

THE FORM AND FUNCTION OF CHIBARWE APPLICATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS – AN LMT ACCOUNT

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Abstract

Bantu languages are characterised by a variety of verbal constructions in their morphology due to their agglutinative nature. As such, their verbal extensions are varied and fall into distinct categories such as valency-increasing, valency-decreasing, or valency-maintaining. This study seeks to investigate the form and function of applicative constructions in ChiBarwe. The applicative construction, together with the causative are considered to be highly productive extensions in ChiBarwe, and in most Bantu languages. The argument avowed in this paper is that applicative extensions take a distinct form and performs several syntactic and semantic functions in ChiBarwe verbal morphology. It also argues that the applicative is a valency-increaser, meaning it performs the function of adding an extra argument to the predicate. The researcher collected data through fieldwork, in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and questionnaires. The researcher also analysed ChiBarwe Language Database, literature written in ChiBarwe, digital ethnography (lurking). Findings for this research were analysed qualitatively. Data presentation and analysis are guided by the principles of the Lexical Mapping Theory (LMT) by Bresnan (2001). This study found that ChiBarwe applicative construction is in the form of -er- and -ir- and performs several functions such as the beneficiary, maleficiary, locative and motive.

Keywords: Applicative, Form, Function, Morpheme, Affixations, ChiBarwe

1. Introduction

Globally, there have been many studies of applicative constructions, covering a wide range of languages around the world (e.g. Peterson, 2007) including Bantu languages (e.g. Ngonyani 1996; Matambirofa, 2010; Morapedi, 2009; Mabugu 2011; Jerro 2016). Of particular interest in most of these studies has been the form and how the argument structure of the verb is altered in applicative constructions. Similar studies have been carried out in other Bantu languages and have shown that the applicative constructions share similar characteristics with other Bantu languages (Jerro, 2023). As noted by Alsina and Mchombo (1993) and Harford (1993) on Chichewa and Shona respectively, the applicative construction is in the form -ir- or -er- and its addition to the verb results in the applied object which may be expressed as a beneficiary, maleficiary, locative or motive or an oblique. The same trends have been observed by (Machobane, 1989): Sesotho; (Bresnan et al., 1993: Kiswahili; and Kimenyi

(1990): Kinyarwanda. From this literature, applicatives are generally valence-adding, and the ChiBarwe applicative construction considered here is no exception. The thrust of this paper is to examine the form and function of applicative constructions in ChiBarwe, a Bantu language spoken in Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

Khumalo (2014) notes that verbal extensions are distinguished from one another by their shape, syntactic function, and meaning. Regarding this construction, Nordlinger (2023) says the applicative is viewed as morphological and syntactic structures whereby the applicative affix plays a significant role. Bellusci (1991) further notes that the valence of the applicative construction can be analysed in both semantic and syntactic terms. Semantically, a verb is altered depending on the affix attached, for instance, the meaning of a simple verb changes to applicative when its extensions are attached to it. Syntactically, valency has insinuations for the arguments taken by the verb. Although there is a paucity of literature that has been written on

ChiBarwe, the available works, for instance, Mangoya (2012), describe the ChiBarwe applicative as a construction in which the verbal suffix -er-/ir- is directly suffixed to the verb root or other morphemes within a suitable grammatical context. Previous studies carried out on ChiBarwe verbal affixes have confined their investigations to these morphemes as elements of morphology but have failed to observe that these affixes overlap in syntax. It is against this backdrop that this paper analyses applicative constructions in ChiBarwe from a morpho-syntactic viewpoint, showing that when the applicative affix is attached to the verb, it is capable of changing the verb's valency by introducing a new argument to its argument structure.

2. Objectives

This study seeks to:

1. identify the form of ChiBarwe applicative construction
2. explore the function introduced by the applicative affix

3. The Lexical Mapping Theory (LMT)

This study gets insight from the Lexical Mapping Theory (LMT) a sub-theory of the Lexical Functional Grammar (LFG). The discussion is based on what has been articulated about this theory by such scholars as Lødrup (2006), Bresnan and Kanerva (1989), Bresnan and Moshi (1990), Alsina (1992, 1994, 1996), Alsina and Joshi (1991), Alsina and Mchombo (1988, 1990, 1991, 1993), Mchombo (1993), Falk (2001), Harford (1993) and Matambirofa (2003), among others. Bresnan (2001) postulates that the Lexical-Functional Grammar (LFG) was established and used to consider data from many languages across the world, including the Bantu ones. In this theory, verbal affixes are viewed as indicators of morphological operations that use lexical rules to the argument structure of a given verb stem. LFG takes verbal extensions as lexical processes; this signifies that they are handled like any other lexical process, including nominalization (Chirimaunga, 2025). This element and the application of a mapping theory make LFG more interesting to explain morphological data from Bantu languages such as ChiBarwe. As noted by

Chabata (2007) the LMT can best be described as a lexicalist theory, meaning that it recognises the syntactic importance of the information that derives from the lexicon. It has been described by Bresnan and Kanerva (1989) as the correspondence between thematic structure and syntactic functions.

Under the LMT, the idea is that argument structure (a-structure) plays a pivotal role in the mapping between thematic roles and grammatical functions. This means LMT deals with grammatical function changes and is about the syntactic realisation of a predicate's arguments. LMT gives simple and general principles that account for the syntactic valency of a predicator based on its argument structure (Lødrup, 2006). This a-structure can be described as a list of the thematic roles of a predicator (Jerro, 2023 & Nordlinger, 2023). It is derived from the predicator's lexical semantics and is used to derive its syntactic valency (Chabata, 2007 & Matambirofa, 2010). The Lexical Mapping Theory (LMT) is relevant in studying the applicative construction in ChiBarwe as it provides a structured framework for analysing how arguments are introduced and mapped onto syntactic functions. LMT helps explain how the ChiBarwe applicative affixes, such as -ir- and -er-, affect argument structure by promoting an oblique argument to a direct object, altering the valency of the verb. Conceived this way, LMT becomes the relevant theory in the analysis of the form and function of the ChiBarwe applicative constructions since a-structure is an interface between semantics and syntax.

4. Research Methodology

The data for the study were collected from fifty (50) informants who took part in the study based on being a ChiBarwe speaker and language academic. Data on the form of ChiBarwe applicatives were collected from forty (40) ChiBarwe speakers whilst ten (10) academics concentrated on the functional aspect. Data on the form of the applicative construction in ChiBarwe were collected from ChiBarwe mother tongue speakers because they possess intuitive and natural knowledge of the language's morphological and phonological structures, ensuring authentic

representation of applicative markers. However, the functions of the applicative were analysed by language academics, such as lecturers, teachers, and language researchers, as they have the theoretical expertise to interpret syntactic roles and thematic functions of the applicative construction within linguistic frameworks such as the LMT. These distinct characteristics of mother tongue speakers and language academics ensured both empirical accuracy and linguistic analysis rigour in the study of the form and function of the applicative constructions in ChiBarwe.

For this study, data were collected through in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions, questionnaires, participant and non-participant observation, virtual ethnography, introspection/intuition, and discourse analysis. Primary data were also collected using a corpus-based analysis of the ChiBarwe Language Database as well as written ChiBarwe texts. Triangulation in this study ensured data validity and reliability by combining multiple data collection tools. This approach also minimised biases, provided a comprehensive understanding of the ChiBarwe applicative construction, and allowed cross-verification of findings. Moreover, before embarking on data collection, the principal researcher had the advantage of being a ChiBarwe speaker. Kadenge (2007) notes that there is an added advantage to the linguist who researches a language that he or she is familiar with. This means that, when a researcher has some knowledge of the linguistic operations of a language, he will be in a better position to appreciate the underlying grammatical patterns in that language.

The researcher also used digital ethnography (lurking) to gather research data. Forberd (2023) posits that digital ethnography is a subfield within the social sciences and it studies the cultural and social domains of human interaction through the Internet technologies they use. As such, messages from WhatsApp group “*Munatibzvanyi ife waHwesa*” which translates as ‘What can you do to us, the Hwesa People’ – an online platform that necessitates a social interaction of ChiBarwe mother-tongue speakers was used as data for this study. In the analysis of

data on the applicative construction in ChiBarwe, the study made use of qualitative approaches. Data from in-depth interviews and observation were transcribed and analysed together with that collected from passive observation in digital ethnography and documents. Open coding was used through the identification of affixations used in ChiBarwe. The verb roots were coded VR, final vowel (FV), applicative extension as (APPL), verb stem (VS), subject (S), past tense (PST), object (OBJ) to mention a few. The researcher received ethical clearance from the Ethics Team of the University of South Africa. Additional approval was granted by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) and the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science and Technology Development (MHTEISTD) in Zimbabwe. There was also informed consent to screen-shot the chats from the administrators on behalf of all group members. Another ethical issue adhered to was not revealing the identities of the participants whose messages were analysed in this study. This was a necessary measure to protect all members from possible harm should their names be exposed. Consequently, the researcher read various works and recorded the different forms and functions. The data were then classified thematically to generate the findings.

5. Findings and Discussions

This section presents and discusses the findings on the form and function of the applicative construction in ChiBarwe. As highlighted in previous sections, the study employed a triangulated approach to data collection through the use of qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions, questionnaires, participant and non-participant observation, intuition, and an analysis of the ChiBarwe Language Database. This multifaceted methodology ensured a comprehensive understanding of the applicative construction in terms of its form and function. The ultimate goal of the researcher was to attain a level of data saturation. It is this insight that justified and validated the amount of data collected from the number of the aforementioned participants. Data saturation occurs when sufficient information is

available to repeat the study (O'Reilly and Parker, 2012; Walker, 2012), or when it is no longer possible to gather new information (Guest et al., 2006), or when further coding is no longer practical. This study established data saturation

where new respondents were now repeating the responses that had been received before. This was the point at which no new data were emerging and no additional insights from the research questions were retrieved.

5.1. The form of ChiBarwe applicative construction

After analysing two hundred (200) verbs that were extracted from questionnaire responses, a total of one hundred (100) verbs were selected and used to test the semantic compatibility of the applicative affixes with the base verb. In doing so, five ChiBarwe speakers participated and agreed to determine the semantic compatibility of all the verbs with the applicative extension. The imperative form of the verb is the one that was chosen to test for semantic compatibility and the imperative mood was used because it is straightforward in terms of its application in determining the form and function of the applicative construction in ChiBarwe.

As in other Bantu languages, the ChiBarwe applicative or applied verbal extension manifests

in the vowel-consonant form (CV) as -ir- or its allomorph -er-. The ChiBarwe applicative extension in this form is a bound morpheme that incontestably needs a verb that can either be transitive or intransitive, to which it attaches in a position that is morphologically suffixal. The affixes -ir- and -er- introduce an object when attached to a verb and this type of object is known as the applied object (Jerro, 2023). In ChiBarwe, applied objects of the applicative extension can often be translated into English as prepositional arguments or 'with', 'for', or 'on'. The following examples demonstrate the form of applicative extensions in ChiBarwe through the use of applicative affix -ir-, in example 1 and -er- as in example 2.

(1) (a)	-shand-a -work-FV 'work'	→	-shand- ir -a -work- APPL-FV 'work for'
(b)	-riz-a -play-FV 'play'	→	-riz- ir -a -play-APPL-FV 'play for'
(c)	-muk-a -stand up-FV 'stand up'	→	-muk- ir -a -stand up-APPL-FV 'stand up for'
(2) (a)	-chek-a -cut-FV 'cut'	→	-chek- er -a -cut-APPL-FV 'cut for'
(b)	-tseng-a -chew-FV 'chew'	→	-tseng- er -a -chew-APPL-FV 'chew for'
(c)	-roor-a -marry-FV 'marry'	→	-roor- er -a -marry- APPL-FV 'marry for'

Examples (1) and (2) above show the form and formation of applicative extensions in ChiBarwe. Example 1(a-c) reveals that applicative extensions are marked by morpheme -ir- and example 2(a-c) shows the applicative morpheme -er- reliant on the vowel harmony of the applicative affix with the verb root. Mabugu (2006) and Matambirofa (2010) affirm that the alteration of the vowel in the applicative from -ir- to -er- is contingent upon vowel harmony between the vowel of the base verb and that of the applicative extension. Vowel harmony in ChiBarwe, as in many Bantu languages, is a phonological process where vowels that are in a word, especially in verb roots and extensions, tend to harmonise regarding specific characteristics. This pattern unequivocally confirms Ngonyani (1996), Mabugu (2000), Harford (1993), Mberi (2002), and Matambirofa's (2010) observation that the suffix -er- is associated with verb roots containing the vowels [e] and [o], whereas the form -ir- is used in all other instances, that is, [a], [i], and [u]. It is these same insights that render -ir- the main affix in denoting applicatives in ChiBarwe and -er- serving as its allomorph. With insights from Ngonyani (1996), Matambirofa (2010), and Mabugu (2000), the researcher summarises the effects of vowel harmony in determining the form of the morpheme in ChiBarwe using the following illustration.

Figure 1: Vowel harmonisation in ChiBarwe applicatives

Penultimate vowels		is realised as
i	u	> -ir-
e	o	> -er-
a		> -ir-

Figure 1 above encapsulates the vowel harmony results arising from the formation of applicatives in ChiBarwe as presented in examples (1) and (2) above. In this case, the verb roots with penultimate vowels [a], [i], and [u] are compatible with the -ir- applicative form as in example 1(a-c). This differs from verb roots with penultimate vowels [e] and [o] which are compatible with -er- applicative affix as demonstrated in examples 2(a-c).

From the analysis of 100 verbs that were used to test the semantic compatibility of ChiBarwe verbal extensions in this research, it has been asserted that more verbs adopt the -ir- affix

than those that conform to the -er- applicative affix in ChiBarwe. It is this observation that leads the researcher to designate -ir- as the main ChiBarwe applicative affix, and -er- is automatically relegated to the status of an allomorph. It should be accentuated, however, that this allomorphic difference between -ir- and -er- in ChiBarwe does not have any significant ramifications, if any effects at all, for the argument and functional structures of ChiBarwe verbs.

5.2. The function of ChiBarwe applicative construction

The ChiBarwe applicative construction performs several syntactic and semantic functions. The applicative affix -ir- and -er- modify the meaning of verbs by introducing new arguments, such as the beneficiary, maleficiary, locative and motive, into the sentence structure (Jerro, 2023). This is done in the form of thematic roles which, Rissman and Majid (2019) describe as labels of arguments whose grammatical status is structurally determined. Zuniga (2024) notes that the applicative is a lexical rule with a morphological index that combines a variety of thematic roles. This means that the applicative affix in ChiBarwe is responsible for licensing arguments of diverse semantic interpretations. Although the form of the verbal extension is the same for these applicatives, the applied objects differ in interpretation and syntactic properties. The applied object has been described by Nodilinger (2023) as the argument (or noun) that is introduced by the applicative construction. Put differently, it is the object that is affected by the action of the verb due to the applicative morpheme -ir- or -er- being added to the verb. This expands the argument structure of a verb, introducing a new object that was not originally there.

On the new object introduced by the applicative affix, Polinsky (2023) avers that this applied object often takes on a specific role, such as benefiting from the action, being negatively affected by an action, or being involved with the action in other ways (such as with the location, goal and source), and motive. Bresnan and Moshi (1990) assert that the thematic roles of the applicative extension, as in ChiBarwe, predominantly comprise the

beneficiaries/maleficiary, locative, and motive, each giving the verb phrase different meanings. In this instance, the original object of the base assumes a secondary role (Jerro, 2023). To unravel the diverse functions of ChiBarwe applicative construction, the researcher employed different morphosyntactic tests to motivate the syntactic and semantic differences among their uses. This is a method used by linguists to investigate the syntactic and morphological properties of language structures, particularly how different elements of a sentence (such as verbs, noun phrases, and affixes) interact within a given grammatical system. This test helps identify how certain structures are formed in ChiBarwe, their roles within the sentence, and how they behave in different syntactic environments. Below is an

explanation and illustration of the different thematic roles or functions that the ChiBarwe applicative affixes license.

5.2.1. *The beneficiary function*

From the data collected, the ChiBarwe applicative construction performs several functions, one of which is to denote the thematic role of the beneficiary. Ngwira (2016) observes that the beneficiary is an entity that benefits from the action of the verb, often receiving a benefit or favour indirectly. This function of the beneficiary as a thematic role has also been defined by Khumalo (2014) as a person on behalf of whom action is carried out. Put differently, it is an entity that benefits or gains from the action expressed by the verb as illustrated in the following examples.

- | | | |
|-----|--|-------------------|
| (3) | (a) Chinheya a-phik-a nkhura.
1a-Chinheya S-PST-cook-FV 9-stiff porridge.
'Chinheya cooked stiff porridge.' | [non-applicative] |
| | (b) Chinheya a-phik-ir-a tu-seye nkhura.
1a-Chinheya S-PST-cook-APPL-FV 13-the elderly 9-stiff porridge.
'Chinheya cooked stiff porridge for the elderly.' | [applicative] |
| (4) | (a) Mukadzi a-tung-a madzi
1-Woman S-PST-cook-FV 9-water
'The woman fetched water.' | [non-applicative] |
| | (b) Mukadzi a-tung-ir-a n'ombe madzi
1-Woman S-PST-fetch-APPL-FV 9-cattle 9-water
'The woman fetched water for cattle.' | [applicative] |

The examples (3-4) are an alternation of non-applicative and applicative ChiBarwe sentences exhibiting the beneficiary as a thematic role. In example 3(a), the verb *-phik-a* 'cook' only licenses one object *nkhura* 'stiff porridge' which is the logical object (LO) or (OBJ1). In 3(b), the addition of the applicative affix *-ir-* to the verb *-phik-a* 'cook' brings in another object which is an applied object (AO) or second object (OBJ2). This applied object is connected to the beneficiary thematic role as *tuseye* 'the elderly' benefits from the action expressed by the verb *-phik-a* 'cook' performed by Chinheya, while OBJ1 *nkhura* 'stiff porridge', is linked to the theme role. In other words, as

demonstrated in 3(a), a root such as *-phik-* 'cook' only requires an agent and a patient as arguments. However, suffixing *-ir-*, as in 3(b), introduces a new argument with a beneficiary participant role and the verb ends up with two objects.

In example 4(a), the transitive verb *-tung-a* 'fetch' is not extended by the applicative affix, whereas the verb *-tung-ir-a* 'fetch for' in 4(b) has undergone a morphological change by having the applicative extension *-ir-* suffixed to it. This results in the increase of the verb's valency where the noun argument *n'ombe* 'cattle' has been introduced in the sentence. The noun *n'ombe* 'cattle' is the applied object bearing beneficiary as

a thematic role. This type of object displaces the patient, *madzi* ‘water’ which follows it. Thus, in ChiBarwe, the use of the applicative affix -ir-/-er-, modifies the verb to include this extra participant known as an applied object, which is an additional object that indicates the beneficiary or recipient of the action expressed by a verb. It is noteworthy to mention that the beneficiary is the role most frequently referenced in relation to the applicative

extension in ChiBarwe.

From the data collected, a closer analysis of the beneficiary role in ChiBarwe brings about two closely related senses that are distinguishable. The first, do something for the benefit of, is illustrated in 3 and 4 above. The second sense of the beneficiary function in ChiBarwe applicatives denotes the act of doing an action on behalf of another, as exemplified in (5).

- (5) (a) Zor-a mwana mafuta [non-applicative]
Smear-FV 1-child 6-oil
‘Smear the child oil’
- (b) Zor-er-a mwana mafuta [applicative]
Smear-APPL-FV 1-child 6-oil
‘Smear the child oil for me’

Example (5) illustrates that applicative verbs in ChiBarwe also convey actions executed on behalf of another individual. Here, the applicative sense emphasises performing an action on behalf of another, distinct from direct beneficiary actions. In 5(a) the verb -zor- ‘smear’ is not extended and is like an instruction or command from the speaker to smear oil on the child. However, when the applicative affix -er- has been attached to the verb root -zor- ‘smear’ it brings about a sense of ‘acting on behalf of X or for the benefit of X’ – who in this instance is externally involved. In this case, the speaker instructs person Y to smear oil on behalf of the child, in which the child becomes the beneficiary of the action performed by Y. It was also discovered that this type of semantics in ChiBarwe does not interfere with the syntax of the sentence, that is, no addition of arguments or addition of applied objects.

5.2.2. The maleficiary function

In ChiBarwe, maleficiary is another function of the applicative affix exhibited by the

applicative thematic role through the affix -ir- or -er-. As a thematic role, maleficiary shows an entity that is harmed or disadvantaged as an effect of an action performed by another entity (Amos, 2020). As noted by Mabugu (2006) a maleficiary analysis of the applied object happens when the relation manifesting is to the disbenefit/detriment of the recipient involved in the event being described. This means that the beneficiary function that has been described in subsection 5.2.1 above can be replaced by a maleficiary one if the pragmatic context produces a negative interpretation (Matambirofa, 2010; Mabugu, 2006). In other words, whenever a beneficial role is referenced, a maleficiary interpretation may similarly apply in the same situation if a different verb denoting misfortune is employed or if the same verb is used in a negative pragmatic context. The function of the applicative affixes in denoting maleficiary in ChiBarwe can be illustrated by examples (6) and (7) below.

- (6) (a) Chingamuka a-uray-a mbuzi.
1a-Chingamuka S-PST-slaughter-FV 9-goat.
‘Chingamuka slaughtered a goat.’
- (b) Chingamuka a-uray-ir-a wa-nhu mbuzi.
1a-Chingamuka S-PST-slaughter-APPL-FV 2-people 9-goat.
‘Chingamuka slaughtered a goat for the people.’

- (7) (a) Mukunda ab-a hembe
1a-Mukunda S-PST-steal-FV 10-clothes.
'Mukunda stole clothes.'
- (b) Mukunda ab-ir-a tete hembe
1a-Mukunda S-PST-steal-APPL-FV 1a-aunt 10-clothes.
'Mukunda stole clothes from aunt.'

The above examples demonstrate the maleficiary function of the applicative construction in ChiBarwe. In example (6), the object *mbuzi* 'goat' licensed by the applicative affix -ir- as in (b) does not, in any way benefit from the action carried by the agent Chingamuka, rather, it is on the disbenefit or detriment side because it is being killed. Consequently, the thematic function with which it is related can only be regarded as a maleficiary. This is what made Humphreys (1999) aver that the applied objects introduced convey a sense of adversity or inconvenience befalling the referents in the applicative construction. In example (7), the applicative affix -ir- in (b) introduces a new applied object *tete* 'aunt' who has been affected by the action performed by Mukunda, which is having her clothes stolen. The act of having one's clothes stolen hurts the victim. In each instance, there is a predicate that signifies that an event is understood negatively, and the applied object is thus construed as being the entity that is negatively affected, that is the maleficiary.

An analysis of the collected data revealed that if the event with a maleficiary undertone can be interpreted positively, then the applied object may be positively influenced by it, depending on the discourse or wider context. For instance, *Mwamuna wangu adandi-pwat-ir-a* 'my husband lied to me' can be understood as 'My husband lied on my behalf', and in that interpretation, it may be to the benefit of the wife. In ChiBarwe, contexts can be identified where maleficiary roles shift to beneficiary roles (negatively affected participants) into 'beneficiaries' (or positively affected participants). For example, in *Chikabudura changu chidandi-thoth-er-a* 'My short slipped (off) on me' can be interpreted positively in a state in which a person who is overweight is trying to lose weight. Thus, it is essential to recognise the

nature of the event that has been indicated by the predicate, along with contextual and perhaps extralinguistic information (such as cultural norms concerned e.g. the embarrassment or otherwise involved in a drop of trousers), that determines whether the applied object is interpreted as being positively or negatively affected (Mabugu, 2006).

5.2.3. The locative function

In ChiBarwe, the locative is a thematic role that marks the relationship between the verb and a spatial argument and usually indicates the direction, place, or destination of an action (Khumalo, 2014, Jerro, 2023 & Nodilinger, 2023). The locative thematic role plays a significant function in ChiBarwe applicative constructions and the researcher describes three types of locative meanings that may be added to a verb by the applicative which are location, goal, and source. Bresnan (1994) describes locative similarly when she asserts that the term locative is used to comprise a broad range of spatial locations or directions and their extensions to some temporal and abstract locative domain.

(i) Location

Under the locative thematic roles, location (or locative) is where verbs are extended by an applicative affix to incorporate additional arguments, often specifying the location of an action (Khumalo, 2014; Jerro, 2023 & Nordilinger, 2023). Matambirofa (2010) describes location as the place in which the action or state expressed by the predicate is situated. Marked by the affixes -ir- or -er-, the applicative extension permits the verb to take a locative argument to indicate the place where the action occurs (Zuniga, 2024). The location is expressed by adding a locative marker or suffix to the verb, and it highlights the 'where' of the action or event. Put differently, location is the actual place or physical

site where the action happens and is often realised as a noun phrase (NP) in the sentence, typically marked by a locative noun class prefix /pa-/ of class 16, /ku-/ of class 17 and /mu-/ of class 18 or a prepositional phrase (PP). Khumalo (2014) and

Morapedi (2009) support this assertion when they say the applicative affix adds a general locative role to the verbs, indicating the location where the event occurred as illustrated in the following examples.

- (8) (a) Hwinga hwa-sinz-a.
14-New daughter-in-law S-PST-pound-FV
'The new daughter-in-law pounded.'
- (b) Hwinga hwa-sinz-i-ra (mhunga) mu-nkhozi.
14-New daughter-in-law S-PST-pound (millet) -APPL-FV Loc-18-granary.
'The new daughter-in-law is pounded (millet) in the granary.'
- (9) (a) Mwana a-phik-a
1-Child S-PST-cook-FV
'The child cooked.'
- (b) Mwana a-phik-ir-a (khombe) pathebu
1-Child S-PST-cook-APPL-FV Loc-17-table
'The child cooked (porridge) on the table.'

Examples (8) and (9) exhibit how the applicative extension in ChiBarwe licenses the locative thematic role. In 8(a), the verb *ku-sinz-a* 'to pound' is intransitive and does not have any reference to the location of the action being performed. However, in 8(b), a new argument is licensed by the applicative affix -ir-. In this case, a location *mu-nkhozi* 'in the granary' has been added to the argument of the sentence when the applicative affix -ir- has been appended to the verb root and marked by a locative noun prefix /mu-/. Locative applicative sentences in ChiBarwe vary from other applicative sentences in that the locative applied object is frequently preceded by a locative prefix. This thematic role is marked by the locative noun prefixes /pa-/ of noun class 16 as shown in example 9(b), or /ku-/ of noun class 17, or even /mu-/ of noun class 18 as in 8(b). Example 8(b) shows that when the applicative affix is used, it adds a new object, *mu-nkhozi* 'in the granary' the object *mhunga* 'sorghum' of the verb -*sinz-ir-a* 'pound in' may be eliminated without altering the sentence's grammaticality. In example 9(a), the verb -*phik-a* 'cook' only comprised of a subject, *mwana* 'child', and an infinitive unextended verb

-*phik-a* 'cook'. The addition of the applicative affix -ir- in 9(b) made changes to the predicate of the sentence by adding a new argument, which is the location exhibited by the locative noun prefix /pa-/ of class 17. Thus, sentences 8(b) and 9(b) are locative in that they show the places where *hwinga* 'daughter-in-law' and *mwana* 'child' are executing the action denoted by the verb.

(ii) Goal

The other function that is brought by the ChiBarwe applicative affix -er-/ir- is that it adds a goal to the event described by the verb. As Matambirofa (2010) points out, the goal as a thematic role is marked by an applicative affix, enabling the verb to accommodate an extra argument that signifies the endpoint or target of an action. This role usually answers the question of *where* the action is directed (Mabugu, 2001; Matambirofa, 2010; Ngonyani, 1996). However, it is important to note that the interpretation of an applied object as a true goal in ChiBarwe relies on the lexical meaning of the verb. In line with Matambirofa (2010) and Mabugu (2001), goals in non-applicative ChiBarwe sentences are generally encoded as adjuncts with the use of a locative

phrase that is headed by *kuna* ‘to or towards’. The applied ones, however, may internalise the adjunct phrase and this argument acquires all the characteristics of a direct object since it has to be

obligatorily subcategorised (Jerro, 2023). The licensing of the goal applicative role in ChiBarwe, through the applicative affixes, is illustrated in the examples (10) and (11) below;

- (10) (a) Anotida a-thamang-a kuna mhaiyo
1a-Anotida- S-PST-run-FV to 1a-mother
‘Anotida ran towards mother.’
(b) Anotida a-thamang-ir-a mhaiyo
1a-Anotida-S-PST-run-APPL-FV -1a-mother
‘Anotida ran towards mother.’
- (11) (a) Bambo wa-tum-a mwana kuna sekuru
1a-Father-S-PST-sent-FV 1-child to 1a-grandfather
‘Father sent the child towards grandfather.’
(b) Bambo wa-tum-ir-a mwana sekuru
1a-Father-S-PST-sent-APPL-FV 1-child 1a-grandfather
‘Father sent the child towards grandfather.’

Examples (10) and (11) above show the goal as an applicative thematic role in ChiBarwe. From these examples, it can be noted that the goal thematic role refers to an entity that is the target or endpoint of an action. In these examples, the differences between the applicative sentences 10(a) and 11(a) with the non-applicative ones 10(b) and 11(b) above relate to the endpoint of the event described. Sentences 10(a) and 11(a) have adjunct goals marked by *kuna* and do not carry the insinuation that the non-applicative object inevitably arrives at the goal, an ‘unachieved goal’ (as indicated by the use of ‘towards’ in English). However, examples 10(b) and 11(b), bear a strong effect that the final destination had been arrived at and this may be referred to as an ‘achieved’ goal which can be paraphrased as ‘to the point of being at the goal’. What is highlighted in this context is the movement of the subject/object with its location at a specific endpoint, the applied object. The ChiBarwe applicative thus serves to strengthen the concept of the goal of the event, yielding the implicature of actual relocation of the direct object.

In ChiBarwe, the locative goal also possesses some pragmatic connotations of emphasising the goal relation by using the applicative as well as through the semantics carried by the verb, an instance of what Marten (2002) refers to as concept strengthening which is also supported by Mabugu (2006) and Matambirofa (2010). The semantic effect is, therefore, an emphasis or focus on the goal itself, an assumption that is reinforced by the fact that ChiBarwe applicative verbs can be used together with an explicit marking of the goal by *kuna* as in (12).

- (12) Baba wa-tum-ir-a mwana kuna sekuru
1a-Father-S-PST-sent-APPL-FV 1-child to 1a-grandfather
‘Father sent the child to grandfather.’

In example (12), there is a triple marking of the goal relation. This is achieved through (a) the semantics of the verb, (b) the applicative affix, and (c) the goal marker *kuna* - to further emphasise the endpoint of the goal. Therefore, goal as an applicative thematic role under locatives plays a crucial function in ChiBarwe in specifying the endpoint or destination of an action. Through the applicative affix, ChiBarwe verbs extend their meaning to include a goal argument, offering greater syntactic and semantic flexibility and a deeper understanding of spatial relationships.

(iii) *Source*

In ChiBarwe, applicative affixes sometimes license an applied object that is understood as a source. Zuniga (2024:32) notes that the source as a locative thematic role is the starting point or origin from which an action or movement occurs. Jerro (2023 p.12) opts to call it the initial point of some movement. The source typically answers the question ‘from where?’ and is mainly marked by a specific preposition or a locative marker such as *ku-*, *pa-* or *kwa-* depending on the sentence structure. Put differently, when the source is indicated in a sentence, it shows the place or entity that an action originates from, often showing movement or transfer which can be physical locations (e.g., a place or region) or abstract sources (e.g., origin or cause of an event or action). The source interpretation in ChiBarwe is largely determined by the lexical meaning of the verb and this can be illustrated in the examples (13) and (14) below.

- (13) (a) Runzirai a-bud-a kwaChibvembe
1a-Runzirai S-PST-come from-FV 1a-place
‘Runzirai came from Chibvembe.’
(b) Runzirai a-bud-ir-a kwaChibvembe
1a-Runzirai S-PST-come from-APPL-FV 17-place
‘Runzirai came from Chibvembe.’
- (14) (a) Jakachaka a-da-muk-a kuNyanga
1a-Jakachaka S-PST-wake up-FV in 17-place
‘Jakachaka woke up in Nyanga.’
(b) Jakachaka a-da-dza-muk-ir-a kuNyanga
1a-Jakachaka S-PST-wake up-APPL-FV in 17-place
‘Jakachaka woke up in Nyanga.’

From the above examples, the non-applicative forms in examples 13(a) and 14(a) do not imply that the source of the activity is exactly the initial point. So, in 13(a) Chibvembe could just have been a stopover in some longer journey, and in 14(a) the place where Jakachaka woke up is given as anywhere in Nyanga, but Jakachaka could have started his journey elsewhere. However, in the applicative form, 13(b) the point to the place where Runzirai began his journey (the source) is explicitly marked after the use of the applicative affix *-ir-*, which is Chibvembe. In 14(b), the point of waking up is focused and there are implicatures that some definite place is intended (such as in Nyanga) to constitute the initial source of the activity.

5.2.4. *The motive function*

In ChiBarwe, the applicative affix *-ir-/er-* also licenses the motive as a thematic role. The thematic role of motive in applicative construction relates to the reason or purpose behind an action (Khumalo, 2014). When a verb assumes an applicative form, it can signify not just the action itself but also embrace extra participants, such as the motive behind the action or the reason or purpose for which an action is performed (Zuniga, 2024). In other words, when the applicative affix is used to denote motive in ChiBarwe, it presents an argument that explains why the action is done, usually for the benefit or need of someone, or for some specific purpose. The motive is generally associated with two instances in ChiBarwe, which are; reason as demonstrated in example (15), and purpose as in example (16).

- (15) (a) Chipo a-mw-a madzi
1a-Chipo S-PST-drink-FV 9-water
‘Chipo drank water.’
(b) Chipo a-mw-ir-a madzi nyota
1a-Chipo S-PST-drink-APPL-FV 9-water 9-thirst
‘Chipo drank water for thirst.’
‘Chipo drank water because she was thirsty.’

- (16) (a) Magandanga a-uray-a psviru
6-Murderers S-PST-kill-FV 5-madperson
'The murderers killed a madperson.'
- (b) Magandanga a-uray-ir-a psviru mutombwe
6-Murderers S-PST-kill-FV 5-madperson for 3-rituals
'The murderers killed a madperson for rituals.'
'The murderers killed a madperson for ritual purposes.'

Examples (15) and (16) above illustrate several aspects that contribute to the interpretation of an applied object as a motive. The most obvious of these is where the applied object is not animate as in the examples in (15) and (16). The motive *nyota* 'thirsty' in the 15(b) represents the reason why Chipo drank the water. This reason has been licensed by the applicative affix *-ir-* to signify the cause for executing the action. In 16(b), the purpose *mutombwe* 'rituals' is an argument introduced by the applicative affix *-ir-* to denote the purpose of the murder, namely for ritualistic reasons, that is, for ritual purposes. Where the applied object is animate, however, it may be interpreted as the motive, depending on contextual factors, as illustrated in the two different English translations in 15(b) and 16(b).

There are some sentences that present a conspicuous situation in terms of the syntactic structure and the interaction between the applicative construction and passivisation in ChiBarwe. For instance, it can be noted that the example (17) below does not passivise and also fails to displace the patient to the point that if we impose the positions of the motive and the patient, we get an ungrammatical structure. The unacceptability of the sentence comes from the fact that *nyota* 'thirst' is taken as an animate entity that motivates the agent, Chipo to drink. This is illustrated in the example (17) below.

- (17) *Nyota i-da-mw-ir-w-a madzi naChipo
9-Thirst 1S-PST-drink-APPL-PASS-FV 9-water 1a-Chipo
'Thirst was drank water by Chipo.'

Example (17) fails to passivise, which is notable because, in ChiBarwe, certain constructions can allow both passivisation and applicative marking. In this case, the applicative affix *-ir-* is added to the verb *-mw-* 'drink', indicating an action involving the water as an object of the verb. However, when attempting to passivise the sentence, it does not yield a grammatical result. This suggests a constraint in the way applicative constructions interact with passivisation in ChiBarwe, particularly in cases where the applicative argument is a non-human or inanimate entity (like *nyota* 'thirst'). The ungrammaticality arises because *nyota* 'thirst' is treated as an animate entity that motivates Chipo's action of drinking. In this case, *nyota* is acting as a motivating force rather than the object of the verb. The structure fails because *nyota* cannot be passivised in the same way as an object would be, and it complicates the syntactic arrangement. When we try to treat *nyota* as a patient (an object undergoing the action), it leads to a violation of syntactic expectations. In a typical transitive construction, the patient (the entity affected by the action) can be displaced to the subject position in a passive sentence. However, here, since *nyota* is not a direct object but a motivating force, it cannot be displaced as the patient which often results in an ungrammatical sentence.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the form and function of ChiBarwe applicative extensions under the guidance of the Lexical Mapping Theory (LMT). It established that the ChiBarwe applicative verbal extension is expressed in the vowel-consonant form (CV) as *-ir-*, the main morpheme, and *-er-* as its allomorph. The

researcher also observed that the ChiBarwe applicative affix *-ir-* or *-er-* is a bound morpheme that needs a verb that can either be transitive or intransitive, to which it is attached in a suffix position. The researcher also argued that the use of the applicative morphemes *-er-* and *-ir-* is caused by vowel harmony of the affix with the verb root. It was further noted that the affix *-er-* is associated

with verb roots containing the vowels [e] and [o], whereas the form -ir- is used in all other occurrences, that is [a], [i], and [u]. These are the insights that make the applicative affix -ir- the main affix in denoting applicative in ChiBarwe and -er- serving as its allomorph. The analysis further revealed that the applicative construction fulfills various syntactic functions, guided by

thematic roles such as beneficiary, maleficiary, locative, and motive. The beneficiary is the entity that benefits from an action, while the maleficiary is the one who suffers or is negatively affected by it. The locative indicates the location where an action occurs the motive explains the reason behind the action.

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