


Particles and Subjunctive in Ring Grassfields Bantu languages



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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

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

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- 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

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“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).

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- ❑ 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.'

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- ❑ Aghem, Babanki, Babungo, Oku, and Wushi (West Cameroon)

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- Hortative

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(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) **yíghēē mǝ'** ñwé lùu táa ñì *'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 ják *'He shall probably write.'* (Oku)
POT he F2 write
- (15) **làkè** ñé nǝ^ˇ já *'He may be sick.'* (Wushi)
POT he IPFV sick

3. Subjunctive in Ring Grassfields Bantu

- Possibility/Impossibility

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(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

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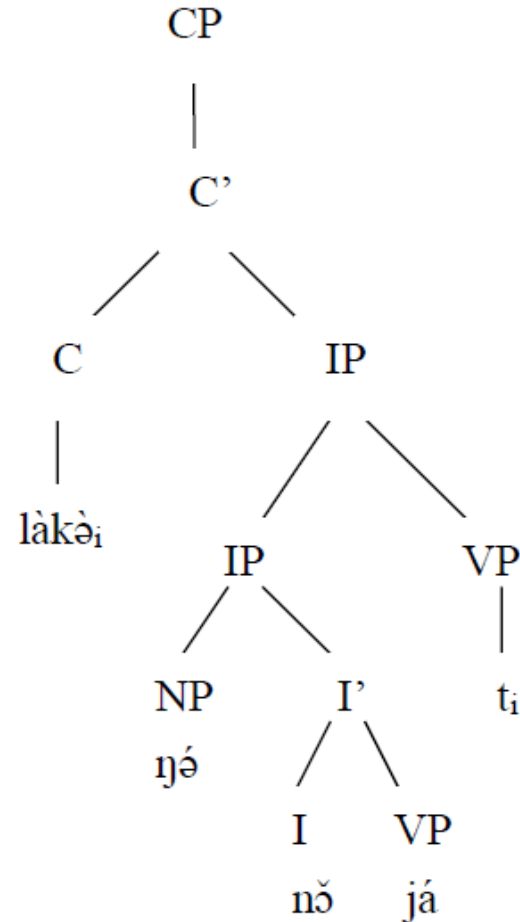
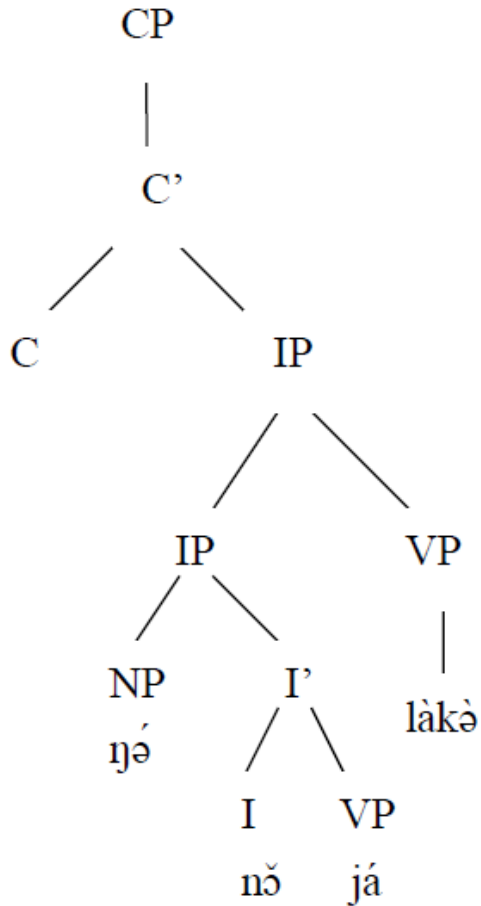
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- Process similar to Wh-raising

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- 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.

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 - là-kè ηé nɔ́ jǎ
 - HYP-DST { he is sick }

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 - Subjunctive particles in Ring languages, placed sentence-initially, suggest the shifting of the discourse in a distant or dissociated world

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- ❑ 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!



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