

The Morpho-Syntactic Characteristics of the Lubukusu Null-Subject Pronouns

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Abstract

This paper reports an empirical qualitative study that set out to discuss the treatment of null-subjects in Lubukusu as a pro-drop language. Its main objective is to discuss the Lubukusu null-subject pronouns in terms of their morpho-syntactic characteristics. One hypothesis is considered with regard to the prediction it makes for the Lubukusu null subject constructions: (a) there exist null subjects in Lubukusu structures which are specified but unpronounced pronouns that assign values to the uninterpretable features of agreement. Crucial evidence in support of the hypothesis governing this discussion comes from Lubukusu null subject constructions. The discussion adopted the Government and Binding Theory (GB) with some slight aspects of the most recent developments within the Minimalist Program (MP): The Feature Theory. It used the researcher's native speaker intuition to generate appropriate data. Thereafter, native speakers of Lukubusu are chosen as informants to verify the generated data. The data collected were coded for three variables which are: Expletives, Null pronouns in simple sentences and Null pronouns in embedded structures. Results show that there is, indeed, pro in Lubukusu, which is a subject pronoun and is specified for interpretable phi-features. This implies that the nullness is a phonological matter: The null subject is a pronoun which is not pronounced.

Key Words: Anaphor, Argument, Expletives, Null subject Specifier, Subject, Topicalization.

Introduction

Linguistic theorizing during the last two decades has often attempted to explain why some languages permit subjects of tensed clauses to be null and other languages do not. For example, certain utterances that are permitted in languages such as Italian (1) and Lubukusu (2) are ungrammatical in a language such as English (3):

1) \emptyset piove (Italian)

Rain 3 sg prs

'(it) is raining.'

(Chomsky 1981:23)

2) \emptyset_i wa- bon- e e – picha (Lubukusu)

(you) Sm see TNS fv CL 3 picture

'You saw a picture.'

3a) *is raining

3b) * saw a picture.

Since Chomsky (1981), it has often been thought that sentences such as those in 1, 2 and 3 contain a phonetically empty, but structurally present, subject. It is an empty pronominal element, referred to as 'pro'. One difference between the languages such as those in 1, 2 & 3 and languages that do not permit such utterances amounts to whether or not a language permits the use of this pro-element in tensed clauses. Those that do permit its use have been labeled 'pro-drop' or 'null subject' languages while those that do not, have been labeled 'non-pro-drop' or 'non-null subject' languages.

Chomsky recognized that pro-drop languages share a number of characteristics that differentiate them from non-pro-drop languages. For example many pro-drop languages have 'rich' inflectional systems, as noted by (Jespersen (1924: 119), Perlmutter (1971 :222) and many others. In addition to rich agreement, they display a cluster of associated morphological and syntactic properties like the omission of a subject pronoun in a tensed clause as in example 1 and 2. They also often permit inversion in declarative sentences and also apparent violations of that-trace. This refers to a rule that, at least in English, prohibits clauses containing both the complementizer that and a 'trace' which is a phonetically null element left behind when a syntactic element moves in a clause. For example, in 'that will go home today' in 4 below, the extraction of the subject from the lower clause would require the absence of the complementizer in English, but not in Lubukusu.

4. Maria_i a- kanakana mbo t_i a- la-ch- a e-ngo

Mary_i Sm think 2 sg- pres that t_i Sm fut go fv CL3 home

'Mary thinks (*that) t_i will go home today'.

At other times the null-subject phenomenon is associated with other properties e.g. the appearance or absence of expletive pronouns as subjects in such constructions as weather verbs, extrapositions and impersonal constructions.

Note that, not all these characteristics cluster in any language that permits some of them. This fact has led to some disagreements among researcher over what should or should not be included in a definition of a pro-drop language. Nevertheless, there is a broad acceptance that these languages contain empty categories which have phonetically unrealized, but syntactically present elements.

Purpose and objectives

The study aims at discussing the nature of pro-drop in Lubukusu as stipulated in the GB program with some slight aspects of the most recent developments in syntactic theory thereby validating them. Specifically it sought to discuss Lubukusu null-subject pronouns in terms of their morphosyntactic characteristics.

It also set out to test the hypothesis that Lubukusu has pro as a null subject which is specified for interpretable phi-features. These features therefore enable pro to value the uninterpretable

features of Agr and then it moves to Spec, IP just like any other subject.

Theoretical Considerations

The study was based on the theory of Government and Binding (GB) with some slight aspects of the Minimalist Program. The presentation is based on the version found in Chomsky (1981:22) and Chomsky (1982:23) which postulates a set of interacting sub-theories each of which deals with some central area of grammatical enquiry. The following are some of the subsystems of GB: Government theory, Case theory, Binding theory, X-bar theory, Theta theory and the Extended Projection Principle.

Government Theory

This theory relates to the (sisterhood) relation between the lexical head of a phrase/projection and the categories that it subcategorizes. Government relations define strict locality domains within which grammatical relations and processes take place.

Consider the following sentence:

5) Maria_i a- bol- el- e Petero mbo Pro_{ij} a- rer- e endebe yewe khukhwama e-sitoo.

Maria Sm tell(3sg) TNS tv Peter that pro_{i/j} Sm bring (3sg)TNS Fv CL3 seat his/her from CLI? the store.

'Mary told Peter to bring his/her seat from the store.'

In this sentence, V in the matrix clause governs its complement NP. In the secondary clause, the V dominates the NP with its specifier and the PP. However, V cannot govern the daughters of PP, viz. P and NP because they are outside her jurisdiction. They fall within another maximal projection; PP. P governs her sister, NP. Note that the subject NP is always governed by Agr. (even if the NP is a pro).

Case Theory

It deals with the assignment of abstract cases to noun phrases. The underlying assumption of Case theory is that noun phrases with phonetic content require to be case-marked. The following are some basic principles of case assignment (Chomsky, 1981: 133):

(i) NP is assigned case if governed by AGR of INFL;

(i) NP is assigned objective/accusative Case if governed by V (i.e. if it occurs as object of a transitive verb);

(ii) NP is assigned oblique Case if governed by the P.

Theta Theory

Haegeman (1994:49) defines theta theory as "the component of grammar that regulates the

assignment of thematic roles". 'Thematic roles' refer to those semantic roles that are assigned to the arguments by the verb, such as agent, patient, beneficiary, theme, etc. It is further assumed that although verbs do not subcategorize for subjects, the majority of verbs may theta-mark the subject position of sentences containing them.

Extended Projection Principle (Epp)

The Extended Projection Principle of GB/P&P/MP in syntactic theorizing of the 50s and 90s states that a clause must have a subject.

Binding Theory

According to Horrocks (1987: 112) "The Binding theory is concerned primarily with the conditions under which NPs are interpreted as referential with other NPs in the same sentence. NPs which are arguments are assumed to fall into one of the three categories: anaphors, pronominals and referential expressions."

The binding theory has three sub-clauses, one for each of the three subcategories of NP arguments mentioned above:

(i) An anaphor must be bound in its governing category.

(ii) A pronominal must be free in its governing category.

(iii) An R-expression must be free everywhere.

In essence, binding entails co-indexing by a c-commanding NP. A category a binds category a iff

(i) a c-commands a and

(ii) a is co indexed with a

Horrocks (1987: 114)

See below how Lubukusu sentence can be indexed:

6) Maria_i a- bol- el- e Peter_j mbo y- enyekh- el- w- a pro_{i/j} a_{i/j}- ch- e e- ngo

Maria Sm tell(3sg) TNS fv Peter that it expect TNS PSV fv pro Sm go(3sg)fv CL 17 home.

'Maria told Peter that s/he is expected to go home'

When the NP Maria is co-indexed with the subject marker a-, it means that a- C-commands Maria, which further means that the Agr. category a- is the governor for Maria. Secondly, sentence 6 can be interpreted in such a way that the subject pro of the embedded clause is co-referential with Peter. This kind of interpretation gives us a means to say that subject pro is bound by Peter and therefore Peter C-commands pro. Likewise, if we interpret the subject in such a way that subject pro in the embedded clause is co-referential with Maria then we say that this subject pro is bound by Maria and likewise Maria C-commands pro.

X-Bar Theory

"The part of grammar regulating the structure of phrases has come to be known as X-bar theory. X-bar theory brings out what is common in the structure of phrases." Haegeman (1994:88). It makes a distinction between lexical categories which include the Verb, the Noun and the Adjective and non-lexical categories which include the elements that are usually considered to belong under the Inflection node, such as Agreement, Tense, Negation as well as the Complementizer.

Minimalist Program

According to the pro theory within the GB Theory, it is the agr. category that values the pro-element but the Minimalist Approach has it the other way round: The agr. features are uninterpretable in nature while the features found in the pro-element are interpretable. Due to their interpretability nature they value the Agr.Category (Chomsky 1995:211). Chomsky further argues that the person, number and gender features of an NP (or DP) are interpretable because they restrict the denotation of the NP. The person, number or gender features which appear on a verb, auxiliary or adjective are uninterpretable as they do not restrict the denotation of the categories.

7) ba- khana khe ba- lwala

CL2(the) girls beTNS Sm(3pl) ailing.

'The girls are ailing'

(7) ascribes to a group of female individuals excluding the speaker and the addressee (the denotation of the NP bakhana) each having (some degree of) the same indivisible and genderless property of being sick (the denotation of the predicate ba lwala). The sentence does not, for example, ascribe to the girls a particular female way of being sick or at least not necessarily, repeated occurrences of being sick.

Methodology

This was a qualitative research that involved native speakers of Lubukusu of any age above 15 who can make the Language behavior under investigation explicit and authentic. The research was conducted in Lugari District of the Western Province of Kenya. Only 10 informants were sampled for verification of the data generated by the researcher. Note that Lubukusu does not have dialectal differences. The data was collected using questionnaires.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Among the basic questions to be asked about subject and object markers are whether they are pronouns or agreement markers and how they are to be represented in a structure.

This study argued that subjects occupy Spec IP position in Lubukusu structures thereby having a spec/head relationship with their respective predicates. See 8:

8a) (Esese) ne- mb- il- e

I Is Sm sing PAST Fv

'I sang'

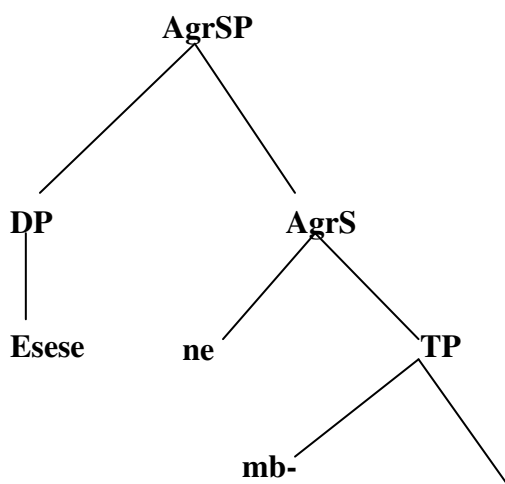
8b) Ø ne- mb- il- e

Is Sm sing PAST Fv

'I sang'

The agreeing head of esese 'I' is assumed to be Arg S⁰ (Agrs standing for "subject agreement"). The agreement of person and number features between the lexical subject and the subject marker can be said to be the result of the spec/head relationship in which they stand. In GB terms these two categories are said to be in a sisterhood relationship. They are governed by ArgSP but they C-command each other. Figure 9 best captures this idea:

9)



Note that because the subject marker bears the same agreement features as the subject, the subject has risen to the specifier of the subject marker and the subject marker is hence a reflex of an agreement relation which can be consummated only by a phrase moving to the specifier of an agreeing head (Agrs").

It should be noted that Lubukusu is what is traditionally termed as a pro-drop language, meaning that a lexical subject is not overtly required, as shown by the omission of the pronoun in 8 b. In such a case, there is assumed to be a silent subject in specifier of Agrs. This type of silent subject is traditionally called pro.

The syntactic configuration exhibited by the tree diagram 9 disputes the claims made by the scholars like Mchombo (1990), Baker (1996), Manzini and Roussou among others who showed that Bantu languages contain incorporated pro (nouns) which normally appear as prefixes attached to the verb and that any element appearing pre-verbally in any given structure is in an A-bar position as marked in Lubukusu 10 below.

10) kamatunda_j, esese_i na_i -li_j- kul- a

fruits, I Sm Om buy PAST Fv

'fruits 1 bought'

This study however noted that the Pronominal Argument Hypothesis works well with other pro-drop languages but if adopted in Lubukusu, it brings about wrong predictions. The concept of the dislocation of a pro (noun) to an adjunct position is said to be motivated by topicalization issues and not syntactic ones. This assumption puts the pronoun esese appearing in such a position as in 10 at the Spec CP i.e. an A-bar position.

Such an interpretation is disputed by the Lubukusu data on the basis of selectional restrictions imposed on a verb by its phi-features.

Note again how the agreement features present in subject markers force the subject esese to raise from the node TP to the specifier of the subject marker in 9. This theoretical and empirical back-up gives solid grounding to the premise that Lubukusu has a Spec IP position which is occupied by an element (the subject of the structure) which agrees with the subject marker. This position is therefore not a Spec CP but a Spec IP position.

This line of reasoning is advanced a bit further by arguing that yes, agreement can force dislocation as in 10 above because it absorbs the case features of the head that it is attached to (T for subject agreement and V for object agreement) in such a case, the overt NPs will not be appearing in the corresponding argument position; they only appear in the clause peripheral positions to which the case filter does not apply.

Note further that according to Chomsky's (1981:94) case theory, case is assigned under government and that the choice of case is determined by the governor in any given structure. NP is assigned a nominative case if governed by AGR. For such a view, the study takes AGR to be the governor which has to assign case to some element within its area of governance in order to guarantee the grammaticality of a given structure. Now assuming that esese is in an A-bar position (Spec, CP) and not in the jurisdiction of the IP, which element within IP will bear the burden of carrying the case feature which is to be assigned by the AGR category na-. Surely there must be an element which the governor agrees with. The basic premise of this thesis is that morphemes are built in syntax through agreement and the notion of lexical incorporation runs contrary to that premise.

As already seen from the above discussion, Lubukusu does allow **null subjects in simple sentences** which appear at the Spec. IP positions of the structures. Sentence 11 best illustrates this point. Note that all the bracketed pronouns are droppable.

(11) (Esese) na - kul- il-- e ku- mu-- toka

I Sm buy TNS fv PPf CL 19 (a) car

Pro_i na_i - kul- il-- e kumutoka

'I bought a car'

The resulting string after the drop is:

(12) Nakulile kumutoka

From the structure 11 it is clear that when the subject drops it is replaced by an empty category *pro* which is co-indexed with some agreement features on the verb morphology.

It is clear that null subjects are part and parcel of Lubukusu 'core grammar'. But does the marginal use of overt pronouns suggest that their occurrence yield to the ungrammaticality of structures? The answer is obviously NO. Lubukusu structures at times employ the use of overt pronouns for emphatic purposes:

(13) Pro_i we-nyi- $l-$ e mbo ewe w-esi $_i$ o- bukul- w- e t_i lundi.

Pro, sm want (2sg) TNS FV that you sm also sm - take -PSV FV TRACE again.

'You also wanted to be taken again'

(14) Pro_i we-ny- $il-$ e mbo pro_i o- bukul- w- e t_i lundi.

Pro_i sm want (2sg) TNS FV that pro_i sm take (2sg) PSV FV TRACE again.

'You also wanted to be taken again'

The structures presented take into account the differences between 13 and 14 which show that the subordinate clause subject in the finite complementation can be empty as in 14 and also overt as in a seemingly parallel sentence 13.

Assuming for a moment that the interpretation of 14 is just like that one of the 13, then we can say that the overt presence of a subject at the subordinate clause in 13 is supported by the emphasizing element -esi here to mean 'also'

Generalization 1

Emphatic subjects in Lubukusu would not be suppressed by 'pro-drop' conditions and the evidence of 13 with its emphatic subordinate subject in just the place where a prodrop account would predict, is consistent with the assumption of *pro* as the missing subject. This means that *pro* in Lubukusu structures does exist as a subject.

There are certain differences among languages regarding null subject occurrence and usage. For instance Finnish and Hebrew allow only 1st and 2nd person null subjects in main clauses. Marathi allows only 2nd person (Holmberg & Nikanne (2002)). Lubukusu on the other hand does allow all persons and in fact in both main and subordinate clauses.

Majority of referential null subjects in Lubukusu occur also in **embedded clauses**. Sentence 15 best illustrates this point.

(15) (Ese $_i$) em $_{i/*j}$ bol-ang--a e-- ndi (ese) $_{i/*j}$ pro_i e- ndi om - ang- a Lu-- sungu bulayi

I Sm say ASP fv Agr comp I pro Sm speak ASP fv CL3 English well

'I say that I speak English well'

The resulting string after the drop is presented **below** here. Again, note that such a string is grammatical.

(16) Embolanga endi endomanga lusungu bulayi

These structures are composed of a complement clause or even an adjunct clause embedded in a matrix clause. Both clauses, the matrix and the complement or the adjunct clause, as the study realized, are finite. From examples 15 it is clear that a null subject must be co-referent with an argument in the next clause up. This constraint is echoed in Gutman (2004:80) who discusses conditions on null subject antecedent-anaphor relation. The morpho-syntactic relations among arguments with regard to null subjects in Lubukusu can be interchanged in any regular way. For example sentence 15 repeated here as 17 can be rendered as sentences 18 and 19.

(17) esese_i e-mbol-a-nga e-ndi pro_i e-ndom-a-nga lusunga bulayi.

'I say that I speak English well'

(18) pro_i e-m-bol-a-nga e-ndi esese_i e-n-dom- a-nga lusungu bulayi. Or

(19) pro_i e-m-bol-a-nga endi pro_i en-dom-a-nga lusungu bulayi.

Moreover, Lubukusu can allow structures like 20 and 21

(20) Anu_i a- bol- el - e Joni_i mbo Pro_{ij} a- rer - e e-- ndebe yewe.

Anu Sm tell TN8 fv John COMP pro Sm bring TNS fv CL3 chair his.

'Anu told John to bring his chair'

(21) Ya lolekha- n- e khu Pita_i mbo pro_i a- bir-- ir- e li-- kela.

EXP seem TNS fv to Peter COMP pro Sm pass TNS fv CL5 the exam.

'It seems to Peter that s/he did pass his/her exams'

Such a disposition in Lubukusu provides the means for an explanation of a wide range of binding possibilities of arguments in a structure:

a) With reference to sentence 17 we can say the null subjects can be bound by an overt preverbal subject in a higher clause since the latter still c-commands the preverbal argument of the lower clause.

b) A null pre-verbal subject in the matrix clause can bind an overt pre-verbal subject in a subordinate clause as in 18 because the null subject C- commands the lower preverbal subject.

c) It is also possible for an embedded null-subject to be bound by a null subject in a higher clause, since C-command still obtains as long as the lower subject remains in a preverbal position. Such double-null-subject configurations are permitted in structures like 19.

d) At the same time, a null subject in an embedded clause can be bound by a postverbal subject in a higher clause as in 20. In such a structure, the supposed subject is occupying a position other than its usual Spec IP, leaving it up for an expletive (a pleonastic element) to fill it up and hence satisfying the EPP.

e) Lastly, there is quite an interesting binding relation as exemplified in sentence 21 where a null subject in embedded clause can be bound, if not by an overt preverbal subject then, by an NP occupying the object position in the matrix clause. The binding relation obtains because the null-element present in the subordinate clause is occurring in a position where it can be syntactically bound by the closest antecedent. The Principle of Shortest Move to binding domain seems to apply here. Within this principle, an anaphor ought only to have one possible antecedent: the closest one.

Therefore, the study observes that the null pronoun in an embedded clause is accessible for binding by a higher NP if and only if it moves to the Spec IP of the embedded clause. If it remains in Spec VP where it is base generated, it becomes inaccessible for binding. The reason for its being accessible for binding when moved out of VP is clear in principle: It moves to a position closer to the root of the sentence and therefore closer to the antecedent. This idea is echoed in Phase Theory (Chomsky 2000, 2001). An element has to move to the edge of a Phase to be accessible for binding by a DP (NP) in the next higher phase.

The study also observes that embedded structures with verbs in their 3rd person singular form admit a lot of ambiguity with regard to their interpretation. It is realized that a null subject can refer to three entities. First, it can refer to an argument in the Spec IP position of the matrix clause. Second, it can refer to an argument in the object position of the main verb in the matrix clause and lastly, it can refer to some entity not syntactically presented in the structures (especially when the embedded pronominal subject is overt). At this point the study observes that due to the fact that Lubukusu is an SVO language it ensures that the higher subjects will C-command the lower one. Therefore in case of default reading where verb morphology is ambiguous, in most cases, it is for the lower null subject to take the higher one as its antecedent.

On the basis of the acceptability judgment, native speakers of Lubukusu find structure with verbs in their 3rd person inflection as in 18 acceptable but quite marginal and well applicable pragmatically as this would enable the speakers to derive their reference from pragmatic clues (from the immediate preceding context). Others, during the verification of the data generated felt that null subject pronouns should never be accepted in isolation, but only in a well-defined context which permit the recovery of the dropped element.

Such an observation elicits the following question: Is the null-subject parameter in Lubukusu a morphological, syntactic or a discursal phenomenon? The study appealed to both the morphological and the syntactic levels of grammar for a justifiable explanation of the pro-drop phenomenon. To work this out, what we need to do is to establish a link between this syntax and something in the morphology. Baker (1985:67) proposes that this link is provided by the Morphological Visibility Condition; a requirement that (in a language where this

phenomenon holds - it is a parameter) all argument features have to be reflected in the morphology of the head. The Agr node carries the grammatical specifications of the purported subject which normally occurs in Spec IP positions of structures. In other words, the semantic features on the Agr category MUST match with those ones on the purported subject of the sentence. The syntactic consequences are supposed to follow from this condition together with the notion that the markers that serve this function will not allow the occurrence of overt pronouns but will sanction the occurrence of a covert pronoun (pro) which will get case from the verb.

On the basis of the binding theory, (Chomsky 1982:87, 1991:101), it should be noted that from a purely syntactic point of view nothing should exclude the possibility for a null embedded subject to take a pre-verbal null subject or a post-verbal overt subject as an antecedent. Binding condition B as stipulated in the binding theory of GB would allow any antecedent outside the embedded clause to serve as an antecedent for the embedded null pronoun as seen from sentences 17, 18, 19 and 20. It was observed that the relation between the NP subjects in the embedded clauses and the higher referential NPs involves a case of binding i.e antecedent-anaphor binding; where the antecedent and the anaphor may both be null or either one of them may be null. The study henceforth refers to this relation as binding.

Important in this discussion also, is the fact that apart from case assignment, verbs in Lubukusu do also assign theta-roles. In a structure like (17) repeated here as (22)

(22) Esese_i e-m-bola-nga e-ndi pro_i e-nd-oma-nga Lusungu bulayi.

The verb -bola- assigns its external theta to esese. By analogy it is assumed that the same is true of the occurrence of -loma- in the embedded clause: it assigns its external theta-role to pro which on the basis of the EPP is the postulated subject of the embedded clause. This means that the projected subject of e-nd-oma-nga- in is in an NP position which is not phonetically realized and in which the external theta-role of the verb is realized. The zero elements occupying the Spec IP position has a definite reference; its interpretation is like that of an overt pronoun. One possible interpretation is that the nonovert subject of endomanga- is identical to that of the overt subject of embolanga-. This view is supported by the fact that the two distinct verbs in the two different clauses have identical features in their AGR categories: I sg. This means that these verbs agree with NPs having identical features hence identical reference.

In conclusion we can say that the interpretation of the lower null-subjects in embedded clauses is not only dependent on the morphological agreement of the relevant verbs but also on the syntactic restrictions. Embedded null subjects require syntactic binding to establish their antecedents. Example 103 as we have already explained shows that embedded null-subjects can find their antecedents in the immediately preceding contexts which contain the material which is syntactically linked to the clauses containing the null-subjects. It is shown that the overt subject in the Matrix clause esese is the antecedent of the anaphor pro in the subject position of the embedded clause. But it is important to note that the antecedent should also be in a position that it can easily bind the null-element. The fact that either the nominative or the accusative argument in the matrix clause has to occupy a particular syntactic configuration has everything to do with the syntactic conditions of binding.

Generalization 2

It is nonetheless clear that these null-subjects are part and parcel of Lubukusu 'core grammar' since Lubukusu speakers have largely uniform intuitions about null-subject constructions.

Generalization 3

The study observed that when the nominative argument of the depended clause is co-referential to the nominative argument of matrix clause, then the subject pronoun in the embedded clause must be deleted. This is true regardless of whether the nominative argument in the matrix clause occupies the Spec IP position or another argument position.

Apart from being associated with the property of the absence of full or weak subject pronoun in a sentence as we have already discussed in the preceding sections, the pro-drop phenomenon has also been associated with the appearance or absence of expletive pronouns as subjects in such constructions as weather verbs, extrapositions and impersonal constructions.

Expletives/pleonastic or dummy elements are identified by their lack of semantic content and their firm grammatical nature that makes them an excellent probe into the boundary between syntax and semantics. They are crucial, for example, in the identification of syntactic positions as thematic or non-thematic.

Lubukusu, unlike other pro-drop languages, has overt expletives which are obligatory in certain contexts. In general Lubukusu does not tolerate verb-initial declarative sentences hence 23 is ungrammatical.

(23) \emptyset *lolekha- n- e khu Petero mbo se a- khe--ch- e luno ta

Seem TNS tv to Peter COMP NEG Sm ASP come(3sg) tv today NEG.

'Seemed to Peter that s/he will not come today'

One has to insert a referential category as in 22 or merge an expletive Ya as in 23 with an IP. Note that even with the merging of an expletive, the Spec IP position is still realized as null.

(24) Petero_i a- lolekha- n- e t_i mbo se a- khe- ch- e luno ta

Peter Sm seemTNS fv t_i COMP NEG Sm ASP come(3sg) fv today NEG.

'Peter seemed not to be coming today'

(25) \emptyset Ya- lolekha- n -e khu Petero_i mbo pro_i se a- khe--ch - e luno ta

EXP Seem TNS fv to Peter COMP pro NEG Sm ASP come(3sg)fv todayNEG. ,

'It seemed to Peter that s/he will not come today'

It is important to note that the occurrence of expletives in various pro-drop languages is

parametric. They can occur overtly or covertly in different languages. This means that even their accounts and interpretations are parametric. This study realized that *ya* in Lubukusu is not a pure expletive in Chomsky's (1995) sense. It is a morphemic marker for agreement. Note that it is also not a place-holder for the subject because the subject of the sentence is structurally present (usually appearing post-verbally). The Spec IP position is thus occupied by a null element (0) and *ya* is in Spec VP. If our assumptions on Lubukusu expletive-constructions in the above examples are correct, *ya* should always immediately precede the head bearing inflectional markers i.e the verb. The above examples show that this is indeed the case. Thus the following is a viable formulation of Lubukusu expletives.

Generalization 4

In Lubukusu, expletives always immediately precede the element that is inflected for tense and can also be inflected for subject agreement to match the agreement features on the postverbal subject once it has been raised to Spec IP position.

Note that expletives in Lubukusu can be preceded by some categories: it can be preceded by at most two constituents one of which should have either a contrastive/an emphatic reading as in 26 and the other one is a null element which fills the subject position.

(26) [cp[c Khale[IPya[vp [v b-a- o [Np [N o-mukhasi ne o-musecha [DET wee]]]]]]].

Long ago EXP beTNS fv CL 1 a woman CONJ CL 1 husband hers.

'Long ago, there lived a woman and her husband'

In 26, the verbal phrase *khale* has moved to the sentence initial focus position (Spec CP) and not Spec IP. The Spec IP position is left out for a null subject to occupy. This adverbial phrase is believed to be an adjunct derived from the CP. That is where it is base generated. Remember that a category can check the EPP if (a) it is a subject (b) it is referential, in the sense that NPs (and not adverbs) are referential. Adapting Holmberg and Nikanne (2002:45) idea the adverbial phrase of time in sentence 26 is not referential hence can not check EPP so it has to occupy a different syntactic position (Spec CP) leaving the (Spec IP) position for the null element to occupy.

Summary of the Findings

Lubukusu verbs do subcategorize A-positions to which are assigned theta-roles by the verbs. Pro for that matter is assigned the role of an agent.

Pro-elements are syntactically projected in Lubukusu null subject structures. This point is well illustrated in the tree diagram presented in the study. The pro-elements normally occupy the Spec IP positions.

The pro-elements can be looked at as antecedents of some anaphors in a structure and that pro must be syntactically present to serve as an antecedent for the anaphor.

In embedded clauses null subjects must be bound by an NP in the matrix clause. This null

subject in the embedded clause must be in Spec IP.

Lubukusu is a consistent null subject language: It allows all persons (1st, 2nd 3rd) subjects to be null. Other languages, for instance Finnish and Hebrew (Holmberg and Nikanne (2000) allow only 1st and 2nd person null subjects; such languages have come to be termed as partial null-subject languages.

Emphatic subjects in Lubukusu will not be suppressed by the 'pro- drop' conditions.

Conclusion

There is a proper null subject in Spec IP in finite null subject sentences in Lubukusu. But it is not pro as defined in Chomsky (1982) or Rizzi (1986). It is a null pronoun which is fully specified for phi- features and which is deleted in the phonology. Following the Chomskyan approach to agreement, the null-pronoun has interpretable phi-features and assigns values to the inherently unvalued features of agreement. In other words, the null-subject pronoun identifies Agr and not vice versa. Again, in definite null subject constructions a pronominal subject checks the EPP there by excluding it from co-occurring with an expletive or another category at the Spec IP for EPP-reasons.

Recommendations

This study appealed for the need to pay close attention to the 'pro-drop parameter' given its firm nature that makes it an excellent probe in the syntactic study. This is subject to the fact that despite pro-drop being a theoretical construct and an excellent probe in the syntactic study it has not been given adequate discussion on the basis of the latest developments in the syntactic theories.

The study realized that pro is part and parcel of Lubukusu 'core-grammar. It really exists and must be given a place in syntactic theorizing. It is therefore my hope that the pro-drop phenomenon will be fully explained and be given a more comprehensive framework on the basis of the recent development in syntax. Though this study has yielded conclusion, I still feel that the topic under study is wide and therefore needed more time for a more detailed analysis. Otherwise a more precise yet all including research will go along way in giving more intricate and finer details which can be presented in a pro-drop study. For example Topic drop and more emphasizingly the Object drop which I believe are present in Lubukusu but were downplayed in this study.

Finally, I emphasize that other researchers studying languages which permit the dropping of the unstressed pronouns should do so, on the basis of the Minimalist approach which does not recognize the presence of the pro-element. Such studies will come in handy in testing the validity of the Minimalist Program.

While there are many issues left for future research, I hope that this study will be a step in our search for knowledge and understanding of the Lubukusu language.

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