

UNITIZER AND NOMINALIZER: THE /N/ AFFIX IN JAHAI

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1. Introduction

Jahai, a language belonging to the Northern Aslian subgroup of the Aslian branch of Mon-Khmer, is spoken by some 1,000 individuals in the states of Perak and Kelantan, Peninsular Malaysia, and adjacent parts of southern Thailand. A significant feature of Jahai morphology is the presence of affixed morphemes involving the phoneme /n/, which have two main purposes: to nominalize verbs and to unitize nouns. The present paper discusses the morphophonemic, morphosyntactic and semantic characteristics of the /n/ affix in Jahai, and attempts are made to identify the conceptual relationship between the processes of nominalization and unitization. Fieldwork is in progress, and further data are likely to modify, refine and supplement the current results. The present discussion does therefore not aim at completeness and is to be considered as preliminary.

1.1. The /n/ affix in Aslian: previous accounts

Affixation of /n/ is a widespread morphological process in Mon-Khmer, and its function is usually that of nominalization of verbs. For examples of this process in various branches of Mon-Khmer, see e.g. Manley 1972:42-43 for Sre (Bahnaric), Radhakrishnan 1981:60-63 for Nancowry (Nicobarese) and Svantesson 1983:94-99 for Kammu (Kammuic).

The /n/ affix is also well-represented in the Aslian branch of Mon-Khmer, spoken in the interior of the Malay Peninsula, and has been reported in all of its three subbranches. As in the rest of Mon-Khmer, its function is usually that of nominalization of verbs, where the derived form has sometimes been equated with the gerund of some European languages (Matisoff, to appear, 24-25, 28; Benjamin 1976:176; Diffloth 1976b:98). This derivative has been described for Temiar (Benjamin 1976:174-177), Semai (Diffloth 1972:91), Jah Hut (Diffloth 1976b:98, 108-109) and Semelai (Kruspe 1999:123-129) and is reported in several other languages, including Batek, Chewong and Besis (Diffloth 1975:16; Matisoff, to appear, 28). Schebesta (1931:646-647) also provided examples of similar nominalization in the supposedly extinct Central Aslian dialect Ple-Temer.

In some Aslian languages the /n/ affix is also added to noun roots to derive count nouns from mass nouns, a process described for Jah Hut (Diffloth 1976b:99-100), Semai (Diffloth 1976a:236) and Semelai (Kruspe 1999) and also indicated early on for Jahai (Schebesta 1928:811-812). A range of other, more specialised and restricted functions of the /n/ affix have been reported in individual Aslian languages (Benjamin in press, 29-30).

1.2. The present study

The present account of affixation of /n/ forms part of a larger descriptive study of the To' variety of Jahai, as spoken by the 90 or so inhabitants of Kampung Sungai Banun, in the resettlement area of Air Banun, Temengor *mukim*, Hulu Perak district, in the state of Perak, Peninsular Malaysia. The analysis is based on elicitation as well as recordings of

spontaneous speech. For a detailed account of the phonological and phonotactic characteristics touched on briefly below, see Burenhult 2000.

2. Morphophonemic characteristics

Jahai words may be monosyllabic, sesquisyllabic, disyllabic or, occasionally, trisyllabic. Monosyllabic words always display the canonic structure CVC, e.g. [c^hep^h] /c^hep/ 'to catch'. Sesquisyllabic words are phonetically disyllabic, but the vowel of the initial syllable is strictly epenthetic and predictable and is omitted in phonemic transcriptions: C.CVC, e.g. [kənɛic^h] /k.nɛc/ 'comb'.¹ Truly disyllabic words have either an open initial syllable with a non-predictable vowel, usually /a/, or a closed initial syllable, the vowel of which may be either predictable or non-predictable: CV.CVC, e.g. [kawip^h] /ka.wip/ 'sun bear'; CC.CVC, e.g. [təmkal] /tm.kal/ 'male'; or CVC.CVC, e.g. [kalto^hŋ] /kal.toŋ/ 'knee'.

These patterns of syllabic structure are significant to the affixation of /n/ in nouns and verbs since they alone determine the three existing allomorphic variants of the affixation process, each of which is associated with monosyllabic, sesquisyllabic and disyllabic words respectively.

2.1. Allomorphic variation

2.1.1. Monosyllabic words. In monosyllabic words (CVC) affixation involves the prefixing of /n-/ and the copying and infixing of the word-final consonant before the root.² An epenthetic vowel (usually [ə]) is inserted between the affixed /n/ and the copied consonant to create a closed initial syllable with /n/ as onset.

$C_iVC_f \rightarrow nC_f.C_iVC_f$

Hence there are forms like [nəp^hʔap^h] /np.ʔap/ from /ʔap/ 'tiger', [nəmji^hb^hm] /nm.jim/ from /jim/ 'to cry', and [nəltɛl] /nl.tel/ from /tel/ 'track'. If the final consonant of the root is a palatal, the inserted epenthetic vowel is realized as [i]: [nic^hsec^h] /nc.sec/ from /sec/ 'meat', [nijbaj] /nj.baj/ from /baj/ 'to dig'. If the final consonant is a glottal stop /ʔ/ or fricative /h/, the epenthetic vowel is realized as [a]: [naʔjiʔ] /nʔ.jiʔ/ from /jiʔ/ 'to burn', [nahbɔh] /nh.bɔh/ from /bɔh/ 'fruit'.

2.1.2. Sesquisyllabic words. Affixation of /n/ in sesquisyllabic words (C.CVC) involves the infixing of /-n-/ after the initial consonant and the copying and infixing of the word-final consonant before the onset of the final syllable. Epenthetic vowels are inserted to break up the initial cluster and create a closed penultimate syllable with /n/ as onset.

$C_i.C_mVC_f \rightarrow C_i.nC_f.C_mVC_f$

Examples include [kənək^hdək^h] /k.nk.dek/ from /k.dek/ 'squirrel', and [j^hənəŋlɛ^hŋ] /j.nŋ.leŋ/ from /j.leŋ/ 'to put inside'. As in affixation in monosyllabic words, the inserted epenthetic vowel is realized as [i] if the copied final is a palatal – e.g. [tənijwi^hj^h] /t.nj.wij/ from /t.wij/ 'headache', and [ʔənijnaj] /ʔ.nj.naj/ from /ʔ.naj/ 'to bathe' – and as [a] if the final is glottal – e.g. [j^hənaʔhūʔ] /j.nʔ.hūʔ/ from /j.hūʔ/ 'tree' and [c^hənahto^h] /c.nh.toh/ from /c.toh/ 'to spit'.

¹ The term 'sesquisyllable' was coined by Matisoff (1973:86; to appear, 8) and literally means 'one-and-a-half syllable'. Most writers on Aslian (including Diffloth 1976a; Matisoff, to appear; and Kruspe 1999) prefer to exclude the epenthetic vowel from phonemic transcriptions, and this is also the orthography employed here. For reasons of clarity and legibility, Benjamin (1976:152-53) argues in favor of including it.

² This type of partial reduplication, referred to as *coda copy* by Kruspe (1999) and *incopyfixation* by Matisoff (to appear, 25-30), is a common morphological phenomenon in Aslian languages.

2.1.3. *Disyllabic words.* In disyllabic words (CV.CVC, CC.CVC or CVC.CVC), /-n-/ is infixed after the word-initial consonant. Again, epenthetic vowels are inserted to break up the initial consonant clusters and create a penultimate syllable with /n/ as onset.

CV(C).CVC → C.nV(C).CVC
 CC.CVC → C.nC.CVC

Examples: [sənagupʰ] /s.na.gup/ from /sagup/ ‘cloud’, [kənərlepʰ] /k.nr.lep/ from /kr.lep/ ‘to forget’, [mənuŋkɛr] /b.nuŋ.kɛr/ from /buŋ.kɛr/ ‘to wake up’.

3. Morphosyntactic characteristics

Although the morphophonemic characteristics of the /n/ affix are identical in nouns and verbs, the two derivational processes obviously differ markedly from a syntactic point of view. Affixation in verbs result in nominalization, making the verb behave syntactically like a noun and become the head of a noun phrase; affixation in nouns occurs in noun phrases involving numerals or the quantifier ‘many’ and does not lead to a change in word class.

3.1. Nominalization

Affixation of /n/ in verbs typically produces verbal nouns which denote the state of being or act of doing whatever is denoted by the verb (see also section 4.1). The affix will here be labelled *nominalizer* (N). These nominalized verbs behave syntactically like ordinary nouns and become heads of noun phrases. Consequently, they may take possessors, as in the following examples:

npcip tmkal
 go.N man ‘the man’s going’
 pnikir mɔh
 think.N 2S ‘your thinking’

It may also take adjectival modifiers and predicatives:

knajoh bɪʔɛt
 swim.N good ‘good swimming’
 pnŋseŋ ʔoʔ bɪʔɛt
 speak.N 3 good ‘his speaking is good’

Furthermore, nominalized verbs can be included in constructions involving numerals and quantifiers:

nej cnhtoh
 one spit.N ‘one spitting’
 kɔm hnəluh
 many shoot.N ‘many shootings’

3.2. Unitization

Affixation of /n/ in nouns takes place typically (but optionally) when the noun is preceded by a numeral or the quantifier /kɔm/ ‘many’. This is exactly the situation described by Schebesta (1928:811) for Jahai. The affix will here be labeled *unitizer* (UNIT) and the resulting form will be called *unitized noun*. The process may be illustrated by the following examples:

tmkal ʔo-puŋe? duwa? nrber
 man 3S-have two younger.sibling.UNIT
 'the man has two younger siblings'
 ʃhũ? tani? ʔo-ʔek kəm nhbɔh
 tree that 3S-give many fruit.UNIT
 'that tree produces many fruits'
 nej hrkit je-ŋɔk ba-grik
 one night.UNIT 1S-stay in-Gerik
 'I spent one night in Gerik'

Since the unitizer is optional, the corresponding sentences with non-unitized forms are considered equally correct:

tmkal ʔo-puŋe? duwa? ber
 man 3S-have two younger.sibling
 'the man has two younger siblings'
 ʃhũ? tani? ʔo-ʔek kəm bɔh
 tree this 3S-give many fruit
 'this tree produces many fruits'
 nej hrkit je-ŋɔk ba-grik
 one night 1S-stay in-Gerik
 'I spent one night in Gerik'

3.2.1. Unitization in classifier constructions. Enumeration often involves the optional use of either of two classifiers: /ken/ for human nouns, and /kəmoʔ/ or /kəbiʔ/ for non-human ones (see also section 4.2.2). In such cases, the unitizer may be left out altogether or, as is usually the case, it may be added to the classifier, but never to the noun. The word order among the three elements is invariably noun-numeral-classifier.

ber je? duwa? nnken
 younger.sibling 1S two CLF.UNIT
 'my two younger siblings'
 je-bdəl tabəŋ limeʔ kbiʔ
 1S-shoot leaf monkey five CLF
 'I shot five leaf monkeys'
 je-bdəl ʔameŋ duwa? knʔbiʔ
 1S-shoot siamang two CLF.UNIT
 'I shot two siamangs'
 je-bʔbɔʔ tomen duwa? knʔmoʔ
 1S-carry on back snakehead two CLF.UNIT
 'I carried two snakeheads on my back'

Classifier constructions are sometimes used without the head noun, usually for anaphoric purposes, as in the following example:

dɛ-je? nej knʔmoʔ
 for-me one CLF.UNIT
 'one for me'

4. Semantic and discourse-related characteristics

The following sections attempt to explain the semantic function and range of Jahai nominalization and unitization respectively. Unitization is also discussed in relation to the use of numeral classifiers, which may have primarily discourse-related functions.

4.1. Nominalization

As noted in section 3.1, verbal nouns in Jahai typically name the general state or activity designated by the verb. All verbal nouns appear to be able to have this unmarked interpretation, although many also have more specialized, additional meanings (see section 4.1.1). In the terminology of Comrie and Thompson (1985:350), for example, such general verbal nouns are referred to as *action/state nominalizations*.

The fact that all verbs may be nominalized makes it possible to treat any type of situation described by a verb as a discrete unit of state or activity which may, for instance, be “possessed” and counted. The very general meaning and unspecified duration of these units result in a variety of possible interpretations, a situation which is particularly obvious in constructions involving enumeration. For example, /duwa? nktek/ has the general meaning of ‘two states of sleeping’, and speakers therefore have a free choice of using it to refer to e.g. ‘two nights of sleep’, or ‘two naps’, or even ‘the sleeping of two different individuals’. Context alone will disambiguate such examples.

The situation is hardly different with verbs which describe instantaneous situations, notably achievements and punctual (or *semelfactive*) events, e.g. ‘to stop’, ‘to enter’, ‘to spit’ and ‘to cough’ (for definitions, see e.g. Smith 1991:28). In such cases, the boundaries of the unit created by nominalization may correspond to the natural boundaries inherent in the verb. Thus, /nej nh?oh/ ‘one act of coughing’ could be taken to refer to one instantaneous cough. But it is also possible to have iterative interpretations in which the unit corresponds to a sequence of repeated instantaneous events.

It is tempting to translate at least some nominalizations into more specific English equivalents, although such interpretations may be rather misleading without the proper context. In the following example, for instance, the nominalized form of ‘sing’ is seemingly best translated into English as ‘song’ although the Jahai meaning of the word in this particular context may be something rather different from an English speaker’s notion of ‘a song’. For all we know, it may refer to any sequence of singing, be it equivalent to a clearly delimited composition or not. The less specific translation ‘singing’ leaves room for alternative interpretations:

tmkal ?o-pnlɔp nej pɔnlɔp ba-babo?
man 3S-sing one sing.N to-woman
‘the man sang one song/singing to the woman’

4.1.1. *Specialized nominalizations.* In addition to the general state and action/manner interpretations of nominalizations, more specialized and concrete meanings of the kind described by Benjamin (1976:176-177) for Temiar and by Diffloth (1976b:98-99) for Jah Hut, where nominalizations may denote different arguments associated with the nominalized verb, are also present in Jahai. Thus, Jahai nominalizations frequently also denote the patient, instrument or location of an action. For example, the nominalization /knajil/ (from /kajil/ ‘to fish’) may not only refer to the general ‘act’ or ‘manner of fishing’, but also to a ‘thing caught by fishing’, that is, ‘fish’ (*object nominalization*); an ‘instrument for the purpose of fishing’, or more specifically ‘fishing-rod’ (*instrumental nominalization*); and a ‘place of fishing’ (*locative nominalization*). (For terminology, see

e.g. Comrie and Thompson 1985:350-358). Most nominalized verbs have such specialized extensions but they do not appear to be quite as productive as the action/state interpretations. The meanings of some concrete nominalizations may become very narrow and specific, such as the object interpretation of the nominalization /nkeɕ/ 'thing cut' (from /keɕ/ 'to cut'), which is sometimes used to mean 'circumcised person', 'Muslim'. Also, the instrumental interpretation of /knajil/ ('fishing-rod') mentioned above has become so specific that other types of fishing-gear, such as casting-nets, cannot be referred to as /knajil/.

4.2. Unitization

As noted in section 3.2 and by Schebesta (1928:811), affixation of /n/ in nouns is restricted to constructions involving numerals and the quantifier /kɔm/ 'many'. This distribution suggests that affixation in nouns is intended to demarcate discrete units of the referent of the noun in order to make it more suitable for counting and quantification, hence the label *unitizer* to refer to the affix and *unitization* to refer to the morphosyntactic process (this terminology is borrowed from Lucy 1992:73, who discusses unitization in relation to numeral classifiers in Yucatec). The /n/ affix clearly has no purpose of pluralization, since it also appears in constructions involving the numeral 'one'.

As indicated in section 1.2.2, most Jahai nouns appear to be susceptible to unitization. Consequently, nouns which refer to substances, for example, which are conventionally considered to be "mass nouns", are treated the same way as nouns which refer to inherently discrete (or bounded) entities such as physical objects, so-called "count nouns". But whereas unitization of inherently discrete nouns usually appears to simply *actualize* the natural "discreteness" which already belongs to the concept of the noun in question, unitization of indiscrete (or unbounded) entities such as substances rather *creates* the unit to be counted (see Croft 1994:162-163 and Bisang 1999:120-121 for discussions on creative and actualizing individualization in relation to quantifiers and classifiers). By analogy with the nominalizations described in section 4.1, this creative aspect of unitization of indiscrete entities leaves room for a variety of context-dependent interpretations of unitized mass nouns. Hence, the construction /nej nmtɔm/ 'one [unit of] water' (from /tɔm/ 'water') may refer to 'one drop of water', 'one bottle of water', 'one river', 'one lake' etc.

Still, the identical morphosyntactic treatment of count and mass nouns and the frequently utilized possibility of unitizing inherently discrete nouns in counting and quantification indicate that *all* nouns are characterized by a high degree of indeterminateness, as is common in Southeast Asia, and that all nouns in their root form are basically unspecified as to unit. The unitizer serves to express the discreteness of the referent of the noun in order to make it more suitable for counting and quantification.

4.2.1. The optional nature of unitization. Schebesta's (1928:811-812) account indicates that affixation of /n/ is common but optional and does not apply to all nouns. Although the present study has shown that most nouns are susceptible to affixation in contemporary Jahai, it is clear that unitization is still an optional process, as evidenced by the examples given in section 3.2. However, unitized forms (of nouns or classifiers) are indeed normally preferred to non-unitized constructions. The reasons for choosing one or the other are not known, but it should not be ruled out that the distribution of unitized

and non-unitized forms may have some as yet unidentified connection to discourse functions similar to the ones suggested below for classifiers (section 4.2.2).

4.2.2. Unitization and numeral classifiers. The two primary classifiers identified in Jahai, the syntactic characteristics of which were outlined in section 3.2.1, reflect a distinction between human and non-human nouns, a rather unusual style of classification for Mon-Khmer and similar to that of Khasi (Rabel 1961:54; Adams 1989:46, 177). /kəməʔ/, the original meaning of which is 'fruit', is used with both animate and inanimate non-human nouns. It appears to be used in free variation with /kəbiʔ/, possibly a loan of Temiar /kəbəʔ/, which also means 'fruit' (Benjamin, personal communication, 1999). /kən/, on the other hand, is used only with human nouns. The original meaning of this latter term is most likely 'child' (Diffloth, personal communication, 1999). There is also a handful of additional classifiers, mostly loans from Malay (e.g. /batan/ for long objects and /biʔiʔ/ for small objects), with only peripheral use.

The fact that the unitizer is used in combination with the primary classifiers is interesting because it suggests that the classifier does not itself carry the component of unit but only adds a classifying dimension to the construction. At the very least, any component of unit in the classifier would be made redundant by the use of the unitizer. The general and unspecific nature of the classifier system would thus suggest that the classifier is semantically more or less dispensable and its common presence therefore surprising.

However, it could be suggested that the Jahai classifiers have mainly discourse-related functions, and the material contains some examples that may point in that direction. For instance, classifiers are clearly used to make anaphoric reference to nouns in enumerative contexts, where an anaphoric classifier construction from which the head noun has been omitted refers back to the noun, which was introduced earlier in the discourse. Also, several classifier constructions of the type exemplified in section 3.2.1 can be seen as pragmatically motivated references to and emphases of the head noun. Classifiers thus serve to give nouns a prominence in the discourse. It is noteworthy that discourse-related features have been of great importance in explaining the function of classifiers in the neighboring Malay language (see e.g. Hopper 1986), a long-standing and important source of influence on Jahai.

5. A typological and conceptual assessment

5.1. Historical and genetic considerations

Nominalization of verbs by means of the /n/ affix is common to most, if not all, Aslian languages and to much of the rest of Mon-Khmer and can surely be reconstructed for proto-Mon-Khmer (Matisoff, to appear 25; Diffloth, personal communication, 1999). We have also seen that nominalizations may be given more specific semantic content. Thus, apart from action/state interpretations, verbal nouns derived by the /n/ affix may also carry the meaning of arguments associated with the verb, notably instruments, objects and locations. These specialized and concrete meanings appear more salient in some languages than others, and in Mon-Khmer languages outside Aslian they are often described as the sole type of nominalization.

Unitization of nouns appears less widespread. In Aslian, productive unitization has been attested in Jah Hut, Semai, Semelai and Jahai. As far as other branches of Mon-Khmer are concerned, similar processes have been noted in Nicobarese and Bahnaric, and

fossilized traces of unitization may be identified in Khmer (Diffloth, personal communication, 1999). Possibly, unitization can also be reconstructed for proto-Mon-Khmer, although it is presently not a particularly common feature of its daughter branches. Diffloth (personal communication, 1999) suggests that the unitization system was present in Mon-Khmer prior to the development of numeral classifiers, which he considers secondary in that language family and which would have made affixal unitization redundant. This replacement process is thought to be linked to the general trend of morphological disintegration in Mon-Khmer. The unitizer affix may thus have survived in languages which have largely escaped the isolating trend and where numeral classifiers are absent or of secondary importance, an explanation which may have some relevance in the case of Jahai and Aslian as a whole.

5.2. Unitizer vs. classifier

The unitizing affix described here is a typologically unusual device for demarcating countable units of nouns. Its closest typological equivalent is probably numeral classifiers, one main function of which is traditionally considered to be individualization of nouns for counting. But, unlike classifiers, the unitizer does not also serve to organize nouns into different semantic categories; its morphophonemic shape is determined only by syllable structure and not by the semantic characteristics of the noun.

Furthermore, the important distinction made between classifiers, which *actualize* the inherent semantic boundaries of a unit to be counted, and quantifiers, which *create* a unit to be measured (Croft 1994:162-163; Bisang 1999:120-121), is bridged by the unitizer insofar as typical count and mass nouns receive exactly the same treatment. However, unlike measuring proper, unitization is usually not employed to refer to exact, standardized measures. Instead, unitized mass nouns are open to various interpretations which typically refer to what are considered to be natural units, shapes or quantities associated with the mass noun in question, hence the various interpretations of the unitized form for 'water' described in section 4.2. Bisang (1993:13-14; 1999:123) refers to such measuring of unbounded entities as *intrinsic quantification*, as opposed to the *extrinsic quantification* done by exact measures.

Thus, the unitizer shares only one of the two main purposes of numeral classifiers, that of unitization for counting, and has in that sense a more restricted and well-defined semantic function. On the other hand, the unitizer transcends the significant typological boundary drawn up between classifiers and other categories of numeratives, notably quantifiers, and thus ignores the semantic distinctions in nouns that underlie these types. In every respect, then, the unitizer appears to operate more or less independently of the semantics inherent to the noun. These differences obviously suggest that it is not possible to simply place the unitizer on a par with classifiers, but that it represents a separate typological category.

5.3. Nouns and unitization

The presence of numeral classifiers in a language has often been considered to reflect a high degree of indeterminateness in nouns. A noun is described as expressing a "property" (Denny 1986:298-302) or "a mere concept" (Bisang 1999:114) of an object rather than a discrete entity, and researchers have frequently proposed that all nouns in classifier languages refer to some sort of mass which can be individualized by means of

classifiers (see e.g. Ritchie 1971; Greenberg 1977; Sharvy 1978). Greenberg (1977) specifically points to transnumerality, that is, the lack of number-marking, in classifier languages, a feature which is considered essential to the existence of numeral classifiers.

In his examination of the differences between the number marking patterns in English and Yucatec Maya, Lucy (1992:154-158) similarly suggests that all nouns in Yucatec, a classifier language, are like English "mass" nouns "in that they are semantically neutral with respect to logical unit or shape", and he presents empirical evidence of considerable differences in cognitive performance between speakers of the two languages. In short, his cognitive experiments show that Yucatec speakers tend to group objects on the basis of common material composition, whereas English speakers tend to group objects on the basis of common shape. Furthermore, speakers of English habitually attend to the number of various objects of reference more often than do speakers of Yucatec. Presented in support of the Sapir-Whorf linguistic relativity hypothesis, that is, the proposal that the grammar of a language affects the way its speakers think about reality, these results support the idea that nouns in classifier languages are largely unspecified with regard to unit.

It would be reasonable to assume that numeral classifiers and the unitization process identified in Jahai and other Aslian languages are parallel reflections of this non-specificity in nouns, which may be considered an areal feature of languages in East and Southeast Asia. Both processes thus create discrete units of a mass represented by the noun, but, as stated in section 5.1, there is a clear difference between the two in that this is the sole purpose of the unitizer.

5.4. Nominalization as unitization

Nouns and verbs in Jahai form two rather distinct classes. On the whole, they display different syntactic behavior and attract different morphological categories. Furthermore, unlike in some Austronesian languages, only a handful of roots occur as both nouns and verbs. Morphosyntactically, the affixation of /n/ in nouns and verbs also forms two distinct processes. However, the identical morphophonemic treatment of nouns and verbs with respect to /n/ may highlight significant semantic parallels between nominalization of verbs and unitization of nouns, and the notion of 'unit' obviously forms a natural common feature.

In his influential account of the cognitive relationship between nouns and verbs, Langacker (1987:90-92) suggests that the semantic contrast between a verb and its nominalization lies in the highlighting of the boundaries of the process designated by the verb. The effect of the nominalization is a shift of focus from the component states of a process (salient in the verb) to the higher-order 'region' comprising these component states. With this approach, a connection to the notion of 'unit' becomes obvious. Nominalization, then, is essentially a matter of 'unitization' of the verb.

5.5. Conclusion

The present work is based on preliminary field data and the semantic analysis in particular is to be regarded as highly tentative. Further work is likely to provide crucial additional insights into this complex issue. However, two aspects of the semantic substance of the /n/ in Jahai already appear to emerge as particularly suitable for theoretical elaboration. First, the unitization of nouns forms an interesting reflection of

what appears to be semantic non-specificity in noun roots with regard to unit and thereby provides a typologically unusual parallel to numeral classifiers. Second, the evident morphophonemic link between unitization and nominalization supports the idea that verbal nouns are 'units' of actions and may thus provide a rare type of evidence of cognitive affinity between nouns and verbs.

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MỘT NGHIÊN CỨU VỀ VIỆC VAY MƯỢN TỪ VỤNG: TRƯỜNG HỢP TIẾNG TAGAKAULO VÀ SARANGAMI MANOBO Ở MIỀN NAM PHILIPPINES (TÓM TẮT)

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Mục đích chính của bài nghiên cứu này là khảo sát hai cộng đồng ngôn ngữ, tiếng Sarangani Manobo và tiếng Tagakaulo¹ kế cận, song thuộc những ngữ hệ khác nhau, để xác định những yếu tố góp phần làm cho nhóm từ vựng chung chiếm tỉ lệ cao (hơn 50%) – so với chưa tới 20% vốn từ vựng chung giữa tiếng Tagakaulo và tiếng Blaan, một thứ tiếng láng giềng khác nằm kề cận bên nó. Cả ba ngôn ngữ này đều có mối quan hệ xa xôi, thuộc phân nhóm Mã Lai-Đa Đảo (Malayo-Polynesian) thuộc hệ ngôn ngữ Nam Đảo.

Tôi đưa ra một giả thuyết cho rằng tỉ lệ từ vựng chung giữa tiếng Tagakaulo và Sarangani không thể được xem là những từ cùng một nguồn gốc xa xôi. Đúng hơn, một số trong các từ vựng này là kết quả của quá trình vay mượn từ vựng do (1) sự gần gũi về mặt địa lý và (2) sự tiếp xúc liên tục của những họ ngôn ngữ riêng của chúng trong một thời gian dài. Sự tiếp xúc sớm nhất đã đưa những từ ngữ có nguồn gốc Manobo vào nhóm Tiên Đông Nam Mindanao/Proto-South East Mindanao, nhóm ngôn ngữ Tiên Đông Mindanao/Proto-East Mindanao và các phân nhóm của nó, do vậy, nhiều từ ngữ trong số đó vẫn còn được sử dụng trong tiếng Mansaka và tiếng Tagakaulo.

Tôi dùng hai cách tiếp cận nhằm xác định những căn nguyên làm cho vốn từ vựng chung giữa tiếng Tagakaulo và Sarangani Manobo chiếm tỉ lệ cao như vậy. Cách tiếp cận thứ nhất mà tôi trình bày trong bài này là truy cứu dấu vết lịch sử của từng ngôn ngữ, chỉ rõ những điểm tham chiếu đặc biệt để xác định cả phân kỳ lẫn không gian địa lý của mỗi họ ngôn ngữ vào lúc đó. Mục đích của cách tiếp cận này là phân biệt những đơn vị từ vựng có quan hệ họ hàng cùng xuất hiện từ một nguồn gốc xa xôi nào đó với những đơn vị từ vựng mà các thứ tiếng này đã vay mượn lẫn nhau.

Cách tiếp cận thứ hai là sử dụng phạm trù ngữ nghĩa để tách ra các khía cạnh văn hóa mà trong đó số lượng từ vay mượn có thể xuất hiện với tỉ lệ cao.

Tôi kết hợp chặt chẽ hai cách tiếp cận trên như là một định hướng cho bài nghiên cứu này và trình bày định hướng này như là một phương pháp nghiên cứu có tính hệ thống về hiện tượng vay mượn từ vựng.

¹ Trong một số ấn phẩm hai ngôn ngữ này được xem là tiếng Kalagan.