

Deobliquative: a new valence-decreasing category

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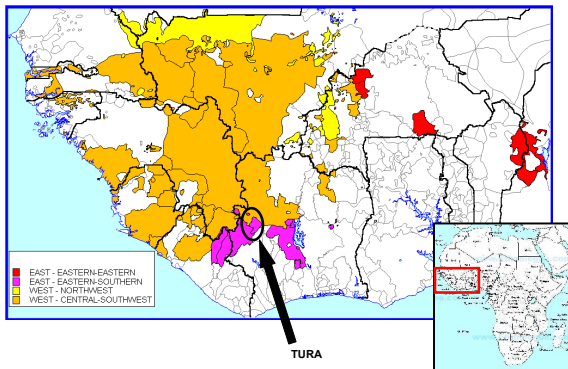
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Tura and the Mande languages:



3

The object of study:

The semantics of the Tura verbal affix $[-L\acute{A}]$ ($-l\acute{a}l$ $-n\acute{a}l$ $-l\acute{o}$)

The claim:

I argue that the primary function of the derivational affix $[-L\acute{A}]$ is to mark on the verb the deletion (or sometimes facultativity) of the argument which is normally obligatorily expressed with the base verb as an indirect object or an adverbial.

2

Preliminaries:

- 24 of some 200 Tura end in $[-L\acute{A}]$
- for 15 of these 24 verbs a similar verb without $[-L\acute{A}]$ can be found
- 9 of the 15 pairs consist of (quasi-)synonyms (in the remaining 6 pairs the semantic relation between the two verbs are less obvious)

4

(Quasi-)synonymous pairs:

- | | |
|--|--|
| (1) <i>b\`ann\`a</i> 'fall (of a group, mass)' | <i>b\`an</i> 'fall (of a group, mass)' |
| <i>b\`hiil\`a</i> 'fall (fast)' | <i>b\`hili</i> 'fall (fast)' |
| <i>dal\`a</i> 'fall' | <i>daa</i> 'enter; fall' |
| <i>d\`ol\`o</i> 'stop; wait' | <i>d\`o</i> 'stand; wait; stop' |
| <i>giinn\`a</i> 'roll (up)' | <i>gini</i> 'roll' |
| <i>gbiel\`a</i> 'drag, trail' | <i>gbie</i> 'pull, draw' |
| <i>ma(a)n\`a</i> 'fall (with a blow)' | <i>maa</i> 'hit, strike, beat; fall (of a bird of prey)' |
| <i>weinn\`a</i> <i>weenn\`a</i> 'throw (here and there)' | <i>wein</i> 'throw (away)' |
| <i>yala</i> 'sit down' | <i>yaa</i> 'sit down' |

5

Pairs without (quasi-)synonymous meanings:

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| (2) <i>b\`hiol\`a</i> 'turn upside-down' | <i>b\`huo</i> 'cover' |
| <i>giel\`a</i> 'send smb for smth' | <i>gie</i> 'pass (by, through)' |
| <i>gbaann\`a</i> 'bend, tilt; squat' | <i>gbaan</i> 'fix, establish' |
| <i>naan\`a</i> 'bow, stoop' | <i>naa</i> 'stick (to), get stuck' |
| <i>wal\`a</i> 'rise, get up' | <i>waa</i> 'arrive' |
| <i>zinn\`a</i> 'get down' | <i>zin</i> 'touch' |

6

Unpaired verbs:

- (3) a. *p\`iol\`a* 'turn; coil; wring'
- seel\`a* 'move, change position; turn'
- y\`onn\`a* 'squint (the eyes); become overcast with clouds (of the sky)'
- yuvl\`a* 'crash down'
- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| b. <i>gal\`a</i> 'change, transform' | c. <i>kol\`o</i> 'educate, bring up, train' |
| <i>gbal\`a</i> 'thunder' | <i>tal\`a</i> 'become black, blacken' |
| <i>sala</i> 'sweep' | <i>zana</i> 'wake up' |
| <i>tan\`a</i> 'lean against' | |
| <i>wal\`a</i> 'collapse' | |

7

Common morphosyntactic properties:

- the segmental verbal TAM-marking attaches to the right of $[-L\acute{A}]$ before any postverbal constituents
- the non-segmental TAM-marking (i.e., tone change) affects only $[-L\acute{A}]$ if the preceding syllable of the verb has a lower tone and both $[-L\acute{A}]$ & the preceding syllable of the verb, if the latter has the same tone

8

dɔ́lɔ́ ‘stop’ & *lɔ́* ‘go’

- (4) *òò* *lɔ́* *kalaj* *lé*
3SG.SUBJ.NEG.TAM go\TAM-TAM school to
‘He did not go to school.’
- (5) *òò* *dɔ́-lɔ́* *yáálé*
3SG.SUBJ.NEG.TAM stand-|LÁ|\TAM-TAM yesterday
‘He did not stop yesterday.’

9

sáálá ‘sweep’ & *póló* ‘detach’

- (6) *òò* *à* *lé* *póló*
3SG.SUBJ.NEG.TAM 3SG tip detach\TAM-TAM
‘He did not open it.’
- (7) *òò* *kwíí* *gí* *sála*
3SG.SUBJ.NEG.TAM house inside sweep\TAM-TAM
‘He did not sweep the house.’

10

Common morphosyntactic properties:

- **transposition:** |-LÁ| can be detached from the verb and function as a kind of support verb to give the verb it is part of the combinatorial possibilities of a noun, e.g. for purposes of focalization (cf. Bearth 1971:171-176). I consider this to be an instance of (partial) antimorphologization (cf. Idiatov 2005:64-67, forthcoming).

11

gbáálá ‘thunder’

- (8) *lá* *gbála*
rain-TAM thunder\TAM-TAM
‘It thundered.’

12

gbáálá ‘thunder’ → ‘It thundered again.’

wɔ́-transposition (‘do’-periphrasis)

- (9) *lá* *gbáálá* *déé* *ké* *wɔ́*
rain-TAM thunder new a.certain do\TAM-TAM
‘It thundered again.’

|LÁ]-transposition

- (10) *lá* *gbá* *déé* *ké* *lɔ́*
rain-TAM thunder₁ new a.certain thunder₂\TAM-TAM
‘It thundered again.’

13

The previous account of the semantics of |-LÁ|:

Bearth (1970:170) analyses |-LÁ| as a derivational suffix with an intensive meaning (“valeur intensive”)

14

(Quasi-)synonymous pairs:

- | | |
|--|--|
| (1) <i>bánná</i> ‘fall (of a group, mass)’ | <i>bân</i> ‘fall (of a group, mass)’ |
| <i>bhíilá</i> ‘fall (fast)’ | <i>bhíli</i> ‘fall (fast)’ |
| <i>dalá</i> ‘fall’ | <i>daa</i> ‘enter; fall’ |
| <i>dɔ́lɔ́</i> ‘stop; wait’ | <i>dɔ́</i> ‘stand; wait; stop’ |
| <i>gínná</i> ‘roll (up)’ | <i>gíni</i> ‘roll’ |
| <i>gbíelá</i> ‘drag, trail’ | <i>gbíe</i> ‘pull, draw’ |
| <i>ma(a)ná</i> ‘fall (with a blow)’ | <i>maa</i> ‘hit, strike, beat; fall (of a bird of prey)’ |
| <i>weinná</i> <i>weenná</i> ‘throw (here and there)’ | <i>wein</i> ‘throw (away)’ |
| <i>yalá</i> ‘sit down’ | <i>yaa</i> ‘sit down’ |

15

A new account of the semantics of |-LÁ|:

I argue that the primary function of the derivational affix |-LÁ| is to mark on the verb the deletion (or sometimes facultativity) of the argument which is normally obligatorily expressed with the base verb as an indirect object or an adverbial.

16

- The derivation with $|-L\acute{A}|$ in Tura concerns motion verbs and (change of) posture verbs.
- The suppressed indirect object or adverbial has locative semantics (typically, it is the goal).
- The argument may be suppressed because it is referentially indefinite, as with *yalá* ‘sit down’ and *bánná* ‘fall’.
- In a few cases, the argument may be suppressed because it is coreferential to the subject or the direct object, as with *dóló* in the meaning ‘wait’.

17

yaa vs. *yalá* ‘sit down’

- (11) a. *yalá!*
b. **yaa!*
‘Sit down!’
- (12) a. *yaa gbààné tà!*
sit.down chair on
b. *?yalá gbààné tà!*
sit.down- $|-L\acute{A}|$ chair on
‘Sit down on the chair!’

18

bân vs. *bánná* ‘fall (of a group, mass)’

- (13) *án gwee bân zúlú-lèè bhà*
1SG.SUBJ.TAM stone let.fall\TAM-TAM wash-place\L on
‘I dropped the stones in the washing place.’
- (14) *án gwee bánná zúlú-lèè bhà*
1SG.SUBJ.TAM stone let.fall- $|-L\acute{A}|$ \TAM-TAM ~~zúlú-lèè~~ bhà
‘I dropped the stones (somewhere, here and there, on the ground).’

19

bân vs. *bánná* ‘fall (of a group, mass)’

- (13) *án gwee bân zúlú-lèè bhà*
1SG.SUBJ.TAM stone let.fall\TAM-TAM wash-place\L on
‘I dropped the stones in the washing place.’
- (14) *án gwee bánná (séé tà)*
1SG.SUBJ.TAM stone let.fall- $|-L\acute{A}|$ \TAM-TAM ground on
‘I dropped the stones (somewhere, here and there, on the ground).’

20

dó vs. *dóló* in the meaning ‘wait’

- (15) *dó/*dóló ò gòn, án nù-ì!*
wait 1SG for 1SG.SUBJ.TAM come-PROG
‘Wait for me, I’m coming.’
- (16) *ì dóló/*dó, e nù-à*
2SG.SUBJ.TAM wait\TAM-TAM 1SG.SUBJ.TAM come-FUT
‘If you wait, he’ll come.’
- (17) *e dóló-ì/?dó-ì wééé gòn*
3SG.SUBJ.TAM wait-PROG money for
‘He’s waiting for the money.’

21

Why the proposed analysis of the semantics of $|-L\acute{A}|$ is better?

- It offers a straightforward account of the examples such as the ones just presented
- It squares well with the fact that the derivation with $|-L\acute{A}|$ in Tura concerns motion verbs and (change of) posture verbs
- It suggests a plausible etymology for $|-L\acute{A}|$, viz. a demonstrative root **tá* ‘there’
- Similarly, the cognate affixes in Busa *-tɛ*, Boko *-(l)ɛ* and Bokobaru *-rɛ* can be brought back to another a demonstrative root **tɛ* ‘there’

22

A label for $|-L\acute{A}|$:

- some terms used for comparable derivations: *deobjective*, *indefinite object deletion*, *absolutive*, *reflexive*, and sometimes more generally *suppressive*

(locative) deobliquative/deoblique

(locative) oblique suppressive

(with two subtypes: indefinite & coreferential)

23

$|-L\acute{A}|$ from a typological perspective:

- the kind of derivation expressed by $|-L\acute{A}|$ appears to be typologically unique

“[valence changes involving] removal of an indirect object or an oblique argument [are] unattested”

(Haspelmath & Müller-Bardey 2004)

24

Is |-LÁ| really so unique?

YES...

- I know no exact analogues to the Tura derivation in |-LÁ|outside of Eastern Mande
- I know no languages with affixes whose main function would be mark on the verb the suppression of an indirect object or adverbial

BUT...

actually, some parallels can be found...

25

Some cross-linguistic parallels:

French

- (18) *Bon, moi, j'y vais*
 well I I-there go
 'Well, I'm leaving (lit.: 'Well, I, I go there').'

26

Some cross-linguistic parallels:

indirect object reflexives

Russian

- (19) a. *Ivan stroit sebe dom*
 Ivan builds oneself.DAT house.ACC
 b. *Ivan stroitsja*
 Ivan builds-REFL
 'Ivan is building a house for himself.'
- (20) a. *Ivan zadajot sebe vopros*
 Ivan asks oneself.DAT question.ACC
 b. *Ivan zadajotsja voprosom*
 Ivan builds-REFL question.INST
 'Ivan is asking himself a question.'

27

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