Micro-variation in object marking in North-Mozambican Bantu languages

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Object properties and object marking in Bantu languages have been the subject of many studies, including typological overviews (see Beaudoin-Lietz et al. 2004, Hyman and Duranti 1982, Marlo 2015, Marten and Kula 2012, Marten et al. 2007, Morimoto 2002, Polak 1986, Riedel 2009, Zeller 2014, Van der Wal 2016, 2017). In this paper we investigate (micro-) variation in object marking in 10 North-Mozambican Bantu languages (cf. Table 1) along 5 main parameters commonly invoked in studies of Bantu object marking.

(1)   Parameters of (micro-)variation:
　　1.　Are multiple object markers allowed?
　　2.　Do object markers exist for all persons and classes?
　　3.　Is the object marker doubling or non-doubling? Following Van der Wal (2016, 2017) we consider object marking to be 'doubling' as soon as any lexical object is obligatorily doubled within the clause by the object marker.
　　3a.　Is doubling grammaticalized with lexical objects in classes 1/2? (i.e., any lexical object pertaining to classes 1/2 is doubled on the verb by an object marker).
　　4.　Is object marking symmetric in ditransitives? Following Van der Wal (2016, 2017) languages are classified as symmetrical as soon as the theme can be object-marked in any ditransitive construction, even if not all constructions are symmetrical.
　　4a　Is object marking symmetric in lexical ditransitives?
　　4b　Is object marking symmetric in applicative ditransitives?
　　4c.　Is object marking symmetric causative ditransitives?
　　5.　Is there object marking in relative clauses?
　　5a.　Is object marking in relative clauses obligatory?

Preliminary results, summarized in Table 1, show that although these languages share many characteristics they also show important micro-variation. For example, based on parameters 3 and 4 the selected North-Mozambican Bantu languages can be characterised as being asymmetric and doubling, a major type distinguished by Van der Wal (2016, 2017), i.e., they mark salience in the non-clausal domain. Interestingly, two languages, namely Koti and Shangaji, deviate from this pattern in being both doubling and symmetric. However, in both languages the latter parameter is (more or less) restricted. In Koti, symmetric object marking is only possible in applicative ditransitives and primarly depends on the thematic role of the arguments involved. The object marker can refer to the theme only when the highest object is lower in thematic role than Beneficiary. In example (1a), the object marker can refer to the theme (i.e., the chicken) because the soldiers are interpreted as the Reason. If, on the other hand, they are interpreted as the Beneficiaries, the object marker can only refer to them (1b).

(1)   Koti P311 (Schadeberg & Mucanheia 2000: 170)
　　a.　(mwanákhú,)　　ka-**ń**-xíc-el-á　　　　　　　　　　a-torópa
　　　　1.chicken　　　　SM1SG.PST-OM1-slaughter-APPL-FV　　2-soldier
　　　　'(the chicken,) I slaughtered it *because of* the soldiers'
　　b.　(mwanákhú,)　　ka-**wáá**-xíc-el-á　　　　　　　　　a-torópa
　　　　1.chicken　　　　SM1SG.PST-OM2-slaughter-APPL-FV　　2-soldier
　　　　'(the chicken,) I slaughtered it *for* the soldiers'

In Shangaji symmetric object marking is prevalent in ditransitive constructions but still restricted by animacy features, as seen in (2). The object marker can refer to either the pre-posed inanimate theme (2a) or the post-verbal animate Beneficiary (2b). However, if the animate Beneficiary is pre-posed, the object marker can only refer to the Beneficiary (2c-d).

(2)   Shangaji P312 (Devos, *field notes*)

    a. nakhuúwo   ki-**m**-úuzany-el-e   aána
        1a.maize   SM1SG-OM1-buy-APPL-PFV   2.child
        'the maize, I have bought it for the children'

    b. nakhuúwo   k-**aa**-wúuzanyel'   aána
        1a.maize   SM1SG-OM2-buy-APPL-PFV   2.child
        'the maize, I have bought it for the children'

    c. aána   k-**aa**-wúuzanyel'   nakhuúwo
        'the children, I have bought maize for them'

    d. *aána   ki-**m**-úuzany-el-e   nakhuúwo

A detailed study of this variation will lead to a better understanding of doubling/symmetric languages and might help to answer the question why they are less frequent than doubling/asymmetric and non-doubling/symmetric languages (Van der Wal 2016, 2017). A comparison with the doubling/asymmetric languages of our sample will help to ascertain whether 1) symmetric object marking is an innovation or a retention in these languages and 2) micro-variation in these parameters entails micro-variation in other parameters.

Selected references

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Table 1

	G402 Makwe	G403 Mwani	G443 Shimaore	P21 Yao	P23 Makonde	P31 Makhuwa	P311 Koti	P312 Shangaji	P34 Cuwabo	N44 Sena
OM slot(s)	1	1	1 (+ enclitic)	1	1	1	1	1	1 (+ enclitic)	1
OM classes	all	1st & 2nd persons, cl. 1/2	all (except locatives?)	all	all	1st & 2nd persons, cl. 1/2	1st & 2nd persons, cl. 1/2	1st & 2nd persons, cl. 1/2	1st & 2nd persons, cl. 1/2	all
Doubling	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
grammaticalized doubling	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
Symmetric OM	no	no	no	no	?	no	**yes**	**yes**	no	no
Symmetric OMing in lexical ditransitives	no	no	no	no	?	no	**no (?)**	**no**	no	no
symmetric OMing in applicative ditransitives	no	no	no	no	?	no	**yes**	**yes**	no	no
symmetric OMing in causative ditransitives	no	no	no	no	?	no	**no**	**yes**	no	no
OM in object relatives	yes	yes	yes	?	?	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
Obligatory OM in object relatives	yes	yes	?	?	?	yes	yes	yes	yes	/