

# A Morpho-Phonemic Analysis of Lukabaras Verbal Nominals

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**Abstract-** *This paper investigated Lukabaras verbal nominals. The specific aim was to analyse the alterations verbs in Lukabaras undergo to form nouns. Accordingly, the study explained the morphological and phonological constraints involved in the formation of such items. The study adopted a descriptive design. A sample of 40 lexical items was picked through purposive sampling technique for analysis. In view of this, the items that featured in this study were typically nouns formed from verbs. The findings of this study revealed that certain Lukabaras nominals derived from verbs exhibited morpho phonemic processes. As such the study concluded that the formation of Lukabaras verbal nominals involved affixation, consonant assimilation and vowel gliding.*

**Key words-** *Lukabaras; verbal nominal; morpho phonemic process*

## Background to Lukabaras

The Luhya language is made up of a minimum of nineteen dialects (Marlo, 2011), which include Lubukusu (spoken in Bungoma County); Lughayo, Lumarachi, Lusaamia, Lunyala-B, Lutura (spoken in Busia County); Luloogoli, Lutirichi, Lunyore (spoken in Vihiga County); Lwisukha, Lwitakho, Luwanga, Lumarama, Lutsotso, Lunyala-K, Lukisa, Lukabarasi, Lutachoni (spoken in Kakamega County, the latter also spoken in Bungoma County). Muandike (2011) identifies Lutura spoken in Busia, while Kebeya (2008) splits Lunyala into B (Busia) and K (Kakamega). Simons & Charles (2018) has listed Lukabaras as one of the members of the macro language Olululyia. Also known as Kabaras, the Kabras largely occupy Malava Sub County in Kakamega County.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

According to scholars such as Plag (2003), various languages use different morphological processes in the formation of their words. This would therefore imply that the morphological structure in many languages varies remarkably. In this perspective, Bauer (1983) argues that the process of word formation presupposes that words exist and hence some words are formed. Moreover, Bauer (ibid) discusses more than six processes involved in formation of English words; these are affixation, conversion, and compounding and assert that conversion is the most productive of all since there appears to be no morphological restrictions on any forms that undergo conversion. On the other hand, Halle (1973) posits that not all words of a language can be derived by means of regular and general rules but instead there exists numerous exceptions.

A study carried out on noun formation in Nuer, a Nilo-Saharan language, spoken in Sudan and Ethiopia (Frank,

1999), established that suffixation is the most productive (regular) process and that ninety percent of Nuer nouns are formed from irregular processes. The study further reveals that derivation is a distinctive feature in Bantu languages. For example, noun or verbal conjugation is a common source of deriving meaning in Zulu language of Southern Africa while the deverbalisation process contributes immensely to the name formation process in the Ngoni language. In view of this, Mphande (2006) posits that the most elaborate and dominant morphological process is affixation which allows the derivation of one lexeme from another. For instance, 'omulosi,' is a Lukabaras word meaning 'a witch', and is derived from the verb stem {loka} by adding a nominalizer prefix {omu-}.

Generative Morphology has a set of word formation rules (WFRs) which enable a competent person in a language make predictions on possible words of a language. For instance, a competent Lukabaras speaker has an intuitive set of rules that will inform him on whether a word is well or ill formed. These intuitive rules enable him/her to form or decompose an infinite number of words. As argued in this paper, one such way forming words is where Lukabaras speakers are able to form nouns by deriving them from verbs.

Since there are models of generative morphology in which word formation takes place in the lexical component of the grammar, it was possible to come up with categories of word-formation processes such as affixation in spoken Lukabaras. Affixation can be divided into sub-categories which include prefixation, suffixation, infixation and circumfixation. The most common of these categories is prefixation and suffixation. Whereas prefixation involves attaching a morpheme before the root, suffixation has the morpheme attached at the end of the root.

According to Mathews (1994), morphological conditioning occurs on the word and so an understanding of noun and verb morphology as well as the basic word structure is fundamental to the description of the morphophonemics of any language. Akida (2000) studied Luwanga morphophonemics and observed that the morphological structure of the Luwanga verb can be understood through the study of the features of the verb. The verb is made up of several morphemes strung together each of which occupies a particular slot in a sense of slots. The verb comprises a root and one or more bound affixes. The root is the base level while the root plus an affix may form the stem. The root is the nucleus and is the meaning - carrying morpheme. Any inflections made for other grammatical elements are done from the root.

Akida (2000) observes that the Luwanga verb may be classified into two: simple and complex verbs. Since Luwanga and Lukabaras are sister members of the macro language Luhya, this paper applied a similar generalization and argued that a simple verb in Lukabaras could be in the form of: *tab-a* 'run', *its-a* 'come. Most simple verbs function as commands. From the foregoing, we notice that the simple verbs are made up of morphemes which can easily be divided into their component parts as a root and affix. This explains Lukabaras as being one language in which the word formation process is productive. In the examples given, the affix is clearly identifiable and typically represents only a single grammatical category or meaning.

Appleby cited in Akida (2000), posits that there are twelve classes of nouns in Luhya distinguished by their prefixes. Eight of the twelve have singular and plural forms also distinguished by prefixes. The rest are not based on singular and plural distinctions. Like its sister dialects, the Lukabaras noun consists of two parts; (i) a stem (ii) a prefix. Akida (2000) observes that an important characteristic of Bantu languages is that nouns are divided into classes according to their prefixes. Lukabaras, being a Bantu language also has nouns based on grammatical gender. The grammatical gender-based nouns in Lukabaras are also based on nature. Based on these two characteristics, the nouns whose grammatical gender is based on nature have concord -markers and are distinguished by nominal prefixes.

## 2. Methodology

This paper adopted a descriptive research design. The morphophonemic processes observed in the nouns derived from verbs in Lukabaras were analysed qualitatively. The data for investigation comprised of 40 lexical items collected through interviewing speakers of Lukabaras living in Malava, Kakamega County. In view of this, the study employed the purposive sampling technique. The focus was on those words that denoted actions and the resultant nominal forms.

## 3. Findings and discussion

The findings of this study were similar to Akida (2000) which studied Luwanga morphophonemics. This study thus established that just like Luwanga, Lukabaras basic word structure is formed out of morphemes which structurally may be either free or bound morphemes. A free morpheme is one that can be a word by itself and which can occur in isolation while a bound morpheme is that which must be attached to another element to form a word (Akida, 2000). Free morphemes in Lukabaras constitute root words while bound morphemes are affixes. Bound morphemes must be attached to other morphemes, root or stem of a word to yield meaning. This attachment is done progressively to give simple as well as complex words.

This paper observed that affixes constitute an important part of word formation in Lukabaras. The findings showed that complex words typically consist of a root and one or more affixes. A root is that part of the word which cannot be further analyzed derivationally or inflectionally. It remains intact even after the removal of derivational and inflectional affixes.

Lukabaras exhibits two types of affixes which are categorized depending on the position they take in relation to the root. Prefixes are attached before the stem while suffixes are attached after the stem. Functionally, the affixes may be derivational or inflectional. Each of these plays a different role within the word and in relation to different words and roots. Inflectional affixes in Lukabaras inflect a word form. They inflect for tense, number, (in noun - class concordial agreement) and negation. Most of these inflectional affixes are prefixes and do not change the class of their stems. Derivational affixes on the other hand indicate different lexemes of the same word in form. They form a different lexeme which differs from that of the stem. It was established that some nouns in Lukabaras are derived from verbs through affixation. The table 1.0 below shows examples of nouns formed from verbs in Lukabaras.

**Table 1.0 showing Lukabaras Verbal nominal**

VERB	NOUN	GLOSS
sinza	omusinzi	one who slaughters
ruka	omuruchi	one who keeps animals
baaka	omubachi	one who skins
yiba	omwifi	a thief
yibala	omwibali	a teacher
raka	omurachi	one who plants
yaka	omuachi	one who weeds
tekha	omuteshi	one who cooks

sunga	omusinji	a reporter
langa	omulanji	a caller
rama	omurami	one who cuts
baya	omubayi	a player
loka	omulosi	a witch
kamba	omukambi	one who is choosy
lela	omulesi	a babysitter
sheba	omushefi	a circumciser
loba	omulobi	a fisherman/woman
linda	omulindi	a caretaker
kusia	omukusi	a seller
khama	omukhami	one who milks
lomba	omulombi	a designer
renya	omurenyi	one who collects firewood
longa	omulonji	a potter/one who moulds
yenga	omuyenji	a brewer
fimba	omufimbi	a thatcher
yaya	omuyayi	a grabber
yinzila	omuyinzili	a worker
yumbakha	omumbashi	a builder
yachikha	omuachishi	a loader
lunga	omulunji	a cook
khupa	omukhupi	one who beats
yaba	omuyabi	a digger
bakha	omubashi	a painter
beka	omubechi	one who shaves
yira	omwiri	a murderer
londa	omulondi	a follower
yibula	omwibuli	a parent
monya	omumonyi	a gossip
yima	omuyimi	a hunter
kula	omukuli	a buyer
mela	omumesi	a drunkard

As shown in table 1.0 above, the forms of the nouns reveal that they were formed from the root of a verb through nominal prefixation. This surface realization of the derived nouns involved a morphological process, however, further alterations occurred to the items due to underlying phonological conditions. For instance the prefix {omu-} is attached to a verb whose root typically ends with /a/. In the derivation of the new item the /a/ is changed to {i} and occupies the suffix position.

#### 4. Lukabaras Noun Formation from Verbs

This paper established that there are two ways of deriving nouns from verbs in Lukabaras. One of the methods involves the nominal prefix {omu-} which is put before the stem of the verb and the final vowel of the verb is changed. The nominal prefix {omu-} when used, the person indicated is the agent (i.e. the doer of the action). Nouns can also be formed from verbs through the prefix {obu-} and as such the noun that is derived indicates that which results from the performance of the action. For example from the verb {baya} two forms of nouns can be derived thus; {omu-bay-i} which means player and {obu-bay-i} which means play. This study also observed that whereas the verb final /a/ typically changes to {i} in the derived noun forms, there are cases when the derived form of the noun takes {o}. For example the derived noun {omu-bay-i} can also change to {omu-bay-o} which means game. The findings of this study revealed that the morphological processes in the noun formation affect the meaning of the derived item. As indicated in the examples given, a noun that is derived through the prefix {omu-} has a different meaning from the one that takes the prefix {obu-}. This implies Lukabaras is productive. Nevertheless there was need to explain the relationship between this surface realization of derived items with the underlying constrains that further determined the shape of the formed nouns.

It is for this reason that this paper adopted the term a morphophonemic analysis in order to describe both the morphological and phonological conditions in the formation of Lukabaras nouns from verbs.

#### 5. Morphophonemic Analysis of the Lukabaras derived nouns

This paper came up with five classifications of Lukabaras nouns derived from verbs. The categories were based on the observable alterations that occurred on the verbs when changing them into nouns. For instance, it was established that there were various phonological conditions that affected the process of derivation, so in order to analyse the items morpho phonemically there was need to group the nouns based on the features that looked common.

Akida (2000) argues that verbs in Luwanga that are in the indicative mood take /a/. This study similarly established that all verbs in Lukabaras take /a/ at the end of the verb stem to mark the infinitive form or imperative mood. As can be observed in the data in table 1.0, all the verbs from which the nouns are derived have a final ending/a/. This

was a common feature on all the verbs in their base form. The derived nouns in the present study were analysed as follows.

i) From the first category of verbs, it was observed that verbs such as *raka*, *yaka*, *beka*, *baka* and *loka* had the final /a/ on the verb root preceded by the sound /k/. The data analysed, revealed that the derived nouns underwent palatalization which is a secondary articulation process that involves a non palatal consonant acquiring features of a palatal sound due to the influence of a following vowel. In the verbs in this category, the front vowel /i/ is superimposed on the velar sound /k/ thus changing its pronunciation to /ɟ/. It was further noted that some of the words took the bilabial vowel glide/w/ because Lukabras phonotactics does not tolerate the vowel sequence [ua]. Therefore, the vowel sequence is modified by insertion of semi vowels [w] between the vowels through glide formation process (Mukulo 2016). This internal word glide did not occasion any change in meaning.

The forms of the derived nouns from the verbs in this category were;

verb	noun	noun
raka	omu-rak-i	omu-rach-i
yaka	omu-yak-i	om-w-ach-i
beka	omu-bek-i	omu-bech-i
baka	omu-bak-i	omu-bach-i
loka	omu-lok-i	omu-loch-i

It was however observed that there are exceptional cases when the /a/ changes to /e/ in the derived noun form. This occurs if the noun in question refers to the person that is acted upon. For example the noun /omu-loch-e/ means one who is bewitched. As noted earlier, it is also possible to derive abstract nouns from the verbs in this category. From the verb *loka*, we can form the noun /obu-loch-i/ which is an abstract noun meaning witchcraft.

ii) The second category of verbs from which nouns were derived included items like *tekha*, *yumbakha*, *yachikha* and *bakha*. These verbs had the sound /x/ coming before the final /a/. As observed earlier, the front vowel /i/ in the derived form of words in this category influence the sound /x/ which in the process of articulation is pronounced as /ʃ/. The segment /x/ therefore through palatalization becomes a palatoalveolar sound /ʃ/. The nouns from these verbs were formed as shown;

verb	noun	noun
tekha	omu-tekh-i	omu-tesh-i
yumbakha	omu-umbakh-i	omu-mbash-i
yachikha	omu-yachikh-i	om-w-achish-i
bakha	omu-bakh-i	omu-bash-i

iii) Verbs such as *sunga*, *lunga*, *longa*, *yenga* and *langa* had the sound /ŋg/ preceding the final /a/ on the verb. These verbs also underwent the process of consonant assimilation through the process of palatalization in which the sound /ŋg/ changed to /ŋj/ in the derived noun form.

The nouns that were derived from this category of verbs were as presented;

verb	noun	noun
sunga	omu-sung-i	omu-sunj-i
lunga	omu-lung-i	omu-lunj-i
longa	omu-long-i	omu-lonj-i
yenga	omu-yeng-i	omu-yenj-i
langa	omu-lang-i	omu-lanj-i

iv) This study categorised verbs like *ibaa* and *sheba* as those that had the sound /β/ preceding the final /a/ on the verb. The derived nouns formed from these verbs in Lukabaras have the sound /β/ pronounced as labial fricative /f/ which is voiceless. The derived nouns from these items were

ibaa	omu-ibi-i	omu-ifi-i	om-w-ifi
sheba	omu-sheb-i	omu-shef-i	

v) The last category of verbs contained; *rama*, *baya*, *ibala*, *sinza*, *kamba*, *loba*, *linda*, *kusia*, *kula*, *khama*, *lomba*, *renya*, *fimba*, *yaya*, *yinzila*, *khupa*, *yaba*, *yira*, *londa*, *monya* and *yima*. This paper established that this group of verbs unlike the rest of the verbs analysed did not change the sounds that precede the /a/ when forming nouns. As already observed the only alteration that occurred involved the /a/ on the verb changing to /i/ in the final word position of the derived noun. It was revealed that since the consonant sounds that preceded the /i/ in the derived noun already had palatal features or was closer to palatal environment, there was no process of palatalization due to the front high vowel /i/. It was also possible to form abstract nouns from these verbs using the prefix {obu-}. For example the word /omu-ram-i/ could give rise to /obu-ram-i/

The following forms were derived from this category of verbs.

verb	noun
rama	omu-ram-i
baya	omu-bay-i
ibala	om-w-ibal-i
sinza	omu-sinz-i
kamba	omu-kamb-i
loba	omu-lob-i

linda	omu-lind-i
kusia	omu-kus-i
kula	omu-kul-i
khama	omu-kham-i
lomba	omu-lomb-i
renya	omu-reny-i
fimba	omu-fimb-i
yaya	om-w-ay-i
yinzila	omu-yinzil-i
khupa	omu-khup-i
yaba	omu-yab-i
yira	omu-yir-i
londa	omu-lond-i
monya	omu-mony-i

## 6. Conclusion

This paper concluded that there was the formation of nouns derived from verbs in Lukabaras. The verbs from which such nouns were formed were characteristically in their base form or infinitive mood. The verbs therefore had /a/ at the end of the root which changes to /i/ or /e/ in the derived noun. The study established that the common processes that involved the noun formation were affixation, palatalization and vowel gliding.

Affixation occurred using the prefix {omu-} and {obu-}. Palatalization occurred due to the influence of the high front vowel /i/ whereas vowel gliding involved the internal word vowel glide /w/. Since the processes observed in the derivation of the nouns from the verbs were both morphological and phonological, the paper analysed them as morphophonemic process.

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