

Movement in Dholuo: A Phase-Based Account

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1. Introduction: In this work, I propose a phase-based approach to *wh*-movement and obligatory subject movement in Dholuo (Western Nilotic). Cable (2012) discusses a series of phenomena showing that movement is optional in Dholuo. For example, as for active verbs (1), subjects can be positioned freely among tense, negation, and aspect; as for passive verbs (2), subjects have one more additional post-verbal position other than those positions observed in cases of active verbs.

- (1) (Ochieng') ne (Ochieng') ok (Ochieng') oneno Onyango.
Ochieng' PAST NEG. saw Onyango
'Ochieng didn't see Onyango.'
- (2) (Onyango) ne (Onyango) ok (Onyango) one (Onyango) gi Ochieng.
Onyango PAST NEG see.PASS by Ochieng
'Onyango wasn't seen by Ochieng.'

To account for these movements in a uniform way, Cable (2012) proposes that each of the functional heads in Dholuo optionally bears EPP-feature in addition to $u\phi$. That is, once a functional head happens to bear EPP (in the lexicon), its ϕ -agreement with the subject would trigger the movement of the subject to its specifier position correspondingly. Thus, Dholuo demonstrates optional subject movements.

2. Obligatory EPP on the Complementizer *ma*: Cable (2012) extends his proposal to other cases where he thinks movement is also optional, such as *wh*-movement. (3) shows *wh*-phases are able to move to the left periphery of clauses, while (4) exhibits they are also able to stay *in-situ*.

- (3) Ng'a ma Achieng' oneno? (4) Achieng' oneno ng'a?
who C Achieng' saw Achieng' saw who
'Who did Achieng' see?' 'Who did Achieng' see?'

Cable argues that C in Dholuo also optionally bears EPP, as with other functional heads. However, I argue that there is one characteristic regarding *wh*-movement that Cable has neglected, namely that there exists a complementizer *ma* in the case of *wh-ex-situ* (3). To capture such distinction, I propose a working hypothesis as in (5), based on the conception of phasehood (Chomsky 2000, 2001).

- (5) *Obligatory EPP in Dholuo*
Overt phase heads bear EPP-feature obligatorily in Dholuo.

My prediction is that *wh*-phrases always move as long as there is *ma* in the *wh*-constructions. This is borne out by a series of empirical facts, in particular *wh*-subject movement and simple partial movement.

- (6) Ng'a *(ma) dwaro ruoth? (7) Ng'a *(ma) ochamo rech?
who C want chief? who C ate fish
'Who wants the chief?' 'Who ate fish?'

Treating *ma* as a C-related phase head can also be found in Schardl (2014). But my proposal establishes a tighter connection among phase heads, EPP-feature, and movement in Dholuo.

3. Obligatory Subject Movement and V-Related Phases: If my working hypothesis (5) was on the right track, several cases of obligatory subject movement can now be accounted for in a different fashion.

- (8) (Ochieng') nyalo (*Ochieng') biro e budho.
Ochieng. might come to party
'Ochieng' might come to the party.'

Cable (2012) argues that subjects are able to reconstruct to a position below *nyalo* (8), but the inability of the subject to follow *nyalo* indicates that its A-movement in such cases is obligatory. He further argues that (i) the seemingly verbal auxiliary *nyalo* is truly verbal, rather than functional heads seen in (1-2), and (ii) the complement of *nyalo* is bare *v*P_s. Taking these ideas into consideration, I simply assume the V-related phases, unlike the C-related ones, are determined by relevant hierarchy (9), instead of being given a uniform categorical label. In this sense, *nyalo* in (8) heads overtly a V-related phase, thereby triggering obligatory subject movement as predicted in (5). More obscure obligatory movements in Dholuo will be explained on the basis of these two phase-based hypotheses (5) and (9).

- (9) *Hierarchy-Determined V-Related Phases*

A V-related phase YP is the structurally-closest maximal projection that c-commands XP in which the subject is base-generated.

Selective References: Cable, S. 2012. The optionality of movement and EPP in Dholuo. *NLLT* 30: 651-697; Schardl, A. 2014. Optional *wh*-movement and cleft. In *Proceedings of the 31st WCCFL*, ed. By Santana-LaBarge, R. E., 391-398. Somerville: Cascadilla.