Sms- past- went af - dec school nom report

1. Word Order

The Swahili language uses the SVO word order. This implies that in a sentence the subject comes first followed by the verb and lastly the object.

(1) NI- li- enda

shule

' I went to the hospital'

It is important to note that in the SVO word order object marking is done for animate objects and is optional when it comes to inanimate objects

(2) a. Wa- li- (mw)- angalia

mtoto

SMP- PAST- OM- looked: AF - DEC baby: NOM

' I looked at the baby'

b. Ni- li- (ki) – rarua

kitabu

SMS- PAST- OM – tore: AF - DEC book: NOM

' I tore the book'

c. Ni- li- rarua kitabu

SM1S- PAST- tore book

' I tore the book'

(2) a and b show object making for animate and inanimate objects. (2) c shows that object marking is optional for inanimate objects.

On the other hand, OSV word order is also used

(3) Haya

mimi si-

yajui

This: NOM I: NOM don't: NEG- know: DEC

' I didn't know this'

In other cases in Swahili it is possible to expresses the subject, verb and

object within the same word.

(4) Ni- ta- ku- piga

SM1S- FUTURE- OM- fight

' I will fight you'

In the statement above, affixes have been added to the verb –piga to ensure

that expresses the subject, verb and object. The subject marker is the prefix

ni-, and the object marker is the prefix ku-.

In addition, words can also be put in the object form. However, it is important

to note that this words do not change when they are in the subject or object

form

(5) A-

li- saidiwana mimi

He: NOM – MSC PAST helped: AF - DEC me: NOM

' He was helped by me'

Mimi

ni- li- (m)-

saidia

I: NOM SM1S- PAST OM- MSC/FMN helped: AF- DEC

I beat him/her

In this case Mimi is used as the subject ' I' or the object ' Me'

There are also locatives in Swahili:

(6) Nyumba- ni

House: NOM- LOC

' In the house'

The non-finite compliment verb acts in a similar manner as the finite clause when it takes a verb. This implies that the complement verb is characterized by the presence of a verb-object constituent.

(7) Huyu a- li- m- saidia yule

He: NOM: MSC SM- PAST- OM- helped her: NOM: FMN

' He helped her'

In this case (7a) is a main clause and (7b) is the complement clause.

In noun phrases, adjective, numerals and demonstrative usually follow the noun:

(8)

a. Mtu m- refu

Man: AS: S, MSC SM- tall

' Tall men'

b. Watu wawili

Men: AS: P, MSC two

' Two men'

2. Questions

Polar or yes–no questions do exist in Swahili. This are questions in which the expected answer is either a yes or a no. This is mainly because it is possible in Swahili to present a pair of alternatives in question form which one has to answer in yes or no to. The questions can either be in the positive or negative form. Example (9) a shows a polar question that is positive and 9 (b) shows a negative polar question.

(9)

a. U- ta- kuja leo?

OM- FUTURE- come today: NOM, Q

' Will you come today?'

b. Ha- u- ta- kuja leo?

NEG OM- FUTURE- come today: NOM, Q

' Will you not come today?'

The expected responses for the above questions are either yes or no.

Wh- questions are also used in Swahili:

(10)

a. Huyu ni nani?

Who: ABS is this: Q

' Who is this'

b. Una- fanya nini?

SM-S- doing what: ABS -Q

' What are you doing?'

3. Focus

Focus in Swahili is mainly achieved in spoken Swahili. Focus does not appear in written Swahili. This is achieved by changing the tone with which the word or phrase under focus is presented.

4. Dependent clause

Similar to English, clauses in Swahili are divided into two. The two divisions are the main and the dependent clauses. In Swahili, dependent clauses do not occur alone without a main clause.

(11) Ni- likuwa ni- napika ni- lipo- m- sikia mtoto

SM, S- PASTCNT- SM, S- cooking SM, S- PASTCNT- OM heard baby: NOM

' I was cooking when I heard the baby'

The dependent clause in this case is in italics. It does not carry any meaning. However, it provides more information to the main clause. It is important to note that dependent clauses appear after markers that can easily be identified. In this case nilipo- is a marker that identifies the dependent clause.

Dependent clauses are always placed before the main clause:

(12) Ni- nge- li- jua,

ni- nge- li- enda

SM: S- CD- PAST- known: AF - DEC SM: S- CD- PAST- gone: AF - DEC

' If I would have known, I would have gone'

Abbreviations used: AS = absolutive ASS = associative; AF = affirmative; CD= conditional; DEC = declarative; FMN= feminine, MSC = masculine; NOM = nominative; Q = question; S = singular; P = plural SM = subject marker; OM= object marker; NEG = negation; PAST = past tense, FUTURE = future tense, PRES = present tense, PASTCNT = present continuous tense.

Work Cited:

Mohammed, M A. Modern Swahili Grammar. Nairobi [u. a.: East African Education Publ, 2001. Print.