'To sit face down' — location and position in Goemai[1]

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Abstract

This article discusses the semantics and pragmatics of postural, existential and positional verbs occurring in the basic locative construction of Goemai, a West Chadic language of Central Nigeria. The Goemai system is of special interest to the typology proposed in this issue, as it presents language-internal evidence for the existence of two different types of locative verbs: postural-type verbs and positional-type verbs. In most respects, Goemai patterns with postural-type languages: it has a small set of postural verbs that codes a limited range of semantic notions and that is used in both assertional and presuppositional ways. In addition, Goemai can recruit other verbs to occur in the basic locative construction: an existential verb that is available in many contexts where other postural-type languages tend to resort to the presuppositional use of posturals; and positional verbs that constitute a distinct form class and that can be used in an assertional way only. The article investigates the interaction of postural, existential, and positional verbs in Goemai, relating them to the proposed typology.

1. Introduction

Different from Goemai, most Chadic languages employ verbless structures in stative locative contexts (Frajzyngier 1987; Pawlak 1994). Even the languages of the Northern Angas-Goemai group, which are closely related to Goemai, are reported to use a verbless prepositional strategy of the form ''Figure NP (+Focus element) + Preposition + Ground NP'' (see Burquest [1973] for Angas; Frajzyngier [1993: 259–263] for Mupun). The available comparative data suggests that these verbless strategies reflect the inherited Chadic pattern, while the Goemai verbal strategies constitute innovations.

The Goemai system is of special interest to the typology proposed by Ameka and Levinson in the introduction to this issue — a typology that is based on the number and types of verbs used in the basic locative construction. While Chadic languages fall within their type 0 (the verbless type), Goemai shares similarities with both type III (the postural type) and type II (the positional type). In most respects, Goemai patterns with type III (the postural type). Languages of this type are said to make use of a small set of postural verbs that code a limited range of semantic notions (usually 'sit', 'stand', 'lie', 'hang', 'be located in a natural habitat') and that constitute a minor form class. These verbs are then used in two different ways: an assertional way (where the verb asserts the current transient orientation of a Figure) and a presuppositional way (where the verb focuses on the existence of a Figure at a Ground, irrespective of its current orientation). As will be shown in this article, the Goemai system exhibits all these properties, but it has an additional resource available: an existential verb that is part of the same form class as the postural verbs. This extra resource is responsible for a peculiarity within the Goemai system: the presuppositional use does not occur in many of the contexts predicted by the typology. As discussed by Ameka and Levinson, contexts such as a negative location, a "where"-question or an unknown orientation are expected to trigger the presuppositional use. In Goemai, by contrast, speakers can (and do) shift to the existential in some such contexts. This shift is reminiscent of a type-II language (the positional type): languages of this type are said to have a large set of positional verbs (that code detailed information about the current transient orientation of a Figure) as well as a semantically-general (or existential) verb to be used in contexts where type-III languages resort to the presuppositional use. Goemai also shares a second similarity with type II: Goemai speakers can optionally convey positional information. Such information is coded in the distinct form class of positional verbs, which — like the postural and existential verbs — can be recruited to appear in the basic locative construction. As predicted by the typology, the Goemai positional verbs can be used in an assertional way only. Goemai thereby presents language-internal evidence for the existence of two different types of locative verbs.

This article focuses on the relationship between the three different types of verbs: postural, existential and positional. Section 2 introduces the basic locative construction, together with the formal properties of postural/existential verbs and positional verbs. Section 3 then focuses on the postural/existential verbs: it briefly illustrates the semantics of each verb (Section 3.1), shows the distribution of assertional and presuppositional uses (Section 3.2), and examines the role of the existential (Section 3.3).

Section 4 explores the occurrence of positionals in the locative construction, Section 5 discusses the BLC (basic locative construction) hierarchy, and Section 6 summarizes this article. For more information about the Goemai system, see Hellwig (2003).

The data reported in this article comes from 16 native speakers of Goemai (seven speakers above 50 years of age, and nine speakers aged between 15 and 30 years), covering both natural and stimuli-based genres. Stimuli were used to explore and test hypotheses — they include two stimuli booklets used by all contributors to this issue: Picture Series for Positional Verbs (PSPV) (Ameka et al. 1999) and Topological Relations Picture Series (TRPS) (Bowerman and Pederson 1993) (see the introduction to this issue); as well as a range of stimuli designed for the investigation of Goemai (Hellwig 2003).[2]

2. The basic locative construction and two distinct classes of verbs

This section introduces the form of the basic locative construction (Section 2.1) and the formal properties of the verbs that occur in it (Section 2.2).

2.1. *The basic locative construction*

As discussed in the introduction to this issue, the basic locative construction codes a stative locative relation and functions as the answer to a "where"-question. In Goemai, it takes the form illustrated in (1), containing a Figure (in Talmy's [1985, 2000] terms) in the subject slot, an unmarked intransitive verb, as well as a spatial nominal and a Ground in the adverbial slot.

(1)   FIGURE   VERB   SPATIAL NOMINAL   GROUND
       Gwi   t'ong   k'a   tebul.
       calabash   sit(SG)   HEAD(SG)   table
       'The calabash sits on top of the table.'
       (TRPS 1)[3]

Goemai grammar permits the omission of any third person singular subject, provided that it is recoverable from the linguistic context. The pronoun *ni* '3SG' is usually not used in such cases, as its use carries the pragmatic implicature that the subject is not coreferential with the preceding antecedent. In the case of the basic locative construction, the Figure tends to be coreferential with the Figure in the preceding "where"-question, and hence tends to be omitted altogether. Furthermore, if the

Ground is not overtly expressed, the spatial nominal occurs without it. Given the right context, example (1) could therefore be rephrased as *T'ong k'a.* '(It) sits on top.' The spatial nominal and the verb, by contrast, are obligatory.

The spatial nominal is taken from a set of nine nominals that introduce adverbials and that code information about the intrinsic part of the Ground at or near which the Figure is located. If the Ground is undifferentiated and cannot be subdivided any further, speakers replace the spatial nominal with the prefix *n-* 'located at an object' (e.g., location at a human body part), and if the Figure is construed as being located in a place (rather than at an object), speakers resort to the preposition *goe* 'located at a place' (e.g., location in a market).[4]

The verb slot of the locative construction is filled by verbs from either of two form classes: the locative class (subsuming the posturals and the existential) and the positional class. Different from the spatial nominals, they do not code information about the search region, but about the type of support relation that holds between the Figure and the Ground (the locatives) or about the internal shape of the Figure (the positionals). Their semantics are discussed in more detail in Sections 3 and 4; this section focuses only on their formal properties.

2.2.   *Two classes of verbs: Locative and positional verbs*

The class of locative verbs consists of the five verb types given in Table (1). All but one of the verbs have suppletive transitive counterparts; and the four posturals have different singular/plural forms (agreeing with the intransitive subject and the transitive object). The form of the existential, by contrast, is invariant — which probably follows from its more general semantics (see Section 3).

The positional verbs are a set of about 30 verbs that code information about posture (e.g., *shuur* 'squat', *k'ut* 'crouch'), orientation (e.g., *k'oon* 'face down', *dum* 'upside down, bend forward'), disposition (e.g., *fum*

Table 1.   *Locative verbs*

Gloss	Intransitive	Transitive
'hang/move'	*lang* (SG), *leng* (PL)	
'sit'	*t'ong* (SG), *t'wot* (PL)	*d'u* (SG), *d'war* (PL)
'stand'	*d'yem* (SG), *d'yam* (PL)	*twaam* (SG), *twat* (PL)
'lie'	*t'o* (SG), *t'oerep* (PL)	*b'ûet* (SG), *d'ûoe* (PL)
'exist'	*d'e*	*loe*

'fold', *lam* 'twist') and distribution (e.g., *f'u* 'scatter', *t'arak* 'long-spaced, in patches'). They form a distinctive subclass within a class of state-change verbs that also codes property concepts (e.g., *b'ang* 'become/make red') and other transformations (e.g., *oereng* 'become/make dry').

The two verb classes — locative and positional — differ in (i) their distributional properties, (ii) their argument structure properties and (iii) their lexical aspect patterns.

(i) *Distribution*

The five locative forms not only occur in the locative construction, but also act as a contrastive set — in grammaticalized form — in a number of other constructions: as intransitive verbs in the ascriptive construction (example [2a]) and in the presentative construction (see example [17] in Section 3.3), as aspectual verbs in the progressive construction (example [2b]) and in various subtypes of serial verb constructions (example [2c]), and as deictic classifiers in the demonstrative word (example [2d]). They are obligatory in all these contexts, and they cannot be replaced by any other element. In particular, they cannot be replaced by a positional element. Furthermore, a locative verb can co-occur with a positional verb in a serial verb construction (as illustrated by the two verbs *k'oon* 'face down' and *d'yem* 'stand' in [2c]). Two locative verbs, by contrast, can never co-occur; and two positional verbs cannot co-occur in a serial construction.

(2) a. goe=<u>lang</u>   goe-b'ââl.
        2SGM=hang/move(SG)   NOMZ(SG)-beg
        '(. . .) you are a beggar (lit. you move (as) a beggar).'

    b. <u>t'o</u>   t'ong   saam   yi.
        lie(SG)(PROG)   PROG   sleep   PROG
        '(. . .) (the tortoise) lay sleeping.'

    c. Wang   nnoe   k'oon   <u>d'yem</u>   pûoe   tebul.
        pot   LOC.ANAPH   face.down(SG)   stand(SG)   MOUTH   table
        'This pot stands face down at the edge of the table.'

    d. t'u   n-<u>t'ong</u>-nnoe=hoe   a?
        bottle   ADVZ-CL:sit(SG)-DEM.PROX=exactly   INTERR
        '(. . .) (is it) this sitting bottle?'

(ii) *Argument structure*

In their nongrammaticalized uses, the locative verbs occur obligatorily with a Ground phrase. This Ground phrase can only be omitted if the verb is marked through either contrastive stress, a cognate adverb (as in [3a]) or a focus particle. This marking conveys that the focus has shifted from the locative relation to the internal posture of the Figure

(see Section 3.2). The positional verbs, by contrast, do not need a Ground phrase, nor do they need specific marking in its absence (as in [3b]).

(3) a. A'a /   t'ong   n-t'ong.
         no   sit(SG)   ADVZ-sit(SG)
         'No, (it) sits sitting.'
     b. Sher   k'oon.
         potsherd   face.down(SG)
         'The potsherd faces down.'

Furthermore, all positional verbs are ambitransitive and can occur both in the intransitive construction (as in [3b] above) and the transitive construction (as in [4a] below). The locative verbs, by contrast, make use of suppletive transitive forms (as in [4b]). The only exception is the verb *lang* 'hang/move', which patterns with the positionals in this respect.[5] The different behavior of *lang* could follow from its semantics: it includes a motion component that is possibly linked to a more agentive subject (see Section 3). Newman (2002a) has proposed that crosslinguistically some verbs in the postural set can be more agentive, thus accounting for different argument structure properties.

(4) a. Mûep   k'oon   ni.
         3PL   face.down(SG)   3SG
         'They put it face down.'
     b. d'ûoe   haas   muk   pûoe   kong.
         cause.lying(PL) egg   3SG.POSS   MOUTH   stream
         '(. . .) (it) lays its eggs at the bank of a river.'

(iii) *Lexical aspect*
The locative verbs code a state, while the positional verbs code an inchoative state change. As such, the two verb classes occur with different types of aspectual markings (e.g., locative verbs can be marked for durative aspect, but not for resultative aspect; while positional verbs can be marked for resultative aspect, but not for durative aspect). And they receive different interpretations in some aspectual constructions, e.g., locative verbs receive a habitual interpretation when they occur as main verbs in the progressive construction (as in [5a]), while positional verbs receive a progressive state change interpretation in this context (as in [5b]).

(5) a. Tun soe goesek fûan   d'e   t'ong   t'ong yi
         since time this   rabbit exist(PROG)   PROG   sit(SG) PROG
         n-goede   yim.
         LOC-bottom   leaf
         'Ever since that time, the rabbit was sitting under the leaves.'

b. Mat=hok   d'e   t'ong <u>dûût</u> yi   sek   gak.
    woman(SG)=DEF exist(PROG) PROG lean PROG BODY wall
    'The woman is getting into a leaning position against the wall.'
    (Said while observing a woman slowly leaning herself against a
    wall.)

To summarize this section, there is formal evidence for (a) the locative
verbs constituting a single form class and (b) the form class of locative
verbs being different from that of the positional verbs. The two classes dif-
fer in their distribution, their argument structure, and their lexical aspect.
Two of the locative verbs show some formal differences: *lang* 'hang/move'
can be used transitively, and *d'e* 'exist' has an invariant singular/plural
form. However, in all defining properties they pattern with the other loca-
tive verbs, thereby justifying their inclusion within this form class.

3. Locative verbs in the locative construction

Locative verbs occur far more frequently in the basic locative construc-
tion than positional verbs — which is not surprising given that they code
the same type of semantics as the construction: a stative locative relation.
The locative verbs can be subsumed under the postural type (i.e., type
III): they constitute a minor form class (see Section 2 above), their seman-
tics correspond to the expected semantic types (see Section 3.1), and they
have both assertional and presuppositional uses (see Section 3.2). Con-
trary to expectations, however, the Goemai system additionally contains
an existential verb whose availability affects the distribution of the asser-
tional and presuppositional uses (see Section 3.3).

3.1. *Semantics*

Like other postural-type languages, Goemai uses a small set of verbs that
code a limited set of semantic notions. This section illustrates the seman-
tics of each of the five verbs.

3.1.1. d'e *'exist'*.   The existential verb *d'e* is used for all abstract loca-
tive relations (as in [6]). Furthermore, for some speakers, it is the only lo-
cative verb available to code static attachments (see Section 3.1.2) and
damaged Grounds (see Section 3.1.4).

(6) Gok   d'e   m-pe   goe-nnoe=hoe (. . .).
     illness exist LOC-place NOMZ(SG)-LOC.ANAPH=exactly
     'Illness is in this place (. . .).'

3.1.2. lang *'hang/move'.*   The verb *lang* 'hang/move' is used with Figures that have the potential to move within a Ground. This includes animate beings and inanimate forces in their natural habitats (e.g., fish in water, birds in air, humans on earth, clouds in sky) (as in [7]) as well as inanimate Figures that are attached to — and suspended from — their Grounds (e.g., leaves and fruits in trees, straps on bags). Notice that the ''attachment'' component is only incidental, since inanimate Figures tend to be attached to their Grounds in order to be able to move within them. In fact, most speakers explicitly reject the use of *lang* with nonsuspended attached Figures (e.g., hooks in a wall, band-aid on a leg, ring on a finger). These speakers resort to either the existential verb (Section 3.1.1) or a positional verb (Section 4) instead. Some older speakers, however, have extended the use of *lang* to cover not only movement but also static attachment.

(7) Sh'arap / la   lang   n-hangoed'e / ni   su.
     fish   COND hang/move(SG) LOC-water   3SG run(SG)
     'If fish move around in water, it (the crab) runs (after the fish).'

3.1.3. t'ong *'sit'.*   The verb *t'ong* 'sit' is used with Figures that project away from the Ground in a stable way and that can maintain their stable position by their own means, e.g., through being located on an internal base that is designed for support. This characterization covers all types of containers (e.g., pots, calabashes, plates, bottles), but also 'facing down' objects (e.g., hats, lids), and objects such as petroleum lamps, fans, telephones, radios, or television sets. Interestingly, it also covers chairs, tables and cars (as in [8a]). These are similar to the above mentioned objects in that they support themselves by their own means, but they differ in that they use *sh'e* 'legs' to support themselves — making their overall shape very different. In fact, speakers can alternatively resort to *d'yem* 'stand' in order to describe them, commenting on their *sh'e* 'legs' as a defining criterion (as in [8b]). I assume that the use of 'stand' with objects having 'legs' is a new development, because the use of 'stand' overlaps with that of 'sit' in this case, and because all objects that show this overlap are novel objects.

(8) a. Ndoe tebul n-t'ong   d'i.
         SPEC   table   PRES-sit(sg) LOC.ANAPH
         'Look, a table sits there!'
     b. Sh'e d'in   la   n-d'e   d'i /   n-d'yem
         leg PAST.CL COND LNK-exist LOC.ANAPH PERM-stand(SG)
         yi.
         SUB
         'If there are legs, then (it) can stand.'

3.1.4.   d'yem *'stand'.*   Like *t'ong* 'sit', the verb *d'yem* 'stand' is used with Figures that project away from the Ground in a stable way. But different from *t'ong* 'sit', these Figures cannot maintain a stable position by their own means. Instead, they maintain their position with the help of the Ground, usually through being inserted in it (e.g., trees and all types of plants), but also through leaning against it (e.g., ladders). This includes negative spaces (e.g., footprints, holes, caves, doors) (as in [9]), and — for some older speakers — damaged Grounds (e.g., holes in towels, cracks in cups). Speakers who cannot use *d'yem* for damaged Grounds resort to either the existential (Section 3.1.1) or a positional (Section 4).

(9)   La   gâât   d'yem   sek   t'eng.
      little/few(SG) hollow   stand(SG) BODY   tree
      'A little hollow stands in the tree stem.'

3.1.5.   t'o *'lie'.*   The verb *t'o* 'lie' is used with Figures that do not project away from the Ground in a stable way. This includes all Figures that do not extend beyond the Ground and whose position is therefore entirely dependent on the Ground, e.g., flexible objects (ropes, cloth) (as in [10]), rigid objects (sticks, pencils, spoons), string-like entities (rivers, roads), and masses (water, grain, sand, grass). Notice that the Ground need not be horizontal (e.g., bark 'lies' at a tree). It also covers unfeatured objects (stones, balls). Although they project away from the Ground, they do not constitute good 'sitting' objects (as they are not stably supported, and as they are not asymmetrical in that one part is designed for support). Most speakers therefore construe them as 'lying' — unless they consciously assign an internal base to them (e.g., the airhole of a ball), in which case 'sit' is chosen.

(10) Rubber   t'o   n-yil /   haan   t'o   sek   t'eng.
      fire.hose lie(SG) LOC-ground   climb(SG) lie(SG) BODY   tree
      'The fire hose lies on the ground, (and part of it) climbed up (and) lies against the tree stem.'

The above discussion has shown that *t'ong* 'sit', *d'yem* 'stand' and *t'o* 'lie' code mutually exclusive locative relations, their choice being determined by the question of whether or not the Figure projects away from the Ground, and — if yes — how it maintains its position relative to the Ground: 'sit' picks out Figures that maintain a stable position autonomously, 'stand' those that maintain a stable position with the help of the Ground, and 'lie' those that do not maintain a stable position extending beyond the Ground. *Lang* 'hang/move', by contrast, focuses on the potential of the Figure to move, which can be independent of the three other categories. Hence, the 'hang/move' category shows some overlap with

the other three, e.g., a leaf can be construed as 'hanging/moving' (within the tree) or as 'standing' (i.e., being inserted into the twig); and water can 'hang/move' (within a river bed) or 'lie' (as a mass). Finally, the existential occupies a special position within the system: it is used with Figures that cannot occur with any of the more specific postural categories, including in particular abstract Figures, but also static attachments and damaged Grounds (for some speakers).

It is often assumed (see, e.g., the contributions in Newman 2002b) that postural verbs code an abstract shape (especially dimensionality and axial properties), which are based on extensions from a human prototype. In the case of Goemai, a characterization in terms of abstract shape does not adequately capture their semantic properties and distinctions: the choice of verb rather depends on the kind of support relationship between Figure and Ground. This support relationship then makes certain requirements on the shape of the Figure (e.g., a one-dimensional entity could hardly support itself in a stable way and hence cannot 'sit'), but it is not possible to describe the entire system exclusively in terms of shape: three-dimensional entities can 'hang/move' (e.g., fruits), 'sit' (e.g., pots), 'stand' (e.g., houses), or 'lie' (e.g., stones); similarly, vertically extended entities can 'hang/move' (e.g., humans), 'sit' (e.g., bottles), 'stand' (e.g., trees), or 'lie' (e.g., tree bark).

Given that four of the five locative verbs may have developed from verbs coding human postures and movements, it is tempting to speculate that the system originated as an extension from a human prototype, incorporating the existential only at a later stage. Diachronically, this may be the case, and it may even hold some relevance for today's speakers (see, e.g., the conscious reference to *sh'e* 'legs' when talking about 'standing' entities). But, again, to describe the entire system in these terms fails to do justice to the observation that the verbs do not describe an internal posture (of a Figure), but a locative relation (between a Figure and a Ground): present-day Figures (including humans) do not just 'sit', but always 'sit in relation to a Ground.'

3.2.   *Assertional and presuppositional uses*

The previous section has illustrated the default assignments of Figures to locative verbs: their assignment is determined by their canonical position, e.g., abstract concepts 'exist' by default, humans 'hang/move', containers 'sit', trees 'stand' and ropes 'lie'. This section now examines the pragmatic status of these default assignments, exemplifying in particular the distribution of locative verbs with noncanonically positioned Figures. It is

shown that Goemai speakers can resort to two different uses under this condition: an assertional use and a presuppositional use. The existence of the presuppositional use is the strongest argument for classifying Goemai as a postural-type language.

In the assertional use, speakers shift to nondefault locative verbs in order to highlight certain aspects of (i) the current position of the Figure or (ii) the current Ground. In the first type of shift, speakers construe the current position as being similar to the position of Figures that canonically occur with a specific locative verb. For example, Section 3.1.3 has shown that 'sitting' Figures project away from the Ground and maintain a stable position through their base. Flexible objects like pieces of rope or cloth normally do not fulfill these criteria — yet, if they are currently coiled up (like head pads, i.e., pieces of cloth that are used when carrying a load on the head), their coiled part can be construed as a base through which the Figure maintains its position. In this case, speakers shift to 'sit'. Similarly, speakers can construe piles or heaps of objects as being self-supported through a base. This can apply to any type of pile, e.g., oranges (which are displayed in the form of pyramid-shaped piles in market-place contexts) or carrots (which are displayed in a fan-shaped form). Often — but not necessarily — this type of shift is marked formally by one of the means introduced in Section 2, e.g., by a cognate adverb (see example [3a] in Section 2).

In the second type of shift, speakers focus on the Ground, whereby both the current and the canonical positions of the Figure are irrelevant. Only two verbs allow for this shift: *lang* 'hang/move' and *t'o* 'lie'. *Lang* 'hang/move' can be used with all Figures that are either located above the ground floor level (as illustrated by the reasoning in [11a]) or at a place. In the latter case, *lang* always co-occurs with the preposition *goe* 'located at a place' or with a deictic adverb, not with the topological prefix *n-* 'located at an object' or the spatial nominals. The second verb, *t'o* 'lie', can be used with all Figures that are either located on the ground floor level (as in [11b]) or that are (fully or partially) contained. I assume that all uses reflect separate senses of the two verbs. They probably developed from the characterizations given in Sections 3.1.2 and 3.1.5, but they cannot be subsumed under them synchronically.

(11) a. Ball=hok <u>lang</u>   k'a   tââm. (. . .) T'o   ba
          ball=DEF   hang/move(SG) HEAD(SG) chair   lie(SG)   NEG
          ai!   D'in   la   t'o   t'ong t'o   a
          INTERJ PAST.CL COND   lie(SG) IRR   lie(SG) FOC
          n-yil.
          LOC-ground

'The ball hangs on top of the chair. (. . .) (It) doesn't LIE, hey!
If (it) were lying, (it) would lie on the ground.'

b. Bi   n-t'oerep-nnoe /   a   bi   shel.
   thing   ADVZ-CL:lie(PL)-DEM.PROX   FOC   thing   game
   'These lying things are playthings.'
   (Talking about musical instruments, calabashes, pots, pieces
   of cloth and pictures in various positions on the ground)

All shifts have in common that they override the default assignment of
Figures to locative verbs. Through their choice of verb, speakers highlight
certain aspects of the situation, and background others.

But a shift is not obligatory: speakers can resort to the presuppositional
use, i.e., they can continue to use the default locative verb. For example,
speakers can continue to use *t'ong* 'sit' when talking about a container —
even if this container is currently in a noncanonical position (as in [12a]),
if its position is questioned (as in [12b]) or if its existence is negated (as in
[12c]).

(12) a. Kwalba goe-t'ong   k'a   muk   zak   a
         bottle   NOMZ-sit(SG)   HEAD(SG)   3SG.POSS also   FOC
         haam-yim.
         water/color-leaf
         'The bottle that sits on its top is also of green color.'
         (Talking about an upside-down bottle.)

      b. D'a   n-d'e-nnoe=hoe /   t'ong   a
         calabash   ADVZ-CL:exist-DEM.PROX=exactly   sit(SG)   FOC
         nd'ang?
         how
         'This calabash, how does it sit (i.e., how is it positioned)?'
         (Talking about an upside-down calabash.)

      c. Hen (. . .) shang nd'ûun toeb'al. (. . .) Kwalba   t'ong
         1SG   look   INSIDE   calabash   bottle   sit(SG)
         d'i   ba.
         LOC.ANAPH   NEG
         'I (. . .) looked inside the calabash. (. . .) The bottle didn't sit
         there.'

In the above examples, the speakers do not assert the current position of
the containers, but rather talk about the (non)existence of containers at a
Ground — presupposing their default 'sitting' position.

There is evidence that hearers interpret defaults differently from non-
defaults. Compare the dialogues in (13a) and (13b) below. They are taken
from a session where two speakers, A. and N., compared a number of

pictures. In both examples, A. and N. describe pictures that show the same object in different positions. In (13a), speaker A. looks at a picture with a noncanonically positioned (i.e., upside-down) calabash, which he introduces into discourse with the help of the nondefault *d'yem* 'stand'. Upon hearing this nondefault, speaker N. pays close attention to the current position of the calabash — which is canonically positioned (i.e., upright) in his picture. As a result, he first confirms the existence of the calabash (by using *d'e* 'exist'), and then comments on its sitting posture (by using *t'ong* 'sit' together with its cognate adverb). In (13b), the reverse situation is found. Speaker A. has a picture with a canonically positioned bottle, introducing it with the default *t'ong* 'sit'. This time, speaker N. does not pay attention to the current position — he accepts and produces *t'ong* 'sit' even though his own bottle is currently upside down.

(13) a. A: To /   d'a   n-d'yem   k'a   k'aram.
             okay calabash PRES-stand(SG) HEAD(SG) mat
             'Okay, look a calabash stands on top of the mat.'
             (= upside-down calabash)

      N: D'a – /   d'a   na n-d'e   d'i   k'a
             calabash   calabash   PRES PRES-exist LOC.ANAPH   HEAD(SG)
             k'aram. (…)   M-maan   t'ong   n-t'ong.
             mat   NOMZ-1SG.POSS   sit(SG)   ADVZ-sit(SG)
             'The calabash, look there is a calabash on the mat. (…)
             (But) mine sits sitting.' (= upright calabash)

   b. A: Goe=na kwalba n-t'ong   k'a   kwati. (…)
             2SGM=see bottle PRES-sit(SG) HEAD(SG) box
             'Look, you see a bottle sitting on the box. (…)'
             (= upright bottle)

      N: Ni   t'ong   d'i   k'a.
             3SG   sit(SG)   LOC.ANAPH   HEAD(SG)
             'It sits there on top.' (= upside-down bottle)

Similar differences in interpretation are found in all comparable situations, suggesting that the two uses have a different status. This difference can be explained with the help of pragmatic implicatures that capture the distribution of marked and unmarked forms (Levinson 2000; see also the introduction to this issue). The use of a marked, nonexpected, expression (such as a nondefault locative verb) draws attention to a marked situation (e.g., the referent is noncanonically located). Upon hearing the nonexpected verb, the hearer therefore closely monitors the current situation, looking for a nonstereotypical property. As a result, he rejects the verb if it does not match the current position (as in [13a]). By contrast, upon hearing an unmarked, expected, expression (such as a default locative

verb), the hearer does not pay attention to the current position, but takes the verb to describe the class of the referent (e.g., of objects that 'sit' by default). As a result, he accepts this verb, even if it does not match the current position (as in [13b]).

The two uses — assertional use of nondefaults and presuppositional use of defaults — occur in different contexts. Speakers use nondefaults to focus on referents, e.g., to contrast referents in different positions or to identify referents. And they use defaults to focus on locations and the (non)existence of referents at those locations. The dialogue in (14) illustrates this difference in focus. In the first sentence, speaker A. draws the attention of speaker N. to a new referent, intending him to identify it. He does so by using the nondefault locative verb *d'yem* 'stand' (together with the positional verb *k'oon* 'face down'; see Section 4) in the presentative construction. Speaker N. cannot identify the referent, as there are three face-down pots available (on the ground, on a table, in a tree). He therefore asks for clarification, and then ventures the guess that it is the referent located on the ground, i.e., he shifts attention away from the referent itself to the location. Notice that he uses the default verb *t'ong* 'sit' to do so.

(14)   A: A   ndoe   wang /   k'oon   na   n-<u>d'yem</u>.
            FOC   SPEC   pot   face.down(SG)   PRES PRES-stand(SG)
            'A pot, look (it) stands face down.'

       N: Wang goenang   nd'ûûn? (...)   <u>T'ong</u>   n-yil   ai?
            pot   which(SG)   INSIDE   sit(SG)   LOC-ground INTERJ
            'Which pot among (them)? (...) Does (it) sit on the ground?'

3.3.   *The role of the existential*

The preceding section has shown that Goemai speakers — like speakers of other postural-type languages — can use the locative verbs in assertional and presuppositional ways. Different from other postural-type languages, however, Goemai also has a separate existential verb available. This section illustrates the role of the existential and its effects on the postural system of Goemai.

The existential belongs to the same form class as the posturals (see Section 2), but it is semantically more general: while the posturals code existence at a location in a specific (presupposed) position, the existential only codes existence at a location. In its presuppositional use, it thus collocates with Figures that cannot be assigned to any of the more specific postural categories, in particular, abstract Figures, but also — for some

speakers — static attachments and damaged Grounds (see Section 3.1.1). In its assertional use, its semantic generality would — in theory — allow it to replace all postural verbs in all their occurrences. In practice, however, the existential only replaces posturals in certain specific contexts, and its usage in these contexts carries certain pragmatic implicatures.

The existential occurs if the attention is on the referent itself, but the speaker cannot provide the appropriate postural information. Such a focus would normally trigger the assertional use of posturals (see Section 3.2), i.e., the speaker would shift to the postural that best matches the current position. However, if the speaker is not confident that he can describe this position accurately, he resorts to the existential instead, thereby avoiding any commitment as to the current position. Example (15) below illustrates the most common context for using the existential: the position is unknown to the speaker. The example is taken from a narrative about a protagonist who searches for his lost possessions. He first uses the existential in the ''where''-question (15a), then with reference to a potential location in a container (15b), and finally for a negative location (15c). In all three contexts, the Figure's position is unknown to the speaker: he explicitly seeks information about it in the ''where''-question (without presupposing its current position), he cannot know the position of a contained object,[6] and he cannot describe the position of a non-located Figure. But once the Figure is found — and its position becomes known — he makes use of the semantically appropriate postural *t'ong* 'sit' (15d).

(15) a. Yin /   d'a=hok   d'e   nnang?
          SAY   calabash=DEF exist where
          '(He) said, where is the calabash?'

      b. Yin ko   d'e   a   m-boega. (. . .)
          SAY maybe exist FOC   LOC-well
          (He) said, maybe (it) is in the well. (. . .)

      c. D'a   d'e   d'i   ba.
          calabash exist LOC.ANAPH NEG
          The calabash is not there.

      d. Mûaan (. . .) shang / kat d'a   t'ong   d'i.
          go(SG)   look   find calabash sit(SG) LOC.ANAPH
          (He) went (somewhere and) looked, (he) found the calabash
          sitting there.'

Whenever the position of the Figure is known and describable with a postural, by contrast, speakers do not shift to the existential. Example (16) below illustrates this observation. It is the typical response to a ''where''-question about a picture depicting seven bottles, three clearly upright and

four clearly on their side. Speakers could have chosen the existential to describe all seven bottles simultaneously, but they never volunteered it (and only reluctantly accepted it when I suggested it). Instead, they opted to describe the exact position of each Figure.

(16) Kwalba k'un   t'wot k'a   tebul / f'er   t'oerep sek
      bottle three sit(PL) HEAD(SG) table   four   lie(pl) BODY
      b'et   muk.
      BELLY 3SG.POSS
      'Three bottles sit on the table, four lie next to it (the group of 3).'
      (PSPV 46)

Although semantically appropriate, speakers tend not to use the existential in the contexts exemplified in (15d) and (16) above. This reluctance follows from the observation that the use of the existential triggers a pragmatic implicature (that the speaker — for whatever reason — cannot confidently describe the current position of the Figure), and the speaker may wish to avoid this implicature. This point can be illustrated with the help of example (17). In the first sentence, speaker A. uses the existential verb in the presentative construction to draw the hearer's attention to a bottle. There are three potential referents (an upright bottle, an upside-down bottle and a bottle on its side), and speaker N. therefore asks for clarification. In his response, he mentions the two noncanonically positioned bottles (the 'lying' and the 'standing', i.e., upside-down, bottles), but not the upright bottle. He assumes that speaker A. must have had a reason for not using a postural — and since all three bottles are clearly visible and describable with posturals, he apparently concludes that a noncanonical position qualifies as such a reason.[7]

(17) A: Nde   kwalba=hok na   n-d'e   zak-yit.
          one/other   bottle=DEF PRES PRES-exist again
          'Look, (there) is again a bottle.'
      N: Goenang nd'ûûn? Goe-t'o   n-t'o   nnoe
          which(sg) INSIDE   NOMZ(SG)-lie(SG) ADVZ-lie(SG) LOC.ANAPH
          a   ko   goe-d'yem   n-d'yem?
          INTERR or   NOMZ(SG)-stand(SG) ADVZ-stand(SG)
          'Which among (them)? (Is it) this one that lies lying, or the one that stands standing?'

Similar differences are found whenever the existential is used in place of a postural. Again, its interpretation can be explained with the help of a pragmatic implicature that captures the distribution of elements in privative opposition (Levinson 2000; see also the introduction to this issue):

the general semantics of the existential ("existence at a location") are entailed by the specific semantics of the posturals ("existence at a location in a position"). The use of the less informative term (i.e., the existential) implicates that the more informative term (i.e., the postural) is not applicable — if it were applicable the speaker would have used the more informative term in the first place.

In other postural-type languages, the contexts exemplified in (15a) to (15c) and (16) would trigger the presuppositional use of default posturals. And although the Goemai default verbs are attested in these contexts (see examples [12a] to [12c] in Section 3.2), the use of the existential is much more common. In this respect, Goemai shows similarities to positional-type languages, which would also resort to a general (existential) verb. Goemai differs from positional-type languages in that it can use its posturals in a presuppositional way — but it also differs from postural-type languages in that the presuppositional use surfaces in other types of contexts (i.e., when the focus shifts away from the referent to the location).

4.   The positional verbs and the locative construction

The five locative verbs — and in particular the four postural verbs — are the most common verbs to occur in the basic locative construction. However, positional verbs are possible alternatives. As shown in Section 2, the formal properties of positional verbs differ considerably from those of locative verbs: they do not occur obligatorily with a Ground phrase, and they code a state change (not a state). These formal properties already hint at their typical semantics: different from the locative verbs they do not code a locative relation between Figure and Ground (see Section 3.1), but a Figure-internal shape, i.e., a Figure is *shuur* 'squatting', *dum* 'upside down, bent forward', *fum* 'folded' or *f'u* 'scattered' with respect to itself, not with respect to any Ground object. When occurring in the locative construction, they retain their focus on Figure-internal properties. For example, a verb like *shoot* 'coil' in this construction can only ever describe the internal disposition of the Figure (e.g., a coiled rope), but not a locative relation in which, e.g., a rope is coiled around a stone. To describe such a relation, a serial verb construction containing both a positional and a locative verb (in that order) is needed (as in [18]).

(18)   K'yang   shoot   t'o   n-t'ââr   p'ang.
       rope   coil   lie(SG)   LOC-flank   stone
       'The rope lies coiled around the stone.'
       (PSPV 15)

Furthermore, positional verbs are always used in an assertional way, i.e., they describe the current transient shape of the Figure. Different from locative verbs, they cannot be used in a presuppositional way.

The formal and semantic properties of positional verbs thus indicate that they code a Figure-internal state change — yet, they can occur in the basic locative construction, a construction that codes a stative locative relation. When occurring there, they receive a stative interpretation and can even be marked for durative aspect (as in [19]). Recall that only stative verbs can occur with durative aspect marking (see Section 2).

(19)   Wang   yi   k'oon   n-yil.
       pot   DUR   face.down(SG) LOC-ground
       'The pot is face down on the ground.'
       (PSPV 12)

Given their considerable formal and semantic differences, the occurrence of positional verbs in the locative construction requires an explanation. Crucial to this explanation is the observation that state-change verbs unmarked for TAM receive a default resultative interpretation (such an interpretation is crosslinguistically common; see, e.g., Comrie 1976: 82–84). As a consequence, positional verbs can occur in place of locative verbs whenever the present state can be construed as the result of a prior action, e.g., being in a 'face down' position is seen as the result of getting into a 'face down' position. This is usually the case when the speaker has witnessed the action that led up to the state (as *b'am* 'get stuck' in [20a]). Furthermore, positionals are used to describe Figures in noncanonical locative relations (as *k'oon* 'face down' in [20b]): since Figures tend to be canonically located, noncanonical relations are more likely to be interpreted as having originated through a prior state-change.[8]

(20)   a. Sai nwap ya   s'a   muk. A'a!   S'a
           then gum   catch hand/arm   3SG.POSS INTERJ hand/arm
           muk   b'am   d'i   sek   masha=hok.
           3SG.POSS stick LOC.ANAPH BODY   lady=DEF
           'Then the gum caught his hand. Surprise! His hand stuck
           there to the lady.'
       b. Wang   k'oon   k'a   kuk   sh'ep.
           pot   face.down(SG) HEAD(SG) stump wood
           'The pot is face down on top of the tree stump.'
           (PSPV 12)

Individual speakers vary as to whether they conceptualize the prior action leading up to the state: older speakers tend to do so more frequently, but

there is variation even among them. In any given situation, only some speakers will thus produce or accept a positional in the locative construction. The overall result is that positional verbs occur much less frequently than locative verbs as an immediate response to a ''where''-question. More frequently, they are used to elaborate further on the internal shape of the Figure, once its locative relation has been established by means of a locative verb. The positionals are especially suited for this task, as they provide very detailed semantic information. For example, the positional *k'oon* 'face down' is used to describe containers that are currently upside down. Appropriate locative verbs would be *t'o* 'lie' and *d'yem* 'stand': upside-down containers are seen as not being supported in a stable way — depending on other factors, speakers then construe them as either not being supported at all (choosing *t'o* 'lie'), or being supported externally (choosing *d'yem* 'stand', as in the first sentence in [21]). However, if a speaker chooses *t'o* 'lie', the hearer would not know if the container is located upside down or maybe on its side. Similarly, if the speaker chooses *d'yem* 'stand', he could refer to an upside-down container, or maybe to an upright container buried in the ground. The positional verb *k'oon* 'face down', by contrast, specifies exactly the upside-down orientation of the pot. As such, positional verbs are used in those contexts where speakers think it necessary to provide more detailed spatial information, e.g., in the second sentence of (21), where speaker N. requires more detailed information to be able to identify the referent correctly.

(21) A: D'yem   k'a   tebul.
          stand(SG)   HEAD(SG) table
          '(It) stands on the table.'
      N: Goe-k'oon   n-k'oon   a?
          NOMZ(SG)-face.down(SG)   ADVZ-face.down(SG) INTERR
          '(Is it) the one facing down?'

The more specific semantics of the positionals also allow them to occur in scenarios where no postural is available. For example, recall that only some older speakers can use a postural in reference to static attachments (as in [22a]) (see Sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2). Most speakers (both old and young), however, cannot use a postural and instead resort to the locative construction with either the general existential verb (as in [22b]) or a more specific positional verb (as in [22c]). Alternatively, younger speakers shift away from the locative construction altogether, and use a positional verb in the transitive construction (as in [22d]).

(22) a. K'along   lang   k'a   longvilip.
          stamp   hang/move(SG) HEAD(SG) web/paper

'The stamp hangs on the paper.'
(TRPS 3)

b. D'e   k'a   takarda.
    exist HEAD(SG) paper
    '(The stamp) exists on the paper.'
    (TRPS 3)

c. Stamp   b'am   k'a   wasik'a.
    stamp   stick   HEAD(SG)   letter
    'The stamp sticks to the letter.'
    (TRPS 3)

d. Mûep   b'am   ni   k'a   takarda.
    3PL   stick   3SG   HEAD(SG)   paper
    'They stuck it (= the stamp) on the paper.'
    (TRPS 3)

The discussion in this section has shown that the Goemai positional verbs code detailed semantic information about the transient shape of the Figure. Different from positional-type languages (type II), however, the positional verbs constitute a marked choice: they replace the postural verbs in the locative construction if the present state can be construed as the result of a prior state change or if the locative relation cannot be described by a postural. Given their marked status, Goemai is not analyzed as a positional-type language.

5. Posturals, existential, positionals and the BLC hierarchy

The preceding sections have shown that Goemai makes use of three types of verbs in its locative construction: postural verbs, an existential verb, and positional verbs. Most frequently, the locative construction contains a postural verb, but speakers can shift to the existential or to a positional instead. The shift away from a postural verb partly reflects the BLC (i.e., basic locative construction) hierarchy proposed in the introduction to this issue. There, a crosslinguistically valid implicational hierarchy of locative relations was set up, stating that if a language uses its basic locative construction for a specific level of the hierarchy, it will use the same construction for all levels below. The lowest level (level VI) covers easily moveable inanimate Figures — and these are the Figures that are consistently described with postural verbs in the locative construction in Goemai. The higher levels depict various attachment scenarios (levels IV, II and I), and they depict Figures as damaged Grounds (level III).[9] As discussed in Sections 3.1.2 and 3.1.4, some speakers can extend a postural verb to cover

all these locative relations, but most speakers cannot, and postural verbs are rarely used beyond level VI. Some speakers extend the use of the locative construction (either with the existential verb or with a positional verb filling the verb slot) up to level I (see examples [22b] and [22c] above), while some younger speakers shift to a positional verb in the transitive construction (see example [22d] above). The postural verbs thus pick out the easily describable scenes of level VI (moveable inanimate Figures), while the existential and the positionals pick out the less easily describable scenes beyond level VI. By using the existential, speakers make no commitment as to how the Figure is positioned with respect to the Ground; and by using a positional, speakers give detailed information about the shape of the Figure.

But the BLC hierarchy can only account for part of the observed differences in distribution, since both the existential and the positionals are attested with movable inanimate Figures (level VI). As discussed in the preceding sections, these differences in distribution can be captured with reference to pragmatic principles. The more general semantics of the existential allow it to occur whenever the speaker cannot adequately describe the current position, e.g., because it is unknown (see Section 3.3). The positionals, by contrast, indicate a focus on a prior state change, triggering their use with noncanonically located Figures (see Section 4). They show similarities to the assertional use of the posturals: they assert a current noncanonical orientation, thereby constituting a marked choice.

The above discussion reflects the use of verbs to focus on the current position of Figures. In addition, Goemai can use its locative verbs (both the posturals and the existential) — but not its positional verbs — in a presuppositional way (see Section 3.2). In fact, it is possible for speakers to combine assertional and presuppositional information in one clause: they can use a serial verb construction containing a positional (asserting the current orientation) and a locative verb (presupposing a certain position). Example (23) illustrates such a serial verb construction: if both verbs described the current position, the utterance would constitute a contradiction, as a pot cannot be simultaneously located 'face down' and on its base (i.e., 'sitting'). However, only the positional verb asserts the orientation, while the postural verb asserts the existence of a particular type of Figure (those that typically 'sit') at a location.

(23) Wang   k'oon   t'ong   k'a   kuk.
      pot   face.down(SG) sit(SG) HEAD(SG) stump
      'The pot sits face down on the stump.'
      (PSPV 12)

6.   Summary

The basic locative construction in Goemai makes use of a small set of postural verbs in both assertional and presuppositional ways. As such, Goemai clearly belongs to the postural type (type III) of the typology proposed in the introduction to this issue. But it constitutes an interesting example of this type, as its postural verbs are used more descriptively than in other languages. In this respect, Goemai patterns more like the positional type (type II). And, in fact, Goemai speakers have a large set of positional-type verbs at their disposal. The reason for this nonexpected behavior lies in the existence of a separate existential verb that belongs to the same form class as the postural verbs, but codes a more general semantics (i.e., existence at a location, irrespective of orientation). Its general semantics trigger pragmatic implicatures that determine its distribution vis-à-vis the posturals. More specifically, the existential is used (a) in a presuppositional way with Figures that cannot be assigned to any of the more specific postural categories, and (b) in an assertional way whenever the speaker focuses on the Figure, but cannot describe its position adequately. As such, it is used in many contexts that would force speakers of other postural-type languages to use default postural verbs in a presuppositional way: negative location, a ''where''-question or an unknown orientation. This division of labor makes it possible for the Goemai postural verbs to be used more descriptively — similar to the positional verbs in positional-type languages. But the crucial and interesting difference here is that despite the fact that speakers of Goemai can resort to the existential verb, the postural verbs nevertheless continue to have presuppositional uses.

Notes

2.   Notice that each stimulus was run with a subset of the speakers only, e.g., PSPV and TRPS were run with seven speakers each.
3.   I use an adapted version of the practical orthography developed by Sirlinger (1937). The following symbols may not be self-explanatory: *p', t', k', f', s', sh'* = nonaspirated

obstruents; *b', d'* = implosives; *oe* = [ə]; *û* = [ʉ]; *â* = [ɔ]. A slash in an example represents an intonation break. If an example occurred as a response to one of the stimuli booklets used by all contributors to this issue, it is marked as PSPV (Ameka et al. 1999) or TRPS (Bowerman and Pederson 1993), plus the number of the picture. The following abbreviations are used in the interlinear glosses: ADVZ "adverbializer", ANAPH "anaphor", CL "classifier", COND "conditional", DEF "definite article", DEM.PROX "proximal demonstrative", DUR "durative", FOC "focus", INTERJ "interjection", INTERR "interrogative particle", IRR "irrealis", LNK "linker", LOC "locative", M "masculine", NEG "negation particle", NOMZ "nominalizer", PAST.CL "close past tense", PERM "permissive", PL "plural", POSS "possessive", PRES "presentative", PROG "progressive", SG "singular", SPEC "specific-indefinite article", SUB "subordinating particle".

4. The distribution of the various Ground phrase elements is more complex than presented here. Briefly, the following observations can be made (see Hellwig 2003 for details):

   (i) Some spatial nominals always occur with a prefix *n-* or *goe-*. In present-day Goemai, the prefixes constitute an unanalyzable part of the nominal, but diachronically the nominals probably derived from a locative preposition plus a bodypart noun.

   (ii) In some contexts, prepositions and some of the spatial nominals can co-occur. They co-occur to either indicate noncontiguity between the Figure and the Ground, or to indicate a shift from an intrinsic frame of reference to a relative frame of reference.

5. This article focuses on the intransitive locative verbs occurring in the locative construction. The semantics of the transitive forms are almost identical, except for a few differences in their metaphorical extensions.

6. In the case of containment, there is some overlap between *d'e* 'exist' and *t'o* 'lie'. Both are appropriate, but they focus on different aspects. To use *t'o* 'lie' stresses that the focus is on the Ground (i.e., the container). To use *d'e* 'exist', by contrast, stresses that the position is not known. As such, *d'e* 'exist' could be used with objects hidden behind a wall, but *t'o* 'lie' could not.

7. The distribution of the existential in the presentative construction differs from its distribution in the locative construction: in the presentative construction, noncanonicality usually triggers a shift to the existential. In the locative construction, by contrast, noncanonicality either triggers a shift to a different postural verb (this is an option in the presentative, too) or to a positional verb (which is not possible in the presentative construction, as positional verbs cannot occur there), but never to the existential.

8. The integration of positional verbs into the locative construction is probably best handled within a construction grammar framework (see, e.g., Goldberg 1995), assuming that (a) the resultative interpretation of the unmarked positionals is semantically compatible with the stative meaning of the locative construction, and that (b) a construction can coerce certain readings (e.g., a stative reading) and supply missing elements (e.g., a Ground phrase).

9. Level V depicts clothing/adornment scenes. These do not form a unified category in Goemai, but are treated as different forms of attachment. I thus subsume them under the attachment scenarios.

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