

## Verb Doubling vs. the Conjoint/Disjoint Alternation

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A subset of Bantu languages (e.g., languages of zones A, B, E, F, H & K) display ‘verb doubling’ – [infinitive verb + identical finite verb] with or without a focus marker (e.g., de Kind et. al 2014). Another subset of Bantu languages (e.g., languages of zones J, M, N, P & S) display the conjoint/disjoint morphology, widely studied in recent Bantu research (van der Wal & Hyman 2015). In the present work, I argue that these seemingly unrelated grammatical forms appearing in different Bantu zones are, in fact, interrelated on the information-structural basis.

Verb doubling is often used to express predicate-centered focus – focus on the lexical content of the verb (‘state-of-affairs focus’) or the verb’s operators such as polarity and tense/aspect/modality (‘operator focus’) (e.g., Morimoto 2015). In the conjoint/disjoint alternation, the disjoint form is generally used to express predicate-centered focus, while the conjoint form is the out-of-focus form (e.g., Güldemann 2003, Morimoto 2015). Interestingly, my preliminary investigation suggests that verb doubling and the conjoint/disjoint alternation are in complementary distribution: in the languages of zones A, B, E, F, H & K that display verb doubling, the conjoint/disjoint alternation is not attested; conversely, in the languages of zones J, M, N, P & S, for example, that display the conjoint/disjoint alternation, verb doubling is not observed. This is not surprising if they indeed fulfill a similar discourse function.

Another potentially related phenomenon is inversion. While those languages that display the conjoint/disjoint alternation certainly vary in terms of what type of inversion is allowed in the language (cf. Marten et. al. 2007), Kikuyu (E51), for example, does not allow even the most wide-spread type of inversion with locative. In the languages of zone A as well, inversion is apparently not attested, suggesting a potential correlation between verb doubling and apparent absence of inversion constructions.

### References

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