Agreement with conjoined objects in Swahili: an unlocking effect

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In Swahili, object markers (OMs) are required with [+human] object NPs (1)a[*] and preferred with definite objects (1)b. A personal pronoun object is expressed as an OM, optionally doubled by an independent pronoun ((1)c). Object 'who' questions must be doubled ((1)d). These factors lead Riedel (2009) among others to an agreement analysis.

(1) a. Ni-li-*(mw-)ona   m-toto wako.   c.   Ni-li-*(ku)-ona   (wewe)
       1SSA-PST-*(1OM)-see 1-child 1-your   1SSA-PST-2SOM-see (2sIndPron)
       'I saw your child.'   'I saw you.'

    b. Ni-li-(ki-)nunua   ki-tabu.   d.   U-li-*(mw)-ona   nani?
       1SSA-PST-(7OM)-buy   7book   2SSA-PST-*(1OM)-see 1who
       'I bought the book.'   'Who did you see?'

The Kiunguja variety of Swahili spoken by my consultant allows first conjunct OM (FCOM) but not second, with conjoined plurals (2)a,b.

(2) a. Ni-li-(ya)-nunua   ma-sanduku na   vi-kapu.
       1SSA-PST-(6OM)-buy   6-suitcase and   8-basket
       'I bought suitcases and baskets.'

    b. Ni-li-(vi)-nunua   vi-kapu   na   ma-sanduku.
       1SSA-PST-(8OM)-buy 8-basket   and   6-suitcase
       'I bought baskets and suitcases.'

    c. *Ni-li-vi-nunua   ma-sanduku   na   vi-kapu.
       1SSA-PST-8OM-buy   6-suitcase   and 8-basket
       [Intended: I bought baskets and suitcases.]

Riedel (2009) argues that a clitic-raising approach to Swahili FCOM would violate the Coordinate Structure Constraint. An agreement approach better fits these facts, as for (1).

Though OM with conjoined singulars has been reported for Swahili (Marten 2005 a.o.), it is disallowed by my Kiunguja consultant, unless there is a strong intonation break, indicated below with a comma. I take the post-comma constituent to be adjoined vP-externally.

(3) a. Ni-li-(*ki-)ona   ki-su na   kalamu. b. Ni-li-(*i-)ona   kalamu na ki-su.
       1SSA-PST-(*7OM)-see 7-knifu and 9pen   1SSA-PST-(9OM)see   9pen   and 7knife
       'I saw a knife and a pen.'   'I saw a pen and a knife.'

    c. Ni-li-ki-ona   ki-su,   na kalamu.   d. [[vP <V> kisu] [&P na   kalamu]] (= (3)c)
       1SSA-PST-7OM-see   7-knife and 9pen   knife   and pen
       'I saw a knife, and a pen.'

    e. Wa-li-m-salimia   mtoto wangu *(,) na   mimi.
       2SA-PST-1OM-greet 1-child 1-1sPOSS   and 1sINDPRON
       'They greeted my child, and me.'

But there is one systematic exception: a verbal suffix -eni encoding 2nd PL features licenses a 2sOM doubling the first conjunct. -Eni is commonly used to indicate a plural addressee (compare the commands and requests in (4)). There are no comparable endings for other person-number features.

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[*] Arabic numerals indicate noun class unless followed by s or pl, in which case they are person features. I take the OM for third person to be simply class 1 (in the schema of Carstens 1991, Gender A singular.

(4)   a. Amka!   b. Amk-eni!   c. Tafadhali   d. Tafadhal-eni
           wake   wake-2pl   please   please-2pl
           'Wake up!'   'You pl. wake up!'   'Please'   'Please (you pl).'

Compare (5)a with (6)a, wherein the suffix *-eni* is present and a FCOM is allowed. *-Eni* can only double the first conjunct, as (6)b shows.

(5) a.*Ni-li-<u>ku</u>-ambia   <u>wewe</u>   na   Halima.
         1SSA-PST-2SOM-tell   you   and Halima
         [Intended: I told you and Halima.]

    b. Ni-li-<u>ku</u>-ambia   <u>wewe</u>, na   Halima.
         1SSA-PST-2SOM-tell   you,   and Halima
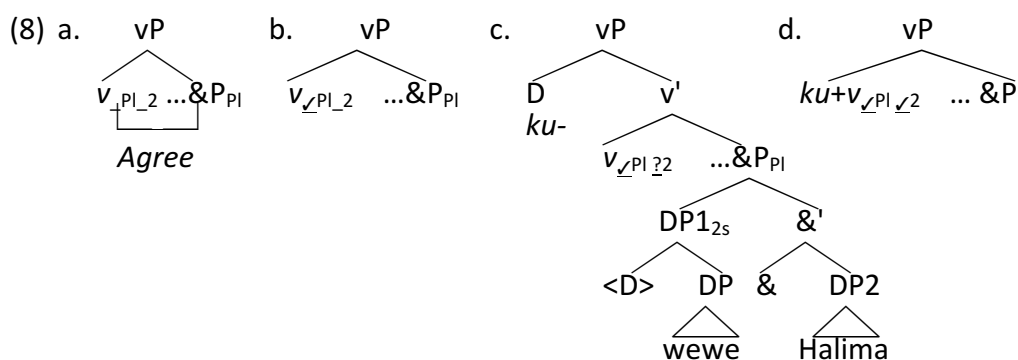   'I told you, and Halima.'

(6) a. Ni-li-<u>ku</u>-ambi-**eni**   <u>wewe</u> na   Halima.
         1SSA-PST-2SOM-tell-2PL you   and Halima
         'I told you and Halima.'

    b. *Ni-li-<u>ku</u>-ambi-**eni**   Halima na wewe.
         1SSA-PST-2SOM-tell-2PL   Halima and you
         [intended: I told Halima and you.'

The ill-formedness of (6)b is not due to a general constraint on the order [XP+pron]. I will take it to be a form of intervention effect for raising of the pronoun (to be proposed below).

(7) Q.   A-li-mw-ona   nani?   Ans.   Halima na wewe.
         1SA-PST-1OM-see 1who?   Halima and you
         'Who did he see?'   'Halima and you.'

To account for (6), I adopt the view that agreement can have an "unlocking" effect (Rakowski & Richards 2005, Van Urk & Richards 2015, Halpert 2018, Branan & Davis 2018). In this case, the featurally specific 2nd PL suffix on *v* probes for matching features. Finding &P, it unlocks it by agreeing with it in plurality. This makes possible probing and raising of the 2s pronoun out of the first conjunct, via Spec, *v*P. I adopt a big DP approach (structural details omitted until (8)c), with raising to Spec followed by m-merger (Matushansky 2006):

(8) a.   vP   b.   vP   c.   vP   d.   vP
         /   \\   /   \\   /   \\   /   \\
     v +PI_2 ...&P_PI   v √PI_2 ...&P_PI   D   v'   ku+v √PI √2   ... &P̄
        |_____| ku-   /   \\
          Agree   v √PI ?2   ...&P_PI
                                                        /   \\
                                                    DP1_2s   &'
                                                    /   \\   /   \\
                                                 <D>   DP   &   DP2
                                                         △   △
                                                       wewe   Halima

I assume also that the 2nd person *u*ϕ of the suffix *-eni* is valued by the m-merge of the 2s OM that results from it. I draw on cross-linguistic unlocking effects (see above citations) and &P opacity facts to support this approach.

Summing up, Kiunguja's purely noun class OMs pattern as agreement, in that they allow doubling and in fact require it with [+human] nouns including object 'who', and since they can reflect the features of a plural first conjunct. However, when the 2nd PL Kiunguja *-eni* suffix is involved, the facts provide reason to think that OMs with person features are

actually raised clitic pronouns. *-Eni* is agreement, and its presence permits a 2s OM on the verb, doubling the first conjunct. The result is an apparent (but not actual) violation of the general ban on OM with singular conjuncts. Viewed as movement, it violates the Coordinate Structure Constraint as noted by Riedel (2009). The pattern is comparable to "unlocking" for movement out of an otherwise opaque domain (and see also Sikuku et al 2018 for evidence that alone among Lubukusu OMs, personal pronouns have clitic syntax). The unlocking property of agreement has been argued for various agreement relations in other languages.