

GRAMMATICAL RELEVANCE OF AFFIXATION IN TIV LANGUAGE

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Abstract

The study of affixation in Tiv is a necessary step in order to add to the available scholarly literatures on the language. This is because affixation is a very productive morphological process in Tiv that produces word variants that are essential for meaning expression, syntactic distribution, and as well as creating phonological effects. The researcher's major aim is to study the grammar of word creation in Tiv through affixation and the specific objectives of the study were to examine both inflectional and derivational affixes and their grammatical relevance in Tiv. The theoretical framework used for this study is a strand of generative grammar known as 'computational system'. Both primary and secondary data were collected and analysed using the qualitative design and findings of this study revealed that Tiv has inflectional affixes which serve grammatical functions, giving extra information about the already existing meaning of a word. Tense and number are expressed through affixation. There are also derivational affixes which are used in deriving new words from other classes of words. This study contributes to theory of universal grammar in general and the grammar of Tiv. The study contributes to knowledge by revealing the grammatical relevance of affixation in Tiv. The study recommends that further studies should be carried out on other morphological processes of Tiv.

Keywords: Affixation, morphological processes, generative grammar, computational system.

1.1 Introduction

Tiv language is classified within the Southern Bantoid branch of the Bantoid group within the Benue-Congo family of the Niger-Congo family (Blench, 2011). Abraham (1940, p. 6) noted early on that "linguistic and ethnological similarities have proved that the language is part of the Bantu ethnic group that inhabited the area." Tiv is native to parts of Benue, Taraba, Plateau, Nasarawa, Cross-River States in Nigeria, and some parts of Cameroon (Blench, 2011). In traditional grammar, words are basic units of grammatical analysis which are made up of fundamental units called morphemes. A morpheme is the smallest part or unit of a word that has grammatical function or meaning. In the study of morphology affixes are bound morphemes that are attached to word roots to create other words. And the process is called affixation.

Affixation is a morphological process which concerns the processes involved in word formation. The processes are basically how new variants of words or new words are created and become part of the language. This process is essentially important in every language and it has been intensively studied for a lot of languages. The Tiv language makes use of inflectional affixes like *en* to express progressive aspect, as in *yav* 'sleep' + *en* – *yaven* 'sleeping', *i-* *tom* 'job' *itom* 'jobs'. Also a derivational affix *iis* is added to the root of a verb to create a nominal form, for instance, *chivir* 'to respect' versus *ichivir* 'respect' (noun). The language is an endangered minority language in Nigeria which needs intensive studies on its grammar; it is as a result that the researcher embarks on this study.

Although, the language has received attention in some aspects of grammar, only little has been done on its morphological processes. The study therefore intends to bridge the gap in the existing literatures on Tiv grammar. This would enhance the descriptive power of the language and can help the language maintain its usage and prevent its eminent death. Every language uses different words which come from different morphological processes to account for its total repertoire. The sources of new words or variants are traced to the language's morphological processes it uses. Studies of this kind have been

adequately carried out on well-written languages such as Arabic, Swahili, Hausa and Yoruba among others.

Contrastively, the scope of affixation is not exhausted in Tiv because the available studies have not used the theoretical apparatus of generative grammar particularly the computational system. The current research extends its scope to study affixation in Tiv using the computational system. This study fills a gap in the existing literatures on Tiv in the sense that it brings closer the computational to analyse affixation in Tiv.

2.1 Review of Related Literature

2.2 Morphemes

Aronoff and Fudeman (2011:1) assert that a morpheme is the smallest linguistic pieces with a grammatical function. This implies that the smallest units of language that have a meaning or a grammatical function and form words or roots of words are called morphemes. In writing, individual morphemes are usually represented by their graphic form, or spelling; e.g., *-es*, *-er*, *un-*, *re-*; or by their graphic form between braces, { }; e.g., {-es}, {-er}, {un-}, {re-}. The definition of Aronoff and Fudeman (2011) above is not meant to include all morphemes, but it is the usual one and a good starting point. A morpheme may consist of a word, such as *hand*, or a meaningful piece of a word, such as the *-ed* of *looked*, that cannot be divided into smaller meaningful parts. Another way in which morphemes have been defined is as a pairing between sound and meaning.

The term ‘morph’ is sometimes used to refer specifically to the phonological realization of a morpheme. For example, the English past tense morpheme that we spell *-ed* has various morphs. It is realized as [t] after the voiceless [p] of *jump* (as in *jumped*), as [d] after the voiced [l] of *repel* (as in *repelled*), and as [ɪd] after the voiceless [t] or the voiced [d] of *wed* as in *rooted* and *wedded* respectively. We can also call these morphs *allomorphs* or *variants*. The appearance of one morph over another in this case is determined by voicing and the place of articulation of the final consonant of the verb stem. Now consider the word *reconsideration*. We can break it into three morphemes: *re-*, *consider*, and *-ation*. *Consider* is called the *stem*. A stem is a base unit to which another morphological piece is attached. The stem can be *simple*, made up of only one part, or *complex*, itself made up of more than one piece. Here it is best way to *consider* a simple stem. Although it consists historically of more than one part, most present-day speakers would treat it as an unanalysable form. We could also call *consider* the root. A *root* is like a stem in constituting the core of the word to which other pieces attach, but the term refers only to morphologically simple units. For example, *disagree* is the stem of *disagreement*, because it is the *base* to which *-ment* attaches, but *agree* is the root. Taking *disagree* now, *agree* is both the stem to which *dis-* attaches and the root of the entire word.

2.3 Affixation

Radford (1997:492) asserts that affixation means adding derivational affixes or inflectional affixes that cannot stand on their own (i.e., prefixes, infixes and suffixes) to roots and stems to form new words. For example, if the suffix *-able* is added to the word *pass*, the word *passable* is created. Likewise, if to the word *passable* the prefix *in-* (or rather its allomorph *im-*) is attached, another word is formed, namely *impassable*. Affixation is a very common and productive morphological process in synthetic languages. In English, *derivation* is the form of affixation that yields new words.

2.3.1 Types of Affixes

Affixes can be classified into two different ways: according to their position in the word and according to their function in a phrase or sentence.

1. According to their position in the word (or side of the word they are attached to), affixes are classified into prefixes, infixes and suffixes.

a. **Prefixes** are bound morphemes that are added to the beginning of the word; e.g., *un-* in *unnoticed*, *a-* in *amoral*, *sub-* in *subway*, etc. Notice that prefixes are represented by the morphemes followed by a hyphen(-).

b. **Infixes** are bound morphemes that are inserted within the words. There are no infixes in the English language, but in the languages such as Tagalog and Bontoc (in the Philippines), Infixes are represented by the morphemes preceded and followed by a hyphen; e.g., *-um-*.

c. **Suffixes** are bound morphemes which are attached to the end of the word; e.g., *-able* in *noticeable*, *-less* in *careless*, *-s* in *seeks*, *-en* in *shorten*, etc. Notice that suffixes are represented by the morphemes preceded by a hyphen.

2. According to the **function** affixes fulfill in the language, affixes are classified into derivational affixes (derivational morphemes or derivations) and inflectional affixes (inflectional morphemes or inflections).

a. Inflectional Affixes

Inflectional morphology has a primarily grammatical function: for example, the suffixes that mark tense and number on a verb (as in *jump/jumps/jumped*), the suffixes that mark plural on nouns (as in *dog/dogs*), and the comparative suffixes attached to adjectives (as in *dirty/dirtier/dirtiest*). These suffixes usually do not change the form of their stems, although there are alternations like *teach/taught* or *wear/wore* that do have phonological consequences. Derivational morphemes alter the meaning and often the syntactic form class of the base forms to which they are attached, as in *manage/management*, *nation/national*, and *able/unable*. Over time these forms may become semantically opaque (i.e., non compositional in meaning), as in *department* or *delight*. In English, the derivational morphology includes both prefixes (such as *re-*, *ex-*, and *pre-*) and suffixes (such as *-ment*, *-ness*, and *-ence*), whereas the inflectional morphology is confined to suffixes.

b. **Derivational affixes** are morphemes that create (or derive) new words, usually by either changing the meaning and/or the part of speech (i.e., the syntactic category), or both, of the words they are attached to (Godby et al., 1982). Derivational prefixes rarely change the phonological form of their stems, but some classes of derivational suffixes do trigger morphophonemic alternations that affect their stems (as in *chaste/chastity* and *decide/decision*). The sequential order of stems and affixes (whether the word is suffixed or prefixed) is also important. In suffixed words, which seem to be preferred cross-linguistically (Cutler, Hawkins, & Gilligan, 1985), the stem is heard first, giving the listener immediate access to the syntactic and semantic information associated with it. In prefixed words, not only is access to the stem delayed but also the initial segments of the word are relatively less informative because of the large number of words typically sharing each prefix. This ordering difference, therefore, may have consequences both for how morphological factors affect the lexical entry and for the way it is accessed.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework selected for this paper is generative grammar which was first proposed by Chomsky's (1957) Syntactic Structures. Chomsky proposed notion of Universal Grammar (UG) and an innate faculty of language which are biological endowment comprising of rules of grammar that enables a speaker to generate an infinite number of sentences. He opines that generative grammar attempts to specify 'what the speaker actually knows' (Chomsky, 1965: 8). Chomsky (2002: 1) further consolidates his stand that "language is a natural object, a component of the human mind, physically represented in the brain and part of the biological endowment of the human species". In a pursuit of cognitivism, he criticized behaviourism, which seeks to understand behaviour and language as a function of environment or setting.

This study is suggestive that the computational system of UG is a good tool for analyzing the data for affixation as a morphological process in Tiv. The computational system as conceived by Chomsky (1995) is made up of the lexicon in the speaker's mind containing all their vocabulary which is similar to a dictionary and the principles of UG. (Cook and Newson 2010:8).

Cook and Newson (2010) assert further that, the knowledge of a speaker is organized in 'lexical entries' for each word they know. While the meaning of the sentence depends upon the relationships between its various elements, say how *the moon* relates to *shone*, it also depends upon the individual words such as *moon*. We need to know the diverse attributes of the word - that it means 'satellite of a planet', that it is pronounced [mu:n], that it is a countable noun, *a moon*, and so on. Each lexical entry in the mental lexicon contains a mass of information about how the word behaves in sentences as well

as its 'meaning'. Our knowledge of language consists of thousands of these entries encoding words and their meanings.

The second component the computational system is the principles of UG. Knowledge of language is based upon a core set of principles embodied in all languages and in the minds of all human beings. Irrespective of the language one speaks, at some level of abstraction all languages rely on the same set of principles. The differences between languages amount to a limited choice between a certain number of variables, called parameters. Since the early Chomskyan approach, Chomsky (1981) has concentrated on establishing more and more powerful principles for language knowledge, leading to the Minimalist Program (MP). This means that the theory of generative grammar is concerned with the cognitive/verbal behavior of a native speaker. For example, a speaker knows exactly the combinations that are acceptable in his language through his competence which comprises an infinite generative rule. This paper examines the said competence embodied in a Tiv speaker through the use of affixation in Tiv.

3.1 Methodology

Data collection for this study consists of the following: Native speaker's intuitive knowledge and this is backed up with participant observation whereby the researcher engaged in conversation with other native speakers to collect sentences and other basic data from native speakers on the grammaticality of some sentences. Another method of data collection used is purposive collection of different word types from books and other documentary sources. This method is adopted to cater for the data requirements of the computational system especially, as it relates to the scope of this study.

4.1 Data Presentation And Analysis

Attachment of bound morphemes to roots or stems of words in Tiv is known as affixation. Affixes in Tiv are classified in inflectional and derivational affixes. Examples of inflectional affixes include groups 1-4. Affixes can also be categorized into prefixes and suffixes.

4.1.1 Inflectional Affixes

Group1

Affix	Noun	Plural Form
i-	Tom	itom
	job	jobs
i-	ywa	iywa
	dog	dogs
i-	hunda	ihinda
	door	doors

In group 1 above, an affix *i* is added to the root of a noun to create its plural form. This affix is an inflectional affix in the sense that it only provides grammatical information of number on its roots.

Group2

Affix	Noun	Plural Form
u-	mato	umato
	car	cars
u-	tabu	utable
	table	tables
u-	windoo	uwindoo
	window	windows
u-	fan	ufan
	fan	fans

Group 2 above has an affix *u* added to the root of a noun to create its plural form. This affix is also an inflectional affix in the sense that it only provides grammatical information that the form *u-* is attached is plural. Words that often take plurals the *u* prefix in Tiv are usually borrowed words from English.

Group3

Affix	Noun	Plural Form
mba-	akwati	mbaakwati
	box	boxes
mba-	alum	mbaalum
	orange	oranges
mba-	apu	mbaapu
	vulture	vultures
mba-	akume	mbaakume
	masquerade	masquerades

Group 3above, the root is prefixed with *mba-* for plural effect. This affix is an inflectional affix as well in the sense that it only provides grammatical information of number.

group4

nyiom	anyiom
year	years
kpa	akpa
bag	bags
bya	abaa
sack	sacks
hyungwa	ahungwa
hole	holes
nguhar	angahar
leg	legs

In group 4above, an affix *ais* added to the root of a noun to create its plural form. This affix is an inflectional affix in the sense that it only provides grammatical information of number.

Progressive Aspect

Affix	stem	Progressive form
-en	Pav	paven
	Operate	operation
-en	Yem	yemen
	Go	going
-en	Lam	lamen
	Talk	talking
-n	Wua	wuan
	Kill	killing
-en	ver	veren
	Keep	keeping

To form progressive aspects, the root is added a suffix *-en* or *-n*. The progressive form of verbs is necessary in grammar of Tiv because it is used in expressing the continuous action expressed by a speaker while communicating.

Tenses with Tone Effect

present tense	past tense
yévésé (high)	yèvéèsè (low)
run	ran
Úlúú (high)	ùlùù (low)
Pull	pulled
Ávér (high)	Àvèr (low)
Cross	crossed
Wuésé (high)	wùèsè (low)
Praise	praised
Púú	pùù (low)
Criticize	criticised

These verbs yévése (high), yèvése (low), Úlúú (high), and ùlùù (low) are used as imperative when expressed in high tone and as past tense when expressed in low tone. It should be noted that tone is part of the orthography for tone languages such as Tiv and it is considered as an affix here because of its function. The lexicon being part of the computational system, a speaker of Tiv embodies a set a set of linguistic data of his language in this case comprising the plural making for the noun through prefixation and the use of tone contrast. Also, the principles and parameters being part of the computational system is manifested here as plural formation being a universal principle of language but then assuming certain peculiarities in Tiv.

4.1.2 Derivational Affixes

Group1

Affix	Verb	noun
	Sunda	sunda
	To harvest	harvest
i-	Wase	iwasen
	To help	help
i-	Lam	iliam
	Speak	speech
i-	Sugh	ishughun
	Greet	greeting
i-	Zunge	ijungwen
	To mourn	mourning
i-	Sombo	isombon
	To break	fracture
i-	Seer	isheer
	To add	add
i-	Wanger	iwanger
	To brighten	light
i-	Wuese	iwuese
	To praise	praise
	To think	thought
i-	Sue	ishuen
	To brace	brace
i-	Kua	ikuan
	To flow where something flows	
i-	Laha	iliaha
	To disrespect	disrespect
	Chivir	ichivir
	To respect	respect(noun)

In group 1 above, a derivational affix *iis* is added to the root of a verb to create a nominal form. This affix is a derivational affix because; it creates nouns out verbs in the language.

Group 2

m-	Kohol	mkohol
	To gather	gathering
m-	Lumummlumun	
	To accept	acceptance
m-	Hen	mhen

The case of this group is similar with group 1 of derivational affixes above. This is because in group 2, a derivational affix *mis* is added to the root of a verb to create a nominal form. This affix is also a derivational affix because; it creates nouns such as the types in found here out verbs of the language.

Adjective-noun

Affix	Group 1	
	Adjective	noun
i-	Lehe	ilihen
	Long	length
i-	Engen	iengen
	Shiny	shininess

With the prefixation of the *-i* to a root (which is an adjective), a noun is created. This makes this affix a derivational affix.

Affix	Group 2	
	Adjective	noun
m-	engem	mengem
	shiny	shininess
m-	vor	mvor
	to be tired	tiredness
m-	Nyian	mnyian(en)
	Mature (fruit)	maturity (fruit)

In group 2 above, a derivational prefix *m-* is added to a root (an adjective) to create a nominal form. This affix is a derivational affix because; it creates a noun out of an adjective. The derivation of words from existing roots in Tiv is in tone with the computational system which sees language knowledge as comprising of a mental lexicon that resembles a dictionary specifying lexical details such as word plural, tense, pronunciation among others. Tiv ways of applying affixation in its grammar are mere parameters. These Parameters are the second aspect of the computational system.

4.1.3 Discussion of Findings

In Tiv language, affixation is a very productive morphological process. The language makes use of both inflectional and derivational affixes to create word variants. This is achieved in various ways as observed in the data for example, an affix *is* is added to the root of a noun to create its plural form. This is the case of inflectional affixes in the sense that they only provide grammatical information of number to their roots in this context. Similarly, an inflectional affix *u* is added to the root of a noun to create its plural form. This affix is also an inflectional affix in the sense that it only provides grammatical information of number on its roots. It should be noted that words that often take plurals of the *u* prefix in Tiv are usually borrowed words from English. To form progressive aspects, the root of a verb is added a suffix *-en* or *-n*. The progressive form of verbs is necessary in grammar of Tiv. This is because it is used in expressing the continuous action in the language.

The tone is also a strong grammar point in Tiv. The high tone is used to express the imperative form of verbs while its low tone counterpart is used to express the past tense. Examples of yévése (high), yèvése (low), Úlúú (high), and ùlùù (low) are used as imperative when in high tone and as past tense when expressed in low tone. This makes tone as part of the orthography of Tiv and as such tone is used as an affix. Derivational affixes are used in the language to create new forms words (usually of different classes) for example, a derivational affix *is* is added to the root of a verb to create a nominal form. This affix in this case is a derivational affix because it creates nouns out verbs in the language. Similarly, nouns are also created from adjectives by the prefixation of the *-i* to a root (which is an adjective), to create a noun.

5.1 Conclusion

Affixation is a very productive morphological process in Tiv. This is because of its application in plural creation, expression of tenses, and the derivational power of affixes in Tiv. This paper contributes to knowledge because of its inclination towards contributing to the theory of universal grammar and towards expanding the scope of Tiv grammar. The researcher recommends that further studies should be carried out on other morphological processes of Tiv.

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