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Metonymic Coercion and Relativization

Yuki-Shige Tamura

1. Introduction

A series of studies by Shibatani (2009, 2014) and Shibatani et al. (2014) have made a claim that we have to advance the notion of *nominalization* for better grammatical and typological characterizations of languages beyond linguistic descriptions that have been explicitly or implicitly based on those of Standard European languages (cf. Croft 2001). One essential point of Shibatani's proposal, analyzing Asian and European languages, is that we should introduce the notion of nominalization in place of that of traditionally-employed relative clause (or its equivalent) so that we could provide proper characterizations for the huge diversity cross-linguistically observed in such an area of grammar. The aim of this article is to support Shibatani's theory of nominalization with an exploration of the American languages of Eskimo and Athabaskan. Furthermore, we attempt to bring forth a cognitive-grammar motivation for the problem of why the notion of nominalization could be considered better for the linguistic analysis than the traditional idea of relative-clause formation, proposing an idea of *metonymic coercion* that presumably works, to a greater or lesser extent, for every nominal construal.

In the next section, we will first observe the essential characteristics of the Eskimo and Athabaskan counterparts of "adjectives" and "relative clauses," clarifying the issue of why the traditional notion of relative clause could be considered as insufficient to capture the relevant linguistic facts. In section 3, then, our framework of Shibatani's theory of nominalization will be reviewed, accompanied by a complementary discussion on how Shibatani's classification of nominalization is backed up in the light of the cognitive-grammar characterization of metonymic coercion. Concluding remarks are provided in section 4.

2. Essential Characteristics of Eskimo and Athabaskan "adjective" and "relative clause"

One interesting formal characteristic of Eskimo languages and Athabaskan languages is that they both have no parts of speech of adjective, no relative pronouns, and no particular grammatical construction used only for the relative-clause formation (cf. Fortescue 1984 and Jacobson 1995:250, 254 for Eskimo languages; Sapir 1923:136–7, Young and Morgan 1980, and Willie 1989:419 for Athabaskan languages). In other words, as will be shown below, the two languages have no linguistic strategy specialized for relativization such as English relative-clause construction. The aim of this section is to show the way the adjectival notion and the relative-clausal notion observed in, for instance, English are expressed grammatically in the two languages. In particular, we will pay attention to the fact that in these two languages, essentially the same formal strategy is employed for the four types of linguistic coding traditionally called "adjective," "headed relative clause," "headless relative clause," and

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|--------|--------------|------------|------------|------|-------------------------------------|
| | see-IND.1s3s | boat | fast-NMNL | (ii) | 'I saw the boat (that went) fast.' |
| c. | Tangrr-aqa | cuka-lria. | | (i) | 'I saw the fast thing.' |
| | see-IND.1s3s | | fast-NMNL | (ii) | 'I saw the thing (that went) fast.' |
| (4) a. | Tangrr-aqa | qimugta. | | | 'I saw the dog.' |
| | see-IND.1s3s | dog | | | |
| b. | Tangrr-aqa | qimugta | qilu-lria. | (i) | 'I saw the barking dog.' |
| | see-IND.1s3s | dog | bark-NMNL | (ii) | 'I saw the dog that was barking.' |
| c. | Tangrr-aqa | qilu-lria. | | (i) | 'I saw the barking (one).' |
| | see-IND.1s3s | | bark-NMNL | (ii) | 'I saw the one that was barking.' |

Furthermore, as shown in (3c) and (4c), nominalized verbal forms with *-lria* can be utilized as a direct object without the head nouns, which suggests that the form itself should be regarded as a full-fledged noun, while it may express some temporal state as shown in interpretation (ii) (Caan Toopeltlook p.c.). Finally, as exemplified in (5) below, some nominalized verbal forms with *-lria* have been lexicalized so that they can be interpreted as a simple noun: (5c) shows that *akalria* can be suffixed by the third-person possessive marker, *-(ng)a* like possessive forms of other simple nouns such as *pani-a* 'her/his daughter' and *naca-a* 'his/her hat.'

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|--------|----------------|---------------|----|----------|------------------------------|
| (5) a. | akag- | 'to roll' | b. | aka-lria | (i)'the one that is rolling' |
| | roll-NMNL | | | | (ii) 'car' |
| c. | aka-lria-nga | 'his/her car' | | | |
| | roll-NMNL-3s3s | | | | |

In sum, nominalized verbal forms with *-lria* can, with a single form, indicate the three grammatical functions expressed by English adjective, (headed) relative clauses as in (3b) and (4b), and headless relative clause as in (3c) and (4c). Furthermore, with the process of lexicalization, the form can also be utilized for deverbal-noun formation as in (5).

2.2. Navajo (an Athabaskan)

Let us start with the following quotation from Sapir (1923): "As is well known by students of Athabaskan linguistics, the Athabaskan adjective is in form a verb," (p. 136). Broadly surveying Athabaskan languages, Sapir (1923) reports that when enclitic *-e* is attached to a verbal stem, the form produced can be construed as expressing an adjectival notion, as exemplified in (6). Note that we call this enclitic *-e* "Athabaskan relative suffix," following Sapir (1923:136).

- | | | | | |
|-----|--------|----------|--------------------|-------------------|
| (6) | dles | gin-e | 'melttable grease' | |
| | grease | melt-REL | | Sapir (1923: 137) |

Furthermore, Sapir (1923) accounts for the fact that this verbal form with the Athabaskan relative suffix can be employed without head nouns so that the form can refer to a referent on its own, as shown in (7) and (8).

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|--------|---------|--------------|----|-----------|--------------------------|
| (7) a. | de-l-ba | 'to be gray' | b. | de-l-ba-e | 'the gray one' |
| (8) a. | -ts'ay | 'to cry' | b. | ts'ay-e | (i) 'the whimpering one' |

(ii) ‘grumbler’ Sapir (1923: 137)

In addition, from the second meaning shown in (8b), it is clearly the case that the verbal form with the Athabaskan relative suffix plays a role in producing lexicalized deverbal nouns; another example is given in (9) below.

(9) a. -k’wε ‘to lie habitually’ b. -k’wε-e ‘lier’ Sapir (1923: 137)

Concerning the formation of relative-clause counterparts in Navajo, Young and Morgan (1980:55) and Willie (1989:413) suggest that Navajo has four relative enclitics, -í, -íí, -ígíí and -éę, which are all regarded as sharing the same etymology with the Athabaskan relative suffix above (Sapir 1923:139), and the latter two enclitics are in particular utilized for “clausal relativization.” Now let us consider the following three examples to learn the essential properties of Navajo’s relative clause counterpart:

(10) a. 'ashkii [at'éeéd yizts'osy-éę] yałtí'
 boy girl yi:kissed-REL 3sS:speak

‘The boy who kissed the girl is speaking.’

(Willie 1989:419, minor modification added for clarification)

b. [at'éeéd yizts'osy-éę] yałtí'
 girl yi:kissed-REL 3sS:speak

‘The one who kissed the girl is speaking.’

(The one such that he kisses the girl –he is speaking.)

(Willie 1989:417, minor modification added for clarification)

c. nahacha-gíí t'óó 'ahoyóí
 3S:hopping-REL too many

‘There are too many grasshoppers.’ (Literary: ones who hop”)

(Willie 1989:413, minor modification added)

Example (10a) and (10b) are considered as Athabaskan counterparts of the headed relative clause and the headless relative clause, respectively, and exactly the same phrase of *at'éeéd yizts'osy-éę*, which is bracketed is employed in both of the examples; it can be employed with or without the antecedent noun. In addition, example (10c) shows ambiguity of the interpretation of the verbal form suffixed by -ígíí (an Athabaskan relative suffix): one is a lexicalized sense of hopping, i.e. ‘grasshoppers,’ and the other is a reading of a headless relative clause like (10b), i.e. ‘the ones who hop.’

The point here is that just as in examples (7) to (9), the verbal form with Athabaskan relative suffix, -e, can be employed for the three ways of the adjectival use with the head noun, of the independent referential use without the head noun, and of lexicalized use, so in (10), the verbal form with the Navajo variants of Athabaskan relative suffix can be utilized for the three ways: the counterparts of relative clause with the head noun and of relative clause without the head noun, and lexicalized use. Arguing against the line of generative-grammar analyses that assumes PRO in the clause created by the Navajo verbal forms with the variants of Athabaskan relative suffix, Willie (1989) suggests that the verbal form itself can have an independent

referential function, examining various types of examples including (10b) and (10c).

In sum, Willie's argument and our observation here may lead to the following idea on Athabaskan relative suffixes: they may be traditionally considered as the marker of relativization that creates adjectival or relative-clause counterparts in Navajo (e.g. Sapir 1923:f.4). However, if we remove the theoretical bias that Navajo must have a construction specialized for relativization like English, the Athabaskan relative suffixes should be considered as functioning as a nominalization marker exactly like CAY's *-lria* shown in 2.1; the verbal forms in the two languages share the essential properties of (i) independently referring to a referent without the antecedent noun: (3c) and (4c) for CAY and (10b) and (10c) for Navajo, (ii) serving as potential sources of lexicalized nouns: (5) for CAY and (8b) and (10c) for Navajo. Furthermore, given that (i) and (ii) are a valid analysis, it should be reasonable to suppose that Navajo's example of (10), i.e. headed relative-clause counterpart, instantiates appositive construction of the two nominals like CAY's examples of (2) and (4b).

2.3. Implications

Now we may encounter a theoretical question of why the two languages observed above employ essentially the same coding strategy to express the grammatical notions that have traditionally been handled under the four independent categories of adjective, headed relative clause, headless relative clause, and deverbal noun. For further clarification, let us briefly review Croft's (1991) functional characterization of grammatical categories as shown in Table 1 below:

	Reference	Modification	Predication
Objects	UNMARKED NOUNS	genitive, adjecti- valizations, PP's on nouns	predicate nominals
Properties	deadjectival nouns	UNMARKED ADJECTIVES	predicate adjectives
Actions	action nominals, complements, infinitives, gerunds	participles, relative clauses	UNMARKED VERBS

Table 1. Functional Characterization of Grammatical Categories (Croft 1991:67)

Croft (1991) attempts to account for grammatical categories in terms of the two parameters of grammatical function and ontology: the former parameter is shown horizontally with the factors of reference, modification and predication, and the latter is indicated vertically with the factors of objects, properties, and actions. Furthermore, the generally assumed grammatical categories are allocated between the two parameters. Following Table 1, the grammatical categories

concerned here are specified as follows: (i) relative clauses inherently show the grammatical function of modification and the ontological status of action; (ii) adjectivalization of modification and objects; and (iii) action nominals (deverbal nouns) of reference and actions. While we may accept the essence of Croft's functional characterization of grammatical categories, we also realize that Table 1 would not give us an answer for the issue of why the two grammatical functions of reference and modification are expressed in a single coding strategy in the Eskimo and Athabaskan languages as observed above. This lack of characterization leads us to ask for a higher-order category to motivate the Eskimo and Athabaskan bipartite system; and the higher-order category will be the theoretical construct of nominalization that was proposed by Shibatani (2009, 2014).

3. Nominalization and Metonymic Coercion

The aim of this section is to provide an answer for the issue presented in the previous section: what cognitive-functional principle motivates the bipartite system of reference and modification observed in the Eskimo and Athabaskan languages. For that purpose, we first outline the theory of nominalization proposed by Shibatani (2009, 2014) and then, we propose an idea referred to here as metonymic coercion.

3.1. Nominalization

Examining many Asian and European languages, Shibatani argues that the "grammatical category that is generally called relative clause (or its equivalent) should be regarded as the modification function of nominalization" (Shibatani 2014:118, my translation). With example (11), let us elucidate the nucleus of Shibatani's theory on nominalization.

(11) Marry a man [who you love \emptyset].

Shibatani (2014:3) first argues against the generative-grammar tradition that regards relative clauses as a type of sentence, i.e. *S*; some illocutionary force such as assertion or command conveying the speaker's intention always accompanies sentences uttered. However, such an illocutionary force is never observed in, for instance, the relative clause part of [*who you love \emptyset*] in (11). When we characterize the relative clause with a functional perspective, we would obtain the function of modification rather than that of assertion or similar. Furthermore, consider the example below:

(12) Marry [who you love \emptyset].

In English, the same relative clause can be employed without the antecedent noun, which suggests that the relative clause may on its own instantiate some referential function like nominals.

What Shibatani suggests, analyzing Asian and European languages, is that linguistics fails to propose a proper descriptive notion for grammatical phenomena that at the level of syntax, one type of (complex) construction can be utilized for both reference and modification just like

nouns at the level of word class. Let us have a look at Table 2.

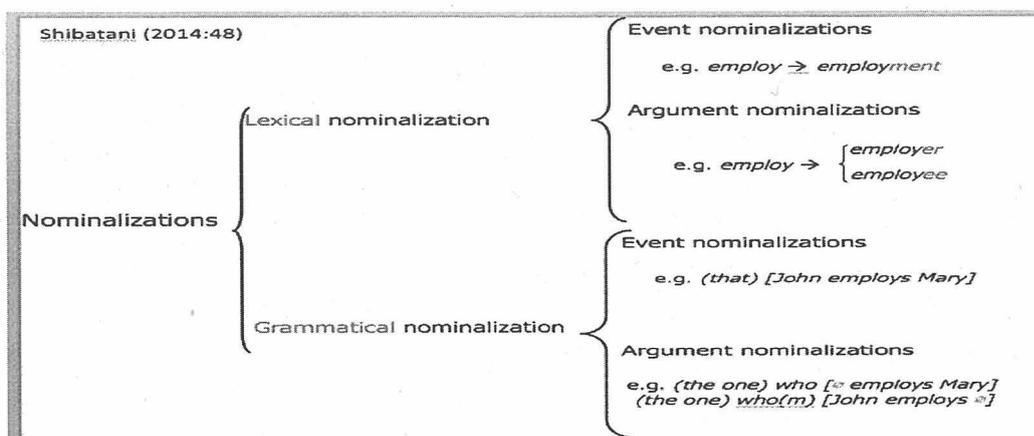


Table 2. Classification of Nominalization (A simplified version of Shibatani 2014: 48)

Table 2 indicates that the notion of nominalization is assumed as a superordinate category, and traditional constructions such as relative clause and complement clause are classified as its subcategories, i.e. as grammatical nominalization. The classification based on grammatical function captures the fact that as lexical nouns can be employed for both functions of modification and reference such as (i) *cotton mill, cotton*, (ii) *a fire fly, fire*, and (iii) *a bus stop, a bus*, relative clauses and complement clauses can also be utilized for the two functions. Recall here that in the tradition of generative grammar, the latter two constructions are grouped together under the label of sentences (e.g. *CP, TP, or S*), and the functional commonality between lexical nominalization and grammatical nominalization has been considered less serious, or totally ignored.

Now let us return to the Eskimo and Athabaskan languages observed above. Our issues proposed in the previous sections were: why the same formal strategy is employed for the four types of linguistic coding traditionally called “adjective,” “headed relative clause,” “headless relative clause,” and “deverbal noun,” and why it shows the bipartite system of reference and modification. Shibatani’s (2014) nominalization leads us to suggest that the grammar of the two languages just responds to the functional parameter of nominalization; without it, the two languages would seem to employ one coding strategy in an inconsistent manner, letting it stretch over several unrelated grammatical categories. Our data and analysis of the Eskimo and Athabaskan languages should support Shibatani’s (2009, 2014) theoretical claim that the grammatical category of nominalization should be postulated not to miss important cross-linguistic and typological generalizations.

3.2. Metonymic Coercion

Given the analysis on nominalization, one question remains: what cognitive principle motivates the grammatical function of nominalization? In other words, our final issue is to discuss why nominalized forms, whether they are lexical or grammatical, show the bipartite function of reference and modification. Shibatani (2014:118) suggests that nominalization is underlain by a cognitive process of metonymy; the nominalized form of [*who you love* \emptyset] in (11) and (12), for instance, can obtain a certain referent because, in English, a strategy of gapping is utilized as a conventionalized means, i.e. a reference point for metonymy, to pay attention to a missing participant in the overall event concept invoked by event nominalization. If the referent is further elaborated linguistically like [[*a man*] [*who you love* \emptyset]] in (11), the appositional nominal phrase is introduced in which the former nominal, *a man*, serves as the head nominal of the compound nominal; otherwise, as in (12), the referent is determined by context.

Agreeing with the idea that nominalization is underlain by metonymy, however, we have to further expand on the role of metonymy in the nominal construal in order to solve the problem of why the bipartite system of predication and modification is observed cross-linguistically as part of grammar in many languages (or perhaps universally). For this purpose, we shall propose the following principle as a fundamental aspect of nominal construal, which is inspired by Jackendoff's (2012) and Langacker's (2008) ideas on cognitive construal:

(13) Metonymic coercion is inherent in every nominal construal.

What (13) indicates is that every nominal construal, whether it is a simple noun or a grammaticalized nominalized-form, accompanies some conceptual adjustment in targeting a referent.

To clarify the way the concept proposed in (13) works, let us here consider Jackendoff's (2012) idea of *enriched compositionality* as summarized in (14) below:

(14) "The meaning of a compound expression (a phrase, sentence, or discourse) is a function of the meanings of its parts, of the grammatical rules by which they are combined— and of other stuff,"

(Jackendoff 2012:61, my underline, cf. Langacker's 2000 partial compositionality)

With the idea of enriched compositionality, Jackendoff (2012) makes a claim that while linguistics explicitly or implicitly follows the idea of Fregean compositionality: "the meaning of a phrase or a sentence is made up of the meaning of its words, and the grammatical structure tells how to paste the word meaning together" (p.62), the language in actual use hardly shows such an integrity, and it always goes together with "other stuff" that beyond linguistic forms. For instance, consider examples (15) below:

(15) a. Plato is there on the top shelf, next to Wittgenstein. [Plato= a book of Plato]

b. Let's check out the wax museum. They have the Beatles on display.

[the Beatles= statues of the Beatles]

c. [One waitress says to another] The ham sandwich in the corner wants some coffee.

[ham sandwich=person who ordered/who's eating a ham sandwich]

(Jackendoff 2012:67, my underlines cf. Lakoff and Johnson 1980)

In (15) the nominals underlined are taken as those indicated in the brackets. If we accept the Fregean compositionality, following Jackendoff (2012), we have to assume that, for instance, in (15a), the noun phrase *a book of Plato* is first postulated linguistically, and the head part of the phrase, *a book of*, is then deleted. The point made by Jackendoff's enriched compositionality is that rather than postulating such an extra formal operation for the nominal construal of (15), it is natural to suppose that, as "other stuff," some cognitive process, reference transfer/metonymy in this case, always works together to make out what meaning is intended by linguistic forms uttered.

Now let us go back to our issue of why the nominalized form shows the bipartite system of reference and modification. Given Jackendoff's observation above and a series of works of Langacker on the nature of construal and reference point ability (e.g. Langacker 1991:ch.3, 2008:ch.3), every construal accompanies some cognitive adjustments. Not only does the construal in examples (15) accompany some metonymic interpretation, but even in that of a simple nominal like *John has a dog* the target referent is accessed via a type concept of *dog* rather than accessed directly. With the broad application of the function of metonymy, we can say that metonymic adjustment, i.e. the metonymic coercion to create a force to choose a contextually proper referent among potential candidates, is immanent of nominal construal. Whether or not the metonymic relationship is expressed overtly or covertly depends on how much information the speaker and hearer share. The less information they share, the more linguistic forms are required to get the referent identification to go smoothly; the modification part of the noun phrase such as adjectives or relative clauses is considered a linguistic realization of conceptual lubrication for the referent identification. On the other hand, the more information they share, the less linguistic forms are required; pronouns as the least value may be employed when the referent is already identified between the speaker and hearer. This implies that the two notions of reference and modification have the same cognitive function of targeting a referent. In other words, the function of modification does not conceptually separate itself from the function of reference, but the former constitutes a vital part of the latter, which underlies the reason why not a few languages can employ the same coding strategy for reference and modification.

4. Concluding Remarks

The aim of this article was to advance Shibatani's theory of nominalization with an exploration of the American languages of Eskimo and Athabaskan. After observing the essential characteristics of the Eskimo and Athabaskan counterparts of adjectives and relative clauses, we discussed the issue of why the traditional notion of relative clause could be considered as insufficient to capture the relevant linguistic facts. In particular, to provide an answer for the issue of why the two grammatical functions of reference and modification are

expressed with a single coding strategy in the Eskimo and Athabaskan languages, we proposed the notion of metonymic coercion with the aim of refining the theoretical notion of nominalization.

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