

〈特集「所有・存在表現」〉

Possessive and Existential Expressions in Copperbelt Bemba

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要旨：本稿では、ザンビアのカッパーベルト州で話されているベンバ語の変種におけるさまざまな所有と存在表現文について述べる。データは『語学研究所論集』18号のアンケートにより収集した。

Abstract: This article describes the various possessive and existential constructions in the Bemba language. The research focuses on the dialect spoken in the Copperbelt province of Zambia and the data was collected through the language research questionnaire 18 of the Institute of Language Research.

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1. Introduction

The article is organized as follows. Section 1.1 gives a brief overview of the Transcription policy and Bemba grammar; Section 1.2 gives a brief overview of the Bemba language; Section 1.3 discusses the possessive constructions in Bemba and Section 1.4 focuses on the existential constructions found in Bemba. Finally, section 2 presents example sentences of possessives, locatives, and existentials. The example sentences presented in Section 2 were formulated, drawing upon the author's intuitive knowledge as a native Bemba speaker. The English sentences were from the comprehensive GOKEN questionnaire, serving as a foundational guide in the data collection process, ensuring a rich and diverse representation for analysis and synthesis.

1.1 Transcription Policy and Outline of Bemba Grammar

The first line of all the examples in this article is transcribed using standard Bemba orthography with modified word boundaries to represent phonological or morphological wordhood more accurately (see section 5 for Bemba vowels and consonants). The glossing conventions primarily follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules. It is however important to consider certain points to aid in understanding the examples. In Bemba, like other Bantu languages, nouns are grouped into 18 classes. The classification designates singular and plural markings based on odd and even numbers, except for classes 14–18. Class 9 and 10 prefixes are marked by ‘N’ representing a nasal sound whose place of articulation is underspecified.



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Modifiers change their form based on the noun class of their head nouns except for the agreement pattern for class 4 head nouns which agree with class 10 in Copperbelt Bemba. Noun class information is provided in glosses for nouns and modifiers, indicating agreement relationships. Specifically, the noun class information of the demonstrative, subject and object prefixes is always noted. Conversely, when there are no correspondents for nouns and other modifiers (e.g., head nouns, modifiers, and verbs), their noun class information is omitted. The glossed noun class information uses only numbers. The first and second persons are represented by numbers 1 and 2, similar to classes 1 and 2, but are accompanied by SG or PL. Class 1 and 2 nouns refer to animate entities. Infinitive verbs fall into class 15, while classes 16, 17, and 18 are locative classes associated with places. For the semantic meaning of the rest of the classes, please refer to Table 1 on Bemba noun classes.

Verbs can be marked with subject and object prefixes, alternating according to the noun classes of the subject and object nouns. Verbs can also be accompanied by a tense-aspect-mood/modality prefix and a final vowel. The formation of relative clauses is indicated by a prefix attached to verbs. The specific form of the relative clause prefix varies based on the noun class of the head nouns.

1.2. The Bemba Language

Since Bantu languages are so numerous, they are frequently referred to by a combination of letters and numbers. The conventional division of the entire Bantu-speaking region is into sixteen zones (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, J, K, L, M, N, P, R, S), which are further subdivided into a number of decades. There are about eighty of these in total. Thus, A10, A20, B10, and so on each denote a group of languages, while A11, A12, A13, and so on each denote a particular language within A10. This system is based on Guthrie (1967–1971). Bemba, alternatively known as Cibemba or Icibemba, is a Niger-Congo language categorized under the Central Narrow Bantu branch, specifically identified as M42 according to the classification of Guthrie (1948, 1967-71). Spoken by around 3.3 million people, Bemba is primarily spoken in Zambia, particularly in the Northern, Luapula, and Copperbelt provinces, as well as in the Southern Democratic Republic of Congo (Lewis, Simons & Fennig 2023). It is one of the 7 major local languages in Zambia and is now taught in schools as a subject at both primary and secondary school levels. Several Bemba dialects exist even though there has not been any systematic study carried out to find out precisely how many Bemba dialects exist or how systematic the differences are in those studies that focus on the languages of Zambia (Kashoki et al 1978). In this article, the focus is on the variety spoken in the Copperbelt province of Zambia. This variety is also known as *Cikopabeluti* or ‘Town Bemba’ and is becoming more and more widespread.

1.3. Bemba Possessives

1.3.1. Predicative Possessive Constructions

Bemba has three possessive constructions. This section will discuss the predicative possessive constructions in Bemba. The first type of predicative possessive construction is a direct/plain possessive that is, a construction encoding a variety of possessor-possessee relationships with the unmarked viewpoint emphasis ‘from possessor

to possessee'. In this construction, the locative copula *-li* is suffixed to a subject and followed by the verbal stem *kwat* 'have', as expressed in example (1) a below.

(1) a. *alikwata motoka.*

a-a-**li-kwat**-a motoka
SM1-PRS-COP-**have**-FV car
'S/He has (owns) a car.'

It is also possible not to use *-li* as in example (1) b. This sentence differs semantically in two ways from sentence (1) a. The first meaning is similar to that of 1 (a) except for the temporal aspect. It means 'the person recently came into possession of a car'. The second meaning could be that the person is in possession of a car at the moment of speaking.

b. *nakwata motoka*

na-a-kwat-a motoka
PERF-SM1-have-FV car
'S/he has a car.' (in this moment)

The second type of possessive construction shown in example (2) below is called the comitative-possessive ('be with' construction), which is popular across Bantu languages.¹ In Bemba, the comitative construction consists of the locative copula *-li* and the use of the comitative *na*, which plays the role of a conjunction or preposition that means either 'with' or 'and'.²

(2) *ali nefumo*

a-**li** **na** i-fumo
SM1-COP **POSS.COP** 5-pregnancy
'She is pregnant.'

1.3.2. Connective Possessive Construction

In this construction, Bemba uses a relator called an associative to link the noun phrases referring to the possessor and possessee. The associative (also called a connective, genitive or connexive in Bantu studies) changes its form according to the noun class of the preceding noun as in many Bantu languages.³ In Example (3), the associative *kwa*⁴ 'ASSC15' occurs between the possessed noun *u-ku-lu* 'AUG-15-leg' and possessor noun *N-koko* '9-chicken'; the associative always agrees with the possessed NP. The connective construction is used to show the possessive relation between two nouns.

¹ See also Creissels (2018) for a discussion of the comitative possessive in Bantu.

² (Marten, 2012) in his description of Swahili existentials referred to the *na* comitative as a 'possessive copula (POSS.COP)' and from here on it shall be referred to as thus.

³ This common across many Bantu languages and the associative can be analysed as being made up of a pronominal prefix (PP, hereafter), which is also used as the subject prefix and the fixed element *-a*. This formal feature is prevalent in Bantu and can be traced back to Proto-Bantu reconstructed by Meussen(1967).

⁴ The associative *kwa* can be further broken down as *ku-a* where *ku* is the pronominal prefix and *-a* is the fixed relator element.

(3) ukulu kwa nkoko

u-ku-lu	kwa	N-koko
AUG-15-leg	ASSC15	9-chicken

‘The leg of a chicken.’

It is also possible to prefix the associative to a possessive pronoun, as illustrated in example (4) below. In this case, the class 9 associative *ya* is prefixed to the first-person singular possessive pronoun *-andi*.⁵

(4) *inkoko yandi*

i-N-koko	ya-andi
AUG-9-chicken	ASSC9-POSS.1SG

‘My chicken.’

Sometimes, the connective construction introduces another element, the locative *kwa*, after the associative. This element is similar to the French locative preposition *chez* ‘at somebody’s place’ and it is typically used with proper names and kinship terms. In example (5) below, the sentence shows the locative element *kwa* being used with a personal name and in 6 with the kinship term father. In this context, the use of *kwa* is obligatory.

(5) *ibuku lyakwa Chanda*

i-buku	lya- kwa	Chanda
5-book	ASSC5-LOC17	personal_name

‘Chanda’s book.’

(6) *bawishi bakwa Chanda*

ba-wishi	ba- kwa	Chanda
2-father	ASSC2-LOC17	personal_name

‘Chanda’s father.’

Note that in Bemba, it is possible to form a possessive construction without any overt marker when expressing kinship relations but only when expressing a ‘parent of’ relationship as illustrated in (7) below.

(7) *bashi Chanda*

ba-shi	Chanda
2-father	personal_name

‘Chanda’s father.’

1.4. Bemba Existentials

There are two possible existential constructions attested in Bemba, one of which is the locative existential construction. Example (8) below is a plain locational clause stating the location of the subject, the car. In this example, the locative copula *-li* is accompanied by the subject prefix *i-* corresponding to the subject noun phrase *motoka* ‘car’ and followed by the noun *pa-fiani* ‘on the grass’, which expresses the location of the referent of the subject.

⁵ Possessive pronouns in Bemba consist of a connective modifier (the associative) and a pronominal possessor. These are the Bemba possessive pronouns: 1SG *-andi*, 2SG *-obe*, 3SG *-kwe*, 1PL *-esu*, 2PL *-enu*, 3PL *-bo*

(8) *motoka ili pafyani*

Ø-motoka i-li pa-fi-ani
5-car SM5-COP LOC16-grass

‘The car is on the grass.’

In the locative existential construction, a locative noun class prefix is attached to the locative copula *-li* which is then followed by the subject and then the location. In example (9) below, the class 16 locative *pa-* which corresponds to the locative noun *pa-fiani* ‘on the grass’ is prefixed to the locative copula *-li*. This sentence focuses on expressing the existence of a car in a certain location. In other words, as phrased by (Creissels, 2023), ‘Situation S (grass) has entity E (the car) as one of its constituent elements.’

(9) *pali motoka pafyani*

pa-li motoka pa-fi-ani
LOC16-COP car LOC16-grass

‘There is a car on the grass.’

The second existential construction uses the class 17 locative *kwa* (discussed in section 1.2 above) with the locative copula *-li* and the be verb *ba* (locative be verb construction). There is a semantic difference between the locative existential construction above and this construction. The locative existential construction is used to state that there is an object in a certain location. On the other hand, the locative-be verb existential construction refers to the existence of a phenomenon or an object as illustrated in sentence (13) below which means that there exists a slippery kind of mushroom.

(10) *kwaliba ubowa uwatelela*

ku-a-li-ba-a u-bu-owa ubwa-telela
LOC17-PRS-COP-be-FV AUG-14-mushroom REL14-smooth

‘There are mushrooms that are slippery.’

In the negative construction, the negator *ta-* is prefixed to the locative of the first construction as in (14) below. In the second type of construction, the locative copula *-li* is dropped, and the negator *ta-* is prefixed to the locative *kwa*, as shown in example (15).

(11) *tapali motoka pafyani*

ta-pa-li motoka pa-fi-ani
NEG-LOC16-COP car LOC16-8-grass

‘There is no car on the grass.’

(12) *takwaba indoshi*

ta-kwa-ba-a i-N-doshi
NEG-LOC17-be-FV AUG-10-witches

‘There are no witches.’ (They do not exist)

2. Example Sentences

5-1 She has blue eyes.

(a) *alikwata amenso ya blue*

a-a-li-kwat-a	a-ma-inso	ya	bulu
SM1-PRS-COP-have-FV	AUG-6-eye	ASSC6	blue

‘She has blue eyes.’

(b) *amenso yakwe ya blue⁶*

a-ma-inso	ya-kwe	ya	bulu
AUG-6-eye	ASSC6-POSS.3SG	ASSC6	blue

‘Her eyes are blue.’

5-2 She has long hair.

(a) *alikwata imishishi ishitali*

a-a-li-kwat-a	i-mi-shishi	i-shi-tali
SM1-PRS-COP-have-FV	AUG-4-hair	PP-APx7-tall

‘She has long hair.’

(b) *imishishi shakwe shitali*

i-mi-shishi	shakwe	shi-tali
AUG-4-hair	ASSC10 ⁷ -POSS.3SG	APx10-tall

‘Her hair is long.’

5-3 He has a beard. / a man with a beard.

(a) *alikwata umwefu*

a-a-li-kwat-a	u-mu-efu
SM1-PRS-COP-have-FV	AUG-3-beard

‘He has a beard.’

(b) *umwaume uuli na umwefu*

u-mu-aume	uu-li	na	u-mu-efu
AUG-1-man	REL1-COP	POSS.COP	AUG-3-beard

‘A man with a beard.’

5-4 He/she has a good eye. He/she has a keen eye. She has an exceptional ability to discern the value and quality of specific things or people.

alishiba ukusala

a-a-li-shib-a	u-ku-sal-a
SM1-PRS-COP-know-FV	AUG-15-choose-FV

‘He/She has a good eye.’ (Lit: She knows how to choose).’

⁶ Note that some copula sentences lack any overt copula.

5-5 He is three years old. / a three-year-old person

(a) *ali nemyaka shitatu*

a-li	na	i-mi-aka	shi-tatu
SM1-COP	POSS.COP	AUG-4-year	EPx10-three

‘S/he is three years old.’ (Lit: S/he is with three years).

(b) *akwata imyaka shitatu*

a-a-kwat-a	i-mi-aka	shi-tatu ²²
SM1-PRS-have-FV	AUG-4-year	EPx10-three

‘S/he is three years old.’

(c) *umuntu uuli na imyaka shitatu*

u-mu-ntu	uu-li	na	i-mi-aka	shi-tatu
AUG-1-person	REL1-COP	POSS.COP	AUG-4-year	EPx10-three

‘A three-year-old person.’ (Lit. ‘A person with three years’)

5-6 He is kind. / a kind person

(a) *alikhwata umutima usuma*

a-a-li-kwat-a	u-mu-tima	u-u-suma
SM1-PRS-COP-have	AUG-3-heart	PP-APx3-good

‘He is kind.’ (lit: he has a good heart.)

(b) *umuntu uwakwata umutima usuma*

u-mu-ntu	uwa-kwat-a	u-u-suma
AUG-1-person	REL-have-FV	PP-APx3-good

‘A kind-hearted person.’ (Lit: A person who has a kind heart)

(c) *aliba bwino*

a-a-li-ba-a	bwino
SM1-PRS-COP-be-FV	good

‘He is kind.’ (Lit: He is good.)

5-7 He is tall. / a tall person.

(a) *ali talimpa*

a-a-li	talimp-a
SM1-PRS-COP	become_tall-FV

‘He is tall.’

(b) *umuntu uwa talimpa*

u-mu-ntu	uwa-talimp-a
AUG-1-person	REL1-become_tall-FV

‘A tall person.’ (Lit: A person who is tall)

5-8 He is 190cm tall.

(a) *ali na ubutali bwa wansevunti sentimiita*

a-li	na	u-bu-tali	bwa	wanseventi	sentimiita
SM1-COP	with	AUG-14-tall	ASSC14	170	centimetres

‘He is very tall.’ (Lit: He is with a height of 170cm)

5-9 The stone is round. / a round stone

(a) *ilibwe lyali shunguluka*

i-li-bwe	li-a-li	shunguluka
AUG-5-stone	SM5-PRS-COP	round

‘The stone is round.’

(b) *ilibwe lya shunguluka*

i-li-bwe	lya	shunguluka
AUG-5-stone	ASSC5	round

‘A round stone.’

5-10 He has talent. / a man with talent

(a) *alikhwata ubupe*

a-a-li-kwat-a	u-bu-pe
SM1-PRS-COP-have-FV	AUG-14-gift

‘He has talent.’

(b) *umwaume uli na ubupe*

u-mu-aume	uu-li	na	u-bu-pe
AUG-1-man	REL1-COP	POSS.COP	AUG-14-gift

‘A man with talent.’

5-11 He is sick. / He has a fever. / a sick person

(a) *nalwala*

na-a-lwal-a
PERF-SM1-become_sick-FV

‘He is sick.’

(b) *nakaba*

na-a-kab-a
PERF-SM1-be_hot-FV

‘He has fever.’ (Lit: He is hot.)

(c) *umulwele*

u-mu-lwele
AUG-1-sick

‘A sick person.’ (Doesn’t have a TAM marker because it is a noun.)

5-12 He is wearing blue clothes. / a man with blue clothes

(a) *afwele ifyakfwala fya bulu*

a-fwal-ile	i-fi-akufwala	fya	bulu
SM1-wear-PFV	AUG-8-clothes	ASSC7	blue

‘He is wearing blue clothes.’

(b) *umwaume ufwewe ifyakfwala fya bulu*

u-mu-aume	uu-fwal-ile	i-fi-akufwala	fya	bulu
AUG-1-man	REL1-wear-PFV	AUG-8-clothes	ASSC8	blue

‘A man who is wearing blue clothes.’

5-13 He is wearing glasses. / a man with glasses

(a) *afwele amaglassi*

a-fwal-ile	a-ma-glassi
SM1-wear-PFV	AUG-6-glasses

‘He is wearing glasses.’

(b) *ali na amaglassi*

a-li	na	a-ma-glassi
SM1-wear-ANT	POSS.COP	AUG-6-glasses

‘He is wearing glasses.’ (Lit: he is with glasses)

(c) *umwaume ufwewe amaglassi*

u-mu-aume	uu-fwal-ile	a-ma-glassi
AUG-1-man	REL1-wear-PFV	AUG-6-glasses

‘A man who is wearing glasses.’

(d) *umwaume uwa amaglassi*

u-mu-aume	uwa-a-ma-glassi
AUG-1-man	REL1-AUG-6-glasses

‘A man with glasses.’

5-14 He has a wife. / a married man

(a) *alikhwata umukashi*

a-a-li-kwat-a	u-mu-kashi
SM1-PRS-COP-have-FV	AUG-1-wife

‘He has a wife.’

(b) *umwaume uwa upa*

u-mu-aume	uwa-up-a
AUG-1-man	REL1-marry-FV

‘A married man.’

(c) *alyupa*

a-a-li-up-a

SM1-PRS-COP-marry-FV

‘He is married.’

5-15 He has three children. / a man with three children / a pregnant woman

(a) *akwata abana batatu*

a-a-kwat-a

a-ba-ana

ba-tatu

SM1-PRS-have-FV

AUG-2-child

EPX2-three

‘He has three children.’

(b) *umwaume uli nabana batatu*

u-mu-aume

uu-li

na

a-ba-ana

ba-tatu

AUG-1-man

REL1-COP POSS.COP

AUG-2-child

EPX2-three

‘A man with three children.’ (Lit: A man who is with three children)

(c) *umwanakashi uuli nefumo*

u-mu-anakashi

uu-li

na

i-fumo

AUG-1-woman

REL1-COP POSS.COP

5-belly

‘A pregnant woman.’ (Lit: a woman who is with a pregnancy.)

(d) *umwanakashi uwakwata ifumo*

u-mu-anakashi

uwa-kwat-a-

i-fumo

AUG-1-woman

REL1-have-FV

5-pregnancy

‘A pregnant woman.’

5-16 Dogs have four legs.

(a) *imbwa shakwata amolu fo*

i-N-bwa

shi-a-kwat-a

a-ma-ulu

fo

AUG-10-dog

SM10-PRS-have-FV

AUG-6-leg

four

‘Dogs have 4 legs.’

5-17 That drink has alcohol in it. / a drink with alcohol in it.

(a) *icakunwa ico calikwata ubwalwa*

i-ci-akunwa

ico

ca-a-li-kwat-a

u-bu-alwa

AUG-7-drink

DEM.HP7 SM7-PRS-COP-have-FV

AUG-14-alcohol

‘That drink has alcohol in it.’

(b) *icakunwa ca bwalwa*

i-ci-akunwa

ca

bu-alwa

AUG-7-drink

ASSC7

14-alcohol

‘A drink with alcohol in it.’

5-18 That man has money. / a rich man

(a) *umwaume ulya alikwata impiya*

u-mu-aume ulya	a-a-li-kwat-a	i-N-piya
AUG-1-man DEM1.D	SM1-PRS-COP-have-FV	AUG-9-money

‘That man has money.’

(b) *umwaume ulya wa mpiya*⁸

u-mu-aume ulya	wa	N-piya
AUG-1-man DEM.D1	ASSC1	9-money

‘That man has money.’ (Lit: that man is of money.)

(c) *umwaume uwakwata impiya*

u-mu-aume	uwa-kwat-a	i-N-piya
AUG-1-man	REL1-have-FV	AUG-9-money

‘A rich man.’ (lit: a man who has money)

(d) *umwaume uwa mpiya*⁹

u-mu-aume	uwa-N-piya
AUG-1-man	REL1-9-money

‘A rich man.’ (lit: a man who of money)

5-19 Do you have a dog? / a man who has a dog

(a) *(bushe) walikwata imbwa*

bushe	u-a-li-kwat-a	i-N-bwa
Q	SM1-PRS-COP-have-FV	AUG-9-dog

‘Do you have a dog?’

(b) *umwaume uwakwata imbwa*

u-mu-aume	uwa-kwat-a	i-N-bwa
AUG-1-man	REL1-have-FV	AUG-9-dog

‘A person who has a dog.’

5-20 Do you have a pen? / a man who has a pen

(a) *naukwata peni*¹⁰

na-u-kwat-a	peni
PERF-SM.2SG-have-FV	pen

‘Do you have a pen?’ (temporary possession).

(b) *uli na peni*

u-li	na	peni
SM.2SG	POSS.COP	pen

⁸ This construction is not possible when the possessee is animate or to indicate temporary possession.

⁹ This construction is not possible when the possessee is animate or to indicate temporary possession.

¹⁰ This construction is used for temporary possession.

‘Do you have a pen?’ (Lit: Are you with a pen?)

(c) *umwaume ukwete peni*

u-mu-aume	uu-kwat-ile	peni
AUG-1-man	REF1-have-PFV	pen

‘A man who has a pen.’

5-21 He has somebody else’s pen.

(a) *akwete peni ya bene*

a-kwat-ile	peni	ya	bene
SM1-have-PFV	pen	ASSC5	someone

‘He has somebody else’s pen.’

(b) *ali na peni yabene*

a-li	na	peni	ya	bene
SM1-COP	POSS.COP	pen	ASSC5	someone

‘He has someone else’s pen’ (Lit: He is with someone else’s pen)

5-22 He has good luck. / a man with good luck

(a) *alikhata ishuko*

a-a-li-kwat-a	i-shuko
SM1-PRS-COP-have-FV	5-luck

‘He has good luck.’

(b) *umwaume uwakhata ishuko*

u-mu-aume	u-a-a-kwat-a	i-shuko
AUG-1-man	REL1-PRS-have-FV	5-luck

‘A man with good luck.’

5-23 There are many rocks here. / a land with many rocks

(a) *pali amabwe ayeengi apa*

pa-li	a-ma-bwe	a-ya-ngi	apa
LOC16-COP	AUG-6-stone	PP-APx6-many	DEM16.CD

‘There are many rocks here.’ (just noticed)

(b) *paliba amabwe ayengi apa*

pa-li-ba-a	a-ma-bwe	a-ya-ngi	apa
LOC16-COP-be-FV	AUG-6-stone	PP-APx6-many	DEM16.CD

‘There are many rocks here.’ (fact)

(c) *icalo ca amabwe ayengi*

i-calo	ca	a-ma-bwe	a-ya-ngi
5-land	ASSC5	AUG-6-stone	PP-APx6-many

‘A land with many rocks.’

5-24 There are three chairs in the room. / a room with three chairs (in it)

(a) *muli ifipuna fitatu murumu umu*

mu-li	i-fi-puna	fi-tatu	mu-rumu	umu
LOC18-COP	AUG-8-chair	EPx8-three	LOC18-room	DEM18.CD

‘There are three chairs in the room.’

(b) *mwaliba ifipuna fitatu murumu umu*

mu-a-li-ba-a	i-fi-puna	fi-tatu	mu-rumu	umu
LOC18-PRS-COP-be-FV	AUG-8-chair	EPx8-three	LOC18-room	DEM18.CD

‘There are three chairs in the room.’

(c) *rumu ili ne fipuna fitatu*

rumu	ii-li	na	i-fi-puna	fi-tatu
room	REL5-COP	POSS.COP	AUG-8-chair	EPx8-three

‘A room with three chairs (in it).’

5-25 There is a spoon on the table. / the table with a spoon on it

(a) *pali spuni petebulo*

pa-li	spuni	pa-i-tebulo
LOC16-COP	spoon	LOC16-5-table

‘There is a spoon on the table.’

(b) *itebulo ili na spuni*

i-tebulo	ii-li	na	spuni
5-table	REL5-COP	POSS.COP	spoon

‘The table with a spoon on it.’

5-26 The spoon is on the table. / the spoon on the table

(a) *spuni ili petubulo*

spuni	i-li	pa-i-tebulo
spoon	SM5-COP	LOC16-5-table

‘The spoon is on the table.’

(b) *spuni ili petubulo*

spuni	ii-li	pa-i-tebulo
spoon	REL5-COP	LOC16-5-table

‘The spoon on the table.’

5-27 That pen is mine (Chanda’s). / My (Chanda’s) pen

(a) *iyo peni yandi*

iyo	peni	ya-andi
DEM5.HP	pen	ASSC5-POSS.1SG

‘That pen is mine.’

(b) *iyo peni yakwa Chanda*

iyo	peni	ya-kwa	Chanda
DEM5.HP	pen	ASSC5-LOC17	personal_name

‘That pen is Chanda’s.’

(c) *peni iyandi*

peni	ya-andi
pen	ASSC5-POSS.1SG

‘My pen.’

(d) *peni yakwa Chanda*

peni	ya-kwa	Chanda
pen	ASSC5-LOC17	personal_name

‘Chanda’s pen.’

5-28 There was a fire at our school yesterday. / I have things to do tomorrow.

(a) *mailo kwali umulilo kusukulu kwesu*

mailo ¹¹	ku-a-li	u-mu-lilo	ku-sukulu	ku-esu
yesterday	LOC17-PST1-COP	AUG-3-fire	LOC17-school	ASSC17.POSS.2PL

‘There was a fire at our school yesterday.’

(b) *ninkwata ifintu fyakucita mailo*

ni-n-kwat-a	i-fi-ntu	fya-ku-cit-a	mailo
PFV-SM.1SG-have-FV	AUG-8-thing	ASSC7-15-do-FV	tomorrow

‘I have things to do tomorrow.’

5-29 Ghosts don’t exist.

takwaba ifiwa

ta-kwa-ba-a	i-fi-wa
NEG-LOC17-be-FV	AUG-8-ghost

‘Ghosts don’t exist.’

5-30 Some speak English, but others do not.

kwaliba abalanda icisungu nabashilanda

ku-a-li-ba-a	a-ba-land-a	i-ci-sungu	na	ba-shi-land-a
LOC17-PRS-COP-be-FV	AUG-2-speak-FV	AUG-7-English	and	2-NEG-speak-FV

‘Some speak English, but others do not.’ (Lit: there are those who speak English and those who don’t)

5-31 There are others who are better at speaking English than I am.

kwaliba bambi abancila ukulanda icisungu

kwa-li-ba-a	ba-mbi	aba-n-cil-a	u-ku-land-a	i-ci-sungu
LOC17-COP-be-FV	APX2-other	REL2-OM.1SG-bypass-FV	AUG-15-speak-FV	AUG-7-English

‘There are others who are better at speaking English than I am.’

¹¹ NB: *mailo* corresponds with both ‘yesterday’ and ‘tomorrow’

5-32 There is something I want you to do.

pali ico ndefwaya ucite

pa-li	ico	n-le-fway-a	u-cit-a
16-COP	DEM7.HP	SM.1SG-PROG-want-FV	SM.2SG-do-FV

‘There is something I want you to do.’

5-33 A winter rain / a house in Tokyo

(a) *imfula ya mumpepo*

i-N-rain	ya	mu-N-pepo
AUG-9-rain ASSC9		LOC18-9-cold

‘A winter rain.’

(b) *inganda ya ku Tokyo*

i-N-anda	ya	ku-Tokyo
AUG-9-house	ASSC9	LOC17-Tokyo

‘A house in Tokyo.’

5-34 His swimming / a dog’s bark / a volcanic eruption / driving a car / Bwalya’s novel.

(a) *ukusamba kwakwe*

u-ku-samb-a	kwa-kwe
AUG-15-bath-FV	ASSC15-POSS.3SG

‘His swimming.’

(b) *ukubosa kwambwa*

u-ku-bosa-a	kwa-N-bwa
AUG-15-bark-FV	ASSC15-9-dog

‘A dog’s bark.’/‘The bark of a dog.’

(c) *ukupuka kwolupili ulupuka umulilo*

u-ku-puk-a	kwa-u-lu-pili	ulu-puk-a	u-mu-lilo
AUG-15-erupt-FV	ASSC17-AUG-11-mountain	REL11-erupt-FV	AUG-3-fire

‘A volcanic eruption.’

(d) *ukwensha kwa motoka*

u-ku-ensh-a	kwa	motoka
AUG-15-drive-FV	ASSC17	car

‘The driving of a car.’

(e) *ibuku lyakwa Bwalya*

i-buku	lya-kwa	Bwalya
5-book	ASSC5-LOC17	personal_name

‘Andy’s novel.’

5-35 Chanda's mother / Come to my desk!

(a) *bana Chanda*

ba-na Chanda
 2-mother personal_name
 'Chanda's mother.'

(b) *banina bakwa Chanda*

ba-nina ba-kwa Chanda
 2-mother ASSC2-LOC17 personal_name
 'Chanda's mother.' (Lit: mother of Chanda)

(c) *banina bakwe*

ba-nina ba-kwe
 2-mother ASSC2-POSS.3SG
 'His mother.'

(d) *isa kucipuna candi*

is-a ku-ci-puna ca-andi
 come-FV 17-7-chair ASSC7-POSS.1SG
 'Come to my chair!'

5-36 A flower petal / a fruit knife / a paper aeroplane / a picture of a rose / the scent of a flower / a letter in English / a Japanese teacher / water from the well / a rainy day.

(a) *ibuula lya iluba*

i-bula lya i-luba
 5-leaf ASSC5 5-flower
 'A flower petal.' (note that *ibula* is used for both a leaf and a petal)

(b) *umwele wa musalu*

u-mu-ele wa mu-salu
 AUG-3-knife ASSC3 3-vegetable
 'A vegetable knife.'

(c) *indeke yamapepa*

i-N-deke ya ma-pepa
 AUG-9-plane ASSC9 6-paper
 'A paper airplane.'

(d) *icipikica celuba*

i-ci-pikica ca i-luba
 AUG-7-picture ASSC7 5-flower
 'A picture of a flower.'

(e) *iceena celuba*

i-ci-ena ca i-luba
 AUG-7-scent ASSC7 5-flower
 ‘The scent of a flower.’

(f) *inkalata ya mucisungu*

i-N-kalata ya mu-ci-sungu
 AUG-9-letter ASSC9 LOC18-7-English
 ‘A letter in English.’

(g) *kafundisha wa ku Japani*

Ø-kafundisha wa ku-Japani
 1a-teacher ASSC1 LOC17-Japan
 ‘A Japanese teacher.’

(h) *kafundisha wa ciBemba*

Ø-kafundisha wa ci-Bemba
 1a-teacher ASSC1 7-Bemba
 ‘A teacher of Bemba.’

(i) *kafundisha usambilisha iciBemba*

Ø-kafundisha u-sambili-ish-a i-ci-Bemba
 1a-teacher SM1-learn-CAUS-FV AUG-7-Bemba
 ‘A teacher who teaches Bemba.’

(j) *amenshi ya mucishima*

a-ma-inshi ya mu-ci-shima
 AUG-6-water ASSC6 18-7-well
 ‘Water from the well.’ (Meussen, 1967)

(k) *ubushiku bwa mfula*

u-bu-shiku bwa N-fula
 AUG-14-day ASSC14 AUG-9-rain
 ‘A rainy day.’

5-37 My younger sister Hanako / Mr. Hichilema, the president

(a) *umwaice wandi Chanda*

u-mu-aice wa-andi Chanda
 AUG-1-young ASSC1-POSS.1SG personal_name
 ‘My younger sister Chanda.’

(b) *Bakateka baHichilema*

Ba-kateka ba-Hichilema
 2-ruler 2-personal_name
 ‘Mr. Hichilema the president.’

5-38 The tire of the car my next-door friend's dad has

itaila ya motoka iyo bawishi bamunandi uwa paneba bakwata

i-taila ya motoka iyo-ba-wishi ba-mu-nandi wa pa-neba ba-kwat-a

5-tire ASSC5 car REL5-2-father 2-1-friend ASSC1 16-neighbour 2-have-FV

'The tire of the car my next-door friend's dad has.'

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4. List of Abbreviations

1, 2, 3...	Noun Class
1SG, 1PL	First Person Singular, 1st Person Plural...
APX	Adjective Prefix
ASSC	Associative
AUG	Augment
CAUS	Causative
COP	Copula
DEM.CD	Demonstrative Counter Distal
DEM.D	Demonstrative Distal
DEM.HP	Demonstrative Hearer Proximal
EPX	Numeral Prefix
FV	Final Vowel
LOC	Locative
NEG	Negative
OM	Object Marker
PERF	Perfect
PFV	Perfective

PL	Plural
POSS	Possessive
PP	Pronominal Prefix
PROG	Progressive
PRS	Present
PST	Past
Q	Question
REL	Relative clause marker
SG	Singular
SM	Subject Marker

5. Tables

Table 1 Bemba Vowels

	Front (unrounded)	Central (unrounded)	Back (rounded)
High	i ii		u uu
Mid	e ee		o oo
Low		a aa	

Table 2 Bemba Consonants

		Bilabial	Labial-dental	Alveolar	Palato-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Labial-Velar
Obstruents	Plosive	p		t			k	
	Fricative	β	f	s	ʃ			
	Affricate				tʃ			
Prenasalised-obstruents	Plosive	mp mb		nt nd			ŋk ŋg	
	Fricative		mf	ns	ɲʃ			
	Affricate				ntʃ ndʒ			
Sonorants	Nasal	m		n		ɲ	ŋ	
	Approximant					j		w
	Lateral			l				

Table 3 Bemba Noun Classes

Class	Augment	Prefix	Meaning	Example
1	u-	mu-	Nouns denoting humans	<i>umuntu</i> u-mu-ntu AUG-1-person 'person'
1a	∅	∅	Mostly kinship terms. No augment.	<i>tata</i> ∅-tata 1-father
2	a-	ba-	Plural of class 1 and 1a. Also used to show respect (honorific plural)	<i>abantu</i> a-ba-ntu AUG-2-person 'people'
3	u-	mu-	Natural phenomena, plants, body parts, animals	<i>umucila</i> u-mu-cila AUG-3-tail 'tail'

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4	i-	mi-	Plural of class 3.	<i>imicila</i> i-mi-cila AUG-5-tail 'tails'
5	i-	li-	Objects appearing in pairs or collections especially parts of the body (eye, tooth). Derogatives.	<i>iliino</i> i-li-ino AUG-5-tooth 'tooth'
6	a-	ma-	Plural of class 5	<i>ameeno</i> a-ma-ino AUG-6-tooth 'teeth'
7	i-	ci-	Miscellaneous; the word for 'thing', languages, objects.	<i>icipuna</i> i-ci-puna AUG-7-chair 'chair'
8	i-	fi-	Plural of class 8.	<i>ifipuna</i> i-fi-puna AUG-8-chair 'chairs'
9	i-	n-	Animals, people, body parts, tools, instruments.	<i>inkoko</i> i-n-koko AUG-9-chicken 'chicken'
10	i-	n-	Plural of class 9 and in some cases class 11	<i>inkoko</i> i-n-koko AUG-10-chicken 'chickens'
11	u-	lu-	Long, thin entities, body parts, natural phenomena, tools, utensils	<i>ulukasa</i> u-lu-kasa AUG-11-foot 'foot'
12	a-	ka-	Augmentatives, derogative, diminutives, ameliorative	<i>akanyebele</i> a-ka-nyelele AUG-12-ant 'ant'
13	u	tu-	Plural of class 12	<i>utunyebele</i> u-tu-nyelele AUG-13-ant 'ants'
14	u	bu-	Abstracts and mass nouns	<i>ubusuma</i> u-bu-suma AUG-14-good 'goodness'
15	u	ku-	Generally, infinitives, a few body parts	<i>ukuulu</i> u-ku-ulu AUG-15-leg 'leg'
16		pa-	Locative: on, at	<i>pang'anda</i> pa-N-house

				16-9-house 'at the house'
17		ku-	Locative: towards, at	<i>kung'anda</i> ku-N-house 17-9-house 'towards/at the house'
18		mu-	Locative: in	<i>mung'anda</i> mu-N-house 18-9-house 'in the house'

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