

## REVIEW

***Les extensions verbales en Swahili Standard*. East African Languages and Dialects 24. Racine, Odile. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 2015, 251 pp, ISBN 978-3-89645-709-7.**

“*Les extensions verbales en Swahili Standard*” by Odile Racine presents a long awaited integrated study of Swahili verbal derivation addressing form, use and combinatory possibilities of Swahili verbal extensions. Bantu languages are notorious for their complicated verbal morphology. As a consequence, a full description of formal characteristics and morphophonological processes often does not leave room for an equally dedicated study of the functional properties of the verbal morphemes. This is to be regretted as morphemes and derivational extensions *par excellence* have come to be known as contributing not only on a semantic level but also on a syntactic and a pragmatic level. “*Les extensions verbales en Swahili Standard*” aims to be an integrated study of formal and functional aspects of Swahili verbal derivation. Next to an introduction and a conclusion it contains 6 chapters. The first gives the theoretical background and the second discusses the form of the Swahili derivational extensions. No less than three chapters are dedicated to the meaning and function of the extensions and the last chapter discusses combinatory possibilities.

The book has a very reader friendly design with a clear table of contents, lists of figures, tables, orthographic conventions and abbreviations, and an index at the end. All the examples, which are mostly taken from Swahili literature, are fully glossed, making this book accessible for non-Swahili specialists as well.

In what follows, I discuss some of the contents of the different parts and chapters.

The introduction gives some background information on Swahili as well as a concise overview of the relevant literature on Swahili verbal extensions. The main goals are set out. First, the present book offers a synchronic analysis of Standard Swahili verbal extensions. Second, it is said to differ from preceding studies in presenting an integrated view including semantics, syntax and pragmatics and not focusing on form, lexicalization and/or syntax alone.<sup>1</sup> This integrated view is inspired by the Enunciation Theory of Antoine Culioli. Last but not least, the analysis is based on real life examples, mostly taken from Swahili literature. It therefore does not aim at describing what Swahili verbal derivation is maximally capable of but rather at describing what it actually does. The study appears to be corpus based but lacks a detailed (qualitative and

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<sup>1</sup> It should be mentioned already that some studies which do aim at giving a full account of individual Swahili verbal extensions are not included in the references (e.g., Marten 2003, Seidl & Dimitriadis 2002).

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quantitative) description of the corpus and statistical information on relative frequencies of verbal extensions and combinations thereof. Moreover, whereas the source of the literary examples is always given, the exact source of the other examples (whether taken from press, publicity or daily conversations) remains unknown.

The first chapter gives a summary of those elements of Culioli's Enunciation Theory that are relevant for the study. The choice of this particular theoretical model lies in the fact that it does not separate semantics from pragmatics and syntax but instead offers an integrated view. Although the motivation for the use of Culioli's model is understandable, the ensuing terminology reduces the accessibility of the book. One specific point which remains unclear to me is the nature of the syntactic relations and specifically the relation between the arguments referred to as *b* and *b'* in applicative constructions. Arguments *b* and *b'* are said to be in a hierarchical relationship. In examples like (1) and (2) *b* corresponds to the applied object (i.e., *maji* 'water' and *mtu* 'person', respectively) and can be represented on the verb by an object prefix (i.e., *-ya-* and *-m-*, respectively), whereas *b'* is the old object, i.e. the object of the underived verb (i.e., *nguo* 'clothes' and *kitu* 'thing', respectively).

- (1) *Maji, umeyavulia nguo, lazima uyakoge* (p. 138)  
'Water, you have undressed for it, now you need to bathe in it'
- (2) *Lakini Losia hakuumbwa kumkatalia mtu kitu alicho nacho* (p. 139)  
'But Losia was incapable of refusing anyone whatever she had'

This holds as long as the applied object has the semantic role of goal. If the applied object is an instrument, as is the 'barometer' in (3), it is identified as *b'*, whereas the object of the underived verb, i.e., 'atmospheric pressure' in (3) is referred to as *b* and is said to be represented on the verb by an object prefix *-i-*. Is this meant to imply that instruments introduced by the applicative extension cannot be cross-referenced on the verb by an object prefix? The present example cannot answer this question as both the applied object and the old object are in class 9 and the object prefix, also in class 9, could thus refer to either one of them.

- (3) *barometa hii, mwanasayansi ameipimia kanieneo ya angahewa* (p. 141)  
'This barometer, the scientist has used it to measure the atmospheric pressure'

The fact that the accompanying scheme (Scheme 14, p. 141) suggests the opposite analysis, in which the 'barometer' is the *b* argument to which the object prefix refers and the 'atmospheric pressure' is the *b'* argument, only adds to the confusion.

If the applied object is a location, as in (4) it is always considered *b'*, except for the interesting case in (5), where the goal of the chasing is referred to as *b/b'*. Most probably both syntactic and

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semantic factors (and maybe also pragmatic ones) determine what is referred to as b or b' (or still b/b'), but the overall picture remains confusing, to say the least.

- (4) *Tazama, ameikalia kofia yangu* (p. 144)  
'Look, he has seated himself on my hat!'
- (5) *Nina haraka, ninafukuzia basi* (p. 147)  
'I am in a hurry, I am running to catch the bus'

The second chapter identifies the form of a total of nine Swahili verbal extensions: (1) durative *-a-*, (2) aggregative *-am-*, (3) associative *-an-*, (4) compressive *-at-*, (5) applicative *-i/-e-*, (6) stative *-k-*, (7) causative *-s/-sh/-z/-ny/-fy-*, (8) dissociative *-u/-o-* and (9) passive *-w-*. The nomenclature largely follows the existing literature, except for aggregative, compressive and dissociative which are new suggestions for the more common terms positional, tentative (or contactive) and separative transitive (or reversive), respectively (Schadeberg 2003: 72). The stative is also sometimes referred to as a neuter (*ibid.*) or the neutro-passive (Schadeberg 1992: 9). The denominal extension *-p-*, as well as the repetitive extension *-ag-* are not discussed. Whereas the first is mentioned but considered too infrequent to warrant analysis, the second is not mentioned at all. It is possibly even less frequent than the denominal extension but seeing that non-mother tongue speakers of Standard Swahili tend to (re)introduce it into Swahili, it deserved to be mentioned. Another extension which is apparently missing, is the separative (or in the terminology of the book 'dissociative') intransitive *-uk-*. Some of its instances are considered a combination of the dissociative *-u-* and the stative *-k-*. Finally, stative *-k-* is thought to cover both stative and impositive meanings (where Schadeberg 1992, Schadeberg 2003 claim separate homophonous extensions for Swahili and Bantu more generally). In my opinion this is the weakest chapter of the book. The author knows and also refers to the relevant comparative/diachronic literature but chooses to ignore it and tries to capture the synchronic morphological variation by a set of morphophonological rules or by positing allomorphs which do not make sense from a comparative/diachronic perspective. In what follows I highlight three, three analyses which are, in my opinion, problematic.

First, I do not think *L* and *w* are equally analysable as epenthetic consonants serving to avoid CVV and CVVV sequences (not involving associative *-an-*). First, it does not become clear which CVV sequences are accepted and which are not. Why is an epenthetic consonant needed in *-sikiliza* 'listen', whereas *-sikia* 'hear' can do without? Next, not all CVVV sequences (not involving associative *-an-*) are avoided. A case in point is *-zoea* 'become used to'. The so-called epenthetic *L* only appears when a (second) applicative is added, as in *-zoeLea*. The historic/comparative analysis considering the *L* as the final consonant of the radical or the (applicative *-iL-*, durative *-aL-* or dissociative *-uL-*) extension which only appears when followed

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by (another) extension with a front vowel offers, even synchronically, the better explanation. Admittedly, the *l* in examples like *-sahaulia* ‘forget for’ cannot be interpreted as a reflex of *\*l* but rather than considering it an epenthetic consonant, I would analyse its presence in these cases as the result of analogy with verbs ending in the dissociative extension *-u-* followed by an extension with a front vowel, e.g., *-funguLia* ‘open for’. Finally, I do think that some instances of *w* could be true epenthetic (automatic) glides, just as some instances of *y* for that matter. However, the phonological status of stem-internal Swahili glides (whether automatic or contrastive) is in need of an in-depth study which is out of the scope of the present book (Kelly 1991 appears to be a relevant study in this regard).

A second problematic issue concerns the so-called causative allomorphs. Eight different allomorphs are given: *-ish-* / *-esh-* / *-iz-* / *-ez-* / *-ny-* / *-fy-* / *-vy-* / *-s-*. In the title of the subsection and in the main text these allomorphs are puzzlingly reduced to five, i.e., *-s-* / *-sh-* / *-z-* / *-ny-* / *-fy-*. Nor the first nor the second series can possibly concern allomorphs as they do not occur in complementary phonological environments. In fact, and as suggested by the first series, they are manifestations of two different causative forms: long *-ish-* (/ *-esh-*) and short *-i-*. The latter causes spirantization of the last consonant of the verbal base (including *L*, cf. supra). Causative forms like *-zusha* ‘make appear’, *-shtusha* ‘surprise, scare’ are thus not the result of the addition of the causative allomorph *-sh-* to a verbal base ending in a vowel but rather concern spirantization of verb base final *k* (cf. *-zuka* ‘appear’, *-shtuka* ‘be surprised, scared’). Similarly, the forms in *-iz-* and *-ez-*, involve spirantization of the applicative extension *-iL-*. This morphological analysis has far-reaching consequences as it shows that the claim uttered already in the introduction (p. 17) and again in Chapter 6 (p. 189) following which a causative can never be preceded by an applicative because “it marks a complexification of the source of the process whereas the applicative marks a complexification of the goal of the process” needs to be reconsidered.

The third problem concerns the stative extension *-k-*. It is said to have the allomorphs *-ik-* / *-ek-* after verbal bases ending in a consonant (e.g., *-tendeka* ‘be done, be doable’ < *-tenda* ‘do’) and the allomorph *-k-* after verbal bases ending in a vowel (*-gongomeka* ‘be hammered, be pounded’ < *-gongomea* ‘hammer, pound’). As regards to vowel-final verbal bases, it is observed that mother tongue speakers of Swahili make a morphological distinction between a stative reading, involving only *-k-* and a potential reading involving *-lik* (which I would prefer to see analysed as the expected apparition of verb base final *L* before *-ik*). Thus mother tongue speakers of Swahili are said to distinguish between *-gongomeka* ‘be hammered’ and *-gongomeleka* ‘be able to be hammered’. The problem with this observation is that only few minimal pairs are given. Moreover, *-sikika* (< *-sikia* ‘hear’) which involves only *-k-*, should have a stative reading but is instead given a potential translation equivalent ‘be audible’. I guess *-sikika* ‘be audible’ indicates that the readings cannot be distinguished on morphological grounds alone and that even mother

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tongue speakers need contextual clues to decide between one reading or the other. An interesting and unresolved question is which form non-mother speakers of Swahili use to express stative as well as potential meanings. Still, minimal pairs of the type *-bomoka* ‘be destroyed’ and *-bomoleka* ‘be destroyable’ are given in greater numbers, which leads me to a related but, in my opinion, different problem. I was taught that *-bomoka* and *-bomoa* exemplify commutation of the intransitive dissociative *-uk-/-ok-* and the transitive dissociative *-uL-/-oL-*, respectively (cf. Schadeberg 1993, Schadeberg 2003). However, the present author is not the first to consider *-uk-* as containing the dissociative *-u-* followed by the stative *-k-* (cf. Polomé 1967: 87, Nurse & Hinnebusch 1993: 370, Seidl & Dimitriadis 2002, Dom 2014: 81-83). I believe there to be both formal and semantic problems with this analysis. First, it does not account for the fact that languages in which *\*l* has not weakened also have both *-uk-* and *-ul-*. Second, a fair number of verbs in *-uk-* do not comply with a stative reading. Verbs like *-ondoka* ‘leave, go away’, *-toka* ‘get out, go out, leave’, *-ruka* ‘jump, fly’, *-zunguka* ‘go round, surround, wander about’, *-toroka* ‘escape, disappear’ are cases in point as they (can) have agentive subjects and thus cannot be stative nor can the extension be said to “encode the unergative member of an ergative alternation pair” (Dom 2014: 59) (as in: he takes X away > X is taken away). One could, of course, argue that fused extensions may display formal irregularities (erosion) and have non-recursive idiosyncratic meanings. However, this is not the position taken in this book as many occurrences of *-uk- / -ok-*, except the ones given in Chapter 6, are analysed as containing only the stative extension.

The following three chapters (Chapters 3, 4 and 5) constitute the main part of the book. They discuss the use of first degree or single extensions. Chapter 3 concerns extensions encoding qualities or states, i.e., the compressive *-at-*, the durative *-a-*, the stative *-k-* and the aggregative *-am-*. The associative *-an-* and the dissociative *-u-* are said to mark fragmented processes and are discussed in chapter 4. Extensions encoding intricate relations, i.e., the causative *-s-/-sh-/-z-/-ny-/-fy-*, the applicative *-i-/-e-* and the passive *-w-*, are the subject of chapter 5. This subdivision differs from more typical ones highlighting either syntax or degree of lexicalization. Ngonyani & Jumwa Ngoma 2016 is a typical example of the former making a distinction between valence-increasing (applicative & causative), valence-reducing suffixes (passive, reciprocal, stative) and non-valence changing extensions (dissociative, compressive, durative, aggregative), whereas Schadeberg 1992 focuses on the productivity of the extensions. The chapters abound with examples: lists of verbs taken from different dictionaries in the case of extensions which do not (regularly) commute with zero, as well as many very nice and fully glossed contextualized examples. The examples illustrate more than the usual suspects. In the case of the stative, for instance, not only examples illustrating the stative and potential readings are given but also examples illustrating an emphatic stative reading, as in (6) and (7).

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- (6) *Chakula kimepikika* (p. 87)  
'the food is excellent'
- (7) *Yasmin alimshawishi mumewe akashawishika ...* (p. 89)  
'Yasmin convinced her husband and he was totally convinced'

A very similar emphatic usage of the dissociative extension is described in Chapter 4. Here too the extended verb is preceded by unextended verb resulting in an emphatic, repetitive reading, as in (8).

- (8) *alipanga na kupangua asifanikiwe kupata jawabu ...* (p. 125)  
'He planned and unplanned without being able to get an answer' (i.e., he planned and planned all over again ...)

In Chapter 5 many examples of the applicative extension introducing applied objects with different semantic roles are given. When the addition of the applicative extension does not cause an increase in valency, an emphatic reading arises either expressing deviation from a norm, as in (9), or referring to a habitual, recurrent action, as in (10) (for very similar examples see Marten 2003).

- (9) *Unaendea wapi saa hizi?* (p. 156)  
'where are you going at this hour?'
- (10) *Pesa zake ziliishia kwenye pombe na wanawake* (p. 155)  
'his money would always end in beer and women'

Deviation of the norm can also be expressed by an applicative in combination with the reflexive object prefix *-ji-*, as in (11). Following the author, the presence of both the applicative and the reflexive indicates that the person in question left in an unusual way.

- (11) *Baada ya kusubiri muda akajiondokea* (p. 158)  
'After waiting a moment, he left'

In sum, the three chapters on single extensions are very inspiring and they succeed in giving a coherent view of the semantic, syntactic and pragmatic uses of the Swahili verbal extensions. I do feel that the syntactic relations are sometimes less well described, especially in the case of the applicative extension (cf. *supra*). Also, the description of the use of the stative could benefit from a formal distinction between the stative proper, the homophonous impositive and the dissociative intransitive *-uk-/-ok-*. Finally, I believe that rather far-fetched hypotheses suggesting that the aggregative extension *-am-* is related to (or maybe even originates in) the class 6 nominal prefix *ma-*, do not have their place in a synchronic study like the present one.

The final chapter (Chapter 6) takes a closer look at the combinatory possibilities of Swahili verbal extensions. It is found that when two up to four extensions combine, those extensions

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which do not have an effect on syntactic relations, i.e., the compressive, the durative, the aggregative, and the dissociative, can never occur in final position, which in a way validates the more traditional syntactically inspired subdivisions of verbal extensions (cf. *supra*). The passive, when present, is said to always occupy the final position in a series. A notable exception which went unnoticed is *-chelewesha* ‘delay’ (cf. *-ch-eL-e-w-esh-a*).<sup>2</sup> Further derivations like *-cheleweshana* ‘delay each other’, *-cheleweshea* ‘delay for’ and *-chelewesha* ‘be delayed’ show that Swahili does allow series of more than four verbal extensions. The remaining extensions, i.e., the applicative, causative, stative and associative, can occupy any position but not all the logically possible combinations are attested. What I find missing in this chapter is an indication of the relative frequencies of some of the combinations. Which combinations are well-attested and do high frequencies tend to go hand in hand with non-recursive idiosyncratic meanings? Of special interest in this respect are the double causatives and applicatives, as well as the stative + associative combination.

By way of conclusion, I would like to add that I am convinced that “*Les extensions verbales en Swahili Standard*” will inspire linguists to take a fresh look at verb extensions in other languages but also to reconsider and dig deeper into many aspects of Swahili verbal derivation itself.

Maud Devos

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<sup>2</sup>I learned about this particular instance of a non-final passive in the Swahili grammar course *Mada za Sarufi ya Kiswahili* by Prof. Dr. Thilo C. Schadeberg at Leiden University.

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