

Object Marking in *wh*-questions in Bantu

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1. Introduction

Bantu languages are generally quite flexible with regard to the acceptability of object marking in SVO assertions. But this is not the case in *wh*-environments, where by and large object marking is either obligatory or ungrammatical. Some Bantu languages never allow object marking in *wh*-environments, while others require it with certain types of entities. This kind of variation has been used as an indicator of the syntactic properties of object marking in Bantu languages. Bresnan & Mchombo (1987) propose object marking in *wh*-questions as one diagnostic for the pronoun/agreement marker distinction. They argue that Swahili, which allows a *wh*-object to be object-marked, has object agreement; while Chichewa, which does not allow a *wh*-object to be object-marked, has pronominal object marking and suggest that this pattern may hold of Bantu languages more generally (Bresnan & Mchombo, 1987). Duranti (1979) similarly argues that Haya object marking is pronominal because it is ungrammatical in questions.

In this paper, I argue against analysing object marking in *wh*-contexts in this way, based on data from Sambiaa (Shambala, G23), Swahili (G42) and Haya (D/J20). I show that object marking patterns in questions and other *wh*-contexts in Bantu are affected by the semantic features of the object noun, rather than being due to differences in the syntactic status of the object marker across languages. Especially in Sambiaa, the differences in grammaticality are sensitive to subtle differences in the feature composition of the object noun or *wh*-element. Bresnan and Mchombo's (1987) analysis of Swahili object marking is not disputed here. But in my view, Haya has object agreement, like Sambiaa and Swahili, albeit with different morphosyntactic properties. Irrespective of one's position on this, the data discussed here show that there is no direct mapping between a particular pattern of object marking in questions and object agreement or pronominal object marking in other contexts.

Apart from simple *wh*-questions, relative clauses and *wh*-clefts are discussed across the three languages. The paper starts with a short overview of object marking in non-questions, followed by a section on *wh*-questions, a brief discussion of the effects of specificity on this data, the contrasts found between relative clauses and cleft questions and a more detailed discussion on human objects in Sambiaa *wh*-questions.

2. Object marking in propositional assertions

Swahili is often used as an example of a Bantu language with object agreement, as in Bresnan & Mchombo (1987). In Swahili, object marking is required with animate objects.² This is shown in (1a),³ for a proper name referring to a human and in (1b) for a common noun referring to a human. There are dialectal or idiolectal differences for how strictly this is applied to non-specific human objects, notably between speakers from Zanzibar and the Tanzanian mainland. Animate objects always tend to

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²Due to lack of space I do not discuss double object constructions here. These have more complex patterns and are discussed in Riedel (2007).

³Abbreviations used in glosses: SM = subject marker; OM= object marker; numbers refer to noun classes; S = (person) singular; P = (person) plural; RM = relative marker; NEG = negation; ASS = associative; APPL = applicative; REFL = reflexive; REC = reciprocal; PERF = perfective; PRES = present tense, CJ = conjoint; DJ = disjoint.

be object-marked, although speakers will not reject sentences such as (1c) if the non-human object is not object-marked. With inanimate objects, object marking is optional, as shown in (1d). Regardless of the exact cut-off point, there is a group of entities which require object marking even when they appear in post-verbal position.⁴

- (1) a. Ni- li- *(**mw**)- ona Yassini.
SM1S- PAST- OM1- see 1Yassin
'I saw Yassin.'
- b. Ni- li- *(**mw**)- ona mtoto.
SM1S- PAST- OM1- see 1child
'I saw a/the child.'
- c. Ni- li- (**mw**)- ona mbwa.
SM1S- PAST- OM1- see 1dog
'I saw a/the dog.'
- d. Ni- li- (**ki**)- ona kitabu.
SM1S- PAST- OM7- see 7book
'I saw a/the book.'

[Swahili]

As argued in (Riedel, 2007), Smbaa also has object agreement. In Smbaa, as in Swahili, object marking is obligatory for proper names, as shown in (2a). But, unlike in Swahili, object marking other humans is optional, although it is the most common pattern. An example of this is shown in (2b). Object marking other animate objects is optional and uncommon, as shown in (2c); while object marking inanimates is optional and rare. An example of object marking with an inanimate object is shown in (2d).

- (2) a. Ni- *(**mu**)- on- iye Yassini.
SM1S- OM1- see- PERF.CJ 1Yassin
'I saw Yassin.'
- b. Ni- (**mu**)- on- iye ng'wana.
SM1S- OM1- see- PERF.CJ 1child
'I saw a/the child.'
- c. Ni- (**ji**)- on- iye kui.
SM1S- OM5- see- PERF.CJ 5dog
'I saw a/the dog.'
- d. Ni- (**chi**)- on- iye kitabu.
SM1S- OM7- see- PERF.CJ 7book
'I saw a/the book.'

[Smbaa]

In Haya, object marking is grammatical, although optional, with lexical objects, regardless of the animacy status or person feature of the object noun. This is shown in (3a) for a proper name, in (3b) for a human common noun and in (3c) for an inanimate common noun.

- (3) a. N- ka- (**mu**)- bona Yassin.
SM1S- PAST3- OM1- see 1Yassin
'I saw Yassin.'
- b. N- ka- (**mu**)- bona omwana.
SM1S- PAST3- OM1- see 1child
'I saw the child.'

⁴There is an extensive literature on object marking in Swahili, this includes Wald (1979, 1997); Seidel & Dimitriadis (1997). For animacy effects see Bentley (1994); Morolong & Hyman (1977); Woolford (1999, 2001). On particular Bantu languages see Stucky (1983); Bukuru (1998). On Bantu object marking in general see Beaudoin-Lietz et al. (2004); Marten & Kula (2007).

- c. N- ka- (**ki**)- bona ekitabo.
SM1S- PAST3- OM7- see 7book
'I saw the book.'

[Haya]

The major points illustrated by the data in this section, are summarized in table 1. Sambaa and

Table 1: Object Marking in non-questions

Language	Oblig. OM	OM for Humans	OM for Animates	OM for Inanimates
Swahili	yes	yes	yes	yes
Sambaa	yes	yes	yes	yes
Haya	no	yes	yes	yes

Swahili have obligatory object marking, while Haya does not. But in all three languages all kinds of lexical objects can be object-marked in SVO assertions. In Swahili, animate object generally require object marking. In Sambaa, only a small subset of animate nouns require object marking (the effects of definiteness and specificity are discussed more in section 4) .

3. Object marking in *wh*-questions

For *wh*-questions an entirely different pattern emerges. In Swahili and Sambaa, object marking is obligatory with certain types of *wh*-words. However, the semantic class of nouns this applies to is different from the class of nouns which trigger obligatory object marking in non-questions (as described above). Moreover, there is a class of *wh*-elements which cannot be object-marked in Sambaa questions. In Haya, object marking *wh*-elements is altogether ungrammatical. The first part of this section discusses *who*-object questions and the second part discusses other types of object questions.

Human Objects In Swahili, object marking a *who*-object is obligatory;⁵ this is shown in (4). For Swahili this might be expected since all animates must be object-marked in non-questions as well.

- (4) U- li- *(**mw**)- ona nani?
SM2S- PAST- OM1- see who
'Who did you see?'

[Swahili]

However, in Sambaa object marking a *who*-object is also obligatory, as shown in (5).

- (5) U- *(**mw**)- ene ndayi?
SM2S- OM1- see.PERF.CJ who
'Who did you see?'

[Sambaa]

In Sambaa, this pattern is less expected since in non-questions only a small subset of human objects requires object marking. Moreover, the same pattern is reported for other Bantu languages which also have obligatory object marking for only a subset of nouns referring to humans, for example Ruwund (Nash, 1992) where only specific human objects require object marking, and Makhuwa where all class 1/2 nouns, which include animates and some inanimates, require object marking regardless of their animacy status (J. van der Wal, p.c.).

In Haya, object marking a *who*-object is ungrammatical, as shown in (6).

- (6) W- a- (***mu**)- bona owa?
SM2S- PAST- OM1- see who
'Who did you see?'

[Haya]

⁵A reviewer presented an example of a non object-marked *who*-object which according to them some Swahili speakers accept. In my view this is unacceptable to speakers of Zanzibari Swahili or Standard Swahili. However, it is quite possible that speakers of other varieties of Swahili allow it.

Inanimate Objects For inanimate objects, object marking is ungrammatical in Sambaa too. (7a) shows a grammatical *what*-question, its object-marked counterpart is shown in (7b). With object marking the ‘what’ reading is unavailable, but because *mbwai* can also mean ‘why’ in Sambaa, the sentence is grammatical with the interpretation of ‘Why did he see it?’.

- (7) a. A- ene mbwai?
SM1- see.PERF.CJ what
‘What did he see?’
- b. A- i- ene mbwai?
SM1- OM9- see.PERF.CJ what
* ‘What did he see?’
✓ ‘Why did he see it?’ [Sambaa]

Generally in Bantu languages, all and only human objects belong to class 1/2. The question word ‘who’ questions only human objects, whereas non-human objects can belong to a number of different noun classes. One could think that this may be the reason for the difference between *what* and *who*-questions in Sambaa, namely that a non-human *wh*-word cannot be assigned to a noun class because its gender is underspecified. However, there are complex *wh*-elements referring to inanimate objects which overtly show noun class agreement or include a head noun, such as the morpheme *-hi* ‘which’ which takes a noun class prefix. But, as shown in (8), these are equally ungrammatical with object marking in Sambaa.

- (8) U- (***chi**)- ghul- iye kitabu chih?
SM2S- OM7- buy- PERF.CJ 7book 7which
‘Which book did you buy?’ [Sambaa]

In Haya, there is no difference between animate and inanimate objects in *wh*-questions. For all *wh*-elements, object marking is ungrammatical; this is shown in (9a) and (6) above. The non-questioned counterpart to (9a) is completely acceptable with object marking, as shown in (9b).

- (9) a. O- ka- (***ki**)- bona ki?
SM2S- PAST- OM7- see what
‘What did you see?’
- b. O- ka- **ki**- bona ekitabo.
SM2S- PAST- OM7- see 7book
‘You saw the book.’ [Haya]

In Swahili, unlike in Sambaa, object marking a *wh*-word referring to a questioned inanimate entity is grammatical. Not all speakers judge (10a) as completely acceptable, but in clear contrast to Sambaa, there are speakers of Swahili who judge sentences like (10a) as completely acceptable. In Swahili there is a difference between *which*-questions and *what*-questions. In contrast to the Sambaa sentence in (8), the Swahili sentence in (10b), with a *which*-phrases was judged as perfectly grammatical by all speakers consulted.

- (10) a. % U- li- (**ki**)- pata nini?
SM2S- PAST- OM7- get what
‘What did you get?’
- b. U- li- (**ki**)- pata kitabu kipi?
SM2S- PAST- OM7- get 7book 7which
‘Which book did you get?’ [Swahili]

The main conclusions from this section are summarized in table 2. While in non-questions all three languages patterned alike for inanimate objects and there were two broad patterns, in *wh*-questions there are three distinct patterns for object marking. In Sambaa and Swahili, object marking for human objects

Table 2: Object Marking in *wh*-questions

Language	OM for ‘who’	OM for ‘what’/‘which’
Swahili	oblig.	% gram.
Sambaa	oblig.	ungram.
Haya	ungram.	ungram.

in *wh*-questions is subject to animacy, and for Swahili inanimates also definiteness effects. These apply somewhat differently when compared to object marking in non-questions but show similar effects. But, surprisingly, for non-human objects Sambaa patterns with Haya in not allowing object-marking at all. Animacy, or rather the property of being [+ human], is more important in Sambaa *wh*-questions than in other contexts. The large group of objects which can optionally be object-marked in assertions, including most humans, all non-human animates and all inanimates, loses this property in *wh*-questions.

4. Definiteness and specificity

In this section, I look at definiteness and specificity and object marking in the languages under discussion more generally. In Swahili and Sambaa, obligatory object marking is linked closely to animacy, but in Sambaa definiteness also plays a role. Cross-linguistically, proper names and pronouns are ranked highest in definiteness hierarchies. For example, Aissen gives the hierarchies shown in (11) of the kinds of object most likely to be overtly case-marked (Aissen, 2003:437). In assertions, the objects highest on both scales are obligatorily object-marked in Sambaa. In Swahili, all animate objects trigger object-marking in the appropriate syntactic configuration, with definiteness showing little effect in non-questions. In Haya, neither hierarchy is much in evidence.

- (11) a. Animacy Scale: Human > Animate > Inanimate
 b. Definiteness Hierarchy: Proper name > Pronoun > Definite NP > Indefinite specific NP > Non-specific NP

However object marking cannot be analysed as marking definiteness or specificity. This is because definite objects do not require object marking to get the intended reading in any of the three languages discussed here. Most Bantu languages have no definite articles or other morphological definiteness markers but there are modifiers with inherently definite readings, including possessives and demonstratives. With the right context definite readings are available without object marking; this is shown for Swahili in (12a), for Sambaa in (12b) and for Haya in (12c).

- (12) a. Ni- li- penda sana kitabu chake cha kwanza.
 SM1S- PAST- like much 7book 7her 7ASS first
 ‘I liked her first book a lot.’ [Swahili]
- b. N- za- ona waja wana vituhu.
 SM1S- PERF.DJ- see 2dem 2child again
 ‘I saw those children again.’ [Sambaa]
- c. N- ka- gula ekitabo kyo omwana.
 SM1S- PAST- buy 7book 7ASS 1child
 ‘I bought the book of the child.’ [Haya]

However, there is a clear difference between Swahili and Sambaa and Haya for the interpretation of object marking. In Swahili and Sambaa, object-marking negative polarity items, which are necessarily non-specific, is grammatical, as shown in (13a) and (13b). In Haya, on the other hand, it is impossible to get the NPI reading with object marking. A sentence with an NPI reading and without object marking is shown in (13c).⁶ With an object marker only the definite reading is available, as shown in (13d). With object marking and *kyona kyona* ‘any’ the sentence is ungrammatical, as shown in (13e).

⁶The augment does not appear in this context. The augment has been linked to definiteness in Haya but the relationship is not one to one. As in many Bantu languages the augment is not used in NPI contexts in Haya.

- (13) a. Si- ku- mw- ona mtu yeyote.
NEG.SM1S- NEG.PAST- OM1- see 1person 1any
'I didn't see anyone.' [Swahili]
- b. Si- chi- on- iye kintu chochoshe.
NEG.SM1S- OM7- see- PERF.CJ 7thing 7any
'I didn't see anything.' [Sambaa]
- c. Ti- n- a- bona kintu kyona kyona.
NEG- SM1S- PAST1- see 7thing 7any
'I didn't see anything.' [Haya]
- d. Ti- n- a- ki- bona ekintu.
NEG- SM1S- PAST1- OM7- see 7thing
* 'I didn't see anything. '
✓ 'I didn't see the thing.' [Haya]
- e. * Ti- n- a- ki- bona (kintu) kyona kyona.
NEG- SM1S- PAST1- OM7- see 7thing 7any
Int: 'I didn't see anything. ' [Haya]

The data in this section have shown that an object-marked noun in Haya always has a definite interpretation, but as shown in (12c) as well as by the data for proper names in section 2, a definite entity does not have to be object-marked. In Sambaa and Swahili, object-marked objects do not always have a definite reading, and can receive a non-specific interpretation, as in the NPI contexts. Since *wh*-elements are non-specific and thus indefinite, the ungrammaticality of object marking of *wh*-objects in Haya follows.

5. Relative clauses

In this section, I compare object marking patterns in relative clauses to those in questions and assertions. Since relative clauses involve extraction and are commonly assumed to have a [+wh] feature, this is revealing. Moreover, *wh*-clefts, which are discussed in section 6, also involve relative clause morphology, which makes it worthwhile to compare both kinds of constructions. In Swahili relative clauses, object marking is required for animates and is optional for inanimates. This means the object marking patterns are the same as in non-relative clauses. An example of an animate object is shown in (14a)⁷ and of an inanimate object in (14b).

- (14) a. askari wa JWTZ wa- li- o- *(wa)- piga wafanyakazi ...
10soldier 2.ASS JWTZ SM2- PAST- RM2- OM2- hit 2worker
'the JWTZ (Jeshi la Wananchi wa Tanzania) soldiers who beat the workers ...'
- b. ... makosa hayo wa- li- yo- (ya)- tenda ...
6mistake 6dem SM2- PAST- RM6- OM6- do
'those mistakes which they made' [Swahili, source: Tanzania Daima, 25 February 2008]

As in Swahili, object marking is optional or obligatory, depending on the features of the relativized object in Sambaa relative clauses. This is shown in (15a) for the inanimate object *matonte*⁸. Since not all definite human require it, object marking is optional in (15b) too.

- (15) a. Matonte n- (ya)- m- nk- iye- yo ya- a- izwi- e.
6ripe.banana SM1S- OM6- OM1- give- PERF -RM6 SM6- PAST- ripen.PASS- PERF
'The bananas which I gave him are ripe.'

⁷In Swahili, nouns like *askari*, which refer to humans but grammatically belong to classes other than 1/2, trigger class 1/2 agreement on the verb.

⁸The object marker for the indirect object is obligatory here, see Riedel (2007) for discussion of this.

- b. Mvyee a- ye- (**m**)- nka lifti a- a- tamiwa.
 1woman SM1- RM1- OM1- give 9lift SM1- PAST- please.PASS

‘The woman who she gave a ride was happy.’

[Sambaa]

In Haya object marking a relativized object is ungrammatical, as shown for a noun referring to a human in (16).

- (16) Omuntu owo n- a- (***mu**)- letela eshokolate ...
 1person 1dem SM1S- PAST- OM1- bring.APPL 9chocolate

‘The person who I gave chocolate ...’

[Haya]

This holds even for non-restrictive relative clauses, where the head noun is interpreted as given, as shown in (17).

- (17) Juliette owo n- a- (***mu**)- ha- ile eshokolate n- a- ba- keisa.
 1Juliette 1dem SM1S- PAST1- OM1- GIVE- PAST 1chocolate SM1S- PAST1- OM2- greet

‘Juliette, who I gave (the) chocolate, sends her greetings.’

[Haya]

This has several important implications for the diagnostic used by Bresnan & Mchombo (1987). They argue for an analysis of pronominal object marking in Chichewa as always pronominal, based partially on the fact that Chichewa does not allow object marking in questions. Chichewa and Haya also display a very similar tone pattern with object marking and a co-indexed lexical object (Bresnan & Mchombo (1987); Byarushengo et al. (1976)), and like Haya, Chichewa never requires object marking with an overt object (Bresnan & Mchombo, 1987). However, unlike in Haya, in Chichewa, object marking of relativized constituents is grammatical (Mchombo, 2004). According to Mchombo, it is optional with some constituents but required with others. In (18a) the object-marked variant is shown and the degraded sentence without object-marking is shown in (18b).

- (18) a. Njovu ziméné anyaní a- ku- zi- patsa mikánda zí- ma- dyá
 10elephants 10.REL 2baboons SM2- PAST- OM10- give 4beads SM10- HAB- eat
 nzímbe.
 10sugar.cane

‘The elephants that the baboons are giving beads to eat sugar cane.’ [Chichewa, Mchombo 2004:41]

- b. ?? Njovu ziméné anyaní a- ku- patsa mikánda zí- ma- dyá
 10elephants 10.textsrel 2baboons SM2- PAST- give 4beads SM10- HAB- eat
 nzímbe.
 10sugar.cane

‘The elephants that the baboons are giving beads to eat sugar cane.’ [Chichewa, Mchombo 2004:41]

The findings from this section are contrasted with the patterns described above in table 3. In Swahili,

Table 3: Object Marking in relative clauses and questions

Language	OM in assertions	OM in <i>wh</i> -questions	RCs
Swahili	% oblig.	% oblig.	% oblig.
Sambaa	% oblig.	oblig. or ungram.	free
Haya	free	ungram.	ungram.

relative clauses pattern like questions and assertions, while in Sambaa, relative clauses pattern like non-relativized assertions, not like questions. In Haya, relative clauses pattern like questions. Furthermore, Haya and Chichewa have the same pattern for assertions and questions but a different pattern for relative clauses. The fact that Chichewa and Haya pattern together for some *wh*-questions but not relative clauses, and Swahili and Sambaa pattern together for relative clauses but not consistently for questions shows that a grouping based on the pronominal or agreement-like properties of object marking in a Bantu language cannot be linked to a particular pattern in relative clauses or *wh*-questions.

6. Object marking in *wh*-clefts

Cleft questions in all three languages involve verbs which are overtly marked with relative clause morphology. In this section, I compare cleft-questions to relative clauses. In Swahili, cleft questions pattern with relative clauses and questions: as expected, object marking is required for human objects, as shown in (19a) and optional for inanimate objects, as shown in (19b).

- (19) a. Ni nani u- li- ye- ***(m)**- pa kitabu?
 COP who SM2S- PAST- RM1- OM1- give 7book
 ‘Who was it that you gave a book?’
 b. Ni kitu gani u- li- cho- **(ki)**- nunua?
 COP 7thing which SM2S- PAST- RM7- OM7- buy
 ‘Which thing was it that you bought?’ [Swahili]

In Sambia cleft questions, object marking is required for human objects, as shown in (20a), but ungrammatical for non-humans, as shown in (20b). This is the same pattern as in non-cleft *wh*-questions.

- (20) a. N’ ndayi u- ***(mw)**- ene- ye ghulo?
 cop who SM2S- OM1- see.PERF- RM1 yesterday
 ‘Who was it that you saw yesterday?’
 b. M’ mbwai a- **(*ya)**- ghul- iye- yo?
 cop what SM1- OM6- buy- PERF.CJ- RM6
 ‘What thing was it that he bought?’ [Sambia]

In Haya, object marking is ungrammatical in all clefts; this is shown for a human object in (21a) and for an inanimate object in (21b).

- (21) a. Mwana ki owo w- a- ***(mu)**- boine?
 1child what 1dem.REL SM2S- PERF- OM1- see.PERF
 ‘Which child was it that you saw?’
 b. Kintu ki ekyo w- a- ***(ki)**- boine?
 7thing what 7dem.REL SM2S- PERF- OM7- see.PERF
 ‘Which thing was it that you saw?’ [Haya]

In Swahili, cleft questions pattern like relative clauses and non-cleft questions; whereas in Sambia cleft-questions pattern with non-cleft questions rather than with relative clauses, in spite of their shared morphological properties. In Haya, all *wh*-environments pattern alike for object marking. The fact that, in Sambia, cleft-questions pattern unlike relative clauses might be evidence that object marking is sensitive to a [+/-wh]-feature. But even with such an analysis the fact that in Sambia some *wh*-objects must be object-marked remains problematic, since this pattern cannot be explained by adding the relevant features together. As we would otherwise predict that inanimate *wh*-objects would be object-marked too.

7. Sambia human objects

In this section, I discuss the more fine-grained grammaticality judgements for Sambia human objects in *wh*-questions. The data presented here show that Sambia object marking in *wh*-questions is not only affected by animacy but by a number of other semantic features. Sambia has another form of the question word for ‘who’: *wandayi*, which is morphologically plural. Unlike *ndayi*, this *wh*-word does not require object marking, as shown in (22).

- (22) U- **(wa)**- ene wandayi?
 SM2S- OM2- see.PERF.CJ who.pl
 ‘Who (pl) did you see?’ [Sambia]

The unmarked form *ndayi* (which requires object marking, as shown in (5) above) can be used with the plural class 2 object marker, as shown in (23a). However, *wandayi* cannot be used with class 1 object marking, as shown in (23b). It appears that *ndayi* is unmarked for number while *wandayi* is marked as plural.

- (23) a. U- **wa-** ene ndayi?
SM2S- OM2- see.PERF.CJ who
'Who (pl) did you see?'
b. * U- **mw-** ene wandayi?
SM2S- OM1- see.PERF.CJ who.pl
Int: 'Who (pl) did you see?' [Sambaa]

For objects questioned with phrases that include an overt head noun, like 'how many people' or 'which student' object marking is also optional. This is shown for a *which*-question in (24a) and for 'how many' in (24b). However, with all *wh*-words referring to human objects, including *wandayi*, object marking is grammatical in Sambaa, in contrast to those *wh*-words referring to non-human objects.

- (24) a. U- (**mw-**) ene ng'wana yuhi?
SM2S- OM1- see.PERF.CJ 1child 1which
'Which child did you see?'
b. U- (**wa-**) alik- e wantu wangahi?
SM2S- OM2- invite- PERF.CJ 2people 2how.many
'How many people did you invite?' [Sambaa]

Object marking in *who*-questions is affected by ϕ -features, such as number, and morphosyntactic environment of the object. While the property of being [+human] seems decisive in licensing object marking in questions, it does not make it obligatory in all cases. There are three classes of object nouns in Sambaa *wh*-contexts: noun phrases that must be object-marked, noun phrases that can be object-marked and noun phrases that cannot be object-marked.

8. Conclusions

The patterns for each language for each type of context discussed here are shown in table (4). In Haya, object marking is incompatible with objects interpreted as indefinite or non-specific and can

Table 4: Summary

Language	OM any assertions	OM in <i>wh</i> -questions	RCs	cleft-questions
Swahili	% oblig.	% oblig.	% oblig.	% oblig.
Sambaa	% oblig.	oblig. or ungram.	free	oblig. or ungram.
Haya	free	ungram.	ungram.	ungram.

therefore never appear in *wh*-questions. However, it is less clear why object marking is ungrammatical in all types of *wh*-environments, such as non-restrictive relative clauses. Swahili generally allows object marking in *wh*-contexts. But, although the acceptability of object marking for inanimate objects is different in questions, the same features trigger the same object marking patterns as in non-*wh* contexts. In Sambaa, *wh*-questions differ from relative clauses and non-*wh*-contexts for object marking. The animacy hierarchy applies more strictly in *wh*-environments than in other environments. Although relative clauses and cleft-questions involve the same morphology they have different object marking patterns. Since inanimate objects pattern the same way in Sambaa and Haya questions it is unlikely that this is caused by an agreement/pronoun distinction, but rather due to their featural composition and syntax. Both Sambaa and Haya are apparently sensitive to a general [+wh] feature in their object marking syntax. As the examples of Sambaa and Chichewa show, at least in some Bantu languages, different types of *wh*-environments do not have the same properties for object marking. Based on these

facts, the acceptability of object marking in questions cannot be used as a diagnostic for agreement-like or pronominal object marking, as proposed in Bresnan & Mchombo (1987) and Duranti (1979). The object marking patterns might be evidence for syntactic differences between relative clauses and *wh*-clefts in Sambia and across Bantu, this will be an area for future research.

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