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Equational predications and nothing else? The case of Movima

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Equational predications: Omnipredicativity, non-verbal predications or zero verb constructions and the diachrony of copulas
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1 Movima: general information

- spoken in Santa Ana del Yacuma, Beni Department, lowland Bolivia
- linguistic isolate
- ~400 hundred adult/elderly speakers, no L1 learners
- fieldwork between 2001 and 2012
- annotated corpus of ~30 hours/130,000 words/26,000 clauses of spontaneous (non-elicited) oral discourse, mostly narrative texts

2 Equational structures

2.1 Verbal and nonverbal predicates

- There is no copula.
- Any (common, unpossessed) noun can directly function as a predicate, with the same argument encoding pattern as that of an intransitive verb.

Structure of a basic clause:

intransitive: **PRED**_{Vintr/N} ([--* ARG])

“transitive”: **PRED**_{Vtr=ARG} ([--* ARG])

* external cliticization only if pronoun

2.1.1 Intransitive clauses with verbal predicate

(1) *jo'yaj* [*us komandante*]
arrive ART.M commander
'The commander arrived.'
[LTC_020906_2 034]

(2) *jo'yaj* [--us] *neyru*
arrive--3M.AB here
'He arrived here.'
[EAO_120906_3 007]

- (3) *jayna jo'yaj [Ø]*
 DSC arrive
 '(She) arrived already.' [LTC_020906_5 389]

2.1.2 Intransitive clauses with nominal predicate

- (4) *bo ja' jutpa [is maniwanra=is]*
 REAS just arrow ART.PL weapon=3PL.AB
 '... because their weapons (were) just arrows.' [HRR_120808-602]
- (5) *bo rey rulrul[--as] rey*
 REAS EPIST jaguar--3N.AB EPIST
 '... because it (was) a jaguar.' [PMP_HRR_etal_210908 169]
- (6) *jayna rulrul [Ø]*
 DSC jaguar
 '(He was a) jaguar already.' [LYO_250808_2 170]

2.1.3 Transitive clauses with (direct) verbal predicates (inverse predicates are not treated here)

- (7) *yey-na=us [is mo'incho]*
 want-DR=3M.AB ART.PL chivé
 'He wanted chivé.' [LTC_020906_5 381]
- (8) *man-na=us[--kas]*
 shoot-DR=3M.AB--OBV:3N.AB
 'He shot it.' [EGA_Sicuri 024]
- (9) *che jayna sup-na=us [Ø]*
 and DSC tie-DR=3M.AB
 'And he tied (it) fast.' [EAO_Jaguar 172]
- (10) *man-na=kus pa:pa=is majni [Ø]*
 shoot-DR=3M.AB father_of=ART.PL my_offspring
 'The father of my children shot (it).' [Vida en el chaco 076]

2.1.4 Possessed nouns

Possessors are encoded like the internal argument of a transitive verb. A clause with a possessed nominal predicate would have the same structure as a transitive verbal clause. But this is almost unattested (very rare cases in the corpus).

(11) ??*pa:pa=is majni [kus ney itila:kwa]*
 father_of=ART.PL my_offspring ART.M.AB DEF man
 (Intended: ‘That man is the father of my children’)

(12) **pa:ko=us[--kas]*
 dog=3M.AB--OBV:3N.AB
 (Intended: ‘It is his dog.’)

This limitation for possessed nouns (which also applies to proper nouns) may be due to their referential reading, which is not a property of predication (Frege 1892; see also Launey 2004: 242; Kaufman 2018: 209). Similar restrictions in Nahuatl and Tagalog.

2.2 Verbs in DPs

- Any verb can be placed inside a DP.
- The verbal DP refers to the “external” (here: S or P) argument of the verb.
- The verbal DP characterizes a referent with respect to its actual activity or property

(13) *isne kwe:ya, [kinos ney nokowa jo'yaj]*
 PRO.F.AB woman ART.F.AB DEF right_now arrive
 ‘She is a woman, the one who will arrive.’ [EAO_Ay'ku II 029]

(14) *to:mi [os yey-na=us jayna]*
 water ART.N.PST want-DR=3M.AB DSC
 ‘Water (was what) he wanted then.’ [EAO_240807_vbr 133]

(15) *beyra [kis ji:sa-na=i], beyra [kis ji:sa]*
 little ART.PL.AB make-DR=3PL little ART.PL.AB make
 ‘Little is what they make, little is made.’ [CCT_120907_1 011]

2.3 Valency decrease on verbs and nouns

In order for a DP to refer to the referent of the internal argument or to a possessor, a valency-decreasing operation is applied.

(16) *jayna ka:w-e [is kaw yey-na n-as vatkapan-wa=i]*
 DSC much-DR ART.PL VALDEC want-DR OBL-ART.N study-NMZ.EVT=3PL
n-as iwani-wansi=n n-ide mowi:maj]
 OBL-ART.N speak-INSTR=2 OBL-1INCL Movima
 ‘Many (are who) want to learn our language of us Movima.’ Erlan Rojas 081

(17) *[kinos kwey majni n-us senyor]*
 ART.F.AB VALDEC offspring OBL-ART.M señor
 ‘the mother of the Lord’ [GBM_Ganado 004]

The valency decrease is productive on all transitive verbs (Haude in press) and all possessable nouns.

2.4 Equational interpretation of basic clauses

To account for the exchangeability of verbs and nouns in different clausal slots, we can analyze all content words (N/V) as participant-oriented nominal predicates or as relative clauses (“the one who is/does ...”) (Haude 2019).

- (18) *yey-na=us* [is *mo'incho*]
 want-DR=3M.AB ART.PL *chivé*
 ‘He wanted chivé.’
 ‘What he wanted/His wanted (thing) (was) chivé.’ [LTC_020906_5 381]

- (19) *to:mi* [os *yey-na=us* *jayna*]
 water ART.N.PST want-DR=3M.AB DSC
 ‘Water (was what) he wanted then/is wanted thing.’ [EAO_240807_vbr 133]

→ Movima basic clauses have the structure of equational predications

In support of an omnipredicativity analysis, there is evidence that content words in DPs are subordinate predicates (Launey 1994; 2004): They can be negated independently.

Subordinate negation: *loy* (+ NMZ on intransitives)

- (20) *ban* [is *loy* *rey sup-le:-wa*] *jaa* *rey kavuj-ka-te-na=a*
 but ART.PL NEG.SUB EPIST tie-CO-NMZ.EVT IJ EPIST blow-MLT-CO-DR=3N
 ‘But the (ones who are) not tied fast, aaa it will blow (them) away.’
 HRR_2009_tape1_A 486

- (21) [*kos* *loy* *rey mowimaj-te*]
 ART.N.AB NEG.SUB EPIST Movima-NMZ.ST
 ‘a (person) (who is) not Movima’ [EAO Tolkosya II 014]

- (22) *lew-na=is* [os *loy* *rey lew-na=y'ti*]
 read-DR=3PL.AB ART.N.PST NEG.SUB EPIST read-DR=1PL
n-os *rey eskwela-na-wa=y'ti*
 OBL-ART.N.PST EPIST school-DIR-NMZ.EVT=1PL
 ‘They read what we didn’t read when we went to school.’ [JMH_160806_2 120]

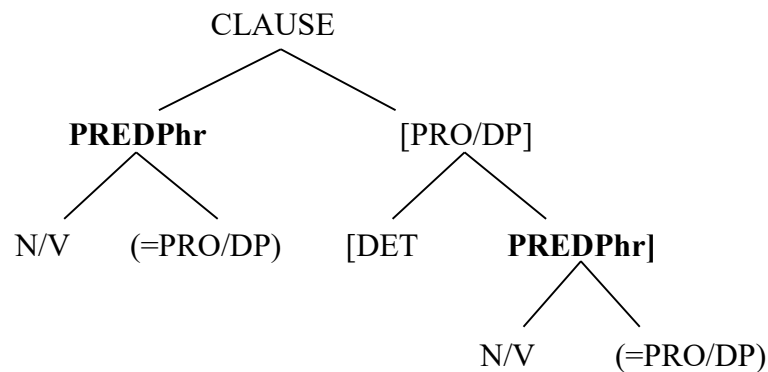


Figure 1. The omnipredicative structure of a Movima basic clause

2.5 Topicalization: a construction for all predicate types

Free pronoun (= copula) + V/N

This equational construction can accommodate all content words as predicates, even possessed nouns. It is used to express a non-discourse topic as a clausal topic (Haude 2018a).

- (23) *usko jo'yaj* S of intransitive (verbal)
 PRO.3M.AB arrive
 'He arrived.'
- (24) *usko itila:kwa* S of intransitive (nominal)
 PRO.3M.AB man
 'He is a man.'
- (25) *usko yey-na=is* P of transitive
 PRO.3M.AB want-DR=3PL.AB
 'They liked him.' [MCA_280806_1 046]
- (26) *usko pa:pa='ne* possessee of bivalent noun
 PRO.3M.AB father_of=3F
 'He is her father.' [NAO_FSG_300706_1 428]

This construction is needed for identificational predication (with left-dislocated DP):

- (27) *us alwaj-a='ne, u'ko kweyninla n-as kamiyón*
 ART.M spouse-LV=3F PRO.3M owner OBL-ART.N truck
 'Her husband, he is the owner of the truck.' [EAO_Neighbours 010]

3 What are the limitations to the all-equational analysis?

3.1 Nouns and verbs as distinct lexical categories

- Nouns can receive a possessor enclitic independently of their morphological shape. Verbs, in contrast, can only receive an “ergative” enclitic if they are overtly marked as transitive (by the direct or inverse marker).
- Some affixes can only be attached to nominal, but not to verbal bases: These can be characterized as verbalizers (in complement/adverbial clauses, the derived forms take the suffix *-wa* that nominalizes verbs).

- (28) Verbalizers (exclusively on nouns):
- | | | |
|-------------|--------|---|
| <i>-tik</i> | VBZ | 'to carry out the typical activity involving N' |
| <i>-maj</i> | LOC | 'to be in/on N' |
| <i>-na</i> | DIR | 'to go to N (place noun)' |
| <i>-ni</i> | PRC | 'to be/become N' |
| <~CV> | NMZ.ST | 'being N' |
| FOOT~ | POSS | 'to have N' |

Verbs derived in this way behave like ordinary intransitive verbs: They can function as predicates and occur in DPs.

Example *-tik* (verbalizer of typical activity):

(29) *pono:-tik*[--is], *te:lo*[--is]
 drum-VBZ--3PL.AB dance--3PL.AB
 ‘They played the drum, they danced.’ [HRR_120808-tigregente 544]

(30) *che* [*is* *jema*] *pono:-tik*
 and ART.PL also drum-VBZ
 ‘and those who also play the drum’ [ERM_140806_1 0819-20]

3.2 Lexical exceptions to the equational interpretation

3.2.1 *chonsinet* ‘language/speak a language’

- (31) a. *chon-sinet*[--is]
 real-sound--3PL.AB
 ‘They speak the native language.’
- b. *as* *chon-sinet*
 ART.N.PST real-sound
 ‘the/a native language’ (not: ‘speaker of the native language’)

→ *chonsinet--is* is not an equational clause (“they are native languages”) (cf. Evans & Osada 2005; Haude 2009)

3.2.2 *ya:lo:we* ‘to drink/the drink’

(32) *ya:lo:we*[--is] *n-is* *pokso*
 drink--3PL.AB OBL-ART.PL *chicha*
 ‘They drank *chicha*.’ [HRR_120808-tigregente 547]

(33) *rimeŋ-i* [*kis* *ya:lo:we*]
 buy-RES ART.PL.AB drink
 ‘The drinks were bought.’ [GCM Bacho 082]

(34) *isko* *ya:lowe=is*
 PRO.PL drink=3PL.AB
 ‘That was what they drank.’ [TX_Erlan Rojas 295]

→ *ya:lo:we--is* is not equational (cannot be interpreted as ‘They are drinks/drinkers.’)

3.2.3 Verbs with incorporated argument

- (35) a. *loj-a:-'oj[--is]*
 wash-DR-CL:cloth--3PL.AB
 ‘They do the laundry.’
- b. *tatvo:seł [is loj-a-'oj-a=is juyeni]*
 fall_down ART.PL wash-DR-CL:cloth-LV=ART.PL person
 ‘The laundry of the people fell down (from the line).’

→ *loj-a'-oj--is* is not equational (‘they are launderers/laundry’)

To refer to a launderer, the agent nominalizer *-pa* (which indicates a habitual activity) has to be used.

- (36) *kiro' [kis de<ja~>jal], kiro'*
 DEM.PL.AB ART.PL.AB cook<MD~> DEM.PL.AB
[kis loj-a-'oj-pa]
 ART.PL.AB wash-DR-CL.cloth-NMZ.AG
 ‘There are (people who) cook, there are launderers.’ [EAO_Asilo 020]

3.3 Subordinate clauses

3.3.1 Complement and adverbial clauses

The predicate of a dependent (i.e. complement, adverbial) clause is overtly marked: nouns undergo reduplication (“state nominalization”) and verbs take the suffix *-wa* (“event nominalization”) (Haude 2011). The derived predicate is obligatorily possessed. Transitive verbs can additionally take their “absolutive” argument, as in a main clause. The derived forms never occur without a determiner, i.e. they cannot function as main predicates.

- (37) *yey-na=Ø [os joy-wa=Ø]*
 want-DR=1SG ART.N.PST go-NMZ.EVT=1SG
 ‘I wanted to go.’ (lit. “I want my past-going.”) [BAS tx 056]
- (38) *dottol--isne [n-os tolkos<ya~>ya=sne]*
 mischievous--3F.AB OBL-ART.N.PST girl<NMZ.ST~>=3F.AB
 ‘She was bad when she was young.’ [EAO_Mala 002]
- (39) *yey-na=Ø [as visitar-na:-wa=Ø [kus alkaka:ye=Ø]]*
 want-DR=1SG ART.N visit-DR-NMZ.EVT=1SG ART.M.AB
 relative=1SG
 ‘I want to visit my relative.’ (lit.: “I want my visiting my relative.”) [EAO Visita 047]

→ In subordinate clauses, the predicate denotes a state or event. There is no equational reading between the “absolutive” argument (in (39), *alkaka:ye* ‘relative’) and the predicate.

3.3.2 State/event negation

State/event negation is formed with a negative copula *ka* and the same nominalized structure as above.

- (40) *ka[=s joy-wa=sne]*
 NEG.COP=DET go-NMZ.EVT=3F.AB
 ‘She is not leaving.’ (Lit. “Her leaving is not.”)
- (41) *ka[=s dichi<ye~>ye=kinos kwey ji:sa:-na]*
 NEG.COP=DET child<NMZ.ST~>=ART.F.AB VALDEC make-DR
 ‘The woman who made (it) is not a child.’ (Lit. “the being a child of the one who made (it) is not.”)
 [EAO_Tuncho 032]
- (42) *ka[=s dum<a>ye-wa=is [is we:ye=is]]*
 NEG.COP=DET find<DR>-NMZ.EVT=3PL.AB ART.PL ox=3PL.AB
 ‘They didn’t find their oxen.’ (Lit. “Their finding their oxen was not.”)
 [EAO_Alcanzar 007]

→ Negated clauses are copular clauses, but the subordinate clause itself is not equational (like complement/adverbial clauses)

3.4 Imperatives

3.4.1 Imperative formation of verbs (and nouns?)

The imperative is marked by a suffix indicating valency and voice. The suffix attaches directly to the verbal base, which does not bear valency/voice marking. Imperative forms cannot occur inside RPs (cf. also Kaufman 2009: 25 for Tagalog).

- (43) *matpit-ki che mas-ti ‘nes ma’a*
 unwrap-IMP.INTR and beat-IMP.TR ART.F lady
 ‘Get untied (i.e. take off your belt) and beat the lady!’ [JGD_130907-01 190]

If the verb base is semantically bivalent, both imperative affixes can be used:

- (44) a. *matpit-ti* ‘Unwrap it!’
 b. *mas-ki* ‘Beat yourself/each other!’

Monovalent bases can only take the suffix *-ki*. Valency/voice morphemes are dropped.

- (45) a. *joy-chet* ‘go’ (go-R/R)
 b. *joy-ki* ‘Go!’ (go-IMP.INTR)
- (46) a. *iwa:ni* ‘talk’
 b. *iwani-ki* ‘Talk!’

When the imperative suffix is attached to a noun, this leads to a dynamic reading:

(47) *pokso-ki*
 chicha-IMP.INTR
 ‘Make chicha!’ [ERM_150806 299]

→ Is this an effect of the verbalizing suffix *-tik* ‘typical activity’ (see (29)), realized as zero? The suffix *-tik* is also “dropped” before other suffixes, e.g. nominalizers:

(48) a. *pokso-tik*
 chicha-VBZ
 ‘to make chicha’

b. *yey-na=sne* [os *pokso-wa=sne*]
 want-DR=3F.AB ART.N.PST chicha-NMZ.EV=3F.AB
 ‘She wanted to make chicha.’ [CCT_120907_2 056]

(49) a. *wa:ka:-tik*
 cow,meat-VBZ
 ‘to slaughter’

b. *oso’-niwa* os rey *wa:ka:-pa*
 DEM.N.PST-VBZ:NMZ ART.N.PST EPIST cow,meat-NMZ.AG
 ‘There was now butcher.’ [GBM_Ganado 084]

Can the imperative suffix be attached to a noun with an equational meaning? Latest news from a phone call with a native speaker on Nov 16th, 2023:

(50) *itilakwa-n-ki*
 man-LV-IMP.INTR
 ‘Be a man!’ (“But there is also a different interpretation, which would be more difficult to explain.”) [HRR_161123, phone]

(51) *itilakwa-n-tik*
 man-LV-VBZ
 ‘speak up to a man’ [elicited, EAO_120702]

The only corpus example approaching a “Be N!” meaning is (51).

(52) *je-ni-ki* *n-inla*, *chonlomaj inla* *itila:kwa*
 state-PRC-IMP.INTR OBL-PRO.1SG really PRO.1SG man
 ‘Be like me, I am really a man.’ [JGD_130907-01 166]

→ The imperative suffix *-ki* is extremely productive and attaches to all types of monovalent bases, including nouns. Imperative clauses can have an “equational” reading. (“Be an untied one” ...)?

3.4.2 Can the imperative tell us something about the origins of the system?

Sasse (2009), Kaufman (2009: 24–25): Under the hypothesis that in omnipredicative systems, the original finite verbs have been replaced by oriented nominalizations (participles), imperative (and other non-indicative) forms are often old forms of predicates.

“[W]hen a language totally abandons finite verb forms, it is typically non-episodic forms that are retained even after complete restructuring. Among these, it is especially the imperative that is likely to survive as the last vestige of the former verbal paradigm.” (Sasse 2009: 172)

The Movima imperative suffixes are productively attached to verbal and nominal bases, from which they derive valency- and voice-marked imperative forms. There are only two lexicalized imperatives in Movima that may reflect old “verbal” forms:

(53) *jay'i*
run.IMP
'Run!'

(54) *jela*
come.IMP
'Come!'

This does not seem to be conclusive evidence for an older set of predicates that was overridden by nominalized forms.

However, semantically bivalent verb bases unmarked for voice (or marked by the dummy/resultative -*i*) have a stative/resultative meaning (a state induced by an external agent) (Haude 2012). These forms are often used in instructions:

(55) *rat-'i* [*is chinala*] *che daypa* *tasyemes*
tear_out-RES ART.PL manioc and put_to_rest three:days
'The manioc is torn out and put to rest three days.'
(original: 'Arrancas la yuca y la dejas reposar tres días.') [LY chivé version 1 001]

(56) *dak-le* *che jarat-'i*
cut-CO and dump-RES
'(It = your head) needs to be cut off and thrown away!' [a joke, overheard]

These forms can occur (like any other verb forms except the imperative) inside a DP:

(57) *dewaj-na='i* *lat* [*os* *eney* *das-'i*]
see-DR=3PL EV ART.N.PST FILLER mow-RES
'They saw the mowed (part).' [JGD_160808-Fundacion_1 760]

What does this tell us?

- The imperative is derived by suffixes and does not seem to be particularly “old”
- Resultative forms (also used in instructions) are the most basic/unmarked forms of verbs
- These unmarked/minimally marked forms can also occur in DPs

- Are all “primitive” lexical bases in Movima nominal in nature? (→ against a derivational “nominalization” hypothesis)

4 Conclusion

Movima is strongly “omnipredicative”:

- All content words function directly as predicates of basic main clauses (there is no copula).
- There is no change in meaning correlated with the “verbal” and “nominal” use.
- Content words in DPs are subordinate predicates.
- Predicates characterize the participant in a state/event.

Construction	Equational?	Comment
basic clauses	Y	except for lexical restrictions
topicalization	Y	due to pronominal copula; open for all lexical classes
negation	Y	negative copula (‘X is not’)
imperatives	(Y)	but only in main predicate function
complement/adverbial clause	N	predicate denotes event/state: no equational reading
lexical exceptions	N	some verbs (incl. incorporating ones) do not permit an equational reading due to orientation change

The system seems quite stable.

There is no sign of historical (morphological) nominalization.

There is no sign of nominalized (event-denoting) forms acquiring main predicate status.

Symbols and abbreviations

= internal cliticization; -- external cliticization; < > infixation; ~ reduplication

AB=absent; AG=agentive nominalization; ART=article; CL=classifier; CO=co-participant; COP=copula; DEF=definite; DEM=demonstrative; DET=determiner; DIR=directional; DR=direct; DSC=discontinuous; EPIST=epistemic; EVT=event; F=feminine; IJ=interjection; IMP=imperative; INTR=intransitive; LOC=location; LV=linking vowel; M=masculine; MD=middle; MLT=multiple event; N=neuter; NEG=negation; NMZ=nominalization; OBL=oblique; OBV=obviative; PL=plural; PL=plural; PRC=process; PRO=free pronoun; PST=past; REAS=reason; RES=resultative; ST=stative; SUB=subordinate; TR=transitive; VALDEC=valency decrease; VBZ=verbalization.

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