

Sources of Symmetry in Bantu Double Object Constructions

1. Overview: It is well-known that some Bantu languages show symmetrical behavior in multiple object constructions, whereas others show asymmetrical behavior (Kimenyi 1980, Marantz 1984, Baker 1988, Bresnan and Moshi 1990, etc.). Lubukusu is generally a language of the crosslinguistically rarer symmetrical type languages (Diercks and Sikuku 2011). However, its symmetrical behavior breaks down in some cases, and these provide hints into the structural underpinnings of (a)symmetry. By comparing examples with third person objects to examples with first and second person objects, and by comparing simple verbs and causative verbs with applicative verbs, we can identify two formally distinct sources of symmetrical object behavior. One of these may also give insight into the nature of so-called Person Case Constraint effects (PCC) in certain languages.

2. Symmetry: If a simple triadic verb ('give', 'show') in Lubukusu has two third person objects, either one can be immediately after the verb ((1)), either one can be expressed as an object marker (OM) on the verb ((2)), and either one can become the subject of a passive ((3)).

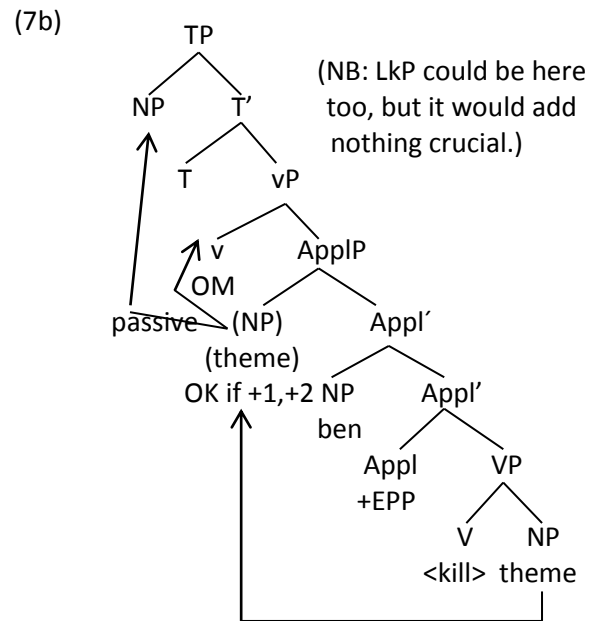
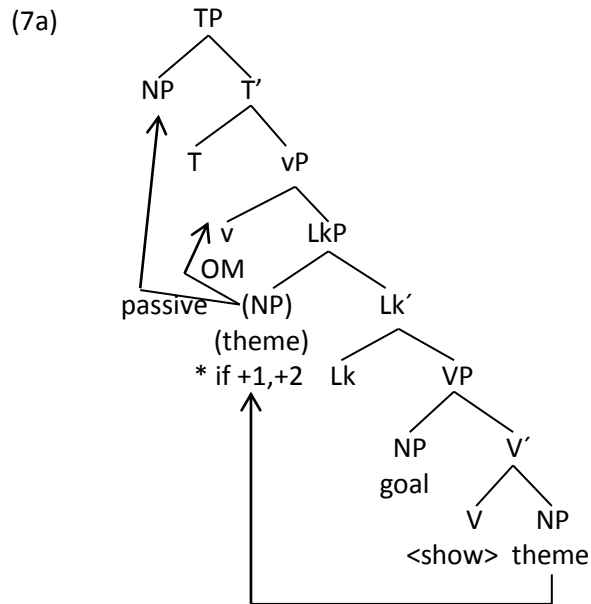
- (1) N-okesy-a embwa Wekesa.
1sS-show-FV dog Wekesa 'I showed the dog Wekesa' OR 'I showed Wekesa the dog'
- (2) N-a-ky-okesya Wekesa.
1sS-T-OM9-show Wekesa 'I showed it Wekesa' OR 'I showed it to Wekesa'
- (3) Sitabu sy-okesy-ebwa Wekesa.
Book 7S-show-PASS Wekesa 'The book was shown to Wekesa.'
Also possible: Wekesa okesyebwa situbu. 'Wekesa was shown the book'

We claim that (1) is the key to this paradigm. It shows that Lubukusu allows a position, internal to the greater verb phrase, to which the theme NP can move, becoming higher than the goal argument. From there, it can further move by cliticization to v ((2)) or by raising to the empty Spec, TP position ((3)). An asymmetrical language like Chichewa (Mchombo 2004) does not allow the theme to move above the goal in the greater verb phrase, so only the goal can cliticize to v or become the subject of a passive.

3. Asymmetry (person): In contrast to third person nominals, first and second person (local) pronouns and reflexives do *not* show symmetrical behavior in Lubukusu. If a local pronoun immediately follows the verb, it can be understood as the goal but not as the theme ((4)). Furthermore, a local OM ((5)) or a local subject of a passive verb ((6)) can be understood as the goal but not the theme.

- (4) Okesya ese Wekesa.
3sS-show-FV me Wekesa 'He showed me Wekesa' NOT 'He showed me to Wekesa.'
- (5) A-nch-okesya Wekesa.
3sS.T-1sO-show Wekesa 'He showed me Wekesa' NOT 'He showed me to Wekesa'
- (6) Ese n-okesy-ebwa Wekesa.
I 1sS-show-PASS Wekesa. 'I was shown Wekesa' NOT 'I was shown to Wekesa'

The contrast between (1)-(3) and (4)-(6) tells us that local pronouns cannot move to the verb-phrase internal position that is higher than the base position of the goal. This recalls Baker and Collins's (2006) analysis of the linker particle in Kinande (another Bantu language). NPs of many kinds move to the specifier of this overt particle, but animate pronouns cannot move there. We extend this to Lubukusu by claiming that the language has a linker particle, but it is phonologically null, and subject to the following constraint: "*local and reflexive pronouns cannot land in Spec, LKP.*" The analysis is sketched in (7a).



4. Symmetry again (applicative verbs). While morphological causative verbs work like simple triadic verbs in these respects, applicative verbs behave differently, as shown in (8)-(10).

- (8) E-r-er-a ese Wekesa.
 1S-kill-APPL-FV me Wekesa 'He killed me for Wekesa' or 'He killed Wekesa for me'
- (9) a-nch-ir-ir-a Wekesa.
 1S.T-1sO-kill-APPL-FV Wekesa 'He killed me for Wekesa' or 'He killed Wekesa for me'
- (10) Ese n-er-er-ebw-a Wekesa.
 I 1sS-T-kill-APPL-PASS-FV Wekesa 'I was killed for Wekesa' or 'For me was killed Wekesa'

Here even examples with a local pronoun are symmetrical, and hence ambiguous. This tells us that applicative constructions provide a way for lower arguments to move past higher arguments without using Spec,LkP. The Appl head has a special feature that itself triggers movement—an extra EPP feature—as proposed by McGinnis 2001. Even local person pronouns can undergo this movement, yielding fully symmetrical behavior. This analysis is contrasted with the one for simple verbs in (7b).

5. Implications. The two sources of verb phrase internal movement we have identified in Lubukusu provide for both macro- and micro- parametric variation within the Bantu languages (and presumably beyond). Whether a language has a “linker phrase” or not influences a variety of constructions—simple DOCs, causatives, applicatives of different kinds—creating a cluster of correlated differences. Whether a particular morpheme in a language (APPL in Lubukusu) has an EPP feature or not creates a kind of microparametric variation, allowing different constructions to have subtly different properties even in the same language. Both seem warranted in the Bantu languages and beyond.

The difference between (2) and (5) also recalls the “person case constraint”, in that an OM in Lubukusu can express a third person theme in the presence of a goal NP, but not a first person, second person, or reflexive theme (compare Nevins 2007, Rezac 2010 and many others). But analyses of the PCC in terms of constraints on agreement or narrow morphological conditions on clitic clusters are not general enough to account for the full range of Lubukusu facts—e.g., the related asymmetries in word order and passive, and the absence of those same asymmetries in applicative. Therefore, we conjecture that person restrictions on movement to particular positions may be a better way of thinking about some PCC effects in some languages.