

The Morphological Differences of Siswati and IsiZulu Class Prefixes

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Abstract: This is a morphological study of class prefixes in two indigenous languages, namely: Siswati and IsiZulu. They are two cognate and mutually intelligible languages that share the characteristics of Nguni macro and micro linguistics. The class prefixes are the formatives that a focal point of this study. A morpheme which is added in the front of the word is referred to as prefixation. They are going to be looked at in relation to the roots, stems and suffixes. Nouns are divided into classes according to the form their prefixes take. Within the field of morphology, it is possible to ask questions about the formation of words, free and bound morphemes. The study of the structure of words becomes complete when basic morphemes are classified. The structuralism theory and linguistic approaches are adopted to enable the researcher to handle the language components in a more logic and systematic manner. A comprehensive noun class prefixes classification that is selected for this study is that of a scholar, Carl Meinhof.

Keywords: Cognate languages, Micro and macro linguistics, Morphemes, Prefixation, Structuralism theory.

I. Introduction

It is concerned with the internal patterning of words, that is, with their roots and affixes. The term, morphology is derived from morph (Greek morphē – form) and its variant morpheme. (Aronoff and Fudeman 2011)

It is the study of the formation of the word. It is part of linguistics which explains the composition of the words and their component parts or morphemes (Lieber and Stekauer 2014).

The morphology of the word relies on language elements. The prefixes stand before the normal stems and the concord before the predicate stems which carry the lexical meaning of the word. (Katamba 2004)

The starting point for morphological processes is the word. Each word category has its own unique basic morphological structure. The basic structure of a noun is: Preprefix+ true prefix + root (stem + suffix)

It refers to the mental system involved in word formation or the branch of linguistics that deals with words, their internal structure, and how they are formed.

Morphology plays a pivotal role in our understanding of the nature of language. This is because words are at the hub of language and hence linguistics. Linguistics is centrally concerned with the syntax, the study of how words patterns in sentences; with semantics the study of words and sentences meaning; and with phonology the study of how words are pronounced, both in isolation and in utterances.

Carl Friedrich Meinhof (July 23, 1857 – February 11, 1944), was a German linguist and the first linguist to study African Languages. He was born in Barzwitz near Rugenwalde in the Province of Pomerania. He studied at the University of Tübingen and at the University of Griefswald. In 1905, he became Professor at the School of Oriental Studies in Berlin. His most notable work was developing comparative Grammar Studies of Bantu Languages, building on the pioneering work of Wilhelm Bleek. In his work, Meinhof looked at the Bantu languages such as Swahili and IsiZulu to determine similarities and differences. Meinhof developed a comprehensive classification scheme for African languages.

II. Statement of the problem

- The morphological differences of Siswati and IsiZulu class prefixes are known by the speakers of the two languages, but are not scholarly highlighted for the development of orthography and spelling rules.
- The content of each class is shared between the two languages, but the differences are phonetic and phonological features.
- The class prefixes are the language determining factors in the two selected languages, therefore, their functions are always significant.

III. Research methodology

The concept structure refers to the total of relations between the elements of a text. Structuralism is therefore, the text-oriented theory and method of investigating these relations with special interest in the relationship between the parts of the whole (Swanepoel 1990) Structural analysis therefore tries to determine the mutual relationship between patterns to form the meaningful units.

Where literary structuralism is distinctive as a mode of interpretation of texts is taking functional view of meaning. It asks the questions: what does this or that element of the text mean as an element of the text? This is to approach the constituency parts of the text in the same fashion as de Saussure's approach the sign of a language, by discriminating between the signs, value and their signification.

IV. Research objectives

The objectives of this study are the following:

- To outline the morphological differences of Siswati and isiZulu prefixes.
- To assess the significances of prefixation in both languages.
- To analyse how the noun class prefixes are classified according to Meinhof.

V. Research questions

The research questions that are vital in this study are the following:

- Why are the morphological differences of Siswati and isiZulu prefixes outlined?
- To what extent are the prefixation significant in both languages?
- How are the noun class prefixes classified according to Meinhof?

VI. Literature review

Language is the system of arbitrary, vocal symbols which permit all people in a given culture, or other people who have learned the system of that cultures, to communicate or to interact (Hamawand 2011).

Language is the system of communication by sound, operating through the organs of speech and hearing, among members of a given community, and using vocal symbols possessing arbitrary conventional meanings (Booij and van Marle 2005).

Language is the set or system of linguistics symbols as used in a more or less uniform fashion by a member of people who are thus enabled to communicate intelligibly with one another (Random House Dictionary of the English Language 1966:806).

Still other common definitions found in introductory textbooks on linguistics include the concepts of: 1. The creativity of language. 2. The presumed primacy of speech over writing. 3 The universality of language among human beings.

Many of the significant characteristics of languages are capsulized in these definitions. Some of the controversies about nature of language are also illustrated through the limitations that are implied in certain definitions.

A prefix serves one of the three functions:

- A prefix can negate a word by meaning "not"
- A prefix can be directional. It sends the base of the word in a specific direction.
- A prefix can have intensifying force, meaning "very thoroughly".

A prefix is a word part added to the beginning of a word. It changes the meaning.

Taljaard and Bosch (1988:13) comment on isiZulu class prefix as follows: each noun belongs to a class which is characterised by a specific class prefix. Class prefixes consist of a preprefix and a basic prefix. Class prefixes are prefixed to noun stems. The classes are divided into pairs, of which one is the singular class and the other the plural class. This is not always the case, some of the words in the so called plural classes do not have a singular form, and nouns in classes 14-17 can be either singular or plural.

Singular		Plural	
Class	Class prefix	Class	Class prefix
1	Umu-	2	aba-
1a	u-	2a	o-
3	umu-	4	imi-

5	ili-	6	ama-
7	isi-	8	izi-
9	in-	10	izin-
11	ulu-	10	izin-
14	ubu-		
15	uku-		
16	pha-		
17	ku-		

The Sillulu SeSiswati Dictionary (2010: v) reflects that nouns are divided into classes according to the form their prefixes take. Different scholars have come up with different classifications. This is an example of Givon's classification:

Class/Sigaba:

1/2	umu-/ba- (umuntfu "person"/bantfu "people")
1a/2a	;-/bo- (make "mother"/bomake "mothers")
3/4	umu-/imi- (umutsi "medicine"/imitsi "medicines")
5/6	li-/ema- (libele "breast"/emabele "breasts")
7/8	si-/ti- (silulu "hatching basket"/tilulu "hatching baskets")
9/10	iN-/tiN- (inja "dog"/tinja "dogs")
11/10	lu-/tiN (lusiba "feather"/tinsiba "feathers")
14	bu- (butsi "poison"; (bu)-tjwala "alcohol")
15	ku- (kudla "food"; kwakha "build"; kona "spoil")

VII. Findings

It is discovered that there are differences between Siswati and IsiZulu noun Classes. The examples are shown from class 1 to class 18.

Class 1 and 2 Person's class

Siswati	IsiZulu
umu-/ba-	umu-/aba-
umfana (boy)/bafana (boys)	umfana (boy)/abafana (boys)
umtingeli (hunter)/ batingeli (hunters)	umzingeli (hunter)/abazingeli (hunters)
umuntfu (person)/bantfu (persons)	umuntu (person)/abantu (persons)

In Siswati, class 2 has no preprefix, while in isiZulu it is found.

Class 1(a) and 2(a) proper names and relationship terms

Siswati	IsiZulu
babe (father)/bobabe (fathers)	ubaba(father)/obaba (fathers)
make (mother)/bomake (mothers)	umama(mother)/ omama (mothers)
gogo (grandmother)/bogogo (grandmothers)	ugogo(grandmother)/ogogo (grandmothers)

In Siswati, class2a has prefix bo-, while in isiZulu there are prefixes u- and o-

Class 3 and 4 miscellaneous nouns

Siswati	IsiZulu
umfula (river)/imifula (rivers)	umfula(river)/imifula(rivers)
umlente (leg)/imilente (legs)	umlenze(leg)/imilenze(legs)
umoya (wind)/imimoya (winds)	umoya(wind)/imimoya(winds)

In both Siswati and isiZulu, there are same preprefixes and real prefixes umu- and imi-.

Class 5 and 6 objects found in pairs or in large numbers.

Siswati	IsiZulu
liso (eye)/emehlo (eyes)	liso(eye)/amehlo(eyes)
lidvolo (knee)/emadvolo (knees)	idolo(knee)/amadolo(knees)
litje (stone)/ematje (stones)	itshe(stone)/amatshe(stones)

In Siswati, the prefixes are li- and ema-, while in isiZulu are ili-/i- and ama-.

Class 7 and 8 instruments and personal deverbatives

Siswati	IsiZulu
sitja (plate)/titja (plates)	isitsha(plate)/izitsha(plates)
sicatfulo (shoe)/ticatfulo (shoes)	isicathulo(shoe)/izicathulo(shoes)
sishosha (a cripple)/tishosha (cripples)	isishosha (cripple)/izishosha (cripples)

In Siswati, the prefixes are si- and ti- while in isiZulu are isi- and izi-

Class 9 and 10 animal classes

Siswati	IsiZulu
inja (a dog)/tinja (dogs)	inja(dog)/izinja(dogs)
inkhomo (cattle)/tinkhomo (cattle)	inkomo(cattle)/izinkomo (cattles)
inkhukhu (a chicken)/tinkhukhu (chickens)	inkukhu(chicken)/izinkukhu(chickens)

In Siswati, the prefixes are in- and tin-, while in isiZulu are in- and izin-.

Class 11 and 10 variety of objects

Siswati	IsiZulu
lukhuni (firewood)/tinkhuni (firewoods)	ukhuni(firewood)/izinkuni(firewoods)
lutfuli (dust)/tintfuli (dusts)	uthuli(dust)/izintuli(dusts)
lunwele (hair)/tinwele (hairs)	unwele(hair)/izinwele(hairs)

In Siswati, the prefixes are lu- and ti- while in isiZulu u(lu-) and izin-

Class 14 abstracts and collectives

Siswati	IsiZulu
buhlalu (beads)	ubuhlalu(beads)
buphuya (poverty)	ubuphuya(poverty)
busika (winter)	ubusika(winter)

In Siswati, the prefix is bu- while in isiZulu is ubu-.

Class 15, the infinitive class

Siswati	IsiZulu
kufa (death)	ukufa (death)
kulima (to plough)	ukulima (to plough)
kudla (to eat)	ukudla (to eat)

In Siswati, the prefix is ku- while in isiZulu is uku-.

Class 16 the locative class employed as adverbs

Siswati	IsiZulu
phandle (outside)	phandle (outside)
phansi (underneath)	phansi (underneath)
phakadze (forever)	phakade (forever)

In both Siswati and isiZulu, the prefix is pha-.

Class 17 abstracts concepts with a locative implication

Siswati	IsiZulu
kunene (the right hand)	ukunene (the right hand)
kucala (first)	ukuqala (first)

The prefix that is used in Siswati is ku-, while in isiZulu is uku-.

Class 18 a class denoting a direction

mshiya loyi (this side)
mshiya lowa (that side)

The prefix is mu- and is only evident in Siswati language.

It is noted that this is the study of the word structure. It cannot be studied in isolation, but it is looked at in conjunction with syntax and the phonology of that language. The idea that is expressed is that morphology is not regarded as an independent study, but rather as a bridge between the syntax of a language and its phonology.

A morph is a word form or part of a word form that cannot be analysed further into a smaller form. There are words that cannot be analysed into smaller parts; those are called free morphs.

In Siswati, free morphs are limited. These are mainly conjunctives, for example: *uma*, *ngoba* and *lapho*. Ideophones, for example: *zwi*, *muhlu* and *chwa*. Interjectives are *hawu*, *maye* and *wohhe*. The auxiliary verbs are *vele*, *mane* and *dzimate*.

When a morph cannot stand alone as a word, it is called a bound morph. Since Siswati is an agglutinative language, bound morphs are in abundance. In Siswati concords, prefixes, infixes, roots and suffixes constitute bound morphs.

While a morph is a substantive unit, the morpheme is an abstract unit, a unit that is part of a syntactic description. The relation between morph and morpheme is stated as realization. In many cases, there is a one-to-one relation between a morph and morpheme.

VIII. Conclusion

When going through Meinhof's classification of noun prefixes, it is evident that the two languages are cognate and mutually intelligible. IsiZulu is consistent by having preprefix in all classes, while Siswati is inconsistent. The noun classifications are shared from class 1(a) to class 17. The Nguni languages share some of their macro and micro linguistics characteristics. The glaring differences are in phonetics and phonological features, sounds and processes. The non-occurrence of certain prefixes in both Siswati and IsiZulu reveals that this may occur in other languages of the same family.

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