Nominalization in Swo (Bantu A82, Cameroon)
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Introduction

Bantu languages and Swo
Introduction | Localization of Swo

○ Swo is spoken in the Central region of Cameroon
○ The speakers live in the tropical forest in a couple of villages, of which Melan and Mvan are the biggest ones
○ Between 9 000 and 12 000 speakers
Bantu language, classified A82 in Guthrie’s (1948) reference system

Not so many resources on the A80-group, but two very good ones:

- Marion Cheucle, 2014, compared phonology and morphology of 8 languages (not Swo), reconstruction of a Proto-A80 language
- Nadine Grimm, 2015, descriptive grammar of Gyeli

Goal of my thesis is to write a descriptive grammar
Introduction | Bantu languages

- About 555 languages, all indicated by a code which indicates more or less its geographical area
- Spread over most of the African continent; from the south of Cameroon to southern Somalia all the way to the tip of South Africa
- Bantu languages generally have:
  - tone (H vs L or Ø)
  - noun classes/genders (8-14) combining into singular and plural pairs
  - persistent agreement depending on the gender of the head noun (modifiers + verb)
  - rich morphology, especially on the verbs
  - no distinction between definite/indefinite (> augment?)
  - no distinction in (biological) gender of animates

North-Western languages are typologically different from the rest; sometimes called “Macro-Sudan belt” (Güldemann 2008) or “Sudanic belt” (Clements & Rialland 2008)

- Strict maximality constraint on the length of stems > loss of segmental material > high number of floating tones
- Few or no tonally underspecified morphemes
- Almost not possible to stack verbal derivational suffixes

Example:

Gusii JE42 (Whiteley 1960:37)

\[\text{ba- tá- á- kó- raa- ná- gó- sang- er- er- ek- an- a}\]

Swo (TAMQ20_FOU M)

\[\text{ná- á- ‘nó- tsè- tsołè bò-kálârè}\]

SP2- NEG- PST- PROG-SEQ- CNT- PROG-meet- APPL- APPL- STAT- ASSOC- FV

3SG- PST2- PRES- REDUP-write 2-letter

‘They should perhaps first meet together’

‘He usually wrote letters’
Introduction | The Swo language

Allophones:
- ġ > ? _#
- k > ? V_V
- t > r V_V
- d > l V_V
- ŋ > ŋ V_V

Morphophonology:
- Homorganic nasal in some nominal prefixes: |N|-ùɾúm > /mùɾúm/ 1-man; |N|-sángé > /ǹsángé/ 3-jewel
- Structural vowels can surface quite differently:
  - |i| > /y/
  - |o| > /w/
  - |u| > /wa/ or /wo/
  - |ei| > /ery/
  - |a| > /e/ i |i-sá-i| > /Iséi/ > [Isê:y]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labials</th>
<th>Alveolars</th>
<th>Dorsals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plosives</td>
<td>p b</td>
<td>t d ts dz k g</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fricatives</td>
<td>f v</td>
<td>s z</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nasals</td>
<td>m n ŋ</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Approximants</td>
<td>w</td>
<td>l y</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Consonant phonemes in Swo.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Front</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>Back</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 i i:</td>
<td>u u:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 e e</td>
<td>ō o o:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 e e: e</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 a a:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Vowel phonemes in Swo.
Introduction | The Swo language

- Two-tone system (H and L); in words in isolation, tones sometimes sound like a M (but are structurally a contour)
- System with 8 genders (few even for a North-Western language)
- Word order: SV(X)O
  
  ṇná-kyàló wó bwábó-ndámbó bà-dás
  
  3SG-PRES-like give DIM:PL-young_man 2-gift
  
  S/he likes to give presents to (the) children.
- Order of adnominal modifiers is more or less free but with a spontaneous preference for:
  
  bì-lí by-áŋ bó-là:lò bí-gá
  
  8-tree VIII-1SG.POS VIII-3 VIII-DEM.PROX
  
  These three trees of mine.
Nominalization

In Bantu and in Swo
Forms of nominalization

- Verb-to-noun derivation
  - Agentive nouns
  - Action nouns
  - Instrument nouns
  - Rare cases
- Adnominal modifier to noun derivation
  - Possessives
  - Demonstratives, interrogatives
  - Relatives
Verb-to-noun derivation
Verb-to-noun derivation

By far the most productive; works with most if not all verbs in one form or another

General form:
- Always: gender assignment
- Possibly:
  - Suffix
  - Tonal change
  - Final vowel change

Gender assignment determines the interpretation of the derivation

Examples of general Bantu are from Van de Velde et al., The Bantu languages 2
Verb-to-noun | Agent nouns

- Generally in Bantu languages:
  - gender assignment 1/2 in most cases
  - suffix *-i after a root:
    - *mo-kó-i (cl. 1/2) ‘in-law’ < *-kó- ‘pay bridewealth’
    - *mo-ðé-d-i (cl. 3/4, 15) ‘moon, moonlight’ < *-ðé-d- ‘shine, be clear’
  - suffix *-á after a causative or passive extension:
    - Nyamwezi F22 (Maganga & Schadeberg 1992)
      - m-ðoúj-á ‘the one who asks’ < -ðoúj- ‘ask’ (CAUS) < -ðoúl- ‘reveal’
      - m-tóol-w-á ‘bride’ < -tóol-w- (PASS) < -tóol- ‘marry’
Agentive derivation in Swo works with almost every verb

- Gender assignment 1/2 in almost all cases so far; one exception:
  - ĕ-duñcwōʔō  ming-duñcwōʔō  person who loves food; 3/4

- No suffixes: verbal root and nominal root are identical, including verbal extensions/suffixation
  - Examples:
    - ĕ-lwî:  bà-lwî:  <  lwî:  person who speaks
    - ĕ-gyǎndô  bà-gyǎndô  <  gyǎndô  person who walks
    - ĕ-gwōlî  bà-gwōlî  <  gwō-lî APL  <  gwô  person who makes s.o. laugh

- Some exceptions:
  - ĕ-kâlò  <  ?kâ-lò ?  <  kò  person who leaves
  - ĕ-dzê:lî  <  ?dzê-lî ?  <  dzê  person who lives (i.e. occupies a home)

  > Doubly exceptional: pl. bà-ndzê:lî

lùò

for monosyllabic verbs?

> tonal change and vowel lengthening are still remarkable
Verb-to-noun | Non-agentive nouns

Proto-Bantu non-agentive nouns, i.e. actions, results and instruments, are derived with the final suffix *-ò, often with an applicative *-id-infix

*ki-did-ò (cl. 7/8) ‘mourning’  < *-did-  ‘cry, weep’
*m-pük-ò (cl. 9/10) ‘mole’  < *-pük-  ‘dig, fling up (earth)’
*dö-gend-ò (cl. 11) ‘journey’  < *-gend-  ‘walk, travel’

Current Bantu languages can derive objects and instruments with or without suffixing (Ambadiang 2011: 343-344);

- With suffixing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tunen</th>
<th>[Dugast 1971:271,277]</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i-sin-in</td>
<td>i-bien-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-look at-loc</td>
<td>7-give birth-loc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘mirror’</td>
<td>‘uterus’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Without suffixing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gunu</th>
<th>[Ambadiang 1988, 1990]</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ge-k5ba</td>
<td>ge-f5la</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-hit (-g5ba)</td>
<td>7-sweep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘drumstick’</td>
<td>‘broom’</td>
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</table>
Swo action nouns generally:

- are derived with the suffix -ʔà
- final vowel of the verb root is replaced in disyllabic verb stems but not in monosyllabic ones (insertion of anti-hiatus semi-consonant)
- final tone can be replaced
- are assigned to genders 3/4

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{m-bér-ʔà} & \quad \text{mím-bér-ʔà} & < \text{bérè} & \quad \text{action of going up} \\
\text{ń-dvíy-ʔà} & \quad \text{mín-dvíy-ʔà} & < \text{dvì} & \quad \text{action of opening (something)} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Sometimes stem alternations become visible:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ŋ-gúg-ʔà} & \quad \text{mín-gúg-ʔà} & < \text{gwáʔ} & \quad \text{action of swimming} \\
\text{ŋ-kúg-ʔà} & \quad \text{mín-kúg-ʔà} & < \text{kwáʔ} & \quad \text{action of crushing} \\
\text{m-búnd-ʔà} & \quad \text{mím-búnd-ʔà} & < \text{bwàndə} & \quad \text{action of peeling} \\
\end{align*}
\]
Can sometimes be used as a resultative:

- m-bùnd-áʔà píyè
- bàrà m-bùnd-áʔà píyè
- bò-píyè bò-láàłè mì-mbùnd-áʔà

3-peel-DER 1.avocado
big 3-peel-DER 1.avocado
‘a peeled avocado’
‘a big peeled avocado’
‘three peeled avocados’

In some cases, there is a derivation without suffixation, leading to a full noun:

- Verb and noun stems are identical
  - lúò ‘to show’
  - n-lúò ‘fishing rod’

- Final vowel change
  - gwvwúą ‘to call’
  - n-gvwúą ‘call’
  - fùmbù ‘to hunt’
  - n-fùmbò ‘hunt’

- Final tone change
  - bágè ‘to separate’
  - m-bágè ‘separation’
Verb-to-noun | Instruments and object nouns

- Quite productive; sometimes unpredictable form. Genders 7/8
  - Identical noun and verb stem:
    - i-sá ‘thing, object’ < sá ‘to do, to make’
    - i-kùlè ‘debt, loan’ < kùlè ‘to loan, to borrow’
  - With a final [àʔ]:
    - i-nòlà? ‘drink’ < nòlì ‘to drink’
    - i-vèrà? ‘lid, cover’ < vèrì ‘to cover’
  - Change of some segment:
    - i-zàgà ‘saw’ < sègè ‘to saw’
    - i-séèy ‘work, job’ < sá ‘to do, to make’
  - Adding of some segment:
    - i-dziyà ‘chair’ < dzi ‘to live’
  - Quality (with reduplication):
    - i-zò~zòndè ‘quality of being black’ < zòndè ‘blacken; starting of the night’
Verb-to-noun | Rare cases

Something that could be called resultative nouns, genders 5/6:

- bvúŋə  mà-bvúŋə  ‘heat, hotness’  <  bvúŋələ ‘to heat’
- byálə  mà-byálə  ‘birth’  <  byálə ‘to be born’
- mà-ngáŋgá反倒 inv.  ‘swelling’  <  ? ‘to swell’

Something that is derived from motion verbs, gender 6:

- mà-nyíì  ‘entry’  <  nyíì ‘to enter’
- mà-kə  ‘departure’  <  kə ‘to leave’
- ~ mà-sólì  ‘end’  <  sólì ‘to end’

Something that is derived through reduplication, genders 1/2:

- ñ-tó~‘ntálè  bà-tó~‘tále  ‘straightness’  <  tálə ‘to put upright’
- m̀-bvú~mbvúɾí  ‘on the stomach’  <  bvúɾí ‘to cover’

mà-kə  ñ-tsólì  mî-ndzɔ~ndzɔ-lé
1SG-leave  3-race  4-REP~live-DER.A

A ‘Je me déplace en voiture.’

Lit. ‘I leave (for) the race of those who are seated.’
Adnominal modifier-to-noun derivation
Adnominal modifier-to-noun | Possessives

- Possessive modifiers agree in gender of the possessee and in person and number of the possessor > 8*6 = 48 forms
- All can also be nominalized;
  - Prefix í- (looks like the augment, nominal pre-prefix)
  - Tone schemes change; all become LH except G5/6 1SG
- Some examples:
  - sâŋgò viĭ ‘our father’ > ínii G1
  - bi-dziyà byńa ‘their chairs’ > ímbyńa G8
  - mò-wáà mwóò ‘your twins’ > ímyóò G6
- Incompatible with modifiers
  - *mwáà-ímyóò; intended: ‘your small ones’ > ímyóò nè twá? ‘yours are small’
In Swo, demonstratives and an interrogative form can be used as nominalized forms (no overt derivation)

Demonstratives:
- nyígá ‘this one’ G1 < ex. píyò nyígá ‘this avocado’
- byígá ‘these ones’ G8 < ex. bilí byígá ‘these trees’

Interrogative:
- wò-nà-gí bà-píyò byáñàbì ? > byáñàbì ?
  2SG-PRES-want 2-avocado II:which II:which
- ‘Which avocados do you want?’
  ‘Which ones?’ G2
Two examples:

į-gwó mó Pierre nà wó mó Marie
3-house AC Pierre and III.REL AC Marie

‘Pierre’s house and the one of Marie.’

[i-ndündà] yíf tfúmbó nà yíf mw-bwòn]
[7-bean] VII.REL cook and VII.REL 3-grain

[speaking about beans] ‘(The) one to cook and (the) one to plant.’
Use of nominalized forms
No nominalization:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{nì-nó-gì} & \quad \text{ɲòli} \quad \text{(má-dvwọ́)} \\
\text{3SG-PRES-want} & \quad \text{drink (6-water)} \\
\text{yì} & \quad \text{wò-nó-gì} \\
\text{Q} & \quad \text{2SG-PRES-want} \\
\text{ő-de} & \quad \text{ị-gá} \\
\text{ɲòli} & \quad ?
\end{align*}
\]

‘S/he wants to drink (water).’

‘Do you want to eat or to drink?’ (exclusive question)

Nominalization:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{nì-nó-fịgọ́} & \quad \text{i-sá} \\
\text{3SG-PRES-ask} & \quad \text{7-thing} \\
\text{'đé} & \quad \text{nà} \\
\text{and} & \quad \text{yì-ɲòli} \\
\text{< ị-ɲọlà?} & \quad \text{‘drink’ (noun)}
\end{align*}
\]

‘S/he asks for something to eat and to drink.’
Nominalization:
\[nî-nô-zâlô \quad m-ô'rá \quad ŋ-îkômb-âʔà \quad mî-mbûŋ\]
3SG-PRES-help 1-woman 3-harvest-DER 4-cassava

‘S/he helps the woman (by) harvesting the cassava.’

No nominalization:
\[nî-nô-zâlô \quad fômbè \quad m-ô'rá \quad mî-mbûŋ\]
3SG-PRES-help harvest 1-woman 4-cassava

‘S/he helps the woman to harvest the cassava.’
Syntax | Fronting of the verbal form

Nominalization:

1-kàndò ló-té ló ní-nó-kyàlè
7-walk V-DEM V 3SG-PRES-like
‘Walking, that s/he likes.’

ǹ-déy-á?à wó nyí-nó-kyàlè
3-eat-DER III 3SG-PRES-like
‘Eating is what they like.’

m-bvír-á?ò tû ŋú mbwògè jú bwábó-ndànmbó
3-hit-DER be.NEG good for DIM:PL-young man
‘Hitting (the) children is not good.’
Lit. ‘Hitting is not good for (the) children.’
Syntax | Causative sentences

Nominalization:

\[
\text{m-òróm ná-wó m-òrá i-sá nyámbè.}
\]
1-man PRES-give 1-woman 7-thing cook
‘The man makes the woman cook.’

*Lit.* ‘The man gives the woman something to cook.’

No nominalization:

\[
\text{m-òróm ná-wó m-ò'rá tfûmbé i-ndûndà.}
\]
1-man PRES-give 1-woman cook 7-bean
‘The man makes the woman cook beans.’

*Lit.* ‘The man gives the woman to cook bean.’
Syntax | Associative constructions

Nominalization:

ŋ̀-kásè m̀-bvír-öʔ ñú bwábó-ndəmbə

3-stick 3-hit-DER for DIM:PL-young_man

‘A stick to hit children.’

Lit. ‘A stick of hitting for the children’

No nominalization:

bùrò ñú tfúmbò

5.cooking_pot for cook

‘A cooking pot for cooking.’
Syntax | Complement phrases

Nominalization?

vì tùʔú nò í-sá vì wò nêè
1PL be.NEG with 7-thing 1PL give 3SG.O

‘We don’t have anything to give to him.’

Lit. ‘We are not with a thing we give him.’

Nominalization:

mò-nà-bə̀rə̀ nò ñ-kàsè jú m-vyíg-áʔə̀ bwàbà-ndàmbá
1SG-PRES-use with 3-stick for 3-hit-DER DIM:PL-young_man

‘I use a stick to hit the children.’

Lit. ‘I use with a stick for the hitting (of) children.’
Particle of some sorts before the verb; generally in Bantu infinitives are of gender 5 or 15 but those don’t have the form a-
à-nó-túò náà à-bví mwá-ndömbó
3SG-PRES-get_up COMP ?-hit DIM:SG-young_man
‘S/he gets up to hit the child.’

à-nó-túò náà à-kó bí-séžy
3SG-PRES-get_up COMP ?-go 8-work
‘S/he gets up to go to work.’
From a traditional story about a mosquito battling a lion; the mosquito wins by hiding in the lion’s fur and irritating his skin.

‘There is no way for him [the lion] to untangle his fur and get out the mosquito.’

Lit. ‘The way for him [the lion] to untangle his fur so that he gets out the mosquito is absent.’
Thank you!

That’s it


