The sense of Mẽbengokre nominalizations

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Goal

To provide a unified structure and interpretation to three constructions of Mẽbengokre:

- "Short" nominalizations:
  piʔok-jarẽɲ-dʒwɤj
  paper-say-NMLZR
  'teacher'
- Internally-headed relative clauses:
  mẽ kutɛ kum dʒɔrɛ jarẽɲ ja
  PL 3erg 3dat Djore say this
  'these that are called Djore'
- Embedded eventive clauses:
  ba ʌk kʌrʌ ma
  1nom bird coo hear
  'I heard the bird cooing.'

Proposal

- Determinerless NPs, like indefinites, lack quantificational force; they are predicates when they compose with the verbs that take them as (syntactic) arguments.
- VPs therefore denote n-place predicates; one of the arguments is the event argument, the others are type e arguments for each NP that is a syntactic argument of the verb.
- VPs compose with T to form finite clauses, with D to form IHRCs, embedded eventive clauses, and "short" nominalizations.

Participant readings

- Internally-headed relative clauses are many-ways ambiguous:
  a. mẽ kutɛ bʌriʔɯ kuru bit nẽ mẽ tɛp kam ku-mẽ
  PL 3erg pepper eat only NFUT PL fish in 3-throw
  'Only those that eat pepper put it on the fish', or
  'Only that pepper which they eat do they put on the fish.'
  b. mẽʔõ kutɛ mẽ i-mʌ̃ mẽkrĩdʒʌ ɲõrõ nẽ jã
  someone 3erg PL 1dat chair give NFUT this
  'These are the chairs that someone gave us', or
  'This is the one that gave us the chairs.'
- Arguments and adjuncts can head the IHRC:
  kubẽ kot i-tẽ-m nẽ ijɛ aŋro bĩ-n nẽ jã
  barbarian with 1-go-PART and 1erg peccary kill-PART NFUT this
  'This is the white man with whom I went and killed peccaries.'

IHRCs and eventive clauses

- Determiners in Mẽbengokre are unselective binders; they can bind any free variable in their scope.
- We know little about their semantics; we'll just assume they are definites. All variables not bound by the determiner get existentially closed.
- Two types: ja and wa (related to demonstratives), can bind variables of type e; ∅ can bind variables of type e and of type l (eventuality). Constructions with the former are always interpreted as IHRCs; constructions with the latter can be both IHRCs and eventive complement clauses:
  ba kute arẽ-ɲ ma
  1 3+ERG 3+say-PART hear
  a. "[I heard] him saying it"
  the $e.\exists x.\text{say}'(e, \text{him}', x)$
  b. "[I heard] what he said."
  the $x.\exists e.\text{say}'(e, \text{him}', x)$

Characteristics common to all of these

- "Non-finite" verb form:
  – Usually embedded, but can appear in matrix contexts with a generic or other stative reading.
  – Is opposed to a single "finite" form, which cannot be embedded.
  – Non-finite forms don't assign nominative.
- Ergativity:
  Nominative in "finite" clauses:
  a. ba a-pumũ b. ba boj
  1nom 2-see 1nom arrive
  Ergative in "non-finite" clauses (including all of the constructions in question):
  a. ijɛ a-pumũɲ b. i-boj
  1erg 2-see 1-arrive
- Lack of higher functional structure:
  Focus, tense/mood, and pre-Asp subject positions available in matrix clauses:
  kukrut nẽ ba arɤm ku-bĩ
  tapir NFUT 1nom COMPLETE 3-kill
  Not available in embedded (i.e., non-finite) clauses:
  (*kukrut) (*nẽ) (*ijɛ) arɤm ijɛ bĩn
  tapir NFUT 1erg COMPLETE 1erg kill

Eventive (not propositional) readings

a. ba ʌk kʌrʌ ma
1Nom fowl coo hear
'I heard the bird calling.'
b. a-tẽm mɛj
2-go good
'You went well.' (not: 'It was good that you went.')

A precedent

- Adjoined relatives in Warlpiri (cf. Larson 1982) have participant or temporal (though apparently not eventive) readings:
  ngajulu-rlu-rna wawiri nyangu, kuja-npa pantu-rnu
  I-ERG-1sg kangaroo see-PAST, COMP/AUX-2sg spear-PAST
  nyuntulu-rlu
  you-ERG
  (i) "I saw the kangaroo which you speared"
  (ii) "I saw the kangaroo when you speared it"

The semantic analysis

- We contend that all the constructions in question share the following structure at the bottom of the tree:
  $$[\text{man}[\text{Voice}\ [\text{jaguar}\ [\text{kill}\ _{\text{V}}]\ \text{VP}]\ \text{Voice}']\ \text{VoiceP}]$$
- I.e., (1) there are no verbal predicates without Voice; (2) Asp is not required in non-finite clauses.
- Denotations are as follows, where we assume the following semantic types: individuals (e), eventualities (l), and truth-values (t).
  – $[\![\text{kill}]\!] = \lambda x_e.\lambda e_l.\text{kill}'(e, x)$
  – $[\![\text{Voice}]\!] = \lambda x_e.\lambda e_l.\mathit{Agent}(e, x)$
  – $[\![\text{jaguar}]\!] = \lambda x_e.\text{jaguar}(x)$ (same for $[\![\text{man}]\!]$)
- Crucial assumption (cf. Heim 1982): indefinite noun phrases lack quantificational force.
- Implementation: a rule of Predicate Restriction (cf. Chung and Ladusaw 2004), by which indefinite noun phrases combine as predicates with the verbs of which they are arguments:
  – Predicate Restriction (op. cit., p. 5)
  $\lambda y.\lambda x.P(y, x) \wedge Q(x)$
  $\lambda x.\lambda y.P(y, x)$ $\lambda x.Q(x)$
- $[\![\text{kill jaguar}]\!] = \lambda e.\lambda x.\text{kill}'(e, x) \wedge \text{jaguar}'(x)$, something like "jaguar-killing".
- The external argument is introduced by a modified version of Kratzer's Event Identification rule (cf. Kratzer 1996):
  – "Generalized" Event Identification:
  $\lambda x.\lambda e.P(e, \ldots) \wedge \text{Agent}(e, x) \in D_{\langle e,\langle l,X\rangle\rangle}$
  $\lambda x.\lambda e.\text{Agent}(e, x) \in D_{\langle e,\langle l,t\rangle\rangle}$ $\lambda e.P(e, \ldots) \in D_{\langle l,X\rangle}$
  Where X ranges over the relevant predicate types.
- $[\![\text{Agent kill jaguar}]\!] = \lambda y.\lambda e.\lambda x.\text{kill}'(e, x) \wedge \text{jaguar}'(x) \wedge \text{Agent}(e, y)$.
- And finally, $[\![\text{man kill jaguar}]\!] = [\lambda y.\lambda e.\lambda x.\text{kill}'(e, x) \wedge \text{jaguar}'(x) \wedge \text{Agent}(e, y)](\text{me}') = \lambda e.\lambda x.\text{kill}'(e, x) \wedge \text{jaguar}'(x) \wedge \text{Agent}(e, \text{me})$
- What do we have here? — An n-place predicate where one of the arguments is of type l, and the others, one for each indefinite argument of the verb (or of Voice), is of type e. This is the denotation of the extended projection of a non-finite verb.
- For syntactic reasons, this will only combine with one of two things: D or T. Combining it with T yields finite verb forms:
  $$[\![\text{Fin}]\!] = \lambda P_{lt}.\exists e P(e)$$
- This head can only take properties of eventualities as arguments. Existential Closure saturates predicates of individuals at the Event level, as assumed by Chung and Ladusaw (2004), i.e., right before Fin is merged, giving existential interpretations to the V's arguments.

What are so-called nominalizers?

- Two morphemes have been called nominalizers in the literature on Jê languages: dʒʌ "instrument nominalizer" and dʒwɤj "agent nominalizer".
- Our contention: what they attach to is already nominal (i.e., it's an eventive complement clause).
- The "nominalizers" are just the nouns dʒʌ "container" and dʒwɤj "master".
- There is no strict selection of particular participants in "instrument" nominalizations:
  a. i-tẽm-dʒʌ
  1-go-dʒʌ
  "The *time* of my going."
  b. i-dʒʌkuru-dʒʌ
  1-eat-dʒʌ
  "My eating utensils", but also: "my eating place", "my food", etc.
- With dʒwɤj there's less leeway in interpretation (i.e., the "master" of an action always seems to be the agent); uses of dʒwɤj with complement nouns illustrate the range of its meaning:
  mʌtkʌ-dʒwɤj
  airplane-dʒwɤj
  "Pilot", "airplane owner", "controller", etc.

References and acknowledgements

References

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