



THE CLAUSE STRUCTURE IN AWING



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ABSTRACT

From a structural linguistic perspective, this paper sets out to identify and analyse the structure of the clause in Awing, one of the languages in the North West Region of Cameroon. The detailed analysis is done using the structuralism approach of Routledge (1993:262f), which states that structuralism is “any approach to linguistic description which views the

grammar of a language primarily as a system of relations.” The paper reveals that the types of clauses we have in English are also found in African languages. As a study in grammar, the Awing language is characterised by the morpho-syntactic aspects that are common in most grassfield Bantu languages.

KEYWORDS

Awing, clause structure

RESEARCH PAPER

Introduction

The study of the grammar of a language is generally at the centre of understanding of that language. The grammars of foreign languages like English and French have been well documented and can hence be easily consulted for educational purposes. Unfortunately, a linguistics study on African languages generally focuses on portions of grammar without a comprehensive and unified document of the grammar. Hedinger (2008), Nforbi and Ngum, (2009) have provided such grammars for Akɔ'ose and Oku respectively.

The goal of this paper is to identify and provide a detailed analysis of the clause structure in Awing and demonstrate the understanding of their use in the language. Awing has little or no in-depth analyses of clause structures. Therefore, Awing, as well as most of the estimated 280 living indigenous languages of Cameroon remain poorly documented (Lewis et al. 2013).

The present paper therefore takes a structural approach to studying the structure of clauses in Awing. We address two research questions:

1. What are the different types of clauses that exist in Awing?
2. How are the clauses structured?

The paper is structured as follows: The second section provides background information on the language under investigation and comment on our data source. The third section states the definition of a clause and brings out the basic order of elements in a clause. The fourth section identifies the various types of clauses in Awing and brings out a careful analysis of their structures. The fifth section provides a conclusion for the paper.

2. Summary of the language under investigation and data source

2.1. Background

Awing is an SVO language classified as Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Wide Grassfields, Narrow Grassfields, Mbam-Nkam, Ngemba (Lewis et al. 2013). Awing is a Grassfield Bantu language, spoken in Awing, a village in Mezam Division, located in the area southwest of Bamenda, the capital of the Northwest Region of Cameroon. The Awing population stands at approximately 60,000 (Akem 2011: 14). 'Awing' is the anglicised form of the name, widely used for the language, the people and the place. However, the Awing people call their people, place and language 'Mbîwiñ'. Other languages spoken in the area are Cameroon Standard English (CSE), Cameroon Pidgin English (CPE), Fulani, and French (Akem 2011: 14). As far as written documents of the language are concerned, with the exception of Akem's (2011) dissertation, Akem's (2018) article on serial verb constructions, existing publications on

Awing are limited to literacy materials (Akem et al. 2009, Akem et al. 2010, Akem et al. 2011, Alomofor et al. 2004, Alomofor et al. 2005, Alomofor and. Anderson 2005, Alomofor 2007a, 2007b). As a speaker and, of course, a linguist in the Awing language, the researcher has the intuition about the grammaticality of sentences used for analyses and therefore, has provided the data for this paper.

3. Clause

3.1. Definition

A clause, as defined by Hedinger et al. (2009: 6), is a unit of grammar that is made up of a noun phrase (subject) and a predicate, usually a verb phrase or larger than a phrase and expresses the relationship between a predicate and its noun phrase agreement(s). In Awing, just like in English and other languages, a clause comprises a noun phrase (NP) subject + a predicate (PRED), (usually a verb phrase) + a noun phrase(s) NP (direct and/or indirect object). In summary, the basic order of elements in a clause is SUBJECT, PRED/VERB, DIRECT and/or INDIRECT OBJECTS (SVO). In negative clauses where the negations (**kě** and **pô**) are used, the objects come before the verb (SOV). For instance,

1. **A kə kě apá jî pô.**

he P2 NEG fufu eat NEG

He did not eat fufu.

In most cases, the direct objects (DO) always occur before the indirect objects (IO). However, in few cases, they do occur after the indirect objects. For example,

2. **Táta a nə ófê na nó məmá.**

grandfather 3S P2 give meat to mother

Grandfather gave meat to mother.

3. **A nə ófê məmá nó neemə**

IO DO

he P2 give mother with meat

He gave mother meat.

4. **Máma ä ló ngwáŋə á mbô yé**

DO IO

grandmother 3S.HAB beg salt to hands her

Grandmother begs salt from her.

5. **Máma ä lóonə yí nó ngwáŋə.**

IO DO

grandmother 3S.HAB beg her with salt

Grandmother begs her salt/ begs salt from her.

From the above examples therefore, the order of direct and indirect objects in Awing can be reversed.

There are optional elements of a clause. These are:

Direct objects and adverbials in Awing. The maximum number of optional elements in one clause in Awing can be two. Some of the various types of clauses that exist in Awing are expressed as follows.

Types of clauses

1. Declarative Clauses

Here, the researcher is going to look at two types of declarative clauses- active and non-active.

1.1. Active declarative clauses

Intransitive, transitive and ditransitive: An intransitive clause in Awing as well as in other languages is a declarative clause that is characterised by an intransitive predicate that takes one argument, a subject, and therefore has the valency of one. A transitive clause is a declarative clause that has a transitive predicate that takes two arguments- a subject and a direct object (DO), therefore having a valency of two. However, a ditransitive clause is a declarative clause with a ditransitive predicate that takes three arguments- a subject a direct object (DO) and an indirect object (IO). All these three arguments are required in the clause. A ditransitive predicate has a valency of three (Hedinger, 2009:3&4).

For active clauses, the language uses active predicates. These are verbs that present action, movement and process. For example, when we say a clause is an intransitive clause, we mean that it has an intransitive predicate as earlier mentioned, a transitive clause, a transitive predicate and a ditransitive clause, a ditransitive predicate.

1.2. Non-active declarative clauses

Non active declarative clauses are stative, attributive, equative, locative, possessive and existential- presentative clauses. With the stative clause, the predicate does not require an agent. A stative clause uses the verb **chîa**, to be and/or the copular verb **lô**, as part of the predicate because they connect the subject to the meaningful part of the predicate. The predicate may be an adjective or a particle. Stative clauses can either be an intransitive or transitive in Awing.

An attributive clause in Awing has a subject and followed by a non-verbal predicate. There is usually no verb in the present tense. For example;

6. Ndên á tsóga.

price 3S expensive
The price is expensive.

However, attributive clauses typically have the copular verb 'lǎ'.
An equative clause uses the copular verb 'lǎ' and has a noun phrase subject and a predicate nominal (proper inclusion). Example:

7. **Nǎmbǎsê lǎ móoonǎ.**
Name be baby
Ndambose is a baby.

Locative clauses in Awing have copular verbs and are sometimes juxtaposed. For instance;

8. **A għenǎ aɾeŋǎ.**
3S here LOC.outside
Here he is outside.

9. **Mǎna mǎ chíǎ akoobǎ.**
animals 3S be forest
Animals are in the forest.

Possessive clauses can either use the verb túgǎ 'to have' or chíǎ 'to be', with the preposition nǎ 'with' to show position. Example;

10. **A chíǎ nǎ nkéebǎ.**
3S be with money
He has money.

11. **Tata a túg pǎngyě pén pě.**
grandfather 3S have women NUM two
Grandfather has two wives.

An existential clause tells us that something or someone exists uses the verb chíǎ 'to be.'
Example:

12. **Pǎngyě pǎtsǎ pǎ chíǎ ówǎ.**
Women certain 3S be there
Some women are there.

A presentative clause uses demonstratives such as there/ here, this/ that, or it, to show the listener the person or thing he wants to identify or introduce.

13. **Lě ndimó mə.**
this relative POSS
This is my relative.

1.2.1. Non-active declarative clauses that always contain a verb

1.2.1.1. Stative clause, example:

14. **Əsê a jîə anuə atsəmə.**
God 3S know thing all
God knows everything.

1.2.1.2. Possessive clause, Example:

15. **Nó ə kě məkə túg pô.**
snake 3S NEG legs have NEG
A snake does not have legs.

2. Interrogative Clauses

In Awing, interrogative clauses such as tag question, Yes / No questions and information or context questions have different ways of expression. Interrogative questions are different from declarative questions in that interrogative questions sometimes are asked using a rising pitch just as in English and ending the last word in a short variant form. For example:

2.1. Statement

16. **Məmə a nə ńgenə á məteenə.**
Mother 3s P2 go to market
Mother went to the market.

2.2. Question

17. **Məmə a nə ńgenə á mətá?**
Mother 3s P2 go to market
Did mother go to the market?

Interrogative questions are marked by changing the schwa, which occurs at the suffix of the last word into a high tone e (é). For example:

2.3. Statement

18. **Pó nə ńtəmm əfəeló nó ńgéele.**
3p P2 shoot sparrows with gun
They shot sparrows with a gun.

The above examples are common in Yes/No questions. Interrogative questions are asked by adding separate morphemes. Example:

2.4. Question

19. Pó nə ńtámm əfɛɛlɔ́ nɔ́ ngéelɛ́?

3p P2 shoot sparrows with gun

Did they shoot sparrows with a gun?

In the above question, the speaker wishes to confirm pre- information he or she has.

2.5. Statement

20. Ajísê a yĩə alá'ə.

Name 3s come village

Ajise has come to the village.

2.6 . Question

21. Ajísê a yĩə alá'ə, ki ɔ́lé?

Name 3s come village, or how

Ajise has come to the village, hasn't she?

The above example is found only in tag questions. Certain phrases are replaced by question words in information question. For instance:

22. Jɔ́nɔ́ a fo?

John 3s where

Where is John?

23. Jɔ́nɔ́ a ghen fɔ́?

John 3s go where

Where has John gone to?

24. Jɔ́nɔ́ a ghenâ afoonə.

John 3s go farm

John has gone to the farm.

When there is a verb in a clause, the question word (QW), (**fɔ́**) carries a high tone at the final position, but when there is no verb, it carries a low tone.

The following words are used in tag questions: **kiáɛ́, lɔ́ líd, á ko'nâ, lɔ́ anu**, among others. There is the use of cleft constructions as information questions are concerned. For instance:

25. Lɔ́ əwə pá' a sánə akáj zâ?

is who which 3s break dish that

Who has broken that dish?

Cleft questions and answers are not necessarily required to be cleft. That is, they are optional. The above question can be answered in two ways, either by using a cleft construction in the answer or by not using it. Examples:

26. Lɔ́ Apé pá' a sánəázóólɔ́.

Is name which 3s break it

It is Ape who has broken it.

27. Apé a sánə ázəəló.

name 3s break it

Ape has broken it.

28. Ló Apé

is name

It is Ape.

These three statements answer the question above, but only the first one is cleft. Awing uses question words like **áfó**, **ólé**, **əwə**, and **akê**. In a clause, interrogative words can be used in two ways:

- a. Moved to the beginning of the clause;
- b. Moved to the end of the clause.

Example:

29. Akê á ghəd nó gho yĭə alá'ə?

what 3s make you come village

What caused you to come to the village?

30. Gho yĭə alá' lə íté akê?

you come village so because what

Why have you come to the village?

In the tag, the verb is not repeated. For instance:

31. Mámá a kwúə, ki ólé?

grandmother 3s die, or how

Grandmother is dead, isn't she?

The language also uses a truth statement tag, such as **á kó'nə** 'right', **ndə̀ndə̀** 'true' and **lólól (líd)** 'correct'. It also uses positive or negative contrasts as follows:

- a. Both statements and tag are positive. Example:

32. Móonə a tó ígoonə, ndə̀ndə̀?

baby 3s IMP sick, true

The baby is sick, true?

- b. Statement is positive and tag negative. Example:

33. Memá a kwê afoonə, á kě líd pô?

mother 3s return farm 3s NEG so NEG

Mother has returned from the farm, not so?

The statement is negative and tag positive, as in the statement below.

34. Afěsê a kě ndê chî pô, ló anu?

name 3s NEG house be NEG, it is true

Afese is not in the house, is it true?

The following table summarises interrogative clauses in Awing and the type of information that each question asks for.

Interrogative Clauses in Awing	Content Type
1. <u>Ló akó</u> / <u>Ló əwə</u> a yə? What/Who is that?	Noun phrase
2. <u>Ló zəənə</u> atsə' pa' gho koŋ nə? Which dress do you like?	Determiner
3. Gho ghenê <u>ló fǒ</u> ? Where are you going?	Adverbial
4. A lo ló əpa ngwán <u>pén əshí'ə</u> ? How many bags of salt does he want	Quantifier
5. Gho fa'ə <u>ló akə</u> ? What are you doing?	Verb phrase
6. Gho yiə á li' nə <u>ló nté akə</u> ? Why are you here?	Reason

The underlined words or phrases are the interrogative words. There are many kinds of interrogative words that differ according to the content of the information that the speaker wants to know. Some of the question words are placed at the beginning of the clause and others at the end.

7. Imperative Clauses

As in English, imperative clauses in Awing are used to give a direct and strong command. The verb uses a simpler form in the imperative mood. It uses the second person subjects 'gho'. They have no overt noun phrase subject. They are sometimes impolite-they are commonly used by adults to command children to do something. Imperative clauses in Awing have the following characteristics:

- no tense marking;
- no person marking;
- and no number marking. For instance:

35. Ghen náanə əsê!

Go sit ground

Go and sit down!

Polite commands are used to soften and make a request more polite. Unlike direct commands with a single verb form, polite commands have two verb forms, namely, the hortative mood

and the subjunctive mood. They have subjects- first, second, and third person singular and plural. Examples:

a. **Hortative**

36. Maŋ pó' mbô, kwáalə mə.

i clap hands help me
Please, help me.

3.2. Subjunctive

37. Á kě yĩ pəŋ ńgá gho twî pô.

it NEG F1 good that you absent NEG
It will not be good for you to be absent.

For imperative clauses, the subject is always omitted. The verb form is different from the indicative mood (declarative clauses). The present tense imperatives take the same form as the present tense indicative. Person and number marking are limited to certain ones. Imperatives have only implied second person subjects.

In hortative clauses, the verb form is different from that of imperative.

8. Coordination Clauses

In Awing, just like in English, two or more clauses are joined in sentence by a coordinating conjunction. There are two ways of coordinating two or more independent clauses:

a. With a conjunction; Example:

a. by coupling: linking two things together using **pó, mbi** or **né**;

b. by alternating: **ki**;

c. and by contrasting- connecting with **ló** or **ló mbə**.

4.2. Clauses are also coordinated by the use of juxtaposition- no conjunction, but can give the same sense as those above. For example:

a. Conjunction by coupling:

38. Akófo pó tá əyĩ ə ghenə atə'ə.

name and father POSS 3P go palm bush

Akofor and his father have gone to the raffia palm bush.

39. Ayəfo pó Ngəm né Akwěsê ə ghenə á məteenə.

name and name with name 3P go to market

Ayafor, Ngem and Akwese go to the market.

40. Afěsê a pe' kóđ nəŋgə mbi ńnô məlo'ə.

name 3S P1 eat plantain and drink wine

Afese ate plantain and drank wine.

41. A kə náŋnə məjî mbi ní' ngabtô.

3S P2 cook food and then share

She prepared food and shared.

In the last example above, **ní'** (then), makes a difference in that it makes the activities sequential, but the other examples with only **pó, mbi** and **ná** do not entail which activity comes first.

b. Conjunction by alternating. Example:

42. Gho kəŋ məkwú ki ndzô?

you like rice or beans

Do you like rice or beans?

c. Conjunction by contrasting:

43. M mbe' ngenô afoonə ló mbó nkě fa' pô.

i P1 go farm but be NEG work NGG

I went to the farm but did not work.

9. Clause Chain and Consecutives

In Awing, many clauses can be joined together in one sentence by using the conjunction **ńkó**, which means 'and. SS'. The action can either be sequential or simultaneous. For example:

44. A kə jî məjî ńkó ńnô nkě.

3S P2 eat food also drink water

He ate food and drank water.

Also, the language uses the high-tone syllabic nasals (pre-nasals) **ń, ń, ń** and the high-tone schwa, **á**, to mark consecutives with different subjects. Example:

45. Táta a pé' ngenô akəb ńtómə tŋka' mbi ńkwô á ndé.

grandfather 3s P1 go forest cons.shoot elephant again SS.return to house

Grandfather went to the forest, shot an elephant and return home.

Note: This action is sequential, marked by consecutive with same subject.

46. A kə kwúnə á ndé, ló mbó nkě əyá á mǎ náanə á akə'ə.

3S P2 enter to house so but refuse him to sit to chair

He entered the house, but refused to sit on the chair.

Secondly, the language also coordinates clauses by juxtaposition, that is not using conjunctions, but still communicates the senses of coupling, alternating, and contrasting, 'and', 'or' and 'but'. For instance:

47. A ghenô á mətá njú na ófê nó ngwě əyĩ.

3S go to market buy meat give with wife his

He went to the market, bought meat and gave to his wife.

In this kind of coordination, there is no limit to the number of clauses that can be linked in one sentence. That is, we can link as many clauses as possible. Example:

48. A kə tó' nkĩ ngen ófê á mbô mǎ əyĩ a kĩa əyó wóəló.

3S P2 fetch water go SS.give to hands mother his 3S refuse her it

He fetched water for his mother and she refused it.

The above example demonstrates consecutive with different subject. The difference between same subject (SS) and different subject DS is that in a clause with DS, actions are performed by different persons that is, replacing the consecutive marker (nasal prefix) a subject agreement marker. While in clauses with SS, the same person or persons perform actions and the actions are separated by consecutive markers. The conjunctions and the consecutive markers show SS and DS as seen in the examples above.

Sequential and simultaneous actions are shown by using conjunctions like **mbí nká**, **mbí** or **mbí ntí'**, as seen in the sentences above. In these cases, there are no affixes used. There are a special consecutive markers or temporal conjunctions (nasal prefixes) which give the sense of **mbí ntí'** (and then) or **mbí nká** (and also).

In Awing, the nasal prefix which marks a consecutive construction links the verb phrases of subsequent clauses to the verb phrase of the first clause. Example:

49. Akófo a nə njê apá mbí ntí' ngyĩ.

Name 3s P2 eat fufu and CONS.then come

Akofo ate fufu and then came.

10. Dependent Clauses- Adverbial Clauses

Like English and many other African languages, Awing has seven types of adverbial clauses; namely: time, locative, manner, purpose, reason adverbial clause, conditional adverbial clause and concessive adverbial clause. These clauses have their various markers- **əghâ/ndəd**, **nté ngó**, **mbó'**, **njî ngó**, **ndzaŋ**, **pătə** and **ló ghəd ólíd**, which also mark adverbial relative clauses.

Time adverbial clause occurs in the beginning where the verb used is auxiliary only and takes the normal action verbs. For instance:

50. Á nə mbá əzoonə a yə á ndê

It P2 be yesterday 3S come to house

Yesterday, he came to the house. / He came to the house yesterday.

In the Awing, as well as in many other languages, the word for time functions in a sentence like a ‘when’ (əghâ) adverbial clause. An example of this is shown below.

51. Əghâ pá’ a kə ghenə afə ló, maŋ kə jwíg nə pòŋkə.

Time REL 3S P2 go farm so I P2 stay with children

(At) the time she went to the farm, I looked after the children.

From the sentence above, the main clause is the second; ‘**maŋ kə jwíg nə pòŋkə**’. Looking at the verb form, both clauses are marked as past simple tense. The relative clause, as well as the independent clause has the same full inflection. For the participant reference, the subject of the relative clause is a pronoun.

An Adverbial clause differs from an independent clause in that it is a dependent clause that serves as an optional element of a clause. Adverbials give information about time, location, manner, reason or purpose. The head noun can be ‘time’ for time adverbial, ‘place’ for location adverbial, ‘manner’ for a manner adverbial and ‘word or problem’ for reason or purpose adverbials.

A Relative clause has the same full inflection as an independent clause. There is a relativiser, **pá’** that introduces the relative clause. Complement clauses are marked using complementizers like **ńgá** (that), **ghó** (say), and others which are prepositions like **á má**, For example:

52. Tă əyă a ghó: “Móonə mə a kě á ndê chí pò”

father his 3S say child my 3S NEG to house be NEG

His father said, “My child is not in the house”.

53. Pó kə kwaŋ ńgá mə əghoobə a kə kě alá’ chí pò.

they P2 think that mother their 3S P2 NEG village be NEG

They thought that their mother was not in the village.

54. Akwěsə a tó ńdoonə á má ghennə á məteenə.

Akwese 3S PROG want to go to market

Akwese wants to go to the market.

Awing also makes use of words like adverbials to introduce a complete clause. For instance: **kí...lě**, which introduces a conditional clause.

55. M mə ńjî kí ŋwu wə a yí lě yí á ndê.

I NEG know or man that 3S will whether come to house

I do not know whether that man will come to the house.

Awing has another adverbial, ndzaŋ, glossed ‘as’ telling the procedure for doing something.

56. A jî ndjaŋ ä fa'nó zəəló.

he knows as he. HAB. work it

He knows how he does it.

57. Ló anuə tápɔŋ ná móonə á má lê ná aɾeŋá.

it is thing bad for child to sleep outside

It is a bad thing for a child to sleep (stay the night) outside.

11. Dependent Clauses- Complement Clauses

In Awing, complementisers are used in all contexts. Unlike English and some Cameroonian languages where the predicates allow for optional complementisers, there is no way we can omit a complementiser as in English and the sentence still gives meaning.

Some of the more common predicate taking complements are: **ghó** (say), **kwaŋə** (think), **megtâ** (finish), **funô** (worry), **shíb** (must), **kəŋə** (like), **jî** (know) **jí** (see), among others. Some complementary clauses in Awing are:

a. Non-finite: infinitive and gerund

b. Gerundives complement clauses. For instance:

58. Maŋ kəŋə á má zəbnó nkǎ.

I like to sing song

I like to sing/ I like singing

As in English, we can also make the verb ‘sing’ in to the subject of a sentence with a gerundive form.

59. Mə zəb ná nkǎ má pəŋə.

to sing song it good

Singing is good.

Declarative Complement Clauses, example:

60. A pé' əsəŋ ɲgá mə əyǎ a tó ɲgyǎ.

3S P1 say COMP mother POSS 3S IMPF come

He said that his mother is coming.

Note that the Awing language uses the past tense (P1) only in the matrix clause and not in the embedded clause.

7.1. Subjunctive Clauses, example:

61. Akõfo a nã ɛsõŋ ñgá pò pã mã ɛghɔb kwê á ndê.
name 3S P2 say COMP 3P with mother their return to house
Akofor said that they should return home with their mother.

7.2. Reported Speech

7.3.1. Direct Speech

62. Pó sóŋã á mbô mã ɛghɔb ñgá: Tã ɛghoobá a yõ kwê ngwe'á
they say to hands mother their that father their 3S F2 return tomorrow
They said to their mother that, their father will return tomorrow.

7.3.2. Indirect Speech Quotations

63. Pó nã ɛsõŋã á mbô mã ɛghɔb ñgá tã ɛghoobá a yõ kwê ngwe'á.
3P P2 say to hands mother their that father their 3S F2 return tomorrow
They said to their mother that their father would return the next day.

64. A pe' ɛsõŋ ñgá kɔ maŋ fyád ngwú jí dzê.
3S P1 say COMP NEG I chase dog it that
He said that I should not chase the dog.

7.3.3. Semi-direct Quotations or Questions, for example:

65. Tã ɛyĩã a pítã ñgá “tãmbɔ' gho wûã aŋwa'lã, a yĩ ñghed álé ná gho?”
Father POSS 3S ask COMP if you fail book 3S F1 do how with you
His father asked that if you fail, what would he (speaker) do with you?”

Whether direct, indirect or semi-direct quotations or questions, Awing uses a complementiser, ghá or ñgá to introduce the content of what is to be said. The only difference is that with indirect or semi-direct quotations, other words like ki...lã and tãmbɔ' which have the same meaning as “whether” and “if, are added after the complementiser to introduce the content. Example:

66. A pítã áwág ñgá ki pã lë ɛfinê ngɛsáŋá alá' Mbîwiŋ.
3S ask us COMP or IND whether sell corn village Awing
He asked us whether corn is sold in Awing.

Conclusion

Looking at the over view of this paper with all the analyses and examples given, a conclusion can be drawn that the Awing language and other African languages as well as French and English share common characteristics.

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Appendix

Abbreviations

3P- Third person plural
3S- Third person singular
COMP- Complementizer
CONS- Consecutive marker
DO- Direct object
DS- Different subject
F1- Near future
F2- Far future
HAB- Habitual
IMPF- Imperfective marker
IO- Indirect object
IND- Indefinite pronoun
LOC- Location
NEG- Negation
NUM- Number
P1- Recent past
P2- Far past
POSS- Possessive pronoun
PROG- Progressive marker
REL- Relative pronoun
SS- Same subject