

## **ON THE PROPERTIES OF EMAI'S *KHI* COPULA CONSTRUCTION\***

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This paper examines the equational identity (EI) construction in Nigeria's Edoid language Emai. It weighs this construction's grammatical properties against a complex of equational identity patterns developed in the crosslinguistic investigations of Stassen (1997). Although EI properties reveal its functional heritage, they fail to conform fully to Stassen's findings. While EI noun phrases are sensitive to information structure and definiteness values, the construction as a whole fails to exhibit crucial features. It evinces no third person limitation, manifests limited predicational structure, and demonstrates compatibility with a restricted range of temporal categories, although not indicative tense/aspect. It is the last of these that highlights the EI construction's obligatory subjunctive marking and its non-deictic temporal character.

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## 1. Introduction.

As part of a crosslinguistic investigation of intransitive predication and its formal encoding, Stassen (1997) delineates the morphosyntactic properties of nominal predication. In contrast to adjectival and locational predication, its function is to specify class membership, i.e. assign the referent of *the man* to the class farmer in *The man is a farmer*. Stassen's wide-ranging database, including that from sub-Saharan Africa, reveals that nominal predication is frequently expressed through the morphosyntax of equational identity. The latter's primary function is to equate two referents previously assumed to be non-identical, e.g. *It is the man whom we greeted that is a farmer* or *This man is the farmer whom we greeted*. This concern with function leads Stassen to reach beyond the definiteness requirement of identity-construction noun phrases often noted in previous literature (Strawson 1974).

Stassen (1997) summarizes his crosslinguistic findings for identity constructions by highlighting four grammatical tendencies:

In sum, we can state that identity statements, on the basis of their semantic-functional characteristics, can be predicted to exhibit the following structural features:

- their unmarked person form will be the third person;
- they will either lack tense-marking or have present tense;
- they will have zero predicate marking if the language allows this at all and
- they may feature topic/focus-marking devices in a more obligatory way than other sentence types do. (p. 110-111)

In other words, equational identity should be framed by construction elements whose grammatical origin lies in overtly signaling aspects of information structure. It should also prefer third person form (if person is marked); reject tense marking and associated temporal forms (or exclusively rely on present tense); and fail to evince predication (i.e. favor identification over predication and its consequent assignment of a subject argument to a predicate). These properties converge on so-called "zero copula" constructions (e.g. Russian's *Moskova gorod* 'Moscow is a city. '), which Stassen frequently finds encoding not only equational identity but also class membership. Nonetheless, not all languages allow a zero copula; some may instead dedicate a specific morphosyntactic construction to each of the functions equational identity and class membership. For such cases, closer scrutiny of Stassen's crosslinguistic tendencies may prove worthwhile.

The West African language Emai (Edoid, Benue-Congo)<sup>1</sup> explicitly distinguishes the functions of equational identity from class membership in its morphosyntax. Equational identity is formally grounded to the BE form *khi* (*ólí ómóhé nà lí í khi ònwímè* 'It is this man who is a farmer.') and class membership to the BE form *vbi* (*ólí ómóhé nà í ì vbi ònwímè*. 'This man is not a farmer.').<sup>2</sup> For this paper, we restrict analysis to the equational identity (EI) construction. Its character appears to reflect its functional heritage, although its grammatical properties do not follow entirely the specific crosslinguistic tendencies outlined by Stassen. EI noun phrases are sensitive to information structure and definiteness values but show no third person restriction. Emai's EI construction exhibits a limited but nonetheless evident predicational nature. And while EI constructions reject tense/aspect marking, they accept auxiliary and preverb categories with non-deictic temporal significance, thus casting doubt on a general atemporal characterization for equational identity.

## 2. Overview of Equational Identity Construction.

At the core of Emai's EI construction is the copula form *khi*, a focus position noun phrase preceding the copula and a post-copula noun phrase.<sup>3</sup> The focus position noun phrase requires the positive focus (PF) marker *li* (1a) or its negative focus (NF) counterpart *ki* (1b). Either of these markers is immediately followed by an obligatory particle *í* in subject position. The post-*khi* noun phrase exhibits no obligatory grammatical marking.

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<sup>1</sup> The major subdivisions of the Edoid language family are outlined in Elugbe (1989). Emai is a member of the North-Central Branch. It is spoken by approximately 25-30,000 speakers across 12 villages in an area that is at longitude 6° east of Greenwich Meridian and latitude 7° north of the equator.

<sup>2</sup> Some of the typological character of Emai's five BE constructions is discussed in Schaefer and Egbokhare to appear.

<sup>3</sup> Orthographic conventions for Emai are consistent with those in Schaefer (1987) and Schaefer and Egbokhare (1999), where <ɔ> represents a lax mid-back vowel, <ɛ> a lax mid-front vowel, and <vb> a voiced bilabial approximant. High tone is marked by an acute accent, low tone by a grave accent and high downstep by an acute accent followed by an apostrophe. Across an Emai clause, tone marking is grammatically conditioned by inflectional factors such as mood, tense/aspect, polarity as well as syntactic position. As a result, tone values on most lexical or grammatical items will appear to shift somewhat from construction to construction.

- (1) a. ólí ómóhé nà lí í khì òdón ôí.<sup>4</sup>  
 the man this PF ID COP husband her  
 ‘It is this man who is her husband.’
- b. ólí ómóhé nà kí í khì òdón ôí.  
 the man this NF ID COP husband her  
 ‘It isn’t this man who is her husband.’

The equational identity character of the *khi* construction is emphasized through obligatory number agreement. The noun phrase preceding the focus marker and the one following *khi* must agree in number, as indicated by the plural definite determiner *éí* and the plural demonstrative *èâin* (2a), compared to the singular definite determiner *ólí* and the singular demonstrative *òâin* (2c). Lack of number agreement between these positions leads to ungrammaticality (2b and 2d).

- (2) a. éí úkpún lí óbín lí í khì èâin.  
 the cloth R dark PF ID COP those-ones  
 ‘It is the dark cloths that are those ones./Those ones are the dark cloths.’
- b. \*éí úkpún lí óbín lí í khì òâin.  
 the cloth R dark PF ID COP that-one
- c. ólí úkpún ísì òjè lí í khì òâin.  
 the cloth ASS Oje PF ID COP that-one  
 ‘It is the cloth of Oje that is that one./  
 That one is the cloth of Oje.’
- d. \*ólí úkpún ísì òjè lí í khì èâin.  
 the cloth ASS Oje PF ID COP those-ones

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<sup>4</sup> Abbreviations used throughout this study include the following: ABSI = absolute intensification, ADD = additive, ANT = anterior, ANTI = anticipative, APP = applicative, ASS = associative, C = continuous, CER = certaintive, CON = conative, CONC = concessive, COP = copula, CORC = correlative conjunction, DED = deductive, DMD = distal manner deictic, DUB = dubitative, DUR = durative, EG = egressive, H = habitual, HOR = hortative, HYP = hypothetical, IG = ingressive, NEG = negative, NF = negative focus, PA = past absolute, PCT = punctual, PF = positive focus, PR = prohibitive, PRED = predictive, R = relator, RC = recurrent, REFL = reflexive REP = repetitive, SC = subject concord, SEQ = sequential, SUB = subsequent, and TEMP = temporal perspective.

Emai's EI construction may have its origin in a grammatical device marking information structure, as Stassen's findings would suggest. The form *khi* with obligatory low tone combines with the subject particle *í* to define right dislocation constructions and their "afterthought" function, as shown in (3).

- (3) a.  $\underline{\text{ò}}$  gbé  $\underline{\text{éwè}}$ ,  $\text{í}$   $\text{khi}$   $\underline{\text{òlì}}$   $\underline{\text{ómòhè}}$ .  
 he kill goat ID COP the man  
 'He killed a goat, that is, the man.'
- b.  $\underline{\text{é}}\text{lí}$   $\underline{\text{ímòhè}}$  gbé  $\underline{\text{òí}}$ ,  $\text{í}$   $\text{khi}$   $\underline{\text{èwé}}$   $\text{ísì}$   $\underline{\text{òjè}}$ .  
 the men kill it ID COP goat ASS Oje  
 'The men killed it, that is, the goat of Oje.'

The form *khi* alone also designates a correlative conjunction, i.e. 'both NP and NP.' However, the resulting construction is limited to the discourse sensitive position topic. Preceding each correlatively conjoined noun phrase in topic position is the form *khi* with obligatory low tone.

- (4)  $\text{khi}$   $\underline{\text{òlì}}$   $\underline{\text{ómóhé}}$   $\text{khi}$   $\underline{\text{òlì}}$   $\underline{\text{óvbékhán}}$ ,  $\text{yàn}$   $\text{é}$   $\underline{\text{émà}}$ .  
 CORC the man CORC the youth they eat yam  
 'As for both the man and the youth, they ate yam.'

### 3. Subject Position Constraints.

Of the three positions associated with *khi* in EI constructions, subject is the most restricted. The position occupied by the subject particle *í* requires an obligatory high tone. It fails to accept pronominal particles conveying person (third person singular  $\underline{\text{ó}}$  5a or plural  $\text{yán}$  5b), which are otherwise acceptable in subject position in focus constructions ( $\text{yán}$  5c).

- (5) a. \* $\underline{\text{ó}}\text{lí}$   $\underline{\text{ómóhé}}$   $\text{nà}$   $\text{lí}$   $\underline{\text{ó}}$   $\text{khi}$   $\underline{\text{ònwìmè}}$ .  
 the man this PF he COP farmer  
 'It is this man who is a farmer.'
- b. \* $\underline{\text{é}}\text{lí}$   $\underline{\text{ímóhé}}$   $\text{nà}$   $\text{lí}$   $\text{yán}$   $\text{khi}$   $\underline{\text{ìnwìmè}}$ .  
 the men these PF they COP farmers  
 'It is these men who are farmers.'

- c.  $\acute{e}lí$   $ímóhé$   $nà$   $lí$   $yán$   $gbé$   $ólí$   $ófè$ .  
 the men these PF they kill the rat  
 ‘It is these men who killed the rat.’

Since the position occupied by the  $í$  particle disallows subject particles expressing person, the *khi* construction reveals no person function and, thus, no evidence of a third person bias. Instead, the subject particle  $í$  conveys an identiphoric function.<sup>5</sup> It registers identification between construction noun phrases, i.e. the noun phrases in focus position and post-*khi* position. Two other Emai constructions marking identification relationships also require the particle  $í$  in subject position. We have already seen its use in the right dislocation (afterthought) construction of (3), where the speaker registers subject (3a) or direct object (3b) identification explicitly in the phrase following *khi*. The  $í$  particle is also obligatory in information questions of the ‘which’ type in (6), where it precedes the verb  $yí$  ‘declare, show, indicate’ to query the identification of a referent.

- (6)  $í$   $yì$   $òlí$   $ómóhé$   $lí$   $ó$   $hían$   $ólí$   $óràn?$   
 ID indicate the man R he cut the wood  
 ‘Which one indicates the man who cut the wood?’  
 Which man cut the wood?’

Across equational identity, ‘afterthought’ and ‘which’ constructions,  $í$  specifies a subject relation relative to a predicate, either *khi* or  $yí$ . Its status as grammatical subject is revealed by behavior with an auxiliary particle such as *ma* ‘surely, certainly.’ In non-equational identity constructions, subject particles expressing person ( $ó$  /third person singular) precede a verb (*da* ‘drink’) in constructions where an auxiliary is lacking (7a) but precede an auxiliary when one is present (*má* CER in 7b). A similar pattern characterizes subject particles in non-equational identity focus constructions ( $ó$  precedes *da* in 7c but *ma* in 7d).

<sup>5</sup> The pronominal function identiphoric contrasts not only with definite personal pronouns (e.g.  $ó$  ‘he/she/it’,  $yán$  ‘they’) but also with logophoric pronouns. The latter express referential identity between a human noun argument embedded in a clause under a verb of communication or cognition and the grammatical subject of that verb (e.g.  $yón$  in  $ólí$   $ómòhè$   $ééní$   $khi$   $yòn$   $gbé$   $éí$   $éwè$ . ‘The man knew that he (himself) killed the goats.’ Definite personal pronouns in embedded clauses show disjoint reference vis-à-vis the grammatical subject of the main clause verb (e.g.  $ó$  in  $ólí$   $ómòhè$   $ééní$   $khi$   $ò$   $gbé$   $éí$   $éwè$ . ‘The man knew that he (someone else) killed the goats.’).

- (7) a. ó dá ólí ényò.  
 he drink the wine  
 'He drank the wine.'
- b. ó má dá ólí ényò.  
 he CER drink the wine  
 'He surely drank the wine.'
- c. ólí ómóhé nà lí ó dá ólí ényò.  
 the man this PF he drink the wine  
 'It is this man who drank the wine.'
- d. ólí ómóhé nà lí ó má dá ólí ényò.  
 the man this PF he CER drink the wine  
 'It is this man who surely drank the wine.'

*khi* constructions as well as 'which' interrogatives with the same auxiliary require that the *í* particle precede *ma* (8a-b). *í* thus registers a subject-predicate relation, and Emai's *khi* construction evinces predication, even of a limited sort, contra Stassen.

- (8) a. ólí ómóhé nà lí í mà khí ódón óí.  
 the man this PF ID CER COP husband her  
 'It is this man who surely is her husband./  
 Her husband is surely this man.'
- b. í mà yí ólí ómóhé lí ó hían ólí óràn?  
 ID CER indicate the man R 3S cut the wood  
 'Which one surely indicates the man who cut the wood?/  
 Which man surely cut the wood?'

#### 4. Noun Phrase Constraints.

The two noun phrase positions in Emai's EI construction exhibit a complex of symmetrical and asymmetrical structural constraints. The dimensions of these constraints fall along emphatic and definiteness lines rather than person. EI noun phrase positions are symmetrical in their rejection of overt non-definite marking by pronouns or post-nominal modifiers. They are asymmetrical in their acceptance of emphatic particles, the definite determiner and pronouns reflecting

person.

Pre-*khi* focus position does not admit explicit indefinite marking. It admits proper names as well as proper names marked by the emphatic particle *òkpá*.

- (9) òhí / òhí òkpá lí í khì òdón ôi.  
 Ohi Ohi alone PF ID COP husband her  
 ‘It is Ohi / Ohi alone who is her husband.’

It accepts bare inanimate nouns with or without emphatic *òkpá* (10a) as well as inanimate nouns marked by the definite determiner *ólí* (10b), the latter also allowing emphatic *òkpá*. Overt definite marking is thus not obligatory in pre-*khi* position.

- (10) a. èkpà / èkpà òkpá lí í khì ísì òjè.  
 bag bag alone PF ID COP ASS Oje  
 ‘It is a bag / a bag alone that is Oje’s.’
- b. ólì èkpà / ólì èkpà òkpá lí í khì ísì òjè.  
 the bag the bag alone PF ID COP ASS Oje  
 ‘It is the bag / the bag alone that is Oje’s.’

Focus position allows emphatic pronouns regardless of person (11a), thus demonstrating no third person bias, as would be expected from Stassen’s findings. Moreover, focus position admits no non-emphatic personal pronouns, as in (11b).

- (11) a. mèmè / wèwè / ìyòìn lí í khì ònwìmè.  
 I you he PF ID COP farmer  
 ‘It is I/you/he who am/are/is a farmer.’
- b. \*ì / ù / ò lí í khì ònwìmè.  
 I you he PF ID COP farmer  
 ‘It is I/you/he who am/are/is a farmer.’

Pre-*khi* focus position permits a wide range of impersonal pronouns, including numeral and universal quantifying pronouns, sortal<sup>6</sup> pronouns and the demonstra-

<sup>6</sup> Sortal refers to a type of grammatical category in Emai specifying a “kind of” relation within a proximal/distal deictic frame. It occurs as pronoun or modifier, assuming the shapes *ùllyó*



tive pronouns in (12).

- (12) òâin / ònà / ònôî lí í khì àgbògbòràn.  
 that-one this-one next-one PF ID COP woodpecker  
 'It is that one /this one/ the next one that is a woodpecker.'

However, focus position fails to accept the existential quantifying pronoun òsò 'some/certain one' whose referent is known to the speaker but not shared by speaker and hearer. Since òsò thus establishes a relation of specific reference, it is overtly non-definite.

- (13) \*òsò lí í khì ísì èmé.  
 certain-one PF ID COP ASS my  
 'It is a certain one that is mine.'

Pre-*khi* focus position also allows pronominal-headed relative clauses (14a). They become unacceptable if marked by the recurrent (RC) particle *a*, whose generic, overtly non-definite character is signaled by translations with 'wh-ever' (14b).

- (14) a. ò lí ò nwú émà lí òlì òkpòsò lí í khì òâin.  
 one R he give yam APP the woman PF ID COP that-one  
 'It is the one who gave yam to the woman who is that one. /  
 That one is the one who gave yam to the woman.'
- b. \*ò lí ò á nwú émà lí òlì òkpòsò lí í khì òâin.  
 one R he RC give yam APP the woman PF ID COP that-one  
 'It is whoever gave yam to the woman that is that one. /  
 That one is whoever gave yam to the woman.'

With respect to post-nominal modifiers, focus position does not admit the existential quantifier òsò with its specific reference.

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'that kind', òlíná 'this kind', èlìyò 'those kinds', èníná 'these kinds' for the older generation familiar with Emai's oral tradition (Schaefer and Egbokhare 1999), but only èlìyò 'that kind' for the younger generation. As a modifier in contemporary speech, it appears in phrases such as ùkpún èlìyò 'cloth of that kind' and èrà èlìyò 'father of that kind' as well as a pronoun in expressions like èlìyò lí í khì àgbògbòràn. 'It is that kind of one that is a woodpecker. / A woodpecker is that kind of one.'

- (15) \*úkpún ósò lí í khì ùkú ísì èmé.  
 cloth certain PF ID COP inheritance ASS my  
 'It is a certain cloth that is my inheritance.'

The noun phrase position following *khi* is more constrained than its focus position counterpart. Post-*khi* position is sensitive to emphatic and definiteness but completely rejects person marking. Proper names occur in this position but not with emphatic *òkpá*.

- (16) ódón ôí lí í khì òlólò / \*òlólò òkpá.  
 husband her PF ID COP Ololo Ololo alone  
 'It is her husband who is Ololo. / Ololo is the one who is her husband.'

Inanimate lexical nouns (*èkpà* 'bag') in post-*khi* position require the definite determiner *ólí* (17a); bare inanimate nouns are ungrammatical, as seen in (17b). Regardless of determiner presence, emphatic *òkpá* is disallowed in post-*khi* position, as shown in both (17a) and (17b). It thus appears that post-*khi* position must be overtly definite but can never be overtly emphatic.

- (17) a. ísì òjè lí í khì ólí èkpà / \*ólí èkpà òkpá.  
 ASS Oje PF ID COP the bag the bag alone  
 'The bag is Oje's. / The one that is Oje's is the bag.'
- b. \*ísì òjè lí í khì èkpà / èkpà òkpá.  
 ASS Oje PF ID COP bag bag alone  
 'A bag is Oje's. / The one that is Oje's is a bag.'

Post-*khi* position restricts pronominal forms. Regardless of pronoun person, it admits neither subject (18a), direct object (18b), nor emphatic personal forms (18c). It thus reflects no propensity for third person, contra Stassen, and no grammatical relation such as direct object.

- (18) a. \*ódón ôí lí í khì ì / ù / ò.  
 husband her PF ID COP I you he  
 'Her husband is the one that is I/you/he.'
- b. \*ódón ôí lí í khì mē / è / ôí.  
 husband her PF ID COP me / you / him

- c. \*ódón ôí lí í khi mèmè / wèwè / ìyòìn.  
 husband her PF ID COP I you he  
 'Her husband is the one that is I /you/he.'

Post-*khi* position permits various impersonal pronouns: demonstrative (*èâin* 'those ones,' *ènôî* 'next ones'), universal quantifying (*èrèmé* 'all'), and collective quantifying (*èvèvá* 'both').

- (19) ìgbégbè lí í khi èâin / ènôî / èrèmé / èvèvá.  
 velvet PF ID COP those-ones next-ones all both  
 'It is the ones that are velvet that are those ones /the next ones / all / both./  
 Those ones / the next ones / all / both are the ones that are velvet.'

It fails, nonetheless, to accept the existential pronoun *ósò* 'some/certain one' and its specific reference requirement.

- (20) \*ìgbégbè lí í khi ósò.  
 velvet PF ID COP certain-one  
 'It is velvet that a certain one is./ A certain one is the one that is velvet.'

And while post-*khi* position admits pronominally headed relative clauses (21a), such clauses are unacceptable if they incorporate the recurrent particle (RC) *a* and its generic 'wh-ever' interpretation (21b).

- (21) a. óâin lí í khi ò lí ò nwú émà lí òlì òkpòsò.  
 that-one PF ID COP one R he give yam APP the woman  
 'It is that one who is the one who gave yam to the woman.'
- b. \*óâin lí í khi ò lí ò á nwú émà lí òlì òkpòsò.  
 that-one PF ID COP one R he RC give yam APP the woman  
 'It is that one that is whoever gave yam to the woman.'

Relative to nominal modification, post-*khi* position does not allow the existential quantifier *ósò* 'certain, some' and its specific reference obligation.

- (22) \*àzén lí í khi òmóhé ósò.  
 wizard PF ID COP man certain  
 'It is a wizard that is a certain man./  
 A certain man is the one who is a wizard.'

The preceding has attempted to demonstrate that the two noun phrase positions in Emai's EI construction uniformly disallow overtly non-definite pronouns and modifiers. These positions also exhibit asymmetric distribution regarding emphatic and definiteness marking. Bare inanimate nouns and proper names with emphatic marking appear in pre-*khi* focus position, whereas post-*khi* position requires inanimate nouns marked as definite or proper names, although neither of these in post-*khi* position allows emphatic marking. Pre-*khi* focus position allows emphatic pronouns reflecting person, whereas post-*khi* position admits no personal pronouns at all. To this extent, neither noun phrase position associated with the *khi* construction reveals Stassen's postulated third person preference.

## 5. Temporal Constraints.

We direct attention now to the properties of *khi* in Emai's EI construction. As our point of departure, we take note of Stassen's (1997) review of the temporal character of identity constructions:

Thus, in their typical use, identity statements are the epitome of Time Stability. In fact, one might even doubt whether the concept of time is applicable to them at all; one might see them as essentially A-TEMPORAL or TIMELESS.... The timeless nature of identity statements may find its formal correlate in two different ways. First there are languages in which identity statements 'deny' the relevance of time specification by disallowing any formal tense marking at all. While other sentence types may (or must) be marked for tense, identity statements in these languages are constructed as 'a-temporal' or 'tenseless'. ... Other languages, however, do not permit sentence types which lack formal tense-marking. In such a case, the language typically singles out one of the available tense forms as the preferred encoding for identity statements. [pp. 109-110]

In contrast to the summary statements in Stassen, *khi* constructions do not reflect a completely atemporal character. This becomes evident through construction compatibility with auxiliaries and adverbial preverbs manifesting temporal significance.

Overall, *khi* constructions are incompatible with indicative mood. They reject tense/aspect marking in the imperfective and perfective, which in Emai reflects metrical tense values indicating degrees of remoteness from the deictic center (Haspelmath, König, Oesterreicher and Reuble 2001). Relative to the perfective, *khi* constructions do not show the completive past (compare

ungrammatical 23a with its high tone *khí* preceded by high tone subject *í* to grammatical 23b with its high tone verb *gbé* 'kill' preceded by high tone subject *ò*) or completive present (compare ungrammatical 23c with its high tone *khí* preceded by low tone subject *ì* to grammatical 23d with its high tone *gbé* preceded by low tone subject *ò*).

- (23) a. \*ólí ómóhé nà lí í khí ònwìmè.  
 the man this PF ID COP farmer  
 'It is this man who was a farmer.'
- b. ò gbé ònwìmè.  
 he kill farmer  
 'He killed a farmer.'
- c. \*ólí ómóhé nà lí ì khí ònwìmè.  
 the man this PF ID COP farmer  
 'It is this man who has been a farmer.'
- d. ò gbé ònwìmè.  
 he kill farmer  
 'He has killed a farmer.'

Likewise, *khi* fails to manifest imperfective tense/aspect. It does not permit the habitual, while a verb such as *gbe* 'beat' does (compare ungrammatical 24a with its high tone subject *í*, low tone habitual *ò* and low tone *khì* to grammatical 24b with its high tone subject *ò*, low tone habitual *ò* and low tone verb *gbè*). *khi* also does not allow the continuous (compare ungrammatical 24c with its low tone subject *ì*, high tone continuous *ò* and low tone *khì* to grammatical 24d with its low tone subject *ò*, high tone continuous *ò* and low tone *gbè*). *khi* thus accepts neither the perfective nor imperfective tense/aspect of the indicative.

- (24) a. \*ólí ómóhé nà lí í ò khì ònwìmè.  
 the man this PF ID H COP farmer  
 'It is this man who is (usually) a farmer.'
- b. ò ò gbè ònwìmè.  
 he H beat farmers  
 'He beats farmers.'

c. \*ólí ómóhé nà lí ì ó khì ònwìmè.  
 the man this PF ID C COP farmer  
 'It is this man who is being a farmer.'

d. ò ó gbè ólì ònwìmè.  
 he C beat the farmer  
 'He is beating the farmer.'

In lieu of indicative marking, *khi* constructions evince properties consistent with Emai's subjunctive mood.<sup>7</sup> The latter contrasts with the indicative in which the speaker commits himself to the true or false status of a proposition. The subjunctive's lack of commitment to truth value manifests itself in a restricted set of constructions that reflect, among others, imperative and embedded imperative constructions, as well as hortative (should'), conative ('went to'), anticipative ('about to'), and predictive ('will') significance.<sup>8</sup> As with indicative, subjunctive mood in Emai is conveyed through tone marking. Its pattern is perhaps most easily seen in the effect of auxiliary and preverb elements on verb tone. When indicative constructions of perfective or imperfective tense/aspect are marked with a preverb or auxiliary (e.g. *gbo*/ ADD 'too'), verb tone is invariable relative to the unmarked construction. The verb *da* 'drink' has high tone in perfective (25a-b) and low tone in imperfective (25c-d), irrespective of *gbo*'s presence.

(25) a. ólí ómóhé dá ényó élìyó.  
 the man drink wine that-kind  
 'The man drank wine of that kind.'

<sup>7</sup> Following Lyons (1977), we take subjunctive as grounded to non-factivity conditions in which the speaker commits to neither the truth nor falsity of a proposition (Schaefer and Egbohkhare 1998). We also note that lack of commitment to proposition truth value may occur for different reasons: either the proposition refers to an event which has yet to occur (the case with imperatives, anticipatives and others) or the proposition is assumed to be true within the societal universe (the apparent case with equational identity constructions).

<sup>8</sup> Subjunctive also includes prohibitive constructions like *é è dá ólí ényò*. 'Don't drink the wine.', which place low tone on the prohibitive particle *è* as well as the immediately following auxiliary or preverb but not the verb, e.g. *é è kè dá ólí ényò*. 'Don't drink the wine anymore.' This has led us to distinguish strong (verb inclusive tone) and weak (verb non-inclusive tone) subjunctive patterns for Emai (Schaefer and Egbohkhare 1998).

- b. ól<sub>í</sub> ómóhé gbó dá ényó él<sub>ì</sub>yó.  
 the man ADD drink wine that-kind  
 'The man drank wine of that kind too.'
- c. ól<sub>í</sub> ómóhé ó ò dà ènyó él<sub>ì</sub>yó.  
 the man SC H drink wine that-kind  
 'The man drinks wine of that kind.'
- d. ól<sub>í</sub> ómóhé ó ò gbó dà ènyó él<sub>ì</sub>yó.  
 the man SC H ADD drink wine that-kind  
 'The man drinks wine of that kind too.'

When subjunctive constructions include a preverb or auxiliary, verb tone is variable. The verb *da* has low tone in the unmarked construction (26a) but high tone in the presence of *gbo* (26b).

- (26) a. ól<sub>í</sub> ómóhé ló dà òl<sub>í</sub> ényò.  
 the man PRED drink the wine  
 'The man will drink the wine.'
- b. ól<sub>í</sub> ómóhé ló gbò dá vbí ól<sub>í</sub> ényó.  
 the man PRED ADD drink LOC the wine  
 'The man will drink from the wine too.'

What then is *khi*'s tonal pattern? Consistent with the subjunctive in (26), *khi* manifests low tone in a structure unmarked by an auxiliary or preverb (27a) but high tone when a preverb like *gbo* is present (27b).

- (27) a. òh<sub>í</sub> k<sub>í</sub> í kh<sub>ì</sub> óbá'?'  
 Ohi NF ID COP Oba/king  
 'Isn't it Ohi who is Oba?'
- b. òh<sub>í</sub> k<sub>í</sub> í gbò kh<sub>í</sub> óbá'?'  
 Ohi NF ID ADD COP Oba/king  
 'Isn't it Ohi who is Oba too?'

Relative to post-verbal adverbs and particles linked to tense/aspect marking, *khi* is extremely constrained. It fails to co-occur with the post-verbal temporal perspective particle *lee* (28a), which makes reference to event onset or endpoint

depending on tense/aspect. With verbs like *e* ‘eat,’ *lee* has an ‘already finished’ interpretation in perfective (28b) and an ‘already starting to’ interpretation in imperfective (28c).

- (28) a. \*ólí ómóhé nà lí í khì ònwímè léé.  
 the man this PF ID COP farmer TEMP  
 ‘It is this man who is already a farmer.’
- b. ólí ómóhé nà é ólí émà léé.  
 the man this eat the yam TEMP  
 ‘This man has already finished eating the yam. /  
 This man has finished eating the yam.’
- c. ólí ómóhé nà ò ó è òlí émá lèè.  
 the man this SC C eat the yam TEMP  
 ‘This man is already starting to eat the yam. /  
 This man is already eating the yam.’

As well, *khi* constructions reject the full range of post-verbal temporal adverbs linked to the deictic moment of utterance or the deictic center of discourse. Excluded are adverbs in (29) such as *èènà* ‘today,’ *ènyàà* ‘just now,’ *èghéènà* ‘recently,’ *òdè* ‘yesterday,’ *é alá úkpè* ‘last year,’ and *úkpùúkpè* ‘yearly.’

- (29) a. \*ólí ómóhé nà lí í khì ònwímé èènà / ènyàà.  
 the man this PF ID COP farmer today just-now  
 ‘It is this man who is a farmer today / just now.’
- b. \*ólí ómóhé nà lí í khì ònwímé èghéènà / òdè.  
 the man this PF ID COP farmer recently yesterday  
 ‘It is this man who was a farmer recently / yesterday.’
- c. \*ólí ómóhé nà lí í khì ònwímé é alá úkpè.  
 the man this PF ID COP farmer last year  
 ‘It is this man who was a farmer last year.’
- d. \*ólí ómóhé nà lí í khì ònwímé úkpùúkpè.  
 the man this PF ID COP farmer every-year  
 ‘It is this man who is a farmer every year.’



These adverbs are otherwise compatible with verbs like *e* ‘eat’ marked for tense/aspect (Schaefer and Egbokhare 1997), for example *ènyàà* ‘just now’ in the continuous (30a), *èghèènà* ‘recently’ in the completive present (30b) and *éíá* *úkpè* ‘last year’ in the completive past (30c).

- (30) a. *óí ómòhè ò ó è òí émá ènyàà.*  
 the man SC C eat the yam just-now  
 ‘The man is eating the yam just now.’
- b. *óí ómòhè é óí émá èghèènà.*  
 the man eat the yam recently  
 ‘The man has eaten the yam recently.’
- c. *óí ómóhé é óí émá éíá úkpè.*  
 the man eat the yam last year  
 ‘The man ate the yam last year.’

*khi*’s rejection of tense/aspect extends to its failure to accept predicate negation. While verbs like *gbe* ‘kill’ allow predicate negation (*i* / NEG 31a), *khi* does not (31b).

- (31) a. *óí ómóhé nà í ì gbè ólì ònwìmè.<sup>9</sup>*  
 the man this SC NEG kill the farmer  
 ‘This man did not kill the farmer.’
- b. \**óí ómóhé nà lí í ì khì ònwìmè.*  
 the man this PF ID NEG COP farmer  
 ‘It is this man who is not a farmer.’

Tense/aspect properties aside, *khi* constructions allow only selected auxiliaries and preverbs, some of which manifest a temporal nature. First we note that *khi* is incompatible with all event (deontic and dynamic) modality particles (Palmer 2001), those that convey obligation, ability or willingness. *Khi* does not permit predictive *lò* /PRED (32a), anticipative *lò* /ANTI or hortative *í* /HOR (32b)

<sup>9</sup> Although one might be tempted to view the *i*/SC in negative constructions as another instance of the identiphoric pronoun *i*/ID, negative constructions with pronominal subjects show person distinctions, as in *ò ì gbè ólì ònwìmè*. ‘He did not kill the farmer.’ and *yán ì gbè ólì ònwìmè*. ‘They did not kill the farmer.’ *i*/ID never alternates with a personal pronoun.

particles. At least two of these (predictive and anticipative) incorporate a metrical tense dimension, reflecting proximal/distal temporal degrees relative to the moment of utterance or some other stipulated reference time (Schaefer and Egbokhare 1997).

- (32) a. \*ólí ómóhé nà lí í ló khì ònwìmè.  
 the man this PF ID PRED COP farmer  
 ‘It is this man who will be a farmer.’
- b. \*ólí ómóhé nà lí ì ló / í khì ònwìmè.  
 the man this PF ID ANTI / HOR COP farmer  
 ‘It is this man who is about to be/ should be a farmer.’

*Khi* also restricts particles of epistemic modality (Palmer 2001), the latter referencing speaker judgments of degree of certainty in a proposition’s truth value. *khi* constructions admit certaintive *ma* /CER (33a), concessive *rere* /CONC (33b), and dubitative *vba* /DUB (33c), although the latter two require a yes/no question. *Khi* does not allow the particles hypothetical *kha*/HYP or deductive *za*/DED (33d), which specify a speaker’s modal judgment based entirely on logical deduction or inference.

- (33) a. òhí lí í mà khí óbá’.  
 Ohi PF ID CER COP Oba  
 ‘It is Ohi who surely is the Oba.’
- b. òhí lí í rèrè khí óbá’?  
 Ohi PF ID CONC COP Oba  
 ‘So is it Ohi who is even the Oba?’
- c. òhí lí í v**à** khí óbá’?  
 Ohi PF ID DUB COP Oba  
 ‘Could it be that it is really Ohi who is the Oba?’
- d. \*òhí lí í kh**à** / z**à** khí óbá’.  
 Ohi PF ID HYP DED COP Oba  
 ‘It is Ohi who would have been/ must have been the Oba.’

*Khi* is compatible with Emai’s relative tense auxiliaries. These are particles that relate situation time to contextually given reference time rather than to time of

utterance (Haspelmath, König, Oesterreicher and Reuble 2001). We find that *khi* accepts two relative tense particles. It allows anterior *ke* /ANT (with dependent clause sense ‘after’ and main clause sense ‘since then, anymore’ 34a) and subsequent *kpe* /SUB (with a dependent clause sense ‘before’ and a main clause sense ‘yet’ 34b). *Khi* never occurs with relative tense *re* /SEQ (34c), whose ‘and then’ sequential meaning is restricted to main clauses.

- (34) a. èkpèn lí í kè khí ójé ísì èànmì.  
 leopard PF ID ANT COP king ASS animal  
 ‘It is the leopard who has been king of the animals since then.’
- b. èkpèn lí í kpè khí ójé ísì èànmì.  
 leopard PF ID SUB COP king ASS animal  
 ‘It is the leopard who is yet king of the animals.’
- c. \*èkpèn lí í rè khí ójé ísì èànmì.  
 leopard PF ID SEQ COP king ASS animal  
 ‘It is the leopard who (and) then was king of the animals.’

As for preverb classes, *khi* combines with member items in a manner reflecting at least in part their event-directed or participant-directed nature (Schaefer and Egbokhare 2000). The latter distinction refers to alternative domains over which preverb meaning has influence: either the event encoded by the predicate or an event participant designated by grammatical subject or direct object. Some event-directed particles with temporal significance are grammatical with *khi*, whereas none of the participant-directed particles are. From the event-directed evaluative class, only *kuku*’s ‘after all’ assessment of information is grammatical in *khi* constructions (35a-b).

- (35) a. òhí lí í kùkù khí óbá’.  
 Ohi PF ID after-all COP Oba  
 ‘It is Ohi afterall who is the Oba.’
- b. \*òhí lí í dùù / wòò khí óbá’.  
 Ohi PF ID in-fact instead COP Oba  
 ‘It is Ohi in fact / instead who is the Oba.’

Among event-directed temporal preverbs, *kpao* ‘initially’ is acceptable (36a), although the more deictic orientation of *bobò* ‘promptly’ is not (36b).

- (36) a.  $\grave{e}kp\grave{e}n$  lí í  $kp\grave{a}ò$   $khí$   $ó\grave{j}é$   $ísì$   $\grave{e}àn\grave{m}ì$ .  
 leopard PF ID initially COP king ASS animal  
 ‘It is the leopard who was initially king of the animals.’
- b. \* $\grave{e}kp\grave{e}n$  lí í  $bòbò$   $khí$   $ó\grave{j}é$   $ísì$   $\grave{e}àn\grave{m}ì$ .  
 leopard PF ID promptly COP king ASS animal  
 ‘It is the leopard who promptly was king of the animals.’

*Khi*'s occurrence is relatively constrained with aspectualizer preverbs, a class of grammatical forms semantically akin to aspectualizer verbs (e.g. ‘start,’ ‘stop,’ and ‘continue’) in other languages (Haspelmath, König, Oesterreicher and Reuble 2001).<sup>10</sup> Emai aspectualizer preverbs reference temporal phases of an event (ingressive, egressive) or construe an entire event as a temporal phase within a larger stretch of time (repetitive, additive, conative, punctual, and durative). *Khi* constructions admit two event-directed aspectualizer preverbs, both conditioned by negative focus with *ki* and interrogative force. Each has a temporal character, additive *gbo* ‘too/also’ (37a) and durative *se* ‘continue on’ (37b).

- (37) a.  $\grave{o}hí$   $kí$  í  $gb\grave{o}$   $khí$   $\acute{o}b\grave{a}$ ?  
 Ohi NF ID ADD COP Oba  
 ‘Isn’t it Ohi who is also Oba?’
- b.  $\grave{o}hí$   $kí$  í  $s\grave{e}$   $khí$   $\acute{o}b\grave{a}$ ?  
 Ohi NF ID DUR COP Oba  
 ‘Isn’t it Ohi who continues to be Oba?’

No other aspectualizers, among them repetitive *che* /REP and punctual *ghe* /PCT (38a), conative *oo* /CON (38b), ingressive *ya* /IG, egressive *m $\grave{o}$*  /EG (38c), and past absolutes *ya* /PA and *m $\grave{o}$*  /PA (38d), are grammatical with *khi*, irrespective of speech act force or focus particle polarity.

<sup>10</sup> Emai has few aspectualizer verbs of the general type conveyed by ‘to start,’ ‘to continue’ or ‘to stop.’ And Emai aspectualizer particles differ from auxiliaries in their propensity to occur in imperative constructions and to occupy positions following auxiliaries and preceding other preverbal adverbs.

- (38) a. \*òhí kǐ í ch̀è / gh̀è khí óbá'?
- Ohí NF ID REP PCT COP Oba  
'Isn't it Ohi who is again/just Oba?'
- b. \*òhí kǐ í óó khì óbá'?
- Ohí NF ID CON COP Oba  
'Isn't it Ohi who went to be Oba?'
- c. \*òhí kǐ ì yà / m̀è khí óbá'.
- Ohí NF ID IG EG COP Oba  
'It is Ohi who was almost Oba.'
- d. \*òhí kǐ í yà / m̀è khí óbá'.
- Ohí NF ID PA PA COP Oba  
'It is Ohi who was formerly/at one time Oba.'

None of the remaining preverb classes is grammatical in *khi* constructions. The event-directed preverb class incorporating manner deictics like ìyó 'that way' is ungrammatical. Equally rejected are participant-directed preverb classes typified by subject attributive *dabò* 'deliberately,' absolute intensifier *zemi* /ABSI, and emphatic subject reflexive *dòbó*/REFL.

- (39) \*òhí í í ìyó / dàbò / zèmì / dòbò òì khí óbá'.
- Ohí PF ID DMD deliberately ABSI REFL him COP Oba  
'It is Ohi who that way/deliberately/really/himself is Oba.'

## 6. Discussion

As we have observed, Emai's *khi* construction manifests some of the temporal and predicational nature Stassen's crosslinguistic findings deny identity constructions. The grammatical situation in Emai appears more complex than predicted. However, it does not involve a simple rejection of the pattern outlined by Stassen.

Since *khi* must be preceded by the subject particle *í*, EI constructions evinced a predicational nature, albeit limited, distinguishing subject from predicate. And although EI constructions failed to accept subject or direct object personal pronouns, no third person preference was evident. Focus position accepted first, second and third person emphatic pronoun forms, while post-*khi* position failed to accept any personal pronouns, relying exclusively on

impersonal forms.

In addition, the two principal noun phrases linked by the *khi* copula revealed a number of asymmetric information-level properties, especially with regard to definite and emphatic marking. Focus position accepted bare inanimate nouns as well as proper names and inanimate nouns with emphatic marking, while post-*khi* position accepted neither bare inanimate nouns nor emphatically marked proper names or inanimate nouns. Only post-*khi* position required nominals marked as definite. Moreover, both positions equally rejected nominals overtly marked as non-definite.

As for temporal character, EI constructions failed to exhibit tonal patterns or particles associated with Emai's tense/aspect types, imperfective and perfective. Linked to this restriction is *khi*'s failure to admit post-verbal temporal adverbs like *òdè* 'yesterday' and the temporal perspective particle *lee* 'already.' EI constructions, instead, manifested the subjunctive: variable verb tone correlating with the presence or absence of an auxiliary or preverb. Since EI constructions also accepted a range of auxiliary and preverb particles with temporal character, one cannot claim along with Stassen (1997) that identity constructions are completely atemporal. *Khi* allowed the relative tense particles *ke* 'since then' and *kpe* 'yet,' the aspectualizer particles *gbo* 'too/also' and *se* 'continue on,' and the preverb *kpao* 'initially.' While these particles may not be linked to tense, they are not atemporal. Rather than relate an event to the deictic moment of utterance, they relate one event to another in discourse without obligatory reference to the moment of utterance. They establish a non-deictic temporal character for EI constructions that allows the latter to be located in discourse. The Emai data suggest that it would be preferable to construe EI constructions as non-deictic rather than atemporal.

The preceding interpretation of Emai's EI construction reveals its essential compatibility with the subjunctive mood. It may prove worthwhile to investigate the grammatical encoding of EI constructions more carefully in other African languages, in particular their possible acceptance or rejection of forms related to tense/aspect. This might allow us to determine whether the patterns uncovered in this study are peculiar to Emai, and perhaps the Edoid family, or whether they reflect broader tendencies in Benue-Congo or Africa. Secondly, it would seem useful to scrutinize the grammatical encoding of equational identity constructions for temporal marking. Which categories with temporal significance are permissible in equational identity constructions? To what extent are particular temporal categories compatible with the indicative or subjunctive mood marking of equational identity? At the very least, this brief excursion into Emai's EI constructions sug-

gests that the formal expression of temporality, predication and person in equational identity constructions in Africa would benefit from closer scrutiny.

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