

Dene [Athabaskan] Possessive Compounds and the Architecture of the Grammar

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Introduction

- we focus on head-final compounds in **Tłjchq** [blue] and **Dëne Sųłíné** [green]. (Head-initial types exist too.) In spellings, we have separated the elements of compounds for the purposes of this poster.
- other sources on compounds in Dene languages: Rice 2009, 1998, 1989; Cook 2004:87-90f, Hargus 2007

Non-possessive compounds: N + N

- (1) **tłeh tł'ih** 'gas-line' (oil rope)
 (2) **dzéh ke** 'rubber shoes' (gum shoe)

Possessive compounds: N + N.PNS

- (3) **tłeh tł'ih** 'starter cord on motor' (oil rope.PNS)
 (4) **jéth tł'ulé** 'fish line' (fishhook rope.PNS)
eneèko sųqmbaà 'old-age pension' (old.man money.PNS)
tu tlesé 'coal oil' (water oil.PNS)

Goals

- to show that possessive compounds have word properties and phrasal properties
- to propose an architecture of the grammar which can handle these properties:
 - mechanism of concatenation: Merge (output can be "word" or "phrase")
 - structural configuration (or "schema") for possessive compounds: nP
 - "lexical" compounds/compound "words": those that have become established as names
 - no strict boundary between words and phrases

Possessive Compounds: Possessed form of the second stem

- the PNS takes one of three forms: the default form has a marked tone, moraic in Tłjchq and vocalic /é/ in Dëne Sųłíné. Irregular forms are marked tone alone, or ø.

- (5) **tłeh tł'ih** 'starter cord on motor' (oil rope.PNS) **tł'ih** 'rope' **wetł'ih** 'his/her rope' (3.rope.PNS)
eneèko sųqmbaà 'old-age pension' (old.man money.PNS) **sųqmba** 'money' **wesųqmbaà** 'his/her money' (3.money.PNS)
 (6) **jéth tł'ulé** 'fish line' (fishhook rope.PNS) **tł'uli** 'rope' **betł'ulé** 'his/her rope' (3.rope.PNS)
la yúé 'tools' (hand equipment.PNS) **yú** 'equipment' **beyúé** 'his/her equipment' (3.equipment.PNS)

Possessive Compounds: Properties Shared with Phrases

I. identical possessive morphology: we are not aware of any cases in which the form of the possessed stem in compounds is different from its form in phrases, cf. (5)-(6)

- for irregular nouns, as in (7), where the PNS is not moraic/vocalic, phrases and compounds show the same forms of possessive morphology. In the examples below, the PNS takes the form of marked tone in both possessive phrases and possessive compounds.

- (7) **ke** 'shoe' **weké** 'his/her shoe' **ti** 'water, lake' **weti** 'his/her water, lake'
kaobo kè 'cowboy boots' (cowboy shoe.PNS) **Sah ti** 'Great Bear Lake' (bear lake.PNS)
tłeh t'òò kè 'propeller on outboard motor' (oil paddle shoe.PNS) **ehtł'è ti** 'muddy water' (mud water.PNS)

II. internal agreement inflection options: with possessive phrases, there is the option (not well understood by us) for the head noun to show prefixal agreement (underlined> with the DP possessor

- (8) **amii lıj** 'who dog.PNS' **amii weli** 'who 3.dog.PNS' 'whose dog?' 'whose dog?'
- (9) **èdiikòp wèkòp** 'electrical fuse' (electricity 3.fire.PNS) **łj betł'ulé** 'dog collar, harness' (dog 3.rope.PNS)
Nòhtsj wenàèdii 'sacrament' (God 3.medicine.PNS) **renhtł'ischèné betué** 'pen' (pencil/pen 3.water.PNS)

III. the nonhead can be a nominalized clause in both possessive phrases:

- (10) **[eghàlaahdaa] kòp** 'the places where you (pl) work; your (pl) work-places' (2pS.work.NOM building.PNS)
 and in possessive compounds:
 (11) **[tsádhéth kanjdhèni] dèné** 'trapper' (lit. 'fur-seeking person') (beaver.fur seek.NOM person.PNS)
[tsába hoghelehi] dèné 'tax collector' (lit. 'money-collecting person') (money collect_pl_O.NOM person.PNS)
[bet'á reghú k'enátsıł] chèné 'toothbrush' (lit. 'stick for washing one's teeth with') (3.means_of_U.tooth wash wood.PNS)

- while it is a productive means of creating words for non-indigenous concepts, this pattern has been around for a long time, as evidenced by its frequent occurrence in traditional placenames:

- (12) **Tł'ò k'edaa ti** 'Lake of Grass Walking' (grass walk.NOM lake.PNS)
Madòp yek'e rekwpò jhk'èe ti 'Lake on which Madòp Shot Caribou' (Madòp 4.on caribou 3.pf.shoot.NOM lake.PNS)

Possessive Compounds: Word-like Properties

I. may have non-compositional meanings: a property of words and not phrases

- (13) **tu tlesé** 'coal oil' [water + oil.PNS]
beschogh dèné 'American' [big knife + person.PNS]
k'es lézé 'ashes' [tree + dust.PNS]

II. have the status of names for things or places: Elders in Tłjchq placenames research instructed us that the names should be spelled without spaces **because they express a singular concept** (DT11C 2002).

- (14) **Łuechogh tué** 'Cold Lake' [big fish + lake.PNS] [placename]
Tsá ké 'Beaverfoot' [beaver + foot.PNS] [personal name]
Tłj keè deè 'Boundary Creek' [dog + foot.print + river.PNS] [placename]

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Tłjchq Yatıi [Dogrib]:

Ca. 3,000 speakers; dialects
 Tonal; lexically marked low tone

Dëne Sųłíné [Chipewyan]:

Ca. 10,000 speakers; dialects
 Tonal; lexically marked high tone

Possessive Compounds: Word-like Properties (continued)

III. phonological reduction potential; use of incorporated stem forms: while some phonological reduction is possible in phrases, the potential is of a different type in established compounds, where the identity of morphemes can easily be lost. (See also Rice 2009 on Slave.)

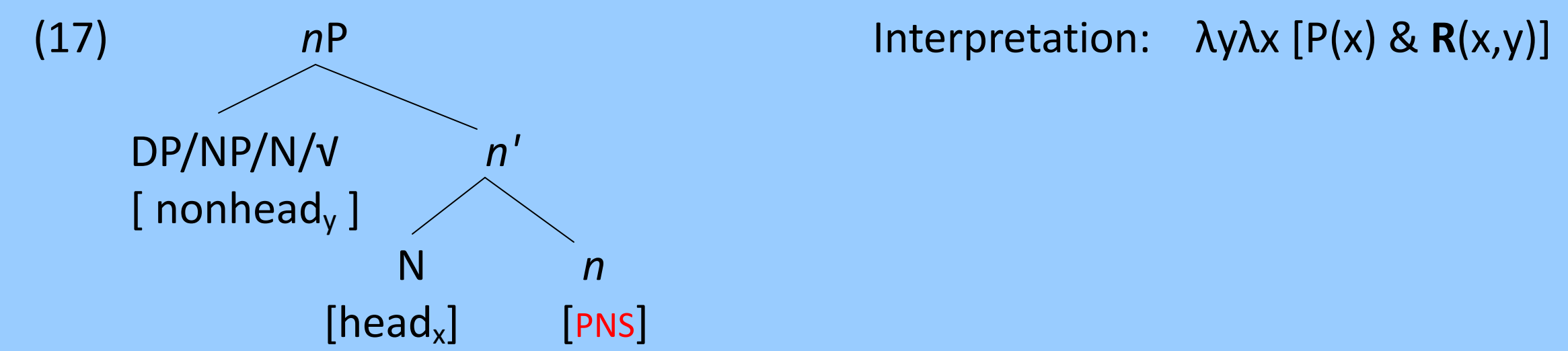
- (15) **tte béh chèné** 'vehicle, car' < ttes-béhchèné < beth-chèné (oil load stick.PNS)
lii h tşòp 'teapot, kettle' < lidi + Linker + tşòp (tea pot.PNS)
elà echıj 'boat frame' < elà + dechıj (boat stick.PNS)
gonawò 'eyelid' < go + da + wò (1p eye cover.PNS)

IV. derivational morphology "outside" the compound: derivational suffixes (for example, the diminutive and augmentative, underlined> are attached outside of the compound

- (16) **ttebéhchèné-chogh** 'truck' < ttes-béhchèné 'oil-vehicle' < beth-chèné 'load-wood.PNS' (car-AUG)
dëne tthi-aze 'postage stamp' (lit., 'little person-head') (person head.PNS-DIM)
sekui hónehtèni k'ódhèráze 'vice principal' (lit. 'little teachers' boss') (child teach.NOM boss.PNS-DIM)
Dlòo dè-a 'Beaver Creek' (lit., 'little beaver river') [placename] (squirrel river.PNS-DIM)

Analysis

I. One single structure (or schema) for all possessives: nP



- nP structure for possessive phrases and possessive compounds accounts for their formal similarity
- nP increases a noun's valence (parallel to vP/VoiceP, cf. Kratzer 1996) and thus licenses a possessive argument, i.e. the nonhead (Alexiadou et al 2007, Wilhelm & Saxon 2009)
- PNS is the overt manifestation of the n head

II. Semantics of the structure/schema: R

- n introduces a relation "R" between the the phrase's head and non-head, specified pragmatically for new expressions, and lexically "fixed" for established expressions. If a noun is inherently relational, e.g., mother, leg, its lexical semantics specify R.
- unspecified R is not only a major approach to the meaning of compounds (Downing 1977, Booij 2010, Spencer 2011), it is also a trait of possessive structures (Williams 1980, Higginbotham 1983; see also "reference point relationship" in Langacker 1991, Taylor 1996)
- R accounts for meanings beyond literal possession in possessive phrases (18), and for the wide range of meanings seen in possessive compounds (19)

- (18) **sedzímé** 'my birthday' (1s-day-PNS) **berhtł'ísé** 'his/her photograph; his/her debt' (3-paper-PNS)
sedáaé 'my sickness' (1s-sickness-PNS) **nuheyatié** 'our language' (1/2p-language-PNS)
 (19) **Łuets'eldéłi Dziné** 'Friday' (fish-eating day.PNS) **dejúlı dhéth** 'screen [for window]' (mosquito cover.PNS)
deni tthı 'moose head' (moose head.PNS) **lıbarlá ké** 'canvas shoes' (canvas shoe.PNS)

III. The Architecture of the Grammar

- Mechanism of concatenation in possessive compounds: Merge (cf. Borer 2009)
- accounts for parallel with possessive phrases in terms of headedness and binary structure
- there is evidence for DIM and AUG as syntactic objects, as they interact with functional elements of the clauses (20); (16) can thus be analysed in terms of Merge. Some questions remain here, however.

- (20) **Ligawıhı nàtso-le-a.** 'The coffee is a little weak' (coffee 3.strong-Neg-DIM)

- therefore possessive compounding does not require a separate morphological mechanism

Contrast between words and phrases

- determined partly in internal complexity of the non-head — is it DP, NP, N, v? (cf. also Booij 2010)
- nothing in our analysis depends on the contrast

Lexicon

- possessive compounds that are established names for things ("entrenched" items) are stored in the lexicon (Langacker 1991, Booij 2010, Spencer 2011)
- the structure/schema is also stored and so new creations are possible (Booij 2010)

Sources and References

Alexiadou, Haegeman, Stavrou 2007. Biscaye, E. (ed). 2002. *Dëne Sųłín Yatıi Topical Dictionary*. Booij, G. 2010. Borer, H. 2009. Cook, E.-D. 2004. *A grammar of Dëne Sųłíné (Chipewyan)*. Downing, P. 1977. Dogrib Treaty 11 Council 2002. Elford, L. & Elford, M. 1998. *Dene (Chipewyan) Dictionary*. Hargus, S. 2007. *Witsuwit'en Grammar*. Higginbotham, J. 1983. Kratzer, A. 1996. Langacker, R. 1991. Lieber, R. & S. Scalise. 2005. Partee, B. 2004. Rice, K. 1989. K. 1998. Rice, K. 2009. R. Lieber & P. Štekauer 2009. Spencer, A. 2011. Taylor, J. 1996. **Tłjchq Community Services Agency. 2005-. Multimedia Tłjchq Yatıi On-line Dictionary**. <http://tlichq.ling.uvic.ca>. Wilhelm

