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Repetition and Anaphora as a Cohesive Device in Eibela Discourse

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Abstract

Like many languages in Papua New Guinea, narrative discourse structure in Eibela is characterized by extensive repetition and summarization of events as a means of bridging discourse episodes. This type of repitition has been given various labels, including tail-head linkage or bridging linkage. In de Vries (2005) several broad patterns seen in Papuan languages are discussed, including thematic continuity and event sequencing. In Eibela, these two functional roles correspond to two formal strategies of tail-head linkage: summary linkage and recapitulative linkage (Thompson et al. 2007 pp.273-274).

Summary linkage is a repeated clause which references a preceding event using a proverb, as in (1). Recapitulative linkage on the other hand repeats the same lexical predicate from a previous independent clause as a dependent clause, as exemplified by the example in (2).

(1) a.   bɛda-lolu=wa   ɛimɛ   oːɸa   aːnɪ
           see:PST-COMPL=TOP   already   sun:ABS   go-PST

           'I saw that the sun was already setting.'

   b.   **[[ɛ=bi=ja]TOP** owaːlo-wa   <u>solaː hɪnɛ   dɪ-si</u>=ja]TOP   hɪnaː   togolɛ
           do=D.S=TOP   tree.type-ABS peel DUR   PFV-LINK=TOP   go   road:LOC

           'That was happening and I peeled the owaalo (bark) and went to the road.'

(2) a.   [hɪnaː-nɪgɛ]MEDIAL [hanɪ   sɛ=ja   ka   <u>solo-di</u>]FINAL
           go-LINK:IPFV   river   bank=TOP   FOC   darken-PST

           'We went there and there at the riverside it got dark.'

   b.   **[[<u>solo-di</u>=ja]TOP**   bɪda-nɪgɛ]MEDIAL   [haːnɪ   ka   taː-nɪgɛ]MEDIAL
           darken-PST=TOP   see-LINK:IPFV   river   FOC   cross-LINK:IPFV

           'We saw it was getting dark, so we had to cross the wawi river…'

In the case of summary linkage, the repeated clause is the discourse topic of an entire clause chain or discourse episode, and provides event continuity between discourse episodes. In the case of recapitulative linkage, the topic clause's frame of reference in restricted to a single clause within a clause chain, and more often serves the function of event sequencing by specifying the temporal and causal relationships between the individual events within a discourse episode.

1 Introduction

The Eibela language, also called Aimele (ISO 639-3 ail), is spoken by about 300 people in Western Province and Southern Highlands province in Papua New Guinea (Shaw 1986). Repetition and anaphora play a central role in structuring topicality and event structure within Eibela discourse. This is done through the use of subordinate clauses and clause chaining structures which use repetition of clauses and anaphoric verbs to reiterate and reestablish events as topics of a section of discourse. This repetitive emphatic device is well attested throughout Papua New Guinea and can be related to discussions of tail-head linkage in de Vries (2005), and bridging linkage in Thompson et al. (2007 pp.273-274).

Before describing Eibela discourse structure, a brief overview of Eibela morphosyntax is needed in order to provide some context for a more detailed discussion of the topic at hand. Eibela is a suffixing language with complex verbal morphology for tense, aspect, mood, and evidentiality, and optional ergative-absolutive case marking on noun phrases in core argument positions (see Aiton 2014). The canonical constituent order is SV in intransitive clauses and AOV in transitive clauses, though other constituent orders are possible. Word classes include open classes of nouns, verbs, and adverbs, and closed classes of adjectives, demonstratives, postpositions, verbal particles, and quantifiers. Predicates in Eibela can be formed by lexical roots of nearly any word class, although only verbs may be inflected by the full range of tense, aspect, mood, and evidentiality suffixes. Verbal morphology is very rich, and features complex inflectional classes of verbs resulting in various patterns of stem alternations and suppletive tense forms, as well as complex predicates consisting of multiple verbal roots forming a single predicate. These complex predicates may take the form of serial verb constructions as in (3), or auxiliary constructions, as in (4).

(3) [agɪ   ɸɛɸɛ-ja]$_S$ [ɛna]$_x$ [dobosuwɛ]$_x$ **tɪ**   **aːnɪ**
    dog   skinny-ABS   there   underneath   go.down   go:PST

    'The skinny dog went down underneath there.'

(4) [sobolo-wa]$_S$ **tɪbɪ**   **do-wa**
    plane-ABS   land   STAT-PST

    'A plane has landed.'

Eibela discourse is structured around long chains of clauses with several medial clauses culminating in a fully inflected final clause. Clauses and noun phrases may additionally be morphologically topicalized. The morphosystax of these discourse strategies will be further discussed in §2. The occurrence of regular repetition and anaphora in these discourse contexts will then be discussed in §3, and finally, the semantics and function of this tail-head linkage will be explored in §4.

2 Morphosyntax of Tail-Head Linkage

Clauses in Eibela may be combined in various ways, but two syntactic clause combining strategies will be highlighted here: clause chaining and topicalization. These two strategies of clause combination will be particularly relevant to the subsequent discussion of tail-head linkage.

2.1 Clause Chaining

Clause chaining is a form of clause subordination where one or more subordinate clauses with limited inflection appear in a sequence, or chain, and the full inflection of tense aspect and mood is expressed on the final clause of the chain (Longacre 1985). These subordinate clauses in a clause chain with limited inflection are referred to as a medial clause. For example, clauses (5)- (5) in example are medial clauses without tense marking. Aspectual marking is limited to either imperfective or perfective clause linking suffixes.

(5) a.   [[solo-di=ja]$_{TOP}$ bɪda-**nɪgɛ]**$_{MEDIAL}$
            darken-PST=TOP   see-LINK:IPFV

            'We saw it was getting dark, so…'

   b.   [haːnɪ ka   taː-**nɪgɛ]**$_{MEDIAL}$
            river   FOC cross-LINK:IPFV

            'we had to cross the wawi river…'

   c.   [wawɪ-ja   ka   taː-lɪ-**si]**$_{MEDIAL}$
            NAME-ABS   FOC   cross-SIM-LINK:PFV

            'We were crossing and…'

   d.   [**a**ː**nɪ]**$_{FINAL}$
            go:PST

            'we went.'

Clause (5) is the final clause of the clause chain and as such displays tense marking with scope over the entire clause chain.

In addition to the imperfective suffix -*nɪgɛ* and the perfective suffix -*si*, there is also a consequential suffix -*bɪda* which expresses causal relationships between clauses. In (6) the medial clause *ogubɪda* refers to the cause of the subsequent clause.

(6) a.   [gɪ   hɛːga-ja   ɪ-saː]$_{FINAL}$
            2:SG   how:PST-Q:N.PRES   say-3:VIS

            'He said "What happened to you?".'

   b.   **[ogu-bɪda]**$_{MEDIAL}$ [nɪ   ɪnɪbɪ   wɪ   dɛːja   wɪ   kɛi]$_{FINAL}$
            do.thus-CONS   1:SG   leg   this   swollen this ASSER

            'He did (said) that, so (I said) "My leg here is swollen right here."'

The speech act "My leg here is swollen right here." is in response to the immediately preceding question.

2.2 Topicalization

Topicalization is a general process of identifying some concept as the topic or theme of a clause. In Eibela, this pragmatic function is realized by a left dislocated sentence position and the enclitic =*ja.* The role of the main clause is then to expand upon a given topic and provide new information which has not

yet been presented. For instance, example (7) is taken from a narrative which centers on transferring several bags from one location to another. This event of taking a bag is topical, and therefore is expressed as the topic of the complex sentence in (7).

(7) [[nɪ   ɪsɪ   no-wa   ogɛ   di=ja]**TOP**   ɸɪlɪ-nɛ]**FINAL**
     1:SG   string.bag   INDEF-ABS   carry take=TOP   ascend-PST

‘Taking another bag, I went up.’

The main predicate of the sentence, *ɸɪlɪnɛ*, describes an event being carried out in order to accomplish the topical goal. The topical clause in this instance has a function similar to a purposive construction. In some contexts, a topic clause can produce a semantically similar conditional reading, as in (8) (see also Haiman 1978).

(8) **[[gɪ   sowa   sugulu-mɛna=ja]**TOP**   ɛlɛmɛntri   tiːsa-ja   kɪlɪ=ma]**FINAL**
     2:SG   child   attend.school-FUT=TOP   elementary   teacher-ABS   find=IMP

‘If your children are to go to school, then find a teacher!’

A purposive or conditional reading results from the topical event taking place after the event described as the main predicate.

Topical events may also precede the event described by the main predicate, as in (9). In this example, the events of the topic clause and main clause are sequential and do not portray the topical clause as an intention or goal.

(9) **[[ɸɪlɪ-nɛ=ja]**TOP**   owaːlo-wa   sola-di]**FINAL**
     ascend-PST=TOP   tree.type-ABS   peel-PST

‘I went up and peeled (bark strips from) an owaalo tree.’

Instead, the topic clause clearly precedes the events of the main clause, and no intentional interpretation is possible. The topical status of the initial clause is instead motivated by a scene setting strategy which presents a previously described event as a topic in order to provide context for new information. This is the basis of tail-head linkage using topical clauses, which will be further described in §3.

3 Tail-Head Linkage

Subordinate clauses of the types discussed in §2 may both be used to form tail-head linkage, or bridging constructions. A topic clause or a medial clause in a clause chain may reiterate familiar or already mentioned information before presenting new information. Bridging constructions are the partial or complete repetition of an immediately preceding event as a dependent clause (de Vries 2005; Dixon 2009; Thompson et al. 2007 pp.273-274). The initial description of the event will be referred to as a reference clause, and the subordinate clause which repeats a description of an event will be labeled the bridging clause. These bridging constructions are extremely common at the beginning of a clause chain as a means of conceptually “bridging” two clause chains by introducing a new series of clauses with the last event of the preceding series of clauses.

3.1 Recapitulative and Summary Linkage

The form of the bridging clause may broadly be described as either recapitulation or summarizing. Recapitulative linkage refers to a bridging clause with a predicate which is synonymous or identical to the predicate of the reference clause. Summary linkage refers to a bridging clause with a generic or anaphoric verb which makes reference to the same event as the reference clause. In this section, the formal characteristics of these two type of tail-head linkage will be presented, and in §4, these two formal strategies will be should to have distinct discourse functions as well.

3.1.1 Recapitulative Linkage

In recapitulative linkage, much of the vocabulary and argument structure from the reference clause is repeated in the bridging clause, as illustrated below in example (10).

(10)a.   [kɛ   ɛna sobo.ono-kɛi   sɛbɛna=ta   ka   hɪnɪ-sa]FINAL
          pig   that ax-INST   hit:FUT=TEL   FOC   go-VIS

‘We went to hit that pig with an ax anyway.’

b.   [**sobo.ono-kɛi   sɛda**ː**-lolu=wa**]BRIDGE   mogaːgɪ-li   sɛdɪ-sɪ   ɸosɛ   ki-jɛ]MEDIAL
      ax-INST   hit:PST-COMPL=TOP   bad-ADV   hit-LINK:PFV   back   bone-LOC

‘We hit it with the ax such that we hit it badly on the backbone then…’

Elements of the reference clause are routinely omitted in bridging clauses. For example, the argument *kɛ ɛna* ‘that pig’ is omitted’ in example (10) above.

3.1.2 Summary Linkage

Summary linkage constructions are formed by a bridging clause with a generic or anaphoric verb as a predicate which makes reference to the same event as the reference clause. In some cases, the scope of reference may range from one reference clause to an entire narrative. Proverbs have limited morphology, with no tense marking, limited aspectual morphology, and limited use of auxiliaries.

ɛ ‘do’

The proverb *ɛ* ‘do’ can form a topic clause referring to the previous discourse. The scope of this reference is sometimes unclear or variable. In example (11) below, the topic clause *ɛbija* makes reference to the preceding final clause, *ɛimɛ oːɸa aːnɪ*.

(11)a.   [[bɛda-lolu= wa]TOP   ɛimɛ   oːɸa   aːnɪ]FINAL
          see:PST-COMPL=TOP   already   sun:ABS   go-PST

‘I saw that the sun was already setting.’

b.   [[**ɛ=bi=ja**]BRIDGE   [owaːlo-wa   solaː   hɪnɪ   dɪ-si=ja]TOPIC   hɪnaː togolɛ]FINAL
      do=D.S=TOP   tree.type-ABS   peel   DUR   PFV-LINK:PFV=TOP   go   road:LOC

‘That was happening and I peeled the owaalo (bark) and went to the road.’

The scope of reference is particularly clear in this example due to the use of the different subject marker =*bi*, but in many contexts the exact scope of reference is ambiguous without such switch reference marking.

Durative

The durative-marking auxiliary *hɪna*ː is also able to form topic clauses and medial clauses in clause chain constructions either independently as an anaphoric predicate, or as part of a complex predicate with a lexical verb. This syntactic functionality allows *hɪna*ː to serve a summary linkage discourse function. All auxiliaries, including *hɪna*ː, require the chaining suffix *-si* when forming a topic clause with the enclitic *=ja*. This may be seen in example (12).

(12)a.   [ogu=bi=ja   nɪ   nɪ-ɸɛni   ɪna   ja   dɪ]FINAL
          do.thus=D.S=TOP   1:SG   1:SG-alone   still   here   do:PFV

          'That happened, I was still alone here.'

b.   [[**hɪna**ː**-si=ja**]BRIDGE   si-ja]FINAL
      DUR-LINK:PFV=TOP   move.around-PST

      'That went on and I was hanging around.'

In the above example, the bridging topic clause *hɪna*ː*sija* references the continuing duration on the immediately preceding reference clause. In a clause chain, the light verb *lɛ* may be combined with the non-final form of the durative auxiliary, *hɪnɪ*, to form a medial bridging clause in a clause chain, as in (13).

(13)a.   [itɛ]MEDIAL
          cook:N.FIN

          'We cooked it, then…'

b.   [**lɛ hɪnɪ**]MEDIAL:BRIDGE
      be DUR

      '…having done that (cooking) for some time…'

c.   [na-sa   ɸa-ja]FINAL
      consume-PL   sleep:PL-PST

      '…we ate, and then slept.'

In contrast to the proverb, *ɛ* 'do', the durative auxiliary is much more consistent and unambiguous in its scope of reference. As seen in (13) above, the summary bridging clause refers only to the immediately preceding clause, in this case a description of cooking.

Semantics and Function of Bridging Linkage in Structuring Discourse

Now that the formal aspects of different types of bridging clauses were described in §3, the role of these bridging constructions in discourse organization. The primary focus of this paper will be to highlight the role of bridging linkage at transitions between stretches of discourse. Tail-head linkage reiterates and summarizes events at the conclusion of a discourse episode, and highlights the relationship of these events to the following discourse. In particular, recapitulative bridging linkage serves to mark a transition between discourse episodes which together form a larger discourse paragraph, while summary

linkage occur at the end of these larger discourse paragraphs to provide closure and commentary to the paragraph as a whole.

Bridging linkage may serve to mark a shift in temporal reference, and highlights the semantic relationship between discourse episodes (see de Vries' discussion of thematic continuity [2005]). In example (14), the bridging clause occurs at a temporal boundary between discourse episodes.

(14)a.   dɪ   ɛna   ka   gɪ-ɸɛɪja
             fire   that   FOC   burn-PERF

        'It had been burned on that fire.'

    b.   **ɛ-ɸɛɪja**_BRIDGE_   umoko   wɪ   daː   ko
             do-PERF   scar   this   exist   DEM

        'That happened and this is the scar.'

The sentence in (14) end a discourse episode which describes a series of events which led to the speaker burning his knee on a fire many years before the time of the utterance. In (14), the speaker is commenting on the present day, and the lasting effects of these events. This temporal shift creates a discourse boundary which is marked by a bridging clause.

In a larger example, a long series of events is broken into four discourse episodes. Examples (15)-(17) are all a single stretch of discourse from the same narrative. The first three episodes describe different events which form a section of a narrative, and a final episode offers commentary on the entire sequence of events. In the first episode, the protagonists decide to attack a pig that was unexpectedly encountered.

(15)kɛ   ɛna sobo.ono-kɛi sɛbɛna=ta   ka   hɪnɪ-sa
     pig   that ax-INST   hit:FUT=TEL   FOC   go-VIS

    'We went to hit that pig with an ax anyway.'

In the second episode in example (16), the protagonists are attacking the pig without successfully killing it, and the previous events are referenced by recapitulative linkage.

(16)[**sobo.ono-kɛi sɛdaː-lolu=wa**]_BRIDGE_   mogaːgɪ-li sɛdɪ-sɪ   ɸosɛ   ki-jɛ
     ax-INST   hit:PST-COMPL=TOP   bad-ADV   hit-LINK:PFV   back   bone-LOC

    'We hit it with the ax, we hit it badly on the backbone.'

Then in (17) an instance of summary linkage introduces a clause chain where the speaker steps into the assault and successfully kills the pig.

(17)a.   **[[ɛ-bɪda]**_BRIDGE_ nɪ   mi-jaː-ja   sobo-kɛi   ja-sɪ]_MEDIAL_
             do-CONS   1:SG   come-PST=TOP   knife-INST   come-LINK:PFV

        'That happened so then I came, I approached with a knife and then…'

b.   [kɛ ɛna   ka   ola]_{FINAL}

           pig DEM:ABS FOC stab:PST

           'I stabbed the pig.'

Finally, in (18) another instance of summary linkage references the entire series of events and is followed by a finale of sorts which describes the final result of the entire narrative.

(18)**[lɛ   hɪna**ː]_{MEDIAL} [kɛ-ja   ka   gudu-saː-bɪ]_{FINAL}

     DEF:ERG DUR   pig-ABS   FOC die-VIS:3-D.S

     'After all this happened, the pig died.'

In this analysis, two levels of discourse organization become apparent. A larger series of related events is broken into episodes, or scenes. The entire series of related events forms a cohesive discourse unit (corresponding to the idea of a paragraph in Thompson et al.[2007]). Episodes within a paragraph are typically made up of one or more clause chains forming episodes, or scenes, of tightly inter-related events. A final episode, like (17) and (18), may provide a summary, result, or commentary regarding the entire paragraph.

This episode structure can also be seen in the following paragraph in (19), where the final episode in (19) brings the paragraph to a conclusion, and ends the series of scenes describing activities that the speaker was undertaking in the bush.

(19)a.   [haːna   mulu-wɛ hɪnaː   dɪ-si]_{MEDIAL}

           water:ABS wash-LOC DUR   PFV-LINK:PFV

           'I finished washing then…'

b.   [ɸɪlɪ-nɛ=ja   owaːlo-wa   sola-di]_{FINAL}

           ascend-PST=TOP   tree.type-ABS   peel-PST

           'I went up and peeled (bark strips from) an owaalo tree.'

c.   **[owaːlo   sola-lɪ-sɪ]_{MEDIAL:BRIDGE}**

           tree.type   peel-SIM-LINK:PFV

           ''While I was peeling (bark from) an owaalo tree…'

d.   [bɛda-lolu=wa   ɛimɛ   oːɸa   aːnɪ]_{FINAL}

           see:PST-COMPL=TOP already   sun:ABS go-PST

           'I saw that the sun was already setting.'

e.   **[[ɛ=bi=ja]_{BRIDGE}** owaːlo-wa   sola: hɪnaː dɪ-si=ja   hɪnaː togolɛ]_{FINAL}

           do=D.S=TOP   tree.type-ABS peel DUR PFV-LINK:PFV=TOP go   road:LOC

           'That happened and I finished peeling the owaalo (bark) and went to the road.'

The boundary between the first episode in example (19) and (19) and the second episode in example (19) and (19) is accompanied by an instance of recapitulative bridging linkage. The summary linkage clause in

(19) references the entire narrative and introduces a concluding remark to end the entire series of episodes.

One final example, shows that a large stretch of discourse, may have several concluding remarks, with each remark being introduced by an instance of summary linkage which references a large stretch of preceding discourse. The stretch of discourse in (20) concludes an entire narrative describing how the speaker received a burn on his knee.

(20)a.   [gulu   tɪ-la-nɪgɛ]_{MEDIAL}
            knee   descend-IPFV-LINK:IPFV

            'This knee was down and then…'

b.   [dɪ   ɛna   ka   gɪ-ɸɛɪja]_{FINAL}
            fire   that   FOC   burn-PERF

            'It was burned on that fire.'

c.   **[[ɛ-ɸɛɪja]_{BRIDGE}** umoko wɪ   da: ko]_{FINAL}
            do-PERF   scar   this   exist   DEM

            'That happened and this is the scar.'

d.   **[[ɛ-ɸɛɪja]_{BRIDGE}** nana   la   babalɪ   do-wa]_{FINAL}
            do-PERF   1:SG:PAT TOP   not.know STAT-PST

            'That happened and I didn't know (what happened).'

e.   **[[ɛ-ɸɛɪja]_{BRIDGE}** ka   nɪ   ɛja   ɪ   wa:lɛ-bɪda]_{MEDIAL}
            do-PERF   FOC   1:SG father 3:SG   tell-CONS

            'That happened, and my father, he told (what happened) so…'

f.   [nɪ   ɛna   dɪda]_{FINAL}
            1:SG   DEM   understand:PST

            'I know about that (story).'

At the end of this narrative, a series of clauses introduced by summary linkage give commentary regarding how the speaker knows this story, and how he was told about these events by his father.

Both recapitulative and summary linkage reiterate and summarize previous events at the conclusion of a discourse episode, and highlight the relationship of these events to the following utterance, but summary linkage often occurs at the boundaries of much larger discourse units which in turn are composed of smaller episodes which are bounded by instances of recapitulative linkage. These smaller discourse episodes may be formed by a single clause or clause chain, and recapitulative bridging linkage serves to mark a transition between these smaller units of discourse. Summary linkage then serves as a strategy of introducing commentary or conclusion relevant to a series of these smaller discourse units.

Conclusion

In this analysis of Eibela, two levels of discourse organization are described. Scenes are formed by one or more independent clauses or clause chains, and paragraphs are formed by multiple scenes. This distinction between the two levels of discourse is realized in tail-head linkage strategies. Recapitulative linkage serves to bridge scenes within a paragraph, while summary linkage references the events of an entire paragraph, or even an entire narrative, and signifies the end of a sequence of related scenes at the conclusion of a paragraph.

Abbreviations

1	first person	**INST**	Instrumental
2	second person	**LINK**	Clause chain linker
3	third person	**LOC**	Locative
ABS	Absolutive	**NEG**	Negator
ASS	Associative	**NOM**	Nominalizer
ASSER	Assertion	**N.3**	Non-third person
COMPL	Complementizer	**N.PRES**	Non-present
CONS	Consequence	**PAT**	Patient
CONT	Continuative	**PERF**	Perfect
D.S	Different Subject	**PFV**	Perfective
DAT	Dative	**PL**	Plural
DEF	Definite	**PRES**	Present
DEM	Demonstrative	**PRO**	Proform
DUR	Durative	**PROG**	Progressive
ERG	Ergative	**PST**	Past
FOC	Focus	**Q**	Question
FUT	Future	**REP**	Reported
HYPO	Hypothetical	**SIM**	Simultaneous
IRR	Irrealis	**SG**	Singular
IMP	Imperative	**STAT**	Stative
INDEF	Indefinite	**TEL**	Telicity changing
IPFV	Imperfective	**TOP**	Topic
INF	Inferred	**VIS**	Visual/Direct experience

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