Guillaume Segerer[1] – WOCAL, Buea, August 23, 2012

Reciprocal, antipassive and the plurality of relations : parallel developments in Bantu and Atlantic

1. The extension -*an* in Bantu

Meeussen (1967: 92): Proto-Bantu : *-*an* : reciprocal
Guthrie (1970): cs 2185 : *-*an*: reciprocal / corporate, cs 2186 : *-*an*: neuter
Schadeberg (2003: 76): '(...) I suggest that the reciprocal meaning derives from the wider associative meaning.'

2. The reciprocal marker

Most descriptions present the suffix -*an* as reciprocal only (but they may ignore or underestimate other meanings)
Whenever the associative meaning is given (which is quite frequent), it is generally in addition to the reciprocal one[2].
> -*an* will preferably be labelled *reciprocal*

3. Polysemy of -*an*

Associative / comitative (very frequent), simultaneity / togetherness (Herero), co-participation (Tswana), alterative (Songye), attributive (Lega), intransitive (Kigiryama, Lomongo), 'do pointlessly' (Kimaatumbi), 'prolonged action' (Xhosa, Zulu), intensive (Tumbuka, Kela, Lomongo, Shi), depatientive / arbitrary object (Bulu), middle (Laadi, Lingala), generic/quantificational (Kirundi), potential (Fang), essive (Kikaonde), habitual (Kinyamwezi), frequentative (Zulu), repetitive (Ngangela), stative (Duala, Orungu, Luyana).

F. Lichtenberk (2008: 33) :

Sometimes, the reciprocal function is seen as part of a set of meanings (that is, as participating in a polysemy); sometimes, it is considered a special case of a more general function. No single label can do justice to the variety of functions that the relevant forms can express in the various languages. There is one notion that underlies the great majority (though not all) of the functions: plurality of relations.

Most of the labels found for -*an* may be grouped under this general notion: p**lurality of relations**

plurality of participants	plurality of events
reciprocal *(frequent)*	intensive *(Tumbuka, Kela, Lomongo, Shi)*
associative *(frequent)*	repetitive *(Ngangela)*
comitative *(frequent)*	frequentative *(Zulu)*
co-participation *(Tswana)*	habitual *(Kinyamwezi)*
alterative *(Songye)*	generic *(Kirundi)*
arbitrary object *(Bulu)*	quantificational *(Kirundi)*
simultaneity *(Herero)*	attributive *(Lega)*
togetherness *(Herero)*	essive *(Kikaonde)*
	stative *(Duala, Orungu, Luyana)*
	potential *(Fang)*
	'do pointlessly' *(Kimaatumbi)*
	prolonged action *(Xhosa, Zulu)*

4. Syntax of -*an*

Syntactic patterns with -*an* : proposed hierarchy and generalization

Pattern 1 : SUB[PL] – V-*an* – Ø	Reciprocal, plural subject
Pattern 2 : SUBJx_{sg} & SUBJy_{sg} – V-an – Ø	Reciprocal, conjoint subject
Pattern 3 : SUBx_{sg} – V-*an* – with y_{sg}	Reciprocal, disjoint subject
Pattern 4 : SUB[SG] – V-*an* – Ø	Antipassive reading with SG subject
Pattern 5 : SUB[PL] – V-*an* – Ø	Reciprocal or Antipassive reading
Pattern 6 : SUB – V-*an* – Ø	Antipassive only, RCP requires a different marker

If, in a given language, a given pattern is attested, then the preceding pattern in the hierarchy is most probably attested as well.

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[2] One exception is Kagulu (Petzell 2008:138), where the REFL prefix is used for a RECP use, and the suffix -*any* is described as *associative* only (although still glossed REC)

5. Antipassive uses of –an: a few examples

Lega (zone D) : stative   *-karya* 'to help'   *-karanya* 'to be helpful'

Kirundi (zone D) :   *abanyéeshuúle   ba-a-tuk-an-ye*
students   3p-PST-insult-AN-asp
'Students insulted each other.' ~ 'Students insulted people$_{arbitrary}$.'

Kikaonde (zone L) : essive   *-suma* 'bite'   *-sumana* 'be a biter'

Lunda (zone L) : potential   *sum-a* 'bite'   *sum-an-a* 'be biting, likely to bite'
     tuk-a 'insult'   *tuk-an-a* 'be insulting'

Kete (zone L) :   *-p̀-* 'donner'   *-p̀-an* 'donner aux autres ; distribuer'

6. Distribution of antipassive –an in Bantu
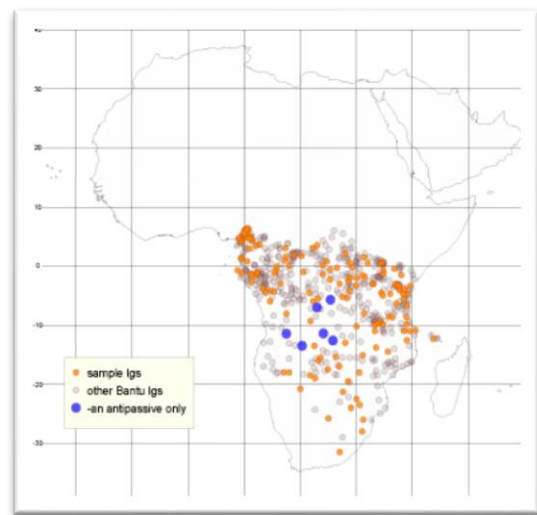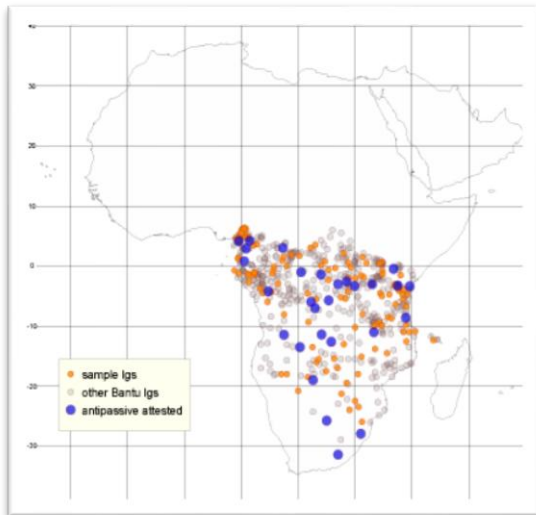
7. The Atlantic parallel

In the Joola cluster of the Bak subgroup of the Atlantic languages, there are interesting variations in the uses of the 'reciprocal' extension. As in Bantu, verbal extensions are suffixes, but the actual forms are quite different. In Joola, the general form for the reciprocal extension is *-ɔɔr*. The following examples are taken from Kerak, a Joola variety spoken in Cabrousse, Senegal (personal fieldwork).

ba-ɲʊl-ab   **bɔɔbʊ**   **kɔɔ**   **kʊ-bʊj-<u>ɔɔr</u>-ɛm**
CL.ba-child-DET.CL.ba   DEM.CL.ba   PR.CL.ku   CL.ku-hit-<u>RECP</u>-TAM
'*these children are fighting*'

As in many Bantu languages, both the conjoint and disjoint patterns may be used :

Koko   **kɔɔ**   **di**   **Pol**   **kɔɔ**   **kʊ-ya-<u>ɔɔr</u>-ʊm**
Koko   PR.CL.ku   and   Paul   PR.CL.ku   CL.ku-beat-<u>RECP</u>-TAM
'*Koko and Paul fought*'

Koko   **ɔɔ**   **a-ya-<u>ɔɔr</u>-ʊm**   **di**   **Pol**
Koko   PR.CL.a   CL.ku-beat-<u>RECP</u>-TAM   and   Paul
'*Koko and Paul fought*'

Kerak, unlike most other joola varieties, allows a singular subject with a verb displaying the RECP suffix. In this case, the meaning is still semantically transitive, but the presence of an object is impossible. Moreover, an additional meaning (iterative/frequentative/intensive) is observed, thus resembling the case of Bantu languages such as Tumbuka, Kela, Lomongo, Shi or Ngangela (see above):

a-ɲʊl-aw   **ɔɔ**   **a-bʊj-<u>ɔɔr</u>-ɛm**
CL.a-child-DET.CL.a   PR.CL.a   CL.a-hit-<u>RECP</u>-TAM
'*the child is fighting all the time*'

8. Conclusion

This reciprocal-antipassive polysemy, occuring in unrelated languages, involving different morphological material and yielding similar semantic outcomes, is but one of the possible results of the general function of the so-called reciprocal extension, which is to indicate a **plurality of relations**.

[For a list of references see the complete handout at *http://www.guillaumesegerer.fr/ling.html*]

9. References

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[3] Online at http://www.africananaphora.rutgers.edu/downloads/casefiles/IkalangaAS.pdf