

Classificatory diminutive prefixes as Number: A case study of Kikuyu

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Introduction. Diminutive markers can instantiate a range of categories within the nominal spine. Specifically, they can instantiate *n* (in Russian and German; Steriopolo 2006) or D (in Tongan; MacDonald 2014). The goal of this talk is to provide evidence from Kikuyu, a Bantu language, that diminutives can also instantiate Number.

Facts. In Bantu languages, noun class markers (NCMs) famously come in singular and plural pairs. In this respect, the diminutive markers behave like NCMs and have therefore been analysed as such. In Kikuyu, they are labelled as noun class 12/13. However, the diminutive prefixes in Kikuyu differ significantly from NCMs: **i)** only diminutives can combine with any noun, and **ii)** only diminutives can combine with nouns that already contain an NCM.

Stump (1992) observes that there are three patterns for diminutive prefixation in Kikuyu, and choice among them depends on the class of the nominal root. First, when a diminutive is added to a class 1/2 nominal, it is always co-occurs with the singular NCM (class 1 *mũ*), regardless of whether the diminutive marker is singular (*ka*) or plural (*tũ*). Second, when a diminutive is added to a class 3/4 nominal, it agrees in number with the NCM. Finally, for all other noun classes, the diminutive is prefixed directly to the nominal root (without a NCM). These facts are summarized and illustrated in the table below.

Class 1/2 pattern (<i>friend</i>)	Class 3/4 pattern (<i>lion</i>)	Elsewhere pattern (<i>bed</i>)
ka- mũ- raata	ka- mũ- rũthi	ka- rĩĩ
DIM _{SG} CL _{SG} N	DIM _{SG} CL _{SG} N	DIM _{SG} N
tũ- mũ- raata	tũ- mĩ- rũthi	tũ- rĩĩ
DIM _{PL} CL _{SG} N	DIM _{PL} CL _{PL} N	DIM _{PL} N

Proposal. We propose that the diminutive markers (*ka-/tũ-*) are pure Num(ber) prefixes that come with a modifying diminutive component. As such, they are inserted in Num and determine the number value of the phrase. In this respect, they contrast with NCMs, which come with an intrinsic (lexical) plural specification (in the sense of Acquaviva 2008). We assume that NCMs are inserted in *n*. In the absence of a diminutive prefix, NCMs undergo movement to Num (1a). In the presence of a diminutive in Num, movement is blocked (1b).

- (1) a. NCM inserted in *n* and moves to Num [... [NumP CL [_{nP} ~~CL~~ [NP N]]]]
 b. Diminutive inserted in Num; no NCM mvmt. [... [NumP DIM [_{nP} CL [NP N]]]]

Analysis. Our proposal immediately derives the two properties of diminutive markers that differentiate them from NCMs. As instances of *n*, NCMs select for specific nominal roots in their complement. In contrast, as instances of Num, diminutive markers impose no selectional restrictions on the root, and hence, can combine with any noun. Second, diminutive markers can co-occur with NCMs in *n* because they do not compete for the same syntactic position.

The three different patterns summarized in the table above are the result of phonological constraints. First, only bimoraic bare nouns allow for the absence of an overt NCM (Carstens 2008). We assume that in this case the NCM is deleted. Second, the class 2 NCM is vowel-initial and the combination of the plural diminutive and this NCM would result in adjacent vowels (**tũ-a-N*). Hence, its non-plural counterpart (i.e., the class 1 marker) is used instead. Finally, the class 3/4 pattern is precisely as expected assuming that the intrinsic plural specification in the class 4 marker must match the number feature in Num.

- (2) a. Class 1/2 [... [NumP DIM_{SG} [_{nP} CL₁ [NP N]]]] [... [NumP DIM_{PL} [_{nP} CL₁ [NP N]]]]
 b. Class 3/4 [... [NumP DIM_{SG} [_{nP} CL₃ [NP N]]]] [... [NumP DIM_{PL} [_{nP} CL₄ [NP N]]]]
 c. Elsewhere [... [NumP DIM_{SG} [_{nP} ~~CL~~* [NP N]]]] [... [NumP DIM_{PL} [_{nP} ~~CL~~* [NP N]]]]

Conclusion. Analysing Kikuyu diminutives as Num accounts for their distinctive properties. Moreover, Kikuyu fills a gap in the typology of diminutives. Cross-linguistically, diminutives can instantiate all functional categories in the nominal spine: *n*, Num, and D.

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