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Distal demonstratives in Nairobi Swahili: An emerging relative particle?

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Abstract
This paper investigates the use of the distal demonstrative *-le* in relative clauses (either as a pronominal head noun or modifier of the head noun) in Nairobi Swahili. It has previously been suggested that the demonstrative functions as a kind of "pseudo-relativiser" (Shinagawa 2019) in Sheng (a youth variety of Swahili spoken in Nairobi), partly because of its frequent use in relative clause contexts and partly because there are demonstrative-based relative particles in other Bantu languages. In this paper, I argue that the demonstrative does not at this stage function as a relative particle but rather co-occurs with relative clauses because both constructions are used for focus. That being said, it may be on its way to grammaticalising as per Van de Velde's Bantu relative agreement cycle (2021), especially given the pragmatic origins of many grammaticalisation processes (Traugott 1988).

Keywords: Relative clauses, demonstratives, grammaticalisation, information structure, Swahili, Bantu

1. Introduction

This paper investigates the use of prenominal distal demonstratives in relative contexts in Nairobi Swahili, arguing that these demonstratives may be in the early stages of grammaticalizing into relative particles via Van de Velde's (2021) Bantu relative agreement cycle. I use the term relative "particle" as an umbrella term for relativiser, relative pronoun, and relative complementiser, partly because there is no consensus on terminology in the literature and partly to avoid the controversial debate around the form of demonstrative-based relative particles in other Bantu languages (Henderson 2006). I also use the term Nairobi Swahili to encapsulate the varieties of Swahili spoken in Nairobi, which are characterised by code-switching and multilingualism. This, then, includes the more extensively documented Swahili-based youth language Sheng, which I follow Githiora (2018) in conceptualising as one point on a continuum of Kenyan ways of speaking Swahili.

The feature in question is evidenced in (1).[1] Here, the distal demonstrative *ile* modifies the head noun of the relative clause *college* 'college' which is directly followed by the main verb of the relative clause *nilienda* 'I went'. In Standard Swahili, such a construction would be ungrammatical, as a pre-verbal relative particle or relative marker affix on the verb would be necessary (see Section 3.1.1.). Such a construction, then, could be analysed either as a null relative (lacking any relative particle) or with the demonstrative functioning as the relative particle.

[1] The following abbreviations are used in this paper (taken from Oxford Guide to the Bantu Languages): 1, 2, 3, etc.: noun class numbers, 1SG, 2PL, etc.: person and number, APPL: applicative, ASS: associative marker, CAUS: causative, COND: conditional, COP: copula, DEM: demonstrative, DIST: distal, EXI: existential, FUT: future, FV: default final vowel, HAB: habitual, INF: infinitive, NEG: negation marker, OM: object marker, PASS: passive, PERF: perfect, POSS: possessive, PRS: present, PREP: preposition, PROX: proximal, PST: past, REF: referential, REL: relative, RM: relative marker, SM: subject marker, and SBJV: subjunctive.

(1) I-le college ni-li-end-a ni y-a driving
9-DEM.DIST college SM1SG-PST-go-FV COP 9-ASS driving
'The only college I went to was a driving college'

Examples such as this have led to the description of this prenominal distal demonstrative as a "pseudo-relativiser" in Sheng by Shinagawa (2019), who labels it so because of its frequency and similarity to demonstrative-based relative particles in other Bantu languages. Under my analysis, however, the demonstrative is not functioning as a relative particle but rather cooccurs with relative clauses for pragmatic reasons, as both demonstratives and relative clauses are focus constructions that "indicate the presence of alternatives" (Krifka 2007: 6, based on the alternative semantics of Rooth (e.g.,1992). Despite this, the potential for this demonstrative to grammaticalise into a relative particle is clear, especially given the pragmatic origins of many grammaticalisation processes (Traugott 1988).

The rest of the paper is structured as follows: First, the methodology is briefly outlined in Section 2. Following this, the background to the study is presented, outlining the different relative clause strategies and uses of demonstratives in both Standard Swahili and Nairobi Swahili; thirdly, an analysis of the structural and pragmatic role of demonstratives in relative contexts is offered; and, finally, the data is considered in light of Van de Velde's Bantu relative agreement cycle (2021).

2. Methodology

The data presented here comes from my corpus of spoken Nairobi Swahili, which was collected for doctoral research in 2022/2023 using sociolinguistic interviews about language practices and attitudes. All the data was naturally occurring (in the sense that it came up spontaneously in discussion, not from elicitation). In total, I interviewed 57 participants for around 20 minutes each. Interviews were conducted in Nairobi Swahili, though it is worth noting that my being a white, British researcher may have prompted a more formal variety of Swahili than is otherwise used (although my corpus data reflects my observations of natural speech between Kenyans during my time there). At the time of writing, 44 out of 57 participants' interviews have been analysed. The corpus contains 658 relative clause tokens, 79 of which feature the prenominal distal demonstrative as in (1). These tokens have been analysed qualitatively, with a further round of quantitative analysis planned for the near future.

3. Background to the study

Across the roughly 300-500 Bantu languages, there are both broad typological similarities and extensive variation (Gibson et al. 2024), and this is just as true of relativisation strategies (Nsuka-Nkutsi 1982; Henderson 2006). In order to contextualise the analysis presented in Section 4, this section outlines variation in relativisation strategies and demonstratives' forms and functions in Nairobi Swahili and, where relevant, Standard Swahili and Bantu languages more generally.

3.1. Relativisation strategies in Standard Swahili and Nairobi Swahili

There are a number of different relativisation strategies across varieties of Swahili, with at least three strategies in frequent use in both Standard and Nairobi Swahili, with only one common to both.

3.1.1. Relativisation strategies in Standard Swahili

There are three well-attested relativisation strategies in Standard Swahili, two synthetic and one analytic. The analytic structure makes use of a relative complementiser *amba-*, which, according to Lipps (2011: 16), is historically related to a verb *-amba* 'say, tell', a cross-linguistically common source of complementizer (Russell 1992), which is still found today in its applicative form as *-ambia* 'tell'. The complementiser takes a suffixed noun class-specific pronominal relative marker (relative concord in Schadeberg (1992) that agrees with the head noun, as in (2):

(2) M-tu amba-ye a-na-ku-l-a
1-person REL-1 SM1-PRS-INF-eat-FV
'Someone who is eating' (Mohamed 2001: 181)

In the synthetic strategies, the same agreeing pronominal relative marker is affixed to the main verb of the relative clause. The difference between the two strategies is that one is tensed (3), in which the relative marker is affixed pre-stem, and the other is tenseless (4), in which the relative marker is affixed post-stem.

(3) M-tu a-li-ye-kw-end-a
1-person SM1-PST-RM1-INF-go-FV
'The person who went' (Keach 1980: 35)

(4) M-tu a-m-pend-a-ye Juma
1-person SM1-OM1-love-FV-RM1 Juma
'The person who loves Juma' (Keach 1980: 36)

Several theories have been put forward to explain these different strategies. It is first worth noting the tense, aspect, and mood (TAM) restrictions. The tenseless affix is restricted in its use to talking about things without a specific tense, in a way that may be recurring or generally the case (Lipps 2011: 19). There are also restrictions on the tensed affix strategy, in that it can only be used with the simple past, present, present negative, and future tenses (and apparently the perfect *-me-* tense in the early 19th century (Russell 1992: 123)). The *amba-* strategy, on the other hand, has no TAM or negation-related restrictions attached to it.

There is little agreement on whether the strategies vary in terms of syntactic distribution relating to the grammatical function of the head noun in the relative clause. Russell (1992: 123) suggests that *amba-* facilitates relativisation of NPs lower in Keenan and Comrie's (1977) accessibility hierarchy, though it appears that all three can serve at least in subject and object relative clauses.[2] There are also other structural constraints that determine which strategy is used. While Mwamzandi (2022) finds that, in general *amba-* is more flexible with word order, Lipps (2011: 23) claims *amba-* "may only be separated from the head noun by arguments and adjuncts of that noun," so an adverb, for example, could not intervene as in (5a), but it could in the case of a tensed relative as in (5b). Mohamed (2001) has claimed that this is also true

[2] Mwamzandi (2022) suggests though that the use of *amba-* in object relatives would be unsurprising given that it has a simplifying effect on the relative clause, and object relative clauses are predicted to be more complex in Keenan and Comrie's accessibility hierarchy (1977).

after *amba-* within the relative clause, though Lipps (2011: 24) notes that corpus data calls into question such a strict constraint.

(5) a. *M-tu jana amba-ye a-li-kwend-a
1-person yesterday REL-RM1 SM1-PST-arrive-FV

b. M-tu jana a-li-ye-kwend-a
1-person yesterday SM1-PST-RM1-go-FV
'A person yesterday who went' (Keach 1980: 66 in Lipps 2011: 24)

Ashton (1947: 309–311) also notes a preference for *amba-* in longer sentences to keep the complementiser closer to its head noun and not violate word order. This is backed up by Mwamzandi's (2022) corpus analysis, which also found a preference for *amba-* in longer relative clauses. Russell (1992: 125) claims that *amba-* is preferred in cases of ambiguity, for example, where the subject and object belong to the same noun class, though this is disputed by Mwamzandi (2022). Meanwhile, Ashton (1947: 310) states that *amba-* must be used with non-restrictive relative clauses, with the identificational *ni* copula, and when the relative is governed by a preposition.

Pragmatic factors are also relevant, as Ashton (1947: 13) notes that *amba-* draws attention to the head noun. This is echoed in Mwamzandi's (2022) study, where he found that *amba-* was preferred in cases of topic shift between the matrix and relative clauses, where the tensed affix strategy was preferred in cases of topic continuity. He also found that, while both *amba-* and tensed relatives were possible with both restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses, they differed in the kinds of information they provided about the head noun, and where the head noun was a proper noun, the tensed strategy was preferred.

3.1.2. Relativisation strategies in Nairobi Swahili

There are also three relativisation strategies in common use in Nairobi Swahili, with only the *amba-* strategy common to both Standard and Nairobi Swahili. The other two strategies, one using a pronoun *-enye* and the other a null construction, are not grammatical in Standard Swahili. Strikingly, none of the common strategies in Nairobi Swahili are synthetic, supporting Shinagawa's hypothesis that isolating-analytic structures are preferred in Sheng (2007). In my corpus, the most frequent strategy makes use of a relative pronoun, *-enye*, which takes a noun class agreeing prefix. In Standard Swahili, *-enye* is a possessive adnominal stem meaning 'having' as in *mwenye nyumba* 'landlord' (lit. 'having house'), but has become a relative pronoun in Sheng (and Nairobi Swahili) (Ferrari 2012; Githiora 2018; Shinagawa 2019), and is perhaps a more recent phenomenon as it is not mentioned in Myers-Scotton's (1979) description of Nairobi Swahili. It is also attested in other inland varieties of Swahili, including Lubumbashi (Ferrari, Kalunga, & Mulumbwa 2014) and Kisangani (Nassenstein 2015), both in the DRC. Examples (6-7) show the use of *-enye* in subject and object relative clauses, respectively.[3]

[3] Example (6) features an interesting auxiliary 'jaai' which is common in Nairobi Swahili. It is the combination of the negative perfect tense marker *-ja-* 'not yet' and the verb *-wahi,* 'manage to' which have auxiliarised together to create a new tense marker, which means 'have never'. *-wahi* has also merged with the perfective *-sha-* 'have already' tense marker to be used in questions like *ushaai enda?* 'Have you ever been?'.

(6) There are certain groups w-enye ha-wa-ju-i Ki-swahili vi-zuri
There are certain groups 2-REL NEG-SM2-know-NEG 7-Swahili 8-well

so tu-na-onge-a English
so SM1PL-PRS-speak-FV English
'There are certain groups [of friends] who don't know Swahili well so we speak English'

(7) U-na-end-a ku-meet new people hata w-enye hu-ja-ai
SM2.SG-PRS-go-FV INF-meet new people even 2-REL SM2.SG.NEG.PERF-never

pat-a
get-FV
'You go to meet new people that you've never even met before'

Shinagawa notes that *-enye* has replaced *amba-* in Sheng, perhaps because of an overall prefixing preference in the language (2019: 135). It is also different to *amba-* in its ability to form headless relatives (i.e., those lacking a head noun), which *amba-* is not able to do, at least in Standard Swahili (Lipps 2011: 36). This can be observed nicely in (8), where the first relative *wenye wako kwa service ya mwisho* 'who are at the final service' has no head noun and uses the *-enye* relative pronoun, while the second *watu ambao ni wazee* 'people who are older' has the head noun *watu* 'people' and uses the *amba-* relative complementiser.

(8) U-na-pat-ang-a w-enye wa-ko kwa service y-a mwisho ni
SM2.SG-PRS-get-HAB-FV 2-REL 2-LOC PREP service 9-ASSlast COP

wa-tu amba-o ni wa-zee
2-person REL-2 COP 2-old person
'You find that those who are at the final [church] service are people who are older'

Also frequent in Nairobi Swahili are null relative constructions, where there is no relative particle. These are also common in my corpus, and have previously been noted in both Nairobi Swahili (Myers-Scotton 1979) and Sheng (Ferrari 2012; Shinagawa 2019). Examples (9-10) show the null relative construction with subject and object relative clauses, respectively:

(9) A-ki-j-a m-tu a-na-onge-a Kizungu basi, na-korog-a
SM1-COND-come-FV 1-person SM1-PRS-speak-FV English then PRS.1SG-mix-FV
'If someone comes who speaks English then I just mix [languages]' (KASMB36)

(10) I think kuna ujanja wa-na-tumi-a
I think EXI.COP magic SM2-PRS-use-FV
'I think there is some magic they use' (RIRMA32)

It is possible that this null strategy is a contact influence of English, which is also widely spoken in the city. In most varieties of English, the null strategy is only possible for object relatives (Andrews 2007), and in my corpus of spoken Nairobi Swahili, I find that while it is possible for both subject and object relatives, it is more common in the case of the latter. In terms of Kenan and Comrie's accessibility hierarchy (1977), if we take the null strategy as a

simplification process as suggested by Shinagawa, it is unsurprising that such a strategy would be used more with object relatives, which are predicted to be more complex by the hierarchy.

3.2. Demonstratives in Nairobi Swahili

As in Standard Swahili (Ashton 1947), Nairobi Swahili exhibits three demonstrative forms. I use the same terms as are commonly used in Standard Swahili for the forms in Nairobi Swahili, which are proximal (11), referential (12), and distal (13). Variation in the use of the different forms in Standard Swahili has been thought of at least in terms of deictic distance (Ashton 1947), discourse distance (Wilt 1987), "noteworthiness" (Leonard 1985), and givenness (Mwamzandi 2014).

(11) Hii ni eneo l-a Dagoreti South
9.DEM.PROX COP 5.area 5-ASS Dagoreti South
'This is the Dagoreti South area' (KWGMB03)

(12) Hi-yo ni generation amba-yo i-me-pote-a
9-DEM.REF COP generation REL-RM9 SM9-PERF-be lost-FV
'That is the lost generation' (KWGWB40)

(13) Asilimia kubwa ni y-a wa-le amba-o ha-wa-ju-i
Percentage big COP 9-ASS 2-DEM.DIST REL-RM2 NEG-SM2-know-NEG

lugha ya mama
mother tongue
'A large percentage [of children] is those who don't know their Mother Tongue'

As with Standard Swahili, all three forms of demonstratives in Nairobi Swahili can be used either as a pronoun (11-13) or as an adnominal modifier (14-16):

(14) Hu-ta-ski-a hi-i Sheng y-enye u-na-ski-a kwa slums
SM2.SG.NEG-FUT-hear-FV DEM.PROX-9 Sheng 9-REL SM2-PRS-hear-FV in slums
'You won't hear this Sheng that you hear in the Slums'

(15) U-na-pat-a wa-tu w-engi amba-o wa-na-zungumz-a iyo
SM2.SG-GET-get-FV 2-person 2-many REL-RM2 SM2-PRS-speak-FV 9-DEM.REF

lugha
9.language
'[In that area] you find many people who speak that language'

(16) I-le lugha tu-na-pend-a ku-tumi-a ni Ki-swahili
9-DEM.DIST 9.language SM1PL-PRS-love-FV INF-use-FV COP 7-Swahili
'The language we like to use is Swahili'

When used as adnominal modifiers, demonstratives in Standard Swahili (Ashton 1947) and Bantu (Van de Velde 2005) generally occur in the post-nominal position,[4] though their word

[4] Though Mwamzandi's (2014) corpus analysis of 20th century Swahili literary texts found that the distal demonstrative was more frequently used in the prenominal position.

order is flexible and can be determined at least in part by information structure (Mwamzandi 2014). Mwamzandi (2014) finds that the order of demonstrative nouns in Standard Swahili relates to referential givenness (Gundel & Fretheim 2006), in particular the "activation status" in the common ground (after Chafe 1987) of the entity in question. Mwamzandi argues that the postnominal demonstrative "signals to the hearer that the referent is "activated," while the referents of prenominal demonstratives are "semi-active" or "inactive" (2014: 61).

It has also been noted in Standard Swahili that the use of demonstratives in the prenominal position functions as a definite article (Ashton 1947: 181). The use of a single word to express both 'the' and 'that' is also common cross-linguistically (Schachter & Shopen 2007), including in Gĩkũyũ and other Bantu languages (Kimambo 2018: 68). The use of a demonstrative as a definite article might also be expected given that most speakers of Nairobi Swahili, which otherwise has no articles, also speak English, which features extensive use of articles.

As is common cross-linguistically (Comrie 2000 in Mwamzandi 2014: 71), demonstratives can also be used for focus in Swahili (Leonard 1985; Mwamzandi 2014). They exhibit at least a simple focus (indicating the presence of alternatives) in the sense that they restrict the reference of an NP among a set of alternatives (Hawkins 1978). In (16), the demonstrative is restricting the reference to the head noun *lugha,* 'language', indicating that there are alternative languages to which the predicate does not apply.

Having reviewed the various forms and functions of relativisation strategies and demonstratives in Nairobi Swahili, the next section interrogates structural and pragmatic factors relevant to the use of the prenominal distal demonstrative in relative clauses.

4. The distal demonstrative – a relative particle?

When assessing whether or not the distal demonstrative is a relative particle, the task, essentially, is to uncover whether the demonstrative is syntactically part of the head noun NP or the relative clause, a task that has long proved problematic in Bantu linguistics (Nsuka-Nkutsi 1982: 25). In his paper on Sheng relativisers, Shinagawa refers to the prenominal distal demonstrative as a "pseudo-relativiser" and "practically the sole stable construction that is used for non-subject relatives" (2019: 130). In my own corpus, this form frequently cooccurs with relative clauses, such as (17), where the grammatical function is subject, and (18), where it is an object:

(17) wa-le wa-toto wa-na-za-liw-a siku i-zi, kabisa
2-DEM.DIST 2-child SM2-PRS-birth-PASS-FV 10.day DEM.PROX-10 completely

hawa-pend-i
SM2.NEG-like-FV.NEG
'The kids that are born these days, they really don't like [speaking mother tongue]'

(18) Lazima mu-onge-lesh-e i-le lugha a-na-ski-a
Must OM1-speak-CAUS-SUBJ 9-DEM.DIST 9.language SM1-PRS-hear-FV
'You must speak to him in the language he understands'

Shinagawa (2019: 131) notes that there are two possible analyses of this construction: either the demonstrative functions as some sort of relative particle, or it is a null relative and the

demonstrative is just modifying the head noun. Shinagawa's final justification for treating the distal demonstrative as a relativiser is that through its frequency, it is recognisable as a stable pattern separate from the null construction, though he recognises that further analysis is needed.

In examples (17-18), the demonstrative is used as an adnominal modifier, but there are also many instances of it being used pronominally in relative contexts, which may support its analysis as a relative particle. In examples (19-20), the demonstrative is being used pronominally, and two analyses are possible. If the demonstrative is analysed as some kind of relative pronoun/particle, then the relative clause is headless (as there is no other candidate for head noun). Alternatively, the demonstrative is functioning as a pronominal head noun of a null relative clause, as there is no other candidate for a relative particle. These constructions also mirror other headless relatives in Nairobi Swahili that take the *-enye* relative pronoun as in (21).

(19) Kuna wa-le wa-me-som-a, na kuna wa-le
COP.EXI 2-DEM.DIST SM2-PERF-study-FV and COP.EXI 2-DEM.DIST

ha-wa-ja-som-a
NEG-SM2-NEG.PERF-study-FV
'There are those who have studied, and there are those who haven't studied'

(20) Wa-ki-onge-a na akina mama ha-wa-elew-i
SM2-COND-speak-FV with group 2.old woman NEG-SM2-understand-NEG

ki-le wa-na-sem-a
7-DEM.DIST SM2-PRS-say-FV
'If they speak [English] with old women they don't understand what they're saying'

(21) Kuna w-enye wa-na-ju-a Lingala na i-zo lugha z-ingine
COP.EXI 2-REL SM2-PRS-know-FV Lingala and DEM.REF-10 10.language 10-other
'[In DRC] there are those who know Lingala and those other languages'

Such examples also mirror the pronominal use of demonstratives in relative constructions in other Bantu languages (such as (22) from Lingala). This pronominal use in relative contexts has been taken as proof of their status as relative pronouns by Zeller (2002 in Henderson 2006: 45).

(22) muye Poso a-tind-aki
5.REL Poso 3SG-send-PST
'The one that Poso sent' (Henderson 2006: 44)

In fact, "[u]se of the demonstrative as a pronominal form introducing relatives is attested by a very high number of Bantu languages" (Nsuka-Nkutsi 1982: 3, translated), where it serves as a link between the head noun and relative clause, and in a high number of languages is essential for the proposition to have the grammatical status of relative (Nsuka-Nkutsi 1982: 3). The presence of this strategy in Gikuyu and contact languages cross-linguistically (Romaine 1988 in Shinagawa 2019) is another of Shinagawa's motivations for analysing the demonstrative as a relativise particle in its own right.

However, there are reasons for not analysing the demonstrative as a relative particle. The first reason is that there are ample examples of relative clauses (either null or featuring *-enye* or *amba-*) that do not have a demonstrative, so if it is a relativiser, it is not obligatory (at least not at this stage or for all speakers). Secondly, while there are Bantu languages (such as Nyilamba and Zaramo) in which the demonstrative relative particle can be placed before or after the relativised noun (Nsuka-Nkutsi 1982: 23), the position of the demonstrative in the demonstrative relative strategies of potential contact languages (Gikuyu and Gusii (Nsuka-Nkutsi 1982: 23)) is post-nominal, a point which is noted by Shinagawa (2019: 131). Finally, in those potential contact languages, the demonstrative is only optional in order for the clause to have the status of relative (Nsuka-Nkutsi 1982: 23).

While this does not necessarily exclude the analysis of the demonstrative as a relative particle, it does call into question what the syntax would look like, particularly regarding the external vs. internal heading of relative clauses. Taken as any kind of relative particle (pronoun, relativiser, or complementiser), the prenominal position of the demonstrative would mean that relative clauses of this type are internally-headed, as the relative particle (the demonstrative) would signal the start of the relative clause and the head noun would therefore exist within the relative clause itself. This is illustrated by examples (23-24), with the relative clause in square brackets:

(23) [wa-le wa-toto wa-na-za-liw-a siku i-zi], kabisa
2-DEM.DIST 2-child SM2-PRS-birth-PASS-FV 10.day DEM.PROX completely

hawa-pend-i
SM2.NEG-like-FV.NEG
'The kids who are born these days, they really don't like [speaking mother tongue]'

(24) Lazima mu-onge-lesh-e [i-le lugha a-na-ski-a]
Must OM1-speak-CAUS-SUBJ 9-DEM.DIST 9.language SM1-PRS-hear-FV
'You must speak to him in the language he understands'

In (23), the relative clause, initiated by the demonstrative relative particle *wale*, would be *wale watoto wanazaliwa siku izi* 'the kids who are born these days', with the head noun *watoto* 'children' occurring inside the relative clause. In (24), the relative clause, initiated by the demonstrative relative particle *ile,* would be *ile lugha anaskia* 'the language s/he understands', with the head noun *lugha* occurring inside the relative clause. The other strategies in Nairobi Swahili are externally headed, as exemplified by (25), where the relative pronoun *-enye* signals the start of the relative clause, which comes after the head noun *lugha* 'language', making it externally headed and post-nominal.

(25) English ni lugha [y-enye u-na-ez-a tumi-a]
English COP 9.language 9-REL SM2SG-PRS-can-FV use-FV

u-ki-end-a like u-ko nje
SM2SG-COND-go-FV like DEM.REF-RM17 abroad
'English is a language you can use if you go abroad'

While analysing the demonstrative construction as an internally-headed relative clause strategy is entirely possible, it is at odds with all other relative clause strategies in Standard Swahili and Nairobi, all Bantu languages listed in WALS, and all other languages that could be conceived as having a contact influence on Nairobi Swahili (English, Luo, Somali, and more remotely Maasai, Turkana, Nandi), all of which use externally-headed (and post-nominal) relative clause strategies (Dryer 2013). Furthermore, as the other relative strategies present in Nairobi Swahili are externally-headed, it would mean the language has both external and internal relative strategies, which is rare cross-linguistically (15/824 languages on WALS (Dryer 2013)).

A more potentially plausible analysis, then, considers the demonstrative to be functioning purely as a modifier of the head noun (17-18) or as the head noun itself in pronominal cases (19-20) with a null relative clause. This is illustrated by a reanalysis of (17-18) (repeated below as 26-27), where the relative clause consists only of the main verb, and the demonstrative is just functioning as an adnominal modifier of the head noun:

(26) wa-le wa-toto [wa-na-za-liw-a siku i-zi], kabisa
2-DEM.DIST 2-child SM2-PRS-birth-PASS-FV 10.day DEM.PROX completely

ha-wa-pend-i
NEG-SM2-like-FV.NEG
'The kids that are born these days, they really don't like [speaking mother tongue]'

(27) Lazima mu-onge-lesh-e i-le lugha [a-na-ski-a]
Must OM1-speak-CAUS-SBJV 9-DEM.DIST 9.language SM1-PRS-hear-FV
'You must speak to him in the language he understands'

While analysing the demonstrative construction as an internally-headed relative clause strategy is entirely possible, it is at odds with all other relative clause strategies in Standard Swahili and Nairobi, all Bantu languages listed in WALS, and all other languages that could be conceived as having a contact influence on Nairobi Swahili (English, Luo, Somali, and more remotely Maasai, Turkana, Nandi), all of which use externally-headed (and post-nominal) relative clause strategies (Dryer 2013). Furthermore, as the other relative strategies present in Nairobi Swahili are externally-headed, it would mean the language has both external and internal relative strategies, which is rare cross-linguistically (15/824 languages on WALS (Dryer 2013)).

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(28) a. Kuna [wa-le wa-me-som-a], na kuna
COP.EXI 2-DEM.DIST SM2-PERF-study-FV and COP.EXI

[wa-le hawa-ja-som-a]
2-DEM.DIST SM2.NEG-HORT-study-FV

b. Kuna wa-le [wa-me-som-a], na kuna
COP.EXI 2-DEM.DIST SM2-PERF-study-FV and COP.EXI

wa-le [hawa-ja-som-a]
2-DEM.DIST SM2.PERF.NEG-study-FV
'There are those who have studied, and there are those who haven't studied'

The fact that the demonstrative can be used pronominally in combination with another relative pronoun, as in (29), suggests that the analysis of (28b) is a better fit: the demonstrative is functioning as a pronominal head noun with a null relative clause.

(29) wa-na-tumi-a Ki-ingereza na ku-tafsiri kwa wa-le w-enye
SM2-PRS-use-FV 7-English and INF-translate for 2-DEM.DIST 2-REL

ha-wa-skik-i
NEG-SM2-understand-NEG
'[At church] they use English and translate for those who don't understand'

Furthermore, evidence for the status of demonstratives as relative particles (i.e., being syntactically part of the relative clause rather than the modifiers of the head noun) in other Bantu languages is not readily available in Nairobi Swahili. In many languages the demonstrative is at a further stage of development into a relativiser as an affix (Nsuka-Nkutsi 1982; Henderson 2006), which is not the case in Nairobi Swahili. In other languages there is a tonal change in the demonstrative when used in a relative context (Nsuka-Nkutsi 1982: 25), but Nairobi Swahili is an atonal language.

Other languages exhibit word order restrictions on demonstratives in relative contexts (Nsuka-Nkutsi 1982: 25), and while the strong preference for the prenominal position of the demonstrative in relative contexts may superficially support its analysis of a relative marker, it is more relevant in illuminating the pragmatic relationship between demonstratives and relative clauses. If we take Mwamzandi's analysis that the demonstrative is used postnominally for "active" referents, a restrictive relative clause, whose purpose is to restrict the reference of an NP, would be redundant as the referent in question is already clear (so it doesn't need restricting). In contrast, semi-active, inactive, or accommodated referents taking a prenominal demonstrative may require some further restriction in order to be accepted by the hearer, which would explain their use in combination with restrictive relative clauses.

There are, then, reasons to doubt that demonstratives are functioning as relative particles in Nairobi Swahili. Firstly, as in Gikuyu, its use is only optional and not necessary for the interpretation of a clause as relative. Secondly, if analysed as a relative particle, the construction would be internally-headed, which is at odds with the other strategies in Nairobi Swahili and relevant contact languages. Thirdly, its nominal function (whether analysed as a head noun or relative pronoun) also rules out its description as a relativiser. Finally, evidence for the relative

particle status of demonstratives in other Bantu languages is unavailable in Nairobi Swahili, and its prenominal word order preference can be explained by pragmatic factors.

In addition to these reasons to doubt the demonstrative's status as a relative particle, there are also well-evidenced and compelling factors that explain its cooccurrence with relative clauses. Firstly, demonstratives may be used as definite articles prenominally, and their expanded use in Nairobi Swahili could be a contact influence from English. The information structure considerations are still more compelling. Both demonstratives and relative clauses work to restrict the reference of an NP and, in doing so, indicate the presence of alternatives (simple focus). It is therefore unsurprising that they should be used so frequently together.

At this stage, then, it seems that the cooccurrence of demonstratives and relative clauses is better explained by pragmatic factors than it functioning as some sort of relative particle. However, it is both possible and plausible that it is at the early stages of becoming one, given that pragmatic strategies are known to evolve into obligatory grammatical patterns (i.e., the early stages of grammaticalisation) (Traugott 1988; Wald 1997). The next section considers this in relation to Van de Velde's Bantu relative agreement cycle (2021).

5. The Bantu relative agreement cycle

In his paper on the Bantu relative agreement cycle, Van de Velde (2021) charts the three-stage process through which 1) new relativisers emerge, which 2) are subsequently integrated into relative verbs, before 3) replacing the original subject agreement prefix. In stage one, he argues that first, an element functioning as a nominaliser or linker (usually a pronoun, demonstrative, or augment) emerges between the head noun and the relative clause and is then reanalysed as a relativiser. This element also tends to be a target for agreement with the relativised NP (the head noun).

In Nairobi Swahili, the demonstratives agree with their head noun, so that criterion is satisfied. The issues around their prenominal position syntactic function are also of less concern at this early stage, partly because there are languages attested in which a prenominal demonstrative has become a relative particle (Nsuka-Nkutsi 1982: 23) and partly because there is at least a pragmatic link between relatives and demonstratives and grammaticalisation processes are known to have pragmatic origins (Traugott 1988; Wald 1997). In Bantu languages like Eton (Cameroon), where a prenominal demonstrative has become a relative particle, the demonstrative was obligatory in modifying the domain nominal before being integrated into the head noun to create a construct form that introduces relative clauses:

(30) Eton; Cameroon

a. kòpí í-nə̀ ɲól î=kpə̀m
[9]coffee IN9-be [9]color CON9=[9]cassava.leave
'The coffee is green.'

b. í-kôpí í-nə̌ ɲól î=kpə̀m
CSTR-[9]coffee IN9-be.REL [9]color CON9=[9]cassava.leave
'green coffee' (lit. 'coffee that is green')
(Van de Velde 2008: 347 in Van de Velde 2021: 997)

Van de Velde also notes that stage one is often reinitiated through the use of the new form with an existing relative particle. He states that this has been claimed to add emphasis or contrastive focus to the clause, again linking the use of relatives to information structure. This is something

also seen in my own corpus, as in (29), where the demonstrative is used together with the relative pronoun *-enye* (repeated here as (31)):

(31) wa-na-tumi-a Ki-ingereza na ku-tafsiri kwa wa-le w-enye
SM2-PRS-use-FV 7-English and INF-translate for 2-DEM.DIST 2-REL

ha-wa-skik-i
NEG-SM2-understand-NEG
'[At church] they use English and translate for those who don't understand'

In stage two of the cycle, "the relativizer is reinterpreted as part of the relative verb form and morphologically integrated to become a bound marker that indexes the head noun" (Van de Velde 2021: 985), before the two agreement prefixes (one for the head noun and the other for the subject of the verb) are reduced, resulting in languages in which the main verb of the relative clause either agrees with its subject or the head noun (both are well attested in Bantu). These stages do not seem to apply to Nairobi Swahili at present, and the demonstrative may well be blocked from ever being reanalysed as part of the main verb by its prenominal position.

It is also interesting to note that Traugott (1988: 410) finds a semantic-pragmatic tendency of grammaticalisation cross-linguistically to be that "meanings tend to become increasingly situated in the speaker's subjective belief-state/attitude towards the situation." Demonstratives are well known to be used for "emotional deixis"[5] (Davis & Potts 2010), and therefore seem a good candidate for grammaticalisation processes based on Traugott's tendency. This could also be said of the focus use of demonstratives (and pragmatic phenomena in general), as through focusing on an entity, the speaker is expressing its increased importance/unexpectedness/contrast, which is based on a subjective belief-state or attitude.

6. Conclusion

This paper has presented an analysis of demonstratives in relative contexts, specifically addressing Shinagawa's claim that the prenominal distal demonstrative is functioning as a pseudo-relativiser in Sheng (2019). I argue that the demonstrative does not function as any kind of relative particle but rather cooccurs with relative clauses for pragmatic reasons. Despite this, it is possible that the demonstrative may be in the process of emerging as a new relative particle in Nairobi Swahili via Van de Velde's Bantu relative agreement cycle (2021), especially considering that many grammatical processes have pragmatic origins (Traugott 1988).

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[5] For example, English speakers may be more likely to use 'this' for things they like and 'that' for things they don't.

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