Wolof verbal system
a holistic construction grammar approach

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Introduction

A large part of the works developed within the Construction Grammar framework are devoted to specific constructions. Much fewer publication deal with complete networks of constructions or with the whole "constructicon" (ie. the network of all construction networks of the language). Nevertheless, Construction Grammar framework allows for holistic analyses of constructions networks, as it highlights both the internal organization of these networks and the links between the different constructions. The aim of this paper is to propose a Construction Grammar analysis of the whole verbal constructions network of Wolof (Atlantic, Niger-Congo language spoken in Senegal).

Toward a constructional analysis

I consider that Wolof predicative constructions cannot be analyzed as a simple list of independent constructions. Some groupings are necessary to explain the formal similarities and differences that exist between these constructions. Besides, some apparent idiosyncrasies in Wolof conjugation can be explained in the light of diachronic elements.

The framework provided by Construction Grammars allows a unified analysis of synchronic observations and diachronic phenomenons. Indeed, within the scope of a constructional approach, we may consider that Wolof predicative constructions form a construction network. Idiosyncrasies observed in synchrony can be analyzed as marks of grammaticalization processes having lead to a restructuring of the network.

I thus propose to bring some constructions together into specific networks.

Wolof conjugation

The Wolof conjugation is based on a limited number of constructions called "predicative constructions" (Guérin 2016), which combine different kinds of grammatical categories: focus (1-4), perfect (5), future (6) or mood (7-9).

In addition to the expression of these distinctions, each predicative construction is perfective, non-past and non-negative by default. To express imperfective, past or negation, it is necessary to add an auxiliary (or its clitic form) (10) or a verbal affix to the construction (11).
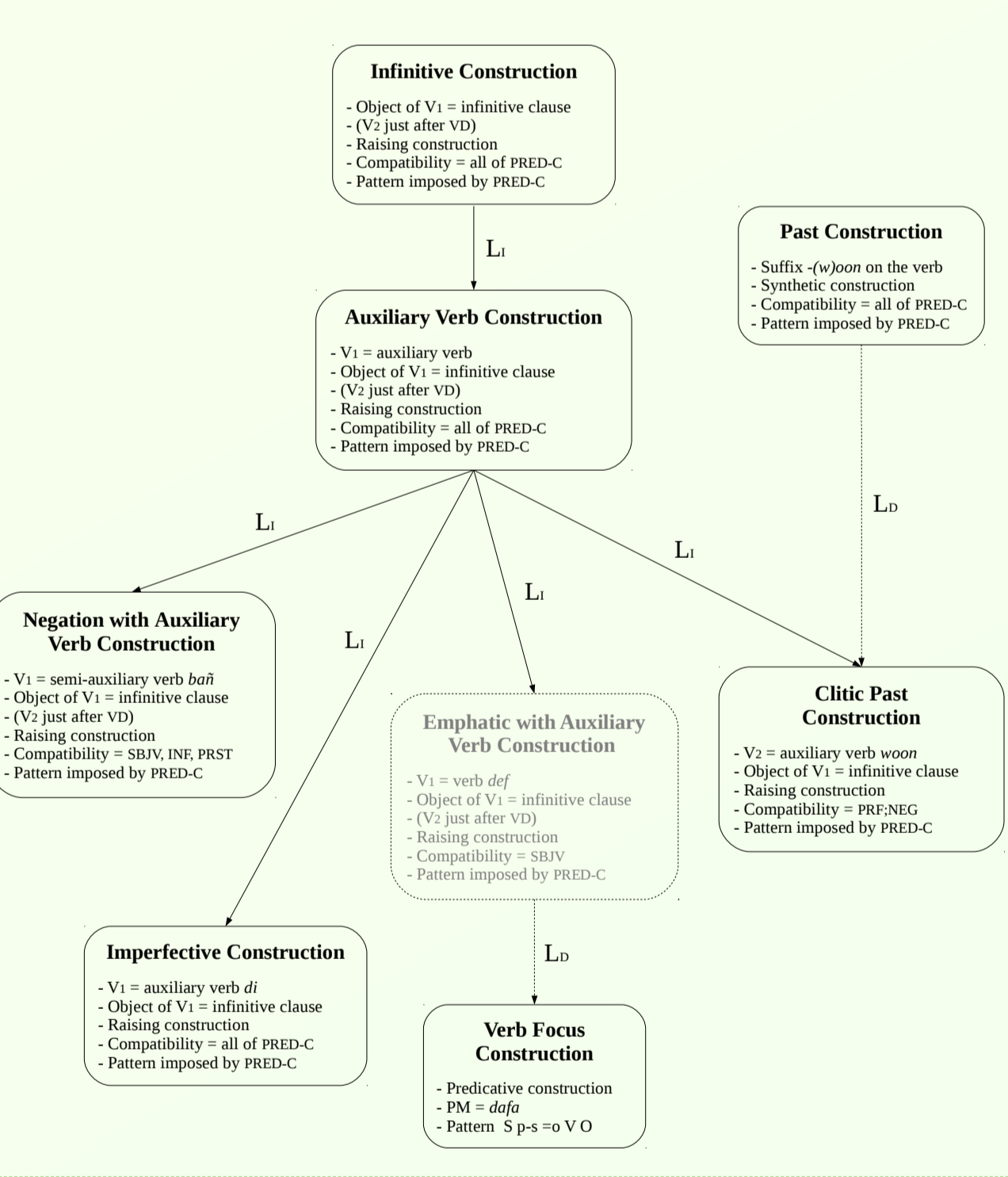
Taking all of this into consideration, Wolof verbal paradigms can be represented as a conjugation table where each line corresponds to a predicative construction.

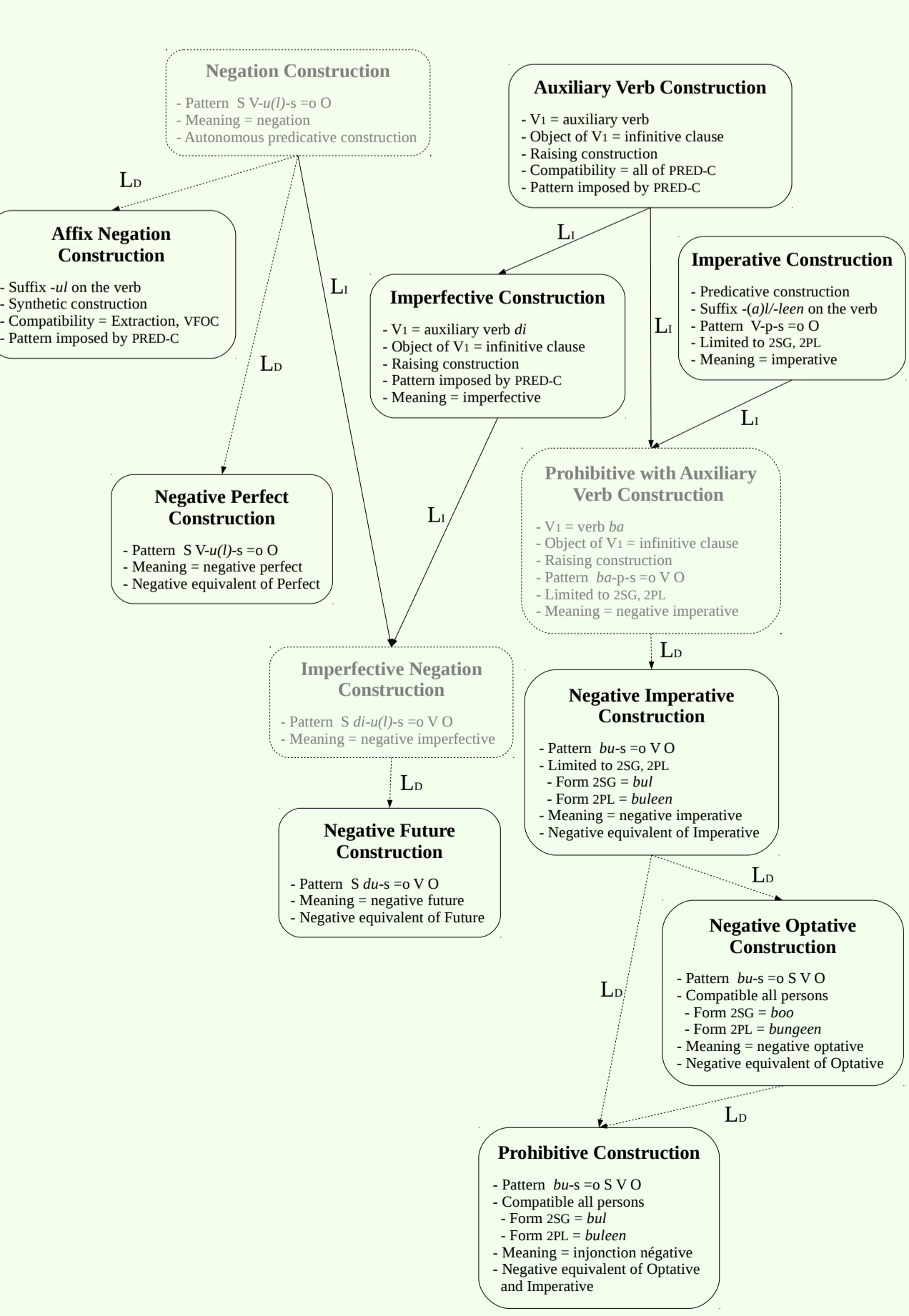| POL		PERFECTIVE		IMPERFECTIVE	
		NON-PAST	PAST	NON-PAST	PAST
SFOC	+	maa lekk	maa lekkoon	maa =y lekk	maa doon lekk
	–	maa lekkul	maa lekkuloon	maa dul lekk	maa duloon lekk
CFOC	+	laa lekk	laa lekkoon	laa =y lekk	laa doon lekk
	–	laa lekkul	laa lekkuloon	laa dul lekk	laa duloon lekk
VFOC	+	dama lekk	dama lekkoon	dama =y lekk	dama doon lekk
	–	dama lekkul	dama lekkuloon	dama dul lekk	dama duloon lekk

The advantage of this analysis is to take into account all possibilities allowed by Wolof conjugation. Nevertheless it can obscure some facts, as it cannot explain (i) differences about word order, (ii) formal similarities between some constructions or (iii) paradigmatic oppositions between some constructions.

1) **Subject Focus**
Omar =a lekk ceeb.
Omar =SFOC eat rice
'It is Omar who has eaten rice.'

2) **Presentational Focus**
Omar =a ngi lekk ceeb.
Omar =PRST eat rice
'Here is Omar, the one who has eaten rice.'

3) **Object Focus**
Ceeb =la Omar lekk.
rice =CFOC Omar eat
'It is rice that Omar has eaten.'

4) **Verb Focus**
Omar =dafa lekk ceeb.
Omar =VFOC.S3SG eat rice
'Omar does eat rice.'

5) **Perfect**
Omar lekk=na ceeb.
Omar eat=PRF.S3SG rice
'Omar has eaten rice.'

6) **Future**
Omar =dina lekk ceeb.
Omar =FUT.S3SG eat rice
'Omar will eat rice.'

7) **Optative**
Na Omar lekk ceeb.
OPT Omar eat rice
'May Omar eat rice.'

8) **Imperative**
Lekk-al ceeb !
eat-IMP.S2SG rice
'Eat rice !'

9) **Subjunctive**
(...) Omar lekk ceeb...
Omar eat rice
'(...) Omar eat rice...'

10) **Imperfective**
Ceeb =la=y Omar lekk.
rice =CFOC=IPFV Omar eat
'It is rice that Omar is eating.'

11) **Negative & Past**
Ceeb =la Omar lekk-ul-oon.
rice =CFOC Omar eat-NEG-PST
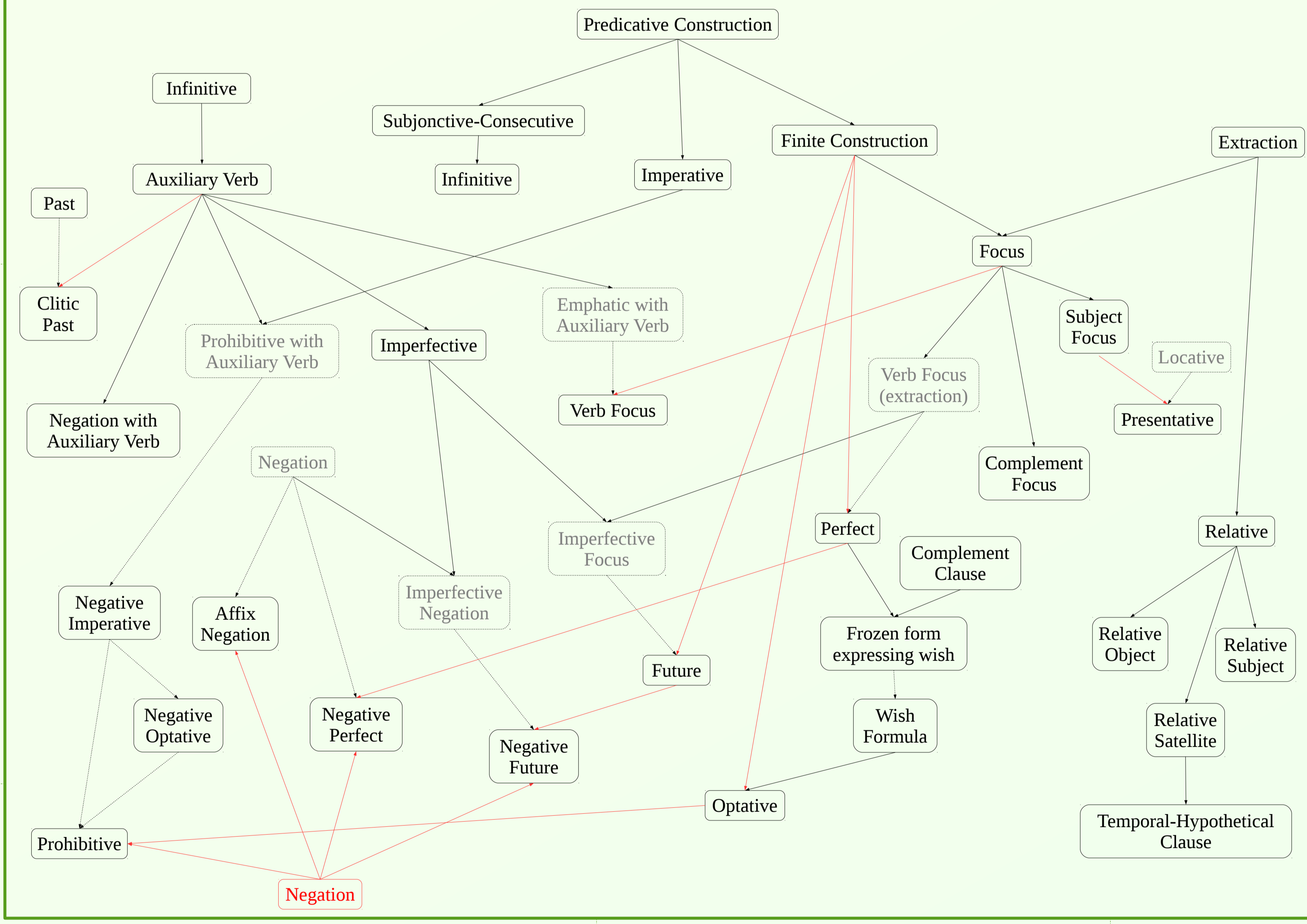'It is rice that Omar had not eaten.'
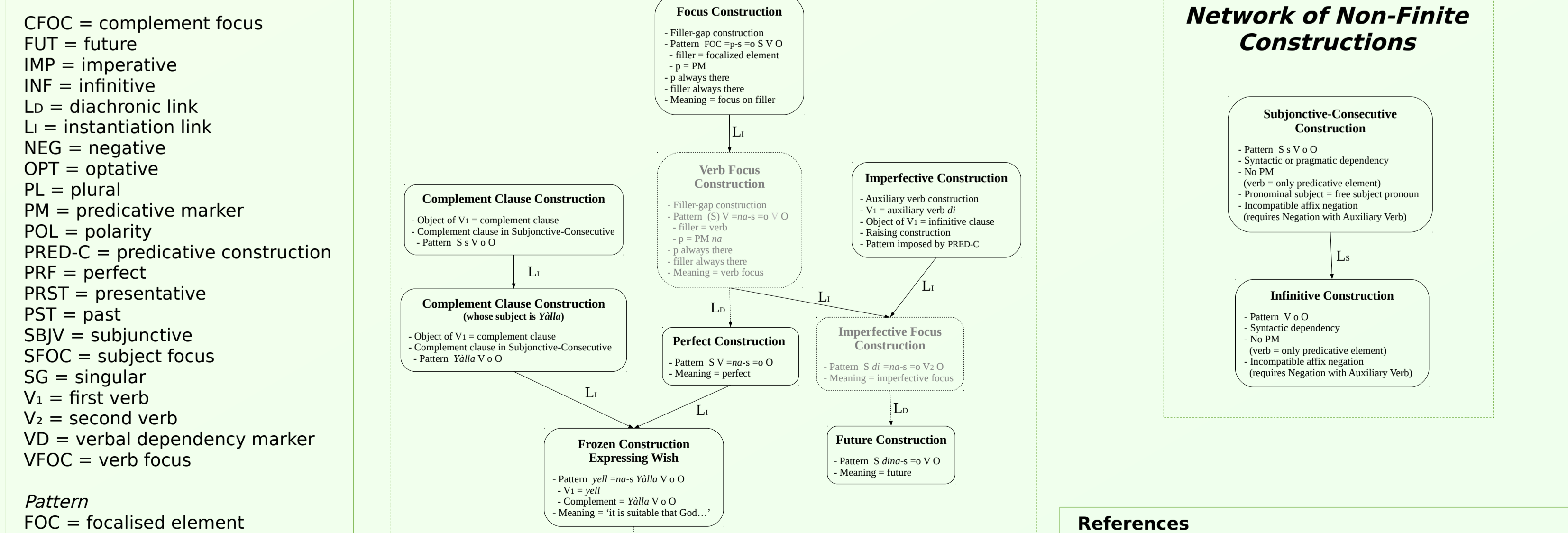
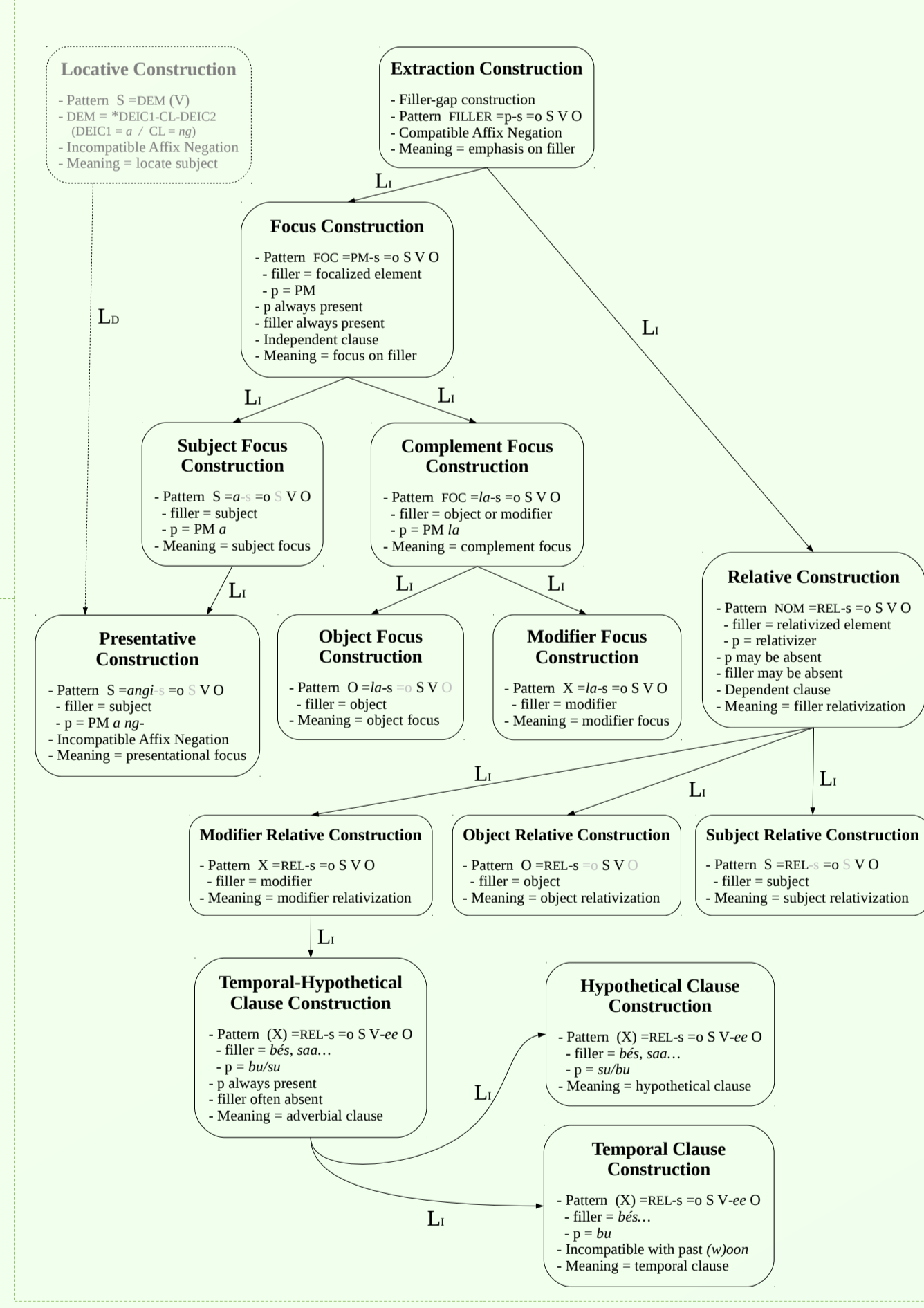## Network of Auxiliary Verb Constructions

Network of Negative Constructions

Network of predicative constructions

Network of Extraction Constructions

Abbreviations

CFOC = complement focus
FUT = future
IMP = imperative
INF = infinitive
L_D = diachronic link
L_I = instantiation link
NEG = negative
OPT = optative
PL = plural
PM = predicative marker
POL = polarity
PRED-C = predicative construction
PRF = perfect
PRST = presentative
PST = past
SBJV = subjunctive
SG = singular
SFOC = subject focus
V_1 = first verb
V_2 = second verb
VD = verbal dependency marker
VFOC = verb focus

Pattern
FOC = focalised element
p = predicative element
o = pronominal object
O = lexical object
PRED-C = predicative construction
REL = relativizer
s = pronominal subject
S = lexical subject
V = verb
W = modifier

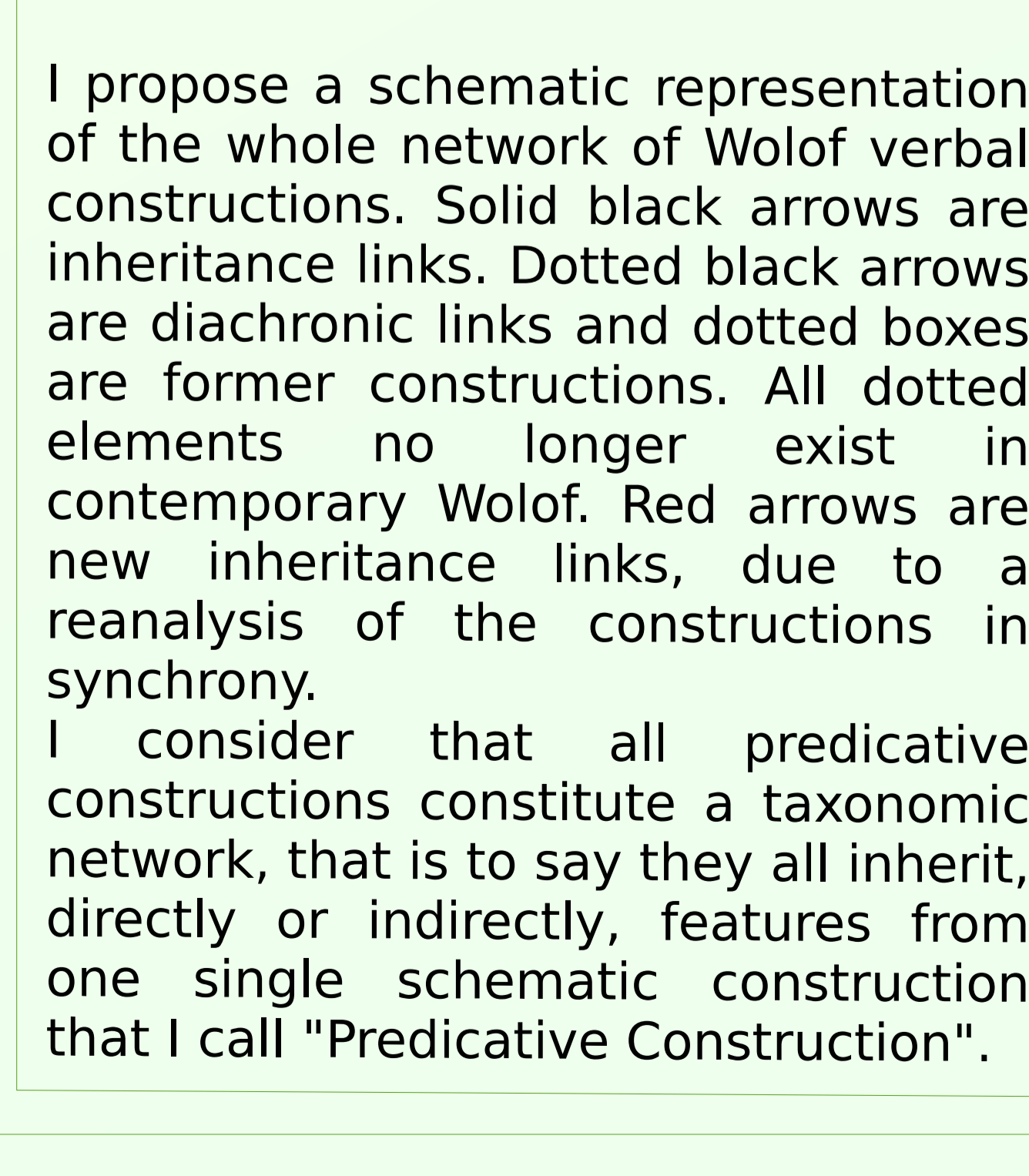## Polygrammaticalization of the former Verb Focus Construction
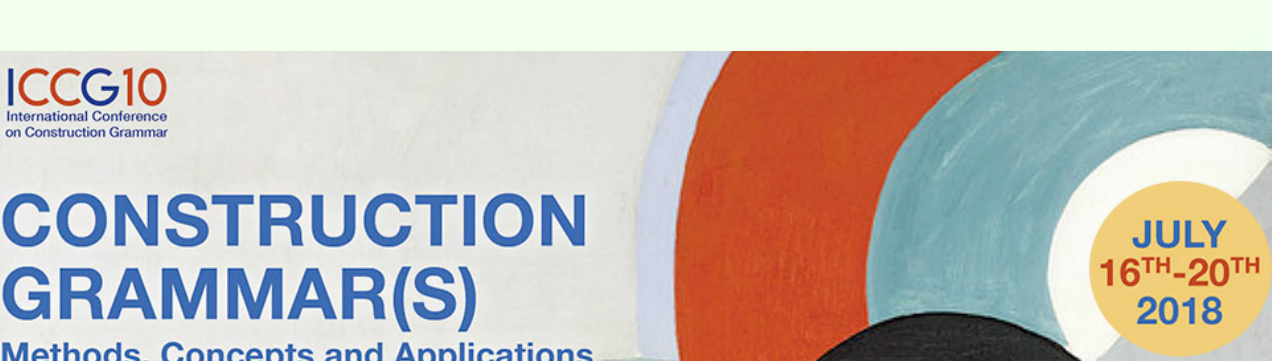

Network of Non-Finite Constructions

Conclusion

I propose a schematic representation of the whole network of Wolof verbal constructions. Solid black arrows are inheritance links. Dotted black arrows are diachronic links and dotted boxes are former constructions. All dotted elements no longer exist in contemporary Wolof. Red arrows are new inheritance links, due to a reanalysis of the constructions in synchrony.

I consider that all predicative constructions constitute a taxonomic network, that is to say they all inherit, directly or indirectly, features from one single schematic construction that I call "Predicative Construction".

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