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Encoding habitual in West African languages: a comparative study between Bangime and the Atlantic languages

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Introduction

Habitual is one of the most widespread aspecto-temporal values in Niger-Congo (Nurse, Rose & Hewson 2016: 25). It is defined as a “situation [...] characteristic of an extended period of time, so extended that [...] the situation [...] is viewed, [...] as a characteristic feature of a whole period” (Comrie 1976: 27). Although frequent, habitual is encoded very differently cross-linguistically. This morphosyntactical heterogeneity makes diachronic and comparative analysis difficult. Comparing the word order in habitual positive in the Atlantic languages, only the Tenda-Jaad languages present an AUX-S V order, whereas for all others, the subject appears before the conjugated element, be it a verb or an auxiliary (Montébran 2021: 825). In these languages, the marker dedicated for the habitual (with links to the progressive and future) is *nd/d*. It raises therefore the following questions: could the word order change be linked to the marker? Is it an innovation or a borrowing (if so, from which language)?

This study presents the ways of encoding habitual in different West African languages belonging to the Atlantic group (spoken in Senegal, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau) and compares them to the situation of Bangime (linguistic isolate from Mali, whose classification is still under debate), where the imperfective marker and its allomorphs show similar shapes.

1. Atlantic languages: north branch

1.1 The Jaad languages: Badiaranke and Biafada

In Biafada, the marker *nd-* occurs as an auxiliary, but its morphological shape is unusual in the language. The hypothesis is that it was originally suffixed to the copula *ga* which itself then disappeared (as Wilson (1993) shows it for the negative progressive) and that the suffix was reinterpreted as an auxiliary. Noticeably, the positive habitual construction has two meanings (habitual and future), but its negative counterpart only has a habitual reading (with a dedicated negative marker) and the future negative meaning is encoded by the negative progressive construction.

(1) Biafada (Wilson 1993: 72)	(2) Biafada (Wilson 1993: 73)
<i>nd-m</i> <i>reeg-ə</i>	<i>nd-add-m</i> <i>reeg-ə</i>
HAB-1SG II.come-VF	HAB-NEG.HAB-1SG II.come-VF
“I come usually” or “I will come.”	“I do not come usually.”

In Badiaranke, the habitual is marked by the form *kəd*, which can be analysed as the copula *yak* in its short form *k-*, suffixed by the morpheme *-d*, which can be linked to the morpheme *nd*, since North Atlantic languages are characterized by the consonant mutation in which *-d* is the grade 2 and *-nd* the grade 3 of a same set.

(3) Badiaranke (Cover 2010: 136)
<i>kəd-ən</i> <i>dakkə</i> <i>de</i> <i>mbuur</i>
HAB-1SG _{S1} eat AFF bread
“I (usually) eat bread.”

1.2. The Tenda languages: Basari and Konyagi

In Basari, the marker for habitual and the progressive (both are encoded by the same form) is a suffix *-nd*, occurring in complementary distribution with the suffix *-d* of the future (Perrin 2019: 75-76). Again, *-d* and *-nd* are the grade 2 and 3 of the same set of consonant mutation (see Pozdniakov 2015: 73-77 for details).

(4) Basari (Perrin 2019: 75 - translated from French)	(5) Basari (Perrin 2019: 76 - translated from French)
<i>baɲaʃ</i> <i>k'-mɛ-yəc'-nd'</i>	<i>baɲaʃ</i> <i>k'-mɛ-yəc'-d'</i>
wine IPFV-1SG-buy-HAB/PROG	wine IPFV-1SG-buy-FUT
“I usually buy wine” or “I am buying wine.”	“I will buy wine.”

In Konyagi, the imperfective marker *-dɛ* has a 3rd grade allomorph *-ndɛ* occurring in all other paradigms than “non-anterior enunciative” including habitual (Sachot 1996: 221):

(6) Konyagi (Sachot 1996: 221-222 - translated from French)	Other imperfective paradigms
Non-anterior enunciative	
<i>tókə̀dɛ́-fú</i> “I eat, I will eat.”	<i>tókə̀kə̀ndɛ́-bú</i> “I would eat.”
<i>tókə̀dɛ́-fú-xò</i> “I was eating.”	<i>tókə̀kə̀ndɛ́-bú-xò</i> “I would have eaten.”
<i>tókə̀dɛ́</i> “I don’t eat.”	<i>ròkə̀nd-ú</i> “I eat (again, usually).”
<i>tókə̀dɛ́-w-òlɛ́</i> “I wasn’t eating.”	<i>ròkə̀kə̀nd-ú</i> “I would eat.”
	<i>tòkə̀ryindɛ́</i> “Keep eating!”
	<i>tókə̀kə̀ndɛ́</i> “I would not eat.”
	<i>tókə̀kə̀ndɛ́-w-òlɛ́</i> “I would not have eaten.”
	<i>ntɛ́kə̀nd-ú</i> “I don’t eat (again, usually).”
	<i>ntɛ́kə̀nd-ròk-ú</i> “I would not have eaten.”

2. Atlantic languages: BAK branch

2.1 Jóola Banjal

Out of the Tenda-Jaad group, it is worth noting that Banjal has a negative morpheme *indi* dedicated to the negation of habitual. It occurs as a free morpheme, its grammatical category (auxiliary or not) remains unclear.

(7) Jóola Banjal (Bassène 2006: 125 - translated from French)
<i>e-mandij</i> <i>indi</i> <i>gu-tij</i> <i>e-lliw</i> <i>e-xumba</i>
CL-muslims HAB-NEG 3PL _{S2} -eat CL-meat CL-pork
“Muslims (usually) don’t eat pork meat.”

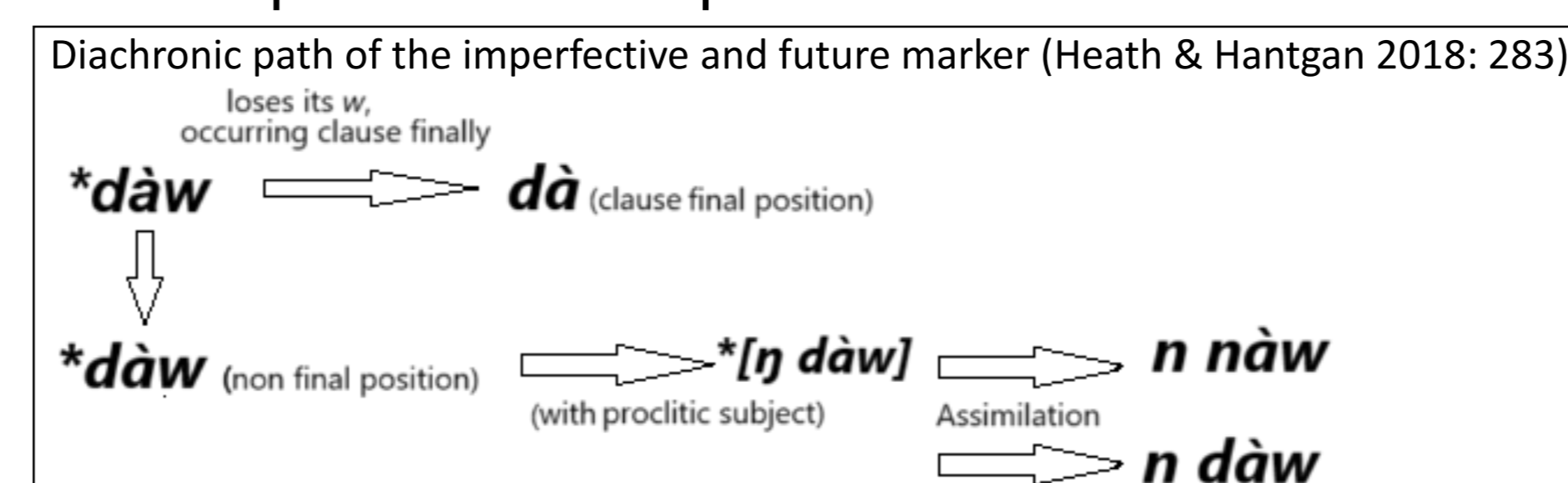
2.2. Jóola Keeraak

Keeraak also has a specific morpheme *ndi* for the negation of habitual, which occurs as an auxiliary, i.e. prefixed by a subject index and suffixed by the standard negative morpheme *-wa*.

(8) Jóola Keeraak (Robert & Segerer 2016: 27)
<i>i-ndi-wa</i> <i>i-rɔk</i> <i>dɪ</i> <i>hɔ-jam-ah</i>
1SG-NEG.HAB-NEG 1SG-work LOC CL _{hm} -rainy.season-DET _{hm}
“I do not work during the raining season.”

3. Bangime

Beyond the Atlantic languages, in Bangime, the imperfective system (terminology of Heath & Hantgan 2018) includes imperfective and future. The meaning of habitual and progressive are expressed by the imperfective paradigm, whose marker is the auxiliary *dà*. The future is marked by the auxiliary *nàw*, which has a minority variant *ndàw* (composed of a nasal proclitic subject morpheme [n=] and an auxiliary *dàw*). Heath and Hantgan suggest that *nàw* is an allomorph of *dà* with specific contexts of use.



It is worth noting, that synchronically, the future marker occurs phrase-finally and the imperfective one appears phrase-medially.



Conclusion

Bybee *et al.* (1994) showed the diachronic path from progressive (itself mostly originating from a locative construction) to general imperfective up to habitual. Considering the range of meanings encoded by the *nd/d* morpheme in Atlantic and *dà/nàw/n-dàw* in Bangime, these two morphemes may be two examples of this grammaticalisation path. Moreover, the evolution of the Bangime auxiliary might provide clues to analyse the Atlantic morpheme. In addition, Pozdniakov (2015: 73) explains that the 3rd grade of consonant mutation in Atlantic comes from the fusion of a nasal morpheme before a lexical root.

Further research will focus on the Jóola languages with the hypothesis that the *i/ɪ* vowel could come from an older TAM or a negation marker, that fused with the habitual morpheme; and on the exploration of the other Atlantic (especially the other Jóola and Tenda-Jaad) languages, looking for possible traces of this morpheme.

Abbreviations

II: second grade initial consonant; 1SG: 1st person singular pronoun; 1SG_{S1/2}: 1st person singular pronoun from the serie 1 or 2; 3PL: 3rd person plural pronoun; AFF: affirmative particle; CL: nominal classifier; DET: determiner; FUT: future; HAB: habitual; IPFV: imperfective; LOC: locative; NEG: negation; NEG.HAB: negative habitual marker; PROG: progressive; VF: final vowel of verb.

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