

Discontinuous noun phrases in Karuk<sup>1</sup>

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## 1 Introduction

Goals of this talk:

- Provide the first description of discontinuous noun phrases in the Karuk language, with comparison to the cross-linguistic picture of discontinuous NPs.
- Show that discontinuous noun phrases in Karuk exhibit a ergative-absolutive asymmetry, whereby ergative arguments are not found to be discontinuous.
  - This asymmetry militates against the Pronominal Argument Hypothesis (Jelinek, 1984; Baker, 1991) by showing one of the pillars of non-configurationality to be sensitive to argument status.

## 2 Karuk language background

- Language isolate/Hokan language of northern California, traditionally spoken along the middle course of the Klamath river.
- Potentially < 6 first-language speakers today. Active revitalization efforts and a growing number of second-language speakers and teachers.
- Decently large morphologically parsed corpus (about 7000 sentences), *Ararahih'uripih*, with data drawn from recent fieldwork by myself and Berkeley colleagues Andrew Garrett, Line Mikkelsen, Clare Sandy, and others, as well as earlier published text collections.

<sup>1</sup>Highest thanks always go to the Karuk elders who have with unmatched generosity opened their homes and communities to myself and my colleagues and shared their language with us: the late Vina Smith, Sonny Davis, the late Charlie Thom Sr., and the late Lucille Albers. This work relies on the equally generous contributions of an earlier generation of elder speakers who worked in the early 1900s. Example sentences from texts and elicitation will be cited with the name of the speaker, the text identifier used in the corpus followed by a colon and the number of the sentence within that text, and the year of publication or elicitation, e.g. (Vina Smith, VS-01:1, 2010). Abbreviations used in the glossing include: ANC = Ancient Tense; ANT = Anterior Tense; AS.MOT = Associated Motion; COMP = Complementizer; DIM = Diminutive; DUR = Durative Aspect; INT = Intensifier; ITER = Iterative; LOC = Locative; NPST = Near Past Adverb; OBV = Obviative Marker; PER = Perfect Aspect; PL = Plural; PL.ACT = Plural Action; POSS = Possessive (always indicated with person and number features, e.g. 3SG.POSS; PRON = Pronoun (always indicated with person and number features); PROSP = Prospective Aspect; PST = Past Tense; RPST = Recent Past Adverb. The subject and object person and number inflection on the verb will be glossed in the following way: Subject>Object. Thus, the prefix *kun-*, indicating a 3PL subject and 3 object, is glossed as 3PL>3.

- Data in this talk: subcorpus of 76 texts (multiple speakers, multiple genres) from Bright (1957), and one each from de Angulo & Freeland (1931) and Harrington (1930); 88 examples of discontinuous NPs from approx. 2000 sentences.

### 2.1 Grammatical background

- Karuk exhibits the three hallmarks of non-configurationality defined by Hale (1983):

- Relatively free order of arguments

- \* Caveats: VSO order not attested (Mikkelsen, 2014) - all other possible orders are.

- \* With two local person arguments, Bright (1957) reports that the subject must precede the object.

- Free pro-drop

- (1) xás ta'ítam u-'âanvath-vunaa-heen  
and then 3SG>3-paint.face-PL-ANT  
'So then he painted their faces.'  
(Julia Starritt, "Coyote Steals Fire", WB\_KL-10:33, 1957)

- Discontinuous noun phrases

- (2) puyava táay tá kun-'uupva pa-tayíith  
so many PER 3PL>3-dig the-brodiaea  
'So they dug a lot of brodiaeas.'  
(Nettie Reuben, "The Story of Skunk", WB\_KL-46:14, 1957)

- Complicated agreement prefix paradigm, with 14 portmanteau prefixes that index both subject and object and are sensitive to polarity and optative mood (intransitives use the same prefixes as transitives with 3rd person objects)

- Pitch accent system, with one high pitch peak per word (see Sandy (2017) for more information on Karuk's prosodic system.)

- Important for us: Bright (1957) describes a difference between comma and period intonational phrases, with period intonation ending with a noticeably lower pitch than anything in the phrase and comma intonation ending with a low pitch comparable to the lowest in the phrase, which he indicates in his transcriptions using a comma and period respectively.

- No case marking

### 3 Discontinuous NPs cross-linguistically

Based on Fanselow & Féry (2006), a survey of 120 languages from a variety of areas of the world (including the Americas), as well as detailed studies in Cavar & Fanselow (1998) of Slavic and Germanic languages and Féry et al. (2007) of Ukrainian.

#### 3.1 What is a discontinuous NP?

- I'll use the following definition:

- (3) A discontinuous noun phrase is any noun phrase which is constituted of two or more segments of phonological material that are separated from each other by intervening material that does not belong to the noun phrase.<sup>2</sup>

Two axes of variation in types of discontinuous NPs are identified in this literature:

#### 3.2 Simple vs inverted

- Simple (or stretched) discontinuous NPs preserve the relative word order expected in a continuous DP.
- Inverted discontinuous NPs reverse the relative word order expected in a continuous NP.

#### 3.3 Cohesive vs non-cohesive

- Cohesive discontinuous NPs have both parts of the discontinuous NP included in a single intonational phrase.
- Non-cohesive discontinuous NPs have each part of the NP in a different intonational phrase.

<sup>2</sup>Fanselow & Féry (2006) describes a distinction between discontinuous noun phrases and extractions from DP, where extractions from DP involved the dislocation of a maximal projection XP leftwards (a PP, say) out of an NP and where discontinuous noun phrases involved the dislocation of what in earlier periods of generative syntax would have been analyzed as N' (everything in NP except for a determiner or quantifier, for example). As Fanselow & Féry (2006) explains, however, this distinction is hardly relevant for modern syntactic theory, where noun phrase structure has been enriched with a variety of functional projections, thus allowing movements even of everything except a determiner to be licit as movements of a maximal projection. Thus, I will not adopt this distinction, opting for the more general definition given above.

### 3.4 Generalizations

- Correlation between simple and cohesive and between inverted and non-cohesive
- Splits are caused by two parts of a noun phrase having differing information-structural requirements, with the fronted part usually the topic or focus, and the second part not.

## 4 Discontinuous NPs in Karuk

Before discussing Karuk in reference to the cross-linguistic generalizations, I will first identify what syntactic types of noun phrases are attested as discontinuous:

#### (4) Quantification Type

##### With *táay* 'a lot'

- a. ... **táay** kun-íykar **pa-'áama**.  
... a.lot 3PL>3-kill the-salmon  
'... they caught a lot of fish' (Lit. They killed a lot of salmon.)  
(Maggie Charley, "Indian Food", WB\_KL-68:5, 1957)

##### With *koovúra* 'all'

- b. ... **koovúra** t-u-tháfiip **pa-nunu-patúmkir**.  
... all PER-3SG>3-eat.up the-1PL.POSS-pillow  
'... he ate up all our pillows.'  
(Chester Pepper, "Coyote's Journey", WB\_KL-03:140, 1957)

##### With numerals

- c. **kári** xás **yítha** u-píip **pa-'ifápiit** ...  
and then one 3SG-said the-girl ...  
'Then one girl said...'  
(Nettie Reuben, "Coyote's Journey", WB\_KL-01:109, 1957)

#### (5) Possession Type

##### With pronominal possessor

- a. ... **naa** púfaat **nanípaah**.  
... 1SG.PRON nothing 1SG.POSS-boat  
'... "I don't have any boat."' (Lit. My boat is nothing.)  
(Julia Starritt, "The Bear and the Deer", WB\_KL-32:85, 1957)

##### With non-pronominal possessor

- b. **á 'iknêechhan** pirishkâarim **mu-hrôoha**.  
duck.hawk grizzly.bear 3SG.POSS-wife  
'Duck Hawk's wife was Grizzly Bear'  
(Lottie Beck, "Duck Hawk and His Wife", WB\_KL-25:1, 1957)

## (6) Apposition Type

**Pronominal apposition**

- a. púya **uum** v-oo-kuph-aanik **pihnêefich**.  
 so 3SG.PRON thus-3SG>3-do-ANC coyote  
 "Coyote did this."  
 (Afrüich, "Coyote Falls Through the Living-House Roof-Hole",  
 JPH.KT-12:29, 1930)

**Nominal apposition**

- b. **áxak asiktâan** kun-'iin-anik **kustáar-as** ameekyáaram.  
 two woman 3PL-live.(dual)-ANC sister-PL ameekyáaram  
 'Two women, sisters, lived there at Ameekyáaram (Ike's Falls).'  
 (Mamie Offield, "Coyote Gives Salmon and Acorns to Mankind",  
 WB.KL-17:1, 1957)

## (7) Coordination Type

**pa-'áama** kun-'áam-ti **káru vúra pa-'éekoons**  
 the-salmon 3PL>3-eat-DUR and INT the-acorns  
 They ate the salmon and the acorns'  
 (Maggie Charley, "Indian Food", WB.KL-68:10, 1957)

- Generally, splits are across the verb or non-verbal predicate (though inverted splits will not be).
- Apposition and quantificational discontinuous NPs are the most common

## 4.1 Simplesness and cohesiveness

- Karuk has both simple and inverted discontinuous NPs. All the above are simple; inverted show a different structure, with the split not over the verb but over some preverbal constituent:

## (8) Inverted Discontinuous Noun Phrases

- a. káan xas **kêech-as p-éeshpuk** cháavura **áxak** ni-ma.  
 there and big-PL the-money finally two 1SG>3-find  
 And right there I found two big gold nuggets.  
 (Benonie Harris, "How I Found Gold", DAF.KT-05b:10, 1931)
- b. **p-eeckxaréeyav** yíchakanach **koovúra**  
 the-god in.one.place all  
 kun-pamfipishniháyaachha.  
 3PL-come.together.

'The gods all gathered together.'

(Chester Pepper, "Coyote's Gambling Song", WB.KL-13:2, 1957)

- c. **pa-vírusur** íshyaav kusrahkêem kári **koovúra** eeráriiv-ak kúuk  
 the-bear winter december and all den-LOC to  
 tá kun-pá-vyihma.  
 PER 3PL-ITER-go.(pl)  
 'In the winter, in December (lit. the bad month), the bears all go  
 into dens.'  
 (Nettie Reuben, "Bear Hunting", WB.KL-71:1, 1957)

– Inverted are much rarer - only these three out of the 88 examples.

- Karuk also has both cohesive and non-cohesive discontinuous noun phrases, in all syntactic types except for possessives. These can be identified because Bright indicated intonational phrase breaks using his comma notation:

## (9) Non-Cohesive Quantification

- a. vúra **koovúra** tá kun-paxeep-áyaachha,  
 INT all PER 3PL>3-win.from-well  
**pa-mukún-'uup**.  
 the-3PL.POSS-property  
 'They won all their property from them.'  
 (Chester Pepper, "Coyote's Gambling Song", WB.KL-13, 1957)

## (10) Non-Cohesive Apposition

**Pronominal apposition**

- a. kári xás **uum** káru ishímfir, **âanaxus**.  
 and then 3SG.PRON also tough weasel  
 'And Weasel was tough, too.'  
 (Mamie Offield, "The Story of Weasel", WB.KL-19:9, 1957)

**Nominal apposition**

- b. **pa-'ás** u-êechip, **asa-yâamach**.  
 the-rock 3SG>3-pick.up rock-pretty  
 'He picked up the rock, the pretty rock.'  
 (Chester Pepper, "Coyote Eats His Own Excrement", WB.KL-  
 14:17, 1957)

## (11) Non-Cohesive Coordination

- a. víri kún **pa-kéevniikich** ú-krii, **káru patapriha-'ifápiit**.  
 so PCL the-old.woman 3SG-live and pataprihak-girl

There lived the old woman, and the young woman of pataprihak.  
(Nettie Reuben, "The Boy from Itúkuk", WB\_KL-57:8, 1957)

- Not all types are equally likely to occur as non-cohesives, however<sup>3</sup>:
  - \* Quantificational: 4 of 28 are non-cohesive
  - \* Apposition: 15 of 30 are non-cohesive
  - \* Coordination: 2 of 8 are non-cohesive
  - \* Possession: 0 of 10 are non-cohesive
- No correlation between inverted and non-cohesive or simple and cohesive however; though this may just be because of the low number of inverted examples in the sample.

## 4.2 Information structure

- For simple splits, Karuk does not appear to have clear information-structural motivation for discontinuous splits:

- (12) a. A lot of people were picking acorns in the mountains, in acorn season.  
 b. Then they all went home.  
 c. **yích-eech** vúra **kích** kári **mu-hrôoha** xákaan.  
 one-DIM INT only still 3SG.POSS-wife together.  
 'Only one man and his wife were still (there)'  
 (Mamie Offield, "The Devil Who Died Laughing", WB\_KL-63:1-3, 1957)

- If only the *yicheech* 'one (man)' were in exhaustive focus, the sentence would be a contradiction, as it would assert that only the one lived there, but also his wife did too. So, the postverbal part of the split must be in focus as well.
- In inverted splits, the fronted part of the noun phrase is often the topic or focus, but with so few examples it is perhaps premature to say those splits have an information-structural motivation.

## 5 An ergative-absolutive asymmetry

Ergative arguments in Karuk do not surface as discontinuous NPs.

<sup>3</sup>The following numbers leave out examples from texts in Harrington and DeAngelo and Freeland, neither of which have consistent ways of marking intonational phrases as Bright's texts do

### 5.1 What NPs can split?

- (13) Adjunct  
 a. pa-yítha uum vúra chíimich pa-mu-'atimn-ak  
 the-other 3SG.PRON INT little the-3SG.POSS-storage.basket-LOC  
 'There was little in the other's burden basket.' (Julia Starritt, "The Bear and the Deer," WB\_KL-32:11, 1957)
- (14) Object of Transitive  
 a. ... **koovúra** t-u-tháñip **pa-nunu-patúmkir**.  
 ... all PER-3SG>3-eat.up the-1PL.POSS-pillow  
 '... he ate up all our pillows.'  
 (Chester Pepper, "Coyote's Journey", WB\_KL-03:140, 1957)
- (15) Subject of Intransitive  
 a. **itáharavan** kun-'ñifshipr-eeñik **tipahêer-as**  
 ten.(animate) 3PL-grow.up-ANC brother-PL  
 'Ten brothers once grew up.'  
 (Mamie Offield, "Wrestling Medicine", WB\_KL-55:1, 1957)

### 5.2 Dealing with potential counterexamples

- There are two potential counter-examples, though neither is unambiguously a split of the subject of an transitive.
- (16) káru **uum** naa vúra nee-músahi-ti  
 and 3SG.PRON 1SG.PRON INT 3SG>1SG.or.1SG-look.like-DUR  
**pa-'ávansa**.  
 the-man  
 'And he looks just like me, the man.'  
 (Julia Starritt, "Coyote Marries His Own Daughter," WB\_KL-16:14, 1957)
- The agreement prefix in this sentence does not clearly indicate the 3rd person argument as the subject, as that same prefix is often used to indicate a first person subject with personal states like 'to be hungry.' Other examples of this verb with that prefix include one where the subject is a first-person possessed noun (possessor raising accounting for the first person agreement):

- (17) vaa vúra pá-naa nee-músahi-ti  
 thus INT COMP-1SG.PRON 1SG-look.like-DUR

pa-nani-tiiv  
the-1SG.POSS-ear

‘... just how my ears look.’ (Julia Starritt, “Coyote Marries His Own Daughter” (WB\_KL-16:15, 1957)

- (18) **uum** vúra itíhaan kuma-máh’iit t-óo  
3SG.PRON INT always 3INANIM.POSS-morning PER-3SG(>3)  
kvát-ar, **itukuk-’afishrihan.**  
gather.sweathouse.wood-AS.MOT itukuk-young.man  
‘The young man of Itúkuk went gathering sweathouse wood every morning.’  
(Nettie Reuben, “The Boy from Itúkuk”, WB\_KL-57:3, 1957)

- Though occasionally used as a transitive with expressed objects, the verb *ikvat* never has an expressed object in the specialized meaning of ‘gather sweathouse wood’ and so I interpret it here as an unergative intransitive verb.

### 5.3 Nonconfigurationality and the Pronominal Argument Hypothesis

- The Pronominal Argument Hypothesis: the expressed noun phrases are not arguments, but adjuncts, and that the real arguments are either pronominal agreement affixes (Jelinek, 1984) or null pronouns (Baker, 1991). Also see more recently Koenig & Michelson (2015) making a similar argument for Oneida.
- Russell & Reinholtz (1995) (for Swampy Cree) and LeSourd (2006) (for Maliseet-Passamaquoddy) have both shown for their respective languages that there are restrictions on word order within discontinuous NPs, casting doubt on the idea that the separate parts of the discontinuous NPs can both be adjuncts.
- The ergative-absolutive asymmetry in Karuk discontinuous NPs continues to militate against the PAH; if the expressed noun phrases were truly adjuncts, and not arguments, a feature of arguments (whether it is the subject of a transitive or not) should not affect their syntactic behavior. However, Karuk shows that, in one language with “nonconfigurational” properties at least, it does.

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