PART OF SPEECH MISMATCHES IN MODULAR GRAMMAR
NEW EVIDENCE FROM JINGULU*

ROB PENSALFINI
University of Queensland

Summary:
The Jingulu language of central-northern Australia presents some
difficulties in terms of classifying certain of its lexemes into part of speech
categories. Personal names, for instance, which should be nouns on notional
grounds, have the phonological and morphosyntactic properties of
interjections, whilst notionally verbal roots are distinctly non-verbal in their
distribution. These phenomena are analysed according to the principles of
autolexical syntax, wherein different levels of representation of the same
linguistic item (morphem, word, phrase and so forth) need not necessarily
correspond to one another exactly.

Keywords: Jingulu, Australian languages, autolexical syntax, part of speech

Different criteria for establishing the part of speech category for lexical
items can return conflicting information for a given item. Introductory linguistic
textbooks are at pains to point out that semantic (notional) definitions such as
‘a noun is the name of a person, place, or thing’ or ‘a verb depicts an action’ are
at best general guides, and that we would do better to rely on morphological
(inflectional) or syntactic (distributional) criteria. However, these criteria are
not themselves without exceptions. For example, there are nouns which do not
take plural marking, and certain adjectives seem to function only as either
predicates (e.g. awake) or modifiers (e.g. mere) but not both. In general,
however, semantic, morphological, and syntactic criteria tend to converge
across classes of items, even if there are exceptions. In this article I consider
evidence from Jingulu, traditionally spoken in the Western Barkly Tableland in

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author.
Australia’s Northern Territory, that these criteria return different part of speech categorisations across entire classes of words.

Personal names in Jingulu provide the most striking example. Semantically they are indisputably noun-like, being referential labels for individuals, yet phonologically, morphologically and syntactically, they resemble nothing so much as interjections, and in pragmatic terms they have a highly restricted and connotatively charged function. Within a multi-stratal theory of grammar, such as Sadock’s (1991) Autolexical model, such an apparent disparity is easily accounted for, as elements can have different categorial properties in different modules of the grammar. In Autolexical grammar, modules are not linked derivationally, but exist as parallel representations. The autolexical account can be extended to cover the unusual structure of the Jingulu verb, in which the element which functions semantically as a verb is morphosyntactically some kind of adverbial adjunct. The morphosyntactic verb, on the other hand, is semantically bleached. Information on Jingulu is drawn from Pensalfini 1997, based on my own fieldwork, as well as more recent unpublished fieldwork. An earlier description of the language can be found in Chadwick 1975.

1. **Personal names in Jingulu**

Traditionally, Jingili people can be referred to by one of a number of names.1 The most common terms of address, also the most common terms for referring to a third party, are kinship terms (translating as ‘father’, ‘paternal aunt’, ‘cross cousin’ and so forth) and subsection names. Every Jingila belongs to one (or sometimes two) of eight subsections, and each subsection has a feminine and a masculine name, resulting in sixteen subsection names (also called ‘skin names’ or ‘skins’). This system translates readily into similar systems of neighbouring peoples, and to a lesser extent into various subsection and section systems that exist all over Australia. The subsection system feeds into a system of classificatory kinship, so that any two people within such a system can determine a classificatory kin relationship, whether they are genetically related or not. In addition to subsection names and kin terms, a person may be referred to by an expression, best described as a nickname or sobriquet, which may be related to an exploit they have (or are alleged to have) performed, or to rituals which they have participated in.

None of these, however, is the Jingila’s personal name, which is given at birth (though it may be changed later, particularly at initiation) or upon adoption into Jingili society. These personal names, while not at all secret, are rarely used. As in much of Australia, it is considered impolite to use someone’s

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1 The language is called ‘Jingulu’, but the people are called ‘Jingili’. A Jingili person is called a ‘Jingila’.
personal name within their hearing, and these names are not often used to refer to people either. However, the Jingili aversion to using personal names goes beyond the purely sociological and is grammaticalised in the language. It is not possible to use a personal name as part of a clause, for example. In this section we will see that this behaviour of personal names stems directly from the fact that they are not nominal in the same way that common nouns and pronouns are.

1.1 Nouns

The class of nouns in Jingulu is better described as a class of nominals, since it includes elements that would translate into other languages as adjectives (as has been noted extensively for Australian languages in general, see for instance Dixon 1980). Pronouns have a slightly different morphological structure to other nouns, but I will consider them to be a sub-class of nominals as they have the same semantic, morphosyntactic and phonological properties.

1.1.1 Semantics. The oft-cited ‘a noun is the name of a person, place, or thing’ is a fairly accurate characterisation of the morphosyntactic class of nouns in Jingulu, except that the personal names of people must be excluded from this class. The class includes all words for objects (animate or inanimate), names of ceremonies, place names, kinship terms, subsection names, and nominalised verbs.

Jingulu has four genders (or noun classes), which Chadwick (1975) and Pensalfini (1997) call masculine, feminine, vegetable, and neuter. These names crudely represent the semantic division of nouns into genders: words for biologically male animates (including kinship and subsection terms) are found in the masculine class, words for biologically female animates are in the feminine, words for most vegetable foods, as well as words for other long thin objects (most of the vegetables growing in Jingili country are long and thin), are in the vegetable class, while the neuter class is occupied by other words for inanimate objects. This is an oversimplification of the system, but it will suffice for the purposes here (a more detailed description and analysis of the gender system can be found in Pensalfini 1999). These genders are usually identifiable by a characteristic ending on the noun itself (see (1)), but more reliably by the form of agreement they trigger on gender-changing nominals (which might be considered adjectives on notional grounds, see (2b)).

1.1.2 Morphosyntax. As mentioned in the previous section, Jingulu nouns typically end with a phonemic sequence that identifies them as a member of one class or another, as indicated in (1). Masculine nouns tend to end in /a/ (1a), feminine in /mi/ or /rdi/ (1b), vegetable in /mi/ or /bi/ (1c), and neuter nouns usually either end in /u/ or are consonant-final (1d).
As in most gender systems (Romance systems, for instance), there are exceptions to this generalisation (for instance the female subsection names, such as *Naaninginju*, all end in /u/ despite being grammatically feminine, as shown in (2b)).
Many nouns, in particular words for higher animates, can appear in more than one gender. In (2a) we see how the reference of nouns for higher animates can be altered by altering the ending (feminine and vegetable gender endings trigger height harmony in the root to which they attach, see Pensalfini 1997 for details), while (2b) shows how a notionally adjectival nominal agrees in gender with the noun it modifies.

(2) a. kunyarrba kunyirrbirni
    “male dog” “female dog”
    wawa wiwirni
    “boy” “girl”
    lala lilirni
    “father” “paternal aunt”

b. kunyarrba ngamurla wiwirni ngamurlirni
    “big (male) dog” “big girl”
    yurrku ngamurlu milakurri ngamurlimi
    “big flower” “big potato”
    Jurlinginja ngamurla Naaninginju ngamurlirni
    “big Jula (male skin)” “big Nawurla (female skin)”

The only members of the nominal class which do not obey this generalisation are a very narrow set of adjectives, almost all of which are consonant-final, which display no gender concord whatsoever (e.g. nyambarnin “venerable”). However, these ‘discordant’ nominals otherwise follow the syntactic and phonotactic restrictions on nominals.

Pronouns differ from other nominals in that (with the exception of third person pronouns) they do not inflect for gender. They encode person, number (singular, dual, or plural) and an inclusive/exclusive contrast for non-singular first person pronouns.

All nominals can be inflected for case. Pronouns have distinct forms for transitive subject (Ergative), intransitive subject (Nominative), object (Accusative) and possessor (Genitive, based on the Accusative form) functions (3b-e). Other nouns take an Ergative suffix when functioning as the subject of a transitive clause (3a). There is a wide range of adpositional suffixes (including Locational, Instrumental, and Comitative) which can attach to nouns and
pronouns (3f-g). In addition, all nouns and pronouns can bear further discourse suffixes such as emphatics and focus markers (not displayed here).

(3) a. Wawa-rii warlaku ngaja-ju.
    child-ERG dog(ABS) see-do
    “The child is looking at the dog.”

    2sgGEN-m child(ABS) cry-do
    “Your child is crying.”

c. Milyamilyayi-nya-nu nyama.
    late-2sg-did 2sgNOM
    “You were late.”

d. Nyamirni nangku-nu kurrubardu.
    2sgERG chop-did boomerang
    “You cut [made] a boomerang.”

e. Angkula larrinka-nga-ju ngaanku.
    NEG understand-1sg-do 2sgACC
    “I didn’t understand you.”

    1sg-come lake-ABL
    “I’m coming back from the lake.”

2 The following abbreviations have been used in glosses throughout the paper:
   1, 2, 3            first, second, third person
   sg, dl, pl         singular, dual, plural number
   Subj, Obj          subject, object
   Inc, Exc           inclusive, exclusive reference
   m, f, n, v         masculine, feminine, neuter, vegetable gender
   NOM, ACC, ERG, ABS, GEN nominative, accusative, ergative, absolutive, genitive
   ALL, ABL           allative, ablative
   INDEF               indefinite marker
   FUT                 future tense
   HAB                 habitual aspect
   NEGIMPV            negative imperative (“Do not...!”)
1.1.3 Phonotactics. Nouns and pronouns follow the same phonotactic restrictions as verbs, adverbs, and all affixes in Jingulu. Complex onsets are not permitted, and complex codas are only permitted if the first element is a liquid and the second an obstruent. Approximants are not permitted in codas at all. Common nominals, pronouns, verbs and affixes are all vowel-final, while adverbs may end in a consonant. All of these types of word must minimally consist of a syllable with a long vowel, a single closed syllable, or two open syllables.

1.2 Interjections

Interjections are characterised, cross-linguistically, by their syntactic and phonological irregularity. In English, for example, interjections can not be integrated into a clause, but are always separated from clausal material into a distinct intonational phrase. Interjections can violate regular English phonology, too, such as the interjection of disapproval, often spelled “tut tut”, which involves ingressive airflow. Jingulu interjections are similarly aberrant.

1.2.1 Semantics. Interjections in Jingulu include words for “yes” (4a), conventional attention getters (4b), fossilised imperatives (4c), and exclamations of pain or alarm (4d).

(4) a. *Yu!* *Yuwayi!* *Yo:*!  
“Yes!” “Yes!” “Yes!”

b. *Ngarla!* *Mma!*  
“Hey!” “Look here!”

c. *Dakarni!* *Karrila!* *Dakaangku!*  
“Drop it!” “Leave it!” “Let him/her come!”

d. *Kuyu!*  
“Hey!/Look out!”

1.2.2 Morphosyntax. Interjections do not take any kind of affix. They cannot occur in a clause, and are always separated from clausal material by a pause. Some interjections have the same meaning as regular lexical items, for instance the interjection *dakarni,* meaning “leave it!” or “drop it!”. However, these...
interjections can never be used in a clause. In order to say “I told him to drop it”, for instance, one could use any of the options in (5a-c).

(5)  
   a. Ambaya-nga-nu (ngarnu) bungka-yi.
      say-1sg-did   3sgACCm drop-FUT

   b. Ambaya-nga-nu bungka-yi ngarnu.
      say-1sg-did  drop-FUT 3sgACCm

   c. Ambaya-nga-nu (ngarnu) “dakarni!”
      say-1sg-did  3sgACCm  drop_it!

   d. *Ambaya-nga-nu “dakarni” ngarnu.
      say-1sg-did drop_it! 3sgACCm

If the option in (5c) is used, the interjection is always understood as quoted speech, and still needs to be separated from the rest of the sentence by a recognisable intonation contour associated with quoted speech (typified, among other things, by higher pitch). Note that it is impossible for the interjection to occur in the middle of the clause (5d), despite the fact that word order in Jingulu is quite free (compare (5a) and (5b)).

1.2.3 Phonotactics. Interjections do not necessarily follow the phonotactic restrictions which apply to other words. One of the words for “yes” is pronounced [yo:] (see 4a), with a back mid vowel, which is usually only found as an allophone of other vowels, and never in this context. Another of the words for yes, also demonstrated in (4a), is pronounced [yu], with a short vowel, in contravention of the usual requirement that Jingulu words be minimally bimoraic. The emphatic which attracts attention, particularly when the speaker is physically handing something to the addressee, is [ma], with a distinctly lengthened initial consonant ([ma], with a short /m/, is not an appropriate pronunciation), yet consonant length is not usually contrastive in Jingulu. This form also constitutes less than the usual minimally bimoraic word.

1.3 Personal names

It is not culturally appropriate to cite personal names, so I will restrict my use of personal names to those few which have already been published elsewhere.
1.3.1 Semantics. Semantically, personal names can be said to be like kinship terms or subsection names when used as personal references. Personal names are conventional cultural labels identifying human individuals. Unlike pronouns or kinship terms, but like subsection names, personal names are absolute rather than relative. On a semantic basis alone, there is no reason to distinguish personal names from other nouns.

1.3.2 Morphosyntax. Morphologically and syntactically, however, there is no reason to consider personal names to be nouns, and every reason to think of them as interjections. Personal names cannot bear affixes. It is not possible to use a personal name as part of a clause. If used in speech, the personal name is separated from clausal material by a significant intonation break and pause:

\[(6) \text{Kanya ngaanku...Dilkbarri.}\]

- uncles
- 2sgACC
- name

“Your uncle Pompey.”

Note that no intonation break required in the English equivalent of (6).

There was one apparent counter-example to this generalisation found among over ninety hours of elicited and unelicited Jingulu data. In this one single instance, given in (7), a proper name was found as a clausal constituent, bearing an affix, and in the same intonational phrase as the rest of the clause.

\[(7) \text{Miji-ngurri-yi Dilkbarri-kini.}\]

- get-1plInc-FUT
- name-INDEF

“We’ll take someone like Pompey.”

Interestingly, however, the personal name here appears with the suffix /kini/, which is used to indicate indefiniteness and usually translates as “something/someone like...”. The use of this affix here renders the personal name non-specific and takes away its ability to identify a unique referent. When later questioned, the speaker who produced the above sentence rejected this structure.

Most striking, perhaps, is lack of participation of personal names in the gender system of Jingulu. As demonstrated in (1) and (2), nouns, including kinship terms, show distinct endings depending on whether they are masculine or feminine. Personal names show no such tendencies.

As mentioned in section 1.1.2, there are exceptions among (non-personal name) nouns, with masculine nominals failing to end in /a/ or feminine nominals failing to end in /imi/ or /irdi/. However, personal names do not even show tendencies toward gender-based regularity, and it is even possible for women’s personal names to end in the characteristically masculine /a/, or for
masculine personal names to end in the characteristically feminine /irni/, a property which is not found among even the most irregular of common nominals.

1.3.3 Phonotactics. From a phonotactic perspective also, personal names pattern with interjections rather than with nouns in that they may contain otherwise illicit phonological and prosodic structures. Personal names may contain clusters which are not otherwise attested in Jingulu, as in the name *Birkirmarni*, which contains the clusters /rk/ and /rm/, not normally permitted in Jingulu. Some personal names, such as *Jarlúkana* (stress indicated by the accent mark), have stress patterns which are not usual in the language (a monomorphic four-syllable word would usually bear main stress on the third syllable and secondary stress on the initial syllable).

Concluding the discussion of personal names, it seems that they pattern morphologically, syntactically, and phonologically with interjections, even though they are semantically nouns. One possible analysis is to claim that personal names, like interjections, stand outside the linguistic computational system which combines categorial elements into phrases and clauses. Under this analysis, the referential properties which personal names and other nouns share must be seen as independent of morphosyntactic properties and part of speech category. On the other hand, it might be proposed, following Sadock (1991), that a given word can have different part-of-speech category membership in different modules of the grammar. Under such an analysis, personal names are semantically nouns, but morphologically, syntactically, and phonologically interjections. This is the analysis taken up in the next section.

2. An Autolexical account of Jingulu personal names

2.1 Autolexical Grammar

Autolexical Syntax (Sadock 1991) holds that the multiple levels of grammaticality and acceptability (which include phonology, morphophonology, morpho(syn)tax, surfotax (surface syntax), logico- semantics, and pragmatics) are encoded in independent but interconnected modules. The lexicon lists properties of each item at all of the various dimensions.

There may be certain unmarked mapping relationships between given modules, which a language can violate at some cost. The precise nature of this ‘cost’ is yet to be elaborated in the Autolexical literature, but it might be supposed that there has to be some kind of trade-off in communicative efficiency or structural simplicity/parsimony.

For a thorough overview of the Autolexical research programme and illustrations of its application, readers are referred to Sadock 1991 and to
Schiller, Steinberg and Need 1996. I provide three simple examples from English in (8-11) as a very primitive introduction or reminder.

(8) Example One – expletive subjects

Abbreviations: Morphology -  
\( X^{-1} \) = fully inflected X  
\( X^{0} \) = X stem

Logico-semantics -  
O = operator  
PRED = predicate  
PROP = proposition  
ARG = argument  
REL = relator

(9) Lexical entries for (8):

a. *it*  
Syntax: N”  
Morphology: N-1  
Logico-semantics: nil

b. *’s*  
(present tense operator)  
Syntax: V  
Morphology: Af  
Logico-semantics: \( O_{\text{present tense}} \)

c. *rain*  
Syntax: N  
Morphology: V-0  
Logico-semantics: PRED
d. -ing
Syntax: nil
Morphology: Af:V[PresPart][V^0]
Logico-semantics: progressive aspect

In the example above, the syntactic status of 's raining as a verb phrase requires it to occur with a subject in order to constitute a legitimate sentence (in the syntax). However, this subject can not have any logico-semantic value, as the tense marking and the predicate rain already form a legitimate logico-semantic proposition. This mismatch forces the subject to be the logico-semantically empty syntactic NP (expletive) it.

(10) Example Two - bracketing paradoxes

Classic bracketing paradoxes such as the one demonstrated in (10) are the result of a mismatch between level ordering requirements on affixation (the stress-shifting level 1 affix /-ity/ would have to be affixed prior to level 2 morphemes such as /un-/ and the morphological subcategorisation frames of the affixes involved (/un-/ attaches to adjectives, not to nouns). An autolexical account of this phenomenon would hold that subcategorisation rules apply to the morphological module while stress-shift and other phonological processes apply to the structure of the word in the phonological module. These structures usually coincide, but when they do not an apparent ‘bracketing paradox’ arises.
Raising verbs, as illustrated in (11), appear to break up the proposition that serves as the logical argument of the raising verb, so that one part of that proposition coincides with the surface subject of the raising verb and another part coincides with its object. The structures in (11) illustrate the Autolexical approach to this phenomenon, with a mismatch between the structures in the syntactic and logico-semantic modules. To explain the restrictions on such mismatches, Jerrold Sadock (University of Chicago class notes, 1998) proposes the notion of Intermodular c-command:

(12) Intermodular c-command:
Let R1 and R2 be representations; A is a node in R1; B is a node in R2.
A c-commands B iff P1 is the first branching node dominating A that has a correspondent node P2 in R2 and P2 dominates B.

Raising is restricted by the requirement that the raising predicate itself must occupy the same level in both surface syntax and logico-semantic structure. By the definition in (12), “seem” is indeed at the same level in both representations, since the first branching node in the syntax that has a correspondent in the semantics is S (corresponds with PROP₁).

2.2 Application to Jingulu personal names
In autolexical terms, personal names are like interjections at the syntactic, logico-semantic, and morphological levels, but have the same kind of encyclopedic content as nouns. Crucially, they have distinct and restricted pragmatics. These different properties are encoded in the lexical entries in (13).
a. Lexical entry for the personal name *Ngarrandarra*:

- **Syntax:** nil
- **Morphology:** uninflectable
- **Logico-semantics:** nil?/ PROP?
- **Encyclopedia:** man, Jurlinginja skin, western name “Rob Pensalfini”
- **Pragmatics:** avoided in most contexts, sparingly used admonitively

b. Lexical entry for the common noun *ngawu*:

- **Syntax:** N
- **Morphology:** N[gender: neuter]°
- **Logico-semantics:** ARG
- **Encyclopedia:** place of residence, temporary or permanent, for an individual or a group
- **Pragmatics:** used in all contexts

c. Lexical entry for the interjection *ngarla*:

- **Syntax:** nil
- **Morphology:** uninflectable
- **Logico-semantics:** nil?/ PROP?
- **Encyclopedia:** nil
- **Pragmatics:** the speaker wants the addressee’s attention (“Hey you!"

The Pragmatic module has not yet received much attention in the Autolexicalist literature, but for the purposes of this article it is sufficient to say that the lexical entry for an item in the Pragmatic module determines its acceptability and use in a variety of pragmatic contexts. The notion of an Encyclopedic module has not, to the best of my knowledge, been suggested in Autolexical work, but I use it here to distinguish that part of lexical knowledge which is ‘meaning’ in the lay use of the term (lexical semantics), distinct from formal compositional semantics.

One fundamental difference between Autolexical and derivational approaches to grammar lies in the status of the pragmatic module. Within Autolexical Grammar, Pragmatics is an equal partner in determining the acceptability of a linguistic expression, expressed as a parallel module, with other aspects of acceptability such as syntactic, logico-semantic, and phonological well-formedness. Most derivational approaches to syntax, on the other hand, seem to treat Pragmatics as a sociological ‘filter’, as it were, to be applied only after the grammaticality of an utterance has been determined.
2.3 **Similar phenomena in other languages**

The Jingulu phenomena with respect to personal names is extremely rare, and could probably be discounted if not for similar behaviour of certain types of nominal in other languages.

The behaviour of personal names (or perhaps proper names more generally) cross-linguistically is worthy of further investigation. Personal names often look more like Determiners than Nouns *per se*. In the Western Desert languages, for instance, personal names inflect like demonstratives (in Pitjantjara (Downing, Hale, and Ingkatji 1968), the Absolutive form of personal names and demonstratives ends in /-nya/ and the Ergative in /-lu/, whereas for other nominals the Absolutive affix is null and the Ergative /-ngku/). This may only constitute evidence treating personal names morpho-syntactically like determiners, but semantically like nouns (in Autolexical terms)\(^3\).

Warlpiri has a range of elements which have external reference, in a sense, but which lack the phonotactic, morphological, and syntactic properties of nouns. These are the affective kin terms described by Laughren (1998):

\[(14)\]

a. *watu*
   “poor/dear (maternal) granny”

b. *warri-warri*
   “poor siblings [male genitalia]”

c. *ngakuny*
   “poor/dear brother-in-law”

d. *ngarpu*
   “poor dog”

These terms are rich in encyclopedic information, conveying an affective relationship between the speaker and a kinsperson. They are used in culturally specified situations, such as when the appropriate kinsperson is involved in a fight or some similar emotionally charged social situation. However, they are syntactically void, being unable to occur within clauses, and morphologically uninflectable. Phonotactically they pattern more with interjections than with nominals (the /rp/ sequence in *ngarpu*, above, is an

\[^{3}\] Of course, this phenomenon receives a ready treatment in terms of Longobardi’s (1994) D to N raising analysis. My point here is merely to demonstrate how such phenomena might be treated as inter-modular mismatches in Autolexical theory.
example of this). They may even be empty of logico-semantic content, they are not used referentially or vocatively (Laughren 1998).

Looking beyond the Australian continent, Daniel (1999) reports that place names in Bagvalal (and probably all Andian (north Caucasian) languages) are not nominal, but should be considered adverbial on morphosyntactic grounds. Despite the morphosyntactic evidence, however, it is clear from the examples that Bagvalal place names are referential, and this is considered to be a semantic property of nominals, not adverbials. From an Autolexical perspective, this would be accounted for in terms of a mismatch between category labels at the morphological, surfotactic, and semantic or pragmatic modules.

The examples cited in this section all involve aberrant behaviour of elements that might be considered nouns in notional terms. However, not all such part of speech mismatches involve nominal elements. In the next section I consider an analysis similar to the one proposed in section 2.2 for categorial mismatches within the verbal system of Jingulu.

3. **Verbs in Jingulu**

This section extends the Autolexical analysis proposed in the previous section to a core aspect of Jingulu grammar, the structure of verbal words. These words have received an exhaustive treatment within the framework of Chomskyan syntactic theory (Pensalfini 1997; 2000). In this section, however, I extend the Autolexical account from section 2 to these data, which are more central to the clausal syntax of the language.

3.1 **Structure of the Jingulu verb**

The Jingulu verb is a complex of morphemes which Chadwick (1975) described as consisting of a stem followed by subject and object agreement markers (in that order, but some combinations of subject and object have a fused marker) and then a final element encoding tense, aspect, mood and direction of motion/orientation. The reasons underlying this analysis are clear from the examples in (15).

(15) a. ngaba-nya-nu
    hold-2sgSubj-PAST
    “you had it”
b. **ngaba-ana-jiyimi**  
   hold-1Obj-come  
   “s/he is bringing me”

c. **ngaba-rnana-wa**  
   hold-3mSubj1Obj-will_go  
   “he will take me”

d. **Ngibi-ji!**  
   hold-NEGIMPV  
   “don’t hold it!”

However, data such as those in (16) led me to propose (in Pensalfini 1997; 2000) an alternative analysis, under which the final element of the word is actually the verb.

(16) a. **kurru-wa**  
   2plSubj-will_go  
   “you all will go”

b. **nga-jiyimi**  
   1sgSubj-come  
   “I’m coming”

c. **wunyu-yi**  
   3dlSubj-FUT  
   “those two will do it”

d. **mindi-yardi**  
   1dlIncSubj-HAB  
   “you and I are/do (usually)”

This final element plus the agreement markers are the only obligatory morphemes in the verb. In fact, when the verb means “come”, “go”, “be” or “do”, there is no possible initial element (root) which can be used in the word - these meanings are conveyed solely by the final element. The initial element, which translates into English as the verb, is analysed in as a category-less co-verbal root which contributes much of the (real-world) semantic meaning of the overall verb. The final element, which inflects for tense, aspect, and mood, and also encodes directionality, is the true verb which takes agreement prefixes.

The problem with this analysis lies in the status of the co-verbal root. In some senses it is clearly verbal, having a fixed position at the beginning of
the verb word, and not usually able to combine with non-verbal morphology. If the element were truly category-less, we would expect it to be able to form nouns by combining with the appropriate (gender) morphology, and yet it cannot.

3.2  *An Autolexical account*

An alternative analysis, within the Autolexical approach, is to assign the categorial label ‘verb’ to different elements in different modules. The final inflecting element, morphologically a suffix, is syntactically the verb, though it is semantically bleached. On the other hand, the initial root, morphologically a prefix (or a bound root, more likely), is semantically a verb, though it is syntactically vacuous.

Lexical entries for the morphemes in (15a):

(17) a. ngaba

Syntax: nil
Morphology: Af[___V⁻¹]
Logico-semantics: PRED
Encyclopedia: holding or possessing

b. nya

Syntax: Agr
Morphology: AfV[2sgSubj][__V⁻⁰]
Logico-semantics: ARG
Encyclopedia: nil

c. nu

Syntax: V
Morphology: V⁻⁰ [Af_Agr__]
Logico-semantics: nil
Encyclopedia: motion-neutral

This analysis has the advantage of explaining why apparently optional and syntactically category-less items (as in (17a)) are restricted to occurring only with verbal heads.

4.  *Conclusion*

A word need not have identical part of speech categories at every level in the grammar. As demonstrated, there are at least two classes of item in Jingulu (personal names and verbal roots) which have bivalent categorial status
(potential examples from other languages were also introduced, but not given extensive treatment). The point to be taken from these data is that syntactic category labels can be of limited significance in determining the morphological and semantic distribution and behaviour of elements. A model of grammar built around independent parallel modules related through lexical items, exemplified here by Sadock’s (1991) Autolexical model, is ideally equipped to handle such data.

References