The functions of Mojeño Trinitario verbal classifiers in discourse

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Mojeño Trinitario

• Arawak, Lowland Bolivia
• Linguistic description
  • Dictionary (Gill 1993)
  • Handbook (Gill 1957)
  • Grammatical sketch (Rose 2015)
  • Papers (Rose 2011, etc)
• Documentation
  
  http://www.ddl.cnrs.fr/Rose
  
  https://www.ortolang.fr
Methodology

• Observation of the data
  • 8 hours of (semi)-spontaneous texts & 2 hours of stimuli-elicited sentences
  • 4920 elicited sentences

• Counts of classifiers in a text sample
  • 7 texts of different genres
  • 520 sentences
  • 175 occurrences of classifiers

• Counts of Referential Distance and Topic Persistence (Givón 1983)
  • Correlation with the morphosyntactic distribution of classifiers
Mojeño Trinitario classifiers

• 29 classifier suffixes
  • Some have two allomorphs: stem-internal and stem-final

• One set with large distribution
  = multiple classifier system (Aikhenvald 2000)
  • On numerals
  • On adjectives
  • On nouns
  • On verbs

• Verbal classifiers: categorize a nominal element within the verb
Mojeño Trinitario classifiers

• The classifiers categorize the referent, not the noun.
  • The same noun can be assigned to various classes.
  • Highlight some inherent or temporary property of the referent.

(1) *t-íto-gi* to *wkugi*
  3-be_bare-*CLF:cyl* ART.NH tree
  ‘The trunk of the tree is bare.’ elicited

(2) *t-íto-si* to *wkugi*
  3-be_bare-*CLF:sphere* ART.NH tree
  ‘The crown of the tree is bare.’ elicited
Mojeño Trinitario classifiers

- Cannot stand as the head of an NP *(SLE talk with van Linden)*
- Most have a CV structure
- General semantics (physical properties like shape, interiority, consistency, quanta)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>-na</th>
<th>CLF.hum</th>
<th>human</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-gi</td>
<td>CLF.cyl</td>
<td>1D, cylindrical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-gie</td>
<td>CLF.fili</td>
<td>1D, narrow, long, thin and flexible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-pi</td>
<td>CLF.fabric</td>
<td>2D, flat, large and generally flexible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-mo</td>
<td>CLF.fabric</td>
<td>2D, flat, large and generally flexible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-me</td>
<td>CLF.sphere</td>
<td>3D, sphere</td>
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<tr>
<td>-si</td>
<td>CLF.sphere</td>
<td>3D, sphere</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>-omo -e</th>
<th>CLF.liquid</th>
<th>liquid</th>
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<tr>
<td>-ku</td>
<td>CLF.path</td>
<td>space between parallel boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-muri</td>
<td>CLF.group</td>
<td>group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-miro</td>
<td>CLF.face</td>
<td>face</td>
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Table 1. Selection of CLF with gloss and definition
Classifiers on verbs

- Associated participant:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mojeño</th>
<th>Typology</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S of intransitive verbs</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>Cross-linguistically common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O of transitive verbs</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obliques</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>Rarely described</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Applicative function: promoting an oblique as a core argument

- Human classifier excluded from this morphosyntactic locus
Other nominal categorization

- Gender marking in person formatives in:
  - Articles
  - Pronominal pronouns
  - Demonstratives
  - Person indexes

- Interactions
  - In an NP, ART + CLF possible
  - In a V, person indexes + CLF possible

*Fig. 1:* Semantic sub-categorization of third person.
Functions of verbal classifiers
Functions of classifiers

• Why this question?
  • Classifiers are not obligatory (except on numerals)
  • Found in 34% of the sentences in the sample
  • From 8% to 60% of the sentences per text

• Categorization is not their primary function (François 1999)
• "The primary function of a noun classification system may be related to discourse level participant reference (Payne 1987).“
  • Discourse issues not often investigated in detail
Functions of classifiers on verbs

• **Why on verbs?**
  • Half of the occurrences of classifiers are found on verbs in the sample
  • Verbal classifiers are found in 18% of the sentences in the sample
  • Less discussed in the literature

• **Functions:**
  • Semantic
  • Derivational
  • Discourse
Derivational function of classifiers

• Derive nouns from other parts of speech
• Common in South America (Krasnoukhova 2012)
• 4% of the V-CLF in the sample

(3) to $t$-

ART.NH 3-be$_{-}$hot-$\text{CLF:liquid}$
‘the breakfast/dinner’ elicited

(4) to $y$-

ART.NH 1PL$_{-}$sleep-$\text{CLF:amorph}$
‘our nest, bed’ T$_{19\_107}$
Functions of classifiers on verbs

• Discourse functions (Contini-Morava and Kilarski’s 2013)
  • reference management
  • referent identification
  • re-presentation of referents.
1- Reference management

How are classifiers used in the management of reference (i.e. definiteness, persistence, or prominence in discourse)?
Reference management

• **Average Referential Distance**
  • Number of clauses to the left, to the previous occurrence of the referent, overtly marked *(Givón 1983)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N only</td>
<td>12.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLF + N</td>
<td>10.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLF only</td>
<td>7.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Information status as new/given and old/recent is relevant
Reference management

• **Average Topic Persistence**
  • Number of clauses to the right, in which the participant continues an uninterrupted presence as a semantic argument of the clause, marked overtly or not. *(Givón 1983)*
  • Comparable in the three constructions
  • Degree of topicality not relevant (?)

• **Reference management**
  • Verbal classifier with an associated noun (S, O or Obl)
  • Verbal classifier without an associated noun (S, O or Obl)
Reference management with an associated NP

- Functions:
  - first mention of a participant
  - new mention of an old participant

(5) \( t(a)-\text{appú-}'e-ko \quad pjuena \quad s-ju'e \quad \text{CLF=S} \)
  
  3NH\-swell-\text{CLF:convex}\-\text{ACT} \quad \text{DEM} \quad 3F\-stomach
  
  ‘Her stomach swelled.’ T_12_009

(6) \( ta-\text{ni-k-}'o \quad \text{to} \quad 'santi \quad \text{CLF=O} \)
  
  3NH\-burn-\text{CLF:path}\-\text{ACT} \quad \text{ART.NH} \quad \text{field}
  
  ‘It (the fire) burns the field.’ T_21_032

(7) \( t-eja-\text{me-re-ko} \quad te \quad pjo \quad ñi-ye'e \quad estera \quad \text{CLF=OBL} \)
  
  3-sit-\text{CLF:}f\text{abric}\-\text{PLURACT-}\text{ACT} \quad \text{PREP} \quad \text{DEM} \quad 3M-GPN \quad \text{mat}
  
  ‘The man is (fabric)-sitting on his mat.’ Traj_S_51
Reference management without associated NP

- Functions:
  - introduction of new non-topical participants
  - mention of given participants ('anaphoric use').

(8)  

```
SUB  3-be.clear-CLF:atmo=PFV
```
When it was day time,… (lit. when the environment was clear) T_11_006

(9)  

```
3PL-put-ACT=PFV  ART.NH  straw  3PL-step_on-CLF:amorph-ACT=PFV
```
They put the straw, they step on it. T_24_078

(10)  

```
ART.NH  year  55  1SG-go_out-CLF:path-ACT=PFV
```
‘In the year 55, I left (the military service).’ 9_017
2- Referent identification

When the associated noun is not expressed within the same sentence, how does the classifier help identifying the referent? Or disambiguating between potential referents?
Referent identification

• Important question
  • 80% of V-CLF without associated noun

• The classifier participates in referent retrieval in three manners:
  • Inference on the situation within the discourse
  • Inference on the speech event
  • Interpretation as a kind, or as a prototype
Referent identification 1-Inference on the situation

• Straightforward cases of anaphora: CLF identifies with previous coreferential expression in the discourse

(13) \( \text{pjor-jo-jno} \quad \text{parawa-tataji,} \quad \text{w-cho-}'i'-gi-a \quad \text{v-ni-gi-a.} \)

\begin{align*}
\text{DEM-EXI-again} & \quad \text{ara-DESP} & \quad 1\text{PL-pluck-CLF:fruit-ACT-IRR} & \quad 1\text{PL-eat-ACT-IRR} \\
\text{w-cho-}'i'-gi-a=a'i=ni & \quad \text{v-ijro-k-a=ri'i=ni} & \quad \text{psuro wrinko} & \quad \text{gringa} \\
1\text{PL-pluck-CLF:fruit-ACT-IRR=IPFV=FRUST} & \quad 1\text{PL-eat-ACT-IRR=IPFV=FRUST DEM} & \quad \text{gringa} \\
\end{align*}

‘There again is this fucking ara, we should pluck it and eat it. If we had plucked it, we would have given it to that foreign woman (for her to eat it so that she becomes talkative).’ T_29_049/050
Referent identification

• Cases without overt antecedent
  • Inference on the situation within the discourse

(14) $t$-kucho-$ku$-‘$a$-vi
    3-wait-$\text{CLF:}path$-ACT-IRR-1PL
    ‘It is waiting for us (on the path).’ [trip in the forest] T_30_052

(15) $t$-mopku-$mo$=$ri'i$=$ni$
    3-be$_{dark}$-$\text{CLF:}fabric$=IPFV=FRUST
    ‘it (the sky) was dark (in vain)’. [Preceding context: It's going to be night again", he said [...] T_19_053
Referent identification

• Or inference through metonymy (bridging or indirect metaphor)

(16) ene t-ko-siop-si-k-wo=po ta-ye’e.
   and 3-CAUS-enter-clf:sphere-ACT-MID=PFV 3NH-PREP
   ‘And it put its head into it.’ T_18_015
Referent identification 2- Exophoric retrieval

• = located deictically in the context of the speech event.

(17)  \textit{v-eja-pue-gi-a}  \\
\textit{1PL-sit-\textbf{CLF.ground}-ACT-IRR}  \\
‘Let’s sit on the ground!’ T_24_099
Referent identification 3- Retrieval as a ‘kind’, or as a prototype

• “Kind” of entity as a vague but sufficient interpretation

(18) ŋi-k-ana-e-k=pu=iji to ‘chope merómero
3M-CAUS-cross-CLF:liquid-ACT=PFV=RPT ART.NH big caiman
‘He said he made the great caiman to cross (the body of liquid).’ T_19_170

(19) takepo ty-uch-ku-'om=po to po-mri-ono sap-gira-no
after 3-go_out-CLF:path-ACT-PL=PFV ART.NH other-CLF:group toad-DIM-PL
‘Then other toads went out (of the river, of the trunk?).’ T_11_040
Referent identification

• Translation task of classifiers: a prototypical member of the class, depending on the lexical verb.

(20) s-an-ku-’o
  3F-cross-CLF:path-ACT
  ‘She is crossing a river, a street.’

(21) n-siop-ku-’o
  1SG-enter-CLF:path-ACT
  ‘I enter an empty house.’

(22) na-ech-ku-’=po
  3PL-cut-CLF:path-ACT=PFV
  ‘They cut down (forest into a field).’

(23) n-ko-sip-ku
  1SG-MID-wash-CLF:path
  ‘I wash my vagina.’
3- Re-presentation of referents

How are classifiers used in giving different representations of the same referent?
Re-presentation of referents

• The same noun may be categorized differently.
• The same referent may be categorized differently.
• Recategorization within the discourse:
  • When the physical properties of the referent evolve through time
  • When the speaker adopts a different perspective on the same referent.
• Reference tracking and qualification of referent done simultaneously.
Re-presentation of referents

(24) n-escho to sawari-omo, éto-na kchara
   1SG-give_drink ART.NH tobacco-CLF:liquid one-CLF:hum spoon

   to sawari-omo [to n-nu-j-re]_REL
   ART.NH tobacco-CLF:liquid ART.NH 1SG-chew-CLF:amorph-PAT.NZ

‘I gave her to drink some tobacco juice, one spoon of tobacco, the one
that I had chewed.’ T_12_014

*Transformation of the referent*
Re-presentation of referents

(25) n-om-a jmani pak-tataj-ono t-ijane-mo-no Perspective shift

1SG-take-IRR DEM dog-DESP-PL 3-stink-CLF:fabric-PL

‘They (the men) could take (for a hunt) these fucking (skinny) dogs that stink.’ 29.042

29.043: ‘Here they don’t do anything, this is why they (the men) would have shaken them (the dogs) up there.’

[dogs referred to with -mo classifier for dogs]

29.044 ‘They (the dogs) are here lying next to us, we never eat what they hunt.’

[dogs referred to with subject person prefixes on verbs]

eto n(a)-om-muu-'a=a'i=ni

3NH 3PL-take-CLF:group-ACT-IRR=IPFV=FRUST

‘They (the men) could have taken the dogs (as a group).’ T_29_045
Functions of classifiers on verbs - Summary

• Not an agreement system
  • Not obligatory
  • Selection by the speaker
  • Use for discourse management
• Derivational function not important
• Functions related to discourse
  • Reference management
  • Reference identification
  • Re-presentation of referents
• Discourse functions most salient on verbs
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ART</td>
<td>article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAUS</td>
<td>causative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLF</td>
<td>classifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEM</td>
<td>demonstrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DESP</td>
<td>despective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIM</td>
<td>diminutive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXI</td>
<td>existential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>feminine (singular)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRUST</td>
<td>frustrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPN</td>
<td>generic possessive noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPFV</td>
<td>imperfective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRR</td>
<td>irrealis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MID</td>
<td>middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NH</td>
<td>non-human</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFV</td>
<td>perfective</td>
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<tr>
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<td>patient nominalizer</td>
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References


References 2


