

Tunen subproject of NWO VIDI project *Bantu Syntax and Information Structure (BaSIS)*

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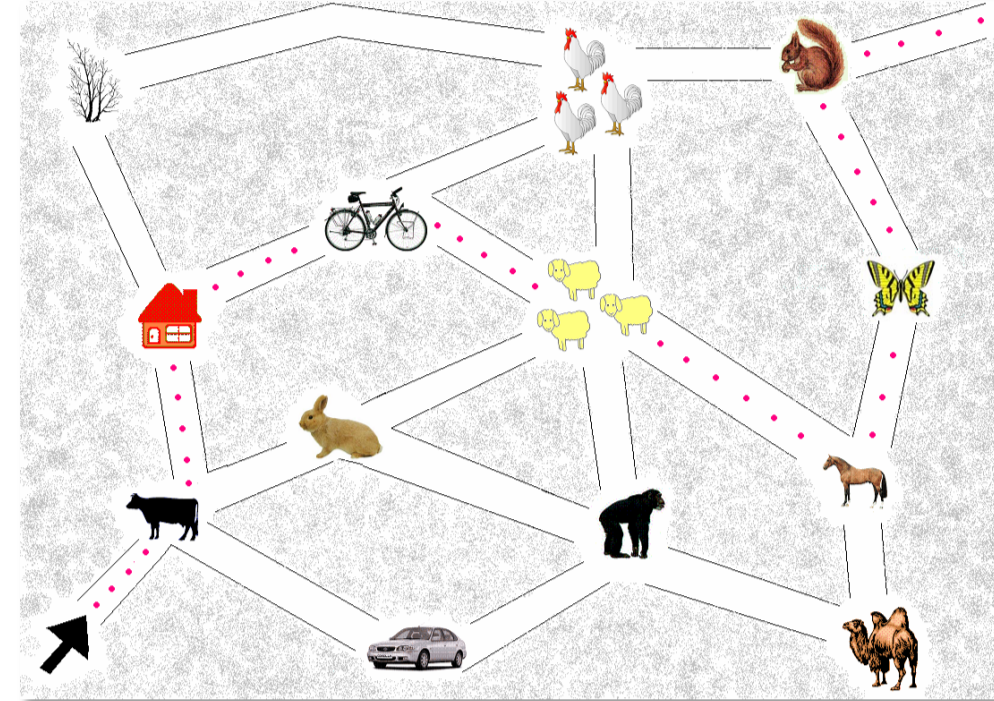
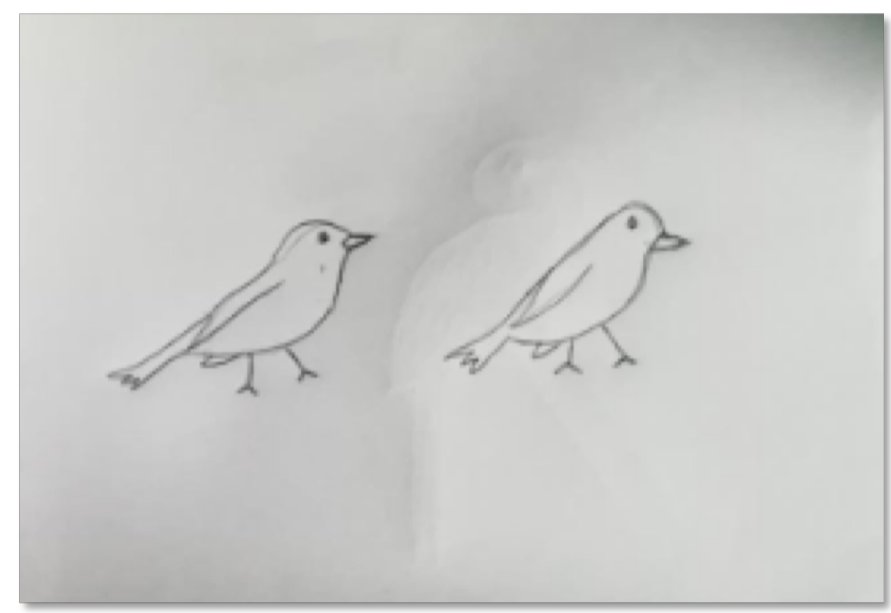
## 1. Introduction

Tunen is a Bantu language (Guthrie no. A44, Cameroon) which has **SOV base order**, no articles, and a noun class system. Using data collected from original fieldwork, my PhD project investigates nominal licensing and information structure in Tunen. Consultants often gave discontinuous **S-O-V-Num** orders with numerals, but not always, leading to the **research question**: what conditions this word order variation?

### Tunen numerals

-mòté 'one'  
-fàndé 'two'  
-làlò 'three'

e.g. tò-bànáà **tó-fàndé**  
13-banana 13-two  
'two bananas'



Above left: Picture stimuli for condition A broad DP focus "what do you see?" and condition B narrow Num focus "how many birds do you see?". Above right: QUIZ map task

## 2. Methodology

Immersive fieldwork in Ndikiniméki, Cameroon from March–June 2019 (analysis in progress!). I worked with 6 consultants, using the following 3 techniques:

- **Elicitation using a context** given in the metalanguage (French)
- **Elicitation with picture stimuli** (control for information structure: "what do you see?", "how many birds do you see?", etc.)
- **Natural dialogues** (map task, free dialogues)

The transcribed forms were inputted into a database hosted on the OLD (online linguistic database) via the **Dative** interface (app.dative.ca), with **tagging** for information structure including specificity.

## 3. Empirical overview

**SOV base order**, but **Num typically postverbal**, discontinuous from O (despite constituency):

- (1) *Context: You need an extra pair of hands to help with your work, so you announce that you are looking for an extra employee (it doesn't matter who):*

mé-ndò mò-ndò sìè ò-mòté  
SM.1SG-PRES 1-person search 1-one  
'I am looking for one person'

(N-V-Num, non-specific)

**Q: Can the numeral appear pre-verbally? Yes** (but less common)

- (2) mé-ndò mò-ndò ò-mòté sìè  
SM.1SG-PRES 1-person 1-one search  
'I am looking for one person'

(N-Num-V, non-specific)

**Q: Can the numeral precede the nominal? Yes**, but results in **specificity interpretation** (particular referent in mind of speaker; Lyons 1999):

- (3) mé-ndò wó-mòté mò-ndò sì. nèáyá nínyè á Tènièl.  
SM.1SG-PRES 1-one 1-person search his 5.name COP Daniel  
'I'm looking for someone. His name is Daniel.'

(Num-N-V, specific)

- (4) *Context: same as (1)*

#mé-ndò wó-mòté mò-ndò sì  
SM.1SG-PRES 1-one 1-person search  
Intd.: 'I am looking for one person'

(Num-N-V, #non-specific)

**Q: What if we have multiple specific referents? → -mòté 'one' stem still used:**

- (5) *Context: PM sees EK looking intently at map, and asks her "What are you doing?". She replies:*  
mé-ndò bé-mòté bì-bálikè (bé-fàndé) sìè bá-séá Yèhèndè nà Ìndikiniméki  
SM.1SG-PRES 8-one 8-town 8-two search SM.3PL-say Yaoundé and Ndikiniméki  
'I am looking for two particular towns called Yaoundé and Ndikiniméki'

(Num-N-V, specific)

**The specific determiner -mòté can also appear without a noun** (NB: is the subject marker agreement or pronominal? cf cross-Bantu debate, e.g. Zeller, 2014):

- (6) tátá tù-nòní tú-kimè é-bákà tó-hùlùlù-èkè. tó-mòté tó-bákà tó-lé hùlùlù.  
not 13-bird 13-all SM.7-be 13-fly-DUR 13-one SM.13-be SM.13-NEG fly  
'Not all birds fly. There are some that don't fly.'

(Num-V, specific)

**Q: What is the interpretation of bare nouns**, i.e. no numeral? → **ambiguous** between definite, indefinite specifics, and indefinite non-specifics. (7) below good in context of (1) or that of (3):

- (7) mé-ndò mò-ndò sìè  
SM.1SG-PRES 1-person search  
'I am looking for one person', 'I am looking for someone'

(N-V, non-specific/specific)

## 4. Summary of findings

Word order	Interpretation	Data
SM-TMA N V Num	Non-specific; focus on DP / narrow focus on numeral, <u>thetic</u>	(1)
SM-TMA N Num V	Non-specific; <u>thetic</u>	(2)
SM-TMA Num N V	Specific, #non-specific	(3), (4), (5)
SM-TMA V N Num	Non-specific; focus on DP / narrow focus on Num	See Dative
Num (N) SM-TMA V	Specific	(6)
S-TMA N V	Non-specific/specific	(7)

Generalisations:

**Standard numerals:** postnominal, often split from N.Obj  
**Specific determiner:** prenominal, from -mòté 'one'  
**Bare nouns:** ambiguous (definite / indefinite specific / indefinite non-specific)

## 5. Analyses to consider

- 1) Both numeral and specific determiner readings come from same basic structure; prenominal version derived through Num movement out of vP
- 2) The specific determiner is base-merged high

- What evidence can tease these apart?
- Do we find similar data patterning in other languages?
- How is the discontinuous N-V-Num order derived?

**Glossing:** 1, 8, 13, ... = Bantu noun class number, 1SG = 1<sup>st</sup> person singular, 3PL = 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural, DUR = durative, NEG = negation, PRES = present. <á> = high tone, <à> = low tone.  
**References:** Lyons, C. (1999). *Definiteness*. CUP; Zeller, J. (2014) Three types of object marking in Bantu. *Linguistische Berichte*, 2014(239), 347-367. **Images:** Bantu map © SIL.

## Acknowledgements

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