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Morphosemantic Description of Clitics in Nyakyusa

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Abstract

This paper offers a morphosemantic description of cliticization in Nyakyusa, focusing on the morphological processes involved in clitic formation and the semantic roles they play within the language. Although very little has been done in Bantu linguistics, a review of the available literature indicates that clitics demonstrate varying shapes, constraints in their formation, and their semantics. The study identifies clitic formation strategies occurring within noun and verb morphology. In noun morphology, clitics are first formed by attaching the final CV syllable of a possessive pronoun to the noun host and secondly, by combining the initial consonant and final vowel of second-person singular possessives into a clitic that leans to class 1 or 2 nouns. In verb morphology, cliticization includes: attaching the first CV syllable of a pronoun or adverb to the verb, attaching the final CV syllable of a demonstrative to the verb and incorporating locative markers 'po', 'ko', and 'mo' into verbs to express spatial or additional semantic nuances revolving around politeness and polarity. Semantically, clitics in Nyakyusa are possessives, interrogatives, and locatives. Regarding productivity, two kinship terms are productive, i.e., they allow clitic formation for all persons, and interrogative clitics =ku and =ki are selective as very few verbs realise well-formedness.

1.0 Introduction

This paper systematically provides a morphosemantic description of clitics in Nyakyusa, a Bantu language spoken primarily in Tanzania. It examines two domains of grammar: morphology, by describing the processes involved in clitic formation, and semantics, by analysing the functional roles clitics play in the language. Within the morphological domain, the paper also identifies the constraints governing cliticization. Overall, the study focuses on describing the morphological structure of clitics, the constraints governing their distribution, and their semantic contributions.

Felberg (1996) describes Nyakyusa as a language spoken by approximately one million people and stretching geographically from the north Rukuru river near Kalonga in Malawi to Mbeya town in Tanzania, where the majority of the speakers

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live. The language is classified as M31 in the list of Bantu languages. According to LOT (2009), Nyakyusa is one of the ten biggest languages in Tanzania with 740,020 speakers. The majority of the speakers, approximately 682,539, live in Mbeya region, particularly in the three districts, namely Kyela (with 138,869 speakers), Rungwe (258,441) and Mbeya Urban (145,007). Compared with other, mostly under-described Bantu languages of Tanzania, there has been a relatively high number of publications on Nyakyusa. The description nevertheless remains very sketchy (Persohn, 2017). Therefore, a lot is needed to contribute to language documentation.

As pointed out earlier, a lot has been done regarding documenting languages in Tanzania, including Nyakyusa. However, most of these descriptive works foregrounded the description of verb and noun morphology, paying little attention to the systematic study of clitics. In particular, descriptive and theoretical studies on verb morphology (Maho, 2007; Robinson, 2015) and noun morphology (Rugemalira, 2007; Lusekelo, 2009; Robinson, 2016) have laid the foundation for the description of clitics within the realm of verb and noun morphology, respectively.

One of the foundations laid by these aforementioned descriptive studies in Bantu linguistics is the theoretical understanding of the meaning of clitics. Regarding their semantic conception, clitics are defined as dependent morphemes that lean on their host words for both pronunciation and meaning (Halpern, 2007; Asir, 2025). In this context, the theoretical framework proposed by Nurse (2008) is particularly relevant. Nurse notes that Bantu languages, including the language under study, are "verby", that is, they are agglutinative and characterised by a rich system of affixation. A single Bantu verb can consist of a sequence of up to eleven morphological slots, all centred around the verb root. This structure provides a useful basis for the description of clitics as leaning elements to the verb and noun. In Bantu languages, clitics can appear as proclitics, occurring before the verb or noun, or as enclitics, occurring after the final vowel of the verbal or nominal structure (Rugemalira, 2005).

Rugemalira (2010) discusses the role of clitics within noun and verbal morphology, highlighting the complexity and variability of their function across different Bantu languages. He focuses on the morpheme *-ag-* or *-ang-,* noting that its status can vary significantly depending on the language in question. In some Bantu languages, this morpheme functions as a clitic, on the one hand, and it operates as a tense or aspect marker, on the other hand. This observation underscores the view that the categorisation and function of morphemes, particularly clitics, are highly language-dependent within the Bantu family. As such, any generalisations about clitics in Bantu linguistics must be made with caution, as morphological markers may not consistently behave the same way across languages. This variability makes the study of clitics in Bantu both a rich

and challenging area of research, requiring careful attention to language-specific grammatical structures and usage patterns.

In illustrating locative cliticization of demonstratives, Simango (2012) points out that both proximal and distal demonstrative pronouns can cliticize to the noun they modify. This is achieved by deleting the initial syllable of the demonstrative and attaching the remaining CV sequence to the noun, as illustrated in (1a-c).

(1) a. *munthu uyu* 'this person' *munthuyu*
b. *munthu uyo* 'that person' *munthuyo*
c. *munthu uja* 'that person' **munthuja*

From the examples provided in (1), the cliticization of demonstratives informs our understanding of possible clitic formation and restricted cliticization in ciCewa. While the demonstratives *uyu* 'this' and *uyo* 'that' can cliticize to the noun they modify, the demonstrative *uja* 'that' cannot. However, the ciCewa data provided by Simango indicate that cliticisation of demonstratives is highly productive, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Productivity of Demonstrative Clitics in ciCewa

Noun Class	**Proximal Demonstratives**	**Distant Demonstratives**
	Examples	**Examples**
1.	*mwanayu 'this child'*	*mwanayo 'that child'*
2.	*anthuwa 'these people'*	*anthuwo 'those people'*
3.	*mundawu 'this garden'*	*mundawo 'that garden'*
4.	*mindayi 'these gardens'*	*mindayo 'those gardens'*
5.	*tsikuli 'this day'*	*tsikulo 'that day'*
6.	*masikuwa 'these days'*	*masikuwo 'those days'*
7.	*cinthuci 'this thing'*	*cinthuco 'that thing'*
8.	*zinthuzi 'these things'*	*zinthuzo 'those things'*
9.	*nkhumbayi 'this pig'*	*nkhumbayo 'that pig'*
10.	*nkhumbazi 'these pigs'*	*nkhumbazo 'those pigs'*
12.	*kanthuka 'this tiny thing'*	*kanthuko 'that tiny thing'*
13.	*tinthuti 'these tiny things'*	*tinthuto 'those tiny things'*
14.	*ulemuwu 'this politeness'*	*ulemuwo 'that politeness'*
15.	*kuvinaku 'this dancing'*	*kuvinako 'that dancing'*
16.	*pamalopa 'at this place'*	*pamalopo 'at that place'*
17.	*kumaloku 'to this place'*	*kumaloko 'to that place'*
18.	*m'malomu'in this place'*	*m'malomo'in that place'*

Source: Simango (2012)

Table 1 shows that cliticisation of demonstratives in ciCewa is highly productive. Interestingly, a review of scholarly works on locative clitics indicates varying shapes of locative clitics, restriction in their formation and their semantics across languages. For instance, while in Runyambo, locative clitics assume the shape of *(-ho, -yo, -mu*) (see Rugemalira, 2005), in Nyakyusa, locative enclitics assume the shape of *(-po, -ko, -mo*) (see Persohn, 2017). Similarly, in ciCewa (see Simango, 2012) demonstrative clitics have a higher degree of productivity compared to other Bantu languages such as Kiswahili. In contrast to many studies on locative clitics, Ngonyani (2006) offered a descriptive account of clitics focusing on resumptive pronominal clitics in Bantu languages with specific attention to Kiswahili, Kindendeule and Chiluba. This indicates that the study involving clitics is broad and has recently drawn a lot of scholarly attention.

Rugemalira (2005), in his descriptive grammar of Runyambo, provides an insightful description of clitics, emphasising their syntactic behaviour and semantic functions. His analysis of locative enclitics (-ho, -yo, -mu) highlights their derivation from locative noun class prefixes (16, 17, and 18, respectively), and their position immediately after the final vowel of the verb stem. These enclitics are notably restricted in their syntactic environment, as they can only be followed by the -ga tense form, as seen in examples like *kusítamáho* ('sit on there') and *embúzi yamfaho* ('the goat has died on me'). Rugemalira demonstrates how these locative enclitics contribute to spatial referencing in Runyambo and interact with tense and negation, as in the complex construction *tí-n-ka-ji-sítama-hó-ga* ('I have never sat on it'), illustrating the morphological richness and hierarchical structure of the verbal complex.

In addition to locative enclitics, Rugemalira identifies interrogative enclitics such as -ci and -hi, which function as reduced forms of the question words *ecici* ('what') and *nkáhi* ('where'), noting a decline in the use of their full forms. He also discusses *-je* and *-kwo,* with the former having lost its free-form origin and the latter derived from *kwokwo* ('really'), enriching the expressive capabilities of the language. Moreover, the study describes the *ka-* proclitic, which marks subjunctive constructions and appears to stem from the verb *reka* ('leave alone'), indicating a functional shift from lexical to grammatical use. Examples like *ká-ba-rim-e* ('let them cultivate') and *ká-ba-ta-m-bón-a* ('lest they see me') show its role in expressing volition, negation, and prevention. Finally, Rugemalira discusses the reflexive morpheme [é], which is invariant and precedes the verb root, as seen in *ba-ka-ji-é-téer-er-a* ('they hit it for themselves'), underlining its syntactic placement and reflexive meaning within complex verb forms.

In Nyakyusa, the existing literature indicates that research on clitics still lacks a systematic and comprehensive description. Existing descriptive studies, such as Lusekelo (2013) and Persohn (2017), touch on clitic phenomena only incidentally, as their primary aims concern the identification of determiners in Bantu noun phrases and the description of verbal morphology, respectively.

Lusekelo (2013: 9), in his comparative study, examined the criteria used for identifying determiners in Bantu noun phrases across selected Bantu languages, with cliticization cited as one of the diagnostic tools. In the case of Nyakyusa, however, the study offered only a single example of clitic formation within a noun, *mwana=ke* 'his/her child', which illustrates possessive cliticization. Because the study focused on the general morphology of the noun phrase rather than on clitics themselves, a substantial portion of the Nyakyusa clitic system remains undescribed. Important gaps include the productivity of clitics within nominal structures, the processes underlying clitic formation on verbs, and the broader semantic range of clitics in the language. A fuller understanding of these aspects is essential for developing a comprehensive morphosemantic account of clitics in Nyakyusa, which is the central goal of the present paper.

Persohn (2017: 69), whose primary focus was the description of Nyakyusa verb morphology, also provides partial insights into clitic behaviour in the language. He notes that Nyakyusa exhibits eight morphemes of the shape CV that appear in a specific postverbal slot: enclitic substitutives for locative noun classes 16-18; a partitive and a comparative enclitic, both homophonous with the class 18 substitutive; and two enclitic WH-question markers. Although Persohn describes these elements as part of the verbal template, his treatment remains limited because clitic behaviour was not the main focus of his analysis. The current study, therefore, seeks to build on this previous work by offering a more comprehensive account of Nyakyusa clitics within both verbal and nominal morphology. It aims to describe their formation, the constraints governing their distribution, and their semantic contributions, thereby providing a more comprehensive morphosemantic profile of clitics in the language.

2.0 Theory

This paper, being descriptive in nature, tends to avoid strong theoretical positions. However, in this section, we provide a theoretical literature review to offer a broader conceptualisation of the clitic phenomenon across languages. The theoretical literature on clitics reveals varying concepts across the world's languages. For instance, Luís (2004) notes that clitics in various Romance languages exhibit many affixal properties associated with pronouns. These properties include rigid ordering, idiosyncratic co-occurrence restrictions, fusion, syncretism, and allomorphic variation. Luís further argues that clitics in Romance languages function as morphologically attached inflectional affixes, categorised as proclitics (preverbal) and enclitics (postverbal) (cf. Rugemalira, 2005). In a similar vein, Duranti (1979) introduces the concept of object clitic pronouns, where a pronominal object is morphologically inflected and incorporated into the verb as an object pronoun.

More recently, Haspelmath (2023) offers a slightly different conceptualisation of clitics from the classical view that treats them as affixes. He

defines a clitic as a bound morph that is neither an affix nor a root. According to Haspelmath, the crucial distinction between clitics and affixes is that affixes are class-selective (i.e., they always attach to nouns, verbs, or adjectives), whereas clitics do not exhibit word-class selectivity. He concludes that although the object person markers in Romance languages have traditionally been described as clitics, in modern usage they function as affixes, though they likely originated as clitics.

This theoretical literature review has been instrumental in informing the description of clitics in Nyakyusa. It provides broader insights into this linguistic phenomenon, particularly the treatment of clitics as morphological elements that can be analysed within both nominal and verbal morphology, as either proclitics or enclitics. Furthermore, clitics are characterised as "leaning" morphemes with phonological features of speech reduction. Ultimately, the review suggests that the definition and behaviour of clitics may vary depending on the specific language under study.

3.0 Methodology

The data for this paper were collected in Kyela district, where many native speakers reside. The data were gathered through observation, supported by the introspective knowledge of one of the two researchers, who is a native speaker of the language. We recorded a total of 100 words and sentences containing clitics. After conducting a preliminary analysis of the data, a discussion was held with three informants to obtain grammaticality judgments from other native speakers. This was done to verify the acceptability of various examples and constructions presented in the paper. The participants were Nyakyusa speakers aged between 40 and 60, one of whom is a secondary school teacher specialising in Kiswahili. The discussion began informally, but when it was noticed that the participants were genuinely interested in the topic, it was necessary to shift the discussion to a more formal tone.

Based on the collected data, we analysed and discussed the formation of clitics (their morphological realisation) in Nyakyusa, including their semantics, the study referred to in this paper as a morphosemantic description.

4.0 Result and Discussions

This paper, descriptive in nature, seeks to answer research questions related to clitic formation in Nyakyusa and their semantic representation. The findings presented here include examples using Nyakyusa words and sentences. In Nyakyusa, we noted a mismatch between sounds and orthography (see Robinson, 2023). In light of this, it is worth presenting a phonological sketch of Nyakyusa before discussing the formation of clitics and their associated semantic nuances.

4.1 Nyakyusa Phonological Sketch

Nyakyusa has seven vowels, which have been maintained in the language, reflecting the Proto-Bantu system. Proto-Bantu (PB) is believed to have had a seven-vowel (7V) system; however, the majority of Bantu languages have reduced this system to five vowels (Schadeberg, 1995; Hyman, 2003). In those Bantu languages that reduced the seven vowels to five, a historical process occurred in which the highest front vowels *i/*ɪ and back vowels *u/*ʊ merged into [i] and [u], respectively. Table 2 shows vowels in Nyakyusa with their orthographic representation, including examples.

Table 2: Nyakyusa Vowels

Vowel	Example	Gloss
~~ɨ~~	*p~~ɨ~~nda*	tighten the rope
i	*pinda*	fold clothes
~~ʉ~~	*k~~ʉ~~la*	grow
u	*kula*	blow (cf. wind)
o	*bhola*	decay
e	*seka*	laugh
a	*papa*	coagulate
ii	*piita*	bewitch
uu	*fuula*	undress
ee	*seeka*	shivering of teeth because of eating something bitter
oo	*bhoola*	slaughter
aa	*saala*	rejoice

The vowels presented in Table 2 have been used in examples presented in this paper, just the same as the consonants. However, the notable mismatch regarding consonants involves [β], which is orthographically represented by <bh>. Other consonants attested in Nyakyusa include [p f m n ŋ ɲ s l t k g ŋg mb nd]. The glides [j] and [w] are not attested as independent phonemes; instead, they appear in the language through a phonological process where vowels [i] and [u], respectively, glide when appearing before another dissimilar vowel.

4.2 Morphosemantics of Clitics within Noun Morphology

The morphosemantic analysis of clitics within noun morphology involved first, identifying, based on the collected data, the noun classes that allow cliticization in Nyakyusa, and then analysing the phenomenon with particular attention to clitic formation in the language. The findings analysed from observations indicate that clitics in the noun morphology denote possession and, in this view, they lean against nouns. Examples in (2) illustrate the formation of clitics and their possessive role with the noun class system.

(2) Class 1

u-mu-ana (umwana) gwako ugwa kipanda u-mu-an-a ko (umwanako)

Aug-1-stem your who is firstborn Aug-1-stem-FV Cl.

'You firstborn child'

The example provided in (2) demonstrates the formation of clitics within the morphology of a noun, technically called cliticisation of possessives. As shown, in the language, clitics with noun morphology primarily express possession, particularly with kinship terms. For instance, in the phrase *umwana gwako* 'your child', consisting of a noun and a possessive pronoun, the two elements merge, and the final syllable of the possessive pronoun, *gwako* 'your', attaches to the noun to mark possession. This results in the form *u-mu-an-a=ko* (*umwanako*), meaning 'your child.' The word *umwanako* 'your child' is composed of an augment (pre-prefix), which, in Nyakyusa, is a copy of the vowel in the noun class prefix, the noun prefix, stem, final vowel, and a clitic that appears after the final vowel. This clitic signifies possession and illustrates its tendency as a "leaning" element in the construction.

Additionally, continuing with the discussion on clitic formation, it is the final syllable of the possessive pronoun that attaches to the noun. However, in the language, the final syllable of possessive pronouns varies depending on the person. For example, the possessive pronoun for the first-person singular differs from its plural counterpart. Similarly, the second- and third-person singular and plural forms do not share the same final syllables. This variation is illustrated in example (3), which involves class 1 nouns and their corresponding possessive pronouns reflecting singular and plural persons.

(3) Statements Clitics

a) ***u-mw-an-a (u) -gw-angu*** ~~*u-*~~*gwa kipanda mbine umwangu*

Aug-3-child-FV Aug.-1s- my Aug-of 7-firstborn is sick my child

'My firstborn'

b) ***u-mw-an-a (u) -gw-itu*** ~~*u-*~~*gwa kipanda mbine umwanitu*

Aug-3-child-FV Aug.-1p- our Aug-of 7-firstborn is sick our child

'Our firstborn is sick'

c) ***u-mw-an-a (u)-gw-ako*** ~~*u-*~~*gwa kipanda mbine umwako*

Aug-3-child-FV Aug.-2s- your Aug-of 7-firstborn is sick your child

'Your firstborn is sick'

d) ***u-mw-an-a (u) -gw-inu*** ~~*u-*~~*gwa kipanda mbine umwaninu*
Aug-3s-child-FV Aug.-2p- your Aug-of 7-firstborn is sick your child
'Your firstborn is sick'

e) ***u-mw-an-a (u)-gw-ake*** ~~*u-*~~*gwa kipanda mbine umwanake*
Aug-3-child-FV Aug.-3s his/her Aug-of 7-firstborn is sick his/her child
'His/her firstborn is sick'

f) ***u-mw-an-a (u)-gw-abho*** ~~*u-*~~*gwa kipanda mbine umwanabho*
Aug-3-child-FV Aug.-3s his/her Aug-of 7-firstborn is sick his/her child
'Their firstborn is sick'

The examples in (3) demonstrate clitic formation in Nyakyusa, where the varying final syllables of possessive pronouns attach to the noun. The examples are presented in pairs, whereby the first pair illustrates first-person singular and plural possession, the second shows second-person singular and plural, and the final pair demonstrates third-person singular and plural. In each case, the clitic reflects both person and number, *ngu/tu* for first person singular/plural, *ko/nu* for second person, and *ke/bho* for third person, and they all get attached to the noun to indicate possession.

Additionally, these possessive pronouns in Nyakyusa exhibit different forms in class 1 and class 2 to reflect agreement properties. Therefore, the examples in (4) demonstrate clitic formation indicating possession with respect to noun class 2.

(4)	**Statements**	**Clitics**
a)	*a-bha-ana a-bh-ang~~u~~ bha-lim-il-e ~~i-~~fi-lombe abhanang~~u~~* *Aug-3p-child Aug-3p-my 3p-cultivate-TA Aug-8- maize children* *'My children have cultivated maize'*	*my*
b)	*a-bha-ana a-bh-~~it~~u~~-~~ bha-l~~i~~m-il-e ~~i-~~fi-lombe abhan~~it~~u~~-~~* *Aug-3p-child Aug-3p-our 3p-cultivate-TA Aug-8- maize children* *'Our children have cultivated maize'*	*our*
c)	*a-bha-ana a-bh-ako bha-l~~i~~m-il-e ~~i~~ -fi-lombe abhanako* *Aug-3p-child Aug-3p-your 3p-cultivate-TA Aug-8- maize children*	*your*

'Your children have cultivated maize'

d) *a-bha-ana a-bh-ɨnu bha-lɨm-il-e ɨ -fi-lombe abhanɨnu*
Aug-3p-child Aug-3p-your 3p-cultivate-TA Aug-8- maize your children
'Your children have cultivated maize'

e) *a-bha-ana a-bh-anabho bha-lɨm-il-e ɨ -fi-lombe abhanabho*
Aug-3p-child Aug-3p-my 3p-cultivate-TA Aug-8- maize their children
'Their children have cultivated maize'

The examples provided in (4) illustrate the agreement pattern involving clitic formation for noun class 2, where the noun prefix *-bha-* agrees with the prefix of the possessive pronoun. Further clarification of the data in (4) is necessary, as the words in brackets represent the surface forms of the possessive pronouns after undergoing specific phonological processes. These processes include vowel shortening, as in *a-bha-ana=ngu* becoming *a-bh-ana=ngu*, and regressive assimilation followed by vowel shortening, as in *a-bha-itu* becoming *abhɨtʉ*. Regarding clitic formation, it is obvious that the final syllable of the possessive pronoun is the one that leans to the class 2 noun. For instance, *a-bha-ana a-bha-angu* 'my children' to *abhana=ngu* (1SG), *abhana abhako* 'your children' to *abhaana=ko* (2SG) and *abhaana abhabho* to *abhana=bho* (3p). For first- and third-person possessive nouns plural *a-bh-ɨtʉ* and *abhɨnu* respectively, the nuclei of the final syllables [tu] and [nu] assimilate their height feature regressively with the final vowel of the class 2 noun as in *abha-ana abhɨtu* to *abhanɨtʉ* (1PL) and *a-bha-ana abhɨnu* to *abhanɨnu* (2PL) respectively. In this view, the final vowel [a] of the Class 2 noun alternates to [ɨ] in the aforementioned clitic formations.

Examples (3) and (4) illustrated clitic formation as a morphological process and its role in marking possession, which is the semantic property. The illustration involved kinship terms *u-mwana* (class 1) and *abha-ana* (Class 2). During data collection, an attempt was made to determine which nouns in Nyakyusa permit clitic formation. The results indicate that many kinship terms in noun classes 1 and 2, beyond those already exemplified, allow clitic formation. Accordingly, Table 3 provides additional examples of kinship terms in Nyakyusa that allow clitic formation.

Table 3: Kinship Terms that Allow Clitic Formation

Class 1	Surface Forms	Gloss	Class 2	Clitics	Gloss
ʉ-mu-nuguna	*ʉnnuguna*	young brother	*abhanugun a*	*ʉnnuguna=g o*	Your young brother

u-mu-ipwa	*umwipwa*	nephew	*abhipwa*	*umwipwa=go*	Your nephew
u-mu-isukulu	*umwisukulu*	grand parent	*abhisukulu*	*umwisukulu=go*	Your grand parent/child
u-mu-kasi	*unkasi*	wife	*abhakasi*	*unnkasi=go*	Your wife
u-mu-lume	*undume*	husband	*abhalume*	*undume=go*	Your husband
u-mu-manyani	*ummanyani*	friend	*abhamanyani*	*ummanyani=go*	Your friend
u-mu-nyenya	*unnyenya*	great grandpa	*abhanyenya*	*unnyenya=go*	Your great grandparent/child
i-lumbu	*ilumbu*	sister/brother	*abhalumbu*	*ilumbugo*	Your sister/brother
u-mu-nyasenga	*unnyasenga*	aunt	*Abhanyasenga*	*unnyasenga=go*	Your aunt
u-mu-lamu	*undamu*	in-law/cousin	*abhalamu*	*undamu=go*	Your cousin
u-mu-ina	*unna*	His/her mother	*abhanna*	*unna=bho*	Their mother
**ugoso*	*ugwise*		**abhise*	*ugwise*	His/her father
u-mu-kamu	*unkamu*	His/her brother/relative		*unkamugo*	Your relative

The examples presented in Table 3 demonstrate permissible clitic formation within noun morphology. The column labelled *Surface Forms* represents words that are synchronically produced by speakers after undergoing diachronic phonological changes. In analysing the data exemplified in the table, we observed three linguistic aspects, namely clitic formation occurring in all persons, lexicalised clitics and clitic formation to borrowed words. Starting with the first, all the examples in Table 1, except for *umwinako (*which appears in all persons as in *umwinangu* (1SG), *umwinitu* (1PL), *umwinake* (3SG), *umwinabho* (3PL) and *umwininu* (2PL)), occur only in the second person, in contrast to the examples in (3) and (4), which allow clitic formation across all persons.

To ascertain this divergence aspect pointed out in the previous paragraph, we conducted an informal focus group discussion (FGD) involving 3 to 5 participants who are native speakers of the language. The result of the discussion shows that since clitic formation involves shortened forms/constructions, it allows speakers not to expend a lot of energy in speech. Because of this possibility, clitics

are formed in constructions which are regularly made by speakers. In this view, it was discussed that Nyakyusa speakers normally engage in conversations involving the first person (speaker 1) pointing to the second person (speaker 2). In many instances, speaker 1 introduces speaker 2 to a particular relative or rather orders speaker 2 to salute, introduce somebody to other relatives or ask person 2 a question to serve a phatic function of a language. Examples

.....~~u~~kiisa nu mu-lume=go (nd~~u~~mego)/u-mu-kasi=go?
Literal meaning: You have not come with your husband.
.....~~U~~ne nd~~i~~ mu-manyani=go
Literal meaning: I am your friend
.....Lusajo isaga g~~u~~mmanye ~~u~~-mu-ipwa=go (~~u~~mwipwago)
Literal meaning: Lusajo come and introduce yourself to your uncle

The sentences presented above were exemplified by FGD participants and were also noted down through observation technique in Nyakyusa speech community. Remaining at the same point, clitics are shortened constructions as in *umulume=go* ([2]*undumego*) or unkasi=go with its longer constructions *undume gwako* 'your husband' or *unkasi gwako* 'your wife' respectively. This reduction involves taking the first consonant, [g] of the second person possessive pronoun singular, combining with the last vowel [o], to form a CV syllable [go], which is a possessive clitic.

This reduction involving a conversation with the second person possessive pronoun singular, one of the participants pointed out that it serves a pragmatic function, that is, meaning goes beyond literal words. This happens when person 1 warns person 2 not to seduce her, for she is her relative. For instance, person 1 justified this position by narrating the following event:

Narration: Isiku limo nanwaga ubhwalwa kwa bhukenja bhukomile. Unkikulu jumo uju a-a-

> *tugeele nu ndumyana alikumumana alinkuti, 'une ndi **ilumbugo**'. Twe twalipo pala tukaapilike isi undumyana jula a-a-jobhile. Bho tundalusiisye unkikulu jula, aliamwile atile, "Alinamatingo fijo umwana uju, akabhagila ukuti ahahege ne **ilumbu gwake**"*

English Translation*:* One day, I was drinking an alcoholic drink at Bhukenja bhukomile (name of a local bar). A certain woman who was seated with a boy started confronting him by saying I am your sister'. We were there

[2] *u-mu-lume*, being the underlying form, to *undume,* its surface form, three phonological processes, namely Deletion of the vowel of the noun prefix, place feature assimilation where [m] becomes [n], and consonant alternation where [l] alternates to [d] are involved. Additionally, from u-mu-kasi to *unkasi [uŋkasi],* [n] changes to [ŋ] when appearing before velar stop, [k].

> we did not hear what the boy said. When we asked that woman, she replied that 'he is very stupid, this child, he cannot seduce me, his sister.

In the narrative above, which involves a conversation between two interlocutors, Person 1 uses words directed at the second person to illustrate a pragmatic aspect. A shortened construction with a clitic is involved. The word *ndi ilumbugo* contains a clitic and is a shortened form of the longer phrase *ndi ilumbu gwako*. This word, when said by a woman to a man, implies that the man can't seduce her since she is his sister. However, when a woman was asked by nearby hearers, she reported using the third person possessive pronoun, *ne ilumbu gwake* 'I his sister' in a longer form without a clitic, for it is not permissible in other persons except the second person pronoun singular. A similar phenomenon occurs with the name of a local bar called *ndinyoko*, which uses a clitic instead of *ne mama gwako*. This bar, located in Ntebela, carries a meaning beyond the literal translation of 'I am your mother' to suggest 'It is impossible to seduce me, for I am your mother.' In this pragmatic context, the use of a clitic is essential and it signifies clitic formation involving a second-person possessive pronoun in the singular only.

The second aspect observed in the data presented in Table 1 is that some clitics have been lexicalised, that is, their forms cannot be traced (for the meaning of lexicalisation see Rugemalira, 2003). These lexicalised clitics involving kinship terms to signify possession are *unyoko* 'your mother' as in the sentence *une ndi Nyoko* 'I am your mother', ug~~u~~*so* as in the sentence *uju g~~u~~so* 'this is your father', and *umu-nino* (unnino) 'your fellow/agemate' as in a sentence *jula nnino* 'that is your fellow/agemate'. All these lexicalised clitics signifying possession involving kinship terms reflect the second person possessive pronoun only and not other persons.

The word for mother has many referents; the first one seems not to be fully lexicalised. This in Nyakyusa appears in third person only: *unna* 'mother', which can roughly be interpreted as *her/his mother*, as in the sentence *uju nna* 'this is her/his mother'. In forming possessive clitics for this word, only the third person plural is attested, as in *unna gwabho* to *unnabho* 'their mother', which is class 1, and its counterpart noun class 2: *abhanna bhabho* to *abhannabho* 'their mothers'. *Unna gwake* 'his/her mother' or the class 2 *abhanna bhake* 'their mother' do not cliticise to *unnake* and *abhannake* respectively. Similarly, *unna gwako* 'your mother' and *unna gwinu* 'your mother' with a plural possessive pronoun cannot form *unnako* and *unnanu*, respectively. However, we observed a lexicalised word with a clitic for the second person, which reads *unyoko* 'your mother', as in *une ndi nyoko* 'I am your mother', *uju nyoko* 'this is your mother', *abha bhanyoko* 'these are your mothers', *uswe tuli bhanyoko* 'we are your mothers'. These are common sentences in the Nyakyusa speech community.

The word for father in Nyakyusa assumes many forms, namely *tata*, lexicalised words *guso* and *gwise*, and the borrowed one from Kiswahili, *bhabha*, with phonological adjustment where the bilabial stop [b] becomes the fricative [β].

With the word *tata*, if one wants to say "my father" in Nyakyusa, one says *tata gwangu,* with impermissible cliticisation. Instead, the lexicalised words are used, realising second person singular *uguso* 'your father', *abhaguso* 'your fathers', and second person plural *abhisabho* 'their fathers'. It also reflects third person *ugwise* 'his/her father', *abhagwise* 'his/her fathers. The borrowed word *bhabha* from Kiswahili does not permit cliticisation of possessives.

Nyakyusa has borrowed kinship terms, and these are impermissible to clitic formation; rather, they acquire the longer possessive form. For example, the kinship words *bhabha, mama, mjomba, kaka,* and *dada* are heard in Nyakyusa as borrowed from Kiswahili with phonological modification (e.g. baba to *bhabha,* taking bilabial fricative in the target language instead of bilabial stop as in the source language). These words take the longer forms with possessive pronouns, as in *bhabha gwangu* 'my father'*, mama gwangu* 'my mother'*,* and *mjomba gwangu* 'my uncle'. The possessive pronouns can exist in all persons as *gwangu/gwitu* for first person singular/plural, *gwako/gwinu* second person singular/plural and *gwake/gwabho* for third person singular/plural. The opposite is true, that these family relation terms permit clitics in the source language as in *mamako* for *mama yako* 'your mother' *babako* for *baba yako* 'your father', and *dadako* for *dada yako* 'your sister'.

Generally, the findings of this study indicate that with noun morphology, only noun classes 1 and 2 permit cliticisation of possessives. However, cliticization in these classes is not highly productive. This conclusion is made following the fact that not all kinship terms permit cliticisation. The examples of these kinship words, which do not permit cliticisation of possessives, include borrowed ones. Additionally, among those which permit cliticisation of possessives, some do not permit it in all person subjects. It was found that only kinship terms in classes 1 and 2 for the child and children, respectively, and the words for your peer/fellow permit cliticisation in all personal subjects in Nyakyusa. Table 4 provides a summary of permissible cliticisation of possessives in Nyakyusa to realise productivity.

Table 4: Permissible Cliticisation of Possessives in Nyakyusa

Noun Class	**Example**	**Gloss**	**Cliticisation**	**Person subject**
1	*u-mwana gwangu*	my child	*u-mwana=ngu*	1st person singular
1	*u-mwana gwitu*	our child	*u-mwani=tu*	1st person plural
1	*u-mwana gwake*	his/her child	*u-mwana=ke*	3rd person singular
1	*u-mwana gwabho*	their child	*u-mwana=bho*	3rd person plural
1	*u-mwana gwako*	your child	*u-mwana=ko*	2nd person

				singular
1	*u-mwana gwinu*	your child	*u-mwani=nu*	2nd person plural
2	*a-bha-ana bhangu*	my children	*a-bhaana=ngu*	1st person singular
2	*a-bha-ana bhitu*	our children	*a-bhaani=tu*	1st person plural
2	*a-bha-ana bhako*	your children	*a-bhaana=ko*	2nd person singular
2	*a-bha-ana bhinu*	your children	*a-bhaani=nu*	2nd person plural
2	*a-bha-ana bhake*	his/her children	*a-bhaana=ke*	3rd person singular
2	*a-bha-ana bhabho*	their children	*a-bhaana=bho*	3rd person plural

Table 4 provides a summary of noun classes 1 and 2 words, *u-mwana* and *a-bha-ana,* respectively, reflecting kinship terms that manifest productivity in the cliticisation of possessives in all persons. However, the analysis shows that many kinship terms are less productive as they do not manifest cliticisation in all persons, as summarised in Table 5.

Table 5: Summary of Productivity in Cliticisation of Kinship Terms

Kinship Term	**Surface**	**P1**	**P 2**	**P 3**
u-mu-nuguna	*unnuguna* 'young'	-	+	
u-mu-ana	*umwana* 'child'	+	+	+
u-mu-lume	*undume* 'husband'	-	+	-
u-mu-kasi	*unkasi* 'wife'	-	+	-
u-mu-isukulu	*umwisukulu* 'grandpa'	-	+	-
u-mu-nyenya	*unyenya* 'great grandpa'	-	+	-
u-mu-nyasenga	*unyasenga* 'aunt'	-	+	-
u-mu-ipwa	*umwipwa* 'uncle/nephew'	-	+	-
u-mu-lamu	*undamu* 'cousin/brother in law'	-	+	-
u-mu-manyani	*Ummanyani '* friend'	-	+	-
i-lumbu	*ilumbu* 'a sister/brother'	-	+	-
u-mu-kulu	*unkulu* 'older sister/brother'	-	+	-
u-mu-kamwana	*unkamwana* 'daughter/father/mother in law'	-	+	-

From the examples provided, only *u-mwana* 'a child' allows cliticisation in all persons. The first person takes the clitic *-ngu*, shortened from *gwangu*; the second person takes *-ko*, shortened from *gwako*; and the third person takes *-ke*, shortened from *gwake*. The rest of the kinship terms allow possessive cliticisation with the second person only, and they take the *-go* clitic, shortened from the possessive *gwako* 'your'. In the examples, the *-go* clitic is for the singular, and the plural

counterpart, which ideally could be *-bho*, formed from *gwabho*, does not allow cliticisation. For instance, *nnyasenga gwabho* 'their aunt' cannot change to *nnyasengabho* with a possessive clitic.

4.3 Morphosemantics of Clitics within Verb Morphology

The description of clitics within verb morphology involves locative clitics and other clitics denoting interrogative.

Locative Clitics

The findings derived from data collected through observation suggest that Nyakyusa locative clitics *po*, *ko*, and *mo* are post-verbal markers associated with locative noun classes 16, 17, and 18. These clitics originally served to indicate location, with meanings such as 'on/here', 'there', and 'in', respectively. However, we observed asemantic say and sometimes shift to these locative clitics. To start with the former, these locative clitics, on the one hand, denote location and they denote the sense of ever been or something else close to it, such as object marking related to place names. Examples in (4) involve sentences recorded in conversations involving Nyakyusa speakers.

katika=po umpunga 'let you start cooking rice'
soka=po (apa) 'get out of here'

The locative clitics *po, mo* and *ko* in Nyakyusa are said to function as object markers of a place representing *here, in here* and *over there,* respectively. For example, during data collection, I observed two Nyakyusa speakers, where one of them asked the other one, saying:

Speaker 1: *Mwanyangala umenye=ko kwa Mwandagane*
English translation: Do you know where Mwandagane lives
Speaker 2: *Mma ngamanya=ko*
English translation: No, I don't know

The sentences above illustrate the conversation involving two Nyakyusa speakers asking the other one if he knows the place where Mwandangane lives. The place name has been expressed by the locative clitic *=ko,* which marks the object as well.

Another function of locative clitics in Nyakyusa has been illustrated by the conversations recorded during data collection through observation, where again two speakers were talking.

Speaker 1: *bha-kind-ile=po a-bh-ulisy-a ngelwa umwisi ugu?*
Have the ngelwa (a type of fish) sellers passed by here today?
Speaker 2: *mma bhakakinda=po*
No, they have not passed by here yet.

Speaker 1: *Unjanga uju a-liil-e=mo imbasa*
Huyu mgeni amewahikula mbasa
'Has this alien ever eaten *mbasa* (a kind of Lake Nyasa fish)?'
Speaker 2: *mmenye a-ka-ly-a=mo*
'I know he hasn't ever eaten'

Additionally, a group of Nyakyusa speakers who were members of a particular youth choir were recorded talking about many things. One of their topics included whether or not some of them had ever gone to Germany and, thereby, had ever travelled by Aeroplane, on the one hand, and another one was about travelling by ship on the lake. They said:

abhamwanongi bhabhukile=ko kubhuJelemani, bhakwelile=mo indege
'These people have ever been to Germany and so they have ever taken a flight'

Une ngakwelamo siku indege, loli ngwelilimo=mo imeli kwa sumbi
'I haven't ever taken a flight, but I have ever travelled by ship through the lake'

From the conversations cited above, the clitic *=mo* denotes the sense of having ever been to Germany, technically called the experiential aspect and partially denotes the object of a place. In this view, locative clitics in Nyakyusa demonstrate a complicated semantic picture, as they function beyond showing a location. As illustrated in the example conversations, they denote the sense of 'ever' signifying polarity appearing in positive and negative.

The following examples of clitics have been recorded from text messages from *WhatsApp* conversations:

tungula=po bhamwembe 'let you pick some mangoes'
konyola=po ifilombe (implies a polite way of letting one take some maize)
jobha=po (nungwe) (let you also say something briefly)

Coming to the latter, in addition to their original function, these locative clitics also carry additional functions. This expanded use is demonstrated in example (7), where the clitics convey nuanced meanings beyond simple locational reference.

(7) a) *tu-li-e =po a-ka-nyama* ***(polite request)***
1p-eat-FV=Cl aug-dim-meet
'Can we eat a little meat'

b) *tu-som-el-e =po i-kalata iji* ***(polite request/on behalf)***
1p-read-Appl.-FV=Cl Aug-letter this
'Can you read for us this letter?'

c) *tu-lamb-il-e =ko kwa jubha* ***(polite request/ on behalf)***
1p-pardone-Appl.-FV =Cl. to mother
'Can you ask our mother for forgiveness for us?'

d) *jobh-a =po* ***(permission)***
say -FV =Cl.
'You may say'

As illustrated above, locative clitics in Nyakyusa convey additional meanings such as politeness, permission, and "on behalf of" when they co-occur with the applicative suffix. For these clitics to express the aforementioned meanings, they must appear alongside either diminutive formatives or the applicative suffix, typically following a final vowel, often the subjunctive *-e* in Nyakyusa.

Another type of clitic in Nyakyusa involves the reduced forms of certain interrogative clitics. Specifically, the interrogative clitic *fiki*, meaning 'what', can be reduced to *ki*, and *kugu*, meaning 'where', can be reduced to *ku*. To ensure the authenticity of the data, an observational method was used to record words and sentences in natural speech where these clitics occurred. Examples in (4) demonstrate these reductions of Nyakyusa interrogative clitics, providing clear evidence of their usage in everyday language.

A-bha-hesya bha-li-ile=ki
Aug-2-guest 2-eat -TAM = what
What the guests have eaten

U-mwan-a=ko ugwa kipanda i-ku-bhomb-a=ki
Aug-child-FV=LoCl of firstborn 3s-TAM-do-FV=InCl
What does your firstborn do?

U-guso a-tw-ile =ku
Aug-your father SM-go-TAM InCl
'Where has your father gone?'

As illustrated in the examples above, clitics in Nyakyusa semantically denote interrogative functions. These clitics are reduced forms of the words *fiki* ('what/why') and *kugu* ('where'). Focusing on the former, the interrogative word for 'what' in Nyakyusa is *findu fiki*, and for 'why', it is *fiki*. Thus, *ki* functions as a clitic or reduced form of *findu fiki* ('what things'). For example, *a-l-il-e=ki* ('what has he/she eaten?') is a reduced form of the sentence *a-l-il-e findu fiki*. Similarly, *a-bhomb-ile=ki* ('what has he/she done?') derives from *a-bhomb-ile findu fiki*. In this cliticization process, only the final syllable of the interrogative word is retained.

Turning to the latter case, as illustrated in examples (4), the Nyakyusa interrogative word for 'where' is *kugu*. In the process of cliticization, the pattern

differs slightly from that of *findu fiki* discussed in the previous paragraph. In this case, the first syllable of the interrogative word *kugu*, namely *ku*, participates in forming clitics. This reduced form *ku* was observed to be applied to the grammaticalised verb *twala* ('bring'), as in *twala kuno* ('bring here') or *twala kula* 'bring there'. The verb *twala* is said to be grammaticalised as *twa* and lexicalised in forms like *ku-twaku* 'where are you going?' or *a-twileku* 'where has he/she gone?'. Interrogative sentences with this lexicalised and grammaticalised clitic *ku* were heard in Nyakyusa, such as *ku-bhuka kugu* ('where are you going?') or *a-bhuk-ile kugu* 'where has he/she gone?'

4.0 Synthesis and Conclusion

5.1 Synthesis

This paper set out to offer a morphosemantic description of Nyakyusa clitics, answering the questions of their formation, including restriction in formation (morphological focus), and the role they play in the language (semantics). Starting with the former, clitic formation takes three main forms, whereby within noun morphology, two are involved, where the first form involves taking the last CV syllable and making it lean to the host (noun) as in *u-mwana gwangu* 'my child' to *umwana=ngu.* The second clitic formation in the realm of morphology involves taking the first consonant of the possessive pronoun, combining with the final vowel to form a CV syllable and make it lean to a class 1 or 2 noun, as in *ummanyani gwako* 'your friend' to *ummanyani=go*. This is the case of cliticisation of possessives that accept only the second person subject singular.

Within verb morphology, clitics are formed by first taking the first CV syllable and making it lean to the host, which is the verb in this case. For example, in the question, *kubhuka kugu?* or *usumwike kugu?* 'Where are you going?' The clitic is formed as '*kubhukaku?* Or *kutwaku.* Also, the second clitic formation entails taking the last CV syllable of the demonstrative and making it lean to the verb, as in *kubhomba fiki?* and *kulya ifindu fiki?* to *kubhombaki?* and *kulyaki?* respectively. The last clitic formation within the verb morphology involves making *po, ko*, and *mo* lean to the verbs to serve locative and other extra functions.

Regarding the semantics, clitics serve three main functions in the language, including possessive function (noun morphology), demonstrative and locative functions (expressed with verb morphology). Additionally, locative clitics in the language serve extra functions which are mainly centred on indicating politeness.

5.2 Conclusion

This paper has offered a comprehensive description of clitics in Nyakyusa with a focus on their formation, restriction and semantics. Based on the findings presented in this paper as compared to other studies reviewed, it is concluded that the study of clitics does not need to be overgeneralised across Bantu languages, as it is language-dependent. For instance, in Nyakyusa we found no cliticisation of

interrogatives, just like in ciCewa, which is very productive. Other variations revolve around formation and restrictions (productive) in formation, as well as the semantic nuances of clitics across languages. During data collection, since Kiswahili is a lingua franca in Tanzania, that is, Nyakyusa speakers embark on speaking Kiswahili simultaneously, some sentiments of clitic intrusion into Kiswahili were noted. Additionally, during data analysis, as both Nyakyusa and Kiswahili speakers, we could be tempted to compare clitic formation between the languages. However, two aspects pointed out seemed to run out of the scope of our paper. This paper, therefore, recommends two further studies, the first one on the nativisation of Nyakyusa locative clitics in Kiswahili, and the second one on a comparative study of clitics between Nyakyusa and Kiswahili.

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