

Kwakum nominal expressions: constructional exuberance

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(1) 'cunning daughter(s)-in-law'

a. *kɛ̀nɛ́* *fjàl*
kɛ̀nɛ́^L *fjàl*
cunning daughter.in.law

b. *fjàl* *kɛ̀nɛ́*
fjàl *kɛ̀nɛ́^L*
daughter.in.law cunning

c. *kɛ̀nɛ́* *fjál*
kɛ̀nɛ́^L *^H-fjàl*
cunning CON-daughter.in.law

d. *àfjàl* *jìkɛ̀nɛ́*
à-fjàl *jì-^H-kɛ̀nɛ́^L*
2-daughter.in.law PP2-CON-cunning

So what?

Variation in nominal expressions (NEs) = common

- around the world (*some hotspots: Australia, South America*)
- along different parameters (*e.g. word order, case marking*)

BUT: unexpected from typological & Bantu perspective

- some surprising constructions
- high level of variation: word order, connectives, agreement patterns
- much inter- and intra-speaker variation in acceptability

Goals

- Extent of constructional possibilities?
- How is available range of constructions used?
- How can we explain this variation/variability?

And: is Kwakum really exceptional?



Kwakum (A91)

- Dialect cluster
- Narrow Bantu
- 7000 speakers (2013)
- informal and traditional settings
- multilingualism (French, Ewondo, Kako, Gbaya)

(Njantcho Kougang 2018: 2)

Kwakum nominal classification

- fragmentary class system
- 8 morphological classes ~ same number marking
- 5 noun classes ~ agreement
 - on DEM, POSS (obligatory)
 - on CON (optionally); only classes 2 & 7

(3) *kĩ-fòkùl* *tʃ-óó*
7-basket PP7-DEM.ADDR.PROX

- numerals and (some?) qualifiers/quantifiers have own NC (= morphologically nouns)

Kwakum nominal classification

- ‘default’ agreement

(4) *kì-ndàj* *ǰì^H-fókú*
7(PL)-cow PL-CON-other
‘the other cows’

(5) *kì-léwó* *w-àámbo*
7(SG)-baby SG-1SG.POSS
‘my baby’

2. Data & methodology

Data

- following up on leads from Njantcho Kouagang (2018)
- focused fieldtrip Nov 2022 + remote work



Data

1) **elicitation:** systematic overview of all structural possibilities

- many different lexical items
- sg & pl
- different agreement patterns
- mainly 2-word NEs (already massive job...),
but also longer combinations (where possibilities seem endless)

Data

2) tasks & narratives

- (semi-)natural speech, but aiming for many NEs
e.g. picture descriptions, talking about farms
- tasks focusing on information structure in NEs
(Skopeteas et al. 2006; van der Wal 2021)

Information structure & information status:
known to play a role in other lgs

e.g. in Australia (Louagie 2023);

e.g. Ngiti (Central Sudanic, Kutsch Lojenga 1994: 354)

3. Constructional exuberance?

A sneak peek...

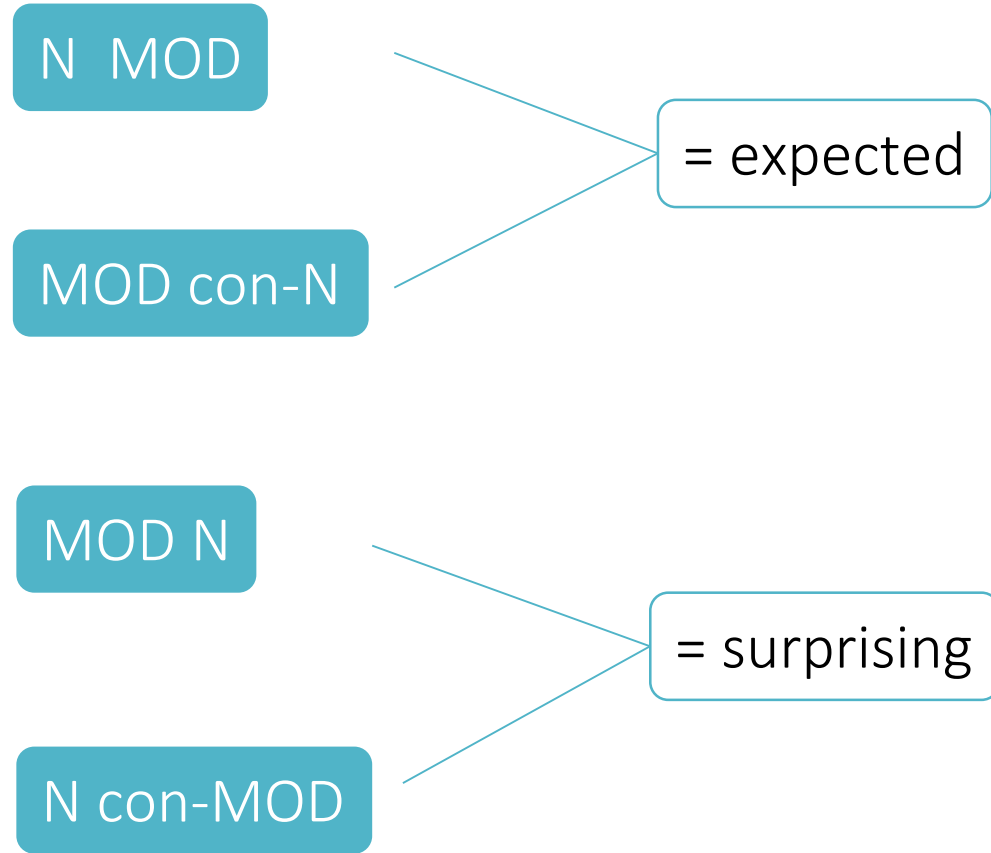
4 basic construction types

(6) *nǐ-Hàà* *dʒéé* *p^hàâ* *fókú*
 1SG-HOD.PST see man other
 'I have seen a certain man.' (Pear Story)

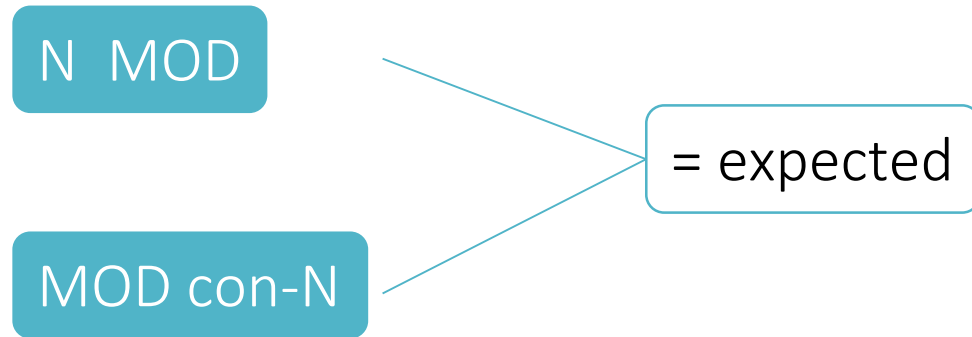
(7) *ní* *ndʒéé* *ndètè* *kéè ...*
^H-nǐ *n-dʒéé^L* *ndètè* *^H-kéè*
 PRS-1SG PRS-see big CON-fish
 'I see a big fish ...' (picture description)

(8) *ndòmbú* *p^hàâ* *dʒì^H* *fénéné^L*
 old man COP here.RDP
 'the old man is here' (Family Problems Task)

(9) *nè* *ntòn* *líṅéṅ* *òtè* *kóó*
nè *ntòn* *^H-lìṅ-éṅ* *ò-tè^H* *kóó^L*
 with spot CON-be.black-PART LOC-there on
 '[They are white] with black spots.' (picture description)



4 basic construction types



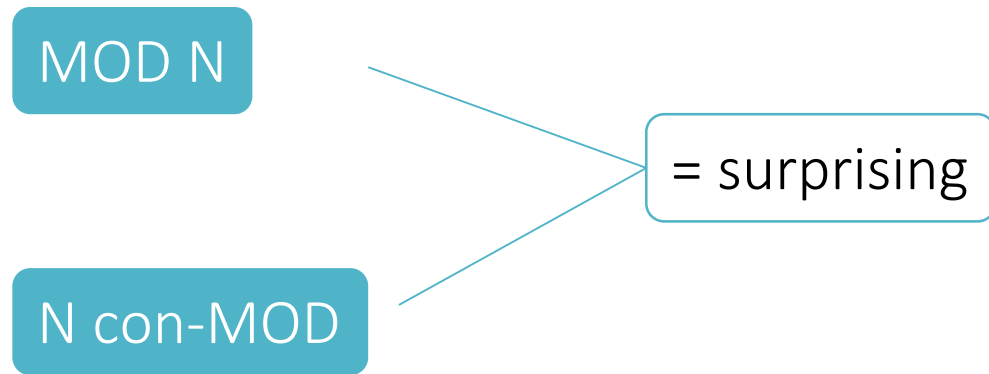
N MOD order in proto-Bantu

‘possessee-like qualifiers’ common in (esp. north-western) Bantu (Van de Velde 2012; cf. also Ross 1998)

(6) kì-délò^L kì-^H-mò-òńó
7-garment PP7-CON-1-child
‘the garment of the child’

(7) ndètè ^H-kÈÈ
big CON-fish
‘the big fish’ (~ *the being big/bigness of the fish*)

4 basic construction types



MOD N:

- occurs in some Bantu languages for DEM, POSS, 'other' (Van de Velde 2022: 910-911)
- but completely unexpected for QUAL (some QUANT)

N con-MOD:

- possessor-like modifiers (*thing of beauty*)
- neutral, not pragmatically marked

→ Which construction type for which modifier?

Simplified version

	N MOD	MOD con-N	MOD N	N con-MOD
DEM	+	-	-	-
POSS	+	-	-	-
NUM	+	+	-	+
QUANT	+	+	+	+
QUAL	+	+	+	+

Full(er) version

	N MOD	MOD con-N	MOD N	N con-MOD
V-áa				
V-àawèH				(not all; in corpus)
V-εη/αη				
mjéndzí 'new'		(less natural)		
ηmkpámákí 'new'				
pàà ^H 'in good condition, better'				(acc 2018)
kì/i-tààtjé 'empty'		(not all)		
béjí 'raw'		(less natural)		(pl not all)
gwój ^L 'empty-handed'		(not all)		
dómjé ^L 'right'				
dzáljé 'left'				
tàmbjè 'in good shape'				(not all)
mbèη 'good-looking'				
mbòòjú 'bad'				
jàkjàkí 'very small'	only pl			
ηgwóòlè 'incapable, good-for-nothing'				
pàálól 'good, better'				
tjitjè 'alone'				(not all)
ndémtú 'cripple'				
jàjè 'simple'				
ηgwááηdzó 'young'	?	?	?	
kì-tjitjil 'stammering'		(not all)		(not all)
kì-dzìimá 'beautiful'	(not; in corpus)			

kì-jèkjèkì 'idiotic'
 kì-tój^L 'good'
 n-dètè 'big, great'
 n-dòmbú 'old, adult'
 n-dètkèlè 'big, elder'
 mbéklè 'talkative'
 jètjim^H 'blind'
 ηdzál^L 'fruitful' (woman)
 tòónó 'carnivorous'
 tjíη^H 'true'
 kùndú 'barren' (woman)
 t^Hándál 'hereditary'
 jómtú 'wise'
 lèm 'lazy'
 jìη^H 'envious'
 kàà^H 'stingy'
 ηjfiη^H 'sly, cunning, crafty'
 likè 'stingy'
 dáá 'false'
 mòmóónó 'little'
 kèjé^L 'cunning'
 pòlól 'yellow'
 jòòtò 'naked'
 pólópólól 'very well, clean, bright'

N MOD	MOD con-N	MOD N	N con-MOD
(not all)		?	
			(not all)
			(acc 2018)
	(not all)		
			(not all)
	(sg not all)		
(unsure)			
only sg		only sg	
(not all)		(not all)	
(not all)			only pl
	(less natural)		
	only in pl		
	(not all)		
		?	
	(less natural)	only sg	only pl
	(acc 2018)	(acc 2018)	
(less natural)			

Qualifiers: a bit messy

Lexically specified

Unstable acceptability

- Inter- and intra-speaker disagreement
- Even more disagreement on form of plural NEs
- Accepted earlier (2014-2018) but not now
- Not accepted in elicitation but used in narrative
- Constructions only accepted in sg or pl

Semantic nuances:

- often: “no meaning difference between constructions”
- but regularly: ‘interference’ of possessive-like meanings; possessive flavour

Possessive flavour

~ CON

N con-MOD

(10) *gwò-òń* *ǰì-^H-lèm*
2-child PP2-CON-lazy
'the lazy children'
or 'the children of the lazy person'

(12) *ì-tóól* *^H-kì-tààtǰé*
5-house CON-7-empty
'an abandoned house' (~ 'a house of emptiness')

(13) *à-p^hàâm* *ǰì-^H-gwój^L*
2-man PP2-CON-empty.handed
'the men who always come back empty-handed'
(~ 'the men of empty-handedness')

MOD con-N

(11) *kì-tój^L* *kǐ-^H-fjàl*
7-good PP2-CON-1.daughter.in.law
'the generous daughter-in-law'
or 'the generosity of the daughter-in-law'

Possessive flavour

BUT: also without CON

(14) *à-ffàl* *ì-tfitfil*
2-daughter.in.law 2-stammering
'the stammering daughters-in-law' or 'the daughters-in-law of the family of stammerers'

(15) *à-ffàl* *ì-tójl*
2-daughter.in.law 2-good
'the good daughters-in-law' or 'the daughters-in-law of joy, that give joy'

Possessive flavour

AND: more likely with plural modifiers

N con-MOD

- (16) *à-fjàl* *jǐ-^H-kèné^L*
2-daughter.in.law PP2-CON-cunning
'the cunning daughters-in-law'
- (17) *à-fjàl* *jǐ-^H-à-kèné^L*
2-daughter.in.law PP2-CON-2-cunning
'the daughters-in-law of the cunning people'
(NOT: the cunning daughters-in-law)

MOD con-N

- (18) *kèné^L* *^H-fjàl*
cunning CON-daughter.in.law
'the cunning daughter-in-law'
- (19) *kèné^L* *jǐ-^H-à-fjàl*
cunning PP2-CON-2- daughter.in.law
'the cunning daughters-in-law'
- (20) *à-kèné^L* *jǐ-^H-à-fjàl*
2-cunning PP2-CON-2- daughter.in.law
'the cunningness of the daughters-in-law'
(NOT: the cunning daughters-in-law')

Adding another layer of complexity...

Nominal classification & number marking: regular features

→ already lead to many possible constructions:

- optional agreement on CON
- optional plural marking (mostly for modifiers)
- default agreement

(21) 'hard chairs'

ì-dzà (jì-)^H-dèt-áàwè^H

ì-dzà (jì-)^H-à-dèt-áàwè^H (not accepted by some speakers)

kì-dzà (kì-)^H-à-dèt-áàwè^H (not accepted by some speakers)

Adding another layer of complexity...

Nominal classification & number marking: stranger things happening...

- agreement on constructions without CON

(22) *à-bùpà jì-tòònò*
2-animal PP2-carnivorous
'carnivore animals'

- agreement with following element?

(23) *mó-mjáa tʃ-óó kì-dzímá*
1-wife PP7-2SG.POSS 7-beautiful
'your beautiful wife'

- mismatches (~ sound similarity?)

(24) *ntúwà m-ín^L né*
1.car PP6-2PL.POSS PP1.DEM
'your car here'

Patterns of analogy
Eroding class system

And another one...

Longer NEs

- many word order possibilities
- also surprising ones
 - going against expectations ~ functional layers (Rijkhoff 2002)

(25) *ì-tóó* *í-né* *kǐ-tààtǝ*
5-house PP2-DEM.SP.PROX 7-empty
'this empty house'

- going against accepted order in 2-word NEs

(26) *mjéndzǐ* *w-áàmbó* *ì-tóó*
new PP1-1SG.POSS 5-house
'my new house'

And another one...

Longer NEs

- with surprising agreement patterns (see also Njantcho & Van de Velde 2019)

(27) 'those two houses'

a. ̀n-tóó ̀báà^H **mí-ké^L**
6-house 2-two PP6-DEM.DIST

b. ̀n-tóo ̀báà^H **jí-ké^L**
6-house 2-two PP2-DEM.DIST

(28) a. kì-bàlá kì-^H-à-bùpà **tj-é^L**
7-two PP7-CON-2-animal PP7-DEM.ADDR.PROX
'those two animals'

b. kì-báà^H kì-^H-̀n-tóó **mí-ké^L**
7-two PP7-CON-6-house PP6-DEM.DIST
'those two houses'

moo: a fifth construction type

= nominaliser-linker

- introduces RCs
- DEM: nominalising function
- creates ordinal numerals
- used with possessive and qualifying constructions

(29) ^H-ḵ-ḡ-kòò tààkò *ʃi^H* *ḵ-tòn* ^H-gwòòm ^H-bèt-éḡ bèt-éḡ bèt-éḡ bèt-éḡ *j-óó^L*
PRS-2SG.S/A-PRS-AUX.REP take FOC 6-point CON-NLNK.PL CON-be.red-PART be.red-PART PP2-DEM.ADDR.PROX
'you just take the red dots there' (map task)

4. Outlook: uses & explanations

Goals

- Extent of constructional possibilities?
- How is available range of constructions used?
- How can we explain this variation/variability?

And: is Kwakum really exceptional?

Uses of constructions?

- Issues with data
- No conditioning factors found so far, except:
 - position of numerals ~ **definiteness** (Njantcho Kouagang 2018)
 - *moo*: **invoking contrast** in qualifying and possessive constructions?

(30) *dèjéé* *mò-ònó* *míí^L* *wéé^L* *tààkò* *lòmbò* *mòò* *H-nèn-éη*
 no 1-child AUX.ALREADY NEG take bottle NLNK.SG CON-be.big-PART

H-à-míí^L *tààkò* *ji^H* *láá^L* *mòò* *H-nèn-éη*
 PRS-3SG.S/A-AUX.ALREADY take FOC glass NLNK.SG CON-be.big-PART

‘No, the child isn’t taking the big bottle, she’s taking the big glass.’



(Skopeteas et al. 2006)

Why this exuberance?

- **Word class status**

At least some qualifiers = nouns rather than adjectives → may explain flexibility

- **Historical explanations**

- Inheritance (N MOD)

- Borrowing of constructional pattern (MOD con-N) (cf. Van de Velde 2012; < Ubangi)

- Innovations?

→ MOD N also found in other A90 languages Kako (Ernst 1992) and Polri (Wéga 2016)

- **'AMAR' mechanism?** (Van de Velde 2022)

= nominalisation and reintegration of modifiers

To explain (some of the) word order patterns in longer NEs

5. Conclusion

Summary

Nominal expressions in Kwakum are wild!

- 4 construction types + *moo*
 - certain amount of chaos:
 - lexical items differ widely in which cxns they occur in
 - much variation in class agreement and number marking
 - speaker variation
 - mysteries: e.g. cxn allowed in sg but not pl
- Trying to get some grip
- Is the situation in Kwakum really so exceptional?

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THANK YOU!

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Kwakum features

Tone

- 7 realisations
- 3-way underlying opposition (H, L, zero)
- Rightward spreading
- Floating tones

(2) jà^H nè nì → jà **né** nì

‘they and I’

Methodology

- Manually extracted all multi-word NEs from 'corpus' (n = 564)
- Annotations include
 - Categories, order & number of elements
 - Referential status
 - Information structure

Data

	A	B	C	E	F	H	I	K	L
		MOD CON-N	MOD CON-N (PL)	MOD N	MOD N (PL)	N CON-MOD	N CON-MOD (PL)	N MOD	N MOD (PL)
10	ki/i-tààtjé 'empty'	ki-tààtjé ki-H-itóól [7-empty PP7-CON-5-house] (N18: 145)	(N18: 145) / i-tààtjé ji-H-i-tóól [2-empty PP2-CON-5-house] -- check recording à-bé ⁺ ji H-bùpà (though later rejected) à-bé ⁺ ji ji-H-bùpà (béfi H-à-bùpà: "on le dit, mais pas vrai Kwakum"; accepted by some speakers)	ki-tààtjé i-tóól [7-empty 5-house]		i-tóól H-ki-tààtjé [5-house CON-7-empty] (N18: 155)	h-tóó H-ki-tààtjé [6-house CON-7-empty] (*h-tóó H-i-tààtjé)	i-tóól ki-tààtjé [5-house 7-empty]	h-tóó ki-tààtjé [6-house 7-empty]
11	bé ⁺ ji 'raw'	bé ⁺ ji H-bùpà [raw CON-meat]		bé.↓.ji bùpà [raw meat]			à-bùpà ji-H-bé.↓.ji [2-meat PP2-CON-raw] bùpà H-à-bé.↓.ji [meat CON-2-raw]	bùpà bé ⁺ ji [meat raw]	à-bùpà bé ⁺ ji (elicitation) (*à-bùpà à-bé ⁺ ji)
12	gwó ⁺ jl 'empty-handed; bredouille'	gwó ⁺ jl H-p ⁺ ààm [empty.handed CON-man] gwó ⁺ jl H-mòónò [empty.handed CON-child] (elicitation)	gwó ⁺ jl H-gwògwòónò gwó ⁺ jl H-gwòónò [empty.handed CON-2.child] à-gwó ⁺ jl ji-H-gwòónò [2-empty.handed PP2-CON-2.child]	gwó ⁺ jl p ⁺ ààm [empty.handed man]		p ⁺ ààm gwó ⁺ jl [man empty.handed]	gwògwòónò gwó ⁺ / m-mbò (m-)gwó ⁺ / à-p ⁺ ààm ji-H-gwó ⁺ jl [2-man PP2-CON-empty.handed] à-p ⁺ ààm ji-H-à-gwó ⁺ jl [2-man PP2-CON-2-empty.handed] (* p ⁺ ààm H-à-gwó ⁺ jl [man CON-2-empty.handed])		à-p ⁺ ààm gwó ⁺ jl [2-man em
14	dó ⁺ mjé 'right'	dó.↓.mjé H-kòIH [right CON-leg]		dó.↓.mjé kòIH [right leg]		mbò H-dó.↓.mjé [hand CON-right]	m-mbò (m-)H-dóm ⁺ je	/	/
15	dɔ́ɔ́lɛ 'left'	dɔ́ɔ́lɛ H-kòIH [left CON-leg]		dɔ́ɔ́lɛ kòIH [left leg]		mbò H-dɔ́ɔ́lɛ [hand CON-left]		/	/
16	tàmbjé 'in good shape' (more often with people)	tàmbjé H-bàà [good CON-1.plantain]		tàmbjé bàà [good 1.plantain]		bàà H-tàmbjé [1.plantain CON-good] (N18: 155) / bèki H-tàmbjé [fete CON-good] (elicitation)	à-kòndé yi-H-tàmbyé [2.plantain PP2-CON-in.good.condition] (N&V19: 402) / kòndé H-à-tàmbyé [plantain CON-2-in.good.condition] (not accepted by some)	kòndé tàmbyé [1.plantain in.good.condition] (N&V19: 402)	in.good.condition] kòndé à-tàmbyé [1.plantain in.good.condition] (not acc (* à-kòndé à-tàmbyé [2-pl in.good.condition])
17	mbèn 'good-looking'	mbèn H-kòndù [good-looking CON-young.girl]	(first response) / à-mbèn ji-H-kòndù [2-good-looking PP2-CON-girl] (first response) / à-mbèn ji-H-à-kòndù [2-good-looking PP2-CON-2-girl] (rare but possible) (elicitation)	mbèn kòndù [good-looking young.girl]		kòndù H-mbèn [young.girl CON-good-looking]		kòndù mbèn [young.girl good-looking]	
18	mbòjù 'bad' (unsure if ded or non-ded; not adv according to NS.)	mbòjù H-kéé [mauvais CON-1.douleur.INTON]	à-mbòjù H-i-kéé [2-bad pain] (no pl form of kéé)	mbòjù (i-)kéé [mauvais 1.douleur.INTON] (T2)		kéé H-mbòjù [douleur CON-mauvais]		kéé mbòjù [douleur mauvais]	
19	nàkɔ̀nàki 'very small'	nàkɔ̀nàki H-bùpà	à-nàkɔ̀nàki ji-H-bùpà à-nàkɔ̀nàki ji-H-à-bùpà nàkɔ̀nàki ji-H-bùpà nàkɔ̀nàki ji-H-à-bùpà (*à-nàkɔ̀nàki H-bùpà "les petits morceaux des animaux")	nàkɔ̀nàki bùpà	nàkɔ̀nàki à-bùpà à-nàkɔ̀nàki à-bùpà à-nàkɔ̀nàki bùpà	* bùpà H- nàkɔ̀nàki "l'animal de la petite espèce"	* à-bùpà ji-H-nàkɔ̀nàki, * à-bùpà ji-H-à-nàkɔ̀nàki, * bùpà ji-H-à-nàkɔ̀nàki (all have genitive meaning; allowed by some?? To discuss with E) *bùpà H-à-nàkɔ̀nàki (never allowed)	à-bùpà nàkɔ̀nàki bùpà à-nàkɔ̀nàki (but very u speaker "l'animal de la pe à-bùpà à-nàkɔ̀nàki (not very speaker same as above)	

And another one...

Longer NEs

- many word order possibilities
- also surprising ones
 - going against expectations ~ functional layers (Rijkhoff 2002)

(25) *ì-tóó* *í-né* *kì-tààtjè*
5-house PP2-DEM.SP.PROX 7-empty
'this empty house'

- going against accepted order in 2-word NEs

(26) *mjéndzì* *w-áàmbó* *ì-tóó*
new PP1-1SG.POSS 5-house
'my new house'

~ strong tendency in Bantu languages:
possessive preceding any other postnominal modifiers
(Van de Velde 2019)

And another one...

Longer NEs

- with surprising agreement patterns (see also Njantcho & Van de Velde 2019)

(27) ‘those two houses’

a. ̀n-tóó ì-báà^H **mí-ké^L**
6-house 2-two PP6-DEM.DIST

b. ̀n-tóó ̀ì-báà^H **jí-ké^L**
6-house 2-two PP2-DEM.DIST

c. * n-tóó ì-báà^H **mí-né^L**

(28) a. kì-bàlá kì-^H-à-bùpà **tj-é^L**
7-two PP7-CON-2-animal PP7-DEM.ADDR.PROX
‘those two animals’

b. kì-báà^H kì-^H-̀n-tóó **mí-ké^L**
7-two PP7-CON-6-house PP6-DEM.DIST
‘those two houses’

c. * kìbàlá kìntóó **tjíké^L**