Ditransitive constructions in Akebu

Nadezhda Makeleva & Andrey Shluinsky

1. Akebu and the data

Akebu (Kebu)

• Ghana-Togo Mountain Kwa language of the group Kebu-Anime
• spoken mainly in the prefecture of Akebu of Togo by ca. 70000 people
• underdescribed
ditransitives addressed only in (Adjeoda 2008: 43-44)

The data:
• fieldtrips in 2012, 2013 and 2016 – authors, Pasha Koval, Nikita Muraviev,
Dasha Shavarina
• village of Djon and neighbouring villages of Kotora and Djiatrame
• in the prefecture of Akebu
• mainly elicited data + data of ca. 3h of texts

2. Cross-linguistic and Kwa background

Typology of ditransitive alignment (Malgukov et al. 2010):
• comparing the P(atient) of montransitives with the T(heme) and R(ipient) of ditransitives
• indirect (P=T=R) vs. constituentive (P=R=T) vs. neutral (P=T=R) alignment

Kwa languages have neutral alignment (see e.g. Lefebvre 1994; Osam 1996;
Essebgy 2010; Creissels & Koudao 2010) (1) and an alternative constituentive
construction based on ‘take’-serial verb constructions (see e.g. Lord 1982;
Essebgy 1999; Shluinsky 2017) (2). Ditransitive verbs are a small class, ‘give’
serial verb constructions are used for other verbs.

1) (1) howusu tót ásafa e-feshi LOGBA
   Howusu 3SG-give Asafo CL-sleep
   ‘Howusu gave Asafo sleep.’ (Dorvol 2008: 137)
2) (2) esi de abofra no ma a abeawa no AKAN
   Esi <take child DEF give-PST old_woman DEF
   ‘Esi gave the child to the old woman.’ (Osam 1994: 20)

Possessive-like ditransitive constructions:
• Recipient is coded like a possessor in a NP
• known, but marginal cross-linguistically (Creissels 1979: 567-574; Croft 1985)
• marginally known in West Africa, as well, but not typical for Kwa (cf.
discussion for Baule by Creissels & Koudao 1977: 245-254; 2010)

3. Overview of Akebu ditransitives


In contrast to other Kwa, three main strategies of alignment of ditransitive verbs (if both objects are expressed):
1. neutral strategy
2. possessive-like strategy
3. strategy with a pronoun reprise

Their distribution is rather tricky.

Similarly to other Kwa, there are also
1. ‘take’ SVs with ditransitives functioning like sceductive strategy
2. ‘give’ SVs introducing recipients with other verbs
3. alternative propositional alignment with verbs of asking

4. Neutral strategy

• Both Theme and Recipient have no overt marking.
• Thus both morphosyntactically are marked as direct objects.
• This strategy is regularly used with:
  1. a pronoun Recipient of 1st or 2nd person (3)
  2. a full NP (4) or pronoun (5) Recipient of 3rd person if the Theme has a

5. Possessive-like strategy

• Recipient is formally marked as a possessor of the Theme (6c)
• the most standard strategy
• used with a full NP (6a) or pronoun (6b) Recipient of 3rd person if the Theme has no possessor

6. Strategy with a pronoun reprise

• Recipient is expressed twice – by an object NP and as a possessive pronoun (7)
• the strategy is regular with pronounal 3rd person Recipients (7) and
  and marginal with full NP Recipients (8)
• the strategy is less standard than the other two strategies

7. Structure of possessive-like strategy

Sequence of a Recipient and a Theme in a possessive-like construction cannot
be analyzed as a single NP (cf. Adjeoda 2008: 43):
• cannot be focalized in ditransitive, not possessive meaning (9)
• regularly used with pronominal Themes (10a), but a possessive NP headed by

8. Monotransitive uses

• Both Theme (11) and Recipient (12) may be omitted in some pragmatic or
  syntactic contexts

9. ‘Take’ serial verb construction

• Used for Theme with ditransitives as secundative strategy (13)
• The only possible structure for a pronounal Theme of 1-2 person (14)

10. Conclusion

strategy
R & T 3 p.

neutral + – + – + –
possessive like – – – + + +
reprise – – – (-) + +
‘take’ SVC + + + + +
+ marks dubious constructions, (+) marks marginal constructions, + marks most typical constructions, ? marks lack of data

Referenes

Abbreviations
NP = noun phrase, PP = prepositional phrase, O = object, T = theme, R = recipient


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