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Structure of Possessive Modifier in Kanuri: a Case Study of Səmonəm Wuro Sərəgəne "Lend Me Your Ears"

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Abstract: This paper examines structure of possessive modifier in Kanuri text Səmonəm Wuro Sərəgəne (Lend Me Your Ears) within the framework descriptive linguistics adopting the work of Cyffer (1998) model of approach. In conducting this research, a text was used as a primary source of data. In the text, all the various places where the structure of possessive modifiers occurred were identified and extracted for data analysis and presentation. The outcome of the study reveals that nzə 'his / her', nəm 'your', nyi 'my', nde 'our', ndo 'your', nza 'their', as dependent possessive and kaanza 'theirs', kaanəm 'yours', kaanzə'his / her', kakke 'mine' and kaande 'ours' as independent possessive modifier. The structure of possessive modifier can function as alienable, inalienable, and affiliation depending on the head noun it attached to. The study also observed that the possessive (bound) is more frequent than possessive (free) in the text. Finally we present their examples in sentences structure and analyzed.

Keywords: possessive, Modifier, Descriptive, Alienable, Inalienable, Affiliation.

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Introduction

Kanuri is a member of the Saharan branch of the Nilo–Saharan phylum of African languages (see Greenberg, 1963). Bender (2000:44) presents the Saharan branch according to the following groups: Saharan Kanuri: Kanembu, Daza, Teda–Tubu, Zaghawa –Bideyat, and Berti. Lewis (2009) presents the Saharan languages into Eastern, Western and Northern branch. Kanuri is the widest – spread language in the Lake Chad region and is spoken in all countries bordering Cameroun, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria. There are also small numbers of Kanuri speakers in Fezzan Libya. Some Kanuri in diaspora also live in Sudan in around Khartoum. However, Kanuri speakers in Nigeria outnumber those in other countries by far. The estimated number of Kanuri speakers in Nigeria is between three to four million. Those in other

countries do not exceed five hundred thousand Cyffer (1998).

Kanuri is an amalgamation of several ethnic groups. The ethnic groups that constitute Kanuri language according to Bulakarima (1991), Bulakarima and Shettima (2012) are twenty different ethnic groups. The speech forms of the Kanuri ethnic groups are further classified into six major dialects. The classification of these six major dialects is based on their phonological, phonetic, morphological and semantic differences. The six major dialects according to Bulakarima (1991), Bulakarima and Shettima (2012) are:

(i) Manga (iv) Dagəra

(ii) Mowar (v) Bilma

(iii) suwurti (vi) Yerwa

The present study is based on Yerwa dialect of Kanuri which is the most widely used dialect of Kanuri and the Standard Kanuri Orthography (SKO) is written in Yerwa dialect of Kanuri (Cyffer 1991).

Trask (1996) defines possessive as a distinctive case form typically marking a noun phrase which servers a possessive role within a larger noun phrase. Morley (2000) says that, possessive pronouns mark possession by / belonging to a person or other entity and fulfil determiner and headword roles. As determiners they form part of a phrase with a noun, whereas as head word they constitute a phrase on their own and are separated by a verb form the noun or adjective to which they relate. Downing and Locke (2006) state that, possessive determiners include not just the possessive determiners my, your, his, her, its, your, their, but also the inflected‘s genitive form. The‘s determinative must be understood in a broader sense than that of the traditional term ‘possessive’.

According to Bulakama and Shettima (2011) state that, possessive pronouns in Kanuri are divided into two, namely: (i) independent (ii) dependent possessive as exemplified below

A. kaande

Ours /our

B. kaando

Yours / your (plural)

C. +nyi

My

D. +nəm

your (plural)

The example in 1a-b above shows the independent possessive pronouns while in 1c-d above shows dependent possessive pronouns

According to Fannami and Mu’azu (2012) possessive pronouns are used to indicate ownership or possession. Similarly, the possessive pronouns are those that act syntactically as nouns. Furthermore, the term “possessive pronoun” is also applied to so-call possessive adjective (or possessive determiners). Possessive can be classified into two: (i) dependent possessive pronouns (subjective) and (ii) independent possessive pronouns (objectives) as exemplify below.

A. bano -nem

Hoe your

Your hoe

B. kuwi -nzə

Hen his / her

His / her hen

C. kulodə kaanza

Farm the theirs

The farm is theirs

The examples in (1a-b) above shows that dependent possessive pronouns nəm 'your' and nzə; his / her' post modify the head nouns bano 'hoe' and kuwi 'hen' respectively. While in example (1c) above shows that independent possessive kaanza 'theirs' post modifier noun phrase kulodə 'the farm'. This paper describes and analyzes the syntactic aspect of structure of possessive modifiers in text by adopting descriptive approach.

The descriptive linguistics a theoretical framework due to the fact that the model is general in nature and can adequately describe the structure of the possessive modifier in Kanuri. Descriptive linguistics gives a comprehensive, systematic, objective and precise account of the patterns and use of a specific language or dialect at a particular point in time. The aim of descriptive linguistic is to describe the facts of linguistics usage as they are not how they are ought to be with reference to some real or imagined ideal state Crystal (1985) Cyffer (1998) identify several categories of modifiers, of which the most common are possessive, determiner, adjective, and numeral. Possessive as one of the modifier type occur after the head noun it modifiers.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The Kanuri Possessive pronoun is classified into two: (i) dependent possessive pronouns and (ii) independent possessive pronouns .In the text, we identified four hundred and twelve (412) instances of possessive. Based on our classification, the different possessive found in the text were: *nyi* 'my', *nəm* 'your' *nzə* 'his or her *nde* 'our' *ndo* 'your' *nza* 'their' are dependent (bound morphemes) and *kakke* 'mine' *kaanəm* 'yours' *kaanzə* 'his or her' *kaande* 'ours' and *kaanza* 'theirs' are independent (free morphemes). Then we calculated the percentage of their occurrences using the formulae indicated below:

$$POP = \frac{NOP}{TNP} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

Where: POP is the percentage of occurrence of possessive

NOP is the number of occurrence of each possessive

TNP is the total number of possessive found in the text

The table (1) below shows the different possessive, their number of occurrences and their percentages as found in the text.

S/NO	Different possessive found in the text as post modifier	Number of their occurrences	Percentage of their occurrences
1	*nzə* 'his'her'	104	25.24%
2	*nəm* 'your'	83	20.14%
3	*nyi* 'my'	64	15.53%
4	*nde* 'our'	57	13.83%
5	*ndo* 'your'	48	11.65%
6	*nza* 'their'	42	10.19%
7	*Kaanza "theirs"*	4	0.97%
8	*kaanəm* 'yours'	3	0.72%
9	*kaanzə* 'his, her'	3	0.72%
10	*Kakke 'mine'*	3	0.72%
11	*kaande* 'ours'	1	0.24%
	Total	412	100%

The table 1 above shows that out of four hundred and twelve (412) instances of occurrence of possessive as post modifier found in the text, *nzə* 'his, her' occurs in 104 instances which constitutes the highest percentage of the occurrence with 25.24% in the text analyzed. The *nəm* 'your' occurs in 83 instances which constitutes 20.14%, *nyi* 'my' occurs in 64 instances which constitutes 15.53%, *nde* 'our' occurs in 57 instances which constitutes 13.83%, *nza* 'your' occurs in 48 instances which constitutes 11.65%, *ndo* 'your' occurs in 42 instances which constitutes 10.19%, *kaanza* 'theirs' occurs in 4 instances which constitutes 0.97%, *kaake* 'mine', *kaanəm* 'yours' and *kaanzə* 'his, her' each occurs in 3 instances with 0.72% each, *kaande* 'ours' occurs in 1 instance with 0.24%. The study observed that the dependent (bound morpheme) and independent possessive (free morpheme) functioning as post modifier modifying nouns. In terms of possessable nouns, it's very common to find a division between what is known as alienable, inalienable and affiliation possession as exemplified below.

How the possessive Modifiers Appear in Kanuri Sentences

Alienable / Inalienable Possessive Modifier

Alienable /Inalienable possessive is when a dependent possessive is attached to a noun (animate / inanimate) it expresses possessions, animal or food, body part or person's relative as illustrated below:

(3) liwula -*nyi* nji -ro sukkuruna fandəke gongənyi (p21)

Needle -POSS water to falls get I did not take

My needle fell into the river I could not pick it

(4) wotia -*nəm* wu ro nasəgəna (46)

Letter POSS I to reach

I received your letter

(5) Daji kungəna -*nzə* sapsa goza leza kamu fal nyiyaza (22)

Ok money POSS they gather they go wife one they marry

Then, they contributed money and went and married a wife

(6) kolle tigə -*nyi* gana harzə duwo (p2)

Leave body POSS small dry than

Allow me to have my body dried

(7) Kámù -*nyí* dóndì (p9)

Wife –my sick

My wife is sick

(8) gəratiye ro -*nde* -ro (p6)

We hide life POSS to

Let's hide for our lives

The above examples (3,4 and 5) , the bound possessive modifier *nyi* "my", *nəm* "your" and *nzə* "his" are suffixed to the alienable head noun to modify the head nouns *liwula* "needle", *wotia* "letter" and *kungəna* "money" respectively.

The examples (6, 7 and 8) above show that the possessive modifier *nyi* "my" and *nde* "our" occur as a bound morpheme which modify the inalienable noun *tigə* "body", *kamu* "woman" and *ro* "life" respectively.

Affiliation Possessive Modifier

Affiliation possessive modifier is when a dependent possessive modifier is attached to a nouns or independent possessive modifier comes after a nouns it express membership in a large group or an individual person. Consider the following examples taken from the text.

(9) Kámù -*nyí* dóndì (p9)

Wife –my sick

My wife is sick

(10) sawa -*nza* kudukare -də daji napsə kairo (p10)

Friend their tortoise DET ok he sit cry

Then, their friend the tortoise sits and cried

(11) lardə *kaanza* -ro walzə sandi napsai (p40)

Country POSS to became they they sit

They possess the country and resided

The examples (9, and10) above shows that the dependent possessive modifier *nyi* "my" and *nza* "their" occur as a bound morpheme which modify the head nouns *kamu* "woman" and *sawa* "friend" respectively. In example 11 above the independent possessive modifier *kaanza* "theirs" occurs as a free morpheme which modifier the head noun *lardə* "country".

Conclusion

This paper examines the structure of possessive modifier in Kanuri text. The study revealed that nyi 'my', nəm 'your', nzə 'his,her', nde 'our', ndo 'your', nza 'their', are bound morpheme and kakke 'mine', kaanəm 'yours', kaanzə 'his, her', kaande 'our' kaanza 'theirs' free morpheme. The structure of possessive modifier can also function as alienable / inalienable and affiliation depending on the head noun it attached to. Apart from presenting the structure of possessive modifier in tabular from, an attempt has also been made to classify them and examine the frequency of their occurrences in the text. Finally we have presented the structure of possessive modifiers and illustrated the presentation with examples in sentences which have been analyzed.

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