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Phonological Processes In Nouns across Maasai Dialects

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Abstract: ***Maasai language has 22 dialects whose noun parallel varies phonologically. This short work describes the phonological processes causing the variation across the dialects of this language. Maasai noun synonyms are either allomorphs or allomorph composites whose structural differences arise from the interaction between the constituent phonemes. The objectives of the work were to identify noun parallels in the various dialects and identifying the various rules governing the phonological processes responsible for the resultant noun variation across the dialects. This research was founded on 2 hypotheses; that different Maasai dialects used different signs for the same meanings and that noun parallels across the dialects differed from each other on the basis of phonological processes. Venneman and Hooper's Natural Generative phonology formed the theoretical framework. Noun data was collected through interviews from Maasai speakers of Kenya and Tanzania. It is hoped that this research will trigger more research in other languages with multiple dialects whose phonology have not yet been studied.***

Keywords: Variation, process, dialect, allomorphs, divergence

1. Introduction

Maasai is one of the Nilotic languages spoken in the regions of Samburu, Baringo, Nakuru, Narok, Trans-Mara and Kajiado in Kenya and also Moshi, Tanga, Arusha, Dodoma, Morogoro and Iringa in Tanzania. Anumber of works on Maasai anthropology and grammar had been writen by the 1950's. Most grammatical works were done by missionaries with the aim of learning Maasai to assist them spread Christianity. For this reason therefore, the works were essentially basic in approach and composition. Important early works include The language of Ioikop (Krapf (1854) The Maasai: Their Language and Folklore (Hollis 1905) A Simple Introduction to Learning Maasai (Shaffer 1955), A Maasai Grammar With Vocabulary (Tucker and Mpaayei 1955) and the more recent linguistic Maa-A Dictionary of the Maasaai Language and Folklore: English- Maasai (Mol 1979). Since then, few researches have been done on this language by historians taking historical perspectives. Heine (1980) and Vossen (1988) have particularly done notable works on the historical relationship between Maasai dialects. These works provided useful information upon which purely theoretical linguistic works may be build.

2. Literature Survey and Theoretical Framework

Phonological processes are operations at work as phonemes interact during the formation of syllables, morphemes, words and sentences. Trubetzkoy (1949) points out that, words in any language can be differentiated by identifying the opposition inherent within their structural phonemes.

The oppositions arise from the phonemes distinctive features of manner of articulation, place of articulation and presence or absence of voice. Jackobson (1971) agrees that phonemic distinctive features are the primary aspects of phonological studies rather than the indivisible phoneme.

He points out that, it is the features that explain how sounds are articulated by speaker and perceived by the hearers. The distinctive features of sounds are described by ascribing them either positive or negative values which will either be + or -. The concept of phonological processes has its origins in the theory of Natural Phonology proposed by Stampe (1969).

Stampe sees phonology as being founded on universal phonological processes that affect distinctive features of sound rather than the segments themselves (syllables and words). He also claims that phonological processes are not ordered and that one process triggers the operation of other processes.

Iribemwangi (2008) applied the theory of Natural Generative Phonology to describe the processes of nasal assimilation nasal, deletion and the Ganda law in standard Swahili. He quotes Abercrombie (1967), saying that nasal assimilation is a natural process controlled by the structure of the articulating organs. Natural Generative Phonology removes the unnatural features and segments and replaces them with the natural ones acceptable to a language. This has also been noted by Katamba (1989). Bakari (1982) agrees that the process of nasal assimilation is common in Swahili language but in contrast to Katamba however, Bakari feels that nasal assimilation is realized morphologically rather than phonologically.

Bodomo and Marfo (2008) in their work on Dagaare and Akan morphophonology claim that language can be taken as a system of noun classification if that language has grammatical gender categorization or if the nouns of that language can be classified according to agreement, reference, affixiation, infixiation or suffixiation. A system of classification is possible even if the language does not have gender morphemes as is the case with Swahili

language. Bodomo and Marfo suggest that Dagaare and Akan Morphemes have stems that are built from different noun forms through phonological processes that affect these nouns. This work on the phonological processes of nouns across Maasai dialects draws insights from Venneman and Hooper's Natural Generative phonology theory.

2.1 Problem definition

Maasai language has attracted great interest from historians, anthropologists and linguists. However, their studies did not give a detailed account of the phonological processes operating within the words of this Language. This research paper therefore, attempts to give a scientific description of the phonological processes occasioning the variation in noun synonyms across Maasai dialects.

3. Data sources and Methodology

Data for this work was collected through interviews from Maasai communities living in Samburu, Central Baringo, Kilgoris, Kajiado and Narok in Kenya. In Tanzania data was collected from Maasai speakers living in Moshi, Tanga, Arusha, Dodoma, Morogoro and Iringa. Theses were the areas also listed by Bildeman (1960). Maasai dialects compared and contrasted were:

Sampurr SAM (Kenya) (Tanzania)	Serenket SER
Siria SIR (Kenya) (Tanzania)	Ilarusa LAR
Ilaitayiok AIT (Kenya) (Tanzania)	Baraguyu BAR
Iltiamus TIAM (Kenya) and Tanzania)	Ilaitokitok AIT (Kenya
Wuasin Kishu WUA (Kenya) and Tanzania)	IlKisonko KIS (Kenya
Matapato MAT (Kenya) and Tanzania)	Sikirrari SIK (Kenya
Loodokilani OOD (Ken) and Tanzania)	Purko PUR (Kenya
Dalalekutuk DAL (Kenya) and Tanzania)	Lparakuo PAR (Kenya
Lkeekonyokie KEE (Kenya) (Kenya)	Ilmoitanik MOIT
Ldamat DAM (Kenya)	Loitai OIT (Kenya)
Kaputiei KAP (Kenya)	

The abbreviations used here will be used throughout the text.

A sample size of 350 nouns was purposively selected on the basis that they will fully represent all nouns in the Maasai lexicon.

4. Results and Discussion

As recommended by Hooper (1976) one item in a paradigm is taken and from which other items deriate from phonologically in the current research items in a paradigm are the noun parallels across maasai dialects phonological difference across the items are explained through phonological operations logically deduced after the phonetic transcription of the collected data.

4.1 Deletion

This is a phonological process of disappearance of a sound from either initial, mid, or financial word environment.

These are 3 types of deletions listed by Lass (1984) ; initial deletion (Apharesis), infix or medial deletion (syncope) and final deletion.

The deletion process can involve both vowels and consonants in Maasai this process is realized in the following words.

1. Fence

l-paashie [lpa:ʃiɛ] LOIT, SIK, AIT
ol-paashie [ɔlpa:ʃiɛ] PUR, DAM, KEE, OIT
en-kikarrata [ɛŋkikarata] MOIT, DAM, OOD, KAP, MAT, TOK, KIS SIR, WUA
e-sita [ɛsita] KEE, OOD, KAP, MAT, KIS, TOK, SAL
kishomi [kiʃɔmi] ARU, SER
uata [uata] SAM, ILTIAM

In this paradigm, it was noted that some dialects such as KAP, KIS and OIT used more than one noun to refer to 'fence'. The male gender morpheme [o] is deleted in the initial environment of the word l- Paashie through the rule [o] > [Ø] / # …….

$$\begin{bmatrix} +\text{vowel} \\ +\text{back} \\ +\text{rounded} \end{bmatrix} > [\ +\text{Ø}\ ] \ / \ \#\ \_\_\_\_\_$$

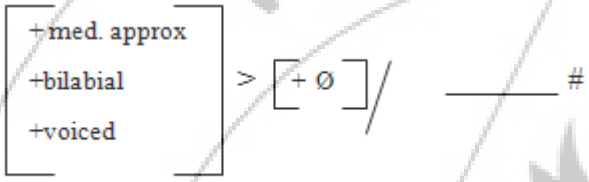
The word enkikarrata of the DAM, OOD, KAP, MAT and KIS arose from the associative process and has the meaning of "that which encloses." The parallel esita, kishomi and uata arose lexically and have no phonological explanation to relate them to the other members of the paradigm.

2. Garden

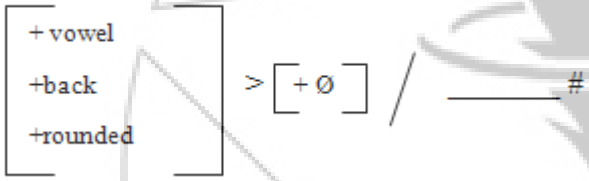
e-mukunta [ɛmukunta] SIK, PUR, DAM, KEE, SIK, DAL, SER
e-mparet [ɛmparɛt] MOIT, SIR
n-kurumwa [ŋkurumwa] SAM
en-kurma [ɛŋkurma] ILTIAM
o-lopololi [ɔlɔpɔlɔli] KAP, AIT, MAT, TOK, DAL, ARU, BAR, OOD

In this paradigm initial deletion is exhibited through the loss of the gender morpheme [ɛ] in enkurma of ILTIAM to nkurumwa of SAM.

Final deletion is also realized by the loss of the final phoneme /w/ of the SAM nkurumwa to the ILTIAM enkurma. The ILTIAM form is also affected by the medial deletion of the phoneme/u/.
[w] > [Ø] / ……. #.



[u] > [Ø] / ……. #.



The word e- mukunta of SIK, PUR, DAM, ALT, DAL, MAT and ARU have its origins in bantu particularly the kikuyu whose noun is mugunda [muðunda]. This was confirmed by respondents and Kikuyu speakers living among the maasai. The word En-kurma used by the Iltiamus is synonymous with the Swahili word 'unga'. Among the Iltiamus the word may be used to refer to all foods in general. The parallel olopololi used by the KAP means something torn away and separated from another. This noun is used to refer to an area of land on which animals are prevented to graze to save it for pasture during drought. It is defintely a result of a derivational process of the word a-polol which means to tear.

3. Witch craft

e-sakut-et [ɛsakut] SIR, UAS, MOIT

e-sakut-ore [ɛsakutɔrɛ] DAM, AIT, KIS

esakut [ɛsakut] KAP, SIK
n-gurup-ore[ŋkurupɔrɛ] TOK, DAL,
en-aibon [ɛnaibɔ̃n] ARU, KIS

e-set'an [ɛsɛtan] SIK, PUR, DAM, KEE, DAL, ARU, BAR

set'an [sɛtan] SAM, ILTIAM

This paradigm apart from being affected by phonological processes also exhibits morphological and lexical processes. The noun synonym esakut used by KAP, SIK, TOK, DAL, ARU and SIK has the final -et or -ore deleted from the esakutet of SIR, UAS and MOIT or from the esakutore of DAM, AIT, and KIS. The synonym setan used by SAM and ILTAM has the initial gender morpheme deleted from the form esetan used by SIK, PUR, DAM, DAL, ARU and BAR.

The parallels esakut, esakutet, esakutore and ngurupore are a result of verb derivation with the base forms being the verbs a-sakut and a-gurup both meaning 'to bewitch'.

A-gurup is an archaic form which is now very rarely used.

4.2 Insertion

Insertion is phonological process that governs syllable structure by speakers through introduction of a vowel or consonant in the initial, medial or final environments. Lass (1984) gave insertion the general name 'epenthesis'. In some languages such as Kiswahili, borrowed forms exhibit insertion more than the native forms. Insertion, in Swahili seeks to maintain the syllable structure CVCV or VCVC found in all Bantu language. Lass refers to initial insertion as 'prosthesis' while medial insertion he calls 'anaptyxis.' Insertion may involve the appearance of sounds in environments which were initially empty.

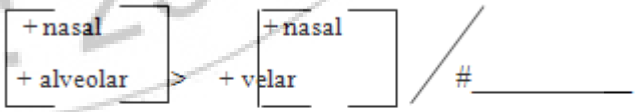
4. Manger

en-tereet [ɛntɛrɛt] BAR, SIK, DAL, MAT
eng-kiuri [ɛŋkiuri] AIT, KIS
l-k'ishop-et [lkiʃɔβɛt] ILTIAM

Eng'-kidong-et [ɛŋkidɔŋɛt] DAM, PUR, OIT, DAL, KEE
eng'-kidong(y)-et [ɛŋkidɔŋyɛt] PUR, KAP

The gender morpheme in the noun en- tereet of SIR, SIK, DAL and MAT [en-] changes to [eng] in the word eng-kidonget of DAM, AIT and DAL. This morpheme acquires the sound /g/ through the process of homorganic nasal assimilation of sound /n/ and the /k/. The word eng-kidong- yet of PUR and KAP has a final insertion of the sound /y/. The rules governing these processes are:

[n] > [ŋ]/#.....



/ y / ------- #

5 Mosquito

ng-kajing'ani [ŋkadsiŋani] SAM
ng-kojong'ani [ŋkɔdsɔŋani] ILTIAM

eng-kojong'ani [eŋkɔdsɔŋani] PUR, AIT, OIT, SIK, DAL, KAP, DAM, KEE, OOD, DAL, ARU, BAR

The noun eng- kojong'ani used by the PUR, AIT, OIT, SIK, DAM, KAP, KEE, OOD, ARU and BAR exhibits initial insertion of the gender morpheme [e].

This Morpheme triggers a hormoganic nasal assimilation process where the nasal /n/ changes to /ŋ/ as shown in the phonetic transcription in the paradigm above.

If the noun eng-kajingani of SAM is taken as the base form while the ng-kojongani and eng- kojongani forms become the surface realizations, then two processes may be identified.

First there is an ablautive process where the medial [a] of the root changes to [ɔ] through the rule [a] > [ɔ] / ---- # ---- -.

[+ front, + low, - rounded] > [+ back, + high, + rounded] / ------- # ------

It is also a vowel raising processes where the lower vowel /a/ changes to a high [ɔ]

6 Guinea fowl

kiresure [kiresurɛ] ARU, BAR, SIK, KAP, OIT, DAL, DAM, KEE
ng-keresire [ŋkeresirɛ] SAM, ILTIAM
eng-keresure [eŋkeresurɛ] SIK, AIT, MAT, SER, OOD

In this paradigm, the form Kiresire of ARU, BAR, SIR, KAP, DAM,KEE and DAL does not have gender morpheme [e]. In the SAM and ILTIAM forms ng'keresire and eng'keresure the gender morpheme is inserted in the allomorphic forms ng' [j] and eng [eŋ] respectively.

7 Dove

en-turkulu [en-turkulu] SIK, AIT, KIS, BAR, SIK, MAT, KAP, PUR, SIK, SAL, TOK, KEE

ngut'ukuruk [ŋutukuruk] SAM, ILTIAM
ol-maitai [ɔlmaitai] ARU, KIS

In the above example the phoneme /r/ is deleted from the medial environment in enturkulu form and is inserted in the final environment in the form ngutukuruk of SAM and ILTIAM.

4.3 Assimilation

Aswani (2010) points out that assimilation is the process whereby a sound affects neighboring sounds in a manner that makes them similar to itself. Assimilation can be through a nasalization process whereby a nasal sound forces non- nasals to acquire a nasal quality. Assimilation can also be through voicing whereby a voiced sound forces a non- voiced sound to acquire a voice characteristic. Look at the following examples

8 Elbow

en-takule [entakulɛ] BAR, TOK, DAL, ARU
l-takule [ltakulɛ] SAM, ILTIAM
e-ng'kikokua [eŋkikɔkua] ARU, KIS
rubata [rubata] PUR, KEE, OIT, DAM
o-loidolol [ɔlɔidɔlɔl] SIK, AIT, MAT, KAP, OOD, SAL, SER

Nasalization here is realized in the word entakule of BAR, TOK, DAL and ARU which can be taken to have been generated from the base form l- takule of SAM and ILTIAM. In this word the sound /e/ and /t/ are nasalized by the nasal sound /n/.

In the noun eng- kikokua, sounds /e/ and /k/ that preceed and follow the nasal /ŋ/ are nasalized. The form rubata results from a transformative desivational process of the verb a-rub which means 'to join' thus rubata means 'a joint.' The form 'oloidol' is a form used widely among many maa dialects and could have its origins in the primitive Proto-Maasai tongue. It has been noted that initial nasalization in most Maasai dialects depend on the consonant sound at the beginning of the stem. For example in the word en- takule, the alveolar nasal [n] appears after the genitive [ɛ] on account of the alveolar [t] that begins the stem.

9. Noise

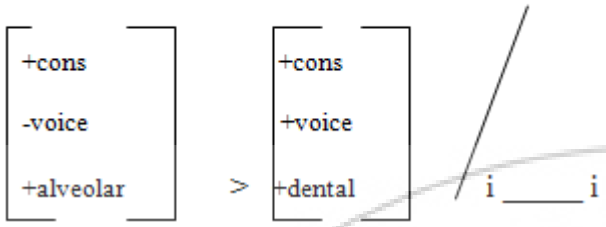
o-loilepilepi [ɔlɔilɛpilɛpi] WUA
l-oilemilem'i [lɔilɛmlɛmi] SAM
n-kilemilem ŋkilɛmilɛm] ILTIAM
ol-bu'aa [ɔlbua] KAP
o-loodo [ɔlɔ:dɔ] ARU, KIS
or'erei [ɔrɔrei] PUR.

The form oloilepilepi of the WUA when articulated in SAM and ILTIAM dialects the medial and final phonemes /p/ are completely transforms into nasal /m/ as loilemilemi and nkilemilem.

In the form nkilemilem of ILTIAM the nasal is articulated as the nasal ng' [ŋ] which prenasalizes the sound /k/ which begins the stem. Assimilation through voicing results when a non- voiced sound in an environment preceded and / or followed by a voiced sound acquires a voice quality as in the following examples.

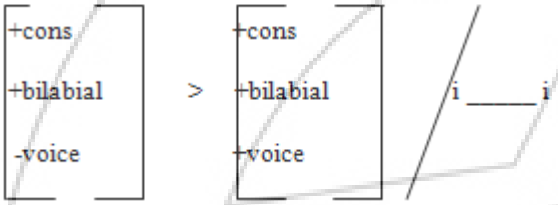
10. Village

emanyatta is realized as *e-manyadha*
[Emanata > ɛmaɲaða] through the rule
[t]> [ð]/ i _____ i



11. Lake / sea

enaiposha is realized as *ɛ-naiβosha*
[ɛnaipɔʃa > ɛ-naiβɔʃa] through the rule
[p] > [β]/ i – i



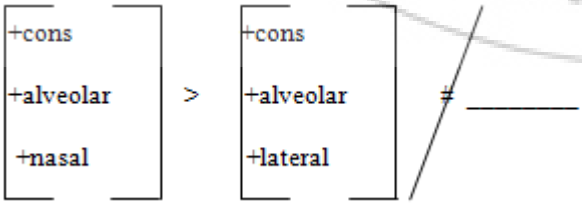
4.4 Dissimilation

This is a phonological process which works contrary to the assimilative process in that a sound acquires qualities contrasting those of the neighboring sound (Malmkjer 1991). This process has very few examples in Maasai.

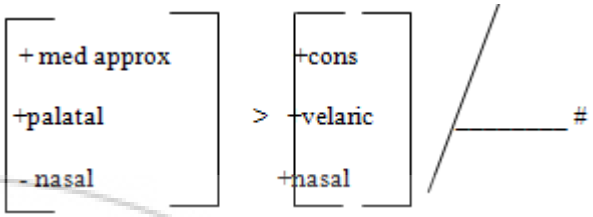
12. Head

en-dukuya [ɛndukudʒia]	PUR, SIK, OOD, SAL, SER
e-lukunya [ɛlukuɲa]	DAM, KAP, AIT, MAT, BAR
en-aisui [ɛnaisui]	SIK, KAP, AIT, MAT,

This process exhibits dissimilation between the forms endukuya of SIR, PUR, SIK, OOD, MAT and PUR and the form elukunya of DAM, KAP, AIT, MAT and BAR. If the form endukuya is taken as the base form then the initial [nd] segments which is a plosive nasal completely transforms into a lateral liquid [l] under the rule [nd] > [l] / # _____



The final medial approximant /y/ [j] which is a palatal transforms into the velaric nasal [ɲ] in the form *elukunya* through the rule [y] > [ɲ] / _____ #



The form enaisui above was formed through an associative process. The noun means 'that which is roasted' and may have originated from practice of roasting a goat or a sheep's head before boiling it to make soup. Other forms are:

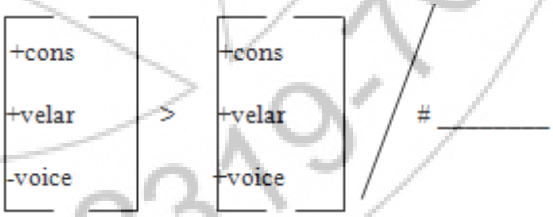
en-g'kue [ɛŋkuɛ]	PUK , KEE, OIT, DAM
n-g'kue [ŋkuɛ]	SAM
n-g'kwe [ŋkwɛ]	ILTIAM, BAR

The nouns en-g'kue, n-g'kue and ng'kwe exhibit some ablautive processes where the vowel /u/ transforms into the approximant /w/ through the rule [u] > [w}.

13. Elbow

en-takule [ɛntakulɛ]	BAR
l-tagule [ltagulɛ]	SAM, ILTIAM
en-kikokua [ɛŋkikɔkua]	ARU, TOK, DAL
o-loidolol [ɔlɔidɔlɔl]	SIR, AIT, KIS, MAT, SIK, PUR, KEE, KAP
rubata [rubata]	SER, SAL, UAS

Dissimilation here is realized in the noun en- takule of BAR transforming into l- tagule of SAM. The non-voiced plosive /k/ of en – takule changes into the voiced /g/ of l-tagule.
[k] > [g] / ____ # _____



As pointed out before, the form rubata resulted from an associative process. En- kikokua and o-loidulul are lexical forms which may have their origins in the Proto-Maasai language.

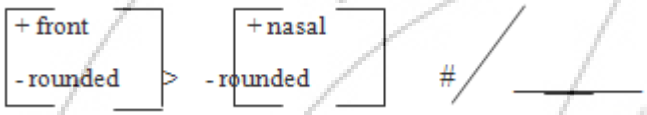
4.5 Vowel coalescence

This process involves the joining or merging of two neighboring vowels into one vowel which in most cases exhibits some qualities of both (Habwe and Karanja 2004). In Maasai dialects, this operation is realized mostly as a sandhi process in word boundaries in sentences or in the formation of compounds.

14. Ankle

Erubata enkeju	
[ɛrubatæŋkɛju]	WUA,SIK,DAL,KIS,SAM,
oloure- kokoyo	
[ɔlɔurɛkɔkɔjiɔ]	KAP,AIT,PUR,KEE,OIT
emurt enkeju	
[ɛmurtɛŋkɛju]	SIR,KAP,TUK,DAL,ARU
oloidoloki	
[ɔlɔidɔlɔki]	ARU,BAR,ILTIAM,SAL,SER

In the above examples, the compound noun erubata-en-keju has the final [a] of erubata and the initial [ɛ] of the gender morpheme en- coalesce to form the diphthong [æ]. This is a front vowel that is not rounded. These are distinctive features exhibited by both [a] and [e]. The responsible rule is a+e=æ



The noun emurtenkeju also exhibits vowels coalescence as the base form is the clause emurt e enkeju which means 'the neck of the leg.' The lone 'e' between meaning 'of' merges with the genitive 'e' of enkeju into one 'e' in the surface realization.

4.6 Double articulation and Co – articulation

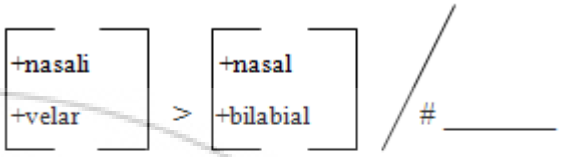
This process involves the articulation of different sounds in a continuum that appears almost simultaneous. Danilof (1973) points out that during speech the tip of the tongue blocks the aggressive airstream about 8 times in a second. With double and co- articulations it is possible to utter between 12-18sounds per seconds. Some nouns in Maasai have sounds that even though one has the potential of assimilating the other, they tend to be articulated separately but simultaneously as in the following example;

15. Cat

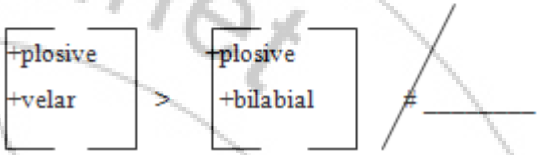
em-paka [ɛmpaka] SIR, WUA, DAM, KEE, AIT
em-puus [ɛmpuːs] KEE, SIK, KAP, AIT, PUR
n-kus [ŋkus] SAM
enyau / em-purra [ɛɲau]/ [ɛmpurra] ARU, BAR
n-kura [ŋkura] ILTIAM

The synonym empaka, empuus, and nkus above may have their origin in the neighbouring Bantu languages which may suggest that the SIR, SIK, KAP, PUR, WUA, DAM, KEE and AIT Maasai may have began keeping cats rather recently after interacting with the Swahili (who call it paka), the gusii (who call it ekepusi) , the Luhyia (who call it lipuusi) or even from the English (who call it pussy – cat). The double articulation is realized in the form empuus if taken as a derivative of n- kus. Through a dissimilative process the introduction of the genitive [ɛ] and the initial bilabial [p] automatically raises the need to use a bilabial nasal [m] in place of the alveolar nasal [n] which is actually realized as [ŋ] or ng' the m-p of empuus articulation is not realized as a nasal as expected but rather as double simultaneous articulation. A speaker who is not fluent Maasai would most likely pronounce the m-p as a nasal which would be wrong. Two rules come into play here;

a) [n] > [m] / # _____



b) [k > [p] / # _____



The same double articulative process can be observed in the forms n-kura and em-purra . These forms are probably the original synonyms from the Proto -Nilosaharan language as they also appear in Nilotic luo as "mboora" [mbɔ: ra]. The form 'enyau' can be traced to a number of Bantu languages.

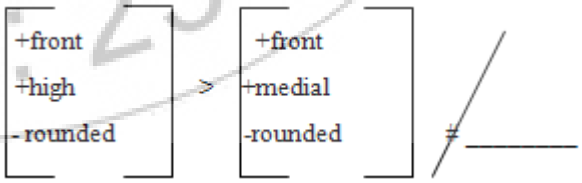
4.7 Vowel raising and lowering

This is a process involving a change in vowels where a low vowel may transform into a high and vice versa. This is realized in the examples below.

16. Ear

n-kiyyok [ŋkijɔk]	SAM PUR, KEE, OIT, DAM, DAL, OOD, KAP, AIT,
e-nkiok [ɛŋkiɔk]	MAT, SIK, TOK, DAL, ARU
n-keok [nkɛɔk]	ILTIAM, BAR
e-ning'et [ɛniŋɛt]	SIK, SAL, SER

If the noun nkeok is taken to be a generation of n- kiyyok and e- nkiok, then it is a result of a vowel lowering rule [i] > [e] / ____ # ____

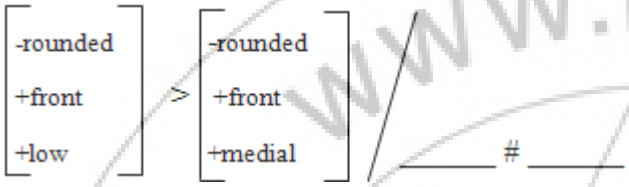


The noun e-ning'et of SIK, SAL and SER was formed through an associative word formation process and brings out the meaning 'that which hears'. It may also have been derived from the verb a- ning (to hear). See Meitamei (2008) for more information on verb derivation in Maasai.

17. Left

Kedianye [kɛdiaɲɛ]	SIR, PUK, KEE, OIT, DAM, OOD, KAP, AIT, MAT, SIK, ARU, TOK, DAL
Kidienye [kɛdiɛɲɛ]	SAM, ILTIAM, BAR

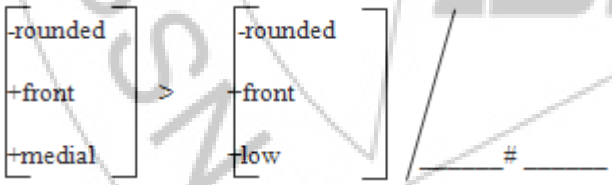
Here, the medial vowel [a] in the noun kedianye is raised to the vowel [e] in the SAM and ILTIAM and BAR form Kidienye following the [a] >[ɛ] / _____ # _____ rule.



18. Dream

n-kidetidet [ŋkidɛtidɛt]	SAM, ILTIAM SAL, SER, BAR UAS, MOIT, ARU
en-kidetidet [ɛŋkidɛtidɛt]	SAL, SER, KEE, OIT, DAM, TOK, DAL PUK, DAL, OOD, KAP, KIS
n-kidatidat [ŋkidatidat]	SIR, , ILTIAM, BAR

This paradigm exhibits the vowel lowering process through the transformation of the medial and final [e] of n- kidetidet and en- kidetidet to the medial and final [a] of the noun n- kidatidat. The rule governing the process is [ɛ] > [a] / _____#_____.



5. Conclusion

Noun lexicon in Maasai dialects differ morphophonologically across various semantic field such as body parts, places, wild animals, among other fields. The variation observed cannot justify the claim that the dialects are different languages. The correct position is that the noun variants are actually synonyms only differing in their phonemic and morphemic configurations. It is a case of internal differentiation of a language's lexicon which Vossen (1988) calls heteronymy characterized by a degree of identity, divergence and partial divergence. Examples of noun variants that exhibit wide divergence are those referring to the elephant found in many areas inhabited by the Maasai. The variant are;

olchang'itosapuk	KIS
l-tomir	OIT, PUR, BAR
l-tome	SAM
ol-tome / en-tome	AIT, ARU, MOIT, BAR, PUR
Saalishoi	SAM
lkanchawi	LTIAM SIK
olkanchawai	AIT
olkanchawi	DAL, KAP MAT, DAM SER, SIR
oleng'kaina	DAL, AIT, DAM, KAP, KEE, PUR, OIT OOD, SER
o-saalishoi / e-saalishoi	KAP, AIT, PUR, OIT

(Vossen, R. 1988).

Other nouns that shows marked divergence are

Face	
Enkomom	AIT, SAM, LTIAM, OOD, KAP SAL, PUR
Enkirribo	SIR, OIT, BAR, DAM, ARU, KIS, MOIT, SER
Entakula	PUR, DAM, OOD, KAP, ARU
Ntagulai	SAM, SIR, PUR, OIT, AIT
Chin	
Olboony	SIR, ARU, SAM, ILTIAM,PUR
Olmunyei	KIS, BAR, SAL, MOIT, SER
Nine	
Naaudo	SIR, KIS, PUR, MOIT, SER
Enturuj	ARU, BAR, SAL
Saal	BAR, SAM, ILTIAM
Thirty	
Tomoni uni	SIR, AIT
Osom	SAM, ILTIAM

Hohenburger (1958) describes the variant enturuj (nine) as a dialectic form while osom (thirty) as having been borrowed from the southern Cushitic speakers. Tomoni uni of course is a dialectic form and is essentially Maasai.

There is a notable identity between the Northern Iltiamus and other southern Maasai dialects. The dialect's nouns exhibit a high degree of heteronymy reflecting arepresentation of the lexicon from other dialects. It is tempting to conclude the LTIAM is the epicenter of all the other dialects. Heine (1980) also noted this and suggested that fugitives fleeing from the great Maasai civil war of the late 19th century may have found refuge in central Baringo among the Iltiamus speakers and therefore occasioning the heteronomy. This may be true but it is also possible that the Baringo area could have been the last joint Maasai settlement as the migrated from the North. This may also explain the heteronymy. In the ILTIAM, SAL and SAM dialects sapa means seven. The Southern dialects except SAL use naapishana. This form are either Nilo-Saharan as the Kalenjin also have 'Tisaf'

or the noun is universal as the Swahili use 'saba' while the English use 'seven'. Hohenberger has also associated sapa with Southern Cushitic speakers. He also associates saal (nine) used by BAR, SAM, and ILTIAM with Sagal (nine) from the Somali language. Could there be a linguistic relationship between this languages requiring further research? This work hopefully serves as brief introduction into one area of a language still waiting to be explored.

5.1 Future scope

This work is part of a greater research undertaken during the 2013and 2014 period on the morphophonology of Maasai dialects of Kenya and Tanzania. It is a work that concentrates only on the noun word class. Other open classes that get affected by both phonological and morphological processes are verbs and pronouns. Papers on this word classes will be written in future as well. The current work was also basically phonological although some aspects of morphology have also been mentioned. Future papers will concentrate more on morphology and the syntax of this language.

Maasai is an Eastern prong of the Nilo-Saharan languages spoken across the Sahelian region which extends from Mali, Niger, Northern Nigeria, Chad, Sudan, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. It will be interesting to investigate the relationship between Maasai and other Nilo-Saharan languages from a theoretical linguistic perspective. Taking Maasai as a Nilo-Saharan language is based on historical linguistics on oral traditions. More linguistic research may confirm this or reveal hitherto undiscovered facts about this language.

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