A revised hypothesis: the discourse function of function of marked and unmarked verbs in Ʋt-Ma'in

SLE 2013

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Original Hypotheses

- #1   Clauses of the main event line, i.e., propositions which move the narrative chronologically forward, are not marked for tense or aspect (TA).
- #2 This unmarked form is not perfective.
- #3 Clauses that are morphologically marked for TA are used for various functions like background information, commentary and conclusion.

Revised Hypotheses

- #1   Clauses of the main event line, i.e., propositions which move the narrative chronologically forward, **are often not marked with TA segmental or tonal morphology, but may follow a marked verb.**
- #2 This unmarked form **is perfective**.
- #3 Clauses that are morphologically marked for TA are used for the initial clause of an episode, background information, commentary and conclusion.

Available morphology

Habitual

(1)   nētɔ́tín ré rgá ɔ́ tcʷānè.

nēt-ɔ̄t=ín		ré	r-gá	ɔ́	t-cʷā=nè
people-C6=1PL.INCL		eat	C5-tuwo	and	c6-soup=with

'Our people eat tuwo and soup together.'

Imperative

(2) a. rè   b. rénè   nɔ̄mɜ̀tré
    'Eat!'   ré-nè   nɔ̄mɜ̀tré

eat-with   thing.of.eating

'Eat together (...before you come)'

Available morphology

(7) | wā | rē:g | sāp | gjɔ̄p |
     |---|---|---|---|
     | 3SG | eat.PST | rice | yesterday |

'He ate rice yesterday.'

(9) ɔ̄m régɔ̄n sāp ɔ́zwɔ̄gɔ̄r

ɔ̄m	ré-g-ɔ̄n	sāp	ɔ́	zwɔ̄gɔ̄r
1SG	eat-PST-DIST	rice	LOC	Zuru.town

'I ate rice at Zuru (before coming here)'

Available morphology

(8) | wɔ̄n | rē:stè | r-gá |
     |---|---|---|
     | 3SG | eat.it.all | C5-yam |

'He ate all the yams (there are none left).'

(9) | ɔ̄m | náp-έ | wá |
     |---|---|---|
     | 1SG | know-Excl | C1.him |

'(Only) I know him'

Available morphology – Aux Constructions

(1) ɔ̄m ɔ́tré   'I am eating'
     ɔ̄m   ɔ́   ɔ̄t-ré
     1SG   PROG   C6-eat

(2) ɔ̄m ɔ́gɔ̄tré   'I was eating'
     ɔ̄m   ɔ́-g   ɔ̄t-ré
     1SG   PROG-PST   C6-eat

Available morphology – Aux Constructions

(3) ɔ̄m détré   'I will be eating'
     ɔ̄m   dé   ɔ̄t-ré
     1SG   FUT   C6-eat

(4) ɔ̄m déʔtétré   'I should be eating'
     ɔ̄m   déʔté   ɔ̄t-ré
     1SG   FUT   C6-eat

Insights from a sample text

- Past tense -g/-tè is used for introductory material and commentary on events.
- The low tone plural argument suffix -nè is used when characters do some action together at the same time.
- The high tone exclusive suffix -é/-né is used by characters when they claim 'they were the only one'
- The purpose marker -ɔ̄t occurs in dependent purpose clauses.
- Auxiliary constructions are used for commentary throughout and to describe simultaeous action

TA marked introduction

Aux	Px	Root	Sx	Classification of verb marking	Free Translation of Clause
		V	-g	PST NEG Copula	There was a time (They did a time) when there was no land
			-g	PST	There were three living things (They did three animals)
		V	-g	PST	who did a debate
	ɔ̄m-	V		Verbal Noun	about who coming first to this land.
		V	-né	Plural Argument	The names of the three living things were together Spider, Frog and Chameleon.

Unmarked main events

Aux	Px	Root	Sx	Classification of verb marking	Free Translation of Clause
		V			A day was set
déʔté	ɔ̄r-	V		Aux + Verbal Noun	that everyone should gather
		V	-ɔ̄t	Purpose	in order to hear them
		V			Wild Dog was appointed (They put Wild Dog)
		V			to give the invitation that
		V			all of the wild animals gather in one place
		V			to get knowledge of the beginning of the world

Unmarked main events

Aux	Px	Root	Sx	Classification of verb marking	Free Translation of Clause
		V	-né	Plural Argument	Everyone arrived that day from everywhere
		V			They listened
		V	-ɔ̄t	Purpose	in order to hear the things
dé	ɔ̄t-	V		Fut Impv	that they will be saying
		V			Room was made for everyone
déʔté	ɔ̄r-	V		Aux + Verbal Noun	to be able to see from the view of all the animals.

Unmarked main events

Aux	Px	Root	Sx	Classification of verb marking	Free Translation of Clause
		V	-tə̄n	Past + Distance	There, Spider shot his web into the middle of all of the animals
		V			**He said,**
		V			"I am Spider
		V			**Every one followed me to the place**
		V	-tɛ̀		where I suspended my web
				Neg Copula	No one has knowledge of the beginning (Lit: There is no one with knowledge.)

Unmarked main events

Aux	Px	Root	Sx	Classification of verb marking	Free Translation of Clause
		V	-ɛ́	Exclusive	When I (only me) came to this world
		V		Neg Copula	that time there was no land
		V			until I shot my web
		V			**I followed it.**
		V			**I traveled to any place…"**
		V			**He silenced them. (Lit: He killed movement.)**

Present Progressive Forms – commentary

Aux	Px	Root	Sx	Classification of verb marking	Free Translation of Clause
		V			**All of the animals looked at one another**
		V		Verbal Noun	amazed (Lit: raising ears to god.)
ɔ́		V	-sə	Present Progressive	Some are wagging their tails.
ɔ́		V	-sə	Present Progressive	Some are raising their heads to god.
ɔ́		V	-də	Present Progressive	Some are shaking their ears.
ɔ́	ət-	V		Present Progressive	Some are jumping joyfully.
		V			As they got knowledge of how the lands beginning.

Distal Suffix

- Use of the distal verb ending -ɔ̄n has been found in main event line when a character "arrives from somewhere else onto the scene"
- The distal suffix has only been found following a past tense marker and therefore contradicts the idea that only bare forms move the narrative along.
- Because this is the only time the form is used in the current data and the entrance of a new character often marks the start of a new episode, this TA marked form may appear for the additional location information

Other discourse comments

- Passive-like construction. Non-specific subject pronoun with nɔ́ŋg 'do.PST'
- Arrival of new characters can be marked by kɔ́nà 'there'
- Partical bɔ́ occurs scattered throughout clauses describing the peak event. More

Further considerations

- Passive-like construction. Non-specific subject pronoun with nɔ́ŋg 'do.PST'
- Arrival of new characters can be marked by kɔ́nà 'there'
- Partical bɔ́ occurs scattered throughout clauses describing the peak event. More

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Thanks!

References

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