

Argument Structure and Locus of Affect in the Maasai External Possession Construction

Author(s): Doris L. Payne

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**Argument structure and locus of affect in the Maasai  
External Possession construction\***

Doris L. Payne

University of Oregon & Summer Institute of Linguistics

The Maasai External Possession (EP) construction can be fully accounted for only if the grammatical object of the verb is understood as simultaneously having two distinct semantic features: Possessor and Affected. Whether these features are both semantic roles bears on the adequacy of those theories of syntax which claim that a nominal in any given sentence must have at least one, but no more than one, semantic (thematic) role. This study in part explores the feature Affected and whether it is a core feature of a semantic role, or whether it is a distinct type of conceptualization intimately tied to the speaker's ability to shift his or her "take" on the Starting and Ending point of an event. The Maasai data also bear on the adequacy of lexically centered views of syntax, succinctly expressed as "syntax is projected from the lexicon," versus more complex verb-plus-construction views of the semantics-syntax interface. The Maasai EP construction adds to the body of data supporting the latter as a more adequate theoretical stance.

**1. The general problem.** The Theta Criterion states that an NP in a sentence must have at least one semantic role, but no more than one.<sup>1</sup> Otherwise, incomprehensibility follows because NPs are not "licensed," as in: \**The elephant the cheese saw the idea the generator* (Napoli 1993:108). In some works the Theta Criterion is articulated with reference just to arguments (Napoli 1993:109), while in others it is stated with reference to all lexical NPs (van Riemsdijk and Williams 1986:131). Under the first view, an argument gets its semantic role from being governed by a verb (cf. Gruber 1976). Under the second view, a nominal may get its semantic role from being governed by a verb, an adposition, or a noun as in a possessed NP (ex. 1). Semantic roles are generally assumed to include at least Agent (AG), Patient (PAT) or Theme (TH), and Goal.<sup>2</sup> Many frameworks add Source, Instrument, Benefactive (BEN), Location, Direction. Baker (1988) also includes Possessor, as in (1c).

- |     |   |           |
|-----|---|-----------|
| (1) | a. <i>The <u>tyrant's</u> destruction of the city</i> | AGENT     |
|     | b. <i>The <u>city's</u> destruction</i>               | PATIENT   |
|     | c. <i><u>John's</u> backpack</i>                      | POSSESSOR |

Though the Theta Criterion has been widely accepted by linguists of many allegiances, it is challenged by data from a wide variety of languages. The following data illustrate five situations where, at first glance, we might be tempted to think that a phrase has two distinct semantic roles in that the phrase at least has "colorings" of two distinct semantic features.

Based on examples like those in (2), Jackendoff (1972:34-35) suggests that a single argument (underlined) can be simultaneously Agent and Theme, Agent and Source, or Agent and Goal. (2a) is especially of interest here in that *Max* both undergoes the action and is somehow responsible for the action.

- |     |    |  |           |
|-----|----|--|-----------|
| (2) | a. | <i>By his own volition, <u>Max</u> rolled down the hill.</i>   | AG/THEME  |
|     | b. | <i><u>Reuben</u> sold Fred some hashish on purpose.</i>        | AG/SOURCE |
|     | c. | <i><u>Fred</u> bought some hashish from Reuben on purpose.</i> | AG/GOAL   |

As a second instance, consider certain "Dative"-shift phenomena. The core argument frame of verbs like *bake* contain only an Agent and a Patient (3a). That they do not include a Benefactive (or a Goal) is shown by the contrast between (3b-c), where *me* can be interpreted as a Benefactive only if the oblique (OBL) marker *for* occurs.

- |     |    |             |              |                |                |
|-----|----|-------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|
| (3) | a. | <i>She</i>  | <i>baked</i> | <i>a cake.</i> |                |
|     |    | AG          |              | PAT            |                |
|     | b. | <i>She</i>  | <i>baked</i> | <i>a cake</i>  | <i>for me.</i> |
|     |    | AG          |              | PAT            | OBL-BEN        |
|     | c. | <i>?She</i> | <i>baked</i> | <i>me.</i>     |                |
|     |    | AG          |              | PAT            |                |

Example (3d) contains the "shifted" variant of (3b). The question arises as to the semantic role of *me* in the shifted form. The *but*-clauses in (3b', d', e) negate an intended Goal. Because some native speakers find (3b') less odd than (3d'), it could be argued that *me* simply counts as a Goal in (3d), and not as a Benefactive (cf. Goldberg 1995:141). If the role is simply Goal, there is no challenge to the Theta Criterion. However, that some sense of the Benefactive role is retained in the shifted form is suggested by the contrast between (3d') and (3e). In (3e) it is almost impossible to add the Goal-negating phrase *but didn't intend to give it to me*, whereas it presents much less of a problem for (3d').

- |     |    |            |              |                  |                |
|-----|----|------------|--------------|------------------|----------------|
| (3) | d. | <i>She</i> | <i>baked</i> | <u><i>me</i></u> | <i>a cake.</i> |
|     |    | AG         |              | BEN/GOAL?        | PAT            |
- b'. *She baked a cake for me, but didn't mean to give it to me.*  
 d'. *?She baked me a cake but didn't mean to give it to me.*  
 e. *\*She wanted to give me a cake but didn't mean to give it to me.*

Whatever one might decide about role assignment for the data in (3), the English shifted sentences are the rough equivalent of what many other languages accomplish with morphological applicatives. Applicative objects are a third case where colorings of two distinct semantic features arise. An applicative overtly

signals that a syntactic object has some semantic role other than Patient, even though the basic frame of the verb in question might normally require a Patient object (cf., Nomatsiguenga [Arawakan], Wise 1971; Kinyarwanda [Bantu], Kimenyi 1978). There is often a greater sense that the applied object is the final locus of effect (Croft 1992), but also very importantly something other than Patient (such as Goal, Benefactive, Instrumental, Locative).

As a fourth instance, consider Comitatives. It seems intuitively clear that the Comitative in (4a) is colored with agentive-ness in that James also rode to the store, while the Comitative in (4b) is colored with patient-ness in that the mashed potatoes are affected by the action of the verb.

- (4) a. *Mary rode her bike to the store with James.*  
 AG PAT COMITATIVE=AG  
 b. *Mary ate her peas with mashed potatoes.*  
 AG PAT COMITATIVE=PAT

As a fifth instance, Klaiman (1988) and Kemmer (1993) characterize reflexives and middles as constructions in which the subject simultaneously has features of both Source (or Agent) and Affected. Klaiman elaborates that “Another middle voice function, referred to by Barber as the ‘plain middle’ [Barber 1975], is that of showing the subject's beneficiary status vis-à-vis the action; i.e., for conveying the subject's dual status, as source (performer) of the action and as affected entity, or locus of the action's effects” (1988:31). The following Greek examples illustrate:

- (5) a. hair-o: moiran  
 take-ACTIVE share  
 'I take a share.'  
 b. hair-oumai moiran  
 take-MIDDLE share  
 'I choose (take for my own benefit) a share.'
- (6) a. politeu-o:  
 be.citizen-ACTIVE  
 'I am a citizen/have civic rights.'  
 b. politeu-omai  
 be.citizen-MIDDLE  
 'I act as a citizen/carry out my civic rights for myself.'

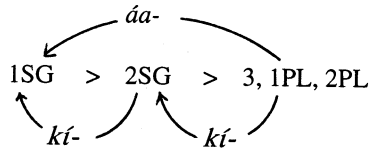
In sum, we find a variety of phrases expressing a combination of semantic features which are commonly viewed as pertaining to two distinct semantic roles.

Whether or not such data falsify the Theta Criterion of course depends on how a given theory determines what semantic roles are: whether their existence depends on the verb or on the construction; whether roles are discrete and distinct versus fuzzy in categoriality; how broad or narrow the inventory of roles is; and whether each of the relevant features in the preceding examples does in fact pertain to a semantic role.

In what follows, I will try to demonstrate two things: First, in the Maasai EP construction grammatical objects necessarily have semantic features of both Possessor and Affected. Some linguists identify Affected as a core feature of Patient/Theme. For others, it is indicative of a distinct type of conceptual status. Second, it is the EP *construction* which assigns both of these features to the grammatical object – not the verb.

**2. A primer of Maasai morphosyntax, and the EP construction.** Maasai has a relatively clear division between basic one-argument and two-argument verbs. The former – verbs like *kvet* 'run' or *ishu* 'be alive' – cannot take inverse person prefixes (cf. 8); the latter can – verbs like *dug* 'cut' or *dol* 'see' (cf. 9). The inverse prefixes are a clear sign of transitive predicates since they signal that the subject is lower on a person-number hierarchy than the object. The Maasai hierarchy for singular persons is: 1 > 2 > 3 (Payne, Hamaya and Jacobs 1994). If second singular is subject with first singular as object, or if third (or any plural) is subject with second singular as object, then the inverse prefix is (*e*)*kí-* (INV). If third (or any plural) is subject with first singular as object, then the inverse prefix is *áa-* (3>1). The arrows go from person-of-subject to person-of-object.<sup>3</sup>

(7) Maasai person-number hierarchy:



- (8) a. \**áa-ishú enk-aí*  
 3>1-be.alive FSG-God.NOM  
 ('God will enliven me / cause me to be alive.')
- b. \**áa-kúét*  
 3>1-run  
 ('He will run me / He will cause me to run.')
- c. \**kí-pír*  
 INV-be.fat  
 ('He will fatten you / will be fat with reference to you.')
- ('You will fatten me / will be fat with reference to me.')

(9) a. áa-dól            en-kínè  
       3>1-see        FSG-goat.NOM  
       'The goat will see me.'

b. kí-duj  
       INV-cut  
       'He will cut you / You will cut me.'

Tone distinguishes two morphological cases in Maasai. By tradition these are referred to as “nominative” and “accusative.” The “nominative” marks grammatical subjects when they follow the verb, and phrases governed by the oblique preposition *tɛ*. All other phrases occur in the “accusative” (Tucker and Mpaayei 1955).

In possessed NPs, the head noun precedes the genitive Possessor. If the Possessor is expressed by a lexical noun, a genitive particle occurs between the two nouns indicating gender and number of both Ns. If the Possessor is expressed by a possessive pronoun, no genitive particle occurs (Tucker and Mpaayei 1955). In the following, the possessed NPs are bracketed, reflecting the fact that the Possessor is internal to the possessed NP.

(10) a. ké-yyetú-tò        [en-kerái            [àì ]  
       3-scream-PROG    FSG-child.NOM    my  
       'My child is screaming.'

b. ké-yyetú-tò        [en-kerái            o            ol-payyán]  
       3-scream-PROG    FSG-child.NOM    MSG.POSR    MSG-man.ACC  
       'The man's child is screaming.'

c. ké-yyetú-tò        [ol-ayyoní            l-o  
       3-scream-PROG    MSG-boy.NOM    MPOSD-M.SG.POSR

ol-payyán]  
       MSG-man.ACC  
       'The man's boy is screaming.'

Maasai has rich morphology for modifying argument structure, including impersonal passive, middle, antipassive, causative, dative and instrumental applicative suffixes. For some verbs, directional affixes also affect argument structure. Ex. (11) illustrates the dative applicative, which adds a Benefactive or a Goal-reached (not just Goal toward which action is directed) to the argument frame. In (11a, c, e), the direct prefix *e-* codes the subject as third and the object

as either third or some plural person. In (11b, d), the inverse *áa-* prefix codes the subject as third person and the object as first singular.

- (11) a. *é-dúŋ en-keráí en-kíné*  
 3>1-cut FSG-child.NOM FSG-goat.ACC  
 'The child will cut the goat.'
- b. *áa-duŋ-okí en-keráí en-kíné*  
 3>1-cut-DAT FSG-child.NOM FSG-goat.ACC  
 'The child will cut the goat for me.'
- c. *é-yá en-keráí en-kíné te nanú*  
 3-carry FSG-child.NOM FSG-goat.ACC OBL 1SG.NOM  
 'The child will carry the goat toward/from/with reference to me.'
- d. *áa-ya-kí en-keráí en-kíné*  
 3>1-carry-DAT FSG-child.NOM FSG-goat.ACC  
 'The child will carry the goat to me / The child will carry the goat for me.'
- e. *é-yá-kí en-keráí ol-payyán en-kíné*  
 3-carry-DAT FSG-child.NOM MSG-man.ACC FSG-goat.ACC  
 'The child will carry the goat (all the way) to the man.'

There are a few ditransitive roots, such as *isho* 'give'. These roots simply take two accusative case phrases for the Goal and Patient, without addition of an applicative.

We now turn to the Maasai EP construction. In this construction, the Possessor need not be expressed internally to the NP which contains the Possessed N. Rather, for first and second person, the Possessor is marked as the object on the verb, as shown by the inverse prefixes (compare 12a with 12b-c). For third person possessors, the Possessor precedes the Possessed N with no genitive particle occurring at all (12d).

- (12) a. *é-yyétú-tò* [en-keráí ài ]  
 3-scream-PROG FSG-child.NOM my  
 'My child is screaming.'
- b. *k-áa-yyetú-tò en-keráí*  
 DSCN-3>1-scream-PROG FSG-child.NOM  
 'My child is screaming.'

- c. kǐ-yyétú-tò                      en-keráí  
 INV-scream-PROG                  FSG-child.NOM  
 'Your child is screaming.'
- d. é-ya    ol-túǵání                      [en-kitók]                      [ol-coní]  
 3-take    MSG-person.NOM    FSG-woman.ACC                  MSG-skin.ACC  
 'The person/man will take the woman's skin.'

There are important dialect differences regarding what kinds of items an external possessor (EP), marked as object on the verb, can be construed as owning (Table 1). Most data in this paper draws are from IIKeekonyokie Maasai.

**Table 1. EP Dialect variation** (Payne 1997)

	<b>External possessor can be construed with:</b>
<b>Restricted, Arusha</b>	body part objects
<b>Intermediate, IUasinkishu</b>	body part objects, intrans unaccusative subjects
<b>Liberal, IIKeekonyokie</b>	liberal range of nouns: objects, trans & intrans subjects

Despite rich morphology for changing argument structure, the EP construction has no verbal marking of any argument-changing operation. Rather, the only index of the construction is the presence of one extra argument in the clause than the verb in question normally allows. In this one situation, basic intransitives behave as transitives, taking inverse prefixes. For example, we have seen in (8a) that *ishu* is intransitive, further supported by the data in (13a-b). But if the object marked on such an otherwise intransitive verb is construable as Possessor, the sentence is acceptable (13c-d). This is possible only if a lexical phrase is available to be interpreted as a possessed item.

- (13) a. é-íshú    en-kínè  
 3-be.alive    FSG-goat.NOM  
 'The goat is alive.'
- b. \* é-íshú            enk-aí                      en-kíné  
 3>1-be.alive    FSG-God.NOM    FSG-goat.ACC  
 ('God will enliven the goat/be alive with reference to the goat.')
- c. áa-ishú            en-kínè  
 3>1-be.alive    FSG-goat.NOM  
 'My goat is/will be alive (and I am benefited thereby).'  
 (\*'The goat enlivens me/is alive with reference to me.')

- d. kǐ-pir            en-kínè  
 INV-be.fat    FSG-goat.NOM  
 'Your goat is/will be fat (and you are benefited thereby).'

Similarly, basic transitives can behave as ditransitives with no argument-changing morphology when the verb-marked object is interpreted as Possessor. Example (14a) shows that *dɔl* 'see' is transitive and not ditransitive, in that it can only take one Agent-Subject and one Patient-Object. The sentence is ungrammatical in the IIUasinkishu dialect which only allows EPs to be construed with body part accusatives. The speaker explained what was wrong with (14a) by saying that it first sounds as if the goat sees 'me', but then 'the woman' too. If, however, a body part like 'hand' is substituted in the otherwise identical sentence, it is completely acceptable with the understanding that it was 'my hand' that the goat saw (14b).

- (14) a. \*áa-dól    en-kínè            en-tító                            (IIUasinkishu dialect)  
 3>1-see    FSG-goat.NOM    FSG-woman.ACC  
 'The goat will see me (Patient)... the woman (Patient).'
- b. áa-dól    en-kínè            enk-áiná  
 3>1-see    FSG-goat.NOM    FSG-hand.ACC  
 'The goat will see my hand (to my detriment or benefit).'

To summarize, one-argument verbs can take two arguments only if the second argument is construable as Possessor (marked in the inverse prefixes in 13c-d), but not if construed as Patient (8a-c). The same is true, *mutatis mutandis*, for basic transitive verbs (14a). Thus, Possessors are unique in that a Possessor can be mapped onto an object when the Patient role cannot. Recognition of the Possessor semantics is essential, as simply trying to reconceptualize the EP object as a Patient gives no way of accounting for the ungrammaticality of (8a-c) as opposed to the grammaticality of (13c-d). The Possessor is also unique compared to Benefactive, Goal and Instrumental roles, in that these can only be expressed as non-oblique arguments of otherwise (in)transitive verbs if there is an overt applicative on the verb. The Maasai EP construction, in contrast, takes no applicative morpheme.<sup>4</sup> What may allow this uniqueness is that a semantic Possessor can be conceptually integrated with another participant (whether Agent or Patient) before the complex participant as a whole is conceptualized as a core participant of the verb.<sup>5</sup>

**3. Affectedness and the EP construction.** In terms of what has been presented so far, one might assume that the role of the EP-object is everywhere just Possessor. But a second semantic issue arises when we observe that the EP construction is used only when an owner is conceptualized as being somehow

affected by the entire state of affairs or action expressed by the predication. That is, the speaker wishes to convey that the ultimate Locus of Affect (Klaiman 1988, Croft 1992) is the owner – and not the owned item or any other participant that might be present.

Thus, in some dialects the EP construction is allowable only with transitive roots and with body part accusatives or items metaphorically construable as extensions of the body (e.g., Arusha; Table 1). This restriction makes pragmatic sense because if part of my body is affected, then I am also necessarily affected. In other dialects, there can be syntactically ambiguous EP sentences with competition between two nouns for which will be interpreted as possessed. In such sentences, what is often grammaticized as an inalienable noun in other languages will be necessarily interpreted as the possessed item (i.e., relationship expressions and particularly body parts; cf. IKeekonyokie Maasai). This preference makes pragmatic sense because if someone or something “close” to me is affected, I may be indirectly affected -- perhaps in an emotional sense or in terms of general well-being. Finally, if a speaker cannot conceive of any way in which a Possessor would be even indirectly affected by the scene depicted in a sentence, then the EP version is rejected. Thus, some “remote” items such as kraal gates can occur as the head N in possessed NPs (ex. 15b), but not as possessed by an EP. Furthermore, there may be some pragmatic preference for physical contact verbs in the EP construction, as opposed to perception or cognition verbs like ‘see’, further underscoring the Affectedness feature.<sup>6</sup>

The following judgments, confirmed by two IKeekonyokie speakers, illustrate. Example (15a) has an item very close to the body as the accusative NP, perhaps as a metaphorical body part.<sup>7</sup> In contrast, (15b) does not have anything even metaphorically construable as a body part, and the sentence is less acceptable. Presumably this is because a kraal gate is not viewed as closely associated with any particular individual.

- (15) a. áa-ból    ɔl-páyyàn    um-beniá  
           3>1-open    MSG-man.NOM    FPL-pockets.ACC  
           ‘The man will open my pockets.’ (\*‘My husband will open the pockets.’)
- b. ?áa-ból    ɔl-páyyàn    en-kishómì  
           3>1-open    MSG-man.NOM    FSG-gate.ACC  
           ?‘My husband will open the gate.’ (\*‘The man will open my gate.’)

Relative to (15a), the ‘my husband’ reading is possible over ‘my pockets’ if the verb is put into the antipassive form (16). In the antipassive, the EP can no longer be construed as owning the pockets, even when an extra accusative NP does occur. (An accusative NP is not generally permissible in a simple antipassive clause.)

- (16) áa-bol-ishó                      ol-páyyàn                      um-beniá  
 3>1-open-ANTIPAS    MSG-man.NOM    FPL.pockets.ACC  
 'My man/husband has the habit of opening people's pockets.'  
 (\*'The man has the habit of opening my pockets.')

In IIKeekonyokie Maasai, and for intransitive subjects in IIUasinkishu Maasai, kin terms and pragmatically alienable items can be construed with the EP when not in competition with a body part.

- (17) a. áa-buak-ítá                      en-keráí  
 3>1-bark-IMPF                      FSG-child.NOM  
 'My child is shouting.'
- b. áa-buak-ítá                      ol-díà  
 3>1-bark-IMPF                      MSG-dog.NOM  
 'My dog is barking.'

Again, a contrast is seen between kin terms and other potentially closely-associated items in that the former will preferably be construed with the EP. A particularly insightful expression of this is quoted below (18).

- (18) áa-pík            en-keráí                      un-klání                      en-karé  
 3>1-put    FSG-child.NOM    FPL-clothes.ACC    FSG-water.ACC  
 'My child will put clothes in the water.'

"Here the ambiguity of whether the child or clothes or both are mine hardly arises. It is obvious that it is the child that is mine. The clothes may be mine but that ownership compared with that of the child is quite distant."  
 (Philip Koitelet)

The extent to which the EP construction is associated with an affect on the Possessor is surely conveyed by the translation that was given to (19c).

- (19) a. ké-purròd            en-keráí                      in-tokitín  
 3-steal                      FSG-child.NOM    FPL-things.ACC  
 'The child will steal things' (with no sense of shame on any parents).
- b. ékí-púrròd            en-keráí                      in-tokitín  
 INV-steal                      FSG-child.NOM    FPL-things.ACC  
 'Your child will steal some goods' (and you as the parent are going to be shamed with a bad name)

- c. áa-purr-isho            en-kerái  
3>1-steal-ANTIPAS FSG-child.NOM

'The problem I have is that my child is a thief, so I have a lot of shame.'

To summarize, the more intimate an item is to the EP marked in the verb, the more likely the EP will be construed as owning *that* item over other possible entities in the sentence. This follows from the basic Affectedness constraint governing felicitous use of this construction: if a “closely possessed” item is involved in an event or situation, whatever happens to that item is more likely to affect the Possessor – as the final Locus of Affect – than if a pragmatically alienable or very “remote” item is involved in the situation. In sum, Affectedness appears to be part of the *meaning* of the Maasai EP construction -- not just something that might be inferred from it.

**4. Affected: A semantic role? Or something else?** We have seen that two semantic features are necessarily involved in the Maasai EP construction: the object marked on the verb is necessarily interpreted as Possessor (not as Patient); and the participant referenced by the verb-marked object is also necessarily interpreted as Affected. If both are semantic roles, then these data falsify the Theta Criterion. One ready way to avoid such a violation would be to claim that in a sentence like (13c) there are really two propositions or clauses: 'The goat is alive, and it [=the goat being alive] affects me.' Each argument then carries only one semantic role in its respective proposition. Subsequently, some sort of clause integration occurs such that there is only one surface clause. However, this solution is necessarily abstract (positing a zero predicate), and seems primarily motivated by trying to save the one-role-per-argument principle.

For some linguists, the EP might simply be said to have the role of Patient/Theme, either on the premise that Affected is the prototypical feature of Patient (cf. discussion in 4.1 below), or on the premise that Possessor is not a bona-fide semantic role because no basic verb ever assigns such a core role. Overall, I believe this view effectively ignores the issue of the Possessor feature.

For strong adherents of the Government Binding tradition, the EP must have the role of Possessor in order to satisfy both the Theta Criterion and the Projection Principle (e.g., Baker 1988); this effectively ignores the Affectedness feature (cf. Shibatani 1994 for some discussion). In this tradition there is little attempt to probe the semantic duality of EPs or of the ontological bases of semantic roles like Patient and Possessor.

Yet other linguists have advocated conceptual-semantic categories of Starting and End Point/Locus of Affect that mediate between the familiar semantic roles and grammatical relations. This type of analysis does justice not only to the EP construction, but also to other types of morphosyntax that allow the speaker to express varying conceptualizations of event boundaries, without ignoring basic lexicalization patterns in verb roots.

From here on, I will simply assume that Possessor (or more accurately, Genitive understood in a semantic sense) is as much of a semantic relation as are other typically-oblique roles like Benefactive, Source, Instrument, and even Goal – which many languages can bring into the core argument frame of derived verb stems via applicative morphology. I will now turn to two proposals bearing on the feature Affected.

**4.1. Prototype views of the Patient semantic role.** Givón (1984:139) assumes thematic roles of Agent, Dative (covering Experiencier, Recipient, and Benefactive), Patient, Locative, Instrument, Associate, and Manner. He takes a prototype approach (cf. Rosch and Mervis 1975), in which particular exemplars can be good or less-good instances of their category. In his view, “total affectedness” is characteristic of the prototype Patient, in that total affectedness is involved in a prototypically transitive action necessarily including a Patient (1984:88, 164). Given that the Maasai EP is necessarily interpreted as affected by the situation described by the sentence, under Givón's view we might suggest that the EP thus approximates to the Patient role.

Also following a Roschean framework, Dowty (1991) argues for two proto(typical)-roles of Agent and Patient. The Patient role is characterized by the features outlined in (20). The more of these features a given argument has, the better instance of a Patient it is; but failure to have one or more features does not, in itself, remove the argument from the Patient category.

- (20)
- a. undergoes change of state
  - b. incremental theme (i.e., the theme can be incrementally affected during the realization of a telic predication)
  - c. causally *affected* by another participant
  - d. stationary relative to movement of another participant
  - (e. does not exist independently of the event, or not at all)

Givon's and Dowty's systems provide partial motivation for why EPs should be coded as objects in Maasai, in that affected participants are Patients, and Patients are preferably coded as objects rather than as subjects. However, they do not provide any motivation for languages like Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Korean which, following the Relational Succession Law (Perlmutter and Postal 1983), can code EPs as subjects in certain clauses.

More to the point, we cannot ignore the fact that *both* Affected and Possessor are crucial semantic features for the EP construction, and prototype analyses do not help us understand why otherwise intransitive verbs can take grammatical objects when the object codes a Possessor-Patient (if that is what we want to call it) -- but not a simple Patient.

The explicitness of Dowty's Patient prototype allows us, in fact, to see that the EP is not a very good Patient at all. To take specific examples like either (14b) or

(16), the EP does not undergo a change of state, it will not be incrementally affected in any clear fashion, it is not causally affected by another participant but rather is affected by the entire situation involving the child, and no Agentive participant is moving with reference to it. Thus, aside from the affectedness parameter, the EP is not a very good Patient at all. If anything, it is perhaps more akin to an "Experiencer" or "dative" (whether metaphorical Goal, Benefactive, or Malefactive) -- and this doubtless explains the tendency in Indo-European languages, at least, to use grammatical dative or indirect object forms to code EPs. But in Maasai there is an explicit dative applicative suffix (11), and this is not employed in the EP construction. Thus, there is fairly straightforward evidence that the semantics involved in Maasai are not that of Benefactive or Goal which are elsewhere signaled by the dative applicative.

**4.2. Locus of Affect as distinct from a semantic role.** Like Gruber and Jackendoff (and presumably Dowty and Givón), Fillmore's classic and influential (1977) article, "The Case for Case Reopened," adopted a view in which verb properties determine what semantic roles the arguments bear. The motivation for Fillmore's system came from the conviction that there was a level of semantic roles different from "deep" grammatical relations; coupled with the desire to work towards a constrained view which avoided ad-hoc proliferation of roles. For Fillmore, the three core thematic roles are Patient (the thing which gets manipulated), Goal (the item on which the manipulated thing acts), and Agent (the manipulator).

In Fillmore's system, Affected is irrelevant to the role of Patient. Indeed, Affectedness and Patient are importantly distinct. Patient is a semantic role which cannot be lost when a verb is used in different syntactic constructions. But shifting conceptions of Affectedness can be conveyed by shifting to a construction in which the Affected item is brought into "perspective" and is expressed as the direct object:

When an AGENT moves a PATIENT against a GOAL, and as a result the GOAL participant *moves* or *changes*, the element in the GOAL [semantic role] has acquired the saliency sufficient for it to be included in the perspective. (1977:76)

For Gruber and many others who followed him, the *item which moves* and *item which changes* are taken to be semantic features identifying Patient/Theme participants. But Fillmore does not see the additional semantic "colorings" of *moving* and *changing* as being either the addition of a second semantic role onto the Goal participant, or as replacing the original Goal. Rather, he links the *movement* and *change* feature directly to the grammatical relation of direct object, as seen in his discussion of the examples in (21).

- (21) a. *I*      *cut*      *my foot*      *on*      *a rock.*  
           AG                    PAT                    GOAL
- b. *I*      *cut*      *my foot*      *with*      *a rock.*  
           AG                    GOAL                    PAT

In the sentence with *with* the foot has the goal relation to the action, and the rock is treated as the thing which acted against the foot; in the sentence with *on* the foot has the patient relation to the action, and the rock is seen as the thing against which the foot moved. *The thing which underwent the change of state -- in each case, the foot -- is expressed uniformly as the direct object, independently of its case role in the underlying action scene.* [Italics mine - DP] (Fillmore 1977:78)

And further:

... the relationship between a change-of-state verb and the entity which undergoes this change in state is reflected, not in the underlying [semantic role] case structure..., but in the grammatical relation DIRECT OBJECT.

Features that Fillmore identifies as affecting which items are likely to be “brought into perspective” (thus coded as objects and subjects) include humanness, movement, definiteness, and totality of affectedness. Fillmore’s list appears to entirely involve semantic features, with no mention of such things as pragmatic “discourse topicality” or cognitive “focus of attention,” though it would not seem too far afield to infer that by “bringing something into perspective” Fillmore did have in mind a certain cognitive conceptualization of the situation.

Like Fillmore, Klaiman (1988) clearly distinguishes the Affected participant from the semantic role of Patient. Klaiman refers to the Locus of Affect as a “conceptual status” which may correspond to either Agent or Patient, depending on the particular basic voice of a clause. (Thus, she also differentiates Locus of Affect from Foley and Van Valin’s (1984) Undergoer and Kemmer’s (1993) Endpoint.<sup>8</sup>) Klaiman’s motivation comes from trying to grasp the semantic typology of middle constructions across Sanskrit, Greek, Korean, and English. In middle constructions generally (cf. 5-6), “the ‘action’ or ‘state’ *affects* the subject of the verb or his interests” (Lyons 1968:363, quoted in Klaiman 1988). As seen in the discussion surrounding examples (5-6), Klaiman observes that in middles, a given semantic role like Agent/Source or Theme/Patient is necessarily also understood to have a distinct semantic feature of Affected (or sometimes of Benefit; see 5b):

... it is clear that diathesis [basic voice] in the IE system marks verbs according to whether their subjects have affected entity conceptual status, irrespective of their *possible concomitant status* as actors, sources, controllers, or catalysts of

action... in classical IE, diathesis signals not the subject's thematic relation to the action, but its conceptual status as affected or nonaffected. [emphasis mine - DP]. (1988:37).

Relative to Maasai, if we are simply concerned to see how the Theta Criterion might still stand, Fillmore and Klaiman's approaches provide one way out, in that one could first say the only bona fide semantic role in the EP construction is that of Possessor. Second, the construction is akin to an applicative (though without the overt morphological marking) in bringing in an otherwise oblique-like role into the (derived) argument frame of the verb just when the Possessor is conceptualized as the primary Locus of Affect.

Croft (1992) suggests there is an idealized cognitive event model which contains a Controller Starting Point, and a Locus of Effect Endpoint. He discusses how causative, passive, antipassive, middle, and applicative morphosyntax express new construals of the primary Starting Point and primary Locus of Effect (or Endpoint), differently from those that are lexicalized as the default Starting and Ending points for given verbs. Whether one wishes to view such morphosyntax as manipulating "voice" versus "event construal" is not my primary concern here. I do suggest, however, that the Maasai EP construction belongs to the domain of morphosyntactic constructions that manipulate basic lexicalizations such that the speaker can express construal of the Possessor as the primary Locus of Effect in the situation described by the sentence -- rather than the Patient, Agent, or some other core argument of the lexical root.

To summarize, Fillmore most closely ties Affected with the grammatical relation of Object. Klaiman specifically avoids such a statement (as do Foley and Van Valin, and Kemmer), clearly keeping the affected participant in the "conceptual" (Klaiman, Kemmer) or "semantic" (Foley and Van Valin) domain. They all, however, separate Affected from the semantic roles of Patient, Recipient, Benefactive, Goal, and Agent. In contrast, Givón and Dowty tie "totally affected" to the prototype of Patient, as a semantic role.

**5. Conclusions and further questions.** The Maasai EP construction is felicitous only when the speaker can conceive of the event or situation as somehow being to the Possessor's Benefit or Detriment. Typically, the Possessor ends up being happy or sad, or somehow being emotionally affected, by the event or situation. That is, the possessor is seen as being the ultimate Locus of Effect of the situation. Similar to the examples in (3d) and (21), when the "oblique" Possessor is brought "into perspective" and coded as the direct object on the verb, it does not lose its Possessor semantic role and take on a Patient role. It retains the same role that it had as a non-core argument of the verb, governed by a noun; but as it is construed as the conceptual Endpoint, it is conceptualized as the primary Locus of Effect.

If one tries to explain syntax starting from a verbal argument-frame centered view, there seems to be no easy way to explain all the semantic features of the EP construction, regardless of whether one takes a prototype view of roles, or a more discrete view. This is first of all because the verbs in the construction do not have Possessor as one of their basic core arguments. A Bakerian approach might suggest incorporation of a zero possessor-applicative into the verb, such that the derived verb could then govern the Possessor and assign the Possessor semantic role. This approach, however, is silent about the Affected feature that is part-and-parcel of the EP construction.

If one starts from a construction centered view, the facts fall out more cleanly (cf. Goldberg 1995). It is the EP *construction* that licenses the Possessor role, a role which is distinct from Patient and from Goal/Benefactive; thus, a distinct Patient may still occur in the clause, as in (14b). As we have seen, the distinctness of the Possessor from Patient is shown by those lexically transitive roots that bring with them a basic Patient and which do not allow a second Patient to be added (cf. 14a). Its distinctness from Goal/Benefactive is shown by the failure of this construction to employ the dative applicative, and also by the distinctive Possessor semantics. Additionally, this construction is chosen precisely to convey an alternative construal of the event or situation lexically coded by the verb root, a construal in which the Possessor is conceived of as the final Locus of Affect.

Finally, these data raise questions for how *constructions* in the sense used here might arise – though I cannot provide any resolution here. If most constructions arise via generalization from the argument frame of paradigm verbs (e.g., the ditransitive CAUSE-RECEIVE <Agent Recipient Patient> arises via generalization of the *give* frame as in *Mary gave John a cake*; Adele Goldberg, p.c.), it is difficult to see how such a source could account for the development of the EP construction, as it is not clear that there is any basic verb with Possessor as part of its core argument frame. The closest verb type that does suggest itself as a possible candidate for the origin of the EP construction is a simple ditransitive verb, like *isho* ‘give,’ which allows a third participant without a dative applicative; as we have seen, affected Possessors are not prototypical Patients by Dowty’s criteria, and many languages do code EPs as the third argument of a ditransitive clause. In this regard, it is probably not irrelevant that all Maasai dialects allow the EP construction with transitive verbs (Table 1), but not all with intransitives.

#### NOTES

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1. The term *Theta Criterion* has been popularized by Government Binding Theory, but the idea is not exclusive to that theory.
2. In this paper I use Theme and Patient interchangeably.
3. Abbreviations are: ACC accusative, AG agent, ANTIPAS antipassive, DAT dative, DSCN discontinuous discourse thread, F feminine, IMPF imperfective, INV inverse, M masculine, NOM nominative, OBL oblique, PAT patient, PL plural, POSD possessed, POSR possessor, PROG progressive, SG singular, TH theme, 3>1 third (or any plural) subject with first singular object. The Maasai orthography used here generally follows the conventions of Tucker and Mpaayei (1955) with the exception that the 'strong' glide phonemes are written *yy* and *ww*, rather than *yi* and *wu*.
4. In this respect Maasai differs from languages which do employ applicatives in EP constructions; cf., Aissen (1987) on Tzotzil.
5. Shibatani (1994) offers an alternative explanation in terms of "relevance." He argues that Affectedness -- either along the lines outlined shortly for inalienable possession, or adversative/benefactive affectedness -- is a feature which makes something highly "relevant" to the scene. If this line of reasoning were to be taken to its logical conclusion, the more affected a participant is, the more easily integratable it should be. This, however, does not happen with the Maasai EP construction. As we will see in Section 4.1, the Maasai EP is not a prototypical Patient in Dowty's sense precisely because it is not totally affected.
6. In one preliminary field experiment speakers were asked to add nouns to sentences beginning with a variety of inflected verbs. The speakers could continue the sentence as either EP or non-EP sentences. The verbs presented included cognition/perception and physical contact meanings. In all cases where the sentence was continued as an EP construction, the verb was one of physical contact and the item added was a body part.
7. Even when on the body, object clothing items were not generally construable with the EP in the IIUasinkishu dialect. "Pockets" was a definite exception.
8. Foley and van Valin (1984) posit macro-(semantic) roles of Actor and Undergoer. Each of these roles may encompass a range of more specific roles -- e.g., Undergoer may code Patient or Goal. Kemmer (1993:39, 50) develops Initiator and Endpoint "participant-structure" concepts, which sound rather like a mix of Givón's prototype notion of semantic roles, and Foley and van Valin's macro-semantic roles (both of which Kemmer cites as antecedents).

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