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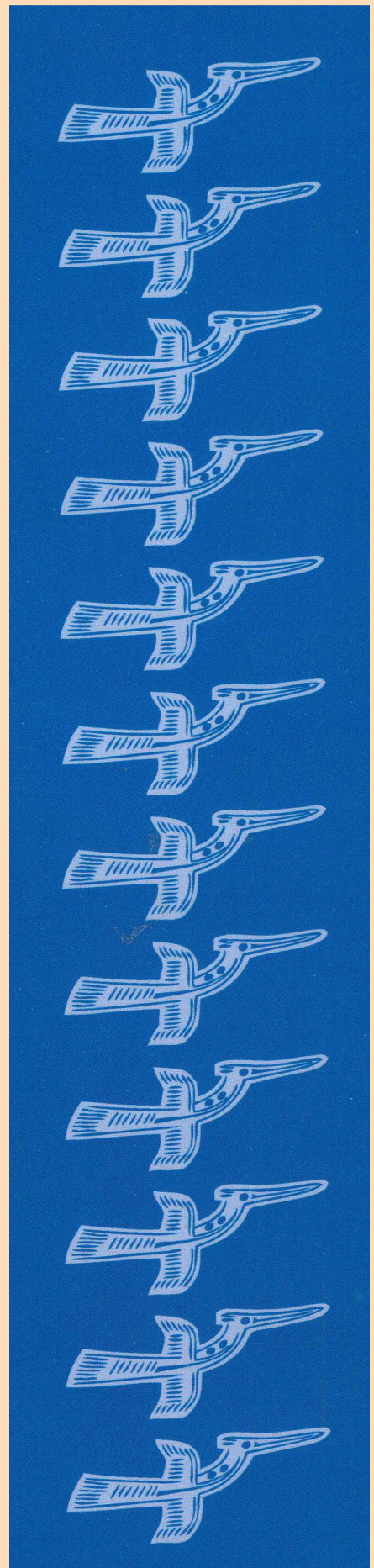
Nominalization in Pnar

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Abstract
Pnar, an Austroasiatic (AA) language located in the state of Meghalaya in northeast India, is typologically interesting because of its range of nominalization strategies. These include derivational verbal morphology, pronominal gendered noun-class clitics that derive nouns when they attach to verbs, and a relativizer. The relativizer *wa* has intriguing similarities to the function of some nominalizers in nearby Tibeto-Burman languages (as identified by Matisoff (1972) for Lahu, and for other languages in the area by Noonan (1997); Bickel (1999); Watters (2008) among others). Unlike most TB languages, however, this relativizer is pre-verbal, more similar to constructions in other AA languages. Similar in form is the *wa* 'with/and' comitative coordinator that also occurs in Pnar. In this paper I review the morphemes, their syntax and interaction.
Keywords: nominalization, grammatical gender, derivation, relativisation
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1. Introduction

Pnar is spoken by about 400,000 people in the eastern West Jaintia Hills and East Jaintia Hills districts of Meghalaya, a state in northeast India. The district seat of Jowai in West Jaintia Hills district is acknowledged by speakers as the standard, and is thus the focus of my forthcoming grammatical description and the main source of my data on Pnar. Pnar uses a roman-based script where characters are for the most part phonemic. This script is used throughout the examples in this paper, with an additional line of IPA characters included for reference. In Pnar script, the digraph *ch* represents the affricate /ʧ/, *j* represents /ʤ/, *ñ* the palatal nasal, and *ng* the velar nasal. Dipthongs ending in *i* identify the following *t* or *d* as laminal-dental (/t̪/, /d̪/), though there is no marking of syllable-initial laminal-dental sounds. Orthographic *h* following a voiceless consonant represents affrication (so *ph*, *th*, *kh* represent /pʰ, tʰ, kʰ/ respectively), while word-finally it represents the glottal stop /ʔ/ (*soh* /sɔʔ/ 'fruit'), and in all other contexts represents the glottal fricative /h/. Orthographic *y* also represents three different sounds depending on where it occurs: as the single onset of a syllable it represents the palatal approximant /j/ (*yap* /jap/ 'die'), when occurring as the second constituent of the onset it represents the glottal stop (*pyut* /pʔut/ 'rot'), and when occurring immediately before a nasal/trill/lateral it marks the following sound as syllabic (so *yn* represents /n̩/ 'REF' and *pyn* represents /pn̩/ 'CAUS'). To distinguish between phonemic vowels, orthographic *o* represents /ɔ/, *oo* represents /o/, and the character *æ* represents /ɛ/. Other consonant and vowel characters represent their corresponding IPA symbols.

2. Defining nominalization

According to the most recent volume on nominalization in Asian languages (Yap et al., 2011), nominalization is "the process by which we derive nominal expressions" (p. 3), a definition used originally by Comrie and Thompson (1985). Some examples from English of nominalization processes are:

- destroy -> destruction (action nominal, morphological derivation)
- treat -> treatment (action nominal, morphological derivation)
- teach -> teacher (agentive nominal, morphological derivation)
- he works [v.] -> the work [n.] (event/action nominal, lexical or syntactic derivation)

The link between nominalization, relativization, and genitivization was first identified and described in Tibeto-Burman languages by Matisoff (1972), who was followed by other TB

researchers (Noonan, 1997; Bickel, 1999; Watters, 2008, to name a few). This link is also evident in other southeast Asian languages such as Burmese (Hopple, 2003). Nominalization in Austroasiatic languages have been less widely studied, though some discussion of nominalization exists for Semelai (Kruspe, 2004), Jahai (Burenhult, 2005) and Temiar (Benjamin, 1976), and in papers by Morev (2006); Parkin (1991); Costello and Khamluan (1998); Bradley (1980). A clearer typology of nominalization has been proposed by Gerner (2012), based on a review of the volume by Yap et al..

Yap et al. (2011) suggest a typology of nominalization divided into three general semantic classes or types: participant vs. event nominalization, lexical vs. clausal nominalization, and embedded vs. non-embedded nominalization. Each of these classes can be realized in Asian languages through either morphological or syntactic means. Gerner (2012) proposes a similar typology of nominalization divided somewhat differently and based on 1) morphology, 2) syntax, 3) semantics, 4) pragmatics, and 5) diachrony. Morphological processes can be further subdivided into unmarked or zero-marking, and morphological marking on the verbal or nominal complex. Gerner states: "Markers in the verbal domain are dedicated nominalizers. Markers in the nominal domain are nominalizers whose main function is to mark syntactic cases, possession, specificity and so forth" (Gerner, 2012: 804-805). Syntactic processes are where nominalization "constrains the verb phrase" (816) or "the nominalized expression assumes a syntactic function in the main clause" (816). In terms of semantics, nominalization encodes participants of the verbal expression, its nonphysical properties, or the situation it denotes (824). Pragmatic uses of nominalization can be contrastive focus, tense and aspect, modality, evidentiality, and attitudes of speakers (829). Diachronically, nominalization forms derive from forms with other functions and can make way for new functions or meanings (833). This typology allows for a clearer analysis of individual languages and their particular organization of nominalization processes, and will be used as a guide for the following description of Pnar nominalization processes. In particular, this paper will focus on morphological and syntactic processes of nominalization.

Table 1: Nominalization in Tibeto-Burman languages and in Pnar

	TB nominalization, V-final
Derivational	[V-NMZ]NOUN
	[V-NMZ]ADJ
Clausal	[(NP)... V-NMZ]NP
	Pnar nominalization, V-initial
Derivational:	[NMZ-V]NOUN
	[NMZ V]ADJ
Clausal:	[NMZ V... (NP)]NP

The data provided in the volume by Yap et al. is extremely useful to scholars of southeast Asian languages, particularly in regards to potential language contact patterns. For example, Genetti's chapter in the volume looks at Tibeto-Burman languages, describing two basic nominalization processes and their formal properties (morphological and syntactic). Considering that speakers of Pnar share a fluid state border with several TB languages, the comparison of nominalization forms is striking. A table summarizing these processes is reproduced as Table (1), which also includes similar processes in Pnar. As can be seen here, nominalization in both TB languages and Pnar are remarkably similar functionally, with the word order (verb final in TB languages, verb-initial in Pnar) resulting in almost mirror-image formal realization.

The following sections detail morphological and syntactic nominalization processes in Pnar.

3. Pnar Nominalizers

As noted above, in Pnar morphology there are both derivational nominalizers and a clausal nominalizer. The derivational nominalizers include prefixes (§2.2.1) and pre-verbal clitics (§2.2.2). Prefixes derive full nouns, while pre-verbal clitics derive non-finite states, resultatives, action nominals and property concepts (equated here to adjectives, as they modify nouns). The clausal nominalizer *wa* (2.2.3) has the same form as the morpheme that derives property concepts and similarly precedes the head [modified clause]. Derivational processes cannot be negated, while clausal processes can be negated.[1]

3.1 Verb root prefixes

The verb root prefix *jing-* is a general nominalizer that prefixes to the verb root. Evidence that this is a prefix is the fact that it is always preceded by a gender clitic, which only attach to nouns.[2] Example (1) is of a verbless clause where *jing-* derives the event nominal 'regarding' by prefixing to the verb *ya-toh* 'have.relations' (the verb *yatoh* seems to have lexicalized from *ya-* 'BEN' and *toh* 'be, exist'). This is used to set up the following verbal clause where the speaker discusses the things he wants to say about the referent *u=woh Lakriah*. In example (2) *jing-* is a patient nominalizer, prefixing to 'rule, ruling' in order to allow the verb to function in a referential manner so it can accept the benefactive/dative case-marking of *ya*.

(1)   *i=**jing**-ya-toh*   *u=ni*   *u=woh*   *Lakriah*
      i=dʒiŋ-ja-tɔʔ   u=ni   u=wɔʔ   lakriaʔ
      N=NMZ-BEN-be M=PROX   M=elder   Lakriah
      'regarding this elder Lakriah, ...' [PP01CSE_070]

(2)   *daw* *chim* *kti*   *noh*   *u*   *ya*   *ka=**jing**-synchar* *sa*   *chi-sein*
      daw   ʧim   kti   nɔʔ   u   ja   ka=dʒiŋ-sn̩ʧar   sa   ʧi-sen
      IRR   take hand IMM 3S.M BEN   F=NMZ-rule   once   one-each
      ha   *ka=kti*   *ka*   *yong*   *oo*
      ha   ka=kti   ka   jɔŋ   o
      LOC   F=hand 3S.F   GEN   3S.M.TOP
      'he will immediately take hold of the ruling once again in his hand' [BPDJ_032]

The prefix *nong-* derives agentive nominals in Pnar. This is an extremely productive prefix, similar to the *-er* suffix in English (*play -> player*, etc...). In example (3) it derives an agentive meaning from the verb *pyllai* 'organize' (a verb which seems to have lexicalized from *pyn-* 'CAUS' and *lai* 'go'). As a prefix, this form must also be preceded by a gender clitic, similar to *jing-*.

(3)   *ka=aiñ*   *wa*   *da*   *chna*   *ki=**nong**-pyllai*
      ka=aɲ   wa   da   ʧna   ki=nɔŋ-pl̩laj
      F=rule   NMZ REAL make   PL=AG.NMZ-organize
      'the rule that was made by the organizers' [AIJ_042]

The prefix *yu-* derives instrumental nominals, i.e.: 'thing used for V-ing'. This morpheme is no longer very productive in Jowai-Pnar, being replaced by the more general nominalizer *jing-*. However, it can still be found in some older Pnar words, such as the word for *yu-spong* 'turban', which is still the required head covering for priests in the traditional religion, or *yu-slein* 'loincloth', again a traditional item of clothing. Speakers also reported that it could also be used for tools and implements, though most often by villagers coming to Jowai for market, or if a speaker couldn't remember the word for a particular thing. In example (4) the morpheme *yu-* modifies the verb *spong* 'wrap', again being preceded by a gender clitic.

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[1]   This, along with word-order restrictions, is criteria for distinguishing a class of 'adjective' in Pnar, an issue that will not be discussed here in detail.

[2]   Out of all my texts [172 tokens of *jing-*] this morpheme occurs without a preceding gender clitic only once, which may simply be an error in production.

(4) *ka=**yu**-spong   toh   u=œm   ko*
    ka=ju-spɔŋ   tɔʔ   u=ɛm   kɔ
    F=NMZ-wrap   right   NF=have   3S.F
    'the turban is necessary' (lit. 'the turban, is right to have it') [TACJ_133]

3.2 Pre-verbal clitics

    Pre-verbal derivational clitics consist of the three gender clitics (ungendered plural clitic *ki=* is not found to derive nominals) and the nominalizer *wa*. The former three clitics have the same form as those required for nouns and serve nominalizing functions when they (optionally) attach to the verb root. With the exception of *u=*, these clitics cannot combine with aspect or mood morphemes.

    The gender clitic *u* derives a non-finite state when cliticized to a verb root. Example (5) shows how the verbs 'farm' and 'work' become stative when pre-cliticized by *u*. In example (6) *u* cliticizes to *pyn-yap* 'kill', following the declarative matrix verb *hoi hi* 'be.ok DEC' whose A-argument is the pronoun *i* '1PL'. Here, *u=pyn-yap* serves a nominal referential function as a non-finite state.

(5) *biang   i=pynthor   u=ræp   u=**khih***
    biaŋ   i=pṇtʰɔr   u=rɛp   u=kʰiʔ
    enough   N=farmland   NF=farm   NF=work
    'enough farmland to farm, to work' [PP04SKO_044]

(6) *hoi   hi   **u=pyn-yap**   i   ki*
    hoj   hi   u=pṇ-jap   i   ki
    fitting   DEC   NF=CAUS-die   1PL   3PL
    'it is ok for us to kill them (animals)..' [BMPJ_036]

    The gender clitic *ka* derives a resultative nominal when cliticized to a verb root. For comparison we have the following two examples. In example (7) the verb *khih* 'work' is used in a question, with the S-argument *phi* '2PL' topicalized in pre-verbal position as well as given in the standard immediate post-verbal position. In example (8) from the same conversation, the verb *khih* is being used in referential function, and is describing an abstract notion that has actualized, i.e. the result of work.

(7) *tæ   phi   **khih**   phi,   nong?*
    tɛ   pʰi   kʰiʔ   pʰi   nɔŋ
    NVIS   2PL   work   2PL   CONF
    'so you, you work, right?' [AIJ_012]

(8) *he-i=jooh   i=por   man   ko   **ka=khih***
    he-i=ʤoʔ   i=pɔr   man   kɔ   ka=kʰiʔ
    LOC-N=same   N=time   happen   3S.F.TOP   RES=work
    'at the same time it is work' [AIJ_072]

    The neutral gender clitic *i* derives an abstract action nominal when pre-posed to a verb. In example (9), from the same conversation as (7) above, the clitic attaches to *khih* 'work'. Unlike in example (8), which refers to a resulting state, here the speaker is referring to a situation or event which is ongoing. Example (10) is similar - the clitic *i* attaches here to the verb *bam* 'eat' in an idiomatic expression. As compared to the function of *u*, this 'eating of betel nut' is not a non-finite state, but is rather an ongoing referential state - an abstract action with no clear grounding in actualization.

(9) *i=ni   hæh   **i=khih**   yong   i*
    i=ni   hɛʔ   i=kʰiʔ   jɔŋ   i
    N=PROX   only   N=work   GEN   1PL
    'this is our only work' [AIJ_013]

(10) *myntu   da   dæp   u=yap   tæ   ong,   **i=bam   kwai**   ha*
mṇtu   da   dɛp   u=jap   tɛ   ɔŋ   i=bam   kwaj   ha
now   REAL   CPL   NF=die   NONV   say   N=eat   betel.nut   LOC

dwar   u=blai
dwar   u=blaj
door   M=god
'after death it is said: 'people eat kwai in heaven' (lit. eat betelnut at door of God)'
[PP12BL_008]

While the clitic *u* derives non-finite states, it should also be clear that this morpheme can encode intentionality or certainty. When speakers refer to what in English is understood as future time (after now, tomorrow, etc.) they use the irrealis marker *daw*. However, *daw* (11a) also indicates uncertainty, which follows from its status as a marker of events or processes that are not actualized. When speakers want to indicate certainty regarding the actualization of an event, they use the non-finite marker *u* instead (11b).

(11a) **daw**   *khræh*   *i*   *mynstæp*
daw   kʰrɛʔ   i   mṇstɛp
IRR   prepare   1PL   tomorrow
'we will prepare tomorrow' (intention, uncertain)

(11b) **u**=*khræh*   *i*   *mynstæp*
u=kʰrɛʔ   i   mṇstɛp
NF=prepare   1PL   tomorrow
'we will prepare tomorrow' (certainly)

The nominalizer *wa* generally acts as a clitic when it precedes verbs, however the degree to which it cliticizes tends to vary from speaker to speaker, and I therefore write it as a separate word. This morpheme derives property concepts from verbs, and the resulting construction follows the noun that it modifies. For example, in (12a) the verb *mane* 'worship' is serving as a transitive verb, while in (12b) when *wa* is pre-posed, *mane* is acting as a property modifier for *ki*, the worshippers.

(12a) *mane*   *ki*   *ka*   *na*   *ki=paid*
ma.ne   ki   ka   na   ki=paḍ
worship   3PL   3S.F   ABL   PL=people
'they worship her, the people.." [AIJ_161]

(12b) *ki*   **wa**   *mane*
ki   wa   mane
3PL   NMZ   worship
'worshippers' [AIJ_159]

Example (13a) is similar to (12b), though in this case the post-posed *ka* causes the resulting expression to be interpreted as a nominal genitive, of which *ka* is the possessor.[3] This is typical of possessor constructions in Pnar, though often the possessor is case-marked by *yong*. Speakers said example (13a) could easily be said as (13b) with *yong* clearly marking *ka* as the possessor, but that (13a) is perfectly clear.

(13a) *ki*   **wa**   *mane*   *ka*
ki   wa   mane   ka
3PL   NMZ   worship   3S.F
'her worshipers' [AIJ_159]

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3   That this is a genitive expression is clear from the pronominal form - were the 3S.F referent the A-argument of the verb *mane*, it would take the form *ko*. As it is the possessor, it takes the form *ka*.

(13b) *[ki*   ***wa***   *mane]*   *yong*   *ka*
      ki   wa   mane   jɔŋ   ka
      3PL   NMZ   worship   GEN   3S.F
      'the worshipers of her' / 'the worshippers belonging to her'

In examples (13a-b) above, a possible analysis is that the pronoun *ki* is actually cliticizing to *wa* (which is potentially cliticized to *mane*), deriving a full noun of property:*ki=wa=mane*. However, this disgregards the reference tracking function of the pronoun, which here is referring to *ki=paid* 'the people' of example (12a) above. Perhaps a better translation of example (12b) above is 'those who worship'. As will be shown below, *wa* is serving a relativization function in (12b) similar to the function of English 'that' or 'who'.

3.3 Relativizer, coordinator

The same morpheme *wa* that preposes verbs to form property concepts is used to mark complete clauses. The only distinction between the two morphemes involves associated morphemes. The morpheme can be preceded by a pronoun which acts as the head of the relative clause and is referential with the gender clitic attached to the full nominal head (14-15 and above).[4] When this is the case, the verb being relativized can be negated. Alternatively, it can simply modify the noun directly (16a), in which case the verb form (in this case *maya* 'love') cannot be negated (thus serving as a derived adjective). Example (16b) illustrates how *wa* can relativize a full clause.

(14) *ym*   *toh*   *ka*   ***wa***   *bha*
     m̩   tɔʔ   ka   wa   bha
     NEG   be   3S.F   NMZ   be.good
     'it isn't good' [BMPJ_037]

(15) *ki=tæ*   *ki*   ***wa***   *lai*   *skur*
     ki=tɛ   ki   wa   laj   skur
     PL=NVIS   3PL   NMZ   go   school
     'the school-goers' [BPVM_007]

(16a) *tæ*   *kam-tæ*   *ki=lok*   ***wa***   *maya*
      tɛ   kam-tɛ   ki=lɔk   wa   maja
      NVIS   like-NVIS   PL=friend   NMZ   love
      'so in that case dear/beloved friends...' [BPDJ_044]

(16b) *ha-dein*   ***wa***   *da*   *æm*   *ka=kur*   *soo*   *kpoh…*
      ha-den   wa   da   ɛm   ka=kur   so   kpɔʔ
      LOC-back   NMZ   REAL   exist   F=clan   four   womb...
      'after the Soo Kpoh clan came into being…' [PP05KO_001]

Examples (17 a-b) illustrate the relativization function of *wa* further. Both sentences are taken from a conversation regarding why another village celebrates a certain traditional festival on a different day. After a question about whether the other village has the correct date, the traditional priest being interviewed is asserting that the other village has made a mistake (17a) and follows that statement with an explanation (17b). In example (17a) *wa* serves to relativize the verbal construction *bakla ki*, which can also be translated here as a genitive. In (17b) both *wa* morphemes relativize clauses: one relativizes the happening (*pyn-man ye-i=tu* 'for that (thing) caused to happen') and one relativizes the lack of knowledge (*ym tip ki u=keiñ* 'they don't know to count'). Here *toh* acts as an equative auxiliary (copula), indicating that both *wa*-clauses are subordinated to

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4   In the case of (14) the nominal being referred to by *ka* is outside this utterance and is understood from context.

ki, which acts as the A/S argument of both clauses and refers to 'them' (the ones who made the mistake).

(17a) *ym   toh,   **wa**   [bakla   ki]*
  ṃ tɔʔ wa bakla   ki
  NEG be NMZ make.mistake 3PL
  '(it's) not, that's their mistake' (or 'they make.mistake') [PP09MW_027]

(17b) *man   **ki**   wa   [pyn-man   ye-i=tu]   tæ   toh   **wa***
  man ki wa pṇ-man je-i=tu tɛ tɔʔ wa
  happen 3PL NMZ CAUS-happen DAT-N=MDIST NVIS be NMZ
  [ym   tip   ki   u=keiñ]
  ṃ tip ki u=keŋ
  NEG know 3PL NF=count
  'the reason they make that (mistake) is that they don't know how to count' [PP09MW_028]

The morpheme *wa* has a homophone which functions as a noun phrase coordinator, conjoining phrases similarly to English 'and' or 'with'. This use can be syntactically identified by the fact that it occurs between the two nouns it is coordinating (18a) rather than being pre-posed to a verb (as seen above and in 18b). As comitative 'with', it offers insight into the potential origins of the relativizer/nominalizer: property concepts could easily be interpreted as 'NP with V[property]'.

(18a) *æm   ar   ngut   chi   lok   ki   u=Nik   **wa**   u=Singh.*
  ɛm ar ŋut ʧi lɔk ki u=nik wa u=siŋ
  have two CL.HUM set friend 3PL M=Nik CONJ M=Singh
  'there were (lived) two friends (a friend set), Nik and Singh' [KP_002]

(18b) *he-i=tæ   toh   u=Nik   toh   [u   [wa   malik]]   [u   [wa   yoh]]*
  he-i=tɛ   tɔʔ u=nik tɔʔ u wa malik u wa jɔʔ
  LOC-N=NVIS be M=Nik be 3S.M NMZ be.boss 3S.M NMZ get
  [u   [wa   æm]],   tæ   u=Singh   toh   [u   [wa   dooh]],   ym   toh
  u wa ɛm tɛ u=siŋ tɔʔ u wa do? ṃ tɔʔ
  3S.M NMZ have NVIS M=Singh be 3S.M NMZ be.poor NEG be
  [u   [wa   yoh]]
  u wa jɔʔ
  3S.M NMZ get
  'then it is that Nik is a boss and has many things, while Singh is poor and doesn't have much' [KP_004]

4. Conclusion

To summarize, Pnar morpho-syntactic nominalization processes can be grouped into two categories: those which affix directly to verbs, and those which cliticize. Affixed forms are rather straightforward in deriving nouns, whereas cliticized forms employ multi-functional pronominal morphemes that generally attach directly to nouns to indicate gender (noun class). These gender morphemes allow Pnar speakers to categorize the nominal elements of their environment, specifically referents in terms of gendered singular and plural. The same noun gender markers derive nominals from verbs, classifying them as particular types of nominalizations salient to Pnar speakers. Pnar further exhibits a versatile clause marker that derives property concepts from verbs as well as creating relative clauses. These processes give us insight into potential pathways for the diachronic development of both gender and relativization in Pnar.

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