EMAI'S PRESENTATIONAL CONSTRUCTION[1]

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Copular forms have received far less cross-linguistic attention over the last few decades than transitive verbs (Hopper and Thompson 1980, 1982, Declerek 1988) Serving as grammatical support items, copular forms typically link a subject noun phrase to a nominal, adjectival or locative phrase Recent cross-linguistic investigations by Stassen (1997) bring new energy to copular studies Although his findings emphasize typological and functional regularities affecting intransitive predicates, Stassen draws attention to contrasting predicational and identificational functions of sentences like *That man is a farmer* In the predicational function, an entity is assigned to a general class (i e class membership), but in one expression of the identificational function two entities are advanced as holding a relationship of equational identity Still another identificational function is structured by presentational sentences of the form *It's a farmer*, which introduce entities and are often accompanied in conversation by a pointing gesture In Stassen's terminology, equational identity constructions instruct the hearer to close down a cognitive file previously viewed as unrelated to another file (collapsing files), while presentational identity constructions instruct the hearer to open a cognitive file (introducing files) Of the two identity construction types, only presentationals concern us in this paper

According to Stassen, identity constructions regardless of type exhibit three formal characteristics reflecting their semantic and functional character They show a preference for third person form and a tendency to be atemporal and non-predicational in nature His database, including that from sub-Saharan Africa, reveals that the morphosyntax of identity expressions reflects grammatical devices employed in marking information structure

For this paper, we will assess previously undescribed grammatical properties of the presentational construction (PC) in Emai, a Benue-Congo language of Nigeria's Edoid group (Bendor-Samuel 1989) The examination is grounded to data emanating from our ongoing documentation effort aimed at describing Emai's lexical, grammatical and discourse structure Emai PCs reflect the non-predicational, atemporal and third person tendencies noted by Stassen, although not all are equally transparent And consistent with Stassen, the structural character of PCs demonstrates an affinity for the grammar of information structure

Emai PCs occur frequently in the discourse of riddles introduced by *gbi aile* [2] They designate a riddle's response (1), no other copula serves in this capacity

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[2] Orthographic conventions for Emai are consistent with those in Schaefer (1987), where *a* represents a half open back vowel, *ɛ* a half open front vowel, *vb* a voiced bilabial approximant, high tone is represented by an acute accent, and low tone is unmarked

1 gbı aıle

edeede, ó ọ gbe ınyọ ọı³
daıly 3s H beat mother ıts
daıly, ıt beats ıts mother'

úvbíokọ ọọ
pestle COP
`ıt's a pestle' (as ın mortar and pestle)

As ıllustrated wıth a dıfferent example, PCs comprıse two fundamental structural components, an ınıtıal noun phrase and the form ọ

2 ọlı ómohe na ọọ
the man thıs COP
ıt's thıs man'

Gıven the hıgh low tone of ọ, one mıght assume that ıt encapsulates a bı-morphemıc structure (3a), ınstead of a sıngle copular form Under thıs hypothesıs, one morpheme would be the subject pronoun, the thırd person sıngular form seen ın (3b), and the other would be the copula ọ

3 a ọlí ọmohe na ọ ọ
the man thıs 3s COP
ıt's thıs man'

b ọ gbé ọlí ákhe á
3s break the pot CS
he broke the pot'

There are three prıncıpal reasons for rejectıng the bı-morphemıc hypothesıs Fırst, no subject pronoun for fırst or second person sıngular can precede low tone ọ

4 * ọlí ọmóhe na í / u ọ
the man thıs 1s 2s COP

As well, the ındefinıte, non-anaphorıc subject pronoun faıls to precede low tone ọ

5 * ọlí ọmohe na a ọ
the man thıs one COP

Thırd, ıf hıgh-toned ọ were a thırd person sıngular form, one would expect number agreement between a plural ınıtıal noun phrase (élí ımáhé na) and a plural thırd person pronomınal subject (yan), as shown by

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³ Abbrevıatıons used throughout thıs study ınclude the followıng ADD=Addıtıve, ANT=Anterıor, ANTI=Antıcıpatıve, CONC=Concessıve, C=Contınuous, CER=Certaıntıve, COP=Copula, CS=Change of State, DED=Deductıve, DUB=Dubıtatıve, EG=Egressıve, H=Habıtual, HYP=Hypothetıcal, IG=Ingressıve, NEG=Negatıve, NF=Negatıve Focus, PF=Posıtıve Focus, PRED=Predıctıve, REC=Recurrent, REFL=Reflexıve, R=Relator, REP=Repetıtıve, SC=Subject Concord, SEQ=Sequentıal, SUB=Subsequent, TER=Termınal

the number agreement requirement of the focus construction in (6a) and (6b) No number agreement exists in PCs, since plural noun phrases occurring in initial position, although grammatical (6c), are never acceptable with plural subject pronouns (6d)

6 a eli imohe na   li yan gbe   oli akhe a
     the men   these PF 3p break the pot CS
     it is these men who broke the pot'

  b * eli imohe na   li o gbe   oli ákhe a
      the men   these PF 3s break the pot CS

  c eli imohe ain   oo
     the men   those COP
     its those men'

  d * eli imohe ain   yan o
      the men   those 3p COP

Such facts argue against a bi-morphemic structure for *oo*, as well as against a subject pronoun interpretation for its initial *o* Additional facts argue that the contour tonal shape of *o* is not a necessary element of its composition and that a single tone bearing unit exists In constructions with an auxiliary particle, the contour shape of *o* is lost and only a final low tone *o* appears In (7a), the Certaintive auxiliary *ma* assumes a high tone, preserving an overall contour of high low tone across *ma* and *o* Contour tonal melodies normally characterize the Emai verb phrase (Egbokhare 1999), as shown by the contour high low high of *ma*, *che* and *welo* (7b)

7 a oli omohe na   ma   o
     the man   this CER COP
     it's surely this man'

  b oli omohe ma che welo oli otoi
     the man   CER REP sweep the ground
     the man surely swept the ground again'

Taken together, these facts are consistent with Stassen's non-predicational claim for PCs Predication has the function of assigning a particular object to a general concept and assumes the representational form of a predicate and its arguments, one of the latter being the subject Since Emai PCs manifest no grammatical subject, they are not predicational in this sense Instead, they exhibit an identificational function in which grammatical subject plays no role

Assuming PCs are not predicational in Stassen's sense would account for their failure to accept predicate negation with the *i* particle (8a), while true predicates normally accept it (8b)

8 a * ói   i   i   o
       thief SC NEG COP

  b olí ámohe í   i   welo oli otoi
     the man   SC NEG sweep the ground

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the man did not sweep the ground'

A non-predicational, subjectless character would also prevent PCs from occurring in imperative constructions (9a), which require predicates and their understood subjects (9b)

9 a * ɔlí ɔmɔhe ɔ́ɔ
    the man   COP
    `be the man'

  b welɔ ɔlɪ otɔɪ
    sweep the ground
    sweep the ground'

      We direct attention now to the atemporal tendencies of PCs To what extent do PCs accept tense/aspect marking or other marking of utterance time? To explore this question, we will assume for the moment that the PC initial noun phrase accepts the subject tonal melodies and ɔ the verbal melodies required for Emai's tense/aspect marking Despite this assumption, PCs disallow tense/aspect marking and adverbial marking of utterance time

      Emai PCs fail to admit tense/aspect distinctions designated by morphological and/or tonal elements Perfective tense/aspect is conveyed by a high tone verb and either an unmarked melody subject (low tone *na*) for the completive present or a marked melody subject (high tone *na*) for the completive past (10) Assuming the initial noun phrase expresses these melody contrasts and that ɔɔ conveys verbal tone, perfective tense/aspect marking is unacceptable

10 * ɔlɪ ɔmɔhe na ɔɔ / * ɔlɪ ɔmɔhe na ɔ́ɔ
    the man   this COP   the man   this COP

Relying on similar subject and verb assumptions for purposes of tonal expression, we find that PCs fail to admit the morphological marking of imperfective aspect Neither the continuous (11a) nor habitual (11b) particle and their obligatory subject agreement (SC) particles are admitted in PCs

11 a * ɔlɪ ɔmɔhé na ɔ ɔ́ ɔ
    the man   this SC C COP

  b * ɔlɪ ɔmɔhe na ɔ ɔ ɔ
    the man   this SC H COP

The PC's atemporal character is further reinforced by its failure to admit any postverbal temporal adverbs (12)

12 * ɔ́ɪ   ɔ́ɔ   eena / odɛ   / ákhɔ
    thief COP   today yesterday   tomorrow

Likewise, it does not accept postverbal complement particles characterizing temporal contour The terminal particle *lée*'s `already' sense, illustrated in (13b), is unacceptable in PCs (13a)
13 a * ɔɪ   ɔɔ   lee
    thief COP TER

b ɔlí ɔ́mɔhe wélɔ   ɔlı   otɔı   lee
  the man   sweep the ground TER
  the man has swept the ground already'

The PC's atemporality extends to relative tense particles Emaı's anterior, subsequent and sequential particles, which convey temporal relations between a clausal event and another event expressed as a clause or as part of discourse context, are unacceptable ın PC constructions (14)

14 * ɔı   ke / kpɛ / re   ɔ
     thıef ANT SUB   SEQ COP
     ıt was previously / subsequently / then a thıef'

       Assuming an atemporal and non-predicational character for PCs would also preclude theır occurrence with deontıc modalıty partıcles, whıch incorporate a tense element Contrastıve tone markıng of subject noun phrases distingушshes the proxımal/dıstal deıctıc range of Emaı's deontıc potentıalıty The deontıc partıcle *lǎ*'s predıctıve sense will' requıres a marked melody subject (hıgh tone *na* 15a), whıle ıts antıcıpatıve sense about to' demands an unmarked melody subject (low tone *na* 15b) Nonetheless, *lɔ* ıs ungrammatıcal ın PCs

15 a * ɔlı ɔ́mɔhe ná   lɔ   ɔ
       the man   thıs PRED COP

   b * ɔlı ɔmɔhé na   lɔ   ɔ
       the man   thıs ANTI COP

       Although PC acceptance of auxılıary partıcles ıs severely constraıned, ıt ıs not entırely so Less dependent on temporal or predıcatıonal features are epıstemıc partıcles, whıch reflect speaker judgment about a proposıtıon's truth value Epıstemıc partıcles from two of three classes are grammatıcal ın PCs Speculatıve judgment partıcles, whıch convey varyıng degrees of confidence ın proposıtıon truth value despıte cırcumstances to the contrary, are acceptable (16) Included are certaıntıve *ma*, and the dubıtatıves *vba* and *bıa* ın Yes/no questıons

16 a íkhumí   ekpa   ma   ɔ
     medıcıne vomıt CER COP
     ıt ıs certaınly vomıt medıcıne'

   b ɔı   vba   ɔ?
     thıef DUB COP
     could ıt really be a thıef?'

   c ıkhúmı ekpa   bıa   ɔ?
     medıcıne vomıt DUB COP
     `was ıt really vomıt medıcıne?'

Assumptıve judgment partıcles, whıch reflect the speaker's assumptıon of proposıtıon truth value, are not each acceptable The concessıve *rɛrɛ* partıcle ıs grammatıcal ın a Yes/no questıon (17a), whereas the

hypothetical particle *kha* would have (but didn't)' is not (17b)

17 a oi   rere   ɔʔ
      thief CONC   COP
      `so was it a thief?' / is it even a thief?'

   b * ikhúmi   ekpa   kha   ɔʔ
       medicine vomit   HYP   COP

The deductive judgment particle, which reflects the speaker's absolute certainty of proposition truth value gained through logical calculation or inference, is ungrammatical Deductive *za* must' never occurs in PC constructions (18)

18 * ikhumi   ekpa   za   ɔʔ
     medicine vomit   DED   COP

      PCs restrict preverb particles even more than auxiliaries Among the former are aspectualizer, discourse evaluative, subject attributive, temporal, manner deictic and quantity forms They tend to be either event-directed or participant-directed (Schaefer and Egbokhare In press), since their sense applies, respectively, to the verb and arguments of an event, or to the arguments only Some event-directed aspectualizers with a phasal sensitivity require a temporally boundable, dynamic event, as in the case of the ingressive *ya* particle (19b) It is unacceptable in PCs (19a)

19 a * oi   ya   ɔ
       thief   IG   COP

   b ɔli   ɔmɔhe   ya welɔ   ɔli   otɔi
      the man   IG sweep the ground
      the man almost started to sweep the ground'

Preverbs with a nonphasal character and not limited to dynamic events, additive *gbo* (20b), fail to appear in PCs (20a) Similar patterns arise with other event-directed preverbs

20 a * oi   gbó   ɔ
       thief   ADD   COP

   b ɔli emá   gbo   u   keré
      the yam   ADD be   small
      `the yam is small too'

      Participant-directed preverbs in the subject attributive and quantity classes are equally ungrammatical Representative members include *daba* deliberately' and the emphatic reflexive *doba* Since neither the initial noun phrase nor the initial high tone of ɔ admit subject melodies, it is not surprising that these preverb particles dependent on subjecthood are ungrammatical The behavior of participant-directed preverbs lends further credence to the hypothesized non-predicational nature of PCs

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21 a * ói   dabɒ   ɒ
         thief deliberately COP

   b * oi   dobɒ   ɒi   ɒ
         thief REFL him COP

Turning now to the initial noun phrase in PCs, we find that it is sensitive to discourse/pragmatic features associated with focus position, not subject position. Although grammatically masked in the affirmative, the PC initial noun phrase occupies contrastive focus position. Negative focus is designated in Emai by the particle *ki* This particle follows the initial noun phrase and precedes copula *ɒ* in canonical PCs (22)

22 ɒli ɒmɒhe na   ki   ɒɒ
     the man   this NF COP
     it isn't this man'

In instances of positive focus, where one would expect the particle *li*, overt marking by *li* in PCs is disallowed (23a-b)

23 a * ɒli ɒmɒhe na   li   ɒɒ
            the man   this PF COP

   b ɒli ɒmɒhe na   ɒɒ
       the man   this COP
       it's this man'

An additional reflex of focus rests with the appearance of emphatic personal pronouns in PC initial noun phrase position. Non-emphatic personal pronouns are unacceptable in PCs (24a) All emphatic pronouns are acceptable (24b), as they are in focus position outside PCs. Since the full spectrum of emphatic personal pronouns is acceptable, PCs show no third person restriction in their initial noun phrase, as one might assume from Stassen's discussion of identity constructions

24 a * i / u / ɒ / mai / vba / yan ɒɒ
         1s 2s 3s 1p   2p   3p   COP

   b meme / wewe / iyɒin / mamai / vbavba / iyain ɒɒ
     I   you   he   we   you   they COP
     it's I / you / he / we / you / they'

Focus position is also registered through definiteness values of impersonal pronouns. Grammatical in this position are a wide range of pronouns with a definite character (25), e g demonstrative, sortal, numeral, universal and anaphoric quantifying classes

25 a ɒain / ɒna / ɒnɒi   ɒɒ
     that-one this-one the-next-one COP
     `it's that one / this one / the next one'

b eliyɔ / ɔdan ɔɔ
  that-kind-one different-kind-of-one COP
  ıt's that kind of one / a different kind of one'

c eva / evevá óɔ
  two both COP
  `ıt's two / both of them'

d eremɛ / ɔvbee ɔɔ
  all another-one COP
  ıt's all / another one'

Ungrammatıcal, however, ıs the exıstentıal quantıfyıng pronoun *aso*, whıch exhıbıts ındefinıte, specıfic reference

26 * ɔso óɔ
  certaın-one COP

      Pronomınally headed relatıve clauses ın PC ınıtıal noun phrases also requıre definıteness Those unmarked by the recurrent (RC) preverb *a* are grammatıcal (27a), whereas those ıncorporatıng thıs preverb are ungrammatıcal (27b) In the latter, the preverb *a* assıgns an ındefinıte, generıc ınterpretatıon to the pronomınal grammatıcal subject of the embedded clause

27 a ɔ lı ɔ gbe ákhe a ɔɔ
  one R 3s break pot CS COP
  ıt's the one who broke a pot'/`ıt's he who broke a pot'

  b * ɔ́ lí ɔ a gbe ákhe a ɔɔ
  one R 3s RC break pot CS COP
  `ıt's whoever broke a pot'

PC definıteness ıs reflected further ın the unacceptabılıty of ınformatıon questıon words Usage of such ıtems presumes a lack of shared ınformatıon between speaker and hearer Sınce PCs requıre an ınıtıal noun phrase whıch ıs definıte, questıon words are unacceptable (28)

28 * eme / ɔé / ebé / eka óɔ?
  what who where how-much COP

      The dıstrıbutıon of nomınals and nomınal modıfiers ın the PC noun phrase also reveals definıteness restrıctıons We saw ın (1) that thıs posıtıon accepts bare nouns construed as referentıal and definıte Thıs posıtıon also accepts proper names, ıncludıng names modıfied by the emphatıc partıcle *akpá* `alone,' a property assocıated wıth focus posıtıon

29 olólo / ololo ɔkpa ɔɔ
  Ololo Ololo alone COP

Many other nominal modifiers are acceptable The prenominal definite determiner, for instance, is grammatical in PCs' initial noun phrase (30)

30 ɔlɪ ɔmɔhe / ɔ́lɪ ɔpɪa   ɔɔ
    the man   the cutlass   COP
    ıt's the man /   the cutlass'

A range of postnominal modifiers, all revealing a definite reading, occur Included are demonstrative, sortal, number, universal and anaphoric quantifying modifiers (31)

31 a ɔlɪ ɔpía   na / aın / nɔɪ   ɔɔ
      the cutlass thıs   that next COP
      `ıt ıs thıs / that / the next cutlass'

   b ɔpɪa   elıyɔ / ɔdan   ɔɔ
      cutlass that-kınd different-kınd   COP
      ıt ıs that kınd of / a different kınd of cutlass'

   c ımɔhe eva / ereme / evbee ɔɔ
      men   two   all   other   COP
      ıt ıs two / all / other men'

PCs, however, do not allow the indefinite existential quantifier

32 * ɔmɔhe ɔ́so   ɔɔ
      man   certaın COP

In sum, Emai's Presentational Construction exhibits two of the prototypical properties postulated for identity constructions by Stassen It clearly manifests atemporal and non-predicational properties

What about the third person property advanced by Stassen? This restriction did not appear in assessment of the focus position noun phrase, which allowed first and second person emphatic pronouns, or of ɑ in the assessment of its possible bi-morphemic character Since PC is subjectless, there is no subject position in which third person could exhibit any dominance via first or second person

To explore the third person property, we turn to the possible origin of the copular form According to Stassen, non-verbal copulas employed in identity constructions tend to have their origin in ertswhile pronominal or particle forms with pragmatic-functional significance In Emai's neighbor Yoruba, for instance, the copula *ni* is homophonous with the focus particle *ni*, leading to the assumption that the copular form arose through a channel of grammaticalization originating with the focus particle

For Emai, our question is, what served as the source morpheme for the copular ɑ? A ready answer appears in the morphosyntax of focus constructions As shown in (33a), the third person resumptive pronoun in subject position is ɑ We suggest this resumptive form, as part of a structural frame incorporating the focus particles *lı* and *kı* and a noun phrase in contrastive focus position, served as the source for Emai's PC construction (33b) Subsequent grammaticalization processes eroded this frame, in particular omitting positive focus *lı*, reanalyzing ɑ as a copula, and assigning an obligatory contour to the phrase incorporating ɑ (33c)

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33 a ɔlı ɔmɔhe na lı ɔ welɔ ɔlı otɔı
   the man   thıs PF 3s sweep the ground
   ıt's thıs man who swept the ground'

 b ɔlı ɔmɔhe na   lí / kı ɔ
   the man   thıs PF   NF 3s
   ıt's thıs man / ıt ısn't thıs man'

 c ɔlı ɔmɔhe na   ɔ́ɔ
   the man   thıs COP
   ıt's thıs man'

   Although Emaı's PC has no subject ın ıts current realızatıon, ıt ıs our contentıon that ıts copular form had ıts orıgın ın a thırd person resumptıve pronoun for subject posıtıon Wıth thıs assumptıon of orıgın, Stassen's postulated thırd person tendency ıs thus naturally lınked to the grammatıcal evolutıon of PCs The Presentatıonal Copula's formal propertıes thus appear to have theır source ın the morphosyntax of ınformatıon framıng

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