

# Some observations on embedded tense in Kanien'kéha

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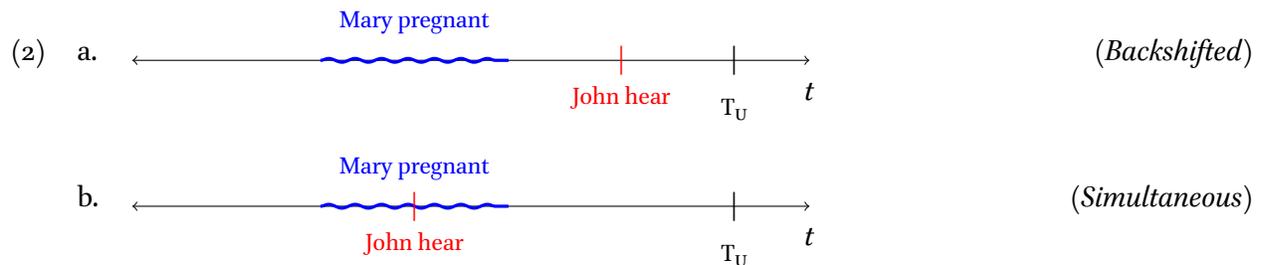
## 1 Embedded Tense

**One parameter of variation in Tense cross-linguistically:** The interpretation of embedded tenses under structurally identical tenses:<sup>1</sup>

### (1) SOT language: English

John heard that Mary was pregnant

- a. BACKSHIFTED: John heard at time  $t$  that Mary was pregnant before time  $t$  (and no longer pregnant at time  $t$ )
- b. SIMULTANEOUS: John heard at time  $t$  that Mary is pregnant at time  $t$



### (3) Non-SOT language: Japanese

- a. Taroo-wa [Hanako-ga byooki-datta ]-to it-ta  
Taro-TOP Hanako-SBJ sick-PST that say-PST  
'Taro said that Hanako had been sick.' (*backshifted only*)
- b. Taroo-wa [Hanako-ga byooki-da ]-to it-ta  
Taro-TOP Hanako-SBJ sick-PRES that say-PST  
'Taro said that Hanako was sick [at that time].'  
(*simultaneous only*) (Ogihara 1996: 69)

<sup>1</sup>These two should be seen as endpoints of a more complex scale; Russian, for instance, has been claimed to occupy a middle ground, where certain embedding environments permit SOT readings. I also ignore double-access readings here, which are found in present-under-past sentences.



So...

There are two ways to talk about the past, meaning:

1. When you use the **Former Past suffix**, we are unambiguously talking about the past.
2. When we want to talk about the past, we have multiple ways to do this!

THE QUESTION IS: Are there places where the Former Past suffix is *required* when talking about the past? (In other words, can we constrain the possibilities in to make the choice we have to make with respect to (2) a bit more predictable?)

### 3 Embedded *-hkwe'* under *-hkwe'*

Two observations:

1. Use of the Former Past under Former Past marked verbs leads to SOT-like interpretations
2. Use of the former Past under non-Former Past marked but past construed verbs leads to no SOT interpretation

#### 3.1 PAST-under-PAST

As a baseline, these examples show cases where the embedded Former Past is interpreted as further shifting the time backwards relative to the time of the Former Past marked intentional matrix verb (believe).

- (6) CONTEXT (backshift): I heard lots of noise from my neighbour yesterday. I assume he is in the middle of cleaning. I run into him this morning and ask him what he was doing, and report back:

- a. Tkehtákhwahkwe'                      tsi    tethatotáhrhoskwe'                      thetèn:re  
 T-k-eh-tahkw-ha-hkwe'                      tsi    te-t-ha-totarho-s-kwe                      thetenre  
 DUPL-1sgA-believe-HAB-FOR.PST    that    CIS-DUPL-MsgA-clean-HAB-FOR.PST    yesterday  
 nek tsi onktó:kenshe'                      tsi    tethononniahkwen:ne'  
 nek tsi wa'-wak-tokensh-e'                      tsi    te-t-ho-nonniahkwen-hne'  
 but    FACT-1sgP-find.out-PUNC    that    CIS-DUPL-MsgP-dance-STAT-REM.PST  
 'I believed that he had been cleaning, but I found out that he was dancing.'  
(WB, OLD ID: 4619)

- b. #Tkehtákhwahkwe'                      tsi    tethatotáhrhos                      thetèn:re  
 T-k-eh-tahkw-ha-hkwe'                      tsi    te-t-ha-totarho-s                      thetenre  
 DUPL-1sgA-believe-HAB-FOR.PST    that    CIS-DUPL-MsgA-clean-HAB    yesterday  
 nek tsi onktó:kenshe'                      tsi    tethononniahkwen:ne'  
 nek tsi wa'-wak-tokensh-e'                      tsi    te-t-ho-nonniahkwen-hne'  
 but    FACT-1sgP-find.out-PUNC    that    CIS-DUPL-MsgP-dance-STAT-REM.PST  
 'Intended (backshift): I believed that he had been cleaning, but I found out that he was dancing.'  
(WB, OLD ID: 4620)

(7) CONTEXT (simultaneous): I am hearing lots of noise from my neighbour. I assume he is in the middle of cleaning. I go to check, and report back:

- a. Tkehtákhkwahkwe' tsi tethatotáhrhoskwe'  
 T-k-ehthakw-ha-hkwe' tsi te-t-ha-totarho-s-kwe  
 DUPL-1sgA-believe-HAB-FOR.PST that CIS-DUPL-MsgA-clean-HAB-FOR.PST  
 nek tsi onktó:kenshe' tsi tethononniáhkwen  
 nek tsi wa'-wak-tokensh-e' tsi te-t-ho-nonniáhkwen  
 but FACT-1sgP-find.out-PUNC that CIS-DUPL-MsgP-dance-STAT  
 'I believed that he was cleaning, but I found out that he is dancing.' (WB, OLD ID: 4615)
- b. Tkehtákwahkwe' tsi tethatotáhrhos  
 T-k-ehthakw-ha-hkwe' tsi te-t-ha-totarho-s  
 DUPL-1sgA-believe-HAB-FOR.PST that CIS-DUPL-MsgA-clean-HAB  
 nek tsi onktó:kenshe' tsi tethononniáhkwen  
 nek tsi wa'-wak-tokensh-e' tsi te-t-ho-nonniáhkwen  
 but FACT-1sgP-find.out-PUNC that CIS-DUPL-MsgP-dance-STAT  
 'I believed that he was cleaning, but I found out that he is dancing.' (WB, OLD ID: 4616)

### 3.2 PAST-under-past-construed-Punctual

(8) CONTEXT (backshift): I heard lots of noise from my neighbour yesterday. I assume he is in the middle of cleaning. I run into him this morning and ask him what he was doing, and report back:

- a. Nòn:wa wenhniserá:te' takéhtahkwe' tsi tethatotáhrhoskwe'  
 ne=onwa wenhniserate t-k-ehthakw-e' tsi te-t-ha-totarho-s-kwe'  
 NE=now today DUPL-FACT-1sgA-believe-PUNC that CIS-DUPL-MsgA-clean-HAB-FOR.PST  
 thetén:re nek tsi onktó:kenhse' tsi tethononniáhkwen:ne'  
 thetenre nek tsi wa'-wak-tokensh-e' tsi te-t-ho-nonniáhkwen-en-hne'  
 yesterday but FACT-1sgP-find.out-PUNC that CIS-DUPL-MsgP-dance-STAT-REM.PST  
 'Today, I did believe that he had been cleaning yesterday, but I found out that he was dancing.'  
 (AM, OLD ID: 4623)
- b. #Nòn:wa wenhniserá:te' takéhtahkwe' tsi tethatotáhrhos  
 ne=onwa wenhniserate t-k-ehthakw-e' tsi te-t-ha-totarho-s  
 NE=now today DUPL-FACT-1sgA-believe-PUNC that CIS-DUPL-MsgA-clean-HAB  
 thetén:re nek tsi onktó:kenhse' tsi tethononniáhkwen:ne'  
 thetenre nek tsi wa'-wak-tokensh-e' tsi te-t-ho-nonniáhkwen-en-hne'  
 yesterday but FACT-1sgP-find.out-PUNC that CIS-DUPL-MsgP-dance-STAT-REM.PST  
 'Intended (backshift): Today, I did believe that he had been cleaning yesterday, but I found out that he was dancing.'  
 (AM, OLD ID: 4624)

(9) CONTEXT (simultaneous): I am hearing lots of noise from my neighbour. I assume he is in the middle of cleaning. I go to check, and report back:

- a. #Takéhtahkhwe' tsi tethatotáhrhoskwe'  
 T-a'-k-eh-tah-khw-e' tsi te-t-ha-totarho-s-kwe  
 DUPL-FACT-1sgA-believe-PUNC that CIS-DUPL-MsgA-clean-HAB-FOR.PST  
 nek tsi onktó:kenshe' tsi tethononniáhkwen  
 nek tsi wa'-wak-tokensh-e' tsi te-t-ho-nnoniahkw-en  
 but FACT-1sgP-find.out-PUNC that CIS-DUPL-MsgP-dance-STAT  
 'Intended (simultaneous): I did believe that he was cleaning, but I found out that he is dancing.'  
 (WB, OLD ID: 4617)
- b. Takéhtahkhwe' tsi tethatotáhrhos  
 T-a'-k-eh-tah-khw-e' tsi te-t-ha-totarho-s-kwe  
 DUPL-FACT-1sgA-believe-PUNC that CIS-DUPL-MsgA-clean-HAB  
 nek tsi onktó:kenshe' tsi tethononniáhkwen  
 nek tsi wa'-wak-tokensh-e' tsi te-t-ho-nnoniahkw-en  
 but FACT-1sgP-find.out-PUNC that CIS-DUPL-MsgP-dance-STAT  
 'I did believe that he was cleaning, but I found out that he is dancing.' (WB, OLD ID: 4618)

#### 4 *-(h)kwe'* and *-hne'* behave differently under Punctual

One further observation:

- When under a Punctual verb of saying, there is a difference between the Former and Remote Past. Namely, the Former Past is **optional for the backshifted reading (10)** but the Remote Past is **obligatory (11)**.<sup>3</sup>

(10) **Context (backshifted reading):** *Katya didn't show up for a get-together last week. Willie told me yesterday why.*

- a. Willie wahèn:ron' tiahia'khera tsi náhe Katya Aquatic Centre kiontá:wenskwe'  
 Willie wa-ha-ihron-' tiahia'khera tsi náhe Katya Aquatic Centre t-ie-atawen-s-kwe'  
 Willie FACT-MSGA-say-PUNC last.week Katya CIS-FI.A-swim-HAB-FOR.PAST  
 'Willie said yesterday that Katya was swimming at the Aquatic Centre last week.'
- b. Willie wahèn:ron' tiahia'khera tsi náhe Katya Aquatic Centre kiontá:wens  
 Willie wa-ha-ihron-' tiahia'khera tsi náhe Katya Aquatic Centre t-ie-atawen-s  
 Willie FACT-MSGA-say-PUNC last.week Katya CIS-FI.A-swim-HAB  
 'Willie said yesterday that Katya was swimming at the Aquatic Centre last week.'

<sup>3</sup>But cf. the difference in with intentional verb *-ehtahkwe* 'believe' above – I don't know what drives this difference yet.

(11) **Context (backshifted reading):** *I come into the room and it's very smoky. No one is currently smoking, but John tells me why there's so much smoke in the air.*

- a. Shawátis wahèn:ron'                      Kó:r rotshokwèn:ne.  
Shawatis wa-ha-ihron-'                      Kor ro-atshokw-en-hne  
John      FACT-MSGA-say-PUNC Paul MSGP-smoke-STAT-REM.PAST  
'John said that Paul was smoking.'
- b. #Shawátis wahèn:ron'                      Kó:r rotshókwen.  
Shawatis wa-ha-ihron-'                      Kor ro-atshokw-en  
John      FACT-MSGA-say-PUNC Paul MSGP-smoke-STAT  
'John said that Paul was smoking.'

## References

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