CONTINUOUS AND DISCONTINUOUS NOUN PHRASES IN NYANGUMARDA

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0. PREFACE

The Nyangumarda language is spoken by about 700 Aborigines along the northwest coast of Australia, between Port Hedland and Broome, and inland around Marble Bar. Of this number, about 500 claim it as their own or their first language, while the rest are from other much smaller language groups who use Nyangumarda as a lingua franca.

Nyangumarda is a member of the Marngu sub-group of the Southwest Group of the Pama-Nyungan language family. It is coded as A61 by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. References to it are made in A Revised Linguistic Survey of Australia (Oates and Oates, ed.) 1970: 87; the 1973 Supplement to the Revised Linguistic Survey, vol. I:129-30; and in Classification and Index of the World's Languages by Vogelin and Vogelin 1977:223.

The data on which this paper is based was collected at Marble Bar, between February 1972 and March 1973, and at 'Twelve Mile' (now the Tjalku Wara Community Inc.), near Port Hedland, between July and October 1973, and between February 1976 and June 1977.

While many members of both communities have contributed to our knowledge of the language, our main helpers have been Mrs Lily Darby, formerly of Marble Bar and now of South Hedland, and Mr. Jack Horace of Tjalku Wara. We are greatly indebted to them.

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0.1. ABBREVIATIONS

1  first person
2  second person
3  third person
conj conjunction
dat dative
dest destination
du dual
erg ergative
ex exclusive
loc locative
nf non-future
nom nominative
poss possessive
pl plural
rep repetitive
s singular
sce source
vb verbaliser
+

joins two or more English words representing one Nyangumarda morpheme in morpheme-by-morpheme translation

0.2. ORTHOGRAPHY

The orthography used for this paper is the one which is being used in literacy materials for the Nyangumarda language. The following symbols are used: bilabials p, m; lamino-dentals j, ny, ly; apico-alveolars t, n, l, rr; apico-domals rt, rn, rl; velars k, ng; semi-vowels w, y, r; and vowels i, a, u.

In word initial position the contrast between t and rt, between n and rn, and between l and rl is neutralised. The apico-alveolar series has been chosen to represent these neutralised consonants.

When two apico-domals e.g. rn + rt occur in a cluster they are symbolised thus: rnt.

0.3. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to describe the basic types of noun phrase in Nyangumarda and to show how some types may be expressed as discontinuous phrases.

There are four types of noun phrase in Nyangumarda:
Head - Modifier, Co-ordinate, Relator - Axis, Appositional.
Relator - Axis phrases occur only in locative constructions. The other three types are found filling several clause level slots. Only Head - Modifier phrases occur in a Time slot.

1. HEAD - MODIFIER PHRASES

A Head - Modifier noun phrase consists of a head - usually a noun, but sometimes a noun phrase - together with up to three modifiers. A noun without any modifiers can be considered to be a phrase if it has the potential of being modified.

1.1. MODIFIERS

The types of words which may modify a noun are:
- adjectives
- demonstratives
- possessives
- nouns
- pronouns
- numerals

1.1.1. Adjectives

Adjectives include such words as wirtu 'big', ngalypa 'good', and nurta 'blunt'. They possibly also include derivatives of nouns such as kurlu-jartiny 'badness-having' i.e., 'bad', and kurlurlu-marti 'dust-like' i.e., 'dusty'.

kurlu-jartiny-ju malyarninyi kaju-lu
bad-having-erg chopping axe-erg
'He is chopping with a useless axe.'

However when examples of these derived words in text are considered, not enough is understood of their function to state categorically that some are acting as modifiers of nouns.

1.1.2. Demonstratives

There are three demonstratives:
- nyungu 'this'
- pala/palama 'that' (mid distance)
- ngurnungu 'that' (far)

Each of the demonstratives may take the dual suffix -jirri and the plural -rrangu.
pala-jirri partany-jirri  
that-du child-du  
'those two children'

nyungu-rrangu kakaji-rrangu  
this-pl uncle-pl  
'these uncles'

1.1.3. Possessives

Possessives consist of nouns or personal pronouns with the possessive suffix -mil. The relationship between the possessive and the head is either one of ownership or of kin relationship.

walypila-mili kari  
white+man-posss beer  
'the white man's beer'

kanyjayi ngaju-mili  
grandmother l+s-poss  
'my grandmother'

1.1.4. Nouns and Pronouns

Unaffixed nouns and pronouns modify other nouns when inalienable possession is involved.

ngaju milya  
l+s nose  
'my nose'

maruntu jina  
goanna foot  
'goanna tracks'

1.1.5. Numerals

There is a small group of numerals comprised of:

waraja 'one'
kujarra 'two'
kujarra-pa waraja 'two-and one' i.e., 'three'
marlu 'many'
kurrngal 'many'
wrirr 'all'

waraja-ngu karrpu-ngu  
one-loc sun-loc  
'on one day'
1.2. RESTRICTIONS ON MODIFIERS

It is unusual to find more than two modifiers in one phrase. The maximum expansion that has been found is head plus three modifiers, which are a possessive and two adjectives.

\[
\text{maya jana-mili nganimarta kararr} \\
\text{house 3+pl-poss tall tough} \\
\text{'their tall, strong building'}
\]

Two adjectives can occur in one phrase.

\[
\text{wirtu-karti talakarr-karti maya-karti} \\
\text{big-dest strong-dest house-dest} \\
\text{'into a big, strong house'}
\]

Demonstratives, adjectives and possessives can each co-occur with one of the other two word types.

Demonstrative and Adjective

\[
\text{pala partany-ju wupartu-lu} \\
\text{that child-erg little-erg} \\
\text{'that little child'}
\]

Possessive and Demonstrative

\[
\text{ngaju-mili ngurnungu mamaji} \\
\text{l+1s-poss that+far older+brother} \\
\text{'that older brother of mine'}
\]

Possessive and Adjective

\[
\text{partany-ju ngaju-mila-lu wupartu} \\
\text{child-erg 1+1s-poss-erg little} \\
\text{'my little child'}
\]

In phrases where the head is modified by an unaffixed noun or pronoun no other modifiers have been found.

\[
\text{maruntu jina 'goanna foot' i.e., 'goanna tracks'}
\]

There seems to be no reason why numerals should not co-occur with any of the other types of modifiers. An example is given below of a numeral with a possessive. A speaker of the language may be persuaded to allow their use in combination with two other modifiers, but the resulting examples sound artificial. In practice, numerals are not used extensively as modifiers, especially in combination with other modifiers. Some of the functions of the small group of numerals can be
taken care of in the noun morphology. The dual suffix -jirri can be used instead of the free form kujarra 'two', and the plural suffix -rrangu covers numbers above two when there is no need to be specific. Absence of a free form numeral, together with absence of suffixation indicates singular.

muwarr ngaju-mili waraja
	*talk 1+s-pos one
	*my one story'

wupartu-jirri partany-jirri
	*little-du child-du
	*two little children'

1.3. WORD ORDER

Demonstratives usually precede the head, but a few examples have been found where a demonstrative follows the head.

muwarr-arrangu palama-rrangu
	*word-pl that-pl
	*those words'

When either an adjective or possessive is the only modifier in a phrase it may precede or follow the head. With adjectives it is difficult to decide whether or not the use of a particular word order places the adjective in focus. With possessives there is no obvious reason for one or the other word order to be chosen. One speaker in the one text will use both word orders for the same expression.

ngaju-mili pipi or pipi ngaju-mili
	*1+s-pos mother mother 1+s-pos
	*my mother'

If a possessive and demonstrative co-occur, either of the modifiers may be contiguous to the head.

ngaju-mili ngurnungu mamaji
	*1+s-pos that+far older+brother
	*that older brother of mine'

nyungu walypila-mila-lu kari-lu
	*this white+man-pos-erg beer-erg
	*this beer of the white man'

If a possessive and adjective co-occur, the possessive is contiguous to the head.

partany-ju ngaju-mila-lu wupartu
	*child-erg 1+s-pos-erg little
	*my little child'
1.4. CASE AND CONCORD

In Head - Modifier phrases where the head is marked for case and/or number there is agreement between the head and modifiers. Nyangumarda is a nominative - ergative language (Hale 1970:759). The ergative case (subject or agent of a transitive verb) is marked by -lu ~ -ju. The nominative case (subject of an intransitive verb and object of a transitive verb) is, in Nyangumarda, unmarked. The lack of marking with nominative case tends to obscure the concord, but it is quite obvious when other cases are used.

Ergative Case and Dual Number

wupartu-lu-jirri partany-ju-jirri
little-erg-du child-erg-du
'two little children'

Locative

waraji-nga karrpu-nga
one-loc sun-loc
'on one day'

Destination

wirtu-karti talakarr-karti maya-karti
big-dest strong-dest house-dest
'into a big, strong house'

Dative

wirtu-ku ngapa-ku
big-dat water-dat
'(listen) for a lot of rain'

Sometimes when two modifiers are used, only the head and one of the modifiers are inflected for case. This may be the result of careless speech as the agreement usually appears on each word in the phrase.

pala partany-ju wupartu-lu
that child-erg little-erg
'That little child'

1.5. THE HEAD

The head of a Head - Modifier phrase is a noun or a Head - Modifier noun phrase marked either for locative case or by -jartiny 'having'. This is an area of phrase construction which needs more investigation. It seems that other case suffixes besides locative could be used in this way, but if this is so they have yet to be found.

pala murtaka 'that motor car'
palama murtaka-jartiny wupartu-jartiny  
that car-having little-having  
'that person with the little motor car'

pala murtaka-nga wupartu-nga  
that car-loc little-loc  
'that person in the little car'

Sometimes an adjective may be used as a substantive where a noun would normally be expected. At this stage it is not known whether or not an adjective used in this way has the potential of being modified and can be said to be acting as the head of a phrase.

wirtu kamarnanganaku  
big called+to+us  
'The important (man) called out to us.'

2. CO-ORDINATE PHRASES

An indefinite number of nouns or short phrases may be strung together in a co-ordinate construction with or without the conjunction -pa. When the conjunction is used it may appear on every item in the construction or only on some of them.

ngaju-mili-ja pipi-ja japartu-ja mamaji-ja jamuji-ja  
l+s-poss-sce mother-sce father-sce brother-sce grandfather-sce  
yaku-ja  
cousin-sce  
'(I learned) from my mother, father, older brother, grandfather and cousin.'

Anna+Plain-ji-pa Mantuny-ju-pa Wallal-ji-pa  
name-loc-conj name-loc-conj name-loc-conj  
'at Anna Plains, Mandorah and Wallal Downe'

3. RELATOR - AXIS PHRASES

Five adverbs have been found which occur with nouns to form Relator - Axis phrases in locative constructions. They are:

wangka 'near'  
yakujani 'this side'  
ngunarri 'the other side', 'far away'  
kaniny 'under'  
kanka 'up', 'above'

When they occur in Relator - Axis phrases all but wangka take the destination suffix -karti (or -kurti) which normally denotes movement towards the referent to which it is suffixed. But when it appears in
combination with these four adverbs it is sometimes difficult to discern any idea of movement.

Instead of being suffixed with -karti, kanka often takes -ni, the meaning of which has not been found. Note that kaniny-kurti means 'inside' as well as 'underneath'.

The axis of the phrase is marked for location. The relator may precede or follow the axis.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{maya-nga wangka} & \quad \text{house-loc near} \\
\text{'near the house'} & \\
\text{yakujani-karti milimili-ngi} & \quad \text{this+side-dest paper-loc} \\
\text{'on this side of the paper'} & \\
\text{kankani warnku-nga} & \quad \text{above stone-loc} \\
\text{'on top of the stone'} & \\
\text{kaniny-kurti maya-nga} & \quad \text{under-dest house-loc} \\
\text{'inside the house'} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

The four cardinal points of the compass behave in a similar way to these adverbs, but take -kurnu (or -kurti) instead of -karti.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{yalinyji-kurnu} & \quad \text{'on the north side'} \\
\text{kakarra-kurnu} & \quad \text{'on the east side'} \\
\text{kurila-kurnu} & \quad \text{'on the south side'} \\
\text{kara-kurnu} & \quad \text{'on the west side'} \\
\end{align*}
\]

4. APPOSITIONAL PHRASES

Two nouns may occur in apposition in a generic specific relationship where one item in the phrase gives more specific information than the other; or they may be in apposition when one is used to amplify the other.

In phrases showing a generic specific relationship either the generic or specific item may be first in the phrase. But where one noun amplifies the other the amplification must come last.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{generic} & \quad \text{specific} \\
\text{ngunarrri-ngi pirra-nga} & \quad \text{far-loc desert-loc} \\
\text{'far away, in the desert'} & \\
\end{align*}
\]
specific generic
marrngu nganarna
Aborigine l+pl+ex
'we Aborigines'

statement amplification
ngapi-karti kukilikang-karti
what+a+it-dest place+name-dest
'to that place, what's its name, to Coogligong'

Mapirri Mervyn 'Mapirri, that is Mervyn'

Not only nouns, but two or more phrases with a wide variety of
fillers may be in apposition to give amplification.

nganin-nganin mayi nyungu nyungu mayi yija marrngu-mili mayi
all+kinds food this this food truly Aborigine-poss food
'(She brought me) all kinds of food, this food, truly food belonging
to the Aborigines.'

5. DISCONTINUITY

It is not uncommon to find discontinuous phrases. All types of noun
phrase except Relator - Axis phrases may be affected. In the examples
given below the words which interrupt the phrase are placed in paren­
thesis and verb morphology has not been marked except where it helps
to clarify an example.

Perhaps the most commonly found type of discontinuous phrase is the
Appositional. With these the statement precedes the verb (or verb
phrase) and the amplification follows the verb. Sometimes it is more
than just a verb which interrupts the phrase.

nganin-nganin kuyi (wirlarnakinyija) rawal-pa nganin-nganin
all+kinds meat (killed+for+me) goanna-conj all+kinds
manganya-pa kuyi-rrangu
echidna-conj meat-pl
'(She killed) all kinds of meat (for me), goanna, all kinds,
echidna, and different meats.'

mamaji (waninyirri Fitzroy+Crossing-ju) Limericki
brother (staying Fitzroy+Crossing-loc) Limerick
'My brother, Limerick (is staying at Fitzroy Crossing).' 

The following example is more complicated in that the words which
precede the verb complex themselves form an appositional phrase. The
amplification which follows the verb is expanded to include a second
actor and is itself another appositional phrase.
partany-ju ngaju-mila-lu wupartu Lenaji-lu (japam ji-ni-kinyi-pulu) child-erg l+s-poss-erg little name-erg (stop vb-nf-rep-3+du)

Lenaja and Leonard kujarra name and name two

'My little child, Lena, Lena and Leonard, the two of them (were stopping him).'

Discontinuous Head - Modifier phrases occur in a variety of forms. Most of the examples found in the data consist only of a head with one modifier. The head may precede or follow the verb. There are examples of adjectives possessives and demonstratives acting as modifiers. One example shows two modifiers, one on each side of the verb. While it is usually a verb which interrupts the phrase, the first example given below shows 'might be' as the interruption.

wirtu (might be) karrru
big (might be) sun
'(it might be) a long time'
marlu (kalkurnan) yukurrru
many (you+keep) dog
'(Do you have) many dogs?'
jurnti-nga (ngalpa-ngalpanyayirni) walypila-mili-nga
 cave-loc (we+are+entering) white+man-poss-loc
'(We are going into) the white man's gaol.'
nyungu (ngawu jininganinyi) walypila-mila-lu kari-lu
this (mad making+us) white+man-poss-erg beer-erg
'This beer of the white man (is making us silly).'

Co-ordinate phrases may occasionally be discontinuous. In the following example the verb is affixed to show dual actor with one free form actor preceding it and the second following. It is further complicated by the fact that the first half of the co-ordinate construction is in apposition to the preceding phrase.

Minyjun-ju name-erg
'My wife Aunty Nayi, and Minyjun (were stopping him).'
6. SUMMARY

Four types of noun phrase have been described for Nyangumarda. They are Head - Modifier, Co-ordinate, Relator - Axis, and Appositional. The Relator - Axis phrases are the most restricted in length, permitted fillers and in distribution. There are restrictions on the length of Head - Modifier phrases. Theoretically there is no limit to the length of Co-ordinate phrases. Appositional phrases, because they may contain other phrase types (including co-ordinate constructions), may also be quite long. All but Relator - Axis phrases may be discontinuous.
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