The Expression of Pronominal Subjects in Kenyang

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The syntax of pronominal subjects gives rise to a range of analytical issues. These issues arise in trying to describe the behaviour of these elements in different environments in the clause. A first approximation of the complexities emerges if we observe that cross-linguistically elements that appear to be pronominal subjects can appear not only in argument position that can be filled by lexical DPs, but also in other positions where they are in complementary distribution with lexical DPs. Thus, it has become apparent that pronominal subjects comprise different types, which can be initially identified via their distributional properties. Depending on the details of particular languages, a range of other properties, morphophonological and morphosyntactic appear to be linked to these basic distributional patterns. For example, a distinction has emerged between languages in which subject pronouns are required and those in which they are not (pro-drop languages). In the same respect, it has been observed that the availability of [Spec, T] position is parameterised (Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou 1998) across languages. This paper develops a view on the morphosyntactic elements that have been interpreted as subject pronouns in Kenyang, a Niger-Congo language spoken in the South West Province of Cameroon. Previous analyses of these elements show that they are expressions somewhere on a continuum (grammaticalisation process) between independent proforms and agreement markers hence attributing to them ambiguous functions. The analysis is basically descriptive.

Keywords: Pronominal subjects, Subject Clitics, Distributional patterns, Preverbal particles, Grammaticalisation process.

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1.0 Introduction

The syntax of pronominal subjects gives rise to a range of analytical issues. These issues arise in trying to describe the behaviour of these elements in different environments in the clause. A first approximation of the complexities emerges if we observe that elements that appear to be pronominal subjects can appear not only in argument position that can be filled by lexical DPs, but also in other positions where they are in complementary distribution with lexical DPs. Thus, it has become apparent that pronominal subjects comprise different types, which can be initially identified through their distributional properties. Depending on the details of particular languages, a range of other properties, morphophonological and morphosyntactic appear to be linked to these basic distributional differences. These distributional differences have a theoretical significance. For example, a distinction has emerged between languages in which subject pronouns are overtly required and those languages in which they are not. The latter have often been described as Pro-drop languages (cf Chomsky 1981: 240–8). In pro-drop languages, it is suggested that there is underlyingly a pronoun in subject position that is deleted in clauses lacking a subject pronoun. However, the nature of the form that constitutes such deleted subjects remains controversial since the properties comprising them vary across languages. The existence of subject pro has not been welcome by some linguists. For example, Alexiadou and Anagnopoulou (1998) have argued that the availability of the specifier subject position is parameterised. Accordingly, a distinction exists between those languages in which the subject position is filled by a lexical expression, and those in which the subject position is never realised. They dismiss the existence of subject pro in the [Spec, T] position in the latter by arguing that these languages have overt subject pronouns which appear in [Spec, v] and do not raise to [Spec, T].

Kenyang is SVO. Simple Kenyang clauses obligatorily contain a preverbal element that as well as specifying the aspectual properties of the clause, also encode information about person, number and noun
class. In this latter respect, such an element has characteristics that would lead to it being as *pronounal*. Furthermore, there are Kenyang clauses lacking lexical subjects, where this element would appear to function in some respects like a pronominal subject. In this paper, I shall develop a view of the morphosyntactic characteristics of these preverbal elements, and in order to this, it will be necessary to have some perspective on the properties of pronominals in general and more particularly, their characteristics when their function is subject-like.

Section 1.1 amplifies and provides illustrations of the different ways used by different languages to express pronominal subjects. Here, I shall define the set of properties that have been claimed to be diagnostic of the different forms of pronouns: strong subject pronouns as opposed to weak subject pronouns and clitics. The expression of pronominal subjects in Kenyang is the topic of 1.2. The section assesses whether it is appropriate to regard Kenyang preverbal elements as instantiating the various properties or one of these pronominals, namely, the strong, weak, clitic, etc. type. The last section, 1.3 is the conclusion.

### 1.1 The Expression of Pronominal Subjects: An Overview

In general, clauses do have pronominal subjects. The question then is how to identify these subjects in a given language. Properties of pronominal subjects vary from language to language and therefore a catalogue of pronominal subject tests must be established independently for each language. Often the tests are meant to reflect properties such as which pronominal subject is free and hence independent and which pronominal subject is bound by a verb and thus dependent. Across languages, we can distinguish two types of simple sentences differing in the nature of their subjects. One sort involves a nominal subject that consists of a noun and possibly including some modifiers. The second sort of simple sentence involves a pronominal subject, where there is no nominal subject and where the subject is expressed at most by a morpheme or morphemes coding semantic or grammatical features of the subject such as person, number or gender. Thus, the English example in (1a) is a simple sentence with a nominal subject, while (1b) is a simple sentence with a pronominal subject:

(1)  
\[ a \text{ The players are standing by the door} \]  
\[ b \text{ They are standing by the door} \]

We see in sentence (1b) that the morpheme expressing the subject is a separate word, an independent pronoun. The position of the pronoun *they* overlaps with that of the noun *the players*. The use of the pronoun *they* is a suitable substitute for the lexical noun because it carries features (person and number) which are similar to those carried by the noun. In many languages, however, the only morpheme expressing the subject in a sentence with a pronominal subject will be an affix on the verb coding features of the subject, as illustrated by the third person singular subject prefix [-a-] in (2) from Hakha Lai (in Tibeto-Burman and Myanmar). Such morphemes have been re-
ferred to as *pronounal affixes.*

(2) *a-kal-tsay*

3Sg-Subj-go-Perf

"He has gone"

(Dryer 2005: 410)

The observation that can be drawn from examples (1) and (2) is that a simple sentence with a pronominal subject is one in which the only expression of the subject is a pronominal morpheme, such as an independent pronoun or a pronominal affix on the verb. In some languages, there is no overt morpheme to express the subject, yet the sentence is interpreted in the same way as sentences with overt pronominal morphemes. So the interpretation of the notion *pronominal subject* includes those languages in which the expression is an independent morpheme or an affix incorporated into the verb and those languages in which such expressions are not overtly expressed in the grammar. Dryer (2005: 410–11) presents a cross-linguistic survey of the methods used by different languages for expressing pronominal subjects. The survey shows the following results in figure I:

- 1 Pronominal subjects are expressed by pronouns is subject position that are normally if not obligatorily present 77
- 2 Pronominal subjects are expressed by affixes on verbs 409
- 3 Pronominal subjects are expressed by clitics with variable host 33
- 4 Pronominal subjects are expressed by subject pronouns that occur in a different syntactic position from nominal subjects 63
- 5 Pronominal subjects are expressed only by pronouns in subject position, but these pronouns are often left out 61
- 6 More than one of the above types with none dominant 30

Total 674

We can see in figure I that there are a number of different types of languages based on the method they use for expressing pronominal subjects. Languages of group (1) comprise those in which simple sentences with pronominal subjects normally if not obligatorily contain a pronoun in subject position. An example of such languages is English, where as we saw in sentence (1b) the pronoun *They* occurs in the same syntactic position as the nominal subject *the players* in (1a). The pronoun in (1b) is obligatory. The sentence is ungrammatical without the pronoun (*are happy*).

1) English does not use subject pronouns in imperative sentences such as *(kick the ball; stand up).* The
The second group constitutes the largest group in the world (involving 409 languages) and comprises languages in which the normal expression of pronominal subjects is by means of affixes on the verb. A member of this group is Hakha Lai illustrated above in sentence (2). We observed in (2) that the third person singular prefix [-a-] on the verb constitutes the only expression of the pronominal subject in the clause.

Languages of group three are languages which employ pronominal clitics to express the pronominal subject. Dryer observes that the pronominal clitics in these languages have variable hosts, a property which enables them to attach to different elements in the clause.

He points out that in Chemehuevi (Uto-Aztecan language of South-western United States), pronominal subjects are expressed by enclitics which attach to the first word in the clause as illustrated in the contrast between sentence (4a) having a nominal subject Ann and (4b) in which the first person singular subject clitic =n is attached to the first word in the clause.

\[
\begin{align*}
4 & \quad \text{a Chemehuevi} \\
& \quad a \ Ann \ \text{waha-k} \ \text{timpi} \ \text{punikai-vi} \\
& \quad \text{Ann two-OBJ stone see-PST} \\
& \quad "\text{Ann saw two stones}" \\
& \quad b \ \text{pusus}i=\text{a}=n \ \text{maga-vi} \\
& \quad \text{cat-OBJ=1Sg-Subj give-PST} \\
& \quad "\text{I gave a cat}" \\
\end{align*}
\]

Languages of group four comprise those languages where the expression of pronominal subjects is by means of pronominal words that occur in a syntactic position distinct from that of nominal subjects. This group is said to include both languages where the pronoun normally co-occurs with the noun and languages where it does not. An example is shown in Longgu (an Oceanic language of the Solomon Islands) in (5a), where there is a separate pronominal word e that expresses the fact that the subject is third person singular. This pronominal word, in contrast, is not in subject position as we can see in (5b), where it co-occurs with a separate nominal subject.

\[
\begin{align*}
5 & \quad \text{Longgu} \\
& \quad a \ e \ \text{zudu} \\
& \quad 3\text{Sg sit} \\
& \quad "\text{He/she is sitting}" \\
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\text{constructions we are concerned herewith involve declarative sentences with verbal predicates. Dryer, however, suggests that to be treated as a language of the first group are languages in which it is grammatically possible to have simple sentences without anything in subject position, but in which this option is seldom taken in actual usage.} 
\]
Another language with these characteristics is Fiorentino (a Northern Italian dialect) as shown in (6).

(6) i a Tu parli
    you-Sg-Subj speak
    "You speak"

    b Te tu parli
    you you-Sg-Subj speak
    "You you speak"

ii a Te parli
    you Sg-Subj speak
    "You speak"

    b Ti te parli
    you you-Sg-Subj speak
    "You you speak"

Brandi and Cordin (1989) have argued that such forms as tu and te always precede the verbs in some Northern Italian dialects like Fiorentino and Trentino. Accordingly, they may function as subject clitic or phi-features which are located on INFL.

According to Dryer, the fact that the pronominal word e (including tu and te in Fiorentino and Trentino) is obligatory, even when there is a separate nominal, means that it is in a distinct syntactic position from that of the subject. Thus, the pronominal word and the preceding subject appear in complementary distribution. The morpheme word e in Longgu is distinguished from the affix e in Hakha Lai (since they look alike) in that it constitutes a separate phonological word in Longgu. However, He suggests that pronominal words of this nature be treated as constituting part of a verbal complex which contains the subject pronominal word and the verb, including other grammatical words associated with the verb.²

What is unclear is whether the pronominal word has the same function when it co-occurs with another nominal in these languages. In Longgu, for example, the properties of the morpheme are the same both in clauses with and without a preceding nominal.

Also included as instances of group

² Dryer observes that languages of groups three (that is, languages in which the normal expression of pronominal subjects is by means of pronominal clitics which have variable hosts) and four (that is, languages in which the pronominal expression occurs in a syntactic position distinct from that of nominal subjects) are like languages with pronominal subject affixes on verbs (such as Hakha Lai of group two), in that there are pronominal morphemes somewhere in the clause, though in a position distinct from nominal subjects.
four are languages which are like Longgu in having a word that expresses the pronominal features of the subject, but where these words also code tense-aspect-mood features of the clause. In Gela, an Oceanic language of the Solomon Islands like Longgu, for example, there are words preceding the verb that code both pronominal features of the subject and tense, as illustrated in (7).

(7) Gela
a e vaya kake
3Sg-PST eat taro
“He/she ate taro”
b ku rivi-a na kau
1Sg-PST see-3Sg-Obj ART dog
“I will see the dog”

In contrast to what is presented above, there are languages in which the only expression of pronominal subjects involves pronouns in subject position, but in which such pronouns are optional. These languages belong to group five and an example of such is Japanese, as shown in (8).

(8) Japanese
tegami o yon-da
Letter Obj read-PST
“I/we/he/she/they read the letter”

In languages where this is possible, the pronoun will only be absent if the reference is made explicit in the discourse. In Japanese and related languages of this group, sentences of the type are considered as instances of sentences having pronominal subjects hence they are assigned an interpretation that is the same as that of their counterparts with overt pronouns.

In group six, and the last group, we find languages which involve a mixture of the five groups presented above. As indicated in the schema, this group includes languages in which certain types of clause structure require a pronoun in subject position, while other types of clauses do not. Included in these group are Jakaltek (a Mayan language of Guatemala), Kenga (a Central Sudanic language of Chad) and Finnish. These languages are assumed to be similar in that third person pronouns are obligatory in the clause, while first and second person pronouns can be absent in the clause.

There are, however, languages which appear to be the opposite of these three languages: In Dinka (a Nilotic language of Sudan) and Lamani (Indic), third person pronouns can be dropped, but first and second person pronouns are obligatory. In some of these languages, obligatoriness is said to depend on whether the clause is transitive and on mood forms. In Nias (an Austronesian language of Western Indonesia),
it has been observed that independent pronouns are required in intransitive realis clauses only if the subject is third person inanimate. In transitive clauses and in all irrealis clauses, pronouns are not required.3)

The following observations can be made from the preceding discussion: the expression of pronominal subjects is overt in some languages, while in some others it is covert. That is, there are languages that allow an overt pronoun in a clause and languages that do not. Among the languages that express pronominal subjects overtly, a distinction exists between those languages whose pronominal word is an independent affix and those languages whose pronominal word is an affix on the verb. A further distinction (yet to be examined) is made between languages based on the property of the independent affix, in particular, the strength of the pronominal word.

The independent pronominal subjects have been characterised as strong in some languages, but as weak in some others. There are, however, languages having both strong and weak pronominal subjects. What follows is a further characterisation of the properties of pronominal subjects and our main concern will be to examine the properties of independent pronominal subjects and pronominal affixes that appear on the verb.

1.1.1 Independent Pronominal Subjects

A number of categories of such forms have been recognised. These include, strong subject pronouns whose properties and distribution overlaps with lexical DPs and weak pronouns. Various proposals have been made to characterise the properties that make some pronominal elements strong as opposed to weak. Strong pronouns have lexical content as ordinary DPs as such their distribution in the clause overlaps as exemplified in sentence (1) for English repeated here as (9).

9  a  The players are standing by the door
    b  They are standing by the door

So the pronominal word they in (9b) is a strong subject pronoun. We also note the structural position of the pronoun they and the lexical DPs the players overlaps. Both function as subjects and the case discharged on them is nominative. Like lexical DPs, strong subject pronouns can be conjoined as illustrated in (10).

10  You and I will go swimming tomorrow

Strong subject pronouns can be used as bare responses to questions as in (11).

11  Who dropped the pen into the bin? “She/I/They”

3) For further discussion of these languages (cf Dryer 2005; Macaulay 1996; and Holmberg 2004).
English, however, lacks the weak pronominal counterparts of strong subject pronouns but the distinction is very apparent in some language systems. Weak subject pronouns have been identified in some languages alongside strong pronouns. Unlike their strong counterparts, weak subject pronouns are said to be morphologically and phonologically reduced in form and appear in complementary distribution with their strong counterparts. Despite the reduction in form, weak pronouns are neither phonologically nor morphologically bound to another constituent. However, they do not receive primary sentence accent like their strong subject counterparts. In French, for example, the subject pronouns *je* "I", *tu* "you", and *ils* "they" (third person singular and plural masculine forms) have been identified as weak subject pronouns. Despite their being characterised as weak, their distribution seems to overlap with lexical subjects as illustrated in the following sentences.

(12) a  *Jean est le meilleur artiste*
    "Jean is a good artist"
  b  *il est le meilleur artiste*
    "He is a good artist"

(13) a  *les enfants vont au marché*
    "The children are going to the market"
  b  *ils vont au marché*
    "They are going to the market"

Their strong pronominal counterparts comprise *moi* "me", *toi* "you", *lui* "him" and *eux* "them". The strong forms are often used in the postverbal position but some can be used as subjects when modified as illustrated in (14).

(14) a  *Seul lui/*il aura un grand prix*
    "Only he will have a prize"
  b  *Lui/*il souvent, lit le journal*
    "He often reads the news"

We observe in (14 a, b) that unlike strong pronouns, weak pronominal subjects cannot be modified hence accounting for the ungrammaticality of structures in which the weak pronominal subjects are modified. French weak pronouns cannot be conjoint as shown in (15).

(15) *Toi/*tu et *Moi/*Je auront un grand prix
    "You and I will win a big prize"

In some languages pronominal subjects may be phonologically bound in the sense that they form a unit with their host or at least require the presence of a host.
These are cliticised pronominal subjects. Cliticised pronominals do not seem to be characterised on the basis of strength as independent pronominals. The following section examines the properties of subject pronominal clitics.

1.1.2 Pronominal Subject Clitics

Clitics have the distinguishing property that they are phonologically dependent on an adjacent host or morpheme, thus failing to constitute an independent word.⁴ Despite this they seem to have a surface structure that shows that they are independent and syntactically active. While the existence of dependency between a clitic and other parts of the clause in which it occurs remains undisputed, various authors, however, appear to disagree on the form in which clitics should be characterised. In early generative studies, for example, clitics were considered to be fundamentally syntactic. Perlmutter (1971), for instance, observed that clitics did not form a single grammatical class. Accordingly, some languages have pronominal clitics; some languages have Aux-clitics, still others have determiner clitics. The syntactic approach to clitics has developed in two main directions. First is the approach that suggests that cliticisation is an instance of head-to-head movement constrained by the Head Movement Constraint (cf Travis 1984; Chomsky 1986a). This approach maintains that clitics move from their deep structure position to the target position via Move \( \alpha \). The second approach analysis clitics as generated in place by the base component and standing in some relation to the position occupied by non-clitic arguments (cf Jaeggli 1985a, b; Borer 1984a; Sün er 1988; and Dobrovie-Sorin 1990). Pronominal clitics, for example, are considered to be pronominal NPs that in some languages are subject to special syntactic rules accounting for their placement in the clause (cf Perlmutter 1971). In some languages, both clitic and a full pronominal phrase appear to compete for the same grammatical function, while in other languages, there is complementarity between the clitic and the argument it stands for. A clitic standing for an argument must have the case of the object that it stands for. A pronominal clitic is an argument of a predicate if it is in a standard agreement configuration with the nominal that would realise overtly this argument in the absence of the clitic. The presence of the clitic signals or licenses a particular property of this argument. Most often, clitics are interpreted in the latter as agreement markers which identify a phonologically null pronominal in argument position (Borer 1984a; Sün er 1988). The agreement analysis would allow another NP to co-occur with it hence yielding an instance of clitic doubling. The clitic and its double must match in grammatical features. The position of the doubled NP has been the subject of substantial debate. It has been argued that the doubled NP is not an argument but rather an adjunct related to the following argument which is a clitic. Aoun (1985) suggests that in a situation with clitic-doubling, the clitic often absorbs the theta-role that the lexical NP would require, thus predicting that any double lexical NP in such constructions should be treated as an adjunct. Jaeggli (1985) argues against this

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⁴ clitics have special prosodic features which are not discussed in this chapter. See Perlmutter 1971; Borer 1984a; Sün er 1988; Dobrovie-Sorin 1990, among others.
proposal but does not suggest whether or not the doubled NP is in adposition to the clitic or not. There is, however, a non-syntactic approach to clitics in which a set of constraints and parameters have been developed which define the behaviour of clitics. For example, Klavans (1985) suggests that clitics are classed in a language-particular fashion by the phrase relevant to their positioning, the anchor that hosts the clitics. He proposes that the left to right order expresses the relation of the clitic to its anchor and the direction that it leans phonologically. 5

It must be pointed here that while the two approaches may be distinctive, the literature illustrating the distinction remains unclear.

Cliticised subject pronouns exhibit a range of properties depending on the properties of the language. They often have a reduction in phonetic form and sometimes undergo semantic bleaching. As with non-cliticised pronoun subjects, cliticised pronoun subjects comprise information as to person, number, and gender. We note from the discussion in 4.1 that cliticised pronoun subjects have a special verb adjacent positioning. In many languages the pronominal word is on the verb (in particular, languages of group two). The relationship between the pronominal word and its host may be tight or loose. In Hakha Lai, as indicated in (2), for example, the subject pronoun is cliticised onto the verb, while in Longgu in (5) and Gela in (7), we see a loose relation between the pronominal word and the verb.

Despite the loose relation, Dryer proposes that the pronominal word should be treated as part of a verbal complex comprising a pronominal word and the verb, including various other grammatical words associated with the verb. Does it mean treating the pronominal word as an independent affix subcategorised for by the verb or treating it as a dependent affix on the verb? More clarification is needed on the use of expressions like pronominal word, pronominal affix and pronominal clitic to characterise and hence distinguish languages from one another. We also saw in 4.1 that a pronominal subject clitic can have variable hosts. Thus, while languages like Hakha Lai, Longgu and Gela have the pronominal word on the verb, in some other languages, for example, Chemehuevi in (4) the pronominal subject attaches onto a different element in the clause. Specifically, it appears onto the noun as an enclitic.

1.1.3 Remarks on the Forms of Pronominal Expressions

The following remarks can be made from the preceding discussion. The configurational design of Universal Grammar requires that syntactic functions be attributed to syntactic phrases. In the grammars of some languages, bound morphemes carry functional information as free morphemes. The functional specification of a pronominal argument might be overt or covert. The latter entails the absence of the structural expression of the pronoun as a syntactic NP or DP. In the former, the syntactic expression can be an independent and free morpheme or a bound morpheme. The bound morpheme has been analysed in different ways based on the nature of its dependency.

5) For further discussion on the non-syntactic approaches to clitics see Zivicky (1977); and Klavans (1985).
with adjacent expressions in the clause. A bound pronominal can appear as a clitic on a host which determines the argument function of the clitic or it can appear in the structure detached from its host and hence giving it a kind of independent status. A bound pronominal subject can be analysed as an incorporated pronoun or a pronominal inflection that specifies a full pronominal form. That is, pronominal incorporation can be seen as a phenomenon in which a pronominal element that would otherwise bear a grammatical relation to the verb such as subject is expressed not as an independent pronoun, but rather as a morphological root that is integrated into the inflected verb to form a kind of composite form. Pronominal incorporation is a salient property that has drawn considerable attention over the years for various reasons. One of such reasons that will be mentioned here is that it bears on issues concerning the relationship of morphology to syntax and the lexicon and the choice of particular technique (syntactic or morphological) used to express important semantic relationship between constituents in a clause. Just how this relationship is analysed you can see (Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou 1998; MCfadden 2004; among others). In what follows, I shall illustrate how Kenyang fits into the typologies reviewed in section 1. I by examining the method used to express pronominal subjects in the language.

1.2 The Expression of Pronominal Subjects in Kenyang

In the previous section, we have examined in some detail the variety of properties that have been linked to subject pronouns in a range of languages. The aim in this section is to examine whether Kenyang preverbal particles also instantiate these properties, and we will do this by systematically examining whether the properties associated with strong, weak and clitic are characteristics of Kenyang preverbal particles. Before embarking on this task, there are two preliminary observations to make. First, in encoding phi-features, we have an immediate property that Kenyang expressions share with weak pronominals. However, our key particles also encode aspectual information, a property that does not appear in those seen as characteristic of weak subject pronominals. This suggests that assimilation of the particles to this class would not be appropriate. Perhaps they are independent strong subject pronouns or subject clitics, the following section will unravel the story.

Let us begin by defining the schema for a simple finite clause in Kenyang. A finite clause in Kenyang has the structure in (16a, b).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(16)</th>
<th>a Lexical Subject</th>
<th>Preverbal Particle</th>
<th>V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( \alpha \text{Person} )</td>
<td>( \beta \text{Number} )</td>
<td>( \gamma \text{Nclass} )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


b Preverbal Particle
\[ \alpha \text{Person} \]
\[ \beta \text{Number} \]
\[ \gamma \text{Nclass} \]
\[ \text{Aspect} \]

According to (16a), a finite clause in Kenyang has a lexical subject which is followed by a preverbal particle and the latter is in turn followed by the verb. The lexical subject carries a set of features for person, number and noun class, while the preverbal particle carries corresponding features of the lexical subject in addition to an aspectual feature. The following sentences can be used to represent the schema in (16a).

\[(17) \quad \text{Ashu} \quad \text{à} \quad \text{wai akok} \]
\[\text{Cl.1-Ashu} \ 3\text{Sg-Subj-Perf} \ 	ext{kill pig} \]
"Ashu has killed a pig"

\[(18) \quad \text{bekati} \quad \text{bé} \quad \text{kwen amem mapèp} \]
\[\text{cl.8-books} \ 8\text{Sbj-Perf} \ 	ext{fall} \ 	ext{into} \ 	ext{water} \]
"The books have fallen into water"

For the schema in (16b), we have the following sentences in (19) and (20), all of which are corresponding analogues of sentences (17) and (18) but without a lexical subject.

\[(19) \quad \text{à} \quad \text{wai akok} \]
\[3\text{Sg-Subj-Perf} \ 	ext{kill pig} \]
"He has killed a pig"

\[(20) \quad \text{bé} \quad \text{kwen amem mapèp} \]
\[8\text{Sbj-Perf} \ 	ext{fall} \ 	ext{into} \ 	ext{water} \]
"They have fallen into water"

Despite some irregularities (the morphology of some of the forms may not always show similarities with the preceding nominal), we can observe that the forms comprising such preverbal particles often are morphologically reduced forms of the preceding noun. In particular, they constitute a prefix which happens to be the first syllable of the preceding noun. For example, the preverbal particle bé in sentence (20), as we can see, is the first syllable of the noun bekati "books". Some other examples showing these characteristics are illustrated below.

\[(21) \quad \text{i a sekwop} \quad \text{sè} \quad \text{sñy} \]
\[\text{cl.13Sg-spoon} \ 13\text{Sg-Subj-Imperf} \ 	ext{hot} \]
"The spoon is hot"
We also have cases in Kenyang where a pronominal element occurs in sentence initial position followed by a preverbal particle. The distribution of such pronominal elements, as we shall see, overlaps with lexical subjects. But first, let us identify the pronominal elements and their various properties in the language.

In Kenyang, the following pronominal elements can be used in sentence initial position:

\[(23) \quad me \quad \text{“1sg-I”} \]
\[(23) \quad wo \quad \text{“2sg-you”} \]
\[(23) \quad yi \quad \text{“3sg-he/she”} \]
\[(23) \quad bese \quad \text{“1pl-we”} \]
\[(23) \quad beka \quad \text{“2pl-you”} \]
\[(23) \quad bo \quad \text{“3pl-they”} \]

These are the same pronominal elements that appear in the postverbal position in Kenyang. However, there is a major distinction with respect to their distribution as preverbal and postverbal elements. In sentence initial position, the elements must be followed by a preverbal particle whose features are in part a reflection of the structure of the pronominal element. In contrast, this requirement is absent when they are em-
ployed in the postverbal position. Thus, an object marker with features such as the element is not required in the postverbal position.

In sentence initial position, each of the pronominal elements is followed by a pre-

\[
\begin{align*}
(24) & \quad me \quad m/n/\eta; \quad me \\
& \quad wo \quad \omega \\
& \quad yi \quad a \\
& \quad bese \quad se \\
& \quad beka \quad ba \\
& \quad b\sigma \quad ba
\end{align*}
\]

verbal expression whose properties as mentioned above comprise in part the structure of the preceding pronominal. The element and their corresponding preverbal expressions are shown in (24).

Postverbal particles are not required when the pronouns appear in postverbal po-

\[
\begin{align*}
(25) & \quad a \quad Ako \ \dot{\alpha} \quad kwu \ \me \ \nden \ \eta\kappa \\
& \quad Ako \ 3Sg-Subj-Agr-Perf \ \buy \ \me \ \dress \ \new \\
& \quad \text{"Ako has bought me a new dress"} \\
& \quad b \quad bh\sigma \quad \dot{b}a \quad pouri \ \bese \ \amem \ \mbok \\
& \quad children \ 3Pl-Subj-Agr-Perf \ \push \ \us \ \into \ \hole \\
& \quad \text{"The children have pushed us into a hole"} \\
& \quad c \quad \eta\kappa \ \dot{\alpha} \quad yang \ \\gamma\omega\omega \quad \ne \ \yi \\
& \quad chief \ 3Sg-Subj-Agr-Impf \ \want \ \see \ \(2\text{sg}) \ \and \ \him/\her \\
& \quad \text{"The chief wants to see you and him/her"}
\end{align*}
\]

Unlike the preverbal particles of lexical nouns which as we mentioned above often comprise features of the first syllable of the preceding noun, the situation with respect to pronominal elements appears to be more complicated. The first observation that can be made in connection with (24) is that the preverbal particles of pronominal elements may be composed of

(i) a syllabic nasal prefix \((m, n, \eta)\) which is the first sound of the pronominal element. The choice of each one of them depends on the nature of the first sound of the following verb;

(ii) a suffix instead of a prefix as is the case for the second person singular \(\omega\), and the first person plural \(se\);

(iii) a morpheme formed by combining the first and last sound of the pronominal element as we can see for the second person plural \(ba\);

(iv) a morpheme generally used to mark the singular/plural alternation of nouns in classes 1 and 2 interpreted as [+human] (cf sentences 22, 25). The cases involved here
are the preverbal particles for the third person singular ə, and plural pronominals ba. It is possible, however, to argue in favour of a mutation process involving the vowel ə of bo to ə to give us ba since the first sound of the preverbal particle corresponds to the first sound of the pronominal element. Further, we can also present a case for ə, the third person singular preverbal particle by suggesting rather that it is a case involving suppletion. Which ever position we might want to take, I find the first proposal more accommodating since it does apply even to those noun classes in Kenyang (in particular, the large paradigm comprising all the thirds forms) whose singular/plural alternation remains irregular and unpredictable;

(v) a preverbal particle is not required, instead the pronominal element is used. Here, the pronominal element carries the temporal feature that would have been carried by a supposed preverbal particle as illustrated for the first person singular me in (24). We shall see why?

If we suppose that the preverbal particle not the preceding pronominal element or noun always carries the aspectual information then (24) can be presented as (26), where each of the particles carries aspectual features for the perfect/imperfect.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(26)</th>
<th>me</th>
<th>mì, ni, ti/mé</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wo</td>
<td>ə/5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yi</td>
<td>à/â</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bese</td>
<td>sè/sè</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beka</td>
<td>bà/bà</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bo</td>
<td>bà/bà</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Suppose that (26) describes the structure of Kenyang finite clauses with overt subjects (cf example (16a) as exemplified in the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(27)</th>
<th>i a  me mì</th>
<th>pai ekati</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1Sg</td>
<td>1Sg-Subj-Agr-Perf read book</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I have read a book&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>*me mé</td>
<td>pai ekati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1Sg</td>
<td>1Sg-Perf read book</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I am reading a book&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii a</td>
<td>bese sé</td>
<td>pai ekati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1Pl</td>
<td>1Pl-Subj-Agr-Perf read book</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;We have read a book&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
b bese sê  
1Pl 1Pl-Subj-Agr-Impf read book
“We are reading a book”

(28) i a wo ɔ  
2Sg 2Sg-Subj-Agr-Perf read book
“You have read a book”

b wo ɔ  
2Sg 2Sg-Subj-Agr-Impf read book
“You are reading a book”

ii a beka bâ  
2Pl 2Pl-Subj-Agr-Perf read book
“You(2pl) have read a book”

b beka bâ  
2Pl 2Pl-Subj-Agr-Impf read book
“You(2pl) are reading a book”

(29) i a yi ɔ  
3Sg 3Sg-Subj-Agr-Perf read book
“He has read a book”

b yi ɔ  
3Sg 3Sg-Subj-Agr-Impf read book
“He is reading a book”

ii a bo bâ  
3Pl 3Pl-Subj-Agr-Perf read book
“They have read a book”

b bo bâ  
3Pl 3Pl-Subj-Agr-Impf read book
“They are reading a book”

We can see that sentence (27ib), the corresponding imperfect structure of (27ia) is ungrammatical in Kenyang. The reason is that a full pronominal expression, rather than its reduced form, is always obligatory for the first person singular in finite clauses marked by imperfect aspect. Since the full pronominal is used there is no need for a corresponding preverbal particle hence the pronoun must carry the temporal feature that might have been carried by a preverbal particle. Further, since the full pronoun is used, there is no need for a corresponding copy to precede the form. The presence of such a copy will result to ungrammaticality. This means that sentence (27ib) will be grammatical only if there is no preceding corresponding copy of the pronoun as in (30).
(30) mē  pai ekati
1Sg- Impf read book
"I am reading a book"

Other examples in support of this view are:

(31) a *me mē  rung esie
1Sg 1Sg- Impf go market
"I am going to the market"
b mē  rung esie
1Sg- Impf go market
"I am going to the market"
(32) a *me mē  na nenyę
1Sg 1Sg- Impf cook food
"I am cooking some food"
b mē  na nenyę
1Sg- Impf cook food
"I am cooking some food"

What this also means is that the full pronoun me cannot carry aspectual feature for the perfect as in (33).

(33) a *mē  pai ekati
1Sg- Perf read book
"I have read a book"
b *mē  rung esie
1Sg- Perf go market
"I have gone to the market"
c *mē  na nenyę
1Sg- Perf cook food
"I have cooked some food"

Equivalently, the preverbal particles m, n, ę, which carry the perfect feature cannot carry the imperfect feature. So clauses such as the following are ungrammatical in Kenyang.

(34) a *mē  pai ekati
1Sg 1Sg- Subj-Agr- Impf read book
"I am reading a book"
There remain a number of questions to be answered with respect to the structure of finite clauses in the imperfect for the first person singular. Suppose as earlier indicated that Kenyang finite clauses can also have the representation in (16b) without an overt subject. Sentences (27–29) will be presented alternatively as in (35–37).

\[
\begin{align*}
(35) & \quad \text{i} \quad \text{a} \quad \text{m} \quad \text{pai ekati} \\
& \quad 1\text{Sg-Subj-Perf read book} \\
& \quad "I have read a book" \\
& \quad \text{b} \quad \text{m} \quad \text{"pai ekati} \\
& \quad 1\text{Sg-Impf read book} \\
& \quad "I am reading a book" \\
(36) & \quad \text{i} \quad \text{a} \quad \text{b} \quad \text{pai ekati} \\
& \quad 2\text{Sg-Subj-Agr-Perf read book} \\
& \quad "You(2sg) have read a book" \\
& \quad \text{b} \quad \text{b} \quad \text{pai ekati} \\
& \quad 2\text{Sg-Subj-Agr-Impf read book} \\
& \quad "You(2sg) are reading a book" \\
(37) & \quad \text{i} \quad \text{a} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{pai ekati} \\
& \quad 3\text{Sg-Subj-Agr-Perf read book} \\
& \quad "He/she has read a book"
\end{align*}
\]
Obviously, our structure in (35ib) poses a problem with respect to the interpretation of the schema in (16b). This is the only pronominal element that precedes the verb without an intervening preverbal particle. It is also the only pronominal that carries the aspectual feature of the clause. The rest of the pronouns must have a preverbal particle which is a morphologically reduced form of the full pronoun carrying features which encode person, number and noun class, and which are referential to the features on the pronoun. Because the full pronoun can always be dropped, the language ensures that the aspectual feature that might have been carried by the full pronoun survives on the preverbal particle. We have seen that finite clauses for the first person singular in the imperfect do not allow a copy of the subject pronoun to co-occur with the pronoun. We have seen that for such co-occurrence relation to exist, one of the elements must be a morphologically reduced form of the other. This requirement holds in clauses in which the full pronominal element is followed by a reduced form having a set of features which are referential with the full element. In contrast, the requirement does not hold in clauses involving two pronouns with the same phonological structure, the latter accounts for the ungrammaticality of such clauses in the language. If these clauses do not allow either a copy of its subject in the preceding position, or a following preverbal expression, it becomes apparent that subject drop cannot be allowed in such clauses. This would imply that sentences involving the first person singular imperfect will also be ungrammatical if the preverbal subject pronoun is dropped as in (38).

(38) i a mē pai ekati
     1Sg-Impf read book
     “I am reading a book”

     b "pai ekati
     read book
     “I am reading a book”

ii a mē rung esse
     1Sg-Impf go market
     “I am going to the market”
b *rung esie
   go     market
   "I am going to the market"

iii a mē   na nepe
   1Sg-Impf cook food
   "I am cooking some food"

b *na nepe
   cook food
   "I am cooking some food"

A consequence of this is that pro-drop is not allowed for the first person singular pronoun in clauses interpreted in the imperfect.

Next, consider the syntactic representation of clauses that allow subject drop and clauses that do not. The syntactic representation for a sentence such as (35ia) will be as in (39),

(39) (me) mē   pai ekati
    (I) 1Sg-Subj-Agr-Perf read book
    "I have read a book"

(40) (S) Preverbal Particle       V       O
     mē       pai       ekati

But what is the syntactic representation for the imperfect counterpart of (35ia) that does not allow reduplication of subject?

(41) mē   pai ekati
    1Sg-Impf read book
    "I am reading a book"

It does appear here that in (41) we have a representation similar to what is obtained in English, where a sentence is characterised as having a subject directly followed by a verb and possibly an object.

(42) S  V  O
    mē   pai ekati
    1Sg-Impf read book
    "I am reading a book"

Since mē is a full independent pronoun having features similar to the pronouns that precede preverbal particles, it would be obvious to see mē appearing in the same syntactic position as the former. One way of arguing against the proposal that preverbal
particles are nominative pronominal subjects is to observe that in (35ia), for example, me looks like a nominative subject here bearing the agent theta-role. If this is so, nominative case and the agent role are already “used up” by me and are not available for the preverbal particle m. This would seem to suggest that the preverbal expressions can never be interpreted as full independent forms, but as elements that carry features that are referential to enable the identification of an overt or missing subject.

But what if we suppose that the distribution of the first person singular imperfect overlaps with the distribution of preverbal particles because both precede the verb? In this context, we are assuming that they both have the same characteristics and values. Recall, however, that all preverbal particles are the reduced forms of independent elements. By implication, the preverbal particles cannot be regarded as independent nominative pronominal subjects in Kenyang in the sense of (Mbuagbaw 2000), and the literature of languages related to Kenyang, for example, Denya (Abangma 1994). Further evidence in support of the fact that the preverbal expressions do not have independent pronominal interpretation comes from the following.

The preverbal particles do not exhibit properties set out to instantiate nominative pronominal subjects. For example, preverbal particles cannot occur as bear responses, as predicate nominals or in coordinate structures. Sentence (43) illustrates the use of Kenyang pronouns as single-word (bare) responses to questions. The preverbal particles are excluded from this context.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(43)</th>
<th>Agha á pai ekati? me/*m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>who 3Sg-Subj-Agr-Perf read book</td>
<td>me/*1Sg-Subj-Agr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Who has read a book?&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Me&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The pronominal form can be used predicatively, while the preverbal particles are excluded from this context as shown in (44).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(44)</th>
<th>tsi me /*m, n, ŋ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>is me /*1Sg-Subj-Agr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;It is me/That’s me&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When a pronominal argument is coordinated with another argument, the independent form of the pronoun must be used. This is the sole context in which such pronouns occur as arguments of the verb. The case in point is exemplified in (45).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(45)</th>
<th>a me ne Ako sê rung ekati</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1Sg and Ako 1Pl-Subj-Impf go school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Ako and I are going to school&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
b *m, n, ŋ ne Ako sè rung ekati
1Sg-Subj-Agr and Ako 1Pl-Subj-Agr-Impf go school
“Ako and I are going to school”

In contrastive focus, the full form of the pronominal is used and not the preverbal particles as observed in the ungrammaticality of (46) in the following:

(46) a tsì me ke ŋi rẹp ŋkap Eba, pè yi
is 1Sg who 1Sg-Subj-Agr-Perf steal money Eba, Neg him/her
“It is me who has stolen Eba’s money, not him/her”
b *tsì ŋi ke ŋi rẹp ŋkap Eba, pè a
is 1Sg-Subj-Agr who 1Sg-Subj-Agr-Perf steal money Eba, Neg him/her
“It is me who has stolen Eba’s money, not him/her”

Up to now the proposition that the preverbal particles in the above constructions are nominative pronouns seems untenable. It would appear that they are not, and thus, we might, therefore, suppose that they are either auxiliaries or pronominal clitics.

1.2.1 Preverbal Particles as Auxiliaries

Cross-linguistically, auxiliaries are a closed class of verbal elements. They seem to have developed generally from main verbs such as be, have, stay, or go. They can be distinguished from main verbs by semantic and syntactic criteria: They have a reduced lexical meaning and a valence which is different from main verbs. Auxiliaries do not select nominal arguments but rather main verbs as their arguments. In this context, they occur as exponents of morphological categories such as tense, mood, voice, number, and person. It remains, however, controversial whether these differences from main verbs are sufficient to treat auxiliaries as separate categories. In terms of subcategorisation frame, two main ways have been proposed to analyse auxiliaries. One sort treats auxiliaries as a special type of raising verb which takes two arguments, a subject and a complement (cf Pollard and Sag 1994; Bresnan 2001). The other view analyses auxiliaries as elements which carry features that contribute tense/aspect or voice information to the clause, but which on the other hand lack a subcategorisation frame (cf Bresnan 2001; King 1995; Butt et al. 1999).

In connection with the former approach, auxiliaries are predicates which take a subject and a complement. The subject is identified with the subject of their complement as in (47).

(47) She has disappeared

Languages which consider auxiliaries as morphological markers of tense, aspect, and voice (for example, English and French) will require that the following word, often a verb or another auxiliary assumes a particular form. In English, for example, the basic order is: (perfective have)-(progressive be)-(passive be). Perfective have
requires a following past participle form; progressive *be* requires a present participle form; and passive *be* a passive participle form as shown in (48).

(48) a They have won the race
    b He is writing a letter
    c It might have been complicated

The use of auxiliaries in many language systems is optional. That is, sentences containing auxiliaries will still be grammatical even if the auxiliaries are omitted. Obviously there are semantic differences in the interpretation of the time frame in such clauses. For example, sentence (47) can also have the representation in (49) without the auxiliary.

(49) She disappeared

This also goes for sentences (48a, b) shown here as (50).

(50) a They won the race
    b He writes/wrote a letter

However, the use of auxiliaries appears to be obligatory for passive constructions in English.

(51) a The writer wrote a letter
    b The letter was written by the writer  (active clause)  (passive clause)

Unlike in English, the preverbal particles as we have observed are obligatory in every Kenyang finite clause (exception being with the first person singular imperfect).

The absence of such particles in the clause will result to ungrammaticality as indicated in the following sentences.

(52) i a yi à pai ekati
    3Sg 3Sg-Subj-Agr-Perf read book
    "He has read a book"

b *yi pai ekati
    3Sg read book
    "He has read a book"

ii a besè sé pai ekati
    3Pl 3Pl-Subj-Agr-Perf read book
    "We have read a book"
Their obligatoriness apparently makes them unsuitable as auxiliaries in the language. Perhaps they are pronominal clitics.

### 1.2.2 Preverbal Particles as Pronominal Clitics

At first glance, the expressions in Kenyang appear to share the distribution of pronominal clitics given that they can occur immediately adjacent to the verb, a position that can never be filled by a DP subject other than the first person singular pronoun in the imperfect. A closer look at the behaviour of these elements in the clause reveals a number of discrepancies between the nature and distribution of subject clitics of some languages in contrast with Kenyang. The expressions encode phi-features and aspectual information, properties which do not appear in those seen as characteristics of subject clitics, thus, suggesting that assimilation of the particles to this class would not be appropriate.

Second, the relationship between the particle and its host is said to be bound such that does not allow any intervening material between them. We see, for example, that in Hakha Lai and Chemehuevi the pronominal affixes are bound onto their respective hosts. In Hakha Lai, it is bound onto the verb.

\[(53)\]
\[
\text{a-kal-say}
\]
\[
3\text{Sg-Subj-go-Perf}
\]
\[
"\text{He has gone}"
\]

In Chemehuevi, in contrast, it appears as an enclitic onto the first word in the clause.

\[(54)\]
\[
\text{puusi-a=m maga-vi}
\]
\[
cat-\text{Obj}=1\text{Sg-Subj give-PST}
\]
\[
"\text{I gave a cat}"
\]

In Kenyang, the story is different. The particles show a degree of independence (they must not necessarily be attached to a host) with respect to their host in the presence of intervening materials. For instance, aspectral modals, adverbials and polarity particles can intervene between the element and the host, thus, giving the element a kind of independent status.

### 1.2.3 Preverbal Particle-Neg-(Adv/Asp Modal)-V

Kenyang aspectual modals consist of \textit{mai} “used to”, \textit{kwai} “may/might/ought” and \textit{tsay} “will”. Their use in the language is illustrated in the following:
Adverbial modifiers that appear between them are nangha “already” and re “yet”. They appear in the following constructions.

(58) Enoh à nangha petsem ebhe
Enoh 3Sg-Subj-Agr-Perf already return farm
“Enoh has already returned from the farm”

(59) Enoh à bhiki re petsem ebhe
Enoh 3Sg-SubAgr-Perf Neg yet return farm
“Enoh has not yet return from the farm”

The adverbial re “yet” is used to denote contrast in constructions having nangha “already”. So it must always be preceded by negation.

Kenyang distinguishes four negative elements in the clause. These are bhiki, pu, pê and ke. They are used as illustrated in (60).

(60) bhiki tse yokok ntswi
2Sg-Subj-Agr-Perf Neg give chicken corn
“You have not fed the chickens with corn”

(61) barre ba pê nyô ebha mape
women 3Pl-Subj-Agr-Perf Neg sweep courtyard
“The women are no longer sweeping the courtyard”

(62) nfo à pu kem etsem e ne etôk
chief 3Sg-Subj-Agr-Perf Neg holding meeting with community
“The chief is not having a meeting with the community”

(63) se ke tok manep
1Pl-Subj-Agr (Subjunctive) Neg fetch water
“We shouldn’t fetch water”

It is possible to have a string of these particles in a single clause as indicated in (64) and (65).
(64) Ayuk à bhiki re kwat be bho skati
Ayuk 3Sg-Subj-Agr-Perf Neg yet ought to start school
"Ayuk ought not begin school now"

(65) m pu mai tfoke ne bho
1Sg-Subj-Agr-Perf Neg used to live with them
"I never used to live with them"

In connection with Dryer, Kenyang will be characterised as belonging to languages of group four. These are languages where the expression of pronominal subjects is by means of pronominal words that occur in a syntactic position distinct from that of nominal subjects (cf examples in Longgu and Gela). Kenyang is like Gela in that the pronominal word in the latter codes both pronominal features of the subject and aspectual information.

(66) e vapa kake
3Sg-PST eat taro
"He/she ate taro"

Kenyang is similar to Longgu since Longgu also allows intervening material between the pronominal word and the verb as in (67).

(67) mwela-geni e vusi angi
child-woman 3Subj almost cry
"The child almost cry"

Dryer argues that the fact the pronominal word *e* in these languages is obligatory, even when there is a separate nominal subject, means that it is in a distinct syntactic position from that of the subject. His remarks suggest that pronominal words of this nature be viewed as being part of a verbal complex, which contains the subject pronominal word and the verb, including other grammatical words associated with the verb. It is not clear whether being part of a verbal complex they should be treated as clitics or just as independent subjects subcategorised for by the verb that appear in the subject position in a clause. In this respect, the characterisation of Kenyang preverbal particles remains unclear.

Kenyang also exhibits characteristics of languages of the last group which involve a mixture of the different methods of expressing pronominal subjects in different languages. This includes languages in which certain types of clauses require a pronoun in subject position, while other types of clauses do not. We have seen that a pronominal subject is obligatory for imperfect clauses involving the first person singular, but the presence of the rest of the pronouns is optional in subject position.

What we have seen up till now is a
characterisation of some elements assumed to function as pronominal subjects in Kenyang. We saw that the element itself is ambiguous between two functions: as a subject and as an object and that the only way to resolve this ambiguity is by determining the nature of their distribution in Kenyang finite clauses. In subject position, it must be followed by a preverbal particle but such particles are not allowed when they appear as objects. Is there is an alternative way of characterising such pronominal elements without resorting to ambiguity? Perhaps the grammaticalisation process discussed in the following section can shed some light on the behaviour of the particles.

1.2.4 The Grammaticalisation Process and Subject Pronouns

Grammaticalisation is a process involving a gradual drift in a grammar in the use of linguistic expressions. The process may see a function word or affix evolve out of a lexical morpheme (cf lexical item > morpheme model by Hopper and Traugott 1991); or the evolution of syntactic and morphological structure through fixing of discourse strategies (the syncretization process in the sense of Givón 1976). The result often is a potential shift in category. The size of the shift depends on the function of the new category in the grammar. Where the shift is maximally saturated on the cline, the source category may eventually disappear or attributed some other specialisation. However, where the shift is gradual, the new category may acquire a new function in addition to its inherent function (ambiguous function) depending on the nature of its distribution. The grammaticalisation of subject pronouns has been attested in some African languages. Verbal agreement systems in these languages seem to have evolved historically from the morphological incorporation of pronouns into verbs or other heads. The cases that have been investigated reveal that the pronominal system is in a transitional process between independent pronoun and agreement markers with the same form of pronoun having ambiguous functions. The optionality in features following (Bresnan 2001: 146) represents a step in the gradual erosion and loss of the independent forms. The pronominal inflection and the independent pronoun have different properties: the former is the reduced form of the latter. Despite this distinction, the pronominal inflection can play the same role in the clause that would have been played by an independent pronoun. The literature that explains the historical development of such pronouns seems clear for some African languages, however, the accounts presented for some other languages remain unclear and controversial.

The grammaticalisation pathways for preverbal particles in Kenyang reveal that they are expressions somewhere on a continuum between independent pronouns and agreement markers (Mbuagbaw 2000) and Abangma (1994) for Denya, a language related to Kenyang. We have seen in Kenyang that preverbal particles do not have the properties of their independent pronominal counterparts hence the issue of having ambiguous function is untenable in the language. Further, the distribution of preverbal particles and independent pronouns does not overlap; they are in complementary distribution so they cannot share the same function in the language.

We can also dismiss the ambiguous na-
ture identified above by supposing that the pronominal elements are in fact accusative pronouns but which appear in subject position as default accusatives. The implication here is that there are no overt pronominal subjects in Kenyang. Equivalently nominative case is not overtly marked in the language. As a result, the subject position in Kenyang can be identified as always obligatorily null. Since the presence of the default accusatives is optional in the language, the use of preverbal expressions carrying features that reflect such subject becomes indispensable in the language. It was also revealed that despite the independent status of Kenyang preverbal particles, the fact that the preverbal particles cannot be used in coordination, or in isolation as bare responses to questions shows their lack of independent status. Suppose this view then every Kenyang finite clause has as primary the structure shown in (16b) without overt subjects and that there is complementary distribution between the overt subject and the preverbal particle in clauses having an overt subject. The preverbal particles are spell-outs of a cluster of features comprising phi-features of the overt or covert subject, in addition to an aspectual feature. They are not independent pronominal subjects.

1.3 Conclusion

In this paper, a number of issues potentially bearing on the morphosyntactic nature of the Kenyang preverbal particles have been considered. In every Kenyang finite clause there is a preverbal particle which may or may not follow a lexical subject. Adjacency between the preverbal particle and the verb can be interrupted by intervening materials, thus giving it a kind of independent status. The particle carries features which encode aspect, person, number and noun class. Its identification as a strong pronominal, weak pronominal or subject clitic fails to be justified on the basis of criteria set out to identify pronominal elements. Our conclusions are that none of these approaches provides the appropriate tools for understanding the nature of these items. It is necessary, therefore, to seek an alternative and as we have seen, this alternative embraces a view on the preverbal particles that is quite different to what has been considered by some authors, they are not independent pronouns but rather spell-outs of a cluster of features comprising phi-features and aspect.

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