

Reflexivity and Reciprocity in Competition in Logoori

John Gluckman, University of Kansas

We discuss the relationship between reflexivity and reciprocity in Logoori (Luhya, Bantu, JE41). We make two empirical observations: i) The so-called reflexive morpheme *i-* is compatible with both reflexive and reciprocal situations, suggesting that it is an instance of Murray’s (2008) *underspecified anaphor*; ii) The reciprocal affix *-an* distributes like a *event-quantifier*, suggesting that it expresses the sub-component of reciprocal meaning involving event plurality (as proposed in Gluckman 2018). Treating the reciprocal and reflexive as categorially distinct directly accounts for instances of co-occurrence of *i-* and *-an*. However, it raises the issue of why *-an* is ever used to express reciprocity (since *i-* can do the job). We propose a competition-based account of *i-* vs. *-an*. Our study sheds new light on the categories of reflexivity and reciprocity in Bantu languages and beyond, and strategies that languages adopt to differentiate between the two overlapping meanings. **Reflexives.** Like all Narrow Bantu languages, reflexives in Logoori are marked in a preverbal slot. In Logoori, reflexives and object markers are in complementary distribution (cf Marlo 2015).

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| (1) <i>Sira a-mu-yag-i</i>
1Sira 1SM-1OM-scratch-FV
‘Sira scratched him/her.’ | (2) <i>Sira y-i-yag-i</i>
1Sira 1SM-REFL-scratch-FV
‘Sira scratched himself.’ |
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Reflexives in Logoori bear typical syntactic properties for anaphoric elements in that they must be locally bound (i.e., Condition A), and the antecedent must be a subject. Such facts are consistent with all previous studies of Bantu reflexives, e.g. Mchombo (1993). More interestingly, reciprocal marked verbs are felicitous in what Murray (2008) calls “mixed scenarios,” i.e., situations in which some participants are acting reflexively, while others are acting reciprocally.

- (3) Sira scratched his own bug-bites while Imali scratched Kageha’s and Kageha scratched Imali’s.
- avaana va-i-yag-i*
2child 2SM-REFL-scratch-FV
‘The children scratched themselves/each other.’

This suggests that *i-* is what Murray (2008) calls an “underspecified” anaphor: *i-* expresses a relation in a set of individuals, but it does not specify whether the relation is reflexive or reciprocal — or a mixture.

Reciprocals As reported in Gluckman (2018), the marker *-an* has two functions in Logoori. In addition to its reciprocal use in (4), it is also used to indicate (cumulative) event-plurality with intransitive verbs as in (5).

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| (4) <i>avaana va-yag-an-i</i>
2child 2SM-scratch-REC-FV
‘The children scratched each other.’ | (5) <i>Sira y-ashiamul-an-i</i>
1Sira 1SM-sneeze-REC-FV
‘Sira sneezed repeatedly.’ |
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Such reciprocal-iterative polysemy is robustly attested across languages (Nedjalkov, 2007). To explain this pattern, Gluckman (2018) argues that in Logoori *-an* in (4) only expresses a *part* of reciprocal meaning, specifically, the part involving event plurality and intransitivity. Reciprocal situations involve (cumulative) event-plurality in that in (4), there are multiple events of scratching (Schein, 1993)). Reciprocal situations are often classified as intransitive because they involve some level of argument/valency reduction (Kemmer, 1993). Thus, Gluckman (2018) observes that it’s

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possible to attribute to *-an* a uniform meaning: it's an event-quantifier for intransitive predicates. In (4), additional semantic resources (e.g., whatever accounts for the meaning attributed to relational plurals as in Langendoen 1978) compose with *-an* to produce a reciprocal meaning.

We adopt here this general analysis, noting that an immediate consequence of treating *i-* and *-an* as categorially distinct is that we can easily explain cases of *co-occurrence* of the reflexive and reciprocal markers (6) (as observed in other Bantu language e.g. Safir and Sikuku 2018 a.o.).

- (6) *va-i-yag(-an)-i*
2SM-REFL-scratch(-REC)-FV
'They scratched themselves/each other (a lot).'

As expected, with *-an*, (6) involves (cumulative) event plurality.

Choosing between *i-* and *-an*. However, if reflexive marked verbs can also express reciprocal situations, and *-an* doesn't in fact express reciprocity at all, why would speakers ever use *-an* to express reciprocity? Why don't speakers simply use the underspecified anaphor (as in Cheyenne, Romance, etc). We suggest that utterances with *-an* and utterances with *i-* are in "competition." When the reciprocal marker is used, it leads to the calculation of an implicature: there is a relation in some set of individuals, but since the speaker didn't use the reflexive marker, we assume that the relation does not include the reflexive relation. As evidence, we observe the following (in)felicitous responses to (3) and (4), in which a responder attempts to cancel the implicature.

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| (7) [Responding to (3)]

<i>Indiyo, va-yag-an-i</i>
Yes, 2SM-scratch-REC-FV

'Yes, they scratched each other.' | (8) [Responding to (4)]

<i>Indiyo, ya-i-yag-i</i>
Yes, 2SM-REFL-scratch-FV

'Yes, they scratched themselves/each other.' |
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This pattern is precisely as we expect if utterances with *-an* and *i-* are in competition, and *-an* is "weaker" than *i-* (cf. *some* vs. *every*). Note that our analysis suggests that *i-* isn't entirely underspecified: it always presupposes that *at least one* individual stands in a reflexive relation.

Reciprocity vs. Reflexivity. Our study makes two important contributions. First, we shed new light on a fairly well-documented area: anaphoricity in Bantu. Indeed, a small sample of (distantly) related Bantu languages suggests that reflexive markers are *generally* underspecified in Bantu languages: the mixed-reading is available in all languages we've looked at. Second, our study highlights one strategy a language with an underspecified anaphor may use to solve the problem of expressing *just* reciprocity: competition between utterances with overlapping meanings governs the morphological choice.

Selected References

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