# Nominalization and clausal subordination in Wutun

Workshop on Adverbial Clauses in Creole and Pidgin Languages
October 4 2023, Göttingen/online
Erika Sandman, University of Helsinki (erika.sandman@helsinki.fi)



## About this talk

- In this talk, I will discuss nominalization clausal subordination in Wutun with a special focus on adverbial clauses.
- Nominalization in Wutun is expressed by the multi-purpose marker de (cognate to Standard Mandarin de 的), which functions on both the lexical and clausal levels. In addition to nominalization, the multi-purpose morpheme -de in Wutun has functions that go beyond nominalization (see Sandman 2023).
- Wutun is a high-contact Sinitic variety spoken in the context of the Qinghai-Gansu Sprachbund and many of its nominalization structures show areal interference from Amdo Tibetan and Bonan (Mongolic).

## Background: North-South division among Chinese languages

- Differences among Chinese groups concern not only phonology but also grammar
- There is a significant geographical division between northern and southern Chinese languages (Chappell 2015; Szeto & Yurayong 2021)

Northern Chinese languages

Less tones

Simple syllable structure

More polysyllabic words

Less numeral classifiers

Verb-final word order more common

Southern Chinese languages

More tones

More complex syllable structure

Less polysyllabic words

More numeral classifiers

Verb-final word order less common

Northern and Southern dialects are separated by Qingling mountains and Huaihe river

Northern dialects have been influenced by Mongolic, Turkic and Tungusic languages ('Altaic' languages) and Southern varieties by Mainland Southeast Asian languages (MSEA).



## The Wutun language

- The Wutun language (Wutunhua 五屯话) is spoken by ca. 4000 people in Wutun, a rural locality in Huangnan Autonomous Prefecture, Tongren County, Qinghai Province, P. R. China (Chen 1986; Sandman 2016).
- Wutun is an integral member of the Qinghai-Gansu Sprachbund (Janhunen 2007). It has characteristics of a mixed language (see Meakins 2013; Dede 2015); its basic vocabulary and grammatical resources mainly come from Chinese, while its morphosyntactic structure replicates Tibetan grammatical pattern. Wutun has also interacted with the Bonan language and it has some Mongolic features.

## The Amdo Sprachbund

- The Amdo Sprachbund is a linguistic area in Northwest China.
- It comprises ca. 15-19 languages spoken in eastern Qinghai and southern Gansu provinces. These languages represent four genetic groups: Sinitic, Bodic (Tibetan), Mongolic and Turkic (Janhunen 2007, Janhunen et al. 2008, Sandman and Simon 2016).
- Varieties of Northwest Mandarin and Amdo Tibetan are dominant regional languages and lingua francas, while Mongolic and Turkic languages and some varieties of Northwest Mandarin are spoken in a more local level.



- Wutun represents many typological features of northern Chinese languages (e.g. polysyllabic words, SOV word order, reduced system of numeral classifiers); however, grammatical categories borrowed from Tibetan set it apart from most of the Mandarin varieties.
- Nouns are inflected for number and case, while verbs in finite clauses are inflected for aspect and egophoric marking.
- 1) adia xian-ha daijhe-liangge getan-lio monk thread-DOM knife-INSTR cut-PFV

ze-li

**EXEC-SEN.INF** 

'The monk cut the thread with a knife.'

## Egophoric marking in Wutun

- 2) a. ngu huan xhe-di**-yek**1sG food drink-progr**-EGO**'I am eating.' (personal involvement)
  - b. gu huan xhe-di-li3sG food drink-progr-sen.inf'S/he is eating.' (as I see/infer)
  - c. ni ma-ge nian-di-yek
     2sG what-REF read-PROGR-EGO
     'What are you reading? (addressee's personal involvement)'

## Nominalization

- Nominalization is a process of deriving nominal expressions from verbs, adjectives or clauses (Comrie and Thompson 1985: 349; Koptjevskaja-Tamm 1993: 5; Yap, Grunow-Hårsta and Wrona 2011: 3).
- Lexical nominalization takes the verb as its domain, while clausal nominalization functions on the level of an entire clause. Clausal nominalization can be further divided into nominal complement clauses, adverbial subordinate clauses and relative clauses.

## Lexical nominalization in Wutun

Lexical nominalization takes the verb as its domain to derive lexical nouns or adjectives.

#### 3) Wutun

```
a. xhe-de(-ge)drink-NMLZ(-REF)'a drink, a person who is drinking',
```

```
b. ho~ho-de(-ge)(be) good-(be) good-NMLZ(-REF)'good news'
```

- Derived lexical nouns can be used as arguments of the verbs. They assume semantic roles like Agents or Patients, and they can carry nominal inflectional morphology.
  - 4) Wutun
  - a. dojjai lhojjok-de xai-**de-ge** ce-lio
    PN classmate-DE write-NMLZ-REF (P) borrow-PFV
    - 'Dojjai borrowed a classmate's pen.'
  - b. quan qhi-de shai gu lu she jhan-de-dera travel go-DE time 3sG road on see-NMLZ-PL (P)

hua-she-lio ze-li

draw-res.ao-pfv exec-sen.inf

'When s/he was travelling, s/he drew the things s/he saw on the road.'

■ The referential marker -ge is only used for singular, referential entities. If the derived lexical noun has a general reference and it does not refer to a specific entity (as in (3), -ge in not used:

#### 5) Wutun

gu xai-de(-\*ge) xaige ho-li

3sg write-nmlz very good-sen.inf

'His/her pieces of writing are very good (in general).'

Compare Wutun lexical nouns with Bonan, whose derived lexical nouns can host number enclitics:

6) Bonan

a. koze~koze=da [nathə=ku]=gə wi-saŋ
self~self=Loc dance=IMPF.NMLZ=SG.INDEF COP1.SUBJ-POS
'Each (deity) has a dance (of his own). (Fried 2010: 273)

b. [nathə-saŋ]=la jaksa wa dance-perf.nmlz=pl pretty cop1.0bJ
'The dancers are pretty.' (Fried 2010: 274)

Nominalized adjectives in Wutun are typically used as predicate nominals with the copular verbs, as in Amdo Tibetan:

#### 7) Wutun

nga-ha zzon-la-da gu gu-duru

1sg.obl-dat for someone-ABL-then that that-PL

xaige xiang~xiang-de-ge hai-de

very delicious~delicious-nmlz-ref equ-nmlz

'I find those (traditional dishes of our village) very delicious (lit. 'For me, those (traditional dishes) are delicious).'

8) Amdo Tibetan

sama cum-bo re

food be.delicious.**NMZ** EQ.ALLO

'The food is delicious.' (Tribur 2019: 262)

### Clausal nominalization in Wutun

- Clausal nominalization takes the entire clause as its domain and allows the clause to be treated as a noun phrase.
- Wutun clausal nominalizations are subordinate clauses that function as arguments or modifiers of the superordinate clause. They are dependent, because they are not inflected for all the grammatical categories that are required in the main clause.
- Following Dixon's (2006) typology of complement clauses, the Fact type (referring to the fact that some action took place), Activity type (referring to an on-going action) and Potentiality type all occur in Wutun.

## Nominal complement clauses

Nominal complement clauses are nominalized clauses that function as noun phrases. They can serve as an argument of the verb in their matrix clause or as a topic of the sentence that has not fully integrated into the argument structure of the verb.

#### 9) Wutun

```
a. gu sho-de-ge yidaze jedo-li3sG say-NMLZ-REF everybody know-sen.INF
```

'a. Everybody understands his/her talking.'

'b. Everybody understands what (s)he said/ is saying.' (Fact type)

#### 10) Wutun

- b. jashe qe-di-de-ge ngu ra jhan-lio
  PN eat-PROG-NMLZ-REF 1sG also see-PFV
  'a. I saw that Jashe was eating,'
  'b. I saw the food that Jashe was eating.' (Activity type)
- c. nga-mu yidaze jhang menzai

  1sG-COLL all nowadays

  da qe-de-ge bo-li

  then eat-NMLZ-REF (be) full-SEN.INF

  'Nowadays we are all able to eat enough.' (Potentiality type)

- The most common types of predicates that take nominal complement clauses are verbs of knowledge (such as jedo, 'to know'), verbs of perception (such as jhan, 'to see') and propositional attitude verbs (such as xang, 'to seem, to look like').
- They are ambiguous in meaning so that they can refer either to an act or an object. This is congruent with the Standard Mandarin de-construction.
- While the basic, unmarked word order in Wutun is Agent-Patient-Verb, nominal complement clauses are always topicalized, and they occur in clause-initial position even when serving as Patient arguments. It is common in Asian languages that nominalizations are formed with the help of marked argument structure; this phenomenon is called focusing strategy by Yap, Grunow-Hårsta and Wrona (2011: 22).

The clause-initial position of nominal complement clauses, as well as their ability to take the referential marker -ge, which is not attested in the de-construction in Standard Mandarin, resembles nominal complement clauses in Bonan and can be attributed to Bonan influence:

#### 11) Bonan

songe najan hko tundax tshem originally that.time big matter heart

ehte-ka=ku=gə ba-sa su-wound-CAUS=IMPF.NMLZ=SG.INDEF COP2.OBJ-COND so

'At the time it was a big deal that caused me grief, but--'

(lit. If originally at the time (the) big matter was a cause of my heart being wounded, so—') (Fried 2010: 287)

## Relative clauses

Relative clauses in Wutun are dependent nominalized clauses. They function as modifiers of the head noun in a noun phrase and their key function is to restrict the reference of the head noun. They resemble the relative clauses in Standard Mandarin.

#### 12) Wutun

nga-ha huaiqa mai-**de** yenze yek
1sG.OBL-DAT book buy-**NMLZ** money EXIST
'I have money for buying books.'

## Adverbial subordinate clauses: a closer look

- Causal subordination in Wutun is expressed by a combination of a nominalized verb and the comitative-instrumental case marker -liangge based on the Mandarin Chinese numeral liăng (两), 'two' and the referential marker -ge (derived from the Mandarin Chinese general classifier ge (个).
- The Wutun comitative-instrumental case marker is isomorphic and similar in usage to the Bonan instrumental marker = sala (ghwala) based on the numeral sar (ghwar), 'two'.
- The numeral 'two' seems to be a cross-linguistically unusual source for comitatives; widely attested sources for comitatives include the verbs 'follow' and 'take' and the nouns 'friend' and 'comrade', as well as the numeral 'one' (e.g. Heine and Kuteva 2002: 329; Stolz et al. 2006: 357-361).

Comitative-instrumental case in Wutun

#### 13) Wutun

- a. yayaya nini-liangge qhi-lai
   yeah grandmother-com go-come
   'Yeah, yeah, come with the grandmother!'
- b. adia xan daijhe-liangge getan-lio ze-li monk cord knife-INS cut-PFV EXEC-SEN.INF
   'The monk cut the cord with a knife.' (ELDP, corpus WT09\_4)

Instrumental case in Bonan

```
14) Bonan

atean jee=la=vala dan=ne ne-teo

3sG key=PL=INS door=ACC open-IMPF.OBJ

'He used the keys to open the door.' (Fried 2010: 60)
```

Causal subordination in Wutun

#### 15) Wutun

ghihua da da ZOWO main thing then custom then yidaze suan-de jhosso hai-de-liangge everybody Tibetan-DE education EQU-NMLZ-INS yegai suan ZOWO ze-ma Tibetan language main thing do-coord jjhang-la-ma study-INCOMPL-COORD

'Because of the custom of all (the schoolchildren) getting Tibetan education, they take Tibetan as the main language of study...'

16) dak jhan-lio-**de-liangge** ren yidaze haipa-gu-lio tiger see-PFV-**NMLZ-INS** person all (be)afraid-COMPL-PFV ze-li

EXEC-SEN.INF

'Because of seeing a tiger, all the people were frightened.' (Sandman & Simon 2016: 108)

Adverbial clauses in Wutun show a mixture of nominal and verbal features.

They take the comitative-instrumental case marker -liangge which is used to mark nominal entities.

They can be specified for aspect but not for egophoricity.

Causal subordination in Bonan

```
17) Bonan
```

```
satsu [te^h\theta nəkə ji\chi-te\theta-sa\eta] =sala
but 2sG one hit.IMPF-PERF.NMLZ=INS
```

tehenne nere=ne ap-san

2sg.gen name-acc take-pos

'But because you got into a fight, your name was removed.'

(lit. 'But with you having fought one (a fight), (they) removed your name.') (Fried 2010: 62)

Both Wutun and Bonan causal subordination constructions are most likely due to the contact with Amdo Tibetan, in which causal subordination is expressed by attaching the nominalizer -no and the instrumental case marker -gi to the verb:

#### 18) Amdo Tibetan

teran finam mbab-go-**no-gi** na today sky[ABS] fall-IPFV**-NMLZ-INS** 1SG[ABS]

фeilor-da mə-ndzjo

outside-DAT NEG.IPFV-go

'Because it is raining, I will not go outside today.'

(Sandman & Simon 2016: 108)

Similar construction is also attested in the Turkic language Salar. The genitive marker in the construction is used because the genitive is homophonous with the ergative-intrumental in Tibetan and the inferred structure is reproduced in Salar.

#### 19) Salar

dysman vo-yan-nige xandar-im-ni

enemy[ABS] exist-NMZ-GEN jacket-1POSS-ACC

yala-qan jari-mes

lose-NMZ be.correct-NEG.IPFV

'I cannot lose my jacket [just] because there are / because of the enemies.' (Sandman & Simon 2016: 108)

Matras (2007: 55): "Subordinating conjunctions are [...] a frequent target of borrowings. [...]

The influence of Tibetan on causal subordination in other languages of the Sprachbund is in accordance with the hierarchy proposed by Matras: "Concessive, conditional, causal, purpose > other subordinators" (Matras 2007: 56).

## Summary of the different functions of -de in Wutun

Strategy	Origins of the morphemes	Functions	Influence from contact languages
Non-referential lexical nominalization -de	Mandarin Chinese -de (的)	Deriving nouns from verbs and marking the noun as non-referential	Resembles Mandarin Chinese
Referential lexico nominalization -de-ge	Mandarin Chinese -de (的) and the generic classifier -ge (个)	Deriving nouns from verbs and marking the noun as referential	The referential marker -ge replicates Bonan indefinite singular marker =gə
Referential nominal complement clause -de-ge	Mandarin Chinese -de (的) and the generic classifier -ge (个)	Deriving nominal complement clauses	The referential marker -ge replicates Bonan indefinite singular marker =gə

Strategy	Origins of the morphemes	Functions	Influence from contact languages
Relative clause -de	Mandarin Chinese - de (的)	Restricting the reference of the head noun	Resembles Mandarin Chinese
Adverbial subordinate clause -de-liangge	Mandarin Chinese general-purpose morpheme -de (的) and numeral -liangge (两个), 'two'	Expressing causal subordination	The instrumental marker -liangge is a calque of Bonan instrumental marker =ʁala; the syntactic structure replicates Amdo Tibetan

## Concluding remarks: some notes on the historical development of Wutun

- Our current understanding posits the genesis of the Wutun language to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when the Upper Yellow River region formed a borderland between Chinese and Tibetan territory and Chinese and Mongolian speakers settled to the region, which was already inhabited by Tibetan speakers (Chen 1986; Janhunen et al. 2008).
- The number of Bonan grammatical features that make use of Sinitic morphemes (such as referential nominalizations in Wutun) suggest that Wutun was formed when a significant number of Bonan speakers shifted to a Sinitic language and introduced Mongolic grammatical structures in the process.

- Later, the speakers of both Bonan and Wutun varieties became bilingual in Amdo Tibetan, and the Amdo Tibetan features continued to be transmitted to both languages due to bilingual mixing.
- This explains, for example, why causal subordination constructions are isomorphic in Amdo Tibetan, Wutun and Bonan despite the typological differences between Sinitic, Tibetic and Mongolic languages.
- Today, both Wutun and Bonan speakers are bilingual in Amdo Tibetan, while bilingualism in Wutun and Bonan is rare and this suggests that the intensive language contact between Wutun and Bonan must have been taken place earlier in the history.

### References

- Chappell, Hilary M. 2015. Linguistic areas in China for differential object marking, passive, and comparative constructions. In H. M. Chappell (ed.), Diversity in Sinitic languages, 13-52. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chen, Naixiong. 1986. Guanyu Wutunhua 关于五屯话 [An outline of Wutun linguistic structure]. Journal of Asian and African Studies 31. 33-52. Tokyo.
- Comrie, Bernard & Sandra A. Thompson. 1985. Lexical nominalization. In Timothy Shopen (ed.), Language typology and syntactic description, Vol III: Grammatical categories and the lexicon, 349-396. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dede, Keith. 2015. Mixed languages. In Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics Online, General Editor Rint Sybesma. <a href="http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2210-7363">http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2210-7363</a> ecll COM 00000271 (18 June, 2023.)
- Dixon, R.M.W. 2006. Complement clauses and complementation strategies in typological perspective. In Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald & R.M.W. Dixon (eds.), Complementation: A cross-linguistic typology, 1-49. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fried, Robert W. 2010. A grammar of Bao'an Tu, a Mongolic language of Northwest China. Buffalo, NY: State University of New York dissertation.
- Heine, Bernd and Tania Kuteva 2002. World Lexicon of Grammaticalization. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Janhunen, Juha. 2007. Typological interaction in the Qinghai linguistic complex. Studia Orientalia 101. 85-103.
- Janhunen, Juha, Marja Peltomaa, Erika Sandman & Xiawu Dongzhou. 2008. Wutun. (Languages of the World/Materials 466). Muenchen: Lincom Europa.

- Koptjevskaja-Tamm, Maria. 1993. Nominalizations. Oxford: Routledge.
- Matras, Yaron. 2007. The borrowability of structural categories. In Yaron Matras & Jeanette Sakel (eds.), Grammatical borrowing in cross-linguistic perspective, 31–73. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Meakins, Felicity. 2013. Mixed languages. In Peter Bakker & Yaron Matras (eds.), Contact languages: A comprehensive guide. (Language Contact and Bilingualism 6), 159-228. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Sandman, Erika. 2016. A Grammar of Wutun. Helsinki: University of Helsinki dissertation.
- Sandman, Erika & Camille Simon. 2016. Tibetan as a "model language" in the Amdo Sprachbund: evidence from Salar and Wutun. Journal of South Asian Languages and Linguistics (JSALL) 3(1). 85-122.
- Sandman, Erika 2023. Nominalization in Wutun. Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages, Special Issue, 38 (1), 41-61.
- Stolz, Thomas, Cornelia Stroh and Aina Urdze 2006. On Comitatives and Related Categories: A Typological Study with Special Focus on the Languages of Europe. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Szeto, Pui Yiu, & Yurayong, Chingduang 2021. Sinitic as a typological sandwich: revisiting the notions of Altaicization and Taicization. Linguistic Typology, 25.
- Tribur, Zoe. 2019. Verbal morphology of Amdo Tibetan. Oregon: University of Oregon dissertation.
- Yap, Foong Ha, Karen Grunow-Hårsta & Janick Wrona. 2011. Introduction: Nominalization strategies in Asian languages. In Foong Ha Yap, Karen Grunow-Hårsta & Janick Wrona (eds.), Nominalization in Asian languages: Diachronic and typological perspectives. (Typological Studies in Language 96), 1-57. Amsterdam: John Benjamin's.