Actual clauses in Lubukusu and the theory of clausal complementation

In this paper we propose a novel analysis of a little-documented clausal type found productively in Lubukusu (Bantu, Luyia), which, by the nature of its syntax and semantics, reveals an interesting interaction between the inventory of clause types in a given language and the class of predicates in that language that select clauses as complements. The Lubukusu clausal inventory includes *actual clauses*, which we show must describe propositions presupposed by the speaker to be true, but not asserted (unlike indicatives – actual clauses cannot be matrix clauses). We also show that actual clauses are tenseless, which explains why, where their meaning is compatible, they are complement options for verbs in Lubukusu that do not take indicatives, but that also take subjunctives or infinitives (1). We analyze actual clauses as modally inflexible, in that they are only evaluated for truth in the actual world of the speaker; This explains why they can describe events that have been completed in the past as well as states that are ongoing (2), descriptions that are represented by past and present tenses, respectively, in indicatives. We demonstrate further that the fixity of the interpretation of actual clauses (their indexicality) influences the lexicalization of verbs that take them as complements, such that predicates distinguished in English, such as *be able* and *manage*, are lexically identical in Lubukusu, but distinguished by the presuppositions inherited from their complements (3). Verbs with meanings incompatible with the actual presupposition, such as 'stop', 'prevent', and 'fail' do not permit actual clause complements (4), and if matrix 'try' is in the future tense, then it cannot take an actual clause complement, since the complement could not describe an event true in the actual world if it has not yet been attempted (5). Actual clauses are contrasted with factive complements in Lubukusu (which are tensed indicatives), for which the presupposition of truth appears to emerge from the predicates that select them (6), yet actual clauses embedded in the complement to non-factive verbs like 'believe' (7) still require the that actual clause is true in the utterer's world. We also explore some of the syntactic properties of actual clauses and suggest a connection between their meaning and their syntax, as well as their relation to other clause types. While the tenseless clause types, subjunctive, actual, and c15 infinitives, can appear without complementizers, indicatives cannot. But subjunctives and actuals pattern alike in that they can have complementizers and their null subjects behave like pro, as those in indicatives do. Null subjects of infinitives are shown to be PRO. We distinguish pro from PRO with evidence from agreement, right node raising, and the potential for discourse antecedency.

We see the exploration of actual clauses as part of a larger project that focuses on the following questions: (A) How does the meaning of a verb influence the set of syntactically realized clausal complements it can select? (B) How does the set of possible clausal complements influence the lexicalization of verb meanings? Do certain verbs mean what they do because of the complements they can select? (C) Can the same complement clause have a different presuppositional commitment based on the sort of verb that selects it? In other words, do certain clause types mean what they do because they are selected by certain verbs? (D) Is there a relationship between what a complement clause means and its internal syntactic structure? How is that relationship explained? (E) How are the answers to questions (A-D) affected by the fact that the inventory of possible clausal complement in any given language can be strikingly different from the inventory of clausal complement types in other languages? These questions have received relatively little attention in the theoretical or descriptive literature by comparison with questions surrounding the selection of non-clausal arguments. Our leading hypothesis is that these relations are orderly.

The Systematic Selection Hypothesis: If the inventory of clausal complement types in a language is known, then the sorts of clausal complements a given predicate allows is predictable from its meaning. Our analysis of Lubukusu actual clauses is intended to be a concrete example of research guided by the search for answers to these questions, in particular because morphologically distinguished clauses of this kind have not, to our knowledge, been analyzed before.

All data elicited during our own research.
1) Wekesa wanted/ planned / tried [go home]

a) Wekesa ényá/ápangá/ákhaká khucha engo (c15 infinitive)
b) Wekesa ényá/ápangá/ákhaká ache engo (subjunctive)
c)*Wekesa ényá/ápangá/ákhaká acha engo (Indicative complement)
d) Wekesa ényá/ápangá/ákhaká áacha engo (actual)

2a) Yohana ákhak ánga áaba ómulamu/ómulayi
Yohana a-a-khak-ang-a a-a-b-a o-mu-lamu/o-mu-layi
John   SM.c1-PST-try-HAB-fv SM.c1-ACT-be-fv c1-c1-healthy/c1-c1-good
John always tried to be healthy/good and he is healthy/good. (or 'he remains healthy/good')

b) Yohana ákhak ánga khuba ómulamu/ómulayi
Yohana a-a-khak-ang-a khu-b-a o-mu-lamu/o-mu-layi
John   SM.c1-PST-try-HAB-fv c15-be-fv c1-c1-healthy/c1-c1-good
John always tried to be healthy/good.

3a) Yohana ányála khukhwombakha énju, ne kakhali saányóla bubwáángu tá
John was able to build the house (with the infinitive), but he never got the chance

b) Yohana áanyala ombakha énju, *ne kákhali saányóla bubwáángu tá
John managed to build the house (with the actual), *but he never got the chance

4) Wekesa failed [go home]
a) Wekesa ákhílwa khucha éngo (c15 infinitive complement)
b) Wekesa ?ákhílwa ache éngo (subjunctive complement)
c)*Wekesa ákhílwa acha éngo (indicative complement)
d)*Wekesa akhilwa áacha éngo (actual complement)

5a)*Wafula will try ACT-eat the fish
Wafula ákhákháke áalya eng'eni
Wafula a-kha-khak-e a-a-ly-a e-ng'eni
Wafula SM.c1-FUT-try-fv SM.C1-ACT-eat-fv c9-fish

b) Wafula will try c15.to eat the fish
Wafula ákhákháke khulya eng'eni
Wafula a-kha-khak-e khu-ly-a e-ng'eni
Wafula SM.c1-FUT-try-fv c15-eat-fv c9-fish

6a) Alice seesonya bali Wekesa ábeyá Maria tá.
Alice s-a-a-isoni-a ba-li Wekesa a-a-bey-a Maria ta
Alice not-SM.c1-PRS-regret-fv c2-that Wekesa SM.c1-PST-marry-fv not
Alice does not regret that Wekesa married Mary. ('Wekesa married Mary' presupposed)

b) Alice saasubila ali Wekesa ábeyá Maria tá
Alice s-a-a-subul-a a-li Wekesa a-a-bey-a Maria ta
Alice not-SM.c1-PRS-believe-fv c1-that Wekesa SM.c1-PST-marry-fv NEG
Alice does not believe that Wekesa married Mary. ('Wekesa married Mary' not presupposed)

7a) Alice saakanakana ali Marya ényá khúcha tá
Alice se a-kanakan-a a-li Marya a-eny-a khu-cha ta
Alice NEG SM.c1-think-fv c1-COMP Mary SM.c1-want c15-go NEG
Alice doesn't think that Mary wanted to go ('Mary went' not presupposed)

b) Alice saakanakana ali Marya ényá áacha tá
Alice se a-kanakan-a a-li Marya a-eny-a a-a-cha ta
Alice NEG SM.c1-think-fv c1-COMP Mary SM.c1-want SM.c1-ACT-go NEG
Alice doesn't think that Mary wanted ACT-go. ('Mary went' presupposed by utterer)