

Swahili Syntax (Anthony Vitale, 1981)

Grammatical Sketch

Very brief grammatical sketch, strong focus on syntax which is nice to see since most grammar sketches avoid syntax as much as possible :)

SVO structure

“Swahili is a positional language rather than a case language. That is, it is at least partly the position of constituents in a phrase-marker which determines grammatical relations such as "subject", "object" and so on. (p. 18)

- Proposes SVO as the canonical word order with the subject defined as the NP directly dominated by S and the object being the NP daughter to V. (no internal subject hypothesis here).

Variations in word order

“Word order may differ from the normal SVO sequence due to such factors as emphasis, definiteness, and type of information (i.e. "old" vs "new"). (p 19).

Permutations are typically unambiguous due to the very clear verbal morphology indicating the noun class + person/number of the subject and object.

“ If both NP's contain the same feature specifications for class and person, a late movement rule such as this one is typically blocked (p. 19).

These are typically interpreted as having an SVO order unless intonational changes accompany the sentence (see Maw 1969).

Simplex sentences

Complex sentences

The syntax of voice

Theoretical implications

Going to skip this part because I'm working in a completely different framework (and, in fact, most generative syntacticians are as well).

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