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ON NEGATING THE CONSECUTIVE VERB IN AKAN

Florence A. Dolphyne
Department of Linguistics
University of Ghana, Legon

Ten tense/aspect verbal forms are recognised in Akan, each with an affirmative and a corresponding negative form.

With the exception of the Consecutive verb, all the verbs in the tense/aspect verbal system can ocur independently. The Consecutive verb, however, normally occurs as a non-initial verb in a serial verb construction, and the initial verb in such a construction is limited to certain tense/aspect forms only.

It has always been taken for granted that when an affirmative sentence is negated, the negative verb belongs to the same tense or aspect as the affirmative verb. It will be shown that this is not true of the affirmative Consecutive verb in serial verb constructions.

Contrary to the claim (Boadi, 1968) that in Akan serial verb constructions 'what joins them [the constituent verb phrases in the serial construction] is agreement between certain pre-verbal affixes across the sentence', this paper[1] shows that there are serial verb constructions in Akan in which the verbs belong to different tenses or aspects of the verb. When such sentences are negated, non-initial verbs are unmarked for tense or aspect, and are dominated by the tense or aspect of the first verb.

The negative form of the Consecutive verb occurs in the very restricted environment of a dependent purpose clause that may not necessarily be serial.

En Akan, l'on reconnaît dix formes verbales à valeur temporelle/aspectuelle; chacune d'elles a une forme affirmative et une forme négative qui lui correspond.

A l'exception du verbe consécutif, tous les verbes du système temporel/aspectuel peuvent apparaître de manière indépendante. Toutefois, le verbe consécutif apparaît normalement en position non-initiale dans une construction comportant une série de verbes; et dans une telle structure, seules certaines formes verbales du verbe consécutif relatives au temps et à l'aspect peuvent se rencontrer en position initiale.

L'on a toujours estimé que lorsque une phrase affirmative devient négative, les caractéristiques temporelles et aspectuelles du verbe négatif sont identiques à celles du verbe affirmatif. Nous allons démontrer que cela ne s'applique pas au verbe consécutif affirmatif lorsqu'il s'agit de constructions comportant une série de verbes.

Boadi (1968) indique que 'ce qui est commun aux syntagmes verbaux figurant dans les constructions Akans comportant une série de verbes, c'est la concordance temporelle et aspectuelle, dans la phrase entière, au niveau de certains affixes pré-verbaux'. Contrairement à ce point de vue, cette communication montre que dans certaines constructions Akans comportant une série de verbes, il n'y a pas de concordance temporelle et aspectuelle des verbes. Lorsque la négation intervient dans les phrases ainsi construites, les verbes en position non-initiale sont dépourvus de marques temporelles et aspectuelles et sont régis par la valeur temporelle ou aspectuelle du premier verbe.

La forme négative du verbe consécutif apparaît dans un contexte très restrient: dans une proposition subordonnée exprimant une finalité, laquelle construction ne comporte pas forément une série de verbes.

1. TENSE/ASPECT VERBAL FORMS

The ten tense/aspect verbal forms in Akan are illustrated below, and in the examples (Ak) stands for Akuapem, (Fa) for Fante, and (As) for Asante - the three written dialects of Akan.

1. Habitual

ɔ̀dá (As) ɔ́dà (AkFa)
'he sleeps'
Neg: ɔ̀ǹdà (As) ɔ̀ǹdá (AkFa)

2. Stative or Continuative

ɔ̀dà
'he is asleep/he lay sleeping'
Neg: ɔ̀ǹdá

3. Past

ɔ̀dáè (AkFa) ɔ̀dàèɛ (As)
ɔ̀dáà ɔ̀dàà
'he slept'
Neg: ɔ̀àǹdá

4. Perfect

ɔ̀ádà (AkFa) ɔ̀àdá (As)

'he has slept'
Neg: ɔ́ǹdá (Fa) ɔ̀ǹdáè (AkAs)
ɔ́ǹdáà ɔ̀ǹdáà

5. Progressive

ɔ̀rédà (AkFa) ɔ̀rèdà (As)
'he is sleeping'
Neg: ɔ́rèǹdá

6. Immediate Future

ɔ̀rèbɛ́dá (AkAs) ɔ̀rèbɛ́dá (Fa)
'he is about to sleep'
Neg: ɔ́rèǹdá

7. Indefinite Future

ɔ̀bɛ́dá
'he will sleep'
Neg: ɔ́rèǹdá

8. Consecutive

ná ɔ̀ádà (AkFa) ná ɔ̀àdá (As)
'and then he will be asleep
Neg: ná ɔ̀àǹdá

9. Imperative I

dá
'sleep!'
Neg: ǹdá (AkAs) má ǹdá (Fa)

10. Imperative II

(mà) ɔ́ǹdá
'let him sleep/he should sleep'
Neg: (m̀má) ɔ̀ǹǹdá

These examples show that -

1) the tense or aspect of the verb is sometimes carried by an affix, for example the Past, Perfect, Progressive etc., and sometimes by tone, for example the difference between the Habitual and the Stative/Continuative is carried by tone.

2) Imperative I is only used for the second person singular and Imperative II for the other persons of the verb, so that it is possible to put them together as one paradigm (Stewart, 1963) since they are complementary to each other as far as the persons of the verb are concerned.

3) the negative affix is a nasal consonant which is homorganic with the following consonant, in this case the initial consonant of the verb stem. The negative form ɔ́ rèǹdá negates the affirmative of the Progressive, the Immediate Future and the Indefinite Future.

2. THE CONSECUTIVE VERB

With the exception of the Consecutive verb, all the verbs in the Akan verbal system can occur independently. The Consecutive verb, however, normally occurs as a non-initial verb in a serial

verb construction in which the first verb is either the Progressive, the Immediate Future or the Indefinite Future, as in the following examples:

Progressive

1 ɔretete akutu akyɛ ama mbofra no
he is plucking oranges share give children the
'He is plucking oranges and sharing them among the children'

Immediate Future

2 ɔrebɛtete akutu akyɛ ama mbofra no
'He is about to pluck oranges and share them among the children'

Indefinite Future

3 ɔbɛtete akutu akyɛ ama mbofra no
'He will pluck oranges and share them among the children'

The pre-verbal element, **na**, of the Consecutive paradigm is a conjunction which translates as 'and then'. It is deleted when the Consecutive verb occurs in a serial verb construction, as in the above examples. When it is used the pronoun subject is repeated for the verb that immediately follows, making the sentence a coordinate structure rather than a serial verb construction.

4 ɔretete akutu na ɔakyɛ ama mbofra no
'He is plucking oranges and then he will share (and) give (them) to the children'

In sentences 1 to 3 above, the pronoun subject ɔ, which governs the verbs in the sentence, occurs only once, with the first verb. In the Fante dialect of Akan, the deletion of the pronoun subject of the Consecutive verbs in the serial verb construction is optional, and the following sentences are all acceptable.

5 (a) ɔretsetsew akutu akyɛ ama mbofra no
He is plucking oranges share (and) give (them) to the children
(b) ɔretsetsew akutu ɔakyɛ ɔama mbofra no
He is plucking oranges he (will) share he (will) give to the children
or (c) ɔretsetsew akutu ɔakyɛ ama mbofra no

3. SAME TENSES/ASPECTS WITHIN THE SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTION

It has often been observed that verbs in a serial verb construction usually agree in tense and aspect. In Akan this is true of only the Habitual, Past, Perfect and Imperative forms of the verb. When such sentences are negated the homorganic nasal negative morpheme occurs with each of the serial verbs in the sentence as in the (b) sentences of the following examples.

Habitual

6(a) ɔsesa bankye ndua twitwa mu dua
He collects cassava sticks cuts inside plants
'He collects cassava sticks, cuts them into pieces and plants them'

(b) **ɔnesa bankye ndua ntwitwa mu ndua**
'He does not collect cassava sticks, cut them into pieces and plant them'

Past

7(a) **ɔsesaa bankye ndua twitwaa mu duae**
'He collected cassava sticks cut them into pieces and planted them'

(b) **ɔansesa bankye ndua antwitwa mu andua**
'He did not collect cassava sticks and cut them into pieces and plant them'

Perfect

8(a) **ɔasesa bankye ndua atwitwa mu adua**
'He has collected cassava sticks, cut them into pieces and planted them'

(b) **ɔnsesaa bankye ndua ntwitwaa mu nduae**
'He has not collected cassava sticks, cut them into pieces and planted them.

Imperative I

9(a) **sesa bankye ndua twitwa mu dua**
'Collect cassava sticks, cut them into pieces and plant them'

(b) **nsesa bankye ndua twitwa mu ndua**
'Don't collect cassava sticks, cut them into pieces and plant them'

Imperative II

10(a) **ɔnsesa bankye ndua ntwitwa mu ndua**
'He should collect cassava sticks, cut them into pieces and plant them'

(b) **ɔnnsesa bankye ndua nntwitwa mu nndua**
'He should not collect cassava sticks, cut them into pieces and plant them'

4. DIFFERENT TENSES/ASPECTS WITHIN THE SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTION

The situation is different, however, when the verbs in the series belong to different tenses/aspects of the verb.

In Akan, as in a language like Izi, (Bendor-Samuel, 1968) it is possible for different tense/aspect verbs to occur in a serial verb construction, and there is a restriction on the tense or aspect of the verb that occurs in the first clause and also of the verb in the subsequent clauses[2], as illustrated below.

4.1 STATIVE - PROGRESSIVE - CONSECUTIVE

4.1.1 Stative - Progressive

11(a) **ɔhyɛ dan mu resu**
he-is-in room inside is-crying
'He is in the room crying'

(b) **ɔnhyɛ dan mu nsu**
'He is not in the room and is not crying/he is not crying in the room - i.e. he is crying somewhere else'

In sentence 11(b) both verbs occur with the negative affix although, as shown by the gloss, either both verbs are negated or one or the other of the two verbs is negated and each interpretation will depend on the sentences from which 11(b) is derived. The derivations of negative serial verb sentences is not the point at issue in this discussion, and therefore nothing more is said about it.

It will be observed from the negative verbs in the sentence that the first verb has a Stative/Continuative negative form, but the second verb is not the negative form that corresponds to the Progressive affirmative which should have been **rensu**. The negative form of the second verb is made up of the negative affix and the verb stem, and is unmarked for tense or aspect.

It is possible to resolve the ambiguity of sentence 11(b) by negating one or the other or both of the two verbs and using the conjunction **na** or **nanso** meaning 'but', in which case the second negative verb is a Progressive negative form, that is, it has the Tense/Aspect of the corresponding affirmative verb, as illustrated by sentences (d) and (e) below. The sentence, of course, ceases to be a serial verb construction.

11(c) **ɔnhyɛ dan mu na/nanso ɔresu**
'He is not in the room but he is crying'

(d) **ɔhyɛ dan mu na/nanso ɔrensu**
'He is in the room but he is not crying'

(e) **ɔnhyɛ dan mu na/nanso ɔrensu**
'He is not in the room and/but he is not crying'

4.1.2 Stative - Progressive - Consecutive

12(a) **ɔte hɔ regyegye nsawa ama okunafo**
He sits there is-receiving donations give widow
'He sits there receiving donations for the widow'

(b) **ɔnte/ɔntena hɔ ngyegye nsawa mma okunafo**
'He is not sitting there receiving donations for the widow'

Like sentence 11(b) above all the verbs in this sentence occur with the negative affix. The first verb is a Stative negative form but the subsequent verbs are unmarked for tense or aspect so that the tense/aspect distinction between the Progressive verb and the Consecutive verb of the affirmative sentence 12(a) is neutralised in the negative sentence 12(b). Again like sentence 11(b) this negative sentence is ambiguous, but the ambiguity may be removed by the use of the conjunction **nanso** 'but' in the appropriate place in the sentence and negating the relevant verb.

4.2 PERFECT - PROGRESSIVE - CONSECUTIVE

4.2.1 Perfect - Progressive

13(a) **ɔahyehyɛ nneɛma rekɔ gua mu/so**
she has packed things is-going market inside
'She has packed things and is going to the market'

(b) **ɔnhyehyɛɛ nneɛma nkɔ gua mu/so**
'She has not packed things and is not going to the market/ she has packed things but is going somewhere other than the market/ she is going to the market but has not packed things'

4.2.2 Perfect - Progressive - Consecutive

14(a) **ɔahyehyɛ nneɛma rekɔ gua mu/so akɔtɔn**
she has packed things is going market inside go and sell
'She has packed things and is going to the market to sell'

(b) **ɔnhyehyɛɛ nneɛma nkɔ gua mu/so nkɔtɔn**
'She has not packed things and is not going to the market to sell' etc.

Like the negative sentences in 11(b) and 12(b) above, all the verbs in sentences 13(b) and 14(b) occur with the negative prefix, but only the first verb is marked for tense or aspect. The subsequent verbs in the serial verb construction are unmarked for tense/aspect, and the distinction between the Progressive and Consecutive affirmative verbs in 14(a) is lost in the negative forms of the verbs. It may also be noted that there is a restriction on the order in which verbs occur in these serial verb constructions - the Progressive verb occurs in second place where the first verb in the serial verb construction is either Stative (Continuative) or Perfect, and the verb that follows it is a Consecutive form.

Like sentences 11(b) and 12(b) the negative sentences above are ambiguous and the ambiguity may be resolved by negating the relevant verb and having a coordinate structure using the conjunction **na** or **nanso** in the appropriate place in the sentence.

4.3 PROGRESSIVE)
IMMEDIATE FUTURE) - CONSECUTIVE*
INDEFINITE FUTURE)

(* indicates that there may be more than one Consecutive verb)

15(a) **ɔresesa/ɔrebɛsesa/ɔbɛsesa bankye ndua atwitwa mu atutu fam' adua**
'He is collecting/he's about to collect/he will collect cassava sticks, cut them into pieces, dig up the soil (and) plant (them)'

(b) **ɔrensesa bankye ndua ntwitwa mu ntutu fam' ndua**
'He's not collecting/he's not about to collect/he will not collect cassava sticks, cut them into pieces, dig up the soil (and) plant (them)'

Like the negative of the other serial verb constructions all the verbs in 15(b) occur with the negative affix. The first verb is the negative form that corresponds to the affirmative of the Progressive, Immediate Future and the Indefinite Future verb. It has already been noted (end of section 1) that the same negative form corresponds to the affirmative of these three tense/aspect forms of the verb. Like the other nega- tive sentences of mixed tense/aspect serial verb constructions (e.g. 11(b),12(b)), the non-initial verbs are unmarked for tense or aspect.

Like the other negative serial verb constructions this negative sentence is ambiguous and the ambiguity may be removed by the introduction of the conjunction **na/nanso** in the appropriate place. This will yield the following coordinate sentences.

15(c) **ɔresesa bankye ndua na/nanso ɔrentwitwa mu ntutu fam' ndua**
'He is collecting cassava sticks but he is not cutting them/ will not cut them into pieces and dig up the soil and plant them'

(d) **ɔresesa bankye ndua atwitwa mu na/nanso ɔrentutu fam' ndua**
'He is collecting cassava sticks and cut them into pieces but he will not dig up the soil and plant them'

(e) **ɔrebɛsesa bankye ndua atwitwa mu atutu fam' na/nanso ɔrendua**
'He is about to collect cassava sticks, cut them into pieces, and dig up the soil but he will not plant them'

(f) **ɔbɛsesa bankye ndua na/nanso ɔrentwitwa mu ntutu fam' ndua**
'He will collect cassava sticks but he will not cut them into pieces, dig up the soil and plant them'

It was noted above that where the conjunction **na/nanso** is used, the negative form of the verb that follows has the tense/aspect of the corresponding affirmative verb. In the above examples, the negative verb after **nanso** is not the negative form that corresponds to the affirmative Consecutive verb, instead it has the negative form that corresponds to the Progressive or Future affirmative verb.

e.g. (c) ..... **ɔrentwitwa**
(d) ..... **ɔrentutu** etc.

4.4 ON NEGATING THE CONSECUTIVE IN SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTIONS

This means that the Consecutive affirmative verb that occurs in these serial verb constructions does not have a corresponding negative form, for the verb that negates it in these sentences is either unmarked for tense or aspect, e.g. 15(b) or it takes the same tense or aspect as the first verb in the series, which in this case may be either Progressive, Immediate Future or Indefinite Future, as in examples 15(c) to (f) above. Those examples show that the negative Consecutive form that is traditionally given in the Akan verbal system is not the form that negates the Consecutive verb as found in serial verb constructions.

It is also possible to negate sentence 15(a) in the following ways: (Note that these are coordinate sentences with the conjunction **na** 'and')

15(g) **ɔrensesa bankye ndua na ɔatwitwa mu atutu fam' adua**
'He will not collect cassava sticks and therefore there is no question of his cutting them into pieces and digging up the soil and planting them'

(h) **ɔrensesa bankye ndua ntwitwa myu na ɔatutu fam' adua**
'He will not collect cassava sticks and cut them into pieces and therefore there is no question of his digging up the soil and planting them'

(i) **ɔrensesa bankye ndua ntwitwa mu ntutu fam' na ɔadua**
'He will not collect cassava sticks, cut them into pieces and dig up the soil and therefore there is no question of his planting them'

In these sentences the first verb is a negative form while the subsequent verbs may or may not occur with the negative morpheme, depending on whether they occur before or after the conjunction **na**. It is clear, however, that the scope of the negative extends over all the verbs in the series. This shows that there is a sequential order for the action indicated by the verbs in these serial constructions, that is the action indicated by each verb is subsequent in time to that indicated by the verb that precedes it, so that once the preceding verb is negated, everything else that follows is also negated. Sentences 15(g) to (i) more or less negate the affirmative sentence 15(a), but none of them has a negative Consecutive form.

5. THE NEGATIVE CONSECUTIVE VERB IN A DEPENDENT CLAUSE

As indicated at the beginning of this paper, the negative of the Consecutive verb in the Akan verbal system is given as follows:

Affirmative	Negative
na made 'and then I would be asleep'	**na manda** 'and then I would not be asleep'
na woada 'and then you would be asleep'	**na woanda** 'and then you would not be asleep'
na ɔada 'and then he would be asleep'	**na ɔanda** 'and then he would not be asleep'

These negative forms of the verb do occur in Akan, but when they do, the Consecutive verb occurs in a dependent clause, and **na** has the meaning 'so that'. Here the Consecutive verb occurs as the first verb in the dependent clause.

16 **ɔbɛnom kɔfe na ɔanda**
'He will drink coffee so that he will not sleep'

17 **merebɛfa aduru na manyare**
'I am about to take medicine so that I do not fall ill'

18 **dua no yiye na ɛantutu angu**
'Plant them well so that they do not get uprooted'

19 **makɔgye sika no na ɛankɔyera**
'I've gone for the money so that it does not get lost'

These are not serial verb constructions, of course, for the verbs in each sentence do not necessarily have the same subject, as in sentences 18 and 19. Sentence 18, however, has two serial verbs in the second half of the sentence.

In each of these sentences the verb in the main clause is in the affirmative while that of the subordinate clause, which is the Consecutive form, is in the negative. When these sentences are

negated, the verb in the main clause occurs with the negative prefix and the verb in the dependent clause is in the affirmative Consecutive.

20 **ɔrennom kɔfe na ɔada**
'He will not drink coffee so that he will sleep'

21 **ndua no yiye na ɛatutu agu**
'Do not plant them well so that they will get uprooted'

22 **meremfa aduru na mayare**
'I am not going to/will not take medicine so that I will fall ill'

It can be seen from these sentences that the negative form of the Consecutive verb as traditionally given in the Akan verbal system corresponds to the affirmative of the Consecutive verb only when it occurs in a dependent purpose clause. If the verb phrase in such a dependent clause happens to be a serial verb construction, all the verbs in the string will be negated (18 and 23 below), as normally happens when all the verbs in the series are of the same tense or aspect (examples 6 to 10).

23 **makɔgye sika no na ɛankɔyera ankɔfa asɛm ambrɛ me**
'I have gone for the money so that it does not get lost and bring trouble upon me'

In this sentence all the three Consecutive verbs in the subordinate clause occur with the negative morpheme.

6. CONCLUSION

In this discussion it has been shown that unlike other tense/aspect forms of the verb, the Consecutive verb does not always show a direct correspondence between the form of the affirmative and that of the verb that negates it. Where the affirmative Consecutive occurs in a non-subordinate clause of a sentence, it is always a non-initial verb in a serial verb construction, usually occurring after a Progressive, Immediate Future or an Indefinite Future verb, and in this position the negative verb that negates the affirmative Consecutive verb is made up of the negative prefix and the verb stem, that is, it is unmarked for tense or aspect, as is the case with all non-initial verbs in mixed tense/aspect serial verb constructions. Even where the verb that negates the affirmative Consecutive is marked for tense/aspect, as in examples 15(c) to (f), this negative verb has the tense or aspect of the verb in the first clause, which is the Progressive or the Future.

It is only when the Consecutive verb occurs in a dependent purpose clause that the negative form bears a direct relationship to the form of the affirmative, having the Consecutive prefix **a** followed by the negative morpheme **n**. This means that the negative form of the Consecutive verb as found in Akan verbal paradigms negates the affirmative Consecutive verb only in the very limited environment of a subordinate purpose clause, and that in the more general environment of a serial verb construction in which the Consecutive verb occurs, the affirmative form does not have a corresponding negative form.

It has also been shown that in Akan, when the verbs in a serial verb construction have the same tense or aspect, as is usual with verbs in the Habitual, Past, Perfect and the Imperative, their negative forms have the same tense or aspect as the affirmative verbs. Where the verbs in the serial verb construction belong to different tenses or aspects of the verb, the negative verbs after the verb in the first clause are unmarked for tense or aspect (exx. 11-15). In other words the non-initial negative verbs in such sentences are dominated by, or take their tense or aspect from the verb of the first clause.

Finally, studies of serial verb constructions have generally focussed on the derivation of such sentences, and very little attention has been paid to how such sentences are negated. Referring to 'the scope of negation and the semantic interpretation of serial verb constructions in which there is a negative element', Bamgbọse (1982) observes that 'hardly any attention has been paid to this problem'. It is hoped that this discussion will contribute to our understanding of this aspect of the serial verb phenomenon.

NOTES

[1]This paper was presented at the 17th West Africa Languages Congress, held at the University of Ibadan, March 17-21, 1986.

[2]It may be noted here that the restriction on the choice of tense or aspect of the verb that occurs in initial or non-initial position in mixed tense/aspect serial verb constructions, and also on the order in which these different tense/aspect verbs follow each other in such constructions, suggests a syntactic relationship between pairs or groups of different tense/aspect verbs in Akan. For the moment, it has not been possible to determine the exact nature of this relationship.

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