

# ACAL 49

Change your subtitle in  
localmetadata.tex

Edited by

Galen Sibanda et al

Draft  
of June 28, 2021, 12:35

Contemporary African Linguistics ??



## Contemporary African Linguistics

Editors: Akinbiyi Akinlabi, Laura J. Downing

In this series:

1. Payne, Doris L., Sara Pacchiarotti & Mokaya Bosire (eds.). *Diversity in African languages: Selected papers from the 46th Annual Conference on African Linguistics.*
2. Persohn, Bastian. *The verb in Nyakyusa: A focus on tense, aspect and modality.*
3. Kandybowicz, Jason, Travis Major & Harold Torrence (eds.). *African linguistics on the prairie: Selected papers from the 45th Annual Conference on African Linguistics.*
4. Clem, Emily, Peter Jenks & Hannah Sande (eds.). *Theory and description in African Linguistics: Selected papers from the 47th Annual Conference on African Linguistics.*
5. Lotven, Samson, Silvina Bongiovanni, Phillip Weirich, Robert Botne & Samuel Gyasi Obeng (eds.). *African linguistics across the disciplines: Selected papers from the 48th Annual Conference on African Linguistics.*

# ACAL 49

Change your subtitle in  
localmetadata.tex

Edited by

Galen Sibanda et al



## **langsci-current-book**

This title can be downloaded at:

<http://langsci-press.org/catalog/book/000>

© 2021, the authors

Published under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 Licence (CC BY 4.0):

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/> 

ISBN: no digital ISBN

no print ISBNs!

ISSN: 2511-7726

no DOI

ID not assigned!

Cover and concept of design: Ulrike Harbort

Fonts: Libertinus, Arimo, DejaVu Sans Mono

Typesetting software: X<sub>E</sub>L<sub>A</sub>T<sub>E</sub>X

Language Science Press

xHain

Grünberger Str. 16

10243 Berlin, Germany

[langsci-press.org](http://langsci-press.org)

Storage and cataloguing done by FU Berlin



# **Contents**



# Chapter 1

## Unary/binary-NEG structures of NPIs and reduplication in Bùli

George Akanlig-Pare<sup>a</sup> & Ken Hiraiwa<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Ghana, Legon <sup>b</sup>Meiji Gakuin University

Negative-sensitive items in Bùli, a Mabia (Gur) language spoken in Ghana, exhibit a mixed behavior between NCIs and NPIs. Thus, Bùli presents a counterexample to Vallduví's generalization. Adopting and extending the framework of CollinsPostal2014 and CollinsEtAl2017, we will show that the apparently mysterious mixed behavior of negative-sensitive items in Bùli can be explained by articulating an unary-NEG structure and syntax of reduplication.

### 1 Diagnosing for NCIs and NPIs

Vallduví1994 examined behaviors of negative-sensitive items such as *n*-words and minimizers in Catalan and Spanish and proposed four diagnostic tests (1a)–(1d) to distinguish Negative Concord Items (NCIs) and Negative Polarity Items (NPIs). Giannakidou2000 further added clause-boundedness to the list. For example, *any* in (1) in English is diagnosed as NPI, while *n*-words in (2) in Spanish are considered to be NCI (see Ladusaw1979, HaegemanZanuttini1996, Haegeman1995, Watanabe2004, Giannakidou2006, GiannakidouZeijlstra2017, among others).

- (1) English
  - a. Did you see anyone? (Question)
  - b. \*Anyone did not come. (\*Pre-negative subject position)
  - c. \*I didn't see almost anyone. (\*Modification by *almost*)
  - d. \*Anyone (I-didn't see). (as an answer to (1a)) (\*Fragment answer)



- e. I don't say I saw anyone. (Long-distance licensing)
- (2) Spanish (Vallduví 1994, Penka 2011)
- a. \* ¿Quieres nada?  
2SG-want nothing  
'Do you want anything?' (\*Question)
  - b. Nada funciona.  
nothing 3SG-work  
'Nothing works.' (Pre-negative subject position)
  - c. ¿A quien has visto?  
a who 2SG-PERF see  
'Who'd you see?'  
A (casi) nandie.  
a almost no.one  
'(Almost) no one.' (Modification by *almost*/Fragment answer)
  - d. \* No dije que había nada en el frigorífico.  
Neg said.1SG c there.was.IND n-thing in the fridge  
'I didn't say that there was anything in the fridge.'  
(\*Long-distance licensing)

Table 1: NCI vs. NPI (Vallduví 1994, Giannakidou 2000)

	NCI	NPI
Non-negative	*	✓
Pre-negative	✓	*
Modifiability	✓	*
Fragment Answer	✓	*
Long-distance	*	✓

In this paper, we examine negative-sensitive items in Bùlì, a Mabia (Gur) language spoken in Ghana, and show that they exhibit a mixed behavior between NCIs and NPIs, resisting the dichotomy in Table 1.

## 2 The NCI-NPI dichotomy revisited

Contrary to the generalization in Table ??, NCIs and NPIs do not always show systematic behaviors cross-linguistically. For example, Korsah Murphy 2017 Ga show

that negative-sensitive items in Gã behave like NCIs, but cannot be used as fragment answers (see also CollinsEtAl2017 on Ewe and Hiraiwa2019 on Okinawan).

Negative-sensitive items in Bùlì, a Mabia (Gur) language spoken in Ghana, also exhibit a mixed behavior, but their distribution is different from those in Gã and Ewe, as shown in Table 2. They can appear in pre-negative subject position, patterning with NCIs in this respect, but they pattern with NPIs in that they are allowed in non-negative contexts, cannot be used as fragment answers, and are licensed long-distance (note that Bùlì lacks a straightforward counterpart of *almost* and hence modifiability of negative-sensitive items cannot be tested). Thus, Bùlì presents yet another counterexample to Valduví's generalization.

Fix!

Table 2: Cross-linguistic Variations

	NCI	NPI	Spanish	English	Gã	Bùlì
Non-negative	*	✓	*	✓	*	✓
Pre-negative	✓	*	✓	*	✓	✓
Modifiability	✓	*	✓	*	*	N/A
Fragment Answer	✓	*	✓	*	*	*
Long-distance	*	✓	*	✓	*	✓

Adopting and extending the framework of CollinsPostal2014 and CollinsEtAl2017, we will show that the apparently mysterious mixed behavior of negative-sensitive items in Bùlì can be explained by articulating an unary-NEG structure and syntax of reduplication.

### 3 Negative-sensitive items in Bùlì

#### 3.1 Morphosyntax of negative-sensitive items in Bùlì

Before examining each diagnostic test in Bùlì, let us first detail morphosyntactic properties of negative-sensitive items in Bùlì (see Akanlig-Pare2005, Akanlig-Pare2014).

Negative-sensitive items in Bùlì come in two varieties, a form based on reduplication of a noun class (NC) pronoun *wa/di/ka/ku/bu* and a suffix *-i* (e.g. *wāā-(i)*) (*wāā-i* ‘anyone’) (hereafter *i*-suffixed reduplicated noun class pronouns: Table 3) and one based on reduplication of an indefinite ordinary noun (e.g. *nur* *nur* ‘anyone/any person’) (hereafter reduplicated indefinite nominals: Table 4)<sup>1</sup>. In

<sup>1</sup>We assume that a long vowel is purely phonological, but it could be an independent morpheme

nominal reduplication, just as in all compounds, coda of the preposed stem is deleted and hence partial reduplication results.

Table 3: Negative-sensitive Items in Bùlì

NC	Wh	NSI	Universal/FC	Existential	Relativizer
wa	wà-nà	wāā(-i) wāā-ī	wāā-ī mééna	wāā-ī	-wāā-ī
di	dì-nà	dīi(-i) dīi-ī	dīi-ī mééna	dīi-ī	-dīi-ī
ka	kà-nà	kāā(-i) kāā-ī	kāā-ī mééna	kāā-ī	-kāā-ī
ku	kù-nà	kūū(-i) kūū-ī	kūū-ī mééna	kūū-ī	-kūū-ī
bu	bù-nà	būū(-i) būū-ī	būū-ī mééna	būū-ī	-būū-ī

Table 4: Reduplicated Indefinite Nominals in Bùlì

	Indefinite	NSI
<i>person</i>	núr	núr núr
<i>child</i>	bíík	bíí bíík
<i>hen</i>	kpiāk	kpiā kpiāk
<i>house</i>	yér	yér yér

Examples (3) illustrate the use of these expressions with negation.<sup>2</sup>

(3) Bùlì

- a. Mí àn nyā wāā(-i) wāā-ī ā.  
 1SG NEG see NC-i NC-i SFP  
 ‘I did not see anyone.’

with its own function. We also leave open the source of the mid-tones for these items, as independent noun class pronouns have low tones.

<sup>2</sup>The sentence-final particle *ā* (also realized as *yā* or *wā* phonetically) appears post-object position in negative and question sentences. But it never appears when the object is followed by an adjunct.

- (i) Bùlì  
 Mí àn nyā wāā(-i) wāā-ī (\*ā) dèlā (\*ā).  
 1SG NEG see NC-i here NC-i here SFP  
 ‘I did not see anyone here.’

We assume it is more like a conjunct/disjunct marker and not a negative particle of a bipartite negation structure, unlike Ewe (see CollinsEtAl2017). See Section 4.

- b. Mí àn nyà núr núr á.  
 1SG NEG see person person SFP  
 'I did not see anyone.'

Each of the morphemes (*wa/di/ka/ku/bu*) in Table 3 is a noun class pronoun. This is illustrated in the following example with *wa*.<sup>3</sup>

- (4) Bùlì  
 àtìm nyà àmòàk, àlégè, mí àn nyǎ wà.  
 Atim see.PERF Amoak but 1SG NEG see NC  
 'Atim saw Amoak, but I did not see him.'

Following HiraiwaEtAl2017, we assume that actual (in)definiteness of noun class pronouns is marked by tone and that the suffix *-i* is for marking indefiniteness SOME. This makes sense because *-i* also appears in existential quantifiers and relativizers.

- (5) Bùlì  
 Mí nyá wāā-í.  
 1SG see NC-i  
 'I saw someone.'

- (6) Bùlì  
 àtìm nyà [nùrú-wāā-í àlē dà mángò lă].  
 Atim see person-NC-i c buy mango Dem  
 'Atim saw the person who bought a mango.'

Reduplication is obligatory for negative-sensitive items (11a)–(11b). Without reduplication, *waa-i* functions as an existential quantifier that is not negative-sensitive (11c)–(11d).

- (7) Bùlì
- a. \* Mí nyá wāā(-í) wāā-í.  
 1SG see NC-i NC-i  
 'I saw someone.'
  - b. Mí àn nyá wāā(-í) wāā-í á.  
 1SG NEG see NC-i NC-i SFP  
 'I didn't see anyone.'

---

<sup>3</sup>We leave it open whether the pronoun *wa* itself in (4) is a noun class pronoun or a noun class marker with a null pronoun [<sub>NCP</sub> *wa* [<sub>NP</sub> Ø]].

- c. Mí nyá wāā-ī.  
1SG see someone  
'I saw someone.'
- d. Mí àn nyá wāā-ī ā.  
1SG NEG see someone SFP  
'I didn't see someone/anyone.'

With this in mind, let us examine syntactic distribution of negative-sensitive items in Bùlì.<sup>4</sup>

Each of the morphemes (*wa/di/ka/ku/bu*) in Table 3 is a noun class pronoun. This is illustrated in the following example with *wa*.<sup>5</sup>

- (8) Bùlì  
 àtím nyà àmòàk, àlègè, mí àn nyá wà.  
 Atim see.PERF Amoak but 1SG NEG see NC  
 'Atim saw Amoak, but I did not see him.'

Following HiraiwaEtAl2017, we assume that actual (in)definiteness of noun class pronouns is marked by tone and that the suffix *-i* is for marking indefiniteness SOME. This makes sense because *-i* also appears in existential quantifiers and relativizers.

- (9) Bùlì  
 Mí nyá wāā-ī.  
 1SG see NC-i  
 'I saw someone.'

---

<sup>4</sup>There is another form *bà bāā-ī*, which can only be used in plural noun class pronouns and expresses a partitive meaning 'some of X'.

- (i) Bùlì
- a. Mí nyá bà/\*wà bāā-ī.  
1SG see NG.PL NC.PL-i  
'I saw some of them.'
  - b. \*Mí nyá wà/bà wāā-ī.  
1SG see NC NC-i  
'I saw some of them.'

<sup>5</sup>We leave it open whether the pronoun *wa* itself in (8) is a noun class pronoun or a noun class marker with a null pronoun [<sub>NCP</sub> *wa* [<sub>NP</sub> Ø]].

(10) Bùlì

- àtìm nyà [nùrú-wāā-ī àlē dà mágò lǎ].  
 Atim see person-NC-i c buy mango Dem  
 'Atim saw the person who bought a mango.'

Reduplication is obligatory for negative-sensitive items (11a)–(11b). Without reduplication, *waa-i* functions as an existential quantifier that is not negative-sensitive (11c)–(11d).

(11) Bùlì

- a. \* Mí nyá wāā(-ī) wāā-ī.  
 1SG see NC-i NC-i  
 'I saw someone.'
- b. Mí àn nyá wāā(-ī) wāā-ī ā.  
 1SG NEG see NC-i NC-i SFP  
 'I din't see anyone.'
- c. Mí nyá wāā-ī.  
 1SG see someone  
 'I saw someone.'
- d. Mí àn nyá wāā-ī ā.  
 1SG NEG see someone SFP  
 'I didn't see someone/anyone.'

With this in mind, let us examine syntactic distribution of negative-sensitive items in Bùlì.<sup>6</sup>

Is the text being reduplicated here?

---

<sup>6</sup>There is another form *bà bāā-ī*, which can only be used in plural noun class pronouns and expresses a partitive meaning 'some of X'.

(i) Bùlì

- a. Mí nyá bà/\*wà bāā-ī.  
 1SG see NG.PL NC.PL-i  
 'I saw some of them.'
- b. \* Mí nyá wà/bà wāā-ī.  
 1SG see NC NC-i  
 'I saw some of them.'

### 3.2 Are negative-sensitive items in Bùlì NCIs or NPIs?

Both *i*-suffixed reduplicated noun class pronouns and reduplicated indefinite nominals in Bùlì are negative-sensitive items because they cannot appear in positive declarative clauses. On the other hand, the fact that they can be licensed in questions indicate that they are so-called weak NPIs (VanDerWouden1997).

(12) Bùlì

- a. Mí \*(à̄n) nyā wāā(-i) wāā-i ā.  
1SG NEG see NC-i NC-i SFP  
'I did not see anyone.' (\*Positive declaratives)
- b. Fí nyá wāā(-i) wāā-i ā:  
2SG see NC-i NC-i SFP  
'Did you see anyone?' (Question)

(13) Bùlì

- a. Mí \*(à̄n) nyà nū́r nū́r ā.  
1SG NEG see person person SFP  
'I did not see anyone.' (\*Positive declaratives)
- b. Fí nyá nū́r nū́r ā:  
2SG see person person SFP  
'Did you see anyone?' (Question)

As expected, being weak NPIs, they cannot appear as fragment answer, in response to a question like *Who did you see?* or *Did you see anyone?*<sup>7</sup>

(14) Bùlì

- \* Wāā(-i) wāā-i (ā).  
NC-i NC-i SFP  
'No one.' (\*Fragment Answer)

(15) Bùlì

- \* Nū́r nū́r (ā).  
person person SFP  
'No one.' (\*Fragment Answer)

<sup>7</sup>There are some speakers who allow for such fragment answers in Bùlì (Abdul-Razak Sulemana p.c.). Those speakers may be interpreting the NPIs in (10)–(11) as NCIs (see Section 4). They also tend to require the sentence-final particle *a* in fragment answers, while the first author and other speakers find fragment answers ungrammatical, irrespective of *a*, as (10)–(11) show. We leave the issue for future research.

Finally, they can be licensed by a non-clausemate negation.

- (16) Bùlì  
 Mí kàn pōlī/wēēnī [àyǐn mí nyá wāā(-i) wāā-ī ā].  
 1SG NEG think/say C 1SG saw NC-i NC-i SFP  
 ‘I don’t think/will not say that I saw anyone.’ (Long-distance licensing)
- (17) Bùlì  
 Mí kàn pōlī/wēēnī [àyǐn mí nyá nūr nūr ā].  
 1SG NEG think/say C 1SG saw person person SFP  
 ‘I don’t think/will not say that I saw any person.’  
 (Long-distance licensing)

All of these diagnostics corroborate evidence that negative-sensitive items in Bùlì are weak NPIs. However, they also pattern with NCIs in that they can appear in subject position (followed by sentential negation).

- (18) Bùlì  
 Wāā(-i) wāā-ī àn chěng Wiāgā.  
 NC-i NC-i NEG go Wiaga  
 ‘No one went to Wiaga.’ (Pre-negative subject position)
- (19) Bùlì  
 Núr nūr àn chěng Wiāgā.  
 person person NEG go Wiaga  
 ‘No one went to Wiaga.’ (Pre-negative subject position)

In the discussion below, we offer a theoretical analysis for the apparently mixed behaviors in the framework of **CollinsPostal2014**. We focus on *i*-suffixed reduplicated noun class pronouns, as basically the same analysis is available for reduplicated indefinite nominals, too.

## 4 Syntax of pre-negative subject NPIs and (partial) reduplication

**CollinsPostal2014** and **CollinsEtAl2017** propose that NPIs come in two varieties. One has a unary-NEG structure and the other has a binary-NEG structure.

- (20) a. [[NEG1 SOME] NP] (strong NPIs/NCIs)

- b. [[NEG1 [NEG2 SOME]] NP] (weak NPIs)

They observe that *ke*-NPIs in Ewe are NCIs/strong NPIs because they cannot be licensed in questions or at long-distance. However, unlike *any*-NPIs in English, they can appear in subject position (with sentential negation).

- (21) a. Ewe (CollinsEtAl2017)

Ame ádéké mé-vá nyě-afé-me o.  
person any NEG1-come 1SG-house-inside NEG2

'Nobody came to my house.' (Pre-negative subject position)

- b. English (CollinsEtAl2017)

\* Anybody didn't come to my house. (Pre-negative subject position)

They argue that the reason why the English sentence in (21b) is ungrammatical, is because it has the derivation in (22). NEG1 raises to sentential negation position out of the NPI, while the remnant NPI raises to subject position.

- (22) [DP2 [<NEG1> SOME] body] did NEG1 [VP come <DP2> to my house]

Here, the higher occurrence of NPI DP2 c-commands the raised copy of NEG1. Thus, they propose condition (23), which prohibits such a structural relation.

- (23) The Remnant Raising Condition (CollinsEtAl2017)

If  $M = [DP [D<NEGx> SOME] NP]$ , then no occurrence of  $M$  c-commands an occurrence of  $NEGx$ .

In contrast, they propose that *ke* is a copy of the original NEG and argue that the Ewe example in (21a) does not violate (23) "since a copy NEG, cNEG1 rather than <NEG1> fills the original position of NEG1 in DP2. In effect, the copy NEG allows the structure to avoid a violation of (23), just as resumptive pronouns in certain English cases allow a structure to avoid a violation of island constraints." (CollinsEtAl2017). The derivation of (21a) is given in (24).

- (24) Ewe (CollinsEtAl2017)

[Ame ádéké] mé-vá <DP2> nyě-afé-me o.  
person SOME-cNEG1 NEG1-come 1SG-house-inside NEG2  
'Nobody came to my house.' (Pre-negative subject position)

But their analysis is challenged by Bùlì. This is because there is no copy NEG, cNEG1 in the original position of NEG1 in DP2 that avoids a violation of (23).

- (25) Bùlì  
 Wāā(-i) wāā-ī àn chěng Wīāgā. (=14))  
 NC-i NC-i NEG go Wiaga  
 ‘No one went to Wiaga.’ (Pre-negative subject position)

Nevertheless, we argue that CollinsEtAl2017’s analysis, once we articulate substructures that reduplication targets in Bùlì, provides a principle account for the apparently mysterious behavior. To see this, first recall that NPIs in Bùlì are necessarily reduplicated.

- (26) Bùlì  
 Mí àn nyǎ wāā(-i) wāā-ī ā.  
 1SG NEG see NC-i NC-i SFP  
 ‘I did not see anyone.’
- (27) Bùlì  
 Mí nyá wāā-ī.  
 1SG see NC-i  
 ‘I saw someone.’

Without reduplication, *NC-i* only has an existential quantifier reading. We assume the following structure for existential quantifiers such as ‘somebody’. Bùlì is head-initial and NCP raises to the specifier of DP (see HiraiwaEtAl2017 for relevant discussion on DP-internal word order).

- (28) [DP [NCP [NC wāā]] [D -i] t<sub>NCP</sub>] (Existential quantifier)

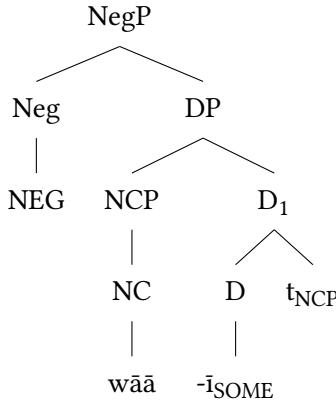
This, in turn, suggests that reduplicated indefinite noun class pronouns in Bùlì contain an odd number of NEGs when they behave as an NCI, co-occurring with sentential negation, while they contain an even number of NEGs when they behave as a weak NPI. Suppose, then, that an unary-NEG structure can be articulated as in Table 5. Note that NEG structurally c-commands SOME. We assume that NEG is a null affix and undergoes affix-hopping to *waa*.

Now, suppose reduplication targets NCP before affix-hopping. Then we get the partially reduplicated structure in (29).

- (29) [[NCP wāā] [NegP NEG wāā -i]]

If reduplication targets DP *before* affix-hopping, then we get the partially reduplicated structure in (30).

Table 5: A binary-NEG structure in Bùlì



check subscript in tree

- (30) [[<sub>DP</sub> wāā -ī] [<sub>NegP</sub> NEG wāā -ī]]

Both (29) and (30) have an unary-NEG structure. This makes them an NCI and explains why they can appear in pre-negative subject position in Bùlì ((14)–(15)). This is because NEG is deeply embedded within the reduplicated indefinite noun class pronouns, just as such subject NPIs are grammatical in English (the data cited from Boeckx2000 and Boskovic2002AMove).

- (31) a. [Pictures of anyone/\*someone] did not seem [ *t* to be available].  
 b. [Pictures of any linguist] seem to no psychologist [ *t* to be pretty].

On the other hand, suppose that reduplication *after* affix-hopping of Neg to NC. Then we get partially reduplicated structure (32) or (33), depending on whether NCP or DP is targeted by reduplication.

- (32) [[<sub>NCP</sub> wāā-NEG ] [<sub>NegP</sub> NEG wāā -ī]]

- (33) [[<sub>DP</sub> wāā-NEG -ī] [<sub>NegP</sub> NEG wāā -ī]]

As a result, both (32) and (33) have a binary-NEG structure. Assuming that the two NEGs cancel out each other (CollinsEtAl2017, Watanabe2004), they behave as weak NPIs. Thus, interaction of reduplication and affix-hopping of NEG correctly explains why NPIs in Bùlì can be licensed by questions ((8)–(9)) and non-clause-mate negation ((12)–(13)), but are unable to occur as fragment answer ((10)–(11)).

One piece of supporting evidence that *i*-suffixed reduplicated noun class pronouns have a binary-NEG structure comes from the fact that they can be replaced by an existential quantifier *waa-i*.

- (34) Bùlì  
 Fí nyá wāā-ī ā:  
 2SG see NC-*i* SFP  
 ‘Did you see anyone?’ (Question)
- (35) Bùlì  
 Mí kàn pōlī/wēēnī àyīn mí nyá wāā(-ī) wāā-ī ā.  
 1SG NEG think/say c 1SG saw NC-*i* NC-*i* SFP  
 ‘I don’t think/will not say that I saw anyone.’ (Long-distance licensing)
- (36) Bùlì  
 Wāā(-ī) wāā-ī àn chéng Wiāgā.  
 NC-*i* NC-*i* NEG go Wiaga  
 ‘No one went to Wiaga.’ (Pre-negative subject position)

## 5 Parameter

CollinsEtAl2017 propose a parameter that allows/disallows binary-NEG (Type 2) nominal NPIs. English allows, but Ewe doesn’t allow, a binary-NEG structure. They also suggest an implicational relation that a language having binary-NEG nominal NPIs will also have unary-NEG nominal NPIs.

Bùlì allows an unary-NEG structure underlyingly, and a binary-NEG structure is derived through reduplication by copying NEG. Thus, our analysis provides support for the implicational relation in that a binary-NEG structure is structurally based on a unary-NEG structure. We leave it for future research to investigate whether there are other types of NPIs in Bùlì. Reduplication is not an unfamiliar strategy for forming negative-sensitive items cross-linguistically. It is observed in Vietnamese, Ainu, Yoruba, Malagasy, etc. (Haspelmath1997). According to Haspelmath1997, however, no languages that use partial reduplication were in his sample. Bùlì, in this respect, offers a case of NPIs with partial reduplication.

One remaining important question is what reduplication is employed for. For one thing, reduplication is required in order to obtain two copies of NEG required for weak NPIs. From this viewpoint, it is important to point out that universal

quantifiers/free choice items in Bùlì do not rely on reduplication (see Table 4). For another thing, **Haspelmath1997** conjectures that reduplication is used to express distributive plurality. We concur with his conjecture. In Bùlì, the form *waa-i* consists of a singular noun class pronoun and an indefiniteness marker. This is necessarily interpreted as singular. But NPIs are often considered to yield distributivity. It is not unnatural to think that reduplication is used (as a means of domain widening (**KadmonLandman1993**) to yield required distributivity.

To summarize, we have proposed the following ingredients that compose NPIs in Bùlì.

(37) Ingredients of NPIs in Bùlì

- a. Indefiniteness SOME: *-i* (with noun class pronouns) or  $-\emptyset$  (with ordinary nouns)
- b. Negation NEG:  $-\emptyset$
- c. Neg-copying: reduplication
- d. Distributivity/Plurality: reduplication

## 6 Conclusion

Reduplicated indefinite noun class pronouns and reduplicated nominals in Bùlì behave as NPIs in that they can appear in non-negative contexts and can be licensed at a long-distance. On the other hand, they behave as if they were NCIs in that they can appear in pre-negative subject position. We have argued that the mixed behavior can be explained if we articulate an unary/binary-NEG structure proposed in **CollinsPostal2014** and **CollinsEtAl2017** and understand which part of the structure reduplication targets.

There are remaining questions that must be answered in future studies. First, the existential quantifier *wāā-ī* cannot come in subject position in the absence of sentential negation (cf. (7c)). Instead, it is necessary to nominalize *waa-i* by prefixing *a-*.

(38) Bùlì

- a. Wāā-ī \*(àn) chéng Wiāgā.  
NC-i NEG go Wiaga  
'Someone didn't go to Wiaga/No one went to Wiaga.'
- b. ā-wāā-ī chéng Wiāgā.  
HM-NC-i go Wiaga  
'Someone went to Wiaga.'

It is also interesting and puzzling that the sentence-final particle *a* is missing when the NPI appears in subject position. We don't have a good account for these at this moment.

Second, NPIs in Bùli, while they can be licensed in questions, are not licensed in conditionals (see CollinsEtAl2017 for a similar observation in Ewe).

- (39) Bùli
- \* Fì dàn nyà wāā(-i) wāā-i, wēēnī àtè n̄ wōm.  
 2SG COND see NC-i NC-i tell C 1SG hear  
 'If you see anyone, please let me know.' (Conditional)

In contrast, an existential quantifier *waa-i* can also appear in conditionals. This discrepancy needs to be explained, too.

- (40) Bùli
- Fì dàn nyà wāā-i, wēēnī àtè n̄ wōm.  
 2SG COND see NC-i tell C 1SG hear  
 'If you see anyone, please let me know.' (Conditional)

## Abbreviations

C	complementizer	PERF	perfective
FC	free choice	PL	plural
HM	human	SFP	sentence-final particle
NC	noun class pronoun	SG	singular
NEG	negation		

## Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements to come here. We are grateful to Chris Collins, Kimiko Nakanishi, Abdul-Razak Sulemana, and two anonymous reviewers for helpful discussions. Ken Hiraiwa's research is funded by the JSPS Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (C) (No. 16K02645).



# Chapter 2

## Focus marking strategies in Igbo

Mary Amaechi<sup>a</sup> & Doreen Georgi<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Potsdam

In this paper we describe the encoding of term focus in the Benue-Kwa language Igbo. Next to a discussion of focus marking devices that are available in the language and their different pragmatic usage conditions, we highlight the fact that the observed subject / non-subject split in focus encoding provides novel insights into the scope and generality of the focus marking generalization put forward in **FiedlerEtAl2010**. We argue that the distribution of focus markers is not solely regulated by pragmatic principles (viz. to avoid a default topic interpretation especially for subjects), but also by the syntactic position of the focus marker, its morphological realization conditions as well as a ban on too local subject movement.

### 1 Introduction

This paper investigates focus marking in the Benue-Kwa language Igbo spoken in Southern Nigeria. Focus is an information-structural category; the constituent in focus is the most salient part of an utterance in a given discourse and signals the presence of alternatives that are relevant in the discourse for the interpretation of an utterance (see among others **Jackendoff1972**, **Dik1997**, **Rooth1985**, **Krifka2008**, **ZimmermannOnea2011**). We will be concerned with focus marking in Igbo, i.e. the linguistic encoding of focus by grammatical devices (**FiedlerEtAl2010**). Furthermore, we will concentrate on the term focus (viz. the encoding of focus on arguments and adjuncts) and leave verb and VP-focus for future research. Igbo is of interest for the study of focus marking because it is relatively rich in morphosyntactic devices that are available to mark focus, and to a certain extent the different strategies encode different pragmatic types of focus. But apart from describing the focus marking system of Igbo, the main aim of this paper is to



highlight a subject / non-subject asymmetry in focus marking. While such a split is cross-linguistically common, especially in (West) African languages, as documented in FiedlerEtAl2010 and Kalinowski2015, the Igbo split provides (partial) counter-evidence for the generalization on focus marking splits put forward in FiedlerEtAl2010. They observe that in contrast to non-subject focus, subject focus must always be marked in some way in West African languages. In Igbo, however, subjects cannot and sometimes must not be marked for focus by the usual devices applied in the language. This shows that the focus marking asymmetry between subjects and non-subjects can also have other sources than the pragmatic one identified in FiedlerEtAl2010 (viz. the avoidance of a topic interpretation for subjects). We argue that the asymmetry in Igbo results from an interaction of the syntactic position of the focus marker in the left periphery, a morphological realization condition on the focus head and a general constraint on too local movement (anti-locality).

Before we can investigate focus marking strategies in Igbo, we must first introduce the basics of its morphosyntax (see e.g. GreenIgwe1963, Carrel1970, Manfredi1991, Mbah2006, Emenanjo2015). The basic word order in a thetic sentence in Igbo is SBJ-V-DO-ADJ(uncs), see (1):

- (1) Ôbí hùrù Ædá n'-áhiá.  
Obi saw Ada P-market  
'Obi saw Ædá at the market.'

The language does not have verb-argument-agreement but rich derivational morphology (Uwalaka1988). The case system is highly reduced with Nom-Acc distinctions in some personal pronouns. Igbo is a tone language that distinguishes high (á), low (à) and downstep (ā) tone; these encode both grammatical and lexical distinctions. We assume the clause-structure in (2) for an information-structurally neutral sentence with a transitive verb (AmaechiGeorgi2019):

- (2) [CP C [TP DP<sub>ext</sub> [T' V+v+T [vP <DP<sub>ext</sub>> ['\_v <v> [VP <V> DP<sub>int</sub> ]]]]]]

The verb moves successive-cyclically through v to T (lower copies indicated in angled brackets); the structurally highest argument (the external argument) undergoes obligatory EPP-movement to SpecT (see AmaechiGeorgi2019 for empirical arguments for these assumptions).

The paper is structured as follows: In §2 we introduce the various focus marking strategies of Igbo and document which pragmatic types of focus they can express. §3 shows that the term questions follow the same encoding strategies as focus, with an interesting difference with respect to (local) subjects. §4 discusses

the subject/non-subject marking asymmetry and its relevance for cross-linguistic generalizations on focus marking splits. In §5 we briefly summarize our analysis of a (subset of the) focus marking strategies that derives the observed asymmetry.

## 2 The expression of focus in Igbo

In this section we will describe how arguments and adjuncts can be focused in Igbo. We summarize both the morphosyntactic means as well as the rough discourse-pragmatic use of the various strategies.<sup>1</sup>

### 2.1 Morphosyntactic properties

Focus on arguments and adjuncts in Igbo can be expressed in a number of ways that we will refer to as the in-situ strategy, the ex-situ strategy, and the cleft strategy, respectively. We address each of them in turn. In the in-situ strategy, the element that is focused occurs in its canonical position, i.e. in the position it also occupies in an all new / out-of-the-blue-sentence (where the corresponding constituent alone is not in focus), see (3); the focused elements are represented in small caps in the English translations. Hence, there is no syntactic marking of focus in the sentence; there is also neither a morphological indication of focus (e.g. by a focus marker) nor phonological highlighting (e.g. by stress) of the focused constituent. This strategy is used frequently in answers to questions and it is only available for non-subjects, i.e. direct objects, adjuncts (see 3) as well as indirect objects, but not for (local) subjects without further changes (see below):

---

<sup>1</sup>A subset of the basic morphosyntactic facts has already been described in the mostly descriptive literature on Igbo, although with a focus on question formation, see e.g. Goldsmith1981, Ikekeonwu1987, Uwalaka1991, Mmaduagwu2012, Nwankwegu2015. However, these sources do not provide a systematic overview, do not take into account all focus marking devices or pragmatic usage factors; and most importantly, they do not offer a detailed study and analysis for the observed subject / non-subject split in focus marking. The data in this paper come from one of the authors, Mary Amaechi, who is a native speaker of Igbo. The data have been verified with several other native speakers, see the acknowledgements.

(3) In-situ focus (Igbo)

- a. Context: Ôbí hùrù ònyé n'-áhiá? – ‘Who did Obi see at the market?’  
Ôbí hùrù Àdá n'-áhiá.  
Obi saw Ada P-market  
‘Ôbí saw Àdá at the market.’ DO focus
- b. Context: Ôbí hùrù Àdá n'èbée? – ‘Where did Obi see Ada?’  
Ôbí hùrù Àdá n'-áhiá.  
Obi saw Ada P-market  
‘Ôbí saw Àdá AT THE MARKET.’ ADJ focus
- c. \* Context: Ônyé hùrù Àdá n'-áhiá? – ‘Who saw Ada at the market?’  
Ôbí hùrù Àdá n'-áhiá.  
Obi saw Ada P-market  
‘Ôbí saw Àdá at the market.’ SBJ focus

It is possible to focus (local) subjects in-situ after all if they are accompanied by a focus-sensitive particle like *sòósò*, ‘only’:

- (4) Sòósò Ôbí hùrù Àdá n'-áhiá.  
only Obi saw Ada P-market  
‘Only Ôbí saw Àdá at the market.’

In the ex-situ strategy, see (5), the focused phrase occurs in the clause-initial position and must be followed by the morpheme *kà* (which we will identify as a focus marker below). Note that this strategy is also not available for (local) subjects: they occupy the clause-initial position anyway due to Igbo’s SVO word order, but they cannot co-occur with the morpheme *kà*. For all other XPs (direct objects, indirect objects, adjuncts) the construction is available.

(5) Ex-situ focus (Igbo)

- a. Àdá \*(kà) Ôbí hùrù \_\_ n'-áhiá.  
Ada FOC Obi saw P-market  
‘Ôbí saw Àdá at the market.’ DO focus
- b. N'-áhiá \*(kà) Ôbí hùrù Àdá \_\_.  
P-market FOC Obi saw Ada  
‘Ôbí saw Àdá AT THE MARKET.’ ADJ focus
- c. \* Ôbí (kà) hùrù Àdá n'-áhiá.  
Obi FOC saw Ada P-market  
‘Ôbí saw Àdá at the market.’ SBJ focus

In the ex-situ strategy focus is thus indicated both syntactically (by a change in the position of the focused element) as well as by morphological means (i.e. by the marker *kà* that follows the focused constituent).

Finally, all grammatical functions in Igbo can be focused by means of a cleft structure. Clefts in Igbo are biclausal: The main clause is introduced by the invariant 3sg nominative personal pronoun *ó* followed by the copula *bù* (that usually occurs in identificational copula clauses). It embeds a CP in which focus is expressed by the ex-situ strategy, i.e. the focused XP occurs in clause-initial position and is followed by the morpheme *kà*, see (6). Note that subjects can also be focused in a cleft, even though they can still not co-occur with *kà* in the embedded clause, so we seem to be dealing rather with the in-situ strategy for focused subjects in the embedded clause of a cleft. Note that in contrast to what the English translation might suggest, these clefts in Igbo do not include a relative clause (see Amaechi 2018 for arguments).

(6) Cleft strategy (Igbo)

- a. *Ó bù Àdá kà Òbí hùrù nà mìgbède.*  
it cop Ada FOC Obi saw P evening  
'It is Àdá that Òbí saw in the evening.' do focus
- b. *Ó bù nà mìgbède kà Òbí hùrù Àdá.*  
it cop P evening FOC Obi saw Ada  
'It is in the evening that Òbí saw Àdá.' ADJ focus
- c. *Ó bù Òbí hùrù Àdá nà mìgbède.*  
it cop Obi saw Ada P evening  
'It is Òbí who saw Àdá in the evening.' SBJ-cleft

The cleft strategy is the only way in Igbo to focus (local) subjects without the need of an additional focus-sensitive particle.

The ex-situ and the cleft strategy can both be applied long-distance (i.e. the focused element can occur in a structurally higher clause than the one to which it is thematically related) and to all grammatical functions, see (7) and (8) for object and subject focus, respectively (the same holds for adjuncts and indirect objects):

(7) Long ex-situ focus (Igbo)

- a. *Àdá \*(kà) Úchè chèrè nà Òbí hùrù \_\_ n'-áhiá.*  
Ada FOC Uche think that Obi saw P-market  
'Úchè thinks that Òbí saw Àdá at the market.' long do focus

- b. Òbí kà Úchè chèrè (\*nà) — hūrū Àdá n'-áhiá.  
Obi FOC Uche think (\*that) saw Ada P-market  
'Úchè thinks that Òbí saw Àdá at the market.' long SBJ focus
- (8) Long clefts (Igbo)
- a. Ọ bụ Òbí kà Úchè chèrè nà Àdá hùrù \_\_\_\_.  
it COP Obi FOC Uche thinks that Ada saw  
'It is Òbí that Úchè thinks that Àdá saw.' long DO focus
- b. Ọ bụ Àdá kà Úchè chèrè (\*nà) — hūrū Òbí.  
it COP Ada FOC Uche thinks (\*that) saw Obi  
'It is Àdá that Úchè thinks saw Òbí.' long SBJ focus

Note that while local subjects cannot be focused with the ex-situ strategy, long-distance ex-situ focus is possible for subjects, see (7). Crucially, however, a long ex-situ focused subject must be accompanied by the marker *kà*, just like (locally and non-locally) focused non-subjects in the ex-situ construction. This observation also provides evidence against the traditional view put forward in the descriptive literature on Igbo that the presence or absence of the morpheme *kà* is driven by the grammatical function of the focused constituent: non-subjects combine with *kà*, while subjects cannot do so. Since long-distance displaced focused subjects have to take *kà* as well, the decisive factor cannot be grammatical function; see below for an alternative proposal.

## 2.2 Semantic focus types

Focus expresses the presence of contextually salient alternatives that are relevant for the interpretation of a sentence (Rooth1985, Rooth1992). According to ZimmermannOnea2011 additional semantic and pragmatic factors can come into play and lead to different types of foci. Bazalgette2015 distinguishes between simple focus (that has no function besides triggering alternatives) and pragmatic focus that is associated with implicatures (e.g. contrast, exclusivity) or with presuppositions (e.g. existence, exhaustivity). VanDerWal2016 summarizes (and criticizes) tests used in the literature to identify these semantic and pragmatic focus types. We applied some of these tests to Igbo and checked which of the three syntactic focus strategies can be used in which function. The result is summarized in Table 1 (✓ means that the strategy can be used to express this focus type, \* means that the strategy cannot be used in this context). In fact, the various syntactic strategies differ in the focus type they (preferably) express.

Table 1: Usage of the focus strategies

test/function	in-situ	ex-situ	cleft
answer to question (new information)	✓	✓	✓
alternative question (selective focus)	✓	✓	*
negative response (non-presuppositional)	✓	✓	*
compatible with ‘only’ (exhaustive)	✓	✓	✓
compatible with additive ‘also’ (non-exhaustive)	✓	*	*
compatible with scalar ‘even’ (non-exclusive)	✓	*	*
numeral interpreted as ‘exactly’ in focus	*	✓	✓
exclusive/exhaustive co-text	*	✓	✓
non-exhaustive co-text	✓	*	*
correction (of a previous statement)	✓	✓	✓

Space limitations prevent us from illustrating all contexts; we provide two below:

Multicols environment removed due to the significant asymmetry between the two columns below.

(9) Correction:

a. Statement A:

Òbí hùrù Àdá n'-áhíá.

Obi saw Ada P-market

‘Òbí saw Àdá at the market.’

b. Corrective statement B:

i. Mbà, Òbí hùrù Úchè n'-áhíá.

no Obi saw Uche P-market

‘No, Ò. saw ÚCHÈ at the market.’ *in-situ*

ii. Mbà, Úchè kà Òbí hùrù n'-áhíá. *ex-situ*

iii. O bu Úchè kà Òbí hùrù n'-áhíá. *cleft*

(10) Numeral interpretation:

a. Ọ nà-ènwétá ótù ndè n'ónwá.

3SG IPFV-NMZL.have.DIR one million P-moon

‘S/he earns (at least) one million a month.’ in-situ, upward entailing

- b. Ótù ñdè    kà ó    nà-ènwétá                n'ónwá.  
     one million FOC 3SG IPFV-NMZL.have.DIR P-moon  
     'S/he earns (exactly) one million a month.' in-situ, not upward entail.

c. Ø    bù    ótù ñdè    kà ó    nà-ènwétá                n'ónwá.  
     3SG COP one million FOC 3SG IPFV-IPFV.have.DIR P-moon  
     'S/he earns (exactly) one million a month.' cleft, not upward entailing

Thus, we can see that the morphosyntactic focus marking strategies differ in the semantic / pragmatic focus types they express.

### 3 Focus marking in questions and the morpheme *kà*

As noted in **FiedlerEtAl2010**, focus marking is very often not only found in focus constructions but also has other functions. Indeed, the same marking strategies described above for focus can also be found in constituent questions in Igbo. This is not surprising in light of the fact that wh-elements are usually considered to be inherently focused (see e.g. **Rochemont1986**, **Horvath1986**, **Tuller1986**, **Beck2006**, **Haida2007**). When asking a constituent question in Igbo, the corresponding wh-pronoun can either remain in-situ, be moved to the clause-initial position and must then be followed by the morpheme *kà*, or can be expressed by means of a cleft, see 11 for subject and direct object questions:<sup>2</sup>

### (11) Question formation strategies (Igbo)

- a. Ônyé hùrù Àdá n'-áhiá.  
who saw Ada P-market  
'Who saw Àdá at the market?' wh-SBJ, in-situ

b. Òbí hùrù ònyé n'-áhiá.  
Obi saw who P-market  
'Who did Òbí see at the market?' wh-DO, in-situ

c. \* Ônyé kà hùrù Àdá n'-áhiá.  
who FOC saw Ada P-market  
'Who saw Àdá at the market?' wh-SBJ, ex-situ

<sup>2</sup>In addition to the strategies listed in 11, Igbo also has other means to form questions, especially the so-called *kèdú*-construction, which shows different properties than the constructions discussed here and is also syntactically very different, viz. potentially a biclausal structure with an embedded relative clause, see among others Ikekeonwu1987, Ndimele1991, Nwankwegu2015, Ogbulogo1995, Amaechi2018.

- d. Ônyé \*(kà) Òbí hùrù n'-áhiá.  
who FOC Obi saw P-market  
'Who did Òbí see at the market?' wh-do, ex-situ
- e. Ọ bụ́ ònyé hùrù0 Àdá.  
it COP who saw Ada  
'Who saw Ada?' wh-SBJ, cleft
- f. Ọ bụ́ ònyé \*(kà) Òbí hùrù.  
it COP who FOC Obi saw  
'Who did Òbí see?' wh-do, cleft

As in focus constructions, the ex-situ strategy is not available for (local) subjects since they can never co-occur with the morpheme *kà*, see (11a). In contrast to (non-wh) focused subjects, however, the in-situ strategy is available for wh-subjects even without the addition of a focus-sensitive particle, see (11c). Note further that question formation via the ex-situ and the cleft strategy can also apply long-distance, just like in focus constructions (cf. 7 and 8).

With this background on the formation of term focus and questions, we can discuss the nature of the morpheme *kà* that occurs with non-subjects in the ex-situ and the cleft construction as well as with long-distance ex-situ / clefted subjects. We identify this morpheme as a focus marker (a claim also made in Osuagwu2015) for the following reasons. It is clear that this marker is related to the expression of focus: first, it occurs in sentences that express focus, viz. focus constructions and questions, but not in other Ā-dependencies such as topicalization or relativization; and second, it is syncretic to the disjunction 'or' in Igbo (cf. Nwachukwu1987), viz. it expresses alternatives. Furthermore, we can exclude that *kà* is a focus-sensitive particle because it is obligatory in the contexts where it can occur (i.e. with non-subjects), it cannot associate with the focused XP at a distance (see 12, *kà* must be left adjacent to the focused constituent), and unlike *kà*, focus-sensitive elements like 'only' precede their associate (see 4).

- (12) \*Ònyé Obi (kà) hùrù (kà) — nà mìgbèdè (kà) n'-áhiá (kà).  
who Obi (FOC) saw (FOC) P evening (FOC) P-market (FOC)  
'Who did Òbí see in the evening at the market?'

We conclude that *kà* is a focus marker. Moreover, we also have evidence that it does not realize an inherent focus feature of focused constituents, but rather an element in the left periphery of the clause: It cannot attach to in-situ focus / wh-elements, cf. (3) and (11b), even though these also bear a focus feature (by assumption). We interpret these results such that *kà* is the exponent of a functional

head related to focus (= Foc<sup>0</sup> in the split CP-system, cf. Rizzi1997 et seq.). This view is supported by the observation that *kà* linearly follows the focused element (occupying SpecFoc) and attaches to whole phrases, not just to single words that are in focus: in (13b) only *áhiá* ‘market’ is focused, but *kà* cannot attach to it; rather, it has to follow the pied-pied PP that includes the focused element.

- (13) a. Òbí saw Àdá at the old farm.  
b. Mbà, [PP N'-áhiá (\*kà) ochie ] kà Òbí hùrù Àdá.  
no P-market (FOC) old FOC Obi saw Ada  
'No, Òbí saw Àdá at the old MARKET.'

#### 4 The subject / non-subject asymmetry in focus marking

Even though the extensive study of focus marking strategies has shown that languages differ remarkably in how exactly focus is encoded, some cross-linguistic generalizations have emerged. In a study of about 20 West African languages (Kwa, Gur, Chadic), FiedlerEtAl2010 find a marking asymmetry between focused subjects and non-subjects in all of the investigated languages; SF = subject focus, NSF = non-subject focus:

- (14) Marking asymmetry FiedlerEtAl2010
- a. NSF cannot or need not be marked syntactically.
    - i. NSF is restricted to in-situ positions (Bole, Duwai, Bade, Ngamo)
    - ii. NSF is not restricted to in-situ positions (Gur; Kwa; Hausa)
  - b. SF must be marked.

In a nutshell, FiedlerEtAl2010 found that while focus marking for non-subjects is excluded or optional, subject focus must obligatorily be marked by morphological devices (focus markers) and/or syntactic means (displacement, clefting). SkopeteasFanselow2010 formulate this as an implicative relation: “If a non-canonical structure occurs with focus on non-subjects, it is expected to occur with focus on subjects too.”. FiedlerEtAl2010 also propose an explanation for the observed asymmetry: They assume that subjects in sentence-initial position are by default interpreted as topics; in order to overwrite this default interpretation in a focus context “the focused subject will have to be realized in a non-canonical structure, for instance, by means of special morphological markers and/or syntactic reorganization” (p.249).

Igbo is not included in FiedlerEtAl2010's (FiedlerEtAl2010) study of focus marking in West African languages, but it is very interesting to consider it in light of their findings since it provides us with new insights into the scope of the generalization. Given that Igbo also exhibits subject / non-subject asymmetries in focus marking, as outlined in the previous sections, it is a typical West African language with respect to (14). As for non-subject focus, Igbo also behaves like other West African languages: focus marking is optional here since focused elements can stay in-situ (no syntactic displacement, no morphological focus marking by *kà*; alternatively, morphological and/or syntactic encoding is possible in the ex-situ and the cleft strategies. Subject focus marking does not entirely behave as expected according to (14). Focused (local) subjects actually do not have to be focus marked at all: they can never co-occur with the focus marker *kà*; moreover, at least (local) wh-subjects can occur in-situ without being syntactically displaced in any obvious way, but still the sentence is grammatical. In fact the ex-situ strategy (with displacement and the focus marker) is excluded for (local) subjects. Hence, focus marking on (wh-)subjects is *not* obligatory in Igbo. The only context in which (local) subjects must be 'marked' for focus is when they are not wh-pronouns and they occur in-situ: this is only possible if a focus-sensitive particle is added, see (4). In any case, (local) focused subjects are incompatible with focus movement (ex-situ strategy, also involved in cleft formation) and morphological focus marking. The generalization for Igbo seems to be a bit more abstract: focus on subjects needs to be encoded morphosyntactically *in some way* to indicate the difference to an information-structurally neutral affirmative sentence as in 1 where the subject is interpreted as the (default) topic. "In some way" includes not only the regular focus marking strategies (not available for local subjects) but also the occurrence of focus-sensitive particles and wh-morphology (the form of the wh-subject pronoun differs from the non-wh person pronouns and the interrogative sentence with a wh-subject thus differs and can be distinguished from an affirmative sentence). If wh-morphology also counts as a focus marking device, we can explain why wh-subjects can occur in the in-situ strategy without further focus marking devices, while focus subjects in the focus construction need to be accompanied by a focus particle to be able to occur in this construction: without the focus-sensitive particle attached to the subject, the sentence would be morphosyntactically indistinguishable from an affirmative sentence as in (1). Thus, FiedlerEtAl2010's (FiedlerEtAl2010) generalization also holds for Igbo if focus marking comprises more than syntactic displacement and the use of focus markers.<sup>3</sup>

Single quotation markers are for linguistic meaning only

<sup>3</sup> Aboh2007 offers a different view on the 'exceptionality' of wh-subjects: wh-elements are not

## 5 On the source of the marking asymmetry in Igbo

In the previous section we came to the conclusion that focused subjects in Igbo can occur in the in-situ strategy without any focus marking (at least there is no regular encoding by syntactic displacement or attachment of a focus marker), even though there should be a pressure to encode especially subjects according to the **FiedlerEtAl2010** generalization. In this section we will briefly outline what the reason for the absence of focus marking with (local) subjects is. For more details, derivations and supporting empirical arguments, the reader is referred to **AmaechiGeorgi2019**, where we develop an optimality-theoretic analysis of the marking asymmetry for questions in Igbo. We have argued above that the focus marker *kà* realizes the left-peripheral head  $\text{Foc}^0$ . We content that in the ex-situ strategy and in clefts the focused non-subject constituent undergoes syntactic movement to  $\text{SpecFoc}$ ; that the observed displacement involves movement rather than base-generation is supported by the fact that the dependency exhibits the hallmarks of movement (island-sensitivity, reconstruction).

- (15) [ $_{\text{FocP}} \text{XP}_{\text{foc}} [_{\text{Foc'}} \text{Foc}^0 [_{\text{TP}} \dots [_{\text{vP}} \dots \text{t}_{\text{XP}} ]]]]$

We can derive the absence of the focus marker *kà* in the in-situ strategy by the following assumption: The head  $\text{Foc}^0$  is morphologically realized as *kà* only if an overt (phonologically realized) XP occupies  $\text{SpecFoc}$ , otherwise  $\text{Foc}^0$  remains silent (= contextual allomorphy). Since nothing moves (overtly) to  $\text{SpecFoc}$  in the in-situ construction,  $\text{Foc}^0$  is not phonologically realized. In the ex-situ (and cleft) strategy where focused non-subjects move to  $\text{SpecFoc}$ , they surface at the left periphery of the clause and are accompanied by *kà* (we will not say more about the structure of clefts here). Since movement for non-subjects is optional, we get optionality in the ex-situ/cleft vs. in-situ strategy. The question that remains is why local focused subjects cannot co-occur with *kà*, not even optionally. We suggest that this is because they have to stay in the canonical subject position  $\text{SpecT}$  (see **AmaechiGeorgi2019** for empirical evidence); i.e., unlike focused non-subjects, they cannot undergo movement to the minimal  $\text{SpecFoc}$  position. And since no XP occupies  $\text{SpecFoc}$ , the head  $\text{Foc}^0$  has to remain silent. One piece of evidence for this claim is the observation that subject movement in Igbo triggers a tonal reflex on the verb, but constructions with a preverbal focused subject do not exhibit this tonal reflex. That subjects cannot undergo local movement has been claimed for other languages as well (see among many others **Chomsky1986**,

---

necessarily inherently focused. The ex-situ ones are in focus, while the ‘in-situ’ ones (moved to a low focus position) are not focused at all and hence do not receive focus marking.

Agbayani1997 on the Vacuous Movement Hypothesis in English). A prominent (but not the only) account for this immobility of subjects is that the movement from SpecT (the canonical subject position in Igbo) to the local SpecFoc position would be too short, which is excluded by an anti-locality constraint (see Abels2003, Grohmann2003, Erlewine2016 and references cited there for this concept). Long-distance movement of the subject (as well as clause-bound movement of non-subjects) covers a greater distance and does not qualify as too short by the definition of anti-locality. Non-subjects and long-distance moved subjects can thus occur in the ex-situ construction (where they trigger the realization of Foc<sup>0</sup>) as *kà* without any problems.

## 6 Conclusions

We have described the focus marking strategies in Igbo and the pragmatic contexts in which they are used. Igbo exhibits a subject / non-subject split in focus marking; however, this split partially challenges the generalization by FiedlerEtAl2010■ on other West African languages because local focused subjects in Igbo cannot be marked by the regular focus marking devices. We provide an analysis according to which the occurrence of the focus marker *kà* is not solely regulated by pragmatic principles, but rather by an interplay of its high syntactic position, morphological realization rules and a ban on too local subject movement.

## Abbreviations

ADJ	adjunct	SBJ	subject
DO	direct object	v	(main) verb

glosses:

COP	copula	NMLZ	nominalizer
DIR	directional	P	preposition
FOC	focus marker	SG	singular
IPFV	imperfective		

Can be merged

IMPF changed to IPFV and SU to SBJ for consistency with Leipzig Glossing Rules.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Jeremiah Nwankwegu, Gerald Nweya, Basil Ovu, Chioma Eweama and Francis Umunnakwe for verification of the data. For valuable comments we are grateful to the audiences at “Quirks on subject extraction” (Singapore, August 2017), ACAL 49 (Michigan, March 2018), “Referential and relational approaches to syntactic asymmetries” (Stuttgart, March 2018), the syntax colloquium at the University of Frankfurt, and especially to Malte Zimmermann and Katharina Hartmann. This research is funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), Collaborative Research Centre SFB 1287, Project C05 (Georgi).

# Chapter 3

## Focus marking and dialect divergence in Líkpākpálñ (Konkomba)

Abraham Kwesi Bisilki<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Education, Winneba, Ghana

In this paper, I discuss some salient aspects of focus marking in Líkpākpálñ (Mabia (Gur), Niger-Congo) spoken mainly in the northern parts of Ghana. I compare focus marking in two dialects of Líkpākpálñ, namely, Línàjùúl and Líchából. I treat the notion of focus from the angle of Dik1981. Data draws from a multi-source corpora digitally recorded from stimuli-based elicitations and other natural discourse settings. Following the analysis of data, the study reveals that the use of focus particles constitutes the significant means of focus marking in Líkpākpálñ as that focus strategy is shared by both Línàjùúl and Líchából. Again, a common feature for both Línàjùúl and Líchából is that there are syntactic restrictions for the distribution of various focus particles in the sentence. On the question of divergences, I note that sentence final vowel lengthening also assumes a focus function with respect to Línàjùúl. Also, the focus markers in Línàjùúl (ní, nká and a sentence final focus particle of varied phonological shapes) differ in form from the focus markers, lé and lá in Líchából. Finally, I suggest that the focus marking differences between Línàjùúl and Líchából possibly stems from the fact that Línàjùúl appears to have innovated a complex focus system vis-à-vis focus marking in the Mabia languages of Ghana. However, more thorough investigation into focus marking in other dialects of Líkpakpahn and Mabia is recommended. This will help establish whether the Línàjùúl case is really an isolate system or not.

### 1 Introduction

The phenomenon of information structure (IS) and packaging is a sub-domain of linguistics that has received a generous scale of attention from linguists globally. This is as exemplified in works such as Lambrecht1994, Krifka2007 Krifka2007;

Krifka2008 perhaps?



Second  
Olawsky  
1999 ref-  
erence  
deleted.  
They ap-  
pear to  
be the  
same  
work

SchwabeWinkler2007, Ameka2010, ZimmermannOnea2011; and VanPutten2014■

Often central in studies of information structure and packaging is the subject of focus. Paradoxically, the more that linguists try to put questions to rest regarding focus phenomena in languages, the more insatiable this topic area becomes. This observation is accentuated by the ever-increasing volumes of focus-related analyses and counter-analyses that continue to delve into the topic. For instance, the focus status of the post verbal *la* in Dagbani (a Gur, Niger-Congo language spoken in the Northern Region of Ghana) has been the source of a series of somewhat varying analyses as reflected in (Olawsky1999), Hudu2012 and Issah2013Focus.

VanPutten2016, similarly, notes the difficulty in attempting to find exhaustive explanations to questions bothering on focus phenomena. She makes this observation in relation to the elusive task that linguists face in trying to determine, for instance, when and why focus marking is resorted to in non-obligatory focus languages.

What the foregoing situation clearly suggests is that the need for systematic investigations into the attributes of focus will continually remain relevant for linguists, even with regard to the so-called well-researched languages. Likpākpálñ is a Gur (or Mabia) language, whose speakers are mostly found in the Northern Sectors of Ghana. Speakers of Likpākpálñ natively term themselves as Bikpakpaam, instead of the exonym, Konkomba, which has often been used as a shared tag for both the people and their language. Some specific areas of their location include Saboba District in the Northern Region, Nkwanta South and Nkwanta North Districts in (Northern) Volta (see map in appendix I for the distribution of Likpākpálñ speakers in Ghana). In other contexts, these areas of the Bikpakpaam location are alternatively termed as the North-Eastern parts of Ghana (Schwarz2009). SimonsFennig2017, SimonsFennig2018, in Ethnologue: Languages of the world, estimate the Likpākpálñ speaker population in Ghana at 831000, besides other speakers reported of in the Republic of Togo.

Likpākpálñ has a significant native speaker population, yet one of the very little-researched languages of Ghana. In the view of (Schwarz2009), the need for basic grammatical descriptions of Likpākpálñ is still very high. This paper contributes to filling the basic knowledge gap on Likpākpálñ by investigating some aspects of focus marking in the language. The study introduces into the literature new data on focus constructions in Mabia. It does so from a comparative perspective by drawing data from two clan dialects of Likpākpálñ, namely, Līnàjùúl and Líchából, respectively. The following questions form the crux of this article:

- (i) What are the linguistic strategies for coding focus in Likpákpaln?
- (ii) What are the functions of focus in Likpákpaln?

- (iii) What are the focus marking similarities and differences between Línàjùúl and Líchából?
- (iv) To what extent does the focus marking system of Líkpākpálñ characterise the focus typology in the Mabia family?

## 2 Some basic grammatical features of Líkpākpálñ

As already indicated, Líkpākpálñ is a Mabia language. It is further defined as belonging to the Gurma sub-cluster of the Oti Volta family (Naden1988, SteeleWeed1966). This section briefly explicates some linguistic features of Líkpākpálñ. This will provide a prerequisite for understanding discussions on focus marking in subsequent sections of the article.

Líkpākpálñ is a word order language, with the SVO typology as generally known of Mabia and Kwa languages (Schwarz2009). A simple sentence in Líkpākpálñ can have the pattern SVO, SV or SVA, depending on whether the verb is transitive or intransitive. See the sentences in (1) below:

The combining character for acute accent is not being displayed properly with some glyphs (e.g. velar nasal /ŋ/ or open-mid back rounded /ɔ/).

Is something missing in this sentence?

- |     |   |       |
|-----|---|-------|
| (1) | a. Ú-ŋóó yá júú bī-sáá.<br>CL-goat DEF bite.PFV CL-food<br>'The goat bit the food.' | [SVO] |
|     | b. Ú-bú mɔ́r.<br>CL-child cry.IPFV<br>'The child is crying.'                        | [SV]  |
|     | c. Nákujá wáá ímbámɔ́m.<br>Nakuja dance.PFV well<br>'Nakuja danced well.'           | [SVA] |

For purposes of focus, a non-subject constituent can be placed sentence initially, but the subject and the verb will remain in the fixed order of SV in the base clause as in (2b) below:

- |     |  |                    |
|-----|--|--------------------|
| (2) | a. Mánótí kɔ́r ú-kúló.<br>Name slaughter.PRF CL-fowl<br>'Manoti has slaughtered a fowl.' | [canonical clause] |
|-----|--|--------------------|

- b. Ú-kúló nká Mánótí koꝝr.  
CL-fowl FOC Manoti slaughter.PRF  
'It is a fowl that Manoti slaughtered.'

In a ditransitive construction, the indirect object precedes the direct object as can be seen in (3a-b) below:

Please identify *ti* in (3a)

- (3) a. Nákujà tí Mánótí ú-kúló.  
give.PRF Manoti CL-fowl  
'Nakuja has given Manoti a fowl.'  
b. Ú-nìmpū wár mē bī-sáá.  
CL-woman cut.PRF 1SG.OBJ CL-food  
'A woman has served me food.'

Líkpákpálñ has an embryonic noun class system based predominantly on class affixes, which also bear number semantic. Although prefixes dominate the class markers, some nouns have obligatory prefix-suffix pairs. Fewer nouns take only suffixes, which become the basis for their class assignment. Prefixes have corresponding class pronouns.

The morphology of Líkpákpálñ nouns is basically agglutinating. Verbs, on the other hand, have a poor morphology as there are only a handful of aspectual markers on the verb. Tense is a function of preverbal particles. Three tones, high (‘), mid (‘) and low (ꝝ) are identified in Líkpákpálñ (SteeleWeed1966).

The language has an initial orthography (which is reasonably phonemic) that was fashioned based on the Líchából dialect. Any sequence of two vowels (whether representing a long vowel or not) in a word is treated as two syllable nuclei that may have the same or varying pitch levels (BisilkiAkponglo-Nartey2017). Tone is generally not marked in the orthography of Líkpákpálñ. I, nonetheless, mark tone in this study as tone has both lexical and grammatical functions in the language and is quite relevant in an analysis such as this.

### 3 The current study in perspective

The notion of focus has been defined in many, related ways. VanPutten2016 maintains that focus is the part of a sentence that carries the common-ground update. The information that is a shared knowledge between both the speaker and the listener in an interlocution constitutes the common-ground. As speakers

communicate, they try to increase their common-ground or shared knowledge by introducing and linking new information to this common ground. The new information that is introduced becomes an update to the common-ground and, for that matter, the focal point. My reservation(s) with VanPutten2016's definition, though, is whether or not focus is always solely underpinned by what is necessarily new information. Indeed, Dik1981 argue that for the purpose of stressing the importance of a certain information or reactivating it in the addressee's memory, a speaker may place focus on such information s/he (the speaker) knows is not new to the addressee. Similarly, SkopeteasEtAl2006 hold that a given element may be focused. A given element, in the view of SkopeteasEtAl2006 refers to information that the speaker believes the addressee already knows.

Consequently, in the present analysis, I treat the notion of focus from the point of view of Dik1981 and as subsequently in Dik1997. Focus represents what is relatively the most important or salient piece of information in a given discourse-context (Dik1981). Relatedly, a constituent of focus function is assumed to present information bearing upon the pragmatic information difference between the speaker and the addressee as perceived by the speaker. The foregoing conceptualisation of focus replays in Dik1997 when he sees the focal information in a linguistic expression to be the most essential or salient in a given communicative context and considered by the speaker to be the most relevant for the listener to integrate into his/her pragmatic information. From this point of view, one can say further that a focus construction is a type of sentence or utterance in which a particular constituent (i.e. the focal constituent) is placed in relative prominence or saliency by setting it off from the rest of the sentence or utterance in one way or another (Boadi1974, DrubigSchaffer2001; MarfoBodomo2005). In terms of the expressive devices or strategies that languages deploy in marking focus, Dik1981 stipulates four ways:

- i. Intonational prominence- extra stress or higher tone
- ii. Constituent order
- iii. Special focus markers
- iv. Special focus constructions

Focus operation in different languages may use some or all of these devices in different combinations. Along a functional line, Dik1981 typologises focus broadly as either -contrast or +contrast. -Contrast focus is also termed as compleutive or informative focus whereas +contrast focus, which is also known as

contrastive focus. **Akrofi-Ansah2014, Schwarz2009, SkopeteasEtAl2006** further delineate into finer-grained focus types such as selective, expanding, restricting, replacive and parallel. Focus is compleptive (-contrast) when it serves merely to emphasize (or make prominent) a particular constituent, but contrastive when it contrasts the information of a constituent with that of another. The Líkpákpálñ (Línajúúl) sentences in (4b) and (5b) illustrate compleptive and contrastive focus respectively.

- (4) a. Ú-ninjà wé bì-trí bá?  
CL-man DEM PROG-push Q  
'What is this man pushing?'
- b. Ú bì-trí lóól lé.  
3SG.SBJ PROG-push car FOC  
'He is pushing a car.'
- (5) a. Ú-ninjà bì-trí ú-táán.  
CL-man PROG-push CL-horse  
'A man is pushing a horse.'
- b. Dábí, lóól nká ú bì-trí.  
No, car FOC 3SG.SBJ PROG-push  
'No, he is pushing a car.'

The discourse function of focus in (4b) is simply to lay emphasis or prominence on a car as the constituent bearing the relatively most salient information in the predication. On the other hand, the focus in (5b) serves to show the contrast that it is a car (and not a horse) that the man is pushing.

Focus can also be broad or narrow depending on whether it is assigned to the entire sentence (or its truth value) or a particular constituent or complement (Dik1981). See the Líkpákpálñ (Líchából) sentences in (6) and (7):

- (6) a. Bá njá-ní?  
Q happen-PROG  
'What is happening?'
- b. Bū-süb lé lír.  
CL-tree FOC fall.PRF  
'A tree has fallen.'
- (7) a. Bá ú trí?  
Q 3SG.SBJ push.IPFV  
'What is s/he pushing?'

- b. Ní yí loጀr lá.  
3SG is car FOC  
'It is a car.'

(6b) presents an instance of broad focus where the entire sentence serves to fill the information gap in the knowledge of the listener (addressee). (7b), however, exemplifies narrow focus as a car is the only focus bearing constituent in the sentence. More on broad and narrow focus can be found in Hyman2010.

Additionally, this study also draws on VanPutten2016 in the light of the contrast between a focused or in focus constituent, on one hand and, on the other hand, a focus-marked constituent. The former is applicable to a situation where an element that constitutes the most crucial point of information is only so understood pragmatically without the use of overt linguistic devices to doing so. The latter case has to do with the situation where a focal element is explicitly marked for focus by any of a possible range of linguistic devices that may have a focus configuration function in a language. Another fact worth noting is that focus-marked elements are invariably in focus whilst an element can be in focus without necessarily being focus-marked. In the present discussion, my concentration is mainly on cases of focus-marked constituents as the presentation and analysis of data will show.

As already indicated (in §1), the current analysis investigates some aspects of focus marking in Likpākpálñ from a dialectal perspective. This is in the sense that the study does not only describe focus marking in Likpākpálñ, but it also compares two actively spoken dialects of the language (Linàjùúl and Lichából), with respect to the phenomenon in question. There has been a preliminary attempt at investigating focus in Likpākpálñ by Schwarz2009. Nevertheless, Schwarz2009's study was limited to only Lichából. Focus marking in Lichából is here being re-examined and compared with focus marking as pertains in Linàjùúl (which has no such previous study).

Beyond the agenda of providing linguistic description of Likpākpálñ, the immediate motivation for this study is also anchored on two issues. The first is to help settle some questions regarding the curiosity that is engendered by a constant, but cursory refrain in the few works on Likpākpálñ that the language is highly split into numerous clan dialects (Schwarz2009; Hasselbring2006). Although scholars have often been quick to point out that Likpākpálñ sub-divides into numerous dialectal forms along clan units, the state of linguistic convergence or divergence between the supposed variants of Likpākpálñ remains unexplored or, at best, little-researched. Secondly, there are currently proposals being

made by the Líkpákpál speaker community in Ghana to re-design an orthography that will have a more unified outlook for various speakers of the language. I am privy to this initiative as a native speaker of Líkpákpál and member of the speaker community. Such a practical need further calls for studies that potentially reveal how similar or different the dialects of Líkpákpál spoken by various Bikpakpaam clan groupings are. I look at focus marking in Línàjùúl (see §5) first, then focus marking in Líchából (see §7) before proceeding to compare the focus systems of the two in §8.

## 4 The data method

This study is based mainly on primary data sets collected from the native speakers of Línàjùúl in the Nkwanta North District of (Northern) Volta and Líchából speakers of Saboba in the Northern Region of Ghana. I used both observation (including participant and non-participant types) and direct elicitation techniques for data collection. The direct elicitation involved four consultants (two Línàjùúl speakers and two Líchából speakers; one male and one female for each dialect) purposively selected. The observation data covered varied communicative domains such as during arbitration proceeding at the chief's court, religious ceremonies and family interactions.

With the direct elicitations, the prompts were a-10-minute video-clip, on one hand, and picture stimuli (some original; others adapted from SkopeteasEtAl2006) on the other hand. Chelliah2013 attests to the advantage in using non-linguistic stimuli tasks such as video-clips and photographs. As Chelliah2013 puts it, “Non-linguistic stimuli have several advantages: speakers do not require special training to understand the tasks and responses are clearly linked to stimuli and are, therefore, less ambiguous.” The video and picture stimuli were designed based on local content in the Líkpákpál speaker environment. For instance, I took pictures of different animals at different times, pictures of people engaged in different activities (e.g., during block laying at a construction site, cooking, etc.). The essence of using familiar stimuli was to avoid the situation where culturally foreign stimuli could lead to consultant confusion. A further benefit from the use of stimuli was that by taking the responses of Línàjùúl and Líchából speakers to the same prompts allowed for making easy contrasts between the two dialects (see Majid2012).

Using the information structure questionnaire [QUIS] (SkopeteasEtAl2006) as a guide, I also sometimes posed content questions to which consultants responded based on the stimuli. The use of question-answer pairs as a standard

heuristic for determining focus constituents is also well established in the literature (see for example Dik1978, Krifka2007, Watters1979). Utterances were recorded with a digital video device. With the aid of Elan (4.9.4), the recorded speech was segmented and transcribed for analysis.

Please check whether this is the right Krifka work that you'd like cite or not

## 5 Focus marking in Línàjùúl

Focus marking in Línàjùúl requires the use of special particles dedicated for marking foci elements. The use of particles for focus marking is also sometimes described as morphological (Childs1997, HartmannZimmermann2009, Schwarz2009, VanPutten2016). Rochemont1986 equally demonstrate the use of prosodic resources and syntactic means, respectively in focus assignment. The focus particles in Línàjùúl include: *ń*, *ńká* and a sentence final focus particle that assumes varying shapes, depending on the sentence final consonantal involved (this is discussed in detailed in §5.3).

This was listed as FlemmingRochemont  
Please verify if something by Flemming is not missing.

### 5.1 Focus particle *ń*

The particle, *ń* is employed to focus-mark constituents in the utterances of Línàjùúl speakers. It is worthy to note that the *ń* particle anticipatorily undergoes homorganic assimilation, giving it other variants as *mń* and *ŋꝝ* in speech:

- (8) a. i. *ŋmá tári kíyá?*  
Q shout.IPFV like.that  
'Who is shouting like that?'
- ii. *Mákinyì mń bì-síí ū-pú.*  
Name FOC PROG-insult poss-wife  
'Mákinyì is insulting his wife.'
- b. *Ú-nímpū ꝝ kpá kí-nyoꝝk.*  
CL.SG-woman FOC have CL.SG-mouth  
'A woman is talkative (in a quarrel).'
- c. *Ú-boꝝr ń yì kí-tìŋ.*  
CL.SG-chief FOC own.HAB CL.SG-land  
'The chief owns the land.'
- d. *Bímá ń yór ń-dàñ.*  
3PL.SBJ FOC take.PFV drink  
'They took (to take away) the drink.'

From the examples in (8), it can be noted that *ń* is used to mark focus on sentence initial subjects. *Ń* in its sentence initial subject focus constructions is restricted to the immediate post subject slot before the canonical verb. Apart from simple subject constituents (nouns and pronominals) as shown in (8) above, *ń* can also be used to place focus on complex subject NPs as the sentences in (9) reveal:

- (9) a. Ú-ŋóó mén wé ń júú lí-núúl.  
CL.SG-goat red DEM FOC bite.PRF CL.SG-yam  
'This red goat bit the yam.'
- b. Bī-nínpíí-b bī-tí-ká-nà mí bán ń-dàn.  
CL.PL-elder-CL.PL 3PL-LOC-sit-DEF FOC want.IPFV CL-drink  
'The elders sitting over there want a drink.'

*Ń* as a focus particle cannot be placed in an intervening position in complex focal NPs, but comes immediately after the last complement of the complex NP (i.e., it is placed at the right most edge of the focus phrase [FocP]). The subject focus role of Líkpákpaln *ń* makes it analogous to a similar subject focus marker (*ń*) in Dagbani and Gurene (Dakubu2003; Issah2013Focus; IssahSmith2018; Akrofi-Ansah2014).

The Dagbani and the Gurune data in (10a) and (10b) respectively confirm this observation:

- (10) a. Dagbani  
Abu ń dá gbáj máá.  
Abu FOC buy.PFV book DEF  
'Abu bought the book.' (IssahSmith2018)
- b. Gurene  
A-ní n zàa nyε bùdáá lá.  
a-WH FOC yesterday see.PFV man DEF  
'Who saw the man yesterday?' (Dakubu2003)

The deletion of *ń* from a sentence in Línàjùúl, nevertheless, does not render such a construction ungrammatical. As such, any of the sentences in (9) above can be re-presented grammatically as in (11), except that these sentences become neutral in their contextual meanings:

- (11) a. Ú-ŋóó mén wé júú lí-núúl. [neutral]  
CL.SG-goat red DEM bite.PRF CL.SG-yam  
'This red goat bit the yam.'

Please verify if this is the correct Issah (2013)

Please check the accuracy of the currently working reference links

- b. Bī-nínpíi-b bī-tī-ká-nà bán ní-dàn. [neutral]  
 CL.PL-elder-CL.PL 3PL-LOC-sit-DEF want.IPFV CL-drink  
 'The elders sitting over there want a drink.'

Ń cannot be used to mark focus on non-subject constituents. As earlier indicated, an attempt to re-position ń in any part of the sentence different from the immediate post canonical subject slot results in ungrammaticality of the sentence. This accounts for the unacceptable forms in (12):

- (12) a. \* Ú-boꝝr yì ń kī-tìŋ.  
 CL.SG-chief own.HAB FOC CL.SG-land  
 'The chief owns the land.'  
 b. \* Bímá yór ní-dàn ń.  
 3PL.SBJ take.PFV drink FOC  
 'They took (to take away) the drink.'  
 c. \* Ń Bímá yór ní-dàn.  
 FOC 3PL.SBJ take.PFV CL-drink  
 'They took (to take away) the drink.'

Ń equally serves both +contrastive and -contrastive focus functions. The specific context of utterance determines whether ń is used for emphasis or to code a meaning of contrast.

## 5.2 The particle, nká as a focus marker

Ńnká is used to focus-mark only fronted non-subject constituents. In this case, a focus phrase (i.e. comprising both the focus particle and the focal constituent) must be placed extra-clausally. Extracting the focus particle only or the focal constituent only leads to a distortion of the grammaticality of the sentence. Although Líkpákpálñ is not a Kwa language, the requirement that nká necessarily collocates with its focal target in the extra-clausal position falls in with Ameka2010's (Ameka2010) observation that in some Kwa languages, both a focus particle and the focalised element must be placed together in a fronted position. Ńnká can be used to focus-mark objects as the sentences in (13) show:

- (13) a. Ú-nímpū ká ɳáándé tī-kpēn né.  
 CL-woman sit.IPFV boil.IPFV CL-soup FOC  
 'A woman is preparing soup.'

- b. Tí-kpēn nká ú-nímpū ká njáandé.  
CL-soup FOC CL-woman sit boil.IPFV  
'A woman is preparing soup.'
- c. Ú bī-nyɔ́ñ nká-dám. [canonical]  
3SG.SBJ PROG-take CL-drink  
'S/he is taking (drinking) a drink.'
- d. N-dám nká ú bī-nyɔ́ñ.  
CL-drink FOC 3SG.SBJ PROG-drink  
'S/he is taking (drinking) a drink.'

Also, the sentences (14b) and (14d) below provide instances of nká marking focus on an adjunct and an adpositional respectively.

- (14) a. Kónjà lán fúnī dín. [canonical]  
Name will arrive today  
'Kónjà will arrive (here) today.'
- b. Dín nká Kónjà lán fú-nī.  
Today FOC Konja will arrive-  
'Konja will arrive (here) today.'
- c. Ú bī-kɔ́ñr kī-sáá-k nē. [canonical sentence]  
3SG.SBJ PROG-weed CL-farm in  
'S/he is weeding inside the farm.'
  - d. Kī-sáá-k nē nká ú bī-kɔ́ñr.  
CL-farm-CL in FOC 3SG.SUBJ PROG-weed  
'S/he is weeding in the farm.'

With reference to the sentences cited so far, one would also realize that it stands to say that fronting constituents for focus assignment with nká does not trigger a resumptive pronoun in the base clause. Syntactically, nká takes the slot immediately after its focal host, but must also precede the subject argument in the canonical clause position, which can either be a pronominal or a lexical subject.

Unlike the n̄ focus marker, a deletion of the nká particle from a focus construction renders it ungrammatical, unless such a deletion is concomitant with a re-positioning of the focal constituent in its base position (*in situ*). As such, (14b) and (14d) become ill-formed constructions as appear in (15a) and (15b) below:

- (15) a. \*Dín Kónjà lán fú-nī.  
Today Konja will arrive-LOC  
'Konja will arrive (here) today.'

Missing gloss for the final morpheme. LOC?

- b. \* Kī-sáá-k nē ú bī-kɔ́łr.  
 CL-farm-CL in 3SG.SUBJ PROG-weed  
 'S/he is weeding inside the farm.'

Nevertheless, (15a) and (15b) would have well-formedness if there were in situ object placement alongside the deletion of nká. Hence ,(15a) and (15b) as re-presented in (16a) and (16b) stand as grammatically correct sentences:

- (16) a. Kónjà lán fú-nī dín.  
 Name will arrive-LOC today  
 'Konja will arrive (here) today.'  
 b. Ú bī-kɔ́łr kī-sáá-k nē.  
 3SG.SUBJ PROG-weed CL-farm-CL in  
 'S/he is weeding inside the farm.'

Discourse contextually, it was observed that nká is mostly used for a contrastive focus function. It appears that when a non-subject constituent is to be focused -contrastively, a sentence final particle (discussed in §5.3) is preferred while the other way around calls for nká.

### 5.3 Sentence final focus particle

There is a phenomenon in Línàjùúl where a focus particle is placed sentence finally for the marking of focus, mostly, on post verbal constituents. This is as shown in the sentences in (17) below:

- (17) a. Ú jóó lí-kú-l lé.  
 3SG hold.IPFV CL-hoe-CL FOC  
 'S/he is holding a hoe.'  
 b. Ú-pìi bī-ŋmáán bī-sū-b áá-fár ré.  
 CL-sheep PROG-chew CL-tree-CL GEN-leaves FOC  
 'A sheep is chewing leaves of a tree.'  
 c. Ñtáánáá chá kī-sáá-k ké.  
 Name go.IPFV CL-farm-CL FOC  
 'Ñtáánáá is going to the farm.'  
 d. Ñtáánáá gáá bī-sū-b bé.  
 Name cut.PRF CL-tree-CL FOC  
 'Ñtáánáá has cut a tree.'

- e. Ñtáánáá bī-ñjmán ñítúúm mé.  
Name PROG-chew beans FOC  
'Ñtáánáá is eating beans.'
- f. i. Chákún dɔ́lá?  
Cat be.lie where  
'Where is the cat lying?'
- ii. Chákún dɔ́lì-jà-l tàáb bé.  
Cat lie-IPFV CL-chair-CL under FOC  
'It is lying [under a chair]<sub>FOC</sub>'.

While é remains invariant in all instances of the sentence final focus particle, the consonants have varied, depending on the final consonant segment(s) in the sentence final word of the constituent in focus. This, therefore, means that the sentence final focus particle is constructed by retaining a sentence final consonant (where sentence final consonant refers to the word-final consonant before the focus particle) and adding é to it. One may then state that the shape of a sentence final focus marker in Línàjùúl is phonologically conditioned. The influence of phonological environment on the choice of focus particles is also found in Sissali (a sister Mabia language spoken in Upper West Ghana). Dumah2017 show that in Sissali, when a focal constituent ends in a consonant, né is used for focus while ré is used where such a constituent ends in a vowel. The following Sissali sentences in (18) from Dumah2017 illustrate the phenomenon:

(18) Sissali (Dumah2017)

- a. Gýinarji né ti /\*ré Dùmà sí gýnnì wùjíŋ.  
Today FOC Dùmá FUT learn lesson  
'Today (and not any other day) that Dùmà will learn a lesson.'
- b. Daarii ré/\*né ti yóbò tèŋ.  
Name FOC buy book  
'Daari (and not any other person) has bought a book.'

Please complete the missing glosses above.

The inappropriateness of \*ré in (18a) is because the focused constituent ends in a consonant and the reverse accounts for \*né in (18b). However, in the case of Línàjùúl, when a post verbal focal constituent ends in a vowel, a focus particle is not used. Instead, there is an increase in the duration/extralengthening of the final vowel (although this still requires an acoustic investigation to be more formally established).

The sentence final focus particle can be used to focalise both simple and complex non-subject constituents, including even entire VPs as can be seen from the examples in (17). (19) specifically illustrates VP focus with the sentence final focus particle.

- (19) a. Áá-jápúán ñáá bá?  
 GEN-son did Q  
 ‘What did your son do?’
- b. Ú jɔññ bī-sū-b bé.  
 3SG.SBJ climb.PFV CL-tree-CL FOC  
 ‘He [climbed a tree]<sub>FOC</sub>.’

In (19b), we see a sentence final particle, bē used to mark focus on an entire VP. The scenario is that the speaker (19a) saw the addressee (19b) knock her son (addressee’s son) on the head. This prompted the speaker’s question, leading to the addressee’s response (19b) in which the entire VP structure is in focus. It must also be reiterated that the sentence final focus particle mainly has a -contrast discourse function. Thus, it serves more to give relative emphasis or prominence to a particular constituent rather than to contrast.

Also, the non-use or the deletion of a sentence final focus particle does not make a sentence ungrammatical. In this sense, sentence final focus particles behave like particle n̄ discussed in §5.1. The sentences in (20) are a representation of (17a-b), except that they are now neutral forms.

- (20) a. Ú jóó lī-kú-l.  
 3SG hold.IPFV CL-hoe-CL  
 ‘S/he is holding a hoe.’
- b. Ú-pìi bī-ñmáán bī-sū-b áá-fár.  
 CL-sheep PROG.chew CL-tree-CL GEN-leaves  
 ‘A sheep is chewing the leaves of a tree.’

Thus, in (20) we find that the sentences with sentence final focus particle in (17a-b) are represented as grammatical forms without the focus markers.

## 6 Any combinatorial permissibility between the Línàjùúl focus particles

A careful analysis of the Línàjùúl focus particles affirm that, to a large extent, they have a complementary distribution in clauses or sentences. A co-habitation

of any two of the focus particles in the same clause or even respectively in conjunct clauses usually results in a grammatically weird form as can be seen in the examples in (21) below.

- (21) a. \* Chákún n̄ chú ú-námpúl l̄é.  
cat FOC catch.PFV CL-mouse FOC  
'A cat caught a mouse.'
- b. \* Kónjà n̄ pēn í-lík kē kūn kī-sáák k̄é.  
Name FOC borrow-PFV CL-money CONJ farm.PFV CL-farm-CL FOC  
'Kónjà borrowed money and used it to make a farm.'

(21a) is a simple clause while (21b) is a compound clause, yet a concurrent hosting of two focus particles is unacceptable in any of the cases.

## 7 Focus marking in Líchából

Two particles, lé and lá have been identified as the focus markers in Líchából (Schwarz2009). In Schwarz2009's study, emphasis was more on establishing the divergent status of lé and lá in the Líchából grammatical system. Schwarz2009 appears to have ended on the following key conclusions, *inter alia*:

- (i) Lé marks focus on constituents in the preverbal field while the realisation of focus on post-verbal constituents is the preserve of lá.
- (ii) Lé and lá have a mutually exclusive occurrence in a simple sentence.
- (iv) Both lé and lá are non-obligatory in sentence structures as their omission does not engender ungrammaticality in the sentence.

Much as I accede to Schwarz2009's arguments, one of my points of disagreement lies with his claim about the non-obligatoriness of lé and lá in the sentence (Schwarz2009). In my observation, it is only lá which is possibly non-obligatory in every context of its use as a focus particle. Lé, on the other hand, has an obligatory use in the case of certain pronominal subjects (which I tentatively typologize as strong, disjunctive pronouns) and also in a situation where a non-subject is placed sentence initial as data in (22) and (23) suggest. Furthermore, a new dimension that I offer in the present analysis is that lá can also be used to lay a special emphasis on the entire proposition of a clause, rather than on only constituents within the clause. This is illustrated in example (23).

## 7.1 Particle lé

When marking focus on a focal subject, both lé and the focused constituent are located within the canonical clause as can be seen in (22a), (22b), and (22c) respectively. However, when it is a non-subject focal constituent, both particle lé and a focalized element are fronted as in (22e):

- (22) a. Mákinyì lé bì-síí ū-pú.  
Name FOC PROG-insult his-wife  
'Mákinyì is insulting his wife.'
- b. Ú-píí lé kpá b-ūmó-b.  
CL.SG-woman FOC have CL.SG-mouth-CL  
'A woman is talkative (in a quarrel).'
- c. Úmáá lé nyún ní-dáán.  
3SG FOC drink.PFV CL-drink  
'He is the one who took a drink.'
- d. N wáá ú-píí. [canonical sentence]  
1SG.SBJ see.IPFV CL-sheep  
'I see a sheep.'
- e. Ú-píí lé ní wáá.  
CL-sheep FOC 1SG.SBJ see.IPFV  
'A sheep is what I see.'

Noteworthy is that whether in subject or non-subject focus, lé invariably occupies the immediate slot after the focal constituent as can be seen from the sentences (22). Lé is not placed in an intervening position within the complements of a focal constituent (i.e. in the case of a complex constituent), even when it is used for a narrow focus on only a part of the complex constituent, illustrated in (23). The question (23a) shows that the focus is narrowed to only nì-lé (two). Yet the placement of the lé focus marker (23b) remains positioned in the same place as would be the case if the entire NP, nì-tà nì-lé 'two tyres' were in focus:

- (23) a. nì-tà nìnjá pú?  
CL-tyre many spoilt.PFV  
'How many tyres got spoilt?'
- b. (nì-tà) nì-lé lé pú.  
CL-tyre two FOC spoilt  
'Two (tyres) got spoilt.'

Contrary to Schwarz2009, lé is found to be obligatory in certain focus conditions. This occurs when certain strong, disjunctive pronouns take the subject position and also when a non-subject constituent is moved to the left periphery. The examples (24) further illustrate the use of lé:

- (24) a. ú-píí      lé      ní      jóó.  
CL-woman FOC 1SG.SBJ marry.PRS  
'I am married to a woman.'
- b. Min      lé      ŋjmán      njí-tùùn.  
1SG.SBJ FOC eat.PFV CL-beans  
'I ate beans.'
- c. Tímín      lé      jín      bī-sáá.  
1PL.SBJ FOC eat.PFV CL-food  
'WE ate (the) food.'

Is "WE" inten-  
tional?  
Per-  
haps it  
could be  
[We]FOC  
for con-  
sistency.

Please  
check  
the gloss

It is a result of the obligatory status of lé in contexts (24) that the sentences (24) become ungrammatical as re-presented (25) below:

- (25) a. \* Ú-píí      ní      ní jóó.  
CL-woman 1SG marry.PRS  
'I am married to a woman.'
- b. \* Min      ŋjmán      njí-tùùn.  
1SG.SBJ eat.PFV CL-beans  
'I ate (the) beans.'
- c. \* Tímín      jín      bī-sáá.  
1PL.SBJ eat.PFV CL-food  
'We ate (the) food.'

Lé (25a) becomes necessary because of the fronted object (a non-subject constituent). Similarly, lé is indispensable (25b and 25c) because of the particular pronominal subjects involved.

## 7.2 Particle lá

The particle, lá as a focus marker in Líchábíl is constrained to sentence final position in a similar way as the sentence final focus particle in Línàjùúl. In its post canonical verb position, lá is immediately postposed to the constituents that it focus-marks. That is, the element in focus precedes lá in terms of nearness to

the canonical verb. Lá can be used to mark focus on any non-subject constituent as can be noted (26) below:

The subexamples in (26) have been rearranged. There are 3 Q-R pairs, which were previously arranged as aQ, aR, bQ, bR, cQ, and dR. They are now rearranged as a to c with two subexamples each for the Q-R pairs.

- (26) a. i. Mbá yúnl nē fí cháá?  
 Q time 2PL.SBJ TRM go.IPFV  
 ‘What time are you leaving tomorrow?’
- ii. Tí gē fí búén máláá lá.  
 1PL.SBJ FUT TRM go.IPFV early FOC  
 ‘We will be going early.’
- b. i. Bá ákēkēln ú gbáb?  
 Q cloth s/he wear.IPFV  
 ‘What type (colour) of cloth is s/he wearing?’
- ii. Ú gbáb lī-kēkē mēnl lá.  
 3SG.SBJ wear.IPFV CL-cloth red FOC  
 ‘S/he is wearing a red cloth.’
- c. i. Ú-jà wé bī-njánì bá.  
 CL-man DEM PROG-do Q  
 ‘What is this man doing?’
- ii. Ú bī-máá kī-díí-k lá.  
 3SG.SBJ PROG-building CL-room-CL FOC  
 ‘He [is building a house]<sub>FOC</sub>.’

Lá (26a-ii), is used to mark focus on an adverbial. Lá marks focus on an adjective and (26c-ii) marks focus on a complex VP.

Furthermore, lá also occurs when the element of focus is just the verb. (27) is an example to this effect:

- (27) a. Lá bī dá ídɔñ?  
 Q 3PL.SBJ buy.PFV wood  
 ‘Where did they buy the (fire)wood?’
- b. Bī sūn lá.  
 3PL.SBJ steal.PFV FOC  
 ‘They stole it.’

Additionally, Schwarz2009 hints of the fact that lá can be used to add a kind of emphasis to the meaning of a focal constituent. Perhaps, a further discovery, the present study brings on board that such emphasis by lá can also apply to the meaning of the sentence. This is observed to happen when, in discourse, a speaker wants to be sarcastic or, in earnest, indicate that the idea or situation being stated is beyond the ordinary. An example (28) below illustrates this:

- (28) Jàgrì kpɔ́ñ ñì-mɔ́ñbil lá.  
Jàgrì has CL-money FOC  
'[Jàgrì has money]<sub>FOC</sub>'

The discourse-contextual interpretation of the sentence (27) is not to emphasize or contrast only a portion of the sentence. Rather, the contextual meaning is that "Jàgrì is, indeed, rich or he is richer than the ordinary." One must also note that in cases (28), lá is still retained in the sentence. An interesting commonality about every context use of the lá focus marker, is its optionality in the sentence. Hence, example (28) and (27b) are still grammatically correct (although their contextual meanings may become inappropriate) without lá (29).

- (29) a. Jàgrì kpɔ́ñ ñì-mɔ́ñbil.  
Jàgrì has CL-money  
'Jàgrì has money.'  
b. BÍ sún.  
3PL.BJ steal.PFV  
'They stole.'

Finally on lá, Schwarz2009 acknowledges that there are similar particles like lá in Líchából, but with different functions. Possibly, a more appropriate way to put this is to say that there are homophonous Lás in Líchából-Kpakpaln. There is a focus marking lá and there is also an interrogative particle lá, meaning roughly "where" (see, for instance, data example 27a).

## 8 Highlights of focus marking divergences between Línàjùúl and Líchából

The foregoing discussions (in sections above) reveal that Línàjùúl and Líchából have intriguing similarities as well as differences, with respect to the phenomenon of focus marking. In the first place, the two dialects use special focus markers

(in this case focus particles) for marking foci constituents. To that extent, both Līnàjùúl and Līchából conform to the common linguistic phenomenon, where the focus systems of Mabia languages involve the use of focus marking particles. Nonetheless, whereas Līnàjùúl has three particles (Ñ, ínká and a clause final particle of varying shapes), lé and lá are the only particles used for coding focus in Līchából. However, Līnàjùúl further appears to draw on the prosodic feature of duration/sentence final vowel lengthening for focus assignment (see §5.3), whereas this does not occur in Līchából. This means that while focus marking remains mainly morphological in Līchából, Līnàjùúl has both morphological and prosodic strategies for marking focus.

There is the temptation to state that the focus marking differences between Līnàjùúl and Līchából owe to the fact that Līnàjùúl has innovated a more complex focus system, while also bearing decadence in that regard. This comes up somewhat clearly when one considers the focus marking system of Līnàjùúl vis-a-vis the larger Mabia framework. It can be said, for instance, that the use of prosody and a phonologically conditioned sentence final focus particle of varying shapes is currently not known to be prevalent among the Mabia languages. What comes close to the latter case in Līnàjùúl is the occurrence in Sissali where the focus markers, né and ré alternate depending on whether the focalized constituent ends in a consonant or a vowel (Dumah2017). Also, lá which is a prevalent focus particle in the focus systems of many Mabia languages of Ghana, such as Dagbani, Dagaare, Moore, Kusaal, Mampruli (Bodomo1997; Dakubu2003, Issah2013Focus, Saanchi2005) is synchronically not used for focalization in Līnàjùúl. The only trace of lá in Līnàjùúl is its use as a question particle (see example 17f).

There is a possibility that the lá focus marker existed in Līnàjùúl at a certain point, but only synchronically got lost due to linguistic evolution over time. The innovations presently noted in the Līnàjùúl focus system correlates with a pattern recently found with its noun class system (BisilkiAkponglo-Nartey2017). In a study of Līnàjùúl noun classes, BisilkiAkponglo-Nartey2017 similarly found that Līnàjùúl is evolving further away from the prototypical Gurma noun class characteristics.

It must, however, be indicated that despite the attested focus marking incongruences between Līnàjùúl and Līchából, no comprehension challenges obtain between the native speakers of these variants. Thus, the degree of mutual intelligibility between Līnàjùúl and Līchából is high enough to warrant smooth intercommunication between their respective speakers.

## 9 Conclusion

I have examined some salient aspects of focus marking in Líkpákpálñ. In particular, I have discussed focus marking strategies and the syntax of focus constructions in the language. Perhaps, more in the article is comparable to the focus marking systems of the Línàjúúl and the Líchából dialects of Líkpákpálñ. The comparison (see §8) has revealed some generic similarities, but more intriguing divergence in the shape of number of focus particles. Within the Mabia focus systems, Línàjúúl was also found to be a bit more diversified by using phonologically conditioned sentence final focus markers. Yet this finds a kind of analogous pattern in a sister Mabia language, Sissali (see §5.3).

Another note of dissociation with Línàjúúl is the non-focus function of lá, which is a common focus marker in several Mabia languages.

Finally, I recommend that investigation of focus marking in other dialects of Líkpákpálñ be undertaken. This will help establish whether the focus system of Línàjúúl is truly an isolate innovation or if the pattern is a shared linguistic tendency in Líkpákpálñ. Similarly, more thorough studies on the phonological possibilities in focus marking in Mabia, needs to be pursued. Both the cases of Sissali and the Línàjúúl dialect of Líkpákpálñ raise this interest.

## Abbreviations

CL	(Noun) class	OBJ	Object
GEN	Genitive	PFV	Perfective
COND	Conditional marker	PL	Plural
CONJ	Conjunction	PRF	Perfect
DEM	Demonstrative	PROG	Progressive
FOC	Focus marker	PRS	Present
FUT	Future	Q	Question marker
HAB	Habitual	Q	Question
IPFV	Imperfective	R	Response
LOC	Locative	SBJ	Subject
		SG	Singular
		SID	Subject identity
		TRM	Time reference marker

## Acknowledgements

# Chapter 4

## Edges and extraction: Evidence from Chichewa

Kenyon Branan<sup>a</sup> & Colin Davis<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>MIT

A growing body of work argues that Agree has the effect of ‘unlocking’ certain domains (‘phases’) such that otherwise illicit extraction from them becomes permitted. However, existing proposals disagree on whether Agree is in fact always required to Unlock phases for extraction, or only required for extractions that would otherwise bypass the phase edge. We argue that constraints on extraction from DP in Chichewa reported in Mchombo2004, Mchombo2006 provide evidence for the latter theory, which privileges phase edges. We go on to show that this theory makes correct predictions about Dinka, the language VanUrkRichards2015 originally argued provides evidence for the opposite conclusion.

### 1 Introduction

In this paper, we argue that Chichewa (Bantu) informs us about the conditions on movement in syntax. A small body of work has argued that one such condition involves Agree: that is, certain domains (*phases*) must be targeted by Agree and hence *Unlocked* before a movement operation can extract something from them, at least some of the time. As it stands, there are two theories about when Unlocking is necessary for extraction:

#1 (RackowskiRichards2005, Halpert2016, Halpert2019, Branan2018)

‘either/or’: Extraction from a phase requires Agree to Unlock that phase, unless the element to be extracted can move via the phase edge.



## #2 (VanUrkRichards2015 on Dinka)

'both/and': Extraction from a phase always requires the containing phase to be Unlocked through Agree, and for extraction to pass through the edge.

While theory #1, the 'either/or' theory, predicts extraction to be permitted either by moving through the phase edge or by Unlocking the phase, theory #2, the 'both/and' view, predicts that both are prerequisites for extraction.

In this work, we argue that patterns of extraction from DP in Chichewa (Bantu) provide evidence for theory #1, which privileges edges. As we will see, the Chichewa patterns make it evident that extraction really is possible from the edge of a 'locked' phase, which has not been agreed with.

### 1.1 Roadmap of the paper

§2 provides more background on theories of extraction from phases and Unlocking. §3 provides the relevant facts from Chichewa, which in §4 we apply to the question of determining which Unlocking theory is correct. In §5 we show in more detail how this account captures the facts in Chichewa and extends to correct predictions about Dinka (Nilo-Saharan), which VanUrkRichards2015 originally argued mandates in favor of theory #2.

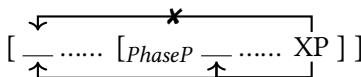
## 2 Background: How to escape a phase

### 2.1 Phases and the edge escape hatch

An influential idea in contemporary syntactic theory is that the derivation proceeds in phases (Chomsky2000, Chomsky2001; a.o.). The set of phases is at least CP, vP, and likely DP as well, DP being our focus in this paper. In essence, Chomsky argues that phases constrain the syntactic derivation because operations outside of a phase cannot target elements within that phase, with one exception: phrases in the edge (specifier) of a phase remain accessible.

We see this system schematized in (1), where movement of XP directly out of the phase's complement is impossible. However, XP can escape the phase if it stops in the edge of the phase first:

- (1) Must exit a phase via its edge

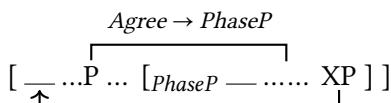


This is one hypothesis about the conditions on escaping phases, which explains why syntactic operations seem to have a cyclic, local, punctuated character.<sup>1</sup>

## 2.2 Unlocking by Agree

A distinct method of phase escape is proposed by **RackowskiRichards2005**, **VanUrkRichards2015**, **Halpert2016**, **Halpert2019**; and **Branan2018**. These works argue that Agreeing with a phase Unlocks it, making it transparent for extraction. For proponents of Unlocking theory #1 previewed in the introduction, this Unlocking allows extraction to bypass the phase edge, which would otherwise be impossible. This is illustrated in (2), where the probe P Agrees with PhaseP, permitting XP to escape PhaseP without stopping in its edge.

- (2) Agree with a phase allows bypassing of the phase edge



**Branan2018** presents evidence for this theory based on cross-linguistic restrictions on extraction from DP, where extraction from nominals seems to be contingent on whether or not the nominal controls agreement morphology. An example of this comes from Northern Ostyak (Uralic, **Nikolaeva1999**). Northern Ostyak has obligatory agreement with subjects, but agreement with objects is optional. In this language extraction of possessors from subjects is always possible. However, extraction of possessors from objects is possible only when the object is agreed with, as the contrast between (3) and (4) shows.

- (3) Possessor extraction from object is impossible without agreement

*Juwan <sub>k</sub> motta [ xot-əl _ <sub>k</sub> ] kǎšalə-s-əm.
John before house-3SG see-T-1SG
'I saw John's house before.'

---

<sup>1</sup>For Chomsky, the accessibility of edges is attributed to the nature of spellout: a phase head spells-out its complement, thus sending it to PF and LF, and out of the syntactic derivation. Because the specifier and head of a phase are outside of the phase's complement, they remain accessible. The view of phases we present evidence for today suggests a different reason for the accessibility of phase edges, which predicts that material deeper within a phase is not inaccessible, but rather more difficult to access due to locality constraints on probing.

(4) Agreement with object permits extraction of possessor

Juwān<sub>k</sub> motta [ xot-əl      <sub>-k</sub> ] kǎśalə-s-e:m.  
John before house-3SG see-T-SG.3OBJ  
'I saw John's house before.'

In (3) we see that possessor extraction from a direct object is not possible on its own. Rather, as (4) shows, such extraction requires the direct object to be agreed with. Under the theory we argue for today, the extraction in (3) would have been grammatical if the possessor could extract via the DP edge, but evidently such a derivation is not available. (See Branan2018 for details about how such extraction is constrained.) Consequently, Agree with the object is necessary to permit extraction. This is because Agree has the effect of Unlocking DPs, as this pattern in Northern Ostyak and similar ones across other languages indicate.

### 2.3 Two versions of Unlocking theory

As previewed above, two variants of Unlocking theory have been proposed:

#1 (RackowskiRichards2005, Halpert2016, Halpert2019, Branan2018)

'either/or': Extraction from a phase requires Agree to Unlock that phase, unless the element to be extracted can move via the phase edge.

#2 (VanUrkRichards2015 on Dinka)

'both/and': Extraction from a phase always requires the containing phase to be Unlocked through Agree, and for extraction to pass through the edge.

RackowskiRichards2005 initially proposed Unlocking theory #1, which affords 'escape hatch' status to phase edges, in order to connect Unlocking to an understanding of locality and successive-cyclic movement through phase edges. Later evidence for Unlocking has been indirect enough to be compatible with a reformulation eventually offered by VanUrkRichards2015' (VanUrkRichards2015) work on Dinka, which we've introduced as theory #2. We argue that Chichewa verifies the predictions of theory #1, and we go on to show that Dinka actually behaves as we would expect if theory #1 is really the correct choice.

## 3 Extraction and agreement in Chichewa

Mchombo2004, Mchombo2006 discusses how the formation of discontinuous DPs in Chichewa is constrained by the distribution of the Object Marker (OM),

a morpheme in the verbal complex which expresses the  $\phi$ -features (in particular for Chichewa, the noun-class features, here represented numerically) of an internal argument. We hypothesize that these discontinuous DPs are derived by movement, and we will argue in this section that the OM involves a probe that Agrees with the  $\phi$ -features of an internal argument DP. Importantly for our proposal, certain correlations hold between the possibility of extraction from DP, and whether or not the OM Agrees with that DP.

### 3.1 When extraction and agreement go together

Mchombo shows that in the basic case, the OM is optional in Chichewa. However, under certain circumstances the OM becomes necessary. For instance, the OM is required when extracting an adjective, as the contrast between (5) and (6) shows. In (5), the OM reflects the features of the class 4 object DP (*lions*) out of which the adjective (*aged*) has been fronted:

- (5) **Adjective extraction possible with OM** (Mchombo2004)  
 Yókálamba<sub>k</sub> anyání a-na-í-gúl-ilá makású awa  
 4SM-aged 2-baboons 2SM-PST-4OM-buy-APPL-FV 6-hoes 6-these  
 óbúntha [ mikángó <sub>-k</sub> ].  
 6SM-blunt 4-lions  
 ‘The baboons bought the aged lions these blunt hoes.’

However, in (6) the OM is absent, and such extraction is blocked:

- (6) **Adjective extraction impossible without OM** (Mchombo2006)  
 \*Zakuda<sub>k</sub> atsíkáná á mfúmu a-a-gul-á [ mbúzi <sub>-k</sub> ].  
 10SM-black 2-girls 2ASSOCM 9-chief 2SM-PFV-buy-FV 10.goats  
 ‘The chief’s girls have bought black goats.’

In just the same way, extraction of a demonstrative requires the OM:

- (7) **No demonstrative extraction without OM** (Mchombo2006)  
 Awa<sub>k</sub> njuchi izi zi-ná-\*(wá)-lûm-á [ alenje <sub>-k</sub>  
 2.PROXDEM 10.bees 10PROXDEM 10SM-PST-2OM-bite-FV 2.hunters  
 ópúsa ].  
 2SM.foolish  
 ‘These bees bit the foolish hunters.’

Note that both adjectives and demonstratives in Chichewa originate on the right side of N(P), which sits at the left edge of the DP.

The  
glosses  
through-  
out the  
chapter  
do not  
comply  
with the  
Leipzig  
Glossing  
Rules

- (8) The Chichewa DP: N < Dem < Adj (from Mchombo2006)  
 alenje awa ópúsa  
 hunter(N) these(Dem) foolish(Adj)

This pattern is comparable to that of Northern Ostyak: Certain elements in DP can only be extracted when the DP that contains them controls agreement morphology. Importantly, in contrast, certain other elements are extractable whether or not the OM agrees with the containing DP, as the next section shows.

### 3.2 When extraction and agreement come apart

So far, we've established that in Chichewa extraction of adjectives and demonstratives requires the OM to agree with the containing DP. As mentioned, in Chichewa the left edge of DP is occupied by N(P). As discussed further in §4, we take this as evidence that NP moves to the left edge of the Chichewa DP. Furthermore, NP is the only element of the Chichewa DP that can always be extracted, whether or not the containing DP controls the OM, as (9) and (10) below show. In (9) the OM is present, while in (10) it is absent, but both of these examples involve acceptable extraction of NP:

- (9) Extraction of NP possible with OM... (Mchombo2004)  
 Alenje<sub>k</sub> zi-ná-wá-lúm-a [ njúchí izi ] [ \_<sub>k</sub> awa  
 2-hunters 10SM-PST-2OM-bite-FV 10-bees 10-PROXDEM 2-PROXDEM  
 ópúsa ].  
2SM-foolish

'These bees bit these foolish hunters.'

- (10) ...and without! (Mchombo2006)  
 Mbûzik<sub>k</sub> atsikáná á mfúmu a-a-gul-á [ \_<sub>k</sub> zákúda ].  
 10-goats 2-girls 2-ASSOCM 9chief 2s-PFV-buy-FV 10SM-black  
 'Goats, the chief's girls have bought black (ones).'

This fact is significant: It is unclear, given the theory of Unlocking presented in VanUrkRichards2015, why extraction of NP is permitted even in cases where the containing object DP is not Agreed with by the OM. Under such a theory, we expect extraction of NP to require the DP which originally contained it to always be agreed with, and thereby Unlocked – contrary to fact.

However, these Chichewa patterns are expected under a theory of Unlocking like that of RackowskiRichards2005 and Branan2018, in which extraction is permitted by moving via the phase edge, or by Agree with the phase itself. In the

previous subsection, we saw that extraction of adjectives and demonstratives, which originate at a non-edge position in DP, requires the OM to Agree with the containing DP. However, as we've just seen, agreement is not required when extracting NP, the element occupying the edge of the Chichewa DP.

We discuss a more specific model of extraction from DP in Chichewa in §5. Before that, in the next subsection, we present some evidence that the OM does indeed involve an Agree relation with the DP that extraction exits.

### 3.3 The OM involves an Agree dependency

As Baker2016 overviews, whether the OM in Bantu languages is a pure agreement marker or a (doubled) pronominal clitic is a subject of debate. For the account proposed in this paper, the presence of the OM must be contingent on some sort of probe-goal Agree relationship, even if the morphological effect of that syntactic relationship is a pronominal clitic rather than a mere agreement marker.<sup>2</sup> We argue that the dependency between the OM and the DP it cross-references indeed shows locality effects characteristic of such probe-goal relations.

While the OM in Chichewa can normally target a direct object, certain other nominals interrupt a potential relation between the OM probe and the direct object. For example, if a benefactive indirect object is present, it must be targeted by the OM rather than the direct object, as shown in (11).<sup>3</sup>

- (11) IO blocks agreement with DO (Mchombo2004)  
 Alenje a-ku-wá/\*zí-phík-il-á zítúmbûwa<sub>DO</sub> anyáni<sub>IO</sub>.  
 2-hunters 2SM-PRS 2OM/\*8OM-cook-APPL-FV 8-pancakes 2-baboons  
 ‘The hunters are cooking the baboons some pancakes.’

Mchombo2004 discusses how similar considerations apply to raised possessors, which the OM must target rather than a direct object.<sup>4</sup> As expected, an

---

<sup>2</sup>See Preminger2015 for an argument that some sorts of clitic doubling involve an Agree relation.

<sup>3</sup>As a reviewer points out, this effect has independent precedent in Kramer2014, who argues that the presence of IO blocks agreement (and hence clitic doubling) with DO in Amharic.

<sup>4</sup>Mchombo2004 states that the raised possessor behaves like the object of the clause in other ways, such as accessibility to passivization. This is also expected if the raised possessor is more local than the direct object to higher probes, thus passivization (presumably involving probing by T and subsequent A-movement) targets the raised possessor rather than the lower direct object.

adjective or demonstrative can only be extracted from the raised possessor, and then, only when it is Agreed with.<sup>5</sup>

- (12) No extraction from DO with raised possessor (Mchombo2004)

\*Áákúlu<sub>k</sub> mkángó u-ku-wá-dy-él-á [ maûngu \_-k ] [  
6SM-big 3-lion 3SM-PRS-2OM-eat-APPL-FV 6-pumpkins  
amalinyé ógúnata ].  
2-sailors 2ASSOC-foolish

‘The lion is eating for the foolish sailors (their) big pumpkins.’

- (13) Extraction possible from raised possessor (Mchombo2004)

Ógúnata<sub>k</sub> mkángó u-ku-wá-dy-él-á [ maúngú áákúlu  
2ASSOC-foolish 3-lion 3SM-PRS-2OM-eat-APPL-FV 6-pumpkins 6SM-big  
] [ amalinyélo \_-k ].  
2-sailors

‘The lion is eating for the foolish sailors (their) big pumpkins.’

Further locality effects emerge from the interaction of extraction with recursive possession. Example (14) shows a recursive possession configuration:

- (14) Recursive possession (Mchombo2004)

Anyaní á mísalá a-ku-chí-phwány-a [DP<sub>3</sub> chipanda  
2-baboons 2ASSOC 4-madness 2SM-PRS-7OM-smash-FV 7-calabash  
[DP<sub>2</sub> chá kazitápé [DP<sub>1</sub> wá alenje ]].  
7ASSOC 1A-spy 1ASSOC 2-hunters

‘The mad baboons are smashing the calabash of the hunters’ spy.’

There are restrictions on what can be extracted from recursive possession structures. As we see in (15), it is possible to extract the possessor (DP<sub>2</sub>) of the direct object (DP<sub>3</sub>) which controls OM, in this case *chipanda* (‘calabash’).

- (15) The ‘outermost’ possessor may be extracted (Mchombo2004)

[DP<sub>2</sub> Chá kazitápé [DP<sub>1</sub> wá alenje ]]<sub>k</sub> Anyaní á  
7ASSOC 1A.spy 1ASSOC 2-hunters 2-baboons 2ASSOC  
mísala a-ku-chí-phwány-a [DP<sub>3</sub> chipanda \_-k ].  
4-madness 2SM-PRS-7OM-smash-FV 7-calabash

‘The mad baboons are smashing the calabash of the hunters’ spy.’

<sup>5</sup>The benefactive arguments and raised possessors that intervene between the OM probe and the direct object nevertheless appear to the right of that object. What is necessary for our account is that these DPs are structurally above the object at the relevant point in the derivation where the OM Agrees with its goal, regardless of their final linear position.

In contrast, as we see in (16), it is not possible to extract DP1, the possessor of the possessor (DP2) of the element that controls the OM (DP3).

- (16) The ‘innermost’ possessor may not extract (Mchombo2004)

\*[<sub>DP1</sub> Chá alenje]<sub>k</sub> Anyaní á mísalá  
 7ASSOC 2-hunters 2-baboons 2ASSOC 4-madness  
 a-ku-chí-phwány-a [<sub>DP3</sub> chipanda [<sub>DP2</sub> chá chiphadzúwá <sub>k</sub> ]  
 2SM-PRS-7OM-smash-FV 7-calabash 7Assoc 7-beauty queen  
 ].

‘The mad baboons are smashing the calabash of the hunters’ beauty queen.’

We’ve seen that extraction from the non-edge of the Chichewa DP requires the containing DP to be agreed with by the OM. In (16), notice that the OM has class 7  $\phi$ -features that could have been received via probing of the direct object *calabash*, or the possessor of the direct object, *beauty queen*, both of which are of noun class 7. Thus (16) should be able to represent a structure where the OM agreed with the possessor of the direct object, if it were possible to do so. Such agreement should Unlock the possessor of the direct object, thus permitting extraction of the possessor of the possessor. However, such extraction is impossible.

This fact suggests that in (16) only the direct object can have been agreed with. Thus the direct object is Unlocked and its possessor can be extracted, as in (15). However, this possessor was not agreed with and thus remains locked, so the possessor of the possessor remains un-extractable, as (16) has shown. This is as expected if locality requirements only allow the OM to agree with and hence Unlock the structurally closest DP, the direct object, which the OM probe will necessarily encounter before any DPs which are its sub-constituents.<sup>6</sup>

The restrictions we’ve seen in this subsection are expected if the OM involves a probe-goal Agree relation, which is constrained by locality considerations like the Minimal Link Condition (Chomsky1995, Chomsky2000) or Relativized Minimality (Rizzi1990) which force Agree operations to target the closest possible goal.

---

<sup>6</sup>The same asymmetries hold for left branch extraction in Russian (p.c. Tanya Bondarenko). This is as expected if the mechanisms we see evidence for on the surface of Chichewa are in fact more general aspects of syntax, and not mere idiosyncrasies of Chichewa.

## 4 Deciding between Unlocking theories

Recall that we are comparing two theories regarding Unlocking:

#1 (RackowskiRichards2005, Halpert2016, Halpert2019, Branan2018)

‘either/or’: Extraction from a phase requires Agree to Unlock that phase, unless the element to be extracted can move via the phase edge.

#2 (VanUrkRichards2015 on Dinka)

‘both/and’: Extraction from a phase always requires the containing phase to be Unlocked through Agree, and for extraction to pass through the edge.

In the previous section, we saw that extraction from DP in Chichewa is subject to a particular requirement: Extraction from DP requires that DP to be agreed with by the OM, unless the extracted element is N(P), which normally appears at the left edge of DP. While the ‘both/and’ theory of Unlocking (#2) does not accommodate this absence of agreement in the latter case, the “either/or” version of Unlocking theory (#1) does.

Theory #1 leads us to expect the Chichewa facts, given an analysis in which the NP-initial order of the Chichewa DP is derived by movement of NP to the edge of DP. Such movement is proposed for independent reasons in Cinque2005, and for the Kordofanian language Moro in Jenks2010, whose DP structure is analogous to that of Chichewa.

(17) NP movement to spec-DP<sup>7</sup>

[<sub>DP</sub> NP<sub>k</sub> D Dem Adj <sub>\_k</sub> ]

Because NP occupies the edge of the Chichewa DP, agreement is not required for its extraction. NP can simply be freely extracted even when DP is not Unlocked, as (10) showed. In contrast, we saw that the extraction of elements from the non-edge of DP (adjectives, demonstratives) requires the Unlocking effect of agreement. The next section discusses these derivations involved in detail.

---

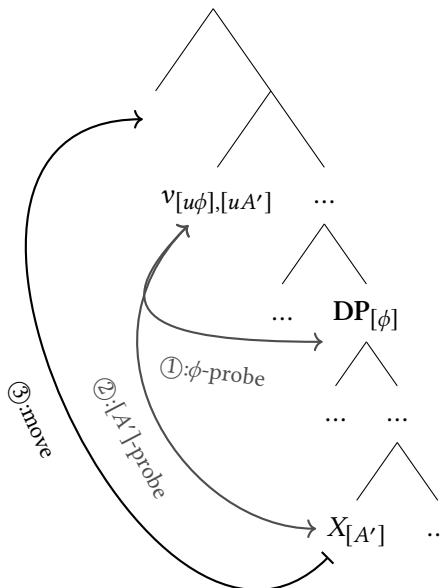
<sup>7</sup>A reviewer mentions that cardinal numerals might be expected to be pre-nominal, in which case, they might pose an issue for this analysis. Mchombo2004 in fact shows that cardinal numerals are post-nominal, as usual for adjectives in this language, hence there is no problem here. A reviewer also asks whether there are any adjective ordering constraints in Chichewa, mentioning that the analysis presented here predicts the relative ordering of adjectives to be essentially the same as in a language like English. At the time of writing, we do not have access to information about this, so we leave this question aside for now.

## 5 Predicting the facts

### 5.1 Chichewa

We have seen that agreement with DP is necessary for extraction from the non-edge of the Chichewa DP. As mentioned, we argue that this is because Agree with the DP Unlocks it for further probing. That Unlocking allows an A'-probe to subsequently search past the edge of DP, as the tree in (18) below shows:

- (18) Deep A'-extraction fed by  $\phi$ -Agreement with DP



If an extracting adjective or demonstrative were able to pass through spec-DP, the edge of this phase, Agreement with DP should not be necessary for extraction. However, this position is occupied by NP in Chichewa, precluding movement to this ‘escape hatch’ position.<sup>8</sup> As a result, the Chichewa DP must be Unlocked

<sup>8</sup>Implicit here is the claim that Chichewa permits only one spec-DP. Alternatively, we could claim that Chichewa D lacks an A'-probe, or that anti-locality constraints block the relevant elements from moving through the DP edge. Additionally, this ban on exiting a phase which something has already moved into the specifier of is analogous to *wh*-island effects, where an initial *wh*-movement into spec-CP blocks extraction of a second *wh*-phrase.

through Agree if anything but NP is to be extracted from it.

In contrast, by being at the DP edge, agreement with DP is not a prerequisite for extraction of NP, as we saw in (10). This is what we expect in a theory like that of **RackowskiRichards2005**, who argue that while locality considerations require probes to target the closest available goal first, a phase label and its highest specifier (the edge) are equidistant with respect to higher probes. This means that higher A'-movement probes can freely target either the phase itself, or material that may happen to be present in its edge. Thus in Chichewa, an A'-probe can extract NP from DP even when DP is not Unlocked. However, no harm is done if the containing DP happens to be agreed with and consequently superfluously Unlocked, as in (9), where both agreement and NP extraction occur.

## 5.2 Resolving Dinka

**VanUrkRichards2015** proposed that extraction from phases requires Unlocking in addition to moving via the phase edge, based on the interaction of extraction out of embedded CPs and EPP effects in Dinka. This result is in conflict with the theory we have argued for based on Chichewa. However, further examination reveals a resolution to this conflict: extraction from CP in Dinka always requires Unlocking to take place, because elements that undergo extraction never reach the edge of the CP phase in this language.

**VanUrkRichards2015** show that Dinka has two positions in the clause which, in the basic case, must be filled. These are claimed to be spec-CP and spec-vP. Spec-vP must be filled by some internal argument, as we see in (19-21).

- (19) **Dinka spec-vP filled by DO** (VanUrkRichards2015)  
Bòl a-cí [<sub>vP</sub> alkókôl<sub>k</sub> lék Dèŋ \_<sub>k</sub>.  
Bol 3SG-PFV story tell Deng  
'Bol told Deng a story.'
- (20) **Dinka spec-vP filled by IO** (VanUrkRichards2015)  
Bòl a-cí [<sub>vP</sub> Dèŋ<sub>k</sub> lék \_<sub>k</sub> alkókôl ].  
Bol 3SG-PFV Deng tell story  
'Bol told Deng a story.'
- (21) **\*Dinka spec-vP unfilled** (VanUrkRichards2015)  
Bòl a-cí [<sub>vP</sub> \* \_ lék Dèŋ alkókôl ].  
Bol 3SG-PFV tell Deng story  
'Bol told Deng a story.'

The subject of the sentence – the element which controls agreement morphology – must occupy spec-CP. We see evidence of this in (22), where unlike the above examples, the subject remains in situ in vP, resulting in ungrammaticality:

- (22) \* Spec-CP unfilled in Dinka (VanUrkRichards2015)  
 \*[<sub>CP</sub> a-cíí [<sub>vP</sub> Bòl lék Dèŋj alkókôl ] ].  
 3SG-PFV Bol tell Deng story  
 'Bol told Deng a story.'

VanUrkRichards2015 further observe that extraction out of an embedded clause appears to satisfy all such EPP positions passed by that movement, which consequently end up unfilled on the surface. We see this in (23), where the EPP positions identified in (19-22) are empty, having been crossed by *wh*-movement.<sup>9</sup>

- (23) *wh*-movement satisfies EPP positions passed (VanUrkRichards2015)  
 Yenjà<sub>k</sub> cíí Yâar \_ lék Dèŋj, [<sub>CP</sub> yé \_ cíí Bôl \_ tuòɔc \_k  
 Who PFV.NS Yaar.GEN tell Deng C PFV.NS Bol.GEN send  
 wúut? ]].  
 cattle.camp.LOC  
 'Who did Yaar tell Deng that Bol sent to the cattle camp?'

VanUrkRichards2015 argue that the extracting *wh*-phrase passes through and satisfies the EPP requirement of the spec-vP and spec-CP of the embedded clause. However, they argue that the embedded CP itself satisfies the EPP for the matrix v. They suggest that the embedded CP moves to spec-vP (subsequently extraposing to the right) due to being Agreed with by v in order to Unlock that CP for extraction. If v had to Agree with CP to Unlock it even though *wh*-extraction passed through the CP edge as (23) indicates, it suggests that both movement via the phase edge and Unlocking are required for extraction out of a phase. This finding is contrary to the theory of Unlocking we have argued for here.

To maintain VanUrkRichards2015' analysis of the Dinka derivation and keep Dinka consistent with the theory we argue for here, we might hypothesize that elements extracted from an embedded CP in Dinka do not actually pass through the true CP edge. If this is the case, CP will need to be Unlocked before a moving

---

<sup>9</sup>A reviewer asks whether the subject DPs in (23) might inhabit spec-vP, given that they do not move into spec-CP in this derivation. VanUrkRichards2015 are not fully explicit about the position of the subject in these cases, but it appears implicit that subjects occupy a position above spec-vP, presumably spec-TP.

phrase can exit it. There is in fact evidence that there is more structure above the high EPP position in CP that moving phrases pass through: Namely, this position can be preceded by an overt complementizer. We saw this in (23) above, where the gap in the edge of the embedded CP is preceded by the C *yé*. We can independently see this post-C position filled by the subject in non-extraction contexts, as in (24–25):

- (24) **EPP position in CP preceded by C *ke*** (VanUrkRichards2015)  
A-cá            táak, ke Càn bí    wít            tíaam.  
3SG-PFV.1SG think C Can FUT wrestling win.TR  
'I think that Can will win the wrestling.'
- (25) **EPP position in CP preceded by C *ye*** (VanUrkRichards2015)  
A-cá            luéel, ye Càn bí    wít            tíaam.  
3SG-PFV.1SG say C Can FUT wrestling win.TR  
'I said that Can will win the wrestling.'

This is the very position that can be unfilled in extraction contexts, which as VanUrkRichards2015 argue, is because a phrase being extracted from CP passes through it. But this peripheral position in the Dinka CP is evidently not at the very edge of CP. Therefore Unlocking of CP is still required for extraction.

In sum, Dinka as analyzed by VanUrkRichards2015 in fact behaves as the account of Unlocking that we have argued for predicts. In Dinka, Unlocking is required for all extraction from CP, because there is no escape hatch at the edge of CP for extraction to pass through. Rather, there is only only an EPP position that is not at the true edge.<sup>10</sup>

## 6 Conclusion

Chichewa's typically optional object agreement gives suggestive evidence for a particular view of the constraints on cross-phasal extraction – in particular,

<sup>10</sup> A reviewer asks why VanUrkRichards2015 take a position below the overt complementizer to be spec-CP. VanUrkRichards2015 propose an extended left periphery in Dinka with at least two CP layers, in which only the lower CP counts as a phase. For them, the EPP position in the left periphery that we have discussed is therefore the specifier of the relevant phase. In this paper, we posit that it is in fact the higher CP layer that is a phase, and that there is no successive-cyclic movement through that upper CP, thus unlocking is required to permit extraction from this domain. We argue that movement through the specifier of the higher CP is banned because movement to this position from the EPP position in the lower CP would be too short, following the formulation of anti-locality in Erlewine2016 (Erlewine2016, a.o.).

one in which Agree allows extraction to bypass the edge of a phase, but in which movement to the edge of a phase is also sufficient to escape the phase. A potential contradiction of this theory presented by Dinka proves to be un-problematic: Agree with embedded CPs is required for extraction from them in Dinka because the peripheral position in CP available for phrasal movement is not at the true edge of the embedded clause. These results are consistent with a theory in which Unlocking is only required for ‘deep’ extraction out of phases.

## Abbreviations

APPL	applicative suffix	NS	non-subject
ASSOC	associative marker	OM	object marker
DO	direct object	PROXDEM	proximate demonstrative
FUT	future	PRS	present tense
FV	final vowel	PFV	perfective
GEN	genitive	PST	past
IO	indirect object	SM	subject marker

PRF changed to PFV and PRES to PRS per LGR

## Acknowledgements

Authors listed alphabetically. Thanks to helpful comments from Norvin Richards, Sabine Iatridou, David Pesetsky, and the audience of ACAL 49 and WCCFL 46. All errors are each other’s.



# Chapter 5

## Propositional attitude verbs and complementizers in Medumba

Terrance Gatchalian<sup>a</sup>, Rachel Lee<sup>a</sup> & Carolin Tyrchan<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of British Columbia <sup>b</sup>University of Potsdam

We present the preliminary results of an investigation on complementizers and their interaction with propositional attitude verbs in Medumba (Grassfields Bantu, Niger-Congo). This initial sketch of the Medumba C-system opens up questions about the syntactic distribution and semantic force of the various Cs. There are two clause-initial Cs, /mbu/ and /ndà/, of which /mbu/ has three syntactically conditioned allomorphs: [mbù]-L, [mbúù]-HL and [mbùú]-LH. The clause-final /lá/ obligatorily co-occurs with two of the clause-initial Cs, namely [mbúù]-HL and [ndà]. Additionally, the inventory of propositional attitude verbs (PAVs) is quite small, with only four identified thus far: two are monomorphemic ([len] ‘know’, [tʃup] ‘say’) and two are bi-morphemic ([kwè-dè] ‘think-ITER’, [bét-té] ‘ask-ITER’). We make the case for a syntactically conditioned floating H-tone. Additionally, we propose a basic structure of the Medumba CP and raise questions about the scope of polarity and the nature of the clause-final particle /lá/.

**Keywords:** Medumba, complementizer, propositional attitude, embedding

### 1 Introduction

Medumba, a Bamileke language of western Cameroon, exhibits a wide use of grammatical tone. While the patterns of Medumba tone have been described in detail by Voorhoeve 1971, the grammatical functions which are expressed through tonal morphemes have not received the same level of detailed description or analysis, and have often been left out of the discussion of tone in Medumba. In fact, the status of tone as a syntactically conditioned element is not discussed in the current literature on Medumba. Instead, tone in Medumba has been treated as a



strictly phonological phenomenon. This, as we will outline below, obscures some important relationships within the grammar of Medumba (see also Keupdjio2020)■

This paper has two principle aims. Firstly, it describes both the system of Propositional Attitude Verbs (PAVs) and the system of complementizers, which have received little descriptive treatment. Secondly, it presents an argument for tonal morphology specifically within the complementizer system, further suggesting the possibility for syntactic activity of tone elsewhere in the language.

## 2 Propositional attitude verbs

We will be defining PROPOSITIONAL ATTITUDE VERBS (PAVs) as verbs conveying mental attitude or communicative verbs, as outlined in Pearson2021 (see also Asher1987). The inventory of PAVs in Medumba is relatively small, consisting of two mono-morphemic forms (1a, 1b) and two bi-morphemic forms (1c, 1d).

- |     |             |              |
|-----|-------------|--------------|
| (1) | a. /lèn/    | 'know'       |
|     | b. /tʃúp/   | 'say'        |
|     | c. /kʷɛ-də/ | 'think-ITER' |
|     | d. /bét-tá/ | 'ask-ITER'   |

The unsuffixed, mono-morphemic forms of the bi-morphemic PAVs (/kʷɛ-də/ and /bét-tá/) are unattested. The iterative morpheme is underlyingly toneless, and takes the final tone of the base to which it is affixed. The bi-morphemic PAVs appear to be lexicalized iterative forms, as can be seen by productive use of the iterative suffix, such as in (2).

- |     |                 |           |
|-----|-----------------|-----------|
| (2) | a. [nà tʃúb-á]  | 'to say'  |
|     | b. [nà tʃúp-tá] | 'to talk' |

These four propositional attitude verbs participate in a variety of constructions, taking either a nominal complement, as in (3a) or a clausal complement (as in 3b).

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| (3) | a. wàtèé t lèén nùnjɛ<br>Watat know Nuga<br>'Watat knows Nuga.'   |
|     | b. mì lén mbà nzì kʰú?ú tʃʷɛé t ndʒé<br>1.SG know COMP envy taro PRES hurt<br>'I know that Numi is hungry.' |

When the complement of the PAV is a noun, the bare noun appears. That is, the thematic role assigned to the DPs is not marked by any overt morphosyntactic element. Instead, the semantic interpretation follows from the rigid order of constituents, S V O<sub>direct</sub> O<sub>indirect</sub>. As exhibited in examples (4a, b), the theme constituent must precede the goal constituent.

- (4) [tʃúp] selecting for a DP<sub>theme</sub> and a DP<sub>goal</sub>

- a. wàtèét tʃúp náñná nùñgè  
Watat say truth Nuga  
'Watat said the truth to Nuga.'
- b. #wàtèét tʃúp nùñgè náñná  
Watat say Nuga truth  
Intended: 'Watat said the truth to Nuga.'

When the PAV takes a clausal complement, the left-edge of the clause is delineated by one of four complementizers. The properties of these complementizers and their analysis form the basis for the remaining sections of this paper.

Table 1 roughly outlines the subcategorization properties of the PAVs. All PAVs except /kʷɛ-dè/ can take a DP as a complement. A more detailed investigation of the subcategorization of PAVs is left as an avenue for further research.

Table 1: Subcategorization properties of PAVs (*tentative*)

PAV	[lèn]	[tʃúp]	[kʷɛ-dè]	[bét-tá]
Possible	DP <sub>theme</sub> CP	DP <sub>theme</sub> DP <sub>goal</sub>	CP	DP CP
Complements		DP <sub>theme</sub> + DP <sub>goal</sub>		
		CP		

We will also include the modal verb [b<sup>hw</sup>òjó] 'be.good' in the following discussion. It should be noted that this verb occurs only with the impersonal subject, as can be seen in (5a). While it is not considered a PAV, it is included here due to its participation in subordinating constructions and its interaction with the complementizers.

- (5) a. á b<sup>hw</sup>òjó nùmí tʃúp náñnáná

3.SG be.good Numi say truth

'Numi should say the truth.' (lit. 'It is good that Numi says the truth.')

- b. \*nùmí b<sup>hw</sup>òjó tʃúp náñúñé  
Numi be.good say truth  
Intended: ‘Numi should say the truth.’

### 3 Complementizers and clausal complements

#### 3.1 Introduction

There are four complementizer forms in Medumba, each varying in the semantic contribution it gives to the subordinate clause. It will be argued that their co-occurrence restrictions arise principally from incompatibility between the semantics of the complementizer and the semantics of the subsequent selecting verb. We will also argue for a compositional account regarding the semantics of the complementizers responsible for this incompatibility with certain PAVS.

These four complementizers can be divided into two different underlying forms based on their segmental content; one being referred to as the /ndà/-form complementizer, and the other as the /mbu/-form complementizer, which has three tonal surface forms.

#### 3.2 /ndà/-form complementizers

To begin with the simplest case, the clause-initial /ndà/ complementizer, in (6), is uniformly low-tone (L). Furthermore, as in (6a), it obligatorily co-occurs with the clause-final /lá/ particle.

- (6) a. á b<sup>hw</sup>òjó ndà nùmí zéñì zú lá  
3.sg be.good COMP Numi eat thing LA  
‘It is good that Numi ate something.’
- b. \*á b<sup>hw</sup>òjó ndà nùmí zéñì zú  
3.sg be.good COMP Numi eat thing  
Intended: ‘It is good that Numi ate something.’

The syntactic and semantic properties of this complementizer are subject to further investigation and will not be discussed in great detail in this paper. However, for the purposes of our discussion, it is relevant that this complementizer does not appear to have surface tonal allomorphy as does the complementizer that will be discussed immediately below.

### 3.3 /mbuə/-form complementizers

#### 3.3.1 L-tone complementizer

There are three complementizers which all carry the segmental content /mbuə/ but have distinct tonal melodies: [mbu̯]-L, [mbu̯u̯]-HL, and [mbu̯u̯]-LH. These complementizer forms each have a unique distribution under the four PAVs and [b<sup>hw</sup>ɔ̄]. The possible co-occurrence patterns are given in Table 2 below. All logically possible combinations of a PAV and a C with or without [lá] that are not depicted here were tested as well, but were judged as infelicitous by our consultant.

Table 2: Co-occurrence of complementizers with PAVs

PAV/Comp	[mbu̯]	[mbu̯u̯ + lá]	[mbu̯u̯]	[ndá + lá]
[lén] ‘know’	✓(7a)	✓(10a)	* (8a)	✓
[tʃúp] ‘say’	✓(7b)	✓(10b)	* (8b)	✓
[k <sup>w</sup> è-dè] ‘think’	✓(7c)	✓(10c)	* (8c)	✓
[bét-tá] ‘ask’	* (7d)	✓(10d)	* (8d)	✓
[b <sup>hw</sup> ɔ̄] ‘be.good’	* (7e)	*	✓(8e)	✓(6a)

The L-tone allomorph [mbu̯] can introduce embedded indirect speech under three PAVs, as seen in (7a-c). The verb [bét-tá] is incompatible with [mbu̯], as in (7d).

- (7) a. m̄à lén mbu̯ nzì k<sup>hw</sup>u̯?ú t̄ʃ<sup>w</sup>èé t ndʒé nùmí  
1.SG know COMP envy taro PRES hurt Numi  
'I know that Numi is hungry.'
- b. m̄à t̄ʃúp nùmí mbu̯ t̄ʃèéŋ ॥Bá  
1.SG say Numi COMP food be.cooked  
'I say to Numi that the food is ready.'
- c. m̄à k<sup>w</sup>èdè mbu̯ nzì k<sup>hw</sup>u̯?ú t̄ʃ<sup>w</sup>èé t ndʒé nùmí  
1.SG think COMP envy taro PRES hurt Numi  
'I think that Numi is hungry.'
- d. \*m̄à bét-tá nùmí mbu̯ t̄ʃèéŋ ॥Bá  
1.SG ask Numi COMP food be.cooked  
Intended: 'I ask Numi if the food is cooked.'

- e. á b<sup>hwɔ̄</sup> mbù nùmí զáà զú  
 3.sg be.good tsccomp Numi eat something  
 Intended: ‘It is good that Numi eats something.’

As can be seen in example (7e), the combination of [b<sup>hwɔ̄</sup>] and [mbù] was also judged as infelicitous by our consultant.<sup>1</sup> As [mbù] introduces embedded speech and appears to simply introduce an embedded clause, it could be that [b<sup>hwɔ̄</sup>] is simply incompatible with the semantics of the embedded clauses tested. This observation leads to the assumption that the incompatibilities of certain PAVS and Cs actually only arises on a semantic level, thus suggesting that the composed meanings that arise from their combination have to be accounted for at LF. As this paper aims at describing and explaining the phenomenon on a morphosyntactic level, this semantic interaction after narrow syntax is left to further investigation.

### 3.3.2 LH-tone complementizer

The LH-allomorph [mbùú] seems to be well-formed only in contexts that are compatible with a modal context, exhibited in (8a-e).

- (8) a. \*mù lén mbùú nzì k<sup>hú?</sup>ú t<sup>f̄w̄</sup>èét ndʒé nùmí  
 1.SG know COMP envy taro PRES hurt Numi  
 Intended: ‘I know that Numi is/should be hungry.’
- b. nùmí Ձtʃúp mbùú bù b<sup>húùm</sup>-Ձndá  
 Numi say COMP 3.PL meet-RECP  
 ‘Numi said that they should meet.’
- c. \*mù k<sup>w̄</sup>èdè mbùú nzì k<sup>hú?</sup>ú t<sup>f̄w̄</sup>èét ndʒé nùmí  
 1.SG think COMP envy taro PRES hurt Numi  
 Intended: ‘I think Numi is/should be hungry.’
- d. \*mù bétte nùmí mbùú tʃəéŋ Ձbá  
 1.SG ask Numi COMP food be.cooked  
 Intended: ‘I ask Numi if the food is/should be cooked.’
- e. á b<sup>hwɔ̄</sup> mbùú nùmí Ձzáà Ձzú  
 3.sg be.good tsccomp Numi eat something  
 ‘Numi should eat.’

---

<sup>1</sup>Note here that the tone on the modal verb differs from that given in 6. A discussion of this follows at the end of §3.3.2.

The segmental similarity between the LH-allomorph and the L-allomorph, despite their semantic and distributional heterogeneity, raises the question of whether these forms are related to each other. By assuming a positive answer to this question, we will argue that we receive an insightful understanding of how tone can be syntactically conditioned in the complementizer system, and by consequence, opens up the possibility of understanding tone elsewhere in the grammar as an integral part of syntax-proper.

The core of the present discussion rests on the assumption that the complementizer can be meaningfully decomposed into an underlying /mbù/-form of the complementizer and a syntactic H-tone. There are both empirical and theoretical consequences for such an analytical assumption, so it is worth decomposing the assumption itself.

Consider the [mbùú]-LH complementizer, which, as was illustrated above, is interpreted as having deontic meaning. A decompositional analysis of this complementizer takes this form as the combination of the low-toned /mbù/-form, which introduces the embedded clause, with a syntactic H-tone, which provides the deontic force whose effects are seen from its distributional restrictions under the PAVS.

The first possible objection to this analysis is the empirical evidence for the decomposition. To answer this, we can consider cases of deontic force without the presence of a complementizer. Consider the data in (9) below, where (9a) shows an embedded clause introduced by the LH-complementizer as expected. In (9b), however, the complementizer is not present; instead, the verb surfaces with an additional obligatory H-tone.

- (9) a. á b<sup>hw</sup>ò mbùú nùmí tʃúp néñaná  
 3.sg be.good COMP Numi say truth  
 ‘Numi should say the truth.’
- b. á b<sup>hw</sup>ò nùmí tʃúp núñaná  
 3.sg be.good Numi say truth  
 ‘Numi should say the truth.’

When the complementizer is not pronounced as in (9b) (whether it is a null element in C or syntactically absent), we see that the H-tone is still present, this time surfacing on the verb [<sup>hw</sup>ò], which appears as L-toned in (9a). This demonstrates the presence of a floating H-tone, which cannot be taken as an inherent part of a simplex [mbùú]-LH. Rather, the persistence of the H-tone in this construction is a direct result of its morphosyntactic independence from the rest of the complementizer.

### 3.3.3 HL-tone complementizer

The HL allomorph [mbáà] introduces embedded polar statements, and requires the presence of the clause-final [lá], (10a-e).

- (10) a. mì lén mbáà nzì kʰú?ú tʃʷéét ndʒé nùmí ॥lá  
1.SG know COMP envy taro PRES hurt Numi LA  
'I know if Numi is hungry.' (I can tell whether Numi is hungry (or not))
- b. mì tʃúp nùmí mbáà tʃəáŋ ॥Bá ॥lá  
1.SG say Numi COMP food be.cooked LA  
'I wonder (to Numi) if the food is ready.'
- c. mì kʷèdè mbà nzì kʰú?ú tʃʷéét ndʒé nùmí ॥lá  
1.SG think COMP envy taro PRES hurt Numi LA  
'I think (about) if Numi is hungry.' (Whether Numi is hungry or not by now, it's something that I thought about.)'
- d. mì bétá nùmí mbà tʃəáŋ ॥Bá ॥lá  
1.SG ask Numi COMP food be.cooked LA  
'I ask Numi if the food is ready.'

The final [lá] element is obligatory with the clause-initial HL-complementizer. This appears to parallel two other instances: the floating H-tone present in the LH-complementizer, and the /ndà/-form complementizer /lá/. Given that there are two elements in all these cases, that these elements appear to delineate the embedded clause, and further that they interact directly in the case of the floating H tone, we will assume that these elements are all local to each other. That is, syntactically, they are all articulations of the CP-domain. Such an approach might invoke the work done in the Cartographic approach, which assumes multiple functional projections within the CP-domain, each with a dedicated function (Rizzi1997). While our proposal is not immediately incompatible with the details of this approach, the Cartographic CP is decomposable into multiple functional projections, which are mappings between syntactic position and function. We will put aside the question of how this analysis might translate into a Cartographic approach for further research.

This assumption of having two CP-elements is further motivated by the presence of these two elements in other semantically distinct contexts, such as relative clauses (Kouankem2011) and in other syntactically distinct contexts, such as the DP-domain and its articulation (Kouankem2011, Kouankem2012).

### 3.4 Clause-final /lá/

As described earlier, the clause-final element /lá/ is obligatory at the end of CPs introduced by [mbúù]-HL and [ndà]-L. It uniformly carries H-tone. The /lá/ particle also appears in several other environments and is not exclusive to complementizer contexts. When /lá/ occurs, it is always obligatory. That is, the co-occurrence with the /mbú/-form complementizers is strict: when the particle is grammatical, it must be present and in constructions where it is not present, it is ungrammatical. The nature and function of the /lá/ particle need to be further investigated.

In questions that contain the [mbúù]-HL C, /lá/ is in complementary distribution with the Q-particle /kí/. This supports our previous assumption that the H-tone /lá/ and /kí/ contribute to the syntax of the CP. As the two particles are in complementary distribution with the floating H-tone as we showed earlier, we assume that the H-tone carried by /lá/ and /kí/ is inherent to them. As further evidence, there are no instances of a L-tone /lá/ or /kí/ in our research.

As mentioned in §3.3.3, [mbúù]-HL can be understood as introducing embedded polar statements. Consider the data in (11a-d), where (11a) contains a statement while (11b) outlines a direct question. As can be seen in the cited examples, the clause-final particle /lá/ and the polar question marker /kí/ are in complementary distribution.

- (11) a. má lèn mbúù á lègdàé b<sup>h</sup>ú?ŋwàñì lá  
1.SG know COMP 3.SG forget packet.school LA  
'I know if he forgot the book.'
- b. ú lèn mbúù á lègdàé b<sup>h</sup>ú?ŋwàñì kí  
1.SG know COMP 3.SG forget packet.school Q  
'Would you know if he forgot the book?' (lit. 'Would you know (or not) if he forgot the book (or not)?')
- c. \*ú lèn mbúù á lègdàé b<sup>h</sup>ú?ŋwàñì lá kí  
1.SG know COMP 3.SG forget packet.school LA Q  
Intended: 'Would you know (or not) if he forgot the book (or not)?'
- d. \*ú lèn mbúù á lègdàé b<sup>h</sup>ú?ŋwàñì kí lá  
1.SG know COMP 3.SG forget packet.school Q LA  
Intended: 'Would you know (or not) if he forgot the book (or not)?'

While /lá/ appears to only interact with the C of the embedded clause, the presence of /kí/ seems to also affect the matrix clause. Although polarity is indicated through the embedded clause, it may also be found within the matrix clause.

The question particle induces a polarity reading in the matrix clause. Lacking the question particle, the embedded clause is still polar, if it contains [mbúà]-HL. This /kí/-independent polarity is likely linked to the HL-form complementizer, as /lá/ is not limited to these contexts. Due to our lack of data concerning the scoping behaviour of /kí/, this topic should be investigated further with new data. Additionally, it might also be fruitful to further investigate if [mbúà]-HL is composed of an underlying [mbù]-L plus a floating tone like its deontic counterpart. In this scenario, which we will follow further in section 4, the floating H tone would realize polarity. As a result, it would be necessary to investigate how the polarity on the complementizer and the question particle interact, if this could explain the unusual scope of polarity in (11) and what implications it would have to assume multiple, phonologically similar, but syntactically and semantically distinct floating tones for modality and polarity.

## 4 Deriving the CP

Taking into account the above discussion, this section aims to provide a sketch for the derivation of the Medumba CP. The presence of (at least) two projections will be taken for granted on the basis of the discussion in the previous sections. Additionally, the distributional clues of the elements within those projections provides us with their potential syntactic positions.

First, consider the floating H-tone of the LH-complementizer. This, assuming that it linearly *follows* the underlying L-complementizer and that linear order is a heuristic for syntactic position, gives us the following syntactic structure in (12). Furthermore, we will assume that Medumba is uniformly head-initial and that all linearization that deviates from this is a result of movement (Kayne 1994).

- (12) [CP mbù [CP H TP ]]

The above derivation shows two available positions within the CP.<sup>2</sup> Naturally then, the /lá/ particle, which delineates the right edge of embedded clauses, might head this lower CP projection. This is further suggested by the fact that it is in complementary distribution with the deontic H-tone of the LH-complementizer,

---

<sup>2</sup>We would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing out a bracketing issue that arises here: as the deontic H-tone is below the [mbù] complementizer, it should not be available for selection by a PAV. This remains a problem which the phonological process of tone docking itself is unable to solve. One possible stipulative solution is to treat the H-tone as an affix, moving it and adjoining its formal features to the upper CP.

as discussed previously. Under the model in (12) we have, as desired, a local relationship between the deontic H-tone and the complementizer [mbù]. In the case of /lá/ heading the lower CP, this requires movement of the TP rightward past /lá/ as /lá/ is a clause-final element. The exact mechanism responsible is a question for future research.

This raises questions about the status of the polarity H-tone of the HL complementizer. Since this co-occurs with the /lá/ complementizer and its surface realization suggests that it precedes the underlying L-complementizer, we might suggest an additional position above the structure, as in (13).

- (13) [XP (H) [CP mbù [CP lá TP ]]]

Given its semantic force, we assume that this upper position occupied by the polarity-inducing H-tone might be an optional PolP head. However, such detailed questions about the CP-structure are subject to further investigation.

## 5 Concluding remarks and remaining questions

While this paper is far from presenting a complete analysis of the complementizer system in Medumba, we hope this discussion has provided a motivation for the presence of syntactically conditioned tone by focusing on the CP domain. By analyzing the impact of PAVs and how they interact with complementizers, we realize that there is much to be gained from looking at some tones in Medumba as properly syntactic rather than pushing off all tonal alternations to the phonology, which can possibly be extended to other domains of the syntax. Furthermore, the interaction of complementizers, grammatical tone and a small inventory of PAVs proves to be a successful strategy to bridge the gap to the semantic possibilities that are lexical in languages with a richer PAV inventory.

Major questions that have arisen during our research include understanding the presence of /lá/ and how the scope of polarity works in Medumba. /lá/ holds an important clause-final position, but at this time we cannot conclusively say whether or not /lá/ holds a definitive role in relation with any of the complementizers. Despite tone acting as a main divisor between meanings and allomorphs, we cannot definitively state whether or not it holds any power as to what determines the selection of what gets read as a propositional attitude reading. Additionally, as the scopal behaviour of polarity is still diffuse and we cannot define a proper position for the PolP so far, we suggest further investigation on this topic.

## Abbreviations

ITER = iterative

ECP = reciprocal

Abbreviation  
changed  
per LGR

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Hermann Keupdjio for sharing his language with us, Rose-Marie Dèchaine for her guidance, the UBC LING 431/432/531/532 class of 2017/8 for their comments and discussions, and the attendees of ACAL49 for their comments. All remaining errors of data and interpretation are the authors.

# Chapter 6

## The pragmatics of Swahili relative clauses

Mohamed Mwamzandi<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Several studies explain the variation of the Swahili relative clause (RC) from a syntactic perspective. These studies discuss the derivational and structural differences/similarities between the *amba* RC and the tensed RC. In this study, the choice between the *amba* and tensed RCs is explained from a pragmatic perspective. 440 RCs were extracted from the Helsinki Corpus of Swahili. The dataset was then coded for various variables including relative marker (*amba/tensed*), relative type (restrictive/non-restrictive), length (number of words used), and information status (topic/non-topic). The results show that the tensed RCs are mostly restrictive while the *amba* RCs are mostly non-restrictive. Further, the mean length of the *amba* RC is higher than of the tensed RC. It was observed that the *amba* RC is preferred in topic shift transition, that is, when a non-topic NP becomes the topic NP in the following utterance while the tensed RC is preferred in continue transition, that is, if the topic of the matrix clause is the same as that of the RC.

### 1 Introduction

Several studies discuss the syntax of the Swahili tensed relative marker (RM) (1) and the *amba* RM (2). The goal of these studies is to draw a parallel between the two by explaining how the position of the RM is derivable from the same underlying position (Vitale1981, Keach1985) or occupies the same syntactic position (DemuthHarford1999, Ngonyani2001, Ngonyani2006). The examples presented in this study are from the Helsinki Corpus of Swahili (written texts in the standard Swahili), otherwise, citation will be given. The following notational conventions are followed: the RM is glossed as SRM (subject RM) or ORM (object RM) and the RC is bracketed.



- (1) Askari [a-li-ye-ki-ongoza kikosi].  
1.policeman 1.SM-PST-1.SRM-7.OM-lead 7.squad]  
'The policeman who led the squad.'
- (2) Askari amba-ye a-li-ki-ongoza kikosi].  
1.policeman amba-1.SRM 1.SM-PST-7.OM-lead 7.squad  
'The policeman who led the squad.'

In (1) the SRM *ye*, which agrees with the head noun *askari* 'policeman' in number and noun class is prefixed to the verb after tense while in (2) it is suffixed to *amba*. In Swahili and other Bantu languages, a predicate has a subject marker prefix that agrees with the subject in number and noun class and may also carry an object marker prefix. In (1), the subject marker prefix *a* occurring in the verb initial position corresponds to the noun class 1 NP *askari* 'police' while the object marker prefix *ki* occurring after the SRM *ye* in (1) and after the tense marker *li* in (2) corresponds to the noun class 7 NP *kikosi* 'squad'. I should mention that there is yet another type of RM referred to as the general relative exemplified in (3).

- (3) Askari a-ki-ongoz-a-ye kikosi.  
1.policeman 1.SM-7.OM-lead-FV-1.SRM squad  
'The policeman who is leading the squad.'

The SRM *ye* in (3) is suffixed to the verb after the final vowel. Time is unspecified in the general relative and it is used in cases interpreted as present or habitual (Ashton1944). In this study, I explain the variation of the tensed RC and the *amba* RC from a pragmatic perspective and leave the general relative for future research. "Pragmatics" is defined as "the systematic study of meaning by virtue of, or dependent on, the use of language" (Huang2007). Notice that the tensed and the *amba* relative clause in (1) and (2) are grammatical and are truth conditionally equivalent. The aim of this study is to give a pragmatic account of the variation. I should mention that most of the explanations for the variation of the Swahili *amba* and tensed RCs in this study are not absolute but statistical tendencies and should be considered in their entirety rather than individually.

Based on a few selected examples from texts, earlier studies have made claims that the *amba* RM is required in non-restrictive RCs, but this is yet to be confirmed using a large dataset (Ashton1944, Schadeberg1989). A restrictive RC as illustrated in (5) delimits the referent of an NP (Andrews2007). On the other hand, a non-restrictive RC as illustrated in (5) makes a comment about an NP or another constituent without delimiting its referent.

- (4) The Japanese [who/that are industrious] now outcompete Europe.
- (5) The Japanese, [who/(\*that) are industrious], now outcompete Europe.  
(Keenan1985)

In English, the restrictive clause in (4) allows the occurrence of the complementizer *that* but the non-restrictive clause in (5) does not. It is also possible to suppress the relative pronoun in a restrictive RC as in: *The man I saw yesterday left this morning*, but not in a non-restrictive RC (Comrie1989). Further, as indicated by the comma before and after the RC, the non-restrictive clause as seen in (5) is set off intonationally from the main clause. Although the dataset in this study shows that the *amba* relative is mostly used in non-restrictive RCs, both the tensed and *amba* RCs can be used restrictively as well as non-restrictively. Thus, the restrictive and non-restrictive variable alone may not explain the Swahili *amba* and tensed RC variation. In addition to being used in non-restrictive RCs, it has been claimed that the *amba* RC when contrasted with the tensed RC is morphologically more versatile; its word order more flexible; and its structure more complex (Schadeberg1989, Russell1992).

I explore via corpus analysis, the following questions (i) the frequency of use of the *amba* RC and tensed RC as restrictive/non-restrictive and its implications in the variation (ii) whether the speaker's choice of the *amba*/tensed RC is influenced by the length of the RC measured in number of words. I should mention that cross-linguistic studies have mostly analyzed complexity of RCs resulting from movement, locality, intervention and feature similarity as well as word order expectation (See, for example, DurrellmanEtAl2016, Rizzi2013Locality, LevyEtAl2013.)■ Because of the difficulty in measuring complexity in written texts whose verification needs processing tests performed on speakers, this study investigates the effect of RC length on the Swahili *amba* and tensed RC variation. It is assumed that longer sentences have more phrases, clauses and optional adjuncts that require subordination and coordination (cf. HemforthEtAl2015 who investigate the effect of length on high attachment (first noun modification) and low attachment (second noun modification) in the processing of relative clauses with two possible antecedents in English, Spanish and French.). (iii) whether the grammatical role (subject/object) of the head noun in the matrix clause and information status of the head NP, specifically topic, impacts on the type of RC used. There are some parameters that may help in identifying the topic in an utterance. These include grammatical role, pronominalization, and linear order of discourse entities. I posit that the notion of topic, defined as what the proposition is about (Gundel1985, Lambrecht1994), play a role on the choice of one form of the RCs

over the other. Subjects are mostly topics while objects may be part of a comment in a topic-comment utterance structure. Based on qualitative and quantitative analysis of the dataset, I claim that the *amba* RC is preferred if an NP in a previous utterance is the topic of the RC in a shift transition while the tensed relative is preferred if the most salient NP (topic) of the matrix clause is also the topic of the RC.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In §2 I discuss previous works that explain the variation of the Swahili *amba* and tensed RCs. In §3 I briefly explain the methodology. I present the results of the study and discussion in §4 followed by the conclusion in §5.

## 2 Previous studies on the Swahili RC variation

The Swahili RC variation have mostly been attributed to Morphosyntactic restrictions on the tensed RM. While the *amba* RM may be used with all the tense, aspect and modality (TAM) markers, the tensed RC may only be used with the past tense marker *li*, present tense marker *na*, the future tense marker *taka*, and the *si* negation marker (See Keach1985 for a detailed description of TAM markers that require the use of *amba*). Due to the verb status of the tense markers and *amba* from a diachronic perspective, it has been argued that the two Swahili RCs are structurally the same (Vitale1981, Keach1985, DemuthHarford1999, Ngonyani2001, Ngonyani2006). A subject postposing rule in object RCs have been used as evidence to argue for the same syntactic position of the Swahili RM. Example (6) and (7) show the *amba* and tensed object RC respectively.

- (6) Kikosi [amba-cho Kisaka a-li-ki-ongoza].  
squad amba-7.ORM 1.Kisaka 1.SM-PST-7.OM-lead  
'Squad which Kisaka led.'
- (7) Kikosi [a-li-cho-ki-ongoza Kisaka].  
7.squad 1.SM-PST-7.ORM-7.OM-lead 1.Kisaka  
'The squad which Kisaka led'

The prefix *a* attached to the verb *ongoza* 'lead' corresponding to the noun class 1 NP indicates that *kisaka* is the subject of the RC while the RM *cho* corresponding to the noun class 7 NP *kikosi* indicates that the object NP marked by the prefix *ki* before the root of the verb is the relativized NP. In (6) the subject, *kisaka*, is preverbal but postverbal in (7). Notice that the head noun *kikosi* 'squad' occurs before *amba/tense (li)*. Keach1985 argues that the tensed RM and the *amba* RM

are both independent words (verbs) and that nothing can intervene between the head noun and *amba/tense*, hence, the postverbal position of the subject in the tensed object RC in (7). However, the structural similarities/differences may not explain why one of the RCs may be chosen instead of the other in discourse texts.

Russell1992 argues that *amba* is used in object RCs to disambiguate the subject and object NPs if they both belong to the same noun class as illustrated in (8) and (9).

- (8) Mwivi [a-li-ye-mw-onā mtoto].  
1.thief 1.SM-PST-1.RM-1.OM-see 1.child  
'The thief who saw the child/The thief whom the child saw.'
- (9) Mwivi [amba-ye mtoto a-li-mw-onā].  
1.thief amba-1.ORM 1.child 1.SM-PST-1.OM-see  
'The thief whom the child saw.'

The NPs *Mwivi* 'thief' and *mtoto* 'child' agree in number and class with the verb *a-li-mu-onā* and can therefore be both interpreted as subject/object in (8) since Swahili allows both the SVO and OVS word order. The use of *amba* licenses the occurrence of the subject in its canonical preverbal position as seen in (9) and therefore enhances the interpretation of *mtoto* 'child' as the subject of the RC. However, the disambiguation justification for the choice of *amba* is limited in its application since cross-reference can establish the subject and object grammatical roles in situations where the two belong to different noun classes as seen in (10).

- (10) Mwivi wa-li-ye-mu-onā watoto.  
1.thief 2.SM-PST-1.ORM-1.OM-see 2.children  
'The thief who the children saw.'

In (10), the subject of the RC is *watoto* 'children' because the subject marker *wa* on the verb agrees with the noun class 2 NP *watoto* 'children'. Furthermore, as was mentioned by an anonymous reviewer, although *amba* is used in (11) the subject of the sentence remains ambiguous if the NP *mtoto* 'child' occurs after the verb.

- (11) Mwivi [amba-ye a-li-mw-onā mtoto].  
1.thief amba-1.ORM 1.SM-PST-see 1.child  
'The thief whom the child saw'

Considering examples such as (10) and (11), the choice of the *amba* relative may not be necessarily to disambiguate the subject/object grammatical roles. Furthermore, the grammatical role (subject/object) and function (agent/theme) of discourse entities belonging to the same/different noun classes can be identified if adequate contextual background is available. In texts, discourse entities are linked via referring expression and therefore parameters such as linear order of utterances, subjecthood and pronominalization can help identify the intended referents as well as their grammatical role and information statuses (cf. GroszEtAl1995 and GroszSidner1998's GroszSidner1998 Centering Theory which attempts to determine topic in discourse texts.).

In Swahili, it has been claimed that the *amba* RC is preferred if the RC in question is complex as illustrated in (12) and (13).

- (12) Masanduku [amba-yo sisi watu wa-wili au wa-tatu  
6.boxes amba-6.ORM us 2.people 2.AGR-two or 2.AGR-three  
ha-tu-wez-i]<sub>1</sub> [ku-ya-enua]<sub>2</sub>.  
NEG-1PL-able-SBJV INF-6.OM-lift  
'Boxes which two or three of us cannot lift.'
- (13) Masanduku [tu-si-yo-weza sisi watu wa-wili au watatu]  
6.boxes 1.PL-NEG-6.ORM-able us 2.people 2.AGR-two or 2.AGR-three  
ku-ya-enua]<sub>2</sub>.  
INF-6.OM-lift  
'Boxes which two or three of us cannot lift.' (Ashton1944)

Following KeenanComrie1977's (KeenanComrie1977) Accessibility Hierarchy of relativization, it has been claimed that the *amba* RC in (12) is preferred instead of the tensed RC in (13) since the relativized NP is the object (which is higher in the Accessibility Hierarchy than the subject). Based on the dataset used in this study, I argue that the choice of the *amba* RM in (12) is influenced by the length of the RC rather than the position of the head noun in the Accessibility Hierarchy. Notice that the RC in (12) contains two clauses with 8 words. The *amba* relative clause may be used by the speaker to "compensate for (perceived) difficulties in producing or parsing" long relative clauses, whether subject or object RCs (Green2008)

There is only Green1996 and Green1997 in the bibliography

In these syntactic studies on Swahili RC, the structural differences/similarities are the focus and their usage by speakers regarded as a case of free variation.

However, a combination of pragmatic factors such as preference for the tensed RC in restrictive RCs, length of the RCs, and information structure considerations may better explain the choice of one of the RC variants in natural language.

### 3 Methodology

The source of data in this study was the Helsinki Corpus of Swahili (HCS) which has 25 million words. The corpus contains Swahili newspaper articles as well as excerpts of literary texts, education and science material written from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century to 2015. In the HCS, concordance searches are done via an inbuilt software, namely *Korp*. *Korp* displays a concordance list of the query as well as the immediate context of the search expression. Every word in the Helsinki corpus contains information related to its parts of speech (for example; verb, noun, adjective), morphological description (for example; relative marker, reciprocal, tense), syntactic function (for example; subject, main verb, object), and gloss in English. The tensed RCs were displayed using an extended search that instructed *Korp* to look for words whose parts of speech was V (verb) and its morphology included REL (relative marker). The *amba* RCs were displayed using a search that queried for all occurrences with *amba* as the base form. Only TAM markers that allow the occurrence of both the *amba* and tensed RCs were selected. Further, the RCs were selected such that they represent the diverse sources in the corpus which include novels by different authors, newspapers, and academic articles on literary works. In total, 440 RCs were selected from the HCS; 285 were tensed RCs and 155 were *amba* RCs.

Recall that *Korp* displays the target utterances in their immediate context. The utterances that occur within the context of the target RC provide contextual clues that help in the pragmatic analysis of the Swahili RC variation. Each of the 440 RCs was coded as restrictive or non-restrictive. As explained earlier, a restrictive relative gives specific information that delimit a referent while a non-restrictive clause gives more information (non-identifying) about a referent. The number of words within each RC was then counted to measure its length. After identifying the discourse entities in the target utterance and those occurring before and after it the RC was coded for relativization (subject/object), the grammatical role of the head noun in relation to the matrix clause (subject/object/PP complement) and information status of the head NP (topic)/non-topic).

## 4 Results and discussion

The study aimed at investigating pragmatic reasons for the variation of Swahili *amba* and tensed RCs. I discuss the results in the following order. In §4.1, I discuss the role of restrictive/non-restrictive on the *amba* RC and tensed RC variation. In §4.2, I discuss the effect of the RC length on the choice of the *amba*/tensed RC. In §4.3 I show that information structure, hitherto unexplored, may also impact on the Swahili RC variation.

### 4.1 Variation due to restrictive/non-restrictive use of RCs

If the variation of the *amba* and tensed RCs is due to the restrictive and non-restrictive use of the RCs, I expect the dataset used in the study to have a higher frequency of *amba* non-restrictive RCs than the tensed non-restrictive RCs. On the other, I expect a higher frequency of tensed restrictive RCs than *amba* restrictive RCs. Of the 155 *amba* RCs, 32 were restrictive and 123 were non-restrictive. As for the 285 tensed RCs, 245 were restrictive and 40 were non-restrictive. Figure 1 summarizes these results.

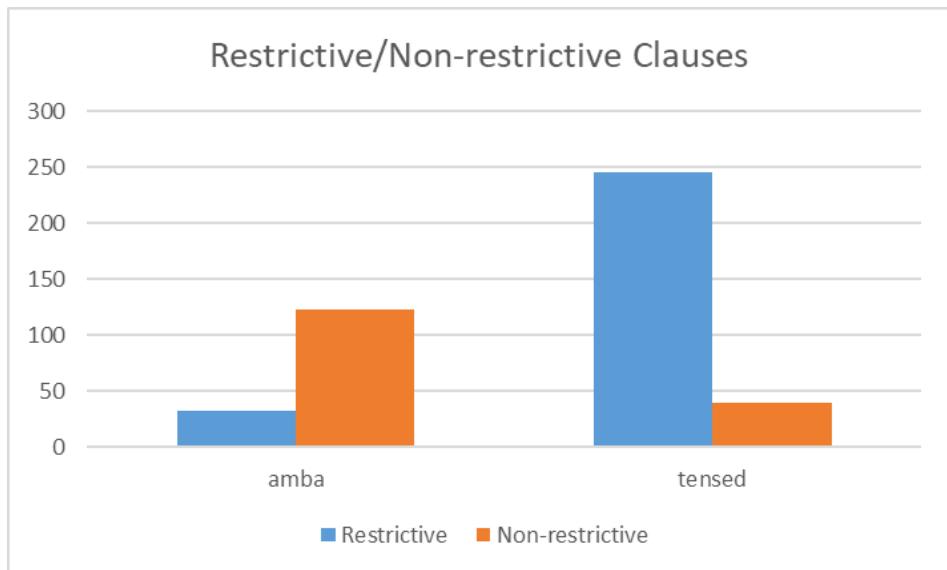


Figure 1: *amba* and tensed restrictive and non-restrictive clauses

Please provide the exact numbers so the image can be replaced with the TikZ plot. Then change the label of the pgfplot from fig:mwamzandi:2 to fig:mwamzandi:1

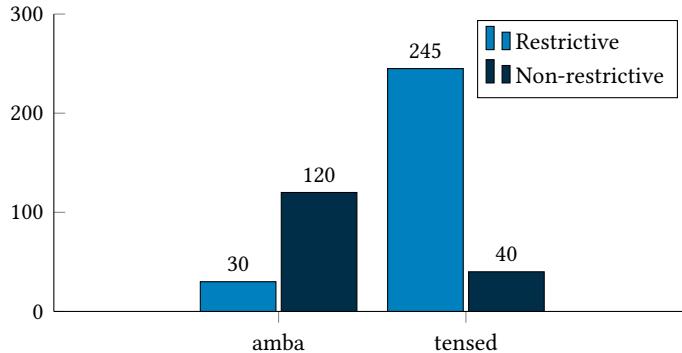


Figure 2: amba and tensed restrictive and non-restrictive clauses

A Chi-squared test shows that the frequency differences between the restrictive and non-restrictive clauses for the *amba* and tensed RCs is significant  $\chi^2(1, N=440) = 180.89$ ,  $p < .001$ . The implication is that the tensed RC is used more frequently as restrictive while the *amba* RC is used more frequently as non-restrictive. I present an example of a tensed restrictive RC in (14).

- (14) Bwana yule [a-na-ye-sinzia].  
 1.man that 1.SM-PRS-1.SRM-doze  
 ‘That man (over there) who is dozing.’

In (14), the speaker points at a specific man who was dozing amongst other men. The RC gives information that help in delimiting the referent of the referring expression *bwana yule* ‘that man’. Although the tensed RC was mostly used restrictively, there are a few instances tensed non-restrictive RCs illustrated in (15).

- (15) A-li-m-rud-i-a                              Adili [a-li-ye-kuwa                      a-na-pata  
 1.SM-PST-1.OM-return-APPL-FV 1.Adili 1.SM-PST-1.SRM-AUX 1.SM-PRS-get  
 fahamu].  
 consciousness  
 ‘He got back to Adili who was regaining his consciousness.’

The RC in (15) does not delimit the referent but gives more information about the topic of the RC, *Adili*. A close analysis of the non-restrictive tensed RCs shows that they mostly occur if the referent of the head noun is a proper noun as is the case in (15). There are also cases when a non-restrictive tensed RC gives more information that establishes the identity of a proper noun as seen in (16).

- (16) Krapf [a-li-ye-li-tumikia              dhehebu              la C.M.S].  
Krapf 1.SM-PST-1.SRM-5.OM-serve 5.denomination of C.M.S.]  
'Krapf, who served the C.M.S Christian denomination.'

In (16), the head noun *Krapf* is the subject of the RC. The RC presents more specific information that may assist the hearer identify the intended referent.

While the dataset shows that the tensed RC mostly gives information that delimits the referent in restrictive RCs or gives identifying information in non-restrictive usage, the *amba* RC adds new non-identifying information predicated on the head noun as seen in (17).

- (17) A-li-kuwa    a-me-va-li—a              rubega nyeupe [Amba-yo  
1.SM-PST-AUX 1.SM-PFV-wear-APPL-FV 9.cloak white amba-9.SRM  
i-li-anza        ku-poteza weupe        wake].  
9.SM-PST-start INF-loose whiteness its  
'He was wearing a white cloak that had started to lose its whiteness.'

In (17), the RC gives more information about the head noun, *rubega nyeupe* 'white cloak', whose whiteness had faded. The RC in (16) may be analyzed as an utterance with a topic-comment structure rather than an NP in a coreferential relationship with its antecedent. Although the *amba* RC is mostly non-restrictive, there are instances when the *amba* RC may be used restrictively as seen in (18).

- (18) Mambo muhimu [[amba-yo ya-na-fanya]<sub>1</sub> [Shairi  
6.things important amba-6.SRM 6.SM-PRS-make 6.poem  
li-it-w-e              la Ki-swahili]<sub>2</sub>].  
6.SM-call-PASS-SBJV of 7-Swahili  
'Important things that make a poem be called a Swahili poem.'

In (18) the *amba* RC is restrictive because the head noun *mambo muhimu* 'important things' are defined by the RC as a set of characteristics that make a poem be called a Swahili poem. Notice that compared to the tensed restrictive clause presented in (14), the *amba* restrictive clause in (18) is longer. The tensed RC is one-word long (one clause) while the *amba* RC is six-words long (two clauses) and both are restrictive and subject RCs. I present the results of the effect of length on Swahili RC variation in §4.2.

## 4.2 Length of the relative clause

In this section, I discuss the effect of the RC length measured in number of words on Swahili *amba* RC and tensed RC variation. I claim that the *amba* RC is more frequently used if the length of the RC is long, while the tensed relative is used more frequently in short RCs as illustrated in (19) and (20).

- (19) a. Mwanamke mjane amba-ye a-li-kuwa jirani yao.  
1.woman 1.widow amba-1.SRM 1.SM-PST-be 1.neighbor their  
'A (woman) widow who was their neighbor.'
  - b. Mwanamke mjane a-li-ye-kuwa jirani yao.  
1.woman 1.widow 1.SM-PST-1.SRM-be 1.neighbor their  
'A (woman) widow who was their neighbor.'
- (20) a. Mwanamke mjane amba-ye a-li-kuwa jirani yao hapo  
1.woman 1.widow amba-1.SRM 1.SM-PST-be 1.neighbor their long  
zamani.  
ago  
'A (woman) widow who was their neighbor long ago.'
  - b. Mwanamke mjane a-li-ye-kuwa jirani yao hapo zamani.  
1.woman 1.widow 1.SM-PST-1.SRM-be 1.neighbor their long ago  
'A (woman) widow who was their neighbor long ago.'

The RCs in (19a-b) are shorter than the RCs in (20a-b) because of the addition of the adverbial phrase *hapo zamani* in the later. Regardless of the grammatical role of the head noun, the dataset indicates that the *amba* RC was mostly used in cases where the length of the RC in question was long as seen in (20). I claim that the *amba* relative is used more frequently in such cases due to its simplifying effect in parsing or producing long RCs.

Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviation (in parenthesis) of the length of the *amba* RCs and tensed RCs (restrictive and non-restrictive).

Table 1: Mean and sd of RC length in restrictive and non-restrictive clauses

	Restrictive	Non-restrictive
<i>amba</i>	6.34 (3.25)	7.21 (3.71)
tensed	3.09 (2.34)	4.25 (2.61)

The mean length of the *amba* RCs is higher (about 7 words) than that of the tensed RCs (about 4 words). A non-repeated measures ANOVA with RC length as the independent variable, and RM (*amba/tensed*) and relative type (restrictive/non-restrictive) as the dependent variables reveal that there is a significant main effect of RC length on RM,  $F(1,440)=197.49$ ,  $p<0.001$ , and relative type  $F(1,440)=11.11$ ,  $p<0.001$ . These results indicate that the *amba* RC is preferred in long RCs while the tensed RC is preferred in short RCs.

In addition to its simplifying effect in parsing and production of long RCs, the preference for *amba* in such situations is also due to its ability to allow for more types of phrases to occur in different orders as illustrated by the adverbial phrase (AP) *kwa makusudi* ‘deliberately’ in (21-24).

- (21) Wa-po wananchi [amba-o kwa makusudi wa-na-ziba 2.SM-16.LOC 2.citizens [amba-2.SRM with 6.deliberate 2.SM-PRS-block mifereji]. 4.taps]  
‘There are some citizens who deliberately block taps.’
- (22) \* Wa-po wananchi kwa makusudi [wa-na-o-ziba mifereji]. 2.SM-16.LOC 2.citizens with 6.deliberate [2.SM-PRS-2.SRM-block 4.taps]
- (23) Wa-po wananchi [amba-o wa-na-ziba mifereji kwa 2.SM-16.LOC 2.citizens [amba-2.SRM 2.SM-PRS-block 4.taps with makusudi]. deliberate]
- (24) Wa-po wananchi [wa-na-o-ziba mifereji kwa makusudi]. 2.SM-16.LOC 2.citizens [2.SM-PRS-2.SRM-block 4.taps with deliberate]

In (21), the *amba* RC must be used because of the fronted AP *kwa makusudi* ‘deliberately’. The use of the tensed RC with the AP intervening between the head noun *wananchi* ‘citizens’ and the RM in *wa-na-o-ziba* renders (22) ungrammatical. Both the *amba* RC and the tensed RC are grammatical if the adverbial phrase is post-verbal as in (23) and (24). The different word order with the AP in sentence final position may however change the intended effect of the utterance as stipulated by information structure considerations discussed in §4.3.

#### 4.3 Effect of grammatical role and topic

I claim that in addition to the restrictiveness and RC length, the use of the *amba/tensed* RC may also be influenced by information structure considerations. Information structure, a term originally introduced by Halliday 1967, deals with formal

properties of semantically equivalent but pragmatically divergent propositions in their textual environment (Lambrecht1994). The notion of topic, defined as what the sentence is about, has a role in the choice of Swahili RC constructions. Under information structure, utterances are organized into two parts. In the unmarked form, the first part, the topic, is given or presupposed information while the second part, comment, the predicate and its internal argument(s) and adjunct(s) is the new or informative part of the utterance (Prince1981, Prince1992, GundelFretheim2006). To investigate the role of grammatical role and topic in the variation of the tensed and *amba* RCs, I coded the relativization of the head noun (subject/object/prepositional phrase (PP)). Based on its grammatical role and other contextual clues including pronominalization and referential chain (previous or later mention), the head noun was coded as topic/non-topic. This was possible because each utterance has exactly one topic which is the most salient member of the referents realized as pronoun, explicit referring expression, zero or “inferred” (as used by Prince1981). Salience “defines the degree of relative prominence of a unit of information, at a specific point in time, in comparison to other units of information” (ChiarcosEtAl2011Salience). The concept of topic as the most salient entity of an utterance is illustrated in (25).

- (25) a. Nyumba [a-li-yo-kaa Beneti].  
9.house 1.SM-PST-9.ORM-stay Beneti  
'The house which Beneti stayed.'
- b. I-li-kuwa ya Kiswahili kabisa,  
9.SM-PST-be of Swahili typical  
'It was a typical Swahili house,'
- c. I-li-on-ek-an-a kuukuu.  
9.SM-PST-see-STV-RECP-FV old  
'it looked old.'

In (25), there are three clauses labeled as a, b and c. In (25a), the subject of the RC is the postposed NP *Beneti* and the relativized NP *nyumba* is the object. Although it is possible to use the *amba* RM in (25a), I argue that the tensed RC is chosen so that the subject NP *Beneti* is postposed to place *nyumba* 'house' as the sole preverbal NP to make it easier for the hearer to parse *nyumba* as the topic of the matrix clause. The head noun *nyumba* 'house' is the subject of the utterance in (25) and therefore occurs in (25b-c) as a pronominal subject prefix attached to the verb. The most salient information unit of the matrix clause is therefore the house because of its occurrence as the sole NP in preverbal position and its pronominalization.

A restrictive clause is analyzed as a modifier of the head noun and therefore an element within a noun phrase structure of a subject, object or PP complement. On the other hand, a non-restrictive clause is analyzed as an independent clause with its own locus for topic update. The head noun may be the topic/non-topic of the RC in question. While (25) shows a head noun, *nyumba* ‘house’, that is the topic of the matrix clause, (26) shows a head noun that is non-topic.

- (26) Adili a-li-vunja amri [a-li-yo-p-ew-a].  
1.Adili 1.SM-PST-break 9.command 1.SM-PST-9.ORM-OM-given-PASS-FV  
'Adili broke the command he was given.'

Isn't the form *given* in the gloss due to the PASS morpheme? Shouldn't it be *give*?

In (26), the head noun *amri* is the object of the matrix clause and together with the RC is an internal argument of the verb *vunja* ‘break’. The topic of the matrix clause is the subject NP *Adili* in the left periphery. The occurrence of the NP *Adili* as a pronominal subject marker prefix within the RC provides further evidence for the topic status of the NP *Adili*. In instances with no topic shift such as (25) and (26), the tensed RC is more frequently used regardless of the grammatical role of the head noun. In both instances, the head noun is the object of the RC, an RC that is predicted to be complex by the Accessibility Hierarchy (KeenanComrie1977) and therefore the *amba* RC more appropriate due to its simplification effects (Ashton1944, Schadeberg1989). Notice that the length of the tensed RCs in (25) and (26) are short (one word long with no subordination or coordination). I argue that the use of the tensed clause instead of the *amba* RC is due to the length of the RCs as explained in §4.2 and the information status of the head noun.

Table 2 shows the results of the effect of grammatical role and topic on the frequencies of *amba* and tensed restrictive/non-restrictive RCs. Row one, for example, shows the frequencies of the *amba* RCs and tensed RCs (restrictive and non-restrictive) when the head noun (HN) is the subject (topic) of the matrix clause and is also the topic of the RC in question.

The frequency of head NPs that were the topic of the matrix clause and were continued as the topic of the tensed RCs was higher (70) than that of head nouns that were topics in the matrix clause as well as the *amba* RCs (28). The frequency difference is significant,  $X^2 (1,N=98)=18$ ,  $p<0.001$ . Example (27) shows a tensed RC whose head noun is the topic of the matrix clause as well as the RC.

Table 2: Effect of grammatical role and topic on Swahili RC variation

	amba restrictive	amba non-restrictive	Tensed restrictive	Tensed non-restrictive	Total
<b>HN=Subj, topic</b>	7	21	62	8	98
<b>HN=Subj, non-topic</b>	1	0	4	1	6
<b>HN=Obj, topic</b>	10	55	21	15	101
<b>HN=Obj, non-topic</b>	3	24	94	5	126
<b>HN=PP, topic</b>	5	18	9	9	41
<b>HN=PP, non-topic</b>	6	5	55	2	68

- (27) Waandishi [wa-li-o-fuata] wa-me-ach-an-a na mtindo  
 2.writers 2.SM-PST-2.SRM-follow 2.SM-PFV-leave-RECP-FV with style  
 huu.  
 this  
 ‘The writers who followed have abandoned this style (of writing).’

In (27), the head noun *waandishi* ‘writers’ is the subject (topic) of the matrix clause and is continued as the topic of the RC via the subject marker *wa*. RCs that delimit the referent of a topic NP in a continue transition are mostly tensed. However, the *amba* RC may be used in long RCs even if the head noun is subject of the matrix clause and topic of the RC in question as discussed in §4.2.

There was a total of 101 RCs (65 *amba* and 36 tensed) whose head nouns were objects of the matrix clause but topic of the RC in question. On the other hand, there were 126 RCs (27 *amba* and 99 tensed) whose head nouns was object of the matrix but were non-topics within the RC utterances. The *amba* RC was used to enhance a shift transition in the event that the object NP became the topic of the RC as illustrated in (28).

- (28) [Waandamanaji wa-li-kaidi amri hiyo]<sub>1</sub> [na  
2.demonstrators 2.SM-PST-disobey 9.command that and  
ku-wa-rush-i-a mawe polisi]<sub>2</sub> [amba-o  
INF-OM-throw-APPL-FV 6.stones 2.policemen amba-2.SRM  
wa-li-jibu mapigo]<sub>3</sub> [kwa ku-fyatua risasi za moto]<sub>4</sub>.  
2.SM-PST-respond 6.beatings by INF-shoot 10.bullets of 3.fire  
'The demonstrators disobeyed the command and threw stones to the  
policemen who responded to the beatings (of stones) by shooting live  
bullets.'

In (28), there are four clauses numbered 1–4. The topic of clause 1 and 2 is *waandamanaji* ‘demonstrators’ while the topic of clause 3 and 4, the *amba* RC, is *polisi* ‘policemen’, the object of the matrix clause. Since the NP *polisi* ‘police’ is mentioned for the first time as the object of the matrix clause in clause 2, then functions as the subject of the following clause, the *amba* RC, then it becomes the most salient NP in that clause due to its subject role and givenness (previously mentioned). The *amba* clause is preferred in a shift transition because of the topic status of the previously mentioned object NP to assist in parsing the RC as a separate utterance with a topic-comment structure. Although the frequency of the *amba* RCs used in shift transition is significantly higher than that of the tensed RCs, the tensed RC may also be used as shown in (29).

- (29) Bali Rehema a-li-po-nyanyua macho ku-m-tazama Bikiza  
but 1.Rehema 1.SM-PST-raise 6.eyes INF-2.OM-look 1.Bikiza  
[a-li-ye-leta taarifa ya kifo]...  
1.SM-PST-1.SRM-bring 9.message of 7.death  
'But when *Rehema* raised her eyes to look at *Bikiza* who brought the  
meassage of death...'

In (29), *Bikiza* is the object of the matrix clause but the topic of the tensed RC. I mentioned earlier that the tensed non-restrictive RC occur in contexts where the head noun is a proper noun. This may explain the choice of the tensed RC here, but I should reiterate that the pragmatic explanations in this study are not absolute. Of course, they are statistical tendencies that cannot be attributed to chance.

41 head nouns occurring as PP complements within the subject/object NP of the matrix clause were RC topics while 68 were non-topics. The frequency difference between the *amba* and tensed RCs when the head NP was topic was insignificant,  $p>0.05$ . However, the frequency difference in non-topic head nouns

was significant  $X^2$  ( $1, N=77$ ) = 31,  $p < 0.001$ ). In (30), the *amba* RC is used in shift transitions, that is, the head noun is not the topic of the matrix clause but is the topic of the RC.

- (30) A-li-anza               ku-safiri ili           ku-epuka ghadhabu ya  
     1.SM.3SG-PST-begin INF-travel 9.anger of       1.sibling his  
     ndugu               yake                       amba-ye a-li-u-kosa urithi huo.  
     amba-1.SRM 1.SM-PST-11.inheritance that  
     ‘He started traveling to avoid the anger of his sibling who had missed the inheritance.’

In (30), the head noun *ndugu yake* ‘his sibling’ is the complement of the preposition *ya* ‘of’. The subject of the matrix clause is a discourse entity occurring as subject pronominal NP *a* (The co-referential NP is not overt in the example.) while the subject of the *amba* RC is *ndugu yake* ‘his sibling’ occurring as a the SRM *ye* and pronominal NP *a* within the RC. The use of *amba* in (30) enhances the parsing of the RC as an utterance with its own locus for update rather than a delimiting phrase of the object NP. A close analysis reveals that tensed RCs whose head is topic of the RC but a PP complement of the matrix subject/object NP were mostly predicated by intransitive or passivized verbs as illustrated in (31) and (32).

- (31) A-li-ji-onsa           katika nyumba kubwa sana i-li-yo-kuwa  
     1.SM-PST-REFL-see in     9.house 5.big very 9.SM-PST-9.SRM-be  
     nzuri               ajabu.  
     beautiful surprisingly  
     ‘He found himself in a very big house that was surprisingly beautiful.’
- (32) Katika hukumu i-li-yo-to-lew-a                   jana           na Jaji  
     in               9.ruling 9.SM-PST-9.SRM-give-PASS-FV yesterday by 1.judge  
     Bernard Luand.  
     Bernard Luand  
     ‘In a ruling that was given yesterday by Judge Bernard Luand.’

In (31) the subject/topic of the tensed RC is the NP *nyumba kubwa sana* ‘a very big house’ which is a complement of the preposition *katika* ‘in’. In (32) the head noun is the NP *hukumu* also occurring after the preposition *katika* ‘in’. As for the head nouns which were PP complements of subject/object NPs of the matrix clause, the dataset generally indicates that the tensed RC in non-topic head nouns is the most frequently used.

## 5 Conclusion

A combination of factors including restrictive/nonrestrictive use of the RC, length of the relative, grammatical role of the head noun and information structure may explain the choice of one of the Swahili RC variants in cases that allow both the *amba* and tensed RC, specifically, when the past, present and future tense markers are used. The dataset suggests that all things being equal, the tensed RM is mostly used if the RC is restrictive while the *amba* RM is mostly used if the RC is non-restrictive. Further, the tensed RC can be mostly be analyzed as a modifier of the head noun. On the other hand, the *amba* RC presents new information predicated on the relativized NP. The dataset also shows that the mean length of the *amba* RC is significantly higher than that of the tensed RC. The implication is that the *amba* RC contains more discourse entities and words in subordinated and co-ordinated structures. This calls for further processing and reading experiments to find out whether the *amba* RM is used in RCs to compensate for difficulty in production and parsing of longer utterances. Another factor that impacts on the choice of Swahili RCs is the grammatical role and information status of the head noun and other discourse elements within the RC. The *amba* RC is more frequently used in shift transition while the tensed relative delimits references of topic/non-topic discourse entities in continue transition. It is also possible that the tensed RC is preferred if the predicate is intransitive in shift transition, but this observation needs.

## Source

Helsinki Corpus of Swahili 2.0 (HCS 2.0). 2014-05-09. User support at CSC – IT Center for Science Ltd. The Language Bank of Finland (distributor). Etsin research data finder, 2018. <http://urn.fi/urn:nbn:fi:lb-2014032624>

## Abbreviations

LOC(atives)?

Abbreviations for Applicative, Infinitive, Perfective, Present, Reciprocal, Reflexive, and Subjunctive changed due to inconsistency with the Leipzig glossing rules.

AGR	Agreement	ORM	Object relative marker
APPL	Applicative	PASS	Passive
AUX	Auxiliary	PRS	Present tense
FUT	Future tense	PST	Past tense
FV	Final vowel	RECP	Reciprocal
INF	Infinitive	REFL	Reflexive
PFV	Perfective	SBJV	Subjunctive
PROG	Progressive	SM	Subject marker
Numbers	Noun class	SRM	Subject relative Mark
OM	Object Marker	STV	Stative



# Chapter 7

## Unifying prolepsis and cross-clausal cliticization in Lubukusu

Lydia Newkirk<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Rutgers University

This paper examines proleptic constructions in Lubukusu (Bantu, Western Kenya). I find that Lubukusu has two distinct strategies for prolepsis: one where the extra matrix nominal is base-generated high, and one where the nominal moves from the embedded clause to the matrix position. The latter is subject to island effects, whereas the former is not. I propose an analysis for these two kinds of prolepsis based on these facts, dependant on the particularities of what nominals can be licensed in what syntactic positions in Lubukusu, and explore the cross-linguistic implications of this analysis.

### 1 Background

Before proceeding to the main description and analysis of Lubukusu prolepsis, it will be useful to briefly introduce both prolepsis as a phenomenon, and provide some preliminary background on Lubukusu as a language.

#### 1.1 Prolepsis

Prolepsis, as characterized in Salzmann2017Chapter, is a multicausal construction in which a verb that normally takes an embedded finite clause apparently takes an additional nominal argument (the proleptic object) in the matrix clause, often accompanied by a preposition as in German (1), but sometimes licensed with case marking, as in Middle Dutch (2).

- (1) German (Salzmann2017Chapter)



Ich glaube von ihm<sub>i</sub>, dass er<sub>i</sub> ein ganz guter Trainer ist.  
I believe.1SG of he.DAT that he a quite good coach be.3SG  
'I believe of him<sub>i</sub> that he<sub>i</sub> is a pretty good coach.'

- ## (2) Middle Dutch (VanKoppenEtAl2016)

Maer die serjanten sijn kenden [den coninc van Israël]<sub>i</sub>, dat hi<sub>i</sub>  
but the sergeants his knew the.ACC king of Israel that he.NOM  
niet was harde fel.  
not was very fierce

*lit.* ‘But his sergeants knew the king of Israel that he was not very fierce.’  
‘But his sergeants knew about [the king of Israel]<sub>i</sub> that he wasn’t very  
fierce.’

Proleptic objects have most typically been analyzed as base-generation of the proleptic object either in the matrix clause (as in Salzmann2017Chapter) or in the left periphery of the embedded clause (as in VanKoppenEtAl2016), with an obligatory coreference requirement between the proleptic object and some pronominal in the embedded clause. Prolepsis without such an embedded pronominal is degraded, as in the English example below:

- (3) ?? *Mary thinks of dinner that John will cook fish tonight.*

## 1.2 Lubukusu

Lubukusu (Bantu J, Western Kenya) utilizes a set of prefixes on its verbs to indicate the noun class of its subject (4).<sup>1</sup>

- (4) Wekesa a-a-kul-a sii-tabu.  
 Wekesa SM.C1-PST-buy-FV c7-book  
 'Wekesa bought a book.' (Wasike2006)

Lubukusu also has a set of object-marking prefixes, but in neutral contexts they cannot cooccur with an overt object, unless that object is a pronoun. This has led DiercksSikuku2015, SikukuEtAl2018 to analyze the object marker as an incorporated pronoun/clitic, rather than an agreement morpheme.

<sup>1</sup>Many of the Lubukusu examples in this paper is from the Afranaph Project. For those sentences I have marked their sentence ID for lookup in the Afranaph database. Other examples I have drawn from the Lubukusu literature, and are marked accordingly. Examples without an accompanying citation are from my own field work. I am indebted to Dr. Justine Sikuku for his patience and assistance by providing me with the data.

- (5) N-a-**mu<sub>i</sub>**-bon-a (#Wekesa<sub>i</sub>).  
 1SG.S-PST-OM.C1-see-FV Wekesa  
 'I saw him.' (DiercksSikuku2015)

The third person pronominal *niye* can cooccur with verbal object marking, however:

- (6) Wekesa a-a-**mu<sub>i</sub>**-p-a (*niye<sub>i</sub>*).  
 Wekesa SM.C1-PST-OM.C1-beat-FV him  
 'Wekesa beat him.' (Afranaph ID: 3734/5039)

This is in line with the generalizations in Anagnostopoulou2016, Anagnostopoulou2017, in that even languages which do not allow clitics to double full DP objects allow doubling for overt object pronouns.

Lubukusu also marks reflexivity on the verb, where an invariant reflexive marker (REFL) occurs in the same position as the OM. A pronoun which takes noun class agreement matching its antecedent may also cooccur with the REFL, which surfaces as *i*- regardless of the noun class of its antecedent. The REFL alone is sufficient to establish reflexivity, so the agreeing anaphor is optional. The Lubukusu REFL is also analyzed as an incorporated pronoun in line with Lubukusu's object markers, given its similar syntactic behavior.

- (7) Yòháná<sub>i</sub> á-á-**i<sub>i</sub>**-bon-a (o-mu-eene<sub>i</sub>).  
 Yohana SM.C1-PST-**REFL**-see-FV C1-C1-own  
 'John<sub>i</sub> saw himself<sub>i</sub>.' (Afranaph ID:1248/1249)

The AGR-*eene* pronoun can also occur without an accompanying REFL, in which case it cannot take a local antecedent, but is allowed to take a discourse antecedent:

- (8) Billi<sub>i</sub> a-a-bon-a o-mu-eene<sub>k/\*i</sub>.  
 Billi SM.C1-PST-see-FV C1-C1-own  
 'Bill<sub>i</sub> saw him<sub>k/\*i</sub>.' (ID: 1367)
- (9) Jack<sub>i</sub> a-many-il-e a-li George<sub>j</sub> a-**mu<sub>i/k</sub>**-siim-a  
 Jack SM.C1-knows-TNS-FV C1-that George SM.C1-**OM.C1**-like-FV  
 o-mu-eene<sub>i/k</sub>.  
 C1-C1-own  
 'Jack<sub>i</sub> knows that George<sub>j</sub> likes him<sub>i/k</sub>.'

These pieces in place, I now proceed to give a description of prolepsis in Lubukusu.

## 2 Prolepsis in Lubukusu

In Lubukusu there are three ways to license a proleptic object: first, a proleptic object can be introduced with a preposition (10), as is the case in English. Second, there is an equivalent construction with an applicative morpheme (11).



(11) John a-kanakan-il-a      Jane<sub>i</sub> a-li      Bill a-mu-siim-a  
       John SM.c1-think-APPL-FV Jane c1-that Bill SM.c1-OM.c1-like-FV  
       o-mu-eene<sub>i</sub>/niye<sub>i</sub>.  
       c1-c1-own/her  
       'John thinks of Jane<sub>i</sub> that Bill likes her<sub>i</sub>.'

Third, it is also possible for a proleptic object to be a reflexive pronoun, in German, English, and Lubukusu, but crucially the Germanic cases still require that a preposition introduce the proleptic object, while in Lubukusu the preposition is optional (14):

- (15) Jack<sub>i</sub> a-i<sub>i</sub>-kanakan-il-a            o-mu-eene<sub>i</sub> a-li     Lisa  
       Jack SM.C1-REFL-think-APPL-FV C1-C1-own c1-that Lisa  
       a-many-il-e            a-li     Wendy a-mu<sub>i</sub>-siim-a            o-mu-eene<sub>i</sub>.  
       SM.C1-know-TNS-FV C1-that Wendy SM.C1-OM.C1-like-FV C1-C1-own  
       'Jack<sub>i</sub> thought for himself<sub>i</sub> that Lisa thinks that Wendy likes him<sub>i</sub>.'

In (14) there is no AGR-*eene* in the matrix clause, as the invariant REFL suffices to mark reflexivity, though (15) demonstrates that AGR-*eene* can occur both in the embedded clause and in the matrix clause. In (13) however, there is no REFL on the matrix verb, and instead there is an overt proleptic object in the matrix clause, which does not participate in clitic doubling on the matrix verb, and has an (optional) embedded resumptive pronoun. Similar constructions are possible with a matrix (third person, non-reflexive) object marker rather than the reflexive marker, although it is degraded when the embedded object marker is in object position:

- (16) John a-a-mu-lom-a            a-li     o-mu-eene a-a-siim-a  
       John SM.C1-PST-OM.C1-say-FV C1-that C1-C1-own SM.C1-PST-like-FV  
       Mary.  
       Mary  
       'John said about him<sub>i</sub> that he<sub>i</sub> likes Mary.'
- (17) John a-a-mu-lom-a            a-li     Mary a-a-lom-a            khu  
       John SM.C1-PST-OM.C1-say-FV C1-that Mary SM.C1-PST-say-FV of  
       o-mu-eene.  
       C1-C1-own  
       'John said about him<sub>i</sub> that Mary speaks of him<sub>i</sub>'.
- (18) ?John a-a-mu-lom-a            a-li     George a-mu-siima.  
       John SM.C1-PST-OM.C1-say-FV C1-that George SM.C1-OM.C1-like-FV  
       'John say of him<sub>i</sub> that George likes him<sub>i</sub>'.

Constructions with *khu-mu-eene* in the matrix clause are insensitive to locality, whereas the construction with the REFL/OM cliticized to the matrix verb is sensitive to island boundaries, here shown with the REFL on matrix verb:

- (19) John<sub>i</sub> a-lom-a            **khu-mu-eene<sub>i</sub>** a-li     Bill a-khaenj-a  
       John SM.C1-say-FV PREP-C1-own c1-that Bill SM.C1-look.for-FV  
       [o-mu-undu o-wa-mu-lip-a            o-mu-eene<sub>i</sub>].  
       C1-C1-person WH-C1-OM.C1-PST-pay-FV C1-C1-own  
       'John<sub>i</sub> said about himself<sub>i</sub> that Bill is looking for the person who paid

himself<sub>i</sub>:

- (20) \* John<sub>i</sub> a-i<sub>i</sub>-lom-a a-li Bill a-khaenj-a [o-mu-undu  
 John SM.C1-REFL-say-FV c1-that Bill SM.C1-look.for-FV c1-c1-person  
 o-w-a-mu-lip-a o-mu-eene<sub>i</sub>].  
 WH-C1-OM.C1-PST-pay-FV c1-c1-own  
 'John<sub>i</sub> said that Bill is looking for [the person who paid himself<sub>i</sub>].'
- (21) \* John<sub>i</sub> a-i<sub>i</sub>-lom-a a-li o-mu-eene<sub>i</sub> a-rekukh-a [paata ya  
 John SM.C1-REFL-say-FV c1-that c1-c1-own SM.C1-leave-FV after  
 Mary khu-mu-khuu-p-a o-mu-eene<sub>i</sub>].  
 Mary c15-OM.C1-C15?-hit-FV c1-c1-own  
 'John<sub>i</sub> said that he<sub>i</sub> left [after Mary hit him<sub>i</sub>].' (Adjunct island)
- (22) \* Jack a-i-many-il-e a-li George a-ch-a nge  
 Jack SM.C1-REFL-know-APPL?-FV c1-that George SM.C1-leave-FV when  
 a-mu-bon-a o-mu-eene.  
 SM.C1-OM.C1-see-FV c1-c1-own  
 'Jack<sub>i</sub> knows that George left when he saw himself<sub>i</sub>.' (Adjunct island)
- (23) \* Bill<sub>i</sub> a-i<sub>i</sub>-nyol-a [chilomo mbo John a-mu-lip-a  
 Bill SM.C1-receive-FV information that John SM.C1-OM.C1-pay-FV  
 o-mu-eene<sub>i</sub>].  
 c1-c1-own  
 'Bill<sub>i</sub> heard [a rumor (about himself<sub>i</sub>) that John paid him<sub>i</sub>].' (CNPC)
- (24) \* John<sub>i</sub> a-i<sub>i</sub>-subil-a [likhuwa mbo Bill a-mu-bon-a  
 John SM.C1-REFL-hope-FV claim that Bill SM.C1-OM.C1-see-FV  
 o-mu-eene<sub>i</sub>].  
 c1-c1-own  
 'John<sub>i</sub> believes [the claim that Bill saw himself<sub>i</sub>].' (CNPC)

And similarly with the OM on the verb, embedding AGR-*eene* inside of an island is degraded:

- (25) \* John a-a-mu<sub>i</sub>-lom-a a-li George a-khaenj-a  
 John SM.C1-PST-OM.C1-say-FV c1-that George SM.C1-look.for  
 [o-muu-ndu o-w-a-mu-lip-a o-mu-eene].  
 c1-c1-person WH-C1-PST-pay-FV c1-c1-own  
 'John said of him<sub>i</sub> that George is looking for [the person who paid him<sub>i</sub>].'

- (26) ? John a-mu<sub>i</sub>-lom-a a-li o-mu-eene<sub>i</sub> a-rekukh-a [paata ya  
 John SM.C1-OM.C1-say-FV c1-that c1-c1-own SM.C1-leave-FV after  
 Mary khu-mu-khuu-p-a o-mu-eene<sub>i</sub>].  
 Mary c15-OM.C1-C15?-hit-FV c1-c1-own  
 John said of him<sub>i</sub> that he<sub>i</sub> left after Mary hit him<sub>i</sub>.

These correlate with the island/locality constraints for *wh*-movement in Lubukusu. The following are the corresponding island examples from Wasike2006:

- (27) \* Naanu ni-y-e Wafula a-kha-enj-a [o-muu-ndu  
 who PRED-C1-PRON Wafula C1-PRS-look.for-FV c1-c1-person  
 o-w-a-kul-a].  
 WH-C1-PST-buy-FV  
 'What is it that Wafula is looking for [the person who bought]?'  
 (28) \* Naanu ni-y-e Nasike a-a-rekukh-a [paata ye t khu-khuup-a  
 who PRED-C1-PRON Nasike C1-PST-leave-FV after of inf-beat-FV  
 Nanjala].  
 Nanjala  
 'Who is that Nasike left [after *t* hitting Nanjala]?'  
 (29) ?? [Chi-lomo mbo Wafula a-a-ib-a si(ina) cha-a-chun-i-a]  
 c7-report that Wafula C1-PST-steal-FV what C7-PST-hurt-CAUS-FV  
 Nafula ku-mw-oyo?  
 Nafula PP-3-heart  
 'What did [the report that Wafula stole] hurt Nafula?'

Based on the demonstrated island restrictions, I take the cliticization strategy to be movement of a pronoun from its argument position in the embedded clause to the matrix clause, and the applicative and prepositional phrase strategies to be base-generation of a pronoun or DP in the matrix clause. These same sentences are illicit without the appropriate embedded object marking, however:

- (30) \* John<sub>i</sub> a-i<sub>i</sub>-lom-a a-li Mary a-siim-a o-mu-eene<sub>i</sub>.  
 John SM.C1-REFL-say-FV c1-that Mary SM.C1-like-FV c1-c1-own  
 'John<sub>i</sub> said that Mary likes him<sub>i</sub>'.  
 (31) \* John<sub>i</sub> a-i<sub>i</sub>-lom-a a-li George a-khaeknj-a o-muu-ndu  
 John SM.C1-REFL-say-FV c1-that George SM.C1-look.for-FV c1-c1-person  
 o-wa-lip-a o-mu-eene<sub>i</sub>.  
 WH-C1-pay-FV c1-c1-own  
 'John<sub>i</sub> said that George is looking for the person who paid him<sub>i</sub>'.

The ungrammaticality of (31) is unsurprising, given the general island sensitivity of this construction. (30) shows that the embedded object marker is obligatory, a fact I will return to later. If the cliticization strategy is movement from the embedded clause to the matrix clause, I will have to explain why the embedded OM remains obligatory.

In summary, Lubukusu has three kinds of proleptic strategies:<sup>2</sup>

- The proleptic object accompanied by a preposition
- The proleptic object accompanied by an applicative marker
- The proleptic object as a reflexive marker (REFL) without an accompanying applicative or preposition

Three main characteristics that are common across these constructions:

1. An “extra” nominal argument in the matrix clause, which the matrix verb does not ordinarily take
2. A aboutness relation between the extra argument and the embedded predicate
3. A specific (*de se*-like) acquaintance relation between the extra argument and the matrix attitude holder

I will conclude that characteristics 2 and 3 come about by the same process, and so I will consider them together. Characteristic 1 is a separate concern, so I will address it first.

### 3 Nominal licensing

In analyzing the island-sensitive clitic-licensed prolepsis, I generally follow analyses of cross-clausal agreement in PolinskyPotsdam2001, Bruening2001, BraniganMacKenzie2001, and BakerKramer2016. The embedded DP A'-moves to the embedded left periphery. In Lubukusu, that pronoun can then undergo further A'-movement to cliticize to the matrix verb. I follow the analysis of clitics as incorporated pronouns from Matushansky2006, BakerKramer2016, more specifically implemented in Lubukusu as in SikukuEtAl2018. ■

On this analysis, (14) has the preliminary structure in (32).

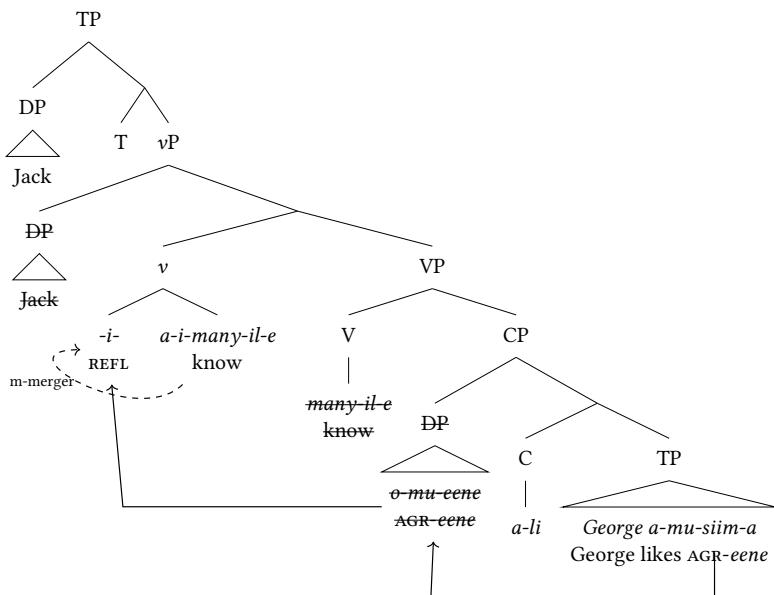
---

<sup>2</sup>An anonymous reviewer astutely observes that there are also a variety of embedded-clause strategies as well. These appear to be subject to the general constraints on object marking and pronominals in Lubukusu, which for reasons of space I will not explore here. The reader is referred to SikukuEtAl2018 for more in-depth discussion of Lubukusu object marking.

- (14) Jack<sub>i</sub> a-i<sub>i</sub>-many-il-e              a-li      George a-mu<sub>i</sub>-siim-a  
       Jack SM.C1-REFL-knows-TNS-FV c1-that George SM.C1-OM.C1-like-FV  
       o-mu-eene<sub>i</sub>.  
       c1-c1-own  
       'Jack<sub>i</sub> knows that George likes him<sub>i</sub>.'

The trees may need resizing for better accessibility.

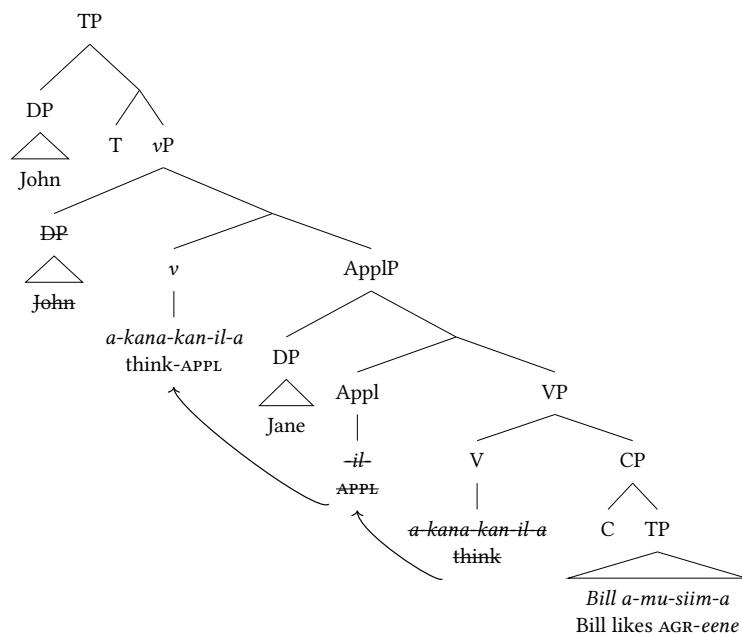
(32)



The preposition-licensed and applicative-licensed cases, on the other hand, have a proleptic object that is base-generated in the matrix clause, introduced by a preposition or applicative, and then are related to the embedded pronoun by binding.

- (11) John a-kanakan-il-a      Jane<sub>i</sub> a-li      Bill a-mu-siim-a  
       John SM.C1-think-APPL-FV Jane c1-that Bill SM.C1-OM.C1-like-FV  
       o-mu-eene<sub>i</sub>/niye<sub>i</sub>.  
       c1-c1-own/her  
       'John thinks of Jane<sub>i</sub> that Bill likes her<sub>i</sub>'.

(33)



The movement strategy is restricted to pronouns due to independent facts about Lubukusu object marking. The object markers are clitics, and these clitics can only be doubled by pronouns, and not by full DPs:

- (34) N-a-**mu<sub>i</sub>**-bon-a (#Wekesa<sub>i</sub>).

1SG.S-PST-OM.C1-see-FV Wekesa

'I saw him.'

(SikukuEtAl2018)

- (35) Wekesa a-a-**mu<sub>i</sub>**-p-a (**niye<sub>i</sub>**).

Wekesa SM.C1-PST-**OM**.C1-beat-FV him

'Wekesa beat him.'

(Afranaph ID: 3734/5039)

- (36) Yòháná<sub>i</sub> á-á-**i<sub>i</sub>**-bon-a (o-mu-eene<sub>i</sub>).

Yohana SM.C1-PST-**REFL**-see-FV C1-C1-own

'John<sub>i</sub> saw himself<sub>i</sub>'

(Afranaph ID:1248/1249)

In principle, a full DP could undergo movement to the matrix clause, but Lubukusu has no way of licensing it there by cliticization. There is no position for it to move to.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, although prepositions can provide licensing to

<sup>3</sup>There may also be licensing concerns in terms of

an additional matrix argument, they are not viable landing sites for movement, and so preclude movement of an embedded argument into their complement. The specifier of an applicative phrase is an eligible landing site for movement, but also for base-generation of a proleptic object, so island effects are obviated in the presence of an applicative morpheme.

I can now offer a tentative explanation for why the embedded OM remains obligatory even in the movement cases. The embedded pronoun begins by receiving a theta role in the embedded clause, but while it is then syntactically licensed in the matrix clause via cliticization, it is not semantically licensed there. So the embedded clitic contains information about where (and from what) the embedded pronoun received semantic licensing, while the matrix clitic contains information about its syntactic licensing in the proleptic construction. Since the two copies contain different information, they both must be pronounced.

Since the distinction between movement-based and base-generated prolepsis ultimately rests on the particular nominal licensing strategies in Lubukusu, we should expect cross-linguistic variation along the lines of what types of nominals can be licensed in what position, and what that licensing strategy is: that is, what provides a syntactically appropriate place for the proleptic object to inhabit.

## 4 Acquaintance relations

There are still several questions left to address, however. The obligatory binding relationship between base-generated proleptic objects and the embedded pronoun is so far unexplained, as is the topic-like interpretation found for all three types of prolepsis.

An important fact on the way to addressing these issues is that proleptic objects must always be read transparently (Salzmann2006, Salzmann2017Chapter).

(37)      **Context:**

*Bill is walking down the street. He glances down a dark alley and sees a man in a trench coat talking into his watch. Bill, who reads too many thrillers, immediately thinks to himself “That man is a spy.” In reality, the man in the alley is Bill’s friend Wayne, although Bill didn’t recognize him.*

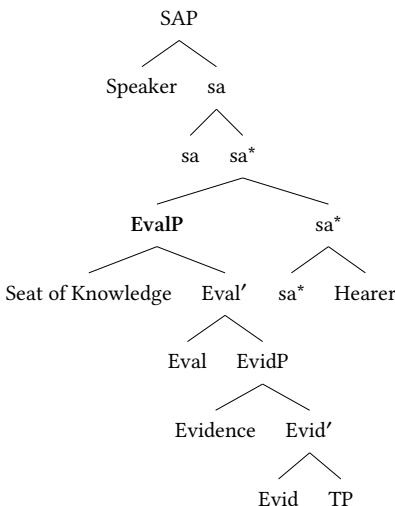
- a. # Bill thinks of Wayne<sub>i</sub> that he<sub>i</sub> is a spy.
- b. Bill thinks that Wayne is a spy.

Saying that the embedded clause is “about” the proleptic object is not sufficient to account for this data. The matrix attitude holder has to **knowingly ascribe the**

embedded predicate to the proleptic object, and properly identify the proleptic object as well.

The framework I will use as a starting point for these facts is from Speas & Tenny 2003.<sup>4</sup> They propose a set of projections in the left periphery to account for various perspectival phenomena. The projections include a Speech-Act Phrase (SAP), Evaluative Phrase (EvalP), and Evidential Phrase (EvidP). The projections host various null nominals that have a perspectival semantics, and can both bind embedded pronouns and be bound by higher nominals to force coreference. A sketch of their left periphery is in (38).<sup>4</sup>

(38)



All of these positions are inherently perspectival, however. Accordingly, they won't work for a proleptic object (which doesn't even have to be sentient, much less a perspective-holder). But within their system, there is space to add one more position, for an **evaluated object**. Speas & Tenny derive an extended SAP by head movement of the speech act head. The same movement can apply to the evaluative head, creating an additional position for the evaluated object. Rather than having a perspective-taking semantics, the evaluated object can be non-sentient, so long as it is the object perceived by the seat of knowledge evaluating the embedded propositional content. This projection is parallel to the Hearer in the speech act projection, but for the lower EvalP head.

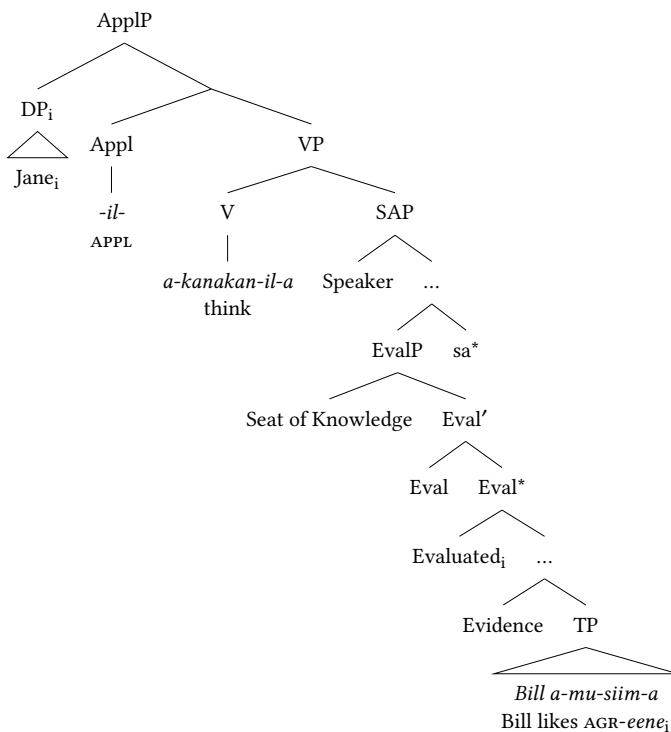
In base-generated prolepsis, the evaluated object binds the embedded *AGR-eene*, and in turn the evaluated object is bound by the proleptic object in the matrix clause. Therefore the modified tree for (11) is in (39).

---

<sup>4</sup>The multiple instances of *sa(\*)* in the tree below are derived via head-movement.

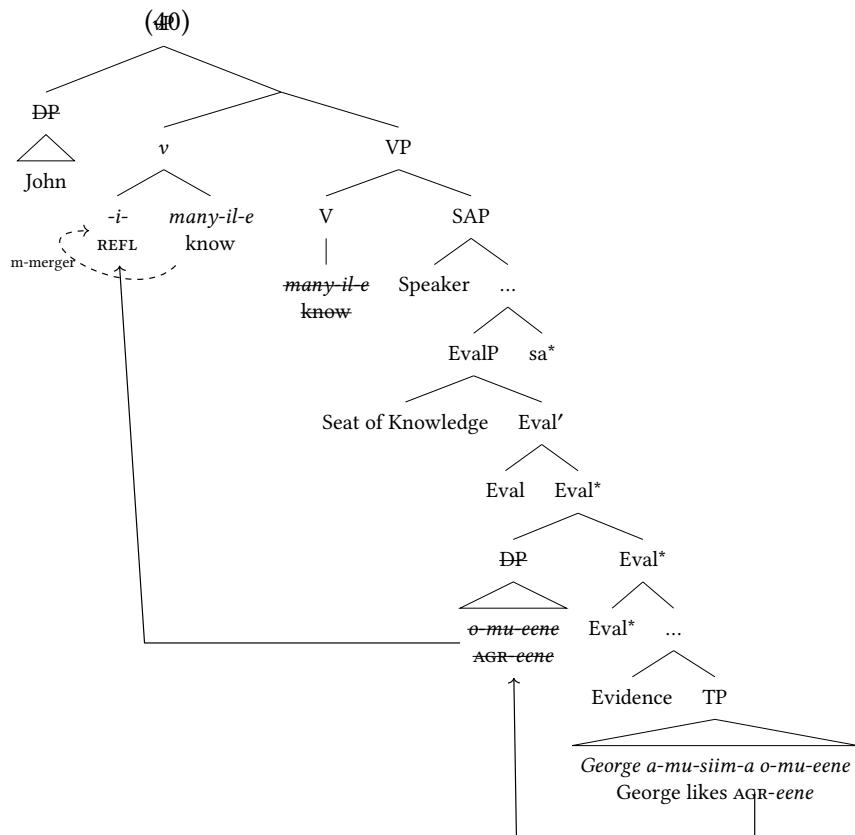
- (11) John a-kanakan-il-a      Jane<sub>i</sub> a-li      Bill a-mu-siim-a  
 John SM.C1-think-APPL-FV Jane C1-that Bill SM.C1-OM.C1-like-FV  
**o-mu-eene<sub>i</sub>/niye<sub>i</sub>.**  
 C1-C1-own/her  
 'John thinks of Jane<sub>i</sub> that Bill likes her<sub>i</sub>.'

(39)



The movement-based prolepsis construction is much as it was before, but now we can pinpoint the left-peripheral location that serves as an escape hatch for the moved pronoun: it passes through the site of the evaluated object, and thereby receives its proleptic semantics. Then AGR-*eene* moves further upward to cliticize to the matrix verb for its syntactic licensing.

Since both constructions involve the same projection in the left periphery, they get the same interpretation from the Eval head. Despite their disparate syntax, a common left periphery allows them to get the same semantics, one similar to topichood, though the proleptic object is not in a Topic projection in either case.



## 5 Cross-linguistic predictions

Turning our attention to other languages, we can see that the difference between movement-based and base-generated prolepsis is how the nominal in the matrix clause is syntactically licensed, and whether that licensing position is eligible for movement or base-generation. For Passamaquoddy (Bruening2001), Innu-Aimûn (BraniganMacKenzie2002), and Tsez (PolinskyPotsdam2001), agreement can reach to the CP domain and license the nominal there. But the nominal can only surface in the matrix clause if it is licensed by an agreeing matrix verb. If the verb surfaces in the non-agreeing (TI) voice, the nominal must stay in-situ, and there is no topicality:

- (41) Innu-Aimûn (BraniganMacKenzie2002):

- a. N-uî-tshissenit-en tshetshî mûpishtâshkuenit **kassiu**  
 1-want-know-TI if visited-2/INV every  
 kâuâpikueshit.  
 priest  
 'I want to know if every priest visited you.'
- b. \* N-uî-tshissenit-en<sub>i</sub> [**kassiu** kâuâpikueshit]<sub>i</sub> tshetshî  
 mûpishtâshkuenit.

Please check the gloss for the word *mûpishtâshkuenit* above.

For Middle Dutch the matrix nominal is licensed by case marking, but on the analysis VanKoppenEtAl2016 it's in spec,CP, although it hasn't been moved there. In German, prolepsis often feeds further movement that would otherwise be degraded (Salzmann2017Chapter).

...by...?  
...of...?

If prolepsis is used when A'-movement is degraded, then it comes as no surprise that the proleptic object in those constructions would not be moved into that position, since movement out of the embedded clause is impossible in the first place. And similar to the base-generation strategy in Lubukusu, the complement of a preposition is not an eligible landing site for A'-movement. If German only licenses extra matrix clause nominals with a preposition, then those extra nominals will necessarily be base-generated there. Once again, the particulars of a given language condition which of the movement and base-generation strategies are available, and under which circumstances.

These considerations bring to the fore an important distinction between semantic and syntactic licensing. Semantically, the evaluated object head provides a viable semantic interpretation for the extra matrix nominal, so long as the context supports that interpretation. Thus the left periphery is identical in both types of structure. The syntactic licensing requirements, however, differ by construction (and by language), as independently established. It is precisely these syntactic facts that derive the differences between prolepsis types.

## Abbreviations

APPL	applicative		
c followed by a number	noun class marker	PREP	Preposition
FV	Final vowel	REFL	Reflexive Marker
OM	Object Marker (typically followed by noun class number)	SM	Subject Marker (typically followed by noun class number)
		TNS	Tense

CAUS, INV, and TI can be added as well.

## Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Justine Sikuku, Ken Safir, Mark Baker, Vivian Deprez, and the attendees of Rutgers ST@R and SURGE reading groups. Some of the data for this project are from the Afranaph Project (NSF BCS 1324404). I am indebted to two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments. Any remaining errors are my own.

# Chapter 8

## On the Nbugu vowel system

Kenneth S. Olson<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>SIL International

Previous researchers have posited asymmetric oral vowel systems for Nbugu and other Banda languages. The present analysis shows that Nbugu has a symmetric 10-vowel system which includes one interior vowel /ə/ and lacks vowel harmony. It also supports and refines BoyeldieuCloarec-Heiss2001's (BoyeldieuCloarec-Heiss2001) proposed Proto-Banda vowel system. The affinities of the resulting proto vowel system to those of nearby languages could facilitate the comparison of vowel systems across the region in order to test hypotheses about shared inheritance or borrowing. Possible explanations for the lack of vowel harmony are suggested.

### 1 Introduction

Authors of previous studies have proposed various oral vowel systems for Nbugu (ISO 639-3 code=lnl), a language of the Banda group, Ubangian family, spoken in southcentral Central African Republic by about 95,000 people (SimonsFennig2018). These proposed systems are shown in Tables 1, 2, and 3.<sup>1</sup>

Table 1: Nbugu oral vowels (Cloarec-Heiss1978)

	front	central	back
high	i	ɪ	u
mid	e	ə	o
low		a	ɔ

<sup>1</sup>I use standard IPA transcriptions for segments and tone in this paper.



The system in Table 1 contradicts a universal put forth by Crothers1978: “The number of height distinctions in front vowels is equal to or greater than the number in back vowels.” Yet, the majority of Banda languages appear to exhibit it. Cloarec-Heiss1978 posits this same system for seven other Banda speech varieties: Langbasi [lna], Ngundu [nue], Kpagua [kuw], Gubu [gox], Gbi [bbp], Linda [liy], and Yakpa [bjø]. It is also the system posited for Mono [mn̩] by both Kamanda-Kola2003 and Olson2005 independently of each other.

Table 2: Nbugu oral vowels (Théret-Kieschke1998)

	front	central	back
high	i	ɪ	u
mid	e	ə	o
low	ɛ	a	(ɔ)
diphthongs	iɛ		oa

Théret-Kieschke1998’s proposed system in Table 2 is more symmetric. In addition to monophthongs, she posits two diphthongs. She considers /ɔ/ to be a marginal phoneme (p. 9).

Table 3: Nbugu oral vowels (BoyeldieuCloarec-Heiss2001)

	front	central	back
high	i	ɪ	u
mid	e	ə	ɔ
low	(i)ɛ	a	

BoyeldieuCloarec-Heiss2001 propose the system shown in Table 3. They transcribe the low front vowel as /(i)ɛ/, capturing the generalization – according to their data – that the phoneme is usually realized as [iɛ], yet surfaces as [ɛ] in initial position and immediately following /w/. The vowel /ɔ/ is positioned as a mid vowel in their chart, along with /e/ and /ə/ (p. 192).<sup>2</sup>

Comparison of these three proposed systems raises questions about the phonemic status of /ɛ/, /o/, and /ɔ/. To address these questions, I worked with a team of three native Nbugu speakers during three visits to Bangui from 2015 to 2017 (a

<sup>2</sup>Boyeldieu (pers. comm.) considers /ɔ/ to be phonetically halfway between [o] and [ɔ] when it does not follow a /w/.

total of five weeks) to re-evaluate the oral vowel system, employing the participatory research methodology elucidated in Kutsch-Lojenga1996.<sup>3</sup> I do not address diphthongs or nasal vowels, which are both also part of the Nbugu vowel system.

Prior to our consultations, the team had collected a corpus of about 2000 lexical items. We removed compound words, borrowings, derived words, etc., after which we had a corpus of about 700 words to work with.

In §2, I provide evidence for the phonemic status of /ɛ/, /o/, and /ɔ/, as well as an in-progress merger between /o/ and /ɔ/. I also provide evidence for the existence of an additional vowel /ʊ/ not reported by the previous researchers. In §3, I provide acoustic evidence for my transcription of the vowels and show that /i/ is best reinterpreted as the front vowel /ɪ/. In §4, I discuss possible implications for the historical development of vowels in the Banda group.

## 2 Phonology

Several arguments support the phonemic status of /ɛ/. First, contrasts between /ɛ/ and its phonetically similar segment /e/ are common in Nbugu. A sampling of these contrasts is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Contrasts between /ɛ/ and /e/

/ɛ/	gloss	/e/	gloss
ʃé,ʃē	bifurcation	ʃē,ʃē	root
jn̩é	all, together	jn̩é	2PL-object
ɛ̄	small	?ē̄	call
hú̄ɛ̄	sweat	hù̄è̄	open

Second, my language consultants had no difficulty distinguishing /ɛ/ and /e/, and the orthography testing they conducted in the Nbugu community suggested that this is true among Nbugu speakers in general. Third, /ɛ/ is not rare, occurring in more than 20 words in our corpus. This count does not include word-initial [ɛ̄], which may be a relic of an historical prefix denoting animals (Greenberg1970). Fourth, /ɛ/ occurs in word-initial, word-medial, and word-final positions, as shown in Table 5.

<sup>3</sup>The three language consultants conducted extensive orthography testing in the Nbugu region during this period of time.

Table 5: Distribution of /ɛ/

	/ɛ/	gloss
initial	ɛ.vbó	dog
medial	ŋvú.lè.jò	earthworm
final	jé.jé	bifurcation

While the phonetic sequence [iɛ] does occur in a substantial number of words, it is also true that [ɛ] is attested immediately following more consonants than just /w/, e.g. [ŋvú.lè.jò] ‘earthworm’, [jé.jé] ‘bifurcation’, [gbé] ‘all’, [ndè.rè] ‘sticky’. Additional examples are found in Boyeldieu’s Nbugu wordlist in *RefLex* (SegererFlavier2011). There are also cases where [iɛ] and [ɛ] both occur after the same consonant, e.g. [gbíɛ] ‘king’ vs. [gbé] ‘all’. These considerations bolster the view that /ɛ/ is a phoneme in its own right, distinct from the diphthong /iɛ/.

Finally, there is a clear acoustic distinction between /ɛ/ and /e/, as discussed below in §3.

Several arguments support the phonemic status of both /o/ and /ɔ/. First, there is contrast between these two phonetically similar segments, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Contrasts between /o/ and /ɔ/

/o/	gloss	/ɔ/	gloss
kpò.tò	hat	kpò.tò	skin
ko	(to) distribute	kɔ	(to) oil (Théret-Kieschke1998)

Second, many native speakers have no difficulty distinguishing the two sounds. Third, both sounds are common, each occurring in more than 30 words in my corpus. Fourth, there is a clear acoustic distinction between the two sounds, as discussed below in §3.

Despite this evidence, the case of /o/ and /ɔ/ is complicated by a couple of factors. First, for apparently all speakers of Nbugu – even those for whom the two sounds are contrastive – free variation occurs between /o/ and /ɔ/ for certain lexical items, as exemplified in Table 7.

Second, while all three of my language consultants recognize the distinctiveness of /o/ and /ɔ/, they indicate that some Nbugu speakers do not distinguish the two sounds, opting to produce /o/ in all cases. Théret-Kieschke1998 noted

Table 7: Free variation between /o/ and /ɔ/ in some lexical items

/o/ ~ /ɔ/	gloss
kò.tò ~ kò.tò	hill
kò.kò.lò ~ kò.kò.lò	duck

this pattern among younger speakers and suggested that a merger is currently underway between /o/ and /ɔ/: \*o, \*ɔ > o. Robust contrast exists between /o/ and /ɔ/ in most other Banda varieties, e.g. Linda (BoyeldieuCloarec-Heiss2001) and Mono (Olson2005), which harmonizes well with this claim.

During the course of our research, we encountered an additional synchronic vowel phoneme, /v/, not attested by previous researchers. Several factors support the existence of this additional phoneme. First, there is contrast between /v/ and all of the other back vowels, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Contrast between /v/ and other back vowels

/u/	gloss	/v/	gloss	/o/	gloss	/ɔ/	gloss
kū	thigh	k̄v̄	war	kō	male	kò	type of termite
-		v̄v̄	stroll	v̄ò	roll, pass	-	
tū	ear	t̄v̄.k̄v̄	in vain	dò	divert	tò	marry
-		gv̄v̄	hole	ḡv̄ó	white	-	

Second, native speakers readily distinguish /v/ from other back vowels. Third, /v/ is not rare, occurring in over 40 lexical items in my corpus. Fourth, /v/ occurs both medially and finally, e.g. [s̄v̄.ḡv̄] ‘pillar’. Finally, /v/ is distinct acoustically from the other back vowels, as discussed in §3.

While /v/ does not occur as such in any of the previous research, it does show up indirectly in BoyeldieuCloarec-Heiss2001, where the sequence transcribed there as /wɔ/ corresponds to my /v/, as shown in Table 9.<sup>4</sup>

Though BoyeldieuCloarec-Heiss2001 do not document extant /v/ per se, their comparative study of Nbugu and Linda leads them to reconstruct the high back [-ATR] vowel \*v for Proto-Banda (pp. 199, 202–203). One of the key findings of

<sup>4</sup>Most of the occurrences of [v] in Table 9 occur after [v̄], but most cases of [v] in my corpus follow other consonants. The difference between my data and that of Boyeldieu and Cloarec-Heiss could be due in part to dialectal variation. More research is necessary on this.

Table 9: Samples of /ʊ/ transcribed as /wɔ/ by  
BoyeldieuCloarec-Heiss2001

Boyeldieu and Cloarec-Heiss	page	my transcription	gloss
jéwɔ̄	216	dʒō.ɛ̄	sorghum
gkwɔ̄	218	gɪɛ̄	to touch
gwɔ̄gwɔ̄	218	gɔ̄	hunger
kkwɔ̄	218	kɛ̄	to stop
ngkwɔ̄	195, 218	ŋgɛ̄	to scratch
kwɔ̄	213	ɛ̄	to walk
tɛ̄kwɔ̄	212	tɔ̄.ɛ̄	in vain

the current paper is that the reflex /ʊ/ of the proto phoneme \*ʊ is present in Nbugu today.

This finding suggests a possible novel use of the comparative method – as an aid to linguistic fieldwork. The comparison of the sound systems of related languages can be used not only to reconstruct proto phonemes, but it can also lead to hypotheses about the structure of the synchronic sound systems and hence serve as a diagnostic for examining them more closely. In the current case, BoyeldieuCloarec-Heiss2001’s positing of \*ʊ led my language consultants and me to examine more carefully the high back vowels of Nbugu, eventually unearthing /ʊ/.

### 3 Acoustic properties

An acoustic study was undertaken in order to verify the transcription of the Nbugu vowels. The subject was a male native speaker of Nbugu in his late 40s at the time of the recordings. He grew up in the Nbugu region, and both of his parents speak Nbugu as their first language. He has obtained his *baccalauréat* and has taken some university courses. He moved to Bangui in 2014. The recordings were made in 2015 and 2016 in Yaoundé and Bangui, respectively. Besides Nbugu, he is also fluent in Sango [sag] and French [fra].

The set of data was recorded at 48k, 24-bit, using a Zoom H2 recorder, and saved as WAV files. The 2015 recording session took place at the SIL center in Yaoundé, and the 2016 recording session took place at the ACATBA (Association Centrafricaine pour la Traduction de la Bible et l’Alphabétisation) center in Bangui. Twelve tokens of each vowel were chosen for analysis. This included

two tokens of each vowel spoken in isolation. In most of the words selected, the vowel followed a coronal consonant.

Acoustic analysis was performed using Praat v. 6.0.37 (BoersmaWeenink2018). I first visually inspected a wide-band spectrogram of each token to verify that there was a steady state period of the vowel. I then visually identified the midpoint of the steady state. The window of analysis was centered on this midpoint. The formant measurements were made using the LPC analysis feature in Praat, employing its default parameters, except that the “Maximum formant (Hz)” setting was changed from 5500 Hz to 5000 Hz, the latter being more appropriate for a male speaker (BoersmaWeenink2018). Because LPC calculations of  $F_1$  can potentially be influenced by a high  $f_0$ , I verified the formant measurements by visual inspection on a wide-band spectrogram and spectral slices, when appropriate. The  $F_1$  vs.  $F_2$  plot is shown in Figure 1.

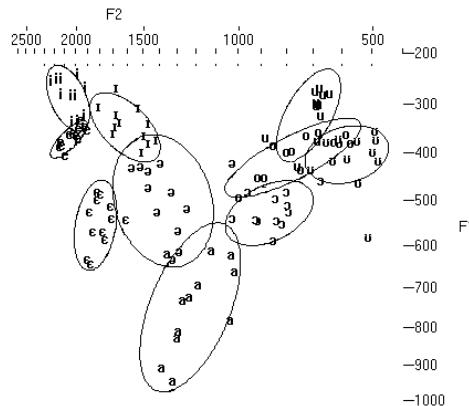


Figure 1: Formant plot of Nbugu vowels (12 tokens each)

Please provide a less grainy image

Several observations can be made about this plot. First, the  $F_2$  of what I have been transcribing as /i/ is generally higher (~1600 Hz) than the  $F_2$  of /ə/ (~1400 Hz), approaching the front vowels /i/ and /e/. This suggests that /i/ may best be construed as a front vowel. I will transcribe it as /ɪ/ for reasons that will soon become apparent.

Second, the positioning of /i/ and /ʊ/ in the plot generally corresponds to what we expect for high [-ATR] vowels. In Starwalt 2008's crosslinguistic study of the acoustics of ATR vowel harmony systems, she found that the  $F_2$  of /ʊ/ is consistently lower than the  $F_2$  of /o/ for the African languages she studied (although

this was not always statistically significant) – *Kwa* : Foodo [fod] and Ikposo [kpo] – *Bantu* : Kinande [nnb] and LuBwisi [tlj] – *Defoid* : Ekiti-Yoruba [yor]. The positioning of /ʊ/ vis-à-vis /o/ in Figure 1 is consistent with this.

With respect to front vowels, Starwalt2008 found some variation: for some speakers of Foodo (p. 105), Kinande (p. 128), and LuBwisi (p. 136), the  $F_2$  of /ɪ/ is lower than the  $F_2$  of /e/. This is consistent with what I found for Nbugu. For the rest of Starwalt’s speakers, the  $F_2$  of /ɪ/ was higher than the  $F_2$  of /e/.

This acoustic study is preliminary. Testing additional subjects would help confirm that our data are indicative of the larger Nbugu-speaking population. Laedefoged2003█ suggests testing a half-dozen speakers of each sex.

## 4 Discussion

### 4.1 Vowel system symmetry

If /i/ is reinterpreted as /ɪ/, as proposed in §3, the resulting Nbugu vowel system becomes symmetric, as shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Reanalyzed Nbugu oral vowel system

	front	central	back
high	i		u
mid-high	ɪ		ʊ
mid-low	e	ə	o
low	ɛ	a	(ɔ)

Not only is symmetry what is generally expected for vowel systems (Pike1947), it is also what is found in most languages of the region, as shown in Table 11. The languages of all of the Ubangian subgroups except Banda exhibit symmetric vowel systems, as do many of the languages from the nearby Central Sudanic group Bongo-Bagirmi.

In fact, the reanalyzed Nbugu vowel system is similar to the set of Proto-Banda monophthongs reconstructed by BoyeldieuCloarec-Heiss2001, which are shown in Table 12. The differences are (1) the presence of a high central vowel \*ɪ, and (2) the absence of the front vowels \*ɪ and \*ɛ.

It is not surprising that Boyeldieu and Cloarec-Heiss posited the proto phoneme \*ɪ. At the time of their study, it was thought that all Banda languages had a high

Table 11: Vowel systems of sample languages in geographic proximity  
("cross" = cross-height harmony)

sample lg	group	oral vowels	VH	source
Gbeya	Gbaya	/i e ε a ɔ o u/	mid	(Samarin1966)
Sango	Ngbandi	/i e ε a ɔ o u/	mid	(Samarin2000)
Ngbaka Ma'bo	Sere-Ngb.-Mba	/i e ε a ɔ o u/	mid	(Thomas1963)
Zande	Zande	/i ɪ ε ə a ɔ ʊ u/	cross	(Boyd1997)
Nzakara	Zande	/i ɪ ε a ɔ ʊ u/	cross	(Landi2005)
Bagiro	Bongo-Bagirmi	/i e ε a ɔ o u/	mid	(Boyeldieu2000)
Yulu	Bongo-Bagirmi	/i e ε (ə) a ɔ o u/	none	(Boyeldieu1987)
Lutos	Bongo-Bagirmi	/i e ε (ə) a ɔ o u/	none	(Olson2013)

Table 12: Proto-Banda vowel system (BoyeldieuCloarec-Heiss2001)

	front	central	back
high	*i	*ɪ	*u
mid-high			*v
mid-low	*e	*ə	*o
low		*a	*ɔ

central vowel. The finding that Nbugu has extant /i/ instead opens up the option of positing the proto phoneme \*i (rather than \*ɪ) with a corresponding sound change \*i > i to account for the presence of /i/ in the other Banda varieties (subject to confirmation via the comparative method). This also leads to a more typologically common proto vowel system.

As for the absence of \*ε, BoyeldieuCloarec-Heiss2001 posit instead the proto diphthong \*ia (pp. 198–199). In their analysis, occurrences of [ie] in Nbugu following labial, alveolar, and velar consonants are combined with occurrences of [ia] in Nbugu following palatal consonants in order to reconstruct the proto diphthong. The corresponding Linda forms are [eya] following labials, [ia] following alveolars and velars, and [a] following palatals. Given their data, an equally valid reconstructed form would be \*ie. Absent from their correspondence sets are occurrences of [ɛ].<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup>There are some residual items in BoyeldieuCloarec-Heiss2001's data: [ie] and [ia] contrast in [gia] 'tourner la pâte' vs. [giɛ] 'animal, viande'; and [ɛ] and [iɛ] contrast in [ŋgàɛ] ~ [ŋgɛ] 'canne à sucre' vs. [ŋgiɛ] 'noyau de la noix de palme' (pp. 192–193).

If we examine cases of [ɛ], we see that Nbugu [ɛ] corresponds with Linda [ja] (Moñino 1988) in word-intitial position, as shown in Table 13.

Table 13: Correspondences between Nbugu [ɛ] and Linda [ja]

Nbugu	Linda	gloss
ɛ.bkò	jā.bù.rù	goat
ɛ.vkó	jā.vó.ró	dog
ɛ.jē	jā.jē	woman

I was not able to identify cognates in Linda that correspond to the Nbugu words in which [ɛ] is word-medial or word-final. Hence, more research is necessary. That being said, the distinction between the two correspondence sets (Nbugu ie~ia vs. Linda ia~eja and Nbugu ε vs. Linda ja) leads me to propose two proto phonemes, \*ie and \*ɛ, with a possible merger \*ie, \*ɛ > ja in Linda. The choice of \*ɛ leads to the Proto-Banda system in Table 14 that is not only typologically more common but is also nearly identical to the extant Nbugu one.

Table 14: Reanalysed Proto-Banda vowel system

	front	central	back
high	*i		*u
mid-high	*ɪ		*ʊ
mid-low	*e	*ə	*o
low	*ɛ	*a	*ɔ

One mystery of the Banda group has been its unusual inventory of vowels (cf. Table 1). The revised symmetric Nbugu vowel system – and the comparable Proto-Banda system proposed here – are much more in line with those found in the surrounding languages. Of particular comparative interest are the vowel systems of Nzakara and Zande, since Nzakara is the immediate neighbor of Nbugu to the northeast. Nbugu, Nzakara, and Zande all have identical inventories of *phonetic* vowels: [i ɪ e ɛ a ɔ ə o ʊ u]. These similarities allow for the straightforward comparison of vowels between groups, something that was very difficult given our previous understanding of the vowel systems in the Banda group. This makes it more believable that the Banda group could be related to other language groups in the vicinity.

## 4.2 Vowel harmony

Boyeldieu-Cloarec-Heiss 2001 suggest that there are traces of a Proto-Banda ATR harmony system in extant Linda (p. 189), and to a lesser degree in extant Nbugu (pp. 196–197, 202). The existence in the current-day Nbugu vowel system of contrasts between [+ATR] and [−ATR] vowels lends credence to the hypothesis of this earlier ATR harmony system.

Indeed, the revised Nbugu vowel inventory bears a remarkable resemblance to inventories that exhibit ATR harmony. It is the same inventory as the 10-vowel systems that exhibit the “most straightforward” cases of ATR harmony in Africa, where the vowels are divided into two groups: the [+ATR] vowels /i e ə o u/ and the [−ATR] vowels /ɪ ɛ a ɔ ʊ/ (Casali 2008).

Yet, it is relatively clear that the current Nbugu system does not exhibit vowel harmony, for two reasons. First, there are many cases in Nbugu of monomorphemic words containing both [+ATR] and [−ATR] vowels, shown in Table 15.

Table 15: Monomorphemic words with both [+ATR] and [−ATR] vowels

lexical item	gloss
kó.lí.ŋgɛ̃	millipede
ʃé.ʃɛ̃	bifurcation
ŋgèé	central vein of the palm leaf
ŋgú.lè.jò	earthworm
kóé.ló	bitter plant
ŋgú.wò	smoke
zō.ngó	rainy season
à.gú.ñé	midnight
húé	sweat
míé	twin
tʃá.né	hand
là.fó	standing
mé.ñá	swell
ā.lú	heavy
à.jí	mother

Second, to my knowledge there are no cases of [+ATR] ~ [−ATR] alternations in Nbugu roots or affixes (Casali 2008).

The absence of vowel harmony in Nbugu is somewhat surprising given the preponderance of harmony systems elsewhere in the region (cf. Table 11). Sys-

tems which exhibit harmony between the two sets of mid vowels /e, o/ and /ɛ, ɔ/ (labeled “mid” in Table 11, VH column) are found in the Gbaya group (e.g. Gbeya), in Sere-Ngbaka-Mba (e.g. Ngbaka-Ma’bo), and to some degree in the Central Sudanic group Bongo-Bagirmi (e.g. Bagiro, which is immediately to the west of the Nbugu region). The lingua franca Sango from the Ngbandi group also exhibits harmony of this type, but it has exceptions.<sup>6</sup>

Cross-height harmony systems in which both high and mid vowels undergo ATR harmony on a surface phonetic level (labeled “cross” in Table 11, VH column) are found in both Nzakara and Zande. In these languages, high, mid, and low vowels all undergo ATR harmony. For both languages, the mid vowels show harmony only at the surface phonetic level, i.e. [e] and [o] are allophones of /ɛ/ and /ɔ/, respectively. In addition, for Nzakara the [a] ~ [ə] alternation is also surface phonetic.

The presence of ATR harmony in Nzakara and Zande, the identical inventories of phonetic vowels between Nbugu, Nzakara, and Zande, and the traces of ATR harmony identified by Boyeldieu and Cloarec Heiss for Linda and Nbugu – all these factors lead to the hypothesis that Proto-Banda exhibited ATR harmony. This harmony system was either inherited or borrowed, and then it was subsequently lost.

What could have led to the loss of ATR harmony in Proto-Banda? There are at least a couple of factors to consider. First, in a crosslinguistic survey, RolleEtAl2017 observe that ATR harmony and interior vowels (e.g. [i], [ə]) appear to be in an antagonistic relationship, and that the presence of both in a given vowel system is dispreferred. Perhaps Proto-Banda had both ATR harmony and the phoneme /ə/ at some point in its history, and the ATR harmony was subsequently lost due to pressure from the interior vowel.

Second, both Samarin1982 and Cloarec-Heiss1995 quote Brunache1894 who provides evidence for the existence of a Banda lingua franca in the region in the late 19th century. If this is true, the loss of ATR harmony may have been a type of simplification of the language structure that is often associated with pidgins and lingua francas.

Either of these possibilities – internal systemic pressure or L2 simplification – could have contributed a certain instability to the phonological system, leading to the loss of the ATR harmony, as well as other eventual structural changes.

---

<sup>6</sup>In discussing the simplification of Sango vis-à-vis the Ngbandi group, Samarin2000 states, “Co-occurrence of vowels has been simplified by vowel harmony: i.e., mid vowels in a single word are either tense or lax, not both.”

## 5 Conclusion

In summary, extant Ngbugu has a symmetric vowel system (including one interior vowel) that resembles vowel systems of the other groups in the region, except for the absence of vowel harmony. The extant ATR contrasts in Ngbugu lend support to Boyeldieu and Cloarec-Heiss's reconstructed Proto-Banda vowel system containing ATR contrasts. The traces of a vowel harmony system in Linda and Ngbugu, combined with the similarity of Ngbugu's surface phonetic vowel inventory to that of nearby languages that exhibit vowel harmony (particularly Nzakara) support the hypothesis that Proto-Banda may have had vowel harmony at some point in its history.

## Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Tychique Longbo, Jessé-Joël Adoumacho, and Guy-Florent Matchi for their collaboration and friendship, Connie Kutsch Lojenga for assistance with the methodology (and in particular being the first to identify /ʊ/), Pascal Boyeldieu, Mike Cahill, Bill Samarin, Coleen Starwalt, and participants at ACAL 49 for helpful comments (all errors are my own), and the SIL Central African Republic Service Group for funding.



# Chapter 9

## Counting mass nouns in Guébie

Hannah Sande<sup>a</sup> & Virginia Dawson<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Georgetown University <sup>b</sup>University of California, Berkeley

This paper contributes to the growing body of work on countability properties of nouns across languages by investigating the three-way countability distinction in Guébie, an Eastern Kru language spoken in Southwest Côte d'Ivoire. Guébie distinguishes three core categories of noun, which we call *true mass*, *count*, and *countable mass nouns*, and possesses a singulative suffix which converts countable mass nouns into count nouns. We use a mereological model to capture this three-way distinction, and the effects of the singulative suffix.

### 1 Introduction

This paper investigates the countability properties of nouns in Guébie, an Eastern Kru language spoken in Southwest Côte d'Ivoire. Guébie distinguishes three core categories of noun, based on number marking. We adopt a mereological model based on properties of cumulativity and divisibility to account for the behavior of these nouns. Additionally, we situate Guébie's system in the emerging typology of countability distinctions cross-linguistically.

Guébie is an endangered Kru language spoken by no more than 7,000 speakers in Côte d'Ivoire. There is one known monolingual speaker, while other speakers are bilingual in Guébie and French, and often other neighboring Kru languages. The data presented here was collected over the past five years in Sande's work with the Guébie community (Sande2017). The specific forms in this paper have each been confirmed by at least two male speakers, ages ~30 and ~40.

In §2 we present the morphological number marking and syntactic distribution facts for the three categories of nouns in Guébie. §3 lays out a semantic analysis of the three degrees of countability in Guébie, based in a mereological approach.



§4 briefly situates Guébie within the growing typology of number marking, and §5 concludes.

## 2 Guébie number marking

In this section we show that Guébie distinguishes three noun categories based on number marking:

1. Count nouns
2. True mass nouns
3. “Countable” mass nouns

The diagnostics for these three categories are based primarily on their compatibility with Guébie’s number morphology: the plural marker (*/-a/* or */-i/*), and the singulative marker (*/-je/* or */-ɛbə/*). The two plural markers and two singulative markers are allomorphs and do not differ in meaning (Sande 2017).<sup>1</sup>

### 2.1 Count nouns

Count nouns in Guébie have a singular individual interpretation in their bare form. These include words for humans, large animals, and items that typically do not come in groups, i.e. [n<sup>w</sup>ɔnɔ<sup>4.4</sup>] *woman*, [ɛbə<sup>31</sup>] *plate*, [mɛɔ<sup>3.1</sup>] *tongue*.<sup>2</sup> Bare count nouns cannot have a plural or substance interpretation. This is shown in (1), where the bare form of [ɛbə<sup>31</sup>] *plate* cannot be predicated on a plural subject.

- (1) \* liene<sup>3.3.1</sup>      εja<sup>2.3</sup> lieko<sup>3.3.1</sup>      ɛbə<sup>31</sup> mɔ<sup>1</sup>  
DEM.PRO.PROX with DEM.PRO.DIST plate be.EMPH  
Intended: ‘This thing and that thing are plate(s).’

These nouns combine directly with the plural suffix (*/-a/* or */-i/*) to yield a plural reading. Example (2), in contrast to (1), shows that morphologically plural-marked count nouns can be predicated of plural subjects.

<sup>1</sup>The two singulative markers do not seem to differ in meaning, and there are phonological traits which explain their distribution. However, one speaker expresses an intuition that nouns that take */-je/* are often small, while nouns that take */-ɛbə/* are often large and/or round. However, this intuition does not hold up across the collected data. More work will be done in the future to explore this area. If a difference in size is found to be conveyed, a classifier-like analysis of the singular markers might be more appropriate than the one presented here; though see §4 on how classifiers are semantically similar to the singular marker in Guébie.

<sup>2</sup>Guébie has four distinct tone heights, marked with numbers 1–4, where 4 is high.

- (2) liene<sup>3.3.1</sup>      εja<sup>2.3</sup> lieko<sup>3.3.1</sup>      ॥bə-i<sup>3.12</sup> mo<sup>1</sup>  
DEM.PRO.PROX with DEM.PRO.DIST plate-PL be.EMPH  
‘This thing and that thing are plates.’

Table 1 shows a selection of count nouns in their bare form, and with the PL suffix.<sup>3</sup>

Table 1: Count nouns in Guébie

	Singular Root	Plural Root-PL	Translation
a.	॥bə <sup>31</sup>	॥bə-i <sup>3.12</sup>	‘plate’
b.	cu <sup>3</sup>	cu-i <sup>3.2</sup>	‘month’
c.	sabala <sup>3.3.3</sup>	sabala-i <sup>3.3.3.2</sup>	‘shoe’
d.	ʃakʷεlε <sup>2.3.1</sup>	ʃakʷεlε-i <sup>2.3.1.2</sup>	‘tarantula’
e.	mεɔ <sup>3.1</sup>	mεɔ-i <sup>3.1.2</sup>	‘tongue’
f.	goji <sup>3.1</sup>	goji-a <sup>3.1.2</sup>	‘dog’
g.	du <sup>2</sup>	du-a <sup>2.2</sup>	‘city’

Count nouns cannot combine with the singulative suffix, as shown in (3).

- (3) \*noun-SG
- a. \* mεɔ<sup>3.1</sup>-॥bə/je<sup>1</sup>  
tongue-SG  
Intended: ‘A tongue’
  - b. \* ॥bə<sup>31</sup>-॥bə/je<sup>1</sup>  
plate-SG  
Intended: ‘A plate’

Only the plural form of a count noun can combine with a numeral greater than one, as shown in (4).

#### (4) Numerals only combine with plural-marked count nouns

<sup>3</sup>Both plural suffixes in Guébie are associated with a level tone 2. When attached to a root, if the root is associated with more underlying tone heights than syllables (e.g. two tone levels on a monosyllabic word as in example a in Table 1), then we see one-to-one association of syllables to tone heights beginning at the left, and any leftover tone heights form a contour together with the plural level 2 at the right edge.

- a. mεɔ̃-i<sup>3.1.2</sup> ta<sup>3</sup>  
tongue-PL three  
'Three tongues'
- b. \* mεɔ̃<sup>3.1</sup> ta<sup>3</sup>  
tongue three  
Intended: 'Three tongues'
- c. ɔ̄bə-i<sup>3.12</sup> ta<sup>3</sup>  
plate-PL three  
'Three plates'
- d. \* ɔ̄bə<sup>31</sup> ta<sup>3</sup>  
plate three  
Intended: 'Three plates'

Similarly, only the plural form of a count noun can combine with an 'all' or 'many' quantifier, as shown in (4). The translations marked with '#' are impossible interpretations of these utterances.

(5) **Quantifiers only combine with plural-marked count nouns**

- a. ɔ̄bə-i<sup>3.12</sup> aɔ̄ba<sup>4.2</sup>  
plate-PL all  
'all the plates', # 'all the plate'
- b. ɔ̄bə-i<sup>3.12</sup> ɔ̄butugba<sup>3.1.1</sup>  
plate-PL much  
'many plates', # 'much plate'
- c. \* ɔ̄bə<sup>31</sup> aɔ̄ba<sup>4.2</sup> / ɔ̄butugba<sup>3.1.1</sup>  
plate all/much  
Intended: 'all/much plate' or 'all/many plates'

Inconsistent capitalization of translations throughout the chapter

In sum, count nouns in Guébie act much like count nouns in English. They have a singular interpretation in their bare form and a plural interpretation when combined with plural morphology. In the latter case, they can appear with a numeral greater than one, or with quantifiers 'all, many'.

## 2.2 True mass nouns

The second class of nouns in countability terms in Guébie are the true mass nouns. These nouns refer to substances, including liquids like *blood*, *oil*, and those consisting of very tiny particles like *sand* and *salt*.

True mass nouns can only surface in their bare form. Unlike count nouns, mass nouns cannot combine directly with the plural suffix. Additionally, mass nouns cannot combine with the singulative suffix, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: True mass nouns in Guébie

Mass Root	Plural *Root-PL	Translation *Root-SG	
a. dolo <sup>1.1</sup>	*dolo-a, *dolo-i	*dodo-je, *dodo- $\bar{b}$ ə	'blood'
b. dodo <sup>3.2</sup>	*dodo-a, *dodo-i	*dolo-je, *dolo- $\bar{b}$ ə	'sand'
c. kpə <sup>4</sup>	*kpə-a, *kpə-i	*kpə-je, *kpə- $\bar{b}$ ə	'oil'
d. ʃuru <sup>2.2</sup>	*ʃuru-a, *ʃuru-i	*ʃuru-je, *ʃuru- $\bar{b}$ ə	'salt'

True mass nouns can never combine with numerals in Guébie, as shown in (6).

## (6) Numerals cannot modify bare mass nouns

- a. dodo<sup>3.2</sup> la<sup>2</sup> ci-ə<sup>2.2</sup> ta<sup>3</sup>  
sand of type-PL three  
'three types of sand'
- b. \*dodo<sup>3.2</sup> ta<sup>3</sup>  
sand three  
Intended: 'three sands'

Unlike count nouns, which cannot combine with quantifiers 'all, many' in their bare form (5), bare mass nouns combine with quantifiers (7).

## (7) Quantifiers can modify bare mass nouns

- a. dolo<sup>1.1</sup> a $\bar{b}$ ba<sup>4.2</sup>  
blood all  
'all the blood'
- b. dolo<sup>1.1</sup>  $\bar{b}$ butugba<sup>3.1.1</sup>  
blood much  
'a lot of blood'
- c. dodo<sup>3.2</sup> a $\bar{b}$ ba<sup>4.2</sup>  
sand all  
'all the sand'

In sum, true mass nouns never appear with number-marking morphology, and they cannot be modified by numerals. Unlike count nouns, they can be modified by quantifiers in their bare form.

### 2.3 “Countable” mass nouns

The third class of nouns, which we call *countable* mass nouns, shows split behavior: bare countable mass nouns pattern with mass nouns, while SG-marked countable mass nouns pattern with count nouns.

The countable mass class makes up a large part of the Guébie lexicon, consisting of individuals that typically come in groups. These include insects, small animals, body parts, fruits and vegetables, grains and nuts, stars, ashes, etc.<sup>4</sup>

Like mass nouns, bare countable mass nouns cannot combine directly with the plural suffix, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Countable mass nouns in Guébie

Mass Root	Plural *Root-PL	Translation
a. novi <sup>2.3</sup>	*novi-a, *novi-i	‘bees’
b. kuk <sup>w</sup> e <sup>4.1</sup>	*kuk <sup>w</sup> e-a, *kuk <sup>w</sup> e-i	‘ants’
c. wɔlɛ <sup>3.1</sup>	*wɔlɛ-a, *wɔlɛ-i	‘fingers’
d. jɛ <sup>3</sup>	*jɛ-a, *jɛ-i	‘stars’
e. ja <sup>31</sup>	*ja-a, ??ja-i	‘coconuts’
f. troɔbiə <sup>3.2.2</sup>	*troɔbiə-a, *troɔbiə-i	‘eggplants’

Again like mass nouns, and unlike count nouns, bare countable mass nouns cannot combine with numerals, but can combine with quantifiers. This is shown in (8).

- (8) a. \* ja<sup>31</sup> ta<sup>3</sup>  
           coconuts three  
           Intended: ‘Three coconuts’

---

<sup>4</sup>Interestingly, *water* also falls into this class: when it combines with the SG suffix, it refers to a body of water such as a lake. For the present, we set *water* aside, as we are unsure to what extent coercion plays a role.

- b.  $\text{ʃa}^{31}$        $a\text{ʃba}^{4.2}$   
     coconuts all  
     ‘All coconut’<sup>5</sup>

Unlike both other classes of nouns, countable mass nouns can combine with the SG suffix to yield a singular individual reading. Just like bare count nouns, these SG-marked nouns cannot be predicated of plural subjects, as shown in (9).

- (9) \*  $\text{liəne}^{3.3.1}$        $\text{ɛja}^{2.3}$   $\text{liəko}^{3.3.1}$        $\text{ʃa-ʃbə}^{3.1}$        $mɔ^1$   
     DEM.PRO.PROX with DEM.PRO.DIST coconuts-SG be.EMPH  
     Intended: ‘This thing and that thing are coconut.’

However this SG form can then be pluralized with the /-a, -i/ plural marker, in which case it can surface as the predicate of a plural subject<sup>6</sup>, as in (10).

- (10)  $\text{liəne}^{3.3.1}$        $\text{ɛja}^{2.3}$   $\text{liəko}^{3.3.1}$        $\text{ʃa-ʃbə-i}^{3.1.2}$        $mɔ^1$   
     DEM.PRO.PROX with DEM.PRO.DIST coconuts-SG-PL be.EMPH  
     ‘This thing and that thing are coconuts.’

Table 4 shows these number marking patterns for a selection of countable mass nouns.

Table 4: Singular and Plural on countable mass nouns

Mass Root	Singular Root-SG	Plural Root-SG-PL	Translation
a. $\text{ʃa}^{31}$	$\text{ʃa-ʃbə}^{3.1}$	$\text{ʃa-ʃbə-i}^{3.1.2}$	‘coconut’
b. $\text{troʃbiə}^{3.2.2}$	$\text{troʃbiə-je}^{3.2.2.1}$	$\text{troʃbiə-je-i}^{3.2.2.1.2}$	‘eggplant’
c. $\text{novi}^{2.3}$	$\text{novi-je}^{2.3.1}$	$\text{novi-je-i}^{2.3.1.2}$	‘bee’
d. $\text{kuk}^w\text{e}^{4.1}$	$\text{kuk}^w\text{e-je}^{4.1.1}$	$\text{kuk}^w\text{e-je-i}^{4.1.1.2}$	‘ant’
e. $\text{wɔlə}^{3.1}$	$\text{wɔlə-je}^{3.1.1}$	$\text{wɔlə-je-i}^{3.1.1.2}$	‘finger’
f. $\text{ʃe}^3$	$\text{ʃalr-je}^{3.1}$	$\text{ʃalr-je-i}^{3.1.2}$	‘star’

<sup>5</sup>More data is needed to know whether this has a definite interpretation similar to using a universal quantifier with a mass noun in English, and whether (8b) is interpreted differently than (12a).

<sup>6</sup>See Marchese1979 for a 2-way split in other Kru languages between countable nouns that take a plural suffix directly, and countable mass nouns which take -SG-PL suffixes.

Like plural count nouns, PL-marked countable mass nouns (noun-SG-PL) can combine with numerals greater than one and quantifiers, but a noun-SG form cannot. This is shown in (11) and (12).

(11) -SG-PL mass nouns with numerals

- a. ja-~~bə~~-i<sup>3.1.2</sup> ta<sup>3</sup>  
coconuts-SG-PL three  
'Three coconuts'
- b. \* ja-~~bə~~<sup>3.1</sup> ta<sup>3</sup>  
coconut-SG three  
Intended: 'three coconut(s)'

(12) -SG-PL mass nouns with quantifiers

- a. ja-~~bə~~-i<sup>3.1.2</sup> a~~bə~~<sup>4.2</sup>  
coconuts-SG-PL all  
'all coconuts'
- b. \* ja-~~bə~~<sup>3.1</sup> a~~bə~~<sup>4.2</sup>  
coconuts-SG all  
Intended: 'all coconuts'

To summarize, bare countable mass nouns pattern with true mass nouns in that they cannot take plural marking or be modified by a numeral. By contrast, the SG marked form of a countable mass noun patterns with count nouns. The SG marked form yields a singular individual interpretation, it can take plural marking, and it can be modified by a numeral (by the numeral one in the noun-SG form, and by any numeral greater than one in the noun-SG-PL form). These properties are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5: Properties of noun types in Guébie

	Indiv. interp.	-PL	N-PL	Numeral	N Quantifier
Count	X	X	X		
True mass					X
Countable mass (bare)					X
Countable mass (-SG)	X	X	X		

## 2.4 Summary

Based on the distribution of singular and plural suffixes as well as numerals, we have seen that there is at least a three-way distinction in countability across nouns in Guébie: count nouns (e.g. ‘plate, woman’), countable mass nouns (e.g. ‘coconut, finger’), and true mass nouns (e.g. ‘blood, sand’).

## 3 Semantics

An analysis of the above data must account for (i) the different distribution and behavior of count nouns, true mass nouns, and countable mass nouns, and (ii) the distribution of SG and its semantic effect (i.e. that it takes a countable mass noun and turns it into a count noun). We assume here that the PL marker in Guébie is analogous to PL marking in languages like English.

### 3.1 Count nouns vs. true mass nouns

A concrete way to model countability distinctions relies on notions of cumulativity and divisibility.<sup>7</sup> These properties are defined in (13) and (14) respectively.

- (13) A noun is cumulative iff it denotes a cumulative predicate.  
A predicate  $p$  is cumulative iff any sum of parts that are  $p$  is also  $p$ .  
(Deal2017)
- (14) A noun is divisive iff it denotes a divisive predicate.  
A predicate  $p$  is divisive iff any part of something that is  $p$  is also  $p$ .  
(Deal2017)

Noun denotations that are neither cumulative nor divisive have been termed *quantized* (Krifka1989, Deal2017), while those that are both cumulative and divisive have been termed *homogeneous* (Bunt1985, Deal2017). These properties distinguish English singular count nouns and mass nouns respectively.

For example, consider the count noun “plate”. If some thing A can be truly described as a plate, and B can also be truly described as a plate, it does not follow that A+B are a plate. Instead, A+B are truly described as plates. This shows that the English noun “plate” is not cumulative. Likewise, if A can be truly described as a plate, it does not follow that some subpart of A is also a plate. Instead, it

---

<sup>7</sup>See Quine1960, Cheng1973, Link1983, Krifka1989, Doetjes1997, Grimm2012Diss; and Deal2017, among others.

would be described as part of a plate. This shows that English “plate” is not divisive.

In contrast, consider the mass noun “sand”. If there is some thing A that can be truly described as sand, and B can also be truly described as sand, it follows that A+B are sand. Unlike “plate”, the English noun “sand” is cumulative. Likewise, if A can be described as sand, it follows that some subpart of A is also sand. The English noun “sand” is also divisive.

This is summarized in (15) and (16).

- (15) English singular count nouns are not cumulative and not divisive (i.e. they are quantized)
  - a. A is a plate, and B is a plate, but A+B are not a plate
  - b. A is a plate, but any subpart of A is not a plate
- (16) English mass nouns are both cumulative and divisive (i.e. they are homogeneous)
  - a. A is sand, and B is sand, and A+B is sand
  - b. A is sand, and any subpart of A is sand

We can schematize these properties of count and mass nouns as in (17). The denotation of a quantized noun like “plate” contains only non-overlapping individuals: while individual plates a, b, and c are in the denotation of “plate”, their sums and subparts are not. In contrast, the denotation of a cumulative noun like “sand” only contains members that overlap with other members: each member of the denotation of “sand” is a subpart of another member, and shares each of its subparts with another member.

- (17) a.  $\llbracket \text{plate} \rrbracket = \{a, b, c\}$
- b.  $\llbracket \text{sand} \rrbracket = \{ab, bc, ac, abc\}$

This analysis of the English count/mass distinction extends nicely to Guébie’s count nouns and true mass nouns. Just like in English, Guébie’s count nouns are quantized (i.e. neither divisive nor cumulative), and its true mass nouns are homogeneous (i.e. both divisive and cumulative). This is schematized in (18).

- (18) a.  $\llbracket \text{plate}^{\text{31}} \rrbracket = \{a, b, c\}$
- b.  $\llbracket \text{sand}^{\text{32}} \rrbracket = \{ab, bc, ac, abc\}$

This analysis allows us to account for the distributional differences of PL between count nouns and true mass nouns: just like in English, PL can only combine with quantized denotations.<sup>8</sup> It also allows us to capture the restriction on numeral modification: numerals can only modify quantized denotations.<sup>9</sup>

### 3.2 Countable mass nouns and SG

Bare countable mass nouns behave like mass nouns, but when they are marked with the SG suffix, they behave like count nouns. Modeling noun meanings in terms of cumulativity and divisiveness allows us capture this. Just like true mass nouns, countable mass noun denotations are cumulative. For example, arbitrarily large groups of coconuts and ants can be referred to with a bare countable mass noun. However, like count nouns and unlike true mass nouns, countable mass noun denotations are not divisive: they contain non-overlapping minimal parts. These properties can be captured by assuming that the denotations of countable mass nouns in Guébie contain both non-overlapping individual members and sums of those individual members. A countable mass noun denotation is schematized in (19), where individual letters *a*, *b* and *c* represent atomic individuals, such as individual coconuts or ants, and combinations of those letters represent sums of those individuals, such as a sum of two or three individual coconuts or ants.

- (19)  $\llbracket \mathbf{j}a^{31} \text{ "coconut"} \rrbracket = \{a, b, c, ab, bc, ac, abc\}$

Since these denotations are cumulative, they cannot combine with PL or be directly modified by numerals, just like true mass nouns. They are crucially different from mass nouns, however, in that their denotations do contain non-overlapping minimal parts. This kind of cumulative but non-divisive noun denotation is also found in English (for “fake mass” nouns like *furniture* and *jewelry*) and in “classifier” languages like Chinese and Japanese (see Doetjes1997, Landman2011, Deal2017). ‘Furniture’ plus more ‘furniture’ is still called ‘furniture’ in English (cumulativity), but a sub-part of ‘furniture’ such as the leg of

---

<sup>8</sup>The role of PL is to add sums to the denotation, and thus makes the resulting denotation cumulative. There is debate in the literature about the exact nature of PL (e.g. whether the resulting denotation includes atoms as well as sums; see SauerlandEtAl2005, FarkasSwart2010), that we do not wish to address here. The Guébie PL data are compatible with analyses that account for English PL.

<sup>9</sup>This assumes that only sets with non-overlapping members (i.e. quantized denotations) can be counted (Chierchia1998, Landman2011). For languages that have PL inflection on nouns that are modified by numerals >1, that PL marking is taken to be either purely morphosyntactic (Krifka1989) or semantically undone by the numeral modification (Chierchia1998).

a chair is not ‘furniture’ (non-divisive). Just like in Guébie, *furniture* cannot be marked PL (\*furnitures) or be directly modified by numerals (\*three furniture(s)). We return to the cross-linguistic picture in the following section.

Finally, we propose that this difference is what allows countable mass nouns (but not true mass nouns) to combine with the SG suffix. Specifically, the role of the SG suffix is to take in a countable mass noun denotation like in (19), and remove all non-atomic members. The result is the quantized denotation in (20), which, like the denotation of a count noun, only contains non-overlapping individuals (i.e. individual coconuts or ants).

- (20) [ʃa-∅bə<sup>3.1</sup> “coconut”] = {a, b, c}

Since a SG-marked countable mass noun is now quantized, it can combine with PL marking, just like the quantized bare count nouns. Importantly, SG cannot attach to true mass nouns because their denotations do not contain these non-overlapping minimal parts.

The analysis presented here also allows us to capture the distribution of the quantifiers [a∅ba<sup>4.2</sup>] ‘all’ and [∅butugba<sup>3.1.1</sup>] ‘many’. We propose that these quantifiers can only combine with cumulative noun denotations. This allows these quantifiers to combine with the homogeneous denotations of true mass nouns, and with the cumulative but non-divisive denotations of bare countable mass nouns, PL-marked count nouns, and SG-PL-marked countable mass nouns. In contrast, these quantifiers cannot combine with the quantized denotations of bare count nouns and SG-marked countable mass nouns.

## 4 The cross-linguistic picture

We have seen that Guébie has a core three-way countability distinction in its nominal semantics, and that this three-way distinction can be captured in terms of cumulativity and divisiveness. Similar three way distinctions are also found in other languages. For example, in addition to the binary mass/count distinction, English also distinguishes a smaller class of “fake mass” nouns like *jewelry*, *furniture*, and *footwear*. Welsh (Grimm2012Chapter) has a larger class of nouns that are interpreted plural in their bare form, and require a SG suffix for singular reference. This contrasts with nouns that are interpreted singular in their bare form (count nouns), and those that cannot take the SG suffix (mass nouns).

Other languages appear to only make a two way distinction. For example, “classifier” languages, like Chinese and Japanese, make a countability distinction in

Undefined  
refer-  
ence

terms of divisiveness, but not cumulativity.<sup>10</sup> These languages lack quantized noun denotations; typical count nouns like “plate” are cumulative in these languages, as indicated in (??). Note that this kind of analysis lends itself to an explanation of the typical absence of PL marking in such languages, and that all nouns in such languages require classifiers in numeral modification.

(21) Noun denotations in classifier languages

- a. Individual-denoting nouns (e.g. *plate*): {a, b, c, ab, bc, ac, abc}
- b. Substance-denoting nouns (e.g. *sand*): {ab, bc, ac, abc}

While cumulative but non-divisive noun denotations are commonly attested cross-linguistically, languages differ in how they treat such denotations. In the first place, languages differ in what objects are assigned cumulative, non-divisive denotations. This class is small in English (*furniture*, *jewelry*, *footwear* and *mail*, among some others), with most nouns either truly mass or count. Languages like Guébie and Welsh, in contrast, have very large classes of such nouns, consisting of a wide variety of objects that typically come in groups. Classifier languages like Chinese and Japanese assign all non-substance nouns such denotations.

Second, languages differ in how they allow such nouns to be modified by a numeral. English uses measure words (e.g. *three pieces of furniture*), while Chinese and Japanese have dedicated classifiers. In contrast, Guébie and Welsh have SG suffixes that convert a cumulative, non-divisive noun into a quantized noun.

Finally, while both Guébie and Welsh employ similar strategies for allowing such nouns to be modified by numerals (via a SG suffix), they also show an interesting difference: SG-marked nouns in Guébie can be further pluralized, but are not in Welsh.

## 5 Conclusion

Guébie shows a core, three-way countability distinction in its nominal semantics, based on number morphology and numeral modification. A singulative suffix takes “countable” mass nouns and turns them into count nouns. We model these distinctions in terms of cumulativity and divisiveness, which are useful concepts for modeling countability across languages.

---

<sup>10</sup>For evidence of countability distinctions in Chinese and Japanese, see ChengSybesma1998, InagakiBarner2009; and CheungEtAl2010. For an explicit proposal in terms of cumulativity and divisiveness, see Deal2017.

## Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the Guébie community for sharing their time and their language. Thanks also to the audience at ACAL 49 in Michigan for their feedback.

## Abbreviations

DEM	demonstrative	PROX	proximate
DIST	distal	SG	singular
EMPH	emphatic	PL	plural
PRO	pronoun		

## Appendix A – List of countable mass nouns in Guébie

	Bare	Bare-SG-PL	Gloss
<b>Body parts</b>			
a.	wɔlɛ <sup>3.1</sup>	wɔlɛ-je-i <sup>3.1.1.2</sup>	‘finger’
b.	gala <sup>3.3</sup>	gala-je-i <sup>3.3.1.2</sup>	‘tooth’
c.	jiri <sup>2.3</sup>	jiri-je-i <sup>2.3.1.2</sup>	‘eye’
d.	jukʷe <sup>3.3</sup>	jukʷe-je-i <sup>3.3.1.2</sup>	‘ear’
e.	⊗bɔgɔ <sup>3.1</sup>	⊗bɔgʷ-e-i <sup>3.1.1.2</sup>	‘leg’
f.	ji <sup>4</sup>	ji-je-i <sup>4.1.2</sup>	‘hair’
<b>Fruit and vegetables</b>			
g.	ja <sup>31</sup>	ja-⊗bə-i <sup>3.1.2</sup>	‘coconut’
h.	tro⊗biə <sup>3.2.2</sup>	tro⊗biə-je-i <sup>3.2.2.1.2</sup>	‘eggplant’
i.	dibo <sup>2.3</sup>	jiote-je-i <sup>2.2.3.1.2</sup>	‘plantain’
j.	gbajɔ <sup>3.1</sup>	gbajɔ-je-i <sup>3.1.1</sup>	‘okra’
k.	ŋate <sup>3.1</sup>	ŋate-je-i <sup>3.1.1.2</sup>	‘yam’
l.	gbajisɔ <sup>2.2.3</sup>	gbajisɔ-⊗bə-i <sup>2.2.3.1.2</sup>	‘papaya’
m.	dio <sup>3.3</sup>	dio-⊗bə-i <sup>3.3.1.2</sup>	‘pineapple’
<b>Grains/Nuts</b>			
n.	saka <sup>3.3</sup>	saka-je-i <sup>3.3.1.2</sup>	‘rice’
o.	gʷi <sup>3</sup>	gʷi-je-i <sup>3.1.2</sup>	‘palm grain’
p.	gv <sup>3</sup>	gv-je-i <sup>3.1.2</sup>	‘kola nut’
q.	dodo <sup>2.3</sup>	dodo-je-i <sup>2.3.1.2</sup>	‘corn’
<b>Animals</b>			
r.	novi <sup>2.3</sup>	novi-je-i <sup>2.3.1.2</sup>	‘bee’
s.	kukʷe <sup>4.1</sup>	kukʷe-je-i <sup>4.1.1.2</sup>	‘ant’
t.	sio <sup>3.1</sup>	sio-je-i <sup>3.1.2</sup>	‘snail’
u.	popi <sup>3.1</sup>	popi-je-i <sup>3.1.1.2</sup>	‘bat’
v.	kanj <sup>3.1</sup>	kanj-je-i <sup>3.1.1.2</sup>	‘mosquito’
<b>Other</b>			
w.	je <sup>3</sup>	jali-je-i <sup>3.1.2</sup>	‘star’
x.	sika <sup>2.3</sup>	sika-je-i <sup>2.3.1.2</sup>	‘gold’
y.	gbajukʷə <sup>3.2.2</sup>	gbajukʷə-je-i <sup>3.2.2.1.2</sup>	‘grass’
z.	kako <sup>3.1</sup>	kako-je-i <sup>3.1.1.2</sup>	‘ember’



# Chapter 10

## The future of the indigenous languages of Kenya and Tanzania

Angelina Kioko<sup>a</sup> & Josephat Rugemalira<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>US International University-Africa <sup>b</sup>Tumaini University College Dar es Salaam

This paper examines the language policies and practices in Kenya and Tanzania and argues that, in spite of the observable differences between these neighbouring countries, the ethnic community languages face an uncertain future. Although language policies play a role in determining this future, there are stronger forces that defy language policy, viz. population movements, urbanization, technological changes affecting mass communication, and the structure of the economies.

Should author's name be Angelina Nduku Kioko? For consistency with the Ngonyani et al. chapter

### 1 Introduction

This paper examines the language policies and practices in Kenya and Tanzania in order to determine their impact on the past and future fortunes of the indigenous languages. The agenda is two-fold. First it is of interest to determine which policies (if any) are more significant in the endeavour to enhance the fortunes of less powerful languages, i.e. which policies or mix of policies are more effective in the business of language promotion and preservation. Second, we consider the open possibility that the language policies notwithstanding, the powerful forces for change in the social and political systems of the world are set against the long term preservation of linguistic diversity. We show that in spite of the observable differences in language policies and practices between Kenya and Tanzania, the threats to the indigenous languages in both countries are the



much more formidable forces beyond the tinkering of politicians and bureaucrats of small time states. These forces include population movements, urbanization, technological changes affecting mass communication, and the structure of the economies.

## 2 Hostile language policies and practices in Tanzania

In this section we show that overall there are more policies and practices hostile to the indigenous languages in Tanzania than in Kenya. After presenting comparative language demographics for the two countries, we proceed to examine the policies and practices that appear to place a stranglehold on the local languages of Tanzania while Kenyan languages appear to get a friendlier environment.

Demographic basics: Table 1 shows that only 13.3 million people, i.e. 38% of the population of Tanzania (which was 35m in 2009) speak a language among the top ten. By contrast, 32.8 million Kenyans, i.e. 85% of the Kenyan population (which was 38.6m in 2009) speak one of the top ten languages. This means that it is more difficult for a Tanzanian ethnic community language to break out of the large pack of small community languages – 150 in total – and gain respect and power. In Kenya the top ten languages constitute a quarter of the total number of languages spoken in the country – about forty altogether. Such relatively respectable numerical strength provides a base for public recognition of the languages.

Is second decimal place for Turkana included on purpose? Consider rounding to 1.0 for consistency

Languages of government: There is no formal recognition of indigenous languages in Tanzania. Indeed such recognition is regarded as inappropriate and undesirable for the unity of the nation. The first attempt to mention language matters in the aborted 2014 draft constitution only mentions Kiswahili as national and official language and English as the other official language. By contrast the 2010 Kenya constitution guarantees space for indigenous languages. The primary language of government business in Tanzania is Kiswahili; in oral communication English is rather minimal; even in formal government documents Kiswahili is edging out English. It is indeed arguable that English may still hold on in written communication because some of the government documents need to be presented to foreign governments for consultations on aid.

Parliament is a good illustration of the struggle for turf between Kiswahili and English and a good indicator of the slow pace of change within the legal profession. While all written laws (except the constitution which is in Swahili

Table 1: Top ten languages in Kenya and Tanzania (millions of speakers)

Kenya		Tanzania	
Kikuyu	6.6	Sukuma	6
Luhya	5.3	Ha	1.2
Kalenjin	4.6	Gogo	1.0
Kamba	3.9	Maasai	0.8
Luo	4.0	Haya	0.8
Somali	2.4	Makonde	0.8
Kisii	2.2	Nyakyusa	0.7
Meru	1.7	Hehe	0.7
Turkana	0.98	Fipa	0.7
Maasai	0.8	Iraqw	0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>32.8</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>13.3</b>

Sources: Kenya-National-Bureau-of-Statistics2009,  
Mradi-wa-Lugha-za-Tanzania2009

and English) are drafted in English, they are orally presented in summary form in Kiswahili and debated in Kiswahili; they are enacted in the English version. Yet MPs need not demonstrate competence in English, although representatives in regional assemblies, such as the East African Community & SADC, defend their candidacy in English within parliament and may lose votes if they cannot express themselves properly. In the courts the language of oral communication is Kiswahili; oral proceedings and the verdict are in Kiswahili, but English is used in written submissions and final judgement.

All this is in stark contrast to the Kenyan scene where the primary language of government business is English and, though Kiswahili is an official language and the national language, its use in government is usually prompted by issues of access, rather than issues of policy preference. It is not normal for a Kenya government document to be written in Kiswahili. In parliament, the constitution allows a choice of either Kiswahili or English; in practice English is the language of parliamentary proceedings. Elected politicians in parliament and county assemblies must demonstrate competence in English and Kiswahili. All written laws including the constitution are in English; bills are drafted and debated in English. In the courts English reigns supreme and Kiswahili may be available via an interpreter; in lower courts an indigenous language may be allowed via an interpreter.

The dominance of Kiswahili in Tanzania government business may have become a major obstacle to the promotion of indigenous languages because of the assumed near total accessibility of the national language. By contrast, the dominance of English in Kenya government business may be seen as a factor helping promote the indigenous languages because of the need to ensure access to government communication.

**Language in education:** In Tanzania Kiswahili is language of instruction (LOI) in the seven years of primary school (except for a very small section of the population who can access English medium primary schools). English is the LoI at secondary & tertiary levels;<sup>1</sup> it is a compulsory subject from the third year of school. Indigenous languages are banned in school.

Kenya is more accommodating of the indigenous languages, allowing them to be used as languages of instruction in the first three years, alongside with Kiswahili. English takes over as LOI from fourth grade. This friendly policy arrangement is largely thwarted in practice because English has become the preferred language of school from nursery level.

**Language in other public domains:** In Tanzania's mass media, Kiswahili predominates over English. English is sporadic in print media and insignificant in radio & TV. Indigenous languages are banned in the media (**TCRA2005**).<sup>2</sup> Kenya, on the other hand, has a vibrant body of broadcasting in indigenous languages even though English is dominant overall both print and electronic media.

Kiswahili is dominant in the various forms of public entertainment (music, soap opera, stand-up comedy) in both countries, which is a good reflection of the sensitivity to market forces. English may come in second ahead of indigenous languages in this regard. The same pattern of paying attention to the structure of the market may be observed in electoral politics (campaigns for office). In both countries Kiswahili is the language for getting votes: Kenya's political campaigns are mainly in Kiswahili in urban and cosmopolitan areas; in Kiswahili or indigenous languages in the rural areas (except presidential campaigns). English is only used on TV talk shows. In Tanzania Kiswahili is the language of politics, while English, while permitted is virtually unusable. The indigenous languages however are banned, being covered by the 'divisive language' label of campaign regulations (**Tanzania-Government2010**).

<sup>1</sup>This policy has been reaffirmed over the past several decades in spite of the perennial debate about its appropriateness and effectiveness, cf. (**Tanzania-Government1995, Tanzania-Government2014, QorroEtAl2012**)

<sup>2</sup>The government has not registered any indigenous language newspaper since independence even though the relevant laws have not explicitly banned such outlets (**Rugemalira2013**). Papers registered before independence eventually died for various reasons – including an envi-

Language choice in product packaging, user manuals, and advertising can be a good indicator of market structure, but there is considerable sophistication here. English appears to be dominant in both countries, which may be a sign of external dependencies of the economies (in imports and exports, and historical links of the particular industry). Bilingual labeling in English and Kiswahili is sporadic – apparently without being required by government regulations.<sup>3</sup> A study to determine the level of sophistication in audience targeting might clarify the advertising scene somewhat: for instance how do the cell-phone companies choose the language for their myriad promotional drives?<sup>4</sup> In this domain in both countries, the indigenous languages are at the losing end even if more so in Tanzania.

In the sphere of organized religion, Kiswahili is in dominant use in Tanzania – even in rural congregations. Translations of the bible, catechism/religious instruction, and hymns in the indigenous languages have fallen into disuse. Popular gospel music is in Kiswahili – another nod to market forces. While there are no government regulations on this it is notable that the churches & mosques have promoted Kiswahili services! In Kenya English and Kiswahili religious services are common in urban and cosmopolitan areas. In the rural areas indigenous languages are more prevalent while some services in Kiswahili or English may be found. Hymnal and bible translations into indigenous languages are still in popular usage even in urban areas.

Language attitudes: The stigma attached to indigenous languages as ‘dangerously tribalistic and retrogressive’ was most explicitly articulated by Nyerere<sup>1995</sup> at his party’s conference to nominate a presidential candidate for the first multi-party elections in Tanzania. Although the point he was making about the imperative of nominating a candidate on grounds of leadership merit rather than narrow ethnic belonging is crucial, the damage to the cause of indigenous languages and cultures was colossal: in that speech he maintained that the only use left for ‘tribal languages’ was in tribal religious ritual (“*kutambika*”) and that in this age only fools would engage in tribal based associations. Kiswahili on the other hand is the language of national unity, progress and political correctness. As for English, the ambivalence in attitudes is oppressive: it is the language of the erstwhile colonial master and the imperialist powers; but it is also the language of individual power and prestige, and anyone who amasses sufficient linguistic

---

ronment hostile to indigenous languages (**Madumulla2007**)

<sup>3</sup>How often have you come across a Swahili label on a bottle of water or soda, a bag of cement, or a packet of medicines?

<sup>4</sup>It is kind of fashionable to choose a English trade name: “the linguistic market is strongly influenced by English in ad’s, business, trade and commerce, banks, technology, TV and in other domains that are a concomitant of Western lifestyle.” (**Legere2010**)

capital in this form is sure to go places and climb higher on the social ladder. This would account for the ‘show-off’ phenomenon whereby some speakers engage in uncontrolled code-mixing involving English and Kiswahili, in very formal contexts regardless of the needs of the audience.<sup>5</sup> Still conditions for the mastery of English in the education system are tough and in communication encounters the advice for many would be avoid it as best you can lest you face humiliation.

In Kenya, there is a relatively strong and positive attachment to indigenous languages; but you speak English to colleagues and the boss at the office, Kiswahili to the house servant, and the indigenous language to your tribesman to signal belonging.

### 3 Emerging patterns of promise

There are significant differences between Kenya and Tanzania regarding the way the ECLs are treated. In Kenya the ECLs appear to have far more habitable space, both in public and private domains than is the case in Tanzania where official policies and practices as well as private preferences appear to disregard or actively suppress these languages. The notable legal [constitutional] and [language in education] policy openings that provide relief to Kenya’s ECLs have created three potential growth poles for the languages.

The first more vibrant pole revolves around the use of the local languages in the media. As noted in the previous section, ECL print media in Kenya has been quickly overshadowed by the fast growth of digital channels – TV and FM radio. It would be safe to say that most ECLs in Kenya can boast of at least a radio FM station. In any case the government owned Kenya Broadcasting Corporation maintains scheduled radio programmes in many of the ECLs in Kenya. Many of the larger communities have access to several TV and radio stations. According to the records from the Communication Authority of Kenya [CAK], there are currently 64 registered ‘vernacular’ radio FM stations and 20 registered ‘vernacular’ TV stations (Personal Communication with CAK officials). The growth, especially of the TV stations is quite recent but very rapid. This is in spite of the initial persecution of promoters of vernacular radio stations in the 1990s and

---

<sup>5</sup>“As for language choices, a *laissez-faire* approach is observed in the recent past. Swahili still holds a strong position, but there is a tendency in public that some people tend to demonstrate their (mostly rudimentary) knowledge of English by inserting English words (articulated with a terrible Swahili accent) whenever possible. They produce a speech variety that is basically Swahili, but intended to demonstrate the status of the speaker who is eager to distinguish him/herself from others who do not dispose of an English vocabulary.” (Legere2010)

early 2000, and the perception of some politicians that the vernacular radio stations are a threat to national unity. It is important to note that there has not been any legislation prohibiting the use of ECLs in media; on the contrary the Kenyan constitution guarantees the citizens of linguistic rights:

- The constitution retains the status of Kiswahili as the National language and further elevates it to official status in addition to English.
- It articulates the commitment to “Promote and protect the diversity of languages of the people of Kenya [and to] promote the development and use of indigenous languages, Kenyan sign language, Braille and other communication formats and technologies accessible to persons with disabilities” (Kenya Constitution, Chapter 2, article 7, clause 3a and 3b; Republic-of-Kenya2010)■

Chapter 4 has the following provisions:

- The right to information held by the State or by another person which is required for the exercise or protection of any right or fundamental freedom (Article 35).
- The right to use the language, and to participate in the cultural life of the person’s choice (Article 44).
- The right to enjoy that person’s culture and use that person’s language (Article 50).
- The right to form, join and maintain cultural and linguistic associations and other organs of civil society (Article 54).
- The right of an accused person to have assistance of an interpreter without payment if the accused person cannot understand the language used at the trial (Article 56).

The competitive atmosphere among ethnic groups promotes these outlets and the languages they serve. In the rural areas, in particular, these stations are the primary sources of information and entertainment. In addition to the usual entertainment and popular adverts, these stations run programs with diverse content including civic education, instructions on relevant farming methods, information on health related issues, and religious instructions.

These media outfits/firms create jobs and encourage entrepreneurs to thrive.<sup>6</sup> They are seen as part of the creative economies. They make literacy in these languages meaningful and may become a catalyst that creates demand for ECL courses in school beyond third grade. The young speakers and programmers in these stations are quite good in their use of the ECLs even though it is not clear where they polished these skills, since ECLs are not taught in the schools beyond primary three.

The second growth pole for the ECLs in Kenya is rooted in the language education policy. The policy states that during the first three years children should be taught in the language of the catchment area. In the homogeneous rural areas, where the majority of Kenyans currently live, the language of the catchment area is an ECL. In addition to use as languages of instruction in these early years, the ECLs are taught as subjects in the first three years of school. It is expected that learners in the rural areas will develop basic literacy skills within that time. The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development has a department that deals with ‘mother tongue’. With the liberalization of the production of learning materials, this department is expected to evaluate materials for teaching the various mother tongues. The department works with language committees from the various language groups to ensure the development and use of standard orthographies.

The third growth pole pertains to the religious sphere. In this respect comparisons between Kenya and Tanzania ought to be much closer because of the absence of government regulation on the Tanzanian side, and because in both countries the relevant organized religion is Christianity since Islam does not appear to have transcended its Arabic and Kiswahili avenues.

The production of new or revised versions of the bible in various ECLs is considerably vibrant, often with active community involvement. The significance of these initiatives in setting standards for orthography and formality, as well as language boundaries, has long been recognized even if inter-denominational and inter-ethnic rivalry may have created unnecessary confusion and duplication in some instances (**Kioko2017**). For many ECLs in both Kenya and especially Tanzania, religious materials [bible, hymn book, prayer book, religious instruction book/ catechism], mainly in print but also in digital form are available on smartphones or ‘audio proclaimers’, and religious gatherings provide the main public domain of use.

---

<sup>6</sup>What may be described as the YouTube of Kenya, viz. Viusasa, provides access to original videos/films in some ECLs as well as foreign language films with subtitles or voicing in ECLs.

## 4 Limitations in growth poles

Kenya's ECL mass media, in spite of the growth promise they hold out, have to contend with the fact that they are circumscribed within an ideological frame that regards the languages as a third tier means of communication in a restricted range of domains at best, or as mere symbols for a glorified rural existence. The restriction in terms of audience is apparent amongst ECL speakers in the city. In the urban centres the audience consists largely of speakers above 40 years of age, but for the younger generation, these are the stations to turn on to keep visiting grandparents informed/entertained.

Even more disturbing is the lingering suspicion that ECL can easily be transformed into lethal tools for rubble rousers and perpetrators of genocides. Hence one radio station is accused of having fomented the 2008 killings in the Rift Valley in similar fashion as the *Rwandese Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines* did during the 1994 killings in Rwanda. One of the accused six who appeared before the International Criminal Court in The Hague after the 2008 ethnic clashes in Kenya was a broadcaster with one of the ECL radio stations. Vociferous debates calling for the ban of the 'vernacular' stations have also been witnessed in the Kenyan parliament despite the constitutional protection of the ECLs. For example **Kioko2013** notes:

Introducing a bill in parliament to ban the use of indigenous languages (other than Kiswahili) in official settings on the 8th of June 2011, a law marker made the following remarks "Article 7(2) of the Constitution recognises Kiswahili and English as the official languages of the Republic of Kenya; aware this provision will address ethnic disharmony in public offices if implemented to the letter...concerned that the use of indigenous languages in public offices and national institutions is a major contributor to disharmony, suspicion, and discomfort in public offices in the country, this house urges the government to ban the use of indigenous languages in all offices". **(Kenya-National-Assembly-Official-Records2011)**

The language committees as the gate keepers of ECL development have generally been made irrelevant by the fact that the policy requiring the use of the mother tongue in the first three years of school is not strictly adhered to:

Both formal research and informal observations indicate that, in some countries of Africa, national policy regarding language of instruction is not being followed. In Kenya, for example, the national policy calls for the mother

tongue or ‘language of the catchment area’ to be used as the medium of instruction through Grade 3. However, Piper (2010) shows that in fact, the language used between 70 per cent and 80 per cent of the classroom time in Grades 1–3 is English – not Swahili and not the mother tongue of the students. This is true even in rural environments, where fluency in English was extremely low among the students. (Trudell2013)

Thus not much writing and publication is happening in the ECLs in spite of the policy and the measures to ensure standardization. It would appear that the *raison d'être* for the Kenya language committees, viz. evaluation of school materials in ECLs, is largely disappearing. Even where a strong language committee is still operational, as is the case with the Kikuyu committee, the engagement is more on language development and modernization than on evaluating learning materials because very few pedagogical materials are getting published.

This situation is surprisingly similar to that found in the rather popular English medium primary schools in Tanzania where children in the first two years of school are not even allowed to learn to read and write Kiswahili! The new curriculum requires that children focus on the three Rs in Standard One and Two – using Kiswahili OR English, and no other subjects are allowed:

Therefore, the development of competence in the 3Rs in English-medium schools in Standards I and II will be carried out in English. The teaching of other subjects, including Kiswahili, will be introduced in Standard III. **(Tanzania-Government2016)**

Religious literature in ECLs is available in a very restricted domain even as it is supposed to appeal to the heart. It is understandable that in urban areas such literature would be of very limited use because of the mixed nature of congregations – except perhaps for rather ethnically skewed denominations like the Presbyterian Church of East Africa which is predominantly Kikuyu in Kenya and runs Kikuyu services even in the city. In the rural areas there ought to be more room for using ECL versions of the religious materials. In Tanzania this is demonstrably not the case (Madumulla2007, MuzaleRugemalira2008, Rugemalira2013).<sup>7</sup> Even in rural Kenya the ECLs are not used exclusively; functions where speakers from other communities are present get conducted in English, even when the focus is on a particular ECL. Consider the example of the launches of the Meru

---

<sup>7</sup>“There are many languages in Uganda and Tanzania with Scriptures available in them, but it is a challenge to discern exactly why they are not being used” (Liz Thomson of SIL, personal communication, 2010)

bible (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mLVq88X7eIE>) and the Kikuyu bible, (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1TYgLTC6X38>). On both occasions held in the respective heartlands of the speech communities concerned, proceedings were conducted mainly in English, and prominent guests (including church leaders, government ministers and civil servants from the focus ECL) addressed the audience in English.

It is possible that these choices of language were driven by logistical considerations [deference to invited non-ECL guests and benefactors] or the desire by public / political figures to project a national perspective / image. Whatever the case, there appears to be an underlying uneasiness when it comes to using ECLs in high level formal meetings. The people concerned appear to be anxious to show, even without being prompted, that they are nationalists rather than tribal chauvinists. Such behavior on the part of the Kenyans tempts one to regard it as ‘unity envy’<sup>8</sup> as they cast an eye at neighbouring Tanzania<sup>9</sup>. And considering the precarious state of ECLs in Tanzania, it is arguable that Kenya may be starting to tread the same path.

## 5 Killer languages

Some language choices made by Kenyans surprise their Tanzanian friends. Why would a father and his son speak in English at the funeral of the wife / mother? Why would parents address the guests at their son’s wedding in English? These questions raise the issue of whether English is the ‘killer language’ encroaching on the space of the ECLs in Kenya. **MuthwiiKioko2002**, surveyed the language choice and language use patterns in both urban and rural areas among five main ECLs. The research found that both Kiswahili and English are used in the home domain even in the rural areas at varying levels among the five ethnic groups. Of significant mention are the leading ethnic groups in the choices between ECL,

---

<sup>8</sup>“In the former Yugoslavia, Serbia and Croatia used to have one common language. But since Croatia became an independent republic, interviews with or statements made by Serbs are subtitled in ‘pure’ Croatian before they are broadcasted on the Croatian national TV. The suggestion is: we don’t understand this strange, foreign language; our language is different from that of the Serbs. The wider context for this peculiar phenomenon of creating differences out of similarities is that of nation building and radical nationalism” (Blommaert2014).

<sup>9</sup>Why would Kenyans be ‘envious’ of their southern neighbour? “... many will vehemently oppose any move to consider their speech variety as a ‘dialect’ of another ‘language’... even prominent linguists join hands with politicians to agitate for and celebrate the production of written material in their speech variety, even when for years they have read and understood current material written in a related variety. It is an issue of ethnic identity, [which explains] the obsession with emphasizing the differences” (Kioko2017)

Kiswahili and English as the language in the home: The Kikuyu community was found to use ECL at home even in the urban areas; the Luhya community led in the use of Kiswahili at home even in the rural areas; the Luo community was leading in the use of English at home even in the rural areas; the Kalenjin community significantly used Kiswahili at home and the Akamba community significantly use ECL at home even in the urban areas. This is a clear indication that even in the home domain, the languages of wider communication have significantly made inroads.

Because Kiswahili in Kenya was not until more recently as aggressively promoted as it was in Tanzania, the local languages appear to have more space in the public domain than is the case in Tanzania. Unlike in Tanzania, in Kenya Kiswahili became a compulsory subject in the schools much later in 1980s. This lapse deprived Kenya the chance of creating a common national language that would neutrally be available to both the elite (the highly educated) and the masses (with only primary education). That gap has for a while been filled by English for a significant section of the Kenyan [educated] population. Kiswahili is coming from behind to claim that role, particularly for the section of the population with less than secondary education, but the competition for space involving English, Kiswahili and the ECLs is stiff. In the longterm it may be safe to say that Kiswahili is going to expand its turf at the expense of both English and the ECLs.

In Tanzania, Kiswahili is much more clearly a greater danger for the ECLs and is bound to replace them as the language of normal everyday communication, partly driven by the education system, and other regulatory arrangements that limit ECL domains of use. However the forces that threaten the ECLs appear to be too strong for normal treatment via the education system or other regulatory policy. It is easy to overestimate the impact of language policy in education, citing for instance, the apparent growth of Swahili in Kenya since the study of the language was made compulsory in the schools. But consider related negative evidence in the Tanzanian context. First, the dismal state of English in Tanzania persists (deteriorates) in spite of the fact that it is a compulsory subject at virtually all levels of the education system (including university), and the language of instruction at all levels except the initial seven years. Second, in spite of the laissez faire situation regarding the languages of worship, the organized religions in Tanzania have largely shunned the ECLs.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup>This is partly understandable in the wider context that Blommaert 2014 describes: "Swahili was swept up in a wave of massive nation building exercises in the late 1960s and 1970s, driven by and incorporated in the state ideology of *Ujamaa*. ... the Tanzanian state made a successful attempt (successful, at least, for some time) at ideological hegemony, ... Swahili was given a

## 6 The forces against indigenous languages

The structure of the economies: It has been argued that languages do not easily appear or disappear by legislative fiat. Rather languages whose speakers are dominant in the “production and consumption interdependencies” will become dominant languages and attract speakers of marginalized communities who may thereby shift linguistic allegiances over time (**Mufwene2004**). The dominance of English in East Africa as the language of the state goes back to British conquest and to current American global dominance. It is the language of choice of a small section of the population (the elite) whose production and consumption patterns are more closely tied to the English nations abroad. The second class position of Kiswahili [relative to English] parallels its being a language of a larger section of the population that is struggling to find a precarious foothold in the modern economy as rather mobile labour with a limited / slippery say in the relations of production. Yet in relation to the ECLs, Kiswahili is a dominant language. Its position as a national and official language in Kenya and Tanzania acknowledges its power as a lingua franca without a rival among the ECLs.<sup>11</sup> These latter are largely spoken by a rural agricultural /pastoral population that has an even weaker hold on the surplus product of the land. As a consequence Swahili is an attractive alternative over the ECLs and is within reach for a bigger section of the communities. English by contrast is beyond the reach of most people and so cannot be a realistic target for shift by the majority of ECL speakers.

Parents’ language preferences for their children in the schools provide a good illustration of the patterns of language shift in progress. In Tanzania it would be very difficult to find parents who want their children to be taught in the ECL. Instead in the rural areas, they support the children’s immediate immersion into Kiswahili on the very first day of school and would regard any ECL instruction as a retrogressive measure – possibly a conspiracy to deprive their children a chance to forge ahead in the national economic and social network. Furthermore the phenomenon of English medium primary schools, not just in the urban areas but also in relatively rural settings, attests to the desire to participate in that imagined international community that communicates in English and is visibly represented by local elites with relatively good jobs and considerable power. This wish is realized to a greater extent in Kenya where even the official policy on

---

prominent role in this process of homogenization. Swahili was, thus, deliberately constructed, manufactured, and not ‘just’ as a language, but as an overdetermined emblem of national belonging and ideological rectitude.”

<sup>11</sup>“Language shift [is ] an adaptive response to changing socioeconomic conditions [which have] undervalued and marginalized” indigenous languages (**Mufwene2004**).

LOI in the first three years of school is disregarded. As already noted, of course, in both Kenya and Tanzania, the reality is that the majority of people will find Kiswahili to be the realistic target for language shift as they get sorted into their respective economic and social slots.

Technological changes affecting mass communication: The ease with which messages are created and disseminated via the smartphone, as well as the language processing technology underlying the gadgets, will have a profound impact on future of the ECLs. Social media operate across local language boundaries; they amplify exposure to dominant languages and other forms of self-expression that undermine ECLs by targeting a wider audience; radio & TV programming will be targeting wider audiences so that the local village radio station [where permitted] may have rather limited impact.

Urbanization: The large cities of Kenya and Tanzania are growing at a phenomenal, perhaps uncontrollable, rate. Placed in the global context such growth is not peculiar. The world population is already 50% urban and is forecast to be 66% urban by the year 2050 (**URBANET2019**). The approximately 5 million inhabitants of Dar es Salaam constitute 10% of the population of Tanzania- which is 32% urban. Similarly the 4 million inhabitants of Nairobi make 8% of the Kenyan population – which is 26% urban. The bigger picture is that even the numerous small settlements along major highways or rural roads are a threat to the ECLs because their inhabitants operate in Kiswahili or English. In particular, the children born in such contexts, even if their parents have a common language, are likely to be Kiswahili first language speakers.

Population movements: Besides the rural to urban migration already discussed, there is another wave of population movements which may be largely rural and still threaten ECL vitality. Traditionally each language would be conceived as inhabiting a clearly demarcated geographical area. However increasing populations and diminishing resources (land, water) have been forcing different speech communities to live in the same space.

In Kenya the Rift Valley province is a prime example of such co-existence with speakers of Kikuyu, Kalenjin, Luhya, and Kisii living in close proximity. The more economically and politically dominant Kikuyu are often accused of not wanting to learn the language of the ‘natives’, but it is fair to note that no community learns the language of the other community. As a result the dominant lingua franca, viz. Kiswahili, has developed fairly well. Similarly the Kamba speakers have dispersed out of their cradle land to various parts of the Coastal province. Their Kiswahili has prospered as a result. In both cases the threat to the ECL is growing because it is confined to the home even in such rural contexts.

In Tanzania large rural movements are associated with speakers of Maasai and Sukuma. From their Kenya / Tanzania border in the north, the Maasai have ventured as far south as the border with Mozambique/Malawi /Zambia. Similarly the Sukuma are no longer confined to the south shores of Lake Victoria but have moved all the way south to Mbeya, Iringa and Morogoro, just like the Maasai (MuzaleRugemalira2008). The scale of these movements has gained constant attention particularly via the frequent media reports about clashes between the pastoralist Maasai and the settled agriculturalists in Morogoro and Coast regions. Similarly government operations to remove large herds of cattle from wetlands and reserve lands / forests have involved these cattle keeping communities. As in Kenya, the migrations do not foster the ECLs; rather they create conditions for the lingua franca, viz. Kiswahili, to prosper.

## 7 Conclusion

It may be prudent to make a rough distinction between language promotion /revitalization endeavours on the one hand and language documentation/conservation initiatives on the other. Activities that make a significant contribution to the active use and promotion of ECLs in Kenya include the teaching of these languages in the school system, and the publication and dissemination of printed materials in various civic educational campaigns pertaining to such matters as health, agriculture, animal husbandry, governance and human rights. The active use of the ECLs in the mass media and in worship may help some of the major speech communities to develop and hold onto these forms of expression for much longer than others. This paper poses a pertinent question in relation to the promotion endeavours: who holds the key to the promotion of ECLs? Are these initiatives that language researchers can contribute to or are these initiatives that only the speakers of the language can engage in? Would language researchers' engagement with the promotion endeavours in the Kenyan setting help in the maintenance or even development of the ECLs in the country? Or is the downward drift without a turn-around button?

Documentation /Conservation efforts focus on the gathering and preservation of records of instances of language use, museum style, as part of humanity's intangible cultural heritage. This is the main thrust of a number of scholarly initiatives where the funding authority specifies strict criteria for identifying an endangered language, using an index of language vitality (UNESCO2003). Typical products would traditionally include a descriptive grammar and a word list / dictionary. Modern technology has made it easier to capture audio and visual

records of speakers. Should this be the main thrust of scholarly initiatives with regard to endangered languages?

The Kenyan context contains a number of activities that still keep the ECLs in the public domain. How long it will take before these activities become part of museum records is a matter for considerable debate. The Tanzanian context suggests that ECL promotion is a lost cause, and given the close parallels between the two countries, Kenya cannot be far behind in the relegation of the ECLs to the museum. This is not a judgement on the desirability of linguistic diversity or on the moral grounds of the linguistic human rights movement. Rather it is an attempt to answer the question whether speech communities can turn or fight the tidal wave<sup>12</sup> of dominant languages and reverse the misfortunes of an endangered language.<sup>13</sup> And given the forces at play in Kenya and Tanzania the answer seems to be negative. In many of the cases, minority language advocates are viewed as parochial tribalists or sentimental ‘small is beautiful’ enthusiasts. Promotional efforts have even been construed as attempts to deny the weak a chance to advance and catch up with dominant groups (in education, political power, economic advancement) by keeping the dominant language out of their reach (Mkude2002). Hence the ‘suicidal’ wish of marginalized speech communities is not an irrational psychological malady that requires psychotherapy and counseling. Rather it is a rational / shrewd assessment of the best interests of such communities, particularly the future fortunes of their offspring.

## Abbreviations

ECL  
miss-  
ing

<sup>12</sup>“There are currently 7000 languages spoken in the world, and at least half are projected to disappear in this century. The Endangered Language Fund is helping to stem the tide”. Endangered Language Fund [<http://www.endangeredlanguagefund.org/>]

<sup>13</sup>“Ikiwa vikwazo hivyo havitatafutiwa ufumbuzi, basi juhudhi hizi za kujaribu kuziimua zitakuwa ni sawa na mateke ya punda afaye, hazitasaidia. Tafiti, maandiko ya istilahi, sarufi na makamusi, pamoja na tafsiri zinazofanywa hivi sasa – bila ya kuvikabili vikwazo hivyo kwanza – zitakuwa ni amali za kuzipeleka kwenye majumba ya kumbukumbu tu ili zikapewe jina la nyaraka kuukuu kwa ajili ya kukoleza tafiti na simulizi za vizazi vijayvo kuhusu zama za wahenga wao” [If these obstacles do not get a solution, then attempts to promote the indigenous languages will be like the kicks of a dying donkey, they will be useless. Research, publication of technical terms, grammars and dictionaries, together with translations currently being produced, - without addressing the obstacles first – they will amount to materials bound for museums to be regarded as archives for the enrichment of research and conversations of future generations regarding the era of their ancestors.] (Madumulla2007)

## Acknowledgements



# Chapter 11

## Proto-Bantu reflexes in Dhaisu

Deo Ngonyani<sup>a</sup>, Ann Biersteker<sup>a</sup>, Angelina Nduku Kioko<sup>b</sup> & Josephat Rugemalira<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Michigan State University <sup>b</sup>US International University-Africa <sup>c</sup>Tumaini University Dar es Salaam College

This paper is a study of Proto-Bantu reflexes in Dhaisu, a highly endangered language also known as Dhaiso, Segeju, Daisu and Kidhaisu (dhs, E56). Dhaisu is spoken in the East Usambara Mountains in northeastern Tanzania, but its closest relative is Kamba (E55). Seven vowels are reported in this study as has been in other studies /i, ɪ, ε, a, ɔ, ʊ, u/. However, no contrast can be established between i and ε, or between u and ʊ. The data shows that Dhaisu vowel system is changing to a 5-vowel system \*i, \*ɪ, \*e, \*a, \*o, \*u, \*ʊ > /i, ε, a, ɔ, u/. The most remarkable feature of this change is that unlike other Bantu languages, which merge the mid-high to high vowels, Dhaisu is merging the mid-high vowels to mid-low. The innovation is demonstrated in (a) numerous lexical items in which PB \*i has become ε, and PB \*u has become ɔ; (b) several nominal prefixes that are constructed in PB having mid-high vowels now have mid-low vowels, and (c) the applicative suffix whose PB form was \*id is now -er in Dhaisu. The fact that the change does not seem to have affected all nominal prefixes with mid-high vowels, and has affected not all verbal derivation with mid-high vowel suggests an ongoing transition. Reflexes of consonants are presented to show that they are not a result of spirantization.

### 1 Introduction

This paper presents the sound system of Dhaisu (iso 632-2 code *dhs*) and reflexes of Proto-Bantu sounds. Dhaisu is a Bantu language spoken on East Usambara in northeastern Tanzania in Tanga region. **SimonsFennig2017** estimate there are about 5,000 speakers. **Nurse2000** reported between 8,000 and 10,000 speakers. **RugemaliraEtAl2019**, however, estimate there are about 11,000 speakers. The language is also known as Dhaiso, Dhaisu, Daiso, Daisu and is referred to



by outsiders as Segeju. However, Segeju is actually a different language spoken on the coast (Nurse1982). Guthrie codes Dhaisu E56 (Guthrie1967, Maho2009) in a group that includes Gikuyu (E51), Embu (E52), Meru (E53), Tharaka (E54), Cuka (E541), and Kamba (E55), a group commonly referred to as Thagicu. Dhaisu's closest relative in the Thagicu group is Kamba (Nurse1982, Nurse2000, Nurse1999). Dhaisu shares with other Thagicu languages features that include an inherited common lexicon, retention of 7 vowels, absence of spirantization in high vowel environments, and fronting of PB palatal \*c and \*j (Nurse1982). The term spirantization in Bantu languages is used to denote the process of forming fricatives from Proto-Bantu stops that appear before high vowels (Nurse1982, Schadeberg1995).

The present study is based on data collected in Dar es Salaam from six speakers of Dhaisu from Bwiti in July-August, 2017 and in Tanga in July-August 2018. The dictionary that was subsequently published as **RugemaliraEtAl2019** is the main source for this study. The sounds in Dhaisu are compared to the Proto-Bantu forms from Tervuren's Bantu Lexical Reconstruction 3 (BLR3) (BastinEtAl2002). The paper demonstrates that the Dhaisu vowel system is in a transition from a 7 vowel system to a 5 vowel system. The paper presents more data to confirm this and show that the change is unusual because it is the mid-vowels that are merging rather than an upward merger to high vowels that is observed in other Bantu languages. The lowering of mid-high vowels was first noted by Nurse2000. The uneven distribution of the vowel change and the fact that the mid-high vowels are also heard, suggests that the change is ongoing. Furthermore, the data demonstrate that the vowel merger is not associated with spirantization.

These findings are presented in the following 5 sections. §2 presents the phoneme inventory, while evidence of vowel merger is in §3 in form of correspondences in Dhaisu, Kamba, Swahili, Sambaa, and Digo. §4 illustrates the vowel change as attested in nominal affixes and verbal suffixes. §5 contains examples of consonant reflexes which reveal that previous changes in the consonant were not associated with spirantization. Concluding remarks and directions for further studies appear in §6.

## 2 Dhaisu phonemes

This section presents the vowel and consonant phonemes of Dhaisu and sets the stage for comparing them to Proto-Bantu forms. The Dhaisu sound system consists of 7 vowels, reflecting Proto-Bantu vowel system. There are three front vowels, three back vowels and a middle open vowel. These appear in four levels as shown in Table 1.

All the tabular environments formatted as examples have been converted into tables, while tabbing environments have been kept as examples. It might be a good idea to convert them as well.

Table 1: Dhaisu vowel inventory (RugemaliraEtAl2019)

i	u
I	ʊ
ɛ	ɔ
a	

Consider changing to figure.

These seven vowels are recognized by **Nurse2000** and **RugemaliraEtAl2019**. Furthermore, **Nurse2000** reports on the difficulties researchers faced in identifying distinctive 7 vowels. The current study faced the same problem of being unable to elicit minimal pairs to contrast mid-high and mid-low vowels. Clear pairs were elicited that contrasted the high vowels /i, u/ and mid vowels /ɛ, ɔ/.

- |                   |               |
|-------------------|---------------|
| (1) rita 'devine' | r̥ta 'bring'  |
| ita 'war'         | ɛta 'call'    |
| ngurɔ 'dog'       | ngɔrɔ 'heart' |
| suma 'trade'      | sɔma 'read'   |

The sounds /i/ and /ɛ/, are distinct as are /u/ and /ɔ/, as the minimal pairs in (1) demonstrate. However, the contrast of the mid-vowels *I* vs *ɛ* and *ʊ* vs *ɔ* is not easy to establish. The same words may be pronounced in two different ways by the same speaker. Whenever the researchers sought to get a clearer repetition, the speakers would pronounce the mid-low vowels. Here are some examples of words pronounced with alternative mid vowels. The speakers also insisted on writing with the mid-low vowels. The writing is reflected in the orthography adopted in **RugemaliraEtAl2019**.

- |               |        |                 |
|---------------|--------|-----------------|
| (2) a. malɔwa | malɔwa | 'flowers'       |
|               | rɔchi  | 'river'         |
|               | uvɔngɔ | 'lies, gossip'  |
| b.            | tumbɛ  | 'egg'           |
|               | kumera | 'to swallow'    |
|               | kulea  | 'to contradict' |

This is likely why **Nurse2000** notes that there are the 7 as well as 5 vowel transcriptions in previous documentation. Vowel length is not contrastive.

The consonant system consists of 25 consonants as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Consonant inventory (**RugemaliraEtAl2019**)

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stops	p		t	c	k	
	b		d	ɟ	g	
Fricatives		f	s	ʃ		h
		v	z			
Nasals	m		n	ɲ	ŋ	
Prenasal. stops	mb		nd	ɳɟ	ɳg	
Liquid			r			
Glides	w			j		

There are 8 stops, paired into voiced/voiceless in four places of articulation, namely, bilabial, alveolar, palatal and velar. There are two pairs of fricatives /f/v and /s/z/. In some cases, /β/ is heard as a possible variant of /v/. In addition, there is a palatal fricative /ʃ/ and glottal fricative/h/. The four nasal consonants are bilabial /m/, alveolar /n/, palatal /ɲ/ and velar /ŋ/. These same places are for prenasalized stops /mb, nd, ɳɟ, ɳg/. Both /r/ and /l/ are heard, with /r/ more frequently heard. The distribution of the two non-contrastive liquids is not clear yet.

Some sounds appear mixed possibly due to the influence of the Swahili alphabet as speakers insisted on how some sounds should be written even though Swahili and Dhaisu have significant differences. Dhaisu speakers also speak and write Swahili. The idea of Swahili influence on Dhaisu writing, therefore, is not far fetched. **Nurse2000** also notes such mixtures. Some of the vowel features may be influenced by tones, which have not been marked in this study.

### 3 Vowel merger

As noted earlier in the foregoing section and as discussed in **Nurse2000**, one can perceive the seven vowels in Dhaisu. But finding contrastive pairs for the intermediate vowels is an elusive endeavour. We conclude that this is due to the current state of transition from a seven vowel system to a five vowel system.

In this section, we present data that show that Dhaisu is exhibiting the loss of distinction between /ɪ/ - /ɛ/ and /ʊ/ - /ɔ/. This is very interesting in the light of Schadeberg's observation that the merger of intermediate high vowels i/e and \*u/\*o is unknown (Schadeberg1995). The baseforms are the Proto-Bantu vowels shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Proto-Bantu vowels (Meeussen1967)

i	u
i	u
e	o
a	

The more widely attested 7 > 5 vowel change merges the so called superhigh vowels \*i and \*u with high vowels \*e and \*o, respectively. Data from Dhaisu reveal that intermediate \*i and \*e merge to /ɛ/ and \*u and \*o merge to /ɔ/. This is summarized in Table 4. The more usual merger, here exemplified by Swahili in Table 5. Swahili merges up, while the unusual merger in Dhaisu merges down.

Table 4: Dhaisu vowel merger

i	u
i ↓	↓ ɔ
ɛ	ɔ
a	

Table 5: Swahili merger

i	u
i ↑	↑ ɔ
ɛ	ɔ
a	

Consider changing to figure (Table 3–5).

This downward merger is most likely not due to loans since there are no languages in the region that have had such a merger. We compare PB reflexes of Dhaisu and languages that may have had great influence on it. The languages that have most influence on Dhaisu are Kamba (E55), its closest relative, Swahili (G42a), the national language that all Dhaisu speakers are fluent in, Sambaa (G23),

a neighboring language, and Digo (E73) another neighboring language. The following sets of examples illustrate that Dhaisu is unlike Kamba's seven-vowel system and Thagicu languages of Kenya, and unlike five-vowel systems like Swahili, Sambaa, and Digo. Data for the comparison are from BLS for Proto-Bantu forms (**BastinEtAl2002**), **NurseHinnebusch1993** and **TUKI1996** for Swahili, **NursePhilipsson1975** for Sambaa and Kamba, and **MwalonyaEtAl2004** for Digo.

Table 6: Proto-Bantu \**ɪ*

PB	Kamba	Dhaisu	Swahili	Sambaa	Digo
*kíŋgó	ŋgiŋgɔ	ŋgiŋgɔ	ʃiŋgɔ	ʃiŋgɔ	singɔ
*píc	víθa	vida	fica	fiṣa	fitsa
*dítò	ŋgitɔ	ritɔ	zito		
*pígò	mbiɔ	mvijɔ	figɔ	fiyɔ	figɔ

Table 7: Proto-Bantu \*i

PB	Kamba	Dhaisu	Swahili	Sambaa	Digo
*dím	'cultivate'	rema	lima	ima	rima
*díd	'cry'	rera	lia	iya	rira
*kídà	'tail'	mkéra	mkia	mkia	
*bíci	'unripe'	bíθi	bichi	ifi	itsi
*dímj	'tongue'	umí	lulémɛ	ulimi	ulimi

Table 8: Proto-Bantu \*e

PB	Kamba	Dhaisu	Swahili	Sambaa	Digo
*cèk	'laugh'	θeka	deka	cëka	ʃeka
*téṁ	'cut'	téma	téma	téma	tema
*pèep	'blow'		mvevø	upɛpɔ	mpɛhɔ
*dèdù	'beard'		eru	ndɛvu	ndɛzu

The data show the critical difference between Dhaisu and other 5-vowel systems such as Swahili, Sambaa, and Digo. These attest to \**i* > *e* (Table 7) and \**u*

Table 9: Proto-Bantu \*a

PB		Kamba	Dhaisu	Swahili	Sambaa	Digo
*jàmà	'meat'	nama	nama	nama	nama	nama
*bàdù	'rib'	wau	rwaru	ubavu	abazu	ubavu
*jánà	'child'	mwana	mwana	mwana	jwana	mwana
*jókà	'snake'	nzɔka	sɔka	jɔka	jɔka	jɔka

Table 10: Proto-Bantu \*o

PB		Kamba	Dhaisu	Swahili	Sambaa	Digo
*gòngò	'back'	mucɔŋgo	mɔŋgo	mgɔŋgo	myɔŋgo	mgɔŋgo
*jókà	'snake'	nzɔka	sɔka	jɔka	jɔka	jɔka
*dóot	'dream'	ɔta	rɔta	ɔta		
*cónì	'shame'	nθɔni	ndɔni	sɔni	jɔni	

Table 11: Proto-Bantu \*u

PB		Kamba	Dhaisu	Swahili	Sambaa	Digo
*búmb	'mould'	ɔmba	ɔmba	umba	umba	umba
*gùdù	'leg'	kɔs	kɔs	mguu		gulu
*gùdùbè	'pig'	ŋgvɔs	ŋgɔrɔwɛ	ŋguruwe	ŋguuwe	nguluwe
*júm	'dry'	ɔma	ɔma			uma

Table 12: Proto-Bantu \*ゅ

PB		Kamba	Dhaisu	Swahili	Sambaa	Digo
*bàdù	'rib'	wau	rwaru	ubavu	abazu	ubavu
*bùŋk	'stink'		jŋanga	nuka	nuŋka	jusa
*kútà	'oil'	mauta	maguuta	mafuta	mavuta	mafuga
*dèdù	'beard'		ɛru	ndɛvu	ndɛzu	

$> \circ$  (Table 11). The corresponding innovations in Swahili and Sambaa are  $*i > i$  (Table 7) and  $*u > u$  (Table 11).

The examples demonstrate three sets of reflexes of PB vowels:

- Kamba representing seven vowel systems /i, ɪ, ε, a, ɔ, ʊ, u/ retained from Proto-Bantu;
- Swahili, Sambaa, and Digo representing languages with 5 vowel systems that resulted from the mid-high vowels merging with high vowels,  $*i/*ʊ > i/u$ .
- Dhaisu with a 5 vowel system in which the mid-low vowels have merged with mid-low vowels,  $*ɪ/*ʊ > ε/ɔ$ .

These patterns are represented in Table 13.

Table 13: Vowel correspondences

Proto-Bantu	7 Vowels	5 Vowels	5 vowels
	Kamba	Swahili	Dhaisu
$*ɪ$	i	i	i
$*i$	ɪ	i	ε
$*e$	ɛ	ɛ	ɛ
$*a$	a	a	a
$*ɔ$	ɔ	ɔ	ɔ
$*ʊ$	ʊ	u	ɔ
$*u$	u	u	u

Nurse2000 suggests that more than half of Dhaisu vocabulary is from neighboring languages. A possible source of this merger could be loans from those languages. As the  $*ɪ/*ʊ > ε/ɔ$  is not attested in any other language which may have greatly influenced Dhaisu, this change must be considered unique for this language. The lowering of PB mid-high vowels PB  $*i > ε$  and PB  $*u > ɔ$  appears to be in progress and incomplete. This is because the lowering of mid-high vowels appears not to have taken place in some words and some environments.

This section has presented lexical data that reveals a unique 7  $>$  5 vowel change in Dhaisu. The merger is evident in other environments too which we now turn.

## 4 Evidence from affixes

Another body of data that attests to the merger is affixes. In this section, we highlight (a) nominal affixes and (b) the applicative suffix.

### 4.1 Nominal affixes

Like other Bantu languages, Dhaisu categorizes nouns into classes. There are 17 classes in Dhaisu. Some of the classes are semantically transparent and others are not. One important feature of the noun classes is the nominal prefixes that characterize each class. The classes are labeled using number as is commonly done in Bantu linguistics and reconstructed PB forms. Dhaisu's correspondences of class prefixes with mid-high vowels in Proto-Bantu provide useful evidence. These are Classes 1, 3, 4, 7, 11, 13, 14, 15, and 18. **Nurse2000** suggests that the vowels for the prefixes in Dhaisu are mid-high. The relevant prefixes are shown as bold in Table 14.

Table 14: Class prefixes compared to (Meeussen1967; RugemaliraEtAl2019)

Class	PB Prefix	Dhaisu Prefix	Example
1	*mu-	mɔ-	mɔtu
2	*ba-	a-	atu
3	*mu-	mɔ	mɔtɛ
4	*mi-	mɛ-	metɛ
5	*i	ø	tumbe
6	*ma-	ma-	matumbe
7	*ki-	ki-	kitu
8	*bj	i-	itu
9	*n-	n-	mbɔri
10	*n-	n-	mbɔri
11	*du-	rɔ	rɔsi
12	*ka-	ka-	kayana
13	*tu-	tu	tuyana
14	*bu-	u-	urwari
15	*ku-	kɔ-	kɔrema
16	*pa-	va-	vatu
17	*ku-	kɔ-	kɔyo

Evidently, not all intermediate high vowels in prefixes have merged to mid-low. Classes 1 and 3 \**mu*->*mɔ*-, as Classes 4 and 11 lowered \**mi*->*mɛ*- and \**du*->*rɔ* respectively. Meanwhile, Classes 7 and 14 have merged higher as \**ki*->*ki*- and \**bu*->*u*. **Nurse2000** indicates Class 15 as \**ku*->*ku*- . The nominal prefixes, therefore, provide examples of both downward merger and upward merger of the same vowel. Further investigation should be able to determine the exact patterns of the change and possible factors, such as contact with different languages.

#### 4.2 Verbal suffix

Dhaisu has a system of verbal derivations, a system that characterizes Bantu languages. This includes verbal suffixes for causative, applicative, reciprocal, passive, neuter, separative. These have also been reconstructed to some proto-forms with high vowels, mid-high vowels, and the low vowel (**Meeussen1967**). Four verb extensions in Dhaisu may be traced to PB mid-high vowels. They are:

- a) Applicative \*-id
- b) Neuter \*-ik
- c) Reversive \*-ul
- d) Passive \*-u

Of these, only the applicative appears relatively consistently in Dhaisu as *-er*. The applicative suffix which is reconstructed as \**id* in Proto-Bantu **Meeussen1967** shows evidence of downward merger. The reflex in Dhaisu is *-er*, as shown in the following examples.

Table 15: The applicative suffix

rita	'devine'	ritera	'devine with'
etera	'spill'	eterera	'spill for'
rema	'cultivate'	remera	'cultivate for, with'
duma	'come out'	dumera	'come out from'
ʃøka	'repeat'	ʃøkera	'repeat for'
dɔra	'open'	dɔrera	'open for, with'
mama	'lie down, sleep'	mamera	'sleep for, on'
teeja	'set a trap'	teejera	'trap for someone'

In some cases, the applicative may still be pronounced as *-ir* as can be seen in **RugemaliraEtAl2019**. It is quite possible that such forms result from Swahili

influence. Unlike other languages in the area, Dhaisu does not exhibit vowel harmony for such an extension. An invariant *-er-* appears even though Nurse2000 suggests that some are realized as *-el-* and some are *-ir-*.

The neuter affix, also known as stative, is less consistent in the realization of the vowel, as the following examples show.

Table 16: The neuter suffix

dɔra	'open'	dɔrɛka	'can open'
mada	'gather beans'	madɛka	'can be gathered'
tia	'leave'	tiɛka	'be divorced'
suma	'look for'	sumɛka	'be searchable'
guna	'break'	gunika	'breakable'
mera	'swallow'	merɛka	'can be swallowed'
dɔja	'buy'	dɔjika	'can be bought'
keva	'close'	kevika	'swallowable'

This set contains words some of which take *-ek* and others that take *-ik* as the neuter suffix. They do not appear to be motivated by vowel harmony. Considering that *-ek* is not used the same way in any of the languages that seem to influence Dhaisu, it must be an innovation in this language. This innovation is consistent with the ongoing merger of the intermediate vowels.

The reversive, also known as separative, appears as a rather unproductive suffix applying to very few items that cannot lead us to a reasonable generalization. The passive is generally realized as a /w/ followed by the final vowel /a/.

From the evidence presented, we conclude that the vowels are in the process of merging intermediate vowels. The indeterminacy that is sometimes observed is due to the fact that the changes are ongoing and not affecting all cases in the same way. That is why there is a mixture of high-mid and low-mid vowels in the class prefixes and in some cases where both appear as in \*gùdù > kɔru 'leg'. There are many cases that appear to indicate the lowering may not affect vowels in word-final position, as in \*kuku > ngɔku 'chicken'.

Schadeberg1995 notes, among other things, the co-occurrence of spirantization and 7 > 5 vowel change in Bantu languages and that the 7 > 5 vowel change was invariably preceded by spirantization. He notes also that only a few languages have had spirantization without vowel merger. Most notable is that merger of intermediate high vowels \*i/\*e and \*u/\*o is unknown in the languages studied (Schadeberg1995). The data in Dhaisu is interesting in at least two respects. One is that the merger is rather recent and no spirantization is co-occurring. The

vowel merger that is associated with spirantization involved mid-high and high vowels. Only very few languages attest to 7 > 5 change without spirantization (Bostoen2008). This leads us to consider consonant reflexes.

## 5 Consonant reflexes

In this section, we present Dhaisu's reflexes of Proto-Bantu consonants and examine various processes that have affected the consonant inventory. The reflexes are presented in Nurse1982 where they are compared to other Thagicu languages. This section provides examples of words with the reflexes.

All stops appear to have undergone significant innovations that are not associated with spirantization or fricativization before \**j* and \**ɥ* (Nurse1982, Nurse2000)■ In the neighboring Seuta languages (Shambala, Bondei, Digo, Segeju) and Sabaki (eg Swahili, Mijikenda), as well as in the entire Northeast Coast Bantu, stops became fricatives before the two high vowels (NurseHinnebusch1993). Again, our reference point is Proto-Bantu as shown in Table 17.

Table 17: Proto-Bantu Meeussen1967

Bilabial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar
p	t	c	k
b	d	j	g
m	n	ɲ	

The exact nature of the PB voiced stops is a subject of considerable controversy and disagreements (Hyman2019, Mould1972). Whether they are stop \**b*, \**d*, \**g* (Guthrie1967, Meeussen1967, Meinhof1932) or continuant \**β*, \**l*, \**y* (Meinhof1932)■ does not affect the findings. We describe (a) fricativization of \**p*, (b) voiceless stops that did not change, (c) various reflexes of voiced consonants, and (d) changes of PB palatal consonants.

Table 18: PB-Dhaisu consonant reflexes

Proto-Bantu	*p	*b	*t	*d	*c	*j	*k	*g
Dhaisu	v	ø	t	r	d	s	k	ø

Proto-Bantu voiceless bilabial stop \**p* became voiced and eventually to a labiodental fricative /v/ in Dhaisu. Examples in (3) demonstrate this.

- (3)    \*p > v

The same source was cited twice at the same point. One of them has been removed.

PB	Dhaisu
*kúpí ‘short’	ŋguvɛ ‘short’
*pýd ‘froth over’	vuro ‘foam’
*pìk ‘arrive’	vika ‘arrive’
*pèep ‘blow’	mveevo ‘wind’
*kúápà ‘armpit’	ŋguava ‘armpit’

The  $*p > v$  change is attested in all environments. The change from a stop to fricative is the kind of spirantization that is not associated with super high vowels noted in other Bantu languages.

In Dhaisu, the voiceless alveolar stop and voiceless velar stop have remained stable and not subject to changes observed with other consonants. The two sets in (4) and (5) provide examples.

(4)  $*t > t$ 

PB	Dhaisu
*tí ‘tree’	mɔti ‘tree’
*d̥ítò ‘heavy’	ritɔ ‘heavy’
*tég ‘set trap’	tea ‘set a trap’
*tém ‘cut’	tëma ‘cut’
*kít ‘do’	këta ‘do’

(5)  $*k > k$ 

PB	Dhaisu
*pìka ‘arrive’	vika ‘arrive’
*kít ‘do’	këta ‘do’
*cèk ‘laugh’	dëka ‘laugh’
*kókó ‘chicken’	ŋgɔkɔ ‘chicken’
*càká ‘thicket’	daka ‘bush, wilderness’

The two consonants have remained stable with the reflexes showing  $*t > t$  and  $*k > k$  in all environments.

Proto-Bantu voiced stops  $*b$ ,  $*d$ , and  $*g$  have reflexes that show significant changes before all vowels. The bilabial  $*b$  has been lost before all vowels except in cases where it appears in post-nasal position.

(6)  $*b > \emptyset$ 

PB	Dhaisu
*bìdì ‘body’	mwere ‘body’

*bín ‘sing’	wina	‘to sing’
*bèbà ‘rat’	mbea	‘rat’
*bón ‘see’	ɔna	‘see’

The plural form *\*batu* ‘people’, for example, is *atu* in Dhaisu. Likewise, *\*bona* ‘see’ has become *ɔna*. In other environments, this loss was followed by glide formation when a prefix is attached as in *\*bidi* > *mwere* ‘body’ where the prefix *\*mu-* has become *mw-* before the now vowel-initial stem. The change *\*b* > *ø* is widely attested in the language. A similar case to this is observed with the reflex of Proto-Bantu voiced velar stop *\*g*. Consider the following example reflexes.

(7) *\*g* > *ø*

Proto-Bantu	Dhaisu
*gündà ‘forest’	mnda ‘farm’
*gòngò ‘back’	mõngɔ ‘back’
*téг ‘set trap’	tea ‘set a trap’
*mbògà ‘vegetable’	mboa ‘vegetable’
*gàmb ‘speak’	kwamba ‘to speak’

In *\*tega* > *tea* ‘set a trap,’ the velar stop is deleted as is the case in several other words such as *\*mbògà* > *mboa* ‘vegetable’. The change *\*gündà* ‘forest’ > *mnda* ‘farm’ involved the deletion of the velar stop as well as the vowel *u*. It is important to note, once more, that both *\*b* > *ø* and *\*g* > *ø* are not associated with the so called super high vowels.

Proto-Bantu alveolar consonant *\*d* has the alveolar/r/ as its reflex. This is illustrated in the following examples.

(8) *\*d* > r

Proto-Bantu	Dhaisu
*dítò ‘heavy’	ritɔ ‘heavy’
*bídì ‘body’	mwere ‘body’
*dògá ‘bewitch’	uroi ‘witchcraft’
*dúm ‘bite’	rɔma ‘bite’
*dob ‘(to) fish’	lɔwa ‘(to) fish’

Occasionally, a lateral liquid /l/ appears as the reflex. But the majority of cases are /r/. As with other consonants, there are no effects of the high vowels associated with spirantization.

The reflexes of the palatal consonants *\*c* and *\*j* reveal more dramatic shift in the consonants. Both are fronted in Dhaisu. Proto-Bantu *\*c* became /d/ that can occasionally be heard as a dental /d̪/.

Is this  
slash  
intended  
here?

## (9) \*c &gt; d

Proto-Bantu	Dhaisu
*cùbad	'urinate'
*jícò	'eye'
*cónì	'shame'
*cèk	'laugh'
*cáká	'thicket'

duwama/duwama 'urinate'  
ridɔ/ ridɔ 'eye'  
ndɔni/ ndɔni 'shame'  
deka/deka 'laugh'  
daka 'bush, wilderness'

Voiceless \*c became /d/. The dentalization that is sometimes heard is a feature which identifies Dhaisu with Thagicu languages but also sets it apart from the rest. Thagicu languages have developed interdental fricatives for Proto-Bantu \*c (**Nurse1982**). Dhaisu distinguishes itself from Thagicu in this by not having an interdental fricative.

Proto-Bantu voiced palatal consonant \*j shifted to a voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ in Dhaisu.

## (10) \*j &gt; s

Proto-Bantu	Dhaisu
*jókà	sóka 'snake'
*jí	masi 'water'
*jògù	sóu 'elephant'
*júkì	sóki 'bee'

Unlike its voiceless counterpart, the PB voiced \*j devoiced and the loss of occlusion created a fricative. Compared to other consonants, the PB reflexes of \*c and \*j are relatively few.

To sum up, we have identified various reflexes of PB consonants and noted the absence of patterns of spirantization, a feature that appears prevalent in Thagicu languages. PB bilabial \*b and velar \*g have been lost. A notable feature has been the dramatic shift of palatal \*c and \*j to /d/ and /s/ respectively. The sounds /p, b, f, g, h, z/ found in Dhaisu are non-inherited (**Nurse2000**) and not a result of the spirantization observed in other Bantu zones.

One question that arises is if the reflexes of \*b and \*g are  $\emptyset$ , then where did /b, g/ in contemporary Dhaisu come from? Likewise, in spite of \*p > v, there is /p/ in the language today. There are several sources. One source contemporary forms is loanwords. Recall that **Nurse2000** notes, as much as 60 percent of Dhaiso vocabulary is borrowed. Many words with such consonants are from Swahili and neighboring languages. For example, words like *bahati* 'luck' and *bei* 'price' are words with /b/ found in the language. These words are from Arabic (**TUKI1996**),

borrowed via Swahili. Another likely source of such sounds is phonological innovations that may have happened. Consider the following words:

Table 19: Examples of Dahl's Law

PB	Dhaisu
*tánò ‘three’	datɔ ‘three’
*kútà ‘oil, fat’	guta ‘oil’
*pèt ‘bend’	beta ‘bend, bow’

Inconsistent use of examples vs tables, see ex 10 vs table 19.

These are traces of Dahl's Law, a dissimilation phenomena observed in some Bantu languages in which the voiceless consonant of the first syllable in a sequence of two voiceless onsets becomes voiced. Thus, although PB \*g > ø, the voicing of \*k results in /g/, as in \*kútà > maguta 'oil'. Such processes have contributed to the inventory of phonemes in contemporary Dhaisu.

## 6 Concluding remarks and future research

In this paper we set out to describe Proto-Bantu reflexes in Dhaisu. Using lexical items from Bantu Lexical Reconstruction, we have demonstrated one remarkable feature in Dhaisu, namely, \*7 > 5 vowel merger which is taking place. Although \*7 > 5 vowel merger is widespread in Bantu, Dhaisu is unique in that it is merging mid-high and mid-low vowels rather than merging mid-high and high vowels. Future research calls for an exploration of tone and its possible role in the merger and other processes. The fact that the intermediate vowels are merging raises the question of what are the effects of such merger on the quality of the high vowels. It may also be the case that the mid-high vowels are acoustically closer to mid-low vowels. Acoustic studies will shed some light on this question. The data on which this study are based was collected in elicitation of words. Often times a request to repeat a word with intermediate high vowel brought a different vowel. Studying vowels from texts and narratives rather than elicited wordlists may result in clearer data. The paper has also presented data that show that Dhaisu, like other Thagicu languages, did not undergo spirantization before high vowels, a process that is linked to changes in the Bantu vowel systems.

## Abbreviations

- BLR Bantu Lexical Reconstruction  
PB Proto-Bantu  
TLS Tanzania Language Survey

## Acknowledgements

This work could not have been possible without the generous participation of the native speakers of Dhaisu, particularly Omari Gauwa, Juma Faki, Juma Mwinyi-hamisi and Fatuma, all of Bwiti. Many thanks to Mohammed Rafiq Yunus whose initial work on the Dhaisu people led to this study. He put us in contact with the Dhaisu speakers and paved the way for much of the project. We appreciate comments from reviewers who helped us clarify many points in the paper. The fieldwork on documentation of Dhaisu, on which this paper is based, was funded by Michigan State University's Alliance for African Partnership.



# Chapter 12

## Dialogue with ancestors? Documentation data from Akie in Tanzania

Karsten Legère<sup>a</sup>, Bernd Heine<sup>b</sup> & Christa König<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Gothenburg <sup>b</sup>University of Cologne <sup>c</sup>Goethe University Frankfurt

The Akie language (khúúti ták Akiyé ‘l. of Akiye people’) is a small Southern Nilotic language spoken in Central Tanzania (Manyara and Tanga Region) by approx. 300 people (among them 90 persons rated as language experts and guardians). Since 2009 this critically endangered language has been studied in a project funded initially by SIDA and since 2012 by Volkswagen Foundation as part of the DoBeS initiative. The project focus has been on Akie documentation, mainly making audio and video recordings of a wide range of multifaceted speech events. In the recordings, a number of discourse markers (DMs) were identified. Of particular interest is the marker mh the role of which resembles an English sentence adverb like ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Its use is quite limited being mainly selected by late Lesakat and other elders. Its main function is establishing the contact with an imaginary target group called asííswe ‘ancestors’. The latter are said to be always present whenever something happens in the community. Their presence is in particular assumed during rituals such as blessing e.g. beer and weapons or wishing people a safe journey when travelling. Taking the presence of asííswe into account is a custom which is deeply rooted in Akie traditions and belief. Accordingly, the elders invite ancestors (often by name) to have a drink and some food, before they are requested to give way to the guests of the blessing. It is also a sort of appeasement, because ancestors can be harmful if they are not properly respected. In the blessing ceremony, the performing (fe)male elder answers on behalf of the asííswe with mh which is an imaginary confirmation of somebody’s presence, similar to roll calls in English. In the paper, samples of Akie texts and the latter’s English translation illustrate the linguistic component of the ceremony.



## 1 The Akie community and their language

This paper deals with a ceremony recorded several times on video and sound among the Akie in Tanzania. The Akie community is a small marginalised hunter-gatherer ethnic group that lives mainly in remote settlements of the Manyara (Kiteto and Simanjiro Districts) and Tanga Regions (mainly Kilindi District, a few villages also in Handeni District). The Akie language is included in *Ethnologue* (SimonsFennig2018) as an independent entry, based on information collected by the authors until 2016. SimonsFennig2018 classify Akie (khúúti ták Akié – “language of the Akie people”) as Southern Nilotic. The language is spoken by approximately 300 people. Of these, 90 individuals are rated as language experts and guardians, while the remaining 200 speakers have an average competence in the language. Another one hundred people have a limited competence<sup>1</sup>. Further language-relevant details listed by SimonsFennig2018 for Akie are as follows, but note that the language use information and the number of speakers have been updated above:

Language name:	Akie
ISO 639-3:	[oki]
Population Full:	250 (2016 K. Legere). Another 250 semi-speakers
Location:	Manyara, Simiyu, and Tanga regions.
Alternate names:	Akiek, Okiek as well as pejorative “Il-Torobo” (Maasai) and “Kindorobo” (Swahili),
Status:	8a (Moribund) <sup>2</sup>
Classification:	Nilo-Saharan, Satellite-Core, Core, Eastern Sudanic, Southern (n languages), Nilotic, Southern, Kalenjin, Okiek,
Language use:	Akie speakers in Tanzania are not in touch with Okiek speakers or the Okiek community in Kenya, from which they originally split. A high percentage of mutual intelligibility obtains between the varieties spoken by the Akie and Okiek communities.

Figure ?? below shows the spread of the Akie language, including an estimate of the speech community size.<sup>3</sup>

Image file missing

<sup>1</sup>This data is the result of field work which was conducted in nearly 60 villages or settlements where the names of Akie speakers or people of Akie origin (identified as Il-Tórobo by Maasai neighbors) were recorded.

<sup>3</sup>Map designed by Monika Feinen (Institute for African Studies and Egyptology, University of Cologne) September 2019.

Figure 1: Distribution of the Akie language, the Akie community and an estimate of the speaker number

## 2 The Akie documentation project

The texts presented below form an integral part of the work on documenting the Akie language. Initially (from 2009 to 2011) the Akie documentation took place within the framework of the Languages of Tanzania (LoT) Project (Gothenburg University-University of Dar es Salaam, Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics cooperation; Gothenburg coordinator K. Legère) funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). Subsequently in 2012, the Volkswagen Foundation assumed funding of the Akie documentation as part of the Documentation of Endangered Languages (*Dokumentation Bedrohter Sprachen*, DoBeS) initiative, by way of two separate studies, namely “Akie in Tanzania – Documenting a critically endangered language” (2012 to 2015) and “Akie in Tanzania – Updating the documentation of a critically endangered language” (2017 to 2019). The fieldwork results, which are derived from the afore-mentioned 60 settlements in the Manyara and Tanga Regions, culminated in a large collection of sound, video and text files as well as photographs, that have been deposited with the DoBeS Archive at the Max Planck Institute of Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen, The Netherlands. The DoBeS Archive forms part of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Memory of the World (MoW) Programme.<sup>4</sup>

According to (HimmelmannEtAl2006), “a language documentation is a lasting, multipurpose record of a language”, reflected in a wide range of multifaceted communicative events. Such documentation aims at providing “a comprehensive record of the linguistic practices characteristic of a given speech community” (Himmelmann1998). The language documentation target is the collection of raw/primary data in recording sessions (both audio and visual) that encompass “as many and as broad a range as possible of communicative events” (HimmelmannEtAl2006). It goes without saying that recordings as suggested here are the background of the Akie project against which the subsequent transcription, translation and linguistic analysis of the material takes place.

The documentation approach is rather well-suited to making available a variety of linguistic elements from recorded communicative events, as e.g. narratives or interviews. In respect of the discourse marker (DM) discussed below, it is taken for granted that its elicitation would probably not be easy or even impossible, as

---

<sup>4</sup>URL <https://archive.mpi.nl/islandora/object/lat>

any DM use is associated with the flow of discourse such as the spontaneous utterances during e.g. a conversation or a narrative. An interesting example of this kind of communicative event can be found in the recordings in Nupilukunya, Ngababa and Losekito (Akie name of Gitu which is one of the main Akie settlements north of Kibirashi, see Figure ??) during blessing/offering rituals that focus on ancestors. Such a ceremony is referred to as *kanaítáise* in Akie (*tambiko*<sup>5</sup> in Swahili).

### 3 Ancestral cult

#### 3.1 The socio-anthropological perspective

The audio and video material and its transcription in §3.2 provide an example of how the Akie, through their relationship to their ancestors, pay special attention to a specific social element as an essential factor of their identity. For the community as well as the individual, respect for the deceased and the maintenance of the associated tradition of involving the ancestors in essential social spheres play an important role.

From a socio-anthropological point of view, Ferraro2005 comments on the position of ancestors in the form of ancestor worship as follows:

- It considers the welfare of the community;
- After death a person continues to interact and affects the lives of living descendants;
- Ancestors are guardians of the social and moral order;
- Ancestors are elevated to the status of ancestor ghosts, enjoying supernatural powers;
- Community practices/ rituals designed to induce the ancestors to protect and to favor them, or at least not to harm living beings.

In addition, Ferraro2005 points out:

- Ancestors punish individuals who violate behavioral norms.

This general overview also applies to the Akie community in up country Tanzania, where the contact with the ancestors is being maintained. Aspects of the ancestral cult among the Akie is dealt with in the following subsection

---

<sup>5</sup>Described by Johnson1939 as an “offering of oxen, ... beer ... made to propitiate the spirits of the dead”.

### 3.2 The Akie community and ancestral worship

Blessing/offering rituals called *kanaítaise* are an indispensable element of Akie tradition and culture. Such ceremonies are deeply rooted in the belief that the community must continuously be assured of their social values and harmony with their neighbors, nature, etc. During these ceremonies, *Tororeita* ('God') and especially *asiíswe*<sup>6</sup> ('ancestors') are asked to bring peace, well-being, health, enough food and local beer to the community, while anger, intolerance and other offensive habits are rejected. Local beer is an important component of the ceremony itself and is also drunk directly afterwards. The ceremony is also performed before men go hunting, when someone is expected to travel, and when guests come to visit. In the latter case, the ceremony is held for visitors to familiarize them with the way the Akie community cultivates and respects traditional values.

Akie community members who were consulted emphasized that their ancestors play a substantial role in these ceremonies. They are said to be present whenever something significant happens, and they are always hungry and thirsty. There is also the belief that *asiíswe* turn into monsters if proper care is not taken of them. Thus, the main function of the ceremony is for the community to establish contact with this imaginary ancestral target group.

In a videotaped conversation on 2016-02-25 in Mbeli<sup>7</sup> with his fellow elder Nkoiseyyo, Lesakat (L) who was one of the pillars of Akie culture and tradition summarized the role of *kanaítaise* as follows:

The data in the tables have been converted into examples, and the tables have been commented out.

- L.: - ... nan korio nen kanaitaisee, inaitaise phi chaa eech, duo phaai.  
‘... and now at the offering/blessing ritual, adults, in particular elders, make it.’
- Kae ko khuumii, kiale.  
‘There is beer, it is bought.’
- Keewa de duo kiinaitaisa neen iyu.  
‘Thereafter the ceremony takes place.’
- Leena yai de lokhoywe.  
‘Mainly news is spread.’

<sup>6</sup>Singular *asiíswanté*.

<sup>7</sup>See the DoBeS/Akie video deposit: 2016\_02-25\_Mahojiano\_Mbeli\_Lesakat\_munimuni.mpeg. [https://archive.mpi.nl/islandora/object/lat%253A1839\\_b41cca45\\_3c9b\\_4d78\\_b45f\\_7e650850cac4](https://archive.mpi.nl/islandora/object/lat%253A1839_b41cca45_3c9b_4d78_b45f_7e650850cac4)

N.: - Ko an lokhoywe chaa kimwaau?

‘This is which kind of news that is said?’

L.: - Kimwaau isoo de lokhoywe, amu kiamchini phi chu kirkophek.

‘News are just now told, because these we tell people who have passed away.’

- Ko chichee kiamchin lokhoo, kiinaitaise.

‘And, we tell them about everything new when our ritual is made.’

The ceremony usually takes place after sunset, i.e. at night. As mentioned above an obligatory prerequisite is beer (*khúúmi*) in a container, such as a steel/aluminum drum or an old plastic Sadoline paint bucket. In the case of the ceremony in Napilukunya and Ngababa, community members brew beer from honey. As a rule, the ceremony is performed by at least one Akie elder (male or female) or someone familiar with the blessing/offering tradition. At the beginning of the ritual and thereafter at regular intervals, the performer dips *ratipánte*<sup>8</sup> (the fruit of the sausage tree, *Kigelia africana*) in the beer, sucks in the liquid and then spits it out. After the ceremonial monologue all those who attend the ritual spend the evening together sharing food and drinks. The structure of the rituals and performance as well as the linguistic focus of the communicative event documentation will be dealt with next.

## 4 The ancestral cult among the Akie and their linguistic constituents

Below are transcripts and idiomatic translations of three ceremonial discourses in Akie that were recorded audio visually. A prominent feature of the texts is the respectful, polite way of addressing the ancestors.

In the first text<sup>9</sup> L as the performer introduces the guests from far away<sup>10</sup> (called “white giants”) to the *asíswe*. Similarly, L welcomes the ancestors, inviting them to eat and to drink *khúúmi*. They are asked to bless the community and clear the way for the ceremony, the participants, and others. The ancestors are finally expected to leave in peace.

<sup>8</sup>The Akie tree name is *sangaratwe*. In Swahili the tree is *mwegea* and its fruit *yegea*.

<sup>9</sup>The focus of text 1 and the following texts is on the presentation of a logical flow of words that is not interrupted by glossing. In response to a suggestion by one of the manuscript reviewers a short selection of glossed text is included in the appendix which is expected to demonstrate some elementary facts about the Akie language structure.

<sup>10</sup>Karsten Legère (KL), P. Mkwanihembo (MK), L. Ole-Wanga.

The polite, respectful way of speaking to the imaginary target group of *asiíswe* is demonstrated in parts 1, 3 and 5 of text 1. When the recordings of this and other ceremonial monologues and their transcriptions were analyzed, it turned out that a specific linguistic element occupied a prominent position in this communicative event. This was the discourse marker (DM) *hm* which, on the one hand, was traced in these parts as paying attention to the ancestors in attendance in general. On the other hand, in part 2 and 4, several *asiíswe* were addressed by name. Thus, the text culminated in a sort of roll call, where, as a token of confirming *asiíswe*'s presence, attention and acceptance, a mock "dialogue" was generated by L. In so doing, for those ancestors whose names were mentioned L imitated a fictitious *hm* answer after the call. In this case, in an English roll call the DM *hm* would be the equivalent of 'yes' (categorized as an answer particle), 'here' or 'present'.

In general, at the offering/blessing ritual, the use of DM *hm* is mainly associated with the English affirmative sentence adverbial 'yes'. When this lexical function of DM *hm* was discussed with Akie resource persons such as L and Bahati Nguyaki (BN), both confirmed this interpretation.<sup>11</sup>

Tex1: Part 1 (Performer = Nangiwinyo Lesakat)

- Ḷopwan nái, œéésien nen iø.  
‘Come now, drink here.’
- Ḷééšien nái, s’ɔíta keen, ጀópe.  
‘Drink now, so that you may move, leave.’
- Ḷopwan, œéésien nen iø, asííswé, amø akíle de:  
‘Come, drink here, spirits [ancestors], because we have just said.’
- Kápwa tián chø leelách ii. Hm.  
‘White giants have come. Hm.’
- Kø akwé i, kikúúre amø ii.  
‘It is you who have been called for this.’
- Kéépwa, kééle:  
‘They came to say:’

---

<sup>11</sup>With respect to DMs including *hm* see also HeineEtAl2017 and KonigEtAl2015. Apart from its role at the blessing/offering ceremony which is commented upon in this paper *hm* is also used in narratives, where its function is the confirmation of the speaker's wording and text content. Like *ehee* in Swahili, DM *hm* encourages here the narrator to go ahead. In this case, HeineEtAl2017 classify *hm* as a connective DM expressing discourse continuity and introducing a new information unit, translated as 'and then'.

- ḡomwáun de lókoíywé tukul. Hm.  
‘Just tell us all words. Hm.’
- Kópwa kóriekis. Hm.  
‘They came to brew beer. Hm.’
- Koúp, anasínan, amíítwaaki tukuul. Hm.  
‘Folks, they brought in all the food. Hm.’
- Ɂéésien nái, si Ɂŋeetíté, Ɂópe, hm, si Ɂkóónu kurúłta. Hm.  
‘Drink now so you may get out and go, hm, so as to give us health. Hm.’
- Ɂíte keen akwé, asííswé, hm, ikaa lanjatáá ni. Hm.  
‘Move yourselves out, ancestors, hm, of tonight. Hm.’
- Ɂmáátæen asíísi. Hm.  
‘Follow this sun. Hm.’
- Amu kó akwéé, kakípwan kéésaam kuutii. Hm.  
‘Because it is you whom we come to ask for the language. Hm.’
- Akéésaam kií ya kimáchë. Hm.  
‘We ask for what we want. Hm.’
- Kówa kópuç íyya kénkæeni. Hm.  
‘It became stalled in one place. Hm.’
- Am(u) kimáchë de, kéketaakak póórwe. Hm.  
‘Because we just want to see your bodies. Hm.’
- Makimáchë de isoo achëe, hm, amoo pií de chaa ɻéétin iyya pa raai, Hm.  
‘We do not want just now, hm, because we are not just people who are from the open place. Hm.’
- Ɂpwani, Ɂéésien, si Ɂŋéítite.  
‘Come, drink, and leave.’
- Ɂópe, s’okoonééch kurúłta, s’ɔpaipái sekérí. Hm.  
‘Go as to give us health, to guide the soul straight. Hm.’
- Ɂíte kátóo, Ɂíte ɻwénááni. Hm.  
‘Move the thorns, move the holes. Hm.’
- Ɂkaachi ɻéétaa kópa, hm, nen sííjo-wínta. Hm.  
‘Give men a chance to go, hm, in comfort. Hm.’

- ɔíté nai keen ɔɔkwéé. Hm. Lalei. Hm.  
‘Move yourselves now. Hm. Look. Hm.’
- Kɔ leenai kimwaayé. Hm.  
‘This is what we are saying. Hm.’
- Kɔ chaa íra lɔkóiywe, hm, ika yaa kiyá i, hm, Ámʉ arkéépwā.  
‘These are words, hm, of this coun-try, hm, because they [guests] have come.’

Part 2

- ɔpwan nái, pháápha, hm, pháápha Sapái, hm, Lɔitiakí, hm, Kaýakai, hm, Namaiyai, hm.  
‘Come now, Father, hm, Father Sapai, hm, Loitiaki, hm, Kaiyakai, hm, Namaiyai, hm.’

Part 3

- ɔpwan nái, ɔpasúún keen tukuul, hm, s’ɔíté keen, hm, si ɔkoonéch de jnéé kurújta. Hm.  
‘Come now, gather yourselves all, hm, so that may move, hm, so that you can give us health now. Hm.’

Part 4

- Amóó, hm, Moisári, hm, Naiyasoi, hm.  
‘Mother, hm, Moisari, hm, Naiyasoi, hm.’
- ɔpwan nái, hm, Lɔlóisyá, hm, Tóótɔ, hm, Lemóna, hm, Nguseróo, hm.  
‘Come now, hm, Loloisya, hm, Tooto, hm, Lemona, hm, Nguseroo, hm.’

Part 5

- ɔpasúún nái keen tukuul, hm, si ɔíté keen óókwé, hm, si ɔkóónu kurújta, hm, si ɔíté keen, si ɔkaachí kójne chɔɔ, kolasiya, hm.  
‘Gather now yourselves all, hm, so that you can move out, hm, so that you may give health, hm, so that you can leave, so that you may give me my eyes, they will heal, hm.’
- Leláa kulo, s’áási de jnéé íya apónɛ, na alapáti, hm am(v) kakíle de, arkoyáii, s’áási de jnéé am kakíle de, arkoyáii óltá, arkóe na kiparé phi, hm.  
‘You folks, so that I find a way to pass and run, hm, because it was

just said, the words are broken, there are people who are being killed, hm.'

The structure of the 2010 kanaítáise recording (text 2 below) is similar to that of text 1 above. In this ceremony, first a female and then a male elder take part. In part 1, N Muringa (M) explains that guests who want to know more about the Ngababa Akie community and the Akie language have arrived in Ngababa. Accordingly, the Akie community members in this village organized various events for their visitors, including a blessing/offering ritual which took place on 2010-08-04. In text 2, part 1, M produces hm three times. In text 2, part 2, L follows the pattern that he had demonstrated in his 2009 performance above (text 1).

Text 2: Part 1 (Performer = Nekitoliya Muringa)

- Iki yai khuumi, phaapha, akipwaan nai iyaa iinte phaapha Teeye ai Patina.  
‘This beer now, Father, we have just come where you are, Father Te-eye and Patina.’
- Ichi khuumi opwaan, oeesien. Hm. Ko phii chaa ko tayee chu chaa kapwa, kolei:  
‘These beers, come and drink them, hm. There are these guests who have come, saying:’
- Opwaan, nyon, olaleech akéeche.  
‘Come [pl.], come [sg.], look at us.’
- Ko makiweche de akeeche, amu kipare:  
‘And we do not reject them, for we say:’
- “Kosii okaseech olaa kiintee, amu arkeeyoosii tu de, kiisyepooseii.”  
“Let them understand where we are, just being old, still living.”
- Ko chaa yai, phaapha, hm, aka Lepatoi, hm.  
‘It is this now, Father, hm, Lepatoi people, hm.’

The part 1 text continues, but is not included here, because no DM hm is used. The same is for the introductory section of text 2, part 2, which is skipped, for no hm is applied.

Part 2 (Performer = Nangiwinyo Lesakat)

- ... Ko akwe; kikuure.  
‘... It is you; you are called.’

- Opwan nai de duoi.  
‘Just come now.’
- Ophasuun keen, asiiswe, hm.  
‘Assemble yourselves, ancestors, hm.’
- Phaapha, hm, Saphai, hm, kos’oopwan nai de duo.  
‘Father, hm, Saphai, hm, so that you (all) just come.’
- Ophasuun keen, hm.  
‘Assemble yourselves, hm.’
- Loitiaki Kaiyakai, Oltungu, opwan nai, ophasuun keen tukuul.  
‘Father, hm, Saphai, hm, so that you (all) just come.’
- Kaiyakai, opwan nai, hm, nen iyu. Hm.  
‘Assemble yourselves, hm. Hm.’
- Taiko, hm, Kisema, hm, Alapuopuo, hm, Nguseroo, hm.  
‘Taiko, hm, Kisema, hm, Alapuopuo, hm, Nguseroo, hm.’

Altogether, L produced the DM hm at least 21 times. It occurred 10 times in what could be interpreted as a roll call of the ancestors. When L addressed the ancestors in a more general way (not calling them by their names), the DM was used another 11 times. Another blessing/offering ritual was recorded on 2013-01-31 by Christa König and Bernd Heine in Losikito (Gitu). Text 3 below is an extract from their transcript of a ceremony performed by Nkauli Samakuya (NS). In NS’s speech, the DM hm is even more widely used (namely a total of 58 times) than in texts 1 or 2 above. Here are samples of this 2013 material.

Text 3 (Performer = Nkauli Samakuya)

- Óeesien, hm, ásiiswé ikáá kíyaí pa Mókiri, hm. [1/61]  
‘Drink, hm, ancestors of this country of Mokiri, hm.’
- Keleí: Hm, óyumuyumun náá kén, hm, áko Kikéko, hm. [1/65]  
‘We say: Hm, gather yourselves, hm, Kikeko people, hm.’
- Elá, kól, hm, ichi deí kaai táá Kisíko, hm, kaai táá Kisíko, hm. [1/66]  
‘Folks, indeed, hm, this [is] now the town of Kisiko, hm, the town of Kisiko, hm.’
- Akó Injulu, hm, ako Taaye, hm, léláá, ako Lesikeí, hm.  
‘Injulu people, hm, Taaye people, hm, Lesikai people, hm.’
- eláá, kól, hm, akó Párleti, hm, lela, kól, hm.  
‘hm, Parleti people, hm, folks, indeed, hm.’

Please check the final two sentences above, as the OKI to EN correspondence seems a bit off here.

The texts produced by even experienced Akie speakers such as Papalai Kalisya on 2013-10-30 (in a short blessing/offering ceremony of two minutes) and earlier B. Nkoiseyyo together with Nkúyáki Rokina in Losekito (Gitu) on 2013-01-31 (more elaborate and longer, but very general) are short of the mock dialogue with the community's ancestors. In this respect, the names of the ancestors are no longer quoted probably because they may not be known any more. Consequently, the emphasis of other more recent blessing ceremonies witnessed during fieldwork has now shifted to the prevailing situation and its hardships for the Akie.

## 5 To sum up

Conclusion? ■

This paper has dealt with some aspects of the documentation of the Akie language using the example of ceremonial discourse as part of the ancestral cult. In this respect the function of the DM hm was discussed which, in the texts included here, is associated with blessing/offering rituals that have been recorded since 2009 in Akie community settlements. The text samples selected above demonstrate how the ceremonies emphasize maintaining and consolidating a ritual relationship with the community's ancestors. The respect bestowed on deceased members of the community and – from the perspective of the living – the unilateral contact with them forms a substantial pillar of Akie traditions and heritage. The discourse strategy in kanaítáise employs two principal ways of addressing ancestors, who are expected to take note of what they are being told. The first method is more general speaking to them without any name, while the second entails appealing to them directly by name. The ancestors are deemed as responding to being addressed in these ways. For example, the performer of the ceremony utters on behalf of the asííswe a short mock response by way of the DM hm. When the ancestors are appealed to directly by name in a type of roll call, the mock response hm corresponds with 'here', 'yes' or 'okay' in English, and indicates that somebody is present. In terms of the ceremony 'dialogue' content per se, not only are the ancestors invited to kanaítáise to drink beer and to eat, they are also requested to pave the way for the arrival of guests or latecomers, ease the passage for community members that are leaving, and bestow peace and well-being on the Akie people.

The material presented here is a symbol of the Akie language versatility that however, becomes more and more rare. Both N Lesakat and N Muringa who

were known and respected as guardians of the language (displaying sophisticated language use, rich in its vocabulary and grammatical structures), Akie history, traditions and other facets of Akie life have passed away.

Another aspect of continuing to uphold Akie traditions and heritage has to do with maintaining kanaítaise in view of the small number of Akie-speaking persons who may be exposed to this and other communicative events. Given that many Akie people live scattered and isolated in small settlements far from each other, it is often not possible to gather enough participants to enact any ritual. That's why ceremonies can only practiced in a few places such as Losekito and Napilukunya, where a reasonable number of Akie speakers can still be found.

In conclusion, therefore, the future of the Akie blessing/offering ritual in the traditional manner – or even in a modern version which was referred to above is bleak. Taking this situation into account, the assessment of ongoing language change, attrition and loss as portrayed in this paper with respect to kanaítaise as one of the pillars of the hunter-gatherer Akie community serves to corroborate once again Akie's status as a critically endangered Tanzanian language.

## **Abbreviations**

## **Acknowledgements**

The authors hereby express their gratitude to the Volkswagen Foundation, which has generously supported and financed the extensive activities of two documentation projects since 2012. Similarly, the SIDA support for KL's field work in 2009/10 is acknowledged with thanks. In this regard, the University of Dar es Salaam has authorized KL's Endangered Languages in Tanzania research project (as part of LoT cooperation) and granted permission for the field research under the Akie (Ref. No.: AB3/3(B)). There was also exemplary support by regional authorities (Tanga and Manyara). At the grassroots level the cooperation with Akie language experts, speakers and other Akie community members was excellent. The commitment shown by the local resource persons and Tanzanian assistants, as well as their initiative have left an immemorable impression. A pre-final version of this paper was checked language-wise by Ms. Sandra Fitchat (Swakopmund, Namibia). Her language revision and paper comments were substantial and stimulating. However, the views expressed in this paper are entirely those of the authors. Ahsanteni sana - many thanks to all.

## Appendix

Please revise the glosses as they are currently not compatible with the Leipzig Glossing Rules.

- (1) a. ó ee-sie-n hím ásiiswê ikáá kíya-í pa  
2PL drink.S.AP.IMP hm ancestors.A GEN land.AD.PR.SG LOC.GEN  
mókiri hím  
Mokiri.A hm (1/61)  
'You should drink, hm, ancestors of this country of Mokiri, mh.'
- b. Akiye ká mókiri hím ñte dě iyu (1/62)  
Akiye.A GEN Mokiri.A hm exist DM here  
'Akiye of Mokiri, mh, exist here.'
- c. hím kɔ niyε dě ni kíí ntei-yak nen iyû  
hm COP 3.SG.A DM REL.SG be.together PREP here Nkuyaki  
nkuyaki hm (1/63)  
'Hm, it is him who we were all together with here in Nkuyaki, hm.'
- d. inkúyaki de ko inkúyaki de ni hím (1/64)  
Inkuyaki DM-COP Inkuyaki.A DM D.PR.SG hm  
'It is inkuyaki there, hm.'
- e. ke leí hím ó yumuyumu-n náá kën hím áko krikékɔ hím  
1.PL say hm 2.PL gather.S-VEN-IMP REL.SG RFL hm COLL.A Kikeko hm (1/65)  
'We say: Hm. You who are Kikeko folks, hm, should gather all together.'
- f. élá kólɔ hím icideí kaai táá kisíko hím kai táá kisíko  
folks EXCL hm here town.A GEN Kisiko.A GEN Kisiko.A hm  
hím (1/66)  
'Folks, hm, here the town of Kisiko, hm.' (x2)'

# Chapter 13

## Discursive strategies for managing bad news: Exemplification from Akan (Ghana)

Samuel Gyasi Obeng<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Indiana University

Bad news is a problem for both news bearers and news recipients especially in situations where apprehensions run high given that it may run counter to people's in situ social and psychological needs (Maynard2003). The object of this paper was to examine the discursive strategies used by diseased individuals and their caregivers to deliver and manage their bad news. In pursing the above objective, transcripts of narratives collected from diseased individuals and their caregivers were subjected to empirical inspection with the view to determining the communicative strategies they employed to deal with their special situation. The study was done within the framework of language and liberty (Obeng2018, Obeng2020) and the results showed that disease and 'powerful' actors intrude on diseased individuals and caregivers' negative liberty (by encroaching on their fundamental freedoms) and positive liberty (by preventing them from participating in their family and communal lives). Common linguistic strategies used in talking about disease and in seeking and protecting participants liberty includes: silence, hesitations, reduplication, adjectives of quality, adverbs and intensifiers, verbs denoting physical sensation, and factive formulae (for evidentiality and credence). Discourse-pragmatic strategies for delivering bad news and for seeking liberty include the speech acts of complaining, blaming and assuring. Other strategies include avoidance, inferencing and polyvocality. It is concluded that to protect diseased individuals' liberty from and liberty to, there is the need to put in place rights that protect these freedoms and empower diseased individuals to participate in their family and communal lives. Also, society must understand the communicational mores surrounding bad news delivery and management and be 'educated' about the intertwining nature of language and care-giving.

Single quotation markers are for reserved for linguistic meaning only



## 1 Introduction

Communication between care-givers, patients and families is an essential component of any high-quality care, especially in cases where the illness is serious, and anxieties are high. **MaynardFreese2012**, in a study about how participants in interaction manage affective experiences and reactions to good news and bad news delivery noted how the delivery or receipt of news (both good and bad) momentarily disrupts recipients' involvement in a social world whose contours and features they typically take for granted, as well as the power of such news to evoke and display strong emotion in the news recipient.

Bad news includes news that convey the results of a deadly and/or socially stigmatized disease, those that discuss and/or provide information about disease and death, or any form of tragedy or misfortune related to disease management, death and dying. In an earlier study, **Maynard2003** noted that breaking bad news is a real problem for both news bearers and news recipients, especially in situations where anxieties run high; a claim supported by **FallowfieldJenkins2004** and **BrownEtAl2009**. Indeed, as **Maynard2003** elucidates, people are reluctant to transmit bad news because of its communicative difficulty, the face threat it has on both the news bearer and the news recipient, and the impact (social, financial, etc.) it has on news recipients and their immediate families. According to **TesserRosen1975** and **WeenigEtAl2014**, **WeenigEtAl2001**, bad news with indefinite consequences is transmitted more often than bad news with definite consequences.

Research has shown that even though bad news delivery is so important, its acquisition and management within the care-giving professions are often not included in the training curricular of care-giving institutions. Current studies into the training of medical personnel all emphasize the need to educate such personnel about appropriate and effective ways of breaking and managing bad news. For example, in a study that involved communication skills workshop for nephrology fellows focusing on delivering bad news and helping patients define care goals, including end-of-life preferences, **SchellEtAl2013** discovered that less than one-third of the studied nephrologists reported prior palliative care training. All respondents felt that communication skills were important to being, a "great nephrologist," and that an essential part of communication must involve ability to deliver bad news, express empathy, and discuss dialysis initiation and withdrawal. Another study by **BaysEtAl2014** also emphasized the importance of providing training for health care personnel in breaking and managing bad news to, and with their patients, with the researchers concluding that communication

skills intervention was associated with improvement in trainees' skills in giving bad news and expressing empathy.

Another study that dealt with the need to have effective communication skills in breaking and managing bad news was that by WalczakEtAl2016 whereby the authors identified and synthesized evidence for interventions including communication skills training, education, advance care planning, and structured practice changes that targeted end-of-life communication. Participants targeted included patients, caregivers, healthcare professionals and multiple stakeholders. The researchers discovered that interventions targeting patients and caregivers are essential to breaking and managing bad news; however, they also found out that barriers to end-of-life communication may more effectively be removed via multi-focal interventions.

In another study about patients' perception regarding the disclosure of news about their cancer as regards physician counselling and how they perceived the flow of information between hospital-based and family physicians, SpiegelEtAl2009█ discovered that 37.7% of their respondents viewed the news disclosure about their cancer as being presented to them 'very empathically' or 'empathically'. Two-thirds of the patients (62.3%) stated that the news disclosure about their cancer was presented to them 'not so empathically' or 'not at all empathically'. Most importantly, the researchers observed the important role of family physicians in breaking bad news to the patients. Specifically, they discovered that patients were more likely to state that the bad news about their cancer had been done 'very empathically' or 'empathically' when counselled by family physicians in contrast to when they had been counselled by hospital-oncologists or self-employed specialists.

Furthermore, a great majority of patients (81.8%) felt that they had been given adequate opportunity to ask the questions that they considered to be important when they were counselled by a family physician. Only 43.5% felt that they had been given adequate opportunity to ask the questions that they considered to be important when they were counselled by a hospital-oncologist or a self-employed█ specialist. (44.3%). Also discovered by the researchers was the fact that 56.8% of the patients preferred to discuss the suggested cancer therapies with an oncologist. The above discoveries led the researchers to conclude that it is essential for oncologists to involve family physicians in breaking bad news to patients.

Within discourse theory, managing bad news falls under therapeutic discourse that involves: talk-in-interaction that represents the social practice between clinicians and clients (Leahy2004); talk-in-interaction between diseased individuals, their caregivers and others discourse types with the potential to bring emotional,

social, and physical relief, as well as discourse types aimed at assisting victims to cope with and/or adapt to their difficult situations (**Obeng2008**).

On the discursive strategies for breaking and managing bad news, research has shown that within western medical discourse ecology, hesitations, qualifiers, and maneuver or circumlocution (**Maynard2003**, **BrownEtAl2009**) and prosody, especially volume and pitch (**MaynardFreese2012**) are some of the common strategies used in delivering and managing bad news. In Akan (Ghana), **Obeng2008** identified: “Speaking to the wind” (addressing God, a deity or a person who is not in a ratified state of talk with you), songs, conventional indirectness, non-conventional indirectness (especially, “twisted speech” e.g., idioms and proverbs), use of different wh-question types as being some of the strategies for breaking and managing bad news. **Obeng2008** also noted that in Ghanaian society, there is the tendency for diseased individuals to blame their disease on other people (sometimes even on their caregivers), and that being able to blame others offers some relief since it takes responsibility away from the diseased individuals as being the source of their illness even if such communicative behavior creates tensions between them and those they blame for their illness. Indeed, on the conveyance of diseased individuals’ emotional state, **KalmykovaMergenthaler1998** argue that narratives serve as one of the commonest and best communicative means to convey speakers’ emotional states given that they are able to stimulate responses of listeners.

Another strategy for breaking bad news, according to **Movahedi1996**, is through a second language given that such a language provides space where certain personal and cultural facets of a diseased individual or a caregiver may be more easily verbalized than through their first language. Specifically, there is the tendency for a diseased bilingual to resort to code-switching when breaking and talking about bad news since such bad news tends to be more ‘tellable’ in a less familiar language or register.

The World Health Organization’s Constitution (**World-Health-Organization1946**) observes the right to health as one of a set of internationally agreed human rights standards and is inseparable or ‘indivisible’ from other rights such as that to be free from intrusion from the state or institutions affiliated with a state or the right to participate in one’s communal affairs. Other rights include the right to vote, the right to free speech, and the right to providing for the underlying determinants of health, such as safe and potable water, sanitation, food, housing, health-related information and education, and gender equality. However, thus far, there is no study on the nature and/or type of language used by diseased individuals to seek liberty from their care-givers (including health personnel) or people around them while breaking and dealing with their bad news or when

dealing with their unique burdensome health communication; this study seeks to fill the gap.

## 2 Theoretical framework

The study is done within the framework of language and liberty (Obeng2020, Obeng2018). I view health as both a *human right* (by it being justifiably belonging to every person), and a *civil right* (by requiring society to ensure the right to equality of health for all). Obeng's theory on language and liberty is inspired by Sir Isaiah Berlin's (Berlin1960) theory on *Liberty* which includes *liberty from* (*negative liberty* which involves the protection of individuals from the intrusions of the society and others into their fundamental freedoms), and *liberty to* (also called *positive liberty*, which guarantees the right of individuals to participate in governance and to share in the political power of their communities). Positive liberty includes the right to freedom and/or independence at the various levels of an individual's community.

In working within the theory of *language and liberty*, it is important to establish the fact that besides liberty being a philosophical, political and juridical concept, it is also a health concept, and that language is used to express liberty and the above associated concepts just as liberty depends on language to become a reality. Therefore, in working within the theory of language and liberty, I posit: (a) that disease, caregivers (community), and sometimes the state, may encroach diseased individuals' negative liberty by forcing them into certain states of health (physical, emotional etc.), and thereby preventing them from doing what they can otherwise do; and (b) that disease, caregivers (community), and sometimes the state, may deny diseased individuals their positive liberty by preventing them from exercising their right to participate and share in their family and communal lives. As a linguistic concept, language and liberty are intertwined. In particular, liberty informs and is informed by language and relies on language to become reality.

Working within the theory of language and liberty requires me to examine such important issues as the nature of material communicative and culturally congruent conditions put in place (or made available) to ensure that diseased individuals can seek and maintain liberty (that is, be guaranteed liberty). In particular, I examine the available culturally congruent communicational freedom mores and/or framework which protect individuals' liberties and thus guarantee liberty in both the negative and positive senses. Specifically, I examine the linguistic and discourse-pragmatic features that are available and allowable for use

by diseased individuals to vent their socio-emotional frustrations, challenge their care-givers if need be, seek material support to enable them deal with their situation, among others. The absence of such culturally congruent material and communicational freedom mores in a community creates a situation in which people in power (care-givers, lineage elders, etc.) may needlessly infringe on diseased individuals' negative and positive liberties with impunity, especially when such individuals hold divergent views about the nature and/or type of their care. Two important questions I attempt to answer are: (a) *What linguistic and discourse-pragmatic strategies are used by participants (diseased persons and/or their care-givers) to seek their negative and positive liberty?* and (b) *Through what discursive strategies is liberty denial made reality?*

### **3 Aim and method**

This paper aims at recapitulating and extending work I did on Akan therapeutic discourse (Obeng2008) by examining the communicative strategies used by diseased individuals, caregivers, and persons they interact with, to seek liberty while breaking and managing bad news. In pursuing the above aims, I examine:

- a) *the linguistic strategies* (sound types or patterns, silence and pausal phenomena, reduplication, prosodies, vocabulary, phrasal and sentential formulae/categories);
- b) *discourse-pragmatic strategies* (inferences and presuppositions derived from utterances), various forms of speech acts such as *complaining, blaming, assuring, avoidance*, etc.); and
- c) *metacommunicative strategies* (such as indirectness and (non)verbal communicative stimuli that help support or interpret that which is said))

that are used by victims of socially stigmatized diseases and their immediate care-givers, relatives or friends to seek liberty while managing their bad news.

Data for the study are made up of transcripts of 6 recorded interactions collected in Akan-Twi, in Asuom and Accra (Ghana). Data collection spanned August 2015 to October 2015 and February 2016 to March 2016. Participants included 6 diseased individuals and 13 caregivers. The data content dealt with sickness and death. Specifically, the data consisted of discourses involving diseased individuals' lived experiences and those of their caregivers, and interactions about death, especially, impending death. A form of the Akan orthography is used in the transcription and participants' initials are used to create anonymity.

The data were chosen because they involved the delivery and management of bad news and were produced by care-givers and diseased individuals who lived with and thus experienced bad news. Participants' lived experiences either as diseased persons or as close relatives caring for the diseased persons meant they experienced the denial of liberty either as agents or patients thereby making their assertions and claims about liberty authentic. Also, the data are replete with speech acts that are common in healthcare management discourse. Among such speech acts are: complaints relating to uncertainty about diagnoses, insufficient care, or lack of care; criticism of the nature of care of care-givers or of the diseased individuals; request for help (financial or moral support); assurance; among others. Through the data we are led into the studied participants' worldview about lived experiences relating to the pursuit of liberty and the various discursive strategies via which liberty was pursued.

## 4 Texts and discussion

The first hypothesis I put forward relates to the interconnectedness between language and liberty and is stated as follows: in asymmetrical medical discourse, actors without power (diseased individuals and care-givers who bear bad news) have linguistic and pragmatic strategies for seeking liberty; that is, speaking the unspeakable (tabooed expressions) irrespective of whether or not their pronouncements will resort in being viewed as ungrateful about their care, dissatisfied with their care, and in the case of care-givers, being viewed as uncaring. It is argued that being able to speak the unspeakable offers the bad news bearers relief (communicational as well as emotional). We posit further that through their language, we are brought into the bad news bearers' worldview about how language and liberty inform each other. Even though two long extracts are cited below in support of the above observations, it is important to note that the cited extracts represent the many cases that help illustrate the above observations and others.

### 4.1 Excerpt 1

Context: Breaking the bad news about a tabooed disease (cancer). Recorded in Asuom (Ghana) September 12, 2015.

Please revise all the glosses according to the Leipzig Glossing Rules.

- (1) T1 KN:

- Me sewaa, mate      sε    AMD yare. (4.0)  
my aunt I've-heard that AMD sick
- (2) T2 AB:  
Hm! Deε aba                dee εso                sen me.  
hm what has-happened foc. it-big(ger) than me
- (3) T3 KN:  
Yadeε no hyε    ne he? (3.0)  
disease the be-loc. her where
- (4) T4 KN:  
Edeen na εha                no? (3.0)  
what foc it-trouble her
- (5) T5 AB:  
a. Obiara nnim.    Ebi se εyε duabø, ebi nso se εyε  
everyone neg-know some say it-be curse some also say it-is  
nkrøfoø    no biribi no bi.  
those-people their thing that some  
b. Sε                εyε deen, se                εyε deen, obi                nhu.  
whatever it-be what whatever it-be what someone neg-know
- (6) T6 KN:  
Mode    no akø                døkota?  
you-take her has-gone hospital
- (7) T7 AB:  
Yede    no akø                baabi                ara.                Obiara nhu  
we-take her has-gone everywhere everyone not-see thing-exactly  
adekodeε.
- (8) T8 AG:  
a. Onipa wote hø na                wo honam                ahyehye  
Human you-be there conj.your skin has-burnt-burnt has-become  
ayε                        tumtumtumtum.  
black-black-black-black  
b. ayε                ammødin  
become unmentionable
- (9) T9 AB:

13 Discursive strategies for managing bad news: Exemplification from Akan  
(Ghana)

- a. Se ɔakɔtia biribi so o, se deen o,  
whether she-has-gone-step something on conj. whether what conj.  
obiara nnim.  
everyone not-know
- b. Yɛadeɛ yi dee emfiri ha!  
disease this as-for it-not-from here

(10) T10 AG:  
Seesei dee Onyame n'adom oo, n'adom!  
Now as-for God his-grace interj. his-grace

(11) T11 KN:  
Na ɔwɔ he?  
And she-be where

(12) T12 AB:  
ɔhyɛ dan no mu ho [KN Enters AMD's Room]  
she-be-loc. room the in there

(13) T13 KN:  
AMD ete sɛn?  
AMD it-be how=

(14) T14 AMD:  
=Ei, Braa! aa mekonkɔn ho. (2.0)  
interj. Brother well I-hang-in-hang-in there

(15) T15 KN:  
Apɔ mu te sɛn? (4.0)  
joints in be-stative how

(16) T16 AMD:  
Braa, me na meni oo! Hm! (1.0) (2.0)  
brother I emp I-be (like-this) interj. fm (well)

Please  
check  
(16).

(17) T17 KN:  
Wo ho bɛyɛ wo den. (3.0)  
your self will-be you strong

(18) T18 AMD:

- Se wo ara wonim; obi a mewɔ m'dwuma a  
as you emp you-know someone who I-have my-work who  
menhia obiara mmoa.  
I-not-need anyone's help

- b. enne hwe! Eno ara ne se mete faako  
now/today look that emp. be that I-stay one/same-place
- (19) T19 KN:  
Na wɔn de wo akɔ dɔkota?  
and they take you have-gone hospital
- (20) T20 AMD:  
Eno dee mete wɔn so a mesore. Obi ara nim se  
that as-for I-sit them on if I-get-up everyone knows that they  
wɔn ayε nea wɔn bɛtumi!  
have-done what they can
- (21) T21 KN:  
Na mokɔε no wɔn se dɛn na εɛkɔɔso yadeε yi? (2.0)  
and you-went when they say what emp it-prog-cause disease this
- (22) T22 AMD:  
a. Hm! (2.0) Obi ara ka ne dee. Ebi se kansa, ebi  
fim (2.0) everyone says his/her thing some say cancer some say  
se sei, ebi se sei.  
this some say that  
b. Edin bebree. Wobɔ din a εnyε yie.  
names many you-mention name if it-neg-be possible
- (23) T23 KN:  
Na dɔkotafɔɔ no yεε ho biribi maa wo?  
and doctors the do-past self something for you
- (24) T24 AMD:  
a. Dee wɔn kaeε ara ne se yemfa me mmra fie.  
what they said only be that we-bring me come home  
b. Yadeε yi ama me asa ama me ayε abɔfra.  
disease this has-made me encumbered has-made me become child  
(2.0)
- (25) T25 KN:  
Me sewaanom boa wo anaa? (4.0)  
my aunt-them help you Q
- (26) T26 AMD:

Aaa εyε. Wo ara wonim; aye ssε wo nsa  
well it-okay you emp. you-know (it)-has-become like your hand  
atɔ osaman aduane mu.  
has-fallen ghost's food in

(27) T27 KN:

- a. Kyere ssε εnyε papa bi ara. (4.0)  
meaning that it-not-be good exactly/very.
- b. f'm it-will-be well/okay  
Hm (2.0) Εbεyε yie

(28) T28 AMD:

Aaa anomaa bi ne ne su; ɔse: "Aaa yεrehwε."  
Well bird a and its cry; it-says Well we-re-looking

### Excerpt 1

T1 KN: My Aunt, I've heard that AMD is sick. (4.0)

T2 AB: Well, What's happened is bigger than me (is beyond me)

T3 KN: Where exactly (in her body) is the disease? (3.0)

T4 KN: What is wrong with her? (3.0)

T5 AB: No one knows. Some say it is a curse, others say it is that sickness that affects the other people (i.e., a disease of foreign nature). Whatever it is, whatever it is, no one knows.

T6 KN: Have you taken her to the hospital?

T7 AB: We've taken her everywhere. No one knows what it is.

T8 AG: A human being whose body has burnt all over and turned into coal-black. It has become an unmentionable.

T9 AB: If she has stepped on something (juju/voodoo) or whatever it is, no one knows! As for this disease, it is not from here (it is a foreign disease).

T10 AG: As it is now, we're counting on God's grace (that is, only God can save her).

T11 KN: And where is she?

T12 AB: She inside the room over there.

[KN Enters AMD's Room]

T13 KN: AMD How are you?=

T14 AMD: =Wow! Brother! (2.0) Well, I'm hanging in.

T15 KN: How are you? (4.0)

T16 AMD: Brother Look at me (Can you imagine what's happened to me)! (1.0)  
Well! (2.0)

T17 KN: You will be well. (3.0)

T18 AMD: You very well know; Someone (a person) with my own business who  
did not need help from anyone! Now look! All I do is stay at the same place  
(I'm encumbered by the disease).

T19 KN: Have they taken you to the hospital?

T20 AMD: They've done their best. Everyone knows they've done their best!

T21 KN: And when you went (to the hospital) what did they say is causing this  
disease? (2.0)

T22 AMD: Well! (2.0) Everyone had their own theory about the cause. Some say  
it is cancer, some say this, others say that. So many names. Some are just  
unmentionable.

T23 KN: And did the doctors do something about it?

T24 AMD: All they said was that they should bring me home. This disease has  
encumbered me; it has made become like a child (dependent on others).  
(2.0)

T25 KN: Does my Aunt and other help you? (4.0)

T26 AMD: Well it's okay. You very well know. It's like putting your hands in a  
ghost's food (It's like a forced commitment not on their own free will).

T27 KN: Meaning the help is not very good. (4.0) Well (2.0) it will be well/okay.

T28 AMD: A bird and its song/cry: it sings “Well, we’ll see: (I’ll believe it if I see it).

An observation of the above excerpt reveals the use of various pausal phenomena in an attempt to hold back the bad news given its communicative difficulty. Prominent among the different types of pausal phenomena are silence, hesitation or voiced pauses, and a combination of both. What is unique about the silent pauses is the duration. Specifically, the silent pauses are much longer than what is generally seen as norm in Akan interaction which is between 0.1 to 0.5 seconds (Obeng1987, Obeng1989, Obeng1999). In American English conversations, Jefferson1983 identified 0.5 seconds as being the norm silent pause between a current turn and the next turn. The 4.0 seconds pause between the KN’s question *ebaa no sen?* ‘What happened’ in T1 and AB’s turn (T2) signals the difficulty in breaking the bad news. In fact, AB’s first utterance is a voiced pause, *hm* [fim] produced with a piano volume and a low pitch height which, in Akan, is used to preface or signal an upcoming constrained utterance. Thus, the use of the voiced pause, *hm* [fim], acts as a hedge and points to the fact that it is culturally neither congruent nor appropriate for AB to deliver the bad news at that point in the interaction given that her liberty to do so is intruded by the cultural conventions of delivering bad news. Besides the phonetic cues of silent and voiced pauses, we also have the syntactic cue of focus marking to project the bad news. The expression:

- (29) Deε aba        deε, εso        sen me.  
          what has-come foc. it-big(ger) than me

‘This news/tragedy is bigger/beyond my capability to break/deal with.’

Thus, we see from T1 and T2 the restriction placed on the bad news bearer in breaking the bad news. Note that an observation of T3 to T5 also confirms the communicative difficulty associated with the bad news delivery. Both T3 and T4 are produced by the same speaker, KN. Within conversational analysis (CA) theory and practice, the 3.0 seconds pauses between T3 and T4, and that between T4 and T5 are referred to as initiative time latency pause and point to a current speaker’s termination of her turn and a next speaker’s refusal to assume turn ownership thereby forcing the current speaker to continue talking. The fact that AB comes in only after KN rephrases the question in T3 and poses it again in T4 points to the level of difficulty in delivering the news about AMD’s illness. AB’s answer (T5), *Obiara nnim. Ebi se εye duabɔ, ebi se εye nkɔfɔ no biribi no bi. Se εye deen, se εye deen, obi nhu* ‘No one knows. Some say it is a curse, others say it

Reference missing

is that (disease) belongs to the other people', is of considerable ethnopragmatic import: First, she resorts to avoidance via a factive construction *Obiara nnim* 'No one knows' in which the subject of the sentence, *Obiara* 'literally meaning everyone but idiomatically meaning 'no one' due to the negative particle n- that precedes the verb *nim* 'know.' Note that in Akan medical discourse use of the quantifier, *Obiara* is a form of number game used to support an assertion. In the current discourse context, the expression, *Obiara nnim* 'No one knows' is used to signify the difficulty in breaking the bad news. If no one knows, then who is she, a non-medical person, or one without the power of divination about illness, to claim knowledge of it.

AB's next sentence in T5, *Ebi se εye duabɔ, ebi se εye nkrɔfɔɔ no biribi no bi*, 'Some say it is a curse, others say it is that (sickness) which belongs to those people' also involves avoidance via the use of the non-specific determiner, *ebi* 'some (people).' Note also that the use of avoidance also points to the intrusions on AB's liberty; she is not permitted to name the source or cause of AMD's illness given that delivering such news could result in communal disintegration since in the studied community such diseases are attributable to relatives who are either jealous of the diseased individual and therefore use a curse to make her sick or even cause her death. Not naming such people helps maintain harmony; even if on the outside. Note also that AB is not responsible for the inferences and conclusions others may draw or have regarding the disease's causation. She expresses her non-responsibility for such conclusions by engaging in disclaimer by way of attributing the conclusions drawn about the disease to others. The expression *εye nkrɔfɔɔ no biribi no bi* 'it is that (sickness) which belongs to those people.' Attributing the cause or source of a disease to a foreign source or other(s) rather than self or one's own group, enables the caregiver to blame those people from whom the disease originated for the disease's burden.

When asked whether they had taken the diseased person to the hospital (T6), AB responds in T7: *Yede no akɔ baabi ara. Obiara nhu adekodee*. 'We've taken her to every place. No one knows what it is.' Use of first person plural pronoun prefix, *yε-* 'we' suggests that the caregiving had been communal and that there had been no apathy. The second sentence which recapitulates her earlier statement about no one knowing what the disease was, is a marker of frustration and a request. The words *baabi ara* 'everywhere' and *Obiara* 'no one' which preface *nhu adekodee* '(not) know what it is,' point to the exhaustion of all possible options about cure by all persons with no success; a waste of scarce communal resources for a hopeless course. The above expressions also signal to KN that if he knows of any place (other than those already tried by the care-givers) that they (the care-givers) may not be aware of, then he must, as required by custom, take the

diseased individual there for treatment. Thus, this is both an indirect request for KN to help and also a warning for KN not to blame the caregivers for not trying their best to help.

In T8, AG, another caregiver, describes the disease without mentioning the diseased person's name; she refers to her with the noun, *onipa* 'person.' Use of the non-specific reference, *onipa* 'person,' instead of the third person pronoun, *ɔnɔ* 'she,' or the diseased person's name, affords the speaker the liberty to talk about the disease without getting into the specifics of naming the diseased person. Use of the reduplicative *ahyehye* 'multiple "burns"' describes the intensity of the disease as well as the multiple places where the melanoma 'burns' *hava* affected the diseased person. Note also that the reduplication of the word *tumm* 'black' four times also describes the extent of the coloration of the skin by the disease; something which she goes on to describe as an unmentionable (that is, a taboo). Like the care-givers before her, she ends by also attributing the disease to a foreign source saying, *Yeadee yi dee emfiri ha!* 'As for this disease, it is not from here.' She could simply have said 'it's not from here' or 'this disease is not from here.' Use of the focus marking expression *Yeadee yi dee* 'as for this disease,' adds to the uncertainty about the nature of the disease and its source. By attributing it to a foreign source, she is given the liberty to talk about the disease since any repercussion or shame associated with it is deflected to an unknown source.

It is important to note that up till T13, the disease, cancer, had not been named because it is considered a tabooed disease in Akan society. The fact that the name of the disease was avoided by the care-givers leads us to posit our second observation which is that: care-givers whose liberty at delivering bad news may be constrained, may leave the delivery of the bad news to the diseased individuals themselves in order to obviate crises. It is only after KN speaks with AMD that she names the disease. Specifically, it is in T22 that AMD mentions cancer, but even then, she resorts to uncertainty. When asked about what disease she had and what was causing it (T21), she hesitates first, pauses, and then mentions the possibility of it being cancer. She then goes on to explain the uncertainty about the disease type with the expression, *ebi se sei, ebi se sei. Edin bebree. Wobɔ din a enye yie.* 'some say this, others say that, so many names, it is an unmentionable.' The repetition of the construction *ebi se sei*, is to create and amplify the extent of doubt about the exact nature of the disease. Via the repetition, she appears to be saying that no one really knows what the disease is. Also, the expression, *Edin bebree* 'so many names', adds to the uncertainty about the exact nature/type of disease. It also points to the extent taboo nature of the disease or its incurable nature. If the disease has that many names, and if caregivers have not settled on a name, then it is, to say the least, a bad disease. Finally, the expression, *Wobɔ din*

a *enye yie* ‘it is impossible to mention its name’ that is, ‘it is a tabooed disease,’ lends a further measure of support to the dangerous and/or terrible nature of the disease and how restraining its effect had been on AMD’s life. In fact, one could argue that the nature of the disease intrudes on AMD’s liberty to even name it without resorting to avoidance and circumlocution.

On the denial of her liberty, the following three expressions that were produced by AMD,

- a) *Braa, me na meni oo!* (1.0) Hm! ‘Brother, can you believe it’s me you’re looking at?’ in T14;
- b) *Se wo ara wonim; obi a mewɔ m’dwuma a menhia obiara mmoa; enne hwe! Eno ara ne se mete faako* ‘You know very well I had my own business and was never in need, look at me today! I’m just stuck at one place (because of the diseases)’ in T16; and
- c) *Yadee yi ama me asa ama me aye abɔfra* ‘This disease has made me look like a child (weak and in need of help)’ in T22;

are discursively most significant given that they each express the diseased individual’s (AMD’s) recognition of her disease intruding her liberty by making her needy, ruining her business, immobilizing her, and making her dependent on others for care and sustenance. From the discourse-pragmatic perspective, the phrase *me na me ni oo* ‘Can you believe it’s me you’re looking at?’ expresses incredulity about her physical appearance brought about by the disease.

From the above excerpts, we observe how AMD’s utterances index the extent to which the disease had encroached her liberty (negative and positive). From the point of view of valence, AMD’s utterance, *me na me ni oo*, expresses the emotional burden brought on her by the disease and from the socio-economic point of view, the downward spiral of her social status from self-sufficiency to that of dependency. The interjection *oo* expresses self-pity.

KN’s utterance in T17, *Wo ho beye wo den*, ‘You will be well,’ is a speech act of assurance done via a declarative sentence to suggest confidence in what is uttered and intended to help AMD to not give in to the disease but to emotionally manage it. AMD’s self-sufficiency and independence are expressed by the sentence, *Se wo ara wonim; obi a mewɔ m’dwuma a menhia obiara mmoa* ‘You know very well; some(one) who had her own business and was never in need.’ This construction is made up of a factive formula, *Se wo ara wonim* ‘You know very well,’ which establishes the truth or credence of the following utterance, *obi a mewɔ m’dwuma a menhia obiara mmoa* ‘(some(one)) who had my own business and was never in

need;’ her self-sufficiency. Her last utterance, *enne hwe! Eno ara ne se mete faako* ‘today/now look, all I do is stay at the same place,’ suggests that her right to physical mobility has been taken away from her by the disease. Even though she does not mention the disease as having restricted her to her home, it is implicitly stated. The expression, *enne hwe!* ‘today/now look,’ which was accompanied by a hand gesture of showing both palms upwards and drawing them to herself, communicates her frustration to being paralyzed and bedridden.

In T25, KN asks about care-giving and one sees from AMD’s answer the communicative burden inherent in the question. Responding directly that the care provided her by the relatives was insufficient and also not done on their own free will but out of ‘social compulsion’ would have marred her face and those of her care-givers. She seeks communicative liberty by: (a) resorting to hesitation, as in the sentence, *Aaa eyē* ‘Well, it’s okay;’ and (b) using a factive expression, *Wo ara wonim* ‘you very well know’ which presupposes the truth of the following statement and consequently makes it impossible to refute the propositional content of the following complaint, *aye se wo nsa ato osaman aduane mu* ‘it’s like putting your hands in a ghost’s food; meaning committing to something and hence not being able to discontinue the care-giving. Via inferencing, AMD appears to be saying that the care-givers are providing her with care because they are socially obliged and not because they care so much about her welfare. Indeed, KN, in T27, resorts to inferencing to explain AMD’s previous utterance (T26) by explicitly saying ‘that means the care isn’t very good’ and that forces AMD to be more direct by saying, *Kyere se enye papa bi ara* ‘Meaning, it’s not very good.’

Phonetically, the long silent pause of 4.0 seconds within KN’s turn, points to the fact that he was done with his turn and wanted AMD to take over the turn ownership. The fact that AMD did not take over the floor suggests the communicative burden placed on her by KN’s line of questioning. Not being grateful to her care-givers is tabooed no matter how insufficient the care might be. When KN continues, he engages in the use of voiced pause *Hm* [fim] which is also a hesitation and signals that the discourse thus far may have involved a face threat. Pausing within one’s turn for 2.0 seconds after the issuance of the voiced pause also confirms the face-threat inherent his utterance and hence a change in the discourse content from asking about the nature of the care-giving to providing assurance that all will be well via the expression, *Ebeye yie*. ‘It’ll be well.’

In AMD’s final utterance she resorts to polyvocality via the aphorism, *Aaa anomaa bi ne ne su; ose: “Aaa yerehwe”* ‘Well, it is a certain bird that cries/sings: We’ll see,’ where she attributes her doubt about a change in the nature of care to the ‘cry’ (song) of a bird that says, ‘We’ll see.’ This aphorism has public knowledge of wide accessibility given that it is known by all competent adult native

speakers of Akan. Basically, AMD appears to be saying something like, 'I will believe it when I see it.'

Next, we examine another excerpt with the view to also identifying the linguistic and discourse-pragmatic strategies used in delivering and managing bad news about a diseased individual with mental/emotion problems, and the communicative strategies used to deny and seek liberty.

## 4.2 Excerpt 2

Context: Breaking the bad news involving a socio-emotional and/or mental challenge. Recorded September 19, 2015.

- (30) T1 KO:  
 AC, εte sen?  
 AC (it)-be how

(31) T2 AC:  
 Hm (.) Dee aka ara ni oo.  
 fm (.) What left emp. this voc.

(32) T3 KO:  
 Aberanteε no ho te sen? (4.0)  
 gentleman the self be how

(33) T4 AC:  
 Seesei dee enye  
 Now as-for (it)-neg-good  
 koraakoraakoraakoraa.  
 whatsoever-whatever-whatever-whatever

(34) T5 AS:  
 a. Wøfa nipa bi yε nipa bøne papapapapapa.  
 Uncle people some be people bad very-very-very  
 b. Aberanteε fefefefefefε hwε dee wøn aye no! (2.0)  
 Gentleman nice-nice-nice-nice look what they have-made him

(35) T6 KO:  
 Seesei ɔwø he? (3.0)  
 now he-be where

(36) T7 AC:

eba mu saa a, onkasa obiara ho; yeama no  
(It)-come in (it happens) that if he-neg-speak anyone self  
akɔhyɛ dam mu  
we-have-mde him go-be room in

(37) T8 KO:

Moma me nkyea no.  
You-pl-allow me greet him

(38) T9 AS:

Wɔfa enha wo ho na ɔremmua wo.  
Uncle not-worry your self for he'll-neg-respond you

[KO enters room]

(39) T10 KO:

YG; ete sen?  
YG (it)-be how

[KO returns from room]

(40) T11 AS:

Obuaa wo? (1.0)  
He-responded you?

(41) T12 KO:

Daabi. (3.0)  
no

(42) T13 KO:

Mode no akɔ hɔspitl anaa?  
You-pl-take him have-gone hospital Q

(43) T14 AC:

Baabi ara nni hɔ a yemfa no nkɔεε.  
Some-where every neg-be there that we-neg-take him neg-go

(44) T15 KO:

Wɔn se adeε ben pɔtee na εreha no?  
they say thing what specifically emp. (it)-prog.-trouble him

(45) T16 AC:

Wɔn se adeε no akɔ hyɛ amee no mu pεε. Kyere se  
They say thing the has-gone be-in brain the in exactly meaning that  
asem aba ho.  
problem has-come self

(46) T17 KO:

Enti seesei yereye no dɛn?  
So now we-prog-do it what

(47) T18 AS:

- a. Wɔfa wode no bɛfa baabi a.  
Uncle you-take him will-go somewhere if
- b. ɔbarima sei, sɛ ɔsɔ dadeɛ mu man this if he-holds machete  
a, nso yadeɛ yi nti ɔte faako  
in if but illness this because-of he-stays one-place

(48) T19 AC:

- a. Baabi bɛn bio? Adeɛ no deɛ wo ara wonim sɛ.  
Some-place where else thing that as-for you emp you-know that
- b. Aseɛ awie; na ehe bio?  
(it)-has-spoilt finish and-so where else

(49) T20 AS:

- a. Wɔfa aye den ama yɛn yie! Sɛ ne yadeɛ no ba a,  
Uncle it-become difficult for us very If his illness the come if
- b. na yɛn nyinaa yɛn ho then us all our selves burn-burn  
hyehye yɛn; obiara repɛ baabi akɔtɛ.  
us everyone prog-want somewhere go-hide

(50) T21 KO:

- a. ɛha deɛ baabi ara nni hɔ a mode no  
Here as-for somewhere any (nowhere) neg-be there that you-take  
bɛkɔ  
him will-go
- b. akɔ gya na moahome kakra  
go leave so-that you-rest little

(51) T22 AC:

Daabi oo. Mmerɛ bi wɔ hɔ mpo a, bosome koraa  
No voc./interj. Time some be there even month even emp.  
na mennaɛɛ.  
I-neg-sleep

(52) T23 KO:

Hm. Oh die! dis iz not guud!  
fim oh dear this is not good

(53) T24 AS:

- a. Den dee, aye den, nso ɔboafɔɔ biara nni ha oo.  
Hard as-for (it)-has-been hard but helper any neg-be here voc.
- b. Woba sei a, na anidasoo aba.  
You-come like-this if then hope has-come

(54) T25 KO:

Mehwe dee metuni aye.  
I'll-look what I-can do

## Excerpt 2

T1 KO: AC, How are you?

T2 AC: Well (.) This is what is left (Just fine)

T3 KO: The Gentleman, How is he? (4.0)

T4 AC: As for now, it's EXTREMELY bad!

T5 AS: Uncle, some people are EXTREMELY wicked/bad! Such a HANDSOME gentleman; look at what they've done to him (Look at how they've bewitched him!)

T6 KO: Where is he now? (3.0)

T7 AC: When he has an attack, he talks to no one; we make him go into a room (we confine him to a room)

T8 KO: Can I greet him?

T9 AS: Uncle, don't waste your time; he'll ignore you (he'll not respond to your greeting)

[KO enters room]

T10 KO: YG; How are you?

[KO returns from room]

T11 AS: Did he respond? (1.0)

T12 KO: No (3.0)

T13 KO: Have you taken him to the hospital?

T14 AC: There isn't a place where we've not taken him (We've taken him everywhere!)

T15 KO: What exactly do they say is wrong with him?

T16 AC: They said that thing (the disease) has gone into his brain; meaning there is trouble.

T17 KO: So, what are we doing about it?

T18 AS: Uncle, if you can send him to a place, you should. Such a strong man, if he holds a cutlass (he well-built for farming); yet, because of the disease, he is stuck at this place.

T19 AC: Where else? You know very well that the die is cast (i.e., the disease has already finished him); where else are you talking about? (Where else should we take him?)

T20 AS: Uncle, it's become so difficult for us! When he has an attack, we all feel uncomfortable and look for a place to hide.

T21 KO: As for this place (town) there is no place where you can leave him so that you can have a little rest?

T22 AC: Not really; never! There are times that for a whole month I'd have no sleep at all!

T23 KO: Well, Oh Dear! This is not good!

T24 AS: As for difficult, it is! (It is really difficult); but there are no helpers here, you know. Once you've come (here), there is hope.

T25 KO: I'll see what I can do.

A systematic observation of above excerpt shows similarities with those of Excerpt 1 in terms of the features that are used to deliver bad news and to seek and protect diseased individuals' liberty. Thus, as in Excerpt 1, as in this excerpt (Excerpt 2), the linguistic features used for managing the bad news include pausal phenomena, reduplication, factive expressions and Akan-English code-switching. We begin by with pausal phenomena.

#### 4.3 Pausal phenomena

In T2, AC signals the bad news first by using the voiced pause, f'm, a hesitating pause that is used as a hedge and a signal to the upcoming bad news. This voiced pause is then followed by a short silent pause notated as (.). The long pauses of between 2.0 and 4.0 seconds that occur between the turns are used to signal or project upcoming bad news. The longer the pause the more difficult it is for the bad news bearer to deliver it. For example, when asked how YG (the diseased individual) was doing (T3), AC in T4 paused for 4.0 seconds signaling that YG was not doing well or that his condition of health had not improved. When KO repeated his question about the whereabouts of YG in T6, AC paused for 3.0 seconds again to signal the bad news about YG's health. What is important in this extract is how the long pause was followed by an evasive answer. Note that there are several places such as T11 and T12 where a long pause of 3.0 seconds duration, an initiative time latency pause, is used because AC did not assume the turn occupancy and KO had to continue as a result of the extent of the bad news regarding YG's health and his behavior of not being communicative when suffering an (emotional/panic) attack from the disease;

#### 4.4 Reduplication

Throughout the discourse reduplication is used by the studied participants to show the intensity or extent of badness of the news or the extent to which a diseased individual's physical or positive attribute has been destroyed by the negative effects of the disease. In T4, AC says: *Seesei dee enye koraakoraakoraakoraa* 'As for now, it is extremely bad.' Repeating the word *kora* four times shows an extreme level of badness of YG's health status. Also, in T5, AS employs reduplication to show the extent of badness or evil nature of some people (witches or people with the spiritual capability to cause others to be sick). In the utterance, she notes: *Wɔfa nipa bi ye nipa bɔne papapapapapa*. 'Uncle, some people are 'EXTREMELY bad.' I have used uppercase letters and bold together with a stress marker on the word, extremely to show emphasis and extent of badness as expressed by AS. The intensifier, *pa* 'very,' is repeated six times so we have the following structure: [DET + Noun + Copula+ INT+ INT+ INT+ INT+ INT+ INT+ ADJ] i.e., some + people + are + very + very + very + very + very + very + bad. Repeating the intensifier six times suggests excessive badness. Thus, by engaging in reduplication we are led into AS' world view about disease causation (in this case, witches) and the extent of badness or evil nature of such persons. In her following utterance, AS engages in another form of reduplication by saying:

*Aberantee fefe fefe fefe hwe dee won aye no!* ‘Such a ‘HANDSOME gentleman! Look at what they’ve done to him!’ Here, AS uses reduplication to describe the extent of handsomeness of YG, and by implication to suggest the debilitating effect of the disease on him (YG). Like extremely, handsome, in the above sentence has been bolded, capitalized and marked with a stress diacritic to show the extent of handsomeness. Note that *fe* means handsome or beautiful so repeating it six times shows extreme beauty or handsomeness. Thus, AS appears to be saying that if a gentleman as handsome as YG could be turned into such a monster such that his care-givers have to either confine him to a room or run away from him, then one sees the extent to which disease can intrude the liberty of both the diseased individuals and their care-givers.

Finally, in T20 AS notes, *yen nyinaa yen ho hyehye yen* ‘literally, we all, our bodies burn-burn us’ meaning ‘we all feel uneasy’ to project the bad news about the difficulty in caring for YG. The verb *hyehye* is a physical verb that denotes physical sensation and unveils both the physical and emotional burden of disease on all stakeholders in the care-giving.

#### 4.5 Factive expressions

Factive expressions such as *wo ara wonim* ‘you very well know’ Are often used to show credence or provide evidence about an upcoming bad news, news about care, or a point about one’s physical or emotional condition. In T19, AC notes: *Baabi ben bio? Ade no dee wo ara wonim se asee awie; na ehe bio* ‘Where else? As for that thing (the disease), you very well know that it has already destroyed him.’ AC uses the factive formula, ‘you very well know’ for evidentiality. She appears to be saying something like; if it is common knowledge that the disease has already destroyed YG, then there is no need to seek cure or medical attention anywhere else; after all the die is cast!

#### 4.6 Akan–English code-switching

As noted earlier, code-switching may be employed to deliver bad news given that it is easier to deliver bad news in a foreign language than in one’s own language. In Excerpt 2 above, we observe the bad news, the FTA, and/or the communicative difficulty being delivered in English. Thus, KO switches from Akan in T21 to English in T23 by responding, *Hm. Oh die! dis iz not guud!* ‘Hm, oh dear; this is not good’ to acknowledge receipt of the bad news. By acknowledging the news was bad via English, the burden of speaking the unspeakable is lessened (Movahedi1996).

From the discourse-pragmatic point of view, bad news is managed through avoidance whereby the diseased individual's name is not mentioned, and he is referred to by a non-specific name such as Aberantee no (T3) 'the Gentleman.' The care-givers may also resort to evasion as observed in T6 and T7 where instead of answering KO's question as to the whereabouts of YG (the diseased individual), AC rather talked about what happened if YG (the diseased individual) was having a bad day.

On denial of liberty, we observed that the interactants used utterances related to forced imprisonment whereby the care-givers constrained the diseased individuals into rooms and denied them the opportunity to come out as shown in T7 where AC responded to KO's question about the whereabouts of YG (the diseased individual) with the statement, *eba mu saa a, ᵡnkasa obiara ho na yeama no akɔhye dam mu* 'When he has an attack, he speaks to no one and we force him into a room.' By the action of the care-givers, we are led into the experience of the diseased individual and thus shown how a disease intrudes the positive liberty of diseased individuals (in this case, YG) by preventing them from participating in their family and communal lives.

Also, denial of liberty was also seen in situations where care-givers were forced to flee from a diseased individual and hide for their own safety as expressed in the utterances in T20 where AS, a care-giver notes; *Se ne yadee no ba a, na yen nyinaa yen ho hyehye yen; obiara repe baabi akɔte* 'If he has an attack, then we all feel trapped and we seek a hiding place (to be away from him.)'

## 5 Summary and conclusion

From the cited texts and discussion, we observed that the linguistic strategies used to break and manage bad news include such phonetic features as silent and voiced pauses of various lengths, and reduplication or repetition which is employed to show frustration, anger, and emotional valence. Lexico-syntactic features used in bad news delivery and management included adjectives of quality used both attributively and predicatively, intensifiers (often repeated), verbs denoting physical sensation, and factive formulae (for evidentiality and credence). With respect to discourse-pragmatic features used to break and manage bad news, we identified vague reference forms, avoidance (which was done via giving up on words or pronoun mismatch where a pronoun such as you was used to index another pronoun such as she in order to avoid direct reference. Others included the speech acts of complaining, blaming (which was done through the use of distal deictics and/or innuendo), requesting, blame-shifting (that is, blaming

others including witches for causing the disease or pain), use of quantifiers, and code-switching from Akan to English given the fact that face-threatening acts (FTAs) were perceived as being more tellable in a less familiar language or register (Movahedi1996, Obeng2008). Other discourse-pragmatic strategies used to break and manage bad news included polyvocality and inferencing through the use of such a non-specific pronoun as *biribi* ‘something’.

Article 25 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights mentioned health as part of the right to an adequate standard of living. The United Nations General Assembly’s (1966 ) International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights also recognized the right to health as a human right (United-Nations-General-Assembly). Given the above declarations and in view of the data examined for this study, it is true to argue that disease encroaches both the negative and positive liberty of diseased individuals and their caregivers. Thus, disease exposes diseased individuals’ and sometimes their caregivers’ freedoms to encroachment and takes away the right of diseased individuals (and sometimes their caregivers) to participate and share in their personal and communal activities.

Furthermore, we learn from this study that managing bad news requires extreme care in determining what questions to ask and how to ask them, how to assign blame, how to assert and assure, among others, given that someone’s life could be on the line. Given the socio-emotional, financial and cultural burdens that disease puts on diseased individuals and their care-givers, it is recommended that an opportunity be made available for such individuals to interact with others in view of the fact that such interactional opportunity could be therapeutic and serve as a communicative means to convey and manage speakers’ socio-emotional and physical states (KalmykovaMergenthaler1998).

It is argued further that bad news management has relevance for language and liberty. Specifically, through bad news management, liberty informs language and through language, liberty becomes a reality. Indeed, viewed from the point of view of liberty (Berlin1960) we have demonstrated that via their complaints, requests, and other speech acts, the studied diseased individuals and their caregivers sought both negative and positive liberty. On the one hand, the diseased individuals requested the right to be free from intrusions from their diseases and from their care-givers’ actions such as forced confinement (negative liberty) and also sought the right to participate in their private, family and professional (business) lives. On the other hand, the care-givers also sought the right to be free from attacks by diseased individuals and a reprieve or lessening of their care-giving burden as seen in AS’ utterance in T24 in Excerpt 2 where she said, *Woba sei a, na anidasoo aba* ‘When you visit like this, then there is hope (of help or reprieve).’ What is unique about AS’ utterance is that it is an implicit request for

help and KO's response, *Mehwe dee metuni aye* 'I'll see what I can do,' in that communicative context, was a promise to help.

What is also unique about this study is that even though Akan language ideology assumes that diseased individuals and people who are generally in need of help are not as communicatively powerful as their care-givers, in these recorded discourses, both the diseased individuals and their care-givers sometimes ignored the power asymmetry and sought both their positive and negative liberties. It is possible that both sides saw each other as being in it together and therefore ignored the power relations. Most importantly, we have learned from this study that the interdependence nature of the Akan society and the socio-cultural requirements placed on members of the community to assist each other in times of need places members at the same camera angle and that trumps the societal power asymmetry.

From the point of view of the larger Ghanaian society, it may be argued that to protect diseased individuals' negative liberty and positive liberty, there is the need to put in place rights that prevent the effects of 'disease' and people from encroaching on the freedoms of diseased individuals as well as rights that empower them to participate in their family and communal lives. Also, medical personnel (especially, doctors and nurses), social workers, end of life care-givers, and family members caring for their sick relatives as well as scholars working in the health area must understand the discursive mores surrounding bad news delivery and bad news management in order to be educated about the intertwining nature of language and care-giving and to guarantee the liberty of all stakeholders in the care-giving ecology.

## Abbreviations

## Acknowledgements



# Chapter 14

## Obligatory controlled subjects in Bùlì

Abdul-Razak Sulemana<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Massachusetts Institute of Technology

The paper argues that despite the lack of morphological marking to distinguish between niteness and non niteness, such a distinction does exist in Bùlì. It also argues that unlike the non niteness of the English type languages where non nite clauses take a null subject (PRO), the non nite clauses of Bùlì obligatorily take overt pronominals. The fact that the controlled element is overt in the language, I argue, shows that phonetic nullness is not an inherent property of the controlled element.

### 1 Introduction

Bùlì does not have overt morphological marking to systematically distinguish finite clauses from nonfinite clauses. As such, notions like these will appear not to be useful descriptive labels in the Syntax and Semantics of the language. This finite-nonfinite distinction is often manifested differently including the distribution of overt DPs and empty categories: finite verbs license overt DPs while nonfinite verbs cannot without special mechanisms. As an illustration, consider the paradigm in (1) from English. The external arguments of the nonfinite complements which are coindexed with a matrix argument has to be null.

- (1) a. Mary remembered [\*she/pro to buy a book]  
b. Mary persuaded John [\*he/pro to buy a book]

The goal of this paper is twofold: first to argue that despite the lack of morphological marking to distinguish between finiteness and nonfiniteness, such a distinction exists in the language. Second, I argue that unlike the nonfiniteness of the English type languages, the nonfinite clauses of Bùlì obligatorily take overt



pronominals which must be coindexed with a matrix argument. The rest of the paper is organized as follows: In §2, I present a brief background to this language. In §3, I present a discussion of the finite-nonfinite distinction in the language. §4 argues that with the exception of its overtess, the pronominal in the subject of the nonfinite clause must be controlled. Section 6 discusses and concludes the paper.

## 2 Bùlì

It is a Mabia (Gur) language spoken in Sandema in the Upper East Region of Ghana. It has three dialects: Central, Northern and Southern. This paper concentrates on the Central dialect. It is a tone language with three contrastive tones: Low, Mid and High. It is also a noun class language with five singular classes and four plural classes build around the pronouns. Its basic clause structure is SVO. Temporal interpretation of a predicate is sensitive to the eventive/stative distinction in the language (tenseless). Unmarked eventive predicates have default past

**Stowell1991** interpretation while their stative counterparts have present interpretation,<sup>1</sup> (2).

- (2) a. Asibi dà gbǎnj.  
Asibi buy book  
'Asibi bought a book.'
- b. Asouk sèbì Ajohn.  
Asouk know John  
'Asouk knows John.'

The data in (2) also eliminates the potential for analyzing the low tone on the verb as the past tense morpheme, since both predicates are marked with a low tone. I will therefore consider the low tone as a form of 3rd person agreement. In the next section, I will present various arguments to show that Bùlì meets the general conditions on the finite vs. nonfinite distinction since an adequate classification of some syntactic structures would not be achieved if such a distinction is not assumed.

<sup>1</sup>This is related to what is sometimes called the factitive constructions which are attested crosslinguistically Haitian (Dechaine1991), and Fòn-gbè (Avolonto1992) among others. Stowell1991 also observes that bare eventive verbs have only a past reading while bare stative verbs are interpreted as non-past in what is called headlinese.

### 3 The finite-nonfinite distinction

Since Bùli is a tenseless (factive) language, notions like finite-nonfinite will appear not to be useful descriptions in the syntax and semantics of the language. Contrary to this, I present four arguments/diagnostics that will distinguish between them. These diagnostics, I argue, bring out two different kinds of nonfinite clauses: The first kind, which I call nonfinite obligatory control complement (nonfinite-OC) illustrated in (3-4), the pronominal subject of the embedded clause must be co-indexed with a matrix argument.

#### (3) Nonfinite-OC: Subject-coindexation

- a. Asouk<sub>i</sub> tierì [\*<sup>(wà<sub>i</sub>/\*\_j)</sup> dā gbáŋ].  
Asouk remember 3SG. buy book  
'Asouk remembered to buy a book.'
- b. Núrmà<sub>i</sub> zèrì [\*<sup>(bà<sub>i</sub>/\*\_j)</sup> dā gbáŋ].  
people.DEF.PL refuse 3PL. buy book  
'The people refused to buy a book.'

#### (4) Nonfinite-OC: Object-coindexation

- a. Mí túlím Asouk<sub>i</sub> zúk [\*<sup>(wà<sub>i</sub>/\*\_j)</sup> dā gbáŋ].  
1SG. turn Asouk head 3SG. buy book  
'I convinced Asouk to buy a book.'
- b. Mí túlím núrmà<sub>i</sub> zúk [\*<sup>(bà<sub>i</sub>/\*\_j)</sup> dā gbáŋ].  
1SG. turn people.DEF.PL head 3PL. buy book  
'I convinced the people to buy a book.'

Full stops in non-portmanteau morphemes throughout the file.

In the second kind, which I call the nonfinite non-obligatory control complement (nonfinite-NOC) as illustrated in (5-6), allows a full DP in the subject of the embedded clause. These further distinguishes between those that are not introduced by complementizers (5) and those requiring complementizers (6). The other differences between these constructions will be made clear as the discussion proceeds as the main reason for this section is to defend the finite-nonfinite distinction in the language.

#### (5) Nonfinite-NOC without COMP

- a. Mí à-yā: Asouk dā gbáŋ.  
1SG. ASP-want Asouk buy book  
'I want Asouk to buy a book.'

- b. Nà:wǎ tè síuk Asouk dā gbáŋ.  
chief.DEF give path Asouk buy book  
'The chief gave permission for Asouk to buy a book.'
- (6) **Nonfinite-NOC with COMP**
- a. Kù à-fɛ̄ átī Asouk dā gbáŋ.  
3SG. ASP-necessary c Asouk buy book  
'It is necessary for Asouk to buy a book.'
  - b. Kù nálā átī Asouk dā gbáŋ.  
it good c Asouk buy book  
'It is good for Asouk to buy a book.'

The first argument to consider for the finite-nonfinite distinction comes from the Low-tone (Agreement) on the verb. In finite clauses, a third person subject triggers a low tone (agreement) on the verb when there are no preverbal particles intervening between the subject and the verb (7). This is the case for all 3rd person arguments in matrix as well as embedded clauses for different DP including r-expressions and pronouns and regardless of the tone on the argument. Note that the embedded clauses of the nonfinite clauses bear mid tones (see examples (3-6)).

- (7) a. Wà dà gbáŋ.  
3SG. buy book  
'S/he bought a book.'
- b. Bí:ká dà gbáŋ.  
child.DEF 3SG. buy book  
'S/he bought a book.'
- c. Asouk pàchím wà dà gbáŋ.  
Asouk think 3SG. buy book  
'Asouk thought he bought a book.'

The second argument for treating the embedded clauses above as nonfinite clauses is based on the distribution of the future marker. In finite clauses, both matrix and embedded, the future marker is required for future interpretations. This is illustrated in (8).

- (8) **Future marker required in finite clauses**

- a. Asibi àlí dā gbáŋ.  
Asibi FUT buy book  
'Asibi will buy a book.'
- b. Asouk pàchim Asibi chūm \*(àlí) dā gbáŋ.  
Asouk think Asibi tomorrow FUT buy book  
'Asouk thought Asibi will buy a book tomorrow.'

In contrast, the future marker is excluded from all the nonfinite clauses. The examples in (9) illustrate this point. The inability of the future marker to appear in nonfinite clauses reminds us of nonfinite clauses in Chinese which cannot take modals like *hui* 'will' (Huang1998).<sup>2</sup>

Missing reference

(9) Future marker excluded from nonfinite clauses

- a. Asouk siak \*(wà<sub>i</sub>/<sub>\*</sub>j) chūm (\*àlí) dā gbáŋ.  
Asouk agree 3SG. tomorrow FUT buy book  
'Asouk agreed to buy a book tomorrow.'
- b. Mí<sub>i</sub> à-yā: Asouk chūm (\*àlí) dā gbáŋ.  
1SG. ASP-want Asouk tomorrow FUT buy book  
'I want Asouk to buy a book tomorrow.'

The third argument for the finite-nonfinite distinction comes from subject questions. In-situ subject wh-questions in finite clauses require the obligatory presence of àlì-ALI in the clausal spine (10).

Please check/fix punctuation in vernacular questions (should end with punctuation/?)

(10) Finite clauses: In-situ subject wh-questions require ALI

- a. Ká wānā \*(àlì) dā gbáŋ a  
Q who ALI buy book PRT  
'Who bought a book?'
- b. Asouk pàchim ka wana \*(àlì) dā gbáŋ a  
Asouk think Q who ALI buy book PRT  
'Who does Asouk think bought a book?'

<sup>2</sup>Whether the future marker *àlì* in Bùli is a modal or a tense marker is beyond the focus of this paper, however.

Although it is generally possible to question the subject of a nonfinite-NOC complement (11a-11b), questioning the subject requires the obligatory absence of *àlì*. The ungrammaticality of example (11c) shows that it is not possible to question the controlled subject of the nonfinite-OC complement. Hence another difference between finite and nonfinite clauses.

(11) Nonfinite clauses: In-situ subject wh-questions doesn't require ALI

- a. Mí<sub>i</sub> à-yā:      ka wana (\*àlì) dā gbáj a  
1SG. ASP-want Q who ALI buy book PRT  
'Who do I want for him to buy a book?'
- b. Nà:wà    tè    síuk ka wānā (\*àlì) dā gbáj a  
chief.DEF give path Q who ALI buy book PRT  
'Who did the chief give permission to buy a book?'
- c. \* Asouk<sub>i</sub> tìerì      ka wana (\*àlì) dā gbáj.  
Asouk remember Q who ALI buy book

Is it possible that what we are questioning in (11a-11b) are arguments of the matrix predicates rather than subjects of the complement clauses as a result *àlì* is not required, since nonsubjects don't require an *àlì*. This is indeed a possible analysis especially for (11a), however, there is evidence that these arguments are subjects of the complement clauses and as such the absence of *àlì* cannot be attributed to questioning a nonsubject argument.

Bùlì employs resumptive pronouns in long distance extraction of a subject, (12a) but not an object, (12b).

- (12)
- a. (Ká) wānā \*(àtì) fì    pá:-chím \*(wà) àlì dīg lāmmú:  
Q who ATI 2SG. think 3SG. ALI cook meat.DEF  
'Who do you think cooked the meat?'
  - b. (Ká) bʷā \*(àtì) fì    pá:-chím Asouk dìgì: (\*bu)  
Q what ATI 2SG. think Asouk cook 3SG.  
'What do you think Asouk cooked?'

If the questioned arguments in (11) above are objects, they should pattern with object extraction and if they are subjects they should pattern with long distance subject extraction. As shown in (13) they pattern with long distance subject extraction by requiring a resumptive pronoun.

- (13)
- a. (Ká) wānā \*(àtì) mi<sub>i</sub> à-yā:      \*(wà) (\*àlì) dā gbáj a  
Q who ATI 1SG. ASP-want 3SG. ALI buy book PRT  
'Who do I want to buy a book?'

- b. (Ká) wānā \*(ātì) nà:wà tè síuk \*(wà) (\*àlì) dā gbár a  
 Q who ATI chief.DEF give path 3SG. ALI buy book PRT  
 'Who did the chief give permission to buy a book?'

The final argument for the finite-nonfinite distinction comes from N-word licensing.<sup>3</sup> It has been noted that NPIs and n-words differ in that NPIs can be licensed across the border of a clause, but n-words cannot. N-words in Bùli are formed by reduplicating indefinite nouns, and they must always occur with negation regardless of their position and number.

Missing from the bib file.  
 Giannakido

- (14) a. Asouk \*(àn) dīg jāab-jāab \*(ā).  
 Asouk NEG1 cook thing-thing NEG2  
 'Asouk didn't cook anything.'
- b. Wāi-wāi \*(àn) dīg lām \*(ā).  
 someone-someone NEG1 cook meat NEG2  
 'Nobody cooked meat.'
- c. Wāi-wāi \*(àn) dīg jāab-jāab \*(ā).  
 someone-someone NEG1 cook thing-thing NEG2  
 'Nobody cooked anything.'

In Bùli and other languages, including Italian and Hebrew, n-words can be licensed across the border of nonfinite clauses in but not finite ones, (15).

- (15) a. Asouk àn tīeri wà dīg jāab-jāab \*(ā).  
 Asouk NEG1 remember 3SG. cook thing-thing NEG2  
 'Asouk didn't remember to cook anything.'
- b. \* Asouk àn tīeri āsī wà dīg jāab-jāab \*(ā).  
 Asouk NEG1 remember c 3SG. cook thing-thing NEG2  
 'Asouk didn't remember that he cooked anything.'

I have shown in this section that the distinction between finite and nonfinite clauses hold in the language and that the complement clauses in (3-6) are indeed nonfinite. In the next section, I argue that the nonfinite clauses in Bùli require pronominal subjects which covaries with the number and class of the matrix argument that it is coindexed with, and as such, despite its overtness, this pronominal shares all the properties of PRO.

<sup>3</sup>For more on NPIs see Zeijlstra2017

Single  
quo-  
ta-  
tion  
mark-  
ers  
are for  
linguistic  
meaning  
only

## 4 Obligatory controlled subjects

In the previous section, I argued that certain clauses in the language are nonfinite. However, unlike the ‘regular’ nonfinite clauses, the nonfinite clauses of Bùli require an overt pronominal. In this section, I will argue that the pronominal in the embedded clauses of nonfinite-OC clauses is a subject and must be controlled by a matrix argument. As noted, the subjects of the nonfinite-OC clauses must be co-indexed with a matrix argument. In (16) the co-indexation is with a matrix subject and in (17), it is with a matrix object. Note that the pronominal also covaries with the number and class of the matrix argument it is coindexed with.

- (16) a. Asouk<sub>i</sub> tìerì \*(wà<sub>i</sub>/\*<sub>j</sub>) dā gbáj.  
Asouk remember 3SG. buy book  
'Asouk remembered to buy a book.'
  - b. Núrmà<sub>i</sub> bàj \*(bà<sub>i</sub>/\*<sub>j</sub>) kpárí tóukú.  
people.DEF.PL forget 3PL lock door  
'The people forgot to lock the door.'
- (17) a. Mì túlím Asouk<sub>i</sub> zuk \*(wà<sub>i</sub>/\*<sub>j</sub>) bäsī dēlā.  
1SG. turn Asouk head 3SG. leave here  
'I convinced Asouk to leave.'
  - b. Núr-wá fè bízájá<sub>i</sub> \*(bà<sub>i</sub>/\*<sub>j</sub>) bäsī dēlā.  
man.DEF force children 3PL. leave here  
'The man forced the children to leave.'

Although the subject of these nonfinite clauses are overt, applying the diagnostics from Hornstein1999, Landau2013; and Williams1980 the often called signature properties of PRO, suggest that the overt pronominal behaves like ‘PRO’ except for its overtness.

First, like PRO, and unlike pronouns, the subjects of these clauses must pick up their antecedent in the immediately preceding clause, (18). That is, just like PRO, and unlike a pronominal subject of a finite clause, the pronominal subject of the most embedded clause can only be *núrmà* ‘the people’ which is the subject of the immediately preceding clause. It cannot refer to the singular subject of the matrix clause, (18a). The referential facts are different when the most embedded clause is a finite clause. As shown in (18b), the pronominal subject can freely refer to subject of the matrix clause.

- (18) Long-distance binding of this pronominal is not possible.

Single  
quo-  
ta-  
tion  
mark-  
ers  
are for  
linguistic  
meaning  
only

Anything  
missing  
from  
this sen-  
tence?

- a. Asouk<sub>i</sub> nyà āsī núrmà<sub>j</sub> tieri \*wà<sub>i</sub>/bà<sub>j</sub> dā gbáŋ.  
Asouk realize c people.DEF.PL remember 3SG/3PL. buy book  
'Asouk realized that the people remembered to buy a book.'
- b. Asouk<sub>i</sub> nyà āsī núrmà<sub>j</sub> wèin āyīn wà<sub>i</sub>/bà<sub>j</sub> dà gbáŋ.  
Asouk realize c people.DEF.PL say c 3SG/3PL. buy book  
'Asouk realized that the people say that he bought a book.'

Second, Non c-command coreference of this pronominal is not possible, (19). The antecedent of a pronominal subject in nonfinite clauses must c-command it, just like PRO (19). In (19a), Asouk cannot be the antecedent of the pronominal subject because it doesn't c-command it. On the contrary, in finite clauses this restriction does not hold (19b).

(19) **The pronominal must be c-commanded by its antecedent**

- a. Asouk<sub>i</sub> dóamà<sub>j</sub> bàŋ \*wà<sub>i</sub>/bà<sub>j</sub> kpárí tóukú.  
Asouk friend.DEF.PL forget 3SG/3PL. lock door  
'Asouk's friends forgot to lock the door.'
- b. Asouk<sub>i</sub> dóamà<sub>j</sub> pàchím wa<sub>i</sub>/bà<sub>j</sub> kpárí tóukú.  
Asouk friend.DEF.PL think 3SG/3PL. lock door  
'Asouk's friends thought he locked the door.'

In ellipsis contexts, the pronominal must be construed sloppily. In example (20) which involves a finite complement, the pronominal could be construed strictly or sloppily. In the strict reading, Asouk was the first to say that he bought a book before Asibi said he (Asouk) bought a book.

(20) **Finite clause: the pronominal is ambiguous: strict or sloppy**

- Asouk<sub>i</sub> wien wà dà gbáŋ àlégé Asibi, wien-wà<sub>i/j</sub>, dà gbáŋ.  
Asouk say 3SG. buy book before Asibi say 3SG. buy book  
'Asouk said he bought a book before Asibi said that he bought a book.'

In contrast, in the nonfinite case (21), the pronominal must be construed sloppily. In (21), Asouk was the first to agree to buy the book before Asibi also agreed to buy a book.

(21) **Non-finite clause: the pronominal must be construed as sloppy**

- Asouk<sub>i</sub> siak wa<sub>i</sub> dà gbáŋ àlégé Asibi, siak-wa<sub>i/j</sub>, dà gbáŋ.  
Asouk agree 3SG. buy book before Asibi agree 3SG. buy book  
'Asouk agreed to buy a book before Asibi agreed to buy a book.'

Another observation is that PRO in OC environments is interpreted as a bound variable i.e it must be bound by the controller. This results in the difference in interpretation between (22a) and (22b). While the pronoun in the nonfinite complement is limited to the bound variable reading in (22a), the pronoun in (22b) is not.

(22) The pronominal is interpreted as a bound variable.

- a. Wā:-wāi<sub>i</sub>              àn    tieri        wà<sub>i</sub>/<sub>j</sub> dā    gbáj a.  
someone-someone NEG1 remember 3SG. buy book NEG2  
'No one remembered to buy a book.'
- b. Wā:-wāi<sub>i</sub>              àn    wēn wà<sub>i</sub>/<sub>j</sub> dā    gbáj a.  
someone-someone NEG1 say 3SG. buy book NEG2  
'No one said that he bought a book.'

Finally, as observed by Chierchia1989 infinitival controlled constructions are always *de se*. The pronominal subject in these complements must be *de se*. This reading arises when the controller/antecedent is the subject of an attitude predicate and is aware that the complement proposition pertains to him/herself. In any situation where the attitude holder mistakes the embedded subject as someone other him/herself, the pronominal cannot be truthfully used.

*Consider the following Scenario: An old man (Asouk) is listening to the credentials of three people being considered for a chieftaincy title. Not knowing that the credentials of the second person mentioned refers to him (because he hardly remembers anything), he says to his wife 'this person should be given the title'.*

In this scenario (23) is false. An outcome expected if the pronominal is an instance of a lexicalised PRO.

- (23) Asouk<sub>i</sub> à-zientí wà<sub>i</sub> chīm    nà:b.  
Asouk eager 3SG. become chief  
'Asouk is eager to become a chief.'

It is important to note here that there have been reports in the literature where overt pronominal subjects are possible in controlled infinitives when they are focused (Szabolcsi2009).<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup>See also Barbosa2009 and Madigan2008.

There is, however, solid evidence that the controlled pronominal subjects in Bùli are not focused marked, thus making it distinct from all the other cases identified where ‘PRO’ is overt. Bùli makes a distinction between weak and strong pronouns, with strong pronouns sometimes associated with focus. Weak pronouns usually have low tones. In controlled constructions, only the weak pronouns are acceptable (24a). The strong pronouns are grammatical only when they are modified by scope bearing element like *also/too* similar to what Szabolcsi2009 identified (24b).

- (24) a. Asouk<sub>i</sub> sàik \*(wà<sub>i</sub>/\*wá<sub>i</sub>) dā gbáŋ.  
          Asouk agree 3SG.       buy book  
          ‘Asouk agreed to buy a book.’
- b. Asouk<sub>i</sub> sàik (\*wà<sub>i</sub>/wá<sub>i</sub>) m̥ dā gbáŋ.  
          Asouk agree 3SG.       also buy book  
          ‘Asouk agreed to also buy a book.’

Crucially, focus is not required to overtly express the subject. This indicates that overtness of the infinitival subject does not depend on focus in this language. Thus what we uncover here is not identical to the ones identified by Szabolcsi2009 and others.

## 5 The pronominal is a subject

In the previous section, I have established that the overt pronominal in the non-finite complement clause must be controlled. An alternative view is that PRO is actually null as in other languages, and that this pronominal is an agreement marker found in nonfinite clauses similar to what we see in languages like Brazilian Portuguese. This alternative view though attractive faces a number of challenges. First, analogous agreement marking is conspicuously lacking in both finite and other nonfinite clauses (25). In finite clauses in both matrix and embedded contexts, repeating the pronominal as an agreement marker results in ungrammaticality (25a-25b). Similarly, repeating the pronominal in the nonfinite clauses that permit referential DPs as in (25c-25d) is also ungrammatical.

- (25) a. Asibi (\*wà<sub>i</sub>) dà gbáŋ.  
          Asibi 3SG.   buy book  
          ‘Asibi bought a book.’

- b. Asouk pàchìm Asibi<sub>i</sub> (\*wà<sub>i</sub>) dà gbáñ.  
Asouk think Asibi 3SG. buy book  
'Asouk thought Asibi bought a book.'
- c. Mí à-yā: Asouk<sub>i</sub> (\*wà<sub>i</sub>) dà gbáñ.  
1SG. ASP-want Asouk3SG. buy book  
'I want Asouk to buy a book.'
- d. Kù à-fé átì Asouk<sub>i</sub> (\*wà<sub>i</sub>) dà gbáñ.  
3SG ASP-necessary c Asouk 3SG. buy book  
'It is necessary for Asouk to buy a book.'

Second, claiming that this pronominal is agreement suggests that it is not in Spec of the embedded clause. However, the placement of adverbials in both kinds of clauses places the pronominal in the same location as matrix and embedded subjects, Spec,TP. The adverb, tomorrow, follows the subject in matrix clauses whether they are referential (26a) or pronominal (26b).

- (26) a. Asibi chúm àlí dà gbáñ.  
Asibi tomorrow FUT buy book  
'Asibi will buy a book tomorrow.'
- b. Wà chúm àlí dà gbáñ.  
3SG. tomorrow buy book  
'He will buy a book tomorrow.'

In nonfinite clauses too, the adverb follows the pronominal (27). This shows that the pronominal is in Spec, TP just as in matrix subjects and that is not a clitic on the verb as one might assume.

- (27) a. Asouk<sub>i</sub> sàik \*(wà<sub>i</sub>/<sub>\*</sub>j) chúm dà gbáñ.  
Asouk agree 3SG. tomorrow buy book  
'Asouk agreed to buy a book tomorrow.'
- b. Asouk<sub>i</sub> à-yā: \*(wà<sub>i</sub>/<sub>\*</sub>j) chúm dà gbáñ.  
Asouk ASP-want 3SG. tomorrow buy book  
'Asouk wants to buy a book tomorrow.'

Finally, the pronominal in the nonfinite clauses can be modified just as any subject, (28).

- (28) a. Asouk mē dà gbáñ.  
Asouk also buy book  
'Asibi also bought a book.'

- b. Asouk<sub>i</sub> sàik \*(wá<sub>i</sub>/<sub>\*j</sub>) mē dā gbáj.  
Asouk agree 3SG. also also buy book  
'Asouk agreed to also buy a book.'
- c. Asouk<sub>i</sub> à-yā: \*(wá<sub>i</sub>/<sub>\*j</sub>) mē dā gbáj.  
Asouk ASP-want 3SG. also buy book  
'Asouk wants to also buy a book.'

All these facts put together suggest that the pronominal is not an agreement marker or a clitic on the verb, but a real subject in Spec, TP.

This section has shown that the overt pronominal subject of the nonfinite complement is a subject and must be controlled by a matrix argument. Except for its overtness this pronominal shares the properties of PRO, distinguishing it from the pronouns.

## 6 Discussions and conclusion

The previous sections have established that Buli makes a distinction between finite and nonfinite clauses. Secondly these nonfinite clauses require overt DPs in their specifier position. This conclusion raises a number of interesting questions for the various approaches to Control. I highlight these approaches and argue that the subjectless-based approach to control cannot be extended to Buli for obvious reasons. I will, however, leave open the option between the Agree-based model and the movement based model for future studies.

I group the approaches to Control into two: (1) Subject-based Accounts: (i) Agree-based accounts Landau2001, Landau2013 in which the relation between the matrix argument and the embedded subject, PRO (a null nominal element distinct from a trace or copy) is established via an agree operation. On this view, PRO is inherently null because of its association with infinitival T, which only assigns null Case (ChomskyLasnik1993), and the (ii) Movement-based account (Hornstein1999) which considers the relation between PRO and the matrix argument as involving movement. This approach accounts for the nullness of the subject by considering it as an unpronounced copy of the matrix argument. (2) Subjectless-based Accounts: these approaches take the lack of overt subjects in the embedded complements as evidence for the lack of a subject (Bresnan1982, Dowty1985, JackendoffCulicover2003, Wurmbrand1998, Wurmbrand2004, Chierchia1989) essentially arguing that there is no PRO. Wurmbrand1998, Wurmbrand2004 for example considers infinitival complements as instances of restructuring where the matrix verb selects a VP complement. In the previous sections, I have argued

that the overt pronominal found in nonfinite complements under control shares all the properties of PRO. The clear fact that nonfinite controlled complements surface with overt subjects raises interesting questions for theories of Control which denies the syntactic presence of a subject. Thus approaches to Control, which take the lack of an overt subject in control complements as evidence for the lack of a subject essentially arguing against the existence of PRO, cannot be extended to Bùli for obvious reasons. The fact that the controlled element is overt in Bùli, I argue, shows that phonetic nullness is not an inherent property of the controlled element. Hence any approach to control that necessarily requires controlled elements to be null cannot be universal. The present data also presents a challenge for standard theories of DP distribution based on abstract Case. It has been standardly assumed that DPs are licensed in structural positions where Case assignment is possible. Subject DPs are assumed to get nominative Case from finite clauses. Since the complement clauses are nonfinite, the prediction of abstract Case theory is either their subjects be null or the DPs should be getting Case from elsewhere. An open question is thus how the overt pronominal is licensed.

## **Abbreviations**

I use the following abbreviations in this paper 1= First person, 2= Second person, 3= Third person, ASP= Aspect c/COMP = Complementizer, DEF= Definite, FUT= Future, NEG= Negation, PL= Plural, SG = Singular.

## **Acknowledgements**

For helpful discussions, I thank İsa Kerem Bayırlı, Kenyon Branan, Suzana Fong, Sabine Iatridou, David Pesetsky, Norvin Richards, Michelle Sheehan, the audience of ACAL49, and two anonymous reviewers. Any and all errors are my own.

# Chapter 15

## Overt subjects and agreement in Zulu infinitives

Claire Halpert<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Minnesota

This paper explores a surprising interaction of agreement and concord inside infinitive clauses in Zulu. In Zulu, as in many Bantu languages, infinitive verbs are marked with noun class 15/17 morphology. Internal arguments of infinitives are typically unmarked, while the external argument must receive so-called associative morphology and must precede internal arguments. I argue that the external argument in these constructions is realized in Spec,vP, a finding that has a number of consequences for our understanding of clause structure and agreement in Zulu and related languages.

### 1 Introduction

This paper investigates infinitive clauses in the Bantu language Zulu that have overt agents. As illustrated below in (1), agents of Zulu infinitives must precede internal arguments (1a) and cannot follow them (1b).<sup>1</sup>

- (1) a. [u-ku-nikeza kwa-khe        izingane        amavuvuzela]  
AUG-15-give 15.ASSOC-1PRO AUG.10child AUG.6vuvuzela  
ku-ya-ngi-casula.  
SM15-DJ-1SG.OM-annoy  
'His giving the children vuvuzelas annoys me.'

---

<sup>1</sup>All examples in this paper are from Zulu, unless otherwise noted. Unsourced Zulu examples are taken from my own fieldwork.



- b. \* [u-ku-nikeza izingane amavuvuzela kwa-khe]  
AUG-15-give AUG.10child AUG.6vuvuzela 15.ASSOC-1PRO  
ku-ya-ngi-casula.  
SM15-DJ-1SG.OM-annoy  
'His giving the children vuvuzelas annoys me.'

These constructions exhibit a puzzling constellation of properties. As the examples above illustrate, overt agents in infinitives must be marked with so-called associative morphology, which typically mark adnominal adjuncts (Sabelo1990, Halpert2015, Pietraszko2019). At the same time, they require VSO word order, placing the associative-marked subject in a position that is otherwise unusual for adjuncts in the language but typical for in situ subjects. I will argue, using evidence from binding, that the overt subject in these constructions is truly in an argument position, in Spec,vP, despite the appearance of associative morphology. This conclusion raises an additional puzzle: as we will see in §3.2, these overt subjects do not block object agreement from appearing inside the infinitive, unlike vP-internal subjects of finite clauses in the language.

How can we reconcile this mix of properties? I will suggest two instructive parallels: Linker Phrases in Kinande (BakerCollins2006, Schneider-Zioga2015ACAL, Schneider-Zioga2015WCCFL) and external arguments of passives in Zulu. If we treat the associative morphology that appears on subjects in infinitives as a head in the clausal spine, akin to the Kinande Linker, then the patterns found in these infinitival constructions with respect to agreement are analogous to those found in Zulu passives, as I will discuss in §4.

## 2 Background: a subject syntax baseline

Zulu is a Bantu language (S42) spoken primarily in South Africa. In this section, I will lay out some of the basic properties of Zulu that will allow us to understand the puzzles posed by the subjects of infinitives. In particular, we will need to establish the expected patterns of agreement and word order, the basic properties of infinitives, and the basic properties of so-called associative constructions.

### 2.1 Agreement and word order

Zulu nouns are divided into 14 noun classes that are notated by number. Agreement and concord processes are glossed using noun class numbers – a number that matches the number on a noun agrees with the noun. Like most Bantu languages, Zulu has obligatory subject agreement morphology and optional object

agreement morphology on verbs. In Zulu, predicates agree with vP-external arguments only: subject agreement tracks the highest vP-external (or pro-dropped) argument, while object agreement appears when a lower argument is vP-external or pro-dropped. In situations when there is no vP-external argument, an expletive agreement *ku-* (class 15/17) appears in the subject agreement spot. The verb in Zulu undergoes head movement to a vP-external position, so any preverbal arguments are outside of vP (Buell2005, Halpert2015).

In (2) below, we can see subject agreement tracking a pre-verbal/pro-dropped subject. The postverbal object is inside vP, so no object agreement appears.<sup>2</sup>

- (2) a. (uZinhle) u- xova ujeqe.  
 AUG.1Zinhle SM1- make AUG.1steamed.bread  
 ‘Zinhle is making steamed bread.’
- b. (omakhelwane) ba- xova ujeqe.  
 AUG.2neighbor SM1- make AUG.1steamed.bread  
 ‘The neighbors are making steamed bread.’

When the subject remains inside vP, we get default agreement: class 17 *ku-*.<sup>3</sup> In the examples in (3) below, the post-verbal subject is followed by a low adverb, *kahle*, ‘well,’ which must appear inside vP (Buell2005).

- (3) a. \* u- pheka uZinhle kahle.  
 SM1- cook 1Zinhle well
- b. ku- pheka uZinhle kahle.  
 SM17- cook AUG.1Zinhle well  
 ‘Zinhle cooks well.’

When objects remain in situ, no object agreement appears, as we saw in (2). When an object appears outside of vP, it controls object agreement:<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>We can determine the position of postverbal material using the distribution of the present tense *disjoint* morpheme *-ya-*, which appears on the verb just in case vP is empty (Buell2005, Halpert2015, Halpert2017). In the examples in (2), there is no disjoint morpheme (the verb appears in its bare *conjoint* form), so the postverbal object must be inside vP.

<sup>3</sup>As BuellDreu2013 note, in modern Zulu, classes 15 and 17 have become indistinguishable. For clarity here, I follow the convention of marking default agreement as class 17, but infinitives as class 15.

<sup>4</sup>Object agreement is typically *required* for vP-external objects, with limited exceptions in the case of double dislocation constructions Adams2010, Zeller2012. The placement of the low adverb *kahle* and the appearance of the disjoint (*-ya-*) here indicate that the object is outside of vP (Buell2005, Halpert2015).

- (4) uZinhle    u-ya-**m**-xova    kahle **ujeqe**.  
AUG.1Zinhle SM1-DJ-OM1-make well AUG.1steamed.bread  
'Zinhle makes steamed bread well.'

We saw in (3b) that subjects can remain inside vP and cannot control subject agreement from this position. When the subject remains low in a finite clause, all lower arguments must also remain vP-internal.<sup>5</sup> As expected, these trapped internal arguments cannot be pro-dropped to control either subject or object agreement:

- (5) a. ku-phek-e    uSipho    amaqanda.  
sm17-cook-PST AUG.1Sipho AUG.6egg  
'SIPHO cooked eggs.'
- b. \* a-phek-e    uSipho    (amaqanda).  
sm6-cook-PST AUG.1Sipho AUG.6egg  
intended: 'SIPHO cooked them.'
- c. \* kw-a-phek-e    uSipho    (amaqanda).  
sm17-OM6-cook-PST AUG.1Sipho AUG.6egg  
intended: 'SIPHO cooked them.'
- (6) a. kw-a-nikeza    uMfundu    izingane    amavuvuzela.  
sm17-PST-give AUG.1Mfundu AUG.10child AUG.6vuvuzela  
'MFUNDO gave the children vuvuzelas.'
- b. \* kw-a-zi-nikeza    uMfundu    amavuvuzela (izingane).  
sm17-PST-OM10-give AUG.1Mfundu AUG.6vuvuzela AUG.10child  
intended: 'MFUNDO gave them vuvuzelas.'
- c. \* kw-a-wa-nikeza    uMfundu    izingane    (amavuvuzela).  
sm17-PST-OM6-give AUG.1Mfundu AUG.10child AUG.6vuvuzela  
intended: 'MFUNDO gave them to the children.'

Word order in these transitive expletive constructions is completely rigid: V S (IO) DO, which I have argued reflects the base positions of the arguments (Halpert2015). To summarize the basic picture of agreement and word order in

<sup>5</sup>There are a few limited cases in Zulu where a locative or instrumental argument can control subject agreement while the external argument remains in vP (Buell2007, Zeller2013). Zeller2013 argues that these cases involve introduction of the instrument or locative in a position structurally higher than vP, which would make them non-exceptions to this generalization.

finite clauses, we have seen in this section that agreement in Zulu corresponds with movement out of vP and that low subjects block other arguments inside vP from moving or agreeing.<sup>6</sup>

## 2.2 Infinitives

Infinitives in Bantu languages often look like verbs that bear noun class morphology (Schadeberg 2003). In Zulu, verbs that have the typical distribution of infinitives are marked with noun class 15(/17) *uku*:

- (7) a. ngi-funa [uku-xova ujeqe].  
1SG-want AUG.15-make AUG.1bread  
'I want to make steamed bread.'
- b. ngi-yethemba [uku-ni-bona].  
1SG-hope AUG.15-2PL.OM-see  
'I hope to see you all.'

The *uku*- prefix can attach above a variety of verbal inflectional morphology, including object agreement, negation, mood, and aspect, as (8) below illustrates. The basic generalization is that *uku*- can combine with morphology that would follow subject agreement in a finite clause.

- (8) a. uku-nga-zi-bon-i.  
AUG.15-NEG-REFL-see-NEG  
'to not see oneself'
- b. uku-sa-m-thanda kabi uSipho.  
AUG.15-DUR-OM1-love badly AUG.1Sipho  
'to still really love Sipho'

As (7) and (8) show, Zulu infinitives can involve quite a bit of clausal structure above the verb root and seem to preserve the internal argument structure of the verb. As the *uku*- infinitive morphology suggests, from the outside, infinitives look just like nominals: as (9) illustrates, they can control subject and object agreement under the same circumstances that nominal arguments do:

---

<sup>6</sup>Zeller 2015 argues that in Zulu, T – the host of subject agreement – must probe before other heads in the same phase, including the host of object agreement. If the non-agreeing subject is a defective intervener, it would necessarily block both subject and object agreement on this view.

- (9) a. ngi-ya-ku-funa [ uku-xova ujeqe ].  
1SG.SM-DJ-15OM-want AUG.15-make AUG.1bread  
'I want to make steamed bread.'
- b. uku-xova ujeqe ku-mnandi.  
AUG.15-make AUG.1bread 15SM-nice  
'Making steamed bread is nice.'

The main takeaways about Zulu infinitives, then, are that they have an internal structure (below the position of subject agreement) that looks similar to finite clauses but an external structure that looks similar to nominals.

### 2.3 Associative: adnominal modification

The final piece that we need in order to return to our puzzle is the so-called *associative* construction (Sabelo1990, Halpert2015, Jones2018). Zulu marks a variety of adnominal dependents with a complex prefix consisting of two parts: a nominal concord that matches the head noun and a fixed *a* vowel that predictably coalesces with the initial vowel of the noun it marks. In (10a), we can see the associative marking a possessor; in (10b), it marks a nominal modifier, and in (10c), it marks the internal argument of a low nominalization, where the root *cabang* 'think' has been nominalized as a class 3 noun:

- (10) a. umkhovu wo-mthakathi.  
AUG.3zombie 3ASSOC.AUG-1wizard  
'the wizard's zombie'
- b. isiminyaminya se-mikhovu.  
AUG.7swarm 7ASSOC.AUG-4zombie  
'a horde of zombies'
- c. um-cabango we-mikhovu.  
AUG.3thought 3ASSOC.AUG-4zombie  
'the thought of zombies'

Multiple nominal modifiers can appear in the same noun phrase, each marked by a separate associative morpheme:

- (11) isiminyaminya se-mikhovu so-mthakathi.  
AUG.7swarm 7ASSOC-4zombie 7ASSOC-1wizard  
'the wizard's horde of zombies'

To summarize, the associative marks nominal adjuncts to a nominal, can occur multiple times within a single noun phrase, and is compatible with a range of semantic relationships. Pietraszko2019 treats the associative in closely-related Ndebele as a nominal adjunct with concord. She analyzes the *a* morpheme as a Linker head that takes the modifying nominal (or CP) as its complement and receives a copy of the phi (noun class) features of the head noun via a DP-internal concord process. On this view, multiple associative-marked nominals can easily modify a single head noun, with each attaching as a right-adjoined adjunct.<sup>7</sup>

## 2.4 Interim summary

To summarize what we have seen in this section, subject and object agreement have a tight correlation with word order: non-agreeing arguments remain in their base position inside vP, while agreement is required to track vP-external arguments. Movement of the external argument out of vP is *required* in order for internal arguments to be available for movement and agreement. Subject and object agreement contrasts with associative marking, which appears to be a concord process internal to the noun phrase that can mark multiple adnominal adjuncts. In the next section, we will return to the initial puzzle and see various ways in which these baseline expectations are not met in infinitives with overt agents. In the next section, we'll see some surprising ways in which overt subjects of infinitives depart from these baseline expectations.

# 3 The puzzle: subjects in infinitives

In the introduction, we saw that Zulu infinitives with overt subjects have two basic properties: rigid VSO word order and obligatory associative morphology on the subject. Given the baseline behaviors that we observed in §2, these properties alone raise questions about the underlying structure of infinitives with subjects. In this section, I will unpack these puzzles and discuss an additional puzzle raised by the behavior of object agreement in these constructions.

## 3.1 Locating the associative-marked subject

As we've seen in previous sections, class 15/17 *uku-* nominalizations have the distribution of infinitives and preserve internal argument structure, as illustrated

---

<sup>7</sup>See Jones2018, though, for an analysis of Zulu associative as a D head. It's not clear how such an analysis would account for the cases of multiple associative-marked modifiers.

in (12) below:<sup>8</sup>

- (12) u-ku-saba igundane.  
AUG-15-fear AUG.5mouse  
'to fear mice/a fear of mice'

When an overt external argument is present (here an experiencer, rather than an agent), it *must* be marked with associative morphology:

- (13) uku-saba kwa-mi ku-khulu.  
AUG.15-fear 15ASSOC-1SG.PRO 15SM-big  
'My fear is big.'

This behavior of class 15 infinitives contrasts with nominalizations that involve other noun classes and that typically do not permit any preverbal morphology between the root and nominal prefix. In these low nominalizations, *all* arguments of the verb, including the external argument, must be marked with associative, as (14b) shows:

- (14) a. ngi-fisa uku-thola iziqu.  
1SG.SM-wish AUG.15-get AUG.8degree  
'I wish to get a degree.'  
b. isi-fiso sa-kho so-ku-thola iziqu  
AUG.7-wish 7ASSOC-2SG.PRO 7ASSOC.AUG-15-get AUG.8degree  
si-zo-fezeka.  
SM7-FUT-come.true  
'Your wish to get a degree will come true.'

In these low nominalizations where the nominals that correspond to the arguments of the root verb are marked with associative morphology, we see no evidence of c-command. For example, the external argument is unable to bind a pronoun inside the internal argument in (15):

<sup>8</sup>I've seen limited cases where an internal argument can be marked with an associative, as in (i.a) but more often, the associative forces an external argument interpretation, as in (i.b):

- (i) a. uku-bhubha kwe-zwe.  
AUG.15-destroy 15ASSOC.AUG-5country  
'the destruction of the country/to destroy the country'  
b. u-no-ku-saba kwe-gundane.  
1SM-with.AUG-15-fear 15ASSOC.AUG-5mouse  
'S/he has a mouse's fear.' (same fears as a mouse, NOT a fear of mice)

- (15) isi-fiso      sa-wo      wonke umtwana      so-ku-bona  
 AUG.7-wish 7ASSOC-1DEM 1.every AUG.1person 7ASSOC.AUG-15-see  
 uma      wa-khe      si-zo-fezeka.  
 AUG.1mom 1ASSOC-1PRO SM7-FUT-come.true  
 ‘Every child’s<sub>k</sub> wish to see her<sub>m</sub> mother will come true.’ (non-bound  
 reading salient, speakers find bound reading difficult)

This lack of a bound reading is unsurprising on a view of associative adjunction like that of Pietraszko 2019, discussed in the previous section. If associative-marked nominals are always adjoined within the nominal phrase of the head that they modify, then both of the ‘arguments’ in (15) would be right-adjoined and we would not expect the first to c-command the second.

In an infinitive with an associative-marked subject, we might expect the structure to similarly involve adjunction within the nominal domain, above the level of verbal structure associated with the root. If so, we first make a prediction about word order that we have already seen does not hold: an associative-marked subject should *follow* any unmarked internal arguments that are introduced in the verbal domain, contrary to what (16) shows:

- (16) a. [u-ku-nikeza kwa-khe      izingane      amavuvuzela]  
 AUG-15-give 15.ASSOC-1PRO AUG.10child AUG.6vuvuzela  
 ku-ya-ngi-casula.  
 15SM-DJ-1SG.OM-annoy  
 ‘His giving the children vuvuzelas annoys me.’
- b. \* [u-ku-nikeza izingane      amavuvuzela      kwa-khe]  
 AUG-15-give AUG.10child AUG.6vuvuzela 15.ASSOC-1PRO  
 ku-ya-ngi-casula.  
 SM15-DJ-1SG.OM-annoy  
 Intended: ‘His giving the children vuvuzelas annoys me.’

If we maintain the assumption that the associative-marked subject involves nominal adjunction, then the word order illustrated by (16), where internal arguments must appear to the right of the subject, would have to involve right-adjunction of these internal arguments in the nominal domain as well, similar to the low nominalization cases in (14) and (15). Given the lack of c-command in (15), we would predict that an internal argument that *follows* the subject in an infinitive would also not be c-commanded by it. Again, the prediction of the adjunction hypothesis is not met. As (17) illustrates, the associative-marked subject of an infinitive *can* bind into the following (non-marked) internal argument:

Single  
quo-  
ta-  
tion  
mark-  
ers  
are  
for  
lin-  
guis-  
tic  
mean-  
ing  
only

- (17) uku-nikeza kwa-wo      wonke umuntu      intombi    isithombe  
AUG.15-give 15ASSOC-1DEM 1.every AUG.1person AUG.9girl AUG.7picture  
sa-khe      ku-thatha isikhathi.  
7ASSOC-1PRO SM15-take AUG.7time  
'For everyone<sub>k</sub> to give the girl<sub>m</sub> his<sub>k</sub> picture takes a long time.'

The basic conundrum: neither the word order nor the binding facts fits with an adjunction picture for the subjects of infinitives. Instead, what we've seen in this section is that in infinitives, we find rigid VSO word order and evidence that S c-commands O. As we saw in §2.1, those are precisely the structural properties of in situ arguments in finite clauses. Based on what we've learned in this section, then, I will suggest that, despite the presence of associative morphology, the overt subject in infinitives is simply in Spec,vP.

### 3.2 Puzzling object agreement

The hypothesis that the overt subject in an infinitive is in Spec,vP brings with it additional predictions. Recall from §2.1 that in finite clauses in Zulu, in situ subjects block objects from moving and controlling object agreement. This agreement blocking effect contrasts with the availability of object agreement in both finite clauses with agreeing subjects *and* infinitives with no subject (as we saw in §2.2). If overt subjects in infinitives are in Spec,vP, we expect a similar object agreement blocking effect. Unlike finite clauses with low subjects, however, infinitives with overt subjects permit object agreement, as (18) below illustrates:

- (18) a. [uku-zi-nikeza    kwakhe      amavuvuzela]  
      AUG15-10OM-give 15.ASSOC-1PRO AUG.6vuvuzela  
      ku-ya-ngi-casula.  
      SM15-DJ-1SG.OM-annoy  
      'His giving them vuvuzelas annoys me.'  
b. [uku-wa-nikeza kwakhe      izingane]    ku-ya-ngi-casula.  
      AUG15-6OM-give 15.ASSOC-1PRO AUG.10child SM15-DJ-1SG.OM-annoy  
      'His giving them to the children annoys me.'

The full puzzle, then, involves not only the presence of associative morphology despite the VSO word order and c-command relationship between arguments, but also the availability of object agreement despite the presence of the overt postverbal subject. In the next section, I will explore a solution that links all of these properties.

## 4 Toward an analysis

The word order and binding facts from the previous section suggest that the external argument in Zulu infinitives is *inside* the verbal part of the infinitival clause. If infinitives involve enough clausal structure to include the external argument, why is special associative marking required on that argument, but not on the low external argument of a finite clause? Furthermore, why does the associative marker not signal the type of adjunction structure that it appears to create when marking nominal modifiers? I'll turn first to this second question, arguing that the associative here is plausibly a head in the verbal extended projection, along the lines of what has been argued for in Kinande by BakerCollins2006.

As BakerCollins2006 discuss, when multiple nominals appear in the postverbal field in Kinande, they must be separated by a so-called Linker, as illustrated in (19):

- (19) Kinande (Bantu; BakerCollins2006)  
 mo-n-a-h-ere                omukali y'- eritunda.  
 AFF-1SG.S-T-give-EXT 1woman Lk.1- 5fruit.  
 'I gave a fruit to a woman.'

The linker matches in noun class with the *preceding* nominal but cliticizes to the following nominal. BakerCollins2006 argue that the Linker (Lk) is a head in the clausal spine between V and v that is involved in case-licensing. On their analysis, the Linker attracts either internal argument in a ditransitive like (19) to its specifier and agrees with that nominal. The verb undergoes head-movement to a position above the Linker head but does not need to move through Lk because Lk itself is not verbal (violating the Head Movement Constraint).

The possibility of Lk before a low subject suggests that LkP is perhaps a bit higher than BakerCollins2006 posit, at least above vP, in such cases, as illustrated by (20):

- (20) Kinande (Bantu; Pierre Mujomba, p.c.)  
 Esyóngwé si-ká-seny-ere                omo-musitu    **mo**   bakali.  
 AUG.9wood SM9-T-chop-APPL.PFV AUG.18-3village Lk.18 2women  
 'WOMEN chop wood in the village.' (Pierre Mujomba, p.c.)

For Schneider-Zioga2015ACAL, Schneider-Zioga2015WCCFL, the Kinande Linker is not a case-licenser, but rather a copula that can be used to mediate predication relations within a verb phrase. She argues that it appears as a last-resort mechanism when multiple arguments remain in the post-verbal field.

I believe that certain insights of these accounts can apply to the puzzle of agents in Zulu infinitives. If the associative in Zulu infinitives is a Linker-like element, following **Pietraszko2019** for Ndebele, that marks true arguments of infinitives, as the binding data in §3.1 shows, then as in Kinande, it could be a head in the verbal extended projection that is “skipped” by head movement, along the lines of **BakerCollins2006**. Also like the Kinande Linker, it appears only when it is needed to “license” an external argument in an infinitive.

Why would the associative be required in infinitives with a low subject but not their finite counterpart? Here is a sketch of a potential analysis: suppose that Zulu infinitives lack some head that helps to license the subject of a finite clause; this would be a typologically common property of infinitives (vs. finite clauses). Likely candidates for such a head in Zulu could be Voice (or possibly Pred<sup>9</sup>) or the locus of the conjoint/disjoint alternation, which I argue in **Halpert2015** helps to license the subject in a finite clause, but which does not appear in infinitives. In the absence of this relevant category, Zulu uses a Linker to mediate predication involving the external argument. As a copular element, Lk is not involved in verbal head movement (like Kinande). Unlike in Kinande, Lk in Zulu doesn’t attract a specifier. Once the infinitive is constructed, it undergoes concord with the head, as **Pietraszko2019** argues for Ndebele. The presence of the Linker head on the external argument prevents it from being a phi-goal, which allows object marking to target lower arguments.

One reason to think that Voice might be relevant in licensing subjects in infinitives comes from parallels to passive constructions with overt agents: overt external arguments in Zulu passives appear in Spec,vP, marked with the **copula** (**HalpertZeller2016**).

- (21) Zulu (**HalpertZeller2016**)

USipho	w-a-nikez-w-a	w-uMary	incwadi.
AUG.1Sipho	SM1-PST-give-PASS	COP-AUG.1Mary	AUG.9book
‘Sipho was given a book by Mary.’			

In both passives and infinitives, the subject appears immediately after the verb and before other vP-internal arguments. In both, the overt subject does not block lower arguments from controlling agreement, unlike in active or finite clauses. Both constructions morphologically mark the subject by something that normally looks like a head (copula, linker).

---

<sup>9</sup>See **Zeller2013**.

**HalpertZeller2016** hypothesize that the copula in these constructions is a head in the clausal spine that gets skipped by head-movement of the verb. We hypothesize that the appearance of this morpheme on the subject renders the subject a non-intervener for object agreement. Given the findings of **Schneider-Zioga2015WCCFL**, **Schneider-Zioga2015ACAL** that the Kinande Linker is a copula, the parallels between Kinande Linkers, Zulu passive subjects, and Zulu infinitive subjects seem even more striking. While Kinande realizes Linkers and copulas with the same morphology in a variety of situations, it is possible that the difference between morphological marking of the subject in Zulu passives and infinitives could depend on the ultimate category of the clause: in a clause that is ultimately verbal (passive), the copula appears; when the clause is ultimately nominal (infinitive), the associative marker and concord obtain.

## 5 Conclusion

This paper presents an initial description and investigation of the syntactic properties of overt subjects of infinitive clauses in Zulu. I show that these constructions require VSO word order and associative marking on the subject and demonstrate that c-command relationships hold between the subject and lower arguments. I also show that the presence of an overt associate-marked subject does not prevent an object from controlling object agreement. I argue that the subject in these constructions is expressed in Spec,vP and sketch a proposal that might account for its puzzling properties.

One intriguing issue that any treatment of this phenomenon must contend with is the question of argument licensing: in a language (and broader language family) that doesn't show typical properties of (nominative) case licensing associated with finite T (**Diercks2012**, **Halpert2015**), what syntactic role does the associative marker play in this construction? What can we learn about argument licensing in Bantu languages from the parallels between associative, copula, and linkers discussed in §4 and cross-Bantu variation in how overt subjects of infinitives are expressed? The data and approach sketched in this paper lay out an avenue for systematic investigation of subject expression in infinitives and the behavior of copula and linker particles both within and across Bantu languages that will advance our understanding of the role that argument licensing plays in these languages.

## **Abbreviations**

Glossing follows the Leipzig Glossing Conventions, with the following departures: noun classes are glossed with cardinal numbers (1,2,3,...); first and second person with ordinal numbers; ASSOC associative, AUG augment, DJ disjoint, EXT extension, Lk linker, OM object marker, SM subject marker.

## **Acknowledgements**

I am grateful to Mthuli Percival Buthelezi, Monwabisi Mhlophe, Mfundu Didi, Menzi Komo, and Thandeka Maphumulo for their assistance with Zulu data and grammaticality judgments and to Pierre Mujomba for sharing his Kinande judgments. I am also grateful to Jochen Zeller for our ongoing discussions about passives that have informed this research and to the audience at ACAL 49 for useful feedback and discussion.

# **Chapter 16**

## **Lessons from the field: An insight into the documentation of Gureñé oral genres**

**Samuel Awinkene Atintono<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>a</sup>Accra College of Education

The paper discusses my eight months fieldwork experience of documenting endangered Gureñé (Mabia, Niger-Congo) oral genres which include riddles and folktales, sung folktales, songs and ritual performances between 2010 and 2012 in Bolga and Bongo in northern Ghana. It presents the documentary corpus of close to 100 hours of both audio and video recordings and discusses the strategies and challenges of documenting these genres. It is argued in this paper that though Gureñé with a speaker population of over 600 000 is not endangered, its oral genres such as riddles and folktales are vanishing and deserves attention to be documented. The paper draws attention of linguistic field workers and language documenters to pay attention to such languages and not to focus only on endangered or moribund languages. The documentation corpus from this project has been archived at the Endangered Languages Archive (ELAR) at SOAS, London. The lessons in this project can be used to document these genres in other Ghanaian or African languages for revitalization and preservation of these linguistic and cultural resources of language communities.

### **1 Introduction**

The paper provides some insights into the documentation of Gureñé oral genres based on eight months' fieldwork that I have undertaken between 2010 and 2012 in Bolga and Bongo in northern Ghana, West Africa. The corpus includes riddles and folktales, sung folktales, songs, daily traditional court trials and ritual performances.



A key contribution of the paper is the proposal to fieldworkers and language documenters not to focus only on documenting endangered and moribund languages but to pay attention to aspects of endangered linguistic resources of languages that are not classified as endangered. Ignoring these languages in our documentation agenda is a sure way to gradually lose some critical aspects of their cultural and linguistic resources of the speakers.

The paper also highlights some of the strategies used to document the Gureñë oral genres and the different types of genres documented. The corresponding number of hours of the recording of each genre is also provided. This is the first major documentation of this kind in the language. It provides a means for the revitalization and preservation of the linguistic and cultural resources of the language. Of late, some of the speakers especially the elderly and those living outside the homeland are engaged in various activities including the use of the social media (e.g whatsapp), music, youtube, the internet, churches, ethnic associations (e.g, BONABOTO, Terabuuriyele) as a means to preserve the language and present it beyond its immediate borders.

One goal of the documentation was to collect the disappearing oral genres especially the riddles and folktales, sung folktales, songs performed by women and other oral genres as many as possible. These genres are fast disappearing in the communities as a result of the massive impact of modern life, motivated by the desire to adopt western values and commodities. Since there are no records of these genres or opportunity for the younger generation to learn them, I saw this as an opportunity to document and archive them. Related to this goal was also to make available the audio and video recordings to the community radio stations and members to take advantage of the digital technology and learn them.

Another goal as is the case with many other documentation projects (cf. TrilsbeekWittenburg 2003, Austin2003, Austin2006, Himmelmann1998, HimmelmannEtAl2006 is to ensure that the materials documented from the project are transcribed, annotated with metadata and deposited in a modern digital archive (e.g. ELAR) to provide a lasting record to prevent the loss of the genres.

The paper is organised as follows; §2 provides the language profile with section §3 on the case for the documentation of endangered genres. §4 discusses the fieldwork setting and the activities while §5 focuses on the documentary corpus involving the audio and video recordings with §6 providing a discussion on the strategies used in documenting the folktales. In §7, the challenges on the field are presented and §8 concludes the paper.

## 2 Language profile

Gurene is classified as Mabia (Gur) and belongs to the Niger Congo languages in Africa. It is spoken in northern Ghana, West Africa. It is sub-classified as a northwestern Mabia language with its closest relative being Dagaare and Moore spoken in Burkina Faso (Naden1989, Bendor-SamuelHartell1989, Bodomo1994, Bodomo2004, Bodomo2020). 2000, It has about 600,000 speakers based on the Ghana Statistical Service Census Report (2010). This figure obviously is not accurate since the census did not take into account the language that the people speak but their ethnic membership. Of course, most of the ethnic members do speak the language and transmit it to their children. However, the problem with the ethnic membership criterion is that there is lack of clarity in the label. For example, in the 2010 Census, an old ethnic label Mole-Dagbani was used to refer to all the over twenty different linguistic groupings in northern Ghana of which Gurene speakers are part. This label was used especially in cases where the speakers migrated to other communities in southern Ghana. So, people identified to belong to the Gurene ethnic group were those in the homeland during the census. This has led to a misrepresentation of the actual number of speakers of the language and hence my reason for the mistrust of the figure.

Further, there is also the tendency for smaller ethnic groups within to identify themselves with their inner group for socio-political reasons and therefore missed being counted. For example, speakers from Bolga west, though are Gurene speakers will usually identify themselves as belonging to Kasina-Nankani ethnic group (the speak Kasim or Nankani) and indeed were not counted as speakers although they belong to this language group.

Today, there is evidence from my recent fieldwork (Atintono2013, Atintono2020) and Bodomo's Bodomo2004, Bodomo2020 fieldwork to suggest that the number of speakers could be as high as 800,000. Other anecdotal evidence comes from the community based on district health census and livelihood intervention programmes data which support our estimate and suggest that the figure is higher than reported.

Gurene is one of the five dialects of Farefari besides Boone, Nabit, Nankani and Taln (Dakubu1995, Nsoh1997, Nsoh2011, Atintono2002, Atintono2004, Atintono2011, Atintono2013, Atintono2019). All the five dialects are mutually intelligible. It is important to point out that in the language classification literature there have been a misrepresentation of the language name leading to spellings such as Frafra, Gurenne, Gurune and Gureni. Farefari is a cover term representing all the five dialects. However, Gurene is privilege to have a unified orthography as far back in

2001. Thus, Gurene has been standardized and today has been considered as a language as a result of its current status of been codified. My position has been that it is a standard dialect of Farefari as shown in my previous works (**Atintono2002, Atintono2004, Atintono2011, Atintono2013**). This is not new in linguistics as standard dialects emerged as languages due to their prestige status of been used in writing.

The language is also studied in the Universities (e.g, University of Education, Winneba) and the Colleges of Education in Ghana but it is yet to be introduced at the early grade, primary, and secondary school levels as a subject of study. The College of Languages Education, Ajumako at the University of Education, Winneba is one main institutions in Ghana that trains both undergraduates and postgraduates in Gurene. The present documentation project focused on Gurene and the Boone dialects as spoken in Bolga and Bongo.

### **3 The case for documenting vanishing genres in non-endangered languages**

Recent interests in language documentation and description by linguistic field-workers is as a result of global concerns about language threat, endangerment and death (**HaleEtAl1992, Himmelmann1998, HimmelmannEtAl2006, GrenobleWhaley1996, Crystal2000, Crystal2003, Woodbury2003, Austin2003, Austin2006, GippertEtAl2006, Bowern2015, ChelliahWillem2010, EssegbeypEtAl2015**). Consequently, a great deal of attention has been paid to language endangerment and documentation issues in the last few decades. Despite these efforts, there has not been a balance in actual practice in terms of the languages that have been documented across the continents and funding support for language documentation projects as far as the literature show.

The attention of fieldworkers and funding for documentation projects from organizations such as UNESCO, NSF, DOBES, ELDP so far are skewed towards documenting endangered languages in Australia and the Americas with a few on African languages (cf. **EssegbeypEtAl2015**). There is also a huge support for documentation projects that tend to focus on severely endangered or moribund languages. In this respect, a critical defining criterion is that languages with fewer speakers of about 1 to 100 who are older speakers but without younger speakers stand a good chance for support for documentation from endangered languages documentation funding agencies.

The reality, however, is that there are many languages in Africa with large numbers of speakers from a few thousand to hundreds of thousands with many

aspects of their linguistic resources endangered. Such languages do not fit in the documentation agenda and are usually left out. The argument that is pushed in the language documentation discourse is that such languages fit into the language preservation and revitalization projects but not language endangerment projects. I take a different position and propose that equal attention should be paid to such languages and be treated as endangered so long as there is sufficient justification to point out that some aspects of their linguistic resources are vanishing or dying in these languages.

Gurene is one of such languages and cannot be classified as an endangered language with a speaker population of over 600,000 but with certain aspects of its linguistic and cultural resources such as riddles and folktales vanishing.

To put the discussion in context, it is important to state the defining criteria for endangered languages. A language is said to be endangered when it is at risk of disappearing within a generation or two with only elderly fluent speakers and no younger generation learning the language or are speakers Thomason2015. There are various degrees of language endangerment or vitality as depicted in the endangered languages literature. In particular, Moseley's (Moseley2012) UNESCO Atlas of the world's languages in danger and UNESCO2011's (UNESCO2011) discussion on degrees of language endangerment in a document titled "Language Vitality and Endangerment" outlined six stages which are stated below:

Please verify that you intend to cite UNESCO2011 instead of UNESCO2003, which is where the factors and stages in question were first laid out. Also please check the page numbers.

- A language is safe when there is intergenerational transmission and this is not interrupted.
- It is said to be vulnerable when the speakers use the language in restricted or in certain discourse contexts such as home alone.
- Definitely endangered when children no longer learn the language as mother tongue in the home.
- A severely endangered language refers to a situation where the language is spoken by grand parents and older generations without transmission to younger generation and even rarely among themselves.
- It is also critically endangered when the younger speakers are grand parents who speak the language less frequently.

- Lastly a language is extinct or dead when there is no more any existing speaker.

Some language documentation experts such as **GrenobleWhaley1998** also define language endangerment similar to UNESCO scale but not necessarily identical to include; At risk, Disappearing, Moribund, Nearly extinct, and Extinct.

Please make sure that you intend to cite **GrenobleWhaley1998**, the book, which was not in the original bibliography, and not **GrenobleWhaley1996**, the IJSL paper that came two years prior. And, if so, please verify that this is the correct work from 1998

On language vitality, **UNESCO2011** identified nine criteria which include intergenerational transmission, community member's attitude towards their own language, shifts in domains of language use, governmental and institutional language attitudes and policies, including official status and use, type and quality of documentation, response to new domains and media, availability of materials for language education and literacy, proportion of speakers within the total population, and absolute number of speakers.

Based on these classifications of the stages of language endangerment, it is safe to conclude that Gurene is not endangered because there is intergenerational transmission with both older and younger speakers. However, the language could be described as vulnerable because it is largely spoken at home and other social contexts such as market, daily interactions and at social events such as funerals, ethnic association meetings, and naming ceremonies.

In terms of vitality, out of the nine criteria, Guren  will miss only one and that is no official status is accorded to the language by government especially to include the language in the school curriculum at the primary and secondary school levels. The people have sent many requests and petitions to the Ministry of Education to include the language in the official policy of the Ghanaian languages since 2002 but received no response.

Despite the fact that the language as a whole is not endangered, some aspects of its linguistic repertoires are critically endangered. They include riddles and folktales, sung folktales, songs, descriptive events and ritual performances. This is because these genres are no longer practised in the community for over three decades. Only a few elderly speakers (numbering about 5) in the community with the youngest been over 50 years and the oldest over 70 years by 2010 have knowledge in the narration of the riddles and folktales in particular.

The various social contexts in which the folktales were narrated no longer exist. For example, they used to be narrated in the evening by grand parents with

children sitting around the fire in the evening (around 7.00pm) after dinner in front of the traditional compound. This was a source of entertainment as well as a means of inculcating moral lessons to children through the messages conveyed in the folktales. These genres are classified as oral literature comparable to western written literature which are used for the teaching of; expressing of thought, history, collective wisdom, language and literature.

The traditional home setting or context for the narration of these tales have been altered due to the adoption of western modes of entertainment. Thus, they have long since been replaced this traditional mode of entertainment with television sets and videos. This has further facilitated the endangerment and subsequent vanishing of the genres.

At the time of my documentation project between 2010 and 2011 as indicated in the preceding paragraph, only five (5) older men with ages between 50 and 70 years had expert knowledge in narrating the riddles and folktales. However, by February 2011 one of these five experts who mentored the other four experts had passed away. The contribution of the present work is the fact that but for this project, the community would have lost this genius narrator with his knowledge in this endangered genre. African oral genres such as riddles and folktales, sung folktales are far less familiar in western cultures and are less documented.

The Gurene community like most other African communities, however, have no records of these genres for the younger generation to learn and practise them. This lack of records partly motivated the documentation of these genres to provide a lasting record in an archive and also with a keen interest in revitalising them.

The project also provided the opportunity for the recordings to be made available on CDs and DVDs for use by the community members and this is helping with the re-learning of these genres by the younger speakers. Quite recently, some of the riddles and folktales have also been shared on social media such as WhatsApp and YouTube for use by speakers and this is fast gaining grounds. The archived materials at the Endangered Languages (ELAR) is open access for most of the materials for both the community members and the research community. In Ghana, there are no well-established digital archives except a university's online library resource depositories which are often not open resources. Nonetheless, I have made copies of the recordings available to the Department of Gur-Gonja Languages Education at the University of Education, Winneba, where Gurenɛ is taught.

It is for the reasons discussed in the preceding endangerment paragraphs on the genres that I am proposing in this paper that though the language documentation agenda focuses on the endangerment of the entire language, it is also impor-

tant that we pay attention to languages that may appear not to be at risk and yet have some of its important aspects critically endangered like the Gurene's case. Indeed, the same can be argued for most of the Gur languages spoken in northern Ghana as they have large number of speakers with intergenerational transmission and yet have their oral genres disappearing (see Bodomo2004, Bodomo2020)■

## 4 The fieldwork setting and activities

The fieldwork took place in six (6) communities in Bolga and Bongo between February 2010 and July 2011. The communities were typically rural except a few that were close to Bolga town such as Tanzui, Soe and Bukere where I recorded some of the folktales, funeral and ritual performances events. I spent eight (8) months on the field for the documentation. The first major field visit took place from February-June 2010. During this period, I recruited five documentation team members and one research assistant to assist in the recording on the field and transcription of the data. They were trained to acquire some basic skills to understand the project and the use of the audio and video recording equipment in language documentation.

I also identified five (5) experts in folktale narration and two (2) groups of sung folktale narrators in the communities with the help of the community members. We arranged with these teams and did a lot of the audio and video recordings in their communities either at a school compound or at the home of the performer. The arrangement to have the folktales performed in these two contexts are staged events as the natural or normal context for the performance used to be in the evenings during occasions such as newly married couple homes, home of a family head or when an important guest for the community visited and was passing the night. The folktale performances were for entertainment.

Together with my documentation team members, we had narrative sessions with each of the narrators at least once in a week for about six months even though some of the narrators frequently cancelled work appointments due to some emergencies. The communities were relatively far apart. Two of the narrators were from Soe and Bukere in Bolga while one narrator was from Yorogo (about 15km north of Bolga), and the most talented narrator who used to ply his trade in Bolga in the 1960s and 1980s had retired to his village at Kansuo (Namoo) of about 35km away from Bolga at the fringes of the Ghana and Burkina Faso border in the Bongo district. The sung folktale groups were both from Beo and Sapooro respectively located east of Bolga.

While the folktale narrators had between two (2) to seven (5) members in a team that of the sung folktale groups had between seven (7) to twenty (20) members in a group.

Apart from the five expert narrators' tales that we recorded, we came across by chance a blind narrator in Bongo who was identified by a community member. We had two recording sessions with him. Although, he had a good knowledge in folktales he did not have a team to support him like the other groups. He told us he learned the tales from his parents while growing up in the 1950s. He invited two of his friends to support him but they were not good respondents.

Other events that we recorded during the period include interviews with some elders on funeral performances and the rituals associated with burial. We also participated in chieftaincy installation events and traditional court proceedings at the Bongo palace. The paramount chief of Bongo (Naba Lem Yaarum) was very enthusiastic about our project and granted us interviews on the history of the Bongo chieftaincy and also the rituals associated with the installation processes.

Recording of women's songs was also another major activity that we undertook on the field. We had a women's group from Sumbrongo, a town located at about ten kilometers west of Bolga who agreed to perform for us. We had four recording sessions with them. While on the field we took advantage to document daily conversations and other cultural events that were spontaneous in the communities whenever community members drew our attention to them.

I also conducted elicitation sessions with other consultants to collect data specific on the grammar and semantics of positional verbs for the writing of my PhD thesis which was part of the award of the ELDP grant.

The follow-up fieldwork was from May-June 2011. This last visit was mainly to cross-check gaps in the data with the consultants and do a few more elicitations and recordings of the folktales. The transcription of the recordings and the final preparation of the metadata constituted the main activities during this visit. It is important to point out that fieldworkers should ensure that the thin and thick metadata are properly recorded while they are on the field. But for the follow-up field trip, I had difficulty identifying names of some contributors, places the data was recorded and even dates and times. This is because we did not record some of the metadata information properly while we were on the field.

Unfortunately, on my second visit, the expert folktale narrator from Namoo (Azulemania) had died in February 2011. I had planned to meet him and record a few more tales and cross-check a few things with him but it was too late. The community members were, however, happy that my documentation record will help to preserve some of his folktales for future generations.

## 5 The audio and video corpus

The documentation project produced a large volume of both audio and video recordings of a variety of genres. These are shown in Table 1 and Table 2 below. Most of this corpus has been transcribed and annotated using ELAN and are archived with metadata at ELAR, SOAS in 2012 and can be accessed at <https://www.elar.soas.ac.uk>. Though this is an open access you will need permission for identification purposes from the archivist to gain access.

Table 1: Audio recordings of the oral genres

Genre	Length hh:mm	Transcription hh:mm	Archived hh:mm	Count
Riddles	1:15	1:15	0:30	160
Folktales	25:30	12:15	10:40	350
Sung folktales	5:30	3:30	2:30	150
Women songs	6:50	3:30	2:30	75
Daily conversations	4:20	2:00	1:00	35
Historical narratives	5:45	2:30	1:30	5
Palace genres	5:25	3:25	2:20	25
Descriptive text	1:15	1:15	1:15	5
Burial and funeral genres	5:40	2:10	1:10	10
Ritual performances	2:20	1:15	1:15	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>63:50</b>	<b>33:05</b>	<b>25:00</b>	<b>830</b>

Notice that in Table 1 and Table 2 above, there is a difference between the audio and video recordings in terms of the length of recording. There are a number of factors that account for this. First, it is much easier to do audio recording on the field than video. Further, as you might have observed, some of the genres like ritual genres are not on video because we were never permitted to use video to record.

Besides, the type of equipment you use to record will also contribute to how much data you can record. In my case, I used a Panasonic video camcorder, which could only record, on mini cassettes with a maximum of one hour. So, there were instances where we ran out of cassettes to record. But the digital audio recorder used SD cards and could record for longer hours of between three to five hours depending on the capacity of the card. This is the advantage of the audio recorder over the camcorder. Even if we had a camera that could record longer hours there

Table 2: Video recordings of the oral genres

Genre	Length hh:mm	Transcription hh:mm	Archived hh:mm	Count
Riddles	0:30	0:30	0:30	75
Folktales	10:30	5:00	5:00	200
Sung folktale	6:30	3:30	2:30	150
Women songs	4:30	2:30	2:30	50
Daily conversations	1:20	1:00	0:00	20
Historical narratives	0:30	0:30	0:30	20
Palace genres	4:30	3:25	1:30	25
War dance	2:15	0:00	2:15	5
Burial and funeral genres	4:40	2:10	1:10	10
Ritual performances	0:00	0:00	0:00	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>35:15</b>	<b>18:35</b>	<b>15:55</b>	<b>555</b>

was also the problem of the time of the day. Most of the recordings in the communities took place in late afternoon (from 4.00pm onwards) running late into the night. Per the tradition, they were narrated when it is nightfall after dinner. Thus, when it is nightfall it becomes difficult to do video recording without sufficient light. Also, the fact that my team and I were operating in rural settings made it difficult to have lights.

Apart from the audio and video recordings, I have also taken about one thousand (1,000) still pictures out of which two hundred and twenty-five (225) photos have been archived. The pictures depict different scenes of the folktale narration sessions, sung folktale performances, women song performances, cultural events such as funerals and chieftaincy installation events in Bongo and the elicitation sessions. Figures 1 to 6 below present examples of the scenes of the folktale narration sessions and other events. The arrangement is typically a semi-circle or a circle with the narrator and his team at the front row (Figure 1 below) while the audience sit behind or in front with space at the centre where occasionally the audience or the narrators may step in the space to dance to a folktale song.

## 6 Strategies for documenting the oral genres

In this section, I discuss some of the strategies that were employed in documenting these genres. The first strategy involves consultations with the gate keepers



Figure 1: : Folktale narration session at Kansuo (Namoo, Bongo) by Azulemania (seated 3rd from left first row in light blue shirt, arrowed) with his team members. At the extreme right row (1st row) monitoring the recordings are Samuel Atintono (the documenter in red and black T-shirt) and James Akolgo (white and green T-shirt), May 2010.



Figure 2: Riddles and Folktale narration session at Yorogo near Bolga by Apia (middle in singlet and arrowed) supported by his team members in the front row left and right. Picture taken in July 2010.



Figure 3: Adagesaana (extreme right) from Bolga Soe with his colleague Narrator Nsoh Atimbila from Bolga Bukere (second from right) at a narration session. Extreme left is Philip Anangina who has been my key documentation team member in Bolga and his friend Mba (my former student) who accompanied us. Picture taken in April 2010.



Figure 4: Sung Folktale performance session at Sapooro by Abugebiire (arrowed) and his team members. Picture taken in April 2010.



Figure 5: Sumbrongo women performing women songs with the documenter (Samuel Atintono) dancing. Leader of the group (Nsoma, arrowed). Picture taken in April 2010.



Figure 6: A traditional court trial on land dispute at the Bongo Chief's Palace with the chief is seated on top right. The documenter, Samuel Atintono first from right in the first row. The arrowed are the two litigants. The rest are the chief elders (Picture taken in April 2010).

in the community in order to gain access to both consultants and places for the documentation. They include chiefs, elders, and some local political leaders, in the case of Ghana, the Assembly member who represents the community at the district assembly. Being a native speaker or a member of the community does not necessarily guarantee you easy access to people and places. I belong to the community but the fact that I had returned to document these genres meant I needed to obtain permission from the community leaders before I could start the project. The only advantage that I had as a native speaker was that the people were very receptive to me and in most cases I also knew the people to contact for particular information.

There is also the issue of making clear the goals of the project by the field-worker to enlist the support of the community. In this respect, you must build trust between you and the community members. They are only willing to cooperate in the execution of the project when they have trust and are convinced about the goals of the project. Some members complained that previous researchers who came to record some data never returned to the community. However, they later saw their materials in publications or even in documentaries shown on national TV without their consent.

The fieldworker must also demonstrate transparency about the end result of the documentation products. The community members needed to know where the recorded folktales would end up. Some members complained about previous researchers not allowing them to have access to the recordings that they have taken from them. In my case, I made them to understand that after the documentation they would be given some of the audio and video recordings and I did give them the DVDs after the project. It is important to give community members some of the products created out of the documentation such as DVDs of audio and video recordings, simple literacy materials, wordlists or dictionaries. This way, they will appreciate and support the project.

One other strategy that was adopted in the fieldwork was to involve the help and support of the local people who have high interest in the documentation and preservation of the language and cultural resources. The five people that I recruited were all self-motivated to participate in the project and this also helped me to record a lot of genres. They could go on their own to document some events without my presence. When you involve active community members in your documentation project they may have privileges to access some community events that the fieldworker will not be allowed to participate and record. A typical example in my documentation was a situation where I wanted to document ritual genres associated with the burial rituals in Bolga and the pallbearers would not accept an uninitiated person to observe the rituals. Fortunately, one

of my documentation team members had been initiated as a pallbearer so he had the privilege of participating and recording the rituals and also interviewing the expert pallbearers.

The promotion of the documentation project on local radio or TV stations in the community where it is possible can also help to whip up the community interest in the project. It will also create the opportunity among the community members to become aware of the project goals so that they can support it. It will be helpful to let the local team members do the talking about the need for the documentation project. I had a weekly programme of about 45 minutes to discuss my documentation project on a local radio station called Gurene Style in Bolga which ran its programmes using only Gurene. The response from the community members was very impressive as it made people to discuss why families should speak to their children in Gurene and suggested ways to revitalise and preserve the folktales. This proved to be very helpful as those who listened to the programme expressed their appreciation for the initiative and also pointed out to me some other experts knowledgeable in some of the genres for further contact.

Another crucial thing that I did was to play some of the folktales that I have transcribed on the radio stations and it generated a lot of interest. People were surprised to hear these dying genres being played on the radio. I left a lot of the audio recordings of the songs and the folktales with the radio station to play during our programme time after we had left. Other radio stations soon learnt about them and also collected them to play at their stations. The outcome of this, is that many people became more interested in the use of these folktales.

## 7 Challenges on the field

As observed by Bowern2015 every fieldwork situation has its own unique problems. There were a number of challenges that I encountered during the fieldwork which affected the progress of my work. They range from consultant's work schedules to equipment malfunctioning. I discuss each of these issues below.

Disappointments from my consultants with respect to meetings on time or postponement of meetings were a major factor. You may schedule a meeting at 1.00pm and they turn up at 2.00pm or later. In some instances, they may not even turn up. Some consultants are also very difficult to track for work. An example is one folktale narrator in Bolga that I had to follow him for six weeks before I was able to get him to start the narration of his tales. He would schedule an appointment for a meeting on a market day which comes every three days but

whenever I met him he would give an excuse but will request that I buy him a local drink. He was a very slippery person but very knowledgeable in the riddles and folktale genre so I had no option but to continue to look for him on every Bolga market day to buy him the drinks until I finally had him in the sixth week to start the narration.

As a fieldworker, one needs to be patient with consultants and also you must adjust to the activities and time of your consultants to succeed in your fieldwork. Some other consultants had emergencies and could not honour appointments.

One other challenge that I had was the observance of cultural norms and social practices in the communities. While on the field, I noticed that whenever there was a funeral in any of the communities that I work, there will be no work for a few days. Particularly, if the funeral affects the consultant's family member or their neighbours you may be required to attend and express your condolences. You will also be required to make a small donation of cash or provide a local drink. The period of my documentation coincided with the performance of funerals in the communities and I frequently encountered these situations which made me to postpone scheduled appointments.

I have had invitations very often from my consultants to attend other social events such as weddings, birthday or anniversary celebrations of churches or prominent community members. The fieldworker's physical presence is often very much appreciated and an expectation of making a donation in cash or kind. This could be time consuming and some cost involved. Even though these events do not directly relate to our documentation project but they help to maintain a good working relationship with the community. It is also important to observe these cultural norms and practices in the community to avoid potential breaking of these norms.

One other social event that was also a bit disruptive was friends' invitation to socialising events such as drink sessions at local pubs. I found myself busy doing some work on my documentation data and hardly had time to attend them but to my friends, I must honour them otherwise I will be labelled as showing off. This requires some negotiations to attend some and leave others else it will derail your work plan.

In the documentation literature, a lot has been said about how to record events and the type of equipment to take to the field for optimum results (**Bowern2015, Woodbury2003, AustinGrenoble2007**). It is important to be aware of the type of event that you can record and also the type of equipment that is appropriate to use. Recording of some cultural performances such as the traditional war dances which involved the performers running on the field as in Figure 7 below was

very difficult to position the camera in a good angle to record because of the fast movement.



Figure 7: A group of war dancers (the leader is in front) from Bolga Soe at a funeral. Picture taken in May 2010

Also, the dancers sang along while performing the dance and this created an excessive noise coupled with the noise made by the enthusiastic crowd who follow them. Thus, running to catch pace with them and record made the images to be unstable. The only time we had good images of the war dancers was when they performed at the front of the compound in a circular movement. Further, we have had instances where some of the audience deliberately shout or pass through the path of the camera lens just to be captured in the video.

Another crucial issue to note while on the field is to ensure that the recording equipment is constantly in good condition for an efficient workflow while on the field (cf. Bowern 2015). Even though you might have charged your batteries and tested them the previous night before going to the field it is important to frequently monitor the equipment because the weather conditions can affect its performance. Our audio recorder with soft plastic case easily melted under the heat of the tropical sun and this sometimes led to the malfunctioning of the recorder. In northern Ghana, between April and June the weather usually gets hotter peaking between 30–40 degrees celsius. Thus, the audio recorders with metal or hard plastic casing are much better under such conditions.

One other important issue a fieldworker should consider is how to manage efficient power supply to the recording equipment during fieldwork. In some of the communities that I worked there was no electricity and in others there was electricity but it was very unstable and could go on and off for every 30 minutes. I used lithium and alkaline rechargeable batteries for the audio recorder. But we

have had instances where the batteries depleted completely even though they were fully charged. You need to have sufficient rechargeable batteries for the digital audio and camcorders. You must remember to charge them over night. I found out that Lithium batteries were far better than Alkaline. In the tropics, heat can cause the batteries to discharge faster.



Figure 8: Samuel Atintono (left, documenter) and James Akolgo (Right) monitoring the video camera during a folktale narration session at Namoo, Bongo. Picture taken in May 2010.

As you can see in Figure 8, the documenter and his team member are monitoring the battery level of the camera and to ensure that it was actually recording the event. It is important to ensure that you do not lose your recording as a result of the battery or the camera not working.

## 8 Conclusion

The paper discussed my personal experience of documenting Gurene oral genres in northern Ghana and notes its significant contribution in saving the disappearing genres such as riddles and folktales, sung folktales and songs. It is noted that though Gurene may not be classified as an endangered language because of the existence of a large number of speakers and intergenerational transmission some aspects of its linguistic resources which include riddles and folktales are vanishing as there are only a few elderly people living today who have expertise in them and they die along with their knowledge.

The Gurene documentary corpus contains many hours of both audio and video recordings of different types of oral genres e.g., riddles, folktales, songs, ritual texts, traditional court proceedings, descriptive texts and cultural performances. Most of these data have been transcribed, annotated and archived.

The paper also outlined a number of strategies that are required in order to be able to undertake a successful fieldwork which include community entry protocols, building trust among community members, ensuring transparency of the project, community members' participation in the project, advocacy and rewarding them with the documentary products. Some challenges on the field that can significantly affect the progress of work on the field have also been discussed. They include delays in consultant's work schedules, the observance of cultural norms in the community, participation in social events, managing recording and equipment to ensure efficient workflow.

# Chapter 17

## Learning Swahili morphology

John Goldsmith<sup>a</sup> & Fidèle Mpiranya<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Chicago

### 1 Introduction

In this paper we would like to explain some of the things that we have learned from a project on the learning of morphology. “Learning of morphology” in this context means using an algorithm which takes a large amount of text from a language, and draws conclusions about what are the roots, affixes, and principles of word construction (from roots and affixes) in this particular language. The crucial fact to bear in mind is that the algorithm is to have no prior knowledge of the language that we give to it. If the language is English or is Swahili, the learning algorithm starts from the same point; any differences that it draws between the two derive entirely from the data, and not from anything that we have given to the algorithm.

That sounds like a tall order, and in some ways it is. But we can offer the following as motivation for this work. When we teach an introductory course on linguistics, we always reserve the second class on morphology for an experiment. We begin by putting a word on the board: *ninasema*, but we do not tell them this is from Swahili. We ask if anyone knows what it means or what language it comes from; if someone does know, we tell them to be quiet for the rest of the class. Then we ask everyone else to divide it into morphemes. There is silence, of course, because the students think they have no idea what the right answer is. Then we ask them to guess how many morphemes there are here: one? two? more? Students guess there are at least two morphemes, and if pressed, typically offer a cut into *nina-sema*.



Then we write *unasma*, and ask them if this allows them to change their minds. Everyone with an opinion opines that the correct cuts are *ni-nasma* and *u-nasma*. When we ask why they do not like *nina-sema* and *una-sema* – which, after all, would allow them to keep the guess that they started out with, when they knew only *ninasema* – they do not know why, but they are pretty sure that *ni/u + nasma* is right.

Then we consider a third word, *anasema*, and the students feel confirmed in their judgment after the second word, since they can easily extend their hypothesis to *ni/u/a + nasma*. Again, we ask them why they do not want to go for *nina/una/ana + sema*, and although they cannot say why exactly, they are pretty confident that this last hypothesis is not right, because it is missing something.

The next word is *ninaona*, and the students easily conclude that there is a break after *nina* (comparing *ninasema* and *ninaona*) and furthermore, the word should be divided up as *ni-na-on-a*. The next two words we offer are *ninampiga* and *tunasema*. The first they break up as *ni-na-mpiga*, and the second as *tu-na-sema*. How about *ninawapiga*? That must be *ni-na-wa-piga*, and then they realize we must go back and reanalyze *ninampiga* as *ni-na-m-piga*. So far we have what we see in Figure Figure 1.

The point to bear in mind is that the students have done this without being told what the Swahili words mean in English. At some point we explain that in other linguistics courses, the teacher gives their students the same words along with their translations in to English, but we tell them that we do not think it is necessary to know the meanings of the words to find the morphemes, and that the external form (which is to say, the spelling) is enough to discover the right morphological structure. By the end of the class, we have analyzed about 30 Swahili words, and found the right structure, at which point we tell them what the various morphemes mean in English, and briefly show the template of the Swahili verb, as in Figure Figure 2. We have color-coded Tense Markers in blue, and verbal roots in red, for the reader's convenience, here and below.

Color

Tables  
or figures?

Table 1: BLIND ANALYSIS

ni	na	∅	sema
u		wa	ona
a		m	piga

From this we draw the conclusion that it is possible to learn Swahili morphology even when you do not know another language to compare it to. This is a wel-

Table 2: SKETCH OF SWAHILI VERB STRUCTURE

SUBJECT MARKERS	TENSE MARKERS	OBJECT MARKERS	REL CL MARKERS	STEMS	EXTENSIONS
ni	na	∅	∅	sem	an
u	li	ni	ye	fany	ish
a	taka	u	o	ingi	ik
tu	me	m	cho	tak	...
m	ka	tu	vyo	to	
wa	...	m	yo	fuat	
...		...	...	...	

come conclusion, because this is a task that all Swahili-speaking children must undertake when they are two or three years old.

But how exactly do the students do this? If we say they just use common sense, that is certainly true, but common sense is notoriously difficult to analyze. Furthermore, there is every reason to believe that this particular task is part of the language-learning capacity, so we have a very real professional interest in puzzling out exactly what this learning process is. It is for this reason that we began to develop an algorithm that learns the morphological structure of words, but with no access to meaning. In fact, we have developed several different approaches (and we are still looking for the best one), all of which we put under the umbrella name *Linguistica*.<sup>1</sup>

How well can an automatic morphology analyzer deal with Swahili today? It has a long way to go before we can see it as comparable to a freshman taking a linguistics course using common sense. Still, there is a lot that it does right – which is to say, there are a lot of linguistic generalizations that it does observe. While there are interesting and complex matters of morphophonology in Swahili (loss of a vowel before another vowel, *ky* becoming *ch*, etc.) we can approach the problem of morphology before solving problems of morphophonology. What Swahili offers is a large range of affixes of similar sizes, and it is quite a challenge for an algorithm to break down a word into morphemes.

The present paper offers an overview of how *Linguistica* analyzes Swahili words. Its value at this point is not that it does a better job of analysis than a human, but rather that it can do a careful study of the morphology of a text so that we can ourselves more easily discover what it is that we are looking at. *Linguistica* serves as a tool to let us better understand what the data are that we are looking at when we explore a language on a large scale.

<sup>1</sup>(Goldsmith2001, Goldsmith2006, Goldsmith2010)

We believe that this work will be of interest to readers in different categories. For the linguist who knows Swahili, the results are interesting because such a linguist sees what can be learned in an explicit procedure of this sort. For such a linguist, *Linguistica* really serves as a microscope through which the details of the language emerge – almost visually. For the linguist interested in morphology, the work is of interest for what it says about the linguistic analysis of morphemes. The central operation here is – so to speak – *split*; the challenge for language learning is finding the pieces that the grammar of language organizes. One way to say this is that we are figuring out where a language-learner performs a “*split*” operation, turning an unanalyzed string into its component pieces. *Split*, in this sense, is the flip-side to the process of *Merge*, so much discussed in the current literature. *Merge* makes sense only once we have developed the broad strokes of the rule of *Split*!

## 2 Earlier work in this area

There was a good deal of work in computational morphology in general, and in automatic learning of morphology in a number of cases, during the last decade of the 20th century and the first decade of the present century, including significant work on Swahili and a number of other Bantu languages. Some of this was motivated by an interest in automatic learning of morphology (see the overviews in Goldsmith2010<sup>14</sup> and GoldsmithEtAl2017, and much was motivated by practical goals. These goals included developing morphological analyzers that could be used in speech recognition systems and in machine translation, and also methods that could be used to parse very large Swahili corpora, such as the one developed as the Helsinki Corpus of Swahili, notably the SALAMA project described by Hurskainen1992, Hurskainen1999, Hurskainen2004Compilers.

The SALAMA project developed the linguistic resources that made this work possible, notably the corpus of Swahili that contained over 300,000 distinct words. Without the resources that this project created, our work would not have been possible at all.

DePauw2008improving provide an overview of much of that work, and they discussed work on a number of languages, including Northern Sotho, Zulu, Xhosa, and Tswana (see also DePauwEtAl2009). There was a special issue on African Language Technology in *Language Resources and Evaluation* in 2011 which provided coverage of work that was being done at that time. As just noted, much of the work had practical goals in mind, such as improving speech recognition (GelasEtAl2012) and machine translation systems, and in such a context, focusing on the development of a system that operates with no language-particular

knowledge is a luxury item that has few rewards. Several researchers applied one of the Morfessor systems, such as *GelasEtAl2012* and some applied one of the Linguistica systems. *Linden2008* explores predicting unseen Swahili words; see also *Muhirwe2007*.

Several efforts have included “data-driven” learning, including *DePauwEtAl2006*, *DeSchryverDePauw2007* on Swahili, *DeSchryverDePauw2007* on Northern Sotho. Unsupervised learning is discussed for Luo (Nilo-Saharan) *de2007unsupervised*, and for Gikuyu *DePauwWagacha2007*. *Linden2008* discusses semi-supervised lemmatization of Swahili.

### 3 What is a morphological analysis?

What is a morphological analysis? This question is not anodyne; our answer to it determines what we expect of our learning algorithm. In much of the work in this area over the last 20 years, the answer has been that a morphological analysis is a division of each word into the pieces called *morphs*. We would like to accomplish more than that; we would like to discover more of the principles that determine the order and the distributional possibilities of roots and affixes.<sup>2</sup>

We can learn an extremely important lesson by looking at what the students did as they examined the Swahili words and proposed an analysis, based purely on form. They became convinced that they had found the right pattern, one that really gets at something *true* about the data, when they discovered sets of morphemes that take the form in Figure Figure 1 for English or Swahili. Of course, the patterns there holds not just for these two verb stems, but for a very large set of stems, and this is even more true in the case of Swahili.

These representations show clearly how a good morphological analysis captures excess information that would be present if we were to simply list all of the relevant words. Morphological analysis starts with words, identifies redundancies, and uses those redundancies to create a representation in which what is stated is the essence of the grammatical description, that is, what makes the language what it is. In the present case, the word *redundancy* means needless repetition of a string of phonemes (or letters).

So how can we devise an algorithm to accomplish this? As our linguistics students showed us, there is a great deal to be learned from comparing pairs of words, which is what they did as we gave them words, one at a time. Zellig

---

<sup>2</sup>The view that the study of words was the study of how the words are composed of morphs and morphemes was viewed by most American linguists of the first half of the 20th century as the greatest American contribution to linguistics, second only to the setting of the phoneme on a firm methodological basis.

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{jump} \\ \text{laugh} \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \emptyset \\ \text{ed} \\ \text{ing} \\ \text{s} \end{array} \right\} \\
 \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{ni} \\ \text{u} \\ \text{a} \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{na} \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \emptyset \\ \text{wa} \\ \text{m} \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{sem} \\ \text{on} \\ \text{pig} \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{a} \end{array} \right\}
 \end{array}$$

Figure 1: Two pieces of morphology

Table 3: CLASS-BASED PREFIXES

class	verbal SM	nominal prefix	adjectival prefix	pronominal prefix	
PRS.1SG	ni	–	m-		
PRS.1PL	tu	–	wa-		
PRS.2SG	u	–	m-		
PRS.2PL	m	–	wa-		
1	a	m, mw	m, mw	yu	but w / – V
2	wa	wa	wa	wa	but w / – V
3	u	m, mw	m	u	but w / – V
4	i	mi	mi	i	but y / – V
5	li	ji/∅	ji/∅	li	but j / – V
6	ya	ma	ma	ya	but y / – V
7	ki	ki	ki	ki	but ch / – V
8	vi	vi	vi	vi	but vy / – V
9	i	n/∅	n/∅	i	but y / – V
10	zi	n/∅	n/∅	zi	but z / – V
11	u	u	m		
14	u	u	m		
15	ku, kw	ku, kw	ku, kw		
16	pa	pa			
17	ku	ku			
18	m	m			

Harris, in a famous paper Harris1955, suggested that a good estimate of the likelihood of a morpheme break could be devised if we take an alphabetized list of words, and with each word, we trace through it one letter at a time, asking after  $n$  letters, how many different letters those first  $n$  letters were followed by in our particular corpus from the language. For example, after *jum*, two letters (*m* and *b*) were found in a corpus we were looking at recently (from *jump* and *jumble*), while after *jmp*, four letters followed (*space*, *e*, *i*, and *s*), and after *jumi* only one letter follows (*n*).

Harris believed that by measuring this *successor frequency* we could find good candidates for morpheme breaks, and he was right. But the strings that we discover in this way are only candidates; many of them are not at all morphemes, and many morphemes are not discovered by Harris's method (or rather, by his methods). We hesitate to show the reader what can go wrong; it may cause them to wonder why we are using these methods. Here is a summary of the first stage of the algorithm that Linguistica employs. If we are seeking suffixes:

1. Find every position in each word where the successor frequency is 2 or greater, and imagine splitting the word there, with the piece on the left a potential stem, and the piece on the right the (potential) stem's *continuation*. We say "potential" here, because this piece has more tests to pass before it can be called a stem.
2. Having done that, for each potential stem  $S$ , gather together all of  $S$ 's continuations, and alphabetize them. (For example, the potential stem *jmp* might be linked to the set of suffixes *NULL, ed, ing, s*.)
3. Consider all of these continuations, and find those which are exact matches as the continuation of two different potential stems. For example, *walk* might also be linked to the set of suffixes in *NULL, ed, ing, s*. If we find such pairs of *multiple stems* and also *multiple suffixes*, we call that a *signature*.

If we are seeking prefixes, we do much the same, except that we do it in the reverse direction. We scan each word from right to left, looking to see how many different letters *precede* each string reaching to the end:

1. Find every position in each word where the predecessor frequency is 2 or greater, and imagine splitting the word there, with the piece on the right a *potential stem*, and the piece on the left the potential stem's continuation (in this case, however, the continuation is in a right-to-left direction, counter-intuitive as that may seem).

2. Having done that, for each potential stem  $S$ , gather together all of  $S$ 's continuations, and alphabetize them. (For example, the potential stem *-tabu* (“book” in Swahili) might be linked to the set of prefixes *ki-*, *vi-* ‘sg., pl.’)
3. Consider all of these continuations, and find those which are exact matches as the continuation of two different potential stems. (For example, *-tu* “thing” in Swahili might also be linked to the set of prefixes in *ki, vi*.) If we find such pairs of *multiple stems* and also *multiple affixes*, we label that a *signature*. A small Swahili text might include the signature  $\{ki,vi : tabu,tu\}$ .

This account assumes that we already know where the points are where the successor frequency (or predecessor frequency) is greater than 1, and it turns out that there is a simple way to find all those points, in all the words, and it requires much less work than one might imagine. First, alphabetize the list of words, and then go through that list looking only at pairs of words that are adjacent on the list (such as *walked, walking*, for example). Scan the two words from left to right (if we are looking for suffixes) or right to left (if we are looking for prefixes), and stop at the first point where the two words differ by a letter. The algorithm takes what is to the left of that point as a potential stem, and it then moves on to the next pair of words. This process is both simple and fast, from a computational point of view.

It is not right to say that the algorithm is finding stems at this point. We will let it analyze Swahili to find prefixes, and in so doing, we are finding the left-most set of morphemes, and treating everything that follows as an unanalyzed whole, which we call for now simply a “potential-stem.” In fact, that potential-stem contains many morphemes within it; we are engaged now simply slicing off the leftmost prefixes of the words in Swahili, and we have just called what follows a “potential stem.” We will continue to cut the potential-stem down to smaller morphs as that becomes possible. Thus in most of the cases we look at below, the “potential” stems that are computed are themselves analyzable into morphs (at a later stage in the computation, as well as in our heads). In order to avoid the ambiguity of the phrase “potential stem,” we will create a new term, *parastem*, to refer to this. A signature is composed of a set of affixes and a set of parastems, and the parastems may themselves be analyzed further in additional signatures. A parastem that can be broken down no further is a stem.

As we observed at the beginning of this section, within the community of computational linguists working on the problem of automatic learning of morphology, different researchers have begun with different assumptions about what the task is. Some linguists have focused on the problem of segmentation, which

means dividing a word up into successive morphs, while others (perhaps sceptical about the notion of morph or morpheme) seek to tag any given word with the morphosyntactic features that it bears. Our work falls in the former group – that is, we are very concerned with finding the proper analysis of a word into consecutive morphs. In addition, we would like to provide an analysis of how morphemes relate to one another in a word. Traditionally, linguists have spoken about relationships in *praesentia*, relations between morphemes that appear in a given word, and relationships in *absentia*, which is to say, the way in which multiple morphemes are alternatives to one another in a particular position in a word’s morphology. We are interested in learning as much as possible about this aspect of a language’s morphology as well.

Our interest here is exploratory. We are not in a rush to develop a practical tool; we have the opportunity to take some time and look at what kind of evidence regarding linguistic structure can be found by looking carefully at language data.<sup>3</sup>

## 4 Morphology of the left edge of the Swahili verb

We used the Helsinki corpus of Swahili, which has about 300,000 distinct words. When we applied the current *Linguistica* algorithm above to 300,000 words to find prefixal signatures, we found 3,434 signatures; when we added an entropy-based filter,<sup>4</sup> 1,235 signatures remained, and it is this set of signatures that we will describe.

---

<sup>3</sup>The algorithm that we employ here has the following stages. We will describe the process of prefix discovery, and the mirror image of it is used for suffix discovery. First, we alphabetize the list of words from the right-end of each word, then we look at each pair of adjacent words on this list, and determine find the rightmost letter whereby the two words disagree. We take the material to the right of that point as a *protostem*. For each word  $w$  that ends with protostem  $t$ , we take  $e$  to be  $t$ ’s extension if  $w = e+t$  (i.e., if  $e$  is what precedes  $t$  in word  $w$ ). We call each set of extensions to a protostem a *protosignature*. We collect all protosignatures that are associated with at least two protostems. We create a set of signatures which consist of a collection of extensions and all of the stems which occur with exactly those extensions in the corpus. If all of the stems in a signature end with the same letter or string of letters, that letter or string of letters is moved from the stems to the extensions. Two further functions are used to identify licit morphemes in the extensions in the system used here.

<sup>4</sup>That filter is roughly this: when the algorithm makes a prefix cut, in light of what we have said so far, it is because as we scan from right to left, a spot is found where there are two alternative options: e.g., as we scan *kitabu* and *vitabu* from right to left, a break will be created before the common stem *-itabu*, though this is in fact wrong. Indeed, throughout the corpus, when a signature  $k=v$  would be uncovered, it will always be followed by exactly one phoneme option: the vowel *i*. The location of true morpheme breaks always involves options both to the left and to the right (which is to say, both prior in time and forward in time). We measure this notion of *options* by the entropy of the final letter right before and right after a proposed

In some ways, using Linguistica is a bit like using a microscope, and just like when we use a microscope for the first time, it takes a bit of experimenting before the picture comes sharply into focus. Let us begin our tour, then, with a rough statement of the position of morphemes in finite Swahili verbs, and a summary of what Linguistica gleans from a large corpus.

The textbook description of Swahili is much as given in Figure Figure 2, while Linguistica's conclusions for the left side and the right side of the Swahili verb are given in Table Table 3. The first figure concerns the initial Subject Marker position, the following Tense Marker position, and the position after the Tense Marker. It does not properly distinguish Object Markers, such as the *-ki-* in *ni-li-ki-som-a* 'I read it' from the relative clause marker *cho* in *ki-tabu ni-li-cho-ki-soma* 'the book that I read'.

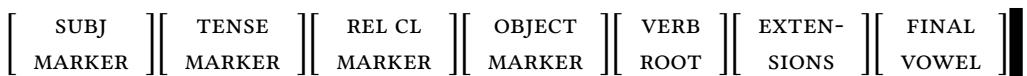


Figure 2: Sketch of Swahili verb morphology

Independently of prefix discovery, Linguistica analyzes the right-end of the word, and the major part of its conclusions are summarized in Figure Figure 4.

However, the template given in these two tables gives only a superficial summary of Linguistica's analysis. Let us consider what happens with each slice of the analysis.

There are 1,235 signatures that emerge from the first iteration of prefixal analysis. What do these signatures say? What can we learn from them? It is naturally to sort them in some way so that the most interesting signatures will appear at the top of the list, and there are several ways of sorting that come to mind. We might, for example, sort the signatures by the number of stems they contain, or we might sort them by the number of affixes. Both present us with interesting material. From a linguist's point of view, sorting them by the number of affixes is by far the more interesting. Figure Figure 5, which is presented to the user by Linguistica, shows how we can arrange the signatures in a lattice, where signatures with the same number of affixes appear on the same row, and in which the signatures in each row are sorted by decreasing numbers of stems (though we have departed that latter point a bit to make the figures easier to read here).

---

morpheme break, and if (as with *k-itabu*, *v-itabu*) zero entropy is discovered (which is just a way of saying that only one letter is present), the algorithm proceeds to create other splits until a non-zero entropy is found. In the case of *kitabu*, this means adding the break *ki-tabu*, *vi-tabu*, which has a non-zero entropy after the break, since many different letters follow *ki-* and *vi-*, such as we see in *kilima*, *vilima* "hill, hills".

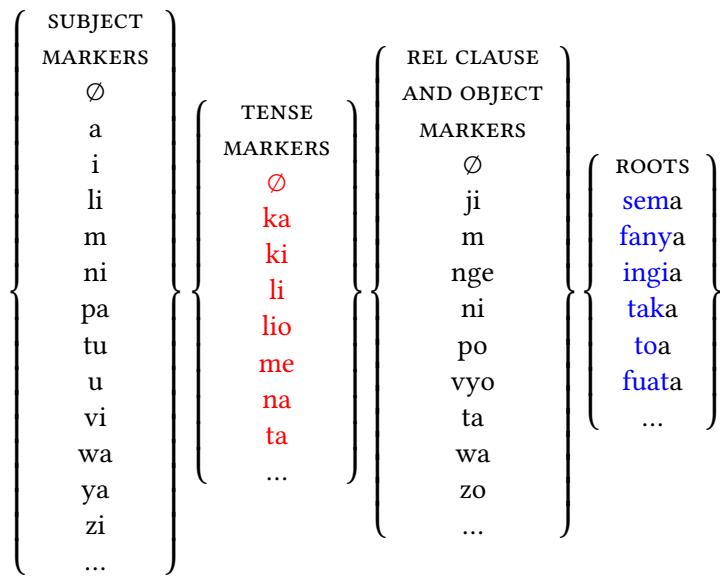


Figure 3: Summary of Linguistica's analysis of the left half of the Swahili verb

Table 4: Word-initial signature counts

Number of affixes	Number of signatures	Stem counts in individual signatures									
14	1	45									
13	5	56	38	33	3	3					
12	6	70	52	51	28	26	15				
11	15	83	68	56	41	30	28	16	11	9	...
10	22	129	90	38	32	30	23	22	20	17	...
9	34	205	46	32	29	20	19	16	16	15	...
8	56	131	82	56	41	26	25	24	17	16	...
...											
2	653	2419	1297	1070	755	690	668	601	564	507	...

Table 5: Examples of word-initial signatures

Rank	Stem count	Signatures													
1	45	NULL	a	i	ki	ku	li	m	ni	tu	u	vi	wa	ya	zi
2	56	NULL	a	i	ki	ku	li	m	ni	tu	u	vi	wa	ya	zi
3	38		a	i	ki	ku	li	m	ni	tu	u	vi	wa	ya	zi
4	33	NULL	a	i	ki	li	m	ni	tu	u	vi	wa	ya	zi	
5	3	NULL	a	i	ki	ku	li	m	ni	tu	u	vi	wa	ya	zi
6	3	NULL	a	i	ki	ku	li	m	ni	tu	u	vi	wa	ya	zi
7	70		a	i	ki	ku	li	m	ni	tu	u	vi	wa	ya	zi
8	52		a	i	ki	li	m	ni	tu	u	vi	wa	ya	zi	
9	51	NULL	a	i	ki	li	m	ni	tu	u	vi	wa	ya	zi	
10	28	NULL	a	i	ki	li	ni		tu	u	vi	wa	ya	zi	
11	26		a	i	ki	ku	li	ni		tu	u	vi	wa	ya	zi
17	30		a	i	ki	ku	li		pa	u	vi	wa	ya	zi	
719	191		a	i					u			wa			

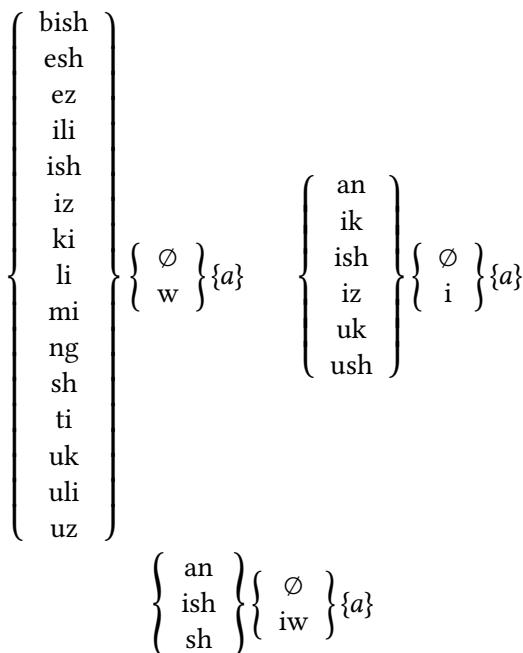


Figure 4: Three signatures from Linguistica's analysis of the right half of the Swahili verb

We need to explain carefully what the relation is between the several figures and tables given here. Each box in Figure Figure 5 is a signature, and each corresponds to an individual *row* in Table Table 5. Each of these signatures corresponds to an individual *number* that appears in the rightmost field of Table Table 4, and the reader can see the correspondence by comparing the number which indicates the number of stems in each signature.

In Table Table 4, each line in corresponds to a row in Figure Figure 5 – top row to top row, and then down from there. Each of the lines in the next table, Table Table 5, correspond to *one* of the individual signatures tallied in Figure Figure 5 or Table Table 4. The first row in Table Table 5 corresponds to the one signature with 14 affixes, and the five signatures in Row 2 in Table Table 6 are the next five signatures in Table Table 4 (or Figure Figure 5).

#### 4.1 The top signature and its parastems

The very top signature in Figure 5 is the largest signature, in that it has a set of 14 prefixes:  $\emptyset$ -*a*-*i*-*ki*-*ku*-*li*-*m*-*ni*-*tu*-*u*-*vi*-*wa*-*ya*-*zi*; it does not contain the locative

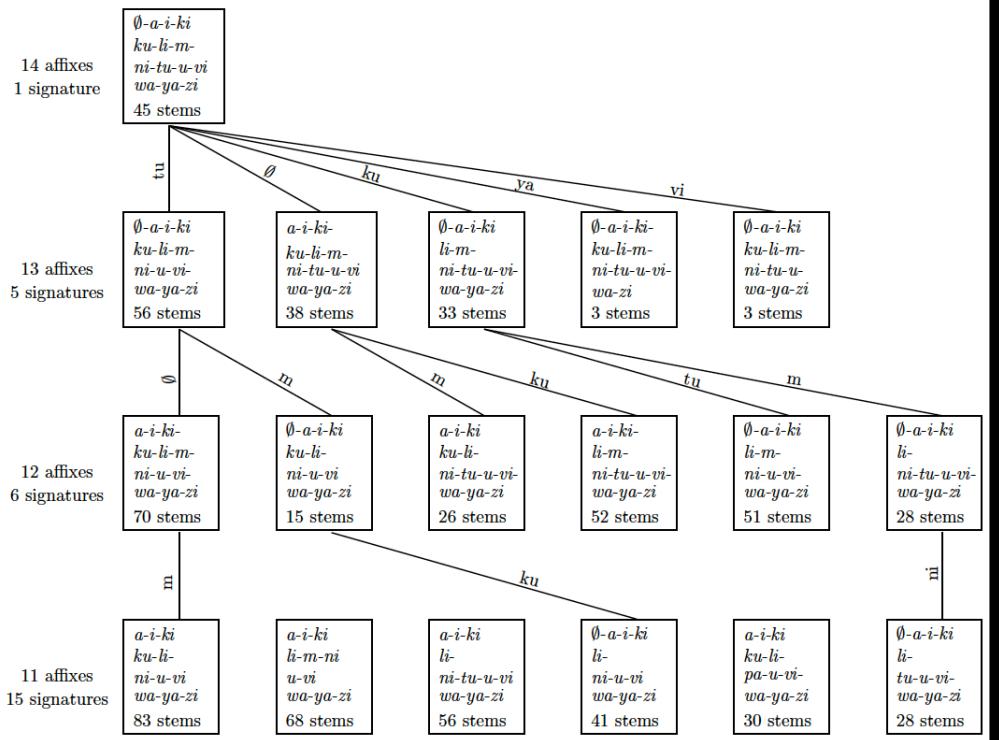


Figure 5: Top of the lattice of word-initial signatures

marker *pa*.<sup>5</sup> The vast majority of signatures beneath it are composed of subsets of those 14 prefixes. Each of the five signatures on the row for 13 affixes is missing one prefix from the one in row 14 (in both Table 4 and Figure 5), just as each of the signatures in row 12 is missing one from those above it, and these differences between the affixes comprising the signatures are marked on the lines in the figure. We have given 18 signatures in Figure 5 out of the total set of 1,235.

Let us dig a little more deeply, and look at the parastems that are found in the top signatures (recall that a parastem is an element in a signature which may be analyzed in a later signature). Each parastem is sorted by, and listed with, its total occurrence count in the corpus in Table 6. One does not see much that stands out with this frequency sorting, but we have sorted the stems alphabetically in Table 7. Here we have *manually* colored the tense markers and verb roots for the reader's benefit, and manually indicated morpheme breaks (these breaks have not been discovered by Linguistica yet).

<sup>5</sup>We consider the absence of *pa* to be an error committed by Linguistica.

Table 6: Parastems of the longest signature, sorted by frequency

na	554,554	rudi	1991	likubali	564
le	33,130	nahitaji	1783	naingia	447
kiwa	20,663	jadili	1514	fike	325
pande	10,230	ngekuwa	1493	taondoka	321
ko	8,857	pate	1404	kiingia	261
takuwa	8,824	kubali	1370	tafanikiwa .	253
we	6,440	nakwenda	1188	kafanya	218
po	5,847	nazidi	1028	naongeza	215
a	4864	tatoa	939	kazidi	203
nataka	4854	naanza	758	nafuata	180
nao	4787	takwenda	654	napita	160
liko	4278	zidi	598	nampa	159
kiwemo	3995	meingia	583	nawapa	155
nayo	3574	nategemea	579	najenga	151
nadaiwa	2220	ngali	331	naifanya	91

Table 7: Parastems of the longest signature alphabetized from left to right

a	me ingi a	na m p a	pat e
jadili	na	na ongez a	po
ka fany a	na anz a	na pit a	rudi
ka zidi	na daiw a	na tak a	ta fanikiw a
ki ingi a	na fuat a	na tegeme a	ta ku w a
ki w a	na hitaji	na wa p a	ta kw end a
ki wemo	na i fany a	na yo	ta ondok a
ko	na kw end a	ngali	ta to a
kubali	na ingi a	na zidi	we
li ko	na jeng a	nge kuw a	zidi
li kubali	na o		

There are some interesting points here (though once we see them, we are inclined to say to ourselves, Oh yes, I should have thought of that). First of all, there are several monosyllabic elements, including three that are monomorphemic *na*, *le*, *we*, often referred to as *pronominal stems* (which can be monomorphemic or bimorphemic) in the Swahili literature. *na* can be translated as “with,” and it is used to indicate possession (*a-na kitabu* “he has a book”, where *a-* is the Class 1 verbal prefix). *-le* is a demonstrative stem “yonder” which is preceded by a pronominal prefix, and *-o* is a demonstrative stem “near you.” *We* is a stem that marks 2nd person singular; we return to Linguistica’s treatment of pronominal stems below.

From a quantitative point of view, there are two points of interest. The most frequent item in the list of parastems, *na*, has a ridiculously high count at 554,554; as we just noted, *SM + na* expresses possession (*na* could be translated as *with*). Other than this one item, the rest of the parastems reflect a frequency distribution in keeping with a Zipfian distribution, as we find in most of the other signatures as well (we return to this immediately). It is striking, as well, that there are no parastems with frequency below 91.

Let us digress for a moment on an interesting point. Word distribution in Swahili is Zipfian as it is other languages, which means that there are a very large number of words that occur very rarely: just once. That proportion is around half: about half of the words in a wordlist drawn from a corpus occur only once. Words that occur only twice in the entire corpus is about two-thirds of that, and over a relatively large range of words of high frequency, the observed frequency is inversely proportional to the rank of the word on the word-frequency list: the  $k^{th}$  word on the frequency ranked list has a frequency around  $\frac{0.06}{k}$ . This breaks down for words of low frequency, but it summarizes well what frequencies we can expect among the most frequent words of a language. This distribution holds for stems as well.

There is a sense in which we can speak of the placement of potential words in this lattice in a dynamic fashion. Suppose we complete our morphological analysis of Swahili on our corpus, and then we go back to the beginning of the corpus and consider each word, knowing now its internal morphological structure but not knowing at any given moment anything about its future appearances in the corpus. In this mental experiment, we can watch any individual parastem as it climbs up through the lattice as we proceed further and further down the corpus. Let us say that we are observing the stem *s*; we watch it first appear with a given prefix *p<sub>1</sub>*, and then later with prefix *p<sub>2</sub>*; this puts the stem on the second row of the lattice, inside the signature with those two prefixes *p<sub>1</sub>-p<sub>2</sub>*. When it appears

later with a third prefix  $p_3$ , it moves up again, and it might eventually get to the top, once the parastem has appeared with all of the prefixes that it possibly can.

Why don't all parastems appear at the very top of the lattice, then? The first answer is because language is Zipfian, and most parastems do not occur very often – certainly not 14 times, the minimal number of occurrences needed for a parastem to get to the top of the lattice. A second reason is that not all parastems want to occur with all the different noun classes (so to speak); a stem built from a verb which requires a human subject is likely to occur primarily or only with class 1 and 2 markers,<sup>6</sup> and a lot of verb roots have this property, and similar remarks hold for other subgroups of verb and adjectival roots.

The result of this is that it is of linguistic interest to see how quickly a given parastem moves up this lattice, and which ones get stuck in the lattice somewhere below the top row. They get stuck if they are infrequent, or they get stuck if there is a reason why they should not appear with all of the noun classes. End of digression!

#### 4.2 The 2nd signature: $\emptyset-a-i-ki-ku-li-m-ni-u-vi-wa-ya-zi$

After the first signature, with 14 affixes, we find that the next 5 longest signatures all contain 13 prefixes. A moment's thought will tell us that we should have expected that there would be 14 different signatures here, rather than only 5; after all, there are 14 different ways to contain one fewer affix than the total of 14; put another way, there are 14 different ways to select 13 affixes from a set of 14. But in fact there are only 5 such signatures, rather than 14. If we retain the dynamic image described just above, we can imagine that the stems that are in these 5 signatures are those which failed to reach the top because they each failed to get one of the 14 affixes, and it would be reasonable to expect that these would be the 5 with the lowest frequency. Here is what we find; the missing affixes are *tu*,  $\emptyset$ , *ku*, *ya*, and *vi*.<sup>7</sup>

The second signature, which has 13 affixes and 56 stems, is missing the subject marker *tu-* (1st person plural). Its parastems are given in Table Table 8. As with

<sup>6</sup>Reality is more complex than this comment suggests; for example, there are a number of stems, such as *rafiki* 'friend' that has two plural forms, *rafiki* and *ma-rafiki*, where *ma-* is the class 6 prefix.

<sup>7</sup>The reader might think that this means that for each of the 30 parastems in the top signature, the final prefix they encountered in the corpus was one of  $\emptyset$ , *ku* and *pa*. That is not quite right, because it is possible that they went through a state in which they had 14 different affixes, but not one of the three signatures ranked 2, 3, or 4; this is possible because if all of that signature's stems had moved up to the top signature, we would not see that phantom signature in the program's output.

the first signature, it is hard to see much in this table, but if we sort the parastems alphabetically (left to right), we find a more interesting pattern in Table Table 9.

Table 8: Parastems of second signature, sorted by decreasing frequency

lisema	lifanya	nakuja	kafanya
likuwa	nakuwa	kitumia	naongeza
mekuwa	litaka	meingia	wape
naweza	naonekana	nategemea	kazidi
kiwemo	kifanya	likaa	nabaki
lianza	natoa	kipata	nafuata
naendelea	nakwenda	naingia	nakosa
litoa	baki	naitwa	napita
weze	lipo	nachukua	nampa
kawa	nazidi	mebaki	nawapa
meanza	kaanza	lipokea	najenga
nadaiwa	kitaka	kiingia	naenda
nafanya	siwe	kaingia	kabaki
napaswa	naanza	naleta	naifanya

It is striking that the parastems in Table Table 9 are composed of a small number of morphemes reused in different combinations, a good deal more so than was seen in Table Table 7. In Table Table 9, there are 56 parastems, and all but 4 begin with one of the 5 tense markers *ka*, *ki*, *li*, *me*, *ka*, *ki*, *na* (see Table Table 13). Linguistica has not yet identified those as a class of morphemes – that will have to await the second iteration – but the natural goal for the learner is to find a way to identify subclasses of data that are going to be easier to analyze than the entire vocabulary taken as a whole. A number of roots are reused a good deal; these are the high frequency roots of the language, often used as auxiliary verbs in certain respects: *-baki-* ‘stay’: 4, *-anz-* ‘start’: 4, *-ingi-* ‘enter’: 4, *-fany-* ‘do, make’: 5. (We emphasize here that the apparent identification of the prefixes in this table was done by us, not by Linguistica.)

Let us take a step back. The top signature, as we sort by number of affixes, is the signature with 14 noun class prefixes plus the null prefix, and it does not include the locative prefix *pa-*, which does not appear until the 23rd signature, which is *a-i-ki-ku-li-pa-u-vi-wa-ya-zi*, with 30 stems. As we go down the list of signatures, as they get shorter (i.e., we go down a list of signatures which is sorted by the number of class prefixes contained), we have to wait until signatures 355 and 356 ( $\emptyset$ -*al-k-l-z* and  $\emptyset$ -*ha-k-n-z*) till we find anything else.  $\emptyset$ -*al-k-l-z* is, to be

Table 9: Parastems of second signature, sorted left to right

baki		na daiw a	na m p a
ka anz a	me anz a	na end a	na onekan a
ka baki	me baki	na endele a	na ongez a
ka ingi a	me ingi a	na fany a	na pas wa
ka zidi	me ku w a	na fuat a	na pit a
ki ingi a	ka wa	na i fany a	na tegeme a
li anz a	ka fany a	na ingi a	na to a
li fany a	ki fany a	na it wa	na wa p a
li ka a	ki tak a	na kos a	na wez a
li ku w a	ki tumi a	na ku j a	na zidi
li po	ki pat a	na ku w a	siwe
li poke a	na anza	na kw end a	ki wemo
li sem a	na baki	na jeng a	weze
li tak a	na chuku a	na let a	wape
li to a			

sure, an error,<sup>8</sup> and  $\emptyset\text{-}ha\text{-}k\text{-}n\text{-}z$  is an error as well,<sup>9</sup> but it has the first occurrence of the principal negative prefix *ha*. The next 138 signatures are various subsets of the class prefixes, and then the next three signatures consist of two errors and the first significant appearance of the negative form of the verb. These three signatures are  $\emptyset\text{-}al\text{-}l\text{-}v$ ;  $\emptyset\text{-}h\text{-}k\text{-}t$  (both errors)–and  $\emptyset\text{-}ha\text{-}hawa\text{-}si$ , which has 172 parastems associated with it. Let us look at this negative signature.

### 4.3 More on parastems

We have emphasized that the parastem that is revealed by Linguistica’s algorithm is often analyzable, and that it frequently consists of several morphemes. But the parastems discovered need not be complex; if we look at very high frequency parastems to a signature in the first (left-most) layer, one of the highest is *-fanya* “do, make”, with 14,293 occurrence in the signature  $\emptyset\text{-}a\text{-}i\text{-}ki\text{-}ku\text{-}li\text{-}m\text{-}tu\text{-}u\text{-}wa\text{-}ya\text{-}zi$ . Another is *-taka* “want”, with 5,434 occurrences in the signature  $\emptyset\text{-}a\text{-}i\text{-}ki\text{-}ku\text{-}li\text{-}m\text{-}u\text{-}wa\text{-}ya\text{-}zi$ . Still, this is the exception rather than the rule.

<sup>8</sup>It wrongly places an *i* in the stem which should be in the prefixes.

<sup>9</sup>Again, it wrongly places an *i* in the stem

#### 4.4 Verbal negation: the prefix *ha-*

Verbal negation in Swahili is expressed in ways that are governed by the tense. The simplest pattern for Linguistica to find is the pattern in the simple past tense, as briefly illustrated in Table Table 10.

Table 10: Verbal negation

<i>ku-som-a</i> ‘to read’			
	Past tense	Present tense	
	affirmative	negative	affirmative
1st person sg.	ni-li-som-a	si-ku-som-a	ni-na-som-a
1st person pl.	tu-li-som-a	ha-tu-ku-som-a	tu-na-som-a
3rd person sg.	a-li-som-a	h-a-ku-som-a	a-na-som-a
3rd person pl.	wa-li-som-a	ha-wa-ku-som-a	wa-na-som-a
			ha-wa-som-i

The  $\emptyset$ -*ha-hawa-si* signature brings together, for example, the forms *kusoma*: *hakusoma*: *hawakusoma*: *sikusoma*. These four forms are the infinitive, followed by three negative past tense forms, where *-ku-* plays the role of a Tense Marker (marking past tense, the negative TM corresponding to the affirmative *-li-*.)

The 1st person singular prefix *ni* is replaced by *si* in negative verbs, and while the present tense negative will in native vocabulary bring with it (so to speak) a change of the Final Vowel to *-i*, that change is not observed in the past tense. Thus the three verbal forms in this signature *hasoma-hawasoma-si* are given in Table Table 10.

The examples in Table Table 11 illustrate the overwhelming dominance of the past tense negation occurring in this signature. Why do we not find something similar for the present tense? The principal reason is the one already mentioned: in the present tense, the final vowel is most often different than the final vowel in the corresponding affirmative present tense, and thus a method that looks for patterns based on a right-to-left scan is bound to fail, at least at this point in the analysis.

However, there are other ways for the correct analysis to emerge from the data. For example, there are four signatures with three items selected from the set *ha*, *hai*, *hatu*, *hawa*, *hazi*, *hu* and *si*. The signature *ha-hai-hawa*, for example, is associated with 181 stems. Of these 181, 75 begin with the Tense Marker *-ja-*, which is the Tense Marker for the negative perfect. We have listed the 32 parastems in this signature with the highest frequency, but the following generalization holds throughout: either the parastem begins with *-ja-*, or it is a (borrowed) verb

root ending with its own final vowel (and hence has the same final vowel in the present tense negative as in the affirmative).

## 5 Second iteration

Let us turn now to the next set of prefixes that we are looking for on the left edge of the Swahili word. We will try a simple procedure: we will consider all of the parastems uncovered during the previous iteration, and apply the same algorithm, treating the parastems as if they were the set of words. In the event, with some 301,000 words in the first iteration from the corpus, we now have 56,363 parastems to consider. From this parastems, 212 signatures arise, and some of the global information is presented in Table Table 14. The top signatures themselves are given in Table Table 15.

The signatures in Table Table 15 support an analysis in which this morphological position includes the morphemes in Table Table 7, where we have put the traditional designations on these Tense Markers. The morphs in Table Table 15 which are not tense markers (and which are errors) are: *lio*, *o*, *nayo*, *i* and *si*.

## 6 Suffixal system

When we run our algorithm to find the suffixal system, we find 1,263 signatures, distributed in length in Table Table 16, and illustrated in Table Table 17 for the longest signatures.

### 6.1 The verbal system

We will focus first on the longest signatures, those with the largest number of affixes. This keeps us in the domain of verbal morphology.

On the whole, the analysis is remarkably good – or linguist-like, in any event. The forms in Table Table 17 are too long for a linguist’s tastes, but the additional parsings given in Table Table 18 are almost entirely correct. We would like, first of all, for the final vowel to be separated as a distinct morpheme, and there is a bit more to be said about the -VC- morphemes on the left side of the arrows in this table.

These -VC- morphemes are called *extensions* in Bantu languages, and the most common ones are *-an-* (reciprocal), *-esh-/ish-/ez-/iz-* (causative), *-ik-* (stative),

Table 11: Parastems of the signature  $\emptyset$ -ha-hawa-si

achi	kuhusishwa	kumuona	kuthubutu
chezi	kuiba	kumuuliza	kutilia
choki	kuielewa	kumwamini	kutoka
fai	kuijali	kumweleza	kutumia
fanani	kuijua	kumwona	kutumwa
husiki	kuingia	kumwua	kuumia
jaja	kuipenda	kunwelewa	kuupata
jakata	kuishia	kuomba	kuwaeleza
jala	kuitwa	kuonana	kuwafahamu
jalala	kuja	kuongea	kuwahi
jambo	kujaaribu	kuonyesha	kuwajali
jawa	kujali	kupata	kuwaona
jazaa	kujaliwa	kupenda	kuwapo
juí	kujiandaa	kupendelea	kuwaruhusu
kipati	kujibu	kupendezwa	kuwepo
kuacha	kujitoa	kupendi	kuweza
kuahidi	kujua	kupewa	kuyaamini
kuambiwa	kukaa	kupigwa	o kuyaona
kuambulia	kukata	kupita	kuzingatia
kuamini	kukataa	kuregea	kuzoea
kuamua	kukimbia	kuridhika	kuzungumizia
kuandaliwa	kukosa	kuridhishwa	kuzungumza
kuchaguliwa	kukosea	kuruhusiwa	lali
kuchelewa	kukubali	kusema	lipi
kucheza	kukubaliana	kushangaa	mpi
kuchoka	kukubaliwa	kushinda	mtaji
kudhani	kukupata	kushiriki	mtaki
kuelewa	kukusudia	kushirikishwa	muamini
kueleza	kukuta	kusikia	mwezi
kuelezwa	kulala	kusita	ngoji
kufa	kuleta	kusoma	ombi
kufahamu	kulijua	kustahili	pambani
kufanikiwa	kulipwa	kustuka	pigi
kufaulu	kumaliza	o kusubiri	pingi
kufika	kumbudu	kutaja	ridhiki
kufikiri	kumbwambia	kutambua	siti
kufikiria	kumchagua	kutangaza	taji
kufua	kumjibu	kutarajia	toshi
kufurahi	kumjibu	kutazamia	uoni
kufurahishwa	kumkuta	kutegemea	utaki
kugundua	kumpigia	kutekeleza	wataki
kuhitaji	kumtambua	kutenda	wezi
kuhusika	kumuelewa	kutendewa	zai

Table 12: 32 of the 181 parastems of the signature  $\emptyset$ -hai-hawa

elekei	jatambuliwa	patikani
eleweki	jatangaza	ridhishwi
fahamiki	jatimiza	takiwi
jabadilika	jathibitisha	tarajawi
jafahamika	jatolewa	tekelezi
jafikia	jawasilisha	tokubali
jajulikana	jeni	walipi
jakamilika	kubaliki	watambui
jaonekana	leti	wezekani
japatikana	mtambui	zingatii
jaripoti	oneshi	...

Table 13: Tense markers

ka	consecutive, or narrative
ki	conditional, or participial
li	past
me	perfect
na	present
ta	future
taka	future (before a relative clause marker)
nge	conditional

Table 14: Signatures of the second position (Tense Marker) in the word

Number of affixes	Number of signatures	Stem counts in signatures								
8	1	3								
7	2	5	3							
6	5	10	8	7	3	3				
5	21	16	10	9	9	8	7	6	6	...
4	33	112	38	35	23	22	22	15	...	
3	359	365	281	243	243	237	224	223	191	...
2	787	6932	2294	1670	1415	1,239	1,114	983	834	...

Table 15: Selected Tense Marker signatures

rank	affix count	stem count		signatures								
1	8	3	NULL	ki	li	lio	me	na	o	ta		
2	7	5	NULL	ka	ki	li	me	na		ta		
3	7	3	NULL		ki	li	me	na	nayo	ta		
4	6	10	NULL	ka	ki	li	me	na				
5	6	8	NULL		ki	li	me	na		ta		
6	6	7	NULL	ka	ki	li		na		ta		
7	6	3	NULL	ka		li	me	na			ku	
8	6	3	NULL	ka		li	liyo	me		ta		
9	5	9	NULL	i		li		na			si	
10	5	3	NULL	i		li		na			si	
11	5	8	NULL	ka	ki	li	me					
12	4	6	NULL	ka	ki	li		na				
34	4	22	NULL	ka		li	me					
38	4	22	NULL		ki	li		na				
54	4	112	NULL			li		na			taka	
108	3	141	NULL			li	me					
109	3	400	NULL			li		na				
143	2	247	NULL	i								
153	2	308	NULL			li						
200	2	179				li		na				

-iw- (passive), -uk- (reversive).<sup>10</sup> The remaining cases are errors: *bish ki li mi ng sh ti uli ush uz*.<sup>11</sup>

At the same time, Linguistica proposes the additional analyses, given in Table Table 18. Table Table 19 summarizes some of Linguistica's analysis, which really should be what is shown in Table Table 20.

<sup>10</sup>In addition, there is the vocalic extension -i- (applicative), which surfaces as -li-/le- with verb stems ending in two vowels (e.g., *ia, ea, aa, oa, ua*); this is discussed in Mpiranya2014.

<sup>11</sup>The morph -ele-/ili- in pairs like -enda-/endelea "go/progress", -penda-/pendelea "like, prefer" appears as a lexicalized intensive suffix.

Table 16: Final signatures

Number of affixes	Number of signatures	Stem counts in signatures									
7	1	12									
6	2	4	3								
5	16	48	34	33	21	16	13	13	7	...	
4	33	172	112	93	90	77	65	56	54	45	...
3	79?	355	281	243	243	237	224	223	...		
2	56	308	247	184	179	179	130	109	...		

Table 17: Selected final signatures

rank	affix count	stem count		signatures							
1	7	12		a	ana	ia	ilia	iliwa	iwa	wa	
2	6	4		a	ana	ia	ika		iwa	wa	
3	6	3		a	ana	ia	ika		iwa	wa	
4	5	34	NULL	a	ana		ka			wa	
5	5	4		a	aji	e				wa	we
6	5	3		a	ana	ea	eka			wa	
7	5	7		a	ana	ia	ika			wa	
8	5	33		a	ana	ia			iwa	wa	
9	5	13		a		e	ea		ewa	wa	
12	5	48		a		ia	ika		iwa	wa	
22	4	172	NULL	a		e	i				
38	4	25		a	ana	ia			wa		
54	4	54		a		e			wa	we	
74	4	112		a		ia			iwa	wa	

Table 18: Identification of extensions in final suffix sequences

an	$\rightarrow$	$\emptyset$	-	i							
an	$\rightarrow$	a	-	ia							
an	$\rightarrow$	a	-	ishwa	ki	$\rightarrow$	a	-	wa		
bish	$\rightarrow$	a	-	wa	li	$\rightarrow$	a	-	wa		
ele	$\rightarrow$	a	-	za	mi	$\rightarrow$	a	-	wa		
esh	$\rightarrow$	a	-	ea	ng	$\rightarrow$	a	-	wa		
esh	$\rightarrow$	a	-	ewa	sh	$\rightarrow$	a	-	na	-	wa
esh	$\rightarrow$	a	-	wa	sh	$\rightarrow$	a	-	e		
ez	$\rightarrow$	a	-	wa	sh	$\rightarrow$	a	-	ia	-	wa
ik	$\rightarrow$	a	-	ia	sh	$\rightarrow$	a	-	iwa		
ili	$\rightarrow$	a	-	wa	sh	$\rightarrow$	a	-	iwa	-	wa
ish	$\rightarrow$	a	-	ia	sh	$\rightarrow$	a	-	wa		
ish	$\rightarrow$	a	-	iwa	ti	$\rightarrow$	a	-	lia		
ish	$\rightarrow$	a	-	iwa	ti	$\rightarrow$	a	-	wa		
ish	$\rightarrow$	a	-	wa	uk	$\rightarrow$	a	-	ia		
ish	$\rightarrow$	iwa	-	wa	uk	$\rightarrow$	a	-	wa		
iw	$\rightarrow$	a	-	e	uli	$\rightarrow$	a	-	wa		
iw	$\rightarrow$	a	-	i	ush	$\rightarrow$	a	-	ia		
iz	$\rightarrow$	a	-	ia	uz	$\rightarrow$	a	-	wa		
iz	$\rightarrow$	a	-	wa							

Table 19: Almost final results

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{ll} \text{bish} & \text{esh} \\ \text{ez} & \text{ili} \\ \text{ish} & \text{iz} \\ \text{ki} & \text{li} \\ \text{mi} & \text{ng} \\ \text{sh} & \text{ti} \\ \text{uk} & \text{uli} \\ \text{uz} & \end{array} \right\} \quad \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{a} \\ \text{wa} \end{array} \right\} \quad \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{an} \\ \text{ik} \\ \text{ish} \\ \text{iz} \\ \text{uk} \\ \text{ush} \end{array} \right\} \quad ; \quad \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{a} \\ \text{ia} \end{array} \right\} \quad \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{an} \\ \text{ish} \\ \text{sh} \end{array} \right\} \quad \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{a} \\ \text{iwa} \end{array} \right\}$$

Table 20: Correct but not discovered

bish	esh			an		an	
ez	ili			ik		ish	
ish	iz			ish		iz	
ki	li			iz		uk	
mi	ng			uk		ush	
sh	ti			ush			
uk	uli						
uz							


## 7 Three other, simpler cases

Linguistica's performance with grammatical stems is mixed: some good, some bad. We will briefly look at three.

### 7.1 *-ote* “all”

The stem *-ote* “all, entire, whole” is one that takes the pronominal prefixes of the sort found before a vowel. We do not find all its forms in the Helsinki corpus, and Linguistica places it in a signature with 11 other stems, all of which appear with the prefixes  $\emptyset$ -*a*-*i*-*ki*-*li*-*m*-*ni*-*tu*-*u*-*wa*-*ya*-*zi*, where we indicate the stem counts in the corpus:

Table 21: Analysis of stem *-ote*

$\emptyset$	a	i	nazo	1,194	nasubiri	407
ki	li	m	naondoka	371	naogopa	246
ni	tu	u	kirudi	196	jitokeze	165
wa	ya	zi	natembea	155	naawataka	154
			najadili	83	takapo	78
			ote	37		

### 7.2 *-angu* “my”

Linguistica's analysis here is not very good at all. Linguistica is permitted to assign multiple analyses to words, and it does so quite a bit with these words, as we see in Table Table 22. The stem *-angu* is identified in only two of the 15 forms present, and five different roots enter into the proposed analyses of the various

forms. Even after studying the results, we are not certain why the algorithm wanders so far from the right answer. It does much better with a consonant-initial form such as *-ko*.

Table 22: -angu “my”

class	“my”		<i>Linguistica</i> hypothesis				
	truth	<i>gu</i>	<i>ngu</i>	<i>angu</i>	<i>wangu</i>	<i>yangu</i>	<i>changu</i>
1	w-angu	wan-gu	wa-ngu		∅-wangu		
2	w-angu	wan-gu	wa-ngu		∅-wangu		
3	w-angu	wan-gu	wa-ngu		∅-wangu		
4	y-angu	yan-gu	ya-ngu			∅-yangu	
5	l-angu			l-angu			
6	y-angu	yan-gu	ya-ngu			∅-yangu	
7	ch-angu						∅-changu
8	vy-angu					v-yangu	
9	y-angu	yan-gu	ya-ngu			∅-yangu	
10	z-angu			z-angu			
11			u-ngu				
14							
15	kw-angu		ku-ngu				
16	p-angu		pa-ngu				

### 7.3 *-ko* of location (from *ku-o*)

All but one of the forms in Table Table 23 is correctly analyzed, but because a word can be multiply analyzed, quite a few have more than one analysis, which is not what we want to see here. In addition to the root *-ko*, other stems are incorrectly seen in one form or another: *-iko*, *-ako*, *-uko*, *-mko*, *-yako*, *-tuko*, *-niko* and even *-kiko*. The wrong analyses here are clearly motivated by the presence of words that are grammatically irrelevant but which *Linguistica*'s lack of understanding of real grammar makes it incapable of ignoring. This is an area that we hope to explore more in the near future.

Table 23: -ko (from ku-o) of location

class	gold	stan-	<i>Linguistica hypothesis</i>
dard	∅ -a-i-	∅ -al-k	∅ -al
	ki-ku-li-	l-n-v-	∅ -a
	m-ni-tu-	z	k-l-z
	u-vi-wa-		
	ya-zi		
	-ko	-iko	
1st sg	ni-ko	ni-ko	n-iko
1st pl	tu-ko	tu-ko	∅ -tuko
2nd sg	u-ko	u-ko	
2nd pl	m-ko	m-ko	∅ -mko
1	yu-ko		
2	wa-ko	wa-ko	w-ako
3	u-ko	u-ko	∅ -uko
4	i-ko	i-ko	∅ -iko
5	li-ko	li-ko	l-iko
6	ya-ko	ya-ko	y-ako
7	ki-ko	ki-ko	k-iko
8	vi-ko	vi-ko	v-iko
9	i-ko	i-ko	∅ -iko
10	zi-ko	zi-ko	z-iko
11	u-ko	u-ko	
15	ku-ko	ku-ko	k-uko
	u-ko	u-ko	

## 8 Conclusions

What do we think that the reader should make of the work presented here? It is, after all, a computational model trying to perform as well as a trained human linguist, and in many respects does not come up to the standards of the linguist. Some things it can do better than a human, such as paying careful attention the fact that many different combinations of the class prefixes appear and yet not all with the same frequencies. And it can do relatively poorly on analyzing the possessive form *-angu*. Still, it is not unreasonable to observe that if we were to be handed a wordlist of 300,000 words in an unknown language, having *Linguistica* as a tool would be a fabulous resource.<sup>12</sup>

One otherwise sympathetic reader of an earlier version of this paper expressed the view that we have not given the reader a good enough sense of where *Linguistica* fails. We have pointed to a few cases of errors, but not given a global sense of the balance of success and failure. That criticism is entirely correct. There are two challenges that *Linguistica* does not handle well which are import for dealing correctly with a Bantu language, and we have seen them here. The first is decided which signatures should be “collapsed,” i.e., seen as the same signature. For example, in Figure 7 we see 18 signatures with small differences of prefixes. *Linguistica* should be able to take the next leap, which is to say that it should treat all of these as belonging to the largest signature, thus making predictions about possible but unseen words. It should, that is, realize that the affixes that are “missing” in various cases are only accidentally missing. This problem arises in every language that we have worked on (or know of!), and it is a challenge that we are working. Note that solving this problem includes *not* placing a signature such as *ki-vi* in with the verbal prefix signatures (and many other cases of the same sort: we need to keep separate verbal, adjectival, and nominal prefix sets, which is not at all a trivial thing to do). A second problem (which is not unrelated to the first, but all of these problems are in one fashion or another related) involves correctly identifying the “left to right slots,” so to speak: to correctly identify relative clause markers as something different from Object Markers, for example. Perhaps the reader should take away the message that very interesting things are done right by *Linguistica*’s analysis, but we are not in a position to say that *Linguistica* really has the big picture of the morphology correctly sketched.

One of the hotly debated topics in linguistic theory over the last forty years has been the question as to whether the human ability to learn language is some-

---

<sup>12</sup>There are similar projects undertaken as we write this, including work on the Voynich manuscript (see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voynich\\_manuscript](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voynich_manuscript)) and on Iberian (see <http://ibers.cat/corpuseng.html>).

thing similar in character to other human abilities. Yet while the project that we have described here is one of the relatively few language-learning projects that works on large collections of raw text, it is not at all clear which group of linguists should be happy with the successes that we have documented here. Do the steps in the algorithm that we have used seem like the kinds of things that a Chomskian rationalist would expect to find in a Universal Grammar? The honest answer is simple: who know? Suppose (as we believe, on better days) that the present project is one of the best examples of modeling grammar acquisition. If that is so, we have no reason to say that this is not what a rationalist learning algorithm looks like. On the other hand, the person who is uncomfortable with the *deus ex machina* character of Chomskian Universal Grammar could perfectly reasonably say that Linguistica's careful analysis of large amounts of data is exactly what puts this project in the empiricist, and not the rationalist, camp. But that too would be the voice of prejudice. The rationalist has no solid grounds for insisting that the language learner is incapable of handling large amounts of data and learning from it.

In the end, a principal interest of this project is that it allows us to built a truly explicit learning algorithm, working not on toy data (small amounts of selected data) but on very large and real data sets. That, in turn, provides us with a useful tool for better studying real and large corpora in linguistically sound ways.



# Chapter 18

## Tense and aspect in Akan serial verb constructions

Augustina Owusu<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Rutgers University

In Akan, tense and aspect in serial verb constructions have different distributions. Tense is repeated on all the verbs; aspect only appears on the first verb, the following verbs have the *à* marker. In this paper, I argue that this difference in distribution is a consequence of being evaluated by different syntactic mechanisms. Evaluation of unvalued features is licensed by two syntactic mechanisms, *Agree* and *Selection/Sel(ect)-Merge*. In Akan, tense is evaluated by *Agree* and aspect by *Selection*. The *-à* morpheme that appears on the non-initial verbs in these clauses is the phonological realization of the morphosyntactic feature bundles [-prog,-fut]. Tense morphology depicts T-v *Agree*. The same tense inflection on all the verbs appears on verbs because one T-head parallel-*Agrees* with all of them. Since a single T-head cannot have different interpretations, it results in the matching restriction.

### 1 Introduction

In this paper, I claim that both *Agree* and *Selection* mechanisms are necessary to explain the morphological distribution of tense and aspect in Akan Serial Verb Constructions (SVCs). In SVCs, tense morphology occurs on the first verb and all subsequent verbs. Aspect, on the other hand, occurs on the first verb, and all subsequent verbs take the *à* morpheme/ consecutive marker (Dolphyne1996, Osam2003). I propose that the mechanism responsible for tense evaluation is *Agree*. There is a single T, which *Agrees* with all the verbs in SVCs relation, (PesetskyTorrego2007). Aspect in Akan, on the other hand, is valued by *Selection*. Following the idea in Kandybowicz2010, Kandybowicz2015 that aspect in



merged within the vP in Akan, I posit two aspect projections in Akan: outer aspect, a projection above the vP where aspect is interpreted, and lower aspect where the aspect is base generated. There is a compatibility/selection requirement between inner and outer aspect features. Since Selection is strictly between sisters, I adopt *Webelhuth1992*'s percolation principles to percolate inner aspect features to the sister of outer aspect.

The data and how the distribution of tense and aspect in Akan compared to other related languages are discussed in the next section. Then in §3, I argue that Akan SVCs are covert coordination of vPs. The analysis of how tense and aspect have the particular distribution they do is discussed in §4. §5 is the conclusion.

## 2 The data

In Akan SVCs, tense morphology occurs on all verbs, as shown in example (1a-i), the past tense morpheme is present on the verb *throw*, and the verb *go*. However, not all tense sequences are allowed. For instance, example (1b-i) with past tense on the first verb and present tense on the second verb is ungrammatical. Also, the sequence, tense on the first verb, aspect on the second verb, is ungrammatical, as illustrated by (1c-i).

(1) (Akan)<sup>1</sup>

a. V(Pst) V(Pst)

- i. Kofi to-o      boo    kɔ-ɔ    dan    no    mu.  
Kofi throw-PST stone go-PST room DEF PostP  
'Kofi threw a stone into the room.'

b. \* V(T (Pst) V(T(Present)

- i. \* Kofi to-o      boo    kɔ    dan    no    mu.  
Kofi throw-PST stone go.PRES room DEF PostP

c. \* V(Pst) V(Asp)

- i. \* Kofi to-o      boo    re-kɔ    dan    no    mu.  
Kofi throw-PST stone PROG-go room DEF PostP

Based on the data above, there appears to be a restriction in the grammar that requires that SVCs must have the same tense specification.

Aspect in these SVCs has a different set of restrictions. Only the first verb can have actual aspect morphology, i.e., the morphology that shows up in simple

<sup>1</sup>All unattributed examples are from the author, a native speaker of the Asante Twi dialect of Akan.

clauses. All subsequent verbs have the *à*- morpheme, which Dolphyne1996 and Osam2003 refer to as the consecutive marker as in example (2a-i). In (2a-i), *throw* occurs with prefix *re-* which marks progressive aspect, but *go* occurs with the *à*-morpheme. Unlike tense, having the same aspect on all the verbs is ungrammatical, as in (2b). Also, as shown in example (2c), aspect on *throw*, and past tense on *go* is also ruled out.

## (2) a. V(Asp) V(à)

- i. Akan (Personal knowledge)

Kofi re-to        boo    à-kɔ        dan    mu.

Kofi PROG-throw stone CONS-go room PostP

'Kofi is throwing a stone for it to go into the room.'

## b. \* V(Asp) V(Asp)

- i. Akan (Personal knowledge)

\* Kofi re-to        boo    re-kɔ-ɔ        dan    mu.

Kofi PROG-throw stone PROG-go room PostP

## c. \* V(Asp) V(Past)

- i. Akan (Personal knowledge)

\* Kofi re-to        boo    kɔ-ɔ        dan    mu.

Kofi PROG-throw stone go-PST room PostP

The *à*- morpheme is ambiguous between the perfect marker and the consecutive marker. In (3), for instance, the sentence is grammatical if *à*- is interpreted as perfect, but ungrammatical if interpreted as the consecutive morpheme.

## (3) Kofi à-da.

Kofi PERF/\*CONS-sleep

'Kofi has slept.'

The distribution of tense and aspect in Akan SVCS, especially the multiple occurrences of tense on all verbs, distinguishes Akan from related languages such as Ewe. In Ewe SVCs, tense and aspect only marked once, a non-affix that precedes all the verbs, illustrated in the example below from Collins1997.

## (4) Ewe (Collins1997)

Ekpe a    f    o    kɔpo yi        xɔ-me.

rock FUT hit cup go    room-in

'A rock will hit a cup into the room.'

'A rock will hit a cup, and the cup will go into the room.'

Tense attaches to neither of the verbs. The distribution of the tense morpheme in Ewe is in assonance with BakerStewart2002's (BakerStewart2002) observation that most in most SVC languages there is no feature checking between the T and v thus no tense morphology on the verb.

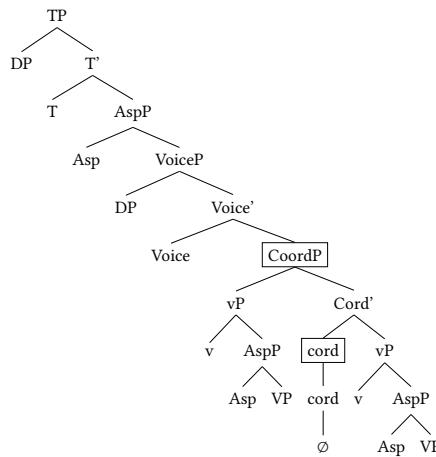
In the next section, I argue that what has hitherto been termed SVCs in Akan is covert coordination of vPs.

### 3 SVCs as coordinate constructions

Pace Martin2011, I argue that Akan SVCs involve covert coordination of little vPs. I assume that subjects are merged in voiceP (Kratzer1996). As such, there is only one subject position and tense position in these constructions. The presence of a single subject position accounts for the fact that there can only be one subject position. Further, the single tense position explains the tense restriction. Though there is a lot of disagreement in the literature on what qualifies as SVCs, they are generally assumed to have the following features: contain at least two (main) verbs in what appears to be a single clause, (Veenstra1993): have only one (phonologically non-null) subject and no overt subordination or coordination markers (JansenEtAl1978) and (Sebba1987). Verbs in SVCs typically have the same specification for tense, mood, aspect, and polarity, (Baker1989) and (Collins1997). The disagreement on SVCs also extends to the right kind of analysis for SVCS. Analyses of SVCs can be divided into three broad categories: complementation (Baker1989, BakerStewart2002, Collins1997, Aboh2009), adjunction (BakerStewart2002), and and coordination (Agbedor1994). The present proposal falls under the coordination account.

Akan covert coordination (SVCs) have the following structure.

(5)



Following Kandybowicz2010, Kandybowicz2015, I maintain that aspect originates inside vP in Akan, the consequence of this is that there are multiple aspects in SVCs. In addition, I posit another aspect outside vP, which I refer to as **outer aspect**. Outer aspect is the position where aspect is interpreted. This move is necessarily since aspect cannot be interpreted within little vP. Aspect is a event quantifier,  $\langle\langle et \rangle\langle it \rangle\rangle$ , it cannot compose with the semantic type of its sister, VP.

The covert coordination accounts for the differences between Akan SVCs and SVcs in related languages. Another feature that distinguishes Akan SVCs from others is the absence of object sharing, i.e., two transitive verbs sharing the same object. In most languages, the shared object is sandwiched in between the two verbs, as in example (6).

(6) Dàgáárè (HiraiwaBodomo2008)

- a. ò dà sé la nénè õò.  
3SG PST roast F meat eat  
'He roasted meat and ate it.'
- b. \* ò dà sé la õò nénè.  
3SG PST roast F eat meat  
'He roasted meat and ate it.'

The sentence is ungrammatical if the object follows the last verb. In Akan, however, all transitive verbs get their own objects as illustrated in (7).

- (7) Kofi kye-e abɔfra no bo-o no.  
Kofi catch-PST child DET beat-PST 3SG  
'Kofi caught the child and spanked him.'<sup>2</sup>

In this sentence, the object of *catch* and *beat* are semantically the same, the child. However, each verb has its own syntactically realized object; the object of *catch* is 'the child' while the syntactic object of *beat* is the 3rd person singular pronoun.

## 4 Distribution and analysis of tense and aspect

In this section, I account for the difference in the distribution of tense and aspect in SVCs. I propose that different mechanisms value tense and aspect; tense by AGREE and aspect by SELECTION. The analysis of tense is spelled out below, and the analysis of aspect in §4.2.

### 4.1 Tense

In §3, I propose a structure for SVCs that include only one tense projection. Recall that in Akan tense is marked on all verbs in an SVC, but the verbs necessarily have to match. This is why (8b) is ungrammatical.

- (8) a. Kofi tɔ-ɔ aduane di-i.  
Kofi buy-PST food eat-PST  
'Kofi bought food to eat.'  
b. \* Kofi tɔ-ɔ aduane re-di.  
Kofi buy-PST food PROG-eat

I argue the tense restriction we see in SVCs is a result of this single T projection simultaneously Agreeing with all verbs. To account for the relation between the single tense projection and the multiple verbs in SVCs, I adopt PesetskyTorrego2007's (PesetskyTorrego2007) theory of Agree, and an adaption of Hiraiwa2001's (Hiraiwa2001). Multiple Agree. Since Multiple Agree is defined for goals that are in a c-command relation, I defined Parallel Agree to account for the SVCs context where there is no c-command between the goals.

---

<sup>2</sup>Inanimate pronouns are independently dropped clause final.

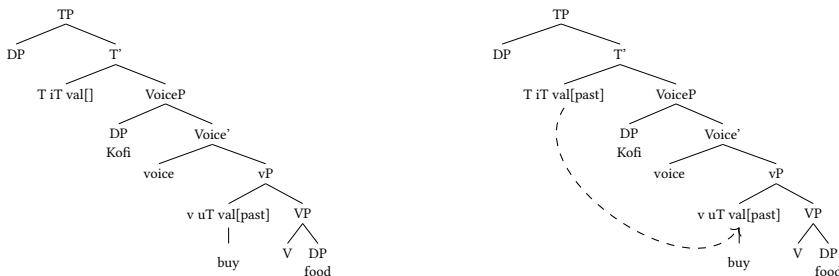
- a. Kofi kye-e nam we-e.  
Kofi catch-PST meat chew-PST  
'Kofi catch fish and ate it.'

Agree, according to PesetskyTorrego2007, is feature sharing. They argue that agreement involves features of lexical items that differ as to whether they are valued/unvalued and interpretable/uninterpretable.

	Interpretable	Uninterpretable	
(9)	Valued	[iF:F]	[uF:F]
	Unvalued	[iF:]	[uF:]

Certain lexical items come from the lexicon unvalued and receive valuation from a valued instance of the same feature present on another lexical item. Interpretability, on the other hand, is concerned with whether or not a feature of a particular lexical item makes semantic contributions to the interpretation of that item. For instance, the tense feature on verbs is valued but not interpretable, but tense feature on T is not valued but interpretable. In their theory, Agree leads to feature sharing, not feature deletion. The Agree relation is illustrated below with the sentence in (10).

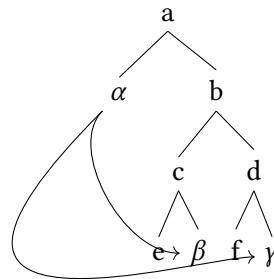
- (10) Kofi bought food.



Agree is thus a two-step process. For instance, the interpretable but unvalued tense feature on T, ([iT val[]]), probes its c-command domain for the uninterpretable but valued tense feature on v, ([uT val[past]]). When it finds it, Agree is established, and T and V now share the tense feature ([iT val[past]] and ([uT val[past]]). If this Agree relation were not established, then the tense feature would not receive an interpretation.

The Agree relation is, however, only defined for T Agreeing with a single head. To apply for the T to Agree with multiple verbs, I propose a modification of Hiraiwa2001, which allows T to Agree with goals that are not in a c-commands relation. I refer to the modified Multiple Agree process as **Parallel Agree** defined below.

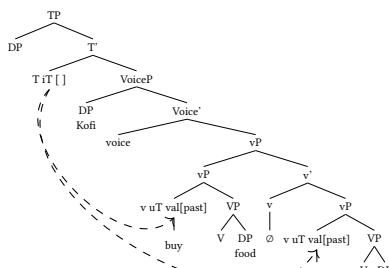
- (11) Parallel Agree with a single probe is a single simultaneous syntactic operation: Agree applies to all matched goals at the same derivational point. There is no c-command between the goals.



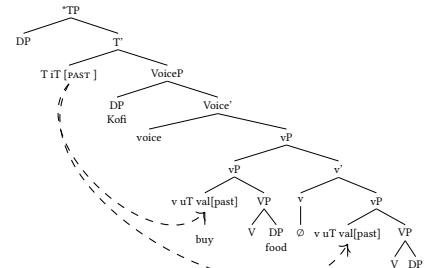
*Agree ( $\alpha, \beta, \gamma$ ), where  $\alpha$  is a probe and  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$  are matching goals for  $\alpha$  and they do not c-command each other.*

With Parallel Agree, we can derive the Agree relation with the single T projection in SVCs with all the verbs in an SVC. This is illustrated below.

- (12) a.



- b.

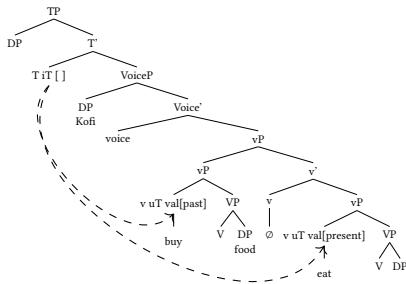


In this derivation, T probes and matches with all the verbs then simultaneously Agree with them. The unvalued but interpretable T feature ([iT []]) on T applies to all the matched goals derivationally simultaneously, establishing Agree (iT[PST]...uT val[PST]...uT val[PST]).

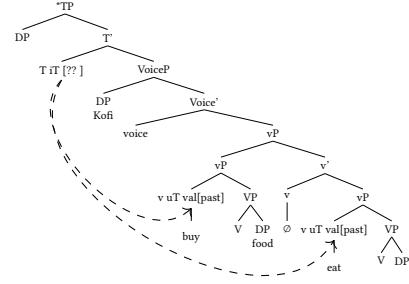
Now we can explain the matching restriction in SVCs. Since T can only have one

interpretable feature, we predict that for a sentence to be grammatical, all the verbs in the sentence must have the same tense feature. For instance, if the first verb is valued for past tense, and the second verb is valued for the present tense, T receives two different tense values to interpret, therefore, uninterpretable.

(13) a.



b.



## 4.2 Aspect

The central claim in this section is that *à-* is the spell-out of an inner aspect head with content-less neutral features [-prog, -fut]. As we have already seen, *à-* is only licensed in coordinate constructions, not in other multi-verb constructions. I argue that this is due to the asymmetric relationship between the external and internal complement in coordinate structures. The distribution of aspect is shown in example (2) repeated here as (14).

(14) a. V(Asp) V(à)

- i. Kofi re-to      boo    à-kɔ      dan    mu.  
Kofi PROG-throw stone CONS-go room PostP  
'Kofi is throwing a stone for it to go into the room.'

b. \* V(Asp) V(Past)

- i. \* Kofi re-to      boo    kɔ-ɔ      dan    mu.  
Kofi PROG-throw stone go-PST room PostP

c. \* V(Asp) V(fut)

- i. \* Kofi re-to      boo    bɛ-kɔ      dan    mu.  
Kofi PROG-throw stone FUT-go room PostP

Cross-linguistically, aspect is thought to be below T, ( see Rizzi2004 Rizzi2013Notes a.o, Cinque2002, Cinque2006, RizziCinque2016 CinqueRizzi2010 a.o). Following Kandybowicz2010, Kandybowicz2015, I argue that aspect, in Akan, is merged lower, i.e., within the vP. However, as a quantifier of events (Hacquard2006), aspect is only interpretable above vP; therefore, aspect is not interpreted where it is base-generated in Akan. To solve this apparent mismatch, I argue that there is another aspect projection above vP, where aspect is interpreted. I refer to this projection as outer aspect. Inner aspect is the morphological projection of aspect.<sup>3</sup> Descriptively, Outer aspect and inner aspect are required to be compatible or match. Matching is checked through Selection/Sel(ect)-Merge. The proposal is that Outer aspect selects for an inner aspect with compatible features. Since Outer aspect and Inner aspect are not sisters, I assume that aspect features percolate to VoiceP, the sister of Outer aspect, where compatibility is checked. Webelhuth1992's (Webelhuth1992) percolation principles govern the feature percolation.

- (15)    a. If the head of XP is marked for the feature F, then F percolates to the XP. (same as projection of head features to maximal projections in the Minimalist framework)
- b. If the head of XP is not marked for F and spec of XP is marked for F, then F percolates from the specifier to the XP. (This could be done via the head, using spec-head agreement.)
- c. If neither the head of XP or spec XP is specified for a value of F(+ or -) and complement is specified, then complement can percolate features to XP.

These principles determine where features can percolate from.

Inner aspect is associated with three morphosyntactic feature bundles; [+prog, -fut] (**progressive**), [+fut, -prog] (**future**) and [-prog, -fut] (à). à has no semantic input. The interpretation of aspect is the union of outer aspect and inner aspect, but since Outer aspect has no value, Inner aspect determines the value of the construction. Through percolation, inner aspect features get to VoiceP where Outer aspect can check them for selection. I argue that since à has no semantic input, it is infelicitous in any position where it has to contribute to interpretation. This is what happens in the simple clause as in (3). In a simple clause, the feature

---

<sup>3</sup>The idea of two aspect projections in the syntax is a not new, inner aspect is used to refer to lexical aspect/situational aspect while outer aspect to grammatical/viewpoint aspect,(see Travis2010, Travis1991, Smith1991, MacDonald2006). In Tagalog and Navajo, Inner aspect also encodes grammatical aspect (Travis2010)

bundle of  $\dot{a}'$  percolate to VociP where it is accessible to Outer aspect, but there is no interpretable aspect features. We can extend the same argument to all contexts where consecutive  $\dot{a}$ - is not felicitous. For instance, as the verb in an SVC, the features of  $\dot{a}$ - has to percolate to Outer aspect for interpretation. The analysis here borrows the idea from Zhang2009 that the external conjuncts are privileged, i.e., it is only the features of the external conjunct that are relevant for feature selection.

For instance, a verb that does not select for a CP complement can take a conjoined DP and CP as its complement as long as they are in that order. In (??), though the preposition *on* selects a DP, it can take a conjoined DP and CP, only if the DP is in the external conjunct.

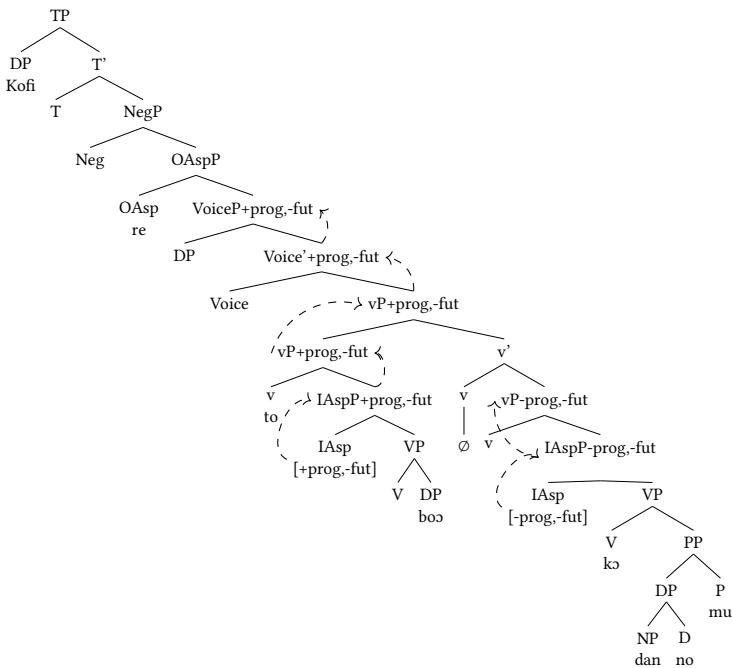
- (16) a. You can depend on my assistant and that he will be on time. (DP & CP)  
 b. You can depend on that he will be on time.

In the same way,  $\dot{a}$ - is only licensed in the internal conjunct of a coordinate clause. The  $\dot{a}$ -[+prog, -fut] in an internal conjunct position does not percolate to VoiceP and is not selected by Outer aspect for interpretation. The only features that are accessible to the outer aspect are the Inner aspect features in the external conjunct. The tree in (??) is a representation of example (14a-i) above.<sup>4</sup>

- (17)

---

<sup>4</sup>A reviewer notes that the feature percolation proposed leads to us expect arbitrarily long-distance morphological dependencies. This is indeed a problem for feature percolation. For now I assume that features can percolate until they met an operator that check those features.



This same logic can be used to account for the ungrammaticality of *à* in both the \*V(*à*) V(*à*) and \*V(*à*) V(Asp) sequence. But nothing I have said so far rules out having two overt aspects with interpretation, i.e., \*V(Asp) V(Asp), though empirically it is ungrammatical. I derived the ungrammaticality of these sequence from an economy of interpretation principle modeled after Boskovic1997Book's minimal structure principle.

Please verify that you intend to cite **Boskovic1997Book** and not **Boskovic1997Wh**.

### (18) Economy of interpretation

Provided that lexical requirements of relevant elements are satisfied, if two representations have the same gross syntactic structure and have the same interpretation, then the version that has fewer *+features* is chosen as the morphosyntactic representation serving that function.

- (19)
  - a. \*re (+prog, -fut) + re (+prog, -fut)
  - b. \*re (+prog, -fut) + be (-prog, +fut)
  - c. re (+prog, -fut) + à- (-prog, -fut)

Based on the privileged position of external conjuncts of coordinate structures and the fact that the feature percolation principle requires that features percolate from the specifier, all the cases in (??) end up with the same aspect interpretation. As such, semantically they serve the same function. Therefore, the simplest version, i.e., ??, with the least number of *+features* is chosen.

## 5 Conclusion

I have argued that tense and aspect have different distributions in these clauses because they are governed by distinct mechanisms, tense by Agree and aspect by Selection. The *-à* morpheme that appears on the non-initial verbs in these clauses is the phonological realizations of the morphosyntactic feature bundles [-prog, -fut] of inner aspect. It is only licensed in a position where its aspectual features do not percolate to a VoiceP. Tense morphology depicts T-v Agree. There are multiple instances of tense because a single T head parallel-Agrees with all the verbs. Single T-head Agree results in the matching restriction. This difference in the mechanism used for the valuation of features is not arbitrary; it is governed by the position of the syntactic objects involved. There is one T merged in these constructions but multiple verbs with Tns features that need to be checked, the single T thus enter into an Agree relation with all of them. Aspect, on the other hand, is merged multiple times

## Abbreviations

<b>PROG</b>	Progressive
<b>FUT</b>	Fut
<b>PST</b>	Past
<b>PostP</b>	Postposition
<b>PRES</b>	Present
<b>CONS</b>	Consecutive Morpheme
<b>Cord</b>	COordinator
<b>PERF</b>	Perfect

## Acknowledgements

The chair of my second qualifying paper, Professor Mark Baker and my committee members, Ken Safir and Viviane Deprez help shaped most of the ideas in this

*Augustina Owusu*

paper. I will like to thank the Rutgers Syntax Reading group (STAR), your comments and insights helped improve this paper. I am also grateful to the participants of ACAL 49, your questions and comments were beneficial. I have benefited from the comments and insights of two anonymous reviewers.

*Draft of June 28, 2021, 12:35*

