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## LOCATIVE ARGUMENTS IN BANTU

Josephat M. Rugemalira  
University of Dar es Salaam  
[josephatr@hotmail.com]

### 1. Introduction

This paper seeks to document the wide variety of marking strategies, across Bantu languages, for locative expressions and to show that this rich resource base corresponds to a wide variety of semantic nuances for the locative concept. The paper also shows that there are several strategies for licensing locative arguments, that the majority of locative expressions qualify as arguments and that only certain types of locative expressions are adjuncts.

### 2. Locative marking strategies

#### 2.1 Locative noun class prefix

The basic marking strategy for locatives is prefixation by means of the locative prefix *ha/pa-*, *ku-*, *mu-*, and *i-*, traditionally referred to as noun class prefixes 16, 17, 18 and 23 respectively<sup>1</sup>. The locative prefix is stacked onto the original class prefix of the noun in question.

- |                        |                                  |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| (1) <i>mu-lu-gutu</i>  | in the (animal) pen [Sukuma F21] |
| (2) <i>mu-nzira</i>    | in the path [Shona S12]          |
| (2) <i>ku-mu-gunda</i> | in the farm [Hehe G62]           |
| (3) <i>ha-meza</i>     | on the table [Sukuma F21]        |
| (4) <i>he-mu-twi</i>   | on the head [Bondei G24]         |
| (5) <i>pa-shi-tala</i> | on the bed [Safwa M25]           |
| (6) <i>pa-lu-soko</i>  | in the valley [Nyakyusa M31]     |
| (7) <i>i-bu-raayi</i>  | in Europe [Rundi D62]            |
| (8) <i>ku-Lilongwe</i> | to Lilongwe [Chewa N31b]         |

#### 2.2 Locative suffix *-ni* on the noun

In a few languages locative expressions are formed by suffixation with *-ni*. Besides the languages exemplified below, Kamba [E55] and Tonga [S62] may also be included.

- |                         |                           |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| (9) <i>mti-ni</i>       | in the tree [Swahili G42] |
| (10) <i>barabara-ni</i> | on the road [Swahili G42] |
| (11) <i>nyungu-ini</i>  | in the pot [Kikuyu E 51]  |

In several Swahili place names the suffix is identifiable:

(12) *Buguruni, Kinondoni, Mtongani, Kigamboni, Magomeni, Marekani, Arabuni*

### 2.3 Zero marking

In many languages place names are not further marked as locatives. This pattern contrasts with the Rundi and Cewa examples in (7) and (8) above.

(13) Swahili G42: *Bara Hindi* (India), *Uturuki* (Turkey), *Misri* (Egypt)

(14) Haya E22: *Bunyoro, Rwanda*

Further semantic restrictions may apply in individual languages. For instance, animate nouns are not available for *-ni* suffixation in Swahili (*\*mbuzi-ni, \*mtu-ni*). But in Nyambo [E21] it is possible to attach a locative prefix to such a noun: *omu-mbuzi* among the goats; *aha-mbuzi* on the goat; *omu-bantu* among people, *aha-muntu* on a person.

## 3. Locative licensing patterns

### 3.1 Verbs that subcategorize a locative complement

#### 3.1.1 Marked locative complements

Where the verb subcategorizes a locative complement, the complement noun is marked with a locative prefix or suffix according to the applicable language pattern. No further marking is required on the verb.

(15) <i>ta mu-mufuko</i>	put in bag [Kerewe E24]
(16) <i>sanga mu-chumba</i>	find in the room [Kerewe E24]
(17) <i>shira mu-mupfuko</i>	put in bag [Hangaza D62a]
(18) <i>gona apa-nsi</i>	sleep/lie on the floor [Safwa M25]
(19) <i>vika mu-mufuko</i>	put in bag [Hehe G62]
(20) <i>fika ku-kaye</i>	find/arrive at home [Hehe G62]
(21) <i>bika mu-nyambe</i>	put in bag [Nyakyusa M31]
(22) <i>mwaga ku-kaya</i>	find at home [Nyakyusa M31]
(23) <i>ziika mwe-mfuko</i>	put in bag [Sambaa G23]
(24) <i>bika mu-ka-nwa</i>	put into mouth [Lenje M61]
(25) <i>weka mfuko-ni</i>	put in bag [Swahili G42]

#### 3.1.2 Inherently locative complements

In some languages inherently locative nouns are not marked with the locative prefix. This is exemplified by Kerewe in (26). In other languages such nouns must also be further marked as locative, as the Ngoni and Rundi examples show [(30) and (31)]. But the

variation may be a property of the verb, either requiring or not requiring the marking of its complement as locative. This is the case in the Sukuma examples in (28) and (29).

- |                             |                              |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| (26) <i>genda Rwanda</i>    | go to Rwanda [Kerewe E24]    |
| (27) <i>ja Rwanda</i>       | go to Rwanda [Sukuma F21]    |
| (28) <i>ja kaya</i>         | go home [Sukuma F21]         |
| (29) <i>sanga gu-kaya</i>   | find at home [Sukuma F21]    |
| (30) <i>beta ku-Rwanda</i>  | go to Rwanda [Ngoni N12 ]    |
| (31) <i>ganja i-Burundi</i> | reign in Burundi [Rundi D62] |

### 3.1.3 Applicative verbs licensing a locative complement

In the majority of verbs and languages, it is the applicative suffix that creates a syntactic slot for the locative complement. In the basic pattern, both the verb and the complement noun are appropriately marked.

- |                                  |                                          |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| (32) <i>ag-il-a ku-dasi</i>      | get lost in the wild [Ngoni N12 ]        |
| (33) <i>ful-il-a mu-mongo</i>    | wash (clothes) in the river [Sukuma F21] |
| (34) <i>ag-i-a mwe-nyika</i>     | die in strange lands [Sambaa G23]        |
| (35) <i>vund-i-a mwe-mnda</i>    | rot in the farm [Bondei G24]             |
| (36) <i>kamul-il-a ku-luvaga</i> | milk in the pen [Hehe G62 ]              |
| (37) <i>syol-el-a hu-mpanda</i>  | chew in the room [Safwa M25]             |

### 3.1.4 Type of locative signaled by presence or absence of applicative suffix

The variations on these morphosyntactic patterns create quite interesting semantic effects. These are exemplified below.

#### (i) Path/direction reversal

- |                                        |                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| (38) a) <i>shimbile imbombo</i>        | run <u>away from</u> work [Nyakyusa M31]                        |
| b) <i>shimbi-il-e umwana</i>           | run <u>towards</u> the child [Nyakyusa M31]                     |
| (39) a) <i>furuka omu-nsi</i>          | move <u>from</u> country [Haya E22]                             |
| b) <i>furuk-ir-a omu-nsi</i>           | move <u>into</u> country [Haya E22]                             |
| (40) a) <i>(inzoga) hera mu-kilabo</i> | (beer) be finished ( <u>from/ in</u> ) the pub [Hangaza D62a]   |
| b) <i>(amahela) her-er-a mu-kilabo</i> | (money) be finished <u>while</u> in/into the pub [Hangaza D62a] |

#### (ii) Participant locative vs event locative

The relevant contrast here concerns the distinction between locating a participant in the event, and locating the whole event itself. In (43) for instance, the focus is on the scribbled marks being in the book in (a), while in (b) the whole event, including the writer, the scribbled marks, the instrument, the book are positioned appropriately at the table.

Similarly in (47) (a) the gift is wrapped in the banana leaf; in (b) the whole event of wrapping the gift in the banana leaf is located in the yard.

- |      |                                |                                                        |
|------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| (41) | a) <i>koma aha-mukono</i>      | tie on arm [Nyambo E21]                                |
|      | b) <i>kom-er-a omu-muhanda</i> | tie <i>while</i> on the way [Nyambo E21]               |
| (42) | a) <i>ona mtu kilabu-ni</i>    | see a person in a pub [Swahili G42]                    |
|      | b) <i>on-e-a mtu kilabu-ni</i> | see a person <i>while</i> (seer) in pub [Swahili G42]] |
| (43) | a) <i>andika mu-kitabo</i>     | write in the book [Kerewe E24]                         |
|      | b) <i>andik-il-a ha-meeza</i>  | write ( <i>while</i> ) at the table [Kerewe E24]       |
| (44) | a) <i>dumule mu-gunda</i>      | cut in/from the farm [Safwa M25]                       |
|      | b) <i>dumul-il-e pi-dala</i>   | cut <i>while</i> on the way [Safwa M25]                |
| (45) | a) <i>zama mwe-ziwa</i>        | drown/sink in lake [Bondei G24]                        |
|      | b) <i>zam-i-e he-ukingo</i>    | drown/sink <i>while</i> at the edge [Bondei G24]       |
| (46) | a) <i>va ku-mugunda</i>        | pick/harvest in/from the farm [Hehe G62]               |
|      | b) <i>v-el-a ku-lisuva</i>     | pick/harvest <i>while</i> in the sun [Hehe G62]        |
| (47) | a) <i>semba omu-rubabi</i>     | wrap in banana leaf [Nyambo E21]                       |
|      | b) <i>semb-er-a omu-cibuga</i> | wrap <i>while</i> in the yard [Nyambo E21]             |

An alternative analysis, suggested to me by Larry Hyman, might be a contrast between “object orientation” in the (a) sentences and “subject orientation” in the (b) sentences. In (42a) for instance, the person seen (object) must be in the pub, but the seer (subject) need not be in the pub. In (42b) the seer (subject) must be in the pub, but the person seen (object) need not be in the pub.

### 3.1.5 Locative verbs that subcategorize an omissible locative complement

Across several languages there exists a certain set of verbs that take an omissible locative complement. The complement noun is marked with the appropriate locative affix but the verb is in its basic non-extended form. However when the verb is extended by means of the applicative affix, the complement loses the locative marker. In general there is no significant semantic effect achieved by means of this alternation. The Nyambo, Swahili, Kerewe, Hangaza and Safwa data below are representative.

- |      |                               |                               |
|------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| (48) | <i>sitama aha-ntebe</i>       | sit on chair [Nyambo E21]     |
| (49) | <i>sitam-ir-a ntebe</i>       | sit on chair [Nyambo E21]     |
| (50) | * <i>sitam-ir-a aha-ntebe</i> | sit on chair [Nyambo E21]     |
| (51) | <i>kaa kiti-ni</i>            | sit on chair [Swahili G42]    |
| (52) | <i>kal-i-a kiti</i>           | sit on chair [Swahili G42]    |
| (53) | * <i>kal-i-a kiti-ni</i>      | sit on chair [Swahili G42]    |
| (54) | <i>nala aha-kitabo</i>        | urinate on bed [Kerewe E24]   |
| (55) | <i>nal-il-a esuka</i>         | urinate on sheet [Kerewe E24] |

- (56) \**nal-il-a aha-esuka* urinate on sheet [Kerewe E24]
- (57) *dahwa mu-meli* vomit in ship [Hangaza D62a]  
 (58) *dahw-ir-a isahani* vomit on plate [Hangaza D62a]  
 (59) \**dahw-ir-a mu-isahani* vomit on plate [Hangaza D62a]
- (60) *gwa mu-mwoto* fall into fire [Safwa M25]  
 (61) *gw-il-a umwoto* fall on fire [Safwa M25]  
 (62) \**gw-il-a mu-mwoto* fall on fire [Safwa M25]

### 3.1.6 Durative argument licensed by applicative verb

The licensing of a durative argument requires the applicative extension. The expression realizing this argument must denote a period of time i.e. duration (cf. the (a) examples below), not a point in time (for which see section 4 below). The examples in (b) demonstrate the spatial locative complement for the same verb as in the (a) examples.

- (63) a) *zw-il-a shiku idatu* sprout in three days [Sukuma]  
 b) *zwa m-ngunda* sprout in the farm [Sukuma]  
 (64) a) *mil-il-a mashiku madatu* sprout in three days [Nyakyusa]  
 b) *mila mu-ngunda* sprout in farm [Nyakyusa]  
 (65) a) *mel-el-a magono gadatu* sprout in three days [Ngoni]  
 b) *mela ku-ng'onda* sprout in farm [Ngoni]

### 3.2 Locative argument may be realized by a clitic on the verb

The locative clitic that may realize a locative argument occurs after the final vowel of the verb. The clitics *ho*, *ko*, *mu*, and *yo* are related to the locative prefixes already discussed and are exemplified with Nyambo and Rundi data below.

- (66) *taaha-mu* enter in there [Nyambo]  
 (67) *reeba-yo* look over there [Nyambo]  
 (68) *sitama-ho* sit on there [Nyambo]  
 (69) *suka-mwo* pour in there [Rundi]  
 (70) *shira-ko* put on there [Rundi]  
 (71) *icara-ho* sit on there [Rundi]  
 (72) *ja-yo* go there [Rundi]

The locative clitic may co-occur with the object prefix (73 –74), but not with the locative noun complement (75-76).

- (73) *akijitaahamu* he entered in it  
 (74) *akajisitamaho* he sat on it  
 (75) \**akataahamu enju* he entered in there the house  
 (76) \**akasitamaho entebe* he sat on there the chair

Finally in Nyambo, there exists an idiomatic *ho* construction illustrated in (77).

- (77) a) *a-ka-mu-tem-er-a-ho*                      he cut off a small piece for him  
       b) *a-ka-mu-rim-ir-a-ho*                      he cultivated a little for him

#### 4 Temporal adjunct

The majority of time expressions are marked with the same locative prefixes in many languages, but in contrast with the durative argument these are adjuncts that are not required by the argument structure. The Nyambo sample below is illustrative.

- |      |                    |            |                           |                   |
|------|--------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| (78) | <i>aka-seese</i>   | morning    | <i>omu-ka-seese</i>       | in the morning    |
|      | <i>orwa-kabiri</i> | Tuesday    | <i>omu/aha-rwa-kabiri</i> | on Tuesday        |
|      | <i>omw-ezi</i>     | month/moon | <i>omu-mw-ezi</i>         | in the month      |
|      |                    |            | <i>aha-mw-ezi</i>         | in the moonlight  |
|      | <i>omw-aka</i>     | year       | <i>omu-mw-aka</i>         | in the year       |
|      | <i>eci-anda</i>    | dry season | <i>omu-ci-anda</i>        | in the dry season |
|      | <i>i-hangwe</i>    | daytime    | <i>omw-i-hangwe</i>       | in the daytime    |

- (79) a) *fura omu-kaseese*                      wash in the morning  
       b) \**fura aha-mu-jera*                      wash at the river  
       c) *fur-ir-a aha-mu-jera*                      wash at the river  
       d) \**fur-ir-a omu-kaseese*                      wash in the morning  
       e) *fur-ir-a aha-mu-jera omu-kaseese*                      wash at the river in the morning

The data in (78) illustrated the type of time expressions that are marked like locatives but are syntactically adjuncts. In (79) (a) and (b) the non-extended verb *fura* may be followed by the temporal adjunct *omu-kaseese*, but it does not license the locative complement *aha-mu-jera*. In (c) and (d) the extended verb *fur-ir-a* licenses the locative complement *aha-mu-jera* but its argument requirements cannot be satisfied by the temporal adjunct *omu-kaseese*. And (e) shows that the extended verb happily takes the appropriate locative complement followed by the optional temporal adjunct.

In some other languages the temporal adjunct need not even be marked in any way. Swahili is a case in point:

- (80) a) *fua asubuhi*                      wash in the morning  
       b) \**ful-i-a asubuhi*                      wash in the morning  
       c) *ful-i-a mto-ni asubuhi*                      wash at the river in the morning

In (80) *asubuhi* ‘morning’ does not take any locative marker (the expected *-ni* suffix), but the adjunct may optionally be added to the structure. Only the locative complement *mto-ni* ‘at the river’ is properly marked and appropriately licensed by the applicative verb.

## 5. Other applicative roles

In order to provide a more complete picture, a short note on the other semantic roles (besides locative role) licensed by the applicative extension is in order.

### 5.1 Beneficiary role

This is the semantic role most often cited in connection with the applicative extension. As the examples below demonstrate, there are several closely related senses (exemplified below) and some expressions may be ambiguous, being amenable to two or more interpretations, depending on linguistic and extra linguistic context. Examples (81 – 84) are from Nyambo.

- (81) gur-ir-a **abantu** enyama  
 buy-A-FV people meat  
 ‘buy meat for people’ [benefit /recipient sense]
- (82) n -sij-ir-a omwana amajuta  
 me-smear-A-FV child oil  
 ‘smear oil on the child for me’ [behalf sense]
- (83) handiic -ir - a **omukeikuru** ebaruha  
 write - A - FV old woman letter  
 (i) ‘write a letter to the old woman’ [goal sense]  
 (ii) ‘write a letter on behalf of the old woman’ [behalf sense]
- (84) reet -er- a **omuseija** abasuma  
 bring-A -FV man thieves  
 ‘bring thieves to the detriment of the man’ [maleficiary sense]

### 5.2. Instrument role

Though not all languages use the applicative to license the instrument role, productive use of the applicative for that purpose is fairly widespread, perhaps more so than use of the causative suffix (cf. Rugemalira 2002). The following examples are from Swahili.

- (85) a) *kat-i-a kisu*            cut with a knife  
       b) *lim-i-a jembe*           dig with a hoe  
       c) *ful-i-a sabuni*            wash with soap

### 5.3 Motive role

Motive complements licensed by the applicative have been given a variety of labels including reason/cause, and purpose/goal. The possibilities available in Nyambo are shown in (86-88). Here too it will be noted that the distinction among the interpretations is rather subtle.

- (86) a - ka- mu - jum - ir- á **obusúma**  
       he-PST-her -scold- A -FV stealing  
       he scolded her for stealing            (*reason/cause*)

- (87) ba - ka- rwan -ir- á **embúzi**  
       they-PST-fight -A -FV goat  
       they fought over the goat            (*reason/cause*)

- (88) ba - ka-rwan - ir- á **obuhúuru**  
       they-PST-fight -A -FV independence  
       they fought for independence        (*purpose/goal*)

## 6. Summary and conclusion

### 6.1 Structure of the locative expression

The locative noun class affix behaves like a preposition that facilitates rather than hinders the incorporation of the noun into the verb's argument structure. The locative expression realizes the syntactic requirements of a locative verb, whether the verb has been derived (extended) by the applicative suffix or not. A locative expression is not simply another type of noun. Two observations may be noted.

#### 6.1.1 Mode of marking

The mode of marking locative expressions by stacking prefixes rather than by displacement is generally different from the behaviour of other expressions in the noun class system, particularly diminutives, augmentatives and infinitives. Contrast (89) and (90) from Nyambo.

- 89) a) *aka-ti*            small stick/tree  
       b) *oru-ti*            long stick



- c) *eci-ti* stick/log
- d) *omu-ti* tree/pole
- e) \**a-ka-mu-ti* small stick/tree

- (90) a) *aha-ka-ti* on a small stick  
 b) *aha-ru-ti* on a long stick  
 c) *aha-ci-ti* on a stick/log  
 d) *aha-mu-ti* on a tree/pole

The semantic effects in (89) are achieved not by stacking but by substitution. But the locative sense in (90) is obtained by stacking the prefix onto the original noun class prefix.

### 6.1.2 Interruption of the locative prefix

The locative prefix may be separated from the noun by other elements.

- (91) a) *omu-bandi-baana*  
 LOC-other-children  
 ‘among other children’

- b) *omw-ogwo-muntu*  
 LOC-that-person  
 ‘at that person’s (house)’

- c) *aha-ri-ejo-ntebe*  
 LOC-BE-that-chair  
 ‘on that chair’

The intervening elements between the locative prefix and the noun show that the prefix and the noun are not closely bound as is the case in the other noun classes.

### 6.1.3 Prominence of the noun

In some languages, however, certain parts of the grammar ignore the locative components and treat the noun prominently. A pertinent example is the pattern of agreement whereby the genitive modifier ignores the locative affix.

- (92) *omu-nju yanje* in my house (\**omu-nju mwanje*) [Nyambo]

- (93) *omu-citabo canje* in my book (\**omu-citabo mwanje*) [Nyambo]

The agreement in (92-93) is with the bare noun, not with the locative expression as a whole. By contrast Swahili treats the whole locative expression as a noun for purposes of genitive agreement.

- (94) *nyumba-ni kwangu* at my house (\**nyumba-ni yangu*)

- (95) *kitabu-ni mwangu* in my book (\**kitabu-ni changu*)

(96) *shamba-ni kwangu* in my farm (\**shamba-ni langu*)

The agreement in (94-96) is with the locative expression rather than the bare noun. It is not clear to me yet whether all languages that use suffixation in the locative expression follow this agreement pattern for the genitive structure. In general, it does not appear feasible to analyze the locative expression either as a noun phrase or a prepositional phrase for all Bantu languages.

## 6.2 Wide concept of locative

The morphosyntactic patterns discussed above show that the concept of locative in the Bantu languages is wide and varied. It includes the following shades of meaning (all examples from Nyambo except where noted).

- a) physical spatial location e.g. *aha-meeza* on the table
- b) source or destination (starting point vs end point) of a participant, e.g. *furuka omu-nju* vs *furucira omu-nju* move into a house vs move out of a house
- c) participant locative or event locative, e.g. *andika mu-kitabo* vs *andik-il-a ha-meeza* write in a book vs write while at the table [Kerewe]
- d) abstract location e.g. *mu-bagabo* among/between men [Hangaza]; *omu-mwirima* in the dark; *omu-kutongana* in the quarrelling; *omu-muyaga* in the wind; *aha-musana* in the sunshine.
- e) temporal location i.e. (i) duration e.g. *omu-biro bisatu* for/in/after three days; (ii) point of time e.g. *omu-kaseese* in the morning. This latter has the morphological marking but not the syntactic properties of a locative expression.

## Notes

\* Abbreviations: PST = past tense    A = applicative    FV = final vowel

LOC = locative

<sup>1</sup> See Maho 1999: 247f for a discussion on the reconstruction of noun class prefixes.

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