

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-ító-gi* *to* *wkugi*
3-be_bare-**CLF:cyl** ART.NH tree
'The trunk of the tree is bare.' elicited

(2) *t-ító-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)

<i>-na</i>	CLF.hum	human
<i>-gi</i> <i>-gie</i>	CLF.cyl	1D, cylindrical
<i>-pi</i>	CLF.fili	1D, narrow, long, thin and flexible
<i>-mo</i> <i>-me</i>	CLF.fabric	2D, flat, large and generally flexible
<i>-si</i>	CLF.sphere	3D, sphere

Table 1. Selection of CLF with gloss and definition

<i>-omo</i> <i>-e</i>	CLF.liquid	liquid
<i>-ku</i>	CLF.path	space between parallel boundaries
<i>-muri</i>	CLF.group	group
<i>-miro</i>	CLF.face	face

Classifiers on verbs

- Associated participant:

	Mojeño	Typology
S of intransitive verbs	22%	Cross-linguistically common
O of transitive verbs	45%	
Obliques	23%	Rarely described

- Applicative function: promoting an oblique as a core argument
 - *Paper to appear in [Linguistic Typology](#).*
- 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

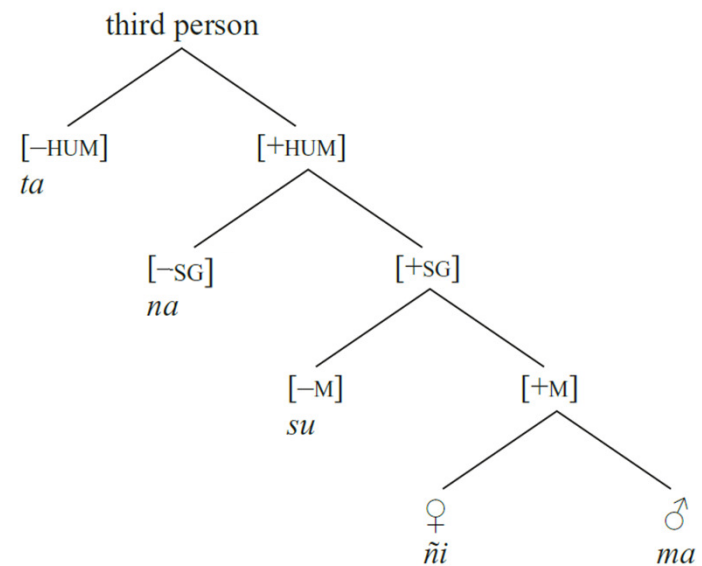


Fig. 1: Semantic sub-categorization of third person.

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-ijr-omo*
ART.NH 3-be_hot-CLF:liquid
'the breakfast/dinner' elicited

(4) *to* *y-moko-ji*
ART.NH 1PL-sleep-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**)

N only 12,69

CLF + N 10,83

CLF only 7,55

- 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)	<i>t(a)-appú-'e-ko</i> 3NH-swell- CLF:convex -ACT	<i>pjuena</i> DEM	<i>s-ju'e</i> 3F-stomach	CLF=S		
	'Her stomach swelled.' T_12_009					
(6)	<i>ta-ni-k-'o</i> 3NH-burn- CLF:path -ACT	<i>to</i> ART.NH	<i>'santi</i> field	CLF=O		
	'It (the fire) burns the field.' T_21_032					
(7)	<i>t-eja-me-re-ko</i> 3-sit- CLF:fabric -PLURACT-ACT	<i>te</i> PREP	<i>pjo</i> DEM	<i>ñi-ye'e</i> 3M-GPN	<i>estera</i> mat	CLF=OBL
	'The man is (fabric)-sitting on his mat.' Traj_S_51					

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) *pjor-jo-jno* *parawa-tataji*, *w-cho-'i-gi-a* *v-ni-gi-a*.
DEM-EXI-again ara-DESP 1PL-pluck-**CLF:fruit**-ACT-IRR 1PL-eat-ACT-IRR

w-cho-'i-gi-a=a'i=ni *v-ijro-k-a=ri'i=ni* *psuro wrinko*
1PL-pluck-**CLF:fruit**-ACT-IRR=IPFV=FRUST 1PL-eat-ACT-IRR=IPFV=FRUST DEM gringa

'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-**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-**CLF:abric**=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 metaphora)

(16) *ene t-ko-siop-si-k-wo=po*

and 3-CAUS-enter-**CLF:sphere**-ACT-MID=PFV

'And it put its head into it.' T_18_015

ta-ye'e.

3NH-PREP

Referent identification 2- Exophoric retrieval

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

(17) *v-eja-pue-gi-a*

1PL-sit-**CLF.ground**-ACT-IRR

'Let's sit on the ground!' T_24_099

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.'

(22) *na-ech-ku-'=po*

3PL-cut-**CLF:path**-ACT=PFV

'They cut down (forest into a field).'

(21) *n-siop-ku-'o*

1SG-enter-**CLF:path**-ACT

'I enter an empty house.'

(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:abric**-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

ACT	active	IPFV	imperfective
ART	article	IRR	irrealis
CAUS	causative	MID	middle
CLF	classifier	NH	non-human
DEM	demonstrative	PFV	perfective
DESP	despective	PL	plural
DIM	diminutive	PLURACT	pluractional
EXI	existential	PREP	preposition
F	feminine (singular)	SG	singular
FRUST	frustrative	PAT.NZ	patient nominalizer
GPN	generic possessive noun		

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