

7

CLAUSE-LEVEL SYNTAX

This chapter provides an overview of the syntax of Pondi at the level of the clause. A clause is taken to be a set of elements consisting (minimally) of a verb phrase and a subject (whether overtly expressed or not). Specifically, in this chapter, I discuss basic constituent order (§7.1), core argument alignment (§7.2), obliques (§7.3), ditransitive alignment (§7.4), and monoclausal sentences (§7.5).

7.1 Basic constituent order

The minimally required constituents of an intransitive clause are taken to be a subject (S) and a verb (V). A transitive clause consists, minimally, of these two elements as well as an object (O). Stated in terms defined less by grammatical relations, an intransitive clause consists of a single argument (S) and a verb (V), whereas a transitive clause consists of a more agent-like argument (A), a more patient-like argument (P), and a verb (V). Pondi exhibits the following—fairly rigid—ordering of constituents.

(7.01) Pondi basic constituent order

Intransitive clauses: SV

Transitive clauses: SOV (APV)

In the following examples of intransitive clauses, the verb is in **bold** and the subject is underlined.

(7.02) kulam **sapĩ**

kulam **sa-apĩ**

boy cry-PFV

‘The boy cried.’

- (7.03) katīl mī **kīlīya**
katīl mī **kīlī-ya**
 old.man 3SG.SUBJ die-IRR
 ‘The old man will die.’

- (7.04) mī **kusanyī**
mī **kusan-yī**
 3SG.SUBJ cough-IPFV
 ‘He is coughing.’

In the following examples of transitive clauses, the verb is in **bold**, the subject (or more agentive participant) is underlined, and the object (or more patientive participant) is in *italics*.

- (7.05) alkī *ndindi* **asiyī**
alkī *ndindi* **asi-ī**
 person dog hit-IPFV
 ‘The person hit the dog.’

- (7.06) nanī *njimoka* **tuklupī**
nanī *njimoka* **tukul-apī**
 mama stick break-PFV
 ‘Mama broke a stick.’

- (7.07) anale *minjame* ***ndamnda***
anale *minjame* *ndī=am-nda*
 woman.PL banana.PL 3PL.OBJ=eat-IRR
 ‘The women will eat bananas.’

- (7.08) o ***nyale***
o *nyī=ala-ī*
 2SG.SUBJ 1SG=see-IPFV
 ‘You see me.’

The fact that the object marker *nd(i)* in (7.07) and the object pronoun *ny(i)* in (7.08) are not only emboldened but also italicised in their respective first lines reflects the fact that these forms—although syntactically part of (or entirely constituting) the object NP—are phonologically part of the verb.

7.2 Core argument alignment

The heuristic categories S, A, and O, which are commonly used to determine and compare alignment systems, are taken to be: 1) the single argument of an intransitive clause (S), 2) the more agent-like argument of a transitive clause (A), and 3) the more patient-like argument of a transitive clause (O) (also identified as P in the literature). In Pondi, the S and A arguments pattern alike syntactically, morphologically, and phonologically (thus instantiating a subject relation, §7.1). Pondi may thus be considered to exhibit nominative-accusative alignment.

S and A occur in the same position in the clause (namely, clause-initially), whereas O occurs after S and before the verb. Pondi nouns do not exhibit core argument case morphology. There are, however, two (somewhat distinct) paradigms for personal pronouns (§5.2.1), as well as for certain determiners (§5.3.2). One paradigm is used for subject arguments and for nothing else—that is, this paradigm applies to S and A arguments, but not to O arguments. The other paradigm is used for all non-subject roles (including O arguments). Often, for convenience, I refer to these forms as ‘object’ forms, although they apply to more than just object arguments—in addition to being used for direct objects of verbs and objects of postpositions, this paradigm is used for oblique NPs (indicated by the oblique-marker enclitic =*n*, §7.3). The two paradigms—subject and object—are highly syncretic, but there are three phonological differences: 2SG.SUBJ *o* vs 2SG.OBJ *u*, 3SG.SUBJ *mī* vs 3SG.OBJ *ma*, and 3PL.SUBJ *ndin* vs 3PL.OBJ *ndi* (§5.2.1, §5.3.2).

There is no evidence of morphological or syntactic ergativity in the language, nor is there any indication of split-intransitivity or related alignment types (i.e. there is no active–stative/semantic/fluid alignment). The following examples illustrate the contrast in pronominal marking between a more agentive argument (or subject) and the more patientive argument (or object) of a transitive clause. When functioning as a subject, the 2SG form is *o* (7.09). When functioning as an object, the 2SG form is *u* (7.10). (The 1SG form does not vary based on its grammatical relation.)

(7.09) **o** nyasiyapī

o	nyī=asi-apī
2SG.SUBJ	1SG=hit-PFV
‘You hit me.’	

(7.10) nyĩ **wasiyapĩ**

nyĩ	u =asi-apĩ
1SG	2SG.OBJ=hit-PFV

‘I hit you.’

Example (7.11) shows the 3SG forms for the more agentive argument of the transitive clause (*mi*) as well as for the more patientive argument of the transitive clause (*ma*). The single argument of an intransitive clause always resembles the more agentive argument of a transitive clause, regardless of whether the argument is more active (unergative, unaffected, etc., 7.12) or more stative (unaccusative, affected, etc., 7.13).

(7.11) mĩ namal **masiyapĩ**

mĩ	namal	ma =asi-apĩ
3SG.SUBJ	pig	3SG.OBJ=hit-PFV

‘He hit the pig.’

(7.12) mĩ mbatapĩ

mĩ	mbat-apĩ
3SG.SUBJ	work-PFV

‘He worked.’

(7.13) mĩ kusanyĩ

mĩ	kusan-yĩ
3SG.SUBJ	cough-IPFV

‘He is coughing.’

Thus, all types of S arguments pattern more closely with A arguments than with O arguments (it is not the case that some Ss are more similar to As, whereas other Ss are more similar to Os depending on semantic or other criteria). Thus, S arguments are alike both syntactically and morphologically, irrespective of whether they are more agentive (unergative) or more patientive (unaccusative).

7.3 Obliques

Core arguments may be defined as the set of all subjects and (direct) objects. Subjects always precede objects, and objects always precede verbs. All other arguments in a clause (that is, noun phrases that are neither subjects nor objects, and all other phrases, such as adverbial phrases) may

be referred to as obliques. In Pondi, the canonical position for all obliques is preceding the (direct) object. Generally, obliques immediately precede the object, although some (most notably temporal adverbs, §5.5.1) may precede the subject, thereby coming first in the clause.

There is an enclitic morpheme =*n* ‘OBL’ that affixes to pronouns and determiners in oblique NPs—that is, to any NP that is neither a subject (or subject complement) nor an object. Although postpositional phrases may be considered obliques, the object of the postposition (at least for these purposes) is considered an object and not an oblique. Only determiners and pronouns may function as hosts for =*n* ‘OBL’. This means that oblique full NPs often do not exhibit this clitic—only personal pronouns, deictic demonstratives, and full NPs that end with determiners, such as ‘object markers’ (here, more properly referred to as ‘non-subject markers’). That said, there is exactly one example in my corpus of the oblique marker following a full NP without any determiner present (see example 8.81); thus, either it may in fact be possible for the oblique marker to directly follow nouns or this single example is somewhat ungrammatical or otherwise not fully accounted for.

In the following sentences, oblique NPs (in **bold**) are serving instrumental functions. Only in (7.16) and (7.17) is the enclitic =*n* ‘OBL’ present, since these NPs contain determiners. In each example, the oblique phrase occurs after the subject and before the object.

(7.14) tatī **yakus** namuse tuklupī

tatī	yakus	namuse	tukul-apī
papa	machete	meat	cut-PFV

‘Papa cut the meat with a machete.’

(7.15) tatī **kulap** kimbane ndasiyī

tatī	kulap	kimbane	ndī=asi-ī
papa	fishing.spear	fish.PL	3PL.OBJ=hit-IPFV

‘Papa shoots fish with a fishing spear.’

(7.16) tatī **sanglama man** kondiyam oliyī

tatī	sanglama	ma=n	kondiyam	oli-ī
papa	axe	3SG.OBJ=OBL	palm.sp	cut-IPFV

‘Papa cuts a palm with an axe.’

- (7.17) alkĩ **sanglamate ndĩn** kondiyambune oliyĩ
 alkĩ **sanglamate** **ndĩ=n** kondiyambune oli-ĩ
 person axe.PL 3PL.OBJ=OBL palm.sp.PL cut-IPFV
 ‘People cuts palms with axes.’

Other thematic roles that can be fulfilled by oblique NPs include recipients and beneficiaries. Sentences with recipient NPs are given in §7.4 with the verb *an-* ‘give’. Here (7.18) is another example, showing a deictic demonstrative serving as the entire recipient NP. It receives the oblique-marker enclitic.

- (7.18) **andan** nyani
anda=n nyĩ=an-ĩ
 that=OBL 1SG=give-IMP
 ‘Give that to me!’

The following (7.19) is an example of a beneficiary NP, also marked with the oblique marker =*n*.

- (7.19) kĩman **nyĩn** nĩmbambiyĩ kanda
 kĩman **nyĩ=n** nĩmbambiyĩ ka-nda
 who 1SG=OBL cloth sew-IRR
 ‘Who can sew the cloth for me?’

In example (7.20), the oblique marker is used to indicate that with which an item is ‘full’.

- (7.20) manjin mandĩn **imunji man** kusuwate
 ma-njin mandĩn **imunji** **ma=n** kusuwate
 3SG-POSS.NPL string.bag betel.pepper 3SG.OBJ=OBL full
 ‘His string bag is full of betel peppers.’

Finally, the argument structure of the verb *mwas-* ‘show’ admits an oblique NP (§7.4). The precise thematic role fulfilled by this NP depends on one’s interpretation, but it could be considered a sort of stimulus or perhaps even an instrument (if we may interpret a sentence such as ‘John showed Mary *the ball*’ to mean something like ‘John furnished Mary[’s vision] *with the ball*’). The following is an example of the verb ‘show’ with a full NP as the instrument/stimulus oblique. Since the NP ends in a determiner (a non-subject marker), it admits the clitic =*n*.

- (7.21) **ndindi man** nyĩmwas
ndindi **ma=n** nyĩ=mwas
 dog 3SG.OBJ=OBL 1SG=show
 ‘Show me the dog!’

Other non-core elements include adverbs and adpositional phrases. These do not receive any oblique marking. Like oblique NPs, these occur before the object and (typically) after the subject (although temporal adverbs often occur before the subject).

7.4 Ditransitive alignment?

Many languages have distinct ways of expressing transfer events—that is, events wherein something is given from one participant to another. In some languages, these constructions make use of ditransitive verbs, which take three arguments: an agent (A), a recipient (R), and a theme (T). Whereas the question of core argument alignment lies in the morphosyntactic patterning of S, A, and O arguments, the main question of ditransitive alignment is whether the O argument of a monotransitive verb patterns more like the R argument or more like the T argument of a ditransitive verb (the O argument is not known ever to pattern more like the A argument).

Pondi, however, does not seem to have any proper ditransitive verbs—that is, there is no verb whose argument structure selects three core arguments. The verb *an-*, which is glossed throughout this grammar as ‘give’, does not really mean ‘give’ in the English sense. It is, rather, a monotransitive verb: the subject of this verb encodes the giver/agent and the object encodes the recipient/benefactive (the gift/theme is encoded by an oblique).

The following sentences illustrate the use of the verb *an-* ‘give’ in Pondi. This irregular verb has a suppletive verb stem (*ala-*), which is used for the imperfective form, *ale* (< /ala-ĩ/). Furthermore, the verb ‘give’ is deponent, in that there is no perfective verb form (whether built from the stem *an-* or the stem *ala-*). Rather, the imperfective form *ale* is used to encode perfective aspect as well. In these sentences, it can be seen that the direct object of the verb glossed as ‘give’ is a recipient argument—whether ‘boy’ (7.22, 7.23) or ‘you’ (7.24, 7.25). The direct objects, which—as always—immediately precede the verb, are presented here in **bold**. Note that oblique marking is only overt on NPs that contain pronouns or determiners (§7.3). Thus, in examples (7.22–25), the only morphosyntactic indication of obliqueness (for the recipient argument) is its placement in the sentence (following the subject and preceding the object). In examples (7.26), (7.27), and (7.28), however, which are all imperatives, the recipient arguments are pronouns or determiners and, as such, permit the oblique marker =*n*.

- (7.22) meyangā iye kinyĩ **kulam** ale
 meyangā iye kinyĩ **kulam** ala-ĩ
 yesterday girl coconut boy give-IPFV
 ‘Yesterday the girl gave the boy a coconut.’

- (7.23) iye kinyal **kulam** male
 iy kinyal **kulam** ma=ala-ĩ
 girl coconut.PL boy 3SG.OBJ=give-IPFV
 ‘The girl gives the boy coconuts.’

- (7.24) nyĩ minjamo **wale**
 nyĩ minjamo u=ala-ĩ
 1SG banana 2SG.OBJ=give-IPFV
 ‘I gave you a banana.’

- (7.25) nyĩ minjamo **wanda**
 nyĩ minjamo u=an-nda
 1SG banana 2SG.OBJ=give-IRR
 ‘I’ll give you a banana.’

- (7.26) **man** nyanĩ
 ma=n nyĩ=an-ĩ
 3SG.OBJ=OBL 1SG=give-IMP
 ‘Give it to me!’

- (7.27) **ndĩn** nyanĩ
 ndĩ=n nyĩ=an-ĩ
 3PL.OBJ=OBL 1SG=give-IMP
 ‘Give them to me!’

- (7.28) **njan** manĩ
 nja=n ma=an-ĩ
 this=OBL 3SG.OBJ=give-IMP
 ‘Give this to him!’

Like ‘giving’ events, ‘showing’ events are also commonly encoded with ditransitive constructions in many languages. In Pondi, the monotransitive verb *mwās-* ‘show’ is used to encode these events. In such constructions, the agent (the one showing something) is the subject of the clause, the experiencer (the one to whom something is shown) is the object of the verb, and the theme (that which is shown) is expressed in an oblique

phrase (indicated by the oblique marker =*n* in NPs with pronouns or determiners). The verb *mwas-* ‘show’ exhibits phonologically conditioned allomorphy in its stem—namely, *s* → *t* / _ *i* # (this same change is seen in *alas-* ‘fly’, which has the imperfective form *alati*). The metathesis in the stem is discussed in §2.6. Like ‘give’, the verb ‘show’ is deponent, with the imperfective form serving to encode perfective aspect as well. The following sentences illustrate the use of *mwas-* ‘show’; the oblique phrase (in **bold**) always occurs between the subject (shower) and object (experiencer) and—as in (7.33) and (7.34)—is overtly marked as oblique.

(7.29) meyanga nanī **ndindi** tatī momatī

meyanga	nanī	ndindi	tatī	ma=mwas-ī
yesterday	mama	dog	papa	3SG.OBJ=show-IPFV

‘Yesterday mama showed papa the dog.’

(7.30) nanī **kame** kulawi ndīmwatī

nanī	kame	kulawi	ndī=mwas-ī
mama	betel.nut.PL	boy.PL	3PL.OBJ=show-IPFV

‘Mama shows the boys betel nuts.’

(7.31) nyī **kamo** umwasīla

nyī	kamo	u=mwas-la
1SG	betel.nut	2SG.OBJ=show-IRR

‘I’ll show you a betel nut.’

(7.32) nyī **ambinjin amwī** umwasīla

nyī	ambin-njin	amwī	u=mwas-la
1SG	NPL.REFL-POSS.NPL	woman	2SG.OBJ=show-IRR

‘I’ll show you my wife.’

(7.33) nyī **un** ambinjin amwī momasīla

nyī	u=n	ambin-njin	amwī	ma=mwas-la
1SG	2SG.OBJ=OBL	NPL.REFL-POSS.NPL	woman	3SG.OBJ=show-IRR

‘I’ll show you to my wife.’

(7.34) **man** nyīmwas

ma=n	nyī=mwas
3SG.OBJ=OBL	1SG=show

‘Show it to me!’

7.5 Monoclausal (or simple) sentences

A simple sentence in Pondi consists (minimally) of one subject and one predicate. The subject may be a pronoun or a full NP, either with or without a determiner (such as a subject marker). The predicate must contain at least one main verb and may contain one auxiliary verb as well. In a transitive clause, there is also an object contained within the verb phrase, and the verb may have an object-marker proclitic preceding it. TAM suffixation appears on the verb (although, in the case of imperative clauses, this marking may be null). There are some compound verbs that consist of nominal adjuncts that associate with verbs. Subjects, too, may consist of multiple elements (typically NPs). Subjects often contain subject markers following the head NP. Other determiners (that is, in addition to subject markers and object markers) are possible as well, whether as part of the subject or as part of the object. In addition to the basic elements of the subject and the verb phrase (including, potentially, an object), the monoclausal sentence may contain obliques. These typically occur between the subject and object, yielding a canonical word order of SXOV.

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