The Bantu attribute noun class prefixes and their suffixal counterparts, with special reference to Zulu

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by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my late sister CONSTANCE POLELO MASHILWANE who passed away on the 10 August 1982. I shall never forget her words of wisdom that says: “Education makes ones life richer for life. For what you have learnt give shape to your life, and it is a gift no one can ever take away from you.” Sleep well now that I have learnt to understand what you meant.
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SUMMARY

The aim of this dissertation is to investigate the attributive noun classes, as well as their suffixal counterparts, firstly in Bantu, and secondly in Zulu. The investigation will be done with reference to aspects such as the following: the general distribution, meaning and function of the attributive noun class prefixes in Bantu. This study will also investigate the distinction between those prefixes which are exclusively used to categorise size and shape deviations, namely those belonging to classes 12/13, 19, 20, 21 and 22; and those class prefixes which have a secondary function of indicating such deviations, namely the prefixes of classes 5/6, 7/8 and 11. The main concern is the way in which these prefixes are often associated with positive or negative emotive perceptions regarding size and shape, and are therefore often used to express amelioration and derogation. In languages such as Zulu and Northern Sotho the existence of possible frozen remnants of such attributive noun class prefixes will be investigated.

Some Bantu languages such as Venda that express variations in size and shape as well as the emotive perception by means of suffixes, or by a combination of prefixes and suffixes will be investigated. The possible semantic overlap between the meanings expressed by attributive class prefixes, and/or between the meanings expressed by attributive class prefixes and so-called ‘attributive suffixes’ will also be scrutinized.

Apart from the aspects mentioned above, the relationship between augmentative and diminutive suffixes and the notion [+ feminine] in languages such as Zulu and Northern Sotho will be scrutinized. The occurrence of the Zulu suffix -azana/-azane, which is apparently a combination of the diminutive and augmentative suffixes, will also be investigated.

This study will firstly provide a typological overview of the various strategies employed in Bantu in order to express variations in shape and size, as well as of the emotive perceptions that accompany such variations. Secondly, this study will provide an insight into the way in which shape and size variations, amelioration and derogation are
expressed in Zulu through the utilisation of diminutive and augmentative suffixes. An indication will also be given of the possible diachronic development of attributive categories in this language. This study will make a significant contribution not only to the field of diachronic and comparative Bantu linguistics, but also to Zulu linguistics. This research will furthermore lead to a deeper understanding of the strategies employed in Zulu to express the semantic nuances of amelioration and derogation.

**Key words**

Bantu
Linguistics
Amelioration
Derogation
Attributive noun classes
Emotive perceptions
Semantic overlap
Attributive suffixes
Attributive prefixes
Secondary function
OPSOMMING

Die doel van hierdie verhandeling is om die attributiewe naamwoordprefikse te ondersoek asook hulle suffigale teenhangers, eerstens in Bantu en tweedens in Zulu. Die ondersoek word gedoen met verwysing na die volgende aspekte: die algemene verspreiding, betekenis en gebruik van hierdie klasprefikse in Bantu. Hierdie studie sal ook die onderskeid tussen daardie klasprefikse wat uitsluitlik gebruik word om grootte asook vormlike afwykings te kategoriseer, naamlik dié van klasse 12/13, 19, 20, 21 en 22, asook die klasprefikse van klasse 5/6, 7/8 en 11 wat ‘n sekondere funksie het om sulke afwykings aan te toon, ondersoek. Die moontlike aanwesigheid van die reste van sulke klasprefikse in tale soos Noord-Sotho en Zulu word ook ondersoek.

Sekere Bantutale soos Venda waarin die wisseling in grootte en vorm asook die emosionele waarneming van sulke variasies deur middel van suffikse (agtervoegsels) uitgedruk word, of deur ‘n kombinasie van beide ‘n prefiks en ‘n suffiks, word ook ondersoek. Die moontlike semantiese oorvleueling tussen die betekenisse wat deur die attributiewe klasprefikse, en/ of die sogenaamde attributiewe suffikse uitgedruk word, word ook onder die loep geneem.

Bo en behalwe die voorafgaande aspekte, word die verhouding tussen die ougmentatiewe en diminutiewe agtervoegsels asook die begrip [+vroulik] in tale soos Zulu en Noord-Sotho ondersoek. Die voorkoms van die agtervoegsels -azana/azane, wat blykbaar ‘n kombinasie van die diminutiewe en ougmentatiewe agtervoegsels is, word ook ondersoek.

Hierdie studie poog in die eerste plek om ‘n tipologiese oorsig te gee van die verskillende strategieë wat in in die Bantutale gebruik word om die wisseling in grootte en vorm uit te druk, asook die gevoelswaarde wat met sulke wisselinge gepaardgaan. In die tweede plek, poog hierdie studie om insig te gee in die verskillende wyse waarop variasie in grootte, vertedering en veragting in Zulu deur middel van die diminutiewe en ougmentatiewe agtervoegsels weergegee word. Daar word ook gepoog om ‘n aanduiding
te gee van die moontlike historiese ontwikkeling van die sogenaamde attributiewe klasse in hierdie taal. Hierdie studie sal ‘n betekenisvolle bydrae maak, nie net tot die historiese en vergelykende Bantutaalstudie nie, maar ook tot die taalkundige studie van Zulu. Hierdie navorsing behoort tot dieper insig te lei van die strategieë wat in Zulu gebruik word ten einde die betekenisnuanses van vertedering en veragting weer te gee.

**Sleutel terme**

Bantu  
Taalkunde  
Vertedering  
Veragting  
Attributiewe naamwoordklasse  
Emosionele waarneming  
Semantiese oorvleueling  
Attributiewe klasprefikse  
Attributiewe suffikse  
Sekondêre funksie
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