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CARITIVE CONSTRUCTIONS IN MWAN

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Abstract: The paper deals with strategies for expressing caritive meanings in Mwan (Niger-Congo < Mande < South Mande). The difference between the strategies used in Mwan and in some other languages of the same family (Gban, Looma, Bambara) is discussed. Conclusions are made about the grammaticalization of constructions with the suffix *-kle* and the postposition *blaam* into specialized caritive means.

Key words: Mwan, South Mande, Bambara, caritive constructions

CONSTRUCTIONS CARITIVES EN MWAN

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Résumé : L'article traite des stratégies d'expression des significations caritives en mwan (Niger-Congo < Mande < Mande Sud). La différence entre les stratégies utilisées en mwan et en certaines autres langues de la même famille (gban, looma, bambara) est discutée. On en conclut que les constructions avec le suffixe *-kle* et la postposition *blaam* subissent le processus de grammaticalisation et se transforment en moyens caritifs spécialisés.

Mots clés : mwan, Mandé Sud, bambara, constructions caritives

1. Introduction

The caritive is a relatively new “comparative concept” (Haspelmath 2010), which is defined in Oskolskaya et al. (2020: 7) as follows: “caritive describes non-involvement (including, but not limited to

absence) of a participant (Absentee) in a situation, with the non-involvement predication semantically modifying the situation or a participant of another situation”.

The caritive in African languages is practically not studied. I am only aware of studies conducted as part of the caritive research project (Oskolskaya 2019; Fedotov 2020; Mishchenko 2020). It should be noted that, despite the relative genetic proximity of Mwan to Looma and Gban, there are not so many similarities in terms of expressing caritive meanings. More similarity is observed between the means of expressing caritive meanings between Mwan and Bambara.

2. Data and methodology

The data were collected by the author during several field trips to the Ivory Coast (2003–2020). The following types of data were used: a) spontaneous narratives and dialogues; b) written sources (stories, book of proverbs); c) elicited data. I used the caritive questionnaire designed by Sofia Oskolskaya (2018; 2020).

The next stage was the analysis and comparison of the data obtained. The proportion of caritive constructions of different types in natural and elicited data was taken into account. The results obtained for Mwan were compared with the materials on Gban, Looma and Bambara. The conclusion about the grammaticalization of the suffix *-kle* and the postposition *blaan* into a specialized caritive marker was made.

3. Caritive constructions in Mwan

3.1. Overview of caritive constructions in Mwan

Mwan uses the following means to express caritive values:

- word-level negation (suffix *-kle*):

- (1) *nè* *dε-kle* *nεε-kle*
 child father-NEG mother-NEG
 ‘fatherless motherless child’

– combinations with certain nouns or adjectives:

(2) *gbàán wε kpu*
 dog tail piece
 ‘dog without tail (it was cut off)’.

(3) *À són kló ò.*
 3SG.NSBJ tooth idle COP
 ‘S/he is without teeth’

– postpositions *blaan* ‘after’ and *zanta* ‘behind’:

(4) *À dε blaán ga kpà-à à ma.*
 3SG.NSBJ father after illness put-PFV 3SG.NSBJ on
 ‘Without his father he fell ill (lit. After his father the illness fell on him).’

– dependent clauses with existential negation:

(5) *Nè é nu-à yaan é lé ké bɔ̀tò*
 child ART come-PFV yam art with and bag
láò (à kóó).
 COP.NEG 3SG.NSBJ hand
 ‘The child brought this yam without a bag (in his hands).’

– general verbal negation:

(6) *È jà ké yaa púbo wo.*
 3SG GO.PFV and NEG greeting do
 ‘He left without saying good-bye.’

The next section contains the analysis of the presented above means of transmitting the caritive values in Mwan.

3.2. Attributive caritive constructions

3.2.1. Constructions with the suffix *-kle*.

I classify the marker *-kle* as a derivative suffix which cannot be used independently (for details see Perekhval'skaya 2015). It can be attached to nouns or verbs turning them into words used as noun modifiers.

With nouns *-kle* forms adjectives which have caritive meaning, see (7).

- (7) a. *wεε* ‘tail’ *gbàán wεεkle* ‘dog without tail’
 b. *gaan* ‘foot, wheel’ *sòò gaankle* ‘bicycle without wheel’
 c. *wíj* ‘top’ *fě wíjkle* ‘house without roof’
 d. *trε* ‘eye’ *mεε trεkle* ‘blind person (without eyes)’

It is worth noting that in (7) we deal with inalienable nouns. Examples (8) demonstrate the use of *-kle* with alienable nouns, in this case the complex N-*kle* is linked to the preceding NP with the postposition *lé* ‘with’.

- (8) a. *ziè* ‘sauce’ *pebhle zièkle lé* ‘food without sauce’
 b. *kulanj* ‘electricity’ *wàla kulanjkle lé* ‘village without electricity’

This shows that the suffix *-kle* can be classified as a dedicated caritive means. Constructions presented in (8) may be translated as “with without-N” or probably deserve the label “anticomitative” (Kämpfe & Volodin 1995).

With verbs, *-kle* forms attributive constructions with negative meaning (9).

- (9) a. *Á* *maza* *ò* *wèèn* *mi-kle* *glán*
 3.SG.NSBJ need COP wine drink-NEG guy
 do *ma.*
 one on
 ‘He needs a guy who doesn’t drink alcohol.’

- b. *Nè yá-kle mu é, ò séli wo Wàànbhaa ni*
 child give.birth-NEG PL ART 3PL prayer do god to
ké ò nè sró wò.
 and 3PL child getting do
 ‘Childless (women), they pray to God to have children.’

These constructions could be analyzed as negative participles or negative converbs, as in Mwan unmarked verbs cannot be used as NPs.

3.2.2. Combining with the relational noun *kpu* or the adjective *kló*.

The suffix *-kle* denotes the situation of the absence of a participant as stable. If it is known or supposed that the NP became N-less at certain point, it should be explicit.

- (10) a. *gbàán wée kpu* ‘dog with cut tail’
 b. *mée gaan kpu* ‘man without leg’

Combinations with *kpu* are genitive constructions as *kpu* is a relational noun ‘piece, something that was cut off’: cf. *bluu lè kpu* ‘the end of the bread’; *dìy yri kpu* ‘a cut piece of a tree’; *blàkò kpu* ‘a cork made of a piece of bamboo’. So, examples presented in (10) are just particular cases of the use of *kpu*. However, its usage is obligatory if the way of the loss was known or presumed (11).

- (11) a. *mée gaan kpu* ‘man without leg (with leg cut)’
 b. **mée gaankle*

(11b) is denied on semantic reasons: it would mean that a person was born without legs, which is considered impossible.

The adjective *kló* ‘idle, useless’ forms the attributive construction with the Absentee (12).

- (12) *Máni dà-à Bijàn ké à sónbhe kló ò.*
 Mani return-PFV Abidjan and 3SG.NSBJ tooth idle COP
 ‘Mani returned from Abidjan without a tooth.’

In my corpus, *kló* in caritive constructions occurs only with nouns *són* ‘teeth’, *sónbhe* ‘tooth’. Taking into account expressions like *fě kló* ‘unfinished house’ it may be supposed that *kló* points out to something incomplete that lacks an integral part.

3.3. Constructions with postpositions

The meanings of concomitant circumstances, a cause or a condition as well as the absence of a companion and the addition of a participant are most often coded by the postposition *blaan* ‘after’ or much less often by the postposition *zanta* ‘behind’. We deal here with the expansion of the meaning ‘after / behind N’ → ‘without N’.

Consider the following examples: cause (13), condition (14); concomitant circumstances (15); absence of a participant (16); addition of a participant (17).

- (13) *Nìníí ò yrèté blaán.*
 cold COP sun after
 ‘It is cold without sun.’
- (14) *Mεε laa sɔ bo-lè tré ta yì*
 person NEG can rest-SBJV earth on water
pegéé pεble blaán.
 and food after
 ‘Man cannot live on the earth without water and food.’
- (15) *Á neε blaán ga kpà-à nè é ma.*
 3SG.NSBJ mother after illness put-PFV child ART on
 ‘Without the mother the child fell ill.’
- (16) a. *Í nu ge-le Bijàn é zanta.*
 1SG FUT go-SUP Abidjan 2SG behind
 ‘I will go to Abidjan without you.’

- b. *Yaá nu-le é de blaan!*
 2SG.NEG.COP come-SUP 2SG father after
 ‘Do not come without your father!’
- (17) a. *Mí blaan mɛɛ sóó lè yàà.*
 1SG.EMPH after person five FOC COP.PFV
 ‘There were five people besides me.’
- b. *Yáa sróókpa gbe bhèèké láò lì bhé blaan èè?*
 2SG.POSS song manner other COP.NEG ever this after Q
 ‘Don’t you have another song, **apart from that one?**’

The example (17b) presents a negative question; the negative copula is not connected with the caritive construction that uses the postposition *blaán* (*bhé blaán* ‘besides this one’).

The following examples (18a–b) should be interpreted as condition or concomitant circumstances and not as absence of an instrument; as the latter meaning (to do something without NP) is expressed by dependent copular negative clauses, see §3.4.

- (18) a. *Waa sɔ wi de-lè màfá blaán.*
 3P.NEG can animal kill-SBJV gun after
 ‘One can’t kill an animal without a gun.’
- b. *Waa sɔ yri kláá-lé poo blaán.*
 3PL.NEG can tree chop-SBJV ax after
 ‘One can’t chop down a tree without an ax.’

3.4. Negative copular clauses

In my data, the meanings of the absence of content, means of transportation, tool or temporarily possessed object are encoded by copular negative clauses with the negative copula *láò/làò*. These clauses are often but not always introduced by the conjunction *ké*. This conjunction has a large range of usages and in this case it denotes an action simultaneous with the action of the main clause. Consider the following examples:

Absence of material (24).

- (24) È fě é dùà ké làsò láò à ba.
 3SG house ART put.PFV and cement COP.NEG 3SG.NSBJ in
 ‘He built the house without cement (in it).’

The examples (19)–(24) demonstrate the strategy used mostly in elicited examples. In these cases, the exact role of the absentee is specified by the postpositional phrase in the dependent clause’. The role of absentee may not be specified, as in (25).

Absence of means of transportation (25).

- (25) Lenè nù-à Lroŋla à gaan ma láò.
 girl come-PFV Sukuruban¹ 3SG.NSBJ foot on COP.NEG
 ké mótó
 and motorcycle
 ‘The girl came to Sukuruban without a motorcycle (because there was no motorcycle).’

The dependent clause may be structured as a relative one, as in (26) with relativizer *lá* in the main clause, for relative clausus in Mwan see Perekhvalskaya (2007).

- (26) Dóò zi lá gliìŋ zì ké glù liì.
 1SG.COP road REL look.for PROG and hole on
 láò à
 COP.NEG 3SG.NSBJ
 ‘I am looking for a road without holes.’

In (26), the relativizer *lá* follows the head *zi* ‘road’, which has the antecedent in the dependent clause the pronoun *à* (*li*)i ‘(on) it’.

¹ The Jula and official name of the Lroŋla village is Sukuruban.

3.5. Competing strategies and lexical means

3.5.1. Competing strategies

In many cases, several strategies may be used to encode the same meaning, cf. (27).

- (27) a. *Srɔ̀àsémi é dà-à glɔe ma ké à*
 soldier ART return-PFV war on and 3SG.NSBJ
gaan do là̀ò.
 leg one COP.NEG
 ‘The soldier returned from the war without a leg.’ {a=b}
- b. *Srɔ̀àsémi é dà-à glɔe ma ké à*
 soldier ART return-PFV war on COMIT 3SG.NSBJ
gaan do kpú lé.²
 leg one piece with

In (27a), the caritive meaning is encoded by the copular clause, and in (27b) the construction with the noun *kpú* ‘piece’ is used.

Rather widespread is the strategy described by Maksim Fedotov for Gban: “Lexical means can also be employed — with a greater or lesser loss of semantic detail. For example, ‘The bus departed without me’ can be rendered in Gban as, literally, “The bus left me” (Fedotov 2020: 190). The same is also characteristic for Mwan, consider the following translations (28)–(29).

- (28) [Stimulus: “The Abidjan bus goes without a stop in Kongasso”.]
Bijà goj é nu ké yaa duláá Kongopla.
 Abidjan car ART come and 3SG.NEG stop Kongasso
 ‘Abidjan bus comes and doesn’t stop in Kongasso.’
- (29) [Stimulus: “He constructed the house without cement”.]
È fě é dùà ké pèè lé.
 3SG house ART put.PFR COMIT clay with
 ‘He constructed the house with clay.’

² In (27b) and (29), the comitative frame construction *ké ... lé* ‘with’ is used.

4. Discussion and conclusion

As it follows from the analysis given in the previous section, Mwan has more diverse means of expressing caritive meanings than Gban and Looma.

According to Fedotov, “Gban <...> has no specialized markers to express caritive semantics, neither affixes nor adpositions (Fedotov 2020: 18). To encode caritive semantics Gban uses multi-clausal periphrases and lexical means (see §3.5.2) as well as comitative postposition with clausal negation, “for example, ‘He’s working without a hoe’ can be rendered as, literally, “He’s not working with a hoe” (Fedotov 2020: 19).

Looma also demonstrates the absence of special means of expressing caritive meanings. “The main way to express caritive semantics is the use of various constructions, which include negation. So, for example, sentence <‘Koluma came without a husband’> literally is ‘Koluma came, her husband did not come’, sentence <‘I went to the market without money’> is ‘I went to the market, I had no money’. Both sentences represent the only way to express the respective meanings in Looma” (Mischenko 2020: 85).

It is worth comparing Mwan data to Bambara, which is perhaps better described than most Mande languages, see also Bambara corpus (Vydrin et al. 2011–2018).

There are two derivational suffixes in Bambara that encode caritive meaning: the participle suffix *-bali* and the adjective suffix *-ntan*. The suffix *-ntan* is used in a more or less similar way to the Mwan suffix *-kle* (§3.2.1), see (30).

- (30) a. *tigi* ‘master’ *fàli tigintan* ‘donkey without master (masterless donkey).’
 b. *ɲɔ̀n* ‘millet’ *gàtigi ɲɔ̀ntan* ‘householder without millet’.³

³ These and further Bambara examples from the Corpus of Bambara were provided by Valentin Vydrin.

The participle suffix *-bali* has no parallels in Mwan. It denotes “negative agent or patient”⁴, see (31).

- (31) *Tile bân-bali té.*
 sun finish-PTCP.PRIV COP.NEG
 ‘There are no days without end (lit: non-finishing suns (=days) do not exist).’

Other Mande languages, namely Gban, Looma and Dan (Vydrin, personal communication), do not possess similar caritive means. Still, it does not seem probable that the privative suffix *-kle* in Mwan would be a loan from Jula which is a widespread trade dialect of Bambara. In fact, being close by the meaning these suffixes (Mwan *-kle* and Bambara *-ntan*) are completely different in their forms which prevent us from making assumptions of a possible direct loan.

Another interesting parallel is the use of the Bambara postposition *kó* ‘behind, after’ which also encodes the meaning ‘besides, except, in the absence of’, see (32)–(33).

- (32) *Júgu té m̀̀̀gɔ lá bàna-jugu kó.*
 enemy COP.NEG man to illness-evil after
 ‘Man has no other enemy except for a dangerous disease.’
- (33) *À fɔ́-rá ñ kó.*
 3SG fail-PFV.INTR 1SG after
 ‘He came in my absence.’ (Vydrin 2019: 78).

Here again we find a similarity in the way the primary meaning ‘after, behind’ is extended: ‘behind, after’ > ‘in the absence’ > ‘without’ (see §3.3). There is no information about the use of a postposition with

⁴ « Il exprime : - la valeur d’agent négatif <et> la valeur de patient négatif » (Vydrin 2019: 232), in other words, *V-bali* means ‘which does not V’ with intransitive verbs, cf. *m̀̀̀gɔ kúma-bali* ‘silent (non-speaking) person’ (*kúma* ‘to speak’) or ‘which is not V-ed’ with transitive verbs, cf. *jóli fúrake-bali* ‘unhelaed wound’ (*fúrake* ‘to heal’).

the meaning ‘after’ in caritive constructions in other Mande languages. At the same time, the Mwan postposition *blaan* and the Bamabara *kó* have no similarity in form. So, it is not the case of a direct loan. It should also be noted that in Mwan the caritive usage of *blaan* is rather widespread, see examples (13)–(18).

The comparison between natural and elicited examples in Mwan shows that caritive constructions with the suffix *-kle* and the postposition *blaan* differ from other strategies. Unlike the latter they are used in natural contexts, including traditional folk tales. On the contrary, in my corpus of natural texts there are no instances of the use of the negative copula *lào / làò* in caritive constructions. In the corpus, the negative copula is used only in existential negative constructions. The fact that the suffix *-kle* and the postposition *blaan* with the caritive meaning occur in traditional narratives seems important. These are functional styles less affected by French or town-styles of speech. The following conclusion can be made: these means are the only true caritive markers used in natural speech. The suffix *-kle* can be classified as a dedicated caritive means.

Abbreviations

ART – article	PL – plural
COMIT – comitative	POSS – possessive pronoun
COP – copula	PFV – perfective
EMPH – emphatic pronoun	PROG – progressive
FOC – focalizer	PTCP.PRIV – privative participle
FUT – future	REL – relativizer
INTR – intransitive	SBJV – subjunctive
NP – noon phase	SG – singular
NEG – negation	SPN – supine
NSBJ – non-subject pronoun	

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