

CHAPTER 5

5. Conclusion

The introductory Chapter 1 gave a bird's-eye view of the issues that this study intended to raise and discuss. It defined the geographical setting of the target language of study, Xitsonga, as the southern edge of Mozambique, the eastern part of Zimbabwe and the eastern part of Swaziland along the border with Mozambique. According to Guthrie's classification (1967), it falls under S.53.

Chapter 1 also identified three main issues that form the crux of this study, viz. (one) the investigation of the predicate argument structure of the verb in Xitsonga; (two) the description of various forms of alternations in Xitsonga and (three) the effect of verbal affixes on the PAS and alternations of the verb in Xitsonga. These three issues were treated in Chapters 1, 2 and 3 respectively and were handled within the Theta sub-theory of the Government and Binding framework.

Chapter 2, in recapitulation, dealt with two lexical representations, viz. lexical-syntactic and lexical-semantic representations.

Under lexical-syntactic representation the distribution of lexical items in various sentence constructions, containing the various types of verbs of change of possession was discussed. The conclusion drawn in this discussion is that the predicate argument structure may be named according to the number of arguments that a verb assigns. Therefore if it assigns one argument, it is a one-place verb; two arguments make it a two-place verb and three arguments make it a three-place verb. In this case semantic relationships between the predicate and its arguments are not specified according to semantic labels.

Also in this chapter, the predicate argument structure of the verbs of change of possession in Xitsonga were identified. It was observed that

- ❖ All **give** verbs in Xitsonga are ditransitive and display the PAS [\underline{x} , (y,z)].
- ❖ **Contribute** verbs are monotransitive and may subcategorize for a locative argument, [\underline{x} , (y, loc.z)].
- ❖ Verbs of **future having** are ditransitive, [\underline{x} , (y, z)].
- ❖ Verbs of **fulfilling** are monotransitive and appear with a locative, [\underline{x} , (y, loc.z)].
- ❖ **Equip** verbs are monotransitive and appear with a prepositional phrase with **hi-** as head, [\underline{x} , (y, hi z)].
- ❖ Under verbs of **obtaining** we find **get** verbs and **obtain** verbs. The former are monotransitive [\underline{x} , (y)], and the latter appear with a locative, [\underline{x} , (y, loc.z)].
- ❖ Verbs of **exchange** are basically monotransitive and subcategorize for a prepositional phrase with **hi-** as head i.e. [\underline{x} , (y, hi z)].

Under lexical-semantic representation the various theta roles were defined and explained viz. **agent**, **patient**, **theme**, **experiencer**, **benefactive**, **malefactive**, **goal**, **source**, **location**, **cause**, **recipient** and **purpose**. The lexical features of nouns were also discussed and example sentences analysed. The analysis reveals that certain nominal features constrain certain verbs from appearing with certain NP arguments. The interpretation of arguments depends on their semantic features such as [+animate], [+human] [+/-concrete].

The assignment of a theta role to the external NP argument via the predication theory was explained. It was observed that the role of **agent** is usually assigned to the subject external argument with a [+animate] and mainly [+human] feature due to its volitional capability while a subject external argument with a [-animate] feature instead generally prefers a **cause** feature. It was also indicated that the assignment of theta roles to internal arguments is done by the VP inside its maximal projection and that it takes place under government. The observation

made here is that the primary internal argument usually bears the role of **theme/patient** while its secondary counterpart generally prefers a **recipient** role.

The different types of verbs of change of possession were analysed individually, first with external arguments, and then with primary and/or secondary internal arguments. In each case individual conclusions were drawn in accordance with interpretations of individual arguments.

In Chapter 3 the various alternations were discussed, viz. the **dative, fulfilling, sum of money subject** and **possession alternations**.

It was observed that in Xitsonga the dative alternation occurs with give verbs and verbs of future having and may only occur when the secondary object becomes an NP_{Loc} within the frame

$$\begin{array}{l} [\text{NP1}] \text{ V} \quad [\text{NP2}] \text{ } [\text{NP3}] \quad > \\ [\text{NP1}] \text{ V} \quad [\text{NP3}] \text{ } [\text{NP2Loc}]. \end{array}$$

The fulfilling alternation occurs with the frame

$$\begin{array}{l} [\text{NP1}] \text{ V} \quad [\text{NP2}] \quad [\text{to NP3}] \quad \text{or alternatively} \\ [\text{NP1}] \text{ V} \quad [\text{NP3}] \quad [\text{with NP2}]. \end{array}$$

However, in Xitsonga there are no verbs from the set of **verbs of fulfilling** which satisfy the specifications of the fulfilling alternation. When the primary object is forced to act as the complement of **hi-** with the thematic role of **instrument**, ungrammatical sentences are generated instead.

The sum of money subject alternation uses the frame

$$\begin{array}{l} [\text{NP1}] \text{ V} \quad [\text{NP2}] \text{ } [\text{NP3}] \quad > \\ [\text{NP3}] \text{ V} \quad [\text{NP2}]. \end{array}$$

It occurs with **get verbs, equip verbs, verbs of exchange** and **verbs of fulfilling**.

The possession alternation can appear in two forms, viz. with ditransitive verbs and with the locative argument. It operates within the frames

V	[NP1]	[NP2]	>
V	[NP2] a	[NP1]	
	and		
V	[NP1]	[NP2Loc]	>
V	[NP1] a	[NP2].	

The fact that syntactic variation is inextricably bound with semantic shift cannot be over-emphasized. Therefore a semantic interpretation of the various arguments (both external and internal) formed a comprehensive part of the core business of this chapter.

Chapter 4 focussed on the verbal affixes with special reference to the valency increasing affixes, viz. the applicative {-el-} and the causative {-is-}.

In an applicative derivation, the applicative verbal suffix {-el-} is added onto a verb stem and bears an external argument which becomes the external argument of the whole. The arguments of the non-head verbal stem, including its external argument, become internal arguments of the whole.

Furthermore, the {-el-} argument is realised as accusative. Because the head has no external argument and because it does not control the external argument of the stem, the external argument of the non-head becomes the external argument of the whole as the stem will be head with regard to external argument.

Examples of the applicative with the different types of arguments were analysed. Some of the observations that were made are that, for instance, the NP internal

argument may have a [\pm animate] feature. The presence or absence of these features affects the semantic interpretation of these arguments. Generally an argument with a [+animate] feature will have a semantic interpretation of **benefactive**, which is most commonly found with the applied suffix. With a [-animate] feature it may have a semantic reading of **purpose**.

Locative phrases may appear as internal arguments of predicates with the applicative affix {-el-}. These internal arguments are dependent on the applicative affix and may appear in various ways with the suffix {-ini} or with the prefix {eka-}. The affixing of the applicative also affects the interpretation of the locative internal argument in various ways. Some observations about the causative, which are described in the paragraphs that follow, were also made.

It was noted that like the applicative, syntactically the causative affix has an influence on the predicate argument structure of the verb because it always increases the number of internal arguments by one. It does this by introducing a new external argument (which occupies the subject position), with the result that the old one becomes an internal argument (which immediately succeeds the verb). It was also pointed out that despite the general agreement that the causative affix is a two-place predicate expressing a relation between a causer and a caused event, in certain languages, it is a three-place predicate involving a patient in addition to a causer and a caused event.

Semantically the new external argument is generally interpreted as **agent** and can have [+animate] or [-animate] features. A further secondary reading of *causative*, *assistive* or *permissive agent* is also possible with NP arguments that have a [+animate/ +human control] feature and is dictated by discourse factors. The NP arguments with a [-animate] feature always have a reading of **cause** as they lack “will” or “volition”. The old external argument in its new position as a secondary internal NP argument still has an **agent** or **source** role. It may also be

interpreted as **beneficiary/ recipient** depending on context while the primary object NP argument may have a reading of **theme** or **patient**.

Both the applicative and the causative were also discussed with the different types of verbs, i.e. from each of the different types of verbs which have been treated (viz. **give** verbs, **contribute** verbs, verbs of **future having**, verbs of **providing, equip** verbs, verbs of **obtaining**, and verbs of **exchange**). A few verbs were selected and used with the applicative and the causative affixes, giving, in each case, the interpretation of the new argument.