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Object Asymmetries in Kitharaka

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Recent research on object asymmetries in Bantu languages within the Lexical Mapping Theory (LMT) component of Lexical-Functional Grammar (LFG) has focussed on two types of languages: asymmetrical and symmetrical, terms proposed in Bresnan & Moshi (1990).¹ The properties of asymmetrical and symmetrical languages have been the topic of a substantial prior literature. Notable examples include Hawkinson & Hyman (1974), Hyman & Duranti (1982), Gary & Keenan (1977), and Kisseberth & Abasheikh (1977), to name only a few. (Cf. Bresnan & Moshi (1990) and other LMT literature cited in this paper for discussion and further references.)

The difference between asymmetrical and symmetrical languages may be illustrated by the object properties of the two objects of transitive verbs with the applicative extension; i.e., the applicative object and the secondary object. Two frequently cited examples of object properties are passivization and control of object markers. (Word order of objects is another, and will be taken up later in the paper.) In an asymmetrical language like Chichewa, an applicative object bearing one of a limited range of thematic roles may passivize or control an object marker, to the exclusion of the secondary object (Alsina & Mchombo (forthcoming and 1990), Bresnan & Moshi (1990)). In a symmetrical language like Kichaga, both the applicative and secondary objects may passivize or control object markers (Bresnan & Moshi (1990)).

Kitharaka is a Bantu language spoken mainly in the Tharaka Division of Meru District in Kenya. Heine & Möhlig (1980), in their areal classification of the Bantu languages spoken in Kenya, place Kitharaka within the Meru-Tharaka subgroup of the Central Kenya group, one of five such groups. Guthrie (1971), in a pan-Bantu classification, places it within his Zone E.50 Kikuyu-Kamba group. It is mutually intelligible with dialects of Kimeru. (Cf. Hodges (1976) for a discussion of object properties in a dialect of Kimeru).

Kitharaka exhibits the symmetrical properties of permitting either object in an applicative construction to passivize and of permitting either object to control an object marker. This pattern is illustrated with a Beneficiary applicative in examples (1)-(2) and (3)-(4).²

1. Mw-íkí ná - á - rá - túm - ír - w - é ngúò né - ékúrí.
1-bride foc-SM1-past-sew-past/appl-pass-FV 10/clothes by-2/women
'The bride had clothes sewn for her by the women'

2. Ngúó ní - í - rá - túm - íír - w - é mw-íkì né - ékúrí.
 10/clothes foc-SM10-past-sew-past/appl-pass-FV 1-bride by 2/women
 'The clothes were sewn for the bride by the women'
3. Èékúrí ¹ í - bá - rá - mú - túm - íír - è ngùò.
 2/women foc-SM2-past-OM1-sew-past/appl-FV 10/clothes
 'The women sewed clothes for her.'
4. Èékúrí ¹ í - bá - í - túm - íír - è mw-ìkì.
 2/women foc-SM2-OM10-sew-past/appl-FV 1-bride
 'The women sewed them for the bride.'

In spite of these examples, I will argue that Kitharaka is an asymmetrical language. (Zaenen (1984) argues for a similar conclusion for Kikuyu, within LFG but not LMT.) In order to make this argument, it is first necessary to discuss how Lexical Mapping Theory accounts for object symmetries and asymmetries.

The domain of LMT is the relationship between the thematic roles of a verb's argument structure and the grammatical functions which determine how these roles are realized syntactically. LMT assumes four grammatical functions: subject, a thematically unrestricted object, a thematically restricted object and a thematically restricted oblique. These functions are decomposed into plus or minus values for a pair of binary features, [+/-unrestricted] and [+/-objective]. (Cf. Alsina & Mchombo (1990), Bresnan & Kanerva (1989) and Bresnan & Moshi (1990) for further details). The feature decomposition for each function is given as follows:

5. SUBJ: [-r, -o]
 OBJ: [-r, +o]
 OBJtheta: [+r, +o]
 OBLtheta: [+r, -o]

Thematic roles are mapped onto these functions by receiving plus or minus feature values assigned by mechanisms including the intrinsic classification of certain thematic roles, morpholexical rules such as Passivization and Applicative Formation, and defaults. All assignments are subject to wellformedness conditions. (Cf. Bresnan & Kanerva (1989), Alsina & Mchombo (1990), Bresnan & Moshi (1990), Harford (forthcoming) for details of the application of LMT to Bantu languages.)

The argument or arguments of a verb which have access to object properties are classified [-r]; that is, only arguments that are eventually mapped onto subject or unrestricted object³. Patient arguments of unextended verbs have access to this feature classification, as do the arguments introduced by the

When these data are considered together, the principal generalization that emerges is that whereas either object may have access to object properties, only one object at a time within a particular lexical form actually has this access. In LMT terms, either object may be [-r], but not both at a time. This is an analysis considered and rejected for Kichaga, a genuinely symmetrical language, by Bresnan & Moshi (1990). However, this paper will incorporate it as part of an LMT analysis of these data in which Kitharaka has the following properties: 1) it is asymmetrical; 2) either object in an applicative construction may be classified [-r], 3) an object marker may only represent a [-r] object. (Note that in Kichaga object markers may represent objects that are either [-r] or [+o].)

The two possible classifications of the objects for the examples discussed so far are given in examples (10) and (11):⁴

10.	< Ag	Ben	Pt >
	Intrinsic Applicative	[-o] [-r]	[+o] [+r]
	Default	[-r]	[+r]
	SUBJ	OBJ	OBJØ
11.	< Ag	Ben	Pt >
	Intrinsic Applicative	[-o] [+o]	[-r]
	Default	[-r]	[+r]
	SUBJ	OBJØ	OBJ

In the lexical form in (10), the Beneficiary argument is classified [-r] and the Patient argument is classified [+o]. Therefore, the Beneficiary argument may either passivize or control an object marker, as in examples (1) and (3). In the lexical form in (11), the Patient argument is classified [-r] and the Beneficiary argument is classified [+o], giving examples (2) and (4). Double object markers, as in example (5), are ruled out, since an object marker must be [-r], and only one object may be classified [-r]. The cooccurrence of passivization and object marking is ruled out because only one object is classified [-r] and the same argument may not be a passive subject and an object at the same time. What is being proposed is minimally different from the analysis of Chichewa proposed in Alsina & Mchombo (forthcoming, 1990), in which arguments bearing thematic

roles higher than Instrumental are constrained to be realized as [-r] roles in the applicative. Kitharaka differs only in lacking this constraint.

In light of this analysis, I would like to propose that asymmetrical and symmetrical languages cannot be distinguished in terms of whether one or two objects have access to object properties, since languages like Kitharaka and Kichaga are the same in this respect, but only in terms of whether object properties can cooccur, as when a passive verb has an object marker. Such cooccurrences should be attested in symmetrical languages, but not in asymmetrical languages.

This account will now be extended to include aspects of the interaction of the reciprocal construction with the applicative, passive and object marker. First, an example of a reciprocalized applicative is given in (12):

12. Èékúró ' í - bá - rá - túm - án - íír - è.

2/women foc-SM2-past-sew-rec-past/appl-FV

'The women sewed clothes for each other/other people.'

I have referred to the -an- extension as the reciprocal because it is cognate to the reciprocal in other Bantu languages and because it has a reciprocal meaning. However, as seen in example (8), it may be glossed as either "each other" or "unspecified other people". Therefore, the most accurate way to describe its function is to say that it suppresses an argument, which then cannot be realized syntactically, and optionally coindexes it with the highest thematic role in the lexical form.⁵

Note now that the Beneficiary argument has been reciprocalized. I assume, following a proposal by Alsina & Mchombo (1990) that only a [-r] argument may be reciprocalized, and that therefore the Beneficiary is the [-r] argument in this example. However, it also turns out that it is not possible to reciprocalize the Patient argument of a Beneficiary applicative verb, contrary to the proposal that either the Beneficiary or the Patient may be classified [-r]. This pattern is the same one found in Chichewa, as described by Alsina & Mchombo (1990), in which only the Beneficiary argument of a Beneficiary applicative verb may be classified [-r]. On the other hand, in Kitharaka, there is additional evidence which suggests that either object may reciprocalize, provided that its thematic role is higher on the Thematic Hierarchy than that of the other. The Thematic Hierarchy is given in (13) (Bresnan & Moshi (1988)):⁶

13. Agent > Beneficiary > Goal/Recipient > Instrumental >
Patient/Theme > Locative > Motive

Evidence for this proposal comes from example (14), in which the applicative argument is a Motive, which Bresnan & Moshi (1988) propose is lower on the hierarchy than Patient:

14. Èékúrí í - bá - kw - èèndà gù - túr - án - ír - à àntù àrúmè.
 2/women foc-SM2-T/A-want inf-beat-rec-appl-FV 2/people 2/male
 ‘The women want to beat each other/other people because of the husbands.’
 (reciprocalized argument is Patient, higher than Motive)

#‘The women want to beat each other/other people for the husbands.’
 (reciprocalized argument is Patient, lower than Beneficiary)

#‘The women want to beat the husbands because of each other/other people.’ (reciprocalized argument is Motive, lower than Patient)

In example (14), only the Patient may reciprocalize, not the Motive, as indicated by the unacceptability of the third reading. This pattern suggests that there is an independent constraint on reciprocalization and that the unacceptability of reciprocalizing the Patient argument of a Beneficiary applicative is not a counterexample to the proposal that either object in an applicative construction may be classified [-r].

Turning now to the interaction of the reciprocal with the applicative, passive and object marker, note that a reciprocalized applicative verb may not take an object marker or undergo passivization, as seen in examples (15) and (16), respectively:⁷

15. *Eekuru i - ba - ra - i - tum - an - iir - e.
 2/women foc-SM2-past-OM10-sew-rec-past/appl-FV
16. *Nguo ni - i - ra - tum - an - iir - w - e.
 10/clothes foc-SM10-past-sew-rec-past/appl-pass-FV

These examples are predicted to be ungrammatical by the theory developed here regardless of whether the applicative argument is higher or lower on the Thematic Hierarchy than the Patient. Only one argument may be classified [-r] and that argument is suppressed by Reciprocalization and cannot be realized syntactically, following assumptions made by Alsina & Mchombo (1990). Therefore, there is no other [-r] argument available to control an object marker or serve as a passive subject.

A note on word order: like object marking and passivization, word order has typically been one of the properties used to distinguish symmetrical from asymmetrical languages (cf. Bresnan & Moshi 1990 and the references cited there). Chichewa, Kichaga and Kitharaka are alike in requiring Beneficiary/Goal applicative objects to follow the verb directly. In the theories developed by Alsina & Mchombo (1990) and Bresnan & Moshi (1990), the [-r] object is the one that follows the verb. Under this assumption, the theory developed in this paper predicts that Kitharaka (although not the other two) should allow either object in

this position, just as it permits either object to passivize or control an object marker. I will assume, however, that since there is no correlation between symmetry or asymmetry and word order, word order need not be treated as part of the typological differences between these languages but may be accounted for by an independent constraint.

In conclusion, I have argued that Kitharaka is an asymmetrical language, in spite of its apparently symmetrical properties, using data from the applicative, passive and reciprocal constructions, as well as object marking. It therefore patterns typologically with languages like Chichewa, rather than languages like Kichaga. This conclusion suggests that the cooccurrence of object properties is the crucial criterion in determining whether a Bantu language is symmetrical or asymmetrical.

Notes

1. I am grateful to Alex Alsina, Joan Bresnan and Larry Hyman for comments and suggestions about this paper. The judgements reported in this paper are those of Nyaga Mzalendo-Kibunja, from Nkondi, Tharaka, and I would like to thank him for all of his help during the time that this paper was being written. Thanks are also due to Patrick R. Bennett for assistance with tone-marking. This study is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under grant BNS-8609642. All mistakes are my own responsibility.

Abbreviations are as follows: appl: applicative, foc: focus, FV: final vowel, inf: infinitive, OM: object marker, pass: passive, rec: reciprocal, SM: subject marker, T/A: tense/aspect marker. An acute accent indicates high tone, a grave accent low tone. Numbers in the glosses are noun class numbers.

2. The pattern also appears in Goal applicatives. Instrumentals are not yet attested. Locative applicatives show the pattern with respect to passivization but, since there are no locative object markers, the pattern cannot be observed across the board. Note that example (4) does not contain the tense marker *-ra-* which is present in examples (1)-(3). This example is acceptable with *-ra-* only with an interpretation of the applicative object as Goal, with the weird reading 'The women sewed the clothes to the bride.' The question of why this is the case should be taken up in future research. Larry Hyman has suggested to me that a plausible line of investigation would be to examine the interaction of the applicative with the focus system of the language.

3. Object markers in symmetrical languages are also controlled by [+o] objects, since the Lexical-Functional Grammar principle of Biuniqueness (Bresnan 1982), which rules out more than one instance of a grammatical function in a single lexical form, prevents lexical forms from having three [-r] roles (one the subject, the other two unrestricted objects) (Bresnan & Moshi (1990).

4. Default classifications assign [-r] to the highest available role in the lexical form to map it onto the SUBJ function, and [+r] to lower roles, to map them onto the thematically restricted functions OBJtheta and OBLtheta. Defaults cannot change values assigned by the intrinsic classifications and morpholexical rules. Cf. Bresnan & Kanerva (1989), Alsina & Mchombo (1990) and Bresnan & Moshi (1990).

5. This formulation of the effect of the reciprocal extension is a modification of that given for Chichewa by Alsina & Mchombo (1990) and for Kichaga by Bresnan & Moshi (1990). In Chichewa and Kichaga, both suppression and coindexation are obligatory.

6. This version of the hierarchy is taken from Bresnan & Moshi (1988), an earlier version of Bresnan & Moshi (1990). It is identical to the hierarchy used in other work within the LMT framework, except for the Motive role at the bottom, which is missing elsewhere.

7. Example (16) is ungrammatical under the intended interpretation but is acceptable with the idiomatic reading 'The clothes were sent off by the women', without any reciprocal interpretation.

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