



THE STRUCTURE OF METO POETRY

Kirsten Culhane

Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz

Owen Edwards

Leiden University and Language &
Culture Unit (UBB), Kupang

OUTLINE

- Background
- The Meto Ritual greeting
 - Amarasi
 - Amfo'an
- Conclusions

LANGUAGE BACKGROUND



CANONICAL SEMANTIC PARALLELISM

Amarasi dyadic set	literal gloss	meaning
<i>sufa-n kaʔu-n</i>	flower blossom	descendants
<i>kuan am bare</i>	village and place	
<i>ta-ʔeku ma na-teef</i>	encounter and meet	
<i>ma-pina-ʔ ma-kraha-ʔ</i>	NMLZ-emit.light blaze-NMLZ	glory (noun)
<i>n-piin ma na-kraah</i>	3-emit.light 3-blaze	be glorious (verb)
<i>ka-nesi-t ka-fini-t</i>	exceeder surpasser	

WORDS HAVE DIVERSE SURFACE FORMS

- morphological metathesis: $n\text{-}i\text{nu} \rightarrow n\text{-}i\text{un}$ ‘drink’, $n\text{-}ko\text{no} \rightarrow n\text{-}ko\text{on}$ ‘pass’
- metathesis and vowel assimilation
 - Amarasi: $V_\alpha Ca \rightarrow V_\alpha V_\alpha C$ $n\text{-}f\text{ena} \rightarrow n\text{-}f\text{een}$ ‘rise’
 - Amfo'an: most vowels: $n\text{-}i\text{nu} \rightarrow n\text{-}i\text{in}$ ‘drink’
- reduced forms of functors: $in\text{a}$, $in\text{i}$, $i\text{in}$, in ‘3SG’, $=ma$, $=ama$, $=am$, $=m$ ‘and’
- consonant insertion: nii ‘pole’ + $=ees$ ‘one’ $\rightarrow n\text{iid}\text{z}ees$
 - most varieties: before vowel initial enclitics
 - Amfo'an: some varieties phrase finally
- vowel assimilation: $f\text{ai}$ ‘night’ + $=ees$ ‘one’ $\rightarrow f\text{aad}\text{z}ees$
- metathesis, vowel assimilation and consonant insertion: $u\text{mi}$ ‘house’ + $=ees$ ‘one’ $\rightarrow u\text{um}\text{d}\text{z}ees$
- epenthesis: $knino?$ ‘clean, holy’ $\rightarrow a|knino?$

STRUCTURAL PARALLELISM

- *ma-pina-ʔ* *ma-kraha-ʔ* ‘glory’ (n.)
NMLZ-emit.light-NMLZ NMLZ-blaze-NMLZ
- *n-piin* *ma* *na-kraah* ‘be glorious’ (v.)
3-emit.light and 3-blaze



THE METO RITUAL GREETING




VIDEO

CALL + RESPONSE

Call: *na-tuin* *sari-t* *beko-t* *a-reok-t* *am nee*
3-because resolve-NML plan-NML NML-good\MET-NML and PAUSE
'Because of these good resolutions and plans and ...'

Resp: *A-REKO-T*
NML-good\UNMET-NML
'(they) are good'

140726, 13.00 

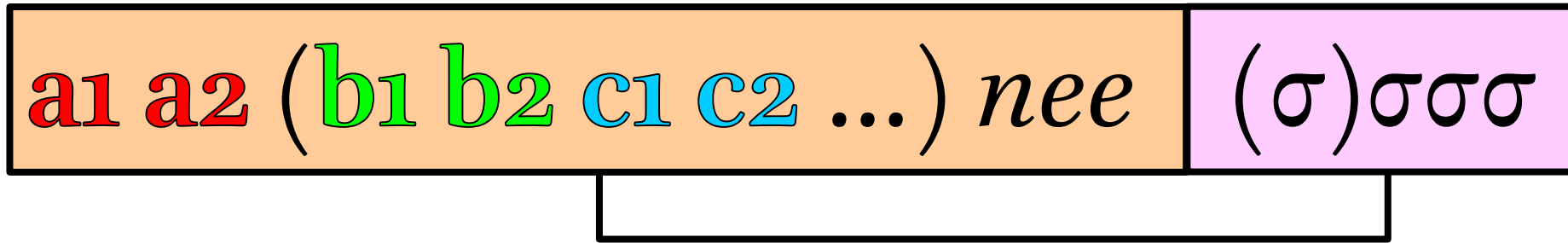


AMARASI

BASIC STRUCTURE

Call (leader)

Response (group)



CONSTRAINTS ON RESPONSE

- Creating a parallel pair
- Repeating final word of call
- Completing a multi-part parallel pair

CREATING A PARALLEL PAIR

- a. *ka=* *n-tok~took* *ma* *n-taʔ~taaʔ* *hiit ar=kiit* *ta-ʔeku* *m nee*
NEG 3-INTNS~sit and 3-INTNS~quiet 1PI all=1PI.ACC 1PI-encounter and PAUSE
'We don't just sit around and be quiet we encounter and
- b. *TA-TEEF*
1PI-meet
'(we) meet'
- 150525, line 5

REPEATING PART OF CALL

- a. *ka* *t-tok~t*
NEG IPI-IN
'We don't ju
- a. *a|n-bi* *tabu* *kninu? ma* *oras* *a|kniun?* *am nee* *efa* *m nee*
3-RL.LOC schedule holy and time holy and PAUSE meet and PAUSE
'during a holy moment and holy time'
- b. *TA-TEEF*
IPI-meet
'we meet'
- b. *RO* *KNINU?*
very holy
'(it is) very holy'
- 181017, line 4 .00

COMPLETING MULTI-PART PARALLEL PAIR

- a. *m-aʔko* *hai* *uumdʒ* =ee *naan-n* =ee *ma* *roopgw* =ee *nee*
1PX/2-ABL 1PX house =3DET inside-3SG.GEN =3DET and social.house =3DET PAUSE
'from inside our house and our home'
- b. *IN* *NANA-N*
3SG inside-3SG.GEN
'its inside'

121114, 13.08

CONSTRAINTS ON RESPONSE

- Creating a parallel pair
 - when first member of pair is final in call
- Completing a multi-part parallel pair
 - when first member of dyadic set is 'modified' and second 'unmodified'
 - call: a1 modifier_i a2 *nee*
 - response: modifier_i
- Repeating (part of) call
 - when final member of call is not part of a dyadic set OR
 - when final member of call is final member of a dyadic set

METATHESIS AND UNMETATHESIS

- Nouns must be unmetathesised (default semantic)
- Verbs must be metathesised (default semantic)
- Allowing the leader to create metathetic parallelism
 - Nouns:
 - Call: noun\MET (*naan-n* ‘inside’)
 - Resp: noun\UNMET (*nana-n* ‘inside’)
 - Verbs:
 - Call: verb\UNMET (*na-hunu* ‘first’)
 - Resp: noun\MET (*na-huun* ‘first’)

METATHESIS AND UNMETATHESIS

- a. *m-aʔko hai uumɕʒ =ee naan-n =ee ma roopgw =ee nee*
 1PX/2-ABL 1PX house =3DET inside\ **M**-3SG.GEN =3DET and social.house =3DET

‘from inside our house and our home’

- b. *IN NANA-N*
 3SG inside\ **U**-3SG.GEN

- c. *mes na-tuin n-aka n-biʔaak neengw =ee na-hunu m faadɕʒ =ee nee*
 but 3-because 3-say 3-RL.LOC day =3DET 3-first\ **U** and night =3DET

‘But it is said (that) during the first day and the night’

- d. *NA-HUUN*
 3-first\ **M**





AMFO'AN

CALL RESPONSE CHAINING

Call:	...	a1	<i>t-batis</i>	‘separate’		
Resp:	a2		<i>at-boʔok</i>	‘divide’		
Call:	a2	...	b1	<i>at-boʔok</i>	<i>lelel</i>	‘field’
Resp:	b2			<i>poʔan</i>		‘orchard’
Call:	b2	...	c1	<i>poʔan</i>	<i>sanel</i>	‘hut’
Resp:	c2			<i>lopo</i>		‘social.house’

- a. *hai feto? hai oli? he* ***t-batis*** *ook am nee*
 1PX sister 1PX ySi IRR 1PI-separate REFL and
 ‘Our sister, our younger sibling we will separate ourselves and’
- b. ***AT-BO?OK***
 1PI-part
- a. ***at-boo?k*** *at m-a?ko* ***lelel*** *panin ma nee*
 1PI-divide SUB 1PX/2-ABL field across and
 ‘when we part from the garden across (there) and’
- b. ***PO?AN*** *PANIN*
 orchard across
 ‘the orchard across (there)’
- a. ***po?an*** *panin m-a?ko* ***sanel*** *panin ma nee*
 1PI-separate SUB 1PX/2-ABL hut across and
 ‘the orchard across (there and) from the hut across (there) and’
- b. ***LOPO*** *PANIN*
 social.house across
 ‘the house (across) there’



CONSTRAINTS ON RESPONSE (AMFO'AN)

- Creating a parallel pair
- *Completing* a multi-part parallel pair
- *Creating* a multi-part parallel pair

CREATING PARALLEL PAIR

a. *askau-t* =aa *tuk~tuuk?* *am nee*
invite-NML =0DET INTNS~cut.short and PAUSE

‘the invitation is very truncated and’

b. *pal-pala?*
INTNS~short.length

‘very short’

170618, 1.54



COMPLETING MULTI-PART PARALLEL PAIR

a. *ma-kaan-?* *at es* *mepu* *Uisneen* =*gwee m* *lasi* *nee*
PROP-name-PROP SUB one work God =3DET and issue

‘Known as the work of God and the issue of’ 170618, 0.56

b. *UISNENO*

‘God’



CREATING MULTI-PART PARALLEL PAIR

a. *at-booʔk at m-aʔko* **lelel panin** *ma nee*
1PI-divide SUB 1PX/2-ABL field across and

‘when we part from the garden across (there) and’

b. **POʔAN PANIN**
orchard across

‘the orchard across (there)’

a. *poʔan panin m-aʔko* **sanel panin** *ma nee*
1PI-separate SUB 1PX/2-ABL hut across and

‘the orchard across (there and) from the hut across (there) and’

b. **LOPO PANIN**
social.house across

‘the house (across) there’



CREATING MULTI-PART PARALLEL PAIRS

a. *tafa t on ho* *amn-otu-ʔ* *paku* *ma nee*
society SUB like 2SG NML-burning-NML lamp and PAUSE

‘(it is a) society like the blazing of your lamp and’

b. *aʔ-kiku-ʔ* *finidz*
NML-scatter-NML seed

‘the scattering of (your) seeds’



170507, 0.44

CONSTRAINTS ON RESPONSE

- Creating a parallel pair
 - when first member of pair is final in call
- Completing a multi-part parallel pair
 - when first member of dyadic set is 'modified' and second 'unmodified'
 - call: a1 modifier_i a2 nee
 - response: modifier_i
- Creating a multi-part parallel pair
 - when first member of dyadic set is 'modified' and second 'unmodified'
 - call: a1 modifier
 - response: a2 modifier

CONSTRAINT ON CALL

- Begins with previous response
 - response: a2
 - call: a2 ... b1 *nee*



CONCLUSIONS

AMARASI AND AMFO'AN

	Amarasi	Amfo'an
response creates parallelism?	yes	yes
create multi-part parallelism?	-	yes
complete multi-part parallelism?	yes	yes
repeat part of call?	yes	-
metathetic parallelism?	yes	yes
call-response chain?	-	yes
response structure	(σ) $\sigma\sigma\sigma$	unconstrained
response intonation	high level	falling
call intonation	-----_ <i>nee</i>	_____/--_ <i>nee</i>

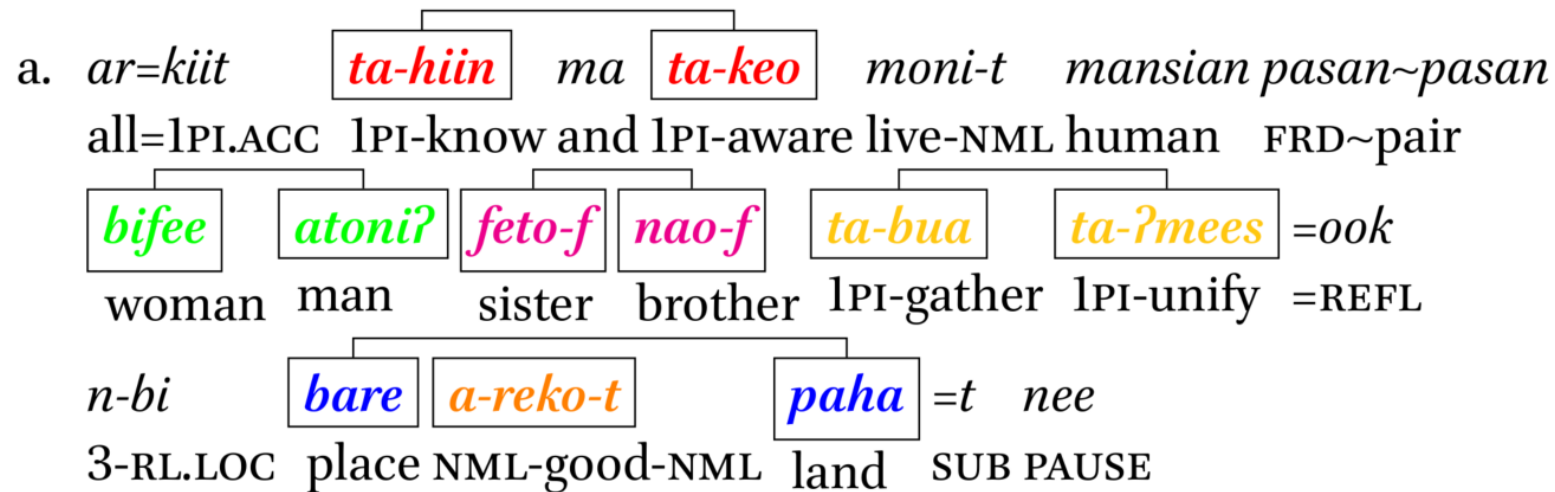
PARALLELISM IS STRUCTURAL

- Meto poetry is organised around parallelism
 - semantic parallelism
 - structural parallelism
 - both highly constrained
 - allows group to correctly respond
- different varieties create structural parallelism in slightly different ways

BROADER IMPLICATIONS

- parallelism is structural, not just semantic
- structural parallelism is created by exploiting the linguistic features of the language
- poetry is a highly refined version of everyday language
- parallelism reflects worldview and culture

CONCLUSION



‘We all know and are aware that the life of humans comes in pairs;
 woman and man, sister and brother, gathered and unified,
 in places and countries that are good.’

b. *RO* *REKO*
 very good

‘(It is) very good.’



090524, 0.36

Thanks and appreciation to the
audience and listeners for
your attention and *nee*

MODERN INNOVATIONS

- a. *ar=ki* *m-fain* *nai m-eik* *tetu-s* *ao_mina?*
 all=2PL.ACC 1PX/2-return POL 1PX/2-bring upright-NML body_nice
a-reko-t *na-ʔko Uisneno a-pakae-t* *nenō_tuunn* *am nee*
 NML-good-NML 3-ABL God NML-create-NML sky_above and
 ‘Please return now with good blessings and health from God,
 the creator of heaven and’

- b. *RO* *TUNAN*
 very above

