

## Workshop Distributed Predicative Syntax (S P O V X)

We (Stefan Elders and Maarten Mous) intend to organize a one-day workshop on distributed predicative syntax during the 4th World Conference on African Languages (WOCAL) at Rutgers University, New Brunswick during the summer of 2003. The aim of the workshop is to make an inventory of the (morpho-)syntactic properties of languages that distribute the verbal functions over two elements: a post-Subject inflectional element (here termed predicative marker P) and the main verb. The object typically separates these two predicative elements. A relatively high proportion of the languages in Africa show this property. The predicative marker has no lexical base and is in fact only a realization of inflection and agreement. The pattern is so common in Niger-Congo (Mande, Kru, Senúfo, Togo Mountain Range, some Bantoid and Bantu, some Gur) —and so a-typical for the rest of the world— that Gensler has proposed to reconstruct it for Proto-Niger-Congo. Outside of Niger-Congo the pattern is also present in Cushitic, Central Sudanic, and Khoi-San. Heine (1976) in his seminal typological work recognized this recurrent syntactic pattern in the languages of Africa and suggested a fourth type, S Aux O V X, in addition to SVO, SOV and VSO. The focus of the workshop is on word order syntax from a synchronic prospective. We are aware that the languages mentioned above are not likely to be uniform in any typology. We hope to be able to recognize recurrent patterns of syntactic properties and to stimulate syntactic research on African languages.

A number of people have already expressed their interest in attending: Inge Egner (Kru), Robert Carlson (Senúfo). We also hope to lure some general syntacticians and typologists to the workshop.

### Issues

The following issues are likely to be raised (an extensive check-list or questionnaire will be made available soon):

#### The morphological status of the verb

The verb in the SPOVX construction may manifest itself in various forms: as a verb stem, as a verbal noun, or as verb stem inflected with a tense/aspect/mood marker. The verb occurring in its stem form is a pattern encountered in many Mande languages. A verbal noun typically occurs in languages showing an alternation between SVO and SPOVX, e.g. Ewe (Kwa), Kisi (Atlantic), Doyayo (Adamawa). These languages restrict the SPOVX construction to progressive-like constructions. Other languages with such a word order alternation make a more general usage of the SPOVX order, as is well-known from Kru. Across the Kru family, one can encounter the whole array from verb stem, verbal noun to inflected verb. Some of the languages with SPOVX as their basic word order allow for inflected verbs. Supyire (Senúfo) systematically contrast tenses with the verb in its stem form to tenses in which the verb bears inflectional affixes: the Perfective consists of the verb stem while the Imperfective has a suffix and shows some historical resemblance to a verbal noun. Some Mande languages — generally known for their scarcity of inflectional morphology— show inflectional suffixes on the verb: Mende is a case in point and in San (Pare 1999) the verb can be marked for (im)perfective by tone or a suffix.

mā      bīŋ̄      būū      kōs̄ò      wùrū  
1SG    PRED    plant    cultivate:PERF    field  
'I have already cultivated the field'

#### Properties of the object

The distributed predicative construction often shows similarities with a nominal construction and this may have consequences for the status of the object between the inflectional element and the main verb. Marchese (1979) has shown that some of the auxiliary elements in Kru developed out of full verbs and that the Object and main verb in those constructions were NPs

with a nominalized verb. Thus, one expects that in some languages the object shows some signs of being the head of an NP, without becoming an NP. For example, in Iraqw the preverbal object receives construct case as if it is modified by the verb. However, here the Noun:construct.case-Verb combination is not an NP because certain adverbs can separate the noun from the verb.

aníng a kasíir (mák) huuríim  
 1SG BE1/2 potatoes:F:CON (somewhat) cook:1SG  
 'I cook potatoes (a bit).'

In relation to the status of the object it is of importance to look at the nature of the pronominalization of the object. In some languages it is replaced by an uncontested object pronoun, e.g. Iraqw. In Busa (Mande) the object pronouns can be distinguished from the possessive pronouns on the basis combinatory possibilities (Jones 1998: 133,136). In other languages the pronoun is indistinguishable from a possessive pronoun, e.g. in Jeli (Mande, Ivory Coast) Tröbs (1998:112-113).

In languages in which the object occurs before the verb, locative objects may behave differently and occur after the verb. In Jeli (Mande, Ivory Coast) locative objects, indirect objects and other PP complements occur after the verb (Tröbs 1998:196-199). In Tunen (Bantu) the locative object (a compulsory complement of the verb) occurs after the verb but is still part of the VP since High tone spread applies (a tone rule that is blocked by major syntactic boundaries).

à-ná-ndá-hían ésèl (Tunen, Bantu A44, Cameroon)  
 1-HOD.PAST-HITH-arrive:H riverside  
 'He arrived at the riverside.'

Some languages, notably the Mande languages, allow only one object in front of the verb. Other languages allow two; in which case the order becomes of interest, distinguishing between full nouns and pronouns. In Tunen (Bantu) the recipient object (often human) precedes the theme object, whether full noun or pronoun.

mé-ŋo àŋó míme f'ólóbì (Tunen, Bantu A44, Cameroon)  
 H:1SG-FUT you house build:CAUS  
 'I'll build a house for you.'

In Tunen depictive noun phrases follow their referent noun phrase and both occur after the verb.

anasomba mukoli ikut (Tunen, Bantu, Cameroon)  
 1:PAST:cut rope piece  
 'S/He cut the rope in pieces.'

In Wobé (Kru) the referent plus depictive noun occur before the verb, (Egner 1989).

ɔɔ muɛ-tɪ' wlu idɔe 'ɔn 'tmɔɔa' (Wobé, Kru, Ivory Coast)  
 he-INC FUT-DCL matter language nice PP speak:APL:NOM  
 'He will say the matter in nice words.'

Some languages allow the object to be disjunct. In Tunen some modifiers of the object may occur after the noun. These modifiers are typically quantifiers or receive emphasis.

mè-ná ìmìtè yè m'ènífí índí mè-ŋéŋ ò hèlóbátɔ (Tunen, Bantu, Cameroon)  
 1SG-HOD.PAST 9:calabash 9:of 6:water give:H 9-big LOC 19:child  
 'I gave the BIG water calabash to the child.'

If the object preceding the verb is seen as incorporated, the expectation is to find correlations with indefiniteness of the object and indeed in Iraqw there is a tendency for preverbal objects to be indefinite or the whole sentence to be a general truth. Related to incorporation is the issue of how compound verbs operate in distributed predicative syntax.

### What is expressed on the Predicative marker

Our point of departure is that the predicative marker (P) is purely grammatical. Initially we would like to exclude auxiliaries that can occur as main verbs. In the Kru languages there are three categories that can be expressed on the P (examples from Marchese 1979):

#### 1. tense/aspect

ɔ	nyá-ka	kòpo	suà	(Bakwé)
he	FUT	rice	buy	
'He will buy rice'				

#### 2. mood

ɔ	yi	suka'	ɓli	mɔyi	(Godié)
she	POT	rice	pound	over-there	
'She will pound rice over there'					

#### 3. negation

wɛ	nɛ	fɔdè	tili	(Kuwaa)
he	NEG	Monrovia	reach	
'He hasn't reached Monrovia'				

Combinations of these are also possible, though it is not clear yet which ones are allowed.

ɔ	se-bɛ	kò	pì	(Sapo)
he	NEG-cond:T	rice	cook	
'If he had not cooked rice,...'				

The Predicative marker can occur as a word by itself or as a clitic. For the latter, we want to know to what it can adjoin. Examples from Bete:

ã	ká	sìkãá	fi
we	AUX	rice	eat
'Let's eat some rice'			

ɔ́ɔ́	kòkó	kà
she-NEG	chicken	have
'She doesn't have a chicken'		

The Predicative markers often have the same form as the copula (examples from Mande; Blecke 1996):

n	ga	sua	buo
1SG	IMPF	firewood	burn
'I'm burning the firewood'			

sembɛ	ga	a	niŋi
power	COP	3SG	POST
'He is strong'			

## Word order variation and pragmatics

In a number of languages the position after the verb is typically for new information or emphasis. In Kru stylistic variation allows X in S Aux V X where X is expanded NP or conjoined NP (Marchese 1979). In Aghem the Immediately After Verb Position is the focus position while the Immediately Before Verb Position is the background position. In verb final languages such as the Cushitic languages, the position before the verb is used for backgrounding too while an Object in focus occurs before the Predicative marker.

Doyayo (Adamawa) has an alternation between SVO and SPOVX. The verb as well as the subject pronoun bear tonal inflection. There are further preverbal and postverbal tense/aspect/mood markers. The progressive has a copula functioning as a predicative marker and the main verb appears as a verbal noun. The object can appear both before and after the verbal noun (Wiering & Wiering 1994; Elders 2001). Kisi (Atlantic) has an alternation between SVO and SPOVX. The latter occurs with the Progressive: the predicative marker is a copula and the main verb appears as a verbal noun. The SPOVX order further occurs with verbs functioning as auxiliaries: 'finish', 'pass (by)', 'come' (Childs 1995).

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