The role of discourse practice in the spread of linguistic features:

The case of logophoricity

1. Introduction

Logophoric markers in sub-Saharan Africa: an areal phenomenon? (Güldemann 2003, 2008a)

(1) Wan (Southeastern Mande, Nikitina 2012a):

a. bē à nā gē bā bē gōmā then 3SG wife said LOG DEM understood that then his wife said 3SG went ‘then his wife said she LOG understood that’ ‘then his wife said he was left’

Logophoricity: an unlikely candidate for direct borrowing (cf. tone, ATR harmony, word order):

• infrequent in discourse, and mostly occurs in specific speech genres;

• in some languages, restricted in their grammatical function;

• commonly optional; e.g., they may alternate with first person pronouns;

• no evidence of borrowed markers; typically go back to old pronouns and demonstratives.

Dimmendaal (2001: 155): “Logophoric markers are an archaic discourse feature of the Niger-Congo and Nilo-Saharan language families, most likely going back to their common ancestor.

<…> [formally distinct, though functionally similar, logophoric markers occur in neighbouring Afroasiatic languages.”

Goals of this talk:

– address the status of logophoricity in sub-Saharan Africa;

– show how African logophoricity differs from “logophoric” uses of reflexive pronouns; relate it to a special discourse reporting strategy (neither direct nor indirect reporting);

– relate logophoricity to the interactive oral performance of traditional sub-Saharan Africa.

2. Properties of West African logophoricity

African logophoricity: commonly treated as a feature of indirect reporting (Culy 1997; Sells 1987; Andersen 1999; Schlenker 2003; Oshima 2011, inter alia); alleged function: encoding co-reference between a participant of the speech report and a participant of the main clause (Hedinger 1984; Coulmas 1986; Dimmendaal 2001; Güldemann 2003, 2008b, among others). African logophoricity is treated on a par with “logophoric” uses of reflexive pronouns in Japanese, Latin, or Italian, which disambiguate sentences such as John, said that he was in a hurry.

Properties distinguishing West African logophoricity from “logophoric” uses of reflexive pronouns and from markers of indirect discourse (Nikitina 2012a,b):

• Logophoric markers are normally optional, alternating with 1st person markers:

(2) bē è gē ēé! bāā kē è, lā nānā-ē ā mī then 3SG said yeah LOG.EMPH this DEF 2SG lose-STAT.PERF 1SG at ēé! Tālī yā gē, nā gā lé kān-tā-... yeah tomorrow PRT PRT 1SG+COP go PROG walk-at

‘He said: Yeah, as for myself LOG here, you are unable to recognize me [lit. ‘you get lost at me’] Yeah! Now tomorrow I will go for a walk…’

• Logophoricity does not depend on a main verb; logophoric clauses are not subordinated:

(3) bē è dā tālī kālē è dī è lā sālā. then 3SG 3SG.ALN stranger man DEF cow DEF eat started

‘Then he [the hyena] started eating the cow of his [the hare’s] guest’

• Logophoric markers cannot encode 1st person participants (Hyman & Comrie 1981; Wiesemann 1986; Curnow 2002; von Roncador 1992: 166).

(4) a. ĭ gé nāē gā lé bē è dūdū yā then 1SG said 1SG+COP go PROG 1SG said LOG+COP go PROG ‘I said I’m going.’

b. dēgbē, mā-mā ē, ā ā ti dē! Kē lā mī, friend people-PL DEF 3PL+COP many IDPH if 2SG+COP at.place bāā nē ū srō! LOG+COP at.place NEG IDPH ‘Man, those people, they are many! [Even] if you’re [staying] here, I LOG am not [staying].’

c. kē lā zū-ā bā biādā nāē, zē zānā dī! if 2SG come-STAT.PERF LOG wake PURP word true say ‘If you’ve come to wake me LOG up, tell the truth!’

d. ē gē zō bē lā bā pōlī 3SG said come then 2SG LOG wash ‘She said: come and wash me LOG.’

e. bē è bāā kē tsāmē dō tē-ŋ that said LOG+COP 1PL.EXCL elder.brother one kill-PROSP ‘He acted as if he LOG was going to kill one of our elder brothers.’

(6) Donno So, Dogon (Culy 1994: 123; Curnow 2002):

Oumar [inyemɛ jɛmbɔ paza bolum] mīng tāgī O. LOG sack:DEF drop left:1SG 1SG.OBJ informed ‘Oumar told me that he had left without the sack.’
3. Origins of logophoricity

Logophoric markers commonly derive from old 3rd person pronouns and demonstratives (Hyman 1979: 51 on Aghem; Dimmendaal 2001).

Some languages use 3rd person pronouns in a logophoric function, in otherwise “direct” clauses:

(Obolo, Cross River; Aaron 1992):

\[\text{è gwú ţá oékýkó itó ìkbè gwúŋ kàŋ, ämš íkànnú this woman was crying cry say child 3SG.POSS 3SG not.told inyí òwú yè ibé òwú kàgšk3 tìfì tìfì yì give 2SG Q say 2SG not.follow play play this}^{11}\]

“The mother was crying, Saying: My child, did I not tell you not to join in this dance group?”

“Logophoric reporting style” is often edited out of texts. Herault (1978: 171-3) on Adioukrou:

\[\text{è bì á blèkɔ ìfìt ífìt yì}^{12}\]

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4. Areal morphosyntactic properties of West African storytelling

Logophoricity: but one of a family of morphosyntactic strategies transmitted through traditional genres. Other characteristic features include:

- the use of ideophones:

\[\text{è bì á blèkɔ ìfìt ífìt yì}^{12}\]

“He ran very quickly.”

\[\text{è wànghá pù pù pá klà á é tá}^{12}\]

“He put on a shiny white fine shirt.”

- fixed reference of demonstratives:

\[\text{è bì á blèkɔ ìfìt ífìt yì}^{12}\]

(10) a. \text{è zò kè ñá ñá ñá 3SG came DEICT.SHIFT 3PL PERF go} ^{11}

‘When he came, they were [already] gone.’

b. \text{wáá kè é gò kè yàá kàgà li yàá} ^{12}

‘at this point in DEICT.SHIFT 3SG+COP scratch PROGR at here ‘At that time, he was [all] scratching.’

• complex repetitive sentence structure (corresponding to complex information structure):

\[\text{è bì á blèkɔ ìfìt ífìt yì}^{12}\]

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- temporal shifts (Nikitina 2007):

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5. Conclusions

- The notion of logophoricity should be extended beyond the use of specialized markers;

- languages without logophoric markers use 3rd person pronouns as part of a

  (distinguishing self-reference by the narrator from self-reference by characters).

- Morphosyntactic phenomena may show areal distribution without being directly borrowable; the

  use of logophoric style precedes the development of specialized logophoric markers.

- Many West African morphosyntactic strategies are grounded in specific types of communicative practice, transmitted through traditional genres. Their spread across genetic family boundaries need not depend directly on linguistic borrowing.

Selected references