On Applicatives and Their Properties[1]

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1. Introduction

In generative studies, applicative refers to a structure in which a verb carries a morpheme, phonologically realized or not, that licenses an oblique object that normally would not be considered part of the argument structure. This object, however, occurs as a direct object and behaves as a "true" object of the verb. The term applicative is mentioned in Bantu literature in as early as 1960's (cf. Guthrie, 1962). In generative studies, highlights are Baker (1988) and Marantz (1984, 1993).

(1) VENDA[4]

a. Mukasa o-amb-a.

Mukasa 3SG.PAST-speak-FV

'Mukasa spoke.'

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[4] The abbreviations used in this work are: 1SG, 1st person singular; 3SG, 3rd person singular; APPL, applicative; FOC, focus; FV, final vowel; LOC, locative; OM, object mark; PASS, passive; PRES, present tense; SM, subject mark; TNS, tense.

b. Mukasa o-amb-el-a Katonga.

Mukasa 3SG.PAST-speak-APPL-FV Katonga

'Mukasa spoke for Katonga.' (beneficiary reading)

(Pylkkänen, 2008:2)

The examples in (1) show that Venda allows the introduction of an "extra" non-essential argument, affected by the event.

The dative shift, or double object construction, is also considered a type of applicative structure (Baker, 1988; Marantz, 1993), for they resemble the Bantu structure.

(2) ENGLISH

a. I baked a cake.

b. I baked *John* a cake.

Notwithstanding, there are distributional differences between the Bantu and the English structures: only the Bantu construction allows adding the extra object to unergative verbs.

(3) CHAGA

a. N-ä-i-zrìc-í-à mbùyà.

FOC-1SG-PRES-run-APPL-FV 9-friend

'He is running for a friend.'

(Bresnan and Moshi, 1993:49–50)

(4) ENGLISH

a. I ran.

b. *I ran *John*.

There are several studies trying to explain these differences (cf. Baker, 1988; Marantz, 1984, 1993; Pylkkänen, 2008; Jeong, 2006; among many others). Mostly focus on either the semantic properties of the affectedness of the verb and the relation of the applied argument with the verb and the basic (direct) object (cf. Pylkkänen, 2002, 2008), or the syntactic properties of the applied and basic objects (cf. Baker, 1988; Bresnan and Moshi, 1990; McGinnis, 2001; Jeong, 2006; Ngonyani & Githinji, 2006).

The main objective of the present study is to verify the classification of the bantu language Nyanja[5] according to the current typology studies on applicatives. In order to do so, we will revisit the applicative literature and present some syntactic properties of Nyanja.

2. Syntactic properties of the applied and basic objects

Baker (1988) proposes that applicatives are an instance of incorporation, namely preposition incorporation. He noted that, in many languages, the preposition and the applicative affix resemble each other, are in complementary distribution, and the theta-roles they assign juxtapose. Baker proposes three types of language: languages that show, at the same time, preposition and applicative affix, such as Chichewa; languages that just display prepositions, such as European languages; and languages that only have the verbal affix, such as Tzotzil.

[5] The language Nyanja, is spoken in three provinces in Mozambique, namely Niassa, Zambézia and Tete. It is also spoken in Malawi (as national language) and Zambia. According to data from the 2007 census (INE, 2010) there are 905,062 speakers of Nyanja in Mozambique. Coded N.31 in Guthrie classification.

Analyzing syntactic properties of the applied object, Baker (1988:246) recognizes a paradoxical pattern he calls *Marantz's Generalization*: the applied object behaves more canonically than the basic/direct object of the verb, that is, it displays more object properties than the direct object, such as object marking in the verb.

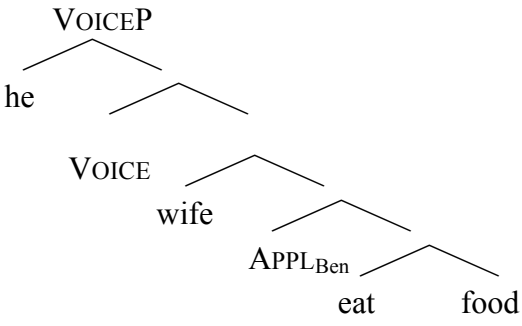
Marantz's Generalization is revisited by Bresnan and Moshi (1990), when they propose a typology of object behavior in applicative languages: they identified symmetrical and asymmetrical languages. Three tests are used: a) object order, b) passivization and c) object marking. In symmetrical languages, both the applied and basic object display the same behavior, whereas in asymmetrical languages, the applied object behaves differently from the basic object. The following table details the typology:

	Symmetrical object languages	Asymmetrical object languages
Object order	(i) AO DO (ii) DO AO	(i) AO DO (ii) *DO AO
Passivization	(i) AO (ii) DO	(i) AO (ii) *DO
Object marking	(i) AO (ii) DO	(i) AO (ii) *DO

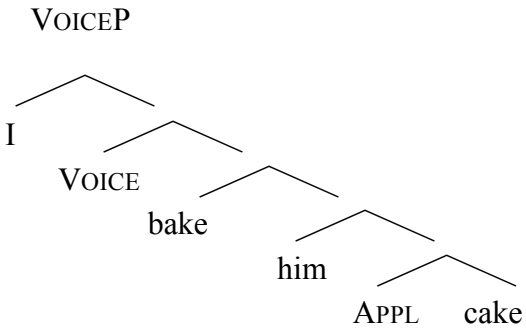
Pylkkänen (2002, 2008) proposed another typology of applicatives, based in semantic and syntactic differences. She noted that Bantu-like structures thematically relate an event described by the verb and the applied argument, while English-like (i.e. dative shift) structures describe a transfer of possession relation between two individuals, the applied argument being the goal or source of the possession of the theme (basic/direct object). Pylkkänen proposes, then, two applicative heads: HIGH

APPL, that selects an event as its complement, relating the applied argument to the event; LOW APPL, which in turn is subdivided in two types, LOW SOURCE APPL and LOW GOAL APPL, that relates two individuals in a transfer of possession event. The labels indicate where the head attaches in derivation, higher or lower than the verb root. HIGH APPL is roughly equivalent to Bresnan & Moshi's symmetrical applicative, while LOW APPL is equivalent to asymmetrical applicative.

(5) HIGH APPL (CHAGA)



(6) LOW APPL (ENGLISH)



Pylkkänen proposes some tests to diagnose HIGH and LOW APPL, summarized in the following table:

Test	**HIGH APPL**	**HOW APPL**
Can unergatives be applicativized?	Yes	No
Can static verbs be applicativized?	Yes	No
If a language has a depictive secondary predicate with the English distribution, is the applied argument available for depictive modification? (Example: I gave Mary *the meat raw*. / *I gave *Mary* the meat *hungry*. [Baker, 1997:23c,d *apud* Pylkkänen, 2008])	Yes	No

McGinnis (2001, 2004) argues that the variation in the grammatical properties of applicatives can be explained in terms of phase structure. To assume that HIGH APPL heads a phase, whereas LOW APPL does not, explains the different properties of the structures.

3. Applicatives and their properties

The literature of applicatives basically focuses on two aspects: semantic or syntactic properties of applied arguments. We can summarize the syntactic properties of applicatives we found on the literature as follows:

i. HIGH APPL (or symmetric applicatives) constitute phases, thus allowing for the object properties Baker described in Marantz's Generalization. LOW APPL (or asymmetric applicatives) do not constitute phases, resulting in the restrictions of A-movement and transitivity.
ii. Marantz's Generalization: the applied argument behaves as a true verbal argument. It can be subject of passives and can trigger object marking/pronominalization.

The semantic properties of applicatives can be summarized as follows:

i. There are two kinds of applicative heads that convey different semantic information, namely relation between an applied argument and an event and transfer of possession relation between two individuals.
ii. Also, there is a great range of thematic roles applicatives can assign, such as benefactive, locative, source, goal etc (cf. Baker, 1988; Pylkkänen, 2002, 2008).

4. Applicative constructions in Nyanja[6]

In order to test the applicative properties aforementioned, some tests were applied to the Bantu language Nyanja. As in other Bantu languages, the affix {*-il-*/*-el-*} allows for the realization of another argument that is assigned a new theta-role. The applicative morpheme can be attached to several kinds of verbs in Nyanja, such as unergatives, unaccusatives and transitives. Consider the following examples:

(8) UNERGATIVES

a. Kondwane wa-thamang-il-a Mingas.
Kondwane SM-run-APPL-FV Mingas
'Kondwane chased Mingas.'

b. Kondwane wa-mu-yend-el-a Mingas
Kondwane SM-OM-walk-APPL-FV Mingas
'Kondwane ran for Mingas.'

(9) UNACCUSATIVES

a. Mwamuna wa-f-el-a Kondwane.
man MS-die-APPL-VF Kondwane
'The man died for Kondwane.'

b. mwamuna wa-gw-el-a Kondwane

[6] The data in this section is taken from Rocha (2014).

homemSM-fall-APPL-FV Kondwane

'The man fell on top of Kondwane.'

(10) TRANSITIVES

a. Kondwane wa-gwil-il-a Mingas thumba.

Kondwane MS-hold-APPL-VF Mingas purse

'Kondwane held the purse for Mingas.'

b. Kondwane wa-tumiz-il-a Mingas kalata

Kondwane SM-send-APPL-FV Mingas letter

'Kondwane sent the letter for Mingas (beneficiary reading).'

Example (8b) is ambiguous: the verb *kuyenda* "walk" can be interpreted as "walk for" or "visit". This ambiguity is related to thematic role, which can be beneficiary or goal. The object marking *-mu-* dissolves the ambiguity.

Nyanja shows some restrictions in object order. The examples in (11) show that the sentence is not well received by the consultant when the basic object intervenes between the verb and the applied object (bold). That is, Nyanja exhibits rigid word order in absence of object marking.

(11) OBJECT ORDER RESTRICTIONS

a. ?Kondwane wa-gwil-il-a t^humba **Mingas**.

Kondwane SM-hold-APPL-FV purse **Mingas**

'Kondwane held the purse for Mingas.'

b. ?Kondwane wa-tumiz-il-a kalata **Mingas**

Kondwane SM-send-APPL-FV letter **Mingas**

'Kondwane sent the letter for Mingas (beneficiary reading).'

Nyanja only allows object marking[7] of the applied argument. Consider the following examples:

(12) OBJECT ORDER AND OBJECT MARKING RESTRICTIONS

a. Kondwane wa-**mu**-gwil-il-a **Mingas** t^{h}umba

Kondwane SM-**OM**-hold-APPL-FV **Mingas** purse

'Kondwane held the purse for Mingas.'

b. Kondwane wa-**mu**-gwil-il-a t^{h}umba (**Mingas)**

Kondwane SM-**OM**-hold-APPL-FV purse (**Mingas)**

'Kondwane held the purse for Mingas.'

c. *Kondwane wa-**li**-gwil-il-a Mingas **t^{h}umba**

Kondwane SM-**OM**-hold-APPL-FV Mingas **purse**

'Kondwane held the purse for Mingas (intended meaning).'

The data in (11) and (12) shows that object marking is optional in Nyanja, and only the applied argument can trigger object marking: (12c) shows that the basic object cannot trigger object marking. In the presence of this marking the applied object can be implicit or not adjacent to the verb, as in (12b).

[7] For a discussion about object marking, cf. among others, Bresnan and Mchombo 1987; Baker 2008; Downing 2014. We will not pick any side in the discussion between object marking as pronominalization or agreement, mainly because the data suggests that, in Nyanja, it could behave as both.

In Nyanja both the applied and basic object can be subject of passives. Consider the following examples:

(13) PASSIVES

a. **Mingas** wa-yend-el-edw-a (ndi Kondwane).
Mingas SM-walk-APPL-PASS-FV (by Kondwane)
'Mingas was walked for (by Kondwane).'

b. **Mingas** wa-gwil-il-idw-a t^{h}umba (ndi Kondwane)
Mingas SM-hold-APPL-PASS-FV purse (by Kondwane)
'For Mingas the purse was held (by Kondwane).'

c. Thumba la-gwil-il-idw -a **Mingas** (ndi Kondwane).
purse SM-hold-APPL-PASS-FV Mingas (by Kondwane)
'The purse was held for Mingas (by Kondwane).'

The examples in (13) show that both the applied (bold) (13a,b) and basic (13c) objects can become subjects of passives.

Now, based on the typologies seen in section 2 and the properties exemplified in (11)-(13), let us identify the typological profile of the language Nyanja.

As aforementioned, Bresnan & Moshi proposed three tests to identify an applicative language as symmetric or asymmetric. Considering data in (11-13), the table below shows how Nyanja compares to the typology:

	Symmetrical object languages	Asymmetrical object languages	Nyanja
Object order	(i) AO DO (ii) DO AO	(i) AO DO (ii) *DO AO	(i) AO DO (ii) DO AO (with object marking) (iii) *DO AO (without object marking)
Passivization	(i) AO (ii) DO	(i) AO (ii) *DO	(i) AO (ii) DO
Object marking	(i) AO (ii) DO	(i) AO (ii) *DO	(i) AO (ii) *DO

The table shows that regarding Bresnan and Moshi's typology, Nyanja behaves as a symmetrical language as of passivization, since it allows for both objects to become subjects of passives. However, it behaves as an asymmetrical language as of object marking and object order. Therefore, we can only classify it as asymmetric partially.

Considering Pylkkänen's typology, the table below shows how Nyanja compares to the typology:

Test	**High APPL**	**Low APPL**	**Nyanja**
Can unergatives be applicativized?	Yes	No	Yes
Can static verbs be applicativized?	Yes	No	Yes
If a language has a depictive secondary predicate with the English distribution, is the applied argument available for depictive modification? (Example: I gave Mary *the meat raw*. / *I gave *Mary* the meat *hungry*. [Baker, 1997:23c,d *apud* Pylkkänen, 2008])	Yes	No	?[8]

[8] We could not find this kind of structure with the consultant, but we will leave it open for more research.

The table shows that regarding Pylkkänen's typology, Nyanja can be classified as High Applicative language, despite the inconclusive nature of the depictive secondary predicate test.

5. Discussion and final remarks

The main goal of this work was to describe the behavior of applicatives in Nyanja and verify how this behavior fits the typologies discussed here. Revisiting applicative literature, we showed that applicatives are structures in which an "extra" argument can be licensed. We also showed that there are two different kinds of applicative structures, with different semantic and syntactic properties. We presented two typology proposals in the literature: the symmetric/asymmetric applicatives of Bresnan and Moshi (1990), and Pylkkänen's High and Low applicatives. We also attempted to test some of the aforementioned properties in Bantu language Nyanja and see how they fit in the typologies discussed. This discussion was important to test the adequacy of the typologies in classifying languages yet to be described.

6. References

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