



Syntactic Focus Marking Strategies and Non-canonical Structure in Kiswahili

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the non-canonical structures triggered by syntactic focus marking strategies, including dislocations, complement inversion, clefting and verb doubling. In many Bantu languages, these strategies are known to alter the canonical word order. For example, in Nsong (B85d), left dislocation changes Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) to Object-Subject-Verb (OSV) and Subject-Object-Verb (SOV), while clefting in Kisikongo (H16a) yields structures such as SVO to OVS, VO and VOS. However, the word order structures derived from Swahili's syntactic focus marking strategies have received limited scholarly attention. To address this, the study aimed to identify and describe the non-canonical word order produced by syntactic focus marking strategies. The data of this study were collected from two narrative texts: the narrative of Mwanamalundi and that of the MV. Bukoba accident. The framework used to analyse data was the Phonetic Form Scrambling Theory proposed by Kidwai (2000). The finding reveals that left dislocation changes SVO to OVS, OV, and OSV. Also, clefting changes SVO to OVS, VOS and SVS. Lastly, complement inversion changes Subject-Verb-Clause (SVC) to Clause-Verb-Subject (CVS). The study establishes that focus marking strategies play a crucial role in restructuring Swahili word order, which contributes to the formation of diverse non-canonical structures.

Key terms: Clefting, complements inversion, canonical structure, left dislocation, SVO.

INTRODUCTION

This study aims to investigate the non-canonical structures generated from syntactic focus marking strategies in Kiswahili. The non-canonical structures deviate from basic word order (canonical structure). According to Kayne (1994), the basic word order typology (canonical structure) in the world's languages is based on three functional constituents: S (subject), V (verb) and O (object). The ordering of these constituents differs across language families (Kayne, 1994). Linguists have classified the world's languages according to their basic word order (Hahn & Xu, 2022). In their classification, about 40 per cent of the world's

languages have subject-verb-object (SVO) basic word order, as in English and many Bantu languages. Also, about 40 per cent of the world's languages have subject-object-verb (SOV) basic word order as in Japanese, Korean and Turkish languages. Other basic orders include verb-subject-object (VSO), as in Modern Standard Arabic and Hebrew. Swahili, like many other Bantu languages, is a right-branching language with an SVO basic word order (Loogman, 1965; Mkude, 2005; Polomé, 1967; Vitale, 1981). Consider the following pair of simple sentences given by Vitale (1981).

- (1) a. [Juma]_s [a-li-wa-pig-a]_v [watoto]_o
 Juma he-pst-them-hit children
 'Juma hit the children' [SVO]
- b. [watoto]_s [wa-li-m-pig-a]_v [Juma]_o
 children they-pst-him-hit Juma
 'The children hit Juma' [SVO]
- Source:** Vitale (1981:18)

Examples (1 a & b) display SVO basic word order in Kiswahili. However, this word order may vary from the normal SVO sequence due to different factors like emphasis, definiteness and the type of information, such as topic or focus (Vitale, 1981; van der Wal, 2009). The mentioned factors cause these constituents to move from their logical position and be placed in ex-situ. This study dealt with a deviation from the normal sequence of SVO word order in Kiswahili due to the focus marking in the proposition.

In many Bantu languages, syntactic focus marking strategies deviate from the normal sequence of the canonical structure in various ways. For example, in the Nsong language (B 85d), left dislocation changes SVO word order to OSV and SOV (Muluwa & Bostoen, 2014). In these constructions, the focus is marked pre-verbally due to the syntactic movement of the NP-object from the right edge of the verb and placed to the left edge of the verb, as illustrated in example (2).

- (2) a. ámbi bɔ-ɔ kɛ-wá-yíb-í é-jín [OVS]
 FP NP14-mushroom SM1PL-HAB-know-PRF NP5-name
 'ámbi bɔɔ kewáyíbí ejín'.
 'We know (only) THE MUSHROOMS (and nothing else) by their name'.
- b. ɛ-baan é-nsó kú a-bá-kúl ló: [SOV]
 NP7-skin PP7-all there SM2SG-NEG-remove NEG
 'ɛbaan énsó kú abákúl ló:'.
 'You have not removed all the skin THERE'.
Source: Muluwa na Bostoen (2014)

As in (2a), the focused object is fronted to the immediate before-verb position in Nsong, resulting in an inverted OVS word order. In (2b), the focused object

is placed after the subject and pre-verbally, resulting in an inverted SOV word order. Therefore, focalising non-verbal constituents with left dislocation in Nsong

involves deviation from normal SVO word order within the main clause. The deviation of the normal sequence of SVO word order is not limited to the Nsong language. Also, Makhuwa exhibits this deviation from the normal sequence of word order due to the syntactic movement of constituents in pre-verbal or post-verbal domains (van der Wal, 2009). In one

context, object-NP is moved from the post-verbal domain to the pre-subject domain, as in (3a), which is known as left dislocation. In another context, the subject is moved from the pre-verbal domain to the post-object domain as in (3b), which is known as right dislocation.

- (3) a. maníy' áale orívísú oo-páńka [OSV]
 6.bracelets 6.DEM.III 1.goldsmith 1.PERF.DJ-make
 'Maníy' áale orívísú oo-páńka'.
 'Those bracelets the goldsmith made'.
- b. oo-vára ephépélé naphúl úule [VOS]
 1.PERF.DJ-grab 9.fly 1.frog 1.DEM.III
 'oovára ephépélé naphúl' úule'.
 'That frog caught a fly'.
Source: van der Wal (2009)

In example (3a and b), there is inverted OSV and VOS due to the syntactic movements of the pre-verbal elements and post-verbal elements to express information structure in Makhuwa. In (3b), the subject marker on the verb agrees with the post-verbal subject. In other languages, such as Kisikongo (H16a), spoken in the vicinity of Mbanza Kongo, northern Angola, left

dislocation and clefting (inverted pseudo cleft) change the normal SVO word order. The OVS word order is derived when object-NP is focused pre-verbally in an inverted pseudo cleft, as in (4a). In another case, the SOV word order is derived when the object-NP is focused after the subject in left dislocation, as in (4b).

- (4) a. o-ma-lavu i ka-nw-ini o-mu-ivi [OVS]
 AUG₆-NP₆-alcohol COP SC₁-drink-PRF AUG₃-NP₃-thief
 'Omálavú í kanwíni omwívi'
 'ALCOHOL is what the thief drank'.
- b. o-ø-se mu-ana ka-nat-idi [SOV]
 AUG₁-NP₅-father NP₁-child SC₁-carry-PRF
 'Father carried a child'
Source: Kind (2004)

Example (4) displays syntactic movements resulting in deviation from the normal sequence of SVO word order in Kisikongo. Some sentential elements are moved into the post-verbal domain or pre-verbal to express focus in Kisikongo. In inverted OVS, the object is moved from its logical position and placed pre-verbally, while the subject is moved from its logical position and placed post-verbally. Also, in inverted SOV, the object is moved from its logical position and placed pre-verbally with the overt subject.

Kiswahili, like many other Bantu languages, uses syntactic and phonological strategies to mark focus in propositions (Mungania & Schroeder, 2018; Ndumiwe, 2023). Focus can be marked pre-verbally or post-verbally by using syntactic strategies. The study done by Ndumiwe (2023) shows various syntactic strategies which are used to mark focus in Kiswahili. These syntactic strategies are left dislocation, clefting, inversion structures (locative, complement and subject) and complementation. Three of these strategies (left dislocation, clefting and complement

inversion) are used to mark focus in ex-situ. Object-NPs are moved from post-verbally to pre-verbally to be focused. In other contexts, subject-NPs are moved from pre-verbally to post-verbally to be focused. However, the non-canonical word order derived from these syntactic focus marking strategies is unknown in Kiswahili. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the non-canonical word order caused by syntactic focus satrapies in Kiswahili.

The study challenged the notion of the previous study, such as Loogman (1965) and Polomé (1967), which indicates that deviation of a sequence of SVO word order results in ill-formed sentences. This squib is organised into five sections. Section one provides a detailed introduction and highlights the statement of the problem. The theoretical framework used to guide the findings is presented in Section 2. Section three outlines the methodology employed in this research. Findings of the study are presented and discussed in section four with its sub-sections. Finally, a concluding remark is offered t in section five.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was guided by the Phonetic Form Scrambling Theory proposed by Kidwai (1999, 2000) as the new version of the Minimalist Program by Chomsky (1995) of handling syntactic movement and realisation of focus in free word order languages. The Phonetic Form Scrambling Theory (henceforth, PFS theory) shows that restructuring of the Phonetic form (sentence) is associated with encoding focus in a proposition (Luraghi & Parodi, 2008). The PFS theory has four key tenets and three principles, which are used in scrambling the phonetic form. The tenets include word order, focus position, syntactic representation of PF, focusing and canonical linear order. The principles of PFS theory included movements, feature checking and XP adjunction.

According to Kidwai (2000), the canonical linear order can change as a result of focusing. Focusing strategies in free word order languages cause movement of sentential elements, mostly NP, from the left periphery to the right periphery of the verb or vice versa. The universal structure of canonical linear order change in SVO languages was given by Ndumiwe (2023) as shown in Figure 1.

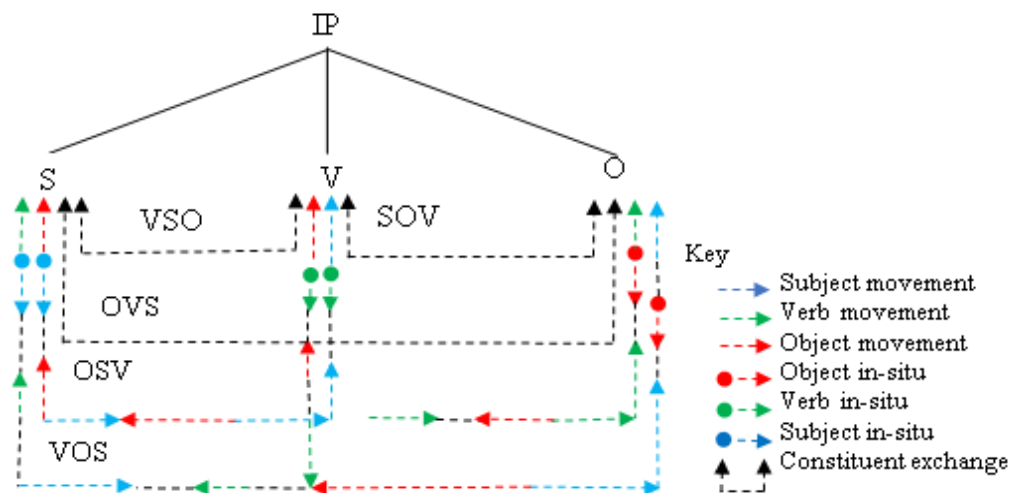


Figure 1: Universal Structure of Canonical Order and Its Changes in SVO Language

Source: Ndumiwe (2023:98)

In Figure 1, the focusing mechanism causes some sentential elements to move from in situ to ex-situ. The moved elements are adjoined in the left or right periphery of the verb. The SVO changes as a result of

encoding focus in the proposition. Therefore, the PFS theory was used to analyse and interpret the findings on syntactic focus marking strategies and non-canonical constructions in Swahili.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative, corpus-based descriptive research design to examine non-canonical word order structuring triggered by syntactic focus marking strategies in Kiswahili. The corpus consisted of two narratives: Mwanamalundi folktale and Mv. Bukoba accident. Narratives were deliberately selected instead of Swahili grammar books in order to avoid artificially constructed sentences and capture naturally occurring language use. Data were collected through oral narration, which was audio-recorded to generate a spoken corpus for subsequent transcription. The researchers selected one informant from each narration by using purposive sampling based on two criteria: demonstration of high linguistic competence in Kiswahili and familiarity with selected narratives. Only informants who met the mentioned criteria were selected. After transcription, the resulting written texts were examined to identify instances of left dislocation, clefting, and complement inversion. The extracted constructions were then presented to four native speakers of Swahili, selected on the basis of native competence and dialectal familiarity with Standard Swahili, to assess their grammatical acceptability. Ethical considerations were observed during data collection. All informants voluntarily participated after being informed of the study's purpose and provided verbal consent prior to data collection. Data were analysed using componential analysis of narratives as proposed by Gimenez (2010), which focuses on the structural organisation of narrative discourse, including free clauses, coordinate clauses, and restricted clauses.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Focus-marking strategies exhibit varying syntactic effects across languages. In some languages, focus is marked *in situ*, while in others it is marked *ex situ*. *In situ* focus marking places the focused constituent immediately after the verb in SVO languages such as Kiswahili, Luganda, Kirundi and Matengo (Mungania & Schroeder, 2018; van der Wal & Namyalo, 2016; Yonenda, 2011). Although these languages typically realise focus *in situ*, focus may also be marked *ex situ* through syntactic movement. Such movement gives rise to constructions including left dislocation, clefting, and complement inversion, which depart from the

canonical SVO word order. In addressing the study's objective of identifying how focus-marking strategies reshape Swahili word order, the findings demonstrate that each strategy produces distinct non-canonical structures. Specifically, with respect to left dislocation, the canonical SVO order is altered to OVS, OV, and OSV.

Concerning clefting, the results show that SVO shifts to OVS, VOS, and VO structures. Finally, in relation to complement inversion, the canonical SVC structure is transformed into CVS. These findings collectively illustrate that syntactic focus marking in Kiswahili systematically triggers a range of non-canonical word orders, thereby confirming the central role of syntactic movement in the realisation of focus.

Non-canonical Structure in Kiswahili Left Dislocation

Left dislocated elements in Kiswahili receive the pragmatic function of focus. The moved elements are placed before the verb or subject for the purpose of focusing. These elements are interpreted as new information, highlighted or emphasised constituents in the proposition. In SVO languages like Kiswahili, LD is a syntactic movement of the right predicate elements to the left edge of the verb (Rodman, 1997; Westbury, 2016). In Kiswahili, nouns (phrases) as objects, prepositional phrases, infinitives, and adverbial phrases can be left-dislocated (Ndumiwe & Kahigi, 2025). The findings show that SVO word order changes when the object is left dislocated. The dislocated elements moved before the verb or subject, depending on the presence of an overt or covert subject. Therefore, the non-canonical structures derived are OVS, OV and OSV.

Inverted OVS Order

LD in Kiswahili changes SVO to OVS when the object is being focused. The object is dislocated from the right edge of the verb to the left edge of the verb. The dislocated object in Kiswahili is marked by an object marker incorporated in the verb. The object marker shows a co-reference between the left dislocated object and the object marker. This syntactic operation shows focus marking in *ex-situ* (pre-verb focus position in SVO languages). The movement indicates

the deviation of SVO word order to OVS in Kiswahili as shown in example (5).

5. (a) [haya ma-boya yote]_o [ni-me-ya-fung-u-a]_v [mimi]_s
 these 6. buoy all ISM-PF-OM-release-REV-FV I
 ‘All these buoys, I have released them.’ [OVS]
- (b) [ma-gome haya u-na-yo-ya-on-a]_o [a-me-ya-paru-a]_v [yule faru]_s
 6. bark these 1SM-PRT-RM-OM-see-FV 1SM-PF-OM-scrape-FV AGR1-that rhinoceros
 ‘These barks you see, have been scrapped by that rhinoceros.’ [OVS]
- (c) [kelele za abiria]_o [ha-tu-ku-zi-siki-a]_v [mimi na w-enzangu]_s
 9.noise of 2.passengers NEG.1SM-PST-OM-hear-FV me and AGR2.colleague
 ‘The passengers’ noise, we didn’t hear them I and my colleagues.’ [OVS]
- Source: Field Data (2023)

In example (5a-c), *haya maboya yote* ‘all these bouys’, *magome haya unayoyaona* ‘these barks you see’ and *kelele za abiria* ‘the passengers’ noise’ are objects dislocated from in-situ to ex-situ. The left dislocated elements deviate from SVO to OVS. The presence of the object marker in the verb signifies that the post-verb elements were moved from a natural position to another position within a sentence. The derived canonical structures in Kiswahili LD (OVS) depend on the presence of other syntactic operations. In the OVS structure, there is syntactic movement known as right dislocation. The object is left dislocated while the

subject is right dislocated. It has been demonstrated that the subject markers in 5(a-c) agree with the post-verbal subject. Object *haya maboya yote* ‘all these bouys’ is placed before the verb, while subject *mimi* ‘I’ is placed post-verbally. The subject has an afterthought-reading when it occurs post-verbally and controls agreement on the verb, and it is analysed as right-dislocated. Within PFS theory, focusing can change the canonical structure by moving the focal element from its position and placing it before the verb, as shown in Figure 2.

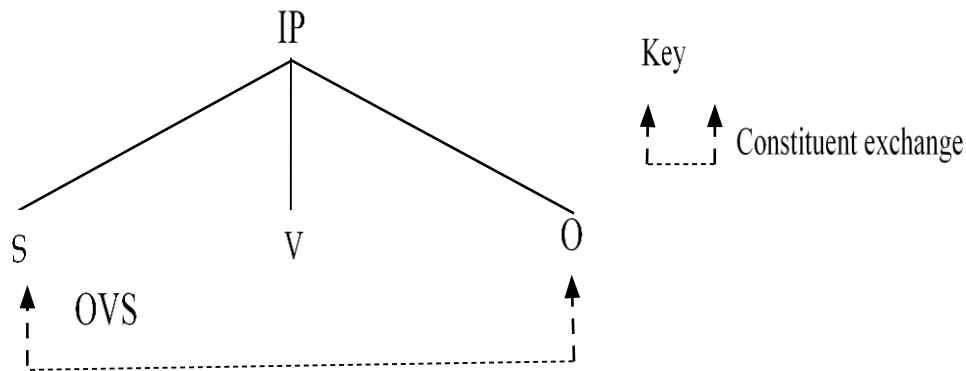


Figure 2: Change of SVO to OVS in Kiswahili Left Dislocation

In Figure 2, the subject moved to the position of the object and vice versa. In this operation, the verb retains its natural position as in SVO word order. The moved object (NP) is being focused and placed before the verb by using left dislocation. The dislocated elements retain their grammatical functions. For example, the object is left dislocated but still marked

as an object by an object marker, as in data 5 (a-c). Also, subjects control grammatical agreement despite being moved to the right edge of the verb, as in 5(a-c).

Inverted OV Order

Objects-NPs are left dislocated in constructions with covert subjects. In Kiswahili, the subject can be

the dislocated NPs are marked by an object marker to signify that they were moved from the right edge of the verb. This syntactic movement changes SVO to OSV in Kiswahili. Within PSF theory, focusing can

change the canonical structure by moving the focal element from its natural position and placing it before the subject, as illustrated in Figure 3.

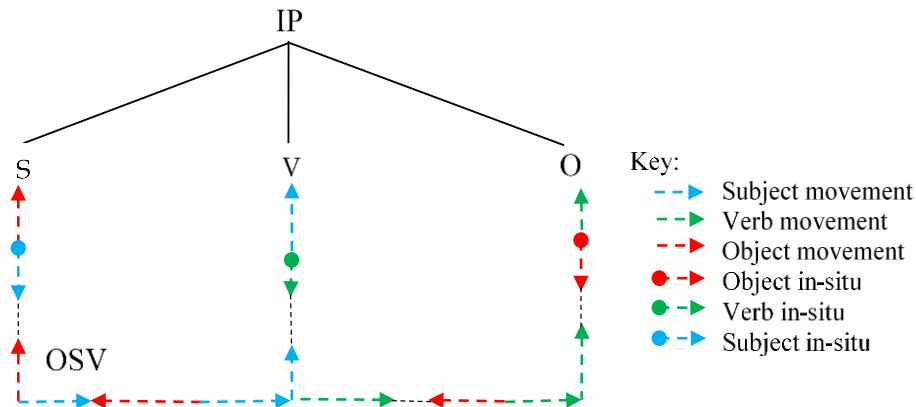


Figure 3: Change of SVO to OSV in Kiswahili Left Dislocation

Figure 3 illustrates the movement of constituents from their natural position to other positions after LD in Kiswahili. The moved object (NP) is being focused and placed before the subject by using left dislocation. The object-NP was moved after the verb to the initial position of the phonetic form. The subject was moved and placed at the verb position, and the verb was moved up to the object position. Despite these movements, the constituents retain their grammatical functions. The object remains as an object along with others. The derived canonical structure after these movements is OVS.

Non-canonical Structure in Kiswahili Clefting

Clefting is the syntactic process of the formation of a cleft sentence (Kim & Sells, 2007). A cleft sentence is a marked structure in which a focused constituent is extracted from its logical position and often set off with some additional material, including an extra verb (Trask, 1993). In cleft sentences, a single message found in simple sentences is divided (cleft) into two clauses to focus on the new information in spoken language. In the cleavage of the simple declarative sentence, the new constituent 'copula' is integrated into the sentence structure. It functions as the focus marker. The purpose of the cleavage of a basic

sentence is to encode focus in an utterance. There are various positions of encoding focus in cleft sentences, such as after the copula in basic cleft and pseudo cleft, and before the copula in inverted pseudo cleft. In these constructions, some sentential element is moved from the logical position and placed in another position within a sentence. The movement deviates from the SVO canonical structure of the simple sentence to other word orders. In this study, we found out the word order derived by clefting in Kiswahili. The clefting in Kiswahili changed SVO word order to OVS, VOS and SVO.

Inverted OVS Order

OVS word order in clefting is derived when the object and subject move from the logical position in the proposition. The object occupies the subject position while the subject occupies the object position in a single sentence. In OVS word order, the object-NP is focused in the inverted pseudo cleft.

The object is placed before the copula, which is used to mark pre-verbal focus in Kiswahili. In the cleavage of simple sentences to form complex sentences (inverted pseudo cleft), the SVO word order deviates to OVS as illustrated in example (8).

8. (a) [Gindunkima]_o [ndi-ye]_v [a-li-ye-shindan-a na
 1.Gindunkima COP-RM 1SM-PST-RM-compete-FV with
 Mwanamalundi katika u-ganga na ku-chez-a ngoma]_s
 1.Mwanamalundi in 14.divine and INF-dance-FV 9.drum
 ‘Gindunkima was the one who competed with Mwanamalundi in divination and dancing.’
- (b) [meli-ni]_o [ndi-mo]_v [mimi na mw-enzangu tu-li-po-pelek-w-a]_s
 9.ship-LOC COP-RM me and 1. fried-my 1SM-PST-RM-send-PASS-FV
 ‘In the ship was where my friend and I were taken.’
- (c) [Ngalitu]_o [ndi-po]_v [Mwanamalundi a-li-po-f-i-a na ku-zik-w-a]_s
 Ngalitu COP-RM Mwanamalundi 1SM-PST-RM-die-APPL-FV and INF-bury-PASS-FV
 ‘Ngalitu is where Mwanamalundi died and was buried.’
- Source:** Field Data (2023)

Example (8a-c) displays changes in SVO word order to OVS in the inverted pseudo cleft. The cleft constituent (object-NP) is placed before the copula and marked as the focus of the utterance. At the same time, the subject is moved from its logical position and placed after the verb. These movements deviate from SVO

word order in Kiswahili to form a bi-clause structure with a matrix clause and a dependent clause. Within PFS theory, focusing can change the canonical structure by moving the focal element from its position and placing it before the copula, as shown in Figure 4.

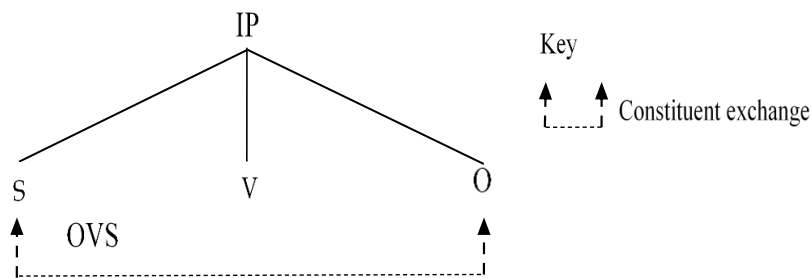


Figure 4: Change of SVO to OVS is a Kiswahili inverted Pseudo Cleft sentence

As illustrated in Figure 4, clefting changes SVO word order to OVS word order by moving the subject from its logical position and placing it into a logical position of the subject and vice versa. The moved object-NP is being focused before the copulative verb, which is regarded as a focus marker in cleft sentences. Despite these movements, the constituents retain their grammatical functions. The object remains as an object along with others. The derived canonical structure after these movements is OVS.

Inverted VOS Order

In VOS word order, object-NP is being focused on the basic cleft in Kiswahili. Object-NP is moved from its logical position and placed after the copulative verb. However, the subject is placed after the object. In Kiswahili, basic cleft, copulative verb and object join together to form a matrix clause, and the remaining part is a dependent clause. The cleavage of the simple declarative sentence from a basic cleft sentence in Kiswahili causes some sentential elements to move from their logical position to another part of the sentence. As displayed in example (9), the movement changes SVO word order to VOS in the Kiswahili basic cleft.

9. (a) [ni]_v [meli ya Mv Klariasi]_o [i-li-yo-pit-a kwa mara ya kwanza]_s
 COP 9.ship of Mv Klariasi 9.SM-PST-RM-pass-FV for time the first
 ‘It is the Mv Klariasi’ ship that passed for the first time.’
- (b) [ni]_v [ma-ziwa ma-bichi]_o [ya-li-yo-tumik-a ku-ju-a
 COP 6.milk AGR6.raw 6.SM-PST-RM-use-FV INF-know-FV
 u-hai wa Mwanamalundi]_s
 14.life of Mwanamalundi
 It is the fresh milk that was used to know the Mwanamalundi’ life.’
- (c) [ni]_v [sisi]_o [tu-na-o-miliki na ku-safish-a eneo li-le]_s
 COP we 1SM-PRT-RM-own and INF-clean-FV 5.area AGR5.that
 ‘It is we whom we own na clean that area.’
Source: Field Data (2023)

In example (9a-c), VOS is derived after encoding focus after the copulative verb in the Kiswahili basic cleft. The clefted constituent (object-NP) is placed after the copula and marked as the focus of the utterance. In the cleavage of the simple declarative sentence to form a basic cleft in Kiswahili, some sentential elements move from their logical position and are placed into another place within the phonetic form.

These movements deviate from the SVO word order to VOS in a basic cleft in Kiswahili. In alignment with PFS theory, focusing strategies (clefting) can deviate the SVO word order to put some sentential elements in a focusing position. Therefore, clefting as a focusing mechanism deviates SVO to VOS in basic cleft Kiswahili, as illustrated in Figure 5.

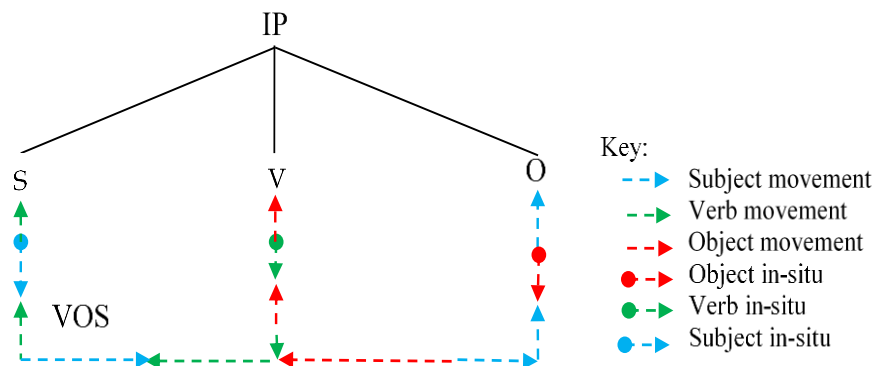


Figure 5: Change of SVO to VOS is a Kiswahili Basic Cleft Sentence

In Figure 5, the phonetic form with SVO can undergo syntactic movements to form a phonetic form with VOS. In these movements, sentential elements move from their logical position to another position for the purpose of focusing. Focusing on the basic cleft in Kiswahili causes the object to move from its logical position and be placed in the verb position, while the verb is moved from its position and placed in the subject position. At the same time, the subject moved from its logical position to the object position. These movements deviate from SVO word order to VOS word order in forming a basic cleft in Kiswahili, in which the object-NP is being focused.

Inverted SVS Order

SVS word order in clefting is derived when the simple declarative sentence is restructured to form a pseudo-cleft in Kiswahili. The cleavage of simple declarative sentences causes some sentential elements to move from their logical position to another position. In this process, the structured sentence has a double subject. The first subject was placed before the copula, while the second subject was placed after the copula. All the subjects possess syntactic properties of the subject in Kiswahili. However, the post-copula subject is marked as a focus in the Swahili pseudo-cleft. Copula is integrated after cleavage as a focus marker. A

reflexive marker is inserted into the former main verb to form a dependent clause. The restructuring process changes the SVO word order to the SVS word order in the Swahili pseudo cleft, as displayed in example (10).

10. (a) [a-li-ye-m-pelek-e-a i-le taarifa]s [ni]v [ki-jana w-angu]s
 1SM-PST-RM-OM-sent-APPL-FV AGR9.that 9.information COP 7.son AGR1.my
 ‘The one who sent him that information is my son.’
- (b) [a-li-ye-m-shitaki kwa wa-koloni]s [ni]v [m-temi wa hapa]s
 1SM-PST-RM-OM-accuse to 2.colon COP 1.chief of here
 ‘The one who accused him of the colonizers is chief of here.’
- (c) [wa-li-o-m-subiri-a pa-le u-wanja-ni]s [ni]v [wa-fuasi wa-ke]s
 1SM-PST-RM-OM-wait-FV AGR16.that 14-ground-LOC COP 2.follower AGR2.poss
 ‘Those who waited for him in that ground were his followers’.

Source: Field Data (2023)

In example (10), SVS is derived after the cleavage of the simple declarative sentence to form a pseudo-cleft in Swahili. The formed sentence has a double subject with a covert object. Covert objects are marked by object markers incorporated within reflexive verbs in dependent clauses.

The first subject forms a dependent clause while the second subject joins with the copula to form a matrix clause. In alignment with PFS theory, clefting as a focusing strategy deviates the word order to put some sentential elements in a focusing position. Therefore, clefting deviates SVO to SVS in Kiswahili in phonetic form with a double subject but without covert objects.

Non-canonical Structure in Kiswahili Complement Inversion

Complement inversion is also known as the subject-complement switch. It applies to clauses containing the main verb in its ‘identifying’ use, with a predicative

complement that is identifying rather than attributive (Collins & Hollo, 2017). Complement inversion is among four inversions (subject, locative, instrument and complement) which are used to express information structure in Bantu linguistics. Three inversions (subject, locative and instrument) do not deviate from canonical structure in different languages, while one inversion (complement) changes word order in many languages. In Kiswahili, complement inversion is used to mark focus after the verb ‘be’, which is known as the copula (focus marker).

In Kiswahili complement inversion, the subject is marked as the focus after the verb ‘be’. Despite these movements, the constituents retain their grammatical functions. Subject control grammatical agreement despite being moved after the verb ‘be’. The complement inversion in Kiswahili changes SVC to CVS as illustrated in example (11).

11. (a) [Juu ya u-le m-ti,]c [wa-li-kuwa-ko]v [ndege wa ku-tosh-a]s
 top of AGR3.that 3.tree 1SM-PST-there-RM 1.bird of INF-enough-FV
 ‘On the top of that tree, there were too many birds.’
- (b) [ndani ya maji,]c [u-ka-wa-mo]v [m-lango wa kulia]s
 in the 9.water 1SM-PST-there-RM 3.door of right
 ‘In the water, there was the right door.’
- (c) [vy-umba-ni,]c [wa-li-kuwa-mo]v [abiria wa kila aina]s
 8.room-LOC 1SM-PST-there-RM 2.passenger of all 9.kind
 ‘In the rooms, there were all kinds of passengers.’

Source: Field Data (2023)

In example (11a-c), there is a syntactic switch between subject and complement. The switched elements hold their logical grammatical functions. For example, the subject controls grammatical agreement despite being moved and placed after the verb 'be'. Complement inversion in Kiswahili is used to encode focus after the verb 'be', which is known as immediate after the verb. This inversion changes the word order from SVC to CVS. Within PFS theory, the syntactic mechanism of encoding focus can change the canonical structure by moving the focal element from its position and placing it in another position. For this case, complement inversion in Kiswahili changes word order to mark the subject as focus after the verb 'be'.

CONCLUSION

The study discussed the deviation of basic SVO word order in mono and bi-clausal focus marking strategies in Kiswahili. In all clauses, SVO word order can be deviated to mark focus in the post-verbal domain or pre-verbal domain in Kiswahili. Mono-clausal focus marking strategies include left dislocation and complement inversion. Bi-clausal focus syntactic focus marking strategies in Kiswahili are cleft construction (basic cleft, pseudo cleft and inverted pseudo cleft).

In bi-clausal strategies, the copula is integrated and is known as a focus marker in many Bantu languages. In most cases, a copula joins with a logical subject or object to form a matrix clause. The verb of a simple declarative sentence is an inserted reflexive marker. This marker changes the verb to a dependent clause. The deviation of the normal sequence of SVO word order in Kiswahili reflects focus marking by using a syntactic mechanism. The constituents are moved post-verbally or pre-verbally to encode new information (focus) within the proposition. The syntactic strategies discussed in this paper involve the syntactic movement of sentential elements while retaining the grammatical functions of the particular elements.

Other permutations, such as subject inversion, locative inversion, passivation, reciprocal construction, reflexive construction, and causative construction, are associated with changes in the grammatical functions of the moved elements. These movements are also used to express information structure in Kiswahili. However, this movement cannot deviate from the normal sequence of SVO word order in Kiswahili.

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