

## COMPARATIVE SYNTAX : THE EXPLETIVE IN THE AFRICAN LANGUAGES OF SOUTH AFRICA (BANTU LANGUAGES)

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Abbreviations

Attention will be primarily focused on the alternation which is known in the literature as expletive or subject inversion, or even in English as **there**-insertion. An example from isiXhosa will show this construction:

- (1) a. [Imvula] [i-ya-n-a]  
 (Rain agrs-pres-rain-fv: the rain rains)
- b. [pro] [ku-n-a [imvula]  
 (pro expl-rain-fv rain: there is raining rain)

The expletive **ku** in (1b) is a morpheme which appears with an empty pronoun. The subject in (1a) is now in an adjunct position after the verb.

Before giving the details of such expletive constructions in these African languages, it will be necessary to focus on some morphemes which appear to have the same form as the expletive above but which have a different reference.

### 1. THE INFINITIVE

The Infinitive in these languages has both nominal and verbal properties (see i.a. Du Plessis, Visser (1992:88) for a list of these properties). Here it will suffice to focus on the nominal property of the Infinitive as appearing in a noun class as all other nouns in Bantu, here specifically in class 15. As such it may have the functions of nouns in general e.g. appearing as subject or objects of clauses. In the examples below, the infinitive will appear in the subject position of a clause. All such infinitives consist of a noun class prefix with a verbal stem e.g. Xitsonga [ku-tirh-a] (pref.cl.15-work-fv: to work/working).

In the examples below the expletive morpheme as well as the Infinitive class 15 agreement subject morpheme will be given:

(2) Expletive morpheme	AgrS of Infinitive
<b>Sesotho:</b> [pro] [ho-n-a [pula]	[Ho-sebets-a] ho-tla-lok-a
<b>Xitsonga</b> [pro [ku-n-a [mpfula]	[Ku-tirh-a] ku-ta-lungh-a
<b>Tshivenda:</b> [pro] hu-n-a [mvula]	[U-shum-a] hu-d8o-lug-a
<b>IsiXhosa:</b> [pro] ku-n-a [imvula] (expl-rain-fv rain: there is raining rain)	[U-ku-sebenz-a] ku-za ku-lung-a (pref.cl.15-work-fv agrs. cl.15-fut-good-fv: to work/working will be good)

The expletive morpheme above and the AgrS of the Infinitive have exactly the same form:

(3)	Expletive	AgrS cl. 15
Sesotho	ho	ho
Tshivenda	hu	hu
Xitsonga	ku	ku
IsiXhosa	ku	ku

The difference between these two morphemes is obvious: firstly, the expletive has to appear with an empty pro while the infinitive AgrS appears with an Infinitive noun in class 15 as head of the subject DP of the clause. Secondly, there is the difference in meaning: the expletive is semantically empty while the AgrS of class 15 refers to a noun in class 15, as shown above.

## 2. THE LOCATIVE AGREEMENT MORPHEME

It is possible for any locative noun which is the head of a locative DP to function as subject or object of a clause, as in the case of the Infinitive above. For an overview of the locative see i.a. Dinga (1997) for isiXhosa, Musehane (1991) for Tshivenda,

Sepota (1999) for Northern Sotho, Mdumela (1996:56) for Xitsonga and Du Plessis, Visser (1992) for isiXhosa.

The locative agreement morpheme has the same form as the morphemes in (3) above:

(4)	Expletive	Agr.cl.15	Agr.Loc
Sesotho	ho	ho	ho
Tshivenda	hu	hu	hu
Xitsonga	ku	ku	ku
isiXhosa	ku	ku	ku

In the sentences below the locative will appear in the subject position:

(5) **Sesotho:**

[Hae] [ho-kguts-itse]

(At-home loc.agr-quiet-perf: At home it is quiet)

**Tshivenda:**

[Fhasi] hu-a-suvh-a

(Underneath loc.agr-pres-slippery-fv: Underneath it is slippery)

**Xitsonga:**

[Ekamareni rin'wana] [a-ku-tsham-ile vatswari va vona]

(In-room another past-loc.agr-sit-perf parents of them: In another room sat their parents)

**isiXhosa:**

[EKapa] [ku-ya-band-a]

(In-Cape-Town loc.agr-pres-cold-fv: In Cape Town it is cold)

The locative agreement morphemes above will all have the reference of the locative subject DP.

### 3. ANAPHORIC PRONOUNS

There are certain anaphoric or cataphoric expressions which refer outside the discourse to other entities by connecting to a prior referring expression or a later one (Levinson 2006:119). In Sesotho and isiXhosa the agreement morpheme with the same form as above in (4) may appear with a demonstrative pronoun or an absolute pronoun:

(6) a. **Sesotho:**

[Mpho o-si-il-w-e mabelong]. [Hona/hoo ho-tshwen-tse titjhere]

(Mpho agrs-leave. behind-perf-pass-perf in.races. This/that agrs-worry-perf teacher: Mpho has been left behind in the races. This/that worried the teacher)

b. **IsiXhosa:**

[UNomsa u-lu-tshon-ile uviwo]. [Ubawo u-ku-v-ile oko]  
 (Nomsa agrs-agro-fail-perf exam. Father agrs-agro-hear-perf that: Nomsa  
 has failed the exam. Father has heard it)

In (6a) the AgrS **ho** appears with the demonstrative **hona** or **hoo** in the subject position. This anaphoric pronoun refers back to the discourse segment which appears in brackets before it. In (6b) the anaphoric pronoun appears with a demonstrative of the second position and the discourse reference is again to the clause before it. See also Du Plessis, Visser (1995) for Sesotho, and Du Plessis, Visser (1992) for isiXhosa, where it is referred to as a sentential pronoun.

The anaphoric pronouns such as those in (6) above do not appear in Xitsonga or Tshivenda. Instead these languages make use of an AgrS morpheme of class 8 (**swi** for Tsonga and **zwi** for Venda which may appear with a demonstrative: see Du Plessis, Nxumalo, Visser (1995) for Xitsonga and Du Plessis, Musehane, Visser (1995) for Tshivenda.

The demonstrative of the second position may be used for such discourse reference, e.g. **seo** in Sesotho below:

- (7) [Seo o-se-bolel-a-ng], ke-a-se-utlw-a  
 (Rel.det agrs-agro-say-fv-rel.marker, I-pres-agro-hear-fv: That which you are  
 saying, I hear it)

#### 4. THE EXPLETIVE

The expletive morpheme with the form as in (4) above may appear in various constructions in these African languages. Below an indication is given of the major structures within which this expletive may appear.

##### Expletive or Subject Inversion

There is an extensive bibliography on the expletive construction: see i.a. the bibliography in Deal (2009:285) and Hornstein a.o. (2005:n31). For these African languages see also Maboya (1992), Mpeko (1992), Mali (1995) and Tshithukhe (1997:139).

In expletive constructions in these African languages as shown in no. (1) and no. (2) above, an expletive morpheme combines with an empty pro in the subject position of the clause:

- (8) **IsiXhosa:**  
 [pro<sub>i</sub>] [ku<sub>i</sub>-ngen-a [abantwana]  
 (pro expl-enter-fv children: there enter children)

According to Mackenzie (2006:17) the high preverbal subject position is occupied by an expletive element (i.e. pro coindexed with **ku** in (8)) and the postverbal subject is referred to as the expletive's "associate". Moro (2005:211) claims that existential sentences have **be** or **exist** as a main verb with **there**, followed by a small clause which is the real predicate of a **there**-sentence:

There are [<sub>sc</sub> many girls in the garden]

**There** plays the role of a dummy place holder for the structural subject position, an expletive.

Before going into the issue of the structure of expletive constructions and its possible semantics, an overview will firstly be given of the distribution of these constructions with various verbs:

#### 4.1 Non-copulative verbs

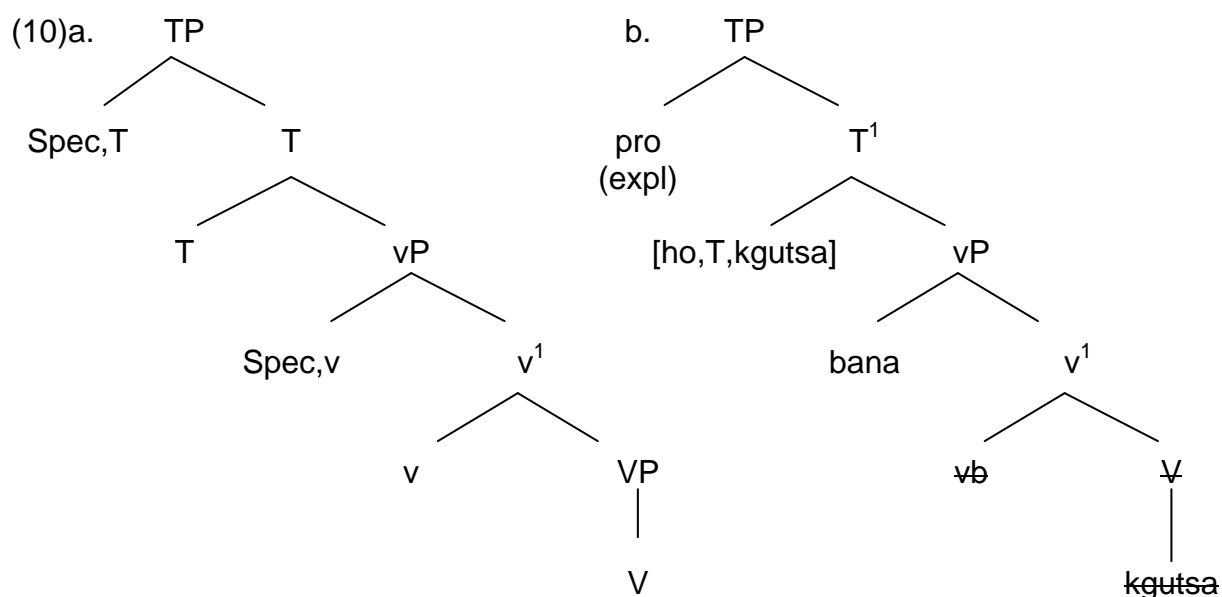
##### 4.1.1 Intransitive verbs

See no. (1) and no. (2) above as well as the following sentences:

- (9) **Tshivenda:** [pro] [ho-fhumul-a [avha vhana]  
**Sesotho:** [pro] [ho-kguts-itse [bana bana]  
**Xitsonga:** [pro] [ku-miyer-ile [lava vana]  
**IsiXhosa:** [pro] [ku-thul-e [aba bantwana]  
 (pro expl-quiet-perf these children:  
 there are quiet these children. Tshivenda **ho** consists of expl  
**hu** with perf morpheme **o**)

Any intransitive verb may appear in such structures as (9). The assertion by Deal (2009:285) is thus not applicable to these languages: "**There**-insertion is compatible only with unaccusatives that are not 'change-of-state verbs". Mackenzie (2006:18) claimed the issue of unergative syntax since Burzio (1988:119-77) is no longer of any concern because of the VP-internal subject hypothesis (Chomsky 1992). The expletive and the verb's subject (the associate) are no longer in competition for the same structural position.

According to the Extended Projection Principle (EPP) of Chomsky (1981, 1982) all clauses must have a subject. Semantically null elements like expletives can also satisfy the EPP. Chomsky (1999, 2000) further requires the EPP to have an overtly filled specifier. Every T constituent must be extended into a TP projection which has a specifier. The sentences in (9) above will then have the following structure:

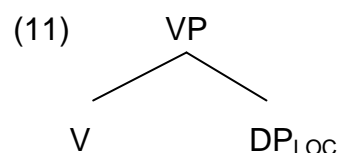


In (10) above the light verb (v) licences the (specifier, v) and assigns a theta-role. The head T checks AgrS (ho) and assigns nominative case. However, according to Hornstein a.o. (2005:287) there is still a problem with case. According to them **bana** in (10b) can have its case-requirements met after it moves covertly to a position where it can have case-features checked e.g. by creating an additional (Spec, TP). This issue is still problematic but it has been solved formerly by putting **bana** and the expletive in a chain which will check the theta-role and the nominative case through the head T. (See i.a. Du Plessis, Visser (1992:130) and the references cited on p. 131).

There was formerly an issue with regard to definiteness with expletive **there**-constructions in English. But according to Deal (2009:313) the definiteness criterion is not always obeyed. Mackenzie (2006:24) says definite associates are allowed but they must be capable of having their referents identified. Definiteness of the associate in these African languages is not an issue because any definite or indefinite associate may appear with expletives as shown in (9) with definite DPs and in (8) with an indefinite DP.

#### 4.1.2 Intransitive verbs with locative arguments

The VP in (10a) will be extended as follows:



Any locative DP may appear as sister of V and its theta-role will be assigned by this V:

(12) **Tshivenda:**

[H-o [d8-a [muthu uyu] [kamarani]

(Expl-perf come-fv person this to-room: There came this person to the room)

**Xitsonga:**

[Se-ku-sele [mhaka yin'we] [eka mina na n'wina]

(Still-expl-remain.perf issue one to me and you: There still remained one issue with me and you)

**IsiXhosa:**

(Ku-fik-a [uBhuqa] [kulaa lali]

(Expl-arrive-fv Bhuqa at-that village: There arrived Bhuqa at that village)

**Sesotho:**

[Ho-dul-a [bana ba bangata] [ntlong ena]

(Expl-stay-fv children adj.det many in-house this: There stay many children in this house)

The associate DP may also appear after the locative DP:

**IsiXhosa:**

[Kwa-fika [eMthombe [kule mizi ingakwaNkosi uMarasela] [amadoda amabini e-khwel-e emahashini]

(Expl. cons-arrive at.Mthombe in-these villages they-are-at-chief Marasela men

two agrs-ride-perf on-horses: There arrived at Mthombe in these villages at chief Marasela two men riding on horses)

**Sesotho:**

[Ha-fihla [ho yena] [lenqosa la timelo]

(Expl.cons-arrive at him Messenger of death: there arrived at him a Messenger of death)

**4.1.3 Transitive verbs**

Transitive verbs may appear with or without their objects in expletive constructions. The following are some typical examples of such expletive sentences:

**Sesotho:**

- (13) a. [Ho-ka-bua [ba bang batho], [eseng nna]  
(Expl-can-speak adj.det other people, not me: There can speak other people, not me)
- b. [Ho-bak-a-[ng] [dintwa] ke eng?  
(Expl.rel.det-cause-fv-rel.marker wars cop what:  
What causes wars it is what?)
- c. Sekolong seo re-ne-ng re-et-etse ho sona, ho-ile ha-jewa, mme ka mora tseo tsohle [ha-bapal-a [bashemane bolo]  
(At-school rel.det we-past-rel.marker we-visit-appl.perf at it, expl-past expl.cons-eat-passive, and after-of those all, expl.cons-play-fv boys soccer: At the school which we visited, there was eaten and after all those, there played the boys soccer)

**Tshivenda:**

- (14) Zwin(we khamusi ndi zwone, [hu-d8ivha [nnyi]  
(Some maybe cop pro, expl-know who: Some may be true, there knows who)

**IsiXhosa:**

- (15) a. Si-bon-e ukuba [ko-qal-a [ku-cim-e [yiphi] na.  
(We-see-perf that expl.fut-begin expl-extinguish-subjt: We saw that there will begin there extinguishes which one)
- b. U-wu-buz-a loo mbuzo kuba [ku-thand-a [mna]  
(Agrs-agro-ask-fv that question because expl-like-fv I:  
You are asking that question because there likes I)

**Xitsonga:**

- (16) a. [Ku-tirh-a [vavanuna], [ku-nga-ri [vavasati]  
(Expl-work-fv men, expl-neg-cop.vb women: There work men, and not women)

- b. [A-ku-onh-ek-angi [nchumu], [ku-huw-elel-a [mufambisi wa lori]  
 (Neg-expl-damage-neut-neg anything, expl-shout-appl-fv driver of lorry:  
 There has not been damaged anything, there shouts driver of lorry)

From the sentences above, the following may be noted:

- (1) The object may not appear: see no. (13a, 14, 15a,b, 16a,b). This type of expletive construction is very ubiquitous because of the semantics of these sentences. The reason why expletive constructions are formed in these languages is because of the issue of focus, specifically contrastive focus: see i.a. Du Plessis, Visser (1992:131). According to Erteschik-Shir (2007:29) "a contrastive focus focuses one element of the contrast set and eliminates the other alternatives". On p. 27: focus is the non-presupposed information in the sentence. Foci must be new in discourse. See also Gundel and Fretheim (2006:181) for a distinction between information focus vs contrastive focus. Contrastive focus is clearly demonstrated in (13a) and (16a) above. Examples in the four African languages below will each time give the focus on the associate of the expletive by adding a negative DP:

(17) **Sesotho:**

[Ho-sebetsa [banna], [eseng basadi]

**Xitsonga:**

[Ku-tirha [vavanuna], [ku-nga-ri vavasati]

**Tshivenda:**

[Hu-shuma [vhanna], [hu-si vhasadzi]

**IsiXhosa:**

[Ku-sebenza [amadoda], [hayi abafazi]  
 (There work men, not women)

The focus in (17) is on **men** which is the associate of the expletive. Belletti (1999) and Mackenzie (2006) are not definitive about focus, but the issues they are concerned with are not the same as in these languages.

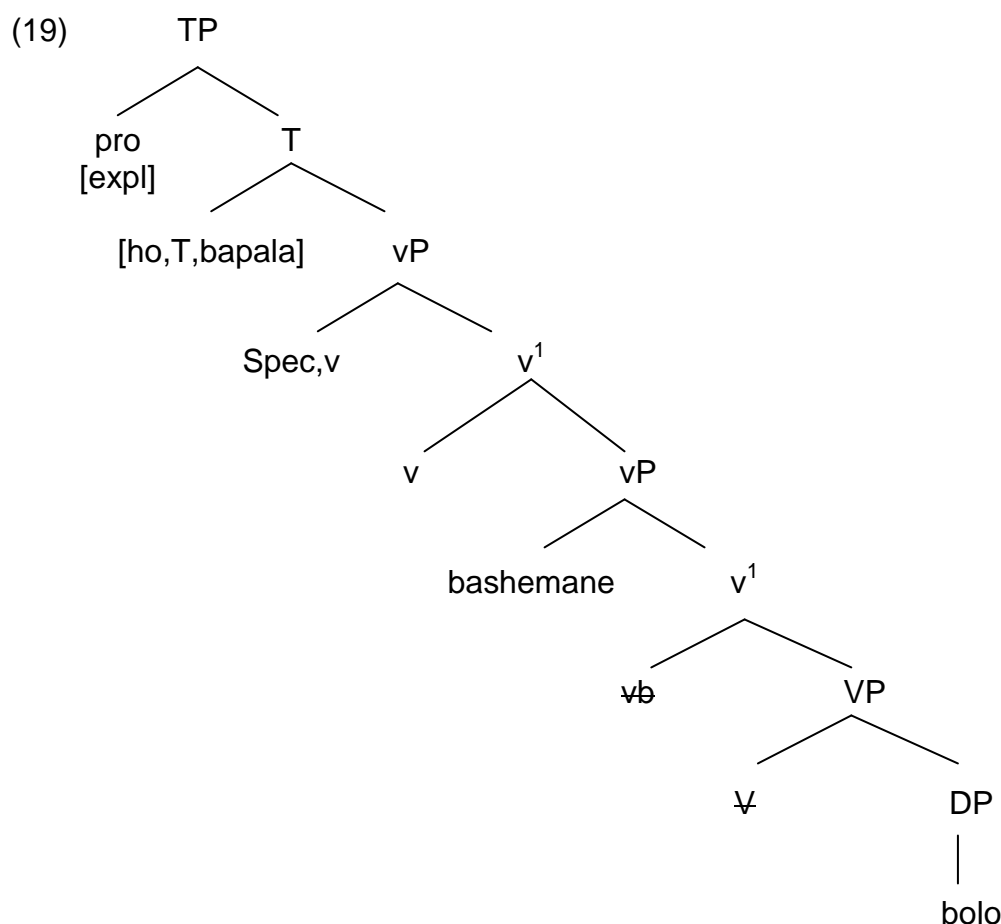
- (2) The object may appear as in (13c): [ho-bapala [bashemane bolo] (there play boys soccer)

The focus may be on **bolo**, which is the reason for the presence of the object:

- (18) Ho-bapala bashemane bolo, eseng rakebi  
 (There play the boys soccer, not rugby).

When the associate includes an object, the subject and object will retain their original position in the structure:





The object **bolo** will lose its status as syntactic object because it can no longer appear with its AgrO:

(20) \*Ho-[e<sub>i</sub>] bapala bashemane [bolo<sub>i</sub>]

#### 4.1.4 Ditransitive verbs

Expletive constructions with ditransitive verbs are very rare but may be attested as the Sesotho sentence below shows. Their non-ubiquity is the result of the problem to decide where focus should be. That is why ditransitive verbs in expletive constructions usually appear with only one associate which is the subject or one of the objects:

(21) Makgotleng a ditlhalano pele moahlodi a-diha nyewe, [ho-ye [ho-bots-e  
[mosadi monna dipotso tse mmalwanyana]  
(In-courts of divorce before judge agrs-cast.down case, expl-def.vb expl-ask-  
subjt woman man questions rel.det few: In divorce courts before the judge  
gives the judgment, there usually asks the woman the man some few  
questions)

#### 4.1.5 Derived verbs

It is possible to use the expletive morpheme with an empty pro with derived verbs. Such constructions are very rarely used while it is more common to focus on one DP which may be focused.

(22) **Applicative****Sesotho:**

[Ho-tsw-el-a [pele] [monnamoholo] [ho-ba-bolel-l-a ditaba]

(Expl-go.out-appl-fv forward old.man to-them-tell-appl-fv news: There goes on the old man to tell them the news)

[Ho-kguti-el-a [mabothong] [balaodi]

(Expl-return-appl-fv to.soldiers officers: There return to the soldiers the officers)

[Ho-kgalemel-l-a [monnamoholo] [metsamao ya hae e mebe]

(Expl-reprimand-appl-fv old-man behaviours of his adj.det bad: There reprimand the old man his bad behaviours)

[Ho-i-papal-l-a [ngwana]

(Expl-refl-play-appl-fv children: There is playing the child by herself)

**Tshivenda:**

[Hu-fhindutsh-el-a [hayani [uyu musadzi]

(Expl-go-early-appl-fv to-home this woman: There goes early to home this woman)

[Hu-bv-el-a [nnd&a] [avha vhanna]

(Expl-go-out-appl-fv outside these men: There go outside these men)

[Hu-bik-el-a [musadzi] [vhaeni]

(Expl-cook-appl-fv woman visitors: There cooks the woman for the visitors)

[Hu-takal-el-a [hulumeni] [mishumo]

(Expl-happy-appl-fv government works: There is happy the government for the works)

**Xitsonga:**

Hikwalaho ka yini u-nga-vutis-i makwenu leswi [ku-nonoh-el-a-ka [exikolweni]?

(Because of what you-neg-ask-neg your-brother rel.det expl-difficult-appl-fv-rel.marker at-school: Why do you not ask your brother about that which is difficult at school)

[Ku-vuy-el-a [wanuna] [hosi]

(Expl-return-appl-fv man chief: there returns the man for the chief)

**IsiXhosa:**

[Ku-khul-el-e [ku-le lali] [uBhuqa]

(Expl-grow.up-appl-perf in-this village Bhuqa: There grew up in this village Bhuqa)

[Kw-a-fik-el-a [ku-m [lo mntwana]

(Expl-past-arrive-appl-fv at-me this child: There arrived at me this child)

[Ku-lil-el-a [umfazi] [ilahleko ya-khe]

(Expl-cry-appl-fv woman loss of her: There cries woman for loss of her)

[Ku-lung-el-a [abantwana] [iimviwo]

(Expl-ready-appl-fv children exams: There are ready the children for the exams)

(23) **Causative verbs****Xitsonga**

[Ku-tsak-is-a [mudyondzisi] [vana]

(Expl-happy-caus-fv teacher children: There makes the teacher the children happy)

**Tshivenda**

[H-o-i-s-a [muthannga] [vhula vhurifhi] [ha vhane vha-ho]

(Expl-past-go-caus-fv boy that letter to owners of-it: There brought the boy that letter to its owners)

[Hu-dzhen-is-a [musadzi] [vhana] [fhala goloini]

(Expl-enter-caus-fv woman children there in-car: There put the woman the children in the car)

**IsiXhosa**

[Ku-libaz-is-a [bani] [mmntwana wa-m]?

(Expl-delay-caus-fv who child of me: There detain who my child?)

[Ku-buy-is-a [indoda] [imali] [ku-m]

(Expl-return-caus-fv man money to-me: There returns the man the money to me)

[Ku-z-onwab-is-a [ezi ntombi] [emlanjeni]

(Expl-refl-happy-caus-fv these girls at-river: There make themselves happy these girls at the river)

**Sesotho:**

[Ho-ken-y-a [monna] [letsoho] [mokotlaneng wa henge]

(Expl-enter-caus-fv man hand in-pocket of shirt: There puts the man his hand in the pocket of his shirt)

[Ho-tla-bon-tsh-a [titjhere] [sekolo]

(Expl-fut-see-caus-fv teacher school: There will show the teacher the school)

**(24) Reciprocal****IsiXhosa:**

[Kw-a-jong-an-a [la madoda]

(Expl-past-look-recipr-fv these men: There looked at each other these men)

[Ku-thand-an-a [intombi] [nalo mfana]

(Expl-love-recipr-fv girl with-this young-man: There love each other the girl with the young man)

[Kw-a-phendul-an-a [le ndoda] [neqaba] [enkundleni]

(Expl-past-answer-recipr-fv this man with-traditional-Xhosa in-court: There answer each other this man with the traditional Xhosa in court)

**Tshivenda**

[Hu-vus-an-a [avha vhathu] [fhala] [nga zwavhudi]

(Expl-greet-recipr-fv these people there with well: There greet each other these people over there very well)

[Hu-rw-an-a [nn8e] [na luvhondo]

(Expl-bump-recipr-fv I with-wall: There bumps me against the wall)

**Xitsonga:**

[Ku-ta-pfux-er-is-an-a [na yena]

(Expl-fut-discuss-appl-caus-recipr-fv with him: There will be discussing each other with him)

[Ku-rhandz-an-a [nhwana] [na mufana]

(Expl-love-recipr-fv girl with young-man: There love each other the girl with the young man)

**Sesotho:**

[Ho-rat-an-a [ngwanana enwa] [lebashemane]

(Expl-love-recipr-fv girl with boys: There love each other the girl with boys)

[Ho-utlw-an-a [mosadi] [le monna] [ka ntho ena]

(Expl-hear-recipr-fv woman with man about thing this: There hear each other the woman with the man about this thing)

**(25) Reflexive****Xitsonga:**

[Ku-ti-xav-el-a [wanhwana] [rokho]

(Expl-refl-buy-appl-fv girl dress: There buys for herself a dress the girl)

[Ku-ti-nyika [vana] [swiwitsi]

(Expl-refl-give children sweets: There give for themselves sweets the children)

**Tshivenda:**

[Hu-d8i-funga [Ntsieni]

(Expl-refl-set-alight Ntsieni: There excites himself Ntsieni)

[Ho-d8i-vhofha [khundu] [musadzi] [nga labi]

(Expl-past-refl-tie waist with cloth: There ties herself the waist the woman with a cloth)

**Sesotho:**

[Ho-i-potsa [banna] [dipotso]

(Expl-refl-ask men questions: There ask themselves the men questions)

[Ho-i-pha [dipapadi] [matla] [mmeleng]

(Expl-refl-give players power in body: There give themselves the players power in the body)

[Ho-i-k-otla [dipapadi] [difuba]

(Expl-refl-beat players chests: There beat themselves the players the chests)

[Ho-i-papal-l-a [ngwana]

(Expl-refl-play-appl-fv child: There plays the child by herself)

**IsiXhosa:**

[A-ku-zi-themb-anga [aba bantu]

(Neg-expl-refl-trust-neg these people: There do not trust themselves these people)

[Ku-zi-phose [phezu kwebhedi] [laa mntwana]

[Expl-refl-throw top of-bed that child: There threw herself that child on top of the bed]

[Ku-zi-bhal-e [lo mntu] [encwadini] [ngokuba unguFanty]

(Expl-refl-write-perf this person in-book with-to-be he-is-Fanty: There wrote himself this person in the book that he is Fanty)

**4.1.6 Left dislocation**

A DP may appear before the expletive so that focus may be kept on the remaining associate. It frequently happens with a DP which has a nominal head with a modifier. The nominal head may then appear before the expletive while the focus will then be on the modifier:

**IsiXhosa**

- (26) U-nga-qabuka [umfazi] [se-ku-xak-ile endlwini] [e-si-thi u-gqobhok-ile]  
 (You-can-realise woman already-expl-difficult-perf in-house agrs.ptc-ptc-say  
 agrs-converted-perf: You can realize there is already difficulty in the house  
 when a woman is converted)

**Xitsonga**

- (27) Phela [mugayo lowu] [a-ku-xav-angi tata wa yena?]  
 (But maize-meal this neg-expl-buy-neg.perf father of you: There didn't buy  
 your father this maize-meal?)

**Tshivenda**

- (28) [Mihumbulo] [ho-d8a [minzhi]  
 (Thoughts expl-perf-come many: there came a lot of thoughts)

**Sesotho**

- (29) O-ne a-kena ha hae moo [eta] [ho-lla-ng [sa hae qha]  
 (Agrs-def.vb agrs-enter poss his rel.det-expl-cry-rel.marker of him only: He  
 was entering here there is sounding only his shoe)

[Kgwedi] [ho-ne [ho-setse [tse pedi] hore ho-ngol-w-e dihlahlobo  
 (Months expl-def.vb expl-remain-perf adj.det two that expl-write-pass-subjt  
 exams: There remained two months that there should be written exams)

**4.2 Copulative verbs**

See Du Plessis (2010a) for a survey of expletives with copulative verbs. Some sentences are given below with copulatives with specific complements.

- (30) **Expl-DP**

**IsiXhosa**

[Ku-[ng-[unyana omhle] le nkwenkwe kw-aba nyana ba-m  
 (Expl-copula-son beautiful this boy in-these sons of-me: It is a beautiful son  
 this boy among my sons)

**Sesotho**

Ke-fuman-e [ho-se [ngwana e motle]  
 (I-find-perf expl-neg.vb child adj.det beautiful: I found there was no beautiful  
 child)

(31) **Expl-AP****Sesotho**

Ho hotle [basadi] (There are beautiful the women)

Ho hotjha [diaparo] (There are new the clothes)

Ho hotenya [lentswe] (There is thick the voice)

Ho hotala [jwang] (There is green the grass)

**IsiXhosa**

The prefix has a nasal **m** or **n**:

Lo mfazi **m**-futshane (This woman is short)

\*Ku-futshane lo mfazi

Ku-**m**-futshane lo mfazi

Xa ku-**m**-futshane lo mfazi ...

Le nduku i-**n**-de (This stick is long)

\*Ku-de le nduku

Ku-**n**-de le nduku

The prefix has no nasal **n** or **m**:

Olu sana **lu**-futsane (This baby is short)

\*Ku-**lu**-futsane olu sana

Ku-futsane olu sana

Xa ku-ku-futsane olu sana ...

(32) **[Expl-AP<sub>NOM</sub>]****Sesotho**

Ho batsi [noka] (There is wide the river)

Ho nthithi [thipa ya tshipi] (There is blunt the iron knife)

Ho botswa [banna] (There is lazy the men)

Ho monate [dijo] (There is nice the food)

**IsiXhosa**

Kulushica [le nyama] (There is tough this meat)

Kutamtam [izidlele zosana] (There are soft cheeks of baby)

(33) **Expl-LOC****Sesotho**

a. \*Ho [sefateng] ditholwana

Ho ditholwana [sefateng] (There are fruit on the tree)

b. Ho [morao] basadi (There is behind the women)

Ho basadi [morao]

Ho fatshe theko ya meroho (There is low price of vegetables)

Ho theko ya meroho [fatshe]

**IsiXhosa**

[Ku-s-edolophini [abafazi], hayi amadoda

(Expl-s-in-town women not men: There are women in town and not men)

(34) **Expl-NA/LE****IsiXhosa**

[Ku-[ne-[ngxaki enzima] [abantwana], hayi nina  
 (Expl with problem difficult children, not you: There has a difficult problem the children, not you)

**Sesotho**

[Ho-na [le [batho ba bangata], eseng bana  
 (Expl-cop.vb with people adj.det many, not children: There are many people and not children)

**5. EXPLETIVES WITH NON-EMPTY [PRO] AS SUBJECT**

There is a great number of constructions in these African languages in which an empty pro appears with a morpheme which has the same form as the expletive in par. 4. The following list of sentences gives an indication of this construction in which pro is not empty but it has some reference.

**5.1 With Intransitive verbs**

An empty pro with such an expletive morpheme appears especially with weather verbs which refer to temperatures (but not exclusively so). The reference of this subject is to some weather condition or a location as in par. 2 above:

**With weather verbs:**(35) **IsiXhosa**

[pro] [ku-phol-ile]  
 (pro expl-cool-perf: It is cool)

(36) **Sesotho**

[pro] [ho-a-bat-a]  
 (pro expl-pres-cold-fv: it is cold)

(37) **Xitsonga**

[pro] [k-a-titimel-a]  
 (pro expl-pres-cold-fv: it is cold)

(38) **Tshivenda**

[pro] [hu-a-fhis-a]  
 (pro expl-pres-hot-fv: it is hot)

**Other Intransitive verbs**(39) **IsiXhosa:**

[pro] [ku-the xum [pro] [kw-a-thi tu]  
 (pro expl-thi-perf silent expl-cons-thi quiet: there was silence and it was quiet)

(40) **Sesotho**

a. [pro] [ho-re tswe]  
 (pro expl-re nice: It is nice)

- b. ke-se ke-nyed-is-eh-ile haholo. [pro] [ho-lekan-e]  
 (I-already I-despise-caus-neuter-perf much. pro expl-enough-perf:  
 I was already much despised. It is enough)

The reference of the subject in (a) is to some location or to some previous discourse as in par. 3 above (anaphoric pronoun with discourse reference).

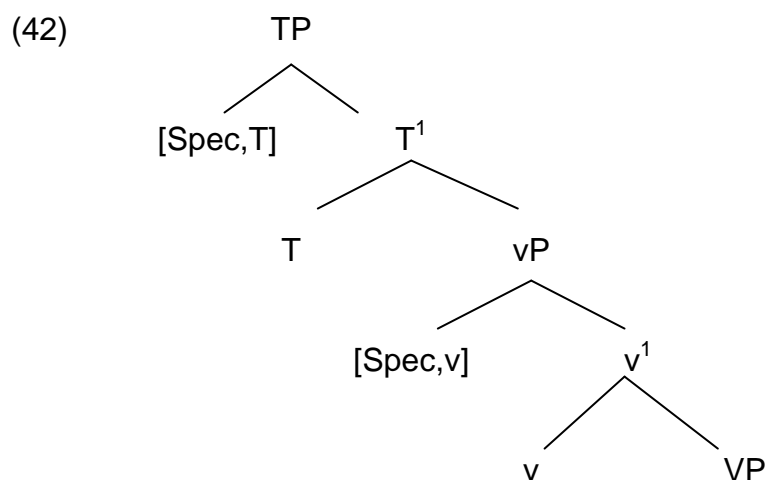
The subject in (b) above clearly is an anaphoric pronoun with the discourse segment before the **ho**-clause as its reference.

### Xitsonga

- (41) a. U-viler-ile hi vito leri. [pro] [a-ku-ya-tik-a]  
 (Agrs-dissatisfied-perf with name this. pro past-expl-go-difficult-fv:  
 he is dissatisfied with this name. It was going to be difficult)
- b. [pro] [ku-nonoh-ile exikolweni]  
 (pro expl-difficult-perf in-school: it is difficult at school)

The reference in (a) above is to the previous discourse segment while in (b) the reference is clearly to a place.

The structures in par. 5.1 above would then place the subject in [Spec, v] position and not in [Spec, T] position as with the expletive with pro in no. (10) and (19) above:



### 5.2 With raising verbs

There are various raising verbs in these languages which may appear with a non-empty pro as above in par. 5.1. These raising verbs have a CP complement. The subject of this CP complement may then be raised to the pro position. See i.a. Mletshe (1995), Nemudzivhadi (1995) and Mandende (1996). The reference of this pro is usually to some previous discourse and it is thus an anaphoric pronoun as in par. 3 above. The following examples from isiXhosa illustrate raising verbs:

- (43) a. [pro<sub>i</sub>] [ku<sub>i</sub>-mele [ukuba [abantwana ba-fund-e  
 (pro expl-ought that children agrs-study-subjt:  
 it is necessary that the children must study)



- b. [Abantwana<sub>i</sub>] [ba<sub>i</sub>-mele [ukuba [pro<sub>i</sub>] [ba<sub>i</sub>-fund-e]  
 (Children agrs-ought that pro agrs-study-subjt:  
 the children ought to study)

In the (a) sentence above the raising verb **mele** appears with a pro coindexed with **ku** followed by a CP with **ukuba** as head. In the (b) sentence the embedded subject **abantwana** is now the subject of the VP with **mele** as head. It is a prerequisite for such verbs to appear with coreferential subjects in the matrix and embedded sentence, i.e. **abantwana** in (b) above. A sentence such as the following should then be disallowed because the subjects of the two clauses are different:

- (44) \*[Abantwana<sub>i</sub>] [ba<sub>i</sub>-mele [ukuba [pro<sub>j</sub>] [si<sub>j</sub>-fund-e]  
 (The children thought that we should study)

Below are some example sentences with raising verbs in these African languages:

### [Expl-V [CP]

- (45) **Xitsonga**  
 [Ku-fanele [ku-va ni mahlo laya gada-ka ku-hlekula ka nomo wo tani]  
 (Expl-ought to-be with eyes rel.det guard-rel. marker to-contempt of mouth  
 of so: There ought to be eyes which guard against contempt of such a mouth)
- (46) **Tshivenda**  
 [Hu-d8o-kona [u-sala [hu-tshi-d8a n(wana)  
 (Expl-fut-def.vb to-remain expl-ptc-come child: There will then remain behind  
 while there is coming a child)
- (47) **IsiXhosa**  
 Olu l-usuku [e-ku-mele [ukuba si-nduluk-e nga-lo]  
 (This cop-day rel.det-expl-ought that we-depart-subjt with-it:  
 This is the day which there ought that we should depart on it)
- [Ku-cac-ile [ukuba a-ka-fun-i uku-ngena nzulu]  
 (Expl-clear-perf that neg-agrs-want-neg to-enter deep:  
 It is clear that he doesn't want to enter deeply)
- [kwa-ku-sele nje [uku-va ukuba wa-fa]  
 (Expl.past-expl-remain.perf just to-hear that agrs past-die:  
 There just remained to hear that he is dead)
- (48) **Sesotho**  
 Phofu e-se e-ntse e-shw-ele. [Ho-se [ho-setse feela [hore a-e-qet-el-e]  
 (Eland agrs-def.vb agrs-def.vb agrs-die-perf. Expl-def.vb expl-remain.perf only  
 that agrs-agro-finish-appl.subjt: The eland is already dead. It already remained  
 only that he should finish it)
- Re-na le thipa e bohale. [Ho-hana-ng [hore re-boele re-dibol-e ka yona hape?  
 (We-be with knife rel.det sharp. Expl-refuse-what that we-again we-cut-subjt  
 with it again: We have a sharp knife. What refuses that we should again cut  
 with it?)

[Ho-thusa-ng [hore ke-nne ke-bola-w-e ke pelo-bohloko?]  
 (Expl-help-what that I-def. vb I-kill-pass-subjt cop sadness:  
 What does it help that I should be killed by sadness?)

[Ho-ne [ho-i-pak-a [hore tjhelete ya tjako mona a-ke-ke a-kgona ho-e-lefa  
 (Expl-past expl-refl-witness that Money of stay here agrs-def.vb agrs-able  
 to-it-pay: There was evidence that the money of the stay here she couldn't  
 pay it)

(49) **IsiZulu**

Uma nga-be loko a-ku-hamb-is-an-i na-we, [a-ku-sho [ukuthi [umshado ngeke  
 wa-ba-khona

(If pot-def.vb that neg-agrs-go-caus-recipr-neg with-you, neg-expl-say that  
 wedding never agrs.cons-cop.vb-present: If that should not suit you, it does  
 not mean that the wedding would never take place)

OSteve noMaqhuzu kw-a-[ku-[s]-obala [ukuthi ba-be-zo-bhek-an-a no-  
 msebenzi omkhulu.

(Steve and-Maqhuzu expl-cons-expl-(s)-in-open that agrs-agrs.ptc-fut-watch-  
 recipr with-work big: Steve and Maqhuzu it is evident that they would watch  
 each other with the big job)

[Ku-fanele [a-kw-azi loku]

(Expl-ought agrs-agro-know this: He ought to know this)

[Kwa-hlaluka [ukuthi i-no-mthi we-ntando le ntombi]

(Expl-cons-clear that agrs-with-medicine of-love this girl: It is clear that this  
 girl has a love-charm)

[Kwa-ku-vama [ukuba ba-lw-e emakhaya]

(Expl.cons-expl-common that agrs-fight-subjt at-home: It is common that  
 they fight at home)

### 5.3 With copulative verbs

See Du Plessis (2010a) for a discussion on the copulative with this non-empty pro  
 with a morpheme which seems to be an expletive because they have the same form.  
 The reference of this empty pro is either to some location or to some previous  
 discourse as in par. 2 and 3 above.

(50) **[Expl-Cop-DP]**

**Sesotho**

Ha-ho [ntho eo a-e-tseb-a-ng]

(Neg-expl thing rel.det agrs-agro-know-fv-rel. marker:

There is nothing that he knows)

Re-tseb-ile hore [ho-tla-ba [lerata]

(We-know-perf that expl-fut-cop.vb noise: We knew that there will be noise)

**Tshivenda**

Naho [hu [musi [ndala i-tshi-dzhena mutani wavho, vho-vha vha-tshi-d&i-lamba u-reng-is-el-a kholomo mun(we muthu  
 (Although expl time hunger agrs-ptc-enter in-home of-them, agrs.perf-def.vb agrs-ptc-refl-refuse to-buy-caus-appl-fv cattle another person:  
 Although it is a time when hunger is entering in their home, he would refuse to sell cattle to another person)

**Xitsonga**

Na swona a-ku-nga-ri [munhu wun'we loyi a-n'wi-tlula  
 (And pro neg-expl-neg-cop.vb person another rel.det agrs-agro-exceed:  
 (And also there was not another person who exceeds him)

**IsiXhosa**

[Ku-[lu-[yolo] uku-ku-buka w-onwab-ile  
 (Expl-copula-happiness to-you-watch you-happy-perf: It is happiness to watch you being happy)

**IsiZulu**

Umsebenzi wa-khe [kw-a-ku-zo-ba w-uku-yi-nyathela imoto  
 (Work of him expl-past-expl-fut-cop-vb copula-to-it-tread car:  
 His work would be to accelerate the car)

**(51) [Expl-Cop-AP]****Sesotho**

A-bon-a hore jwalo [ho [ho-be]]  
 (Agrs-see-fv that now expl n.cl-bad: He saw that now it is bad)

Ba-bile ba-arohan-a feela, [ho-le [ho-tsho ho bona]  
 (Agrs-def.vb agrs-depart-fv only, expl-cop.vb n.cl-dark to them: They further departed while it is dark to them)

**IsiXhosa**

Ku-bi uku-xoka  
 (Expl.n.cl bad to-lie: It is bad to lie)

Nd-a-qond-a mhlophe [a-ku-[ku-hle]  
 (I-past-understand-fv well neg.expl-n.cl-good: I understood very well that it is not good)

**IsiZulu**

[Ku-khulu izwe lakini o-sa-zo-l-enz-el-a  
 (Expl.n.cl-big country of-you rel.det.agrs-still-fut-agro-do-appl-fv:  
 It is big what you still will do for your country)

[Ku-ningi o-ku-yo-ba lu-sizo ku-we  
 (Expl.n.cl-many rel.det-expl-fut-cop.vb copula-help to-you: It is many which there will be a help to you)

(52) **[Expl-Cop-AP<sub>NOM</sub>]****IsiXhosa**

[Ku-nga-mnandi ku-ye uku-ya ku-chitha khona ikhefu  
(Expl-pot-nice to-him to-go to-spend there holiday: It can be nice for him to go and spend his holiday there)

Ku-buhlungu uku-ba y-insila ye-nkosi  
(Expl-painful to-cop.vb copula-servant of-chief: It is painful to be a servant of the chief)

UNomazizi [be-ku-nge-[lula] uku-m-jika entweni  
(Nomazizi def.vb-expl-neg-easy to-agro-turn in-thing: It would not be easy to change Nomazizi into something)

**Northern Sotho**

Go bonolo gore dikgomo di-ka-theoga  
(Expl-easy that cattle agrs-pot-come-down: It is easy that the cattle can come down)

**Sesotho**

Ho bobebe jwang ho-ba monna?  
(Expl easy how to-cop.vb man: How is it easy to be a man?)

(53) **[Expl-Cop-LOC]****IsiXhosa**

Ku-lapho wafundisa khona  
(Expl-there he-past-study there: It is where he studied)

**Northern Sotho**

Go pepenene-ng gore o nnosi tabeng ye  
(Expl-clear-loc that he alone in-issue this: It is clear that he is alone in this issue)

**Tshivenda**

Ha-athu-shuma hun(we arali hu-si henefho  
(Neg.agrs-yet-work other-place if expl-neg.cop there: He has not yet worked at another place if it is not there)

(54) **[Expl-Cop-LOC ABS PRD]****IsiXhosa: kho**

A-ku-kho ndaba zimbi  
(Neg-expl-kho matters others: There are no other matters)

A-ku-ba-nga kho mfundo yo-kwenza oko  
(Neg-expl-cop.vb-neg kho need of-to-do that: There was no need to do that)

**Tshivenda: hone**

Ra-ts-a h-a-vha hu [hone d8uvha l8ila l-o-thom-a  
(We-cons-get-off-fv expl-cons-def.vb expl hone day this agrs-perf-begin-fv:  
We got off and that was the beginning of the day)

(55) **Expl-Cop-NA/LE****IsiXhosa**

Ku-no-kw-enz-ek-a ukuba ba-vel-a eKapa  
 (Expl-with-to-do-neut-fv that they-come-from Cape Town:  
 It may happen that they come from Cape Town)

**Xitsonga**

U-te ku-heta sweswo ivi a-n'wi-mbamba enhlokweni ku-kambisisa loko  
 [ku-nga-ri [ni nchumu endzeni]  
 (Agrs-to-finish that then agrs-agro-grope on-head to-examine that expl-neg-  
 cop.vb with anything inside: (When he finished that, he groped him on the  
 head to examine whether there isn't anything inside)

**Sesotho**

Ho-ne ho-na [le seo a-rata-ng ho-ya-se-etsa  
 (Expl-def.vb expl-cop.vb with rel.det agrs-want-rel.marker to-go-agro-do:  
 There was something which he likes to go and do)

**Tshivenda**

A-hu na [na nga in(we ndila)  
 (Neg-expl with and with other way: There is no other way)

A-hu-tshee na muthu  
 (Neg-expl-still with person: There is no longer a person (he is dead)

**5.4 With passive verbs**

See i.a. Du Plessis (2010b) for a discussion on the passive construction in these languages as well as the references cited in that manuscript. A non-empty pro as in par. 5.1 and 5.2, coindexed with a morpheme with the same form as the expletive may appear in all passive constructions in the subject position. With passive morphology the subject argument has been de-externalized (Du Plessis, Visser (1992:70)). Some sentences with passive verbs with this pro as subject are given below:

(56) **[Ku-V-w] (Intransitive verb)****IsiXhosa**

U-bon-e [se-[ku-si-l-iw-a [ngeemela]]]  
 (He-see-perf already-expl-ptc-fight-pass-fv with-knives:  
 He saw there was already being fought with knives)

**Sesotho**

[Ho-tla-tsoh-w-a] ho-rom-el-w-e batho hohle  
 (Expl-fut-wake-up-pass-fv expl-send-appl-pass-subjt people everywhere:  
 There will be awakened and then there will be sent for people everywhere)

**Xitsonga**

[A-ku-dzah-iw-i]  
 (Neg-expl-smoke-pass-neg: There is not being smoked (no smoking)

**Tshivenda**

[Hu-a-ed8el-w-a]

(Expl-pres-sleep-pass-fv: There is being slept)

**(57) [Ku-V-w] (Transitive verb)****IsiXhosa**

Kw-a-hlek-w-a kakhulu

(Expl-past-laugh-pass-fv much: There was laughed a lot)

**Xitsonga**

Ku-dy-iw-ile ku-vulavur-iw-a

(Expl-eat-pass-perf expl-talk-pass-fv: There was eaten while there is being talked)

**Tshivenda**

Hu-khou-amb-iw-a

(Expl-pres-talk-pass-fv: There is being talked)

**Sesotho**

Ho-sa-tsej-w-a-ng, ke seo a-ne-ng a-se-sebedisa

(Expl.rel.det-neg-know-pass-fv-rel.marker copula rel.det agrs-def.vb-rel.marker agrs-agro-use: What there was not known, is what he was using)

**(58) [Ku-V-w DP] (Transitive verb)****Sesotho**

Ba-botsa hore na ho-tsek-w-a eng

(They-ask that Q expl-quarrel-pass-fv what:

They ask that there are quarreled about what)

**Xitsonga**

Se-ku-thor-iw-ile munhu

(Already-expl-hire-pass-perf person: there was already hired a person)

**IsiXhosa**

Kw-a-ncokol-w-a zimbi

(Expl-past-chat-pass-fv other-things: There was already chatted about other things)

**Tshivenda**

H-o-nang-w-a vhadededzi

(Expl-perf-choose-pass-fv teachers: There were chosen teachers)

**(59) [Ku-V-w DP DP] (Ditransitive verbs)****Xitsonga**

Ku-nyik-iw-a wanuna mali

(Expl-give-pass-fv man Money: there is being given to the man Money)

**Tshivenda**

Hu-n8e-w-a munna tshelede

(Expl-give-pass-fv man Money: There is being given to the man Money)

**Sesotho**

Ho-f-uw-a bana dipompong

(Expl-give-pass-fv children sweets: There are being given to the children sweets)

**IsiXhosa**

Ku-nik-w-a uThemba imali

(Expl-give-pass-fv Themba money: There is being given to Themba money)

Neuter-passive verbs may appear with the same pro as above with passive verbs. See i.a. Du Plessis Visser (1992:70-81.)

**5.5 With temporal constructions with the verb thi/re**

The verb **thi** or **re** may appear with pro together with a morpheme which is the same as the expletive morpheme, except in Sesotho where a morpheme [e-] appears. The function of this [pro expl-thi/re] is to indicate the time in which the CP which follows on this may appear. See i.a. Mabitje (1991) and Kinzela (1993) for a discussion of these verbs. The reference of pro itself is either some place or some previous discourse.

**(60) Tshivenda**

[Ha-ri [nga tshifhinga tsha [musi [vhathu vho-no-switula], ha-vha hu hone vhathada vha-tshi-vhuya hafha hayani

(Expl.cons-ri with time of when people agrs.perf-already-eat.breakfast, expl.cons-def.vb copula there people agrs-ptc-return here at-home:

By the time people already had breakfast, it was then that the fellows were coming back here at home)

[Ha-ri [d8uvha l8i-tshi-vho-t8od8ou-kovhela], a-swika hafha hayani

(Expl.cons-ri sun agrs-ptc-already-almost-set, agrs.cons-arrive here at-home: when the sun was almost ready to set, she arrived here at home)

**(61) Sesotho**

[Ya-re [ha ba-kgutla], pere ya-kgathala [agr.e.cons-re when agrs-return, horse agrs.cons-tired: when they returned, the horse was tired]

[E-re [ha a-qeta ho-ja], a-tsamay-e [agr.e-re when agrs-finish to-eat, agrs-go-subjt: When he finishes to eat, he goes away]

[E-itse [re-bua le yena hantle], a-hana ho-mamela: agr.e-re.perf we-speak with him nicely, agrs.cons-refuse to listen: when we talked to him nicely, he refused to listen]

**(62) Xitsonga**

[Ku-te [loko ku-hundz-e mavhiki mambirhi], munhu lowu a-fika

(Expl-te when expl-pass-perf weeks two, person this agrs-arrive: when there have passed two weeks, this person arrived)

[Ku-te [loko [va-tirh-ile swinene], thicara a-byela vana hikwavo ku-huma

(Expl-te when agrs-work-perf really, teacher agrs-tell children all to go-out: When they have really worked, the teacher told all the children to go out)

(63) **IsiXhosa**

[Ku-the [xa a-thi u-ya-hamba], kwa-fika iintombi ezine  
 (Expl.thi.perf when agrs-thi agrs-pres-go, expl.cons-arrive girls four:  
 when he was on the point to go, there arrived four girls)

[Kwa-thi [kuba wa-[y-e-[si-[siqh-waga], wa-m-qhwaba nge-mpama  
 (Expl.cons-thi because agrs.cons-def.vb-agrs-copula-quick-tempered-person,  
 agrs.cons-agro-hit with-hand: because he was a quick-tempered person, he  
 hit him with the hand)

**5.5 Some complements of ku- in IsiXhosa**

(64) U-za ku-bona ukuba [ku-[nga-[njani] na xa si-v-an-a  
 (You-fut to-see that expl-pot-how Q when we-hear-recipr-fv: You will see that  
 it is how when we are friends)

[Ku-[nini] ndi-ku-xelela into yokuba a-ndi-yi-thand-i le nto  
 (Expl-when I-you-tell thing of-that neg-I-agro-like-neg this thing:  
 It is long that I am telling you that I don't like this thing)

[Ku-[nje-[ngokuba] ndi-ku-xelela  
 (Expl-so-to-be I-you-tell: It is as I am telling you)

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## ABBREVIATIONS

abs.pr	absolute pronoun
adj.det	adjectival determiner
agr	agreement
agro	objectival agreement
agrs	subjectival agreement
AP	adjectival phrase
AP <sub>NOM</sub>	Nominal adjectival phrase
appl	applicative
caus	causative
cl	noun class
cons	consecutive
cop	copula

cop.vb	copulative verb
CP	complementizer phrase
def.vb	deficient verb
DP	determiner phrase
expl	expletive
fut	future tense
fv	final vowel
loc	locative
n.cl	noun class
neg	negative
neut	neuter-passive
pass	passive
perf	perfect tense
pot	potential
pref	prefix
pres	present tense
pro	pronoun
ptc	participle
Q	question
recipr	reciprocal
refl	reflexive
rel.det	relative clause determiner
sc	small clause
spec	specifier
subj	subjunctive
T	tense
v	light verb
vb	verb
VP	verb phrase