Yucatecan control and lexical categories in SBCG

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Abstract

This paper explores the conundrum posed by two different control constructions in Yucatec Maya, a Mayan language spoken by around 800,000 speakers in the Yucatán Peninsula and northern Belize. Basic syntactic structure of the language is introduced, and a general SBCG treatment of control in YM is presented, alongside with an example of motion verbs as control matrices. The unruly case of intransitive subjunctive control, where the controllee appears with an unexpected status (incompletive) and without set-A morphology, is discussed and a proposal to treat it as nominalization is evaluated. The nominalization proposal is rejected based on the following grounds: (1) nominalization tends to attract definitive morphology, which is absent from intransitive subjunctive control constructions, (2) nominalization does not truly explain the lack of set-A morphology if one desires to provide a unified account of set-A morphemes, (3) verbs bereft of otherwise expected set-A morphemes have an independent motivation in the form of agent focus constructions.

1 Introduction

Yucatec Maya has two different types of control construction, in this paper referred to as *incompletive control* and *subjunctive control*, which differ in status marking on the embedded verb. Most generally, *control* is a construction where the understood subject of a given verb is determined by some other expression in the sentence. *Status* is a traditional term employed in Mayanist literature for verbal suffixes whose choice is subject to the aspect, mood and transitivity of the verb.[1]

(1) In k'àat in ts'íib-t-∅-∅ le kàarta-o'.
A1SG wish A1SG write-APP-SBJ-B3 DEF letter-D2
"I want to write the letter." (lit. "To write the letter is my wish.")

(2) Táan in bin-∅ in ts'íib-t-ik-∅ kàarta-o'ob.
PROG A1SG going-INC A1SG write-APP-INC-B3 letter-B3PL
"I am going (around while) writing letters."

Here, sentence (1) demonstrates a construction where the embedded verb *ts'íibt* takes on subjunctive status.[2] Subjunctive status is required by desiderative verbs as the above *k'àat*, motion verbs and verbs such as "learn," "know" or "fear."

[1] Abbreviations for glosses: 1: first person, 2: second person, 3: third person, A: set A, APP: applicative voice, B: set B, CAUS: causative voice, CPL: completive status, D2: distal clitic, DEF: definite article, IMP: imperfective AM marker, INC: incompletive status, ONGL: onglide, PL: plural, PREP: preposition, PROG: progressive AM marker, PRV: perfective AM marker, REC: recent past AM marker, REL: relational, SBJ: subjunctive status, SG: singular, TERM: terminative AM marker, TOP: topic.

[2] In this case, the subjunctive status is morphologically empty, but that does not have to be the case. Status morphology is really quite complex and sensitive to voice, transitivity and type of verb. Table 1, adapted from AnderBois and Armstrong (unpublished manuscript), gives status suffixes for active verbs.

	TRANSITIVE	INTRANSITIVE
INC	. . . -*ik*	. . . -V*l*, -∅
SBJ	. . . -*ej*, . . . -∅	. . . -V*k*, . . . -*ak*
CPL	. . . -*aj*	. . . -*aj*, . . . -∅

Table 1: Status morphology

Sentence (2) demonstrates an incompletive control construction where the verb is explicitly marked with the suffix *-ik*. Other matrix clauses selecting for incompletive complements include motion verbs and verbs such as "begin," "remind" or "remember." The meaning of motion verb control differs depending on the status: the subjunctive status indicates a purpose while the incompletive indicates simultaneity (AnderBois & Armstrong, unpublished). Notice the overt agreement between the matrix clause and the embedded clause, both expressly marked for 1st person singular in (1) and in (2).

The main preoccupation of this paper will be understanding and accounting for an unexpected property of subjunctive control. While incompletive control easily generalizes from transitive verbs to intransitive ones, subjunctive control is not as well-behaved. In fact, the most obvious approach to generating the subjunctive control with intransitive verbs (i.e. one employing intransitive verbs with subjunctive morphology) is ungrammatical (3). The proper intransitive equivalent to (1) is expressed via an *incompletive* verb stripped of the appropriate agreement marking, discussed later in the paper.

(3) *J tàal-∅-en wen-ek-en.
PRV come-CPL-B1SG sleep-SBJ-B1SG
"I came to sleep."

The relevant data and observations will come primarily from AnderBois and Armstrong (unpublished manuscript, henceforth A&A), but I will deviate in my analysis of intransitive subjunctive control. To formalize the relevant facts about the language, I will avail myself of Sign Based Construction Grammar (henceforth SBCG), a framework in the spirit of and incorporating insights from both Berkley Construction Grammar and Head Driven Phrase Construction Grammar (Boas & Sag, 2012). In this way, I will try to show that SBCG's elasticity allows for a simpler analysis which eschews artificial, from a language internal perspective, divisions.

1.1 Sentence Structure

Yucatec Maya is head-marking language. Its word order is traditionally classified as underlyingly VOS.[3] That can be most easily observed in sentences with stative predicates (predicative nouns and adjectives).

(4) Maks-∅ in k'àaba.
Maks-B3SG A1 name
"My name is Maks."

(5) Polok-∅ le wakax-o'.
fat-B3SG DEF cow-D2
"The cow is fat."

Clauses with active verbs, however, are more syntactically complex. As shown in (1) and (2), such sentences begin with one of multiple words indicating aspectual or modal information, known in the Mayanist literature as Aspect-Mood markers (AM markers). The ones introduced so far include PROG "progressive" and PRV "perfective." Their presence is not generally considered to be a counterexample to the posited VOS word order. Adapting insights from Bohnemeyer (2002), I analyze AM markers as stative predicates and VP phrases as their arguments. The meaning of PROG can be thus approximated as "is ongoing" and the meaning of PRV as "has happened." Sentence (6) could be then thought of as "your watching of a cow is ongoing," instead of its typical translation.[4] (Notice the similarities between the categories of non-predicative nouns and active verbs under this analysis.)

(6) Tàan a w-il-ik-∅ wakax.
PROG A2 ONGL-watch-INC-B3 cow
"You are watching a cow."

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
1ST	. . . *-en*	. . . *-o'on*
2ND	. . . *-ech*	. . . *-e'ex*
3RD	. . . *-∅*	. . . *-o'ob*

Table 2: Set-B morphology

Morphemes glossed with A and B need to be noted here, too. The glosses stand for *set-A* and *set-B*, respectively, items of traditional terminology in Mayanist literature used for two sets of agreement morphemes. Set-A, broadly understood as

[3] For alternative approaches positing SVO as underlying, see Durbin and Ojeda (1978), and Gutiérrez-Bravo and Fronte y Madera (2010).

[4] While common (cf. Bohnemeyer (2002) and Armstrong (2009)), this analysis is by no means uncontroversial. The other school of though analyzes the AM marker, the verb, and all the intervening morphemes as one polysynthetic-style verb, e.g. AnderBois & Armstrong (unpublished).

ergative-genitive, cross-references subjects of transitive verbs, subjects of incompletive intransitive verbs and possessors of nouns. Set-B, broadly understood as absolutive, cross-references subjects of stative predicates (nouns and adjectives), objects of transitive verbs, and subjects of intransitive verbs marked for subjunctive or completive status.[5] Tables 2 and 3 have been adapted from Lehmann (2002).

Set-B morphemes are typically considered to be clitics in transformational literature (Grinevald & Peake, 2012). Adapting HPSG-esque approaches to clitics, such as the one espoused in Miller and Sag (1995), I recast them simply as inflectional morphology (Miller & Sag, 1995).

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
1ST	*in (w-)...*	*k ...* *in (w-)...-o'on*
2ND	*a (w-)...*	*a (w-)...-e'ex*
3RD	*u (y-)...*	*u (y-)...-o'ob*

Table 3: Set-A morphology

Singular set-A morphemes are traditionally considered to be prefixes. I have decided to split them (in agreement with practical orthography) into separate lexical items and prefixes.[6] Similarly, I analyze plural set-A as a combination of separate lexical items and circumfixes, where the left-hand side of the circumfix is an onglide (attached to the stem only if it begins with a vowel),[7] while its right-hand side is essentially identical to set-B suffixes.[8]

Arguments of the verb (normally following it) are frequently dropped due to a robust head-marking system. First and second person arguments are unambiguous while third person arguments are usually specified via topicalization or simply understood from the context. For the sake of exposition, this paper will deal mostly with sentences where verbal arguments are not overtly expressed.

[5]Labels *set-A* and *set-B* have been used, because *ergative* and *absolutive* do not quite reflect the exact nature of Yucatecan agreement morphemes For example, in the incompletive status, *set-A* reflects *nominative* and *set-B – accusative*.

[6]The strongest motivation for this comes from a desire to unify the treatment of verbal and nominal usages of set-A, which, unfortunately, cannot be explicitly discussed here.

[7]Certain alienable nouns might resist an oglide (Lehmann, 2002).

[8]That is an interesting patten, indicative of a historical reanalysis. It is still in progress in the dialects where *k ...* is being replaced with *in (w)-...-o'on* by analogy with the rest of the paradigm (Lehmann, 2002).

1.2 Status Markers

Main status markers are: *completive*, *incompletive* and *subjunctive*, the first one having a considerably more restricted distribution.[9] Despite their labels, evocative of aspectual information, their semantic import is frequently negligible.[10] In most constructions, the status of the verb is strictly governed by an AM marker, so its meaning, whatever it be, is subsumed under the AM marker's much stronger semantics.

(7) Táan in páan-ik-∅ u y-okom-al.
PROG A1SG dig.out-INC-B3SG A3 ONGL-pillar-REL
"I am digging out (holes) for the pillars." (Bohnemeyer, 2002, E447)

The presence of the status suffix in (7) is, in a way, semantically redundant, since the progressive aspect marker already has an "incompletive" sense. Other times, the "meaning" of the status suffix is entirely contradicted by the AM marker.

(8) Ts'o'ok a took-ik-en ti' le kim-il-o'.
TERM A2 wrest-INC-B1SG PREP DEF die-NML-D2.
"You have wrested me from death."
(AnderBois & Armstrong, unpublished, 73a)

In (8), the terminative AM marker *ts'o'ok* does not conflict with the incompletive status. To the contrary, it demands it and overrides its meaning.

Consider the interactions between AM markers, status and morphosyntactic alignment:

(9) Ts'o'ok [in na'ak-s-ik-ech].
TERM A1SG ascend-CAUS-INC-B2SG
"I finished lifting you up." (lit. "I finished making you go up.")
(AnderBois & Armstrong, unpublished)

(10) Ts'o'ok [in na'ak-al].
TERM A1SG ascend-INC
"I finished going up." (AnderBois & Armstrong, unpublished)

(11) Sáam [in na'ak-s-∅-ech].
REC A1SG ascend-CAUS-SBJ-B2SG
"I lifted you up a while ago." (lit. "I made you go up a while ago.")
(AnderBois & Armstrong, unpublished)

[9]There is also the *extrafocal* status, a vestige of the old morphological paradigm for marking certain focal constructions. In modern YM, focus is realized primarily through syntactic (morphologically simpler) means and the extrafocal status is retained only in constructions of manner focus (in certain dialects, also temporal focus) (Bohnemeyer, 2002).

[10]While there are good—historical and synchronic—explanations for those names (for example, subjunctive appears in subordinate clauses with irrealis semantics), they ought not be conflated with the Europeanist understanding of corresponding aspects (Bohnemeyer, 2002).

(12) Sáam [na'ak-ak-en].
REC ascend-SBJ-B1SG
"I went up a while ago." (AnderBois & Armstrong, unpublished)

In both transitive sentences (9, 11), set-A marking corresponds to the agent and set-B to the patient. In the incompletive intransitive example (10), set-A corresponds to the subject, while set-B is lacking,[11] which results from the nominative-accusative alignment of the incompletive status. The subjunctive intransitive sentence (12), on the other hand, displays no set-A and the subject is marked by set-B, as expected due to its ergative-absolutive nature.

2 Control Constructions

As has been hinted at in in Section 1, only three of the VPs[12] presented in (9-12) (delimited by brackets) are suitable controllees. The relevant generalization which captures this observation is that for a VP to be suitable controllee, its needs set-A agreement. This notion can be formalized by adding *control-lexeme* to the hierarchy of lexemes with the following restrictions:

$$\textit{control-lexeme} \Rightarrow \left[\text{SYN} \quad \left[\text{ARG-ST} \quad \left\langle \ldots \text{ /VP}\left[\text{AGR-A} \quad \textit{agr-cat}\right] \right\rangle\right]\right]$$

Figure 1: *control-lexeme*

The above feature structure states simply that the set-A agreement (AGR-A) of the last member of the lexeme's ARGUMENT-STRUCTURE (ARG-ST) list is supposed to be *agr-cat*, as opposed to *none*. That excludes the subjunctive intransitive, exactly that member of the valence-status paradigm which does not employ set-A marking (cf. Table 4).

	INC	SBJ
TRNS	✓	✓
INTR	✓	✗

Table 4: Presence of Set-A morphology

The ARG-ST corresponds to the "Accessibility Hierarchy" of (Keenan & Comrie, 1977). Its first member corresponds to the subject, second to the direct object, third to the indirect object, and so on. The order of elements is based on the universally observed principles pertaining to argument extractions and relativization, and

[11] Notice the different between a lacking set-B in 10 and zero-marking set-B in (9). The difference is theoretical, but significant in other parts of the grammar.

[12] The abbreviation VP is used here to refer to Yucatec Maya-style VPs. That is: the verb with with all its arguments, but excluding the AM marker.

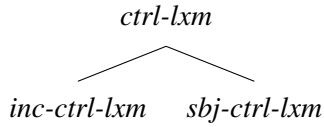

Figure 2: *control-lexeme* hierarchy

does *not* correspond to a particular language's basic word order. In case of Yucatec Maya, the word order can differ quite substantially. That is handled by Argument Realization Principle and linearization constraints, none of which can be discussed here for space considerations (Reape, 1994).

Now, *control-lexeme* bifurcates further into *incompletive-control-lexeme* and *subjunctive-control-lexeme*, as illustrated by Figure 2. To account for the former is easy enough:

$$\textit{incompletive-control-lexeme} \Rightarrow \left[\textsc{syn} \quad \left[\textsc{agr-st} \quad \left\langle \ldots \left[\textsc{status} \quad \textit{inc}\right] \right\rangle\right]\right]$$

Figure 3: *incompletive-control-lexeme*

The only novelty introduced here is the restriction imposed on the STATUS of the controllee, which now—unsurprisingly—is said to be *incompletive*. The matter with arguments of subjunctive control is somewhat more complicated.

As already stated, subjunctive intransitive VPs do not make good controllees. But language is not helpless; when intransitives are involved, subjunctive control semantics are expressed through other means. That is, the regularity of the paradigm is broken as incompletive "overrides" subjunctive. Consider the following, perhaps somewhat pragmatically awkward, sentences:

(13) J tàal-∅-en [in na'ak-s-ik-ech].
PRV come-CPL-B1SG A1SG ascend-CAUS-INC-B2SG
"I came (while) lifting you up."

(14) J tàal-∅-en [in na'ak-al].
PRV come-CPL-B1SG A1SG ascend-INC
"I came (while) ascending."

(15) J tàal-∅-en [in na'ak-s-∅-ech].
PRV come-CPL-B1SG A1SG ascend-CAUS-SBJ-B2SG
"I came to lift you up."

(16) *J tàal-∅-en [na'ak-ak-en].
PRV come-CPL-B1SG ascend-SBJ-B1SG
intended: "I came to ascend."

(17) J tàal-∅-en [na'ak-al].
PRV come-CPL-B1SG ascend-INC
"I came to ascend."

Motion verbs were used, because only they can participate both in subjunctive and incompletive control constructions. Incompletive controllees have manner readings (13-14), while subjunctive ones are motion-*cum*-purpose (15). The intended meaning of the ungrammatical (16) can be expressed with incompletive, as exemplified by (17). Yet, the most surprising feature of Yucatecan subjunctive control is the fact that the incompletive verbs appear in those situations without set-A morphology. Conspicuously, the morphological change does not result in a semantic one—the undergoer of "ascending" is still the speaker. This is even more clear in an example cited by A&A:

(18) In k'áat xook-∅.
A1SG wish study-INC
"I want to study." (AnderBois & Armstrong, unpublished, 39)

(18) has only the listed meaning and it cannot mean "I want studying" or "I want for studying to occur." That indicates the semantics associated with set-A are still present, even though it is not overtly expressed. In transformation-based framework, that is typically viewed as deletion under the identity with a preceding morpheme (Bohnemeyer, 2002). (Notice the identity has to be loosely defined. In (17), for example, the identity pertains only to ϕ-features, since the matching morpheme is set-B.) Here, the same goal is achieved by splitting set-A into two separate features: trilean SET-A,[13] indicating whether the phase has combined or will combine with a set-A morpheme, and AGR-A, which denotes the agreement features of the set-A morpheme. (Correspondingly, AGR-B contains contains information about the agreement of set-B morphology.)

From the featural perspective, Yucatecan subjunctive control has an essentially disjunctive character. Its arguments can be headed by one of two verb types:

$$\textit{tr-sbj-controllee-v} \Rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} \text{CAT} & \begin{bmatrix} \text{SET-A} & + \\ \text{ARG-B} & \textit{agr-cat} \\ \text{STATUS} & \textit{sbj} \end{bmatrix} \end{bmatrix}$$

Figure 4: *transitive-subjunctive-controllee-verb*

[13]The reasons for using a trilean, rather than boolean, value will not be discussed here at length, but let it be known it is motivated mostly by an attempt to make sure verbs combine with their set-A morphemes before they combine with their arguments. That order is motivated by semantic considerations as well as the fact it is traditionally takes to be part of verbal inflectional morphology.

$$\textit{intr-sbj-controllee-v} \Rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} \text{CAT} & \begin{bmatrix} \text{SET-A} & 0 \\ \text{AGR-B} & \textit{none} \\ \text{STATUS} & \textit{inc} \end{bmatrix} \end{bmatrix}$$

Figure 5: *intransitive-subjunctive-controllee-verb*

The first one, *transitive-subjunctive-con-trollee-verb*, has combined with a set-A marker (indicated by [SET-A +]) and is, as its name suggests, subjunctive. Its transitivity is guaranteed by requiring that ARG-B also be *agr-cat* (only transitive verbs have both set-A and set-B agreement). The second one, *intransitive-subjunctive-controllee-verb*, has not and will not combine with a set-A marker ([SET-A 0]) and is—yes, you guessed it—incompletive. [AGR-B *none*] ensures it is intransitive. Both types are subtypes of *verb*, and even more immediately of *subjunctive-controllee-verb*. The relevant part of the hierarchy is shown in Figure 6.

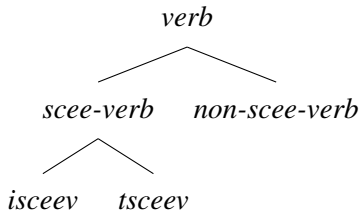

Figure 6: *verb* hierarchy

It is now clear how to notate the appropriate restrictions on the subjunctive controllee. (The abbreviation *scee* stands for *subjunctive-controllee*.)

$$\textit{subjunctive-control-lexeme} \Rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} \text{SYN} & \begin{bmatrix} \text{AGR-ST} & \left\langle \ldots \begin{bmatrix} \textit{scee-verb} \end{bmatrix} \right\rangle \end{bmatrix} \end{bmatrix}$$

Figure 7: *subjunctive-control-lexeme*

And all that is left is to establish which agreement features are shared among which arguments. That property depends on the particular lexeme and requires splitting *control-lexeme* into even more subtypes. Here, we will look only at *control-motion-lexeme*. Set-B agreement of its first argument (its subject) is identified with set-A agreement of the second argument (the controllee).[14]

The agreement of nouns and pronouns falls into the category of AGR-B. Consider (13) again. The first argument of *tàal-∅-en* is the unexpressed pronoun *tèen*

[14]In fact, motions verbs should probably be though to have three arguments, one of them corresponding to the direction. The feature structure has been simplified here for the purpose of exposition.

$$\textit{control-motion-verb-lexeme} \Rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} \text{SYN} & \begin{bmatrix} \text{ARG-ST} & \left\langle \begin{bmatrix} \text{AGR-B} & \boxed{1} \end{bmatrix}, \begin{bmatrix} \text{AGR-A} & \boxed{1} \end{bmatrix} \right\rangle \end{bmatrix} \end{bmatrix}$$

Figure 8: *control-motion-verb-lexeme*

("I" or "me") lexically specified as [AGR-B *1sg*]. Its second argument, *in na'ak-s-ik-ech*, is obviously [AGR-A *1sg*], which adheres to the above specification.

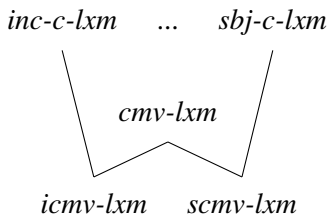

Figure 9: *control-motion-verb-lexeme* hierarchy

Control-motion-verb-lexeme (cmv-lxm) can take either incompletive or subjunctive control arguments, which motivates its split into two further subtypes: *subjunctive-control-motion-verb-lexeme (scmv-lxm)* and *incompletive-control-motion-verb-lexeme (icmv-lxm).* Those lexemes inherit from *subjunctive-control-lexeme (sbj-c-lxm)* and *incompletive-control-lexeme (inc-c-lxm)*, respectively, which means they need not be specified any further; the inheritance hierarchy ensures each verb will take only the right type of complements. Since motion verbs can generally take subjunctive or incompletive controllees, they are underspecified at the level of the lexicon. Thus, the lexical entry specifying syntactic nature of a verb like *tàal* can be as minimal as the one displayed below. As all non-maximal types are quired to resolve a maximal type, *cmv-lxm* eventually resolves to *scmv-lxm* or *icmv-lxm*.

$$\begin{bmatrix} \textit{cmv-lxm} & \\ \text{FORM} & \text{<tàal>} \end{bmatrix}$$

Figure 10: Lexeme *tàal*

3 Discussion

Many of the data points and suggestions for analysis presented in this paper are drawn from AnderBois & Armstrong (unpublished). Their work is in large a reaction to Coon (2013), who argues that all control construction in Ch'ol (a closely related Mayan language) are nominalizations. Space considerations preclude me from reviewing her argument in detail. One of its core aspects relies on observing that the distributions of NPs and VPs in Ch'ol largely overlap. For example, the Ch'ol progressive AM marker can select for NPs, too, which is not the case in Yucatec Maya:

(19) Choñkol-∅ ja'al.
PROG-B3SG rain
"It is raining." (lit. "Rain is happening.")
(AnderBois & Armstrong, unpublished, 15a, Ch'ol)

(20) *Tàan cháak.
PROG rain.
intended: "It is raining."
(AnderBois & Armstrong, unpublished, 15b, Yucatec Maya)

Other facts relevant for Ch'ol control derive then from a number of independently motivated principles. A&A argues, convincingly one must admit, that while Coon's account might be correct for Ch'ol, differences between the two languages make it irrelevant for Yucatec Maya. Nonetheless, they are still willing to entertain the claim that intransitive subjunctive control derives its usual properties from its nominal nature. That, I believe, is incorrect.

An observation crucial for A&A's account is that all major Yucatecan verb classes use the same morphology for nominalizations as they do for incompletive status. Consider one of their examples:

(21) Yaan k'iin-e' le áalkab-∅-o' jach toop-∅.
exists day-TOP DEF run-INC(?)/NML-D2 really hard-B3SG
"Sometimes, running is very difficult."
(AnderBois & Armstrong, unpublished, 70a)

(22) In k'áat áalkab-∅.
A1SG wish run-INC/NML(?)
"I want to run." (AnderBois & Armstrong, unpublished, 70b)

While the cue is truly telling, one must notice the nominalization and incompletive status are not morphologically identical; nominalizations are accompanied by the determiner *le* and a distal clitic (here, a D2). A great deal of nominalizations found in corpora seem to follow this pattern. Whether incompletive forms without determiners are grammatical at all (under the nominal reading) is not really clear. An informant asked for a judgment on (23) (intended to be a clear nominalization yet devoid of definite morphology) agreed it was grammatical but also

noticed it would be most natural when giving advice. That hints at its irrealis, and thus probably verbal, semantics. (For comparison consider English "reading is good" vs "it is good to read.") Little to none is understood about verbal complements without set-A/set-B morphology, but were that interpretation correct, the status of nominalization as necessarily definite would remain unchallenged and a verbal interpretation of intransitive subjunctive control would gain a strong piece of evidence in its favor.

(23) Uts-∅ xook-∅.
good-B3GS study-INC/NML
"It is good to study." / "Studying is good." (?)

On the other hand, when asked to repeat (23), the informant would sometimes utter (24) instead, adding a distal clitic at the end of the clause. The exact distribution of distal clitics in YM is poorly understood, but it is generally agreed that its presence is governed by specific lexical items (Lehmann, 2002). One such item is the determiner *le*, which necessitates a clitic such as *-o'* (D2). Other items, such as the nominal set-A (i.e. set-A in its possessive usage), allow for clitics but do not demand them. The case of (24) is surprising inasmuch as there seem to be no morpheme justifying the presence of *o'*. One possibly explanation is that nominalizations themselves allow for it too, perhaps as a clarification of the nominal nature of ambiguous incompletive morphology. Since incompletive status in subjunctive control constructions does not seem to allow for distal clitics, the above data cast a shadow on the attempts to interpret intransitive subjunctive control as nominalizations.

(24) Uts-∅ xook-∅-o'.
good-B3GS study-INC/NML-D2
"It is good to study." / "Studying is good." (?)

An even graver objection to the nominalization proposal stems from a lack of good reasons to believe intransitive subjunctive control should really lack set-A morphology. As has been mentioned, set-A and set-B are quite indifferent about the category of the head they attach to. Consider the following phrases, where set-A has ergative and possessive interpretations:

(25) in w-il-ik
A1SG ONGL-watch-INC
"I watch" / "my watching"

(26) in wakax
A1SG cow
"my cow"

The ambiguity can be even more radical when set-B is involved. In addition to its verb-restricted usages, noun phrases with suffixed with *-o'ob* can have a predicative and plural readings:

(27) wakax-o'ob
cow-B3SG
"they are cows (a cow)" / "cows"

A&A justify their proposal by considering verbal set-A and set-B as part of inflectional verbal morphology, and thus disidentify it from nominal (e.g. possessive) set morphology.[15] But that division seems more than just a tad artificial. In fact, it is not clear to me if that any such division should really be drawn. First, set-A and set-B are syntactically and morphologically *identical* in their nominal and verbal usages. Since the overlap is complete, it is difficult to relegate it to a historical accident, irrelevant for synchronic analysis. Second, the distribution facts between nominal and verbal set morphology are strikingly parallel. For example, just as there exist verbs that necessitate the set-A morphology (the transitives and incompletive intransitives), so do nouns.[16] Third, it is difficult to draw a clear semantic boundary between the two of them. The following example from Armstrong (2009) is a case in point:

(28) Uts-∅ t-in t'aan in ts'u'uts'-ik-∅ chamal.
good-B3SG PREP-A1SG speech A1SG smoke-INC-B3SG cigarette
"I like smoking cigarettes." (Armstrong, 2009, 36)

Even though the typical translation is as indicated above, it is hard to resist the impression it could be more literally translated as "my smoking of cigarettes is good in my speech," with *ts'u'uts'-ik-∅* "smoking" interpreted in a more nominal fashion and *in* in a possessive one. Examples like that are plentiful—it is enough to recall that all sentences involving AM markers can be interpreted as stative predications over nominals.

Now, that is not to say there is no difference between Yucatecan nouns and verbs. Even though that distinction in Mayan languages is not as fundamental as, let's say, in Indo-European, they constitute two discreet categories; the recurring noun *wakax* "cow" could never be used as an active verb, at least not without undergoing some derivational morphology first. But the examples given here demonstrate quite clearly that this distinction does not translate into a distinction between nominal and verbal set morphology, at least not on syntactic grounds.

[15] verbatim: "If our claim is on the right track that in the above examples the status morphology is actually a realization of n^0 rather than v^0, the absence of agreement is straightforwardly accounted for. Since v^0 is the locus of all agreement in verbs, we don't expect to see Set A or Set B in these examples" (AnderBois & Armstrong, unpublished, p. 32).

[16] The *inalienable* nouns, as Lehmann refers to them, form a large class of YM nouns that require an explicit possessor expressed though set-A morphology. For an extensive description of the possessive phrases, see Lehmann (2002).

If a unified account of two speciously disparate phenomena can be done, it should. In SBCG, that is in fact possible. Set-A is treated as separate words which combine with nouns and verbs, depending on the verb status or nominal subcategory. Set-B is treated as inflectional morphology handled by one function applicable to verbs as well as referential and predicative nouns.

Last but not least, there is an independently motivated reason to allow for verbs bereft of set-A. Such verbs are the cornerstone of agent focus constructions, one of the most studied topics in Mayan syntax and morphology.

(29) K-u w-il-ik-∅ polok wakax Maruch.
IMP-A1SG ONGL-watch-INC-B3SG fat cow Mary
"Mary is watching a fat cow."

(30) Maruch il-ik-∅ polok wakax.
Mary watch-INC-B3SG fat cow
"MARY is watching a fat cow." / "It is Mary who is watching a fat cow."

In essence, the construction is characterized by the fronting of a transitive verb's agent and the removal of an associated AM marker alongside with the set-A morpheme. Even though the quirks of agent focus are very different from subjunctive control, agent focus points at a precedence in Yucatecan grammar of verbs without the otherwise expected set-A. Interestingly, it has been suggested that this way of marking agent focus emerged in Yucatec Maya to disambiguate between agent and patient focus after all morphology associated with agent focus was lost (Norcliffe, 2009a). Were that true, one could look at intransitive subjunctive control in a similar way—here too it is set-A whose presence or lack disambiguates between two otherwise identical constructions.

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