Morpho-Phonological Contrasts across Languages

Eva Dobler

I. Introduction

Topic: Affix-related phonological asymmetries across languages:

Under (seemingly) similar conditions, the same affix is correlated with different phonological effects:

(i) Stem + Af form a phonological unit

(ii) Stem + Af do not form a phonological unit
    i.e., stem is a phonological unit to which the affix is attached

An example for the contrast between (i) and (ii) is provided in (1a) and (1b), respectively; the data are from the Luo language Acholi.

(1) a. Inalienable possessive: nasal deletion

\[ \text{bad} + \text{na} \rightarrow [\text{bada}] \]
arm/leg-my
‘my arm’ (part of my body)

b. Alienable possessive: no deletion

\[ \text{bad} + \text{na} \rightarrow [\text{badna}] \]
arm/leg-my
‘my leg’ (e.g. part of a slaughtered animal) \hspace{1cm} (Bavin 1996:852-853)

Goal of this talk:
bring data from unrelated languages together and show that we can make a generalization that comes with clear predictions

Claim: Phonological contrast shows that there is an underlying structural difference; i.e., the contrast is the result of relative closeness/distance between the affix and its host:

(i) Stem and affix are structurally close
(ii) Stem and affix are structurally distant
II. Possessive constructions: distinction between alienable and inalienable possessives

Luo languages: Acholi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possessive pronouns</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st person</td>
<td>(n)a</td>
<td>wa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person</td>
<td>(n)i</td>
<td>wu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person</td>
<td>(n)e</td>
<td>gi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1

If a noun ends in a vowel, the possessive construction is ambiguous between an alienable and an inalienable interpretation:

(2) obo+ni → [oboni] ‘your lung’
lung+your

The difference only becomes visible with roots that end in a consonant:

(3) bad+na      [badna] or [badda] ‘my leg’ (animal part)
    arm/leg+my    [bada]       ‘my arm’ (part of my body)

(4) IAs:  
    a. dog+na  → [doga]        ‘my mouth’ (part of my body)
        mouth+my
    b. tik + na → [tika] or [tixa] ‘my chin’
       chin + my

(5) ALs:  
    a. ot + na  → [otna] or [oddna] ‘my house’
       house + my
    b. buk + na → [bukna] or [bukka] ‘my book’
       book + my

(6) buk + na  *[buxa]       (Bavin 1996:852-853)

Vennemann’s ‘Law of Syllable Contact’: an onset must not be more sonorous than the preceding coda.
Summary:

- **AL roots**: always combine with -na whether the root ends in a consonant or not → ignore the law of syllable contact → boundary between alienably possessed noun and possessor
- **IA roots**: a final consonant prevents the insertion of the full form –na → abide by the law of syllable contact → there is no boundary between inalienably possessed noun and possessor

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**Luo languages: Lango**

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<td>2nd person</td>
<td>ni</td>
<td>wu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person</td>
<td>mere</td>
<td>gi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 (Hayes 2009:137-141)

(7) lem ‘cheek’

**AL possession:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>lemma</th>
<th>‘my (animal) cheek’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lemmi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lemmere</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| lemwa |                     |
| lemwu |                     |
| lemg |                    |

(8) rep ‘liver’

**AL possession:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>reppa</th>
<th>‘my (animal) liver’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>reppi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>repere</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**IA possession:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>reфа</th>
<th>‘my liver’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>reфи</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reфе</td>
<td>(Hayes 2009:139)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nivkh

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possessive Pronouns</th>
<th>Full form</th>
<th>Clitic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st person</td>
<td>ɲi</td>
<td>ɲ-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person</td>
<td>cʰi</td>
<td>cʰ-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person</td>
<td>if</td>
<td>iNg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflexive</td>
<td>pʰi</td>
<td>pʰ-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 (Shiraishi 2006:38, ex. 40)

AL construction: systematic insertion of an epenthetic [i] between reduced possessive and root; holds even if the host starts with a vowel → epenthesis is not expected in this environment

(9) **ALs:**

a. pʰi-'ep
b. pʰi-’oq
c. cʰi-’olyonŋ oyla-gu
d. pʰi-'näch

e. pʰi-’saqo
f. pʰi-caqo
g. pʰi-’no
h. pʰi-’ro-jni-x-xu
j. pʰi-’pilkar caqo

(Shiraishi 2006:41, ex. 50)

IA construction: no epenthesis, clustering is permitted:

(10) **IAs:**

a. pʰ-’nanak
b. pʰ-’näch

c. pʰ-’qan-gu (< qan)
d. pʰ-’fo (< vo)
e. pʰ-’fivus (< vivus)

(Shiraishi 2006:41, ex. 51)
III. Verbal domain

Malayalam

Two types of causatives: direct/lexical vs. indirect/productive → they appear in the same form unless the verb allows for the lexicalized form of causation.

Causative suffix: -ikk/-ipp

(11) a. tilnum ‘will eat’
   b. tittum ‘will feed’
   c. tittikkum ‘will cause x to feed y’ (Mohanan 2005:71, ex. 16)

(12) a. direct causation: tilnum + ikk → tittum
   b. indirect causation: tilnum + ikk → tittikkum

(13) a. unarum ‘will wake up (intr.)’
   b. unarttum ‘will wake up (tr.)’
   c. unarttikkum ‘will cause x to wake up y’ (Mohanan 2005:71, ex. 17)

(14) a. bootṭo munṭi
    boat sank
   b. kutṭi bootṭo mukki
    child-N boat-N sink-CAUSE-PAST
    ‘The child sank the boat.’
   c. kutṭi bootṭo munṭiccu
    child-N boat-N sink-CAUSE-PAST
    ‘The child caused the boat to sink.’ (Mohanan 2005:71, ex. 18)

(15) a. kutṭi kaṭaṇṇu
    child-N cried
    ‘The child cried.’
   b. acchan kuṭṭiye kaṭayiccu
    father-N child-A cry-CAUSE-PAST
    ‘The father made the child cry.’
   c. amma acchanekkonṭa kuṭṭiye kaṭayippiccu
    mother-N father-A with child-A cry-CAUSE-CAUSE-PAST
    ‘Mother caused father to make the child cry.’ (Mohanan 2005:72, ex. 19)
Timugon Murut

Prefixation with \textit{maN} can either trigger

\begin{itemize}
  \item nasal assimilation, or
  \item nasal substitution
\end{itemize}

\begin{tabular}{lll}
(16) & a. maN + buli & mambuli $T/S$ will keep [R] \textsuperscript{1} \\
 & & mamuli $T/S$ will keep \textit{R} \\
 & b. maN + tutu & mantutu $T/S$ will pound [O] \\
 & & manutu $T/S$ will pound \textit{O} \\
 & c. maN + kabul & mankabul $T/S$ will fan [R] \\
 & & mañabul $T/S$ will fan \textit{R} \\
 & d. maN + tumbuk & matumbuk $T/S$ will thump \textit{e.o.} \\
 & & manumbuk $T/S$ will thump \textit{O} \\
\end{tabular}

(Prentice 1971:112ff)

IV. Conclusion

\begin{itemize}
  \item IA roots and their possessive affixes are closer than their AL counterparts
  \item Contrasts in terms of structural closeness are not limited to possessive constructions but can also be found in the verbal domain
  \item Prediction: Inalienable possessives, lexical causatives, transitive verbs and their objects should always be structurally closer than alienable possessives, productive causatives, \ldots\ldots
\end{itemize}

References:


\textsuperscript{1} \textit{T/S} refers to Topic/Subject; \textit{R} indicates Referent; \textit{O} indicates Object. The brackets indicate optionality.