

Lutz Marten* and Maarten Mous

Valency and expectation in Bantu applicatives

<https://doi.org/10.1515/lingvan-2016-0078>

Received September 25, 2016; accepted March 28, 2017

Abstract: Bantu applicatives are standardly analysed syntactically, as encoding a change in valency. However, in many cases applicatives do not change valency, but are rather related to a change in interpretation. In particular pragmatic functions of applicatives related to focus and emphasis are often noted in the description of individual languages, but are very rarely reflected in typological or theoretical work. To address this problem, this paper develops a pragmatic analysis of applicatives, in which applicatives signal that the action denoted by the base verb is being carried out in some way remarkably, and so differently from normal expectations about the action. Pragmatic effects are found with all uses of applicatives, and may lead to a change in valency, or not. Absence of a change in valency is found in particular with locative and instrument applicatives, while benefactive applicatives almost always entail a change in valency. This is related to the thematic hierarchy: Beneficiaries occupy a high position in the thematic hierarchy and have a strong effect on the expectedness of the action expressed. The advantage of our analysis is that it addresses both interpretational and structural aspects of applicative constructions and provides a unified explanation for them.

Keywords: applicative constructions; valency; context-dependence; syntax-pragmatics interface; expectation.

1 Introduction

Applicatives are typically analysed syntactically, in terms of their valency changing potential, in particular as resulting in the addition of an argument, or the promotion of a non-argument, with respect to a corresponding non-applicative construction (see e.g. Peterson 2007). In addition, in many languages, including Bantu languages, applicatives are marked morphologically, for example, through a derivational suffix of the verb. However, these two properties do not always co-occur, and a morphology-syntax mismatch arises when morphologically marked applicative verb forms do not change valency. In such cases the same applicative morphology is related to syntactic valency changing only sometimes, but not consistently, making a syntactic analysis problematic. Furthermore, pragmatic functions of applicatives related to focus and emphasis are often noted in the description of individual languages, but are very rarely reflected in typological or theoretical work (exceptions include e.g. Marten 2003; Creissels 2004; Voisin 2006). The challenge addressed in this paper is to show how a range of uses of applicative constructions defy an analysis in purely syntactic terms, and to outline an alternative analysis of Bantu applicatives which explains the morphological marking and associated semantic, syntactic and pragmatic qualities. In particular, we propose that applicative morphology indicates that the action or event described by the predicate is unusual or unexpected and in some sense ‘stronger’ than the corresponding non-applied verb from. From this perspective, the underlying valency of lexical verbs encodes culturally expected, ‘normal’ events, while applicative morphology signals that the particular event is somehow remarkable, often through emphasising or focusing a specific aspect of the action or event. While we will not develop a fully worked-out definition of ‘remarkableness’, we will assume that pragmatic effects like remarkableness or unexpectedness, rather than syntactic effects, are at the heart of applicative constructions. We

*Corresponding author: Lutz Marten, SOAS University of London, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG, UK, E-mail: lm5@soas.ac.uk

Maarten Mous: Leiden University, PO Box 9500, 2300 RA Leiden, The Netherlands

will develop this idea and take a semantic-pragmatic characterisation of applicatives as a starting point, and show that well-known syntactic effects, which have been taken as central in previous research, follow from it.

The paper is organised as follows. In Section 2, we provide a background on Bantu applicatives, and in Section 3 a brief survey of previous syntactic analyses. Section 4 introduces motion predicates and lexical applicatives and shows their specific behaviour in terms of meaning and valency. Section 5 describes pragmatic effects associated with applicatives, and shows that these are independent of valency change. In Section 6 we discuss so-called augmentative verbs, which morphologically employ a double applicative suffix, and show how these forms provide further evidence for a pragmatic view of applicatives. In Section 7 we bring the evidence of the preceding sections together and develop a comprehensive, pragmatic analysis of applicatives. Finally, Section 8 presents a summary and conclusion of our findings.

2 Bantu applicatives

Bantu applicatives are well described and a number of analyses of different aspects of the construction have been proposed from a variety of analytical perspectives. Typical examples of applicative constructions found in the literature involve a change in valency, where the applicative verb appears to license the introduction of a new object, the applied object, such as *anyani* ‘baboons’ in (1b):

- (1) a. A-lenje a-ku-phík-á zí-túmbúwa [Chichewa]
 2-hunters SM2-PRES-cook-FV 8-pancakes
 ‘The hunters are cooking pancakes’ (Mchombo and Firmino 1999: 217)
- b. A-lenje a-ku-phík-ír-a a-nyaní zí-túmbúwa
 2-hunters SM2-PRES-cook-APPL-FV 2-baboons 8-pancakes
 ‘The hunters are cooking (for) the baboons some pancakes’ (Mchombo and Firmino 1999: 217)

Bantu applicative constructions have a number of distinct morphosyntactic characteristics which can be summarised as follows:

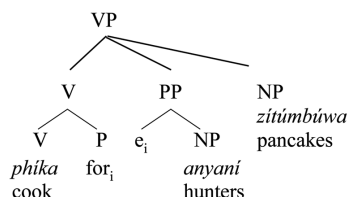
- Applicative verbs are formally marked by a verbal suffix (also called ‘verbal extension’) reconstructed as **-il-*, appearing after the verbal root and before the final vowel. Sometimes vowel and nasal harmony occur (which is also found with causatives, statives, passives, etc., as well as with perfects).
- When applicatives license the introduction or promotion of an additional argument, this argument can have different thematic roles such as beneficiary, location, instrument, motive, etc.
- Schadeberg (2003: 74) proposes a concise set of three basic semantic/thematic roles of Bantu applied objects: “(i) beneficiary, (ii) place and – by extension – time, cause and reason, and (iii) instrument”.
- De Kind and Bostoen (2012) propose, based on evidence from CiLuba, that the basic meaning of applicatives is locative (following earlier proposals by e.g. Dammann 1961 and Kähler-Meyer 1966). A similar view underlies the analysis of Bemba substitutive applicatives in Marten and Kula (2014).
- The applicative can be combined with other extensions, and usually follows causative suffixes, but precedes passives and reciprocals (Hyman 2003).
- Reduplication of (what looks like) applicative suffixes give sometimes rise to intensive readings.
- In contrast to other (non-Bantu) languages with applicatives (cf. Peterson 2007), the form of the suffix in Bantu does not vary according to different syntactic or thematic functions of the applicative.
- A historically post-verbal locative clitic (such as *-ho* in Kinyarwanda) is sometimes analysed as locative applicative marker (see Zeller and Ngoboka 2006).

3 Previous syntactic analyses

Syntactically, applicatives are typically analysed as instances of double object constructions, and a considerable amount of work has focused on the status of the two objects (e.g. symmetric vs. asymmetric languages/constructions) (Baker 1988; Bresnan and Moshi 1990; Marantz 1993; Kimenyi 1995; Moshi 1998; Ngonyani 1998; Ndayiragije 1999; McGinnis 2001; Ngonyani and Githinji 2006; Zeller and Ngoboka 2006; Pylkkänen 2008; Georgala 2012; Murrell 2012, among many others).

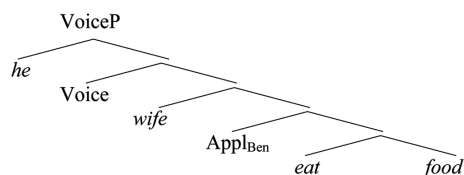
Irrespective of the theoretical approach taken, the starting point for formal analyses of applicatives is their valency-changing quality, often illustrated with benefactive applicatives. The central position of valency change can in fact be traced to older, comparative work. Guthrie (1962), for example, divides Bantu extensions into three groups: 1) valency reducing (passive, stative), 2) valency increasing (applicative, causative), and 3) valency neutral (reversive). Early generative analyses, such as Baker's (1988) incorporation analysis, assume that applicatives are double object constructions with a prepositional head incorporated into the verb (2):

(2) Applicatives as preposition incorporation (cf. Baker 1988: 278)

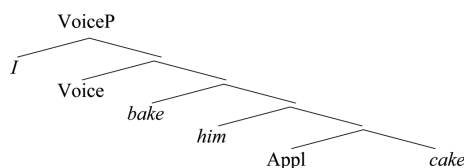


Similarly, more recent approaches which postulate an applicative head (e.g. Marantz 1993 and subsequent work) assume that applicatives license the introduction of an additional argument. In work distinguishing between 'high' and 'low' applicatives (e.g. Jeong 2006; Pylkkänen 2008; Georgala 2012), two different applicative constructions are postulated, distinguished by the relation of the applied object with either the direct object (low applicatives) or the event denoted by verb (high applicatives). However, both cases presuppose that an extra applied object is introduced by an applicative head as shown in (3) (Pylkkänen 2008: 14):

(3) a. High applicative (e.g. Chaga)



b. Low applicative (e.g. English) (Pylkkänen 2008: 14)



Although differing in detail, the same valency-changing assumption underlies the applicative analysis in LFG. Work such as Bresnan and Moshi (1990) and Murrell (2012) analyses applicatives as a morpholexical

operation. Applicatives add a new semantic role to the argument structure of the verb, below the highest role as in (4) (where ‘appl’ stands for different thematic roles introduced by the applicative):



To a large extent the details of the analysis are then concerned with modelling the object properties of the new object, in terms of LFG features of objecthood and thematic restrictions, and so to determine the specific mapping relation between thematic roles and grammatical functions in applicative constructions. This then helps to explain cross-linguistic variation in the symmetry or asymmetry between the objects.

In summary, syntactic analyses assume that applicatives change valency, and that the main task of the analysis is to model how exactly this change in valency takes place. However, there is very little discussion of why this change of valency occurs, that is, of the semantics, pragmatics or information structure behind it. There is also no reflection of the fact, often observed in the descriptive literature, that in many cases, applicatives do not, in fact, trigger a change in valency – for example with motion predicates, in lexicalised uses, and in pragmatic uses. We will discuss these cases in more detail in the following sections, and then develop a pragmatic, rather than a syntactic analysis in the light of this evidence.

4 Motion predicates and lexical applicatives

Despite the wide-spread assumption about the primary function of applicatives as valency-changing, two sets of counter-examples to this assumption are well known: Applicatives of directional and motion predicates, and lexicalised applicatives.

With motion predicates, such as Swahili *-kimbia* ‘run’ in (5), which lexically encode a location or direction, a change in valency is often less clear than in other examples:

- (5) a. A-li-m-kimbi-a m-ke w-ake [Swahili]
 SM1-PST-OM1-run-FV 1-wife 1-his/her
 ‘S/he ran away from his/her wife’
- b. A-li-m-kimbil-i-a mama y-ake
 SM1-PST-OM1-run-APPL-FV 9.mother 9-his/her
 ‘S/he he ran to his/her mother’
- c. A-li-kimbi-a mbio
 SM1-PST-run-FV fast
 ‘S/he ran (away) fast’

In (5a), *-kimbia* ‘run’ lexically entails movement away from some centre: When the verb is used with an object (without applicative morphology), the object is interpreted as the source of the movement, in this case as ‘running away from’. When used with applicative morphology (5b), the object encodes the goal of the movement – running towards (see Creissels 2006 for similar examples from Tswana). However, there is still a syntactic difference between the base form and the applicative form, since in the applicative form, the complement is necessary, while the non-applicative form can be used without complement, as (5c) shows.

We will propose below that motion applicatives like (5) are important for a better understanding of the construction because they show that in these cases, rather than simply adding an argument, applicatives interact with lexical entailments of the underived predicate, i.e. in the example of *-kimbia* in (5), reversing the direction.

A similar example is provided from Bemba in (6), where the transitive use of *-toloka* ‘jump’ means ‘jumping over’ the object (6b), while the applicative form means ‘jumping onto’ (6c).

- [illegible]

In these examples as well, we see that there is no direct change in valency related to the applicative, but that the difference between the base verb and the applicative verb is one of interpretation: The applicative directs the action of the verb towards an endpoint or goal. The saliency of this interpretation is further confirmed by the Bemba examples in (7), which is very similar to the Swahili examples in (5).

- (7) Mutálé a-lée-mu-bútúk-íl-á [Bemba]
 Mutale SM1-PROG-OM1-run-APPL-FV
 'Mutale is running towards him/her'
 ?'Mutale is running for him/her'

The example shows that with the applicative verb *-butukila* ‘run (APPL)’, only the directional interpretation is possible, and not the benefactive one, at least out of context. The interpretation of applicative verbs is thus directly related to the semantics of the base verb, and the resulting interpretation dependent on it.

Next to motion applicatives, lexicalised applicatives interact directly with the lexical meaning of the base verb, without encoding a change in valency. In (8) a non-applicative verb is used to express ‘to warm oneself at the fire’ (8a), but the applicative form is used in the expression ‘warm oneself in the sun’ (8b):

- (8) a. uk-ont-a umu-lilo [Bemba]
 15-warm-FV 3-fire
 ‘to warm oneself at the fire’
- b. uk-ont-el-a aká-suba
 15-warm-APPL-FV 13-sun
 ‘to warm oneself in the sun’ (van Sambeek 1955: 86)

In (9), the use of the applicative distinguishes between ‘smell bad’ and ‘smell good’.

- (9) a. -nuka 'smell, smell bad, stink' [Swahili]
b. -nuk-i-a 'smell good, have a sweet smell'

Forms cognate to *-nuka/-nukia* with a similar meaning are found in several Bantu languages and thus appear to be quite old. While lexicalised applicative verbs may have a directional dimension (e.g. turning towards a sweet smell), they do not in any clear sense involve a change in valency.

5 Pragmatic factors

Since it is often assumed that the core function of applicatives is syntactic – encoding a change in valency – only a few studies have addressed semantic or pragmatic aspects of applicatives, mainly highlighting the

relevance of (lexical) semantics for the analysis of applicatives (e.g. Cann and Mabugu 2007; De Kind and Bostoen 2012; Jerro 2016; Sibanda 2016), or noticing the role of information structure, in particular the association of applicatives with focus (e.g. Marten 2003; Creissels 2004; Voisin 2006). However, we believe that the wider pragmatic functions of applicatives are a key aspect for their understanding. We will first show pragmatic effects of valency-changing applicatives, and then turn to non-valency changing applicatives. In the next section, we will build on this evidence to develop a pragmatic analysis of applicatives.

The first set of evidence comes from valency-changing applicatives which provide a structural alternative to non-applicative, oblique constructions. These are typically cases of locative or instrument applicatives, rather than benefactive applicatives. In these cases, there are two formally distinct ways of expressing the same proposition: The use of a non-applicative verb form and an oblique argument marked by a preposition or a locative affix, or the use of an applicative verb form plus an unmarked object NP. Although semantically identical, the applicative version often carries a specific pragmatic meaning: The event is emphasized or focused, it is portrayed as being ‘stronger’ than ‘normal’:

- (10) a. Salma a-li-ka-a ki-ti-ni [Swahili]
 Salma SM1-PST-sit-FV 7-chair-LOC
 ‘Salma was sitting on a chair’
 b. #Salma a-li-kal-i-a ki-ti
 Salma SM1-PST-sit-APPL-FV 7-chair
 ‘Salma was sitting on a chair’
 c. Salma a-li-kal-i-a ki-ti ch-a uvivu
 Salma SM1-PST-sit-APPL-FV 7-chair 7-of laziness
 ‘Salma was *sitting/slouching* in a comfortable chair’ (Marten 2003: 214)

In these examples, the neutral way to express the relevant event is to use a non-applicative verb plus oblique as in (10a). Without some contextual support to indicate that the event is in some way remarkable or unexpected, the use of an applicative verb plus unmarked object is infelicitous as shown by (10b). However, if the event in some sense extends normal expectations, the applicative construction is appropriate. In (10c) this reading involves slouching, rather than just sitting, which is reinforced by the change of object from a ‘normal’ *kiti* ‘chair’ to *kiti cha uvivu* ‘comfortable or lazy chair’. However, the change of object just provides further contextual clues. The point is that the event portrayed by the applicative construction in (10c) is construed as stronger and more remarkable than the corresponding event encoded by the non-applied verb.

A similar effect is demonstrated in the examples in (11):

- (11) a. Juma a-li-va-a kanzu [Swahili]
 Juma SM1-PST-wear-FV kanzu
 ‘Juma was wearing a Kanzu’
 b. #Juma a-li-val-i-a kanzu
 Juma SM1-PST-wear-APPL-FV kanzu
 ‘Juma was wearing a Kanzu’
 c. Juma a-li-val-i-a nguo rasmi
 Juma SM1-PST-wear-APPL-FV 10.clothes official
 ‘Juma was *dressed up* in official/formal clothes’ (Marten 2003: 215)
 d. – kijana wa Kihindi, ka-val-i-a vizuri ...
 youth of Indian SM1.PERF-wear-APPL-FV well ...
 ‘– an Indian youth, dressed (up) well ...’
 (Muhammad Said Abdulla, *Mwana wa Yungi Hulewa*, 1976: 52)

The non-applicative construction in (11a) shows the pragmatically neutral portrayal of the situation expressed by the verb. The object *kanzu* is an everyday garment which does not, on its own, easily trigger an interpretation that there was something special about the clothes or the way Juma was dressed. Consequently, in the absence of other contextual clues, the applicative verb form is infelicitous (11b). In contrast the applicative is used in (11c), where the *nguo rasmi* ‘official clothes’ facilitates an interpretation of dressing for a special event – we have translated this in (11c) as ‘dress up’. The final example (11d), from a novel by the Zanzibari author Muhammad Said Abdulla, shows the same construction, but now the applicative verb form is even used without an overt object. Rather than increasing valency, (11d) seems to demonstrate a decrease in valency. However, the pragmatic effects explain the use – the agent is portrayed as being dressed up well, and this is reinforced by the use of the adverb *vizuri* ‘well’. Examples like these show that applicatives carry pragmatic meaning, placing emphasis on the event, which is construed as being done to a more excessive, remarkable, and slightly unexpected degree.

The second set of evidence concerns examples in which no change in valency takes place, and where the use of the applicative construction fulfils a purely pragmatic function, independent of any syntactic role. As in the previous examples, this effect is most commonly found with non-benefactive applicatives, such as locative or instrument applicatives. The examples in (12) show the pragmatic function of an instrument applicative construction (Marten and Kula 2014: 21):

- (12) a. Mutálé a-lée-’ípík-a na supuni [Bemba]
 Mutale SM1-PROG-cook-FV with 9.spoon
 ‘Mutale is cooking with a spoon’
- b. Mutálé a-lée-’ípík-íl-a na supuni
 Mutale SM1-PROG-cook-APPL-FV with 9.spoon
 ‘Mutale is cooking *with a spoon*’, ‘Mutale is using the spoon to cook with’

In both (12a) and (12b), the instrument is encoded as a prepositional phrase headed by the preposition *na* ‘with’. Yet the verb form is a base verb in (12a), and an applicative verb in (12b). Under a syntactic analysis, (12b) is puzzling, as it would constitute a morphology-syntax mismatch and the instrument NP *supuni* would be doubly licensed – by the applicative and by the preposition. However, the difference in pragmatic interpretation corresponds to the pragmatic effects described for the previous examples. In (12b) the action denoted by the verb – cooking with a spoon – is strengthened and portrayed as remarkable, and the fact that the cooking involved the spoon is highlighted. There is focus on the instrument although syntactically it remains coded as a prepositional phrase. The unifying effect of valency-changing examples in (10) and (11) above, and the non-valency changing examples in (12) is thus their pragmatic function, while syntactically, it is hard to provide a unified analysis.

A similar example is provided by Trithart (1977) from Chichewa, where the author notes the optional presence of an applicative marker, without any corresponding change in complementation.

- (13) Jóni a-ná-lí-lemb(-er)-a dží’ná láké ndí péni [Chichewa]
 John SM1-PST-OM5-write-APPL-FV name his with pen
 ‘John wrote his name with a pen.’ (Trithart 1977: 16)

Trithart (1977: 16) comments on the optionality of the applicative in the example and notes that the applicative verb form “directs more attention to the fact that an instrumental appears in the sentence but it does not alter the behaviour of the sentence.” This means that the applicative contributes to a difference in interpretation, but does not result in a change in syntactic structure.

In addition to instrument applicatives, as seen in (12) and (13), pragmatic uses can also be found with locative applicatives:

- (14) a. N-de-ly-a mu-mu-putule [Bemba]
 SM1SG-PRES-eat-FV 18-3-room
 'I am eating in the room'
 (neutral; as answer to: What are you doing?)
- b. N-de-li-il-a mu-mu-putule
 SM1SG-PRES-eat-APPL-FV 18-3-room
 'I am eating in the room'
 (emphatic; as answer to: Where are you eating?) (Marten 2003: 217)
- (15) a. Ŵa-ku-cap-a vya-kuwvara vya ŵ-aana [Tumbuka]
 SM2-PRES-wash-FV 8-clothes 8.POSS 2-child
 ku-máaji yáayi
 17-6.water NEG
 'She is not washing the children's clothes in the river'
- b. Ŵa-ku-cap-ir-a ku-nyúumba
 SM2-PRES-wash-APPL-FV 17-9.house
 'She is washing (them) *at home*.' (Downing 2012: 127)

Like in the examples in (12) and (13), there is no change in valency in (14) from Bemba and (15) from Tumbuka. The locative argument is coded as a locative phrase in both (14a) and (14b). However, there is a pragmatic difference: (14a) is pragmatically more neutral, and could be used as a wide-focus answer to a question such as 'What are you doing?'. In contrast, (14b) places more narrow focus on the location, answering a question such as 'Where are you eating?'. As in the previous examples, the assertion expressed by the applicative construction in (14b) is more emphatic than the non-applicative assertion in (14a). Similarly, in (15a), the locations are expressed identically in the two sentences, as (class 17) locative nouns, yet (15a) has a base, non-applicative verb form, while (15b) has an applicative verb form. The difference between the two sentences lies in their information structure: (15b) places more focus on the location than (15a).

The pragmatic use of locative applicatives such as illustrated by the examples from Bemba and Tumbuka has been noted in the descriptive literature of other Bantu languages. For example, for locative applicatives in Lunda, Kawasha (2003 : 262) observes: "Applicative extensions may be used optionally in combination with a locative noun phrase without changing the semantic role of the locative. ... The applicativized verb places an emphasis on the location/setting of the event or state". The mention of both optionality and emphasis in Kawasha's comment accords well with our observations about the structure and interpretation of locative applicatives.

In addition to locative applicatives in which the location of an event is highlighted, pragmatic emphasis can also fall on the direction implied in the event, as (16) shows:

- (16) a. Posa! [Bemba]
 throw_away-FV
 'Throw (it) away!'
- b. Pos-oko! (<posa uko)
 throw_away-Dem17
 'Throw (it) there!'
- c. Pos-el-oko! (< posela uko)
 throw_away-APPL-Dem17
 'Throw (it) there far away!'

In (16), both the base form (16b) and the applicative form (16c) of *-posa* 'throw' can be used with a locative demonstrative clitic indicating the direction of throwing. The difference between the two constructions is that (16c) is more emphatic than (16b), adding an implication of throwing something further away. However, both (16b) and (16c) encode the endpoint of the throwing, and so there is no difference in valency.

Similar examples, in which applicatives result in an interpretative difference without a corresponding syntactic difference, can be found in Swahili. In (17), Abdulaziz (1996) notes a difference in pragmatic emphasis:

- (17) a. Waziri a-li-anguk-a chini [Swahili]
 minister SM1-PAST-fall-FV down
 ‘The minister fell down’
 b. Waziri a-li-anguk-i-a chini
 minister SM1-PAST-fall-APPL-FV down
 ‘The minister fell down’ (Abdulaziz 1996: 32)

Both (17a) and (17b) describe the same event. However, the applicative construction in (17b) draws attention to the movement itself, adding a ‘meaning of movement and directionality’ (Abdulaziz 1996: 32), and so (17b) depicts a more remarkable downwards falling than in (17a).

A final set of examples comes from intransitive uses of applicatives:

- (18) a. Tu-ka-ly-a [Bemba]
 SM1PL-FUT-eat-FV
 ‘We will eat’
 b. Tu-ka-li-il-a
 SM1PL-FUT-eat-APPL-FV
 ‘We will feast’ (idiom.: ‘enjoy’) (Marten 2003: 218)
- (19) Krismasi u-ta-ku-l-i-a wapi? [Swahili]
 Christmas SM2SG-FUT-SM-eat-APPL-FV where
 ‘Where will you celebrate Christmas?’ (Poeta 2011: 49)

In both (18) and (19), the applicative form of *-lya/-la* ‘eat’ is used to express ‘enjoy/celebrate’. While this usage is probably at least in part idiomatic, the underlying effect of the applicative is in line with the effects described so far: The applicative adds emphasis to the predicate and a sense that the action was remarkable, and performed to a higher degree than expected.

6 Augmentative verbs

A final observation about the pragmatic function of applicatives comes from so-called ‘augmentative verbs’ found in many Bantu languages. These verb forms typically include a derivational extension which looks morphologically like a double applicative, but which does not have an effect on syntax: Rather augmentative verb change the interpretation of the base verb by adding emphasis or a sense of excess or completion to the base verb. The link between applicatives and augmentatives, which is clearly seen in their morphological similarity, is obscure from a syntactic point of view, but becomes clear from a pragmatic perspective. For example, in Luganda, the use of augmentative verb forms encodes ‘completeness’ or ‘excessiveness’ as a result of performing the action denoted by the verb to a high degree or amount, or as reaching a final endpoint (cf. Ashton et al. 1954: 332).¹

¹ Unfortunately no glosses are provided in the original source. However, we are mainly concerned here with the interpretation indicated in the English translations, which in all examples includes an element of excessiveness. We are grateful to Saudah Namyalo for discussion of these data.

- (20) Semb-er-er-a ddala wano. [Luganda]
 come-APPL-APPL-FV right here
 ‘Come right here.’
- (21) Tuteganidde bwereere.
 ‘We have taken (all this) trouble for nothing.’
- (22) Asomerera okuyiga afuna okumanya.
 ‘He who reads diligently in order to learn gains knowledge.’
- (23) Omuliro guzikiridde.
 ‘The fire has gone completely out.’

In Pogoro, augmentative verbs encode intensity and completeness (Hendle 1907: 42; German glosses are from the original source, English glosses are ours):

- | | | | | | | |
|------|----|----------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------|
| (24) | a. | -itir-a | | -itir-ir-a | | [Pogoro] |
| | | pour-FV | | pour-APPL-FV | | |
| | | ‘pour’ (‘eingießen’) | | ‘pour completely’ (‘ganz eingießen’) | | |
| | b. | -tugira | ‘entfliehen’ | -tugirira | ‘ganz entfliehen’ | |
| | | | ‘escape’ | | ‘escape completely’ | |
| | c. | -oyera | ‘sich ausruhen’ | -oyerera | ‘sich gründlich ausruhen’ | |
| | | | ‘relax’ | | ‘relax thoroughly’ | |
| | d. | -megera | ‘austeilen’ | -megerera | ‘alles austeilen’ | |
| | | | ‘distribute’ | | ‘distribute everything’ | |

Although there are obvious similarities in morphology, augmentative verbs are often treated as distinct from applicatives, presumably because they have no syntactic effect on valency. From a syntactic perspective the morphological similarity between applicative and augmentative markers – such as Pogoro applicative *-ir* and augmentative *-irir* – is merely accidental. However, from a pragmatic perspective this otherwise puzzling accident receives a more principled explanation: Since applicatives standardly convey a reading implying that an action is performed stronger, more intensely or in some other way remarkably, the interpretation of augmentatives as encoding an excessive action, or an action performed thoroughly or to completion, might be analysed as resulting from the original pragmatic function of applicatives, plus the effects of reduplication, known to often induce intensification.

7 Applicatives and expectation

In the previous sections we have started out with the common assumption that applicatives change valency. We have then shown that this is not always the case, and that examples of locational, directional, lexicalised and certain uses of pragmatic applicatives may not show a change in valency.

Since this evidence shows that a uniform analysis of applicatives cannot be based on their syntax, in this section we outline an alternative analysis of applicatives, which takes their pragmatic effects as starting point. This means approaching the phenomenon from the opposite angle.

In particular we propose that applicatives signal that the action denoted by the base verb is being carried out in some way remarkably, or in some sense ‘stronger’ than normal. The action is performed in an unexpected way, and so different from normal expectations about this action. Applicatives thus relate

to expectation, and applicative morphology indicates that the action or event described by the predicate is performed unusually or in an unexpected way. An implication of this view is that underlying valency lexically encodes culturally expected ‘normal’ events, and applicative morphology signals that the particular event differs from that. The examples discussed in the preceding sections have provided some indication of the specific interpretation associated with applicative constructions, and which we are trying to capture here. For the present we assume that the notions of ‘remarkableness’ and ‘unexpectedness’ characterise the interpretation associated with applicatives, although we leave it for future work to develop a more precise understanding of what constitutes remarkableness cross-linguistically and with respect to a particular eventuality.²

To illustrate this novel analysis, we will first revisit applicatives without valency change:

- (25) Juma a-li-val-i-a nguo rasmi [Swahili]
 Juma SM1-PAST-wear-APPL-FV 10.clothes official
 ‘Juma was *dressed up* in official/formal clothes’
- (26) Mutálé a-léé-’ípík-íl-a na supuni [Bemba]
 Mutale SM1-PROG-cook-APPL-FV with 9.spoon
 Mutale is cooking *with a spoon*, ‘Mutale is using the spoon to cook with’

In our analysis, (25) and (26) are paradigm cases of applicative use, signalling counter-expectation, e.g. emphasis on the lexical content of the predicate, the location, the instrument, etc. In (25), there is something remarkable, out of the ordinary, about the dressing, and in (26) about the fact that Mutale is cooking with a spoon. No valency change is necessary, and the function of the applicative is purely pragmatic.

A different case results from applicatives of movement predicates. We assume that the direction away from some endpoint provided by the object is lexically part of movement predicates such as *-butuka* in (27), and so the use of the applicative signals unexpected direction, namely direction towards the endpoint:

- (27) a. Mutálé a-léé-mu-bútúk-á [Bemba]
 Mutale SM1-PROG-OM1-run-FV
 ‘Mutale is running away from him/her’
- b. Mutálé a-léé-mu-bútúk-íl-á
 Mutale SM1-PROG-OM1-run-APPL-FV
 ‘Mutale is running towards him/her’

These are more lexicalised cases than the examples in (25) and (26). Direction away is ‘grammaticalised expectation’ within the predicate. Applicative marking encodes ‘counter-expectation’ and so ‘running towards’ with predicates which lexically encode motion away from. Given our pragmatic approach, we would also expect cases where the applicative form results in a ‘source’ reading, as in the following example from Kinyarwanda (Jerro 2016: 4):

- (28) a. Mukamana y-Ø-ambuts-e (mu) n-yanja [Kinyarwanda]
 Mukamana SM1-PAST-cross-PERF 18 9-ocean
 ‘Mukamana crossed the ocean’
- b. Mukamana y-Ø-ambuk-iy-e (mu) n-yanja i Mombasa
 Mukamana SM1-PAST-cross-APPL-PERF 18 9-ocean 23 Mombasa
 ‘Mukamana crossed the ocean from Mombasa’

² The notion of expectation employed in our analysis might also open the possibility to compare the effects of applicatives to interpretive effects associated with mirativity (cf. DeLancey 1997, 2012), which likewise involves assessment of hearer expectations.

The examples show that the fact that the applicative indicates ‘towards’ with many motion verbs is not a function of the applicative as such but rather reflects the interaction with the lexicalisation patterns of verbs of movement. Given the right lexicalisation pattern of the base verb, it is possible to have an applicative that indicates ‘away from’, as (28b) shows.

These examples of applicatives with motion predicates are similar to lexicalised (e.g. ‘smell’) applicatives, which encode an unexpected aspect of the event (e.g. good smell):

- (29) a. nuka ‘to smell, smell bad, stink’ [Swahili]
 b. nuk-i-a ‘to smell good, have a sweet smell’

Both directional and lexicalised applicatives are no longer fully productive. The interpretation is lexically restricted and not subject to an entirely pragmatic interpretation. But the specific meanings which have been lexicalised are compatible with our pragmatic analysis, as encoding counter-expectation, and so these uses receive a principled explanation as well.

Finally, the well-known cases of valency-changing applicatives in our analysis signal the unexpected involvement in the event of someone or something which is pragmatically relevant in the situation:

- (30) A-li-mw-andik-i-a shangazi barua [Swahili]
 SM1-PAST-OM1-write-APPL-FV 9.aunt 9.letter
 ‘S/he wrote a letter for/to the aunt’

In (30), writing is not normally done for the aunt – there is no expectation that writing is done for anyone in particular. The applicative licenses the construction of the predicate as over-riding this expectation and directing the action towards the beneficiary. It is noteworthy that benefactive applicatives typically show a change in valency, and that the use of locative and instrumental applicatives shows more syntactic variability. This may be related to a number of factors. First, it might be due to the absence in many Bantu languages of a suitable preposition to encode benefaction (cf. Mbuun, where such a preposition is available, and with it non-valency changing benefactive applicatives, Bostoen and Mundeke 2011). Second, since beneficiaries are often human, their involvement in the action is typically more remarkable than the involvement of non-human referents, and so their involvement is more likely to be coded as exceptional. Third, it might also be due to the high internal topicworthiness of benefactive arguments (which are often filled by human referents, as noted above). For example, it has often been noted that beneficiaries are high on the thematic hierarchy, while instruments and locatives are low (see e.g. Hawkinson and Hyman 1974: 159; Bresnan and Kanerva 1989: 23; Mchombo 2004: 129; Ngonyani and Githinji 2006; and Wald 1997 for discussion). Since beneficiaries are high on the thematic hierarchy, they will typically be coded as objects. In (30), the use of *-andikia* plus the mention of *shangazi* ‘aunt’ has thus two elements of interpretation: 1) writing is not in the expected way, and 2) involvement of the aunt. This evokes interpretations that the letter is written to the aunt or on behalf of the aunt. Since *shangazi* ‘aunt’ encodes a human referent, and so is high on the thematic hierarchy, it becomes coded as the object. In contrast, instruments and locatives are low on the thematic hierarchy and so their involvement is less predictably important, and they are less likely to be encoded as objects (cf. also Riedel and Marten 2012 on the intermediate syntactic status of locatives as arguments/adjuncts).

An interesting further case is provided by recipients, which are thematically closely related to beneficiaries, and are often human. With recipients, pragmatic effects comparable to the ones we have described more clearly for locatives and instruments can be observed.

- (31) a. Habimana y-a-tey-e Karekezi i-buye [Kinyarwanda]
 Habimana SM1-PAST-throw-PERF Karekezi 5-rock
 ‘Habimana threw the rock at Karekezi’
 b. Habimana y-a-ter-ey-e Karekezi i-buye
 Habimana SM1-PAST-throw-APPL-PERF Karekezi 5-rock
 ‘Habimana threw the rock to Karekezi’ (Jerro 2016: 89)

In (31), the addition of the applicative marker in (31b) does not result in a change in valency, but in a change in interpretation. In our analysis, the lexical entailment of the predicate is that an object is thrown in the direction of or ‘at’ something or someone. However, if the endpoint is human, the throwing can also be construed as being directed towards that person. In this case, the action is remarkable vis-à-vis the lexical meaning, and so is marked by applicative morphology.³

From our perspective, then, all uses of applicatives are pragmatically licensed, as portraying the event as being remarkable and to some extent unexpected. In some instances this is lexicalised, and a specific interpretation of unexpectedness (e.g. running towards, smelling good) results from the interaction with lexicalisation pattern of the predicate. In other cases, the action denoted by the verb is unexpected in involving the applied object. The pragmatic meaning may go together with a change in valency, depending on the nature of the added constituent and on the language concerned. With benefactive uses, there is almost always a change in valency. But this is not evidence for a syntactic requirement as such, but rather reflects the high topicality and topicworthiness of animate, beneficiary arguments, whose involvement in the action almost always entails an element of counter-expectation or remarkableness.

8 Conclusions

In this paper we have questioned the common assumption that applicatives encode a syntactic operation and that their basic function is syntactic. In contrast, after looking at a range of applicative examples without change in valency, we proposed that applicatives are really about pragmatic meaning, and about expressing that the action of the verb is performed in an unexpected, remarkable way. From this perspective, non-valency changing applicatives are expected, and the change of valency is in need of explanation. We have provided this explanation in particular with reference to benefactive applicatives, which almost always include a change in valency, by reference to the thematic hierarchy and the fact that beneficiary arguments are very high on the thematic hierarchy. This means that the involvement of a beneficiary argument will typically entail that the event is remarkable and different from normal expectation, and so the use of applicative morphology is expected. The empirical advantage of our analysis is that it addresses different uses of applicative constructions – including valency-changing and non-valency-changing cases – and that it provides a unified explanation for these uses.

We believe that the study of applicatives is instructive, for several reasons. Firstly, applicatives are good data for examining the interaction between structure, meaning and context – especially in language groups like Bantu, where applicatives are morphologically marked. It was because of the morphological marking that we could observe the apparent syntax-morphology mismatch of non-valency changing applicatives to begin with. In our analysis this apparent mismatch is resolved because what at first sight looked like (and in much of the current literature are taken to be) instances of structural, syntactic aspects of natural language turned on closer analysis in fact out to be centrally related to interpretation. Secondly, methodologically our study has shown that it is rewarding to study language in use, and to ‘listen to’ data which at first sight seem difficult to analyse – such as the pragmatic, non-valency changing uses of applicatives. While the link between applicatives and emphasis, and the partial relation to valency-changing has been noted frequently in the descriptive literature, it has hardly been addressed in the typological or theoretical literature. Yet, in our analysis, it is these examples which are central to a full understanding of applicatives. Thirdly, the notion of expectation we have evoked in our analysis has received considerable attention in the literature, in particular in relation to mirativity, where it is often argued that many languages employ formal means to express the speaker’s assessment of the hearer’s expectation with respect to a particular fact or event. While these are different cases to the ones addressed in our analysis, it is noteworthy that notions of expectations appear to play a role in both phenomena.

³ We are grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out this example to us.

While the present analysis provides an alternative to most other, syntactic analyses of applicatives, there are a number of outstanding issues and questions for further research. First, it would be good to have more examples from other Bantu (and non-Bantu) languages, to see whether the range of applicative uses is similar to Bemba and Swahili, from which most of our examples are taken, or whether there is cross-linguistic variation. Second, our notions of unexpectedness and remarkableness were largely intuitive, and future work needs to provide a more detailed and explicit characterisation of these terms. Third, we have focussed here on pragmatic aspects of applicatives, and have mentioned semantic aspects only in passing. However, more fine-grained study of the semantics of applicatives (for example in terms of direction and directing of an action, or the effects of different lexical classes of predicates) will certainly increase our understanding of the construction. Fourth, it would be interesting to look at the pragmatic functions of other so-called valency-changing operations – causatives, statives, or passives – and see to what extent their syntactic behaviour can also be subsumed under a more comprehensive, interpretation-based analysis along the lines we have proposed for applicatives in this paper.

Acknowledgements: Research reported in this paper was partly supported by Leverhulme Research Project Grant RPG-2014-208 ‘Morphosyntactic variation in Bantu: Typology, contact and change’ awarded to the first-named author, which is hereby gratefully acknowledged. We are grateful for comments and discussion of ideas developed in this paper to Hannah Gibson, Chege Githiora, Rozenn Guérois, Nancy Kula, Irina Nikolaeva, Teresa Poeta, Jenneke van der Wal, and Jochen Zeller, as well as to audiences at the Linguistics Research Student Conference @ SOAS, May 2014, the joint SAALA/SAALT/LSSA Conference, University of the Witwatersrand, June 2014, WOCAL 7, Kyoto University, August 2015, and the University of Nairobi, December 2015. Any shortcomings of the paper remain our own.

References

- Abdulaziz, Mohamed H. 1996. *Transitivity in Swahili*. Cologne: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag.
- Ashton, E. O., E. M. K. Mulira, E. G. M. Ndawula & A. N. Tucker. 1954. *A Luganda grammar*. London: Longmans, Green and Co.
- Baker, Mark C. 1988. *Incorporation: A theory of grammatical function changing*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Bostoen, Koen and Léon Mundeke. 2011. The causative/applicative syncretism in Mbuun (Bantu B87, DRC): Semantic split or phonemic merger? *Journal of African Languages and Linguistics* 32. 179–218.
- Bresnan, Joan and Jonni Kanerva. 1989. Locative inversion in Chichewa: A case study of factorization in grammar. *Linguistic Inquiry* 20. 1–50.
- Bresnan, Joan and Lioba Moshi. 1990. Object asymmetries in comparative Bantu syntax. *Linguistic Inquiry* 21. 147–185. Repr. in Sam A. Mchombo (ed.) 2003, *Theoretical aspects of Bantu grammar*, 47–91. Stanford, CA: CSLI.
- Cann, Ronnie and Patricia Mabugu. 2007. Constructional polysemy: The applicative construction in chiShona. *Metalinguistica* 19. 221–245.
- Creissels, Denis. 2004. Non-canonical applicatives and focalisation in Tswana. Paper presented at SWL1, Leipzig.
- Creissels, Denis. 2006. Encoding the distinction between location, source and direction: a typological study. In Maya Hickmann & Stéphane Robert (eds.), *Space in languages*, 19–28. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Dammann, Ernst. 1961. Das Applikativum in den Bantusprachen. *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 36. 160–169.
- De Kind, Jasper and Koen Bostoen. 2012. The applicative in ciLubà grammar and discourse: A semantic goal analysis. *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies* 30(1). 101–124.
- DeLancey, Scott. 1997. Mirativity: The grammatical marking of unexpected information. *Linguistic Typology* 1(1). 33–52.
- DeLancey, Scott. 2012. Still mirative after all these years. *Linguistic Typology* 16. 529–564.
- Downing, Laura J. 2012. On the (Non-)congruence of focus and prominence in Tumbuka. In Michael R. Marlo, N. B. Adams, C. R. Green, M. Morrison & T. M. Purvis (eds.), *Selected proceedings of the 42nd annual conference on African Linguistics*, 122–133. Somerville, MA: Cascadia Proceedings Project. Available on-line at www.lingref.com, document #2764.
- Georgala, Efthymia. 2012. *Applicatives in their structural and thematic function: A Minimalist account of multitransitivity*. PhD dissertation, Cornell University.
- Guthrie, Malcolm. 1962. The status of radical extensions in Bantu languages. *Journal of African Languages* 1. 202–220.
- Hawkinson, Annie and Larry M. Hyman. 1974. Hierarchies of natural topic in Shona. *Studies in African Linguistics* 5. 147–170.
- Hendle, P. J. 1907. *Die Sprache der Wapogoro*. Berlin: Reimer.

- Hyman, Larry M. 2003. Suffix ordering in Bantu: a morphocentric approach. In Geert Booij & Jaap van Marle (eds.), *Yearbook of morphology 2002*, 245–281. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Jeong, Youngmi. 2006. *The landscape of applicatives*. PhD dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park.
- Jerro, Kyle. 2016. *The syntax and semantics of applicative morphology in Bantu*. PhD dissertation, University of Texas, Austin.
- Kähler-Meyer Emmi. 1966. Die örtliche Funktion der Applikativendung in Bantusprachen. In Johannes Lukas (ed.), *Neue afrikanistische Studien: Festschrift für A. Klingenheben*, 126–136. Hamburg: Deutsches Institut für Afrika-Forschung.
- Kawasha, Boniface Kaumba. 2003. *Lunda grammar: A morphosyntactic and semantic analysis*. PhD dissertation, University of Oregon.
- Kimenyi, Alexandre. 1995. Kinyarwanda applicatives revisited. Keynote address presented at the 8th Niger-Congo Syntax-Semantics Workshop, Boston University. Available at <http://www.kimenyi.com/kinyarwanda-applicatives-revisited.php>
- Marantz, Alec. 1993. Implications of asymmetries in double object constructions. In Sam A. Mchombo (ed.), *Theoretical aspects of Bantu grammar*, 113–148. Stanford: CSLI Publications.
- Marten, Lutz. 2003. The dynamics of Bantu applied verbs: an analysis at the syntax-pragmatics interface. In Kézié K. Lébikaza (ed.), *Actes du 3e Congrès Mondial de Linguistique Africaine Lomé 2000*, 207–221. Cologne: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag.
- Marten, Lutz and Nancy C. Kula. 2014. Benefactive and substitutive applicatives in Bemba. *Journal of African Languages and Linguistics* 35(1). 1–44.
- McGinnis, Martha. 2001. Variation in the phase structure of applicatives. In Pierre Pica and Johan Rooryck (eds.) *Linguistic Variation Yearbook 1*, 101–142. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Mchombo, Sam A. 2004. *The syntax of Chichewa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mchombo, Sam A. and Gregória Firmino. 1999. Double object constructions in Chichewa and Gitonga: A comparative analysis. *Linguistic Analysis* 29: 214–233.
- Moshi, Lioba. 1998. Word order in multiple object construction in Kivunjo-Chaga. *Journal of African Languages and Linguistics* 19. 137–152.
- Muhammad Said Abdulla. 1976. *Mwana wa Yungi Hulewa*. Dar es Salaam: East African Publishing House.
- Murrell, Paul. 2012. The applicative construction and object symmetry as a parameter of variation in Kiswahili and Maragoli. *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies* 30(2). 255–275.
- Ndayiragije, Juvénal. 1999. Checking economy. *Linguistic Inquiry* 30. 399–444.
- Ngonyani, Deo. 1998. Properties of applied objects in Kiswahili and Kidendeule. *Studies in African Linguistics* 27(1). 67–93.
- Ngonyani, Deo and Peter Githinji. 2006. The asymmetric nature of Bantu applicative constructions. *Lingua* 116. 31–63.
- Peterson, David A. 2007. *Applicative constructions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Poeta, Teresa. 2011. *What's in an applicative?* MA dissertation, SOAS.
- Pylkkänen, Liina 2008. *Introducing arguments* (Linguistic Inquiry Monographs Series). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Riedel, Kristina and Lutz Marten. 2012. Locative object marking and the argument-adjunct distinction. *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies* 30(2). 277–292.
- Schadeberg, Thilo C. 2003. Derivation. In Derek Nurse & Gérard Philippson (eds.), *The Bantu Languages*, 71–89. London: Routledge.
- Sibanda, Galen. 2016. The Ndebele applicative construction. In Doris L. Payne, Sara Pacchiarotti & Mokaya Bosire (eds.), *Diversity in African Languages*, 309–333. Berlin: Language Science Press.
- Trithart, Mary Lee. 1977. *Relational grammar and Chichewa subjectivization*. Los Angeles, CA: UCLA MA thesis.
- van Sambeek, J. 1955. *A Bemba grammar*. Cape Town: Longmans.
- Voisin, Sylvie. 2006. Applicatif et emphase. In Daniel Lebaud, Catherine Paulin & Katja Ploog (eds.) *Constructions verbales et production de sens*, 155–170. Besançon: Presses Universitaires de Franche-Comté.
- Wald, Benji. 1997. Instrumental objects in the history of topicality and transitivity in Bantu. In Rose-Marie Déchaine & Victor Manfredi (eds.), *Object positions in Benue-Kwa*, 221–253. The Hague: Holland Academic Graphics.
- Zeller, Jochen and Jean Paul Ngoboka. 2006. Kinyarwanda locative applicatives and the Minimal Link Condition. *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies* 24(1). 101–124.