

Agreement in Disguise*

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KiRimi (Bantu, north central Tanzania, data from Hualde 1989) allows only one object marker (OM) per clause, but that OM initially appears to have a dual identity--sometimes functioning as an agreement morpheme and other times as an incorporated object pronoun.

(1) N-a-**mU**-on-aa Maria.
1-TNS-**OM**-saw- Maria
I saw Maria.

(2) N-a-**mU**-on-aa.
1-TNS-**OM**-saw-
I saw her.

Bresnan and Mchombo (1986) propose that subject markers in Chicheŵa, which also manifest such a dual function, are ambiguous between subject agreement morphemes and pronouns (grammatical and anaphoric agreement, in their terms). However, there is no empirical evidence to distinguish that analysis from one in which the subject marker is always a subject agreement morpheme, but the subject can be null (pro). The theoretical motivation for Bresnan and Mchombo's approach is that it provides an account of why languages allow subject pro drop: pro drop is possible only if the subject agreement is ambiguous between agreement and a pronoun which can take the thematic role. However, that account will not extend to languages such as Japanese that allow pro drop but have no agreement (Speas 1994). Based on only the Chicheŵa data, one cannot make a strong argument that one morpheme can be ambiguous between agreement and pronoun, especially since Bresnan and Mchombo show that the Chicheŵa OM is not ambiguous, but is always an incorporated pronoun.

KiRimi initially appears to provide empirical evidence that an OM can be ambiguous between object agreement and an incorporated object pronoun. That

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evidence takes the form of different sets of conditions on the use of the OM as agreement versus as a pronoun. Agreement (co-occurrence of the OM with an overt object) is limited to animate objects, as shown in (3), while pronominalization (occurrence of the OM without an overt object) occurs with inanimates as well as with animates, as seen in (4):

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>(3) a. N-a-mU-on-aa Maria.
 1-TNS-OM-saw- Maria
 I saw Maria.</p> <p>b. *N-a-ki-on-aa kItabu.
 1-TNS-OM-saw- book
 I saw the book.</p> | <p>(4) a. N-a-mU-on-aa.
 1-TNS-OM-saw-
 I saw her.</p> <p>b. N-a-ki-on-aa.
 1-TNS-OM-saw-
 I saw it.</p> |
|---|--|

In addition, agreement is limited to the first object of double object constructions whereas pronominalization is available to either object (Hualde 1989). Given that the conditions on object agreement versus object pronouns are different, one naturally assumes that it will be necessary to link these two different sets of conditions to two different identities of the OM, agreement and pronoun.

Nevertheless, despite this initial impression of strong evidence for an ‘ambiguous OM’ in KiRimi, this paper will argue that this initial impression is incorrect and that the KiRimi OM is always an object agreement morpheme.¹ Under this account, object pronouns are usually null (*pro*), but pronouns in general (null or overt) agree whenever possible. As a result, the OM usually appears when the object is a pronoun. However, there are circumstances in which object ‘pronominalization’ occurs without an OM; these circumstances occur whenever the object *pro* is in a construction in which it cannot trigger agreement. Thus *pro* drop is possible in KiRimi even without an OM, a fact that creates difficulty for the idea that the OM is the pronoun.

The real challenge of the KiRimi data is to account for the conditions on the appearance of the KiRimi OM (which are even more complex than indicated above) and to do so within a theory that makes the right predictions about the typological variation in conditions on object agreement across languages. It will be shown here (following Woolford 1995, 1996) that the conditions on object agreement in KiRimi follow from the interaction of economy principles (which restrict movement and the amount of structure used) and exclusion principles (which restrict the features of VP-internal objects). Using Optimality Theory (Prince and Smolensky 1993), these principles are violable and ranked

¹The view that the KiRimi OM is always agreement is consistent with Olson’s (1964:96) description of the KiRimi OMs as “concord” and not pronouns.

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with respect to each other in order of which are more and less important to obey.

The paper is organized as follows. Section one focuses on the account of instances of the KiRimi OM that co-occur with overt arguments. In section two, this account is expanded to include instances of the OM that do not co-occur with an overt argument. Section three is devoted to a discussion of how some very exceptional data can be handled, in which it appears that the normal KiRimi limit of one OM is suspended.

1. An Account of the Conditions on Object Agreement in KiRimi

It is assumed that objects that trigger object agreement move out of the VP to Spec Agr-O, the object agreement position (Chomsky 1993). However, this is not obvious from the KiRimi word order because the verb raises to and then above Agr-O, taking the object agreement morpheme with it.

(5) N-a-**mU**-on-aa Maria.
1sg-TNS-**OM**-saw- Maria
I saw Maria.

(6) [_V...OM+Vstem...] [_{Agr-OP} Maria_j [_{Agr-O}] [_{VP} [_V] t_j]]

In languages such as KiRimi where only objects with certain features agree, we deviate from the assumptions of Chomsky (1993), and following Woolford (1995, 1996), postulate that only those objects that agree have moved out of the VP. The objects that do not agree remain inside the VP. Under this view, any object that moves to Spec Agr-O agrees, so that in a sense, there are no conditions on object agreement. Instead, there are conditions on which objects move and which do not.

The reason that only some objects move out of the VP, while others remain in place, has to do with restrictions on the features that VP-internal objects are allowed to have. Diesing (1992) shows that specific objects are often prohibited from remaining inside the VP, while non-specific objects are allowed to remain inside the VP. As shown in Woolford (1995, 1996), there is actually a whole family of constraints that exclude NPs with certain features from VP-internal positions, but whether or not these constraints are 'active' in any particular language depends on their relative importance (ranking) with respect to the economy principle, Avoid Movement.

These Exclusion Principles exclude from object positions inside VP (positions governed by V) NPs with features that are high on one or more of the well-known animacy/topicality hierarchies:

(7) Animacy/Topicality Hierarchies:

human > animate > inanimate
definite > indefinite
specific > non-specific
pronoun > non-pronominal
first > second > third
singular > plural

(8) General Form of Exclusion Principles:

Exclude (feature(s)) NPs from positions governed by V inside VP.

E.g.: Exclude specific NPs from positions governed by V inside VP.
Exclude human ...
Exclude pronouns ...
Exclude definite animate ...²
Exclude singular specific ...

In KiRimi, the exclusion principle referring to definite animates is 'active'. That is, it is more important to obey this exclusion principle than it is to Avoid Movement. As a result, an object with the features definite and animate will move out of the VP to avoid violating this exclusion principle, even though that movement will violate the economy principle, Avoid Movement. We express this order of importance in Optimality Theory by ranking these principles:

(9) KiRimi ranking: Exclude definite animate ... >> Avoid Movement

It is assumed here that objects that are forced out of the VP move to Spec Agr-O because that is the closest place to move. When they move to Spec Agr-O, they trigger agreement.

As a result of this Exclusion principle, animate objects in KiRimi move and agree when they are also definite. But as a result of Avoid Movement, objects with other features, such as indefinites, do not move and thus do not agree. We see this contrast between (10a) with an indefinite object and no OM and (10b) with a

²As an alternative to allowing Exclusion principles that refer to more than one feature, it is possible to restrict Exclusion principles to referring to only one feature if one makes use of the device of constraint conjunction (Smolensky 1993, Legendre, Smolensky and Wilson to appear). Under that view, the principle 'Exclude definite, animate NPs...' would be replaced with a conjunction of two constraints: Exclude animate NPs... & Exclude definite NPs The empirical effect on this data would be the same.

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- (13) a. Nee uuki ukari ne-wa-puuzeyastia. [Huichol]
 I man girls 1sg-3pl-show
 I showed the man (to) the girls.
- b. Nee ukari uuki ne-∅-puuzeyastia.
 I girls man 1sg-3sg-show
 I showed the girls (to) the man.

Such examples present no particular problem under the assumption that there is one Spec Agr-O position available in clauses and that the highest object, the goal, has privileged access to it because it is closest to it. We thus expect exactly what we find in Huichol, that one object agrees and the other does not.³

Now, in KiRimi, under a ‘features-on-agreement’ account, we would expect to find a similar pattern. The first (goal) object should agree, while the second (theme) object should remain in the VP *regardless of its features*. Since only one object agreement slot is available, we expect only one object to agree. However, that pattern is grammatical in KiRimi only when the second object is *not* definite and animate, as in (14a). If the second object is definite and animate, then the double object construction is ungrammatical, as in (14b), and an NP PP construction must be used instead, as in (14c) (Hualde 1989:181).

- (14) a. N-a-**va**-et-e-aa anca mUhUmba.
 1sg-TNS-**OM(pl)**-bring-APPL- girls boy
 I brought the girls a boy. (*the boy) (Hualde 1989 (3))
- b. *N-a-**va**-tUm-I-aa alimu Yohana.
 1sg-TNS-**OM(pl)**-send-APPL- teachers Yohana
 I sent the teachers Yohana. (Hualde 1989 (5a))
- c. N-a-**mU**-tUm-aa Yohana kU alimu
 1sg-TNS-**OM(sg)**-send- Yohana for teachers
 I sent Yohana to the teachers. (Hualde 1989 (5b))

In contrast, the Exclusion principle approach allows us to capture the fact that what is driving the system is not the features on the agreement morpheme, but rather the features on VP-internal objects. Both objects in a double object construction are subject to Exclusion principles, not just the first or highest. However, since it is only possible for one object to move to Spec Agr-O, the other object must either simply violate the Exclusion principle or else find another

³The word order in these Huichol examples suggests that Spec Agr-O may be on the right in that language.

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strategy to avoid violating the Exclusion principle. It was established in Woolford (1995) that an alternate way of avoiding a violation of Exclusion principles is to realize an object inside a PP, so that it is no longer a direct object of V (or no longer governed by V). Thus it is possible for both objects to avoid violating the prohibition on VP-internal objects that are both animate and definite, if one moves to Spec Agr-O and the other is realized inside a PP. That is what occurs in (14c).⁴

This approach also allows us to answer the question of why conditions on object agreement are so much more common than conditions on subject agreement. We expect to find similar conditions on subject agreement only in languages that do not require all subjects to move out of the VP. When all subjects have to move to the subject agreement position (e.g. because of the Extended Projection Principle), all subjects will agree regardless of their features. Only if a language allows subjects to remain in the VP will we see the effects of Exclusion principles on subjects.

Now let us turn to the constraints on ‘pronominalization’ in KiRimi.

2. Extending the Account to Conditions on ‘Pronominalization’

All pronouns are definite and most pronouns are also animate (all first and second person pronouns and some third person pronouns). Thus most pronouns fall under the the Exclusion principle discussed above that prohibits animate definites from remaining in VP-internal object positions. Regardless of whether the pronoun is covert or overt, it moves to Spec Agr-O, where it agrees.

(15) N-a-**kU**-on-aa
1sg-Tns-**OM(2sg)**-saw-
I saw you. (Hualde 1989 (13))

⁴Presumably example (14b) would still be ungrammatical if the first object were indefinite, because the second object is animate and definite: ‘I brought (some) teachers Yohana. Although Hualde (1989) does not explicitly discuss such examples, he states categorically that double object constructions are ungrammatical if the second object is animate and definite. This raises the question of why the second object cannot move and agree when the first object does not tie up the object agreement. In general, cross-linguistically, second objects do not appear to be able to agree even when the first object does not agree. This is presumably because of locality conditions on movement that prevent the second object from crossing over the first object to get to Spec Agr-O. Nevertheless, this locality condition is violated in languages with symmetric passives when the second object passivizes (Woolford 1993). Exactly what this locality condition is and the details of when it holds remain to be determined.

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(16) ... pro_i Agr-O [VP t_i]

(17) N-a-**kU**-on-aa veve.
 1sg-TNS-**OM(2sg)**-saw- you
 I saw you. (Hualde 1989 (13))

(18) ... you_i Agr-O [VP t_i]

In double object constructions, an animate pronoun behaves just like a definite animate NP in KiRimi. In the following example, the first object agrees and the second object is an overt animate pronoun. The example is ungrammatical because the second object, by remaining in situ, violates the Exclusion principle targeting definite animates. As we saw above, the NP PP construction must be used instead in this situation.

(19) a. *N-a-**mU**-et-e-aa mUnca veve.
 1sg-TNS-**OM(3sg)**-bring-APPL- girl you
 I brought the girl you.

b. N-a-**kU**-et-aa veve kU mUnca.
 1sg-TNS-**OM(2sg)**-bring- you for girl
 I brought you for the girl. (Hualde 1989 (6))

However, inanimate pronouns also agree, even though they are not covered by the Exclusion principle that targets definite animates.

(20) N-a-**ki**-on-aa.
 1-TNS-**OM**-saw-
 I saw it. (Hualde 1989 (8))

(21) I saw pro_i Agr-O [VP t_i]

That indicates that another Exclusion principle, targeting pronouns, is also active in KiRimi.⁵

(22) Exclude pronouns from VP-internal positions governed by V.

⁵Although most pronouns will be targeted by both of these Exclusion principles, the second Exclusion principle targets pronouns, rather than only inanimate pronouns, because cross-linguistically, there is no evidence for an Exclusion principle that only targets pronouns with a feature low on the animacy hierarchy, whereas there is a great deal of evidence for one that targets all pronouns (e.g. languages where object pronouns always move out of VP but other objects do not).

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In single object constructions, these two Exclusion principles seem to have the same effect and they seem to be of the same importance. However, when we look at their effects on double object constructions, we will see that the principle referring to definite animates is more important (ranked higher) than the principle referring to pronouns.

To begin this demonstration, we need to first establish that, like the Exclusion principle that targets definite animates, the Exclusion principle targeting pronominals applies to second objects as well as first objects. In the following example, the first object is indefinite and thus remains in situ. As a result, Spec Agr-O is empty. If the second object is realized as a null pronoun, it moves to Spec Agr-O and agrees, as in (23b).⁶

- (23) a. N-a-rUgh-I-aa ang'inya Ughai.
 1-TNS-cook-APPL- children cornmeal (*children* is indefinite)
 I cooked (some) children cornmeal.
- b. N-a-U-rUgh-I-aa ang'inya
 1-TNS-**OM(it)**-cook-APPL- children (it)
 I cooked (some) children it. (Hualde 1989 (14))

- (24) I cooked [_{Agr-OP} pro_i Agr-O [_{VP} children t_i]]

The contrast in the effect of the two Exclusion principles can be seen in the behavior of the second object in situations where the first object does agree. We saw above in (14b) and (19a) that double object constructions are ungrammatical when both objects are animate and definite, because leaving either one in situ violates the Exclusion principle targeting animate definites. In contrast, double object constructions are grammatical when leaving the second object in situ only

⁶Why it is grammatical for second object to cross a first object when the second object is a null pronoun, but not when it is overt (see footnote 4 above), is an interesting question. There is a possible piece of independent evidence in Kichaga (Bresnan and Moshi 1990:154) that A-moving a null element is grammatical in contexts where moving an overt element is not. In certain contexts, it is grammatical to passivize (A-move) a null pronoun, but ungrammatical to passivize an overt NP in the same construction (unless the overt subject is focused or an overt pronoun, which carries some emphasis in contrast to a null subject):

- (i) a. K-ʔ-ʔ-lyì-í-ò.
 7s-TNS-OM-eat-APPL-PASS
 (It) is being eaten for/on him/her. (Bresnan and Moshi 1990 (17b))
- b. *K-èlyá k-ʔ-ʔ-lyì-í-ò. (grammatical if subject is focused)
 7-food 7s-TNS-OM-eat-APPL-PASS
 Food is being eaten for/on him/her. (Bresnan and Moshi 1990 (18a))

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There are two problems to solve regarding this data. First, what is the nature of the construction that allows a second OM and, second, why is that construction restricted to first person singulars? As to the nature of this construction, we can only speculate here, but we can show how the OT account easily restricts whatever this unidentified construction is to first singular objects.⁸

Whether the unidentified construction is another agreement projection or some kind of incorporation, it removes an object from the VP so that it will not violate Exclusion principles. In addition, this unidentified construction is ‘expensive’, violating some economy constraint that we will refer to here as ‘Avoid Construction X’ for purposes of this demonstration.

The unidentified construction is only available to exclude first person singular objects from the VP. That indicates that a third Exclusion principle is active in

⁸It might seem obvious that the second OM must also be agreement, since it can double an overt pronoun. However, the idea that there are multiple Agr-O projections (e.g. Hoffman 1991), is not supported by any (clear) example of a language anywhere in the world that allows more than one direct object to agree at once. There are languages such as Warlpiri that allow dative and accusative objects to be doubled by clitics, but I know of no language that allows two non-oblique objects to co-occur with object agreement morphemes. There are, of course, languages such as Kinyarwanda that allow two or more OMs, but these OMs are clearly not agreement, but rather some sort of pronominal OMs. Thus proposing that KiRimi has two Agr-O projections is not empirically motivated by what we know about the languages of the world. A possible alternative construction is suggested by Hualde (1989: 186):

“The first person singular goal is somehow fused with the verb, allowing an O2 to behave as if it were an O1 for the purpose of prefix marking. Schindwein (1986) proposes that the first person singular object prefix is “invisible” for certain phonological purposes. I should argue that a first person singular object with the benefactive/goal theta role is equally invisible in the syntax allowing an O2 to behave as a second O1.”

Hualde’s remarks suggest that perhaps the first object can be incorporated or cliticized to the verb in some way, when it is first person singular. An incorporated or cliticized first object would leave Spec Agr-O empty so that the second object could move there.

- (i) The teachers sent+me [_{Agr-OP} Yohana [_{VP}]]

The identity of the second OM remains somewhat mysterious on this view. However, there is a language that appears to allow incorporated objects to trigger some kind of agreement (though perhaps not the usual structural agreement). In Southern Tiwa (Aissen 1990), one portmanteau morpheme reflects the person, number, noun class and thematic role of up to three arguments, including incorporated objects. The examples below (Aissen 1990 (50)) have an incorporated object and the portmanteau morpheme changes to reflect the number of that object.

- (ii) a. Ka-’u’u-wia-ban.
1sg/2sg/3sg-baby-give-past
I gave you the baby.
- b. Kam-’u’u-wia-ban.
1sg/2sg/3pl-baby-give-past
I gave you the babies.

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KiRimi, targeting first person singular NPs. In addition, it indicates that obeying this Exclusion principle is ‘worth the cost’ of using the unidentified construction. We express this generalization with the following constraint ranking:

(32) Exclude first person singulars ... >> Avoid Construction X

>> Exclude definite animates ... >> Avoid P

>> Exclude pronouns ... >> Avoid Movement

This account, to summarize, involves three Exclusion principles (restricting the features that VP-internal objects can have) interleaved with three economy principles (expressing the cost of the various strategies one might use to remove objects from VP-internal positions). With respect to the typological variation predicted by this approach, one expects to find languages with all of the possible different rankings of these constraints; however there are certain universal constraint rankings involved that limit the predicted varieties. For example, since first person singular pronouns are higher on the animacy hierarchy than pronouns in general, it is probably not possible to rerank the exclusion principles targeting these features.⁹ However, the relative rankings of the various Exclusion principles with respect to the various economy principles should be alterable. In the dialect of KiRimi described by Olson (1964), for example, definite objects agree regardless of whether or not they are animate. That indicates that in Olson’s dialect, the Exclusion principle referring to definites is ranked higher than Avoid Movement (whereas that Exclusion principle seems inactive in Hualde’s dialect because it is ranked below Avoid Movement). For more discussion of typological variation in object agreement patterns in Bantu languages, see Woolford (1996).

⁹This approach captures the intuition expressed by Hyman and Duranti (1982) that the exceptional behavior of the first person singular is related to the fact that the first person singular is highest on the various hierarchies. An alternative, suggested during the question period at ACAL 28, is that the reason that first person singular is exceptional is because of the phonological form of the morpheme, a single nasal. The idea is that the limit of one OM is due solely to a morphological slot limit, but that because a nasal can combine with the following root without creating an additional syllable, it need not use the one available slot. One problem with that view is that there are other Bantu languages, such as Sesotho, where the 1sg is a single nasal which nevertheless do not allow two OMs when one is first singular (Jacottet 1968:58). That cross-linguistic variation is unexpected if all that is necessary to have two OMs is to avoid creating an additional syllable. But that variation is exactly what is expected if the Exclusion principle targeting 1sg can be ranked below the economy principle ruling out the unidentified construction.

4. Conclusions and Discussion

The OT account proposed here, under which the KiRimi OM is always agreement, provides answers to a number of questions that would be left unanswered under an ambiguous OM approach. Object ‘pronominalization’ usually involves an OM because pronoun objects agree whenever possible; but, object ‘pronominalization’ is possible without an OM whenever the object occupies a position where agreement is impossible. It is not necessary to posit gaps in the inventory of agreement morphemes to explain why only objects with certain features agree; any object that moves to the object agreement position will agree. However, objects with certain features are prohibited in VP-internal positions and forced to move. It is no accident that we generally do not find similar ‘animacy’ restrictions on subject marking under this approach, because independent principles force subjects to move out to the subject agreement position, regardless of their features, and thus subjects agree regardless of their features. The constructions that are available to objects with different features vary because of the relative ranking of different economy principles (ruling out certain constructions) and different Exclusion principles (forcing objects with certain features out of VP-internal positions).

What this paper has in common with Bresnan and Mchombo (1986) is that both argue that OMs in different Bantu languages which superficially appear to be ambiguous between agreement and incorporated pronouns are not. That raises the question of whether OMs in Bantu languages or other languages are ever ambiguous between agreement and incorporated pronouns. Such ambiguity has been claimed for Swahili OMs in Keach (1995), but it is likely that an analysis similar to the one proposed here for KiRimi is possible for Swahili, under which the OM is always agreement.

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