

Lexical Borrowing in Spoken Lukabaras in a Multilingual Context

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigated the borrowing of lexical items into spoken Lukabaras due to the influence of Nandi language in a multilingual setting. The data was collected in Chepsaita Scheme in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. The scheme is that of a multilingual setting and presents a phenomenon in which the languages that come into contact apparently influence each other. The predominant language is Nandi, but other minority languages such as Lukabaras, Lutachooni, Luwanga, Lulogooli and Lubukusu are also spoken there. As a result, one of the outcomes of the contact is the transfer of linguistic features which occur at the lexical level. This paper therefore set out to identify and describe the lexical items that the speakers of Lukabaras borrow from the dominant Nandi language in the home and business domains of interaction. In this paper, the lexical items were collected through audio recording and analyzed descriptively. The findings of the study showed that lexical borrowing into spoken Lukabaras in Chepsaita was a communication strategy used by minority Lukabaras speakers to coexist with the dominant Nandi community. However, the borrowing constrained communication between Lukabaras speakers using the borrowed versions and the native Lukabaras speakers not residing in Chepsaita Scheme.

1. INTRODUCTION

As is common in most multilingual communities, Kenyans have always juggled their languages to fit various contexts (Michieka, 2012). In addition to English and Kiswahili, there are over forty native languages that are spoken by the indigenous Kenyan tribes (Kebeya, 2008). Consequently, in the interaction of these languages, there is usually a tendency for speakers to transfer certain linguistic items such as lexical, morphological, syntactic or semantic from one language into the other (Trudgill, 2003). Thus this paper sought to identify and present instances of lexical borrowing in spoken Lukabaras due to the influence from the Nandi language in Chepsaita Scheme, in Kenya.

Lexical borrowing, according to Grosjean (2010), is the integration of a word from one language into another by changing the phonology and the orthography of a foreign word to fit into the target language. Meyerhof (2008), argues that if speakers of one language move to a new environment outside their

own linguistic area, they will learn the languages that are spoken in the new setting. Muysken (1999), points out that the most common and specific type of influence resulting from language contact situations is the borrowing of words.

As observed by Mandila (2016), lexical borrowing may be a communicative strategy the speakers of a target language use to bridge the communication gap with speakers of a donor language in the context of interaction. In doing, so one language can add several words to its lexicon as a result of the influence exerted by another language whenever there is contact between the speakers. This is observed in multicultural and multilingual contexts like Chesaita Scheme, in which as Rendon (2008) observes, language is more oriented towards the accomplishment of communicative goals.

In this perspective, since Lukabaras and Nandi languages in Chepsaita Scheme have had a long history of contact, there was need to establish the

mechanisms they have employed to adapt to their socio-communicative needs in this multicultural setting. The current paper investigated the unidirectional influence Nandi language has had on Lukabaras. While the focus was on lexical borrowing there was need to establish the motivation behind the absorption of the foreign lexical elements into spoken Lukabaras.

Lexical borrowing has been classified into various types which include lexical invention and loan blends/hybrids. Lexical invention according to Muysken (1997), involves hybrid blends between the source language and the target language free and bound morphemes. This paper was guided by these assertions to further inquire into what kind of lexical borrowing occurred in the interaction between spoken Lukabaras and Nandi language in Chepsaita Scheme.

Adams (2012), argues that the home domain is depended on by a multilingual society since it is common and has family subdivisions into role relations of family members. Within the domain of business, we have the sub domains of private business and marketing. The language used when people are doing business is therefore important because it is used in the transactions, and facilitates exchange of goods and services This paper focused on lexical borrowing from Nandi language and concentrated on the home and business settings as the major interactive situations between Nandi and Lukabaras the languages.

In view of the foregoing discussion, the present paper ultimately set out to establish the communication gaps occasioned by lexical borrowing in spoken Lukabaras. As observed by Mudogo (2017, 2018), lexical choices that speakers make are significant in the communication process. In this view the paper further inquired into whether or not the borrowing into spoken Lukabaras in Chepsaita impeded comprehensibility with other Lukabaras native speakers. There was also need to establish the scales of lexical borrowing. Lewis (2009) reclassified Luhya as a macro language and the various dialects promoted to the status of languages. The reclassification is noted to be due to the fact that there is no standard Luhya language but rather each Luhya speaker speaks one of its varieties. Available studies differ on the exact number of dialects that comprise the Luhya language (Marlo, 2011).

Lukabaras language and lexical borrowing

According to Marlo (2011), the Luhya language is made up of a minimum of nineteen dialects which include Lubukusu (spoken in Bungoma County);

Lukhaya, 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.

The speakers of this language also spread to parts of the neighbouring Matete Sub County, Kakamega East and parts of Uasin Gishu, Nandi Counties and Trans Nzoia. The name "Kabaras" as cited in (Mukulo, 2016) was derived from the Ababalasi sub group of the Kabras by the British. Therefore, Kabras are the people who speak Lukabaras. There was need to carry a study that would add to the existing literature on Lukabaras. As one of the Kenyan indigenous languages, Lukabaras has apparently not been extensively documented.

Studies done in Lukabaras such as Mukulo (2016), investigated how English loanwords are adapted to fit into the Lukabaras phonological system. Mukulo's study showed how the pronunciations of English loan words are constrained by the Lukabaras phonological structure. Mukulo's study, further concluded that all the English nouns which are adopted by Lukabaras are first morphologically conditioned and nativised through nominal prefixation since all the Lukabaras nouns have prefixes.

The findings in Mukulo's study showed that any loanword which enters Lukabaras is assimilated both morphologically and phonemically so as to fit into the Lukabaras' morphological and phonological structure. The present investigation however, deviated from Mukulo's work by considering identifying and describing the pattern of the borrowed lexical items by Lukabaras from Nandi and not English. There was also no attempt to do a phonological analysis of the borrowed items from Nandi language by Lukabaras speakers.

Mudogo (2011). studied comprehension challenges facing Lukabaras listeners in interpreting news broadcast in Luhya by non-kabras presenters of Mulembe FM. The study sought to establish whether there were constraints in interpretation or meaning loss when the Kabras listen to news aired in Luhya by the non-Kabras presenters. The study found out that the kabras listeners have comprehension constraints in

interpreting some news broadcast in Luhya by the non Kabras presenters of Mulembe FM since the interpretation strategies employed were not effective. In this view, the researcher underscores Mudogo's assertions that appropriate lexical choices are key in facilitating effective communication. However unlike Mudogo (2011), the paper investigated lexical borrowing and did not focus on the interpretation of these items through news broadcasts but through the language contact of Lukabaras and Nandi in the home and business domains.

Similarly, in the investigation of lexical choices and their significance in communication, Mudogo (2016, 2018) established that successful communication must involve appropriate negotiation of meaning between speakers and listeners. With the focus on Lukabaras, the author established that the intricate nuances of meaning in a language are often tied to the lexical choices which in communication dictate the semantic realization and hence cannot be overlooked in communication. He further established that the rendering of lexical items were not appropriately captured in Mulembe FM Luhya news translation and hence resulted to many cases of semantic loss.

Mudogo's (2017,) investigations illustrates how various levels of linguistic analysis are relevant to the communication process. However, a study that would investigate the significance of lexical borrowing involving Lukabaras, a Bantu Language, and Nandi, a Nilotic Language was necessary. The present study therefore focused on lexical borrowing patterns and their significance in the communication process. This is because; if the borrowed lexical items in Lukabaras are not appropriately negotiated by the communicators, there will be communication breakdown.

2. METHODOLOGY

This paper adopted a descriptive research design in which the identification and description of lexical borrowing in spoken Lukabaras was interpreted using qualitative methods. The researcher specifically focused on Lukabaras speakers who are intermarried with the Nandi speakers and those in the business interactive domains to select 36 respondents. The research used a data extraction guide to collect a

corpus of 400 words from the key respondents through audio recording then using systematic random sampling transcribed 120 items from which at least thirty percent was derived for discussion in focus groups. The sample thus comprised 40 words representing both nouns and verbs in the two domains of interaction. The main unit of analysis was the lexical item which was presented and analysed in form of single words.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Lexical Borrowing in spoken Lukabaras

The paper identified borrowed lexical items in spoken Lukabaras from Nandi language through questions that targeted names of things and certain actions in spoken Lukabaras. The researcher investigated the borrowed items in the home and business interactive situations, through FGD's.

The study was informed by the Borrowing Transfer Theory (Odlin 1989, 2004). This theory states that when languages come into contact, transfer or diffusion of material from one language to another takes place. Odlin (1989, 2004) therefore notes that Borrowing transfer refers to the influence a second language has on a previously acquired language (which is typically one's native language). As argued in this theory the process of transfer involves foreign linguistic elements being adapted to the native system of the target language at various levels such as phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic. Accordingly, the study found the BT theory beneficial in explaining the transfer of linguistic material at the lexical level from Nandi language into spoken Lukabaras in Chepsaita Scheme.

This paper established that Lukabaras speakers borrow different words and expressions from the Nandi language during their interaction in Chepsaita Scheme. According to what was observed in the linguistic data posted in Table 4.1 the borrowed words reveal that there are various alterations such items undergo in the process of transfer from the donor language into the target language. The modifications on the words have given rise to loan blends or lexical inventions which were morpho-phonologically adapted into spoken Lukabaras though they did not exist in this language.

Table 4.1 showing examples of borrowed forms into Lukabaras

| Borrowed Lukabaras | Native Lukabaras | Gloss |
|--|---|---|
| M'Chepsaita muno niwenya okhumenya vulai wenya orule olubuchani | Mshivala muno niwenya okhumenya vulai wenya orule oluchesi | Here in Chepsaita, if you want to stay comfortably, you must sweat . |
| Tsia onunie omwana oyo, alenyanga ekineti . | Tsia onunie omwana oyo, alenyanga elituru | Go and breastfeed that child, they want a breast . |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| Ekimieti ilia neyile, lera khulenyanga okhutsia. | Obusuma vulia nivuyile, lera khulenyanga okhutsia. | If the ugali is ready, serve. We want to leave. |
| Eying'ombe yilia yivele erioti , yilarula lina? | Eying'ombe yilia yivele esimu , yilarula lina? | That cow is in-calf , when will it give birth? |

From table 4.1 above, it was observed that the form of the borrowed word into spoken Lukabaras varied from the native Lukabaras form. The study established that these forms posed communication constraints among speakers of Lukabaras. The data collected further revealed that speakers of Lukabaras borrowed words like *ekimieti*, *erioti* etc whose forms were a modification from Nandi words. The study established that the motivation behind the adaption of these words into spoken Lukabaras was the need for Lukabaras speakers to coexist with the Nandi in the home and trade settings.

Lexical Borrowing involving Nouns

In the data collected for investigation, the study targeted spoken Lukabaras words used by respondents to name referents. Some of these words were; *breast, calf, crowd, rock, leaves, ugali, goodness, truth, greetings, age, time, temptation, traditional tray, in-calf, and traditional mortar, friend, girl, guest, house, market, man, sweat, cooking pot, cooking stick etc.*

Furthermore, in choosing the nouns, the researcher was able to collect data that fairly represented the life and environment of Lukabaras speakers in their interaction with Nandi speakers. The researcher was able to go for specific referents as guided by a data extraction guide. The examples of some of the nouns were presented as shown in table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Table showing sample Borrowed Nouns

| Nandi | Lukabaras borrowed form | Native Lukabaras form | Gloss |
|----------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| <i>moita</i> | <i>emoita</i> | <i>eshimosi</i> | <i>calf</i> |
| <i>Kiinet</i> | <i>ekineti</i> | <i>elituru</i> | <i>breast</i> |
| <i>Kimiet</i> | <i>ekimiet</i> | <i>obusuma</i> | <i>ugali</i> |
| <i>moet</i> | <i>emoeti</i> | <i>eyinda</i> | <i>stomach</i> |
| <i>Chorwet</i> | <i>omuchorweti</i> | <i>omulina</i> | <i>friend</i> |
| <i>Muren</i> | <i>omureni</i> | <i>omusatsa</i> | <i>man</i> |
| <i>Lubchan</i> | <i>olubuchani</i> | <i>oluchesi</i> | <i>sweat</i> |

As shown in table 4.2 above, the researcher targeted these particular nouns because they fall in the category of things that were common in the daily speech of spoken Lukabaras in the interaction with Nandi in Chepsaita Scheme. The respondents were also able to recall these words easily and give spontaneous answers. As noted earlier, it is not every noun that the

study investigated. The nouns that were collected for this study were obtained from categories that named people and parts of the body, household items and things at home, domestic animals, objects and the physical environment and objects in the social-economic environment. The data was recorded and presented as shown in table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3 Table showing categories of Borrowed Nouns

| Category | Form of borrowed noun | Gloss |
|------------------------------------|--|--|
| People and parts of the body | Ekineti, omuchorweti, omureni, Olubuchani, emoita | Breast, guest, friend, Man, girl, sweat Old, finger, stomach |
| Household items and things at home | ateluti, eshinuti, ekimieti, ekoti, omukango, echibungusi, echekeo | Traditional tray, Traditional mortar, ugali, house, cooking stick, cooking pot, milk |
| Domestic animals | Emoita, erioti, | Calf, in-calf |

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| Objects and the physical environment | Amasaka,oluandeti,etulwa, | Leaves,rock,anti-hill |
| Social-economic environment | Etukhuli,elitiemu,emiendo,ekaroni Eshirechi,echamuke, | crowd,temptation,market,goodness,morning,greetings |

The table 4.3 above reveals that the data collected for this study comprised nouns that targeted categories of things that were common. As observed earlier, it was easy for the respondents to identify names for parts of the body, things used at home and household items, objects, people, domestic animals and the physical and socio-economic environment of an individual. The study thus derived the following generalizations from these categories of borrowed nouns.

It was observed that in the category of nouns borrowed for people and parts of the body, Lukabaras speakers in Chepsaita scheme borrowed more words that name people than those that name parts of the body. For instance the words; *omutoti*, *omuchorweti*, *omureni*, *omuchepu*, and *omuosi* were common nouns relating to people and were borrowed more than *olubuchani*, *eshiyeti* and *ekineti* which are examples of words naming or relating to parts of the body.

The data collected also showed that not many words that named domestic animals or related to domestication of animals were borrowed into Lukabaras from the Nandi language. The study identified items like *emoita* and *erioti* as shown in the table. It was observed that this category had fewer lexical items into spoken. The category of nouns borrowed for house hold items included names of some of the commonly used house hold items in the home. The study identified examples of words such as; *ateluti*, *eshinuti*, *ekimieti*, *ekoti*, *omukango*, *echibungusi* etc. There were varied reasons for the prevalence in borrowing of words in this category into spoken Lukabaras. The respondents informed the study that words for items like *ateluti* and *eshinuti* were commonly adapted into spoken Lukabaras since they were shared in ordinary usage by speakers of the two communities both at home and in trading.

Some of the words borrowed in the category for objects and the physical environment included *amasaka*, *oluandeti* and *etulwa*. It was also observed that just like words in the category of domestic

animals, this category instantiated less borrowing. The study attributed this to the forms of the words in this category in Nandi which showed that many of them could not be nativised into spoken Lukabaras. This category also included items whose names did not feature commonly in the ordinary interaction between Lukabaras and Nandi speakers.

The study further observed from the linguistic data shown in table 4.3 that words in the category of nouns borrowed for social-economic environment were commonly borrowed. Like the borrowed words in the category of people and parts of the body, many words in this category were easily adapted into spoken Lukabaras in Chepsaita. These words included; *eyimanda*, *etukhuli*, *elitiemu*, *emiendo*, *ekaroni*, *eshirechi*, *echamuke* etc. The ease of borrowing many of the words in this category was due to the frequency of interaction between the speakers of Lukabaras and in the social –economic environment like at home and on the market.

Lexical Borrowing involving Verbs

Rendon (2008), argues that verbs, unlike nouns, are not purely content items but carry structural information. This would make them more difficult to borrow than nouns, since their borrowing would require knowledge of the source language beyond the lexicon (Rendon, 2008). The present paper discovered a similar situation in the investigation of lexical borrowing in spoken Lukabaras and therefore chose questions whose target answers were verbs that were common activities among the Lukabaras speakers. This was to enable the researcher to obtain data that would give a fair reflection of the influence of Nandi language on spoken Lukabaras.

The verbs that were investigated included to *eat*, *hit*, *wash*, *open*, *pierce*, *close*, *hear*, *annoy*, *harass*, *stand*, *pay*, *beat*, *tie* and *steal*. The data obtained was presented as shown in table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4 Table showing sample Borrowed Verbs

| Nandi | Lukabaras borrowed form | Native Lukabaras form | Gloss |
|-------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| muut | muta | tuya | hit |
| pir | pira | khupa | beat |
| keun | kauna | yosia,singa,fua | wash |
| rat | rata | naatsa,voya | tie |
| kwer | kwera | khupa | hit |
| ker | kera | yikala | close |

| | | | |
|--------|--------|---------|--------|
| rut | ruta | tsoma | pierce |
| tonoon | tonona | sinjila | stand |
| kas | kasa | ulira | hear |

From the table 4.4 above, the study observed that there was borrowing of verbs into spoken Lukabarasi from Nandi language. This was revealed through the discussants as recorded in the foregoing example;

Example 1.

- i. Discussant 1 : *Kauna* ofundu fulia khowanze okhutekha.
- ii. Native Lukabarasi: Yosia ofundu fulia khowanze okhutekha
- iii. English gloss: Wash those things before you start cooking

In example 1 above, the discussant used the borrowed verb Nandi word *kauna* (wash) instead of the native Lukabarasi version *yosia* (wash). Similar to the observation was made on the borrowed nouns into Lukabarasi. The borrowed form of the verbs was a modification of the Nandi language as it can be revealed from Table 4.4. . The study also observed that the borrowed forms of the verbs did not exist in native Lukabarasi.. The study established that due to the mismatch between Lukabarasi borrowed forms and the native Lukabarasi versions, communication between a speaker of Lukabarasi from Chepsaita interacting with other native speakers of Lukabarasi faced intelligibility challenges.

Scales of Lexical Borrowability

According to Arabski (2006), language transfer is not equal in all areas of language contact. It is argued that lexical borrowing is more permeable to transfer than other levels of linguistics (Arabski, 2006).On the strength of this assertion, the current study considered the lexical aspect in spoken Lukabarasi in Chepsaita.As further pointed out by Rendon (2008), the major process involved in the majority of contact situations is borrowing that occurs most extensively on lexical items. Similarly, Muysken (1999) agrees with these views and argues that the lexicon is the most readily borrowable element.

The research concentrated on the noun and verb word categories as the basic units of analysis. According to Rendon (2008), noun borrowing is a universal of language contact and languages can borrow further lexical material only if nouns are borrowed first. It is posited that there is a possibility of a language having a larger number of borrowed nouns than the number of borrowed items in another lexical class within the same language.

However, it is argued that noun borrowing is less frequent in situations involving two culturally similar groups with a long history of contact because there are few objects unknown to either group. For instance many dialects of the macro language Luhya are mutually intelligible and culturally similar. As such the level of noun borrowing among them is less frequent. Rendon (2008) further argues that for two culturally different groups that scarcely had contact in the past, the need to adopt items referring to new physical objects surpasses other considerations.

According to Thomason and Kaufmann (1991), the position of loan verbs in the scales of borrowability is not fixed. Some scholars such as Field (2002). consider verbs as the second largest lexical class while others put them either after adjectives (Muysken, 1997) or consider both as having the same scope. Rendon (2008), however notes that verbs are not only borrowed in many contact situations, but their number is also relatively high. Nevertheless, Rendon (2008). further observes that while the evidence confirms the borrowing of verbs across typologically different languages, it is still notable that verbs are borrowed with less frequency than nouns.

A case of a Bantu language coming into contact with a Nilotic language would have such a situation where speakers borrow and adopt foreign lexical items from the language of the other. Most indigenous Kenyan languages that come into contact and are members of culturally different orientations, would exhibit this situation.

The present investigation, in this perspective, investigated lexical borrowing in spoken Lukabarasi, a Bantu language in the context of interaction with Nandi, a Nilotic language in Chepsaita Scheme. The two languages being culturally different, this study contented that nouns were among the words that Lukabarasi speakers largely adopted due to the influence of the Nandi. The study relied on the home and business domains of interaction and established that there were more nouns than verbs borrowed into spoken Lukabarasi in Chepsaita.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this paper concluded that there was lexical borrowing into the Lukabarasi spoken in Chepsaita Scheme. Accordingly, the noun category was borrowed more than the verb. The investigation further established that Lukabarasi speakers borrowed

these items as a communicative strategy to coexist with the Nandi in the home and business domains of interaction.

However, as observed from the linguistic data showing borrowed nouns and verbs represented in Table 4.1 and Table 4.2, there was a significant variation in the forms of the words borrowed into Lukabaras in Chepsaita with those forms of native Lukabaras in Malava. Some of the borrowed lexical items were either foreign or had different forms in native Lukabaras. For example the words *yata*, *kasa*, *ruta*, *muta*, *kauna*, *omuchepu*, *ekoti*, *olubuchani* among others had the following corresponding forms; *yikula*, *ulira*, *tuya*, *yosia*, *omukhana*, *eyinzu* and *oluchesi*. This paper thus concluded that the variability constrained communication between Lukabaras speakers residing in Chepsaita Scheme and other Lukabaras speakers living outside the Scheme.

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