

Abo Optional Anti-Agreement

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Abstract

Anti-Agreement Effects (AAE) in Bantu languages are descriptively the selection of one agreement marker over another. Theoretically this morphological alternation is the fall out from subject extraction in relative clauses and *wh*-questions. Previous accounts of Bantu AAE (Schneider-Zioga 2000) argue that long distance extraction can induce optional AAE, but this optionality is treated as free morphological variation. Based on evidence from Abo (A42), a North-Western Bantu language, I argue that even seemingly “optional” AAE should not be understood as free morphological variation and is in fact governed by syntactic principles.

1 AAE Background

Traditional AAE (Ouhalla 1993): Default subject marking in extraction. Contexts: *wh*-questions, subject clefts (focus), and subject relative clauses.

Berber (Ouhalla 1993):

- (1) a. man tamghart ay yzrin Mohand
 which woman COMP see.PART Mohand
 Which woman saw Mohand?
- b. *man tamghart ay t-zra Mohand
 which woman COMP 3F.SG-saw Mohand

Bantu AAE (Cheng 2006, Schneider-Zioga 2000 & 2007, Henderson 2009, Dierks 2009): Alternation of Class 1 subject agreement. Either 3rd person singular marking **a-* or Class 1 **u-* marking.

Bemba (Cheng 2006):

- (2) a. umulumendo **a-** ka- belenga ibuku
 1.boy 3SG- FUT- read 5.book
 The boy will read the book.
- b. umulumendo **ú-** **u-** ka- belenga ibuku
 1.boy 1.REL- 1.SUBJ- FUT- read 5.book
 the boy who will read the book
- c. *umulumendo **ú-** **a-** ka- belenga ibuku
 1.boy 1.REL- 3SG- FUT- read 5.book

A summary of Bantu AAE in comparison with Traditional AAE is given in the following table.

ENVIRONMENT	TRADITIONAL AAE	BANTU AAE
Relative Clauses	x	x
Wh-questions	x	x
Focus Constructions	x	

Table 1: Summary of AAE environments

Why is it that we don’t find descriptions of Bantu AAE in focus constructions?

In addition to “static” AAE, Abo displays AAE in focus constructions that is optional.¹ Use of AAE in this structure produces an utterance that is semantically synonymous to when AAE is not used.

¹Schneider-Zioga (2000:2) describes an instance of optional AAE in Kinande. Although it is presented as free variation, the example sentences that are provided are not of minimal pairs. The use of AAE in these examples might be restricted syntactically even though the speaker is free to use one construction or the other.

- (3) a. m-ǎn ndì á jé
 1-child FOC 3SG eat.PST
 It is the child who ate.
- b. m-ǎn ndì nú jé
 1-child FOC 1.SUBJ eat.PST
 It is the child who ate.

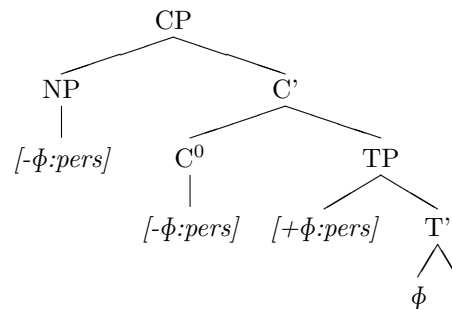
Looking at the data in Abo which does form a minimal pair should lead us to ask:

Question What is optional AAE, free morphological variation or something else?

1.1 Theoretical Assumptions

Framework Minimalism

Agree AAE is the result of agree being able to send only partial agreement information to the T⁰ from an agreement probe nested in CP (Henderson 2000). The following Tree represents AAE in Henderson's framework.



Tree 1. Anti-Agreement in Minimalism via Agree

Movement Not all questions involve movement. Pro does not move outside of TP.

1.2 Road Map

The rest of this paper will be organized as follows. First there will be a description of the basic facts about Abo word order in matrix clauses. Once these facts are established, we shall delve into the facts about Abo AAE in seemingly obligatory cases and seemingly optional cases. I will provide evidence that optional AAE in Abo is really the result of two different syntactic structures and is not free morphological variation.

2 Abo Basics 101

Abo is a north-western Bantu language spoken in Cameroon, by approximately 12,000 people (Lewis 2009). Abo is a member of the A40 (Basaa) group and alternately called Bankon. Like most Bantu languages in this group (with the exception of Nen), Abo is SVO.

2.1 Word Order

Declarative

- (4) m-ǎn [à jé]_{VC} kó
 1-child 3SG eat.PST 9.chicken
 The child ate chicken.

Polar Question

- (5) m-ǎn à jé kó=ò
 1-child 3SG eat.PST 9.chicken=polar
 Did the child eat chicken?

2.2 Agreement ²

Overt Lexical Subject

²For a complete list of the agreement paradigm see Appendix A

- (6) a. nyé à jé
he 3SG eat.PST
He ate.
- b. nyé nú jé
he 1.SUBJ eat.PST
he who ate

Non-Overt Lexical Subject

- (7) a. à jé
3SG eat.PST
He ate.
- b. *nú jé
1.SUBJ eat.PST

Adverbial Placement

In main clauses, the adverb may appear either in the predicate or preceding the predicate.

- (8) a. mù-lóm à kó ñkò
1-man 3SG fall.PST yesterday
The man fell yesterday.
- b. ñkò mù-lóm à kó
yesterday 1-man 3SG fall.PST
The man fell yesterday.

3 “Static” AAE

Static AAE: AAE whose implementation (or lack thereof) results in either a grammatical or ungrammatical judgment.

3.1 Relative Clauses

Subject Relative:

- (9) a. [ñ-kànè_i [nù là [t_i nú kó]]
1-chief REL.1 COMP t 1.SUBJ fall.PST
The chief who fell

- b. * [ñ-kànè_i [nù là [t_i à kó]]
1-chief REL.1 COMP t 3SG fall.PST

Object Relative:

- (10) a. *mw-èlè_i [mù là [ñ-kànè nú jé t_i]]
3-banana REL.3 COMP 1-chief 1.SUBJ eat.PST t
- b. mw-èlè_i [mù là [ñ-kànè à jé t_i]]
3-banana REL.3 COMP 1-chief 3SG eat.PST t
the banana which the chief ate

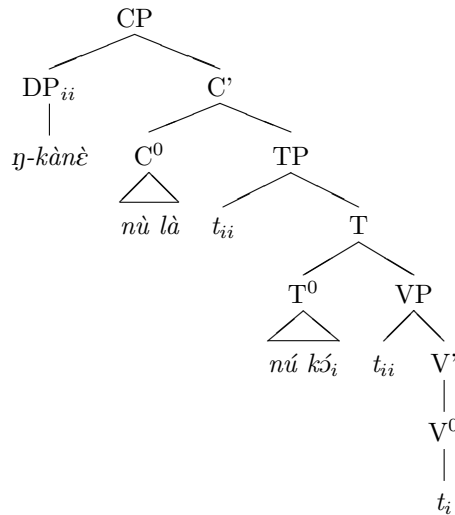
Matrix verbs show “normal agreement” with the relator head and do not exhibit AAE.³

- (11) a. [ñ-kànè nù là nú kó] à yé
1-chief REL.1 COMP 1.SUBJ fall.PST 3SG cry.PST
The chief, who fell, cried.

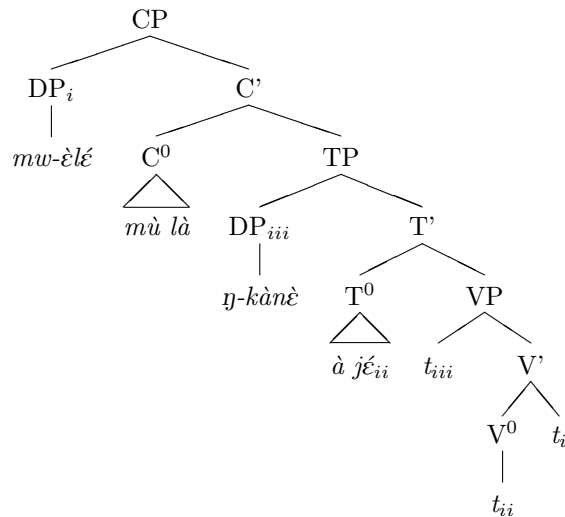
- b. * [ñ-kànè nù là nú kó] nú yé
1-chief REL.1 COMP 1.SUBJ fall.PST 1.SUBJ cry.PST

³(10b) is ungrammatical due to its bracketing structure. The only reading of (10b) that is grammatical is a coordinated relative (i.e., ‘The chief who fell and who cried’).

Proposed Structures:



Tree 2. Subject Relative



Tree 3. Object Relative

Elision of the Complex Complementizer (c.f. example 6b)

- (12) m-ǎn (nù là) nú jé kó
 1-child REL.1 COMP 1.SUBJ eat.PST 9.chicken
 The child who ate chicken.

Adverbial Placement

In a relative clause, the placement of the adverb is fixed to be within the predicate structure.

- (13) a. mù-lóm nú là nú kó ηkò
 1-man REL.1 COMP 1.SUBJ fall.PST yesterday
 the man who fell yesterday
- b. *mù-lóm nú là ηkò nú kó
 1-man REL.1 COMP yesterday 1.SUBJ fall.PST

3.2 Wh-Questions

Object Wh-words can front.⁴

- (14) a. n-gilà ì nó: n-jé
 9-lion 9.SUBJ kill.PST 1-who
 Who did the lion kill?
- b. n-jé n-gilà ì nó:
 1-who 9-lion 9.SUBJ kill.PST
 Who did the lion kill?

Subject Wh-words don't show overt fronting, but do move in the syntactic structure (c.f. example (5)).

- (15) a. n-jé nú jé kó
 1-who 1.SUBJ eat.PST 9.chicken
 Who ate the chicken?

⁴The only exception to this is the wh-word *cé* 'what'.

- b. *n-jé à jé kó
1-who 3SG eat.PST 9.chicken

Adverbial Placement

Wh-questions allow free adverbial movement like a main clause.

- (16) a. n-jé nú kó ηkò
1-who 1.SUBJ fall.PST yesterday
Who fell yesterday?

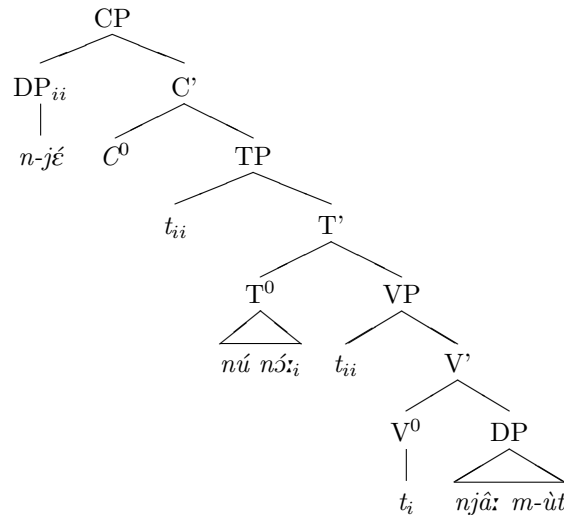
- b. ηkò n-jé nú kó
yesterday 1-who 1.SUBJ fall.PST
Who fell yesterday?

3.2.1 Double Wh-Questions

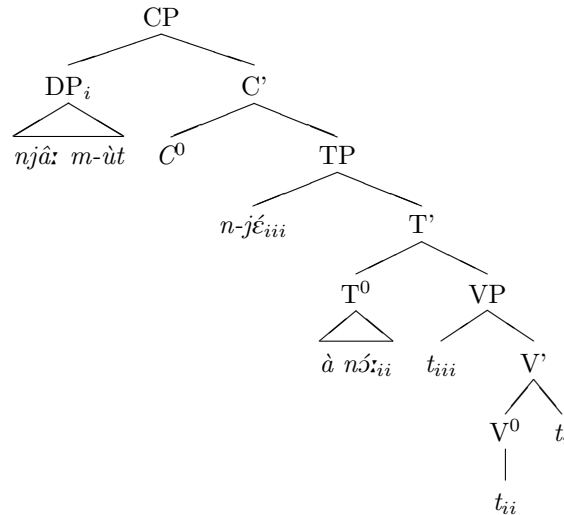
When a wh-object moves, the use of AAE is blocked.

- (17) a. *n-jé à nó: njâ: m-ùt
1-who 3SG kill.PST which 1-person
- b. n-jé nú nó: njâ: m-ùt
1-who 1.SUBJ kill.PST which 1-person
Who killed which person?
- c. njâ: m-ùt n-jé à nó:
which 1-person 1-who 3SG kill.PST
Who killed which person?
- d. *njâ: m-ùt n-jé nú nó:
which 1-person 1-who 1.SUBJ kill.PST

Proposed Structures:



Tree 4. Double Wh-Question Subject Raising



Tree 5. Double Wh-Question Object Raising

3.2.2 Wh-Cleft

Subject of an Intransitive Verb:

- (18) a. n-jé nù là nú kó
 1-who REL.1 COMP 1.SUBJ fall.PST
Who fell? Lit: Who is it that fell.
- b. *n-jé nù là à kó
 1-who REL.1 COMP 3SG fall.PST

Subject of a Transitive Verb:

- (19) a. n-jé_i nù_i là (nyé) á né t_i
 1-who REL.1 COMP he 3SG see.PST t
Whom did he see? Lit: Whom is it who he saw?
- b. n-jé_i nù_i là t_i nú_i né
 1-who REL.1 COMP t 1.SUBJ see.PST
Who saw? Lit: Who is it who saw?

4 “Dynamic” AAE

Dynamic AAE: AAE whose implementation (or lack thereof) results in only grammatically and fully synonymous statements.

Focus Framework: Kiss (1999) division of labor between Identificational (ID) Focus and Information Focus.

Dynamic AAE is found in the ID focus construction with the particle *ndi*. As predicted by Kiss’ framework, this element is associated with movement and reordering as shown in example set (20).⁵

Object Reordering

- (20) a. à wán bì-kóŋkòŋ
 3SG buy.PST 8-snail

He bought snails.

- b. à wán ndí bì-kóŋkòŋ
 3SG buy.PST FOC 8-snail
 He bought *snails*.
- c. bì-kóŋkòŋ ndí á wán
 8-snail FOC 3SG buy.PST
 He bought *snails*.

Subject Reordering?

- (21) a. m-ăn ndí á kó
 1-child FOC 3SG fall.PST
The child fell. Lit: It is the child that fell.
- b. m-ăn ndí nú kó
 1-child FOC 1.SUBJ fall.PST
The child fell. Lit: It is the child that fell.

Adverbial Placement

A peculiarity of the focus construction is that although it reads like an embedded clause, it allows for free adverbial movement like a main clause.

- (22) a. mù-lóm ndí á kó ŋkò
 1-man FOC 3SG fall.PST yesterday
The man fell yesterday.
- b. ŋkò mù-lóm ndí á kó
 yesterday 1-man FOC 3SG fall.PST
The man fell yesterday.

4.1 Ndí, Wh-Questions, and the Relative Clause

Are there other ways in which the focus construction behave either like a relative clause (embedded structure) or a main clause (matrix structure)? What is its structure?

⁵ *Ndi* has two positions, either pre-verbal or post-verbal (immediately after the inflected verb (IAV)). *Ndi* is always pre-verbal when a subject is under focus, but can be either pre-verbal or IAV if any non-subject element is under focus. If a non-subject element is under focus and *ndi* is pre-verbal, that element will occur in the fronted position as in example (20b).

Constituent Negation

Of the three structures under investigation, only the relative clause allows for constituent negation.⁶

- (23) a. tó m-ùt nù là nú kó [à jéghé ífá
NEG 1-person REL.1 COMP 1.SUBJ fall.PST 3SG COP here
làtálátálà]
right.now
No one who fell is here right now.
- b. *tó n-jé nú kó
NEG 1-who 1.SUBJ fall.PST
- c. *tó m-ùt ndì nú/á kò
NEG 1-person FOC 1.SUBJ/3SG fall.PST

Despite these similarities, we should move forward with caution. The wh-construction is compatible with the ndi construction, much like it is with the relative clause (c.f., examples (18-19)).

- (24) n-jé ndì nú/á kó
1-who FOC 1.SUBJ/3SG fall.PST
Who fell?

This however is not the case for relative clauses. As was mentioned above, *cé* ‘what’ cannot move unlike other wh-words. With the use of either the focus marker, or the relative clause, it can move.⁷

- (25) a. cé ndì n-jé á wán
7.what FOC 1-who 3SG buyl.PST
Who bought *what*?
- b. *cé ndì n-jé nú wán
7.what FOC 1-who 1.SUBJ buyl.PST

⁶This is generally true unless *tómùt* ‘Tomut’ is understood to be a propername. In the case that it is in the position of a moved constituent in the focus construction and wh-construction, the indefinite reading of *tómùt* ‘no one’ is not available.

⁷There is no general ban against *ndí* going at the end of an utterance: *à kó ndí* ‘He fell’.

- c. *cé (*ndì) kì là (*ndì) n-jé à wán
7.what FOC REL.7 COMP FOC 1-who 3SG buy.PST
(*ndí)
FOC

All Three Together

Forget about it.

- (26) *cé (*ndì) kì là (*ndì) n-jé à wán
7.what FOC REL.7 COMP FOC 1-who 3SG buy.PAST

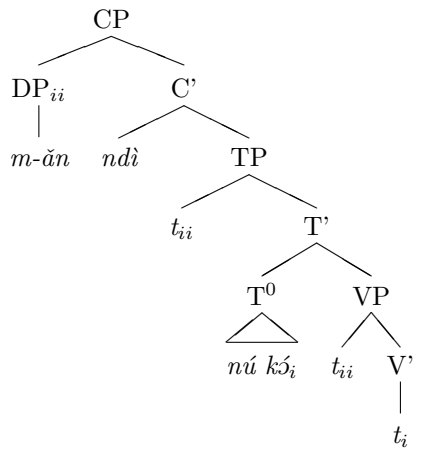
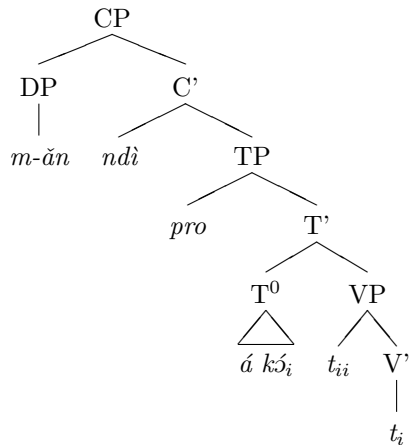
4.2 Summary

Despite the some similarities with relative clauses, it appears as if the focus construction behaves as other monoclausal structures.

PROPERTIES	RELC	WH-Q	NDI
Involves Movement	yes	yes	yes
AAE Type	static	static	dynamic
Constituent Negation	yes	no	no
Free Adverb Movement	no	yes	yes
Compatibility	Cleft-Wh	Cleft-Wh Ndi-Wh	Ndi-Wh

Table 2: Summary of Constructions

Based on this information, I propose the two following trees for the *ndí*-construction, one which involves movement, and one which involves base generation of a *pro* as shown in the following structures.

Tree 6. *Ndì* construction with AAETree 7. *Ndì* construction without AAE

5 Blocking Dynamic AAE

In the previous section, AAE has been described in terms of whether or not variable agreement is possible. It was argued that it is possible in most instances of AAE, but only one construction allows for this type of variation without a semantic difference. In this section, I will show that

eventhough the *ndì* construction is still “dynamic” in the sense that one does not find variable meanings, there are co-restriction occurrences that begin to fall out embedded structures.

5.1 Control Verbs

The verb *tòŋ* ‘want’ can take either a DP complement or a CP complement. When the complement is a CP, the verb of the lower clause will inflect for mood depending on whether the subjects of the two clauses are the same.

- (27) a. \check{a}_i tòŋ là \check{a}_i sák
 3SG want.PRES.IND COMP 3SG dance.PRES.IND
 He wants to dance.

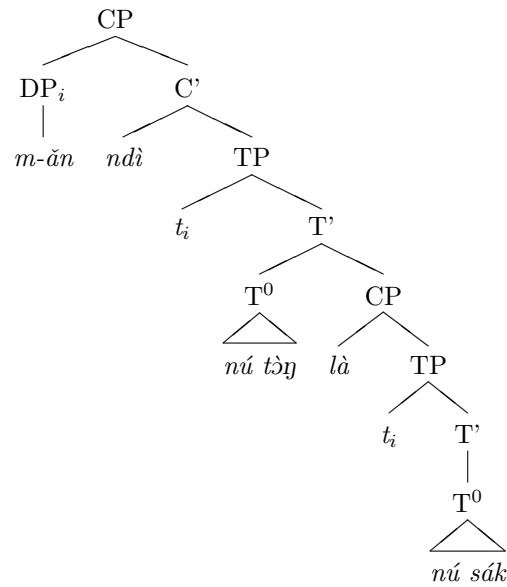
- b. \check{a}_i tòŋ là \check{a}_j sék
 3SG want.PRES.IND COMP 3SG dance.PRES.SBJV
 He wants him to dance.

When using the *ndì* construction under bi-clausal identity the following restrictions occur.

- (28) a. m-ãñ ndì á tòŋ là à sák
 1-child FOC 3SG want.PRES.IND COMP 3SG dance.PRES.IND
 The child wants to dance.
- b. *m-ãñ ndì \check{a} tòŋ à nú
 1-child FOC 3SG want.PRES.IND COMP 1.SUBJ
 sák
 dance.PRES.IND
- c. m-ãñ ndì nú tòŋ là nú
 1-child FOC 1.SUBJ want.PRES.IND COMP 3SG
 sák
 dance.PRES.IND
 The child wants to dance.

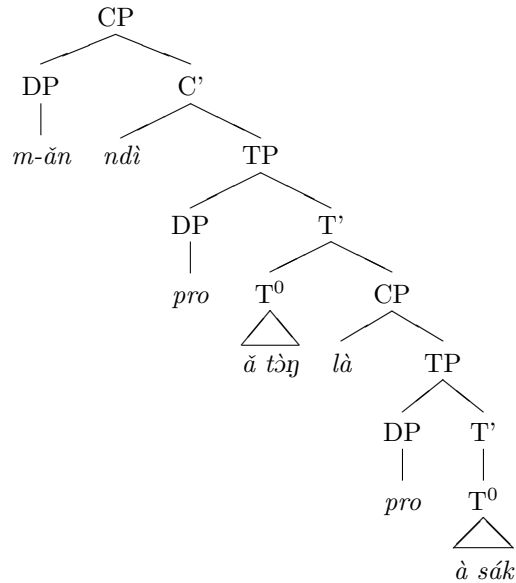
- d. m-ǎn ndì nú tòŋ là à
 1-child FOC 1.SUBJ want.PRES.IND COMP 1.SUBJ
 sák
 dance.PRES.IND

The child wants to dance.

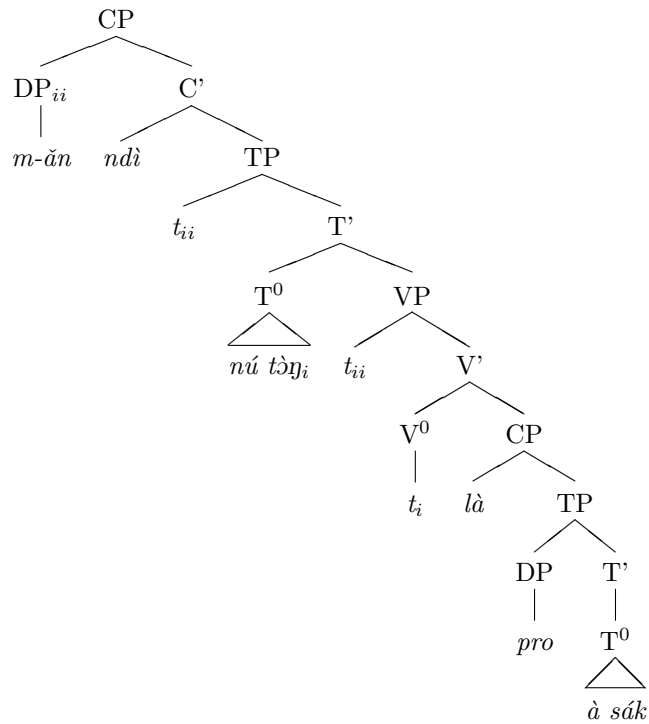


Tree 9. *Ndí* control construction with AAE

This restriction is predicted if we understand that *pro* is the null category that licences person-number agreement and something akin to a *t* (possibly from movement) licences class agreement.



Tree 8. *Ndí* control construction without AAE



Thank you!

Tree 10. *Ndì* control construction mixed AAE

6 Conclusion

Application of AAE is morpho-syntactic; it is never just up to the morphology to flip a coin and decide.

Areas for future research of AAE in general (especially in the Bantu literature) should look into whether or not so-called optional AAE is ever really optional.

In general syntax, this particular case study might be useful for anyone seeking to make an argument for when agreement occurs in the derivation as it seems to favor an argument that agreement happens quite late (after movements have occurred).

A Agreement Charts

NOUN CLASS	NOUN	CLASS PREFIX	RELATOR	SUBJECT AGREEMENT	PRONOUN
I	mùt <i>person</i>	m- N-	nù	ǎ	nyé
II	ḃòt <i>people</i>	ḃa-	ḃà	ḃá	ḃó
III	mùkǎŋ <i>root</i>	mu- N-	mù	mú	mó
IV	mìkǎŋ <i>roots</i>	mi-	mì	mí	myó
V	ìpón <i>hole</i>	ḃi- i-	ḃì i	ḃí	jó
VI	màpón <i>holes</i>	ma-	mà	má	mó
VII	kipúmá <i>orange</i>	(k)i- e-	(k)ì	(k)í	yó
VII	bìpúmá <i>oranges</i>	bi-	bì	bí	byó
IX	títí <i>meat</i>	N- 0-	ì	ì	yó
X	títí <i>meats</i>	N- 0-	ì	í	yó
XI	wě: <i>wood</i>	w- 0-	wù	wú	wó
XIV	bwàngá <i>chest</i>	bw- 0-	bù	bú	bwó

Table 3: Noun Class Prefixes and Pronouns

	SINGULAR AGREEMENT	PLURAL AGREEMENT	SINGULAR PRONOUN	PLURAL PRONOUN
1 st Person	mè	sá	mè	ḃěs
2 nd Person	ò	ḃè	wè	ḃě
3 rd Person	à	ḃá	nyé	ḃó

Table 4: Person Number Agreement and Pronouns