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ABSTRACT
This paper aims to give a detailed account of the phonological and discourse properties of a post-syntactic truncation in IsiXhosa, Setswana, and TshiVenḓa which is used to show affection towards kinship and pain towards body parts. The data elicited from native speakers shows the truncation of possessor phrases involving deletion of the rightmost intervocalic sonorant of the phrase, typically the class concord. The phonological and pragmatic conditions for the Reduced Possession Form (RPF) are similar across the languages examined, but eligible possessors and possessees vary significantly. Current distribution across the wider Bantu language family is unknown, but there are promising leads in languages like Cuwabo and Kiswahili.

KEYWORDS
isiXhosa; Setswana; TshiVenḓa; affection; possession

ABBREVIATIONS

RPF:	Reduced possession form
Ø	null morpheme
SM	subject marking
9SM	class nine subject marking
9.POSS	class nine possessive pronoun
10.POSS	class ten possessive pronoun
COP.1	copula for class 1
COP.9	copula for class 9
POSS	possession morpheme
POSS.1	possession morpheme for class 1 possessors
1SG	first person singular
2SG	second person singular
3SG	third person singular
1PL	first person plural
2PL	second person plural
3PL	third person plural
WH	wh-word
REL	relativizer
FUT	future
INF	infinitive
APPL	applicative
FV	final vowel (used in isiXhosa present tense)
RECP	recent past
1	class 1 marking (ibid. for 2-15)
2a	one version of noun class 2, *aba-*

2b	second version of noun class 2, *oo-*
LOC	locative

I. BACKGROUND

What are we communicating when we swear or use slurs? When we use nicknames? When we use expressions like ‘ouch!’ or ‘oops!’? The function and use of these types of meaning have long been the subject of discussion among linguists and psychologists, but the general consensus has centered on these terms not carrying descriptive semantics, but rather emotional, expressive semantics (see Elffers 2014 for a summary since the 1600s). The term *expressives* is meant to unify linguistic phenomena that are largely dependent on emotional meaning. Work with aphasia patients, for example, shows that individuals who cannot create linguistic propositions can still curse well and curse often, leading to the conclusion that this process of producing emotion-based meaning must be occurring in a different part of the brain (Jay 2000).

Expressive and descriptive (truth-conditional) meanings have often been described as parallel systems (Kratzer 1999; Sawada 2013; Potts 2007). Many morphemes, such as English *little*, demonstrate simultaneous work on both fronts: *little* communicates smallness, and it can communicate endearment (Schneider 2003). Endearment has been linked to diminutives to the point that some have posited its universality (Strang 1968), despite many languages grammaticalizing affection through alternate strategies, like possession (Pukui & Elbert 1979:116, for Hawaiian). Other examples of simultaneous meaning are slurs like *Kraut*, an derogatory anglophone term for Germans which simultaneously conveys that a referent is German (descriptive) and that the speaker does not like Germans (expressive) (Gutzmann 2013). Despite occasional overlap with descriptive meaning, perhaps the most important aspect of expressives is that they are generally syntactically and semantically optional, meaning that sentences with and without them are both acceptable in traditional grammaticality judgments (Kratzer 1999; Fortin 2011: 68; Ponsonnet 2018[1]), and do not add descriptive meaning but rather flesh out perspectives in the context of the utterance (Flier 1975:2; Beard 1995).

Returning to the example of *Kraut*, the argument here is that descriptive semantics and syntactic well-formedness are unaffected by the use of a slur instead of the unmarked alternative, *German*. These traits apply not only to aforementioned words like ‘ouch’ and ‘oops’ (Kratzer 1999), but also some pragmatic particles in German (Gutzmann & Turgay 2012), Korean honorifics which seem to tolerate unexpected syntactic mismatches (Song, Choe & Oh 2019; Pak 2015), and binding problems with experiencer verbs (Pesetsky 1987).

This paper intends to add to current literature by delineating a truncation construction in three Southern Bantu languages: this truncation process holds an expressive meaning of affection towards a subclass of kinship terms (including some pets), and of pain in a subclass of body part terms. Unless otherwise cited, the data in this paper was elicited in sessions with one speaker each of isiXhosa, TshiVenḓa, Setswana, and a short session with one speaker of Kiswahili, all in Boston between 2020 and 2021.[2] This data is supplemented by academic and

[1] Ponsonnet’s work on Barunga Kriol (Australia) shows a stark contrast between a reduplication morpheme that is non-optional (telicity marker) and a separate reduplication morpheme that only provides expressive meaning of endearment, and which is completely optional syntactically.

[2] All uncited Hawaiian data throughout the paper was also elicited by the author from two high school teachers of Hawaiian, one of whom is a native speaker. All consultants were paid $25 hourly, the

media materials such as movies and books. The truncation of possessor phrases onto their possessee nouns will be labeled Reduced Possession Form (RPF), as it will be compared to languages which show similar patterns but whose usage may not be expressive and instead syntactic, like Cuwabo (Guérois 2015).

The truncation constructions in possessive NPs are broadly similar in semantics, phonology, and structure across the examined Bantu languages, and are argued to underlyingly be the same process: a pragmatically-licensed, post-syntactic truncation of an intervocalic sonorant at the right edge of the phrase. This sonorant is usually – but not always – the class agreement on the possessor phrase (for an overview of Bantu noun class: Katamba 2003). The licensability of the construction varies across the three languages, with isiXhosa (Section II) having the most extensive list of both possessors and possessees in this truncation phenomenon, and thus the greatest analysability on a phonological and pragmatic level. TshiVenḓa (Section III) will have the narrowest set, with only two eligible possessees – mother and child – and one eligible possessor, the first person singular. Setswana (Section III) will be shown to have a narrower set of eligible possessors and possessees, and will be compared to similar data from its sister language Northern Sotho (Mojapelo 2007). A discussion (Section V) will show that the conditions for truncation are extremely similar across these Southern Bantu languages, both in phonology and semantics, and will examine similar data from Kiswahili and other Bantu languages in light of this. Finally, the conclusion (Section VI) will present a summary of current findings as well as diagnostics for finding similar constructions in other Bantu languages, which delineates how cognate constructions are predicted to surface, given the microvariation established within this paper.

standard rate for foreign language instructors in Boston. All elicitation was held online due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

II. ISIXHOSA (S40)

IsiXhosa is the southernmost Bantu language on the African continent, and forms the tail end of the Nguni dispersal southwards. The puzzle this paper will attempt to explain in isiXhosa and related languages is produced below. The truncation of the noun class agreement [w] in (2) is argued to be a spell-out of affectionate expressive semantics (Potts 2007).

1. *Ndithethe* *nomama* *wam*
   ndi-theth-e na-u-mama u-a-m
   1SG.SM-speak-RECP with-1-mother 1-POSS-1SG.POSS
   'I spoke with my mother.'

2. *Ndithethe* *nomamam.*
   ndi-theth-e na-u-mama-w-a-m
   1SG.SM-speak-RECP with-1-mother-1-POSS-1SG.POSS
   'I spoke with my mother.' (affectionate)

The alternation is entirely syntactically and semantically optional, in almost the way that *mother* and *mommy* are interchangeable. According to the consultant, the reduced possession form (**henceforth RPF**) in (2) is much more affectionate, informal, close, and even child-like. This possession paradigm can be extended to other kinship terms, too, such as for *father*, *daughter*, *child*, *son*, *wife*, *husband*, *son-in-law*, *daughter-in-law*, *mother-in-law*, and *friend*, as the examples below show.

	Full			Truncated
3.	*Utata*	*wam*	⇒	*Utatam*
	u-tata	u-a-m		
	1-father	1-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	'My father'			'My dear father'
4.	*Intombi*	*yam*	⇒	*Intombam*
	iN-tombi	i-a-m		
	9-girl	9-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	'My daughter'			'My dear daughter'
5.	*Umnt(w)ana*	*wam*	⇒	*Umntanam*
	um-ntwana	u-a-m		
	1-child	1-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	'My child'			'My dear child'
6.	*Umkwenyana*	*wam*	⇒	*Umkwenyanam*
	um-kwenyana	u-a-m		
	1-son.in.law	1-POSS-1SG.POSS		

	‘My son-in-law’			‘My dear son-in-law’
7.	*Unyana*	*wam*	⇒	*Unyanam*
	u-nyana	u-a-m		
	1-son	1-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	‘My son’			‘My dear son’
8.	*Umhlobo*	*wam*	⇒	*Umhlobam*
	um-ɬobo	u-a-m		
	1-friend	1-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	‘My friend’			‘My dear/best friend’
9.	*Umyeni*	*wam*	⇒	*Umyenam*
	um-yeni	u-a-m		
	1-husband	1-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	‘My husband’			‘My dear husband’

All of these examples again have expressive connotations of endearment, emotional closeness between the speaker and the relation, as well as having informal and almost child-like connotations. Note that this construction is not restricted to a single class, as the class 9 example shows in (4). This form is DP-internal and not predicative in any sense. For the sake of argument, the independence of this construction from DP-external forces such as the verb or prepositions is demonstrated below, by placing both the unmarked possession form and the truncated possession form in varying thematic roles.

<u>Unergative</u>

10.	*Umama*	*wam*	*uncumile.*[3]
	u-mama	u-a-m	u-ncum-ile
	1-mother	1-POSS-1SG.POSS	1SM-smile-RECP
	‘My mother smiled.’		
11.	*<u>Umamam</u>*		*uncumile*.
	u-mama-u-a-m		u-ncum-ile
	1-mother-1-POSS-1SG.POSS		1SM-smile-RECP
	‘My dear mother smiled.’		

<u>Unaccusative</u>

12.	*Umama*	*wam*	*uwile.*
	u-mama	u-a-m	u-w-ile
	1-mother	1-POSS-1SG.POSS	1SM-fall-RECP
	‘My mother fell.’		

[3] This sentence is ambiguous between a present stative and a past tense, so (10) and (11) could also be interpreted as *My mother is smiling*. For the sake of clarity, we will take the recent past tense reading.

13. *Umamam* *uwile.*
u-mama-w-a-m u-w-ile
1-mother-1-POSS-1SG.POSS 1SM-fall-RECP
'My dear mother fell.'

Theme

14. *Ndibone* *umama* *wam.*
ndi-bon-e u-mama u-a-m
1SG.SM-see-RECP 1-mother 1-POSS-1SG.POSS
'I saw my mother.'

15. *Ndibone* *umamam*.
ndi-bon-e u-mama-w-a-m
1SG.SM-see-RECP 1-mother-1-POSS-1SG.POSS
'I saw my dear mother.'

Transitive agent

16. *Umama* *wam* *uthenge* *imoto.*
u-mama u-a-m u-theng-e i-moto
1-mother 1-POSS-1SG.POSS 1SM-buy-RECP 9-car
'My mother bought a car.'

17. *Umamam* *uthenge* *imoto.*
u-mama-w-a-m u-theng-RECP i-moto
1-mother-1-POSS-1SG.POSS 1SM-buy-PST 9-car
'My dear mother bought a car.'

Goal

18. *Ndinike* *umama* *wam* *imoto.*
ndi-nik-e u-mama u-a-m i-moto
1SG.SM-give-RECP 1-mother 1-POSS-1SG.POSS 9-car
'I gave the car to my mother.'

19. *Ndinike* *umamam* *imoto*.
ndi-nik-e u-mama-w-a-m i-moto
1SG.SM-give-RECP 1-mother-1-POSS-1SG.POSS 9-car
'I gave the car to my dear mother.'

Beneficiary

20. *Ndiculele* *umama* *wam.*
ndi-cul-el-e u-mama u-a-m
1SG.SM-sing-APPL-RECP 1-mother 1-POSS-1SG.POSS

'I sang for my mother.'

21. *Ndiculele* *umamam.*
ndi-cul-el-e u-mama-w-a-m
1SG.SM-sing-APPL-RECP 1-mother-1-POSS-1SG.POSS
'I sang for my dear mother.'

Object of Preposition

22. *Ndihambe* *nomama* *wam.*
ndi-hamb-e na-u-mama u-a-m
1SG.SM-walk-RECP with-1-mother 1-POSS-1SG.POSS
'I walked with my mother.'

23. *Ndihambe* *nomamam.*
ndi-hamb-e na-u-mama-w-a-m
1SG.SM-walk-RECP with-1-mother-1-POSS-1SG.POSS
'I walked with my dear mother.'
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Possessor

24. *Inja* *kamama* *wam* *ityile.*
iN-ja Ø-ka-mama u-a-m i-ty-ile
9-dog 9-POSS.1-mother 1-POSS-1SG.POSS 9SM-eat-RECP
'My mother's dog ate.'

25. *Inja* *kamamam* *ityile.*
iN-ja Ø-ka-mama-w-a-m i-ty-ile
9-dog 9-POSS.1-mother-1-POSS-1SG.POSS 9SM-eat-RECP
'My dear mother's dog ate.'

This list demonstrates that this alternation is entirely independent of theta role and the verb more broadly, and this holds true for the cognate constructions in related languages. Instead, given felicitous pragmatics, it is DP-internal constraints which largely govern applicability of RPF: the type of possessee, the type of possessor, and restrictions on phonological deletion.

Regarding possessors, RPF is licit for all tested pronominal possessors in isiXhosa, as demonstrated below. Later data in Setswana and TshiVenḓa will establish a difference here in that their version of RPF is limited to 1sg possessors. This construction can apply to all the possessive pronouns of the language, including those for non-humans like *dogs* (32).

26. *Umama* *wam* ⇒ *Umamam*
u-mama u-a-m
1-mother 1-POSS-1SG.POSS
'My mother' 'My dear mother'

27. *Umama* *wakho* ⇒ *Umamakho*
u-mama u-a-kho
1-mother 1-POSS-2SG.POSS
'Your mother' 'Your dear mother'

28. *Umama* *wakhe* ⇒ *Umamakhe*
u-mama u-a-khe
1-mother 1-POSS-3SG.POSS
'His/her mother' 'His/her dear mother'

29. *Umama* *wethu* ⇒ *Umamethu*
u-mama u-a-ithu
1-mother 1-POSS-1PL.POSS
'Our mother' 'Our dear mother'

30. *Umama* *wenu* ⇒ *Umamenu*
u-mama u-a-inu
1-mother 1-POSS-2PL.POSS
'Y'all's mother' 'Y'all's dear mother'

31. *Umama* *wabo* ⇒ *Umamabo*
u-mama u-a-bo
1-mother 1-POSS-3PL.POSS
'Their mother' 'Their dear mother'

32. *Umama* *wazo* ⇒ *Umamazo*
u-mama u-a-zo
1-mother 1-POSS-10.POSS
'Their mother' (of dogs) 'Their dear mother' (of dogs)

33. *Umama* *waye* ⇒ *Umamaye*
u-mama u-a-ye
1-mother 1-POSS-9.POSS
'Her mother' (pronominalization of *umama wentombi* 'the mother of the girl')

Above, the experiencer of affection towards the possessee switches depending on the possessor. For example, in (31), the mother is unambiguously interpreted to be very close with *them*, and not the speaker. These examples above make clear that it is possible for parties that are not the speaker or the listener to be involved in this structure for isiXhosa, which will not be the case in other languages. For isiXhosa, every noun capable of RPF can carry every type of possessor shown above. Nevertheless, isiXhosa does have restrictions in possessors for RPF,

namely a categorical rejection of non-pronominal possessors, which is shared by the other Bantu languages for this construction.[4]

34. *Umhlobo* *kaSipho* ⇒ **UmhloboSipho // *UmhlokaSipho*
um-hlobo Ø-ka-Sipho
1-friend 1-POSS.1-Sipho
'Sipho's friend' *Intended: 'Sipho's dear friend'

35. *Umhlobo* *wenja* ⇒ **Umhlobenja*
um-hlobo u-a-iN-nja
1-friend 1-POSS-9-dog
'The dog's friend' *Intended: 'The dog's dear friend'

36. *Umhlobo* *wendoda* ⇒ **Umhlobendoda*
um-hlobo u-a-iN-doda
1-friend 1-POSS-9-man
'The man's friend' *Intended: 'The man's dear friend'

37. *Umama* *woluntu* ⇒ **Umamuluntu // *Umamoluntu // *Umamawuntu*
u-mama u-a-ulu-ntu
1-mother 1-POSS-11-community
'The community's mother' *Intended: 'The community's dear mother'

Having established that RPF in isiXhosa is only licensable for pronominal possessors, the next question is the extent of this paradigm in terms of eligible possessees. Recalling that RPF is licit for many kinship terms like *mother*, *father*, *daughter*, *child*, *son*, *son-in-law*, *friend* and *husband*, not all kinship terms are eligible:

38. *Umzala* *wam* ⇒ **Umzalam*
um-zala u-a-m
1-cousin 1-POSS-1SG.POSS
'My cousin' *Intended: 'my dear cousin'

39. *Ubhuti* *wam* ⇒ **Ubhutam*
u-bhuti u-a-m
1-brother 1-POSS-1SG.POSS
'My brother' *Intended: 'my dear brother'

[4] I switch away from using *umama* here because *umakaSipho* is licit, as is *utakaSipho* for 'Sipho's father'; these look like *umkaSipho*, which would mean 'Sipho's wife'. However, *ma-* operates like a prefix in the language, like in the name of the musician *Madosini*, a woman who is of the *Dosini* clan. The two terms for mother and father are unusual in this regard, and the pragmatics of *umakaSipho* and *utakaSipho* do not concretely seem expressive like other RPF forms examined for isiXhosa, at least for this speaker. It cannot be ruled out that this is a form of RPF, but uncertainty leads me to exclude this from the analysis.

40.	*Umalume*	*wam*	⇒	**Umalumam*
	u-malume	u-a-m		
	1-uncle	1-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	'My uncle'			*Intended: 'my dear uncle'
41.	*Utat'omkhulu*	*wam*	⇒	*******Utat'omkhulam/*Utat'omkhulwam*
	u-tat'omkhulu	u-a-m		
	1-grandfather	1-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	'My grandfather'			*Intended: 'my dear grandfather'

This cannot be attributed to pragmatics, as affection itself is possible towards any kinship member, and the phonological conditions in (38) *cousin* are virtually identical to the ones for *mother*. Thus, it is only a subset of kinship terms which are eligible for RPF on seemingly lexical grounds. This differs from plausible explanations for RPF restrictions on plural kinship terms on seemingly phonological grounds.

42.	*Oomama*	*bam*	⇒	**Oomamam // *Oomabam*
	oo-mama	b-a-m		
	2b-mother	2-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	'My mothers'			*Intended: 'my dear mothers'
43.	*Abazali*	*bam*	⇒	**Abazalam // *Abazabam*
	aba-zali	b-a-m		
	2a-parents	2-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	'My parents'			*Intended: 'my dear parents'
44.	*Abahlobo*	*bam*	⇒	**Abahlobam*
	aba-hlobo	b-a-m		
	2a-friend	2-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	'My friends'			*Intended: 'my dear friends'
46.	*Iintombi*	*zam*	⇒	**Iintombam // *iintozam*
	iziN-ntombi	z-a-m		
	10-girl	10-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	'My daughters'			*Intended: 'my dear daughters'
47.	*Amantombi*	*ʔam*	⇒	*Amantombam*
	ama-ntombi	ʔ-a-m		
	6-girl	6-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	'My daughters'			'My dear daughters'

The crucial piece of data here is (46) and (47), where two pluralization strategies exist in modern isiXhosa: (46) which is standard pluralization in class 10, and (47) which is non-standard but common pluralization in class 6. This variation allows a clear demonstration of how phonological restrictions work in the language, where an easily-deletable consonant like the glottal stop [ʔ] is eligible for RPF, while other consonants like [z] are ineligible. Kinship terms are highly restricted in noun class, so further proof of this phonological restriction will be shown in body parts which appear in more of the noun classes.

Initial attempts to use RPF for body parts resulted in failure due to infelicitously attempting to put the body part into an affection structure. However, the following movie scene revealed how RPF is actually used for body parts in isiXhosa:

Context: A man has just been hit by a car, and his leg broke. (Qubeka 2018, for 49)

48. *Umlenze* *wam!*
um-lenze u-a-m
3-leg 3-POSS-1SG.POSS
My leg!

49. *Umlenzam!*
um-lenze-w-a-m
3-leg-3-POSS-1SG.POSS
Ouch, my leg!

The scene above takes place in the 2018 movie *Sew the Winter to My Skin* when the South African police are firing into a crowd of protesters. One man is run over by the vehicle; his leg snaps grotesquely and he calls out with (49). The example in (48) is given as the unmarked version of this phrase, for reference. Upon review with the consultant, this type of truncation with body parts is indeed productive for scenarios with pain, surprise, and anger. Some other body parts can carry this structure with a pain context, shown below:

50.	*Umnwe*	*wam*	⇒	*Umnwam!*
	um-nwe	u-a-m		
	3-finger	3-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	‘My finger’			‘Ow, my finger!’
51.	*Amashiye*	*am*	⇒	*Amashiyam!*
	ama-shiye	ʔ-a-m		
	6-eyebrow	6-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	‘My eyebrows’			‘My eyebrows!’
52.	*Umzimba*	*wam*	⇒	*Umzimbam!*
	um-zimba	u-a-m		
	3-body	3-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	‘My body’			‘Ow, my body!’

53.	*Umlomo*	*wam*	⇒	*Umlomam!*[5]	
	um-lomo	w-a-m			
	3-mouth	3-POSS-1SG.POSS			
	'My mouth'			'Ow, my mouth!'	
54.	*Intloko*	*yam*	⇒	*Intlokwam!*	(**Intlokam***)**
	iN-ɬoko	i-a-m			
	9-neck	9-POSS-1SG.POSS			
	'My neck'			'Ow, my neck!'	
55.	*Impumlo*	*yam!*	⇒	*Impumlwam!*	
	iN-p^{h}umlo	i-a-m			
	9-nose	9-POSS-1SG.POSS			
	'My nose'			'Ow, my nose!'	
56.	*Ingqiniba*	*yam*	⇒	*Ingqinibam!*	
	iN-ngqiniba	i-a-m			
	9-elbow	9-POSS-1SG.POSS			
	'My elbow'			'Ow, my elbow!'	

It is licit to exclaim (51) if one's eyebrows are burning off, or if they were largely removed by the aesthetician. Something like this usage exists in English, one can scream *My leg!* when hit by a vehicle, or shout *My eyebrows!* if they were accidentally threaded off in a salon. These are not expressions of affection towards the body parts, yet this usage, some form of *ouch!*, has been described as lying within expressive semantics as part of a natural class with affection (Kratzer 1999). It is also the case that body parts and kinship form a crosslinguistic natural class as inalienable nouns (Heine 1997), a discussion which we will return to in Section V. However, many body parts cannot undergo RPF on seemingly phonological grounds, and any body part whose class concord is not a glide or glottal is completely ineligible for this structure.

57.	*izandla*	*zam*	⇏	**izandlam*
	izi-andla	zi-a-m		
	8-hand	8-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	'My hands'			*Intended: 'Ow, my hands!'
58.	*ubuso*	*bam*	⇏	**ubusam* // **ubuswam*
	ubu-so	bu-a-m		
	14-face	14-POSS-1SG.POSS		

[5] One might be puzzled as to why the output is not [umlomwam] given the underlying final vowel of /umlomo/. This is due to a language-wide dispreference for adjacent labials resulting in deletion of the glide.

	‘My face’			*Intended: ‘Ow, my face!’

59.	*unyawo*	*lwam*	⇏	**unyawam // *unyalwam*
	ulu-nyawo	lu-a-m		
	11-foot	11-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	‘My foot’			*Intended: ‘Ow, my foot!’

60.	*isisu*	*sam*	⇏	**isisam // *isiswam*
	isi-su	si-a-m		
	7-stomach	7-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	‘My stomach’			*Intended: ‘Ow, my stomach!’

This fact is more clearly demonstrated by the following pairs of body parts which match in root but the different agreement markers in the plural change the acceptability for RPF, where class 5 items with a lateral l- prefix on the possession phrase are categorically barred from RPF, while their plural counterparts in class 6 with a glottal ʔ- prefix are allowed. Conversely, class 9 singular body parts with a glide y- prefix allow RPF, while their plural counterparts in class 10 with a fricative z- prefix are categorically barred from RPF.

61.	*Iqatha*	*lam*	⇏	**iqatham // *iqalam*
	ili-qatha	li-a-m		
	5-ankle	5-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	‘My ankle’			*Intended: ‘Ow, my ankle!’

62.	*Amaqatha*	*ʔam*	⇒	*Amaqatham!*
	ama-qatha	ʔ-a-m		
	6-ankle	6-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	‘My ankle’			‘Ow, my ankles!’

62.	*Indlebe*	*yam*	⇒	*Indlebam!*
	iN-dlebe	i-a-m		
	9-ear	9-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	‘My ear’			‘Ow, my ear!’

63.	*Iindlebe*	*zam*	⇏	**Iindlebam! // *Iindlezam!*
	iiN-dlebe	z-a-m		
	10-ear	10-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	‘My ears’			*Intended: ‘Ow, my ears!’

Finally, there are some noun classes like 3-4 in which both agreement prefixes are glides, and so RPF is eligible for both singular and plural body parts, as shown below.

65. *umnwe* *wam* ⇒ *Umnwam!*
um-nwe u-a-m
3-finger 3-POSS-1SG.POSS
'My finger' 'Ow, my finger!'

66. *iminwe* *yam* ⇒ *Iminwam!*
imi-nwe i-a-m
4-finger 4-POSS-1SG.POSS
'My fingers' 'Ow, my fingers!'

The data for RPF restrictions for body parts make clear that there is a strong phonological component at play: the agreement prefix must be either a glide **y** or **w** or must be a glottal stop **ʔ** in order to be eligible for deletion. Below is a table which summarizes the data so far by displaying a sample word possessed by the first person singular with the class concord prefix in bold; licit reduced forms are shaded in green, while illicit reduced forms are shaded in red. All unshaded forms are the licit realization of the regular, unmarked possession structure in the language.

Table 1: Table of noun classes where truncated possession (RPF) is possible (green) and not possible (red) in isiXhosa

Class		Full	RPF	Full	RPF
		Singular		Plural	
1-2	'friend'	umhlobo **w**am	umhlobam	abahlobo **b**am	*abahlobam
3-4	'finger'	umnwe **w**am	umnwam	iminwe **y**am	iminwam
5-6	'eye'	iliso **l**am	*ilisam	amehlo **ʔ**am	amehlam
7-8	'hand'	isandla **s**am	*isandlam	izandla **z**am	*izandlam
9-10	'ear'	indlebe **y**am	indlebam	iindlebe **z**am	*iindlebam
11-10	'foot'	unyawo **lw**am	*unyawam	iinyawo **z**am	*iinyawam
14	'face'	ubuso **b**am	*ubusam	--	
15	'food'	ukutya **kw**am	*ukutyam	--	

A key case demonstrates truncation where the noun class is *not* easily-deletable, and RPF seems to skip to the next right-most intervocalic consonant:

67.	*abantwana*	*bam*	⇒	*abant(w)abam*[6]	(**abantwanam*)
	aba-ntwana	b-a-m			
	2-child	2-POSS-1SG.POSS			
	‘My children’			‘My dear children’	

If this is the same type of RPF – and it seems to be on pragmatic grounds – this effect on the root itself confirms RPF in isiXhosa as a *deletion* process instead of a lack of agreement due to its deletion of part of the root. This was the only strong example in the data where the deletion was not of a noun-class prefix on the possessor phrase. Building from this, then, if the deletion usually affects the class concord consonants, then the agreement relation must have happened prior to triggering the RPF deletion process. We can deduce that RPF must be post-syntactic, happening after noun class agreement is complete between the root and the possession phrase.[7]

Further proof that RPF must be a post-syntactic process comes from the example below concerning *home* and adds weight behind a theory that alienability is playing a role in RPF licensing:

68.	*indlu*	*yam*	⇏	**indl(w)am*
	in-ʞu	i-a-m		
	9-house	9-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	‘My house’			*Intended: ‘My dear house’

69.	*endl(w)ini*	*yam*	⇒	*endlinam*
	e-in-ʞu-ini	i-a-m1sg		
	LOC-9-house-LOC	9-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	‘At my home’			‘At my beloved home’

Note that RPF is only eligible on the locative-circumfixed[8] *home*, and not on the unmarked *house*; this is an idiosyncrasy with no explanation yet. What is clear from the truncated form in (69) is that the possession is clearly outside the locative suffix *-ini*, indicating that the syntactic

[6] Although this is isiXhosa data, an isiZulu film entitled *Nabantwa bam* (Nxumalo 2004) clearly shows that a cognate construction exists in isiZulu, and clearly implies affection according to an isiZulu speaker, who describes the comitative preposition *na-* as also adding to the affection. The film is about strong emotional bonds in a family.

[7] My initial syntactic analysis, given that alienability does seem to play a part in licensability, was that in RPF there was no agreement happening in the first place due to lower possessor attachment for inalienable possession (Myler 2016). However, this piece of data (67) caused that analysis to collapse. This line of syntactic explanation is salvageable only if (67) is determined to not be ‘true’ RPF, which I am unable to do on pragmatic grounds, and the fact that it is clearly not an error by the consultant given its occurrence in both isiXhosa and isiZulu, and its attestation in media. It would also be possible to dismiss this example as a lexification, which is unappealingly close to ignoring inconvenient data.

[8] Further reading: Taraldsen 2020

locativization must have happened prior to RPF, adding further complication to claiming early-attachment inalienabile possessors in explaining Bantu RPF.

It must be noted that the example above with *house* is extremely unusual in allowing RPF. The examples so far have solidified a phonological requirement for the RPF, but this is clearly not the only factor, as the previous ineligible kinship terms made clear. The attempted RPF for *cousin* is reproduced below, as well as several other phonologically-acceptable environments. Alongside the phonological considerations for RPF, **the vast majority of nouns are ineligible for RPF in any capacity** when they are not either kinship, body parts, or the home, specifically examples like (72) and (73), which have RPF-deletable phonological contexts.

70.	*Umzala*	*wam*	⇏	**Umzalam*
	um-zala	u-a-m		
	1-cousin	1-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	‘My cousin’			*Intended: ‘my dear cousin’
71.	*Ukrebe*	*wam*	⇏	?**Ukrebam*
	u-krebe	u-a-m		
	1-shark	1-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	‘My shark’			*Intended: ‘my dear shark’
72.	*Umfula*	*wam*	⇏	**Umfulam*
	um-fula	u-a-m		
	3-stream	3-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	‘My stream’			*Intended: ‘my dear stream’
73.	*Incwadi*	*yam*	⇏	**Incwadam*
	iN-ncwadi	i-a-m		
	9-book	9-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	‘My book’			*Intended: ‘my dear book’

Inanimate objects are almost categorically excluded from reduction, but it is worth noting is that my classmate researched sharks and loved them very much, and so by the end of the semester (71) playfully became licit, although this cannot be expected to be a typical grammatical judgment outside of this context. However, this does reveal a narrow productivity for animals which could be considered either pets or friends:

74.	*Ikati*	*yam*	⇒	*Ikatam*
	i-kati	i-a-m		
	9-cat	9-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	‘My cat’			‘My dear cat’

75.	*Intaka*	*yam*	⇒	*Intakam*
	iN-taka	i-a-m		
	9-bird	9-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	‘My bird’			‘My dear bird’
76.	*Inja*	*yam*	⇒	*?Injam*
	iN-nja	i-a-m		
	9-dog	9-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	‘My dog’			‘My dear dog’
77.	*Inyoka*	*yam*	⇏	*?*Inyokam*
	iN-nyoka	i-a-m		
	9-snake	9-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	‘My snake’			*Intended: ‘my dear snake’
78.	*Umkhaza*	*wam*	⇏	**Umkhazam*
	um-khaza	u-a-m		
	3-tick	3-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	‘My tick’			*Intended: ‘my dear tick’

The analysis so far predicts that all of the above RPF should be theoretically allowed, at least on phonological grounds. However, animals which are not pets are illicit for the structure, specifically (77) and (78). When presented with a scenario in which the author has four pet snakes, (77) became marginal, but the consultant said that the practice of keeping snakes as pets is culturally infelicitous among amaXhosa and (77) would be strange on those grounds. Cultural infelicity was the same reason behind the marginality of (75), where the consultant said that dogs were not traditionally given affection or considered pets, but an example with proper context allows (76), as will be shown in (83). RPF for (78) was completely unacceptable regardless of status as a pet, showing that individual animals may be on a gradient, which would be an ideal place to test individual speaker variation. Despite not being prototypical kinship terms, certain pets seem eligible for RPF, perhaps elevating them to part of the ostensible kinship system anyway, as has been attested in other languages (Tsunoda 1995: 576). This could be similar to acceptability for ‘my dear friend’ (8) *umhlobam*, which might not be kinship in the strictest sense.

Beyond the lexicon and phonology, there are pragmatic considerations for RPF which seem to influence acceptability. A prototypical example of RPF in discourse is presented below:

Context: Speaker’s mother passed away a few years ago

79.	*Ndikhumbula*	*<u>umamam</u>.*
	ndi-khumbul-a	u-mama-w-a-m
	1SG.SM-miss-FV	1-mother-1-POSS-1SG.POSS
	‘I miss my dear mother (my mom).’	

80.	*Ndikhumbula*	*umama*	*wam.*

ndi-khumbul-a	u-mama	u-a-m
1SG.SM-miss-FV	1-mother	1-POSS-1SG.POSS

‘I miss my mother.’

In this context, the speaker is explicitly expressing affection towards her mother, and the possession structure in (79) is an overt marker of this qualification of closeness. Although not syntactically incorrect, the context can pragmatically rule out the more neutral sentence (80).

Context: A mother teasing her grown son after his wedding[9]

81.

Ngubani	*oza*	*kukhathalela*	*<u>umamakho</u>*	*ngoku?*
ngubani	a-u-za	ku-khathal-el-a	u-mama-w-a-kho	ngoku
who	REL-3SM-FUT	INF-care-APPL-FV	1-mother-1-POSS-2SG.POSS	now

‘Who will take care of your mommy now?’

82.

(#)*Ngubani*	*oza*	*kukhathalela*	*umama wakho*	*ngoku*
ngubani	a-u-za	ku-khathal-el-a	u-mamau-a-kho	ngoku
who	REL-3SM-FUT	INF-care-APPL-FV	1-mother1-POSS-2SG.POSS	now

‘Who will take care of your mother now?’

In a similar way, (81) and (82) are very close in meaning and are syntactically interchangeable. Yet, (82) does not explicitly encode a conversational move being made by the mother here, one of affirmation of her closeness with her son. The affective form here implies teasing, which is a well-known form of cementing and reaffirming closeness (Blythe 2012; Haugh & Pillet-Shore 2018). The closeness is emphasized by RPF, and in fact its absence in (82) could be strange and could be a misinterpreted as distance or real concern about the matter. That is to say, using the construction in (81) explicitly rules out readings of pragmatic distance between the mother and her addressee.

Context 3: A woman treats her ugly dog like a baby, and we’re being mean about it.

83.

Injakhe	*imbi!*
in-ja-i-a-khe	im-bi
9-dog-9-POSS-3SG.POSS	COP.9-ugly

‘Her little doggie is ugly!’

84.

Inja	*yakhe*	*imbi!*
in-ja	i-a-khe	im-bi
9-dog	9-POSS-3SG.POSS	COP.9-ugly

‘Her dog is ugly!’

Returning to the discussion on pets, we can recall that *dog* was only marginally acceptable in (76), yet (83) becomes licit with this context. This statement crucially relies on

[9] Note that if we were to mark the object (mother) on the verb, it would spell out as 3SG despite semantically being 1SG. The mismatch is likely the same phenomenon as the “imposters” of Collins & Postal 2012.

making explicit the emotional closeness between *her* and *her dog*, only to turn around to mock this fact. From the speaker's intuition, (83) is almost an analogization of the *owner* and the *dog* into the roles of *parent* and *child*. Again like before, it is not semantically or syntactically wrong to pick one structure over the other, but there are solid pragmatic implications that the shorter affectionate structure in (84) makes overt – specifically of teasing.[10]

As before, if pets count as a kinship, then isiXhosa displays a fascinatingly prototypical alienability effect for RPF, where body parts, some kinship, and the home are eligible to the exclusion of the rest of the nouns of the language, when the phonological and pragmatic licensing conditions are met. This pattern is much clearer for isiXhosa than the following languages given that RPF is much less productive in TshiVenḓa and Setswana.

III. AFFECTION IN TSHIVENḒA (S21E)

TshiVenḓa, alongside a few close language varieties like Xironga, form a divergent branch of Southern Bantu language in the extreme northeast of South Africa in the Limpopo state, as well as across the border in Zimbabwe, and it is classified as its own node S20 in the Southern Bantu language group (Maho 2009), which makes it a cousin to isiXhosa. The data analyzed in this section was collected from a speaker of the Nzhelele TshiVhase dialect, which is tentatively classed as S21E. Recalling the truncation pattern delineated for isiXhosa, the alternation below should look familiar:

				TshiVenḓa S21
85.	*Ṋwana*	*wanga*	⇒	*Ṋwananga*
	nw-ana	u-a-nga		
	1-child	1-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	'My child'			'My dear child'

In spoken speech, this alternation is easy to miss, and could preliminarily be explained as a purely phonological process which deleted intervocalic **w**. As with isiXhosa, the forms above are interchangeable syntactically and semantically -- there is no context which causes one to be exclusively grammatical or felicitous and not the other. It also seems to be unique to this lexical item -- none of the other words in this noun class were able to shorten like this, in the judgment of this speaker. Example (85) has very specific connotations, however: it is almost child-like,[11] it is informal, and it communicates love for the child, almost like a nickname. The

[10] This is similar to the use of endearment possessors in Hawaiian for mocking, specifically the second-person *kō*, "your dear _", a pronoun no longer in use in modern Hawaiian. I reproduce the line of a chant (Fornander 1917-18: 57), which is analyzed as as a father mocking his son-in-law to his daughter (Pukui & Elbert 1979:117).

'E'oe kū ka hauna lā'au a kāua i kō kāne, he kōlea kō kāne, he wāwae li'ili'i, he 'ūlili kō kāne, he holoholo kahakai (FS 57)

. *Our war strokes are not suitable for your (fine) husband, your (fine) husband is a plover, a small legged [one]; your (fine) husband is a tattler, running along the beach.*

[11] As in, the TshiVenḓa speaker could easily envision children using this construction productively. This is further discussed in Section V.

RPF can be used by an adult addressing the child, or calling the child to come over, in introducing the child with affection to someone else, and to assert authority and ownership of the child. This last point can and has been used in a scenario where a man is trying to claim his biological child, although he is not involved in the child's upbringing. In choosing this form, the father is explained to be affirming his love and closeness to the child by choosing RPF over the unmarked possession form.

Unlike for isiXhosa, only the first person singular possessor is eligible for RPF.

86.	*N̂wana*	*washu*	⇏	***N̂wanashu**
	nw-ana	u-a-shu		
	1-child	1-POSS-1PL.POSS		
	'Our child'			*Intended: 'Our dear child'
87.	*N̂wana*	*wavho*[12]	⇏	**N̂wanavho*
	nw-ana	u-a-vho		
	1-child	1-POSS-2SG.POSS/3PL.POSS		
	'Your/their child'			*Intended: 'Your/their dear child'
88.	*N̂wana*	*waṋu*	⇏	**N̂wanaṋu*
	nw-ana	u-a-nu		
	1-child	1-POSS-2PL.POSS		
	'Y'all's child'			*Intended: 'Y'all's dear child'
89.	*N̂wana*	*wawe*	⇏	**N̂wanawe*
	nw-ana	u-a-we		
	1-child	1-POSS-3SG.POSS		
	'His/her child'			*Intended: 'his/her dear child'

Thus, the truncated construction in TshiVenḓa is restricted to the first person singular. With the parameter of person restriction set for TshiVenḓa, the question of extent of the paradigm remains. The only other possible truncated form found in the language is the term for 'mother' in class 1a (as in Mulawadzi 1996: 31).

90.	*Mme*	*ʔanga*	⇒	*Mmeanga*
	m-me	ʔ-a-nga		
	1-mother	1a-POSS-1PL.POSS		
	'My mother'			'My dear mother'
91.	*Baba*	*ʔanga*	⇏	**Babanga*
	ø-baba	ʔ-a-nga		
	1a-father	1a-POSS-1PL.POSS		

[12] The possessive pronoun *-vho* is homophonous for both 2SG.POSS and 3PL.POSS. Neither accept RPF.

	‘My father’		*Intended: ‘My dear father’
92.	*Maḽumi*	*ʔanga*	**Maḽumanga*
	ø-maḽumi	ʔ-a-nga	
	1a-uncle	1a-POSS-1PL.POSS	
	‘My uncle’		*Intended: ‘My dear uncle’

Thus, the entirety of the truncation phenomenon in TshiVenḓa centers on the words for ‘mother’ and ‘child’ being possessed by the first person singular. Neither body parts nor the term for home ever worked for truncation, and thus this constitutes the most narrow paradigm examined by this paper.

IV. SOWETO SETSWANA (S31)

Setswana forms part of a larger dialect continuum with Northern Sotho and counts well over 8 million speakers (Gordon & Grimes 2015). Keeping in mind the prior truncation pattern found in TshiVenḓa and isiXhosa, the alternation in possession of kinship terms below again looks familiar:

				Setswana
93.	*Ngwana*	*wame*	⇒	*Ngwaname*
	ngw-ana	u-a-me		
	1-child	1-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	‘My child’			‘My dear child’
94.	*Mma*	*wame*	⇒	*Mmame*
	m-ma	u-a-me		
	1-mother	1-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	‘My mother’			‘My dear mother’
95.	*Tsala*	*wame*	⇒	*Tsalame*
	ø-tsala	u-a-me		
	1a-friend	1-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	‘My friend’			‘My dear/best friend’
96.	*Motswala*	*wame*	⇒	*Motswalame*
	mo-tswala	u-a-me		
	1-cousin	1-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	‘My cousin’			‘My dear cousin’
97.	*Koko*	*wame*	⇒	*Kokwame*
	ø-koko	u-a-me		
	1a-grandma	1-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	‘My grandmother’			‘My dear grandmother’

98.	*Monna*	*wame*	⇒	*Monname*
	Mo-nna	u-a-me		
	1-man	1-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	‘My husband’			‘My dear husband’

The full form with two separate words is the unmarked possessive form which is the most standard way of speaking and writing; the truncation again gives connotations similar to a nickname, and is judged to be child-like, affectionate, and informal. It was not obvious at first whether to include *koko* (97) ‘grandmother’ given the ambiguous [w] that could originate either as a phonological effect from the last letter of the lexical item for grandmother or be from the agreement on the possessive phrase. The judgment of the consultant clarifies that there is a definite meaning change between the two variants in (97), and is exactly comparable with the other pairs. The data above constitutes the entire set of kinship terms eligible for RPF, at least for this speaker.

Note that there are several asymmetries for eligible possessees in Setswana, specifically that *husband* is licit for this form but not *wife*, that *grandmother* is licit but not *grandfather*, and that *mother* is licit but not *father*. An idiosyncratically lexical element to alienability classes is attested crosslinguistically: the Hawaiian inalienable class ‘o-class’ contains words such as ‘canoe’ and ‘chair’ while excluding ‘child’ (Elbert 1970: 52); Mokilese treats ‘vehicle’ as morphologically inalienable while ‘car’ is alienable (Harrison 1976: 124, 128); Northern Pomo treats most kinship terms inalienably, but excludes ‘relative’ (O’Connor 1992: 257). Given such data from languages with explicit alienability splits in the morphology, an alienability system in Setswana which includes ‘husband’ but not ‘wife’ is at least plausible.

For sake of clarity, (99) shows an ungrammatical attempt at placing an alienable object into this construction, despite the favorable phonological environment. This is the result for every other noun in the language, except ‘stomach’ which will be covered (104).

99.	*Nama*	*yame*	⇏	**Namame*
	N-nama	y-a-me		
	9-meat	9-POSS-1SG.POSS		
	‘My meat’ (i.e. of a chicken)			*Intended: ‘My dear meat’

Constructions not using the first person singular possessor were judged as ungrammatical, as shown below, and extend to all other possessors. Recall that this is the same restriction as was shown for TshiVenḓa, and is unlike isiXhosa.

100.	*Monna*	*wago*	⇏	**Monnago*
	mo-nna	u-a-go		
	1-man	1-POSS-2SG.POSS		
	‘Your husband’			Intended: ‘Your dear husband’

101.	*Monna*	*wage*	⇏	**Monnage*

mo-nna u-a-ge
1-man 1-POSS-3SG.POSS
'Her husband' Intended: 'Her dear husband'

This list of terms in Setswana is largely corroborated by work on Northern Sotho (Mojapelo 2007:123), a closely related variety where the identical corresponding words for *Mma* 'mother', *Motswala* 'cousin', and *Koko* **'**grandmother' from above are also being licit in a truncated possession structure, as well as *papa* 'father', *mmatswale* **'**mother-in-law', *ratswale* 'father-in-law', *rakgolo* **'**grandfather'[13], and *motlogolo* **'**nephew/niece'. Mojapelo goes a step further than my consultant, however, and gives the example below:

102. *Ke rata [mmago]*
ke rata m-ma-wa-ga-go
1sg love 1-mother-1-POSS.1-1SG.POSS
'I love [your mother]' (glosses mine)

A footnote explicitly explains that "**[mmago]** is the contracted form of **[mma [wa gago]]**" (Mojapelo 2007: 150). Note that this means that Northern Sotho speakers clearly allow for possessors outside of the first-person singular, specifically the second person.[14] The analysis of these kinship terms is very brief, and Mojapelo does not explain whether there is a meaning difference between the longer and shorter versions, but uses this evidence to strengthen claims of inalienable syntax in the language. This leaves the extent of eligible possessors in Northern Sotho affection truncation an open question, but at minimum includes the speaker and addressee. The brevity of Mojapelo's treatment of this specific construction in Northern Sotho leaves open questions about whether the truncated form (102) has endearment in its meaning.

On the other hand, Setswana clearly uses RPF for the same set of expressive meaning as isiXhosa and TshiVenḓa. A very close variety like Northern Sotho could be predicted not to stray too far in this respect, but this remains conjecture for now. The Setswana consultant was tasked with coming up with the scenario for which using the form *Ngwaname* 'My dear child' as appropriate:

103. Contexts for *Ngwaname*:

a. My child, I need you to learn to pray before I die.
b. My child loves me! (He surprised me with a visit or a gift)
c. My child said something hurtful to me.
d. My child is sick and I am scared.
e. My child graduated! (Proud; maybe it has been a struggle)

[13] My consultant specifically judged this one as ungrammatical, which could come down to either a dialectal or individual difference. This is an area for future work.
[14] The Northern Sotho judgments are drawn from Mojapelo herself as a native speaker, as well as a number of consultants who are also native speakers. (Mojapelo 2007: 8)

RPF is not licit without a strong emotional component in Setswana, matching previous patterns. Using the truncated form gives the intention behind it “something extra”, and is a statement of love from the speaker’s standpoint. Thus, a small subset of kinship terms in Setswana expand the possessive truncation phenomenon found in TshiVenḓa beyond the concept of *child*, but maintains person and number restrictions in possessor which are stricter than isiXhosa.

The final piece of relevant data for Setswana is presented below, which shows the truncated possession applied to a body part. This was the only body part which was found to license the construction in the language. The context for (104) would be to have a stomach ache, and the speaker notes that pregnant women are known to say this when the baby kicks. The alignment with the isiXhosa usage for pain is noteworthy and adds further proof of some alienability effect for RPF.

104.	*Mpa*	*yame*	⇒	*Mpame!*
	N-pa	i-a-me		
	9-stomach	9-ᴘoss-1sɢ.ᴘoss		
	‘My stomach’			‘Ow, my stomach!’

This consultant did not accept any other nouns as eligible possessees for RPF, including *house* or pets, but she suggested that other speakers might. Again like for isiXhosa, the major limitation of this study is that the data is gathered from a single speaker per language. However, the RPF pattern emerging across these languages behaves similarly in phonology, pragmatics, and lexical specification.

V. DISCUSSION

The crosslinguistic analysis of the affectionate truncation phenomenon is further spelled out in this section. On a phonological level, isiXhosa, Setswana and TshiVenḓa largely pattern together in mostly deleting glides and glottal stops. Included here is the isiXhosa data point in which RPF unusually skips a syllable and deletes an alveolar nasal for *my children*.

Table 2: Truncatable consonants in different languages

Deleted consonant	w	y	ʔ	n
isiXhosa	*Umntwana <u>w</u>am* ‘My child’ ⇒ *Umntwanam*	*Intombi <u>y</u>am* ‘My daughter’ ⇒ *Intombam*	*Amashiya <u>ʔ</u>am* ‘My eyebrows’ ⇒ *Amashiyam*	*Abantwa<u>n</u>a bam* ‘My children’ ⇒ *Abantabam*
Setswana	*Ngwana <u>w</u>ame* ‘My child’ ⇒ *Ngwaname*	*Mpa <u>y</u>ame* ‘My stomach’ ⇒ *Mpame*		
TshiVenḓa	*Ṅwana <u>w</u>anga*		*Mme <u>ʔ</u>anga*	

	‘My child’ ⇒ *N̰wananga*		My mother ⇒ *Mmeanga*	

This class of consonants [w j n ʔ] could form a natural class of sounds to the exclusion of other sounds like [l b s k z]. The Sound Pattern of English treated glottal consonants as sonorants based on lack of constriction (Chomsky & Halle 1968), giving some precedent for treating a glottal stop as a sonorant. The roadblock might be the [l], which is typically considered sonorant, but some have argued that lateral liquids can be nonsonorant depending on the language (Yip 2005). The prime evidence for this explanation would be Setswana, in which /l/ is allophonically produced [d] before high vowels (Gouskova, Zsiga & Boyer 2011). However, categorization of exclusively [w j n ʔ] by the term *sonorant* is simply a matter of convenience, and the rule could simply be further specified against laterals. Thus, a possible truncation rule could be formulated as a single application of the rule below:

105. [TRUNC]: V[+sonorant]V -> Ø / _V([+sonorant][-lateral])(V)C(V)#

This analysis does not yet contend with how exactly this truncation is initiated by syntax or pragmatics, given that meaning change must reside outside phonology in many frameworks. Rather, this paper serves to bring to light the existence of this phenomenon, its contexts of use, its phonological characteristics, and its post-syntactic operation. However, its restricted distribution only within the realm of inalienable possession is noteworthy and points towards the necessity of accounting for syntax in a full analysis.

It is important to note that the RPF pragmatics across the languages are very similar: all three consultants independently mentioned that there is something “child-like” about the construction. Affectives characterized as a feature of child-speak is a recurring feature of this type of expressive construction crosslinguistically, perhaps best attested in diminutives, to the point that diminutives are proposed to universally derive from the word for ‘child’ (Jurafsky 1996). Russian poetry can feature *-ik* for child imagery (Kalina-Levine 1981: 37); diminutives are a salient component of politeness in child-directed speech in Macedonian (Spasovski 2012); Colloquial Jordanian Arabic diminutives convey pragmatics that fundamentally revolve around children (Badarneh 2010: 156). This perception is easily substantiated in English by listing terms with affective suffix /-i/ (horsey, birdey, kitty, piggy, sheepie) which has been long noted as a feature of English child speech (Svaib 1993; Schneider 2003). However, many Bantu languages already *have* a diminutive (isiXhosa, Setswana, TshiVenḓa: *-ana*) which has been convincingly shown to etymologically stem from the word for *child* and have true size semantics as well as similar expressive affection semantics (Jurafsky 1996; Fortin 2011). In contrast, RPF has no size semantics and cannot be etymologically derived from *child*, yet speakers derive a child-like association despite this. Also noteworthy is that the narrowest RPF paradigm examined in this paper, TshiVenḓa, critically only includes the words for *child* and *mother*. Hawaiian use of affective possessors also displays the same judgments of child-speech from speakers, despite also having no size semantics and no obvious derivation etymologically from *child*. This association can hardly be coincidental.

The isiXhosa and Setswana use of RPF for pain when directed to body parts is an link that lends further evidence to treating these expressive meanings as part of some natural class (Kratzer 1999), and is validated by *pain* class words (i.e. hurt) significantly associating on a scale with *pleasure* class (i.e. loveable) in corpus computational work (Grefenstette et al. 2006). Hawaiian again has a very similar pattern where expressive possession of body parts is used for *ouch!* contexts, further validating the crosslinguistic tendency. In comparison with English /-i/ again, we find *tummy* for as an expressively marked version of 'stomach' (Schneider 2003: 91), revealing that English, too, has a similar construction which can be used in pain constructions and has child-register connotations. This term *tummy* is far more common in a corpus search (17405 hits) than Schneider's other attested terms like *footie* (2114), *leggy* (3909), *toothie* (11) (NOW corpus: Davies 2013).[15] It is likely then that English, when using /-i/ for pain constructions, has a similar distribution to Setswana's single RPF body term *stomach* , revealing that such narrow usage in the lexicon is probably not a rare phenomenon. It is crosslinguistic analysis which reveals this systematic pattern which might otherwise be explained as a singular idiosyncrasy of a language's lexicon.

RPF possessors in isiXhosa, Setswana, and TshiVenḓa are restricted to pronouns. IsiXhosa accepts all pragmatically viable pronouns, including non-human ones like for *umamazo* 'their dear mother (of dogs)'. RPF licensing in TshiVenḓa and Setswana, on the other hand, is restricted to first person singular possessors according to this data. Northern Sotho, a close variety to Setswana, clearly accepts the second person singular possession in truncated possession, but no meaning difference has been established (Mojapelo 2007).

The final point of comparison is the lexical restrictions on licensing. Some languages like Wailaki (Begay 2018:226), Hawaiian, and English seem to have no real lexical restrictions on possessees of affection constructions given sufficient pragmatic licensing in context. English speakers frequently coin new /-i/ terms like *stimmy-check* for 'stimulus check', or *Dunky Donuts* for 'Dunkin Donuts'. Conversely, this does not seem to be the case for the Bantu language data examined in this paper so far, whose RPF licensing is word-specified and not similarly productive in discourse. IsiXhosa did demonstrate marginal productivity for pets, but this stands in stark contrast to overwhelming productivity of affective constructions regardless of possessee alienability in Hawaiian and English. Every Bantu RPF possessee was at least arguably inalienable in this paper, which would predict a similar pattern elsewhere, yet Kiswahili data almost immediately breaks this mold.

Kiswahili has been documented to have syntactically optional constructions that look incredibly similar to the RPF of Southern Bantu, called "contractions" (Mpemba 2015). Mpemba describes them as functionally serving a purpose, "as a brevity, time-saving, and speech connectivity device" (2015: 1). Some are reproduced below from the paper:

106. (a) *Babao* (instead of *baba yao* 'their father')
(b) *Mwanetu* (instead of *mwana wetu* 'our son/child')
(c) *Jinale* (instead of *jina lake* 'his/her/its name')
(d) *Kakayo* (instead of *kaka yako* 'your (sg.) brother')
(e) *Chumbache* (instead of *chumba chake* 'his room')

[15] Schneider 2003 also mentions *handy*, with over 140,000 hits, but whose homophony with the more common adjective is misleading in an unrefined corpus search.

(f) *Nyumbenu* (instead of *nyumba yenu* ‘your (pl.) house’)
(g) *Kambangu* (instead of *kamba yangu* ‘my rope’)
(h) *Wemao* (instead of *wema wako* ‘your kindness’)
(i) *Kitabucho* (instead of *kitabu chako* ‘your book’)
(j) *Majinangu* (instead of *majina yangu* ‘my names’)
(k) *Ugonjwangu* (instead of *ugonjwa wangu* ‘my disease’)

Important to note here is that the vast majority of contracted nouns are unacceptable according to Mpemba, but a few, including above, seem to simply be specified to allow contraction. Interestingly, Kiswahili also includes a wider variety of deletable consonants and semantic categories, specifically a word like *rope* which is not crosslinguistically predicted to pattern inalienably. There does not seem to be a restriction on personhood in pronouns, as the examples above include 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person pronouns in both the singular and plural, though Mpemba does show that 3sg is much more contractable than the others, in what might simply be a separate non-expressive paradigm (2015:10). Mpemba makes no note of semantic difference between contracted and uncontracted forms, and attributes the phenomenon as resulting from frequency, where high-frequency terms tend to be contracted more often.

A frequency-based approach is not necessarily incompatible with one of alienability, given that possessed inalienable nouns tend to be high-frequency. In fact, the frequency of possession of body parts and kinship terms has been argued as a primary driver of alienability splits in grammars crosslinguistically (Haspelmath 2008: 3). However, a consultant for Kiswahili confirms the fact that ‘my dear father’ *Babangu* is a more affectionate form of ‘my father’ *Baba yangu*, and likewise for *Kakayo* ‘your dear brother’ and *Mwanao* ‘your dear child’. Testing the rest of the paradigm in Kiswahili for meaning difference in the contractions constitutes further research, but the attested meaning difference for the contraction in kinship terms is non-trivial and shows that this might constitute a cognate structure to the previously-discussed Southern Bantu languages.

Finally, there are attested Bantu Reduced Possession Forms (RPF) which phonologically seem similar to what has been laid out in this paper, with contracted possessor phrases onto their possessee nouns, but with major functional differences which would necessitate a fundamentally different syntactic explanation. One example is Mpyemo (A86c) in which possessor phrases for kinship and the home are obligatorily contracted, but only for the 1sg possessor (Murrell 2021). Without meaning difference derived through an alternation, this would likely not serve an expressive function: RPF in Mpyemo would simply be morphologically-specified on the first person possessive pronoun.

Similarly, Cuwabo (P34) systematically cliticises all pronominal kinship possessors onto the possessee noun instead of placing them in a separate agreement phrase, which does not seem to constitute a pragmatically-governed set of alternatives (Guérois 2015: 217). Additionally, Cuwabo has a vowel length reduction in possessive phrases during fast speech, which could be called RPF under its current definition (Guérois 2015: 214), illustrating yet another possible type of conditioning environment that exists across the Bantu family. For example, speech rate might constitute at least part of the explanatory power behind the Kiswahili paradigm given its description as optional phonological contraction to save time

(Mpemba 2015:4). Again, these are speculations that future work on both these and related languages might clarify.

VI. CONCLUSION

This paper has documented a truncation process in possessed nouns in Southern Bantu languages which serves to denote expressive meaning -- affection towards kinship, or pain for body parts. Eligibility for the truncation seems somehow tied to alienability, given that only kinship, body parts, and the home have been found to take this structure. The list of nouns eligible for truncation is language-specific, ranging from a couple (TshiVenḓa) to dozens (isiXhosa). There is also variation in eligible possessors, where isiXhosa licenses all persons and numbers, while Setswana and TshiVenḓa only license 1sg possessors (and Northern Sotho may also license 2sg). The deletable consonants are argued to form a natural class of sonorants, and may occur one or two syllables from the right edge of the word. A summary of the points above can be found below in Table 3, upon which a few crosslinguistic tendencies will be outlined in hopes of helping future research in this area.

Table 3: Compared features in languages discussed in this paper

Family	Language	Possessee	Possessor	Expressive	Structure
Bantu (RPF)	isiXhosa	-some kinship -body parts -house.ʟoc	All pronouns	yes	Contraction: [n w j ʔ]
	Setswana	-some kinship -stomach	1sg	yes	Contraction: [w j]
	N. Sotho	-some kinship ?body parts	1sg, 2sg	?	Contraction: [w j χ]
	TshiVenḓa	-mother -child	1sg	yes	Contraction: [w ʔ]
	Kiswahili	-some kinship -few objects	All pronouns	yes, some	Contraction: [w j l ʧ z][16]
	Cuwabo	-some kinship	All pronouns	no	-
	Mpyemo	-kinship -house	1sg	no	-
Austronesian	Hawaiian	Open class	1sg, 2sg (archaic)	yes	Noun class[17]
Dene	Wailaki	Open class	1sg	yes	Pronoun
Indo-European	English	Open class	Open class	yes	Suffix /-i/
	Macedonian	Open class	Open class	yes	Diminutive
	Russian	Open class	Open class	yes	Diminutive

First, glides and glottal stops are deleted more often than stops and fricatives, which shows a trend along sonority hierarchy. Second, RPF and other morphological expressives in possession are most common in the first person singular possessor, evidenced by Setswana, TshiVenḓa, modern Hawaiian, and Wailaki, followed by the second person in Northern Sotho and archaic Hawaiian, then followed by the full pronominal paradigm in isiXhosa and Kiswahili.

[16] Gathered from the data tables in Mpemba 2015 Appendix.

[17] Hawaiian 1sg possessors **ka‘u** *my (alienable),* **ko‘u** *my (inalienable),* and **ku‘u** *my (affectionate)* break down into D-NC-Possessor, where the middle vowel agrees with noun class. Noun classes which serve expressive function are not in the scope of this paper, but have been described in Shona and Fula (Fortin 2011), TshiVenḓa (Mulaudzi 2000), and Wolof (Babou & Loporcaro 2016:18).

This could be outlined as a [1>2>3] crosslinguistic person hierarchy (Rosen 1990: 704 for Southern Tiwa, Hockett 1939 for Potawatomi), where we predict that if a language allows for a 3rd person RPF, then it also allows for 2nd and 1st person. In the context of Bantu, the possessee class most often eligible for RPF is close kinship, followed by body parts, the home, and then by alienable objects. This predicts that RPF is most likely to appear in other languages on inalienable possessees, though this probably does not need to be the case given Kiswahili. Lastly, RPF might not always serve the same role in the grammar: a relatively unified use for expressives has been covered in detail by this paper, but Cuwabo and Mpyemo hint at variation in what RPF might accopmlish like in other languages.

Although this paper has not outlined a detailed syntactic analysis for the process which seems simultaneously linked to expressive semantics, phonology, and alienability syntax, a descriptive account of RPF is intended to bring attention to this overlooked issue. It is currently unknown how many other languages may have RPF, though it has appeared in every Bantu language that I have examined. In the same vein, it is unclear whether these paradigms in languages like isiXhosa and Kiswahili constitute cognate syntax inherited from their common ancestor, whether they constitute multiple independent developments, or whether endearment syntax is laterally transferable. Transfer from neighboring languages would be especially plausible for TshiVenḓa due to narrow RPF usage and alternative method (noun class) for similar expressive meanings (Mulaudzi 2000), which the other languages lack. Further factors could be TshiVenḓa's relatively small speaker population and the extreme multilingualism of the South African sprachbund. The limitation to these hypotheses is lack of data, specifically lack of access to more than a single speaker each of these languages. However, planned follow-up studies in South Africa with a broader number of speakers will hopefully clarify some of these questions.

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