

Affix formation as a process of lexical reduction in LuBukusu

Justine Sikuku

Moi University, Eldoret - Kenya

Most studies in morphosyntax (Baker 1985, Payne 1997) are concerned with investigations into the shapes of linguistic forms generally referred to as words. Primarily, the focus is always on the identification of the varied 'building blocks' (morphemes), their categorization, and the delimitation of the syntactic context of use, all put in the perspective of a host of theoretical assumptions that are structurally or functionally predisposed. The assumption is always that different languages have different 'morphemes' playing different roles. However, very few studies (Goichi 2000, Nishikawa 2001) focus on the genesis of such morphemes. This paper is an attempt to pursue a theory of affix formation based on LuBukusu (a Bantu Language). The main premise is that in LuBukusu, affixes are derived via a lexical reduction process triggered by the need for language to be economical (Chomsky 1993, 1995).

The analysis gets overwhelming evidence from the language's possessive and prepositional constructions occurring in specified agreement contexts. Following Anderson (2004), agreement occurs between heads and non-heads in phrasal or non-phrasal configurations. In this paper, reduction is analyzed as a product of similar principles. The full lexical possessive construction in LuBukusu, for example, undergoes reduction and attaches to the head N within an NP category. On the other hand, the prepositional affixes either occur in a modifier-head relation within an NP or in a predicate-adjunct relation within a clause. The following objectives therefore form the basis of the analysis in this paper:

Identify and describe the different contexts of lexical reduction in LuBukusu

Explain the systematic rules governing lexical reduction in LuBukusu

Extend the description to related Languages to help formulate theoretical assumptions to account for the whole phenomenon of affix formation by lexical reduction.

The main hypothesis is that affixes are intentionally derived from full lexical forms in Language.