

Adjectival Agreement in Vata

In this talk I will present the results of the fieldwork I conducted on the Kru language Vata that is spoken in the Ivory Coast. I will discuss general results on the agreement and number marking morphology of the language and provide a theoretical account of the agreement between adjectives and plural nouns.

Plural nouns can be grouped into two classes, based on the agreement they trigger on adjectives. Class-1 nouns as in (1) trigger the agreement marker [i/I] and Class-2 nouns as those in (2) trigger the agreement marker [wa] on adjectives:

- (1) a. n-i zal-i
 mouth.CL1-PL red-AGR:PL,CL1
 ‘red mouths’
- b. kɔp-i zal-i
 carafes.CL1-PL red-AGR:PL,CL1
 ‘red carafes’
- (2) a. wutuwutj-a zal-wa
 mosquito.CL2-PL red-AGR:PL,CL2
 ‘red mosquitos’
- b. ɲɛbɛl-i zal-wa
 man.CL2-PL red-AGR:PL,CL2
 ‘red men’

As shown in (1a,b), the vowels [i/I] mark plural on the nouns. However, plural marking seems to be independent from the agreement classes, as there are class-2 nouns which take the plural marker [i/I] as well like *ɲɛbɛl-i* ‘men’ and class-1 nouns which take a plural marker other than [i/I].

Remarkably, adjectives with the stem vowel [ɔ] like *wɔt* ‘cold’ take the **class-1** agreement marker [i/I], even when they agree with **class-2** nouns like *wutuwutj-a* ‘mosquitos’ and *ɲɛbɛl-i* ‘men’. The phonological content of the adjective thus causes an agreement mismatch.

- (3) a. wutuwutj-a wɔt-i
 mosquito.CL2-PL cold-AGR:PL,CL1
 ‘cold mosquitos’
- b. ɲɛbɛl-i wɔt-i
 man.CL2-PL cold-AGR:PL,CL1
 ‘cold men’

I will provide an analysis for that phenomenon that is couched in a realizational framework of morphology (Halle and Marantz 1993) and propose that vocabulary insertion is determined by optimality theoretic constraints (Prince and Smolensky 1993). I assume that morphosyntactic agreement applies regularly for all adjectives and that mismatches as those in (3) are created at the point of vocabulary insertion.

Following Wolf (2008) I assume that vocabulary insertion applies in the phonology, which means that phonological markedness constraints and constraints on feature realization stand in competition. When phonological markedness constraints dominate constraints on feature realization, the insertion of those VIs that are most suitable in terms of their morphosyntactic content (in the case of class-2 agreement the agreement marker [wa]) can be blocked in favor of those VIs which are less suitable in terms of their morphosyntactic context (the class-1 agreement marker [i/I]) but result in a phonologically less marked structure.

References

- Halle, Morris and Alec Marantz (1993). '*Distributed Morphology and the Pieces of Inflection*', in K.Hale and S. Keyser (eds.), *The View from Building 20: Essays in Linguistics in Honor of Sylvain Bromberger*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 111–76.
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