

PARDON, MAY I CUT IN?

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In Volume 3, Number 3 of Studies in African Linguistics there appeared two short contributions, one a reply by Talmy Givón to Frank Henry's "Bantu lexical classes and semantic universals", which appeared in SAL 3:3, the other Henry's reply to that reply. At the risk of drawing two separate "Replies to a comment on a reply and reply to a reply" from the scholars in question, let me say this: gentlemen, you are both right--and wrong!

I agree with Henry [1972a] that it is reasonable and necessary to reflect in setting up lexical classes the considerable similarities shown by adjectives and nouns in most Bantu languages. I agree with Givón [1972] that the morphologic similarities of nouns and adjectives are irrelevant to any synchronic syntactic/semantic description. The two agreements are not incompatible.

One principal objection to the arguments on both sides is the fact that neither realizes, it would seem, the fallacy of Døke-like establishment of "parts of speech" on the basis of prefix-shape alone. This is the more surprising in view of the fact that both argue from a theoretical basis of transformationalism. Clearly, in a Bantu language such as Kikuyu it is wholly irrelevant at any deep syntactic/semantic level that 'many' and 'few' are adjectives, 'all', 'how many', 'one', 'two', 'three', 'four', 'five', 'six', and 'eight' pronominals (perhaps with internal subdivision), 'seven', 'nine', and 'ten' invariable nouns which never require concordial agreement, 'hundred' and 'thousand' nouns which may be pluralized and do require concordial agreement. All these items, despite their formal promiscuity, belong to a single semantic and syntactic; to subdivide them on the basis of their form would obscure this fact. While the original mistake is Henry's, Givón overlooks it and seems to accept himself a formally based definition of "adjective".

It is, of course, a point in favor of Henry's argument that in many Bantu languages (as specifically in Kikuyu) formal and, in fact, syntactic criteria differentiating nouns and adjectives are difficult to establish.

The distinction between "short-series" and "long-series" nominals, to use Whiteley's terminology, largely fails. In Bantu generally, "nouns" may usually occur in a number of classes. While it is true there is usually a semantic differential, as in the case of pluralization and diminutive formation, there need not be. In Kikuyu, for example, ūkabi and mūūkabi, taking concords of classes 3 and 1 respectively, are used interchangeably for 'Maasai person'. At the same time, some "adjectives" are restricted to a relatively small range of classes; in Kikuyu the "adjective" -ka 'female' does not seem to occur except in classes 1, 2, 9, and 10-- at least no occurrence in any other class is known to me (though one would expect to find the diminutive classes 13/12 as well represented). The objection that the prefixes on "adjectives" carry no semantic weight is easily countered. The distinction between mūka (class 1) and nga (class 9) when the two are used anaphorically is as important as, and perfectly comparable to, the prefixal distinction at the surface of mūtī (class 3, 'tree, wood') and gītī (class 7, 'chair'), or mūdū (class 1, 'person') and andū (class 2, 'persons'). It must be remembered that in practice the speaker of Kikuyu or similar Bantu languages has no formal clue by which to distinguish "noun" from "adjective"; only the syntactic patterning of the item can enlighten him.

This brings one to another problem in the description of Bantu languages. In many--perhaps most--Bantu languages there are certain items which take the typical prefixes of "nouns" and "adjectives", which are used as modifiers without change to indicate concord. In Kikuyu we have such forms as gītonga (class 7, 'rich person') and ngīa (class 9, 'poor person'). In most cases, these pattern precisely like nouns; but one also finds cases such as mūdū ngīa 'poor person', mūdū ūcio nī gītonga mūno 'that person is very rich', where except for concord these pattern precisely like adjectives. In languages such as Lingala, most "adjectives" have only one form, or at most show concord for number, some few have a wider range, approximating that of the concord system as a whole, if not in all cases equalling it. A similar situation exists in some Gur languages such as More, where the few adjectives having more than one form will show concord only with nouns whose class affiliations are within their range, choice being otherwise fairly random!

Such behavior, of course, might be taken to support either argument. But Heny's objection to Givón's morphological lag on the grounds that many adjectives "were never noun stems"--were, that is, derivations from verbal stems--can hardly be taken seriously in the light of the fact that a large proportion of noun stems themselves have clear verbal origins. In fact, many "nouns"--even excluding infinitives--retain the capacity to take objects and, in some languages, even markings of tense. A "noun" such as *mūtũthũũri* 'us-hater' in Kikuyu is much more obviously verbal than the "adjective" *-irũ*, 'black', though the language contains verbs corresponding to both.

It is clearly as necessary to reflect in setting up classes within the lexicon the prefixal similarities of noun and adjective stems as it is to recognize in the lexicon the inflectional peculiarities of English regular and irregular verbs; to this extent Heny is correct. This similarity of prefix is, however, syntactically and semantically irrelevant, and in all probability due to morphological lag reflecting historical changes which produced the adjectival form-class; to this extent Givón is correct. Givón errs in claiming that the formal class "noun" can be differentiated semantically and syntactically from the formal class "adjective". Heny, in claiming that the formal class "adjective" is semantically as well as formally distinct from other constructions serving to express concepts which in English would be expressed through the use of "adjectives", similarly errs.

If we understand "deep" to have reference to semantic values, to which surface expression is irrelevant, rather than to some intermediate level at which surface structure is still important, I fail to see how the differences in number, form, and distribution of concord prefixes between Bantu languages can be taken as "deep". It is clear that at any such level items must be grouped according to syntactic function, and that there need be no expectation that correspondence of such groupings with form classes marked on the surface will be at all close. In Kikuyu, *kinya* 'until' and *mũhaka* 'until' are interchangeable members of the same syntactic/semantic class, though the former is a "verb" and the latter a "noun" from the standpoint of shape and history!

Surely it is not too much to ask of a lexicon that it should embody both surface and deep classifications, nor too much to ask of linguists that they be aware of the distinction!

REFERENCES

- Givón, Talmy. 1973. "On cost accounting in lexical structure: a reply to Frank Heny". Studies in African Linguistics 3:3.
- Heny, Frank. 1972b. "Bantu lexical classes and semantic universals". Studies in African Linguistics 3:2.
- Heny, Frank. 1972b. "Cost accounting vs. explanation: a reply to a reply". Studies in African Linguistics 3:3.

FOURTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON AFRICAN LINGUISTICS

Queens College, City University of New York
Flushing, New York

The Fourth Annual Conference on African Linguistics took place on April 6, 7 & 8, 1973 at Queens College (C.U.N.Y.) and provided an opportunity for Africanists from the United States, Africa and Europe to exchange ideas in a well-balanced program of 20 minute papers followed by discussion, as well as in various special group discussions and symposia. The following program of conference papers was distributed to participants just before the meeting (last minute changes in the program are not reproduced here):

PROGRAM

April 6, 1973

Session 1: 9:00 AM - 12:30 PM (Plenary Session)

TONE SYSTEMS, Academic 150 (Gilbert Ansre, Chairman)

Qladele Awobuluyi (Lehman College, CUNY): Terraced-level tone systems.

Ann M. Peters (University of Hawaii): A new formalization of downdrift.

H. M. J. Truteneau (University of Ghana): Some derivations of 'downstep'.

F. Muyumba Nkongola and Ian Maddieson (Indiana University): Luba tonology
and the derivation of downstep.

Paul Kotey (University of Florida): Downstepping the 'downstep': tone in
the Ga verb revisited

Session 2: 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Section A: PHONOLOGY, Academic 250 (Emmon Bach, Chairman)

C. Stanley Jones (Carleton University): Abstract phonology, natural phonology,
and Swahili vowels.

Jilali Saib (U.C.L.A.): Spirantization in Berber.

Kay Williamson (University of Ibadan): The sound system of Proto-Lower-Niger.

David Dwyer (Michigan State University): The historical development of
Southwestern Mande Consonants.

Larry M. Hyman (University of Southern California): Remarks on the Southwestern
Mande controversy.

Section B: SYNTAX, Academic 258 (Beatrice L. Hall, Chairman)

Jeannette Harries (University of Wisconsin): Conjunction without conjunctions
in Tamazight.

- Stephen Antell and Godfrey Cherono (Graduate Center and Queens College, CUNY): Topicalization and clefting in the Elgeyo dialect of Kalenjin.
- Oluşola Ajolore (University of Illinois): Topicalization in Yoruba: evidence from child language.
- Thomas H. Peterson (California State University, Los Angeles): On definite restrictive relatives in Moore.
- Alexis Takizala (University of California, San Diego): Some movement rules in Kihungan.

April 7, 1973

Session 3: 9:30 AM - 12:30 PM

Section A: SYNTACTIC TONOLOGY AND TONOLOGICAL SYNTAX, Social Sciences 213
(Frank Heny, Chairman)

- Chin-Wu Kim (University of Illinois and University of Hawaii): A note on tonal conjunction in Efik.
- Baruch Elimelech (U.C.L.A.): Tonal alternations in the Etsako verb.
- William R. Leben (Stanford University): Some apparent idiosyncracies in the behavior of tone.
- Irvine Richardson (Michigan State University): The role of tone in negative tenses in Sukuma.
- Ian Maddieson, Tim Shopen and Jenny Okello (Indiana University): Lango tonology, suprasegmentality and paradigms.
- James D. McCawley (University of Chicago): Irregular lowering of final high tones in Kikuyu.
- Section B: SYNTAX, Social Sciences 216 (Oladele Awobuluyi, Chairman)
- Lyndon Harries (University of Wisconsin): The syntactic function of Swahili locatives.
- Clifford A. Hill (Columbia University): Negation in Hausa syntax.
- Ernest F. Dunn (Rutgers University): Two problematic aspects in Hausa.
- John Eulenberg (Michigan State University): I-dropping in Hausa.
- Gayle Partmann (Stanford University): Derivation and simplification by young Dioula speakers.

Section C: HISTORICAL LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE SUB-GROUPING, Social Sciences 222 (Kay Williamson, Chairman)

- Walter J. Pichl (Duquesne University): The Cangin language group in Senegal.

Paul D. Black (Bell Laboratories): The Konsoid dialect chain: an example of extreme dialect differentiation.

Patrick R. Bennett (University of Wisconsin): A reconstructed phonological history of Luhya-Gisu.

Charles D. Laughlin, Jr. (S.U.N.Y. at Oswego): Lexicostatistics in So: the anomaly of the So language complex to theories of East African ethnolinguistic relations.

Ralph M. Williams (Trinity College): A lexicostatistic look at Oluluyia.

Session 4: 2:00 - 5:00 PM

Section A: MORPHOPHONOLOGY AND MORPHOSYNTAX, Social Sciences 213 (Stephen Antell, Chairman)

Charles H. Kraft (U.C.L.A.): Reconstructions of Chadic pronouns II: verb subject pronouns.

Doreen M. Schmitt (Modern American Language Institute): Pronominalizing root vowel duplication and the tonal problem in Yoruba.

Erhard F. K. Voeltz (Indiana University): SeSotho nominalization.

Lynette Nyaggah (U.C.L.A.): The associative in Asante Twi.

George M. Horn (University of Massachusetts, Amherst): On the so-called intransitive suffix in Asante Twi.

Section B: LANGUAGE AND SOCIETY, Social Sciences 216 (Edward Bendix, Chairman)

Roger Wescott (Drew University): Tonal icons in Bini.

Richard E. Wood (Louisiana State University): Afrikaans in its African setting: some thoughts on Marius F. Valkhoff's New Light on Afrikaans and 'Malayo-Portuguese'.

Sammy Beban-Chumbow (Indiana University): Some constraints in the Pidginization of English in Cameroon.

Loren Nussbaum (Cherokee Bilingual Education Program): Towards a typology of native language literacy: some African examples.

Ali Ahmed Jahadhmy (University of California, Santa Barbara): The standardization of Swahili orthography.

Section C: PHONOLOGY, Social Sciences 222 (Alan M. Stevens, Chairman)

Eyamba Georges Bokamba (Indiana University): On the phonological status of labio-velars.

Ricardo Otheguy and Zafrira Malisdorf (Graduate Center, CUNY): Derivation of NCV nouns in Igbo.

- Nina Pilszczikowa-Chodak (University of Warsaw and Sir George Williams University): On the syllable structure of grade 2 verbs in Hausa.
- Paul Newman (Abdullahi Bayero College, A.B.U.): The development of /k/ as a Hausa phoneme.
- Russell G. Schuh (U.C.L.A.): A new look at some Hausa sound changes.

In addition to the above papers, the following linguistic events were arranged in conjunction with the conference:

Pre-Conference Lecture, April 5, 1973, 8:30 PM, Academic 170

Paul Postal (IBM Research Center): Grammatical relations in generative grammar.

Colloquium: LINGUISTICS, AFRICAN EDUCATION, AND THE EDUCATION OF AFRICANISTS

April 6, 1973, 8:00 PM, Academic 150 (D. Terence Langendoen, Chairman).

Discussants included: Gilbert Ansre (University of Ghana), Wentworth Ofuatay-Kodjoe (Queens College) and Kay Williamson (University of Ibadan).

A reception followed the colloquium in the Patio Room, Dining Hall.

Special Demonstration: THE SILENT METHOD--GATTEGNO--OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING (in both Slovak and Swahili), April 7, 1973, 4:00 PM.

Symposium: HISTORICAL CREOLE STUDIES FROM AN AFRICANIST PERSPECTIVE

April 8, 1973, 10:00 AM, Social Sciences 211 (Ian Hancock and Morris Goodman, Co-chairmen). Among the participants were: Frank S. Anshen (SUNY at Stony Brook), J. L. Dillard (Yeshiva University), Edward Bendix (Graduate Center, CUNY), Richard Long (Atlanta University), R. M. R. Hall (Queens College, CUNY), Beatrice L. Hall (SUNY at Stony Brook), Richard E. Wood (Louisiana State University), Sammy Beban-Chumbow (Indiana University), Jan Voorhoeve (University of Leiden). Among the topics discussed were: common Creole word order, Creole phonological processes, existential sentence structure, sandhi phenomena, and function of tone in the Creoles.

Symposia: Also on April 8, 1973, symposium were held on phonology (Charles E. Cairns, Chairman) and syntax (Emmon Bach, Chairman), which dealt respectively, with tone and word order universals.

The Fifth Annual Conference on African Linguistics will take place at Stanford University in the Spring of 1974.

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