

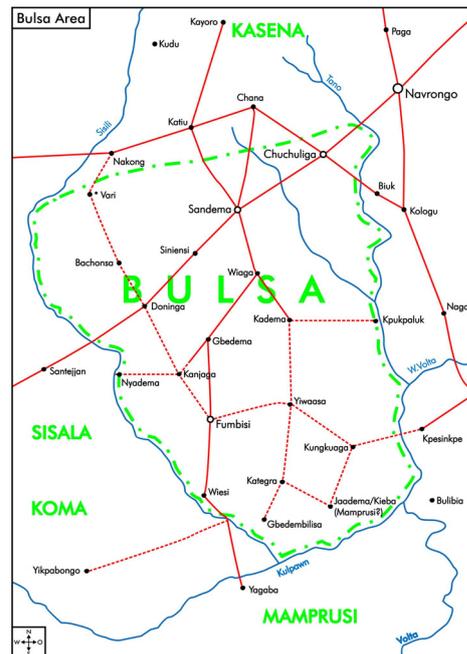
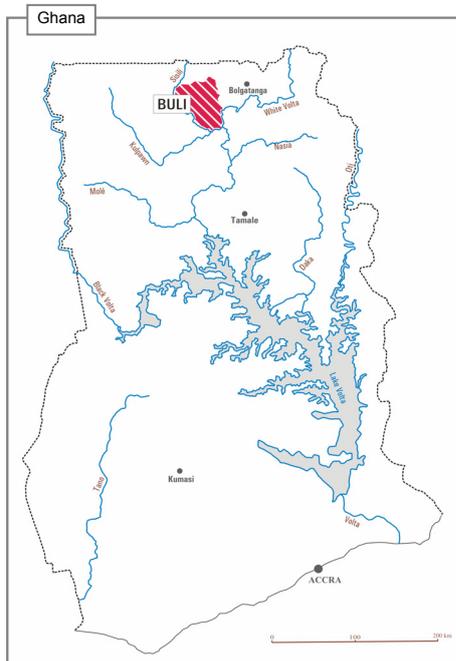
# Sentence-medial Adverbials in Buli (Gur, Northern Ghana)\*

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*Research on adverbials in sentence-medial position in the North-Ghanaian Gur language Buli suggests that the language offers two divergent slots for adverbials between subject and verb. Special attention is paid to the group of sentence-medial deictic temporal adverbials. While they have the potential to develop into tense markers, this process seems to depend on special information structural conditions.*

## 1 Introduction



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<i>Population</i>	150,000 (2003 GILLBT)
<i>Classification</i>	Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, North, Gur, Central, Northern, Oti-Volta, Buli-Konni

*Typological Traits:*

- strictly SVO
- rectum-regens order
- three-tone system with grammatical and lexical function
- noun class system with nominal suffixes
- basically aspectual verb system
- verb serialization

Adverbials appear in different positions, for example, sentence-marginally:

- (1) a. wà ch̀èn k̄ā bāl̄i.  
CL come:ST FM next.year  
'He is coming next year.'
- b. bāl̄i, wà lè jām.  
next.year CL FUT come  
'Next year, he will come.'
- (2) a. sentence-final SV(O) **ADV**  
clause- and VP-internal
- b. sentence-initial **ADV** SV(O)  
clause- and VP-external

Buli adverbials do also occur in sentence-medial position (cf. Kröger 1992: 32f.), but I suggest there are two divergent slots within this position:

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- (3) sentence-medial
- a. [S **ADV**] V(O)  
clause-internal, VP-external = subject-final
- b. S [**ADV** V(O)]  
clause-internal, VP-internal = predicate-initial

## 2 Structural Features of Sentence-Medial Adverbials

The following three features can be used as diagnostics for the exact slot of sentence-medial adverbials:

- preverbal morphemes (indicating left edge of VP)
- grammatical verb tone (indicating VP-internal position)
- boundary tone (indicating right edge of subject)

### 2.1 Preverbal Predication Markers

In some grammatical environments, Buli requires preverbal predication markers (PM) without changing the SVO syntax: S PM V O. Unlike others, some of these predication markers cannot occur inside complex predicates. They are always restricted to immediate preverbal position:

*ṇ* Negation

*ḷè* aff. Future

*ḷē* non-topical subject

Since the left edge of the VP is always indicated by these markers, their relative order with respect to sentence-medial adverbials reveals whether they are placed VP-external or –internal.

- (4) a. S ADV PM V(O) → subject-final (VP-external)
- b. S PM ADV V(O) → predicate-initial (VP-internal)

Example with negation marker (*a*)*ñ*:

- (5) a. subject-final slot

wà dīēm \_\_\_\_\_ àñ kààbī-yà?  
 CL yesterday NEG sacrifice-ASS.NEG  
 ‘He didn’t sacrifice yesterday.’

- b. predicate-initial slot

wà ñ \_\_\_\_\_ kàsím-á púúsí bà?  
 CL NEG always-IPF greet CL.NEG  
 ‘He does not always greet them.’

## 2.2 Grammatical Verb Tone

Buli verbs display a tonal subject agreement pattern (H verb tone after discourse participants, otherwise L) in certain environments. A part of the sentence-medial adverbials bears such grammatical „verb“ tone, too. This tone pattern is obligatory for predicate-initial (i.e. VP-internal) adverbials.

- (6) a. S ADV [<sub>-</sub> tonal subject agreement] VO → subject-final  
 b. S ADV [<sub>+</sub> tonal subject agreement] VO → predicate-initial

- (7) a. [+ discourse participant]: H

mí dérí nìn tììmù zúk lò.  
 1sg.E just come.out tree.DEF head fall  
 ‘I just fell from the tree.’

- (7) b. [- discourse participant]: L

nùimū dèrì yìrì jùè tìimù zúk.  
 bird.DEF just get.up climb tree.DEF head  
 ‘The bird suddenly flew on top of the tree.’

The surface representation of H tones – whether grammatical verb tone as in (8a) or lexical tone as in (9b) – can be disturbed by L-tone spreading operating in most Buli varieties.

- (8) a. [+ discourse participant]: H (predicate-initial adverbial)

ñ dèrì jìn tìimù zúk lò. /dèrì/  
 1sg just come.out tree.DEF head fall  
 ‘I just fell from the tree.’

- b. [- discourse participant]: L (predicate-initial adverbial)

wà dèrì jìn tìimù zúk lò. /dèrì/  
 CL just come.out tree.DEF head fall  
 ‘He just fell from the tree.’

- (9) a. Predicate-initial adverbial with grammatical verb tone

wà sùm-à díg tì. /sùm/  
 CL really-IPF cook CL  
 ‘He really cooks it well.’

- b. Subject-final adverbial with lexical tone

bà chùm lè chēŋ skúùl. /chúm/  
 CL tomorrow FUT walk school  
 ‘Tomorrow they will go to school.’



- (11a)  $\begin{array}{ccc} \text{H} & \text{H} & \\ | & | & \\ \text{ka} & \text{kək-sa.} & \end{array} \rightarrow \begin{array}{ccc} \text{H} & \text{H} & \text{L} \\ | & | & \vdots \\ \text{ká} & \text{kók-sà.} & \end{array}$   
 FM mahogany-CL  
 ‘It is mahogany trees.’

- (11b)  $\begin{array}{ccc} \text{H} & \text{H} & \text{L} & \text{L} \\ | & | & | & | \\ \text{ka} & \text{kək-sa} & \text{sì-ta.} & \end{array} \rightarrow \begin{array}{ccc} \text{H} & \text{H} & \text{H} & \text{L} & \text{L} \\ | & | & \vdots & | & | \\ \text{ká} & \text{kók-sá} & \text{sì-tà.} & \end{array}$   
 FM mahogany-CL CL-three  
 ‘It is three mahogany trees.’

Enclitic object pronouns display it when bound to verbs with grammatical High tone:

- (12a)  $\begin{array}{ccc} \text{L} & \text{H} & \text{H} & \text{H} \\ | & | & | & | \\ \text{n} & \text{sum-a} & \text{díg} & \text{tì.} \end{array} \rightarrow \begin{array}{ccc} \text{L} & \text{H} & \text{H} & \text{H} & \text{L} \\ | & \neq & | & | & \vdots \\ \text{̀n} & \text{sùm-á} & \text{díg} & \text{tì.} \end{array}$   
 1sg really-IPF cook CL  
 ‘I am really cooking it (well).’

- (12b)  $\begin{array}{ccc} \text{H} & \text{H} & \text{H} & \text{M} \\ | & | & | & | \\ \text{mi} & \text{díg} & \text{tì} & \text{kama.} \end{array} \rightarrow \begin{array}{ccc} \text{H} & \text{H} & \text{H} & \text{H} & \text{M} \\ | & | & \vdots & | & | \\ \text{mí} & \text{díg} & \text{tí} & \text{kámā.} \end{array}$   
 1sg.E cook CL AFF  
 ‘I have COOKed it.’

It has to be remarked that the morphemes making use of the phrase-final Low boundary tone after High tones do not act completely homogeneously after Non-high tones and that there is still need for further investigation. Irrespective of that, there is some evidence for the Low boundary tone to appear with part of the

adverbials in sentence-medial position. It is restricted to some adverbials in the subject-final slot.

- (13) a. mí dìim kò ká būūk tè wā.  
 1sg.E last.year kill FM goat give CL  
 ‘I killed a goat for him last year.’
- b. bà dīim kò kā būūk tè mō.  
 CL last.year kill FM goat give 1sg  
 ‘They killed a goat for me last year.’

The tonal patterns of the adverbial *dīim* ‘last year’ (13) in sentence-medial position do neither correspond to the subject-congruent grammatical “verb” tone nor can they be traced to mere surface changes of underlying lexical tone. The fact that the Low realization is restricted to an immediately preceding High, like in (13a), suggests that we deal with a case of boundary tone.

#### 2.4 Sentence-medial Adverbials and their Slots

Based on these criteria sentence-medial adverbials can be categorized with respect to the subject-final respectively predicate-initial slot, as in the following non-exhaustive list:

(14) a. Sentence-medial adverbial in subject-final slot:

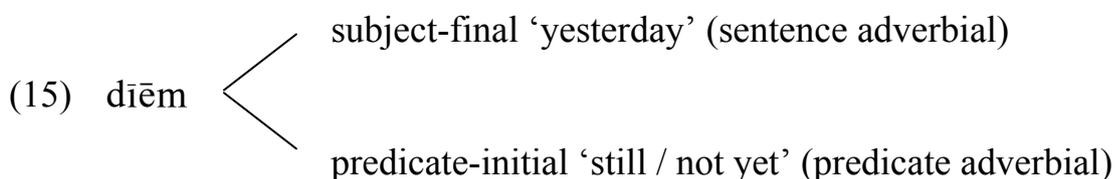
dāām	day(s) before yesterday, recently	}	boundary tone
dīēm	yesterday		
dīīm	last year		
yāā	now, then		
chúm	tomorrow	}	lexical tone
dōnlá	this year		
jīn(lá)	today		
níém	always		

b. Sentence-medial adverbial in predicate-initial slot:

dēri	just, suddenly	}	grammatical verb tone
dīēm	still, not yet		
kāsím, kāsiyám	always		
ṅāāṅ	already		
pōōm	further past		
sūm	really		

### 3 Semantic Properties of sentence-medial Adverbials

The sentence-medial position is dominated by temporal adverbials (cf. Kröger 1992: 32f.), especially the subject-final slot. Comparing the adverbials of both slots in sentence-medial position, a kind of “minimal pair” can be detected:



Basic for both adverbials is their reference to a very close past, the subject-final adverbial operating deictically, the predicate-initial adverbial having transferred it into the textual level (grammaticalization). Both adverbials are distinguished by their scope and can be combined within a sentence:

(16) ‘Where is the bicycle?’ – ‘I don’t know, ...

bù dīēm dìēm bō ká délá.  
 CL yesterday still be:LOC FM here  
 it was still here yesterday.’

#### 4 Subject-final Slot

Deictic temporal adverbials are found in a variety of positions, including the subject-final slot in sentence-medial position, as demonstrated by the adverbial *chúm* ‘tomorrow’:

- (17) a. chúm, fì lè tū bā.  
 tomorrow 2sg FUT meet CL  
 Tomorrow, you will meet them.
- b. wà chùm àlè jāmōō.  
 CL tomorrow FUT come.Q  
 Will he come tomorrow?
- c. núrúwá lè jām chúm.  
 person.DEF FUT come tomorrow  
 The man will come tomorrow.

This holds for other deictic temporal adverbials, as indicated in table (18). There are gradual distinctions concerning the morphological complexity of the adverbial, depending on the position: at the left periphery of the sentence (i), suffixes (*-lá* or *-wá*) are common, while in subject-final position (ii), the suffixless form dominates. In sentence-final position (iii), the suffix is less often preferred than at the beginning of the sentence.

(18)

(i) sentence-initial	(ii) subject-final	(iii) clause-final	
clause/VP-external	clause-internal, VP-external	clause-internal, VP-internal	
dōnlá	dōnlá	dōnlá	‘this year’
chúm(wá)	chúm	chúm	‘tomorrow’
jīnlá	jīn(lá)	jīnlá	‘today’
dìèmwā	dīēm	dìèm(wā)	‘yesterday’
			...
+ suffix	- suffix	(+) suffix	

While the positional variation is not correlated with the adverbial’s lexical meaning, it corresponds with a difference in the information structural status of the adverbial. Sentence-initially (cf. 17a), it typically functions as frame or as contrastive topic, sentence-finally (cf. 17c), placed at the end of the predicate, it is in the ideal focus position for new and uncontroversial information. Though a more thorough investigation is still needed, there is reason to assume that the subject-final slot represents an extra-focal position. By binding to the end of the subject, which constitutes a prototypical unmarked topic in Buli, the adverbial avoids the focal end position and is backgrounded, while remaining within the clause.

Consequently, it is not appropriate to just use the temporal adverbial in the subject-final slot in an answer to a wh-question concerning time. Hence, the utterance #wà *chùm̄* àlè jām. is pragmatically inadequate as reply to ‘When will he come?’, because the temporal expression is expected to be focal in that context.

There are interesting parallels between Buli temporal adverbials in the subject-final slot and the metrically organized tense markers of related languages (table 19). Although the sentence-medially placed temporal expressions are not restricted to the past tense, the grammaticalization process in the past domain seems gradually stronger than in the future tense. A first grammaticalization step has probably also been reached in Buli, since some speakers automatically add the sentence-medial counterpart to the sentence-initial past time adverbial ‘yesterday’: *dìèmwā, bà dīēm* ... ‘Yesterday, they ...’. The subject-final slot seems to offer a perfect place for the development of grammatical (tense) morphemes.

(19)	last year	day(s) before yesterday	yesterday	today <sup>1</sup>	tomorrow	day after tomorrow	this year
Buli	<i>dìimwā,</i> <i>dīim</i>	<i>dààm(wā),</i> <i>dāām</i>	<i>dìèmwā,</i> <i>dīēm</i>	<i>jīnlá,</i> <i>jīn(lá)</i>	<i>chúm(wá),</i> <i>chúm</i>	<i>vònùŋ</i>	<i>dōnlá,</i> <i>dōnlá</i>
Konni		<i>dìàríwá</i>	<i>dìèné(wó)</i>	<i>jìnné</i>	<i>súrúŋ</i>	<i>vùntúŋ</i>	<i>dònná</i>
Dagbani		<i>daa</i>	<i>sa</i>		<i>sa</i>	<i>daa</i>	
Byali		<i>dā</i>	<i>sini, sān</i>		<i>sí</i>		
Waama	<i>dēn</i>	<i>dangō</i>	<i>dē</i>		<i>sún</i>	<i>(dāān)<sup>2</sup></i>	
Nateni			<i>wontako,</i> <i>wōndà</i>				
Ditammari	<i>yáá</i>	<i>sì</i>	<i>yénkā, yé</i>				

*italics* in (post-subjectival) sentence-medial position

standard deictic adverbial (if no adverbial is given, form is either not known or quite different from sentence-medial element)

<sup>1</sup> Due to lack of data in some of the languages displayed, the deictic temporal ‘now’ is not considered here.

<sup>2</sup> It is not sure whether ‘day after tomorrow’ is included (cf. “futur éloigné”, Sambieni 2005: 157).

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