Conjunct/disjunct marking in Awa Pit

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Abstract

Awa Pit, a Barbacoan language spoken in Colombia and Ecuador, has a conjunct/disjunct system of verb suffixing similar to a person-marking system. It is a binary system, with ‘conjunct’ used for first person in statements and second person in questions, while ‘disjunct’ is used for second and third person in statements and first and third person in questions. Unlike the conjunct/disjunct system in a language such as Kathmandu Newari (Hale 1980), where conjunct is only found with volitional agents of controlled verbs, in Awa Pit volitionality and similar phenomena have no effect on the system. In addition, the use of conjunct is not dependent only on the person of the subject or agent; any statement with a first person argument (subject, object, second object) or affected participant, or any question with a second person argument or affected participant, will be marked as conjunct. If the sentence is past tense, there is a choice of three suffixes: one indicates a conjunct subject and one a conjunct undergoer, and the third shows that there is no conjunct participant in the sentence. In nonpast tenses, there is only a binary system; all that is indicated is whether there is a conjunct entity or not.

1. Introduction

Awa Pit, an indigenous language of South America spoken by the Awa of Colombia and Ecuador, has a system of verbal marking that shares many similarities with the conjunct/disjunct system described by Hale (1980) for Kathmandu Newari. However, while there are similarities, there are also substantial differences between the two systems.

Conjunct/disjunct systems are systems of (usually verbal) marking that indicate something about the participants involved in an activity; in many ways they are analogous to person-marking systems. However, the
systems are binary, with conjunct used for first person in statements and second person in questions, while disjunct is used for all other persons. In addition, in Awa Pit (but not in Kathmandu Newari) the system depends not only on the person of the subject, but also on the person of the object or any affected participant.

Awa Pit (sometimes referred to as Cuaiquer) is spoken in the border regions of Colombia and Ecuador, on the western slopes of the Andes mountain range.² It is a Barbacoan language, clearly related to Guambiano, Totoró, Cha’palaachi or Cayapa, and Tsafiki or Colorado (Curnow and Liddicoat 1998). Each of these languages appears to have some form of conjunct/disjunct system, but each is different, and with the exception of one form in Cha’palaachi and Tsafiki, the forms used to express the conjunct/disjunct system do not appear to be cognate. The best described is the system of Tsafiki (Dickinson 1999, 2000); in Tsafiki the system is controlled only by subject arguments and is less strongly bound to person than in Awa Pit. The system of Cha’palaachi is not well described, but it is clear from Vittadello’s (1988: 59) description that the verbal morphology used to indicate first person in statements indicates second person in questions. The verbal system of Totoró is unknown but is presumably similar to the closely related Guambiano, where there is a first/non-first person distinction in verbal morphology in statements (Vásquez de Ruiz 1988); the system used in questions is not known.

Following a discussion of the conjunct/disjunct system as it applies to Awa Pit, with some discussion of the system more generally, the precise details of the Awa Pit system of verbal marking of person will be examined — first the system used with the past tense morpheme, then the system used in all other cases.

2. The conjunct/disjunct distinction

A wide variety of terms have been used for conjunct/disjunct or similar systems (it is not always clear how similar the systems in question are). For example, “conjunct” and “disjunct” have been used for the Tibeto-Burman languages Kathmandu Newari (Hale 1980) and Lhomi (Vesalainen and Vesalainen 1980); “set X” and “set Y” were used for Akha (Thurgood 1986) and “set I” and “set II” for Kathmandu Newari (Hargreaves 1990), both Tibeto-Burman languages; “first person” and “non-first person” were used for Sherpa (Woodbury 1986); while “egophoric” and “neutral” have been used for Tibetan (Tournadre 1996); the terms “locutor” and “non-locutor” have been used to describe the Barbacoan languages Guambiano (Vásquez de Ruiz 1988) and Awa Pit.
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(Curnow 1997); “congruent” and “noncongruent” have been used for the Barbacoan language Tsakiki (Dickinson 1999); and both “subjective mood” and “objective mood” (Chinggeltai [Hohhot] 1989) and “first evidential” and “non-first evidential” (Slater 1998) have been used for the Mongolian language Monguor or Minhe Mangghuer. Conjunct/disjunct systems have also been considered a grammaticalization of mirativity (DeLancey 1997), thus leading to the use of the terms “non-mirative” and “mirative”; this grammaticalization hypothesis has been disputed (Curnow 2001).

The terms “conjunct” and “disjunct” are not perhaps the most intuitive terms for the oppositions found in these systems; however, they are the terms with the widest currency and consequently will be used throughout this article.

At first glance, a conjunct/disjunct system appears to be a binary system of person marking, with a contrast between first person (conjunct marking) and nonfirst person (disjunct marking). Thus in Awa Pit, finite verbs have one suffix if the sentence is first person, another if the sentence is second or third person:

(1) (na=na) pala ku-mtu-s
   (1SG.(NOM)=TOP) plantain eat-IMPF-CONJ
   ‘I am eating plantains.’
(2) (nu=na) pala ku-mtu-y
   (2SG.(NOM)=TOP) plantain eat-IMPF-DISJ
   ‘You are eating plantains.’
(3) (us=na) atal ayna-mtu-y
   (3SG.(NOM)=TOP) chicken cook-IMPF-DISJ
   ‘He/she is cooking chicken.’

As indicated in these sentences, it is always possible to add a personal pronoun and consequently disambiguate between second and third person; however, this is not necessary nor especially common.

An examination of questions, both content and polar, quickly shows that the system is not a straightforward first/nonfirst person system. In questions, the conjunct form is used with second person (rather than first person), while disjunct is now used for first and third person:

(4) min=ta=ma ashap-tu-y?
    who-ACC=INTER annoy-IMPF-DISJ
    ‘Whom am I annoying?’
(5) shi=ma ki-mtu-s?
    what=INTER do-IMPF-CONJ
    ‘What are you doing?’
These examples thus show what are considered here to be the defining features of a conjunct/disjunct system. A language contains a conjunct/disjunct system if, given an agentive, intentional, volitional context (or a relatively neutral context with a verb that is most commonly interpreted as an intentional, volitional action performed by an agentive subject), statements containing a first person are distinct from those that do not contain first person reference, while questions containing second person are distinct from those that do not contain second person reference. The marking used to distinguish first person in statements and second person in questions is the “conjunct”; the other form is the “disjunct.” That is, the distribution of forms is that found in Table 1.

While this definition gives the basis of the conjunct/disjunct system, in each language there appear to be cases that deviate from this pattern, and Awa Pit is no exception. Very few divergent examples have been found in Awa Pit; however, no conversation was recorded in the language, as it is not used as a daily language in the fieldwork area, and it is quite possible that more examples of deviations from the basic pattern would occur in this genre. The only divergent examples in the Awa Pit corpus involve conjunct marking in first person questions or disjunct marking in second person questions:

(7) \[ \text{mi} - \text{ta} \quad \text{na} = \text{na} \quad \text{tu-s?} \]

\[ \text{where} = \text{LOC 1SG.(NOM)} = \text{TOP be:in:place-CONJ} \]

‘Where am I?’

(8) \[ \text{nu} = \text{na} \quad \text{Ricaurte} = \text{mal} \quad \text{puz-ta} \quad \text{ki?} \]

\[ \text{2SG.(NOM)} = \text{TOP Ricaurte} = \text{LOC go:out-PFPART Q.(DISJ)} \]

‘Did you go to Ricaurte?’

These examples arose in odd circumstances, however — in both cases, they occurred in direct elicitation. When asked how to say ‘Where am I?’ the speaker knew where he was; likewise, when asked how to say ‘Did you go to Ricaurte?’, the speaker knew that the addressee had, indeed,

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gone to Ricaurte. These examples are thus similar to rhetorical questions, in that the speaker already knows the answer, and as Hale (1980) noted for Kathmandu Newari, the person marking of rhetorical questions in conjunct/disjunct systems patterns like that of statements rather than that of true questions. Thus a first person rhetorical question would be expected to be marked conjunct, while a second person rhetorical question would be expected to be marked disjunct, precisely the distribution found in the Awa Pit examples above.

These exceptions for rhetorical questions are explained in a relatively straightforward manner by assuming that conjunct/disjunct systems are in some way associated with knowledge systems and what Hargreaves (1990, 1991) has referred to as “epistemic authority.” Essentially his argument is that in order to make a statement, the speaker must (claim to) know that the facts indicated in the proposition are true; to ask a question, the speaker (claims that he or she) assumes that the addressee knows whether the facts indicated in the proposition are true or false. That is, for a statement the speaker claims that the speaker is the epistemic authority; for a question the speaker claims that the addressee is the epistemic authority. Naturally, for a rhetorical question the speaker is claiming himself or herself, not the addressee, as the epistemic authority. What conjunct/disjunct systems then do is indicate whether the epistemic authority is present in the utterance (conjunct) or not (disjunct).

In other languages there are a variety of different sorts of exception to the straightforward person-marking nature of conjunct/disjunct systems. For example, in Kathmandu Newari only verbs that have some element of control may be marked with conjunct; verbs referring to noncontrollable events are only ever marked as disjunct, regardless of the person of the subject (Hale 1980; Hargreaves 1990, 1991). In Tsafiki, on the other hand, while conjunct may be used with all verbs when there is a first person subject (or a second person subject in questions), disjunct may be used with a first person subject in statements in certain circumstances, such as when the subject did not perform the action intentionally, when an action was unexpected, to indicate irony, or to indicate the unusual nature of the situation, with the meaning depending at least in part on the semantics of the verb as well as on context (Dickinson 1999, 2000).

In Awa Pit, however, elements such as control, volition, intention, and so on do not seem to be factors in the use of the conjunct/disjunct system. As will be seen, however, in Awa Pit, unlike in Kathmandu Newari or Tsafiki, there are two different systems of conjunct/disjunct marking. Furthermore, while, in Kathmandu Newari and Tsafiki, to the extent
that person is relevant, it is the person of the subject of the clause, in Awa Pit it is any entity affected by the action in the clause.

The use of the conjunct/disjunct system to refer to any affected entity, rather than just the subject, may also explain a further difference between Awa Pit and some other conjunct/disjunct languages, such as Kathmandu Newari and Tsafiki. In both of these languages, the conjunct/disjunct system operates in some subordinate clauses on the basis of logophoricity. That is, in essence, conjunct is used in a subordinate clause of speech or thought when the subordinate verb has the same subject as the matrix clause, while disjunct indicates noncoreference between a subordinate and a matrix clause (Dickinson 1999; Hale 1980). In Awa Pit, almost all appropriate subordinate clauses use a nonfinite clause with or without a complementizer or else use a direct-speech construction. As the conjunct/disjunct system is only ever used on finite verbs, the system thus never operates in a logophoric manner in Awa Pit.

The conjunct/disjunct system of Awa Pit thus appears to be entirely person-based, with no variation for elements such as intention or volition. If a statement contains a first person element, the verb will be marked conjunct; if a (true) question contains a second person element, the verb will be marked conjunct; otherwise the verb will be marked disjunct. However, while the choice of conjunct or disjunct marking is thus straightforward, there are differences between the system used with the past tense marker and in other cases, and differences depending on the grammatical relation or semantic role of the first or second person entity — these complications will be discussed in the following section.

3. Conjunct/disjunct in Awa Pit

The system of conjunct/disjunct marking in Awa Pit is only ever found with finite verbs and a few nonverb elements (see section 3.3) in nondirective utterances. Directive utterances, that is, imperatives and hortatives, contain special imperative or hortative verb suffixes that are inherently marked for either second or first person and are thus outside of the general conjunct/disjunct system. Nonfinite verbs, which are mainly used in subordinate clauses, are never marked for conjunct or disjunct. In addition, there is one finite verb aspect, the terminative *ti*, which is never directly followed by conjunct/disjunct marking; either another aspect or tense marker follows it and is in turn followed by conjunct/disjunct, or the verb remains unmarked for this. Equally, either the obligative or the potential mood can be used with a personal interpretation (“Juan must/can do X”), in which case they participate in the usual marking
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system, or they have a nonpersonal interpretation (“X must/can be done”) in which case they are unmarked for conjunct/disjunct.

While there are a number of complications with the verbal structure in Awa Pit — particularly with regard to interrogatives and negatives, which are often coded using auxiliary verbs — the general structure of the finite verb in Awa Pit is the following:


The majority of these suffixes are optional, and various suffixes may or may not be possible in combination. (For a more precise formulation and discussion of the inflectional system of Awa Pit, see Curnow 1997: 176–186.) In what follows, we will focus on the conjunct/disjunct marking, which occurs in the final slot.

3.1. The past paradigm

Awa Pit sentences that deal with past time can be marked with a variety of aspect and mood markers and may or may not have an explicit tense marker. The past system of conjunct/disjunct marking applies only in clauses with an explicit past tense marker — because of the ordering of suffixes, conjunct/disjunct marking always directly follows any explicit past tense marker.

In the past paradigm, there are three possible suffixes: \( w \), which indicates a conjunct subject; \( s \), which marks a conjunct undergoer; and \( zi \), which shows an absence of conjunct entities. These forms are shown below.

Conjunct: \( (ta)w^A \) (past tense) conjunct subject

\( (ti)s \) (past tense) conjunct undergoer

Disjunct: \( (ti)zi \) (past tense) disjunct

Note that the imbalance between the notions of subject (a grammatical relation) and undergoer (a semantic role) is intentional and is necessary to an understanding of the system, as will be seen in section 3.1.2.

3.1.1. Conjunct-subject marking. Awa Pit has a strongly indicated grammatical relation of subject, identifiable on the basis of constituent order, case marking, number marking, serial verb–like constructions, two same-subject subordinate structures, and two nominalization strategies (see Curnow 1997: 64–71 for details). The presence of a final \( w \) on a past tense verb indicates that the grammatical subject of that clause is a
conjunct participant (that is, first person in a statement or second person in a question). This subject is most commonly an agent but may be an experiencer or other semantic role.

(9) nash-na = kima na = na kal
afternoon-INF = until 1SG.(NOM) = TOP work
ki-ntu-ata-w
do-IMPF-PAST-CONJ:SUBJ
‘I was working till late.’

(10) shi ayuk = ta = ma libro ta-ta-w?
what inside = LOC = INTER book put-PAST-CONJ:SUBJ
‘Under what did you put the book?’

(11) kin-ka = na, na = na Santos = ta
dawn-WHEN = TOP 1SG.(NOM) = TOP Santos = ACC
izh-ta-w
see-PAST-CONJ:SUBJ
‘At dawn I saw Santos.’

(12) payta-ma-ta-w
sweat-COMP-PAST-CONJ:SUBJ
‘I sweated.’

It should be noted that while a w always indicates that the subject is a conjunct element, the reverse is not necessarily the case: a conjunct subject entity in a past tense clause does not always imply a final w (see next section).

3.1.2. Conjunct-undergoer marking. A final s suffix after a past tense morpheme indicates that a conjunct entity underwent the action of the verb. This past tense s is the most complex of the three past system markers.

When there is a conjunct participant in the object grammatical function, a past tense verb is always marked with s, and this is the most common usage of s. This suggests that s indicates a conjunct object in the same way that w marks a conjunct subject:

(13) Demetrio = na tit-ma-ti-s
Demetrio = TOP cut-COMP-PAST-CONJ:UNDER
‘Demetrio cut me.’

(14) nu-wa = na, min = ma pyan-ti-s?
2SG-ACC = TOP who = INTER hit-PAST-CONJ:UNDER
‘Who hit you?’

However, s is also found in two other cases as well. It can be found in utterances where a conjunct participant is the grammatical subject of an intransitive verb:
(15) mayŋ-ma-ti-s
lose:consciousness-COMP-PAST-CONJ:UNDER
‘I lost consciousness.’

(16) na = na = ma
    pit-ma-ti-s
1SG.(NOM) = TOP = TEMP sleep-COMP-PAST-CONJ:UNDER
‘I fell asleep then.’

This use of s to mark a grammatical subject only appears in the data with a handful of verb roots: kwayne- ‘get tired’, mayŋ- ‘lose consciousness’, nayn- ‘fall’, nijul- ‘gain consciousness’, pit- ‘sleep’, shiyapayl- ‘get thin’, tazh- ‘go down’. These verbs have a semantic feature in common — while they are all intransitive, their single argument, the subject, undergoes the action expressed in the verb.

This marking of conjunct undergoer subjects by s appears to compete with the earlier statement that w marks conjunct subjects. In fact it is also possible to mark conjunct subjects of these verbs using w. Thus, corresponding to the last two sentences above, the following are also well-formed Awa Pit sentences:

(17) mayŋ-ma-ta-w
lose:consciousness-COMP-PAST-CONJ:SUBJ
‘I lost consciousness.’

(18) na = na = ma
    pit kway-ta-w
1SG.(NOM) = TOP = TEMP sleep DROP-PAST-CONJ:SUBJ
‘I fell asleep then.’

There is possibly some subtle meaning distinction between the use of the conjunct subject and the conjunct undergoer in sentences such as these; however, native speakers considered that they were the same, and no difference in use was found.

In the corpus, only the handful of verbs mentioned above were found to take s as well as w, but it seems likely that all intransitive verbs with a single participant who is an undergoer can take this alternation; certainly all verbs from this class that were tested had the possibility of s marking as well as w marking. It is also worth pointing out that while all these verbs are intransitive, this may be a semantic rather than a syntactic fact, as there are no transitive verbs in Awa Pit with a grammatical subject that is semantically patientive (though there are experiencer subjects, such as with verbs of perception, and these cannot be marked with s to indicate a conjunct experiencer subject; this must be marked with w).

These examples clearly show that s does not mark a conjunct object: there are cases where a conjunct subject is “cross-referenced” using this
suffix. Perhaps even more interesting are those cases where the suffix \(s\) is present but is not cross-referencing any argument at all. This can occur in sentences with intransitive verbs, either stative or active, and in copula sentences, and indicates that the action or state affected a conjunct entity, even though that entity is not an argument of the verb indicating the action or state, being some sort of experiencer similar to a benefactive or malefactive:

(19) kerosin way-a-s
    petrol lack-PAST-CONJ:UNDER
    ‘Petrol was lacking to me.’

(20) alu ki-ma-ti-s
    rain do-COMP-PAST-CONJ:UNDER
    ‘(I was on my way to bathe,) it rained on me.’

(21) aympi pina i-ma-ti-s
    blood very go-COMP-PAST-CONJ:UNDER
    ‘(I cut myself,) lots of my blood flowed everywhere.’

(22) pina us a-ti-s
    very heavy be-PAST-CONJ:UNDER
    ‘I found [the bag] very heavy.’

It is important to note that these verbs retain their original transitivity. It is not the case that an extra argument, an object, is added to the verb, as can be seen by the fact that such an argument cannot be expressed by, for example, a personal pronoun:

(23) (*nawa) alu ki-ma-ti-s
    (1SG-ACC) rain do-COMP-PAST-CONJ:UNDER
    ‘It rained on me.’

Unlike “ethical dative” constructions in languages such as Spanish, which have somewhat similar semantics, in Awa Pit only an affected conjunct entity (rather than any entity) can be indicated by this device — that is, one cannot express a notion such as ‘it rained on her’ in this fashion — and this affected entity can only be indicated in the verb, not by a free noun phrase or pronoun.

This \(s\) suffix in the past conjunct/disjunct paradigm is thus clearly not cross-referencing an object in the way that \(w\) cross-references a grammatical subject. An \(s\) indicates that a conjunct entity is affected by the action in some way, whether an argument of the action or not. This concept of “affectedness” is, however, very broad and perhaps better stated as “involved in the action but not as a (volitional controlling) agent.” In any sentence with a conjunct object (as well as in some sentences without a conjunct object) the verb will be marked with \(s\) regardless of the
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semantic role of the object; it is most commonly a patient but may also be, for example, a theme, in which case it is not “affected” by the action in the usual sense of the word. Thus the conjunct undergoer form must be used in a sentence such as (24):

(24)  Juan = na (na-wa) izh-ti-s
       Juan = TOP (1SG-ACC) see-PAST-CONJ:UNDER
       ‘Juan saw me.’

This conjunct argument is, however, involved in the action, and not as an agent (there are no transitive verbs in Awa Pit that have an object that is semantically agentic).

3.1.3. Disjunct marking. The third suffix in the past conjunct/disjunct system, zi, is the default “elsewhere” marker, stating that there was no conjunct argument in the activity and that no conjunct entity was affected by the activity.⁶ The first of these options is, of course, syntactic — if there is a conjunct subject or object the verb is necessarily marked with w or s. The second, no conjunct element affected by the activity, is more a matter of speaker choice. If it rained, a speaker may state simply this fact, using the disjunct suffix:

(25) pìna alu ki-ma-ti-zì
    very rain do-COMP-PAST-DISJ
    ‘It rained heavily.’

Alternatively, as shown in section 3.1.2, speakers may indicate that this rain affected them, using the conjunct-undergoer suffix:

(26) pìna alu ki-ma-tí-s
    very rain do-COMP-PAST-CONJ:UNDER
    ‘It rained heavily on me.’

3.2. The nonpast paradigm

When there is no past tense marker on a verb, the nonpast system of conjunct/disjunct marking is used in Awa Pit, regardless of the time reference. The nonpast system has only two marking possibilities, as opposed to the three in the past system. Essentially, the distinction between the conjunct-subject and conjunct-undergoer markers is collapsed, so that there is one marker, conjunct, used when there is a conjunct entity involved in any way in an action or state or affected by an action; and a separate marker, disjunct, when there is no conjunct
entity in an action or state. These two markers have a variety of
allomorphs, given below.

Conjunct  *i*  after a consonant or glide
  *s*  after a vowel

Disjunct  *i*  after a consonant or glide
  *∅*  after */i/*, the past question marker *ma*, and the irrealis
  *na*
  *y*  after */a/* and */u/*
  *zi*  after */i/*

The conjunct form is used when the sentence is nonpast and has a
conjunct participant as either subject or object:

(27)  pala  ku-mtu-s
      plantain eat-IMPF-CONJ
   ‘I am eating plantains.’

(28)  na-wa = na  Santos tittu-mtu-s
         1SG-ACC = TOP Santos spy:on-IMPF-CONJ
   ‘Santos is spying on me.’

(29)  shi = ma  ki-mtu-s?
      what = INTER do-IMPF-CONJ
   ‘What are you doing?’

(30)  shi = ma  nu-wa  ish-tu-s?
      what = INTER 2SG-ACC hurt-IMPF-CONJ
   ‘What hurts you? (i.e. in what way are you sick?)’

Clearly, of course, the alternation found in the past system between
conjunct-subject and conjunct-undergoer marking with intransitive verbs
such as ‘lose consciousness’ or ‘sleep’ is not possible in the nonpast, as
there is only the one conjunct form, corresponding to both of the past
tense conjunct forms.

The conjunct form is also used in the nonpast system in a fashion
similar to the conjunct undergoer in the past system, to indicate that a
conjunct entity was affected by an activity or state although it is not an
argument of the verb. Once again this occurs with active or stative
intransitive verbs and with copula verbs:

(31)  pina ii  ki-mtu-s
      very be:hot do-IMPF-CONJ
   ‘I feel it’s very hot.’

(32)  nyam way-is
      salt lack-CONJ
   ‘I feel that salt is lacking.’
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(33) alizh i-s
    angry be-CONJ
‘He is angry at me.’

(Note that while in the context in which it was used this last example meant ‘he is angry at me’, in a different context the same form could also mean ‘I am angry’.)

The disjunct form in the nonpast system is, not surprisingly, used in all other cases — where there is no conjunct argument, and the speaker does not wish to indicate that a conjunct entity was affected:

(34) nu = na pala ku-mtu-y
    2SG.(NOM) = TOP plantain eat-IMPF-DISJ
‘You are eating plantains.’

(35) nashka alu ki-ni-zi
    later rain do-FUT-DISJ
‘It will rain later.’

(36) tilawa = na Hugo = na Ricaurte = ta puz-na
    tomorrow = TOP Hugo = TOP Ricaurte = LOC go:out-INF ki?
Q.(DISJ)
‘Will Hugo go to Ricaurte tomorrow?’

3.3. Conjunct/disjunct marking on nonverb constituents

Perhaps one of the most unusual features of the conjunct/disjunct system in Awa Pit is the use of the system on words that are not, by other criteria, verbs: the negative particle shi, the semblative postposition kana, and the question markers sa and ki.7

As these elements are not verbs, they are never marked with tense, and consequently the conjunct/disjunct system found is that of the nonpast, with a conjunct versus disjunct distinction only. It is interesting to note that all these words have an opposition between a conjunct s form and a disjunct zero form — while zero is the expected disjunct form for stems ending in i, it is not the form that verb stems ending in a take (normally y), except for verbs with the question suffix na or the counterfactual na.8

This suggests that these nonverbs may only be marked, or at least may originally have only been marked, with conjunct when a conjunct element was present, rather than strictly marked with an opposition between conjunct and disjunct; that is, it suggests that conjunct is or was a privative rather than a binary feature on nonverbs.
(37) paas akkwihsh mij kana-s two mother have.(IMPFPART) like-CONJ
'It's like I have two mothers (lit. I'm like having two mothers).'

(38) na = na inkal awa shi-s 1SG.(NOM) = TOP mountain person NEG-CONJ
'I am not an Awa (lit. mountain person).'

(39) tilawa a-n sa-s? tomorrow come-INF Q:UNSURE-CONJ
'Would you be coming tomorrow?'

The semblative postposition and the negative particle can be used in nonfinal position in sentences, and in this case it is impossible for them to be suffixed with conjunct/disjunct marking. However, in some constructions these forms are sentence-final, as in the examples above, and it is in precisely these cases that they can be marked with s to indicate a conjunct entity. Similarly, the question markers sa and ki are always found sentence-finally and always indicate conjunct/disjunct. This use in sentence-final position is the feature that unites all these forms with finite verbs, which also always occur in sentence-final position (with the exception of afterthoughts). This suggests that in origin the conjunct/disjunct suffixes could have been separate sentence-final particles, cliticizing to sentence-final words; this would not, however, explain the current restriction of conjunct/disjunct marking to only some sentence-final elements. Synchronically, then, these four elements must simply be listed in the grammar and lexicon as being nonverbal items with distinct conjunct and disjunct forms.

4. Conclusion

This article has discussed the conjunct/disjunct system of marking found in the Awa Pit verbal system. The fundamental principle of the system is the basic distinction between “conjunct” and “disjunct.” In statements, conjunct is used for first person while disjunct covers second and third persons. In questions, conjunct corresponds to second person, with disjunct being first or third person. The Awa Pit conjunct/disjunct system appears much more closely tied to person marking than similar systems found in Kathmandu Newari and Tsafiki, where factors such as volitionality intervene in the choice of conjunct or disjunct marking.

While the fundamental principle is thus a binary distinction between conjunct and disjunct, the system of marking in Awa Pit is more complex than that of Kathmandu Newari or Tsafiki in a different way. Awa Pit
has two systems of marking, one used together with the past tense suffix, and one used in all other cases. In the past paradigm, there are three possibilities of conjunct/disjunct marking — conjunct subject, conjunct undergoer, and disjunct — while the nonpast paradigm is simpler, with only two choices of marking — conjunct and disjunct.

The existence of two paradigms and the use of conjunct marking to indicate any conjunct entity in a sentence distinguish the conjunct/disjunct system of Awa Pit from that of the related Barbacoan language Tsafiki, as well as from that of the Tibeto-Burman language Kathmandu Newari.

Clearly, more work is needed on conjunct/disjunct systems, both the Awa Pit system and those found in other languages. It is hoped that the present data and analysis will contribute to this ongoing work.

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Notes

1. I would like to thank Sasha Aikhenvald, Bob Dixon, Geoff Haig, Randy LaPolla, and two anonymous referees for commenting on an earlier draft of this article; also the Australian Research Council for its support through an ARC Australian Postdoctoral Research Fellowship. Correspondence address: Research Centre for Linguistic Typology, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Victoria 3083, Australia. E-mail: T.Curnow@latrobe.edu.au.

2. For a fuller description of Awa Pit, see Curnow (1997).

3. Awa Pit examples are taken from the author’s fieldwork in 1994 in the Pialapi–Pueblo Viejo region of the Awa territory in the municipality of Ricaurte, Nariño, Colombia. In glosses, a hyphen (−) indicates an affixal morpheme boundary, an equals sign (=) marks a clitic, and elements in parentheses are “zero-marked” features. Abbreviations used are

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABL</td>
<td>ablative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACC</td>
<td>accusative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMP</td>
<td>completive aspect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONJ</td>
<td>conjunct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONJ:SUBJ</td>
<td>conjunct subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONJ:UNDER</td>
<td>conjunct undergoer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISJ</td>
<td>disjunct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DROP</td>
<td>perfective serial verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FUT</td>
<td>future tense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMPF</td>
<td>imperfective aspect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMPFPART</td>
<td>imperfective participle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INF</td>
<td>infinitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTER</td>
<td>interrogative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOC</td>
<td>locative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEG</td>
<td>negative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. The past suffix has a variety of allomorphs, primarily phonologically conditioned. The main allomorphs are /a/its, /a/ta, and a.

5. It should be noted that there is also an s morpheme in the nonpast system, but while this morpheme is still related to conjunct, it has a much wider function than s in the past system, as will be discussed in section 3.2.

6. The same marker, zi, is also one of the markers in the nonpast system and indicates precisely the same concept.

7. There is the possibility in Awa Pit of a “zero” copula. However, this cannot be invoked to explain the conjunct/disjunct marking on these elements. Whenever there is a “zero” copula, an overt copula is available as an option — but this cannot appear after su or ki. Perhaps more importantly, when a “zero” copula is used with other particles or postpositions, conjunct/disjunct marking cannot be expressed.

8. In fact it could be maintained that, historically at least, the two apparently verbal forms with no disjunct y, the counterfactual na and the question marker ma, are or were also nonverbal elements, as there are other factors that seem to support this. The question suffix ma has no possibility of combination with tense marking, for example, suggesting it may have earlier been a separate particle, grammaticalizing to verb-suffix status. Similarly the counterfactual marker na appears in an unusual position, being placed after tense marking, unlike other mood/modality suffixes.

References


Conjunct/disjunct marking in Awa Pit


