

# Ruth Kramer. 2014. Clitic doubling or object agreement: the view from Amharic. *NLLT* 32: 593–634.

Lecture 30

November 27, 2023

## 1 Introduction

**The Empirical Puzzle.** The empirical focus of [Kramer \(2014\)](#), as well as [Baker & Kramer \(2018\)](#), is the status of the Object Marker (OM) in Amharic, as well as other languages:

- (1) a. Almaz tämari-w-in ayy-ät[tf]-**iw**  
Almaz.F student-DEF.M-ACC see-3FS.S-**3MS.O**  
'Almaz saw the male student.'<sup>2</sup>
- b. Almaz tämari-wa-n ayy-ät[tf]-**at**  
Almaz.F student-DEF.F-ACC see-3FS.S-**3FS.O**  
'Almaz saw the female student.'<sup>3</sup>

The puzzle comes from the question of whether OM in Amharic is the reflex of an agreement relation or if it is an instance of clitic doubling

- (2) ni-\*(k)-te:moa šo:čitl **Object agreement: Nahuatl**  
1S.S-3S.O-see flower  
'I seek a flower.'  
(Stiebels 1999:790)

- (3) **Clitic doubling**
  - a. **Rioplátense Spanish**  
(Lo) vimos a Guille.  
3MS saw.1PL a Guille  
'We saw Guille.'  
(Jaeggli 1982:14)
  - b. **Greek**  
(ton) idhame to Jani  
3MS saw.1PL the John.ACC  
'We saw John.'  
(Philippaki-Warbuton et al. 2004)

There is also the puzzle of precisely how these two phenomena differ morphosyntactically and how to distinguish them both within and between languages.

- (4) Agreement = affix, obligatory, realization of valued phi features on a functional head  
Clitic doubling = morphophonological clitic, optional, D that has moved to a verbal functional head

**The Empirical Claim.** [Kramer \(2014\)](#) draws on previous research to present a comparison of Amharic OM with known instances of agreement and clitic doubling.

(5) **Table 1** Properties of the Object Marker seen in Sect. 2

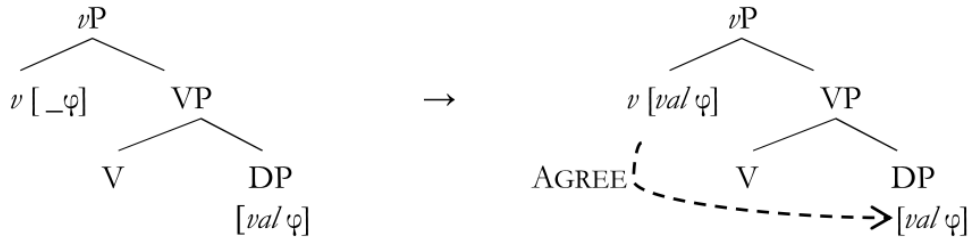
Characteristic of Agreement	Characteristic of Clitic Doubling
One object marker per clause	Optional
Attaches to verbal stem	Indexes specific DPs
Refers to highest internal argument	Triggers a semantic effect of emphasis
	Obligatory for inalienably possessed nominals
	No obligatory default
	Allows for backward pronominalization

It is determined to be implausible that OM is an instance of agreement (*pace* [Baker 2012](#)). Further argumentation demonstrates the morphonological similarity of Amharic OM with clitics.

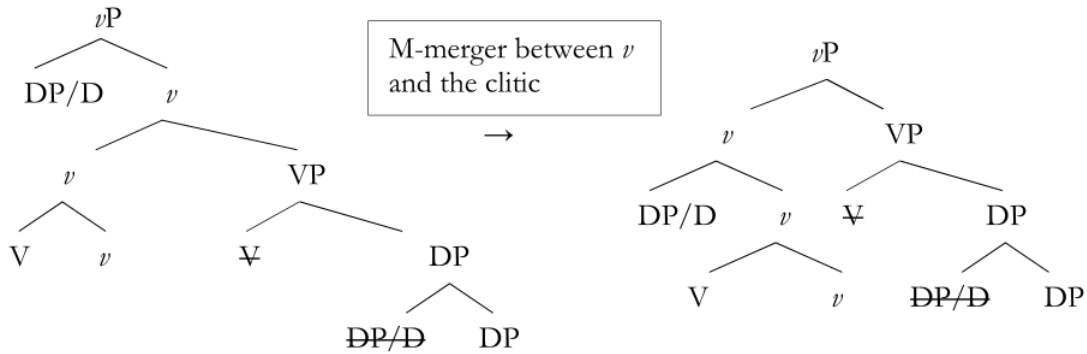
From an empirical standpoint, this paper is a diagnostic case study in how to distinguish agreement from clitic doubling.

**The Clitic-Doubling Analysis.** [Kramer \(2014\)](#) develops a  $D^0$ -Movement analysis that is parasitic on an agreement relationship between  $v^0$  and the doubled object.

(6)  $\Phi$ -feature Agreement



(7)  $D^0$ -to- $V^0$  Movement



**Looking Ahead.** [Baker & Kramer \(2018\)](#) ultimately extend this program further by showing that several newly catalogued restrictions on OM are expected from a clitic doubling analysis.

## 2 The Amharic object marker

### 2.1 Agreement-like properties

OM in Amharic shows several properties that, at first glance, make an agreement analysis plausible.

**One OM per clause.** There is only one  $v^0$  per clause, so there can be only one OM per clause (Kramer 2014:599).

- (8) \*Girma lä-Almaz mäs'haf-u-n sät't'-at-äw  
 Girma.M DAT-Almaz.F book-DEF.M-ACC give-(3MS.S)-3FS.O-3MS.O<sup>11</sup>  
 'Girma gave the book to Almaz.'

Clitic doubling can and should double as many DPs as are present.

- (9) tu to edhosa to vivlio tu jani Greek  
 3MS.GEN 3MS.ACC gave.1S the book.ACC the John.GEN  
 'I gave the book to John.' (Philippaki-Warburton et al. 2004:969, (7c))

**Attaches to verbal stem.** OMs attach only to verbal stems as if they were inflectional realizations of a low verbal head like  $v^0$  (Kramer 2014:599).

- (10) s'ähafi-wa-n i-fällig-at -allä-hu  
 secretary-DEF.F-ACC 1S.S-look.for-3FS.O AUX.NONPAST-1S.S  
 'I am looking for the secretary.'

Clitics are known for their ability to “climb” up to auxiliaries and into higher clauses.

- (11) to echo ghrapsi to ghrama Greek  
 3MS have.1S written the letter  
 'I have written the letter.' (Philippaki-Warburton et al. 2004:969, (7b))

- (12) O Janis tin perimeni ti Maria na paraponethi  
 the John.NOM CL.ACC expects the Maria.ACC SUBJ complain-3SG  
 'John expects Mary to complain.' (Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 2000:6, (14a))

**Cross-references highest internal argument.** Only the goal argument is cross-referenced in ditransitive constructions, which follows from the locality of an agreement relationship (Kramer 2014:600).

- (13) a. Girma lä-Almaz mäs'haf-u-n sät't'-at  
 Girma.M DAT-Almaz.F book-DEF.M-ACC give-(3MS.S)<sup>13</sup>-3FS.O  
 'Girma gave the book to Almaz.'  
 b. ... \*sät't'-ä-w  
 give-3MS.S-3MS.O

Clitics can double either or both internal arguments of a ditransitive construction.

- (14) (tis) (ta) estile o Petros tis Marias ta  
 3FS.GEN 3PL.NEUT.ACC send.3S the Peter.NOM the Maria.GEN the  
 hrimata **Greek**  
 money.NEUT.ACC  
 ‘Peter sent Mary the money.’ (Kordoni 2004:155, (19))

## 2.2 Clitic-like properties

OM in Amharic displays more properties that are typical of known instances of clitic doubling in Rioplatense Spanish and Greek.

- (15) **Clitic doubling**
- a. **Rioplatense Spanish**  
 (Lo) vimos a Guille.  
 3MS saw.1PL a Guille  
 ‘We saw Guille.’ (Jaeggli 1982:14)
  - b. **Greek**  
 (ton) idhame to Jani  
 3MS saw.1PL the John.ACC  
 ‘We saw John.’ (Philippaki-Warburton et al. 2004)

OM in Amharic furthermore shows properties that would not be expected from agreement morphemes.

**Optionality.** When OM is possible, its presence is optional in the majority of contexts (Kramer 2014:601). This is like the clitic doubling examples we’ve seen above, though see Baker 2012 and Kramer 2014:fn.16.

- (16) Almaz tämari-w-in ayy-ätftf(-iw) (repeated from (1a))  
 Almaz.F student-DEF.M-ACC see-3FS.S-(3MS.O)  
 ‘Almaz saw the male student.’

Agreement is typically obligatory for all DPs.

**Specificity constraint.** OM is gated by the specificity of the cross-referenced DP (Kramer 2014:601). This is similar to constraints on Romance clitic doubling, where referential DPs are more likely to be doubled.

- (17) Almaz doro wät’-u-n bäll-atftf(-iw)  
 Almaz.F chicken stew-DEF.M-ACC eat-3FS-3MS.O  
 ‘Almaz ate the chicken stew.’  
 Almaz doro wät’ bäll-atftf(\*-iw)  
 Almaz.F chicken stew eat-3FS-3MS.O  
 ‘Almaz ate chicken stew.’

Agreement is not typically cued to the semantic properties of DPs.

**Triggers emphatic effect.** OM has the poorly understood effect of triggering a kind of emphasis on the cross-referenced DP (Kramer 2014:601). This, too, is similar to effects found in other languages with clitic doubling

- (18) Almaz dorō wät'-u-n bäll-atftj-**iw**  
 Almaz.F chicken stew-DEF.M-ACC eat-3FS.S-3MS.O  
 'Almaz ate the chicken stew.'  
 Comment: It's like, 'Almaz ate **that** chicken stew'.

Agreement does not have an emphatic effect.

**Obligation with inalienably possessed nominals.** Despite its general optionality, OM is obligatory when the object has an inalienable possessor (Kramer 2014:602). This is similar to other instances of possessor doubling in other languages.

- (19) bärr-u t'at-e-n k'ärät't'äf-ä-\*(ññ)  
 door-DEF.M finger-my-ACC pinch-3MS.S-1S.O  
 'The door pinched my finger.' (cf. Leslau 1995:187–188)

Agreement is not typically cued to the semantic properties of DPs.

**No obligatory default form.** When clitic doubling is not possible, there is no default form to surface in its place (Kramer 2014:603–604).

- (20) a. \*Almaz lam ayy-ätftj-**iw**  
 Almaz.F cow.F saw-3FS.S.-3MS.O  
 'Almaz saw a cow.'  
 b. Almaz lam ayy-ätftj  
 Almaz.F cow.F saw-3FS.S  
 'Almaz saw a cow.'

Subject marking has a default 3MS form in the presence of clausal subjects.

- (21) a. [Almaz sira-w-in indämmi-tt-agāñ] gils' nāw  
 Almaz.F job-DEF.M-ACC C-3FS.S-get clear be.3MS.S  
 'That Almaz will get the job is clear.'  
 b. [elian-otftj ind-all-u] bā-bizu säw-otftj  
 alien-PL C-exist-3PL.S by-many person-PL  
 yi-t-amän-al  
 3MS.S-PASS-believe-AUX.3MS.S  
 'That aliens exist is believed by many people.'

**Allows backward pronominalization.** OM ameliorates disjoint reference effects associated with backward pronominalization (Kramer 2014:604–605). This is similar to other languages in which clitic doubling can affect coreference (i.e., Binding) relations.

- (22) a. Tigist<sub>i</sub> tāmari-wa<sub>i</sub>-n ayy-ätftf  
 Tigist.F student-her-ACC see-3FS.S  
 ‘Tigist<sub>i</sub> saw her<sub>i</sub> student.’  
 b. ?\*tāmari-wa<sub>i</sub> Tigist<sub>i</sub>-in ayy-ä  
 student-her Tigist.F-ACC see-3MS.S  
 Intended: ‘Her<sub>i</sub> student saw Tigist<sub>i</sub>.’
- (23) tāmari-wa<sub>i</sub> Tigist<sub>i</sub>-in ayy-at  
 student-her Tigist.F-ACC see-(3MS.S)-3FS.O  
 ‘Her<sub>i</sub> student saw Tigist<sub>i</sub>.’

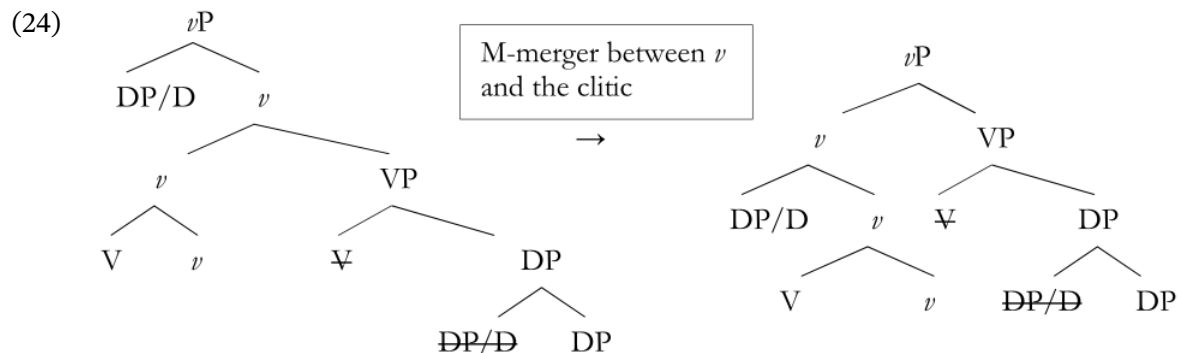
Agreement does not ameliorate disjoint reference effects.

### 3 Summary and Looking Ahead

OM in Amharic:

- Shows few properties that make it compatible with treatment as an agreement morpheme.
- Show numerous properties observed for known clitics

For Kramer (2014), this motivates an analysis in which OM in Amharic is a clitic that doubles the object it cross-references.



We will take a closer look at this analysis next time alongside some further evidence for the clitic status of OM morphemes.

## References

- Alexiadou, Artemis, & Elena Anagnostopoulou. 2000. Clitic-doubling and (non-)configurationality. In *Proceedings of NELS 30*, 1–12. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Graduate Linguistics Student Association.
- Baker, Mark C. 2012. On the relationship of object agreement and accusative case: Evidence from Amharic. *Linguistic Inquiry* 43:255–274.
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