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The Sentence and Sentence Particles in Sara

Sandy Banasik

The following remarks have to do with certain particles which function over the entire sentence in Sara Majingay, and with a limited description of the Sara sentence as a whole. The particles serve to connect or highlight certain relationships between clauses. This by no means a definitive analysis since it was done by analysing texts without the aid of a native speaker.

Understanding certain symbols used in the examples may help the reader, since adaptations from the regular orthography were necessary due to typing impossibilities. A comma under a vowel signals a nasalized vowel. / c / = [ɔ̃] / 6 / = [ɔ̃] ' = high tone, and = mid tone.

The language analyzed is of the Nile-Soudanic language family, of the Sara group. It is spoken in the Moyen Chari of southern Chad, Africa. Many of the examples given are from texts published in "Manual pratique d'apprentissage du Sar", by Maurice Fournier. The rest are from my own texts.

I Sentence Particles

1. Kadh and adh

Kadh and adh both serve as connecting links between sentences and in paragraphs in a discourse. Clause 1 is the reason or purpose for the result in clause 2. They also function as coordinators in clauses where the 2nd clause is the object of the first.

Adh carries the aspectual sense of realization with it, although in real time it may not yet be accomplished or realized. Kadh carries a non-realized or non-accomplished aspect with it.

With Clause 2 as object of Clause 1

kadh

i.e.-M'ree i dijei nyá kogum t.

I came to ask you something.

-I nyá ri.

What is it?

-Kadh i rā sem adh m'rā'n kila yam laa.

So that you might help me out so that I can do (with it) my work here.

adh

-N'gerh adh kila yam nelhi ale.

I know that my work doesn't please you.

Initial

kadh c.f. kadh as above

adh

A man had a beautiful daughter. (title)

-Adh, balsa'g awhn nung't, ba bcbhn cd ale.

So, young men went courting, but the father wouldn't have anything to do with them.

Medialkadh

-Tít'n too 6aa, m'ā m'rā k̄la sei kadh īndā mbarhi k yibhi.

Since that's the case, I'll work with you so that you can make wax with honey.

adh

-Ba dumh dc bcbh dinyá kckh, adh adh dingam ni dinyá.

He (a young man) got one over on the girl's father so that he (the father) gave the girl to him.

2. adh

adh occurs initially and medially. It makes emphatic, precise or obligatory that which follows it. The relationship between the clauses seems more often to be one of cause and result rather than condition and result. If condition is specifically indicated, it will be indicated with the condition marker 'ré'.

Initial

-Adh j'awh ji 6ār dingam'g kadh....

We must call the men, so that...

Medial

-ī ree cý wúl kem ngongo ādh j'isa.

Come (and) gather the ground nuts into the sack so that we
(can) eat.

-Nyíl isam ngany ādh m'rā kila ale.

The mosquitoes are biting me so much that I can't work.

Condition

-Ré i ma-n m'rā nyá'n noo bang 6aa adh kámb'k māt'n too t̄lm.

If I've done this thing then the leaf of this mat tree must
(or surely will) kill me.

3. Ya, ya kadh, and tam kadh

Ya, ya kadh and tam kadh all coordinate logically related clauses. Clause 2 is the reason for clause 1. If ya is used, the subject of clause 2 is automatically deleted. Tam kadh and ya kadh can be interchanged with no apparent change in sentence meaning.

-Nay mbe a dckaglo as tam kadh awh'n kúju tā.

So it is that it's time to go (because of it, the time,) to go
into the house.

-Ngar ila pajā go'd't ya rā saria tā.

The chief sent his aide for them so that they might have

the judging.

4. a

a functions to emphasize or make precise that which follows it. It occurs between a suite of two sentences sequentially and logically related. It most frequently occurs with the question words why, what and where, or with relative clauses, or after certain phrase introductory expressions. In some cases it could be deleted and replaced by other types of particles, connecting or aspectual. A might be considered a cause-result relationship where the result has a high degree of certainty.

-Ma, kūb'k rēm't goto á, m'cd kawh l'ekolo ale.

As for me, without clothes I refused to go to school.

-Dinyá i sánda á de mang inya gir de yan'g't a.

Is a woman a horse that a person buy her and leave her with her family?

-I tīt'n noo-n á, madh naa'g'n mīta'g ni, ne'n á i nge koy wath'g mbak ni.

Ane so it is the friends, which were three, it's they which are dead in the bush (all three) together.

-Ba i mbang-n á cjn ni wala i her ale.

It's the sun not the fire which is showing him the way.

5. a

a occurs between a suite of two clauses sequentially and logically related. The second or last clause to follow the "a" is an obligatory consequence of the preceding circumstances. a might be considered a cause-result relationship where the result has a lesser degree of certainty than á.

-Ré k ōo kō nyá ni a, k to jeke, k to gír t̄irá't laa ba
k lō rā r̄cn.

If you hear the noise of the thing, stay still, stay under the bed here and don't move.

-i be a, j'awh tā.

Since it's that way, we'll go.

-Ma m'āwh a, meter awñ i ya k̄cl sem ngany á, m'6ōlh.

When I go, the teacher is going to really ball me out, and I'm afraid (of that).

6. ta

Tá occurs initially, medially, and finally in the sentence. Clause one seems a type of obligatory prerequisite to clause two. It could be translated 'given the fact that all these things happened in clause 1, the following is a logical event, question, statement, etc. Medially, tá may be found as tāa in most dialects. tá might also be considered an action-purpose relationship wherein the purpose has a high degree of certainty.

Initial

I returned from the trip without incident.

Tá 6ē'n āwh ku't ni to kari a.

Is everything alright in the village where you went?

Medial

-črh najh jeke jeke tá m'gerh kum.

Speak slowly so that I can understand.

Final

-Maj, ī ree tá.

Good, come on then.

(the preceding discussion goes something like this:

"I came to talk to you." "What about?" "Oh, just to visit." "Good, come on then" (you'll have to come before we can talk.)

7. ta

ta occurs medially between action-purpose clauses in which the purpose seems to have a lesser degree of certainty than the tá.

m' ālh j-īlō ta koj ngán kos.

I dress to kill in hopes of giving birth to many children.

8. todo, na

Todo occurs word initially and medially. Na occurs medially (and I suspect, initially as well). They both represent a logical relationship of result or purpose between two clauses.

Na functions in result-cause clauses in purpose-action which there is a high degree of certainty in the purpose or result clause.

Todo functions in result-cause clauses purpose-action where the result or purpose clauses have a lesser degree of certainty than the na purpose and result.

If the ta, tá, a, á clause ordering were reversed, na would replace the ta and á, and todo the ta, a particles.

The details of these will need extended additional study for certainty of description, but it is sure there is an aspectual element similar to that described above which plays an important role in the clauses connected by these particles.

Todo-

-í n̄' mbī si ōoi'n, todo hor tam goto tam 't k̄c
listen carefully hear because I no longer have any
(by means of it)
saliva in my mouth

-ba k to jeke, todo dckāglo ree dā'g ne as ngr.
stay still, because the time for the return of the
animals is near.

na

-m'āwh manha ale, na m̄fla uam
I don't go the water because the cat catches me.
-as ji 6ola, na kcr rā si ngany.
that's enough for us today, because you're very tired

9. Najh ri wa

Najh ri wa occurs between two clauses in a reason-result cause -purpose relationship. Implied in the expression is the attitude of disgust.

-de'g oon kum si ale najh ri wa sii í 6ogi ngany.

People detest you because you're such thieves.

10. Ba

Ba connects related clauses, with no emphasis on the ordering of the events or time. If a negation or a pair of contrast words are in the clauses, ba might be translated 'but'. In the affirmative it is not really translatable in English. It appears to function not only between clauses, but in connecting paragraphs.

Initial

My net is too small to catch nile perch.

-Ba úa kánj ri'g ri'g.

What kind of fish did you catch?

Medial

--Duru i isō k gidn ne, ba dcgum tee aw̄h k w̄lu k̄c yan't.

Duru fell on his back and the hare came out and went away with his nuts.

With a negation

-í lō kila ngong ta jí k̄g'k mb0lh't, ba íla ta jí k̄g'k tut't.

Don't hang the sac on the green branch, but hang it on the dry one.

-I sɔm't seny, ba i ngany ale.

I'm a little better, but not much.

11. Ani

Ani is a left to right iterative referent marker.

It seems to focus attention on what follows, meaning that it highlights or directs one's attention to the following rather than preceding information. It occurs initial and medial in the clause, or after sentence introductory time phrases. It seems to have a function in discourse paragraphs when found initial.

Initial

What is it that's making you cry like that?

-Ani ida 6eth na, i najh njar kemn ya kcrh'n ngōn ni.

She says to the monkey, it's this business about cutting open my stomach to take out the baby

Medial

-6eth taa ngōn oy 6a ani, un ngōn aw h sene k'uju.

The monkey took the dead child, took the child and went into the house with him.

Final

-K nd'cyg ani, ngar ila pajā go'd't ya rā saria tā.

In the morning, the chief sent his aide for them so that they could have the judgement.

12. Ni

Ni is a right to left iterative specific referent marker. In other words, it directly refers back to some preceding event, thing, person, etc. It seems to put the thing referred to in focus. It can function on words and phrases as well as on entire clauses. If it occurs between clauses it indicates that the hearer's attention is directed back to the preceding statement rather than necessarily ahead. It also terminates a relative clause, which is signaled by 'n...ni.

Non-relative clause

-indān nyá kisa ni 6aa, mbínj ge kɛsa sei.

Once someone's prepared the food, the hedgehog
(will) want to eat with you.

Relative clause

-kúj'n ngōkóí rā ni bo ngany a.

Is the house which your brother made big?

13. ré

Ré introduces a condition, the result or consequence of which follows in the second clause. An aspect marker of some type is obligatory between the clauses. Therefore we have things like ré.....a, ré.....ani, ré.....6aa, etc.

-Ré m'úd goi't noo a, a á laya'k mburn dum't.

If I have to come after you, you're going to get it!

-Ba ré de'n tōmb bangaw'g k ngalia'g ani, a'n too i
kēc ni nīkć a gāngn saria don't.

If someone vomits sweet potatoes and manioc, he it is
who will have condemned himself.

14. Dan'n and lo'n

Dan'n introduces simultaneous events which can be viewed as completed and which occur at a precise moment in time. This completed action is sometimes in the future, although it is usually in the past. It is translated 'when'.

-Dan'n m'í 6ēe ni, lo unjh náng nang kēc.

When I left the village it was already broad day light.

Lo'n might be considered the precise form of dan'n. This means that lo'n refers to something already known about or referred to. It functions on the clause as does dan'n, with the exception that it is more precise.

-Dan'n rēyh tut kēc ni, ā ī rā'n i bany.

When the nuts are dry, what will you do with them?

-Lo'n rēyh tut kēc ni, m'tānda ngcn gid't kēc, pátá m'
ngīnya kumn.

When the nuts are dry, I'll crack their shell before
taking out the meat.

15. 6aa

6aa connects two sequential events, the first of which is obligatory, with the second being the point of focus in the sentence. It seems that there is some distinction between the function of the initial and medial 6aa, but it has not yet been pinpointed. Initial 6aa may introduce a paragraph. In any case, there seems to be some kind of logical relationship between the clauses. A particular time lapse does not seem to be the primary issue, although in no case in the available texts does the lapse seem to be a lengthy one. If a specific time period is needed, a time word is used.

6aa is an A then B relationship, which can most often be translated 'since, given that' when initially, or medially followed by a comma (6aa,), or 'after which' when preceded by a comma medially (,6aa). It often appears to be a combination of 6a + ani.

Initial

I'll never buy a chicken for 200 francs.

-6aa, ādhm 180 francs.

Then give me 180 francs.

Medial

-Duru tee tan ngany 6aa, dɔgum tēgh náng ros jīn,

6ōkh kum Duru't.

Duru opened his mouth wide, after which the hare gathered up a handful of dirt and threw it in his eyes.

-m'cy yibh, m'āndā horo kadh nyee, 6aa m'njer m'6ōkh kem
kūu.

I gather up the oil and put it on the fire so that it melts,
after which I dip it out and I pour it into a gourd.

Initial and medial

These examples are from the story of a hare and a hedgehog.

-Ree 6aa tcln dcgum.

He comes (the hare)...and the hare is killed by them.

-6aa, ni'n kōn'k gidn't'n rā rēn i gindh rē yan't ni,

... he whose quills made his body his weapon

-i'k róny malang kēc. Bís'g reen 6aa ann tā. Isōn

have already been plucked out. The dogs come...and

-sene tó' tclnn tā.

he flees. They jump on him and bite him and kill him.

With a time word

-Seny go' t 6aa, nge mang kānjá tél 6ārn.

A little later..., the chicken seller re-calls him.

Irritated na + ke + Cl + wa

-M'ída na, ke āwh sem wa.

I asked if you were going with me?

Simple indirect quote Cl + ke + Cl + wa

-M'ndig gerh ke āwh sem wa.

I'd like to know if you're going with me?

Simple direct quote Cl na + ke + Cl + wa

-M'dijei na ke āwh sem wa.

I asked if you were going with me?

Clause completeing

Simple Cl + i + ná

ri

ra

-āwh i ra. Where are you going?

Excited Cl + i + ná + wa

ri

ra

-Bcbhi i ra wa. Where is your father?

Precise, repeated i + ná + -n + Cl

ri

Emphatic ke + NP + ke + Cl + ke + Cl + wa

-ke nānm kcdh ni ke awh i ra ke m'á kumn al
bat ni wa.

Where has my uncle the smith gone that I don't
see him at all.

Sentence completing

Simple Cl + i + ringay't
 tam ri't
 bany

-ā ī tél i ringay't.

When will you return?

Excited Cl + ringay't + wa
 tam ri't
 bany

- ā ī tél i ringay't wa.

When will you return?

Precise, repeated ke + Cl + ringay't + wa
 tam ri't

-Ke ā ī tél i ringay't wa.

When will you return?

Iterated repetition (cold, formal preciseness

na + ke + Cl + wa

-M'ída na ke ā ī tél i ringay't wa.

I asked (two times already) when are you
 going to return?

Additive i bany á + Cl + o + Cl + o a + Cl + o a

-Sú, i'k bany á āwh seji k' 6ēe o, 6irh'g a
 6ārñ o a, kcdh'g a 6ārhn o a.

Sú, why is it that you're going with us to
 the village, and the mortars resound, and the
 drums resound?

Emphatic ke + i bany á + ke + Cl + wa

-ke i bany á ke cd ree al wa.

Why is it that he refuses to come?

Surprise Marker + cl

Neutral aspect á + Cl

- á, madh. Lapia. Ī ree i jó a.

Hello there. Have you been here a long time?

Negative, Interrogative Aspect m + Cl

-M, i ngōn ya ji mbak ala.

Oh no! Doesn't the child belong to all of us?

Affirmative aspect e + Cl

-E, dcm ndíg nal k̄c̄c̄.

Oh! I'd forgotten.

Emphatic Cl + marker

Neutral aspect Cl + aá

-ī da, ī njīra ngany aá.

Negative, interrogative aspect Cl + 'm

-I ri-n rāi á úa keseng'k bo al'm.

What's with you that you didn't catch a big
nile perch?

Imperative Cl in the second person

-āwh tā. Go now!

Polite command maj kadh + Cl

-Maj kadh āwh tā. You must go now.

Deferential address Clause in the second person

plural when addressing a high dignitary.

-M'ōo dc si. I see your heads.