Comitative-based coordination in Lopit, an Eastern Nilotic language

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There are AND-languages and WITH-languages (Stassen, 2000). WITH-languages use a ‘comitative strategy’ to coordinate NPs. This uses a prepositional ‘with’ phrase rather than using a conjunction like ‘and’.

Lopit is an Eastern Nilotic language from South Sudan, which has VSO word order and a marked nominative case system. It is a strongly WITH-language. It distinguishes singular and plural comitative constructions. The plural constructions are called verb-coded coordination (Schwartz, 1988) or inclusory constructions (Lichtenberk, 2000).

á-wù nàŋ xɔ ìjè
1SG-go.SG 1SG.NOM with 2SG.ABS → singular comitative construction
‘You and I are going’ (lit. ‘I-go I with you’)

ei-fwò nàŋ xɔ ìjè
1PL-go.PL 1SG.NOM with 2SG.ABS → verb-coded coordination (VCC)
‘You and I are going’ (lit. ‘we-go I with you’)

VCCs in Lopit conform to a person hierarchy (1st > 2nd > 3rd). Thus, a VCC can only be formed when the person of the subject NP is higher than the person in the comitative prepositional phrase.

A special VCC can be formed when there is no subject NP (but the referent of this NP is topicalised). In this situation the person marking on the verb agrees with the person of the NP in the prepositional phrase.

x-ì-jèn íjé iràsi leiti ... e: ei-boŋ xɔ nàŋ
Q-2-know 2SG.NOM brother my.M yes 1PL-meet with 1SG.ABS
‘Do you know my brother? Yes, he and I met’ (lit. we-met with me’)

The reasons for this kind of construction will be explained.