



Phasal polarity in Isu – and beyond

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The phasal polarity system in Isu, a West Ring language of Grassfields Bantu (Cameroon), seems to be restricted to a single item, i.e. *nám(á)* which is fully dedicated semantically to encode the concept STILL. Other phasal polarity notions are partly covered by polysemous items which have their semantic core elsewhere, e.g. the concept NO LONGER is expressed by the adverbial *kám(á)* ‘again’ in externally negated constructions. The English loan *àlrédì* is frequently used to fill the ALREADY gap, otherwise partially covered by the adverbial *táŋ(á)* ‘readily, promptly’.

From a formal point of view, all items mentioned belong to the category of hybrid adverbials, a type of defective verbs which have become grammaticalised in their position of minor verbs or co-verbs in asymmetrical serial verb constructions. They betray their verbal origin by virtue of their participation in aspectual morphology, while they are synchronically rather defective with respect to verbhood, since they cannot establish single-handedly a verbal predication.

Across the Ring languages there is considerable variation with respect to the expression of phasal polarity, since nearby Central Ring languages such as Men come up with a fundamentally different system, providing dedicated items for the concepts ALREADY (*kàinà*) and NOT YET (*ɲàm + NEG*), while the concept STILL is expressed by the adverbial *pá* which is not cognate to WR **nám(á)*.

The contribution gives an overview of phasal polarity in Isu generally, but will have its limitations concerning semantic detail due to the fact that it relies on mining a limited corpus of some thirty texts of different lengths representing various genres, without being supported by any elicitations geared towards clarifying phasal polarity concepts.