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MORPHO-PHONEMIC ADAPTATION OF ENGLISH LOAN VERBS IN LUKABARAS

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Abstract

English as an official language in Kenya has apparently influenced the Kenyan indigenous languages. Since it is the language of formal instruction in schools and other institutions, a large number of loan words have been integrated in the local languages. This paper thus investigated the adaptation of English loan verbs in Lukabaras which is one of the ethnic languages spoken in the Western region of Kenya. The study endeavoured to describe the morphological and phonological constraints evident in the integration of these items in Lukabaras. A sample of 20 lexical items was picked through purposive sampling technique and analysed descriptively. The study established that English verbs are incorporated in Lukabaras through the prefix {okhu-} and the verbal radical suffix {a}. It was further observed that in the process of integration the verbs are subject to phonological conditions such as consonant devoicing, vowel insertion, gliding and vowel reduction.

Keywords: English language, loan word, Lukabaras, morpho phonemic process

Introduction

Studies such as Nyanguthii and Ong'onda (2018); Mwihaki (2008) and Mahlangu (2007) investigated loan word adaptation and posit that people re-invent their native languages by borrowing words which do not exist in their native languages or do not have equivalent words in the borrowing language. In order to make communication easier, the adopted words are nativised to appropriately fit into the phonological system of the borrowing language (Gitari,2016). Due to this, speakers of a given language find it convenient to borrow foreign words which they integrate to serve the social communicative needs of their language. As such African languages have acquired many new words through borrowing from English which is apparently the official language of most African countries (Evans,2014; Maxwell,2009; Owino, 2003).

In this respect, various scholars such as Mekuria (2018); Onkwani (2016); Ayele and Bokko (2016) and Nurhayati (2015) studied morphophonemics in their native languages and attest that borrowing of new words from other languages involves different ways of adaptation. For instance, Lukabaras as one of the Bantu languages spoken in Kenya has borrowed and customised a number of words from

the English language in various facets of life such as education, administration, farming, household and religion. However, a study by Mukulo (2016) argues that nouns adopted from English into Lukabaras are integrated differently depending on the Lukabaras noun class to which the adopted word belongs. Mukulo's (2016) study reveals that the nouns are integrated into Lukabaras through morphological conditioning of the loanword with a prenominal affix [e] or [o]. Moreover, Lukabaras phonotactics do not allow consonants at the word final position, so all the loanwords adopted from English further take the final vowels [i] or [u] through suffixation. On this basis, there is evidence that languages utilize a variety of morphological and phonological processes in order to adapt new words (Jika,2017; Mtenje,2007). The present study therefore investigated the adaptation of English loan verbs in Lukabaras and described the morpho-phonemic constrains these items undergo in the process of integration.

Background to English Language in Kenya

According to Muaka (2011); Furaha (2007) the advent of English in Kenya is traced back to the British colonial administration in the years (1920-1963) in which the colonialists employed indirect rule and exploited the existing indigenous political structure to control the colonized Kenyan people. The British education system used new skills to suit the local cultural and social conditions where Kenyans were trained in English and later used to train their fellow countrymen. As a result, more schools were established and Kenyans were recruited for learning and for clerical jobs. This made many Kenyans to enrol for British education with the aim of being employed after they had learnt and mastered English.

Mukulo (2016) further attests that the spread of English in Kenya was also greatly influenced by the Second World War. This occurred when some Kenyans who were recruited as soldiers, clerks and translators by the British army could speak English whenever they were demobilized from the army after the war). Following this, the use of English has spread over time and the language is presently one of Kenya's official languages (Temelkova,2021) and the language of formal instruction in the education system which is used alongside other many languages spoken in Kenya (Michieka,2005).

Methodology

A descriptive research design was adopted in the study of the morphophonemic adaptation of the English loan verbs in Lukabaras. The data for investigation comprised of 20 English verbs 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 verbs that were borrowed from English into spoken Lukabaras and nativised to conform with Lukabaras phonological system. The study established that the adaptation of the English verb forms into Lukabaras is largely influenced by the native Lukabaras speaker's intuition to discern the words that are well formed in their language.

Findings and Discussion

Introduction

This study observed that the borrowing of foreign lexical elements in Lukabaras was motivated by various reasons. For instance, the incorporation of English loan verbs was due to the lack of indigenous words for the English equivalent. For this reason, it was revealed that in the domain such as technology, the English verb '*dial'* did not have a corresponding word in Lukabaras. This verb was therefore integrated in Lukabaras by first morphologically inserting the verbal radical suffix{a} and the nativised form of the borrowed item thus changed to {tayol-a}.

According to Matseshe (2020) and Akida (2000), the suffix morpheme {a} is placed at the end of the verb root to show the indicative mood. Mukulo (2016) observes that Lukabaras phonotactics does not permit final consonants in words; therefore, the epenthic vowel /a/ occurs on all verbs to indicate the infinitive mood. A further analysis based on findings in studies such as Alqahtani (2015) and Adomako (2008) revealed that there were certain underlying phonological conditions that influenced the processes of loan word adaptation. For instance, the initial consonant sound /d/ in the verb '*dial*' does not exist in Lukabaras. For this reason, it is devoiced and realised as /t/. The study inferred that Lukabaras speakers find it easy to articulate /t/ which is found in the same place of articulation as /d/.

Lukabaras Vowel System

(Unrounded)	Front	central	back (rounded)	
Close	**i**		**u**	High
Close mid	**e**		**o**	Mid
Open		**a**		Low

(Source: Mukulo, 2016)

As shown above, Mukulo (2016) identifies five Lukabaras vowels as [a, e, i, o, u]. The present study found it beneficial to identify these vowels in Lukabaras in order to describe the phonological processes the foreign English verbs undergo when integrating in Lukabaras. On this account, the study observed that all Lukabaras vowels occur in all word positions.

These are word initial, word middle and word final (Mukulo2016). For example, it was established that the vowels [i] and [o] were used to break consonant clusters. In particular, [i] appeared in words with velar stops like (sk, ks, kl, st, gr, sp) whereas the vowel [o] occurred where there were bilabial consonant clusters such as (pr, pt, bl, br). On the other hand, the vowel [a] as pointed earlier, occurred in the verb final position to indicate the infinitive mood. The vowel [a] also served to avoid the occurrence of consonants at the end of a syllable because Lukabaras phonotactics does not permit this.

Lukabaras Consonants

Table 1 below shows the consonants in Lukabaras identified in this study based on Mukulo (2016).

Table 1. Consonants in Lukabaras

Manner of articulation / Place of articulation	Labial	Dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosives	p		t		k	
Prenasalised plosives	mb		nd		ŋg	
Affricates			ts			
Prenasalised affricates						
Fricatives	f β		s		x	
Prenasalised fricatives			nz			
Nasals	m		n		ŋ	
Glides	w			j		
Approximants			l r			

(Source: Mukulo 2016)

This study deduced that there was a disparity between the number of English consonants and those in Lukabaras. For example, from the Lukabaras consonant inventory above, it was observed that the Lukabaras consonant system did not have voiced consonant sounds such as /b/, /d/ and /g/. This study established that where these sounds occurred in a borrowed item the processes of adaptation involved devoicing. For instance, the verb '*break*' was observed to take the sound [p] in place of the initial consonant sound [b] in spoken Lukabaras. A similar case occurred on the verb '*drive*' in which the initial voiced consonant sound [d] was devoiced and realised as [t] in spoken Lukabaras. Devoicing was thus observed to be a consonant adaptation processes that occurred where certain English consonants did not exist in Lukabaras.

English Loan Verbs and their Adaptation Processes in Lukabaras

This study analysed the following data of English loan verbs in spoken Lukabaras as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. English Loan Verbs in Lukabaras

English Verb	English Transcription	Lukabaras Adapted Form
mix	/ miks/	mikisa
sieve	/ siv /	siva
change	/ ʧeindʒ/	chenjia
rinse	/ rins/	rinza
taste	/ teist/	tesita
test	/ tᵉst/	tesita
drive	/ draiv/	turaiva
dial	/ dᵊiᵊl/	tayola
call	/ kɔ:l/	kola
receive	/ risi:v/	risiva
miss	/ mis/	misa
record	/ rekɔ:d/	rekota
spray	/ sprei/	supureya
switch	/ swiʧ /	swicha
lift	/ lift/	lifuta
prepare	/ pripᵉᵊ/	puripeya
chair	/ ʧᵉᵊ/	cheeya
meet	/ mi:t/	mita

raise	/ reiz/	reyisa
settle	/ sᵉtᵊl/	setola
break	/ breik/	pureka

The data in the Table 2 above shows the English loan verbs borrowed in Lukabaras. This study first observed that there is a difference between the pronunciation of the verbs in English and the forms of the verbs after integration in Lukabaras. The study attributed the discrepancy to the fact that there is no one on one correspondence between the way words in English are spelled and the way they are pronounced. On the other hand, words in Lukabaras were observed to be pronounced the way they appear orthographically.

It was realised that a Lukabaras speaker nativised the words to fit in their system by first inserting the epenthic vowel /a/ and breaking the consonant clusters in the loan words. For instance, the word 'mix' /miks/ has the consonant cluster 'ks' which in the processes of adaptation, a Lukabaras speaker breaks by inserting the epenthic vowel /i/. The verbal radical vowel /a/ is then placed at the end for the word to make it fit in the Lukabaras morphological structure hence realised as '*mikisa'*

Phonological Adaptation Processes

Vowel Epenthesis

According to Rose and Demuth (2006); Uffmann (2004) vowel epenthesis involves the insertion of a vowel between two consonants in a syllable. Mukulo (2016) asserts that vowel epenthesis is one of the Lukabaras resyllabification processes in loan words thus the present study similarly observed that English loan verbs in Lukabaras that consisted consonant clusters have to be broken to allow them fit into Lukabaras phonological structure. It was established that the vowels [i] and [u] were used in the process of adapting the English loan verbs in Lukabaras through vowel insertion.

1. *Vowel Insertion [i]*

This study revealed that the vowel [i] was inserted to break consonant clusters that were either sibilants or velar and alveolar stops. This was attributed to the fact that Lukabaras speakers found it easy to co-articulate the high front vowel /i/ with the sibilant sound [s], the velar sound [k] and alveolar sound [t] since they almost have similar manner of articulation.

Table 3. Insertion of Vowel [i]

English	Transcription	Lukabaras	Transcription
Mix	[miks]	mikisa	[mikisa]
Taste	[teist]	tesita	[tesita]
Test	[tᵉst]	tesita	[tesita]

As seen in Table 3 above, the verbal end of the adapted forms has the vowel [a] whereas the consonant clusters '*ks'* and '*st'* have been broken by inserting the vowel [i].

2. Vowel Insertion [u]

The epenthic vowel [u] occurred in verbs that had consonant clusters such as '*dr, spr, ft, pr* and *br.*' The verbs included *drive, spray, lift, prepare* and *break.* These verbs were analysed as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Insertion of Vowel [u]

English	Transcription	Lukabaras	Transcription
drive	[draiv]	turaiva	[turaiβa]
spray	[sprei/]	supureya	[supurejia]
lift	[lift]	lifuta	[lifuta]
prepare	[prip^{ə}]	puripeya	[puripejia]
break	[breik]	pureka	[pureka]

This study established that other than the insertion of the vowel [i] and [u] to break consonant clusters in the adaptation of English loan verbs in Lukabaras, the occurrence of the final [a] on every verb was a common feature in all verbs in Lukabaras. Moreover, the study observed that the inserted vowels [i] and [u] in actual speech were lengthened as observed in Komenda, Maroko & Ndung'u (2013).

Consonant Devoicing

This study established that the process of consonant devoicing occurred because some of the voiced consonants in the English loan verbs did not exist in Lukabaras. Some of these consonants include [b, g, d, z,]. The data in this study identified verbs such as *break*, *dial*, *drive*, *record* and *raise* in which Lukabaras speakers adapted the words by pronouncing the consonants *[b]* as *[p]*, *[d]* as *[t] and [z]* as *[s]*. This was as presented in as shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Consonant Devoicing

English	Transcription	Lukabaras	Transcription
drive	[draiv]	turaiva	[turaiβa]
dial	[d^{ə}i^{ə}l]	tayola	[tajiola]
record	[rekɔ:d]	rekota	[rekota]
raise	[reiz]	reyisa	[rejisa]
break	[breik]	pureka	[pureka]

Consonant Substitution

The voiced English consonant sounds [b] and [v] do not exist in the Lukabaras consonant inventory. Whenever they occur in words in spoken Lukabaras, they are rendered as sound [β]. Verbs such as *dri**ve**, recei**ve*** and *sie**ve*** had the sound [v] realised approximately as [b] in the adapted forms '*turai**ba***', '*risi**ba**'* and 'siba' in spoken Lukabaras. The English voiced labio-dental fricative[v] and the Lukabaras [β] have similar manner and place of articulation. This study observed that the disparity though, is that the fricative [v] is released during articulation while the Lukabaras [β] is usually unreleased (Mukulo2016). This study established that the sound [v] and [b] were thus substituted in Lukabaras by the voiced labio-dental fricative [β] in the process. The borrowed forms of drive *receive* and *sieve* therefore became*; [turai**β**a], [risi**β**a]* and *[si**β**a]*.

Vowel Reduction and Substitution

The English vowel [ɔ:] in verbs such as *'c**a**ll' /k**ɔ:**l/* and *'rec**o**rd' /rek**ɔ:**d/* was adapted in Lukabaras through vowel reduction. Since this vowel does not exist in the Lukabaras vowel inventory, it was realised as the back mid vowel [o] as observed in the Lukabaras loan verb forms */k**o**la/* for *'c**a**ll'* and */rek**o**ta/ for 'rec**o**rd'.* In some English loan verbs, the phoneme [ə] is realized in Lukabras in two ways as [a] or [o].

This is because there is one to one correspondence between letters and sounds in Lukabras such that a word is pronounced the way it is written. This study established that the verbs *'dial' [dᵊiᵊl]* and *'settle' [sᵉtᵊl]* had the English phoneme [ə] substituted in Lukabaras as shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Vowel Substitution

English	Transcription	Lukabaras	Transcription
dial	[dᵊiᵊl]	tayola	[tajiola]
settle	[sᵉtᵊl]	setola	[setola]

Vowel Deletion

This study observed that the occurrence of the diphthong [ei] in Lukabras was not tolerated, thus, the English diphthong [ei] was realized as the central mid vowel [e] in the loan verbs in Lukabras. During the process of adapting English verbs such as *break [br**ei**k]*, *change [ʧ**ei**nd͡ʒ]* and *taste [t**ei**st]*, the vowel [i] is deleted and the diphthong [ei] reduced to [e] through the process of vowel deletion. The borrowed forms in Lukabaras therefore appeared as shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7. Vowel Deletion

English	Transcription	Lukabaras	Transcription
break	[breik]	pureka	[pureka]
change	[ʧeind͡ʒ]	chenjia	[chenjia]
Taste	[teist]	tesita	[tesita]

Morphological Adaptation Processes

This study established that the surface realization of all loan verbs adapted in Lukabaras from English took the final verbal radical morpheme {a}. It was observed that this morpheme occurred to indicate the infinitive mood. Accordingly, this study identified affixation as the main morphological process evident in the integration of the loan verbs into Lukabaras. For in instance, the following loan verbs were formed through suffixation of the morpheme {a} as shown in Table 8 below.

Table 8. Suffixation of Loan Verbs

English	Transcription	Lukabaras Borrowed Form
mix	/ miks/	{ mikis-a}
sieve	/ siv /	{ siv- a}
change	/ ʧeind͡ʒ/	{chenji-a}
rinse	/ rins/	{ rinz- a}
taste	/ teist/	{ tesit- a}
test	/ tᵉst/	{ tesit- a}
drive	/ draiv/	{ turaiv-a}

dial	/ dʰiʰl/	{ tayol-a}
call	/ kɔ:l/	{ kol- a }
miss	/ mis/	{ mis- a}

The data in Table 8 above reveals that other than the underlying phonological alterations the loan verbs in Lukabaras underwent in the processes of adaptation, there was also the suffixation of the verbal root through the morpheme {a}. For instance, the root of the loan verb, '*mix'* from English is {*mikis-}* in Lukabaras. However, the verb is morphologically integrated in Lukabaras by adding the suffix *{-a}* so that it is to realized as *{mikis-a}*.

The study also noted that it is possible for Lukabaras loan verbs from English to take the to- infinitive. In such cases the Lukabaras infinitive verb take the prefix morpheme {okhu-}. This was presented as shown in Table 9 below.

Table 9. To-infinitive forms of Loan Verbs

English to-infinitive form	Lukabaras to-infinitive form
to mix	{okhu-mikis-a}
to sieve	{okhu-siβ -a}
to change	{okhu-chenji-a}
to rinse	{okhu-rinz-a}
to taste	{okhu-tesit-a}
To dial	{okhu-tayol-a}
to drive	{okhu-turaiβ- a}
to call	{okhu-kol- a}
to break	{okhu-purek- a}
to meet	{okhu-mit- a}

It was observed from the data in Table 9 above that the loan verbs in Lukabaras are morphologically formed through the process of prefixation to derive the to -infinitive. The prefix morpheme {okhu-} is therefore added to the Lukabaras infinitive form. Additionally, where the to -infinitive forms of Lukabaras loan verbs were used, there was neither generation of new meaning nor a change on the tense and number of the verb. The study also showed that it was not possible for the prefix morpheme {okhu-} to occur alone on the root of the loan verbal. This would result to ill-formed words such as *{okhu-mikis-}*. However, it was permissible to have loan verbs in Lukabaras that occurred with the suffix {-a} without the prefix morpheme {okhu-}.

Such verbs were properly formed as seen in words like *{mikis-a}, {tayol-a}* and *{siβ-a}*. The verbal radical morpheme {-a} was therefore an obligatory element in the formation of verbs in their infinitive form in Lukabaras.

Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed that the English loan verbs that are borrowed in Lukabaras are morpho phonemically integrated through various phonological and morphological processes. It was established that since there is a disparity between the English sounds inventory and the Lukabaras phonological system, the process of adapting the verbs in Lukabaras involved phonological alterations on the loan words for them to fit into Lukabaras phonotactics. These

underlying processes included the insertion of vowels, vowel reduction, gliding and consonant substitution.

Moreover, the study found that the loan verbs were also morphologically adapted through the prefix morpheme {okhu-} and the verbal radical suffix morpheme {a-}. It was established that the morpheme {a-} was an obligatory element on all verb roots in Lukabaras to show the infinitive mood. On the other hand, the prefix morpheme {okhu-} was optional and only occurred when the loan verb forms were the to- infinitive.

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