

Anti-Agreement and [Person] in Bantu

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1. Introduction

In many languages the agreement relation between an argument and a verb is suppressed or altered when the argument is extracted. These so-called anti-agreement effects (AAEs) have been discussed for Berber, Breton, Irish, Turkish, Italian dialects, and other languages as well (see Ouhalla 1993, among others). Recently, Scheider-Zioga (2000, 2002, 2007) and Cheng (2006) have discussed AAE in Bantu languages. In some Bantu languages, AAE occurs in the context of subject extraction: the subject agreement marker that normally occurs in an SVO sentence is replaced by a different marker that appears only when the subject has been extracted. An example from Kinande, taken from Schneider-Zioga (2007), appears in (1). In (1a) the canonical agreement marker /a-/ is prefixed to the verb. In (1b), however, the subject has been extracted and the /a-/ marker is replaced by a different marker, /u-/. (1c) shows that the canonical marker is impossible in this context:

- (1) a. Kambale a-langIra Marya *Kinande*
Kambale 3SG-saw Mary (Schneider-Zioga 2007)
'Kambale saw Mary.'
- b. IyOndI yO u-langIra Marya
Iwho IREL AAE-saw Mary
'It is who that saw Mary?'
- c. *IyOndI yO a-langIra Marya
Iwho IREL 3SG-saw Mary

In this paper, I will examine the morphosyntactic properties of Bantu AAE in detail. I will argue that the facts of Bantu AAE suggest a particular analysis for this phenomenon that is compatible with certain general proposals about the nature of extraction and agreement as put forth in works like Richards (2001) and Boeckx (2003). I will also argue that the Bantu facts suggest that AAE does not involve reference to phi-features generally, but to the feature [person] specifically.

2. Previous Accounts

Recently, both Cheng (2006) and Schendier-Zioga (2007) have offered explicit accounts for AAE in Bantu. I briefly discuss them here.

2.1 Cheng (2006)

Cheng (2006) begins with observations about the difference between object and subject relative clauses in Bemba. While relativized objects are followed by a relative marker that is identical to a full demonstrative (2b), relativized subjects are followed by the verb which carries a prefixed relative marker as well as an anti-agreement marker (2c).

- (2) a. umulumendo a-ka-belenga ibuku *Bemba*
Iboy 3SG-FUT-read 5book
'The boy will read the book.'

Schneider-Zioga notes that if in fact subjects were merged in the CP domain all the time, they would create a minimality violation in case another argument were to be extracted to a higher position in the CP domain. She argues that in these cases subjects are merged in SpecVP (and subsequently move to SpecIP), thereby preemptively avoiding such a violation.

Interestingly, as in Cheng's account, anti-locality also plays a role in Schneider-Zioga's view in cases of subject extraction. If the subject were present in the CP domain and then extracted to another specifier also in the CP domain, this would lead to an anti-locality violation under Grohmann's (2000) definition. Rather than accepting that such violations can be repaired by copy spell-out, however, Schneider-Zioga argues that the grammar conspires to avoid such violations; therefore, in cases of subject extraction, the subject is merged in SpecVP rather than SpecTopP. From SpecVP, it raises to SpecIP from whence it is extracted into the CP domain, never encountering an anti-locality violation.¹

Schneider-Zioga's account of AAE rests on the assumption that I must lack phi-features in order to avoid licensing *pro* and allow the subject to be merged in the SpecVP theta position. In cases of subject extraction, then, the phi-features of I are suppressed which in turn eliminates I's ability to license *pro* and requires the subject to be merged in its theta position. One problem with this account, however, involves constructions in which an argument other than subject has been extracted. Recall, it is Schneider-Zioga's claim that in such cases the subject is merged clause-internally to avoid a minimality violation. However, this does not seem to require that the phi-features of I be suppressed since canonical subject-verb agreement is displayed in these contexts. In sum, while it is convincing that subjects originate from a clause-internal position when they are extracted, it seems doubtful that the reason phi-features are suppressed in this context is to allow the subject to be merged in its theta position.

3. The Morphosyntax of Bantu AAE

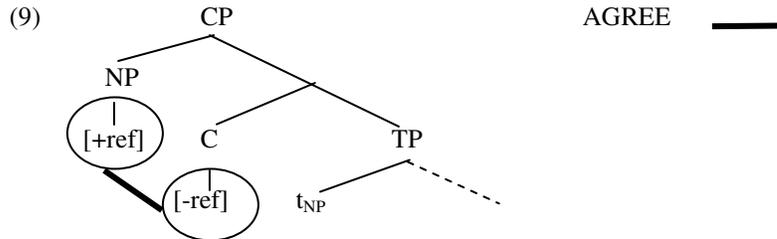
In this section, I would like to draw attention to previously undiscussed facts about the morphosyntax of AAE in Bantu. The first generalization concerns the relative marker in Bantu subject relatives. As in the Bemba example above, many Bantu languages employ such a marker that prefixes to the verb form in subject relatives. What has not been previously noted is that this marker is typically identical to the augment vowel of the relativized NP in languages that have them. In the Luganda and Bemba data below, one can see the two markers co-vary.

- (7) a. Ekitabo e-ki-yulise *Luganda* (Walusimbi 1996)
 7book REL-7AGR-torn
 'the book that is torn'
- b. Akambe a-ka-meyeyse
 12knife REL-12AGR-broken
 'the knife that is broken'
- c. Abasajja a-ba-kola
 2men REL-3PL-work
 'the men who are working'
- (8) a. u-mulumendo ú-u-ka-belenga ibuku *Bemba*
 AUG-1boy 1REL-1SM-FUT-read 5book
 'the boy who will read the book'
- b. abalumendo a-ba-kabelenga ibuku
 2people REL-3PL-FUT-read book
 'The people who will read the book'
- c. itabu i-li-a-kon-we-ke

¹ For a fuller and more general discussion of these two views of anti-locality, see Boeckx and Henderson (2007).

5table REL-5SA-break-PASS-STAT
 ‘the table that was broken’

In the languages that have them, the function of the augment vowel is to encode aspects of referentiality such as definiteness or specificity. I propose that the morphological identity of the relative marker and the augment vowel in these languages reflects an agreement relation between the interpretable referential features of the relativized NP and a set of uninterpretable referential features in C, the functional head in which the relative marker resides. This is illustrated in (9):



The second fact I would like to bring to light here is that in languages with distinct relative marker vowels and AAE morphemes, these morphemes are always identical (and therefore identical with the augment of the third person singular class 1 NPs in the language). This can be difficult to see since usually the adjacent vowels are adjacent and collapse phonologically. This is the case in the Bemba example above, repeated here, in which the verb form would be pronounced as a single long vowel:

- (10) umulumendo ú-u-ka-belenga ibuku *Bemba*
 1boy 1REL-AAE-FUT-read 5book
 ‘the boy who will read the book’

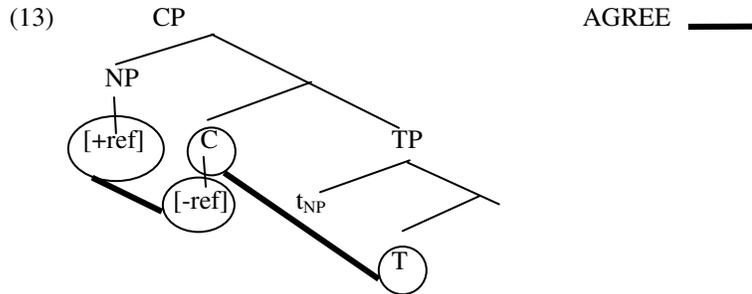
The generalization is easier to see in Dzamba. In this Bantu language, the negative morpheme intervenes between the relative marker and subject agreement in subject relatives (data from Bokamba 1976):

- (11) I-zibata i-ta-zi-komelaki iloso *Dzamba*
 AUG-5duck REL-NEG-5SA-ate rice
 ‘the duck that didn’t eat the rice’

As in Bemba and Kinande, an AAE occurs with third singular class 1 NPs. In (12b) one can see that the relative morpheme and the AAE morpheme are morphologically distinct. Both are identical and are identical to the augment vowel of the relativized NP.

- (12) O-mwanda ó-ta-ò-nyoloki ondaku a-utaki Bomai
 AUG-person REL-NEG-AAE-enter house 3SG-come.from Bomai
 ‘the person who didn’t enter the house came from Bomai.’

Like the relation between the augment vowel and the relative marker, I propose that the identity requirement between the relative marker and the AAE morpheme also reflects an Agree relation. I suggest that this is a relation between the referential features in C (valued by their Agree relation with the relativized NP) and the phi-features in T. This is illustrated in (13):



Given this analysis, several questions arise. First, though the morphology of AAE in Bantu suggests the analysis in (13), it does not suggest an explanation for why AAE occurs in the first place. What is it about the configuration of subject extraction that requires an Agree relation between C and T? A second question arises regarding how referential features can agree with phi-features at all if the two are not of the same type. I return to this question in section 5 below.

4. Explaining AAE

Richards (2001) proposes that movement chains may only contain one strong position. A strong position is defined as a position to which an element moves in association with feature checking. In Bantu, for instance, it is generally accepted that the checking of phi-features (agreement) requires movement, resulting in a spec-head relation (Kinyalolo 1991, Carstens 2001). In Richards' terms, then, SpecTP is a strong position.

Accepting this view, subject extraction presents a difficulty since it requires an XP to move from one strong position (SpecTP) to another (SpecCP). The result would be a movement chain with two strong positions, an impossible syntactic object in Richards' system. Considering similar structural situations, Boeckx (2003) argues that there are two ways to 'rescue' a chain with more than one strong position. One way is to split the moving element up amongst the strong positions (resumption). The other is to establish an Agree relation between the heads that define the two strong positions. This latter option results in a sort of feature sharing relation between the two strong heads that allows the two strong positions to count as one for computational purposes.

I propose that this is precisely what is occurring in the context of AAE. Subject extraction from SpecTP to SpecCP in Bantu would result in a movement chain with two strong positions. The computational system overcomes this problem by establishing an Agree relation between the heads that define the two positions, namely C and T. AAE is a side effect of this Agree relation, overriding the Agree relation between the subject and T and transferring C's features to T.

5. Anti-Agreement is Anti-[person]

Finally, I would like to address a third interesting fact that Bantu languages bring to the general discussion of AAEs. As discussed by Ouhalla (1993), AAE in languages such as Berber, Breton, and some Italian dialects results in a verb that is marked for third person singular, no matter the person and number feature content of the extracted subject. A result of this is that AAE cannot be detected when the extracted subject is third person singular. In Bantu, however, nearly the opposite is true: AAE is *only* detectable with third singular subjects that are in noun class 1 (the human class). Plural subjects and third singular subjects from other noun classes do not appear to trigger AAE when extracted. This can be seen for a plural human subject in (14a) and a third singular noun from non-human noun class in (14b). Both examples display canonical subject-verb agreement markers.

- (14)a. Abalumendo a-ba-kabelenga ibuku *Bemba*
 2people REL-3PL-FUT-read book
 'The people who will read the book'

- b. Izybata i-zi-komelaki iloso *Dzamba*
 5duck REL-5SA-ate rice (Bokamba 1976)
 ‘the duck that ate the rice’

Ouhalla (1993) proposes that the third person singular form of the verb often arises in AAE contexts due to the fact that in these languages third singular is the ‘default’ form of the verb. More technically, the third person singular form of the verb does not require an underlying set of phi-features. Therefore, in the AAE contexts when phi-features are suppressed, the third singular form arises.

The Bantu facts, however, suggest that this account cannot hold if AAE is understood not to target phi-features generally, but the feature [person] specifically. Other phi-features, [gender] (or [class] as in the Bantu case) and [number], are unaffected by the C-T relation posited to be behind AAE. This proposal accounts for the facts when the morphological paradigms of languages that display AAE are considered. Unlike the languages discussed by Ouhalla (1993), Bantu languages have an articulated noun class system typically comprised of about a dozen noun classes. The noun classes are defined by corresponding subject agreement affixes. For most of the system, reference to the feature [person] is unnecessary to define these affixes. The noun classes and their corresponding agreements can be defined solely by referencing the values of the features [class] and [plural]. An exception to this generalization is noun class 1. In most Bantu languages, this class is unique in containing almost exclusively human nouns. I propose that rather than a value for the feature [gender], class 1 is defined by reference to the feature [person]. Class 2 (which contains the plural counterparts for class 1) is also defined by the features [person], but also by a [number] feature. Therefore, when [person] is suppressed in the context of AAE, class 2 morphology can still be distinguished from the rest of the paradigm by [number] feature and lack of a [class] feature. This proposal is illustrated in (15): be the whole story since AAE in Bantu does not give rise to ‘default’ agreement. I propose that Ouhalla’s facts can be reconciled to the Bantu

- (15) *Noun Class Feature definition for Bantu:*
 Class 1: [person]
 Class 2: [person], [number]
 Other odd numbered classes: [# class]
 Other even numbered classes: [# class], [number]

6. Conclusions

In this paper, I have reviewed the details of AAE in Bantu, demonstrating that the shape of AAE morphology reflects agreement with the augment vowel of the relativized NP. I proposed that this is the result of an agreement relation between C and T that takes place in the context of subject extraction for reasons having to do with chain interpretability. I have also suggested that the fact that AAE is limited to class 1 third singular subjects while in other languages it is limited to non-third singular subjects reflects differing conditions on morphological spell-out rather than deep differences between AAE phenomena.

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