

## There is not just one way to agree

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**Summary:** Recent work concerning the directionality of phi-feature agreement challenges the standard view that Agree exclusively probes downward. Zeijlstra 2012, Zeijlstra & Bjorkman 2014, & Wurmbrand 2012 argue that the *goal* must c-command the *probe* (Upward Agree (UA)), while Preminger & Polinsky 2015 defend standard Downward Agree (DA): the *probe* must c-command the *goal*. Carstens 2013 argues for a directionality neutral approach: a probe immediately searches downward for a goal but valuation can be delayed. This can lead to UA if the goal has undergone displacement. In this paper, I present novel data that indicate that DA clearly occurs for phi-feature agreement in the Bantu language Kinande, contra Baker 2008 who proposes direction of agreement as a macroparameter, set to UA for Kinande. The data primarily come from Specificational Copular Clauses (SCC). I demonstrate that contra Preminger 2013 & Preminger and Polinsky 2015 local agreement relations can be used to test directionality of agreement hypotheses and conclude that Kinande provides evidence there is not a universal single direction of Agree.

**Agreement in Kinande:** The Bantu language of Kinande has been the archetype language used in support of upward Agree: the verb agrees with the c-commanding preverbal XP, regardless of whether or not it is the thematic subject. For example, the verb in Kinande agrees with the preverbal locative phrase in locative inversion constructions rather than with the postverbal thematic subject:

- (1) **O-mo-mulongo**    **mu-kabi.hika**    mukali    ‘A woman just arrived in the village.’  
       aug-18-3village    18-just.arrived    1woman

Original data involving SCCs challenge the upward Agree generalization for Kinande. With SCCs, agreement is downward: the copula must agree in class (indicated by numbers) with the post-copular XP, the thematic subject.

(2)a. [ebyalya ebyo nyanzire kutsibu] <b>w'</b> <b>amatimo</b> 8food 8that I.like      strongly 6COP 6bananas 'The food that I like best is bananas.'	b. émbugá <b>lô</b> lúhi 9problem 11COP 11war 'The problem is the WAR.'
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**Analysis:** The SCC facts cannot be dismissed as only apparent downward Agree. To try to save the principle of UA, one might hypothesize additional structure where the postcopular XP is actually in a specifier/head relation with the copula at some point (3a), agrees with it (3b), and then the copula (3c) and surface initial XP (3d) subsequently raise across the agreeing XP. I assume here a small clause analysis of SCCs following den Dikken 2006, where RP = relator phrase.

- (3) a.  $[_{RP} \text{XP}_1] \quad [_{R'} \text{COP(ula)}] \quad [ \text{XP}_2 ]]$   
 b.  $[_{RP} [ \text{“bananas” XP}_1 ] ]_{y-\varphi} \quad [_{R'} \text{COP}]_{y-\varphi} \quad [ \text{“the food that I like best” XP}_2 ]_j]$   
 c.  $\text{COP}_{y-\varphi} [_{RP} [ \text{“bananas”} ] ]_{y-\varphi} \quad [_{R'} \text{t}_y] \quad [ \text{“the food that I like best”}_j ]]$   
 d.  $[_{TP} [ \text{“the food that I like best”} ]_j] \quad \text{COP}_{y-\varphi} \quad [_{RP} [ \text{“bananas”} ] ]_{y-\varphi} \quad [ \text{t}_y \quad \text{t}_j ]]$

Alternately, one could imagine that the postcopular XP is part of a chain with a non-overt head of the chain occurring in the precopular position where it undergoes upward agree. None of those scenarios can be correct if we consider agreement facts involving proper names and pronouns as postcopular XPs in SCCs. Postcopular proper names exceptionally do not agree with the copula in SCCs. If they agreed, we would expect the agreeing copula *yo*. Instead, the non-agreeing copula *ni* occurs. *Ni* displays no verbal properties. It lacks tense and class agreement morphology and is inherently 3p (discussed further below):

- (4) Omugalimu **ni/\*yo** Kambale  
The.teacher is /\*1COP Kambale

1Kambale 1is teacher

6a. ingye ( <b>*ni</b> ) mwana {Null Copula} I child 'I am a/the child.'	6b. eprobleme <b>ni</b> ingye aug.9problem NI me 'The problem is <b>me</b> .'
<i>reversed SCC</i>	<b>SCC</b>

first person	second person	third person
7a.*Ingye <b>ni</b> mugalimu I NI 1teacher	b.*Iwe <b>ni</b> mugalimu you.sg NI 1teacher	c. Iye <b>ni</b> mugalimu (s)he NI teacher (≠SCC)

Bjorkman & Zeijlstra 2014, who allow for UA and under restricted circumstances DA, also cannot account for the Kinande data. Under their account, downward phi-agreement in Kinande would have to be tied to an additional unvalued feature such as Case. In Kinande apparent examples of UA are never tied to Case (see (1) and Baker 2008). Postcopular agreement in Kinande is tied to semantic focus: the agreed with XP in an SCC must always be interpreted as focused. However, focus cannot be the additional unvalued feature that allows for DA in Kinande. There are agreeing constructions elsewhere in the language that demonstrate that agreement and focus are dissociated.

**Conclusion:** This paper argues that neither UA nor DA is a universal agreement mechanism. Instead, evidence exists for a direction-free approach to agreement. Furthermore, I demonstrate that the relatively minimal syntactic structure of copular sentences allows us to

formulate falsifiable hypotheses about the direction of Agree when maximally local agreement configurations are involved.