

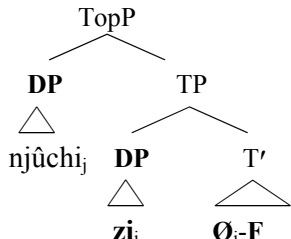
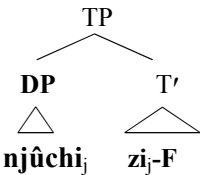
The case for null subject verb agreement morphology in Bantu

1 The issue (i) In *Topic, pronoun and agreement in Chichewa*, Bresnan & Mchombo (BM, 1987) argue that in (1), the subject marker (SM) is ambiguous between an incorporated subject pronoun bound to the preverbal lexical DP, a topic; and the morphological realization of subject-verb agreement (SVA). Within the minimalist framework, such a claim would give rise to the structures in (2), with SpecTP filled with SM *qua* DP *per* Chomsky's (1995: 249) claim that a clitic is a D, or with a lexical subject DP. Notice that in (2a), SVA is not phonetically realized. Since in (2) the subject DPs occur in the same syntactic configuration, it is not clear what forces the functional head associated with SVA to activate SVA morphology in the overt syntax in (2b) but not in (2a), as if to motivate a split in SVA due to the pronoun status of the subject DP. It is worth noting that clitic subjects as well as lexical subject DPs trigger SVA in a language like French. In any event, BM's claim calls into question standard assumptions relative to SVA in Bantu, and the conclusion that in (2b), SM is SVA. The claim in (2a) is of further theoretical interests: not only does it steer away from the assumed *pro*-drop nature of Bantu, it also stands against the traditional view that a verbal complex (VC) is a single word, or Chomsky's (1995) claim that a verb is stored in the lexicon as a fully inflected morphological form.

(ii) As shown in various studies (e.g., Meeussen 1971, Bokamba 1976), in *wh*-extraction resulting in V-S order, SM cannot co-occur with a postverbal subject DP, (3a) vs (3b). Furthermore, local *wh*-extraction of the subject DP results in the presence of a relative marker (RM) only. Thus, "coindexed" SM and RM cannot co-occur (3c). Various accounts of this fact fall short of an adequate explanation. E.g., to explain such restriction in (3c) derived then as in (3d), Kinyalolo (1991) postulates a morphological economy requirement (adopted in Carstens 2002) such that "in an adjoined structure, AGR on a lower head is inert iff its features are predictable from AGR on a higher head." In view of further facts (e.g., (4)-(5) infra), this constraint is spurious: V does not raise to T/C, undermining the motivation for the requirement.

2 The proposal Based on KiLega, I propose that SVA morphology is null; and that SM or RM is merged as a DP, an independent syntactic object, not as features of a fully inflected V. I offer two arguments that establish this. First, SM and RM appear in cases involving null or zero copula (4), an unusual fact for agreement markers. If they are pronouns, the facts follow. Second, the coordinator **nũ** 'and' can, as it were, split a VC in instances involving clause coordination (5). Taking **nũ** as a syntactic head (Larson 1990), these facts are puzzling in view of the fact that **nũ** coordinates XPs (6). Assuming the Multiple Spell-Out (MSO) hypothesis, the data are naturally accounted for if **nũ** is a second-position clitic. Anderson (1993) holds the view that the domain within which a 2nd position clitic is placed may be parsed as a phonological or syntactic structure. I claim that in the derivation of (5), **nũ** placement takes place after the Spell-out of YP, when the latter left edge as well as the right edge of the next, adjacent structure are "known" (7). For this to be, SM or RM and the verb must enter the numeration independently from one another. The facts point to the conclusion that in general, the verb does not reach the highest Infl element, implying that V-features of T are weak. The explanation for why SM and RM cannot co-occur in local *wh*-extraction of the subject DP is straightforward. Following Chomsky's (1995) claim that a clitic raises as an XP from a θ -position, for them to co-occur, SM and RM would have to be merged as a single constituent sharing the same θ -role, but attracted separately by different features. Aside from the conceptual problem with this view, the sentences should violate FI. This derives Ouhalla's (1993) *Anti-Agreement Effect* according to which a pronoun must be A-bar disjoint from a closely located antecedent, lest it be interpreted as a resumptive pronoun (8). Finally, as for the absence of SM in V-S order in general: assuming that there is no clitic doubling, the sentence violates FI. Any preverbal lexical DP co-occurring with SM or RM therefore merges into the Spec of a category high up in the left periphery.

- (1) *Njũchi zi – ná – lúm - a alenje.*
bees SM-PAST-bite-INDIC hunters
'The bees bit the hunters.' (BM 1987, p. 744)

- (2) a.  b. 
- (3) a. *báněnyú bá - ku - lim - ág - á mupunga bú - b - o.*
2buddy:IIPL:POSS 2SM-PROG-farm-HAB-FV 3rice 14RED-14AGR-D
'Your buddies cultivate rice that way.'
- b. *ú bú - (*bá) - ku - lim - ág - á báněnyú mupunga bú - b - o.*
COP 14RM-2SM-PROG-farm-HAB-FV 2buddy:IIPL:POSS 3rice 14RED-14AGR-D
'That's how your buddies cultivate rice.'
- c. *mwána ú - (*á) - ku - yan - ág - á n' isé ngúlú...*
1child 1RM-(*1SM)-PROG-joke-HAB-FV with 1father:IIISG:POSS 1great
'the child who usually jokes with his / her grand-father...'
- d. $[_{CP} Op_k [C RM_k-C^{\circ} [_{FP} t_{XP} [F SM_k-F^{\circ} [_{YP} \dots [_{VP} t_{OP} \dots]]]]]]$
- (4) a. *Ámbu u mu - bibu w - a bibúka. Vw - a kú - no ú - mon - é !*
EVID IISG 1agr-strong 1agr-AM 8fight come-IMP 17AGR-D IISG-see-SUBJ
'You are rumored to be a strong fighter. Come over here; you'll see !'
- b. *ikozí ly - á kw' ibúngu lí - tik - y - é mĩlí kú mutĩma.*
5stone 5agr-AM 17 5shore 5SM-come out-CAUS-SUBJ 6crab 17RM 3heart
'A stone (lying) on the shore should bring crabs from where the heart is.'
- (5) a. *tw - á - nũ - sá - li - á magomá.* b. *tú - nũ - sá - li - á magomá.*
IPL-A-&-start-eat-FV 6plantain IPL-&-start-eat-FV 6plantain
'And we started eating plantains.'
- (6) *mikilá z - á - bás - á Musémé mu mubili, nũ mu méso, nũ mu myěmbé.*
4blood 4CL-A-spurt out-FV M 18 3body & 18 6eye & 18 4nostril
'Blood spurted out of Museme's body; (and) from the eyes, and from the nostrils.'
- (7) $[_{XP} [_{X^{\circ}} \acute{a} / \emptyset] nũ [_{YP} \dots]]$
- (8) * $[_{CP} wh-SUBJ_k [_{TP} pro_k Agr_k-V]]$

References

- Anderson, S. R. 1993. Wackernagel's revenge: Clitics, morphology, and the syntax of second position. *Language* 69.1: 68-98.
- Bokamba, E. G. 1976. *Question Formation in Some Bantu Languages*. unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University.
- Bresnan, J. W. & S. A. Mchombo 1987. Topic, pronoun and agreement in Chichewa. *Lge* 63.4: 741-782.
- Carstens, V. 2002. *Against Spec-head Agreement: inversion, intervention, and the EPP*. ms.
- Chomsky, N. 1995. *The Minimalist Program*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Kinyalolo, K. 1991. *Syntactic Dependencies and the SPEC-HEAD Agreement Hypothesis in KiLege*. Unpublished PhD dissertation. Los Angeles, CA: UCLA.
- Larson, R. 1990. Double Objects Revisited: Reply to Jackendoff. *Linguistic Inquiry* 21.4: 589-632.
- Meeussen, A. E. 1971. Relative Clauses in Bantu. *Studies in African Linguistics*, Supplement 2: 3-10.
- Ouhalla, J. 1993. Subject-Extraction, Negation and the Anti-Agreement Effect. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 11.3: 477-518.