

# On the issue of clitic vs morpheme

Sandra suggests contacting Dr. Botne to ask about whether the pre-verbal markers in Bantu languages are morphemes or separate clitics.

I can also prepare a questionnaire to give to someone like Dr. Omar to see if certain things are possible with clitics in Swahili.

Still need to read 'on clitics'.

Sandra says this will be a good paper for TLT next summer.

## On Clitics:

### Diagnostics for whether you have a clitic:

- Ordering relative to other markers can change (p. 2)
- Phonological rules that apply within word boundaries do not apply
- If the marker is bound to the root, it is a morpheme
- If a morpheme is in construction with an affix it is either a base or an affix
- " Proper parts of words do not undergo rules of deletion under identity"
  - Means that yellowish or grayish happens not yellow or grayish
  - E.g. there is no deletion when coordinated with a similarly inflected component
- Markers that are not accented are affixes

"Binding, Construction with affixes and accent are the most susceptible to attack"

## Typology of clitics:

First class:

The "unaccented bound form acts as a variant of a stressed free form with the same cognitive meaning and with similar phonological makeup"

- The unaccented bound unit is said to be "conjoint" while the other is said to be "independent" or "strong".

## Second Class:

"Cases where a free morpheme, when unaccented may be phonologically reduced, the resultant form being phonologically subordinated to a neighboring word" ( p. 5)

## Third Class:

" Cases where a morpheme that is always bound and always unaccented show considerable syntactic freedom in the sense that they can be associated with words of a variety of morphosyntactic categories."

"Frequently, such a 'bound word' is semantically associated with an entire constituent while being phonologically attached to one word of this constituent and ordinarily the bound word is located at the very margins of the word, standing outside even inflectional affixes" (p.6)

# How are verbal markers discussed in the literature?

## The Bantu Languages 1st ed ()

“ Bantu languages are agglutinating. Verbs have an elaborate set of affixes. Most Bantu languages have non-derived and derived nouns, the latter having an inflectional prefix and a derivational suffix. For verbs and nouns, the conventional analysis (Ch. 5) starts with an (abstract) root/radical, most often of the shape -(i)CV(C)-. For nouns a stem is formed by the addition of a derivational suffix (mostly consisting of a single vowel). For verbs, an (abstract) base may be derived from the root, via the suffixation of an extension, and the

addition of a final inflectional suffix then provides a stem, to which pre-stem inflection is added. The set of suffixes is limited, for nouns and verbs. For nouns a class prefix is then added, and in some languages, a pre-prefix. All nouns are assigned to a class. Over twenty such classes are reconstructed for PB, although most of today's languages have between twelve and twenty (a few languages reduced or even eliminated classes, see e.g. Chs 15, 16, and especially 23). A class is characterized by: a distinct prefix, a specific (and characteristic) singular/plural pairing (a 'gender'), and agreement with other constituents. During most of the twentieth century the semantic arbitrariness of noun classes was emphasized but recent years have seen attempts to find semantic generalizations. Bantu languages have been described as verby. The verb is pivotal in the sentence, it incorporates much information, and may stand alone as a sentence. Nearly all Bantu languages are pro-drop. In many languages verbs have six possible pre-stem positions, and since some of these may be filled by more than one morpheme, it is often possible to get a string of a dozen or more morphemes in one verbal word. -- p. 8

“ However, this diversity must not be allowed to obscure the fundamental principle of double representation which is common to most Bantu languages, albeit to greatly varying degrees: information coded in the syntax of the sentence may be cumulatively or alternatively coded in the verb morphology. Any sentence can be reduced to its verb without ceasing to function as a sentence --p 125

## The Bantu Languages 2nd ed ()

“ Preceding a verbal stem, we may find prefixes specifying, amongst other things, the person or noun class of the subject as well as inflectional categories such as time, aspect, negation, etc. (p 175)

“ Slots to the left and right of the Root and Extension(s) in (1) involve inflection. (p 205).

“ Bantu languages with grammatical agreement-like object marking (Stage II) include, for example, Swahili G42. Swahili object markers can serve a pronominal function, resuming objects mentioned earlier in the discourse, but they also serve a grammatical agreement function: object marking is (almost) obligatory with overt human objects (especially definite ones), as in (21a), and common with definite non-human objects, as in (21c). (p 275)

“ Riedel (2009: 42, 46) affirms that the object marker in these examples occurs even though the co-referential object noun phrase is in its base position, not dislocated. This means that class 1/2 object markers in Swahili can be analysed as agreement markers (22). (p 275)

“ However, there are also arguments against confounding subjects and topics. Most generative analyses have, in fact, rejected the Bresnan and Mchombo (1987) proposal that the subject marker may function as an incorporated pronoun. For one thing, subject marking is typically obligatory in inflected verb forms, and obligatoriness is more consistent with morphological agreement than with syntactic incorporation. Furthermore, in complex verb phrases, several subject markers can occur in agreement with one subject. (p 281)

## A Comparison of Approaches to Word Class Tagging: Disjunctively vs. Conjunctively Written Bantu Languages (Taljad & Bosch 2006)

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In this article it is argued that the different orthographic systems obscure the morphological similarities and that these systems impact directly on word class tagging for the two languages.

The authors argue that different approaches are needed for word-level tagging when working with disjunctive and conjunctive languages as a result. In particular for the disjunctive language (Northern Sotho), no separation of morphemes has to happen, the tagger is doing both part of speech tagging and something resembling morphological analysis, then some word-formation rules would need to be applied to determine how the small disjunctive pieces fuse together.

“ In the case of Zulu, the morphological analyser plays a significant role on levels I and II where constituent roots and affixes are separated and identified by means of the modelling of two general linguistic components. The morphotactics component contains the word formation rules, which determine the construction of words from the inventory of morphemes (roots and affixes). This component includes the classification of morpheme sequences. The morphophonological alternations component describes the morphophonological changes between lexical and surface levels (cf. Pretorius & Bosch, 2003: 273–274).

“ Finally, Northern Sotho and Zulu are on a par on level III, where the identification of word classes, associated with the assigning of tags, takes place.

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