Presentational Focus and Thematic Structure
in Comparative Bantu

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Abstract

Locative inversion has often been treated as an unaccusativity phenomenon in languages as typologically different as English and Chichewa (e.g. Bresnan 1990). Yet Bantu languages show some diversity in the thematic structure of verbs that can occur with locative inversion and related expletive/impersonal constructions. This paper provides a detailed examination of locative inversion and expletive constructions in Setswana, showing that this class of presentational focus constructions exhibits morphological, syntactic, agreement, and discourse characteristics that differ from those of Chichewa and other Bantu languages. It shows that these differences, the result of morphological loss during historical change, can best be understood synchronically within a theory of partial information structures (Bresnan 1982).

Presentational Focus and Thematic Structure in Comparative Bantu[*]

1.0 Locative inversion and presentational focus constructions

Bresnan & Kanerva (1989) observe that inverted locatives in Chichewa function as grammatical subjects, where both the locative and subject marker (SM) inflect for the full range of locative noun class prefixes (classes 16, 17, and 18). The Chichewa inverted locative thus shows various properties typical of subjects in general (i.e. subject raising, subject extraction), and undergoes subject pro-drop, where the SM retains locative reference. These Chichewa constructions are, however, limited to cooccurrence with unaccusative verbs, leading Bresnan & Kanerva (1989) to suggest that locative inversion is restricted to constructions where the highest thematic role is *theme*.

Bresnan (1990) notes further that locative inversion in Chichewa and English are very similar, both being cases of 'unaccusativity'. She suggests that this similarity can be captured from the perspective of Lexical Mapping Theory (Bresnan & Kanerva 1989, Alsina & Mchombo 1990, Alsina 1992, 1993), where arguments are assigned intrinsic values depending on whether they exhibit restricted or unrestricted grammatical properties [+/-r], and whether they can have object properties or not [+/-o]. For example, Agents are typically classified as non-objects [-o] (i.e. they can only function

as subjects or as obliques (under passivization), but generally cannot function as objects of the verb). In contrast, Themes are generally classified as [-r] (i.e. they can function as objects that may become subjects, as in the case of unaccusative verbs or the passivization of transitive verbs). Locative inversion in both English and Chichewa occurs when *theme* is the highest thematic role (i.e. with unaccusative verbs, or with passivized transitives).[1]

From a comparison of Chichewa and English it appears that locative inversion, and presentational focus constructions more generally, are characterized by a uniform set of unaccusativity phenomena. However, an examination of other languages quickly demonstrates that this is not the case: Harford (1990) shows that locative inversion in Chishona is identical to that in Chichewa, except that in Chishona it is permitted so long as *agent* is not the highest thematic role. Harford suggests that languages may differ in their intrinsic marking of thematic roles, and that the *theme* must be left underspecified in Chishona. Furthermore, Demuth (1990) shows that presentational focus constructions in Sesotho cooccur with a larger class of verbs than that reported for Chishona. As this paper will show, Setswana shows a similar pattern, suggesting that the intrinsic marking of thematic roles in these two languages will have to be modified even further.

The paper proceeds as follows: In section 2 we present the basic Setswana locative inversion facts, discussing issues of subject-verb agreement, and providing evidence

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[1] The classification of arguments in causative constructions is somewhat more complex. Readers are referred to Alsina (1992, 1993) for a fuller treatment of these issues.

from subject raising and subject relatives that Setswana locatives can function as grammatical subjects. In section 3 we examine cases of locative subject pro-drop, showing that the class 17 subject marker *go-* subsequently functions as a semantically empty expletive. In section 4 we show that these presentational focus constructions occur with a wide range of verb types, being disallowed only when both *agent* and *theme* are present in the same construction (i.e. in transitive and ditransitive actives). We conclude in section 5 with a discussion of how such findings can be handled within a theory of partial information structures, providing a principled mechanism for understanding processes of historical change.

2.0 Setswana Locative Inversion Constructions

Setswana is a southern Bantu language spoken in Botswana and parts of northern South Africa. Data for this paper is drawn primarily from the Rolong dialect of Setswana, the mother tongue of the second author, and the basic dialect used in descriptive grammars (e.g. Cole 1955). Like Chichewa, Setswana appears to exhibit productive use of locative noun class prefixes 16 *fa-*, 17 *ko/kwa-* and 18 *mo-*.[2]   However, like closely related Sesotho, Setswana locatives are marked also with an invariant locative suffix *-ng,* and the subject marker (henceforth SM) takes the invariant class 17 formative *go-*. In other words, Setswana shows the rich locative nominal morphology of languages like Chichewa, but the restricted verbal 'agreement' morphology of languages like Sesotho. These phenomena, and their syntactic consequences, are discussed below.

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[2]   Denis Creissels (personal communication) argues from tonal evidence that these morphemes are not locative noun class prefixes, but rather demonstrative pronouns: As shown in the examples in (1), they exhibit high tone rather than the low tone of noun class prefixes.

2.1 Locative Noun Class Prefixes and Locative 'Agreement'

Nouns in Bantu languages are generally inflected with a noun class prefix, and the locative prefix is subsequently prefixed to this already inflected nominal form. Unlike closely related Sesotho, Setswana shows productive (though optional) use of the locative noun class prefixes 16, 17, and 18 (*fa-, kwa/ko/go-, mo-*). Nominal modifiers generally show agreement with the noun class of the nominal stem ((1) a-c), but can alternatively employ agreement with the locative itself, providing locative emphasis ((2) a-c) (from Cole 1955: 353).[3]

(1)   a.   **Fá-se-tlharé-ng sé-se-léelé**[4]

16-7-tree-LOC   7-7-tall

'By the tall tree'

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[3]   Glosses are as follows: APL = applicative, COP = copula, DM = demonstrative, FUT = future tense, INF = infinitival marker, LOC = locative, OM = object marker, PASS = passive, PAST/CONT = past continuous, PRF = perfect aspect, POSS = possessive marker, PREP = preposition, PRES = present tense, REL = relative marker, RL = verbal relative suffix, SM = subject marker, WH = wh-question word, 8 = gender/number class #8, 15 = infinitive class #15, 1s = 1st person singular, ´ = high tone, + = mid tone, low tone = unmarked.

[4]   Adjectives in Bantu languages are traditionally referred to as 'relative' constructions (e.g., see Cole 1955). This is more clearly seen in the alternative reading for examples like (1a) - 'by the tree (which is) tall'. In effect, the first of the agreement markers on the adjective functions as a copula.

b. **Kó-mo-tse-ng ó-le**

17-3-village-LOC 3DM

'To yonder village'

c. **Mó-le-fátshé-ng lé-le-talá**

18-5-country-LOC   5-5-entire

'In the green world'

(2)   a.   **Fá-se-tlharé-ng gó-go-léelé**

16-7-tree-LOC   17-17-tall

'By the tree it is tall'

b.   **Kó-mo-tse-ng kwá**

17-3-village   17DM

'At the village yonder'

c.   **Mó-le-fátshé-ng gó-go-talá**

18-5-country-LOC   17-17-entire

'In the world it is green'

Note, however, that agreement on locative modifiers is only realized with class 17: Agreement with class 16 or class 18 is ungrammatical ((2) a' & c').

(2)   a'.   *__Fá-se-tlharé-ng fá-fa-léelé__

16-7-tree   16-16-tall

'By the tree it is tall

c'.   ***Mó-le-fátshé-ng   mó-tlhe**

18-5-country   18-all

'In the world it is green'

Thus, while Setswana exhibits productive use of all three locative prefixes, only class 17 is productive in locative nominal agreement. We will see in the following section that class 17 is also the only class to show locative-verb agreement.

2.2 Locative-Verb 'Agreement'

Grammatical subjects in Bantu languages generally agree with the verb through the use of a subject-verb agreement morpheme (SM). Along with much of the recent syntax literature, we assume that the subject raises from VP internal position to the (Spec-IP) position in front of the verb, thereby triggering subject-verb agreement, as in (3).

(3)   a.   **Ba-símané bá-éme   fá-se-tlharé-ng**

2-boys   2SM-stand/PRF 16-7-tree-LOC

'The boys are standing by the trees'

b.   **Roná re-tla-ya   kó-Maúng maríga**

1pPN 1pSM-FUT-go 17-Maung winter

'We shall go to Maung in winter'

c.   **Di-kgomó dí-fúla   mó-le-fátshé-ng**

10-cattle   10SM-graze 18-5-country-LOC

'The cattle are grazing in the country'

As in Chichewa and other Bantu languages, Setswana allows locatives to occur in both post-verbal position (3) and in pre-verbal, or 'inverted' position (4). When the locative NP is in pre-verbal (subject) position it triggers agreement on the verb and the logical subject is left behind (in Spec-VP - see Demuth & Harford 1996 for discussion). The logical subject of these constructions is presentationally focused.

(4)   a.   **Fá-se-tlharé-ng gó-émé ba-símané**

16-7-tree-LOC   17SM-stand/PRF 2-boys

'By the tree stand the boys'

b.   **Kó-Maúng gó-tlá-ya   roná maríga**

17-Maung   17SM-FUT-go 1pDM winter

'To Maung we shall go in winter'

c.   **Mó-le-fátshé-ng gó-fúla di-kgomo**

18-5-country   17SM-graze 10-cattle

'In the country are grazing the cattle'

As in the case of locative nominal agreement (2), the 'subject agreement' marker, or SM, is always class 17. One might wonder if perhaps the examples in (4) are not simply topicalized locatives, as suggested for Sesotho (Demuth 1990). However, if the locative is topicalized, subject agreement remains with the logical subject of the sentence (5a) and no presentational focus results. Furthermore; the use locative class 17 SM *go-* in topicalized constructions is ungrammatical (5b).

(5a)   **Mó-le-fátshé-ng di-kgomó dí-á-fula**

        18-5-country   10-cattle   10SM-PRES-graze

        'In the country the cattle are grazing '

(5b)   ***Mó-le-fátshé-ng di-kgomó gó-á-fula**

        18-5-country   10-cattle   17SM-PRES-graze

        'In the country the cattle are grazing '

It would appear, then, that the class 17 SM *go-* functions as a general locative agreement marker, with the inverted locatives in (4) functioning as grammatical subjects. However, other grammatical tests are necessary to verify the subject status of inverted locatives. We turn now to a consideration of subject raising and subject extraction, showing that the inverted locative functions as a grammatical subject, just as Bresnan & Kanerva (1989) (henceforth B&K) argue for Chichewa, and as Machobane (1995) argues for Sesotho.

2.3 Subject Raising

Although subject raising constructions are limited crosslinguistically, Setswana has verbs such as *go-bonahala* 'to seem' and *go-lebeletswe* 'to be expected' that allow subject raising, as shown in (6).[5]

(6)   a.   **Ba-sádi$_i$ bá-bónágala** t$_i$ **go-tsófála ká bonako**

2-women 2SM-seem   15SM-age PREP fast

'Women seem to age fast'

b.   **Ba-sádi$_i$ bá-lébéléts-w-é**   t$_i$ **go-bóa**

2-women 2SM-expect-PASS-PRF 15SM-return

'The women are expected to return'

In these examples the subject of the matrix clause has been raised from subject position of the lower clause, as indicated by the coindexed trace. That these verbs exhibit true subject raising (as opposed to the raising any NP) is shown by the ungrammaticality of (6c).

(6)   c.   ***Ba-sadi ba-lebelets-w-e   ba-nna$_i$ go-bapadisa** t$_i$

2-women 2SM-expect-PASS-PRF 2-men   15SM-tease

'The women are expected to be teased by the men'

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5   Note that the infinitival class 15 SM is morphologically similar to the locative class 17 SM. There is, however, a tonal distinction, the former exhibiting low tone, the latter exhibiting high tone.

If these verbs also permit the raising of locatives, this would provide evidence that locatives can function as grammatical subjects. The examples in (7) indicate that this is the case.

(7) a. **Kwá-noké-ng$_i$ gó-bónágala** t$_i$ **go-thíba**

        17-9river-LOC   17SM-seem   15SM-cloudy

        'At the river it seems to be cloudy'

    b. **Kwá-Gáúte-ng$_i$ gó-lébéléts-w-é**   t$_i$ **go-na**

        17-G.-LOC   17SM-expect-PASS-PRF 15SM-rain

        'In Johannesburg is expected to be rainy'

As subject raising is, by definition, limited to subjects, it would appear that inverted locatives in Setswana can function as grammatical subjects.

Further support for the subject status of Setswana inverted locatives comes from the subject relative constructions discussed below.

2.4 Subject Relatives

Relative clauses in Setswana employ a relative complementizer (REL) that agrees in noun class with the head noun, and an invariant relative marker *-ng* suffixes to the embedded verb. This is illustrated in the subject relative in (8a), the object relative in (8b), and the oblique relatives in (8c,d). When the head noun is a locative, the relative

complementizer can agree with either the locative prefix (8c), or the inherent class of the noun itself (8d).

(8) a. **Ba-símané bá bá-éme-ng   fá-se-tlharé-ng**

2-boys 2REL 2SM-stand/PRF-RL 16-7-tree-LOC

'The boys who are standing by the trees'

b. **Di-buka tsé   ba-simané bá-di-bálá-ng**

10-books 10REL 2-boys   2SM-10OM-read-RL

'The books that the boys are reading (them)'

c. **Fá-se-tlharé-ng fá   ba-símané bá-éme-ng téng**

16-7-tree-LOC   16REL 2-boys   2SM-stand/PRF-REL

there

'By the trees where the boys are standing (there)'

d. **Fá-se-tlharé-ng sé   ba-símané bá-éme-ng téng**

16-7-tree-LOC   7REL 2-boys   2SM-stand/PRF-REL

there

'By the trees where the boys are standing (there)'

Note that a resumptive pronoun is required with object and oblique relatives. In the case of the locative (8c,d), the resumptive locative *teng* 't/here' is optional but highly preferred. The presence or absence of the resumptive pronoun therefore provides a useful diagnostic for determining the grammatical function of the locative head noun.

Now consider the locative relatives in (9), where the locative appears to be functioning as an extracted subject.

(9)   a.   **Fá-se-tlharé-ng fá/sé   gó-émé-ng   ba-simané**

16-7-tree-LOC   16/7REL 17SM-stand-RL 2-boys

'By the tree where stand the boys'

b.   **Kó-se-kólo-ng kó/sé   gó-yá-ng   roná maríga**

17-7-school-LOC 17/7REL 17SM-FUT-go-LOC 1pDM winter

'To school where we go in winter'

c.   **Mó-le-fátshé-ng mó/lé   gó-fúlá-ng   di-kgomó**

18-5-country   18/5REL 17SM-graze-LOC 10-cattle

'In the country are grazing the cattle'

We showed in (8) that extracted obliques function like extracted objects in that both take a resumptive pronoun. The resumptive locative *teng* is permitted in (9), but the preferred structure is without it. Thus, it would appear that the locatives in (9) are functioning as true subjects (where no resumptive pronoun is required), and not as extracted obliques. Again, agreement on the relative marker can be with either the locative or the inherent class of the noun itself.

In sum, the evidence presented above indicates that inverted locatives in Setswana can function as grammatical subjects. In (4) and (5) we showed that inverted locatives use

class 17 for subject-verb agreement, and that these constructions are preferred to fronted, or topicalized locatives, even though the latter are 'grammatical'. In (6) we showed that inverted locatives can occur in subject raising constructions. Finally, in (9) we showed that inverted locatives can function as subjects of relative clauses. Setswana inverted locatives therefore appear to function syntactically like those of Chichewa (B&K). Setswana differs from Chichewa, however, in that no locative reference remains when the locative subject is dropped, as is possible in null-subject languages (see Machobane 1995 for discussion of similar facts in Sesotho). We turn to a discussion of this issue in the following section.

3.0 Presentational Focus and Expletive *go-*

In section 2 we saw that inverted locatives can function as grammatical subjects, and that they agree with the verb using the class 17 SM *go-*. As Setswana is a null subject language, we expect *go-* to have locative reference even when the locative subject is dropped, as is the case in Chichewa (B&K). Interestingly, however, when the Setswana locative subject is dropped, *no locative reading remains*. Thus, the sentences in (4) (= (10)) have no locative interpretation when the locative is dropped in (11): Only a 'presentational focus' reading persists.[6]

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[6] There is no adequate translation of these sentences into English, though the glosses given provide a rough 'presentational focus' equivalent, somewhat like that of English locative inversion constructions like 'Into the room came a man'. Focus is on the postverbal NP (the logical subject), but it is presentationally focused rather than contrastively focused. An alternative gloss for sentences such as (10a) would be 'It is the boys (who are) standing by the tree', but this

(10)   a.   **Fá-se-tlharé-ng gó-émé   ba-símané**

16-7-tree-LOC   17SM-stand/PRF 2-boys

'By the tree stand the boys'

b.   **Kó-Maúng gó-tlá-ya   roná maríga**

17-Maung   17SM-FUT-go 1pDM winter

'To Maung we shall go in winter'

c.   **Mó-le-fátshé-ng gó-fúla   di-kgomó**

18-5-country   17SM-graze 10-cattle

'In the country are grazing the cattle'

(11)   a.   **Gó-émé   ba-símané**

17SM-stand/PRF 2-boys

'It's the boys that stood up'

b.   **Gó-tlá-ya   roná maríga**

17SM-FUT-go 1pDM winter

'It's we who shall go in winter'

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provides the English-speaker with a contrastive focus reading which in Setswana is achieved with a cleft/relative construction.

c.   **Gó-fúla   di-kgomó**

17SM-graze 10-cattle

'It's cattle that are grazing'

The Setswana class 17 SM appears to fill two grammatical functions, one as a grammatical agreement marker with locative subjects, and the other as a dummy expletive subject. What is not entirely clear, however, is how and why the class 17 SM looses its locative agreement 'features' when the locative NP is not present. To address this issue we turn to a discussion of the grammatical status of the SM.

3.1 The Grammatical Status of the SM

Bresnan & Mchombo (1987) argue that the subject marker in Chichewa is functionally ambiguous between a grammatical agreement marker and an incorporated pronominal. They suggest that when the lexical subject is present, the subject marker functions as a grammatical agreement marker. On the other hand, when pro-drop occurs and no lexical subject is present, they suggest that the subject marker is an incorporated pronominal and assumes the grammatical role of subject, with the complete phi-feature specification (person, number, gender features) of the lexical subject itself. This appears to be an adequate representation of the Chichewa facts, where locative anaphoric reference remains when the locative subject has been dropped.

However, treating the SM as ambiguous between an agreement marker and an incorporated pronominal is problematic in the case of Setswana (and Sesotho (Demuth 1990, Machobane 1995)) if no locative features remain when the locative subject is dropped. Demuth & Johnson (1989), drawing on independent evidence from Setawana

- a northern dialect of Setswana, argue that all SMs function consistently as incorporated pronominals, and that lexical subjects are actually topics.[7] If locative SMs robustly carry the phi-features of their lexical heads, as in Chichewa, these features will remain when the locative is dropped. However, it appears that in languages like Sesotho and Setswana, where locative SMs are only available in the invariant form of class 17, locative features are only active in the presence of the locative subject itself. In other words, the class 17 SM serves only as a conduit for transmitting locative features, and is presumably necessary for the wellformedness and interpretation of the expression. We suggest that languages with two or more locative SMs will retain locative reference, as locative features will still be 'productive'. However, when only one locative SM remains, semantic as well as morphological contrasts are leveled, and the form is available for reinterpretation as a dummy subject - syntactically required, but void of semantic phi-features.

In this section we have shown that the Setswana class 17 SM *go-* functions as an expletive when no lexical locative subject referent is present. We suggest that this is made possible due to processes of morphological leveling which have brought about a lack of active locative phi-features in this form. The resulting constructions are presentational focus constructions - much like their locative inversion counterparts, but with no locative reference. In the next section we explore the possibility that the

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[7] The SM can also be thought of as AGR in other syntactic frameworks. See Demuth (1989, 1990), Demuth & Gruber (1995), and Demuth & Harford (1996) for analyses along these lines, and for evidence of subjects as topics in Sesotho and more generally across Bantu languages.

expletive nature of Setswana locative SMs may effect the thematic representations (verb-argument structures) permitted in presentational focus constructions.

4.0   Presentational Focus and Thematic Representations

B&K note that locative inversion in Chichewa occurs only with unaccusative verbs and passivized transitives. Like presentational focus constructions in English, they suggest that locative inversion is restricted to unaccusative constructions. B&K develop this notion further by appealing to the thematic role hierarchy and a set of Lexical Mapping functions, suggesting that locative inversion is only allowed when the highest available thematic role is a *theme* (i.e. unaccusative actives, as well as transitive and ditransitive passives). The different classes of verbs and their thematic representations are listed in Table 1 below.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

Given that presentational focus seems to involve unaccusative constructions in languages as different as English and Chichewa, we might suppose that *theme* as the highest thematic role is universally required of such constructions. However, Harford (1990) notes that placing a restriction on *theme* being the highest thematic role is too strong to account for locative inversion in Chishona. Rather, Harford suggests that the lexical mapping relations in Chishona (or the intrinsic classification of thematic roles) must be adjusted to permit locative inversion whenever the highest thematic role is not an *agent*. Interestingly, Demuth (1990) shows that the lexical mapping constraints in Sesotho must be relaxed even further to allow presentational focus constructions in all cases except under the simultaneous occurrence of an *agent* and a *theme*. Thus, there

appears to be some language variation in the intrinsic classification of thematic roles. In the foregoing discussion we have seen that Setswana patterns like Chichewa in exhibiting a rich system of locative nominal morphology, but like Sesotho in having reduced productivity in terms of locative-verb agreement, using the class 17 SM as an expletive when the locative NP is dropped. Below we examine the behavior of Setswana presentational focus constructions with different verb classes.

The examples in (12), (13), and (14) show that, like Chichewa, Setswana presentational focus constructions can occur when *theme* is the highest thematic role. Note, however, that Setswana shows no definiteness effect with inverted subjects (e.g. in (12) and (14)).

Active Unaccusatives ((12b-d) come from Cole (1955: 436))

(12)   a.   **Gó-fithl-ílé   rré**

             17SM-arrive-PRF 1afather

             'There arrived father'

       b.   **Gó-ne   gó-ts-ilé   nná lé Mólefi**

             17SM-PST/CONT 17SM-come-PRF me   and Molefi

             'There had come myself and Molefi'

       c.   **Gó-tlá-sálá   wená**

             17SM-FUT-remain you

             'There will remain you'

d. .....**ga-ba gá-tswá mo-ɬ na**...

  17SM-then 17SM-emerge 1-man

  '... then there emerged an old man...'

Passive Transitives ((13a, c, d) come from Cole (1955: 452-53)).

(13) a. **Gó-tshw-érwé nkwe ká-se-lágá mó-se-kgwe-ng**

   17SM-catch-PASS/PRF 9leopard PREP-7-trap 18-7-forest-

               LOC

   'There has been caught a leopard with a trap in the forest'

  b. **Gó-bólá-ílwé di-phólogóló dí-lé di-ɬ tsi**

   17SM-kill-PRF/PASS 10-animals 10-COP 10-many

   'There have been killed many animals'

  c. **Gó-dír-wá-ng móno?**

   17SM-say-PASS-WH here

   'What is being done here?'

  d. **Gó-tlhab-ílwé pódi**

   17SM-slaughter-PRF/PASS 9goat

   'There has been slaughtered a goat'

Passive Ditransitive

(14)　a.　**Gó-róm-él-éts-w-é**　　　**ba-sádi+ nama (ké kgósi)**

　　　17SM-send-APL-PRF-PASS-M 2-women 9meat by 1-chief

　　　'There was sent some meat to the women by the chief'

　　b.　**(Kó-di-kgáísano-ng) gó-tábóg-étswé**　　　**kgósi**

　　　17-10-race-LOC　　　17SM-run-APL/PRF/PASS 9chief

　　　'(In the race) there has been run for the chief'

　　c.　**Gó-rék-étswé**　　　**ba-símane di-jo (ké ba-ɫ na)**

　　　17SM-buy-APL/PRF/PASS 2-boys　　8-food by 2-men

　　　'There was being bought food for the boys (by the men)'

　　d.　**Gó-kwál-élwa**　　　**Motséi lo-kwálo (ké mo-sádi)**

　　　17SM-write-APL/PASS 1Motsei 11-letter　　by 1-woman

　　　'There is being written a letter for Motsei (by the woman)'

The examples in (15) and (16) show that, like Chishona, Setswana presentational focus constructions can occur when *locative* is the highest thematic role:

Passivized Unaccusatives

(15)　a.　**Gó-fitlh-ilwe**

　　　17SM-arrive-PRF/PASS

　　　'There has been arrived'

a. **Gó-íwa   káe?**

17SM-go/PASS where

'Where are you/they going?'

Lit: 'There is being gone where'

b. **Gó-d-úwa   káe?**

17SM-come from-PASS where

'Where do you/they come from'

Lit: 'There is being come from where?'

d. **Gó-tlá-sál-wa**

17SM-FUT-remain-PASS

'There will be left behind'

Passivize Unergatives

(16) a. **Gó-á-leng-wa**

17SM-PRES-plough-PASS

'There is being ploughed'

b. **Gó-a-bín-wa**

17SM-PRES-sing-PASS

'There is being sung'

c. **Gó-á-rot-wa**

17SM-urinate-PASS

'There is being urinated'

d. **Gó-á-log-wa**

17SM-weave-PASS

'There is being woven'

Finally, like Sesotho, Setswana allows presentational focus constructions even when *agent* is the highest thematic role (17).

Unergatives

(17) a. **Gó-léma   ba-ĺna**

17SM-plough 2-men

'There are men ploughing'

b. **Gó-bíná ba-sádi**

17SM-sing 2-women

'There are women singing'

c. **Gó-róta   ba-ná**

17SM-urinate 2-children

'There are children urinating'

    d.   **Gó-lóg-a   ba-ɬ́ na**

          17SM-weave 2-men

          'There are men weaving'

The only restriction in Setswana, as with Sesotho, appears to be in cases where both *agent* and *theme* are present. This is shown by the ungrammaticality of the active transitives in (18) below, and this generalizes to active ditransitives as well.

Active Transitives

(18)   a.   ***Gó-ét-ela   ba-símané kokó**

          17SM-visit-APL 2-boys   1a-grandmother

          'There are boys visiting the grandmother'

    b.   ***Gó-kwál-éla   kokó   lo-kwálo**

          17SM-write-APL 1agrandmother 5-letter

          'There is writing the grandmother a letter'

Table 2. provides a summary of the restrictions on presentational focus constructions in the different Bantu languages considered here.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

Locative inversion in Chichewa is restricted to the verb class where *theme* is the highest thematic role. In contrast, Chishona locative inversion constructions include all of those where *agent* is not the highest thematic role. Finally, Setswana patterns like Sesotho,

where presentational focus is not possible if both *agent* and *theme* are present. This would seem to be a restriction not on what can be the highest thematic role, but rather a restriction on having two thematic roles compete for Focus position (i.e. the position following the verb). In other words, even though subject inversion is generally permitted (cf. Machobane 1987, Demuth & Harford 1996), it appears to be disallowed in the event that a *theme* is already present in that position.

In this section we showed that Setswana allows presentational focus constructions to occur under a much wider range of thematic conditions than either Chichewa or Chishona. We turn now to a discussion of the implications of these findings in terms of semantic features within a theory of partial information structures.

5.0 Semantic Features and Partial Information Structures

One of the central goals of linguistic theory is to identify the set of grammatical constraints needed to account for universals in linguistic structure. One of the challenges of this enterprise is to understand variation amongst languages. We suggest that the variation found in presentational focus constructions in different Bantu languages can be best understood by appealing to 'partial information structures' as formulated within Lexical Functional Grammar (LFG) (Bresnan 1982, Bresnan & Mchombo 1987, Bresnan & Kanerva 1989). By 'partial information structures' we refer to different 'types' of information, including constituent structure (syntax) and functional structure (function-argument structure, including phi-features of arguments), and the lexical mappings between them. Given that each type of information can vary independently, we suggest that the reorganization of one or more of these sources of information may result in certain types of diachronic change. We now outline how the

variation found in Bantu presentational focus constructions with respect to 1) the thematic structures permitted and 2) the possibility of expletive readings might be handled within such a framework.

We have shown above that languages which inflect the SM for different locative classes maintain locative reference under null-subject conditions (i.e. locative phi-features are 'active'), while those languages with one invariant locative SM do not. That is, even though Kichaga has no productive locative prefixes on locative subjects, locative reference is maintained when the locative subject is dropped due to the fact that locative phi-features are still active on the SM. This means that in Chichewa, Chishona and Kichaga, where there are at least two different locative SMs, locative reference can be maintained when locative subjects are dropped. In Sesotho and Setswana, however, with only the class 17 SM, an expletive reading results. We interpret this to mean that the SM in Sesotho and Setswana carries no locative phi-features itself. It would appear that, for locative phi-features to be 'active', at least a two-way locative SM contrast is required. The morphological and discourse function characteristics of presentational focus constructions are summarized in Table 3.

[Insert Table 3 about here]

As Table 3 illustrates, the presence or absence of locative morphology on locative NPs themselves is irrelevant to the ability of the SM to maintain locative reference under null-subject conditions. Rather, the critical factor is the morphological productiveness of the SM, where a two-way contrast is necessary for a locative reading to be maintained under pro-drop. Interestingly, however, Chishona appears to be an 'exception' to this rule:

Chishona has a three-way contrast with locative SMs and, as predicted, can maintain locative reference, but an expletive reading is also possible under pro-drop with the class 17 SM (Perez 1983). Chishona therefore appears to have two systems being maintained simultaneously: The fully morphologized system behaves like that of Chichewa, with locative reference maintained, while the reduced system functions like that of Setswana and Sesotho, where an expletive reading results. That is, the class 17 SM in Chishona has a dual function, where the SM marks locative phi-features, but an expletive reading is also possible. How can this be explained?

Table 3. shows that a reduction in the number of locative phi-feature contrasts made by the SM has an effect on its discourse role (or functional structure), that is, whether it can function as an expletive or not. Interestingly, this seems to correlate with the type of thematic structures permitted in presentational focus constructions, shown in Table 2: In both Chichewa and Kichaga presentational focus constructions are restricted to those where *theme* is the highest thematic role, therefore *theme* must have the intrinsic role [-r] and *agent* the intrinsic role [-o]. In both Sesotho and Setswana, however, presentational focus is allowed so long as both *agent* and *theme* are not simultaneously present; i.e. both must be left intrinsically underspecified. It would therefore appear that the cooccurrence of expletive constructions with the possibility of a greater number of verb types permitted with presentational focus constructions is purely accidental, and that these two can covary independently. Chishona is such a case: In Chishona presentational focus is restricted to constructions where *agent* is NOT the highest thematic role. The intrinsic classification of thematic roles for Chishona is therefore underspecified for *theme* and [-o] for *agent* (Harford 1990). This is summarized in Table 4.

[Insert Table 4 about here]

Table 4. outlines aspects of presentational focus constructions in terms of partial information structures, showing how different types of information can vary independently, giving rise to languages with only partially varying structures. Partial information theory therefore provides a means for examining these subsets of grammatical phenomena, as well as their interactions. We suggest that such an approach will prove particularly fruitful in understanding subtle processes of diachronic change, especially as evidenced in closely related languages. In languages like Chichewa, locative SMs are fully specified for locative features, resulting in locative reference even when locative subjects are dropped. But locative subjects are only permitted with unaccusative verbs: This is due to the fact that *theme* is classified as [-r], and therefore able to become the subject only when it is the highest thematic role. In contrast, we have shown that in languages like Setswana, which have a fully range of locative noun class prefixes, there is only one locative SM. Locative 'agreement' features are not active, and no locative reading is retained with null subjects. In addition, it appears that thematic roles in Setswana are largely underspecified, thereby permitting locative inversion with a wide range of verbs, the only restriction being on active transitives and ditransitives - that is, when both *agent* and *theme* are present. If the classification of thematic roles and the morphological productivity of the SM truly covary, we would predict the existence of languages intermediate between Chichewa and Setswana, and this is the case: Languages like Chishona, with different feature realizations of the SM, function alternatively like either Chichewa or Setswana in

permitting 'optional' locative or expletive readings under pro-drop conditions. Interestingly, locative inversion constructions can occur with both active and passive unaccusatives, a sign that *theme* must be intrinsically underspecified for Chishona.

In sum, we have explored the syntactic, morphological, and thematic characteristics of Setswana presentational focus constructions, and have shown how these differ from those of other Bantu languages. In so doing, we demonstrate how language variation can be handled within a theory of partial information structures, and how this approach is helpful for understanding the subtle effects of language variation and diachronic change. Although the locative/expletive facts can be understood as a result of morphological loss, the conditions underlying language particular thematic restrictions are unclear. Further research will be needed to determine if such phenomena are amenable to the notion of 'grammatical constraints', and if they can be handled from an optimality-theoretic perspective (e.g. Prince & Smolensky 1993, McCarthy & Prince 1993, Grimshaw 1993, Grimshaw & Samek-Lodovici 1995, Legendre, Wilson, Smolensky, Homer & Raymond 1995).

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Verb Type	Active	Passive
Unergatives	< ag loc >	< (ag) loc >
Unaccusatives	< th loc >	< (th) loc >
Transitives	< ag th loc >	< (ag) th loc >
Ditransitives	< ag th pt loc >	< (ag) th pt loc >

Table 1. Verb Classes and Thematic Representations

Verb Type		Chichewa	Chishona	Sesotho	Setswana
unergative	active	*	*	OK	OK
	passive	*	OK	OK	OK
unaccusative	active	OK	OK	OK	OK
	passive	*	OK	OK	OK
transitive	active	*	*	*	*
	passive	OK	OK	OK	OK
ditransitive	active	*	*	*	*
	passive	*	OK	OK	OK
(agent phrases optional)		*	OK	OK	(OK)

Table 2. Verb Classes Permitted with Presentation Focus Constructions

	Morphology		*Discourse*
Function			
Language	Locative	SM	SM+ pro-drop
Chichewa	16,17,18	16,17,18	locative
Kichaga	-	17,18	locative
Chishona	16,17,18	16,17, 18	locative
	-	17	expletive
Setswana	16,17,18	17	expletive
Sesotho	-	17	expletive

Table 3. Morphological & Discourse Characteristics of

Presentational Focus Constructions

Constituent Structure   **Thematic Structure**

(+ = full inflection, - = reduced inflection)

Language	Locative Morphology	'Agreement' Morphology	Grammatical Function of SM	Highest Thematic Role	Intrinsic Classification
Chishona	+	+	loc. features	theme	th=[-r], ag=[-o]
Kichaga	-	+	loc. features	theme	th=[-r], ag=[-o]
Chishona	+	+/-	loc. features /expletive	-agent	th=[ ], ag=[-o]
Setswana	+	-	expletive	*(agent + theme)	th=[ ], ag=[ ]
Sesotho	-	-	expletive	*(agent + theme)	th=[ ], ag=[ ]

Table 4. Partial Information Structures