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LARGE GRAMMATICAL UNITS AND THE SPACE-TIME SETTING IN MAXAKALÍ

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The Maxakali tribe of 250 Indians lives near the northeastern corner of Minas Gerais. Historically it has had long contact with non-Indian civilization because of its location in the colonial section of Brazil. Yet it has tenaciously retained many tribal customs and monolingualism, isolating itself from the surrounding culture.

Curt Nimuendaju summarizes the beliefs of several linguists concerning the relationship of Maxakali to a language family. He himself considers the language similar to 6 extinct languages, and Pataxô. Five others: Martius, Steinen, Ehrenreich, Rivet, and Schmidt group most or all of the same languages, together with some others, into a group called Goytacás, which they consider a sub-group of, or similar to, Jê.

The analysis of Maxakali requires the description of a grammatical unit larger than sentence. This unit, for convenience, is called a paragraph. Little has been written about such high level grammatical units; this is still a frontier of linguistics.

The paragraph was postulated in order to solve several problems that remained after the Maxakali clauses had been analysed. These problems involved the use of motion verbs, the use of conjunctions, and the distribution of simple time phrases vs. time phrases included in clauses. Oddly enough, all of the problems seemed to refer to time or space. We hypothesized that temporals and locationals might be the defining features of paragraphs.

One of the problems that led to this hypothesis was the use of the verbs nūn 'come' and mõg 'go'. We heard Indians mention many locations, but could not predict when they would 'go' to a place or 'come' to it.

A second problem was with the conjunctions. We already knew that any one Portuguese conjunction such as 'and' or 'but' is translated in Maxakali by a set of conjunctions. The set hãyã and pãyã, for example, means 'but' in the sense of 'contrast', but hãyã links clauses with the same subject, while pãyã links clauses with different subjects. The unsolved problem, however, was that vague meanings of motion and time kept appearing. For example, our informant told us that the conjunction mõktu meant 'go'. But it clearly occupied the position of a conjunction and not a verb. We failed to determine the exact meanings or uses of the conjunctions with overtones of motion.

A third problem was the occurrence of time phrases in two different distributions. In one case the time phrase stands alone between conjunctions, as a complete clause might: tu hãptup ha 'and day and'. In the other case, the time phrase occurs within a clause as in: tu 'ãmniy hãg- nũn ha 'and night at I come and'. We wondered if the time phrase not tied directly to a specific clause might be relevant for the entire paragraph.

The fourth problem was the apparent redundancy of some of the spatial expressions. For example: hag-mũ' nũn tu nũktu xupep tug-mũ' õnte k- pip 'and-we come and here-to arrive and-we there first person-to be (We came and arrived and were there)'. The final clause 'and we were there' seems redundant.

At this point a paragraph was hypothesized to solve these problems. The hypothesis includes a spatial setting in three parts: a home area, places-in-passing, and the area of travel between these. We named these three areas nuclear, marginal, and transitional respectively. The nuclear area is marked by the use of locational verbs such as pip 'to be' ('estar'). Motion is directional toward the nuclear area (nũn 'come') or away from it (mõg 'go'). The morpheme tu' 'at/and' occurs with the nuclear area; the morpheme ha' 'at/and' occurs with the marginal area: the morpheme ta 'and' indicated transition from the nuclear area, or from the basic temporal setting to the speficit time segment of the next clause.

The hypothesis further includes two kinds of temporal setting: the time phrase that stands alone is the time setting for all clauses in the paragraph. Time phrases occurring within a clause signify the time of that one clause only.

A paragraph of Maxacali text is helpful now:

(Tu[1]	hãptup[2]	(ha)[3]	(ta)[4]		g-mũ'[5]	pip[6]		mĩkax[7]	kakak[8]	tu'[9]
and	day	and	from setting		we	to be (estar)		rock	foot	at

(tu)[10]	(ta)[11]		g-mũ'[12]	mõg[13]	(tu)[14]	(mõktu)[15]		kõnãgkox[16]	ha[17]
and	from setting		we	go	and	to marginal area		river	at

g-mũ'[18]	mõg[19]	(nũy)[20]	mã'ãy[21]	xak[22]	('ĩhã)[23]		Yõãm[24]	te[25]		p-tex[26]
we	go	purpose	crocodile	hunt	simultaneous		John	subject		kill

Yõãm[27]	te[28]		mã'ãy[29]	p-tex[30]	(ha)[31]	g-mũ'[32]	nũn[33]	(tu)[34]	(nũktu)[35]
John	subject		crocodile	kill	and	we	come	and	to setting

'ãmãxak[36]	hã[37]	g-mũ'[38]	xupep[39]	(tu)[40-41]	mãhã'[42]	(tu)[43]	mũ[44]	mõ[45]k[44]yõn[45].
evening	at	we	arrive	and it	eat	and	we	sleep 1st pers. sleep

'on the (next) day we were living at the foot of the rock. We went away to the river to hunt crocodile. John killed, John killed a crocodile. We returned, and upon arrival ate it (crocodile) and slept.'

The conjunctions are in parentheses. Clauses or phrases are between the conjunctions.

The following are the three areas of the spatial setting. The nuclear area is mĩkax[7] kakak[8] tu'[9] 'rock foot-of at' ('at the foot of the rock'. Note that this expression is in the same clause with the verb pip[6] 'to be', and that it is marked by the morpheme tu' 'at'. This is the place that the main actor considers home on that particular day.

The marginal area is kõnãgkox[16] ha'[17] 'river at' ('to the river'). Note that this expression is in the same clause with the action verb mõg[19]

'go', and that it is marked by the morpheme ha' 'at'. It is a place that the actor is merely visiting that day. The travel takes place in the transitional area, between the nuclear and marginal areas of the text, as can be seen in the following excerpts from the text: (ta)[11] g-mu'[12] mõg[13] (tu)[14] (mõktu)[15] 'from-setting we go and to-marginal area'; and g-mũ'[32] nũn[33] (tu)[34] (nũktu)[35] 'we come and to-setting'.

The phrase that expresses the time of the whole paragraph is hãptup[2] 'day'. The other time phrase, within a clause, gives the time of that clause only: 'ãmãxak[36] hã[37] g-mu'[38] xupep[39] 'evening at we arrive'.

We are now ready to review the solutions to the four problems, with examples from the text.

The problem of 'come' and 'go' was solved. 'Come' means motion

toward the nuclear area, and 'go' means motion away from the nuclear area. The marginal area does not determine which word to use. Motion near the marginal areas is significant only in terms of the nuclear area; i.e., one 'comes' to a marginal area only if he is on the way to the nuclear area, and 'goes' to a marginal area only if, in the process, he is going away from the nuclear area. In the text, for example, mõg[13] 'go' refers to going from the nuclear area mĩkax[7] kakak[8] tu[9] even though the actor is approaching the marginal area kõnãgkox[16] ha [17].

The problem about motion expressed in conjunctions was solved. The clue lies in the relationship of the conjunctions to the three spatial areas. Ta occurs following nuclear area and temporal setting, and means 'from the setting'. In terms of location it indicates that the actor has left the nuclear area and has set out to travel. In terms of time it means leaving the temporal setting of the paragraph and moving into the time segment of the next clause. In the text ta[11] refers to leaving the nuclear area, mĩkax[7] kakak[8] tu[9] 'rock foot-of at', whereas ta[4] refers to leaving the temporal setting hãptup[2] 'day' and entering into the time segment of the following clause: g-mũ[5] pip[6] mĩkax[7] kakak[8] tu[9] 'we to-be rock foot-of at'. It can also be seen that the conjunction mõktu like the verb mõg indicates motion from the nuclear area, and that the conjunction nũktu like the verb nũn indicates motion toward the nuclear area.

The problem of time phrases was solved. The isolated time phrase (tu)[1] hãptup[2] (ha)[3] 'and day and' is the length of time in which all actions of the paragraph take place. Then each consecutive clause takes place in either consecutive time segments or simultaneously but never does the second of two adjacent clauses take place before the first. Maxakali expresses no "flash-backs". Conjunctions signal whether the two clauses they join occur simultaneously or consecutively. For example (tu)[10] indicates consecutive time as in: g-mũ[5] pip[6] mĩkax[7] kakak[8] tu[9] (tu)[10] (ta)[11] gmũ[12] mõg[13] 'we to-be rock foot--of at and from-setting we go'. ('ĩha)[23] indicates simultaneous action as in: mã'ãy[21] xak[22] ('ĩhã)[23] Yõãm[24] te[25] p-tex[26] 'crocodile hunt and John subject kill'. A time word within a clause indicates the time of that clause only (and is included within the total time of the setting): e.g., 'ãmãxak[36] 'evening' in 'ãmãxak[36] hã[37] g-mũ[38] xupep[39] 'evening at we arrive', which means 'we arrive at evening of the same day'.

The time and space settings are interrelated. Each narrative para-

graph contains either one spatial or one temporal setting or both of these. The temporal setting occurs at the very beginning of the paragraph. The nuclear area of the spatial setting occurs anywhere in the first half of the paragraph. If both settings occur, the temporal setting preceeds the nuclear area. If either setting does not occur, it is understood to be the same as the preceeding paragraph.