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A CONSTITUENT BOUNDARY MARKER IN GUARANÍ

ROBERT A. DOOLEY

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0. In Guaraní, the enclitic $mã^2$ (with the vowel only slightly nasalized) is an optional marker of constituent boundaries on the clause or sentence level, as well as a marker of paragraph introductory elements. It is a device for both recognizing message units and for suggesting their intended significance in Guaraní speech. In this paper the term "constituent" coincides on the sentence level with the usual notion of "immediate binary constituent", but on the clause level it is used somewhat more broadly to include such syntactic elements as temporal and locational adjuncts, as well as noun phrases of subject and direct object, and other phrases corresponding to the "oblique" nominal cases.

The enclitic $mã$ marks divisions between such constituents, not by any lexical meaning which it might have, but rather by phonological phenomena which result from the position of $mã$ within the pause group. For this reason in the examples which follow there is no gloss for $mã$, but an asterisk (*) is used.

Before these claims are discussed further, it should be mentioned that there exists a second Guaraní enclitic with the same phonemic representation as $mã$, which does make use of lexical meaning. This second enclitic, a verbal aspect marker denoting completion or immediacy, will be written $mã_2$. Besides the issue of lexical meaning, $mã$ differs in three ways from $mã_2$: first, $mã_2$ can occur sentence final, but $mã$ never does; second, $mã$ has an optional and often-realized feature of vowel lengthening, whereas $mã_2$ never does:

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and third, $m\tilde{a}_2$ occurs only after temporally based predications (those predications, such as "action verbs", denoting processes limited to a restricted time frame, as opposed to "timeless" predications such as identification and attribution), whereas $m\tilde{a}$ never occurs following such predications.

1. Of the two levels on which $m\tilde{a}$ functions as a constituent division marker, it occurs more frequently on the clause level. The two basic constituents of equative clauses, for example, are commonly separated by $m\tilde{a}$.

xerery $m\tilde{a}$ garavi
(lps-poss-name * Gabriel)
'My name is Gabriel.'

xee $m\tilde{a}$ João
(lps * João)
'I am John.'

oo py ikwai va'e $m\tilde{a}$ ija oayvu va'e
(house in 3p-be which * 3p-poss-owner 3p-like which)
'The things that are in the house are what the owner likes.'

If $m\tilde{a}$ had been absent from the above three examples, they would have been open to such non-clausal interpretations as 'My name, Gabriel', 'I, John', and 'The things that are in the house, which the owner likes'. That is, the presence of $m\tilde{a}$ between clause level constituents often disambiguates the grammatical structure, so that as in the above three examples, the second of two noun phrases is correctly interpreted as a predication instead of as an appositive or relative clause.

Similar to the case of equative clauses, the subject of an attributive clause may be separated by $m\tilde{a}$ from the verb.

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jãnejagwa kwēry oro'ea m̃a hetave
 (lppl-incl-dog pl lppl-excl-say-nom * many-more

 ore kwēry gwi
 lppl-excl pl from)

'"Our dogs" as we call them were more numerous than we.'

Likewise in transitive and intransitive clauses, the subject or object (if it precedes the verb) may be separated from the verb by m̃a.

xee m̃a aikwaapa opa ma'e avei
 (lpsg * lpsg-know-all every thing also)
 'I know everything also.'

compadre Galdino m̃a aexa
 (companion Galdino * lpsg-see)
 'I saw my companion Galdino.'

When in a transitive clause the subject and object both appear as free forms preceding the verb, m̃a may follow either.

xee m̃a moka areko avei
 (lpsg * gun lpsg-have also)
 'I also have a gun.'

pēē tujakwe'i m̃a naperekovei m̃a
 (2ppl old-class-dim * neg-2ppl-have-more-neg complet)
 'You no longer have your parents.'

In particular, the preceding example shows that m̃a need not follow the first constituent appearing in the clause. However, since m̃a never occurs after the final constituent in the clause or sentence, each occurrence coincides with an actual division between constituents of the same clause or sentence.

Besides the occurrences that have already been illustrated, m̃a appears following other kinds of clause level constituents, such as

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locational adjuncts,

tape py mā ojukaa
(path in * 3p-kill-nom)
'He was killed in the path.'

ha'e py mā òmoopy
(deictic in * 3p-caus-begin)
'There he began it.'

temporal adjuncts,

kwee mā navyxe pōrāĩ
(yesterday * neg-lpsg-arise-want well-neg)
'Yesterday I didn't want to get up early.'

ha'e rāmĩ rire mā xivi jipy'a gwaxui
(deictic like after * jaguar neg-3p-liver large-neg)
'Afterwards the jaguar wasn't courageous.'

manner adjuncts,

ha'e rāmĩ ae mā xeayvu
(deictic like excl * lpsg-talk)
'Just like that I speak.'

and phrases expressing certain "oblique" participant cases.

ãmõgwe ndoikwaai gwyrapa ojapo agwã va'e pe mā
(someone neg-3p-know-neg bow 3p-make nom which to *)
'To someone who doesn't know how to make a bow

haxy mērāmi
(difficult apparently)
it appears difficult.'

In most of the preceding examples, the clause level predication was the final constituent. If, however, the predication precedes another constituent, then mā can occur between them as long as the predication is not temporally based (as explained in section 0).

jāne kwéry rāmĩ ē'y mā ha'e kwéry
(lppl-incl pl like neg * deictic pl)
'They are not like us.'

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On the sentence level, *mã* can occur between a dependent clause and an independent clause, always following the clause subordinator.

ha'e oja**p**opa *mã* voi araka'e rire *mã*
 (deictic 3p-make-all complet early long-ago after *)
 'After he had first made everything,

ha'e kwēry opa ma'e oja**p**o va'erã ae *mã*
 deictic pl every thing 3p-make fut final complet)
 they were to make all things.'

ērēnōēxe ete rã**m**õ *mã*
 (2psg-concom-exit-want really subord *)
 'If you really want to take her out,

xee aa 'rã aipe'a uka agwã
 lpsg lpsg-go fut lpsg-release indir purp)
 I will go and have her freed.'

oo py pēvãē vy *mã*
 (house in 2ppl-arrive subord *)
 'When you arrive in a house,

pēmã'ē rive 'rã ma'e mō re
 2ppl-look casually fut thing any on)
 only look at the things.'

2. The enclitic *mã* as a marker of sentence constituent boundaries occurs just once per sentence. Similarly, *mã* occurs only once per clause at clause level constituent boundaries. Thus in the following two examples, although in each one there are multiple occurrences of *mã*, each occurrence is associated with a different clause at a particular level of embedding.

joupe ha'e nūga *mã* nee *mã* neporiau va'e
 (recip-to deictic type * 2psg * 2psg-poor which
 'It is not good for us to say to one another that

ja'e ãgwã *mã* na'evei
 lppl-incl-say nom * neg-good-neg)
 sort of thing, "You are poor."'

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ha'e rãmõ mã po rãmĩ ãjõ mã avei
 (deictic connec * speech-deictic like only * also
 'And so, I only know to say what I

xee xeayvu ãgwã aikwaa
 lpsg lpsg-talk nom lpsg-know)
 have just said.'

Since in each clause there is no more than one occurrence of *mã*, there is no need to consider *mã* as dividing constituents of a level lower than the clause. Therefore, we have considered as clause level constituents the various kinds of adjuncts, direct objects, and phrases for "oblique" participant cases that were illustrated in the examples of section 1. Although such constructions are not considered to be immediate binary constituents of the clause, in this paper they are being considered as a marginal type of clause level constituent.

There are further considerations that involve just this kind of marginal clause level constituent. If the discourse is considered as a whole, it can be observed that each clause adjunct followed by *mã* occurs when there is either a change in the locational setting, a gap in the time setting, or some shift in the participant structure. Although the demonstration of this kind of claim is beyond the scope of the present paper, the above observation is actually the case for each of the adjunct plus *mã* examples of section 1, and for many others not cited. Thus, if the term "paragraph" is given to those blocks of Guaraní discourse where there is continuity in the temporal and locational setting and constancy in the participant structure, it can be said that adjunct plus *mã* occurs only paragraph initially.

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Aside from adjuncts, certain other marginal clause level constituents plus *mã* seem to have discourse level significance. For example, in the clause

pẽẽ tujakwe'i mã naperekovei mã
 (2ppl old-class-dim * neg-2ppl-have-more-neg complet)
 'You no longer have your parents.'

the direct object *tujakwe'i* introduces the topic of parents, which in the ensuing paragraph is thematic.

3. The effectiveness of *mã* in its grammatical and textual functions can be largely explained on a phonological basis, in terms of pause groups. Briefly, the peak of a pause group in Guaraní is a stressed syllable, which may then be followed by a coda consisting of unstressed (or at most, lightly stressed) syllables pronounced with low pitch and often lengthening. Whenever a coda is present, it clearly signals the end of a pause group; in the absence of a coda it is sometimes more difficult to recognize pause group boundaries.

The enclitic *mã* can operate as a sort of automatic coda. It is one of several Guaraní morphemes which do not take any stress, and it is often lengthened. Therefore, when it appears following a portion of speech that is potentially recognizable as a constituent on some level, this *mã* is quite naturally interpretable as a pause group coda, where the pre-coda portion of the pause group is then the preceding constituent. There may be other elements in the pause group coda, but *mã* is generally in final position.³

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Pause groups in Guaraní are often co-terminous with message units, such as grammatical phrases. This reflects a general psycholinguistic principle: "nearness in time operates to determine units in messages—the longer the pause between two speech events, the less likely they are to belong to the same unit."⁴ Thus phonological units suggest message units, not only because they are already units in the phonological sense, but also because their boundaries are often accompanied by a slowing of the rate of information flow. This slowdown allows the hearer to reflect briefly on the preceding portion of speech and to organize it into a message unit that is independent, to whatever degree possible, from what might follow. In this connection it should be noted that *mã*, besides comprising a pause group coda, slows the rate of information flow in yet another way: because of its lack of lexical meaning, the time elapsed in its transmission is essentially free of new information.

Such phonological and psycholinguistic considerations are thus able to account naturally for the grammatical function of *mã*, that is, as a constituent division marker. In the same way, the bit of forced reflection afforded by *mã* may also play a part in elevating commonplace adjuncts and other clause level constituents to paragraph level significance. Thus *mã* functions as an aid in the decoding process, as an indicator of both the extent and the grammatical or textual significance of message units.

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FOOTNOTES

1. The Guaraní language, spoken by approximately 1500 speakers in various locations throughout southern Brazil, is part of the Tupí-Guaraní language family. The Guaraní Indians are in sustained contact with Brazilian culture, and are bilingual to differing degrees.

The data for this study was gathered on the Posto Indígena Rio das Cobras, Paraná, throughout 1975 and 1976. This period of contact was made possible through contracts held between the Summer Institute of Linguistics and the Ministry of the Interior, National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) and the National Museum, Rio de Janeiro.

2. The data in this paper appears in a modified phonemic format according to the phonemic statement and supplementary additions on file with the National Indian Foundation and the National Museum. A tilde over a vowel indicates that all phonemes in that syllable are manifested by their nasal allophones, if such exist. Diphthongs have not been marked.

3. At times the enclitic *je*, indicating second-hand information, follows *mã* in a pause group coda. And rarely, *mã* appears before the peak of the pause group, as when followed by some stressable modal element such as *ae mã* 'real/really.'

4. Osgood, Charles E. and Thomas A. Sebeok, 1965. *Psycholinguistics*. Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana U. Press. p.52.