

Shona Subjects are Subjects

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Asymmetries as Ambiguity

A pattern interpreted as strong crossover has been observed in Shona passive applicatives [2, 10]. These are typically symmetric in the language, but when the applicative object is a reflexive, direct object raising is disallowed.

- (13) ✓ *Bill a-zvi-rov-er-a* John
Bill 1SM-REFL-hit-APPL-FV John
'Bill_i hit John_j for himself_i.'
or 'Bill_i hit himself_i for John_j.' [10]
- (14) ✓ *John_i a-zvi-rov-er-w-a* t refl_i
John 1SM-REFL-hit-APPL-PASS-FV t REFL
'For himself John was hit.'
- (15) * *John_i a-zvi-rov-er-w-a* refl_i t
John 1SM-REFL-hit-APPL-PASS-FV REFL t
'John was hit b/c he was asking for it.'

Lethal ambiguity provides an alternate explanation for this exact case which concurs with A-raising [7]. Under this analysis, an A-scrambled object cannot bind a subject. A-scrambling of the lower object which places it above the higher object, allowing it be selected to satisfy a T's EPP feature. Applying this to the Shona case, the pre-verbal subject cannot bind the anaphor because it A-scrambled over it.

- (16) ✓ *John_i azviroverwa* [AppLP t_i [VP refl_i]]
- (17) * *John_i azviroverwa* [AppLP t_i [AppLP refl_i [VP t_i]]]
LETHAL AMBIGUITY

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The Shona Language

Traditional analyses assume that Shona ('S'-Bantu, Zimbabwe) pre-verbal subject position is an A-position [6, 12]. Recent analyses argue that Shona pre-verbal subject position is actually a topic position, and therefore, raising to subject is A'-movement [1, 4, 8].

We argue in favor of the subject in A-position analysis for Shona on the basis of non-topics in the pre-verbal position as well as the lack of crossover violations.

Verbal Argument Constructions

Active sentences typically exhibit SVO surface order. Subject raising is optional for passives.

- (1) *Shingi a-ka-bik-a* ma-nhanga.
Shingi 1SM-PST-cook-FV 6-pumpkins
'Shingi cooked pumpkins.' [1]
- ma-nhanga a-ka-bik-w-a* na-Shingi.
6-pumpkins 6SM-PST-cook-PASS-FV by-Shingi
'Pumpkins were cooked by Shingi.'

In locative inversion, a locative phrase appears pre-verbally in subject agreement with the verb while the subject appears post-verbally.

- (2) *Mombe dza-ka-vat-a* mu-mu-nda
10.cattle 10SM-PAST-sleep-FV 18-3-field
'Cattle slept in the field.' [6]
- Mu-mu-nda m-aka-vat-a* mombe
18-3-field 18SM-PAST-sleep-FV 10.cattle
'In the field, cattle slept.'

Shona applicatives are symmetric in passivization. Either object may raise and enter subject agreement with the verb.

- (3) *ma-nhanga a-ka-bik-ir-w-a* Mufaro na-S.
6-pumpkins 6SMcooked.APPL.PASS Mufaro by-S
'Pumpkins were cooked for Mufaro by Shingi.' [1]
- (4) *Mufaro a-ka-bik-ir-w-a* ma-nhanga na-S.
Mufaro 6SMcooked.APPL.PASS 6-pumpkins by-S
'For Mufaro were cooked pumpkins by Shingi.'

Lack of Weak Crossover

Shona pre-verbal subjects do not trigger weak crossover, consistent with pre-verbal subjects binding from an A rather than A'-position. In applicative constructions, **raising of the subject with passives repairs binding violations.**

- (5) * *mu-kadzi aka-uray-ir-a* [mari y-ake_i] [mu-rume_i]
1-woman 1SM.killed.APPL [9.money 9-his_i] [1-man_i]
'The woman killed the man for his money' [11]
- (6) [mu-rume_i] aka-uray-ir-w-a [mari y-ake_i]
[1-man_i] 1SM.killed.APPL.PASS [9.money 9-his_i]
'The man was killed for his money'
- (7) ✓ *murume_i akaurayirwa* [AppLP [AppLP [mari yake_i]] [VP t_i]]

Locative inversion presents another environment where weak crossover can be tested. If locatives in these constructions raise from an internal argument or adjunct position, the raising over the logical subject sets up a crossover environment as in Example (8). Under an A'-position analysis, the following should be ungrammatical. This argument would fail if the locative were generated externally. However, if that were the case, Example (9) would be ungrammatical.

- (8) *mu-mba_i m-aka-gar-a* mu-ridzi wayo_i
18-house_i 18SM-PST-sleep-FV 1-owner 1-POSS_i
'The house's_i owner slept in the house_i.'
- ✓ *mumba_i makagara* [vP *muridzi wayo_i t_i*]
- (9) *ku-danga kw-ayo_i kw-aka-svik-a* mombe_i
17-kraal 17-POSS_i 17SM-PST-arrive-FV 9.cow_i
'The cow_i arrived at its_i kraal.'
- ✓ *kudanga kwayo_i makagara* [vP *mombe_i t_i*]

Non-Specific Indefinite Pre-Verbal Subjects

The presence of pre-verbal subject A-position comes from pre-verbal NSI subjects, which would be unexpected under a topicalization analysis. First, **while Shona often answers WH-subject questions with existential constructions, it does not disallow declarative answers** (e.g., Q: 'What happened last night?' A: ? *munhu akagogodza pagonhi* 'A man knocked at the door') [12]. Then, **when provided with six English sentences containing NSI subjects, our consultant translated three as simple active declaratives (Example (10)), two as existentials (Example (11)), and one as a passive (Example (12))** and confirmed their NSI interpretations.

- (10) *mu-nhu a-no-bv-a* Gweru
1-person 1SM-PRES-come-FV 5.Gweru
a-cha-tam-ir-a ku-Harare manje manje.
1SM-FUT-migrate-APPL-FV 17-Harare soon
'Someone from Gweru will move to Harare soon.'
- kana mbavha i-kawan-a* mu-kova w-angu
if 9-thief 9SM-find-FV 3-door 3-my
w-aka-sham-a, i-cha-pind-a.
3SM-PAST-open-FV 9SM-FUT-enter-FV
'If a robber finds my door open, he will go inside.'
- r-imwe zuva, mu-kadzi a-cha-sarudz-w-a* kuve
5-some 5-day 1-woman 1-FUT-elect-PASS-FV 17-to
mu-tungamiri.
1-leader
'Someday, a woman will be elected Prime Minister.'
- (11) **P-an-e** va-end-a ku-no-raur-a
16-be.with-FV 2SM-go-FV 15SM-PRES-fish-FV
nhasi
tomorrow
'Some people went fishing yesterday.'
- P-an-e** bhuku r-aka-teng-w-a
16-be.with-FV 5-book 15SM-PRES-buy-PASS-FV
nezuro.
yesterday
'A book was bought yesterday.'
- (12) *Tsoka y-angu i-no-fanir-a*
9.foot 9-my 9SM-PRES-should-FV
ku-taris-w-a na-chi-remba.
15SM-look_at-PASS-FV by-7-doctor
'A doctor should look at my foot.'

Acknowledgements

We thank Dr. Julie Anne Legate for her advice, Munashe Gwaradzimba for his Karanga Shona judgements, as well as our anonymous reviewers.