International Journal of Innovative Research and Advanced Studies (IJIRAS)
Volume 7 Issue 7, July 2020

ISSN: 2394-4404

Syntactic Aspects Of Ekegusii Subject And Object Markers

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Abstract: ***The verbal complex in Bantu languages is an important unit in the syntactic structure. The verbal word in Bantu, in particular, EkeGusii, has a structure which accommodates affixation of a variety of morphemes as prefixes and suffixes before the final vowel (Bresnan & Mchombo, 1987; Sozinho & Mbiavanga, 2008; Iorio, 2015; Sikuku, 2013; Ondondo, 2015 among others). Notable among these are the Subject Marker (SM) and the Object Marker (OM). The SM and OM represent their corresponding subject and object Determiner Phrases (DPs) respectively. The aim of this paper is to describe the syntactic operations that licence the occurrence of these markers in the EkeGusii verb. There have been attempts in the analysis of EkeGusii verb (Basweti et. al., 2015; Ogechi, 2002, 2006; Elwell, 2008; Ongarora, 2008 among others). However, none has attempted an analysis of syntactic aspects of subject and object markers in this language. This paper seeks to focus on the syntactic properties and operations that determine the occurrence of these markers on the EkeGusii verb with a view to describing their syntactic aspects. The paper shows that the SM and OM attach to the verb through incorporation. Additionally, the SM moves to the verb through lowering operation while the OM gets to the verb through a raising operation.***

Keywords: Subject Marker, Object Marker, Verbal Complex, Movement, Incorporation, Lowering, Raising.

I. INTRODUCTION

Buell (2005) defines subject markers and object markers as terms used in Bantu tradition to denote verbal prefixes in the verbal word which agree with subject and object NPs respectively. The verbal word in EkeGusii, as in other Bantu languages, has a structure which accommodates affixation of a variety of morphemes both to the left of the root (prefixes) and to the right of the root (suffixes) before the final vowel (Sozinho & Mbiavanga, 2008; Iorio, 2015; Sikuku, 2013; Ondondo, 2015). The subject and object markers are some of these morphemes accommodated on the verbal word.

This paper analyses the syntactic properties and syntactic operations that licence the subject and object markers in EkeGusii. It is hoped that the paper will be of help in the understanding of the verbal word in this language. The common syntactic properties of SM are: it is obligatory, the SM can co-occur with the subject NP with which they co-refer, the SM occupies the first position in the verbal template in positive statements and it agrees with the noun class prefix to which that noun belongs. The OM in EkeGusii is optional, it does not co-occur with the lexical object DP unless when left dislocated, the OM occupies a specific slot in the verbal template, that is, it comes after SM and tense marker and before the verbal root and the final vowel. Also the OM

checks agreement features in the verbal template. The common processes responsible for the occurrence of these markers in the EkeGusii verbal word include: incorporation, movement, raising and lowering.

The paper is organised as follows. Section 2 gives a brief background of EkeGusii language while section 3 describes the basic morphosyntax of EkeGusii. Sections 4 explains the syntactic properties of subject and object markers in EkeGusii. Section 5 elaborates the syntactic operations that licence the subject markers while Section 6 explains those operations that licence the object markers. Section 7 summarises and concludes the paper.

II. THE LANGUAGE

EkeGusii is a Bantu language that is spoken by approximately two and a half million AbaGusii people of the present Kisii and Nyamira counties collectively known as Gusii in Kenya (Basweti, Achola, Barasa & Michira, 2015; Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2010). However, EkeGusii is spoken in other areas far from the original EkeGusii speaking region due to migration. Nyakoe, Ongarora and Oloo (2014) assert that although EkeGusii is predominantly spoken in Nyanza province, AbaGusii form part of local immigrants in major towns and cities and it is normal to hear EkeGusii being spoken far from the original EkeGusii speaking areas.

EkeGusii language is classified as JE42 by Maho (2008). This language is classified as an E. 10 language that is spoken in South Western Kenya, the present Kisii and Nyamira counties (Elwell, 2008). According to Nurse and Phillipson (1980), EkeGusii is part of the Eastern sub-group of East Nyanza/Suguti of the Lacustrine Bantu and that it is set apart from other languages in its sub-group such as Kuria, Ngurumi, Zanaki, Shashi, Ikizu and Nata because it has acquired a considerable amount of new non-Bantu lexical items from Dholuo, Maasai, and Kipsigis (a Kalenjin dialect). This is because the Gusii people do not share boundaries with a Bantu speaking community because they are sandwiched between Nilotic speaking communities, that is, Luo, Kipsigis and Maasai (Ogechi, 2006). Therefore, the borrowed lexical items from these languages have to undergo nativisation so as to fit the Bantu structure of words.

According to Komenda (2015), most EkeGusii speakers are bilingual in one of the official languages: Kiswahili or English and that due to the proximity of EkeGusii to Nilo-Saharan languages (Dholuo, Kipsigis and Maasai) some speakers are multilingual.

The language exhibits two noticeable dialects, namely EkeRogoro and EkeMaate, elsewhere in the literature called Rogoro and Maate respectively (Ogechi, 2002; Ongarora, 2008 & Basweti *et al*., 2015). The dialects differ in their lexicon and phonology, that is, words for the same item may be different as well as the pronunciation of some words. The Maate dialect is spoken by the clans bordering the Luo and the Maasai ethnic communities. These clans include the Abamachoge and South Mugirango. This study will focus on the Rogoro (Northern) dialect because it is the one which exists in written sources and is the standard dialect (Basweti *et al*., 2015).

III. EKEGUSII MORPHOSYNTAX

This section explains the basic structure of EkeGusii nouns and verbs as well as syntactic structure of its sentences.

A. EKEGUSII NOMINAL MORPHOLOGY

EkeGusii noun words consist of a class prefix and a stem (Ogechi 2006). This is echoed by Ongarora (2008) that Bantu languages are known for their elaborate noun class system in which nouns fall into several genders. In EkeGusii, a noun constitutes an augment, a class prefix and the noun stem as shown in (1).

(1) o-mo- mura
AUG-1-boy
'A boy.'

The noun may occur without an augment in questions involving the word 'which' or in negative constructions, as shown in examples (2) and (3) respectively.

(2) mo-mura ki o-ges-a e-bi-tuma?
1-boy which 3sgS-harvest-FV AUG-8-maize
'Which boy harvested maize?'

(3) mo-nto taiyo o-go-kwan-a
1- person no 3sgS-PRST-speak-FV
'No person is speaking.'

However, questions not involving the word 'which' have the noun bearing an augment as example (4) shows.

(4) Ng'ai o-mo-iseke a-goch-i?
Where AUG-1-girl 1sgS-go-FV
'Where is the girl going?'

Nouns in Bantu, as well as in EkeGusii, are divided into classes that are numbered from 1-24 (Ogechi, 2002; Ondondo, 2015). However, there are changes that have occurred over time in many of these languages and thus not all the 24 classes are found in any contemporary Bantu languages (Ondondo, 2015; Ongarora, 2008). Presently, Ekegusii has 16 noun classes and the nouns are placed into classes depending on the prefixes they take and their meanings. The class system for EkeGusii common nouns is set out in Table 1.

Class	Augment	Class prefix	Example	Gloss
1	o-	mo-	o-mo-iseke AUG-1-girl	Girl
1b	Ø	Ø	Taata 1-father	Father
2	a-	ba-	a-ba-iseke AUG-2-girl	Girls
2b	a-	ba-	a-ba-taata AUG-2-father	Fathers
3	o-	mo-	o-mo-sie AUG-3-sugarcane	Sugarcane
4	e-	me-	e-me-sie AUG-4-sugarcane	Sugarcanes
5	e-	ri-	e-ri-ino	Tooth

ISSN: 2394-4404

			AUG-5-tooth	
6	a-	ma-	a-ma-ino AUG-6-tooth	Teeth
7	e-	ke-	e-ke-moni AUG-7-cat	Cat
8	e-	bi-	e-bi-moni AUG-8-cat	Cats
9	Ø	e-	e-yanga 9-cloth	Cloth
9a	e-	n-	e-n-daagera AUG-9-food	Food
10	Ø	chi-	chi-anga 10-cloth	Clothes
10a	chi-	n-	chi-n-daagera AUG-10-food	Foods
11	o-	ro-	o-ro-ko AUG-11-firewood	Firewood
12	a-	ka-	a-ka-moni AUG-12-cat	Small cat
14	o-	bo-	o-bo-taka AUG-14-poverty	Poverty
15	o-	ko-	o-ko-minyok-a AUG-15-run-FV	Running
16	Ø	a-	a-ase 16-place	Place
21	Ø	nya-	Nya-mbera 21-graveside	Graveside

Table 1: Ekegusii Noun Class System

As realised in Table 1, the Augment (AUG) prefix is Ø in Classes 1b, 9, 10, 16 and 21, and the Class prefix is Ø in Class 1b. In Class 9 the noun class prefix is *e-* while in 9a it is *n-*, and in Class 10 the noun class prefix is *chi-* and *n-* in 10a thus distinguishing the noun classes.

B. EKEGUSII BASIC VERBAL MORPHOLOGY

The verbal word in EkeGusii, as in other Bantu languages, has a structure which accommodates affixation of a variety of morphemes both to the left of the root (prefixes) and to the right of the root (suffixes) before the final vowel (Sozinho & Mbiavanga, 2008; Iorio, 2015; Sikuku, 2013; Ondondo, 2015). In general, a Bantu verbal word takes the structure shown in Figure 1.

According to Sikuku (2013), verbal forms across Bantu are highly similar, the main components are presented in (1) where SM stands for 'subject marker', OM for 'object marker' and the verbal base includes derivational affixes. Sikuku (2013) presents the following stereotypical Bantu verbal form in example 5.

(5) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Pre- SM Post- Tense Marker OM Verbal Base Final vowel Post Final

Initial Initial

Neg Neg

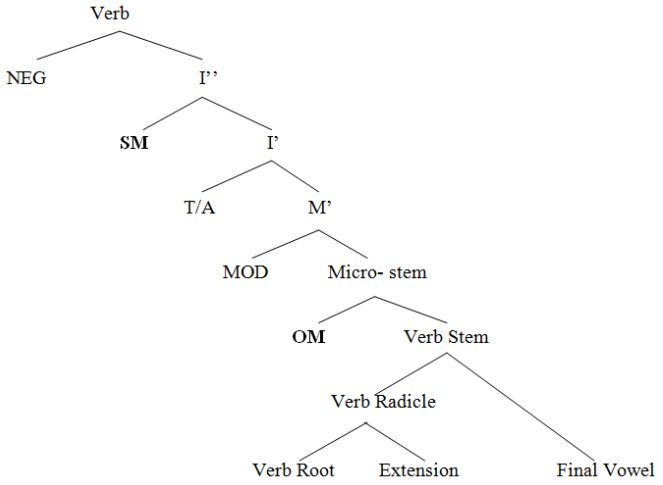

Figure 1: The Structure of Bantu Verb

Prefixes and suffixes encode syntactic information which includes the expression of negation, tense aspect and mood (TAM), verb suffixes (verbal extensions), modals and conditional markers. Many such prefixes are attached before the verb root which is the central element as shown in Figure 1. The structure of the verbal word in EkeGusii follows the pattern in Figure 1. The minimal meaningful verbal word in this language has a root and a final vowel as shown in (6).

(6) rar-a
sleep-FV
'sleep'

The maximal verbal word in EkeGusii has several morphemes but not necessarily all those shown in Figure (1) and each morpheme provides different and specific grammatical information as sentence (7) shows.

(7) ba-ka-mo-ke-gor-er-a
3plS-PST-3sgO-3sgO-buy-APPL-FV
'They bought it for him/her.'

The morpheme *ba-* in (7) above marks the subject, *ka-* marks past tense, *mo-* direct object, *ke-* indirect object all incorporated before the root *gor-* and after the root we have the applicative maker *–er* and the final vowel *–a*. This shows the agglutinating nature of this language.

C. WORD ORDER

Ekegusii, like other Bantu languages, (Nurse & Philippson, 2006; Riedel, 2009; Ongarora, 2008 among others), exhibits a default syntactic structure of the order SVO as shown in (8).

(8) E-ke-moni ke-ga-it-a e-mbeba
AUG-7-cat 7-PST-kill-FV 9-rat
'The cat killed the rat.'

Sometimes the subject may be omitted but the sentence structure remains grammatical. However, the meaning of the missing subject must be context derived. For instance, example (8) can be as shown in (9) where the subject NP has been omitted.

(9) ke-ga-it-a e-mbeba
7-PST-kill-FV 9-rat
'It killed the rat.'

ISSN: 2394-4404

The object can also be omitted if it is marked in the verb by its appropriate object marker as per the class of the noun as (10) shows.

(10) Ge-ka-ye-it-a
7-PST-9OM-kill-FV
'It killed it.'

It therefore follows that the verbal complex can accommodate the subject marker, the tense marker and the object marker thus translating to a whole sentence in English.

IV. SYNTACTIC PROPERTIES OF EKEGUSII SUBJECT AND OBJECT MARKERS

Subject and object markers in EkeGusii exhibit different syntactic properties as discussed in the following sub-sections. Section 4.1 discusses syntactic properties of EkeGusii subject markers while Section 4.2 analyses syntactic properties of EkeGusii object markers.

A. SYNTACTIC PROPERTIES OF EKEGUSII SUBJECT MARKERS

Buell (2005) defines a 'subject marker' as a term used in Bantu linguistic tradition to denote prefixes in the verbal word which agree with a subject. Subject markers in EkeGusii have different syntactic properties as discussed below.

a. SUBJECT MARKERS ARE OBLIGATORY

In EkeGusii, as in other Bantu languages like Sambaa (Riedel, 2009), Bembe (Iorio, 2015), Kilugulu (Lutz & Deograsia, 2001), Chichewa (Mchombo, 2005), Kiswahili (Kamil, 2006) among others, subject markers are mandatory. Typically, a Bantu verb marks the subject with an obligatory marker (SM) as discussed in (Spencer & Luis, 2012). This means that irrespective of the presence or absence of a lexical subject, verbs in EkeGusii have a subject marker which can be said to be obligatory as shown in sentence (11a).

(11) (a) Ba-ka-raager-a
3S-PST-eat- FV
'They ate.
(b) *ka-raager-a
PST-eat-FV

The verbal word in 11(b) above is ungrammatical because it does not have a subject marker. The only environments where the subject marker is not required in EkeGusii are in imperatives and requests as examples (12) and (13) show.

(12) Minyok-a aiga
Run-FV here
''Run here!'
(13) Gaki ikarans-a
Please sit-FV
''Please sit / get seated.'

The imperative in (12) and the request in (13) do not require a subject marker because the subject is usually implied in those instances and therefore need not to appear on the verb.

b. THE SUBJECT MARKERS AND THE OVERT SUBJECT NP

Like in other Bantu languages in general (Lutz & Deograsia, 2001; Riedel, 2009; Iorio, 2015) among others, subject markers in EkeGusii, can co-occur with the subject NP with which they co-refer. Consider examples (14) and (15).

(14) (a) E-ke-rogo ge-ka-gw-a
AUG-7-chair 7S-PST-fall-FV
'A chair fell.'
(b) E-bi-rogo bi-ka-gw-a
AUG-8-chair 8S- PST-fall-FV
'The chairs fell.'
(15) (a) ø-e-nyomba e-ka-yi-a
AUG-9-house 9S-PST-burn-FV
'The house burned down.'
(b) ø-chi-nyomba chi-ka-yi- a
AUG-10-house 10S-PST-burn-FV
'The houses burned down.'

In (14) and (15), it is shown that the subject markers co-occur with the subject DPs, that is, they have to appear in the verbal template, even when an overt subject NP is present, for the respective sentences to be grammatical. Thus the sentences in (16) (a) and (b) are ungrammatical because the verb has no subject marker.

(16) (a) *E-ke-rogo ka-gw-a
AUG-7-chair PST-fall-FV
(b) * ø-e-nyomba ka-yi-a
AUG-9-house PST-burn-FV

However, if the lexical subject is covert, the meaning of the verbal template is always derived from the context. This means that the subject DP can be retrieved from either the anterior discourse or the extra-linguistic context (Iorio, 2015) as (17) shows.

(17) e-ka-yi-a
9S-PST-burn-FV
'It burnt.'

From (17) above, the lexical subject is absent and thus the meaning of 'what burnt' is derived from the context of the utterance. When a language allows the omission of an overt subject NP in the clause like example (17), such a language is said to be a null subject language. This is a language that has the person, number and/or gender agreement features marked on some other element and as such, the explicit realization of the subject is considered redundant (Lonyangapuo, 2016). EkeGusii being a null subject language, the occurrence of the overt subject can only be used for emphasis, but it can be dropped as its meaning can be inferred from the context as explained in Iorio (2015) and Lonyangapuo (2016).

c. THE POSITION OF SUBJECT MARKER IN THE VERBAL TEMPLATE

Subject marking in Bantu is associated with fixed positions in the verbal template (Sozinho & Mbiavanga, 2008; Sikuku 2012; Ondondo 2015 among others). In most cases, the subject marker in EkeGusii occupies the first position in the verbal template as example (18) shows.

(18) ba-ga-chi-kuny-a
3plS-PST-3O-dig-FV

'They dug them.'

The verb *' ba-ga-chi-kuny-a'* in (18) has the morphemes arranged in a fixed order, that is, the SM, tense marker, OM, verb root and the final vowel. The subject marker precedes the past tense marker *ga-*, the object marker *chi-* (if present) and then the root of the verb followed by the final vowel.

In contrast to the syntactic situation presented in (18) above, where the subject marker is the first morpheme in the verbal word, the negation prefix *ti-* in (19) shows that this is not always the case.

(19) Ti-ba-som-et-i
Neg-3plS-read-PFV-FV
'They have not read.'

These morphemes cannot interchange positions and therefore it is grammatically disallowed to have the OM coming before the SM or even the tense marker as sentences (20) (a) and (b) show.

(20) (a) * A-ba-ana ga-ba-kuny-a chi-ngoro
AUG-2-child PST-3plS -dig- FV 10- hole
(b) * A-ba-ana ga-chi-ba-kuny-a
AUG-2-child PST-7O-3S-dig-FV

d. SUBJECT MARKERS AND AGREEMENT

Kamil (2006) defines agreement as a process in which two elements that are in local configuration share morphological features through a process of feature matching (or checking). Noun class prefixes mark themselves in subjects, verbs, demonstratives and adjectives. According to Riedel (2009), the subject marker agrees with the noun class prefix of the appropriate class, or, in the case of first or second person subjects, with the person of the subject.

In EkeGusii, the subject marker agrees with the noun class prefix to which that noun belongs. The examples in (21) illustrate agreement in noun classes 1, 2, 3 and 4.

(21) a) O-mo-nto a-ga-tony-a
AUG-1-person 3sgS-PST-drop-FV
'A person dropped.'
b) A-ba-nto ba-ga-tony-a
AUG-2-person 3plS-PST-drop-FV
'People dropped.'
c) O-mo-te o-ga-tony-a
AUG-3-tree 3S-PST-drop-FV
'A tree dropped.'
d) E-me-te e-ga-tony-a
AUG-4-tree 4S-PST-drop-FV
'Trees dropped.'

The data in (21) above show that the subject marker incorporates on the verb and agrees with the noun class prefix in the subject DP in each noun class.

The preceding discussion shows that subject markers in EkeGusii have four syntactic properties thus they are obligatory (Lutz & Deograsia, 2001; Riedel, 2009; Ongorora, 2008; Iorio, 2015), they co-occur with the subject NP as well as occupying specific slots in the verbal template (Sozinho & Mbiavanga, 2008; Sikuku 2012; Ondondo 2015) and they are marked for agreement as shown in Kamil (2006) among others. EkeGusii being a null subject language also allows the dropping of the subject NP from the clause since the semantics of the subject can be derived from the context of a sentence.

B. SYNTACTIC PROPERTIES OF EKEGUSII OBJECT MARKERS

Creissels (2001) defines an object marker as a pronominal marker that corresponds to a noun phrase in the object function while Riedel (2009) defines it as a morpheme which appears attached on the verb stem, usually in the form of a prefix. Object markers in EkeGusii have the following syntactic properties.

a. THE OBJECT MARKER AND OPTIONALITY

In EkeGusii, as well as in other Bantu languages such as Kiluguru (Lutz & Deograsia, 2001) and Sambaa (Riedel, 2009) among others, object markers are optional. This means that object markers can be absent in a sentence and the sentence is still grammatical as evident in 22 (a) and (b) below.

(22) (a) O-mo-mura a-ka-gor-a e-me-te
AUG-1-boy 3sgS-PST-buy-FV AUG-4-tree
'A boy bought trees.
b) O-mo-mura a-ka-**ye**-gor-a
AUG-1-boy 3sgS-PST-3plO-buy-FV
'A boy bought them.'

In (22) (a), the verb does not host an OM while 22 (b) the verb hosts an object marker *ye-* showing that the object marker is optional in the verb but the statement remains grammatical.

b. OBJECT MARKERS AND OVERT OBJECT NPS

In EkeGusii, co-occurrence of the object marker and the lexical object DP are not permissible as shown in (23) below.

(23) * Ogoti a-ga-chi-ror-a chi-bicha
1-Ogoti 3sgS-PST-3plO-see-FV 10-photo
'Ogoti saw the photos.'

However, there is one context in which object markers in EkeGusii co-occur with object NPs. This co-occurrence of the object markers and object NP is required when the object NP is left dislocated. In this case, the object NP comes before the verb and is separated by a comma in written work and a pause in speech as shown in sentence (24).

(24) ø-ri-rube, na-ri-riik-a
AUG-5-letter, I-3sgO-write-FV
'The letter, I wrote it.'

The sentence in (24) shows the doubling of the object DP and the object marker, a situation which arises when the object DP comes before the verbal word, that is, the object NP is left dislocated.

Additionally, the transitivity of the verb determines the number of OMs in a verbal complex. For instance, EkeGusii transitive verbs require one internal argument (object) and one external argument (subject). For these verbs the object markers are always present to represent the object DP in that verb. Ditransitive verbs require two object DPs and therefore in EkeGusii these two DPs are marked on the verb using two OMs as (25) shows.

(25) Ombachi a-ka-mo-ke-gor-er-a.
1-Ombachi 3sgS-PST-3sgOMOI–3sgOMOD-buy-APPL-FV
'Ombachi bought it (book) for him.

ISSN: 2394-4404

In EkeGusii, two object DPs cannot be left dislocated and still co-occur with the object markers as shown in example (26).

(26) (a) Mochiemo a-ka-gor-er-a Bogonko e-ge-tabu
1 Mochiemo 3sgS-PST-buy-APPL-a 1 Bogonko AUG-3-book
'Mochiemo bought Bogonko a book.'
(b) * Bogonko, e-ge-tabu, Mochiemo a-ka-mo-ke-gor-er-a

It is only one object NP that can be left dislocated as shown in (26). As realised in (25) and (26), when there are two object markers in the EkeGusii verb, the applicative marker has to be marked on the verb as also seen in (27).

(27) Ba-ka-ba-ri-rik-er-a
SM-PST-2OM-5OM-write-APPL-FV
'They wrote it (a letter) for them.'

Another issue that is related to transitivity is on the number of object markers that a verb can accommodate (Mchombo, 2005; Riedel, 2009; Elwel, 2008, among others). In EkeGusii, the number of OMs per verb is not restricted. There can be one or two OMs in a verb. However, these two OMs do not co-occur with their respective object DPs and their understanding is contextual. In addition, there must be the applicative verbal extension for a verb to be able to carry these objects markers otherwise it is grammatically disallowed as example (28) shows.

(28) A-ba-mura ba-ir-er-a a-ba-ko chiombe
AUG-2-boy 3plS-take-APPL-FV AUG-2-in-laws cows
'The boys take the cows to the in-laws.'

Chiombe is the direct object (DO) while '*abako*' is the indirect object (IO). These objects can be marked on the verb as shown in (29).

(29) A-ba-mura ba-ba-chi-ir-er-a
AUG-2-boys 3plS-3plO(oi)-3plO(od)-take-APPL-FV
'The boys take them (cows) to them (the in-laws).

c. THE POSITION OF THE OBJECT MARKER IN THE VERBAL TEMPLATE

Object marking in Bantu is associated with fixed positions in the verbal template (Maho, 2007; Sozinho & Mbiavanga, 2008; Sikuku, 2012; Ondondo, 2015 among others). The structure of the verb in EkeGusii follows the pattern presented in Figure 1. The verbal word in EkeGusii is made up of a root preceded by a number of prefixes and followed by a number of suffixes, as example (30) shows.

(30) ba-ka-mo-ke-gor-er-a
3plS-PST-3sgO-3sgO-buy-APPL-FV
'They bought it for him/her.'

In EkeGusii, as in other Bantu languages, the verbal template has fixed positions and the object marker occupies a specific slot in the template as (31) shows.

(31) ba-ga-chi-it-a
3plS-PST-3sgO-kill-FV
'They (children) killed them (the dogs).' (Meaning realised from the context.)

The verb *' ba-ga-chi-it-a'* in (24) has the morphemes arranged in a fixed order, that is, the SM, tense marker, OM, verb root and the final vowel. The OM is preceded by the negation morpheme (if present), the SM and the past tense morpheme and it precedes the root of the verb followed by other derivational morphemes like the applicative and causative. These morphemes cannot interchange positions and therefore it is ungrammatical to have the OM coming before the SM or even the tense marker as shown in (32).

(32) *ga-ba-chi-it-a
PST-3pl**S**-3sg**O**-kill-FV

However, all these elements need not be present in a given verb but the ones present should appear in a specific order as presented in Figure 1.

Additionally, in EkeGusii multiple object markers are structurally restricted. In such instances where there are more than two OMs in a verb, the object markers are ordered in that the OM marking the indirect object (beneficiary) comes before the OM marking the direct object. The verb will be ungrammatical to have the OM representing the indirect object coming after the object marker for the direct object as shown in (33).

(33) (a) Ba-ba-chi-ir-er-a
2plS-3plOoi-3plOod-take-APPL-FV
'They take them (cows) to them (in-laws)
(b) *Ba-chi-ba-ir-er-a
3plS-3plOod-3plOod-take-APPL-FV
'They take them (in-laws) to them (the cows).'

In 33 (a) above, it is grammatical, for the indirect object marker *ba-* to come before the direct object marker *chi-*, but it becomes ungrammatical when their order is reversed as in 33 (b). In addition, the verbal word must have the applicative marker for it to be grammatical.

d. OBJECT MARKERS AND AGREEMENT

Agreement is a process in which two elements that are in local configuration share morphological features through a process of feature matching (or checking) (Kamil, 2006). Riedel (2009) argues that when discussing object agreement in Bantu languages, the agreement is expressed by the object marker thus in EkeGusii the object markers check agreement features as shown in (34-36).

(34) O-mw-ana a-ka-**ge**-samb-a
AUG-1-child 3sgS-NARR-7OM-burn-FV
'A child burnt it (a cup).'
(35) O-mo-te o-ka-**mo**-it-a
AUG-3-tree 3sgS-NARR-1OM-kill-FV
'A tree killed him/her.'
(36) Chi-ng'ondi chi-ga-**chi**-ri-a
10-sheep 10-NARR-10OM-eat-FV
'Sheep ate them (maize).'

The object markers appearing in (34) to (36) (*ge-*, *mo-*, *chi-* respectively) represent object noun phrases whose interpretation is contextual. This means that the meaning is derived from the surrounding discourse. For instance, the object marker *ge-* in (34) can represent any noun from noun class 7 as to what was burnt.

e. THE OBJECT MARKERS AND THE LOCATIVE

In EkeGusii, there are locative object markers and they occupy the same position as the other OMs. They also do not co-occur with object noun phrases as (37) shows.

(37) (a) a-ka-rem-a aiga
1SM-PST-dig-FV here

'He dug here.'
(b) A-ka-**ya**-rem-a
1SM-PST-OM loc–dig- FV
'He dug here.'

V. SYNTACTIC OPERATIONS THAT LICENSE SUBJECT MARKERS

There are different syntactic operations that determine the occurrence of subject markers in EkeGusii as discussed in the following subsections.

A. MOVEMENT

Halpert (2013) defines movement as change of position of elements from their original position where they are semantically interpreted to other positions within the clause. Halpert (2013) proposes three types of movement, which are, head movement where X^0 moves to a higher (c-commanding) Y^0, A-bar movement where an XP moves to a higher non-argument position for instance [SPEC, CP] and A-Movement where an XP moves to a higher position like the [Spec, TP]. Data show that all these three movements apply in EkeGusii as discussed in sub-section 5.1.1.

a. HEAD MOVEMENT

In this movement, a head element X^0 moves to a higher c-commanding Y^0. In this case, the verbal head moves from V^0 to inflectional head position I^0 as shown in Figure 2.

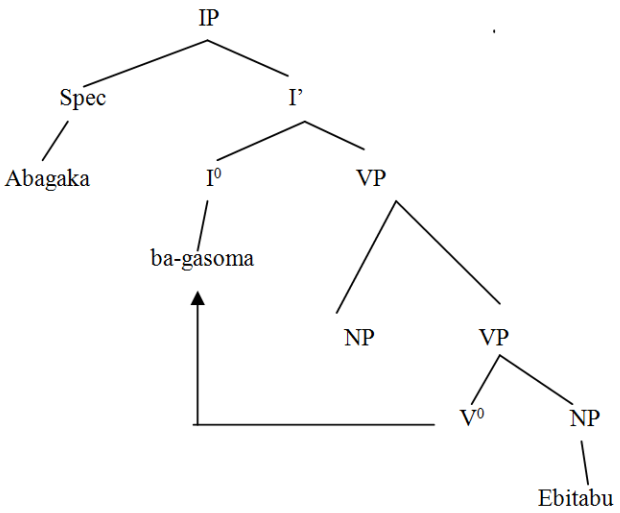

Figure 2: Head Movement in EkeGusii

In Figure 2, the verb *soma* moves from within the VP to a higher position I^0. The verb then merges with the subject marker *ba-* and the tense marker *ga-* to form the verbal word *bagasoma* because the verbal root *soma* cannot stand alone in this sentence.

b. A-BAR MOVEMENT

In this movement, an XP in our case the wh-phrase moves to a higher non-argument position like [SPEC, CP]. In EkeGusii, this involves the movement of the wh-word from within the VP to [SPEC, CP] as shown in Figure 3 below.

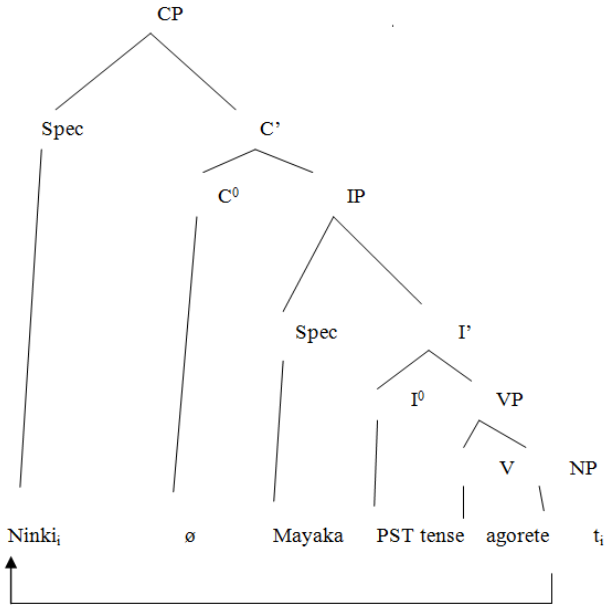

Figure 3: A-bar Movement in EkeGusii

In Figure 3, the wh-word *ninki* (what) moves from within the VP to [SPEC, CP] position thus A-bar movement. In this case, the wh-word *(ninki)* is a subject. The EkeGusii sentence under consideration is: *Ninki Mayaka agorete?* 'What did Mayaka buy?' In EkeGusii, the tense is merged with the verb that is why we have ø in the C^0 position. Since the wh-word is a subject, the same analysis applies to subject markers which are base-generated in [Spec, vP] (Bresnan & Mchombo, 1987) and subsequently move to the traditional subject position, [Spec, CP] as presented in Figure 3.

(38) o-mw-ana o-ø-tam-a
AUG-1-child SM-PST-ran-FV
'A child ran.'

When the above statement is changed into a wh- question, we get the following question.

(39) Ning'o o-ø-tam-a?
Who wh/S-PST-run-FV
'Who ran?'

From example (39) it is assumed that the wh-word moves from inside the VP to the subject position [SPEC, CP] in this case the morpheme *o-* in the verbal word *o-ø-tam-a* represents both the wh-word and the subject.

c. A-MOVEMENT

In EkeGusii, A-movement involves the movement of a noun phrase from within the VP to a higher position like [SPEC, TP]. Oyioka *et al.* (2015) posit that in A-movement, an NP moves from a position where an NP receives a Θ-role to one in which no Θ-role is assigned due to the fact that an NP-trace cannot satisfy a Θ-role. In this case, the noun phrase *abagaka* moves to [SPEC, TP].

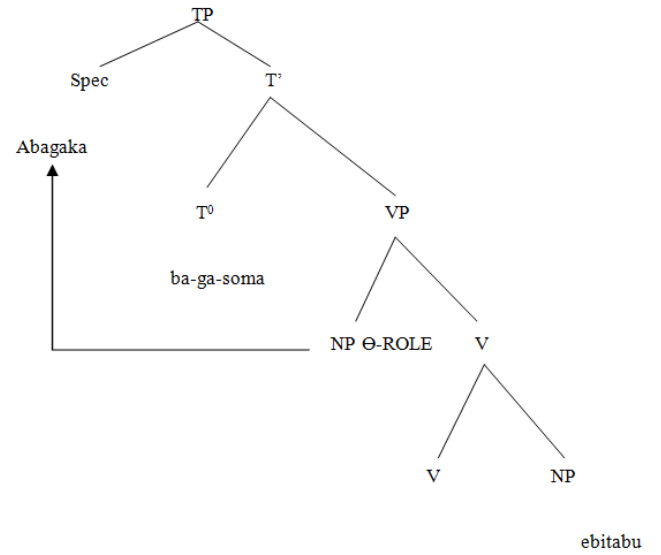

Figure 4: Movement of the Subject from within VP to [Spec, T]

The difference between A-movement and incorporation is that A-movement precedes incorporation because in A-movement, the noun phrase just moves from within the VP to [SPEC, TP] as shown in figure 4 where the noun phrase *abagaka* moves from within the VP to [SPEC, TP]. On the other hand, in incorporation, the noun phrase that has been moved (*Abana*) gets included in the verbal word through an element (in this case the subject marker *ba-*) in the complex verbal word as shown in Figure 5.

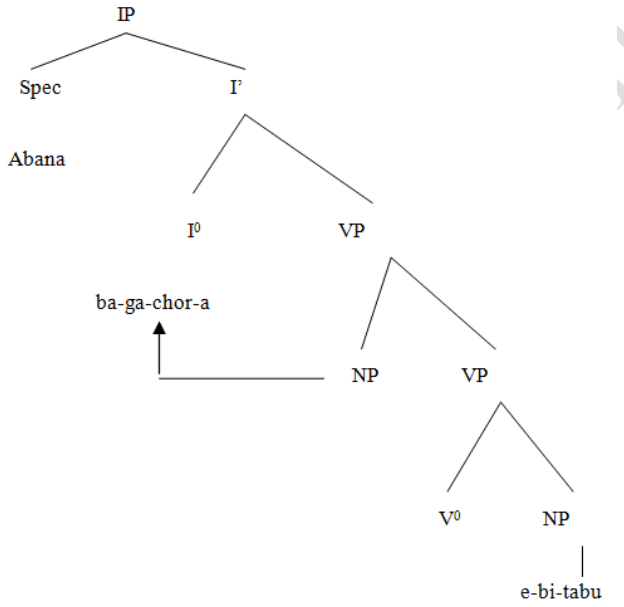

Figure 5: Incorporation of the SM

In Figure 5, the subject *abagaka* receives the theta role in its base position inside the VP and then moves to [Spec TP] where it finally gets incorporated into the verbal complex *ba-ga-chor-a*.

As observed by McCloskey (1997), the movement of the subject to its position is anchored in the VP-Internal Subject Hypothesis (VPISH) which states that the subject originates from [Spec VP] and moves to [Spec IP]. McCloskey (1997) explains that this hypothesis accounts for two classes of arguments, that is, lower origin arguments and lower position arguments. An example of lower origin argument is when an object moves to the subject position as in passive constructions.

(40) e-ge-tabu$_i$ ge-ka-som-w-a t_i
AUG-7-tabu 5S-PST-read-PASS-FV
'A book was read.'

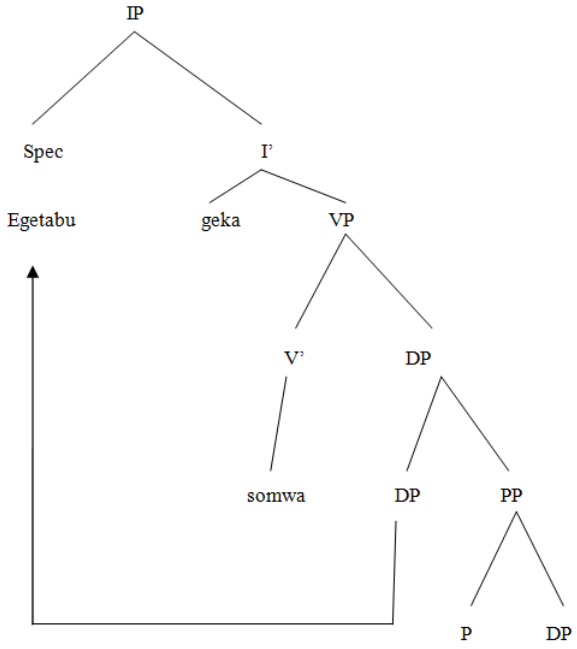

Figure 6: VPISH in EkeGusii

In Figure (6) the NP *egetabu* 'book' moves from the [Spec, VP] to [Spec, IP] so as to function as the specifier of the passive particle, *somwa* (Oyioka et al., 2015). There is a trace that is left thus the movement obeys the (VPISH) in EkeGusii.

In lower position arguments, the subject remains in [Spec, VP] when there is V-I movement in VSO languages. Since EkeGusii is an SVO language, this phenomenon is grammatically disallowed.

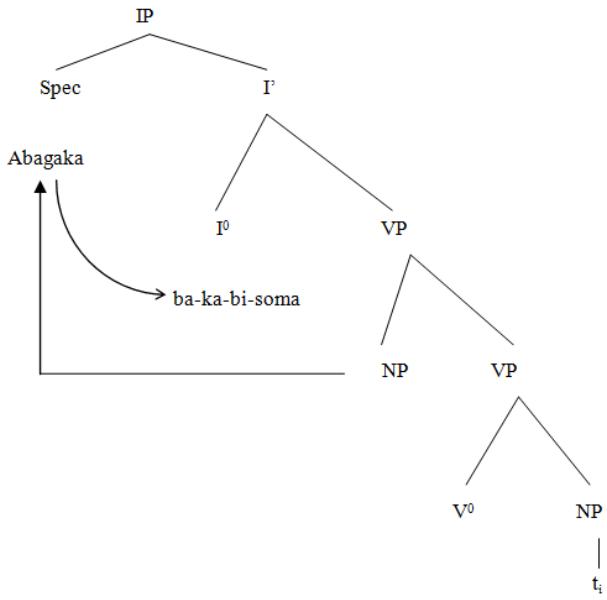

Figure 7: Movement of the SM to its position

According to Iorio (2015) the subject marker is base generated in [Spec, vP] from where it raises to [Spec, TP]. Preverbal subject DPs appear either overtly or covertly in [Spec, CP]. Thus as shown in Figure 6, the subject marker *ba-* moves from [Spec, T] to I^0 and it gets incorporated into the verb and the subject marker is marked on the verb to form a complex verbal complex *bakabisoma*. This leads to another syntactic procedure called incorporation explained in 5.2.

B. INCORPORATION

Matthews (1997) defines incorporation as a regular process by which lexical units which are syntactically complements of verbs can also be realised as elements within the verb itself. According to Matthews (1997), this process involves a verb accommodating a nominal which is taken to be the verb's notional object argument. In Ekegusii, incorporation takes place when the constituents move from within the VP to the specific positions outside the VP. When they move, they are checked for relevant features (number, person and gender) in each position they move to, after that merging happens and the heads are then projected. The verb also moves from within the VP to T and this is where the subject marker is incorporated to it to reflect the subject. This process can also be called morphological merger and a complex head of some kind is formed. This complex head is the verbal string in Bantu languages that has different morphemes as the verb *bagaita* in Figure 8 shows.

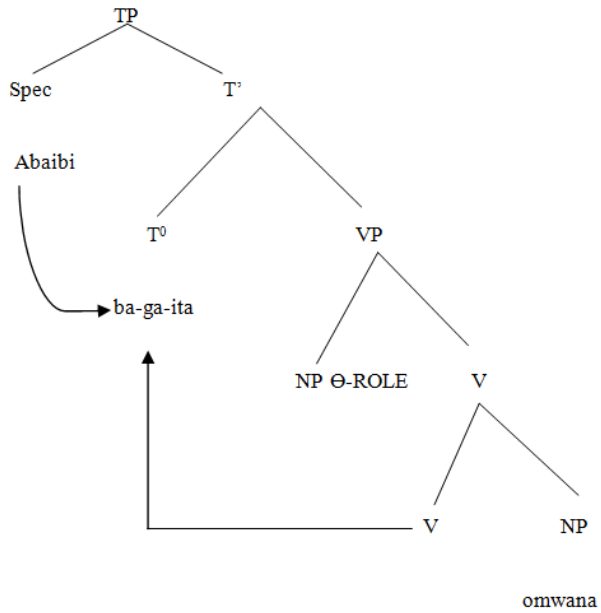

Figure 8: Incorporation in EkeGusii

In Figure 8 above, the subject *abaibi* (thieves) is assigned its theta role from within the VP then moves to [SPEC, TP]. The verb *ita* (beat) also moves to T. This is where the subject marker *ba-* is incorporated into the verb to reflect the subject therefore having the verbal word *bagaita* 'they beat' in T^0.

C. LOWERING

A lowering syntactic operation occurs when an element that is considered to be higher in the tree hierarchy moves down the syntactic tree for instance from the NP position to be within the VP (Kidwai, 2005). However, Kidwai (2005) argues that this process is a violation of the Empty Category Principle because once lowered, an empty category that remains cannot adequately govern the incorporated element (SM) in the verbal complex. In EkeGusii, lowering is shown in a case where there is no overt subject NP (null subject constructions) as sentence (41) shows.

(41) Ba-ga-som-a e-bi-tabu
3plS-read-PFCT-FV AUG-8-book
'They read books.'

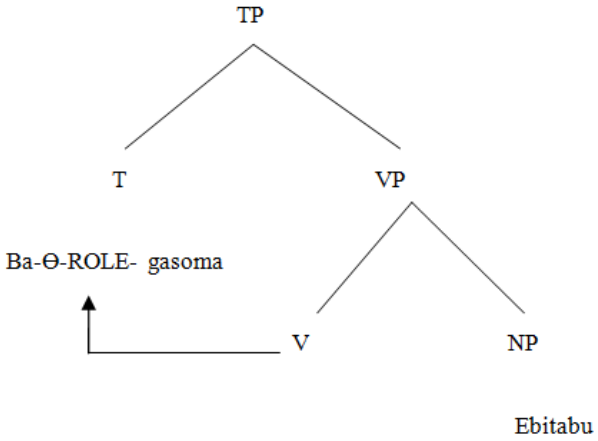

Figure 9: Null Subject Construction

In sentence (41) above, the subject DP must be present because the subject is more of an obligatory argument in EkeGusii except in imperatives and requests. In imperatives and requests as shown in (42), the verb moves from within the VP to I to acquire tense and agreement features with especially the subject but incorporation does not take place since the subject is implied. This then explains why we have agreement in (42) though we don't have a syntactic subject.

(42) Gend-a
Go-FV
'Go.'

In sentence (42) there is no movement that takes place because the subject is implied.

VI. SYNTACTIC OPERATIONS THAT LICENCE OBJECT MARKERS

There are different syntactic operations that determine the occurrence of object markers in EkeGusii as discussed in the following subsections.

A. MOVEMENT

Movement can be defined as change of position of elements from their original position to another position within the clause (Halpert, 2013) as shown in Figure 10.

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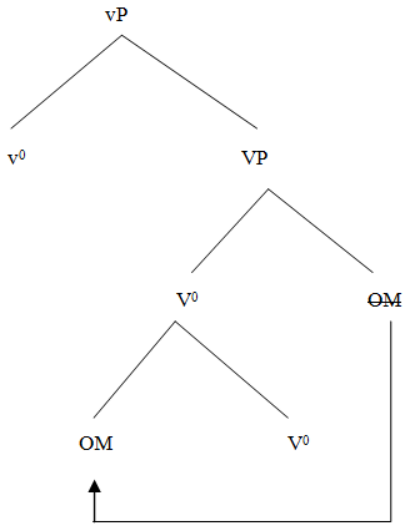

Figure 10: Head Movement of Object Marker

In Figure 10, the object marker is seen to originate in the normal position for arguments of verbs which is assumed to be the sister to V^0. The object marker then incorporates into V^0 head through head movement from its base position. Therefore in EkeGusii object DP moves to I^0 before the object marker is merged with the verb to create the complex verbal word for instance *bakabisoma* as it is illustrated in Figure 11.

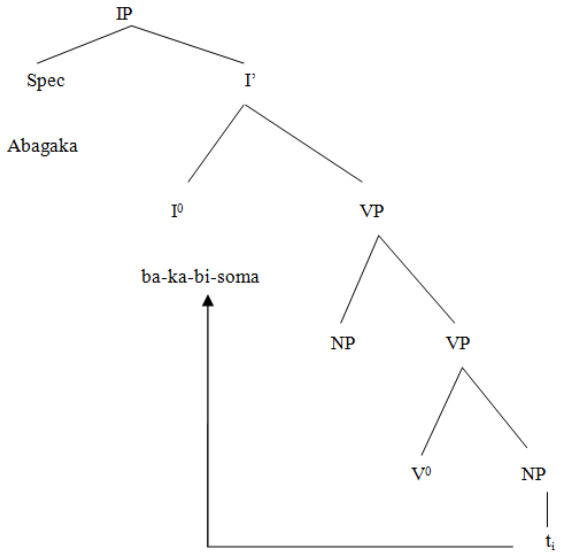

Figure 11: Movement of the OM to its position.

As realised in Figure 11, the object marker moves to its position inside the verb (which is I^0) and merges with the verb leaving a trace t_i within the VP.

B. RAISING

A raising syntactic operation occurs when an element that is considered to be lower in the tree hierarchy moves up the tree. As observed by Oyioka *et. al.* (2015), raising is a syntactic operation whereby an NP moves from a non-Case to a Case position so as to check its case feature as shown in figure 11. This can be exemplified in EkeGusii in sentence (43).

(43) Kerubo a-ka-agach-a ø-e-nyomba
1-Kerubo 3sgS-PST-build- FV AUG-9-house
'Kerubo built a house.'

Sentence (43) shows the object argument house before it raises to the verb to be incorporated as illustrated in Figure 12.

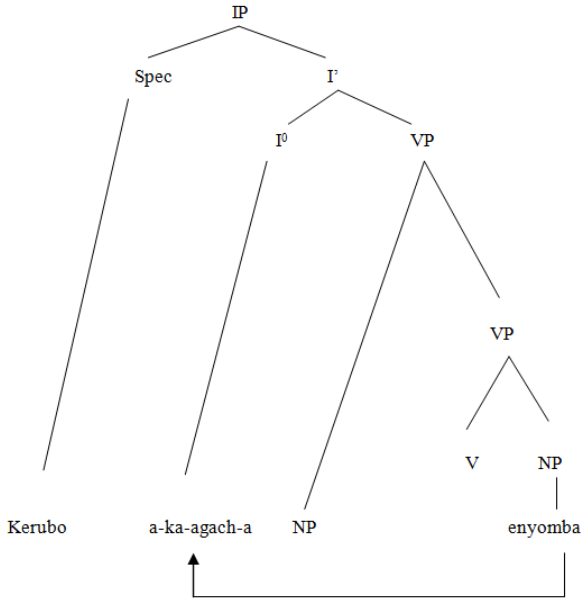

Figure 12: The Object NP before incorporation into the verb

The object marker raises and gets incorporated into the verb as shown in example (40). However, because the object marker and the object DP do not co-occur, the object marker gets marked in the verb and the overt object NP is not repeated as sentence (44) shows.

(44) Kerubo a-ka-ye-agach-a
1-Kerubo 3sgS-PST-9sgO–built-FV
'Kerubo built it.'

The object marker *ye-* in (44) is now incorporated and part of the verbal word *a-ka-ye-agach-a* after being raised from its position as illustrated in Figure 13.

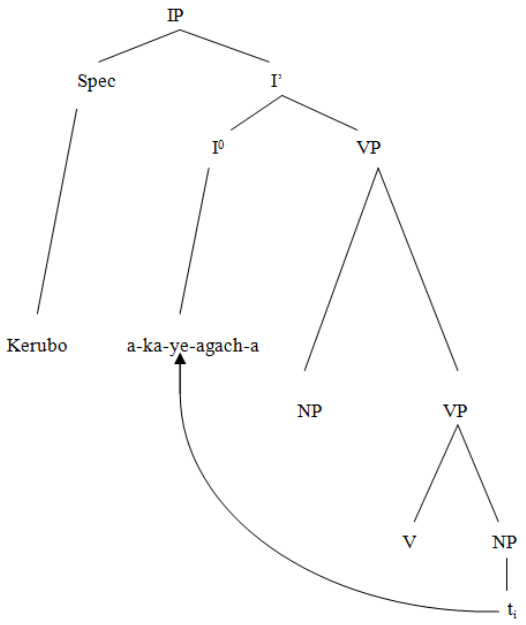

Figure 13: Raising of the Object NP into the Verb.

As realised in Figure 13, the raising operation involves the movement of the object marker from its original position inside the VP to inflectional head I^0. It therefore can be

concluded that an object marker moves to its position by the raising operation and thereafter gets incorporated into the verb.

VII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The paper analysed the syntactic properties and syntactic operations that are responsible for the occurrence of the SM and OM in EkeGusii verbal word. The paper has shown that the SM is characterised by its obligatoriness which means that it is mandatory to occur especially in positive statements. It was also realised that the SM, can co-occur with the subject NP with which they co-refer. The SM was also analysed as occupying specific slot in the verbal template, that is, it precedes the tense marker, the OM, and then the root followed by the final vowel. In addition, the SM agrees with the noun class prefix to which that noun belongs. It was realised that the OMs in EkeGusii are optional and cannot cannot co-occur with the lexical object NP. The co-occurrence of the OM and the lexical object NP can only be permissible when the when the object NP is left dislocated. Syntactically, the OM also occupies a specific position in the verbal template, which is, preceded by the negation morpheme, the SM, tense marker and followed by the root derivational morphemes and the final vowel.

On syntactic operations, it is evident from the paper that the SM moves from within the VP and gets incorporated into the verbal complex while the OM moves and incorporates into the verbal complex through a raising operation. From the discussion, the paper concludes that EkeGusii is a null subject language since it allows the omission of an overt subject in the EkeGusii clause. It is also realised that the overt object DP is omitted in the EkeGusii sentence, a fact that affirms that EkeGusii is a highly agglutinating language. Additionally, unlike the standard assumption on the behaviour of overt object DP and OM, these elements (object DP and OM) do not behave uniformly in Bantu as it has been shown in the analysis of EkeGusii.

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