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The Syntax of Head-Marked Phrases and Head-Marking Morphemes in Lunyore

Muhanji Leonida Lihemo^{*1}, Prof: David Ongarora², Dr: Jackline Okello²¹Ph.D Candidate, Maseno University²Department of Linguistics, Maseno University

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Abstract: A language is head-marking if the grammatical marks showing agreement tend to be placed on the heads of phrases. Lunyore like many bantu languages is agglutinating and therefore has a rich and complex morphology. The complexity is more evident in head-marking morphology. This study examines the syntax and morphology of head-marking to establish how agreement is achieved in Lunyore phrases, a dialect of Luluhya language. The key objective is to examine the syntax of head-marked phrases and to analyze head-marking morphemes. The types of head-marked phrases include; applicatives, locatives, passives, causatives, reciprocals and instrumentals. Descriptive research design was adopted and the target population was people of Emuhaya sub county in Vihiga county. Purposive sampling technique was applied to gather head-marked phrases from churches and baraza sessions. Secondary sources of data include written texts in Lunyore hymn book and the Bible. The research instruments included conversations, written texts from Lunyore, participant and non-participant observations until saturation stage was attained. Data was analyzed through description and structural form. It was found out that each head-marked phrase had prefixes that attach to the stem. Head-marking morphemes licensed agreement in Lunyore head-marked phrases. The study therefore recommends that further research should be done on head-marking using comparative approach in bantu languages. Chomsky's minimalist theory was relevant in the analysis of head-marked phrases and head-marking morphemes.

Keywords: Head-marking, morphology, syntax and phrase

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BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Nichols (1986) observed languages are classified according to their tendency for using affixal morphology in marking select clausal and phrasal relations, for example, a given construction is considered head-marked if the syntactic dependence between the head and its arguments is morphologically realized on the head.

Many languages employ head-marking. The concept of head-marking is commonly applied to languages that have richer inflectional morphology. In morphologically agglutinative language like Lunyore, most agreement phrases are head-marked; they carry properties of some other forms appearing elsewhere, either in the same sentence or clause. The affixes in Lunyore on the other hand encode information pertaining to agreement. Lunyore manifests the typical Bantu agglutinative structure where the verbal complex functions as a complete sentence as in the example below;

Ba-rem-a
SM Cut FV
'The cut'

Lunyore verbal forms are as such complex entities which can be equivalent to a whole sentence with a subject, a verb and an object (Murasi 2000).

Lunyore is different from other Luhya dialects and other Bantu languages in general in terms of accent,

vocabulary and pronunciation (Bulimo, 2013). According to Fedders and Salvadori(1980), variations found in Luluhya dialects are phonological, morphological, and semantic and as such warrant specific studies. This information gives an important basic foundation to the general understanding of the inflectional and derivational verb constituents necessary for data analysis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Radford (1996) observes that, a phrase consists of two or more words as unit in a sentence. He also adds that words in a natural language belong to a highly restricted finite set of word level categories such as noun, verb, adjective, adverbs, preposition, determiner and modals. Major word level categories can be expanded into corresponding phrasal categories for instance noun-phrases and verb phrases. Radford (1996) goes ahead to add that a phrases is a constituent of a sentence when it appears in a syntactic structure.

Kamango (1990) did her research on the syntax of the Ki-Giryama noun phrase in the transformational mode. Kamango (ibid) observes that Ki-Giryama noun phrase structure is headed by a noun which is either followed or preceded by its quantifiers. Kamango adds that in Ki-Giryama, 'kila' every, can only co-occur with nominal categories that also have these features namely [+ singular] nominal categories. For example, we cannot have a NP like *kila viti' which means 'every chairs'. Similarly, we cannot have 'kila' co-occurring with

demonstratives. For example, *kila muhoho yuyahu', which means 'every that child'. This also applies to English. Important to this study is the fact that Lunyore like Ki-Giryama is a bantu language.

However, Kamango's work is limited to the constituents of the noun phrase. Kamango did not analyze head-marked phrases and head-marking morphemes in Ki-Giryama which is also an African language, Secondly Kamango's work is purely syntactic in nature and it examines the structure of a noun phrase. The present study in Lunyore analyses the syntax of head-marked phrases and the head-marking morphemes.

Sikuku (2014) discusses the Lunyala noun phrase, the study shows that modifying elements portray agreement from the head-noun. It also showed that the NP can consist of the head and its modifiers, which follow a strict order of co-occurrence. It was also evident that in nearly all cases, the modifiers occur to the right that is the noun precedes its modifiers. In this case, Sikuku's work did not discuss head-marking in Lubukusu, a dialect of Luluhya where Lunyore belongs. This study will therefore determine head-marked phrases and analyze head-marking morphemes.

Hans – Jorg (2015) define morphemes as the smallest meaning-bearing units. Morphemes can be classified in different ways: one common classification already learnt above separates those morphemes that mark the grammatical forms of words (-se, -ed, -ing and others) from those that form new lexemes conveying new meanings. Derivational morphemes play a role in word formation. Derivational morphemes, especially in the verbal extensions play an important role in marking relationships with other languages especially isolating languages indicated by syntactic means (Schoenberg, 2002). This study analyses head-marking morphemes and show how they convey meanings of various head-marked phrases.

Osore (2009) observes that like other bantu languages, Lutsotso which is in the same family of Lunyore of Luluhya language has a subject verb object (SVO) basic word order. The noun constituent element of the simple sentence exists as a complete noun phrase with nominal properties represented by affixes as in the word order. However, Osore's work is limited to the internal structure of a noun phrase of Lutsotso dialect, it does not focus on head-marked phrases and head-marking morphemes that license agreement. The current study will describe head-marked phrases and analyze head-marking morphemes. Osore's (2009) utilized the standard theory as formulated by Chomsky (1965) and the theory of inflectional morphology (Baller, 1983). The current study will be guided by the Minimalist program (Chomsky, 2001).

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive research design because it is within the qualitative paradigm. Creswell (1988) observes that descriptive approach is designed to obtain information concerning the current phenomenon and to draw valid conclusions from the facts discussed. The descriptive research design involves the knowledge of the target language by the researcher. Descriptive design is effective where a large population needs to be studied and where techniques such as observations are involved. The target population includes people from Emuhaya sub-county in Vihiga county in various social settings where Lunyore was spoken. Phrases were sampled from church services, baraza sessions, and personal interactions until saturation was attained. Data collection techniques were participant and non-participant observations. Secondary data was collected from Lunyore texts (the hymn book and the Bible). Collected data was grouped into common linguistic characteristics. In line with Minimalist program tenets (Chomsky, 2001), this study described the structural properties of head-marked phrases and analyzed head-marking morphemes in Lunyore.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study found out that each head-marked phrase has unique affixes that makes them attached to a particular phrase. Relationships in phrases as reciprocals, applicatives, locatives, instrumentals, causatives, and passives are generally referred to as extension meaning of phrases.

Lunyore reciprocal phrase is formed by adding the affix -na, with the verb root. It emerged that reciprocal phrase is not very productive. Reciprocal morphemes occur in verbal and nominalized phrases where the form marking reciprocal still remains -na (each other).

Applicative was identified as a head-marked phrase. The researcher found out that applicatives can fulfill a wide range of applicative arguments' structure related functions, benefactive, location, instrument and substitutive. Applicative in Lunyore can introduce an applied phrase in the course which would otherwise be more peripheral or not licensed. The applicative is formed by adding the morphemes -i-la-e-la added to the verb.

Locative phrases in Lunyore are derived by means of class markers of 16, 17 or 18 (ha, khu, mu and mwo). The constructions examined in Lunyore indicate that 'khu' and 'mu' locative prefixes triggers agreement with nouns. The findings further established that the morpheme -'mwo'- is semantically significant in that it is used to denote definite location which can be inferred from the context even when the location is not explicitly mentioned.

The study also examined passive head-marked phrases, it was observed that the construction of passive

phrases is realized by the addition of *-lwe-* affixed to a verb immediately before the final vowel if the verb root ends in a consonant. The affixed morpheme (passive) changes the final vowel of the verb from *-a* to *-e*, for example *ruma* (send) *arumi-lwe* (was sent).

Causative phrases were also analyzed, it emerged that Lunyore causative phrases, like applicative are valency increasing morphemes. It adds an extra participant to the argument structures of the verbs. The causer is introduced in the subject position as the former subject moves to the position after the verb. The instrumental phrases were also valency increasing, they add an extra object to the verb. In instrumental marking, Lunyore language make use of verbal suffixation strategy; with the causatives or applicatives. The instrumental morpheme in Lunyore is *l-la* and is inserted between the last consonant and the last vowel of the verb.

Data was discussed within the Minimalist Program (Chomsky, 2001), the syntactic structures are constructed bottom to top and that there is a cyclic transfer to the phonological form (PF) and logical form (LF) interface triggered by the phrase head verb and complementize (C). Chomsky's tenet of economy of representation is the principle that observes that grammatical structures must exist for a purpose, structures of a sentence should not be larger or more complex than required to satisfy constrain grammatically which are equivalent to constraints on the mapping between the conceptual internal and marking interfaces is the optimal system that minimalism seeks to explore (Chomsky 1995:219). Chomsky observes that there are only two levels of representation, logical form (LF) and phonological form (PF). LF is the level that interfaces with the conceptual intention (CI) system. PF is the level that interfaces with the articulatory-perceptual (AP). All conditions on syntactic representation hold at LF. The principle that falls under representation is bare phrase structure (BPS) (sentence building prior to movement) which contrasts with x-bar theory which preceded it, in four important ways.

- Bare Phrase Structure is explicitly derivational, that is, it is built from bottom up, bit by bit. In contrast, x-bar theory is representational, a structure for a given construction is built in one fell swoop and lexical items are inserted into the structure.
- Bare Phrase Structure does not have a preconceived phrasal structure while x-bar theory every phrase has a specifier, a head and a complement.
- Bare Phrase Structure does not distinguish between a head and a terminal while some versions of x-bar theory require such a distinction.
- Bare Phrase Structure permits only binary branching.

Bare Phrase Structure incorporates two basic operations, merge and move. In MP, the bare phrase

structure allows for the projections to be built as per the language analysis. The subcategorization features of the head licenses certain label projections and eliminates all derivations with alternate projections. Merge is an important concept in MP. Merge can be defined as a binary operation that selects takes per two operational constituents from [N] and turns them into one constituent that carries the same label as that of dominating item. (Zeijlstra, 2004:14). Mp assumes that it is conceptually necessary that phrases and sentences are built up from words by a series of merger operations.

Movement is an important part of the Minimalist program. It is an operation that is derived from merge (Chomsky, 1995). Move states that, move any category to a different position. Move mediates between the deep structure and the surface structure. In Mp, lexical items are moved round for feature checking purposes. Feature checking is designed to ensure that, the grammatical features carried by different words in a sentence are compatible with those of other words in the same sentence.

From the theory above, it is imperative that head-marked phrases conforms to (Chomsky's 2001) tenet of bare phrase structure. The head-marked phrases that were identified were; reciprocals, applicatives, instrumentals, locatives, causatives and passives.

In Lunyore, the reciprocal morpheme is basically *-na-*, in the structure
Be-ra-na
SM-Tns-kill RECM-FV
'they killed each other'.

In the structure above, the verb phrase *yira* (kill) is head-marked by the morpheme *-na-* showing the reciprocal form of a head-marked phrase *bera-na* (killed each other), the reciprocal is ditransitive. The verb does not subcategorise for any object. The verb *yira* (kill) moves from its place, the VP to (REC/REC') to pick up the reciprocal features. The verb then moves on to the TNSP and to the subject agreement features. The compound subject moves from its place in the VP to (SPEC/AGRSP)

Lunyore applicative phrase is head-marked by the morpheme *-el-a*. In the structure,
a-tekhel-a
ISM-cook-APPLMFV
(cooks for).

In the applicative head-marked phrase *tekhe-la* (cook for). The verb *tekhe-la* (cook for) moves from its place in the VP to (AGRO) to TNS/TNS to pick up the applicative affix and merge with the objective features. The applicative affix heading the objective phrase is the lowest thus realized overtly. The verb moves to (APP/APPL) to merge the applicative features with the theme argument. The applicative affix heading the

applicative phrase is realized covertly because Lunyore has only one applicative affix despite the many applied arguments introduced.

Instrumental head-marked phrases in Lunyore are formed by the morpheme *-la* as in the example below;

Funaki-*la* (cut with). The head-marked phrase *funaki -la* (cut with) licenses an objective argument. Movement in the structure is in line with ideas of Chomsky (2001:2) that states....

Any structure formed by the computation is constituted of elements already present in the lexical items selected for numeration. No new items are added in the causes of the computation.

Lunyore locative head-marked phrases can be marked for prefixes and suffixes. The locatives prefix is *-mu*, *khu*. The locative suffix is *kho* and *mwo*, *yao* (there). For effective communication locative head-marked phrases must be selected by the verb in Lunyore.

The Minimalist program (Chomsky 2001:2) eliminates x-bar levels in favour of bare-phrase structures that satisfies the inclusiveness condition which has been formulated by Chomsky as follows;

Any structure formed by the computation is constituted by elements already present in the lexical items selected for N (the numeration). No new objects are added in the course of the computation apart from rearrangement of lexical properties.

In the head-marked phrase, *andiye kho* (wrote on) has selectional features that it must combine with a noun (*ebarua*) a letter.

Causatives in Lunyore are considered head-marked phrases. The argument introduced by the causative cannot merge its features in a causativity local configuration, therefore, the argument introduced has a full projection, with the causative affix being the head of the causative phrase.

In the Minimalist Approach, the structure building process, the order of elements in a phrase structure are fixed according to how they appear in the language in question. The structure building process and the Principle of Full interpretation (FI) constrains the structure building process, so that no superfluous element appears, merges causative structures. A morphological causative is formed by attaching a causative affix to a bare verb or base which yields derived causative construction as in the structure (b) below;

(a). a-bana ba-sina-nga
CL 2 child SM-dance-FV

‘The children are dancing’

(b). derived structure

A-bacheni ba-sinisia a-bana

CL 2 visitors SM-make children

‘the visitors are making the children to dance’.

Passive phrases are head-marked with the morpheme *-lwe* in Lunyore, as in the example below;

Chikhwi chikingi-lwe na bakhana

Firewood SMcarryPASS SM p L girl

‘firewood has been carried by the girls’

The role of the verb and that of the object are reversed. In active voice, the subject always comes first and is seen to do something but in passive voice the roles are reversed. It is the object that takes the initial position and the subject may be mentioned or eliminated. Agreement between T and DP to be established, it is sufficient that the DP is in C-command domain of T (Chomsky, 2000). Computational system builds syntactic structures in a bottom up fashion. When a functional head F is merged with its complement a, F’s uninterpretable features must immediately start searching for a phrase with matching interpretable agreement features.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

They study identified six head-marked phrases in Lunyore. The head-marked phrases included, reciprocals, applicatives, instrumentals, locatives, causatives and passives. It emerged that the reciprocal is not hosted by argument less and intransitive verbs because they do not participants that can mutually act on each other.

The research found out that the applicative can fulfill a wide range of applicative arguments’ structure related functions like benefactive, location, instrumental and substitutive.

The study concludes that head-marking morphemes license agreement in head-marked phrases in Lunyore. This study further concludes that agreement has morpho-syntactic functions which mark agreement relationship in a syntactic structure. Agreement has its own head since we have seen that in a single construction, the subject, verb form and object have all been inflected to indicate agreement.

This study also concludes that, the Lunyore phrase structure conforms to the proposed phrase structure in Minimalist Program (MP.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has noted that the whole phenomenon of head-marking covers both syntactic and discourse-oriented head-marking. The focus of this study was on

head-marked phrases. I recommend a study to capture intricate properties of head-marking in discourse. The focus of this study was mainly on data from Lunyore, I recommend a more comparative approach with other languages either within Bantu or from other language families.

The theoretical framework employed is mainly based on the generative framework. An analysis based on other theories may provide different details on head-marking that have never been discussed before.

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