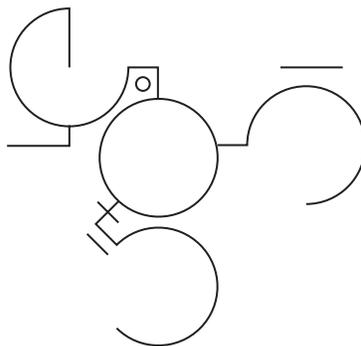


Topics in ʔaá siri Conlinguistics

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The Syntax & Semantics of WANT, HAVE, and NEED



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§1. Introduction

In ʔaá siri, there is a verb of interest, *yíí* — the meanings of which can be mapped onto three separate concepts: (i) desiring some which one lacks (‘want’); (ii) lacking something which one feels is necessary (‘need’); and (iii) possessing something formerly desired or necessary (‘have’). This short article is an exposé of the morphosyntactic patterns which alter the semantics of this single verb root.

§2. History

Historically speaking, the current use(s) of *yíí* are a fairly late development occurring at Time 1 (T1). The verb comes from **zyøq* which originally meant ‘to dwell somewhere, to live’ but drifted gradually. This proto-verb, **zyøq*, is also preserved in ʔaá siri’s locative verb, *yíí’i* (‘to be in’), which was originally **zyø(q)-ki* (‘dwell-be.at’ = ‘stay’). The contemporary senses of ‘have, want, need’ were expressed differently from **proto-siri* (T3) to T2, when there were several distinct verbs in use:

| | | |
|-----|-------------------------------|---|
| (1) | <i>ʔaá siri</i> (T0) | <i>*proto-siri</i> (T3) |
| | <i>yíí</i> ‘have, want, need’ | <i>*ki</i> ‘locative copula’ = ‘have’ |
| | | <i>*ata</i> ‘dream, want’ (preserved as <i>‘a</i> in <i>‘atla</i> and <i>‘lir’a</i>) |
| | | <i>*li-lə</i> ‘long-emptiness’ = ‘need’ (preserved in as <i>‘lir</i> in <i>‘lir’a</i>) |

The original verbs are at this point preserved only in pieces and none of them have been kept fully intact. For instance, **ki* (as explained above) is preserved in *yíí’i*, and so on. Interestingly, **li-lə* (‘to feel empty for long’ = ‘need’) and **ata* (‘to dream, want’) formed a compound which has been preserved, **li-lə-ta* becomes *‘lir’a* which means ‘to day-dream; to hope for something to happen; to imagine.’

§3. Preliminaries

Before any detailed discussion takes place, it is necessary to define some basic behaviors of and characteristics of the verb *yíí*. It has limiting s- and c-selectional criteria on both the subject and the object; the former must be a nominal, sentient (human) argument and the latter must be nominal (i.e. no clausal complements, the verb *‘lir’a* can, however, take clausal complements).

Thus we have the following distinctions between (a) and (b) below where # indicates semantic ungrammaticality and * indicates syntactic ungrammaticality:

| | | | | |
|-----|----|--|----------------|----------------------|
| (2) | a. | ᵛᵛ ᵛᵛ | ᵛᵛ ᵛᵛᵛᵛ | ᵛᵛ ᵛᵛᵛᵛ |
| | | <i>ríryaár</i> | <i>liya-la</i> | <i>l-a-’aa-’yíí!</i> |
| | | SENT\male.relative | food-INAN | NEAR-ABS-VIS-need |
| | | ‘My brother needs food! (he does not look well)’ | | |
| | b. | ᵛᵛ ᵛᵛᵛᵛ | ᵛᵛ ᵛᵛᵛᵛ | ᵛᵛ ᵛᵛᵛᵛ |
| | | # <i>’ursa-ʔa</i> | <i>liya-la</i> | <i>l-a-’aa-’yíí!</i> |
| | | dog-ANIM | food-INAN | NEAR-ABS-VIS-need |
| | | Intended: ‘The dog needs food!’ | | |

- (3) a. ᠰᠤᠣᠵᠤᠴᠤᠳᠤᠴᠤᠳᠤᠰᠤ ᠰᠤᠶᠢᠢᠷᠠᠭᠠᠶᠢᠨ
tasala'u-layaa *ṭ-ii-raa-yií.*
 computer-INAN IMM-DIST-INFR-want
 'I want that computer.'
- b. ᠰᠤᠶᠢᠢᠷᠠᠭᠠᠶᠢᠨ ᠰᠤᠴᠤᠳᠤᠴᠤᠳᠤᠰᠤ
**ṭ-u-raa-ttíli.* *lirsa ṭ-aa-raa-yií.*
 IMM-IMM-INFR-leave COMP IMM-ABST-INFR-want
 Intended: 'I want to leave.'

Furthermore, the verb *yíí* typically does not occur negated, and is instead replaced by either the affirmative form of the verb *ṭaa* ('lack') or the negated form of the verb *ṭaa* ('wish for, hope for something'). As (2) above exemplifies, however, *yíí* may occur with modified evidentialities.

To summarize briefly, *yíí* c-selects for a nominal subject and object, and s-selects for a sentient (human) subject. It is rarely negated and alternative verbs are preferred for expressions of negation.

§4. Patterns Concerning <yíí>

We are now in a position to explain more precisely the three current meanings of the verb *yíí* and how to derive them. The discussion will proceed from the unmarked form of the verb to other forms which require additional morphology. All three senses retain the criteria outlined above since the criteria are innate to the verb itself.

§4.1. <yíí> as 'need'

In its unmarked form, *yíí* means 'need' — the line between 'need' and 'want' is observed somewhat more distinctly in *laá siri* than in English. 'Need' is usually expressed for physical things which are crucial to one's health, whether emotional (friends, assistance, etc.) or physical (food, water, medicine, etc.). For instance, something (4) is quite a natural:

- (4) ᠰᠤᠯᠠ ᠰᠤᠶᠢᠢᠷᠠᠭᠠᠶᠢᠨ ᠰᠤᠶᠢᠢᠷᠠᠭᠠᠶᠢᠨ ᠰᠤ
sa-lá *'a = saliya-la'-la* *saa-yií* *sa.*
 living.being-ANIM LINK = consume-PAT-INAN GNO-DIR\need PRT
 'Living creatures need food and drink (to survive).'

The sort of hyperbolic uses of 'need' in English ('I need that game!' = 'I want that game a lot!') would most likely translate to 'want' depending upon the context. It is possible to use *yíí* with animate or sentient objects as well.

§4.2. <yíí> as 'want'

If *yíí* co-occurs with the INFERENCE evidential, which also marks some irrealis states, then the meaning of this verb changes to 'want.' This morphosemantic change has, in fact, become lexicalized as the following discussion will explain.

- (5) *'ursa-la* *ṭ-ii-raa-yií* *'aa!*
 dog-ANIM IMM-DIST-INFR-want PRT
 'I really want that dog over there!'

Of importance is the fact that (5) cannot be translated as 'I may want that dog over there!' as one expects. The only

§4.3. <yii> as 'have'

By no means is the verb 'have' used as extensively in *laá siri* as it is in English; there are other ways of expressing ownership, possession, or acquisition and <yii> is used to express have mainly in contexts in which the subject formerly desired or needed something and, after this desiring event, acquired that thing. The reason it has this specific use is that 'have' is expressed as an aspectual quality of 'needing.' Once the event of 'needing' has come to a conclusion or has reached its goal, one *has* what they formerly *needed*. It is on this basis that <yii> plus the TERMINATIVE aspect is interpreted as 'have.'

The terminative originally referred only to the *stopping* or *ending* of an event. It carries that meaning still, but its meaning has expanded to include the *completion* of an event or the *attainment* of its goal. In short, it now encompasses a degree of telicity in addition to termination. Therefore, 'to be done needing' becomes 'to have.' For example:

- (9) ꞑꞑ ꞑꞑ ꞑꞑ ꞑꞑꞑꞑ ꞑꞑ ꞑꞑ ꞑꞑꞑꞑ ꞑꞑꞑꞑ
liya-la ri t-a-tlaá liyaá' t-u-l-uur-yii.
 food-INAN FOC IMM-ABS-DIR\lack FOC IMM-IMM-INDIC-TERM-DIR\have
 'I didn't have food but now I do.'

In this sense, there is change from 'lack' to 'have,' and the use of the terminative shows that the completion and/or termination of 'needing.'

Note that the facts about <yii> as 'want' still hold true in this sense as well. With the inferential, <yii> in this sense could still mean 'have,' but rather than acquiring something necessary, the verb would express the acquisition of something desirable. This is given in (10):

- (10) ꞑꞑꞑꞑꞑꞑ ꞑꞑ ꞑꞑ ꞑꞑ ꞑꞑꞑꞑꞑꞑ ꞑꞑ ꞑꞑ ꞑꞑꞑꞑ ꞑꞑꞑꞑ
tasala'u-layaa ri t-a-raa-yii, liyaá' t-a-l-uur-raa-yii.
 computer-INAN FOC IMM-ABS-INFR-want FOC IMM-ABS-INDIC-TERM-INFR-have
 'I wanted a computer and now I have one.'

It should come as no surprise that in these contexts for 'have,' there is some degree of focus or contrast between formerly 'wanting/needing' and currently 'having.' In somewhat more neutral contexts, <yii> would be an unacceptable verb to use for 'have.' In response to the question, 'Do you have a computer?' for instance, <yii> would not be used (unless the context is right). Instead, the conversation would go as follows (take note of the use of the deictic postposition, <i>i</i>):

- (11) A: ꞑꞑ ꞑꞑꞑꞑꞑꞑ ꞑꞑ ꞑꞑ ꞑꞑꞑꞑ ꞑꞑ
 A: *ri tasala'u-layaa l-a-i ('aá)?*
 INTER computer-INAN NEAR-ABS-POSS PRT
 A: 'Do you have a computer?'
- B: ꞑꞑꞑꞑ ꞑꞑ
 B: *t-a-i (sa).*
 IMM-ABS-POSS PRT
 B: 'I do!'

§5. Concluding Remarks

In this short article, three distinct behaviors of the verb *yíí* have been described with respect to their semantic and morphosyntactic licensing conditions. For speakers of English, a distinct line between ‘want’ and ‘need’ may feel like a difficult one to adhere to. In *laá siri*, this distinction is more pertinent: The unmarked form of this verb is ‘need,’ but it has been lexicalized with the INFERENTIAL evidential to express the meaning ‘want.’ In accordance with these two meanings, the third meaning of ‘have’ is actually an aspectual specification of either ‘wanting’ or ‘needing’ — specifically, when this event has terminated (or culminated), the meaning shifts to ‘have.’ This is expressed with the use of the TERMINATIVE aspect.

§6. Appendix: Historical Change of *<*zyøq>*

laá siri is currently at Time 0 (T0). Three relevant points in time have led up to T0, the earliest of which is T3 (called **proto-siri*). Here is a more detailed timeline of the **proto-siri* verb *<*zyøq>* whence *yíí* comes.

| | | |
|----|--------------|---|
| T0 | <i>yíí</i> | ‘to need; to want; to have’ |
| T1 | <i>*yíç</i> | ‘to have something at home, to keep something around the house’ |
| T2 | <i>*ziç</i> | ‘to dwell; to stay indoors’ |
| T3 | <i>*zyøq</i> | ‘to dwell, live somewhere’ |