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Examining the morphological processes in the formation of Tupuri nominals

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Abstract

The current work examines the morphological processes that are observable in the formation of nominals in Tupuri, a Niger-Congo language spoken in the South West of Chad and in the North of the Republic of Cameroon. Structuralism was adopted as a theoretical approach in this paper. Forty (40) native speakers of ɓāŋlíŋ dialect, i.e. eight (8) from each of towns/villages Sere, Dawa, Mindaore, Lale, and Guwe were randomly selected to collect data based on a Swadesh words-list. The data revealed that the formation of nominals in Tupuri language is characterized by pre-fixation, suffixation, total reduplication, partial reduplication, total modification, and partial modification, which include subtraction and neutralization. Furthermore, compounding is another process that characterizes the formation of nouns in Tupuri language.

Keywords: Morphological processes; Tupuri language; Nominal; Nominal formation

1. Introduction

Tupuri language belongs to Adamawa-Ubangui, a branch of the Niger-Congo phylum [1]. According to [2], this language, along with many other languages, belongs to Group 6, i.e. Mbum of the Adamawa sub-branch.

The Tupuri language is spoken in the Republic of Chad and the Republic of Cameroon.

According to [3] in [4], the land that is occupied by the Tupuri people stretches from South of Chad Republic (Mont Illi Department in Mayo-Kebbi) to north east of Cameroon (Mayo Danay). On the one hand, it is located between the latitudes 9°43' E (South) and 100° 17' N (North). On the other hand, it is between the longitudes 150°10' E (East) and 14° 40' W (West).

The Tupuri territory is more widespread in the Republic of Cameroon than in Chad. In the latter, it lies in the region of Mayo-Kebbi going from the Sub-Prefecture of Fianga (now set up as a local department, Mont Illi by name) in the east to Mburao village in the west [5]. Within the Republic of Chad, Tupuri land shares boundaries with Bongor in the east, Gunu-Gaya in the south-east, Pala in the south and Lere in the west. In the Republic of Cameroon, the Tupuri territory is limited by Yaguwa in the east, Maruwa in the north, Mindif in the north- east and Kaele in the west [3] in [4]. Though in a small number, the Tupuri people are also found beyond the so-called pure Tupuri land.

The number of Tupuri is increasing. In 1965, it was estimated at 150,000 people; this is shared out as follows: about 60,000 in Chad Republic and 85, 000 in Cameroon, the remainder being widespread within the rest of the world. According to the Free Encyclopaedia consulted on 10 June 2022, the number of Tupuri people in Cameroon and in Chad is 490,000 people. In Chad, there are 177,000. This means that the Tupuri people are more numerous in Cameroon than in Chad.

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Ruelland [6] distinguishes five (5) dialects of Tupuri language spoken within the Republic of Chad. These include ɓāŋlíŋ (lit. towards one's place), ɓāŋgö (lit. towards the place of Wang Dore'deputy, Wang Dore being the great chief of Tupuri people), ɓāŋwɛ́rë (lit. towards East), fáalèpīyēw (lit. beyong the stream), and pɔɗɔkgē (lit. land).

Ɓāŋlíŋ is the Tupuri dialect that is the focus of this research paper. It is chosen because it is regarded as the standard dialect of the Tupuri language. It is spoken in some Chadian villages and towns within the North of Mayo-Kebbi, namely in Sere, Dawa, Mindaore, Lale, Guwe, Bilambale, Tchingring, Gudum, and Darbe.

This paper aims at undertaking a morphological analysis of nominals in the Tupuri language.

More precisely, it seeks the morphological processes that characterize the formation of nominals in the Tupuri language.

2. Literature review

This section reviews previous works that have bearing in the current paper.

[7] treated some compound nouns in Marghi language as noun + noun, where two nouns are combined to form a single word. Consider the example below:

mbwa + kuzgu = mbwakuzgu

'room' 'medicine' 'hospital (dispensary)'

Three decades later on, [7] dealt with some aspects of morphology in Marghi language, especially nouns. He studied inflectional nouns, i.e. plural formation in the language as illustrated below:

bzer (sing) = bzeryar (plu)

'boy' = ' boys'

val : valyar

'granary': 'granaries'

He also discussed derived nouns whereby an affix is attached to an existing lexeme to change the grammatical category of words as shown below:

Operand + Formative = Derived

mesdagu + kur = mesdakur

'happy' 'ness' ' happiness'

Hoffmann (ibid) has equally discussed the morphological processes of Marghi language, i.e. affixation and reduplication, which are illustrated as follows:

Prefixation: u + lagu = ulagu

'on' the road 'on the road'

Suffixation: babal + kur = babalkur

'hard' ness hardness

Looking at reduplication in Marghi, [8] distinguishes complete reduplication on the one hand and partial reduplication on the other. The total reduplication, which consists in repeating the exact copy of the reduplicated word can be illustrated as follows:

'dubu = dubudubu

'thousand' 'thousand each'

As for partial reduplication, it is exemplified as follows:

'pathlu = papathlu

'one' 'one each'

Discussing the morphology of nouns in Mumuye, [9] identifies two types of noun classifications in that language. First, by the use of the traditional criterion and secondly, going by their morphology, that is to say, how words are formed.

Using the first criterion, [9] observes that Mumuye nouns are classified into proper nouns, common nouns, which involve collective nouns, uncountable, concrete nouns and abstract nouns. On the other hand, using the second criterion mentioned above, [9] notices that affixation, compounding, reduplication and modification processes operate in Mumye language, i.e. in derived nouns. Affixation exists in that language in the form of pre-fixation, in-fixation, and suffixation.

In terms of compound nouns, [9] classifies Mumuye nouns into noun-noun, noun-verb, and noun-adjective. In terms of inflectional morphology in Mumuye, she observes that there is a case of inflection through the suffixing of the morph –*yi* to a root noun in order to turn it into the plural form.

Another work that is related to ours is [10]. Analysing the Wurkun language, [10] observes that Wurkun nouns comprise proper nouns and common nouns, the latter including mass nouns, concrete nouns, abstract nouns and collective nouns. He added that concrete nouns have the following syllable structures: CV, CVC, CVCV, CVCV-CV, which implies that they can be monosyllabic, disyllabic, tri-syllabic and polysyllabic. He also observes that Wurkun nouns have the following tone patterns: high + low+ mid (CVCVCV); high + low + low + low (CVCVCVCV) and high + low + mid depending on the syllable structure of the noun in question.

Discussing the derivational noun in Wurkun, [10] uncovered the presence of affixation, reduplication and modification processes in the language. Talking of affixation, he observes that new words can be derived by prefixing *ba* to a root. In the same vein, *yo* can be attached at the end of the root. As for in-fixation, he mentions that there is the occurrence of some words in-between the lexeme in order to derive the feminine form of the noun. Dealing with compounding, Adams (ibid) identifies the Wurkun nouns of the following types: noun + noun, noun + verb, and noun + adjective. He also shows the existence of reduplication along with complete modification. In addition, in the process of vowel change, he observes that in Wurkun, the shift of /a/, /i/ and /o/ to /e/ brings about a change in meaning as exemplified below:

gápá = gápé

'divide' 'divided'

náh = néh

'tell' 'told'

líssí = líssé

'sweep' 'swept'

Furthermore, [10] noted the presence of zero modification process, where some words are used for both types of gender, i.e. masculine and feminine.

Also relevant to this research paper is [11], which classifies Yoruba nouns into ten types viz. human nouns, non-human nouns, value nouns, quantity nouns, demonstrative nouns, relative head nouns, genitival head nouns, countable nouns, mass nouns and interrogative nouns.

3. Theoretical framework

In this paper, we adopted [12]'s approach, i.e. structuralism. We have adopted this approach because it is appropriate to our study. [12] divides morphology into main branches viz. lexical and inflectional. He further subdivides lexical morphology into derivational and compounding/composition.
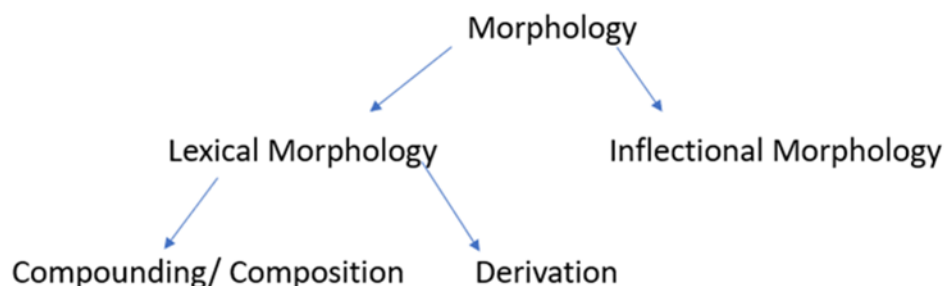
[12] states that lexical morphology deals mainly with the process of word formation, and it is divided into two sub-branches: derivational morphology and compounding/composition as in figure 3.1 above.

Derivational morphology deals with the formation of words by the use of affixes and that brings about a change in the class of words. Derivational process consists of an operand (word base), formative (what is added to the base) and derivand (the result of the operation). This can be exemplified as below:

 Operand + Formative = Derivand

 dance + er = dancer

 teach + er = teacher

As regards compounding, it is the joining-together of two independent lexical items in order to form a single lexeme. But there is a clear notion that the product is the sum total of the meaning as illustrated below:

 'house + boy = houseboy

 'black + board = blackboard

On the other hand, composition is a situation whereby two words are joined together to form a single lexeme and the result is not necessarily the meaning of the joined words as shown below:

 'ice + cream = ice-cream

 'brain + drain = brain-drain

With regard to inflectional morphology, [12] states that this does not change the category of the word but rather serves as marker of tense or number as exemplified below:

In Latin: 'puta putas = putat

 'I think' 'you think' 'he thinks'

In English: 'boy + s = boys

 'bush + es = bushes

In terms of morphological processes, [12] distinguishes three basic types, viz. Affixation, Reduplication and Modification.

3.1   Affixation

It is a process whereby an element or a bound morpheme is added to a base word or root and it could be in the form of pre-fixation, suffixation or in-fixation.

Pre-fixation is the process of adding a bound morpheme to word-initial position as illustrated below:

un + grateful = ungrateful

im + possible = impossible

Suffixation is the placement of a bound morpheme after the root. It is one of the most effective processes in English. This can be illustrated as follows:

establish + ment = establishment

kind + ness = kindness

As far as in-fixation is concerned, it is a process that consists in infixing a bound morpheme within the root. It is not common in English, but it exists in Hausa as shown below:

Singular Plural

gurgùu gur + aa + gùu = guràagùu

'cripple': 'crpples'

barde bar + a + dee = baradee

'hero': 'heroes'

[see 13].

3.2   Reduplication

According to [12], reduplication is defined a process whereby another shade of meaning is produced by reduplicating whole or part of the root. It is divided into two, namely complete reduplication and partial reduplication. Total reduplication refers to a situation whereby the repeated segment is exactly like the original copy as illustrated below in Hausa language:

kásà = kásàkásà

'down' 'a bit down'

tsāmī = tsāmī'tsāmī

'sour 'a bit sour' [See 13]

As regards partial reduplication, it is a process whereby only a part of the root is repeated. Here are some examples in Hausa:

harɓàa = harharɓàa

'stone' 'stone it several times'

kaamàa = kakaamàa

'catch' 'catch it several times'

3.3   Modification

For [12], modification is the process whereby the shape of the root is modified to get another of meaning. It can be total or partial. Total modification shows no apparent correlation between forms of related words. It is a complete change of sound in such a way that there is no visible link between the original word and the derived one. In other words, there is a change of word in such a way that the grammatical link between the two forms is not the same. This is illustrated as follows: go = went

 bad = worse.

Partial modification is a modification process whereby only a part of the stem is modified. It is further subdivided into vowel change, stress change, tonal modification, subtraction and neutralization.

Vowel change is a sub-type of modification in which the difference between the base and the derived word is in the vowel quality.

For instance, sing = sang, foot = feet.

The stress change is a shift of a stress from one syllable to another, which changes the category of the word so that if it is on the first syllable, we are dealing with a noun otherwise it is a verb. This can be illustrated as follows:

'import (N) = imˈport (V), 'convict (N) = conˈvict (V).

Tonal change is a process in which there a change in tone/pitch of the voice on a syllable of a word, bringing about a grammatical change of that word. Here are some examples in Hausa language:

 Base Imperative Gloss

 yankàa yànkaa 'cut'

 warwàatsaa wàrwaatsaa 'you throw away repeatedly'

[12] states that subtraction is a partial modification and it is the opposite of affixation. It deals with taking away of some affix from the root. This means that subtraction is a process where an element is removed from the structure of a word. Consider the change of gender in French in the following example:

 blanche /blɑ̃ʃ/ (f) = blanc /blɑ̃/ (m)

 'white' 'white'

 petite /pətɪt/ = pətɪt

 'small' 'small'

Finally, [12] sees modification also in terms of 'zero modification' and this is a process whereby an expected opposition between morphs/morphemes is no longer apparent. In other words, words that denote the same thing do not carry gender features. Here is an illustration:

 'teacher (m) = teacher (f)

 'doctor (m) = doctor (f)

4   Material and methods

Our data come from forty (40) native speakers of ɓāŋlíŋ dialect, i.e. eight (8) from each of towns/villages Sere, Dawa, Mindaore, Lale, and Guwe. The respondents were both female and male. Simple random sampling process was adopted to obtain the required number. The age of the respondents ranges from forty (40) to sixty (60). This age range is chosen because it is assumed that any person within this age would be a mature user of the language.

Out of the forty (40) respondents selected and interviewed, only twenty respondents' responses were used to check the validity of the data so that the researcher can cancel any form of doubt. The selection of the twenty respondents was based on the lottery based that is used in random selection. All of the forty respondents were assigned a number on pieces of paper, which were dropped into a box. Then someone was assigned to pick one rolled paper at a time and the number picked was recorded and returned into the box. In case a number was picked twice, it was disregarded. And the picking continued until the number of the respondents required is reached [adapted from 14]. Structured interview was used as the primary source of data collection and the researcher used the Swadesh four hundred (400) word-list in order to get as many types of nouns as possible. The interview was tape-recorded. This enabled us to listen again and again to the interview for the ease of transcription and tone intonation.

5 Results and discussion

As mentioned earlier, [12] distinguishes three basic types of morphological processes, namely Affixation, Reduplication and Modification. These morphological processes are available in the formation of nominal in Tupuri language. Affixation in this language exists in the form of pre-fixation and suffixation.

5.1 Pre-fixation

In Tupuri, the morpheme *jè* is placed before a verb or a noun to form a new noun, which in turn is a noun of agent. As an illustration, here are examples:

jè + hátgë = jèhátgë

'teach' 'teacher'

'jè + räŋgē = 'jèräŋgē

'travelling' 'traveller'

'jè + gàw = 'jègàw

'hunting' 'hunter'

5.2 Suffixation

It is the occurrence of a bound morpheme at after a root. In Tupuri, the suffix-gë having a very low tone is placed after a verb to derive a noun as shown below:

ɓàl + gë = ɓàlgë

'to crucify' 'crucifixion'

ɗìk + gë = 'ɗìkgë

'to think 'thinking'

tàw + gë = tàwgë

'to complete' 'completion'

5.3 Reduplication

The two forms of reduplication exist in the formation of Tupuri nominals.

5.3.1   . Total reduplication

It is the exact repetition of the original copy as illustration below:

bɔŋ = bɔŋ-bɔŋ

'one' 'one each'

nènmàʔä = nènmàʔä-nènmàʔä

'eight 'eight each'

rënäm = rënäm-rënäm

'seven' 'seven each'

5.3.2 . Partial reduplication

This is a process whereby a part of the root is repeated as illustrated below:

mbárʔ = mbár-mbárʔgë

'beat' 'beat it several times'

jïbïdï = jïbïd-jïbïdï

'sweet' 'sweetish'

tùwärē = tùwär-tùwärē

'male' 'boyish'

5.4 Modification

In the formation of Tupuri nominal, there is total modification, which is seen by [12] as a process in which there is no apparent correlation between the forms of relevant words. It is a complete change of sound in such a way that there is no link between the original word and the derived one. This is illustrated as below:

mbárga = werewɔ

'child' 'children'

'wãaŋ = näarēwɔ

'woman' 'women'

5.5 . Subtraction

Subtraction deals with taking away some affix from the root. In Tupuri, the subtraction of the prefix jè as characteristic of nouns of agent produces another type of nouns, i.e. nouns of action as shown below:

jèfɛlɛkgë = fɛlɛkgë

'a hunter/fisherman' 'hunting/fishing'

jèräŋgē = räŋgē

'a traveller' 'travelling'

jèɗēe = jèɗēe

'a runner' 'running'

5.6 . Neutralization

Neutralization is process whereby an expected opposition between morphs/ morphemes is no longer apparent. This means that words that mean the same thing do not exhibit gender features as illustrated below:

jètábáy (m) = 'jètábáy (f)

'person 'person'

jèhátgë (m) = jèhátgë (f)

'teacher 'teacher'

'bälë (m) = 'bälë (f)

5.7 Compound nouns in Tupuri

According to [15], compounding involves "the combination of independent elements into larger units whose forms and meanings are based on those of the items composed". In Tupuri, compound nouns include noun based compound nouns, verb based-compound nouns, adjective based-compound nouns, and preposition based-compound nouns.

5.8 Noun based compound nouns

Tupuri noun based-compound nouns have a noun as core. They have the following structures: noun + noun and noun + noun + noun.

5.8.1   Noun + noun

Tupuri compound noun (N + N) are nouns that are made of two independent nouns and the meaning of the whole is influenced by that of the second noun as shown below:

N + N = N (Derivand)

fēw ɓúrgí = fēwɓúrgí

'month' 'dust' 'april'

ɓíiri + kágé = ɓíirikágé

'intestine' 'chicken' 'chicken's intestine'

5.8.2   Noun + Noun + Noun

In Tupuri language there is a category of nominals that is derived from the joining of three independent nouns as exemplified below:

N + N + N = N (Derivand)

wãāy + jäàr + Mukay = wãāyjäàrmukay

'woman' 'people' 'Mukay (village name)' 'Mukay woman'

wãāy + jäàr + Kábáláy = wãāyjäàrkábálá

'woman 'people' 'Kabalay (ethnics)' 'Kabalay woman'

wãāy + jäàr + Kelo = wãāyjäàrKelo

'woman' 'people' Kelo (town name) 'Kelo woman'

5.9 Verb based compound nouns

This type of compound nouns is formed with a verb in- between, which influences the meaning of the noun produced. The first element is mostly *jè* in the meaning of actor as shown below:

N + V + N = N (Derivand)

jè + càr + kïida = jècàrkïida

'actor' 'cut/judge' 'judgement' 'a judge'

jè + id + húulí = jèidhúulí

'actor' 'kill' 'dead/death 'killer'

ŋgël + bà + wüu = 'ŋgëlbàwüu

'place' 'catch' 'fire' 'heat'

5.10 Adjective based compound nouns

In Tupuri language, adjective based compound nouns are nouns which are made of Noun + Adjective as shown below:

N + Adj = Noun (Derivand)

jè + tàbäy = jètàbäy

'person' 'black' 'a black man'

māy + tíklí = māytíklí

'girl' + 'young' 'a young girl'

wãāy + külúu = wãāykülúu

'woman' 'old' 'an old woman'

5.11 Preposition based compound nouns

This type of compound nouns is made of noun, preposition and noun, and the meaning of the resulted noun is affected by the preposition as exemplified below:

Noun + Preposition + Noun = Noun (Derivand)

ŋgël + tí + cégé = ' ŋgëltícégé

'place/time' 'in' 'heat' 'dry season'

wãāy + mäāde + hãa = wãāymäādehãa

'woman' 'with' 'wickedness' 'wicked woman'

típegē + tí + tíŋ = típegētítíŋ

'brain' 'on' 'house' 'summit of the house'

6 Conclusion

This paper aimed at examining the morphological processes that characterize the formation of Tupuri nominals. Based on Matthews PH. approach, this investigation showed that the three basic morphological processes exist in Tupuri

language, i.e. affixation, reduplication and modification. In detail, affixation exists in Tupuri in the form of pre-fixation and suffixation. It is observed that the prefix *jè*, having the idea of 'actor' or 'doer' is attached to a noun or verb to produce another noun. In terms of suffixation, *gë* is attached to the end of a verb to derive a noun. Reduplication exists in the both forms, i.e. total and partial.

With regard to modification, total modification is bound to gender and number, i.e. the feminine form of some nouns is completely different from that of the masculine one (wãāy (woman)/jètúwäēr (man)), and the plural of some nouns as well. Partial modification comprises subtraction and neutralization. In Tupuri, the subtraction of the pre-fix *jè* as a characteristic of nouns of agent gives another type of noun. In terms of neutralization, there are Tupuri nouns that are neutral regarding the gender.

In addition to the three basic morphological processes mentioned above, there is compounding in the formation of Tupuri nouns. Indeed, in that language, compound nouns exhibit the following structures: N + N, N + N + N, N +V +N, N + Adj, and N + Prep + N.

In conclusion there hope that this paper would contribute to the literature of African languages.

Compliance with ethical standards

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