

Auxiliaries verbs and serial verb constructions in Ewondo

Christophe Onambélé

University of Paris 8 - France

This paper intends to sketch the serial verb constructions (henceforth SVCs) with auxiliaries verb in Ewondo. Ewondo is a cameroonian Bantu language classified as A.72a within the beti fang linguistic subgroup. Unlike other Bantu languages as Yoruba, Ewe, Ijo ..., SVCs in Ewondo have never been analysed. SVCs and auxiliaries verbs are a complex and a very creative part of the Ewondo verbal system. They constitute a serie of verbs used either to describe a serie or sequence of actions, or to show an intensive repeated action. Auxiliaries verbs occur in many SVCs.

According to Redden (1979), SVCs in Ewondo have (N+) V (+N) + V ((+N) + V) structure.

(1) SM 1st Pers.Sing- be-PRES Cl.5 thing go
"I can go"

To express the meaning can, be able to, Ewondo uses a class 5 noun meaning thing, matter, affair in a phrase with BE plus another verb. (1) literally means I am (in) state (to) go, or I am (of) matter/capability (to) go. But a good translation is I can go.

Auxiliary verbs are classified in three subgroups according to semantic considerations [Abessolo et al. (1982), Abéga (1969)], but Redden (1979) and Essono (2000) make distinction based on their distribution.

(2) "Woman that SM 3rd Pers.Sing- surpass (AUX) love her- husband"
That woman loves her husband very much

(3) "Woman that SM 3rd Pers.Sing- step over ditch"
That woman steps over the ditch

(cross over, step over, surpass) is used as an aspectual to express the meaning of something which is enough (2); while in (3), it is an independent verb. Note that in sentence (2), we have two auxiliaries verb appearing together "surpass" and "love", while the former appears as an auxiliary or an aspectual particle, the latter occurs as an independent verb. This particle receives the tense feature and a verbal noun as complement. My talk will be devoted to propose a derivational analysis of SVCs involving auxiliaries verb. (Chomsky, 1995; 2001), (Stewart, 2001), (Baker & Stewart, 2002), (Choi, 2003)