

Non-canonical applicatives and focalization in Tswana

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ABSTRACT. *This paper examines non-canonical uses of Tswana applicative verb forms that support the hypothesis of a prototypical relationship between the syntactic role of object and the pragmatic role of focus. In its canonical use, the applicative suffix of Tswana can be defined as licensing the presence of a direct object representing a participant that cannot figure in the construction of the same verb in its non-derived form. One of the non-canonical uses of applicative verb forms examined in this paper involves no change in the valency of the verb: in Tswana, as in other Southern Bantu languages, the use of the applicative form of the verb may simply indicate the focalization of a locative complement or adjunct. This non-canonical use of applicative verb forms must be related to other facts of Tswana, and more generally of Bantu languages, suggesting that in Bantu syntax the immediate post-verbal position, grammaticalized as the obligatory position of the objects of transitive verbs, is primarily a focus position.*

1. Introduction

Tswana (or Setswana) is a southern Bantu language with approximately 4 million speakers. Its closest relatives are Northern Sotho and Southern Sotho.¹

Typologically, Tswana is in almost every respect a typical Bantu language.²

Nouns are characterized by a twelve-term class system manifesting itself in noun prefixes, obligatory head-dependent agreement in the noun phrase, and obligatory agreement of free pronouns and bound pronominal morphemes (subject markers, object markers) with the noun they represent. Noun phrases are head-initial.

Verbs show a rich system of morphological variations, including TAM markers, negation markers, obligatory subject markers, optional object markers, and valency operators (reflexive, reciprocal, decausative, causative, passive, and applicative). The tonal morphology of the verb is particularly complex, even by Bantu standards –see Creissels 1999, Creissels & al. 1997.

Basic verbal clauses have a rigid constituent order *subject – verb – objects – obliques*. There is no distinction between intransitive and transitive subjects: the same set of subject markers is used in transitive and intransitive clauses, and objects are represented by a distinct set of verb prefixes. Subject markers are obligatory, even in the presence of a subject noun phrase, whereas object markers are used only if the clause includes no noun phrase representing the same argument. In the morphological structure of the verb, object markers occupy a position different from that occupied by subject markers, and they are characterized by a particular tonal behaviour, very different from

¹ In fact, these three languages are so close to each other that, from a strictly linguistic point of view, they should be considered as three varieties of a single language.

² For an overall presentation of Tswana, see Cole 1955, Creissels 2003.

that of any other morpheme, even when they are segmentally identical with subject markers –see Creissels & al. 1997. Subjects and objects are equally devoid of case-marking.

Tswana has multiple-object constructions. Non-derived verbs may have two non-co-ordinated objects, and valency-increasing derivations (causative and applicative) may result in constructions with three objects, as in ex. (1).³

- (1) a. *Ngwana o nole maši*
 ‘The child drank milk’

ŋw-àná ú-nú-l-é má-jî
 1-child S3:1-drink-PFT-FIN 6-milk

- b. *Ke nositse ngwana maši*
 ‘I made the child drink milk’

kì-nú-s-íts-é ŋw-àná má-jî
 S1S-drink-CAUS-PFT-FIN 1-child 6-milk

- c. *Ke noseditse Dimpho ngwana maši*
 ‘I made the child drink milk in Dimpho’s place’

kì-nú-s-éd-íts-é dímp^hó ŋw-àná má-jî
 S1S-drink-CAUS-APPL-PFT-FIN 1.Dimpho 1-child 6-milk

In multiple-object constructions, the hierarchy between the objects is minimal: each object can be converted into the subject of a passive construction, or represented by an object marker, and a verb such as *nosetsa* ‘make somebody drink something in behalf of somebody’ may simultaneously include three object markers. The linear order of the objects is rigid, and depends crucially on Animacy Hierarchy. Distinctions in the semantic role of the objects (for example: beneficiaries precede recipients) are taken into account only in the case of objects that do not differ in animacy.⁴ When two or three objects are pronominalized at the same time, the linear order of the object markers in the verb form is the mirror image of the linear order of the noun phrases they represent.

Locative phrases have the internal structure of noun phrases, from which they differ only in that they are headed by a locative, i.e. a nominal form to which the locative prefix *go* or the locative suffix *-ng* is added. In Tswana, locative phrases optionally combine with one of the three locative prepositions *ko* (relative remoteness), *fa* (relative proximity), and *mo* (interiority, contact, without reference to the distance involved). There is no difference in meaning between the locative prefix *go* and the locative suffix *-ng*; the choice is determined by the grammatical nature of the head of the noun phrase converted into a locative phrase by the presence of one of these two affixes. Toponyms and a handful of common nouns function as locatives (and in particular, optionally combine with one of the three locative prepositions) without taking one of the two locative affixes. Neither

³ Tswana sentences are given both in their usual orthographic notation and in a broad phonetic transcription in which they are segmented into phonological words. The phonetic transcription is necessary to make apparent distinctions in tone and in vowel quality that are crucial in morphological analysis but are not reflected in the orthography. Moreover, in the standard orthography of Tswana, many bound morphemes (in particular subject markers, object markers, TAM markers and negation markers prefixed to verb stems) are written as separate words, which may be misleading in a grammatical analysis. Note that glosses reflect only grammatical meanings carried by overt segmental morphemes; taking into account meanings relying on the absence of a segmental morpheme or on tonal variations would necessitate an intricate system of conventions that would make glosses hardly readable.

⁴ This may lead to ambiguities. For example, *bolaisa motho ntša* | kill.CAUS | 1.man | 1.dog | has two possible readings: ‘make the man kill the dog’ or ‘make the dog kill the man’; since *man* has a higher degree of animacy than *dog*, in a multiple-object construction, *man* must precede *dog*, irrespective of their semantic role.

locative affixes nor locative prepositions specify the distinction between static location, source of movement, or direction of movement, and the coding of these meanings entirely relies on the verb: some verbs of movement (for example *tswa* ‘come from’ *boa* ‘return from’, *huduga* ‘move from’) have a locative argument to which they assign the role of source, some others (for example *tla* ‘come to’, *ya* ‘go to’, *tsena* ‘enter’) have a locative argument to which they assign the role of direction, and static location is the default interpretation of locative phrases that do not represent the locative argument of a verb of movement belonging to one of these two subsets.

Tswana has three non-locative prepositions: *le* (comitative), *ka* (instrumental, also used for manner and time adjuncts), and *ke* (used exclusively for obliques representing the demoted subject in passive constructions).

2. A typology of applicatives

2.1. Prototypical applicatives

A prototypical applicative construction involves a derived verb form combined with a subject semantically identical to that of the non-derived form of the same verb, and with a direct object representing a participant that cannot be encoded as a core argument of the same verb in its non-derived form.

2.2. Obligatory vs optional applicatives

The definition proposed in the preceding section leaves two possibilities open for the direct object whose presence is licensed by the applicative form of the verb: either the same participant can be coded as an oblique term in the construction of the same verb in its non-applicative form (optional applicative), or the use of the applicative form of the verb is the only way to code this participant as a term of the construction of the verb (obligatory applicative).

Ex. (2) illustrates an optional applicative in Wolof: in sentence (a), the preposition phrase *ak doomu nijaayam* ‘with his cousin’ is an oblique term in the construction of the intransitive verb *séy* ‘get married’; in sentence (b), *doomu nijaay* ‘his cousin’ is syntactically in the role of object of the derived transitive verb form *séy-al* ‘marry’. In this case, the use of the applicative derivation is motivated by focalization: the applicative construction makes it possible to apply to *doomu nijaay* a focalizing device that cannot be applied to the complement of the preposition *ak*.

(2) a. *Mu séy ak doomu nijaayam*
 s3S get married with child.of uncle.3S
 ‘He married his cousin’

b. *Doomu nijaayam la séy-al*
 child.of uncle.3S FOC.S3S get married-APPL
 ‘He married HIS COUSIN’

Ex. (3) illustrates an obligatory applicative in Tswana: there is absolutely no possibility to have a term representing a recipient or a beneficiary in the construction of the Tswana verb *kwala* ‘write’ in its non-derived form; such a term must be treated as the direct object of an applicative verb form. Note that, if both a recipient and a beneficiary are mentioned, the applicative suffix is repeated.

(3) a. *Ke kwala lokwalo*
 ‘I am writing a letter’

kì-kwá1-á lù-kwá1ò
 S1S-write-FIN 11-letter

b. *Ke kwalela malome lokwalo*

‘I am writing a letter to my uncle, *or* on behalf of my uncle’

kì-kwá1-é1-á màlómé lù-kwá1ò
 S1S-write-APPL-FIN 1uncle.1S 11-letter

c. *Ke kwalelela mme malome lokwalo*

‘I am writing a letter to my uncle on behalf of my mother’

kì-kwá1-é1-é1-à mèmé màlómé lù-kwá1ò
 S1S-write-APPL-APPL-FIN 1mother.1S 1uncle.1S 11-letter

Note that the definition of applicative constructions is sometimes formulated in a way implying that obligatory applicatives cannot be considered canonical. From an africanist point of view, this decision can hardly be maintained, since in many African language families (particularly in Bantu), obligatory applicatives are much commoner than optional applicatives.

2.3. Valency-increasing vs valency-modifying applicatives

Applicative forms derived from intransitive verbs are valency-increasing by definition, since they license the presence of an additional core-term with the syntactic role of object. By contrast, applicative forms derived from transitive verbs can increase the number of core-terms only in languages that have multiple-object constructions. This is the case in Tswana, as already illustrated by ex. (1) & (3). In languages that ignore multiple-object constructions, the introduction of an object representing a participant that cannot be coded as the object of a transitive verb in its non-applicative form implies the demotion of the argument represented by the object of the non-applicative form; this is for example the case in Yup’ik, as illustrated by ex. (4).

(4) a. Taqukaq tuqut-aa angute-m
 bear kill-DECL.S3S.O3S man-E/GEN
 ‘The man is killing the bear’

b. Arnaq tuquy-ut-aa angute-m taquka-mek
 woman kill-APPL-DECL.S3S.O3S man-E/GEN bear-ABL
 ‘The man is killing the bear for the woman’

2.4. Semantically specialized applicatives vs semantically unspecified applicatives

Applicative verb forms may specify the semantic role of the object they license. For example, K’ichee’ has applicative verb forms used exclusively to promote instrumental adjuncts –ex. (5).

(5) a. X-Ø-u- paxiij ri b’o’j r-uuk’ ab’aj ri ali
 TAM-O3S-S3S-break DEF pot 3S-with stone DEF girl
 ‘The girl broke the pot with a stone’

b. Ab’aj x-Ø-u-paxib’eej r-eech ri b’o’j ri ali
 stone TAM-O3S-S3S-break.APPL 3S-for DEF pot DEF fille
 ‘The girl broke the pot WITH A STONE’

But it may also happen that the only semantic indication provided by the use of an applicative verb form is that the construction includes an object with a semantic role that cannot be assigned by the same verb in its non-applicative form. Such semantically unspecified applicatives are particularly common among Bantu languages.

2.5. Atypical applicatives and non-canonical uses of applicative verb forms

Some languages may have derived verb forms used only in constructions that have some features in common with prototypical applicative constructions, but do not entirely conform to the definition of prototypical applicatives. Such derived verb forms can be identified as atypical applicatives. In other languages, derived verb forms occurring in prototypical applicative constructions have also non-canonical uses, i.e., they also occur in constructions that depart from the prototype of applicative constructions in some respects. This is precisely what occurs in Tswana: this language has derived verb forms occurring in constructions analyzable as prototypical applicative constructions (provided the definition of prototypical applicative constructions is formulated in such a way that it does not exclude obligatory applicatives) –section 3, but the same forms also occur in constructions in which they cannot be analyzed as licensing the presence of a direct object with a semantic role that the same verb in its non-derived form cannot assign to a direct object.

3. Tswana applicative verb forms: morphology and canonical uses

3.1. The applicative suffix in the morphological structure of the Tswana verb

Tswana applicative verb forms are recognizable by the presence of an applicative suffix. This suffix has several allomorphs; the allomorph *-el-* [ɛl]⁵ can be analyzed as the direct representation of its underlying form, but depending on the context, it may also appear as *-el-* [ɛl], *-ed-* [ed], or *-ets-* [ets]. Note that, in certain contexts, *-ets-* [ets] must be analyzed, not as a simple allomorph of the applicative suffix, but as a porte-manteau morph representing an underlying sequence *applicative + perfect*.

In the morphological structure of the verb, the applicative suffix occurs in the same zone as three other morphemes coding valency changes:⁶ reciprocal, causative and decausative. The passive morpheme occupies a slightly different position in the morphological structure of the verb (the morpheme of the perfect positive follows the applicative, reciprocal, causative and decausative morphemes, but precedes the passive suffix), and the reflexive morpheme occurs in an entirely different position, since its morphological behaviour is totally identical to that of object markers, and not to that of the other morphemes coding valency changes. When other valency-changing suffixes occurring in the same zone as the applicative suffix are present, the applicative suffix necessarily precedes the causative and the decausative suffixes, whereas with the reciprocal suffix, both orders are possible, with a difference in meaning.

Ex. (6) illustrates various possible combinations of the applicative morpheme with other verbal formatives coding valency changes: *causative + applicative* –sentence (a), *applicative + passive* –sentence (b), *causative + applicative + passive* –sentence (c), *applicative + reciprocal* –sentence (d), *reciprocal + applicative* –sentence (e), *reflexive + applicative* –sentence (f).

- (6) a. *Monna o apeiseditse baeng mosadi wa gagwe dijo*
‘The man made his wife cook the meal for the guests’

⁵ The applicative suffix is underlyingly toneless: it does not contribute the tonal structure of the word, and its tone entirely depends on the spreading of underlying high tones contributed by other formatives –see Creissels 1999, Creissels & al. 1997.

⁶ For a general presentation of valency-changing derivations in Tswana, see Creissels 2002.

mù-ńńá ú-àpé-ís-éd-íts-é bá-èṅ mù-sádì wá-χάχwé ðì-dzó
 1-man S3:1-cook-CAUS-APPL-PFT-FIN 2-guest 1-woman 1.GEN-1.PRO 8/10-food

b. *Baeng ba apeetswe dijo*

‘A meal was cooked for the guests’ (lit. The guests were cooked-for a meal)

bà-èṅ bá-àpé-éts-w-í ðì-dzó
 2-guest S3:2-cook-APPL.PFT-PSV-FIN 8/10-food

c. *Baeng ba apeiseditswe dijo*

‘Somebody was ordered to cook a meal for the guests’
 (lit. The guests were made cook-for a meal)

bà-èṅ bá-àpé-ís-éd-íts-w-é ðì-dzó
 2-guest S3:2-cook-CAUS-APPL-PFT-PSV-FIN 8/10-food

d. *Kitso le Mpho ba berekelana thata*

‘Kitso and Mpho work a lot for each other’

kítsó lí-m̀p̀hó bá-bérék-él-àn-à t^hátà
 1.Kitso with-1.Mpho S3:2-work-APPL-RECIPR-FIN much

e. *Batho ba ba mekgwa e e tshwanang ba ratanela mekgwa eo ya bone*

‘People that have the same habits love each other for those habits they have’

bà-t^hù bá bá-mì-q^hwá é í-ts^hwán-à-ṅ
 2-person 2.LINK S3:2-4-habit 4.LINK S3:4-be like-FIN-REL

bá-rát-án-él-à mì-q^hwá éú já-bòné
 S3:2-love-RECIPR-APPL-FIN 4.habit 4.DEM 4.GEN-2.PRO

f. *Ke ithekela ditlhako*

‘I am buying shoes for myself’

kì-í-t^hék-él-á dí-t^hàkú
 S1S-REFL-buy-APPL-FIN 8/10-shoe

As already illustrated by ex. (3) above, Tswana verb forms can include two successive occurrences of the applicative suffix.

3.2. The canonical use of Tswana applicative verb forms

In its canonical use, the applicative suffix licenses the presence of a direct object with a semantic role that the same verb devoid of the applicative suffix cannot assign to a direct object.

Tswana canonical applicatives are obligatory applicatives. As already illustrated by ex. (3) above, in Tswana, objects licensed by the applicative suffix cannot be analyzed as promoted obliques: they always represent participants (in the broad sense of this term) that cannot be treated

as terms of the construction of the same verb in its non-applicative form, even through the mediation of a preposition.⁷

Since Tswana has multiple-object constructions, Tswana applicative constructions never imply the demotion of a direct object present in the construction of the same verb in its non-applicative form. Note however that there are limitations to the number of objects in the construction of derived verb forms: since Tswana has non-derived verbs (for example *fa* ‘give’) in double-object constructions, theoretically, the possibility to combine causative and applicative derivation, and to reiterate applicative derivation, should result in constructions with four (or even five) objects (for example, ‘A makes B give C to D on E’s behalf). In fact, constructions with more than three objects are always categorically rejected by informants. Constructions with three objects (as illustrated by ex. (1c) & (3c) above) are possible, but not very common, and they are subject to arbitrary limitations: the applicative form of *fa* ‘give’ (A gives B to C for D) is considered acceptable by Tswana informants –see ex. (7k-l) below; by contrast, they reject the causative form of *fa* (A makes B give C to D), whose equivalent would be perfectly acceptable in other languages having a similar system of multiple-object constructions and of valency-increasing derivations.

The applicative suffix of Tswana is semantically unspecified, in the sense that, by itself, it gives only negative indications about the semantic role of the object it licenses: the object licensed by the applicative suffix may assume any semantic role that the verb in its non-applicative form cannot assign to an object, and that cannot be coded by means of a preposition either. Practically, this means that the interpretation of applicative constructions crucially depends on the lexical meanings of the verb and of the object whose presence is licensed by the applicative suffix, as can be seen from ex. (7), which illustrates the variety of the semantic roles taken over by applicative derivation.⁸

- (7) a. *Kgosi e atholetse monna bogodu*
 ‘The king condemned the man for theft’

qhósí í-át^húl-éts-í mù-ńná bú-χòdù
 9.king S3:9-condemn-APPL.PFT-FIN 1-man 14-theft

- b. *Kgosi e atholetse monna loso*
 ‘The king condemned the man to death’

qhósí í-át^húl-éts-í mù-ńná lù-sú
 9.king S3:9-condemn-APPL.PFT-FIN 1-man 11-death

- c. *Kitso o berekela tiego*
 ‘Kitso is working in order to make up lost time’

⁷ This means in particular that in Tswana, participants with a semantic role categorized as comitative or instrumental cannot be coded as objects of an applicative verb form, since two prepositions (comitative *le* and instrumental *ka*) typically assigning these roles to their complements are available. We will however see in section 4 that Tswana applicative verb forms have a non-canonical use in which their subject represents a participant that can appear as an instrumental adjunct in the construction of the non-applicative form of the same verb. We will also see in section 5.3 that Tswana does not use the instrumental preposition to introduce the mention of participants that can be viewed as instruments, but also necessarily have a particular spatial relation with another participant (for example, a pot used to do the cooking necessarily contains the food that is being prepared): in Tswana, such participants are usually represented by locative phrases in a non-canonical applicative construction.

⁸ In Tswana, the possibility to assign specific semantic roles to objects in their non-applicative form is a lexical property of verbs that cannot be entirely predicted from their meaning. For example, *athola* ‘condemn’ in its non-applicative form can occur in a double-object construction in which the second object represents the amount of a fine, e. g. *athola motho kgomo* | condemn | person | cow | ‘condemn somebody to be fined a cow’, but in order to express ‘condemn to death’ or ‘condemn to prison’, the use of the applicative form is obligatory.

kítsó ú-bérék-él-à tíéχò
1.Kitso S3:1-work-APPL-FIN 9.delay

- d. *Magodu a bolaetse monna madi*
'The thieves killed the man for money'

mà-χòdù á-búlá-éts-í mù-ńńá mà-dí
6-thief S3:6-kill-APPL.PFT-FIN 1-man 6-money

- e. *Mpho o jetse Kitso dinawa*
'Mpho ate the beans that were intended for Kitso'

m̀p^hó ú-dʒ-éts-í kítsó dí-nàwá
1.Mpho S3:1-eat-APPL.PFT-FIN 1.Kitso 8/10-bean

- f. *Ke lebogela Kitso madi*
'I am thanking Kitso for the money'

kì-lèbùχ-él-à kítsó mà-dí
S1S-thank-APPL-FIN 1.Kitso 6-money

- g. *Losea lo lelela go anya*
'The baby is crying because he wants to suck'

lù-síá lú-líl-él-à χù-áɲà
11-baby S3:11-cry-APPL-FIN INF-suck

- h. *Mosadi yo o akela ralebentle*
'This woman is telling lies about the shopkeeper'

m̀-śádì jó ú-ák-él-à rálibíntíli
1-woman 1.DEM S3:1-lie-APPL-FIN 1.shopkeeper

- i. *Mabele a alafelwa thsupa*
'The sorghum is treated against tshupa (a kind of worm)'

m̀-βèlé á-áráf-èl-w-à ts^hùpà
6-sorghum S3:6-treat-APPL-PSV-FIN 9.tshupa

- j. *Mosadi o biletsa bana dijo*
'The woman is calling the children to eat'

m̀-śádì ú-bíl-éts-á b-àná dì-dʒó
1-woman S3:1-call-APPL-FIN 2-child 8/10-food

- k. *Mosadi o biletsa bana ngaka*
'The woman is calling the doctor for the children'

m̀-śádì ú-bíl-éts-á b-àná ɲákà
1-woman S3:1-call-APPL-FIN 2-child 9.doctor

- l. *Ke fetse ngwanake baesekele madi*
 ‘I gave money to my son for a bicycle’

kì-f-éts-í ñwánàké bāisíkìlí mà-dí
 S1S-give-APPL.PFT-FIN 1.child.1S 9.bicycle 6-money

- m. *Ke fetse malome dikgomo letswai*
 ‘I gave salt to the cows for my uncle’

kì-f-éts-í màlómé dí-q^hòmú ì-tswāi
 S1S-give-APPL.PFT-FIN 1.uncle.1S 8/10-cow 5-salt

- n. *Mosetsana yo o fose^tsa batsadi*
 ‘This girl behaves badly towards her parents’

mù-sétsánà jó ù-fós-éts-à bà-tsádi
 1-girl 1-DEM 3:1-be wrong-APPL-FIN 2-parent

- o. *Ke gakgamalela bopelokgale jwa ngwana jo*
 ‘I am impressed by the courage of this child’

kì-χáq^hámál-èl-à bù-pìlúq^háì dzwá-ñw-àná jò
 S1S-be impressed-APPL-FIN 14-courage 14.GEN-1-child 1.DEM

4. Applicative derivation and the promotion of instrumental adjuncts

In Tswana, participants usually treated in the construction of the non-applicative form of a verb as instrumental adjuncts, i.e. represented by a preposition phrase headed by the instrumental preposition *ka*, can also appear as the subject of the applicative form of the same verb, as illustrated by ex. (8).

- (8) a. *O ne a apaya kgaka a šaba bogobe ka nama ya yone*
 ‘He cooked the guinea-fowl and flavoured the porridge with its flesh’

ú-nè à-àpàj-à q^háká á-šàb-à bù-χóbé
 S3:1-AUX S3:1.SEQ-cook-FIN 9.guinea-fowl S3:1.SEQ-flavour-FIN 14-porridge

ká námà já-jòné
 PREP 9.flesh 9.GEN-9.PRO

- b. *Nama e šabela bogobe*
 ‘Meat is used to flavour the porridge’

nàmà í-šàb-él-à bù-χóbè
 9.meat S3:9-flavour-APPL-FIN 14-porridge

This use of applicative derivation is clearly non-canonical, since in the construction illustrated by sentence (8b), the subject of the non-applicative form of the verb is demoted, and the instrumental adjunct is not promoted to the role of object, but to that of subject.⁹

5. Applicative derivation and the semantic role of locative phrases

5.1. General remarks

In this section, we examine a first type of non-canonical use of Tswana applicative verb forms in connection with locative phrases. It has in common with the canonical use that, in this case too, the applicative derivation is necessary to license the presence of a term with a particular semantic role in the construction of the verb. It departs however from the canonical use in that the term in question is not a noun phrase in the syntactic role of object, but a locative phrase showing no evidence of a syntactic status different from that of ordinary obliques. It cannot be represented by an object marker, or converted into the subject of a passive construction, and more generally, locative phrases licensed by applicative derivation seem to have exactly the same syntactic behaviour as locative phrases accompanying non-derived verbs.

In Tswana, locative phrases can enter the construction of a non-derived verb in two possible ways:

(a) Any Tswana verb can combine with a locative phrase whose function is to localize the event, or a participant in the event, as in ex. (9).

- (9) a. *Kitso o bereka ko Kanye*
 ‘Kitso is working in Kanye’

kítsó ú-bérék-à kó kàṅé
 1.Kitso S3:1-travailler-FIN PREP 1.Kanye

- b. *Ke bonye Kitso ko jarateng*
 ‘I saw Kitso in the yard’

kì-bóṅí kítsó kó džáráté-ṅ
 S1S-see.PFT-FIN 1.Kitso PREP 9.yard-LOC

(b) Two subsets of movement verbs can combine with a locative phrase to which they assign, either the semantic role of source, or that of direction of movement, as in ex. (10).

⁹ More generally, in Bantu languages, the behaviour of Instrumentals in valency-changing mechanisms is a tricky matter. Mostly on the basis of Kinyarwanda data from Kimenyi 1980 or Kimenyi 1988, Bantu languages are sometimes said to have special applicative forms used to promote Instrumentals to Objects, but in fact, the verbal suffix *-iish-* that licenses the promotion of an Instrumental to Object in a Kinyarwanda sentence such as *Umugore a-ra-andik-iish-a ibarúwa ikarámu* | woman | S3:1-PRES-write-CAUS-FIN | letter | pen | ‘The woman is writing a letter with a pen’ is not an applicative, but a causative suffix, and the literal meaning of this sentence would be something like ‘The woman is making a pen write a letter’. A similar use of the causative suffix *-is-* is marginally attested in Tswana too: in Tswana, prototypical Instrumentals (*write with a pen, cut with a knife*, etc.) cannot appear as objects of causative verb forms, but *his car* in the Tswana equivalent of *He ran over a man with his car* is normally treated as the object of the causative form of *gata* ‘run over’, rather than an instrumental adjunct (*O gatisitse monna mmotorokara* [ú-χát-ís-íts-é mò-íná m̀mótúrùkàrà] | S3:1-run over-CAUS-PFT-FIN | 1-man | 3-car |, lit. ‘He made/let the car run over a man’). This means in particular that there is no obvious connection between the promotion of Instrumentals to Subjects as attested in Tswana, and the promotion of Instrumentals to Objects, marginal in Tswana, but fully productive in other Bantu languages, since the derived verb forms involved in these mechanisms are different (applicative in the promotion of Instrumentals to Subjects, causative in the promotion of Instrumentals to Objects).

- (10) a. *Kitso o ile ko Kanye*
 ‘Kitso went to Kanye’

kítsó ú-ìl-é kó kàṅé
 1.Kitso S3:1-go.PFT-FIN PREP 1.Kanye

- b. *Kitso o hudugile ko Kanye*
 ‘Kitso moved from Kanye’

kítsó ú-húdúχ-ìl-è kó kàṅé
 1.Kitso S3:1-move-PFT-FIN PREP 1.Kanye

Consequently, the applicative derivation is necessary when the use of a locative phrase departs from these conditions. Three cases must be distinguished.

5.2. Verbs of movement of the type illustrated by *taboga* ‘run’

Taboga ‘run’ is semantically a verb of movement, but in its non-derived form, it has no semantic role to assign to a locative phrase. In other words, the only available interpretation for a locative term in the construction of *taboga* is the default interpretation of location of the event. By contrast, the applicative form *tabogela* can assign the role of direction –ex. (11). The same behaviour has been observed with *akofa* ‘hurry’, *fofa* ‘fly’, *feta* ‘pass’, etc.

- (11) a. *Ke tlaa taboga ko tseleng*
 ‘I will run on the road’

kì-tlǎǎ-tábúχ-à kó tsílè-ṅ
 S1S-FUT-run-FIN PREP 9.road-LOC

- b. *Ke tlaa tabogela ko tseleng*
 ‘I will run to the road’¹⁰

kì-tlǎǎ-tábúχ-él-à kó tsílè-ṅ
 S1S-FUT-run-APPL-FIN PREP 9.road-LOC

Note that, in this particular case (but not in those examined in the following sections), a canonical applicative would be possible with the same meaning: a possible alternative to *Ke tlaa tabogela ko tseleng* is *Ke tlaa tabogela tsela*, with *tsela* ‘road’ treated as the object of a transitive construction. There is an obvious relationship with the fact that, in Tswana, non-derived verbs of movement that can assign the role of direction to a locative phrase (for example, *ya* ‘go’) have an alternative construction in which a noun phrase representing the direction is treated as the direct object of a transitive construction.

5.3. Verbs of movement of the type illustrated by *huduga* ‘change one’s residence’

With verbs of movement that, in their non-derived form, imply a locative argument to which they assign the role of source, the applicative form has the same formal valency as the non-derived form (it governs a locative phrase with the syntactic status of oblique argument), but assigns to its locative argument the role of direction, as illustrated in ex. (12) by *huduga* ‘change one’s

¹⁰ See section 5 for another possible interpretation of this sentence.

residence’. Note that, in order to express ‘move from A to B’, Tswana must combine the non-derived form of *huduga* introducing the locative phrase referring to the source of the movement, and the applicative form of the same verb introducing the locative phrase referring to the direction –ex. (12c). More generally, Tswana (like many languages of Sub-Saharan Africa, even among those that otherwise show no tendency towards so-called serialization) has no possibility to specify the source and the direction of a movement within the frame of a single-verb construction.

- (12) a. *Ke tlaa huduga ko Kanye*
 ‘I will move from Kanye’

kì-tlàà-húduχ-à kó kàṅé
 S1S-FUT-move-FIN PREP 1.Kanye

- b. *Ke tlaa hudugela ko Gaborone*
 ‘I will move to Gaborone’

kì-tlàà-húduχ-él-à kó χàbúróṅì
 S1S-FUT-move-APPL-FIN PREP 1.Gaborone

- c. *Ke tlaa huduga ko Kanye ke hudugele ko Gaborone*
 ‘I will move from Kanye to Gaborone’

kì-tlàà-húduχ-à kó kàṅé kì-húduχ-él-ì kó χàbúróṅì
 S1S-FUT-move-FIN PREP Kanye S1S-move-APPL-FIN PREP 1.Gaborone

5.4. Verbs that do not express movement

Verbs that do not express movement freely combine with locatives expressing the location of the event or of a participant, as already illustrated by ex. (9) above, but the use of the applicative form is obligatory to license the presence of a locative whose semantic role departs more or less from the mere indication of a location. This means for example that Tswana is sensitive to the difference in the semantic role of *in the yard* in *She is cooking porridge in the yard* and *in the big pot* in *She is cooking porridge in the big pot*. In the first sentence, *in the yard* expresses nothing more than the location of the event, whereas in the event represented by the second sentence, the pot contains the porridge, which justifies to code it as a locative, but it also plays the role of an instrument in the cooking event. In other words, the spatial relation between the pot and the porridge is not accidental; it follows from the role they play in the cooking event. Consequently, in the Tswana equivalent of *She is cooking porridge in the yard*, the verb *cook* can remain in its non-derived form,¹¹ whereas in the equivalent of *She is cooking the porridge in the big pot*, the verb *cook* must be in the same applicative form as when, for example, a noun phrase referring to a beneficiary is added to the construction of this verb, and the applicative derivation must be reiterated in order to make it possible to mention both the vessel used to cook the porridge and the beneficiary of the cooking event –ex. (13).

- (13) a. *Lorato o tlaa apaya motogo*
 ‘Lorato will cook the porridge’

¹¹ As we will see in the following section, the applicative form of the verb is also possible in the Tswana equivalent of such a sentence, but its use would imply the focalization of the locative phrase.

lòrátó ù-tfáá-àpàj-à mù-tòχó
 1.Lorato S3:1-FUT-cook-FIN 3-porridge

- b. *Lorato o tlaa apeela bana motogo*
 ‘Lorato will cook the porridge for the children’

lòrátó ù-tfáá-àpè-èl-à b-àná mú-tòχó
 1.Lorato S3:1-FUT-cook-APPL-FIN 2-child 3-porridge

- c. *Lorato o tlaa apeela motogo mo pitseng e tona*
 ‘Lorato will cook the porridge in the big pot’

lòrátó ù-tfáá-àpè-èl-à mù-tòχó mó pìtsé-ìj é túnà
 1.Lorato S3:1-FUT-cook-APPL-FIN 3-porridge PREP 9.pot-LOC 9.LINK 9.big

- d. *Lorato o tlaa apeela bana motogo mo pitseng e tona*
 ‘Lorato will cook the porridge for the children in the big pot’

lòrátó ù-tfáá-àpè-èl-èl-à b-àná mú-tòχó mó pìtsé-ìj é túnà
 1.Lorato S3:1-FUT-cook-APPL-APPL-FIN 2-child 3-porridge PREP 9.pot-LOC 9.LINK 9.big

Ex. (14) provides additional illustrations of the obligatory use of applicative verb forms when the construction of verbs that do not express movement includes a locative phrase referring to a participant whose role implies a spatial relation with another participant, or more generally, a locative phrase whose semantic role is not reduced to mere location.

- (14) a. *Dikgomo di nwela mo mokorong*
 ‘Cows drink from a *mokoro*’ (a tree trunk carved in the shape of a canoe)

dì-q^hòmú dí-nw-él-à mó mù-kóró-ìj
 8/10-cow S3:8/10-drink-APPL-FIN PREP 3-*mokoro*-LOC

- b. *Baegepeto ba ne ba kwalela mo pampiring e ba e dirileng ka lotlhaka wa noka*
 ‘The Egyptians wrote on paper they made with reed from the river’¹²

bà-éχèpító bá-nè bá-kwàl-él-à mó pámpirí-ìj
 2-Egyptian S3:2-AUX S3:2-write-APPL-FIN PREP 9.paper-LOC

é bá-í-dìr-ìl-è-ìj ká lú-t^hàkà lwá-nùká
 9.LINK S3:2-O3:9-make-PFT-FIN-REL PREP 11-reed 11.GEN-9.river

- c. *Batho ba ne ba bolokela mabele a bone mo disigong tse ditona*
 ‘People kept their sorghum in big baskets’

bà-t^hù bá-nè bá-bùlúk-él-à mà-bèlé á-bòné
 2-person S3:2-AUX S3:2-keep-APPL-FIN 6-sorghum 6.LINK-2.PRO

¹² The same applicative stem *kwalela* < *kwala* ‘write’ has already been encountered –ex. (3) above– in a construction in which the function of applicative derivation was to license a direct object representing a recipient or a beneficiary. The difference in tone is not relevant: it follows from the automatic application of tone rules to two distinct tense forms of the same verb (present in ex. (3b), narrative past here).

mó dī-síχú-ŋ tsé dī-tónà
 PREP 8/10-basket-LOC 8/10.LINK 8/10-big

- d. *Ntšhe o ipaakanyetsa kutla e a tlaa beelang mae mo go yone*
 ‘The ostrich is preparing the hole in which it will lay eggs’¹³

ŋtʃʰé ú-ì-páákáŋ-èts-à kútʃá í á-tʃáà-bé-él-à-ŋ mà-í
 1.ostrich S3:1-REFL-prepare-APPL-FIN 9.hole 9.LINK S3:1-FUT-put-APPL-FIN-REL 6-egg

mó χú-jòné
 in LOC-9.PRO

- e. *Batho ba ba tshelela mo ngwaong ya bone*
 ‘These people live according to their traditions

bà-tʰù bá bá-tsʰíl-él-à mó ŋwáò-ŋ já-bòné
 2-person 2.DEM S3:2-live-APPL-FIN PREP 9.tradition-LOC 9.GEN-2.PRO

It is interesting to observe that instruments usually represented by locatives in this type of construction by virtue of the spatial relation they necessarily have with another participant share with typical instruments the possibility to appear also as subjects of applicative verb forms, as illustrated by ex. (15) –compare with ex. (8) above.

- (15) a. *Mosadi o ne a tsholela bogobe mo megopong*
 ‘The woman dished out the porridge into the wooden bowls

mù-sádí ú-nè à-tsʰùl-él-à bù-χóbé mó mì-χúpú-ŋ
 1-woman S3:1-AUX S3:1-dish out-APPL-FIN 14-porridge PREP 4-wooden bowl-LOC

- b. *Mogopo o tsholela bogobe*
 ‘The wooden bowl is used to dish out porridge’

mù-χúpú ú-tsʰùl-él-à bù-χóbé
 3-wooden bowl S3:3-dish out-APPL-FIN 14-porridge

Similarly, ‘the *mokoro* used to water cows’ is *mokoro o o nwelang dikgomo mù-kórò ó ú-nw-él-à-ŋ dí-qʰòmú* | 3-*mokoro* 3.LINK S3:3-drink-APPL-FIN-REL 8/10-cow |, ‘coffee-cup’ is *kopi e e nwelang kofi kópí é í-nw-él-à-ŋ kófí* | 9.cup 9.LINK S3:9-drink-APPL-FIN-REL 9-coffee |, ‘a room used to do the cooking’ is *ntlo e e apeelang ntù é í-ápé-él-à-ŋ* | 9.room 9.LINK S3:9-cook-APPL-FIN-REL |, etc.

6. Applicative derivation and the focalization of locative phrases

In constructions including a locative phrase that does not necessarily trigger the use of the applicative form of the verb, the applicative form of the verb can be used, without any change in the construction or in the semantic roles, in order to focalize the locative phrase. This use of the applicative derivation, strictly limited to constructions including a locative phrase whose semantic

¹³ A hole used as a nest is a necessary element of the event described by this sentence, hence the obligatory use of the applicative form of *baya* ‘put’. Note that, by contrast, *baya* ‘put’ remains in its non-applicative form when combined with a locative referring to a place where something is put accidentally, for example in *Ke beile buka mo tafoleng* ‘I put the book on the table’.

role does not trigger the use of the applicative form of the verb, constitutes an alternative to cleft constructions, which are in Tswana the standard way to express focalization.

For example, in ex. (11) above, sentence (b) is in fact ambiguous between an interpretation according to which the applicative suffix codes a change in the role-assigning properties of *taboga* ('I will run *to* the road (not *on* the road)'), and another interpretation according to which the applicative suffix codes the focalization of a locative phrase with the default semantic role of location ('I will run *ON THE ROAD* (and nowhere else)').

This ambiguity is general with verbs of movement that must be used in the applicative form in order to be able to assign the role of direction to locative phrases: the same applicative form can always be used to focalize a locative phrase in the role of location. But with verbs whose applicative form cannot be used to assign the role of direction to a locative phrase that otherwise would be interpreted as expressing location, the focalization of a locative phrase is the only possible function of an applicative verb form used in a construction identical to that of the non-applicative form of the same verb. Ex. (16) illustrates applicative forms in constructions in which their only possible interpretation is that they are used to focalize a locative phrase expressing location. Note that, in Tswana, contrary to what could suggest the use of the applicative derivation with verbs such as *taboga*, an andative interpretation of the applicative form of verbs that do not express movement is not possible.

- (16) a. *Lorato o apeela MO JARATENG*
'Lorato does the cooking *IN THE YARD*'

lùrátó ú-ápé-èl-à mó dzáràté-ṅ
1.Lorato S3:1-cook-APPL-FIN PREP 9.yard-LOC

- b. *Monna wa me o swetse KO MORAFONG*
'My husband died *IN THE MINE*'

mù-ńná wá-mí ú-sw-éts-ì kó mù-ráfó-ṅ
1-man 1.GEN-PRO1S S3:1-die-APPL.PFT-FIN PREP 3-mine-LOC

- c. *Ke tsaletswe KO KANYE*
'I was born *IN KANYE*'

kì-tsál-éts-w-ì kó kàṅé
S1S-give birth-APPL.PFT-PSV-FIN PREP Kanye

- d. *Bana ba tladi ba anyela LORATLENG*
'The sons of the thunder suck *IN THE NOISE*' (proverb)¹⁴

b-àná bá-tladi bá-áṅ-él-á lú-ràtlé-ṅ
2-child 2.GEN-9.thunder S3:1-suck-APPL-FIN 11-noise-LOC

¹⁴ Compare the focalizing function of *anyela* (applicative form of *anya* 'suck') in this proverb with its canonical use in the idiom *anyela motho dipodi*, lit. 'suck goats to somebody's detriment', i.e. 'exploit somebody'). Note also that the absence of a locative preposition in this example is not relevant: there is evidence that the three locative prepositions of Tswana result from a relatively recent evolution; in everyday speech they are very frequent, but never strictly speaking obligatory, and they tend to be omitted in conservative types of texts such as proverbs.

7. Possible connections between the focalizing use of applicative derivation and other syntactic phenomena

The applicative verb forms of Tswana raise an interesting question, since the same morphological formation occurs both in contexts in which its function is to modify the correspondence between syntactic and semantic roles without any particular discursive implication, and in contexts in which it has a purely discursive function, without any modification of the correspondence between syntactic and semantic roles. From the strict point of view of a description of the present state of Tswana, it seems difficult to propose a unified definition of the meaning of the applicative verb forms of Tswana that would predict both types of use. In particular, it seems difficult to account for the fact that their focalizing function is strictly limited to locative phrases.

There is however a possible connection between this duality in the uses of the applicative verb forms of Tswana and the syntactic phenomena examined in sections 7.1 to 7.3.

7.1. Exceptions to the general constraints governing constituent order

In Tswana, noun phrases in the syntactic role of object generally precede obliques,¹⁵ and in multiple-object constructions, objects that stand relatively higher in Animacy Hierarchy precede those that stand lower, and any violation of these constraints results in agrammaticality. There is however an interesting exception: in Tswana, objects and obliques can be questioned *in situ*, but interrogative pronouns and adverbs tend to be placed immediately after the verb, even if this contradicts the principles that govern the linear order of objects and obliques in declarative clauses. In the case of *eng* ‘what?’, this tendency of interrogative words to be placed immediately after the verb has led to the development of a clitic form *-ng*.

Ex. (17) shows that, in a declarative sentence, a temporal adjunct like *maabane* ‘yesterday’ must follow noun phrases in the role of object; apparent exceptions to this rule, as in sentence (b), imply a construction in which the argument represented by the object is treated as a post-clausal topic, and therefore must be represented in the verb form by an object marker. By contrast, *leng* ‘when?’ can immediately follow the verb in constructions including an object treated as a term of the clause (and not necessarily as a post-clausal topic) – sentence (d).

- (17) a. *Ke bonye monna yo maabane*
‘I saw this man yesterday’

kì-bóǰ-í mù-ńná jó máàbání
S1S-see.PFT-FIN 1-man 1.DEM yesterday

- b. *Ke mmonyé maabane monna yo*
‘I saw him yesterday, this man that is’

kì-m-móǰ-í máàbání mù-ńná jó
S1S-O3:1-see.PFT-FIN yesterday 1-man 1.DEM

- c. **Ke bonye maabane monna yo*

¹⁵ Note that this constraint does not apply to complement clauses equivalent to noun phrases in object function. For example, when *itse* ‘know’ is followed by a noun phrase in object function, the sequence *verb + complement* cannot be interrupted by an adverb such as *sentle* ‘well’, but this is possible when the complement of *itse* is a clause introduced by *gore* ‘that’.

- d. *O bonye leng monna yo?*
 ‘When did you see this man?’

ù-bóŋ-ì Íŋ mù-ńnà jó
 S2S-see.PFT-FIN when? 1-man 1.DEM

Ex. (18) provides further illustrations of the possibility to place interrogative phrases immediately after the verb, even if this violates the general constraints on linear order.

- (18) a. *O bonye jang leina la gago?*
 ‘How did you receive your name?’

ù-bóŋ-ì dzáŋ Ì-ínà lá-χáχù
 S2S-see.PFT-FIN how? 5-name 5.GEN-PRO2S

- b. *Re tlaa tsaya kae madi a sekole?*
 ‘Where will we take the money for the school from?’

ri-tlää-tsáj-à kái mà-dí á-sì-kólè
 S1P-FUT-take-FIN where? 6-money 6.GEN-7-school

- c. *O boleletse ke mang kgang e?*
 ‘By whom were you told this news?’

ù-búlél-éts-ì kí máŋ q^háŋ é
 S2S-tell-APPL.PFT-FIN PREP 1.who? 9.news 9.DEM

Therefore, constraints on linear order raise a problem quite similar to that raised by the use of the applicative form of verbs: in Tswana, constituent order is grammaticalized to a considerable extent, and most of the time, its rigidity leaves no place to possibilities of variation; variations are however possible if interrogative words are present. These variations do not seem to have any impact on the interpretation of the sentence, but it is reasonable to think that their explanation lies in the particular semantics of interrogative words. Given the general affinity between interrogative words and focalization, the variations in constituent order observed in interrogative sentences can be explained as the result of a dual status of the immediate postverbal position. This position is quite obviously the position assigned to noun phrases in the syntactic role of object, but its behaviour in interrogative sentences suggests to recognize it also as a focus position. Starting from this hypothesis, the variation observed in interrogative sentences can be predicted by positing that in certain conditions, a constraint assigning the immediate postverbal position to a focalized constituent can prevail over the constraint assigning it to a noun phrase in the syntactic role of object; this is in particular the case if the focalized constituent includes an interrogative word.

7.2. The impersonal construction of intransitive verbs

Another evidence of a particular discursive status of the immediate postverbal position in Tswana is provided by the existence of an impersonal construction of intransitive verbs whose function is to de-topicalize the subject. In this construction, very similar to the impersonal construction of French intransitive verbs, there is no subject-verb agreement; the verb does not show any overt mark of a valency change, and invariably includes a subject marker of class 15/17 (which consequently must be analyzed as an expletive); the de-topicalized subject is placed immediately after the verb, i.e. in the canonical position of objects. As illustrated by ex. (19), this impersonal construction emphasizes that the argument which otherwise would appear as the subject

carries new information, and is used to get round the constraint that forbids interrogative words to assume the syntactic role of subject.

- (19) a. *Basimane ba tlaa bina*
 ‘The boys will dance’

bà-símàní bá-tláà-bín-à
 2-boy S3:2-FUT-dance-FIN

- b. *Go tlaa bina basimane*
 ‘There will be a dance performed by (the) boys’ (lit. ‘There will dance boys’)

χú-tláà-bín-á bà-símàní
 EXPL-FUT-dance-FIN 2-boy

- c. *Go tlaa bina bomang?*
 ‘Which persons will dance?’ (lit. ‘There will dance which persons?’)

χú-tláà-bín-á bó-máḽ
 EXPL-FUT-dance-FIN 2-who?

- d. **Bomang ba tlaa bina?*

It is interesting to note in this connection that in Tswana, *Thank you* is usually expressed as *Ke a leboga*, lit. ‘I thank’, a polite reply being *Go leboga nna*, with the same verb in the impersonal construction, and the first person singular pronoun *nna* in the position of the demoted subject –lit. ‘There thanks ME’: here, the focalizing effect of this impersonal construction is quite obvious. Similarly, Tswana speakers use this impersonal construction to identify themselves at the beginning of a phone call. For example, a man named Kitso usually begins a phone call by the sentence *Go bua Kitso*, lit. ‘There speaks KITSO’.¹⁶

7.3. The alternation $N_1 V N_2\text{-loc} \sim N_2 V N_1$

Some Tswana verb have two alternative constructions whereby the subject of the first construction represents the same argument as the object of the second construction, and the locative complement of the verb in the first construction represents the same argument as the subject of the second construction. This can be viewed as a case of promotion of Locatives to Subjects, but the verb undergoes no morphological change coding this valency-change. Ex. (20) and (21) illustrate this alternation, which in Tswana seems to be limited to a few verbs, but has been signalled as productive in other Bantu languages.

- (20) a. *Madi a tswa mo nthong*
 ‘The blood is flowing out from the wound’

mà-dí á-tsw-à mó ñt^hó-ḽ
 6-money S3:6-come from-FIN PREP 9.wound-LOC

¹⁶ For a similar analysis of an identical construction in another Southern Bantu language, see Du Plessis and Visser 1992:130-133.

- b. *Ntho e tswa madi*
 ‘The wound is bleeding’

ñt^hó í-tsw-á mà-dí
 9.wound S3:9-come from-FIN 6-money

- (21) a. *Ngaka ya Setswana e agile mo motseng le batho*
 ‘The traditional doctor lives in the village with the people’

ñàkà já-sì-tswáná í-áχ-íl-è mó mú-tsi-ì-ì lí-bá-t^hù
 9.doctor 9.GEN-7-Tswana S3:9-settle-PFT-FIN PREP 3-village-LOC with-2-person

- b. *Lefatshe le le agile Basarwa*
 ‘This territory is inhabited by Bushmen’

ì-fáts^hì lé í-áχ-íl-é bà-sárwà
 5-territory 5.DEM S3:5-settle-PFT-FIN 2-Bushman

Here again, as reflected in the translations, the demotion of the subjects of sentences (a) to the role of object (and consequently, their placement in immediate post-verbal position) is motivated by a change in their discursive role.

8. Conclusion

It follows from the data examined in sections 6 and 7 that in Tswana, applicative derivation and placement of constituents in immediate postverbal position share an important particularity: both are crucially involved in the particular way the general notion of direct object manifests itself in Tswana morphosyntax, but both have uses that cannot be described adequately with reference to the notion of object only, and these uses involve the notion of focus at least to some extent. A clue to this puzzle must probably be sought in an ancient state of Bantu syntax in which constituent order was less grammaticalized and more sensitive to discursive variations than in modern Bantu languages, and in the following two principles governing the most basic aspects of the syntactic organization of languages:

(a) as a core term of transitive clauses, the direct object shares with the subject the property of representing a participant in the event that has intrinsically a certain degree of salience;

(b) as opposed to the subject, which in transitive clauses typically represents the initiator of the event, and consequently tends to be taken as the initial term from the point of view of communicative dynamism too, the object has a natural affinity with the discursive role of focus.

It is particularly interesting to observe manifestations of these general principles in a language like Tswana, which at first sight seems to have a rigid constituent order leaving no place to discursive variations and a system of verbal derivation operating exclusively on the correspondence between syntactic and semantic roles.

It would be desirable to extend this study to the whole of the Bantu family, in order to investigate whether it would be possible to reconstruct the evolutions responsible for similar situations on the basis of comparative evidence. Unfortunately, this would raise a difficult problem of documentation. Recent work on Bantu (and more generally African) languages has drawn attention to a frequent involvement of verbal morphology in focus phenomena,¹⁷ but relatively few descriptive grammars provide adequate information on this matter.¹⁸ In particular, the use of the applicative

¹⁷ For a relatively recent overview, see Bearth 1999.

¹⁸ See in particular the discussion in Güldemann 2003.

derivation to focalize locatives is certainly much more widespread than suggested by the available Bantu grammars.

For example, this use of applicative derivation seems to be general at least in Southern Bantu languages (i.e., in Guthrie's zone S), but it is mentioned, neither in Cole's grammar of Tswana, which still constitutes the main source of information on the syntax of this language, nor in Doke and Mofokeng's reference grammar of Southern Sotho.

Among more recent publications, an explicit statement of the focalizing function of applicative verb forms can be found in Mabugu's thesis on Shona, but this is rather an exception.

For example, Du Plessis and Visser's *Xhosa syntax* includes several examples suggesting that applicative verb forms are used in Xhosa to focalize locatives exactly in the same way as in Tswana, but the notion of focalization (which these authors explicitly use in the analysis of other constructions) does not figure in the chapter of their book devoted to the uses of applicative verb forms. Du Plessis and Visser give the Xhosa sentence *Wafela emgodini*, comparable to the Tswana ex. (16b) above, with the same translation as *Wafa emgodini* ('He died in the mine'), which does not account for the focalization of the locative adjunct implied in this sentence by the use of the applicative verb form *wafela*. They also quote couples of Xhosa sentences such as *Abantu bayalila ecaweni* 'The people are crying in church' / *Abantu bayalilela ecaweni* 'The people are crying in church only' or *Abantwana bayavuya esikolweni* 'The children are glad at school' / *Abantwana bayavuyela esikolweni* 'The children are glad at school only'. But they comment such couples of Xhosa sentences in terms of 'implicit contrast' or 'exclusive location', not of focalization, which implies that they do not consider focalization to be involved, since the term *focalization* appears in other chapters of their book.¹⁹ The explanation is probably that, when a language has several focalizing devices, linguists tend to consider the most frequent, or the most 'visible' of them as the only focalizing device existing in the language they describe. In Southern Bantu languages, as already mentioned for Tswana, cleft constructions constitute the standard way to mark focalization, hence the general failure to recognize the existence of an alternative focalization strategy involving no specific construction or morphology, and arbitrarily restricted to locative phrases.

In these conditions, it would not be reasonable to try to put forward precise historical hypotheses. This would mean discussing the choice between a scenario according to which the use of the applicative derivation as a focalizing device would be an innovation of some Bantu languages (as suggested by current Bantu reconstructions), and another scenario according to which this would be rather a remnant of an ancient situation (which seems to be more in accordance with the general assumptions of grammaticalization theory, according to which syntactic structures are the product of the fossilization of discursive devices). But before investigating this question, it would be crucial to know what is the exact extent of the focalizing use of applicative derivation, at least at the level of the Bantu language family, which for the reasons just mentioned is impossible to establish on the basis of the available documentation.

¹⁹ In connection with habitual events, the notion of 'exclusive location' put forward by Du Plessis and Visser is more or less equivalent to the focalization of a locative phrase expressing location, but this notion does not provide an overall explanation of the use of applicative derivation to focalize locative phrases, since the focalizing function of applicative verb forms may manifest itself in contexts in which 'exclusive location' makes no sense. For example, a habitual jogger can say *I run ON THE ROAD* or *The road is the only place where I run* with approximately the same meaning. But this possibility of equivalence is conditioned by the fact that running is something a person can do several times in his/her life in different places. By contrast, the location of an event necessarily unique (such as the birth or the death of an individual) can be focalized (*He died IN THE MINE, I was born IN KANYE*), but cannot be presented as an 'exclusive location' (sentences such as *The mine is the only place where he died* or *Kanye is the only place where I was born* would be semantically anomalous). This explains why, starting from the notion of 'exclusive location' instead of focalization, Du Plessis and Visser were not able to account for the difference in meaning between *Wafa emgodini* and *Wafela EMGODINI*.

ABBREVIATIONS

Numbers followed by *S* (singular), *P* (plural), or *:X* (class X), indicate persons. Otherwise, numbers indicate noun classes. For example, 2.GEN indicates the form of the genitive marker agreeing with a head noun of class 2, O3:1 means ‘object marker, 3rd person, class 1’, etc.

ABL = ablative

APPL = applicative

AUX = auxiliary

CAUS = causative

DECL = declarative

DEF = definite

DEM = demonstrative

DJT = disjunctive²⁰

EXPL = expletive

E/GEN = ergative-genitive

FIN = final²¹

FUT = future

GEN = genitive

INF = infinitive

LINK = linker²²

LOC = locative

NEG = negative marker

O (followed by ‘1’, ‘2’, or ‘3’) = object marker (of 1st, 2nd, or 3rd person)

P (preceded by ‘1’ or ‘2’ indicating a person) = plural

PERS = persistive

PFT = perfect

POT = potential

PREP = preposition

PRO = personal pronoun

PSV = passive

RECIPR = reciprocal

REFL = reflexive

REL = suffix characteristic of relative verb forms

S (followed by ‘1’, ‘2’, or ‘3’) = subject marker (of 1st, 2nd, or 3rd person)

²⁰ In several tenses, Tswana has a distinction between ‘conjunctive’ verb forms, that cannot occur at the end of the clause, and ‘disjunctive’ verb forms, that occur in clause final position; this means that words or phrases following a disjunctive verb form that at first sight seem to belong to the clause in which the verb in question fulfils the predicate function are in fact postclausal topics, which implies a focalization of the verb; in most cases, this distinction manifests itself in the tone of the final vowel only, but the conjunctive form of the perfect positive is characterized by the addition of a grammatical H tone that modifies the tonal properties of the whole verb stem, and in the present positive, the disjunctive form is characterized by the addition of a formative *a-à-* immediately after the subject marker –see Creissels 1996, Creissels & al. 1997.

²¹ In the morphological structure of the Tswana verb, the final is a vowel whose variations, in combination with the presence of formatives in other positions and with tonal variations, contribute to the expression of the TAM value of the verb.

²² Linkers are words that obligatorily introduce certain types of noun dependents (adjectives, attributive nouns and relative clauses). They agree in class with the head noun, and are maintained in elliptical constructions from which the head-noun is absent (*podì e ntsho e tona* | 9.goat | 9.LINK | 9.black | 9.LINK | 9.big | ‘a/the big black goat’ → *e ntsho e tona* | 9.LINK | 9.black | 9.LINK | 9.big | ‘a/the big black one’. Linkers are homonymous with demonstratives, and historically, they are former demonstratives which in the context *noun ... dependent* have lost their deictic value and acquired a purely syntactic function.

S (preceded by '1' or '2' indicating a person) = singular
SEQ = sequential
TAM = TAM marker

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