Tense and Aspect in Akan

Claim: This study accounts for the distribution of tense and aspect in serial verb constructions(SVCs) and *na* coordinate clauses (CCs) in Akan, (Kwa, Niger-Congo).I explore the idea that valuation of morphosyntactic features in these constructions can be achieved through two different valuation mechanisms: AGREE, (Pesetsky & Torrego 2007), and Selection, (Grimshaw 1979, Pesetsky 1982, Lahiri 2002). Evidence for the presence of these two mechanisms stems from the distribution of tense and aspect in Akan SVCs and CCs .

Data: One of the properties that differentiate Akan SVCs from SVCs in other languages is the distribution of tense and aspect. In Akan, tense is marked on all of the verbs in an SVC. This is different from Ewe, for instance, where a single tense marker precedes all the verbs in an SVC, (Collins 1997). Though tense occurs on all the verbs, there are some restrictions. These restrictions also apply to *na* CCs, which is why I consider them together. One of the restrictions is that the tense must match, i.e. all the verbs must have the same tense. For instance, if the first verb is in the past, all subsequent verbs must also be in the past. The second restriction bans tense-aspect sequences on the verbs in these constructions. In other words, if the first verb is marked for tense, the subsequent cannot be marked for aspect. This is exemplified below. The (a) examples are SVCs and the (b) examples are *na* CCs. Present tense is unmarked in Akan.

(1)   **V($\mathbf{T}_{past}$)   V($\mathbf{T}_{past}$)**
   a.   Kofi tɔ-ɔ   aduane di-i.
        Kofi buy-PST food   eat-PST
        'Kofi bought food and ate.'
   b.   Kofi tɔ-ɔ   aduane na   ɔ-di-i.
        Kofi buy-PST food   CONJ 3SG-eat-PST
        'Kofi bought food and ate.'

(2)   *****V($\mathbf{T}_{past}$)   V($\mathbf{T}_{present}$)**
   a.   *Kofi t-ɔ-ɔ   aduane di.
        Kofi buy-PST food   eat.PRES
   b.   *Kofi t-ɔ-ɔ   aduane na   ɔ-di
        Kofi buy-PST food   CONJ 3SG-eat.PRES

(3)   *****V(T)   V(Asp)**
   a.   *Kofi t-ɔ-ɔ   aduane re-di.
        Kofi buy-PST food   PROG-eat
   b.   *Kofi t-ɔ-ɔ   aduane na   ɔ-**re**-di.
        Kofi buy-PST food   CONJ 3SG-PROG-eat

Aspect has separate restrictions. If the first verb in either constructions is marked for aspect, all subsequent verbs have the *à-* morpheme, which is referred to as the the consecutive marker.(See Dolphyne (1996), Osam (2003) a.o). The consecutive marker is not an independent aspect; it is not licensed in simple clauses. The marker should not be confused with the perfect aspect morpheme in (4), which is used in simple sentences.

(4)   Kofi à-didi
        Kofi PERF.-eat
        'Kofi has eaten.'

The relevant aspect considered are progressive(PROG) and future(FUT). The future marker is analyzed as an aspectual marker since it patterns with the other aspect markers and not tense in their distribution in both SVCs and *na* coordinate structures.

(5) **V(Asp) V(à)**

    a.   Kofi re-tɔ   aduane à-kɔ   di.
         Kofi PROG-buy food   CONS-go eat
         'Kofi is buying food to eat.'

    b.   Kofi re-tɔ   aduane na   ɔ-à-kɔ   di.
         Kofi PROG-throw food   CONJ 3SG-CONS-go eat
         'Kofi is buying food to eat.'

(6) ** **V(Asp$_{prog}$) V(Asp$_{prog}$)**

    a.   *Kofi re-tɔ   aduane re-kɔ   di.
         Kofi PROG-buy food   PROG.-go eat

    b.   *Kofi re-tɔ   aduane na   ɔ-re-kɔ   di.
         Kofi PROG-buy food   CONJ 3SG-PROG.-go eat

(7) ** **V(Asp$_{prog}$) V(Asp$_{fut}$)**

    a.   *Kofi re-tɔ   aduane bɛ̀-kɔ   di.
         Kofi PROG-buy food   FUT-go eat

    b.   *Kofi re-tɔ   aduane na   ɔ-bɛ̀-kɔ   di.
         Kofi PROG-buy food   CONJ 3SG-FUT-go eat

(8) ** **V(Asp) V(T)**

    a.   *Kofi re-tɔ   aduane kɔ-ɔ   di.
         Kofi PROG-buy food   go-PST eat

    b.   *Kofi re-tɔ   aduane na   ɔ-   kɔ-ɔ   di.
         Kofi PROG-buy food   CONJ 3SG- go-PST eat

Analysis: Whether a particular subsystem is governed by Agree or Selection is not arbitrary; it is influenced by the position of the syntactic objects involved. In SVCs and *na* coordinate constructions, there is a single T projection and multiple v projections. The valued but uninterpretable tense feature on the v and the unvalued but interpretable tense feature on the single T projection enter into an Agree relation, (Pesetsky & Torrego 2007). The matching restriction falls out of the fact that a single T head cannot have two separate tense interpretations. Aspect in Akan, on the other hand, is argued to be merged within the vP, Kandybowicz (2010,2015). Therefore, in SVCs and *na* CCs, there are as many projections of aspect as there are vPs. Since aspect is interpreted higher than the position that is it is merged, I argue for an outer aspect projection above the vP, which is the locus of the interpretation. The lower aspect features should be such that they are interpretable by the higher aspect projection. Selection drives this compatibility; outer aspect selects for specific inner aspect features. Inner aspect features percolates to VoiceP in for valuation. How these features get to VoiceP is driven by the feature percolation principle. The -*à* morpheme is the phonological realizations of the morphosyntactic features [-prog,-fut] of inner aspect. It is only licensed in a position where it aspectual features does not percolate to a VoiceP. One consequence of this analysis is that what is referred to as SVCs in Akan are covert CCs.

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