What's in a Name? An Exposition of Gĩkũyũ Grammar through Personal Names

Peter Kinyanjui Mwangi
Karatina University
Karatina – Kenya

Abstract

When we look at personal names, we find that they are generated by the grammatical rules of a language. An analysis of personal names would show that they are derived from nouns, verbs, nominal modifiers and even larger elements like noun phrases. Many types of transformations like pre-fixation, suffixation; nominalization, passivization and even reflexivization are exhibited. Consequently, the coding of information into personal names is based on the lexical, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic rules of the language. This paper focuses on the basic linguistic principles that underlie the construction of Gĩkũyũ (pronounced as Gɛkɔyɔ) personal names. The paper draws on linguistic procedures, documented descriptions as well as knowledge of the Gĩkũyũ language structure. The results indicate that the characterization of Gĩkũyũ names is a clear reflection of a large part of Gĩkũyũ grammar. A total of 300 Gĩkũyũ personal names were analysed for this study.

1.0 Introduction

The Gĩkũyũwho number about six million people according to the 1999 census live in the central highlands of Kenya and constitute the largest ethnic group in Kenya. To the Gĩkũyũ, personal names are very important features of their language and not mere labels like John, Peter and James. These names are directly derived from the language and as such are a perfect reflection of the language. Apart from their individual lexical meanings, Gĩkũyũ names are generally a reflection of the grammatical structure of the language. Thus if one was to study the structure of a substantial number of Gĩkũyũ names, he would have learnt a significant part of the grammar of the language. This paper aims at analyzing the structure of personal names as a mirror to the grammar of the Gĩkũyũ language. This study shows that personal names can form an important aspect in the teaching of a language.

1.1 Rationale

Indigenous languages are very important in national development since they are the window through which indigenous people view the universe. Indigenous languages are full of indigenous knowledge, values and attributes that make a people. Moreover, they help leaner's build strong ties with their cultural heritage as they develop a deep sense of cultural pride and identity. Indeed, as Njoroge and Gatambuki (2012) have argued, the greatest and most important gift a parent can give a child is to pass their language and culture. Teaching of indigenous languages is therefore a worthwhile exercise that should be embraced by all. This paper presents the grammar of an indigenous African language as demonstrated in personal names.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

The theory used for this study was Lexical Morphology (LM) as advanced by Katamba (1986, 1993). The basic method adopted in this theory is morphological analysis in which words are broken down into functionally meaningful lexical units whose grammatical meanings are decipherable. Katamba (1993) presents his morphological theory within the linguistic model of generative grammar (GG) as advanced by Chomsky (1957). The central objective of GG is to understand the nature of linguistic knowledge that is exhibited by language users. Chomsky (1957) argued that language users have implicit knowledge of rules of a language that make production and understanding of a large number of utterances possible. LM exhibits a system of rules which apply to generate an indefinite number of words. The rules capture the generalizations where one rule accounts for all alternatives. Given a set of rules, one may predict other forms in which the rule may apply unless otherwise specified. In other words, linguistic productivity is a product of linguistic knowledge that is mostly rule governed. In modern linguistics, linguistic rules are statements of principles responsible for the observed regularities in the speech of a particular language (Katamba 1993:5).

This means that if one was to master the system of rules that enables speakers of a language to encode and decode limitless number of utterances, one could be said to have mastered that language. One subset of this rule system is the rules of word formation which is the core of this investigation. These rules bring out morphological processes that include inflection, derivation and compounding among others. LM argues that word formation rules operate both inside and outside the lexicon. To this end, Katamba (1993) proposes a layered approach to lexical analysis from the most basic levels of fones and phonemes to the most advanced such as syntax and semantics. Lexical Morphology allows analysts to analyze word forms at different levels; phonological, morphological or syntactical without having to shift from one theory to another. The only requirement is that one has to explain the rules governing the processes being witnessed at any particular level. In this respect aspects of the word that are phonological or syntactic in nature could be explained in a morphological study without having to resort to phonological or syntactic theories. Personal names are part of the vocabulary of a language and therefore their structure is expected to follow the general pattern of the language. By grouping names with similar or related forms together, we are able to analyze the structure of personal names and by extension the grammar of a language.   In this respect, a theory of word formation was deemed adequate as a basis for the study of the grammar of Gĩkũyũ personal names.

1.4 Literature Review

This section gives a brief exposition of Gĩkũyũ grammar. The Gĩkũyũ vowels, consonants and syllable structures are illustrated. The sections also demonstrate the link between personal names and the grammar of a language.

1.4.1 The Gĩkũyũ Language

In Africa, personal names are an integral part of the vocabulary of a language and therefore expected to reflect the structure of that language (Essien, 2000). Gĩkũyũ is one of the central Bantu languages placed in position 51 in group E by Guthrie (1967). Gĩkũyũ has seven vowels namely/i/, /e/, /ɛ/, /ɔ/, /a/, /o/, /u/and 17 consonants (Mũgane 1999). Table 1 shows the phonetic transcription of Gĩkũyũvowels.

Table 1: Gĩkũyũ Vowels

Vowel	Phonetic transcription	As in
/i/	/i/	[in]
/e/	/e/	[error]
/ĩ/	/ɛ/	[apple]
/ũ/	/ɔ/	[owl]
/a/	/a/	[another]
/o/	/o/	[on]
/u/	/u/	[ooze]

The 17Gĩkũyũ consonants are /mb/, /m/, /t/, /nd/, /n/, /r/, /ɲɟ/, /tʃ/, /k/, /γ/, /θ/, /h/, /ŋ/ /ŋg/, /ɲ/, /β/, /w/. The vowels combine with the consonants to form Gĩkũyũ syllables. These syllables are CV, CCV or CCCV clusters as in the words ***ka**na* (child), ***ngu**i* (dog), ***mbw**e* (wolf). Gĩkũyũ, vowels can appear either at the initial, middle or final positions. But because Gĩkũyũ has open syllables, the normal environment for the vowels is either at the middle or final positions (Mwĩhaki, 1997). Like in other languages, the most important grammatical elements in Gĩkũyũ are nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. Most Gĩkũyũ nouns consist of a prefix and a stem. For instance the noun *mũthuri (a man)* consists of the prefix "mũ" and the root "*thuri*". The plural form of this noun is *athuri (*men*)* which consists of the prefix "*a"* and the same stem "*thuri"*. The diminutive for this noun is "*gathuri*" (small man) which consist of the prefix "*ga*" and the same stem. The plural is "*tũthuri"* (small men) which consists of the prefix "tũ" and the same stem. Other nouns like the noun for a person (*mũndũ*) can be inflected in the same manner to get "*andũ*" (persons), "*kamũndũ*" (a small person), "*tũmũndũ*" (small persons), "*kĩmũndũ*" (a huge person) and "*imũndũ*" (huge persons), "*ũmũndũ*" (humanity). In every noun it is the stem that carries the real meaning of the noun while the prefix gives extra information about the noun for example whether it is singular or plural, diminutive or augmentative or whether it is concrete or abstract. In Bantu languages, the prefix also shows the sort of concordial agreement that the noun should enter with other grammatical elements in a sentence such as verbs, adverbs, adjectives, pronouns and demonstratives (Mugane, 1999). Examples 1 (a-d) are illustrate such agreements in the Gĩkũyũ language.

1.

a.	**Mũ**ndũũrĩa**mw**erũ**mũ**rayanĩo**ka**	(the tall, white person has come)
b.	**Ka**mũndũ**karĩa**ke**rũka**rayanĩ**go**oka	(the (small) tall white person has come)
c.	**Tũ**mũndũ**tũ**rĩa**tw**erũ**tũ**rayanĩ**tu**oka	(the (small) tall white persons has come)
d.	**Kĩ**mũndũ**kĩ**rĩa**kĩ**rayanĩ**gĩ**oka	(the (big) white tall person has come)

The highlighted parts show the kind of agreement that the subject noun enters with other parts of speech in a sentence. In the Gĩkũyũ language, this kind of agreement has given rise to 17 distinct noun classes (Mũgane, 1997). Besides nouns, Gĩkũyũnames can also be derived from other parts of speech especially verbs, and adjectives. The Gĩkũyũ verb morphology, like that of other Bantu languages is very complex because of its ability to agglutinate several morphemes. Tenses, aspects, pronouns, moods... are affixed to the verb and the verb has to agree with the subject. Example (2) below is an illustration of the agglutinative nature of the Gĩkũyũverb:

(2).   Nĩ-ndĩ-ra- mũ-rehe-i-re-   I brought it for him/her
         I-do-past-him-bring-for

In this example, the subject, tense, object and action are all compressed in the same word through affixation. Such a word is therefore not merely a word but a complete sentence as shown in the translation.

1.4.2 Names and Grammar

Several scholars have studied African personal names and alluded to their connection to the grammar of a language. Early studies on African names were carried out by European anthropologist like Pritchard (1940), Beattie (I957), Middleton (I961), and Levi- Strauss (1966) in the first half of the nineteenth century. These scholars were intrigued by African names which they saw as different from European names due to their ability to carry and convey different types of messages (Levi-Strauss 1966). Some of the messages that were borne by these names included characteristics and behaviors of people, socio-economic and political attributes customs and traditions (Tonkin 1980:653). Scholars have decried the lack of interest by linguists on African onomastics (Lipka, 2000). Recently however, interest in African names especially their linguistic forms has risen with west African and south African scholars such as Mohome (1972), Akinnaso (1980), Suzman (1994), Essien (2000) and Koopman (2002) leading the pack. Akkinasso (1980) studied Yoruba names and discussed briefly about the structure of those names. According to him, African names:

"Have special characteristics, a complex linguistic and semantic structure that is generally related to the African value system." (Akinnaso 1980: 276) Akinnaso (1980) found that Yoruba names were derived from nouns, noun phrases or complete sentences. Essien (2000) studied Ibibio names and concluded that the names were a reflection of Ibibio grammar. In East Africa, Kimenyi (1977), Muzale (1998) and Rubanza (2000) have described the structure of names in their languages namely Kinyarwanda,Haya and Ha. Makanda (2006) also studied the structure of names among the Luloogoli of Kenya and described in detail the rules of word formation that were operational in Luloogoli personal names. These studies on personal names conducted in other contexts have valid lessons for all languages. It is vital to establish what holds true for Gĩkũyũ language and this is the central impetus of this paper.

1.5 Methodology

The data for this study was collected from the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) of Kenya voter's register. A total of 500Gĩkũyũ names were randomly sampled from three constituencies in Central province of Kenya. This province was selected because it's the native homeland of the Gĩkũyũ people. The IEBC list was chosen because it has updated version of all available Gĩkũyũ names. We concentrated on the middle names which enabled us to select names from both genders and also avoid Christian names. After this, names that were similar were removed from the data so that each name had only one entry. This process left us with 300 names. The data was subjected to a detailed analysis by the researcher who is a fluent speaker of the language. The researcher used five informants who were purposefully sampled because of their knowledge of the language. These informants used their institutional memory and intuition to provide the most reliable meanings and possible etimologies of the names in our data. This information assisted the researcher in classifying the names into different grammatical categories. After this, the researcher who is a native speaker of the language was able to establish the roots of the names in the data by separating the prefixes from the roots. Having found the roots of all the names in our study, we were able to establish the various structural transformations and processes that go into the structure of personal names.

Since the rules of word formation applied in the structure of personal names are similar to those applied in other word forms, this analysis was able to prove that one can actually study basic Gĩkũyũ grammar by analyzing the personal names.

2.0 The Morphology of Personal Names

There are four major elements that are considered to constitute the grammar of any language. These are nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs (Payne 1977). Although there are other elements in language such as conjunctions, interjections, pronoun and adverbs, this study showed that Gĩkũyũ personal names are mostly derived from nouns and noun phrases, verbs and adjectives. A few names were compounds of nouns and verbs. Other names were nativized foreign words which have been assimilated into the Gĩkũyũ language. These were not analysed due to constraints of space. No name was related to adverbs. The distribution of nominal, verbal and adjectival bases in our data is shown in table 1.

Table 2: Distribution of Grammatical Elements Making up Gĩkũyũnames

Root	Number of names	percentage
Nouns	144	48
Verbs	93	31
Adjectives	45	15
Others	18	6
Total	300	100

This table shows that the bulk of Gĩkũyũ names were derived from nouns and noun phrases (48 %) followed by verbs (31 %) and adjectives (15 %). The 6% others consisted of compounds and nativized names. By examining the structure of all these name categories, we were able to gain some general understanding of the grammar of Gĩkũyũ language. In every language there exist rules that relate to formation of words (Mathews (1972). It is these morphological rules that determine how morphemes combine to form words. Since Gĩkũyũ is basically an agglutinating language, one can apply fragmentation in analyzing word forms. This was applied in our analysis as we sought to identify the base and affixes in the structure of personal names. Basically, seven major grammatical processes were found to take place in the formation of Gĩkũyũ personal names. These were zero affixation, prefixation, multiple affixation, suffixation, reflexivization and compounding. These processes were mostly performed on nouns, verbs and adjectives.

2.1noun and its Constituents as Names

The basic processes through which common nouns were transformed into personal names were either through zero affixation, pre-fixation or multiple pre-fixation. All these processes were inflectional since no new words were formed after their application. In zero affixation, common nouns are transformed into personal names without any changes being performed on them. These nouns retain their original uses but take on another function as a personal name. The meaning of the common noun is however not inferred in the personal name and is therefore not considered when using the name. The examples in table 3 illustrate this transformation.

Table 3: Personal Names Derives from Common Nouns

Common noun	Personal Name	Meaning
Ngigi	Ngigi	Locust
Thumbi	Thumbi	Crown
Ngũgĩ	Ngũgĩ	Public work
Mwera	Mwera	Hen
Ngina	Ngina	Bean

This category of names is composed of free morphemes and therefore their structure cannot be analyzed further. Such names are formed without any modifications on the structure of the base nouns. Names in this category refer to nouns such as plants, animals, parts of the body or even inanimate objects. Most of these names would be grouped in class 10 in the Gĩkũyũ noun class system. The other method used to transform Gĩkũyũ common nouns into personal names is through pre-fixation. When pre-fixation is applied on the base of a noun we get names such as those shown in table 4. The prefixes used in this process are the same as those used as noun class markers in the Gĩkũyũ noun class system.

The distribution of these prefixes replicates almost all the Gĩkũyũ noun class markers. In fact, it's only markers for classes 2, 8 and 13 (plural) and those of classes 16, 17 (place) that were not used as prefixes in the names used for this study. It is therefore apparent that one can learn almost the entire Gĩkũyũ noun class system by merely studying the prefixes in the personal names.

Table 4: Pre-Fixation on Gĩkũyũpersonal Names

Noun class	Class marker	Root	Name	Meaning
1	{mũ}	-thoni	Mũthoni	An inlaw
3	{mũ}	-tũndũ	Mũtũndũ	A tree
4	{mĩ}	-gwĩ	Mĩgwi	Arrows
5	{i}	-kinya	Ikinya	Foot
6	{ma}	-thu	Mathu	Paws
7	{kĩ}	-rũhĩ	Kĩrũhĩ	He goat
9	{N}	-jenga	Njenga	Ground maize
10	{N}	-gendo	Ng'endo	Journeys
11	{rũ}	-gara	Rũgara	Basket
12	{ka}	-romo	Karomo	A small mouth
14	{ũ}	-irũ	Ũirũ	Blackness
15	Kũ-	-gũrũ	Kũgũrũ	Leg

These examples show that common nouns can be prefixed with various class markers to form Gĩkũyũ personal names. For example the name [*Mũthoni*] is composed of two elements; class 1 marker {mũ} and the base {thoni}. Once the process of name formation is completed, the initial letter is capitalized as is the norm with all proper nouns. Most Gĩkũyũ names derived from nouns follow the same process though different class markers are used as prefixes as shown above. Diminutives in Gĩkũyũ are formed using class 12 markers {ka} or {ga} as in the names *Karomo* and *Gaciĩ*while augmentatives are always formed with the class 7 markers {kĩ} or {gĩ) as in the name *Kĩrũhi*. The plurals of these however cannot form names in Gĩkũyũ and were therefore not considered. However, the plural class markers of classes 4, 6 and 10 [{mĩ}, {ma} and {N-}] respectively are vastly used as prefixes in Gĩkũyũpersonal names. The use of these markers as prefixes in Gĩkũyũ personal names seems to contradict Rubanza, (2000) who says that plural markers are not very common in Bantu names.

2.2 The Noun Phrase as Names

Prefixing noun class markers is not the only way in which common nouns can be turned into personal names in Gĩkũyũ. Three other prefix morphemes are used with varying degrees of productivity. These are the possessivemorphemes {wa-}, {kia-}and {nya-}. When used in a sentence, {wa} and {kĩa} agrees concordially with the subject though it only forms names with the object noun. In the ensuing transformation, the possessive morpheme is attached to the object noun while the subject is dropped from the construction. It is possible to reconstruct the undelying form of these names as shown in table 5.

Table 5: The noun Phrase Construction

S/no	Name	Underlying form			Meaning
		subject	possessive	object	
1.	Wang'ombe	Mũrĩithi	wa	Ng'ombe	The keeper of cows
2.	Wamuciĩ	Mũtumia	wa	Mũciĩ	The woman of the home
3.	Kiambũthĩ	Kinya	kia	Mbũthĩ	The gourd of seeds
4. k	Kabũrũ	Kaana	ka	Mbũrũ	The child of Mbũrũ

The {wa} construction occurs almost entirely with class one nouns while {kĩa} takes class 7 concords as example 3 above show. On rare occassions however, class 12 concords may be used as in the names "*Kabũrũ*" (*kaana ka Mburu*) and "*Kang'ethe*" (*kaana ka Ng'ethe*) . The {wa} construction isthe most productive, forming both masculine and feminine names. It can also be attached to nominalized verbs to make more names. The {nya-} construction which isused exclusively in female names uses the same process to form names. Unlike the other two possessive morphemes, {nya-} can be used both as a prefix or a pre- prefix on various nouns, nominalized verbs or adjectives.

Some authors have argued that this construction may have emanated from proto-bantu where it may have been used to mean "mother of" or "woman with" (Musere and Odhiambo (1999). The table below shows some examples of personal names using this construction with various nouns.

Table 6: The {nya} Construction

Possessive	Object	Name	Meaning
{nya}	Kĩo	Nyakĩo	An industrious woman
{nya}	kĩrĩnga	Nyakĩrĩnga	A big cup (pejorative)
{nya}	wĩra	Nyawĩra	A hard working woman
{nya}	Uhoro	Nyahoro	A talkative woman
{nya}	Ruiru	Nyarũirũ	A woman from Ruiru

All these names have a possessive meaning. Apart from forming names with nouns, these possessive morphemes can also form names with verbs and adjectives as well.

2.3 Nominal Modifiers as Names

As has been stated earlier, Gĩkũyũ nominal modifiers must agree concordially with their subject and therefore take the same prefixes as their subjects. In Gĩkũyũ, the modifiers that are most likely to form names are adjectives and numerals. As noted by Barlow (1960) Gĩkũyũ noun modifiers follow the subject and can act as surrogate nouns in contexts where both the speaker and listener know what the head noun is. Below are some nominal modifiers that are used as names in Gĩkũyũ:

i. Mũraya (tall)
ii. Mũkuhĩ (short)
iii. Mwerũ (white)
iv. Mũirũ (black)
v. Waigiri (two)
vi. Maingĩ (a lot)

It's worth noting that these modifiers behave like nouns themselves, with prefixes and bases. A name like "*Muraya*" consists of the prefix "*mũ*" and base "*raya*". Again this is a reflection of the concord between nominal heads and their modifiers in the grammar of the language as shown in 4 below.

4
i. Mũndũmũraya   a tall person
ii. Andũaraya   tall persons

As is the case with the nouns, nominal modifiers can also take diminutive or augmentative morphemes to make personal names. Consider the following names formed from the same base using class 7, 10 and 12 markers.

5
i. Kĩ-irũ   black- augmentative   class 7
ii. Nji-irũ   black– with class 9/10 concords
iii. Ka-irũ   black – diminutive   class 12

Class 7 and 12 concords are used with subjects that are deemed to be human (kĩmũndũ/kamũndũ) whereas classes 9/10 are used with non- human subjects such as animals (mbũrinjirũ). In Gĩkũyũ humans and animals are placed in different noun classes. The {nya-} morpheme can also be pre-prefixed on nominal modifiers to form feminine names discussed earlier. This process of multiple affixations only occurs on bases which were originally full masculine names. Examples are shown in 6 below.

6   Masculine name   Feminine name   Meaning
i. Mwerũ   Nya-mwerũ   (a white female- with class 1 concords)
ii. Kairũ   Nya-kairũ   (a black female- with class 12 concords)
iii. Kiriga   Nya-kiriga   (unknown female – with class 7 concords)

The names Mweru, Kairu and Kiriga are all masculine but when prefixed with the {nya} morpheme, they become feminine.

2.4 Names Derived from Verbs

This section discusses the derivation of personal names from verbs in the Gĩkũyũ language. There are two methods that are used in this process namely verb nominalization and verbal extension.

2.4.1 Verb Nominalization

Nominalization is the process through which verbs are transformed into nouns. When a nominalizing morpheme is suffixed to the root of the verb, the result is normally not another verb but a noun. Such morphemes are known as derivational morphemes because when they are affixed to a verb root, a new word is formed. The new word is normally in a different grammatical class than the un-derived word (Makanda, 2006). In Gĩkũyũ the nominalizing morphemes are the final vowels /e/, /i/, /o/ or /u/. Each of these suffixes gives the root a distinctive meaning different from, though related to the original word. The suffixes are added to the root of the verb after the final vowel /a/ which is found in all Bantu languages is removed from the construction (Katamba 1993, Mugane 1999). The new noun could depict active agent, passive agent, the product or result of some action or the state of some other noun. Finally a class marker is pre-fixed on this construction to denote the class of the new noun. The class markers commonly used with verbs to form personal names are {mũ}, {kĩ}, {ka} and {N}. These processes are shown in table 7

Table 7: Verb Nominalization

verb	prefix	class	Verb root	Nominalizer	Name	Meaning	Type
Ruga	{Mũ-}	1	-rug-	-i	Mũrugi	Cook	Active
Ũnũha	{Mũ-}	1	-nuh	-e	Mũnũhe	Destroyed one	Passive
Rĩa	{Kĩ-}	7	-rĩ-	-i	Kĩrĩi	One who eats a lot	Active
Tunga	{N}	10	-tung-	-o	Ndungo	Combined	Product
Gunya	{Ka-}	12	-guny-	-u	Kagunyu/	One who is moist	State

This method of nominalizing verbs to form nouns is very rich in producing personal names in Gĩkũyũ. Apart from using the agentive [i] morpheme, this process can use the entire vowel system with differing meanings such as passivity, product of some action or the state of some other noun. These meanings can be detected in names like in 7 (i-iii):

7

 i. Mũ-nũh-e   the passive agent (destroyed one)
 ii. Ndu-ng-o   the product(of something)
iii. Ka-guny-u the state (of being moist)

7 (i) represent names in passive form, 7 (ii) show the result of some action whereas 7 (iii) represent the state of some other noun.The final vowels are all derivational morphemes since they are the ones that transform the original verb into a noun. As shown in table 7, most derived names would fall in classes 1, 7, 10 or 12. The reason for this is simple. The nouns in all these classes represent human beings in different states.

2.4.2 Verbal Extensions

Verbal extension is one of the most prolific methods of word formation in many languages (Gathenji, 1981). In Gĩkũyũ as in most Bantu languages, verbal extensions are used very productively in creating new words (Kamau, 2002). The extensions give the main verb different meanings which depend on the intention of the user. The process is normally inflective since no new word forms are created (Gathenji, 1981). In Gĩkũyũ, verbal extensions are not very productive in the formation of personal names but a few examples can be found such as those in example 8 below.

8.

 i. Mũkur-i-a   one who makes noise as he walks
 ii. Kair-ith-ia   causer of darkness
iii. Kĩ-rĩm-ĩr-e one who relies on another person
 iv. Ka-hu-th-i-a   one who makes issues lighter

As can be seen from the examples above, the verb may include one or more verbal extensions when it is the base of a name. Among the examples given above, we find the applied extension [i-a] in names like *Mũkuria* and the causative extension (-ith) in names like *Kahũithia.*

2.4.3 Reflexivization

Reflexivization applies when the subject and the object are co-referential. A fewGĩkũyũ personal names are formed through reflexivization. The process involves repetition of the subject noun in the verb form.   The reflexive marker is the morpheme {ĩ} [ɛ] which follows other prefixes. In the following names, the subject {mũ-} is reflexed by the morpheme {ĩ} [-ɛ]. The general meaning of the names is "one who does something to him/herself". The names in 9 (i-iii) are examples of names derived through this method.

9
  i. Mũ-ĩ-cĩgi   one who prides himself
  ii. Mũ-ĩ-reri   one who brings himself up
  iii. Mũ-ĩ-haki   one who smears (something) on herself

From the foregoing, it is apparent that the verb readily transforms into a noun through derivational processes. Again this is a reflection of the ability of the Gĩkũyũ language to increase its vocabulary through internal means of word formation.

2.5 Compounds as Names

Compounding is a process of word formation that involves joining together two elements each with a full lexical meaning (Lieber, 1992). One can easily tell the meaning of the compound by discerning the meaning of the parts that make up the compound. The boundaries of the parts are also easily noticeable. In the examples on table 8, two elements, a verb and a noun are joined and then pre-fixed with a class marker. The class marker shows the class of the new word.

Table 8: Compound Names

Prefix	Verb	Noun	Name	Meaning
mũ	gwa	nja	Mũgwanja	One who falls outside
mũ	Tua	rũhiũ	mũtuarũhiũ	One who breaks a sword
ka	iria	Nja	Kairianja	One who makes compound dirty
ka	gwa	Thĩ	Kagwathĩ	One who falls down
ka	rĩa	Mbũri	Karĩambũri	One who eats goats

Compound name structures are not common in Gĩkũyũ but these examples serve to show how compounding is used in the language to create new words.

3.0 Summary and Conclusion

We have seen in this paper the linguistic structure of Gĩkũyũ personal names in terms of morphological constructions, their modifications and general development. We have also seen that names are morphologically analyzable following the same agglutination principle of Bantu morphology. From our discussion, we have left no doubts about the grammatical properties of Gĩkũyũ names. As we have demonstrated Gĩkũyũ grammar is largely contained in personal names. Thus one can learn the language from names alone because they are derived and are actually a part of the lexicon of the language. A name could either be a noun, a verb, a nominal modifier or a noun phrase. Furthermore, this study has revealed various morphological processes in the language that include affixation, derivation, compounding and reflexivization. We have also shown the various forms of verbs in the language namely active and passive verbs. Finally, the study has revealed what may once have been a grammaticalization of the female gender in the Gĩkũyũ language.

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