**Title**
Agreement and Word Order: A Case for Pragmatics in Haya

**Permalink**
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1wm8271p

**Journal**
Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society, 2(2)

**ISSN**
2377-1666

**Authors**
Byarushengo, Ernest Rugwa
Tenenbaum, Sarah

**Publication Date**
1976

Peer reviewed

Agreement and Word Order: A Case for Pragmatics in Haya
Author(s): Ernest Rugwa Byarushengo and Sarah Tenenbaum
*Proceedings of the 2nd Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics
Society* (1976), pp. 89-99

AGREEMENT AND WORD ORDER:
A Case for Pragmatics in Haya

Ernest Rugwa Byarushengo
Sarah Tenenbaum

University of Southern California

## 0.   Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to show the extensive
effects of pragmatics on Haya word order and agreement
pronouns.

Initially, it appears that Haya, a Lake Bantu lang-
uage, is a "free" word order language.  All permutations
of the verbal complex and the subject, indirect object,
and direct object noun phrases are allowed with the
relationships between the various syntactic roles re-
maining stable.  However, a closer examination reveals
that rather than having "free" word order, Haya has the
underlying basic structure:  subject--verbal complex--
indirect object--direct object.  All other syntactically
possible permutations are the result of specific prag-
matically conditioned processes such as :  emphasis,
topicalization, focusing and/or afterthought.  The prag-
matic conditioning is motivated by the tendency in this
language to separate old and new information.  In Haya,
except in the case of a new subject, new information
never precedes the verbal complex.

Markers in the verbal complex, which agree in noun
class membership with their "antecedent" nouns, allow
for this apparent "free" movement.  The stability of the
syntactic functions of the various noun phrases is main-
tained due to the rigid ordering of the agreement markers
--they indicate old discourse information.

In this discussion, it will be necessary to differ-
entiate between information and reference.  A referent
is the idea which is expressed by the noun, while old
(or given) information deals with what is in the hearer's
consciousness (Chafe 1976).  In other words, the notion
of reference must involve shared background knowledge,
and information must be tightly bound with the state of
the discourse at the time of the utterance.  Therefore,
any one of three possible situations may arise in dis-
course:

|  |  | reference | |
|---|---|:---:|:---:|
| | | old | new |
| information | | + | − |
| | new | + | + |

If our hypothesis is valid, only sentences belonging to
the class "old referent--old information" would include
these morphemes.

## 1. Description

### 1.1 Nouns and Their Noun Classes

In Haya, as in other Bantu languages, nouns are grouped into classes. Each noun class has a corresponding prefix and pre-prefix (or initial vowel--IV) which is determined by the prefix. Nouns have the following structure:

        pre-prefix < prefix - noun stem

Class membership indicates number and animacy.

1. a) o-mu-kâzi   'woman'
     IV $cl_1$ stem

  b) a-ba-kâzi   'women'
     IV $cl_2$ stem

  c) e-ki-tooke  'banana'
     IV $cl_7$ stem

  d) e-bi-tooke  'bananas'
     IV $cl_8$ stem

### 1.2 The Verbal Complex (VC)

For each specified noun in a given sentence, an affix, marked for class membership, may be attached to the verb in a rigid manner, indicating the grammatical function of the nouns. This order is: Subject--Direct Object--Indirect Object, and occurs prefixed to the verb radical. Other markers indicating tense and case may also be affixed to this unit. The verbal complex is the name given to the verb radical and all its possible affixes.

2. abakázi ba-gi-mu-cumb-îl-a kakûlw' énkôko
  women they it him cook APP MD Kakulu chicken
      | VERBAL COMPLEX |
  'The women cook chicken for Kakulu.'

The verbal complex may occur as a sentence without any specified noun.

3. ba-gi-mu-cumb-îl-a      APP=applicative
  they it him cook APP MD   MD= mood
  'They cook it for him.'

Notice in example (3) that ba-, -gi-, and mu- function as pronouns in addition to indicating class membership. These markers will henceforth be called agreement pronouns.

The agreement pronoun corresponding to the subject is obligatorily present and will be referred to as the Subject-Agreement-Pronoun (SAP). The Object-Agreement-

Pronoun (both DO and IO--OAP) may be optionally present depending upon conditions that will be discussed in detail in Sections 2 and 3.

## 1.3 Basic Word Order

Upon examining the data (Appendix II), it appears that the only possible orders that can occur with merely the SAP are SVIO or VIOS. Since VIOS is in actuality VIO‖S -- as can be detected tonally (see Section 3) -- we will therefore postulate that SVIO is the unmarked or basic order and that VIOS is actually the result of right dislocation--i.e. afterthought.

4. abakázi ba-cumb-il-a kakúlw' énkôko
   women they cook APP MD  Kakulu   chicken
   'The women cook chicken for Kakulu.'

5. ba-cumb-il-a kakúlw' énkôk' ‖ ábakâzi
   they cook APP MD Kakulu    chicken    women
   'They cook chicken for Kakulu, the women.'

By "unmarked", we mean the order one gets if everything in the sentence is new information--not previously mentioned in discourse, or if only the subject is old information.

$$\begin{Bmatrix} \underset{\text{OLD}}{S} \underset{\text{NEW}}{\vert V \ I \ O} \\ \overline{\text{ALL NEW}} \end{Bmatrix} = \text{UNMARKED}$$

This basic order then is found to have the following properties:
   a)  sentence contains all new information or only the subject is old information
   b)  no tonal peculiarities
   c)  occurs without OAP's

This finding agrees with Givón (1976) who stated that there seems to be a universal tendency for the IO to be positioned closer to the verb than the DO when both DO and IO are equally marked/unmarked. It also helps explain the less acceptable judgment given to sentences of the form SVOI.

6. kakúlw' a-cumb-il-' énkók' émbwa
   Kakulu  he cooks APP  chicken    dog
   'Kakulu cooks chicken for the dog.'

On first reading, one would expect enkôko to be the IO. But since this is semantically highly improbable, a second reading is attempted--making enkôko the DO.

It can therefore be hypothesized that example (4) cannot be considered ambiguous since word order disambiguates, and only when that fails do other semantic factors intervene (cf. Hawkinson and Hyman, 1974).

## 2. Left Dislocation
## 2.1 Presence of OAP's

In Haya, as in many other languages, there seems to be a fairly consistent separation between old and new information. This separation is the motivation for left dislocation which allows the old information to be placed to the left of the verbal complex.

In order for an object to become topicalized (the result of left dislocation), it must be old information, the morphological realization of which is the obligatory presence of its corresponding OAP in the verbal complex. It is at this point that we differ from previous analyses of the OAP's function. Rather than indicating definiteness (Givón, 1976), our findings, which took contextual considerations into account, reveal that the indication of definitization is a by-product of a more general function.

Old information is by definition an old referent which is, in turn, by definition definite. Generics can also be considered old referents. However, an old referent may be either old or new information. Therefore, one would expect generics to occur with or without their corresponding OAP's, dependent only upon whether the information is old or new. Similarly, one would not expect to find an OAP corresponding to any NP which is new to the discourse.

7. 'The women cook for Kakulu.'
                    [old info]
   a)   abakázi kakúlu ba-mu-cumb-îl-a
   b)  *abakázi kakúlu ba-∅-cumb-îl-a
   c)  ≠abakázi ba-mu-cumb-îl-a kakûlu
   d)  ≠abakázi ba-∅-cumb-il-a kakûlu
           women   they    cook APP MD Kakulu

(7b) is ungrammatical because an object without its corresponding OAP in the VC was topicalized. The OAP is not present because the object is new information and therefore may not be topicalized.
(7c) is an example of afterthought (see Section 3).
(7d) is merely a declarative sentence. kakûlu in this case is taken as being new information.
Notice in (7d) that no OAP occurs in the VC even though a proper noun (kakûlu) must be definite. That implies that its presence in (7c) must be attributed to another function.

The fact that the absence of OAP's have no effect on definiteness may be further illustrated by the fact that if a Haya speaker wants to say "Kakulu cooks chicken for the children", the sentence in (8) will result.

8. kakúlu' a-∅-cumb-il-' ábáán' énkôko
   Kakulu he   cook APP   women   chicken

Notice that enkôko is generic and does not have its
corresponding OAP in the VC. Furthermore, in this sit-
uation, the speaker assumes that the hearer knows the
particular children under discussion (Sentence (8) can
of course also mean 'Kakulu cooks chicken for children').
The absence of the OAP implies that abáana is new infor-
mation. Obviously then, OAP does not cause definiteness
nor does definiteness require the presence of OAP.

## 2.2 Topic Prominence
Either or both objects may be topicalized dependent
only upon prior mention in discourse. In this type of
situation, where more than one NP occurs to the left of
the VC, the one in sentence-initial position receives
greatest prominence--i.e. the NP on which the speaker is
focusing or setting up as topic.

## 3. Afterthought
## 3.1 Tonal Change
Underlyingly, high tone in Haya has two surface
realizations: falling in phrase penultimate position and
high elsewhere.

9. / o-mu-kázi /
   IV cl  stem
   omukâzi          'woman'
   omukázi wange    'my woman'

Therefore, a falling tone in non-phrase-penultimate
position indicates a pause signifying a syntactic break.
     As mentioned in Section 1.3, the configuration VIOS
is actually the result of right dislocation of the sub-
ject. In comparing the following examples, notice the
difference in tone on abakâzi and enkôko.

10. abakázi ba-cumb-' énkôko
       women they cook   chicken
    'The women cook chicken.'

11. ba-cumb-' énkôk' ábakâzi
    they cook  chicken women
    'They cook chicken, the women.'

12. abakázi ba-cumb-' énkóko ge
       women they cook      chicken well
    'The women cook chicken well.'

Whatever causes the falling tone on enkôko in examples
(10) and (11) is not present in (12). Notice also that
abakâzi has a falling tone in (11) but not in (10) or (12).

We claim, that in all cases, the falling tone is caused by the same factor--a syntactic break.

## 3.2  Right Dislocation

A syntactic break within a sentence is the result of afterthought.  Imagine a situation in which the speaker begins a sentence without including the subject NP, in which case, the SAP functions as a pronoun.  By the time he/she reaches the end of the sentence, he realizes that the reference of the SAP may not be in the conscious mind of the hearer.  In such a situation, the speaker may choose to add the subject NP to the right of the VC as an afterthought.  The speaker, knowing he changed the normal word order, places pause(s) separating the subject NP from the rest of the sentence.  This phenomenon can be attested to tonally as seen in the following examples:

    13.  ba-cumb-' énkôk'‖ ábakâzi
         they cook   chicken   women
         'They cook chicken, the women.'

    14.  ba-cumb-il-a kakúlw' énkôk'‖ ábakâzi
         they cook APP MD Kakulu  chicken    women
         'They cook chicken for Kakulu, the women.'

Notice that in both of the above examples, everything to the left of the pause constitutes a complete sentence.

## 3.3  OAP Without Movement

Recall the presence of OAP's indicate that their respective NP's are old information and therefore the NP's will either be topicalized or not mentioned at all. In cases where both the OAP's and their NP's co-occur and no movement takes place, the NP's are interpreted as being afterthought.  This can also be tonally verified.

    15.  ba-gi-cumb-il-a kakûlw'‖ énkôk'‖ ábakâzi
         they it cook APP MD Kakulu    chicken    women
         'They cook it for Kakulu, the chicken, the women.'

    16.  ba-gi-mu-cumb-îl-a ‖ kakûlw'‖ énkôk'‖ ábakâzi
         they it him cook APP MD  Kakulu   chicken    women
         'They cook it for him, Kakulu, the chicken,
                                            the women.'

Extending what was mentioned in connection with examples (13) and (14), everything to the left of any phrase boundary constitutes a complete sentence.

## 4. Conclusion

In view of the tonal behavior discussed above, we conclude that ANY NP TO THE RIGHT OF THE VC IS CONSIDERED AN AFTERTHOUGHT WHENEVER ITS CORRESPONDING AGREEMENT PRONOUN IS PRESENT. This finding is in accordance with our hypothesis that OAP's mark old information. Since the normal position for old information is to the left of the VC, its occurrence elsewhere in the sentence indicates an addition to what the speaker originally intended to say.

n! sentences may be generated, where n is equal to the number of NP's occuring to the right of the VC simultaneously with the presence of their corresponding agreement pronouns. The pragmatic conditioning of these various alternatives, as well as possible cases of ambiguity, will be discussed in Tenenbaum and Byarushengo (forthcoming).

REFERENCES

Chafe, Wallace L. "Giveness, Contrastiveness, Definiteness, Subjects, Topics, and Point of View", Charles N. Li,ed., Subject and Topic, New York Academic Press, 1976.

Givón, Talmy. "Topic, Pronoun and Grammatical Agreement", Charles N. Li ed., Subject and Topic, New York Academic Press, 1976.

Hawkinson, A. and Hyman, L. "Hierarchies of Natural Topic in Shona", in Studies in African Linguistics, Vol. 5, No. 2, July 1974, pp. 147-170.

# APPENDIX #1

## CLASS CONCORD SYSTEM

| Class | Noun Prefix | Example | SAP | | OAP |
|-------|-------------|---------|-----|-----|-----|
| 1. | mu- | mu-ntu (person) | a- | | -mu- |
| 2. | ba- | ba-ntu (persons) | | ba- | |
| 3. | mu- | mu-kôno (hand) | | g̈u- | |
| 4. | mi- | mi-kôno (hands) | e- | | -gi- |
| 5. | i-/li- | i-cûmu (spear)<br>lí-ino (tooth) | | li- | |
| 6. | ma- | ma-cûmu (spears) | | ga- | |
| 7. | ki- | ki-ntu (thing) | | ki- | |
| 8. | bi- | bi-ntu (things) | | bi- | |
| 9. | N- | m-bógo (buffalo) | e- | | -gi- |
| 10. | N- | m-bógo (buffaloes) | | zi- | |
| 11. | lu- | lú-go (fence) | | lu- | |
| 12. | ka- | ka-húka (small insect) | | ka- | |
| 13. | tu- | tu-húka (small insects) | | tu- | |
| 14. | bu- | bu-húka (small insects) | | bu- | |
| 15. | ku- | ku-gulu (leg) | | ku- | |

APPENDIX #2

'The women cook chicken for Kakulu'

VSID
```
    bagimucumbîl' ábakâzi kakûlw' énkôko
   *bagicumbîl' ábakâzi kakûlw' énkôko
    bamucumbîl' ábakâzi kakûlw' énkôko
   *bacumbîl' ábakâzi kakûlw' énkôko
```

VISD
```
    bagimucumbîla kakûlw' ábakâzy' énkôko
    bagicumbîla kakûlw' ábakâzy' énkôko
    bamucumbîla kakûlw' ábakâzy' énkôko
   *bacumbila kakûlw' ábakâzy' énkôko
```

VSDI
```
    bagimucumbîl' ábakâzy' énkôko kakûlu
   *bagicumbîl' ábakâzy' énkôko kakûlu
    bamucumbîl' ábakâzy' énkôko kakûlu
   *bacumbil' ábakâzy' énkôko kakûlu
```

VDSI
```
    bagimucumbîl' énkôk' ábakâzi kakûlu
   *bagicumbil' énkôk' ábakâzi kakûlu
    bamucumbil' énkôk' ábakâzi kakûlu
   *bacumbil' énkôk' ábakâzi kakûlu
```

VDIS
```
    bagimucumbîl' énkôko kakûlw' ábakâzi
   *bagicumbil' énkôko kakûlw' ábakâzi
    bamucumbil' énkôko kakûlw' ábakâzi
   *bacumbil' énkôko kakûlw' ábakâzi
```

VIDS
```
    bagimucumbîla kakûlw' énkôk' ábakâzi
    bagicumbîla kakûlw' énkôk' ábakâzi
    bamucumbîla kakûlw' énkôk' ábakâzi
    bacumbila kakúlw' énkôk' ábakâzi
```

SVID
```
    abakâzi bagimucumbîla kakûlw' énkôko
    abakázi bagicumbîla kakûlw' énkôko
    abakázi bamucumbîla kakûlw' énkôko
    abakázi bacumbila kakúlw' énkôko
```

SVDI
```
    abakâzi bagimucumbîl' énkôko kakûlu
   *abakázi bagicumbil' énkôko kakûlu
    abakázi bamucumbil' énkôko kakûlu
    abakázi bacumbil' énkôko kakûlu
```

Appendix #2 cont.

SIVD
---
  abakázi kakúlu bagimucumbîl' énkôko
*abakázi kakúlu   bagicumbîl' énkôko
 abakázi kakúlu   bamucumbil' énkôko
*abakázi kakúlu     bacumbil' énkôko

SIDV
---
  abakázi kakúlw' énkóko bagimucumbîla
*abakázi kakúlw' énkóko   bagicumbîla
*abakázi kakúlw' énkóko   bamucumbîla
*abakázi kakulw' enkoko    bacumbila

SDIV
---
  abakázy' énkóko kakúlu bagimucumbîla
*abakázy' énkóko kakúlu   bagicumbîla
*abakázy' énkóko kakúlu   bamucumbîla
*abakázy' énkóko kakúlu    bacumbîla

SDVI
---
  abakázy' énkóko bagimucumbîla kakûlu
 abakázy' énkóko   bagicumbila kakûlu
*abakázy' énkóko   bamucumbîla kakûlu
*abakázy' énkóko    bacumbila kakûlu

DVSI
---
  enkóko bagimucumbîl' ábakâzi kakûlu
*enkóko   bagicumbîl' ábakâzi kakûlu
*enkóko   bamucumbîl' ábakâzi kakûlu
*enkóko    bacumbîl' ábakâzi kakûlu

DVIS
---
  enkóko bagimucumbîla kakûlw' ábakâzi
 enkǫko   bagicumbila kakûlw' ábakâzi
*enkóko   bamucumbîla kakûlw' ábakâzi
*enkóko    bacumbîla kakûlw' ábakâzi

DSIV
---
  enkók' ábakázi kakúlu bagimucumbîla
*enkók' ábakázi kakúlu   bagicumbîla
*enkók' ábakázi kakúlu   bamucumbîla
*enkók' ábakázi kakúlu    bacumbîla

DSVI
---
  enkók' ábakázi bagimucumbîla kakûlu
 enkók' ábakázi   bagicumbila kakûlu
*enkǫk' ábakázi   bamucumbîla kakûlu
*enkók' ábakázi    bacumbila kakûlu

Appendix #2 cont.

DIVS
```
 enkóko kakúlu bagimucumbîl' ábakâzi
*enkóko kakúlu  bagicumbîl' ábakâzi
*enkóko kakúlu  bamucumbîl' ábakâzi
 enkóko kakúlu   bacumbîl' ábakâzi
```

DISV
```
 enkóko kakúlw' ábakázi bagimucumbîla
*enkóko kakúlw' ábakázi  bagicumbîla
*enkóko kakúlw' ábakázi  bamucumbîla
*enkóko kakúlw' ábakázi   bacumbîla
```

IVDS
```
 kakúlu bagimucumbîl' énkôk' ábakâzi
*kakúlu  bagicumbîl' énkôk' ábakâzi
 kakúlu  bamúcumbil' énkôk' ábakâzi
*kakúlu   bacumbil' énkôk' ábakâzi
```

IVSD
```
 kakúlu bagimucumbîl' ábakâzy' énkôko
*kakúlu  bagicumbîl' ábakâzy' énkôko
 kakúlu  bamucumbîl' ábakázy' énkôko
*kakúlu   bacumbîl' ábakázy' énkôko
```

ISVD
```
 kakúlw' ábakázi bagimucumbîl' énkôko
*kakúlw' ábakázi  bagicumbîl' énkôko
 kakúlw' ábakázi  bamucumbil' énkôko
*kakúlw' abakázi   bacumbil' énkôko
```

ISDV
```
 kakúlw' ábakázy' énkóko bagimucumbîla
*kakúlw' ábakázy' énkóko  bagicumbîla
*kakúlw' ábakázy' énkóko  bamucumbîla
*kakúlw' ábakázy' énkóko   bacumbîla
```

IDVS
```
 kakúlw' énkóko bagimucumbîl' ábakâzi
*kakúlw' énkóko  bagicumbîl' ábakâzi
*kakúlw' énkóko  bamucumbîl' ábakâzi
*kakúlw' énkóko   bacumbîl' abakâzi
```

IDSV
```
 kakúlw' énkók' ábakázi bagimucumbîla
*kakúlw' énkók' ábakázi  bagicumbîla
*kakúlw' énkók' ábakázi  bamucumbîla
*kakulw' énkók' ábakázi   bacumbîla
```