

Overt Pronoun Subjects of Infinitival Clauses in Gã



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May 31st, 2020



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Introduction

The need for PRO

- ❖ English non-finite clauses appear to lack a subject.

(1) a. Cindy_i remembered [PRO_i to buy a book]

(1) b. Cindy persuaded Mark_i [PRO_i to buy a book]

- ❖ Infinitival subjects need to be null for (1a,b) to be grammatical
- ❖ PRO (Chomsky 1981) a null DP category *simultaneously* anaphoric and pronominal offers a principled solution to the EPP and theta criterion

Plot Twist: Gã's Overt Pronouns

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In Gã (Kwa group of the Niger-Congo language family), there is a full overt pronoun where we expect a PRO:

(2) a. Mii_k tao *ma*_k na bo
1.SG want 1.SG see.INF. you
'I want to see you'

(2) b. *Mii tao \emptyset na bo
1.SG want [PRO] see.INF. you
'I want to see you'

(2b) is ungrammatical because of the absence of the overt pronoun *ma*.

Overt pronoun is obligatory in the embedded infinitival construction.

My argument:

The goal of this talk is to show that **the overt pronouns** in infinitival predicates of Gã are the **lexical counterparts of PRO** in subject position.

Outline of Talk

Roadmap

- ❖ Brief background on Gã
- ❖ Arguments for Gã's overt PRO
- ❖ Sketching a hypothesis for Gã's overt PRO
- ❖ Summary and Conclusions

The Gã Language

Gã

❖ Kwa sub-group of the Niger-Congo family (Williamson 1989)



❖ Spoken in south-east Ghana

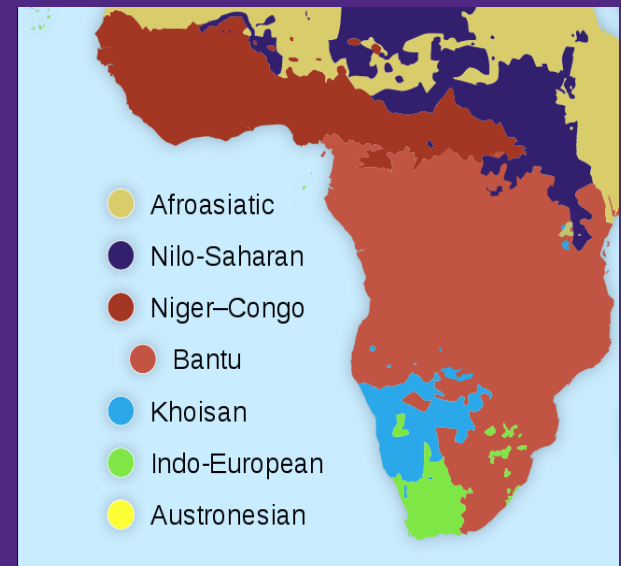
❖ >600,000 people L1 speakers (Lewis 2015)



❖ Non pro drop

❖ Tonal language : High, mid, low

❖ SVO basic word order



Cross-linguistic evidence for Overt PRO

(6) Decidiu ir **ele** ao mercado [European Portuguese]

decided to-go he.NOM to-the market

'He_k decided for it to be the case that he_k goes to the market'

(Barbosa, 2016)

(7) Pedro_k quer [**ele**_k chegar infcedo] [Brazilian Portuguese]

Peter wants [he.NOM arrive.INF early]

'Peter wants to arrive early.'

(Corlaban, 2018)

[Spanish]

(8) Juan_k prometió a su profesor [hacer **él**_k los deberes]

John promised to his teacher [do.INF he.NOM the homework]

'John promised his teacher to do the homework by himself.'

(Corlaban, 2018)

Previous analyses of Overt PRO

For Gã

Dakubu (2004) & Campbell (2017) :

Overt PRO is a subjunctive subject embedded under a matrix volitional verb

Korsah (p.c):

Overt PRO is an agreement marker agreeing with matrix subject

Cross-linguistically

Herbeck (2015) & Barbosa (2016):
Overt PRO – interpretable, externally merged D
head with variable phi-features in T.

Szabolcsi (2009):
Long Distance Agree Hypothesis (LDA)

Satik (2019):
Left-periphery bound pronoun

Overt PRO in Gã: Evidence and Argumentation

Properties of Gã's Overt PRO

1. Must be overt
2. Must be a pronoun
3. Must be co-indexed with matrix argument
4. Must be C commanded
5. No long-distance antecedent
6. Sloppy reading only
7. Bound Variable
8. Spec TP of embed clause

The embedded pronoun must be **overt**

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Unlike PRO, the *ma* pronoun cannot be silent.

(9) Dida_k sumɔ-ɔɔ ni *(e_k) na bo
Father like-NEG C 3.SG see.INF you
'Father is reluctant to see you'

(10) Mii_k tao ni *(ma_k) na bo
1.SG want C 1 .SG see.INF. you
'I want to see you'

If the embedded pronominal is omitted from these sentences, they are rendered ungrammatical.

The embedded pronoun must be **a pronoun**

The *ma* pronoun position does not permit lexical nouns in the embedded infinitival clause.

(11) a. E_k / Ameele_k kai ni e_k-he wolo
 3.SG /Ameele remember C 3.SG-buy book
 'Ameele remembered to buy a book'

b. *Ameele_k kai ni Ameele_k -he wolo
 Ameele remember C Ameele-buy book

c. * E_k kai ni Ameele_k -he wolo
 3.SG remember C Ameele-buy book

The embedded pronoun must be **co-indexed**

The embedded *ma* pronoun must be co-indexed with a matrix argument.

(12) Mi_k kai ni ma_k he wolo
 1.SG remember C 1.SG buy.INF book
 'I remembered to buy a book'

(13) Mi wa Ama_k ni e_k-ya skul
 1.SG help Ama C 3.SG-go.INF school
 'I helped Ama to go to school'.

Properties

The Ma Pronoun

Obligatory Controlled PRO

Must be co-indexed



Subject Control



Object Control



Must be C-commanded

Long distance antecedent

Sloppy reading only

Bound Variable

Spec TP of embed clause

The embedded pronoun must be **c-commanded** 22

Landau (2013) & Hornstein (1999) :PRO must be c-commanded. Guess what? The *ma* pronoun too.

(14) [Jojo_k gbekɛbii lɛ]₁ hiɛkpano ni ame*_{k/1} sha tsɛnsii lɛ
Jojo children DET forgot C 3.PL wash.INF dishes DET
Jojo's children forgot to wash the dishes.'

(15) [Gbekɛbii_k lɛ papa]₁ kai ni e*_{k/1}-he woji lɛ
Children DET father remembered C 3.SG-buy INF books DET
'The children's father remembered to buy the book'

The embedded infinitival subject pronoun must be co-referent with the possessive phrase and not the possessor.

Properties

The Ma Pronoun

Obligatory Controlled PRO

Must be co-indexed



Subject Control



Object Control



Must be C-commanded



Long distance antecedent

Sloppy reading only

Bound Variable

Spec TP of embed clause

Long distance binding of the embedded pronoun²⁴ is not possible

The subject of the embedded clause must pick its antecedent in the immediately preceding clause.

(16) Aku_k $k\epsilon\epsilon$ $ak\epsilon$ e_1 -tao ni $e_{*k/1}$ -ya skol gbiko
Aku said C 3.SG-want.INF C 3.SG-go.INF school day
A 'Aku said she wants to go to school one day'

(17) Mi_k $k\epsilon\epsilon$ $ak\epsilon$ Debo₁ hiekpano ni e_1 /* ma_k he wolol ϵ
1.SG say C Debo forgot C 3.SG/*1.SG buy book
'I said Debo forgot to buy the book'

Properties	The Ma Pronoun	Obligatory Controlled PRO
Must be co-indexed	✓	✓
Subject Control	✓	✓
Object Control	✓	✓
Must be C-commanded	✓	✓
Long distance antecedent	X	X
Sloppy reading only		
Bound Variable		
Spec TP of embed clause		

The ma pronoun must be construed **sloppy** **under ellipsis**

English elided VPs can be interpreted in at least two ways:

(18) John scratched his arm and Bob did too

a) Strict reading:

John_k scratched his_k arm and Bob_l [~~scratched his_k arm~~] too

b) Sloppy reading:

John_k scratched his_k arm and Bob_l [~~scratched his_l arm~~] too

The ma pronoun must be construed sloppy under ellipsis

Landau (2013): PRO in the elided VP must be construed sloppily (~~and not strictly~~)

(19) Mary_k expected [PRO_k to attend the ceremony] and Sue_i did too [~~PRO_{i/*k} to attend the ceremony~~]

(20) Mary_k kplẽno ni e_k-ya paati lɛ ni Pite_i hu kplẽno
Mary agreed C 3-go party DET and Pite also agreed
[~~ni e_i-ya paati lɛ~~]
C 3-go party DET

'Mary agreed to go to the party and Peter also [agreed to go to the party]'

Properties	The Ma Pronoun	Obligatory Controlled PRO
Must be co-indexed	✓	✓
Subject Control	✓	✓
Object Control	✓	✓
Must be C-commanded	✓	✓
Long distance antecedent	X	X
Sloppy reading only	✓	✓
Bound Variable		
Spec TP of embed clause		

De Se: The *ma* pronoun must be interpreted as **a bound variable**

Chierchia (1990):

PRO has a *de se* reading. The *de se* reading arises when the antecedent subject of a predicate is aware that the complement proposition pertains to herself.

Imagine a scenario where Ajele Thompson has been nominated to win a prize but has no knowledge of this. Ajele comes to a notice that reads “Ayele Tomson is nominated for the Anisha prize”. Ajele anticipates that Ayele will win the prize, not knowing that she is the one nominated for the prize, but her name was misspelled. Ajele comes to believe that Ayele will win the prize.



De Se: The ma pronoun must be interpreted as a **bound variable** ³⁰

(21) #Ajele_k kpã-gbɛ ni e_k-ye jweremɔ lɛ
Ajele expects C 3.SG-win.INF prize DET
'#Ajele_k expects PRO_k to win the prize'.

(21) is not felicitous since *Ajele* mistakes the embedded subject to be *Ajele*. This outcome gives the embedded pronominal the bound variable reading as *de se*.

Properties

The Ma Pronoun

Obligatory Controlled PRO

Must be co-indexed

✓

✓

Subject Control

✓

✓

Object Control

✓

✓

Must be C-commanded

✓

✓

Long distance antecedent

X

X

Sloppy reading only

✓

✓

Bound Variable

✓

✓

Spec TP of embed clause

Gã's Overt PRO is a subject

The ma pronoun occupies **subject position**

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Gã does not show agreement in person or number on the verb :

(22) Mi/Wɔ tee skul mra
 1.SG/1.PL went school early
 'I went to school early'

(23) O/Nyɛ tee skul mra
 2.SG/2.PL went school early
 'You went to school early'

(24) E/Amɛ tee skul mra
 3.SG/3PL went school early
 'I went to school early'

The *ma* pronoun **not agreement marker**

If the *ma* pronoun is agreement, we should be able to have the pronoun together with an overt DP subject.

(25) Asibi_k (*e_k)-he wolo lɛ
 Asibi (3.SG)-buy book DET
 'Asibi bought the book'

(26) E_k (*e_k)-he wolo lɛ
 3.SG (3.SG)-buy book DET
 'She bought the book'

This however is not possible.

Negation markers intervene between the embedded pronoun and the verb

(29) Jojo kplɛnɔ ni e ka he wolo lɛ
 Jojo agreed C 3 NEG buy book DET
 'John agreed not to buy the book / to not buy the book'

(30) Aku tao ni e ka na bo
 Aku want C 3 NEG see you
 'Aku wanted to not see you'

If the *ma* pronoun is agreement, we expect negation to precede the *ma* pronoun not follow it

Negation markers intervene between the embedded pronoun and the verb

Implications

- ❖ the *ma* pronoun is not attached to the verb as a clitic or agreement marker
- ❖ The *ma* pronoun is in Spec TP of embedded clause
- ❖ The *ma* pronoun sits in subject position of the embedded clause

Conclusion

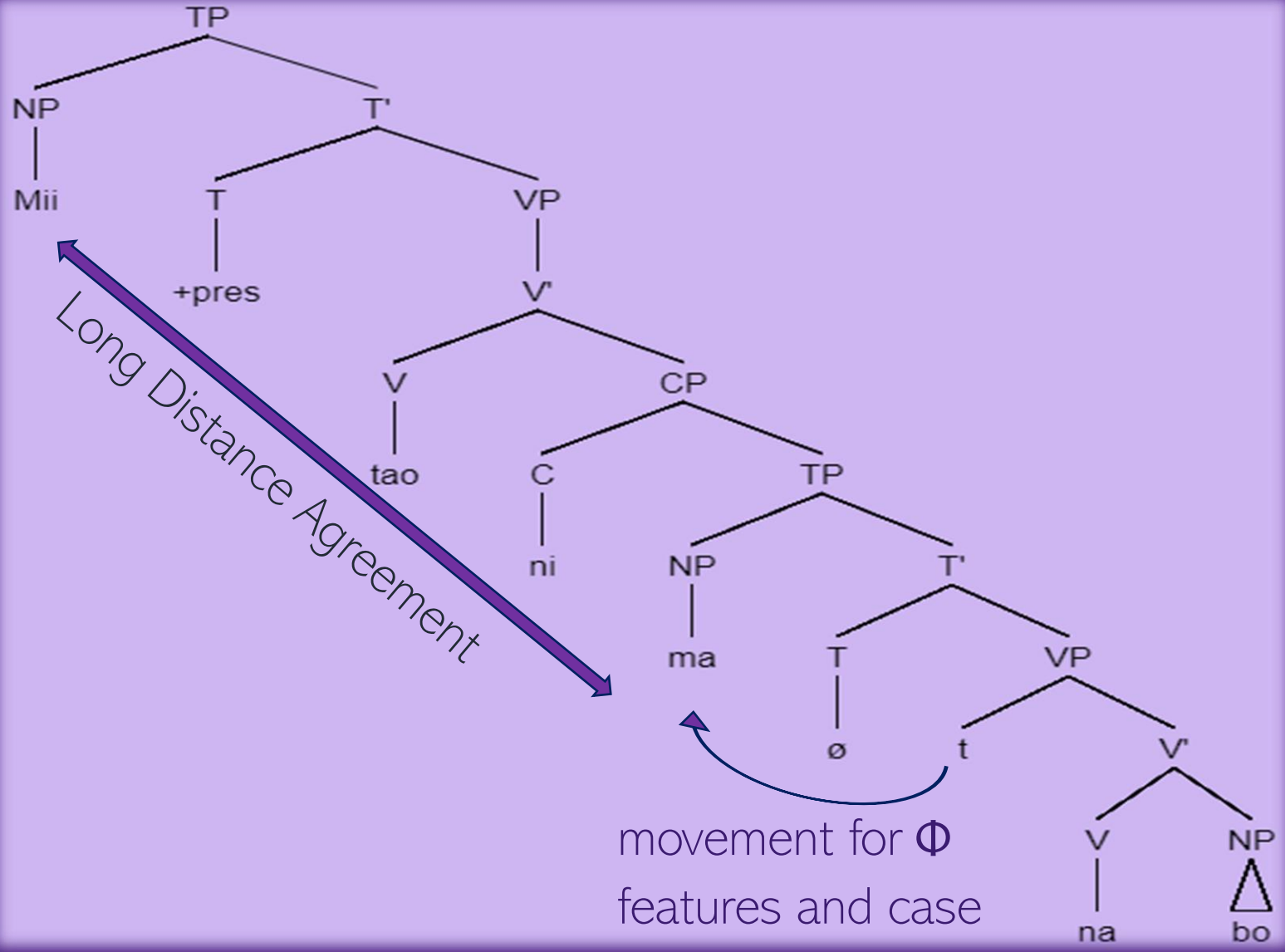
- ❖ The *ma* pronoun is an embedded subject.

Sketching an analysis for Gã's Overt PRO

Long Distance Agree Hypothesis (LDA)

Proposed by Szabolcsi (2009) :

- ❖ the nominative DP in the infinitival complement, agrees with a superordinate subject, in case, person and number.
- ❖ Conditions for LDA
 - i. DP must be overt
 - ii. DP must be a pronoun



Summary and Conclusions

What we know so far of Gã's Overt PRO

1. Occurs with control verbs such as *persuade*, *want*, *forget* etc.
2. Occurs in subject position of an embedded infinitival clause
3. Obligatory control of matrix and embedded arguments
4. Embedded subject fits Landau's (2013) PRO diagnostics

Conclusion

This pronoun is **PRO being overt**

Properties	The Ma Pronoun	Obligatory Controlled PRO
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Must be co-indexed	✓	✓
Subject Control	✓	✓
Object Control	✓	✓
Must be C-commanded	✓	✓
Long distance antecedent	X	X
Sloppy reading only	✓	✓
Bound Variable	✓	✓
Spec TP of embed clause	✓	✓



Thank You!

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