

Particles and Subjunctive in Ring Grassfields Bantu languages



Liliane Hodieb, INALCO-PLIDAM, Paris
LAGB 2021, UK
6-9 September

Outline

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Subjunctive in Bantu
- 3) Subjunctive in Ring
- 4) Syntactic, Typological and Cognitive explanations
- 5) Conclusion

1. Introduction

1. Introduction

- Analytic (Grassfields Bantu) vs. Agglutinative (Narrow Bantu) tendencies (Nurse 2008, Kiessling 2011)

1. Introduction

- Analytic (Grassfields Bantu) vs. Agglutinative (Narrow Bantu) tendencies (Nurse 2008, Kiessling 2011)
- Particles vs. Affixes

1. Introduction

- Analytic (Grassfields Bantu) vs. Agglutinative (Narrow Bantu) tendencies (Nurse 2008, Kiessling 2011)
- Particles vs. Affixes
- Get a better understanding of the relationship between Bantu and Bantoid

2. Subjunctive in Bantu

2. Subjunctive in Bantu

- Imperative and Subjunctive as the main grammatical means of expressing basic illocutions (Nurse and Devos 2019)

2. Subjunctive in Bantu

- Imperative and Subjunctive as the main grammatical means of expressing basic illocutions (Nurse and Devos 2019)

“The idea that modality is mainly marked through suffixes, and especially the subjunctive final vowel [reconstructed as *-e], is prevalent within Bantu literature” (Nurse and Devos 2019:219).

2. Subjunctive in Bantu

- Imperative and Subjunctive as the main grammatical means of expressing basic illocutions (Nurse and Devos 2019)
- Subjunctive final vowel –e: expresses speaker attitudes such as uncertainty, tentativeness, vagueness, suggestions, preferences, hopes, fears, wishes, and some commands (Nurse 2008:317)

2. Subjunctive in Bantu

- Imperative and Subjunctive as the main grammatical means of expressing basic illocutions (Nurse and Devos 2019)
- Subjunctive final vowel –e: expresses speaker attitudes such as uncertainty, tentativeness, vagueness, suggestions, preferences, hopes, fears, wishes, and some commands (Nurse 2008:317)
- -i and –a also attested

2. Subjunctive in Bantu

(1) Zalamo G33 (Nurse 2008:24)

u-si-gul-e

2S-NEG2-buy-SBJ

'Don't buy.'

(2) Ngombe C41 (Meeussen 2014:17)

nátɔndé

'I should say.'

(3) Duala A20 (Meeussen 2014:17)

ánɔnge

'He should take.'

(4) Shona S13 (Meeussen 2014:17)

(ngá)tínámate

'Let's pray.'

(5) Zimba D26 (Meeussen 2014:17)

túbuutí

'We should pull.'

3. Subjunctive in Ring Grassfields Bantu

3. Subjunctive in Ring Grassfields Bantu

- Analytic tendency → considerable use of particles

3. Subjunctive in Ring Grassfields Bantu

- Analytic tendency → considerable use of particles
- No single morpheme for the subjunctive unlike in Bantu

3. Subjunctive in Ring Grassfields Bantu

- ❑ Analytic tendency → considerable use of particles
- ❑ No single morpheme for the subjunctive unlike in Bantu
- ❑ Aghem, Babanki, Babungo, Oku, and Wushi (West Cameroon)

3. Subjunctive in Ring Grassfields Bantu

- Hortative

3. Subjunctive in Ring Grassfields Bantu

(6) ò **lú** bó fighâ m 'He should hit the mat.' (Aghem)
he F2/HRT hit mat

(7) ghè dám ' 'He should play!' (Babanki)
he play HRT

(8) **máa** à gé táa yìwiŋ 'You should go to the market'.
challenge you go-impf to market (Babungo)

kí ŋwé jwí féenè m̄ 'He should not come here!' (Babungo)
monit he come-impf here neg

(9) ghèsèn **nĩ** ghá 'What should we do?' (Oku)
we F1 what

(10) wè **ki** ' ghùè ìjú? 'You should work hard.' (Wushi)
you have work hard

3. Subjunctive in Ring Grassfields Bantu

- Potential (or Hypothetical)

3. Subjunctive in Ring Grassfields Bantu

- (11) **tó** ò bòó fìghàm *'He could be hitting the mat.'* (Aghem)
POT he hit mat
- (12) ghèn tè **zì** ghèn lýí *'He could take.'* (Babanki)
you P3 POT SM take
- (13) **yíghēe mǝ** ɲwé lùu táa ɲì *'He may be in the house.'*
time some he be in house (*Babungo*)
- (14) **finǝ** ǝ kǝ nǝ-imén *'He might have done it.'* (Oku)
POT he P1 do -?
- tàm** ǝb náà ɲák *'He shall probably write.'* (Oku)
POT he F2 write
- (15) **làkè** ɲé nǝ^ʋ já *'He may be sick.'* (Wushi)
POT he IPFV sick

3. Subjunctive in Ring Grassfields Bantu

- Possibility/Impossibility

3. Subjunctive in Ring Grassfields Bantu

(16) a. **ká'** ηwé gántè ghó[^] 'He can help you.' (Babungo)
POSS he help you

b. **ví kó** ηwé gántè ghó[^] 'He can help you.' (Babungo)
POSS he help you

c. ηwé nyíi **didū** 'He cannot run.' (Babungo)
he run IMPOSS

(17) a. **làkè** ηé tì dzè 'She cannot come.' (Wushi)
POSS she NEG come

b. **làkè** wé gè 'You can go.' (Wushi)
POSS you go

3. Subjunctive in Ring Grassfields Bantu

- The subjunctive marker is a particle occurring sentence-initially, quite systematically in the potential or hypothetical mood and with a small variation in the other moods and modalities

4.1. Syntactic explanations

4.1. Syntactic explanations

- Subjunctive or mood and modality as the illocutionary force of the clause (Haegeman 1997) → Complementizer

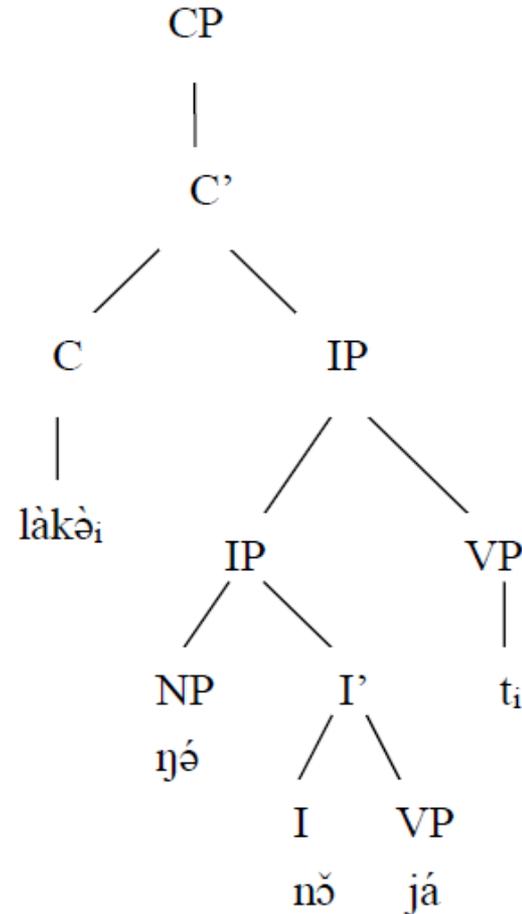
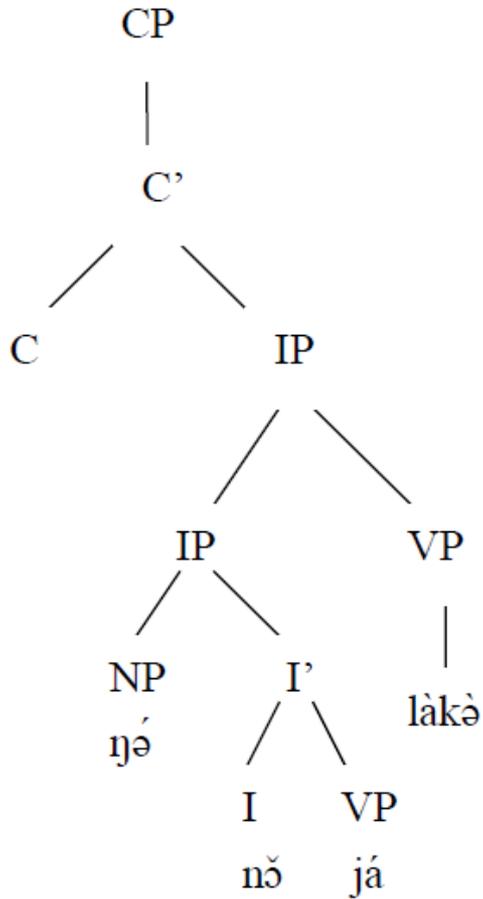
4.1. Syntactic explanations

- Subjunctive or mood and modality as the illocutionary force of the clause (Haegeman 1997) → Complementizer
- Words > Affixes (Bybee 1995)

4.1. Syntactic explanations

- Subjunctive or mood and modality as the illocutionary force of the clause (Haegeman 1997) → Complementizer
- Words > Affixes (Bybee 1995)
- Process similar to Wh-raising

4.1. Syntactic explanations



4.2. Typological and Cognitive explanations

4.2. Typological and Cognitive explanations

- Hawkins (1990) – cited in Primus (2001:860) - finds that there is a psycholinguistic advantage that comes from heads that are positioned peripherally by demonstrating that this pattern leads to more rapid language processing, based on the EIC (Early Immediate Constituents) principle:
 - The human parser prefers linear orders that maximize the left-to-right IC-to-word ratios of the phrasal nodes that it constructs.

4.2. Typological and Cognitive explanations

- Hawkins (1990) – cited in Primus (2001:860) - finds that there is a psycholinguistic advantage that comes from heads that are positioned peripherally by demonstrating that this pattern leads to more rapid language processing, based on the EIC (Early Immediate Constituents) principle
- Scopal operators like quantifiers or modifiers tend to precede and/or c-command the elements within their scope, and the scope of a modifier depends on the function of the modifier

4.2. Typological and Cognitive explanations

- Hawkins (1990) – cited in Primus (2001:860) - finds that there is a psycholinguistic advantage that comes from heads that are positioned peripherally by demonstrating that this pattern leads to more rapid language processing, based on the EIC (Early Immediate Constituents) principle
- Scopal operators like quantifiers or modifiers tend to precede and/or c-command the elements within their scope, and the scope of a modifier depends on the function of the modifier
 - là-kè ηέ nɔ́ jǎ
 - HYP-DST { he is sick }

4.2. Typological and Cognitive explanations

- Hawkins (1990) – cited in Primus (2001:860) - finds that there is a psycholinguistic advantage that comes from heads that are positioned peripherally by demonstrating that this pattern leads to more rapid language processing, based on the EIC (Early Immediate Constituents) principle
- Scopal operators like quantifiers or modifiers tend to precede and/or c-command the elements within their scope, and the scope of a modifier depends on the function of the modifier
- Botne and Kerhsner (2008): P-domain (now) and D-domain (dissociative) as the basis of the organisation of tense-aspect systems in Bantu languages

4.2. Typological and Cognitive explanations

- Hawkins (1990) – cited in Primus (2001:860) - finds that there is a psycholinguistic advantage that comes from heads that are positioned peripherally by demonstrating that this pattern leads to more rapid language processing, based on the EIC (Early Immediate Constituents) principle
- Scopal operators like quantifiers or modifiers tend to precede and/or c-command the elements within their scope, and the scope of a modifier depends on the function of the modifier
- Botne and Kerhsner (2008): P-domain (now) and D-domain (dissociative) as the basis of the organisation of tense-aspect systems in Bantu languages
 - Subjunctive particles in Ring languages, placed sentence-initially, suggest the shifting of the discourse in a distant or dissociated world

5. Conclusion

5. Conclusion

- Descriptive, typological and cognitive principles put together provide interesting insight into language change and the understanding of synchronic phenomena

5. Conclusion

- ❑ Descriptive, typological and cognitive principles put together provide interesting insight into language change and the understanding of synchronic phenomena
- ❑ More comparative studies on Bantu and Bantoid languages would shed more light on their relationship

Thank you!



liliane.hodieb@inalco.fr

liliane.hodieb@yahoo.fr