Distinction between nouns and verbs in Guató

Distinção entre nomes e verbos em Guató

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Abstract: Even though the distinction between nouns and verbs is generally considered to be universal, it has been argued for some languages of Northern North America that they lack this distinction. The main argument for such assertion is that in these languages lexemes denoting entities and lexemes denoting actions receive the same markers, when used as predicates. Guató, an isolate from South America, exhibits a similar phenomenon. In Guató, lexemes considered nouns receive the same subject markers as intransitive verbs do, when they occur in predicative function. Moreover, nouns and verbs share other morphosyntactic features. This article aims to describe and to compare the morphosyntactic behavior of Guató nouns and verbs, pointing out similarities and differences between them.

Keywords: Guató. Lexical classes. Nouns. Verbs.

Resumo: Embora a distinção entre nomes e verbos seja geralmente vista como universal, ela já foi considerada ausente em algumas línguas da América do Norte. O principal argumento que defende essa ausência é que, nessas línguas, os lexemas que denotam entidades e os lexemas que denotam ações recebem os mesmos marcadores, quando são usados como predicados. Guató, uma língua isolada da América do Sul, exibe um fenômeno semelhante. Em Guató, os lexemas considerados nomes, na função predicativa, recebem os mesmos marcadores do sujeito que os verbos intransitivos. Além disso, nomes e verbos compartilham outras características morfossintáticas. O objetivo deste artigo é descrever e comparar o comportamento morfossintático dos nomes e verbos no Guató, apontando suas semelhanças e diferenças.

Palavras-chave: Guató. Classes lexicais. Nomes. Verbos.

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INTRODUCTION

The Guató language (isolate) was spoken along the Paraguay and São Lourenço rivers in the modern Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul states, in Brazil. Nowadays, the Guató people is monolingual in Portuguese, and Guató is no longer used in daily communication. There are no more than ten former native Guató speakers, who reside in different localities. Almost all of them are over 70 years old and the youngest ones are over 50 years old. Their competence in Guató varies from remembering some few words (in the case of the youngest ones) to being capable of telling stories.

The data presented in this paper were collected with the two most proficient Guató speakers, Eufrásia Ferreira and Vicente Manoel da Silva. Vicente spoke the language on a daily basis until 2011, when his mother died. Eufrásia ceased speaking Guató in the 1980s. Both of them show signals of language attrition, although the process is more evident in Eufrásia's speech, particularly, on the word level. There are some lexical and grammatical differences in Eufrasia's and Vicente's language usage, which can be related not only to language attrition but also to possible dialectal variations. These differences will be indicated when relevant for the discussion. However, both speakers use consistently the morphosyntactic constructions addressed in this paper and, thus, there is no reason to suspect that these constructions differ substantially from those used in daily communication decades ago.

This paper is the first attempt to compare morphosyntactic behavior of Guató nouns and verbs. Firstly, in order to contextualize the discussion in language typology, a brief overview of the studies on noun – verb distinction in some Northern American languages is given. Thereafter, the morphosyntactic domains in which Guató nouns and verbs behave similarly are discussed. These domains are nominal predication, verb arguments and compounding.

NOUN – VERB DISTINCTION IN SOME NORTHERN AMERICAN LANGUAGES

Despite the general unanimity among typologists in what concerns the universality of the distinction between nouns and verbs (Dixon, 2004, p. 9; Schachter & Shopen, 2007, p. 5), there have been several attempts to demonstrate that some languages do not distinguish these two categories. Swadesh (1938) claims that in Nuu-chah-nulth[1], a Wakashan language spoken in Western Canada, there are no usual lexical classes, such as noun, verb or adjective. Instead, "all sorts of ideas find their expression in the same general type of word, which is predicative or non-predicative according to its paradigmatic ending" (Swadesh, 1938, p. 78). One of the main evidences for such claim is that nouns can function as predicates, taking the same suffixes which express subject (person and number) and mode as verbs do.

However, the author himself classifies the lexemes on the basis of their semantics into seven groups (entity, state, action, location, time, quantity, and indication) and notes that there are peculiarities in the syntactic behavior of different semantic groups. For example, the lexemes which denote entities "show more irregularity of combining form and durative than any other semantic class" (Swadesh, 1938, p. 99).

Later, several authors provided evidence in order to prove that nouns and verbs do form distinct categories in Wakashan languages. In particular, it was shown that verbs obligatorily take the definite suffix *-ʔi* to function as arguments, whereas nouns can occur with or without this marker (Jacobsen, 1979, p. 123). Besides, only nouns can function as the heads of arguments which contain modifiers (Wojdak, 2001, p. 625).

Another claim about the lack of distinction between nouns and verbs was made by Kinkade (1983) for the Salish language, from the family of the same name and spoken in Northwestern United States. The author affirms that "any full word may constitute the main predicate of a Salishan sentence" (Kinkade, 1983, p. 27) and the only possible distinction is between

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[1] Swadesh (1938) designates the language as *Nootka*, but this name was later rejected by its speakers.

predicates and particles. The author suggests that the absence of lexical classes is an areal feature shared by Salishan, Wakashan and Chemakuan languages, which constitute three unrelated, but neighboring families (Kinkade, 1983, p. 25-26).

Kinkade's claim was rebutted by Van Eijk & Hess (1986), who used evidence from two other Salishan languages, Lillooet and Lushootseed. The authors affirm that there are, at least, two major morphosyntactic differences between nouns and verbs in these languages. The first one is that nouns can take possessive affixes, while verbs cannot (Van Eijk & Hess, 1986, p. 321). The second one is that verbs can be subjected to aspectual operations, while nouns cannot (Van Eijk & Hess, 1986, p. 322).

Nevertheless, the authors recognize that the difference between nouns and verbs is largely irrelevant for syntax since lexemes from both classes function as predicates and take the same subject markers (Van Eijk & Hess, 1986, p. 323). The difference is also irrelevant for the application of some word-building rules (Van Eijk & Hess, 1986, p. 326).

As we will see further, Guató nouns used as predicates also share several grammatical features with verbs. Nevertheless, there are also important differences between two classes.

GUATÓ NOUNS IN PREDICATIVE FUNCTION

In the first dissertation on the Guató language, Palácio (1984, p. 48-50) addresses what she calls "determinative inflection" of nouns. According to the author, there are two determinative nominal prefixes, *g(o)-* and *m(a)-*. The prefix *m(a)-* marks a noun "free of any context", while the prefix *g(o)-* is attached to nouns "inside a context". As I will show further, the nominal prefixes *g(o)-* and *m(a)-* are not determinative markers and should not be labelled in the same way. They contrast with each other, marking the distinction between nouns in non-predicative functions vs. nouns in predicative ones.

Guató nouns in any non-predicative function are normally marked by the prefix *g(o)-*, as we can see in (1a)[2]. Given its wide distribution, I gloss *g(o)-* as 'nominal'. This prefix can only be replaced by a possessive marker. For example, in (1b) the noun *ovɯ* 'house' firstly occurs with the 1st person singular suffix *-ɾu* and, therefore, does not receive the prefix *g(o)-*. When the noun is used with the *g(o)-* instead, it does not receive the possessive suffix. The possessive markers are summarized in the Table 1 below.

(1a)   <u>g-épágu</u>   *dúni*   <u>g-ibɔ́</u>   *ɛ-gũ*   *mahĩ*   *i-o*   <u>g-oɾékũ̃</u>
      NM-jaguar   two   NM-duck   3SG-kill   there   3SG-edge   NM-bay
      'The jaguar killed two ducks at the bay.'

(1b)   *ójo*   *na-nuna-ti-o*   *mani*[3]   <u>ovɯ-ɾu</u>   *áɾio-fɛ́*   *mani*   <u>g-ovɯ</u>
      1SG   IPFV-make-FUT-1SG   DEM   house-1SG   INTS-be.big   DEM   NM-house
      'I will make a house (lit.: my house), a big house (lit.: the house is big).'

Table 1. Possessive affixes.

1			2	3	
SG	DU	PL		SG	PL
(a)- … -ɾu/-jo	*gi-*	*had͡ʒi-*	*gʷa-*	*ɛ-/i-*	*bi-*

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[2] Guató is a tonal language, with high and low tones. The high tone is indicated by the acute accent, while the low one is not indicated.
[3] Eufrásia Ferreira often uses the demonstrative pronoun *mani* in contexts which do not imply pointing out a specific referent.

As we can see, the 1ˢᵗ person singular and 3ʳᵈ person singular possessive markers have allomorphs. It is necessary to make some observations about their distribution. In the 1ˢᵗ person singular, the prefix **a-** is not used when the root begins with a vowel. The suffixes **-ɾu** and **-jo** seem to be in free variation. In the 3ʳᵈ person singular, the distribution between **ɛ-** and **i-** is item-based: some roots select the first allomorph, while others select the second one. This selection does not depend on the lexical class of the root.

When used as predicates, Guató nouns receive the prefix **m(a)-** instead of **g(o)-** 'nominal'. This is why I gloss the prefix **m(a)-** as 'predicative'. Furthermore, predicative nouns receive subject marking suffixes[4]. The singular subject markers attached to them are **-jo** '1SG', **-he** '2' and **Ø** '3SG', exemplified in (2), (3) and (4) respectively. Note that the predicative noun is often followed by the copula **ɾa**, although this element can be omitted, as in (2b) and (4b). The copula receives possessive affixes which also index the subject person.

(2a) _m-évɯ́-jo_   _a-ɾa-jo_   (2b) _ma-gaɾe-jo_
      PRED-woman-1SG   1SG-COP-1SG   PRED-brazilian-1SG
      'I am a woman.'   'I am Brazilian.'

(3a) _ma-to-d͡ʒɔ́-he_   gʷa-ɾa   (3b) _m-otʃíbɔ-he_   gʷa-ɾa
      PRED-AUG-chief-2   2-COP   PRED-witch-2   2-COP
      'You are a big chief.'   'You are a witch.'

(4a) mani   go-dɛ́   _ma-ʃéuvɯ́_   ɛ-ɾa
      DEM   NM-man   PRED-Guató   3SG-COP
      'This man is a Guató.'

(4b) na-dágátʃî-jo   mani   go-hɯ   _ma-d͡ʒájɛ́_
      IPFV-know-1SG   DEM   NM-jabiru   PRED-bird
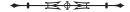   'I know that jabiru is a bird.'

Besides establishing different types of identity relations between two referents (X is Y), the nominal predicative construction can also indicate the material out of which an object is made, as in (5) and (6).

(5) _oʃⁱi-ɾu_   _m-adá_   ɛ-ɾa
     comb-1SG   PRED-wood   3SG-COP
     'My hair comb is (made of) wood.'

(6) _m-otʃɛ́_   ɛ-ɾa   mani   a-fɛ-ɾu
     PRED-cotton   3SG-COP   DEM   1SG-clothes-1SG
     'My clothes are (made of) cotton.'

It is worth noting that when single nouns are elicited, the speakers always mark them with the predicative prefix **m(a)-**[5]. Thus, when a noun 'banana' is elicited, the answer is actually a simple clause meaning 'It is a banana'.

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[4] In this paper, only sentences with singular subjects will be discussed, since plural forms are less readily remembered by the speakers.
[5] The only exception are nouns for body parts which, when elicited, are almost always marked by possessive affixes.

This is exactly the case Palácio (1984, p. 48) referred to when she stated that the prefix *m(a)-* is used on nouns "free of any context". Interestingly, something similar happens in Salish, in which any simple form denoting an entity "may be translated into English either as a simple noun or as an equational sentence with a dummy 'it' as subject, with the whole indicating a state rather than an entity" (Kinkade, 1983, p. 28).

The subject markers used on predicative nouns are the same used on intransitive verbs, as shown in the Table 2. Examples of intransitive verbs with singular subjects are given in (7) – (9) below.

Table 2. Singular subject markers on intransitive verbs and predicative nouns.

1	2	3
-jo	*-he*	Ø

(7) *ójo*   <u>*na-fúu-jo*</u>   *mahĩ-gɯɾɯ*   *go-d͡ʒékũ*
      1SG   IPFV-swim-1SG   there-INTS   NM-river
      'I swim there, in the river.'

(8) *óhe*   <u>*n-átũga-he*</u>
      2   IPFV-snore-2
      'You snore.'

(9) *a-d͡ʒɛo-ɾu*   <u>*na-hɛ̃gigi*</u>
      1SG-husband-1SG   IPFV-smoke
      'My husband smokes.'

As we can notice, despite the same subject markers, the predicative nouns and verbs receive different prefixes: the predicative prefix *m(a)-* and the imperfective prefix *n(a)-*, respectively. Note that in both cases the sentences are interpreted as present tense. As we will see below, predicative nouns only receive the imperfective prefix *n(a)-* when they are marked for desiderative mode.

There is also a verbal prefix *m(á)-*, but it is different from the predicative prefix *m(a)-*, since it marks perfective aspect on active verbs, as shown in (10) – (12).

(10) <u>*má-kṹni-jo*</u>
      PFV-sleep-1SG
      'I slept.'

(11) <u>*má-hɛ̃gigi-he*</u>
      PFV-smoke-2
      'You smoked.'

(12) *go-tiát͡ʃɔ*   <u>*má-d͡ʒáki*</u>
      NM-broom   PFV-break
      'The broom broke.'

Furthermore, the perfective prefix *m(á)-* has a special use on descriptive verbs. Attached to them, it denotes transition to a new state in which the referent acquires the property denoted by the verb (Balykova, 2019, p. 97-100), as in (13) – (15).

(13) *m̱á-kɯɾa-jo*
      PFV-be.tired-1SG
      'I got tired.'

(14) *m̱á-gahe-he*
      PFV-be.drunk-2
      'You got drunk.'

(15) *g-ikɯ́vai*   *m̱-át͡ʃaɾa*
      NM-pan   PFV-be.dry
      'The pan got empty.'

Interestingly, verbs which denote human activities can receive the predicative prefix *m(a)-* and be followed by the copula. These constructions are often used to refer to professions. For example, in (16), the profession of cook is referred to by the predicative construction with the verb *aót͡ʃe-gɯ̃* 'to cook'.

(16) *óhe*   *m̱-aót͡ʃe-gɯ̃-ẖe*   *gʷa-ɾa*
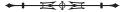   2   PRED-to.cook-INTRZ-2   2-COP
      'You are a cook.'

More examples of such predicative constructions are given in (17) – (21). Note that in most of them the verb denoting a human activity incorporates its object. This incorporation allows for a more precise reference to the activity in question.

(17) *ójo*   *m̱a-gɯ́-d͡ʒ-égɯ̃ti-j̱o*   *a-ɾa-ɾu*
      1SG   PRED-sell-E-fish-1SG   1SG-COP-1SG
      'I am a fishmonger.'

(18) *ójo*   *m̱-ahɔ́-kɯ́-j̱o*   *a-ɾa-ɾu*
      1SG   PRED-hunt-capybara-1SG   1SG-COP-1SG
      'I am a hunter.'

(19) *ójo*   *m̱-ahɔ́-vaká-j̱o*   *a-ɾa-ɾu*
      1SG   PRED-hunt-cow-1SG   1SG-COP-1SG
      'I am a herdsman.'

(20) *óhe*   *m̱a-kí-ẖe*   *gʷa-ɾa*
      2   PRED-to.fish-2   2-COP
      'You are a fisherman.'

⬥━▮━▦◈▦━▮━⬥

(21) *mani*   *go-dɛ*   <u>*ma-gŭ-dɛ*</u>   *ɛ-ɾa*
      DEM   NM-man   PRED-kill-man   3SG-COP
      'This man is a criminal.'

Of course, these verbs can also participate in verbal predicative constructions, as shown in (22) – (27). In this case, however, they do not denote professions.

(22) *óhe*   <u>*n-aótʃe-gŭ-he*</u>   *n-ítɯvɯ*   *gʷ-aótʃa*
      2   IPFV-to.cook-INTRZ-2   IPFV-be.good   2-to.cook
      'You cook well.' (lit.: 'You cook, your cooking is good.')

(23) <u>*na-gúu-jo*</u>   *mani*   *g-égŭti*
      IPFV-sell-1SG   DEM   NM-fish
      'I sell fish.'

(24) *óio*   <u>*n-ahɔ́-jo*</u>   *go-kúu*
      1SG   IPFV-hunt-1SG   NM-capybara
      'I hunt capybaras.'

(25) *óio*   <u>*n-ahɔ́-jo*</u>   *go-vaká*
      1SG   IPFV-hunt-1SG   NM-cow
      'I look after cows.'

(26) <u>*na-kí-o*</u>
      IPFV-to.fish-1SG
      'I fish.'

(27) *mani*   *go-dɛ*   <u>*n-ɛ-gŭ*</u>   *go-ʃéuvúu*
      DEM   NM-man   IPFV-3SG-kill   NM-Guató
      'This man kills people.'

Besides the same subject markers, predicative nouns receive the same past and future tense suffixes as verbs do. The past tense suffix is **-ga**, as shown in (28) for a verb and in (29) – (31) for nouns.

(28) *ójo*   <u>*na-gátʃa-ga-jo*</u>   *mani*   *go-fédito*
      1SG   IPFV-dance-PST-1SG   DEM   NM-party
      'I used to dance at parties.'

(29) *ójo*   <u>*m-ahɔ́-vaká-ga-jo*</u>   *a-ɾa-ɾu*
      1SG   PRED-hunt-cow-PST-1SG   1SG-COP-1SG
      'I used to be a herdsman.'

(30) *óhe*   <u>*ma-dʒɔ́-ga-he*</u>   *gʷa-ɾa*
      2   PRED-chief-PST-2   2-COP
      'You used to be the chief.'

(31) *mahĩ*   *g-oɾékŭ*   <u>*ma-tʃájovɯ-ga*</u>   *ɛ-ɾa*
      DEM.DIST   NM-bay   PRED-town-PST   3SG-COP
      'That bay used to be a town.'

Future tense is expressed by the suffix **-ti** on verbs, as in (32). The same suffix is used in nominal predications, as in (33) – (35).

(32)   *ójo*   <u>*na-gʷó-ti-jo*</u>   *g-égũti*
       1SG   IPFV-to.fish-FUT-1SG   NM-fish
       'I will fish.'

(33)   *ójo*   <u>*ma-ʃéuvʉ́-ti-jo*</u>   *mani*   *a-ɾa-jo*
       1SG   PRED-Guató-FUT-1SG   DEM   1SG-COP-1SG
       'I will be a Guató.'

(34)   *óhe*   <u>*m-ahɔ́-kʉ́ʉ-ti-he*</u>   *gʷa-ɾa*
       2   PRED-hunt-capybara-FUT-2   2-COP
       'You will be a hunter.'

(35)   <u>*m-áfí-ti*</u>
       PRED-night-FUT
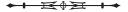   'It is going to be night.'

The desiderative mode is expressed by the prefix **t(a)-** both on verbs (36) and on nouns (37) – (39). Note that nominal predications in desiderative mode are marked by the imperfective prefix **n(a)-** and not by the predicative prefix **m(a)-** and, therefore, are even more similar to verbal predications. The desiderative prefix **t(a)-** is highly likely a grammaticalization of the verb *taɾi* 'to want', used when the object is a noun phrase or when the object is omitted. The fact of the **t(a)-** being a grammaticalized verb might explain why nominal predications in desiderative mode receive the imperfective verbal prefix **n(a)-**.

(36)   *mani*   *go-dɛ́*   <u>*na-ta-ɾát͡ʃiéd͡ʒa*</u>
       DEM   NM-man   IPFV-DES-go.away
       'The man wants to go away.'

(37)   *ójo*   <u>*na-t-ahɔ́-kʉ́ʉ-jo*</u>
       1SG   IPFV-DES-hunt-capybara-1SG
       'I want to be a hunter.'

(38)   *óhe*   <u>*na-ta-gí-he*</u>
       2   IPFV-DES-mother-2
       'You want to be a mother.'

(39)   *mani*   <u>*na-ta-dɛ́*</u>
       DEM   IPFV-DES-man
       'This one wants to be a man.'

There are other modal markers in Guató, such as prefixes for imperative (40), prohibitive (41) and obligative (42) modes, but there is no evidence yet whether it is possible to use them on predicative nouns.

(40)   *o̞-kʷájd͡ʒĩ*   *g-afóɾata*
       IMP-throw.away   NM-ashes
       'Throw the ashes away!'

(41) *tí-gahɛ-ɾehe*
      PROH-be.drunk-2SG.NEG
      'Don't get drunk!'

(42) *í-ké-jo*
      OBG-travel-1SG
      'I have to travel.'

Negation on verbs is expressed by the prefix *i(á)-*, which substitutes aspectual markers. There are also special negative subject markers for the 1ˢᵗ singular and for the 2ⁿᵈ persons, *-ɾu* '1SG' and *-ɾehe* '2'. In the 3ʳᵈ singular person, verbs do not receive any subject markers. The examples are given in (43) – (45).

(43) *i-káni-ɾu*   *g-áfí*
      NEG-walk-1SG.NEG   NM-night
      'I do not walk at night.'

(44) *óhe*   *mani*   *i-aho-ɾehe*
      2   DEM   NEG-sing-2NEG
      'You do not sing.'

(45) *mani*   *a-d͡ʒɛo-ɾu*   *iá-hɛ̃gigi*
      DEM   1SG-husband-1SG   NEG-smoke
      'My husband does not smoke.'

Predicative nouns also receive the special negative subject markers. However, they do not receive the negative prefix *i(á)-*. Instead, a predicative noun should be preceded by the negative particle *(í)ni*, which is not used before verbs. The examples are given in (46) – (48).

(46a) *ójo*   *mani*   *íni*   *ma-ʃéuvú-ɾu*
      1SG   DEM   NEG   PRED-Guató-1SG.NEG
      'I am not Guató.'

(46b) *ójo*   *íni*   *m-ahɔ́-kú-ɾu*
      1SG   NEG   PRED-hunt-capybara-1SG
      'I am not a hunter.'

(47a) *óhe*   *mani*   *íni*   *m-évú-ɾehe*
      2   DEM   NEG   PRED-woman-2NEG
      'You are not a woman.'

(47b) *óhe*   *ni*   *ma-ʃéuvú-ɾehe*
      2   NEG   PRED-Guató-2NEG
      'You are not Guató.'

(48a) *mani*   *a-d͡ʒɛo-ɾu*   *íni*   *ma-ʃéuvú*
      DEM   1SG-husband-1SG   NEG   PRED-Guató
      'My husband is not Guató.'

(48b) *mani*   *a-d͡ʒɛo-ɾu*   *íni*   *ma-gáɾegu*
      DEM   1SG-husband-1SG   NEG   PRED-Paraguayan
      'My husband is not Paraguayan.'

The comparison between nominal and verbal predications shows us that these constructions share some features, yet they are not identical. Nominal predications receive the same subject markers, tense prefixes and at least one modal prefix as verbs do. The peculiarities of the nominal predicative construction are (i) predicative prefix *m(a)-*, (ii) copula element *ɾa*, marked by possessive affixes indexing the subject and (iii) negative particle *(í)ni*.

On the other hand, it was also shown that nominal predications denoting professions actually involve verbal roots. Yet, while at least some verbal roots can participate in nominal predications in the same way as nominal roots do, the opposite cannot be fully affirmed. For example, the imperfective prefix *n(a)-* cannot be directly attached to a nominal root. This prefix was only attested on nouns marked by the desiderative prefix *t(a)-*, as in (37)-(39) above, and on nouns verbalized by the attributive prefix *i-* in constructions of predicative possession, as in (49) and (50).

(49) *mani* *go-t͡ʃédafɛ* *na-i-gʷáɾi*
      DEM NM-clothes IPFV-ATTR-mark
      'The clothes have writings/pictures (on them).'

(50) *na-i-kúɯ* *g-iɾod͡ʒí* *i-hia-kũ*
      IPFV-ATTR-egg NM-Southern.lapwing 3SG-REFL-nest
      'The Southern lapwing (*Vanellus chilensis*) has eggs in its nest.'

Predication is a typical verbal function and it is expected that nouns functioning as predicates acquire some verbal characteristics. However, in Guató the morphosyntactic assimilation between the two classes is even stronger when verbs are used in a typical nominal function, i.e. as arguments. This usage is discussed in the next section.

NOMINAL AFFIXES AS VERB NOMINALIZERS

Guató verbs can be nominalized by possessive affixes. The main use of such nominalizations is when the event expressed by a verb needs to be modified. Since Guató has no manner adverbs, the modification of an event is carried out by descriptive verbs. The verb denoting the modified event functions as the subject of a descriptive verb and, for this purpose, is nominalized by a possessive affix which indexes the person of the agent/experiencer. Thus, the sentence 'I cried a lot' is translated into Guató literally as 'My crying was much' (51a), and 'I cried a little' as 'My crying was little' (51b).
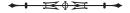
(51a) *áɾio-pũ* *mani* *a-úni-ɾu*
       INTS-be.much DEM 1SG-cry-1SG
       'I cried a lot.'

(51b) *áɾio-dí-t͡ʃumu* *mani* *a-úni-ɾu*
       INTS-DIM-be.a.little DEM 1SG-cry-1SG
       'I cried a little.'

The descriptive verbs *áɾio-pũ* 'be many or much' and *áɾio-dí-t͡ʃumu* 'be few or little' allow mass nouns as well as count ones as their subjects. In (52a) and (52b), we can observe the count noun *toɾa* 'child' functioning as the subject of these verbs. Note that this noun receives the same possessive affixes as the verb *úni* 'cry' above. Furthermore, the whole morphosyntactic structure of the sentences is identical in two cases.

(52a) *áɾio-pũ* *mani* *a-toɾa-ɾu*
       INTS-be.many DEM 1SG-child-1SG
       'I have many children.'

(52b) *áɾio-dí-t͡ʃumu* *mani* *a-toɾa-ɾu*
       INTS-DIM-be.a.few DEM 1SG-child-1SG
       'I have a few children.'

Predicative possession is another domain in which nouns receive the possessive markers. As (53) shows, the sentence 'He has three brothers' is translated into Guató as 'His brothers (are) three'. The same morphosyntactic structure is used to quantify events. In this case, the verb denoting the event is nominalized by a possessive marker which indexes the person of the agent/experiencer. Thus, a Guató speaker would say something like 'His/her throwing up (is) three' for 'He/she threw up three times', as we can see in (54). Note that the 3rd person singular possessive prefixes *ɛ-* and *i-*, in (53) and (54) respectively, are allomorphs.

(53)   *t͡ʃúmu*   *mani*   *ɛ-dúnihi*
       three   DEM   3SG-brother
       'He/she has three brothers.'

(54)   *t͡ʃúmu*   *mani*   *i-kɯniá*
       three   DEM   3SG-throw.up
       'He/she threw up three times.'

Furthermore, a verbal root can be nominalized by the prefix *g(o)-* to function as an argument of another verb. A nominalized verb functions as the subject of a transitive verb in (55), as the subject of an intransitive verb in (56), and as the direct object of a transitive verb in (57). As said before, this prefix is obligatory on nominal roots unless they are marked by the predicative *m(a)-* or possessive affixes.

(55)   *mani*   *g-aót͡ʃe-gũ̃*   *má-e-ɾɯgúki*   *mani*   *g-égũti*
       DEM   NM-to.cook-INTRZ   PFV-3SG-cut   DEM   NM-fish
       'The cook cut the fish.'

(56)   *má-ku*   *go-ɾákʷá*
       PFV-finish   NM-be.cold
       'The cold weather has ended.'

(57)   *na-d͡ʒuáɾa-ga-jo*   *mani*   *g-aja*
       IPFV-know-PST-1SG   DEM   NM-shoot
       'I used to know how to shoot.' (Lit.: 'I used to know the shooting.')

Thus, verbs nominalized by possessive affixes or by the nominal prefix *g(o)-* are morphologically indistinguishable from underived nouns. Another domain in which nouns and verbs behave similarly is compounding.

COMPOUNDING

Two types of compounding are quite frequent in Guató: nominal incorporation and nominal compounds. Guató allows the incorporation of the direct object to a transitive verb (58) and of the subject to an intransitive verb (59)[6]. The incorporated argument does not receive the otherwise obligatory prefix *g(o)-* nor possessive affixes. The order in such incorporations is head – dependent, i.e. the argument always follows the verb root.

(58)   *í-ánuna-tãgi-jo*
       OBG-make-cigarette-1SG
       'I have to make a cigarette.'

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[6] Vicente da Silva uses such incorporations much more often than Eufrásia Ferreira.

(59)   *m-okɯ́-ɾe*   *go-ʧɛ́-gɯ̃*
IMP.NEG-drink-IMP.NEG   NM-be.rotten-water
'Do not drink the spoiled water!'

Nominal compounds usually involve a possessum and a possessor. Such constructions are structurally identical to nominal incorporations, since they also exhibit the head – dependent order, i.e. the possessor follows the possessum. Compare the incorporation in (60), in which the noun *kɯ̃* 'nest' occupies the dependent position, and the nominal compound in (61), in which the same noun functions as the head.

(60)   *go-hɯ*   *gʷ-ánuna-kɯ̃*
NM-jabiru   PROG-make-nest
'The jabiru is making a nest.'

(61)   *ma-gɯ̃⁷-hɯ*
PRED-nest-jabiru
'(It is) a jabiru nest.'

Nominal compounds can also be incorporated as verb objects. For example, in (62), the compound *gɯ́-kʷɔ́* 'alligator egg' is incorporated to the verb *ɾo* 'eat'.

(62a)   *ma-gɯ́-kʷɔ́*   (62b)   *má-ɾo-gɯ́-kʷɔ́-jo*
PRED-egg-alligator   PFV-eat-egg-alligator-1SG
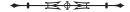'(It is) an alligator egg.'   'I ate an alligator egg.'

Furthermore, some roots can be used as nouns or as verbs depending on the context, thus originating interesting types of incorporation. In (63a), the root *ɾo* means 'food' and functions as the incorporated subject of the descriptive verb *bɛ̃hɛ̃* 'be sweet'. In (63b), the nominal compound *bɛ̃hɛ̃ɾo* '*rapadura* (lit. 'sweet food')' is incorporated to the root *ɾo*, which now means 'to eat'.

(63a)   *ma-bɛ̃hɛ̃-ɾo*   (63b)   *gʷá-ɾo-bɛ̃hɛ̃-ɾo-jo*
PRED-be.sweet-food   PROG-eat-be.sweet-food-1SG
'(It is) *rapadura*.'   'I am eating *rapadura*.'

Note that incorporations based on descriptive verbs, like *bɛ̃hɛ̃-ɾo* (be.sweet-food) '*rapadura*', always refer to entities and are never used as verbal predicates. Other such examples are *aʧáɾa-ɾo* (be.dry-food) 'cracker' and *okʷɛ́dɛ-gʷáɛka* (be.ugly-saint) 'evil spirit'. Besides, the semantic head of such incorporations is the noun since its reference is restricted by the meaning of the descriptive verb (e.g. *rapadura* and cracker are kinds of food in general). Differently, the semantic head of incorporations based on active verbs is the verb itself. In this case, the type of activity denoted by a verb is refined by the kind of patient it takes (e.g. making a cigarette is a particular case of making in general). Thus, incorporations involving descriptive verbs are a borderline phenomenon: they are based on verbs but behave like nouns both from a semantic and a morphosyntactic point of view.

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⁷ The root initial consonant [k] is voiced due to a dissimilation rule which avoids that both roots begin with voiceless consonants in nominal compounds.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, a first account of the grammatical similarities between nouns and verbs in Guató was given. It was shown that nouns in predicative function, a typical verbal domain, behave much like verbs. In particular, they take the same subject and tense suffixes. However, some features – such as the predicative prefix *m(a)-*, the copula *ɾa* and the negative particle *(i)ni* – are exclusive to nominal predications. Furthermore, it was stated that verbs can actually participate in nominal predications, whereas restrictions apply to nouns participating in verbal ones.

When verbs function as arguments, a typical nominal domain, they receive exactly the same markers as underived nouns: the prefix *g(o)-* or possessive affixes. Therefore, these markers function as nominalizers and the morphological structure of nominalized verbs is undistinguishable from that of underived nouns.

Finally, both nouns and verbs can participate in compounds. Transitive verbs can incorporate their direct objects, while intransitive ones can incorporate their subjects. Nominal compounds usually involve nouns referring to a possessor and a possessum. In both types of compounds, the head (verb or possessum) precedes the dependent (object/subject or possessor). Besides, incorporations based on descriptive verbs are actually more similar to nouns in what regards their semantics and morphosyntactic behavior.

All these facts contribute to blur the boundary between two lexical classes. There are other grammatical similarities between Guató nouns and verbs to be explored, e.g. the usage of nominal degree prefixes on verbs. For now, it is known that the degree prefixes often combine with descriptive verbs. The diminutive prefix *(o)dí-* can be attached to verbs which denote a low degree of a given property, such as *áví* 'be small', *tobɯ* 'be short (in length)', *ókʷada* 'be short (in height)' and *ʧ̃ũmu* 'be few or little'. Similarly, the augmentative prefix *(o)tó-* was found on verbs which denote a high degree of a certain property, such as *fɛ́* 'be big', *gʷótʃ̃á* 'be high', *kí* 'be long' and *pũ* 'be many or much'. Palácio (1984, p. 59) registers *dí-kíni* (DIM-sleep) meaning 'to nap', but it is still to be discovered if the degree prefixes can be used on active verbs. If so, nouns and verbs would be even closer, grammatically.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABREVIATIONS

1	first person	DIM	diminutive	IPFV	imperfective	PROH	prohibitive
2	second person	DIST	distal	NEG	negation	PST	past
3	third person	DU	dual	NM	nominal	REFL	reflexive
ATTR	attributive	E	epenthesis	OBG	obligative	SG	singular
AUG	augmentative	FUT	future	PFV	perfective		
COP	copula	IMP	imperative	PL	plural		
DEM	demonstrative	INTS	intensifier	PRED	predicative		
DES	desiderative	INTRZ	intransitivizer	PROG	progressive		

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