ON THE TYPOLOGY OF DIRECTIONAL VERBS IN BANTU*

Richard Gaines

Abstract: This paper investigates data from ten Bantu languages in terms of Talmy’s typological framework, which distinguishes V- and S-languages. The former conflate the semantic notions [Motion] (e.g., go) and [Direction] (e.g., up) in verbs; the latter express these notions with distinct syntactic units. Also investigated are complex motion events involving [Manner] (e.g., run), with V-languages expressing [Manner] distinct from verbs, while S-languages conflate [Motion+Manner]. The study shows that Bantu languages employ a V-language strategy conflating [Motion+Direction] with [Manner] commonly expressed in a separate subordinate clause.

1. Introduction

The investigation of the lexicalization patterns used to express physical motion events constitutes a rich area for typological and language-specific studies (Talmy 1985). Although a few studies involving both cross-linguistic and language-specific characterizations of physical motion events in African languages have recently appeared (see, for example, Schaefer 1985, Schaefer & Gaines 1997, and Gaines, Mbaye & Schaefer 1999), Dimmendaal (2000) has noted, with respect to African languages in particular, that the study of such lexicalization patterns is a domain in need of further research. This study addresses this need by examining lexicalization patterns in a small sample of Bantu languages.

Central to the analysis of physical motion events are the two semantic elements Motion and Direction. Motion describes the act of physical displacement (e.g., move, go), while Direction delimits the trajectory taken by the entity in motion (e.g., into, down, up, around). Talmy (1985, 1987), in his cross-linguistic investigations of physical motion events, has identified two language types, what he calls V- and S-languages. These language types are distinguished with respect to their strategies for expressing Motion and Direction. V-languages incorporate Motion and Direction in a single lexical item, the verb. This strategy can be illustrated by the French l’homme traverse la rue ‘the man is crossing the street,’ in which both Motion and Direction are lexicalized in the verb traverser ‘to cross, move across.’ In contrast to the V-language strategy, S-languages express Motion and Direction in distinct syntactic units; Motion surfaces in the verb while Direction appears as a separate syntactic element, for example, as a preposition. This strategy is typical of German and can be illustrated by a phrase such as Der Mann geht über die Straße ‘the man is crossing the street.’ In this case, Motion is expressed by the verb gehen ‘to go, move,’ while Direction is expressed by the preposition über ‘over, across.’

More complex motion events involve the incorporation of the semantic element Manner. As with simple motion events, languages select distinct strategies for expressing Manner. V-languages, which incorporate both Motion and Direction in the verb, express Manner in a separate syntactic element. For example, French commonly utilizes a gerundive phrase such as en courant ‘by running’ to express Manner, as in l’homme traverse la rue en courant ‘the man is running across the street.’ S-languages, on the other hand, conflate Manner and Motion in the verb, while Direction continues to

* I would like to thank Robert Botne and the audience at the 1999 Mid-America Linguistics Conference, University of Kansas, Lawrence, for their comments on earlier versions of this paper. Any errors and omissions are my own.
surface in a syntactically distinct element. In German, for example, the lexicalization of Manner and Motion is demonstrated by the verb *laufen* ‘to run,’ which co-occurs with the Directional element *über* ‘over, across,’ in *Der Mann läuft über die Straße* ‘the man is running across the street.’

Along with Motion and Direction (and Manner, if the event is complex), the semantic elements Figure and Ground are included in the complete syntactic constructions used in the investigation of motion events. The Figure represents the object in motion, which is typically the subject in intransitive (i.e., non-causative) motion events. The Ground represents the reference point with regard to which the object is moving. Thus, in the sentence *the man entered the house*, the noun *man* is the Figure while *house* expresses the Ground element (see Talmy 1985 for a full discussion of Figure and Ground elements).

In a preliminary investigation of African languages based on Talmy’s typological framework, Schaefer and Gaines (1997) uncovered two principal characteristics of African languages. First, African languages tend to employ the V-language strategy of conflating Motion and Direction for the expression of simple motion events. Second, a variety of syntactic strategies are employed to express complex motion events. In the Niger-Kordofanian phylum, for example, languages utilize no fewer than four strategies to express complex motion events (for further discussion, see Section 4).

Given the comprehensive scope of the Schaefer & Gaines study, this paper focuses solely on the Bantu sub-family of Niger-Kordofanian in order to address two questions: (1) does a closer look at one sub-family of languages reveal a consistent V-language pattern as predicted by the earlier investigation?; and (2) does a restriction in the scope of the investigation to one sub-family reveal a concomitant reduction in the number of strategies employed to express complex motion events? In order to answer these questions, I compared data from a sample set of ten Bantu languages: Duala, Ewondo, and Tunen from the northwest part of the Bantu zone; Ruund and Herero from the central and southwestern areas, respectively; Ha, Gikuyu, and Swahili from the east; and Tswana and Zulu from the southeast. Lexical data were compared in all languages for simple motion events. Syntactic data were analyzed from four of the ten languages, Gikuyu, Swahili, Tswana, and Zulu.

The discussion is organized in the following manner: In section 2, lexical and syntactic data are analyzed to determine the strategy used in the expression of simple motion events; in Section 3, syntactic data alone are utilized in the investigation of complex motion events; concluding remarks are given in Section 4, while section 5 discusses areas for future research.

## 2. Simple Motion Events

One may begin by considering single lexical items found across Bantu languages that evince a common pattern of conflating Motion and Direction. The Cameroonian languages Duala A.24 (Ittmann 1939, 1976), Tunen A.44 (Dugast 1967), and Ewondo A.72 (Redden 1979) all consistently reveal the lexicalization of Motion and Direction in their verbs, as shown by the data in (1), as do the eastern and western languages, Ha J.61 (Nakagawa 1992), Ruund K.23 (Nash 1991), and Herero R.31 (Irle 1917), as shown in (2).

Although the preceding lexical data seem to indicate a consistent V-language strategy, lexical data alone do not constitute a sufficient basis for analysis. Supporting evidence for V-language status can be found at the syntactic level when the motion verb does not require a distinct direc-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Duala A.24</th>
<th>Tunen A.44</th>
<th>Ewondo A.72</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>enter, move into</td>
<td>!nge-a</td>
<td>f, !n</td>
<td>#i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exit, move out</td>
<td>bu'sa~</td>
<td>fa'm</td>
<td>ku', !</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ascend, move up</td>
<td>ondea</td>
<td>ba'l</td>
<td>bE'd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Directional motion in Bantu

descend, move down | siba | lo~ | sus

cross, move across | eka~me2~ne~ | b, | | asE~n | daN

encircle, move around | kilan

(2) Ha J.61 | Ruund K.23 | Herero R.31

enter, move into | -!njira | -andam | -hita

exit, move out | -tu!ruka | -budik | -pitira

ascend, move up | -ku$uka | -kanduk | -ronda

descend, move down | -shungumuka | -kurumuk | -rauka

cross, move across | -ambuka | -aawuk | -konda

tional element of a non-locative nature. Therefore, a look at a selection of directional motion verbs syntactically is necessary in order to confirm V-language properties for Bantu in general.

Consider first the Kenyan language Gikuyu E.51 (Barlow 1975, Benson 1964, Mugane 1997). The V-language lexicalization pattern is found in simple directional verbs, such as those in (3). These directional verbs are immediately followed by a noun phrase expressing the Ground, as shown by the sentences in (4). This juxtaposition of verb and Ground element precludes the possibility of Direction being expressed as a distinct syntactic unit, and so provides further evidence for the conflation of Motion and Direction in the verb.

(3) Gikuyu E.51

erenter, move into | -ing, | ra

exit, move out | -uma

ascend, move up | -ambata

descend, move down | -iku|ru|ka

(4) a. mu|thuuri n, j a-nger, | r-ire n y, | mba

man 3S-move.into-CMPL house
‘the man entered the house’

b. mu|tumia n, j a-u m-ire n y, | mba

woman 3S-move.out-CMPL house
‘the woman exited the house’

c. mu|thuuri n, j a-mbat-ire k, j r, | jma

man 3S-move.up-CMPL hill
‘the man ascended the hill’

d. mu|tumia n, j a-iku | r)k-ire k, j r, | jma

woman 3S-move.down-CMPL hill
‘the woman descended the hill’

1 For their time, effort and syntactic data, I would like to thank Zilungile Sosibo for Zulu, Kassim Kassim for Swahili, and M thoni Njage for Gikuyu. Data for Tswana are from Schaefer (1985).

2 Abbreviations in this paper are: 3s third person singular; CMPL completive; PST past; LOC locative; CONS consecutive; IMP imperfect; PROG progressive; SUB subordinate verb prefix; ASS associative; INF infinitive.
Swahili G.42 (Loogman 1965, Kajiga 1975, Myachina 1981, Brauner & Herms 1986, Perrott 1990, Amidu 1997), spoken along the East African coast, also provides evidence of a V-language strategy. The conflation of Motion and Direction seems straightforward in simple directional verbs, as shown in (5). In syntactic context, however, the situation is not as straightforward. Locative elements appear, as shown in (6), which, superficially, might be considered to be distinct directional markings. These include the nominal suffix -ni and the preposition katika. Upon closer inspection, however, it becomes clear that these elements are locative in nature and not directional. Evidence for this analysis rests on the fact that both -ni and katika can occur with verbs which express opposing directional notions, such as enter and exit (6a-b), as well as with the other directional notions, such as enter and descend/dismount from (6c-d).

(5) Swahili G.32

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Swahili</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>enter, move into</td>
<td>-ingia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exit, move out</td>
<td>-toka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ascend, move up</td>
<td>-panda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>descend, move down</td>
<td>-teremka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cross, move across</td>
<td>-vuka</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(6) a. *kijana a-ka-tingia chumba-ni*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Swahili</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>youth 3S-PST-move into room-LOC</td>
<td>‘the youth entered the room’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. *msichana a-ka-toka chumba-ni*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Swahili</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>girl 3S-PST-move out room-LOC</td>
<td>‘the girl exited the room’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c. *kijana a-ka-tingia katika chumba*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Swahili</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>youth 3S-PST-move into LOC room</td>
<td>‘the youth entered the room’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

d. *Basi, Juma a-li-shuka katika punda*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Swahili</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>so Juma 3S-PST-descend LOC donkey</td>
<td>‘and so Juma descended from his donkey’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The South African language Zulu S.42 ((Ziervogel 1967, Taljaard & Bosch 1988) provides further evidence for the V-language strategy evinced by the other Bantu languages considered thus far. Zulu employs directional verbs such as those in (7). In complete syntactic constructions, the verbs -ngena and -phuma require a locative complement, while -khupuka and -ehla do not. Thus, transitivity seems to determine whether the noun phrase (the Ground) following the directional verb will be marked with the discontinuous locative morpheme e...ni (8a-b), or whether the verb will be followed directly by a noun phrase (8c-d). The analysis of e...ni as a locative marker and not as a directional element is based on the same criteria as for Swahili locatives above; the locative phrase can occur with verbs expressing opposite directional notions, such as enter and exit (8a-b).

(7) Zulu S.42

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Swahili</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>enter, move into</td>
<td>-ngena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exit, move out</td>
<td>-phuma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ascend, move up</td>
<td>-khupuka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>descend, move down</td>
<td>-ehla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cross, move across</td>
<td>-wela</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Directional motion in Bantu

(8) a. umfana wangena e-ndli-ni
    boy 3S.PST.move.into LOC-house-LOC
    ‘the boy entered the house’

b. umfana waphuma e-ndli-ni
    boy 3S.PST.move.out LOC-house-LOC
    ‘the boy exited the house’

c. indo_a yakhuphuka intaba
    man 3S.PST.move.up hill
    ‘the man ascended the hill’

d. umfazi wehla intaba
    woman 3S.PST.move.down hill
    ‘the woman descended the hill’

Finally, the South African language Tswana (Schaefer 1985 and Snyman 1990) provides further support for a V-language analysis of Bantu languages. Tswana lexicalizes Motion and Direction as do the other languages, as shown by the verbs in (9). As in Zulu, directional verbs in Tswana may occur with a following noun phrase either marked (10a) or unmarked (10b-d) by a locative.

(9) **Tswana S.31**

    enter, move into -tse!na
    exit, move out -tswa
    ascend, move up -pa!la!ma
    descend, move down -pa'go!loga
    cross, move across -tshe!la
    encircle -po!to!loga

(10) a. mòsimànè ó tsw-à mó-tlù-ng
    boy 3S-move.out-IMP INSIDE-house-LOC
    ‘the boy is moving out of the house’

b. mòsimànè ó-pálám-à thàbà
    boy 3S-move.up-IMP mountain
    ‘the boy is moving up the mountain’

c. mòsimànè ó-págólòg-à thàbà
    boy 3S-move.down-IMP mountain
    ‘the boy is moving down the mountain’

d. mòsimànè ó-tshél-à lèsàká
    boy 3S-move.across-IMP kraal
    ‘the boy is moving across the kraal’

3. Complex Motion Events

With the above data confirming a V-language analysis for Bantu languages, the next area to consider is the expression of complex motion events which involve the incorporation of Manner into an utterance. The four languages examined syntactically above present three strategies for expressing complex motion events: (1) Motion and Direction appear in a main clause, while Manner surfaces in a subordinate clause (Gikuyu, Swahili, Tswana, and Zulu); (2) Motion and Direction appear in a
main clause, while Manner surfaces as an infinitival/nominalized verb form (Swahili); and (3) Manner appears in a main clause, while Motion and Direction are expressed in a subordinate clause (Gikuyu). Each of these strategies will be considered in turn.

3.1. The Expression of Manner in Subordinate Clauses

Expressing Motion and Direction in a main clause with Manner in a subordinate clause is a strategy shared by all languages under consideration. Beginning with Gikuyu, we find that a Manner verb such as *teng’era* ‘run’ appears in a subordinate clause. The subordinate status is signaled by the consecutive verbal prefix *k¸)* (or its allophone *g¸)* and the third person singular subject prefix *a*, while the verb conveying Motion and Direction appears in the main clause, as in (11).

(11) a. *mu)thuuri n¸)a-ng¸)r-ire nyu)mba a-g¸)-teng ’er-aga*

   man 3S-move.into-CMPL house 3S-CONS-run-IMP
   ‘the man entered the house while he was running’
   ‘the man ran into the house’

b. *mu)tumia n¸)a-un-ire nyu)mba a-g¸)-teng ’er-aga*

   woman 3S-move.out-CMPL house 3s-CONS-run-IMP
   ‘the woman exited the house while she was running’
   ‘the woman ran out of the house’

c. *mu)thuuri n¸)a-mbat-ire k¸)¸)ma a-g¸)-teng ’er-aga*

   man 3S-move.up-CMPL hill 3S-CONS-run-IMP
   ‘the man ascended the hill while he was running’
   ‘the man ran up the hill’

The comparable Swahili construction places Manner in a subordinate clause whose subordinate status is introduced by the circumstantial marker *akiwa* ‘while.’ Of additional interest is the effect a subordinate clause has on the noun phrase representing the Ground element following the main clause verb. Whereas in the expression of simple motion events (cf. 4a–c), the Ground element is marked by a locative following the verbs *-ingia* ‘enter’ and *-toka* ‘exit,’ they are no longer so marked when followed by a subordinate clause (12a–b), Manner being illustrated by the verb *kimbia* ‘to run.’

(12) a. *kijana a-li-lingia chumba akiwa a-na-kimbia*

   youth 3S-PST-move.into room while 3S-PROG-run
   ‘the youth entered the room while he was running’
   ‘the youth ran into the room’

b. *mwanamke a-li-toka chumba akiwa a-na-kimbia*

   woman 3S-PST-move.out room while 3S-PROG-run
   ‘the woman exited the room while she was running’
   ‘the woman ran out of the room’

c. *mwanamume a-ka-panda ngazi akiwa a-na-kimbia*

   man 3S-PST-move.up stairs while 3S-PROG-run
   ‘the man ascended the stairs while he was running’
   ‘the man ran up the stairs’

In Zulu, the subordinate clause status of the verb expressing Manner is signaled by a subject prefix; this prefix appears to provide the subordinate clause with a circumstantial meaning. Furthermore, Zulu evinces an interesting syntactic phenomenon in that when the verb in the subordinate clause occurs with an intransitive verb in the main clause, a locative phrase repre-senting

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3 The different forms of the subordinate subject prefix are due to noun class agreement patterns which are governed by the subject of the main clause.
the Ground element can occur in either clause. This is demonstrated in (13a-d), in which the intransitive verbs –ngenya ‘enter’ and –phuma ‘exit’ occur with the Manner-expressing verb –gijima ‘run.’ In (13a), the locative phrase e-ndlǐ-ni ‘the house’ appears in the main clause, while in (13b) the same locative phrase occurs in the subordinate clause following the verb –gijima. The same alternation of the locative phrase is shown in (13c-d) with –phuma as the main clause verb.

(13) a. umfana wangena e-ndlǐ-ni e-gijima
    boy PST.move.into LOC-house-LOC SUB.3s-run
    ‘the boy entered the house while he was running’
    ‘the boy ran into the house’

    b. umfana wangena e-gijima e-ndlǐ-ni
    boy PST.move.into SUB.3s-run LOC-house-LOC
    ‘the boy entered the house while he was running’
    ‘the boy ran into the house’

    c. intombazane yaphuma e-ndlǐ-ni i-gijima
    girl PST.move.out LOC-house-LOC SUB.3s-run
    ‘the girl exited the house while she was running’
    ‘the girl ran out of the house’

    d. intombazane yaphuma i-gijima e-ndlǐ-ni
    girl PST.move.out SUB.3s-run LOC-house-LOC
    ‘the girl exited the house while she was running’
    ‘the girl ran out of the house’

Conversely, if the main clause verb is transitive, then no locative phrase appears, and the object of the main clause verb, again representing the Ground element, occurs only in the main clause. This happens, for example, with the verbs –khuphuka ‘ascend,’ –ehla ‘descend,’ –zungeza ‘encircle,’ and –wela ‘cross,’ which are illustrated in (14) with the verb –gijima again appearing in the subordinate clause.

(14) a. umfazi wakhuphuka intaba e-gijima
    woman PST.move.up hill SUB.3s-run
    ‘the woman ascended the hill while she was running’
    ‘the woman ran up the hill’

    b. *umfazi wakhuphuka e-gijima intaba

    c. indoda yehla intaba i-gijima
    man PST.move.down hill SUB.3s-run
    ‘the man descended the hill while he was running’
    ‘the man ran down the hill’

    d. *indoda yehla i-gijima intaba

    e. indoda yazungeza indlu i-gijima
    man PST.move.around house SUB.3s-run
    ‘the man encircled the house while he was running’
    ‘the man ran around the house’

    f. *indoda yazungeza i-gijima indlu

    g. umfazi wawela umgwaqo e-gijima
    woman PST.move.across street SUB.3s-run
    ‘the woman crossed the street while she was running’
‘the woman ran across the street’

h. *umfazi wawela e-gijima umgwaqo

With regard to Tswana, data from Schaefer (1985) are consistent with the pattern found for the three languages considered above. The verb expressing Manner appears in a subordinate, participial clause whose status as such is indicated by a verbal prefix that contrasts with the verbal prefix found on main clause verbs. In (15), the Manner-expressing verb –tábóg ‘run’ occurs with the subject prefix á-, which contrasts with the subject prefix ó- found on the main clause verbs –tsw ‘exit,’ –pálám ‘ascend,’ –págólóg ‘descend,’ and –tshél ‘cross.’

(15) a. mòsímàné ó tsw-á mó tlù-ng á-tábóg-á
    boy he-move.out-IMP INSIDE-house-LOC he-run-IMP
    ‘the boy is running out of the house’

b. mòsímàné ó-pálám-á thàbà á-tábóg-á
    boy he-move.up-IMP mountain he-run-IMP
    ‘the boy is running up the mountain’

c. mòsímàné ó-págólóg-á thàbà á-tábóg-á
    boy he-move.down-IMP mountain he-run-IMP
    ‘the boy is running down the mountain’

d. mòsímàné ó-tshél-á lèsàká á-tábóg-á
    boy he-move.across-IMP kraal he-run-IMP
    ‘the boy is running across the kraal’

3.2 The Expression of Manner as an Infinitival Verb Form

Another strategy utilized for the expression of Manner appears in Swahili. Along with expressing Manner in a subordinate clause, Swahili places the Manner-expressing verb in an infinitival construction. This construction consists of the locative marker ku together with the associative marker a (the juxtaposition of the two elements yields the surface form kwa). The verb, in turn, appears in a nominalized form preceded by the infinitive marker ku. As with the other syntactic strategy used by Swahili, the verb expressing Motion and Direction appears in the main clause, preceding the Manner element. This construction type is shown in (16) with the verb kimbia ‘run.’

(16) a. kijana a li-ingia chumba ni kwa ku-kimbia
    youth 3s-PST-move.into room-LOC LOC-ASS INF-run
    ‘the youth entered the room at a run’
    ‘the youth ran into the room’

b. mwanamke a-li-toka chumba ni kwa ku-kimbia
    woman 3s-PST-move.out room-LOC LOC-ASS INF-run
    ‘the woman exited the room at a run’
    ‘the woman ran out of the room’

c. mwanamume a-ka-panda ngazi ni kwa ku-kimbia
    man 3s-PST-move.up stairs-LOC LOC-ASS INF-run
    ‘the man ascended the stairs at a run’
    ‘the man ran up the stairs’

d. mwanamume a-li-teremka ngazi ni kwa ku-kimbia
    man 3s-PST-move.down stairs-LOC LOC-ASS INF-run
    ‘the man descended the stairs at a run’
‘the man ran down the stairs’

A further point regarding this construction type in Swahili concerns the use of locative noun phrases representing the Ground element (e.g., *chumba, ngazi*). When Manner is expressed in a subordinate clause, the noun phrase serving as the Ground element in the main clause appears in its bare form; that is, it appears as a direct object (cf. 12). However, in the construction type illustrated in (16) with an infinitival construction, the Ground element is marked by the locative suffix –*ni*. Furthermore, this phenomenon seems to occur only with the verbs –*ingia* ‘enter,’ –*toka* ‘exit,’ –*panda* ‘ascend,’ and –*teremka* ‘descend.’ Other verbs that conflate Motion and Direction, such as –*izunguka* ‘encircle’, allow a bare noun phrase as the Ground element when Manner is expressed in an infinitival construction. This is illustrated in (17) where –*izunguka* occurs with the noun *nyumba* ‘house,’ instead of the locative phrase *nyumba-ni*.

(17) *mwanamume a-li-izunguka nyumba kwa ku-kimbia*

man 3s-PST-move.around house LOC.ASS INF-run

‘the man encircled the house at a run’ / ‘the man ran around the house’

3.3. The Expression of Motion and Direction in Subordinate Clauses

Of the four languages examined syntactically, only Gikuyu has the freedom to express Manner in the main clause with Motion and Direction appearing in a subordinate clause. Thus, it is the only language that does not respect an ordering constraint of Manner vis-à-vis Motion and Direction. The subordinate status of the Motion- and Direction-conveying verb is marked in the same fashion as when a verb conveying Manner appears in a subordinate clause. The subordinate verb form appears with the consecutive prefix *k¸)*- (or its allophone *g¸)*- along with the subject prefix *a*.

(18) a. *mu)thuuri n¸a-teng’er-ire a-k¸) ing¸)ra nyu)mba*

man 3S-run-CMPL 3S-CONS-move.into house

‘the man ran while he was entering the house’

‘the man ran into the house’

b. *mu)tumia n¸a-teng’er-ire a-k¸) uma nyu)mba*

woman 3S-run-CMPL 3S-CONS-move.out house

‘the woman ran while she was exiting the house’

‘the woman ran out of the house’

c. *mu)thuuri n¸a-teng’er-ire a-k¸) ambata k¸) r¸) ma*

man 3S-run-CMPL 3S-CONS-move.up hill

‘the man ran while he was ascending the hill’

‘the man ran up the hill’

4. Discussion

The above analysis has shown that Bantu languages typically utilize a V-language strategy to express simple physical motion events by employing verbs which conflate the semantic elements Motion and Direction. To express complex motion events, which introduce Manner along with Motion and Direction, Zulu, Gikuyu, Swahili, and Tswana share a common strategy of placing Manner in a subordinate clause that follows the main clause expressing Motion and Direction. For Zulu and Tswana, this appears to be the only strategy for expressing such complex events. Swahili has the additional strategy of expressing Manner as an infinitival/nominalized verbal construction, yet the linear order of Manner relative to Motion and Direction is the same as in the subordinate clause.
strategy. Only Gikuyu has the syntactic freedom to express Manner in a main clause while expressing Motion and Direction in a following subordinate clause.

The syntactic variability evinced by these languages to express complex motion events is consistent with earlier findings for Bantu languages. In a previous, Pan-African investigation of motion events, Schaefer & Gaines (1997) found that Shona S.10 demonstrated the same syntactic variability for expressing complex motion events as Gikuyu. This earlier, cross-linguistic analysis uncovered four strategies for the Niger-Kordofanian phylum as a whole. The most common of these strategies is that in which Manner appears in a subordinate clause, while Motion and Direction surface in the main clause. A second strategy is to express Manner before Motion and Direction in a coordinated construction (e.g., he swam and crossed the river). Another strategy is to express Manner before Motion and Direction in a serialized verb construction (e.g., he swam cross the river). The fourth strategy is to express Manner in a main clause, with Motion and Direction appearing in a subordinate clause, one that is also exemplified in Gikuyu. To this list of strategies can now be added the Swahili construction of expressing Manner in an infinitival form, so that the list of construction types relevant to the expression of complex motion events in Niger-Kordofanian includes five types.

5. Conclusion

The results of this study are preliminary. Given the large number of languages in the Bantu family, no definitive conclusions can safely be offered based on the investigation of only ten languages. What this paper has shown, however, is that there is variation in the means used to express complex motion events. Bantu languages utilize at least two of the syntactic strategies found for the Niger-Kordofanian phylum as a whole (Schaefer & Gaines 1997: 217), in addition to a third strategy not uncovered in the earlier cross-linguistic study. A question for further research in this domain is whether there are other strategies in use. A larger question to be pursued pertains to why such variation occurs in complex motion events.

More research in the motion domain is needed, not only for Bantu languages in general, but also for the languages appearing in this study. One area that calls for further investigation is the use of locative phrases in the expression of complex motion events. Why, for example, do locative nominals not occur in main clauses in Swahili when a subordinate clause is used to express Manner? Or, conversely, why do locative phrases co-occur with an infinitival construction? With respect to Zulu and its use of locative phrases, one question that needs to be addressed concerns the semantic nuances involved when a locative phrase occurs in a main clause expressing Motion and Direction as compared to when it occurs in a subordinate clause expressing Manner. Another area for future research concerns the use of the consecutive marker in subordinate clauses in Gikuyu. It remains to be demonstrated conclusively that subordinate clauses containing a consecutive marker are used to express one event instead of two consecutive events. This need for further verification for Gikuyu stems from the earlier discovery that the Bantu language Shona can employ a consecutive marker to express two distinct events (e.g., the woman entered the house and then ran) (Schaefer & Gaines 1997: 215). Given the other similarity that Shona and Gikuyu share in expressing complex motion events (i.e., the syntactic variability mentioned in section 4), a closer look at Gikuyu is warranted. Finally, the data in this paper need to be embellished to include causative constructions involving Motion and Direction (e.g., the man pushed the chair into the room).

References
Directional motion in Bantu


