Chuukese, an Austronesian language, is spoken by about 20,000 speakers in Chuuk State, FSM in Micronesia (Spencer 1996; Lynch 1998). There has not been any research on Chuukese grammar in detail, other than an English-Chuukese dictionary by Goodenough and Sugita (1980; 1990). This paper reports my on-going research on Chuukese agreement and subject/object markings, based on my own data collection from native speakers.[1] One of my important findings on Chuukese is that it is one of the languages incorporating number to express politeness. This study illustrates and attempts to analyze the agreement patterns including the case of polite plurals.

Chuukese verbs mark person and number for their subjects and objects, but not gender (1).[2] The first person plural is divided into inclusive (including and addressee) versus exclusive (excluding any addressee), as given in (2).

Chuukese is a pro-drop language, and independent pronouns are used only with an emphasis. I suggest that Chuukese subject and object markings behave similar to Chicheŵa discussed in Bresnan and Mchombo (1987), in that the SMs are obligatory, whereas the OMs are not, as shown in (1); however, when the OM occurs, the object is focused, and there cannot be another nominal or pronominal object (see (1f-f')). I apply Bresnan and Mchombo's (1987) analysis to Chuukese that the SMs can be either an agreement marker or the grammatical subject argument itself, whereas the OMs are always a grammatical object argument when they appear, which explains ungrammaticality of the sentence in (1f ').

I also found that all three person features in Chuukese also employ a different number feature from their usual meaning for politeness, as in many other languages discussed in Head (1978), Corbett (2000) and Hahm (2010), for example. As shown in (3), any linguistic entity with a plural phi-feature can have a polite interpretation towards a single individual. I analyze these pronouns and subject/object markings to possess formal number features, and hence the predicates agree syntactically with their agreement triggers. However, the ones in plural have an ambiguous meaning of an aggregate vs. a single polite referent.

Interestingly, an object argument of transitive verbs is not required to be overt, unlike a subject argument. The referent of the unexpressed object is understood from its discourse context or its referent is indefinite and non-specific (1d). I explain this discrepancy between subject and object arguments by the optional incorporated object arguments embedded in the lexical entries of the transitive verbs.

There are lots of researches to be done in Chuukese grammar, which I anticipate to explore in my future research. I believe that my research on this understudied language contributes to the field of linguistics.

(1) a. (Kich) si-sani   kangit.   vs.   a'. *Kich sani kangit.
        we.INCL SM.1.INCL.PL-like   mango
        'We (including an addressee) like mangoes.'

    b. (En)   ke-sani   kangit.   vs.   b'. *En sani kangit.
        you.SG   SM.2SG-like mango
        'You (SG) like mangoes.'

    c. (Ii)   / John e-sani   kangit.   vs.   c'. *Ii sani kangit. or *John sani kangit.
        She or he/ John   SM.3SG-like mango.
        'She or he / John likes mango.'

    d. (Ir)   re-sani.   vs.   d'. *Ir sani kangit.
        they   SM.3PL-like
        'They like things/anything in general.'

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[2] Although the given examples are spelled out by native speakers, some people might not agree with how they are transcribed here since Chuukese orthography is still in debate.

e. (Ngang)   u-san-uk.
    I   SM.1SG-like-OM.3SG
    'I like him or her.'

f. (Ngang)   u-sani   John.   vs.   f'. *(Ngang) u-san-uk John.
    I   SM.1SG-like   John
    'I like John.'

(2) a. Independent subject pronouns[3]

	SG	PL	
1	ngang	Inclusive	kich
		Exclusive	am
2	en	ami	
3	ii	ir	

b. Subject makings

	SG	PL	
1	u/uwa-	Inclusive	si/sa-
		Exclusive	ai/eiwa-
2	ke/ka-	ou/owa-	
3	e/a-	re/ra-	

c. Object markings

	SG	PL	
1	-ei	Inclusive	-kich
		Exclusive	-kem
2	-uk	-kemi	
3	-ii	-ir	

(3) a. (**Am**)   **ai**-pwe   anisi   John
        we.EXCL SM.1EXCL.PL/1.SG.POLITE-will help   John
        'We[EXCL] will help John.' *or* 'I[POLITE] will help John.'

b. John   e-pwe   anisi-**kemi**
    John   SM.3SG-will   help-OM.2PL/2SG.POLITE
    'John will help you[PL].' *or* 'John will help you[SG.POLITE].'

c. Nouch   tokter   **re**-pwe   anisi   John
    our.INCL   doctor   SM.3PL/3SG.POLITE-will   help   John
    'The doctor [POLITE] *or* doctors will help John.'

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[3] Chuukese possesses a complicated phonological system, and thus the orthography might vary in each word.