

Subject nominalizations in Ewe and Oshiwambo¹
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1 Introduction

- Agent nominalizations are assumed to be derived from verbs (Baker & Vinokurova 2009, Alexiadou & Schäfer's 2010, Wood 2023, among others).

- (1) a. Jane **drives** two trucks. (clause)
b. a **driver** of two trucks (agent nominalization)

- Based on a survey of 78 languages, Baker & Vinokurova (2009) (henceforth B&V) conclude that agent nominalizations lack several verbal properties.

- These properties include negation (NegP) and tense (TP):

- (2) a. Jane did **not drive** two trucks. (✓ negation)
b. *a **not driver** of two trucks (✗ negation)

- (3) a. Jane **drove** two trucks. (✓ tense)
b. *a **drover** of two trucks (✗ tense)

- This amounts to saying that the verbal structure of agent nominalizations is deprived in size.

- (4) a. a driver of two trucks
b.

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graph TD
    DP1[DP] --- D1[D]
    DP1 --- NP1[NP]
    NP1 --- N[N]
    NP1 --- VP[VP]
    N --- a[a]
    VP --- V[V]
    VP --- DP2[DP]
    V --- drive[drive]
    DP2 --- of[(of)]
    DP2 --- trucks[two trucks]
```

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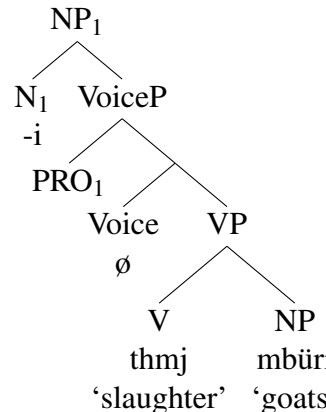
- Gĩkũyũ (Bantu) showcases what is referred to as *subject* nominalizations.
- Subject nominalizations can be derived from unaccusative verbs:

- (5) a. mu-**twek**-i
1-**melt**-I
'one that melts'
- b. mu-**ku**-i
1-**die**-I
'one that dies' (Gĩkũyũ, Baker & Vinokurova 2009:547)

- The reflexive marker *i-* can participate in subject nominalizations:

- (6) a. mû-**i**-end-i
1-**REFL**-like-I
'one who likes herself/himself'
- b. mu-**i**-yamb-i
1-**REFL**-pride-I
'one who is full of herself/himself' (Gĩkũyũ, Baker & Vinokurova 2009:548)

- B&V claim that the external argument (EA) PRO is introduced in the derivation as the antecedent that binds the anaphor *i-*.
- B&V's analysis of subject nominalizations is fleshed out in (7).

- (7) a. a-thmj-í mbüri
2-slaughter-I goats
'those (people) who slaughter goats'
- b. 

- Based on B&V, subject nominalizations cannot host negation (NegP) or tense (TP).

- Empirical evidence from Ewe (Kwa) and Oshiwambo (Bantu) suggests otherwise.

1. NegP can be realized in Ewe subject nominalizations.
2. TP can be realized in Oshiwambo subject nominalizations.

- Subject nominalizations can be more articulated in syntactic size than previously assumed.
- More parallels can be drawn between the nominal domain and the clausal domain.

2 Ewe (Kwa)

- Ewe is a member of the Gbe cluster of languages spoken in Ghana, Togo, and Benin.
- I focus on Tongugbe, a coastal dialect of Ewe spoken in Ghana.

2.1 Nominalizations

- Nominalized intransitive verbs undergo reduplication (Clements 1975, Fabb 1992):

- (8) a. Nu-fíé-lá vá.
 thing-teach-LA **come**
 ‘The teacher came.’
- b. [Nu-fíé-lá wó **va-va**] dó dzidzo ne mí.
 thing-teach-LA POSS **come-come** plant happiness for us
 ‘[The teacher’s coming] made us happy.’

- Nominalized transitive verbs generally involve reduplication and object shift (Clements 1975, Dorgbetor 2016, Duthie 1996):

- (9) a. Ama **Φo-ó** sankú.
 Ama **play-HAB** piano
 ‘Ama plays the piano.’
- b. [**Sankú-Φo-Φó**] víví-ε né Ama.
piano-play-play sweet-HAB for Ama
 ‘Ama enjoys [playing the piano].’ (reduplication & object shift)

- Reduplication can target the verb and the negative marker *ma-* in Ewe ($\approx$ *not* in English).

- (10) a. [Nu-fíé-lá wó **ma-va-ma-va**] dó dziku né mí.
 thing-teach-LA POSS **NEG-come-NEG-come** plant anger for us
 ‘[The teacher’s not coming] made us angry.’
- b. [Kofi wó ame-**ma-bu-ma-bu**] wɔ nukú né mí.
 Kofi POSS person-**NEG-respect-NEG-respect** make surprise for us
 ‘[Kofi’s not respecting people] surprised us.’

2.2 Subject nominalizations

- Subject nominalizations are associated with the suffix *-la* in Ewe ($\approx$ *-er* in English).
- Subject nominalizations can host the negative marker *ma-*.

- (11) a. **dzo-dzo-lá**
 jump-jump-LA
 ‘a jumper’
 b. **ma-dzo-ma-dzo-lá**
 NEG-jump-NEG-jump-LA
 $\approx$ ‘a non-jumper’

- Object shift takes place inside subject nominalizations. Here, reduplication does not apply:

- (12) a. **agbalẽ-dzra-la**
 book-sell-LA
 ‘a seller of books’
 b. **agbalẽ-ma-dzra-la**
 book-NEG-sell-LA
 $\approx$ ‘a non-seller of books’

- While reduplication takes place in subject nominalizations with an intransitive verb, subject nominalizations with a transitive verb and an object pattern quite differently.

2.3 Scope

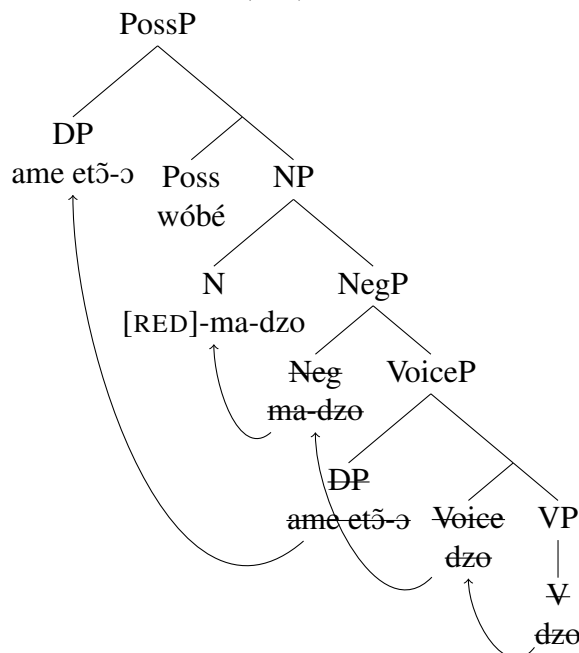
- I examine whether *ma-* in Ewe is syntactic (e.g., *not* in English) or morphological (e.g., *in-*, *un-*, *non-* in English).
- Syntactic negation induces scope ambiguity as in (13a), whereas morphological negation does not as shown in (13b).

- (13) a. [**Everyone’s not** having gone to the party] surprised me.
 i. No one went to the party ($\forall > \neg$)
 ii. It is not the case that everyone went to the party ($\neg > \forall$)
 b. [**Everyone’s ineligibility**] surprised me.
 i. No one is eligible ($\forall > \neg$)
 ii. It is not the case that everyone is eligible ($*\neg > \forall$)

- Scope ambiguity is possible with *ma-* in Ewe.
- In (14), numeral quantifiers realized inside a subject DP can take wide scope and narrow scope with respect to negation.

- (14) a. [Ame etɔ̃-ɔ wóbé ma-dzo-ma-dzo] wɔ nuku nũ.
 person **three**-DEF POSS.PL NEG-jump-NEG-jump make surprise for.1SG
 ‘[Three people’s not jumping] surprised me.’ (3 > ¬, ¬ > 3)

b. Tree structure for (14a)



- *Ma-* induces syntactic negation inside subject nominalizations:

- (15) [Evu-**eve**-**ma**-ɸle-lá-ɔ] dzó.
 car-**two**-NEG-buy-LA-PL leave
 ‘[Those who did not buy two cars (but only one)] left.’ (2 > ¬, ¬ > 2)

- Recall that syntactic negation inside subject nominalizations is not predicted under B&V.

2.4 NPI licensing

- NPI licensing is another diagnostic for examining the syntactic status of negation.
- The English NPI *any* can be licensed by *not*, but not by *un-*:

- (16) a. *Jane is happy about **any** of his drawings. (✗ NPI licensing)
 b. Jane is **not** happy about **any** of his drawings. (✓ NPI licensing)
 c. *Jane is **unhappy** about **any** of his drawings. (✗ NPI licensing)

- English *non-* does not assign NPIs:

- (17) *Jane is a **non**-seller of **any** books. (✗ NPI licensing)

- Ewe *ma-* licenses NPIs:

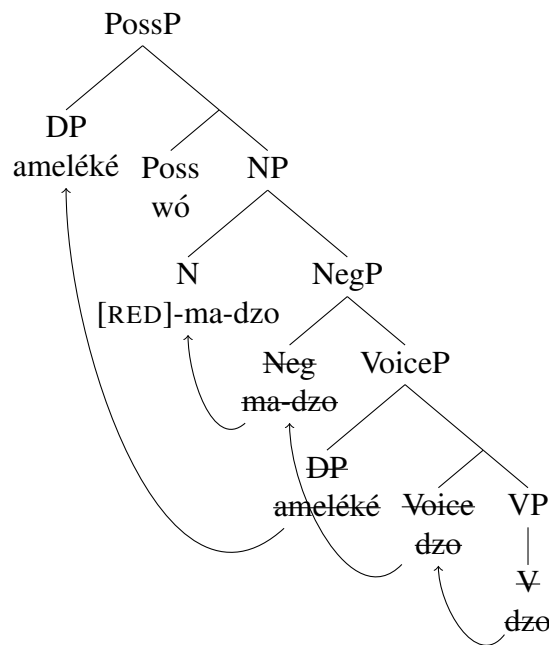
(18) [Ameléké wó ma-dzo-ma-dzo] wɔ nuku nũ.
nobody.NPI POSS.SG NEG-jump-NEG-jump make surprise for.1 SG
 ‘[No one’s jumping] surprised me.’ (✓ NPI licensing)

- When *ma-* is absent, the non-NPI *amesíame* instead of the NPI *ameléké* has to be used:

(19) [Amesíame(/*ameléké) wó dzó-dzó] wɔ nuku nũ.
everyone(/*nobody.NPI) POSS.SG jump-jump make surprise for.1 SG
 ‘[Everyone’s jumping] surprised me.’ (✗ NPI licensing)

- Ewe *ma-* is syntactic negation, which is consistent with our findings from scope.
- The derivation for (18) is provided below:

(20) Tree structure for the subject in (18)



- An NPI can be licensed by *ma-* inside subject nominalizations:

(21) [Nanéké-ma-dzra-lá-ɔ] le gámá.
nothing.NPI-NEG-sell-LA-PL be there
 ‘[Those who did not sell anything] are there.’ (✓ NPI licensing)

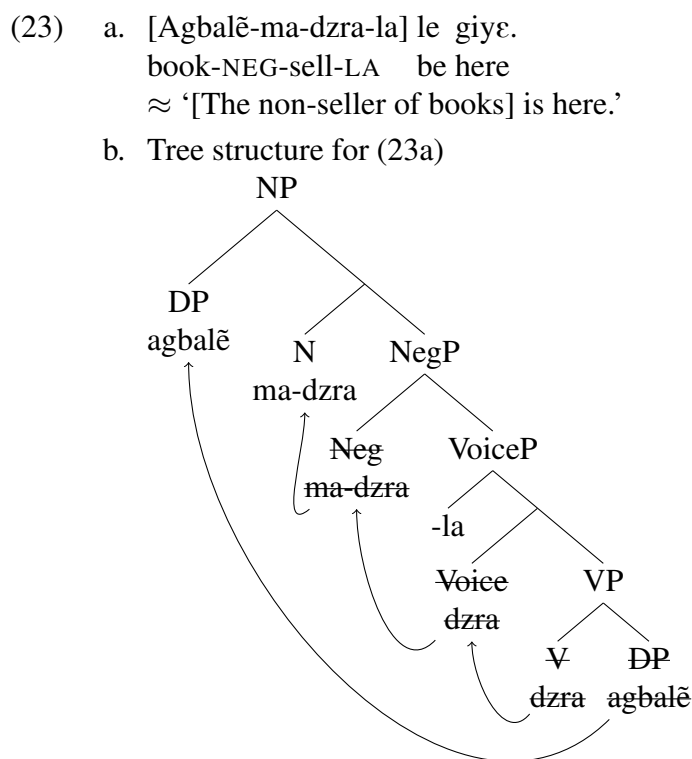
- As a side note, Wá-šiw (Hokan/isolate, USA) also showcases negation inside subject nominalizations (Hanink 2021, In progress).
- Negation in Wá-šiw subject nominalizations licenses NPIs (Emily Hanink p.c.).

2.5 Putting the pieces together

- Evidence from (i) **scope** and (ii) **NPI licensing** suggests that *ma-* is associated with NegP (see also Agbedor 1994 and Collins et al. 2018).
- Taken together, Ewe (Tongugbe) allows NegP inside subject nominalizations contrary to B&V's assumption.
- I assume that *-la* is introduced as an external argument in Spec, VoiceP à la Collins (2006).

- (22) a. **dokoé-dzí-ɖu-lá**
 self-top-win-LA
 'a disciplined person' (reflexive)
- b. **wónɔɔɔ-ɖe-lá-ɔ**
 each.other-marry-LA-PL
 'a married couple' (reciprocal)

- The tree structure for the negated subject nominalization in (23a) is provided below:



- One implication is that subject nominalizations can be more verb/clause-like than what has been previously reported in the literature.

3 Oshiwambo (Bantu)

3.1 Basic facts about Oshiwambo

- Oshiwambo is a Southern African Bantu language of the Niger-Congo family spoken in the northern part of Namibia and the southern part of Angola.
- I focus on the dialect, Oshingandjera.
- Similar to other Bantu languages, Oshiwambo displays a number of noun class prefixes:

Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4	Class 5	Class 6	Class 7	Class 8	Class 9
<i>mu-</i>	<i>a-</i>	<i>mu-</i>	<i>mi-</i>	<i>e-</i>	<i>ma-</i>	<i>shi-</i>	<i>i-</i>	<i>n-</i>
Class 10	Class 11	Class 12	Class 13	Class 14	Class 15	Class 16	Class 17	Class 18
<i>o-</i>	<i>lu-</i>	<i>ka-</i>	N/A	<i>u-</i>	<i>ku-</i>	<i>po-</i>	<i>ko-</i>	<i>mo-</i>

Table 1: Noun classes in Oshiwambo (Bantu)

- Noun classes 1 and 2 are associated with [+human] nouns.
- An augment prefix can be introduced in Oshiwambo noun phrases.²

- (24) a. **o-mu-nhu**
 AUG-1-person
 ‘a person’
 b. **a-a-nhu**
 AUG-2-person
 ‘people’

3.2 Subject nominalizations

- Subject nominalizations are often associated with noun classes 1 and 2.
- Subject nominalizations are often associated with the suffix *-i*.

- (25) a. **o-mu-nhuk-i**
 AUG-1-jump-I
 ‘a jumper’
 b. **a-a-nhuk-i**
 AUG-2-jump-I
 ‘jumpers’

²Augments generally serve the role of denoting aspects of referentiality. Indefinite and unspecified noun phrases (e.g., *wh*-words and NPIs) tend to lack augments (see Hyman & Katamba 1993; Progovac 1993).

- Unaccusative predicates can be associated with subject nominalizations:

- (26) a. o-mu-**gw**-i
 AUG-1-**fall**-I
 ‘one who falls (a faller)’
 b. a-a-**gw**-i
 AUG-2-**fall**-I
 ‘those who fall (fallers)’

- (27) a. o-mu-**s**-i
 AUG-1-**die**-I
 ‘one who dies (a dier)’
 b. a-a-**s**-i
 AUG-2-**die**-I
 ‘those who die (diers)’

(unaccusative)

- Transitive predicates with an overt object can be realized in subject nominalizations.

- (28) o-mu-**landith**-i **ma-mbo**
 AUG-1-**sell**-I **6-book**
 ‘a seller of books’

(transitive)

- Reflexive and reciprocal markers can be realized in Oshiwambo.
- In (29), the reflexive marker *i-* refers to the subject *Penda*.

- (29) Penda o-kwi-**i**-dheng-a.
 Penda AFF-1 SG.PST-**REFL**-hit-A
 ‘Penda hit himself.’

- Reflexive anaphor binding in Oshiwambo is done syntactically rather than semantically.
- A piece of evidence comes from the availability of the *statue*-reading or the *near-reflexive* (proxy) reading:

- (30) Penda o-kwi-**i**-dheng-a.
 Penda AFF-1 SG.PST-**REFL**-hit-A
 ‘Penda hit himself.’ ([i] Penda₁ hit Penda₁ or [ii] Penda₁ hit a statue of Penda₁)

- Argument structure needs to be established where an antecedent c-commands its anaphor.
- In (30), *Penda* is the EA that binds its reflexive anaphor.
- The reflexive marker *i-* can be realized inside Oshiwambo subject nominalizations.
- The *statue*-reading is also available:

- (31) o-mwi-**i**-dheng-i
 AUG-1-**REFL**-hit-I
 ‘one who hits him/herself’ or ‘one who hits a statue of him/herself’ (reflexive)

- (31) suggests that a syntactic antecedent is present in the derivation.
- PRO is introduced as the EA in Spec, VoiceP that binds the anaphor in (31).
- This is in line with B&V’s claim that PRO is introduced in Gĩkũyũ subject nominalizations.
- Reciprocal marking is possible as well:

- (32) a-a-hokana-**than**-i
 AUG-2-marry-**RECP**-I
 ‘Those who marry each other (spouses)’ (reciprocal)

- Causative and applicative markers can be realized inside subject nominalizations.

- (33) a. o-mu-nhuki-**th**-i Elago
 AUG-1-jump-**CAUS**-I Elago
 ‘one who makes Elago jump’ (causative)
- b. o-mu-telek-**el**-i Elago o-shi
 AUG-1-cook-**APPL**-I Elago 9-fish
 ‘one who cooks fish for Elago’ (applicative)

- When a transitive predicate undergoes passivization, the passive suffix *-w* surfaces.
- Passivization is possible inside subject nominalizations.

- (34) o-mu-dheng-**w**-i (ku-Penda)
 AUG-1-hit-**PASS**-I (by-Penda)
 ‘one who is hit (by Penda)’ (passive)

- The passive marker can surface together with causative and applicative markers:

- (35) a. o-mu-nhuki-**th-w**-i (ku-Penda)
 AUG-1-jump-**CAUS-PASS**-I by-Penda
 ‘one who is made to jump by Penda’ (causative & passive)
- b. o-mu-telek-**el-w**-i (ku-Penda)
 AUG-1-cook-**APPL-PASS**-I by-Penda
 ‘one who is cooked for by Penda’ (applicative & passive)

- Nominals hosting the passive suffix *-w* are compatible with the suffix *-a*, as in (36).
- Notably, a past tense reading is induced:

- (36) a. o-mu-dheng-**w-a** (ku-Penda)
 AUG-1-hit-PASS-A by-Penda
 ‘one who was hit (by Penda)’
 b. o-mu-hol-**w-a** (ku-Penda)
 AUG-1-love-PASS-A by-Penda
 ‘one who was loved (by Penda)’

- In (37a), the temporal adverb *nená* ‘today’ modifies the entire sentence, whereas the adverb *hela* ‘yesterday’ modifies the content internal to the subject nominalization.
- This suggests that subject nominalizations associated with *-a* can independently bear tense.

- (37) a. O-mu-dheng-w-**a** gwo-**hela** (ku-Penda) o-ta-alukwa **nená**.
 AUG-1-hit-PASS-A ASSOC-yesterday (by-Penda) AFF-IPFV-sick today
 ‘One who was hit yesterday (by Penda) is sick today.’
 b. O-mu-dheng-w-**i** (*gwo-**hela**) (ku-Penda) o-ta-alukwa **nená**.
 AUG-1-hit-PASS-I ASSOC-yesterday (by-Penda) AFF-IPFV-sick today
 ‘One who is hit (by Penda) is sick today.’

- Tense-associated subject nominalizations are observed even when the passive marker is realized with causative and applicative suffixes:

- (38) a. o-mu-nhuki-**th-w-a** gwo-**hela** (ku-Penda)
 AUG-1-jump-CAUS-PASS-A ASSOC-yesterday by-Penda
 ‘one who was made to jump yesterday (by Penda)’
 b. o-mu-telek-**el-w-a** gwo-**hela** (ku-Penda)
 AUG-1-cook-APPL-PASS-A ASSOC-yesterday by-Penda
 ‘one who was cooked for yesterday (by Penda)’

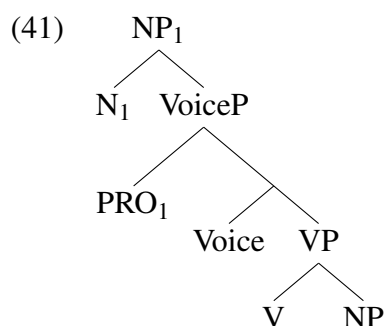
- A past tense-associated aspect marker can also be realized in subject nominalizations:

- (39) o-mu-dheng-**elél-w-a** ku-Mary
 AUG-1-hit-R.PFV-PASS-A by-Mary
 ‘one who had been hit by Mary (a long time ago)’

- As a side note, low (manner) adverbs can be realized inside subject nominalizations:

- (40) a-a-dhipag-i i-kombo **nayi**
 AUG-2-kill-I 8-goat **badly**
 ‘those who slaughter goats badly’

- The empirical picture for Oshiwambo cannot be reconciled with the structure in (41), repeated from (7b) based on B&V.

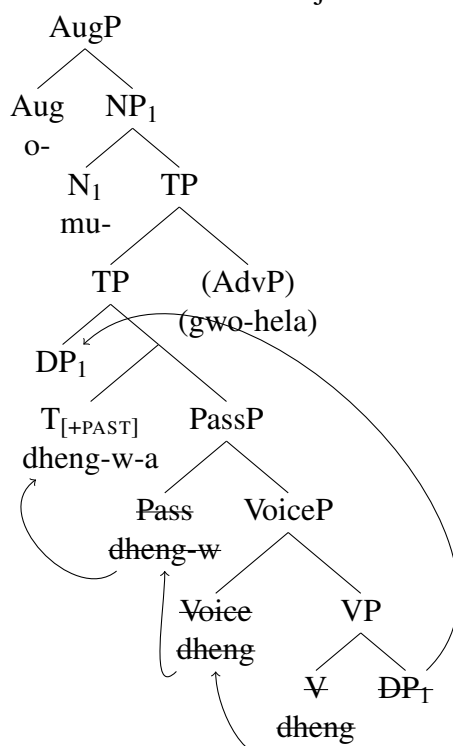


- The reduced syntactic size of (41) provides no room for temporal adverbs.

3.3 An analysis

- The facts in Oshiwambo can be captured under an extended version of Alexiadou & Schäfer's (2010) phrasal layering analysis.
- Verbal functional projections, including TP, can be established inside the nominal domain.

(42) The derivation for the subject nominalization in (37a)



- V-to-T movement derives *dheng-w-a* based on Baker's (1985) Mirror Principle.
- The IA is promoted to Spec,TP due to passivization.
- The suffix *-a* is spelled out in T.

- I assume that finite T inside Oshiwambo subject nominalizations is defective in that it only selects PassP and that it only induces a past tense reading.

- The notion of defective finite Ts has also been posited for Turkish nominalizations (Kornfilt & Whitman 2011).
- Kornfilt & Whitman (2011) point out that the lack of agreement also signals the defectiveness of Ts. This is exactly what we see in Oshiwambo subject nominalizations.

3.4 Putting the pieces together

- I have argued that TP can be showcased inside subject nominalizations.
- An implication of this work is that the syntactic size of subject nominalizations can be more articulated than previously assumed in the literature.
- This calls for a closer look at other (Bantu) languages, including Gĩkũyũ, to see if the findings from Oshiwambo can be replicated.
- One aspect of Oshiwambo subject nominalizations that is worth further investigating is the past tense reading that is only available with passivization.

4 Subject nominalizations in other languages

- The following Bantu languages host the passive suffix *-(i)w* and the suffix *-a* inside subject nominalizations (Mchombo 2004 and Mletshe 2010).
 - Chicheŵa
 - Northern Sotho
 - Setswana
 - Siswati
 - Tshivenda
 - Xitsonga
- For future research, I plan to investigate whether the analysis provided for Oshiwambo can be applied to these languages (and more).

5 Reduced & headless relative clauses

5.1 Ewe

- Ewe (Tongugbe) relative clauses (RCs) are postnominal. The relativizer in Tongugbe is *yɛ*.

(43) *ɖɛví [yɛ me-kpɔ](*-lá)*
 child REL 1SG-see-LA
 ‘the child that I saw’

- There seems to be no reduced RCs in Ewe, since the relativizer is always overt.

	Subject nominalizations	Reduced RCs	Headless RCs
Overt relativizer	✗	✗	✓
Overt head	✗	✓	✗
Object-denoting	✗	✗	✓

Table 1: Subject nominalizations are different from reduced and headless RCs

- The closest Ewe counterparts to English headless RCs are headed by *nu* ‘thing’ or *ame* ‘person,’ which is followed by the relativizer *yɛ*:

(44) Me-kpó [**nu** *yɛ* Kofi dʒrá].
 1 SG-see **thing** REL Kofi sell
 ‘I saw what Kofi sold.’

(45) Me-nyá [**ame** *yɛ* Adzo lɔ].
 1 SG-know **person** REL Adzo love
 ‘I know who Adzo loves.’

- Subject nominalizations in Ewe cannot bear an overt relativizer or a head noun.

5.2 Oshiwambo

- RCs in Oshiwambo are postnominal, and the relativizer is overtly realized:

(46) o-mu-nhu [**ngu** ta-li o-shi-kuki]
 AUG-1-person REL PROG-eat AUG-7-cake
 ‘a person who is eating the cake’

- Reduced RCs are realized without a relativizer:

(47) **o-mu-nhu** [ta-li o-shi-kuki]
 AUG-1-person PROG-eat AUG-7-cake
 ‘a person eating the cake’

- Oshiwambo headless relatives clauses bear a relativizer.

(48) Jane o-ku-hole **ngu** o-mu-wanawa
 Jane AFF-3SG-like REL AUG-1-beautiful
 ‘Jane likes who is beautiful.’

- Subject nominalizations in Oshiwambo cannot bear an overt relativizer or a head noun.

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A Appendix

A.1 *Non-* in English

- English *non-* does not behave like Ewe (Tongugbe) *ma-*.
- English *non-* attaches to nouns, not to verbs:

- (49) a. a non-runner (N), a non-teacher (N)
b. *non-run (not run) (V), *non-teach (not teach) (V)

- This suggests that *non-* is realized only after the noun category has been introduced.
- English *non-* cannot license NPIs:

- (50) a. *a non-driver of anything
b. *a non-seller of anything

- English *non-* does not seem to pose a challenge to Baker & Vinokurova's (2009) analysis.