

Chapter 3

Pre-verbal uses

3.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the uses of *ba* followed by another verb. According to Jones (1961:16) modal verbs are defined as occurring before the verb and their special treatment required in negatives. He lists the following as modal verbs:

<i>θý</i>	prevent, prohibit
<i>plé</i>	permit (an event to take place)
<i>dý?</i>	permit (a person to do something)
<i>θá</i>	intend to do something
<i>mé</i>	if

It is interesting that Jones classifies a “modal auxiliary subclass one” and glosses it as ‘must’, ‘have to’. However there are no syntactic differences between Jones’ modal verbs and *ba*.

Gilmore (1898:37) calls the pre-verbal verbs “dependent verbs”, by which he means that the pre-verbal verb is depending on the following verb, without undergoing any change of form. He also notes that these verbs “express suitability, necessity, etc”. He provides an example as follows.

- 50) *jə-ba* *lɛ* *lɔ*
1s-must go DECL
AUX V Pf
I must go. [Gilmore 1898:37#147]

Pre-verbal uses of *ba* involve modality. As there are many different opinions on what actually comprises modality I will base my definitions on Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca’s (1994) cross-linguistic description of tense, aspect and modality.

The two modalities associated with pre-verbal *ba* involve obligation and necessity. The following sections discuss these two kinds of modality.

3.2 Obligation

I define obligation as “enabling conditions exist *socially* that *compel* an agent to complete the predicate action” (c.f. Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca 1994: 177). Sgaw makes no distinction between weak (“should”) and strong (“must”) obligation. This distinction is part of the discourse-pragmatic context.

- 51) *ba ma di.θo? pə-da.mi.mə əθo? lə*
 OBLG do similar 1pl-dream as DECL
 vV V SUB N ADV Pf
 We have to do as our dream. [P&T10]
- 52) *po.mu tə.ɹə ne ba wi də? ku*
 women PL TOP OBLG carry with basket
 N CLF TOP vV V P N
 Women have to carry with baskets. [Harvest 7]
- 53) *bwa ba bə.ja.lə ge ə.θa? lə*
 people OBLG repent back 3.RFLX DECL
 N vV V ADV PRO Pf
 All should repent.
 Lit: People should repent themselves. [Mason_Mk 6:12]
- 54) *ə.po.k^hwa tə.ɹə ne ba t^ho k^hu?*
 man PL TOP OBLG drill field
 N CLF P vV V N
 Men have to drill the field. [Harvest 6]
- 55) *pə-tə ba tɛ bwa lə pə-da.mi.mə ʋo*
 1pl-NEG OBLG tell people about 1pl-dream Pf
 ADV vV V N P N NEG
 We should not tell people about our dream. [P&T 9]
- 56) *nə-ba po? jə k^hi lə*
 2s-OBLG follow 1s hip Pf
 vV V PRO N Pf
 You have to follow me. [P&T37]

- 57) *bwa.kə.ŋɔ p^ho.k^hwa i ba do? da.na?.da.p^hɔ a.mi*
 people son this OBLG take suffering many
 N N DET vV V N ADV

The Son of Man must suffer many things.

Lit: This son of people has to take many sufferings. [Mason_Mk 8:31]

- 58) *mɛ ba tɛ əp^hu ne*
 if OBLG say short TOP
 P vV V ADV TOP

If I have to tell [you] shortly, [elephant19]

- 59) *pə-mo tɛ.xa? bwa pə-tə-ba kuʔ.ə lɔ.pə.θa? ba*
 1pl-mother tell 1pl 1pl-not-OBLG plot.bad ourselves NEG
 N V PRO vV V RFLX NEG

Our mother told us that we should not plan together. [P&T 14]

More commonly, obligation is coded by the sequence *kə* IRR (Irrealis) and *ba*:

- 60) *jə-kə-ba ma dī.θo? jə-da.mi.mɔ ə.θo? lɔ*
 1s-IRR-OBLG do similar 1s-dream as DECL
 vV V SUB N ADV Pf

I will have to do according to my dream. [P&T 18]

- 61) *pə-kə-ba lɛ.tɛ ɔ pə.ye.pə.glo lə kə-ba si.ŋɔ bwa lɔ*
 1pl-IRR-OBLG go.tell 3 about.us for IRR-OBLG judge 1pl DECL
 vV V PRO N P AUX V PRO Pf

We will have to go and tell him to judge for us. [P&T 19]

- 62) *jə-kə-ba ma dī jə-tɛ ə.θo? lɔ*
 1s-IRR-OBLG do as 1s-say as DECL
 vV V SUB V ADV Pf

I will have to do as I say. [P&T 26]

- 63) *jə-kə-ba ɔ ɔ lɔ*
 1s-IRR-OBLG eat 3 DECL
 vV V PRO Pf

I will have to eat him. [P&T 27]

64) ə.wε kə-**ba** ɔ na lɔ
 3 IRR-OBLG eat 2s DECL
 PRO vV V PRO Pf

He will have to eat you. [(P&T 29)]

65) bɔ.θo kə-**ba** ɔ tʰ.mi ə-ŋa
 tiger IRR-OBLG eat pig 3s-flesh
 N vV V N N

Tiger will have to eat pig meat. [P&T 39]

66) nə-ma ne kə-**ba** kε.tʰɔ jə-ma lɔ
 2s-wife TOP IRR-OBLG become 1s-wife DECL
 N P vV V N Pf

[If you talk like that] your wife will have to become my wife. [P&T 41]

67) tʰoʔ.mi.pʰo tə diu i ne jə-kə-**ba** kuʔ diʔlε
 piglet NUM CLF this TOP 1s-IRR-OBLG plot how
 N NUM CLF DET TOP vV V Q

How should I plan this little pig? [P&T 6]

It is interesting to note that no examples of obligation were found in the Book of Mark. The remainder of the Sgaw Bible needs to be checked to see if there are any examples of obligation

3.3 Necessity

Necessity refers to those situations where enabling conditions exist *physically* that *compel* an agent to complete the predicate action (Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca 1994:177). Example (68) shows the meaning of necessity. Because the speaker has drunk so much water, they physically cannot hold on and so must find a toilet.

68) jə-ɔ tʰi a ə.xo jə-**ba** lε sʰu da.haʔ.lɔ
 1s-drink water much so 1s-need go to toilet
 V N ADV P vV V P N

I've drunk so much water that I need to go to the toilet.

69) pə-me ba.kɔ.ba.kʰε ne pə-**ba** ba.tʰu.kə.pʰa da lɔ
 1pl-be trouble TOP 1pl-need pray thing DECL
 V V P vV V N Pf

If we are in trouble, we need to pray. [Elephant4]

70) *ba* *zɔ.lɔ* *buu.k^hli* *də?* *ba* *blɛ.lɔ* *wɛ*
 need grab rice.seed and need scatter 3
 vV V N CONJ vV V PRO

[They] need to grab the rice and need to sow it. [Harvest 8]

71) *bwa* *ba* *də.nuu?* *ɔ* *lə* *t^hi.də.dapi?* *ə.θɔ* *lɔ*
 people need put.inside 3 in water.container.skin new Pf
 N vV V PRO LCLZR N ADJ Pf

People need to put it in new skin water container. [Mason_Mk 2:22]

72) *pə-ba* *t^hɔ* *gə.zə*
 1pl-need climb mountain
 vV V N

We have to climb mountain. [Elephant2]

73) *pə-ba* *ge.klɔ.ge* *pə-ba* *pa.p^ho.ge*
 1pl-need go.back.cut 1pl-need gather.back
 vV V vV V

[When the fire does not burn down] we need to go cut again and we need to gather again. [Harvest 4]

74) *pə-ba* *t^hɛ?* *θə* *blɔ* *tə-* *ni* *ə.dɔ.bu*
 1pl-need pull three time one year within
 vV V NUM CLF NUM N TEMP

Each year we need to weed three times. [Harvest 15]

Sometimes *ba* codes a habitual action:

75) *pə-ba* *s^hu?* *lə* *mu.s^ha.k^hɔ* *k^hi* *na.i* *ə.s^hə.gə.dɔ*
 1pl-need burn with noon two hour time
 vV V P N NUM N N

We need to burn at two o'clock. [Harvest31]

76) *tək^hlu?* *pə-p^hɛ?^hku?* *ne* *pə-ba* *xə?diu*
 before 1pl-cultivate TOP 1pl-need look.for
 ADV V P vV V

'Before we cultivate, we need to search. [Harvest1]

77) *pə-ɓa tʰɛ? kə.də.ge tə blɔ kʰi blɔ*
 1pl-need pull back one time two time
 vV V ADV NUM CLF NUM CLF

We need to pull (it) back one or two times. [Harvest 14]

78) *tə.kʰlu?lə pə-sʰu?.kʰu? ne pə-ɓa waʔ.ni me.ə.klo*
 before 1pl-burn.field TOP 1pl-need scrape fire.line
 SUB V P vV V N

'Before we burn the field we have to scrape the fire line. [Harvest2]

79) *jə-kə-ɓa ma diʔ.lɛ jə-kə-ɔ ɓa bwa.də.ya i ne*
 1s-IRR-need do how 1s-IRR-eat able person this TOP
 vV V Q V V N DET TOP

What will I have to do to be able to eat this person? [P&T 5]

ɓa is commonly found in procedural and exhortative texts:

80) *θu ɓa ɛ lθuθa?*
 3 need love each.other
 PRO vV V PRO

θu tə ɓa ma tʰɔ.də lθuθa? ɓa,
 3 NEG need do against each.other NEG
 PRO ADV vV V V PRO Pf

θu ɓa ma.zə lθuθa?
 3 need help each.other
 PRO vV V PRO

θu tə ɓa kuʔ.ə lθuθa? ɓa
 3 NEG have.to plot each.other NEG
 PRO ADV vV V PRO Pf

You have to love each other, you should not be against yourselves, you have to help each other, you should not plan evil yourselves. [P&T2]

Example (80) is an example from an exhortative text with *ɓa* being used four times in the same sentence. In fact, *ɓa* could be used as many times as one wants in just one sentence to describe a process. That is the reasons why *ɓa* is found many times in the procedural texts.

3.4 Vagueness of pre-verbal *ba*

Out of context many clauses with pre-verbal *ba* could be interpreted as either necessity or obligation, example (81).

- 81) *nə-ba* ɔ me lɔ
 2s-? eat rice Pf
 vV V N Pf

You should eat rice.

You need to eat.

You must eat.

- 82) *ba.mə.nuu.xo nə-ba* hɔ lɛ
 why 2s-? cry Pf
 Q vV V Pf

Why do you have to cry? [P&T33]

Why do you need to cry?

Why must you cry?

If sentence (81) is spoken by a mother to her son, *ba* here would convey a strong command sense or obligation. On the other hand, it could be also a gentle exhortation ‘you need to eat rice, son’.

- 83) *pə-kə-ba* lɛ jə miɪ
 1pl-IRR-? go five minute
 vV V NUM N

We will have to go for five minutes. [Elephant1]

- 84) *pə-ba tʰɛ?* nɔ
 1pl-? pull grass
 V V N

We have/need to pull grass. [Harvest 13]

- 85) *bui.kə.do ne pə-ba* wi kə.də.ge ɔ
 rice TOP 1pl-? carry back 3s
 N P vV V ADV PRO

We must/need to carry back the rice. [Harvest 20]

Sgaw has words that code necessity and obligation. For example, *kə?* ‘suitable’⁸ is used to code a suggestion/weak obligation – somebody in authority or somebody

⁸ This morpheme is not discussed in Jones’ (1961) grammar of Sgaw.

who firmly believes that something is suitable to be done would use *kɔʔ* rather than *ba* so as to restrict the strong obligation reading, for example:

- 86) *nə-kɔʔ* ɔ *me lɔ*
 2s-OBLG V N Pf
 vV V N Pf

You should eat rice. [Con 19/8/11 (1)]

Example (86) could be translated as ‘it is suitable for you to eat rice’. This sounds like a weak command. Yet, nobody except the participants in the conversation knows that this really is a suggestion or obligation.

There is another preverbal *lo* ‘need’. If it is used with other verbs it shows necessity though sometimes overlaps with obligation sense.

- 87) *nə-lo* *ɛ lɔ*
 2s-NEC V Pf
 vV V Pf

You need to go.

So in summary, Sgaw has not grammaticalized weak or strong obligation. To mark an utterance as weak/strong obligation/necessity phonological features involving pitch and phonation, along with facial expression and some circumstances identify the strength of the utterance.

3.5 Summary

The agent oriented modalities obligation and necessity that compel an agent to perform a particular task are coded by preverbal *ba*. The primary force compelling action is external to the actor.

These two non-epistemic necessity modalities were defined as:

Obligation describes the situation where the enabling conditions exist *socially* that *compel* an agent to complete the predicate action; and

Necessity describes the situation where the enabling conditions exist *physically* that *compel* an agent to complete the predicate action.

The intensity of the modal verb could be known only upon the context and the situation in which the speakers are involving. Otherwise, whether the speaker would

like to mean it as obligatory or suggestion cannot be known. Depending on the situation, sometimes *ba* makes the verb obligatory or optional or soft or rough command.

A semantic map of preverbal *ba* is shown in Figure 15.

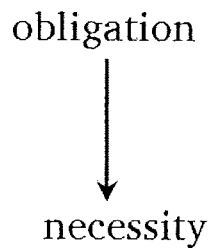


Figure 15: Semantic map for preverbal *ba*

Figure 15 shows that obligation extends into necessity but not from necessity to obligation. The difference between obligation and necessity is that obligation includes a social dimension that is absent in necessity. Thus, there is a loss of meaning moving from obligation to necessity, and a gain of meaning moving from necessity to obligation. Chapter 1.11.1 describes the fundamental assumptions of grammaticalization where the process is from lexical to grammatical or grammatical to more grammatical (the unidirectional hypothesis) and that there is associated semantic bleaching. As the moving from obligation to necessity results in the loss of the social dimension, and the moving from necessity to obligation result in the addition of meaning, the choice is that the movement from obligation to necessity is the more frequent.