

Causes of Structural Ambiguity in Sesotho Substantive Phrases

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Abstract

In Sesotho, a qualificative is a word that adds more information on the substantive that precedes it. Previous studies have investigated the qualificatives from morphological, syntactic, and semantic perceptions. From a syntactic view, studies affirm that a substantive phrase in Sesotho allows more than one qualificative resulting in a complex substantive phrase. As observed in sentences collected from casual conversations and from the media, the complexity of a substantive phrase yields multiple meanings. Employing the Minimalist Program and Galen's theory of ambiguity, the study aims to explore the syntax of complex substantive phrases in Sesotho in quest of factors that cause structural ambiguity. The findings depict recursion, movement, and embedded possessive stems as accountable for structural ambiguity in Sesotho substantive phrases. Furthermore, the results reveals that the second qualificative in a quantification embedding may lose its primary status and assume the status of an adverb.

Keywords: qualificative; substantive phrase; recursion; structural ambiguity; parallel perception