

## Agentive noun formation strategies in Tiv language

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**Abstract:** The study was designed to prove that agentive nouns are found in Tiv just like in any other language in consonance with the claims of Universal Grammar Theory. The study aimed at identifying the agentive noun formation strategies in Tiv, which indicate what a person does as a job, what they do habitually or at a particular time, and their nationality or origin. The researchers used their intuitive knowledge of Tiv to collect data for the study. Lexical items which mark the doer of an activity or action and the professional and nationality status of a person were collected and analysed. The study discovered that the formation of agentive nouns in Tiv is done by compounding rather than prefixation since or 'person/man' and kwase 'woman' are independent words, which are attached to other nouns, progressive forms, and adjectives to derive agentive nouns in the language.

### 1. Introductions

Universal Grammar claims that languages of the world share certain features despite the existence of slight differences found among them. Nominal categories that indicate the performer of action, the origin of someone, and those used to show that someone is a professional are found across languages of the world. However, the structure of languages is not the same since there are parameters that distinguish one language from another. According to Noam Chomsky's notion of Universal Grammar, languages of the world share properties despite the variations that exist due to environmental factors and historical changes (Di Petro, 1971; Cook & Newson, 1988/2007). That is to say that languages share features of agentive noun formation. Agentive noun formation in Tiv involves compounding. Tiv language combines two separate words into a single word in order to form agentive nouns. According to Denham and Lobeck (2010/2013) and Yule (1985/2010), compounding is the process of agglutinating two words together in order to form a new word. This implies that two separate words are merged through the compounding process to form a single word.

Udu (2009) and Chahur and Adzer (2020), Ajim and Iorember (2021), as well as Mbapuun (2021) carried out studies on Tiv derivational morphology. Among the previous studies, only Udu (2009) studied agentive noun formation in Tiv, but he used the descriptive approach. He claims that {or- 'person' /kwase- 'woman'} are agentive prefixes attached to nouns to form agentive nouns. The previous study claims that prefixation is the process of forming agentive nouns in Tiv. On the contrary, the present study, which is theory-driven, is designed to prove that agentive nouns are derived by compounding in the Tiv language. The study is anchored on the theory of Universal Grammar. According to Universal Grammar, languages of the world share the same principles such as agentive marking, plurality, tense marking, compounding, reduplication, affixation, among others; however, there are parameters which distinguish one language from another (Di Petro, 1971; Cook & Newson, 1988/2007). Tiv language features agentive nouns, and the formation of such nouns is done by compounding rather than prefixation since or 'man/ person'/ kwase 'woman' are independent words in Tiv language. Hence, the present study aims at identifying the agentive noun formation strategies in Tiv, which indicate what a person does as a job, what they do habitually or at a particular time, and their nationality or origin.

The researchers used their intuitive knowledge of Tiv to collect data for the study. Lexical items which mark the doer of an activity or action and the professional and nationality status of a person were collected and analysed. The analysis of the data was geared towards proving that the Tiv language has agentive nouns just like any other language. Thereby, testing the claim of universal Grammar about languages sharing certain features despite the parameterised nature of every language.

## 2. Empirical review

Mbapuun (2021) studied aspects of compounding in Tiv using the descriptive approach. The findings of the study show that compounding is a highly productive word-formation process in Tiv in terms of varieties (forms) and functions. He claims that apart from noun + noun compounds, other compound types such as synthetic, deverbal, and verbal compounds which could equally be accounted for using semantic criteria, are found in Tiv. He also claims that even though endocentric nominal compounds in Tiv generally obey Left-Hand head rule (N1 as head), synthetic compounds in Tiv, it has been observed, exhibit the possibility for either Left-Hand head position or Right-Hand head position. However, the Right-Hand head rule is not and, even if found, may not be highly productive in the language. The study portrays that compounding is greatly used in naming concepts, particularly foreign institutions, ideas, items or objects, and concepts that were hitherto non-existent in Tiv. The previous study, although very interesting, did not treat the formation of agentive nouns through compounding.

Ajim and Iorember (2021) studied nominalisation in Tiv using Hockett's theory of Item-and-Arrangement and Item- and- Process. They submit that nominalisation is a linguistic process whereby verbs, adjectives, and sentences are converted or changed into nouns in Tiv. The findings of the study show that sentences are nominalised through the process of desententialisation while lexical items are nominalised through prefixation, prefixation with some modifications, and tonality. They claim that nominalisation as a derivative process is essential in word creation and helps in enriching the Tiv language. The previous study is an aspect of derivational morphology but does not account for the agentive noun formation strategies in Tiv.

Chahur and Adzer (2020) studied the semantics of compounding in English and Tiv languages using the descriptive approach. They submit that both Tiv and English have both endocentric compounds, for example, *babysit hyo-nguhar* 'toe' attorney-general, *kwaghfan* 'wisdom'; and exocentric compounds, for example, *white collar*; *gba shima* 'determination' *ikyomkwase* 'barren woman'. The findings of the study show that both languages have instances of both right-headed and left-headed compounding. The findings also show that Tiv language accommodates copulative compounds, which are compounds with more than a single semantic head, for example, *Yesu Kristu*, a Tiv word for Jesus Christ. Both 'Yesu Kristu' and 'Jesus Christ' are copulative compounds for the reason that each of them is double-headed. The previous study aimed at interpreting the meaning of nouns derived through compounding whereas, the present study proves that compounding is a strategy for the formation of agentive nouns in Tiv by attaching either {or-}'man' or {kwase-}'woman' to nouns, progressive forms, and adjectives.

Udu (2009) studied the formation of agentive nouns in Tiv in the book entitled *Tiv language: A reference book*. His aim was to describe how agentive nouns are formed in Tiv. Hence, he adopted the descriptive approach for the study. He claims that {or-}'person' and {kwase-}'woman' are agentive prefixes attached to nouns to form agentive nouns. On the contrary, the present study is theory-driven, and it is designed to prove that agentive nouns are found in Tiv just like in any other language in consonance with the claims of Universal Grammar Theory, and the formation is done by compounding rather than prefixation.

## 3. Data presentation and analysis

### Formation of Agentive Nouns through the Addition of the root {or-} to Nouns

Noun (Root)	Noun	Derived Noun
sule 'farm'	or- 'man/person'	orsule 'farmer'
tato 'hunting'	or-	ortato 'hunter'
iwyan 'disability'	or-	oriwyan 'disabled man'
ihyom 'enmity'	or-	orihyom 'enemy'
Kristu 'Christianity'	or-	Orkristu 'male Christian'
gbàndè 'drum'	or-	orgbande 'drummer'
shiada 'witness'	or-	orshiada 'witness'
Turan 'a district from Kwande'	or-	orturan 'man from Turan'
Nanev 'a district from Kwande'	or-	ornanev 'man from Nanev'
Nigeria 'a West African nation'	or-	ornigeria 'male Nigerian'
perapera 'righteousness'	or-	orperapera 'righteous man'
Musulumi 'Islam'	or-	ormusulumi 'male muslim'
pati 'politics'	or-	orpatí 'male politician'
komputa 'computer'	or-	orkomputa 'male computer operator'
Igbo 'a tribe from Eastern Nigeria'	or-	origbo 'Igbo man'

poloshi 'police'	or-	orpoloshi 'policeman'
twer 'medical profession'	or-	ortwer 'male medical personnel'
Yoruba 'a tribe from Western Nigeria'	or-	oryoruba 'Yoruba man'

The analysis of the above data shows that {or-} is attached to nouns to derive agentive nouns. The formation of agentive nouns in Tiv proves the claims of Universal Grammar that languages of the world share certain properties, and they are parameterised. The derived agentive nouns which are endocentric compounds, mark the doer of an action or activity. The derived nouns also indicate that someone belongs to a particular profession, career, religion, tribe, origin, and nationality.

#### Formation of Agentive Nouns through the addition of the root {Kwase-} to Nouns.

Noun Root	Noun	Derived Noun
yòùgh 'house'	kwase- 'woman'	kwaseyòùgh 'housewife'
twer 'medicine'	kwase-	kwasetwer 'female medical personnel'
komputa 'computer'	kwase-	kwasekomputa 'female computer operator'
poloshi 'police'	kwase-	kwasepoloshi 'policewoman'
hemen 'leadership'	kwase-	kwasehemen 'female leader'
Buter 'English'	kwase-	Kwasebuter 'Englishwoman'
iwyān 'disability'	kwase-	kwaseiwyān 'disabled woman'
Kristu 'Christianity'	kwase-	kwasekristu 'female Christian'
Musulumi 'Islam'	kwase-	kwasemusulumi 'female Muslim'
perapera 'righteousness'	kwase-	kwaseperapera 'righteous woman'
pati 'politics'	kwase-	kwasepatir 'female politician'
abaver 'news'	kwase-	kwaseabaver 'newswoman'
Igbo 'South Eastern Nigerian tribe'	kwase-	kwaseigbo 'Ibo woman'
Yoruba 'South Western Nigerian tribe'	kwase-	kwaseyoruba 'Yoruba woman'
icòvogh 'widowhood/orphanage'	kwase-	kwaseicòvogh 'widow'
anumbe 'sports'	kwase-	kwaseanumbe 'sportswoman'
akombo 'idolatry'	kwase-	kwaseakombo 'female idol worshipper'
azòv 'fairies'	kwase-	kwaseazòv 'female worshipper of fairies'
ahir 'magic'	kwase-	kwaseahir 'female magician'

The analysis of the above data shows that agentive nouns are derived through the addition of the root {kwase-} 'woman' to nouns. The agentive nouns which are endocentric compounds, indicate the doer of an action or activity. The agentive nouns also indicate that someone belongs to a particular profession, career, religion, origin, tribe, and nationality.

#### Formation of Agentive Nouns by attaching {or-} to Verbs (Progressive)

Verb	Noun	Derived Noun
maan 'building'	or- 'man/person'	ormaan 'builder'
tesen 'teaching'	or-	ortesen 'teacher'
yiman 'helping'	or-	oryiman 'helper'
kuran 'protecting'	or-	orkuran 'protector'
waren 'saving'	or-	orwaren 'saviour'
henen 'learning'	or-	orhenen 'learner'

The analysis of the data proves that agentive nouns are found in Tiv in agreement with the notion of Universal Grammar. It reveals that {or-} 'man/person' which is an independent word in Tiv, is added in front of the present participles to form agentive nouns in the language.

#### Formation of Agentive Nouns by Attaching {or}/ {kwase} to Adjectives

Adjective	Noun	Derived Noun
zege 'mighty'	or 'man'	zegeor 'mighty man'
tamen 'elderly'	or	tamenor 'elderlyman'
civirigh 'honourable'	or	orcivirigh 'honourable man'

gôgôgh 'tall'	or	gôgôghor 'tall man'
ibyaver 'powerful'	kwase 'woman'	ibyaverkwase 'powerful woman'
gôgôgh 'tall'	kwase	gôgôghkwase 'tall woman'
tamen 'elderly'	kwase	tamenkwase 'elderly woman'

The analysis of the data proves that agentive nouns are formed in Tiv by attaching {or-} 'man/person' or kwase 'woman' which are independent words in Tiv in front of adjectives. Hence, the exocentric compounds are derived to show someone's ability, stature as well as social status.

#### 4. Conclusion

The study finds out that agentive nouns in Tiv are endocentric and exocentric compounds, and the formation of agentive nouns in the language is parameterised. Hence, agentive noun formation involves the morphological process of compounding, where two separate words are combined to form a single word. The strategies adopted for the formation of agentive nouns include attachment of the word {or-}'person/man' to nouns; {kwase-} 'woman' to nouns and {or-} and {kwase-} to progressive forms and adjectives in Tiv respectively.

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