

## COVERBS AND AUXILIARIES IN PÈDÈ

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**Abstract:** In Pèdè, predicates consisting of multiple verbal elements are extremely frequent. In this context, verbs adopting a secondary function of modifying coverbs play an important role. It can be shown that this function has emerged from conceptualisation processes within serial verb constructions. Along the same lines, a very limited number of auxiliaries have been grammaticalized. The types of coverbs and auxiliaries under discussion display partially overlapping functional ranges (in the semantic domain of aktionsart), they clearly differ, however, on the syntactic level.

**Key words:** coverbs, auxiliaries, serialisation, manner, aktionsart

### 1. Introduction: the language and its setting

Pèdè [pè·rè]<sup>1</sup> is mainly spoken in the eastern part of the Adamawa Region in Cameroon, in some settlements within the Faro Game Reserve (Northern Region), and in a narrow strip beyond the border, in Nigeria (see “pèrè” on the map in Figure 1).<sup>2</sup> It belongs to the Duru Group of the Samba-Duru branch of the Adamawa languages:

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<sup>1</sup> /d/ has an allophone [ɾ]. In the variety of Almé (on which the research of the present author focusses), the most frequent environment that conditions the occurrence of this allophone is an intervocalic position of the phoneme. Non-central, phonologically short vowels have a higher degree of aperture compared to their phonologically long counterparts (e.g. /e/ [ɛ] vs. /e:/ [e:], /u/ [u] vs. /u:/ [u:], etc.). Under certain conditions, short vowels undergo lengthening.

<sup>2</sup> For some more details on the setting, see Kastenholz (2011: 129–131).

Table 1

**The place of Pèdè in the Duru Group<sup>3</sup>**

|                    |                           |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Dii Cluster     | 2.2.2. Vere-Gimme         |
| 1.1. Duupa         | 2.2.2.1. Vere             |
| 1.2. Dii           | 2.2.2.1.1. Gounəm Cluster |
| 1.3. Dugun         | 2.2.2.1.2. Kobom          |
| 2. Lɔŋto-Dooyaayɔ  | 2.2.2.1.3. Momi (Vere)    |
| 2.1. Pèdè-Lɔŋto    | 2.2.2.1.4. Mom Jango      |
| 2.1.1. <b>Pèdè</b> | 2.2.2.2. Gimme            |
| 2.1.2. Lɔŋto       | 2.2.2.2.1. Gəəme          |
| 2.2. Vere-Dooyaayɔ | 2.2.2.2.2. Beiya          |
| 2.2.1. Dooyaayɔ    | 2.2.2.2.3. Riitime        |

Pèdè is a notoriously understudied language. With the exception of Kastenholtz (2011; 2018), only pedagogical materials (e.g. Raen 1981, among others) are accessible. The dominant language of wider communication in the larger area is a vehicular form of Fulfulde. Besides this general fact, virtually no information is available as yet on the sociolinguistic setting of the Pèdè speech community.

## 2. Notes on the verbal predicate

### 2.1. The verb word

The classification presented at Table 1 reflects the fact that, on lexical grounds, Pèdè is closest to Lɔŋto (also known as “Voko” in the literature). In certain aspects of grammar, on the other hand, Pèdè differs considerably from Lɔŋto. This becomes apparent in predicate syntax (see §2.2), and in the complexity of the verb word. Stems forming the base of a (phonological) verb word can be full (or independent) verbs, coversbs

<sup>3</sup> This is based on the classification presented in Kleinewillinghöfer (2011: 145), with some changes in terminology.



full verbs are potential valid text words as such, formally and functionally unmarked for TAM, referred to as “factative” here<sup>5</sup>, a form that is used to state facts, either as “general truths”, as in (1)<sup>6</sup>, or – driven by context – with a reading of past events, as in (2)–(3).

- (1) *vā kó lāl vādè*  
 3PL make clod small  
 ‘They make small clods.’
- (2) *nàm yídī*  
 touch person  
 ‘He touched the person.’
- (3) *lò = ū = dī*  
 hit=3SG.OBJ=PCF  
 ‘He hit him.’

The function load of verbs marked for aspect, however, is considerably higher. There are two aspect suffixes in Pere, an IMPERFECTIVE *-gān*<sup>7</sup> and a COMPLETIVE (perfective) *le*: with three tonally marked allomorphs that are selected according to the inherent transitivity, i.e. low tone for transitive predicates, mid tone for middle voice predicates, and high tone for other intransitive predicates.<sup>8</sup> The following examples (4)–(7) illustrate the use of the two aspect markers.

- (4) *lò-ŋn = ū = dī*  
 hit-IPF=3SG.OBJ=PCF  
 ‘He beats him / is beating him.’

<sup>5</sup> This term is used here following Welmers (1973: 346ff.); it should not be confounded with “factitive”.

<sup>6</sup> Language data presented in this paper are from the author’s field notes, if not indicated otherwise. Data taken from (mostly monolingual) printed sources written in the orthography established by the Lutheran Mission are re-written phonologically here for the present purpose.

<sup>7</sup> This element has a number of phonologically determined, eroded allomorphs: *-ān*, *-ŋn*, *-n̄*, *Ŵ*, and others.

<sup>8</sup> For a more detailed description and analysis of this, see Kastenholz (2018: 85–86).

- (5) *yá:l sèŋ-ān dām*  
 woman sift-IPF flour  
 ‘The woman sifts / is sifting flour.’
- (6) *vā nū:l-è: ólè*  
 3PL collect-CPL honey  
 ‘They have collected honey.’
- (7) *ŋ kē:l-è: = ū = dī*  
 1SG ask-CPL=3SG.OBJ=PCF  
 ‘I have asked him.’

In addition to this, aspect suffixes<sup>9</sup> may be followed by a number of phonologically bound elements, which cover a very wide range of functions that cannot be presented in detail here (this would go far beyond the scope of this paper): object pronouns, comitative/instrumental/reflexive, deictic (hither/thither), modality (e.g. NECESSITY), current relevance, predicate centred focus<sup>10</sup>, compare (8).

- (8) *bèŋ-ān = ū = nān = ī: = dī*  
 throw-IPF=3SG.OBJ=INS=VEN=PCF  
 ‘He is pelting him with [it] hither.’

## 2.2. Multiple verb predicates in Pèdè: some basic findings

Complex predicates, i.e. predicates consisting of a series of two or more verbal elements, are extremely frequent in Pèdè. In such serial verb constructions (henceforth SVCs), any grammeme pertaining to the verbal predicate is a suffix, or an enclitic, to the last verb stem in the series, be it a full verb, a coverb, or an auxiliary. An eventual pronominal reference to the subject, accordingly, only occurs once in a clause with a complex predicate, preceding the first verb in a series.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Or the unmarked verb stem itself, compare (3) above.

<sup>10</sup> The PCF element /dī/ ([rī]) when preceded by a vowel, /nī/ after nasals other than nasal vowels) is obligatory under certain conditions.

<sup>11</sup> 3sg pronominal subject reference has a zero representation, as have [-HUMAN] 3sg and 3pl pronominal object references.

The overall topic of juxtaposition of unmarked verbs in Pèdè is still largely work in progress. It is not clear at this point of research, how the situation encountered in this language actually matches the prototype properties and parameters (compare Bisang 2009: 795ff. for a critical view) of highly influential main stream typological approaches (e.g. Aikhenvald 2006; 2018). Nevertheless, constructions of juxtaposed verbal elements in Pèdè are, provisionally, assumed to be generally describable as SVCs in the following, eschewing at the same time any well established conceptualisation, or definition. Among others, SVCs like the ones in (9) and (10) are very common in Pèdè.

- (9) *vā dū: t̄ā=ū=dō*  
 3PL follow rep=3SG.OBJ=CR  
 ‘They resumed his pursuit.’
- (10) *lé kpág-lè:=dō*  
 eat do\_excessively-CPL=CR  
 ‘He has eaten to excess.’

In (9), the last verbal element (*t̄ā*) is an AKTIONSART auxiliary, the one in (10), *kpág*, is a coverb (lacking any attested parallel full verb reading in this case), adverb-like in function, expressing MANNER (e.g. (22), (23) below). Coverbs and auxiliaries of these kinds will be discussed in more detail below. At this point here, it may suffice to emphasize that the syntax of all predicates consisting of more than one verbal element is formally identical throughout in Pèdè. The most salient features characterising these serial-like constructions are:

— all verbal suffixes and enclitics appear exclusively on the last verbal element of a series.

— no matter to which one of the lexical verbs an object belongs as an argument, it invariably follows the last verbal element in the series (this is true for both pronominal and nominal objects).

— if several verbs in a construction are transitive, and if they do not share the same object, only one of these arguments can be encoded in an object noun phrase; if applicable, one more (with a [+HUMAN])

reference) can be encoded as clitic object pronoun (cf. clause (15) below).

— all verbs share the same subject.<sup>12</sup>

Symmetric SVCs in Pèdè prototypically comprise, among others, those expressing complex events, i.e. events presented as consisting of ordered sub-events; these are extremely frequent in all kinds of texts, cf. (11)–(13).

(11) *vā lé-ŋ lād yénè, vā mǎ: sù-ŋ séŋ gā:lnā: tò*  
 3PL eat-IPF tree fruit 3PL kill eat-IPF meat wild PL  
 ‘They used to eat fruits and hunt various game to eat.’ (Mandouré 1976: 7)

(12) *vā yǎ: =dó séŋ má: -dì ní, vā sè lā: -ŋ gā:lè*  
 3PL want=CR animal kill-VN DCM 3PL set\_fire lurk-IPF bush  
 ‘If they wanted to hunt, they burnt the bush and watched.’  
 (Mandouré 1976: 9)

(13) *vā nù: -ŋ ólè, vā fū: zò-ŋ kùrúm*  
 3PL collect-IPF honey 3PL dissolve drink-IPF gruel  
 ‘They used to collect honey, (which) they dissolved in gruel they drank.’

Also very frequent, and equally prototypical, are compact symmetric constructions, where two (or more) verbs are combined to express one single event, cf. (14)–(15).

(14) *ŋ sáb dòm =tō kěnsàŋ míní*  
 1SG worry\_about repent=CR behaviour 1SGPOSS  
 ‘I am sorry for my behaviour.’

(15) *kú:d gū: -lè: =dō lādè*  
 hook\_on grip-CPL=CR tree  
 ‘He has already gripped the tree [and] clinged to it.’ (= “hook-gripped” the tree)

<sup>12</sup> There is, however, a very small number of cases in our data that seem to contradict this claim. These still represent, to a certain extent, an unsolved problem for the present author.

### 3. Coverbs and auxiliaries

#### 3.1. Functional coverbs

##### 3.1.1. From EFFECT to MANNER semantics, and beyond

A very common semantic pattern with such symmetric, single event SVCs in Pèdè is EFFECT, i.e. the second verb in a construction adds the semantics of an effect the process or action expressed in the first verb has, compare (16)–(18):

- (16) *fùm vù:*            *gbàg=tō*  
 beer effervesce turn\_sour=CR  
 ‘The beer has effervesced (to the point of) turning sour.’
- (17) *və lō mǎ:ūvǎ=dō*  
 3PL beat kill=3PL.OBJ=CR  
 ‘They have beaten them to death.’
- (18) *zò àg=tō fùm*  
 drink quench=CR beer  
 ‘He has drunk beer to the point of being intoxicated.’

It is observable that certain verbs have a tendency to ‘specialise’ as second verbs expressing effect. A verb like *yù:d* ‘to be(come) fine-grained’, as well as its transitive counterpart, *yù:d* ‘to refine’ (ex. (19)–(20)), still seem to be acceptable as full verbs (predicate heads), but clearly have a preferred use as a second verb in a specifying function.

- (19) *gbád*            *yù:d=tō*  
 become\_smooth become\_fine-grained=CR  
 ‘It has become smooth to the state of being polished.’
- (20) *nàŋ yù:d=tō nēnè*  
 grind refine=CR millet  
 ‘She has ground millet finely.’

This kind of routinisation, apparent in the use of verbs like *yù:d* / *yù:d*, might have played a role in the development of a secondary, modifying function of verbs (referred to as coverbal, see below), given

the fact that there is a conceptual overlap of effect and manner semantics, compare (21a) and (21b).

- (21) a. *dì:b sèn=tō lādè*  
 put\_up fix=CR beam  
 ‘He has propped up the beam firmly.’
- b. *tà sèn-lè:=ū=dō*  
 look fix-CPL=3SG.OBJ=CR  
 ‘He has stared at him.’

In (21b), the verb *sèn* clearly does not convey the idea of an effect induced by the event encoded in the preceding verb – it rather expresses manner in this case. An analysis of the lexical data at hand (Kastenholtz, to appear) reveals that there is a high number of verbs in Pèdè that, in addition to their status and semantics as full verbs, function as modifying coverbs (or minor verbs), following the main verb(s). As such, they adopt “quasi adverbial” semantics of manner in the widest sense of the term.<sup>13</sup> The fact that these elements, as minor verbs, have a modifying function is crucial. In (22), *lēm* has coverb function, meaning ‘to do s.th. usually, have the habit of doing s.th.’, whereas as a full verb, this same element means ‘to get accustomed to s.th. or s.o.’.

- (22) *vā lé lēm-gān kù:dè*  
 3PL eat be\_used-IPF mash  
 ‘Usually, they eat mash.’
- (23) a. *wādwá: àm nī-lé:=dō*  
 child walk do\_perfectly-CPL=CR  
 ‘The toddler has perfectly [learned to] walk.’
- b. *kó nī-lè:=dō*  
 do do\_perfectly-CPL=CR  
 ‘He did it to perfection.’

<sup>13</sup> There is another type of coverbs in Pèdè, preceding full verbs. The preliminary hypothesis adopted here is, that these coverbs developed from full verbs that may take another verb ( $V_2$ ) as their complement in a serial construction. This second type is not discussed in the present paper.

As a full verb, *nī* (a coverb in (23a) and (23b)) means ‘to become mature’, and as such, it exclusively has an intransitive reading. For (24), it is assumed here that *tā* represents the coverbal reading of the (formally identical) full verb meaning ‘to tie’. This is, admittedly, speculative; if this assumption were dismissed, we would have a verbal element here whose function is reduced to that of a coverb.<sup>14</sup> This illustrates how difficult it may be to assert if a given verbal element does have an independent representation (along with that of a modifying coverb), or not.

- (24) *dī*    *tā=dō*                    *sānè*  
 have hold\_plenty=CR    money  
 ‘He has got a lot of money.’

Three more examples may suffice to illustrate the point. The meaning of the independent verb *dùg* is ‘to persist’, and as such, again, it is necessarily intransitive. As a coverb (in (25)), it is also compatible with transitive predicates, though.<sup>15</sup> Again, the basic meaning of *kā:*, (having coverb function in (26)), is ‘to move around, wander’. On the other hand, full verb and coverb semantics are somewhat less divergent in (27), the full verb’s meaning being ‘to be recurrent’.

- (25) *wā:* *dùg-lè: = dō*  
 run do\_persistently-CPL=CR  
 ‘He has kept running for a long time.’
- (26) *zò*    *kā:-n̄*                    *fùm*  
 drink do\_always-IPF    beer  
 ‘He drinks beer at any occasion.’
- (27) *kà*    *lé*    *púl = tō*  
 take eat do\_anew=CR  
 ‘He has taken seconds.’

<sup>14</sup> There are indeed some such cases, see §3.2.

<sup>15</sup> Note that the main verb *wā:* in (25) is transitive, its cognate object ‘a run, race’ not surfacing here.

Apart from the fact that elements with a coverb function are dependent in a given predication on a main verb, on the semantics of which they operate in a modifying way, the multiple verb constructions in which they occur do not differ in any formal respect from the symmetric SVCs briefly introduced above (§2.2 and sample clauses (16)–(20)).

### 3.1.2. “Coverb only” elements

There is a small number of verbal elements whose range of functions seems to have become narrowed down to that of modifying coverbs. With these, no parallel full verb functions, no occurrences as main verbs, are attested in our data. The semantic contribution of these to the predicate, again, is “adverbial” in a large sense in many cases. With some, their semantic content overlaps with modality and temporality, or is even further bleached to express aktionsart. It is quite conceivable that this type of dependent verbs must have developed from erstwhile independent verbs no longer attested in Pèdè. Only a small number of such minor verbs (all in all, 11 cases, see Table 2) could be identified in our data at hand, which makes them an almost marginal part of the lexicon, compared to the large number of coverb readings of otherwise independent full verbs.

*Table 2*

#### List of “coverb only” elements

|             |            |   |
|-------------|------------|---|
| <i>vāj</i>  | tr., intr. | ‘to do lost in thought, unawares’           |
| <i>kól</i>  | tr., intr. | ‘to do jokingly, teasingly’                 |
| <i>fā</i>   | tr., intr. | ‘to do/happen fast, quickly’                |
| <i>sén</i>  | intr.      | ‘to do/happen firmly, steadily’             |
| <i>sèn</i>  | tr.        | ‘to do firmly, steadily’                    |
| <i>kpág</i> | tr.        | ‘to do excessively, exaggeratedly’          |
| <i>fād</i>  | tr., intr. | ‘to do/happen abruptly, immediately’        |
| <i>vám</i>  | intr.      | ‘to do/happen inevitably, for sure, anyway’ |

*End of Table 2*

|            |       |                               |
|------------|-------|-------------------------------|
| <i>kún</i> | intr. | ‘to do/happen involving all’  |
| <i>túd</i> | intr. | ‘to do/happen involving many’ |
| <i>tùd</i> | tr.   | ‘to do affecting many’        |

A somewhat transitional case, in a way, is represented by the paired coverb stems (one is selected for transitive predicates, the other for intransitive ones) *kùn* and *kún* in (28) and (29) below. Both are maximally abstract in function (aktionsart TOTALITY). An independent use is indeed attested for the transitive stem alone (cf. 30)),<sup>16</sup> but not for the intransitive one.

(28) *ā dū kùn = tō lādè*  
 2SG fell affect\_all=CR tree  
 ‘You have felled all the trees.’

(29) *ān fl kún-lé = dō*  
 thing change involve\_all=CR  
 ‘Everything has entirely changed.’

(30) *vā kùn = mē tōnóm*  
 3PL finish=NEC work  
 ‘They have to finish the work.’

In the following, some more sample clauses of these verbs that solely occur in a modifying function are given to illustrate the point (see also sample clauses (21a) and (21b) above for *sèn* ‘do firmly’). The first pair of stems (again, selected for transitivity) has a more abstract function that could be labelled PLURALITY OF ACTION or pluractional (31)–(32).<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Pairs of low tone transitive vs. high tone intransitive verb stems are frequent in Pèdè (in both independent full verb, and coverb functions), see Kastenholz (2018).

<sup>17</sup> The two others, *kól* in (33), and *fā* in (34), have more lexical, adverbial-like semantics.

- (31) *yĩ̀:* *tùd=tō* *līgò*  
 build do\_many=CR house  
 ‘He has built houses galore.’
- (32) *vā* *yā:* *túd-lé:=dō*  
 3PL come be\_many-CPL=CR  
 ‘They have already come in great number.’
- (33) *lò* *kól=án=tó*  
 beat do\_teasingly=1SG.OBJ=CR  
 ‘He has tapped me in joke.’
- (34) *lé* *fā=dō* *kũ̀dè*  
 eat do\_quickly=CR mash  
 ‘He has quickly eaten [his] meal.’

### 3.2. Serial auxiliaries

#### 3.2.1. Grammaticalization sources, and functions

So far, it has been argued that, in Pèdè, certain verbs through routinisation in SVCs have adopted a dependent, modifying function covering a continuum from the expression of MANNER to AKTIONSAKT. Further down along these same lines, it is postulated here that a small number of serial auxiliary verbs has been grammaticalized. At this point of research, two such elements can be identified. Both are, compared to their source verbs, phonologically reduced.<sup>18</sup> Their functions, again, fall into the range of aktionsart, cf. Table 3, and sample clauses (35)–(39).

Table 3

#### Auxiliaries and their lexical sources

|                          |                                    |                |                |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| <i>tā</i>                | REPETITION: ‘do again, do in turn’ | < <i>tũ̀</i>   | ‘to turn back’ |
| <i>lé:</i> [ <i>lé</i> ] | EGRESSIVE: ‘get done with’         | < * <i>lé:</i> | ‘to let off’   |

<sup>18</sup> Note that in this respect, they (formally) differ from coverbs as discussed above, a fact paralleled by a difference in syntactic behaviour, as summed up in Table 4 in §3.2.2.

- (35) *tò gēb dū̀-̀n pā ní, vā wá: tã-̀ŋ wē: dá:*  
 if divination be\_good-NEG NEG DCM 3PL seek REP-IPF place one  
 ‘If divining is not favourable, they look for another place.’  
 (Mandouré 1976: 7)
- (36) *vā gà: tã-̀n ãn dá: pāi*  
 3PL know REP-NEG thing one NEG  
 ‘They did not know anything else.’
- (37) *vā tū: àm tã só:d āŋ tī*  
 3PL return go REP calabash field POSTP  
 ‘They once more headed back to the calabash field.’ (Anon. 1981: 32)
- (38) *kég lé-̀n gú:*  
 shell EGR-IPF peanuts  
 ‘He is getting done with shelling peanuts.’
- (39) *dāŋ lé:-̀lè: = dō*  
 say EGR-CPL=CR  
 ‘He has already said it once and for all.’ (Raen 1981: 102)

The form of the EGRESSIVE, as well as its probable lexical source, need some comments. 1) Phonological attrition is very slight with this auxiliary, it consists of vowel shortening (a process that does not occur with lexical items); long vowels in Pèdè differ in the degree of aperture from their short counterparts (see footnote 2 above), but long vowels that undergo shortening maintain their original quality, they do not adopt that of a phonologically short vowel. 2) The source verb as such has not been preserved in the language.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, the egressive auxiliary is near to formally identical to the COMPLETIVE morpheme,<sup>20</sup> but the two clearly differ functionally and syntactically, being even combinable in one and the same predicate (see (39) above).

<sup>19</sup> \**lé:* is an internally reconstructed form, tentatively proposed on the basis of the verbs *lè:* ‘to be lost, to become detached’, and the (diachronically related) corresponding causative *lè:d* ‘to lose s.th., part from s.th.’.

<sup>20</sup> The COMPLETIVE morpheme has tonally differentiated allomorphs selected for transitivity (see Kastenholz 2018), the egressive auxiliary is invariable: *lé:*.

## 3.2.2. Serial auxiliaries vs. coverbs

The decision to distinguish aktionsart coverbs like *kún* (as in (29)), or *tùd/túd* (in (31)–(32)), conveying the concepts of TOTALITY and PLURACTIONAL respectively) from aktionsart auxiliaries of the type presented above is justified here by the fact that coverbs (including those with rather abstract meanings), unlike the auxiliaries in question, behave morphosyntactically in many respects like full lexical verbs. This can be illustrated by a comparison of the slots they can be assigned to in predicates involving verbal nouns. In order to make this line of argumentation transparent, a brief introduction of another type of (non-serial) auxiliaries, grammaticalized from complementiser constructions, is needed. These form auxiliary constructions of the type AUX + VN, as exemplified in (40).<sup>21</sup>

- (40) *dà-ṛj*            *ká-dì*    *kā:lè*  
 AUX.FUT-IPFV    take-VN    wife  
 ‘He is going to get married.’

For convenience, auxiliaries taking verbal noun complements, like *dà* in (40), are referred to as AUX1 in this context, whereas the serial auxiliaries (*tā* and *lé:*) are labelled AUX2 in the following. With such AUX1 constructions, the occurrence of inflectional elements (e.g. aspect suffixes for IMPERFECTIVE, COMPLETIVE), of coverbs, and of serial auxiliaries encoding aktionsart (AUX2) show different distributional patterns respectively. This is summarized in Table 4.

An AUX2 can alternatively either occur serially after AUX1 (as is the case with *tā* in (41a), and with *lé:* in (42a)), or be part of a complex verbal noun (cf. *tā* in (41b), and *lé:* in (42b)<sup>22</sup>). Within complex verbal nouns, the order of elements is the same as in complex predicates.

<sup>21</sup> There are several auxiliaries of this type in Pèdè; it suffices here to exemplify the point made by means of constructions based on the future auxiliary.

<sup>22</sup> All verb stems, including coverbs, and auxiliaries, receive a high tone marking as part of a verbal noun.

Table 4

Compatibility of serial auxiliaries<sup>23</sup>

|                      | follows AUX1 | integral part of VN |
|----------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| aux2                 | +            | +                   |
| infl                 | +            | -                   |
| coverb <sup>22</sup> | -            | +                   |

Inflectional morphemes (not further discussed here) exclusively occur as suffixes to (the last of a series of) auxiliaries immediately preceding the verbal noun (as is apparent in (41), (42), and (43)). Coverbs, however, just like any full verb, must obligatorily be part of the verbal noun (cf. (43), (44)) in such constructions. Thus, conversely, a clause like (45) would be ill-formed, and unacceptable.

- (41) a. *dà t̄-ŋ ká-dì k̄lè*  
 AUX.FUT REP-IPF take-VN wife  
 ‘He is going to get married again / once more.’ {a=b}
- b. *dà-ŋ ká-t̄-dì k̄lè*  
 AUX.FUT-IPF take-REP-VN wife
- (42) a. *b̄n̄ŋ dà lé-ŋ bá-dì v̄*  
 1PL.INCL AUX.FUT EGR-IPF till-VN farm  
 ‘We are going to quit doing farm work.’ {a=b}
- b. *dà-ŋ bá-lé-dì v̄*  
 AUX.FUT-IPF till-EGR-VN farm
- (43) *v̄ dà-ŋ lé-kún-dì k̄m̄*  
 3PL AUX.FUT-IPF eat-do\_all-VN maize  
 ‘They are going to eat up all the maize.’
- (44) *dà ȳ-túd-dì ligò*  
 AUX.FUT build-do\_many-VN house  
 ‘He will build a lot of houses.’

<sup>23</sup> Including aktionsart coverbs like *kùn/kún* (like in (28) and (29) above), or such coverbs as *lēm* ‘do habitually’ (full verb semantics ‘to get accustomed to’) in (22), whose quasi-adverbial semantics conceptually overlap with aspect.

- (45) \**vā* *dà*            *kùn-ān*    *lé-dì*    *kām̄*  
 3PL AUX.FUT    do\_all-IPF    eat-VN    maize

#### 4. Conclusion

In Pèdè, there is a rather sizeable closed class of verbs which function as coverbs in SVCs, covering a wide range of adverbial-like semantics, and forming a continuum between lexical (manner) and grammatical meanings, with some instances of modal (cf. *vám* in Table 2) or aspectual (cf. *lēm* in (22) above), and, particularly, aktionsart.

A few of these elements solely occur as coverbs ; for most cases, though, both a main verb and a coverb use of one given form is attested. Correspondingly, apart from the fact of being dependent, elements functioning as coverbs share certain syntactic properties with full verbs (see Table 4, and the remarks which follow it). The scope of their modifying function is, of course, the event rendered by one or more full verbs in the relevant predicate, cf. (46).

- (46) *vā kán àm*            *kún=ān=tō*    *yē: tò, vāŋ vādém*  
 3PL call go\_away do\_all=COM=CR    dog PL with young\_folks  
*tò pém āŋ*            *tī*  
 PL all farm            POSTP  
 ‘They had called the dogs [and they] had all headed, together with all the young folks, for the farm.’ (Anon. 1981: 7)

Sample clause (46) illustrates that, with serial verb constructions representing complex events consisting of ordered sub-events, the scope of the modifying coverb may also be restricted to one of the sub-events. The intransitive form *kún* ‘do involving the totality of agent/positioner/processed participants’ is selected here.  $V_1$  *kán* ‘to call s.o.’ is transitive,  $V_2$  *àm* ‘to leave’ is intransitive, and the coverb only refers to this latter sub-event. Parallely, the scope of the comitative (‘together, with’) particle *nān* (represented by its conditioned allomorph *ān* here) is equally limited to the intransitive sub-event.

It has been shown that the semantic range of functional coverbs partially overlaps, precisely in the domain of aktionsart, with that of a certain type of serial auxiliaries. These latter, however, can be clearly distinguished from coverb elements. With the auxiliaries *tā* and *lé*: [*lé*], 1) coevolution of form and meaning can be ascertained, as these elements have undergone phonetic erosion; and 2) they display a syntactic behaviour that differs from that of coverbs.

Both massive use of SVCs in general, as well as the high number of modifying coverbs in particular, seem to be features that make Pèdè very distinct within the Duru Group. For the time being, it is difficult to ascertain this, as there is little to no information available in this domain concerning the languages in question. For Lɔŋto, Pèdè's "next cousin" (cf. Table 1 in §1 above), nothing has been published as yet on its grammar.

In a survey based on published data, Markgraf (2010: 40–68) shows that both Dii and Doyayo do have serial verb constructions for a number of semantic concepts. Dominant for the scope of his survey are motional and directional svcs. Adverbial svcs are not discussed for these languages in the thesis, which might be due to the fact that their grammars are only poorly documented. Also, following Markgraf's data collection and presentation, svcs in Dii and Doyayo are formally considerably different from those in Pèdè.<sup>24</sup> To our knowledge, nothing has ever been published on any of the other languages of the Duru group.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> A salient feature in this context is the fact that, with the former two languages, each verb in a serial construction comes with its own subject slot, as well as with its own object slot. The canonic form of serial constructions so typical for Pèdè: S V V V ... O (S = subject, V = verbal element, O = direct object), does thus not represent a common feature of languages of the Duru Group (on the basis of accessible data).

<sup>25</sup> Not counting word lists, and the like, of course.

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## Abbreviations

|      |                                   |        |                            |
|------|-----------------------------------|--------|----------------------------|
| 1SG  | — 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular | INS    | — instrumental             |
| 2SG  | — 2 <sup>nd</sup> person singular | IPF    | — imperfective             |
| 3PL  | — 3 <sup>rd</sup> person plural   | NEC    | — necessity (modality)     |
| 3SG  | — 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular | NEG    | — negation                 |
| AUX  | — auxiliary                       | OBJ    | — object pronoun           |
| COM  | — comitative                      | PCF    | — predicate centered focus |
| CPL  | — completive                      | pl, PL | — plural                   |
| CR   | — current relevance               | POSS   | — possessive               |
| DCM  | — dependent clause marker         | POSTP  | — postposition             |
| EGR  | — egressive                       | REP    | — repetition               |
| FUT  | — future                          | SVC    | — serial verb construction |
| INCL | — inclusive                       | VEN    | — ventive                  |
| INFL | — inflectional suffix             | VN     | — verbal noun              |

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