

## The grammar of action nominals in Tigemaxo (Bozo, Mande)

Thomas Blecke

SIL - Mali

Despite the rising interest in non-finite verb forms (infinitives, participles, converbs, action nominals (AN)) among typologically oriented linguists (e.g. König & van der Auwera 1990, Haspelmath & König 1995, van der Auwera 1998), insights into the topic from West African languages are still scarce. To help fill this huge gap, the present paper provides a descriptively oriented, text-corpus-based analysis of action nominals in Tigemaxo.

As a starting point, the different types of verb-to-AN-derivations are briefly summarized: morphological, tonal and conversion for the majority of lexemes. The well-known semantic problem with ANs to discern an event reading from a result reading (cf. Menolli 2006) is investigated by a pluralization test: Typically, ANs like *dunbu* 'hitting with fist', which nominalize the situation (event, state), are not pluralizable, while others, like *munãã* 'coldness', nominalize the result and accept a plural.

Syntactically, ANs behave as nouns in that they are found in all NP slots of the Mande-typical S-AUX-O-V-Px clause structure, including pseudo-clefting and left dislocation. At the same time, complex ANs retain their verbal argument structure alignment (*xɔnde gu nou-bãã gu* (enemy/DEF/city-destroy/DEF) 'the enemy's destruction of the city'), which also mirrors the left-branching possessive NP constructions.

Other noteworthy phenomena treated are:

- light verb constructions, with AN as Direct Object, followed by a semantically bleached verb (*ye bãã wale* (3P/destroying/do) 'They have done some damage.')

- similarities between AN + POSTP complements (*a n hada sige ga* (3S/1S/prevent/leaving/from) 'She has prevented me from leaving.')

and converb constructions (*a ye siɛŋa ɪ xalɛ-tɔɔ g'i*. (3S/3P/greet/3S.LOG/pass-IMPV.PART/DEF/in) 'She has greeted them while passing by').

- similarities between ANs and infinitival constructions, esp. clause-initially: *(be) maasɛwɛ di n mãĩ*. (PARTCL/speak.ill/NEG/COP/good) '(to) speak ill [of others] is not good.'

At the discourse level, ANs typically introduce typified events as sentence topics, which corresponds to a stylistically valued register of use.

In concluding, the apparent ambivalent nature of ANs, retaining verbal and taking nominal properties and the close links between different non-finite verb forms in Tigemaxo corroborate the cross-linguistic validity and similarity of ANs and non-finite verb forms in general.

