

Disjoint/conjoint alternation and the focus position in Xichangana

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Changana (S53), also referred to as Xichangana in the literature, is one of the several native languages catalogued by the Geographic Atlas of Mozambique. One of the major goals of this paper is to show that the conjoint versus disjoint alternation correlates with information structure in Changana. As will be shown, the conjoint form of the verb is directly associated with the term focus of the constituent following the verb which shows either new information or contrastive focus. As in other Bantu languages, verbs in Xichangana exhibit a conjoint (CJ) and disjoint (DJ) alternation, whose main role is to differentiate information and contrastive focus from familiar topic. In view of this, this research has the objective to demonstrate that contrastive and informational focus is marked morphologically, syntactically and prosodically in Xichangana. With regard to the morphology, the purpose is to investigate whether, or not, the language makes use of morphological marking for encoding focus. In fact, Xichangana verbs exhibit a set of temporal and aspectual morphemes to encode the conjoint and disjoint alternation. In this sense, we claim that the distribution of these affixes is directly related to syntactic constituency and to information structure, since the CJ/DJ alternation interacts with focus and topic in Xichangana. From the syntactic viewpoint, we notice that Xichangana makes use of a structural position immediately following the verb, henceforth IAV, for the expression of noun phrases that carry focus interpretation. We posit that both identificational and informational focus must appear in this syntactic position. Based on this syntactic distribution, we propose that the IAV position corresponds to a dedicated focus projection, henceforth labelled as FocP, that is generated above the ν P, to which identificational and informational focused constituents are moved

Regarding the phonological strategies, the purpose is to demonstrate that, in addition to placing the focused DP in an IAV position and displaying specific tense/aspect morphemes to differentiate conjoint from disjoint forms, Xichangana makes use of prosody to encode the CJ/DJ alternation. Evidence in favour of this proposal comes from the fact that the focused constituents that occur in IAV position is always affected by a high floating tone in the sense that it spreads from the first syllable of the focus constituent onto the vowel of the penultimate syllable of the focused phrase. Furthermore, this high tone spreading effect forces the penultimate vowel of the focus constituent to be lengthened, as is shown in the example below:

- (1) *nì-Ø-fám-b-á* *múndzú:kù* *àngáli* *nyámú:ntlà*
 1SG-CJ-go-VF tomorrow not today
 ‘I will go tomorrow, not today.’

Thus, the tone spreading and the vowel lengthening help one set the limit of the phonological domain in which the focused and non-focused constituents occur. What will be relevant for our analysis is the fact that focused constituent in Xichangana must always occur on the right edge of the phonological domain to which it belongs. Thus, we will assume that the grammatical role of this high floating tone is to mark that there is a focused argument following a conjoint form of the verb, regardless of whether this constituent is projected as a core argument (subject, direct object or indirect object) or an adjunct. This becomes particularly clear by the fact that the tone pattern of the noun phrase *màzàmbànà* in (3a) changes from LLLL to HHHL, as is shown in (3b). Hence, the change of tone in this case serves to show that the object receives contrastive focus, since the semantic interpretation entails that the action of buying involves only potatoes, not bread. Compare the examples (a-b) below.

- (2a) *nì-Ø-xàv-à* *màzàmbhànà*
 1SG-PROG.CJ-buy-FV 6-potatoes
 ‘I am buying some potatoes.’
- (2b) *nì-Ø-xàv-à* *mázàmbhá:nà**àngáli* *mápá:wà*
 1SG-PROG.CJ-buy-fv 6-potatoes and not 6-bread
 ‘(What) I am buying is SOME POTATOES and not some bread.’

Furthermore, the high floating tone also affects *wh*-pronouns that appear in information focus context. This constraint holds for the interrogative pronoun *yini* ‘why’ that changes its tone pattern from LL into HL, as is shown in the example below. Notice that the interrogative pronoun must occur in the IAV position, thereby occurring before the theme and the goal. In such case, the verb must bear the morpheme {-Ø-} that signals the conjoint form of the verb in present tense.

- (3) *u-Ø-(mu)-nyik-el-a* *yini* *a* *búkù* *Casimiro*
 2SG-PROG.CJ-OM_i-give-APPL-FV what DEF book Casimiro
 ‘Why do you give the book to Casimiro?’

In sum, the main hypothesis we will be advocating in this paper is that Xichangana makes use of prosodic marking both to encode contrastive and information focus and to differentiate the CJ/DJ verb alternation. More to the point, we will claim that the occurrence of the high floating tone in the IAV position is only possible if the conjoint verb is followed by a focused constituent. We will also be pursuing the hypothesis, according to which one way of diagnosing CJ/DJ alternation and the presence of a focus constituent in the IAV position in Xichangana is by the high tone spreading rule. This rule is triggered whenever the verb exhibits a CJ morphology. We aim to demonstrate that the high tone spreading outlined above follows from regular tone rules and therefore does provide motivation for considering the occurrence of the in situ high tone patterns as one of the strategies of encoding the CJ/DJ alternation in Xichangana.