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Word order and information structure in Makhuwa-Enahara

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Citation

Wal, G. J. van der. (2009, June 16). *Word order and information structure in Makhuwa-Enahara. LOT dissertation series*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/13845>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

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Word order and information structure in Makhuwa-Enahara

This thesis investigates the grammar of Makhuwa-Enahara, a Bantu language spoken in the north of Mozambique. The information structure is an influential factor in this language, determining the word order and the use of special conjugations known as conjoint and disjoint verb forms.

The thesis consists of two parts. The first part is a grammatical description of the language, covering the basic properties in the phonology, prosody and morphology of the nominal and verbal domain, as well as an overview of the conjugational system. The chapter also examines some syntactic issues, such as relativisation and non-verbal predication.

The second part is concerned with the question how syntax and information structure interact in Makhuwa-Enahara. The elements in a sentence are positioned before or after the verb on the basis of their information structure. Elements in the preverbal domain are interpreted as more accessible, functioning as topics. The *disjoint* verb and elements in the postverbal domain form the comment. The element immediately following the *conjoint* verb form is interpreted not just as new information, but as exclusive, meaning that the proposition holds for that referent and not for (some) other referents.

These data can be accounted for if insights from syntax and information structure are combined. Two such approaches are discussed: a cartographic model and an interface model. Two interface rules are proposed to account for the interpretation of word order and the conjoint and disjoint verb forms in Makhuwa-Enahara.



Netherlands
Graduate
School of
Linguistics

ISBN 978-90-78328-90-2

LOT
215

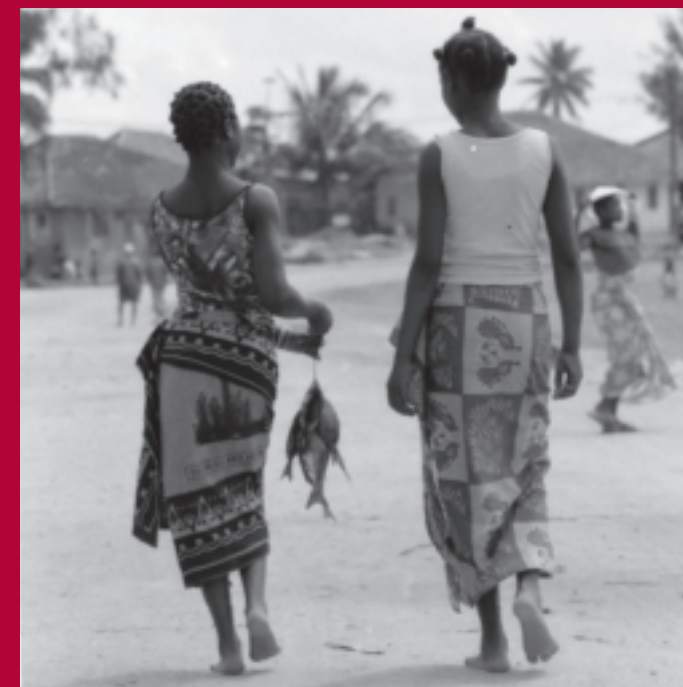
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