

Why is the Locative NP in Kiswahili not Syntactically Oblique?*

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Amidu, Assibi A. (2017). Why is the locative NP in Kiswahili not Syntactically Oblique? *The Linguistic Association of Korea Journal*, 25(1), 1-27. Kiswahili, a Bantu language, distinguishes between PPs, e.g. *kutoka soko-ni* 'Cl. 0 COP-a from market-Cl. 17/26, i.e. from market, lit. from in market' and NPs, e.g. *m-pishi w-a soko-ni* 'Cl. 1-cook Cl. 1 SM-COP-n of market-Cl. 17/26, i.e. market cook, lit. cook of in marker.' According to one group of linguists, a syntactic oblique is an NP and/or argument introduced by a syntactic preposition (P). Thus *sokoni* 'market, in the market' above is oblique because it is introduced by a preposition (P): the adverbial P-a/COP-a or P *kutoka* 'from', or the nominal P-n/COP-n or P *wa* 'of', whose P-root is {a}. Another group of linguists states that every locative is a syntactic oblique in postverbal position, whether it is an NP or a PP. This study argues that the Kiswahili locative NP is not a syntactic oblique unless it is the complement in a PP. It is also shown that a syntactic oblique is not the same as a lexical or inflectional oblique case in linguistics. We conclude that the use of a 'colonial reductionist hypothesis' to determine obliqueness in the Bantu languages, in the name of universal grammar, undermines efforts at highlighting the diversity between the languages of the world.

Key Words: noun, NP, preposition, PP, locative, oblique

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1. Introduction

Kiswahili is a member of the Bantu language family in the north-east Bantu group. It is, as a result, an agglutinating noun class language. This means that every noun bears a class prefix, and its modifying elements, including verbs, agree with it in class, person, number and gender. Thus consider *ki-ti hi-ki ki-bovu ki-ta-vunj-ik-a* 'Cl. 7-chair this-Cl. 7 Cl. 7-wretched Cl. 7 SM-FUTURE-break-STATIVE-MOD, i.e. this wretched chair will break down'. In our example, the demonstrative *hiki* 'this', the adjective *kibovu* 'bad, wretched', and the predicate constituent (PC) or verb (V) *kitavunjika* 'lit. it will be broken' agree with the head N *kiti* 'chair' in class, person, number and gender. Kiswahili has 1 to 16 or 18 noun classes, depending on how one reckons the classes. Most of them are paired singular/plural classes. Thus classes 1/2, MU1/WA, contain human and animate objects; classes 3/4, MU2/MI, contain tree and plant objects; classes 5/6, JI/MA1, contain augmentative objects; classes 7/8, KI/VI, contain diminutive objects; classes 9/10, NI1/NI2, contain common objects and animals; classes 11/10, U1/NI2, contain thin, slender objects; classes 14/6, U2/MA1, contain abstract objects; class 15 KU contains verbo-nominal objects or infinitive nouns; and classes 16-18, PA, KU, and MU contain locative nouns. In reality, Kiswahili does not have noun classes 16-18 (see Amidu, 1980, 2002). It has a class 16/25 MA2, which contains the word for place *mahali*, borrowed from Arabic. It has a class 17/26 NI3, which contains location or locative nouns, e.g. *mtoni* 'in the river', *mjini* 'in the town, at the homestead', each of which has a stem {mto} 'river' or {mji} 'town, homestead' + locative class marker {ni} (see Amidu, 1980, chs. 1-3). The locative affix *-ni* is also found in other Bantu languages, such as Kimakua. In Kichaga, {ni} takes the form *-nyi*, and in Sesotho, it takes the form *-ng*, i.e. phonetically [ŋ]. Our analysis of *mtoni* or *mjini* as a noun is supported by the findings of Bresnan and Moshi (1990) for the Bantu language Kichaga. That is to say, Bresnan and Moshi (1990, p. 149, footnote 5) note that,

Kichaga has lost productive use of the proto-Bantu locative noun class prefixes and employs the locative suffix *-nyi* instead, as in (3b). However, two of the locative verb prefixes for subject and object marking have been

other Bantu languages, such as Chichewa, which is spoken in Malawi (see Amidu, 1980, ch. 3). Observe, on the one hand, that the subject NP of (1a), (2a), and (3a) is locative, and a PC or V follows it. The object or complement NP of each PC or V is *viboko* 'hippos, hippopotamuses.' As an SVO language, we may say that, although Kiswahili is not a language with case inflections, the constituent at S is structurally in the nominative case, while the constituent at O is structurally in the accusative case. (1b), (2b), and (3b), on the other hand, have the non-locative NP *viboko* 'hippos, hippopotamuses' as subject. A PC or V follows the subject, and the postverbal object or complement NP of each PC or V is locative. Only objects become subjects in these pairs of data.

This paper argues that a locative NP without a P head is not a syntactic oblique by itself in Kiswahili, both in inversion and in non-inversion syntax.

2. Definition of Terms

Katamba (1993, p. 263) writes that, "Finally, any argument of the verb that is realized by a prepositional phrase is an **oblique NP** (Obl): [...]" Chomsky (1995, p. 110) also writes that, "[...] and the object of a pre- or postposition is assigned *oblique* Case (again with substantial variation)." Matthews (2007, p. 273) defines 'oblique' as:

oblique 1. (*Case) in e.g. Latin other than the nominative and (where it is distinct) the vocative. In an ancient account the nominative is the 'direct' or 'upright' case (Latin 'casus rectus') and the other cases 'slant off' from it. **2.** Any syntactic element accompanying a verb which is not a subject or object, or the equivalent. E.g. in *I took the painting to London by train*, both *to London* and *by train* are oblique. **3.** Thence extended in some usage to any unit whose syntactic role is marked by a preposition: e.g. *of the cheese* in *some of the cheese*.

Crystal (2003, p. 323) defines the oblique only as a case inflection, as follows:

Oblique (adj.) (**obl**, **OBL**) In languages which express GRAMMATICAL

relationships by means of INFLECTION, this term refers to the FORM taken by a NOUN PHRASE (often a single NOUN or PRONOUN) when it refers collectively to all the case forms of a word except that of the UNMARKED case, or NOMINATIVE.

Lyons (1968, p. 12) explains the origin of the distinction 'direct' or 'upright' or 'true' case of a noun versus its 'oblique' cases within a case system, as follows:

The classification of what we now call *inflexion* (e.g. the relationship between such forms, in English, as *boy, boys, or sing, sang, sung*) was greatly developed by the Stoics. It was they who gave to the term *case* the sense which it has preserved in standard grammatical usage ever since, distinguishing between the true form of the noun, the 'upright' case (what we now refer to as the nominative), and the 'oblique' cases, which they regarded as deviations from the upright.

It follows that before linguists began to recognize a syntactic oblique constituent, the term 'oblique' was used in case systems in reference to a contrast between an 'upright' case (called today the nominative case) and all other cases that do not have the upright case, e.g. accusative case, dative case, and so on. Following from the definitions above, our discussion will look at i) the locative NP as a domain of oblique inflection case, and ii) the locative NP as a syntactic oblique. In this regard, it is important to note that inflection 'oblique' cases (i.e. all cases that are non-nominative or non-upright) are not equivalent to the syntactic oblique, i.e. an NP headed by a syntactic preposition (P) that is assigned an overt or implicit inflection case by its P. Thus an inflectional oblique case is about a non-nominative noun, while a syntactic oblique is about a PP that contains a complement or object which is assigned case by its P head.

3. The Paradox of Nominative Case versus Oblique Case

The definition of Matthews (2007) taken together with the definitions of

Crystal (2003) and Lyons (1968), reveal that all NPs in the nominative and/or vocative case/s are non-oblique, while all NPs with cases other than the nominative/vocative are oblique units in languages with case inflections. This means that in SVO languages, such as English, nouns in the nominative case tend to function as S, while all postverbal nouns in the accusative, dative, ablative, allative, locative, instrumental cases, and so on, are in the oblique cases even if they functions as DO, or IO, etc. Recall that, in modern linguistics, objects or complements of P items are also termed oblique constituents (see Katamba, 1993, Chomsky, 1995). The import of the definition of inflectional oblique case can be conveyed by a simple rule (4) below:

(4) *The inflectional case criterion of oblique.*

In case languages and in languages with structural cases, noun phrases with non-nominative cases, that are not also vocative cases, are oblique.

Rule 4 is about postverbal nouns and their cases. It is not about the postverbal prepositional phrase and its internal relationship. Thus, given rule (4) above, any assertion to the effect that a postverbal locative NP is oblique or has an oblique case is only useful in so far as this includes the explicit implication that all postverbal NPs that have non-nominative cases are oblique or have oblique cases, too. Although Kiswahili is not an inflectional case language, it has SVO word order. If we assume that S is structurally nominative, while all varieties of O (also called C) are structurally non-nominative, then all non-nominatives in Kiswahili are structurally in the oblique case, on the analogy of English. Thus, for example, in (1a), (2a), and (3a) above, the subject locative NPs *mtoni hapa* 'by/in this river', *mtoni huku* 'around/in this river', and *mtoni humu* 'in/within this river' are all in the nominative case, while the postverbal object or complement NP *viboko* 'hippos, hippopotamuses' in each Pn-S or clause is in the oblique case relative to each subject NP. When we turn to (1b), (2b), and (3b), we discover that the subject NP *viboko* is in the nominative or 'upright' case in each Pn-S or clause, while the postverbal locative object/complement NPs are all in the inflectional oblique case relative to their subject NPs. The evidence reveals that both locative NPs as well as non-locative NPs are

inflectionally and/or structurally in the oblique case in the postverbal position, when they do not take the nominative or 'upright' case. Based on Bresnan (1994), Landau (2010, p. 12) formulated a rule of the following type: "(21) The canonical grammaticalization of location is subject or oblique." Observe that, in the inflectional case sense, Landau's (2010) rule is common knowledge in the sense that if a subject has the nominative or 'upright' case, a non-subject NP, whether locative or non-locative, that has a non-nominative case is oblique per the inflectional case definition of oblique and per (4).

(1a, b), (2a, b), and (3a, b) are relations of entailment (Whiteley, 1968, Amidu, 1980). This relationship has also been called a relation of inversion (Bresnan and Kanerva, 1989, Levin, 1993, Bresnan, 1994, Amidu, 2007, Kim, 2007, Landau, 2010, Jin, 2015). In fact, (1b), (2b), and (3b), are generally taken as the parent constructions. They undergo entailment or inversion to become (1a), (2a), and (3a).

4. The Syntactic Locative NP is not Oblique by Itself in Kiswahili

Landau (2010) and Bresnan (1994) may state that their rules and claims refer to the postverbal syntactic oblique, i.e. an NP dominated by a lexical P as [P [NP]], rather than to the banal truism of the contrast between nominative/vocative or 'upright' case inflection of a noun in the preverbal position versus the non-nominative oblique case inflections of nouns in the postverbal position. From the syntactic point of view, therefore, Landau's (2010) rule says that the locative is a subject in preverbal position, i.e. as a genuine subject, if NP, or topic subject, if PP. Landau (2010, p. 124) writes that, "Bresnan (1994) shows that in Chichewa, where inverted locatives are genuine NPs, they do occupy the canonical subject position." Bantu grammatical studies have long recorded that locative NPs function as subject (see Steere, 1870, Sacleux, 1909, Ashton, 1947, and Whiteley, 1968). Kim (2007) and Jin (2015) both argue that in Korean and in Chinese, the inverted locative PP is a genuine subject. Landau (2010), Kim (2007), and Jin (2015) accept, without reservation, the assertion of Bresnan and Kanerva (1989) and Bresnan (1994) to the effect that the postverbal

locative is oblique, whether it is a postverbal PP or a postverbal NP. The assertion that the postverbal locative is syntactically oblique both as a PP and as an NP is difficult to defend in Kiswahili. Recall that we speak here only about the syntactic oblique NP dominated by a P. As a result, our claims a) do not contradict § 3. above that discusses postverbal non-nominative oblique cases of nouns that are not dominated by any P and b) are not inconsistent with § 3. Let us examine (3), renumbered (5) below. Note that (3b) is now (5a), and (3a) is (5b).

- (5) a. *Vi-boko* *wa-me-ja-a*
 Cl. 8/2-hippo Cl. 2 SM-RECENT PAST-be full-MOD
mto-ni *hu-mu.*
 river-Cl. 17/26 this-Cl. 17c/26c
 ‘Hippos have filled this river, lit. hippos are full in river this.’
- b. *Mto-ni* *hu-mu*
 River-Cl. 17/26 this-Cl. 17c/26c
m-me-ja-a *vi-boko.*
 Cl. 17c/26c SM-RECENT PAST-be full-MOD Cl. 8/2-hippo
 ‘This river is full of hippos, lit. in river there is full hippos.’

According to Bresnan and Kanerva (1989), Bresnan (1994), Landau (2010), and others, the postverbal locative NP *mtoni humu* ‘in this river’ in (5a) is syntactically oblique, while the preverbal locative NP in (5b) is a canonical subject that is not oblique. Given Katamba (1993), Chomsky (1995), and Matthews (2007) above, the NP *mtoni humu* ‘in this river’ is not oblique in its non-subject position in (5a), a) because a syntactic P head does not introduce it, and/or b) because it is an object or complement that is obligatorily required to make (5a) a grammatical construction. Similarly, in (5b), the postverbal NP is an obligatory object or complement of V. If it is omitted the construction becomes ungrammatical. (5b) is, as a result, transitive rather than intransitive in Kiswahili, whereas, in Korean, its equivalent is intransitive.

Our finding leads to two conclusions. The first conclusion says that Bresnan and Kanerva (1989), Bresnan (1994), Landau (2010), and their followers are correct in maintaining that the non-subject locative is always oblique, and this

includes locative NPs in Bantu languages such as Chichewa. If we accept this conclusion, it would require us to substitute the oblique syntax of Katamba (1993), Chomsky (1995), and Matthews (2007) for the banal inflectional oblique case contrast of § 3. above, i.e. with specific reference to all postverbal NPs in Kiswahili and Bantu. If we agree to do so, we will no longer be able to distinguish an oblique locative noun case that is not a syntactic oblique dominated by P, and from a locative NP that is oblique because it is explicitly dominated by P. In addition, if the conclusion of Bresnan and Kanerva (1989), Bresnan (1994), and Landau (2010) is true and valid, then, naturally, Katamba (1993), Chomsky (1995), and Matthews (2007) did not quite get their oblique syntax right. That is to say, it is not the case that a syntactic oblique, whether pre- or postverbal, is exclusively an NP or argument that is introduced by a syntactic P head.

The second conclusion says that Katamba (1993), Chomsky (1995), and Matthews (2007), and their followers are correct in maintaining that the syntactic oblique arises when an NP or argument is headed by a preposition (P). If this conclusion is true and valid, then, naturally, Bresnan and Kanerva (1989), Bresnan (1994), Landau (2010), and their followers got their oblique syntax completely wrong with reference to Bantu locative NPs. That is to say, it is not the case that a locative NP or argument with an oblique case, in the sense of the Stoics, is a syntactic oblique in a postverbal position, even if it lacks a syntactic P to introduce it. If a locative noun with an oblique case has no P head, it is just a postverbal syntactic object or complement, and, as we have seen in § 3. above, all non-nominative object nouns or complement nouns, without exception, have oblique cases.

If we have to choose between the two claims, we would side with Katamba (1993), Chomsky (1995), and Matthews (2007). At the cost of some repetition, recall from §§ 1.-3. above and data (5a, b) above, that both locative NPs and non-locative NPs function as postverbal NPs in Kiswahili, e.g. *mtoni humu* 'in this river' in (5a) and *viboko* 'hippopotamuses' in (5b). It follows that an acceptance of the Bresnan and Kanerva (1989), Bresnan (1994) and Landau (2010) positions will, *a fortiori*, compel us also to accept that both locative NPs and non-locative NPs function as oblique NPs case-wise because they are postverbal non-nominative NPs, and none is an oblique NP based on a syntactic

motivation, namely none of the postverbal NPs is headed by a preposition (P). In this scenario, the only justification, then, for the postverbal locative oblique NPs of Bresnan and Kanerva (1989), Bresnan (1994), and Landau (2010) is the inflectional oblique cases of the Stoics, as in rule (4). That is to say, the locative oblique of Bresnan and Kanerva (1989), Bresnan (1994), Landau (2010), and others would be a valid oblique case in the same way that all postverbal NPs, without exception, have oblique cases or non-upright cases. Paradoxically, in this context, to say the locative NP is oblique is not a specific statement about an unique syntactic type of NP. It is a statement about case contrasts. By contrast, a syntactic oblique, as defined by Katamba (1993), Chomsky (1995), and others is a specific type of phrase structure called a PP in which, significantly, P heads an oblique NP. In this way, one avoids describing all postverbal NPs as oblique by default. We reject, therefore, the Bresnan and Kanerva (1989), Bresnan (1994), and Landau (2010) position that, inadvertently, licences all postverbal NPs, including DOs, as oblique elements even when they are not headed by syntactic prepositions. Finally, recall that our study recognizes the lexical syntactic P, e.g. *wa* 'of', plus its complement NP, e.g. *sokoni* 'in the market', as a PP. It does not recognize sub-lexical prepositional roots, e.g. {a} 'of', and their class markers, e.g. {w}, as lexical P items. Likewise, in the same way that the English noun *king-dom* is not a PP, the noun *mto-ni* in Kiswahili, too, is not a PP. Both lexical items belong to the form class of noun. Thus, even if one relates an NP to a PP in terms of meaning, the category of the PP is not the same as the category of the NP (see Smith and Wilson, 1979, p. 58).

5. The Locative NP as a Syntactic Oblique in Kiswahili

There is additional cogent evidence in Kiswahili, a major Bantu language, which supports the syntactic definitions of oblique in § 2. Consider (6)-(7) below.

- | | | | |
|-----|--|-------------------------|-------------------|
| (6) | <i>Ki-pungu</i> | <i>a-li-pand-a</i> | <i>mbingu-ni.</i> |
| | Cl. 7/1-eagle | Cl. 1 SM-PAST-climb-MOD | sky-Cl. 17/26 |
| | 'The/an eagle climbed to the sky/heavens.' | | |
| (7) | <i>Mbingu-ni</i> | <i>ku-li-pand-a</i> | <i>ki-pungu.</i> |

Sky-Cl. 17/26 Cl. 17b/26b SM-PAST-climb-MOD Cl. 7/1-eagle
 'To the sky/heavens climbed the/an eagle.'

(6)-(7) are like (1)-(5). The subject of (6) is *kipungu* 'eagle' of class 7 KI, which takes agreements of class 1 MU1 because it is an animate entity. It assigns an SM {a} to its PC or V *alipanda* 'it climbed' to signal their obligatory subject-verb relationship. It is structurally nominative for an SVO language. The PC or V is followed by the locative NP *mbingu* 'in, to, at, the sky, heavens.' The postverbal locative NP *mbingu* is an object or complement that is not introduced by a preposition (P). Consequently, it is not syntactically oblique. It is only inflectionally oblique relative to the subject's nominative case. (6) inverts as (7). The locative NP is now the subject NP. It assigns its SM {ku} to its PC or V *kulipanda* 'there climbed.' Simultaneously, the NP *kipungu* becomes the DO or direct complement of the PC or V. Let us turn to (8)-(9).

- (8) *Ki-pungu* *a-li-pand-a* *mpaka*
 Cl. 7/1-eagle Cl. 1 SM-PAST-climb-MOD Cl. 0 COP-a up to
mbingu-ni.
 sky-Cl. 17/26
 'The/an eagle climbed up to the sky/heavens.'
- (9) **Mpaka* *mbingu-ni* *0-li-pand-a*
 Cl. 0 COP-a up to sky-Cl. 17/26 0-PAST-climb-MOD
ki-pungu.
 Cl. 7/1-eagle
 'Up to the sky/heavens there climbed the/an eagle.'

The syntactic subject of (8) is also *kipungu* 'eagle' of class 7 KI, and as in (6a), it assigns the SM {a} to its PC or V *alipanda* 'it climbed.' Inflectionally, it is structurally nominative as a subject. The PC or V is followed by the locative P-aP/PP *mpaka mbinguni* 'up to the sky, heavens.' According to Lyons (1968, p. 345), "More particularly, the term 'complement' is used of such 'adverbial' expressions as *in Central Park* or *on Sunday* in sentences like *The parade was in Central Park* or *The demonstration was on Sunday*." Adverbial complements define transitive clauses but they do not function as objects or subjects of clauses.

- (11) **Kwa* *madirisha-ni*
 Cl. 0 COP-n through windows-Cl. 17/26
0-li-peny-a *mi-pulizo* *y-a*
 Cl. 0-PAST-penetrate-MOD Cl. 4-waft Cl. 4 SM-COP-n of
ma-nukato
 Cl. 6-perfume
 'Through the windows penetrated wafts of perfume.'

(10) is from Robert (1966, p. 39). (10) is like (8), and (11) is like (9). As a result, no further description is required. We wish, however, to draw attention to the fact that the PC or V *ilipenya* 'they penetrated' in (10) is followed by the P-nP/PP *kwa madirishani* 'through the windows', which is also its obligatory complement. The P-nP/PP is not an object because it does not undergo a subject-object inversion (see Whiteley, 1968, Amidu, 1980). The non-locative P-n or P *kwa* 'through' is a partially opaque nominal preposition and it takes a locative NP *madirishani* 'in, into the windows' as its object or complement to form a P-nP/PP. Because it is partially opaque, the P-n or P *kwa* cannot assign an agreement marker to any modifier or to a PC or V. Thus, in (11), the P-nP/PP is unable to function as the subject of the PC or V, and is, therefore, ungrammatical. The P-n *kwa* is partially opaque because, although it is an endocentric element of structure, it has become fossilized in its prenominal position. That is to say, it is unable to activate its full prenominal potential and be modified by an adjective, or demonstrative, or possessive, or any other modifying item, for that matter. In addition, it cannot agree in person, number, gender, and case with any agreement-taking V. As a preposition, it requires an obligatory complement, e.g. *madirishani*, to complete its syntax. Kiswahili and Bantu do not have intransitive P elements (Amidu, 2014). The failure of agreement between *kwa madirishani* and V **Olipanda* renders (11) ungrammatical. That is to say PP *kwa madirishani* (with *kwa*, a class 0 element with no prenominal gender marker, as its head), attempts to assign an SM to V but manages to assign a zero (0) agreement, i.e. no agreement whatsoever, to V. Even so, the complement *madirishani* of the P-nP/PP is syntactically an oblique NP in (10)-(11). Let us look at (12)-(13).

- (12) *Mi-pulizo* *y-a* *ma-nukato*
 Cl. 4-waft Cl. 4 SM-COP-n of Cl. 6-perfume
i-li-peny-a *madirisha-ni.*
 Cl. 4 SM-PAST-penetrate-MOD windows-Cl. 17/26
 'Wafts of perfume penetrated into the windows.'
- (13) *Madirisha-ni* *ku-li-peny-a*
 Windows-Cl. 17/26 Cl. 17b/26b SM-PAST-penetrate-MOD
mi-pulizo *y-a* *ma-nukato.*
 Cl. 4-waft Cl. 4 SM-COP-n of Cl. 6-perfume
 'Into the windows penetrated wafts of perfume.'

(12)-(13) are our constructions. They are based on Robert's (1966) datum given as (10). (12) is like (6) and (13) is like (7). (13) is, therefore, the entailed or inverted counterpart of (12). Here, too, the postverbal locative NP *madirishani* in (12) is an object or complement that is not introduced by a preposition (P). The postverbal NP *madirishani* is, in fact, an obligatory complement of its V. If it is omitted, (12) becomes ungrammatical. It is, as a result, not oblique, at all, syntactically, even if one argues like the Stoics that it has an oblique noun case. Similarly, the postverbal NP *mipulizo ya manukato* in (13) is an obligatory complement of its V. If it is omitted, (13) becomes ungrammatical. It is, as a result, not oblique, at all, syntactically, even if one argues that it has an oblique noun case in the sense of the Stoics. Unlike in Korean, (13) is not an intransitive construction. This is because it has a complement that is dominated obligatorily by V.

- (14) *Ki-pungu* *a-li-pand-a* *katika*
 Cl. 7/1-eagle Cl. 1 SM-PAST-climb-MOD Cl. 17/26 COP-n to
mbingu.
 Cl. 10-sky
 'The/an eagle climbed to the sky/heavens.'
- (15) *Katika* *mbingu* *ku-li-pand-a*
 Cl. 17/26 COP-n to Cl. 10-sky Cl. 17b/26b SM-PAST-climb-MOD
ki-pungu.
 Cl. 7/ 1-eagle
 'To the sky/heavens there climbed the/an eagle.'

When we compare (6)-(13) with (14)-(15) above, we discover a different kind of locative P-nP/PP (see also Amidu, 1980, 2007). (14) is like (8), except that its postverbal PP is a P-nP type whose P-n or P *katika* 'in, at, to' is transparent. Namely, it can generate agreement markers and assign them to modifiers and to its V. The complement of the PC or V in (14) is a P-nP/PP *katika mbingu* 'to the sky'. The complement of the P-nP/PP is a non-locative NP *mbingu* 'sky, skies, heavens' of class 10 NI2. It is a syntactic oblique because its head is the locative P *katika* 'in, at, to' that assigns it an oblique case, per Chomsky (1995, p. 110). (14) inverts as (15), in which the P-n or P *katika* heads the subject P-nP/PP *katika mbingu* and assigns the SM {ku} to the PC or V *kulifika* to signal obligatory subject-verb relationship. The postverbal NP *kipungu* in (15) is an obligatory complement of its V and cannot be omitted. Thus unlike Korean inversions, (14)-(15) are transitive rather than intransitive constructions.

(14)-(15) reveal that there are other ways in Kiswahili to express oblique as a locative argument, i.e. as an object or complement that contains an oblique NP headed by an agreement-assigning P-n or P. The data further reveal that a P-nP/PP headed by an agreement-assigning locative P-n or P may express the same meaning as a locative NP, e.g. *katika mbingu* in (14)-(15) and *mbinguni* in (6)-(7). We wish to stress that the relatedness observed is a relatedness of meaning rather than a relatedness of syntactic categories (see Smith and Wilson, 1979, p. 58, on *rabbity* ("adjective") versus *like a rabbit* ("prepositional phrase") versus *resembling a rabbit* ("participle clause") which express the same meaning but differ in their categories). Kiswahili also has NP/PP alternations, as found in languages such as English (see Levin, 1993), e.g. *-funga kamba/kwa kamba* 'lit. tie (with) rope/with rope', *-omba salama/kwa salama* 'lit. beg/pray (for) safety/for safety' (see Amidu, 2012, pp. 7-18, 2013, pp. 599-617). These choices and alternations occur with basic verbs, as above, as well as extended or derived verbs. They are not restricted to any specific morphology of a verb.

6. The Locative Oblique in NP Syntax

Recall that Matthews (2007, p. 273) states that "*of the cheese in some of the cheese*" is oblique. His view fits that of Chomsky (1995, p. 110). Consider (16)-(17).

- (16) *Safari_i z_i-a mji-ni_j.*
 Cl. 10-travel Cl. 10 SM-COP-n of town-Cl. 17/26
 'Town travels, travels into town, lit. travels_i they_i-of into town_j.'
- (17) *Dirisha_i l_i-a ofisi-ni_j.*
 Cl. 5-window Cl. 5 SM-COP-n of office-Cl. 17/26
 'Office window, window of the office, lit. window_i it_i-of in office_j.'

The external N of P-n/COP-n or P *za* 'of' is *safari* 'travel, journey' of class 10 NI2, and the internal N of the same P-n/COP-n or P item is *mjini* 'town, in (the) town' of locative class 17/26 NI3. The external N of P-n/COP-n or P *la* 'of' is *dirisha* 'window' of class 5 JI, and the internal N of the same P-n/COP-n or P item is *ofisini* 'office, in the office' of locative class 17/26 NI3. Following sound harmony rules, the agreement {zi} → {z} / P-root {a}, and the agreement {li} → {l} / P-root {a}. Following Chomsky (1995) and Matthews (2007), the P-nPs/PPs *za mjini* 'of/from town' (16), and *la ofisini* 'of/from the office' (17) are oblique phrases. Thus if a ±locative NP lacks a P head to introduce it, it is not a syntactic oblique in NP syntax.

In Bresnan (1994, p. 114), we find an example (118d), which we renumber (18).

- (18) *Mw-aná w-á ku-mudzi kw-âthu.*
 1-child 1-ASC 18 3-village 18-our
 'A child from our village.'

Observe that the Chichewa NP is *mwaná wá kumudzi kwâtu* 'a child of/from our village, lit. child of in/at village our'. The NP *mwaná* 'child' is the external NP of the nominal P-n/COP-n or P *wá* 'of, from'. The nominal *wá* 'of, from' is called "an *associative marker*" in Bresnan (1994, p. 115) rather than a P. However, Bantu has no intransitive P, and as a result, *wá* 'of, from' must take a complement to become syntactically transitive and form a P-nP/PP (see Amidu, 2014, for details). Thus nominal P *wá* 'of, from' takes a locative NP *kumudzi kwâtu* 'lit. in, at village/town our' to complete its syntax. Following Chomsky (1995) and Matthews (2007), the P-nP/PP *wá kumudzi kwâtu* 'of/from our village/town' is oblique. (18) is equivalent to the Kiswahili NP *mwana wa mjini*

kwetu 'Cl. 1-child Cl. 1 SM-COP-n of town-Cl. 17/26 Cl. 17b/26b SM-COP-n of-PossProCl. 2/1 OM, i.e. child of/from our town'. As a result, the P-nP/PP *wa mjini kwetu* 'of/from our village/town' is also oblique.

7. The 'Colonial Reductionist Hypothesis' of Oblique

Given the evidence in (18), Landau (2010, p. 124), and the Bresnan and Moshi (1990, p. 149, footnote 5) statement to the effect that a locative noun class marker, such as {nyi}, is not a marker of oblique case, it is surprising that Bresnan (1994), Landau (2010), and others, assert in their inversion syntax that a locative NP, by itself, is oblique in postverbal position. It appears to us that Bresnan (1994) adopts as her method of analysis the traditional 'colonial reductionist hypothesis' equivalent to what Quine and Ullian (1978, p. 73) term "This cynical doctrine of selective leniency [...]." The 'colonial reductionist hypothesis' arises when a constituent x in a language B under description is described by reference to a constituent y or z in a language A of description, i.e. $x = y$ or z , in spite of patent differences in the internal syntactic structures of x and y or z . The language A is a colonial or former colonial language of the speakers of language B . Bresnan's (1994) descriptions make use of a 'colonial reductionist hypothesis'. Consider, for example, Bresnan (1994, p. 113) below.

However, uncontestable NPs do appear as adjuncts and obliques in languages that lack morphological case and have few prepositions. Chichewa is a good example of this. It has only two uncontroversial nonnominal prepositions, an instrumental and a temporal (Kanerva 1990b). Oblique relations marked in other languages by case or prepositions are marked by 'applied' verb morphology in Chichewa, as in Bantu in general. In view of these facts, it is not surprising that in Chichewa the same locative NPs that serve as subjects and objects can also serve as obliques and adjuncts.

Firstly, observe from the above extract, and also on her pages 113-115, that Bresnan (1994) attempts to explain away the function of dependent P heads as

syntactic P units. (18), however, reveals, clearly, that Chichewa has genuine oblique locative NPs, exactly as defined in § 2. Secondly, the extract from Bresnan (1994) above gives rise to an intriguing question as follows: If "[...] in Chichewa the same locative NPs that serve as subjects and objects can also serve as obliques and adjuncts," how is Bresnan (1994) able to determine from the same postverbal position of a PC or V that the same locative NP is oblique or adjunct rather than an object, or an object rather than an oblique or adjunct? In our view, in this situation, without the help of a P item, it is impossible to tell an object apart from an oblique or adjunct by sight and by relying on the same locative NP in the same postverbal position of a pair of Pn-S or clause. This is self-evident in pairs of transitive construction. We will return to this topic in (19)-(24) below. To bar subjective and arbitrary criteria that are often used to distinguish between object and oblique or adjunct, or both, in syntax, the father of inversion syntax in Bantu, Whiteley (1968), suggested that object NPs undergo transposition, or entailment, or inversion syntax in Kiswahili and, by extension, the Bantu languages (see, however, the paradox of (14)-(15) above; see also Amidu, 1980, ch. 4). Whiteley (1968, p. 10) writes that,

It is a property of items participating in an object-relationship that they may also participate in a subject relationship, and one way of exposing differences of transitivity is to transpose the item(s) in the object-relationship with those in the subject-relationship while retaining the same lexical items. I term this operation 'entailment' and the sentences involved in such an operation I regard as constituting an 'affiliation-set'.

Bresnan (1994), Landau (2010), and others overlook the sound analysis of Whiteley (1968) (see also Amidu, 1980, ch. 5). Note that Bresnan (1994) also states that, "Oblique relations marked in other languages by case or prepositions are marked by 'applied' verb morphology in Chichewa, as in Bantu in general." The problem is that it is impossible to verify the oblique claim when a P does not introduce the complement of the applied or applicative verb. Besides, Keenan (1985, p. 281), based on patterns in another Bantu language, Kinyarwanda, concludes, explicitly, that,

Thus to say ‘the knife with which John killed the chicken’, we must construe the subordinate clause as one on which *knife* is either a subject or an object; it cannot directly be relativized as an oblique NP. So again, major syntactic operations depend on the existence of ways of forming derived objects and subjects in a way quite unlike English. (see also Amidu, 2012, p. 24)

We agree with Keenan (1985). Although oblique S and O exist, subject or object is not the same as oblique in Bantu. Thirdly, Bresnan (1994, p. 115) writes as follows:

Second, on this analysis it is unexplained why the nominal specifiers and modifiers of the locative NP show concord with the embedded PP. True PPs in Chichewa have no gender class and disallow concord altogether.

Third, unlike the English PPs, these putative Chichewa PPs would never appear unembedded outside NPs. All Chichewa locatives allow NP specifiers and modifiers, even in what are ‘PP’ position in English (the position of adjuncts and oblique arguments).

The literature of linguistics does not say anywhere that true Ps are exclusively non-nominal P items, as in English, or that “embedded PPs” are not syntactic PPs. Thus, Bresnan’s (1994) dichotomies “True PPs”, presumably in contrast to ‘non-True PPs’, and “uncontroversial nonnominal prepositions” presumably versus ‘controversial nominal Ps’ are artificial reductionist constructs. In Kiswahili, “putative” PPs do “appear unembedded outside NPs.” (Amidu, 1980, 2012, 2013, 2014). All syntactic Ps and PPs are true Ps and PPs in the standard definitions in § 2. Thus the introduction of a set of pseudo-dichotomy into the linguistic discourse serves only as a strategy for ignoring P and PP items that a linguist does not like, e.g. the locative oblique in (18).

Recall also that Bresnan (1994) says that, “All Chichewa locatives allow NP specifiers and modifiers, even in what are ‘PP’ position in English (the position of adjuncts and oblique arguments).” In response to this, a Chichewa linguist could argue, using the same reductionist analogy, that, “All English locatives do not allow NP specifiers and modifiers, even in what are ‘NP’ position in

often take an adverb *mbali* 'utterly' to give *mpishi alifia mbali* 'the cook died utterly.' (19)-(20) also express the same meaning. Recall that Kiswahili has PP DOs and PP Ss, as in (14)-(15) (see Amidu, 2007, pp. 31, 34-36, 2012, 2013, ch. 9).

Firstly, one cannot tell that the same postverbal locative NP *nyumbani* is an object or an oblique/adjunct by staring at (19)-(20). Secondly, (19) and (20) take the same locative NP, irrespective of the type of verb in each PC or V. This situation suggests that verb morphology alone is not able to distinguish between oblique and object in Bantu. Consider, in addition, (21)-(22).

- (21) *Nyumba-ni ku-li-ku-f-a*
 House-Cl. 17/26 Cl. 17b/26b SM-PAST-STRESS AFX-die-MOD
m-pishi.
 Cl. 1-cook
 'In the house/at home died the/a cook.'
- (23) *Nyumba-ni ku-li-f-i-a*
 House-Cl. 17/26 Cl. 17b/26b SM-PAST-die-APPL-MOD
m-pishi.
 Cl. 1-cook
 'In the house/at home died the/a cook.'

(21)-(22) reveal that (19)-(20) undergo the same pattern of inversion in which the postverbal locative NP *nyumbani* 'in the house/at home' becomes the syntactic subject of (21)-(22), irrespective of whether or not the PC or V has a basic or applicative verb. Per Whiteley (1968) and Amidu (1980), the postverbal NP in (19)-(20) must be an object because it undergoes subject-object inversion. Let also examine (23)-(24).

- (23) *Nyumba-ni*
 House-Cl. 17/26
a-li-ko-ku-f-a
 Cl. 1 SM-PAST-Cl. 17b/26b-SOM-STRESS AFX-die-MOD
m-pishi.
 Cl. 1-cook
 'In the house/at home where the/a cook died.'

- (24) *Nyumba-ni* *a-li-ko-f-i-a*
 House-Cl. 17/26 Cl. 1 SM-PAST-Cl. 17b/26b SOM-die-APPL-MOD
m-pishi.
 Cl. 1-cook
 'In the house/at home where the/a cook died.'

(23)-(24) confirm that the postverbal NP in (19)-(20) is an object. This is because each locative NP of (19)-(20) undergoes an object relative operation that obligatorily assigns its SOM, also called an ORM, {ko} to its PC or V. The SOM also signals an obligatory verb-direct object relationship in the data. In addition, (23)-(24) convey the same meaning. The patterns confirm Keenan's (1985) observation about the use of object or subject or *x* in Bantu, where English would use oblique or *y* or *z*. The evidence reveals that, irrespective of verb morphology, one cannot tell oblique from object or subject a) by sight, if an NP has no P head to introduce it, and b) by means of a 'colonial reductionist hypothesis' based on *x = y* or *z* in another language.

8. Conclusion

In this study, we have followed Katamba (1993), Chomsky (1995), Crystal (2003), and Matthews (2007) in affirming that an NP is oblique, syntactically rather than inflectionally, if a syntactic P introduces it, otherwise it is not oblique. Without this caveat, oblique cannot be distinguished from S or O/C in clauses. This is especially the case in Kiswahili. Thus Kiswahili locative NPs are not syntactic oblique units. When they are syntactically oblique, P items introduce and head them. We have also seen that differences in verb morphology do not discern oblique from non-oblique in Bantu. In this respect, even if in an Indo-European language, such as English, a Bantu locative NP would occupy a PP position in postverbal syntax, the English position does not count towards oblique function in Bantu. We suggest, therefore, that the internal mechanisms and structures of Bantu languages should be treated as valid language internal features. In this regard, we should, as linguists, recognize that Bantu languages often use NP where Indo-European languages and Korean use

PP, and avoid trying to turn Bantu NPs without P heads into syntactic oblique units, either in the sense of the Stoics or in the name of universal grammar. It is, after all, in the fine points of divergence that languages exhibit their significant diversity, which makes them interesting to learners and typologists.

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List of some abbreviations

adj.	adjective
AFX	affix
APPL	applicative or applied verbal form or verbal extension
C	complement
Cl.	class
Cl. 16/25 MA2	Mahali 'place/s' class, also written pahali, pahala. The

class contains only this borrowed noun. Neither the noun nor its modifiers inflect for singular versus plural, although the roots of some modifier, e.g. numerals, imply singular as opposed to plural, e.g. mahali pamoja 'one place', mahali pawili 'two places', etc.

Cl. 17/26 NI3	locative class, with three allomorphic agreement markers (a) pa-, (b) ku-, (c) mu-; traditionally classes 16 PA-, 17 KU-, and 18 MU-
COP-a	adverbial copula (also called P-a)
COP-n	nominal copula (also called P-n)
DO	direct object
FUTURE	future tense
IO	indirect object
MOD	mood marker, modalic marker
N	noun
NP	noun phrase
O	object
Obl, obl, OBL	oblique
OM	object marker
ORM	object relative marker (see also SOM)
P	preposition, prepositional unit (see also P-a, COP-a, P-n, COP-n)
PAST	past tense
P-a	adverbial predicate, adverbial preposition (also called COP-a)
P-aP	adverbial predicate phrase, adverbial prepositional phrase (see PP)
P-n	nominal/adnominal predicate, nominal preposition (see COP-n)
P-nP	nominal predicate phrase, nominal prepositional phrase (see PP)
PC	predicate constituent, equivalent to syntactic verb, hence see V
PRESENT	present continuous tense
PossProCl.	possessive pronoun class (1/1 = in Cl. 1, 1st person, 1/2

	= in Cl. 1, 2nd person, 1/3 = in Cl. 1, 3rd person; 2/1 = in Cl. 2, 1st person, 2/2 = in Cl. 2, 2nd person, 2/3 = in Cl. 2, 3rd person)
PP	prepositional phrase (with subtypes P-nP and P-aP)
RECENT PAST	recent past tense, also called immediate past tense or perfect tense
S	subject
STATIVE	stative derivational affix, stative verbal extension
SM	subject marker
SOM	secondary object marker (see ORM)
SVO	subject verb object (word order)
V	verb, equivalent to predicate constituent (see PC above)
*	a) used to indicate ungrammatical forms; b) used by Matthews (2007) for an entry in his dictionary
=	is equal to, is equivalent to
0	zero, null, empty

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