

Noun classes in kiniliamba a Study Conducted in Iramba District, Singida Region

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This study describes noun classes in Kiniliamba in order to determine the number of noun classes found in the language. It also aimed at examining the forms and distribution of noun class prefixes in Kiniliamba. This is because many Bantu languages have been losing noun classes; the researcher was thus interested to investigate whether or not Kiniliamba is undergoing a similar problem. Various literature were reviewed in order to find the number of noun classes in various Bantu languages. The study used three criteria: morphology, syntax and semantics i.e. morphological, syntactic and semantic criteria. To achieve the desired results, questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions and observation were used as methods for data collection. Data were analysed using descriptive method, i.e. using statements, tables and morphological parsing to represent information. Generally, the study investigated the noun classes in Kiniliamba by examining the forms and meanings of noun class prefixes. The Proto-Bantu had 23 noun classes according to Katamba (2003) in Nurse and Philippson (2003). Study findings indicated that Kiniliamba has retained 19 noun classes, a relatively good number of classes comparing to Kivunjo which has retained only 12 noun classes (Temu, 1975; Kyara, 2010; Mcha, 1979). Kivunjo has lost classes 4, 15a, all diminutives and all locatives of Proto-Bantu. Kikibosho has retained only 12 classes after losing class 15a, all diminutives and all locatives of Proto-Bantu (Mushi, 2005). Shambala has retained only 15 noun classes after losing all locatives (classes 16, 17 and 18) of Proto-Bantu (Besha, 1985). Kimachame has retained only 13 noun classes after losing classes 13, 15a and all locatives (classes 16, 17 and 18) of Proto-Bantu (Phanuel, 2006). Kibondei has retained 14 noun classes after losing class 13 of diminutive and all locatives (classes 16, 17 and 18) of Proto-Bantu (Lukindo, 1980). All these languages mentioned have also lost all pre-prefixes. However, Kiniliamba has retained all pre-prefixes except for infinitives and locatives, in which, many Bantu languages do not have. Findings also indicated that, there is very strong morphosemantic relation in classifying nouns in Kiniliamba. This is due to the fact that, nouns of certain semantic content having certain morphological forms (noun class prefixes) are grouped in one class. The classification is also morphosyntactic since these nouns influence types of concordial agreement

markers with other words in a construction. It has been concluded that, in many aspects, Kiniliamba behaves as most Bantu languages by attaching noun class affixes before the root. The language follows a similar pattern of Proto-Bantu contrary to other Bantu languages which deviated from this pattern by putting noun class affixes after the root, as the case of Kiswahili and Kiwoso for locatives (Amidu, 1997; Mallya, 2011). It is suggested that other researchers should focus on the phonological influence on the noun class prefixes in Kiniliamba. Others should also investigate noun derivation in Kiniliamba and others should research on locative expressions in Kiniliamba. In view of these findings, it is recommended that Kiniliamba should not borrow words from Arabic and English lest it destroys its Bantu skeletal structure as happened in Kiswahili, hence causing problems in noun classification. Kiniliamba should borrow words from other Bantu language so as to make sure that the language remains Bantu .