

Incorporated classifiers in Gunwinyguan languages

We examine the nature of incorporated classifiers in several Gunwinyguan languages (Northern Australia), and show that, despite initial appearances, they may be analysed building on existing work on Australian languages such as Simpson (1991), Nordlinger (1998), and Sadler & Nordlinger (2006); these proposals are discussed below.

In a number of GN languages we find a class of apparent nominal compounds as in (1):

- (1) a. ceŋ-ŋolkko ‘big fish’ (Ngalakgan)
 fish-big
 b. kuŋtu-joccon ‘clear (not sacred) country’
 country-clear
 c. [aŋka-kaŋa? ‘small waterhole’
 billabong-small

Compounds in these languages therefore have the same interpretations as NPs in English involving a noun and an adjective. Compounds in English and most other languages cannot have interpretations like this.

We show that these constructions are indeed compounds, rather than phrases, based on prosodic and particularly morpho-phonological criteria. For instance, in Wubuy, epenthesis targets the stem boundary where stem2 begins in a stop. We propose that these compounds are headed by the Adjective, rather than the Noun, and that their morpho-syntactic, as well as their semantic, properties follow from this. For instance, N-Adj compounds can be inflected for tense and agreement, like Adjectives in general, but unlike most nouns, as in (2):

- (2) a. [nijambaɖawaɖawaɖaɖ] (Wubuy)
 /ni-jaŋ-waɖa-waɖawaɖaɖ/
 3M-voice-INTENS-strong
 ‘his voice is strong, he is strong voice-wise’ [9/4/07: tk1]
 b. */ni-jaŋ/

We show that N-Adj compounding is a fundamentally analogous construction to (generic) ‘noun incorporation’ into verbs in Gunwinyguan languages. Firstly, the same set of nouns may be either compounded with adjectives or incorporated into verbs. This class is small (around 40 items in each language), and includes at least one suppletive form. Even where not morphologically suppletive, compounded/incorporated forms may have distinct denotations from their independent uses (Heath 1984: 467). Although the class is small, loanwords can be compounded/incorporated, as in (3), suggesting that incorporated nouns cannot be simply treated as a lexical ‘list’.

- (3) a. ku-**pottol**-kaɭi (Ngandi)
 NEUT-bottle-big
 ‘big bottle’
 b. an-**ɟut**-kaɭe (Bininj Gun-wok)
 VEG-road-old
 ‘old road’

Apart from the various descriptive issues, the N-Adj compounds present some theoretical challenges. In particular, they raise the issue of the functional contribution of adjectives to NPs in general. Ordinarily in LFG, adjectives have an ADJ function within an NP headed by a N. But in N-Adj compounds, all the evidence suggests that the head is the adjective, not the noun. In addition, the position of the N is not open: it is restricted by semantic and morphological factors. We propose an analysis along the lines suggested in Simpson 1991, where adjectives are both N modifiers but at the same time argument taking predicates within f-structure. In this way, adjectives can impose selectional restrictions on their arguments, thus giving us a mechanism to account for the restrictions on the class of incorporated/compounded nouns.

On this analysis the f-description associated with the adjective alone, is that given in (4) for *ŋolkko* ‘big’. Following Simpson 1991, the pronominal subject is anaphorically controlled by the head noun which this adjective modifies (5).

- (4) ḡolkko: A
 (↑ PRED) = 'big <SUBJ>'
 (↑ SUBJ PRED) = 'PRO'
 (ADJ ↑)

$$(5) \left[\text{ADJ} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{PRED 'big <SUBJ>'} \\ \text{SUBJ [PRED 'PRO']} \end{array} \right] \right]$$

When the adjective is compounded with an incorporated nominal, the nominal itself constructs the PRED for the superordinate f-structure, as shown below. Thus, the resulting f-structure is analogous to that for Adj-N NPs in a language like English, despite the difference in morphosyntactic structure.

- (6) ceḡ-ḡolkko: A
 (↑ PRED) = 'big <SUBJ>'
 (↑ SUBJ PRED) = 'PRO'
 (ADJ ↑)
 ((ADJ ↑) PRED) = 'fish'

$$(7) \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{PRED 'fish'} \\ \text{ADJ} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{PRED 'big <SUBJ>'} \\ \text{SUBJ [PRED 'PRO']} \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right]$$

In fact, as with nominal incorporation into verbs, the incorporated nominal in these adjective-headed compounds can co-occur with an external nominal. This nominal may be identical in form (as in (8)), or may further specify the referent of the incorporated nominal, akin to standard generic-specific constructions (as in (9) and (10), from two varieties of Bininj Gun-wok).

- (8) ma-ḡuka-ḡu-puraa mana-ḡuka
 VEG-stone-EPENTH-sit.PR VEG.TOP-stone
 'There's a stone.' [Lit. 'the stone sits.'] (Wubuy; Heath 1980: 435)

- (9) an-carman ko-no ko-ḡermej (MM)
 VEG-kurrajong flower-PRT flower-red
 'Kurrajong (*Brachychiton sp.*) trees have red flowers.' (An alternative translation is:
 'Brachychiton flowers are red ones [flowers].') (BGW; Evans 2003: 17)

- (10) ka-rulk-ti an-tupaḡ/an-peḡpeḡ (Dj)
 3-tree-stand.NP VEG-ironwood/VEG-ghostgum
 'An ironwood/ghostgum tree is there.' (BGW; Evans 2003: 334)

We show how these doubled constructions can be incorporated into the above account by building on Sadler and Nordlinger's (2006) analysis of appositional structures in Australian languages, in which both the incorporated classifier and any external nominal instantiate a set at f-structure.

Evans, Nicholas. 2003. *Bininj Gun-wok: A pan-dialectal grammar of Mayali, Kunwinjku and Kune*. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.

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Sadler, Louisa and Rachel Nordlinger. 2006. Apposition as coordination: evidence from Australian languages. In Miriam Butt and Tracy Holloway King (eds) *Proceedings of the LFG06 Conference*. Stanford: CSLI Publications. 437-454.

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