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# **Stable Grammatical Marking and Denominalization: A Special Attention to Central Alaskan Yup'ik**

Yuki-Shige Tamura

## **1. Introduction**

It is well known that many languages develop independent-clause markings from original verbs that are regarded as having been nominalized. For instance, the current Japanese finite, or conclusive, form of predicates is thought to have come from the adnominal form in classical Japanese (e.g. Aoki (2012)). And it has been pointed out that in Tibeto-Burman languages, nominalized clauses gave rise to independent clauses that now show the indicative mood (e.g. Matisoff (1972); DeLancy (2012)). Furthermore, Eskimo languages also seem to follow the same type of grammaticalization path as shown in the following quote from Bergsland (1997):

- (1) “The Eskimo participles, marked by partly different suffixes in the different languages and dialects, have a close affinity to the indicative. Forms that are participial in one dialect (e.g. West Greenlandic) may be indicative in another (e.g. Alaskan Inupiaq), and within the same dialect participles may be used as independent predicates, possibly with some special force (e.g. exclamation) or as a simple past (see, for example Jacobson 1995:382f, 1988:57).” (Bergsland 1997:353)

This cross-linguistic tendency provides us with a simple but substantive question: why do languages show a path of grammaticalization in which verbs (i.e. predicates) change into nouns with nominalization (nominals), and why do the nominalized verbs return back to "verbal" predicates? As to why this "denominalization" occurs, a definitive theory or principle has yet to be put forth in the literature (Tamura (2014); (2015)). One major reason may be that we have not accumulated enough relevant data for the cross-linguistic generalization; we seem to need further investigation into the form-meaning correlations (i.e. iconic motivations (Haiman (1983)) observed in this grammatical process in which deverbal, nominalized forms are reinterpreted again as a (part of the) predicate.

Based on essential grammatical descriptions on Central Alaskan Yup'ik (an Eskimo-Aleut) by Jacobson (1982; 1995), this research note observes that pronominal marking could serve as a major formal cue to shifting construal from that of nominals to that of predicates. In particular, employing the typological notion of head/independent marking proposed by Nichols (1986), we shall suggest that in terms of pronominal grammatical marking, Central Alaskan Yup'ik (hereafter CAY) shows a “release” from the pressure of stable grammatical pattern in the process of the development of nominalized verbs to predicates. As shown in the next section, CAY displays a grammatical preference for the double-marking strategy. However, we will maintain that the language employs a head-marking strategy in certain limited contexts of subordination (cf. Jacobson (1982)), and the deviation from the standard marking pattern corresponds to a shift in construal of the nominalized

verbs from their nominal construal to predicative construal. Thus, the formal property of pronominal marking can provide an iconic motivation for the denominalization. This research note follows the original insight and descriptions on CAY subordination proposed by Jacobson (1982), and our focus here is directed to the issue of how these grammatical characteristics are captured more in general from a perspective of cognitive-functional linguistics (e.g. Nichols (1986) and Langacker (2008)).

## 2. Morphological Marking Patterns and Stable Grammatical Marking

Nichols (1986) cross-linguistically examines the way grammatical relationships, i.e. asymmetrical dependency relationships observed in various constituents, are marked morphologically, and she suggests that “languages display a tendency to use one type consistently throughout their grammar” (Nichols (1986:56)). The aim of this section is to review the typology of morphological marking proposed by Nichols (1986), and to assure that CAY utilizes the double marking strategy as its dominant means of expressing grammatical relationships, though the system employed may be considered cross-linguistically rare.

Nichols (1986) indicates that the marking strategies on grammatical relations can be grouped into two major types: (i) dependent-marking patterns and (ii) head-marking patterns. The former is exemplified in (2) and the latter in (3) below, respectively:

(2) Chechen:

da:- <sup>M</sup> s	woʃa- <sup>M</sup> na	urs- <sup>M</sup> ø	<sup>H</sup> tu:xira
father-ERG	son-DAT	knife-NOM	struck

'The father stabbed the son.' (lit. 'father struck son with knife')

(Nichols 1986:61)

(3) Tzutujil:

x- <sup>M</sup> ø- <sup>M</sup> kee- <sup>H</sup> tij	tzyaq	ch'ooyaa <sup>7</sup> .
ASP-3sg.-3pl.-ate	clothes	rats

'Rats ate the clothes.'

(Nichols 1986:61)

Let us pay attention here to the way the argument-verb relationship (a grammatical relation) is coded, in which relationship verbs are regarded as head, and arguments as dependent (the difference is shown by superscripts *H* and *M* in the examples above). In Chechen in (2), the information on the grammatical relationship is marked on the nouns, employing case markers such as ergative, dative and nominative; the verb *tu:xira* bears no overt coding itself about the information of its dependent arguments. On the other hand, in Tzutujil in (3), the grammatical information on arguments is realized on the verb as shown in *-ø-* and *-kee-*; the nouns, however, show no morphological marking on their relationship to the head of the constituent.

While these two marking patterns are cross-linguistically dominant, Nichols (1986) also touches on two other types of marking strategy, though they are typologically much less familiar: (iii) no morphological marking employed either on heads or dependents, and (iv) double-marking

patterns in which a grammatical relation is marked on both the head and dependent. Example (4) below is an example of double-marking patterns.

(4) Turkish:

ev-<sup>M</sup>in                      <sup>H</sup>kapi-<sup>M</sup>si  
house-GEN                  door-3s

'the door of the house.'

(Nichols 1986:65)

In example (4), in which the grammatical constituent of the possessor-possessioned relationship is expressed, the grammatical information is morphologically marked both on the dependent noun with *-in* and on the head noun with *-si*.

As quoted in the first paragraph of this section, Nichols suggests that languages tend to favor one type of coding strategy throughout their grammar. For instance, Japanese grammar shows a strong preference for the dependent marking patterns as shown in (5) below:

(5) Japanese:

a. Argument-Predicate Relation:

Boku-<sup>M</sup>ga    tomodati-<sup>M</sup>ni    hana-<sup>M</sup>o                      <sup>H</sup>ageta  
I-SUB                  friend-DAT                  flowers-OBJ                  gave

'I gave flowers to my friend.'

(Nichols (1986:61) cited from Kuno (1972) with minor modification)

b. Possessor-possessioned Relation:

Toro-<sup>M</sup>no                      <sup>H</sup>hon  
Taro-GEN    book                  'Taro's book'

c. Relativization:

Kore-wa                  [watakusi-ga    <sup>M</sup>ø    kaita]                      <sup>H</sup>hon    desu  
this-TOP                  I-SUB                      wrote                  book                  is

'This is a book I have written.'

(Nichols (1986:61) cited from Kuno (1972) with minor modification)

d. Verb-Verb Compounding:

<sup>M</sup>hasiri-<sup>H</sup>dasu  
run.ADV-start.CONCLUSIVE  
'start to run'

In all the four types of grammatical relation shown in (5), the head of each constituent bears no marking on the relevant grammatical information at all. Thus, following Nichols (1986), Japanese is considered to be a language in which the dependent-marking pattern is dominant. In other words, the dependent style of morphological marking is employed as the most "stable" strategy to indicate grammatical relations observed in formal constituents.

Now, let us consider what type of coding strategy is stable in CAY. As shown in (6) below, CAY shows a strong preference for the double-marking pattern like an example from Turkish in (4) above (I would like to acknowledge Jacobson (1984; 1995) as the primary source of my knowledge

on CAY).

(6) Central Alaskan Yup'ik<sup>1</sup>:

a. Argument-Predicate Relation:

Angute-<sup>M1</sup>m      angqaq-<sup>M2</sup>∅      <sup>H</sup>kitngig-a-<sup>M1M2</sup>a.  
man-3s.ERG      ball-3s.ABS      kick-TRAN.-3s3s

'The man kicked the ball.'

(Caan Toopetlook and Oscar Alexie, p.c.)

b. Possessor-possessed Relation:

(i) atkuk-∅ 'parka'

parka-3s.ABS

(ii) elitnauriste-<sup>M</sup>m      <sup>H</sup>atku-<sup>MH</sup>a      /      <sup>H</sup>atku-<sup>MH</sup>i  
teacher-3s.ERG      parka-3s3s.ABS      parka-3s3p.ABS  
'the teacher's parka'      /      'the teacher's parkas'

(iii) elitnauriste-<sup>M</sup>t      <sup>H</sup>atku-<sup>MH</sup>at      /      <sup>H</sup>atku-<sup>MH</sup>it  
teacher-3pl.ERG      parka-3pl3s.ABS      parka-3pl3pl.ABS  
'the teachers' parka'      /      'the teachers' parkas'

(Caan Toopetlook and Oscar Alexie, p.c.)

c. Directional/locational Relation:

(i) <sup>M</sup>caqu-<sup>H</sup>mi<sup>M</sup>      (ii) <sup>M</sup>caqu.g-<sup>H</sup>ni<sup>M</sup>  
bag-3s.LOC      bag.dual-dual.LOC  
'in a/the bag'      'in two bags/the two bags'

(iii) <sup>M</sup>caqu-<sup>H</sup>ni<sup>M</sup>      ((?) caqu-<sup>M</sup>t (bag.pl)-nun > caqu-nun)  
bag-3pl.LOC  
'in bags/the bags'

(iv) arna-<sup>H</sup>m<sup>M</sup>      <sup>Mi</sup>[<sup>H</sup>caqu-a<sup>MH</sup>]-<sup>Hi</sup>ni<sup>Mi</sup>  
woman-3s.ERG      bag-3s3s-LOC.POSS

'in the woman's bag'

(Caan Toopetlook and Oscar Alexie, p.c.)

As shown in the three grammatical relations in (6), the relevant grammatical information is marked on both the head and the dependent in each example. It may be true that following Nichols (1986), typologically speaking, languages that extensively rely on the double-marking pattern are rare, but a set of the grammatical facts shown in (6) leads us to judge CAY as one such less-familiar language: the language employs the double-marking pattern as its stable style of grammatical-relation coding.

Before moving onto the topic of CAY nominalization and denominalization, let us briefly review a couple of grammatical characteristics that would be important for our discussion below in section 3. First, as exemplified in (6a) and (6bii), CAY shows a parallel structure between the possessive construction and transitive construction: (i) the possessor of the possessive construction and the A-core argument (Dixon (2010:116)) in the transitive construction are both marked by the ergative case (e.g. *-m* above), which is traditionally called "relative case" in the Eskimo literature.

And (ii) essentially the same pronominal suffixes are attached to the possessed noun and the transitive verb; for instance, both in the transitive verb *kitngig-a-a* in (6a), and in the possessed noun *akut-a* in (6bii), the last pronominal suffix of *-a* is assumed to indicate that the grammatical relationship marked so involves that of the third-person-singular person to third-person-singular person.

Second, in addition to the grammatical number observed in the contrast between (6ci) and (6cii), the semantic case marking such as aplicative, allative or locative also shows a sensitivity to whether its theme is possessed or not: as shown in the contrast between (i) *caqu-mi* 'in the bag' in (6ci), and (ii) *caqu-a-ni* 'in his bag' in (6civ), the possessor-possessioned relationship should be explicitly marked in the word (i.e. *-a-* here) as exemplified in the latter example. In addition, the locative-case allomorphe, *-ni* rather than the unmarked locative form, *-mi*, should be employed to convey that relationship, the form of which is shared with the dual and plural locative case-marking as indicated in (6cii) and (6ciii).

### 3. A Release from Stable Grammatical Marking and Denominalization

Keeping in mind that the double marking strategy is dominant in CAY grammar, let us now consider how closely the double marking pattern correlates with CAY's deverbal nominalization, and its "denominalization" leading to the construal as predicates. We shall observe here, following Jacobson's (1982) descriptions on CAY subordination, that what is "locally" observed is a release from the stable double-marking strategy, i.e. losing the property of dependent marking while keeping that of head marking, and we suggest that it is this unstable grammatical marking that functions as the indicator of the reinterpretation of nominalized verbs as a predicate.

Let us start our discussion on nominalization and denominalization with a pair of examples in (7) below, the contrast of which indicates that the nominalized verbs behave in the same way as common nouns, showing a double marking pattern:

- (7) a. *Pissu-lleq-ø*                      *assik-aqa.*  
 hunt-NMNL-3s.ABS              like-TRAN.IND.1s3s  
 'I like hunting.'

(N.B. the transitive marker *-a-* is phonologically fused with the pronominal suffix)

- b. *angute-m pissu-llr-a-ø*                      *assik-aqa.*  
 man-ERG hunt-NMNL-3s3s-ABS              like-TRAN.IND.1s3s  
 'I like the man's hunting.'

(N.B. the last velar consonant of *pissur-* and the schwa vowel of *-lleq* are not phonologically realized here.) (Caan Toopetlook p.c.)

As shown in (7a), the verb, *pissur-* 'hunt' is nominalized with a nominalizing suffix for actions, *-lleq*, and the main verb, *assik-aqa*, shows the transitive pronominal marking (1s3s), which suggests that *pissu-lleq-ø* is regarded as the O core argument of the transitive construction. Furthermore, it is verified whether *pissu-lleq-ø* is "fully" nominalized or not by example (7b): the

This double marking pattern observed in the set of the characteristics of the nominalized verb with the suffix, *-lleq*, however, is not sustained in the following example, in which only the head-marking pattern is utilized, that of dependent-marking being lost:

- Let us start by focusing on the formal properties expressed in (8). First, the main verb indicates the transitive relationship as shown in *-aqa* of *tange-llru-aqa*. However, its dependent O core argument is not formally marked anywhere against the spirit of double marking: as shown in *pissu-llr-a-ni*, the locative case *-ni* (i.e. semantic, adverbial, case marking) is employed here rather than the structural, absolutive case. Second, while *pissu-llr-a-ni* contains the possessor-possessed pronominal marking *-a*, no noun that bears the ergative case is shown. Thus, example (8) lacks the characteristics of double marking in either formal property that contributes to the indication of nominalized verbs being fully nominalized.

(9) Tange-llru-aqa            angun-ø            pissu-lria-ø  
see-PAST-TRAN.1s3s   man-3s.ABS   hunt-PART.INTRA-3s(or (-NMNL-3s.ABS))  
'I saw the man who was hunting.'  
(Caan Toopetlook p.c.)

What is expressed in (8), on the other hand, is not such a relative-clause reading, but an event construal: example (8) depicts what event the subject saw rather than who he saw (Caan Toopetlook p.c.). This interpretation leads us to suppose that the nominalized verb is no longer construed as a "reified thing," but it now turns itself into a "relational conceptualization" that requires some event participant(s) (Langacker (2008)). In other words, *pissu-llr-a* should now be

Another interesting fact about this "unstable" marking is that CAY moves towards the restoration of its stable double-marking strategy when the conceptual content gets more complicated, i.e. when the transitive construal is required in subordination. And this partial restoration to the double marking pattern further backs up our denominalization analysis above. Consider the following example:

'I saw the man hunted the moose.' (Caan Toopetlook p.c.)

The introduction of another pronominal suffix, *-ku*, makes it clearer that the pronominal suffix *-a*, the head marking part of double marking strategy, no longer fulfills its original function at all; the suffix, *-a* is considered to be fossilized as hinted by Jacobson (1982). As described by Jacobson (1982; 1995), the newly introduced suffix, *-ku*, is generally used together with the verbs in subordinate (i.e. adverbial) verb mood as in (11):

(The example from Jacobson (1995:325), and the morphological information and literal translation are mine.)

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a portmanteaus pronominal suffix indicating the person-number information of the two participants further agglutinates another pronominal suffix showing the information of one of the two participants again (see Matthew (1993:213) and Dixon (2010:16) for general non-recursive characteristics of morphological affixation).

The use of the set of absolutive case and ergative case for *pissu-llr-a* in (10), furthermore, backs up our analysis of *pissu-llr-a* being denominalized. Recall here that the CAY grammar employs a parallel structure between the possessor-possessive relationship and the transitive relationship, showing a set of absolutive and ergative case-marking for their dependent arguments. In *angute-m pissu-llr-a-ku tuntuvak-ø* in (10), the same case marking as in the transitive construction in (6a) above is observed. When it comes to why CAY utilizes the same case marking for both the relationships, one simple observation is that the CAY grammar is sensitive to whether or not a grammatical relationship the speaker employs realizes some asymmetrical relationship between the two participants: the possessor and possessee for the possessive construction, and the subject and object for the transitive construction. Given this assumption, the fact that *pissu-llr-a-ku* accompanies the set of absolutive and ergative case indicates that *pissu-llr-a* gives up its reference as a "rerified thing" as that in (7b), and, as argued in (8) above, it serves a relational function, the property of which is more clearly identified in the transitive construal that require the double marking pattern between *pissu-llr-a-ku* and *tuntuvak-ø*.

For our analysis so far, the following two notes should be provided. First, further survey is required on the issue of why the terminalis case is employed for the agent marking in the subordinative (i.e. adverbial) verb mood as in (11), while the ergative case in the "complement" subordination as in (10). Second, the locative case *-ni* is regarded as 3rd-person-singular intransitive marker in CAY prescriptive grammar (Jacobson (1995)) as shown in the parentheses of (8). However, without the analysis based on the notion of grammatical marking as in this research note, we could not provide any reasonable account of the issue of why the possessive pronominal marker *-a* should be realized before *-ni*.

Before closing this research note, let us consider how the denominalization observed in CAY is characterized in terms of grammaticalization in general. What we want to emphasize as an important characteristic of CAY grammaticalization is: in CAY, the subordinate clause markings, or subordinate verbal forms, develop in the process of denominalization rather than in that of nominalization. In other words, they are not on the way to "full-fledged" nominals, the properties of verbs being "gradually" lost. For instance, the Japanese complex postposition, *-nituite* 'about' developed out of the verb *-tuku* 'stick to' (Matsumoto (1997)). In this case, the complex postposition is created through the process of weakening its verbal properties as a predicate, and it is "decategorized" from the category of verbs (Matsumoto (1997); Haine and Kuteva (2007)). The same analysis may be applied to such newly-created English prepositions as *concerning* or *regarding*.

As shown above with the notion of double marking strategy, however, we suggest that CAY's

transition from verbs to nominals takes place in one go, and the predicative function of the nominalized forms is produced in the process of losing the nominal properties they have acquired with nominalization as described above. Jacobson (1984; 1995) suggests that the current verb mood markers of CAY have all been derived through nominalization; for instance *-lu-* in (11), *-lria-* in (9), and *-a-* in (6a). While we follow his observations, the account in which he uses the notion of "partial nominalization" might be misleading for non-specialists in Eskimo languages. The term of partial nominalization does not only give us the impression that CAY's nominalization observed in subordinate clauses is yet to be achieved, but it also blurs the directionality of the development of subordinate-clause markers.

#### 4. Conclusion

Basing our analysis on Jacobson's (1982; 1984; 1995) original insight and descriptions on CAY subordination, this research note suggests that pronominal marking could serve as a major formal cue to shifting construal from that of nominals to that of predicates. In particular, employing the typology of head/independent marking proposed by Nichols (1986), we first show that CAY displays the double marking pattern as its dominant grammatical marking, and then we maintain that when its stable marking pattern is broken, i.e. when the head-marking pattern is employed, the shift in construal from full nominals to predicates is triggered. In other words, we argue that the release from the pressure of its dominant double marking pattern provides an iconic motivation for the event construal of nominalized verbs.

#### Notes

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1. The orthography of CAY employed in this article follows Jacobson (1995).

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