

Subject Agreement versus Subject Pronoun

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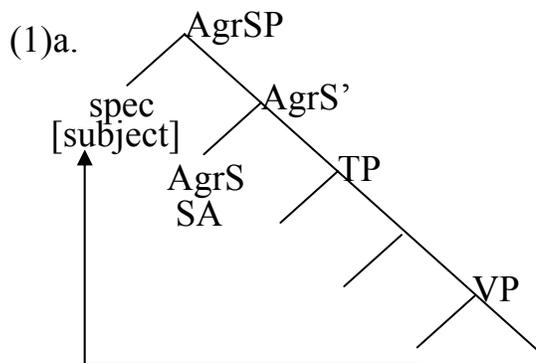
1. Introduction

Bresnan & Mchombo (1987) → Seminal article on the status of agreement in Chicheŵa

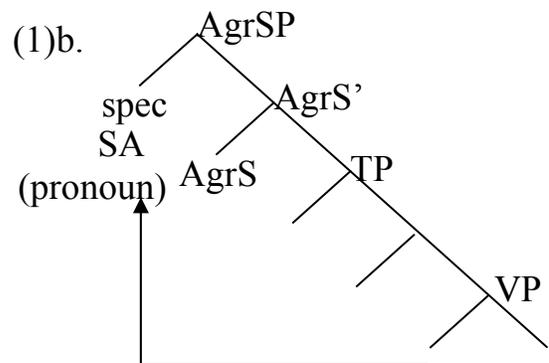
Keach (1995) → Applied B&M's methodology to varieties of Swahili, concluding that SA in Swahili behaves both as agreement as well as pronoun.

Zwart (1997) → Argues essentially for an auxiliary analysis of the T marker, and then suggests that SA is a pronoun cliticized to the auxiliary verb.

I argue against the pronominal analysis of subject agreement.



Agreement Analysis



Pronominal Analysis

(2) Kibaki a – li – shind – a
Kibaki SA_{3s} – past – win – IND
'Kibaki won.'

In Habitual HU-clauses, SA is obligatorily absent:

- (4) a. Watu wa Kenya hu - wa - pend - a watoto
people of Kenya hab-OA_{3pl}- like - IND children
'People of Kenya like children'
- b. *Watu wa Kenya wa - hu - wa - pend - a watoto
people of Kenya SA_{3pl}-hab-OA_{3pl}- like - IND children
'People of Kenya like children'

In HU-clauses, where SA is absent, postverbal subjects and the raising of subject to matrix topic position are ungrammatical as illustrated in examples (5a,b):

- (5)a. *Hu - wa - pend - a watoto, watu wa Kenya
hab-OA_{3pl}- like - IND children people of Kenya
'like children, people of Kenya'
- b. *Watu wa Kenya ni-na-fikir - i kuwa hu - wa - pend-a watoto
people of Kenya SA_{1s}-pres-think-IND that hab-OA_{3pl}- like - IND children
'People of Kenya, I think that, like children'

2.2 Subject Wh- Questions

Principles from Bresnan & Mchombo (1987), used by Keach (1995):

- (6) i. Relative pronouns bear TOPIC function;
ii. Questioned constituents bear FOCUS function;
iii. An argument cannot bear both TOP and FOC function in the same clause.

Swahili subject wh-questions:

- (7) nani_i a_i - me -end-a ?
who SA_{3s}-pr.prf-go-IND
who has gone?

2.3 Idioms

- (8) a. Ni - li - fikir - i kuwa mtindi u - me - va - a Asha
SA_{1s}-past-think-IND that brew SA₃-pr.prf.-wear-IND Asha
'I thought that Asha is drunk'
(lit: I thought that the brew has covered Asha)

- b. *Mtindi ni – li – fikir – i kuwa u - me – va - a Asha
 Brew SA_{1s}-past-think-IND that SA₃-pr.prf.-wear-IND Asha
 (lit: (As for) the brew, I thought that it has covered Asha)

3. Additional arguments against a pronominal analysis

3.1 Quantification

If SA is a pronominal subject, then the lexical overt subject must be a topic. One property of topics is that they cannot be quantifiers (Lasnik & Stowell, 1991; Rizzi, 1992):

- (9) a. I did everything
 b. *Everything, I did (it)
- (10) a. Nothing is impossible
 b. *Nothing, (it) is impossible

In Swahili, this restriction also holds. In (10a), the object (*kila kitu*) is in object position, and is ungrammatical when topicalized, as in (10b).

- (11) a. a – li – nunu – a kila kitabu
 SA_{3s} –past–buy–IND every book
 ‘She bought every book’
- b. * kila kitabu, a – li – (ki)–nunu– a [t]
 every thing SA_{3s}–past–(OA₇)–buy–IND [t]
 ‘Every book, she bought’

Under a pronominal analysis of SA, the preverbal DP is in topic position, and so a quantifier should be ungrammatical, contra to fact:

- (12) a. kila mtoto a – li – nunu– a ki – tabu
 every child SA_{3s}–past–buy–IND 7–book
 ‘Every child bought a book.’
- b. kila ki–tabu ki – li – nunuli – w – a na mtoto
 every 7–book SA₇–past– buy –passive–IND by child
 ‘Every book was bought by a child.’

3.2 Answer to question

The answer to a question cannot be a topic:

- (13) a. Who arrived early?
b. ?? As for John, he arrived early
c. John arrived early

In Swahili, the preverbal DP can be the answer to a question:

- (14) a. nani a – li – fik – a mapema
who SA_{3s}–past–arrive–IND early
‘Who arrived early?’
b. ?? Juma, a – li – fik – a mapema
Juma, SA_{3s}–past–arrive–IND early
‘Juma, he arrived early.’
c. Juma a – li – fik – a mapema
Juma SA_{3s}–past–arrive–IND early
‘Juma arrived early.’

3.3 Typology of agreement and clitics

Among the languages of the Takic family, SA has been particularly well-studied in four languages: Luiseño, Cupeño, Serrano, and Cahuilla. In Luiseño, the unmarked word order is shown in (15a) (examples are from Steele, 1995), where the clitic (*up*) is in second position following the subject (*hengeemal*):

- (15) a. hengeemal up heyiq Subject-clitic-verb
boy 3sg is:digging
‘The boy is digging’
b. heyiq up hengeemal Verb-clitic-subject
is:digging 3sg boy
‘The boy is digging’
c. * hengeemal heyiq up Subject-verb-clitic
boy is:digging 3sg

In (15a), the unmarked order is subject-clitic-verb. According to Steele (1995, p.1227), (15b) with the verb preceding the clitic is semantically non-distinct from (15a). (15c) – where the clitic sequence is not second – is ungrammatical. This is also true of two of the other three most well-studied languages: Cupeño and Serrano. Thus the order of the clitic and verb is free, provided the clitic is in second position. However, Cahuilla, has a set of bound pronominal elements that are obligatorily preverbal. Thus the order clitic-verb is grammatical, but verb-clitic is ungrammatical irrespective of whether the clitic is in second position or not. These clitics are “generally taken to be prefixes rather than (pronouns)” (Steele, 1995, p.1227)

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Why did Keach find ambiguous results?

Several possibilities: - Multiple sources
- Multiple dialects

Why are there no ambiguous results here?

- A single dialect (as best as can be determined)
- A somewhat newer and authentic variety of Swahili than Kiswahili Sanifu

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What is happening in Swahili such that there is such a debate?

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