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ACAL 40 Presentation

## When Is A Null Object Possible?

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### 0. Introduction

#### **The Problem**

Object marking in Bantu has frequently been associated with a displaced object, with it either being the case that:

- (1) the full DP object is generated in a topic position because the object marker is itself the argument (Bresnan and Mchombo 1987),
- (2) the object marker is an agreement morpheme and Agree triggers deletion of the full DP object, so that any full DP object there is necessarily outside of the verb phrase (Markman 2006) or
- (3) the object marker is an agreement morpheme and the full DP is in something like spec AgrO, or perhaps is an adjunct. (Buell 2005, Henderson 2006)

However, in all these cases the object marker is what indicates that the full DP has been dislocated, deleted, or simply is a free floating topic.

(4)

Question: Does the inability to be paired with an object marker prevent displacement of an object? How can we determine the syntactic status of a second object when the language allows for only one object marker?

I will look at Zulu for this, which allows either object to be object-marked but only allows for one object marker at a time.

(5)

Conclusion: A non-object-marked DP does have the option of being outside of the verb phrase in the way that an object-marked DP does. Object marking is the default means of indicating object displacement. It is only in the event that object marking is unavailable, however, that a null object can be in argument position.

We will proceed as follows:

- Section 1 - Introduce the long/short alternation as a diagnostic for determining verbal constituency
- Section 2 - Provide the data of what is possible for the combination of object marking and the long or short form
- Section 3 - Show that the long forms do indicate displacement of the non-object marked object through word order possibilities, focus possibilities.
- Section 4 - Evaluate the possibilities for the syntactic position of a non-object marked object
- Section 5 - Conclusion

### 1. The Long/Short Alternation

In many Bantu languages there is an alternation between conjoint or "short" and disjoint or "long" forms of the verb. Buell (2006) showed that the alternation in Zulu is one of constituency differences.

- Long form if verb is final in its clause
- Short form if verb is non-final

In Zulu, two tenses participate in this alternation, present and recent past<sup>1</sup>. Remote past and future tenses do not have alternating forms.

(6)

	short / conjoint form	long / disjoint form
present tense	-∅-	-ya-
recent past tense	-e	-ile

In short, the long form is used in intransitives (2) and transitives whose object is object-marked (4). The short form is used in transitives with non-object-marked objects (3).

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<sup>1</sup> The alternation is only active in the affirmative.

(7) *long form; present*

Ngi-*(ya)-fund-a.
SM1 <sup>ST</sup> SG-PRES-read-FV
I study.

(8) *short form; present*

Ngi-*(ya)-fund-a	isi-Zulu.
SM1 <sup>ST</sup> SG-PRES-read-FV	7-Zulu
I study Zulu.	

(9) *long form; present*

Ngi-ya-si-fund-a	isi-Zulu
SM1 <sup>ST</sup> SG-PRES-OM7-read-FV	7-Zulu
I study Zulu.	

(9) is explained in a constituency analysis because the full object *isiZulu* is dislocated, leaving the verb to be final in its clause. This phrase structure is also supported by phonological phrasing data as discussed in van der Spuy (1993).

## 2. The Long/Short Alternation in Ditransitives

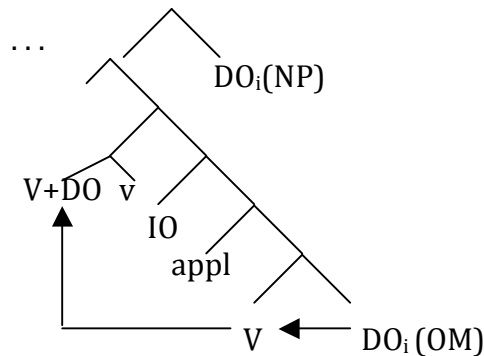
2.1 In the short form, either object can be object-marked, and that full DP object is sentence-final.

(10)

(a) *short form; recent past; DO object-marked*

U-mama	u-zi-nik-e	aba-ntwana	izin-cwadi
1A-mother	SM1-OM10-give-REC.PST	2-child	10-book
Mother gave the children the books			

(a')



(b) *short form; recent past; DO object-marked*

*Umama	uzinike	izincwadi	abantwana
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(11)

(a) *short form; present; IO object-marked*

U-mama	u-ba-nik-a	izin-ncwadi	aba-ntwana
1A-mother	SM1-OM2-give-FV	10-book	2-child
Mother is giving the children a book.			

(b) *short form; present; IO object-marked*

??Umama	ubanika	abantwana	izincwadi
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(10) - (11) are expected under a constituency analysis because:

- The object-marked object is right peripheral, therefore it follows the non-object-marked object
- The short form indicates that the verb is not final in its clause
- If the verb is not final in its clause and the object-marked object is dislocated, it follows that the non-object-marked object must have remained in the verb phrase.

**2.2** In the long form, only the IO can be object-marked and either word order of objects is possible in that case.

12)

a) *long form; recent past; DO object-marked*

*U-mama	u-zi-nik-ile	aba-ntwana	izin-cwadi
1A-mother	SM1-OM10-give-REC.PST	2-child	10-book
Mother gave the children the books.			

b) *long form; recent past; DO object-marked*

*Umama	uzinikile	izincwadi	abantwana
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13)

a) *long form; recent past; IO object-marked*

U-mama	u-ba-nik-ile	izin-cwadi	aba-ntwana
1A-mother	SM1-OM2-give-REC.PST	10-book	2-child
Mother gave the children books.			

b) *long form; recent past; IO object-marked*

Umama	ubanikile	abantwana	izincwadi
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The data in (12) - (13) lead to two questions:

1. Why is the long form incompatible with the object-marked DO in ditransitives?
2. Why can we have either word order in (13)? Does this mean that both objects are displaced? Is there any way to confirm this?

These questions are explored in the next section.

### 3. Is The DO Truly Displaced?

**3.1** Do the long forms in (13a) and (13b) really indicate that the DO is also outside of the verb phrase?

**I)** In order to receive focus, a DP must be inside the verb phrase. If the long form in (10) - (11) truly indicates that the non-object-marked object, we expect a focus interpretation of the non-object-marked object, the DO, to be impossible in the long form. This is borne out:

(14) She isn't giving the children *newspapers*,

(a) *long form; present; IO object-marked*

*u-ya-ba-nik-a	aba-ntwana	izin-cwadi
SM1-PRES-OM2-give-FV	2-child	10-book
she's giving the children <i>books</i> .		

(b) *long form*

*uyabanika	izincwadi	abantwana
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(c) *short form*

ubanika	izincwadi	abantwana
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**II)** Also, in order for an object to be interpreted indefinitely, it cannot have been displaced. If the long form indicates both objects have been displaced, we expect *wh*-words to be ungrammatical with it, even for the non-object-marked object. This is also borne out:

(15)

(a) *short form; rec. past; IO object-marked*

u-Thabani	u-yi-qash-el-e	bani	in-dodakazi y-a-khe?
1a-T.	SM1-OM9-hire-APPL-REC.PAST	who	9-daughter 9-POSS-1
Who did Thabani hire for his daughter?			

(b) *long form; rec. past; IO object-marked*

*uThabani	uyiqashelile	bani	indodakazi yakhe?
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<p>Conclusion: The long form does indicate, even in ditransitives where one object will not be object-marked, that both objects have been displaced and the verb is final in its clause.</p>
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### 3.2 Why is the long form incompatible with the DO in ditransitives?

Tentative answer: The default means of indicating object displacement is through the object marker. In ditransitives, only one object can be object-marked. Therefore in the case that we have displaced both objects, the animate / higher theta role / structurally higher object is the one that is object-marked.

## 4. Where Is The Direct Object?

If the DO is also displaced in (13) above, what is in argument position for the DO? We have the following options:

- 1) the full DP DO is generated in argument position and is then extraposed
- 2) the full DP object is generated in argument position and is moved left to a higher projection, just as the IO is moved to a spec-AgrO position
- 3) pro is in argument position and the full DP argument is dislocated

If (1) were the case, we would expect a fixed order of full DP objects.

a) We would expect an IO-DO order if OM is agreement because the IO would move up to a spec-AgrO position while the DO would be moved to a right-adjoining position meaning the DO would come after the IO

b) We would expect a DO-IO order if OM is pronominal and the IO is dislocated because in a string, a dislocated (hanging topic) object should follow an adjoined object.

If (2) were the case, we would expect a fixed order of full DP objects. If both objects are moved to a higher projection like spec-AgrO, we expect these positions to be fixed with respect to each other, particularly as it is the case that it is only the IO that can reflect object marking.

If (3) were the case, we would expect either order to be possible for full DP objects.

a) If both full DP objects are right-adjoined, we can expect adjunction in either order.

b) If both full DP objects are free-floating topics, again we can expect them to be uttered in either order.

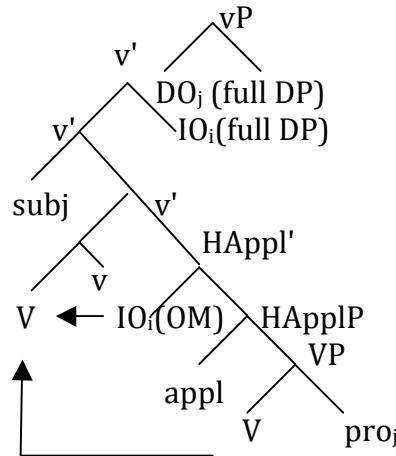
A possible structure for (13a), then, repeated below as (16a), would be that in (16b)

(16)

(a) *long form; recent past; IO object-marked*

Umama	ubanikile	aba-ntwana	izin-cwadi
Mother	SM1-OM2-give-REC.PST	2-child	10-book

(b)



As expected, both the full direct object and indirect object can be dropped, as in the following scenario:

At a daycare center, one of the teachers is reading a book to the children. Another teacher tells her that they don't have time to read books because they have to get on a bus soon to take a field trip. The first teacher says "don't worry, I'm reading it to them quickly."

(17)

(a) *long form; present; IO object-marked*

Ngi-ya-ba-fund-el-a	ngokushesha	in-cwadi
1 <sup>ST</sup> .SG-PRES-OM2-read-APPL-FV	quickly	9-book
I'm reading the book to them quickly.		

(b)

Ngiyabafundela	ngokushesha
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Based on a structure like that in (16b), especially under the assumption that the verb will move to Tense, we can modify Buell's analysis of the long/short alternation to the long form being indicative of the verb being phonologically final in its phrase.

Conclusion: The free word order between the full DP objects indicates that the full DP DO is not moved from argument position, but is generated in a position to the right. Therefore, what is generated in argument position is a phonologically null object.

## 5. Conclusion

We showed that the long / short alternation in Zulu indicates that a non-object-marked object can be outside of the verb phrase in the right periphery. Evidence from focus data and NPIs supported this.

We also showed that, of the possibilities for where the full DP object was in case it was not object-marked, it was most plausible to analyze that full DP as being generated to the right while a null object was what was generated in argument position.

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