Predicate-centered focus, epistemicity and assertion in Secoya

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1. A focus on knowledge and communication
2. Secoya epistemicity basics
3. On Secoya PCF phenomena
4. Concluding remarks
Communication and Common Ground


= Let's have a CG
For the communicative purpose, the self-aware individual integrates the other interlocutor(s) into her self-awareness and self-monitoring activities.

The speakers' utterances affect the CG - either by directly contributing to its propositional content or by regulating particular pieces of information.
Contributions to the CG are realized by illocutionary acts (cf. Searle 1975) which vary in type and force.

The *effect* on the CG is the focus, and the information which *affects* the CG in terms of directly or indirectly contributing to the propositional content is the focal information.

> Focus
  - is a notion at CG level
  - is not directly linguistically reflected (in contrast to illocutionary acts and forces)
Keeping assertive (illocutionary) force and focus apart

- Assertives feed the CG by directly contributing to its propositional content
- If, for instance, considering the verbatim contribution, the speaker applies stronger force than expected on account of the propositional content, accommodation takes place: assumption that competing alternatives or other conflicting information exist
- The speaker marks the variation of the assertive force (not the interpretation)

Fig. 1: Assertive force and focal effects
CG regulation

Regulation issues occur at certain points in communication and concern particular pieces of information. Illocutionary acts other than assertions might be more appropriate, but like assertions, they ultimately also affect the propositional content of the CG.

Negotiation of knowledge contribution:
- Concerns SAP's nurturing responsibility and capacities concerning the CG content
  - *Who contributes to content?*
  - Profiling lack of knowledge (indicated by questions, turn taking cues, etc.)

Evaluation of knowledge reliability:
- Concerns SAP's bonding responsibility concerning the CG content
  - *Who commits to content?*
  - Profiling adequateness of knowledge (indicated by modals, hedging, etc.)

... and others
Summary

- Linguistic structures do not directly reflect focus (a CG level function), but encode variations in illocutionary acts and force
- I will stick to the descriptive terms Focus and PCF in the following sections on Secoya, but later return to the relation between illocutionary force and PCF
1. A focus on knowledge and communication
2. **Secoya epistemicity basics**
3. On Secoya PCF phenomena
4. Concluding remarks
- Recurrent field research since 2010, ongoing documentation project of Ecuadorian Secoya (400 speakers)
- Dialectal variation, data presented here mostly from Upriver Ecuadorian Secoya (indicated if divergent)
- Audio-/videorecordings of mostly (semi-) spontaneous speech (currently approx. 20 hours, in process of annotation)

- Ecuador, Peru, up to 1200 speakers
- West Tucanoan
- Short grammatical description by Johnson & Levinsohn 1990, few other works
VERB INFLECTIONAL DICHOTOMY

- Secoya displays a fundamental structural dichotomy in its verb inflection that correlates with epistemic-evidential modality
- The inflectional opposition is expressed by the suffixes of finite verbs (conflating subject cross-reference and TAM)
- Some of the Secoya "Tenses" come in pairs, each Tense with either of two inflectional sets: Set 1-Tenses are applied when the speaker is confident about the truth of the proposition, Set 2-Tenses are applied when she is not

1) Ja'kë tįtapi.
   ja' -kë tįta -pi
   father -M reach_and_remain -PFV.3SG.M SET 1
   Father has come.

2) Ja'kë tįtaê
   ja' -kë tįta -ê
   father -M reach_and_remain -PFV.2/3SG.M SET 2
   Father might have come
The choice between the two Sets also entails a difference in illocutionary force. In the speculative inflectional Set 2, the category of speech act participants as controller for the subject cross-referencing verb suffix is systematically ignored. An individual addressee (2SG) is reflected by the same nominal gender suffix (-ē in 2) as a 3rd person. The verb's nominal morphology does not compromise the predicative function of the target but just blocks any assertive force. Accordingly, a non-assertive utterance in (2) cannot achieve the integration of the propositional content into the CG. As an independent clause, the utterance just qualifies either as pondering soliloquy or it requests the interlocutor's partaking in solving the uncertain matter, in particular when explicitly marked by question intonation.

(1) Ja'kē tjitapi.
   ja' -kē tita -pi
   father -M reach_and_remain -PFV.3SG.M
   Father has come.

(2) Ja'kē tjitaē
   ja' -kē tita -ē
   father -M reach_and_remain -PFV.2/3SG.M
   Father might have come
   [- question intonation] Father might have come.
   [+ question intonation] Has Father come?
EVIDENTIAL TENSE PAIR

In addition to the epistemically opposed Tense pairs, one of the Tense pairs counts as crucially evidential. The Evidential Past Tenses were misunderstood as "Remote Past" in Johnson & Levinsohn 1990: 66 (although it was realized that events encoded as such are not necessarily remote).

The Evidential Past Tense Set 1 indicates that the speaker obtained the information firsthand.

(3) ... sani yuretä'a kwëgå'wë'ë jåo jåi sôkëore.
    sai -ni yure -ta'a kwë +å'wë'ë ja -o jai sôkë -o -re
    go -SC now -CE chop EVP:N3SG DEM -F big tree -F -ACC
    ... and I chopped down this large tree. - directly experienced: Set 1

The Evidential Past Tense Set 2 indicates the lack of firsthand information. The speaker is relying on knowledge obtained from others.

(4) ... yo'oni yuretä'a yai këkëå'ñeña
    yo'o -ni yure -ta'a yai këkë +å'ñe -ña
    do -SS now -CE jaguar be.afraid EVP:N2/3SG -REP
    ... and the jaguars were frightened - secondarily obtained: Set 2

Note that in a declarative sentence such as in (4) a main verb in the Evidential Past Tense Set 2 necessarily carries an additional suffix (here -ñä, to be discussed in a minute). Otherwise the verb lacks assertive force, but can still be employed as the main verb of a question.

(5) Jajë p'å'ñe?
    Jajë p'å'i +å'ñe
    like.this be_LOC EVP:N2/3SG
    Like this they were living?
EXCLUSION OF INFERENTIAL REASONING

What makes the Evidential Tenses stand out as *evidential* among the Tense paradigm is the categorial exclusion of inferential reasoning (fig. 2).

- A speaker using the Evidential Tense Set 2 indicates that she did neither witness the SoA on her own (that would be indicated by Evidential Tense Set 1) nor is there something that would allow her to infer on what had happened (and could be indicated by the Perfective Tense Set 1).
- The Evidential Tense Set 2 thus correlates with information typically obtained via oral communication.

Fig. 2: The Evidential Past Tense Pair

To be able to assert the obtained information and ensure its further transmission, Secoya speakers need an additional assertive aid. Two suffixes are available.
STRONG ASSERTIVE AID: evidential -ña

Suffix -ña (described as suffix of "separation" by Johnson & Levinsohn 1990: 69) originated from the perceptive-cognitive verb ċña 'to see, recognize, understand'. It is characteristic for the main verb in oral traditions (4, 6).

(6) ... j waëre wekëre de'wakë p'a'a'këña.
j -ē waē -re wekē -re de'wa -kē p'a'i +a'kē -ña
PRN -M father-in-law -ACC tapir -ACC transform -M be_LOC EVP:2/3SG.M -REP
... Pāaina transformed his in-law into the tapir (narrative reportative).

Suffix -ña is also used with other Set-2 Tenses to indicate reported speech (7).

(7) A: What did he say?

De'okēña. Ao āikēña.
de'o -kē -ña. Ao āi -kē -ña
be_good -IPFV.2/3SGM -REP food eat -IPFV.2/3SGM -REP
B: He is fine (reportative). He eats (reportative).

To summarize, a suffix derived from the verb "to see" fulfills assertive function at Set-2 inflected predicates in order to transmit secondhand information. This Secoya "reportative" marker does not mitigate the speaker's commitment to the truth of the proposition (as reportatives in many other languages do), it rather raises it.
WEAK ASSERTIVE AID: epistemic -'ni

Suffix -'ni (misinterpreted as "dubitative" by Johnson & Levinsohn 1990: 71) is an epistemic probability marker that is applied when the speaker cannot provide rationals for her commitment, but still wants to commit to the truth of the proposition. Among others, this suffix (the origin of which is not known) is employed in declarative questions which serve rhetorical functions (8).

Suffix -'ni signals the speaker's gut instinct on certain proposition and is less "objective" than the reportative marker. This assertive weakness excludes it from canonical declarative sentences.

(8) Ėjaë wənopi yo'okë'ni?
    ēja -ē wəno -pi yo'o -kë -'ni
    authority -M ? -PFV.3SG.M do -IPFV.2/3SG.M PROB

Do you think you are the boss?
MARKEDNESS OF ASSERTION

 Assertive speech acts in Secoya show a split in their relation to the propositional content and its encoding. In Set-1 predicates, content and assertive illocution are indistinguishable. Utterances with Set 2-inflected main verbs are not made for assertion. Still, additional suffixes can provide an assertive boost by explicitly marking the speaker's stance. In this case, the assertive component remains clearly separate from the propositional component.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject crossreference</th>
<th>Extra speaker perspective</th>
<th>Assertive force</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Set 1</td>
<td>– (redundant per design)</td>
<td>X (strong)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set 2</td>
<td>– (irrelevant per design)</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X (+ Epistemic -‘ni / Evidential -ñal)</td>
<td>X (moderate/strong)</td>
</tr>
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THREE STUDENTS DISCUSSING (in Quito) whether the shaman in the Boas story had a son:

- **assertive (Set 1) and non-assertively (Set 2) inflected verbs /nominal predicates**
- **additional periphrastic authority claiming (e, f): topicalized verb + Set 1 inflected nominal predicate of verb stem "hear"**

\[(9) \quad \text{a. S1: Jëjë, yo'oni} \quad \text{i} \quad \text{mamakëre} \\
\text{jëjë'ë} \quad \text{yo'o} \quad \text{-ni} \quad \text{i} \quad \text{-ë} \quad \text{mama} \quad \text{-kë} \quad \text{-re} \\
\text{yes} \quad \text{happen} \quad \text{-SS} \quad \text{PRN-M} \quad \text{son} \quad \text{-M} \quad \text{-ACC} \\
p'akë \quad \text{o} \quad \text{p'eo} \text{kë?} \\
p'a \quad \text{-kë} \quad \text{o} \quad \text{p'eo} \quad \text{-kë} \\
\text{have} \quad \text{-IPFV.2/3SG.M} \quad \text{or} \quad \text{not have -IPFV.2/3SG.M} \]

Yes, then did he have a son or didn't he?

\[\text{b. S2: P'eo}. \\
p'eo \quad \text{-o} \\
\text{not be(LOC) -PFV.3SG.F} \]

There was none.

\[\text{c. S1: P'eoji} \quad \text{jaore} \quad \text{kato, jajë?} \\
p'eo \quad \text{-ji} \quad \text{jå} \quad \text{-o} \quad \text{-re} \quad \text{kato} \quad \text{jajë} \\
\text{not have -PFV.3SG.M that -F -ACC} \quad \text{IMPL} \quad \text{like this} \]

In this (story) he didn't have, right?

\[\text{d. S3: P'akë} \quad \text{o} \quad \text{p'eo} \text{kë?} \\
p'a \quad \text{-kë} \quad \text{o} \quad \text{p'eo} \quad \text{-kë} \\
\text{have -IPFV.2/3SG.M or not have -IPFV.2/3SG.M} \]

Did he have (a son) or didn't he?

\[\text{e. S2: Wesëyë,} \quad \text{p'eoji} \\
wesë \quad \text{-yë} \quad \text{p'eo} \quad \text{-ji} \\
\text{not know -IPFV.N3SG} \quad \text{not have -IPFV.3SG.M} \\
kayeje \quad \text{asakëa'ë.} \\
ka \quad \text{-ye} \quad \text{-jë} \quad \text{asa} \quad \text{-kë} \quad \text{-a'ë} \\
\text{say -NMLZ.IPV.NSG} \quad \text{-also hear -NMLZ.IPV.M} \quad \text{-COP:N3SG} \]

I don't know, I always heard that he didn't have (a child).

\[\text{f. S1: P'eoji,} \\
p'eo \quad \text{-ji} \\
\text{not have -IPFV.3SG.M} \\
p'eo\text{yeje} \quad \text{asakëa'ë.} \\
p'eo \quad \text{-ye} \quad \text{-jë} \quad \text{asa} \quad \text{-kë} \quad \text{-a'ë} \\
\text{not have -NMLZ.IPV.NSG} \quad \text{-also hear -NMLZ.IPV.M} \quad \text{-COP:N3SG} \]

He didn't, that's what I used to hear.
Summary

The marked paradigms in the split assertion (the use of an additional evidential or epistemic suffix at Set 2-inflected verb) can be regarded the product of explicite morphological CG regulation. Set 2-inflected predicates with additional assertive aids provide a semantically specific (probability or secondary recognition) intrinsic focus of assertion in addition to the proposition they encode.
3. On Secoya PCF phenomena

Note that all utterances can be accompanied by more or less prominent intonation patterns. Intonation in Secoya helps to distinguish between different illocutionary acts and force. As far as I know so far, intonation does not systematically discriminate between different focus types.
Constituent order

- Verbfinal, flexible
- Immediate preverbal position = default focus position (cross-linguistically common, Van Valin 2005: 72)

(10) a. S1: Lagopi    daiye    p'ako?
     Lago    -pi    dai    -ye    p'ã    -ko
     Lago_Agrio -NOM come -NMLZ.IPFV.NSG refuse -IPFV.2/3SG.F
     Is she not coming from Lago? (weak bias)

b. S2: Lagopi    iko    daiko
     Lago    -pi    i    -ko    dai    -ko
     Lago_Agrio -NOM PROX -F come -IPFV.3SG.F
     (Yes) This woman is coming from Lago. (addressing S1 and pointing to S4)

c. S3: Jeropi ...?
     From where ...?

d. S1: Lagopi ...
     From Lago ...

e. S3: Më'ë  Lagopi    daiko?
     më'ë  Lago    -pi    dai    -ko
     2SG  Lago_Agrio -NOM come -IPFV.2/3SG.F
     You are coming from Lago? (addressing S4)
Constituent order (+ PCF)

Altruistic move of O to postverbal position to support PCF

(11)  A: Grate the yuca!

Tsoe  k'ë'towë  a'so.
tsoe  k'ë'to -wë  a'so
already  grate -PFV.N3S  manioc

B: I already grated the yuca.
Differential case marking

Nominative case marking of animate subjects (*tsi*-pi) in combination with a negative predicate implies the existence of alternative agents on which the respective affirmate predicate holds > contrastive topic construction: discontinuous focus on subject and on comment.

(12)  Tsi(pi)  k'a'a  yo'oyë   p'åñë.
       tsi   -pi  k'a'a  yo'o  -yë   p'a   -ñë
child  -NOM  play  do  -IPFV.N3SG  refuse  -IPFV.N3SG
The children are not playing.
Differential case marking (+ PCF)

a. ACC-marked O

b. Bare O: incorporating the focus competing O noun

(13) a. She is called the Night-Hunter, the one who is killing and eating, ...

\begin{verbatim}
p'ai re ai ko
people ACC eat NMLZ.IPFV.F
is eating the people (... we call friends)
\end{verbatim}

b. Ñamisako kato ye ko, p'ai ai ko...

\begin{verbatim}
ñami +sa ko kato ye -ko -a p'ai ai ko -a
night take F IMPL other F -COP(3SG.F) people eat NMLZ.IPFV.F -COP(3SG.F)
The Night-Hunter is different (from us) and eats people ...
\end{verbatim}
Emphatic *ti* (+/- PCF)

- Precedes the constituent to be emphasized
- Is always prosodically prominent
- Very common in negation
- Seems to be interpreted exhaustively

(14) K'oa kēkēwesēni ti si'a ǝkē, ...

just be_frightened -INTS -SS EMPH all Mestizos

Everybody was scared, (even) all the Whites ...

(15) saiona, jse'ekē tāni ti jūkēňa

she went on and he fell down and died (on the spot)

(16) Ti p'ąkota'a.

But they didn't do anything at all.
Ontological quantifier -*repa* (+/- PCF)

- Is described as "emphatic 'precise(ly), exact(ly)'")" (Johnson & Levinsohn 1990: 43, 45)
- Indicates maximal saturation on upward scale/maximal norm: ontological marker emphasizing the characteristic properties of an entity/SoA: common reading "proper", "real"

(17) Ke puuumakarepa ju'a'kēña ti si'a tutu.

(18) K'winaoni wejarepasi'i kakē ... 

(19) Koka karepawē!

She really wants to marry her (and nobody else) ...
Implication particle *kato* (+/- PCF)

- Resembles a focus particle and/or copula and precedes typically assertive information (which can be fronted, though)
- Is very common, but not obligatory in name-presenting constructions (with the bare/inflected particle copula -a also present)
- Contains the verb stem *ka* "say, intend" and the locative-conditional suffix -to
- *kato* establishes an implicational categorical relation ("X means/implies Y")
- Is incompatible with a focal subject to its left (cf. exclusion of NOM case marking in 21b)

(20) After we were desperately searching the key for hours we found out:

```
Llave kato Enightpi p'ao.
llave kato Enight -pi p'a -o
key IMPL Enight -NOM have -PFV.3SG.F
```

Enight had the key.

(21) a. Yë'ëpi nokare āsi'i.
    yë'ë -pi noka -re āi -si'i
    1SG -NOM plantain -ACC eat -FUT.N3SG
    I'm going to eat plantain.

b. Yë'ë(*pi) kato nokare āsi'i.
    yë'ë kato noka -re āi -si'i
    1SG IMPL plantain -ACC eat -FUT.N3SG
    I'm going to eat just plantain.
    (Me that means (just) eating plantain)

(22) De'we yure kato salvawë
    de'we yure kato salva -wë
    maybe now IMPL save -PFV.N3SG
    At least we've saved our life (the Whites said relieved after the armed robbers had left) (DR subvariant)
Intensity marker -wesë (+ PCF)

- From verb stem wesë "be ignorant" (cf. wesëyë "I don't know.")
- Denotes a change in some participant's knowledge from ignorant to informed > evokes the idea of a more intense experience /SoA (apparently not necessarily that of the speaker)

(23) Then they wanted to remove his tooth,

yo'o jë -jë -na k'oa kaka -wesë -ko p'a'i +a'ko -ña
do -NMLZ.IPFV.NSG -DS just enter -INTS -NMLZ.IPFV.F be_LOC EVP:3SG.F -REP
but it simply entered (deeper).

(24) Sakona tsoe na'iwesëkona ...
sai -ko -na tsoe na'i -wesë -ko -na
go -PFV.2/3SG.F -DS already go_down_(sun) -INTS -IPFV.2/3SG.F -DS
It was already getting (really) late ...
Ignorance marker -ma' (+ PCF)

- Integrates into the stem of a Set-2 inflected verb or a noun and denotes the speaker's ignorance concerning the SoA
- Expresses fairly low probability or even negation (see also Johnson & Levinsohn 1990: 64, 71) depending on contextual factors: (25) with a probability expression > less likely; (26) with the epistemic assertive aid -'ni > possible; (27) without probability support > negation
- Is common in dialogues (28): one interlocutor repeats the proposition just asserted by the other interlocutor. This is not impolite scepticism and does not show lack of belief. The demonstration of ignorance of the SoA serves the expression of interest to hear more and to continue on this discourse topic
- Common denominator: marks speaker's ignorance: "My knowledge does not comprise this SoA, thus it might not exist or be true (semantic interpretation, ex. 25-27), but I would be happy to update my knowledge with respective information" (discourse pragmatic function, ex. 28)

(25) De'we ŋama'kë ...
   de'we ŋa -ma' -kë,
   maybe see -IGNO -NMLZ.IPFV.M
   Maybe you see it ...

(26) P'a ima'o saiko'ni?
   p'a'i -ma' -o sai -ko -'ni
   be_LOC -IGNO -NMLZ.PFV.F go -IPFV.2/3SG.F -PROB
   Does she probably want to go?

(27) te'e aoji aima'ë okojë ti ukuma'ë ...
    te'e aò -je äi -ma' -ë oko -je ti uku -ma' -ë
    one cassava -also eat -IGNO - NMLZ.PFV.M water -also EMPH drink -IGNO - NMLZ.PFV.M
    without eating or drinking anything at all

(28) A: Jo kato Wajoya'ë, siekoya'ë jo kato. / The real names is Wajoya or Siekoya. (DR subvariant)

   B: Jào p'a ima'ko ñorepa kato?
      jà -o p'ai -ma' -ko j -o -repa kato
      that -F be_LOC -IGNO -IPFV.2/3SG.F PRN -F -PREC IMPL
      These are the real names?
4. Concluding remarks

- I have proposed a revision of the notion of focus that restricts it to an interpretative CG effect (in line with Matic & Wedgwood 2013) and provides room to study the role and linguistic reflections of speech acts and illocutionary force in alleged focus constructions (contra the concept of "focus-underdetermination", Zimmermann & Onea 2011).
- I have argued that the epistemic-evidential dichotomy in the verb inflection in Secoya does not mean that parts of the inflectional paradigm are completely excluded from (PC)F. The marked assertion patterns employing additional evidential /epistemic suffixes with Set 2-inflected predicates represent regulative strategies to contribute to the CG.
- I have shown that there are several parallels in the formal appearance of PCF and other foci.
- It has become obvious that many of the PCF phenomena in Secoya are linked to the explicite expression of the speaker's epistemic-evidential stance, preferrably through verb morphology. To abstract away from these involved semantics would certainly mean to miss the point.
Acknowledgments

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Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACC</th>
<th>Accusative</th>
<th>LOC</th>
<th>Locative</th>
<th>Transcription largely according to current orthographic standards</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CE</td>
<td>Counter-expectation</td>
<td>N...</td>
<td>Non-</td>
<td>Clitics and suffixes are not distinguished</td>
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<tr>
<td>CG</td>
<td>Common Ground</td>
<td>NMLZ</td>
<td>Nominalizer</td>
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<td>COP</td>
<td>Copula</td>
<td>NOM</td>
<td>Nominative</td>
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<td>DAT</td>
<td>Dative</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>Object</td>
<td></td>
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<td>DR</td>
<td>Downriver dialect</td>
<td>PCF</td>
<td>Predicate-centered focus</td>
<td>(see <a href="http://www.sfb632.uni-potsdam.de/en/cprojects/b7.html">http://www.sfb632.uni-potsdam.de/en/cprojects/b7.html</a>)</td>
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<td>DS</td>
<td>Different subject</td>
<td>PFV</td>
<td>Perfective</td>
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<td>EMPH</td>
<td>Emphasis</td>
<td>PREC</td>
<td>Precise</td>
<td></td>
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<td>EVP</td>
<td>Evidential Past</td>
<td>PROX</td>
<td>Proximal</td>
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<tr>
<td>FUT</td>
<td>Future</td>
<td>REP</td>
<td>Reportative</td>
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<tr>
<td>IGNO</td>
<td>Ignorance</td>
<td>SoA</td>
<td>State of Affair</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMPL</td>
<td>Implication</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td>Same subject</td>
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<td>INTS</td>
<td>Intensifier</td>
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<tr>
<td>IPFV</td>
<td>Imperfective</td>
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