THEORIZING THE METALINGUISTIC FUNCTIONING OF ∅ IN THE NOUN PHRASE OF THE BAULE LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

The English language displays an operator **ø.** It is a dynamic unit, which is a tracer of a specific set of operations in the system. These operations guide the utterer in his process of any contextual use, in any verbal interaction. Before the insertion of ***a*** and ***the*** the noun is marked with ∅ and said to be notional. While analyzing the operations on the noun phrase of Baule, I have been able to identify this operator. In my work, the objective has been that of sorting out the fundamental function of **ø** in the Baule language.

KEY WORDS

Zero operator, contextual use, context-free, context-dependent, fundamental function

RESUME

∅ est un operateur dynamique de la langue anglaise. Il est la trace d'opérations spécifiques au sein du système de la langue. Ces opérations guident le sujet énonciateur dans son processus de construction des énoncés et de leur insertion contextuelle dans toute activité interactionnelle. Avant l'inscription des unités ***a*** et ***the,*** le nominal est marqué de ∅ et doté d'une charge notionnelle. En analysant du syntagme nominal du baoulé, nous nous sommes rendu compte de l'existence d'un opérateur ∅. Le but de ce travail est de dévoiler la fonction fondamentale invariante de ∅ dans le syntagme nominal du baoulé.

MOTS CLÉS

Opérateur zéro, utilisation contextuelle, hors contexte, lié au contexte, fonction fondamentale

"I shall define linguistics as the science whose goal is to apprehend language through the diversity of natural languages" Antoine Culioli

INTRODUCTION

Language is a system. This is a widely-accepted utterance on account of the noted works of Ferdinand de Saussure, Noam Chomsky and Gustave Guillaume. Language itself has proved its systemic aspect through the sound system. However, there is most of the time a chaotic representation of its phenomena due, mainly on a theoretical ground essentially focused on the surface level and a fuzzy definition of the scientific subject. Results such as: *there is V-ing after a verb when the latter is* ***stop, continue, keep, remember….*** This analysis is questioned when structured like ***stop to have a snack, continue to say that, remember to bring a bottle of champagne….*** These exceptions should have called for a review of the theory and a reorganization of the method of analysis since, ***exception disproves the rule.***[1] The theoretical tools should be reviewed or simply changed when the results are not satisfactory because the objective of the scientist is to describe and explain the mythic, stable or fundamental being of an item, a fact or a phenomenon. In linguistics, the purpose is to ***disclose or tell the clarity of the architecture of language.*** The approach is then highly valuable.

Let us consider the treatment of the noun. The study of the noun in general and the noun phrase in particular has led to a rather a-systematic set of results, which cannot account for the functioning of the noun and the specificity of each operation on the nominal operator and within the noun phrase. The fact is that studies were based on the structural organization of the linear order, the first observation. The same attitude has been observed with the treatment of tones and the other prosodic features. According to Gustave Guillaume, "*on explique selon qu'on a su comprendre et on comprend selon qu'on a su observer*"[2]. The explanation depends on the understanding of the scientist, but this understanding, in turn, depends on how he observes the phenomenon under analysis. First observation should therefore be taken as the starting point of the process of explanation. The results of this first observation must be submitted to another sound and deep scrutiny. In other words, the scientist should move from the surface to investigate the world beyond, the origin of the fact and the process of constitution, the route of architecting. He deconstructs the phenomenon to unfold the constituents and describe the

[1] See Henri Adamczewski, 1982.

[2] Gustave Guillaume, *Langage et science du langage,* 1960, p. 273.

itinerary and the types of relations set. The focus on the linear order or surface level cannot lead to a fine scientific result.

This is the reason why I have decided to revisit the treatment of the noun phrase in Kwa languages with a theory that has provided adequate results on the European languages such as English, French, Russian, Polish, German, Spanish, and more other. This work is a set of prolegomena to the theorization of the functioning of ∅ in the noun phrase of Kwa languages. This theorization can only be done after the disclosure of the principle underlying the existence of ∅ in Kwa languages in general through its analysis in particular language systems. The specific language that I have decided to start this scientific adventure on is Baule.

The work shall be organized in three main parts: first, I will settle the theoretical ground; then, I will investigate the operations on the nominal operator in English and Baule and I will end up with the functioning of ∅ in the Baule noun phrase.

1. THE RISE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE UTTERING ACT LINGUISTICS

The science of language has continually revised its tools of analysis throughout history for two main reasons: first of all, linguistics has had to adapt its methods to the attitudes of the general scientific domain. The second reason lies in the necessity to cope with the internal and external behavior of the scientific subject. Indeed, the subject of scientific study has continuously been redefined to improve the analysis and provide better outcomes. The concern on the subject thus started with philosophical speculations to later on be focused on the working out of diachronic phenomena and the attempt to set up families.

Linguistics as a sound scientific field started with the publication of Ferdinand de Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale (Course in General Linguistics),* published in 1916. This book sets a clear method and a plain subject of scientific study: *la langue.* The choice of *langue* was motivated by its stability, its constancy and thus its freedom from other phenomena such as

psychological, anthropological, ethnological, logical, historical and physiological facts. *Parole* was put aside because the frontiers between speech and the abovementioned phenomena are not clear-cut. This is a sound scientific choice that will prove efficient. However, the fact of putting aside *parole* has locked up linguistics from the reality of language, the linguist having no direct contact with *langue.* Only *parole* can lead to the unfolding of langue.

Some linguists, followers of de Saussure, will develop a new method of getting to language and produce much finer results. I shall develop this point below.

Noam Avram Chomsky went in the same scientific direction as de Saussure. Chomsky suggested a dichotomy (*competence / performance*). He suggested the analysis of *competence* as a finer scientific discovery route. Competence, which is the internal grammar of the ideal native speaker, is said to be stable and unaltered by external phenomena. The scientist is then sure to generate outcomes that are wholly linguistic. *Performance* would not allow a sound capture of language. This choice is also scientifically accurate. Conversely, the same issue with the theory of de Saussure arises here: competence is not a clear element to define and sort out since there is no clear contact between the researcher and *competence;* moreover, an ideal native speaker is not a datum the scientist could find or come across.

To work out these problems, some linguists will go back to an intuition of Wilhelm Gustav Freiherr von Humboldt: language is *energeia* and not *ergon* (activity and not a state). Activity, here, refers to dynamics. Language is not a static set of units. It is a dynamic system of active items. The works of Roman Jakobson and Emile Benveniste will hold up this trend through a re-visit of the *speech or performance*. Jakobson, through his system of communication, will celebrate the importance of the organizer of the language phenomena: the *speaker.*

The main fundamental idea is the following: *language being directly unreachable, only its manifestation or materialization can lead to its functioning.* However, the linguist should bear in mind that the manifestation is not iconic to the organization of the system. The method of the "new" linguistics therefore consists in *redefining the nature of the scientific subject and set*

sound objectives. Only a deep consideration of speech (or discourse[3]) can lead to the "intimacy" of a system of language. This method consists in looking INTO and not AT speech to unveil the reality of the operations and reveal the real value of the units. We will then be able to securely set up classifications. The following scheme is suggested by the *theory of psycho-mechanics* of Gustave Guillaume:

LANGUAGE ⟵ DISCOURSE

Emile Benveniste is the main direct forerunner of this new trend of linguistics. He assumes the *linguistics of speech.* He advocates for the release of *parole*, the reality of language and the establishment of a linguistics of the *uttering act.*

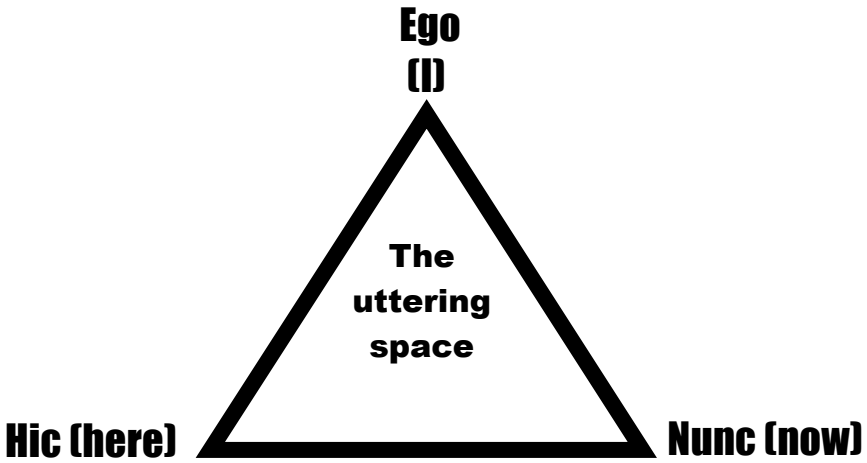
Emile Benveniste defines the *uttering act* as:

la mise en fonctionnement de la langue par un acte individuel d'utilisation. (…). Par l'énonciation, le locuteur s'approprie l'appareil formel de la langue.[4]

Benveniste promotes the fundamental phenomenon of the linguistic fact: *the utterer.* S/he is the architect of the linguistic "game". The utterer is the one who structures the utterances and brings language out. Each utterance s/he produces or utters is made according to an uttering sphere or situation of utterance. This situation is an enunciative space defined by a system of utterance coordinates:

[3] See Gustave Guillaume, *Discourse* is a much better term in that it expresses the dynamics of the phenomenon of utterance production.

[4] Emile Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale, 2,* Paris, Gallimard, 1974, pp. 80-81

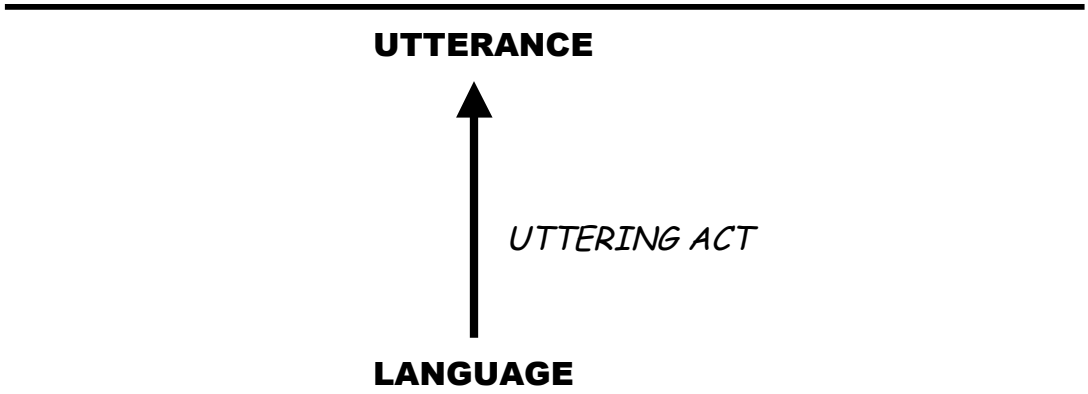


In this system, *ego* is the utterer and <hic, nunc>, the space and time data.

Antoine Culioli and a team of linguists, psychologists, logicians, sociologists and mathematicians have developed a theory: *théorie des opérations énonciatives (theory of enunciative operations or theory of the uttering operations*[5]*)*. For Culioli and his team, language phenomena should be treated in terms of *operations.*

These operations are mainly *metalinguistic*, *linguistic* and *extralinguistic*. For Culioli, an utterance is *made or produced.* This utterance is just the tip of the iceberg. It is the final product of a more or less complex process:

[5] The theory of uttering act operations is also called the theory of the *lexis.* A lexis is a *dictum,* a propositional schema, a paraphrase set. A lexis is not an utterance, it is neither asserted, nor denied. For example: $\lambda = <\xi_0,\xi_1,\pi>$ (a lexis schema) where ξ_0 and ξ_1 are the first and second terms of the relation. In Baule, we can have = <alua, nnin, di> (<dog, meat, eat>) which is a lexis. It is a paraphrastic set. Any type of utterance may be derived from this lexis: alua di nnin (dogs eat meat); alua ɔ su di nnin (a dog is eating meat); alua wa di nnin (a dog has eaten meat); alua'n dili nni'n (the dog has eaten the meat), etc.



The utterance is then the linear order. This order cannot help to explain the utterance. The explanation must be ***an accurate permeation into the operations underlying the structural set that is an illusive and misleading concatenation***. The scientist must then look into the linear order to discover the source, the basis or the explanation of the concatenation s/he observes.

The fundamental assumption of the uttering act theory is that ***the linear order is not the message.*** The process will consist in fathoming the utterer, the type of operations s/he applies on the units (that is the way s/he makes them function in a given context) and the kind of relation s/he establishes between the components of the utterance.

Consider the following examples:

Utterance 1: *She stopped to smoke the cigarette you gave her that day.*

Utterance 1': *She stopped smoking the cigarette you gave her that day.*

The process of the linguist's work is:

First: ***to collect***; → **What?**
Second: ***to describe***; and → **How?**
Third: ***to explain***. → **Why?**

The work is over when the phenomenon has been fully and satisfactorily explained. In the utterances (1) and (1'), the fact is that the same verb (*stop*) occurs, but different morphologies of the verb after: why **to+verb vs. verb-ing?** What is the invariant value of each of these operators?

In (1), the process of smoking is rightward oriented. This is governed by the metalinguistic function of ***to,*** which signals a new predicative relation[6]. Here, the phenomenon ***smoke*** is engaged after the introduction of ***to.*** Utterance (1') on the other hand displays a backward direction with the metaoperator ***–ing*** encoding a presupposed verb phrase or predicate. I can say ***stop+ to V*** when the verb occurring after is rhematic, novel into discourse. The structure ***stop+V-ing*** is used to mark a presupposed ***V***. In this second case, the utterer is bringing ***V*** back into discourse.

The same function is seen in the couple ***a/de*** in French:

Utterance 2: *Le président a commencé à parler à 7 h 00.*
Utterance 2': *Le président a cessé de parler à 7 h 00.*

Other examples can be provided in African languages. The choice here is Baule:
Utterance 3: ɔ bà***lì*** anouman.

Utterance 3': Wa ***ba***, i loto niin. (wa = ɔ a)

Classification and description are then not sufficient to quench the scientific thirst of humankind. The linguist should be satisfied when the *fundamental value* or *invariant* of each operator the language system is accurately unveiled and the system is perfectly sorted out. The question that could lead to a suitable treatment of a unit is the ***why?*** This scientific attitude of deep understanding and explanation will help classify and typologize accurately. We shall thus avoid the overlaps of values since the analysis is made on a sound basis.

[6] See Henri Adamczewski, 1982, 1996, 2000...

This was for instance the objective of Gustave Guillaume with a powerful theory called *the Psychomechanics of language.* Another linguist of the *uttering act opus,* Henri Adamczewski has developed this fact. Through the *theory of linguistic operations*, also called *Metaoperational Grammar* (and later *double keyboard theory,* he advocates for the investigation within the operations underlying the utterances and disclose the inner functioning fact of the linguistic operators.

Though each of the theories cited has a specific appellation (*the Linguistics of Uttering Act or Enunciative Operations, the Theory of the Psychomechanics of Language, Metaoperational Grammar*) there is a common thread. These are different aspects of the same *uttering act theory* with identical fundaments: first, *the key to disclose the mysteries of language is the uttering act;* second*, the utterer is the kernel constituent in the explanation of utterances* and third*, the linguist must go beyond the linear order to uncover the reality of the units.*

In this work, I shall use the theory of the uttering act to analyze the operations underlying ∅ in the noun phrase of the Kwa languages. Being unable to work out many languages in this paper, I shall take a specific case: the Baule language. The objective is to sort out the invariant of ∅ as an operator of the noun phrase and get to a suitable theorization.

Within the uttering act theory, we shall use a tool that Henri Adamczewski has coined to account for the perfect organization of the language system: *the system of phases* or *double keyboard.* For Adamczewski, the system is organized in a cyclic way of *phase 1* and *phase 2*. *Phase 1* is the level of introduction of operators into discourse and *phase 2*, the retaking or comment on operators or relations. The units of *phase 1* are oriented toward the extralinguistic word. They are used to express the facts of the outside world, the events of the physical universe. The operators of *phase 2* on the other hand are oriented toward the metalinguistic world, within the type of relation established between units in the utterance. They express a departure from the outside world.

Examples in English:

Utterance 4: You have drunk.

Utterance 4': You have been drinking again.

Examples in Baule:

Utterance 5: ɔ yacili aliɛ dilɛ.

Utterance 5': * ɔ yacili aliɛ di.

Utterances 4 and 4' do not express the same meaning. With have-en + PP, the utterer is just presenting a fact. He is giving the co-utterer a crude fact. He is informing. In 4' on the other hand, s/he does not just give the fact, s/he adds his/her comment. This is the invariant of ***be-ing***. With be-ing, the utterer endorses the verb phrase or predicate:

Utterer

[YOU HAVE ∩ (YOU-DRANK)]

In utterance 4, the utterer does not endorse the verb. S/he only gives the rough fact to the co-utterer:

[YOU HAVE ∩ (YOU-DRANK)]

Utterance 5' is not grammatically correct because ***yaci*** is a phase 2 unit. It is oriented toward the inner dynamics of language and not outside. ***Di*** is oriented toward the extra-linguistic world. It cannot go along with ***yaci*** in this structure. With ***lɛ***, the orientation changes. There is a nominalization:

Utterance 5'': He stopped eating.

In 5'', ***-ing*** nominalizes the verb and expresses the presupposed status of ***eat***.

Utterance 6: Kofi nin Kuaku be su kɔ kisi blo. ***Be*** nanti ndɛndɛ.

Be here has nothing to do with the extra-linguistic world. It functioning tells the inner functioning of language. ***Be*** has no reference in the outside world, Kofi and Kuaku do.

We can see that the powerful tools of Metaoperational Grammar can efficiently be applied to African languages in general and Kwa languages in particular.

Moreover, the scope is not the segmental or syntactic structure only. The theory of Henri Adamczewski can help work out supra-segmental phenomena such as accent and intonation. Let us consider the following utterances:

Utterance 7: Do you go along with these resolutions? ↑

Utterance 7': How far do you go along with these resolutions? ↓

The utterer of each of the following utterances is asking a question. But the intonation movement is different. The task of the linguist is to explain the linguistic phenomena after having conducted a sound description. S/he must account for the ***why of facts after the what***. Her/his results will otherwise be incomplete. In utterance 7, the relation between ***you*** and ***go along with these resolutions*** is now set. The speaker is setting this relation or rather, s/he is asking the co-utterer the degree of relation between ***you*** and ***go along with…***. The relation is then introduced. This is the reason why the tone rises. In 7' on the other hand, the relation between ***you*** and ***go along with these resolutions*** is already set or presupposed to be. The utterer only wants to know the degree of connection or, pragmatically said, the extent of the support of his co-utterer. The movement can then lower since the relation is already set.

The uttering act linguistics in general and Metaoperational Linguistics in particular proves also an efficient ground in the working out the fuzzy situation in the field of suprasegmental facts. It can help in the treatment of tone and accent. Indeed, the boundary between tone and accent is so thin that the mere analysis of the surface cannot lead to a sound result. The necessity to go beyond the surface structure and inquire the underlying operations shall prove satisfactory. We will then make systematic analyses and keep the appellation *tonal* to languages that really display the tone and it extent.

For this work, my interest is the noun phrase. I shall apply the method of Metaoperational Linguistics to the functioning of the operator ∅ in the noun phrase of Baule.

2. THE OPERATIONS ON THE NOMINAL OPERATOR

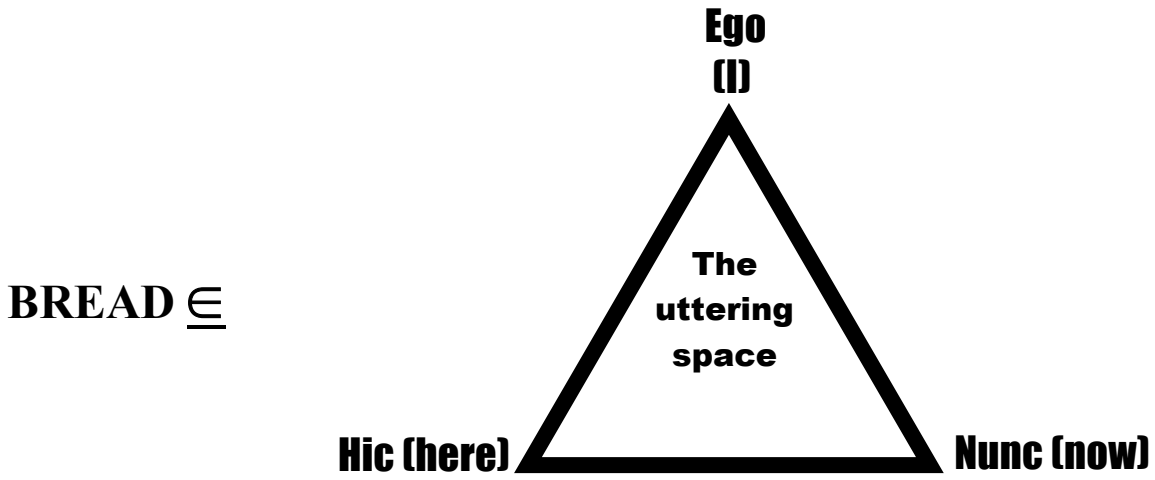
Languages offer the possibility to use a set of units called *nouns* to express a number of ideas or facts. But the functioning of these units is not a static phenomenon. Nouns are so dynamic that their analysis can only be conducted in terms of relations and operations. The noun phrase is not a mere concatenation of a "determiner" and a noun. The operation is much more complex in so far as it is governed by the utterer and her/his environment. The status of the noun will then depend on the type of relation the utterer decides to set.

For Antoine Culioli, the "determination" of the noun is a set of operations of location. The process of determination of a noun is a complex system of ***location relative to a particular situation of utterance.*** This operation is represented as follows:

Consider **N**, a given noun;
Sit_0, the situation of utterance, made of **U**, the utterer and **T** the time/space data; and
$\underline{\in}$ the metaoperator of location,
the determination of a noun can be written: **$N \underline{\in} Sit_0 (U,T)$**

The type of relation established between a nominal operator and a metaoperator of determination is the degree of connection or relation between that noun and Sit_0.

Let us take the nominal operator ***bread.*** The functioning of ***bread*** is a system of location. This nominal will be located relative to Sit: **bread $\underline{\in}$ Sit_0**, that is:



This relation is at the basis of the use of a given operator of determination. If ∅ is used, there is no connection between N and Sit. The result is N $\underline{\notin}$ Sit_0. N is free from Sit and can thus be inserted into any Sit.

Utterance 8: The baby likes ∅ ***bread***.

The use of the operator A is the first step in the insertion a noun into a given Sit.
Utterance 8': They bought ***a*** loaf of ***bread***.

The operator ***the*** will definitely tide the noun to a Sit.
Utterance 8": ***The*** loaf of ***bread*** was not the one I was expecting.
In the ***microsystem a/the***, ***a*** is said to be in phase 1 and ***the*** in phase 2. ***A*** introduces a noun into discourse and ***the*** recalls a noun already introduced.

I shall consider the operations underlying the nominal operator of Baule.

Utterance 9: ɔ klo ***klenzua*** ∅.

|he/she/it|like|egg|

Utterance 10: ***klenzua*** ∅ ɔ wo i sa nu.

|egg|it|is|his/her|hand|in|

Utterance 11: ɔ toli ***klenzua*** kun.

|he/she/it|buy+preterit|egg|one|

Utterance 12: ɔ dili ***klenzua*** 'n.

|he/she/it|eat-past|the|

Utterance 13: ɔ klo ***klenzua*** nga**.**

|he/she/it|like|egg|deictic|

Utterance 14: ɔ klo akɔ ***klenzua*.**

|he/she/it|like|chicken|egg|

A close analysis of the functioning of ***klenzua (egg)*** in the utterances above reveals two main groups. In utterance 9, the noun *klenzua* is not localized relative to any situation of utterance but in the others utterances, it is. We shall come back to utterances 9 and 10. As for utterance 11, the nominal operator is engaged on the process of counting. ***Kun (one)*** is the marker of the promotion of a single item, the strict extraction of one and single element from the class of ***klenzua.***

The metaoperator ***'n*** (contracted form of ***ni***) is a marker of another status of the nominal operator. ***'n*** expresses the saturation of the relation between the operator of determination and the noun. On the surface level, ***'n*** marks the recall of a noun into discourse. That noun has previously been introduced in a given situation or it is fully known by the co-utterer.

Utterance 15: - ɔ dili klenzua ’n**.**

- klenzua beni?

  legg|which|

With the operator ***beni (which),*** the co-utterer expresses that a step has been skipped on the process of localizing the nominal operator.

The operator ***nga (this)*** is a marker of a ***pinpointing operation,*** which is, here, a deictic operation. With ***nga***, the utterer indicates a particular unit in a given situation.

The last utterance is a determination through a reduction of the scope of the notional continuum. The operation consists in combining the semantic packages of two or more units: ***an associative localization*** or ***associative determination.*** The result is a shortening of the semic set of each of the units.

For utterances 9 and 10, see below.

3. ∅ IN THE ENGLISH NOUN PHRASE

When the noun occurs as a pure notion, the utterer uses the operator □:

∅ tree;

∅ love;

∅ meat;

∅ bottle, etc.

With the ∅ operator, the utterer constructs a notional domain which is a set of physico-cultural properties contained within a noun and that make up its definition and value in the whole system.

The notional domain of a noun is the concept, the conceptual sphere covered by this noun. A notional domain is a continuum, a qualitative definition of a lexical operator. There is no quantity expressed in the noun used with the ∅ operator. It is just an idea.

Utterance 16: She never buys ∅***meat*** when she goes to the mall.

Utterance 17: Jesus Christ came to teach ∅ ***love*** to humankind.

Here ***meat*** and ***love*** are not specific entities. They refer to concepts, notions.
When the noun is countable, there is a construction of class before the construction of the notional domain:

Utterance 18: ∅ ***Women*** are gentle.

Utterance 19: ∅ ***Dogs*** are faithful.

The utterers of these utterances do not express any difference in the classes or domains of ***woman*** and ***dog.***

4. ∅ IN THE BAULE NOUN PHRASE

Beyond the description and explanation of the linguistic facts exhibited by each language, the purpose of the linguist is to be able to discover or uncover the phenomena occurring in *language in general*. The second step consists in modeling and theorizing the result. The third step is that of a formalization or a programming of the theory. Such an attitude reduces speculations and provides a sound and transportable theoretical tool.

The objective in this paper is to analyze the functioning scheme of the metaoperator ∅ in the Baule language and disclose the unique operation underlying ∅ in Kwa languages and attempt a theorization.

Let us first investigate the functioning of ∅ in Baule:

Utterance 20: Aya le mankun fie. ɔ'a ko titi ***mankun***∅. ɔ su kɔ i atɛ gua bo. ɔ nin i wá Afue yɛ be kɔ-ɔ. kɛ be juu gua bo lɔ'n, mɔ be siesiee bé *mankun'n*, kpɔkun kanga *bla* kun ɔ' a ba. I wan ɔ to *mankun'n* kotokun kun. Aya see kanga *bla'n* kɛ (…).

Utterance 21: Mi janvuɛ wan ɔ klo man ***bla*** ∅.

Utterance 22: ***Bla***∅ wo awlo nga nu?

Utterance 23: Aya klo ***tannin***∅.

Utterance 24: Kofi su wu ***tannin*** ∅.

Utterance 25 : Kofi wu ***tannin***∅.

Utterance 26: Kofi ɔ a fa *tannin'n*.

A first observation of the utterances above reveals the following result: the nouns in bold are "determined" by the same operator at the surface level, that is to say ∅. There is no formal operator to signal the status of their determination. The scientist will then postulate a uniform treatment according to the uniqueness of the morphological image. The same case can be noted in:

- ∅ women are being more and more voluntary.
- ∅ women are knocking at his door.

It will be a wrong attitude to stick to the results of first observation[7]. Indeed, a deeper insight into the fact demonstrates that the functioning of the nouns is different. This is an evidence for the necessity to depart from the surface level after the first observation and track down the underlying operations. The surface is only the outcome of a much more complex process of construction. Let us just bear in mind that first appearances may be seriously deceptive.

In the utterances 9, 10, and 20 to 26, the nominal operator displays two major facts. I shall explain them below.

4.1. ∅ AND THE EXPRESSION OF NOTION

I will start the analysis of these utterances with 9 and 10. ***Klenzua*** occurs with the operator ∅**.**

In Utterance 9, the nominal operator is free from any context, any situation of uttering act. It does not have a quantitative definition. The utterer is only expressing the concept, the ***notion*** or the ***notional domain.*** He/she takes the whole package of the noun and builds up the utterance. The package is not "opened" to single out a specific element. It is just a full continuous set, as the noun will appear in a dictionary:

ɔ klo klenzua ∅.

He /she /it likes eggs, everything having the definition, the unbroken aspect of the concept of egg. The utterer is not making any difference since there is no quantitative discrimination. In this notional domain of *klenzua,* there is no distinction as for the type or quality of egg.

[7] See Gustave Guillaume, *Langage et science du langage,* Paris, Nizet, 1960.

The same case occurs in the utterances 21, 23 and 25.

Mi janvuɛ wan ɔ klo man ***bla*** ∅.

|my| friend|say-present|he| like|not|woman|

Kofi wu ***tannin***∅.

|kofi|weave-present|cloth|

Aya klo ***tannin***∅.

|aya|like-present|cloth|

The nouns ***bla*** and ***tannin*** are purely conceptual. Moreover, they are not linked to any context. They are fully ***context-free***. ***They are not determined.***

This situation is not the same for the other utterances.

4.2. ∅ AND THE CONTEXTUALISATION OF THE NOUN

The nominal operator can also occur with the ∅ operator and display another set of speech effects.

In utterance 10, the noun ***klenzua*** occurs without any formal marker. However, the effect is not the same as in utterance 9. In 10, the noun is not context-free. It is linked to a specific situation organized and managed by the utterer. Here, the noun is ***determined.*** It is localized in a given space and time sphere, be it virtual or not. This is the first step on the process of nominal localization or "determination". This operation consists in introducing a noun or a class of noun into a given context.

Klenzua ∅ ɔ wo i sa nu.

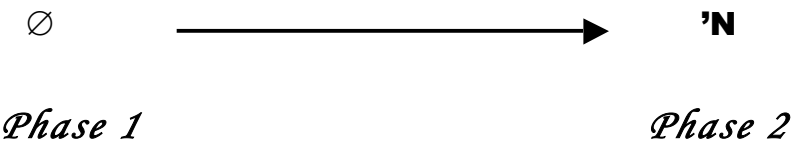
The utterer is introducing a particular noun into discourse. ***Klenzua*** is not context-free; it ***is context-dependent or context-bound***. Utterances 22 and 24 exhibit this operation.

Kofi su wu ***tannin*** ∅.

Bla∅ wo awlo nga nu?

Tannin and ***bla***, here, are not conceptual. They are linked to a given context.

This operator is, here, a unit of ***contextualization.*** It is the ***contextualizing ∅.*** This operation is an ***operation of phase 1.*** The operator ***'n*** is its counterpart in a perfect microsystem:



The conclusion from this fact is the following: the operator ∅ displays two phenomena at the surface level. ***It expresses a context-free full notion and a contextual full notion.*** But in both cases, ∅ is the tracer, the marker of the ***notional domain of the nominal operator.*** According to the characteristics of the situation of utterance, the utterer can choose to use the notion context-free or context-dependent. When it is context-free, the noun is not determined. But when it is context-bound, it is determined. This is why this contextual or contextualizing ∅ is translated with an operator of extraction when the source language displays a formal operator:

Utterance 27: El jefe ha comprado ***un*** coche. (un)
Utterance 27': El jefe ha comprado ∅ coche***s***. (∅-s)

Utterance 28: The chief has bought ***a*** car. (a)

Utterance 28': The chief has bought ∅ car***s***. (∅-s)

Translation into Baule: Kpɛn ɔ a to loto ∅.

Both utterances have the same translation if the quantification is not of any significance. In Baule, the utterer performs the first operation of nominal localization in two main steps:

(i) ***a notional domain construction.***

(ii) ***a connection of that notional domain to a given situation of utterance.***

5. THE CONTEXTUALIZING ∅ AND THE METAOPERATOR ***KUN***

The analysis above proves that the operator ***kun*** (one) is not the starting point of the process of nominal localization in Baule. This operator occurs when the utterer goes beyond the contextualizing ∅. Indeed, ***kun*** is a tracer of a series of operations: first, the utterer "opens" the notional package for a quantification. After this quantification, he selects one and single item to insert in a context.

Utterance 29: Kpɛnngbɛn ***kun*** su bo klɛn.

Utterance 30 : Akisi le luku ***kun.***

Utterance 30' : Akisi le luku ∅.

In Utterance 30, the number is known by the co-utterer. The nominal ***luku*** is not notional. But in Utterance 30', ***luku*** is a notion, a concept. ∅ and ***kun*** are then tracers of different operations. ***Kun*** goes beyond the pure notion to single out an item. We shall come back to the operations underlying ***kun*** in a deeper analysis in another paper.

CONCLUSION

Linguistics is a scientific practice. As such, the issues concerning the scientific method or scheme of analysis must accurately be dealt with. As for the definition of the subject and the objectives, they must be rigorously be defined to guarantee sound results. In this task, theorization must be an important part. The attempt to theorize will account for the adequacy of the method and the suitability of the outcomes. It is important to note here that the theorization of the surface level is useless since this level does not contain the explanations of the phenomena. It is the level of the outcome, the result, the product. It is then necessary to look beyond and investigate the relations and the operations underlying the surface. Such a scientific attitude shall help to present good classifications and typologies and thus avoid overlaps and ambiguity.

I have tried to look beyond the operator ∅ in the noun phrase of Baule to sort out its specificity, its fundamental functioning scheme in the system. This fundamental value or invariant is that ∅ in Baule is a tracer of the ***notional domain of the noun.*** The utterer uses it to mark a noun when he wants to present this nominal as a whole set, a concept without any internal discrimination.

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