

STRATEGIES FOR RESOLVING THE CRISIS OF AGREEMENT OF THE COMPLEX SUBJECT WHOSE NUCLEI [+ HUM] ARE COMBINED WITH THE [- HUM] IN XIZRONGA

ESTRATÉGIAS DE RESOLUÇÃO DA CRISE DE CONCORDÂNCIA DO SUJEITO COMPLEXO CUJOS NÚCLEOS [+ HUM] SÃO COMBINADOS COM OS [- HUM] EM XIZRONGA *

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ABSTRACT: In this article we examine, based on the foundations of Descriptive Linguistics, the verbal agreement of the complex subject, in contexts where the combined head nouns are [+ HUM] and [- HUM], in Xizronga, a bantu language of the Tswa-Ronga group (S50), spoken in southern Mozambique, in Maputo Province and the cities of Matola and Maputo. The discussion of this topic aims, on the one hand, to identify the contexts in which this combination does not result in a crisis of agreement and, on the other hand, to ascertain whether in this language, speakers perform total agreement for this type of subject and to map the linguistic agreement strategies adopted by speakers to resolve the crisis of agreement. In summary, data collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 15 native speakers of the Xinondrwana, Xikalanga, and Xihlanganu variants led to the conclusion that, except in contexts where the head nouns are from classes 1 and 2 and 7 and 8, this combination results in a crisis of agreement. To resolve this crisis, speakers resort to three strategies: commutative construction strategy, verb repetition strategy, and impersonal construction strategy.

KEYWORDS: Xizronga. Verbal agreement. Complex subject. Human trait.

RESUMO: Neste artigo examinamos, com base nos fundamentos da Linguística Descritiva, a concordância verbal do sujeito complexo, nos contextos em que os núcleos combinados são [+ HUM] e [- HUM], em Xizronga, uma língua bantu do grupo Tswa-Ronga (S50), falada na zona sul de Moçambique, na Província de Maputo e nas Cidades da Matola e Maputo. A discussão deste tema visa, por um lado, identificar os contextos em que esta combinação não resulta em crise de concordância e, por outro lado, averiguar se nesta língua, os falantes realizam a concordância total deste tipo de sujeito e mapear as estratégias linguísticas de concordância adoptadas pelos falantes, para resolver a crise de concordância. Resumidamente, os dados recolhidos através de um questionário estruturado e administrado a um universo de 15 falantes nativos das variantes Xinondrwana, Xikalanga e Xihlanganu, permitiram concluir que, exceptuando os contextos em que os núcleos são das classes 1 e 2 e 7 e 8, esta combinação de núcleos resulta em crise de concordância. Para resolver esta crise, os falantes recorrem a três estratégias, a saber: estratégia de construção comutativa, estratégia de repetição do verbo e estratégia de construção impessoal.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Xizronga. Concordância verbal. Sujeito complexo. Traço humano.

1 Introduction

One of the factors responsible for the crisis of verbal agreement (VA)² of complex subjects, at the level of several bantu languages (BL), such as Xichangana (S53), Ciyao (P21), Luganda (JE15), Setswana (S31) and Chichewa (N31), according to Corbett & Mtenje (1987),

* Submitted: 31.07.2025 – Accepted: 09.01.2026 | DOI: 10.22478/ufpb.1983-9979.2025v20n2.75183

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² **List of abbreviations:**

BL – bantu languages; FV – final vowel; Fut – future; Loc – locative; NP – nominal prefix; NC – nominal class; NR – nominal radical; SM – subject marker; Pas – past; Pass – passive; TC – total agreement; VP – verbal prefix.

Sitoe (1999), Corbett (2006) and Ngunga (2014), is the combination between semantically [+ HUM] and [- HUM] head nouns. Indeed, Corbett & Mtenje (1987), based on data from Chichewa (N31), found that “Conjoined structures involving noun phrases denoting humans and nonhumans are unacceptable...” (p. 36). In turn, Corbett (2006), based on elements from Luganda (JE15), found that the attempt at total agreement (TA) of complex subjects of this nature “...is often ungrammatical or questionable” (p. 249), as illustrated by the following examples:

[Luganda JE15] (CORBETT, 2006, p. 249)

1a. ?*omu-sajja* *ne* *em-bwa-ye* *bi-agwa*
 SG-man(1/2) and SG-dog(9/10)-his 8-fell
 ‘The man and his dog fell down’

b. **omu-sajja* *ne* *em-bwa-ye* *ba-agwa*
 SG-man(1/2) and SG-dog(9/10)-his 2-fell
 ‘The man and his dog fell down’

Pas

Semantically, the complex subjects in examples (1a-b) have different head nouns, namely: *omusajja* ‘man’, (class 1), which is [+ HUM], and *embwaye* ‘dog’, (class 9), which is [- HUM]. Because of this semantic difference, in (1a), we find that the attempt to achieve agreement through *svi-* (NC8) results in a questionable construction. Similarly, in (1b), we find that the use of *va-* (NC2) also generates an ungrammatical construction. The questionable construction in (1a) and the ungrammatical one in (1b) arise from the fact that the head nouns *omusajja* ‘man’ and *embwaye* ‘dog’ belong to different hierarchical levels, even though they are all animals! In line with Corbett (2006) and Givón (1970), cited by Corbett & Mtenje (1987), had already noted that in these contexts “informants prefer to avoid conjoining the noun phrases and to use the comitative construction instead” (p. 33).

Regarding the VA of a complex subject whose head nouns are similar to the examples in (1), Corbett (2006) argues that “If the conjuncts are semantically mixed, the comitative construction is preferable” and “if gender resolution is forced, the form will be as for nonhumans.” (p. 98). Agreeing with Corbett (2006) and Maho (1999), McCormack (2007) understands that, in general, there are “three methods of avoiding agreement with conjoined noun phrases...” (p. 95), namely: “comitative constructions”; “repetition of the verb” and “impersonal construction”.

Considering the interlinguistic variation that occurs at the level of the BL of different linguistic groups, three questions arise in relation to the VA of the complex subject in Xizronga: *i.* In this language, do all contexts of complex subjects, whose head nouns [+ HUM] are combined with [- HUM], result in a crisis of agreement?; *ii.* In contexts of agreement crisis, do speakers perform the TA of the complex subject? and *iii.* If not, what linguistic strategies do speakers adopt to resolve this crisis?

This article aims to propose a reflection on the questions presented above. Specifically, we intend to: *i.* identify the contexts of complex subjects in which the combination of head nouns [+ HUM] with [- HUM] does not result in a crisis of agreement; *ii.* investigate whether, in Xizronga, speakers perform TA of complex subjects of this nature; and *iii.* map the linguistic strategies adopted in resolving the crisis.

The data supporting the descriptive analysis in this article were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 15 native speakers of three varieties of Xizronga,

namely: Xinondrwana, Xikalanga, and Xihlanganu. These speakers are aged 20 to 65, mostly taxi-motorcycle operators, farmers, and public and private sector employees.

Continuing the reflections initiated by Maho (1999), Corbett (2006) and Ngunga (2014) on the agreement of complex subjects whose head nouns [+ HUM] are combined with [- HUM], we intend to deepen the examination of VA in Xizronga, offering a contribution to the description of Xizronga grammar. Therefore, we have organized the article into 5 sections, with this brief introduction being part of section 1, dedicated to contextualizing the research, presenting the theme, the objectives we wish to achieve, the questions guiding the research, as well as the theoretical and methodological aspects. Next, we have section 2, in which we provide a brief description of Xizronga, addressing dialectal variation and the morphology of the noun and verb. In section 3, we present the state of the art on complex subject agreement strategies in BL, highlighting the contexts in which [+ HUM] head nouns are combined with [- HUM]. Following this, we have section 4, dedicated to discussing strategies for resolving complex subject VA crises in Xizronga. Finally, section 5 presents the final considerations, before the references.

2 Xizronga, the language under study

2.1 Linguistic context

According to Ngunga & Faquir (2012), Xizronga (S54) is a language of the Tswa-Ronga group (S50), which also includes Xichangana (S53) and Xitshwa (S51). It is a linguistic group characterized by reciprocal intelligibility (CONCEIÇÃO, 1999), due to geographical proximity, resulting in bilingualism and/or multilingualism among speakers.

Xizronga is spoken in the southern region of Mozambique, specifically in Maputo Province (districts of Manhiça, Marracuene, Boane, Moamba, Namaacha and Matutuine); Maputo City (municipal districts of KaMpfumu, KaNlhamankulu, KaMaxakeni, KaMavota, KaMubukwana, KaTembe and KaNyaka) and Matola City. Due to this geographical location, during colonial times, knowledge of Xizronga, along with Xisena and Kiswahili, was of paramount importance, not only for individuals from other latitudes who wished to engage in commercial activity, but also for those who wished to “study any Thonga dialect or even another bantu language” (QUINTÃO, 1951, p. 10).

The zronga territory described above is linguistically heterogeneous, since Xizronga coexists with BL, such as Emakhuwa and Citshwa, and other non-Bantu languages, including Portuguese, the official language, English, and Arabic, brought by african emigrants and “foreigners” to the continent, attracted by the socio-economic conditions existing in Maputo. Therefore, we argue that currently, the survival of foreigners and the possibility of success in studying other BL do not depend on mastery of Xizronga.

In terms of dialectal variation, Ngunga & Faquir (2012) argue that Xizronga has 4 varieties, namely: *i.* Xinondrwana, spoken in Maracuene, Maputo, Matola and Boane; *ii.* Xikalanga (Xilwandle), spoken in the Manhiça district; *iii.* Xizingili (Xiputru), spoken in the region extending from Ponta de Ouro to Catembe, including Inhaca Island and *iv.* Xihlanganu, spoken in the districts of Moamba and Namaacha.

2.2 Morphological characterization of the noun and the verb

In BL, as in natural languages in general, the noun and the verb are two very important morphological categories in syntax. Therefore, although this article is dedicated to the analysis of the VA of the complex subject, we understand that it is essential to discuss their morphology in order to facilitate data analysis. To this end, let us analyze the following examples:

- | | | | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------------|-------------|-----|--|------------|
| 2a. | mhúnu > mhú -nu | ‘person’ | 3a. | kufá > ku -f-á | ‘to die’ |
| b. | vhánu > vhá -nu | ‘people’ | b. | kubila > ku -bil-a | ‘to boil’ |
| c. | xidakwá > xi -dakwá | ‘drunk’ | c. | kukhánélá > ku -khánél-á | ‘to speak’ |
| d. | svidakwá > svi -dakwá | ‘drunkards’ | d. | kudóndzrá > ku -dóndzr-á | ‘to learn’ |

Structurally, in each of the examples presented in (2) we find that in Xizronga, the noun consists of two parts, namely: nominal prefix (NP), highlighted in bold, which is a variable morpheme that indicates the NC and the number (singular *vs* plural) and, nominal root (NR). In (3) we see that the verb has three parts, namely: verbal prefix (VP), also in bold; root, which is “constituent that contains the lexical meaning” (XAVIER and MATEUS, 1992, p. 321) and final vowel (FV).

Specifically, in (2), *mhu-*, *vha-*, *xi-* and *svi-* constitute NPs of NCs 1, 2, 7 and 8 and, *-nu*, and *-dakwa* are NRs. Therefore, the variation consists of, for example, the NR *-dakwa* being able to receive as NP *xi-* (class 7) or *svi-* (class 8), depending on whether it is in singular or plural.

In (3), *ku-*, the VP, constitutes an infinitive marker, invariable and, *-f-* ‘to die’, *-bil-* ‘to boil’, *-khanel-* ‘to speak’ and *-dondzr-* ‘to study’, VRs and *a-*, FV, also invariable.

In summary, in Zronga language and in BL in general, the variation of the noun, which is most striking, as we have mentioned, is that which allows signaling the singular or the plural, taking into account the NC, according to the data contained in the table that we presented in section (2.3), referring to the NCs.

2.3 Nominal classes

In the language under study, nouns, whether endogenous or exogenous, are distributed into NCs, taking into account their semantic characterization and NP. In the context of BL, NC is a “set of nouns with the same prefix and/or the same agreement pattern” (NGUNGA, 2014, p. 122). The agreement pattern as a unifying factor for nouns of the same class is also present in Van de Velde (2019), who states that NC constitutes “sets of nouns that trigger the same agreement pattern” (p. 238). However, it is worth noting that Xizronga's data show that there are cases in which nouns from different NCs exhibit the same agreement pattern, as shown in the following examples:

- | | | | | | |
|-----|--------------------------|---------------------|----|---------------------|---------------------|
| 4a. | [<i>Yindlu</i>] | yi -psh-ile. | b. | [<i>Minsinya</i>] | yi -psh-ile. |
| | house | 9.SM-burn-Pas | | trees | 9.SM-burn-Pas |
| | ‘The house burned down.’ | | | ‘The trees burned.’ | |

Analyzing the agreement pattern of the nouns *yindlu* ‘house’ and *minsinya* ‘trees’ we could affirm that, as both select the **yi-** marker, they are from the same NC. However, while *yindlu* ‘house’ is from NC9, since it forms its plural through *ti-* (in *tiyindlu* ‘houses’, class 10), *minsinya* ‘trees’ is from NC4, given that it forms the plural of NC3, (in *nsinya* ‘tree’).

The exercise we have just carried out in (4) shows that in BLs, NCs plays a crucial role in the agreement system. Therefore, we agree with McCormack (2007) when he states that in BL “The noun class system is at the heart of the agreement system in Bantu” (p. 91). Recognizing this fact, in the following table we present the inventory of NCs of Xizronga, at present.

Tabela 1. Inventory of nominal classes of Xizronga

Singular		Exemplos	Plural		Exemplos	Semântica
NC	NP		N	NP		
1	<i>mu-</i>	<i>muyívi</i> 'burglar'	2	<i>va-</i>	<i>vayívi</i> 'thieves'	human beings
3	<i>mu-</i>	<i>mukwá</i> 'knife'	4	<i>mi-</i>	<i>mikwá</i> 'knives'	Plants
5	<i>li-</i>	<i>lihlahla</i> 'firewood'	6	<i>ma-</i>	<i>mahlahla</i> 'lenhas'	animals and fruits
7	<i>xi-</i>	<i>xifuva</i> 'chest'	8	<i>svi-</i>	<i>svifuva</i> 'breasts'	things and languages
9	<i>n-</i>	<i>ndota</i> 'elder'	10	<i>ti-</i>	<i>tindota</i> 'elders'	Animals
11	<i>li-</i>	<i>lihunyi</i> 'firewood'	10	<i>ti-</i>	<i>tihunyi</i> 'firewood'	long things
14	<i>wu-</i>	<i>wushwa</i> 'chima'	6	<i>ma³-</i>	<i>mawushwa</i> 'chimas'	abstract things
15	<i>ku-</i>	<i>kufa</i> 'to die'	No plural			infinitive ⁴

Source: the author

In the previous table, we present the NCs of Xizronga, the NPs accompanied by illustrative examples, and the semantic orientation, taking into account the nouns that are most abundant in each of the NCs. As can be seen, there are 13 active NCs in this language. From class 1 to 10, these are organized in pairs, with classes 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9 containing the nouns in the singular, and classes 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10 containing the plural. Exceptionally, NC11 forms the plural through NC10.

The 13 NCs presented in Table 1 result from the desactivation of the diminutive classes 12 and 13 and the locative classes 16, 17, and 18. However, this does not imply that morphological diminutivization and locativization are not possible in this language. What happens is that these operations cease to be prefixes and become suffixes, through *xi-... -ana* and *-ine*.

3. Strategies of verbal agreement of the complex subject bantu languages

In BL, the VA of the complex subject, according to Ngunga (2014) and Corbett & Mtenje (1987), is realized based on different strategies, taking into account the NC of the head nouns, the semantic characterization of the combined head nouns, the Adjacency Principle, and the subject's position in relation to the verb. To illustrate the influence of these linguistic factors on VA, let's analyze the examples of different LB that we present below:

[Citshwa S51] (UETELA, 2009, p. 192)

- 5a. *Muti*(cl.3) *ni svifuyu*(cl.8) *svisele svoce*.
'The house and the animals were left alone'
- b. *Ximanga*(7) *ni homu*(9) *zvatalelwa hi mati*.
'The cat and the ox are being flooded by the water.'

[Kiswahili, G42] (MITCHLEY, 2015, p. 23)

- 6a. *Mw-alimu* *na* *mw-anafunzi* *w-ake* *wa-li-kuja*.
1-teacher and 1-student 1-Poss SM2-PAST-come

³ With very few exceptions, the names of NC14 do not vary in number.

⁴ In the infinitive form, this lexical category does not vary in number.

‘The teacher and his student came.’

[Xizronga, S54]

- b. *Xi-pixi ni xi-nyanyana svi-lw-ile.*
 7.cat and 7.bird 8.MS- to fight -Pas
 ‘The cat and the bird fought.’
- c. **Nhlata ni ntrumbula mi-bol-ile.*
 3. sweet potatoes and 3. cassava 4.MS-rot-Pas
 ‘The sweet potatoes and cassava rotted.’

In the examples in (5a-b), from Citshwa, we find that in contexts where the head nouns of the complex subject are nouns [- HUM] from different NCs, the VA marker is *svi-* NC8. However, in (6a-b) we find that there are cases where, regardless of the semantic characterization of the combined head nouns, when the heads are from the same NC, the agreement is made through the corresponding plural prefix, in obedience to the “morphological rule”, which predicts that “two nouns of the same class trigger the corresponding plural agreement on the verb” (MARTEN, 2000, p. 80). However, the example in (6c) shows that in some cases, speakers violate this rule.

In addition to the *svi-* NC8 marker and the one referring to the plural corresponding to the NC of the complex subject head nouns, in other BL, agreement can also be signaled through *va-* NC2, when the combined head nouns are [+ HUM], regardless of their NCs, as illustrated by the examples presented below:

[Kiswahili, G42] (MITCHLEY, 2015, p. 114)

- 7a. *I-polisa ne-gqwetha ba-ya-sebenza.*
 5-policeman and.5-lawyer SM2-PRES-work
 ‘The policeman and the lawyer are working.’
- b. *Isi-tyebi nesi-bhanxa ba-ya-funda.*
 7-rich.person and.7-fool SM2-PRES-study
 ‘The rich person and the fool are studying.’

[Sesotho, S30] (MITCHLEY, 2015, p. 97)

- 8a. *Le-polesa le di-tsibi ba bua*
 5-policeman and 8-expert SM2 talk
 ‘The policeman and the experts are talking.’
- b. *Ma-polesa le se-tsibi ba bua*
 6-policeman and 7-expert SM2 talk
 ‘The policemen and the expert are talking.’

Analyzing the complex subjects of the constructions in (7-8) we find that, although the combined head nouns are from different NCs and, incidentally, are not from NC1 or NC2, the agreement marker is invariably *va-* NC2. The selection of this, according to Mitchley (2015) and Marten (2000), is explained by the fact that all the head nouns are [+ HUM] names.

Moreover, in some LB, this semantic agreement is not exclusively registered in these contexts, as documented by the examples presented below:

[Ciyao, P21] (TAJI & MRETA, 2014, p.85)

- 9a. *Mu-ndu* *ni* *li-vaata* *a-ku-utuk-a.*
 1-person and 5-duck 2SC-PRES-run-FV
 ‘A person and a duck are running.’
- b. *M-chanda* *ni* *ng‘ombe* *a-kw-ik-a.*
 1-boy and 9-cow 2SC-PRES-come-FV
 ‘A boy and a cow are coming.’

Indeed, the examples in (9) attest that in Ciyao, the *a-* NC2 marker is also selected in contexts where the [+ HUM] cores are combined with the [- HUM] cores not belonging to NCs 1 and 2. In fact, these constructions show that VA is partially realized based on the [+ HUM] cores, *mundu* ‘person’ and *mchanda* ‘boy’. Regarding complex subjects with this configuration, Siteo (1999) argues that “...os SNs representando seres com traços [+ HUM] e [- HUM] (ou com traços [+ HUM] e [- animado] não podem constituir S_j composto contínuo, pertencam ou não a mesma classe nominal” (p. 7).

While in some LBs the VA of the complex subject whose head nouns [+ HUM] are combined with [- HUM] is realized through *va-* or *a-* NC2, in obedience to the semantic factor, in other BLs, such as Xichangana (S53), Citshwa (S51) and Ciyao (P21), the attempt to achieve the agreement of grammatical subjects with this semantic configuration always results in questionable or ungrammatical constructions:

[Xichangana S53] (SITOE, 1999, p. 7)

- 10a. *?Ntombhi* *ni* *mbzáná* *yatsemakanye* *mùsele.*
 9.rapariga e 9.cão 2.atraversar.psd 3.canal
 ‘A rapariga e o cão atravessaram o canal.’ The girl and the dog crossed the canal.
- b. **Ntombhi* *ni* *mbzáná* *svitsemakanye* *mùsele.*
 9.rapariga e 9.cão 8.atraversar.psd 3.canal
 ‘A rapariga e o cão atravessaram o canal.’

[Citshwa S51] (UETELA, 2009, p. 191)

- 11a. **vanu ni zvibza zvanelwa hi vhula* ‘pessoas e coisas estão a molhar com chuva’
 b. *?zvibza ni vanu vanelwa hi vhula* ‘coisas e pessoas estão a molhar com chuva’
 c. *?vanu ni zvibza vanelwa hi vhula* ‘pessoas e coisas estão a molhar com chuva’

[Ciyao P21] (NGUNGA, 2014, p. 252)

- 12a. **muundu ni nguku ajiinjiile n’cituundu* ‘a pessoa e a galinha entraram na capoeira’
 b. **nguku ni muundu sijiinjiile n’cituundu* ‘a galinha e a pessoa entraram na capoeira’

As shown in examples (10-12), the VA of complex subjects whose [+ HUM] head nouns are combined with [- HUM], namely: *ntombhi* ‘girl’ and *mbzàrà* ‘dog’, in (10a-b); *vanu* ‘people’ and *svibza* ‘things’, in (11a-c) and *muundu* ‘person’ and *nguuku* ‘chicken’, in (12a-b), results in a concordance crisis, since the use of the markers of NCs 2 and 8 does not allow the interpretation of the respective complex subjects.

As we showed in the introductory section, the phenomenon described above also occurs in Setswana (S31). Thus, to resolve this crisis, Maho (1999) cited by McCormack (2007) argues, based on data from this BL, that speakers adopt three strategies, namely: *i.* commutative constructions *ii.* verb repetition and *iii.* the impersonal construction, as documented by the following examples:

[Setswana S31] (McCORMACK, 2007, p. 96)

- 13a. *ba tlhankaba tsile le di kólói*
 NP.2 servant SC.2 havetcome COM NP.10 wagon
 ‘The servants have come with the wagons.’
- b. *ba tlhanka ba tsile, le di koloí di tsile*
 NP.2 servant SC.2 have.come CON NP.10 wagon SC.10 have.come
 ‘The servants have come, and the wagons have come.’
- c. *go tsile ba tlhankale di koloí*
 SC. 17 have.come NP.2 servant CON/COM NP.10 wagon
 ‘There have come servants and/with wagons.’

In the example in (13a), we see that head nouns *the batlhanka* ‘servants’ and *koloí* ‘wagon’ have been separated, with the latter moving to the post-verbal position, preceded by the particle *le* ‘with’. Therefore, in the verbal form *batsile* ‘have come’, which separates the two head nouns, *ba-* NC2, is a marker of agreement for *batlhanka* ‘servants’, the only head noun that remains in the pre-verbal position.

Unlike the commutative strategy, in the verb repetition strategy, as illustrated in (13b), the two head nouns already mentioned agree, even though they are also separated. What happens in this construction is that the second head noun is moved to the intermediate zone, causing the verb to be repeated and, in each of them, the markers of each of these two head nouns are prefixed. Therefore, in *basile* and *disile* we have the markers *ba-* and *di-* referring to *batlhanka* and *koloí*, respectively.

Finally, the impersonal construction strategy, in (13c), in which the two head nouns are moved to the post-verbal position, with the NC17 prefix being coupled to the verb. As can be seen, in this strategy, neither of the head noun performs the VA.

4 Agreement of the complex subject of head nouns [+ HUM] and [- HUM] in Xizronga

In general, the subject-complex agreement conflict where [+ HUM] head noun are combined with [-HUM] head noun also occurs in Xizronga. However, a comparative analysis of the 13 NCs of this language reveals that there are some exceptions, as in the following examples:

- 14a. *Muloyi ni mahulwána ya-ta-hah-a.*
 1.wizardand 1.curiango 2.SM-Fut-fly-VF

‘The wizard and the curiangos will fly.’

- b. *Valoyi ni vamahulwána va-ta-hah-a.*
2.sorcerers and 2.curiangos 2.SM-Fut-fly-VF
‘The sorcerers and curiangos will fly.’
- 15a. **Jaha ni khele ma-/svi-/va-psh-ile*
5.rapaz and 5.frog 6/8/2.SM-burn-Pas
‘Boy and the frog burned.’
- b. **Majaha ni makhele ma-/svi-/va-psh-ile*
6.boys and 6.frogs 6/8/2.SM-burn-Pas
‘The boys and the frogs burned.’
- 16a. *Xiduhati ni xipixi svi-f-ile*
7.old and 7.cat 8.SM-die-Pas
‘The old man and the cat died.’
- b. *Sviduhati ni svipixi svi-f-ile*
8.elderly and 8.cats 8.SM-die-Pas
‘The elderly and the cats died.’
- 17a. **Nhenha ni nghonyama ti-/svi-/va-lw-ile*
9.hero and 9.lion 10/8/2.SM-fight-Pas
‘The hero and the lion fought.’
- b. **Tinhenha ni tinghonyama ti-/svi-/va-lw-ile*
10.heroes and 10.lions 10/8/2.SM-fight-Pas
‘The heroes and lions fought.’

Analyzing the examples presented above, we find that, while the complex subject whose combined head nouns are names from NCs 1, 2, 7, and 8 does not present a conflict of agreement, since the selected markers are *va-* NC2 and *svi-* NC8, respectively, in the remaining NCs, the attempt to perform this syntactic operation, both through the corresponding plural prefix and through the markers *svi-* and *va-*, results in questionable or ungrammatical constructions.

The ungrammaticality mentioned above is not only verified when the head nouns of the complex subject are names from the same NC, namely classes 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, and 10:

- 18a. **Mu-hloti ni mbzáná va-y-ile ku-hlot-eni.*
1.hunter and 9.dog 2.SM-go-Pas 15-hunt-Loc
‘The hunter and the dog went hunting.’
- b. **Svi-duhati ni m-bongolo va-d-iw-ile hi ngonyama.*
8.old people and 9. donkey 2.SM-eat-Pass-Pas buy 9.lion
‘The old people and the donkey were eaten by the lion.’
- c. **Va-yeni ni xi-pixi va-fik-ile kaya.*
2.visitors and 7.cat 2.SM-arrive-Pas 5.house-Loc

‘The visitors and the cat arrived at the house.’

- d. **Ma-jaha ni ti-huku va-ta-famb-a hi movha.*
6.boys and 10.chickens 2.SM-Fut-go-VF by 3.car

‘The boys and the chickens are going to the car.’

As illustrated by the examples in (18), the ungrammaticality of the complex subject whose head noun [+ HUM] are combined with [- HUM] also occurs in contexts where these head nouns are from different NCs. In the case under analysis, we have: *muhloti* ‘hunter’ NC1 and *mbzáná* ‘dog’ NC9, in (18a); *sviduhati* ‘elderly’ NC8 and *mbongolo* ‘donkey’ NC9, in (18b); *vayeni* ‘visitors’ NC2 and *xipixi* ‘cat’ NC7, in (18c) and *majaha* ‘boys’ NC6 and *tihuku* ‘chickens’ NC10, in (18d).

The aforementioned ungrammaticality results from the fact that the use of the *va*-NC2 marker suggests that all head nouns of the complex subject are [+ HUM], when in fact, *mbzáná* ‘dog’, *mbongolo* ‘donkey’, *xipixi* ‘cat’ and *tihuku* ‘chickens’ are [- HUM]. Thus, the use of this marker would mean, according to the informants, the “humanization” of these irrational animals.

If, on the one hand, the attempt to achieve agreement through *va*-NC2 proves unfeasible due to the semantic implication of the combined head nouns, the possibility of using the *svi*-NC8 marker also results in anomalous constructions, as in the following examples:

- 19a. ?*Mu-hloti ni mbzáná svi-y-ile ku-hlot-eni*⁵.
1.hunter and 9.dog 8.SM-go-Pas 15-hunt-Loc

‘The hunter and the dog went hunting.’

- b. ?*Svi-duhati ni mbongolo svi-d-iw-ile hi ngonyama.*
8. old people and 9.donkey 8.SM-eat-Pass-Pas buy 9.lion

‘The old people and the donkey were eaten by the lion.’

- c. ?*va-yeni ni xi-pixi svi-fik-ile kaya.*
2. visitors and 7.cat 8.SM-arrive-Pas 5.house

‘The visitors and the cat arrived on the house.’

- d. ?*Ma-jaha ni ti-huku svi-ta-famba hi movha.*
6.boys and 10.chickens 8.SM-Fut-go-VF by 3.car

‘The boys and the chickens will go by car.’

Indeed, according to the informants, the above constructions are questionable, due to the use of the *svi*-NC8 marker, in the contexts where *muhloti* ‘hunter’ NC1, in (19a); *sviduhati* ‘elderly’ NC8, in (19b); *vayeni* ‘visitors’ NC2, in (19c); and *majaha* ‘boys’ NC6, in (19d) are beings [+ HUM]. Therefore, if, on the one hand, the *va*- marker humanizes the [- HUM] head nouns, the *svi*- marker disqualifies the [+ HUM] head nouns. Human beings are not things.

The ungrammaticality referenced in the preceding paragraphs, both through the *va*-marker and through *svi*-, seems to make sense insofar as the humanization of the [- HUM] head nouns, as well as the diminutivization of the [+ HUM] heads, abstracts the constructions, as shown in the examples below:

⁵ Sufixo locativo, que ao ser acoplado a nomes e verbos, transmite a ideia de locatização.

- 20a. *Mu-hloti na n'wa-mbzána va-y-ile ku-hlot-eni.*
 1.hunter and 1.mr. dog 2.SM-go-PAS 15-hunt-Loc
 'The hunter and the mr. dog went hunting.'
- b. *Svi-duhati ni svi-mbongolwana svi-d-iw-ile hi nghonyama.*
 8.old people and 8.burrinhos 8.SM-comer-Pass-Pas buy 9.lion
 'The old people and the donkeys were eaten by the lion.'
- c. *Va-yeni na n'wa-xipixi va-fik-ile kaya.*
 2.visitors and 1.mr. cat 2.SM-arrive-Pas 5.house.Loc
 'The visitors and mr. cat arrived at the house.'
- d. *Svi-jahana ni svi-hukwana svi-ta-famb-a hi movha.*
 8. boys and 8.chicks 8.SM-Fut-go-VF buy 3.car
 'The boys and chicks will go by car.'

Contrary to the examples in (18a) and (18c), where the heads *mbzána* 'dog' and *xipixi* 'cat' are actually [- HUM], in (20a) and (20c), these are personified through the prefix *n'wa-*, becoming integrated into NC1. Therefore, in these cases, the use of the *va-* NC2 marker does not result in ungrammaticality, since all head nouns are [+ HUM]. Similarly, in (20b-d) the constructions are grammatical insofar as the head nouns *mbongolo* 'donkey' NC9 and *svimbongolwana* 'little donkeys' NC8, in (20b), and *svijahana* 'little boys' NC8 and *svihukwana* 'little chicks' NC8, in (20d) are diminutivized. Therefore, in (19b) and (19d) where all the head nouns are from NC8, agreement through *svi-* makes the constructions grammatical, even though the head nouns *sviduhati* 'elderly' and *svijahana* 'little boys' are [- HUM].

The examples we have just analyzed show that, except for the contexts in which the head nouns of the complex subject are from NCs 1 and 2 and 7 and 8, the combination [+ HUM] with [- HUM] results in ungrammatical constructions, which forces speakers to adopt different agreement strategies, in order to resolve the crisis, as illustrated by the examples that we present below:

- 21a. *Mu-hloti a-y-ile kuhlot-eni ni mbzána.*
 1.hunter 1.SM-go-Pas hunt-Loc with 9.dog
 'The hunter went hunting with the dog.'
- b. *Va-yeni va-fik-ile kaya ni xi-pixi*
 2.visitors 2. SM-arrive-Pas 5.house.Loc with 7.cat
 'The visitors arrived at the house with the cat.'

The examples in (21a) and (21b) illustrate the commutative strategy for resolving the agreement crisis found in (18a) and (18c) respectively, considering that in the grammatical subjects of the constructions the head [+ HUM] are combined with [- HUM]. Thus, as we saw in the literature review, this strategy consists of separating the head nouns, moving the second to the final position, which allows for partial agreement, through *muhloti* 'hunter' NC1 and *vayeni* 'visitors' NC2, selecting the markers *a-* NC1 and *va-* NC2, respectively.

In addition to the commutative strategy, the most productive, the "vazronga" also resolve the agreement crisis through verb repetition, as in the examples:

- 22a. *Mu-hloti a-y-ile ku-hlot-eni, nayone mbzáná yi-y-ile.*
 1. hunter 1.SM-go-Pas 17.hunt-Loc too 9.dog 9.SM-go-Pas
 ‘The hunter went hunting, and the dog went too.’
- b. *Va-yeni va-fik-ile kaya, naxone xipixi a-fik-ile.*
 2. visitors 2.SM-arrive-Pas 5.house.Loc too 7.cat 1.SM-arrive-Pas
 ‘The visitors arrived home, and the cat arrived too.’

Unlike the strategy described above, in the verb repetition strategy, although the head nouns are also separated, each one agrees by selecting its marker. Thus, while in (22a) the head nouns *muhloti* ‘hunter’ and *mbzáná* ‘dog’ select *a-* and *yi-*, respectively, in (22b) *vayeni* ‘visitors’ and *xipixi* ‘cat’ adopt *va-* and *xi-*. Finally, we have the impersonal construction, as in the examples:

- 23a. *Ku-hlot-eni ku-y-ile mu-hloti ni mbzáná.*
 17-hunt-Loc 17-go-Pas 1.hunter and 9.dog
 ‘At hunting went the hunter and his dog.’
- b. *Kaya ku-fik-ile va-yeni ni xi-pixi.*
 5.house.Loc 17-arrive-Pas 2. Visitors and 7.cat
 ‘At the house, visitors and cat arrived.’

In the examples in (23) we see that syntactically, the head nouns *muhloti* ‘hunter’ and *mbzáná* ‘dog’, in (23a) and *vayeni* ‘visitors’ and *xipixi* ‘cat’ in (23b) do not agree, since although they are not separated, they have been moved to the post-verbal position. This lack of agreement is licensed by the morpheme *ku-*, an infinitive marker.

5 Final Considerations

In this article, we discussed the VA of the complex subject whose [+ HUM] head nouns are combined with [- HUM] in Xizronga, with the aim of identifying the contexts in which this configuration does not result in a crisis of agreement; to ascertain whether, in these contexts, speakers perform the TA of this type of subject; and to map the agreement strategies adopted by speakers to resolve the crisis of agreement. To achieve these objectives, it was necessary to collect empirical data from 15 native speakers of three varieties of Xizronga, namely: Xinondrwana, Kikalanga, and Xihlanganu.

Regarding the questions that guided this research, the analyzed data allowed us to conclude that, as happens in Xichangana (S53), Citshwa (S51) and Ciyao (P21), the combination of head nouns [+ HUM] with [- HUM] results in agreement crisis, except in contexts where the combined heads are from NCs 1 and 2 and 7 and 8. In these two exceptions, speakers realize the total agreement through *va-* and *svi-*, when the head nouns are from classes 1 and 2 and 7 and 8, respectively.

For verbal agreement crisis contexts, the analyzed data showed that speakers of the language under study adopt three resolution strategies, namely: *i.* commutative strategy (the most productive); *ii.* verb repetition strategy and *iii.* impersonal construction strategy. As we saw in the literature review, these strategies are also used in other bantu languages, such as Ciyao (P21), Chichewa (N31) and Setswana (S31).

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