A grammar of Konso

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3. Simple sentences

This chapter describes the basic structure of simple sentences. It presents simple verbal sentences, adjectival sentences, subject clitics, nominal sentences and cleft sentences.

3.1. Verbal simple sentences

Verbal simple affirmative declarative sentences may contain overt subjects, verb roots with (affirmative or negative) subject clitics and inflectional suffixes. There is no marking to show that a sentence is declarative. They are only characterised by a sentence-final falling intonation (Ongaye 2000). The basic word order in simple sentences is SOV. This is shown in (1):

(1a)   attiχ χarʃa iɗɗammi
        atti-ʔ   *χarʃa*   *iʔ=ɗam-ni*
        2SG.PRO-NOM beans   2=eat-IPF.PRES
        'You (SG) eat beans.'

(1b)   antik kulleetasiʔ ʔinɠeeɗa
        anti-ʔ   *kulleeta-siʔ*   *in=ɠeeɗ-a*
        1SG.PRO-NOM hood-DEF.M/F 1=take-IPF.FUT
        'I will take the hood.'

As is apparent in the above examples, (1a) contains the overt subject ʔatti 'you (SG)', the overt object χarʃa 'beans', the second person subject clitic iʔ=, the verb root ɗam- 'eat', and the aspect marker -ni. Similarly, (1b) contains the overt subject anti 'I', the overt object kulleetasiʔ 'the hood', the first person subject clitic in=, the verb root ɠeeɗ- 'take' and the imperfective future aspect marker -a on the verb.

Overt subjects, such as anti 'I' and atti 'you (SG)' in (1) can be optionally left out because they are understood from the type of the subject clitics and the gender agreement markers on the verb. For instance, example (2a) and (2b) are such versions of the example in (1a) and (1b), respectively.

(2a)   χarʃa iɗɗammi
        χarʃa   *iʔ=ɗam-ni*
        beans   2=eat-IPF.PRES
        'You (SG) eat beans.'

(2b)   kulleeta-siʔ   *in=ɠeeɗ-a*
        hood-DEF.M/F 1=take-IPF.FUT
        'I will take the hood.'

A simple verbal sentence with transitive verb roots may also occur with covert subjects and objects. As mentioned earlier, covert subjects are understood from the type of subject clitics and the gender agreement markers on the verb. For covert objects, there are no such clues. They are understood only from an earlier mention in a discourse. For instance, if we omit the subject and object of the examples in (1), we get the sentences in (3):

(3a)   iɗɗammi
         iʔ = ɗam-ni
         2 = eat-IPF.PRES
         'You (SG) eat (it).'

(3b)   in = ɠeeɗ-a
         1 = take-IPF.FUT
         'I will take (it).'

In the literature on Konso, various terms have been used for subject clitics: preverbals (Black 1973; Ongaye 2000, 2004), person indices (Sim 1977, Daudey & Hellenthal 2004). In this work, I choose the term "subject clitics" because they are clitics and always indicate the person value of the subject.

Most sentences contain one subject clitic. The position of subject clitics in the sentences is mainly with the verb of the sentence. However, they can be procliticised or encliticised to other constituents of a sentence, as we shall see below. The subject clitics do not distinguish gender or number; they only distinguish person. Gender (and person/number) is marked by the inflectional suffix on the verb. Without an overt subject, it is only the subject clitics that distinguish between second person singular and third person singular feminine, which have the same verb form, as shown below.

(4a)   iʔʔanti
         iʔ = an-t-i
         2 = go-2-PF
         'You (SG) went.'

(4b)   iʔanti
         i = an-t-i
         3 = go-3F-PF
         'She went.'

We identify different forms of affirmative and negative subject clitics for various persons depending on the sentence/clause type. The following table presents these forms.

Sentence/Clause type	Affirmative			Negative		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
Verbal/Adjectival	in=	iʔ=	i=	an=	aʔ=	in=
Nominal	an=	aʔ=	-	-	-	-
Optative/Imperative	-	-	-	-	in=	in=

Table 1: Forms of subject clitics

With explicit subject and object, the subject clitics may occur in any of the following four positions: as a proclitic to the verb as in (5a), as an enclitic to the object as in (5b), as a proclitic to the object as in (5c), or as an enclitic to the subject as in (5d).

(5a) inuk kuufa inhaaʔni
    inu-ʔ   *kuufa*   *in=haad̶-n-i*
    1PL.PRO-NOM   cow.dung.pile   1=carry-1PL-PF
    'We carried a cow dung pile.'

(5b) inuk kuufan haaʔni
    inu-ʔ   *kuufa=in*   *haad̶-n-i*
    1PL.PRO-NOM   cow.dung.pile=1   carry-1PL-PF
    'We carried a cow dung pile.'

(5c) inuʔ ʔinkuufa haaʔni
    inu-ʔ   *in=kuufa*   *haad̶-n-i*
    1PL.PRO-NOM   1=cow.dung.pile   carry-1PL-PF
    'We carried a cow dung pile.'

(5d) inun kuufa haaʔni
    inu=in   *kuufa*   *haad̶-n-i*
    1PL.PRO=1   cow.dung.pile   carry-1PL-PF
    'We carried a cow dung pile.'

In the following examples, the subjects are implicit and the subject clitics are negative.

(6a) akkaltu
    aʔ=kal-t-u
    2NEG=return.home-2-NEG.IPF.FUT
    'You (SG) will not go home.'

(6b) χarʃasiʔ ʔand̶ammi
    χarʃa-siʔ   *ʔan=d̶am-n-í*
    beans-DEF.M/F   1NEG=eat-NEG-PF
    'I did not eat the beans.'

(6c) χarʃasiʔ ʔinɗammi
    χarʃa-siʔ   *in=ɗam-n-í*
    beans-DEF.M/F   3NEG=eat-NEG-PF
    'He/She/They did not eat the beans.'

(6d) aʔʔanni akkittu
    aʔ=ʔan-ni   *aʔ=kit-t-u*
    2NEG=go-IPF   2NEG=be-2-NEG
    'You (SG) do not go.'

3.2. Adjectival sentences

Adjectives differ from verbs in that both number and gender are marked on the former (see 4.1.4). Adjectives are like verbs with regard to hosting subject clitics. Like the independent verbal sentences, affirmative adjectival sentences occur with the same subject clitics: **in=** for first person, **iʔ=** for second person, and **i=** for third person. Singular subjects are not marked but plural subjects are marked by reduplicating the adjectival root's initial $C_1V(C_1)$. Adjectival sentences, like nominal sentences (see 3.4), have no copula. Both nominal and adjectival sentences have subject clitics, but these differ in form. Moreover, adjectival sentences may occur with overt or covert subjects. For example, the example in (7a) has the overt subject **inantasiʔ** 'the girl' and the one in (7b) has **hellaasiniʔ** 'the children'. The adjectival root in both examples is **ɗer-** 'be tall'.

(7a) inantasiʔ ʔiɗeri
    inanta-siʔ   *i=ɗer-i*
    girl-DEF.M/F   3=be.tall-PF
    'The girl is tall.'

(7b) hellaasiniʔ ʔiɗeɗɗeri
    hellaa-siniʔ   *i=ɗeɗ-ɗer-i*
    children-DEF.P   3=PL-be.tall-PF
    'The children are tall.'

First person plural and second person plural take the suffixes **-nna** and **-ttan**, respectively, in addition to reduplication on the adjectival roots as shown in (8).

(8a) inuʔ ʔinɗeɗɗerinna
    inu-ʔ   *in=ɗeɗ-ɗer-i-nna*
    1PL.PRO-NOM   1=PL-be.tall-PF-1PL
    'We are tall.'

(8b)   iʃinaʔ ʔideɗɗerittan
         iʃina-ʔ   *i=ɗeɗ-ɗer-i-ttan*
         2PL.PRO-NOM   3=PL-be.tall-PF-2PL
         'You (PL) are tall.'

Adjectival sentences may occur without an overt subject. We can show this by omitting the overt subjects **inantasiʔ** 'the girl' and **hellaasiniʔ** 'the children' in the above examples. With the absence of an overt subject we only know the number of the implicit subject from reduplication and also from the suffixes **-nna** and **-ttan** for first person and second person plural. Examples:

(9a)   *i=ɗer-i*
         3=be.tall-PF
         'She/He/It is tall.'

(9b)   *i=ɗeɗ-ɗer-i*
         3=PL-be.tall-PF
         'They are tall.'

(9c)   *in=ɗeɗ-ɗer-i-nna*
         1=PL-be.tall-PF-1PL
         'We are tall.'

Negation in adjectives is marked by negative subject clitics as well as by negative suffixes on the verb 'be, exist'.

(10a)   anɗereen co
         an=ɗer-i=an   *kiy-o*
         1NEG=be.tall-PF=1NEG   be-NEG
         'I am not tall.'

(10b)   ɗerin kittu
         ɗer-i=in   *kit-t-u*
         be.tall-PF=3NEG   be-3F-NEG
         'She is not tall.'

Negative adjectival sentences in which adjectival roots serve as predicates differ from adjectival affirmative sentences in the following ways:

- They require the existential verb **kit-** 'to be, exist' in addition to the adjectival predicate;
- Except third persons, the other persons do attach negative subject clitics on the adjectival predicates;
- All persons have negative subject clitics on the verb 'be, exist';
- Except for second person plural and third person plural, negation is also marked on the verb **kit-** 'to be, exist'.

The following are illustrative examples of negative adjectival sentences.

(11a) anɗeri anco
  an=ɗer-i   *an=kiy-o*
  1NEG=be.tall-PF 1NEG=be-NEG
  'I am not tall.'

(11b) aɗɗeɗɗeri akkittan
  aʔ=ɗeɗ-ɗer-i   *aʔ=kit-t-a-n*
  2NEG=PL-be.tall-PF 2NEG=be-2-PF-P
  'You are not tall.'

The negative subject clitics of the verb **kit-** 'to be, exist' mainly occur as enclitics with the adjectival predicate. This leftward movement omits the glottal stop for all persons. This in turn causes vowel coalescence for first and second persons: i+a=ee. For third persons, the vowel i is elided, and negation is marked only by the suffix -n. Below I provide some illustrative examples.

(12a) anɗereen co
  an=ɗer-i=an   *kiy-o*
  1NEG=be.tall-PF=1NEG be-NEG
  'I am not tall.'

(12b) aɗɗereek kittu
  aʔ=ɗer-i=aʔ   *kit-t-u*
  2NEG=be.tall-PF=2NEG be-2-NEG
  'You (SG) are not tall.'

(12c) ɗeɗɗerin can
  ɗeɗ-ɗer-i=in   *kiy-a-n*
  PL-be.tall-PF=3NEG be-IPF.FUT-P
  'They are not tall.'

The position of subject clitics is restricted in content questions and conditional clauses when the conditional conjunctions are not expanded with the suffix -n, for which I could not find the grammatical function or semantic content (but see 12.2.1 for details on conditional conjunctions). In content questions, subject clitics are attached only to the content-question word as shown in (13). The examples in (14) are unacceptable because the subject clitcs have moved to the verbs.

(13a) maanan iʃaɗ ɗaaʃa
  maana=in *iʃa-ʔ* *ɗaaʃ-a*
  what=1   him-DAT give-IPF.FUT
  'What shall I give him?'

(13b)   ayʃaak kitta
      ayʃaa = iʔ   kit-t-a
      where = 2   be-2-IPF.FUT
      'Where are you?'

(14a)   *maana iʃaʔ ʔinɗaaʃa
      maana   iʃa-ʔ   in = ɗaaʃ-a
      what   him-DAT   1 = give-IPF.FUT
      (intended: 'What shall I give him?')

(14b)   *ayʃaa   iʔ = kit-t-a*
      where   2 = be-2-IPF.FUT
      (intended: 'Where are you?')

The position of subject clitics is also restricted in conditional clauses that contain conjunctions that are not expanded with suffix **-n**. For instance, in (15), we have the unexpanded conditional conjunction **kanɗe** 'if'. Accordingly, the subject clitic must occur with this conjunction. This is shown in (15a) where the first person subject clitic occurs with the conjunction **kanɗe**. The example in (15b) is unacceptable because the first person subject clitic has moved from the conditional conjunction **kanɗe** to the verb root.

(15a)   kanɗen urmalaapa aanay lahan piɗɗa
      kanɗe = in   urmalaa-opa   an-ay   laha = in
      if = 1   market-to   go-PF[3M]   ram = 1

      piɗɗ-a
      buy[SG]-IPF.FUT
      'If I went to the market, I would buy a ram.'

(15b)   *kanɗe urmalaapa inaanay, lahan piɗɗa
      kanɗe   ʔurmalaa-opa   in = an-ay,
      if   market-to   1 = go-PF[3M]

      laha = in   piɗɗ-a
      ram = 1   buy[SG]-IPF.FUT
      (intended: 'If I went to the market, I would buy a ram.')

Subject clitics are also restricted in their position of occurrence when the adverb **amma** 'now' follows the discourse marker **asu** 'just'. The adverb **amma** 'now' has an inherent emphasis and as a result only hosts subject clitics when followed by **asu** 'just' as in (16a). The example in (16b) is unacceptable because the subject clitic has moved from the adverb to the verb.

(16a)　amman asu koɗaasiɗ ɗikkiʃay
　　　　amma = in　asu　koɗaa-siʔ　　　ɗikkiʃ-ay
　　　　now = 1　　just　work-DEF.M/F　finish-PF[3M]
　　　　'I have just finished the work.'

(16b)　*amma asu koɗaasiʔ ʔinɗikkiʃay
　　　　amma　asu　koɗaa-siʔ　　　in = ɗikkiʃ-ay
　　　　now　　just　work-DEF.M/F　1 = finish-PF[3M]
　　　　(intended: 'I have just finished the work.')

So far, I have discussed about the presence of subject clitics in sentences. Now, I return to presenting cases where subject clitics are absent. Subject clitics are absent in affirmative imperatives and optative sentences. They are also absent in cleft sentences. Since various sections are dedicated to each of these sentence types in this work, here, I only provide illustrative examples to show that subject clitics are absent in these sentence/clause types.

The examples in (17) illustrate imperatives (see imperatives in 6.4.1). They, however, differ in the presence or absence of subject clitics. The example in (17a) does not have a subject clitic because it is an affirmative imperative. In contrast, the example in (17b) has a subject clitic because it is a negative imperative. Notice that the form of the negative subject clitic of the negative imperative is identical to that of the first person affirmative subject clitic in affirmative verbal sentences.

(17a)　alleesip poota
　　　　alleeta-siʔ　　　poot-a
　　　　hut-DEF.M/F　　demolish-IMP.PL
　　　　'(You (PL)) Demolish this hut!'

(17b)　alleesiʔ ʔimpootan
　　　　alleeta-siʔ　　　in = poot-a-n
　　　　hut-DEF.M/F　　2NEG = demolish-IMP.PL-NEG
　　　　'(You (PL)) Do not demolish this hut!'

Optative sentences are illustraed in (18) (see also Section 6.4.2). The affirmative optative in (18a) does not have subject clitics whereas the negative optative in (18b) has a subject clitic. Again, notice that the form of the negative subject clitic of the negative optative is identical to that of the first person affirmative subject clitic in affirmative verbal sentences.

(18a)　a　　　kal-u
　　　　REL　return.home-OPT
　　　　'Let him return home.'

(18b) in＝kal-i-n
      3NEG＝return.home-OPT-NEG
      'Let him not return home.'

In non-cleft verbal sentences, the subject pronoun has a nominative suffix, and the verb has the subject clitic, gender suffix and aspect marker as in (19a). On the other hand, in cleft sentences, the subject occurs in the form of an accusative pronoun followed by a cleft sentence marker. Moreover, the verb has no subject clitic and gender/person marker. It only has the verb root and invariable aspect marker as shown in (19b-c).

(19a) iʃeennaʔ ʔikalti
      iʃeenna-ʔ   *i＝kal-t-i*
      3SGF.PRO-NOM   return.home-3F-PF
      'She returned home.'

(19b) iʃeenna-á   kal-ay
      3SGF.PRO[ACC]-CLF return.home-PF[3M]
      'It's her who returned home.'

(19c) ke-é   kal-ay
      2SG.PRO.ACC-CLF   return.home-PF
      'It's you (SG) who returned home.'

In the preceding sections, I have presented the forms of affirmative as well as negative subject clitics in various sentence/clause types. In these sentence/clause types, subject clitics are flexible with regard to their placement in most verbal sentences. This flexibility in the placement of the subject clitics renders subtle differences in meaning. Further research should be done in order to understand these differences. It seems that the explanation lies in information structure.

Content question words host subject clitics as in (20a) (see also Section 10.3). The example in (20b) is ungrammatical because the subject clitic has moved from the content question word.

(20a) antiʔ ʔaynun χonsupa erka
      anti-ʔ   *aynu＝in*   *χonso-opa*   *erk-a*
      1SG.PRO-NOM   who＝1   Konso-to   send-IPF.FUT
      'Whom shall I send to Konso?'

(20b) *antiʔ ʔaynu χonsupa inerka
      anti-ʔ   *aynuχonso-opa*   *in＝erk-a*
      1SG.PRO-NOM   who Konso-to   1＝send-IPF.FUT
      (intended: 'Whom shall I send to Konso?')

Inherent emphasis can be obtained from the adverb **amma** 'now' when fol-
lowed by **asu** 'just' as in (21).

(21)   antiʔ ʔamman asu koɗaasiɗ ɗikkiʃay

     anti-ʔ   *amma = in*   *asu*   *koɗaa-siʔ*
     1SG.PRO-NOM   now = 1   just   work-DEF.M/F

     ɗikkiʃ-ay
     finish-PF[3M]
     'I have just finished the work now.'

3.3. Nominal sentences

A citation form of a noun serves as a base for a nominal sentence for third
person singular as in (22a). When the first person singular or second person
singular is the subject of such nominal sentences, the nouns occur with subject
clitics as in (22b-c). The forms of the subject clitics are: **an =** and **aʔ =** for first
person and second person, respectively. Notice that the forms of the nominal
subject clitics for first and second persons are identical to the negative subject
clitics of the verbal sentences. For first and second person plurals, however,
overt pronouns are mandatory in addition to the subject clitics, as illustrated in
(22d-e).

(22a)   χorma
     '(a) bull' or 'It is a bull.'

(22b)   an = χorma
     1 = bull
     'I am a bull (i.e. I am brave.)'

(22c)   aχχorma
     aʔ=χorma
     2 = bull
     'You (SG) are a bull (i.e. You are brave.)'

(22d)   inuʔ ʔanχormaɗaa
     inu-ʔ   *an = χormaɗaa*
     1PL.PRO-NOM   1 = bulls
     'We are bulls (i.e. We are brave).'

(22e)   iʃinaʔ ʔaχχormaɗaa
     iʃina-ʔ   *aʔ = χormaɗaa*
     2PL.PRO-NOM   2 = bulls
     'You (PL) are bulls (i.e. You (PL) are brave)'.

Derived nominals such as the agentive also form nominal sentences. Such nominal sentences occur with subject clitics for first and second persons. Examples:

(23a)   an = akim-itta
           1 = treat-AGENT.M
           'I am a physician.'

(23b)   aʔ = akim-itteeta
           2 = treat-AGENT.F
           'You (SG.F) are a physician.'

(23c)   akim-iyyaa
           treat-AGENT.PL
           'They are physicians.'

Nominal sentences do not have negative subject clitics. Rather they have a negative nominal suffix -n(nin).

(24a)   iʃaχ χormannin
           iʃa-ʔ   χorma-nnin
           3SGM.PRO-NOM   bull-NEG
           'He is not a bull (i.e. He is not brave).'

(24b)   iʃinaʔ ʔaʔʔoraayaannin
           iʃina-ʔ   aʔ = oraayaa-nnin
           2PL.PRO-NOM   2 = hyenas-NEG
           'You (PL) are not hyenas (i.e. You are not greedy).'

3.4. Cleft sentences

As mentioned in the preceding section, cleft sentences do not take subject clitics. Furthermore, they are characterised by not having gender markers on the verb. The forms of the aspect markers do not vary. In cleft sentences, all nouns with short final vowels lengthen the final vowel. When personal pronouns are used, they occur in the object form.

Below, I provide paradigms to show the above characteristics of cleft sentences, using the verb root ɗam- 'eat'. Interlinear glossing and translation are given for the first person singular in each of the paradigm.

(25a)   anaa ɗammi
           ana-a   ɗam-ni
           1SG.PRO.ACC-CLF   eat-IPF.PRES
           'It is me who eats (it).'

inoo ɗammi	'It is us who eat (it).'
kee ɗammi	'It is you (SG) who eat (it).'
iʃinaa ɗammi	'It is you (PL) who eat (it).'
iʃeennaa ɗammi	'It is her who eats (it).'
iʃaa ɗammi	'It is him who eats (it).'
iʃoonnaa ɗammi	'It is them who eat (it).'

(25b) anaa ɗamay
ana-a   *ɗam-ay*
1SG.PRO.ACC-CLF   eat-PF[3M]
'It is me who ate (it).'

inoo ɗammay	'It is us who eat (it).'
kee ɗamay	'It is you (SG) who ate (it).'
iʃinaa ɗammay	'It is you (PL) who ate (it).'
iʃeennaa ɗamay	'It is her who ate (it).'
iʃaa ɗamay	'It is him who ate (it).'
iʃoonnaa ɗamay	'It is them who ate (it).'

(25c) anaa ɗama
ana-a   *ɗam-a*
1SG.PRO.ACC-CLF   eat-IPF.FUT
'It is me who will eat (it).'

inoo ɗama	'It is us who will eat (it).'
kee ɗama	'It is you (SG) who will eat (it).'
iʃinaa ɗama	'It is you (PL) who will eat (it).'
iʃeennaa ɗama	'It is her who will eat (it).'
iʃaa ɗama	'It is him who will eat (it).'
iʃoonnaa ɗama	'It is them who will eat (it).'

With transitive verbs, the object is marked with a high tone (see also 4.12.1 for nominative-accusative case distinction).

(26a) **ana-a**   karmaá   iʃʃ-a
1SG.PRO.ACC-CLF   lion   kill[SG]-IPF.FUT
'It is me who will kill a lion.'

(26b) **ke-e**   keraá   ɠap-a
2SG.PRO.ACC-CLF   thief   catch-IPF.FUT
'It is you (SG) who will catch a thief.'

Verbless cleft sentences are marked by the suffix **-Vn** as shown in the following illustrative examples:

(27a)   ineen ɠoyraawu
         ini-en   ɠoyra-awu
         this-CLF   tree-1SG.POSS.M/F
         'It's this one which is my tree.'

(27b)   iʃeenna-án   akimi-tteeta
         3SGF.PRO[ACC]-CLF   treat-F
         'It's her who is a physician.'

(27c)   helloosineen kereʔta
         hellaa-oosiniʔ-en   kereʔta
         children-DEM.P-CLF   thieves
         'It's these children who are thieves.'