

THE KI-VERB CONSTRUCTION IN ACHOLI

Grammaticalization of a resultative morpheme

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1. Introduction

Current writings on grammaticalization discuss both sources in the linguistic input and paths of change as a grammatical category or linguistic structure emerges. In their discussion of the grammaticalization of past and perfect forms, Bybee, Pagliuca & Perkins (1988) argue that perfectives and pasts may develop from anteriors and resultatives (as they have in French, Italian, German, Dutch and Turkish). Resultatives mark a situation that exists as the result of a past action. They differ from completives, which include the meaning component of ‘thoroughly’ or ‘completely’. They differ from passives in that intransitive verbs as well as transitives may be marked with resultatives. The data from Bybee, Pagliuca & Perkins (1988) indicates that resultatives frequently have lexical sources; when these sources are verbs they are stative, as opposed to completives, which have dynamic verb sources

The paper investigates the functions and source of an Acholi verbal prefix *ki*¹) There is no evidence that it has a lexical source. As will be shown in this paper, the most likely source is the third person plural agreement affix. The grammaticalization of the prefix *ki* as a resultative is evidence of change in the Acholi verbal system. Some of the features of the Acholi language, particularly the agreement patterns and the tense/aspect system of which the *ki* prefix forms a part, are presented in section 2. The *ki* prefix is illustrated in section 3, and its likely source is discussed in section 4

2. The Acholi language

2.1 Changes already noted

Acholi is a Western Nilotic language (Nilo-Saharan family) of Uganda. It is most closely related to Lango, Dholuo, Alur and Padhola. In his grammar of Acholi ([1938] 1955), Crazzolaro states that ‘the greatest possible simplicity is met with everywhere in comparison with the richness of forms found in Shilluk’ (Nilotic) and a “still greater variety is found in Nuer” (p.12). It is clear from Crazzolaro’s discussion that there have been radical changes in Acholi. The changes in Acholi are noticed in a number of areas of the morphology, including relics from a noun plural system based on noun classes, and also relics of a productive verb stem alternation. These alternations mark the applicative and qualitative (stative) uses. The applicative is used with patient/theme objects, while the qualitative encodes the affected argument as subject. Crazzolaro points out that the verb in Acholi “cannot be said to present any serious complications; in fact it could hardly be simpler” (p.106).

However, other changes are resulting in new distinctions in the tense/aspect system. I will cite two examples here (discussed in Bavin, 1982). Future time reference used to be expressed with a periphrastic construction, consisting of the inflected verb *bin* ‘to come’ + the uninflected lexical verb. However, the verb *bin* has undergone erosion (Heine & Reh, 1984) and is Dholuo as a future morpheme. As pointed out by Bybee and Dahi (1989:66), the phonological reduction necessary for affixation moves hand in hand with the reduction of semantic content. Synchronically the syllable *bi* is attached as a prefix to the verb. However, in a closely related language, Lango, the periphrastic form is still used.

¹ I am most grateful to a number of Acholi speakers for assisting me. I particularly thank Simon Olwach for his endless patience.

Another change has been in the development of a progressive morpheme *ka* from the lexical item *kany* ‘place’. This is used in combination with the copula *tye* ‘be’. The change is comparable with the development of a progressive aspect in other languages. For example, Heine & Reh (1984: 122) claim for other African languages that the meaning component ‘locative’ is extended to progressive aspect marker, although the source is frequently a copula ‘be at’.

2.2 Basic sentence and agreement patterns in Acholi

Acholi has an SVO word order. There are few variations on this order, question words are left in situ, and there is no passive. In the indicative mood, finite verbs agree with the person and number of the subject NP as indicated in examples (1-6). Pronominal subjects are not always overt if understood from context.

Sentences (1-6) illustrate the basic pattern of agreement. I am using the orthography of the language with the exception of *ng* for *ŋ*. The language uses a series of five +advanced tongue root vowels and a series of five retracted vowels. Retracted vowels assimilate to advanced tongue root vowels. Tone is used to distinguish past from present tense for inflected verbs. I have only indicated tone patterns for the verbs in the first examples. Elsewhere I have indicated the tense in the gloss. Transitive verbs generally end in a final *o*. Object nouns do not have to be overt if they can be understood from the linguistic or non-linguistic context. In (6), it is assumed that the cow ate the food.

- (1) (*an*) *a-camo* [tone on verb: low, low, low]
 I 1:SG-eat
 ‘I ate.’
- (2) (*an*) *a-camo* [tone on verb: low, high, low]
 I 1:SG-eat
 ‘I eat.’
- (3) (*wan*) *wa-camo*
 we 1:PL-eat
 ‘We ate.’
- (4) *o-camo*
 3 :SG-eat
 ‘Something/someone ate.’
- (5) *gu-camo* (or: *gi-camo*, or: *gin o-camo*)
 3:PL-eat (3:PL-eat they 3:SG-eat)
 ‘They ate.’
- (6) *dyang-ni* *o-cam*
 cow-det 3:SG-eat
 ‘This cow ate.’

The forms of the verbal prefixes are similar to the forms for the independent pronouns, and it is clear that the inflections developed by a process of affixation of the pronouns to the verb at an earlier stage of the language. The development of subject agreement morphemes from independent pronouns is not unique to Western Nilotic (cf Givon 1975). So there is a pattern in the language for attracting lexical forms to the beginning of the verb, forms which lose their independent lexical status and which become re-analyzed as grammatical morphemes. The pronominal affixes and the future marker have both developed in this way.

Table 1 gives the forms of the independent pronouns and the affixes used for subject agreement. For third person singular in the present tense, the prefix is not used. The form *e* is

used in logophoric contexts, that is to indicate same subject after a matrix verb of saying. For third person plural, there is great variation in the affix used for subject agreement. Speakers often use the singular *o* if the pronoun *gin* ‘they’ is overt. Number is then not marked.² In the past, the most usual form is *gu*, a fusion of *gi+o*. However, this form is not used in the non-past. The use of *o*, the singular agreement marker, is related to the use of the singular form of nouns with plural reference. Acholi, like other Western Nilotic languages, had noun classes distinguished by the plural forms, but even if speakers can produce a plural noun in elicitation, they use the singular form.

TABLE 1: **Independent pronouns & subject affixes in Acholi**

person	singular		plural	
	pronoun	affix	pronoun	affix
1	<i>an</i>	<i>a-</i>	<i>wan</i>	<i>wa</i>
2	<i>(y)in</i>	<i>i-</i>	<i>(w)un</i>	<i>wu</i>
3	<i>en</i>	<i>o/ø/e</i>	<i>gin</i>	<i>gi-/gu</i>

For pronominal objects, a verbal suffix is used instead of an independent pronoun. These suffixes resemble the subject affixes, with the exception of the third singular. This is *e*, which is homophonous with the reflexive in orthography, but distinguished by tone. The object suffix replaces the verb final vowel. Note the object suffix in (7) which is identical to the subject affix in(1).

- (7) *dako o-nen-a*
 woman 3:SG-see-1:SG
 ‘The woman saw me.’

2.3 Tense & Aspect

As noted above, verb tense is indicated mainly by tone changes. The past form has a sequence of low, low on the stem, and the prefix is also low. Present tense differs in that the sequence of tone is high low on the stem. In locative sentences which include the copula *tye* and no other verb, *onongo* is used in this invariant form (third person singular past) to establish past time reference. The verb *nongo* is still used as the lexical verb for ‘find’. The relationship between the semantics of ‘find’ and ‘past’ is clear. ‘Find’ is a telic verb with a clear endstate. Note the following sentences (8-9).

- (8) *i-kare ma-con onongo Aborigin keken aye tye i-Australia*
 LOC-time REL-old PAST Aborigine only FOC be LOC-Australia
 ‘In olden times, there were only Aborigines in Australia.’

- (9) Q *ngo ma onongo tye i-dukan pa Okelo*
 what REL PAST be LOC-shop POS Okelo
 ‘What was in Okelo’s shop?’

- A *cabun keken aye onongo rye*
 soap only FOC PAST be
 ‘There was only soap.’

Without *onongo* in the last sentence, the interpretation is ‘There is only soap’.

Future time reference (as discussed in section 1) is indicated by a prefix *bi* on the verb stem. This is illustrated in (10).

² In Lango, a closely related Nilotic language, all plural affixes have been neutralized *too*.

- (10) (An) *a-bi-lwoko bongo*
 I 1:SG-FUT-wash clothes
 'I will wash the clothes.'

Habitual aspect is not distinguished morphologically. The present form of the verb is used. Progressive aspect for the present tense is constructed with the copula *tye* followed by the particle *ka* and the finite form of the lexical verb as in (11-14). *Tye* is inflected as for present tense. In place of *tye*, the verb *bedo* 'to sit' may be used. When a past reference time has already been established, *bedo* is often used, as in (13) and (14). This indicates an anterior component of meaning which *tye* does not contain. *Onongo* is the past marker for past progressive, as given in (12).

- (11) (an) *a-tye ka-lwoko bongo*
 I 1:SG-be PROG-wash clothes
 'I am washing clothes.'

- (12) *An onongo a-lye ka-lwoko bongo i-kare ma in i-bino*
 I PAST 1:SG-be PROG-wash cloth LOC-time REL you 2:SG come
 'I was washing clothes when you came.'

- (13) *gin o-juk-e ki ngom wek o-nyut ni gin gi-bedo k-pur*
 they 3:SG-cover-REF with soil allow 3:SG-show that they 3:PL-sit PROG-dig
 'They covered themselves with soil to show they had been digging.'

- (14) *an a-bedo ka-pur*
 I 1:SG-sit PROG-dig
 'I have been digging.'

Another verb that can take the place of *tye* is *cito* 'go', as given in (15).

- (15) *i-kare-mo omego aryo gin gu-cito ka-dwar*
 LOC-time-some brother two they 3:PL-go PROG-hunt
 'Once upon a time, two brothers went hunting.'

The language uses serial constructions, and *teko* 'to finish' appears in serial constructions to emphasize the completion of an activity, as illustrated in (16). In other languages, the verb for 'to finish' is a lexical source for perfects and pasts or perfectives (Bybee and Dahl 1989: 58).

- (16) *gi-kayo bel gi-tyeko*
 3:PL-harvest corn 3:PL-finish
 'They harvested all the corn.'

There are two other features of Acholi that relate to aspectual distinctions. One of these is the optional use of *ko* to emphasize the completion of an activity, as illustrated in (17). The use of *ko* here emphasizes that the leg is really stuck with glue so that it can not be pulled away. The form *ko* is derived from the adverb *woko* 'out'. Although Acholi speakers generally use *ko*, they can always substitute *woko* for the item.

- (17) *tyen-e o-mako ko*
 leg-3:SG:POS 3:SG-stuck COMPLT
 'His leg stuck.'

Although optional, *ko* is used most frequently with verbs of breaking or the verb *too* 'die'. These are verbs that indicate a change of state with some totality. It is not used, for example, with verbs such as 'distribute'.

Another feature is the stative verb form. The alternation between stative and non-stative is lexically specified, with the stative form indicating a state resulting from an action. In (18) *tur* ‘broken’ is the stative form of *turo* ‘break’, which is shown in (19).

(18) *cinga-a-ni* *o-tur*
 hand-1 :SG:POS-det 3:SG-broken
 ‘This hand is broken.’

(19) *man cing-a* *ma* *a-turo-ni*
 this hand-1 :SG:POS REL 1 :SG-break-det
 ‘This is the hand that I broke.’

The reflexive form of a verb can function in a similar way to the stative, and for those stems that do not have a distinct stative form, the reflexive is used instead. However, this is one of the functions of the reflexive verb form. It is also used with reflexive and reciprocal functions.

3. The *ki*-verb construction

3.1 Properties

A verbal form used by Acholi speakers in contexts that focus on the resulting state has received little mention in the available material on Acholi (Crazzolaro 1955, Malandra 1955, Tucker & Bryan 1966). Crazzolaro’s grammar first appeared in 1938, and Malandra based his work on that book. Crazzolaro states that *ki* and *gi* were in free alternation as a third person plural affix, indicating that there was not a functional difference 50 years ago. Tucker and Bryan (1966:421 & 424) state that “sometimes in Acholi [Acoli]” the “Impersonal Subject Prefix is used in the Passive Equivalent”. They give one example: ‘many books are written’ or ‘one writes many books’, with a *ki* prefix on the verb, and they give one other example with an *o* prefix on the verb.

The *ki+v* form has a stative quality. This is clear when the form is used as an attributive, as in (20). The active verb *dolo* is illustrated in (21-22) for comparison. Note that adjectives in Acholi are usually prefixed with the relative marker *ma*.

(20) *ma* *ki-dolo*
 REL ki-tied up
 ‘that is tied up’

(21) *tol* *ma* *dolo* *lawala*
 string REL tie reeds
 ‘string that ties reeds’

(22) *gu-dolo* *lawala*
 3 :PL-tie reeds
 ‘They tied reeds.’

The *ki* verb form is productive. While in texts it generally has a past tone pattern, it can also be used with nonpast tone. With past tone (low, low, low), the interpretation is of a state resulting from some action. With a present tone pattern it is interpreted as a resulting state that is expected from some regular activity. In neither instance is an agent mentioned. Consider the question- answer patterns below:

(23) Q *lum* *ki-timo* *ki* *ngo?*
 grass ki-work with what
 ‘What is done with grass?’
 (‘What do you do with grass?’)

A *lum* *ki-yubo* *ki* *ot.*
 grass ki-build with house
 ‘Houses are built with grass.’
 (‘You use grass for building houses.’)

The construction is contrasted with sentences containing *me* ‘for’, as illustrated in the next two examples:

(24) Q *lum* *me* *ngo?*
 grass for what
 ‘What’s the grass for?’

A *turn* *me* *yubo* *ot*
 grass for building houses
 ‘The grass is for building houses.’

(25) Q *kalam* *me* *timo* *ngo?*
 pen for work what
 ‘A pen is for doing what?’
 (What do you do with a pen?)

When speakers use *ki*, they are taking a particular perspective on an actual or habitual event. The focus is on the end, resulting state. Thus the *ki* is aspectual, marking viewpoint aspect. Examples (26) and (27) distinguish the two tense markings with the *ki* verb form; (26) is habitual and has nonpast tone; (27) reports a specific event and has past tone.

(26) *ki-puro* *ki* *kweri* *ngo?*
 ki-dig with hoe what
 ‘What type of hoe is used for digging?’

(27) *ki-puro* *ki* *kweri* *ngo?*
 ‘What hoe was dug with?’

An example is given to illustrate the construction with a pronominal object.

(28) *ki-nen-a*
 ki-see-I :SG
 ‘I was seen.’

The generalization that can be made about the construction is that the verb remains in the transitive form, with a final vowel, but there is no overt subject agent phrase, nor a person/number agreement prefix on the verb. The prefix *ki* replaces the subject agreement marker. Another generalization is that pronominal objects stay as verbal suffixes. However, noun objects (and objects of prepositions) may be moved into preverbal position as shown in the following in which ‘houses’ are the objects created by the action. This word ordering is discussed in 3.2.

(29) *ot* *ki-gero*
 ‘houses are built’

3.2 Use in texts

In that an agent is not specified, the construction is something akin to an impersonal. However, the construction is limited to resulting states, the result of some activity, and thus the *ki* is best analyzed as a resultative marker. Bybee and Dahi (1988:67) note that perfects are used in resultative cases (‘the present result of a previous event’), as well as ‘experiential’. The fact that *ki* can appear in both past and nonpast tone indicates that *ki* is not

functioning as a perfective. The state resulting from an action marked with *ki* can be specific to a particular event or it can be a typical resulting state, something that is expected if one knows something about activities in the cultural setting (and thus have experience of).

The following are excerpts from a text on building houses in olden times. It is clear that the speaker is describing that this is what used to be done, the reference time being established at the beginning of the text. (I have labelled the lines for ease of reference later.)

- (30) a. *ot me Acholi ma-con ki-yubu ki lum*
house for Acholi REL-old ki-build with grass
'Acholi houses were built with grass -'
- b. *ki yen. ot nino-ducu ki-yubu ma*
with sticks house day-all ki-build REL
'- and sticks. Usually, houses were built-'
- c. *baraja rye ki i-ngey-e*
baraja line with LOC-back-3:SG:POS
'-so that a baraja stood in the middle'
- d. *en aye job wi-ot ma ki-tweyo*
it FOC support top-house REL ki-tie
'It was to support the top of the house that was tied'
- e. *ki lum ot alunga ki-yubu kaman.*
with grass house type ki-build this way
'-with grass. Houses were built this way.'
- f. *ki-kwinyo bur ma olwore ma-lac-lwore-ne*
ki-dig hole REL round REL-wide-round-POS
'A hole was dug that was round with a diameter-'
- g. *lubu kit dit pa ot.*
follow way size POS house
'-the size of which depended on the size of the house.'

In lines a, b and e, *ki-yubu* is used, in line d, *ki-tweyo* appears, and *ki-kwinyo* appears in line f. Note that I have translated the *ki* forms with a passive. However, the construction is not morphologically a passive. The verb is semantically stative, although morphologically transitive with the logical object appearing in object position generally, and not controlling agreement on the verb. Note that an English speaker could explain the process of building a house using the pattern 'people used to do X and then they did Y and after Y was finished P would be done'.

For Acholi texts, however, the speakers do not use a noun such as *Jo* 'people' or *dano* 'person'.

Although the construction might function like a passive in that the agent is not specified, the construction does not appear in all text types. It was several years before I elicited the form - in a procedural text. The *ki* verb form seems to function as a cohesive device being used most typically in texts that have a sequence of ordered events. Thus one resulting state is the stage of readiness for the next activity. This can be seen clearly in (31) and (32). A passive might be expected to have a wider distribution.

- (31) a. *ki-onyo pii iye*
 ki-poured water there
 ‘Water is poured.’
- b. *ka ki-nyono wek o-bed ma-nwang*
 when ki-mixed allow 3:SG-stay REL-sticky
 ‘Then it is mixed with the feet so that it is sticky’
- c. *ka dong en lobo-no ki-rwato ki ot.*
 when then it soil-some ki-spread with house
 ‘Then earth is spread Onto the house.’
- (32) a. *ka ot ki-rwato, kor ot-no tye ma-gwa pe ber me bedo*
 when house ki-spread chest house-det be REL-rough NEG good for sit
 ‘When the house has been spread, some walls are rough; it’s not good to keep them this way.’
- b. *ka inge two pa kor ot ki-gwayo kor-e ki opuyu*
 when after dry of walls house ki-smooth walls-3:SG:POS with black soil
 ‘After the walls are dry, they are spread with black soil.’
- (33) *pien kace pe ki-toro apwar romo bedo tye iye ci kelo two.*
 because if NEG ki-beat dust might stay be LOC and bring disease
 ‘Because if it is not beaten, dust might bring disease.’

Another property of the construction, that can only be detected in a stretch of discourse, is that the affected argument (object) will be moved into preverbal position if it is a topic of the discourse.³ Thus in the house building text, *ot* ‘house’ appears in preverbal position in many of the sentences with the *ki* verb form, but most other nouns remain in the object position, that is post verbal. Notice in the examples, which are other sections of the same text, *pii* ‘water’ follows the verb in (31) line a, but in (32), *ot* ‘house’ is preverbal in the first line. In example (30), *ot* is preverbal in lines a, b and e. And also in (30) *bur* ‘hole’ is post verbal in line f. In (33) it is not specified what will be beaten. The topic of the section, the house walls, is not repeated.

Bybee and Dahi (1989:68-9) cite the findings of Nedyalkov et al’s comparison of resultatives and perfects. The characteristics they discuss are highly relevant in determining the status of the *ki* verb form in *Acholi*. One characteristic of the resultative is that it is restricted in meaning. The nature of the result is defined by the meaning of the verb. On the other hand perfects do not typically imply the presence of a direct result, since they can be used with statives, for example. Resultatives imply some change and so are lexically restricted. In addition, resultatives are commonly valence-changing, possibly part of the voice system, while perfects are not. In Acholi, *ki* is restricted to those verbs that imply a change in state. In addition, there is some effect on the verb valency in that an agent can not be specified. Thus the construction shares characteristics of resultatives in general.

4. Sources of *ki*

There are two possible sources for the *ki* prefix. The preposition form *ki* is polysemous. In many of the examples already given, *ki* has been glossed as ‘with’.⁴ The following examples show that, amongst its many functions, *ki* functions in combination with *i* ‘locative’ as an

³ Lango allows topicalization in sentences with overt subjects: an object noun may be moved to sentence initial position. However, Acholi speakers do not like these sentences.

⁴ Stafford (1967:18) reports *gi* is used in Dholuo for ‘with’ or being with’.

ablative, as in (34), as a comitative (translated as ‘and’ within noun phrases) as in (36), and as an instrumental, as in (37).

- (34) *dano mukene dok paco ki i-poto*
 people all return village with LOC-field
 ‘All the people returned to the village from the field.’
- (35) *gin o-tito ki min-gi*
 they 3:SG-explain with mother-3:PL:POS
 They explained to their mother’
- (36) *apwoyo gin ki obala gu-bedo piny gu-mwodo*
 hare they with brother 3:PL-sit earth 3:PL-eat
 ‘The hare and his brother stayed to eat’
- (37) *ci gin o-juk-e ki ngom*
 and they 3:SG-smear-REF with soil
 ‘and they smeared themselves with soil’
- (38) *Okelo oyok-e ki gwok*
 Okelo knock-REF with dog
 ‘Okelo bumped into the dog.’

The multifunctional preposition *ki* (low tone) could be a source for the verbal perfective *ki*. The semantics of ‘with’ are compatible with the semantics of result, if ‘with’ is viewed as semantically related to possession. Possessive constructions have developed into resultatives which have then developed into perfects through grammaticalization processes. For example constructions with ‘have’ + past participle of the main verb have developed into perfects in both Germanic and Romance languages (Bybee and Dahl 1989:68).

However, another possible source for the prefix is the third person plural subject affix *gi*. One piece of evidence for this hypothesis rests on the statement by Crazzolaro (1955) that *ki* is a variant of *gi*. However, it is clear that the forms are no longer in free variation. Rather the forms have taken on different functions, at least for the speakers I have worked with. The reanalysis of a subject marker to impersonal marker is not uncommon. In Dhuluo, a language closely related to Acholi, there is an impersonal verb form which Stafford (1967) gives as the closest equivalent to a passive. The impersonal verb has a prefix *i* in the incomplete aspect and *o* in the complete aspect (see also Omondi, 1982). With both of these forms, the affected object if pronominal remains as a verbal suffix. The *i* presumably develops for the second person affix, and the *o* from the third; however, Stafford does not discuss this. There is a tonal difference between the active and the impersonal interpretations.

With the loss of productivity for the qualitative (stative)- applicative alternation, there is gap in the Acholi verbal system. If speakers wishes to focus on the end state, they can use the reflexive verb form (which has other functions), or use the past, but both of these imply an agent. In addition, the forms are not applicable to habitual contexts.

Examples (39) and (40) contrast the stative verb and the *ki*-verb construction. In the first sentence, it is assumed that this is the way the hand is, while the second implies that someone (unknown or unspecified) caused the break. The verb, then, is still viewed as transitive, but the agent is not relevant. Instead, the perspective taken on the event is the resulting state.

- (39) *i-kare ma cing-a o-tur*
 LOC-time REL hand-1:SG:POS 3:SG broken
 ‘When my hand was broken.’(state)

- (40) *i-kare ma cing-a ki-turo a-weko tuku odilo*
 LOC-time REL hand-1:SG:POS ki-broke 1:SG-stop play ball
 ‘When my hand was broken, I stopped playing football.
 (on a particular occasion when someone caused the break)

5. Passives, impersonals, resultatives

When a speaker takes a perspective on an event which focuses on the result of an activity rather than the agent or cause, the affected argument is more salient than the agent. Thus the affected argument can be focused, or the agent defocused, or both of these may occur. There is a close connection between passives, impersonals, and resultatives because they are all constructions in which an agent is defocused. A passive construction allows the speaker to demote the agent from subject status and promote the affected argument. Acholi has no passive; however, the language allows the speaker to defocus the agent by replacing the subject agreement prefix with *ki*. Since the *ki* marked verb indicates the changed state of an object, a state resulting from some activity, the *ki* is functioning as a resultative and thus an aspect marker.

It is possible that the *ki* will develop into a passive marker. Passives do develop from impersonal constructions. However, perfectives and pasts develop from resultatives, and this path of change may be followed in Acholi. Factors that will influence any future change relate to whether the verb is viewed as transitive or intransitive and whether it is reanalysed as stative or active. An intransitive analysis would result in the logical object being analyzed as a subject, and subject marking would then appear on the verb. For a perfect or past reanalysis, the agent would be introduced as the subject.

Givon (1979) argues that pragmatic factors influence grammaticalization processes; a passive may develop from a topic being reanalysed as a subject. Recall that a topic noun object may appear preverbally in the Acholi *ki* construction. Although the languages which are closest to Acholi (genetically) do not have passives, other Nilotic languages do. Shilluk has a passive the agent being introduced with *ye* (or *yi*), which may be *affixed* to the verb as *i* (Heine & Reh 1984: 56). Dinka, a language closely related to Shilluk has an agentless passive as well as a full passives. Nuer has a passive which has developed through a grammaticalization process in which the third person subject pronoun has been desemanticized (Heine & Reh 1984: 100).

Maa (Eastern Nilotic) has a passive marked by a verbal suffix *ki* or the allomorph *i* (Heine & Claudi 1986:8 1). In discussing the Masai dialect, Greenberg (1959) proposes that the passive suffix is *i* derived from a plural person marker, with the loss of the initial consonant. Heine and Claudi (1986:81) argue that the passive developed through desemanticization of the third person subject marker. In the first stage of change, the underlying object continues to be coded as the object. An alternative strategy is employed to encode the agent noun phrase *s* which is no longer viewed as the grammatical subject. Finally, a subject is introduced, either by imposing morphosyntactic properties of a subject onto the patient, or by reanalysing the agent as the subject. However, Maa has not yet completed the three stages of the change.

6. Concluding remarks

Before the development of the Acholi prefix *ki*, the third plural affix seems to have alternated between *ki* and *gi*. With a functional shift, *ki* became reanalysed as a resultative marker. I have analyzed the form as a resultative because of its restrictive use in texts of procedure with activity verbs. The *ki* is used when the speaker wishes to focus on the resulting state. A meaning component of current relevance is implied, given that the *ki* form of the verb is used to relate an ordered sequence of steps. No agent noun phrase is allowed with a *ki*-prefixed verb, and no other prefix. The affected noun remains in object position but may move into

initial position if it is the topic of the discourse. Pronominal objects remain as suffixes on the verb. Resultatives often develop into perfectives and pasts. This is, perhaps, a path of future change for the *ki* prefix in Acholi. However, given the patterns of change in which third person subject marker are reanalysed as passive morphemes in other African languages, an alternative path may be the development of a passive in Acholi.

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