

A place for position: insights into selective opacity from Swahili relatives
Tom Meadows (QMUL)

§1. Overview. This paper provides novel data from Swahili (Bantu) consultants showing that relativisation varies in whether it can cross a finite clause boundary. This connects to several unnoticed structural asymmetries at the top of relative clauses. Such facts are argued to support an irreducible role for structural positions in our theories of how clause structure constrains movement dependencies. The structurally higher the landing site, the more potentially unbounded the movement.

§2. Theoretical background. A clause that allows one type of movement out of it, but forbids this of another movement type, is *selectively opaque* for movement. English finite complements are, for example, transparent to *wh*-movement but block raising. Approaches to selective opacity typically implement two intuitions at once: **A. THE CONTENT INTUITION:** *blocking of movement depends on the featural content motivating the dependency* **B. THE POSITION INTUITION:** *blocking movement depends on the structural relationship between the base position and landing sites*. In other words: different kinds of movement (e.g. A vs \bar{A}) involve distinct landing sites. Halpert (2019) has attempted to trivialise the role of position, reducing it to the distribution of movement-triggering features (and potential interveners) in the clausal spine. This strategy does not work for selective opacity in Swahili RCs, meaning that landing sites do play a distinct role in our theory of locality (cf. Keine 2018).

§3. Selective opacity to relativisation. Using the diagnostics in (1), we can distinguish two types of complement clause. I assume these clauses differ in structural richness, as schematized in (2).

	Diagnostic	Full Finite	Infinitive	
(1)	COMP: <i>kwamba/kuwa</i>	✓	✗	(2) a. Full Finite [CP [TP [VoiceP ...]]]
	Subject marking	✓	✗	
	Tense marking	✓	✗	b. Infinitive [VoiceP ...]
	Tense independence	✓	✗	

A well-known distinction among Swahili relative clauses (RC) is whether the relative complementiser *amba* is present or not (e.g. Ashton 1944; Barrett-Keach 1980; Ngonyani 2001). Recent work (e.g. Scott 2021) provides evidence for movement in Swahili RCs, but doesn't address the *amba*(-less) distinction in detail or examine the properties of cross-clausal relativisation. The data in (3) show that *amba*-less RCs allow extraction out of infinitives but not full finite complements. It can be shown that the base position of an *amba* RC can be contained in either complement type. Full finite clauses in Swahili are thus selectively opaque to relativisation.

- (3) a. *Ni-li-nunua kisu_i [a-li-cho-amini Lizzie [kwamba Jini a-li-ki-vunja t_i]]
 1SG-PST-buy knife 1-PST-7REL-believe Lizzie COMP Jini 1-PST-7-break
 'I bought the knife Lizzie believed Jini broke.' [amba-less RC [Full Finite ... t_i ...]] ✗
- b. Agnes ha-hitaji kiti_i [ni-li-cho-taka mimi [ku-ki-tengeneza t_i]]
 1Agnes 1.NEG-need 7chair 1SG-PST-7.REL-want 1SG INF-7-repair
 'Agnes doesn't need the chair that I wanted to repair.' [amba-less RC [Infinitive ... t_i ...]] ✓

§4. Connected asymmetries: Only RCs without *amba* display obligatory subject inversion, which has been interpreted as the result of V-to-C movement (e.g. Demuth & Harford 1999). There are however unnoticed scope differences between post-verbal subjects and their pre-verbal counterparts with respect to e.g. negation (4). I take this as evidence of unrelativised DPs being forced to stay

low in *amba*-less RCs, below negation and unable occupy SpecTP. Notice inverted DPs still control subject marking, suggesting that SM control is not tightly connected to occupying SpecTP.

- (4) a. Tiketi hizi amba-zo watu wote ha-wa-nunui ni ghali sana
 10ticket 10these COMP-10REL 2person 2all NEG-2-buy COP expensive very
 ‘These tickets that everybody doesn’t buy are very expensive.’ (not >> all, all >> not)
- b. Tiketi hizi wa-si-zo-nunua watu wote ni ghali sana
 10ticket 10these 2-NEG-10REL-buy 2person 2all COP expensive very
 ‘These tickets that not everybody buys are very expensive.’ (not >> all, *all >> not)

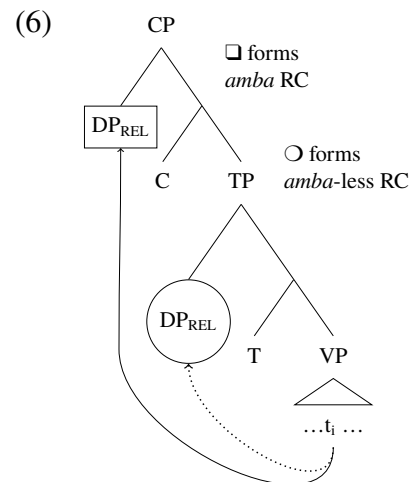
In addition to their restricted word order, neither raising predicates nor existential constructions (ECs) can form an *amba*-less RC, as shown in (5). Such restrictions can be shown not to hold of *amba* RCs. Both raising and ECs involve movement to SpecTP - at least on analyses of ECs like Freeze (1992) with covert locative nominals. Again, it seems *amba*-less RCs’ SpecTP is unavailable.

- (5) a. *Jini a-li-dondosha bakuli_i [*pro* ku-li-lo-kuwa na maziwa t_i]
 Jini 1-PST-drop 5bowl there LOC.AGR-PST-5.REL-AUX P 6milk
 ‘Jini dropped the bowl there was milk in.’ *amba*-less relativisation in EC ✗
- b. *Wewe_i ndi-ye [wa-na-ye-onekana watu wale ku-penda t_i]
 2.SG COP.FOC-1.REL 2-PRS-1.REL-seem 2person 2that INF-like
 ‘It’s you that those people seem to like.’ *amba*-less relativisation in raising predicate ✗

Despite their differences, RCs with/without *amba* can both be shown to display the hallmarks of movement, relativise the same range of arguments/adjuncts (agents vs. themes, definites vs. indefinites etc), require the relative marker and form restrictive relatives. It’s therefore doubtful that the difference in RCs amounts to merely probing for different (combinations of) features in nominals.

§4. Analysis: **i)** RCs with *amba* involve movement to a higher position than in *amba*-less RCs, as schematized in (6). **ii)** Relativisation to the lower landing site prevents other DPs from being merged there. This blocks raising and existential formation, and forces some DPs to remain low in the clause, to be linearised post-verbally. **iii)** Relativisation to the lower landing site blocks projection of the left periphery, leading amongst other things to the absence of the complementiser *amba*.

iv) Movement is subject to the following constraints: **A.** SUBJACENCY: *movement crossing C must leave a copy in SpecCP* **B.** THE WILLIAMS CYCLE: *The landing site of movement from a lower to a higher clause must be the same or higher in the functional sequence as the base position (e.g. CP → TP ✗, CP → CP ✓)*. The work of these constraints will be implemented along similar lines to e.g. Williams (2003, 2011), Keine (2020). **v)** By the complement clause structures in (2) and SUBJACENCY, only extraction from full finite clauses requires moving through SpecCP. The next step from SpecCP can only be a higher SpecCP by the WILLIAMS CYCLE. This prevents the formation of *amba*-less relatives.



Selected references E. Ashton 1944. *Swahili Grammar*; C. Keach. 1980. *The syntax and interpretation of the relative clause structure in Swahili*; K. Demuth & C. Harford 1999. Verb raising and subject inversion in Bantu relatives. *JALL*; C. Halpert. 2019. Raising, unphased. *LI* S. Keine. 2018. Case vs.

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