As Above, but Below: Karuk Directional Suffixes as "Low Applicatives"

Keywords: Karuk, directionals, applicatives, first phase syntax, syntax, morphology

Karuk (ISO 639-3: kyh), a polysynthetic Hokan isolate spoken in northern California, has a distinctive set of over 50 verbal directional suffixes expressing the path and/or ground of an event (-furuk in (1) expresses not only a path, ‘into,’ but also the ground ‘an enclosed space’). I argue that facts about the distribution of these suffixes offer striking support for Ramchand (2008)’s decomposition of the VP and cannot be accounted for merely by a high applicative analysis such as the one proposed in Macaulay (2004).

(1) kári xás iińáak u-vón-furuk ikmaháčraam and then indoors 3sg-crawl-into.an.enclosed.space sweathouse “Then he crawled into a sweathouse.” (WB_KL-05, 93, 1957; (Macaulay, 2004, p. 95))

Macaulay (2004) identifies a set of these suffixes as high applicatives (cf. Pylkkänen (2008)), with one important caveat in that, as Karuk is a pro-drop language, they need not introduce an explicit expression of the applied object. Instead, the suffix itself acts as both the applicative and the applied object. If an explicit nominal expression of the applied object occurs, as in (1), it is treated as an adjunct. Hence, (2) is felicitous though it lacks the noun ikmaháčraam present in (1).

(2) xás ú-kfuuk-furuk. and 3sg-crawl-into.an.enclosed.space “So he crawled in.” (WB_KL-04, 126, 1957)

Macaulay (2004) situates her analysis in a Distributed Morphology framework whereby the conflation of path (expressed by the Appl head) and ground (expressed by the applied object) is accomplished by the merger and fusion of those two heads at Morphological Form. Several of the suffixes express multiple paths and grounds, such as -rin ‘to here across a body of water’ (including two applicative/path notions, ‘to’ and ‘across,’ and two ground notions, ‘here’ and ‘a body of water,’), which leads Macaulay, dedicated to having each Appl head or applied object express only one such path or ground notion, to posit an uneconomical analysis for these suffixes involving multiple, otherwise unmotivated Appl projections.

I propose an alternative analysis of the Karuk directional suffixes based on Ramchand (2008)’s decomposition of the VP into Init(iation)P, Proc(ess)P, and Res(ult)P. Ramchand’s system includes a PathP complement to ProcP and a PlaceP complement to PathP that correspond to the exact semantic categories that the Karuk directional suffixes express. Analyzing the Karuk directional suffixes as occupying those positions not only does away with the necessity of multiple merger/fusion operations (as there is no commitment to having only one path/ground notion expressed per head, as in Macaulay’s analysis), but can also account for facts about the distribution of the directional suffixes that Macaulay’s analysis does not.

Namely, certain Karuk verb roots, such as va- ‘go,’ it- ‘look,’ and voor- ‘crawl,’ must occur with a directional suffix (Bright, 1957). This is easily accounted for in my analysis, which only needs to rely on standard downward selection by Proc of a PathP complement to ensure the obligatory selection of a PathP, as in (3); Macaulay’s high applicative analysis would have to resort to upward selection to achieve the same.

Furthermore, I present a heretofore undescribed behavior of a class of telic verb roots, like ipak ‘come back’ and uum ‘arrive’: they cannot occur with directional suffixes. This restriction can be easily derived from the proposed structure: Res verb roots, including achievement verbs like ipak and uum, cannot take PathP complements, as the PathP must be a complement to Proc, whose
complement position would already taken by the ResP, as in (4). Macaulay’s high applicative analysis can make no such prediction, as there is no reason a high applicative in Pylkkänen (2008)’s system should be unable to combine with an achievement verb.

These Karuk directional suffixes are thus low applicatives of a new type not predicted to be possible in Pylkkänen (2008): they hold a low position in the tree below the verb root (below Proc), but nonetheless “denote a relationship between an event and an individual” (Pylkkänen, 2008, p.13) like high applicatives. In contrast, this type of low applicative is allowed by Ramchand (2008)’s system, but only for applicatives expressing path and ground notions that would be able to act as the Path and Place heads. Thus, more typical Karuk high applicatives like the Causative -math and Benefactive -ihi, though also denoting “a relationship between an event and an individual,” must occupy the conventional high applicative position above the verb root (above Proc), as suggested by their differences in distribution from the directionals (being able to occur with Res verbs, for example). This offers more evidence against a high applicative analysis of the directionals and suggests that Karuk has a contrast between high and low applicatives of a different type from the contrast described in Pylkkänen (2008), thus contributing to the theoretical typology of applicatives and arguing against the universality of Pylkkänen (2008)’s widely accepted analysis.

References


