

Four counter-presumption constructions in Shua (Khoe-Kwadi, Botswana)

William B. McGregor^{*}

Department of Aesthetics and Communication – Linguistics, Aarhus University, Jens Chr. Skous Vej 2,
Office 1485-617, DK-8000 Århus C, Denmark

Received 22 April 2014; received in revised form 7 February 2015; accepted 9 February 2015

Available online 20 March 2015



CrossMark

Abstract

This paper is concerned with four unusual grammatical structures in Shua (“Khoisan”, Botswana). Three of these presume the exceptionality of a salient discourse entity as a thing of its type and contradict this with an assertion of non-exceptionality; the fourth presumes the typicality of the salient entity, contrasting this with a claim to exceptionality. The paper describes the formal properties and meanings of these structures, distinguishing between their coded and inferred meanings. It is argued that the coded meaning of each is of the interpersonal type. The paper further suggests that the structures represent four distinct constructions that are partly motivated, and that crucial to each is repetition of key lexical components.

© 2015 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Shua; Interpersonal grammar; Presumptions; Semantics; Pragmatics; Repetition

1. Introduction¹

1.1. Preliminary remarks

This paper describes and analyses four unusual and infrequent construction types in Shua, a Khoe-Kwadi (Central Khoisan) language of north-eastern Botswana (Güldemann, 2004; Güldemann and Elderkin, 2010; Vossen, 1997, 2013:10–11). To orient the reader, the four types can be initially characterised in terms of their English translations. Three types translate as so-called tautologies, two as nominal tautologies of the type *boys will be boys*, the third as a conditional tautology like *if you've gotta go you've gotta go*. The fourth type translates as a putative existential construction resembling *there are cars and cars*.

The paper has two primary purposes. One is to describe these constructions, providing an account of both their formal features and their meanings. The second is to explore the theoretical relevance of the constructions within the framework of a usage-based grammar that accords a central place to constructions. The four constructions are not a random set, but

^{*} Tel.: +45 87162153.

E-mail address: linwmg@dac.au.dk.

¹ Example sentences are laid out according to the Leipzig Glossing Rules, employing mostly the recommended abbreviations. For the reader's convenience, they are listed here: ACC — accusative; C — common gender; F — feminine gender; INS — inessive; INT — interrogative; J — juncture morpheme; LOC — locative; NEG — negative; OBL — oblique; PGN — person-gender-number marker; PL — plural; POS — possessive; PRS — present tense; PST — past; SG — singular; and REF — reflexive. 1, 2 and 3 indicate the three person categories.

rather form a coherent group that invoke presumptions which they contradict. This presumptive meaning concerns that which is shared between the speech interactants, that which they take as common ground on which the unfolding knowledge in the interaction is scaffolded. The meaning is thus of the interpersonal type (McGregor, 1997; see further section 5.2 – cf. Halliday, 1994). At the constructional level the coded meanings are entirely interpersonal.

The term *Shua* as it is generally used is a cover term for a set of varieties in the East Kalahari Khoe group of the Khoe–Kwadi family (Vossen, 2013:10–11). *Shua* is an endangered language with around a few thousand speakers in total. In this paper, however, the term *Shua* is used specifically in reference to the linguistic variety spoken by a couple of hundred residents of the township of Nata who identify themselves as *Shua*. This follows their own usage of the term as an autonym, and common practice by speakers of *Shua* varieties spoken elsewhere in north-east Botswana. In Nata, this variety is particularly seriously endangered, and is spoken fluently only by adults over the age of about 30. This variety does not closely resemble any of the *Shua* varieties discussed in Vossen (2013), including either of the two varieties he locates in Nata, Cara and IXaise.

No detailed description is available of *Shua* grammar, and considerations of space preclude providing an outline in this paper. Vossen (2013:215–227, 401–407) can be consulted for basic information on the morphology and syntax of *Shua* varieties. *Shua* phonology is discussed in Vossen (2013:71–73), though a number of phonemic segments are not mentioned. In this paper *Shua* words are spelled according to the orthography tentatively adopted by the Nata *Shua* community, a brief description of which can be found at the website for the literacy workshops, http://www.hum.au.dk/ling/research/Shua/Documentation_and_description_of_Shua.htm.

The paper is organised as follows. First, in section 1.2, we overview the four construction types in *Shua*; in this and the following three sections these are referred to neutrally as structures, with no implication that they are genuine constructions, i.e. grammatical signs. Following this, section 1.3 presents a brief overview of methodology and the data used in the study. In sections 2–4, we provide detailed discussions of each of the types. Then in section 5 we turn to theoretical considerations, presenting evidence for the constructional status of the structures dealt with in the paper, and addressing the question of how the constructions are best analysed. Section 6 winds up the paper with some conclusions and comments on wider issues.

1.2. Overview of the structures

Examples of the four structures discussed in this paper are provided in (1)–(4) below.

- | | | |
|-----|---|-------------------|
| (1) | <i>khoe i:e khoe ʔi:-ʔi: ʔi</i>
person all person be:like-be:like be
‘A person is a person.’ | ‘all’ copular |
| (2) | <i>ts'i: k'am ts'i: k'am luĩ ʔi</i>
bum mouth bum mouth one be
‘An anus is an anus.’ | ‘one’ copular |
| (3) | <i>ti: ke k'ui kika ta: ke k'ui</i>
1SG.OBL PRS say then 1SG PRS say
‘If I’m saying it I’m saying it.’ | conditional |
| (4) | <i>hoku-na kotere hoku-n xai hã:</i>
chicken-PL and chicken-PL:OBL still exist
‘There are chickens and chickens.’ | existential (PIE) |

The main features of each structure are summarised in Table 1. The first column provides convenience labels for the four structures (used in the examples above), in accordance with a salient morphological feature of the template description given in the third column. The second column indicates the type of ordinary structure in the language that most resembles the particular structure. Three types are distinguished: copular clauses, which use *ʔi* ‘be’ as a copula, as in (1) and (2); conditional clause complexes, that make use of the connector *kika* ‘if-then’, as in (3); and existential clauses, which use the paradigmatically defective verb *hã*: ‘exist’, as in (4). These labels, it is stressed, are given to assist conceptualisation, and provide the reader with an indication of the ordinary structure each resembles most in form. Thus the first two types resemble copular clauses in that they have the ‘be’ copular in final position; the third is like a conditional clause complex; and the fourth is like an existential clause in that it involves the existential verb. See section 5.1 for further details and discussion.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/935387>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/935387>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)