

The logo for BaSIS, with 'Ba' in red, 'S' in yellow, and 'IS' in brown.

Bantu Syntax & Information Structure

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

Conjoint/disjoint alternation

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*'

Conjoint/disjoint alternation

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.'

Conjoint/disjoint alternation

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 *nĩ* á-rá-re-iré mbó:so.
1.child F 1SM-PST-eat-PFV 6.bean
'The child did eat the beans.'
- b. mwaná *nĩ* áráreiré.
'The child ate.'

Conjoint/disjoint alternation

- 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

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.'

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

Teke-Kukuya (B77, Li 2019 presentation)

(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)

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'

Sesotho (S33, Demuth 1990: 73)

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	-	-	-	+
3pl	-	-	-	+
OV order	-	-	+	-
OSV order	-	-	+	+

Augment

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

Augment

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 &

Augment

- (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 á-ká-wûnga.
1SM-PAST-eat and 12PX



Augment

Kisikongo (H16a, de Kind 2016)

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

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

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

Augment

- 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*

QUIS

Who is hitting the ball?

S1-110



ConditionF Item6

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





S1-33



ConditionB Item2

Does William have four melons?

S1-28

 <p>Samuel</p>	 <p>Thomas</p>	  <p>William</p>
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Item3

How to change the model?

- 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)

Summary

- 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>