# Going to a Wandala town

## The reflection of culture in the grammatical system

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**Abstract:** The study demonstrates that some elements of culture may be reflected in the grammatical structure of the language. The demonstration is drawn from the coding of directionality of movement in Wandala, a Central Chadic language. In this language, movement to or from a town inhabited by Wandala people is coded in a different way than movement to or from a town not inhabited by speakers of Wandala. It is as if speakers of English were using a different form for the concept of going to New York from the concept of going to Paris.This highly idiosyncratic phenomenon may have a well-motivated explanation.

**Key words:** grammatical system and culture; locative expressions; directionality; Wandala; Chadic.

## Introduction

Existing studies of the relationship between language and culture are often limited to the domain of the lexicon, and their findings that the lexicon reflects culture are not particularly surprising or enlightening with respect to our knowledge of language use. After all, people talk about the things that matter to them.

Although there exists much literature dedicated to the issue of the connection between language and culture, there are very few well-documented examples whereby some element of the culture is reflected in the phonology, morphology, or syntax of the language.

The present study provides evidence for the existence of a very idiosyncratic feature in language structure.The feature in question is the differential coding of directionality to places inhabited by the speakers of the language as opposed to all other places. The study provides evidence for such a differentiation and hypothesizes, somewhat tentatively, about the potential reasons for the motivation for this differentiation.

The study is organized as follows: In section (2) I provide a sketch of the coding of directionality in Wandala (Central Chadic, Frajzyngier 2012[1]) and the relevant terminology that is used to describe it; in section (3) I provide the evidence for the existence of the differentiation of the coding of directionality of locative complements, and in section (4) I speculate about the possible reasons for the existence of differential coding.

## 1 The locative predication in Wandala

Directionality is one of the functions within the domain of locative predication in Wandala. In order to better understand the way directionality is marked, it is necessary to present a brief sketch of the domain of locative predication in the language. The coding means used in the locative predication in Wandala include:

The inherent locative verbs *d* 'go to' and *s* 'come from'. Both of these verbs can be expanded by the suffix *–à* to yield forms *dà* and *sà*. The function of the suffix on the constituent X indicates that X is the determiner of the function deployed in the utterance (dof) and that the following constituent Y is another component of that function (Frajzyngier 2016) :

1. The locative predicator *a*;
2. Auxiliary verbs derived from the verbs *d* and *s* coding directionality;
3. Verbal extensions; and
4. Spatial specifiers orienting the position of the subject or object with respect to the place referred to by the locative complement.

These formal means code the following functions: movement away from the place of speech or some other locative center; movement away from a source; arrival at a location; arrival at a location from a source; spatial orientation for movement; presence of an entity or activity in a given place; manner of movement; and altrilocality, i.e. the indication that the event occurs in a place other than the previous place.

The structure of a clause encoding locative predication can have one the following forms (the constituents in parentheses are not obligatory):

> Pronominal subject Verb (Nominal argument 1) (Nominal argument 2) (Locative predicator) Directionality marker Locative complement)
>
> Verb-Pronominal subject (Nominal argument 1) (Nominal argument 2) (Locative predicator) (Directionality marker) Locative complement

[1]The present study is based on data in Frajzyngier 2012 and data collected during fieldwork after the *A Grammar of Wandala* has been printed. I would like to express gratitude to Nabba Ramadan, my main Wandala language assistant. He has been a patient teacher, and has pointed me many times to the fine semantic distinctions in Wandala. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Sultan of Wandala for his initial approval of the work on Wandala.

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The locative predicator *a* occurs only if the predicate is not inherently locative. In the following example, the predicate is the inherently locative verb*s* 'go from', and consequently there is no locative predicator:

```
(1)       à                 sà-wá    márwà
    3SG   come  from:VENT-GO     Maroua
    'He   comes from Maroua.' [said in the town of Meme, a Wandala town,
   about this writer, who was present at the time of speech]
```

In the following example, the predicate *bə̀rhá* 'push' is not inherently locative, and consequently the locative predicator *á* must be used:

```
(2) bà        únà        ŋánnà    kínà    à        bə̀rhá    gdzàrà        ŋánnà
    FOC        DEF        DEF        now    3SG        push    child:PL DEF
    á        də́-m    názù    tà        hày-ná        rvə̀nɗ-á-tàr        nà
    PRED    go-IN    thing    3PL        want-3SG    heart-GEN-3PL    DEM
    'That's what pushes those children into something that their hearts want.'
```

A complement is inherently locative if it does not have to be marked as a locative complement. Inherently locative complements include *mbà* 'compound, home', 'house', and *ɬàlá* 'borough'. If the predicate is inherently locative and directional and the complement is inherently locative, the locative predication involves only the predicate and the complement, without any prepositions:

```
(3)      tà        də́        mbá-á        ɬə̀ksè
    3PL  go        house-GEN    Sultan
         'They went to the Sultan's.'
```

In stative locative predications, including predications that indicate that an event takes place at a certain place, the predicator *á* precedes the complement, regardless of whether the complement is inherently locative or not:

```
(4)     yò        d-á-r            gə̀        gdzə̀-r       kínì
        well    father-GEN-3SG    TO        young-NOM        C.FOC
        'Well, the father of the child [the bride]'
        á        ɓàlà-n                á        ɬàl-á-rà
        3SG        announce-3SG        PRED    borough-GEN-3SG
        'is announcing it in his neighborhood.'
```

We have seen that Wandala has distinct locative predication. If the predicate is not inherently locative, the locative predication must have the predicator *á*. Directionality toward the goal is marked by auxiliaries derived from the verb *d* 'go to' and *s* 'come from'. The rest of this study focuses on the coding of directionality.

## 2 Coding directionality in Wandala

Directionality to a place other than the location of the speaker is marked by the form *dəm*, derived from the verb *də* 'go' and the spatial specifier marker *m* 'in'.

The form *də̀m* can be the only predicate of the clause, coding both movement and the direction of the movement:

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```
(5) tà        tsə́-t-hə̀            tà        nábə̀    də́m    hʊ̀ɗ-á        ksə̀
    3PL        rise-T-PNCT        3PL        then    go:IN    belly-GEN    town
    'They got up and went into the town.'

(6) tsà-r-tsà        mdə̀    kə̀ yè    tà    də́m    kámbà    tà    də̀    bàkà
    ŋ̀ə̀
    rise-3PL-rise    people    three    3PL    go:IN    bush    3PL    go    pursuit
    hunt
    'Three people decided to go into the bush to hunt'
```

The form *də̀m* can cooccur with the verb *dà* 'go to':

```
(7) màkí    dà-dà    nàrwàlà də́m       gdzə̀r    wá
    HYP     go-go    bride price       go:IN    child    COM
    màɣàr            bà                mùks-á-ŋà
    for the rest     FOC               wife-GEN-2SG
    'If the bride price went to the bride, she is your wife.'
    (i.e. if your bride payment has been accepted, she is your wife)
```

If the verb of the clause is inherently non-locative verb, predicator *á* must precede the marker of directionality:

```
(8)     tà           mbàɗə́-m-hé            á       də́m    yàwè
   3PL     fall:PL-IN-PNCT PRED    go-in   water
   'They fell into the water.'
```

Movement from a source to the deictic center, represented from the point of view of the deictic center, is marked by the verb *s* 'come from', phonetically realized as *sə̀*. If the complement is [+animate], whether human or animal, the form *zá* 'animate locative complement' marker' must precede the complement:

```
(9) à       sə̀       zá  rvàrè
    3SG     come AL  lion
    'He came to the lion.'
```

When the verb *s* is followed by the marker *à*, it indicates that the unmarked locative complement of this verb is the source rather than the goal:

```
(10)    vàcí    tə̀ ŋánnà    ŋà      sà      márwà       ŋà      ɓə̀ yì  làbàr-á     vyà
        day     T   DEM 1EXCL   come    Maroua  1EXCL   found   news-GEN season
        'The other day we came from Maroua, we found the news of the season.'
```

Movement into a space requires the predicator *á*, regardless of whether the main verb is inherently directional or not. The predicator is followed by the spatial specifier *m* 'in':

```
(11)    à   də̀   bà      á-m         hyérè
        3SG go   FOC     PRED-IN joy
        'he/she enters into the joy'

(12)    máki    áŋkwà   dùks-á-ŋà           ká   màgà    nâzə̀   nânì
                HYP     exist    thing-GEN-2SG   2SG     make    thing   DEM
        à       də̀-m-d                      ám                      ìcá     mdə̀    nà
        3SG     go-in-go PRED:IN                 eye                 people  DEM
```

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'If you have anything, you do what is going to enter into the eyes of people'
(i.e. you seek people's approval)

(13)
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| á | | dàbà | jàhà | | md-àhà | | dəgì | | nó | ì | |
| | ksà | | gdz-á-rwà | | | | | | | | |
| PRED | reason | gathering | people-PL | COMP.DIR | PRES | 1SG | take | child-GEN-1SG | | | |
| dəm | bá | | žil | | | nà | | wá | | bà | sédiré |
| GO-IN | FOC | | husband | | DEM | | COM | FOC witness | | | |

'Therefore, as concerns the assembly of people, I take my girl to the husband, it
[the role of the assembly of people] is only as a witness

If the main verb is not inherently directional, the marker á is followed by the form *də́m*:

(14)
ɓɣyèɓɣyè-n yàlú nà á dém hùɗè
fall-fall -pause zucchini DEM PRED go-IN stomach
'The zucchini fell into the stomach'

(15)
hàá bà ŋá bàkà dábbà-h-á-ŋrè
ha FOC 1EXCL drive animal-PL-GEN-1EXCL
á dəm tètà úmlè
PRED go:IN place other
'Ha, it is better to drive our cattle somewhere else.'

(16)
nálèndzè à pwà nàfá-hà á dém hàhà
hail 3SG pour tree-PL PRED go:IN ground
'The hail felled the trees to the ground.'

(17)
dà-ŋrá-dà dém ksè ŋà dè ɓè yí-n
go-1EXCL-go go-IN village 1EXCL go find-PAUSE
émdè kénì tà sá-m yàkárà á-m tétà həd-á-rà
people C.FOC 3PL retun-IN cemetery PRED-IN place internment-GEN-3SG

'When we arrived at a village we found people returning from the cemetery, from an internment.'

Directionality of movement from a source to the goal is marked by the form *sə́m*, consisting of the verb *s* 'come from' and the spatial specification marker *m* 'in':

(18)
má sàsà sém dz-á-ŋ wà
HYP come-come come:IN part-GEN-2SG COM
'If [wife] enters into your patrimony' (the wife comes from her parents' house)

(19)
é dəgìy ún à bà ítàr wá wàtsè dábbà-hà tá sà
eh COM.DIR DEM 3SGsay 3PL COM FUT animal-PL 3PLcome
sém ùksè
come:IN town
'Eh, they say that the animals will come to the town'

àdàbà mà sà-m-sà ddábbà sém ks wá àmtán kà
because if come-IN-come animals come:IN village COM goodNEG
'Because if the animals come into village, that is not good.'

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The verb *sa* and the directional marker *sə́m* are used only if the speaker is at the locative center to which the movement takes place:

(20) dábbà-hà tá sà sóm ùksè
animal-PL 3PL come come:IN village
'animals come into the village'
If the speaker is not at the locative target the expression is:

(21) dábbà-hà tá ptsà dóm ùksè
animal-PL 3PL return go:IN town

## 3 Directionality and the toponyms

Movement towards a location that is labeled by a toponym, but not a toponym representing a town occupied by Wandala is marked by the directional marker *də̀m*, the same marker that codes directionality to any locative complement:

(22) dá-dà dó-m Gider/Pete/Marua
go-go go-IN Guider/Pété/Maroua
'He returned to Guider/Pété/Maroua' [these are not Wandala towns. said outside of these places]

(23) á dó-m kánò/márwà/Yaoundé
3SG go-IN Kano/Maroua/Yaoundé
'he is going to Kano/Maroua/Yaoundé'[These are not Wandala towns. said outside of these places]
If the main verb is not inherently locative, the locative predicator á must precede the
the directional marker dóm:

(24) à šàgrà àmbà nàbà màkí bà stúwà
ah, well,better then if FOC like that
mmágà níy-á-ŋà ŋà pwà-k-só-pwè
make:IMPER preparation-GEN-2SG 1EXCL rest-2SG-S-rest
á dóm gàmžàgè

PRED go:IN Gamzhage
'Ah, o.k. [chief speaking]. --If it is like that [change of speaker], get ready, we will accompany you to Gamzhege.' (Gamzhege is not a Wandala town, hence the use of the directional marker dóm rather than dá) Locative complements that do not represent Wandala townsrequire the locative preposition m added to the directional marker s:

(25) sá-sà sóm Gider/Pete/Marua/Kolofata/Banki
come-come come:IN Guider/Peté/Maroua/Kolofata/Banki
'he came to Guider/Peté/Maroua/Kolofata/Banki [non Wandala towns] for good' [said in those towns]

## 4 Wandala toponyms as locative complements

If the locative complement refers to a Wandala town, the directionality toward the place is coded by the form *dá* rather than by the form *də́m*:

(26) á wáyà ná wá tà dá kràwà
PRED yesterday DEM COM 3PL go:GO Kerawa
'As for yesterday, they went to Krawa . . .' (Kerawa is historicallya Wandala town)

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(27) yè vlà-nà dá múrà
1SG send-3SG go-GO Mora
'I sent it to Mora'

tà d-á hìyà d-á múrà
3PL go-GO corn go-GO Mora
'they took guinea corn to Mora' (Mora is a Wandala town)

tà ptsà d-á múrà
3PL return go-GO Mora
'they returned to Mora'
Use of the form dá with a non-Wandala town is disallowed:

(28) *á dá kánò/márwà/yaundé
3SG go:GO Kano/Maroua/Yaoundé
'he is going back to Kano/Maroua/Yaoundé'

If the locative complement is drawn from the name of a Wandala town, and if the complement is the target of movement, the directional marker *s* has the goal marker *á* suffixed:

(29) sá-sà sá múrà/mime/kràwà
come-come come:GO Mora/Meme/Krewa
'he came to Mora/Meme/Kerawa for good' [said in those towns]

(30) dàcì yá s-á-rwà s-á múrà
then 1SG come-GEN-1SG come-GO Mora
'I return to Mora.' (Mora is a Wandala town)

If the speaker is at a place other Wandala town, and the movement is toward the speaker, the ventive marker wá is suffixed to the verb sà 'come' functioning as directional marker:

(31) tà vlà-nà sà-wá múrà
3PL send-3SG come-VENT Mora
'they sent it from Mora'
The marker sà-wá is used even if the main verb is s 'come from':

(32) tà s-y-á hìyá sà-wá múrà
3PL come-1SG-GO corn come-VENT Mora
'they brought me guinea corn from Mora'

We see, therefore, that Wandala toponyms as locative complements are coded in a different way from non-Wandala toponyms. This fact, which does not follow from any linguistic theory, requires an explanation.

## 5 An attempt at explanation

The question that needs to be explained is why directionality to towns inhabited by Wandala is marked a different way than directionality to other locative complements, including complements referring to other towns. The explanation is as follows: The

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form *á*, whether suffixed to the verb *d* 'go to' or *s* 'come to from', is used to code movement toward home or to another locative center that serves as 'home' for the speaker, and specifically the speaker of Wandala. The evidence for this hypothesis is provided by the use of the verbs *d* and *s* with the suffix *á* when these verbs are not followed by a locative complement. In such cases, the interpretation of the verb indicates that movement home or movement toward the place of speech is involved:

(33) mà mà dá kà
HYP 1INCL go-GO NEG
'we wouldn't have come here'
dàcì tá s-á-tàrè
then 3PL come-GO-3PL:POSS
'then they return home.'

Wandala towns and towns are thus treated as home towns, and accordingly, directionality to and from those towns is marked by the same form that marks directionality toward home. Coding directionality toward home as opposed to directionality toward other places is an element of culture that has been incorporated in the grammatical structure of the language.

The question of why Wandala has this property and other languages do not cannot be answered at this time. One of the explanations may lie in the fact that at one time the Wandala were an important political entity dominating other ethnic groups in the area, and the names of Wandala towns had a different significance for speakers of Wandala than did non-Wandala towns.

## 6 Implications

The finding of the present study, although limited to a relatively narrow group of lexical items, has profound implications with respect to linguistic theory, and more specifically with respect to the meaning of lexical items, syntax, and the relationship between language and culture.

With respect to the lexicon, there are the following implications:

1. The meaning of the lexical item is not only defined by the relationship between the referent and the lexical item but also by the role the referent plays in the culture of the people speaking the language. This is particularly important for the meaning of toponyms in Wandala, as some toponyms behave like all other lexical items while other toponyms are different because of the role they play in the culture.

2. The meaning of the lexical item has to be described with respect to its place within the specific language. Some such meanings do not exist in another language.
   Implications for the relationship between syntax and the lexicon are as follows:

3. Corbett 2012 postulates the existence of a finite number of features that play roles in the syntax of a language. The existence of a highly idiosyncratic feature

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in Wandala, that of distinguishing between movement towards home as opposed to movement to any other place provides evidence that the list of features affecting the syntax of the language is not finite, and that any meaning encoded in the grammatical system affects the form of the utterances.

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## Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | First-person |
| 2 | Second-person |
| 3 | Third-person |
| AFF | Affected |
| APPL | Applicative |
| ASSC | Associative |
| C.FOC | Contrastive focus |
| COL | Collective |
| COM | Comment marker |
| COMP | Complementizer |
| CONJ | Conjunction |
| DEF | Definite |
| DEM | Demonstrative |
| DET | Determiner |
| EP | Epenthetic |
| EX | Existential |
| EXCL | Exclusive |
| FOC | Focus |
| FUT | Future |
| GEN | Genitive |
| GO | Goal |
| HL | Human locative |
| HYP | Hypothetical |
| IMP | Imperative |
| IN | Inner space |
| INCL | Inclusive |
| INTNS | Intensifier |
| M | Masculine |
| N | Noun; nasal consonant |
| NEG | Negative |
| NOM | Nominalizer |
| NP | Noun phrase |
| NUM | Numeral |
| ON | Extension ‘on’ |
| OPT | Optative |
| OUT | Extension ‘out’ |
| PAST | Past |
| PL | Plural |
| POL | Polite |
| POSS | Possessive |
| PNCT | Punctual |
| PRED | Predicator |
| PREP | Preposition |
| PRES | Presentative |
| PRO | Pronoun |
| PROG | Progressive |
| PROX | Proximate |
| Q | Question |
| REFL | Reflexive |
| REM | Remote |
| S | Source; subject |
| SEQ | Sequential |
| SG | Singular |
| T | Target |
| TO | Destinative preposition |

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