

DOCUMENTATION AND MORPHOLOGY OF CHIMIINI

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My research centers on issues in the morphological and syntactic description and analysis of Bantu language. Bantu languages constitute more than 500 languages in sub-Saharan Africa. They are known for having an unusually high number of noun classes, elaborate agreement systems, and complex verbal derivation paradigms. Investigating and comparing the morphosyntax of these languages has led to a number of important discoveries about the nature of human language in general.

I am also involved in the documentation and description of endangered languages, focused especially on *Chimiini*. *Chimiini* is an endangered Bantu language of the south Somali coast, now chiefly spoken by immigrant refugees in the US, UK and Kenya. *Chimiini* is the language of the city of Barawa (or Miini, or Brava), one of the original Swahili city states, and is thus closely

related to Swahili. I have documented various aspects of the *Chimiini* language, including collecting proverbs, specialized vocabulary, folk tales, descriptions of games, and so on. I have also used this data to work on issues in *Chimiini* grammar.

The current project presented at the Linguistic Society of America concerns an investigation into the verbal derivational suffixes of *Chimiini*. In this paper, I show that a detailed study of verbal derivational endings challenges the notion that Swahili verb suffixes occur in a fixed order template (Causative, Applicative, Reciprocal, Passive - known in the literature as CARP). Rather I show that in many cases these suffix double one another in a mirrored fashion (Causative-Applicative-Applicative-Causative) when so-called 'lexical' suffixes are taken into account, even though the semantics of the verb stem do not line up with these morphological expressions.

That is, a stem with two causative and two applicative suffixes is only interpreted as having one of each. Similar sorts of suffix doubling have been observed by others for other Bantu languages.

These patterns raise interesting questions: what is it about the derivation of verbs in Bantu that gives rise to morphological doubling? What are the important distinctions between the so-called 'lexical' set of derivational suffixes and the more familiar 'productive' suffixes and how do they interact in stems that contain both? Since *Chimiini* is increasingly well-documented, my hope is that this detailed study of its verbal morphology will lead to a better understanding of these questions that can be applied to other Bantu languages and human language more generally.

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