

Travaux du 19ème CIL | 19th ICL papers

Congrès International des Linguistes, Genève 20-27 Juillet 2013
International Congress of Linguists, Geneva 20-27 July 2013



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Expressing conjunction and conditionals in Digo through TAM marking

oral presentation in workshop: 129 The semantics and
pragmatics of logical words: a cross-linguistic perspective
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Published and distributed by: Département de Linguistique de l'Université de
Genève, Rue de Candolle 2, CH-1205 Genève, Switzerland
Editor: Département de Linguistique de l'Université de Genève, Switzerland
ISBN: 978-2-8399-1580-9

Expressing Conjunction and Conditionals in Digo through TAM Marking

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In Digo (a North-East Coastal Bantu language) clausal conjunction and conditionals are expressed through verbal inflection. Clausal conjunction and conditionals are structurally similar, and conceptually linked through the notion of contingency, expressed through the TAM markers with the same forms but different syntactic distribution.

The verb group in Digo

Subject_Concord-TAM-(Object_Concord)-verb

a-na-gomba	<i>s/he is speaking</i>
u-a-gomba	<i>s/he spoke</i>
a-nda-gomba	<i>s/he will speak</i>
a-ya-gomba	<i>s/he is going (somewhere) to speak</i>

TAM → Tense, Aspect, Movement

Clausal conjunction $V_F + V_{INF}$

Conjunction “should” be balanced, e.g. the Coördinate Constituent Constraint (Schachter 1977: 90)

“The constituents of a coördinate construction must belong to the same syntactic category and have the same semantic function.”

See also Chomsky (1957: 35-37).

This rules out coordination of a finite and a non-finite clause.

Clausal conjunction $V_F + V_{INF}$

‘Unbalanced’ clausal coordination is the norm in Digo. $V_F + V_{INF}$ is used when there is a close conceptual link between clauses:

Saa sita **wa-hala** fimboye na chifulanache

3SG.PST-take

na ku-gbwira yo barabara...

COM INF-seize

*At 12 o'clock he **picked up** his stick and his vest **and took** the road...*

Clausal conjunction $V_F + V_{INF}$

Riedel & de Vos (2013) argue that in $V_F + V_{INF}$ in Swahili, both conjuncts are coordinated AgrSPs dominated by TP (which licences case-marked subjects in both conjuncts).

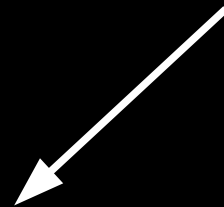
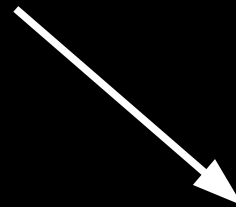
‘Consecutive’ and ‘Sequential’

a-**chi**-gomba

3SG-CONS-speak

a-**ka**-gomba

3SG-SEQ-speak



and s/he spoke

(2nd or subsequent clause)

Both dependent on previous verb group to establish temporal reference: CONS < past tense, SEQ < any TAM marker (except FUT).

Finite forms with no dependency marking.

Consecutive

Phahi, fisi **ra-uka** fuli **ri-ch-enda-hala**

5.PST-return 5-CONS-ITIVE-take

yuya kulungu **ri-chi-richa** yuya maiti pharatu.

5-CONS-leave

*So, the hyena **went** and **took** that antelope and left that corpse right there.*

Consecutive: subject need not be same

Hiye mchetu ariyemtiya yuya mwanache dibwani,
wa-gwirwa ni mchecheta **a-chi-gbwa**.

3SG.PST-seize.PASS

3SG-CONS-fall

Ndipho atu **a-chi-manya** kukala iye ndiye

3PL-CONS-know

ariyehenda mabo higo.

*That woman who had put the child in the pit, **she was seized by panic and fell down**. Then people **knew** that it was her who did those things.*

Sequential: subject need not be same

Mizi hino **kala nku-katwa-katwa** na chisha

PST HAB-cut.PASS-cut.PASS

i-ka-jitwa, **i-ka-okohwa** dabwa-dabwa

4-SEQ-cook.PASS 4-SEQ-boil.PASS

hadi **i-ka-galuka** rangi.

4-SEQ-change

Halafuye **a-ka-hewa** hino dawa **a-ka-nwa.**

3SG-SEQ-give.PASS

3SG-SEQ-drink

*These roots **were cut up** and then **cooked**, they were **boiled** thoroughly until **they changed** colour.*

*Afterwards **she was given** this medicine and **drank** (it).*

Sequential: negation strategy

hodiernal / anterior **NEG-SC-ka-verb**

k-a-ka-gomba / ta-hu-ka-gomba

s/he has not spoken / we have not spoken

sequential **SC-ka-NEG-verb**

a-ka-sa-gomba / hu-ka-sa-gomba

and s/he did not speak / and we did not speak

kasa is also used to negate the consecutive

‘Dependent’ and ‘Potential’

a-chi-gomba
3SG-DEP-speak

a-ka-gomba
3SG-POT-speak



if s/he spoke
(protasis)

Both establish conditions under which following verb group should be interpreted.

Finite forms with no dependency marking.

Dependent:

Fisi anamba, “**U-chi-fika** kaya, usiphiye
2SG-DEP-arrive

uchamuambira mcheo kukala yuya mchetu
yezikipwa dzana nkamuona na fisi, usiseme
tse-tse-tse.

*The hyena says, “**When you arrive** home don’t go
and tell your wife that that woman who was buried
yesterday, I have seen her with a hyena, don’t give
a bad report at all.*

Dependent:

Chakuryache chindakala uwe, **u-chi-menya** ndani
2SG-DEP-enter

ya madzi uriwe ni mamba, mbuzi **i-chi-menya**
9-DEP-enter

ndani ya madzi iriwe ni mamba, ni nyama wa
weruni **a-ka-menya** madzini ariwe ni mamba.
3SG-POT-enter

*Its food will be you, if you enter into the water you will
be eaten by the crocodile, a goat if it enters into the
water it will be eaten by the crocodile, any wild animal if
it enters the water it will be eaten by the crocodile.*

Dependent in generic/timeless clauses:

Atu nkuambwa, “Aphiyaye ukalani, **a-chi-uya**
3SG-DEP-return
ni auye na nyama phano.”

*People are told, “The one who goes hunting **when he returns** he should bring meat there.”*

Dependent in past time clauses:

Kama vyokala desturi ya atu hipho kare,
mutu **ka a-chi-kala** tajiri,

PST 3SG-DEP-be

ka n'lazima alóle achetu anji.

*As was the custom of people long ago, a person
if he was rich, he had to marry many wives.*

Potential:

U-ka-ni-kuta náphiya kare mbere za haki,

2SG-POT-1SG-meet

kisha ni salama, ndugozo za phapha.

*If you find I have already passed on before my time,
then it is fine, your brothers and sisters are there.*

Potential + *hata* ('even'):

Hiyu mutu ye **hata a-ka-chimbira** n'kazi ya bure,
even 3SG-POT-flee

andafwa vivyo.

*This person, even if he flees it will be pointless,
he will die anyway.*

Potential: negation strategy

Same as sequential: SC-**ka**-NEG-verb

Phahi **n-k-edza** **n-ka-sa-kpwedza** ...

1SG-POT-come 1SG-POT-NEG-come

So if I come (or) if I don't come ...

kasa is also used to negate the dependent

Tentative conclusion

consecutive/sequential and dependent/potential
have the same forms: *chi / ka*
and unusual negation strategy: *kasa*

All express the notion of contingency:

‘main’ clause > CHI / KA

second clause is temporally contingent on first clause

CHI / KA > ‘main’ clause

apodosis is conceptually contingent on protasis

Other languages

Isomorphy between conditional and consecutive (narrative) forms is found in other African languages, such as Makaa (Njoya 2013).

ká / kí (interchangeable) = conditional

kà / kì (interchangeable) = narrative (consecutive)

à ká ĩn ɕùmè, à kà fé:ʃ, à kà fùgè mèɕúwó-ʃ
3SG COND finish pound 3SG NAR sort 3SG NAR knead water-LOC

If one finishes pounding (the palm nuts), then one sorts (them), kneads (them) in water...

Summary

From a traditional Standard Average European perspective, conjunction is expressed through ‘balanced’ coordination, and conditionals are indicated by logical words.

From a Bantu perspective, both conjunction and conditionals are expressed using ‘unbalanced’ coordination, and TAM markers which indicate a contingent relation between the coordinated clauses.

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