

Mursi Construct Form markers and the information they carry

Since early 1930s, the notion of Construct State ‘CS’ has been in use in grammars of languages particularly in Semitic languages and by Semitic linguists. seemingly to refer to the very same notion in Mursi also known as Construct Form (CF). However, since then, due to the use of different terms by linguists who have been dealing with this uncommon notion/feature in the NPs of individual languages they investigate (“Status Constructus” (Turker and Bryan 1966), “Associative Construction” (Welmers 1973), “Modified Noun Form” (Reh 1996), “Construct Form” (Creissels 2009), “Associative Connective Construction” (Van de Velde 2013)), CS is still a less-known/less-explored grammatical notion in linguistics. Regarding the application of CS in Semitic linguistics, Creissels (2017: 1) noted as it to be applied to nouns immediately followed by another noun in the role of genitival modifier, or by a bound pronoun in possessive function. Almost similar application of CS has been noted in the NPs of Mursi. I, however, prefer to use the term Construct Form because it meets two essential characteristics of the notion of construct marking of nouns which were stated by Creissels (2017:1) and because I find it convenient to the intended discussions on the topic of this paper.

Mursi (a Nilo-Saharan Language from Ethiopia) has markers which specify the very same notion of CF. In the grammatical description of Mursi language, Worku (2021: 11) used the term ‘Modification Marker’ to refer to the CF markers which are found in the NP constructions of the language. However, in Mursi, both the head noun and the dependents (modifiers) can be marked by CF suffixes. Depending on the type of information the CFs encode on the internal structure of Mursi NPs, CF markers can be of two types: restrictive (RSTR) and non-restrictive (NRSTR). As a head and dependent marking language, except number words and quantifiers (as in (2a-b)), all dependents or modifiers are required to indicate their dependency relation with the head nouns they modify always by an overt morphological inflection: *-a* [-o](RSTR) (as in (1a-b)) and *-i* [-ti] (NRSTR) (as in (2a-b)).

(1) a. [[zùw-á nàgàs-á]_{NP} ór-ùŋ]_{NP} mèzì-d-ó
 people-RSTR old.STV-RSTR village-GEN discuss-PERV.PL-3PL.IRR
 ‘The village’s elders held a council.’

b. á [lòg-á [bì-á gòlòŋ-á]_{NP}]_{NP}
 COP.3.IMPERV issue/matter-RSTR cow-RSTR red.STV-RSTR
 ‘This (it) is the matter of the red cow.’

(2) a. [érmì-tí dǔnèj]_{NP} áíw-ó
 child-NRSTR one come.PERV.SG-MT.3SG.SU.PERV
 ‘One child came.’

b. [kèn-í mèrì]_{NP}
 tree.PL-NRSTR many
 ‘Many trees’

If two or more modifiers of the head noun occur in typical NP types of this language, all the intermediates will be marked by the restrictive modification suffix. I call these modifiers ‘intermediate modifiers’ or ‘intermediate possessors’ in NP-internal possessive constructions.

As it is shown in the examples above, CFs, being as agreement markers is among many other information which Mursi CFs can carry. In addition, Creissels's (2018: 712) recent survey on morphosyntactic phenomena among Sub-Saharan languages has shown that CFs/Linkers in noun-modifier constructions may have invariable forms and/or express agreement with the head noun.

The aim of this paper is to explore Mursi CF markers and the information they could carry or encode on the internal structure of NPs.

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