

Syntactic Exorcism: Toward an LFG Analysis of Swahili ‘External Possession’

BY TERRILL B. SCHROCK

Student: Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics

Abstract

At the periphery of linguistic investigation lie those data that have yet to be satisfactorily explained. ‘External possession’ or ‘possessor-raising’ constructions often fall into this category, despite their widespread, cross-linguistic manifestation. Swahili of East Africa exhibits an ‘external possession’ construction which scholars have dealt with in a variety of ways. Until now, most analyses of Swahili ‘external possession’ have shared a common assumption: that ‘external’ and ‘internal’ possession encode the same meaning. This paper shows what might happen if the data in question are delivered from this assumption and how the results might look within a simplified Lexical-Functional (LFG) framework. The outcome is a reminder that it is never too late for another look at how the linguistic data present themselves phenomenologically.

1 Introduction

External possessor constructions (EPCs¹) like those found in Swahili constitute such a knotty syntactic problem that they are said to challenge fundamental premises in nearly all major theoretical frameworks (Payne & Barshi 1999:16). Typical, internal possessor constructions (IPCs) in Swahili comprise a possessed noun phrase and a modifying (genitive) possessor noun phrase. In an EPC, however, the possessor NP is said to be extracted or raised so that the possessor (PR) and the possessum (PM) are no longer in the same constituent.² The following examples³ contrast an IPC with an EPC:

- (1) a. *Asha a- li- vunja kidole cha Juma.*
 Asha 3SG-PST-break CL7.finger CL7.of Juma
 ‘Asha broke Juma’s finger (*lit.* ‘finger of Juma’).’
- b. *Asha a- li- m- vunja Juma kidole.*
 Asha 3SG-PST-3SG.OBJ-break Juma CL7.finger
 ‘Asha broke Juma’s finger.’

EPCs are difficult to explain because they are the site of converging syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic concerns. Consequently, the various analyses tend to focus more on one of these three areas of concern. The specific syntactic challenge EPCs present to Lexical-Functional Grammar (LFG) has to do with an apparent violation of the COHERENCE PRINCIPLE: the functional structure of a clause may not contain any argument which is not permitted by the subcategorization of its PRED (Kroeger 2004). If Swahili transitive verbs like *vunja* ‘break’ take two arguments—one agent and one theme/patient—how are these two arguments distributed over three noun phrases in (1b)?

The purpose of this paper is to attempt a provisional answer to the following question within a simplified LFG framework (Kroeger 2004, 2005): why are Swahili EPCs grammatically acceptable despite apparently violating the COHERENCE PRINCIPLE? In addition to syntax, semantics and pragmatics are crucial to finding such an answer and are considered throughout the study. To begin, the first section of the paper recounts previous analyses of Swahili EPCs. Following that, the discussion delves into one analysis that offers a potential solution and serves as a stepping stone from which the final section guides the reader through a simplified LFG approach to the problem.

¹ A.k.a. ‘possessor-raising’, ‘possessor-ascension’, or ‘genitive promotion’.

² Payne & Barshi (1997) define External Possessors as “any construction in which a semantic Possessor-possessed relation is expressed via coding the Possessor as a core grammatical relation of the verb...external to the constituent containing the possessed item” (395). The volume edited by Payne & Barshi (1997) provides an excellent comprehensive, cross-linguistic treatment of external possession.

³ Unless otherwise indicated, Swahili examples are from the author. My thanks go to Dar-es-Salaam native Erick Kitundu for helping me with my initial data collection and analysis.

2 Previous Analyses⁴

2.1 Swahili grammarians (e.g. Ashton 1944) have traditionally placed EPCs into a special NOMINAL CONSTRUCTION class for post-verbal nominals that are not morphologically marked on the verb or preceded by a preposition. Besides external possessors, this class of post-verbal nominals includes instrumentals and 'locative inversion', of which the following two sentences are examples:

- (2) a. *Waalimu wa-li- wa- piga wanafunzi fimbo.*
 CL2.PL.teacher 3PL.PST.3SG.OBJ-hit CL2.PL.student CL9.stick
 'The teachers hit the students with a stick.' (Instrumental)
- b. *Porini ku- na- kaa simba.*
 CL17.bush-LOC CL17.SUBJ-PRES-live CL9.lion
 'Lions live in the bush.' ('Locative Inversion')

Of these constructions, Ashton suggests that the post-verbal nominals are 'oblique', adding "some detail in respect to the action or state expressed by the verb, whether in time, place, manner or reason, etc." (299). Despite the superficial similarities, Keach & Rochemont (1995) demonstrate that EPCs cannot be satisfactorily included in Ashton's nominal construction class. Their proof consists of the following facts about Swahili: 1) post-verbal instrumentals like in (2a) can be optionally preceded by the preposition *kwa* 'with', while possessa in EPCs take no prepositions; 2) post-verbal instrumentals like in (2a) can become the subject of the active verb, while EPC possessa cannot.

2.2 Others (e.g. Hinnebusch & Kirsner 1980) relegate the interpretation of EPCs to pure pragmatics, saying the construction falls outside the purview of sentence grammars. This claim is made on the basis of a lack of morphological cues in the nominal constructions. Their conclusions do not support a syntactic account of the problem, but they do help distinguish some semantic restrictions on EPCs, namely the requirement of inalienable possession or possessor affectedness (H&K, p. 21):

- (3) a. *Ni- li- m- vunja Juma mguu.*
 1SG-PST-3SG.OBJ-break Juma CL3.leg
 'I broke Juma's leg.'
- b. **Ni- li- m- vunja Juma kiti.*
 1SG-PST-3SG.OBJ-break Juma CL7.chair
 'I broke Juma's chair.'

2.3 Scotton (1981) compromises between syntax and pragmatics by suggesting that Swahili EPCs involve an 'Extensive Case' which allows an additional argument to be pragmatically interpreted. This proposal effectively "inserts a grammatical layer between the sentence types of the Nominal Construction and their (pragmatic) interpretations" (Keach & Rochemont 1995:89). The extra grammatical layer for EPCs would be formulated as follows: NP1 (agent) + verb + NP2 (patient) + NP3 (extensive). The extensive-case NP would then receive its meaning through pragmatic interpretation.

On this point, Keach and Rochemont (1995, hereafter K&R) indicate the simplistic nature of calling the NP2 a 'patient', given the following sentences (89):

- (4) a. *ni- li- u- vunja mguu wa Juma*
 1SG-PST-CL3.OBJ-break CL3.leg CL3.of Juma
 'I broke Juma's leg.'
- b. *ni- li- m- vunja Juma mguu.*
 1SG-PST-3SG.OBJ-break Juma CL3.leg
 'I broke Juma's leg.'

⁴ The discussion in 2.1–2.4 draws heavily from Keach & Rochemont (1995).

As K&R wryly put it, “evidently, ‘leg’ is not the ‘patient’ in both these examples, although it is broken in both cases” (90). It is true that the leg is broken in both cases, but Scotton’s analysis is not so easily dismissed. Construed alternatively, Juma *is* broken in (4b), and ‘leg’ further specifies the site or extent of his brokenness (similarly to Ashton’s analysis). Nevertheless, the data in (5) below lend credibility to K&R’s critique (91):

- (5) a. *mganga a- li- ondoa risasi ya Juma*
 CL1.doctor 3SG-PST-remove CL9.bullet CL9.of Juma
 ‘The doctor removed Juma’s bullet.’
- b. *mganga a- li- mw- ondoa Juma risasi*
 CL1.doctor 3SG-PST-3SG.OBJ-remove Juma CL9.bullet
 ‘The doctor removed Juma’s bullet.’

Consider (5b) in which the NP2 (*Juma*) can hardly be construed as the semantic theme/patient of the verb. Semantically, it seems that the only thing being ‘removed’ in (5b) is the bullet. It is not a matter of specifying in what way or to what extent *Juma* is being removed. If the verb *ondoa* ‘remove’ takes a patient/theme, then the ‘bullet’ is it.

As part of their response to these prior analyses, K&R affirm the assumption that “it is very unlikely that the Swahili verb has an inalienable possessor thematic-role to assign to the postverbal argument in PR [possessor-raising]” (89). So if the first object in an EPC does have a possessor role, that role must be supplied by something other than the verb. The validity of this assumption is purportedly illustrated in the following data (89):

- (6) a. **ni-li- m- kata Juma*
 1SG-PST-3SG.OBJ-cut Juma
 ‘I cut Juma’s. (Okay as: ‘I cut Juma.’)’
- b. **ni -li- m- kat-ia Juma Asha.*
 1SG-PST-3SG.OBJ-cut-APPL Juma Asha
 ‘I cut Asha’s for Juma. (Okay as: ‘I cut Asha for Juma.’)’

(6a) portrays a situation in which only *Juma* can be construed as the patient of the transitive verb *kata* ‘cut’. The sentence in (6b) involves an applicative suffix that adds a beneficiary, and since the beneficiary is clearly not the patient of *kata* ‘cut’, the only other option for patient is *Asha*. According to K&R, if verbs like *kata* ‘cut’ did select a possessor argument, then the ungrammaticality of (6a) would be hard to explain semantically. That is, if one can say ‘cut Juma’s finger’, then why not ‘cut Juma’s’? But since ‘cut Juma’s’ it is not acceptable, the conclusion is that Swahili verbs do not select possessor arguments at all, with or without an explicit possessum.⁵

2.4 In summary, the overarching claim of K&R is that the proposals they surveyed, briefly reproduced here, fail to characterize the syntax, semantics, and pragmatics of EPCs. For their part, K&R offer a viable solution embodied in Government Binding (GB) theory, in which the thematic role and grammatical function criteria of the external possessor are met at different levels of representation. Their expressed goal is “to determine how PR is syntactically licensed” and to discover how GB can “explain the property of a construction containing an NP which does not receive a thematic-role from a verb but which nevertheless acts as an argument of the verb” (93).

A crucial step in their GB treatment is to demonstrate the inadequacy of a morpholexical account of EPs. Admittedly, Swahili does have applicative and causative suffixes that turn intransitives into

⁵ Their logic here is potentially misleading due to an over-reliance on the English glosses in (6), which include solitary post-verbal genitive NPs (*Juma’s*, *Asha’s*). Unlike English, Swahili simply does not exhibit genitive NPs in an active clause without its syntactically-encoded possessed NP. Since no known Swahili verb has an argument structure like <agt, poss>, the reason (6a–b) are ungrammatical is because they are structurally incomplete. What K&R show is not that the Swahili verb disallows a possessor thematic-role, but rather that a possessor cannot be the sole object of a verb.

transitives and transitives into ditransitives, but crucially, not ditransitives into tritransitives.⁶ Even predicates that are ditransitive in their basic form (like *kupa* 'to give') cannot take a valence-increasing suffix. It is only in an applicative/ causative + EP construction that three bare post-verbal nominals can be found:

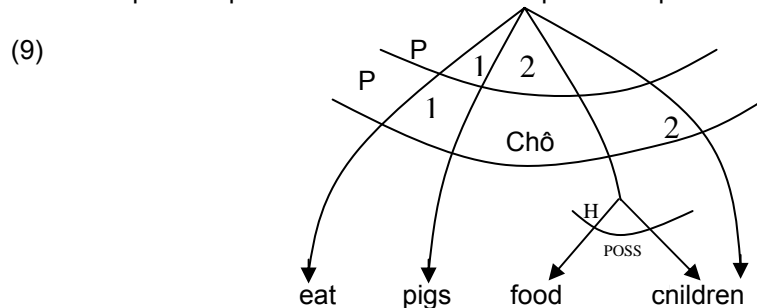
- (7) *ni- li- m- chan- ia Juma watoto nywele*
 1SG-PST-3SG.OBJ-comb-APP Juma CL2.children CL10.hair
 'I combed the children's hair for Juma.'

According to K&R, what this demonstrates is that if certain Swahili verbs can be tritransitive, then they are not so by virtue of a valence-increasing morpholexical operation. K&R's solution is to posit that in d-structure, an NP like *nywele za watoto* 'hair of children' receives its θ -role from the verb because of its immediate postverbal position. Likewise, the possessor *watoto* is assigned its θ -role in d-structure by virtue of its constituent relation to the possessum within the object NP. Through an intermediate derivational step, the possessor (*za*) *watoto* is 'raised' to the VP-specifier slot where it is assigned Abstract Case, thereby usurping *nywele za watoto* as the morphosyntactically-marked object of the verb. When this happens, the possessum *nywele* 'hair' no longer c-commands its possessor. In this way, the semantics of EPCs is satisfied in d-structure and the syntax in s-structure. Thus, in the spirit of transformational grammar, the problem of EPCs is relieved by invoking different levels of representation.

2.5 Several years later, Davies & Dubinsky (2004) offered an elegant Relational Grammar (RG) account of possessor 'promotion' in Kinyarwanda, a Bantu language related to Swahili. Their analysis addresses the following sentence pair (133):

- (8) a. *ingurube z- a- ri- iye ibíryo by'ábáana*
 pigs they-PST-eat-ASP food of.children
 'The pigs ate the children's food.'
- b. *ingurube z- a- ri- ir- iye ábáana ibíryo*
 pigs they-PST-eat-APP-ASP children food
 'The pigs ate the children's food.'

The syntactic structure of these sentences is nearly identical to the Swahili ones we have already seen. A crucial difference, however, is that Kinyarwanda makes use of the applicative suffix *-ir* to effect possessor promotion. That is, Kinyarwanda possessor promotion is a valence-increasing operation that assigns a clause-level grammatical relation to the possessor NP. In RG terms, this means that the grammar puts the 2-object of (8a), *ibíryo* 'food', out of employment and promotes the NP-internal possessor *ábáana* 'children' to 2-object status in (8b). This RG analysis is essentially similar to K&R's GB analysis in that the semantics of the promoted possessor is still reliant on its d-structure/first stratum relationship to the possessum and not to the predicate per se.



⁶ Comrie (1976) claims that Swahili can derive tritransitive clauses by adding a causative suffix to certain basically ditransitive verbs, as in: ?*Maria a-li-m-lip-ishiz-a Johni watoto pesa* 'Mary made John pay the money to the children.' But this example is complicated by the presence of two causative suffixes: *-ish* and *-iz*. Following Vitale (1981), K&R offer the counterclaim that "neither the causative nor the benefactive...may apply to an underived ditransitive" (94) like *lipa* 'pay' or *pa* 'give'.

Following Davies & Dubinsky, an alluring analysis would be to treat Swahili EPCs as a kind of applicative construction that increases verbal valence by one. However, Swahili EPCs are not accompanied by any applicative suffixation on the verb. When an applicative suffix is used, it results in a different meaning altogether:

- (10) *Asha a- li- m- vunj- ia Juma kidole.*
 Asha 3SG-PST-3SG.OBJ-break-APP Juma CL3.finger
 'Asha broke a/the finger for Juma.' (*'Asha broke Juma's finger.')

It is important to note that (10) is not derived from the basic transitive clause in (1a) and therefore is not in free variation with (1b). Instead, it is derived from the sentence *Asha alivunja kidole kwa (ajili ya) Juma* 'Asha broke the finger for (the sake of) Juma', in which *Juma* is construed as a beneficiary of the breaking action. So if Swahili EPCs are functionally analogous to applicative constructions, they must be like the 'Dative Shift' and certain causatives in English that do not exhibit morphological changes in the verb.

3 Potential Analysis

3.1 Building on the lucid insights of Keach & Rochemont in GB and Davies & Dubinsky in RG, we might simply translate their analyses of possessor-raising/promotion into the Lexical-Functional framework. A first step in that direction would be to establish the grammatical relations involved in Swahili EPCs. Objecthood tests laid out in Kroeger (2004) have been used here to show that the external possessor must be the primary object (OBJ) of the clause, leaving the possessum to function as a secondary object (OBJ₂). Specifically, the tests show that 1) Swahili primary objects are marked for agreement on the verb⁷, 2) are closer to the verb than secondary objects, and 3) can be passivized.

- (11) a. *Asha a- li- m- vunja Juma kidole.*
 Asha 3SG-PST-3SG.OBJ-break Juma CL7.finger
 'Asha broke Juma's finger.'
- b. **Asha a- li- ki- vunja Juma kidole.*
 Asha 3SG-PST-CL3.OBJ-break Juma CL3.finger
 'Asha broke Juma's finger.'
- c. *Juma a- li- vunj- wa kidole.*
 Juma 3SG-PST-break-PASS CL3.finger
 'Juma's finger was broken.'
- d. **Kidole ki- li- vunj- wa Juma.*
 CL3.finger CL3.SUBJ-PST-break-PASS Juma.
 'Juma's finger was broken.'

In (11a) the EP is marked for agreement on the verb and therefore must be the primary object. (11b) marks the verb for agreement with the secondary object, and the result is ungrammatical. In (11a–b) *Juma* is the closest postverbal NP to the verb, indicating its syntactic prominence over the more distant NP. (11c) is a direct passivization of (11a) wherein the possessor-OBJ is promoted to SUBJ. When the possessum-OBJ₂ is passivized, the result is ungrammatical. Together, these tests are taken to show that the EP in Swahili is the primary object, the possessum the secondary. With regard to semantic roles, in IPCs the Swahili data invariably encode the agent as the subject and the patient/theme as the object. But in EPCs, the patient/theme is encoded as the secondary object and the extra-thematic possessor as primary object.

3.2 As previously stated, K&R's analysis pivots on the assumption that "the possessor in these cases is not thematically related to the verb" (97). Likewise, the RG framework interprets the semantic role of the

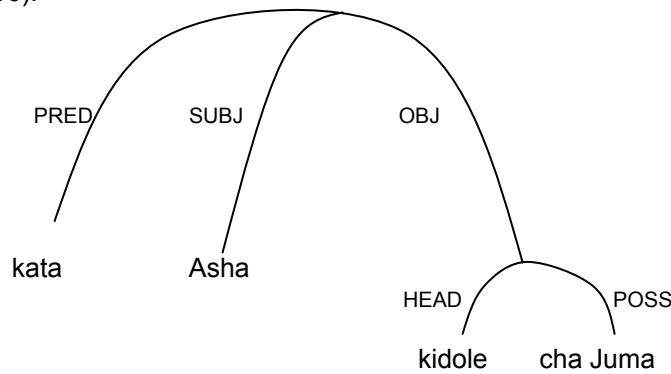
⁷ Animate primary objects are obligatorily marked on the verb; inanimate objects are optionally so.

possessor as coming from its first-stratum relationship to the possessed item. In sum, both theories treat EPCs as cases of ‘raising’ in which the possessor is not included in the verb’s argument structure. This treatment can also be easily illustrated with a simplified LFG notation (Kroeger 2004), as in the following:

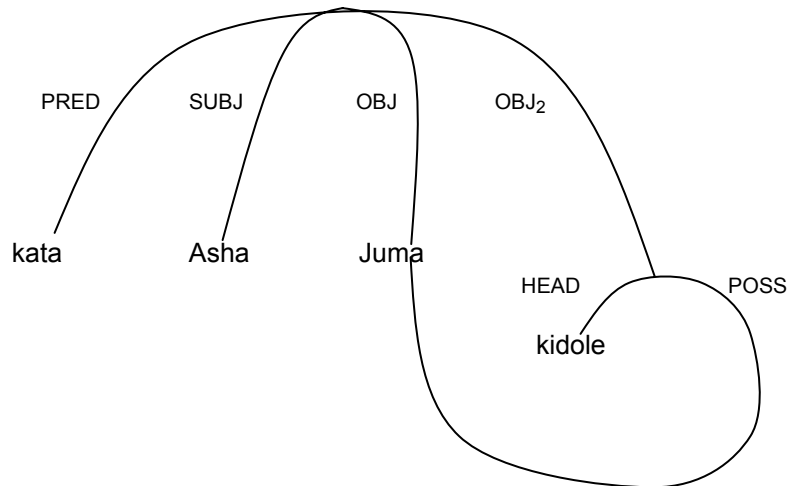
- | | | | | |
|------|--|-------------------|---|---------------------|
| (12) | <i>ni- li- kata kuni</i>
1SG-PST-cut firewood
'I cut firewood.' | <i>kata</i> 'cut' | <agent, patient>
SUBJ OBJ | <u>Basic</u> |
| (13) | <i>ni- li- kata kidole cha Juma</i>
1SG-PST-cut finger of Juma
'I cut the finger of Juma.' | | <agent, patient>
SUBJ OBJ | <u>Basic</u> + POSS |
| (14) | <i>ni- li- m- kata Juma kidole</i>
1SG-PST-3SG-cut Juma finger
'I cut Juma's finger.' | | <agt, pat> Ø
SUBJ OBJ ₂ OBJ | <u>POSS-raising</u> |

In the basic transitive clause of (12), the issue of possession is not semantically or even pragmatically in focus. (13) contains a possessor NP modifying the object ‘finger’, but the possessor NP is not a semantic argument of the predicate. Neither is the possessor a semantic argument in (14). Instead, though it is granted termhood, it remains outside the verb’s true argument structure. The diagram in (15) pictures the f-structure of (13) above. The f-structure of a possessor-raising clause like (14) is in turn represented in (16):

(15)



(16)



The relationship between the lexical entries for *kata* ‘cut’ in (13) and (14) could then be drawn up as a possessor-raising morphological rule represented in (17):

- (17) “Possessor-Raising”
- $$\left(\begin{array}{l} \text{OBJ} \rightarrow \text{OBJ}_2 \\ \emptyset \rightarrow \text{OBJ} \quad [\text{OBJ}=\text{OBJ}_2 \text{ POSS}] \end{array} \right)$$

What this rule signifies is that 1) the primary object gets demoted to secondary object, 2) a non-argument gets introduced as primary object, and 3) a functional control relation is created between the new primary object (OBJ) and the possessor of the secondary object (OBJ₂ POSS). To reiterate, external possession in this analysis involves increasing the verbal valence by one and locating the semantic role of the new argument outside the verb’s argument structure. In so doing, we appear to have arrived at a solution.

4 Proposed Analysis

4.1 Now consider that all the theoretical toil undertaken so far stems from the assumption that the following two sentences mean the same thing:

- (18) a. *Asha a- li- vunja kidole cha Juma.*
 Asha 3SG-PST-break CL7.finger CL7.of Juma
 ‘Asha broke Juma’s finger (*lit.* ‘finger of Juma’).’
- b. *Asha a- li- m- vunja Juma kidole.*
 Asha 3SG-PST-3SG.OBJ-break Juma CL7.finger
 ‘Asha broke Juma’s finger.’

Because of this assumption, the descriptive and explanatory resources of numerous linguistic theories have been stretched to their limits over the issue of EPCs. If linguistic meaning is partly defined as the semantic roles licensed by any given verb, then how are those roles distributed over (18a–b)—over a different number of grammatical relations— so that identical meaning is preserved? When various scholars have intuited a difference in meaning, they have tended to handle it outside truth-conditional semantics, in the realm of pragmatics. Under this approach, as under the GB and RG analyses discussed above, the semantic roles in an EPC are the same as in the IPC from which it was derived. Just the constituent structure has changed. In other words, Swahili EPCs are *morphosyntactic*, ‘meaning-preserving’ operations that alter “the syntactic manifestation of a given semantic representation, particularly the way it is mapped on to grammatical relations” (Sadler & Spencer 1998:208).

4.2 . To the contrary, I argue below that between (18a–b) the meaning is different, that Swahili EPCs are *morpholexical*, ‘meaning-changing’ operations that alter the semantic content of the predicate (Sadler & Spencer 1998). This hypothesis originated in the responses of my language informant to the following questions: Do they mean the same thing? “Yes, they mean the same thing.” Do they really *mean the same thing*? “Well, not exactly.” Since the English sentence ‘Asha broke Juma finger’ is ungrammatical, the next best option seems to be ‘Asha broke Juma’s finger.’ The English gloss of (18b) is a non-trivial example of how translation can significantly affect linguistic analysis. Had we started with the gloss ‘Asha broke Juma finger’, some of the theoretical difficulties encountered thus far may have been circumvented. All the analyses surveyed in this paper presuppose that *kidole cha Juma* ‘finger of Juma’ and *Juma kidole* ‘Juma finger’ are synonymous and that Swahili has these two forms as options for encoding possession.

4.2.2 The trouble with this position is that Swahili EPCs do seem to impose semantic restrictions on the ‘possessor’ NP. Not just any possessum-possessor combination can lead to external possession constructions. For example, compare the following sentence pairs:

- (19) a. *Asha a- li- vunja mguu wa kiti*
 Asha 3SG-PST-break CL3.leg CL3.of CL7.chair
 ‘Asha broke the chair’s leg.’
- b. **Asha a- li- ki- vunja kiti mguu*
 Asha 3SG-PST-CL7.OBJ-break CL7.chair CL3.leg
 ‘Asha broke the chair’s leg.’

- c. *Juma a- li- chungu ng'ombe za Asha*
 Juma 3SG-PST-shepherd CL10.cows CL10.of Asha
 'Juma shepherded Asha's cows.'
- d. **Juma a- li- m- chungu Asha ng'ombe*
 Juma 3SG-PST-3SG.OBJ-shepherd Asha CL10.cows
 'Juma shepherded Asha's cows.'

The sentences in (19) give evidence that more is at stake in EPCs than merely raising the possessor. Strikingly, in the raising analysis, (19a) and (19b) should mean the same thing because all that has changed is the syntactic location of the possessor NP. The same is true for (19c) and (19d). According to the raising analysis, the verbs in (19b) and (19d) should overlook the external possessor to find their patient/theme in the possessum. If so, then why are these two sentences ungrammatical? I suggest they are ungrammatical because the EPs in them are not semantically vacuous with respect to the predicate, but rather are assigned their roles by the predicate. Moreover, calling them 'possessors' is not enough; culture-specific notions of inalienability and affectedness determine what kinds of possessors can be external. For example, (19b) may be ungrammatical because *kiti* 'chair' is inanimate and seen as insufficiently affected by the breaking of its leg. *Asha* in (19d) is animate, but since the *ng'ombe* 'cows' are alienable possessions, *Asha* may not be seen as sufficiently affected to allow an EPC. Heine (1997) cites some data that portray a kind of semantic cline of 'possession' along which EPCs may fall:

- (20) a. *a- li- ni- vunja mkono* (animate PR, inalienable PM)
 he-PST-1SG.OBJ-break arm
 'He broke my arm.'
- b. *a- li- ni- tatua shati* (animate PR; alienable PM)
 he-PST-1SG.OBJ-tear shirt
 'He tore my shirt.'
- c. *a- li- shona koti mkono* (inanimate PR; inalienable PM)
 he-PST-sew coat arm
 'He sewed the coat sleeve.'

In (20a), the PR is a sensate being that is highly affected by the act of breaking an arm (which happens to be attached to him or her). Clothing is almost as close as skin and certainly is felt on the skin, so the PR in (20b) is affected by the act of tearing a shirt (which happens to be on his or her body). The PR in (20c) is inanimate, but in a metonymic or meronymic way, a part of its body is being operated on.⁸ Any of the events described in (20) could have been formulated with an IPC, but the reverse seems not to be true: Swahili allows NP + -a(connective) + NP constructions for any relationship broadly construed as possessive, but only for some relationships does it allow the NP + NP construction. The crucial point here is that for semantic reasons, EPCs and IPCs are not simply two sides of the same grammatical coin.

4.2.4 Coming from a slightly different angle, I hypothesize with Croft (1994) that external possession occurs when the speaker construes a situation in which the possessor (PR), rather than the possessum (PM), is the perceived end-point or focal point of the predicated action. Consequently, the PR is viewed as more affected by the verbal action or as more interested in its outcome. When some objects (e.g. body-parts) are themes or patients of a transitive verb, they are so inextricably linked to their host organism that an EPC is generally preferred. Take the following clauses as examples:

- (21) a. *Ni- li- m- shika Daudi mkono*
 1SG-PST-3SG.OBJ-grab David CL3.arm
 'I grabbed David arm.'

⁸ An explanation for why (20c) is grammatical but not (19b) will have to await further research.

- b. *Ni- li- shika mkono wa Daudi*
 1SG-PST-grab CL3.arm CL3.of David
 'I grabbed the arm of David.'

As already noted, (21a–b) would both normally be translated as 'I grabbed Juma's arm'. The glosses provided here, however, are intended to surface the different nuances. In human life, the act of grabbing a live person's arm usually causes more relevant effects to the person than to the lump of flesh constituting his or her arm. The affectedness of *Daudi* in (21a) gives him contextual prominence over his arm and also "accords [him] with cognitive saliency" (Payne & Barshi 1997:20), which is in turn reflected in the language. Now (21b) is perfectly grammatical, but given the involvement of an animate being (David), it might be considered the marked alternative of the two. (21b) foregrounds the affectedness of David's arm and relegates David conceptually and linguistically to the role of mere possessor. Thus when the proper contextual conditions are met, the PR may be made an argument of the verb to illustrate iconically that the predicated action is affecting it as much or more than its PM. In an IPC like *mkono wa Daudi* 'arm of David', the possessive relationship between the PR and PM are explicit, syntactically and semantically. The affectedness of the PR relies on pragmatic inference. In an EPC, however, the affectedness of the PR is explicated and prioritized syntactically, while the relationship between the PR and PM is inferred pragmatically. In brief, contra prior analyses, 'possession' is not being explicitly encoded in EPCs.

Further proof for this claim can be drawn from constructions where a possessive or interrogative pronoun is found following the possessum. Consider the following:

- (22) a. *ni- li- m- vunja Juma kidole chake*
 1SG-PST-OBJ-break Juma CL7.finger CL7.POSS
 'I broke Juma his finger.'
- b. *Asha a- li- vunja kidole cha nani? Cha Juma/∅Juma.*
 Asha 3SG-PST-break CL7.finger CL7.of who CL7.of Juma/Juma
 "Whose finger did Asha break? Juma's."

(22a) contains an EPC with a possessive pronoun whose antecedent is the EP. The possessive pronoun *chake* is obviously 'possessive', so if the verb also assigns a POSS semantic role to the EP, then *kidole* 'finger' would be redundantly possessed. (22b) indicates that as a constituent, a possessor NP in Swahili must be preceded by the *a*-connective (often translated as 'of'). While this is not independent proof against a raising analysis, it does support the idea that elsewhere in the language possessive elements are not bare NPs.

4.2.5 So if 'possession' is not being encoded, what is? It seems that the semantic role assigned to the OBJ in EPCs depends on the particular predicate as well as the associative link between 'possessor' and 'possessum'. In cases involving body parts and sensate beings, the primary object might be considered an EXPERIENCER. In other cases, it might be more accurately seen as BENEFACTIVE, MALEFACTIVE, or even LOCATION. For the sake of simplicity and generality, I have adopted the term AFFECTEE⁹. The term is meant to signify that a primary object in an EPC is syntactically present because in some way it is notably affected by the action performed upon the patient.

5 Summary

To summarize, I am prepared to say that the OBJ of EPCs has a grammatical relation *and* a semantic role in the subcategorization of certain verbs. Further, that semantic role need not be POSSESSOR in the more traditional, narrow sense. This means we have more to work with than extra-thematic possession, a fact that opens new doors for analysis. What I am proposing is that an undetermined number of transitive Swahili verbs require an additional lexical entry that subcategorizes for

⁹ POSSESSOR may still be suitable, but only given Heine's (1997) conception of it as often being a grammaticalization of various 'event schemas' like LOCATION, SOURCE, GOAL, COMPANION, TOPIC, etc. However, to distinguish my proposal, I have opted for AFFECTEE.

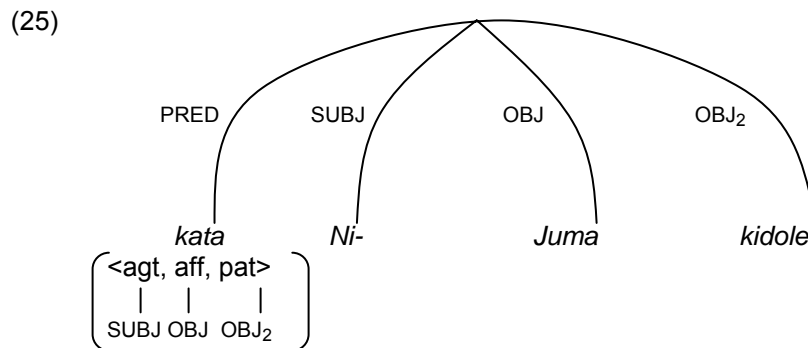
three semantic arguments instead of two. In other words, EPCs involve ditransitive predicates derived lexically from more basic transitive predicates. To further elucidate how my claims differ from previous ones, let us re-examine the following sentences:

- (23) a. *Ni-li-kata kidole.* *kata* 'cut' <agt, pat>
 I-PST-cut finger
 'I cut a finger.'
- b. *Ni-li-kata kidole cha Juma.* *kata* 'cut' <agt, pat>
 I-PST-cut finger of Juma.
 'I cut a/the finger of Juma.'
- c. *Ni-li-m-kata Juma kidole.* *kata* 'cut' <agt, aff, pat>
 I-PST-him-cut Juma finger.
 'I cut Juma finger.'

Crucially for this analysis, (23b) and (23c) are both derived from (23a), but (23c) is not derived from (23b). No, (23b) simply embeds a possessor-NP in the syntax of (23a), and (23c) simply displaces primary affectedness from *kidole* 'finger' to *Juma* by means of applying a new object. Therefore, so-called 'external possessor constructions' are not derived from 'internal possessor constructions', but rather are derived from basic transitive clauses in which the patient can be construed as having a strong conceptual link to another entity. That other entity may then be applied as primary object if the speaker so chooses. The rule that coincides with this alternative cognitive construal may be called 'Affectee Application', formalized as follows:

(24) 'Affectee Application' $\left(\begin{array}{c} \emptyset \rightarrow \text{AFFECTEE} \\ \text{OBJ} \end{array} \quad \begin{array}{c} \text{PATIENT} \\ \text{OBJ} \rightarrow \text{OBJ}_2 \end{array} \right)$

The application of this lexical rule to (23a) might result in a sentence like (23c), functionally diagrammed below in elegant Kroegerian style. For maximum clarity at this point, compare (25) with the f-structure diagrams in (15) and (16) above.



6 Conclusion

Linguistics has been haunted for some time by the implicit meaning correlation between EPCs and canonical possessive constructions which make possession explicit. What we have done here for Swahili is effectively turn the analytical tables and exorcise the ghost of possession from these constructions. Even the title 'external possession' may no longer befit a simplified LFG analysis of the phenomenon—*possession* is not being encoded and therefore cannot be *external*. Instead, we are dealing with 'Affectee Application', a lexical rule that satisfies the LFG well-formedness condition of COHERENCE.

*Questions or comments welcome at: <terrill_schrock@sil.org>

Bibliography

- Ashton, E. 1944. *Swahili Grammar*. London: Longman.
- Comrie, Bernard. 1976. The syntax of causative constructions: cross-language similarities and divergences. In *The Grammar of Causative Constructions. Syntax and Semantics*, vol. 6, Masayoshi Shibatani (ed.), New York: Academic Press.
- Croft, William. 1994. Voice: Beyond Control and Affectedness. In *Voice: Form and Function*. Barbara Fox and Paul Hopper (eds.), Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Davies, William D. and Stanley Dubinsky. 2004. *The Grammar of Raising and Control*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Heine, Bernd. 1997. *Possession*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hinnebusch, Thomas J. and Robert S. Kirsner. 1980. On the inference of 'inalienable possession' in Swahili. *Journal of Linguistics and African Languages* 3:37–81.
- Keach, Camillia N. and Michael Rochemont. 1995. On the Syntax of Possessor Raising in Swahili. *Studies in African Linguistics* 23.1:81-106.
- Kroeger, Paul. 2004. *Analyzing Syntax*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kroeger, Paul. 2005. *Analyzing Grammar*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Payne, Doris L. and Immanuel Barshi (eds.). 1999. *External Possession*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Payne, Doris L. and Immanuel Barshi. 1999. External Possession: What, Where, How, and Why. *External Possession*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 3–29.
- Sadler, Louisa and Andrew Spencer. 1998. Morphology and Argument Structure. *The Handbook of Morphology*. Andrew Spencer and Arnold M. Zwicky (eds.), Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Scotton, C. 1981. Extending Inalienable Possession: The Argument for an Extensive case in Swahili. *Journal of African Languages and Linguistics* 3:159-174.
- Vitale, Anthony J. 1981. *Swahili Syntax*. Publications in language sciences, no. 5. Dordrecht and Cinnaminson, NJ: Foris Publications.