



Phasal Polarity in Suma

Raymond Boyd, LLACAN-CNRS

The asymmetry of the ALREADY/NO LONGER pair with respect to STILL/NOT YET is discussed. The polysemy of terms used for ALREADY, which varies widely with the individual language, is remarked, and the example of Suma (a northern Gbaya language of the CAR) is adduced. In this language, the particle covering the ALREADY sense for which NO LONGER is proposed as polar opposite has the primary senses of 'past no longer relevant to the present' (in French, the *révolu*) and the classic completive sense 'firmly intended, about to occur' as when, for example, the verb 'go' in the completive form is used to mean '(x) has decided to go, is about to leave'. The NO LONGER sense is obtained by use of the particle 'again' in a negative utterance.

STILL/NOT YET is expressed by a verb meaning 'remain' and its negation used for provisional situations and contrasting with a verb 'sit; be in a final state' remindful to some extent of Spanish *estar* vs. *ser*. The very broad semantic range of this verb is presented in detail, one of its striking features being the possibility to express both a lasting state and the nearly enantiosemic 'as soon as, immediately thereafter'. A sequence of senses giving rise to this situation is described.