RESEARCH ARTICLE

MORPHOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION OF ADJECTIVES IN KI IMENTI DIALECT: KIMERU LANGUAGE

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Abstract

The paper assesses the morphological description of adjectives in the Imenti dialect of the larger Kimeru language. Adjective is one of the seven parts of speech in Ki imenti; it is among the four open categories of speech portrayed in the language. The paper employs Morris Halle's 1973 model of Generative Morphology Theory to evaluate the morphological descriptionof adjectives in Ki imenti language. The basic principle in generative morphology is that the process of word formations can generate actual words and potential words. The research uses the descriptive research design to obtain information from data that was accumulated from the adjectives in the Ki imenti language. The Ki imenti language is spoken by people from North Imenti, Central Imenti, Buuri and south Imenti constituencies in Meru County. Ki imenti adjectives are divided into different categories and subcategories which explains the diversity in their formations. Hence different morphological descriptions. The study seeks to identify a rule or rules that would account for morphological description of adjectives in Ki imenti language.

Introduction

This paper examines the adjective formations in Ki imenti language of the larger Kimeru speaking communities. Kimeru is a Bantu language spoken by Ameru people of Kenya. The Ameru people reside in Meru County and Tharaka Nithi county. The two counties are on the Eastern slopes of Mt. Kenya. Mwebia (2006) however notes that, a considerable number of Meru speakers live in other parts of the country as a result of migration, land settlement and employment. A significant number occupy the Laikipia District, Nairobi, Isiolo and parts of the Kenyan Coast. (Kawira 2014).

There are several dialects spoken by the Ameru people. According to Muriungi (2015) Kimeru language is not homogeneous, it has various variations in dialects and there is a discrepancy between what the native speakers

recognize as main Kimeru dialects and what the scholars' state to be the dialects of Kimeru language (Gacunku 2005). Marete (1981) recognizes five regional varieties. Ki-Tharaka, Gi-Tigania, Gi-chuka, Ki-Mwimbi and Ki-imenti. Mberia (1979) however, treats Ki-tharaka as a distinct language and not as a dialect of Kimeru. Guthrie (1970/71) assigns Meru and Tharaka different codes thus treating the two as languages that are distinct from each other.

Nkubitu (1993) recognizes only four dialects of Ki-meru- Ki-Igembe, Gi-Tigania, Ki-Imenti and Ki- Mwimbi. More recent studies, for example, Gacunku (2005) identified up to 8 dialects can be distinguished in Kimeru. These are: Ki-igembe, Gitigania, Gi-chuka, Ki-muthambi, Ki-mwimbi, Ki-igoji, Ki-imenti and Ki-miitine.

The eight dialects are represented in the two counties as follows:

- Meru county- Ki-imenti, Ki-Egoji, Ki-igembe, Gi-tigania and Ki-miutine
- Tharaka Nithi county- Gi-Chuka, Ki-muthambi, and Ki-mwimbi.

The present study focused on the Imenti variety which is the researcher's native language. At the same time, it is considered to be more dominant Taitumu (2014). The data used for this paper is derived from Ki-imenti language.

Literature review

Many studies have been done on different aspects of Kimeru as well as other related Bantu languages. Kawira (2014) researched on a semantic analysis of Kimeru Kinship terms with a view of investigating which kinship terms are used for describing the various kinship relations. This study also looks at the various processes used in the formation of Kimeru kinship terms and seeks to establish whether a kinship term describing the same kinship relation takes different forms. The words used in kinship terms were mostly nouns while this study is based majorly on adjectives.

Taitumu (2014) did a study on Kimeru word-formation processes using an onomasiological approach which is theoretical framework that emphasizes the cognitive-semantic component of language and the primacy of extra-linguistic reality in the process of naming. The study identified the word-formation processes in the Gitigania dialect of the larger Kimeru speaking community. The study purposed to investigate to what extent the individual word-formation rules or processes in Kimeru could be productive. This study although based in Ki imenti it also seeks to identify rules governing word formation.

Other studies include Maore (2013) who based his study on the phonological basis of misspellings in written English of Kimeru speaking pupils in public Primary schools. The study focused on whether the phonology and orthography of Kimeru as a learner's first language affected their spelling of English words. The study adapted Error Analysis as its theoretical framework. The data for this study was collected from creative compositions and dictation of words written by primary school learners whose first language was Kimeru. His study is different from the current study because the latter was based on word formation while the former was looking at how Kimeru can affect a child's spelling in English.

Mbae (2020) based her research on Kimeru Causatives: a morphosyntactic study in a construction Grammar approach where she sought to study causatives in the Kimeru language. Common Kimeru words used in this study were derived from Ki-igoji dialect. The study's objectives were: to find out how causatives are formed in Kimeru, to describe the structure of causative constructions in Kimeru, and to examine morphological causatives using the Goldberg theory of construction grammar. This is a theory of cognitive linguistics that claims that language is not inborn, but instead,

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learners learn constructions from generalizations and the environment to which they are exposed and that the constructions are then stored in the human mind and produced when the need arises. The current study however, is different because it was based on word formation process in Ki imenti dialect if Kimeru language.

Zaheer (2017) examined the word formation processes that are used in SMS language by the Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) students of University of Management and Technology (UMT), a private university based in Lahore- Pakistan. The article also explored the choices of word formation processes (WFPs) that are made by males and females. The data was collected from 50 male and 50 female students enrolled in the university. The research questions were related to the use of word formation processes and the research hypotheses were tested to distinguish WFPs as a marker of Gender identity.

These articles are relevant to this paper since they have highlighted on the studies done in Kimeru and also based on the research done on Word formation processes in different languages.

Methodology

Based on the research problem being investigated, this study was carried out in Meru County, South Imenti constituency in Nkubu area. Purposive sampling was used to select Nkubu area which is in South Imenti constituency because the residents of the area speak the Imenti dialect and thus there is availability of language experts who may provide data relevant for this paper. In addition, the researcher comes from the locality. Nkubu area is easily accessible through the Mombasa-Nairobi- Meru-Maua highway. Similarly, the availability of resources, and the ethical implications of conducting research in the area encourage this particular area.'

The study used Purposive sampling also called judgment sampling this is because Purposive sampling involves the researcher choosing participants who possess the qualities needed in the research. It is a non-random technique that does not need underlying theories or a set number of participants. Simply put, the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience (Benard (2002) as quoted by Etikan et. al (2015). In this case all the selected participants were native speakers and of Ki imenti language.

The researcher selected 30 informants through purposive sampling basing her criteria for selection on their knowledge in Ki imenti dialect and their age. The researcher settled on 30 informants citing their knowledge in Ki imenti language and saturation of information, resource constraints and also presence of other sources of data like books which helped in getting more data required in the study. Further, the researcher considered those who had reached the age of 30 and above fit for the research because most were not affected by slang/sheng or code switching. The informants generated data that was used for the study. Data collected from these informants was used in analysing the morphological description of Ki-imenti adjectives.

The nature of the research prompted the adoption of a descriptive research design. The descriptive research design allowed the researcher to obtain information without changing the environment more so; the language was not manipulated in any way. Such a design, enabled the researcher obtain information about the naturally occurring nouns in the Imenti dialect of the larger Kimeru language. Similarly, the descriptive design was chosen since the study involved a one-time interaction with the Ameru speakers in the form of questionnaires which contained language tests in order to collect and analyze many adjectives in Kimeru.

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Data analysis and interpretation

The study aimed to collect data on Imenti words portrayed in the categories and sub-categories of adjectives. The researcher used a questionnaire that was aimed to get Ki imenti adjectives, this was used by the informants who could read and write. This primary source of data would help the researcher in collecting relevant and suitable data for this study. In some few isolated cases, the researcher used guided interview targeting informants who could not read and write. Then the researcher used kimeru story books *Ui Wiji Atia? Jukia Iuku Ukathome* and the Kimeru bible *Iuku ria Murungu* as a source of word lists and further to be used to validate the data given.

For the data analysis; the researcher translated the words collected into English to make it easier for anyone reading the work to understand. Then, classified the given data into the lexical sub-categories of adjectives. Later the researcher described the formation of words in the adjective category of speech and analysed them basing on any rule that governs their formation in Ki-imenti. The researcher then filtered the words based on the word formation rules, consequently explaining other aspects in the morphological description of the language. Finally, the researcher analysed the extent to which the Generative Morphological theory accounted for the formation of adjectives in the Ki imenti language that are acceptable in the vocabulary of the Imenti-dialect of the larger Kimeru language.

Theoretical Framework

The central objective of generative linguistics is to understand the nature of linguistic knowledge and how it is acquired by infants. In the light of this objective, a fundamental question that a theory of word structure must address is, "*What kind of information must speakers have about the words in their language in order to use them in utterances?*' attempts to answer this question has led to

development of sub-theories of lexicon and of morphology. (Katamba: 1993)

To account for the morphological a description in Kimeru-Imenti dialect this paper utilizes Morris Halle's (1973) model of Generative Morphological Theory as discussed by Scalise (1984) in his book Generative Morphology.

The Analysis of Generative Morphology Theory of Halle's (1973) Model

Generative morphology also makes use of the principles and techniques of morpheme identification used by structural morphology. The basic principle in generative morphology is that the process of word formations can generate actual words and potential words.

Morris Halle (1973), looked at four the basic principles of Generative Morphological Theory. They included the following:

i. List of Morphemes: That morphemes portrayed in languages can be bound or free morphemes. Free morpheme can stand alone as words that consist of class or content words, like nouns (N), verbs (V), adjective (Adj), and advebs (Adv), and function words, like determiners (primary auxiliaries and modal auxiliaries), intensifiers, and question words. Bound morpheme on the other hand cannot stand alone as words instead they consist of affixes which can be further divided into prefixes that are added after the base. This paper is based on morphemes that are portrayed adjectives.

ii. Word formation rules: After all morphemes are listed in the list of morphemes, then the linguists formulate a set of word formation rules (WFR), which could the noun formation rules (NFR), the verb formation Rules (VFR), the adjective formation rules (AdjFR), and the adverb formation ruler (AdvFR). Every rule must be

accompanied by its meaning or semantic. This paper utilises the Adjective Formation rules. (AdjFR),

iii. Filter: The filter is the mechanism that can change unacceptable underlying representation into acceptable ones.

iv. Dictionary: All adjectives that have been formed through word formation rules (WFR) and have gone through the filter are listed in the dictionary, the last component of Halle's model. In the dictionary, all words are accompanied by their meanings and their semantic features. This is needed for the selection and application of words in sentences, so that we do not generate ungrammatical sentences.

Discussions and Findings

Adjectives in Ki imenti are used to describe nouns in terms of shape, colour, height width etc. For instance; *indaja* (tall), *intune* (red), *giceke* (slim/thin) etc. Ki imenti adjectives come after the noun they are describing. For instance; *nguo intune* (a red dress), *nguo*-dress *intune*-red *antu ikumi* (ten people) *antu*- people, *ikumi*-ten. The adjective will either change in form through reduplication and affixation in Ki imenti or will be used with words like, *(most) buru* (which treated as a suffix) and used to mark superlatives. Ki imenti adjectives are divided into different types as shown in the table below.

Table 1: showing types adjectives in Ki imenti

Type of adjective	Ki imenti example	Gloss
Descriptive	Inthongi	Beautiful
Demonstrative	Iria	That
Quantitative	Ikumi	Ten
Interrogative	Atia/ imbi	What

Ki imenti adjectives have a concordial agreement with nouns. Descriptive and demonstrative adjectives adopt prefixes that

denote the 17 noun classes both in their singular and plural manner.

The table 2 shows the adjectives prefixes derived from different noun classes. Classes 7 /8 and 9 /10 share prefixes *gi-bi* while classes 11/12 and 13 /14 also share the adjective prefixes *ga-tu*. Similarly, classes 16 and 17 share one prefix which is *i-* which denotes plural for classes 16 while it represents singular and plural for class 17.

Table 2: showing noun classes and their adjectives concordial agreement

Noun classes	Noun prefixes	Adjectives prefixes (concordial agreement)
1/ 2	Mu-a	u-ba
3/ 4	Mu-mi	Ju -mi
5/ 6	I -ma	Ri-ja
7/ 8	Ki-i	Gi/ki -bi
9/ 10	Gi -i	Gi -bi
11/ 12	Ka -tu	Ga -tu
13 /14	Ga -tu	Ga – tu
15 /16	Ru -n	Ru -i
17	N -n	I -i

Ki imenti morphological description

Ki imenti language word formation portrays different classifications of adjectives each one of them with its own formation. This paper looks at the different categories of adjectives found in Ki imenti language and their formation. The study focuses on the formation of adjectives through reduplication, comparative adjectives, superlative adjectives and negative adjectives. The discussion further looks at any constraints that hinder the formation of adjectives and account for it through Halle's Generative morphology Theory

Adjective formation through reduplication

Just as adverbs numerical and demonstrative adjectives take full reduplication where the root word is repeated. Numerical adjectives are reduplicated in order to show the order in which things happened while demonstrative adjectives are reduplicated to show emphasis.

Table 3: Showing quantitative Adjectives formed through reduplication:

Noun class	Nouns	Adj-classes	Adjectives	Reduplicated
Ki/gi-i	Kiratu 'shoe' Giti 'chair'	Gi/ki-bi	Kimwe 'one' Kimwe 'one'	Kimwekimwe 'one by one' Kimwekimwe 'one by one'
Mu-a Mu-mi	arume 'men'(plu) miti 'trees'(plu)	u-ba ju-i	Bairi 'two' Iiri 'two'	Bairibairi 'in groups of two' Iiriiiri 'in groups of two'
n-n Mu-a Mu-mi Ki-i	Mburi 'goats' Antu 'people' Miti 'trees' Iratu 'shoes'	i-I u-ba ju-i gi-bi	Ikumi 'ten' Igana 'hundred'	Ikumiikumi 'in groups of ten' Iganaigana 'in groups of hundred'

Table 3 above shows the formation of quantitative adjectives through reduplication showing order. In these classes, the adjective prefixes are maintained while using reduplicated numerical adjectives in singular form and in all the numbers below ten as shown above. As in, *umwe*, *imwe, (one) b*airi, *i*jiri (two)*as shown in the table above. However, from number ten and the numbers above ten the adjectives do not take any prefixes both in singular or plural form.

E.g *ikumiikumi (*in groups of ten). This can be shown in the rule below;

RULE: Given the root word to be X, then one can form an adjective showing order by duplicating the root word.

X+ X= XX (adjective + order)

Where;

X= Root word

XX=duplicated form

Table 4: Showing Demonstrative Adjectives formed through reduplication:

Noun example	Adj classes	Ki imenti Adj-	Ki imenti redu-
Kiratu 'shoe' (sing)	Gi	Giki 'this'	Gikigiki 'This +emphasis'
Gikombe 'cup'(sing)	Ki	Kiria 'that'	Kiriakiria 'That + emphasis'
Iratu 'shoes'(plu)	Bi	Bibi 'these'	Bibibibi 'These + emphasis'
Ikombe 'cups'(plu)	Bi	Biria 'those'	Biriabiria 'Those +emphasis'

The table above shows the formation of demonstrative adjectives through the process of reduplication. Here, the root adjective is repeated to create emphasis. The adjectives formed in this manner just like the other adjectives take a prefix from the specific noun

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class as shown in the example above. This can be represented in the following rule;

RULE:

Given the root word to be X, then one can form demonstrative adjective showing emphasis by duplicating the root word.

X+ X= XX (adjective + emphasis)

Where;

X= Root word

XX=duplicated form

Comparative Adjectives formed through infixation

Ki imenti language also takes a comparative form of adjective with the intention of comparing two things. Here, the adjectives take an infix *-a* to mark their comparative form as in *munene* (big) *munen-a- nene(bigger).* In order to form adjective in their comparative form, the root adjective drops the final *vowel* and then it is replaced with another vowel *-a* which is then joined with a duplicated root adjective. The infix *-a-* is applied to the adjectives both in their singular or plural form.

Table 5: Showing comparative Adjectives formed through infixation:

Adjective type	Ki imenti Adjective	Ki imenti Comparative	Adj class Agreement
Descriptive			
-thongi	Umuthongi 'beautiful' Babathongi	Umuithongathongi Babathongathongi 'more beautiful'	u-ba
-kui	Inkui / inkui 'short'	Inkuakui-inkuakui 'shorter'	i-i
-matu	Jumumumatu 'thick' Imimatu	Jumumumatamatu- Imimatamatu 'thicker'	ju-i
Quantitive			
-ringi	Riringi 'a lot' Jamaingi	Riringaingi- jamaingaingi 'More'	ri-ja
-kai	Inkai / inkai 'a little/ a few'	Inkaakai 'less'	i-i

Table 5 above shows examples of descriptive, quantitative types of adjectives in their comparative form formed through infixation. Both types of adjectives then drop the final vowel of the root adjectives before adding a duplicated root. This can be shown in the following rule;

RULE: Given the root word to be X, then one can form an adjective through infixation by replacing the last vowel of the root adjective

with *-a* then attaching the duplicated form of the adjective at the end.

X -v + *a* **+red = adjective + comparative**

Where;

X- Root word

v- vowel

a - infix

red – reduplicated adjective.

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Superlative Adjectives formed through suffixation

The standard superlative marker in Ki imenti is the word or suffix *buru (most)* which is added after the adjectives as in *jumuthongi buru* (most beautiful) in order to compare more than two things. Superlative adjective formation in Ki imenti retains the root adjectives and adds a suffix -*buru* which is in form of a word, the suffix is then attached to the root word.

Table 6: Showing superlative Adjectives formed through suffixation:

Adjective type	Kiimenti adj	Kiimenti superlative	Adj class agreement
Descriptive			
-raja	Umuraja 'tall' Babaraja	Umuraja buru Babaraja buru 'tallest'	u-ba
-nthongi	Inthongi 'beautiful'	Inthongi buru 'most beautiful'	i-i
-iru	Jumwiru 'black/dark' Imiru	Jumwiru buru Imiru buru 'blackest/darkest'	ju-i
Quantitive			
-ingi	Riringi 'a lot' Jamaingi	Riringi buru Jamaingi buru 'the most'	ri-ja
-kai	Inkai 'a few'	Inkai buru 'fewest'	i-i

Table 6 shows superlative adjectives formed through suffixation. The suffix *buru* is attached to the root adjective to form descriptive and quantitative adjectives in their superlative form. The suffixation process applies to the above adjectives both in their singular or plural form. This can be represented in the following rule;

RULE: Given the root word to be X, then one can form a superlative adjective through the process of suffixation by adding the suffix word *buru* to the root adjective.

X+ buru =adj + sup

Where;

X- Root word

Buru-suffix

Adj- adjective

Sup – superlative

Negative adjective formation

In Ki imenti language negative adjectives are used to express negative emotions or lack of agreement to an idea or opinion. The standard negative marker in language is *ti-* whose basic meaning is '*not*'. As shown in the table below.

Table 6: Showing Adjectives in negative form

Adj root	Adj class	Adjective	Negative Adj	
munoru 'fat'	u-ba	Umunoru	U-**ti**nori	'not fat'
mukue 'short'	Ju-i	Jumukue	Ju-**ti**kuei	'not short'
rioru 'rotten'	Ri-ja	Ririoru	Ri-**ti**ori	'not rotten'
inene 'big'	I-i	Inene	I-**ti**nenei	'not big'

From table 6, there are examples of negatives that are formed through prefixation and suffixation. The prefix *ti-* is attached to the root adjective and then the final vowel is replaced with *-i as in noru- tinori* 'fat not fat' or the vowel is added after the root word as in *nene-tinenei* 'big not big'. This can be represented in the following rule;

RULE

Given the root word to be X, then one can form a negative adjective by adding a prefix /*ti-*/ to the root word and then replacing the final vowel with a suffix *-i* after the root word.

This can be presented in the following formular;

Ti+X+i = negative adjective

Where;

X -root

ti -prefix (not)

i – suffix

Morphological constraints on adjectives

Most of the words in the Ki imenti adjectives portrayed noticeable uniformity in their formation. A considerable number of them had a similar pattern during their formation and further application in sentences. However, a few exceptions were observed in which very minimal rules were not followed due to various phonological and morphological aspects of the words portrayed in the language.

In their comparative form, adjectives take the infix *-a* replacing the last vowel in the root word as in the case of *munoru-munor**a**noru*,

however these changes in the case where the adjective has the last vowel as *-a* as in the case of *-raja- muraja(tall)*. Here, the last vowel is retained and it is also not doubled as would have been expected. The phonotactics of Ki imenti language does not allow a double vowel for comparative, hence, the single vowel retained serves as the final vowel as well as a comparative marker which is then attached to the duplicated root. This can be presented in the rule as follows;

RULE: Given the root word to be X, then one can form a comparative adjective that has a final vowel /*a*/ by retaining the final vowel of the root adjective which is *-a* then attaching the duplicated form of the adjective at the end.

X +red = adjective + comparative

Where;

X = Root word

red – reduplicated adjective

Recommendation

This study set out to analyze morphological description of adjectives in Ki imenti dialect using Morphological generative theory. So far, this study is by no means the final study on morphological description since the domain is still a rich reservoir of future research possibilities. The study recommends further research on word formation processes in other dialects of Kimeru language. Due to the close relationship on morphology and phonology encountered during this study, it was

recommended that research can be done based on Ki imenti phonology in order to account for the phonological constraints encountered during the study. Finally, in order to get a clear understanding of the relationship between Kimeru dialects, the researcher proposed that, a comparative study to be carried on to compare the morphological description of adjectives in Ki imenti dialect and other Kimeru dialects.

Conclusion

The study of morphological description in Ki imenti identified various sub categories of Ki imenti adjectives. The study observed that, Ki imenti adjectives have a concordial agreement with nouns. The descriptive and demonstrative adjectives adopt prefixes that denote the 17 classes both in their singular and plural manner. The study further found out that numerical and demonstrative adjectives take full reduplication where the root word is repeated in order to show intensity or emphasis. Ki imenti adjectives portray both comparative and superlative forms. In the formation of comparative adjectives, the language uses infixation which replaces the final vowel of the root word and replaces it with *(-a)*. Superlatives are attained through addition of a suffix which is in form of a meaningful word *(buru)* to show the extreme. Further the study observed that a prefix *(ti-)* 'not' was used in negative adjectives to denote the negative adjectives. Finally, the study observed that Ki imenti adjectives portrayed uniformity in its formation except for a few words which portrayed a few constraints. The research therefore observed that; that the adjectives found in Ki imenti language fit in the list of bound morphemes and that they portrayed clear word formation rules. However, there were some words which experienced phonological and morphological constraints which were accounted for through filter where the words that did not follow rules were marked and accounted for. Thereafter, the words were found to fit in the Ki imenti dictionary as indicated in the Generative Morphology Theory. All the above was accounted for by Halle's (1973) Generative Morphology Theory.

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