

## Ese Ejja posture verbs do not just sit there:

### An inquiry into other ways they stand out

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#### 0. Introduction

- Ese Ejja (Tacana), **undescribed endangered language**
  - in **Amazonia**, both in Peru and Bolivia
  - around **1000 speakers**. (Vuillermet 2005)
- Ergative case marking (ERG = -(y)a, ABS = ∅)  
 ‘Neutral’ word order SV/ SOV (not rigid)
- Data recorded in the **Bolivian lowlands** (7 months of fieldwork between 2005-2007)
  - spontaneous oral texts + elicited sentences
  - elicitation via ‘Frog, where are you?’/ FWA (Mayer 1969)
  - elicitation via an audiovisual stimulus (Ishibashi et al. 2006)
  - 1 sentence from an evangelist booklet /Mcu
- As often reported for Amazonian languages, spatial information is pervasive in Ese Ejja:

(1) SoFWA.040

*Nekisowakyani.*

neki	- sowa	-ki	-ani
be.stand	- go.up	-away	-be.sitting
#1	#2	#3	#4

*He is going up (onto a stone higher off the ground).*

One can identify in (1) four spatial elements in the verb form:

- #1 and #4 are posture verbs (the latter standing for TAM);
- #2 encodes path, #3 encodes deixis, encoding together the trajectory.

#### 1. A set of four posture verbs

- 3 standard elements: ‘sitting’, ‘lying’ and ‘standing’
- 1 ‘interloper’ (Grinevald 2006): ‘floating’  
 (whether in the air or the water, i.e. no contact with the ground.)

<i>ani</i>	‘be.sitting’
<i>jaa</i>	‘be.lying’
<i>neki</i>	‘be.standing’
<i>ba'e</i>	‘be.floating’ (no contact with the ground, e.g., in a hammock)

(2) BaFWA.002

*Majoya oya kawinaje, jaanaje,*  
 majoya oya kawi -naje **jaa** -naje  
 then 3.ABS sleep -PAST **be.lying** -PAST

*iñawewa obyaxe jaanaje,*  
 iñawewa o -byaxe **jaa** -naje  
 dog 3sg -on **be.lying** -PAST

*y taxakaka tao'ayjo aninaje.*  
 y taxakaka tao - 'ay -jo **ani** -naje  
 and frog bottle - big -LOC **be.sitting** -PAST

*Then he was sleeping, he was lying, the dog was lying on him, and the frog was sitting on the bottle.*

(3) KaEli070510.b  
*Emaxiijo ba'enaje miyanijo.*  
 emaxii -jo ba'e -naje mi- e- ani -jo  
 belly -TM be.floating -PAST 2sg-e- be.sitting -TM.DS

*I was pregnant last time you were here. (lit : she was floating in my belly when you were here).*

- Posture verbs can stand **on their own** (no TAM required) where **other verbs cannot** (in the present tense, or when tense already well established)

(4) MCui.2b  
*Oja bakwa oja teejo ba'e.*  
 oja bakwa oja tee -jo ba'e  
 3sg.POSS child 3sg.POSS belly -LOC be.floating

*There is a child in her belly. (lit: her child is floating in her belly)*

(5) SoFWA.001  
*Esho'i akwi'aybyaxe neki.*  
 esho'i akwi -'ay -byaxe neki  
 child tree -big -on be.standing

*'The child is standing on a log.'*

(6) SoFWA.004  
*Esho'i swani. (Not: Esho'i swa.)*  
 e- sho'i swa -ani  
 NPF- child smile -PRS

*'The child is smiling.'*

(7) SoFWA.001  
*Esho'i taarani akwi'aybyaxe neki. (Not: Esho'i taara)*  
 e- sho'i taara -ani akwi - 'ay -byaxe neki  
 NPF- child shout -PRS tree - big -on be.standing

*The child is standing on a log shouting.*

- *ani* 'be.sitting' is the 'default' posture verb, also expressing the neutral 'be' ('estar')

(8) PaBai.011  
*Maya xeya oxaña etiibaxani anika.*  
 ma -ya xeya oxaña etiibaxani ani -ka  
 that -FOC now all elected.repr. be.sitting -ka

*All those (people) who are present (lit: sitting) are politicians. (Esos son todos los elegidos que estan presente hoy).*

(9) MoDes.001  
*Xeya ekwana marinanixe ani.*  
 xeya ekwana.ABS marina -nixe ani  
 now 1pl Marine -COM be.sitting

*We are now (lit:sitting) with Marine.*

- The shape of the entity referred to might be of importance for using one or the other posture verb.  
 See Rumsey 2002 for similar semantics in Papuan languages.

(10) Elicited  
*Daki'ay ebyojo ani. (Not: neki 'be. standing')*  
 daki'ay ebyo -jo ani  
 turtle forest -LOC be.sitting

*The turtle is (lit:sitting) in the jungle.*

(11) Elicited  
*Dokwey'ay ebyojo neki.* (Not: ani 'be.sitting')  
 dokwey'ay ebyo -jo neki  
 deer forest -LOC be.standing

*The deer is (lit:standing) in the jungle.*

(12) Elicited  
*Exawi kejo yani.* (Not: eneki 'be.standing')  
 exawi ke -jo e- ani  
 plantain field -LOC TAM- be.sitting

*There are plantains (lit: sitting) in the field (cut on the ground).*

(13) Elicited  
*Exawi kejo eba'e.* (Not: eneki 'be.standing')  
 exawi ke -jo e- ba'e  
 plantain field -LOC TAM- be.floating

*There are plantains (lit: floating) in the field (still in the tree).*

(14) Elicited  
*Shixe kejo eneki.* (Not: eba'e 'be.floating'/Not: yani 'be.sitting')  
 shixe ke -jo e- neki  
 corn field -LOC TAM- be.standing

*There is corn in the field (lit: Corn stands in the field).*

- The place where someone is also matters.  
 Culturally gendered-places? (Firestone 1991).  
 Places related to specific gender/posture activities.

(15) Elicited  
*Kejo neki.* (Not: ani)  
 ke -jo neki  
 field -LOC be.standing

*He/She is (lit:standing) in the field.*

(16) Elicited  
*Ekíjo ani.* (Not: neki)  
 e- kí -jo ani  
 NPF- house -LOC be.sitting

*He/She is (lit:sitting) in the house.*

- These posture verbs may also extend semantically to 'live':
  - *ani* 'be.sitting' refers to a female entity
  - *neki* 'be.standing', refers to a male entity
  - *ba'e* 'be.floating' would be the more general term, allowing for the inclusion of both genders.

(17) KaVid.016  
*Xeyaney enekitii pokiani.*  
 xeya -ney e- neki - tii poki - ani  
 now -intens TAM- be.standing - only keep.on - PRS

*I am still living (lit:standing) here. (male speaker/ Not: female speaker)*

(18) Elicited  
*Xeyaney eanitii pokiani.*  
 xeya -ney e- ani - tii poki - ani  
 now -intens TAM- be.sitting - only keep.on - PRS

*I am still living (lit:sitting) here. (female speaker /Not: male speaker)*

(19) KaVid.029  
*Eya nekipokinaje onixe, ba'epokinaje*  
 eya neki -poki -naje onixe ba'e - poki -naje  
 1sg.ABS be.standing -keep.on-PAST 3sg.COM be.floating - keep.on -PAST

*I used to live with her, we used to live together. (male speaker)*

- But not only have they acquired different semantics.  
 They have also followed different grammaticalization paths.

## 2. Posture verbs grammaticalized into TAM-markers

### 2.1. *ani* 'be.sitting' in existential, possessive and predicate constructions

- Existential constructions (be/live >): ex. (12-14)  
See Heine (2002: 203) for ex. in Limbu, English, Swahili and Sranan CE.

(12) Elicited  
*Exawi kejo yani.* (Not: *eneki* 'be.standing')  
 exawi ke -jo e- **ani**  
 plantain field -LOC TAM-**be.sitting**

*There are plantains (lit: sitting) in the field (cut on the ground).*  
 NB : The other posture verbs are also used for this construction.

- Possessive-construction (other possessive constructions do exist)
- "Possessive, existential and locative constructions are related to one another." Heine (1994: 203)

(20) KaVid.028  
*Cinco ekweya yani.*  
 cinco ekweya e- **ani**  
 five 1sg.POSS TAM-**be.sitting**

*I have five (children). (lit: Five are sitting mine)*  
 NB: male or female speaker

- copula for predicative adjectives  
See Heine&Kuteva 2002: 99 for examples in other languages.

(21) SoRad.002  
*Oya miminaje oya kyapame ani.*  
 oya mimi -naje oya kya- pame **ani**  
 3.ABS say -PAST 3.ABS APF- good **be.sitting**

*She said she was fine (in this context : Not: she was sitting fine).*

### 2.2. Present tense?

(22) Ka.Pey.020  
*Oya tatajo aniani,*  
 oya tata -jo **ani** -**ani**  
 3.ABS dense -LOC **be.sitting** -**sit/PRS**

*epoxajo pya'ay, mekaxyawa po'aekyani.*  
 e- poxa -jo pya'ay mekaxyawa **po'aeki** -**ani**  
 NPF- day -LOC also morning **go.for.a.walk** -**sit/PRS**

*It sits in bushes, during the day too, in the morning it goes for a walk.*

Evidence of grammaticalization:

- A. **Semantic bleaching** has occurred and allows seemingly incongruous combinations to occur:

a. *It sits in bushes* (22)

NOT	<i>ani -ani</i>	BUT	<i>ani -ani</i>
	be.sitting -be.sitting		be.sitting -sit/PRS
	<i>neki -ani</i>		<i>neki -ani</i>
	be.standing -be.sitting		be.standing -sit/PRS
	→ Not: <b>posture.verb</b> -be.sitting		

b. *it goes for a walk* (22)

NOT	<i>po'aeki -ani</i>	BUT	<i>po'aeki -ani</i>
	go.for.a.walk -be.sitting		go.for.a.walk -sit/PRS
	→ NOT: <b>motion.verb</b> -be.sitting		

However, **elements of the original meaning persist:**

- 1 default TAM-marker *ani* 'be.sitting';
- BUT 3 other posture verbs: expressing a **marked** posture. See ex. (23-25)

(23) SoRad.006  
*Jackson (oya) exawi eshe ixypoba'e.*  
 Jackson oya exawi eshe ixya-po -**ba'e**  
 J 3.ABS plantain raw eat -AUX.itr -**float/PRS**

*Jackson is eating a banana (suspended in the arms of his mum).*

## B. Morphology:

- a. **Same slot** as past **tense** markers (see (2-3) with *-naje*)
- b. **Phonological reduction** for one of the posture verbs:  
*neki* > *-ki*

(24) WoFWA.001  
*Esho'i taaaki.* (Not: *taanekei*)  
 e- sho'i taaa **-ki**  
 NPF- child shout **-stand/PRS**

*The child is standing shouting.*

(25) SaEli  
*Besaki.*  
 besa **-ki**  
 bathe **-stand/PRS**

*I am bathing. (male speaker; refers to men's posture when bathing)*

(26) SaEli  
*Besani.*  
 besa **-ani**  
 bathe **-sit/PRS**

*I am bathing. (female speaker; refers to women's posture when bathing)*

Present tense which covers both:

- habitual / generic value (22)
- progressive value (23-26).

## 2.3. Habitual?

- *-ani* 'be.sitting' is mainly used in combination with the past tense marker, when describing habits of ancestors.

(27) KaBab.004  
*ajyo onaya xadakixeshedianinaje,*  
 ajyo onaya xa- daki - xeshe -ki **-ani** -naje  
 INT.LOC 3pl.ABS REFL- garment - to.buy -REFL **-sit/HAB** -PAST

*a' onaaya ixayakaninaje.*  
 a' onaaya ixya-ka **-ani** -naje  
 INT 3pl.ERG eat -ka **-sit/HAB** -PAST

*...out of what they used to make their clothes, what they used to eat.*

(28) KaBab.006  
*dexa mimiaxi mawajo,*  
 dexa mimi -a -xi mawa-jo  
 man say -a -NML then -TM.DS

*ashay'a woshokaninaje kwaa,...*  
 ashaya wosho-ka **-ani** -naje kwa -a  
 INT dress -3 **-sit/HAB** -PAST others -ERG

*...(before the white people had spoken) how they used to dress...*

(29) KaBab.038  
*Jamaya pa etiikyana bayaninaje, ba'epokianaje...*  
 jama -ya pa etiikyana ba'e **-ani** -naje ba'e -pokia -naje  
 so -FOC EVID ancestors live **-sit/HAB**-PAST live -HAB2 -PAST

*That is how our ancestors used to live.*

(30) KaBab.037

*Etiikyaa pa exawikwana momaxe ixyakaniinaje,*  
 etiikyanaa pa exawi -kwana mo -maxe ixya -ka **-ani** -naje  
 ancestors.ERG EVID plantain -PL bury -TM.SS eat -3 **-sit/HAB**-PAST

*epowi ishikaniinaje.*  
 epowi ishi -ka **-ani** -naje  
 typ.drink drink -3 **-sit/HAB** -PAST

*The ancestors buried the bananas and used to eat them, they used to drink epowi.*

(31) PBai.002

*Jikyō mekaxe ekwaa Ese'ejjaa (y) Tacanaa pya'ay,*  
 jikyō meka -xe ekwanaa Ese Ejjaa y Tacanaa pya'ay  
 this night -by 1pl.EXCL.ERG EE.ERG and Tacana.ERG also

*oja etiikyaa akaninaje majamaja xeya akajeyo,*  
 oja etiikyanaa a -ka **-ani** -naje majamaja xeya a -ka -je -yo  
 3.POSSancestors.ERG do -3 **-sit/HAB**-PAST dance now do -3 -FUT-ASP

*shawabakajeyo.*  
 shawaba -ka -je -yo  
 remember -3 -FUT -ASP

*Tonight we will remember and do the dance that our ancestors used to do.*

(32) KaEkí.050

*Yawajo kyawiso yekaokyaninaje.*  
 yawajo kya- wiso ye -ka -okya **-ani** -naje  
 long.ago APF- much bring -ka -bring.down **-sit/HAB**-PAST

*Long ago they used to bring (lots of stuff) down to the harbour.*

## 2.4. Durative?

- But *-ani* 'be.sitting' is also used for action lasting over time.

(33) KiWey.018

*Onaya oja familia paaninajetii mekaxe.*  
 Onaya oja familia pa **-ani** -naje -tii meka -xe  
 3pl.ABS 3.POSS family cry **-sit/DUR**-PAST -very night -by

*They, her family have been crying the whole night long.*

### HYPOTHESES:

*-ani* 'be.sitting' is, as an aspect marker, both used as a **habitual** (27-32) and a **durative** (33).

Given the data in 2.2 (present tense), I have concluded that present tense can be used as a **generic or a progressive**.

Thus, we can consider having **only one morpheme**, namely an **Imperfective-marker**.

There is then no differentiation between progressive (7) and habitual (22) in the present tense, which is then zero-marked. However, when used **in the present tense, the imperfective-marker retains postural meaning in marked cases**.

Posture verbs > Imperfective

Comrie (2001 [1976] :11), with regard to aspect marker: "the existence of **both basic and secondary meanings can be shown to be the result of a historical process** where the basic meaning is the original meaning while secondary meanings have been acquired as **extensions of this original meaning**, often leading ultimately to the same form **acquiring a new basic meaning much wider than the original basic meaning**, and incorporating a number of uses that were originally secondary meanings".

- *Neki* ‘be.standing’ also appears in the same slot and expresses the same aspectual meaning:

(34) KiWey.028  
*Oxaña Ese'ejja exanekichichakinekinaje,*  
 oxaña Ese Ejja e- xa- neki - chicha -ki -**neki** -naje  
 all EE TAM-REFL- stand - gather -REFL -**stand/IPFV** -PAST

*bakanekinaje.*  
 ba -ka -**neki** -naje  
 look.at -3 -**stand/IPFV** -PAST

*All the Ese Ejjas had gathered there, they were all watching.*

(35) KaEkí.045  
*Yawajoka ekwana dojokanekyapwa bishexe (...)*  
 yawajo -ka ekwana dojo -ka -**neki** -pwa bishe -xe  
 long.ago-CONTR 1pl.ABS bring -3 -**stand/IPFV** -R.PAST canoe -by

*But long ago we used to go down the river by canoe (to bring things that we had been planting). (lit: the river brought us down).*

NB: According to the speakers, both *-ani* and *-neki* are possible in (35)

### **HYPOTHESIS:**

2 different aspect markers specifying the degree of **volition/control** :  
*-neki* ‘be.standing’, as an aspect marker, could involve **more volition/control** than *-ani* ‘be.sitting’, since *standing* involve [+volitional] (Newman 2002: 2ff)

### **3. Continuing to evolve?**

- The affixal use of posture verbs of the kind shown in (36-39) presents a challenge to analysis in that the semantics of the posture verb (be.lying) does not match the spatial configuration of the figure (standing up) for the scene described:

(36) NiTraj.071  
*Epona jaasowakyani.*  
 e- pona **jaa-** sowa -ki -ani  
 NPF- woman **be.lying-** go.up -away -sit/PRS

*‘A / the woman is going up (from a lower position)’.*  
*Not: A woman is lying and going up.*

(37) KyBiñ.004  
*Esho'i jaaokekinaje besaa.*  
 e- sho'i **jaa** - oke -ki -naje besa -a  
 NPF- child **be.lying-** go.down-away -PAST bathe -MOT.PURP

*The children went down to bathe. (to a source)*

(38) KyBiñ.018  
*Majoya ekwana jaasowa'yonaje.*  
 majoya ekwana **jaa** - sowa -'yo -naje  
 then 1pl.ABS **be.lying-** go.up -'yo -PAST

*Then we came back home.*

(39) KyBiñ.019  
*Eya pya'ay maxeya xaexekinaje (...) jaasowa'yonaje.*  
 eya pya'ay ma -xe -a xaexeki -naje **jaa** - sowa -'yo -naje  
 1sg.ABS also this -by -focus come.back -PAST **be.lying-** go.up -'yo -PAST

*I also came back through that place (after doing my wash) I went up.*

In those examples, *jaa-* does NOT refer to:

▪ *Figure information*

- A. the posture of the figure **during the action**:
  - they are not lying when they go up or down (ex. 37-40)
  - another slot is used in Ese Ejja to specify it.
- B. the shape of the figure **at the end of the action**:
  - they do not lie when they arrive
- C. the shape of **the figures/the group** (like the children walking *in line* in ex 38, as is the case in Yupi, Mithun, p.c. May 2008)
  - however, in (37), only one person is going.

▪ *Deixis information*

- D. the speaker's point of view (*toward* vs. *away from* him):
  - Ese Ejja has directional, found in another slot:

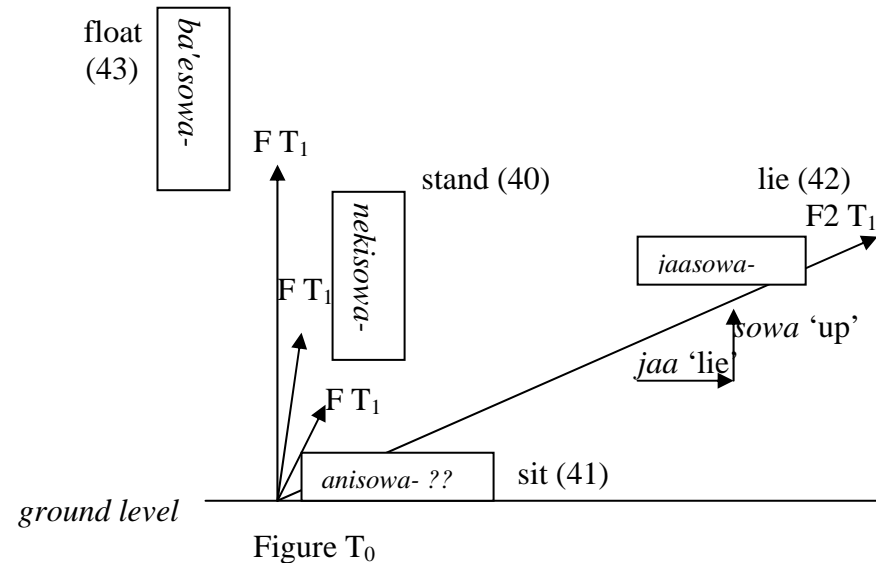
ixya	-wa	-kwe	vs.	ixya	-ki	-kwe
eat	-toward	-IMP		eat	-away.from	-IMP
<i>Come eat!</i>				<i>Go eat!</i>		

*jaa-* could possibly refer to:

▪ *Path information*

- E. where one goes (*down* vs *up*):
  - other morphemes (*oke* vs *sowa*) and slots are used.
  - And it IS NOT redundant in Ese Ejja: ex 38 vs 39.
  - Could it then be a second dimension, where *jaa* is used when the figure goes up AND moves, *neki* when the person goes up without a significant motion (like *stand up, go up a ladder*)?
  - Hypothesis supported by the semantics of the *be.lying* and *be standing* respectively requiring less and more effort (see Newman 2002: 2ff.): the straighter you go up, the more effort it requires.

SOWA 'go.up'



(40) SoEli.Mot\_Dir.001  
*Nekisowakwe!*  
 neki- sowa -kwe  
 be.standing- go.up -IMP

*Get up! (context: to someone who is lying in bed, or to someone going up a ladder)*

(41) SoEli.Mot\_Dir.003  
*Anisowakwe!*  
 ani- sowa -kwe  
 be.sitting- go.up -IMP

*Get up! (context: to someone who is lying in bed)*



(42) SoEli.Mot\_Dir.004

*Jaasowakwe!*

**jaa-** sowa -kwe  
**be.lying-** go.up -IMP

*Come (up)! (context: to someone who is lower off)*

(43) SWAF.025

*Ojaya iñawewa (...) meemeebiyajo ba'esowakiani.*

ojaya iñawewa meemeebiya -jo **ba'e** -sowa -ki -ani  
 3.POSS dog bee -LOC **be.floating** -go.up-away -sit/IPFV

*His dog (too) jumps at the bees (lit: comes up at the bees).  
 (Su perro (también) sube a las abejas)*

#### 4. Conclusion

Grammaticalization chain of a set of spatial elements:

from **very concrete** posture verbs  
 to extended **-more abstract-** locative constructions,  
 to **even more abstract** aspectual markers,  
 and -if the hypothesis holds- to **metaphoric** path expression.

This contrasts with Sikuaní, another Amazonian language where geographic location is expressed through a semantic extension of the trajectory set markers (Queixalós 1985).

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## Abbreviations

Example names

*The capital letter which precedes the sentence's reference code identifies the speaker. This is followed by:*

Bab: **B**abakwana / ancestors

Bai: **B**aile de los antiguos / ancestors' dance

Biñ: **B**iñani / holy wood

Des: **D**esfile

Ekí: Ekwana Riberaltajo owe **ekí** sapwani / we want a house in Riberalta

Eli: **E**licitation

Mcui: **M**ENT (Misión Evangelista Nuevas Tribus) Infant care and feeding - **C**uidado y alimentación infantil

Pey: **P**eyojo esowi / snake, viper story

Rad: **R**adiojo saranixe / on the radio with Sara

Traj: **T**rajectoire (elicited path expressions with audiovisual material)

Vid: **V**ida / life of the speaker

FWA: **F**rog, **W**here **A**re you

## List of glosses

ABS	ABSolute
APF	Adjective PreFix
ASP	aspect marker
AUX	AUXiliarie
DIR	DIRectional
DUR	DURative
ERG	ERGative
EXCL	EXCLusive
EVID	EVIDential
FOC	FOCus
FT <sub>0</sub>	Figure at Time 0
FT <sub>1</sub>	Figure at Time 1 (once the action is performed)
FUT	FUTure
HAB	HABitual marker
HAB2	HABitual marker 2
itr	intransitive
IMP	IMPerative
INT	INTerrogative marker
IPFV	ImPerFectiVe
NPF	Noun PreFix
Pl	plural
PAST	PAST
POSS	POSSessive
PRS	PReSent
REFL	REFLexive
RPAST	REMote Past
tr	transitive
TM.DS	TiMe.DifferentSubject
TM.DS	TiMe.SameSubject
1	1 <sup>st</sup> person
3	3 <sup>d</sup> person