



The hyper-sensitive agreement in Akebu

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Introduction

Central claim

This talk is about the interaction of agreement and \bar{A} -movement.

(1) **Central claim**

\bar{A} -feature is visible to Agree, similar to ϕ -features.

Why is it interesting?

Agreement morphology often tracks \bar{A} -movement utilizing some special inflection in its presence. But what exactly is triggering the special inflection?

(2) *Answer 1:* The syntactic configuration (Cheng 2006; Chung 1994; Haik 1990; Ouhalla 1993; Schneider-Zioga 2007, a.o.)

regular inflection = regular syntactic derivation;

special inflection = irregular derivation (Anti-Agree; ϕ -agr't with C etc.)

(3) *Answer 2:* The \bar{A} -feature (Baier 2018; Baker 2008; Ouhalla 2005, a.o.)

$[\phi] \Leftrightarrow$ / regular inflection /

$[\phi, \bar{A}] \Leftrightarrow$ / special inflection /

(1) is a cornerstone assumption for the morphological theory of \bar{A} -agreement (3). In this talk I argue that the agreement pattern found in the language Akebu (GTM; Kwa) provides direct evidence in favor of (1).

Roadmap/Goals for the talk

- ❖ Introduce a new pattern of \bar{A} -sensitive agreement — the hyper-sensitive subject agreement in Akebu;
- ❖ Develop an analysis of the Akebu pattern:
 - ❖ T ϕ -agrees with its Spec;
 - ❖ C \bar{A} -agrees with its Spec (sometimes);
 - ❖ C transmits \bar{A} -features to T (sometimes);
 - ❖ $[T, \phi]$ and $[T, \phi, \bar{A}]$ are spelled out as different vocabulary items.
- ❖ Argue that this analysis requires the \bar{A} -feature to be visible to Agree;
- ❖ Show morphosyntactic evidence against analyzing the Akebu pattern as *wh*-agreement;
- ❖ Show morphophonological and morphosyntactic evidence against analyzing the Akebu pattern as contextual allomorphy on T.

What is Akebu?

- ❖ 1 of 14-ish Ghana-Togo Mountain languages spoken in Central Togo in the mountains at the Ghana-Togo border (Blench 2001; Heine 1968; Struck 1912)
- ❖ Akebu is spoken by 70,000 people in Togo (Ethnologue 2015 (census in 2012))
- ❖ GTM are not very “typical” Kwa languages. Akebu has noun classes (7-12; Makeeva and Shluinsky 2018a; Storch and Koffi 2000), subject agreement, nominal concord (Makeeva and Shluinsky 2018b) ...
- ❖ SVO; largely prefixal morphology
- ❖ All examples come from my own field notes collected in the village Djon (Wawa prefecture; Togo) with 7 different speakers.

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The hyper-sensitive agreement in Akebu

Subject agreement with the noun class NU in Akebu (Makeeva and Shluinsky 2018a) has two different exponents — \emptyset - and *n*-. The *n*-form occurs in standard \bar{A} -movement contexts (*wh*-fronting, focus fronting, relativization).

- (4) mār^é \emptyset -láá-tā àṅālūpí
Mary.NU NU-HAB-like ice.cream.PE.Q
'Does Mary like ice cream?' *yes/no-question*
- (5) élē wó *n*-(l)áá-tā àṅālūpí
who.NU FOC \bar{A} .NU-HAB-like ice.cream.PE
'Who likes ice cream?' *subject wh-fronting*
- (6) kè wó mār^é *n*-(l)áá-tā
what.TE FOC Mary.NU \bar{A} .NU-HAB-like
'What does Mary like?' *non-subject wh-fronting*

Components of my proposal

\bar{A} -agreement

(9) \bar{A} -feature is visible to Agree, similar to ϕ -features.

Vocabulary items

(10) $[T, \phi:NU] \Leftrightarrow / \emptyset - /$
 $[T, \phi:NU, \bar{A}] \Leftrightarrow / n - /$

Feature Inheritance

(11) C-to-T Feature Transfer (Chomsky 2008; Ouali 2008; Richards 2007)
C passes its features to T.

Note: Multiple probes on T is a plausible alternative.

Weak and strong C

wh-in-situ and *wh-ex-situ* at some point in the derivation have different featural makeups of C (Cole and Hermon 1998; Sabel 2000, a.o.):

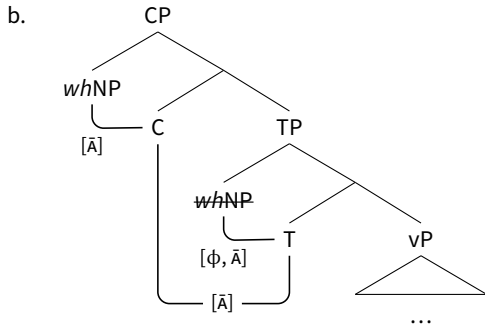
(12) Weak C: [wh]
Strong C: [wh, \bar{A}]

Weak C does not transmit features to T. Strong C does.

Putting pieces together

(13) *subject wh-fronting*

a. élē wé n-(l)áá-tā àṅālūpí
who.NU FOC Ā.NU-HAB-like ice.cream.PE
'Who likes ice cream?'

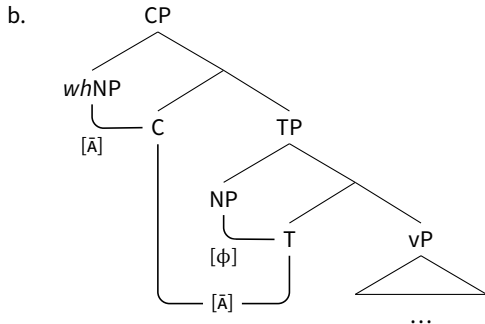


c. $[T, \phi: \text{NU}, \bar{A}] \Leftrightarrow /n-/$

Putting pieces together

(14) *non-subject wh-fronting*

- a. kè wá mārē n-(l)áá-tā
what.TE FOC Mary.NU Ā.NU-HAB-like
'What does Mary like?'

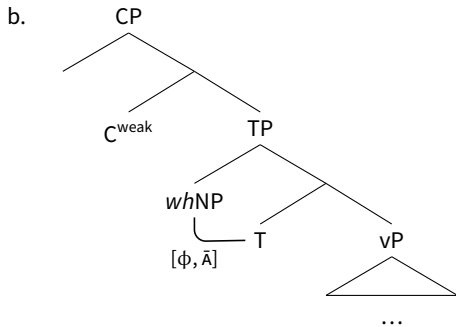


- c. $[T, \phi:NU, \bar{A}] \Leftrightarrow /n-/$

Putting pieces together

(15) *subject wh-in-situ*

- a. élē n-(l)áá-tā àṅālūpí
who.NU Ā.NU-HAB-like ice.cream.PE
'Who likes ice cream?'

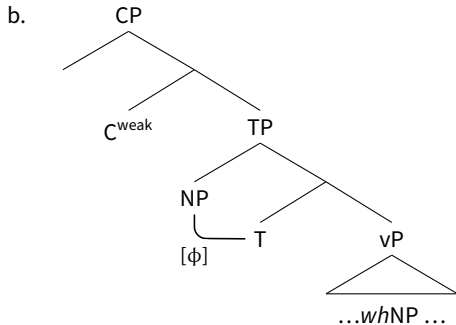


- c. [T, φ:NU, Ā] ⇔ /n-/

Putting pieces together

(16) *non-subject wh-in-situ*

- a. mār^é ∅-l^áá-t^ā k^è
Mary.NU NU-HAB-like what.TE
'What does Mary like?'



- c. [T, φ:NU] ⇔ /∅-/

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Alternative #1: *wh*-agreement

Proposal: ϕ -agreement with C

One alternative to the analysis using (17) is to assume that *wh*NP in Spec;CP ϕ -agrees with C and after the C-to-T Feature Transfer T hosts two sets of ϕ -features as in (18).

(17) \bar{A} -agreement

\bar{A} -feature is visible to Agree, similar to ϕ -features.

(18) $[T, \phi, \phi] \Leftrightarrow /n-/$

Under this view the *n*-form in Akebu is an instance of portmanteau agreement on T.

Alternative #1: *wh*-agreement

Problem #1: Indistinguishable ϕ -sets

- (19) Two sets of ϕ -features on the same node cannot be distinguished by their source (Markman 2005; Nevins and Sandalo 2011; Schütze 2003, a.o.).

Note: hierarchies in portmanteau agreement never make reference to sources of features alone, but only to combinations of values and sources (Harbour, Adger, and Béjar 2008; Trommer 2003; Woolford 2016).

If Akebu has ϕ -agreement with C and its ϕ -features are later transmitted to T, the special inflection must be tied to the ϕ -feature bundles of two NPs in Spec;TP and Spec;CP irrespective of their order. This is not the case:

- (20) a. $\acute{a}l\bar{e}$ $l\acute{a}$ $d\bar{a}p\acute{u}p\acute{u}-t\grave{e}$ $w\acute{a}$ $m\bar{a}\epsilon$ $n-(l)\acute{a}\acute{a}-t\bar{a}$
who.NU POSS crow-TE FOC Mary.NU \bar{A} .NU-HAB-like
'Whose crow does Mary like?'
- b. * $\acute{a}l\bar{e}$ $w\acute{a}$ $d\bar{a}p\acute{u}p\acute{u}-t\grave{e}$ $n-(l)\acute{a}\acute{a}-t\bar{a}$
who.NU FOC crow-TE \bar{A} .NU-HAB-like
int. 'Who does the crow like?'

It follows that (17) must be true as long as feature bundles are spelled-out in T.

Alternative #1: *wh*-agreement

Problem #2: Agreement under government

In subject *wh*-in-situ (but not in other in-situ contexts) C must ϕ -agree with *wh*NP staying in Spec;TP.

- (21) $\acute{e}l\bar{e}$ n -(l) $\acute{a}\acute{a}$ - $t\bar{a}$ $\grave{a}n\bar{a}l\bar{u}p\acute{i}$
 who.NU \bar{A} .NU-HAB-like ice.cream.PE
 ‘Who likes ice cream?’

subject wh-in-situ

Note: If both C and T ϕ -agree with the same *wh*NP and it results in $[T, \phi, \phi]$, then Agree can only be modeled as feature copying and not feature sharing (Frampton and Gutmann 2002).

Alternative # 2: *wh*-agreement in C + Affix Hopping

Proposal: /*n*-/ leaps from C to T during Spell-Out

(22) [C^{strong}, ϕ] \Leftrightarrow /*n*-/

(23) *wh*NP C ... NP T ...
A diagram showing the movement of the affix /n-/ from C to T. A curved arrow starts under the C in the structure whNP C ... NP T ... and points to the T.

Problem #1: Other noun classes

If the *n*-form is a result of Affix Hopping, we expect to find *n*- with other noun classes, including the noun class TE which has a zero exponent similar to NU.

(24) kè wá kè-pōō-kè (**n*)-kè-láá-tā
what.TE FOC KE-snake-KE \bar{A} -KE-HAB-like
'What does the snake like?'

(25) álē læ dój-té (wá) (**n*)-∅-lā-wó
who.NU POSS road-TE FOC \bar{a} -TE-PFV-be.destroyed
Whose road was destroyed?

Alternative # 2: *wh*-agreement in C + Affix Hopping

Problem #2: Agreement under government

All *in-situ* contexts have a weak C, but subject *wh-in-situ* emerges with the *n*-form:

- (26) *ólē* *n*-(l)áá-tā àṅālūpí
 who.NU *ā*.NU-HAB-like ice.cream.PE
 ‘Who likes ice cream?’

Alternative # 3: ϕ -agr't in T + contextual allomorphy

Proposal

- (27) a. [T, ϕ :NU] \Leftrightarrow /n-/ / ???
b. [T, ϕ :NU] \Leftrightarrow / \emptyset -/ (elsewhere)

After Bobaljik (2000) I assume that the inward-sensitive contextual allomorphy is restricted to morphophonological features and the outward-sensitive one to morphosyntactic features.

Restricting the context of (27-a) to the phonological content of its sister is simply inadequate, both \emptyset - and *n*- co-occur with the same neighboring phonemes.

Problem: outward-sensitive allomorphy triggered by the wrong C

Restricting the context of (27-a) to the presence of \bar{A} -feature in C excludes subject *wh-in-situ* with the weak C:

- (28) $\acute{e}l\bar{e}$ n-(l)áá-tā àṅālūpí
who.NU \bar{A} .NU-HAB-like ice.cream.PE
'Who likes ice cream?'

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Summary of results

- ❖ Akebu demonstrates a new pattern of extraction-sensitive agreement — *the hyper-sensitive agreement*. Its signature property is that the locus of subject agreement also shows sensitivity to the presence of \bar{A} -feature (in C or Spec;TP).
- ❖ The hyper-sensitive agreement receives an account based on the mechanism of Feature Inheritance. This account also needs some means to distinguish two sets of features that appear on T.

(29) **Central claim**

\bar{A} -feature is visible to Agree, similar to ϕ -features.

Thank you!



Questions?

Noun classes

	NU	TE	PE	WU	YE	KE	KPE
Agr't marker	∅-/[nasal]-	[voice]-	pè-	wè-	yè-	kè-	kpè-

Agreement markers in Akebu (Makeeva and Shluinsky 2018a)

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