

THE LEXICAL INTEGRITY PRINCIPLE:
EVIDENCE FROM BANTU*

The lexical integrity principle has been called into question by recent work which hypothesizes a syntactic phrasal source for inflected words. Bantu morphology provides a particularly rich empirical domain for this issue because it straddles the boundary between morphology and syntax, inviting syntactic analyses in both the earliest missionary grammars and recent theoretical works in generative grammar (Myers 1987; Baker 1988a,b; Kinyalolo 1991, Carstens 1991). In this study we show that the morphology and syntax of Bantu noun class markers strikingly support the lexical integrity principle, once the morphemic structure of words is factored apart from their prosodic and functional structures.

0. INTRODUCTION

How can we tell whether a sequence of morphemes is a word? A fundamental generalization that morphologists have traditionally maintained is the *lexical integrity principle*, which states that words are built out of different structural elements and by different principles of composition than syntactic phrases. Specifically, the morphological constituents of words are lexical and sublexical categories – stems and affixes – while the syntactic constituents of phrases have words as the minimal, unanalyzable units; and syntactic ordering principles do not apply to morphemic structures. As a result, morphemic order is fixed, even when syntactic word order is free; the directionality of ‘headedness’ of sublexical structures

* A preliminary version of this paper was given at the Colloquium on Agreement at the Twentieth Annual Conference on African Linguistics at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana on April 21, 1989, and subsequent versions were presented at a UCLA Colloquium in December of 1991 and the Formal Linguistics Society of Mid-America at Northwestern University in May of 1992. We are grateful to Eyamba Bokamba for providing the stimulus and occasion for writing this paper, and to him as well as Alex Alsina, Avery Andrews, Bruce Hayes, Katherine Demuth, Ki-Sun Hong, Larry Hyman, Sharon Inkelas, Jonni Kanerva, Will Leben, K. P. Mohanan, Tara Mohanan, Salikoko Mufwene, Scott Myers, Peter Sells, Whitney Tabor and several *NLLT* reviewers for valuable comments on earlier stages of this work, although we alone are responsible for its shortcomings. We are also grateful to Jonni Kanerva for providing and checking tonal transcriptions of Chicheŵa. Our transcription and glossing conventions for Chicheŵa examples follow Bresnan and Kanerva (1989). This study is based upon work supported in part by the United States National Science Foundation under Grant No. BNS-8919880, Stanford University.