

# Chapter 1

## The reflexive in Kalenjin: Its syntactic status and semantic functions

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Kalenjin *kee(y)* is typically treated as an arity-reducing verbal suffix with reflexive (and reciprocal) meaning. However, we show that it is actually a separate word with a typologically unusual combination of two functions: it can be the object of a verb or preposition (contributing an arity-reducing ‘middle’ meaning that is broader than just reflexive and reciprocal) or it can modify pronouns (with an intensifying meaning).

### 1 Introduction

Kalenjin is a cluster of languages, classified as Southern Nilotic and spoken mainly in Kenya (Rottland 1982). It has a morpheme, pronounced as [kɛ:], [kɛ:j], or [kɛ:x] across the different languages, with reflexive and reciprocal meaning. We refer to this item with *kee(y)* in this article, with an optional final glide, although this does not, strictly speaking, cover the Pökoot form [kɛ:x] with its final velar fricative [x].

There is no specific study of *kee(y)*, but the typical view seems to be that it is an arity-reducing suffix deriving reflexive and reciprocal verbs (§2). However,

we argue in this paper that it is not a suffix (§3), that it is not restricted to verbs (§4), that it is not only reflexive and reciprocal (§5), and that it is often but not always arity-reducing (§6). In the resulting picture (§7), *kee(y)* shows a typologically unusual combination of two functions: it can contribute a ‘middle’ meaning, as the object of a verb or preposition, or it can be an intensifying modifier of pronouns. Our argumentation is based on corpus data from Endo-Markweta, complemented with constructed examples from Keiyo and Tugen, but we suspect our conclusions to be valid for Kalenjin in general.

## 2 Kalenjin *kee(y)*

Kalenjin has a verb-initial sentence structure, with the subject (marked tonally with nominative case) and object (unmarked, absolutive case) following in a relatively free order (Creider & Creider 1983). Various valency-increasing suffixes (like applicative and instrumental) allow oblique arguments to function as objects of the verb, but without requiring adjacency to the verb.

*Kee(y)* is typically adjacent to the verb and this might be the reason that in the literature, it is usually discussed as part of verbal morphology, as a suffix. That is what we find in Rottland’s overview of Kalenjin, but also in the grammars of Kipsigis (Toweett 1979) and Cherang’any (Mietzner 2016) and the specific morphological studies of Tugen (Jerono 2018) and Keiyo (Sitienei Jepkoech 2018). However, on the other hand, in their description of Nandi Creider & Creider (1989) treat *kee(y)* as a ‘particle’ and write it separately from the verb, while Rottland also considers a clitic status for *kee(y)*, given that its vowel does not harmonise with the verb in advanced tongue root (ATR) (Rottland 1982: 229). The orthographies of Kalenjin languages show similar divergences. To illustrate: the Kalenjin Union Bible has no space before *kee(y)*, unlike the Bible translations into Marakwet, Pökoot, and Sabaot. Clearly, there is no agreement about the morphosyntactic status of *kee(y)* among writers and scholars of Kalenjin.

The literature also specifies that *kee(y)* can have both reflexive and reciprocal uses. In his overview of reflexive/reciprocal polysemies in African languages, Heine (2000) also mentions Kalenjin *kee(y)*, not only with these two meanings, but also with a *middle* function (Kemmer 1993). He refers to Toweett (1979: 336), but no middle examples can be found there, unfortunately. On the other hand, Heine does not count Kalenjin among the languages where the reflexive has an additional *emphatic* use (as English, in *he did it HIMSELF*), but Mietzner (2016: 76) points to ‘reflexive personal pronouns’ like *ínéé-kêy* ‘he himself’. Clearly, some

empirical clarification is needed here with respect to the range of functions of *kee(y)*, because only then can we be sure how Kalenjin fits into the typology of African (and other) languages in this respect.

For these reasons, we started to explore the variety of uses of *kee(y)* in a fairly large corpus of one particular Kalenjin variety, namely the New Testament translated into Endo-Marakwet (the northern variety of Marakwet), and determined some properties in more detail through constructed examples in two other varieties (Keiyo and Tugen, spoken by the second and third author, respectively). The reflexive is *keey* in Endo-Marakwet and Tugen and *kee* in Keiyo.

All examples are given in the orthography of the Endo-Marakwet Bible. Tone is not represented. The consonants are spelled as in Swahili, where <ch> is used for [c], <ng'> for [ŋ], <ny> for [ɲ], and <y> for [j], but <j> (for ʝ), <b>, <g>, and <d> are never used, because it is always the underlying voiceless phoneme (<ch>, <p>, <k>, <t>, respectively) that is represented. The short vowels <a>, <e>, <i>, <o>, and <u> have long variants (<aa>, <ee>, <ii>, <oo>, <uu>). Advanced tongue root is represented by a macron on the non-high vowels (<ā>, <ē(ē)>, <ō(ō)>); the long +ATR version of <a> is pronounced and written as <oo>. As a result, readers will sometimes encounter '+ATR words' in this paper without any macrons, like *kimwoochi* and *tiipik* in (23). Also, in line with our analysis, the morpheme *kee(y)* is written as a separate word, and not with a hyphen, unless it is clearly part of a complex word.

The New Testament in Endo-Marakwet contains 1815 relevant occurrences of the string *keey*, mostly written as a separate word (1653 tokens).<sup>1</sup> In the remaining 162 non-separate occurrences, *keey* is part of the verb *karkeey* 'be like' and the nominal stems *cheepaykeey* 'prostitute(s)' and *peerkeey* 'virgin(s)', that we will consider later on. We did not specifically search for the variant *kēēy* with ATR vowel *ēē* (represented through the macron), because it is known that *kee(y)* is opaque for ATR vowel harmony (e.g., Lodge 1995) (although there are a few relevant occurrences of *kēēy*, e.g., in a word like *kārkēēyin* 'likeness', that we will return to in the next section).

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<sup>1</sup>The word *kumwoochikeey* 'they said to one another' is accidentally spelled without a space, and should have been *kumwoochi keey*. The forms *keeya* (*kee-ya*) and *kikeeyeeng* (*ki-kee-yeeng*) are the only two hits in which the string *keey* does not correspond to the reflexive morpheme, but these are irrelevant for the current analysis because they involve the morpheme *kee-* before *y*.

### 3 *Kee(y)* is not a suffix

If *kee(y)* would be a suffix, then it is always the last one, following all other suffixes. Of course, one suffix has to be the final one, but there are two important reasons not to treat *kee(y)* as the final suffix of the verb. The first reason is that words can come between the verb and *kee(y)* (1). The adverb *nyuun* ‘then’ in (1a) provides the clearest example, but the full subject pronoun *aneen* ‘I’ in (1b) also illustrates the point, because *aneen* is neither a suffix itself, nor is this a case where *aneen* is emphatically modified by *key* (because *aneen* and *key* are two distinct arguments of the verb here).

- (1) Endo-Marakwet
- a. kaa-kee-syaak nyuun key  
RP-1PL-judge then REFL  
‘we judged ourselves then’
- b. a-kuskuus aneen key  
1SG-make.weak 1SG REFL  
‘I make myself weak’

The second indication that *kee(y)* is not a suffix is its opacity for vowel harmony (e.g., Lodge 1995). Notice first how the 1PL object suffix *-eech* behaves in *neet-eech* ‘teach us’ and *toorēt-ēēch* ‘help us’. In the latter word, +ATR spreads from the verb root *toorēt* ‘help’ to *-eech* and makes it *-ēēch*. With the –ATR verb *neet* ‘teach’, the suffix remains as it is. In contrast, with the same two verbs, *key* keeps its –ATR vowel not only in *neet key* ‘teach oneself’, but also in *toorēt key*. This non-spreading behaviour was the reason that Rottland (1982: 229) considered a clitic status for *kee(y)*.<sup>2</sup> *Kee(y)* is similar in this respect to pronominal forms accompanying verbs as subjects, in (2a), or as possessive (2b) and demonstrative (2c) pronominals with nouns:

- (2) Endo-Marakwet
- a. *āmāraa* ‘I want’, *kichāmēēchaan* ‘we love’, *āchāmēēkwaan* ‘you (pl.) love’, *keemwaanyēēn* ‘you (sg.) say’

<sup>2</sup>“Der Vokal war schon im PK [Proto-Kalenjin] harmonienneutral, d.h., das Suffix (Enklitikon?) gehörte nicht eindeutig zum Wortverband.” (The vowel was already in Proto-Kalenjin harmony neutral, i.e., the suffix (enclitic?) did not unambiguously belong to the word domain.) If *kee(y)* is in fact a clitic, an equals sign would be the appropriate boundary symbol in interlinear glosses.

- b. *wēēchiikwaak* ‘their brothers’, *mālāktiing’waang* ‘their reward’,  
*koonēētiisiyeenyiin*<sup>3</sup> ‘his teaching’
- c. *kookeelyaanoonēē* ‘that star’, *taapukeechoochēē* ‘those flowers’,  
*paannyēēnyi* ‘this moment’.

These examples are not meant to suggest that *kee(y)* is pronominal, but to illustrate that morphemes can be very close to the verb or noun without being in its ATR domain, whatever the precise phonological characterisation of that domain may be.<sup>4</sup> *Kee(y)* contrasts in this respect with the contemporative/sociative suffixes *-yō* and *-sōōt*, which do share their +ATR value with the preceding verb root: e.g., *ng’ēētyō* and *ng’ēētsōōt* are derived from the -ATR verb *ng’ēet* ‘stand up’. A verb with one of these suffixes is plural in the sense that it is only compatible with a plural subject (Zwarts et al. 2023).

Lexicalisation might create words that contain reflexive *kee(y)* as a part. Given its meaning, it is not inconceivable that the word *karkey* ‘be like’ originally had *key* contributing a reciprocal meaning. The combination is functioning as one word now, with a non-transparent meaning, allowing derivations like *karkayit* ‘become like’ and *kārkēēyin* ‘likeness’. *Key* is no longer a separate word here and it fully participates in lexical phonological processes affecting its vowel (shortening and ATR harmony, respectively). Also, the word itself can take *kee(y)* as an object, as shown in the Keiyo example (3).<sup>5</sup>

(3) Keiyo

i-kerkeéy keè laak-o-chu  
CL2-be.like REFL child-PL.DEF-these

‘These kids are copying each other (to look the same).’

Other potential examples of words with ‘incorporated’ *kee(y)* are *cheepaykeeyaan* ‘prostitute’ (maybe with *pay* ‘feed’), *peerkeeyaan* ‘virgin’ (maybe with *peer* ‘keep whole’), and *kimekeyaan* or *kipekeyaan* ‘selfish person’ (with unidentifiable verbs).

<sup>3</sup>Notice that the morpheme *-nyiin* is not just opaque, but its -ATR feature even affects the preceding vowel.

<sup>4</sup>Whether *kee(y)* is pronominal or not, and whether and how we could decide that, is a separate discussion that we do not address in this paper.

<sup>5</sup>The class 2 prefix *i-* (Rottland 1982: 123) marks the verb as causative and transitive here. Note also the segmental and tone differences between the two *kee(y)*’s here.

Even though *kee(y)* is not an affix, it is not an independent word either, i.e. it cannot be used to start a sentence, or as a full utterance all by itself. Unlike the English reflexive and reciprocal pronouns, for instance, it cannot be used as the answer to a question, but it needs to be part of a sentential answer (4). This is in line with *kee(y)* being enclitical: even though postverbal constituents have a relatively free word order, the position of *kee(y)* is rather rigidly right-adjacent to the verb (apart from a few discourse markers).

(4) Keiyo

- a. Ki-ng'war ng'oo cheepyoos-ee? Ki-ng'war kee.  
DP-scratch who woman-DEF DP-scratch REFL  
'Who did the lady scratch? (She scratched) herself.'
- b. Ki-iim ng'oo piichooto? Ki-iim kee.  
DP-annoy who people-those DP-annoy REFL  
'Who did those people annoy? (They annoyed) each other.'

#### 4 *Kee(y)* is not only for verbs

Not only is *kee(y)* not a suffix, it is not exclusively verbal either. It can also occur with nominalised verbs (5). The morpheme *-aa(p)* in these examples functions like a preposition ('of').

- (5) a. Endo-Marakwet  
las-at-aa keey  
praise-NOM-of REFL  
'praise of oneself, i.e. pride'
- b. Endo-Marakwet  
riip-ot-oo keey  
guard-NOM-of REFL  
'guarding of oneself, self-control'
- c. Tugen  
toorēt-ēēt-aap keey  
help-NOM-of REFL  
'the helping of each other, collaboration'
- d. Tugen

wiirun-ēēt-aap keyy  
throw-NOM-of REFL  
'the falling, lit. throwing of oneself'

*Kee(y)* is external to the nominalisation in (5). The example in (6), where *kee(y)* is *internal* to the nominalisation *-nat*, seems to point to a suffixal status of *kee(y)* at first sight:

(6) Tugen  
las-keey-nat-ēēt  
praise-REFL-NOM-TH.DEF  
'praise of oneself, i.e. pride'

However, as we already pointed out, with strongly lexicalised forms, this is what we might expect. The combination *las keey* 'praise oneself' is such a form, with a non-transparent meaning ('boast').

*Kee(y)* is even possible with nouns that are not deverbal, to indicate a possessive (7).<sup>6</sup>

(7) Tugen  
ki-sooman Kiptuum ak Kipēēt kitaapuu-syek-aap keyy  
DP-read Kiptum and Kibet book-PL.DEF-of REFL  
'Kiptum and Kibet read their own/each other's books'

We also find *kee(y)* with free-standing prepositions, at least with *po* 'of', as illustrated in (8):

(8) Tugen  
ma-po keyy chii  
NEG-of REFL person  
'No man is an island (lit. of himself)'

However, we do not find it with other prepositions or conjunctions, like *ākōō* 'and, with':<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup>The other way to form reflexive and reciprocal possessives is illustrated in (19).

<sup>7</sup>An anonymous reviewer suggested that the correct generalisation for the examples in this section is that *kee(y)* occurs in 'possessive' constructions. This might be a possibility, provided it is clear enough what we mean with 'possessive'.

- (9) Endo-Marakwet
- a. a-riir-ee          keey ākōō laak-ōō-k-wook  
1SG-weep-APPL REFL and child-PL-DEF-2PL  
'Weep about yourself and your children'
- b. \* a-riir-ee          laak-ōō-k-wook ākōō keey  
1SG-weep-APPL child-PL-DEF-2PL and REFL  
'Weep about your children and yourself'

As [Mietzner \(2016: 76\)](#) already showed, we also find *kee(y)* (in a different type of role, emphatic) with pronouns (10).<sup>8</sup> We will say more about that use in §6.

- (10) Endo-Marakwet
- a. inyēēn keey  
3SG REFL  
'(Who came?) Only him.'
- b. a-ku-ng'ālool-chi akwaaneek keey  
and-3-talk-DAT 3PL REFL  
'and he spoke to them privately'

## 5 *Kee(y)* is not only reflexive and reciprocal

We already know that *kee(y)* has both reflexive and reciprocal uses (11).

- (11) Endo-Marakwet
- a. ā-ng'ālool-ēē keey  
1SG-talk-APPL REFL  
'I am talking about myself'
- b. a-taakwees keey  
2PL-greet REFL  
'greet each other!'

We will not enter into the discussion whether this is a matter of ambiguity or vagueness (see, for instance, [Palmieri 2020](#)). What is important here is that there is a broader spectrum of meaning(s) of which the reflexive and reciprocal uses

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<sup>8</sup>In Kipsigis the form is *keen* with pronouns and *kee* with verbs. This final *n* might be an additional suffix. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out to us.



are a part. Kemmer (1993) showed that languages can express these meanings through their middle voice, taken broadly as a way of marking where a verb is “intermediate in transitivity between one-participant and two-participant events” (Kemmer 1993: 3). This marking can cover not only reflexive and reciprocal meanings, but many more. For instance, the German object pronoun *sich* is treated as a middle voice marker for a range of situation types beyond the ordinary reflexive and reciprocal (12).<sup>9</sup> Syntactically, the verbs in (12) are transitive (taking *sich* as object), but semantically they are intransitive.

- (12) a. natural reflexive, grooming: *sich anziehen* ‘dress (oneself)’  
b. natural reciprocal: *sich küssen* ‘kiss (each other)’  
c. emotion: *sich fürchten* ‘become afraid’  
d. nontranslational motion: *sich verbeugen* ‘bow’  
e. change in body posture: *sich hinlegen* ‘lie down’  
f. collective: *sich sammeln* ‘gather’  
g. spontaneous: *sich auflösen* ‘dissolve’  
h. impersonal: *Hier tanzt sich gut* ‘One can dance well here’

Reflexive and reciprocal situations are called *natural* when they typically happen for oneself or with one another, respectively. English tends to drop the reflexive and reciprocal pronouns in these situations, as shown by the parentheses around *oneself* and *each other* in (12a) and (12b), respectively. Some middle meanings, like (12f) and (12g), are also known as ‘anticausative’ (but this is not a term that Kemmer used in her overview of middle meanings).

Note that we use the term *middle* here in Kemmer’s sense (common in the typological literature) and not in the more specific sense that it has in the generative literature, for impersonal constructions like *This book reads well*, which do not seem relevant for *kee(y)*. It is also important to stress that languages differ in the range of uses that they express with a middle marker and the productivity with which verbs are involved in these uses. The German verbs with *sich* illustrate one particular instantiation of Kemmer’s middle voice, but they are not intended to characterise a ‘prototypical’ middle.

With Kalenjin *kee(y)* we also find examples that are middle-like. For instance, the combination *neet keey* literally means ‘teach oneself’, but it usually has the non-deliberate meaning of ‘learn’. This illustrates the difference between

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<sup>9</sup>Examples from Kemmer, sometimes slightly adapted.

a fully transitive construction, with agent and patient role distinguished, and a construction that has essentially one role, although it is based on a transitive verb. (13a-f) presents more examples like this, with Kemmer's categories and labels.

- (13) Endo-Marakwet (a-f), Keiyo (g-h)
- a. spontaneous: *takus keey* 'drown', *wiiru keey* 'fall'
  - b. collective: *rum keey*, 'gather', *ruruuk keey*, 'gather' *tuuyo keey*, 'gather', *pēesyō keey* 'separate'
  - c. non-translational motion: *walak keey* 'turn', *ng'uruuk keey* 'bend'
  - d. translational motion: *wēēchi keey* 'go', *ng'unta keey* 'walk quickly'
  - e. emotion keey: *iim keey* 'worry', *las keey* 'boast'
  - f. grooming: *uun keey* 'wash', *laak keey* 'dress'
  - g. change of posture: *tēēp kee* 'sit down', *teleel kee* 'stand up'
  - h. body activity: *sus kee* '(body) itch', *liil kee* '(teeth) ache'

These uses might be very similar to the reflexive, but they are different. An animal drowning can be described by *takus keey* (lit. 'drown oneself'), but that does not mean that the animal is agent and patient at the same time, performing an action on itself. Rather *kee(y)* marks that a transitive verb is used to describe an event that has only one participant. The broader set of uses of *kee(y)* also involves a broader type of antecedent. While antecedents of *kee* are typically animate in reflexive and reciprocal uses, we also find inanimate antecedents in its anticausative uses, for which a reflexive analysis, with agent and patient roles linked to one inanimate participant, does not make sense.

- (14) Keiyo
- a. roong' kee kārātiik  
pour REFL blood-DEF  
'the blood gushed'
  - b. choor kee asiis  
steal REFL sun  
'the sun rose'
  - c. tum kee pēy  
pour REFL water  
'water poured'

- d. mil kee koyin  
turn REFL stone-PL  
'stones fell'

We can conclude that Kalenjin *kee(y)* has middle functions, already claimed by Heine (2000) and Toweett (1979), who did not provide supporting examples though. The range of examples covered by the middle varies from language to language. In Kalenjin, natural reciprocity does not seem to be expressed using *kee(y)* but with what are called the 'contemporative' suffixes (Rottland 1982: 127) *-yō* and *-sōōt* (15).<sup>10</sup>

- (15) Endo-Marakwet  
*choomnyō* 'reconcile', *chuunchuunnyō* 'disagree', *tuupchō* 'be brothers',  
*pēēsyo* 'disperse', *pooryō* 'fight', *tēēniityō* 'be equal', *tuuyō* 'meet'

These verbs also have transitive, causative alternants which can then be used with *kee(y)* (16).

- (16) Endo-Marakwet
- a. si-mē-ē-tēēniit-yō                      keey nkōō chiitō aka  
PURP-NEG-1SG-make.equal-CONT REFL with person other  
'so that you do not compare yourself with somebody else'
- b. kii nēē kaa-kuu-tuu-yō keey pi-choochēē  
DP when RP-3-meet-CONT REFL people-those  
'when those people had assembled'

In line with the broader middle semantics of *kee(y)*, (16b) can be seen as an anticausative (like German *sich sammeln* 'come together', but literally 'collect oneself').

By claiming that *kee(y)* has middle functions we do not wish to imply that it productively derives those functions with each transitive verb (like it does for the reflexive and reciprocal functions). For instance, *kee(y)* does not derive the 'anticausative' alternant of every transitive verb in a productive way; only some verbs have an alternant marked with *kee(y)* that can be characterized as such.

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<sup>10</sup>An anonymous reviewer pointed out that *-yō* might be cognate with a suffix with antipassive/middle functions in Bari and other Nilotic languages. Even if this is the case, it does not seem to have those functions in Kalenjin now, see Zwarts et al. (2023).

## 6 *Kee(y)* is arity-reducing, but not always

Most of the uses of *kee(y)* that we have seen are arity-reducing in the following general sense. The combination  $P_2+kee(y)$  of a two-place predicate  $P_2$  with *kee(y)* results in a one-place predicate and the combination  $P_3+kee(y)$  is effectively a two-place predicate. This arity-reduction is illustrated in (17).

- (17) Endo-Marakwet
- a. si-ku-ng'ālool-chi keye  
PURP-3-talk-DAT REFL  
'so that he talks to himself'
  - b. ku-ung'-a keye akwaaneek  
3-hide-APPL REFL 3PL  
'he hid himself for them'
  - c. chēēr-ēēn-ook keye  
strengthen-APPL-2PL REFL  
'strengthen oneself with you'

The verb *ng'ālool-chi* 'x talk to y' in (17a) is a two-place predicate and *kee(y)* saturates the internal argument *y* of this predicate, reducing it to a one-place predicate ('talk to oneself'). The verb *ung'-a* 'x hide y for z' in (17b) is a three-place predicate. *Kee(y)* saturates argument *y* and *akwaaneek* saturates *z*. (17c) differs from (17b) in the order in which *kee(y)* and the other object saturate arguments of the verb. The verb *chēēr-ēē(n)* 'x strengthen y with z' first gets *z* saturated with the object pronoun and then *y* with *kee(y)*. The examples also illustrate the role of verbal suffixes like dative *-chi* and applicative *-a/-ee(n)* in creating argument positions that *kee(y)* can saturate, thereby effectively reducing the arity of the verb. However, since *kee(y)* is not a verbal suffix, but a separate object, it does not operate on the verb's lexical-semantic argument structure, but it reduces arity by saturating a syntactic argument position.

*Kee(y)* does not combine with one-place predicates; it is always one of the internal arguments (objects) that is saturated. Even the translational motion cases like (13d) always seem to have a suffix that adds a non-subject slot for *kee(y)* to saturate. The basic motion verbs *wō* 'go (sg.)' and *pa* 'go (pl.)' (that are one-place) only allow *kee(y)* when the suffix *-chi* is there to license it as an object.

- (18) Endo-Marakwet

- a. a-ku-wēē-chi    keey  
and-3-go.SG-DAT REFL  
'and he went away'
- b. paani kaa-ku-pēē-chi keey saang'  
when RP-3-go.PL-DAT REFL outside  
'when they had gone outside'
- c. ku-pa    saang'  
3-go.PL outside  
'to go outside'

(18c) shows that the goal *saang'* 'outside' is already licensed by the verb root and that *-chi* in (18) must therefore be instrumental in licensing *kee(y)*. What exactly happens in these motion descriptions with *kee(y)* is a matter for further study, but it is clear that we have no exception here to the generalisation that *kee(y)* reduces the arity of a predicate by saturating an argument position of that predicate.

The same is true for the reciprocal verbs illustrated in (16) above. Although verbs with contemporative *-yō* are usually intransitive, here they are transitive and there is an object argument that *kee(y)* saturates in (16).

*Kee(y)* can also saturate possessor arguments (19).

(19) Keiyo

- a. ki-ng'wār-chin-i    kee    John patay  
DP-scratch-DAT-IMPF REFL John back  
'John was scratching his own back'
- b. ng'wār-chin-i    kee    pātooy  
scratch-DAT-IMPF REFL backs  
'They were scratching each other's backs.'

Unlike the English pronouns, however, and the example in (7), *kee(y)* in (19) does not directly saturate the possessor argument of the noun for 'back', but it targets the additional argument created by *-chi* as part of a three-place verb *ng'wār-chin-i* 'x scratch y's z'.

Before turning to the non-arity-reducing use of *kee(y)*, we want to give one more piece of evidence here for our argumentation that *kee(y)* does not reduce the arity of a verb by directly operating on the verb (i.e., as a suffix), but by saturating an internal syntactic argument of the verb (i.e., by being its separate

object). The reciprocal meaning of *kee(y)* can be made explicit by adding a non-ambiguous reciprocal expression, essentially a plural pronoun conjoined with itself (20).

(20) Tugen

- a. ki-chām-ē    keey a cheek eng' a cheek  
1PL-love-IMPF REFL we    and we  
'We love each other.'
- b. o-chām-ē    keey okweek eng' okweek  
2PL-love-IMPF REFL you    and you  
'You love each other'
- c. chām-ē    keey i cheek eng' i cheek  
love-IMPF REFL they    and they  
'They love each other.'

The transitive verb *cham* 'love' requires *kee(y)* in (20). On the other hand, these reduplicated reciprocals can also occur without *kee(y)* (21), when the predicate is intransitive.

- (21) ak o-tēpii    eng' kaalyeet okweeke eng' okweeke  
and 2PL-stay in peace you    and you  
'and stay in peace with one another'

The phrase *okwege eng' okwege* accompanies the intransitive predicate *otēpii eng' kaalyeet* 'stay in peace'. There is no object position here that *okwege eng' okwege* could saturate; it must function as an adjunct. It makes sense then that the reduplicated reciprocals in (20) are adjuncts too, while *kee(y)* is the argument of the transitive verb *cham*.

While the core uses of *kee(y)* reduce a predicate's arity by saturating an internal argument, this is obviously not true for emphatic *kee(y)* in combination with pronouns (10). Unlike verbs and prepositions, pronouns do not have an argument position that can be satisfied. In that use, *kee(y)* is an adjunct that adds an emphatic meaning to the pronoun.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>It is important to distinguish the emphatic *kee(y)* from a demonstrative marker that is often deceptively similar in some Kalenjin languages. In Cherang'any it is *key* and treated as a 'post-final referential marker', marking a referent that is 'just mentioned' (Mietzner 2016: 165). It is part of a larger series of demonstratives with a temporal dimension. In Endo-Marakwet its

Intensifying *kee(y)* can be paraphrased as ‘alone’, ‘by oneself’, ‘without help’, ‘personally’ (König & Siemund 2000). The different paraphrases suggest a lexical field with subtle distinctions (22) that we will not explore further.

(22) Keiyo

Ā-ām-iisyēy      ani-kee  
1SG-eat-INTR-IMP 1SG-REFL

‘I am eating by myself/alone/without help’

The modification of a pronoun with *kee(y)* also allows for more regular reflexive and reciprocal uses, as shown in (23), similar to the pronoun+*self* forms in English, for instance.

(23) Tugen

- a. Ki-mwoo-chi Mary tiip-ik akopo ichee-keey  
DP-tell-DAT Mary girl-DEF about 3SG-REFL  
‘Mary told the girls about themselves’
- b. ki-sooman kitapuu-syek-aap ichee-keey  
DP-read book-PL.DEF-of 3SG-REFL  
‘They read each other’s books’

## 7 Conclusion

We have shown that the syntactic status of Kalenjin *kee(y)* is not that of a suffix, but a separate word, although probably enclitical. It has two semantic functions. It is usually an argument of a verb, contributing a reflexive, reciprocal, or (other) middle meaning, and sometimes an adjunct of a pronoun, with an emphatic/intensifying meaning. The resulting empirical picture clarifies the representation of *kee(y)* in the literature about Kalenjin and it has consequences for the broader typology of reflexivity, reciprocity, and intensification.

It seems that Kalenjin does something unusual by using one and the same item for three meanings: reflexive, middle, and emphatic. We already saw that

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form is *kay*. Given that there has been a conflation of short  $\varepsilon$  with  $a$  in Endo-Marakwet, we can conclude that there are two distinct items in Kalenjin: reflexive/emphatic *kee(y)* and demonstrative *key*. What also distinguishes the two is that the emphatic *kee(y)* seems to be restricted to pronouns, while the demonstrative *key* combines with noun phrases more generally.

German *sich* is used reflexively, but also as a middle marker, while it has a different emphatic item (*selbst*). On the other hand, Juang (Austrosiatic) uses its reflexive morpheme also both emphatically and reciprocally (Patnaik & Subbarao 2000: 843), but middle meanings are not mentioned. In her typologically overview of Oceanic, Moyse-Faurie (2017) makes clear that these languages adhere to the generalisation made in König & Siemund (2000: 59): “If a language uses the same expression both as intensifier and reflexive anaphor, this expression is not used as a marker of derived intransitivity.” *Derived intransitivity* is what we called *middle*. Also Kemmer (1993: 196) writes: “It appears that either emphatic reflexive/direct reflexive polysemy or direct reflexive/middle polysemy is permitted, but not a three way polysemy involving all of these situation types.” Clearly, the polysemy of Kalenjin *kee(y)* requires a reconsideration of these claims, as well as a closer look into the situation of Kalenjin, both synchronically and diachronically.

The grammaticalisation perspective on the broader middle domain (Kemmer 1993; Heine 2000) would lead us to expect that *kee(y)* originates from a noun (e.g., for ‘body’) that has developed into a middle marker through an intermediate emphatic and then reflexive use and that increasing grammaticalisation also forces the emphatic to be renewed again. Unfortunately, we have no clues about a nominal origin of *kee(y)*. Outside of Kalenjin (but still within Southern Nilotic), both Datooga and Omotik have a singular/plural contrast (Rottland 1982: 151,191). However, this does not necessarily suggest a nominal source for *kee(y)*, because other categories than nouns show number contrasts too.<sup>12</sup> There are indications that emphatic *kee(y)* is being renewed, if we can interpret various competing items with similar emphatic meanings (*kipaata*, *ākityōōn*) as such, at least.

Our study of Kalenjin *kee(y)* is also relevant for what Safir & Selvanathan (2016) propose for ‘transitive reciprocal constructions’ (as they call it), in Niger-Congo, which involve an ambiguous object (reflexive/reciprocal) that gets its reciprocal interpretation from a marker (overt or covert) in the verbal morphology (“little *v*”). Since we have argued *kee(y)* to be an object with that type of ambiguity, the question arises how this Nilo-Saharan element would fit into this proposal. We have found no relevant cases in Kalenjin where *kee(y)* expresses reciprocity together with reciprocal verbal morphology. The examples in (16) are irrelevant, because *kee(y)* is not reciprocal there, but middle-like. For a better understanding of transitive reciprocals/reflexives, it would be useful to include

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<sup>12</sup>Thanks to Gertrud Schneider-Blum and Alice Mitchell for pointing out to me the complexities of the issue here.



both Niger-Congo and Nilo-Saharan languages to explore a hypothesis like that of Safir and Selvanathan.

Another important question for future research is how our observation that *kee(y)* has middle voice functions fits into a broader and deeper analysis of verb alternations in Kalenjin, including the recent work of (Kouneli 2021) on such alternations in Kipsigis. The empirical breadth of such an analysis should involve the division of labor between *kee(y)* and the suffix *-ak* ('stative' and 'potential passive' in (Rottland 1982), but treated as a middle by Kouneli) and the classification of verbs as class 1 or 2. With multiple morphosyntactic devices involved in transitive/intransitive alternation, the question becomes acute how their operations might differ. The theoretical depth of such an analysis needs to address how these devices are syntactically implemented, not only in syntactic heads like little *v* or Voice, but also in other ways, doing justice to the richness of verbal alternations in Kalenjin.

Finally, with its narrow focus on one single word in Kalenjin this paper already has general typological ramifications. Nevertheless, it would be useful to zoom out and include other Nilotic languages, which have different systems of marking intensifying, reflexive, reciprocal, and middle meanings to get a richer picture of the connections and encodings of these meanings, in African languages, and beyond.

## Abbreviations

1/2/3 = first/second/third person, APPL = applicative, CL2 = class 2, CONT = contemporary, DAT = dative, DEF = definite, DP = distant past, IMPF = imperfective, INTR = intransitive, NEG = negation, NOM = nominaliser, PL = plural, PURP = purpose, REFL = reflexive, RP = recent past, SG = singular, TH = theme vowel

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