Categories of Lukabarasi Nominal Compounds and their Pragmatic Functions

Valentine Lukania, Benard Mudogo & Atichi Alati
Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kenya

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Abstract

Although the categories of nominal compounds in many Bantu languages have been described in the literature, their pragmatic functions are often unexplained. This paper examines this phenomenon in Lukabarasi language of Western Kenya, based on the Generative Morphological Theory (GMT) (Bochner, 1992). The study employed a descriptive research design. Data was collected from native speakers using purposive sampling and snowballing techniques. The collected data was analyzed using a content analysis to identify and describe emerging themes. We identified these types of Lukabarasi nominal compounds; Noun+ Noun, Noun+ Verb, and Verb+ Verb. The study established the process of acquiring compounds in Lukabarasi involves prefix deletion, vowel duplication, and nominalization of verbs. The study also found that pragmatic processes modify the meaning of the compound based on context. Lukabarasi has commonly prefixes of singular and plural nouns. The singular prefixes include *omu-, eshi-* and *eli-* while the plural prefixes are *eva-, efu- and ofu-*. We analyzed the pragmatic functions of compounds, finding they serve metaphoric, attitudinal, identification, and classifying functions. This study contributes to understanding the pragmatic functions of nominal compounds in Lukabarasi.

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to analyse nominal compounds in Lukabarasi based on the Generative Morphological Theory (Bochner,1992). It is a good morphological model which leads to prediction of the formation of a word rather than insist on listing individual words or morphemes in a language. Its basic principle is that a speaker has tacit rules that make it possible to distinguish between well-informed and ill-informed words (Bochner, 1992). The theory has been used by scholars such as Hyman (2002), Hyman & Katamba (2005) and Hyman (2007) to analyse words in agglutinative languages that have many morphemes which are easily separable. Lukabarasi being an agglutinating language was analysed to find whether it can form or generate new words by compounding. One of the aspects of morphology as one of the major branches of linguistics is nominalization (Naumann & Vogel 2000; Ten Hacken, 2000; Booij, 2005). Morphology involves the formation of nominal by modifying any item belonging to a particular word class, noun inclusive. The study is motivated by an attempt to describe the nominal formation strategies and the associated pragmatic functions in Lukabarasi, a stable indigenous language of Kenya that belongs to the Niger –Congo language family and which is part of the Oluluyia macro-languages (Mudogo, 2017; Sasala, Mudogo & Barasa, 2022). Lewis et al. (2024). For instance, Kula (2009:434), investigates nominal compounding in Bemba. Kula

examined nominal compounding and associative phrases in Bemba. On the other hand, Ilonga (2016), did a comparative study of headedness in Ruhaya compounds. The study was descriptive in nature and presents a description of two types of Ruhaya compound words that is endocentric compounds and exocentric compounds. Bauer (1983) argues that the use word formation is of value when the rules for the formation of words are not identical with the rules for the formation of sentences. This means that word formation involves the creation of new lexical items based on certain linguistic processes such as coinage, borrowing, compounding, blending, clipping, back formation, conversion, acronyms, derivation, prefix and suffix, and multiple processes (Bauer, 1983).

Many African languages still remain unstudied and undocumented (Mweshi, 2015). Furthermore, empirical literature on Bantu nominal morphology reveals that most of these languages use compounding as a word formation device. Most of the work that has been done by linguists on the subject of Morphology has been based mainly on Indo-European languages, (Kula, 2009). Quite a substantive amount of work has also been done on African languages in general, and Bantu languages to be specific. This is especially so with regard to studies carried out in Bantu languages which are related to nominal compounding as word formation process, (Kula, 2009, Maduagwu, 2010, Ilonga. 2016). However, the pragmatic functions of nominal compounds have received scant attention, for instance Zapata (2000) did a study explaining that compounding involves a combination of two or more roots to form a new word, as well, Mchombo (2008) did a study identifying compounding as another word formation process in Chichewa language pointing out that compounding is another process through which nominals are formed in Chichewa hence informing the focus of study in this research.

Lukabarasi Language

Lukabarasi is one of the varieties of the Luhya language group, spoken in Western Kenya (Luvonga, 2023). Various studies have been done on Lukabarasi morphological structures (Mukulo, 2016; Sasala, 2020). For instance, Makulo (2016), investigated how English loan words are adapted to fit into the Lukabarasi phonological and morphological system. Makulo's study showed how the pronunciation of English loan words is constrained by the Lukabarasi phonological system. The study further concludes that all the English nouns that are adopted into Lukabarasi are first morphologically conditioned and nativized through nominal prefixation because all Lukabarasi nouns have prefixes. The present investigation, however, deviated from Makulo's work since it deals with the morphology and pragmatics of Lukabarasi nominal compounds. Similarly, Sasala (2020), investigated Lukabarasi verbal nominals. The aim is to analyze the alterations verbs in Lukabarasi undergo to form nouns. It explained the morphological and phonological constraints involved in the formation of such items. The findings of the study revealed that certain Lukabarasi nominal derived from verbs exhibited morpho-phonemic processes. It further concluded that the formation of Lukabarasi verbal nominals involved affixation, consonant assimilation, and vowel gliding. Affixes constitute an important part of word formation in Lukabarasi, the most manifested affixes are prefixes. They are inflectional affixes that show tense, number, and negation and derivational affixes that show how different lexemes of the same word are formed. Nouns in Lukabarasi are derived from verbs through affixation.

The study of Lukabarasi nominal compounds through a morpho-pragmatic analysis with a generative lexical approach holds significant value for the advancement of linguistic knowledge on multiple fronts. Firstly, it furthers the understanding of Lukabarasi morphology by providing a detailed analysis of how morphemes interact within nominal compounds. This analysis reveals the processes involved in compound formation, shedding light on the language's word-building mechanisms. This knowledge can be compared to existing research on similar processes in Bantu languages or isolating

languages, potentially leading to a more comprehensive understanding of nominal compound formation across language families.

Nominal compounding in Bantu

Bochner (1992), states that one of the design features of human languages is manifested in the ability of the speakers of a language to create an infinite number of words that can be modifiable depending on the needs of the language users. Compounding is one such way of forming new words in a language. Furthermore, Morphological and pragmatic operations also need this information in determining which constituent of a compound to affix for the word to be a well-formed compound noun and for it to convey meaningful information in the language. It is on this basis that the current study seeks to examine nominal compounds in Lukabarasi to establish their pragmatic functions. This study identified and categorized the nominal compounds and their pragmatic functions in Lukabarasi in the framework of generative morphological theory. Available literature has shown that nominal compounding constitutes the most frequent and productive category of compound (Bauer, 2017) and, this fact is well established in the Bantu group of languages (Mweshi, 2015).

In the study of nominal derivation in Igbo, Maduagwu (2010) established that a nominal compound (a single noun) is formed by the combination of two nouns. After compounding, the resultant noun may or may not have any semantic correlation with the individual words that formed it. During the compounding process in Igbo, there is an order that is followed when combining the nouns to form a nominal compound. On the other hand, the current study sought to investigate whether Lukabarasi as a language also forms its nominal compounds through derivation from other word categories or not.

Methodology

Descriptive research according to Mugenda (2008) is mainly used to investigate social issues, and it enables researchers to come up with solutions or recommendations on a given phenomenon. The target population of the study is the nominal compounds which are collected from native speakers of Lukabarasi. Data was elicited from a combination of native speaker's intuition and informants who are native speakers. The units of analysis for the study are nominal compounds.

The study employs multiple sampling techniques comprising systematic sampling techniques, snowballing techniques, and purposive sampling techniques. To begin with, the purposive sampling technique identifies linguistic units for analysis (nominal compounds). This was driven by the fact that the researcher is a native speaker of Lukabarasi and was able to tell well-constructed units from the ill-formed ones. The researcher being a native speaker of Lukabarasi adopted the snowballing technique to identify the 12 informants who aided in the research together with 3 research assistants who were selected based on their expertise in English and Lukabarasi language. Using systematic random sampling, the researcher sampled 52 nominal compounds by picking alternate nominal compounds to use for analysis. The data was collected until the saturation stage was attained or when the trend repeated itself without any more change (Luvonga, 2023). The sampling of 52 compounds was based on well-formed conditions as explained in Generative Morphology Theory by Brochner (1992). The purpose of this technique was to enable the researcher to obtain the relevant data to achieve the objective which is to identify and categorize nominal compounds and their pragmatic functions in Lukabarasi. The data collected was analyzed by identifying themes that emerged from the field notes or transcription of in-depth interviews and describing them in the content analysis guide.

Results and Discussion

Categories of Nominal Compounds
Since the focus was on nominal compounds, the research did not include any other kinds of nouns that may have been collected. Using the speaker's intuition and competence in identifying well-formed nominal compounds, the following categories were revealed;

Nominal Compounds from the Nominal Category
The data collected revealed that Lukabarasi nominal compounds are derived from the nominal category. This section analyses nominal compounds that are formed by combining two nouns and not any other word category. By examining these compounds, the researcher aims to gain insights into how Lukabarasi speakers utilize nominal elements to create complex meaning and explore the pragmatic functions served by such constructions. The following examples have been used to illustrate the nominal compounds from the nominal category.

1. *Eshifimba +omurwe =eshifimbamurwe* (A person that disturbs people.)

A swelling   Head

  N+N=CN

Noun+Noun=compound noun.

During compounding, the first words end with a vowel sound, prefix *o-* of the second word is dropped due to the process of assimilation. The morphological process involved was dropping of the prefix of the second noun *o-* which depicts singular and retaining the root word. *Eshifimba (*a boil or any swelling on the body).

Such nouns cannot be interpreted as different entities but as a whole compound. The meaning cannot be realized semantically but pragmatically as the disturber. If the nouns are separated, the meaning cannot be realized. The person who keeps disturbing others or causing problems is called *Eshifimbamurwe* (a person that disturbs people) in Lukabarasi language.

Mchombo (2004) had found that *N +N* compounding is less in Chichewa compounds but deverbal compounds are prevalent. In Lukabarasi speaking community, the common ones are *N+N= CN.* According to the Generative Morphological Theory (Brochner,1992), the speaker of a particular language has the ability to distinguish between well-formed and ill formed words. The rule governing compounding in the above example is dropping of the prefix of the second noun to form a compound noun. Whether it is well-formed or not, the native speaker uses the rule possessed to detect it.

2. *Inonda +   Avalayi =   Inondavalayi* (a pimple on a girl's face)

To follow   the beautiful ones

In example 2 above, the two separate nouns cannot derive intended meaning until they are combined into compounds. Their meanings are realized pragmatically as the pimple. Therefore, the meaning of the compound formed is sum of the total of the two nouns. The meaning of the compound nouns formed serves the pragmatic function. This is reinforced by Maduagwu (2010) who asserts that after compounding, the resultant compound may not have any semantic correlation with individual words that formed it. That is factual because in Lukabarasi compounding, the meaning of the compound noun formed is pragmatic and not some of the total of its constituents' nouns. Basing on this example 2: *Inonda (*something that follows others*)* and *valayi (*good or beautiful*)* when combined it means a pimple, which is not related to each individual noun that formed it.

3. *Olimila +   Amarionje =Olumilamarionje* (an unknown disease.)

One that eats   Balls of ugali

Literally, it means the disease of swallowing pieces of ugali. Pragmatically, it is the unknown or hidden disease. The second noun drops the prefix *a-* in order for the nominal compound to be realized as *olumilamaronje*. The morphological processes in this case is deletion. Interestingly, Sasala (2020) also observes similar vowel deletion processes in Lukabaras verbal nominals, suggesting a possible link between these morphological phenomena. This phenomenon also aligns with the findings of Kula (2012) who describes noun phrase constructions in Bemba where a noun can undergo deletion of its prefix when it combines with another noun to form a complex expression. An example of such a noun in Bemba is *kaatombamatipa* (a small bird which plays and eats its prey from the mud). The compound noun is formed by combining *akatomba* and *matipa*. The first noun loses its prefix *'a'* and then reduplicates the vowel *'a'* in the first noun for the compound to be realized as *'kaatombamatipa'*. In this example, the prefix of the first noun is deleted while in Lukabarasi the prefix of the second noun is the one that is deleted.

4. *Malonda +   Ing'ombe=Malondaang'ombe (*low quality shoes*)*

That follows   Cattle

When combined as a compound noun, the meaning collectively changes as low-quality shoes associated with looking after cattle. That is a pragmatic realization of compounds. The dropping of a prefix from the second noun is a phonological process called dissimilation. The process of acquiring compound nouns in Lukabarasi involves prefixation, dissimilation and blending. Pragmatic process is where the two nominal meaning change to match with that of the prevailing environment.

Bochner (1992) affirms that the native speaker has tacit rules that make it possible to distinguish between well-formed and ill-informed words. Therefore, when compound nouns are formed correctly, the native speaker can generate such a rule that is in line with generative morphological theory. It is therefore, concluded that Lukabarasi has nominal compounds which have pragmatic functions.

Nominal Compounds from Verbal Categories
It is found that the compound nouns formed from verbs are rare. The verbs are first converted into nouns before combining with other nouns. Hence, N+N is the common structure in Lukabarasi nominal compounding. There are 35 out of 52 nominal compounds formed from such a trend.

5. *Sinjila (verb) +Valeche (verb)= Sinjilavaleche (*Name of a place)

Stand   + they despise

Sinjila-valeche is the compound noun derived from two verbs to show the name of a place. It serves a pragmatic function of a place which was occupied by people who had no value in the community. According to Mchombo (2008), such compounds are numerous in Chichewa, meaning that compounding in Lukabarasi is not exactly the same as Chichewa though they both belong to Bantu group of language. Most of the compounds take N +N to form CN.

Nominal Compounds from Nominal and Verbal Category
From the data collected, such evidence of combining nouns and verbs to form compounds is rare. Instead, the verbs are converted into nouns (function shift) before combining with other nouns, hence N +N is a common structure in Lukabarasi compounding. For instance,

6. *Shilia   +   vakhana=Shiliavakhana (*womanizer*)*

One that eats+ girls

The verb *eat* has been nominalized to be eater in order to fit into the pattern of Lukabarasi compounding of Noun +Noun =Compound Noun. Literally, the nominal compound would mean a womanizer.   However, pragmatically it is a particular insect.

Pragmatic Functions of Lukabarasi Nominal Compounds
Nominal compounds in Lukabarasi exhibit a rich array of pragmatic functions, often conveying meanings that are more nuanced and complex than a simple sum of their constituent parts. These compounds serve as linguistic tools to express a wide range of concepts, including: metaphoric function, attitudinal function, identification function and classifying function.

Nominal compounds with metaphoric functions
Metaphors which are understood based on their cultural and contextual understanding of the language is crucial for interpreting the intended meaning as seen in example 7 and 8 below;

7. *Eshinia   +   Omuliro*=   *Eshiniaamuliro* (the cause of the problem.)

The one who defecates +   Fire

In Lukabarasi, (*Eshinia*) means the person or thing that performs the act of defecating. While *Omuliro means fire.* These two nouns are combined to realize a meaning that pragmatically imply as 'the cause of the problem' and not the literal meaning of the individual nouns which form the compound. In this nominal compound, the meaning goes beyond the sum of its constituent parts.

8. *Avarandula(verb)+Amarwi (noun) =Avarandulamarwi*

Those who tear +   ears = (People from the Nandi Community)

The words, *Aarandula (*those who tear*)* and *Amarwi* (ears*)* are combined to form the compound noun different from the individual words. It is pragmatically used to mean the Nandi community in Kenya that neighbors the Kabarasi. It was used to hide the identity of the compound from such community.

From the above examples, it can be noted that nominal compounds in Lukabarasi are more than just the sum of their parts. These compounds carry specific meanings that are deeply rooted in the language's cultural and contextual nuances. To fully understand their intended meaning, it is essential to consider the cultural and contextual factors at play.

Nominal compounds with attitudinal function
These compounds indicate speakers' attitudes towards the person or thing implied in the compounds as shown in example 9 below;

9. *Eshifimba +   Omurwe*=   Eshifimbamurwe (A stubborn person)

Swelling   +   Head

Eshifimbamurwe (a stubborn person). The compound noun serves an attitudinal pragmatic function, conveying a negative attitude towards the person who disturbs others by being called *eshifimbamurwe.* The compound noun serves the function of hiding the identity of the wrongdoer by using the name *eshifimbamurwe*. These examples show evidence that most of the Lukabarasi speaking community compound nouns are attitudinal. According to GMT by Bochner (1992) the word formation process follows the rules for the well-formedness and the native speakers of that language have tacit rules that dictate the way they are pronounced.

According to the pragmatic functions of the compound nouns formed from the combination of noun+verb, noun noun, verb verb, they can be further classified as gender biased, positive thoughts and negative thoughts. Those which are gender biased tend to discriminate or disadvantage mostly the female gender. From these it can be deduced that some compound nouns are gender biased against women, but none is against men. There are those compound nouns with positive and negative attitude towards the referent. Those with positive thoughts include:

Nominal Compounds with identification function
The nominal compounds in Lukabarasi can also form an identifying function apart from attitudinal functions. This is by identifying groups of people who belong to different communities from the present community being Lukabarasi. A good example of such compounds includes:

10. *Omwambukha + Omuchela = Omwambukhamuchela* (Aforeigner)

One that crosses   +   River

In this example, the word, *Omwambukhamuchela* which literary translates as 'the one who crosses the river' is used to   mean discrimination against the foreigner who is not a native speaker of Lukabarasi or bought the land without necessarily being born there. It is found that Lukabarasi speaking people have many compound nouns formed to identify strangers from natives. The word is considered as a polite from of addressing foreigners who are considered as natives by the act of 'crossing the river' (coming from other communities to live with the Kabarasi.

Nominal compounds with classifying function
The study also unearthed that there are some compound nouns with classifying functions where some people are classified according to their status in the community for instance, people of high status are regarded with dignity as shown in example 11 below;

11. *Omwene + Ingo = Mweneengo.* (Owner of the home.)

In this example, the word, *mweneengo,* means the owner of the home. He is considered the owner of the home because he is a native speaker and has also established his homestead in Kabarasi land. The compound serves a pragmatic function of positive attitude towards some people who are associated with ownership of the home. It is associated with men among the Kabarasi speaking community because they remain in the community. It also depicts that you are not a visitor or a foreigner but part of the community. It gives a sense of belonging to the members of a particular setting and addressed as *Mweneengo (owner of the home).*

Conclusion
The study examined the structure and function of Lukabarasi nominal compounds through a descriptive analysis of 11 utterances collected via audio recordings and unstructured oral interviews. Data analysis employed Generative Morphological Theory to understand the morphological processes involved in compound formation. The study identified 52 well-formed nominal compounds in Lukabarasi, primarily focusing on those derived from the nominal category. These compounds often involve the combination of two nouns, with morphological processes like prefix deletion and dissimilation occurring during formation.

Pragmatically, these compounds convey meanings beyond the sum of their constituent parts, reflecting cultural and contextual nuances. They serve various functions, including classification, attitude, and identification. Modifiers within these compounds play significant roles, classifying entities and expressing attitudes. Additionally, some compounds identify groups of people based on their community affiliation or social status.

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