

Generic bound nouns in Nalögo between language-specific description and crosslinguistic comparability

This talk aims to analyse the formal and semantic characteristics of the class of generic bound nouns in Nalögo, a Reefs-Santa Cruz (RSC) Oceanic language spoken in Santa Cruz Island in Solomon Islands, from a language-internal and a cross-linguistic point of view. The term ‘bound noun’ refers to nominal forms which cannot occur independently, but they can only cooccur with other elements, such as nouns, verbs, demonstratives, and so on. The type and number of elements cooccurring with bound nouns vary, depending on the class to which the bound noun belongs. In Nalögo, there are four types of bound nouns showing different properties: (i) bound nouns expressing plant-part and body-part relations, (ii) the lexeme *nalë* ‘spouse’ which can occur as a bound noun with independent nouns and other bound nouns, (iii) bound nouns occurring in reduced compounds, and (iv) ‘generic’ bound nouns occurring with a variety of modifiers (Alfarano 2021: 139-140). This talk focuses only on type (4). Næss (2017) was the first scholar to coin the term ‘generic bound noun (GBNS)’ for the description of this nominal category in Äiwoo, an RSC language spoken in the Reefs Islands, to the north of Santa Cruz Island. In Äiwoo, the term is used as a ‘handy label’ rather than as a definition, in order to differentiate this class from other types of bound nouns. GBNS do not occur as independent lexical items, typically showing low phonological independence. They can function as syntactic heads taking various types of modifiers, including nouns, demonstratives, bare verbs and relative clauses, with which they can form complex nominal constructions. Generally, they do not display clear sources in independent lexical nouns. In Nalögo, there are eight GBNS which do not have an independent use and can cooccur with different elements in complex nominal expressions: *lö-* ‘people’, *i-* ‘female’, *mö-* ‘male’, *ma-* ‘house’, *mö-* ‘place’, *bä-* ‘place’, *kä-* ‘one’, *kä-* ‘way, reason’. Two examples with the bound nouns *mö-* ‘male’ and *kä-* ‘one’ are shown in (1a) and (1b), respectively.

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| 1. a) <i>mö-tuku</i>
male-walking.stick
‘Old person (male)’ | b) <i>kä-i-ngungu</i>
one-PFV.N3AUG-be.cranky
‘The cranky one.’ |
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In (1), *mö-* and *kä-* attach to a noun and an inflected verb in (1a) and (1b), respectively, to form two complex constructions. As pointed out by Næss (2017), in a number of Oceanic languages, morphemes showing properties similar to those of generic bound nouns are often described as nominalizing prefixes. However, Næss (2017) shows interesting differences between nominals headed by GBNS and the typological category of participant nominalizations formed by nominalizing prefixes. In typological studies, the term ‘participant nominalization’ is generally used to refer to deverbal nominal constituents displaying a referential status (Koptjevskaja-Tamm 1993). Næss (2017) identifies two main differences between participant nominalization mentioned above and the constructions with GBNS. First, participant nominalizations tend to encode specific semantic roles, by contrast with GBNS constructions. Second, they typically do not take inflections, by contrast with action nominalizations (Baker & Vinokurova 2009), while GBNS can occur in complex constructions with inflected verbs, arguments, etc. Like Äiwoo, Nalögo has no category of participant nominalizations. Moreover, the distinction between GBN constructions and participant nominalizations as a typological category is a matter of degree. Based on the parameters proposed by Næss (2017), in this talk, I will describe in detail the formal and semantic properties of GBNS in Nalögo and how they differ from the typological category of participant nominalization. In particular, I will show how the distinction between these two categories in Nalögo is gradual, rather than clear-cut.

References

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