NOUN PHRASES IN GUINEA-BISSAU KRIYOL AND NUBI: A MORPHOSYNTACTIC AND SEMANTIC-PRAGMATIC COMPARISON

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The languages

- GBK emerged from a Portuguese pidgin during the 16th century.
- Spoken in Guinea-Bissau and Senegalese Casamance.

- NB formed during the first half of 19th century among Black Sudanese soldiers forcefully recruited into the Ottoman Egyptian army.
- Now spoken in Uganda and Kenya.

Definiteness and number

- **Definiteness**: conjunction of two properties.

- *Logical property*: exhaustivity / maximality (Hawkins 1978; Sharvy 1980).

- *the/a* = generalized quantifier Q_{df}, *the/a cat is miaowing* means that one exemplar of the kind 'cat' exhausts the set of miaowing cats in the universe invoked by the tense of the predicate.

- Generic interpretation of 'the/a cat miaows': kind as second-order individual exhausts the set.

- Predicate's tense partially resolves ambiguity in English.

- Dutch *De/een kat miauwt* or French *Le/un chat miaule* ambiguous.

- *Pragmatic property*: identifiability (Lyons 1999).
- Definite NP if speaker assumes referent to belong to common ground of entities she and hearers know they are or could be able to identify (except weak definiteness – Carlson et al. 2006). (Natural kinds assumed to be always part of the common ground.)
- Indefinite NP if she assumes the contrary.
- Specific or nonspecific depending on belief about her own capacity to identify the referent (von Heusinger 2011).

- **Number**: morphosyntactic feature with two values, singular ('1') and plural ('> 1'), in English, GBK, and NB.

- Weakly related to actual cardinality of referent.

- Cf. 'We filmed the grizzlies in Alaska' vs. 'We filmed the grizzly in Alaska' (Krifka et al. 1995:87).

- Referent envisaged individually or as Krifkaian concept-kind 'grizzly'.

Definiteness expression in GBK

- No definite article.
- Bare NP's may be definite.
- Phrase-initial indefinite article *un* < EP *um(a)* (no grammatical gender in GBK).
- Indefiniteness ⊃ specificity: *un gatu* 'a certain cat'.
- Nonspecific indefiniteness: bare NP.

Number expression in GBK

- Plurality: *-s* suffix on N and Adj: *gatus pretu(s)* '(the) black cats' (normally no agreement).
- It may be left unexpressed on count nouns.

Definiteness expression in NB

- Phrase-final definite article (or demonstrative) *de*: *juwa kebir de* {house big the} 'the/this big house'.

- Phrase-final indefinite article *wai*: *juwa kebir wai* 'a big house' (no grammatical gender in NB).

- Indefiniteness ⊃ specificity: *juwa wai* 'a certain house'.

- Bare NP's may be definite or indefinite.

Number expression in NB

- Several suffixes.
- 2 productive ones: *bágara* / *bagará* 'cow(s)', *malím ajúsi* {teacher old} 'old teacher' / *malimá ajusi(yá)* 'old teachers'.
- One noun may have more than one plural: *sókol* / *sokolná ~ sokolín ~ sokolá* 'thing(s)'. (Areal feature?)
- No dual (unlike E/SA).
- Plurality may be left unexpressed on count nouns.

A morphosyntactic comparison of GBK and EP

- Major difference: absence of definite article in GBK.
- Historical accident: phonetically light EP *o(s)/ a(s)* did not survive unguided SLA / pidginization.
- Indefinite expressions share same structure.
- GBK *un* and EP *um(a)* can be pluralized: *uns gatu(s) = uns gatos*.
- Same morphological device for pluralization in GBK and EP.

A morphosyntactic comparison of NB and E/SA

- E/SA definite article *l*- did not survive in NB (same reason as EP), but replaced by phrase-final demonstrative *da*: cf. NB *lukumár kebír de* 'the/this big donkey' vs. SA *al-ħumaar al-kibiir da* 'this big donkey'.

- E/SA definite artacle = prefix.

- RE: X_N & {DEF +} $\Leftrightarrow$ *L-X*

- NB *de* = phrase clitic introduced by construction (Sag 2011).

- The structures are distinct.

- Yet NB *de* ambiguous between new meaning as definite article and old meaning as demonstrative, both meanings related by anaphoricity.
- Relativizes structural gap.
- Both grammars include demonstrative construction [NP da/de].
- NP inflected for positive definiteness in E/SA.
- Not in NB, and demonstrative (deictic) meaning may bleach to positive definiteness via anaphoricity.

- NB *wai* occupies same phrase-final position as does E/SA *waaħid* 'one', also usable as specific indefinite article.

- Plural formation suffixal in NB.

- Partly suffixal ('sound'), partly infixal ('broken') in E/SA.

- Most common NB suffixes final stress and *⁻(y)á* < E/SA feminine suffix *-áat*, also exceptional default suffix for unintegrated borrowings.

Enlarging the comparison

- Numerals and other quantifiers precede head in GBK (*tris gatu* 'three cats', *manga di gatu* 'many cats') as in EP (*três gatos*, *muitos gatos*).

- Follow head in NB (*lukumár taláta* 'three donkeys'), also most common order in SA (Owens 1991:19).

- Adjectives and relative clauses follow head in GBK and NB as they do in EP and E/SA.

- Adjectives that precede the head in EP (e.g. *outro gato* 'another cat') also do so in GBK (*utru gatu*).

A morphosyntactic comparison of GBK and NB

- GBK and NB differ from each other precisely to the extent that they align on their respective lexifiers in terms of NP structure.

A semantic-pragmatic comparison of EP and E/SA for definiteness and number expression

- EP characterized by rarity of entirely bare count nouns (bare singulars).

- Limited to formulaic expressions (*Cão que ladra não morde* 'A barking dog does not bite') or fixed constructions (*vir de carro* 'come by car') with generic reference.

- Bare plurals are indefinite (*ouvi gatos* 'I heard cats').

- Bare singulars and plurals are indefinite in E/SA.

- Pluralization according to 'arithmetic' principle.
- Count nouns must be pluralized if the referent's cardinality is more than one, except when it is possible to refer directly to the concept-kind (cf. 'grizzly' example).
- You must say *Gosto de gatos* 'I like cats', even though plurality expression is redundant.
- Cf. ?*Gosto do gato* ?'I like the cat': generic reading requires special context.
- *Gosto de gato* *'I like cat' (unless mass reading and 'cat' = 'cat meat').

A semantic-pragmatic comparison of GBK and NB for definiteness expression.

- GBK NP's commonly appear entirely bare:

(1) *Mindjer kumpra pratu.*

    woman buy.PF dish

    The woman bought (the/a) dish(es).

- Object multiply ambiguous.
- Subject almost categorically interpreted as singular and definite.

- Constructional effect: bare subject (topic) NP's associated with stage-level predicates show strong tendency to be interpreted as definite (Carlson 2002).

- Specific indefinite reading requires *un mindjer*.

- Nonspecific indefinite reading incompatible with stage-levelness (in this configuration). Cf. same terms with possibly individual-level predicate:

(2) *Mindjer ta   kumpra pratu.*

    woman IPF buy   dish

    The/a woman buys dishes / Women buy dishes.

- Definite reading available: the woman in question habitually buys dishes.
- Kind-oriented reading as well: it is a woman's nature or role to buy dishes !!

- Interpreting bare subjects for definiteness results from the interaction of syntax, the predicate's TMA value and/or lexical meaning, and virtual contrasts with other possible constructions.

- Object (focus) bare NP's are genuinely ambiguous with stage-level predicates.

- Only context – e.g. does *pratu* in (1) introduce a new discourse referent or not – allows one to reach a final interpretation.

Bare definite or indefinite NP's common in NB as well:

(3) *Ína ja   ámrugu gwánda téna fi sámba.*

   we come.PF remove cassava our in field

   We took away our cassava from the field.

(4) *Fára de, mána   to je   háfla kebír.*

   feast the meaning its like party big

   The feast, its meaning is that it's like a big party.

(5) *Uwo ruwa fu su.*

   s/he go.PF to market

   S/he went to (the/a) market(s).

- Bareness of *háfla kebír* in (4) confirms specificity of *wai*.

- Bare definite *sámba* in (3) active DR not because of previous mention (D-linking), but because speaker trusts hearer to know what field she is referring to, viz. her own.

- Bare *su* in (5) compatible with all possible readings.

- GBK example analogous to (3) and (5):

(6) *N na   disa   pilon   na porta.*

　　I PROG leave pestle in door

　　I'll leave (the/a) pestle(s) in the door.

- *Porta* refers to speaker's house door, definite like *sámba* in (3).

- *Pilon*'s and *su*'s definiteness (and number) cannot be ascertained out of context.
- Were pestle(s) or market(s) already mentioned?
- Is the hearer supposed to know which pestle(s) or market(s) are being talked about?
- Does the speaker care?

- English, EP, and E/SA grammars force a choice since they do not allow for bare NP's in such constructions.
- **GBK and NB grammars do not force a choice.**

- **Principal difference between GBK-NB grammars and EP-E/SA grammars.**

- Utterers of (5) and (6) need not make any assumption about hearer's state of knowledge about markets or pestles.

- *Su* and *pilon* as word-forms do not convey more information than the same as lexemes: some exemplar(s) of the concepts-kinds MARKET or PESTLE was/were gone to or will be stood by the speaker's door.

- In GBK and NB it is always appropriate for a lexeme to be used as a word-form in a construction without any specification additional to its lexical identity.

A semantic-pragmatic comparison of GBK and NB for number expression

- Nonpluralized count NP's referring to pluralities need not be generic (kind-referring) in GBK and NB (cf. [5]-[6]), whereas they have to in EP (*O gato é um mamífero* 'The cat is a mammal') and E/SA (provided they are at all possible).

- The principle regulating plural marking in GBK and NB is pragmatic relevance, with a subjective and an objective (cognitively and socially determined) facet.

- Subjective relevance has to do with the speaker's intentionality.
- Does she wish or is she able to make it known that she is talking about one or several exemplars?
- In (1) – or NB equivalent *mara de biyo san* – the message may be no more than that the woman bought something that answers the description 'dish'.
- Whether one or more may be immaterial or even unknown.

- Is this kind-oriented talk 'when we do not care about the object-level identity of the objects, as in *we filmed the grizzly in Alaska*' (Krifka et al. 1995:87)?

- Yes, provided we do not equate the sort of kind-orientation evidenced by GBK and NB with genericity, but rather with Cartwright's (1979:42) deliberate vagueness:

- 'This sort of use is one which is self-consciously vague and non-committal, available for deception as well as honest communication'.

- Objective relevance depends on the actual and/or socially defined nature of the denoted entity.

- How acceptable is it not to mention its cardinality every time it is referred to?

- Shared individualization hierarchy (the same in GBK and NB):

- **Persons > domestic animals > 'higher' non-domestic animals > artefacts > other inanimates (including 'lower' animals and abstractions)**

- The higher an entity stands in the hierarchy, the more individuality it is imbued with, and the more likely it is that the noun referring to it will be pluralized every time more than one exemplar is at issue.

- Consequently, the nonpluralized forms of nouns denoting humans and 'higher' animals (especially if personified) effectively mean the singular in nearly all cases (cf. *mindjer* in [1]).

- NP's denoting pluralities of persons are nearly always pluralized.

- Subjective and objective relevance interact in concrete utterances to yield the highly variable, albeit by no means haphazard evidence.

- Plurality-definiteness correlation follows from this interaction.

- For instance, if the speaker intends to point out the individual members of a plurality of artefacts (a definite plurality) she is bound to pluralize the noun (*pratus ~ sanán* 'dishes') notwithstanding the hierarchy which would dispense her from doing so.

- Overt plurality may become the sole indicator of positive definiteness in a language without a definite article such as GBK.

- *Mindjer kumpra pratu***s** normally understood as meaning 'The woman bought **the** dishes'.

- Only utterable in context where 'the dishes' are a clearly identified DR.

Conclusion

- Morphosyntactic differences between GBK and NB NP's:

✓No definite article in GBK vs. phrase-final definite article in NB.

✓Q-type modifiers (indefinite article, numerals, quantifiers etc.) precede the head in GBK, follow it in NB.

- Morphosyntactic similarities between GBK and NB NP's:

✓Plurality inflectionally marked on the head.

✓No gender.

✓No agreement.

- Except for lack of gender and agreement, all these differences and similarities proceed from properties of the lexifiers.

- Such a morphosyntactic stability makes the convergent evolution in the semantics and pragmatics of definiteness and number expression all the more remarkable.

- **Change from morphosemantic to pragmatic principle.**

- Morphosemantic principle of EP and E/SA usually forces the speaker to mark NP's whenever the properties of the referent match the meaning of the available marker.

- Pragmatic principle of GBK and NB always allows the speaker not to mark even if the referent shows the right properties, because she decides or knows (more or less subconsciously) that these properties lack relevance in the current interaction and/or in view of the referent's ontology.

- Clearly so in both languages as far as pluralization is concerned.

- Highly significant that they share the same individualization hierarchy, probably reflecting a spontaneous ontology.

- Positive value of definiteness unexpressed in GBK and morphosyntactic factors play a role (whether NP subject or object, predicate's TMA value…).

- Nevertheless, bare NP's can be used without a definiteness value in both languages if the speaker feels the property to be of no pragmatic and/or cognitive relevance in her present utterance.

- Definiteness and number expression interact.

- In (1) *mindjer* 'the woman' is definite because it is a subject and it is number-valued (singular).

- *Pratu* has neither a definiteness nor a number value, but it is used in kind-oriented mode.

- In GBK and NB overt indefiniteness (*un NP*, *NP waiͅ*) implies specificity.
- Nonspecific indefiniteness is a possible reading of bare NP's.

- In EP specific and nonspecific indefiniteness equally expressed by *um(a) NP*.
- Status of *waaħid* unclear in E/SA, but evidence points towards nondistinction as in EP.

Thank you
Dank U
Merci

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