

Object marking in Sambaa*

Kristina Riedel
LUCL

Sambaa allows one or several object markers to appear on a verb. In this paper I argue that these object markers are agreement morphemes. Theories of agreement such as Baker (forthcoming, henceforth simply “Baker”) propose that “true” agreement is restricted to a single object. Baker makes specific claims for Sambaa with regard to this analysis. I re-evaluate his analysis of Sambaa using new data. Baker proposes a number of tests for true agreement. I show that these are inconclusive for Sambaa in light of the new data. I discuss object agreement with coordinated objects and object agreement in *wh*-questions as potential new tests and conclude that Sambaa is actually a counterexample to Baker’s generalization.

1. Sambaa morphosyntax

Sambaa (also referred to as Shambaa or Shambala) is a Bantu language, Guthrie number G23, spoken in northern Tanzania with about 600,000 speakers. Sambaa has a rich agreement system with a large number of noun classes and allows null subjects and null objects.

Object marking is the appearance of one or several prefixes on the verb, which have the person or gender and number features of the complement, as (1a) shows. Sambaa allows more than one object marker. In (1b) both the direct object and the indirect object agree with the verb.

- (1) a. n-za-**mw**-ona Stella¹
SM1S-PERF.DJ-OM1-see 1Stella
‘I saw Stella.’
b. n-za-**chi-m**-nhka Stella kitabu
SM1S-PERF.DJ-OM7-OM1-give 1Stella 7book
‘I gave Stella a book.’

Bantuist literature distinguishes between languages with asymmetric double object constructions and languages with symmetric double object constructions (Bresnan

& Moshi 1990, Rugemalira 1991, Marten & Kula forthcoming). This is based on the behaviour of the direct and indirect object in double object constructions with regard to access to the immediately post-verbal position, the ability to trigger object marking on the verb, and the ability to be passivized. Based on these criteria, Swahili and Chichewa are asymmetric, while Haya and Rundi are symmetric. Across the Bantu family, it has been observed that the languages which allow more than one object marker, such as Haya and Rundi, are symmetric. Baker explains this as being a consequence of the properties of syntactic agreement as opposed to object clitics. Sambaa does not fit into this typology, it is asymmetric but allows multiple object markers. Like the asymmetric languages, Sambaa has a strict order of indirect and direct object, where the indirect object immediately follows the verb, as in (2a), and does not allow passivization of the direct object in double object constructions, as shown in (2b) even with an overt pronoun. Object marking will be discussed below.

- (2) a. n-za-**m**-nhka Stella kitabu
 SM1S-PERF.DJ-OM1-give 1Stella 7book
 ‘I gave Stella a book.’
 b. *kitabu chi-za-(**ni**)-inhkwa (imi)
 7book SM7-PERF.DJ-OM1S-give.pass me
 Int: ‘The book was given to me.’

Henderson (2006) proposes co-occurrence restrictions as a test for object agreement in Bantu languages. Object agreement co-occurs with lexical objects while clitic pronouns cannot co-occur with them. He claims that no Bantu language which allows more than one object marker allows co-occurrence of the lexical object and the object marker (but see Marten & Kula forthcoming). As (3) shows, Sambaa is a counterexample to Henderson’s typological claim.

- (3) n-za-**ha-chi-m**-nhka Stella kitabu haja
 SM1S-PERF.DJ-OM16-OM7-OM1-give 1Stella 7book 16dem
 ‘I gave Stella a book there.’

Another counterexample is the Musumban dialect of Ruwund (as discussed in Nash 1992, Woolford 2001), which also allows multiple object markers and the co-occurrence of object markers and lexical objects. However in Ruwund this is only possible for indirect objects in double object constructions. In Sambaa all types of lexical objects or locatives may co-occur with an object marker in double object constructions. In fact, for object marking with locatives, as in (3), there is a preference for doubling the object marker with a lexical locative phrase in Sambaa.² Furthermore, Sambaa has morphologically distinct conjoint and disjoint forms of some tenses, where conjoint tenses may only be used if something follows the verb, as shown in (4b), otherwise a disjoint form must be used, as shown in (4c).

- (4) a. *ni-it-iye
 SM1S-go-PERF.CJ
 Int: 'I went.'
- b. ni-it-iye kaya
 SM1S-go-PERF.CJ 16home
 'I went home.'
- c. n-za-ita
 SM1S-PERF.DJ-go
 'I went.'

Both conjoint and disjoint forms can be used with object marked verbs³ where a lexical object follows, which indicates that the object has not been dislocated.

There is no upper limit on the number of object markers allowed in a verb in Sambaa, but the construction deteriorates with increasingly high numbers of objects. It is robustly grammatical to have three object markers on one verb, as shown in (3). Bantu languages allow multiple applicatives and causatives, so it is possible for a verb to have more than two DP complements. Notably, though, in (3) the class 16 locative object marked by *-ha-* is not an argument of the verb. It is generally possible to mark locatives in Sambaa, but no other adjuncts.

For constructions where a verb takes two or more object markers there are two restrictions: a constituent which is lower on the thematic hierarchy, as specified in (5) cannot be object marked if the constituents higher on the thematic hierarchy are not also object marked and there is a strict order of object markers with regard to the verb stem and other morphology, as shown in (6).

- (5) indirect object > direct object > oblique

- (6) subject – TAM – locative – direct object – indirect object – verb stem

The ordering of object markers directly mirrors the linear order of lexical indirect objects, direct objects, obliques and locatives. The indirect object must be closest to the verb stem, as shown in (7a), if the order is reversed, as in (7b), ungrammaticality results.

- (7) a. n-za-**chi-m**-nhka Stella kitabū
 SM1S-PERF.DJ-OM7-OM1-give 1Stella 7book
 'I gave Stella a book.'
- b. *n-za-**m-chi**-nhka Stella kitabū
 SM1S-PERF.DJ-OM1-OM7-give 1Stella 7book

As (8) shows, object marking the direct object is ungrammatical if the indirect object is not also object marked. Even if the lexical direct object is dropped the construction remains ungrammatical.

- (8) *n-za-**chi**-nhka Stella (kitabú)
 SM1S-PERF.DJ-OM7-give 1Stella 7book
 Int: 'I gave Stella a book.'

Symmetric languages, such as Haya, as shown in (9), allow any complement to be object marked (Haya examples from Hyman and Duranti 1982:221).

- (9) a. A-ka-**mú**-cumbil' ébitooke [Haya]
 SM1-P3-OM1-cook.appl 8banana
 'He cooked bananas for him.'
 b. A-ka-**bí**-cumbil' ómwáana
 SM1-P3-OM8-cook.appl 1child
 'He cooked them for the child.'

However, as shown in (10) the ordering of the object markers is the same in Haya as in Sambaa (as in (6)), the object marker closest to the stem is the indirect object (example from Rubanza 1988:117, my gloss).

- (10) tu-lika-**gi-mu-ba**-chumbilila-mu [Haya]
 SM2P-RMF-OM9-OM1-OM2-cook.appl.appl- OM18
 'We will in the (far remote future) cook him in it on their behalf'

The relative ordering of the complements in double object constructions in Sambaa is not affected by the presence of object marking, as shown in (11). The indirect object must immediately follow the verb, even if it agrees with the verb.

- (11) *n-za-(**m**)-nhka kitabu Stella⁴
 SM1S-PERF.DJ-OM1-give 7book 1Stella
 Int: 'I gave Stella a book.'

As shown by the word order restrictions, object marking patterns and passivization facts in this section, Sambaa is clearly asymmetrical. However, the data in (11) shows that Sambaa is different from other asymmetric Bantu languages like Chichewa and Swahili. For Chichewa (Mchombo 2004) it has been argued that free word order is "licensed" by agreement morphology, while in Swahili the order of the direct and indirect object is free regardless of the presence of object marking but in Sambaa the order is fixed.⁵

Analyses of object marking in Bantu languages, such as Duranti (1979) and Woolford (2001) treat object marking in terms of hierarchies where person, role, animacy, number and definiteness can play a role. Woolford (2001) argues that object marking appears when the feature bundle of a lexical object forces it to move to Spec,AgrO. In Woolford's account, object marking is syntactic agreement which is triggered by movement of the object out of the VP, due to the object having features such as being specific and/or animate.

In Sambaa, human objects, in distinction to objects denoting animals and inanimate objects, form a special class for object agreement. There is a tendency to agree with a human object, although it is not obligatory, as shown in (12). I will discuss proper names, which trigger obligatory agreement, below.

- (12) N-za-(mw)-ona ng'wanae
 SM1S-PERF.DJ-OM1-see 1child.poss
 'I saw his child.'

Agreement with a lexical non-human object is rare. However, it is grammatical without any phonological or morphological signs of the object having moved out of the VP. This is because conjoint tenses can be used, for example as shown in (13a) below, and because tones spread from verbs onto their complements.

There is no direct connection between object marking and definiteness or specificity, since object marking can be used with indefinite non-specific DPs, as in (13a), and be dropped with definite specific (human) DPs, as in (13b).

- (13) a. ni-vi-on-iyē vitezū vishano du
 SM1S-OM8-see-PERF.CJ 8basket 8five only
 'I saw only five baskets.' (Context: the speaker was meant to buy ten baskets but there were only five)
 b. N-za-dikiya wana.
 SM1S-PERF.DJ-cook.appl 2child
 'I cooked for (my) children.' (Context: the speaker's children, known to hearer)

2. Properties of Agreement

Baker analyses Sambaa as a language with "real" agreement. He contrasts Sambaa with Haya, claiming that the latter has object clitics based on three tests: the Person Case Constraint, object marking in the passive and object marking with reflexives. All the data and the morphosyntactic properties that Baker's analysis of Sambaa and Haya is based on are taken from Duranti (1979). My data differs from Duranti's for the relevant properties. Rubanza's (1988) analysis of Haya also differs from Duranti's for some relevant aspects.

The Person Case Constraint (PCC) bans phonologically weak first or second person direct objects in ditransitive constructions. Bonet proposes the PCC for all weak objects (agreement, clitics, or weak pronouns), but notes that there are languages which violate it (Bonet 1994:33). She proposes a weaker version of the constraint. The so-called weak version bans first or second person direct objects from co-occurring with third person indirect objects (Bonet 1994:40–1). Baker

re-examines the languages which are claimed to violate the PCC and proposes that the strong version of the PCC is obeyed by languages with “real” agreement, but not by languages with object clitics (Baker forthcoming, ch. 3:32). Baker claims that Sambaa does not allow first or second person direct objects in double object constructions. However, my own data is different; first and second person can co-occur without any degradation of grammaticality.⁶ As shown in (14a) and (14b), Sambaa violates the strong version of the PCC. However, (14c) shows that Sambaa does obey the weak version of the PCC.

- (14) a. a-za-**ku-ni**-onyesha
SM1-PERF.DJ-OM2s-OM1s-show
‘He pointed you out to me’
b. a-za-**ni-ku**-onyesha
SM1-PERF.DJ-OM1s-OM2s-show
‘He pointed me out to you’
c. *a-za-**ni-mu**-onyesha
SM1-PERF.DJ-OM1s-OM1-show
Int: ‘He pointed me out to her.’

Thus, following Baker’s analysis, Sambaa would not have object agreement, although based on different data Baker claims exactly the opposite, namely that Sambaa is a language with “real” agreement (Baker forthcoming, ch.3:31). Moreover, as shown in (15b), Haya does in fact obey the weak version of the PCC (examples from Duranti 1979:40).

- (15) a. a-ka-**mu-n**-leetela [Haya]
SM1-PAST-OM1-OM1s-bring.appl
‘He brought him to me. OR He brought me to him.’
b. *a-ka-**n-mu**-leetela
SM1-PAST-OM1-OM1s-bring.appl

For the strong version Haya is more restricted than Sambaa, by not allowing a reordering of first and second person singular, as shown in (16a) and (16b) (examples from Duranti 1979:40).⁷

- (16) a. a-ka-**ku-n**-leetela [Haya]
SM1-PAST-OM2s-OM1s-bring.appl
‘He brought him to me. OR He brought me to him.’
b. *a-ka-**n-ku**-leetela
SM1-PAST-OM1s-OM2s-bring.appl

Baker proposes the passive as a diagnostic for “real” agreement. If object marking morphology can appear on a verb in the passive voice then it is not an agreement

marker but a moved object clitic. Baker bases this test on Burzio's generalization (Baker forthcoming, ch.3:31), treating object marking on par with accusative case. In Sambaa, object marking the direct object after the indirect object has been passivized is grammatical, as shown in (17).

- (17) n-za-chi-nhkwa n' tate
 SM1S-PERF.DJ-OM7-give.pass by 1father.my
 'I was given it by my father.'

According to Baker's criteria, Sambaa would not be a language with object agreement. Baker (again based on Duranti 1979) claims that Sambaa does not allow object marking in the passive and thus comes to the opposite conclusion. Moreover, according to Rubanza (1988), Haya does not allow object marking in the passive either. This casts doubt on whether object marking in the passive voice has any connection at all to the distinction between agreement and object clitic languages.

According to Baker, languages with "true" agreement do not allow object agreement with reflexives. Indeed, with reflexive verbs object agreement is ungrammatical in Sambaa, as shown in (18).

- (18) *ni-chi-ki-ghul-iye kitabu
 SM1S-OM7-REFL-buy-PERF 7book
 Int: 'I bought a book for myself.'

In this case my data confirm what is reported in Duranti (1979). According to Rubanza (1989) object markers cannot co-occur with the reflexive morpheme in Haya (Rubanza 1989:182). Thus, although Haya and Sambaa differ with regard to their symmetry or asymmetry in double object constructions and for the co-occurrence restrictions, they pattern alike for all three of Baker's tests.

As summarized in (19), Sambaa patterns with the object clitic languages for two of the three tests for agreement proposed by Baker, while for one test it patterns with the agreeing languages. For Henderson's co-occurrence test, Sambaa patterns with the agreeing languages. Thus, no conclusion about the nature of Sambaa agreement can be drawn from the result of these tests. Baker (1996) argues that agreement must also be obligatory. In the following sections I will look at cases of obligatory agreement in Sambaa.

- (19) Diagnostics for agreement:

Property	Sambaa	Agreement
OM in passive	yes	no
OM in reflexive	no	no
obeying strong PCC	no	yes
co-occurrence with lexical object	yes	yes

3. Obligatory Object Marking and Coordination

Baker (1996) argues that syntactic agreement is obligatory. Sambaa has obligatory agreement with proper names referring to humans and in certain types of *wh*-questions. While obligatory agreement with proper names might also be predicted by an analysis in terms of semantic hierarchies the agreement patterns in *wh*-questions are more problematic. Moreover, in both cases agreement becomes optional where the object is part of a coordination structure. This cannot be explained by resorting to hierarchies. I will discuss object marking in coordination structures and *wh*-questions and coordinated *wh*-questions.

Sambaa has four strategies for object marking with coordinated noun phrases: no agreement, first conjunct agreement, plural agreement for two nouns in the same class and the default plural class (class 8).⁸ This is in line with Van Koppen's (2005) analysis of agreement in coordination structures. Van Koppen argues that in coordination structures agreement is possible with the first conjunct or with the entire coordination phrase but not with the second conjunct. Agreement is possible with the first conjunct, as (20a) shows, but not with the second conjunct, as shown in (20b). If the order of the two conjuncts is reversed, as in (20c) and (20d), the same distribution holds.

- (20) a. n-za-ji-ona kui na shimba.
 SM1S-PERF.DJ-OM5-see 5dog and 9lion
 'I saw a/the dog and a/the leopard.'
- b. *n-za-i-ona kui na shimba.
 SM1S-PERF.DJ-OM9-see 5dog and 9lion
 'I saw a/the dog and a/the leopard.'
- c. n-za-i-ona shimba na kui.
 SM1S-PERF.DJ-OM9-see 9lion and 5dog
 'I saw a/the dog and a/the leopard.'
- d. *n-za-ji-ona shimba na kui.
 SM1S-PERF.DJ-OM5-see 9lion and 5dog
 'I saw a/the dog and a/the leopard.'

First conjunct agreement is maintained where a human proper name and an inanimate object are coordinated, as shown in (21a) and (21b).

- (21) a. n-za-ji-ona iwe na Joni.
 SM1S-PERF.DJ-OM5-see 5stone and 1John
 'I saw the stone and John.'
- b. *n-za-mw-ona iwe na Joni.
 SM1S-PERF.DJ-OM1-see 5stone and 1John
 Int: 'I saw the stone and John.'

If agreement were primarily influenced by semantic hierarchies, one would predict that this is not the case since the proper name *Joni* would be much higher on an animacy hierarchy than the inanimate common noun *iwe* 'stone'.

Proper names referring to humans (as opposed to place names or brand names) must be object marked in Sambaa. In (12) above, I showed that this is not the case for all definite human objects. In the same context a proper name without object agreement is ungrammatical, as shown in (22a). When two proper names are coordinated, agreement is optional, as (22b) shows.

- (22) a. Ni-ta-*(m)-dikiya Martini.
 SM1S-PERF.DJ-OM1-cook.appl 1Martin
 'I cooked for Martin.'
- b. Ni-ta-(wa)-dikiya Martini na Maria.
 SM1S-PERF.DJ-OM2-cook.appl 1Martin and 1Mary
 'I cooked for Martin and Mary.'

Plural agreement and first conjunct agreement would also be possible in (22b).

In *wh*-questions, human objects must be object marked in Sambaa. A non-object marked 'who' object is entirely ungrammatical, as shown in (23).

- (23) U-*(mw)-ene ndayi?
 SM2S-OM1-see.PERF.CJ who
 'Who did you see?'

In Sambaa, coordinated *wh*-words are used to ask for exhaustive list questions. With coordinated 'who' first conjunct agreement is possible, as (24a) shows.

- (24) a. U-mw-ene ndayi na ndayi?
 SM2S-OM1-see. PERF.CJ who and who
 'Who all did you see?'
- b. *U-wa-ene ndayi na ndayi?
 SM2S-OM2-see. PERF.CJ who and who
 Int: 'Who all did you see?'

However, although there is no noun class mismatch, plural agreement results in ungrammaticality, as shown in (24b). Dropping the object marker with coordinated 'who' is not judged acceptable by all speakers, though some speakers find it completely grammatical, as shown in (25). This is in clear contrast with the non-coordinated 'who'-question in (23), where all speakers judged the non-object marked variant ungrammatical.

- (25) U-it-iye-ho u-ene ndayi na ndayi?
 SM2S-go-PERF-RM16 SM2S-see.PERF.CJ who and who
 'When you went who all did you see?'

Agreement with coordinated *wh*-items patterns slightly differently from non-*wh* items. This could be related to the fact that this kind of coordination has a special meaning, namely exhaustivity. If two different *wh*-items are coordinated, the agreement pattern comes totally in line with other types of coordination: agreement is only possible with the first conjunct (26a) and is optional (26b).

- (26) a. *U-**mw**-on-*iye* mbwai na ndayi?
 SM2S-OM1-see-PERF.CJ what and who
 Int: 'What and who did you see?'
 b. U-(**mw**)-on-*iye* ndayi na mbwai?
 SM2S-OM1-see-PERF.CJ who and what
 'Who and what did you see?'

The data discussed in this section show that agreement in Sambaa is obligatory with certain types of objects, meeting Baker's (1996) obligatoriness requirement. Furthermore, I have shown that the obligatoriness of agreement is affected by syntactic configurations, since coordination changes the structural configuration between the verb and its complement in terms of locality and embeddings but does not affect the semantic properties of the object.

4. Agreement and Word Order

Data from Sambaa *wh*-questions provides some more clues about the interaction of syntactic configurations and object agreement in Sambaa. *Wh*-elements in Sambaa appear immediately after the verb.⁹ In a double object construction where the direct object is questioned there are thus two elements which target this position, resulting in two different word orders: V DO[+wh] IO and V IO DO[+wh]. Both orders are grammatical but the preferred order is for the *wh*-item to be immediately adjacent to the verb. With this word order the indirect object must be object-marked, as shown in (27a). This must be due to the word order since object marking an object like *ng'wana* 'child' is generally optional (as shown in (12) above, where *ng'wana* is marked possessive). With the opposite word order, object marking is optional again:

- (27) a. Hu-*(**m**)-ghul-*iye* mbwai ng'wana?
 NEGSM2S-OM1-buy-PERF.CJ what 1child
 'What didn't you buy for the child?'
 b. Hu-(**m**)-ghul-*iye* ng'wana mbwai?
 NEGSM2S-OM1-buy-PERF.CJ 1child what
 'What didn't you buy for the child?'

This effect parallels the effect of object marking on the order of the indirect and direct object in Chichewa by Mchombo (2004), as described in Section 2.

5. Conclusion

In this paper I have given an overview of the properties of object agreement in Sambaa. Baker's tests prove inconclusive for determining the syntactic nature of object agreement in Sambaa when applied to more extensive data. Moreover his tests fail to bring out any differences between the two languages with different types of object marking discussed here and by Baker, namely Haya and Sambaa. I have shown that there are environments where agreement is obligatory in Sambaa, and that this is affected by the syntactic configuration of the complement and the verb rather than by its (semantic) features. This fact, as well as the data from co-ordination structures and agreement in questions, support an analysis of Sambaa object marking as agreement. Sambaa is thus a counterexample to Baker's generalization that true agreement is only possible with one object.

Notes

* I would like to thank my Sambaa informants Stella Seifu, Kassim Kimweri, Abdiel Kiango, and Monica Martin. Thanks for helpful comments to the LUCL Bantu Syntax Project Team: Leston Buell, Lisa Cheng, Thilo Schadeberg and Jenneke van der Wal; Lutz Marten, Mark de Vos and the two anonymous reviewers. The data used here was collected in Tanzania from December 2004 to June 2005 and August to December 2006.

1. Abbreviations used in glosses: SM = subject marker; OM= object marker; numbers refer to noun classes; s = (person) singular; P = (person) plural; RM = relative marker; APPL = applicative; REFL = reflexive; REC = reciprocal; P3= past 3, RMF= remote future; PERF = perfective; CJ = conjoint; DJ = disjoint. Class 1 is used for third person singular humans and class 2 for third person plural humans; other noun classes refer to non-humans in singular-plural pairs.
2. Tone patterns have been used to provide evidence for dislocation of the object with object marking, for Chichewa and Haya. In Sambaa H tones spread onto the object marked complements of verbs. There is also no pause between the verb and its complements.
3. Conjoint and disjoint forms are connected to focus.
4. This sentence is grammatical if *Stella* is interpreted as an afterthought and if there is an intonation break between *kitabu* and *Stella*.
5. But see Marten & Kula (forthcoming) where the opposite is claimed for Swahili.

6. The data in question was checked with four native speakers from different parts of the Sambaa speaking area. In any case, there is no strong dialectal variation. Data in Duranti is based on a single speaker.
7. Interestingly though, in Haya both interpretations are possible in (14a) and (15a), which also ought to be ruled out by Bonet's PCC.
8. There is variation for the acceptability of class 8 agreement for animate objects.
9. The so-called IAV (Immediately After the Verb) position is often connected with focus in Bantu languages (cf. Watters 1979). This is especially noticeable in languages where there are conjoint and disjoint verb forms, as is the case in Sambaa.

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