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Françoise Rose

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## MY HAMMOCK = I HAVE A HAMMOCK

### Possessed nouns constituting possessive clauses in Emérillon (Tupi-Guarani).

Françoise ROSE<sup>1</sup> (Université Lyon II -France, Laboratoire Dynamique du Langage, IRD)

This paper concerns Emérillon, a language spoken only in French Guyana by about 400 speakers who call it Teko. It belongs to the 8<sup>th</sup> subgroup of the Tupi-Guarani family according to Rodrigues (1984-85). Very little work on the Emérillon language has been done to date: a short grammatical sketch of the language (Maurel, 1998), two as yet unpublished articles on its morpho-syntax (Queixalós, n. d.; Couchili, Maurel & Queixalós, n.d.) and a qualifying paper on the phonology of the language by the author of this paper.

This paper deals with a particular construction of Emérillon: the predicative use of a possessed noun<sup>2</sup> (person prefix plus a noun stem) to constitute a possessive clause. The fact is that, in Emérillon, there is no morphological distinction between possessed nouns in argument function in "ordinary" sentences and possessed nouns that constitute by themselves possessive clauses.

- (1) *e-kija* (Couchili et al.)  
1sg/II<sup>3</sup>-hammock  
"my hammock" or "I have a hammock"

This topic is linked to the new analysis of so-called "descriptive verbs" as a subcategory of nouns (called nominoids, Cf. Couchili, Maurel & Queixalós), which implies analyzing the person marker as a possessive prefix. The structure in (2) is therefore exactly parallel to the one in (1).

- (2) *e-kane?õ* (nominoid) (Couchili et al.)  
1sg/II-fatigue  
"my fatigue" or "I am tired" (i.e. I have fatigue).

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<sup>1</sup> [francoise.rose@etu.univ-lyon2.fr](mailto:francoise.rose@etu.univ-lyon2.fr)

<sup>2</sup> "Possessed noun" must be read as "noun + possessive affix", as opposed to the "genitival construction" i.e a noun modified by a full noun.

<sup>3</sup> 1sg/II means a- is a prefix of set II referencing 1<sup>st</sup> person singular.

# 1. Possessive sentences in general linguistics and in Emérillon:

Payne 1997 draws a quick typology of possessive clauses in the languages of the world: "Languages usually employ existential and/or locational structures to express the notion of possession. Occasionally possessive clauses use a special verb like "have"." The following examples show that the same copula in Estonian is used for existence (3), location (4) and possession (5).

- (3) *laua-l on klaaspiima* (Estonian, Payne 1997)  
table:LOC be glass milk  
There is a glass of milk on the table.

- (4) *raamat on laua-l* (Estonian, Payne 1997)  
book be:3sg table:LOC  
The book is on the table.

- (5) *lapsel on piima* (Estonian, Payne 1997)  
child:LOC be:3sg milk  
The child has milk. (lit: Milk is at the child)

(In this last sentence, the possessor is expressed as a location, but the word order differentiates it from (4).)

Heine (1997) gives 8 different Event Schemas as sources for predicative possession. Three of them are exemplified in Emérillon constructions.

• The first construction contains a verbal predicate, and would fit under the Companion Schema, whose Formula is "X is with Y", with the meaning of "X has, owns Y".

- (6) *a-leko kasulu*  
1sg/I-have (?) necklace  
I have some necklaces.

Though in synchrony *-leko* can be translated with "have", Cabral (2001) gives a nice analysis of the cognates of this form in Tenetehára-Tembé and in Jo'é. She analyses it as the causative-comitative form of the verb "to be in movement".

- (7) *a-r-eká e r-ú-Ø* (Cabral 2001, Jo'é)  
1-C.COM-be.in.movement 1 CONT-father-ARG

So the *-leko* in Emérillon could be analysed the same way (*eko* being a stem), with the meaning "to be with something", except that in a synchronic analysis, the causative-comitative morpheme seems to be *-elo*.

- (8) *kob-a-zepe idžu-pe kalakuli...*

despite the money he has... (Litt: despite that there is money to  
..)

- The most obvious hypothesis on the semantic type of predication in these possessive clauses is to consider it as an existential predication. This analysis was proposed by Rodrigues for Tupinamba (2001) and Dietrich for Tupi-Guarani languages in general (2001). A strong argument in favour of this existential interpretation is an interesting fact about Jo'ê, another Tupi-Guarani language. In Jo'ê, a possessive sentence consists most of the time of a possessed noun followed by an existential copula (Cabral, 2001).

- The difference between the Jo'é construction and the Emérillon one is that the existential meaning that we presume in these sentences is expressed overtly by a copula in Jo'é, which is not the case in Emérillon (although we will actually see a case where it appears).

In line with Heine's typology, my hypothesis would be that it is either the Genitive Schema "X's Y exists" or the Topic Schema "As for X, Y exists.", both being sub-types of the Existence Schema.

The important point is that, as far as I know, it is typologically really uncommon to have an existential predication without any existential verb or copula (that is to say to have just "N" as a sentence for "there is N"), especially without a locative constituent. Tupi-Guarani languages display this rarity. Before dealing with the absence of a copula in this structure, let us look at this construction in more detail.

## 2. Predicate nominals:

An article by Couchili, Maurel and Queixalós on the lexical categories in Emérillon has established that there is a clear distinction between nouns and verbs. The main difference is that nouns have the vocation to be used as arguments (i.e. they can be used as such without any modification), whereas verbs have the vocation to be used as predicates. In the following example, – *kûlûg* and –*ijnuŋ* are verbs, *zetûg* and *kuku* are nouns.

- (11) *zetûg o-kûlûg o-ijnuŋ kuku-pope*  
 sweet.potato 3/I-grate 3/I-put manioc.beer-POST  
 She grates the sweet potatoes and puts them in the beer.

For Tupi-Guarani specialists: note that nouns in Emérillon do not take the –*a* suffix when used as core arguments. The use of this –*a* varies among Tupi-Guarani languages, and in some, it would make a difference between a possessed noun used as an argument (marked with –*a*) and a possessive predicate (unmarked), see for example Rodrigues 96.

And yet verbs can be used as arguments once they have been nominalized through relativization:

- (12) *o-kuwa-pa o-manõ ma?ẽ.*  
 3/I-know-TAM 3/I-die REL  
 He knows the dead. (i.e. those who have died)

and nouns may be used as predicates when possessed:

- (13) *i-ǰalûǰ-a-nam, i-ǰalûǰ-ate o-mã?ẽ Ø-ehe.*  
 3/II-grandmother-a-SUB 3/II-grandmother-FOC 3/I-watch 3-POST  
 If she has a grandmother, her grandmother watches her.

(Here, the –*a* is made necessary by the subordination: *i-ǰalûǰ* by itself means "she has a grandmother".)

These nominal predicates share the same TAM (Tense Aspect and Mood) (14&15) and negation (16&17) as the verbs:

- (14) *wane maʔẽ za-ûkûɕ-tal apam-a-wi.*  
 good REL indet/I-take-FUT foreigner-a-POST  
 We are going to take the good things from the foreigners.
- (15) *e-l-apûɕ-tal*  
 1sg/I-LK<sup>4</sup>-house-FUT  
 I will have a house.
- (16) *d-o-ʔu-ɕi sautu*  
 NEG-3/I-eat-NEG salt  
 (S)he does not eat any salt.
- (17) *d-i-kiya-ɕi* (Couchili et al.)  
 NEG-3/II-hammock-NEG  
 He does not have any hammock.

Vieira (2001) indicates that the predicate nominal in Mbya Guaraní keeps some nominal syntactic properties: this means that the noun has not been verbalized. Here is an example of a nominal predicate modified by a numeral in Emérillon:

- (18) *ede mokon de-l-apidɕ*  
 2sg/PRO two 2sg/II-LK-house  
You have two houses.

I will assume for the time being that predicate nominals have both nominal and verbal properties because their lexical category (noun) allows them to be modified, whereas their function (predicate) makes them have the same properties as verbs in a predicative function.

We must specify here that only possessed nouns consisting of a person marker plus a noun can make a possessive clause, and that genitival constructions (a noun modified by another noun) do not share

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<sup>4</sup> This linking morpheme is used in front of some postpositions and nouns when they are preceded by another noun or a prefix of set II (1st or 2<sup>nd</sup> person) in the same constituent.

this property (since the possessed noun and the genitival construction do not have the same structure).

(19) *ti?iwan-a-kija* (Couchili et al.)

T.-a-hammock

T's hammock / \* T has a hammock.

If one wants to introduce a full NP for the possessor, the possessive clause will look like (20):

(20) *i-kija ti?iwan* (Couchili et al.)

3/II-hammock T.

T. has a hammock.

This description raises two questions: the first one is the analysis of the possessor NP's function (linked to the question of the predicate type). Various analysis have been made in Tupi-Guarani linguistics: subject of an intransitive predicate, subject of a transitive predicate, Head of a nominal determination, adposition of a pronominal argument...) Given lack of time and data, I will not develop this question here.

The second question is the question of an existential predication without copula. We can now return to it.

### 3. Existential predications:

In order to focus on the absence/presence of an existential copula, let us compare Emérillon with Turkish (as already done in Couchili, Maurel & Queixalós). In both languages, the distinction between verbs and nouns is blurred by the fact that both classes use the same person markers and that possessed nouns as arguments (21) or in a possessive predication (22) share the same inflectional affixes.

(21) *araba-m* (Turkish)

car-1sg

my car

(22) *araba-m var* (Turkish)

car-1sg EXIST

I have a car. (My car exists.)

(23) *bir araba var* (Turkish)

one car

EXIST

There is one car.

*Var* is an existential copula, as shown in (23). In Turkish, a possessed noun needs this existential copula (*var*) to make a possessive clause, whereas in Emérillon, the surface forms of possessed nouns and possessive clauses look exactly the same. Within our existential hypothesis, this would result from the fact that no copula is needed to express existence with possessed nouns, a fact that is typologically rare. In Payne 1997, there is no mention about any existential clauses without a verb or a copula.

(Even though uncommon, the absence of existential copula has been attested for Australian languages.)

It is true that a zero copula is nothing exceptional, but in most cases, this zero copula will occur in predications expressing the identity between two arguments (equation, attribution or inclusion), rather than in existential predications. The following examples show that in Russian the identity copula is zero with proper inclusion (24) and attribution (25):

(24) *Ivan professor.* (Russian)  
 I. teacher.  
 I. is a teacher

(25) *Ona krasiva.* (Russian)  
 3sg/FEM beautiful  
 She is beautiful.

We must insist that in Emérillon possessive clauses (and probably in the other Tupi-Guarani languages), the predication is not attributive: in (26), the relation between "me" and "fatigue" is not a relation of identity "be" (even though it is between "me" and "tired" in English, Portuguese or French).

(26) *e-kane?õ* (nominoid) (Couchili et al.)  
 1sg/II-fatigue  
 "I am tired" (i.e. I have fatigue).

Semantically, the relation is one of possession "have", which is more obvious in (27) where there is no possible attributive interpretation even in European languages.

(27) *e-kija* (Couchili et al.)



1sg/II-hammock  
"I have a hammock"

Our hypothesis is that there is a covert existential meaning in possessive clauses in Emérillon, but is there any overt existential verb or copula in non-possessive clauses?

#### 4. Existential predications in non-possessive clauses.

In our corpus, existence is expressed by the use of *kob* (28), the basic meaning of which is a distant location like the English *there* (29).

(28) *kob petum.*  
EXIST cigarette  
There are cigarettes.

(The location is backgrounded in this text: the speaker describes the influence of "foreigners" on the community life. If a location were expressed, it would be "here" or "in our village").

(29) *kob amonam olo-wûg-tal-e?e.*  
there maybe 1excl/I-arrive-FUT-REP  
We will maybe go back there.

Up to this point, we have seen possessive clauses consisting of a simple possessed noun with what we assume to be an existential meaning. However, the Emérillon existential copula was not used in these sentences.

#### 5. A possessive clause with the existential morpheme?

In fact, the corpus shows some examples of the existential *kob* plus a possessed noun, with a possessive meaning. This is another strong argument for the hypothesis that there is a covert existential copula in possessive clauses consisting simply of a person marker plus a noun. This copula may reappear under certain circumstances.

(30) *κοβ-α-ιτε ε-βοτε-ναμ, wil-a-kuwa e-ial o-ho.*  
there-a-IRR 1sg/II-motor-if quick-a-IRR 1sg/II-canoe 3/I-go  
If I had a motor, my canoe would go fast.

This reminds us of the fact that in some languages copulas may be zero or optional in present or incomplete tense and then become

obligatory in past tense. In fact, when sentences 24 (proper inclusion) and 25 (attribution) are put in the past or the future tense, they indeed display then a copula (31-32).

(31) *Ivan budet professor.*

I. be:FUT professor

I. will be a teacher.

(32) *Ona byla krasiva.*

She be:PAST:FEM beautiful

She was beautiful.

In (30), *kob* could be sensitive to the irrealis TAM and/or the subordination. Further data should be collected to confirm this hypothesis and specify the contexts in which the copula can occur or must occur.

### **Summary:**

➤ Only possessed nouns (person marker plus noun) can function as predicate with a possessive meaning.

➤ We made the hypothesis that these nominal predicates are in fact existential constructions.

➤ With unpossessed nouns, the existential meaning is expressed by the copula *kob*.

➤ The existential copula *kob* may be overt also in possessive clauses. What is still to be investigated is if the possessed noun keeps some verbal properties when *kob* is present, or if negation and TAM are taken over by the copula. Similarly, the question is raised of whether we should posit a zero copula in sentences like (1) and (2), or still think of them in terms of "nominal predicate"?

### **Further remark:**

Queixalós (2001) notes that in Tupi-Guarani languages nouns have a general propensity to function as predicate in semantically possessive predications, a fact we have illustrated here with Emérillon examples.

On the other hand, we said earlier that "descriptive" words (words with adjectival meaning) were analyzed as nouns (nominoids) in

Emérillon. They share most of the properties of nouns, and precisely can easily constitute a possessive clause when possessed (2).

These last two remarks make understandable how some property-concept words (adjectival meaning words) can be expressed by nouns in Emérillon (we refer here to nominoids): they can easily constitute a possessive clause, that is to say be used in a predication, one frequent use of property-concept words.

#### ABBREVIATIONS:

3/I	3 <sup>rd</sup> person of set I	LOC	locative
ARG	argumental case	NEG	negation
C.COM	causative comitative	PAST	past tense
CONT	contiguous	POST	postposition
EXIST	existential copula	PRO	pronoun
FEM	feminine	REL	relativizer
FOC	focalisation	REP	repetitive
FUT	future	sg	singular
IRR	irrealis	SUB	subordinator
LK	linking morpheme	TAM	tense, aspect, mood

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