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TOPIC

THE NGAS (ANGAS) MORPHOLOGY

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THE NGAS (ANGAS) LANGUAGE MORPHOLOGY

PREFACE

In studying a language one needs an informant especially when one is not familiar with that particular language. My informant “an anonymous” plain Ngas speaker who actually refuse to tell his name, who doesn't like people to reference him in their work, the reason which I the analyst don't know. Ngas is an interesting language someone should study, it has two main dialect; Hill Ngas and Plain Ngas. Hill Ngas is known for its complexity and the Plain Ngas for its simplicity.

In the study of this language I got to know that there are some languages which people took as “minor language” therefore there is no much work done on it. No language is irrelevant, every language need to be studied and documented to avoid language death. I am happy to research on this language which actually enable me to know that there is a language in Nigeria known as Ngas (Angas) language.

Zeribe Ifechukwu

DEDICATION

Dedicated to lovers of Language

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The Ngas (Angas) People and Their Country

Ngas (̀ngas, Pl. ̀ngas mwá) is the mother tongue of some 400,000 people who live on the south-eastern hills, slopes and plains of the central Nigerian Plateau. Politically and linguistically they are divided into two large sections, the Hill or Highland Ngas (H) with its administrative centre (Local Government Area) Pankshin (pàŋ-céen) and the Plains or Lowland Ngas (P), extant in the present Kanke Local Government Area with its administrative centre in Kabwir (ka-ḡwíir).

The History of Ngas

According to their oral traditions, the Ngas have originated from Borno in north-eastern Nigeria from where they are assumed to have set out some 5-600 years ago. Localities which people still remember that their ancestors have passed through before they reached Kabwir at the south-eastern foothills of the Plateau are Kwàpíl, Búm Sùwà and Lep Calím. Some sections of them will have continued their migration climbing up and penetrating into the higher parts of the Plateau Mountains where they ultimately settled down and founded places such as Pankshin, Garram, Wokkos, Ner, etc. According to Folktales, the Ngas say that their ancestors were Jukun “who came from Bornu and drove the Rems westward”. Could “Rem” be mistaken for “Ron”, who live indeed to the west of the Ngas today? The Chadic speaking ancestors of the Ngas will probably have met a section of the widespread Jukun when reaching the Plateau and will have had considerable intercourse with them. A number of lexical and, above all, phonological affinities between modern Plateau Jukun and Ngas, especially the Plains dialect (P), hint at such close contact between the two ethnic groups and

languages. In this context it is also worth noting that the Ngas address the Kanuri, Goemai (Ankwe) and Jukun by the term or title Kèká ‘ancestor, grandmother’!

The Ngas Language and Its Two Principal Varieties

The two principal varieties of the Ngas language, i.e. the Hill (H) and the Plains (P) Ngas, are distinguished from each other by a number of characteristic features. Generally speaking, H is undoubtedly the more conservative and archaic dialect variety. It has preserved many features which in P have either been lost or transformed in a different, innovative manner. Thus, the certainly historically earlier method of forming a possessive construction by suffixing the possessive pronouns directly to a noun (of possession), e.g. wók-ná ‘my house’ in H is generally replaced in P by an indirect construction in which the language uses a carrier morpheme f- (of unknown origin¹) yielding wók fana. Moreover, phonological features play an

overwhelming role such as prenasalisation, labialisation and palatalization in P, which, on the other hand, are practically absent in H.

For two reasons the present study of the language almost completely concentrates on the P variety of Ngas. Firstly, from the very outset, my informants have been P speakers, mainly from Kabwir and Kudum (Dawaki). Secondly, the P variety is spoken by the majority of Ngas which may have to do with the fact that most of the indigenous publications including the Ngas translation of the New Testament are written in the P variety of Ngas.

Classification and Characteristic Features of Ngas

Ngas is one of some fifteen West Chadic languages spoken on the southern parts of the central Nigerian Plateau and on the plains between the Plateau and the Benue valley. Ngas and its close relatives on the Plateau are members of the Chadic

family which counts some hundred and fifty languages spreading over northern Nigeria, northern Cameroon and central Chad.

The Ngas Language central Chad. Chadic as a whole is the southwestern most member of the Hamito-Semitic/ Afro-asiatic stock, which comprises besides Chadic the North African Berber languages, Ancient Egyptian, Cushitic including Omotic in East Africa and the wide-spread Semitic language family. Of course, each of these five families is heir of a common Hamito-Semitic stock heritage. And each of the 300-400 languages of the stock has in the course of several millennia preserved – as well as lost – different parts of that heritage. Each of them has also developed in different ways and at a variable speed. Moreover, the extent and degree of foreign influence must have been very different. Thus, present-day Chadic languages display extremely different inventories in their grammar-structural and lexical outfit. Each language is an individual of its own. Thus, some of them can be classified as conservative ('archimorphic'), others as particularly progressive and innovative ('metamorphic').

Ngas belongs to the most progressive and innovative members of the entire Chadic language family. There are no (more) features of gender and plural marking worth mentioning; ablaut (Apo phony) is practically non-existent; a three level tone system takes care of a smooth functioning of the verbal and nominal morphology; the verbal aspect system operates elegantly on suprasegmental (tonal) grounds only. Phonologically, secondary features such as prenasalisation, labialisation and palatalization have crept into the speech habits – almost exclusively of P speakers, obviously, short vowels, especially i and a, tend to become centralized to ə (shwa), implosive stops such as ɓ are deglottalized. Beside its highly progressive and historically innovative character, the language has still preserved ancient features such as the fact, that "the sentence 'what is your name', addressed to a man, is me sīngha, very close indeed to the Hebrew ma šimkha" (Greenberg 1962: 85).

CHAPTER 2

THE MORPHOLOGY OF NGAS LANGUAGE

INFLECTION

Inflection is a change made in form of a word to express its relation to other words in a sentence. A word undergoes inflection when it appears in a variety of forms depending on its grammatical role in the sentence. Inflection morphology is a rule-based system for interpreting a stem in the light of the morphosyntactic features it acquires by being placed in a particular syntactic environment. Inflection brings a sort of paradigmatic relation to words. (Babarinde. 2009).

Inflection morphemes are lexical-class maintaining, it perform a grammatical function in a word without changing the lexical class of the particular word. Inflection can be seen in Ngas language plural marker;

The plural suffix mwa

Des	man	Desmwa	men
Mat	woman	Matmwa	women
Gyep	child	Gyepmwa	children
Gepmat	young woman	Gepmatmwa	young women
Dehmwa	plate	Dehmwa	plates
Long	animal	Longmwa	animals
Chule	pot	Chulemwa	pots
Pitong	chair	Pitongmwa	chairs
El	cloth	Elmwa	cloths

Kop	shoe	Kopmwa	shoes
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DERIVATION

Derivation refers to the operation of a class of word formation rules within the lexicon: specifically, those word formation rules whose structural descriptions do not involve a dependence on information contained in the morphosyntactic representation of the position which a word is to interpret. (Babarinde. 2009).

Derivational morpheme are bound morphemes attached or affixed to root to form or derive a new word or lexeme from the existing words. It always changes the lexical class of the root to which they are added but they can also maintain the lexical class of the root word. This can be seen in Ngas language;

The prefix “eh”, “keh”, “e”.

Met	go	ehmet	gone
Fra	her	kehfra	herself
Fri	him	kehfri	himself
Nah	my	kehnah	myself
Li	say	eli	said

The suffix “mwa”

Guruma	person	Gurumamwa	people
--------	--------	-----------	--------

From the examples above derivational morphology maintains the lexical class of the root word in Ngas language.

PRONOMINALS

Pronominal Adjectives

My	mina	
Our	munu	
Your	miki-woman	mika-man
His	migode	
Her	mipede	
Their	mumwa	
Which	kodan	
What	ameh	
Whose	muweh	
Some	pak	
Any	kodan eh	
All	kibut	
Little	lokkis	
This	bideh	
That	kpowana	
These	kodemwa	
Those	bidemwa	

CHAPTER 3

MORPHOLOGICAL PROCESSES IN NGAS LANGUAGE

COMPOUNDING

Compounding is the combination of two or more free morphemes. Compounding is a source of new words in languages especially Ngas language. It is a loose phrase, it is lexicalized and as such inseparable having some syntactic features and as well has phonological distinctiveness with some non-compositional meaning. (mBabarinde. 2009). When two morphemes are in the same grammatical category, the compound word formed too will belong to such category.

Gyem	rit	Gyemrit
Boy	Good	Goodboy
Chi	nka	Chinka
Can	not	cannot
Go	walk	gowalk
Lord	land	landlord
Mat	walk	matwalk
Lady	land	landlady
Pan	mwu	panmwu
Look	them	take care
Li	zin	lizin
Talk	true	true talk

REDUPLICATION

Reduplication is a morphological process whereby the whole or part of the free morpheme is reduplicated. It involves adding material just like any other form of affixation, but the identity of the added material is partially or fully determined by the base or root word.

Example of Full Reduplication is seen in Ngas language;

Le	Quick	Lele	Quick Quick
Zug	Big	Zugzug	Big Big
Kak	Tights	Kakkak	Tights Tights
Kom	Tights	Komkom	Tights Tights (Hill Ngas)
Su	Fear	Susu	Fear Fear
Mer	Sour	Mermer	Sour Sour
Shang	Sweet	Shangshang	Sweet Sweet
Pe	White	Pepe	White White
Tip	Black	Tiptip	Black Black
Net	Red	Netnet	Red Red

Partial Reduplication in Ngas Language

Nyeng	deliberately	Nyen-nyeng	deliberately deliberately
Fwin	untie	fwan	untie untie

PLURALIZATION

Pluralization can be define as an act of pluralizing or attributing plurality to word. (vocabulary.com). It also means a change in the form of a word (usually by adding a suffix) to indicate a change in its grammatical function

Des	man	Desmwa	men
Mat	woman	Matmwa	women
Gyep	child	Gyepmwa	children
Gepmat	young woman	Gepmatmwa	young women
Dehmwa	plate	Dehmwa	plates
Long	animal	Longmwa	animals
Chule	pot	Chulemwa	pots
Pitong	chair	Pitongmwa	chairs
El	cloth	Elmwa	cloths
Kop	shoe	Kopmwa	shoes

TONE

Tone is a pitch variation applied to syllables in tone languages for distinction of meaning. A difference in the tone of two or more words that have the same sound segments constitutes a difference in the meaning of those two or more words in a tone language. A tone language is the one which uses tone first to give meaning to a lexical item, secondly to differentiate semantic items which may otherwise appear similar in forms. Tone is seen as feature realized on the syllable in tone languages. (Anagbogu Etal. 2010).

In languages such as Ngas language in which tone operates, tone is usually realized on the vowel of the syllable or on any other syllabic element. For example, in *tùkók* 'to play', *támkím* 'to dance' tone is realized only on the vowels but never on the consonants in tone language such as Ngas.

When we say that tone differentiates two otherwise identical lexical items, we mean although two words maybe morphological identical, the tonal element can completely change the meaning of these otherwise identical words. Example:

- | | |
|----------|---------|
| 1) Lè | birth |
| Lé | quick |
| Lē | pain |
| 2) Sháng | sweet |
| Shàng | to pull |
| 3) Mór | farm |
| Mòr | sorry |
| 4) Pús | sun |
| Pùs | shoot |

TYPES OF TONAL SYSTEMS OF NGAS LANGUAGE

There are two basic types of tonal systems

1. Register tonal system
2. Contour tonal system

REGISTER TONAL SYSTEM:

In register tone language, tones are essentially level. By this we mean that the pitch of a syllable does not glide from one level to the other during their production. An example of a register tone language is Ngas. It has high tone, low tone, mid tone. Mid tone is often found following a high tone. It is never preceded by a low tone.

Example:

- | | |
|-------|-------|
| 1) Lè | birth |
| Lé | quick |
| Lē | pain |

CONTOUR TONAL SYSTEM:

In this type of tonal system, the syllable undergoes a glide in pitch during its production. An example of this is the Ngas language and it has such gliding tonemes as rising, falling, falling-rising, and rising-falling.

OBJECT-VERB ORDERING IN NGAS LANGUAGE

In his 1979 book, Givon sets forth the claim that SOV is the universal word order. He says, It seems that the majority of language families known to us exhibit SUBJECT-OBJECT-VERB (SOV) syntax, and so far as one can tell they were always SOV. •. The overwhelming majority of languages and language families which do not show actual SOV syntax currently, can be nevertheless reconstructed via internal and comparative methods back to an earlier' SOV stage. In other words, either their syntax or--at the very least--their bound morphology exhibit coherent relics of the earlier SOV stage. •• (p.275)

Regarding Afro-Asiatic languages particularly he says in a footnote to the above: "Kushitic is SOV and Semitic can be reconstructed to SOV. The entire Afro-Asiatic group must have been SOV, as a detailed analysis of the bound morphology [of] Chadic, Berber, and Old Egyptian is bound to show." This note presents evidence of OV ordering in Angas morphology as a step toward providing the Chadic evidence. (Burquest 1979).

The unmarked ordering of constituents in the Angas clause is SVO. Note the following examples:

- (1) Musa sit as 'Musa bought a dog'
 buy dog
- (2) Musa ne shwe 'Musa saw the corn'
 See corn
- (3) Musa kat mbandar 'Musa got a basket'
 get basket

In addition, the two most productive patterns of nominalization show the verb preceding the object. In the first of these the initial noun (comparable to the clause-

level subject) occurs obligatorily with low tone, and the verb is in its verbal noun form:

- | | | | | |
|-----|-----------------|--------------|--------|------------------|
| (4) | ngo | karm | nam | 'butcher' |
| | Person | slaughtering | animal | |
| (5) | mbi | cak | shwe | 'threshing tool' |
| | thing | beating | corn | |
| (6) | yan | pan | nkam | 'tonic' |
| | medicine giving | health | | |

In the second productive nominalization pattern no subject occurs; the verb occurs first and is in the verbal noun form, and it is joined to the following object by the morpheme ka 'of':

- | | | | | |
|-----|------------|----|---------|------------------|
| (7) | Dyip | ka | shwe | 'harvesting' |
| | Harvesting | of | corn | |
| (8) | ten | ka | nfutat | 'sewing' |
| | sewing | of | cloth | |
| (9) | shwe | ka | mbandar | 'basket-weaving' |
| | weaving | of | basket | |

Both of these patterns are currently productive, and the examples can be expanded readily. In contrast to the above constructions, which illustrate the current SVO order, there are two types of apparently non-productive nominalization in which the relevant order is OV. Such non-productive patterns are potential evidence for an earlier ordering, as Givon claims. In the first type there is a characteristic tone pattern of low tone obligatorily occurring on the verb. The following is the entire inventory of such forms; (Burquest 1979)

- | | | |
|------|--------------|--------------|
| (10) | shwe-dyip | 'harvesting' |
| | corn-harvest | |
| (11) | do-Ie | 'shouting' |

voice-raise

(12) shat-can 'working'

work-do

(13) kok-tu 'playing'

game-play

(14) yal-sa 'gratitude'

earth-eat

(15) shak-tok 'message'

word-speak

(16) ke-bam 'rescue'

head-snatch

(17) pi-dur 'command'

place-command

(18) po-lang 'argument'

mouth-think

In the second non-productive pattern the verb occurs in its verbal noun form, and the preceding noun object occurs with obligatorily low tone. All examples known to me have the generic mbl as the noun object: (Burquest 1979)

(19) mbl-se 'food'

thing-eating

(20) mbl-dyip 'harvest'

thing-harvesting

(21) mb l-kat 'wealth'

thing-getting

(22) mbl-kop 'crop'

thing-planting

(23) mbl-sit 'merchandise'
 thing-selling

We see, then, that although SVO is the pattern of ordering in the clause and in productive nominalization in Angas, there is evidence for OV ordering in non-productive nominalization patterns. This data thus provides a beginning body of evidence for object-verb ordering in Chadic, as Givon predicted would be found.

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