

COMING AND GOING IN LONIU

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In this paper I will examine some of the multiple functions of the morphemes la 'motion away from' and me 'motion toward' in the Loniu language.

Loni is an Austronesian language spoken by approximately 480 people in Manus Province, Papua New Guinea. The data upon which this discussion is based were collected over a period of seven months of field work, from February to September 1982, in Loniu village, and in periodic consultation with a native speaker of the language from August 1978 to June 1981.

The two morphemes under discussion serve a variety of functions in Loniu. When used as main verbs, they are equivalent to 'go' and 'come' in English, as in examples (1) and (2):

- (1) iy i-la um a iy
3sg 3sg-go house poss 3sg 1
'He goes/went home'
- (2) yo u-me ete wɔw
1sg 1sg-come h.o. 2sg
'I come/came to you'

In some cases in which the two morphemes occur as single verbs, the English equivalent is 'become', as in examples (3)-(7):

- (3) su'u pihin su'u la ni ma'amɔw
3du woman 3du go fish two
'The two women became two fish'
- (4) ni ndɔpɔ itiyɛn iy kili me hɔmɔw pihin
fish dem dem 3sg perf come one woman
'That fish had become a woman'
- (5) iy i-me hi-huyan hepe
3sg 3sg-come inc-adult small-amount
'He was beginning to grow up, become an adult'

- (6) pu ndopɔ itiyɛn iy kili la hɔmɔw hi-amat
 banana dem dem 3sg perf go one female-human
 'That banana had become a human female'
- (7) iy i-la pata-n
 3sg 3sg-go trunk-3sg-poss
 'She became its trunk'

In this group of examples, these two morphemes are clearly expressing more than just the idea of 'becoming', since grammatically both la and mɛ can be used in each of the examples. If the speaker chooses mɛ 'motion toward' over la 'motion away from', he identifies himself with the resultant state of the patient in the utterance. The use of la, on the other hand, implies a separation, either spatial or psychological. la is used for change from humans to fish or plants, and for becoming evil, none of which would be considered happy states for humans, while mɛ is used for becoming an adult and being strong, and for becoming human, which can be viewed as desirable conditions. The single exception found is example (6), in which a banana changes into a human female--from a non-human, undesirable state into a human, presumably desirable one--and yet the word used is la. This particular example occurs in a story in which a young boy, expecting to see a banana, sees instead a human female. His surprise at this unexpected state of affairs is expressed in his use of la, implying departure from expected reality. Example (7) is from the end of the same story, when the woman reverts to her original plant form--and la is used.

The use of mɛ to indicate a stronger identification of the speaker with some aspect of the utterance can also be seen in two-verb sentences in which no actual, physical, 'motion toward' is implied by the mɛ morpheme. Compare (8) and (9):

- (8) piŋɛɕ mapɛŋ yo u-mɛ ʒɛlu
 yesterday morning 1sg 1sg-come get-up
 'Yesterday morning I got up'
- (9) ŋatama i pihiŋ iy i-ʒɛlu
 father 3sg woman 3sg 3sg-get up
 'The woman's father got up'

In (8), the speaker focuses on the transition from one state (lying down) to another (sitting/standing), and it is this second state in which she finds herself at the time of the utterance; thus mɛ, indicating change into a state with which she is currently identifying. In (9), no such focus is implied. The sentence represents a simple, straightforward, statement of fact. In (10) below, the yams are

seen to be entering the speaker's world or perceptual range; in (11), the speaker's generation was born into the world with which he now identifies; and in (12), the child acquires knowledge which the speaker already possesses.

- (10) lɛŋɛ'i suwɛ i-mɛ ek
 when yam 3sg-come grow
 'When the yams grow...'
- (11) ɛwɛh tupunah m^wi'in ɛwɛh mɛ le'e-y i tuwɛnɔn
 1pl.excl boy later 1pl.excl come see-it 3sg true
 'Later, we younger generations came and saw that it was true'
- (12) iy i-mɛ pɛsani kɔmu
 3sg 3sg-come know word/language
 'He came to know the language, learned the language'

Examples (8) and (10)-(12) involve mɛ plus another verb. I have found no examples of la plus a second verb in which the function of la is clearly the counterpart of mɛ in these last examples, implying the psychological separation of the speaker rather than identification.

Further occurrences of two-verb constructions involve la and mɛ in a literal, physical movement sense. If the movement is perceived by the speaker to be away from himself or some deictic point upon which he is focusing, la is used; if towards himself or towards such a point, mɛ is used. This option is manipulated by the speaker in narrative discourse to vary the focus of the hearer's attention and to add to the dynamic sense of the action. Examples (13)-(16) show the use of la and mɛ to indicate movement toward the location of the action of the other verb.

- (13) ɛ-kɛhi kɔ ɛhɛ tɔ'u ka-la aʃ ki-la ɛy
 2sg-find place where 1du.incl pot-go hide pot-go non-h obj
 'Find a place where we two can go hide'
- (14) ɲɛtu-m pihin iy ma ki-mɛ puti ɲɛtu kaman
 child-2sg-poss woman 3sg int pot-come take child-1sg
 poss man
 'Your daughter wants to come marry my son'
- (15) sɛh mɛ p^wa-y i-mɛ ɛtɛ iy
 3pl come say-it 3sg-come h.o. 3sg
 'They came and said it to him'

- (16) uto la nu
 1pl.excl go bathe
 'We went and bathed'

In many cases the two-verb constructions may be interpreted in two ways when not taken in context--either physical movement, as exemplified above, or movement through time (i.e. durative or continuative aspect), as in (17)-(20):

- (17) iy i-mε ačəčə'ət i-mε mata-tas
 3sg 3sg-come crawl 3sg-come eye-sea
 'He came crawling toward the sea'
- (18) su'u la təwɔ ɔŋɔw sih ε kam^wan umow
 3du go put hibiscus one and ash some
 'They went along putting down a hibiscus and some ash (at each of various points along the route)'
- (19) sih i-mε hilow
 one 3sg-come run
 'One came running (toward the speaker)'
- (20) sih i-la hilow
 one 3sg-go run
 'One went running (away from the speaker)'

In (17), (19) and (20), the semantic nature of the verbs ačəčə'ət 'crawl', and hilow 'run' would tend to indicate continuative aspect when used with mε or la, rather than physical movement toward the action, even when heard out of context: 'come crawling' vs. 'come (and) crawl', 'come running' vs. 'come (and) run'. In general, however, this aspectual use of la and mε is heavily dependent on context for interpretation, when the order is la/mε + verb. When the la/mε forms follow the other verb, however, there is no ambiguity:

- (21) su'u tɔ taŋəsi-ly i-la
 3du stat mourn-3sg 3sg-go
 'They two mourned her as they went along'
- (22) su'u yo'ose i-mε i-mε i-mε
 3du walk 3sg-come 3sg-come 3sg-come
 'They two walked and walked (toward the speaker)'

In each of these cases, the underlined forms indicate the durative

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nature of the action. In (22), the repetition of the morpheme implies greater distance (or longer time, therefore greater distance traveled).

When mε and la occur in construction with statives tɔ or ta, as in (21) above and (23)-(25) below, the durative interpretation is also clear, both in and out of context. The two types of morphemes, one basically a motion verb, the other an expression of state, condition or customary behavior, combine to give the sense of 'being through time'.

- (23) yo tɔ ta'i ni masih i-la ta lɔ tas
 1sg stat catch fish all 3sg-go stat in sea
 'I (customarily) catch all the kinds of fish that
 are in the sea'
- (24) hetow la tɔ kɔ ŋa'a-n petuhe
 3pl go stat place name-3sg-poss Petuhe
 'They live in a land called Petuhe'
- (25) iy i-tewε-y i-mε tan i-mε tɔ keyaw
 3sg 3sg-put-it 3sg-come down 3sg-come stat platform
 'He put it down on the platform (where it stayed)'

These constructions can be seen to express location over an extended period of time.

Both mε and la are used in non-verbal constructions. In most of these, their function is relational in nature, much like the prepositions in English. Examples (26) and (27) share the English gloss 'into'; (28)-(29), 'to, toward'; (30)-(31), 'onto'; and (32)-(33), 'along'. Each of these indicates direction through space.

- (26) iy ki-tεpeluwani p^wεleyah ki-mε lɔ kɔw
 3sg pot-turn parrotfish pot-come inside fence
 'He can herd the parrotfish into the closed-off area'
- (27) iy hεčεley ay a iy i-la εy
 3sg pour blood poss 3sg 3sg-go
 'She poured her blood into it'
- (28) iy i-tɔ čalap^wεni i-la tan i-mε pεlεŋan
 3sg 3sg-stat throw 3sg-go down 3sg-come above
 'He was flapping (his wing) up and down'

- (29) i-la yɔwɛsani-iy i-la sipi i-mɛ sipi
3sg-go parade-3sg 3sg-go part 3sg-come part
'...goes parading her up and down'
- (30) iy i-nak i-la kɔyaw
3sg-climb 3sg-go platform
'She climbs onto the platform'
- (31) ɔw kɛ-ta'i lawɛyap ki-la pɛlɔŋan
2du pot-put net pot-go above
'You two, put the net up on the shelf'
- (32) lawat i-ɕɛ'et i-la ɛy
possum 3sg-crawl esg-go non-h obj
'The possum crawled along it (the branch)'
- (33) u mɛ m^wɛnɛn i-mɛ p^wahalɛŋ
1du.excl come straight 3sg-come beach
'We came right along the beach'

If the above examples share the interpretation 'direction through space', the following could be said to share the meaning 'direction through time', in the sense that the phrase which follows the underlined la forms refers to an activity or state of affairs which is realized subsequent to the action expressed by the main verb of the utterance. Examples (34) and (35) illustrate 'purpose' constructions, those of (36) and (37), 'goal', and (38) and (39) gloss as 'concerning, about':

- (34) ɲatama-n i-la pɔ'ɔ-lɔ-ke i-la wɛɕ ɛpi
father-3sg-poss 3sg-go within-inside-tree 3sg-go cut sago
'Her father goes into the forest to cut down a sago palm'
- (35) su'u tɛwɛ ɛnɛyan tɛ itiyɛn i-la ɕɔ'uya-n
3du give food feces dem 3sg-go revenge-3sg-poss
'They gave that feces as food to take his revenge'
- (36) ɔw kɔ-tɔ ɔŋpɛ aŋ a yo ki-la wɛnɛy aŋ malimɛh
2du pot-stat count day poss 1sg pot-go until day five
'Count my days until they reach five in number'
- (37) lɛŋɛ'i ɲanɛ-su'u i-tɔ tuwani i-la mɛ'isan
like mother-3du-poss 3sg-stat cook 3sg-go done
'...like their mother, who would cook it til it was done'

- (38) səh tɔ ɔŋɔ'ɔŋɔhɛy i-la pɔrɛt i-la ɛpi
 3pl stat think 3sg-go work 3sg-go sago
 'They were thinking about the work (it takes) for
 (making) sago'
- (39) yo lɛ'i-tɔ nɛnɛs i-la m^walih
 1sg pres-stat talk 3sg-go story
 'I am talking about a story'

There are no examples in the data of mɛ used in any of the three preceding categories (purpose, goal, 'concerning'), nor does mɛ function as instrument marker, which is one of the most easily identified functions of la in the language. Below are two examples of this type of construction (examples (40) and (41)).

- (40) iy i-sala pala-n i-la ɛy
 3sg 3sg-split head-3sg-poss 3sg-go non-h obj
 'She split his head with it'
- (41) ɔw kɛ-ɕa'iti kɛ ɔw kɔ-sɔ'i ŋɛyɛ-suwɛ ki-la ɛy
 2du pot-cut wood 2du pot-dig hole-yam pot-go non-h obj
 'Cut (a piece of) wood and dig a hole for the yam with it'

Although mɛ plays a very minor role in the types of constructions exemplified in (26)-(41), it does appear regularly, as does la, as indirect object marker. When the IO is first or second person, the marker is i-mɛ; when third person, either i-mɛ or i-la can be used, depending on the context (examples (42)-(44) below).

- (42) ŋatama-n iy i-nɛnɛs i-la kɔmu itiyɔ i-la ɛtɛ iy
 father-3sg-poss 3sg 3sg-talk 3sg-go word dem 3sg-go h.o.
 3sg
 'Her father talks to her about these words'
- (43) iy i-p^wa-y i-mɛ ɛtɛ yo
 3sg 3sg-say-it 3sg-come h.o. 1sg
 'He said it to me'
- (44) su'u ili ŋɛtu-su'u pihin i-mɛ ɛtɛ su'u
 3du call child-3du-poss woman 3sg-come h.o. 3du
 'They call their daughter (to come) to them'

The comparative construction in Loniu is also formed with la and mɛ. As with indirect objects, the choice between the two depends on the person compared. If the standard of comparison is either first or second person, the comparative is formed with mɛ (Example (46)); otherwise,

la is used (examples (45) and (47)).

- (45) yo nap^wanan i-la ɛtɛ su'u
 1sg big 3sg-go h.o. 3du
 'I am bigger than those two'
- (46) yo nap^wanan i-mɛ ɛtɛ wɔw
 1sg big 3sg-come h.o. 2sg
 'I am bigger than you'
- (47) p^wɛleyah itiyɔ i nap^wanan i-la masih
 parrotfish dem 3sg big 3sg-go all
 'This parrotfish is the biggest of all'

The purpose of this paper has been to illustrate the rather unusual breadth of functional range exhibited by the 'come' and 'go' morphemes in Lonu. Not only do they occur as the single verb of an utterance, but also in combination with other verbals to show movement as well as static location and durative or continuative aspect; as directional prepositions, purpose and goal markers, comparatives, and markers for instrument. Their range of meaning is so extensive, and their use so pervasive throughout the language, that it is clear that if you want to get along in Lonu, you must know whether you are coming or going.

NOTES

¹All examples are given in phonemic transcription. Abbreviations used are as follows:

dem	demonstrative
du	dual
excl	exclusive
fut	future
h.o.	human object marker
inc	inchoative
incl	inclusive
int	intentional
non-h obj	non-human object marker
perf	perfective
pl	plural
poss	possessive
pot	potential
sg	singular
stat	stative



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