

How information structure influences Bantu grammar

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How information structure influences Bantu grammar

Recap from Monday:

- accessibility (how active is a referent?)
- topic (what the sentence is about)
- focus (new or contrastive information, triggering alternatives)

It's PANCAKES I like.

I LIKE pancakes.

How information structure influences Bantu **Grammar**

- Inflectional morphology
 - tense/aspect
 - subject, object
- Case morphology
- Valency/transitivity
- Word order
- Syntactic operations
 - passive
 - extraction (wh, relative)

To show

- Conjugational morphology and valency dependent on focus
- Subject marking and word order dependent on topic
- Passive dependent on pragmatic promotion
- Different noun forms ('case') dependent on focus

■ What does this mean, for our research and for theory?

Makhuwa (P31, Van der Wal 2011: 1735)

(1) a. DJ Nthíyáná o-hoó-cá (nráma). 1.woman 1SM-PFV.DJ-eat 3.rice 'the woman ate rice'

> b. CJ Nthíyáná o-c-aalé *(nramá). 1.woman 1SM-eat-PFV.CJ 3.rice 'the woman ate *rice*'

Makhuwa (P31, Van der Wal 2014: 49)

- (2) a. CJ Eshímá e-ruw-iy-é tsiítsáale. 9.shima 9SM-stir-PASS-PFV.CJ like.that 'Shima is cooked like that.'
 - b. CJ Ni-n-rúpá wakhaámá-ni. 1PL.SM-PRS.CJ-sleep 16.bed-LOC 'We sleep in a bed.'
 - c. CJ Ki-naan-alé n' iipulá. 1SG.SM-wet-PFV.CJ with 9.rain 'I got wet by the rain.' lit. 'I was wetted with rain.'

Kikuyu (E51, Morimoto 2017)

- (3) a. mwaná á-rá-re-iré mbó:so. 1.child 1SM-PST-eat-PFV 6.bean 'The child ate the beans.'
 - b. *mwaná áráreíre. 'The child ate.'
- (4) a. mwaná ní á-rá-re-iré mbó:so. 1.child F 1SM-PST-eat-PFV 6.bean 'The child did eat the beans.'
 - b. mwaná ní áráreiré. 'The child ate.'

- Verb forms can require an information-structural complement (conjoint needs a focus to follow)
- T/A morphology depends on the information-structural status of the following element

Subject inversion

Kinyarwanda (JD61, Ngoboka 2016: 356)

(5) a. Abáana nti-ba-nywá inzogá. 2.children NEG-2SM-drink 9.alcohol 'Children don't drink alcohol.'

b. Inzogá nti-zi-nywá abáana.
 9.alcohol NEG-9SM-drink 2.children
 'Alcohol does not drink children.'

Subject inversion

Kinyarwanda (JD61, Kimenyi 1980:141)

(6) Instrument Inversion

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Ikárámu i-ra-andik-iish-a úmwáalímu
9.pen 9SM-PRS-write-INSTR-FV 1.teacher
'The pen is used to write by the teacher'
lit. 'The pen writes the teacher.'
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Xhosa (S41, Carstens & Mletshe 2015)

- (7) Default agreement Inversion Ku-lil-é u-Sindiswa. 17SM-cry-PFV.CJ AUG-1.Sindiswa
 - i. 'Sindiswa cried' (answers 'what happened?')
 - ii. 'It's Sindiswa who cried' (answers 'who cried?')

Subject inversion

- The preverbal position is reserved for topical referents
- "Subject" marking can be argued to be topic agreement (Morimoto 2006, Givón 1976)
- (Then what is the grammatical role of the postverbal logical subject?)

Passive

Cuwabo (P34, Guerois 2015, adapted)

(8) Mí-rí dhí-n-ó-j-úw-á na nyenyéle. 4-tree 4SM-IPFV.DJ-15-eat-PASS-FV by 10a.ant 'The trees are being eaten by the ants.'

Bemba (M42, Kula & Marten 2010: 118)

(9) Bá-alí-poosa ífy-ákulya (ku bá-ána). 2SM-PAST-throw 7-food by 2-children 'The food was thrown away (by the children).'

Passive

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Teke-Kukuya (B77, Li 2019 presentation)
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- (10) Nkiní ba-nzulí bá-dzí. 5.corn 2-cat 2-eat.PST 'The corn is eaten by the cats.'
- (11) Ndíri me mu-káli me báana ki-mbúli á-dzí. 1SM.say 1SG.PRN 1-wife 1SG.PRN 2.children 7.lion 1SM-eat.PST (He) says "my wife and my children were eaten by the lion".'

Passive (and inversion)

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Matengo (N13, van der Wal 2015)

'Has the fire been put out?'

(12) ji-súsw-i íyuula

9SM-extinguish-PFV 9.rain

'the rain has put it out' / 'it was put out by the rain'
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Passive

Sesotho (S33, Demuth 1990: 73)

(13) a. O-o-nk-il-e kae? 2SG.SM-OM-get-PFV-FV where 'Where did you get it from?'

> b. Ke-o-f-uo-e ke ausi Linaese. 1SG.SM-OM-give-PASS-FV by sister Linaese 'I was given it by sister Linaese.'

Passive

 A 'passive' does not necessarily manipulate grammatical roles but is motivated in information structure

	syntactic promotion non- agent	syntactic demotion agent	promotion patient to topic	demotion agent to non-topic
passive	+	+	+	+
stative	+	+	-	+
VS order	-	-	-	+
ЗрІ	-	-	-	+
OV order	-	-	+	-
OSV order	-	_	+	+

o-mu-sota [+A] 3A-3PX-snake	mu-sota 3PX-snake	[-A]
e-bi-tabo [+A] 8A-8PX-books	bi-tabo 8px-books	[-A]
a-ma-tooke [+A] 6A-6PX-plantain	ma-tooke 6PX-plantain	[-A]

Luganda (JE15)

- (14) a. Y-a-gúla e-bí-tábó. 1SM-PAST-buy 8A-8PX-books 'He bought books.'
 - b. Y-a-gúla ___-bi-tábó.
 1SM-PAST-buy 8PX-books
 'He bought BOOKS.' (Hyman & Katamba 1993)
- (15) a. Y-a-yéra o-lú-ggya. 1SM-PAST-sweep 11A-11PX-yard 'She swept the yard.'
 - b. Nédda, y-a-yérá nnyúmba / # e-nnyúmba. no 1SM-PAST-sweep 9.house 'No, she swept the house.' (vdWal &

(16) Y-a-yérá (*e-)nnyúmba y-okká... 1SM-PAST-sweep (9A-)9.house 9-only 'She swept only the house...

> ... sí ki-yûngu. NEG.COP 7PX-kitchen ... not the kitchen.'

- (17) a. Y-a-lyá n' á-ká-wûnga. 1SM-PAST-eat and 12A-12PX-ugali 'He ate even ugali.'
 - b. * Y-a-lyá né _ká-wûnga. 1SM-PAST-eat and 12PX





Kisikongo (H16a, de Kind 2016)

(18) Nkí ósùmbìdì? nki o-sumb-idi what 2SG.SM-buy-PFV 'What did you buy?'

Nzó yàyíná nsùmbìdì.
_-N-zo yayina N-sumb-idi
9-house 9DEM 1SG.SM-buy-PFV
'I bought that house.'

(19) Ènzó yàyíná, mònó nsúmbìdí yò.
e N-zo yayina mono N-sumb-idi yo
AUG 9-house 9DEM 1SG.PRO 1SG.SM-buy-PFV 9PRO
'That house, I bought it.'

- The shape of a noun can be dependent not just on morphological case or definiteness
- Instead, it can be governed by information-structural factors

What does this mean?

- 1. We need to keep information structure into account when describing the grammar of a language
 - How can we do that?
- 2. Our model of grammar probably does not fit these languages
 - If we are serious about Universal Grammar, our model should be able to account for, as well as be based on, non-European languages too
 - How can we change the model?

How to check IS in description?

- Provide contexts for examples
- Use longer stretches of natural speech to track referents
- Use diagnostics (e.g. QUIS)
 - question-answer pairs
 - corrections
 - contrasts
 - focus-sensitive particles
 - indefinite, quantified etc. NPs

Who is eating the apple and who is eating the banana?

QUIS

Who is hitting the ball?

S1-110



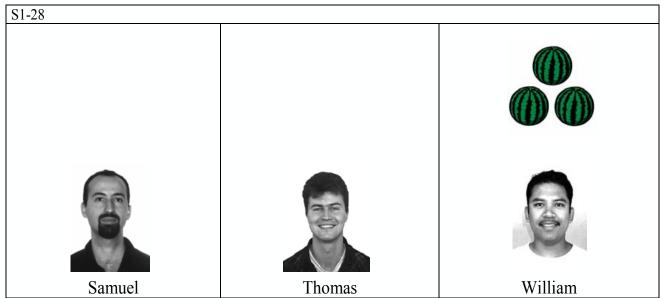
ConditionF Item6

S1-33



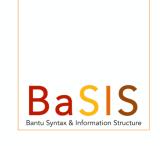
ConditionB Item2

Does William have four melons?



Item3





- Assume that not all languages have all features as grammatical(ised) features (contra Miyagawa's 2010 Strong Uniformity)
- Find out which aspects of information structure are in the syntax as formal features
- Compare whether such features perhaps take the role of nominal licensing (case marking)





- Information structure can affect not just prosody but
 - word order
 - agreement
 - 'case' marking
 - syntactic operations
- There are tools to study information structure
- We need to take information structure seriously in description as well as theory formation

https://bantusyntaxinformationstructure.com