The Psychosemantic Theory and Its Application to Bantu Languages: A Case Study from Ruhaya[1]

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Abstract

The article attempts to apply a cognitive approach in analysing tense and aspect systems in Bantu languages, with specific focus on Ruhaya (J22). The cognitive approach applied takes a psychosemantic perspective by analysing tense and aspect (T/A) as semantic domains that are cognitively contrasted in the speaker's mind and morphologically marked in the verbal unit. The paper analyses the functions of the various T/A formatives in Ruhaya by providing morphosemantic reasons that attribute each formative to one of the three levels of the T/A staging. It analyses the basic T/A markers for each level in order to provide their morphosemantic interpretations. Then it identifies the extended functions of the versatile markers which are used beyond their basic aspectual functions, not only in other simple constructions but also in compound forms. Ruhaya is used as the springboard from which other Bantu languages can be analysed using the same principles.