

Predicate doubling and information structure in eastern Bantu languages

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Abstract

Formal structures with two predicates in a sentence are common in eastern Bantu languages. They occur in the order infinitive predicate being followed by inflected predicate as in Kinyakyusa examples (1-2). The opposite order is also possible in that the inflected predicate precedes the infinitive predicate as in Kĩtharaka example (3). Güldemann and Fiedler (to appear) propose that the infinitive occurs in the cleft as in examples (1-2), in situ in post-verbal position as in example (3), and as a left-peripheral topic as in Kĩtharaka example (4).

With regard to functional analysis, these structures called predicate doubling reveal focus interpretation in eastern Bantu languages. In example (1), we obtain intensive reading, while in examples (2-3) we achieve truth focus. The interpretation of example (4) is similar to topicalization. However, since studies have shown various interpretations of the structures with two predicates (Güldemann & Fiedler 2019), the interpretation provided here is not complete rather it requires to be expanded.

- (1) (Context: Speaker compliments on the dressing of someone)
Ukufwala afweele.
mma u-ku-fwala a-fwala-ile
no AUG-15-wear 1SM-wear-PFV
'He has really dressed up!'
- (2) (Context: Father told us to sweep when he left; now he comes back, and we are sitting watching TV; he says, 'why are you lazy watching TV and haven't swept?')
Ukupyaaagira ko tupyaaagiile!
u-ku-pyaagil-a ko tu-pyaagil-ile
AUG-15-sweep-FV 15.PRO 1PL.SM-sweep=PFV
'We did sweep!'
- (3) Tũĩĩnĩrĩ (kĩbũco) kũĩĩna.
tũ-in-ire kũbũco kũ-in-a
1PL.SM-sing-PFV kũbũco 15-sing-FV
'We really sang kũbuco.'
- (4) Kũ-rũgã n-káá-rũg-a.
15-cook 1SG.SM-FUT-cook-FV
'I will indeed cook.'

The predicate doubling structures mentioned above interact with other formal structures which are available in the marking of the two universal units of information structure, namely topic and focus. In this paper, therefore, we provide an outline of the formal structures of predicate doubling interacting with other formal markers of topic and focus. We also strive to determine the interpretation of those structures as they occur in Cicopi, Kĩtharaka, Kinyakyusa, Rukiga, Kirundi, and Makhuwa-Enahara.

References

Fiedler, Ines and Tom Güldemann. To appear. Predicate partition for predicate-centered focus and Meeussen's "advance verb construction".