

# ‘Restricted group’ and ‘group’ within the pronominal system of Western Toba (Guaicuruan, Argentina)

María Belén Carpio

Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET),  
Universidad Nacional de Nordeste (UNNE)

This paper describes splits on the basis of number within first-person verbal pronominal indexes and independent pronouns, and third-person verbal pronominal indexes in Western Toba, a southern Guaicuruan language. First-person nonsingular dependent and independent pronouns are analyzed in terms of ‘restricted group’ and ‘group’, i.e., according to the number of participants plus the speaker involved in the situation depicted by the verb. This is a peculiarity of Western Toba among the southern Guaicuruan languages. In addition, horizontal homophony between third-person singular and collective (‘group’) vs. plural (‘restricted group’) verbal pronominal indexes is shown. Finally, genetic and areal implications of this description are discussed.

**Keywords:** pronominal indexes, independent pronouns, first-person nonsingular, third-person, southern Guaicuruan language

## 1. Introduction

Western Toba is a southern Guaicuruan language spoken in communities located near the Pilcomayo River, in Formosa Province, Argentina: Isla García, Tres Yuchanes, Vaca Perdida, Pozo Ramón, El Churcal, La Madrugada, Pozo Charata, El Breal, Laguna Cansino, and Quebrachito. A part of the population lives in “Barrio Toba” on the outskirts of Ingeniero G. N. Juárez City (Arenas 2003). The Toba from western Formosa number around 1,800. They call themselves *qomleʔk*, self-ascribe as Tobas, and are called *ñachilamoleʔk* ‘people from the river headwaters’ by the Pilagás. The analysis proposed in this paper is based on fieldwork carried out in Vaca Perdida (Bermejo Department, Formosa, Argentina), and on the data provided by the “Diccionario Toba” (Tebboth 1943).

In Western Toba, person-number distinctions are encoded in independent pronouns, verbal pronominal indexes, and possessor affixes on nouns. In this paper, first-person nonsingular independent pronouns and verbal pronominal indexes, and third-person verbal pronominal indexes are analyzed. It is in these pronominal categories that a split between 'restricted group' and 'group' has been observed.

The analysis of the formal opposition between first-person nonsingular as restricted vs. unrestricted within dependent and independent pronouns proposed in this paper, has not been noticed so far among the languages of the southern Guaicuruan family, except for a mention among independent pronouns in Abipón (an extinct language). Nevertheless, a first-person nonsingular split has been reported in Kadiwéu, a northern Guaicuruan language, and in Maká and Wichí, Mataco-Mataguayan languages, areally related to Western Toba.

The distinction between a restricted vs. unrestricted number of entities is also attested with nouns when the collective morphological category is compared to the number category. With regard to verb agreement, this distinction implies horizontal homophony between third-person singular and collective ('group') vs. plural ('restricted group'). This distinction has been reported, using different terminology, among the other southern Guaicuruan languages.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides a description of first and third-person nonsingular S — unique argument of an intransitive clause — and A — the most agent-like argument of a transitive clause — verbal pronominal indexes in terms of 'group' and 'restricted group'. Section 3 describes first-person nonsingular independent pronouns. In Section 4, a brief description of the implications of the first-person nonsingular split described among genetically and areally related languages is provided. The conclusions in Section 5 include a summary of the analysis and potential future research.

## 2. Verbal pronominal indexes

Cysouw (2003: 102–103, 188), from a cross-linguistic perspective, describes pronominal number as a specialized variation of group marking and distinguishes between two categories: group and restricted group. Group expresses "nonsingular general reference", in which the cardinal number of referents involved is irrelevant. Rather, it makes reference to a number that is greater than a language-specific minimum, and at least greater than one. Restricted group expresses "nonsingular restricted reference" in the sense of a group that is marked for a language-specific minimally needed number of participants.

In Western Toba, a split on the basis of number among nonsingular person categories has been observed not only for the third person — as in the rest of

the southern Guaicuruan languages — but also for the first person. First-person nonsingular verbal pronominal affixes are explained, in Western Toba, on the basis of the number of participants, plus the speaker, involved in the situation depicted by the verb in terms of ‘group’ and ‘restricted group’. It is shown that the formal opposition in first-person nonsingular does not correlate to clusivity. A split on the basis of the number of entities involved is also observed in nouns if they occur in plural (a few entities encoded by plural affixes) or in collective (a lot of entities seen as a cohesive unit, encoded by the suffix *-pi*). In terms of verbal agreement, morphologically collective nouns agree with verbs in the same way as singular ones, but differently from plural nouns. This agreement behavior reveals horizontal homophony among the singular and group pronominal categories.

S and A are encoded on verbs through three paradigms of pronominal indexes (Figures 1–3). The correspondence between verbs and the units of each of these paradigms is mostly lexically determined. The most patient-like argument of a transitive clause (P) only triggers number agreement on verbs. Particularly relevant to this paper are the first-person nonsingular and third-person verbal indexes (in bold face in Figures 1–3).

		NONSINGULAR			
		group		restricted group	
1	SINGULAR	<i>h</i> -...- <i>q</i>		<i>qaw</i> -	1+2
	<i>h</i> -				1+2+3
2	<i>aw</i> -	<i>aw</i> -...- <i>i</i> <i>o</i> -...- <i>i</i>			1+3
	<i>o</i> -				2+3
3		<i>i</i> - <i>w</i> - <i>ø</i> - <i>t</i> - <i>d</i> -		<i>i</i> -...-? <i>w</i> -...-? <i>ø</i> -...-? <i>t</i> -...-? <i>d</i> -...-?	3+3

Figure 1. Type I S and A verbal pronominal indexes

		NONSINGULAR			
		group		restricted group	
1	SINGULAR	<i>ñ</i> -...- <i>q</i>		<i>qan</i> -	1+2
	<i>ñ</i>				1+2+3
2	<i>an</i> -	<i>an</i> -...- <i>i</i>			1+3
					2+3
3		<i>n</i> -		<i>n</i> -...-?	2+3
					3+3

Figure 2. Type II S and A verbal pronominal indexes

		NONSINGULAR		
		group	restricted group	
1	SINGULAR	<i>i-...-q</i>	<i>qal-</i>	1+2
	<i>i</i>			1+2+3
2	<i>al-</i>	<i>al-...-i</i>		1+3
				2+3
3		<i>l-</i>	<i>l-...-ʔ</i>	3+3

Figure 3. Type III S and A verbal pronominal indexes

The verbal indexes *qaw-*, *qan-*, and *qal-*, whose meaning is that of a first-person restricted group, were not described in the rest of the southern Guaicuruan languages.

### 2.1 First-person nonsingular verbal pronominal indexes

In Western Toba, first-person restricted group prefixes are used to refer to the speaker plus a small group of persons, for example the inhabitants of Vaca Perdida or church members. Instead, first-person group affixes are used when the reference is to the speaker plus the whole ethnic group or the entire community.

The possibility of describing the split within first-person nonsingular verbal pronominal indexes in terms of clusivity, i.e., according to the kind of category of person involved (inclusive (1+2, 1+2+3)/exclusive (1+3) or minimal inclusive (1+2)/augmented inclusive (1+2+3) (Cysouw 2003:77–78)), was also studied. Hence, transitive constructions in which a first-person nonsingular (A) acts on a second person (P) were analyzed. If there was an inclusive/exclusive split within first-person nonsingular pronominal indexes, the use of the inclusive affix should have been ungrammatical in those kinds of transitive clauses. Nevertheless, this hypothesis was disregarded because both first-person nonsingular verbal indexes — type I (1), type II (2), and type III (3) — may occur as A with transitive verbs when P is a second person.

- (1) a. *ʔam qaw-pi'yen*  
2SG 1RGI-greet  
'We (a few) greet you'<sup>1</sup>
- b. *ʔam h-ipi'yena-q*  
2SG 1I-greet-1G  
'We (all) greet you'
- (2) a. *ʔam qan-epo'daʔ*  
2SG 1RGII-oblige  
'We (a few) oblige you'

- b. *ɔam ñ-ipo'dah-oq*  
2SG 1II-oblige-1G  
'We (all) oblige you'
- (3) a. *ɔam qal-qochi'ya*  
2SG 1RGIII-help  
'We (a few) help you'
- b. *ɔam yi-qochi'ha-ga*  
2SG 1III-help-1G  
'We (all) help you'<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, the most accurate description of the first-person nonsingular verbal affixes is made on the basis of the number of participants involved with the speaker. The restricted group prefixes — *qaw-*, *qan-*, and *qal-* — are used when a reduced group of people plus the speaker is involved in a cooperative situation. The group affixes — *h-...-q*, *ñ-...-q*, and *y-...-q* — occur when a large group, together with the speaker, is involved in a cooperative situation.

There are verbs in which the split between first-person restricted group and group is not attested. This is the case for change of state, location, and change of position verbs. The first-person nonsingular affixes selected resemble the restricted forms with change of state verbs, and the unrestricted forms with location and change of position verbs.

The prefix *qad-* encodes first-person nonsingular on change of state verbs.<sup>3</sup> Although it may alternate with the first-person group verbal affixes *h-...-q* (type I) and *ñ-...-q* (type II), it most frequently occurs as the unique first-person nonsingular prefix with this type of verb. For example, the only way to express first-person nonsingular on a verb such as *yi'mege* 'he is healed or he becomes healed' is through the prefix *qad-* (4).<sup>4</sup>

- (4) *qad-e'mege*  
1NSG.CS-to be or become healed  
'We are healed' or 'We become healed'

The unique first-person nonsingular affix used on location and change of position verbs such as *Ø-'nayngi* 'he enters somewhere' is *h-...-q* (5).<sup>5</sup>

- (5) *h-ona'<qa>yngi neliko'ta*  
1I-to enter<1G> canoe  
'We enter the canoe'

## 2.2 Third-person verbal pronominal indexes

The distinction between a few and an unrestricted or non-individualized large number of entities is also attested in Western Toba when the plural value — within the nominal category of number — is compared to the collective category (Carpio 2012: 62–73). This distinction implies horizontal homophony within third-person singular and collective ('group') verbal pronominal indexes. When third-person S or A are morphologically collective, i.e., they occur with the collective suffix *-pi* and refer to a group of entities, they agree with verbs in the same way as when they are singular. However, they exhibit different verbal agreement behavior when they are plural. This difference in agreement behavior with verbs inflected for third-person singular, collective, and plural indexes of type I, II, and III is illustrated in (6–8).

- (6) a. *daʔ-me ipya'gayk y-a'lik maʔa'ge*  
 DEM-ENDOPH hunter 3I-eat kind of honey  
 'The hunter eats honey'
- b. *daʔ-me ipyagayk-'pi y-a'lik maʔa'ge*  
 DEM-ENDOPH hunter-COL 3I-eat kind of honey  
 'The (many) hunters eat honey'
- c. *da<a>ʔ-me ipyagay'q-a y-a'liʔ maʔa'ge*  
 DEM<PL>-ENDOPH hunter-PL 3I-eat.PL kind of honey  
 'The (few) hunters eat honey'
- (7) a. *n-o'yin ha-'daʔ ñoqo'le*  
 3II-cry F-DEM young woman  
 'The young woman cries'
- b. *n-o'yin ha-'daʔ ñoqole-'pi*  
 3II-cry F-DEM young woman-COL  
 'The (many) young women cry'
- c. *n-o'yi<ʔ>n da<a>ʔ ñoqo'le-l*  
 3II-cry<PL> DEM<PL> young woman-PL  
 'The (few) young women cry'
- (8) a. *ha-'daʔ-me y-aʔyo'le l-o'den*  
 F-DEM-ENDOPH 1POS-niece 3III-seek firewood  
 'My niece seeks firewood'
- b. *ha-'daʔ-me y-aʔyole-'pi l-o'den*  
 F-DEM-ENDOPH 1POS-niece-COL 3III-seek firewood  
 'My (many) nieces seek firewood'
- c. *da<a>ʔ-me y-aʔyo'le-l l-o'de<ʔ>n*  
 DEM<PL>-ENDOPH 1POS-niece-PL 3III-seek firewood<PL>  
 'My (few) nieces seek firewood'

According to Cysouw (2003:210–212), horizontal homophony between singular and non-singular pronominal categories — like the one observed in third-person pronominal indexes in Western Toba (6–8a-b) — is cross-linguistically less frequent than between non-singular ones.

### 3. First-person nonsingular independent pronouns

First-person nonsingular independent pronouns, *qoʔ'mi* and *daʔ he'naq* (in bold face in Figure 4), are described with a special focus on the correlation between their syntactic functions and their differences in verbal agreement behavior. It is shown that the contrast between first-person restricted group and group is only attested when *qoʔ'mi* and *daʔ he'naq* function as P. These pronominal units are not observed among all speakers. The first-person nonsingular pronoun most frequently used is *qoʔ'mi*.

		NONSINGULAR		
		group	restricted group	
1	SINGULAR <i>ha'yim ~ a'yim</i>	<b>(<i>daʔ he'naq</i>)</b>	<b><i>qoʔ'mi</i></b>	1+2 1+2+3 1+3
2	<i>ʔam</i>	<i>ʔa'mi</i>		2+3
3	Demonstrative			3+3

Figure 4. Independent pronouns

*Daʔ he'naq* is morphologically different from the other independent pronouns. It resembles a verbal complement as it always occurs with the demonstrative root *daʔ* ‘stand up’, which also functions as a complementizer, followed by *he'naq*, which is equal at the segmental level to the verb *en* ‘to make’ inflected for first-person group, but differs from it at the suprasegmental level. When the segmental chain *henaq* encodes ‘first-person nonsingular’, stress falls on the second syllable (*he'naq*) (9), but when it expresses ‘we (all) make something’, stress falls on the first syllable (*'henaq*) (10).

- (9) ***daʔ he'naq*** *h-a'yatena-q daʔ doʔ-ho*  
 INSG II-know-1G DEM DEM-UISEXOPH  
 ‘We (all) know this’

- (10) ***'h-ena-q*** *daʔ 'doʔ-ho*  
 II-make-1G DEM DEM-UISEXOPH  
 ‘We (all) make this’

In Western Toba, the syntactic function of the arguments is not morphologically encoded on independent pronouns. S and A, as independent pronouns, are optionally expressed. They can be identified by the obligatory person/number verbal indexes (Figures 1–3). P, as an independent pronoun, obligatorily occurs in preverbal position, and only its number is encoded on verbs. First and second person independent pronouns show the same syntactic behavior in terms of word order. Third person is pronominally expressed through demonstratives (Carpio 2012:44–55). In this paper, only the use of first-person nonsingular independent pronouns as S, A, and P is exemplified.

When *qoʔ'mi* and *daʔ he'naq* function as S or A, they may agree with first-person restricted group and group verbal affixes. Their use is optional. The verbal prefix *qaw-* 'first-person restricted group' S/A agrees with the first-person nonsingular units *qoʔ'mi* and *daʔ he'naq* (11)–(12).

- (11) S  
*(qoʔ'mi/daʔ he'naq) qaw-'keʔe*  
 1NSG 1RGI-eat (INT)  
 'We (a few) eat'
- (12) A  
*(qoʔ'mi/daʔ he'naq) qaw-a'lon diʔ 'doleʔ*  
 1NSG 1RGI-light DEM fire  
 'We (a few) light the fire'

In addition, *qoʔ'mi* and *daʔ he'naq* trigger S/A agreement on verbs with the discontinuous morpheme *h-...-q* 'first-person group' (13)–(14).

- (13) S  
*(qoʔ'mi/daʔ he'naq) h-e'kiʔya-q*  
 1NSG 1I-eat (INT)-1G  
 'We (all) eat'
- (14) A  
*(qoʔ'mi/daʔ he'naq) h-a'lon-aq diʔ 'doleʔ*  
 1NSG 1I-light-1G DEM fire  
 'We (all) light the fire'

This verbal agreement behavior reveals a difference between independent and dependent pronominal paradigms. The contrast in first-person nonsingular S/A dependent pronouns between restricted group and group seems to be neutralized within S/A first-person nonsingular independent pronouns. Nevertheless, the difference between first-person restricted group and group in independent pronouns can also be observed when *qoʔ'mi* and *daʔ he'naq* function as P. This semantic



difference is observed in their verbal agreement behavior: *qoʔmi* occurs in preverbal position and *agrees in number on verbs* (15) — as the rest of the P plural pronouns — but *daʔ he'naq* occurs in postverbal position and *does not imply number agreement on verbs* (16). This agreement behavior is consistent with the main semantic difference between first-person restricted group and first-person group, i.e., the relevance of the number of participants plus the speaker involved, or not, respectively.

- (15) P  
*qoʔmi n-akyagata-ʔote*  
 1NSG 3II-listen-OVER.PL  
 'He is on alert for (a few of) us'

- (16) P  
*n-akyagata-ʔlege daʔ he'naq naza'le piʔyaaq*  
 3II-listen-OVER 1NSG always night  
 'At night, he is always on alert for (all of) us'

This difference in P agreement supports the description of *qoʔmi* as 'first-person restricted group' and *daʔ he'naq* as 'first person group'. When *qoʔmi* functions as P, the number of participants who undergo — with the speaker — the situation depicted by the verb is relevant, as it is shown by the verbal number agreement. When *daʔ he'naq* functions as P, the number of participants who undergo — with the speaker — the situation depicted by the verb is not relevant. It agrees like a singular pronoun with the absence of number morphemes on verbs.

The most frequently used first-person nonsingular independent pronoun is *qoʔmi*. According to the speakers, *qoʔmi* "is used when you are talking about the people, Vaca Perdida, or the members of the church, for example." *Daʔ he'naq* is rarely used by younger speakers and it is identified as an expression used by the elders to make reference to the whole ethnic group, the entire community. Tebboth (1943:179, 188) recorded the forms *comí* and *jenác*<sup>6</sup> with the meaning 'we'. However, only forms phonologically similar to *qoʔmi* were reported in other southern Guaicuruan languages: Mocoví — *qomid* (Gualdieri 1998:188), *qomir* (Grondona 1998:95), and *qom* (Carrió 2009:180); Pilagá — *qomzi* (Vidal 2001:143); and Toba from Chaco province — *qomi-qomiʔ~omi* (Buckwalter 1980:467), *qomi* (Klein 1981:155), *qoʔomiʔ* (Censabella 2002:129), and *qomiʔ* (Messineo 2003:117).

The morphosyntactic peculiarities of *daʔ he'naq* and its low frequency of use when compared to the rest of the independent pronouns make its inclusion within the independent pronominal paradigm tentative.

#### 4. Implications of the first-person pronominal split in Western Toba among genetically and areally related languages

In the descriptions of the southern Guaicuruan languages, Mocoví (Gualdieri 1998, Grondona 1998, Carrió 2009), Pilagá (Vidal 2001), and Toba from Chaco province (Buckwalter 1980, Klein 1981, Censabella 2002, and Messineo 2003), no mention has been made of a split within first-person nonsingular. The only traces of a distinction within first-person nonsingular independent pronouns in the southern Guaicuruan family were observed in the description of the extinct language Abipón, provided by Najlis (1966: 56–57). Najlis posits the possible suffixation of *-aoge* 'all' to the first-person plural independent pronoun *akam* to express 'we all' and *-taoge* 'all' to the second-person plural pronoun *hakamii* to encode 'for you all'.<sup>7</sup>

A split within first-person nonsingular pronouns has, however, been observed in the northern Guaicuruan language, Kadiwéu, for which Loukotka (1933: 270–271) describes a split into 'we, we-two, we-three, we-all, and we-all together'. The first person dual and trial are composed of the first person plural pronoun plus the numerals two and three, respectively. The author also presents a distinction in the second and third person between 'you.PL and you.PL-all, and they and they-all'. Moreover, Griffiths & Griffiths (1976: 64–66, 73) report a distinction in Kadiwéu between first-person dual and plural in independent pronouns and a series of suffixes whose meaning is 'a group' that are added to plural pronominal verbal indexes — not just to first-person nonsingular indexes — to convey the difference between a few and a group.

Splits within first-person nonsingular have also been described in languages from the Mataco-Mataguayan family that are areally related to Western Toba, such as Maká (Gerzenstein 1994: 83–104, 147–150, 174–177) and different varieties of Wichí (Terraza 2009: 66–69, 99–103, 119–124; Vidal & Nercesian 2005: 10; and Spinelli 2010: 3). In these languages, the distinction is described in terms of inclusive/exclusive first-person nonsingular within nominal possessive affixes, independent pronouns, and verbal pronominal indexes.

#### 5. Conclusions

In this paper, splits on the basis of number within first-person verbal pronominal indexes and independent pronouns, and third-person verbal pronominal indexes are described in Western Toba. It is demonstrated that, instead of a distinction in terms of clusivity, first-person nonsingular encoding is sensitive to the restricted or unrestricted number of participants, plus the speaker, involved in the situation

depicted by the verbs. In addition, horizontal homophony between third-person singular and collective ('group') vs. plural ('restricted group') verbal pronominal indexes is shown.

The first-person nonsingular split described in Western Toba is a peculiarity among the southern Guaicuruan languages. There is only brief mention of a possible distinction within first-person nonsingular independent pronouns in the extinct southern Guaicuruan language, Abipón (Najlis 1966:56–57). Nevertheless, a first-person nonsingular split has been described in Kadiwéu, a northern Guaicuruan language, and in Maká and Wichí, languages of the Mataco-Mataguyan family that are areally related to Western Toba. The first-person nonsingular independent pronoun *daʔ he'naq* is also a genetically peculiar feature as it was not attested in other languages of the southern Guaicuruan family. This genetic and areal scenario suggests the relevance of future comparative research on the incidence of number within the pronominal systems of the languages from the Gran Chaco region.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the speakers of Western Toba who have kindly shared their knowledge with me. I am also very grateful to Michael Cysouw, two anonymous reviewers, and the editor for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper. All responsibility for any remaining errors of fact or interpretation remains with the author. This study was supported by the Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET, Argentina).

## Abbreviations

1, 2, 3=first, second, and third person; 1G=first person group; 1RG=first person restricted group; COL=collective; CS=change of state; DEM=demonstrative; ENDOPH=endophoric; F=feminine; I=pronominal index of type I; II=pronominal index of type II; III=pronominal index of type III; INT=intransitive; POS=possessor; PL=plural; NSG=nonsingular; SG=singular; OVER=directional type II 'over'; VISEXOPH= visible exophoric.

## Notes

1. In Western Toba, verbs cannot occur without person markers, and there is no morphological tense.
2. More examples of the use of first-person group and restricted group type I, II, and III verbal affixes are included in Carpio (2012).

3. The prefixes *qad-* 'first-person restricted group' with change of state verbs, and *qan-* 'first-person restricted group of type II' are isomorphic to the inalienable and alienable first-person plural possessor prefixes on nouns, respectively. An isomorphism between verbal pronominal indexes and nominal possessor affixes is also observed in second-person singular and plural affixes with change of state verbs, in the other verbal pronominal indexes of type II, except *ñ-...-q* 'first-person group', and in first-person singular and third-person verbal indexes of type III (Carpio 2012:73–78).
4. Other verbs that take the first-person nonsingular prefix *qad-* are: *yile'wak* 'he is sick or he becomes sick', *i'lew* 'he dies', *yo'no* 'he is filled', *yoqo'wat* 'he is hungry or he becomes hungry', *yim* 'he ends', *ya'hap* 'he gets entangled', *yipo'ta* 'he is thin or he becomes thin', *yama'gak* 'he becomes aware of something', *yikemaga'lege* 'he becomes hurt by something', *yi'homak* 'he is lost or he gets lost', etc. The prefix *qad-* on verbs was described in other southern Guaicuruan languages. For example, in Toba from Chaco province, it was presented as a morpheme that encodes first-person plural inactive (Messineo 2003:65).
5. Other verbs in which the unique first-person nonsingular affix is *h-...-q* are: *Ø-'nañña* 'he lives somewhere', *Ø-'chi'yogoge* 'he comes from somewhere', *Ø-'na'lege* 'he goes up to somewhere', *Ø-'neta'lege* 'he is up to something', *Ø-'nozot* 'he remains under something', *Ø-'ne'tozot* 'he is under something', *Ø-'ñi'ziñi* 'he sits down', etc. However, the split within first-person nonsingular on the basis of number is observed in the causative version of these verbs.
6. This is the notation used by Tebboth (1943).
7. These suffixes commute with *-am* 'future', *-atara~-tara* 'alone', and *-tañi* 'with'. They are called 'suffixoids' by Najlis (1966:56).

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*Author's address*

María Belén Carpio  
Instituto de Investigaciones Geohistóricas (IIGHI-CONICET/UNNE)  
Av. Castelli 930  
3500 Resistencia, Chaco  
Argentina  
belencarpio@conicet.gov.ar  
belenvenado@yahoo.com.ar