

The Proposition for Morph Ordering Elegance in Bantu Languages: The Case of Polymorphic Verbs

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to propose Morph ordering Elegance in Bantu languages in relation to polymorphic verbs. Many conjectures have been put forward aiming to clarify affix ordering in Bantu verbal extensions e.g. Lexical Mapping Theory (LMT), Bresnan and Zaenen, 1990; Mirror Principle, Baker, 1985; Item-and Arrangement Theory, and Incorporation theory, Baker, 1988). These theories account for grammatical structure and arguments structure after verbal morphologization. Of all these theories, polymorphic Swahili verbs like: fung-ish-an-ish-a ‘make to close each other’ (Khamisi, 208:102) or sho-sh-ek-a ‘turnable’ in Kisukuma (Goodman, 1960) are difficult to figured out since the sense of the word is not the sum of its parts and these theories and others do not account for such phenomena. In addressing this phenomenon, 20 documents were reviewed whose polymorphic verb ordering behavior were of either opaqueness or transparency. It was found that both un activated and activated post radical verbal morphs ordered together on a single verbal root or stem were not accounted for by existing theories. This made the proposition of Morph ordering Elegance with two tenets: Morph uncanonical Condition and Morph canonical Condition. Morph Ordering Elegance handles even language with more than four or five ordered morphs in single morphs. The paper concludes that, linguistics is a matter of facts and factorizing data depending on how the language dictates in a given paradigm naturally. In this scope, innovative development through language can be achieved if our languages can be well explained pragmatically and theoretically as opposed to generalizations.

Keywords: Polymorphic Verbs, Morph Ordering, Elegance, Valency

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