

Dynamic Syntax and Multiple Object Marking

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A lot of the present literature on objects in Bantu suggests that the order of multiple object constructions is fixed and that this order is subject to thematic hierarchies which extend to the ordering of object markers. Recent data shows that this is not strictly so and that cross language generalisations as to the ordering of objects, and object markers, cannot be made. Further, there is a typological split between Bantu languages allowing one object marker, such as Swahili, and those that allow more than one, such as Tswana.

Dynamic Syntax uses a process of incremental tree growth to model the parse of a natural language utterance. Using a DS approach, object markers are analysed as syntactic elements and the typological variation between languages with one object marker and those with more than one is accounted for by employing locally unfixed nodes within the DS tree structure. In languages with multiple object markers, the positions of the object concords are fixed with respect to the discourse context by employing an extended notion of constructive case which allows for the iterative introduction of multiple object markers. This also predicts a flexible order in multiple object constructions, as is found in Tswana.