Noun Predication in CiTonga

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Abstract

This study is an account of noun predication in CiTonga. The morphemes responsible for noun predication are identified and discussed to bring forth their morphosyntactic role. Data for the study are collected mainly through intuition. The informing theoretical perspective in the study is Distributed Morphology. This theory addresses the interface between morphological and syntactic processes. The study advances that noun predicative morphemes in Tonga, in addition to converting nouns into predicates, implement two degrees of emphasis on the noun to which they are preprefixed. It is further noted that each predicative morpheme is restricted to specific noun classes. From the data used, the study also notes that predicative morphemes (morphemes used to convert noun into predicates) are governed by the noun that they predicate morphophonologically. In terms of meaning, it is noted that predicate nouns have two levels of meaning; the literal and the actual meaning. The study concludes that predicative morphemes in CiTonga are highly productive and can be analysed phonologically, morphologically, syntactically and semantically.

Introduction

The study was a descriptive account of noun predication in CiTonga. Noun predication (also known as copulative formation or stabilisation) is a process by which a noun or adjective is made into a statement like 'it is ...' or 'they are ...'; a predicate so to speak (cf Carter, 2002, p. 24). The study discussed the different noun predicative morphemes. The concept predicative morpheme in this study were used to refer to morphemes that render nouns into predicates. The study was motivated by Carter (2002) who outlined predication in CiTonga. In an outline of the grammar of Tonga, Carter touched on many aspects of the grammar of CiTonga including predication, without providing detail on the aspects. Thus, instead of providing answers to questions on predication and many other aspects of the grammar of CiTonga, Carter's work roused more questions.

CiTonga is spoken in Zambia and Zimbabwe. In each of the two countries, the language has variations. The examples provided in the study are from the Zambian CiTonga, precisely the Plateau CiTonga variety. This is because Plateau Tonga is the variety the present researcher is more familiar with. The use of examples from a variety the researcher is familiar with is important given that the vast majority of the data used in the study were generated intuitively and by the use of introspection.

The study found out that there are different predicative morphemes in CiTonga that affect predicate nouns in different ways grammatically. The concept predicate noun in this study is used to refer to nouns to which a predicate morpheme has been preprefixed (or a predicated noun). It is also noted in the study that each predicative morpheme is limited in terms of the noun classes to which the nouns it can be with belong.

Literature Review

A survey of literature on noun (or substantive) predication in Bantu suggests that this aspect of grammar has not received much attention from linguists. This state of affairs is attested through a dearth of literature that addresses and discusses noun predication in Bantu. This section discusses some of the few available studies on noun predication in Bantu.

Buell and de Dreu (2013) examined noun predication in Zulu and found out that the most common morpheme used to convert nouns into predicates is *ngu-* 'she or he is'. Buell and de Dreu note that this morpheme in some cases can be omitted in predicate nouns. In such cases, predication is achieved by the use of a breathy voice phonation on the initial syllable of the noun predicate. In CiTonga the omission of a predicative morpheme is rare, if it happens, telling from the data used in the present study. The data suggests that in all instances of noun predication, relevant predicative morphemes are pre-prefixed to predicate nouns; no instance of omission of the morphemes was noted.

Schneider-Zioga (2018) surveys non-verbal predication in Bantu and demonstrates that Bantu languages use different morphemes to render substantives into predicates. Some of the languages that Schneider-Zioga's data is drawn from are Kinande, Kinyarwanda, Swahili, Zulu and Nzadi. One of the morphemes that are proffered as being common in these languages is *ngu-* 'it is she or he'. Since Schneider-Zioga's study focused on many languages, it does not provide a detailed discussion of the grammatical roles played by the morphemes in individual languages. It is highly probable that the (grammatical roles of) predicative morphemes in each language have unique characteristics. For example, the noun classes to which the nouns that the morpheme *ngu-* can be used with can be language specific. Concentrating on one language is important because it allows for a detailed discussion of the grammatical roles of the predicative morphemes.

Commenting on predication in Bantu, Schneider-Zioga (2018, p. 1) has this to say: 'They [Bantu languages] employ a rich variety of ... particles, verbal copulas, null copulas, directly inflected ... predicates and tone to establish ... predication'. A cursory glance at the situation in CiTonga regarding noun predication shows that CiTonga also uses different predicative morphemes. The present study examines the morphemes and brings out their grammatical functions. Enroute, the noun classes with which each morpheme is used are given.

Carter (2002) has provided an outline of noun and adjective predication in CiTonga and suggests that different predicative morphemes that convey different degrees of emphasis are used in Tonga. Carter suggests four classes or types of

predicative morphemes. However, as demonstrated in this study, it seems that there are in fact two classes of such morphemes in CiTonga. The study by Carter can be credited for noting that predicative morphemes in Tonga are used for emphasis. However, the study could have been more enlightening on noun predication in CiTonga if it discussed in detail and with aid of sufficient examples illustrating the claim that predicative morphemes are used for emphasis. Secondly, Carter's study would have been more informative if it touched on the semantic output of the syntactic units that arise from pre-prefixing the predicative morphemes to nouns. Thirdly, the study could be more illuminating if it attempted to provide an inventory of noun predicative morphemes as well as spelling out the noun classes that each morpheme can be used with. The current study addresses these conspicuous lacunas in Carter's study.

Other studies on noun predication in Bantu that inform the present study are Jerro (2015) Schneider-Zioga and Hederg (2015). From these studies, it can be noted that noun predication in Bantu involves a deployment of different morphemes that have different grammatical influence on nouns. The present study seeks to establish the grammatical influences of predicative morphemes on nouns in Tonga.

Data collection method

The data used in this study were mainly generated intuitively and introspectively as well as through reflecting on how Plateau CiTonga speakers use the language with respect to predication. The importance of intuition and introspection in linguistics is given by Evans and Green (2006, p. 16) who argue that 'native speakers of any given human language will have strong intuitions about their language'. The present researcher is a native speaker of the Plateau CiTonga variety. The researcher identified the different predicative morphemes in Tonga and their grammatical influence on noun predicates. At the same time, the researcher reflected on CiTonga speakers' use of such morphemes in day-to-day communication. Thereafter, the researcher sought to establish the noun classes to which the nouns that each morpheme can be used with belong.

Theoretical perspective

Distribution Morphology (DM) is used as a perspective informing the analysis in this study. DM, a theory concerned with the interface between morphological and syntactic units, was proposed and developed by Halle and Marantz (1993), Halle (1997) and Harley and Noyer (1999). DM is a theory that is used to account for the relationship between the internal structure of words and the structures generated by syntax (cf Embick & Noyer, 2007). In other words, this theory accounts for processes involved in deriving syntactic units from lexical items such as nouns. In this study, DM is used to account for predication in CiTonga; that is, the theory is used to demonstrate that predicative morphemes generate syntactic forms when pre-prefixed to nouns.

The main claim in DM is that it is difficult to make a distinction between the constructions of lexical items (words) and syntactic items. As such, there is one generative 'engine' responsible for the formation of complex words and phrases. DM has its roots in Generative Grammar, a theory that views grammar as a system of rules generating only combinations of words that form grammatical sentences in a language. The main principle that DM picks from Generative Grammar is that from words, syntactic units can be generated through the process of prefixation. In the present study, interest is on predicative morphemes that can be said to be responsible for generating syntactic units from nouns.

In the study, the predicate morphemes are identified. Thereafter, it is shown that when the morphemes are contracted by a noun, they convert the noun into a predicate (or a syntactic unit). Furthermore, the grammatical influence of the morphemes are brought out and discussed. Clearly, what is accounted for and/or described in the study is a morphosyntactic phenomenon. The account and/or description are possible because the theory used in the study, DM, is also morphosyntactically oriented.

Findings and discussion

The discussion of the findings was done with the aid of the Table below. In the tables, predicate morphemes and examples of nouns before and after being predicated are provided. The tables also provide the noun classes that each predicate morpheme can be used with.

Noun predicative morphemes in CiTonga

There are many noun predicative morphemes in CiTonga. A predicative morpheme can be considered as being a pre-prefix because it precedes a prefix, at least in (Tonga) nouns. According to Carter (2002) predicative morphemes in CiTonga are used to express emphasis. In the present study, it is noted that there are two degrees of emphasis which are expressed by the morphemes: indefinite and definite.

Indefinite predication in Tonga

Indefinite predicative morphemes are those that when attached to a noun, do not turn the noun into a definite predicate. A definite predicate can be said to be one in which the object in question is specified. Indefinite predicative morphemes in CiTonga are shown in Table 1 with examples of how each is used as well as the noun classes with which each of them can be used:

Table 1: *Indefinite predicative morphemes in CiTonga*

Predicative Morphemes	Nouns	predicate nouns
m- *(used with nouns from classes 1,2,3,4, 6, 9, 10, 14)*	1. *ba-ntu* 'people' CL2-Stem	*m-bantu* 'they are people
	2. *mu-ana* 'child' CL1-Stem	*m-mwana* 'it is a child'
	3. *ma-bisi* 'sour milk' CL6-Stem	*m-mabisi* 'it is sour'
	4. *m-pongo* 'goat(s)' CL9/10-Stem	*m-mpongo* 'it is a goat or they are goats
	5. *bu-izu* 'grass' CL14-Stem	*m-bwizu* 'it is grass'
	6. *mu-longa* 'river' CL3-Stem	*m-mulonga* 'it is a river'
	7. *mi-longa* 'rivers' CL4-Stem	*m-milonga* 'they are rivers'
n- *(used with nouns from classes 7, 8,12, 13, and 15)*	8. *ka-kutu* 'small hide' CL12-Stem	*n-kakutu* 'it is a small hide'
	9. *zi-nkwa* 'loaves of bread' CL8-Stem	*n-zinkwa* 'they are loaves of bread'
	10. *ci-subulo* 'punishment' CL7-Stem	*n-cisubulo* 'it is a punishment'
	11. *tu-bulo* 'metals' CL13-Stem	*n-tubulo* 'it is small metals'
	12. *ku-twi* 'ear' CL15-Stem	*n-kutwi* 'it is the ear'
	13. *tu-anda* small houses' CL13-Stem	*n-twaanda* 'they are small houses'
ndi-,ndu- *(used with nouns from classes 5,and 9a, and 11)*	14. *-Bbwe* 'stone' CL9a-Stem	*ndi-bbwe* 'it is a stone'
	15. *-Jamba* 'hoe' CL9a-Stem	*ndi-jamba* 'it is a hoe'
	16. *li-nyo* 'tooth' CL5-Stem	*ndi-nyo* 'it is a tooth'
	17. *lu-gwalo* 'letter' CL11-Stem	*ndu-gwalo* 'it is a letter'

From the Table above, it can be noted that there are three indefinite predicative morphemes in Tonga: **n-**, **m-**, and **ndi-/ndu-**. It can also be noted that pre-prefixing the morphemes to nouns places (indefinite) emphasis on the nouns. At the same time, the nouns are converted into syntactic units; predicates to be precise. Put in another way, the noun assumes the form of a syntactic unit; it is changed into a clause or sentence. The output predicates in Table 1 are all indefinite; they are not restrictive or do not specify the object. Thus, indefinite predicative morphemes are so-called because they do not specify the object of the predicates they produce. This is in sharp contrast with the definite predicative morphemes that are discussed in

the next sub-section. The other aspect which can be noted from Table 1 is that each predicative morpheme is restricted in terms of the class of noun to which it can be pre-prefixed.

In terms of the relationship between the prefix of the noun and the indefinite predicative morphemes, it can be noted that in some cases the morphemes displaces the prefix of the noun to which it is pre-prefixed. This can be noted in examples (14) – (17). In these examples, the prefix of the noun disappears when the noun is converted into a predicate. However, to say that the morpheme displaces the noun class prefix for examples (14) and (15) can be controversial if not incorrect because the class prefixes for nouns in these examples do not have a morphological shape. Thus, it may be readily acceptable to say that the predicative morphemes displace the noun class prefixes for nouns in classes 5 and 11 as shown in examples (16) and (17). In the rest of the examples in Table 1, the prefix of the nouns is not displaced by the predicative morphemes.

The predicate nouns in examples (14) – (17) are from classes 5, 9a and 11 and the indefinite predicative morphemes in the examples are *ndi-* and *ndu-*. Thus, it can be argued that the indefinite predicative morphemes *ndi-* and *ndu-* which are used with classes 5, 9a and 11 displace the noun class prefix when used with classes 5 and 11, and stands in the place of the unlexicalised noun class prefix when used with class 9a nouns. The structure of the predicate nouns in Table 1 is as follows:

Indefinite predicative morpheme + Noun Prefix + Noun Stem= Indefinite Predicate

This means that an indefinite predicative morpheme, plus a noun class prefix, plus a noun stem give an indefinite predicate.

Definite predication in Tonga

A definite predicative morpheme is a morpheme that can turn a noun into a definite predicate when attached to it. Definite predicative morphemes in CiTonga are shown in Table 2 with examples of how each is used as well as the classes of nouns with which each can be used:

Table 2: ***Definite predicative morphemes in CiTonga***

Predicative Morphemes	Nouns	predicate nouns
Mbi-/mbe-/mbo-/mbu-/mba- *(used with nouns from classes 2 and 14)*	1. *ba-ntu* 'people' CL2-Stem	*mba/mbe*-bantu 'these are the people'
	2. *ba-taata* 'father' CL2-Stem	*mba/mbo*-bataata 'this is my father'
	3. *bu-usi* 'smoke' CL14-Stem	*mbu-busi* 'this is smoke'
	4. *bu-sena* 'place' CL14-Stem	*mbo/mbu-busena* 'this is the place'
	5. *bu-izu* 'grass' CL14-Stem	*mbo/mbu-bwizu* 'this is the grass'
Nce-/nco-/nka-/ *(used with nouns from class 7,12)*	6. *ka-kutu* 'small hide' CL12-Stem	*nka-kakutu* 'it is the small hide'
	7. *ci-luli* 'roof' CL7-Stem	*nco-cilulu* 'it is the roof'
	8. *ci-subulo* 'punishment' CL7-Stem	*nce/nco-cisubulo* 'it is the punishment'
	9. *ka-bulo* 'metals' CL12-Stem	*nka-kabulo* 'it is the small metal'
	10. *ci-buno* 'waist' CL7-Stem	*nci-cibuno* 'it is the waist
nde-/ndo- *(generally used with nouns from class 5, 8, 9a, 11)*	11. *-Bbwe* 'stone' CL9a-Stem	*nde/ndo-bbwe* 'this is the stone'
	12. *-Jamba* 'hoe' CL9a-Stem	*nde/ndo-jamba* 'this is the hoe'
	13. *li-nyo* 'tooth' CL5-Stem	*nde/ndo-linyo* 'this is the tooth'
	14. *zi-na* 'name' CL8-Stem	*nde-zina* 'this is the name'
	15. *lu-uwo* 'wind' CL11-Stem	*ndo-luuwo* 'it is the wind'
nze-/nzi- *(used with nouns in classes 8 and 10)*	16. *n-koloko* 'clock' CL10-Stem	*nze/nzi-nkoloko* 'these are the clocks'
	17. *m-pongo* 'goats' CL10-Stem	*nze/nzi-mpongo* 'they are the goats'
	18. *n-singo* 'neck' CL10-Stem	*nze/nzi-nsingo* 'these are the necks'
	19. *zi-samu* 'trees' CL8-Stem	*nze/nzi-zisamu* 'these are the trees'
	20. *zi-ntu* 'things' CL8-Stem	*nzi-zintu* 'these are the things'

Nje-/nji- *(used with nouns from classes 4, 9, and few nouns from 9a,)*	21. *m-poto* 'pot' CL9-Stem	*nje/nji-mpoto* 'these are the pots'
	22. *n-ongo* 'clay pot' CL9-Stem	*nje-nongo* 'this is the clay pot'
	23. *-kkomputa* CL9a-Stem	*nje-kkomputa* 'this is the computer'
	24. *mi-longa* 'rivers' CL4-Stem	*nje-milonga* 'these are the rivers'
	25. *mi-celo* 'fruits'	*nje-micelo* 'these are the fruits'
Nga-/nge-/ngo- *(used with nouns in classes 1, 1a, and 6)*	26. *mu-nyati* 'buffalo' CL1-Stem	*ngo-muntyati* 'this is the buffalo'
	27. *-sicuuno* 'chairman' CL1a-Stem	*ngo-sicuuno* 'she or he is the chairman'
	28. *ma-susu* 'hair' CL6-Stem	*nga/nge-masasu* 'this is the hair'
	29. *mu-ntu* 'person' CL2-Stem	*ngo-muntu* 'this is the person'
	30. *ma-enda* 'water' CL6-Stem	*nge-meenda* 'this is the water'

Definite predicative morphemes in CiTonga, as well as their possible use, are given in Table 2. As can be seen from the two tables used in this study, it appears that there are more definite predicative morphemes in CiTonga than there are indefinite ones. In Table 2, there are seven of them (with most of them having variations depending on speaker preference) while in Table 1 there are only three. Unlike indefinite ones, particularly ***ndi-***, the definite predicative morpheme used with class 5 nouns, ***nde-/ndo-***, does not displace the noun prefix. The structure of the predicate nouns in all the examples in Table 2 is as follows:

Definite predicative morpheme + Noun Prefix + Noun Stem = Definite Predicate

This means that a definite predicative morpheme, plus a noun class prefix, plus a noun stem give a definite predicate.

A syntactic and semantic perspective of predicative morphemes

Predicate morpheme in CiTonga translate the English third personal pronoun 'she or he', 'it' or 'they', depending on the noun undergoing predication. To get further insights into the syntactic roles of predicative morpheme, predicate nouns are used in sentences in the following examples:

31. *Bana bakwe **m**bantu* (Indefinite predication)
    Literal meaning: His or her children they are people.
    Actual meaning: His or her children are well behaved.

32. *Bana bakwe mbabantu* (Definite predication)
    Literal meaning: His or her children they are the people.
    Actual meaning: His or her children are the ones that are well behaved.

33. *Aaya ngoondipa mmabisi* (Indefinite predication) (In the written form, only one nasal is used; the nasal geminate as presented in this example only manifests in pronunciation)
    Literal meaning: This that you gave me is sour milk.
    Actual meaning: This that you gave me is good or nice sour milk.

34. *Aaya ngoondipa ngomabisi* (Definite predication)
    Literal meaning: This that you gave me is the sour milk.
    Actual meaning: This that you gave me is the good or nice sour milk.

35. *Nzyajisi nzisani* (Indefinite predication)
    Literal meaning: What she or he has are clothes.
    Actual meaning: What she or he has are good clothes.

36. *Nzyajisi nzezisani* (Definite predication)
    Literal meaning: What she or he has are the clothes.
    Actual meaning: What she or he has are the good clothes.

Two major grammatical aspects of predicative morphemes can be noted from examples (31) – (36). Firstly, these morphemes can be said to be cataphoric pronouns. A cataphoric pronoun is one that comes before the noun that it refers to. Secondly, in the lenses of Government and Binding theory, it can be said that the predicated noun governs the pronoun (predicate morpheme); the morphological shape and meaning of the pronoun is governed by or bound to that of the prefix of the predicated noun.

Related to the aspect of predicative morphemes being bound to the prefixes of the predicate nouns, the morphemes can also be said to be clitics; proclitics to be precise. Marantz (1988, p. 253) defines a clitic as 'an independent syntactic constituent which shows up phonologically as part of a derived word.' This means that from a syntactic perspective, a clitic can be viewed as a word while from a morphophonological perspective it can be viewed as a morpheme. A proclitic is a clitic that comes before the word it depends on orthographically and phonologically. In all the examples given in this study, predicative morphemes depend on the nouns that they predicate orthographically and phonologically. Thus they can be said to be proclitics.

In terms of sentence meaning, it can be noted from examples (31-36) that predicative morphemes, in addition to converting nouns into predicates tend to add a figurative layer of meaning to nouns in some cases. This can be best seen in examples (31 & 32) where the predicate nouns *mbana* 'they are children' and *mbabana* 'they are the children', respectively, are used to refer to a well-behaved, well-mannered or hard working children.

The aspect of figurative meaning is evidenced by the fact that in terms of meaning, predicate nouns have two meanings: the literal and the actual meaning. Thus, in ordinary communication, predicate nouns should not be taken literally. Native CiTonga speakers do not have challenges in differentiating the literal meaning from actual meaning in predicate nouns in day-to-day communication. The identification of the actual meaning is, in fact, done subconsciously.

Conclusion

The study described noun predication in CiTonga. Using DM as an analytical framework, the study demonstrated that noun predication in CiTonga is a morphosyntactic phenomenon. The study attempted to achieve firstly, bringing forth the morphemes used in noun predication in CiTonga. Secondly, the study has described the structure of the nouns and the resultant syntactic units after preprefixing the predicative morpheme to the noun. Thirdly, the study has touched on the semantic influence of the morphemes on the noun. The overall conclusion of the study was that predicative morphemes in CiTonga play a grammatical role both syntactically and semantically. At the semantic level, the morphemes convey different degrees of emphasis.

It was also noted in the study that noun predicative morphemes in CiTonga are restricted thus each morpheme can be used with nouns in a limited number of classes. The expectation is that the Morphosyntactic phenomenon described in the study regarding predicative morphemes in CiTonga holds also for other substantives (noun-like forms). Furthermore, the study showed that predicative morphemes are governed by the nouns that they predicate. Firstly, the morphological shape of the morphemes is determined by that of the class prefix of the noun being predicated. Secondly, the predicative morpheme is bound to the noun it predicates phonologically.

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that predicative morphemes in CiTonga are highly productive and can be analysed phonologically, morphologically (their structural relationship with the prefix of predicate nouns), syntactically (their ability to convert nouns into syntactic units) and semantically (their semantic influence on the noun they predicate).

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