

The basic locative construction in Gurene

Samuel Awinkene Atintono

University of Manchester - UK

In this paper, I examine the Basic Locative Construction (BLC) in Gurene, a Gur (Niger-Congo) language spoken in Ghana. The BLC is the canonical unmarked response to a “where-search question”. In Gurene, the response usually requires a Figure in the subject position, a verbal component that describes the position of the Figure, an obligatory locative noun phrase that expresses the ground and a postpositional element that designates the search domain. I focus on the verbal component by examining the form class of contrastive positional verbs from which elements are chosen to code the spatial orientation of the figure with respect to the ground. In addition, I discuss the conditions under which some elements of the BLC can be omitted. The findings reported on are based on data elicited using picture stimuli developed at the Max-Planck Institute of Psycholinguistics (MPI), Nijmegen, Bowerman and Pederson 1993, Ameka et al. 1999. A significant finding of this study is that Gurene uses a set of positional verbs which are more than seven in its BLC. Thus, Gurene can be classified as belonging to the multiverb type of Typology III following Ameka & Levinson (2007), and Levinson & Wilkins (2006) cross-linguistic classification of positional and locative verbs.