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On the morphosyntax of main and subordinate clauses in Xokleng

An analysis of Xokleng sentence structure

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Abstract

This is a thesis on the Gê language of Xokleng and its means of subordination. This work is based on previous publication on the Xokleng language (Urban 1985, Gakran 2005, Gakran 2015). In this highly isolation language with almost no inflection, a large set of grammatical and lexical monosyllabic particles are used to express TAM(E). The most obvious grammatical particle is the sentence final marker which expresses the aspect of every main clause. These markers codes perfective, imperfective, progressive (in three physical positions) and stative (the vã-clauses). In my data and conclusion, the vã-clauses stick out from the other main clauses and show the same characteristics as subordinate clauses. The grammatical feature that the vã-clauses and the subordinate clauses have in common, among other things, is the use of the particle tō, separating the subject from the verb phrase. In this thesis the main questions are: what are vã-clauses, what's the meaning of tō, and what is the relation between them. In previous works on Xokleng the answer is that subordinate clauses and vã-clauses follow an ergative-absolutive pattern, and that tō is used as an ergative marker on the transitive subject. In my conclusions I offer an alternative analysis: subordinate clauses, including vã-clauses, are to be treated as nominalized possessive constructions and the tō functions as a disambiguator appearing between the subject and the nominal in the verb phrase. The tō appears between the possessive pronoun and the object to distinguish a nominalized verb phrase from an action of a possessed noun. The analysis in this thesis is based on data from Gakran 2005 and 2015 and field work in Brazil. During one week I conducted interviews with one native speaker of Xokleng. The translations and stimuli were mainly focused on subordinate and vã-clauses. Frog story and narrative speech were also used.

Keywords: Subordination, word order, Xokleng, nominalization

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Abbreviations

1	first person	GM	gender marker
2	second person	Imperf	imperfective
3	third person	LINK	linker
ASP	aspect	M	masculine
CONJ	conjunction	Masc	masculine
COR	coreferential	OBL	oblique case
DEF	definite article	Perf	perfective
DEM	demonstrative	pl	plural
EMP	emphatic	POSP	postposition
F	feminine	Prog	progressive
Fem	feminine	s	singular
FEM	feminine	W2	second position subject marker
FUT	future		

1 Introduction¹

1.1 Purpose

The Xokleng² language of the Gê³ family, spoken in the Santa Catarina region of southern Brazil, is highly isolating with almost no inflection⁴ and many monosyllabic morphemes. This thesis is based on previous research on the matter made by Urban (1985) and Gakran (2005 and 2016) and is an attempt to complete the existing facts, and also, to offer an alternative interpretation. In the publications listed above the authors present a “reverse” split ergative-absolutive pattern with the split dividing clauses with a stative aspect and a non-stative, making the stative clauses show a ergative-absolutive pattern and the non-stative show a nominative-accusative pattern. In the case of Xokleng the non-stative aspect includes the perfective aspect and this would contradict generalisations made in previous research regarding split ergativity (see Dixon 1994:99). This contradiction leads us to question whether the conclusion in Urban (1985) is the final answer to the question of ergativity in Xokleng. In my work I propose an alternative analysis regarding Xokleng’s ergative-absolutive properties. This thesis is based on the question of what is really happening in Xokleng regarding morphology and syntax.

1.2 Research question: What are the differences between main and non-main clauses in Xokleng?

According to Urban (1985) and Gakran (2005 and 2015), a split between nominative-accusative and ergative-absolutive is predicated on two variables. First, an aspectual split, and also, a split between main and subordinate clauses. From the following examples one can see how that conclusion is made: intransitive *vã*-clauses (1), transitive *vã*-clauses (2), intransitive active clauses (3), transitive active clauses (4), intransitive subordinate clauses (5) and transitive subordinate clauses (6).

¹I sincerely want to acknowledge Gerd Carling for initiating this project and for giving me the opportunity to conduct field research and writing a thesis on this matter. Carling was the leader of the LUNDIC project, funded by Marcus and Amalia Wallenbergs Stiftelse 2013-2015. LUNDIC funded our field trip to Brazil. Also, I would like to thank the University of Brasilia for the welcoming and help with the research. Ana Suelly Arruda Câmara Cabral deserves gratitude for helping us on our trip to Brazil and for opening her house to us. Further, I gratefully acknowledge practical help and support from FUNAI. I would like to mention Elis Jarl Skute, and thank him for the support and helpful comments on our field trip. finally, I would like to give my greatest thanks to Dr. Nanblá Gakran who was collaborator in my work and source of *all* my data in this thesis. Thank you.

² Xokleng is sometimes also referred to as *Laklanõ* or the anglicized version *Shokleng*

³ Sometimes spelled *Jê*

⁴ Certain verbs agree in number (see Gakran 2015:157-161).

- (1) ti těj wã⁵
he go stative
'He went'. (Urban 1985:166)
- (2) ti tǔ ti pɛnũ wã
he erg he shoot stative
'He shot him'. (Urban 1985:166)
- (3) tã wũ těj mũ
he nom go active
'He went'. (Urban 1985:166)
- (4) tã wũ ti pɛnũ mũ
he nom he shoot active
'He shot him'. (Urban 1985:166)
- (5) ti tawi kũ mã ti wɛŋ těj
he arrive, sg., stat. conj. 2-nom he see, act. Imperfective
'When he arrives, you are going to see him⁶'. (Urban 1985:179)
- (6) ti tǔ uyol těj tãñ kolkũ měj těj wũ ti maŋ mũ
he ergative tapir def. kill after jaguar def. 3-nom he grab,sg., act.active
'After heⁱ killed the tapir, the jaguar got himⁱ'. (Urban 1985:182)

This far, Urban's reasoning seems clear and examples 1 through 6 can support his conclusion that the *tǔ*-particle is an ergative marker. However, some examples (7) make me question this statement.

- (7) ti tǔ ãmɛñ lo těj wã
he ergative path along go stative
'He went along the path'. (Urban 1985:172)

In his article, intransitive sentences, too, can have an ergative marker. Urban comments this with the following:

tǔ is an ergative marker insofar as it is always used together with a noun phrase that is in A function and it is never used with a noun phrase in S function (or O function), provided that no postpositional phrase appears between the S noun phrase and the verb. (Urban 1985:172)

⁵ In examples (1-7) spelling, translation, glossing, and orthography is used exactly as in Urban (1985).

⁶ Xokleng can use imperfective aspect to express future tense (see Gakran 2015:178).

First, the fact that Urban's examples (1-7), except for the clauses in (5), are all translated as past tense, even though the glossing for the respective particles are so different (compare 1 and 3, 2 and 4), led me to believe that the difference between these clauses might be something other than just the aspect. Second, the fact that *tō*, according to previous publications on Xokleng (Urban 1985, Gakran 2005 and Gakran 2015), is defined as an ergative marker, even though it appears in intransitive sentences, made me question whether this particle, in fact, is an ergative marker. Third, that the split would occur on an aspectual basis with the *perfective aspect* having a nominative-accusative marking, would go against generalizations made by Dixon. Dixon (1994:99) writes that if a language has a split ergative system based on aspect, it is *always* the perfective aspect that takes ergative marking. Urban (1985), and Aikhenvald (2012), claim that Xokleng contradicts this fact. Also, the particle *tō* poses another question: it can be used as a linker between a noun and its attribute (or attributes) in a noun phrase (8), and it is also used in all cases of transitive non-main clauses (see sections 3, 4) where it separates the transitive subject from the verb phrase (9). The homonymy of *tō* as used in (8, 9) causes a problem for the reader because of its similar yet very different use in Xokleng sentences. Example (8) serves to point out this difference in use between the two functions of the particle.

(8) ěnh mǎg tō katxol tō jĕl tō kónhgág
 1s pet LINK dog LINK child LINK male
 'my male puppy'

(9) óg tō gal ze vǎ
 3pl LINK corn grate StativeASP
 'They grate corn.'

The constructions I refer to as *vǎ-clauses* (9) are also an important detail in the question of the alignment in Xokleng. In the analysis in previous publications on Xokleng, *vǎ-clauses* are seen as main clauses with a *stative aspect*, and an ergative-absolutive alignment. According to these analyses *tō* is the morpheme that marks the ergative case (see 1,2). In Xokleng, the word order, together with a *person marker* following the subject, is the basic way of knowing who does what to whom in a transitive clause. The canonical constituent order, in all aspects, is SOV with a particle expressing the aspect in the final position and a clitic in second position expressing the subject (10).

(10) Kǎggunh vū katxol lǎg mǔ,
 Kǎggunh 3sg dog hit PerfASP
 'Kǎggunh hit the dog'

- (11) Kāggunh tō jēl te lān⁷ vā
 Kāggunh LINK child DEF hit StativeASP
 'Kāggunh hit the child.' (Gakran 2005:84)

In Urban's words, (10) shows an *active* sentence whereas (11) shows a *stative* sentence. Although the semantics in these sentences are fairly similar (looking at the translations), a clear difference in morphology is apparent. The most important difference in this case is the substitution of *vū* for *tō* as the aspect of the sentence changes from *mū* to *vā*. In the following sections, I will show how *vā*-clauses show more semantic similarities to main clauses but syntactic similarities to subordination, and that Xokleng does not use ergative-absolutive alignment on any clause level. What looks like ergativity is in reality a result of a pattern which has nothing to do with alignment.

The aim of this thesis is to explain the differences between main and subordinate clauses in Xokleng, to explain *tō* and *vā*, and what consequences the use of these particles have for understanding the differences in clause syntax.

Before this thesis, *tō* has been seen as a particle with the same function as *vū*, *nū*, *nā*, etc: marking the (transitive) subject. The *tō* has been interpreted as a ergative marker in certain clauses, and *vū*, *nū*, *nā* as nominative markers in other clauses. Even though both functions mark the subject, it is only in the *active* aspects where the markers agree with the subject. The ergative marker *tō*, is used for all persons and numbers. Another fact that lacks explanation is why *tō* could never be preceded by anything but the subject of the clause and why sentences with this particle never seem to change word order. The fact that word order in subordinate clauses are limited to SOV, whereas the main clauses can have a relatively free word order is surprisingly close to the word order restrictions of Germanic languages.

In this thesis I will try to solve all the above mentioned problems, and also, explain why *vā* acts so differently from the other aspect markers, and why *tō* only appears in subordinate and *vā*-clauses. The aim for this thesis is to connect all these questions and facts and try to figure out a model that can explain the structure of main and subordinate clauses in Xokleng.

1.3 Method

For this thesis I have investigated the publications of Gakran (2005, 2015), to figure out the underlying grammatical patterns in Xokleng. Also, I have conducted research during one week's field trip to Brasilia, Brazil, where I interviewed the aforementioned Nambla Gakran. The interviews took place at the Faculty of Indigenous Languages at Universidade de Brasilia in December 2015. The interviews were based on grammaticality judgement tasks, translations from Portuguese to Xokleng, and also, eliciting data using pictorial stimuli. The pictorial stimuli has also been used in research on Seediq, Bunun (Holmer), Puyuma (Karlsson, Anastasia & Holmer, Arthur 2011), for Mongolian, Japanese, Puyuma, (Karlsson, Anastasia; House, David & Svantesson, Jan-Olof

⁷ Some verbs change form when the aspect of the sentence changes. This fact is of no importance for this thesis and will be subject to future studies.

2016), and for Basque (Goergens 2015). This thesis and the theses published by Gakran are based on one single speaker, yet two different analyses are made.

1.4 Orthography

Since this thesis solely focuses on syntax and morphology, no attempt to analyze phonetics or phonology has been done. Therefore, the orthography in this thesis is used exactly as in Gakran (2015).

1.5 Theoretical background

In languages which allows a certain degree of variation in word order, grammarians need to establish a fundamental model that encompasses all possible variations. Xokleng allows a range of word orders and this has been pointed out in Gakran (2015). These variations are explained in 2.1 and exemplified in (12-20). Gakran lists the possible word orders, but no attempt to design a model that covers all possibilities is made. The fact that this language is possible to acquire for children, supports the notion that there is, in fact, an underlying pattern that could define all possible word orders. Using Drach and Diderichsen theories for analysing Germanic languages, I have come up with a pattern which explains all word order possibilities in Xokleng. Languages with relatively free word orders can sometimes be organized with abstract patterns. This is the case for Germanic languages in *topological clause model* of Drach (1938) and Diderichsen (1946). As explained in Drach (1938) there are certain positions, slots, in the sentence that have to be occupied by a certain element. In Germanic languages⁸ the second position of any main clause is occupied by the *finite verb*, in this model, called *mittlefeld* as seen in *figure 1*. The Swedish sentence *mannen åt äpplet* is translated to ‘the man ate the apple’.

Figure 1 *Drach’s model of German syntax*

<i>Vorfeld</i>	<i>Mittelfeld</i>	<i>Nachfeld</i>
mannen	åt	äpplet

In *figure 2*, Diderichsen’s model also include a topicalized adverbial and shows that the finite verb is still in the second position. The Swedish sentence *igår åt mannen äpplet* is translated to ‘yesterday the man ate the apple’.

⁸ This is no longer true for the English language

Figure 2 Diderichsen's model of Germanic syntax

Foundation field <i>igår</i>	Nexus field <i>åt</i> <i>mannen</i>		Content field <i>äppet</i>
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Figure 3 shows my model for the analysis of Xokleng main clause syntax, where the stable positions are the second (the *W2*) and the final (the aspect marker). As explained in 2.1 the initial position could be occupied by any constituent. However the *W2*, much like the finite verb in Germanic languages, will always occupy the second position. A thorough description of this phenomena is offered in chapter 2.

Figure 3 A model of Xokleng syntax

Topic	<i>W2</i>	Verb Phrase(OV)	Aspect Marker
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1.6 Outline

In chapter 1 I have explained the background to this thesis with an account of what earlier researchers have written about Xokleng and the questions that have surfaced in my investigation of these studies of the language. Also, a description of the theoretical background in the studies of syntax is presented.

In the following sections, I will leave earlier analyses behind and present my own analysis of Xokleng. First in section 2, Xokleng main clauses, together with the pronominal system is explained. In section 3 and 4 Xokleng non-main clauses, and how they differ from main clauses, is described. In section 5 the particle *tō* and its relevance for the understanding of main and subordinate clauses is explained. A discussion about the findings is offered in section 6 and my concluding remarks will be presented in section 7.

2. *W2*, Main clause structure and TAM

In the introduction, previous works on Xokleng and word order theory has been summarized. In the following chapters my own analysis will be described and supported. My analysis is based on a different way of viewing Xokleng word order. Therefore new terminology and models will be used to analyze the grammar of Xokleng. The only facts that I have taken from previous research is, first, the fact that *vā*-clauses and subordinate clauses share grammatical properties. Properties which are

not found in other clauses, and second, my analysis of the aspect markers (except for *vã*), is identical to previous analyses.

2.1 The *W2*

While the canonical Xokleng word order can be described as SOV, on the surface the word order seem to be relatively free. However, there seems to be a pattern that all main clauses have to align with. Gakran (2005:48-64 and 2015:173,174) explains that the word order in Xokleng can vary and lists the following as possible constituent orders. For intransitives: SV and VS. For transitives: SOV and OVS.

Nevertheless, there is one underlying pattern that manages to cover all the possible word orders: all main clauses could be described as X - *W2* - VP - ASP. The obligatory elements in a main clause, except of course for the verb, is the final aspect marker and the second position clitic (*vũ* in 12, 13; *nũ* in 14). I have chosen to give the particle the name ‘*W2*’ after Wackernagel’s second position clitic (even though the particle rather resembles a person marker than an actual clitic, see Wackernagel 1892). The *W2* is obligatory in all main clauses and it agrees with the transitive and intransitive subject in person and in number. Gakran (2005:68 and 2015:165) describes these clitics as *MS*, *Marca de sujeto*.

- (12) ta vũ ěnh txanh tẽ
 3s.M W2.3s me kill ImperfASP
 ‘He will kill me.’
- (13) Āmẽdo zi⁹ vũ goj kagkag jã.
 Āmẽdo fem W2.3s water drink ProgASP
 ‘Āmẽdo is drinking water (standing up).’ (Gakran 2005:91)
- (14) ěnh nũ lanhlanh tẽ
 1s W2.1s work ImperfASP
 ‘I will work.’

The first position can be occupied by any phrase level constituent, such as the subject (12–14), but also the verb phrase, i.e. object followed by verb (15, 16), postpositional phrase (17, 18), an adverbial (19), or an adverbial clause (20). The verb phrase is rigid and can never be divided (21). The subject of a main clause can only be realized overtly in the initial pre-*W2* position and never after the *W2* (21). If a verb phrase (15, 16) is in the pre-*W2* position, the subject is omitted (for adverbial clauses see chapter 3). In these cases the *W2* is the only way of identifying the subject.

⁹ All female names in Xokleng is followed by the feminine marker *zi*.

- (15) [ti ji te vég] nũ mũ
 3s.M son DEF see W2.1s PerfASP
 'I saw his son.' (Gakran 2005:57)
- (16) [dén ko] ta mũ
 something Eat W2.3.Masc PerfASP
 'He ate something.'
- (17) [ẽn ki] nũ kutādē mũ
 house POSP W2.1s leave PerfASP
 'I left the house.' (Gakran 2015:145)
- (18) [kute tá] nã kapó mũ
 bush POSP W2.1pl leave PerfASP
 'We left the bush.' (Gakran 2015:146)
- (19) [kulag ban kũ] nã lanhlanh tẽ
 tomorrow again CONJ W2.2pl work ImperfASP
 'We will work after tomorrow.' (Gakran 2015:126)
- (20) [a tō ěnh lãn kũ] nũ plāl tẽ
 you LINK 1s hit COMP W2.1s cry ImperfASP
 'When you hit me I will cry.'
- (21) *ti vũ ta tanh mũ
 3s.M W2.3s 3s.M kill PerfASP
 Intended 'He killed him.'

As one can notice from the examples above, the W2s can take different shapes *vũ, nũ, ta, nã*, etc, depending on the subject (overtly stated or not). The W2 forms will be thoroughly described in section 2.3 *pronouns and case*. The fact that the verb phrase always remains intact is highly relevant to the conclusion (see chapter 7). All main clauses share the same properties when it comes to the W2 phenomenon and word order.

2.2 Aspect particles

Another feature of a Xokleng main clause is the aspect particle placed in the final position of every declarative sentence (and in relative clauses, see chapter 3.4). This particle is obligatory and encodes the aspect of the events in the clause preceding this marker (22,23). The aspects markers are listed in *table 1*. Note that the 'stative aspect' marker *vã* behaves differently to the others and will be treated separately (see chapter 4).

Table 1 *aspect markers in Xokleng*

mũ ¹⁰	Perfective aspect
tě	Imperfective aspect
jã	Progressive aspect (standing)
ně	Progressive aspect (sitting)
nō	Progressive aspect (lying)
nōdě	Progressive aspect (plural)
(vã)	'Stative aspect'

(22) ta vũ gal zég mũ
 He W2.3s corn grate PerfAsp
 'He grates corn.'

(23) ěnh nũ lanhlanh tě
 I W2.1s work ImperfAsp
 'I will work.'

Three markers for the progressive aspect also encodes the position of the subject (24-26). The progressive aspect marker for sentences with a plural subject can not give information about the position of the subject (27).

(24) Kãggunh vũ meg tanh jã
 Kãggunh W2.3s jaguar kill ProgASP
 'Kãggunh is killing the jaguar.' (standing up) (Gakran 2015:78)

(25) Jêl vũ plâl nō
 Child W2.3s cry ProgASP
 'the child is crying.' (lying down) (Gakran 2015:78)

¹⁰The aspect marker for perfective aspect *mũ*, and the aspect marker for imperfective aspect *tě* are both grammaticalized forms of the word for go/walk. *mũ* for plural and *tě* for singular. This is noted in Gakran (2015:157), and Wiesemann (1972:119) for the closest relative of Xokleng: Kaingang. This interesting fact is beyond the scope of this thesis and subject for future studies.

(26) zi vũ gal tydyn nẽ
 3s.F W2.3 corn grind ProgASP
 'She is grinding corn.' (sitting down) (Gakran 2015:79)

(27) óg vũ kul kágzag nōdē
 3pl W2.3 clothes wash ProgASP
 'They are washing clothes.' (position unknown) (Gakran 2015:79)

In sentences containing the first six aspect markers, clause structure is identical in syntax and morphology (22–27). These clauses will be called main clauses in this thesis. Their word order can be described as having a X - W2 - VP - ASP structure. Conversely, the *vã*-clauses (28,29) show a different syntactic pattern.

(28) Kāggunh tō jēl te lān vā
 Kāggunh LINK child DEF hit StativeASP
 'Kāggunh hit the child.' (Gakran 2005:84)

(29) Kāggunh lanhlanh vā
 Kāggunh work StativeASP
 'Kāggunh is working.'

Even though the *vã* appears in the same final position as other aspect markers, a difference in morphosyntax is apparent: the transitive clause (28) has a *tō* instead of a *vũ*, and the intransitive clause (29) has nothing between the subject and the verb. The fact that *vã*-clauses differ somewhat from other clauses is noted in Urban (1985), Gakran (2005), and Gakran (2015). The *vã*-clauses (discussed in chapter 4) will not be defined as main clauses in this thesis.

To conclude, the word order of a Xokleng main clause is X - W2 - Verb phrase - Aspect particle, while *vã*-clauses have a different structure which will be discussed in section 4.

2.3 Pronouns and case

In *all* instances, the the form indicating syntactic object is identical to the indication the syntactic possessor function. Therefore, these two syntactic functions will be grouped together in a *oblique case*. As shown in (30,31) in the possessive function, and (32,33) in object function, no difference is made between *ti* 'his' and *ti* 'him', nor between *Kāggunh* as a possessor and as an object.

(30) ti kónā
 3s.M.OBL eye
 'his eye.' (Gakran 2015:80)

(31) Kāggunh jānky
 Kāggunh mouth
 'Kāggunh's mouth.' (Gakran 2015:94)

(32) ta vū ti tanh mū
 3s.M 3sg 3s.M.OBL kill PerfASP
 'He killed him.'

(33) kó vū kāggunh te jy jā
 wood W2.3s kāggunh DEF POSP ProgASP (standing)
 'There is [standing] a [piece of] wood in front of Kāggunh.' (Gakran 2015:169)

When expressing a possessor, Xokleng uses the noun (34), person name (35) or the pronoun (36, 37) without any sort of genitive marking or case distinction. This is the oblique case. The few exceptions to this rule are shown in table 2 and discussed in section 2.4.

(34) kagklo by
 fish tail
 'the tail of the fish' (Gakran 2015:88)

(35) Kāggunh jānky
 Kāggunh mouth
 'Kāggunh's mouth' (Gakran 2015:94)

(36) ěnh kónā
 1s eye
 'my eye' (Gakran 2015:79)

(37) a dunh
 2s neck
 'your neck' (Gakran 2015:86)

Further, in most cases the oblique case is also identical to the nominative case. For instance, the pronoun 1s *ěnh* could mean either 'I', 'me', or 'my' (38-40). Also, note the lack of case distinction in *zi* in nominative case (41), *zi* in possessive function, *zi* as *gender marker*¹¹, and in object function (42). All these occurrences of *zi* denote 3sg.fem.

(38) ěnh nū lanhlanh tē
 1s W2.1s work ImperfASP
 'I will work.'

¹¹ More on *gender markers* in section 3.4 *relative clauses*.

- (39) ta vũ ěnh txanh tẽ
 3s.M W2.3s 1s kill ImperfASP
 'He will kill me.'
- (40) ěnh kónã
 1s eye
 'my eye' (Gakran 2015:79)
- (41) zi vũ gal tydyn nẽ
 3s.F W2.3s corn beats ProgASP
 'She beats corn.' (Gakran 2005:79)
- (42) zi nõ zi vũ zi dun tẽ mũ
 3s.F motherGM W2.3s 3s.F follow walk PerfAsp
 'Her mother followed her.' (Gakran 2015:139)

Table 2 demonstrates that no distinction is made between nominative case and oblique case in all pronouns (this is also valid for proper nouns and person names) except for two. The two pronouns that contradict this fact are *3s.masc* and *2pl*.

Table 2 *the pronouns of Xokleng*

	NOMINATIVE	OBLIQUE	W2
1sg	ěnh		nũ
1pl	ãg		nã
2sg	a		mã
2pl	mẽ	mẽ a	
3s masc	ta	ti	vũ
3s fem	zi		
3pl	óg		

2.4 Pronouns with case distinction between nominative and oblique case

In *third person singular masculine* a distinction is made between *ta* ‘he’ in nominative (43), and *ti* ‘him/his’ in oblique case (43,44).

(43) ta vū ti tanh mū
3s.M 3sg 3s.M kill PerfASP
‘He killed him.’

(44) ti kónā
3s,M eye
‘his eye’ (2015:80)

Also, in *second person plural* a distinction is made between nominative case *mě mā* ‘you.pl’ (45), and oblique case *mě a* ‘your’ and ‘you.pl.OBJ’ (46,47). As stated before, in Xokleng, possessive pronouns never differ from the object pronoun of the referent.

(45) mě mā vál mū
all W2.2 fall perfASP
‘you.pl fell.’ (Gakran 2015:184)

(46) mě a kónā
all 2s eye
‘your.pl eye’ (Gakran 2015:79)

(47) mě a ha¹² u vég nā nōdē
You.pl EMP good see W2.2pl ProgASP
‘We find you attractive.’ (Gakran 2015:192)

The word *mě* means essentially just ‘all’, which leads *mě a* to mean ‘all you’, and gives us the *plural you*. Both plural and singular second person has *mā* as its W2 (48,49, and table 2).

(48) mě mā vál mū
all W2.2 fall perfASP
‘You.pl fell.’ (Gakran 2015:184)

(49) jan mā jā
sing W2.2 ProgASP
‘You.sg are singing.’ (Gakran 2015:173)

¹² Emphatic markers are beyond the scope of this thesis.

Therefore, when no subject appears overtly (49,50) and the W2 is the only element that conveys the underlying subject, *mě* is added to the W2 to disambiguate between singular (49) and plural (50) second person. Consequently, the construction **mě a mǎ* for ‘plural you’ is ungrammatical¹³, since the plurality and second person only need to be expressed once. This also means that *mě a* never could be subject.

(50) \tilde{A} medo zi blé mǎ mē kamũ mũ
 \tilde{A} medo FEM with W2 arrive perfASP
 ‘you.pl came with \tilde{A} medo’ (Gakran 2005:75)

In conclusion, the oblique case functions mainly as either object or possessive and is identical to the nominative case, in all occurrences except for *third person masculine singular* and *second person plural* (see table 2). Consequently, the uses of 3s.masc *ta* and *ti*, and 2pl *mě mǎ* and *mě a*, are in complementary distribution.

2.5 When W2s are homonymous with pronouns

The pronominal system in Xokleng is not that simple. As seen in table 3 the subjects and W2s are homonymous when it comes to third person: *ta*, *zi*, *óg*. In instances where the third person subject is omitted, but still introduced to the discourse, these W2s will be used. This fact also leads to confusion and it is important to see that the same word, *ta*, as a subject (51) and *ta* as a W2 (52), *zi* as a subject (53) and *zi* as a W2 (54), will vary in its syntactic function, and therefore, syntactic position.

¹³The construction is grammatically correct if *mě a* and *mǎ* is separated by an emphatic marker *ha*.

Table 3 *Xokleng W2s when subject is not overtly indicated*

	W2
1sg	Same W2 as table 2
1pl	
2sg	
2pl	mã mẽ
3s masc	ta
3s fem	zi
3pl	óg

The two functions of *ta*, *zi* and *óg* may never coincide in a sentence (55), since the W2s *ta*, *zi* and *óg* are only used without a subject, and the pronouns *ta*, *zi*, and *óg*, as subjects, always take *vũ* as their W2 (51,54).

(51) ta vũ dén ko mũ
 3s.M W2.3s something eat PerfASP
 'He ate something.'

(52) dén ko ta mũ
 something eat W2.3s.masc PerfASP
 'He ate something.'

(53) kutã zi mũ
 fall W2.3s.fem PerfAsp
 'She fell.' (Gakran 2005:52)

(54) zi vũ kutã mũ
 3s.F W2.3s fall PerfAsp
 'She fell.' (Gakran 2015:183)

- (55) *Ta ta dén ko mū
Intended 'He ate something.'

2.6 Summary of Xokleng main clauses & pronouns

In conclusion, a Xokleng main clause word order is on the surface free, but the defining structure is that main clauses must contain 1. a W2 which always occupies the second position (see table 2 and 3) and 2. an aspect marker (see table 1). A main clause could contain a subject and a W2 (56), both expressing the agent, a W2 without an overt subject (57), but never a subject without a W2 (58). In the progressive aspect, where the aspect marker also functions as a motion verb, sentences can be verbless, i.e. the implied verb is being in a position (59,60). Note that the W2 is equally important in verbless main clause sentences. (61) show two conjoined main clauses where both clauses include a W2 and an aspect marker. Following this reasoning and definition of a main clause, *vã*-clauses are not main clauses.

- (56) ta vū kutā mū
he W2.3s fall PerfAsp
'He fell.' (Gakran 2015:183)

- (57) goj ki ta kutā mū
water in W2.3s.masc fall PerfAsp
'He fell into [the] water.' (Gakran 2015:173)

- (58) *ta jan mū
he sing PerfAsp
Intended 'He sang.'

- (59) zi vū téj jā
she W2.3s tall ProgAsp
'She is tall.' (Gakran 2015:182)

- (60) katxol tóg vū kujel jā
dog DEM W2.3s hungry ProgAsp
'This dog is hungry.' (Gakran 2015:113)

- (61) Kāggunh vū ti lāg mū kū ta ti tanh mū
Kāggunh W2.3s him hit PerfAspCONJ W2.3s.masc him kill PerfAsp
'Kāggunh hit him and he killed him.' (Gakran 2015:232)

3. Xokleng Subordination

3.1 Conjoined and subordinate clauses - 'kũ-clauses'

In the previous chapter we have established what constitutes a Xokleng main clause and what role the pronouns and the W2s play. Main clauses always follow the X - W2 - VP - ASP structure, where the W2 and final aspect marker are obligatory. Contrarily, Xokleng subordinate clauses (and *vã*-clauses, see chapter 4) show a different pattern. The first thing one can notice is that the subordinate transitive clause (in brackets) in the sentence (62) lacks these two elements, which later appears in the main clause of this sentence. Adverbial clauses always precede the main clauses.

- (62) [a tō ěnh lān kũ] nū plāl tē
 2s LINK 1s hit CONJ W2.1sg cry ImperfASP
 'When you hit me I will cry.' (Gakran 2015:237)

However, another particle appears in the position where the W2 appears in main clauses and this is the *tō* (63). In his example the construction *hã ta te kũ* is translated to 'if'. In example (64), where an intransitive clause is subordinate to the main clause, this particle does not appear.

- (63) [a plāl hã ta te kũ] nū a lāg tē
 2s cry DEM DEF CONJ W2.1s 2s hit ImperfASP
 'If you cry I will hit you.' (Gakran 2015:239)

- (64) [a tavi kũ] nū nūl tē
 2s arrive CONJ W2.1s sleep ImperfAsp
 'When you arrive I will sleep' (Gakran2015:236)

In previous works on Xokleng this *tō*-particle is seen as an ergative marker on the subject in subordinate clauses. One could see that this is a logical conclusion since they appear in transitive subordinate clauses but not in intransitives.

The word *kũ* could be seen as both a subordinator and a conjunction. Depending on syntax and morphology one can find out whether the initial clause is subordinated to the second clause, or if it is a clause joined with the second clause in no hierarchical order. The word *kũ* could be translated to *and*, *when*, *then*, *but*¹⁴ and the construction *hã ta te kũ* is translated to the conditional subordinator 'if'. (65) shows two main clauses joined by a *kũ*. Both clauses include a W2 particle and an aspectual marker in final position.

¹⁴ And sometimes 'if'.

- (65) Kāggunh vū ti lāg mū kū ta ti tanh mū
 Kāggunh W2.3s 3s.M hit PerfASPCONJ W2.3s.masc 3s.M kill
 PerfASP
 'Kāggunh hit him and he killed him.' (Gakran 2015:232)

When a main clause precedes another main clause it will occupy the initial slot, before the W2, of the second main clause. The first clause is then structurally part of the next clause and the second main clause can not stand alone **ta ti tanh mū*. Every initial clause in a conjoined construction functions as the topic for the next.

The element *kū*, in any of its functions, will always be followed by a W2. Therefore, the main clauses following either a subordinate clause or a main clause, will never have an overtly stated subject. Further, while the word order in a main clause can vary, the word order in a subordinate clause is limited to SOV.

3.2 Purpose clauses - 'jé-clauses'

Purpose clauses in Xokleng follow the pattern of subordinate clauses: they lack W2s and aspect markers. And as expected the link *tō* separates the transitive subject and object (66), whereas no particle appears in the intransitive (67).

- (66) kuty tá nū nūl tū tē
 night POSP W2.1s sleep not ImperfAsp

 [ēnh txō¹⁵ ēnh ji tōlēl jé]
 1s LINK 1s.OBL son care 'to'
 'I didn't¹⁶ go to sleep, to take care of my son.' (Gakran2015:237)

If the subject of the purpose clause is the same referent as the main clause, it does not have to be stated (67-69). In this case the sentence looks more like a multi ver construction. However the fact that this 'clause' lacks the W2 is still clear.

- (67) [nūl jé] nū tē mū
 sleep 'to' W2.1s go Perfasp
 'I went to sleep.'
 (68) ta vū [jan jé] tē mū
 3s.masc W2.3s sing 'to' go PerfAsp
 'He went to sing.'

¹⁵ The *tō* after first person singular is assimilated to *txō*.

¹⁶ This sentence is translated to past tense, even though it is in the imperfective aspect (Gakran2015:237).

- (69) João vũ [dén ko jé] tẽ mũ
 João W2.3s something eat 'to' go PerfAsp
 'João went to eat something.'

3.3 Nominalized clauses - 'te-clauses'

In Xokleng the definite article is *te*, and it always follows the noun (70).

- (70) ãn te la ta tavig mũ
 house DEF POSP W2.3sM come PerfAsp
 'He came near the house.' (Gakran 2015:139)

The definite article can also be placed after clauses (71-75). These are the so called *te*-clauses. The syntax of such clause is identical to the syntax of other subordinate clauses: *tõ* in transitives (71,72,75) and no particle in intransitives (73,74).

- (71) [ti tõ katxol lãn] te u tũ tẽ
 3s.OBL LINK dog hit DEF good not ImperfASP
 'It is bad that he is hitting the dog.'

- (72) [ti tõ gal ze] te u tẽ
 3s.OBL LINK corn grate DEF good ImperfASP
 'It is good that he is grating corn.'

- (73) [ti jan] te u tu tẽ
 3s.OBL sing DEF good not ImperfASP
 'It is bad that hi is singing.'

- (74) [ti nũl] te u tẽ
 3s.OBL sleep DEF good ImperfASP
 'It is good that he is sleeping.'

Since the definite article is placed after nouns, one can see the *te*-clauses as being nominalized. Nominalized clauses are clauses that are to be treated as nouns rather than events. The fact that the definite marker *te* follows the clause could be seen as proof that the clause is to be treated as a noun. This does not mean that the article *te* is the element that triggers the nominalization. That *te* is the same article one uses following nouns to express definiteness leads us to believe that the events in the preceding clause are nominalized. Also, the 'subject' in these clauses are in oblique case, that has a possessive function (only noticeable in 3s.MASC and 2pl) indicates that the event in the clause is seen as a noun (See Rik van Gijn, Katharina Haude & Pieter Muysken (2011), for other South American languages that use nominalizations as means of subordination.) Xokleng has very

limited inflection and there is no specific marking on the clause or the verb to express nominalization. The facts stated above show that these clauses are nominalized. It is not perfectly clear whether it is the verb itself or the entire clause that is nominalized, but since morphology outside the clause indicates that the clause is to be treated as a noun, and that there is no marking on the object, one can assume that the entire clause is nominalized.

It has become clear that the subject in the *te*-clauses is not in nominative case but in oblique case (71-74). This could be taken to mean that the ‘subject’ possesses the nominalized clause. The *te*-clauses can also function as the object in complementary clauses (75).

- (75) Kónhgág te vũ [ti tō katxol lãn] te vég mũ
 Man DEF W2.3s 3s.OBL LINK dog hit DEF see PerfASP
 ‘The man saw that he hit the dog.’
 Lit. ‘The man sees his hitting of the dog.’

3.4 Relative clauses

Relative clauses differ from the other embedded clauses in the way that they *have* aspect markers in the final position (76-85). The relative clauses in Xokleng are in some cases internally headed and in some cases externally headed. The best example to illustrate that relative clauses can be internally headed is (76), where the object, placed in the middle of the sentence, is the relativised argument. When the subject is relativized it takes *tō* as a link (76,77). This also proves that these clauses are internally headed.

- (76) kózej te vũ [kónhgág tō tá pazun jã] zi¹⁷
 flower DEF W2.3s man LINK woman push ProgASP GM

 klě klě nẽ¹⁸
 head above ProgASP
 ‘The flower is above the head of the woman who is being pushed by the man.’

- (77) João vũ [põn tō ãnh plag mũ] tanh mũ
 João W2.3s snake LINK 1s.OBL bite PerfASP kill PerfASP
 ‘João killed the snake who bit me.’

As in other subordinate clauses, *tō* appears between transitive subject and object (76-78) or between subject and postpositional phrases (79). Also, as expected, *tō* is never used in intransitive relative clauses (80), and W2 is never used in any relative clause.

¹⁷ The function of *zi* will be discussed below.

¹⁸ The main clause in (76, 78-80, 83-85) only has the aspect marker as the predicate.

(78) kózej te vũ [tá tō kugklyl tanh jã] zi klě
 Flower DEF W2.3s woman LINK bottle fall PerfASP GM head

klě nẽ
 above ProgASP

‘The flower is above the head of the woman who is kicking the bottle.’

(79) kózej te vũ [kãvãlu tō kózéj jó jã] klě
 flower DEF W2.3s horse LINK leaf POSP ProgASP head

klě nẽ
 above ProgASP

‘The flower is above the head of the horse which is in front of the the leaves.’

(80) klěpugdél vũ [tá nẽ kũ nẽ] zi klě
 hat W2 woman sit CONJ ProgASP GM head

klě nẽ
 above ProgASP

‘The hat is above the women who is sitting.’

At the end of the relative clause an optional¹⁹ gender marker, which is identical in form to the third person pronouns, is used to indicate which of the constituents in the relative clause that is an argument in the main clause. This particle is placed after the aspect marker. This can occur even if it is not necessary to convey which constituent is the relativized argument. Example (80), in which the relative clause involves an intransitive verb, and thus only one argument, still has this particle. In (81) this particle does not appear and in (82) it does.

(81) Ta vũ [kónhgág lanhlanh jã] vég jã
 3sg W2.3s man work asp see ProgAsp
 ‘He sees the man who is working.’

(82) Ta vũ [kónhgág tō katxol lãg mũ] ti vég mũ
 3sg W2.3s man LINK dog hit PerfAsp 3sg see PerfAsp
 ‘He sees the man who hit the dog.’

Just as in any embedded clause, if the the relativised element is a transitive subject in the relative clause (83), it takes the initial position. In the case of subject relativization relative clauses can only be internally headed.

¹⁹ Exactly when this particle occurs in unclear and subject to future studies.

(83) kózej te vū [tá tō bola lēg jā] zi klē
 flower DEF W2.3s woman LINK ball play ProgASP GM head

klē nē
 above ProgASP

‘The flower is above the woman who is playing with the ball.’

However, in cases where the relativised argument is the object in the relative clause, it usually takes the canonical position (76) between *tō* and the verb, and the relative clause is internally headed.

However, it can also take a position preceding the relative clause (84, 85).

In this situation it ‘splits’ and leaves a resumptive pronoun in situ, between *tō* and the verb (*zi* in 84, *ti* in 85). The relativised object is then realized in three different positions: initially, as resumptive pronoun, and as a resumptive gender²⁰ marker after the clause.

(84) klēpugdél te vū nēkabág tō²¹ tá [tá zi tō zi
 hat DEF W2.3s ox LINK GM womanGM LINK 3s.F

lāg jā] zi klē klē nē
 drag ProgAsp GM head above ProgAsp

‘The hat is above the head of the cow which is being pulled by the woman.’

(85) kózej te vū jēl [tá tō ti lāg jā]
 flower DEF W2.3s child woman LINK him grab ProgAsp

ta²² klē klē nē
 GM head above ProgAsp

‘The flower is above the head of the child who is being grabbed by the woman.’

The reason why relative clauses have aspect marker is unclear. The reason could be the adjectival nature of relative clauses. The action in the clause is there to modify a nominal phrase. One can speculate that the speaker needs to convey the aspect of the clause for it to be able to modify the noun phrase. Other embedded clauses do not need to express aspect because they are ruled by the aspect of the main clause.

In conclusion Xokleng relative clauses have a very peculiar structure. They follow some patterns from main clauses and some patterns from subordinate clauses. This fact is not of great importance

²⁰ For more on gender markers in the closest relative of Xokleng, Kaingang, see D’Angelis (2012)

²¹ In (84), the object of the relative clause is a noun phrase construction with *tō* as a linker between *ox* and *woman*, i.e. a cow (same construction as (8)). The subject in the relative clause is a noun phrase consisting of the words for woman *tá* and a gender marker *zi*. Between the transitive subject and the object *tō* is placed (just as in any subordinate clause).

²² The reason why this gender marker sometimes is realised as *ti* and sometimes *ta* is unclear and subject to future studies.

to this thesis, nor to my conclusion. However the important thing to remember is the features they share with other embedded clauses: *tõ* between subject and object in transitives, and no particle between the subject and the intransitive verb.

4. Copula clauses - *vã*-clauses

The particle *vã* has been described in different ways (see table 4). In previous publications clauses in this aspect, together with subordinate clauses, have been interpreted as having an ergative-absolutive alignment. It is correct that these types of clauses share structure, but in this chapter i will demonstrate that contrary to to earlier theories, *vã*-clauses are not ergative. They are to be seen as copula constructions.

Table 4 *explanations of the concept of *vã**

‘Stative (or ‘resultative’ stative)’ (Urban 1985:174)
‘Action that will happen (ação que ira acontecer)’ (Gakran 2005:85)
‘Inherent quality, permanent state, ongoing activity, Evidentiality, realis’ (Workshop Lund university 2015)
‘Stative Aspect (Aspecto Estativo)’ (Gakran 2015:177)

As seen in section 3.3 - *te*-clauses, the event in the clause is, in fact, nominalized. This is also the case for *vã*-clauses. However in these clauses, the predicate of the utterance is the final marker itself. Also, to support this conclusion, *vã* functions as copula with predicative attributes for nouns (86, 87) and for adjectives (88).

- (86) *ẽnh* *txõ* João *ji* *vã*
 1s LINK João son StativeAsp
 ‘I am João’s son.’
- (87) *ẽnh* *txõ* Brasileiro²³ *vã*
 1s LINK Brazilian StativeAsp
 ‘I am Brazilian.’

²³ In Xokleng, the word *Brasiliro* is a noun. Lit. ‘a Brazilian’.

- (88) ěnh vānhkágze vā
 1s happy StativeAsp
 'I am happy.'

As seen in (89, 90), the first element in the clause is the person in oblique case (just as in any subordinate clause). This fact is only evident in third person singular (89) and second person plural (90). Further, as explained in table 2, only these pronouns have a distinction between nominative case and oblique case. In all other pronouns, nouns, and person names, the nominative form is identical to the oblique form of the referent.

- (89) ti vānhkágze vā
 3s.OBL happy StativeAsp
 'He is happy.' (Gakran 2015:135)

- (90) mẽ a vānhkágze vā
 2pl.OBL happy StativeAsp
 'You.pl are happy.' (Gakran2015:135)

Events can also be expressed in *vā*-clauses. (91,92) show clauses with the intransitive verb 'to sing'. The events in the clause are to be seen as nominalized since (91) has a oblique case and not a nominative, in the first position. This means that the verb in the clause should not be seen as a predicate, but rather a noun phrase, while the *vā* takes the function as the predicate. A possible way of translating this statement (91) is: 'His singing is a fact'.

- (91) ti jan vā
 3S.OBL sing StativeAsp
 'He is singing.'
 Lit. 'His singing is a fact.'

- (92) a jan vā
 2s sing StativeAsp
 'You.sg are singing.'

In transitive *vā*-clauses, *tō* appears between the 'subject' and the object (93,94). This is also true for intransitives with a postposition (95), where *tō* also comes after the 'subject'.

- (93) ti tō ti lān ke²⁴ vā
 3s:masc.OBL LINK 3s.M.OBL hit fut. StativeAsp
 'He will hit him'.

²⁴ In *vā*-clauses particles expressing tense can be used. This fact is beyond the scope of this thesis.

- (94) põn tõ ti pló vã
 snake LINK 3s.M.OB bite StativeAsp
 ‘The snake bites him.’
- (95) jël tõ goj ki kutã vã
 child LINK water POSP fall StativeAsp
 ‘The child is falling into the water.’ (Gakran 2015:140)

As main clauses (96), *vã*-clauses can also be conjoined with a *kũ* (97). In these situations, it is the final *vã* that covers the all the preceding events. Note that neither clause has a W2.

- (96) Kãggunh vũ ti lãg mũ kũ ta ti tanh mũ
 Kãggunh W2.3s him hit PerfAsp CONJ W2.3s.M him kill PerfAsp
 ‘Kãggunh hit him and he killed him.’ (Gakran 2015:232)
- (97) ãnh txõ ẽ²⁵ kulynh ke kũ zi tõ like tũg vã
 1s LINK COR comb FUT CONJ 3s.fem LINK that not StativeAsp
 ‘I want to comb her, but she doesn’t.’ (Gakran 2015:200)

Unlike the subordinate clauses, the *vã*-clauses allow some variation in word order (98)²⁶. In this example, the object is in initial position. The morpheme *ti* is the object, and not the subject, since it is a part of a postpositional phrase.

- (98) ti blé óg kamũnh ke vã
 3s POSP 3pl come FUT StativeAsp
 ‘They will come with him.’ (Gakran:2015:175)

To conclude, although *vã*-clauses are similar to main clauses in a semantic way, they share morphological traits with subordinate clauses. The fact that they allow some variation in word order also shows that they could be considered somewhere between main and subordinate clauses. The marker *vã* has been described as a marker for stative, resultative, permanent state, etc. The *copula function* could semantically include all these qualities. The other aspect markers all seem to have been grammaticalized from motion verbs such as *go*, *sit*, *stand* etc. The morpheme *vã* always seems to recur as part of words that have something to do with time; *vãha* ‘now’ and *vãtxỹ* ‘in the old days’, or being in a state; *vãnhkágze* ‘happy’, *vãtxuke* ‘lonely’, etc.

²⁵ This particle refers to the the subject of the following clause. Coreferential markers are beyond the scope of this thesis and subject to future studies.

²⁶ This clause could also be seen as having main clause word order with *óg* being a W2. I interpret this *óg* as being in oblique case and not a W2. To see if this is the case one would need a clause with a 3s.masc or a 2pl in the position of *óg* e.g. ‘He came with them’. If the 3s.masc in this position would be realised as *ti*, it would mean that it is in oblique case, which would also mean that it is the ‘subject’ of the *vã*-clause. If it would be realised as *ta*, it would mean that the this *vã*-clause contains a W2.

5. What is *tõ*?

A part of my research question (what is *tõ* and *vã* ?) has already been answered in chapter 4. The question of *tõ* still remains. To answer this question we first need to establish the syntax of Xokleng non-main clauses. First, as explained in Chapter 3 and 4, Xokleng non-main clauses, are nominalized. This means that the events in these clauses are to be considered nominal phrases and not predicates. (99,100) could be literally translated to ‘Kãggunh’s working is a fact’ and ‘his corn-grating is good’.

(99) Kãggunh lanhlanh vã
 Kãggunh work StativeAsp
 ‘Kãggunh is working.’

(100) [ti tõ gal ze] te u tẽ
 3s.OBL LINK corn grate DEF good ImperfAsp
 ‘It is good that he is grating corn.’

Second, the ‘subjects’ in these clauses are *always* in oblique case, and are according to my theory, to be analyzed as possessors of the following clause²⁷. The only instance where there is a difference between nominative and oblique case is in third *person singular masculine* and *second person plural*. These are the only cases where my conclusion becomes evident. See examples (101, 102) where the ‘subject’ is in oblique case (*ti, mẽ a*), and not in nominative case (*ta, mẽ mã*).

(101) ti jan vã
 3S.OBL sing StativeAsp
 ‘He is singing.’

(102) mẽ a vãnkhágze vã
 2pl.OBL happy StativeAsp
 ‘You.pl are happy.’ (Gakran2015:135)

Third, the fact that the verb phrases and the postpositional phrases *always* have the noun phrase in the initial position, is also relevant for the meaning of *tõ*. Without *tõ*, the ‘subject’ in non-main clauses would always be adjacent to the object of the verb phrase (103) or the noun of the postpositional phrase (104).

²⁷ For a similar analysis for Xokleng’s nearest relative, Kaingang, see Henry (1948:199), where certain clauses are interpreted as possessed nominalized constructions. A similar analysis is also made in languages of the Macro-Gẽ stock, see Wiesemann (1986).

- (103) [ti tō katxol lān] te u tū tē
 3s.OBL LINK dog hit DEF good not ImperfAsp
 ‘It is bad that he is hitting the dog.’
- (104) jēl tō goj ki kutā vā
 child LINK water POSP fall StativeAsp
 ‘The child is falling into the water.’ (Gakran 2015:140)

The function of *tō* is to appear between the ‘subject’ and the following noun phrase. This particle, in all its uses, functions as a disambiguator between two noun phrases. As explained in section 2.3, the way of expressing a possessive relation between two noun phrases is to leave them adjacent to each other (105). To avoid expressing a possessive relation between two noun phrases in non-main clauses, Xokleng uses the particle *tō*. As stated before the ‘subject’ of a non-main clause is always in the oblique case, i.e. expressing a possessive function. If nothing were to be between the nominal phrases, it would express a possessive relation between the two, just as (105). The *tō* appears in different situations: in (106) between two noun phrases in a predicative construction, (107) between several noun phrases to create a complex noun phrase, and (108) between two noun phrases which are arguments in a clause. All these occurrences of *tō* are there to separate the noun phrases and to avoid expressing a possessive relation.

- (105) mē a ja
 2pl.OBL tooth
 ‘Your tooth’ (Gakran 2015:85)
- (106) ěnh txō Brasileiro²⁸ vā
 1s LINK Brazilian StativeAsp
 ‘I am Brazilian.’
- (107) ěnh mǎg tō katxol tō jēl tō kónhgág
 1s pet LINK dog LINK child LINK male
 ‘my male puppy’
- (108) Kǎggunh tō jēl te lān vā
 Kǎggunh LINK child DEF hit StativeAsp
 ‘Kǎggunh hit the child.’ (Gakran 2005:84)

The reason why *tō* never appears in intransitive non-main clauses (except when a postpositional phrase is present), is that the ‘subject’ will never precede a nominal phrase. It will only be preceded by verbs. There is no need to avoid interpreting a noun phrase and a verb as being in a possessive relation. This is also the case with predicative constructions with an adjective (102). A sentence like

²⁸ In Xokleng, the word *Brasiliero* is a noun. Lit. ‘a Brazilian’.

(107) would presumably mean: ‘my pet’s dog’s child’s male’, if no particle separated the noun phrases.

The reason why this function of *tō* never appears in main clauses is that the subject will always be followed by a *W2*. Therefore, the relation between the underlying subject and the following nominal phrase will never be interpreted as being possessive, since the *W2*s always differ from the oblique case (see table 2 and 3)²⁹.

To conclude, the particle *tō* is used to disambiguate between two (or more) nominals being in a possessive relation, and them not being in a possessive relation.

6. Discussion

From the collected data, my analysis is as follows: all Xokleng non-main clauses are nominalized and are to be seen as possessed by the ‘subject’ of this clause. The particle *tō* appears between the subject and the object of the transitive verb. If there is nothing between these two nominal phrases would be in a possessive relation. This is also the case for intransitive clauses with a postpositional phrase. The only instance where the nominalized nature of these clauses becomes evident is when the ‘subject’ is in either third person singular masculine, or second person plural, where the oblique case is apparent. The particle *tō* does not have to appear in this function in main clauses, since the subject and object are always separated by a *W2*. The intransitive non-main clauses do not need *tō*, since only one nominal phrase is present. My conclusion is that Xokleng does not have ergative-absolutive marking in any clause. This means that Xokleng is not a counterexample to Dixon’s generalization that if a language shows split ergativity based on aspect the ergative marking would be found in the perfective aspect not in the imperfective. Dixon’s generalization still holds.

Also, Xokleng word order shows a remarkable similarity to Germanic languages, in the fact that the second position of any main clause must always be occupied by a specific element: in Xokleng, the *W2*, and in Germanic languages, the finite verb.

Xokleng subordinate, and conjoined clauses are to be considered structural parts of the following main clause. This is apparent since the first clause is in a topic position, preceding the *W2*, of the next clause and makes conjoined clauses in a way subordinate to the next main clause. This could mean that no conjunction exists in Xokleng, only subordination.

Another interesting feature to notice is that Xokleng has a system that resembles ergativity in non-main clauses. Although the distribution of the *tō* particle is ergative (except for intransitive clauses with postpositions), the function of this particle is something other than an ergative marker.

Xokleng relative clauses are expressed in a way that seems quite unique. Relative clauses can be externally headed with the relativised argument realized in three positions: before the relative clause, as a resumptive pronoun in the clause and as a resumptive gender marker after the clause.

²⁹ This statement could be questioned when it comes to the third person singular feminine, where the pronoun *zi* is both 3s.fem.OBL and *W2*.3s.fem. The reason why this *W2* never could be interpreted as possessive is that the listener knows that the *W2* always is the underlying subject of the clause. If a postpositional phrase would precede the *zi*, and an object would follow the *zi* (in a transitive clause), the *zi* would always be perceived as the underlying subject of the clause.

As one can notice from the footnotes in this thesis there are still many features that need to be fully understood and explained. Relative clauses, for instance, still need much more investigation and description. The interesting way in which they appear in some ways like main clauses (they have aspect markers), and in other ways, like subordinate clauses (they lack *W2s* and use *tõ* in transitive clauses) is something that needs to be fully understood. For future studies I would also like to zoom out the picture and look at Gê relatives of Xokleng. Much of studies of related languages have come to conclusions similar to the one of Urban, Aikhenvald, and Gakran. It is possible that these languages will show patterns similar to the ones discovered in this thesis, when it comes to clause syntax. Also, reconstructing the grammar of proto-languages would be of interest.

7. Conclusion

In this thesis I have explained what main and subordinate clauses look like in the language of Xokleng. The most important finding is that all sorts of non-main clauses are to be treated as nominalized. The fact that they are nominalized becomes clear when the 'subject' is in third person singular or second person plural, where a difference is made between nominative case and oblique case. Since these clauses have a quality of being possessed, the *tõ* appears to disambiguate between a possessive relation, and the first element of the clause being a subject of the clause. In future studies the ways of coreferencing in different clauses would be of interest. Also, the ways of expressing tense in Xokleng main and non-main clauses are still to be fully described, as is a more thorough description of relative clauses.

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