

# Abstract of 'Basic Finite Verbal Constructions in Ombule'

**Jean Robert Opgenort**

*Basic finite verbal constructions in Ombule.* Paper presented at Grammatical Phenomena in Himalayan Languages. 2nd Annual Seminar. Rijksuniversiteit Leiden, The Netherlands, 1 September 1998.

In Ombule (Wambule, Umbule), a semantic and formal distinction can be made between four types of finite verbal constructions termed 'intransitive construction', 'reflexive construction', 'middle transitive construction' and 'directive transitive construction'. The term 'finite' refers to the fact that these verbal constructions are explicitly marked for the grammatical categories of person and number.

Morphologically speaking, finite verbal constructions contain at least the following two components in the given linear order: a verbal stem or stem alternant, and the person and number agreement markers. Some person and number agreement markers are also obligatorily preceded by one of the three co-reference markers labelled 'reflexive marker', 'directive marker', and 'middle marker'. Finite verbal construction which only contain these two to three components will be called basic. The syntax of more complex finite verbal constructions, which are merely elaborations of the basic scheme, will not be a topic of discussion.

After having presented some formal differences between these types of constructions by means of the relevant person and number agreement markers and the co-reference markers, I will show that Ombule is a perfect example of a language in which there is a significantly high correspondence between the phonological quality of the final element of the verbal stem and the type of finite construction to which a verb may or must be subject. With respect to the four types distinguished, I will give a general semantic characterisation, a formal characterisation with respect to the basic verbal suffixes, and a formal characterisation with respect to the phonological quality of the stem final element. It will be demonstrated that the semantic differences between the four language-specific types of finite verbal constructions can be defined in terms of the number of participants evoked by the verbal event, and the absolute distinguishability of participants.

Each construction can be associated with different universal semantic categories of events: intransitive constructions can be formally related to the semantic category of a one-participant event; reflexive constructions to the categories of the direct reflexive and the body middles; directive transitive constructions to the categories of the two-participant event and the indirect three-participant event; and, finally, middle transitive constructions to the category of the indirect middle (and reflexive). The presented semantic and formal analysis of the Ombule finite verbal constructions will not only have some implications for a number of language-specific morphological and phonological issues, the definition of the reflexive marker <-si>, the middle marker <-s> and the directive marker <-t> in terms of co-reference or distinguishability and (number of) participants will also provide new insights into general Tibeto-Burman morphology with respect to the so-called 'particularly troublesome' dental suffixes..