Locative and existential constructions in Ulwa

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Abstract

This paper lays out the morphosyntactic and semantic facts of existential and locative constructions in Ulwa (Misumalpan; Nicaragua). Locative constructions come in two types. There are those that take one of a small set of posture predicates (*lau* 'sit', *sâk* 'stand', *kût* 'lie', *wit* 'hang') and those that are completely bare, much as in English, having only a figure and locative (postpositional phrase) non-verbal predicate. It is shown that *lau* 'sit' is special among the posture predicates in being polysemous, having both a locative and more semantically bleached existential meaning. Posture constructions headed by *lau* are contrasted with the bare locative construction and it is shown that bare locative constructions do not have the same kind of meaning as the bleached *lau* existential. Rather than naming an existential proposition, they have a pure locative meaning and in fact cannot have an existential meaning like *lau* constructions.

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1 Introduction

Ulwa, an endangered Misumalpan language spoken by approximately 350 adults in the village of Karawala on Nicaragua's Atlantic coast has two distinct, if related, constructions, illustrated by the data in (1), which are used to express locative propositions.[1]

(1) a. *Alas Costa Rica kau ka.*

s/he Costa Rica in/at SENT-KA

'S/he is in Costa Rica.' (Oct09-18)

[1]Sources of data are discussed in §2.

The orthography used in the Ulwa examples is that adopted by the Ulwa Language Project, itself an adaptation of the Miskitu orthography devised by Moravian missionaries (Green 1999:33). The orthographic conventions are mostly straightforward and are discussed by Green (1999:33ff.). The less self-explanatory conventions are: (a) use of the circumflex above a vowel for contrastively long vowels, (b) *ng* is used for the velar nasal, (c) *h* following any of the sonorants *l, r, n, ng, m* indicates that the sonorant is voiceless.

Glossing conventions throughout the paper are as follows: ADJ, the morpheme appearing on Ulwa words naming property concept states (Koontz-Garboden and Francez In press); AUX, auxiliary; COP, copula; –DA–, *–da–* verb class marker; DEF, definite article; DS, different subject switch reference marking; FUT, future tense; IMPER, imperative; INDEF, indefinite article; INF, infinitive; INTERR, interrogative marker; IRR, irrealis modality; IRREV, marker of irreverence; NEG, negative; NOM, nominative case; NON-NOM, non-nominative case; PA, *–pa–* verb class marker; PAST, past tense; PL.EXCL, plural exclusive (of first person plural); PL.INCL, plural inclusive (of first person plural); PL, plural; PRES, present tense; PRFCT, perfect aspect; RAUPI, the Ulwa marker *raupi* (see Koontz-Garboden 2009b:476ff.); SENT.KA, the sentential *ka* marker in Ulwa (see Koontz-Garboden In press); SING, singular; SS, same subject switch reference marking; TA, *–ta–* verb class marker; TOP, topic marker; WA, *–wa–* verb class marker; 1,2,3 , 1st, 2nd, 3rd person agreement; < >, Gloss inside angle brackets indicates glossed morpheme is an infix.

b. *Yaka pan-ka ya Bill û-ka dîpih-ka kau sâk ka.*

that tree-3SING the Bill house-3SING area.next.to-3SING at stand SENT-KA

'That tree stands in the area next to Bill's house.' (Oct09-45)

While the sentence in (1a) has as the main predicate a postpositional locative phrase, (1b) has this same postpositional phrase in addition to the predicate *lau* 'sit', one of a small family of non-verbal posture predicates (further described below) used in locative constructions that also gives rise to inferences about the posture of the located figure. While the use of such predicates in locative constructions is neither unknown nor necessarily rare crosslinguistically (see e.g., Newman 2002; Ameka and Levinson 2007), their morphosyntactic and lexical semantic properties have not previously been studied in detail.[2] The goal of this paper is to lay out a description of these facts in Ulwa, with an eye toward understanding the grammatical differences between locative constructions like (1a) that lack them and those like (1b) in which they are present.

As part of the description of this class of predicates in Ulwa, I also consider whether existential constructions, which are superficially identical in form to constructions like (1b), are simply garden-variety uses of posture predicates as locative constructions, or whether they have their own particular properties. Several arguments, which I enumerate below, suggest that there are, in fact, a small set of properties that distinguish existentials from locatives like (1a) and

[2]This class of verbs in Mayangna, Ulwa's sister language, is discussed in Norwood (1997:53-59), with some of their syntactic properties explored in Benedicto (2002). An overview of the Ulwa posture verbs is given in Green (1999:140-142). I go beyond these important first discussions in both morphosyntactic and semantic detail, while at the same time focusing on how these constructions differ from the bare locative construction, which has to this point received no description in the literature.

(1b). Ulwa is far from being alone among the languages of the world in lacking a construction that is transparently morphosyntactically distinct from locative constructions for the expression of existential propositions (Clark 1978). The fact that the same is true of many languages is one fact that has supported prominent treatments of existentials in the theoretical literature whereby locative and existential are treated identically, both semantically and, at a deeper (possibly non-surface) level morphosyntactically (Lyons 1967; Freeze 1992).[3] I show that somewhat subtle morphosyntactic and semantic diagnostics of the kind recently laid out by Francez (2009) for English diagnose an existential distinct in truth conditions from locatives like those in (1). This finding, at the same time that it contributes to the documentation of this class of predicates, has broader implications for the analysis of existentials, since it constitutes a (partial) replication in an entirely unrelated language of Francez's finding that locative and existential are truth-conditionally distinct.

I begin with discussion of Ulwa and the sources of data I draw upon, following this with a description of posture predicates in Ulwa and how these are distinct from other types of non-verbal predicates in the language. I then turn to data that show that there is a special use of the posture predicate *lau* 'sit' distinct from its purely postural use, and from the other posture predicates (e.g., *sâk* in (1b)), that is bleached and existential in nature. Finally, I consider data showing that the existential and the bare locative illustrated in (1a) above differ in their truth conditions.

[3] See Francez (2009) for a nice overview of this issue.

2 Background on Ulwa and Misumalpan

Ulwa is an endangered Misumalpan language spoken by approximately 350 adults (Green 1999:17ff.) in the village of Karawala on Nicaragua's Atlantic coast. Although some linguistic work had been carried out on Ulwa around the early 1900s (see Green 1999:Chapter 1 for a comprehensive review) it was Ken Hale, Tom Green, and their colleagues that began in the late 1980s to conduct more recent work on the language. To date, there have been several articles and chapters discussing the verbal morphology of the language (Hale and Salamanca 2002; Hale and Keyser 2002; Koontz-Garboden 2006b, 2009a,b), verb chaining constructions in Ulwa and Misumalpan more generally Hale (1991b; 1997), an overview paper on dialectal differences within Mayangna, considering to a lesser degree, the arguments for Ulwa being a different language from Mayangna (Benedicto and Hale 2000), a sketch grammar and dictionary (Green 1999), a paper on possessive morphology on Ulwa adjectives (Koontz-Garboden and Francez In press) and several chapters of a recent dissertation examining adjectives and related grammatical features in detail (Koontz-Garboden 2007). This work was all carried out in the context of the Ulwa Language Project, a grassroots language documentation project founded by members of the Ulwa speaking community of Karawala concerned about the loss of their language.[4]

The research on Ulwa reported in this paper draws on data from this previous work in addition to my own fieldwork. The bulk of this fieldwork was carried out over an eleven month period from August, 2004–July, 2005 during which time I was in residence in Karawala, working in a monolingual fashion (Everett 2001) under the auspices of the Ulwa Language Project, in

[4]For a history of the Ulwa Language Project see Green and Hale (1998), Green (1999:Chapter 1), Hale (1991a; 2001), and Koontz-Garboden (2006a) and Núñez Villanueva and CODIUL (2010) for more recent activities of the project.

particular with the following native speaker members of the project: Abanel Lacayo, Lorinda Martínez Lacayo, Alberto Santiago, Francisco Santiago, Kandler Santiago, and Clementina Simon. Additional fieldtrips to Karawala have been carried out in March, 2006 (3 weeks), March 2008 (1 week), July 2008 (4 weeks), and October 2009 (3 weeks). Thus, the Ulwa data in the discussion that follows come from several sources: (a) the Ulwa dictionary (Green 2004), kindly made available to me in electronic form by Tom Green, (b) sentences constructed by Ulwa speakers upon request for an example sentence illustrating a particular lexeme, (c) changes made by me to these naturally occurring examples in order to elicit a judgment on a slightly altered sentence, (d) naturally occurring examples overheard in the community, and (e) a 55,000-word corpus of texts, stories, and discourse. These come from a wide variety of sources. Among them are folk stories collected by Tom Green (and made available to me), the Ulwa portion of Knight Julian and James Olegarios (2008), discourse, folk tales, and *The Frog Story* (Mayer 1969) collected by me and transcribed by Alberto Santiago, Francisco Santiago, and Lorinda Martínez Lacayo. Sentences taken from the Ulwa dictionary (Green 2004) are annotated "dict", while those from my own fieldnotes are annotated with a month/year for the volume of my notes the example is found in, followed by a page number. Examples from the corpus are labeled "corpus".

3 Posture predicates and non-verbal predication in Ulwa

Posture predicates in Ulwa include any one of the small set of non-verbal predicates listed in (2) and are used to predicate a location of a figure. In so doing, they also attribute a particular posture to that figure. Both this, and the general architecture of the posture construction, are

illustrated by (3).[5]

(2) Ulwa posture predicates (Green 1999:140)

lau 'sitting'

sâk 'upright'

kût 'recumbent'

wît 'suspended'

tung 'ambulatory'

(3) … *dapak yal-ka* *laih û-ka* *kau lau ka.*

next woman-3SING TOP house-3SING at sit SENT-KA

'And next, the woman is sitting at the house.' (corpus)

The construction is composed of a figure, a location, and a posture predicate, in the case of (3) the woman, the house, and *lau* 'sit' respectively. With posture predicate constructions, strictly speaking, the only obligatory component is the posture predicate (along with obligatory tense particles or sentential *ka*, see §3.3); the figure and the location can come from context. E.g., (4b) is a perfectly normal response to (4a), in a context where a visitor goes to a house looking for Francisco, asking (4a) of one of his children.

(4) a. *Francisco?*

b. *Lau ka.*

sit SENT-KA

[5]These predicates are called "stative verbs of stance" by Green (1999:140). Given the facts discussed below which show quite clearly, I think, that these predicates are non-verbal, this is something of a misnomer.

'He's here (lit: he's sitting).'

In addition to their locative uses, posture predicates are also used with the same subject verbal participle, in the context of Ulwa's switch reference verbal system (Hale 1991b, 1997) to create progressive constructions. Examples of each of the posture predicates in (3) in this use are given in (5).

(5) a. *Kataramah wâna ya luk-t-uti kau kutak-p-i* **tung** *ka.*

chicken female the lay.egg-TA-3SING.FUT when cluck-PA-SS

'When a hen is about to lay an egg, she walks around clucking.' (0405-494)

b. *Pamkih ya sit-t-am kau ihih-p-i* **sâk** *ka, wanih-ka*

horse the tie-TA-2SING.PERF when neigh-PA-SS stand SENT-KA relative-3SING

balna kui-t-i.

PL summon-TA-SS

'The horse, when you tie it, it stands there neighing, summoning his/her relatives.'

(0405-501)

c. *Ai yamti ah-d-i* **kût** *pih?*

why do moan-DA-SS lie INTERR

'How come s/he is lying there moaning?' (0405-512)

d. *Û-ma ya isi-d-i* **wît** *ka.*

house-2SING the shake-DA-SS hang SENT-KA

'Your house is shaking.' (0405-1023)[6]

[6]Houses in Karawala are on stilts, so *hang* is not surprising above.

e. *Kusma ya dî* *î-w-ang* *âisau* *bahangh amat-d-i* **lau**

vulture the animal die-WA-3SING.PERF not.exist so sad-DA-SS sit

ka.

SENT-KA

'Because there are no dead animals, the vulture is sitting there sad.' (dict)

Another auxiliary-like environment in which these predicates are found is with property concept predicates (words naming adjectives in languages that have that lexical category; Dixon 1982; Koontz-Garboden and Francez In press), as with the data in (6).

(6) *Andrew, sang-ka* *kût* *man* *pih?*

Andrew, awake-ADJ 2SING INTERR

'Andrew, are you awake?' (0405-995)

According to Benedicto (2002:4), in Mayangna, it is only stage-level predicates (see Fernald 2000 for an overview) that can be used with posture predicates in this way (individual-level predicates appearing as a main predicate, without a posture predicate). Initial data I have collected suggest this also to be the case in Ulwa, with the caveat that stage-level meanings can surface not only in these contexts, but in predicative contexts as well. The data in (7) and (8) illustrate this. As shown in (7), in a context where the speaker's dog is born black, one can only assert the dog to be black using *baraska* 'black' as the main predicate (7a), not alongside a posture predicate like *lau* 'sit', as in (7b).

(7) CONTEXT: Speaker's dog is black by birth.

a. *Sû-ki-lu* *ya baras-ka ka.*

dog-<1SING> the black-ADJ SENT-KA

'My dog is black.'

b. *#Sû-ki-lu* *ya baras-ka lau ka.*

dog-<1SING> the black-ADJ sit SENT-KA

'My dog is black (lit: My dog sits/exists blackly).' (Oct09-20)

By contrast, if the dog is white by birth, but is black at the moment from having rolled around in mud, then either of these two constructions is fine—the predicative, as shown in (8a), or the construction where *baraska* 'black' is used with an auxiliary-like posture predicate, as in (8b).

(8) CONTEXT: Speaker's dog is white by birth, but is black at the moment from having rolled around in the mud.

a. *Sû-ki-lu* *bahka ya pih-ka* *ka* *katka mâdi palka âka baras-ka.*

dog-<1SING damn the white-ADJ SENT-KA but right now this black-ADJ

'My damn dog is white but at the moment, he's black.'

b. *Sû-ki-lu* *ya baraska lau ka.*

dog-<1SING> the black-ADJ sit SENT-KA

'My dog is black (lit: My dog sits/exists blackly).' (Oct09-20)

Exactly how these facts should be analyzed, of course, remains an open question, but as Benedicto (2002) shows for Mayangna, they are also for Ulwa, facts that should ultimately receive

an explanation.[7]

In the remainder of this section, I lay out the facts showing that the class of posture predicates is in its own special syntactic category in the language, unlike both verbal predicates, nominal predicates, and property concept predicates (the class of predicates with the meanings of adjectives in languages with that lexical category; Dixon 1982).

3.1 Non-verbal predication

Unlike verbs, non-verbal predicates in Ulwa require additional morphosyntactic modification (Hengeveld 1992; Beck 2002) in order to be predicated of an argument. The basic morphosyntactic contrast, leaving aside contrasts in meaning, is illustrated by the minimal pair in (9), (9a) containing a verbal predicate and (9b) containing a non-verbal predicate based on the same root as the verb in (9a).[8]

[7] I thank an anonymous reviewer for raising the question of stage-level uses of property concept words with posture predicates.

[8] An anonymous reviewer suggests that the markedness relation might be precisely the reverse in that with the non-verbal predicate, person/number agreement "is added (syntactically, maybe) directly to the root *lau*, whereas when that same person agreement is merged to a verbal root, the verb needs the 'extra' material in the form of the thematic morpheme (*–wa–* in this case of (9a).)" From my perspective in (9a), it is not *lau* that is a verb, but rather that *lau* when suffixed by the verb class morphology *–wa–* is itself a verb, and only then is eligible for verbal inflectional marking. It is in this way that the "verb" does not require the help of an additional syntactic projection (i.e., a copular element) in order for person/number to be expressed. Ultimately, however, as the reviewer suggests, this probably really is a matter of theoretical interpretation (e.g., if one takes the view that derivation is syntactic, as in e.g., Distributed Morphology, Halle and Marantz 1993), then it probably would indeed make more sense to say that something like (9a) is more morphologically marked than (9b). So, the question is really whether what is projected in the syntax in the case of (9a) is *lau–* as a precategorial root (then merging with higher functional projections) or *lau-wa–* under a verbal head. This issue goes far beyond the scope of this paper, and nothing below

(9) a. *Lau-wa-yam.*

sit-WA-2SING.PRES

'You're sitting down.'

b. *Lau man.*

sit 2SING

'You're sitting.'

The basic observation is that while the person and number features are included in the verbal inflections, they are not for non-verbal predicates (though the phonological shape of person/number morphology is similar for some person/number combinations for both non-verbal and verbal predicates; see Green 1999:119ff, 136 for full paradigms). The pattern in (9b), illustrated there with a predicate from the set of posture predicates, is the same one used for nominal and property concept state predicates, as shown by the data in (10), (10a) for a nominal predicate and (10b) for a property concept state predicate.

(10) a. *Al as man.*

man one 2SING

'You are a man.' (Mar08-1.9)

b. *Sang-ka man dah?*

green-ADJ 2SING still

'Are you still alive?' (dict.)

hinges on it, so I leave it open.

The constructions in (10), and all non-verbal predications like them, are interpreted as holding of the present. In order to situate them in either the past or future, additional copular material is required, as illustrated in (11a) for the past and (11b) for the future.

(11) a. *Babar-ka yang dai.*

thin-ADJ 1SING PAST

'I was thin.' (Oct09-3)

b. *Babar-ka at-kuting.*

thin-ADJ be-1SING.FUT

'I will be thin.' (Oct09-3)

The way in which tense marking is achieved with non-verbal predication differs, as can be seen in (11), according to tense. With the past tense, the particle *dai* is used, which exists only in two forms: the third person past as in (11a) and in the perfect, as further discussed in Green (1999:138). In the future, the copular verb *atnaka* 'be' is used, as illustrated in (11b). Unlike the defective *dai*, *atnaka* is a full-fledged verb and can take both person and number inflection. Because of this, when used in place of *dai* in the future (and some related tenses/moods like the irrealis), the person/number copula *yang* is not used, person agreement being encoded directly in the inflectional morphology (see Green 1999:chapter 8 for additional discussion, Benedicto (2002) for some possible syntactic consequences of similar behavior in Mayangna).

In tenses where the person/number copula (*yang* '1SING' in (11a)) is used, the form of the copular element varies according to person and number, with the form for the third person, whether singular or plural, being null (pending discussion below on *ka*). The table in (12) gives the full paradigm for person/number, with some examples of third person non-verbal

predicative constructions in (13).

(12) Person/number copula markers (Green 1999:136)

1sing	yang	1pl.excl	yangna
		1pl.incl	yak
2sing	man	2pl	manna
3sing	—	3pl	—

(13) a. *Kusih-ki ya babar-ka (ka).*

pig-1SING the thin-ADJ (SENT-KA)

'My pig is thin.' (Oct09-5)

b. *Kusih-ki balna ya babar-ka (ka).*

pig-1SING PL the thin-ADJ (SENT-KA)

'My pigs are thin.' (Oct09-5)

As illustrated by the examples in (13), there is no overt agreement in person or number when the non-verbal predicate is predicated of a third person argument, whether singular as in (13a), or plural as in (13b). The examples in (13) further illustrate the fact that with words naming property concept states the property concept word is suffixed with a *–ka*, which I gloss as ADJ, since this marker shows up on words that are adjectives in other languages.[9] Additionally, there is also another optional *ka*, whose presence has previously been understood as having complementizer-type functions (Green 1999:140). I have more to say about this *ka* in §3.3, since posture predicates are unique in obligatorily taking it in certain contexts.

[9]In actual fact, this is a possessive suffix, as shown by Koontz-Garboden and Francez (In press).

A final complication that should be pointed out is that with posture predicates, number agreement is encoded in the predicate itself, there being separate lexemes for singular and plural (Green 1999:140). Posture predicates stand alone in Ulwa in being the only class of words that systematically suppletes for number agreement. This is illustrated by the data in (14).

(14) a. *Tû-ki-ruh ya akarh-p-i kût ka.*

cow-<1SING> the ruminate-PA-SS lie SENT-KA

'My cow is lying down, ruminating.' (0405-472)

b. *Alas balna kal balis-na mûk ka.*

s/he PL REFL hug-3PL.PERF lie.PL SENT-KA

'They are lying down, hugging one another.' (dict)

While *kût* is used in (14a) to predicate a sitting posture of a figure, if this posture is predicated of more than one figure, *mûk* is used, as in (14b). As illustrated by Green (1999:140), each posture predicate has both a morphologically simple singular form and a morphologically simple plural form. These forms are given in (15).

(15) Lexically singular and plural forms of posture predicates (Green 1999:140)

singular	plural	gloss
lau	*bang*	'sitting'
sâk	*râuh*	'upright'
kût	*mûk*	'recumbent'
wît	*dul*	'suspended'
tung	*rîh*	'ambulatory'

While all predicates in Ulwa, whether verbal or non-verbal, appear with some kind of number agreement, whether inflectional or by use of an auxiliary verb, no other class of predicate has completely independent roots for singular and plural. This property puts the class of posture predicates in a class of its own.

Despite their suppletion for number, however, it is worth noting that in non-third person plural contexts, these predicates still take a copula inflected not only for person, but (redundantly, in these cases) for number, a fact illustrated by the data in (16).

(16) a. *Yangna mûk yangna.*

1PL.EXCL lie.PL 1PL.EXCL

'We (exclusive) are lying down.' (dict)

b. *Yangna balna mikdikina wiruruska bang yangna.*

1PL.EXCL PL eyes.1PL.EXCL closed.eyes sit.PL 1PL.EXCL

'We're sitting down with our eyes closed.' (dict)

A final note regarding this contrast is that whether it is strictly a singular/plural contrast or not has been unclear to me owing to examples like (17), where the singular variant *lau* is found with a plural figure.[10]

(17) ... *Pen balna lau ka.*

pen PL sit SENT-KA

'There are pens.' (corpus)

[10] Although these are attested, it's worth noting that at least some speakers claim them to be unacceptable.

What now seems clear after further study is that the contrast is indeed a strict singular/plural one for the vast majority of posture predicates. For no plural variant is it the case that it is found with a singular figure, as illustrated by the data in (18).

(18) **Baka-ki ya bang ka.*

child-1SING the sit.PL SENT-KA

'My child is sitting.' (Oct09-6)

Additionally, the only singular posture predicate I have found with plural figures is *lau* 'sit.' For all other posture predicates, it appears to be the case that Ulwa uses the singular form only with singular subjects and the plural form only with plural subjects. *Lau* 'sit' seems to be the lone special posture predicate that allows both singular and plural figures. This seems somewhat unsurprising in light of the other facts discussed below in §5 that show *lau* to be unique in other ways as well.

3.2 Morphological properties

There are a number of morphological properties that distinguish the class of posture predicates from both verbal, nominal, and property concept predicates, which I lay out in this section.

3.2.1 Lexical agreement for number

As already discussed in §3.1, one morphological property that distinguishes posture predicates from all other predicates in Ulwa is suppletion for number. No other class of lexeme in Ulwa suppletes for number.

3.2.2 Reduplication

Only property concept words are like posture predicates in undergoing reduplication, the meaning of which is not yet fully understood.[11] The data in (19) illustrate reduplication with property concept words, while those in (20) illustrate the same phenomenon with posture predicates.

(19) a. *Um balna ya û-kana-tak mu-mun-ka ka.*

sloth PL the skin-3PL soft-soft-ADJ SENT-KA

'Sloths have soft skin.' (Green 1999:60)

b. *Muih pi-pih-ka balna ya makda-kana buhu-huk-ka balna ka.*

person white-white-ADJ PL the eye-3PL blue-blue-ADJ PL SENT-KA

[11]In Mayangna, reduplicated property concept words are reported to be used as a form of plural agreement with a plural subject (Norwood 1997:65-66). How exactly Ulwa reduplicated posture words, as exemplified in (i), differ in meaning from the suppletive plural variants like (ii) is not yet clear to me.

(i) a. *Bikiska balna sumal pas kau lau-lau ka.*

child PL school inside at sit-sit SENT-KA

'The children are (sitting) inside the school.' (Oct09-3)

b. *Tûruh laih bang-bang dai, and yang laih bai kau lâ-w-ikda.*

cow TOP sit.PL-sitPL PAST and 1SING TOP far at cross-WA-1SING.PAST

'The cows were sitting and I crossed from far away.' (Oct09-11)

(ii) *Baka-ki balna yâlah bang ka.*

child-1SING PL over.there sit.PL SENT-KA

'My children are sitting over there.' (Oct09-6)

My best guess is that reduplication in Ulwa has some sort of distributive meaning, though I have as yet been unable to collect convincing data to substantiate this idea. Further work is needed.

'White people have blue eyes. (Green 1999:60)

(20) a. *Asna as as lau-lau ka pakap-ka.*

clothes one one sit sit SENT-KA stiff-ADJ

'There are some clothes that are stiff.' (0405-435)

b. *Ûmis balna wît-wît ya î-t-anauh.*

bat PL hang-hang the kill-TA-2PL.IMP

'Kill the bats that are hanging there.' (Oct09-6)

c. *Sûlu balna kût-kût ya bil-p-i yak-t-ah.*

dog PL lie-lie the scold-PA-SS remove-TA-2SING.IMP

'Scold and remove the dogs that are lying there.' (Oct09-6)

Neither verbs nor nouns share this property with posture predicates and property concept words; that is, reduplicated forms of verbs are entirely unknown.[12]

3.2.3 Status of the root

The status of the posture root is like that of nouns, but unlike that from which verbs and property concept words are formed in that the root is morphologically free. Roots from which verbs and property concept words are formed, by contrast, are bound and can only be made into free syntactic words via morphological derivation (Koontz-Garboden 2007:Chapter 6). This is seen, by examining the small selection of property concept roots in (21), from which both property

[12]This statement is somewhat complicated by the fact that both the roots that property concept words and posture predicates are derived from can have verbs derived from them (see e.g., discussion in Koontz-Garboden 2009b). The observation, then, more precisely is that these roots are never reduplicated in the context of verbal derivational or inflectional morphology.

concept words (22) and often change of state verbs (23) can be formed (Koontz-Garboden 2006b, 2009b).

(21) Some Ulwa property concept roots

auh– 'fat'; *babar*– 'thin'; *sik*– 'big'; *bisi*– 'small'; *tubak*– 'thick/dense'; *siu*– 'ripe'; *yam*– 'good'; *dut*– 'bad'; *pau*– 'red'; *pih*– 'white'; *baras*– 'black'; *puput*– 'brown'; *lalah*– 'yellow'

(22) *Tâpas adah-ka ya wât-da-naka yam-ka ka.*

path short-ADJ the walk-DA-3SING.INF good-ADJ SENT-KA

'A short path is good for walking.' (dict)

(23) *Alas î-w-ai dai katka yam-p-ida.*

s/he sick-WA-3SING was but good-PA-3SING.PAST

'S/he was sick, but got better.' (dict)

The sentence in (22) illustrates the fact that roots like those in (21), in order to be used as free syntactic words, must be suffixed with –*ka*, the third person form of possessive morphology that aside from appearing on possessed nouns in possessive NPs, is used to turn bound property concept roots into free syntactic words (with a number of interesting and somewhat peculiar morphosyntactic and semantic consequences, as shown by Koontz-Garboden and Francez In press). Verbal stems, by contrast, are formed from roots, whether property concept denoting or not, by the use of a verb class suffix, such as –*pa*– in (23) (Koontz-Garboden 2009b). Morphologically free verbs, then, appear with person, number, and tense inflectional morphology, as with *yam-p-ida* in (23), an instantiation of the general scheme for Ulwa verb formation

exemplified by the template in (24).

(24) root-verb.class.suffix-person/number/tense

Posture predicate roots are unlike the roots from which property concept words and verbs are derived in that while the latter are morphologically bound, as illustrated above, the former are morphologically free in the same way that nouns are. This is illustrated for both posture predicates and nouns by the data in (25) and (26), which show, as already seen in §3.1 that in predicative constructions, posture predicates take no additional morphological marking, appearing only with a copular element. Nouns, for their part, are also morphologically unmarked, although they do generally take an article in predicative constructions, as the data in (26) show.

(25) *Damai, Ulwa û-ka kau lau yang dai.*
yesterday Ulwa house-3SING at sit 1SING PAST
'Yesterday I was sitting at the Ulwa house.' (Oct09-12)

(26) *Tâtungh kau sumaltingka as yang dai.*
old.time at teacher one 1SING PAST
'In the old days, I was a teacher.' (Oct09-12)

In this way, posture roots are like nominal roots, which are also morphologically free, requiring no derivational morphology in order to be used either as an argument or as a predicate. Posture predicates differ from nouns in a number of other ways, however, particularly in never appearing as the argument of a determiner, never appearing with the nominal marker of plurality *balna*, reduplicating (unlike nouns), and obligatorily taking sentential *ka* in present tense

environments, to which I turn now.

3.3 Posture predicates and evidentiality

As discussed in Koontz-Garboden (In press), Ulwa has a sentence final particle *ka*, illustrated in (27), that seems to have evidential uses, and can be used only in the present tense.

(27) *Wassik ya sang-p-ai ka.*

river the clear-PA-3SING KA

'The river is clear (=not muddy, and speaker has been to river to observe this).' (July08-1.139)

The sentence in (27) is acceptable in a context where the speaker has direct evidence for the assertion that the river is clear. Absent direct evidence, *ka* must be omitted.

As previously mentioned, there is a requirement that in the absence of tense/aspect marking, i.e., in the default present tense, *ka* is obligatory with posture predicates, as illustrated by the data in (28).

(28) *Al as lau *(ka).*

man one sit *sent-ka*

'There's a man (sitting).' (July08-1.62)

Speakers report (July08-1.122ff; 1-148ff.) that in posture predicate constructions such as (28), there is an inference (seemingly non-cancelable) that the speaker has direct evidence for their assertions, which with posture predicate constructions generally means visual evidence, though see more detailed discussion and exceptions in Koontz-Garboden (In press).

As mentioned, *ka* is obligatory only in the present tense third person contexts. In the presence of first or second person copular elements, as in (29), for example, it does not generally appear.[13]

(29) a. *Kuring kau lau yang.*

canoe in sit 1SING

'I am (sitting) in a canoe.' (corpus)

b. *Man laih dî auh-ka lau man.*

2SING TOP thing fat-3SING sit 2SING

'You, you're sitting there fat.' (corpus)

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[13]This is not to say that it cannot. It is just the case that it is not obligatory. The data in (i) show an example where it does indeed appear.

(i) CONTEXT: Al passes by Aba's house asking if he's sitting there. Aba is, though he lies about it.

Al: *Lau man pih?*

sit 2SING INTERR

'Are you there/sitting?'

Aba: *Sâk yang, wahai.*

stand 1SING brother

'I'm standing, brother.'

Al: *Man sâk sa man. Lau man ka!*

2SING stand NEG 2SING sit 2SING SENT-KA

'You're not standing. You're sitting!' (Oct09-12)

Additionally, the data in (30) show that a copular element carrying person/number/tense/aspect information alleviates the need for *ka*. As shown in (31), there is a small series of other particles, like the interrogative particle, particle of irreverence (Green 1999:201), and the element meaning 'still', that can alleviate the need for *ka* as well.

(30) a. *Al as lau dai.*

man one sit PAST

'There was a man (sitting).' (July08-1.62)

b. *Al as lau at-rang.*

man one sit be-3SING.IRR

'There will be a man (sitting).' (July08-1.62)

c. *Al as lau at-kuti.*

man one sit be-3SING.FUT

'There will be a man (sitting).' (July08-1.62)

(31) a. *Pâpanghma lau pih?*

father-2SING sit INTERR

'Is your father here?' (dict)

b. *Walang ya-wa-yam lau sah.*

corpulent go-WA-2SING.PRES sit IRREV

'I see you're getting corpulent.' (dict)

c. *Muku ya pan taran yau lau dah.*

toad the tree high there sit still

'The toad is still sitting high up there in the tree.' (corpus)

The upshot of all of this is that posture predicates are the only class of predicates that require use of *ka* in any context. In this way, they constitute a morphosyntactic class unto themselves.[14]

3.4 Summary: The morphosyntactic properties of posture predicates

In this section I have shown that posture predicates are in a morphosyntactic class of their own. They are nonverbal predicates, but nonverbal predicates unlike nouns and property concept predicates. Unlike the latter, which are constructed from morphologically bound roots, posture predicates are morphologically free. In this way, they are like nouns. They differ from nouns, however, in being able to reduplicate (like property concept words). Unlike either nouns or property concept words (or verbs, for that matter), they obligatorily take sentential *ka* in the present tense. They are also unlike the two other classes in having suppletive plural forms. In this way, posture predicates are in a morphosyntactic class of their own.

Having laid out a morphosyntactic description of this class of predicates, in the sections that follow, I consider the role that posture predicates and their absence play in Ulwa in the expression of existential and locative propositions, first turning, however, to their non-posture counterpart in the expression of location.

4 Bare locatives

To this point discussion has centered around posture predicate constructions. There is a second type of locative construction in Ulwa, however, first illustrated in (1a), in which only a

[14] As discussed in Koontz-Garboden (In press), there is a small handful of other non-posture predicates that group themselves morphosyntactically with posture predicates. These include *watah* 'have', *it* 'to be possible', and so-called "auditive" inflected verb forms.

postpositional phrase and a figure appear. No posture predicate appears in this construction. Additional naturally occurring examples are given in (32).

(32) a. *Mâdi âka yaka Bluefields kau ka.*

now this that.one Bluefields at SENT-KA

'He's in Bluefields right now.' (Oct09-58)

b. *Âwih, yaka ûka kau ka, nâwalh.*

yes that house at SENT-KA ghost

'Yes, ghosts are in that house.' (Oct09-68)

c. *Yang pan laba-ki kau ka.*

1SING DISC-PART side-1SING at SENT-KA

'It's just that they're on my side.' (speaking of a building next to speaker's house that causing speaker problems) (Oct09-197)

d. *Alas Costa Rica kau ka.*

s/he Costa Rica in ka

'S/he is in Costa Rica.' (Mar06-23; nat occ.)

e. *Mâdi laih yakau ka.*

now TOP over.there ka

'Now he lives over there.' (Jul08-1.174; nat) (Aba speaking to someone else about where Andrew lives, i.e., in England)

f. *CD wâk kau ka.*

CD other in/on ka

'It's on another CD.' (Jul08-1.173; nat) (A, speaking of the rest of a story that he is transcribing)

These examples illustrate the key morphosyntactic difference between the bare locative and the posture locative—the bare locative includes no posture predicate. One obvious consequence of this is that bare locatives are underspecified for posture, so that there is no claim, for example, about whether the subject in (32d) is sitting, standing, or lying, while in the specified location. Morphosyntactically, however, they seem to have very similar properties. First, they are non-verbal, as shown by the fact that they don't take verbal inflectional morphology. Further, they seem to be unlike nouns and property concept words and more like their posture predicate counterparts in that, as shown in (32), in the present tense, they take sentential *ka*. In this way, then, it looks potentially like the bare locative could simply be a posture predicate construction with the posture predicate elided, with the associated loss of posture-specific meaning, but little else. To a large degree, I think this is correct.

It is a bit more complicated than this, however. As I show below, not all posture predicates are comparable in the semantic properties. I believe that the bare locative construction patterns with the broader set of posture predicate constructions in naming locative propositions. In this way the bare locative, I argue below, contrasts with particular uses of the bleached posture predicate *lau*, which alongside its pure posture meaning has also an existential meaning. In the sections that follow, I show how these two kinds of meanings contrast, and how it is that the bare locative and posture predicates excluding *lau* have pure locative meanings, while *lau* has not only this, but a bleached existential meaning as well.

5 Distinguishing the Ulwa existential from locative constructions

In this section, I explore the question whether there is any evidence for considering that the bare locative and posture predicate constructions express the same kinds of meanings. I begin this endeavor by showing that not all posture predicates are identical. As is common crosslinguistically (Ameka and Levinson 2007:857), Ulwa has one particular posture predicate, *lau* 'sit', that is different from the other posture predicates in having a bleached, purely existential meaning. Given that the bare locative, by virtue of lacking a posture predicate, also lacks any postural semantics, this raises the question whether the bare locative construction and the bleached *lau* existential construction express the same meanings or not. Drawing on arguments of the kind presented recently for English by Francez (2009), I show that they do not, and that as a consequence, in Ulwa locative and existential meanings are separate, if related, much as they are also in English.

5.1 *Lau* 'sit' versus the other posture predicates

Clark (1978) observes that languages commonly use locative constructions for the expression of existential propositions. Superficially, this is also the case in Ulwa, which uses the posture predicate *lau* 'sit' to predicate not only the sitting posture of a figure, but also existence of a figure independent of posture. Ulwa speakers have volunteered this to me before, pointing out that *lau* has two meanings, a pure posture meaning 'sit' and a more abstract 'exist' meaning. And from data like those in (33), it seems intuitively obvious that alongside the pure posture uses, *lau* must have another more abstract, non-posture meaning.

(33) *Minsa bik, dî abal-ka bik lau ka. Minsa yam-ka sa.*

Minsa also thing wrong-ADJ also sit SENT-KA. Minsa good-ADJ NEG

'Minsa (the government health organization in Nicaragua) also, there's something bad there. Minsa is not good.' (0405-512)

Given the sense in which 'something bad' no more is in a sitting position than a hanging, lying, or standing one, data like (33) suggest that *lau* 'sit' is bleached, having a meaning entailing merely existence. That *lau* is polysemous in this way is presumed, without argumentation, by Green (1999:140), who gives it the gloss 'sitting/existing.' That a predicate with this particular meaning should also have existential uses is unsurprising crosslinguistically, given similar findings of Ameka and Levinson (2007) for other languages like Ulwa that have a special class of posture predicates. Still, although data like those in (33) make it seem intuitively obvious that this is what is going on, linguistic arguments for this position are rarely presented that show conclusively that there are two distinct, if related meanings.

One solid argument for this position comes from the fact that *lau*'s use does not entail that the figure it is predicated of is in a sitting position. This is suggested already by the data in (33), but shown more conclusively by the data in (34), since in the sentence in (34) *lau* is asserted of the woman at the same time that *lau* is denied without giving rise to a contradiction.

(34) *Yaka yal-ka ya baka-ka makdâ-t-i lau ka, katka lau*

that woman-3SING the child-3SING watch-TA-SS sit SENT-KA but sit

at-sa/sa. Asna suh-p-i sâk ka.

be-NEG/NEG clothes wash-PA-SS stand SENT-KA

'That woman is (sitting) watching her child, but she's not sitting. She's standing,

washing clothes.' (July08-2.86)

Given that (34) does not give rise to a contradiction, it has to be the case that it has two different meanings. This is the case if *lau* has two separate, if related meanings, one existential, one postural.[15]

By contrast with *lau*, other posture predicates give rise to a contradiction when placed in the frame in (33). This is shown by the data in (35)–(37).

(35) *#Yaka yal-ka ya baka-ka mâkda-t-i wît ka wah kau, katka*

that woman-3SING the child watch-TA-SS hang SENT-KA hammock in but

wît sa/at-sa.

hang NEG/be-3SING.NEG

#'That woman is hanging in the hammock watching her child, but she's not hanging.'

(July-2.86)

(36) *#Baka-ki baka ya kût ka katka kût sa/at-sa.*

child-1SING small the lie SENT-KA but lie NEG/be-3SING.NEG

[15]The data in (i), on the other hand, show that a contradiction is generated if *lau* is asserted of some entity, and it is later denied, with the negative existential lexeme, that it exists.

(i) *#Yaka yal-ka ya baka-ka makdâ-t-i lau ka, katka âisau.*

that woman-3SING the child-3SING watch-TA-SS sit SENT-KA but not.exist

#That woman is (sitting) watching her child, but she doesn't exist/is not there.' (July08-2.86)

This behavior is expected with either meaning of *lau*. If the existential meaning is used, then obviously it will be contradictory to later deny existence. Since posture predicates presuppose existence, the postural meaning of *lau* in (i) would also be expected to generate a contradiction.

#‘My child is lying there, but s/he’s not lying.’ (July08-2.66)

(37) *#Ami-ki ya û-ka kau sâk ka katka sâk sa/at-sa.*

sister-1SING the house-3SING at stand SENT-KA but stand NEG/be-3SING.NEG

#‘My sister is standing at her house, but she is not standing.’ (July08-2.65)

These facts show that *lau* is special, having an existential meaning alongside its posture meaning. The other posture predicates, although they certainly presuppose existence, cannot be used to assert only existence, but not posture. They all entail of their figure that it is in a particular posture. Only *lau* has a pure existential meaning alongside its posture meaning.

A second consideration that points to the conclusion that *lau* is special among the set of posture predicates concerns number marking facts laid out above. As already discussed in §3.1, *lau* seems to be alone among Ulwa posture predicates in being underspecified for number. I.e., examples can be found not only with singular subjects, but plural ones as well. Although logically independent of the bleaching facts discussed above, this seems unsurprising in light of them; it is, in essence, another kind of semantic bleaching and it seems easy to imagine that postural bleaching and number bleaching could go hand-in-hand, as seems to be the case with *lau*.

5.2 Existential versus bare locatives

To this point, I have laid out data showing that the posture construction with *lau* ‘sit’ is polysemous between a locative/posture and an existential reading, while posture predicate constructions with the other posture predicates have no bleached existential reading. There remains to be discussed the status of the bare locative construction, examples of which were given in (1a)

and (32), vis a vis locative and existential readings of the types discussed in previous sections. In this section I show that unlike the *lau* construction, which bare locatives might be expected to pattern with given their postural underspecificity, bare predicate locatives have a pure locative, and no existential, meaning.

The argument for this begins with the observation that part/whole constructions, at least in English, are acceptable with the English *there* construction, which is like posture predicate *lau* constructions in allowing both existential and locative readings, but unacceptable with predicate locatives, as illustrated by the data in (38) (Kimball 1973; Francez 2009).

(38) a. There is space in the village for more houses.

b. *Space is in the village for more houses.

The same kind of contrast is found in Ulwa. Posture constructions with *lau* are fine with part/whole meanings, as illustrated by the data in (39).

(39) a. *Burimak kau makka lau ka.*

guava in seed sit ka

'Guavas have seeds (in them).' (July08-1.56; 1.119)

b. *Karawala kau û yamnaka pahka isau lau ka.*

Karawala in house make-3SING.INF place-3SING much sit ka

'In Karawala there is much house-building space.' (July08-1.56; 1.119)

c. *Waspah kau was isau lau ka.*

well in water much sit ka

'In a well, there is much water.' (July08-1.125)

By contrast, bare predicate variants of the sentences in (39) tend to be rejected.[16]

(40) a. **Makka burimak kau ka.*

seed guava in ka

'*A seed is in a guava.' (July08-1.56; 1.119)

b. **Û yamnaka pahka isau Karawala kau ka.*

house build-3SING.INF space much Karawala in ka

'*House-building space is in Karawala.' (July08-1.56; 1.119)

c. **Was isau waspah kau ka.*

water much well in ka

'? Much water is in a well.' (July08-1.125)

Assuming that part/whole meanings are ones that are consistent only with existential meaning and not with locative meaning, as is the case in English, then these data show that posture predicates with *lau*, as already determined above, have an existential reading. By contrast, bare locatives have no existential reading, which is why they are often judged unacceptable for the expression of part/whole constructions.

The same conclusion is reached by consideration of the meanings that negated bare locatives can have in contrast with similar sentences headed by the negative existential *âisau*. The

[16]This varies to some degree from speaker to speaker and construction to construction. All speakers I have consulted reject (40a), for example. Some, but not all, however, reject (40b,c). They all contrast with those in (39), however, which are perfectly ordinary for everybody.

An anonymous reviewer asks how it is that we know that the sentences in (40) aren't unacceptable due to the position of the subject. This we know because of the data in (29a,d), which are like (40) in terms of subject/predicate order, but are nevertheless acceptable.

data in (41a), for example, show that the bare locative cannot be used to talk about the non-existence of a leader in the community, in a context where the village has a political organization where there is no leader. By contrast, consultants judge it acceptable in a context where Karawala does have an organization with a leader, but the leader is just absent at the moment of speaking. The sentence in (41b), however, is acceptable in the given context, i.e., it is acceptable in the context where the village is not organized around a single leader.

(41) Context: Karawala is not a community that has a leader; everyone is the leader

a. *#Tunak muih-ka Karawala kau sa.*

head person-3SING Karawala at NEG

? 'A leader is not in Karawala.' (July08-2.26; 2.55)

b. *Tunak muih-ka Karawala kau âisau ka.*

head person-3SING Karawala in neg.exist ka

'In Karawala there does not exist a leader.' (July08-2.26; 2.55)

The data in (42) and (43) show the same kind of contrast. Where there is no space for houses in Bluefields, the negative existential with *âisau* (42a) is acceptable, by contrast with the bare locative (42b). Similarly, given the knowledge that cinnamon is not an ingredient in bread, (43a) is acceptable, while the bare locative in (43b) is not.

(42) a. *Bluefields kau û yam-naka pah-ka âisau.*

Bluefields in house build-3SING.INF place-3SING not.exist

'In Bluefields there does not exist house-building space.' (July08-2.55)

b. **Û yamnaka pahka Blufields kau sa.*

house build-3SING.INF space-3SING Bluefields in NEG

? 'House building space is not in Bluefields.' (July08-2.55)

(43) a. *Bâpah kau cinnamon âisau.*

bread in cinnamon neg.exist

'In bread, there is no cinnamon.' (July08-2.55)

b. **Cinnamon bâpah kau sa.*

cinnamon bread in NEG

? 'Cinnamon is not in bread.' (July08-2.55)

These data show that the bare locative is a pure locative construction; it does not have an existential reading; it cannot be used solely as an existential without also predicating location. What exactly the difference between the bare locative and the posture locatives might be remains an open question. As suggested in §4, it may well just be that the bare locative is simply underspecified for the kind of postural meaning that the posture predicate provides in the posture locative. Or, as an anonymous reviewer points out, it could well be that there is a deeper semantic difference. This remains an open question.

6 Concluding remarks

First and foremost this paper is meant to serve as a description of the encoding of location and existence in Ulwa, and the morphosyntax of the posture predicates implicated in both of these.

Beyond this, however, several broader conclusions can be drawn, in the context of Ulwa, and beyond. First, *lau* 'sit' and other posture predicates differ from one another fundamentally

in that while *lau* is polysemous, the other posture predicates are not. As seen in the preceding sections, *lau* can have a pure posture 'sit' meaning. At the same time, though, one can assert *lau* of something and then later deny it, giving rise to the pure existence meaning of *lau*. This is possible only for *lau*, because it has two separate, if related, meanings—one of pure existence and one of existence in a position. The other posture predicates have only the existence in a position type meanings.

A second important observation is that bare locatives differ fundamentally from existentials in that locative meaning is simply different from existential meaning, as shown by the contrast between the negated bare locative and the negative existential *âisau*. While a sentence headed by *âisau* denies the existence of the referent of its argument, negated locatives do not. Instead, a negated locative simply denies that the argument is located in the specified position; a negated locative does not give rise to any inference that the figure does not exist. Existence is presupposed in locatives, while it is part of the assertion in an existential.

What we find in Ulwa, in the end then, are four distinct, if closely related constructions used in the expression of location and existence: pure posture predicates (including the posture use of *lau*), bare locatives, existential *lau*, and the negative existential *âisau*. These differ from one another in the lexical semantics of the predicates in question, the first two seemingly presupposing existence, the latter two asserting/denying it. What exactly the consequences of these findings are for formal analyses of existential constructions is something that seems worth considering in future work. For example, Francez (2009) explores the issue of what is the main predicate in an English existential construction—the figure or the location. In the Ulwa system, the issue of what is the main predicate seems relatively straightforward, at least morphosyntactically—all signs point to the posture predicate being the main predicate. This

raises the question whether a compositional semantic analysis in which the semantic predicate and the morphosyntactic predicate are one and the same is possible.

Beyond the specifics of Ulwa, the diagnostics used in this paper to tease apart existential and locative meanings could be used in other posture-type languages like those discussed by Ameka and Levinson (2008) to isolate the constructions expressing these two types of meanings. Such work, in turn, could contribute to a better understanding of the ways in which languages encode existential and locative meaning, and the extent to which these are separate, if related, notions, as suggested by Francez's work, and by the findings laid out above.

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