Dislocation in Amharic Complex Verbs and Beyond

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In Amharic, simple imperfective verbs can mark agreement with both a person prefix and a gender/number suffix, bolded in (2).

(1)　　**ti-**säbr-**i**　　　　　　　　SIMPLE IMPERFECTIVE
　　　　2- break.IPFV-**FSG**
　　　　'You (f.sg.) break' (Leslau 1995:301)

Complex imperfective verbs, which consist of an imperfective verb like (1) and an encliticized non-past auxiliary, can have three agreement markers: a prefix and suffix for the main verb and a suffix for the auxiliary, all bolded in (2).

(2)　　**ti-**　säbr-　　**i-**　allä-　　ʃ　　　　COMPLEX IMPERFECTIVE
　　　　2-　break.IPFV-　**FSG**- AUX.NPST- 2FSG
　　　　'you (f.sg.) break, you (f.sg.) will break' (Leslau 1995:342)

However, in 2nd and 3rd plural complex imperfective verbs, the suffixal component of agreement on the main verb (bolded in (3)a) is mysteriously absent, while the prefixal component remains. An empty box in (3)b indicates where the suffix is expected to be.

(3)　　SIMPLE IMPERFECTIVE　　　COMPLEX IMPERFECTIVE
　　　　a. **yi**-säbr-**u**　　　　　　　b. yi-säbr-☐　　all-　　　u
　　　　　3-break.IPFV-**PL**　　　　　　3-break.IPFV- AUX.NPST- PL
　　　　　'They break'　　　　　　　　　'They break, they will break' (Leslau 1995: 301, 342)

To address this puzzle, I develop a novel analysis in which the plural suffix has not vanished, but only moved away from its original location; specifically, it undergoes the post-syntactic morphological operation Local Dislocation (Embick and Noyer 2001, Embick 2003). I show how this analysis successfully predicts the distribution of agreement markers on complex imperfectives in a range of contexts (e.g., with object markers and focus particles). I also argue that a Local Dislocation analysis is more successful than alternative analyses based on contextual allomorphy, hiatus resolution, and/or avoidance of multiple exponence.

I then turn to two similar dislocation phenomena in other languages that have received thorough treatments recently. Clem, Rolle, and Dawson (2020) propose an analysis of Tiwa past tense dislocation in the hybrid theory DM-OT (Rolle 2020), and Arregi and Nevins (2018) treat Spanish imperative agreement dislocation with Generalized Reduplication (Harris and Halle 2005). I attempt to synthesize these results, identifying empirical commonalities across the dislocation effects in Amharic, Tiwa, and Spanish. I argue that neither DM-OT nor Generalized Reduplication are fully suitable for analyzing the effects, although each approach offers important insights. I develop an augmented/amended version of Local Dislocation (including a copying capacity), which generates the data successfully and which, I argue, is a better fit to dislocation phenomena in general. I close with some discussion of the implications for the order/nature of PF operations in general and for multiple exponence.