Verbal Morphology of Runyankore Language

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Abstract

An academic study entitled "Verbal Morphology of Runyankore language," was carried out in Uganda. This study was warranted by the fact that very few scholars have studied and written about this language, and yet the government language policy - basing on thematic curriculum - of teaching lower primary school classes, emphasises using local languages as media of instruction. Such a policy to be fully implemented requires text books written in and about those local languages. However, for Runyankore, very few such books have been written. So the study came timely to bridge the gap.The study was guided by Generative morphology theory, especially models of Halle and Aronoff. These scholars propounded four basic principles of morphological analysis of any language. Namely: A list of morphemes; Word formation rules; a Dictionary and a Sieve. According to these scholars, any person to analyse language, particularly morphology, requires knowledge about types of morphemes that form words in a given language, should also know patterns that those morphemes follow in word formation, which create word formation rules; should further be aware that not all words are formed by those rules, this is to say that, some words are sieved into the language from other languages, without necessarily following basic rules of that language, and finally, all those words, whether governed by rules or not, make up a dictionary of that language. Out of the four afore mentioned principles advanced by Halle and his compatriot, the researcher was mainly guided by three of them; for instance, he used a dictionary to collect some verbs that were used in the analysis, since he employed both library and field methods of research. While analysing those verbs, different morphs that are affixed to roots and stems of verbs were identified, and finally, patterns that those morphs follow during inflectional and derivational processes, which in turn make word formation rules in Runyankore, were examined.The study, among other observations, found out that; Since Runyankore is a Bantu language, and Bantu languages are agglutinating in nature, a Runyankore verb is a complex entity. One verb root is capable of appearing with many different morphemes and each morpheme serving a different linguistic function such as: pronominal agreements, tense markers, personal pronoun, aspect, mood, reflexive marker, object infix, negation marker and voice markers, in a phrase or sentence. When these morphs are affixed to the root, they appear as a single entity as shown in the extracts that will follow.

1 Introduction

Runyankore is a Bantu language used by Banyankore tribe, who are found in south western Uganda. This tribe occupies districts of Mbarara, Ibanda, Bushenyi, Ntungamo, Shema, Kiruhura, Mitoma, Rukungiri, Isingiro, Rubirizi and Nsika. Runyankore is used by over 8.5 million people, who form about 20% of the Ugandan population, because according to the Uganda National Bureau of Statistics report of 2014, about the national population and housing census, Uganda has over 35million people now.

Preliminary studies prior to this, had indicated that, very few writers like Benedicto Mubangizi, Charles Taylor and others had written some books in and about Runyankore language, however, those books were either too general, or more elementary, so, they could not serve the purpose. For example, though Charles Taylor gave a descriptive analysis of linguistic genres of phonology, morphology and syntax of Nkore-Kiga, he mixed two languages of Runyankore and Rukiga and described their linguistic units as of one language. It is true that their mutual intelligibility is very high, but they are considered as two distinct but closely related languages. Furthermore, in some cases, he puts certain linguistic elements as single units, whereas they can be split further, to give more linguistic functions of each in Runyankore language. So this study focused on verbal morphology of one language of Runyankore, and analysed every linguistic unit separately, with intentions of suggesting rules that govern their structures.

2.0 Observations.

As mentioned above, the study, observed that; Runyankore is a Bantu language, and like other Bantu languages, it is agglutinating in nature, and its verb is a complex entity. This is to say that, one verb root is capable of appearing with many different morphemes and each morpheme serving a different linguistic function such as: pronominal agreements, tense markers, personal pronoun, aspect, mood, reflexive marker, object infix, negation marker and voice markers among others, in a phrase or sentence.

2.1 The study analysed the **tense and aspect** systems in Runyankore and realised that, this language has six tenses and two aspects. Tenses are: present, near past, far past, near future, far future and habitual tense, which Taylor referred to as universal tense. On the other hand, aspects are progressive and perfective aspects. Both tense and aspect markers usually, appear in the prefix position of verbs, in positive and negative forms, except

the near past tense marker that appears in the suffix position. However, it was observed that, the habitual tense does not have a marker associated with it, it is usually identified by the tone[1] used by a speaker using it

The study wanted to come up with one general rule that would be used to describe all tenses, but it was not possible because each tense exhibited a different structure from another one, as shown below:

Tense/aspect	**Positive**	**negative**

2.1.1 Present/progressive; [tens] + [pro] + [x] + [a] → [Ti] + [pro] + [tens] + [ku] + [x] + [a].
As in: [Ni]+[n]+[gyend]+[a]   →   [Ti]+[n]+[ri]+[ku]+[gyend]+[a].
                         (I am going)   (I am not going)
2.1.2 Near past;   [pro] + [x] + [tens]   →   [Ti] + [pro] + [x] + [tens]
As in: [O]+[gyend]+[ire] (ogyenzire) → [Ti]+[o]+[gyend]+[ire] (togyenzire).
                        (You went; like yesterday)   (You did not go).
2.1.3 Far past;   [pro] + [tens] + [x] + [a]   →   [Ti] + [pro] + [tens1] + [x] + [tens2]
As in: [A]+[ka]+[gyend]+[a]   →   [Ti]+[a]+[ra]+[gyyend]+[ire] (Taragyenzire)
                        (He went)   (He did not go).
2.1.4 Near future; [asp]+[pro]+[tens] [ku]+[x]+[a] [Ti]+[pro]+[tens]+[ku]+[ija]+[ku]+[x]+[a]
As in: [Ni]+[ba]+[ija] [ku]+[gyend]+[a] →   [Ti]+[ba]+[ri]+[ku]+[ija] [ku]+[gyend]+[a].
               (They will go; like tomorrow)   (They will not go; like tomorrow)
2.1.5 Far futrure   [pro] + [tens]+[x]+[a]   →   [Ti]+[pro]+[tens]+[x]+[a]
As in: [Ba]+[rya]+[gyend]+[a]   →   [Ti]+[ba]+[ri]+[gyend]+[a].
                        (they will go)   (they will not go,)
2.1.6 Habitual   [pro]+[x]+[a]   →   [ti]+[pro]+[x]+[a]
As in: [Ba]+[gyend]+[a]   →   [Ti]+[ba]+[gyend]+[a]
                        (they go)   (they do not go)
Note: 1 Runyankore is a tonal language, ie some words can be semantically distinguished using their tones.
 2.1.7 Perfective   [pro]+[asp]+[x]+[a]   →   [Ti]+[pro]+[asp]   x]+[a].
As in: [o]+[a]+[gyend]+[a] (wa-gyend-a) → [Ti]+[o]+[a]+[gyend]+[a].(Ti-wa-gyend-a].
                    (You have gone)   (You have not gone).
This construction can also be,
        [o]+[a]+[gyend]+[ire] (wagyenzire) → [Ti]+[o]+[ka]+[gyend]+[ire] (tokagyenzire)
As mentioned earlier, the positive form cannot be predicted, so it is not easy to give a general rule to describe those structures. However, the negative form has almost the same structure, so can be described by the following rule**: [Ti] + [pro] + [tens/asp] + [verb-root] + [a]/[ire].**

2.2 The study, further analysed the N**ominalisation process** in Runyankore language, where by different nouns that are derived from verbs were considered. Derived nouns like agentive, locative, instrumental, manner, gerundive and causative nouns were analysed. The study found out that the general rule that may be used to describe structure of these derived nous is the following:

Singular   Plural
[Pref1] + [Pref2] + [x] + [Suf1]/[Suf2]   →   [Pref1] + [Pref2] + [x] + [Suf1]/[Suf2]. [2]
[In. V]+[noun class]+[verb]+[1 or 2 endings]   →   [In. V] + [noun class]+[verb]+[1 or 2endings]. As in;
[[o]+[mu]+[shom]+[es]+[a]]   →   [[a]+[ba]+[shom]+[es]+[a]].

2.3 The third element that the study looked at was the **levels of voice** in Runyankore language. It was observed that in this language, every level has a certain marker that distinguishes it from other levels. All those markers appear in the suffix position of verbs, also referred to as verb extensions. These levels are: passive which is represented by "w", prepositional or dative represented by "er/ir"; associative or reciprocal represented by "an"; causative represented by "es/is"; impositive represented by "ek/ik"; reversive represented by "oor/oror or uur/urur; tentive or contactive represented by "at"; repetitive exhibited by double roots; emphatic represented by; "ez" as in, [reeb+er+ez+a] (look at keenly) and double emphatic represented by "es..ez" as in [reeb+es+er+ez+a]. (look at very keenly).
The general rule that may be used to describe structures of these levels of voice is:
[[x]+[suf]+/[suf]+/[suf]+/[suf]]; where "x" is the verb root. This implies that, one root may be extended by either, one suffix, or two, or three or four, depending on the level of voice being analysed.

2.4 The study further considered the **reflexive** morph used in Runyankore language, since it also appears in the verb entity. It was found out that in this language only one morph ie "e" is usually used as a reflexive marker throughout all classes of nouns, with only consonantal changes to suit phonological environments prevailing.
Note:2 Ti= negative marker, In.v = initial vowel; Pro = pronoun; asp = aspect; Pref = prefix; Suf = suffix;

Furthermore, the study found out that there was no single rule that could be used to show the position of this morph in the verb entity, because each tense exhibits the reflexive marker in a different position, however, it was observed that the following rules can be used to show its location: either, [tens]+[pro]+**[ref]**+[x]+[f.v],[3] as in [Ni]+[a]+**[e]**+[reeb]+[a] → (N+a+**ye**+reeb+a) He is seeing himself. Or [pro]+[tens]+**[ref]**+[x] +[f.v] As in: [o]+[ka]+ **[e]**+[reeb]+[a] → (O+ke+**e**+reeb+a) You looked at yourself. Or; [pro]+**[ref]**+[x]+[tens], as in [A]+**[e]**+[reeb]+[ire] → (A+**ye**+reeb+ire) He looked at himself. In the negative form however, there is one general rule that can be used ie; **[Ti]+[pro]+[tens]+[ku]+[ref]+[x]+[a]** or, **[Ti]+[pro]+[ref]+[x]+[t**ens] as in "Ti+a+ri+ku++ **e**+reeb+a→ "T+a+ri+**kw+e**+reeba" (he does not look at himself; or "Ti+a+ **e**+reeb+ire" → "T+a+**ye**+reeb+ire." (he did not look at himself).

2.5 The other element that the study analysed was the **object infix**. The word infix here does not mean that, that morph is inserted inside the verb root, but it is fixed in between other prefixes. The study observed that; the general rule that can be used to describe the structure of this unit is: [s. pron]+[tens]+**[o.pron]**+[x]+[a] for all tenses, except near future tense, which follows the following rule**:** [Ni]+[s.pron]+[tens] [ku]+**[o.pron]**+[x]+[a]. As in "A+ka+**ki**+reeb+a" (he saw it) and "Ni+aija ku+**ki**+reeb+a" (he will see it) respectively. In negative the structure can be described by the following rule; [Ti]+[s.pron]+[tens]+**[o.pron]**+[x]+tens]] as in "Ti+a+ra+**ki**+reeb+ire" → [T+a+ra+**ki**+reeb+ire] (he did not see it) and "ti+a+ri+ku+ija ku+**ki**+reeb+a" → [T+a+ri+ku+ija ku+**ki**+reeb+a] (He will not see it).

3 Conlusion
The study observed that a Runyankore language verb is a complex one, for it can appear with many units and they all appear as one entity, however, it was further observed that all these units do not always appear in the same verb phrase at the same time. In most cases they have one, two or three prefixes and one or two suffixes, depending on the type of word form inflected or derived from that root. However, there are few cases where many of them may appear in one verb entity. If they do, four to five units appear in the prefix position in positive form, and two to three in the suffix position; whereas, in negative form, four to five units appear in the prefix position and two to four appear in the suffix position; as exemplified by the following: "A+ka+mu+e+reeb+er+a" (He saw her himself), "Ti+a+ra+mu+e+reeb+e+ire"→ "T+a+ra+mw+e+reeb+e+ire" (He did not see her himself). Also: "Ni+a+e+reeb+es+er+ez+a" (She looks at herself very keenly) → "Ti+a+ri+ku+e+reeb+es+er+ez+a" (She does not look at herself very keenly).

These examples prove that; 5 morphs appear as prefixes and 4 as suffixes attached to one root, and all of them appear as a single entity. This notion can be described further by the following rule/ pattern: **[pref1] + [pref2] + [pref3] + [pref4] + [pref5] + [x] + [suf1] + [suf2] + [suf3] + [suf4].** *Note: 3 "f.v" = final vowel, ref = reflexive marker, pro = pronoun; tens = tense marker, Ti= general negator, ku= infinitive, S.pron= subject pronoun; O.pron= Object pronoun; ni=progressive aspect that normally goes with future tense.*
As proven in the above examples; " Where; "a" is a 3rd personal pronoun singular, "ri" is a negative tense marker, "ku" is an infinitive that normally goes with present tense negative and near future tense positive and negative; whereas, "e" is the reflexive morph.
It was again observed that, usually, a negative marker precedes other prefixes i.e it normally appears at the very beginning of the verb entity, whereas, a reflexive morph is always the last prefix before the root of the verb. "x" stands for the root of the verb and the first 3 suffixes are voice morphs, and the very last suffix is the final vowel of the verb. The first suffix is the causative voice, the second one is the dative or applicative voice, whereas the 3rd suffix is the emphatic morph.
Apart from the above stated suffixes, it was further observed that, there are other morphs that are suffixed to the Runyankore verbs, to indicate mood, occasional and atelic aspects. For instance, occasional and atelic aspects are represented by morph "ho" as exhibited below:
Occasional aspect: This one normally appears in questions about whether a certain action has ever been done or not, and their responses as shown in these examples: "O+ra+ri+ire+<u>ho</u> ekyenyanja? (have you ever eaten a fish?)
        "Ti+n+ka+ry+a+<u>ho</u>+ga[4] ekyenyanja (I have never eaten a fish).
Atelic aspect: Normally used on telic verbs to indicate; "do a little something" or "trying something", as shown in the following:
"nywa+ho" (drink a little)
"zaan+a+ho" (play a bit).
"gyez+a+ho" (try)
Note: [4]*"ga" morph is used to emphasise the negativity of the occasion.*

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