

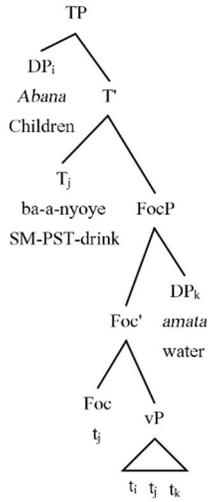
Asymmetry in Kirundi Reversal and TECs

Objective: I explain an asymmetry in Kirundi reversal and transitive expletive constructions (TEC) using the Labeling algorithm (Chomsky 2013).

Kirundi Reversal: The data is from Ndayiragije (1999) (N1999, henceforth). (1) shows a sentence in canonical SVO order with a focused object.

- 2a) Abâna ba-á-nyôye amatá
 children 3P-PST-drink:PERF milk
 'Children drank milk (not water).'

2b)

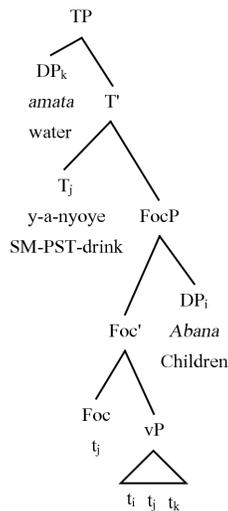


Following N1999, I assume that (2a) has the structure in (2b), where the focused object is moved to a rightward specifier of a low FocP.

In OVS reversal as in (3a), the external argument (DP_{ea}) is assumed to move to Spec, FocP as shown in (3b), following N1999.

- 3a) Amatá y-á-nyôye abâna.
 milk 3S-PST-AF-drink:PERF children
 'Children (not parents) drank milk.'

3b)



Asymmetry in Reversal and TECs: I will now illustrate the asymmetry. First, observe non-reversal contexts [(4)] with two post-verbal phrases, XP and YP. Schemas are shown due to word restrictions.

4) Non-reversal: $DP_{ea} \quad V \quad XP \quad [YP]_{Foc}$
 $DP_{ea} \quad V \quad YP \quad [XP]_{Foc}$

Here, XP or YP can be focused, but the focused phrase must be rightmost. This is the case with post-verbal elements that are an object and CP [N1999:ex.17] or an object and adjunct [N1999:ex.15]. Structurally, the rightmost phrase is in the low Spec, FocP. (5) shows the asymmetry.

5) Reversal: $XP \quad V \quad YP \quad [DP_{ea}]_{Foc}$
 $*XP \quad V \quad DP_{ea} \quad [YP]_{Foc}$

In (5), DP_{ea} remains post-verbal with another element, but the DP_{ea} must be focused. In structural terms, DP_{ea} must move to Spec, FocP in reversal contexts even if there is another element that could have been focused. This is the case with post-verbal elements that are DP_{ea} and a CP [N1999:ex.16] or DP_{ea} and an adjunct [N1999:ex.14].

This requirement that a post-verbal DP_{ea} be obligatorily focused can also be seen in TECs where an expletive pro is in Spec, TP [N1999:ex.67].

6) TEC: $pro_{exp} \quad V \quad YP \quad [DP_{ea}]_{Foc}$
 $*pro_{exp} \quad V \quad DP_{ea} \quad [YP]_{Foc}$

(6) shows, again, that a post-verbal DP_{ea} must be focused. What explains this asymmetry in reversal and TECs?

Analysis: In Chomsky's labeling algorithm (LA), a structure that is formed by two non-heads, eg. {XP, YP}, is ambiguous for labeling. In this case, displacement of either phrase is required.

7) $\{XP \{H, \{XP, YP\}\}\}$

Displacing XP as shown in (7) makes the lower copy of XP invisible which now makes the complement of H labelable as only YP is visible at this point.

I claim that this is what requires a post-verbal DP_{ea} in Kirundi to be focused. In (5) and (6), if DP_{ea} remains in Spec, vP, we will have $\{DP_{ea}, v'\}$, a structure containing two non-heads. Thus, the label of vP remains ambiguous and the derivation will crash. However, by moving DP_{ea} to Spec, FocP, the lower copy of DP_{ea} is invisible and vP can be labeled. $\{Foc', DP_{ea}\}$, the newly formed structure, can be labeled as these share focus features (i.e. feature unification).

Conclusion: In this paper, I provide an account for asymmetries in Kirundi OVS reversal and TEC constructions using the LA.

References

- Chomsky, Noam. 2013. Problems of projection. *Lingua* 130:33–49.
 Ndayiragije, Juvénal. 1999. Checking economy. *Linguistic Inquiry* 30, 399–444.