

Agreement Features and Lubukusu Null-Subject Structures

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Abstract

This paper reports an empirical qualitative study that sought to discuss the treatment of agreement features found in Lubukusu which is a pro-drop language. Its main objective was to interpret the agreement features which permit the missing pronominal subjects in Lubukusu structures. Two hypotheses governed this study: a) Agreement features are uninterpretable in nature; they are only assigned values by the subjects governing them. b) Agreement is interpretable in null subject languages and a pronoun of whichever nature (overt or covert) is therefore redundant. According to this study this prediction is false. Crucial evidence in support of the former hypothesis governing this study comes from Lubukusu structures. It is observed that such constructions can have both overt and phonetically empty subject pronouns which are called pro. These pronouns are formally licensed by virtue of the agreement on the finite verbs or auxiliaries. The study adopted the Government and Binding Theory (GB) with some slight aspects of the most recent developments within the Minimalist Program (MP): The Feature Theory. The study uses the researcher's native speaker intuition to generate appropriate data. Thereafter, native speakers of Lubukusu were chosen as informants to verify the generated data. The data collected was coded into simple sentences, embedded structures and expletives. The results show that the inflectional features found in these structures are uninterpretable and are only valued by the interpretability nature of the overt or covert subjects within the structure at hand.

Keywords: Feature, GoverningCategory, Interpretation, Phi-feature, Projection.

Lubukusu is one of the bantu languages found Kenya. Its speakers predominantly occupy western Kenya; more specifically Bungoma County

INTRODUCTION

The concept of agreement in the broad sense expresses a relation between two syntactic elements. Some studies on the relational nature of agreement have treated the agreement category as an independent category which is interpretable in itself. In this study agreement is treated as a category that depends on a subject (null or overt) for its interpretability. In Lubukusu, it has often been noticed that noun phrases (in short, NPs) which are coreferential also agree:

- 1) Maria_i a_i- 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'.

In such a sentence, the NP Maria (a single noun) matches with the verbal morphology 'a' which also denotes 3rd person singular. This sentence therefore shows that there has to be number and person agreement between the pro-form and the lexical item. The two must co-refer in this case. Gender agreement is marked explicitly in English as shown below:

- 2a) John_i thinks that he_i can shave himself_i
2b) Mary_i thinks that she_i can shave herself_i.
2c) (John and Mary)_i think that they_i can shave themselves_i
2d) *John_i thinks that he_i can shave herself_i.
2e) *Mary_i thinks that he_i can shave himself_i

Examples 2 a, b, c, d and e show that besides there being number agreement, there has to be gender agreement between the two pro-forms referring to the full NPs. Despite such an explanation there is still debate on the question "what is agreement?" No precise definition has been brought forth though various scholars have tried to come up with various definitions. Ferguson, cited in Barlow & Ferguson (1988:22) defines agreement as

'A grammatical element x matches a grammatical element y in some property z within some grammatical configuration'.

Such a definition is an attempt towards defining 'agreement' but it still admits too many cases pre-theoretically. For instance do we want to say that the choice of a pronoun that is appropriate for use in a given circumstance is an instance of 'agreement'? This becomes even more complex in various languages in reference to gender systems such as those of the Bantu family. In Lubukusu, for instance, the agreement features on the verb do not explicitly show the same gender as the Full NP with which they stand in an anaphoric relationship, but when the referent is human, a of class 1/2 (generally, but not always, used for humans) is always used regardless of the gender of the referent. It is therefore a fact that pronominal reference on the face of it involves identity of features, but still other things come into play.

Usually two sorts of agreement are distinguished:

- Agreement between modifiers and the head of their phrases; and
- Agreement between 'predicates' (including V, Adj, Prep and possessed N) and their Arguments.
Anderson (1997: III)

Related to the study is the second option which will be briefly discussed in the following section.

Predicate-Argument Agreement

This is a type of Agreement which on the face of it involves agreement of heads with non-heads. It not only involves feature copying (from the Argument onto the predicate) but also a referential relation between the agreement features and the argument that provides them. In Lubukusu such a notion can be represented as below:

- 3) [Yohana] a - b- el- e bulayi, nga [niye] ke - ch - il- e e-- ngo
John Sm is TNS fv well, COMP s/he Sm come TNS fv CL3 home
Pro_i a_i - b- el- e bulayi, nga Pro_{ij} ke_{ij} - ch - il- e e- ngo
'John was well when he came home'

Agreement and Reference

The relation between verbal agreement and the argument it corresponds to can differ somewhat among languages. In many languages agreement on the verb simply registers certain properties of an argument and does not supplant the overt expression of the argument.

In other languages however, agreement morphology alone without an overt argument expression is enough to guarantee the grammaticality of a structure. A variant of this is the situation of Mohawk (and other 'polysynthetic' languages, as in Mark Baker's work). Here the overt argument appears in the position of rather than that of arguments. (Baker 1998)

A third possibility in agreement systems and very relevant to this study is what we find in pro-drop languages. Here agreement is present and is always compatible with an argument in the Spec IP position. The Argument may be missing but still is interpreted as a pronoun. In such a case where the presence of agreement features sometimes sanctions a null argument, it is argued that the A- positions are in fact present and occupied by null pro elements. The hypotheses informing this study relies on the second and the third possibilities to mount its argument.

Languages with full verbal inflections eg Lubukusu have the option, unlike English, of omitting unstressed pronominal subjects. The idea behind the omission of the pronominal subject is that the content of the pronoun can be recovered via the rich inflection on the verb. The rich inflection on the verb is the bundle of agreement features (AGR) encoded in I (INFL), which are rich enough to permit an interpretable null subject, namely a pro-element, to stand in for an overt noun subject. Such languages are called null-subject or pro-drop. The feature of pro-drop is being identified as a parameter of universal grammar, whose settings are [\pm Pro-drop]. Lubukusu will thus be represented as [+ pro-drop) and English will be [- pro-drop).

Purpose and Objective of the study

The study sought to investigate on the features present in languages like Lubukusu, Italian, Spanish and many others such that sentences with missing pronoun subjects in these languages are perfectly interpretable. Specifically, the study sought to:

- i) Interpret the Agr. features present in Lubukusu null-subject structures which permit the missing pronouns.

Two hypotheses were posited for testing:

(A) Agr, the set of phi-features of I, is an interpretable, referential, definite pronoun, albeit a pronoun phonologically expressed as an Affix.

(B) The set of phi-features of I are uninterpretable in Lubukusu. These features therefore enable an overt or covert pronoun to value them.

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, 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:

- 4) 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, 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.

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.

- 5) ba- khana khe ba- lwala
CL2(the) girls beTNS Sm(3pl) ailing.
'The girls are ailing'

(5) 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

Lubukusu as a language does allow null subjects **in simple sentences**. Normally, the null subjects appear at the Specified Inflectional Phrase (in short Spec.IP) positions of the structures. Note that the bracketed pronouns are droppable in example 6 below:

- 6. (Ese) na - kul- il-- e ku- mu-- toka
Sm buy TNS Fv PPrf CL 19 (a) car
Pro_i na_i - kul-il--e kumutoka
'I bought a car'

The resulting string after the drop is presented as 7 below here. Remember that such a string is grammatical.

- (7) Nakulile kumutoka

Lubukusu being a pro-drop language can allow the subject NP to be dropped without affecting the grammaticality of the structure because they are recoverable from the agreement features marked on the verb. Pro-drop phenomenon follows from Chomsky (1981) pro-drop theory within the GB approach.

From the structure 6 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. In the GB analysis, the sentences identified as 6 and 7 mean one and the same thing. In both cases, the INFL(ection), denoted as I, is composed of an agreement node (AGR) and a tense node (TNS). The AGR node acquires its features (Phi-features which are: person number and gender) through agreement with the subject in the base. It is this realization of agreement that in turn allows Lubukusu to drop its pronominal subject. In a sentence such as 6, the overt subject is *esese*, the inflectional node has an AGR node dominated by *na-* and a tense node dominated by *-i/e-*. One crucial implication of the GB analysis is that the AGR features in the INFL have to match the lexical features of the

purported subject NP. Our example observes this constraint in the sense that *esese* has the phi-feature [1Sg] and the same value feature is reflected in the AGR category *na-* which denotes [1Sg]. Once there is subject-verb agreement, the subject *esese* is dropped. The dropping of *esese* does not mean that the Spec IP position does not exist neither does it mean that the AGR category can assume a subject position now that it is specified for phi-features. Note that even when the subject is dropped, the phi-features still remain as AGR markers and the real subject in this case is *pro*. Going by our example, *pro* is licensed because it is governed and case-assigned by INFL which has the TNS and AGR node. In Lubukusu INFL qualifies as X⁰Y. The *pro*-element has the grammatical specifications of its features on X co-indexed with it. It is this disposition that allows a subject pronominal to be dropped because its features are recovered from INFL. Chomsky (1981) assumes that all NPs with lexical content are assigned abstract case. The basic idea being that case is assigned under government. In sentence 6, the null element in the subject position is governed by INFL which is the head of the IP. Government 'roughly' explains the relation between a head and its complement. A head government licenses *pro* thereby determining its position. In Lubukusu, this head can either be an INFL or an NP. Implicitly, it means that *pro* without a governor makes the sentence ungrammatical because it is that governor that carries the grammatical specifications of *pro*. Ungrammaticality of sentence 8 is brought about by the lack of a governor for the null subject:

8)**pro* khol- ang- a ki- mi---limo kimi---kali po.
S/he do ASP fv PPrf CL20 work Agr much too

Nevertheless, the view that head movement is what satisfies the EPP is an attractive one but it also has its own limitations. Artemis Alexiadou and Elena Anagnostopoulou, in a paper presented at the Tromsø conference on which this argument is based (published as Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 1998:90), develop such theory. On their theory, V-raising in Irish and other languages satisfies the EPP, because the finite verb bears the requisite nominal features for checking the EPP. Versions of this analysis are adopted by other scholars for instance Mazini and Savoia (2002:70) though with some variation. According to these scholars if an element occurs preverbally in any construction in NSLs, then such an element is accorded a left-dislocated status. This means that the preverbal subject is a non-argument that merges in a non-a-position, in fact, often the same position the theta subject raises to in non-NSLs. Such an account does not hold in Lubukusu null subject constructions. The study realizes that *pro*-elements in Lubukusu are syntactically projected and that they occupy the Spec IP positions. One often mentioned piece of evidence is the fact that objects of transitive verbs in Lubukusu get assigned accusative case. Implicitly this means that there must be an element in the subject position of that structure in question which the finite verb agrees with. This means that there is a subject at Spec IP position which must have a nominative case. On the basis of the EPP, it is thus postulated that there is a subject position (Spec IP) in the sentence 8. For instance, the projected subject of "*a-khol-a-nga*" in this sentence is an NP position which is not phonetically realized and in which the external theta role of the verb is realized. Generally, that-role assignment is driven by theta criterion:

- (a) Each argument is assigned to one and only one theta role.
- (b) Each theta-role is assigned to one and only one argument.

The proposal guiding this study, as all those in the past concerning NSLs, relates prodrop to the richness of verbal agreement. So far, therefore, nothing is new. Since Rizzi (1982:67), all the proposals resort, in similar ways, to rich agreement. In the REST framework Chomsky (1981 :44), this guiding idea was fleshed out as INFL having the features [+ pronominal]. Kato (1999:87) for instance, give argument status to the affix containing the [- interpretable] features of V, instead of considering it a reply to the [+ interpretable] phi-features of the corresponding NP argument. Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou (1998:90) and Pollock (1998:84) do not see the affix as an argument but they also assume (although not explicitly) that the phi-features of V are [+ interpretable]: they must indeed be when the affix is taken to belong to the category of pronouns, as they propose in Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou (1998:123). Since they consider the agreement affix a pronoun with phi-features, then it turns out that according to them, Agreement elements absorb the structural case which the verb would otherwise assign and for that matter, the verb governs the Agreement category. Now suppose an overt or covert nominal expression were to appear in an A-position (Spec, IP) which the verb governs again, this ought to produce a theta-criterion violation because there would be argument too many at the Spec IP position which the verb ought to assign a theta-role.

But from the discussion, the study realizes that the AGR category in Lubukusu is not an independent category hence not a pronominal in itself, instead there is an element *pro* which is pronominal, it replaces an overt pronoun by occupying its position (Spec IP) hence performing the same syntactic function the overt pronoun would otherwise perform. To support this fact, the study realized that the Agr category in all Lubukusu null subject constructions should be interpreted with reference to some subject whether overt or covert present in the structure.

However the study realizes that, at times, some occurrences of null subject pronouns in Lubukusu could be construed ambiguously as fully referential or as arbitrary. The value of finite verb/auxiliary denoting 3rd

person plural/singular or even 2nd person singular can, sometimes, be arbitrary. Sentences 9 and 10 best illustrate this point.

(9) Khale [Proarb] ba- silikh ---il--- ang- a ba -lwale anano.

Long ago [Proarb] Sm- treat(3pl) TNS ASP fv CL2 patients here.

'Long ago they treated patients from here.'

(10) [Proarb] o -nyal-a we- ngil--a mwi-kulu ne o- li omu- kwalafu.

[Proarb] Sm- can fv Sm enter fv CL 18 heaven COMP Sm be CL 1 pure.

'You can enter the heaven if you are pure'

Note that in a structure like 9, the pro-element may be looked at as having an arbitrary reference because it is not picking out a specific entity in the discourse of universe. The use of arbitrary pro in Lubukusu is more frequent with verbs of reporting as in 10 or when referring to customs or activities performed by unidentifiable group of people as in 9. The use of pro arb in turn may represent a more abstract and detached perspective.

Embedded clauses at times consist of a complement clause(s) or even adjunct clause(s) adjoined to the main or the matrix clause. Eg

(11) (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.

(12) Embolanga endi endomanga lusungu bulayi

Such a structure has both clauses, the matrix and the complement or the adjunct clause, realized as being finite.

The study 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.

Such an observation elicits the following question: Is the null-subject parameter in Lubukusu a morphological, syntactic or a discursal phenomenon? The study appeals to both the morphological and the syntactic levels of grammar for a justifiable explanation of the pro-drop phenomenon. The 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 supports this appeal. Note that this study takes the INFL(ection) node which has the Agr node that carries the grammatical specifications of the purported subject, to be the head of all the Inflectional Phrases generated. In other words, the semantic features on the Agr category MUST match with those ones on the purported subject of the sentence.

A key role in such an explanation is played by the assumption that agreement elements in Lubukusu do not absorb the structural case which the verb would otherwise assign. This is obviously a fact about Lubukusu, at least in part, since agreement is universally compatible with the appearance of a pro-element in Spec IP position. Agreement normally gets its values from the pro-element, meaning that the case assigned by the verb is absorbed by this element.

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 (11) repeated here as (13)

(13) E sese, e-m-bola-nga e-ndi pro, 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-* 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 dependent on the morphological agreement of the relevant verbs

Expletives/pleonastic or dummy elements have been pivotal in syntactic argumentation. 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 14 is ungrammatical.

(14) Ø *Iolekha- n- e khu Petero mbo se a- khe-- ch- e luno ta

Seem TNS Fv 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 15 or merge an expletive *Ya* as in 16 with an IP. Note that even with

the merging of an expletive, the Spec IP position is still realized as null.

- (15) Peter_i a- lolekha- n- e t_i mbo se a- khe- ch- e luno ta
 Peter Sm seem TNS fv t_i COMP NEG Sm ASP come(3sg) fv today NEG.

'Peter seemed not to be coming today'

- (16) Ø Ya- lolekha- n - e khu Peter_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 today NEG. ,

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

Different scholars have advanced various proposals about the nature of features borne by expletives. Some, for example Taraldsen (1978) have argued that expletives bear only number features. Others proposed that expletives have deictic features and may also have case features. 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 (Ø) 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 ie the verb. The above examples show that this is indeed the case. Thus the following is a viable formulation of Lubukusu expletives.

Generalization 1

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.

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 17 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.

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

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

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

But what about the AGR category? Is it referential hence interpretable enough to assign values to the proelement which is inherently unspecified for the phi-features values, as implied in the second recovery condition of Rizzi (1986) theory of pro?

If the AGR category is referential and interpretable, why should it allow a redundant proelement again in Lubukusu structures yet the agreement category is pronominal in itself? In the theory of agreement, which category agrees with the other one? Does the AGR category agree with pro or is it pro that agrees with the AGR category. If the former case holds for Lubukusu, as it has already been indicated in the Lubukusu data provided, how can agreement assign values to an element that pre-determines its existence?

The distinction of the agreement features on the verb as either interpretable or uninterpretable comes in handy in further testing of the two hypotheses informing this study. As we have already observed in the Theoretical Framework, Chomsky (1995:50) made this distinction very explicit. He argued out that the person, number and gender features of an NP (or DP) are interpretable in the sense that they restrict the denotation of the NP. But the person number or gender features, which appear on a verb, an auxiliary or an adjective, are uninterpretable as they do not restrict the denotation of the categories.

On the basis of the arguments posited above by Chomsky (ibid), it is worth noting that the traditional view of the null subject, pro, being identified by Agr (the phi features of I) and the assumption that there is no pro at all in null-subject constructions instead the Agr. category is a referential definite pronoun, sufficient enough to specify the features of pro hence no need for pro can not be maintained in a study of pro-drop languages which have the Agr category as containing uninterpretable Features. For that matter it would obviously not be possible for an inherently unspecified pronoun to be specified by the phi-features of I, as those feature are in themselves inherently unspecified.

Recall that the main proposal of this study postulates that there is no pro at all in null subject constructions. Instead Agr, the set of phi-features of V, is itself interpretable; Agr is a referential, definite pronoun and for that matter a pronoun phonologically expressed as an affix. As such Agr is also assigned a subject theta-role, possibly by virtue of heading a chain where the foot of the chain is in VP, receiving the relevant theta-role.

On the other hand a counter-proposal of this study postulates that a null-subject is specified for interpretable phi-features. The null-subject therefore values the uninterpretable features of Agr. This implies that the null-ness of the subject is a phonological matter which is not pronounced.

According to the counter-proposal, the Spec IP position must be occupied by a pronoun checking the EPP and is therefore not available for another category.

Notice again that according to the main proposal, Lubukusu agreement category is made up of

interpretable features and therefore, Agr is essentially an affixed definite pronoun. An overt 1st, 2nd or 3rd persons subject pronoun is therefore not required, and if included, it is (presumably) in a higher, A-bar, position. The prediction then is that Spec IP, the position immediately preceding the finite verb or auxiliary in a declarative sentence should not even be projected because the agreement features on the finite verb can check (satisfy) EPP and if projected, it should be filled with an expletive pronoun. This prediction is false as it is shown in the sentence presented to you as 18:

- (18) (Efwe) khu-Iom-ang- a Lu- sungu
 Pro khu-lom- ang- a Lu- sungu
 Pro Sm speak ASP fv CL3 English
 'We speak English'
- (19) *ya khu- Iom- ang-- a Lu-- sungu
 EXP Sm speak ASP fv CL3 English

As it is predicted in the counter-proposal, a null pronoun checks the EPP, and thus sentence 19 with the expletive is ill-formed for the same reason that sentences 20 and 21 below are. The subject pronoun checks the EPP, thus leaving no function for the expletive to fulfill.

- (20) *ya niye a- khol-ang--- a ki-mi--Iimo kimi--kali lukali
 EXP she Sm do ASP fv PPrf CL20 work Agr much too.
 'EXP she does too much work'
- (21) Nama (pro) * (ya) khu-kenia mu--Nairobi
 Be (1sg) (pro) EXP Inf visit CL18 Nairobi.
 'I am from visiting Nairobi'.

Sentence 18 compared with 19, 20 and 21 shows that a subject pronoun cannot be combined with an expletive in a pre-verbal position in either order: (Pronoun-expletive or expletive-pronoun). But notice that an expletive can be preceded by some fronted phrases one occupying an A-bar position and a null element occupying the Spec IP position other than Spec IP, leaving the Spec VP position up for the expletive. Note that the overt subject is occupying a post-verbal position 22 illustrates this point.

- (22) khale, Ø ya b- a--- o o- mukhasi ne o- musecha wee.
 Long ago, (null) EXP be TNS fv CL 1 a woman CONJ CL 1 husband hers.
 'Long ago there lived a woman and her husband'

Structure 23 explicitly shows the above mentioned positions.

- (23) [_{CP} [_C [khale [_{IP} Ø [_{VP} ya [_V bao [_{NP} [_{NOM} mukhasi] ne omusecha wee]]]]]]]]

The study points out that if Agr checks the EPP feature of I, then a nullsubject preceding finite I must be in A-bar position, the movement triggered by a feature in the C- domain, typically a feature with information-structural import. This is argued to be a correct prediction by Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou (1997) and Platzack (2003, 2004) for the null-subject language they discuss.

The prediction is incorrect for Lubukusu because, as already discussed, this study recognizes only two positions in the left periphery preceding the finite verb or the auxiliary verbs in Lubukusu null-subject constructions; a contrastive position which is also a landing site for a fronted Wh-phrase and a position which in unmarked structure is occupied by either an overt or a null subject checking the EPP-feature in INFL.

From the above discussion, the study can therefore formulate the following generalization about Lubukusu structures.

Generalization 2

The finite verb or auxiliary can be preceded by at most two sentence constituents. The one closest to the finite verb or auxiliary verb checks the EPP, the other one is contrastive (or a WhP).

The study therefore concludes that a finite 1st, 2nd or 3rd person verb or auxiliary in Lubukusu does not check the EPP. Instead, it takes a category and merges it with an IP to check the EPP by movement. In Lubukusu null-subject constructions, therefore, there is a null subject pronoun in Spec IP. Following the Chomskyan approach to agreement the null-pronoun has interpretable phi-features and assigns values to the inherently unvalued features of Agr.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The fact that the objects of the transitive verbs in Lubukusu get assigned accusative case is in line with the idea that there is a subject which the finite verb agrees with. This is to say that the subject must have a nominative case.

The Agreement markers on the verb are assigned values by the subject in the Argument position. This is made possible by the fact that the subject is referential and is inherently specified for the features unlike the agreement features which are not referential and therefore not specified for feature values. It is important to note that the mechanism involved here is directional, that is the features are copied from the Argument onto the predicate and not vice versa.

It was noted that the rich agreement on the finite verb is vital in the licencing process of the null subject. The finite verb must be rich to licence a null subject. It is from this constraint that the syntactic and semantic approach followed.

The study observed that the subject features value the Agr features on the finite verb and that the interpretation of the agreement category depended on the phi-features on the subject (whether null or overt) in any given structure. For recovery process of the null subject to take place, the Agr features on the finite verb must be realized overtly. If the subject is null and the agreement on the finite verb is also null or not sufficiently distinct or rich, then the recovery of the features of the subject will fail.

It was also noted that the GB theory can handle the pro-drop phenomenon though not adequately. It can explain the binding relations of pro and its licencing process but when it comes to the interpretation of the Agr. category in Lubukusu null subject constructions one had to go the Minimalist way on the basis of Chomsky (1995) recent developments in syntactic theorizing.

Lastly, it was observed that the Agr. Category in Lubukusu is uninterpretable and can not stand on its own. It depends on the null subject for its interpretability. That is why as we have already observed, Lubukusu does not tolerate verbal initial structures.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study we conclude that the counter proposal is right at least in the case of definite null subjects in simple sentences and embedded clauses: In definite null subject constructions a pronominal subject checks the EPP and there by excluding it from co-occurring with an expletive or another category at the Spec IP for EPP-reasons. The conclusion therefore is that there is a proper null subject in Spec IP in finite null subject sentences in Lubukusu 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.

Recommendations

On the basis of this discussion, the following recommendations were made:

1. This study appeals for the need to pay close attention to the agreement features present in I, given their firm nature that makes I an excellent probe in the syntactic study. This is subject to the fact that it has not been given adequate discussion on the basis of the latest development in the syntactic theories: the minimalist approach.
2. Another recommendation concerns the technique of data collection used in the study. The study was purely dependent on the researcher's native-speaker intuition with verification interviews and further probing in case of border-line cases. It is my belief that data gathered from natural conversation involving the native speakers themselves would go along way in adding authenticity and accuracy to the findings.
3. 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. I also hope that it will be a stimulus for linguist and other scholars alike.

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