THE USES AND FUNCTIONS OF *MEW* IN MAPUDUNGUN

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Augusta's *Gramática Araucana* (1903: 128) and Moesbach's *Idioma Mapuche* (1963: 170) both note the "vague" meaning of *mew* in Mapudungun. The wide range of semantic notions associated with *mew* creates difficulties in its analysis and also is a source of potential interference in the acquisition of Spanish by dominant Mapudungun speakers. In this study, examples of the diverse uses of *mew* establish its function as a post-position and demonstrate that the meaning of *mew* cannot be determined without context. 'Point of reference' is proposed as a definition for *mew*, being a shared component of meaning in the different uses of *mew*.

1. THE USES OF MEW

This study will describe the uses and functions of *mew*, one of the postpositions in Mapudungun[1], based on data obtained during field research in the Ninth Region of Chile. The specific objectives of this study are 1) to consider the uses of *mew*, giving numerous examples; and, 2) to analyze the essential function(s) of *mew*.

Augusta (1903: 128) and Moesbash (1963: 170) briefly deal with *mew* in their sections on prepositions[2]. Moesbach's treatment includes the following statement regarding *mew*:

> *Mew* "is the most frequently used preposition, but also the one with the vaguest meaning... Almost all the prepositions in Spanish... can be realized in Mapuche by *mew*."

(translation mine).

Moesbach's comment reflects the difficulty that exists in finding an equivalent for *mew*. Unlike most prepositions or postpositions with specific meanings, a wide range of meanings is associated with *mew* such as: in, at, to, from, toward, out of, with, by, etc. In the following sections, examples will be given of the ways in which *mew* is used. After the examples of these uses of *mew* have been given, discussion of the function(s) of *mew* follows in section 2.0.

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[1]Augusta (1903: 128) mentions other postpositions: *püle* 'hacia', 'en dirección de'; *kütu* 'desde', 'hasta'; *engu* and *engn* 'accompaniment'; and *ngeno* 'without'. The use of the postposition *püle* is similar to that of *mew* in location, but does not have the wide diversity of uses and/or meanings. Augusta (1903: 129) mentions that *kütu* is old and not in use at that time. No ocurrences of *kütu* have been found in the present research. *Engu, engn*, and *ngeno* are not considered to be postpositions in the same rights as *mew* and *püle*, and are not discussed here.

[2]Augusta, obviously writing at a time before postposition was an accepted term, comments that the few prepositions that exist in Mapudungun should, in fact, be called "postpositionals". Both authors, however, continue to use the term pre-position in spite of their awareness of its position.

1.1 Mew used in locative phrases

If a main function of *mew* were to be identified, it would most likely be that of location. The use of *mew* in location is very similar to the use of prepositions in English or Spanish. Consider the following examples:

1. Amutuan ruka *mew*.   I'm going back to the house.
2. Tripayan ruka *mew*.   I'm going out of the house.
3. Mesa *mew* müley.   It's on the table.
4. Küpay Santiaw *mew*.   He came from Santiago.
5. Fülkülen waria *mew*.   I live close to town.

The meaning of *mew* in each of the above examples is clear because a context is established by the verb, but without this context the exact position or locative relationship indicated by *mew* would be indeterminable. In the following three phrases, however, an exact positional relationship is not expressed by *mew*; rather the meaning of *mew* would be determined by the context in which the phrases are used. For example, *wingkul mew* can encompass 'on the hill', 'on top of the hill', 'on the side of the hill', 'from the hill', 'beside the hill', etc.

6. wingkul *mew*.   location relative to hill
7. ruka *mew*.   location relative to house
8. mesa *mew*.   location relative to table

Mew stands in constrast to other location prepositions such as *nag* 'below', *wekun* 'outside', *ponwi* 'in', 'inside', *furi* 'behind', *wenu* 'on top of', *miñche* 'below' or 'beneath'[3]. These locationals indicate a specific location of one object relative to another without depending on context to define their meaning. Note the following examples:

9. wenu wingkul   on top of the hill
10. furi ruka   behind the house
11. miñche mesa   under the table

It must be considered that *wingkul mew* can refer to the location 'on top of the hill', depending on the established context, but the specific location of the top (of the hill) is not inherently a part of the meaning of *mew*. This is also seen in the fact that *mew*, depending on the context, may have opposite meanings such as 'into' and 'out of' as seen in examples 1 and 2 above. Any meaning beyond "locational" is context-sensitive and not from *mew* itself, whereas other locationals are more like English and Spanish prepositions in that they have context-free meaning.

1.2 Mew used in temporal clauses

The following examples will now show *mew* in temporal clauses. The use of locationals in spatial relations as well as temporal relations is a common phenomenon in many languages. Rather than location on a physical plane, in temporal clauses *mew* is used to indicate relative position within time. *Mew* can be used with reference to past as well as future.

12. Feymew may *füta kuyfi mew* mülekerkey kiñe füta tripakon.
    A long time ago (in the distant past) they say there was a great flood.

[3]This listing of locationals is not intended to be exhaustive.

13. Feymew *fantepu mew* mületuy che fill mapu.
    Since then (In the time since then) there have been people everywhere again.
14. Petu feypilay *tunten mew* tañi llituael.
    He still hasn't said *when (in how much time from now)* he will start.
15. Fey *küla antü mew* müten akuy tañi wenüy Pawlino.
    So only *three days after* that, my friend Paul arrived.
16. Federico kom adentuy chem küdaw ñi nieken *tripantu mew.*
    Federico recalled all the work he has to do *during the year.*
17. Ka *kiñeke mew* kellukeenew tañi pu wenüy, femngechi doy amukey tañi küdaw.
    And *sometimes* my friends help me so my work goes faster.

Often, in a temporal clause, the verb is in a non-finite form of either a participle or infinitive as seen in the following two examples, the first of which shows *mew* together with a participle: *elkülelu*; and the second example shows *mew* with two infinitives: *in* and *nütramkan.*

18. *Dew kom küme elkülelu mew,* fey wüla ka kellu katrükünuenew mamüll.
    Once all was well prepared, then he also helped me cut the wood.
19. Fey dew kom afchi *in mew* ka *nütramkan mew,* fey amutuaiñ piyey engün.
    So when they had finished *eating* and *telling stories,* they said they were going home.

1.3 Mew used in expressions of quantity

Mew can also be used in expressions of quantity, marking the amount used in the sale or purchase of an item as in the following examples:

20. *¿Tunten mew* ngillafimi?
    For how much did you by it?
21. Ngillafiñ *epu warangka mew.*
    I bought it *for two thousand.*

1.4 Mew used in comparative constructions

Mew is also used in comparative constructions and always marks the standard of comparison. In the following examples, *doy* 'more' is the comparative adverb marking the item that is being compared with the standard, marked with *mew.*

22. Feyngey tañi *doy yafüngen   kakelu kura mew.*

        comparison   standard
        ....
        more hard   than other rocks
    It's definitely harder than other rocks.
23. Tüfa *doy kümey   kangelu kachilla mew.*

        comparison   standard
        ....
        more good   than other wheat
    This (wheat) is better than the other wheat.

1.5 The use of mew to indicate instrument

In addition to the uses mentioned above, *mew* is also used to mark the instrument or means used to complete an action or to indicate cause, as seen in the following examples:

24. Katrüngekey kachilla *uchuna mew.*
    The wheat is cut *by sickle.*
25. Fey ñi *wünen kure mew* epu fotüm niekefuy piam, *kangelu epu domo mew* nielafuy piam kiñe yall rume.
    By his first wife he had two sons, and *by his other two wives* he didn't have any children at all.
26. Tüfeychi wünenke longko *pewma mew* elukerkefeyew addungu ta Ngünechen.
    God communicated with the first caciques *through dreams.*

No further categories of uses of *mew* have been detected in the current research. At this point we move to a discussion of the basic function(s) of *mew.*

2. THE FUNCTIONS OF MEW

The preceding examples show *mew* in a wide variety of uses. It is important, however, to evaluate whether it is possible to establish some kind of common denominator of these uses.

The function of *mew* is equivalent to that of a preposition in English or Spanish. The main difference, however, is a semantic one. The actual meaning of *mew*, especially in location, is context sensitive. Consider, for example, that the following phrase *ko mew* can have the following meanings depending on the context.

27. *ko mew.*
    in the water   with water
    out of the water   by water
    because of the water   for the water

One evidence of the fact that *mew* in itself does not have one exact equivalent in Spanish or English is that a sentence like: *Küchangekey ko mew* could mean either 'It is always washed in water' or 'with water'. Also *Tranfemi fotra mew* can mean either 'He suddenly fell into the mud' or 'fell because of the mud'.

Without some greater context in which the specific relative position of two items is made clear by some other locational reference, it is not possible to know which of these possible meanings to assign to *ko mew*; by itself it is ambiguous. The analysis proposed here for *mew*, is that *mew* itself does not have one specific locational meaning, but rather indicates that a locational or spatial relationship exists.

The verbs of motion often provide this kind of determining context. Examples 1 and 2 above (section 1.1) clearly show this. *Mew* indicates the existence of a spatial relationship, but the English or Spanish prepositional equivalent of *mew* is determined on the basis of the meaning of the verb of motion. With *amun* 'to go', the possible meanings of *mew* are 'to' or 'toward'; with *tripan* 'to leave', the meanings are 'out of' or 'from'.

'Point of reference' is proposed as a "definition" for *mew*. One of the main motiva-

tions for this definition of *mew* is that its range of meaning is much greater than any one preposition in English or Spanish. Consider the following points:

In spatial relations, *mew* establishes the point of reference or location with respect to which the action takes place.

In the temporal uses of *mew*, the time frame with respect to which an action has been realized or will be realized is marked with *mew*.

In expressions of quantity, point of reference also accounts for the use of *mew*. The examples given above (20 and 21) without *mew* no longer refer to the quantity used to purchase but rather have the following meanings without the reference to instrument:

28. ¿Tunten ngillaymi?
    How many did you buy?
29. Ngillan epu warangka.
    I bought two thousand.

Also, in comparative constructions, *mew* marks the standard against which the comparison is made, functioning again as point of reference.

Point of reference is perhaps the least appropriate for the use of *mew* to mark instrument or means. Seeing the other ways in which *mew* is used, however, make it easier to see a possible connection.

In summary, then, the function of *mew* is that of indicating that a prepositional relationship exists between the lexical item preceding *mew* and the predication of the main clause. *Mew* encompasses the meaning of many different locational prepositions in English or Spanish; the reading to be assigned to *mew* in any given case is determined from the established context. The other uses of *mew* in time, quantity, instrument, and comparison are extensions of the locative nature of *mew* in which the lexical items marked with *mew* are points of reference.

3. Interference in Acquisition of Spanish as a Second Language

The examination of the uses and functions of *mew* brings to light the potential for interference in the dominant Mapudungun speaker's learning of Spanish prepositions since many relational notions, encoded by separate lexical items in Spanish, are expressed through *mew* in Mapudungun. Consider the following examples[4]:

Mapudungun: Feymew ti wentru kisu miyawkerkefuy *ñi kulliñ mew*.
Spanish: Entonces el hombre andaba solo *en sus animales*.
English: So, the man was alone *in* his animals.

The Spanish preposition 'en', used in the translation of the example above, should be 'con' (with).

Mapudungun: Iñche kimlafun tami amupen *iñche mew*.
Spanish: Yo no sabía que había ido *en mi casa*.
English: I didn't know that you had gone *in* my house.

[4]Mapudungun examples and Spanish translations are taken from texts in Mapudungun and translated by the authors.

In this example, 'en mi casa' has been used as the equivalent of *iñche mew* when 'a mi casa' is the correct preposition for this case.

In both of these examples, 'en' was chosen as the appropriate Spanish preposition, reflecting an apparent transfer of the patterning of *mew* to 'en'. Further research in this area would be needed, however, to confirm this hypothesis.

CONCLUSION

The kind of difficulty faced in the analysis of *mew* is not so much a result of the complexity of *mew* itself, but rather a problem of finding the way to adequately define an entity for which terminology does not exist. 'Point of reference' is an attempt to consolidate the uses of *mew* under one term — perhaps at the risk of obscuring each individual usage. What is clear, however, after consideration of innumerable examples of *mew* is that it seems possible to establish a common denominator. Rather than say that there are different *mews* with separate functions, the attempt here is to establish that the different functions all derive from one *mew*.

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