

Postpositions – *Ro* and – *Lan* as Clitics in Kanuri

GAZALI, Baba Kura Alkali (Ph.D.)

Department of Languages and Linguistics
University of Maiduguri, Bornu State, Nigeria

&

MUNKAILA, Mohammed (Ph.D.)

Department of Languages and Linguistics
University of Maiduguri, Bornu State, Nigeria

Abstract

This paper examines the syntactic and morphological functions of the postpositions –*ro* and –*lan* as clitics in Kanuri within the broad framework of descriptive linguistics. The study adopts the works of Zwicky and Pullum (1983) and Spencer and Luis (2012) as its analytic models. Primary sources of data collection are Kanuri written texts: *S?mon?m wuro sarus?g?ne* by Norbert Cyffer and *Nyariwa Kanuribe* by Shettima Bukar Abba and John Hutchison. These two texts are collection of stories written in the Yerwa dialect of Kanuri. All the various places where the postpositional particles –*ro* and –*lan* occurred are identified and extracted for presentation and analysis. The outcome of the study reveals that the postpositions –*ro* and –*lan* function as clitics and can be attached to both lexical and functional categories in Kanuri. Syntactically, the postpositions can be cliticised to nouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, pronouns, relativizers 'd?', dependent possessive pronoun '-nz?' (his/her) and the genitive marker '-be' to express different semantic functions.

Keywords: Kanuri, Postpositions, -*Ro*, -*Lan*, Clitics, Affixes, Genitive Marker.

Introduction

Kanuri is a member of the Saharan branch of the Nilo-Saharan phylum of African languages (Greenberg, 1963, 1966, 1971). Lewis (2009) presents the Saharan branch into Eastern, Western and Northern branch of African languages. According to Cyffer (1998), the Kanuri language is the widest spread language in the Lake Chad region and is spoken in all the countries bordering the Lake (Cameroon, Chad, Niger

and Nigeria). Bulakarima and Shettima (2011) observe that Kanuri is the major language of the people of the present day Borno and Yobe States of Nigeria.

Crystal (2008) defines postposition as a grammatical classification of words, referring to the closed set of items which follow noun phrases (or single nouns or pronouns) to form a single constituent of structure. The analogous construction in English involves prepositions. Many languages make regular use of post posed items, e.g. Japanese and Hindi, etc. Lyons (1968) observes that the difference between prepositions and postpositions is trivial. In the traditional theory of the parts of speech, the term is employed to refer to that class of invariable words or particles, which have a grammatical or local function and which, as it happens in Latin and Greek, tend to occur immediately before the noun or noun phrase they modify. In many other languages (e.g. Turkish, Japanese, Hindi, etc.), particles with similar grammatical or local functions to those of the Latin, Greek or English prepositions occur after the noun they modify and for that reason they are usually called postpositions. On Kanuri postpositions, Koelle (1854) identifies Kanuri as postpositive language where particles are marked after nouns or noun phrases. Lukas (1937) identifies six different postpositive particles in Kanuri. Hutchison (1976) identifies and classifies postpositions –ro and –lan in Kanuri while Cyffer (1998) sub-categorises the two major concepts of the postpositions in Kanuri as dynamic –ro and stative –lan. Bulakarima and Shettima (2011) observe that postpositions –ro and –lan are suffixed to nouns, verbs and adverbs to express different functions in Kanuri and Gazali (2014) discusses the various functions of the postpositions in Kanuri but none of these studies discusses the relationship between the postpositions with their stem or root. Therefore, this study examines relationship between the postpositions –ro and –lan with their hosts and stems.

Methodology

In conducting this study, primary sources of data collection are employed. They are: *S?mon?m wuro sarus?g?ne* by Norbert Cyffer and *Nyariwa Kanuribe* by Shettima Bukar Abba and John Hutchison. In the texts, all the various places where the postpositions –ro and –lan occurred are identified, underlined and extracted for presentation and analysis. The choice of the texts is informed by their popularity. The two texts are written with the principles of Standard Kanuri Orthography (SKO) and in the Yerwa dialect of Kanuri. No lottery method is used in picking out the data because all the two texts are considered.

Theoretical Framework

The approach adopted for this study is mainly descriptive based on the works of Cyffer (1998) and Ziegelmeier (2008). Cyffer (1998) discusses the functions of the postpositions –ro and –lan in Kanuri while Ziegelmeier (2008) discusses elements of subordination and co-ordination of Arabic loan words in Kanuri and both scholars

have used informant(s) as source of data. Here, this study marries the two approaches in analysing the Kanuri postpositions using two Kanuri written texts as sources of data. On the relationship between the postpositions with host or stems, this paper observes that the postpositions identified in the two texts are bound morphemes that cannot stand on their own but lean virtually to every lexical categories i.e. verbs, nouns, adverbs, possessive pronouns and independent pronouns to express roles and functions in Kanuri.

Crystal (2008) defines clitics as a form used in grammar to refer to a form which resembles a word, but which cannot stand on its own as a normal utterance, being phonologically dependent upon a neighbouring word (its host) in a construction while affixes as a collective term for the types of formative that can be used only when added to another morpheme (the root or stem) and affixes are limited in number in a language.

Zwicky and Pullum (1983) identify six (6) criteria of distinguishing clitics and affixes in English. This study examines the status of the postpositions –ro and –lan in Kanuri as clitics adopting Zwicky and Pullum (1983) as analytical model. Discussion shows the basic criteria of distinguishing clitics with affixes. Spencer and Luis (2012, p.1) observe that “In terms of their function and meaning, the clitics `s and the full form *is* are essentially the same thing. Since it is not a fully-fledge word, we might want to say that `s is an affix like the plural –s or like the 3sg ending –s in *eats* [sic]. Like clitics, affixes cannot exist independently but need something to attach to. However, clitics are not ordinary affixes. A genuine affix only attaches to words of a particular category, such as a noun (for plural) or a verb (for person-number agreement) but for clitics `s attaches to whatever word it happens to be next to, even the pronoun *you* in *The woman standing next to you `s a linguist.*”

Spencer and Luis (2012) identify two important aspects to the problem of identifying clitics as follows:

1. We need to decide whether we are dealing with an ordinary word represented in the syntax like other words, or whether we are dealing with an element whose syntax is special or idiosyncratic, or indeed an element which is simply not represented syntactically as a word in the first place.
2. We need to decide whether we are dealing with a clitic or with an affix.

As we will see, many of the elements labelled clitics in theoretical and descriptive discussions correspond to function words in other languages. If an element fails to behave like a normal function word and shows idiosyncratic or restricted behaviour, we might then use this as evidence that we have a clitic. This paper examines the status of criteria of clitics' identification using the following criteria:

1. Clitics can exhibit a low degree of selection with respect to their hosts, while affixes exhibit a high degree of selection with respect to their stems. This criteria explains that clitics can attach to virtually any category of words in

Kanuri i.e. nouns, adverbs, verbs, possessive pronouns and independent pronouns. This can be illustrated in the following examples:

- a. Fero (n) “girl” + -ro fero=ro “to girl|”
- b. Fero (n) d? (the)+-ro ferod?=ro “to the girl”
- c. Shi (pro) “him/her|”+-ro shi=ro “to him”
- d. Ka (stick) + -n kalan or kan “with stick”
- e. Ka (stick) d? + lan kad?n/ lan “with the stick”

The above examples in (1 a-e) show that the postpositions –ro and –la (n) can attach to every category of words in Kanuri. In example (1a) the postposition –ro is cliticised to noun “fero” (girl), in example (1b) the –ro is cliticised to the determiner “d?” (the) and the determiner “d?” is also cliticised to the noun “fero” (girl), in example (1c) the postposition –ro is cliticised to independent pronoun “shi” (him/her), in example (1d) the postposition –lan is cliticised to the noun “ka” (stick) while in example (1e) the postposition –la(n) is cliticised to the determiner “d?” and the determiner d? is also cliticised to the noun “ka” (stick). However, it is observed that in the inflectional affixes and the derivational affixes, by contrast, are quite specific to their selection of stems. The plural markers only suffixed to nouns, the past tense marker is only suffixed to verbs and the superlatives are only suffixed to adjectives to Kanuri. Consider the following examples:

2. a. fero (n) “girl” + -wa ferowa “girls” (n)
- b. bu-k-in (v) “eat” + -na buk?na “I ate”
- c. kura (adj) “big” + -ro kuraro (adj) “biggest”

3. Clitics can attach to material already containing clitics but affixes cannot. The postposition –ro and la (n) as clitics can cliticise to material already containing clitics in Kanuri. According to Zwicky and Pullum (1983), the inflectional affixes cannot take affixes attached to material already containing inflectional affixes. In this study, it is observed that the inflectional affixes in Kanuri cannot be attached to materials already containing inflectional affixes. Consider the following examples in (3 a and b)

3. a. * tada-d? ishin –na noz?nyi
 boy –the coming-PST he doesn't know
 The boy is coming/ came he doesn't know
- b. tada-d? is?na=ro noz?nyi
 boy –the came-COC he doesn't know
 “He doesn't know whether the boy is coming”

Example (3 a and b) above shows that the verb “ishin” (I am coming) contains progressive –n inflectional suffix and the sentence is ungrammatical because the inflectional suffix cannot be attached or suffixed to material already containing the inflectional suffix in Kanuri while example (3b) shows that the verb “is?na” (came)

already contains past inflectional suffix –na and the postposition –ro is cliticised to the inflected verb to express conditional-concessive marker “whether” in Kanuri. Basing on the works of Zwicky and Pullum (1983) and Spencer and Luis (2012), it is observed that the postpositions –ro and –la(n) are clitics not affixes in Kanuri.

Data Presentation and Analysis

4. Postposition–ro as clitics

4.1. Indirect Object Marker –ro: Indirect object refers to one of the two types of object element that can function in clause, the other being labelled as direct; traditionally considered as dative function (Crystal, 2008). In the texts, it is observed that the postposition –ro is cliticised to pronouns, genitive markers –be to express indirect object. Consider the example (4a and b) below.

- 4 a. Cìr -d? -ye nji shi=ro cìwùdo
Concubine-the SM water him-IOM he brought
“The Concubine brought the water for him”
b. tada –ye aba -nz? fero –be=ro guljiwo
boy –the father –his girl –GEN-IOM he told
“The boy told the girls' father”

The above examples in (4a and b) show that the postposition –ro functions as indirect object marker. The postposition –ro is a bound morpheme cliticised to pronoun “shi” (him) in example (4a) and in example (4b) the postposition –ro is cliticised to genitive marker –be and the genitive marker –be is also cliticised to the noun “fero” (girl).

Temporal –ro

The postposition –ro expresses time and adverbial clause of time in Kanuri. The adverbial clause of time is formed with the head noun “kawu” (day) which is durational in both the temporal and the spatial sense. It is usually best described in English as clauses headed by words like: “before”, “until”, “since” (temporal). The temporal use of “kawu” is by far the most common and the most important, durationally making reference to an activity that is carried out in relation to a point in time. This point in time is indicated by the subordinate clause. Consider examples (5a and b):

5. a. kawu nji s?di s?wandin –d? =ro, fal- nza cikuruwo
before water ground gets –RTV –TEM one –them fall
“Before the water falls down to the ground, one of them fall”
b. kawu ishin-d?=ro, kuwi –so tada kada sasambi
day he comes-RTV hen –PL chicks they gave birth

“Before he comes back, hens would have hatched their eggs”

Examples (5a and b) show that the postposition –ro can express time when the sentence begins with adverbial “kawu” (before) and the relativizer “d?” is cliticised to the verb root then the postposition –ro is also cliticized to the relativizer “d?”. The postposition –ro that is cliticised to the relativizer “d?” functions as temporal introducing temporal clauses. Such clauses are dependent clauses in Kanuri.

Intension –ro

The postposition –ro can also express intension in Kanuri. Intension –ro is formed when the postposition –ro is cliticised to verb root such as “mat?” (to look for), “gota” (to take) “bargat?” (to congratulate) and the intension –ro also introduces subordinate clause in Kanuri. Let us examine examples 6a and b:.

6. a. ilmu mata=ro Borno-ro lewono

Knowledge look-INT Borno-DIR he went

“He went to Borno so as to seek knowledge”

b. Yim laa Bultu karaa-ro karga k?mbu mata=ro
one day hyena bush -DIR he entered food look-INT

“One day hyena entered into the bush so as to look for food”

In the above examples (6a and b) the postposition ro is cliticised to the verb roots to express adverbial clause of intension in Kanuri.

Postposition –la(n) as clitics

Time or Temporal –(la)n

The postposition –(la)n also expresses time and adverbial clause of time in Kanuri. The adverbial clauses are constructed with the head noun “kawu” (before), “ngawo” (after) and “sa” (time) and they are all extended by a relative clause which are equivalent to those clauses introduced by 'before' in English. In adverbial temporal clauses formation, the postposition –la(n) is cliticised to adverbs, genitive markers and relativizer “d?” to form adverbial clauses in Kanuri. The examples in (7a, b and c) will suffice: .

7. a. kawu gana-be ngawo=n kwa nui

After small-GEN after-TEM husband died

“The husband died after few days”

b. ngawo mag?fal -be -lan mal?m-d? kadio

bak week one-GEN-TEM teacher-the came

“After one week, the teacher came”

c. sa ask?r –wa -n?m isai ruk?na- la-d? -n, f?r –nyi -ro bake
lewoko

time army-PL – your they come I saw RTV-TEM horse-my-to climbed
I went

“By the time I saw your armies coming; I took my horse and went
away”

The above examples in (7a, b and c) show that the postposition – (la)n function as temporal. The temporal postposition –la(n) is cliticised to adverbs “ngawo” (after) to express adverbial temporal phrase in example (7a), the temporal la(n) is also cliticised to genitive marker –be to express adverbial temporal phrase and the temporal (la)n can also be cliticized to relativizer “d?” to express adverbial clause of time in Kanuri.

Instrument –la(n)

According to Crystal (2008), instrument refers to the form taken by a noun phrase when it expresses such a notion as “by means of”. This study identifies that postposition –(la)n is cliticised to inanimate nouns or entity to express instrumental role in Kanuri. Consider the following examples (8a, b and c) below.

8. a. na-n?m-ro suluyi –ga shi-ga kazaa=n bangne

Place-your-to comes-if him-DOM spear-INST you hit

“If he comes to you, hit him with your spear”

b. Am –so –d? kala=n lene yilzain

peoplPl –the stick-INST you touch they will scream

“You touch the people with your stick they will scream”

The above examples in (8a and b) show that the postposition –(la)n is cliticized to inanimate nouns to express instrumental role in Kanuri.

Conclusion

This paper discusses the postposition –ro and –la(n) as clitics in Kanuri language. The study also discusses and identifies different syntactic and semantic functions of the postpositions –ro and –la(n) in Kanuri using Kanuri written texts as the source of data. On the relationship between the postposition –ro and –la(n) with their host/stem, the study observes that the postpositions in Kanuri can be cliticised to virtually every lexical categories in Kanuri –nouns, verbs, inflected verbs, adverbs, pronouns, relativizers, dependent possessive pronouns and genitive markers to express different functions. The study also examines the general behaviour of inflectional affixes in Kanuri adopting the works of Zwicky and Pullum (1983) and Spencer and Luis (2012).

References

- Bulakarima, S.U. and Shettima, A.K. (2011). *Elements of Kanuri Grammar*. Maiduguri: Desktop Publishers Co-operative Society.
- Bukar, S.A. and Hutchison, J.P. (1978). *Hawarwa Kanuribe*. Kaduna: Northern Nigerian publishing Co..LTd.
- Crystal, D. (2008). *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*. London: Basil Blackwell.
- Cyffer, N. (1979). *S?mon?m wuro sarus?g?ne*. Lagos, Thomas Nelson.
- Cyffer, N. (1998) *A Sketch of Kanuri*. Koln, Rudiger Koppe Verlag.
- Gazali, B.K.A. (2014). Descriptive Analysis of the Various Functions of the Postpositions in Kanuri. Unpublished doctoral Thesis, Department of Languages and Linguistics, University of Maiduguri, Nigeria.
- Greenberg, J.H. (1963). *The Languages of Africa*. The Hague: Mouton
- Greeberg, J.H. (1966). *The Languages of Africa*. Indiana University, Bloomington.
- Greenberg, J.H. (1971). "Nilo-Saharan and Meroitic": In *Current Trends in Linguistics*. The Hague Monton.
- Hutchison, J.P. (1976). Aspect of Kanuri Syntax, Unpublished doctoral Thesis, Indiana University, Bloomington.
- Koelle, S.W. (1854). *Grammar of Borno or Kanuri Language*. London: C.M.S.
- Lewis, M. (2009) *Ethnologue: Languages of the World* 16th edn.) Dallas.
Online version: [http:// WWW.ethnologue.com/](http://WWW.ethnologue.com/).
- Lukas, J. (1937). *A Study of the Kanuri Language, Grammar and Vocabulary*. London: Oxford University, Press.
- Lyons, J. (1968). *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Spencer, A. and Luis, A. (2012). *Clitics: An Introduction*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Zieglmeyer, G. (2008). "Aspects of Adverbial subordination in Kanuri" *Maiduguri Journal of Linguistics and Literary Studies*, University of Maiduguri x 16-22.
- Zwicky, A. and Pullum, G. (1983). Cliticisation vs Inflection: English n't Lg.59.502-13