

BOOK REVIEW: LUSEKELO (2014)

Linguistic Morphology: A Student Guide. By Amani Lusekelo. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: E&D Vision Publishing Limited, 2014. Pp. 184. ISBN 9789987735259. \$17.68. Reviewed by Troy E. Spier, Tulane University.

SUMMARY

Comprising eight chapters at just under two-hundred pages, this textbook is intended to provide a general introduction to morphology, particularly for students on the African continent who may be equally familiar with both Swahili and English. The text assumes no prior knowledge of morphology specifically, but it does assume that the typical reader will be familiar with basic linguistic terminology. Nevertheless, it attempts to provide a pedagogical approach by providing a short exercise at the end of every chapter.

Chapter One (“Introducing Linguistic Morphology”) presents a discussion of the book’s structure and of the basic units of morphology, viz. the *affix*, *root*, *base*, *stem*, *allomorph*, and *morph*. Chapter Two (“Word-Building”) focuses on the major and minor processes for building words and draws examples from English and Swahili primarily to illustrate the major processes, which are discussed in later chapters, viz. affixation, reduplication, borrowing, and compounding. The minor processes are secondarily discussed, though the majority of these examples come strictly from English.

Chapter Three (“Derivation”) and Chapter Four (“Inflection”) exist as separate chapters to address the first of the major word-building processes previously discussed, i.e. affixation. Derivation in Swahili is attributed overwhelmingly to nominals, deverbal adjectives, and the very prototypical verbal extensions (e.g. causative, stative, passive, etc.). On the other hand, this chapter states that “[...] derivational prefixes seem to be few in English” before proceeding to discuss nominalization, verbalization, and adjectivization briefly by presenting lists of prefixes and suffixes that are commonly used. The fourth chapter discusses inflection, most of which eschews English as a result of the limited inflectional affixes in English, emphasizing instead the role of inflectional number (singular/plural), negation, tense-aspect-mood (TAM), and agreement markers.

Chapter Five (“Reduplication”) is the longest, most detailed section from the entire textbook. Although the chapter begins by stating that much of the data arrives from six Bantu languages, the reader quickly finds that this chapter also includes examples in English, Mandarin (Chinese), Hausa, and Dholuo. Nonetheless, the initial discussion in this chapter concerns the nomenclature used in the literature to describe reduplication, after which point total and partial reduplication are addressed and exemplified in the aforementioned languages. It is after this point that the chapter diverges into more theoretical issues, including the classification of reduplication as phonological or morphological process best classified as inflectional or derivational.

Chapter Six (“Lexical Borrowing”), perhaps as a direct result of the issues under discussion, is the most diverse chapter of the textbook, at least with reference to the number of languages presented and the extensive types of borrowing that are identified. The chapter begins most strikingly—and importantly—by situating the Swahili language alongside other

major donor languages, i.e. Greek, Latin, and present-day “killer languages.” After defining the primary categories of borrowing, numerous loanword adaptation/nativization strategies are exemplified in English, Swahili, French, and Iraqw alongside the relevant historical or linguistic context, e.g. Persian lexical items referring to maritime activities being adopted in Swahili and consonant cluster reduction in English loanwords adopted by Swahili, respectively.

Chapter Seven (“Compounding”) begins by reducing the phenomenon to two-word compounds before defining the possible combinations of lexical categories in English, Swahili, and French. It is immediately after this that a multi-page foray into syntactic and semantic criteria used to differentiate endocentric and exocentric compounds, a discussion of the interface that seems unnecessary for beginning students.

Chapter Eight (“Introduction to Theories of Morphological Analyses”) is a brief chapter that attempts to introduce the reader to three of the most widely referenced approaches to morphology: Lexical Morphology, Autosegmental Theory, and Optimality Theory.

EVALUATION

The author of this textbook must be commended for his extensive use of data throughout every chapter in three major languages, one of which (Swahili) is far less likely to appear in such an introductory textbook. He also includes data in many other African languages from across the major stocks on the continent, e.g. Kinande, Kinyakyusa, Kikerewe, Subiya, Lusaamia, and Wandya. Additionally, one extremely well-appreciated trait of this textbook, though one that might fall below the radar of a non-Africanist, is the extensive collection of references to literature by Africanists concerning African languages. As a result, the author seems to accomplish very well the goal of utilizing exemplars from non-Indo-European languages to illustrate cross-linguistic concepts.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that the cover states that “the guide is appropriate for both undergraduate and postgraduate [students],” this introductory textbook seems better suited in most instances for the typical undergraduate student (excluding the more advanced, somewhat out-of-place theoretical topics found in a few chapters). As such, it is quite unfortunate that each chapter only contains two or three relatively straightforward practice questions. In particular, it seems strange that the author would cite more widely used introductory textbooks *without* including exercises similar in length, quality, or linguistic diversity (e.g. Katamba 1993; Plag 2003; Booij 2005; Haspelmath and Sims 2013).

Finally, although the last chapter of the textbook attempts to introduce readers to three of the most widely referenced frameworks utilized in morphophonology (Lexical Morphology, Autosegmental Theory, and Optimality Theory), none of these is discussed in enough detail or illustrated with sufficient examples for the readers to be able to implement any of the three in their own papers. In fact, this chapter is only seventeen pages and presents each theory in five or fewer pages, hardly enough to remark clearly on and delineate just these three approaches, let alone to incorporate any of the more recent literature from the field. Consequently, it would have been more beneficial for novice students to address a single theory—most likely Optimality Theory, given its continued, widespread employment in the field—or to eliminate the chapter entirely in exchange for additional exercises.

REFERENCES

Booij, G. 2005. *The Grammar of Words: An Introduction to Linguistic Morphology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Haspelmath, M and A. Sims. 2013. *Understanding Morphology*, 2nd Edition. New York: Routledge.

Katamba, F. 1993. *Morphology*. London: Macmillan.

Plag, I. 2003. *Word-Formation in English (Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.