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# Dialectology, typology, diachrony, and contact linguistics: A multi-layered perspective in Purepecha

## Abstract

The aim of this paper is to explore the relations between four domains dealing with linguistic variation: dialectology, typology, diachrony, and contact linguistics. I will contribute to dialectal research that includes syntactic questions by exploring the typological and geographical variations in the position of the indefinite article in the noun phrase in Purepecha. I show that a syntactic focus in dialectal research reveals the dynamic of Purepecha, displaying diachronic change and synchronic variation and revealing social and historical particularities. This dialectal perspective is dynamic and multi-dimensional, with a multi-layered organization.

Keywords: Dialectology, typology, diachrony, contact linguistics, Purepecha, indefinite article

## 1. Introduction

This paper explores the relations between four domains dealing with linguistic variation: dialectology, typology, diachrony, and contact linguistics. Combining the four domains is relatively new, but combining two out of the four is not a new idea. Diachronic studies have always played an important role in typology. In the late 1960s, Greenberg promoted the concept of *diachronic typology*, which was described in detail by Croft (1990). Recently, diachrony and contact linguistics have been treated as

complementary approaches to understanding linguistic change, such as contact-induced grammaticalization change by Heine and Kuteva (2005) and multifactorial causes of linguistic change by Chamoreau and Goury (2012) and Chamoreau and L glise (2012). In these books, three domains – diachrony, contact linguistics, and typology – are combined. Moreover, in recent years syntactic studies have been characterized by a growing interest in dialectal variations, and dialectal research has incorporated syntactic questions in addition to the more traditional phonological, lexical, and morphological topics (Kortmann 2004, Nevelainen *et al.* 2006). Approaching the concept of variation from these perspectives leads to new insight into what syntactic variation within a language can reveal, both about new syntactic types (not revealed by cross-linguistic studies) and specific language distribution (not revealed by phonological and lexical dialectal studies). Another important point is that the integration of syntactic parameters into dialectal research requires rethinking methods of obtaining data. The data collection procedure needs to combine spontaneous speech, narratives, conversations, and some specific morphosyntactic questionnaires designed to cover relevant areas.

In this paper, I contribute to dialectal research that includes syntactic questions about typological and geographical variations in the position of the indefinite article in the noun phrase. On the typological level, I show the diversity of the position of the indefinite article in a noun phrase within a language, something that is not a frequent occurrence (Heine 1997: 68). On the dialectological level, I demonstrate that these variations exhibit a different geographical distribution from that which other linguists have claimed (Friedrich 1971, 1975, Ch vez 2004). Moreover, a syntactic focus in dialectal research reveals the dynamic of Purepecha, showing diachronic changes and synchronic variations and pointing to social and historical particularities. In consequence, this dialectal perspective is not static but dynamic and multi-layered, demonstrating three levels of organization.

The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 introduces some important properties of Purepecha; section 3 gives essential information about previous studies of the dialectology of Purepecha and my proposal; section 4 describes the variations of position of the indefinite article in a noun phrase; section 5 shows the geographical

distribution of these variations. The discussion in section 6 assigns the inclusion of syntactic questions in dialectal research a dynamic organization, highlighting a multi-layered perspective.

## 2. Some properties of Purepecha

### 2.1. The language and its speakers

Purepecha (formerly known as Tarascan) is classified as a language isolate spoken in the state of Michoacan in the central western part of Mexico, with approximately 110,000 speakers, 10% of them monolingual (Chamoreau 2009a). Spanish is the language of prestige, linked to education, a better standard of living, oral and written media, religion, administration, commerce, and work. In 2003, Purepecha (like the other indigenous languages spoken in Mexico) acquired the status of a national language.

Purepecha presents a geographical continuum of speakers, and the different ways of speaking Purepecha are inter-intelligible to varying degrees. Purepecha is traditionally spoken in Michoacan in a territory of 3500km<sup>2</sup>. The area includes 80 villages divided into 21 municipalities (Census of INEGI 2005; see map 2), and is generally divided into four geographic regions (see map 1<sup>1</sup>):

- (i) In the northeast, the region of Zacapu is a small area with 5.2% of the speakers. Only in two villages, Zipiajo and Azajo, does the language have a high degree of vitality (more than 97% of Purepecha speakers); in the other communities Purepecha is not the everyday conversation language and is not transmitted to the youngest inhabitants.
- (ii) In the east, the region of Lake Patzcuaro is the most accessible one, with most exposure to economic and tourist development. It is home to 17.8% of

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<sup>1</sup> In map 2, all the villages appear, whereas in map 1 only the villages where I am working are indicated.

the speakers. In this region, the language is losing ground, except in two islands, Yunuen and Tecuen, and in some villages to the north of the lake, such as Santa Fe de la Laguna, Chupícuaro, and San Andrés Tziróndaro. Tecuen and Santa Fe de la Laguna exhibit great vitality and are made up of more than 94% Purepecha speakers; the people – even the youth – speak Purepecha in everyday conversation. The other four villages contain more than 57% Purepecha speakers.

- (iii) In the northwest, the valley of the eleven villages has 14.7% of the speakers. All the villages are along a road and are very close to one another; it is possible to go from one village to another simply by crossing the street. Each village preserves its identity, but as a consequence of their proximity they share some feasts and some traditional and economic activities. In these villages, Purepecha has a high degree of vitality; they contain more than 94% Purepecha speakers (except in Chilchota).
- (iv) The most important and central region, the Sierra, represents 62.3% of the speakers. The preservation and transmission of the language is still intense in this region. The region is extensive and sub-regions can be distinguished, for example the villages in the southeast (Comachuen, Arantepacua, Turicuaro, Quinceo), in the center, the villages whose begins with San (San Isidro, San Benito, San Marcos, etc.). Each sub-region has its own internal organization and some links with villages throughout the region. In some geographically isolated villages, Purepecha has a high degree of vitality: Ocumicho (in the north, 85% Purepecha speakers), Tarecuato (in the west, 77%), Cocucho (in the center, 87%), and Angahuan (in the south, 96%).

## 2.2. Basic typological properties

Purepecha is an agglutinative and synthetic language, and is almost exclusively suffixing. It has an elaborate derivational verbal system. Although bare stems exist, there is a very productive derivational system in which a basic stem can take voice,

causative, locative, positional, directional, and adverbial derivative suffixes. Inflectional suffixes follow the stem to mark aspect, tense, mood, and person (Chamoreau 2009a).

Purepecha has nominative-accusative alignment, and is a case-marking language in which the nominal subject has no overt marker. The object is generally marked by the objective case marker *-ni*. This morpheme encodes the object of a transitive verb, such as *misitu-ni* ‘the cat,’ in (1), and both objects of a ditransitive verb, such as *inte-ni wantantskwa-ni* and *Puki-ni*, in (2). The presence or absence of the object case marker depends on semantic hierarchy (animacy), grammatical features (definiteness, etc.), and pragmatic strategies (topic, focus).

- (1) *xo Selia ata-x-ti imeri misitu-ni*  
yes Celia beat-AOR-ASS3 POS3 cat-OBJ  
‘Yes, Celia beat her cat.’ (JR-A25: 94)<sup>2</sup>

- (2) *Selia arhi-x-ti inte-ni wantantskwa-ni Puki-ni*  
Celia tell-AOR-ASS3 DEM-OBJ story-OBJ Puki-OBJ  
‘Celia told Puki a story.’ (JR-A25: 36)

Subject and object pronouns are expressed by second-position enclitics. Purepecha displays predominance of dependent-marking (for example, the pronominal enclitic and genitive case). Purepecha is basically a SV and SVO constituent order language, as illustrated by examples (1) and (2). This order, that is, the one that is pragmatically unmarked, is the basic order in the region of Lake Patzcuaro (Capistrán 2002, Chamoreau 2009a: 55-58). Other orders indicate specific pragmatic properties. Studies of constituent order in the other regions do not as yet exist (Chamoreau 2009b). However, Purepecha exhibits some traits of a SOV language: (i) tense, aspect, and

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<sup>2</sup> The examples of Purepecha come from my own fieldwork data. The first letter corresponds to the pueblo, here JR; then appears the file identifier, here A25, and finally the reference of the recording, here 94.

modal markers following the verb; (ii) postpositions; (iii) the almost exclusive use of suffixes; (iv) enclitics; (v) case markers; (vi) main verbs preceding inflected auxiliaries. SVO and SOV constituent orders are attested in the sixteenth century, and the former has progressively increased since then. The change is probably due to areal contact. Spanish has been the principal contact language for many centuries; however, prior to the Conquest there were speakers of other languages in this territory, mostly from Nahuatl (Uto-Aztecan family) and Otomi (Otopamean family), two languages with verb-initial structure. The change probably began under the influence of these languages; Spanish, a SVO language, continued the process, for example by introducing prepositions (Chamoreau 2007).

In Purepecha as in other languages, simple noun phrases generally only contain pronouns or nouns plus simple modifiers (Dryer 2007b: 151), such as articles as illustrated in example (3), adjectives as in (3), numerals as in (4) and (5), and demonstratives as in (6) (for a more complete presentation, see Chamoreau 2009a: 56-91). The numerals may be used as noun modifiers as in (4). A numeral classifier may be used as in (5). Purepecha has three classifiers: *erhakwa*, *ichakwa*, and *ichukwa*. They are used with nouns referring to round, long, and flat objects, respectively. This use is attested since the sixteenth century, when Gilberti (1987 [1558]: 275) counted eighteen elements. In many villages, the classifiers exhibit fluctuation in their use: in (4) a classifier is not used with the noun *musiki*, whereas in (5) a classifier occurs.

- (3) *tsitsiki arhi-xa-ti ma xipati sapichu ama-mpa-ni*  
 Tsitsiki say-PROG-ASS3 ART.INDEF secret small mother-KPOS3-OBJ  
 ‘Tsitsiki is telling a little secret to her mother.’ (CO1: 26)

- (4) *tsimani musiki-cha=xĩ ja-a-ti*  
 two band-PL=FOC be.there-FUT-ASS3  
 ‘There are two bands that will be there.’ (PT16: 29)

- (5) *jimpo=xĩ*      ***ma-echakwa***      *musiki* *ni-a-ti*      *ma*  
INST=FOC      one-CLASS.LONG      band    go-FUT-ASS3    one  
*xurhiatikwa*      *toru-cha-ni*      *jinkoni*  
day                  bull-PL-OBJ      COM  
‘This is the reason why one band will go during one day with the bulls.’  
(PT16: 30)

- (6) ***inte***    *acha*    *mas*    *k’éri-e-s-ti*                  *ke*    *de*    *xo*  
DEM    man    more    old-PRED-AOR-ASS3    than    of    here  
*anapu yamintu*  
origin all  
‘This man is older than anyone else here.’      (TM1: 301)

Purepecha has no grammatical gender (Chamoreau 2009a: 57-60). Nouns may be marked by the plural marker *-cha* (or *icha*, *echa*). Plural marking depends on two hierarchies: firstly the inherent semantic properties of the referent (human, animate), and secondly properties related to grammatical features (definite, count noun vs. mass noun, generic vs. specific, etc.). Animacy is generally the predominant factor: a noun with animate reference is marked by the plural marker. Two contexts in which definiteness prevails upon animacy are particularly relevant for our topic (Chamoreau 2009a: 82-91):

- a. In a noun phrase with an animate noun marked by a numeral greater than one, the presence of the plural marker indicates a definite reference as in (7a), while the absence of the plural marker indicates an indefinite reference as in (7b).
- b. In a noun phrase with an inanimate noun with plural reference, generally no plural marker appears, as in (8a), but if the inanimate noun is marked by a demonstrative modifier, the plural marker is generally



attested, as in (8b), because the demonstrative reference allows the individuation and identifiability of the entity.

- (7)a. *witsintikwa=kxi tsimani kurhudene-cha wé-ra-x-ti tarheta*  
 yesterday=3PL two quail-PL go out-FT-AOR-ASS3 field  
 ‘Yesterday, the two quails went out to the field.’ (PM43: 23)
- b. *yóntki=kxi tanimu axuni ni-ra-x-ti jwata-rhu*  
 long time ago=3PL three deer go-FT-AOR-ASS3 hill-LOC  
 ‘A long time ago, three deer went to the hill.’ (CN: 37)
- (8)a. *ima jwata no=teru ja-ra-x-ti anatapu*  
 DEM hill NEG=more be.there-FT-AOR-ASS3 tree  
 ‘On this hill, there are no more trees.’ (CN: 107)
- b. *witsintikwa=kxi iwiri-echa p’iku-x-ti tsima-ni anatapu-echa-ni*  
 yesterday=3PL woodcutter-PL cut-AOR-ASS3 DEM-OBJ tree-PL-OBJ  
 ‘Yesterday, the woodcutters cut these trees.’ (CN8: 81)

### 3. Dialectology of Purepecha

#### 3.1. Previous studies

Paul Friedrich (1971, 1975) and David Chávez (2004) have sketched tendencies establishing some correlations between the linguistic data and geographic distribution. However, the overall results have pointed to a process of breakdown in which the isoglosses cross each other and fail to define dialectal areas.

In his study, Friedrich (1971: 169) concludes that “the pervasive and distinctive features of Tarascan dialectology are (1) the implicit equality of village dialects, (2) the

mutual distinctiveness of village dialects, (3) differential exposure, mainly after the age of five, to the Spanish of the dominant Mestizo world, and (4) near lack of covariation between linguistic and gross geographical marginality. Similar combinations obtain elsewhere in the world, but are so characteristic of Indian Mexico, including Mayan Chiapas, that I have coined the term ‘pueblo dialectology.’” In other words, every village has its own way of speaking Purepecha; the language is one of the identity features used to display and assert that someone belongs to a particular village. Suárez (1983: 19-20) indicates that this situation reflects the linguistic fragmentation in Mesoamerica. He claims that “Pueblo dialectology” is also described in Tzeltal, Tsotsil, and Quichean languages.

Chávez (2004: 112) even claims that there are no features specific to each village, but perhaps only speaker-specific features. He concludes by questioning the relevance of the study of dialectology for this language (for a detailed analysis of these two studies, see Chamoreau 2005). Given the lack of clear geographical distribution for the linguistic data, Chávez’s question is relevant. The situation he describes does not make it possible to define linguistic areas. Some of the methodological choices adopted by Friedrich and Chávez may explain their results. Three facts are relevant. Firstly, they worked in only a few villages – Friedrich in 26 (32.5% of the villages) and Chávez in 10 (12.5% of the villages). Secondly, they only used questionnaires translated from Spanish, and thirdly, they worked essentially on the phonetic and lexical levels (with some morphological data).

### 3.2. Proposal

In recent years, theoretical discussion around syntactic issues has been characterized by a growing interest in variation, both dialectal and cross-linguistic. Typological considerations have proven to be essential even for research on individual languages. On the other hand, detailed studies of dialectal variation within languages and variation across closely related languages have attracted more interest among typologists. One

consequence of this has been that dialect research has integrated syntactic questions (Chamoreau 2009b, Kortmann 2004, Nevalainen *et al.* 2006).

This study is elaborated in the spirit of the "micro-typology" approach, that is, one in which a systematic and detailed comparison of very closely related speech varieties to extract fine differences leads to a fine-grained typology. I propose that by exploring the typological variety of syntactic constructions in Purepecha, it will be possible to define dialectal areas. Furthermore, the study brings in linguistic changes and contact linguistics in order to highlight dynamic aspects of language (Croft 1995: 20); in Bisang's words (2004: 11), "The integration of typology, dialectology and contact linguistics may open new perspectives for research dealing with linguistic variation." For this reason the four domains – dialectology, typology, diachrony, and contact linguistics – are combined to their mutual advantage and in order to give a more detailed and rich analysis in this specific case study.

In this paper I explore a specific construction, that is, the variation of positions of the indefinite article in the noun phrase, but in the course of the investigation<sup>3</sup> other syntactic constructions are analyzed as well as phonological and morphological features (Chamoreau 2009b, Chamoreau in press).

This investigation is part of a project that aims to document the different ways of speaking Purepecha. So far, I have studied 60 villages located in 21 municipalities, accounting for 70% of the villages in which the language is spoken. In each village, I recorded three men and three women, belonging to three age groups (15-29, 30-49, 50 and older). The method I adopted was to record five types of data (during approximately 15 hours in each village):

- (i) Traditional narratives, descriptions of specific situations, spontaneous speech

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<sup>3</sup> This research was made possible through financial support from the French and Mexican institutions CELIA, SEDYL, CEMCA, and INALI. Aid from these institutions is greatly appreciated. This research would not have been possible without the support of Teresa Ascencio Domínguez, Puki Lucas Hernández, Celia Tapia, and all our Purepecha hosts.

- (ii) Conversations between two or three people from the same village or from different villages
  - (iii) 200 sentences (translated from Spanish), designed to cover all relevant areas of morphosyntax
  - (iv) Sociolinguistic questionnaires (about each village and each speaker) asked in Purepecha
  - (v) Attitude questionnaires (perceptual dialectology) also asked in Purepecha.
- The data collected by the team who took part in the project was compiled, translated, and classified in a large database.

## 4. Noun phrase with an indefinite article in Purepecha

### 4.1. Noun phrases with articles: typological and diachronic perspectives

Lengua de Michoacan<sup>4</sup> appears not to have had articles, either for noun phrases with definite reference (9a) or for noun phrases with indefinite reference (9b):

(9)a. *Ca cuiripu eweri cuiripeta varihaqui niramapa quamendo?*

*ka      kwiripu eweri      cuiripeta      wari-xa-ki*  
and    man    GEN    body                    die-PRES-INT

*niramapakwa=mendo*

eternity=really

‘And the body of the man really dies for eternity?’ (Lagunas 1574: 109)

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<sup>4</sup> In order to distinguish the pre-contact replica language from the contact replica language, I adopt the traditional name, Lengua de Michoacan, for the former (spoken in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries), and the current name, Purepecha, for the latter.

- b. *Menchhca ambehcoesqui huuata yamendo paraquahpen hymbo*  
*meni=ɬfk'a      ampe=k'o      e-s-ki      **jwata**      yamento*  
 other.way=then    what=exactly    be-AOR-INT    hill    all  
*parakwap'eni      jimpo*  
 world                  INST  
 'But what exactly is a hill in the whole world?' (Medina Plaza 1575: 36)

Today, two articles are found in Purepecha: in (10a) the definite *ima* and in (10b) the indefinite *ma*:

- (10)a. *jempoka                  **ima**                  tata      kura      san juan      anapu*  
 because                  ART.DEF                  man    priest    San Juan      origin  
*no      wé-ka-k'a      para      jimani      ú-nt'a-ni*  
 NEG    want-FT-SUBJ    for      then    do-IT-INF  
 'because the priest from San Juan does not want to organize realize (a feast)'  
 (NR15: 10)

- b. *pée-ra-sin-ti=ksi                  **ma**                  **kumanchikwa-rhu***  
 carry-CAUS-HAB-ASS3=3PL      ART.INDEF      house-LOC  
 'They carry it into a house, the one who wants to carry it.' (TD1: 4)

The rise of these articles followed two historically well-known and independent processes: the endophoric demonstrative pronoun *ima* was recruited for the definite article and the numeral *ma* 'one' for the indefinite article (Givón 1981, Heine 1997, Dryer 2005a, 2005b, Himmelmann 2001, Heine and Kuteva 2006).

The majority of the world's languages do not have definite and/or indefinite articles (Dryer 2005a and 2005b). Dryer (2007: 95-96) notes that "articles appear to be somewhat more common in VO languages than they are in OV languages." Purepecha seems to have been an OV language, so the absence of articles is not surprising (see above, section 2.2.). In Purepecha, articles are only one of the means to encode

definiteness and indefiniteness, plural markers and the objective case are other means (see above, section 2.2., examples 7 and 8, and Chamoreau 2009a: 146-157).

Cross-linguistically, it appears that in general definite articles tend to develop earlier than indefinite ones. In Heine's words (1997: 69): "If a language has a grammaticalized indefinite article, it is likely to also have a definite article, while the reverse does not necessarily hold true. Thus, the presence of an indefinite article is likely to be accompanied by that of a definite article, but not vice versa." In Purepecha, the reverse process is observed: all noun phrases with an indefinite reference appear with the article *ma* (or other indefinite markers), whereas noun phrases with nouns with a definite reference generally lack an overt marker, as in (11):

- (11) *achati púro pensari-xìn-ti para ánci-kurhi-ni*  
man only think-HAB-ASS3 for work-MID-INF  
'The man only thinks of working.' (JR2: 6)

Moreover, the indefinite article is "fully grammaticalized" (see below, section 4.2.) whereas the definite article, as in (12), has not gone beyond the context-definite stage three of the six possible stages attested in Heine and Kuteva's (2006) grammaticalization scale:

- Stage 1: *spatial-deictic and anaphoric reference (demonstrative)*
- Stage 2: *definite anaphoric marker*
- Stage 3: *context-definite marker*
- Stage 4: *marker of "semantically definite"*
- Stage 5: *indefinite-specific marker*
- Stage 6: *article loss*

- (12) *jucha isì=sì*                      *mi-te-s-p-ka*                      ***ima***  
 ' 1PL.IND thus=FOC                      know-face-AOR-PAST-ASS1/2                      ART.DEF  
*tshirakwa*                      *jimpo*  
 cold                      INST  
 'We thus knew it for the cold.' (TM9: 10-14)

#### 4.2. Indefinite articles in Purepecha

The grammaticalization of the indefinite article from the numeral *ma* 'one' has a complex evolution: the two forms can be distinguished by their position in different varieties of Purepecha. In the sixteenth century, *ma* was essentially used for the numeral 'one.' Nevertheless, some occurrences of indefinite *ma* exist. Nowadays, Purepecha has "fully grammaticalized" the indefinite article from a numeral. It has a generalized indefinite article that can even be used in contexts involving plural nouns. Purepecha exhibits the five stages attested in Heine (1997) grammaticalization scale:

- Stage 1:     *numerical value of 'one'*
- Stage 2:     *presentative marker*
- Stage 3:     *specific-indefinite marker*
- Stage 4:     *non-specific indefinite marker*
- Stage 5:     *generalized indefinite article*

Since the sixteenth century *ma* has functioned as the numeral 'one' and as presentative.

*Stage 1. Numeral 'one.'* The original and initial function of *ma* is the cardinal numeral 'one' as illustrated in (13) in Lengua de Michoacan, or in (14) in Purepecha spoken in the eighteenth century.

- (13) *ca yquirengua ma naranja exesirahaca*  
*ka iki=re=nkwa ma naranja exe-sira-xa-ka*  
 and SUB=2=order one orange see-HAB-PRES-SUBJ  
 ‘And if you see one orange ...’ (Medina Plaza 1998 [1575]: 36)

- (14) *ati ma curunegua piguati Maria antonia*  
*ja-ti ma kurunkwekwa pi-a-ti Maria Antonia*  
 be.there-ASS3 one tunic take-FUT-ASS3 Maria Antonia  
 ‘there is one tunic, Maria Antonia will take it.’ (Monzón 2002 [1750]: 5)

In Purepecha, numerals may be used with numeral classifiers, as illustrated in (15).

- (15) *i warhiti pya-x-ti ma-ichakwa tsikata-ni*  
 DEM woman sell-AOR-ASS3 one-CLASS.LONG chicken-OBJ  
 ‘This woman has sold one chicken.’ (JR-CL7: 56)

*Stage 2. Presentative marker. Ma* introduces a new participant unknown to the hearer, as in (16) for Purepecha of the nineteenth century, and (17) for the present day.

- (16) *Jalrasti ma rrancho ca ímani rranchon jimbó japinagati Ninio sapicho*  
*ja-rha-s-ti ma rancho ka ima-ni*  
 be.there-FT-AOR-ASS3 ART.INDEF ranch and DEM-OBJ  
*rancho-ni jimpo xapi-nha-ti niño sapitfo*  
 ranch-OBJ INST conceive-PASSIV-ASS3 boy small  
 ‘There is a ranch, and in that ranch the baby was born.’  
 (Barlow 1948 [1848]: 332)



- (17) *ja-rha-x-p-ti=na*                      *ma*                      *achati*                      *ima-nki*  
 be.there-FT-AOR-PAST-ASS3=EV    ART.INDEF                      man                      DEM-SUB  
*no*      *xaka-k'u-ka*      *éxki*      *ánima-icha*      *xo-nkwa-xin-ka=kxi*  
 NEG      believe-FT-SUBJ SUB      soul-PL                      come-CENTRIP-HAB-SUBJ=3PL  
 ‘They said that once there was a man who did not believe that the souls  
 returned.’ (JR2: 1-3)

For Lengua de Michoacán and for eighteenth-century Purepecha, *ma* used as an indefinite presentative article is still ambiguous with respect to whether it should be interpreted as a numeral or as a presentative article. Among the prerequisites for ‘one’ to grammaticalize is the use of the numeral in contexts where the exact quantification of the referent of the noun is irrelevant, as illustrated in (18).

- (18) *curahcha herache: ys arasirahati ma micuriri*  
*kura-ch'a-ø*      *jerache isi*      *ara-sira-ja-ti*                      *ma*                      *mikuriri*  
 listen-ear-IMP2    brother thus      say-HAB-PRES-ASS3 ART.INDEF                      savant  
 ‘Listen, brother, thus says a savant: ....’ (Medina Plaza 1998 [1575]: 39)

The nineteenth century saw the development of an indefinite article.

*Stage 3. Specific-indefinite marker.* *Ma* refers to any discourse participant known to the speaker but presumed to be unknown to the hearer. Certain uses are difficult to distinguish from the purely presentative stage two. The main difference between stage two and stage three is that the latter may refer to a participant who is not expected to come up as a major discourse participant. This is the case in (19), where *ma atfati* ‘a man’ is introduced at the end of the story who is not relevant for the development of the story.

- (19) *terunskwa=ksï ja-rha-s-ti ka ma ahati*  
 night=3PL be.there-FT-AOR-ASS3 and ART.INDEF man  
*charro arhi-kata*  
 cow-boy say-PART.PP  
 ‘They were there during the night and a man called the cowboy ...’  
 (PC45: 22-23)

*Stage 4. Non-specific indefinite marker.* The indefinite article may also refer to a participant whose referential identity is unknown to both the hearer and the speaker, as in (20), *ma tsitsiki* ‘a flower’:

- (20) *comesqui aguanda piraca guinirin tsipecualretechan comesqui ma tsitsiqui*  
*komoeski awanta pira-ka wini-rini*  
 as sky take-SUBJ fill-PART.PA  
*tsipekwarheta-cha-ni komoeski ma tsitsiki*  
 pleasure-PL-OBJ as ART.INDEF flower  
 ‘... as in the sky, it is filled with pleasures such as a flower.’  
 (Barlow 1948 [1848]: 334)

*Stage 5. Generalized indefinite article.* The article can be expected to occur with all types of nouns. In (21) the article is used in adpositional temporal phrases that express a limit. This context is relevant in Purepecha, and is skipped over in Heine’s scale. In this context *ma* is always located before the noun.

- (21) *ma=tiru mó-tsi-ni ma=tiru kumanchikwa*  
 one=more change-TRANSLOC-INF one=more house  
*nyá-ra-ni ka ísï xama-ni=ksï ma erantskukwa*  
 arrive-FT-INF and thus walk-INF=3PL ART.INDEF daybreak  
 ‘They move from one house to another, they arrive at another house and they walk thus until daybreak.’ (TD1 : 25)

The use of the indefinite article *ma* is generalized to the extent that it can even be used in contexts involving plural nouns, as illustrated in (22). This context of use generally refers to groups of entities.

- (22) *ka witsintikwa=kxi ma axuni-cha ni-ra-s-t jwata-rhu*  
 and yesterday=3PL ART.INDEF deer-PL go-FT-AOR-ASS3 hill-LOC  
 ‘and yesterday, deer went to the hill.’ (CN-CB: 69)

On typological and diachronic levels a hypothesis can be advanced to explain why the indefinite article has full grammaticalization and why it developed earlier than the definite one. This development seems to be related to multifactorial causes of linguistic change. The development from ‘one’ to the indefinite article and the development from the demonstrative to the definite article are very common grammaticalization changes, and are also common areal changes (Heine and Kuteva 2006: 119-133). In Purepecha, it is impossible to reach absolute certainty about the contact origin of the phenomenon, as the replication only involves pattern and not content. However, four reasons exist for arguing that there are multifactorial causes for linguistic change:

- (i) Among the prerequisites for ‘one’ to grammaticalize is the use of the numeral in contexts where the exact quantification of the referent of the noun is irrelevant (Stolz 2012, Heine 2012); this context is attested in Lengua de Michoacán in the sixteenth century, as illustrated in (18). This is the first step in distinguishing an overt marker for the indefinite article from no overt marker for the indefinite article.
- (ii) The development from ‘one’ to the indefinite article started in the sixteenth century (with stage two), but a definite change (acceleration) is observed in the nineteenth century. This century was a turning-point because it followed the independence of Mexico in 1810. Spanish was pervasive in all spheres of social life, in particular education for the unification of the

country. Multilingualism between indigenous languages and Spanish was extended and accelerated (Brice 1972).

- (iii) The ability to take plural forms qualifies the Purepecha indefinite article for stage five on the grammaticalization scale. A noteworthy cross-linguistic observation is the rarity of plural articles derived from the numeral ‘one.’ Heine (1997: 77) and Himmelmann (2001: 838) use the same example from Spanish. We can hypothesize that the full grammaticalization of the indefinite article in Purepecha was due to contact-induced change caused by contact with Spanish. Purepecha seems to have accepted the Spanish progress on the grammaticalization scale as a fact, in particular in the use of the indefinite article *ma* in contexts involving plural nouns.
- (iv) The recent development of the definite article can be directly associated with bilingualism (almost generalized for Purepecha) and with education (in oral and written Spanish).

#### 4.3. Variations in the position of indefinite articles

According to Heine (1997: 68), the indefinite article “is likely to employ the same position in the clause as the numeral ‘one’.” In Purepecha this is generally the case, but there are other possibilities.

*Indefinite article-Noun.* In the majority of the varieties (see examples (13) to (22)), *ma* always occurs before the noun. This is a holdover of the position of the numeral, as asserted by Heine (1997: 68). The article-noun word order exhibits a correlation with the VO constituent order in these varieties (Dryer 2007: 94).

*Noun-Indefinite article.* In some varieties, *ma* follows the noun: this is an innovative position for *ma*, since in traditional texts the numeral is only found before the noun. The

noun-article order is a feature of languages with the OV constituent. Purepecha seems to have had an OV order (see above, section 2.2).

Today, the OV constituent order is found only in two villages in the south of the Sierra, Angahuan and San Lorenzo (Chamoreau 2009b). These villages thus exhibit a correlation between the constituent order and the noun-article order (Dryer 2007). Interestingly in these villages *ma* always occurs after the noun, no matter what its function (except in the adpositional temporal phrase) – in (23) as a numeral (some variation exists in the order with numeral use), and in (24) as an indefinite generalized article.

- (23) *jwata tsakapu kw'ani-ku-xa-p-ti ka tsakapu ma*  
 hill stone throw-3APPL-PROG-PAST-ASS3 and stone one  
*kwhiripu anta-h-p-ti*  
 people reach-AOR-PAST-ASS3  
 'The hill was throwing stones and one stone reached people.' (AN44: 11)

- (24) *anatapu ma kutsare-nko ju-rha-xa-p-ti=kxi*  
 tree ART.INDEF sand-COM come-FT-PROG-PAST-ASS3=3PL  
 'Trees were coming with sand.' (AN44: 81)

Nevertheless, the majority of the villages in which *ma* follows the noun have a VO constituent order. Surprisingly, *ma* appears after the noun (except in the adpositional temporal phrase). This noun-article order shows no correlation with the VO order. The main hypothesis proposed to explain this process is that this order is a remnant of the OV constituent order that was probably present in these varieties when *ma* began to be grammaticalized into an indefinite article. In (25) *ma* appears as a numeral,<sup>5</sup> and in (26) as an indefinite article.

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<sup>5</sup> As a numeral *ma* is generally ordered after the noun, but some variations exist.

(25) *enka juchari papa jatsi-s-p-ka xu*  
 SUB POS1PL dad have-AOR-PAST-SUBJ here  
*banda-ni ma regular ma*  
 band-OBJ one regular one  
 ‘... that our dad has had here one regular band.’ (AH-BD: 112)

(26) *ni-ra-ni=nha kawaru ma impo para jiri-nha-ni*  
 go-FT-INF=EV ravine ART.INDEF INST for seek-inside-INF  
*a ver ampe je-pi-ni*  
 to see what see-ANTIP-INF  
 ‘He went to a ravine in order to seek out what he found.’ (OC-B: 4)

*Distinction between the functions of ma depending on its position.* Four villages have developed a specific strategy, using the position in order to distinguish between functions (Dryer 2005b). Two different types of organization can be described (summarized in table 1):

	Before the noun	After the noun
specific/non-specific opposition	numeral, presentative	non-specific indefinite
numeral/indefinite opposition	numeral	indefinite article

**Table 1:** Types of organization when functions are distinguished by position

The difference of position between the numeral and the indefinite article is described in the literature and pointed out by Dryer (2005b: 158): “For example, in Turkish, the numeral for ‘one’ functions as an indefinite article, but has a different position within the noun phrase when serving that function: namely, it follows a prenominal adjective, in contrast to its use as a numeral, where it would precede an adjective .... Similarly, in Remo (Munda; India), the numeral *muy* ‘one’ precedes the

noun when it is functioning as a numeral, but follows when it is functioning as an indefinite article ... while the reverse situation obtains in Pa'a (Chadic; Nigeria; ...): as a numeral the word for 'one' follows the noun, but as an indefinite article it precedes."

However, the difference between specific and non-specific opposition is generally marked by two different types of marker, not by two different positions. For example, in Moroccan Arabic, while non-specific indefiniteness is marked by the prefix (or proclitic) *xi-*, specific indefiniteness requires two forms, the indefinite article *wahed* (identical to the numeral 'one') plus the regular definite prefix *l-*.

What is interesting about Purepecha is the presence of both kinds of opposition. My hypothesis is that they represent two stages of the same process, namely the change from OV to VO. They reveal intermediary positions in the continuum: noun-article > numeral/definite article opposition > specific/non-specific opposition > article-noun.

*Specific/non-specific opposition.* In (27) the numeral and in (28) the presentative article precede the noun; in the second noun phrase in (28) and in (29) the non-specific indefinite article follows the noun.

(27) *jimakhani ma echakwa sipaphiri tsí-nharhi-ni*  
 then one CLASS.LONG thief wake.up-cara-INF  
 'Then, one thief (one of the thieves) wakes up ...' (TA-TPR: 32)

(28) *ja-rha-s-p-ti=nha ma ahati enka*  
 be.there-FT-AOR-PAST-ASS3=EV ART.INDEF man SUB  
*ni-p-ka k'eri ireta ma ximpo*  
 go-AOR.PAST-SUBJ big village ART.INDEF INST  
 'They said that there is a man who had gone to a city ...' (TA-TP: 30)

(29) *ch'anakwa ma=t'u ampe ja-rha-sin-ti*  
 game ART.INDEF=too something be.there-FT-HAB-ASS3  
 'There is also something like games ...' (SI17: 15)

*Numeral/indefinite opposition.* In (30) the numeral precedes the noun, and in (31) the indefinite article follows the noun.

(30) *ka kama-t'i ma-echakwa=xi tataka sapichu-ni*  
and bring.up-ASS3 one-CLASS.LONG=FOC boy little-OBJ  
'And, she brings up one little boy.' (CR38: 25)

(31) *xaxe=ksĩ=nha t'arhenwa-cha=nha ma jima=sĩ ni-ra-ni*  
after=3PL=EV road.runner-PL=EV ART.INDEF there=FOC go-FT-INF  
'and after, they say that there, road runners will go ...' (TA-HR: 21)

## 5. Geographical distribution

The geographical distribution of the positions of the indefinite article has three complementary levels:

*Absence of isoglosses* (map 3), that is, the presence of the noun phrase with the indefinite article throughout the area. This is the result of the spread of full grammaticalization of the numeral to all the villages. This level exhibits a result both of linguistic change and contact with Spanish, following the working hypothesis that there are multifactorial causes of linguistic change.

*One isogloss separates the eastern area from the western one* (map 3). The distinction between noun-article and article-noun clearly differentiates the two dialectal (and typological) areas: the order noun-article is attested in the western area, while the article-noun is localized in the eastern area. The border can be drawn from Ichán in the north, to Uruapan in the south, passing to the east of Cherán. This line does not correspond exactly to the regional area (see map 1), as the regional border is located



further to the east (from Zapacu to the southeast of Pichátaro). An interesting question is why four villages in the southeast of the Sierra region (Arantepacua, Turícuaro, Comachuen, and Pichátaro) and the northern village of Ichán in the valley function in the same way as the villages of the eastern region.

Before suggesting some answers to this question, I present the sociolinguistic data that partly explain this isogloss. They show a clear difference between the eastern and western regions. Table 2 includes the data relevant to the explanation:

	WESTERN REGION	EASTERN REGION
% of villages in which Purepecha is spoken	68.8	31.2
% of speakers of Purepecha	77.0	23.0
% of villages in which Purepecha speakers are less than 50%	45.5	61.7
% of villages in which Purepecha speakers are more than 50%	54.6	38.3

**Table 2.** Sociolinguistic data (Census of INEGI 2005)

In the eastern region the use of Purepecha is diminishing, partly because older people address young people in Spanish. In the western region the language has more vitality, and is used more frequently in everyday conversation.

Only one of the five villages of the western region, Pichátaro, has the same characteristics as the villages of the eastern region (with 18% Purepecha speakers). In the other four, Purepecha has very great vitality, with more than 98% being Purepecha speakers. A possible explanation for the unusual behavior of the villages in the southeast of the Sierra region is to be found in the intense social relations (for traditional feasts) and economic exchange (sale of products) with villages located in the region of the lake. These activities, carried on in Purepecha among the three villages in the southeast of the Sierra region (Arantepacua, Turícuaro, Comachuén) and some villages on the western shore of Lake Patzcuaro (such as Jarácuaro and Puácuaro), may influence the way of speaking in the southeastern villages. This is not the only feature

that distinguishes them from others in the Sierra region; another well-known feature (Chamoreau 2005) is the use of lateral /l/ in these villages, as in some villages on the western shore of the lake.

*A specific sub-area.* The villages with noun-article and OV, Angahuan and San Lorenzo, in the south of the western area, exhibit numerous linguistic differences from the other villages, in particular phonetic changes and OV constituent order (Chamoreau 2009b, Monzón 2004). These two villages seem to be different enough to cause problems of intelligibility for speakers from other villages (Chávez 2004, Chamoreau 2005, 2009b). Purepecha displays great vitality in this area: more than 96% are Purepecha speakers, and the language is used in everyday conversation. These villages, in particular Angahuan, are culturally and historically recognized as having a strong Purepecha identity.

A dialectal puzzle is the geographical position of the villages in which the position of the article differentiates function. The location of these four villages seems to have neither a geographical nor a social explanation (map 4). My hypothesis about these constructions is that they are intermediate stages between the noun-article order and the article-noun order (see above, section 4.3.). The central location of these four villages in the western Sierra area suggests that they first used a noun-article position, like the other villages in the region, then gradually underwent a change to the article-noun order. The change is revealed across the two intermediate stages. From a historical point of view, this evolution follows the general evolution of Purepecha toward more VO order features. The numeral/indefinite opposition occupies a position adjacent to the noun-article order, as only the numeral has the inverse order, while in the specific/non-specific opposition only non-specific articles have a noun-article order. This latter opposition is closer to the article-noun order.

## 6. A multi-layered perspective

The integration of dialectology, typology, diachrony, and contact linguistics offers new insights into many linguistic puzzles. In this article, different topics are relevant to these four domains. The multifactorial process of linguistic change of *ma* from the numeral ‘one’ to the generalized indefinite article demonstrates the five stages of grammaticalization in Purepecha in synchrony. At the same time, contrary to the usual cross-linguistic tendencies, the indefinite article develops earlier than the definite one. Moreover, the possibility that *ma* can appear in different positions in the noun phrase is relevant for a single situation, that is, where *ma* can appear in two positions in order to differentiate its functions. This possibility is certainly a consequence of the fact that Purepecha is a spoken code not supported by the standardizing effects of the written code.

The point that is relevant to dialectology is that the integration of four linguistic domains makes it possible to define dialectal areas for Purepecha that are different from those that Friedrich (1971, 1975) and Chávez (2004) claimed. The result found in this case study is not isolated; other analyses, such as the comparative construction of superiority, display similar results (Chamoreau, in press). It is thus an important advance toward a more fine-grained knowledge of the geographical distribution of Purepecha.

Another crucial point is that the syntactic focus of dialectal research reveals the dynamic of present-day Purepecha, integrating diachronic changes, contact linguistics consequences, and synchronic variations, and pointing out social and historical particularities. The result is not static and uni-level but dynamic and multi-dimensional. This is a multi-layered perspective, demonstrating three superimposed levels of organization:

- The first level exhibits an absence of isogloss, that is, the presence of a construction throughout the area (a construction absent in the sixteenth century).

- The second level exhibits one isogloss that separates the eastern area from the western one, showing two distinctive ways of adapting the syntactic constructions.
- The third level exhibits a sub-area with linguistic specificities, explained by its social, cultural, and historical specificity.

Each level has its own importance: The first level is clearly the consequence of the (contact-induced) diachronic process; the second level exhibits a different typological adoption; while the third level has a sociolinguistic source. The complementarities of these superimposed levels constitute a multi-layered perspective and show the relevance of integrating dialectology, typology, diachrony, and contact linguistics for their mutual advantage.

## Abbreviations

ANTIP	antipassive
AOR	aorist
APPL	applicative
ART	article
ASS	assertive
CAUS	causative
CENTRIP	centripetal
CLASS	classifier
COM	comitative
DEF	definite
DEM	demonstrative
EV	evidential
FOC	focus
FT	formative

FUT	future
GEN	genitive
HAB	habitual
IMP	imperative
IND	independent
INDEF	indefinite
INF	infinitive
INST	instrumental
INT	interrogative
KPOS	kinship possessive
LOC	locative
MID	middle
NEG	negation
OBJ	objective
PART.PA	past active participle
PART.PP	past patientive participle
PASSIV	passive
PAST	past
PL	plural
POS	possessive
PRED	predicativizer
PRES	present
PROG	progressive
SUB	subordinating conj.
SUBJ	subjunctive
TRANSLOC	translocative

**Villages**

AH	Ahuiran
AN	Angahuan

CN	Cuanajo
CO	Cocucho
CR	Capácuaro
JR	Jarácuaro
NR	Nurio
OC	Ocumicho
PC	Pacanda
PM	Pamatácuaro
PT	Pichátaro
SI	San Isidro
TA	Tacuro
TD	Tiríndaro
TM	Teremendo

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