

## Purepecha: An isolate non-Mesoamerican language in Mesoamerica

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Purepecha (formerly known as Tarascan) is spoken in the state of Michoacan in Mexico by approximately 110,000 people. It is classified as a language isolate. In this paper, after introducing some of its sociolinguistic and dialectal characteristics I provide information on phonetic and phonological processes (Chamoreau 2009), then highlight the most recent and relevant progress in morphological and syntactic description.

Purepecha possesses an elaborate, highly productive verbal derivational morphology. Stems may be simple or compound. Although bare stems exist, they are typically augmented with various derivational suffixes, in particular locative suffixes, but also voice, causative, positional, directional, desiderative, and/or adverbial derivational suffixes that comprise a total of around eighty markers. The majority of nouns are derived from a verbal stem and built with a nominalizer. As for inflectional morphology, verbs inflect for aspect, tense, and mood and nouns for case by means of suffixes.

On the syntactic level, features of the verb and the noun phrases are analyzed. In simple clauses, Purepecha has nominative-accusative alignment; the basic constituent order is SVO but the language exhibits some traits commonly associated with basic OV order. It is a predominantly dependent-marking language, since person of subject and object is generally encoded not on the verb but by means of second position enclitics. However, in some contexts it exhibits head-marking characteristics. I analyze this seemingly inconsistent situation (Chamoreau in press a). With respect to complex clauses, the predicates of both independent and dependent clauses are generally finite, though some non-finite dependent clauses have been observed. In this paper, I describe the uses of non-finite and finite dependent clauses and the position of these clauses on the continuum of finiteness in Purepecha (Chamoreau in press b).

I complete this chapter by discussing the classification of Purepecha as belonging in the Mesoamerican linguistic area. This is interesting because this language is located in Mesoamerica but generally is not classified as a Mesoamerican language, as it shows very few signature Mesoamerican characteristics (Smith-Stark 1994).

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