

Nominal compounds in Bemba

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This paper looks at nominal compounds in Bemba with the goal of investigating their structure and how this relates to their flexibility of interpretation. A survey of Bemba compounds will be presented showing that compounds with fixed idiomatic expressions tend to be left-headed while those created with a possessive marker can have a more flexible interpretation. The paper will seek to understand what structures can capture this flexibility (or lack thereof) of interpretation. It will be argued that the latter type of data present structures that are similar to genitives and which as a result allow a wider interpretation. It will be shown that right-headed compounds are expected to have a structure similar to that of genitives and therefore to have less restrictions on the interpretation of the compound. The paper will also aim to test this hypothesis with reference to other Bantu languages for which compounding data is available.