Transitive Object Marking

- a. yimetawal
 - yi- met-aw-al FUT.SUBJ.3MS hit him FUT b. yic. "He will hit him."

Intransitive Object Marking

Context: A boy left home without permission. His father says:

- yi- mət'- al FUT.SUBJ.3MS return-FUT b. yic. "He will return."
- a. yimət'atal (3)

a. yɨmət'al

(2)

yi- mət'- **at**- al FUT.SUBJ.3MS return OBJ.3FS FUT b. vic. "He *better* return."

With either male or female object marker:

(4)	a. yizəmbawal
	b. y i - zəmba- w - al FUT.3MSrain OBJ.3MSFUT
	c. "It's going to rain a lot!"
(5)	a. yizəmbatal
	b. yi- zəmb- at - al FUT.3MSrain OBJ.3FSFUT
	c. "It had better rain!"

Embeddings: question, negation, antecedent:

(6)	a.	sak'at adəl?
	b.	sak'- at PAST.SUBJECT.3MS laugh adəl
	c.	INTERROGATIVE "He <i>will</i> laugh, right?"
(7)	a.	athedatim
	b.	at-hed- at -im NEGgo.2msOBJ.3FSNEG
		"You are <i>not</i> going to leave."
(8)	a.	tisik'at əna yigudzahal
	b.	ti- sik'- at ana FUT.SUBJ.2MS laugh OBJ.3FS and
		yi- gudz- ah- al FUT regret OBJ.2MS ^{fut}
	с.	"If you do laugh, you will regret it."

Intransitive Object Marking in Amharic

Reuben Cohn-Gordon | Stanford University | reubencg@stanford.edu

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The Phenomenon

- Amharic has infixed object markers that agree in number, person and gender with the definite object of the verb.
- But it turns out that these object markers can be infixed to intransitive verbs as well.
- This is not a valency shifting operation, despite the frequency of these in Amharic.
- The only previously documented cases are with masculine infixation, see [2], which only describes the fourth effect below.
- Instead, the intransitive object marker appears to mark a variety of types of focus.

When Is Intransitive Object Infixiation Licensed?

- The object marker must be in the 3rd person singular, but the subject can be any person or number.
- It is possible with any tense or voice, given the right context, so long as the verb is not stative.
- Intransitive object marking is only used in speech, not written narrative.
- Both masculine and feminine object markers are possible here.

Effect 1: Verum Focus

- Intransitive object infixation is infelicitous in "bare" contexts, e.g. (3) uttered on entry to a room.
- The nature of the contention can be bouletic or epistemic, as with English, e.g. "You will run.".

Effect 2: Intensive

- The masculine object marker has an intensive effect, as in (1). The Amharic definite marker on nouns is conventionally augmentative and the feminine diminutive. " $z = b^w a$ " suggests a small fly and " $z = b^w a$ " a large one.
- The masculine object marker cannot appear on verbs with telic lexical aspect, like *break*.
- When the lexical aspect of *break* is made atelic, using the frequentative, the intensive is acceptable, e.g. "tasabbabbersw."

Effect 3: Threats

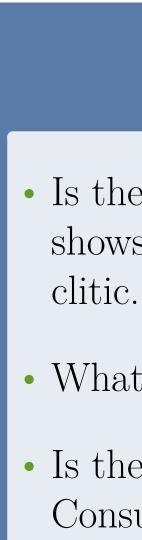
- While the masculine object marker intensifies the event for intransitives, the feminine does not act as a diminutive.
- Instead, the feminine object marker typically has the flavor of a threat, as in (3).
- Even in the past tense, the feminine marker can suggest that the verbal action was performed despite a threat or warning to do otherwise.

Effect 4: Emotion

• A final effect of intransitive object marker is to convey emotion, usually on the part of the subject.

Object Marker	at: Feminine Singular	<i>w</i> : M
Transitive	Definite Feminine Object	Defin
Intransitive	verum focus, emotion, authority	verun

Masculine Singular nite Masculine Object m focus, emotion, intensity



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[1] Ruth Kramer. Clitic doubling or object agreement: the view from Amharic. Natural Language and Linguistic Theory, 32(2):593-634, 2014. [2] Wolf Leslau. Reference grammar of Amharic. Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 1995.

Side-Issue Meaning

• All the effects of intransitive object infixation appear to be side-issue meanings.

• For instance, the intensive and imperative cannot be targeted by negation.

Conclusions

• The marker denotes focus and the listener can choose one of several conventional ways in which to interpret this marking, depending on gender.

• While more than one of the effects of intransitive infixation can appear at a time, only one ever *need* appear.

Further Work

• Is the object marker really an object marker at all? [1] shows that the marker is best understood as a doubled

• What is the origin of intransitive object infixation?

• Is the phenomenon a point of dialectal variation? Consultants associated its use with the dialect of the Gojjam and Gondar regions.

Acknowledgments