Silozi Possessives: A Description and Analysis

Claire Kletchka

The University at Albany community has made this article openly available. Please share how this access benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.library.albany.edu/honorscollege_anthro

Part of the Anthropology Commons

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 International License.

Rights Statement

Copyright License
Silozi Possessives: A Description and Analysis

An honors thesis presented to the
Department of Anthropology,
University at Albany, State University of New York,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for graduation with Honors in Linguistics
and
graduation from The Honors College

Claire Kletchka
Research Mentor and Advisor: Lee Bickmore, Ph.D.

May 2023
Abstract

This thesis investigates the behaviors of the possessive in the language of Silozi. Possession words in Silozi hold layers of complexity that are not seen in the English language. Common possessive words such as "my," are influenced by an element known as noun class agreement. Silozi has a total of fourteen unique noun classes which results in multiple distinct ways to form possessive words like "ours" and "theirs." This paper presents a discussion and analysis of data collected from a language consultant fluent in the languages of English and Silozi. A strong focus is placed on the structure and behaviors of the possessive and its interactions with other lexical elements, particularly adjectives and demonstratives. Also examined is how the structure of the possessive changes when introduced to more complex syntactical environments. Since Silozi is an undercommented Bantu language, the findings presented in this thesis provides a valuable contribution to the study of possessives in Silozi while also shedding insight into some of the complex linguistic structures of the language.
Acknowledgments

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all those who have been a part of helping me through the process of completing senior honors thesis. First and foremost, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to my research mentor and advisor, Dr. Lee Bickmore, for his valuable guidance, feedback, and discussions regarding my elicitation planning and analysis. His continuous support and expertise have been instrumental in the successful completion of my research.

I would also like to extend my thanks to my family and friends for their unwavering support and encouragement throughout my research. Their constant motivation and belief in me have been a driving force through the many challenges I faced.

Lastly, I owe a very sincere and special thanks to Mr. Mubiana Liswaniso, my Language Consultant, who has been an exceptional resource throughout my research. I am very grateful for the six months we spent working together, for his flexibility in our elicitation sessions, and for his patience in sharing his language. His invaluable insights and guidance have been crucial to the success of my research project, and I am forever grateful for his willingness to share with me the richness of Silozi.
List of Tables

Table 1: Silozi Vowel Inventory ................................................................. 4
Table 2: Silozi Consonant Inventory ......................................................... 4
Table 3: Noun Class Prefixes ................................................................. 6
Table 4: Pronominal Roots ..................................................................... 10
Table 5: Third Person Singular and Plural Independent Pronouns .......... 10
Table 6: 2nd Person Independent Pronouns ........................................... 12
Table 7: Associative Prefix Comparison Chart ..................................... 14
Table 8: Possessive Root Chart .............................................................. 17
Table 9: Numbers One Through Five .................................................... 22
Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. ii
Acknowledgments ................................................................................................................ iii
List of Tables ......................................................................................................................... iv
1.1 Data Collection ............................................................................................................... 1
1.2 This Paper ....................................................................................................................... 3
2.0 Phonemes and Orthography .......................................................................................... 3
   TABLE 1: SILOZI VOWEL INVENTORY ........................................................................... 4
   TABLE 2: SILOZI CONSONANT INVENTORY ................................................................. 4
3.0 Noun Classes ................................................................................................................ 5
   TABLE 3: NOUN CLASS PREFIXES ............................................................................... 6
4.0 Pronouns ........................................................................................................................ 9
   TABLE 4: PRONOMINAL ROOTS .................................................................................. 10
   TABLE 5: THIRD PERSON SINGULAR AND PLURAL INDEPENDENT PRONOUNS .......... 10
4.1 Different Forms of the 2nd Person Pronouns .............................................................. 11
   TABLE 6: 2ND PERSON INDEPENDENT PRONOUNS .................................................. 12
4.2 Pro Dropping ............................................................................................................... 12
5.0 The Associative .......................................................................................................... 14
   TABLE 7: ASSOCIATIVE PREFIX COMPARISON CHART ......................................... 14
5.1 Phonological Change Within Prefixes ........................................................................ 15
5.2 Possessive Roots ......................................................................................................... 16
   TABLE 8: POSSESSIVE ROOT CHART ....................................................................... 17
6.0 Eliciting ‘It’ .................................................................................................................. 18
7.0 Simple Possession ....................................................................................................... 20
8.0 Numerals ...................................................................................................................... 22
   TABLE 9: NUMBERS ONE THROUGH FIVE .................................................................. 22
9.0 Adjectives .................................................................................................................... 24
10.0 Combining Demonstratives, Numerals, Adjectives and Possessives ....................... 26
11.0 Double Possession ...................................................................................................... 27
11.1 Possession of More Than One Noun ......................................................................... 29
12.0 Special Circumstances .............................................................................................. 30
13.0 Concluding Remarks ................................................................................................. 31
References ......................................................................................................................... 32
Appendix .................................................................................................................................33
1.0 Introduction

Silozi is one of many Bantu languages belonging to the Niger-Congo family. It is spoken by the Lozi people in several countries including Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and Botswana. It is classified within the Sotho-Tswana branch of Zone S or S.30 (Eberhard, 2022). Sometimes referred to as Lozi, this language developed as a blending of two other languages known as Luyana and Kololo. According to Ethnologue, there are currently over 734,000 Silozi speakers, with 612,000 of them residing in the country of Zambia, where the language is primarily spoken. Silozi speakers can also be found in the Southern province of the Livingstone area and in the Western province of Barotseland (Eberhard, 2022). Although it may not be as broadly recognized as other Bantu languages like Swahili, Silozi, along with English and several other Bantu languages, is recognized as an official language of Zambia.

1.1 Data Collection

The data included in this paper was compiled over the time span of October 2022 through April 2023 at the State University of New York at Albany. This data collection was initially organized as a part of the Field Methods in Anthropological Linguistics course taught by Professor Lee Bickmore. Although the field methods course concluded in December of 2022, a strong interest in the language of Silozi led me to continue conducting research into 2023, to complete my thesis on the Silozi possessive.

The majority of data that is presented in this paper was gathered during individual elicitation sessions held over the phone with the use of the WhatsApp application. Data collection had originally begun with in-person classroom sessions with language consultant Carol Liswaniso. However, in September 2022, Carol encountered an unfortunate scheduling conflict and had to step down from her position. Carol’s uncle, Mr. Mubiana Liswaniso, was able to fill the position
and become the new language consultant for the remainder of the fall 2022 semester. Mr. Mubiana Liswaniso continued to serve as my sole language consultant for the remainder of my research. Although the data that was collected from Carol in those initial months are not included in this paper, I would still like to thank her for her time and wonderful insight into the language.

Although this paper is primarily an analysis of my own gathered data, there are times where I may cite data from other authors who have done extensive research on the language of Silozi. I include references to their work only at times where I feel that their data can supplement or fill gaps from my own research. The first source I reference is the book, “Introduction to Silozi Grammar” by author M. W Mwisiya. I also quote from another Silozi grammar which is “Elementary Grammar of the Lozi: With Graduated Exercises” by A Jalla. A few comparisons to other Bantu languages such as Liko are also included throughout this paper. I use Wit G.’s “Liko Phonology and Grammar” book for all references regarding Liko.

To avoid any discrepancies, all data examples of mine included in this paper were elicited from Mr. Mubiana Liswaniso. Any data collected with Carol deemed useful for this paper was re-elicited in order to keep things consistent with the mental lexicon of one language consultant. All other data examples that are referenced from another author’s work will be clearly labeled as such.

I began working with Mr. Liswaniso midway through October 2022. He is seventy-two years old and was born and raised in Mongu Zambia, where he still resides. Working with a speaker who was in a different country at the time of data collection was a great learning experience. I would like to express my gratitude to Mr. Liswaniso for stepping in to help the Field Methods class and for continuing to work with me while I conducted further research on Silozi. I sincerely thank him for his patience during this process and for sharing the richness of his language.
1.2 This Paper

This paper will consist of discussions and analysis regarding data from the language of Silozi. In specific, I will offer an analysis, based on my own observations, of the structure and behaviors of the possessive. Conclusions will be drawn about the basic structure of the possessive as well as how this structure changes when the environment becomes more complex. A focus will be placed on how the possessive interacts with other lexical elements, specifically that of adjectives and demonstratives. I will begin my analysis by discussing the possessive’s relationship to noun class and then use these foundations to gradually begin to explore how the possessive functions when placed in varying contexts. Sections of this paper will also incorporate discussion and comparisons of the Silozi possessive to the behaviors of the possessive in other Bantu languages, such as Liko and Lingala.

2.0 Phonemes and Orthography

A practical orthography was chosen to be used for all the written Silozi examples in this paper. I would like to acknowledge that there were some instances when working with Mr. Liswaniso, where the decision was made to slightly stray from the practical orthography if it meant that the written example would better align with Mr. Liswaniso’s pronunciation or his insisted spelling of a word. This decision was made only a handful of times and exclusively when it would not have any effect on other parts of the analysis. The following charts display what I have found to be the total vowel and consonant inventory of the language. All the practical non-IPA adjustments used in this paper are listed in bullets below the consonant chart with their IPA equivalents provided in brackets beside them.
Table 1: Silozi Vowel Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Front</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>Back</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>i</td>
<td></td>
<td>u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid</td>
<td>e</td>
<td></td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
<td>a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Silozi Consonant Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Labial</th>
<th>Labiodental</th>
<th>Alveolar</th>
<th>Post Alveolar</th>
<th>Retroflex</th>
<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
<th>Glottal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stop</td>
<td>p, b</td>
<td>t, d</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>k, g</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasal</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>j</td>
<td>η</td>
<td>η</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affricate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>tʃ, dʒ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fricative</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>s, z</td>
<td>f</td>
<td></td>
<td>h</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>j</td>
<td>w</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lateral</td>
<td></td>
<td>l</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The practical orthography used throughout this paper generally follows the IPA, but with the following exceptions.
• [β] is written as <b> in all environments except when proceeded by <m>.
• <c> is written for [tʃ] and <sh> is used to represent [ʃ].
• <j> is written as []
• <y> is written as [j]
• The velar nasal [ŋ], is written as <n> before <g> and <k> but before a vowel, it is written in Lozi as <ñ>.

3.0 Noun Classes

A noun class can be defined as a grammatical system used to classify nouns. Bantu languages are especially known for the categorization of their nouns into classes and Silozi is no exception. Noun class is marked most commonly by a prefix. However, some languages will denote noun class with the use of suffixes. In Silozi, I have encountered a total of fourteen noun classes, each of which is identified with a unique prefix. Every class has its own verbal subject and object marker as well as individual agreement markers for the possessive, adjectives, and several other lexical categories. It is frequently seen that the noun class markers will appear in pairs of the singular and plural forms of nouns, with the singular often being represented by an odd class number and the plural falling into classes which are even numbers. For instance, some common pairs include 1/2, 3/4, 5/6, 7/8, 9/10, 9/6, and 12/13. Other pair combinations certainly exist such as 10/6 or 11/6 but may not be as frequent.

It is important to note that noun classes are generally not formed on the basics of semantics. It is true that multiple words of one semantic category may fall into a single noun class, nonetheless, that does not signify that the class in question exclusively contains words from that one semantic category. With that said, I did find a slight exception to this when compiling and
reviewing my Silozi data. I generally found that classes 1 and 2 seem to almost purely include nouns that were related to people and professions. For instance, such nouns like mother, father, child, doctor, teachers, wife, husband, friend etc.… all fall into classes 1 and 2. This is not to say that nouns without a semantic connection to people cannot be included in Classes 1 and 2. I am confident that there may be at least a few exceptions in the language that I did not discover within the collection of my own data.

As mentioned previously, noun class can be identified by the presence of a specific prefix. The chart included below displays a complete list of all noun class prefix markers for Silozi as found during my research.

**Table 3: Noun Class Prefixes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun Class</th>
<th>Prefix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>mu-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>ba-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>mu-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>mi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>li-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>ma-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>si-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>li-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>ø</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>li-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>lu-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>ka-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It apparent from the table above that some noun classes have identical prefixes. For instance, the class prefix marker for class one and class three is *mu*-. This may cause question as to why class one and class three are deemed separate classes if they are marked the same. The justification for the distinction between classes like one and three is made much more apparent when one examines the class-based prefix markers for lexical elements like adjectives or demonstratives. One finds that the prefix markers for these elements for classes one and three greatly differ which is only further proof for the need for different classes.

Below in example (1), I present what I have determined to be the basic morphological structure of Silozi nouns. This structure illustrates the use and position of noun class prefixes and will be helpful when I explore the possessive’s interactions with nouns and other parts of speech later in this paper.

(1) Noun Class Prefix - Root

The following are examples of Silozi nouns from each class to demonstrate the structure provided above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun Class</th>
<th>Prefix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>tu-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>bu-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2) a. mü-lüti  
C1-teacher  
‘teacher’  

bà-lüti  
C2-teacher  
‘teachers’  

mü-lálà  
C3-neck  
‘neck’
Some noun classes have prefixes that when given to nouns of other classes, will alter their meaning. For instance, classes 12 and 13 are known as being the diminutive classes. When some nouns take on these class 12 and 13 prefixes of *ka-* and *tw-* they are then given the meaning of smallness. Below are some examples demonstrating this process.

(3) a. mw-ànà → kà-ànà
   C1-child   C12-child
   ‘child’    ‘small child’
This is addition of the diminutive prefix is just one of the ways that Silozi allows one to portray the feature of smallness onto nouns. Smallness can also be created in a more intuitive way with Silozi’s adjective root for small, -nìyàni. In my data, I also came across an instance where one can combine both the diminutive prefix and the adjective root when describing something that’s very small. For instance, one can say “small dogs” as lìnjà zènìyàni or they can add the noun class 13 prefix to create a more specific word like equivalent to ‘puppies’ in English. In this case, another prefix is also seen to have been added to the adject stem for small. This prefix surfaces as tòtò which is not one of the noun class agreement markers. I am unsure as to what kind of marker it is, and so I chose to gloss it with the meaning of “very” which is what best aligns with the English translation given by Mr. Liswaniso. I have illustrated this in the example below.

(4) tù-njà tòtò-nìyàni
C13-dog very-small
‘Puppies’

4.0 Pronouns

In Silozi there are four types of pronouns: absolute pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, quantitative pronouns, and qualificative pronouns. Qualificative pronouns can be further separated.
into adjectival qualificative pronouns, possessive qualificative pronouns, relative qualificative pronouns, and enumerative qualificative pronouns (Mwisiya, 1977). In this paper, I only discuss the absolute and some qualitative pronouns. Below I have provided a chart displaying Silozi’s first- and second-person absolute pronouns.

**Table 4: Pronominal Roots**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Person</td>
<td>-nà</td>
<td>-lú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Person</td>
<td>-kù</td>
<td>-mì</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The noun class system in Silozi presents us with several forms for the third person singular and plural pronouns. In my data collection I had experienced some difficulty eliciting these specific pronouns. For the completeness of this section, I would still like to provide a list of third person pronouns that I’ve taken from (Mwisiya, 1977).

**Table 5: Third Person Singular and Plural Independent Pronouns**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun Class</th>
<th>Third Person Pronouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>yena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>bona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>ona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>yona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>lona</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1 Different Forms of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Person Pronouns

There are several languages that have a variety of forms for the possessive word \textit{your}. When choosing the correct form for the use of \textit{your} in Silozi, a few factors come into play. The first factor that one must know is if they are referring to a singular person or to many. The second and very important factor that must be considered is the formality of the situation. One must know if respect needs to be placed on \textit{your}. In cases where one is talking to an equal or to a child, no respect is needed. However, in situations when talking or referring to someone that holds a position of power, respect must be used.

Overall, given these formality and plurality factors, Silozi has two main forms of the word \textit{your}. Below I have included a chart that demonstrates the contexts in which each form should be used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun Class</th>
<th>Third Person Pronouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>ona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>ona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>zona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>zona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>zona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>lona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>lona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>kona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>bona</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5 was created using data provided in (Mwisiya, 1977).
Table 6: 2nd Person Independent Pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>háò</td>
<td>mènà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>mènà</td>
<td>mènà</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some Silozi examples of the use of the word *your* in different situations are included below to help with further clarification.

(5) ndù y-à-háò  
    house C9-ASO-your  
    ‘Your house’

(6) ndù y-à-mènà  
    house C9-ASO-your.resp  
    ‘Your house’

(7) bà-lùtì b-à-mènà  
    C2-teachers C2-ASO-your.pl  
    ‘Your teachers’

(8) bò-mù-lùtì b-à-mènà  
    resp-C1-teacher C2-ASO-your.resp  
    ‘Your teachers’

4.2 Pro Dropping

Like many languages across the world, Silozi is an example of a pro-drop language. This means that a speaker can omit a subject in a sentence because it can be inferred from another element. This is not true for English speakers as we would need to keep the subject pronoun in a sentence like *I went to the store today*. It would be very ungrammatical to omit the ‘I’ and just say *Went to the store today*. In Silozi, one can choose to not include a subject noun phrase in some Silozi sentences as the subject is already marked somewhere else. Below are a few examples in Silozi where one can drop the subject due to the remaining agreement marker.
Pronoun dropping is common occurrence across many languages. This process is seen in Spanish where one can say “I write” as *yo escribo* or just *escribo* since the first-person subject is noted by the ‘o’ at the end of the verb. Many Bantu languages aside from Silozi also demonstrate this process. For instance, I reviewed a grammar on the language of Liko that discusses the formalities of pronoun dropping. I came to find that it was quite similar to Silozi and so I included some Liko examples for reference.

The following are examples from (Wit, 2015:415) that demonstrate the process of pro dropping and the ungrammaticality of dropping the subject prefix.

(10)  

a. o-gbit-i ɓi ɓu-syo  
3SG-fell-FV.ANT P1 C14-tree  
'He felled this tree.'

b. *Makánzyálá gbit-i ɓi ɓu-syo ní ɓó  
"Makánzyálá" fell-FV.ANT P1 C14-tree COP-14.DEM.I  
*Int* 'Makanzyalá felled this tree.'

Example (10b) illustrates how in Liko one cannot do the reverse of pro-dropping, which would be to keep the subject noun phrase and omit the subject prefix. This is also true in Silozi.
5.0 The Associative

In Silozi, the possessive behaves quite differently than what the English speaker is used to. In English, a singular possessive word like *my* can be used to indicate the possession of nouns across all contexts and categories. This is not the case in Silozi. In the language, possession words like *my* must take a noun class agreement marker, which I refer to as the associative prefix. With fourteen different classes for agreement, this leads to the creation of multiple distinct ways to form possessive words like *my, ours, theirs,* etc.

Below I provide the associative prefix markers and list them in a side-by-side comparison with the noun class prefix markers.

**Table 7: Associative Prefix Comparison Chart**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun Class</th>
<th>Noun Class Prefix</th>
<th>Associative Prefix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>mu-</td>
<td>à or ø¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>ba-</td>
<td>ba-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>mu-</td>
<td>u-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>mi</td>
<td>y-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>li-</td>
<td>li-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>ma-</td>
<td>y-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>si-</td>
<td>si-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>li-</td>
<td>li-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>ø</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>li-</td>
<td>li-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Two different prefix markers are listed for class one because based on uncertainties within my data, I could not confidently declare a single prefix.
Table 7 clearly demonstrates that for the majority of the noun classes, the corresponding associative prefix is the same as the noun class prefix. This is not the case for classes 4, 6 and 9. For these classes we see that the associative prefix is <y> which is vastly different from what would be the expected prefixes of mi- ma- null. Currently, I do not have an analysis for why these associative prefixes deviate so much from the others.

### 5.1 Phonological Change Within Prefixes

For the associative prefix column in the table above, I chose to represent several of the agreement markers in the way that they would most likely be underlying, not how I had transcribed them in my elicitations. I will now take the time to discuss the phonological rules that the agreement markers most likely underwent.

The agreement markers for classes 3, 11, 13, and 14 all show evidence of the occurrence of a gliding rule. When spoken, the possessive markers can be transcribed as ‘w’, ‘lw’, ‘tw’, and ‘bw’ respectively. However, based on the verbal subject and object markers, one can assume that underlyingly they are /u-/, /lu-/, /tu-/, and /bu-/, which is how I have listed in my table. For this change to occur, a gliding rule like the following most likely exists:

\[ \text{The phonological rules discussed in (10) and (11) are extremely basic. These rules may very well be much more complex. I would spend more time going into depth on the criteria of these rules if it were a larger focus in my paper.} \]
Another possible phonological rule is presented when we examine the possessive agreement markers for classes 2, 5, 7, 8, and 10. In my elicitation sessions, I transcribed these markers as \(<b>, <l>, <s>, <l>, and <l>\) respectively. If we look at the verbal subject and object markers as we did earlier, it makes more sense to have these possessive markers instead as ‘ba’, ‘li’, ‘si’, ‘li’, and ‘li’. This suggests that some variation of the following vowel deletion rule exists.

\[ u \rightarrow w / ___ V \]

There is one final phonological rule that must be addressed when looking at the possessive agreement markers. This rule affects the markers for classes 8 and 10. Prior discussions with peers have confirmed that Silozi does indeed have a phonological rule where the letter ‘l’ will become ‘z’ in certain environments. Due to the discussion surrounding this rule, in my elicitation, I mark the class 8 and 10 agreement prefixes as ‘z’ when appropriate. I have written a basic phonological rule demonstrating this change below.

\[ l \rightarrow z / \{s,z\} V ___ \]

### 5.2 Possessive Roots

In my research I have encountered six possessive roots. These roots are what the associative prefix attaches to in order to form the correct possessive pronoun that the speaker needs. In many languages, one will find a gender distinction within the third person singular pronouns. It is important to note, that in Silozi, this gender contrast does not exist and instead, a singular root is
used to satisfy both male and female possession. I have demonstrated this and included the five other possessive roots in the chart below.

**Table 8: Possessive Root Chart**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Person</td>
<td>-kà</td>
<td>-lûnà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(my)</td>
<td>(our)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Person</td>
<td>-hâò</td>
<td>-mênà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(your)</td>
<td>(your plural)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Person</td>
<td>-hyè</td>
<td>-bôna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(His/hers)</td>
<td>(theirs)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When one is using possessive words like *my, ours, theirs,* and *his/hers,* the agreement is always added as a prefix to a small morpheme which in Silozi is, à. This morpheme is what I define as the associative. In many Bantu languages, one may see the possessive being referred to as ‘the associative’ because it generally shows an association between two things rather than ownership.

Once agreement is attached to the associative, one then must attach the possessive root as a suffix to the associative. This kind of structure looks like the following:

(14) Possessed Object - Class Agreement - à - Possessive Root

To help further illustrate the use of the possessive root within the phrasal structure listed in example (14), I have included multiple Silozi examples below, all of which contain one of the six main possessive roots.

3 In this paper I also may refer to the possessive as ‘the associative’ with the reasoning given above.
The third person pronoun that we know as “it” in English, has a multitude of moving parts. In the mind of an English speaker, ‘it’ can be a very ambiguous concept, as in the language this pronoun can be used to refer to anything. It can refer to objects, animals, and humans. One can use it to suggest disrespect towards a person or to portray uncertainty of gender in animals. There is even the concept of the “expletive it” where the pronoun doesn’t have any true meaning or reference. Take for example the phrase, *It is nice out today*. While it holds the subject position of the sentence, the word is more of a place holder than a referent to a real concept. When asked sentences with the English expletive it, Mr. Liswaniso was hesitant and stated that he could not think of a direct translation in Silozi.

Because of its confusing nature, I struggled while working with Mr. Liswaniso to gather elicitations of the word ‘it’ even in its more simplistic meanings. There were times where I was successful in truly getting this form, but also many times where I was not. These few successful
times consisted of a process of prompting, where I would ask a few specific sentences before eliciting the phrase that I actually wanted. When reviewing these forms of *it* that I gathered, it was clear that in order to form the possessive ‘it’, one had to take a base root and add an agreement marker based on the noun class of the noun that was the possessor. In table five, listed previously in this paper, I include a full list of the forms of ‘it’ according to noun class as gathered by Mwisiya.

The structure surrounding phrases that contain *it* includes the noun class agreement prefix of the proceeding noun attached to the associative. Then, the noun class agreement marker for the noun you are replacing with *it* is attached as a suffix to associative while also being the prefix of the possessive root. This structure is written below in example (21) and followed by a few Silozi examples.

(21) Proceeding Noun Agreement- à – Noun Class Agreement – third person possessive root

(22) nà-ú-lât-à múbàlå w-à-s-óñà
I-inf-like-FV C3-color C3-ASO-C7-it
‘I like its color (referring to a frog)’

(23) nà-ú-lât-à múbàlå w-à-óñà
I-inf-like-FV C3-color C3-ASO-it
‘I like its color (referring to a bed)’

(24) nà-ú-lât-à múbàlå w-à-y-óñà
I-inf-like-FV C3-color C3-ASO-C9-it
‘I like its color (referring to a house)’

When just consulting my own data, I initially found example (23) to be a discrepancy to the structure presented in (19) as there seemed to be no second agreement marker on the associative. Instead, I would have expected a form like *w-à-w-óñà*. However, after consulting
Mwisiya’s data and list of pronouns, I found example (23) to be completely normal as it is suggested that the agreement for class three was a null and just surfaced as -ona.

7.0 Simple Possession

The next possessive structure that I would like to discuss is used when there is a possessor of a direct object. These phrases begin with what is being possessed, followed by the class agreement marker, which is attached to the associative. This is all followed by the possessor. For clarification, this structure is listed below with a few Silozi examples.

(25) Possessed Agreement - à - Possessor

(26) li-zóhô l-à mw-ànâ
C5-hand C5-ASO C1-child
‘The child’s hand’

(27) mû-kûli w-à mw-âlàfi
C1-patient C3-ASO-C1-doctor
‘The doctor’s patient’

I would like to briefly discuss the small discrepancy in example number (27). The word mû-kûli, meaning patient, receives the class one marker. I determined that it would indeed be labeled as class one when I elicited the plural for patients and saw that it had the ba-, or class two prefix. This demonstrated to me that this was a class 1/2 pairing. This was reasonable as most words involving people fall into these categories. However, it can be seen that the agreement marker placed on the associative was not for class one but for class three.

At this time, I am not sure how to interpret this discrepancy. The noun class marker is mu- for both class one and class three and so the use of the w- class agreement marker could possibly occur because the noun class marker for one and three is the same. Therefore w- may have been used in place of the null marker that is usually seen for class one. Further examination and analysis would have to be done to fully prove the latter.
Noun class agreement is an essential component in simple possessions. Because I want to build a clear foundation for the basis of possessive structure, below I have included simple possessive examples that span across all the noun classes.

**Class 1**

(27) mw-àlàfì à mù-lìmì  
C1-doctor ASO C1-farmer  
‘The farmer’s doctor’

**Class 2**

(28) bà-àlàfì b-à mù-lìmì  
C2- doctors C2-ASO C1-farmer  
‘The farmer’s doctors’

**Class 3**

(29) mù-mbétà w-à mù-lìmì  
C3-bed C3-ASO C1-farmer  
‘The farmer’s bed’

**Class 4**

(30) mi-mbétà y-à mù-lìmì  
C4-beds C4-ASO C1-farmer  
‘The farmer’s beds’

**Class 5**

(31) li-zóhò l-à mù-lìmì  
C5-hand C5-ASO C1-farmer  
‘The farmer’s hand’

**Class 6**

(32) mà-zóhò à mù-lìmì  
C6-hands ASO C1-farmer  
‘The farmer’s hands’

**Class 7**

(33) si-mbòtwé s-à mù-lìmì  
C7-frog C7- ASO C1-farmer  
‘The farmer’s frog’

**Class 8**

(34) li-mbòtwé z-à mù-lìmì  
C8-frogs C8-ASO C1-farmer  
‘The farmer’s frogs’

**Class 9**

(35) ngù y-à mù-lìmì  
sheep C9-ASO C1-farmer  
‘The farmer’s sheep’

**Class 10**

(36) lí-ngù z-à mù-lìmì  
sheep(pl) C10-ASO C1-farmer  
‘The farmer’s sheep (pl)’

**Class 11**

(37) lù-bàsì lw-à mù-lìmì  
C11-family C11-ASO C1-farmer  
‘The farmer’s family’

**Class 12**

(38) kà-shìmài k-à mù-lìmì  
C12-small boy C12-ASO C1-farmer  
‘The farmer’s small boy’
Class 13
(39)  tú-shímáni tw-à mù-limi
C13-small boys C13-ASO C1-farmer
‘The farmer’s small boys”

Class 14
(40)  bù-cwàlà bw-à mù-limi
C14-beer C14-ASO C1-farmer
‘The farmer’s beer’

8.0 Numerals

The number system in Silozi is a very complex but deeply interesting concept. In this section I will only give a surface level description of the number system and will also go on to show how numbers and the possessive interact when both used in a sentence.

In Silozi, numbers one through five have their own, directly correlating word. These five numbers serve as the base for the formation of most other numbers, which are created through some combination of these five. It is key to remember that these number bases will need to take the agreement of the noun or nouns that they are quantifying. Below I have included a chart demonstrating the first five numbers.

Table 9: Numbers One Through Five

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>ilímù</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>zèpèlì</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>zètálu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>zènè</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>bòkètá li-zòhò</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For numbers higher than five, one essentially forms the numbers through addition. For instance, if you wanted to say “six” you would have to use the word for five and for one. An example of this is shown below.

(41) bókétá lí-zòhò ni kà-likámù.
    Five and one
    ‘six’

The same kind of addition continues after the number ten. So, the word eleven really is just ‘ten and one’. As one gets closer to one hundred, the system only increases in complexity. Take for example the number seventy. In order to form it you need to say “five tens and two tens” which is mà-shùmì à kétá lízòhò kàzèpèlì. Because this is very complicated, Mr. Liswaniso informed me that most Silozi speakers will just use English words for numbers, and that it is rare to hear people actually using this traditional number counting system.

The topic of numerals was of great interest to me and so during my research, I wanted to see how traditional words for Silozi numbers behaved in sentences where they are the quantifiers for a possessive. Below I have included two sentences that I elicited to find answers to my question.

(42) n-à bà-làt-á bà-nà b-á-kà bàbà-péli
    1sg-Pres-C2.obj-love-FV C2-child C2-ASO-my C2-two
    ‘I love my two children

(43) li-tàfùlè z-à-kà zèpèlì ni si-pùlà si-lisímù
    C10-table C10-ASO-my two and C7-chair C7-one
    ‘my two tables and one chair’
When we take a closer look at example (43) we can see that noun class agreement is only places on the second number. I see this occurring in the other sentence I elicited in this format. This could be evidence that when there are two numbers in a single sentence, noun class agreement is only required for the second word. Due to a lack of supplementary examples, I cannot make any generalizations as to whether this is a general rule or if it only co-occurs with the possessive.

9.0 Adjectives

In English adjectives can be used universally and do not change based on the noun they are modifying. The opposite is true for Silozi. As we have continually seen throughout this paper, several lexical elements must take an agreement marker based on noun class in order to be used correctly. This is true for how adjectives function. I would like to note that just like many other Bantu Languages, Silozi only has a select few “true” or proper adjectives. I have listed below some of the adjectives that I have come across in my research.

(44)4  túnà  ‘big’
  níyàni  ‘small’
  hùlù  ‘old’
  vùndè  ‘good’
  vùmáswè  ‘bad’

As mentioned in the above paragraph, adjectives undergo slight changes to correctly match the described noun. Below I have included examples of how an adjective changes based on the noun class of what its describing.

---

4 I would like to note that this is by no means an extensive list of Silozi adjectives, just some that I had come across.
I would also like to include my findings for when you want to emphasize an adjective. The English equivalent is the word ‘very’. I have found that this always comes at the end of a sentence and does not need any agreement marker.

(49) yàlè kí-ndù yè túná àhùlù
    That-is-house C9-big very
    That is a very big house

(50) njà yà-háò yè-máswè ahùlù
    dog C9-your C9-bad very
    ‘your dog is very bad’

Questions may arise regarding what happens when an adjective could potentially describe two nouns of different classes. One may wonder which class agreement the noun may take. In my research I elicited sentences where the adjective could potentially be describing either noun. I made sure to get two forms to clarify which noun the adjective belonged to, in order to see how the agreement would change. I have listed the two sentences I elicited below and to demonstrate the change in agreement and placement.


(51)  mi-lili yèmi-kùswáńi y-à mw-ànà  
       C4-hair C4-short C9-ASO-C1-child  
       ‘the child's short hair’

(52)  mi-lili y-à mw-ànà yòmù-kùswáńi  
       C4-hair C4-ASO-child C1-short  
       ‘the short child’s hair’

10.0 Combining Demonstratives, Numerals, Adjectives and Possessives

Throughout my research I have examined how the possessive interacts individually with demonstratives, with numerals, and with adjectives. In this section I look at what happens when all four of these elements are present in one sentence. First, I list some examples of the possessive interacting with the other three elements separately.

**Demonstrative and Possessive**

(53)   bókà yàlè ki-y-à-kà  
       book that is C9-ASO-my  
       ‘That book is mine’

**Adjective and Possessive**

(54)   mù-likan-à-kà yo-mùndè  
       C1-friend-ASO-my C1-good  
       ‘my good friend’

**Numbers and Possessive**

(55)   li-ndù z-à-kà zèpèli  
       C10-house C10-ASO-my. two  
       ‘my two houses’
When all four elements are combined, I find that the following order is true: noun-demonstrative-number-adjective-possessive root. It is also apparent that each element takes the class agreement marker of the noun. For instance, if the noun belongs to class 2 then the adjective, the demonstrative and the possessive root all have a class 10 marker. I saw two different outcomes for class marker on the number. In the first sentence, the number did not take on a class prefix marker, however in the second sentence it did. Due to lack of further data, I cannot say whether the number would always take or not take an agreement marker. I list two examples of sentences that lead me to this analysis below.

**Demonstrative, number, adjective, possessive, and noun**

(56)  li-bökà z-álè zètálù z-éndè ki-z-à-kà  
      C10-book C10-those three C10-good. are C10-ASO-my  
      Those three good books are mine

(57)  bà-nànà v-álè bà-bàëli bà-bàndè ki-b-à-kà  
      C2-child C2-those C2-two C2-good. are C2-ASO-my  
      ‘those two beautiful children are mine’

**11.0 Double Possession**

In situations where possessions occur within one another, I find that there must be two sets of agreement markers. Double possession phrases begin with the final possessed object which is then followed by the noun class agreement marker for that object that is attached as a prefix to the first associative. Following that is the possessor of the object and then a noun class agreement marker prefix on a second associative which is followed by the initial possessor.
This phrasal structure is written out in (58) with examples following it for further clarification.

(58) Possessed AGR - à possessor 2  AGR - à possessor 1

(59) li-hùtù l-à mù-kùlì w-à mw-àlàfì
C5-leg C5-ASO C1-patient C3-ASO C1-doctor
‘The doctor’s patient’s leg’

(60) zàpálù z-à mw-ànà à mú-limi
shirt C10-ASO C1-child ASO C1-farmer
‘The farmer’s child’s shirt’

I would like to address an occurrence that sometimes appears within the class one agreement. The phrasal structure listed in (58) tells us that in cases of double possession, a class agreement marker is needed as a prefix on the second associative à. However, example (60) shows the second associative à without any agreement.

Throughout my data collection, I have often found the possessive agreement marker for class one to be null. Due to this observation, I suggest that the absence of a class agreement marker on the second associative à in example (60) may not be an absence but instead just be the null agreement marker.

Further investigation would need to be conducted to see if there are other instances in Silozi where an agreement marker is present for class one words in double possession.
11.1 Possession of More Than One Noun

It is now established that in Silozi, the agreement used for possession is based on the noun class agreement marker of the possessed object. However, this leads one to question: what class agreement marker is used when there are two objects of different noun classes being possessed by one possessor?

After gathering my elicitations, I conclude that the second possessed object, or the one located closer to the possessor in the sentence, is ultimately the one that determines the agreement. Below I have included several examples that demonstrate my conclusion. These examples all illustrate that the agreement always matches that of the second possessed noun, even when the order is flipped.

(61) tàfúlè nì si-pùlà s-à mù-lìmì
     table and C7-chair C7-ASO C-farmer
     ‘The farmer’s table and chair’

(62) si-pùlà nì tàfúlè y-à mù-lìmì
     C7-chair and table C9-ASO C-farmer
     ‘The farmer’s chair and table’

(63) ngù nì si-mbòtwé s-à mù-lìmì
     sheep and C7-frog C7-of-C1-farmer
     ‘The farmer’s sheep and frog’

(64) si-mbòtwé nì ngù y-à mù-lìmì
     C7-frog and sheep C9-ASO C1-farmer
     ‘The farmer’s frog and sheep’
I tried to test my hypothesis in the examples above by eliciting sentences where the order of the possessed nouns was flipped as a way to see if the order caused a difference in agreement. I found this to be true. For instance, example (44) shows how when the class seven noun was second or closest to the possessor in the sentence, the class seven possessive agreement marker was used. Then in example (45), we see that the noun order is flipped and now the class nine noun is closest to the possessor. When this happens, we see that the agreement marker changes to match class nine. This is also true for the instances where I elicited sentences first with all singular nouns and then again with the plurals.

Due to time constraints, I was not able to elicit a form where a single possessor simultaneously possessed both a plural and singular noun. This is one of the limitations of my analysis of the possession of more than one noun in Silozi. Gathering this final piece of data would help to solidify my results and is something that should be researched for future analyses.

12.0 Special Circumstances

During my data collection, I came across some material that proved to be an exception to some of my assumptions presented in this paper. This material involved the formation of possessives that referred to parental figures.

Earlier in this paper, I had concluded that the phrasal structure for one possessor and one possessed noun consisted of the possessed noun followed by the associative with its noun class agreement prefix, and then lastly followed by the possessor. I find that phrases where either mother or father is the noun being possessed, don't follow this structure. These phrases do not have noun
class agreement and do not include the associative. Instead, we see that the possessive pronoun his/her is present. I have listed some examples of this phenomenon below with (68) serving as contrast as it is an example of how the structure *should* have looked.

(66) bó mà-hyè mù-limi
    resp-mother-his/her C1-farmer
    ‘The farmer’s mother’

(67) bó ndántè-hyè mù-limi
    resp father-his/her C1-farmer’
    ‘The farmer’s father’

(68) bà-ànà b-à mù-limi
    C2-children C2-ASO C1-farmer
    ‘The farmer’s children’

I am not sure how to justify this occurrence other than concluding that it must be a special circumstance that happens only in situations when parental nouns are possessed.

13.0 Concluding Remarks

In this paper, I have presented my preliminary analysis of the structure and behaviors of the Silozi possessive. My analysis explored and examined the fundamentals of noun class as well as some of the more complex possessive structures like double possession and a single possessor’s possession of two nouns. The limitations within my analysis were presented in hopes that they can help stimulate further research on the Silozi possessive. I am very grateful to have been given this opportunity to work with language consultant Mr. Liswaniso and be able to present my findings on the language of Silozi.
References


Appendix

Gloss Abbreviations:

C#  class
ASO  associative
FV  final vowel
resp  respect
pl  plural
inf  infinitive