Subject and Object Agreement in Dhao: Contact-Induced Change from Hawu and Rote

A. Jermy I. Balukh[1], B. A.A. Inten Mayuni[2]
[1]STIBA Cakrawala Nusantara, Kupang
[2]Universitas Warmadewa, Denpasar

Email: jbalukh@yahoo.com.au

Abstract: This paper deals with the language contact situation and its impact to the grammatical features of Dhao, as well as the role of language documentation in a multilingual community, like Ndao. This paper focuses on the agreement system in Dhao, a language spoken by about 3000 speakers on the tiny island of Ndao in East Nusa Tenggara Province. Ndao Island is relatively isolated. People of Ndao tend to abandon the island and move to the neighboring islands, Rote and Timor, for the sake of better education and economy. People of Ndao are multilingual. They speak at least their mother tongue, Dhao, the neighboring languages, such as Rotenese, Uab Meto, Hawu, and, Kupang Malay, as well as Indonesian as the national language. Genetically, Dhao language is Sumba-Hawu subgroup of Austronesian family. However, instead of Hawu, Dhao has intense contact with Rotenese, which is Nuclear Timor subgroup of Austronesian. Language contact as such results in changes of grammatical features from Hawu-like to Rotenese-like grammatical typology. In terms of agreement, Dhao applies two different systems: (1) Hawu-like object-verb agreement, where the final vowel of verbs change according to the semantics and plurality of the objects and (2) Rotenese-like subject-verb agreement where the vowel-initial verbs obligatory require prefixes to agree with the subject in person and number. In order to explore such kind of "mixing typology", a comprehensive documentation and in detail description of the language play a significant role.
Keywords: *language contact, language documentation, grammar, agreement.*

INTRODUCTION

The sociolinguistic complexity of Dhao today has a long history. Dhao, a language spoken by about 3000 people on a tiny island of Ndao, westwards of Rote Island in Eastern Indonesia, is genetically subgrouped into Sumba-Hawu of Central Malayo-Polynesian (CMP) languages in which it is similar to languages of Hawu, Sumba, and Bima (Blust, 2009; Donohue & Grimes, 2008). However, instead of Hawu, Dhao has intense contact with the neighboring language, Rotenese, due to geographical proximity and official administration. The island of Ndao[1] is adjacent to Rote and currently becomes one of ten sub-districts or *kecamatan* of Rote-Ndao Regency. People of Ndao believe that their ancestors came from the island of Sawu bringing indigo plant (*indigofera tinctoria*) or *dhau* by which the name of the island was originated (Balukh, 2020). People of Sawu also told that one of their ancestors who originally inhabited the island of Raijua moved to Ndao and descended the ancestors of Ndao (Kana, 1983). Whether those two legends are historically related or not, the cultural relationship between Sawu and Ndao is apparantly imminent (Fox, 1987).

In addition to the geographical proximity and official administration to Rote, the poor agricultural and educational resources on Ndao force people to leave the island periodically to seek their fortunes. The first destination is to Rote, then to Kupang and other surrounding areas of Timor. The women are mostly traditional weavers and the men are silver/goldsmiths and fishermen. They tend to leave the island in dry season to trade their products. Children abandoned the island to pursue higher education. The influence from Rote also involves socio-cultural system. People of Ndao have shifted from their Sawu-like customs to Rote-like system (Fox, 1987). The well-known name of the island and the language "Ndao", which was originally derived from *dhau* 'indigo', has been mispronounced for decades -- following the spelling of the neighboring dominant language, Rotenese. The consonant cluster or pre-nasal /nd/ never occurs in any position of syllabic system in the language. People always

[1] Together with two other smaller islands, namely Nuse and Do'o.

pronounce it differently with no nasal, but the sound [d] is slightly retroflex and affricated, orthographically represented as /dh/ (Grimes, 2010).

This paper focuses on the language contact situation and its impact to the grammatical features of Dhao. The grammatical feature to be the main discussion in this paper is the agreement system. Dhao applies object agreement, as shown in (1) below, similar to Hawu (Walker, 1982), but also subject agreement, like (2), identical to Rotenese (see Balukh, 2020).

(1) a. *ja'a* *mat**a*** ***rèngu***
1SG wait 3PL
'I wait for them'

b. *èdhi* *mat**e*** ***nèngu***
1PL.in wait 3SG
'We wait for him/her'

c. **rèngu* *mata* *ja'a*
3PL wait 1SG

(2) a. [***ina*** =***na***] ***n***-*e'a* *le*
mother 3SG 3SG-know already
'His mother has known already'

b. [***ina*** =***na***] ****k***-*e'a* *le*
mother 3SG 1SG-know already

In this paper, we argue that the subject agreement identical to Rotenese is the result of language contact, whereas the object agreement similar to Hawu is genetical inheritance. These features can only be explored in detail through a comprehensive language documentation.

LANGUAGE CONTACT SITUATION

People of Ndao mostly speak Dhao at home but they easily shift to Malay because they have spoken Malay natively for centuries. In customary ceremonies (*adat*), they speak Dhao with some code-mixing of Malay (Kupang/Indonesian). In formal situations, such as at school, in church, in wedding party, and in official ceremonies, they speak standard Indonesian. The contact with Malay was not only because people of Ndao have intensive inter-ethnic informal communication with people in the neighboring regions, but also because Malay had been introduced to people of Rote through education since 17th century (Fox, 1968), long time before Malay was declared as Indonesian language in 1928, the language of unity for the whole country. Thus, children born at the time absolutely acquired Malay natively from their parents.

Linguistically, Dhao lexicons and phonology are undoubtedly identical to Hawu, which had driven Jonker (1903) to claim that Dhao is a dialect of Hawu. However, the whole subsystem of grammar is different (Grimes, 2010; Walker, 1982). Its grammatical features are more like languages spoken on the islands of Rote and Timor, which are genetically classified into Nuclear Timor subgroup (Blust, 2009). Unlike Hawu and Rote, Dhao has no dialect variation.

Children on Ndao Island speak Malay more than Dhao, while culturally have abandoned their native customary practices and shifted to Rote. As such, Dhao applies overlapping typology both linguistically and socio-culturally. Fox (1987), from anthropological prespective, has shown that Dhao shares features of Hawu and Rote through kinship terminology. The significance of kinship is that the terms can indicate the social transformation between contact communities. In terms of Dhao, kinship terms give evidence that Dhao has been influenced by Rotenese social system for long time, although it is obviously seen that Dhao still retains most of the original terms. For example, in the second generation, Dhao uses the term *baki* 'grandfather' and *bei* 'grandmother' which are identical to Rotenese term *ba'i* 'grandfather' and *bei* 'grandmother'. Those terms also indicate gender distinction, contrast to Hawu that does not distinguish gender. Hawu uses *èpu* 'grandparent' for both. For gender distinction, Hawu applies gender terms as modifier. The same is true for the first generation that Dhao uses *to'o* 'uncle' and *teto* 'aunt'. However, instead of following Rote system in descending generation, Dhao still retains the Hawu term *èpu* 'grandchild'. The usage of kinship terms in Dhao absolutely indicates the transformation of social system from Sawu to Rote system while still retaining most of the terms. In this respect, kinship terms of Dhao show an overlapping system between Hawu and Rote, which is in

Fox's terminology "a halfway house between Sawu and Rote". Such kind of change is in some way socially motivated (for more detail, see Fox, 1987). In addition to that, such changes also drive people of Dhao to apply the Rotenese socio-cultural system, which then also influence the linguistic system. It can be hypotesized that more terms, whether in kinship or other fields, will progressively be transformed to Rote-like structure following the socio-cultural system across generations.

AGREEMENT SYSTEM

The overlapping typology between Hawu-Dhao and Dhao-Rotenese is linguistically evident from their pronominal systems, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Pronominal System of Hawu, Dhao, and Rote[2]

Pron.	Hawu	Dhao			Rotenese		
	Free	**Free**	**Clitics**	**Pref.**	**Free**	**NOM**	**Pref.**
1SG	*yaa*	*ja'a*	*ku*	*k-*	*au*	*ø*	*ø/k*
2SG	*èu*	*èu*	*mu*	*m-*	*o*	*ø*	*m-*
3SG	*noo*	*nèngu*	*na / ne*	*n-*	*ndia*	*ana*	*n-*
1PL.in	*dii*	*èdhi*	*ti*	*t-*	*ita*	*ata*	*t-*
1PL.ex	*jii*	*ji'i*	*nga*	*ng-*	*ai*	*ø*	*m-*
2PL	*muu*	*miu*	*mi*	*m-*	*emi*	*ama*	*m-*
3PL	*raa*	*rèngu*	*ra*	*r-*	*sila*	*ala*	*r/l-*

As indicated in the table above, the free pronouns of Dhao and Hawu are closely identical in form, and very different from Rote. Not only are the lexical forms, but also the phonological representations are similar. However, when looking at the clitics and the pronominal prefixes, Dhao is more identical to Rote, and completely different from Hawu. Hawu does not have clitics and pronominal prefixes; therefore, free pronouns are applied to all positions and nominal functions. Unlike Hawu, Dhao and Rote have clitics and pronominal prefixes that can be applied to various positions and functions (Balukh, 2020; Tamelan, 2021). It is clearly seen from the phonological forms that Dhao pronominal prefixes are reduced form of the clitics, not from free pronouns. The pronominal prefixes of Dhao and Rotenese in turn are used as morphological devices to agree with subjects. Meanwhile, Hawu applies phonological strategy for the agreement between the verb and the object.

Object-Verb Agreement; Dhao vs. Hawu

The object agreement in Dhao and Hawu is phonological, instead of grammatical. They agree in number (singular and plural), but not person. In Dhao, the plural objects agree with verbs which have the final vowel /a/ and singular objects agree with the verb which have the final /e/, as illustrated in (3) below. In (3)a, the verb *para* 'to slaughter' ends with /a/ because the object is plural, that is *hahi lèmi* 'five pigs', whereas in (3)b the verb *pare* 'to slaughter' ends with /e/ because the object is singular, that is *hahi èèna* 'that pig'.

Dhao

(3) a. *ji'i* *par**a*** *hahi* ***lèmi***
1PL.ex slaughter pig five
'We slaughter five pigs'

b. *ji'i* *par**e*** *hahi* ***èèna***

[2] There are some phonological variants of pronouns depending on the dialectal variation of Hawu. For example, the form *yaa* '1sg' is used by Seba dialect which is dominant in Hawu, also Mesara and Liae, while Raijua D'ida dialect uses *joo* or *ja'o* '1sg' and other dialects, Dimu and Raijua Wawa use the form *j'aa* '1sg' which is lexically identical to Dhao. The only difference is the implosive sound on /j'/ (Grimes, 2010; Walker, 1982).

1PL.ex slaughter pig that
'We slaughter that pig'

Hawu verb *ègu* 'to fetch' in (4)a below agrees with the plural form *d'ue* 'two' which in this construction modifies the object *kerab'o* 'pumkin', while in (4)b the verb *ègo* 'to fetch' agrees with the singular form *he* 'one'.

Hawu (Walker, 1982)

(4) a. ***ègu*** *ri* *noo* *wo-kerab'o* ***d'ue*** *b'ue*
fetch ERG 3SG PROD-pumkin two COUNT(PL)
'He fetched two pumkins'

b ***ègo*** *ri* *roo* *ei-mèni* *wo-rai* ***he****-boto*
fetch ERG 3PL liquid-oil PROD-earth one-COUNT
'They fetched a bottle of kerosene'

It is said that the plural form is the unmarked form, and the singular form is the derived form, by reason that the plural form agrees with plural, generic, and mass NPs, whereas the singular form can only agree with singular NPs (Grimes, 2010, pp. 267–268; Walker, 1982, pp. 23–24).

Subject-Verb Agreement; Dhao vs. Rotenese

The subject agreement both in Dhao and Rotenese uses pronominal prefixes, which agree with subject in person and number. In Dhao, the prefixes inflect the vowel-initial verbs, while clitics appear before consonantal verbs, whereas in Rotenese, the prefixes are attached to bound roots of either verbs or prepositions, while nominative pronouns occur before free verb roots. In some grammatical constructions, clitics and prefixes co-occur. In this case, the clitics is interpreted as the subject of the construction. Clitics and free pronouns of Dhao are in complementary distribution.

The examples of subject agreement in Dhao and Rotenese are given in (5) through (7) below. Dhao inflects the vowel-initial verbs *neti* '3SG-bring'. The prefix *n-* agrees with free pronoun *nèngu* '3SG'. In Dhao, only eight vowel-initial verbs require prefixes to agree with the subject, as given in Table 2 below. Besides pronominal prefix, Dhao also has pronominal suffix which is attached to one verb only, that is *la-* 'to go' to agree with the subject, as shown in Table 3 below. It is an intradirective verb (Grimes, 2010:267). The example of subject agreement in Dhao with suffix is given in (6) below.

Dhao

(5) ***nèngu*** *dhoka* ***n****-èti* *adhe* *ana* *èèna*
3SG only 3SG-bring liver child that
'He brought only the liver of the child'

(6) ***Rika*** *la-****'e*** *dhasi*
Rika go-3SG sea
'One day Rika went to the beach'

Table 2: Dhao Subject Agreement with prefixes

Pron.	Pref.	'eat'	'take'	'know'	'see'	'bring'	'want'	'drink'	'hold'
1SG	*k-*	*ku'a*	*kore*	*ke'a*	*kèdhi*	*kèti*	*ko'o*	*kinu*	*kèd'u*
2SG	*m-*	*mu'a*	*more*	*me'a*	*mèdhi*	*mèti*	*mo'o*	*minu*	*mèd'u*
3SG	*n-*	*na'a*	*nare*	*ne'a*	*nèdhi*	*nèti*	*no'o*	*ninu*	*nèd'u*
1PL-in	*t-*	*ta'a*	*tare*	*te'a*	*tèdhi*	*tèti*	*to'o*	*tinu*	*tèd'u*

1PL-ex	*ng-*	*nga'a*	*ngare*	*nge'a*	*ngèdhi*	*ngèti*	*ngo'o*	*nginu*	*ngèd'u*
2PL	*m-*	*mi'a*	*mere*	*me'a*	*mèdhi*	*mèti*	*mo'o*	*minu*	*mèd'u*
3PL	*r-*	*ra'a*	*rare*	*re'a*	*rèdhi*	*rèti*	*ro'o*	*rinu*	*rèd'u*

Table 3: Dhao Subject Agreement with suffixes

Pronoun	Suffix	*la-* 'go'
1SG	*-ku*	*la-ku*
2SG	*-mu*	*la-mu*
3SG	*-'e*	*la-'e*
1PL-in	*-ti*	*la-ti*
1PL-ex	*-'a*	*la-'a*
2PL	*-mi*	*la-mi*
3PL	*-si*	*la-si*

As it is shown in Table 1 above, Rotenese has nominative pronouns (NOM) and pronominal prefixes. The prefixes are attached to bound roots of verbs and prespositions to agree with the subject in person and number, while NOM occur either before free verb roots or inflected verbs (see also Tamelan, 2021 for Dela-Oenale). The example of subject agreement is given in (7) below. The prefix *n-* is attached to the bound verb *-eni* to agree with the nominative subjects *ana* '3SG.NOM'. Another example with NP subject is given in (8). A few examples of inflected verbs and prepositions are illustrated in Table 4 below. In Rotenese, the verb for 'to eat' and the preposition 'from' are considered as irregular bound roots, while the verbs, such as 'to bathe' and 'to tell' are regular bound roots.

Rotenese

(7) ***ana*** *mai* ***n****-eni* *busa-n* *dua*
3SG.NOM come 3SG-bring dog-GEN two
'He comes with his two dogs'

(8) ***busa*** ***n****-a'a* *mba*
dog 3SG-eat meat
'The dog eats meat'

Table 4: Rotenese Subject Agreement

Pron.	Pref.	'eat'	'bathe'	'tell'	'from'
1SG	*(a-)*	*u'a*	*adiu*	*afada*	*eme*
2SG	*m(a)-*	*mu'a*	*madiu*	*mafada*	*muma*
3SG	*n(a)-*	*na'a*	*nadiu*	*nafada*	*neme*
1PL-in	*t(a)-*	*ta'a*	*tadiu*	*tafada*	*teme*
1PL-ex	*m(a)-*	*mi'a*	*madiu*	*mafada*	*mima*
2PL	*m(a)-*	*mi'a*	*madiu*	*mafada*	*mima*
3PL	*l(a)-*	*la'a*	*ladiu*	*lafada*	*leme*

DISCUSSION

The data and discussion presented in the previous sections have shown that (1) Hawu has VSO basic word order, whereas Dhao and Rotenese have the same typology of word order, SVO. (2) in terms of agreement, Hawu only applies object agreement and Rotenese only applies subject agreement, while Dhao applies two systems; object agreement, similar to Hawu and subject agreement identical to

Rotenese. (3) the agreement in Hawu is phonological and agreement in Rotenese is grammatical, while Dhao uses both phonological and grammatical devices. The summary is given in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Summary of analysis

Languages	**Word Order**	**S-/O-Agreement**	**Devices**
Hawu	VSO	Object agreement	Phonology
Dhao	SVO	Object agreement Subject agreement	Phonology Morphology
Rotenese	SVO	Subject agreement	Morphology

Referring to the language contact situation and the agreement system explicated above, the linguistic features that Dhao is applying today tend to be like Rotenese, instead of Hawu. The similar grammatical typology gives a strong indication that Dhao borrows not only the linguistic forms, but also the functions of the forms from Rotenese. The borrowing process has happened since very long time ago due to intensive contact between Dhao and Rotenese community. The sociolinguistic situation described in brief above indicates that the contact between Dhao and Rotenese is a displacive one, a contact situation where multilinguialism is found among the speakers of the dominated language (Velupillai, 2012, p. 402). Dhao speakers tend to learn Rotenese, but not vise versa. The reason is that Ndao in general very much rely on Rote in many cases, such as economy, education, and politics among others. Such type of contact situation results in some transferred forms and functions from Rotenese, such as the morphology of pronominal system. Since the borrowing of the grammatical system from Rotenese already becomes an existing feature in Dhao since long time, the system is then enhanced and more pronounced. It is because the intensive contact between languages results in grammatical change and adaptation (Campbell, 2018; Ross, 2013; Aikhenvald & Dixon, 2007:18).

LANGUAGE DOCUMENTATION AND LANGUAGE CONTACT

In this section we briefly discuss the contribution of language documentation to understanding language contact and grammatical features of languages in contact. Basically, the major aim of language documentation is to produce a long lasting and multipurpose records of a language (Gippert et al., 2006). The records in this case should involve a variety of types and genres of texts. The more the texts vary in type and genre, the more comprehensive the documentation is. The variability of the texts determines the scope of the documentation, a significant aspect in exploring the language under documentation.

Most of the time, language documenters or researchers focus on only a single language when doing documentation project due to limited financial support and allocated time. It is not misleading. However, language documentation projects are mostly conducted within a community where the language is typically endangered. The endangered languages in most cases have contact with some dominating languages, either neighboring languages or a regional lingua franca. In such a situation, whether code-switching, borrowing, or other sociolinguistic types may occur. These of course are represented in the variety of texts once the texts are recorded, transcribed, and annotated. In terms of exploring the linguistic features of languages represented in the texts, transcription and annotation play a significant role. Good and consistent transcription and annotation will help the researcher to explore the linguistic features in the texts, either phonological, grammatical, or semantic features.

As indicated in the previous sections, the pronominal system and agreement system of Dhao is identical to Rotenese, but Dhao still has some verbs that apply object agreement, similar to Hawu. These features cannot be explored without an in-depth documentation of the languages. If it is not well-documented, knowledge of the existence of such a unique pattern of multilingualism and language choice would have been lost (Campbell, 2018). Thus, it is important to document unusual and unique facts about language contact, socio-cultural facts such as language choice and language use, not just individual language in multilingual settings.

CONCLUSION

The overlapping grammatical typology of Dhao, which is between Hawu and Rotenese, is a consequence of language contact since long time. The agreement system shows that Dhao has both object agreement and subject agreement system. Such a grammatical system was actually borrowed from Rotenese and later extended not only in forms but also functions. Such unique feature as a result of language contact in a multilingual setting, like Dhao, can never be explored without a comprehensive language documentation. Therefore, language documentation plays a significant role in this case. Texts in a variety of types and genres should be documented in order to help with an in-depth analysis about the grammatical features of the language.

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