Object marketing in Kihehe

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Abstract

This study was a descriptive analysis of object marking (OM) in Kihehe. The study specifically focused on morphological morphemes that could occupy the object position, explaining the behaviour of the post-verbal noun phrases (NPs) in relation to OM and the role of discourse in Kihehe object marking. Generally, the study aims at analysing the syntax and discourse of object marking in Kihehe.

Specifically, the study focused on the following specific objectives:

- To identify the morphological morphemes that could occupy object position;

- To explain the behaviours of post-verbal NPs in relation to object hood features; and

- To explain the role of discourse in Kihehe object marking.

In order to provide a descriptive analysis of object marking in Kihehe, which was the main aim of this study, the study employed a qualitative research design. It was qualitative due to the nature of data that needed to be collected. The data that were collected included oral data, which were later transcribed into words in a written form. Other data were obtained from various Kihehe texts. Data were collected in the natural setting. The aim was to obtain data that explain how the language is used in natural setting.

Data was collected from primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources included interviews (structured interviews) with focused group discussions and questionnaires with a list of sentences to be elicited. Secondary data was obtained from Kihehe text and narrative books.

The study could not cover all geographical areas in Iringa Region. It based on research conducted in Ipilimo Village, which is found in lhowanza Division, Mufindi District. The village 'was preferred because it had a large number of Kihehe native speakers and it had less influence from other languages. Kihehe was used as the medium of communication in homes, local churches, and in local community gatherings.

The informants for this study were obtained using snowball or chain sampling. Snowball sampling starts with principled list of key respondents who are then tasked to recruit further participants who are similar to them in some respect central to the investigation.

The selection of informants was done basing on languages background, age, gender, and level of education. Basing on language background, all informants who were selected had good command of Kihehe as their first language. In terms of age, the study included young male and elders (male and female). Elders who were consulted were those who knew clan histories and often made public speeches in a native language. This helped the researcher to collect data that reflected what the original Kihehe language was like.

With regard to education background, both literate and non-literate informants were selected. Even though it was assumed that the non-literate informants may know more about oral history of the culture; literate informants were also used, as they were useful as they could fill in the questionnaires and could read and write. In addition, males and females are said to use language differently. Therefore, gender was an important criterion for informants selections.

Considering all factors, the study involved 10 informants. There were four elders (two males and two females), who were used during focused group discussion. Also, included in the selection were three (3) young males who were able to engage in conversation that was recorded and provided maximum insight on the topic and three primary school teachers (one female and two males) who filled in the questionnaires.

To accomplish the description of object marking in Kihehe, various methods were used in gathering data. The methods included elicitation, which was done through focused group discussion. Other data were obtained through questionnaires and through reviewing written materials. Elicitation is a method of obtaining reliable linguistic data from the informants' either actual utterances or judgments about utterances.

In this study, a questionnaire consisting of sentences that were specifically designed to reflect various aspects of object marking was prepared and used as a means of gathering data. The sentences were written in English. Therefore, 60 sentences with variety of arguments structure possibilities (transitive and ditransitive verb) were determined in advance. The questionnaires were presented to the four informants (who were primary school teachers) and they were asked to fill them in Kihehe. The sentences aimed at testing the elements that could occupy the object position, their number and order of occurrence. They also tested how the postverbal NPs behaved in relation to the objecthood features.

Written materials used in this study included church literature in Kihehe language, such as Tukumwiwuka Uyuva veto Telesa (We are remembering our mother Telesa) and other Kihehe short stories. The collection of written material was very important as it helped to know not only the role of discourse in object marking in Kihehe but also determining the function object clitic in Kihehe, whether it was an agreement or pronominal role or both.

Also, in some occurrences, recorded data from three youths involved in conversation during working hours, was recorded using audio recorder. Three conversations were recorded but only one was selected and used for data analysis. Therefore, the researcher's task was to analyse the recorded conversation and examine how object marking was manifested in spontaneous speech.

The collected data were analysed using descriptive method. Recorded data were transcribed accordingly. After transcription, data were further analysed using pre coding and coding. Pre-coding involved reading and rereading transcript, reflecting on them and noting down the researcher's thought. Coding involved reading the texts and highlighting all the verbs relevant to object marking.

Using verb fragmentation (morphological parsing) and coding methods, verb complex structures were broken down into fragments to separate the pre-stem and post-stem affixes from their roots. Then, morphemes were coded with labels and their meanings were given accurately with the functions they denote. Apart from that, descriptive statement and tables were also used. Descriptive statements were used to explain and illustrate data collected while tables were used to present summaries. In addition, tree diagrams were used to show structural relations between different constituents in the constructions in relation to the binding principles.

The study found out only one marker occupied the object position in a Kihehe verb template at a time or sometimes the position might not be filled at all. The 0M in Kihehe occupied slot number 9 of the verb template after all other inflectional morphemes were attached. Morphemes that could occupy this position included noun class prefix, personal pronoun affixes, the reflexive, the reciprocal and the locative affixes. Locative affixes occupied the object position only when the post-verbal position was occupied by the locative NP.

Using three object hood parameters (cliticisation, passivization and word order) to analyze the status of the post-verbal NPs in relation to the objecthood features, the study found that the tests provided conflicting results. First, in both mono-transitive and ditransitive verbs (i.e. natural ditransitive, causative, applicative verbs as well as and body parts NPs) only one object marker occupied the object position. That is, in mono-transitive verbs, direct object occupied the object position and in ditransitive verbs, indirect object did that. Secondly, with the word order criterion, when the indirect object marker occupies the object slot, the postverbal NPs occurred in free word order. That is, either of the two nouns could occur close to the verb.

Basing on the data from written Kihehe texts and recorded conversation, it was clear that the conditions determining 0M in Kihehe were morph-syntactic properties and discourse. The discourse features determining 0M in Kihehe included definiteness, person and specificity. Animacy feature did not play significant role in Kihehe 0M. Therefore, animate NPs were not always object marked. In order for the animate NP to be object marked it has to be definite and specific. Due to that, even inanimate NPs occupying the object position might be marked as long as they were definite and specific. Proper nouns, kingship terms, titles, and person pronouns rank in the person hierarchy system of object marking.

Regarding the function of the object marker in Kihehe, the study established that Kihehe 0M could function as an agreement morpheme and sometimes as incorporated pronoun. An agreement function (co-occurrence of the 0M with an overt object NP) was restricted to the definite and specific object NPs whereas pronominalization function (occurrence of the 0M without an overt object NP) occurred with indefinite and unspecific object NPs.

Given the foregoing findings, the study recommended that:

- A much-detailed study needed to be done in Kihehe on the status of reciprocal and reflexive as well as locative object marking since these were thinly discussed in this study; and

- A study should be done on what determines the OM to be pronominal or agreement, and whether it has anything to do with the nature of the verbs.