

## Binominal compounds in Enindhilyakwa (AOI, Gunwinyguan, Australia)

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This paper introduces two new types of binominal compound (BNC) from Enindhilyakwa, an Aboriginal language spoken in Northern Australia. Like many other Northern Australian languages, Enindhilyakwa is polysynthetic, thus making extensive use of morphology to identify grammatical relations, with agreement throughout the clause. As a result, simply putting two nominals together to build a compound noun - as in the English noun-noun compound *railway*, the French prepositional compound *chemin de fer* [way of iron] ‘railway’, or the Russian relational compound *železnaja doroga* [iron.ADJZ road] ‘railway’ - is not an available strategy in this language.<sup>1</sup> This is because modifiers need to agree with their heads. Enindhilyakwa employs a set of derivational prefixes to achieve agreement: inalienable possession (INALP) and alienable possession (ALP), which enable modifiers to agree with the noun class of their head. The two constructions each name a subset of complex concepts, as illustrated in (1, INALP) and (2, ALP) (van Egmond 2012), and constitute two additional binominal construction types to the ones identified by the workshop convenors:<sup>2</sup>

- (1) a. *ma-ma+kulya*            *menba*  
      VEG-INALP+skin        VEG.eye  
      ‘eyelid’
- b. *yi-nv-ma+kulya*        *kalkwa*  
      MASC-M-INALP+skin    coconut(MASC)<sup>3</sup>  
      ‘coconut husk’
- c. *yi-nv-m-eminda*            *yikarba*  
      MASC-M-INALP-NEUT.nose    MASC.woomera  
      ‘woomera hook’
- (2) a. *envngv-menba*  
      NEUT.M.ALP-VEG.eye  
      ‘glasses, spectacles’ (Lit.: ‘NEUT class item associated with the eye’)
- b. *envng-arrvrra*  
      NEUT.M.ALP-NEUT.wind  
      ‘bicycle pump’ (Lit.: ‘NEUT class item associated with wind’)

Non-human nominals derived with the INALP prefix refer to components of body parts (1a) or parts of inanimate objects (1b,c), where the noun class of the part agrees with that of the whole. The ALP construction (2) has a sense of ‘belonging to’ or ‘associated with’, and the derived noun agrees in noun class with the hypernym (introduced objects are usually NEUT noun class).

Examples (1a) and (2a,b) are complex concepts from Pepper's (2016) cross-linguistic sample of BNCs in the world's languages. Completing Pepper's list for Enindhilyakwa results in a comparatively low frequency of BNCs: 14% (against an average of 21%). Pepper's data

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<sup>1</sup> This appears to be the case for other languages belonging to the Gunwinyguan family as well: e.g. Bininj Gun Wok (Evans 2003), Wubuy (Heath 1984), Ngalakgan (Baker 2008).

<sup>2</sup> The letter *v* represents the phoneme /ə/; NEUT = neuter noun class; VEG = vegetable noun class; MASC = masculine noun class; F = feminine gender; M = masculine gender; NMLZ = nominalizer. A synchronic morpheme boundary is indicated with a dash (-); a frozen morpheme boundary with a full stop (.), which is not indicated on the lexeme; and bound forms with a plus sign (+).

<sup>3</sup> *Kalkwa* is not overtly marked for noun class because it is a Macassan loanword, and loanwords do not take noun class prefixes.

base so far includes only one other Australian language: Gurindji (North Australia, genetically unrelated to Enindhilyakwa), which has an even lower BNC frequency (7%). However, these low numbers are most likely due to the fact that many of the complex concepts in the sample do not exist in (former) hunter-gatherer societies, such as *doorpost*, *flea market*, *breakfast*, *carpenter*, and so on. Only 47% of Pepper's complex concepts are realized in Enindhilyakwa. Furthermore, many of the complex forms from his list are not binominals, but for example nouns derived from verbs (4a) or adverbs (4b):

- (4) a. *a-k-warikaja*  
NEUT-NMLZ-tangle\_up  
'vine' (Lit: 'NEUT class item that is tangled up')
- b. *me-merrku-wilyarra*  
VEG-sun-in\_the\_middle  
'midday'

The Enindhilyakwa data thus show us two things: firstly, the frequency of BNCs in a language depends to some extent on the semantic field of the items included in the data base. And secondly, typologically lesser-known languages may reveal new strategies to express complex concepts.

## References

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