

**Unmarked Verbs with Free Future Construal:
Mucha (2013) “Temporal Interpretation in Hausa”**

Unlike Lillooet or Guarani, unmarked predicates in Hausa seem to freely allow future construals.

(1) Future Construal of Unmarked Predicates in Hausa (Mucha 2013)

- a. **Su-na** wasa.
3PL-CONT play
They were playing / They are playing / They will be playing.
- b. **Ta-na** wasa.
3sgF-CONT play
She was playing / She is playing / She will be playing.
- c. **Sun** gyara motasa
3PL.COMPL repair car.his
They have repaired his car / They will have repaired his car.
- d. Bashir **ya-na** wasa gobe.
Bashir 3sgM-CONT play tomorrow
Bashir will be playing tomorrow.
- e. Karin ka iso jaririn **ya** yi barci.
before 2sgPROSP arrive baby.DEF 3sgM.COMPL do sleep
When you arrive, the baby will already be asleep.
- f. Kafin karfe shida **na** gama aikina.
before clock six 1sg.COMPL finish work.my
I will have finished my work by six o'clock.

(2) Some Comments

- The data above are all the examples of unmarked futures in the paper.
- (1a)-(1c) are not presented with contexts, and so we can't be sure whether or not this is a kind of 'scheduled future' interpretation.
- The context that (1d) is presented with in the paper does suggest it is a scheduled future.
- There is a 'prospective' aspect in (1e), rendering this sentence somewhat similar to the Guarani examples with 'because' adjuncts.
- (1d) is a sentence of the form explicitly rejected by speakers of Lillooet and Guarani

Mucha reports that future reading of unmarked predicates are generally dispreferred, and require context to really bring them out.

- She explains this by appealing to a ‘hierarchy of simplicity’ in her (45), according to which futures are the most complex, and so therefore least accessible interpretation...

(3) **Sketch of the Hierarchy of Simplicity**

- Present time reference is the simplest, since the RT=UT. UT is given by the conversation itself, and so setting the RT equal to that (rather than some other time) requires no introduction of further times.
- Past time reference is the next simplest, since it only requires that the RT shift to some other *actually existing* time.
- Future time reference is the least simple, since the RT doesn’t actually exist yet. “It adds the complication of *modal displacement* and thus increases the level of abstraction required for interpreting the utterance.” (Mucha 2013: 392)

Unlike Guarani, unmarked predicates in subordinate clauses allow for *both* back-shifted and simultaneous readings in Hausa.

(4) **Interpretation of Embedded Predicates**

Hawwa da Binta sun ce sun gaji.
Hawwa and Binta 3PL.COMPL say 3PL.COMPL tired
Hawwa and Binta said they were tired.

- Both simultaneous and back-shifted readings possible.

To get the possibility of *both* interpretations, Mucha proposes that there *is* a *featureless* T-node in the Hausa clause. This T-node can be bound – leading to a simultaneous reading – or it can be referential – leading to a back-shifted reading.

(5) **Structure of Hausa Clause**

a. Main Clause: [TP T₁ [A_{SP} COMPL [VP *they tired*]]]

b. Subordinate Clause:

(i) [λ_W [1 [TP T₁ [A_{SP} COMPL [VP *they tired*]]]] *Simultaneous Reading*

(ii) [λ_W [λ_t [TP T₁ [A_{SP} COMPL [VP *they tired*]]]] *Backshifted Reading*

(6) **Note:**

The LF in (5bii) also should allow for a ‘forward shifted’ reading in her system. The possibility of such a reading isn’t discussed.

(7) **A Question I Have...**

- What actually *is* the semantics of ‘present tense’ in languages where they can be used to describe future events (e.g., German)?
- Could whatever is going on with such sentences be extended to languages like Hausa?
 - That is, imagine that there is a separate parameter governing whether non-past tenses (i.e, PRESENT or NON-FUTURE) can be used to cover future events...
 - For English, Lillooet, and Guarani, the setting is NO
 - For German and Hausa, the setting is YES

(8) **(Optional) Future Marking in Hausa**

Future marker *za* in Hausa has to be followed by the subjunctive particle.

- a. Hawwa **za** **ta** gudu
 Hawwa FUT 3sgF.SUBJ run
 Hawwa will run.

All the particles that select for this ‘subjunctive’ particle are in some sense ‘future directed’.

- b. (i) wishes
 (ii) desires
 (iii) obligations
 (iv) purposes
 (v) intentions
 (vi) instructions
 (v) proposals

On its own, the subjunctive particle has a kind of future-oriented deontic use:

- c. Su gudu
 3pl.SUBJ run
 They should run / Let them run!

(9) **Subjunctive Particle as Prospective Aspect (Mucha 2013)**

Mucha proposes that the ‘futurity’ of sentences like (8a) is actually contributed by the ‘subjunctive’ particle, which she reanalyzes a ‘prospective’ aspect:

$$[[\text{ta}]] = [\lambda P_{\langle e, st \rangle} : [\lambda e : [\lambda w : [\lambda t' : P(e)(w) \ \& \ T(e) > t]]]]$$

(10) **Future Particle as a Modal**

Mucha proposes that the future particle *za* is a kind of strong circumstantial modal.

$$[[\text{za}]] = [\lambda P_{\langle e, \langle i, st \rangle \rangle} : [\lambda w : [\lambda t : \forall w' . w' \text{ in Circumstantial}(w)(t) \rightarrow \exists e. P(e)(w')(t)]]]]$$

(11) **Predicted Truth-Conditions for (8a)**

$$\forall w' . w' \text{ in Circumstantial}(w)(t) \rightarrow \exists e. \text{run}(e)(w') \ \& \ \text{Ag}(e)(w') = \text{them} \ \& \ T(e) > t$$

(12) **Some Cross-Linguistic Connections**

- The semantics in (10) has also been proposed for English *will*.
 - Given its behavior in conditionals, it's attractive to analyze *will* in English as a circumstantial modal.
- The future-directedness of *will* would then follow from the fact that it is a circumstantial modal:
 - All circumstantial modals (all root modals) seem to be future-directed...
- The future-directedness of circumstantial modals has sometimes been attributed to a covert future operator that appears below them.
 - Such an operator would seem to be a phonologically null version of the 'subjunctive' particle *ta* in Hausa
- **Under this view, Hausa is actually overtly pronouncing a structure that is somewhat obscured in the pronounced form of English sentences...**
 - **Also, English wouldn't actually have an overt 'future' operator, *WOLL* itself simply being a circumstantial modal...**
- Other languages that seem to have a similar overt pronunciation of 'prospective' aspect: Blackfoot and Gitksan (Matthewson 2012).