On OV and VO at the Bantu/Bantoid borderlands

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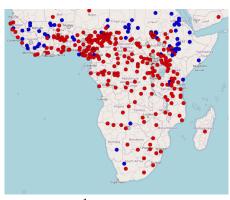


OV and VO: WALS 83A (Order of object and verb)



Intro

- Bantu languages in WALS sample overwhelmingly VO
- Tunen (Bantu, Cameroon) as outlier as OV
- Tikar (Bantoid, Cameroon) coded as 'no dominant order'
- Some other OV in broader Niger-Congo (+Cushitic; Khoi; San)
 - Gur (Senufo), Mande, Ijo



(Dryer 2013) ¹

¹Totals are for the whole world; map cropped to sub-Saharan Africa.

Tunen OV, Nyokon OV/VO

- (1) a. bá-ndo <u>bɛ-kana</u> **tála** o yoko SM.2-PRES 8-basket put PREP 7.chair 'They are putting baskets on the chair.'
 - b. bá-ná <u>bε-kana</u> tála ο yoko
 sm.2-PAST2 8-basket put PREP 7.chair
 'They put baskets on the chair.'

(Tunen, Mous 1997:125, adapted)

- (2) a. mù nèó: **yìl** <u>wóó</u> <u>nìtān</u> SM.1SG COP take small stone 'I take a small stone.'
 - b. ù <u>kìfá</u> <u>ús</u> **yíl** sm.1 stick short take
 'He took a short stick'

The Bantu/Bantoid borderlands

Where zone A Bantu borders Bantoid in central/West Cameroon

Intro

- Ndikiniméki: Tunen (Bantu zone A);
- Makenene: Nyokon (Bantu zone A);
- Tonga, Bangangté:
 Medumba/Mambəlema
 (Bantoid, E. Bamileke)



Introduction

Intro

Today:

- OV/VO patterns at the Bantu/Bantoid borderlands
- Investigating relevance of information structure (IS) and tense-aspect marking (TAM) for OV vs VO order
- Syntactic profile beyond OV vs VO
- Implications for syntactic reconstruction

Background

Reconstructions of word order

Different proposed reconstructions for Proto-Niger-Congo:

| *SOV | Givón 1975 |
|------------|--|
| *SVO | Heine & Reh 1984; Claudi 1993 |
| *S-AUX-O-V | Gensler 1994; Gensler & Güldemann 2003 |

! Gensler (1994, 1997): Misleading to frame the choice of reconstruction as a dichotomy between OV and VO, because (i) there can also be the intermediate 'syntagm' S-Aux-O-V, (ii) a language may have multiple orders at once to different extents

⇒ Instead of "OV or VO?", ask "what was the word order syntax of Proto-Niger-Congo actually like?" (Gensler 1997:90)

Reconstructions of word order

Different time depths of reconstruction:

Proto-Bantu > Proto-Bantoid (?) > Proto-Niger-Congo

Multiple cycles possible and likely between PNC and modern-day (e.g. Gensler 1997; Hyman 2011)

- \Rightarrow Can we meaningfully reconstruct the syntax of an intermediary stage before Bantu?
- \Rightarrow Are the rare OV patterns independent innovations or are they linked historically?

SOV and reconstrution

- Dugast (1971:6): Tunen OV order is "à ma connaissance absolument unique en bantu" [to my knowledge completely unique in Bantu] (see also Gensler, 1994:6; Bearth 2003)
- Mous (2005): SOV is an innovation in Tunen; partial SOV found also in Nyokon (A45, Cameroon), though not in Gunu (A62a) or Nomaande (A46)
 - Mbam languages share other **innovations** such as ATR vowel harmony (cf Güldemann on MSB)
- Rare/partial S(Aux)OV(X) patterns found in Gur (Senufo), Mande, Ijo

Research questions

RQs

- RQ1 To what extent do TAM and IS influence OV vs VO word order in Tunen and Nyokon? Is it accurate to classify such borderland languages as canonically OV?
- RQ2 To what extent do the languages with OV orders differ syntactically from languages with VO orders?
- RQ3 Is OV at the borderlands historical or innovative?
- RQ4 What can we reconstruct syntactically for an intermediary stage between Proto-Bantu and Proto-Niger-Congo?

Methodology

Methodology

- Fieldwork on Tunen (A44) as part of Bantu Syntax and Information Structure (BaSIS) project
 - 2019: 3.5 months (Ndikiniméki/Yaoundé)
 - 2021/22: 3.25 months (Ndikiniméki/Yaoundé)
- Study of Nyokon (A45) data (Mous, p.c.; Lovestrand 2020)²
 - + follow-up fieldwork with 1 Nyokon speaker (2022, Yaoundé)
- Other data from published literature³



Tunen: Natural speech, elicitation



Nyokon: Elicitation

https://zenodo.org/record/3962412.YgZwUBPMJZo

³See Appendix for full overview of data sources.

²Lovestrand's Nyokon data:

Methodology: Field questionnaires

- Bantu Syntax and Information Structure (BaSIS, Leiden University) project methodology on syntax & IS⁴ (building on QUIS, Skopeteas et al. 2016)
 - ⇒ How does IS influence syntax?
- Consequences of Head-Argument Order on Syntax (CHAOS/C08, Universität Potsdam) project questionnaire on OV/VO patterns (draft version)
 - ⇒ What other syntactic features correlate with VO/OV order?



References

⁴ https://bantusyntaxinformationstructure.com/methodology/

Results

RQ1: TAM and IS

RQ1

RQs

RQ1 To what extent do TAM and IS influence OV vs VO word order? Is it accurate to classify such borderland languages as canonically OV?

To do:

- Investigate range of TAM contexts
- Use controlled elicitation and natural speech to control for influence of IS (e.g. topic, focus, contrast)

Intro

RQ1: Tunen

RQs

RQ1 To what extent do TAM and IS influence OV vs VO word order? Is it accurate to classify such borderland languages as canonically OV?

Tunen:

- S-TAM-O-V-X syntax across tenses (see appendix)
- Thetics = SOV
- VP focus = SOV (or cleft)
- Object focus = SOV (or SVáO or cleft)
- \rightarrow OV as neutral word order in Tunen, found across tenses



RQ1: Tunen

(3) Context: What did the woman give to the other woman? anó ɔsókó hetété indi

a-nó ssókó he-tété indíá SM.1-PAST1 other 19-gourd give 'She gave [a gourd] FOC to the other.'

[PM 1541]

- \Rightarrow SOV for focus on object
- (4) Context: You enter the room and see a broken window, someone announces...

Biéle aná itúbé san.

Biə́lε a-ná ε-túbə́ sana 1.Pierre SM.1-PAST2 7-window break

'Pierre broke the window.'

[EE+EB 1669]

Intro

RQs

RQ1 To what extent do TAM and IS influence OV vs VO word order? Is it accurate to classify such borderland languages as canonically OV?

Nyokon:

- Alternation between OV and VO dependent on tense (see Mous submitted for further detail)
- Thetics = SOV or SVO dependent on tense
- VP focus = SOV or SVO dependent on tense
- \rightarrow TAM is primary conditioning factor for OV vs VO order, not IS

SVO in present tense **regardless of IS status**, e.g. narrow focus on numeral (3); verum (4)

- Context: How many chickens do you see? (5) táá ndukŋ ikɔ'ɔ SM.1PL see chickens three V Num 'We see three chickens.'
- (6)Context: Kinyo is sick. Can Kinyo eat rice? áa, u fur anyé álif. yes sm.1 can eat rice S V V 'Yes, she can eat rice.'

References

Nyokon

Past tense: OV regardless of IS context

- (7) Context: What did you do today? (VP focus) / Who did you give the bananas to? (indirect obj focus) pimbóto ndaá apé ghó. mu SM.1sG bananas give PREP child 'I gave the bananas to the child.'
- \Rightarrow OV order in past tense for both broad focus and focus on indirect object
- (8)Context: Where did you buy the bananas? (non-argument focus) (pimbóta) káp a konon. mu

SM.1SG bananas buy A road

'I bought the bananas at the roadside.'

Nyokon

Past tense: OV regardless of IS context

- (9) Context: What did your father do? (VP focus) / What did your father kill? (object focus) itá ángam ghó father spider kill 'My father killed a spider.'
- (10)Context: What did your father kill? (object focus) ?itá ghó ángam. father kill spider 'My father killed a spider.'
- \Rightarrow SOV in broad focus and narrow focus on object in past tense, SVO is marginal for narrow focus on object ◆□▶◆問▶◆夏▶◆夏▶

Nyokon

NB: 1 example in data of VO in past tense with focus on direct object and given indirect obj:

(11) Context: What did you give to the child? mu nda pimbɔtɔ vɨ.

SM.1SG give bananas PRON.3SG

'I gave him bananas.'

RQs

RQ2 To what extent do the languages with OV orders differ syntactically from languages with VO orders?

To do:

 Investigate general syntactic profile of language e.g. head-finality in other domains, placement of non-arguments (SOVX vs verb-final SOV)

RQ2: Tunen results

RQs

RQ2: Syntactic profile

Intro

RQ2 To what extent do the languages with OV orders differ syntactically from languages with VO orders?

Tunen:

- No low subjects allowed (cf subject inversion in other Bantu)
- Imperatives = V0 (V-IO-D0)
- N-Mod order
- C-Comp order
- Cop-Compl order
- Adjuncts and locative arguments typically postverbal (SOVX)
- → Patterns with SVO languages vs 'true' verb-final SOV languages

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VO (V-IO-DO) in imperatives:

(12)índíé moná imit! indíé mo-ná ε-míté give 1-child 7-calabash 'Give the child a calabash!'

[10 1594]

Head-initiality elsewhere in the syntax, N-Mod order:

tóóye tobanána toté té tofítiti tófande (13)tόόνε to-banána to-têtéá to-fítitie to-fande 13.DEM.PROX 13-banana 13-small 13-black 13-two 'These two small black bananas' [10 885] Intro

RQs

RQ2 To what extent do the languages with OV orders differ syntactically from languages with VO orders?

- No low subjects allowed (cf subject inversion in other Bantu)
- Imperatives = VO
- N-Mod order
- C-Comp order
- Cop-Compl order
- Adjuncts and locative arguments typically postverbal (SVOX/SOVX)
- ightarrow Patterns with SVO languages vs 'true' verb-final SOV languages

VO (V-DO-IO) order in imperatives:

(14) nda manyí ngóm! give water PRON.1SG 'Give me water!'

Head-initiality elsewhere in the syntax, N-Mod order:

(15) pí pimbóto pífu dem.prox bananas two 'these two bananas'

RQ2 results

- Both Tunen and Nyokon share syntactic similarities with VO languages despite having (partial) OV syntax
- Expected if recently grammaticalised from VO origin
- However, Tunen OV order is pragmatically neutral (RQ1) and therefore looks to be the base word order for the verb phrase

RQs

RQ3 Is OV at the borderlands historical or innovative?

- If historical: need to derive VO in other languages
- If innovative: derive OV via grammaticalisation/contact
 - V > Aux (> TAM)
 - Serial verbs
 - Verbal nouns
 - Infinitival constructions
- \Rightarrow If OV is innovative, are such innovations independent or related through shared history / contact?

RQ3: V > Aux

V > Aux (> TAM) grammaticalisation path:

- Do auxiliaries/TAM markers have observable verbal source in Tunen/Nyokon?
- Do Nyokon tense markers differ in syntactic/grammaticalisation status?

RQ3: Tunen

| Marker | Gloss | Time point |
|----------|-------|--|
| -ŋɔ | FUT | future from tomorrow onwards |
| -́ndɔ | PRES | present, immediate future |
| -nź | PAST1 | recent past, just an instant ago |
| -ná | PAST2 | a few hours ago (same day) |
| -ka/-¹ná | PAST3 | yesterday and before |
| -lε | PAST4 | far past; many years ago, before birth |

Table: Tunen tense markers

RQ3: OV/VO grammaticalisation

Nyokon

| label | schema | TAM | verb stem | AO. | remarks |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------|----------|-----------------------------------|
| Subjunctive | Stroit VH | | | Y | subject pronoun obligatory |
| Recent past | H/V | | | Y | |
| Far past | VH | | | Y | |
| Remote past | VHk | - | k | Y | built on Far past |
| Perfect | VH | nòó něků | | N | built on Far past |
| Present Continuous | V+T | nš | no k | N | built on Present; < na cop |
| Conditional | V+T | ná | no k | Y | built on Present continuous |
| Past Imperfective | S mbiá S (O) V(\PR?) (O) | | | Y | |
| Past Imperfective 2 | S mbiá ku V/PAST (O) | mbé à ku | | N | |
| Background | S mbiá V(\Px?)(O) | mbés | | N | |
| Background Past R | S mbiá V (O) | mbiò | | N | |
| Background Moment | Smàà S(O) V(O) | | | Y | |
| Future | mà-Spro V-PAST (O) | | | N | |
| Narrative | pi (+ kš ~ kš) + V | pí | | Y | |
| Present Subject Focus | Compl INF-V-à* (O) | | | N | |
| Recent Past Subject | Compl nóù/nôkú V/PA (O) | nóò | | N | |
| Focus | | nákú | | | |
| Far Past Subject Focus | Compl VerbiPA (O) | | | N | |
| Remote Past Subject Focus | Compl Verb-K/PA (O) | | | N | |
| Procedural | (O) INF-MID-V/H* Obl | | | Y obl | |
| Procedural2 | (O) mbiš INF- V/H* Obl | | | Y | |
| Negative General Present | S sá V/H (O) other á | si | | N | |
| Negative Present | S mà-môkô-káŋ (O) á | nà nàkô káŋ | | N | |
| Negative Background | S mbiá V (O) á | mbés | | N | |
| Negative Past | S mbíá V PAST (O) á | mbis | | N | |

Source: Mous (submitted)



RQ3 results

- Tunen + Nyokon TAM marker appears with SM separate from the verb (S-TAM-OV/VO)
- No clear verbal source for Tunen/Nyokon TAM markers
- Surprisingly little overlap between Tunen and Nyokon TAM system

Intro

RQ3: Infinitival path

Infinitival grammaticalisation path:

Proposed by Mous (2005) for Tunen

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"There is no example of Object-Infinitive order in the limited Nyokon (A45) data."

"[...] Nen (A44):

LOC 0 V (argument)

LOC V '0' (circumstantial)

Nyokon (A45):
a V 0"
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(Mous 2005:12)

i.e. OV order is first derived from infinitival constructions

Tunen

- Preposition and infinitive marker are homophonous, 2
- Multiple instances of *ɔ* in embedded clauses:
- (16) míndɔ siə ɔ mənífé ɔ ɔnyá.
 mε-ndɔ siə ɔ ma-nífé ɔ ɔ-nyá
 sm.1sg-pres want prep 6-water prep inf-drink
 'I want to drink water.'
- (17) miɔkɔ́ alɛ́ ɔ́sɔ ɔ bɛŋgwɛtɛ (ɔ) ɔbáta.
 miɔkɔ́ a-lɛ́ óso ɔ bɛ-ŋgwɛtɛ ɔ ɔ-báta
 chicken sm.1-neg can prep 8-potato prep inf-collect
 "The chicken wasn't able to collect up her potatoes."
 - σ used elswhere as preposition (e.g. σ nioní 'to the market') and left-peripheral topic marker (e.g. σ bέεεbε bεlábónέá bέεεbε, 'As for this food here, ...')

Infinitival constructions

Multiple marking of locative preposition/infinitival prefix also found in Nyokon with marker *a*, with VO syntax:

(18) Vivianə (nə) yár **a** náám **a** kəndáf Vivianne COP want A cook A pork 'Vivianne wants to cook pork.'

OV syntax with finite embedded clause:

(19) Vivianə yár usáá Roger kú **a** kəndáf náám Vivianne want SM.1-say Roger TAM A pork cook 'Vivianne wants Roger to cook the pork.'

- Infinitival constructions alternative grammaticalisation scenario for Tunen and Nyokon
- Nyokon retains VO in embedded non-finite clauses but has OV in finite example; Tunen has OV consistently

RQs

RQ4 What can we reconstruct syntactically for an intermediary stage between Proto-Bantu and Proto-Niger-Congo?

- Are OV patterns independent innovations?
- Is there influence of contact?
- Do we see other OV patterns in the borderlands region, and how do they compare with Tunen and Nyokon?

Discussion: Outstanding questions

- Do other languages at the Bantu/Bantoid borderlands show OV patterns?
 - Is OV in Tikar predictable by TAM or IS?
- Can we identify grammaticalisation sources for the TAM markers?

RQ4: Historical reconstruction

Conclusion

Discussion

- Tunen has a fully established SOV order, Nyokon has partial SOV
- Both languages have other syntactic properties that fit the typical syntactic profile of a VO language
- According to Mous (2005), neighbouring languages Mande and Gunu have no SOV, though there is a lack of data in the borderlands region
- Reconstruction: TAM-dependent, though no clear verbal source synchronically; infinitival path could have applied for both languages
- IS may have been a factor historically, but synchronically is not significant

Conclusion

- Tunen consistently SOV though aligns in other properties with SVO languages, S-Aux-O-V-X
- Nyokon OV in certain tenses, VO in others
- No clear synchronic verbal origin of Aux
- Relevant factor for Nyokon is TAM-context
- For Tunen, OV in multiple IS contexts

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