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The EK construction in Xhosa: A cognitive account

Developed within the frame of cognitive linguistics, this paper argues that the entire syntactic and semantic profile of the EK gram can be unified and viewed as coherent by modeling it as a map of different but related features. This understanding gives access both to the extreme variability of the EK form and to its internal cohesion, without equating this construction with one taxonomical category or postulating a set of invariant properties. The synchronic evidence demonstrates that the traits such as intransitivity, non-agentivity, resultativity/stativity, and modality are prototypical. Other traits, e.g. (semi-)transitivity, (semi-)agentivity, spontaneity, and impetus are less prototypical or non-prototypical. The former class is psychologically associated with the EK gram, while the latter class does not enter into speakers' representation of this form. The true cohesion of the EK gram is, however, recoverable only diachronically. The historical center of the map of the EK form corresponds to an in-/de-transitive, agentless, resultative gram. This input construction has developed all the other properties visualized as components of the map (e.g. functions that are more transitive and more agentive, as well as stative and modal senses) by following a set of crosslinguistically common evolutionary tendencies or grammaticalization paths.

Key words: Xhosa; Bantu; EK extension; cognitive linguistics; morpho-syntax; semantic maps; prototype.



1. Introduction

The present paper is dedicated to the EK gram(matical construction) in Xhosa, a Nguni language of the Bantu family. The EK gram is a verbal form derived by adding the affix EK to the base (or the infinitive) of a given verb, or to its inflected forms: (*uku*)*buka* ‘look with admiration’ > (*uku*)*buk-ek-a* ‘be admired’ and *bayalala* ‘they sleep’ > *kuyalal-ek-a* ‘one is sleeping’ (Du Plessis & Visser 1992; 1998; Visser 2005).

The EK gram is a troublesome object in Xhosa scholarship. It is similarly so in Nguni and Bantu studies. On the one hand, the construction expresses several senses and offers a wide range of syntactic properties that are exceedingly difficult to fit into traditional taxonomical boxes. On the other hand, driven by the modernistic ideal of discrete categories and neat models,¹ scholars have attempted to categorize the EK form as a monolithic grammatical phenomenon by proposing one basic (invariant or abstract) meaning or function. As the properties of the EK gram are not semantically and syntactically monolithic, but rather complex and diverse, a great number of labels have been proposed (cf. Mchombo 2004: 95). In most cases, linguists have constructed their definitions given the features that are the most relevant in their view, relegating the other traits, especially those that do not fit, outside the model, or listing them as exceptional cases.

Furthermore, most studies dedicated to the EK construction in Xhosa have been developed within a generative framework. They focused on the structural properties of this gram, paying less attention to its semantic characteristics.² Recent advances in semantics and the systematic acknowledgement of its relationship to syntax offered by cognitive linguistics (instead of a separation of the two modules typical of generative grammar), as well as the development of alternative approaches to categorization within cognitive science indicate that the issue of the EK gram needs to be revisited. This paper responds to this need by reconsidering the problem of the EK gram from a cognitive perspective. Specifically, it proposes a novel classification of the EK construction in terms of a coherent – albeit non-monolithic – phenomenon, i.e. a dynamic map.

To achieve its objective, the paper will be organized in the following manner: In section 2, classical views on the EK form and traditional definitions of this gram in Xhosa, Nguni languages, and the Bantu family will be presented. Section 3 will

¹ For criticism of this ideal consult Bybee (2010).

² The situation in Nguni and Bantu scholarship is similar, although probably less dominated by generative grammar (cf. recently Dom 2015).



familiarize the reader with the framework of cognitive mapping, within which the EK gram will be analyzed and its categorical status posited. In section 4, we will present the Xhosa evidence, discussing in detail semantic and syntactic properties of the EK form. In section 5, we will evaluate this evidence within the adopted framework and formulate a new, cognitive model of the EK gram. Lastly, in section 5, the main conclusions of this research will be drawn.

2. Traditional views on the EK construction in Xhosa, Nguni and Bantu

The morpheme EK, which is the formative component of the EK construction, is defined as a derivational affix in Xhosa grammars (Mtoba 1985: 86). When applied, this affix does not modify the lexical class of the hosting verb, but rather provides it with new syntactic and semantic properties (*ibid.*).

In Xhosa scholarship, the EK form is referred to in three ways, i.e. as neuter-passive (Du Plessis 1978; Jokweni 1989; Du Plessis & Visser 1998: 188, 192; 1992: 71; Du Plessis 2010; Visser 2005), neuter (Mtoba 1985: 85), and metastatic (Pahl 1978:397). In general, the above-mentioned labels make reference to the distinctiveness of the category both from the active voice and the passive voice (Satyo 1985: 160; Jokweni 1989: 4).

Scholars argue that, from a syntactic perspective, EK verbs are always intransitive, and that the affix EK exerts a de-transitivizing effect where possible (Du Plessis 1978: 175; Mtoba 1985: 85). Accordingly, in certain aspects, the affix EK behaves like the passive morpheme *-w-* and the syntax of EK verbs exhibit properties typical of the passive voice in Xhosa (Du Plessis 2010). For instance, in the EK construction, the subject agreement is de-externalized, the accusative case is suppressed, the object is moved to the subject position, and the existential *ku* is inserted in the empty subject position (Mtoba 1985: 85; Du Plessis & Visser 1998: 212; Du Plessis 2010; for details see section 3.1).

It is also argued that what systematically distinguishes the EK gram from the *w* passive, is that in the former construction no implicit argument expressing the agent is present. Therefore, the EK gram is viewed as a non-agentive or agentless structure (Du Plessis 2010; see also Jordan 1956: 375). Even though copulative N(ominal) P(phrase)s are allowed, they are commonly interpreted with the semantic role of cause (Jokweni 1989: 48; Du Plessis & Visser 1998: 212). However, this clear picture is blurred by certain instances where copulative NPs express the agent (Du Plessis 1978; Jokweni 1985: 53, 64). Albeit acknowledged, this agentive be-



havior of the EK gram has not been incorporated to a more systemic analysis of this construction in Xhosa.³

As far as its semantics are concerned, linguists associate the EK gram with two meanings in Xhosa: a stative sense and the expression of possibility (Pahl 1978; Jokweni 1989; Du Plessis 2010). As for the former meaning, the construction indicates that the subject has undergone a change, achieving a new state (Du Plessis 1978: 174; 2010; Pahl 1978:397; Jokweni 1989: 4–5). It is sometimes claimed that this change of state is induced spontaneously – it occurs “by itself” (Du Plessis & Visser 1998). In the latter usage, the EK gram indicates that the subject has the capacity to undergo a change, communicating the meaning comparable to the suffixes *-able/-ible* in English (Pahl 1978: 397; Jokweni 1989: 4–5; Du Plessis 2010). Apart from these two prevalent meanings, other values of the EK construction have also been detected. Such values are less common than those mentioned above and tend to be restricted to certain (types of) verbs. For example, the EK construction may communicate the idea of obligation (Du Plessis 2010), impact, and motion (usually accompanied by the nuance of urgency; Pahl 1978: 398–399; Jokweni 1989: 6–7). No unifying account of all these meanings, or the proposal of their conceptual and diachronic relationship has been formulated. This often leaves the semantic descriptions of the EK gram in Xhosa at the level of mere taxonomies.

The analysis of the syntax and semantics of the EK construction in other Nguni languages is comparable to the studies developed for Xhosa. In Zulu, the affix EK – usually referred to as neuter, middle, or quasi-passive – derives intransitive constructions. It denotes a state that is achieved (or is in the process of being achieved) without the intervention or the participation of an agent. As in Xhosa, the EK gram in Zulu may also convey the idea of ability and possibility (Doke 1984: 138–139; Ziervogel, Louw & Taljaard 1985: 165; Nthoba 1995: 1–2). In Ndebele, the EK construction is classified as a neuter, stative, or non-agentive passive (Pelling & Pelling 1974: 167; Khumalo 2007; 2009). It expresses an intransitive state whose causing agent remains unspecified (Khumalo 2007; 2009: 165). As in Xhosa, the morpheme EK has a de-transitivizing force – the subject of the underlying verb is eliminated, while its object is moved to the subject position (Khumalo 2007; 2009).

Similar analyses have been proposed for other Bantu languages. In comparative Bantu studies, the EK gram is usually defined as neuter(-passive) (Schadeberg

³ This reference to agent constitutes a problem in Xhosa scholarship (see the afore-mentioned definitions formulated by Jordan (1956) and Du Plessis (2010)) and in Nguni studies (compare with the agentless character of the affix EK that has been observed in Zulu by Doke (1947: 139), Cole (1975: 196), and Pahl (1978: 397). For a more detailed discussion see Jokweni (1985: 53).



2003), stative (Mchombo 1993), intransitive (Nurse 2008: 317), and (quasi-)middle (Dom, Kulikov & Bostoen 2016).⁴ As for syntax, the affix EK tends to derive intransitive constructions, by which it approximates the passive voice rather than the active voice (Schadeberg 2003; Nurse 2008: 317). That is, the subject of the underlying verb is eliminated, whereas the object may be promoted to the subject of the verb (Mchombo 2004: 95). Contrary to the passive, however, it is usually impossible to express the agent (Schadeberg 2003; Nurse 2008). Therefore, the gram is viewed as an anticausative affix (Dom, Kulikov & Bostoen 2016). With respect to semantics, the affix EK yields stative constructions. It expresses states that are either factually or potentially achieved, thus enabling two interpretations: actual conditions or potential conditions (Schadeberg 2003; Mchombo 2004; Nurse 2008: 317).⁵

Although the productivity of the EK gram ranges from low to high depending on language sub-group (Schadeberg 2003), reflexes of the EK gram may be found in all branches of the Bantu family.⁶ Given this pervasiveness, the construction has been reconstructed for Proto-Bantu as **-ik-* (Schadeberg 2003). Its existence has also been postulated for Proto-Niger-Congo as **-ke-* (Voeltz 1977; Hyman 2007: 151; Dom 2015: 2).⁷

3. Model – the meaning of a form and its categorial status

In this paper, we will follow a cognitive approach to the syntax and semantics of a form, both with respect to its (i.e. the form's) holistic modeling (3.1) and to the specification of its categorial status (3.2). The primordial assumption of this approach is that semantics and syntax do not constitute two separate modules – they are rather interconnected. Therefore, they can both be analyzed and described through the same method.

⁴ Other, less common labels that are used in Bantu linguistics are: 'capable form', derived intransitive, descriptive passive, impositive, intransitive subject-form, medio-passive, neuter-directive, neuter-stative, passive, potential, quasi-passive, reflexive impositive, resultative, spontaneous, static, and tolerative (Satyo 1985; Mchombo 2004; Dom 2015).

⁵ Moreover, in Bantu languages, including those where it is scarcely used, the affix EK is typically compatible with two lexical types of verbs: verbs of destruction and verbs of experience (e.g. perception; Schadeberg 2003).

⁶ The affix is usually attested in present-day Bantu languages under the form *-i/eC-* (where C = k, g, χ, γ, h, fi) although other realizations such as *-ik-*, *-k-*, *-ey-*, *-i-*, *-e-*, *-ε-*, *-ə-* are also found (Dom 2015).

⁷ For a further discussion of the history and evolution of the EK gram, see section 5.



3.1. *Model of meaning*

In general terms, the synchronic properties of the EK gram, whether syntactic or semantic, will be understood as structured polysemy.⁸ That is to say, the total meaning and function of the EK construction will be depicted as a dynamic network – referred to as a map – organized along a diachronic template that schematizes how the polysemy of this form has arisen over time. The organization of the map will principally be posited given typological evidence that shows how grams exhibiting a similar type of polysemy evolve across languages (cf. Haspelmath 2003; 2004; Andrason 2016a; 2016b). In this manner, it will be possible to propose the mapping of the EK form, even though direct diachronic data related to its grammatical history are scarce.

Our model originates in the following observation: any linguistic form is polysemous and, thus, expresses a number of senses and functions.⁹ The inherently polysemous nature of grammatical forms reflects these forms' dynamic character – constructions evolve (Janda 2015: 136). Their meanings or functions constantly change to cope with new experiences (Hamawand 2016: 82). As such forms are re-used appearing in new environments, they acquire new semantic or functional properties. Simply put, in new contexts, the same form expresses new senses or conveys new functions.

The above-mentioned extensions to new environments are possible because meaning is constantly elaborated via “imaginative mapping processes” or mechanisms such as metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, blends, analogy, and abduction (Janda 2015: 139). It is these mechanisms that motivate the transition from one sense or function to another, and render the connection between them perceivable by the speakers (Janda 2015: 133; Hamawand 2016: 134). These extensions are initially pragmatically driven and unstable. However, due to conventionalization and entrenchment, they become stabilized and are gradually associated with the form – first as less relevant elements in the form's polysemy and later as its crucial com-

⁸ In its narrow definition, polysemy only refers to semantic properties. However, given the relationship between syntax and semantics, we will use this term in a broader sense, referring to the total behavioral profile of a construction. Other possible notions could be ‘heterosemy’, ‘polyduty’, or ‘polyfunctionality’ (Haspelmath 2004; Andrason & Lyle 2015).

⁹ The exact number of senses and functions depends on the granularity of categorization adopted in a study.



ponents (Janda 2015: 142, 147, 148).¹⁰ Generally, features that are frequent, productive, contextually unrestricted, and salient play a more significant role in the semantic and functional potential of the form – they are, therefore, prototypical. In contrast, the role of features that are rare, unproductive, and limited to specific environments is marginal. Such features are viewed as non-prototypical (Andrason & Locatell 2016).

As a result, senses and functions exhibited by a form are related both cognitively and diachronically. One sense/function derives cognitively and diachronically from another sense/function; and constitutes a cognitive and diachronic foundation of yet another sense/function (Andrason 2016a; 2016b; Hamawand 2016: 134). Therefore, all the properties exhibited synchronically by a form – whether semantic or functional – can be ordered into a network in which the link between any two senses or functions would reflect (and represent) the cognitive and diachronic relationship that exists, or existed, between them. Because of the cognitive foundation of meaning extensions and the pervasiveness of certain types of grammatical developments (known as grammaticalization paths) arising from these cognitive principles, we may structure the polysemous meaning of a form into a coherent network even if direct diachronic data are not available (Hamawand 2016: 134; Andrason 2016a; 2016b; see Heine 1997, Haspelmath 2003).

Overall, it is the historical reiteration of the afore-mentioned cognitive mechanisms linking a sense/function with its immediate successor that ultimately warrants the unity of the total meaning of a form. That is, the coherence of the polysemy represented as a network results from dynamic processes that motivate meaning extensions and enable the gradual emergence and expansion of that polysemy over a period of time (cf. Hamawand 2016: 136). The meaning of a form is, thus, equated with a dynamic map: a set of distinct senses and functions (each one being activated in specific contexts) that is structured into a cognitively coherent, diachronically-based network (Andrason & Lyle 2015; Hamawand 2016: 135).

In such a network, two adjacent senses or functions share various features and their cognitive relationship is easily recoverable. In contrast, remote members need not share most features or even any feature at all. This means that the senses and functions of a form do not exhibit a constant set of essential properties, but are rather related as members of a family (Hamawand 2016: 131–132). In other words, as the relationship between two remote senses or functions can be mediated by a

¹⁰ This demonstrates that “[g]rammar and lexicon [or syntax and semantics] are not two discrete types of meaning, but rather the extreme ends of a spectrum of meaning containing transitional or hybrid types” (Janda 2015: 134).



long chain of intermediated links – in which any pair of two adjacent members shares various features but not all of them – there may be no feature exhibited by senses/functions located at the extreme ends of this chain or in the opposite spheres of the network (Janda 2015: 136). This demonstrates the fallacy of the invariant meaning approach, where the semantic relationship between all the senses of a form is approached in terms of “a core + rules model” (Janda 2015: 136).

The dynamic-map approach outlined above constitutes a powerful tool to analyze, structure, and explain all types of polysemy (including the messiest ones), as it allows both for the macro-synthetic-holistic perspective and the micro-analytic-atomistic analysis (Janda 2015: 137). One can combine the variety of senses/functions with their coherence, instead of “attending exclusively to either the variety by making atomistic lists, or to the coherence by assigning abstract features that fail to capture the variety” (Janda *ibid.*). A form can be represented both as unified and internally complex (Janda *ibid.*). There is evidence that such network structures underlie most, if not all, linguistic phenomena (Janda 2015: 139; Hamawand 2016). They are recognizable not only in lexemes, but also in syntax and broadly understood grammar, including morphemes, such as the affix EK.

3.2. *Model of category*

The map model posited by cognitive linguistics is used not only to explain the polysemy of a form that exists in a specific language, but also to structure abstract grammatical categories postulated by linguists. In general terms, categories are depicted as networks with prototype effects (Janda 2015: 133). They radiate from the central or canonical instantiations to less representative, peripheral spheres that contain non-canonical members (Janda 2015: 136, 138). This approach to categorization makes it possible to precisely determine the taxonomical status of a form, without resorting to over-simplifications and excessive rounding (Andrason 2016a).

In cognitive linguistics, a category is organized around its prototype – an ideal exemplar that assembles the category’s primordial characteristics (Hamawand 2016: 129). The role of the prototype is crucial as it enables one to structure a given taxon meaningfully – all the members of a category are measured in relation to that prototype. However, given crosslinguistic variation, the category itself cannot be equated with its prototype. That is, grammatical forms found across languages need not match the prototype perfectly. In fact, they seldom do so. They rather approximate it to a greater or lesser extent either by exhibiting some, but not all of the ex-



emplary features; or by offering the exemplary features only in a number of cases but not in all of them. Those instantiations that always match the prototype (consistently exhibiting all its attributes) can be seen as central or canonical representatives of the category. Those that comply with some, but not all, traits associated with the prototype, and those that offer such features only in a limited number of cases are peripheral or non-canonical.

This means that categories – like the polysemy of forms – are composed of members connected through a chain of partially overlapping similarities, gradually decreasing (or increasing) their compliance with the taxon's prototype. Categories are maps – they constitute radial networks that comprehend all possible instantiations of an abstract prototype.

As members of a category may fail to exhibit a great part of the features postulated for the prototype, and yet still belong to that taxonomical type, membership itself is no longer a binary dilemma of either-or. The belonging is not determined by means of closed and impermeable Venn diagrams imported from Set Theory, and a category is not defined by fixed boundaries in terms of all-or-nothing, where all members exhibit equal status (Janda 2015: 135). Instead, the form's belonging to a category is conceived in terms of similarity – it is a matter of degree (Hamawand 2016: 129–131). Therefore, even though prototypes are definable by sets of essential features, categories themselves are fuzzy – they lack rigid boundaries and are not discrete (Janda 2015: 131, 136–139).

To conclude, neat and binary definitions typical of modernism and structuralism become unsatisfactory as they cannot embrace the variability of a category across languages. This accommodation of variability, in contrast, may be achieved by the map model. It is possible because that model defines the category holistically as a radial network, revealing not only its coherence but also internal complexity. It includes both members that are representative with respect to the prototype, as well as the members that are not representative, showing their distinct – albeit related – status (Hamawand 2016: 132). As a result, the categorization becomes more inclusive and more precise, such that less rounding and fewer exclusionary over-generalizations are needed (cf. Janda 2015: 139; Hamawand 2016: 133).¹¹

¹¹ For a more comprehensive presentation of the cognitive framework consult Langacker (1987; 2008); Taylor (2002); Croft & Cruse (2004); Evans & Green (2006); Geeraerts (2010); and Geeraerts & Cuyckens (2007).



4. Evidence

4.1. *Syntactic properties related to argument structure*

In many aspects, syntactic properties of the EK gram approximate this construction to the category of a passive voice. In fact, on several occasions, the EK form behaves similarly to the prototypical expression of passivity in Xhosa – the *w* construction (Du Plessis 2010; Mtoba 1985). Crucially – whether derived from underlying intransitive, transitive, or ditransitive verbs – the EK gram tends to exhibit an intransitive valency pattern, as is also true of the *w* passive and the passive-voice prototype crosslinguistically (Du Plessis 1978:175).

If derived from intransitive verbs, the subject agreement exhibited in the active voice is eliminated and the existential subject morpheme *ku* fills out the empty subject position. The construction remains intransitive. This behavior is fully analogous to that exhibited by the *w* passive (see Jokweni 1989; Du Plessis & Visser 1998: 192; Du Plessis 2010):

- (1) a. *Si-yalala*
SA.we-PRES.sleep¹²
'We are sleeping'
- b. *Ku-yalaleka*
SA.15-PRES.sleep.EK
'People are sleeping (lit. It is being slept)'

In cases where the EK gram is derived from transitive verbs, the resulting construction is intransitive. The direct object of the active voice is either eliminated or, having lost its accusative case, is moved to the subject position (compare the active voice in example 2.a with the EK gram in 2.b). If the object position remains unfilled, and the patient is expressed in the postverbal position, the expletive subject morpheme *ku* must be used (2.c; Mtoba 1985: 85). This expletive subject *ku* is co-indexed with the semantic subject or patient of the EK gram, i.e. the object of the underlying transitive verb (e.g. *ikofu* in example 2.c; Du Plessis & Visser 1998: 192, 194; Du Plessis 2010):

- (2) a. *Si-thanda ikofu*
SA.we-like 9.coffee

¹² The glossing of Xhosa examples is a complicated matter. Xhosa morphology is extremely complex; many morphemes are fused, with their boundaries being blurred; and various grammatical categories are foreign to Indo-European languages. For the sake of transparency, in this paper, we will gloss only those grammatical categories that are the most relevant for our discussion.



‘We like coffee’

- b. *Ikofu i-yathandeka*
9.coffee 9-PRES.like.EK
‘The coffee is desirable’
- c. *Ku-thandeka ikofu*
SA.15-like.EK 9.coffee
‘It is desirable, the coffee’

When used in the postverbal position, typical of objects in Xhosa, the patient such as *ikofu* in (2.c) cannot be analyzed as the object of the EK verb. This stems from the fact that it is ungrammatical to employ object agreement affixes on the verb or to pronominalize that postverbal constituent by means of pronominal object affixes (cf. 3.a and 3.b; Mtoba 1985: 85; Jokweni 1989).¹³ This contrasts, in turn, with the behavior of objects in the active voice, which can always be co-indexed with or pronominalized by object agreement affixes exhibited in the verbal morphology (3.c). If the postverbal patient of the EK construction is to be pronominalized, only the so-called absolute or independent pronouns can be used (3.d).

- (3) a. *Si-yayi-thanda ikofu*
we-OA.9-like 9.coffee
‘We like (it) the coffee’
- b. **Ku-yayi-thandeka ikofu*
SA.15-OA.9-like.EK 9.coffee
Intended lit. meaning: ‘It is liked this, the coffee’
- c. **Ku-yayi-thandeka*
SA.15-OA.9-like.EK
Intended meaning: ‘It is liked’
- d. *Ku-thandeka yona*
SA.15-like.EK 9.ABS
‘It is liked’

If the EK construction is derived from ditransitive verbs (4.a), the underlying object – either the direct or the indirect object – can be moved to the subject position (see examples 4.b and 4.c respectively).

¹³ In Xhosa, pronominal affixes and object agreement affixes are indistinguishable. That is, the same set of bound morphemes is used for object agreement and pronominalization.



- (4)a. *Si-boleka amakhwenkwe incwadi*
SA.we-lend 6.boys 9.book
'We lend the boys a book'
- b. *Incwadi i-bolekeka amakhwenkhwe*
9.book SA.9-lend.EK 6.boys
'The book can be lent to boys'
- c. *Amakhwenkwe a-bolekeka incwadi*
6.boys SA.6-lend.EK 9.book
'The boy can be lent a book'

The expletive subject morpheme *ku* can also fill out the subject slot if this position is empty and the underlying indirect and direct objects occupy the postverbal position (5.a; Du Plessis & Visser 1998: 204, 206; Du Plessis 2010). Even though such constructions are possible (see also *Ku-bolekeka amadoda imali*; Du Plessis 2010), most native speakers interviewed for the purpose of this study perceived them as problematic. In contrast, equivalent constructions with the passive morpheme *w* are widely accepted (5.b):

- (5) a. *E-sikolwe-ni ku-bolekeka amakhwenkwe incwadi*
LOC-7.school-LOC SA.15-lend.EK 6.boys 9.book
'At school it is possible to lend a book to boys'
- b. *E-sikolwe-ni ku-bolekwa amakhwenkwe incwadi*
LOC-7.school-LOC SA.15-lend.PASS 6.boys 9.book
'At school it is possible to lend a book to boys'

Object agreement affixes cannot be used in the EK construction if they refer to the indirect object of the underlying ditransitive verb (6.a). The same holds true for the pronominalization of the underlying indirect object (6.b) – only the independent absolute pronoun with the preposition *ku* can be used (6.c; Du Plessis & Visser 1998: 206; Du Plessis 2010):

- (6) a. **Izono zi-ba-xoleleka abantu*
8.sins SA.8-OA.2-forgive.EK 2.people
Intended lit. meaning: 'The sins can be forgiven them, to the people'
- b. **Izono zi-yaba-xoleleka*
8.book SA.8-OA.2-lend.EK
Intended meaning: 'The sins can be forgiven to them'
- c. *Izono zi-xoleleka ku-bo*
8.book SA.8-lend-EK to-2



‘The sins can be forgiven to them’

However, if it is the underlying direct object that occupies a postverbal position in the EK construction, the use of object agreement affixes co-indexed with that object (7.a) and/or its full pronominalization by means of object affixes (7.b) are possible (Du Plessis & Visser 1998: 206; Du Plessis 2010). In such cases, the arguable intransitivity of the EK gram is, at least, less canonical. Inversely, the gram exhibits a semi-transitive profile.

(7) a. *Abantu ba-(ya)zi-xoleleka izono*
2.people SA.2-OA.8-forgive.EK 8.sins
‘The people can be forgiven sins’

b. *Abantu ba-yazi-xoleleka*
2.people SA.2-OA.8-lend.EK
‘The people can be forgiven them [i.e. the sins]’

If the expletive morpheme *ku* is used in the subject position, no object agreement affixes can be used, irrespective of whether they refer to the direct (8.a) or the indirect (8.b) object (Du Plessis & Visser 1998). In cases where the prefix *ku* appears in the subject position, a full pronominalization of the underlying direct (9.a) and indirect objects (9.b) is also ungrammatical.¹⁴

(8) a. **Ku-zi-xoleleka abantu izono*
SA.15-OA.8-forgive.EK 2.people 8.sins
Intended meaning: ‘It is possible for people to be forgiven them, the sins’

b. **Ku-ba-xoleleka abantu izono*
SA.15-OA.2-forgive.EK 2.people 8.sins
Intended meaning: ‘It is possible for the, the people, to be forgiven sins’

(9) a. **Ku-(ya)zi-xoleleka abantu*
SA.15-OA.8- forgive.EK 2.people
Intended meaning: ‘It is possible to forgive it to people’

b. **Ku-(ya)ba-xoleleka izono*
SA.15-OA.2- forgive.EK 8.sins

¹⁴ This demonstrates that even the underlying direct object cannot be regarded as a canonical object in the EK gram, and therefore EK construction cannot be viewed as fully transitive. In Xhosa, genuine objects exhibit three properties: in the canonical word order, they occupy the postverbal position; they can be pronominalized or co-indexed by means of object agreement markers; they can be promoted to subjects of passive constructions (Du Plessis & Visser 1998:48–50; Du Plessis 2010).



Intended meaning: ‘It is possible to forgive them the sins’

The behavior of the EK gram as described above, is similar to the use of underlying ditransitive verbs in the *w* passive. In the *w* passive formed from ditransitive verbs, only the underlying direct object can be pronominalized by or co-indexed with object agreement affixes (10.a); The indirect object cannot (10.b; Dyubeni 1993: 96–97, 99–100):

- (10) a. *Abantwana ba-yaku-nikwa*¹⁵
2.child SA.2-OA.15-give.PASS
‘The children are being given it’
b. **Ukutya ku-yaba-nikwa*
15.food SA.15-OA.2-give.PASS
‘The food is being given to them’

If the direct object is promoted to the subject position in the *w* passive and the underlying indirect object realized pronominally, the latter must be encoded by means of an absolute pronoun. This last feature, however, contrasts with the EK construction where, at least to most speakers, the absolute pronoun should be introduced by a preposition, e.g. *ku* (see 6.c quoted previously). The use of sole independent pronouns is usually perceived as ungrammatical (11.b):¹⁶

- (11) a. *Ukutya ku-phekelwa bona* (Dyubeni 1993:97)
15.food SA.15-cook.APPL.PASS 2.ABS
‘Food is cooked for them’
b. **Izono zi-xoleleka bona*
8-book SA.8-lend.EK 2.ABS
Intended meaning: ‘The sins can be forgiven them’

4.2. Syntactic properties related to agentivity (copulative NPs and other complementary NPs)

Even though the EK gram exhibits syntactic similarities with the *w* passive, it also shows one important difference. The EK construction usually does not allow for an

¹⁵ This discussion and examples (10.a), (10.b) and (11.a) draw from Andrason (forthcoming).

¹⁶ A highly limited group of EK verbs whose original non-extended bases are lost exhibit a genuine transitive profile. The objects of these verbs can be pronominalized and co-indexed with object agreement markers. They can also be promoted to the subject position in passive constructions (see section 4.3).



agent to be expressed (Mtoba 1985: 85). Indeed, any reference to a possible agent is frequently absent (see examples 2.b and 4.b-c above; Jordan 1956: 375; see also Doke 1947: 139; Cole 1975: 196; Pahl 1978: 397). This contrasts with the situation found in the w passive where the agent may virtually always be expressed by the so-called copulative NP:

- (12) *Incwadi i-yafundwa ngabafana*
 9.book SA.9-read.PASS COP.2.boys
 ‘The book is being read by the boys’

As we have mentioned in section 4.1, the copulative NP can be used with the EK gram. However, in contrast to the w passive, such copulative NPs offer semantic roles that are often different from agent. If one copulative NP is expressed, its semantic role is typically cause. This is true irrespective of whether the EK construction is derived from intransitive (13.a), monotransitive (13.b), or ditransitive verbs (Jokweni 1989: 48; Du Plessis & Visser 1998: 212).

- (13)a. *Ku-yalaleka yipilisi*
 SA.15-PRES.sleep.EK COP.9.pill
 ‘It is possible to sleep because of the pill’
 b. *Isuphu a-yi-tyek-i yityuwa*
 9.soup NEG-SA.9-eat.EK-NEG COP.9.salt
 ‘The soup cannot be eaten because of the salt’

If two copulative inanimate NPs are used simultaneously, they are also typically interpreted as cause, thus conforming to the rule given above (Pahl 1978: 397; Jokweni 1989: 49):

- (14) *Olo cango lu-vuleka ngumoya bubulula balo*
 this 11.door SA.11-open.EK COP.3.wind COP.14.light 2.POSS.11
 ‘This door gets opened easily by the wind because of its lightness’ (adapted from Jokweni 1989: 49)

However, contrary to the usual behavior of copulatives in the EK gram presented in the previous paragraphs, the animate copulative NP can be interpreted as agent in certain cases (Jokweni 1989: 50–51, 54; consult also Du Plessis 1978: 174). This may be illustrated by the following examples:

- (15)a. *Utitshala u-phatheke kakubi yinqununu*
 1a.teacher SA.1a-treat.EK.PERF badly COM.9.principal
 ‘The teacher is ill-treated by the principal’ (Jokweni 1989: 51)



- b. *Amakhwenkwe a-yathandeka ngabazali bawo*
6.boys SA.6-PRES.love.EK COP.2.parents 2.POSS.6
'The boys are loved by their parents'

In fact, if one of the two NPs is animate, this NP necessarily receives the interpretation of agent. The other NP, whose referent is inanimate, expresses cause. This applies to intransitive (15.a), monotransitive (16.b), and ditransitive (16.c) underlying verbs (Jokweni 1989: 51–52, 54; Du Plessis & Visser 1998: 214).

- (16)a. *Ku-yalileka ngabantwana ziintlungu*
SA.15-PRES.cry.EK COP.2.child COP.10.pain
'There can be cries by children because of pain' (lit. 'There can be cried by children'; Jokweni 1989: 52)
- b. *Le mibuzo iza kuphenduleka lula*
this 4.question 4.FUT INF.answer.EK easily
ngabafundi bubulula bayo
COP.2.student COP.14.simplicity their
'These questions will be answered easily by the students because of their simplicity' (Jokweni 1989: 51)
- c. *Umama u-bolekeke imali ngabaphathi*
1a.mother 1a-lend.EK.PERF 9.money COP.2.manager
bebhanki yintobeko yakhe
2.POSS.9.bank COP.9.meekness her
'Mother has been lent money by the bank managers because of her meekness' (Jokweni 1989: 52)

If the copulative NP expresses agent, this agent can be conceived as the intender of the action, who acts intentionally. It usually bears the feature animate (Jokweni 1989: 54) and can be accompanied by agent-oriented adverbs, e.g. *ngabomu* 'purposefully' (17) or *lula* 'easily' (see again 16.b).

- (17) *Umfundi u-phatheke kakubi ngabomu ngutishala*
1.student SA.1-treat.EK.PERF badly purposefully COP.1a.teacher
'The student is purposefully ill-treated by the teacher'

It is also possible to use subordinate clauses of reason that specify the goal or the motivation of the acting agent:

- (18) *Utitshala u-phatheke kakubi yinqununu*
1a.teacher SA.1a-tread.EK.PERF badly COP.9.principal



kuba i-funa ukumxotha
because SA.9-want INF.OA.1a.let.go

‘The teacher is ill-treated by the principal who (lit. because) wants to expel him’

Moreover, the EK construction – whether the agent is expressed or not – can be combined with subordinate clauses of purpose that are introduced by *ukube* ‘so that’ and contain a subjunctive verb. Such subordinate clauses express the idea of intentional goal that motivates the action communicated by the EK verb (Jokweni 1989: 84):

- (19) *Ucango lu-vulekile ukuba abantu ba-ngene*
11.door SA.11-open.EK.PERF so.that 2.people SA.2-enter.SUBJ
‘The door could open so that the people may enter’ (Jokweni 1989: 82)

In limited cases, even inanimate copulative NPs can be, at least metaphorically, understood as agents. In such instances, the EK construction (20.a) and the w passive (20.b) seem to be equivalent (Du Plessis 1978: 174):

- (20)a. *Ndi-hlupheka yile nto* (Du Plessis 1978: 174)
SA.I-bother.EK COP.this 9.thing
‘I am bothered by this thing’
b. *Ndihlutshwa yile nto* (ibid.)
SA.I-bother.PASS COP.this 9.thing
‘I am bothered by this thing’

Apart from being complemented by a copulative NP, the EK gram can also be followed by locative NPs. A locative NP is a noun phrase that is accompanied by a locative marker, either the affixes *e-* and *e...-ini* (and its allomorphs) or an agglutinative preposition *ku-* (for classes 1a and 2a). Such locative NPs are usually interpreted as recipients (21.a), direction (21.b), source (21.c), location (21.d), or time (21.e). The first reading is typical of animate NPs whereas the other interpretations occur with inanimate NPs (Jokweni 1989: 59-63).

- (21)a. *Uluvo lwakhe lw-amkelekile ku-bahloli*
11.idea his SA.11-accept.EK.PERF LOC-2.inspector
‘His idea has been acceptable to the inspectors’ (Jokweni 1989:59)
b. *Amatye a-phoseke ku-Landile*
6.stone SA.6-throw.EK.PERF LOC-Landile
‘The stones have been thrown to Landile’



- c. *Ukutya ku-yafumaneka ku-mama*
15.food SA.15-PRES.obtain.EK LOC-1a.mother
'The food can be obtained from mother' (Jokweni 1989:62)
- d. *Umdoko u-jiyekeka lula e-sitovi-ni*
3.porridge SA.3-condense.EK easily LOC-7.stove-LOC
'The porridge condenses easily on the stove'
- e. *Le nto i-yafundeka ku-lo nyaka*
this 9.thing SA.9-PRES.study.EK LOC-this 3.year
'This thing can be studied this year' (Jokweni 1989: 63)

In certain cases, however, an animate locative NP may express the agent who either causes the action or performs it intentionally:

- (22)a. *Abasebenzi ba-lindelekile ku-baphathi*
2.worker SA.2-expect.EK.PERF LOC-2.manager
'The workers are expected by the managers' (Jokweni 1989: 61)
- b. *UNombeko u-phatheke kakubi ku-ninazala*
1a.Nombeko SA.1a-treat.EK.PERF badly LOC-1a.mother-in-law
'Nombeko is ill-treated by her mother-in-law' (ibid.)
- c. *Umfundi u-gxekeka ku-tishala*
1.student SA.1-criticize.EK LOC-1a.teacher
'The student is criticized by the teacher'

With perception and cognition verbs, the locative NP denotes an observer or an experiencer. Although these types of NPs are not prototypical agents, semantically they approximate agents to a degree:¹⁷

- (23)a. *ULandile u-jongeka equmbile e-bantwi-ni*
1a.Landile SA.1a-see.EK being.cross LOC-2.people-LOC
'Landile is perceived to be cross by people' (i.e. People perceive him as cross)
- b. *UMandla u-yathandeka ku-bahlali*
1a.Mandla SA.1a-PRES.love.EK LOC-2.neighbor
'Mandla is lovable to the community' (i.e. The neighbors perceive him as lovable)

¹⁷ Compare a similar situation in Chichewa discussed by Dom (2015: 11).



Another common way of introducing NPs in clauses with the EK gram consists of using the preposition *nga* ‘through, by, with’. In such cases, the prepositional phrase that follows the EK verb expresses time, place, theme, and manner (24.a-b), as well as reason and instrument (24.c.; Jokweni 1989: 64–69). Since instruments are usually manipulated and controlled by agentive participants, they are not expected to be found in genuine agentless passive constructions (compare Dom 2015: 14). In the EK gram, the use of instrumental NP’s is unproblematic.¹⁸

- (24) a. *Ucango lu-valeke nga-mandla*
 11.door SA.11-close.EK.PERF with-6.force
 ‘The door has been closed with force’
- b. *Ku-thetheka izinto ezimbi ngo-titshala*
 SA.15-say.EK 10.thing bad about-1a.teacher
 ‘Bad things can be said about the teacher’ (lit. ‘There can be said bad things about the teacher’; Jokweni 1989: 69)
- c. *Uphahla lu-valeke nga-macangci*
 11.roof SA.11-enclose-EK.PERF with-6.corrugated.iron-sheets
 ‘The roof is enclosed with corrugated iron-sheets’

4.3. *Sematic properties related to tense, aspect and mood*

As was the case of the syntactic behavior of the EK gram (section 4.1) and the functions of its complementary NPs (4.2), the semantic profile of the EK construction is complex. In general, the EK gram conveys a broad range of TAM senses. Many of them (albeit not all) can be divided into two main groups: those related to aspectual domains (e.g. resultativity and stativity) and those related to modality (e.g. possibility, potentiality, and evidentiality). Both sets of meanings can be combined in a particular usage, so that the form simultaneously draws from the aspectual and the modal domain. Additionally, the EK construction expresses other nuances such as spontaneity and impact/impetus. As will be evident from the subsequent discussion, some of the aforementioned uses are common, while others are rather infrequent.

The EK construction frequently conveys resultative shades of meaning, indicating a state that has changed or that has been achieved (Du Plessis 1978: 174). In

¹⁸ In Ndebele, the EK gram cannot be used with purpose clauses and agent-oriented adverbs in contrast to the W passive which can. However, the EK gram, just like the W passive, allows the use of the instrumental phrase (Khumalo 2007; 2009).



this usage, the EK gram offers a complex internal event structure – it expresses a state, current at a reference time, that results from a previously performed action (Pahl 1978: 397; Jokweni 1989: 4; Du Plessis 2010). As most resultative constructions across languages, the EK gram is usually intransitive and, if possible, exhibits a de-transitive force (cf. section 4.1; on this property of resultatives consult Nedjalkov 1988; 2001).

The resultative value is particularly persistent in cases where the EK gram is derived from transitive, telic (terminative), and/or inchoative verbs, such as verbs of destroying and breaking, which necessarily imply change of state (25.a; Guthrie 1967: 92; Schadeberg 2003; Khumalo 2007; 2009; Dom 2015). Another group of predicates that are commonly used in the EK gram with a resultative meaning are verbs extended by the affix *-la*, e.g. *ahlula* ‘separate’ > *ahluka* ‘be separated’ and *guqula* ‘turn’ > *guquka* ‘be turned (into)’ (25.b-c; Visser 2005).¹⁹

- (25) a. *Umqombothi u-chithekile*
3.beer SA.3-spill.EK.PERF
‘The home-brewed beer is spilt’
- b. *Ingalo yam y-aphukile*
9.arm my SA.9-break.EK.PERF
‘My arm is broken’
- c. *Iincwadi zesikolo z-ahlukile*
10.book 10.POSS.7.school SA.10-separate.EK.PERF
kwezeCawa
from.those.of.9.church
‘The school books are different from church books’
- d. *UMongezi u-guqukile*
1a.Mongezi SA.1a-change.EK.PERF
‘Mongezi is changed’

It should be noted that in order to express a genuine resultative sense, the EK construction usually needs to appear in the ILE gram – the so-called perfect. If used in the present tense, the EK gram rather communicates the process of getting into a state (not that state itself), thus conveying the nuance similar to the English auxiliaries *become* and *get* (26.a; Pahl 1978: 397). Nevertheless, when inflected in the ILE perfect, the EK gram can also express dynamic senses of a present perfect (26.b):

¹⁹ In Zulu, the resultative meaning typically appears with reversive forms; see as *vuthulula* ‘shake off’ > *vuthuluka* ‘get shaken off’ (Doke 1984: 140).



- (26) a. *Intlanzi i-yaqhotseka*
 9.fish SA.9-PRES.fry.EK
 ‘The fish is getting fried’ (cf. *Intlanzi iqhotsekile* ‘The fish is fried’)
- b. *Imoto i-tshabalaliseke ngenxa yakho*
 9.car SA.9-destroy.EK.PERF because.of you
 ‘The car has been destroyed because of you’

Although the resultative meaning is principally conveyed by the EK gram in the ILE perfect, in certain instances the resultative sense also appears if the EK construction is inflected in the present tense (27.a). In such a case, the present-tense form of the EK gram is semantically equivalent to, or similar with, the ILE form of the W passive (27.b), at least where temporal and aspectual nuances are concerned:

- (27) a. *Ku-shiyeka ukutya okuninzi*
 SA.15-leave.EK 15.food much
 ‘Much food is left over’ (Kirsch & Skorge 1999: 205)
- b. *Ku-shiywe ukutya okuninzi*
 SA.15-leave.PASS.PERF 15.food much
 ‘Much food is left over’ (Kirsch & Skorge 1999: 205)

With some verbs, the EK gram denotes non-dynamic conditions or (relatively) permanent properties with no resultative shades of meaning (Kirsch & Skorge 1999: 205), thus acting as the category of stative (Visser 2005: 14). In these cases, the EK gram may occur with verbs that do not express the idea of change of state. As was the case of the resultative sense, the stative present value typically appears if the gram is used in the ILE perfect (28.a-c). In contrast, if the EK gram is inflected in the present tense, it usually expresses inchoative or ingressive senses of acquiring or getting into a state (28.d-e).

- (28) a. *Ndi-qinisekile u-yeza*
 SA.I-make.firm.EK.PERF SA.1-come
 ‘I am sure he will come’
- b. *Ndi-khululekile ukwenza isigqibo*
 SA.I-free.EK.PERF INF.make 7.decision
 ‘I am free to make a decision’
- c. *Ku-balulekile ba-m-mamele*
 SA.15-distinguish.EK.PERF SA.2-OA.1-listen.SUBJ
 ‘It is important that they listen to him’



- d. *Ndi-yaxakeka ngemiGqibelo*
SA.I-PRES.busy.EK on.4.Saturdays
'I get busy on Saturdays'
- e. *Isigulane si-yabulaleka ziinthungu*
7.patient SA.7-PRES.kill.EK COP.10.pain
'The patient is being (getting) killed by the pain'

The stative meaning exhibited by the EK gram warrants a relatively spread use of this form in descriptive and relative constructions in Xhosa.²⁰

- (29)a. *USipho wam o-thandeka-yo u-hambile*
1a.Sipho my REL.1a-love.EK-REL SA.1a-go.PERF
'My dear Sipho is gone'
- b. *Ndi-funde incwadi e-balulekile-yo*
SA.I-read 9.book REL.9-distinguish.EK-REL
'I read an important book'

Another important group of senses associated with the EK gram are modal values. With high frequency, the EK construction indicates the potentiality, capacity, and possibility of achieving or exhibiting a certain state and condition. In this usage, the EK form is often equivalent to English adjectives that end in *-able/-ible* or to the expression with the auxiliary *can* (Pahl 1978: 397; Jokweni 1989: 4; Du Plessis 2010). This sense is found both with lexically inchoative verbs and with verbs that do not denote a change of state.

- (30)a. *Intombazana i-yathandeka*
9.girl SA.9-PRES.love.EK
'The girl is lovable / lovely'
- b. *Umolokazana u-yafuneka ku-lo mzi*
1.daughter.in.law SA.1-PRES.desire.EK LOC-this 3.household
'A daughter-in-law is desirable in this household'

The idea of (broadly understood) potentiality is often depicted as a subjective perception of an entity to possibly "lower its opposing force" (Dom 2015: 34). This motivates the use of the EK form to convey the so-called "letting relation" (ibid). This 'letting' value is similar to the meaning expressed by the construction *dejarse*

²⁰ Descriptive constructions (including the relative subtype) can be viewed as semantic and functional equivalents of Indo-European adjectives in Xhosa. They express more or less permanent qualities of a person or thing.



in Spanish and *dać się* in Polish, whose sense of potentiality is derived from the predicates of giving or letting: *dejar* and *dać*, respectively. In Xhosa, the ‘letting-type’ of potentiality concerns both the process in its totality (31.a-b) and its degree of facility (31.c). In the former case, the EK construction comments on general properties of the item and/or its conduciveness to achieve a given state (Davidse & Heyvaert 2007: 67; Dom 2015: 20). In the latter case, the EK gram can be accompanied by adverbs of manner that express facility-oriented potentiality, stating that the condition or action can be achieved or carried out easily or with difficulty (Dom 2015).

- (31) a. *Lo mphokoqo u-yatyeka*
 this 3.mphokoqo SA.3-PRES.eat.EK
 ‘This mphokoqo is edible’
- b. *A-ku-lalek-I ngakuSizwe*
 NEG-SA.15-sleep.EK-NEG near.1a.Sipho
kuba u-yangxola (Jokweni 1989: 66)
 because SA.1a-PRES.be.noisy
 ‘It’s impossible to sleep near Sizwe because is noisy’
- c. *Isandla sakhe si-fundeka nzima*
 7.handwriting his SA.7-read.EK difficultly
 ‘His handwriting is illegible’ (lit. ‘His handwriting is legible with difficulty’)

The modal value discussed in the previous paragraph (i.e. ‘letting relation’) explains a widespread use of the EK gram with verbs expressing the ideas of allowing (32.a), obligating, and forcing (32.b). In such instances, however, the EK construction does not add any nuance of potentiality or possibility. It rather constitutes an intransitive counterpart of the underlying transitive verbs.²¹

- (32)a. *Abafundi ba-vumelekile ukuba ba-bhale uviwo*
 2.students SA.2-allow.EK.PERF that SA.2-write.SUBJ 11.exam
 ‘The students are allowed to write the examination’ (Jokweni 1989: 85)
- b. *Amakhwenkwe a-nyanzelekile ukuba a-hambe*
 6.boy SA.6-force.EK.PERF that SA.6-go.SUBJ
 ‘The boys are forced to leave’

²¹ Our evidence suggests that the EK gram does not express the idea of obligation in Xhosa (Du Plessis 2010).



As mentioned above, the EK gram tends to express a subjective type of modality when expressing the idea of potentiality. This means that, by employing the EK construction, the speaker evaluates the likelihood of a situation or activity (Nuyts 2001: 383; Dom 2015: 24). This subjective evaluation of the evidence available to the speaker is even clearer in cases where the EK gram conveys the sense of evidentiality, corresponding to the constructions with the verb *seem* in English. In such instances, the EK gram communicates the viewpoint of the experiencer. That is, given the available physical traits or general deductive mechanisms, the experiencer infers or recons that the subject of the clause is in a certain state, or that a certain activity is being performed. This evidential usage is typical only of perception verbs. In fact, the EK forms of two perception verbs – namely *khangeleka* (33.a) and *jongeka* (33.b) derived from *khangela* ‘look at’ and *jonga* ‘look, see’, respectively – have been grammaticalized as primary expressions of the evidential category in Xhosa. These types of evidential constructions may also be interpreted as expressions of uncertainty.

- (33)a. *USipho u-khangeleka ediniwe*
1a.Sipho SA.1a-look.at.EK being.tired
‘Sipho seems to be tired’
- b. *Le ndoda i-jongeka ilambile*
this 9.man SA.9-look.at.EK being.hungry
‘This man seems to be hungry’

In addition to the aspectual and modal values discussed above, the EK construction may also denote that a given state of affairs or condition arose spontaneously, i.e. as if with limited or no participation of acting agents (see examples 34.a-b below; Du Plessis & Visser 1998). Since the idea of spontaneity, the lack of the agent’s involvement, and the absence of agent-oriented semantic elements is crosslinguistically typical of anticausatives (and/or middles voices; Haspelmath 1993: 93), the EK gram could be regarded as an anticausative member of the causative-anticausative alternation in Xhosa (cf. Dom 2015: 4).²² However, in languages of the world, anticausatives that take part in the causative-anticausative alternation tend to be restricted to a close class of verbs (Dom 2015). In contrast, the value of agent-less and/or spontaneity exhibited by the EK gram in Xhosa is not limited to a

²² Compare the anticausative verbs and the middle voice in Icelandic which are commonly used to represent the event as having occurred or occurring spontaneously without participation of the causing agent. It should also be observed that the EK gram cannot be accompanied by the expression *ngo kwayo* ‘by itself’ or its variants. In order to use such expressions, the reflexive pronoun *-zi-* must be employed.



small set of predicates, but can be employed with a great number of verbs that are characterized by distinct semantic profiles.²³ It should also be noted that, in all cases where the agent is overtly expressed (see section 4.2), the EK gram cannot be analyzed as an anticausative form.

- (34) a. *Iglasi i-qhekeke ingabanjwanga*
 9.glass SA.9-break.EK.PERF without.being.held
 ‘The glass broke without anyone holding it’
- b. *Inyama i-ntlaphuke e-mbize-ni*
 9.meet SA.9-disintegrate.EK.PERF LOC-9.pot-LOC
 ‘The meat disintegrated in the pot’

Furthermore, with a few motion verbs, the EK gram expresses the idea of impact (35.a), urgency, abandon, or impetus (35.b; Pahl 1978: 398–399; Jokweni 1989: 6–7).

- (35) a. *Inkwenkwe i-ntlitheke e-mthi-ni*
 9.boy SA.9-bump.EK.PERF LOC-3.tree-LOC
 ‘The boy has bumped into the tree’
- b. *Ilitye li-yaqengqeleka*
 11.stone SA.11-PRES.hurtle
 ‘The stone is hurtling along’

As far as lexical semantics are concerned, some verbs have acquired special meanings in the EK form if compared to the respective non-extended forms. In certain cases, the metaphorical extension chain can still be recovered. This can be illustrated by the verb *buka* ‘look intently or with admiration’. In the EK construction, i.e. as *bukeka*, this verb signifies ‘be admired, admirable’ and by extension ‘be liked, likable’.

Lastly, a few predicates behave in the EK form as if they were used in the basic form (Pahl 1978: 399; Jokweni 1989: 7). They allow active transitive or ditransitive uses and fail to convey aspectual and modal nuances typically associated with the EK gram. In such cases, the corresponding underlying roots are missing and, hence, the EK forms cannot be traced to any simple (i.e. non-extended) variant, e.g. *meka* ‘light’ or *boleka* ‘borrow, loan’ (see example 36) – the conceptual link between the EK form and its derivational source is lost.

²³ This property would rather approximate the EK construction to the category of a middle voice.



- (36) *Ntumeka ikhandlela!*
light.EK 11.candle
'Light the candle!'

5. Discussion – Map model

The evidence demonstrates that the EK gram is a complex grammatical phenomenon that exhibits a broad range of diverse syntactic and semantic properties.

With respect to syntax, the EK construction tends to be intransitive. The affix EK exerts a de-transitive effect on transitive verbs (both mono- and ditransitive) and has an impersonal effect on intransitive verbs. It also maintains the intransitivity of underlying intransitive verbs. Whenever is possible, the object is eliminated and moved to the subject position, or the expletive *ku* is used in the empty subject position. This behavior approximates the EK form to the W passive. Usually, when objects of underlying transitive verbs appear in the postverbal position in the EK gram, they cannot be co-indexed with object agreement affixes, nor can they be pronominalized. Therefore, such complements do not constitute genuine objects in Xhosa. Although this observation holds true in most cases, there are instances where postverbal elements that correspond to objects of the underlying active verbs do exhibit object-like properties in the EK gram. Specifically, direct objects of underlying ditransitive verbs can be used with object agreement affixes and can be pronominalized by means of pronominal affixes if the indirect object of a respective verb is promoted to the subject position in the EK form. In such cases, the EK gram exhibits a semi-transitive profile. Moreover, a few EK verbs that lack their primary (non-extended) bases can be fully transitive.

Furthermore, even though, in most cases, syntactic properties related to the argument structure exhibited by the EK gram are consistent with properties offered by the W passive, the two constructions also differ. To be exact, the acceptability of examples where the direct and indirect objects of an underlying ditransitive verb appear simultaneously in the postverbal position as simple NPs (i.e. with no preposition or locative markers) is much higher in the W passive than in the EK gram.

What distinguishes the EK gram from the W passive in the most consistent manner is that the former construction commonly fails to express the agent. Although copulative NPs can be used in the EK form, they are often interpreted with the semantic role of cause. However, in certain cases, such copulative NPs can receive an agentive reading. This regularly occurs if two copulative NPs are used and one of them is animate. Additionally, in some instances, the role of agent is found even if



one copulative NP is employed. Such a copulative NP tends to be animate. The copulative NPs with agentive interpretation can be accompanied by agent-oriented and intentional adverbs, as well as by subordinate clauses of reason and purpose. Agents can also be introduced by means of locative NPs, even though other semantic interpretations are significantly more common. An agentive-like reading regularly appears with perception and cognition verbs where a Locative NP is interpreted as experiencer. Furthermore, the EK gram tolerates instrumental NPs.

With respect to TAM verbal semantics, the EK gram customarily expresses two types of information: aspectual and/or modal. Within the domain of aspect, the EK form conveys the ideas of resultativity and stativity. Such readings typically arise if the EK construction is inflected in the ILE perfect. In the present tense, the EK gram rather expresses the process of reaching or getting into a state. Although not a strict rule, the resultative sense predominates with change-of-state verbs, while the stative reading admits non-change-of-state verbs. The resultative and stative nuances persist in the common use of the EK form in descriptive constructions, where the gram approximates Indo-European adjectives. Apart from aspect, the EK gram frequently conveys modal nuances. Often, the EK construction communicates the idea of subjective potentiality, capacity, or possibility, similar to the affix *-able/-ible* in English. Such modal senses are compatible with various temporal and aspectual grams in which the EK construction may be inflected. The subjective modal use is also visible in two other values associated with the EK form: the 'letting relation', either process-oriented or facility-oriented (common with verbs of allowing, obligating, expecting, etc.) and the evidential sense (typical of perception verbs). Both sets of meanings, i.e. aspectual and modal, can be combined in a single usage, so that the form simultaneously draws from the two main domains. Additionally, the EK construction may convey the nuance of spontaneity, implying that a state has emerged or can emerge with limited or no participation of acting agents. In such cases, the gram approximates an anticausative construction. This use is not restricted to a closed set of verbs, but is found with verbs characterized by different semantic profiles. With a few motion verbs, the EK gram expresses impact, urgency, abandon, or impetus. Furthermore, in certain cases, verbs extended by the affix EK receive a special meaning through metaphorical extensions. Lastly, a highly limited number of verbs that contain the morpheme EK act as if they were basic verbal forms – they can be used transitively and fail to exhibit semantic properties typical of the EK gram. Their underlying sources (i.e. verbs without the morpheme EK) are missing.

The semantic and syntactic complexity of the EK gram and the multifariousness of its properties makes it impossible to reduce this form to one taxonomical class



(be it syntactic or semantic), one rigid label, or one (or even a few) invariant values. No taxonomical class encompasses all the cases of the EK form and no specific single sense can be found in all the uses. First, even if the EK gram is frequently intransitive and de-transitive, and its argument structure and argument alternation are typical of passives (the *w* passive included), uses that are not genuinely intransitive can also be found. In such cases, certain elements behave similarly to direct objects and certain verbs behave as semi-transitive or transitive verbs. Second, although the EK form is typically agentless, thus approximating the category of middle voice or anticausative, the agent can be expressed – in fact, in certain cases, the agentive interpretation is obligatory. The EK gram can also be accompanied by locutions that express intentions, reasons, goals, and instruments, lowering the extent of agentless spontaneity, common of EK in its anticausative usage. Third, even though the EK construction frequently introduces the ideas of resultativity and stativity, it can also communicate the process of getting into a state. The former is common if the EK gram is inflected in the ILE perfect, while the latter is typically found with the present-tense morphology.²⁴ Additionally, a few verbs express activities or actions rather than states. Fourth, although the EK gram may express modal senses of potentiality and possibility, as well as related modal shades of meanings, these types of nuances are absent in many other cases.

As a result, instead of boiling down the EK gram to one basic meaning or function, which is untenable given the provided evidence, the definition of the construction should acknowledge the internal variation exhibited. This may be achieved by using the semantic-map model (Figure 2 below). In this model, given the frequency, productivity, lack of contextual constraints, and overall saliency of certain uses, it is possible to postulate four prototypical senses or functions of the EK gram: intransitivity and/or de-transitivity, non-agentivity, resultativity/stativity (treated jointly), and subjective modality.²⁵ The other senses and functions would be less prototypical (semi-agentivity, agentivity, and spontaneity) or non-prototypical (semi-transitivity, transitivity, and impetus).

The map below is purely synchronic. It has a psychological dimension, suggesting how speakers may conceptualize the form. That is, it is likely that native Xhosa

²⁴ This behavior is typical of resultatives and statives crosslinguistically (or rather with constructions evolving along the resultative path; see below).

²⁵ The stative/resultative domain includes descriptives. The subjective modality encompasses all its subtypes such as subjective potentiality, ‘letting relation’, and evidentiality. It should be noted, however, that resultativity and stativity are distinct categories. The same holds true for subjective potentiality, ‘letting-relation’, and evidential.

speakers associate the EK form with the idea of intransitivity (de-transitivity), lack of agentivity, resultativity/stativity, and subjective modality. Other uses and senses would be linked to these centers of prototypicality and viewed as their extensions and (rightfully or not) contextual modifications. Because of their extreme scarcity, some values would not be associated with the form even though they are produced by speakers. Since, in synchronic maps that have a psychological dimension, the relationship expands from prototypical uses (center) to less prototypical uses (periphery), the link between the elements of the map in Figure 1 would proceed from top to bottom.

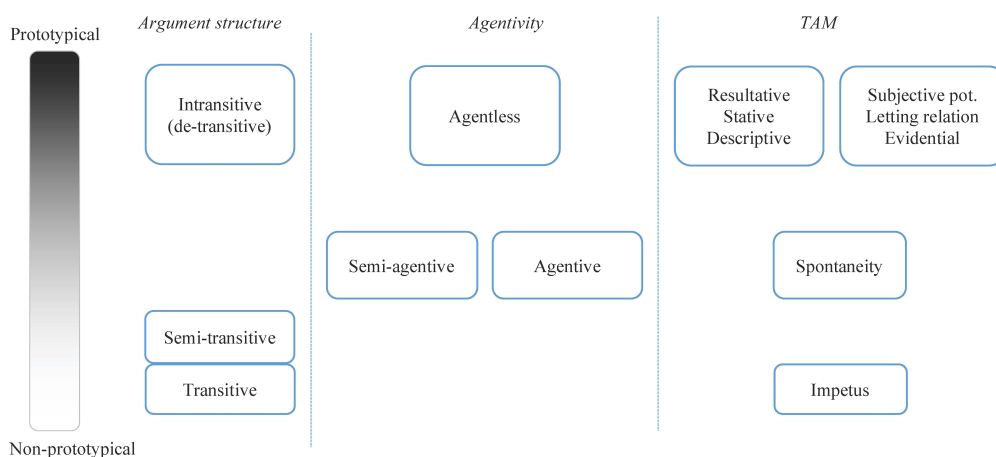


Figure 1: Semantic map of the EK gram – synchronic dimension²⁶

The synchronic polysemy of the EK form that is depicted in Figure 1 arose diachronically. Therefore, the map that represents it should make reference to that diachronic process. As has been explained in section 3, it is that process (not the psychological dimension constructed *post facto* by the speakers) that warrants the cohesion of the map – each sense or function is derived from its predecessor and yields other successive senses and functions.

There is no direct diachronic evidence that could show how the polysemy of the EK form actually arose and how its synchronically-driven map could be structured

²⁶ The prototypicality scale in the left part of the figure differentiates between senses that are more prototypical (black color) and those that are not prototypical (white color). In this map, three degrees of prototypicality are distinguished: prototypical, semi-prototypical and non-prototypical.



internally. There are no texts that would attest to the development of the EK gram from its origin, possibly semantically transparent, to the present. Even more recent stages of this evolution in Nguni (in general) and Xhosa (specifically) cannot be illustrated by texts. This in turn means that the dynamic map can only be postulated on the basis of comparative Bantu (or Niger-Congo) grammar and linguistic typology.

Comparative Bantu and Niger-Congo linguistics suggest that the historical nucleus of the EK gram was constituted by the values of intransitivity, non-agentivity and stativity/resultativity. Other senses, e.g. the modal value of potentiality (similar to *-able/-ible*) is argued to have been developed posteriorly in Common Bantu (Hyman 2007: 160). As has been mentioned in section 2, the EK gram in Xhosa is a successor of the Proto-Bantu morpheme **-ik-* which likely had an intransitive and agentless force and a stative value (Meeussen 1967; Schadeberg 2003; Hyman 2007).²⁷ This Proto-Bantu affix goes further back to the Proto-Niger-Congo morpheme **-ke* which would have exhibited the same neuter and stative value (Voultz 1977; Hyman 2007).²⁸ The exact origin – including the lexical source – of the Proto-Bantu and/or Proto-Niger-Congo affix is, however, unknown.²⁹

Dynamic typology provides further insight into the possible internal structure of the map and, hence, its cohesion. It is a recognized fact that de-transitive constructions are widely used to derive resultative grams. Inversely, the prototype of a resultative category is an intransitive and, if possible, de-transitive construction (Nedjalkov & Jaxontov 1988; Maslov 1988; Haspelmath 1994: 159; Nedjalkov 2001). In various languages, such in-/de-transitive resultatives are also agentless (cf. Akkadian and Mandinka; Andrason 2013a; 2016, respectively). Only later are more

²⁷ It should be noted that stativity is conflated with a resultant state (i.e. resultativity) in various studies.

²⁸ See, for instance, that an Atlantic language, Bijogo uses the affix *-ak / -Vk* to mark the resultative and the middle voice (Seeger 2000, Hyman 2007:159).

²⁹ Güldemann (2011) criticizes Hyman's view (found also in Schadeberg 2003 and Nurse 2008) that Proto-Bantu and Proto-Niger-Congo had a complex inflectional and derivational verbal morphology. According to Güldemann, the agglutinative verbal morphology of Bantu constitutes an innovation – “a late and partly unique development” (ibid.: 133). Thus, we could infer that EK derives from a proto-Niger-Congo periphrasis built around an element that in Bantu appears as the affix EK, and a verbal root or stem. Hyman responded critically to this proposal arguing that Güldemann's hypotheses are weakened by two problems: the possibility that the grammaticalization cycle may be travelled more than once, and the recent and innovative character of most areal properties discussed by Güldemann (2011). Consequently, Hyman (2011) maintains his view that multiple suffixation and prefixation already existed in Proto languages.



agentive uses acquired, often by means of NPs that originally introduced instruments, reason, and/or cause. (Compare the recent development in Basse Mandinka, where the agent can sometimes be expressed, with Standard Mandinka, where it cannot; Andrason 2016a).³⁰ Furthermore, in various languages, original in-/de-transitive resultatives develop into active and, if possible, transitive verbal grams, typically perfects (Maslov 1988; Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca 1994; Nedjalkov 2001; Andrason 2016a). This evolution, which is highly pervasive crosslinguistically, can be illustrated by the development of the *qatala* form in the Semitic family. This gram evolved from an in-/de-transitive resultative (as attested by Akkadian) to an active and transitive perfect, perfective and/or past in posterior languages, such as Hebrew or Arabic (Kouwenberg 2011; Andrason 2013a). Additionally, certain in-/de-transitive constructions may acquire the value of spontaneity, giving rise to anticausatives (cf. the class of Proto-Nordic verbs in *e* whose anticausative sense derives from the Proto-Indo-European intransitive resultative/stative).

Resultative grams undergo another, genuinely aspectual, development. In various languages, resultatives evolve into statives. As a result of this development, a complex, bi-partite event structure typical of resultatives (a prior dynamic cause and a posterior static result; Maslov 1988) is simplified. That is, resultative nuances and any connection between the state and the action by which that state has been triggered are lost – the only remaining sense being a static quality or condition (Andrason 2014a; 2016a). Statives, thus, constitute a more advanced stage of the semantic evolution of resultatives (Andrason 2014a; 2016a; see also Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca 1994).³¹ Apart from developing into statives, resultatives may also acquire evidential values, gradually developing into modal categories (Aikhenvald 2004: 112–117, 279–281; Andrason 2013a, 2013b; 2016a).

Lastly, there is a conceptual and diachronic link that connects intransitive and passive constructions with the modal sense of potentiality (Haspelmath 1987; see Hausa and Modern Greek where the potential modality is expressed by means of the passive).

³⁰ In some languages, one observes a split of an original resultative into two directions, namely into a passive where the agent can be expressed and into an impersonal gram where the agent cannot be expressed (cf. the evolution of the *n/t* resultative into the passive voice in Polish and the so-called impersonal *n/t* tense; Długosz-Kurczabowa & Dubisz 2003; Midgalski 2006; Andrason 2016a).

³¹ This development, which at the end, leads to the formation of present tenses is referred to as the ‘simultaneous path’, a sub-path of the resultative path, which schematizes the crosslinguistic evolution of resultatives. The resultative path includes another common development, referred to as the ‘anterior path’, according to which resultatives evolve into past tenses through the stages of present perfect and perfective (Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca 1994; Dahl 2000; Andrason 2013a; 2016a).



Consequently, in-/de-transitive agentless resultative constructions tend to (or may) gradually develop according to the following grammaticalization paths: in-/de-transitive > transitive; agentless > agentive; agentless > spontaneity; resultative > stative; resultative > evidential > modal; and in-/de-transitive > potential. These evolutionary tendencies enable us, in turn, to postulate a dynamic organization of the map that renders coherent the semantic and functional diversity of the EK gram. An in-/de-transitive, agentless, resultative construction most likely constitutes the historical nucleus of the map from which other senses and functions have emerged. In the domain of argument structure, the in-/de-transitive EK gram has arguably acquired semi-transitive and, possibly, transitive traits (the latter development occurred only if the underlying verb has been lost). In the domain of agentivity, the agentless EK form has developed more agentive values: semi-agentive (purpose, reason, instrument, etc.) and genuine agentive (with some copulative and locative NPs). In the domain of TAM semantics, the resultative EK construction would have acquired stative and descriptive senses (aspect) as well as a set of modal values (subjective potentiality and evidentiality). The agentless function would prompt the development of the nuance of spontaneity.³² All of this is represented graphically in the map below (Figure 2).³³

To conclude, as the EK gram draws from various semantic and functional domains, it oscillates around several categories. Therefore, if envisaged holistically, it fits into a cloud of categorial radial networks. For the same reason, it does not constitute a canonical exemplar of any such category. According to our analysis, the EK gram exhibits the highest degree of canonicity with respect to the category of intransitivity. Nevertheless, since semi-transitive and transitive uses occur sporadically, the EK construction should be viewed as a slightly less canonical representative of that category. The agentless nature of the EK form is less canonical, because semi-

³² At this stage of research, we are unable to determine the diachronic relationship between potentiality and evidentiality, and how the nuance of impetus relates to the remaining components of the map. It also seems excessively speculative to us to postulate any diachronic connection of ‘letting-relation’ to the other modal values.

³³ Proto-Bantu and Proto-Niger-Congo probably had another resultative in-/de-transitive gram, the ILE (or its variants). This construction explores other possible paths of development. It became transitive (if necessary or possible) and agentive, and acquired dynamic perfectal, perfective, and past values (as predicted by the anterior path). The gram also developed stative and simple present senses (as predicated by the simultaneous path). However, the original, intransitive force can still be seen in some languages, where the ILE verbs are intransitive and the extension is valency-related (Hyman 2011). For instance, in Degema, there are unanalyzable verbs that contain the affix ILE and are also in-/de-transitive: *kpengile* ‘be tilted backwards’ (cf. causative *kpengile-se* ‘tilt backwards’ (Kari 2008; Hyman 2011).

agentive and genuine agentive uses are relatively common. Consequently, the gram likely occupies a less central sphere in this categorial network. With respect to aspect, the EK gram cannot be viewed as a canonical instantiation of either resultativity or stativity – both senses are equally common, and, moreover, other, non-resultative and non-stative meanings are frequent. As a result, the EK form may be mapped onto intermediate zones of the resultative and the stative categories. The overall canonicity of the modality is probably similar. The position of the EK gram in other categorial networks (such as spontaneity, and especially transitivity and agentivity) is significantly more peripheral.

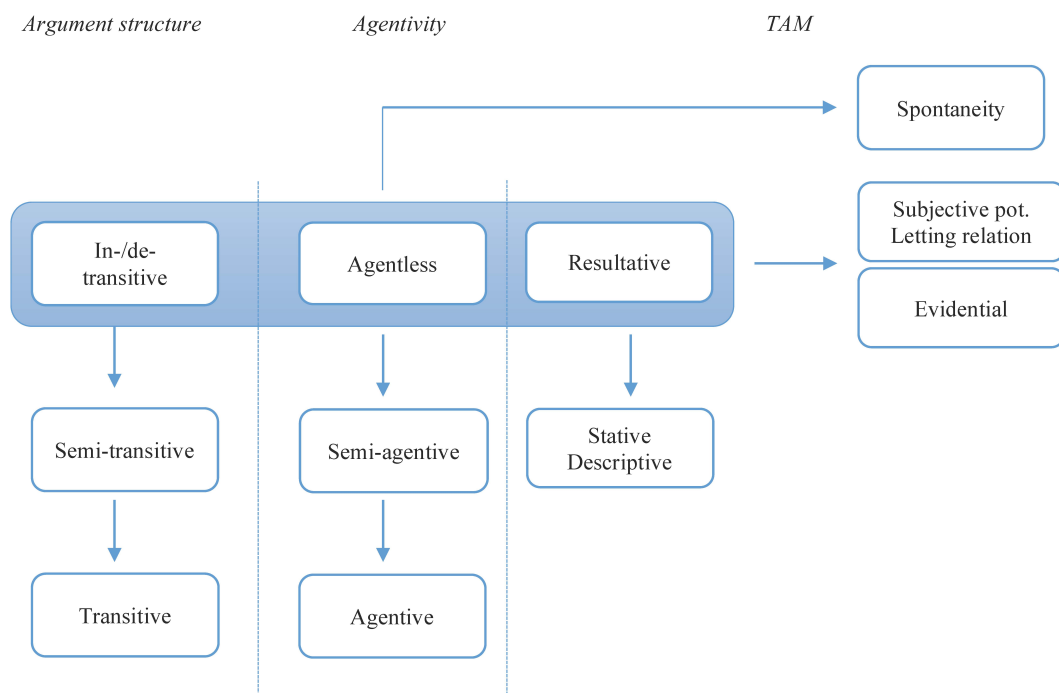


Figure 2: Semantic map of the EK gram – diachronic dimension³⁴

³⁴ This diachronic map is more fine-grained than the synchronic map (see Figure 1) because it is possible to discern a historical relationship between certain sub-types of the aspectual domain (resultative > stative / descriptive) and postulate individual paths leading to certain sub-types of the modal domain (i.e. resultative > subjective potentiality; and resultative > evidentiality). The blue shaded area covers the diachronic center (input) of the map. It is possible that descriptive is a later extension of stativity, while ‘letting relation’ arose from potentiality.



6. Conclusion

The present paper has demonstrated that despite their complexity and disparity, the semantic and syntactic properties of the EK gram can be harmonized and unified. The EK construction can be viewed as a coherent – albeit non-monolithic – grammatical phenomenon if one adopts the cognitive approach to (broadly understood) polysemy. That is, when the EK form is defined by means of a dynamic map of related functions and senses. Synchronically, the components of the map such as intransitivity (de-transitivity), non-agentivity, resultativity/stativity, and modality are prototypical. Other components, e.g. (semi-)transitivity, (semi-)agentivity, spontaneity, and impetus, are less prototypical or non-prototypical. Speakers regularly associate the EK gram with the former group of features. In contrast, the latter class of properties does not enter into the speakers' psychological representation of the EK form. Although this synchronically oriented map has a psychological dimension (important for speakers' perception and understanding of the EK construction), the true cohesion of the EK gram is recoverable only diachronically. This stems from the fact that the components of the map have emerged gradually spreading along a web of grammaticalization paths. Comparative Bantu and Niger-Congo studies and linguistic typology suggest that the most probable input of the map of the EK form (or its diachronic center) corresponds to an in-/de-transitive, agentless, resultative gram. By following a set of crosslinguistically common grammaticalization paths, this initial construction has developed functions that are more transitive and more agentive; senses that are stative and descriptive, as well as a separate class of modal values (subjective and evidential). Overall, the dynamic understanding of the EK gram in terms of a grammaticalization-based map gives us access to both the extreme variability of this construction and its internal cohesion.

Abbreviations

ABS – absolute pronoun; COP – copulative; EK – EK gram; LOC – locative (prefix and/or suffix); NEG – negative / negator; NP – noun phrase; OA – object agreement / pronominal object affix; PASS – W Passive; PERF – ILE Perfect; POSS – possessive; PRES – YA Present; SA – subject agreement / pronominal subject affix; SUBJ – Subjunctive; TAM – tense-aspect-mood. Numbers make reference to the Bantu noun classes or the classes of inflectional affixes.

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KONSTRUKCIJA S GRAMOM EK U JEZIKU XHOSA: KOGNITIVNI PRISTUP

Temeljeći se na kognitivnolingvističkome teorijskom okviru, rad zagovara tezu da se cijeli sintaktički i semantički profil EK grama može ujediniti i promatrati kao koherentnu cjelinu njegovim modeliranjem kao prikaza različitih, no povezanih odlika. Ovakvo shvaćanje



omogućava pristup kako iznimnoj varijabilnosti oblika EK tako i njegovoj unutarnjoj koheziji, bez izjednačavanja te konstrukcije s jednom taksonomskom kategorijom ili postuliranja skupa nepromjenjivih odlika. Sinkronijski dokazi pokazuju da su prototipne odlike poput neprijelaznosti, ne-agentivnosti, rezultativnosti/ statičnosti i modalnosti. Ostale odlike, npr. (polu-)prijelaznost, (polu)agentivnost, sponanost i poticaj manje su prototipne, ili neprototipne. Prva od ovih skupina je psihološki povezana s EK gramom, dok potonja nije dio govornikove predodžbe ovoga oblika. No prava se kohezija EK grama može otkriti jedino dijakronijski. Povijesno središte prikaza oblika EK odgovara ne/detranzitivnom rezultativnom gramu bez agensa. Iz te početne konstrukcije razvijaju se ostale odlike prikazane kao sastavnice prikaza (npr. funkcije koje su prelaznije ili agentivnije te stativna i modalna značenja) vodeći se skupom zajedničkih evolucijskih tendencija zajedničkih jezicima ili smjerova gramatikalizacije.

Ključne riječi: Xhosa; Bantu; ekstenzija EK; kognitivna lingvistika; morfosintaksa; značenjski prikazi; prototip.