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The Syntax of Chichewa. Sam Mchombo. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. 149 pp.

The Syntax of Chichewa is a thorough description of Chichewa syntactic structures. It is informed by extensive research based on various aspects of African languages, in particular Bantu languages. This book is very impressive in that in addition to describing Chichewa syntactic structures, the author creatively addresses the different interfaces: between phonology and morphology, phonology and syntax and morphology and syntax. Additionally, the various contributions of the study of African languages to linguistic theory are highlighted. Instead of restricting himself to a particular theoretical framework, the author provides an elaborate description based on a diversity of theoretical approaches. This is achieved through an analysis of areas such as phonetics and phonology, clause structure, relative clauses, argument structure and linguistic processes in the verb domain.

The introductory chapter provides an overview of the Bantu language family and places Chichewa in three Southern African countries. In addition the chapter provides general demographics of the language. Chapter one also outlines the general features of Chichewa while providing the various proposals to account for the status of noun prefixes in Chichewa and Bantu languages in general. Through the description of the phonological system of Chichewa, the author shows the relevance of tone to syntactic configurations. In particular this interaction between tone and relative-clause formation is explored in detail in chapter 2 and 4. The author also discusses stress assignment and highlights areas that may require further research within the area of tone (p. 16).

The discussion on clause structure (chapter three) is particularly interesting because it highlights the role of tone in determining the relation of the external noun phrase (NP) to the verb since this cannot be accounted for by its structural position or government. The author also mentions comparable analysis of the treatment and status of the object markers in other languages such as Kirundi and Kihaya. Chapter three closes with a discussion of modals and how they differ from verbal suffixes.

Chapter four provides an elaborate description of nominal complementation, in particular the relative clause. The role of relative clause in cleft and question formation is also described in detail. In addition, the author discusses the various roles of the subject marker and object marker in relative clause formation. In this chapter, the author provides an excellent example of the application of linguistic theory to provide a unified analysis. Additionally, the author poses questions that may be of interest to scholars working with other languages that are related to Chichewa.

Chapters five and six deal with the morphology of the verb stem. The author discusses verbal extensions in detail. Also, the author also talks about the status of pre-verb-stem morphemes and contrasts these with post verb-stem morphemes and provides a tree to represent the verb in

Chichewa (p.70). Mchombo further discusses the much debated issue of the ordering of verbal suffixes in Bantu and provides some of the questions that guided research in this area in Bantu languages.

The concluding chapter outlines some of the linguistic processes associated with the verb-stem. These include reduplication, compounding and nominal derivation. The author also discusses how various theoretical approaches have attempted to account for morpheme ordering in Bantu. Mchombo makes reference to Mirror Principle, Templatic Morphology and Thematic Roles and provides brief historical accounts of each approach.

Overall, the book is clearly arranged and written in an accessible style. It provides data from a variety of languages that may be used in cross-linguistic studies or within Bantu languages. In addition, the book provides examples of how to apply and test theory in less researched languages, a skill that is beneficial for linguistic students interested in Bantu languages. *The Syntax of Chichewa* would be a valuable teaching/learning resource for students of Bantu linguistics.

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