

Middle and Antipassive Voices in Gĩkũyũ (E51)

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Abstract. This paper argues for the recognition of the middle and antipassive voices in Gĩkũyũ. The claim is based on the analysis of the functions of the reflexive and reciprocal verbal derivational morphemes. The reflexive morpheme is both a reflexive and middle voice marker. Based on crosslinguistic typology of middles by Kemmer (1993), Gĩkũyũ exhibits middle semantics types such as (non-) translational motion, change of body position, cognition middles, grooming, emotional middles. Since the reflexive does not indicate all the senses of a canonical middle, it is labeled a ‘quasi-middle’ marker, *à la* Dom et al. (2016). The reciprocal morpheme, among other functions indicates the antipassive voice. The Gĩkũyũ antipassive is classified as: patientless, implicit patient argument, and backgrounding antipassive types.

Keywords: Antipassive, Middle Voice, Bantu, Reflexive, Reciprocal

Languages: Gĩkũyũ

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1.0 Introduction

Bantu languages are known for their rich verbal extensions (see Lodhi 2002, Schadeberg & Bostoen 2019). This paper argues for the recognition of middle voice as an important function of the reflexive prefix and antipassive voice as an important function of the reciprocal suffix in Gĩkũyũ (Kikuyu) (E51), a Bantu language spoken in central Kenya. These two morphemes are generally recognized as the main sources of middle and antipassive markers in many languages (see Kemmer 1993, Janic & Witzlack-Makarevich 2021).

Reciprocal and reflexive markers in African languages are commonly associated with homonymy and/or polysemy (Heine 2000). Examples of studies of polysemous reciprocals include Ndayiragije (2006), who looked at the polysemous Kirundi reciprocal; in Cilubà and Kirundi, the reciprocal affix has an associative/antipassive interpretation (Bostoen, Dom, & Segerer 2015). Mugane (1999) looked at the Gĩkũyũ polysemous nature of the Gĩkũyũ reciprocal suffix *-an-*. However, Mugane did not propose an antipassive meaning for the affix. The present paper argues that the reciprocal has an antipassive function in the language. Unlike the reciprocal, the Gĩkũyũ reflexive has not received much attention, but see Mwangi's (2001) argument that the reflexive is an object argument.¹

Since the seminal crosslinguistic study of the middle voice by Kemmer (1993), in which she identified the existence of the middle voice in Bantu languages such as Changana (S53, Mozambique) and Pangwa (G64, Tanzania), languages hitherto unknown to possess the middle voice, many studies investigating the middle voice in other languages have been carried out. In Bantu linguistics, a systematic study of the middle voice remained non-existent, until Dom et al. (2016, 2018) convincingly demonstrated the crosslinguistic existence of middle voice in Bantu languages; at the same

¹ Although in a future endeavour, Mwangi's analysis can be challenged from a Role and Reference Grammar [RRG] perspective. RRG posits a logical representation of verbs where by two macroroles, Actor (subject-like) and Undergoer (object-like) are represented on a verb's logical representation. If it was maintained that a reflexive is an object argument *à la* Mwangi, then the assumption would be that the Actor is also an Undergoer, which contradicts RRG's theory of macroroles. That is, pronominal *ma-* in (i) is in coreference with the reflexive *-e-*, but both are Actor pronominals not an Actor-Undergoer mix.

- (i) Ne ma-r-ε- ger-e-ir-ε mw-ana.
AM 2SM-PST-RFL-get-APPL-PFV-FV 1-child
'They picked the child themselves.'
- (ii) Ne ma-ra-mo-ε-ger-e-ir-ε.
AM 2SM-PST-1OM-RFL-get-APPL-PFV-FV
'They picked him/her themselves.'

In (ii) contradicts a known fact about Gĩkũyũ that the language is not an object doubling language e.g. Kinyarwanda, that is, it does not allow more than two object markers (in this case the RFL and the OM) in the verb group. This fact is known to her and it is noted in (Mwangi 2001: 122, footnote 2, and page 216).

time acknowledging it as under-researched in this language family. On the scarcity of middle voice studies in Bantu, Dom and co-workers blamed it on the lack of a single definitive middle marker in Bantu, because the middle voice is marked by verbal affixes with other functions. For instance, a middle marker may be a reflexive, passive, anticausative, antipassive or a reciprocal affix (Dom et al. 2016: 130), or even a stative such as *-ik-* in Citumbuka and Citonga (Chavula 2018) and also in Kinyarwanda (Jerro 2018).²

Until recently antipassives were mostly studied in ergative languages (cf. Cooreman 1994; Polinsky 2013). However, an increase in descriptive and typological studies on antipassives has led to reevaluation of this construction (Heaton 2020). Typological research shows that non-ergative (accusative) languages also have constructions with features associated with antipassives (cf. Givón 2001; Payne 1997; Polinsky 2017, etc.). Surprisingly, Heaton (2017) claims that 25% of the world’s languages (ergative and non-ergative) have antipassive constructions. In Bantu, Bostoen et al. (2015) provide a convincing account of the presence of the antipassive in several Bantu languages.

Following the claims of the middle and antipassive voices in Bantu by Dom et al. (2016; 2018) and Bostoen et al. (2015) respectively, this paper focuses on the Gĩkũyũ reflexive marker as a middle marker and on the reciprocal affix as an antipassive voice marker in Gĩkũyũ. The limited focus is due to space constraints, and therefore other middle marking extensions remain a future endeavor.

More so, I concentrate on these two case studies because in the literature there is a natural tendency to discuss these concepts together. Indeed, Mchombo (2004:102) asserts that to have “separate accounts” for reflexives and reciprocals, “might look contrived or artificial”. Some studies have followed this tendency. For example, Kioko (1999) describes the syntactic status of Kikamba reciprocals and reflexives concurrently; Dixon (2012) discusses the reciprocal and reflexive together; Payne (2006: 244) says that reflexive and reciprocal constructions are “conceptually similar”. In some languages reciprocal and reflexive markers are ambiguous hence described as “reflexive reciprocals” and “reflexive-based reciprocals”

² Mwangi (2001:234) dismisses a claim that the Bantu *-ik-* can indicate the middle in Gĩkũyũ. She said, there is nothing neutral or middle in *-ik-*. However, she did not show that as promised. Kulikov (2013) and Dom et al (2016; 2018) have shown that suffix *-ik-* in Bantu is associated with some middle domains by encoding a “cluster of deagentivized (intransitivized) syntactic patterns” (Kulikov 2013: 265). An example in Gĩkũyũ is

I-buku ne re-ra-thom-ek-a wɛga.
5-book AM 5-PRS-read-STA-FV well
‘The book reads well.’

This example is deagentivized (intransitivized) which is characteristic of the middle voice. This is evidence contrary to Mwangi’s claim. Nevertheless, this paper does not pursue this line of thinking as it only focuses on the reflexive as a middle domain category in the language.

(Maslova 2008: 232). Finally, past evidence shows that reflexives and reciprocals indicate middle voice in many languages (Kemmer 1993; Dom et al 2016):-

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 introduces the Gĩkũyũ verb template; section 3 is on the Gĩkũyũ reflexive marker and how it realizes the middle voice; section 4 on the reciprocal and how it indicates the antipassive voice. Section 5 is the conclusion of the discussion.

2.0 The Language Under Study

Gĩkũyũ /yekojo/ also ‘Kikuyu’ /kikuju/ is a Bantu language spoken in central Kenya. Gĩkũyũ belongs to Kikuyu-Kamba group (E50) by Guthrie (1967) and Gĩkũyũ is coded as E51. Like most Bantu languages, Gĩkũyũ has a subject-verb-object word order that is relatively free.

As a Bantu language, Gĩkũyũ has verbal extensions and some of them are shown in the template in (1). Barlow (1961) contains a comprehensive overview of all known Gĩkũyũ verbal extensions. Mwangi (2001) contains a theoretical discussion of most Gĩkũyũ verbal extensions using the Mirror principle by Marantz (1984). The template below captures some of the common extensions. Those of concern are the reflexive (RFL) and the reciprocal (RCP). Both are morphologically and functionally distinct as well as being syntactically separate. The reflexive precedes the reciprocal in the verb template in (1).

(1) AM-SM-TNS-OM-**RFL**-root-**RCP**-APPL-PFV-CAUS-PASS/FV³

The template shows the relation of the RFL in relation to RCP. The RFL is a prefix and the RCP a suffix. Having shown the order of the extensions, next is the discussion of the extensions and how they indicate the two voices under study.

3.0 Reflexive Voice in Gĩkũyũ

Gĩkũyũ has passive, active, and reflexive ‘voices’ (Barlow 1960:117). The language has a morphological reflexive marker and lexical reflexives. On the one hand, the morphological reflexive is either -ĩ- [e] or [ɛ], which are allophones that occur in given phonological environments, see (2a). On the other, the lexical reflexive uses an independent pronoun (IP) and an

³I have used phonetic sounds for vowels rather than Gĩkũyũ vowels. Abbreviations used in the glosses include the following: **SM** (subject marker), **OM** (object marker), **PL** (plural), **SG** (singular), **NMZ** (nominaliser), **COP** (copula), **APPL** (applicative), **CAUS1** (causative 1&2), **PRS** (present), **PST** (past), **RFL** (reflexive), **PFV** (perfective,), **RCP** (reciprocal), **FV** (final vowel), **AM** (assertive marker), **COM** (comitative), **MID** (middle), **IMP-PL** (imperative plural marker), **PASS** (passive), **CONS** (consecutive), **Ø** (null element), **ANTIP** (antipassive), **INT** (intensive), **IP** (independent pronoun), and **CONS** (consecutive). Numbers refer to noun classes.

anaphoric one based on the root *-ene* ‘self’, see (2b). The Gĩkũyũ lexical reflexive is an emphatic reflexive especially when it used together with reflexive *-ε-* as in (2b). The IP *wε* obligatorily co-occurs with the reflexive anaphor *mw-ene* in (2b).

- (2) a. Ne *ε-ε-tεm-ir-ε.*
 AM 1SM.PST-RFL-cut-PFV-FV
 ‘He cut himself.’
- b. Ne *ε-ε-tεm-ir-ε* *wε* *mw-ene.*
 AM 1SM.PST-RFL-cut-PFV-FV 1.IP 1-self
 ‘He cut himself, he himself.’

Intensive reflexive expressions such as *wε mw-ene* are “heavy reflexives” as opposed to “light ones” (Kulikov 2013: 279). They are used to intensify another nominal unit, e.g. *wε* where it indicates a speakers’ emphasis on the fact that the object refers specifically to the same entity as the subject, as opposed to some other actual or potential entity in discourse.

3.1 Characterizing the Middle Voice in Gĩkũyũ

Dom et al. (2018:167) say that a “middle voice is a notoriously complex, vague and ill-definable linguistic category, which remains the subject of vivid debate in typological and general linguistic scholarship.” Indeed, a single definition of a ‘middle voice’ has faced many challenges (cf. Dom et al. 2016; Kulikov 2013; Zúñiga & Kittilä (2019) etc., hence it is described as a “cluster of related syntactic patterns, rather than one single syntactic pattern” indicated by a derivational verbal morpheme. The middle category may be indicated by *passive*, *anticausative*, *reflexive*, *reciprocal*, *antipassive*, *conversive*, and *autobenefactive* derivational morphemes (Dom et al 2018: 167). This ‘cluster of sort’ is captured by a description by Zúñiga & Kittilä (2019:168) that the middle refers to “multifunctional constructions that include reflexives, reciprocals, passives, antipassives, causatives, causative-reflexives, and/or autobenefactive (indirect) applicatives”. Indeed, this is a cluster of relationships that may be difficult to define singly. It is even more complex in Bantu where the reflexive, neuter, stative, reciprocal/associative, and the separative realize different middle domains (Dom et al. 2016).

Turning to Gĩkũyũ data, example (3), though containing a reflexive, can also be interpreted as a middle construction. A subject (agent) in a middle-form verb performs an action (as in an active sentence), and it is also the patient (affected) argument (as in a passive construction) and this is illustrated by (3), whereby the subject is both the “controller and the affected participant” in a middle construction (see Payne 1997:218), and it is the reflexive affix that makes it the interpretation possible in (3).

Furthermore, a middle form highlights subject ‘affectedness’ by the action of the verb (Saeed 2016:172), and *Kamau* is the one affected.

- (3) Kamau ne a-ra-e-etho-a.
Kamau COP ISM-PRS-RFL-scratch-FV
‘Kamau is scratching himself.’

In (3) *Kamau* is both the agent and the patient of verb ‘scratch’. Examples such as (3) show that the reflexive prefix has lexicalized a middle sense, thus lexicalized to the verb *-ethoa* ‘scratch’, with a real reflexive affix preceding it. Kemmer (1993:237) defines a middle voice as, “a language-specific category characterized by an overt marker (or a paradigm of morphologically related markers) that in the course of time acquires a function of expressing the semantic category of middle”. This could be the case in Gikũyũ.

The middle (MID) voice is part of the broad semantic-pragmatic domain that encompasses voice categories (active and passive) and the semantic categories. Kemmer (1993:2) notes the disparate nature that characterizes the notion of middle voice which necessitates the use of terms such as: “medio-passive”, “quasi-reflexive”, “pseudo-reflexive”, “neuter”, “patient-subject constructions”, and “deponent”. Such characterization has led to varied definitions and descriptions of the middle voice. For instance, a middle form is a “cluster of deagentivized (intransitivized) syntactic patterns” (Kulikov 2013: 265); “an action or state that affects the subject of the verb or his interests” (Lyons 1968:373), and Maldonado (2007: 853-854) writes, “[a] middle voice depicts actions, events, or states pertaining to the subject’s own sphere” hence squarely in the “subject’s dominion”. The understanding of the middle voice in this article is guided by such varied descriptions.

Kemmer (1993:24-26) suggests three middle marking systems: a one-form middle system, in which the middle and reflexive markers are morphologically similar; a two-form cognate middle system, where the middle marker is similar, but not identical to the reflexive i.e. they may have partial morphological similarities, and a two-form non-cognate system, in which the middle marker is morphologically different from the reflexive marker.

Dom et al. (2016:148) propose a fourth system for Bantu languages, which they call a multiple-form system. In a multiple-form system, “multiple verbal morphemes cover different parts of the canonical middle, yet sometimes convey meanings situated on the periphery of the canonical middle domain”. Their proposal follows the examination of several derivational morphemes that realize partial categories of the canonical middle voice domain.

According to Kemmer (1993), a true middle is the sole indicator of the middle voice in a language. Because of the multiplicity of functions of verbal affixes indicating middle domains in Bantu, Dom et al. (2016)

propose that Bantu languages have a multiple-form system. Consequently, they conclude that the Bantu languages they studied, lack a single dedicated middle marker, and therefore propose that those languages have what they call a ‘quasi-middle’. A quasi-middle, as opposed to a canonical middle marker, is a verbal marker that encodes “more than one (two or three) functions of the middle domain, which do not, however, encompass the major part of the middle domain” (Dom et al. 2016: 130).

I relate Dom and co-workers’ observation on the multifunctionality of verbal affixes in Bantu to a phenomenon observed in Gĩkũyũ. Barlow (1960:122) noticed a construction with “double reflexives with the first-person singular objective” in Gĩkũyũ shown in (4a). Ruling out vowel lengthening or any other phonological processes, Barlow admitted that he had “no explanation of [such] phenomenon...”. It is a fact that languages with double reflexives are rare, as shown by Kemmer (1993:47) citing a study by Faltz (1977:17-19), in which Faltz did not find a language with two reflexives in a sample of thirty languages. In this paper I disagree with the idea that Gĩkũyũ has two reflexive affixes. Indeed, Barlow simply translated (4a) as ‘*And he turned towards me*’, a translation without a reflexive interpretation. I attempt an explanation for the phenomenon based on the adapted example in (4b). In (4a) the morphemic translations are mine, but Barlow’s original orthography is retained. I have changed the first-person singular to first person plural to show the differences more succinctly. It is possible to read the example as ‘and he turned towards himself’, which means that the subject is both agent and patient, although it is a rather odd interpretation, it has characteristics of a middle construction. An assumption is made below to show that the ‘phenomenon’ Barlow mentions is not strange.

- (4) a. A-kĩ-ĩ-ĩ-hũgũr-ĩr-a. (Barlow 1960:122)
 ISM-CONS-RFL-RFL-turn-APPL-FV
 ‘And he turned towards me.’
- b. A-ge-to-e-hogor-er-a.
 ISM-CONS-2OM-??RFL-turn-APPL-FV
 ‘And he turned towards us.’

Based on (4b), we may guess that the first *-ĩ-* prefix in (4a) is the first-person object argument (‘me’), which should be realized by *n-* (not *-ĩ-* as in Barlow’s example) e.g. *A-kĩ-n-ĩ-hũgũr-ĩr-a* ‘he-CONS-1OM-RFL-turn-APPL-FV ‘and he turned towards me.’ It should be the case that a morpho-phonological process where the nasal of the person marker is deleted/assimilated, leaving the person marker to be isomorphic with the reflexive marker is at work. This becomes clearer when (4a) is compared with (4b) which contains the first-person plural *-to-* ‘us’ followed by the ‘reflexive’ as per the template in (1). Note that (4b) does not have a reflexive interpretation meaning that the reflexive-like affix *-e-* is not

reflexive after all. This affix resembles the so-called ‘false reflexives’ identified in Dyirbal (an Australian language) by Dixon (1972:90-92). They are false because they have the reflexive morphology but lack a reflexive meaning, and it turned out to be an antipassive marker.

This type of construction is a type of middle semantic category, precisely the non-translational motion type. Thus, it is proposed that the ‘second’ reflexive **-ĩ-** is in fact a middle marker that is isomorphic with the reflexive affix, which might explain Barlow’s conclusion of double reflexives. For a middle marker to resemble a reflexive is not unusual since it is cross-linguistically known that middles may obtain from reflexives (See Kemmer 1993; Lichtenberk 2000; Heine 2000; Haspelmath 2021). Maldonado (2007:859) succinctly summarizes the features of middles this way: “the middle signals ‘change-of-state affecting only the subject’; in other words, many of these change-of-states are restricted to the subject domain, be it the physical, the relational, or the emotional sphere.” In reference to the characteristics above, in (4b), there is a physical change of motion, ‘turning’, initiated by the subject.

3.2 Middle Domain Types in Gĩkũyũ

Sample middle voice types according to Saeed (2016:172-175) are neuters, body activities and emotions verbs, reflexives and autobenefactives. On her part, Kemmer (1993) contends that the middle morphology resides in specific semantic classes of verbs. For instance, verbs of body motion without change in overall position are non-translational. These are exemplified by several verbs in Gĩkũyũ. The **-e-** prefix is the morphosyntactic marker in different verbs, and it indicates different clusters of middle situation types. A common feature in the verbs below is their exclusive bearing of a middle marker. Those that inherently have the middle (lexicalized middle verbs) and have no counterpart without a marker are called non-opposition middles (Inglese 2021:26) or deponent verbs, which are a natural product of middle systems (Kemmer 1993:33). Such verbs are bolded in the examples below. The verb types below follow those of Kemmer (1993).

Non-Translational Motion Verbs include verbs of bowing, twisting, stretching, turning, nodding, leaning, etc., which change the configuration of the body or part of it e.g. *kw-e-nɔgɔra* ‘to stretch oneself’, *kw-e-hogora* ‘to turn’, *gw-e-thuna* ‘to hurdle’, ***gw-e-tirania*** ‘to lean against’; *kw-e-n yɔgɔra* ‘to writhe in pain’, etc. According to Kemmer (1993:53) most of these non-translational middle verbs are deponents.

Translational Motion Verbs involve actions of motion of an animate entity under its own power through space” from one location to another (Kemmer 1993: 56) e.g. ***gw-e-thara*** ‘to flee from danger’

Grooming and Body Action Verbs include verbs that relate to the actions for grooming performed to oneself e.g. bathing, washing oneself, *gw-e-thamba* ‘to bathe’, *kw-e-humba* ‘to dress up’, *kw-e-haka* ‘to apply oil on one’s body’, *kw-e-yɔga* /*kw-e-eria* ‘to wash/bathe oneself’, *kw-e-gemia* ‘to adorn oneself’ *kw-enja* ‘shave’⁴, *gw-e-thoa* ‘to scratch oneself’, etc. Kemmer (1994:195) explains that grooming actions are important in the study of middles. She argues that grooming verbs denote a situation type that is mostly interpreted as a middle in the languages that have it. See examples of Gikūyū grooming verbs above and a verb such as *kw-e-yɔha* ‘to arm oneself/be ready for war’, a cultural activity, can be included here. Kemmer cautions that such grooming verbs should not be subsumed under direct reflexives. I agree with a reviewer’s suggestion that the fact that many grooming verbs and typical middle verbs contain the reflexive-like prefix is evidence for its middle function.

Emotion Middle Verbs include verbs of being happy, sad, frightened, afraid, etc. For example *kw-e-tigera* ‘to fear’, *kw-e-ehɔka* ‘to trust /hope’, *kw-e-hoga* ‘to be wary’, *gw-e-teya* ‘to be proud’, *kw-e-heta* ‘to swear/vow’, *kw-e-gangara* ‘to be free from fear’, *kw-e-kerera* ‘to glorify self/conceited’, etc.

Cognitive Middle Verbs include verbs of thinking, supposing, meditating, remembering, forgetting, etc., e.g. *gw-e-ciria* ‘to think’, *gw-e-corania* ‘to ponder over something’, *gw-e-thikera* ‘be sad/be buried in grief’, *gw-e-tekia* ‘to believe’, *kw-e-rira* ‘to regret/repent’, *gw-e-cɔkia* ‘to complain/to grumble’, *gw-e-koa* ‘to suspect’, *kw-e-ricukwɔ* ‘to change mind’, *kw-e-ruta* ‘to train/teach oneself’⁵ etc.

Spontaneous Actions Verbs include verbs of drying up, growing, evaporating, rotting, falling apart, etc., e.g., *ko-e-meri-a* ‘to sprout, germinate’⁶, *kw-e-yatora* ‘to crack open’, etc.

Change of Body Posture Verbs include verbs of kneeling, squatting, lying down, sitting down, standing up, etc. *kw-e-handa* ‘to stay upright’, *gw-e-tamborokia* ‘to

⁴ For this body part action, Gikūyū treats it as a normal regular transitive verb e.g. (i) below. The addition of the reflexive is only to emphasize that he did it himself and not anyone else.

(i) Baba ne e-nj-a nderu
1.father AM 1 SM.PRS-shave-FV 9.beard
‘Father has shaved his beard.’

⁵ This verb contains a ‘reflexive’ even when someone is being trained by someone else i.e. under instruction e.g. a learner in a driving school under an instructor’s guidance, or in any other training that they are being trained (i). In (ii), the learner is training her/himself, but note the presence of both the RFL and the MID. This is one of the examples that show that the middle marker and the reflexive marker are semantically different.

(i) Ne a-r-ε-rut-ago-tum-a.
AM 1SM-PRS-MID-learn-FV 15-knit-FV
‘S/he is learning/training to knit.’

(ii) Ne a-r-ε-ε-rut-a go-tum-a.
AM 1SM-PRS-RFL-MID-learn-FV 15-knit-FV
‘S/he is learning/training /teaching her/himself to knit.’

⁶ Benson (1964:199) has a noun, *kĩ-ĩ-merera* /ke-e-merera/ “growing by itself, self-planted, native to place”. Note that the reflexive morpheme -e- is part of the word formation derived from verb *mera* ‘germinate.’

stretch out oneself’, *gw-e-tandaiya* ‘sprawl in sunshine’, *gw-e-thuna* ‘to hurdle/crouch’, etc.

Indirect (Autobenefactive) Middles: in such middles, the agent is also the recipient or beneficiary of the action initiated by the same agent. *gw-e-thek-i-a* 15-RFL-laugh-CAUS-FV ‘to cause oneself to laugh’. This verb fits in well in the causative reflexive middle (see Zúñiga and Kittilä (2019:168), since the causee and the causer are one and the same, which is the basic determining feature of a middle category.

In other examples such as (5), we find a perception verb *-rɔr-a* ‘look’ (5a), which with the addition of *-e-* becomes *ko-e-rɔr-er-a* ‘to watch’ (5b). The applicative *-er-* (appearing as *-er-* for phonological reasons) does not have a benefactive sense; nor does the *-e-* prefix, although indicated as a reflexive (RFL), have the usual reflexive meaning. However, there is a chance for an alternative interpretation, ‘They are looking for the ball themselves’, which is different from the *watching*-sense. The combination of *-e-* and *-er-* points to an autobenefactive middle meaning. One characteristic of middles is that the action of the verb revolves around the subject (agent). Hence the subject in (5b) is both the initiator (perceiver) and the ‘beneficiary’ of the action of ‘watching’ (based on the presence of the applicative suffix). Note that the meaning of the verb in (5a) extends from ‘looking’ to ‘watching’ in (5b).

- | | | |
|--------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| (5) a. | Ma-ra-rɔr-a
2SM-PRS-look-FV
‘They are looking at a ball.’ | mo-bira.
3-ball |
| b. | Ma-r-ε-rɔr-er-a
2SM-PRS-??RFL-look-APPL-FV
‘They are watching football.’ | mo-bira.
3-ball |

The subject benefits from the action in which s/he is the sole participant. S/he is both the actor and undergoer hence all the action is in the ‘subject’s dominion’. Such an example qualifies as an autobenefactive middle. More examples on autobenefactives are presented below.

Example (6a) illustrates physical sphere (body action middle verb) ‘eating’ and (6b) contains an emotional sphere (an emotive middle). The applicative suffix allows the benefactive meanings and the middle reflexive marker transfers the benefit to the subject.

- | | | |
|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| (6) a. | A-tumia ma-r-ε-re-re-ir-ε
2-woman 2SM-PST-MID-eat-APPL-PFV-FV
‘The women ate the food’ (on their own accord).
(lit. ‘The women ate the food for themselves.’) | iriɔ.
5.food |
| b. | Mo-tumia a-r-ε-kɛn-ε-ir-ε
1-woman 1SM-PST-MID-happy-APPL-PFV-FV
‘The woman was very happy.’
(lit. ‘The woman was very happy for herself.’) | monɔ.
very |

Since prefix *-e-* lacks a reflexive interpretation, the examples attain a self-benefactive middle quality ‘to do something to oneself,’ whereby the action affects the “subject of the verb or his interests” (Kemmer 1993:17). Thus in (6a) and (6b) subject ‘woman’ is both the “controller and the affected participant” of the events of ‘eating’ and ‘being happy’. These examples are representative of existing facts about the middle voice in Bantu, whereby the middle voice may be expressed by a reflexive together with an applicative (Heine 2000:19), and such autobenefactives are typologically common according to Kulikov (2013).

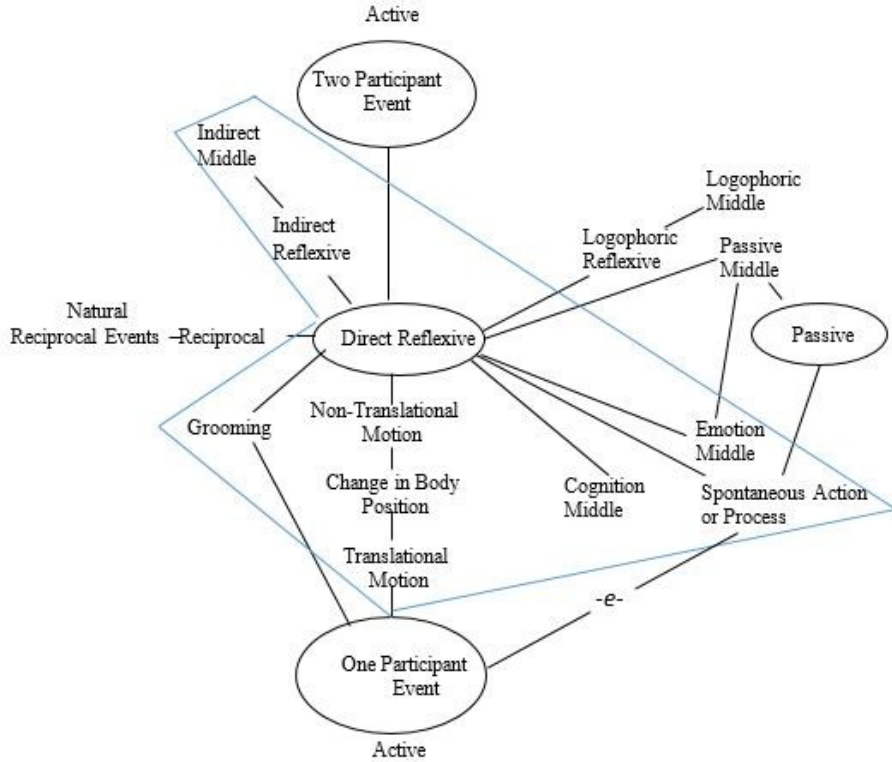
Based on the data of the one derivational morpheme presented, Gĩkũyũ is a one-form middle system language (based on the middle marking systems by Kemmer (1993)). One-form middle systems have an identical morpheme (e.g. *-e-* in Gĩkũyũ) that marks both the reflexive and the middle voice. This puts Gĩkũyũ in the same system with German which uses *sich* for both reflexive and emotive middles, as well as French and Italian, which also have a reflexive middle marker and also together with other Bantu languages, e.g. Changana and Pangwa (cf. Kemmer, 1993). The one-form system is the most common type of middle marking system (Kemmer 1994).

So far, the claim is that the Gĩkũyũ reflexive-like prefix is a middle marker. It is a middle marker based on the characteristics by Dom et al (2016:130). It expresses an activity that is focused on a single argument; and three, it leads to intransitivization of a base verb. However, intransitivization is not a necessary property of middle marking, as there are languages that have transitive middles (Kemmer 1994). The Gĩkũyũ verbal derivation morpheme *-e-* indicates a variety of middle verb types: autobenefactive or indirect middles, cognition and emotive middles, and bodily-action middles. It noticeable that the Gĩkũyũ middle signals physical, relational or emotional domains, changes-of-body-states that are exclusive to the subject/agent.

The semantic range of prefix *-e-* is shown in figure 1. Following Kemmer (1993: 205) and Dom et al. (2016: 145), the semantic range of *-e-* shows the areas covered by the nodes of the situation type expressed by it. The enclosed part shows the situation types expressed by *-e-*.

Compared with the cross- Bantu semantic range of the reflexive prefix **(j)i-* by Dom et al. (2016: 145, figure 5), the semantic range of the Gĩkũyũ verbal prefix *-e-* covers all domains associated with the reflexive marker, but not the reciprocal-based ones because Gĩkũyũ uses the reciprocal suffix for reciprocals, unlike languages that use the same verbal marker to indicate the reciprocal and the reflexive e.g. in Lingala RCP *-an-* indicates emotion and cognition, spontaneous events and body action middle domains (Kemmer 1993:200).

Figure 1: The Semantic Map for the Semantic Range of the Gikuyu Reflexive



From the semantic map, all the middle subdomains relate to the direct reflexive, hence the central positioning. The prefix indicates numerous middle sub-domains, which are usually not explained in Bantu studies (Dom et al. 2016). These subdomains are shown by the verbs shown earlier on.

A true middle marker, according to Kemmer (1993), is one that singly indicates the middle voice domain in a language. From the semantic range shown in Figure 1, the reflexive, other than being a direct reflexive, also covers several other middle semantic subdomains. For example, it does not produce logophoric reflexive, reciprocity, passive middles, etc. A canonical middle covers semantic functions such as passive, reflexive, reciprocal, agentless passive, potential passive, anticausative, autobenefactive (Kemmer 1993; Dom et al. 2018).

Dom et al. (2016) argue that a language may have a single middle marker; however, it is not unusual for Bantu languages to have several derivational verbal morphemes that only express several middle semantic domains, but not all. They call such morphemes ‘quasi-middles’ since they do not cover all the middle domains as is expected of canonical middle markers. In this paper, I have focused on only one derivation morpheme: the reflexive and the middle semantic domains it encodes. Work by Dom et al. (2016) demonstrates that none of the derivational extensions they studied covered all the potential middle categories. A future undertaking on middles

in Gĩkũyũ should consider the other derivation morphemes that Dom et al. deal with, and the others that they ignored. As it is now, and following the proposal propped by Dom et al., the Gĩkũyũ reflexive *-e-* is better called a ‘quasi-middle’ rather than a canonical middle marker.

4.0 The Reciprocal in Gĩkũyũ

Reciprocal markers encode a reciprocal situation, in which two or more participants have an identical role (Frajzyngier & Curl, 2000). Reciprocals and reflexives in African languages are known to be polysemous (Heine 2000). In fact, the Bantu reciprocal is described as “notoriously polysemous” (Dom et al. 2016:137), see also Dom & Segerer (2015) and Bostoen et al. (2015) for more functions of the Bantu reciprocal. In many Bantu languages the reciprocal *-an-* is responsible for fourteen grammatical functions, including the seldom mentioned antipassive function (Bostoen et al. 2015). A working description of the antipassive is taken from Polinsky (2017), who describes antipassives as constructions in which the logical object of a transitive (one and two-place) predicate is not realized or it appears as a non-core argument (demoted to the periphery) or left unexpressed, but presupposed.

The Gĩkũyũ reciprocal (RCP) is suffix *-an-*, which is similar to that of many Bantu languages in form. Barlow (1960:123) has it as *ana*, but I will follow the common practice of separating the suffix from the final vowel. The ‘recalcitrant nature’ of Gĩkũyũ reciprocal is mentioned by Mugane (1999). The RCP morpheme has several semantic interpretations: reciprocal (7b); detransitivizer (resulting to an indefinite/null object (7c); fall and scatter, as in the so-called ‘plurality of localities’ or dispersal to different directions *à la* Lichtenberk (2000) in (7d).

- (7) a. Mw-anake ne a-ra-rum-a mo-iretu.
 1-youth AM 1SM-PRS-insult-FV 1-girl
 ‘The young man is insulting the girl.’
- b. Mwa-nake na mo-iretu ne ma-ra-rum-an-a.
 1-youth and 1-girl AM 2SM-PRS-insult-RCP-FV
 ‘The young man and the girl are insulting each other.’
- c. Mw-anake ne a-ra-rum-an-a.
 1-youth AM 1SM-PRS-insult-RCP-FV
 ‘The young man is insulting (others)’.
- d. I-kabu ne ci-a-go-an-a.
 8-baskets AM 8SM-PRS-fall-RCP-FV
 ‘The baskets have fallen (in different directions)’.

Plurality of arguments is used to test reciprocity (Frajzyngier & Curl, 2000), that is, the involved participants should be more than one. (7b) passes the test because it has plural subjects. When a reciprocal marker is used with a

singular subject, e.g. in (7c), it does not functionally code reciprocity. Nevertheless, (7d) contains a plural subject and RCP marker, but it is not reciprocal. Therefore (7c) and (7d) do not meet the reciprocal test criterion, although they contain *-an-*. In fact (7c) means that the subject insulted an unspecified participant. Without the plural participants' symmetry, but with the reciprocal suffix, (7c) still lacks a reciprocal meaning. A feature of RCP is to detransitivize a transitive verb, e.g. *insult*. In that case, the object (patient) argument of the verb in (7c) remains unstated, although it is assumed to be understood. Example (7d) bears a manner adverbial interpretation, that is, the baskets fell and were scattered in different directions. Certainly, the 'reciprocal' suffix *-an-* in (7c) and (7d) has a different function from that of the usual known reciprocal. It is those other functions of the suffix that we expound further as the antipassive voice.

Frajzyngier & Curl (2000) observed that although plurality of participants is important for coding a reciprocal situation, it is not always the case that the subject must be plural in some languages. This is exemplified in Gĩkũyũ by (8a), which has a reciprocal meaning although the subject (causer) is singular but the patient (causee) is plural. This interpretation is made possible by the plural animate causee-patient. The difference is evident in (8b), which has a singular patient; hence it lacks a reciprocal meaning. (8b) actually means that the mother heedlessly/carelessly/frivolously hit the child against a surface, e.g. a wall. The adverbial interpretation of (8b) depends more on knowledge of the world than on syntax. In fact, Mugane (1999), without much elaboration, cautions that relying on syntax to account for non-reciprocal *-an-* is unsatisfactory.

- (8) a. Mo-ciari ne a-hor-ith-an-i-a ci-an-a.
 1-parent AM 1SM-hit-CAUS₁-RCP-CAUS₂-FV 7-children
 'The parent made the children quarrel with each other.'
- b. Mo-ciari ne a-hor-ith-an-i-a mw-an-a.
 1-parent AM 1SM-hit-CAUS₁-? RCP-CAUS₂-FV 1-child
 'The parent hit the child against something (heedlessly/frivolously).'

Still on the plurality of arguments, a plural subject in Gĩkũyũ can result in ambiguity concerning who acts upon whom, as shown in (9a).

- (9) a. A-rɔgi ne ma-rɔg-an-ag-a.
 2-witches AM 2SM-bewitch-ANTIP/RCP-IMPFV-FV
 'Witches bewitch (others).' / 'Witches bewitch each other.'
- b. Mo-rɔgi ne a-a-rɔg-an-ag-a.
 1-witch AM 1SM-bewitch-ANTIP-IMPFV-FV
 'A witch (customarily/habitually) bewitches (other people).'

The meaning of (9a) is ambiguous; it has both reciprocal and antipassive meaning. The reciprocal meaning is made possible by the plural subject and

the RCP. The antipassive (ANTIP) interpretation holds when the hearer considers that ‘bewitching’ is done by ‘witches’ to other people and not among themselves to each other. On the other hand, the singular subject in (9b) is by default an antipassive construction, in which the object is inadmissible, and therefore making a reciprocal sense of (9b) impossible without a plural participant, subject or object. The above is an additional pointer that the plurality of participants is vital for reciprocal interpretation in Gĩkũyũ.

Having shown how Gĩkũyũ indicates reciprocity, it is evident that *-an-* has other functions other than the reciprocal. In the next section, I propose that a detransitivized construction bearing suffix *-an-* and without an overt patient object instantiates antipassive voice in Gĩkũyũ. Creissels (2018:755) observed “the reciprocal-antipassive syncretism” that exists in African languages where a reciprocal suffix indicates antipassive voice, among other functions. Ndayiragije 2006) and Bostoen et al. (2015) show that the RCP suffix marks the ANTIP in Kirundi and in Cilubã, respectively. Bostoen et al. (2015) suggested that the Bantu antipassive could have evolved from the reciprocal.

4.1 The Reciprocal as the Antipassive Marker in Gĩkũyũ

Explicit arguments for the recognition of antipassives in Bantu can be credited to Bostoen et al. (2015) and Dom et al. (2015), whose papers inspired research on antipassives in Bantu, including this one. Bostoen et al. (2015:731) observed that the antipassive has “largely gone unnoticed in Bantu languages”. An antipassive construction is a valency-reducing operation. According to Zúñiga & Kittilä (2019:103), a prototypical antipassive voice is characterized by:

- a. Its syntactic valency is one less than the one of the non-antipassive diathesis (e.g., it is monovalent when its counterpart is bivalent).
- b. Its subject corresponds to the A[gent] of the non-antipassive diathesis.
- c. Its peripheral, and optional, argument (typically marked by a non-core case or adposition) corresponds to the P[atient] subject of the non-antipassive voice.
- d. Antipassivization is formally coded on the predicate complex.

Still on the characteristics of an antipassive, Dixon (1994:146) and Dixon & Aikhenvald (2000: 9) lay out four basic conditions for a prototypical antipassive construction. One, an antipassive contains a detransitivized verb;

two, the agent becomes the subject, or the subject of the antipassive construction corresponds to the subject of its active counterpart; three, the object of the verb in the antipassive ceases being a core argument, it may become an oblique argument, or even deleted; and four, there is an overt formal antipassive marker. The above are the features that guide the discussion of antipassive constructions in Gĩkũyũ.

The example in (10) from Dyirbal (Pama-Nyungan), an Australian language, cited by Heaton (2020:132) from Dixon (1994) illustrates the features above.

- (10) a. Yabu ŋuma-ŋgu bura-n.
 mother.ABS father-ERG see-NFUT
 ‘Father saw mother.’
- b. Duma bural-ŋa-nyu yabu-gu.
 father.ABS see-ANTIP-NFUT mother-DAT
 ‘Father saw mother.’

The word order in (10a) shows the object (*yabu*) (Patient) as the absolute (ABS) argument and the subject (Agent) (*ŋuma-ŋgu*) as the ergative (ERG) and lastly the verb. The introduction of the verbal antipassive (ANTIP) affix *ŋa* in the verb in (10b), the Agent becomes the absolute argument (see criterion (b)), the verb codes the antipassive by a suffix *ŋa* (criterion (d)) and the patient is demoted to a dative by the addition of the dative suffix *-gu*, which conforms to criterion (c) above. In some antipassive constructions the object argument may be deleted completely not just made a peripheral argument, hence the detransitivization feature.

To establish if such constructions meet the minimum threshold of antipassives, Gĩkũyũ reciprocal constructions will be assessed against the crosslinguistic features of antipassives, e.g. Dixon (1994), Dixon & Aikhenvald (2000), Polinsky (2017), and Zúñiga & Kittilä (2019).

Voices are construed as constructions that “affect the alignment between semantic roles and grammatical relations in clauses” (Payne 2006: 237). Active-passive constructions exhibit this alignment in Gĩkũyũ as seen (11).

- (11) a. Maina a-ra-or-ir-ε keki.
 Maina 1SM-PST-buy-PFV-FV 9.cake
 ‘Maina bought the cake.’
- b. Keki e-ra-gor-ir-wɔ ne Maina.
 9.cake 9SM-PST-buy-PFV-PASS by Maina
 ‘The cake was bought by Maina.’

In the active voice sentence in (11a) *Maina* is the agent/subject and *keki* ‘cake’ is the object/the patient. In the passive (11b), the patient replaces the subject, which becomes an optional oblique argument. The passive (PASS)

suffix *-wo* licenses the preposition *ne* ‘by’ which occurs with the agent in the periphery, though optional.

As noted earlier, Mugane (1999:166) noticed the polysemic nature of the Gĩkũyũ RCP; but he did not suggest the antipassive sense of *-an-*. Barlow (1960:123) described the uses of suffix “*ana*” [sic] as: reciprocal, generalizing, associative and divisive. The generalizing sense refers to a generalized, unspecified object argument. In this paper, *-an-* is the reciprocal without the FV *-a*.

Since antipassive reduces the valency of a verb, we look at monotransitive and ditransitive verbs, beginning with antipassive in monotransitive verb in (12). The actor/agent and the patient /undergoer are present since *roma* ‘bite’ is a transitive verb in (12a). Example (12b) fails the plural subject test hence not reciprocal, although the verb is detransitivized by *-an-*; the agent is maintained but the object is omitted, and its inclusion leads to ungrammaticality. It would remain ungrammatical even if the object is an oblique argument *na mondo* ‘with a person’. Interestingly, the interpretation is that ‘he bit someone not something’, even without an overt object. This fact is compared with example (12c) which fulfills the plural subject criterion. This example has two interpretations. First, owing to the plural subject, it is interpreted as ‘the cows butting other cows’, and the second interpretation is that ‘the cows are butting people’. The first interpretation not available to (12b) because of its singular subject. However, all the examples with *-an-* do not allow an object argument.

- (12) a. Kamau ne a-a-rom-ir-ε mo-ndo.
 Kamau AM 1SM-PST-bite-PFV-FV 1-person
 ‘Kamau bit a person.’
- b. Kamau ne a-a-rom-an-ir-ε *mo-ndo.
 Kamau AM 1SM-PST-bite-RCP-PFV-FV *1-person
 ‘Kamau bit (someone).’
- c. Ngɔmbe i-ci ne i-ra-tuth-an-a.
 10. cows 10-DEM AM 10SM-PST-butt-RCP-FV
 ‘These cows are butting each other/they are butting people.’

The ditransitive verb *he* ‘give’ in (13a) has three participants: the agent *motumia* ‘woman’, the recipient *ciana* ‘children’ and the theme *iriɔ* ‘food’. With the addition of *-an-*, the valency of the verb is reduced to two arguments: agent (*motumia*) and theme (*iriɔ*) since the indirect object (*ciana*) is obligatorily omitted as its inclusion makes the sentence ungrammatical. Only the direct object (theme) *iriɔ* can be allowed as an object marker (SOM) (13c) but not the indirect object (recipient) *ciana* as in *mo-tumia a-ra-he-ci-an-ir-ε *iriɔ*. ‘The woman gave them (children) food.’

- (13) a. Mo-tumia a-ra-hε-ir-ε ci-ana irio.
 1-woman 1SM-PST-give-PFV-FV 7-children 5.food.
 ‘The woman gave the children food.’
- b. Mo-tumia a-ra-hε-an-ir-ε *ci-ana irio.
 1-woman 1SM-PST-give-ANTIP-PFV-FV *7-children 5.food.
 ‘The woman gave out the food.’
- c. Mo-tumia a-ra-hε-i-an-ir-ε *ci-ana.
 1-woman 1SM-PST-give-5.OM-ANTIP-PFV-FV *7-children
 ‘The woman gave out them (the food).’

The suffix *-an-* in (12b-c) and (13b-c) is responsible for the detransitivization of the verb by deleting the direct object. The monotransitive and ditransitive examples above have a non-specific or presupposed participant. Antipassives, like passives and reciprocals, are valency-decreasing operations. The difference is that while reciprocals bring together the controlling and the affected participant, the antipassive downplays an affected participant (Payne, 1997: 173).⁷ Such hierarchical demotion of an object is a defining characteristic of an antipassive construction (cf. Polinsky (2017) and Zúñiga & Kittilä (2019)).

I will discuss examples (12b) and (13b-c) in light of the characteristics of antipassive constructions outlined in Dixon (1994) and Dixon & Aikhenvald (2000). For the first condition, the transitive verbs in the active sentence are detransitivized in the antipassive, verbs *roma* ‘bite’ and *hε* ‘give’ and *tutha* ‘butt’ in the examples cannot take an object argument. For the second condition: the subjects in (12a) and (12b) and in (13a), (13b) and (13c) i.e. *Kamau* and *motumia*, are identical in the active and in the antipassive sentences. The third condition: the antipassive constructions in (12b-c) and (13b-c) lack overt objects; and lastly, the antipassive constructions contain suffix *-an-* the proposed formal marker of the antipassive voice in Gĩkũyũ in present in all the examples posited as antipassives. It becomes evident that the examples meet all the four conditions expounded by Dixon (1994) and Dixon & Aikhenvald (2000).

On the formal marking of an antipassive, Janic & Witzlack-Makarevich (2021) noted that some languages lack a dedicated

⁷ Even with applicatives that obligatorily require an applied argument, the antipassive suffix disallows a benefactive applied object in (ii).

- (i) A-ra-gor-er-ir-e mw-ana i-rato.
 1SM-PST-buy-APPL-PFV-FV 1-child 7-shoes
 ‘S/he bought the child shoes.’
- (ii) A-ra-gor-an-er-ir-e *mw-ana i-rato
 1SM-PST-buy-RCP-APPL-PFV-FV *1-child 7-shoes
 ‘S/he bought shoes for someone.’

The benefactive applicative in (i) licenses the benefactive applied argument *mwana*, but this is not the case in (ii) which has suffix *-an-* whereby the beneficiary is unspecified but the direct object is present.

morphological antipassive morpheme, yet they indicate the antipassive voice, and others have a syncretic antipassive marker (a marker that has other functions in a language) as opposed to a dedicated one. Other than the proposed antipassive function, the Gĩkũyũ reciprocal *-an-* has an associative function (see Mwangi 2001:205) and can, therefore, be described as a syncretic antipassive marker.

But what other type of antipassive construction exists in Gĩkũyũ? There is an “indefinite antipassive” (Cooreman 1994:52), a type of antipassive in which the object argument is left out for being obvious, unimportant in the discourse, indefinite, or unknown. Example (12b) takes it that the theme argument is recoverable from the context. The hearer can make out that the agent bit somebody (here interpreted a human being), and in (13b) the fact that verb *hε* ‘give’ has a theme argument, then the semantics of the verb will guide the interpretation that there is an obvious recipient, though not overtly expressed. Hence, these Gĩkũyũ examples pass for indefinite antipassives.

The Gĩkũyũ examples in (12b) and (13b-c) also pass for “patientless antipassives” (Dixon & Aikhenvald 2000: 10), since the patient arguments are not indicated. These types of constructions resemble the ‘antipassive of the implicit argument type’ by Polinsky (2017); implicit because the argument in question is understood or presupposed. Crosslinguistically, patientless antipassives are the most common. Polinsky (2013) reported that 9% of languages examined (18 languages out of 194) bear implicit patient argument antipassives. See also Foley & Van Valin (1985) and Heaton (2017).

Another typology of antipassives is the backgrounding and foregrounding antipassives suggested by Foley & Van Valin (1985). On the one hand, backgrounding antipassives occur in syntactically accusative languages, e.g. English; in morphologically and syntactically ergative languages, e.g. Dyirbal; and in morphologically ergative and accusative languages, e.g. Tzotzil (Foley & Van Valin 1985:340). On the other hand, foregrounding antipassives are more common in ergative languages. In the foregrounding type, foregrounding an agent gives the agent/subject prominence as it may be the only argument overtly expressed in case of a deleted object. Backgrounded objects are either deleted or demoted objects (cf. Foley & Van Valin 1985; Foley 2007; and Polinsky 2017).

Based on Foley & Van Valin (1985) and Foley (2007) typology, Gĩkũyũ antipassive falls under ‘backgrounding antipassives’ because in this type the undergoer (roughly the object) is demoted to peripheral status (oblique). In most cases the object argument is completely suppressed or omitted altogether, and this is exactly what happens in Gĩkũyũ; the object is not made an oblique argument. In Gĩkũyũ considering that in (12b) the object (patient) and the indirect object (recipient) in (13b-c) are understood to be inherently human, the interpretation may be more about pragmatics than semantics. This kind of antipassive with an indefinite human object

‘someone’ is aptly called a ‘human antipassive’ by Janic & Witzlack-Makarevich (2021), and it exemplified by the given examples.

5.0 Conclusion

This article set out to argue for the recognition of middle and antipassive voices in Gĩkũyũ. The novel claim led to the re-analysis of the reflexive and the reciprocal verbal morphemes. For the reflexive, the analysis showed that the reflexive morpheme is responsible for the reflexive meaning and an array of other middle voice semantics as laid out in Kemmer (1993), e.g. indirect middles, (non-) translational motion, change of body position, cognition middles, grooming, emotional middles, etc. Because the prefix does not cover all the meanings of a canonical middle, it is a quasi-middle following Dom et al. (2016). The positing of the middle voice helps solve the Gĩkũyũ double reflexive conundrum noted by Barlow (1960). Barlow’s claim of ‘double reflexives’ in Gĩkũyũ is weakened since the prefixes are not really reflexive affixes but a middle marker and a first person singular subject marker.

For the reciprocal, its so-described ‘recalcitrant nature’ by Mugane (1999) is partially resolved by uncovering its antipassive function in Gĩkũyũ. It has been shown that the reciprocal suffix *-an-* indicates the antipassive voice in Gĩkũyũ since it meets the crosslinguistic typological criteria or characteristics of an antipassive marker. Since the reciprocal marker is also the antipassive marker, it presents a reciprocal-antipassive syncretism that is cross-linguistically common. Further, Gĩkũyũ antipassives can be typologically sub-classified into patientless, implicit patient argument, human antipassive, and backgrounding antipassives. Research on typological linguistic aspects of Bantu languages has the potential to expose linguistic aspects hitherto thought exotic to Bantu language family, hence the need to examine more derivational extensions in Bantu especially those concerning the middle semantics.

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