1. Introduction

- The correlation between **subject** and **topic** is well-established in the Bantuist tradition (Bresnan & Mchombo 1987; Givón 1976)
- This correlation is instantiated in different ways in different Bantu languages (Henderson 2006, Morimoto 2008)

Shona:

(1) *Shingi akabika manhanga.*
   - S. a-ka-bik-a ma-nhanga
   - S. AGR1-PST-cook-FV CL6-pumpkin
   ‘Shingi cooked the pumpkins.’

- In (1), *Shingi* controls prefixal agreement
  - *Shingi* is the logical subject (= agent)
  - *Shingi* is also the **discourse topic**

**Topic** = previously introduced (“discourse-old”) constituent that characterizes what the sentence is about (Erteshik-Shir 2007)

- Evidence for Shona subjects as topics: **wh-questions**
  (Demuth and Johnson 1989)
  - Basic declarative sentence cannot answer subject **wh-questions**

(2) Q: *Ndiyana akabika manhanga?*
   - ndiyana a-ka-bik-a ma-nhanga
   - who was it AGR1-PST-cook-FV CL6-pumpkin
   ‘Who cooked the pumpkins?’

A: *Ndiye Shingi akabika manhanga.*
   - ndiye S. a-ka-bik-a ma-nhanga.
   - it was S. AGR1-PST-cook-FV CL6-pumpkin
   ‘It was Shingi who cooked the pumpkins.’

A: #Shingi akabika manhanga.

**Question:** What is the locus of prefixal agreement in Shona?
- Is agreement with the ‘subject’ or with the ‘topic’?
- Where are agreement features spelled out?

**Answer:** Agreement is with the topic in an A’-position, Top(ic)P, at the left clausal periphery.

- **Main Goals:**
  - Demonstrate that Shona prefixal agreement is **not** A-agreement in T with the grammatical subject
  - Provide a formal Minimalist account of A’ topic agreement in:
    - Agentive active
    - Passive
    - Locative Inversion (LI)
2. “Subject” Agreement or “Topic” Agreement?

- If subject \( \approx \) topic, then there are two logical possibilities for the locus of agreement in a Minimalist framework

2.1. Hypothesis #1: Agreement is Subject-driven

- Agreement is in TP
  (e.g. Deen 2006 for Swahili; Demuth and Harford 1999 for Sotho; Letsholo 2002 for Ikalanga)

- In a Minimalist Framework:
  - EPP on T triggers A'-movement to Spec, TP
  - Phi-features of subject spelled out as agreement on T

2.2. Hypothesis #2: Agreement is Topic-driven

- Agreement is in the CP domain
  (e.g. Henderson 2006 for Kirundi; Simango 2006 for Nsenga; Morimoto 2008 for various Bantu languages)

- We assume a Top(ic) head in the CP domain (Rizzi 1997)
- In a Minimalist Framework
  - EPP on Top triggers A'-movement to Spec, TopP
  - Phi-features are spelled out as agreement on Top

2.3. Summary

(5) Two logical possibilities for subject/topic agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locus of Agreement</th>
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<td>Top</td>
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- In this talk, we will argue that Shona agreement is Topic Agreement
3. Why Agreement is not in T

- If subject agreement is in T, then the subject is in an A-Position

Shona subject position is not an A-position

3.1. Non-Agentive Subjects

- In the default case, the logical subject controls agreement:

(6) Shingi akabika manhanga.
S. a-ka-bik-ir-a ma-nhanga
‘Shingi cooked the pumpkins.’

- What controls agreement when the logical subject is not topical?

3.1.1. Passive

- Unlike canonical passive constructions, Shona passive does not discriminate between arguments and adjuncts

(7) a. Shingi akabikirwa Mufaro muriyo.
S. a-ka-bik-ir-w-a Mufaro mu-riyo.
‘Shingi cooked the pumpkins.’

b. Direct Object
Muriyo wakabikirwa Mufaro naShingi.
u-riyo wa-ka-bik-ir-w-a M na-S.
CLA3-vegetables AGR3-PST-cook-PASS-FV by-Shingi
‘Vegetables were cooked for Mufaro by Shingi’

c. Applied Object
Mufaro akabikirwa muriyo naShingi.
M a-ka-bik-ir-w-a mu-riyo na-S.
CLA3-vegetables APPL-PASS-FV by-S
‘For Mufaro were cooked vegetables by Shingi.’

(8) Companion Adjunct
a. Murume akafamba nomukadzi wake.
u-riume a-ka-famb-a no-mu-kadzi wa-ke.
CL1-man AGR1-PST-walk-FV with-CL1-woman POSS
‘The man walked with his wife.’

b. Mukadzi akafambwa naiye nomurume.
Mu-kadzi a-ka-famb-w-a na-ye no-mu-riume
CL1-woman AGR1-PST-walk-PASS-FV with-3SG by-CL1-man
‘The woman was walked with by the man’

(9) Locative Adjunct
a. Murume akafamba musango.
u-riume a-ka-famb-a mu-sango.
CL1-man AGR1-PST-walk-FV CL18-forest
‘The man walked in the forest’

b. Musango makafambwa nomurume.
u-riume a-ka-famb-w-a no-mu-riume
CL18-forest AGR18-PST-walk-PASS-FV by-CL1-man
‘In the forest was walked by the man’

- Shona passive need not target A-positions
- Shona passive is NOT A-movement
• In fact, the passive need not involve movement at all:

(10) *Kwakarumwa mwana neimbwa.*
    Ku-aka-rum-w-a mwana ne-imbwa
    EXPL-PST-bite-PASS-FV child.CL1 by-dog
    ‘There was biting of the child by the dog.’

• Passive need not involve A-movement
• Shona passive is demotional (Foley and Van Valin 1985)
  o Logical subject is “demoted” or blocked from moving
  o Movement of non-subject is subsequent topicalization

3.1.2. Active Voice Locative Inversion

• Locative subjects are also possible in active sentences:

(11) **Locative Inversion**
    Mumuti makagara makudo.
    mu-mu-ti m-aka-gar-a ma-kudo
    CL16-CL3-tree AGR16-PST-sit-FV CL6-baboon
    ‘In the trees sat the baboons.’

• LI clauses are felicitous only when the locative subject has been introduced in the preceding discourse
  o The locative subject must be a discourse-old topic

• Shona LI is restricted to unaccusative verbs (no agent) (Demuth and Mmusi 1997)

• Locative subjects are in complementary distribution with agents (spec, vP)
• LI parallels topicalization of the agent in basic transitive clauses

3.2. Reflexives

• Reflexives are canonically A-binding
• Reflexives in Shona are bound by the subject of a sentence:

    Mufaro a-ka-zvi-won-a
    M. AGR1-PST-REFL-see-FV
    “Mufaro saw himself.”

    b. *Mbudzi yakazvipisa.*
    Mbudzi ya-ka-zvi-pis-a
    goat.CL9 AGR9-PST-REFL-burn-FV
    “The goat burnt itself.”

• Reflexives are disallowed in some passive sentences:

(13) a. *Mbudzi yakazvipisirwa.*
    Mbudzi ya-ka-zvi-pis-ir-w-a
    goat.CL9 AGR9-PST-REFL-burn-APPL-PASS-FV
    intended: ‘The goat was burnt for itself.’

    b. *Shingi akazvibikirwa.*
    Shingi a-ka-zvi-bik-ir-w-a
    S. AGR1-PST-REFL-cook-APPL-PASS-FV
    intended: ‘Shingi was cooked for herself.’

• If subjects were always A-positions, we should expect reflexive binding to be uniformly acceptable.

**Sum:** Shona subjects are not in A-positions, therefore agreement is not in T
4. A Formal Account of Topic Agreement

- Recalling section 2:

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- We have established Shona subject agreement is not A-agreement in T, then it must be A’.
- Shona subject position is not an A-position, but A’-position

**Overview of our analysis:**
- Top bears an EPP feature, requiring movement of the closest topical DP to Spec, TopP
- T is the locus of tense and nominative case, but has no EPP
  - All movement is EPP driven (Chomsky 2000)
  - Nominative case is checked at a distance
- There are (at least) 3 different instantiations of v
  - v selects overt agent specifier (Agentive Active)
  - \( v_{\text{pass}} \) selects pro agent specifier (Passive)
  - \( v_{\text{loc}} \) selects locative specifier (Locative Inversion)

4.1 Agentive Actives

- Active v introduces the overt agent
- Closest goal to EPP on Top is the agent in Spec, vP
- Agent checks EPP on Top

(14) **Shingi akabika manhanga**
Shingi a-ka-bik-a ma-nhanga.
S. **AGR1-PST-cook-FV CL6-pumpkin**
“Shingi cooked the pumpkins.”

4.2 Passives

- \( v_{\text{pass}} \), realised as the passive morpheme –w, taking pro agent
- pro checks nominative case, but cannot check Top
- Any eligible constituent from the VP domain is free to check EPP on Top

(15) **Muriyo wakabikirwa Mufaro naShingi.**
Mu-riyo wa-ka-bik-ir-w-a Mufaro. na-Shingi CL3-vegetables **AGR3-PST-cook-FV** M. by-S.
“Vegetables were cooked for Mufaro by Shingi.”
4.3 Active Locative Inversion

- \(v_{loc}\), selects a locative specifier and an unaccusative VP complement
- The locative is the closest goal, checks EPP on Top

(16) *Mumuti makagara makudo.*
Mu-mu-ti ma-ka-gar-a ma-kudo
CL18-CL3-tree \(AGR18\)-PST-sit-FV CL6-baboon
“In the trees sat the baboons.”

4.4. Summary

- The locus of agreement is the A’-position Top
- Movement to Top is driven by an EPP feature, subject to a locality condition
- The difference between active, passive, and LI clauses is the substantive content of \(v\), paralleling the tripartite voice systems of Austonesian languages, analysed as topicalization (Pearson 2007)

5. Potential Problems...and their Solutions

- Data involving left dislocation and variable binding may appear to contradict our analysis of Topic Agreement
  - …BUT a straightforward explanation is possible

5.1. When a Topic Doesn’t Control Agreement

- **Problem #1:** If agreement is with the topic, why don’t the ‘topics’ in the following examples control agreement?

(17) *(Uri kutaura nezva) Starbucks ...*
  u-ri ku-taur-a nezva S
  2S-AUX INF-talk-FV ASSOC S

...*Shingi akanua kofi ikoko nezuro chaiye.*
  S. a-ka-nw-a kofi iko-ko nezuro cha-iyi
  S. \(AGR1\)-PST-drink-FV coffee DEM-RED yesterday place

‘Speaking of Starbucks, Shingi drank coffee at that very place yesterday’

- Starbucks is a clearly a topic:
  - ☑ discourse-old
  - ☑ what the sentence is about
  - BUT Starbucks doesn’t control agreement

**Our solution:**

- Two positions for topics: Internal and External (Aissen 1992)
- Only Internal Topics can satisfy the EPP on Top

- **Internal Topics**
  - move from vP-internal position to CP domain
  - can enter into formal Agree relations
• **External Topics**
  o primary function is to anchor clause in discourse (Beninca and Poletto 2004)
    ▪ may be discourse “old” or “new”
  o either base-generated (“hanging”) or left-dislocated
  o may constitute a distinct intonational unit

• The “anchoring” position where external topics appear can also be occupied by focused constituents

(18) *Mũmũiti, Mufaro akagara.*
  mu-mi-tì M. a-ka-gar-a
  CL₁₈-CL₃-tree M. AGR₁-pst-sit-fv
  ‘In the trees, Mufaro sat’
  ▪ *Mũmũiti* has a final high tone (indicative of focus), and is separated from the main clause by an intonational break
  ▪ compare with LI, which has an internal locative topic:

(19) *Mũmũiti makagara Mufaro.*
  ‘In the trees sat Mufaro.’

• Only internal topics control agreement
  (Bokamba 1992 on Dzamba; Morimoto 2008; Zeller 2005 on Zulu)

• In (17):
  o *Starbucks* is the external topic
  o *Shingi* is the internal topic

**Sum:** EPP on Top probes for Internal but not External topics

5.2. **Variable Binding with A’-Agreement**

• **Problem #2:** If the subject is in an A’-position, why are crossover effects inconsistent?

• **Crossover effects** are a common diagnostic of A’-movement
  o An element which has undergone A’ movement should not be able to bind an element not c-commanded by its trace

• We assume that themes (Direct Object) are the most deeply-embedded A-position (complement of V).

• Crossover manifests itself with reflexives, argued to be bound variables (Storoshenko 2009)

• The reflexive must be bound in its original A’-position:

(20) a. *Ndiiyani akazvipisiswa?*
    Ndiiyani a-ka-zvi-pis-is-w-a.
    who is it that AGR₁-PST-REFL-burn-CAUS-PASS-FV
    ‘Who was caused to burn himself?’

    b.*Ndiiyani akazvipisirwa?*
    Ndiiyani a-ka-zvi-pis-ir-w-a.
    who is it that AGR₁-PST-REFL-burn-APPL-PASS-FV
    Intended: ‘Who was burnt for himself?’

(21) a. *?Mufaro akazvipisiswa.*
    Mufaro a-ka-zvi-pis-is-w-a.
    M. AGR₁-PST-REFL-burn-CAUS-PASS-FV
    ‘Mufaro was caused to burn himself.’

    b.*Mufaro akazvibikirwa.*
    Mufaro a-ka-zvi-bik-ir-w-a.
    M. AGR₁-PST-REFL-burn-APPL-PASS-FV
    Intended: ‘Mufaro was burnt for himself.’
• Where the causative object moves up to check the EPP on Top in a passive, the reflexive direct object is still properly bound.
• Where the direct object moves up, it crosses over the reflexive applicative object, and is categorically ruled out.
• Crossover is not universally seen in all passives:

(22) a. Nhnaga rogaroga rakabikirwa muridzi waro.
   Nhnaga rogaroga ra-ka-bik-ir-w-a pumpkin.CL5 CL5.every AGR5-PST-cook-APPL-PASS-FV
   mu-ridzi waro
   CL1-owner POSS
   “Every pumpkin was cooked for its owner.”

   b. Muridzi wogawoga akabikirwa nhanga rake.
   Mu-ridzi wogawoga a-ka-bik-ir-w-a
   CL1-owner CL1.every AGR1-PST-cook-APPL-PASS-FV
   nhanga rake
   pumpkin.CL5 POSS
   “For every owner, his pumpkin was cooked.”

• In both cases, a topicalized quantifier can bind a VP-internal variable.
• This is consistent with **Weakest Crossover** (Lasnik and Stowell 1991) where Topicalization is argued not to trigger crossover effects:

(23) This book, I would never ask its author to read it.

**Sum:** Reflexives show crossover because they must be bound from an A-position; otherwise, topicalization does not trigger crossover.

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6. Conclusion

• Miyagawa (2007) describes a parameter in which languages are either “Agreement” or “Focus”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreement Language</th>
<th>Focus Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rich subject agreement Case-driven EPP</td>
<td>No subject agreement Focus-Driven EPP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Citing Baker (2003), Miyagawa describes Kinande (Narrow Bantu) as a Focus Language with rich agreement.
• We see the same for Shona, but, contra Miyagawa view this as A’-Movement of topics to the left periphery, rather than A-Movement to [Spec, TP]
• This parameter may vary across the Bantu language family (Henderson 2006, Morimoto 2008.)
• Shona would then represent an extreme case, where agreement has completely divorced from case assignment, shifting to an A’ position.

**References**