

Expressing Intensification in the Chasu Language of Tanzania

Rafiki Y. Sebonde, The University of Dodoma, Tanzania

*While a number of studies have been conducted about expressing intensification in languages such as English, less attention is given to Bantu languages on the topic. This paper, therefore, explores strategies used to express intensity in Chasu, a language of the Bantu family spoken in Same District of Kilimanjaro, Tanzania. The study is guided by the Functional-typological approach which assumes that linguistic structures such as intensifiers are shaped by their communicative and cognitive functions such as emphasis and expressing degree or speaker's stance. The approach propagates also that the structure of intensifiers is typologically diverse across languages. The study employs a descriptive research approach using data from both spoken and written forms. Spoken data were elicited through sociolinguistic interviews using 30 native speakers of Mamba Myamba Ward of Same District in order to capture conversations of everyday language use. To complement spoken data, written forms were reviewed from a Chasu hymn book to record sentences, phrases, and words with intensifiers. Transcription of recorded data was done using Chasu orthography followed by content analysis. The findings of this study reveal the use of both morphological and lexical strategies. In morphological strategy, intensification in Chasu is expressed by a morpheme **-ish-a** embedded as a suffix after the verb root and adjectives like in **kund-ish-a** (love so much) and **mbah-ish-a** (very big) respectively. From lexical strategy, intensifiers are expressed through adverbs **haiwa** and **pere** modifying adjectives and verbs. In addition, ideophonic adverbs, verbal and adjectival reduplication are strategies for expressing intensification in Chasu. Furthermore, there were few incidences of the use of borrowed Swahili intensifiers **sana** and **kabisa**. The study recommends more studies on expression of intensification in Bantu languages to widen up the knowledge scope and theoretical understanding. It also recommends a comparative study examining the structural diversity of intensifiers across languages.*

Keywords: *intensifiers, Chasu, adverbs, adjectives, ideophones, reduplications*

1 Introduction

The study on various aspects of intensification and the way of its expression in spoken and written discourse has been of great interest for some decades. Various scholars have made interesting contributions especially in the conceptualization, classification of intensifiers, and the patterns and frequency of their occurrence in the sentences. Quirk et. al (1985), for example, conceptualized intensifiers as linguistic devices that boost the meaning of a property upward from an assumed norm. Intensifiers “indicate a point on an abstractly conceived intensity scale, and the point on the indicated may be relatively low or relatively high” pp 589. Quirk, et.al (1985) divide intensifiers into emphasers, which have a general heightening effect and are generally attributive only; amplifiers (maximizers, boosters), which scale upwards from assumed norms and are central adjectives if they are inherent, and denote a high or extreme degree, and down toners (approximators e.g. *almost*; compromisers e.g. *more or less*; diminishers e.g. *partly*; minimizers e.g. *hardly*) which are having a lowering effect usually scaling downwards from assumed norms. Intensification helps to highlight what is being said and how it relates to the impact it may make to the interlocutor. In a broader definition, intensity involves such range of linguistic phenomena as a change in the degree of an attribute to and

side (decreasing or increasing) size of an object, the strength of an action, and value of an object or action. According to Bolinger (1972), intensifiers are adverbs that scale the quality of an adjective or adverb up, hence referred as degree words. Quirk, et. al (1985) address them as amplifiers while Tagliamonte (2008) categorises them as adverbs that boost or minimize meaning.

Furthermore, Rodionova (2004) in Siddikova & Zubareva (2020) postulates that intensity can be applied not only to the attribute of an object, or phenomena but also the attitude towards it. This may happen when the speaker gives a persuasive speech aiming at imparting certain views and opinions to the potential audience. Siddikova & Zubareva (2020) claim that the combination of attitude to the phenomena with the use of various expressive means which express the value of the degree of attributes, intensify the communication effect. In broader conceptualization of this category, intensity includes such a range of phenomena as a change in the degree of an attribute such as expressiveness, emotionality, evaluativity, and imagery. It includes attributes to any side either of increase or decrease of an object, the size of an object, the strength of an action and the value of an object.

Concerning the importance of intensification, Labov (1985:43) hypothesizes that “at the heart of the social and emotional expression is the linguistic feature of intensity”. Partington (1973:178) adds that intensification, in the communication process is a vehicle for impressing, praising, persuading, insulting and generally influencing the listeners’ reception of the message. In addition, intensifiers can express an interpersonal message, which signals personal commitment and their judgments of truth and value (Lorenz 1999: 24). Linguistically, the use of intensifiers is the most typical way of realizing intensification to show the attitudinal meaning. From the systemic functional perspective, intensifiers serve a modal function, and they convey an interpersonal meaning and provide information about the social and emotional stance of the speaker (Labov 1985; Partington 1993; Halliday 1994; Peters 1994; Klerk 2006). Generally, the intensifiers are used when the speakers of a language intend to use words to scale upward or scale downward the meaning of an object when delivering the message through words.

Speaking of intensifying adverbs, Huddleton & Pullum (2000) assert that intensifying adverbs should not be viewed as either grammatical or lexical category, but they do have grammatical properties, although not insufficiently defined, unless their functional significance is described. Intensifiers help to highlight what is being said and related to the basic human need to make an impact on the interlocutor especially when the speaker gives a persuasive speech aiming at instilling certain views and opinions to the potential addressee. In another study, Zhiber & Korotina (2019) describe that intensifying adverbs have undergone some evolution through the process of grammaticalization and delexicalization. In addition, Tagliamonte (2008) posits that the evidence of change *very* is quickly moving out of favor and *rely* has expanded dramatically. Moreover there is evidence to suggest that some intensifiers are undergoing delexicalization but not as part of continual longitudinal process, instead the profile of change reveals recycling, suggesting that the mechanics of intensifiers renewal may be more complex than previously thought.

In the study of expressing levels of intensity in Xhosa English, de Klerk (2005) classifies intensifiers as subclass of adverb that amplifies or adds emphasis to words (adjectives or verbs) which are gradable, or capable of a range of force, by either scaling them upwards or downwards in degree of intensity. The intensifiers can heighten the meaning or lower its effect. Intensifiers with a positive function are called amplifiers and those with strongest degree of intensification are maximizers, while those at the end of the scale are minimizers; for example,

hardly or *scarcely*. Intensifiers are technically described as a subcategory of subjunct along with emphasizees, focusing adverbs and others (Chalker & Weiner 1998).

In Bantu languages, adverbs have been studied as a word category which modify the word categories such as verbs and adjectives that precede them immediately. Adverbs of magnitude have been identified in Kinyakyusa, a language in Tanzania, expressing intensifiers using ideophonic adverbs. In the study of adverbs in Kinyakyusa, Lusekelo (2010) describes that, adverbs of magnitude may modify verbs or adjectives that immediately precede them. On a study of intensifying ideophone in three Luhya languages, Bowler and Gluckman (2017) assert that the Luhya ideophones select for semantic class of lexical items that they can co-occur with to intensify. Ideophones in Luhya commonly co-occur with verbs and adjectives, and for few cases with nouns. For example; Llogoori (one of the Luhya languages) ideophone *ti* combines with lexical item *mwamu* (adjective) or *chafu* (adjective) to describe ‘darkness’ or ‘dirtiness’ respectively, while *zi* combines with lexical items *zilu* (adjective) or *chinganu* (adjective) describing ‘stillness’ or ‘coldness’. Ideophone *mno* co-occurs with *kuyaanza*, (verb) *mahooru*, (noun) and *ndugi* (adjective) describing ‘to be happy’, ‘longing’ and ‘sweet’ respectively. Generally, ideophones in Luhya languages are behaving typically like the way adverbial element does to intensify lexical items such as verbs, adjectives and nouns.

Moreover, in Bantu linguistics, intensification has also been expressed through the use of full or partial reduplication of adjectives or verbs for emphatic purposes. Examples can be borrowed from Zulu words such as adjective *khulu* ‘big’ to *khulukhulu* ‘very big’; the verb *hamba* ‘go’ to *hambahamba* ‘go a lot’ (Downing 2001) and from Swahili language the verb *piga* ‘strike’ to *pigapiga* ‘strike repeatedly or hard’ (Hyman 2009) whereas reduplication expresses habitual action or intensive actions.

Though the study of intensification has been discussed widely with various studies being conducted in English and other languages like Chinese, less is studied regarding intensifiers particularly in Bantu linguistics. This study therefore, sought to describe the formation, categorization of strategies and functions; and patterns of distribution of intensifiers in Chasu, a Bantu language spoken in Same District of Kilimanjaro Region, Tanzania. This study did not delve in to the comparative part of intensifiers across languages.

1.1 Chasu language and context

The study of expressing intensifiers is conducted in Same District - Kilimanjaro Tanzania, where Chasu speakers live. Chasu is a Bantu language predominantly spoken in Same and Mwanza Districts, the Northeastern part of Tanzania (Mreta 1998). Mreta (1998 as cited in Yohana 2009) clarifies that Chasu is sub-divided into two major dialects, the Northern Chasu dialect spoken in Mwanza District, and the Southern Chasu dialect spoken in Same District. Regarding classification, Guthrie (1948) classifies Chasu in Zone G (Shambala group) and coded G.22 whereby, Northern Chasu is designated G.22A and Southern Chasu as G.22B (Msuya and Mreta 2021). Southern Chasu, the target dialect of the current study, contains sub-varieties such as Kisuji/Kimamba, Kimakasa-papa, Kimbagha and Kigonja (Kotz 1909; Kagaya 1989; Omari 1991; Mreta 1998). The present study has focused into the Kisuji/Kimamba variety which is spoken in Mamba Myamba ward. Other studies that have been conducted on this variety include, language contact and sociolinguistic analysis of variation, language shift, code-switching and socio-stratification, lexical borrowing and numerical system, naming practices and mode of address, and lexical borrowing and semantic change (Yohana 2009; Sebonde 2012; 2014; 2020; & 2025). Chasu, like other Ethnic

Community Languages in Tanzania, has been affected by other languages due to the long-term contact with Kiswahili and English resulting into bilingualism, lexical change, code-switching and code mixing, and semantic change. However, Chasu is still spoken in some domains such as several religious contexts, funerals, local markets, local wedding ceremonies, and other traditional ceremonies (Sebonde 2014), *ndethi* ‘for cursing’ and *maatha* ‘for litigation’ (Msuya 2014). The co-existence of Chasu, Kiswahili and English may have affected some grammatical features including strategies of expressing intensification. This study has concentrated on examining strategies of expressing intensification in Chasu speech community.

2 Theoretical framework

The study of expressing intensification in Chasu language is guided by the Functional-typological approach which is a combination of two linguistic inquiries; functional linguistics and typological linguistics. This approach is based on the foundational works by Givón (1979), Comrie (1989) and Croft (2003) who provide a framework on studying intensifiers offering a glance emphasizing their functional roles and typological variation. Their effort was to integrate functionalism’s focus on communication with typology’s cross-linguistics perspective. The functionalism adopts the idea that linguistic structures are fashioned by communicative functions such as expressing meaning, facilitating interaction or optimizing their cognitive processing. On the other side, typology focuses on classification of comparison of languages to identify their universal features, constraints and variations. For more emphasis, Plank adds that:

Typological research commences by identifying differences among languages, as opposed to traits shared universally. Typology’s remit then is to determine whether these individual differences are interrelated or independent of each other.

(Plank 2001: 1399)

Generally the functional-typologists are interested on one hand, studying the communicative functional motivation behind linguistic structures and on the other hand, emphasizing on the cross linguistic variation of languages.

The functional-typological approach suits this study as it focuses more on the functional roles of intensifiers emphasizing how they are shaped within and across languages. The approach helps classifying the intensifiers, cataloging their forms, distribution and functions enlightening with how they converge or diverge from cross-linguistic tendencies. It helps to guide the study on how intensifiers function and correlate with other grammatical features such as word order across languages. The approach serves in examining the functional roles of intensifiers such emphasizing degree, expressing speakers’ attitude or structuring discourse.

3 Methodology

Most of the studies on strategies to express intensification adopted the use of different corpora such as British National Corpus (BNC) (Yujie 2017), and The Corpus of the Contemporary American English (COCA) (Zhiber & Korotina 2019) in collecting linguistic forms which could be used in examining, categorizing, and identification of intensifiers. However, the data for the study at hand were elicited using two major sources; written and spoken. The spoken

linguistics forms were elicited through sociolinguistic interviews involving 30 informants from Chasu community of Same District-Kilimanjaro Region where the Southern Chasu Dialect is spoken. Informants included both males and females of different age groups from Mamba Myamba ward specifically from Goha, Mang'a, Mteke, Kirore, Kambeni, and Mramba villages. The study used descriptive research and the informants were selected through snowball sampling and being engaged into various topics of interest such as soccer, daily activities including trading, farming, hunting, and stories about their school life experience. Before data collection, consent was sought from the informants to participate in the study, and to be recorded. Through these sociolinguistic interviews, audio recorded short speeches from day-to-day language were gathered. From these speeches about 86 linguistic structures in form of sentences, lexical items, and phrases with intensifiers were extracted. To complement the spoken data, the written linguistic forms were collected from Chasu hymn book (Nyimbo za Mtaso 1967). The book was purposively selected based on the fact that, it contains hymns written in Chasu with very few incidences of borrowed words from Kiswahili, the national language in Tanzania, and a language which is currently used by Chasu speakers in different domains such as church, market, schools, and village meetings (Sebonde 2014). The Chasu hymn book is written using Kisuji/Kimamba sub-dialect hence aligning with spoken data which were gathered in Mamba Myamba ward. About 170 tokens in form of sentences, phrases and expressions were reviewed and collected. The transcription of data from interviews was made from the recorded text using Chasu orthography followed by the content analysis to categorize strategies of expressing intensification of Chasu. Since intensifiers have traditionally been associated with adjectives, adverbs (Palacios & Ignacio 2016), verbs, nouns, and prepositions (Bolinger 1972), and ideophonic adverbs (Lusekelo 2010 and Bowler & Gluckman 2017), the analysis of this study was geared into identifying patterns with combination of verbs + adverbs intensifiers, adjectives + adverbs, verbs + intensifying morpheme, adjectives + intensifying morphemes, verb +intensifying morpheme +adverb, ideophonic adverb, and reduplications of linguistic aspects. There were no incidences with patterns involving a combination of nouns or prepositions in this particular study.

4 Results and discussion

In this section, the study gives a description and the strategies used to express intensification in Chasu language. It starts with a description of linguistic patterns involving intensifiers and their distribution in the Chasu sentences. The following are the linguistic patterns bearing combinations of adverbial intensifiers co-occurring with the linguistic forms they modify, being a verb, an adjective or an adverb.

Table 1: Linguistic patterns with Chasu intensifiers

SN	Patterns	Occurrences
1	verbs + adverbs intensifiers	22
2	adjectives + adverbs	12
3	verb root + intensifying morpheme <i>-ish-a</i>	110
4	adjectives + intensifying morphemes <i>-ish-a</i>	56
6	verb +intensifying morpheme <i>-ish-a</i> +adverb	15
7	adjective + intensifying morpheme <i>-ish-a</i> +adverb	2
8	adjective + ideophonic adverb	8
9	verb +intensifying morpheme <i>-ish-a</i> +ideophonic adverb	12
10	verbs + ideophonic adverb	10
11	reduplication	9

The following examples in (1a-g) depict various patterns of Chasu intensifiers as in Table 1.

- (1) a. *Ni- Ø-end-**ish-a** lila i-sanga l-ed-**ish-a***
1SG-PRS-want-INT-FV that 5.land 5-beautiful-INT-FV
‘I **highly** need that **very** beautiful land’
- b. *Twa- Ø-ku- gwir-**ish-a***
1PL- PRF-2OPSG- trust-INT-FV
‘We **highly** trust you’
- c. *Tu-ne-von-a nkalamo y-edi **haiwa***
2PL-FUT-see-FV 9.salvation 9-good **ADV**
‘We shall see a **very good** salvation’
- d. *Ni- Ø-ag-**ish-a haiwa***
1SG-PRS-grieve-INT-FV **ADV**
‘I am **so much** grieving’
- e. *U-ni-ož-e iki ni-el-**ish-e chwe***
2SG-OP1SG-wash-SBJ now SBJ 1SG-clean-INT- FV/SBJ **IDEO**
‘Wash me now to be **exceedingly very** clean’
- f. *Shuke ni ny-ewa **chwe***
10.cloth COP 9-white **IDEO**
‘Clothes are **exceedingly white**’
- g. *Vi-ogwe vya- Ø sia **pere***
8.potato 8-PRF-finish-FV **ADV**
‘Potatoes are finished **completely**’

The most occurred linguistic pattern with intensifiers is a verb root co-occurring with an intensifying morpheme *-ish-a* as in example (1a) and (1b); an adjective with intensifying

morpheme *-ish-a* as in (1a); *led-ish-a*; verb root with intensifying morpheme *-ish-a* followed by intensifying adverb *haiwa* as in (1d); adjective followed by an adverb *haiwa* as in (1c); verb root with morpheme *-ish-a* followed by ideophonic adverb *chwe* as in (1e); adjective with ideophonic adverb *chwe* as in (1f) and verb followed by an intensifying adverb *pere* as in 1(g).

It was mentioned in the introduction part that Chasu is one of the Ethnic Community Languages in Tanzania, having a high contact with Swahili and English languages. As a result, there has been a language shift in some domain of language use, lexical borrowing and code-switching. In the study at hand, the data also indicate that, in Chasu language, there were few incidences of borrowed intensifiers from Kiswahili. Out of 86 linguistic forms gathered from the conversations, 13 had borrowed forms of Swahili intensifiers *sana*, *kabisa*, and *zaidi* as observed in the examples (2a-d) below.

- (2) a. *Tu- Ø pat-i-e ma-jeraha ma-dori sana*
1PL-PST-got-FV 6.bruise 6-small ADV
‘We got some **very** few bruises’
- b. *Va-ntu ve-ki-lwan-a sana*
2.people 3PL-PTCP-fight-FV ADV
‘People were **so much** fighting’
- c. *Shughuli ž-angu že-n-ink-a pesa ni-žo ne- Ø-ži-kund-i-e zaidi*
10.activity 10-POSS 10-OBJ-give-FV 10.money COP-REL 1SG-PRF-10.OP-love-APP-FV ADV
‘Those activities which pay me are the ones I love **most**’
- d. *Ni ki-ntu ki-kuži sana*
COP 7-thing 7-difficult ADV
‘Is a **very** difficult thing’

It is worth noting that there were no data from the Chasu hymn with incidences of borrowed intensifiers from Swahili language.

4.1 Expression of Chasu intensification

As asserted above, Chasu is among the languages of the Bantu family, hence reflects agglutinative nature of Bantu linguistics in verbs and adjectives. Therefore, while in other languages like English, intensifiers are manifested in free forms such as adverbs and adjectives, in Chasu language, intensifiers are categorically expressed using morphological and lexical strategies, and a combination of both.

4.1.1 Morphological strategy

Morphologically, Chasu is expressing intensification using a bound morpheme *-ish-a*, a suffix attached as a final morpheme to a verb, an adverb, or adjective expressing intensification of a precedent word. The following examples in (3a-h) describe the manifestation of the morpheme *-ish-a* in Chasu linguistic expression.

- (3) a. *Ni-Ø-end-ish-a lila i-sanga l-ed-ish-a*
1SG-PST-want-INT-FV that 5.land 5-beautiful-INT-FV
'I **highly** need that **very** beautiful land'
- b. *Twa- Ø- ku-gwir-ish-a*
1PL- PRS-2OPSG-trust-INT-FV
'We **highly** trust you'
- c. *E- Ø ni- kund-ish-a mi*
3SG- PRS-1OPSG -love- INT-FV me
'He loves me **so** much'
- d. *Va-lao v-ed-ish-a*
2.angel 2-beautiful-INT-FV
'**Very** beautifully angles'
- e. *Mbonea nyink-ish-a*
10.mercy 10.many-INT-FV
'So **exceedingly** mercy'
- f. *He u-la m-zi m-bah-ish-a*
In that 5.city 5-big-INT-FV
'In that **very** big city'
- g. *Ni-ne-m-many-a nento-sh-a*
1SG-FUT-3OPSG-know-FV well-INT-FV
'I will know him **very** well'

In example (3a-c) the bound morpheme *-ish-a* is attached to the verb roots *-enda*; 'need'; *gwira*-'trust'; *kunda* 'love' respectively, to express degree or the intensity of the action, meaning that an action is performed in greater force, or degree of frequency. On the other hand, examples (3d-g), the bound morpheme *-ish-a* is affixed to an adjective *-edi-* 'beautiful'; *nyinki* 'many or much'; *mbaha* 'big' and *nento* 'good' respectively, to express emphasis to scale up the meaning of an adjective. Comparing to other Bantu languages, the morphological strategy in Chasu is different from Kiswahili, a highly spoken, and a national language in Tanzania which lacks suffix as where lexical items *sana*, *mno*, and *kabisa* are used to express intensification.

4.1.2 Lexical strategy

The following intensifiers are at the word level category. These include lexical items with ideophonic adverbs, adverbial, verbal and adjectival reduplication, and numerals.

4.1.2.1 Ideophonic expressions

When expressing intensifying adverbs in English language, Zhiber & Korotina (2019) argue that the context and the precedent linguistic item determine the meaning and the connotation of intensifying adverbs. As mentioned in the introductory part, ideophonic adverbs are among the expressions which intensify adjectives and verbs or sometimes nouns. Crystal (1997:198)

describes an ideophone as a “...term used in linguistics and phonetics for any vivid representation of an idea in sound, such as occurs through onomatopoeia” It is a “a vivid representation of an idea in sound...a word, often onomatopoeic, which describes a predicate, qualificative or adverb in respect to manner, colour, sound, smell, action, state or intensity” (Doke 1935: 118, as cited in Voeltz and Kilian-Hatz 2001). In Bantu linguistics, Crystal specifies that an ideophone is “the name of a particular word class containing sound symbolic words”.

In Chasu, the study has revealed that there are several ideophonic adverbial elements which express intensity in different linguistics patterns. These expressions include pairs in which the intensifiers *twa*, *chi* and *chwe* modify adjectives or verbs. These adverbs express a sense of absoluteness for something that is ‘so colourful’ or ‘coloured’; ‘so black’, ‘dark’ or ‘dirty’; so ‘clean’ or ‘white’ respectively. The first expression involves an adjective with an ideophone which functions to intensify or modify adjectives. The major ones are adjectives of main colors such as red, black and white which co-occur with ideophones to express the intensity of the colour as in examples (4a-c).

- (4) a. *Sakame nkundu twa*
9.blood 9-red IDEO
‘The blood so red’
- b. *M-bora m-jiru chi*
1.girl 1-black IDEO
‘The girl so black/darkish’
- c. *Shuke ny-ewa chwe*
9. cloth 9-white IDEO
‘The cloth so white’

The second expression involves a verb co-occurring with an ideophonic adverb to express the intensity of the action in Chasu as in examples (5a-c). These are the same ideophonic expressions which co-occur with the adjectives of colour in (4a-c) above and they connote a synonymic meaning as (5a-c).

- (5) a. *Ma-embe e- Ø-rotom-e twa*
6.mango 6 PST-ripe-FV IDEO
‘Mangoes are so ripe/colourful/reddish’
- b. *Shuke i- Ø-jirar-e chi*
9.cloth 9-PST-dirty-FV IDEO
‘The cloth is very dirty’
- c. *Mazi i- Ø-eli-e chwe*
9.water 9-PST- clean-FV IDEO
‘The water is so clean’

These findings align with the study by Lusekelo (2010) on Kinyakyusa adverbs. He argues that ideophonic expression in Kinyakyusa function to intensify verbs as in: *Tu-tunywik-e tunyu* ‘we fell down heavily’ where the word *tunyu* is an ideophonic expression modifying the verb

tunywika ‘fall’. He also adds that ideophonic adverbs can also function to modify adjectives as in *umwa-ana-ke n-titu pii* ‘His/her child is very black’. The ideophone *pii* modifies the adjective *ntitu* ‘black’.

The third expression involves a verb attached with the intensifying morpheme **–ish-a** co-occurring with an ideophonic adverb to express a very high intensity of the action as in examples (6a-c).

- (6) a. *Sakame i- Ø-rotom ish-e twa*
9.blood 9-PST-red-INT-FV **IDEO**
‘The blood is so so reddish/colourful’
- b. *U-ni-oz-e ni-el-ish-e chwe*
2SG-1OPSG- wash-SBJ 1SG-clean- INT-SBJ **IDEO**
‘Wash me to be very very clean’
- c. *Mw-ango u- Ø-jirar-ish-e chi*
3.door 3-PST-dirty- INT **IDEO**
‘The door is very very dirty’

This expression is different from other studies like that of Lusekelo (2010) in Kinyakyusa and Bowler and Gluckman (2017) in Luhya languages where intensification is not expressed through the use of bound morphemes. In addition, the ideophonic adverbial expressions are same as those of Luhya languages in selecting verbs and adjectives to co-occur with. However, Chasu ideophones do not select nouns as in Luhya languages do.

Moreover, in this study we observed that Chasu expresses intensification through the use of adverbial ideophone which do not involve colours, or tidiness as in examples (7a-f).

- (7) a. *Mwango u- Ø-dind-i-e ndi*
3.door 3-PST- tight- FV **IDEO**
‘The door is **so** tight’
- b. *Mazi i- Ø- zu-e ndi*
9.water 9-PST-full-FV **IDEO**
‘The water is **so** full’
- c. *A- Ø-huzy-a chwi*
3SG-PRF-quite-FV **IDEO**
‘She is **so** quite’
- d. *Mazi i- Ø-ho-i-e do*
9.water 9- PST- cold- FV **IDEO**
‘The water is so/very cold’
- e. *Ma-hemba e-sh-a veke*
6.maize 6-hot-PRS-FV **IDEO**
‘The maize are so hot’

- f. *A-fikw-a tiki*
3SG- PRF-exhaust-FV **IDEO**
'She/he is **very/so** exhausted'

In (7a-f) the ideophonic adverbs select only a verb to co-occur with. These include adverbial ideophones such as *ndi* 'very tight or extremely full' as in (7a) and (b); *chwi* 'extremely quite' as in (7c); *do* 'very cold' as in (7e); *veke* 'very hot'; and *tiki* very tired as in (7f).

4.1.2.2 Adverbial expression

Like in other languages, Chasu is using adverbs as a strategy to express intensification. These adverbs precede verbs they are modifying as in (8a) *haiwa*; 'so much' and (8b) *pere*; 'complete'. While the adverb *haiwa* may modify a verb with the adverbial morpheme *-ish-a*, the adverb *pere* does not have a pattern that takes the adverbial morpheme. The adverb *haiwa* may also modify an adjective as in (8c) as it modifies the adjective 'beautiful'.

- (8) a. *E- Ø- m-kund-i-e haiwa*
3SG-PRS- OP3SG-love-FV **ADV**
'He/she loves him **so much**'
- b. *Ma-hemba a- Ø- si-a pere*
6.maize 6-PRF-finish-FV **ADV**
'Maize are **completely** finished'
- c. *M-bora w-ed-ish-a haiwa*
1.girl 1-beautiful-INT-FV **ADV**
'A **very very** beautiful girl'

The findings of this study in this part align with the study in Kinyakyusa by Lusekelo (2010) as shown in example *ba-gog-ile aka-kuku aka-nini fiijo*; 'They killed the very small hen'. The adverb *fiijo* 'much' intensifies the meaning of the adjective *akanini* 'small'.

4.1.2.3 Reduplication

Reduplication is one of the characteristics of Bantu languages (Ashton 1944). Reduplication occurs as a full or entire word stem or when part of a word is repeated to create a new form with modified meaning (Hurskainen 2024). It involves copying the entire word or stem or a partial phonological or morphological elements to express meanings like repetition or multiple occurrence of event (Gibson & Yoneda 2018), intensity, plurality, diminution or aspectual distinction, iterative or continuous action. Speaking of traditional Bantu grammars, Hyman (2008), claims that reduplication can be manifested in verbs, nouns, adjectives, numerals, pronouns, and demonstratives signifying specific semantic properties. However, based on the works by Downing (1997), verb duplication is widespread in the family of Bantu languages signifying that the action verb is done on a small scale, or little by little or from time to time. Ashton (1944) as cited in Lodhi (2004) stresses that reduplication is used to express various phases of intensiveness, including, to emphasize, to increase or extend the idea contained in the word, to express abundance or diversity; to lessen or modify the force of a word; to express continuous action, or state to express a distributive idea. In Chasu language, reduplication

occurs in form of verbs, adverbs, and numerals. Reduplication occurs as full reduplication of verb root as in the following constructions:

- (9) a. *Vana ve-lonza-lonza he mtaso*
'Children are **repetitively shouting** in church'
- b. *Tura-tonga-tonga he kiete mira si misi yose*
'We **frequently go** to the market but not everyday'

In example (9a), the verb *lonza* 'shout' the action is repetitively done to express continuity of action, while the *tonga* 'go' the action is repeated but in lesser force.

Reduplication in Chasu occurs through repetition of adverbs like in *fia* 'fast' occur and the repetition implies the action is done excessively fast and *mpoa* 'slowly' to imply that the action is done excessively slowly as in (10a) and (10b) respectively.

- (10) a. *Tongani fia-fia:*
'Go fast repeatedly'
- b. *Tula viogwe mpoa-mpoa*
'We eat potatoes very slowly'

Moreover, in Chasu, reduplication is also manifested through repetition of numerals like in (11a-b).

- (11) a. *Tuhandie mbeu mbiri-mbiri*
'We planted **two seeds distributively**'
- b. *Ngiani mmwe-mmwe*
'Get inside **one by one**'

The numerals in (11a) and 11(b) *mbiri* 'two' and *mwe* 'one' respectively are repetitions used to express distribution of action.

These examples indicated repetition or habitual action, and the action amplifies the action's force to do excessively or lesser. These findings align with the Swahili study by Makino (2014 & 2016) as he says that full reduplication involves the repetition of verb stem and can be used to convey habitual action or increase degree. Gibson and Yoneda (2018) add that in Swahili full verb reduplication used to convey multiple occurrence of an event or plurality of the event as in *Yule mbwa ana-bweka-bweka* 'That dog habitually barks'; The verb *bweka* 'bark' in this context is expressing that the action is done habitually.

5 Conclusion and recommendations

This study has attempted to examine the expression of intensification in Chasu language of Same District in Tanzania. The study sought to explore which strategies are used by Chasu speakers to express intensification in both written and spoken forms. The study has revealed

that Chasu language speakers are using both morphological and lexical strategies to express intensification, but there were some incidences with the interaction between morphological and lexical forms. Morphological strategy involves suffix *ish-a* attached to a verb root or adjective is used to express intensity of action. Lexical strategy has involved the use of adverb *haiwa* and *pere*, ideophonic adverbs *chwe*, *chi*, *twa* which involve colours, and *chwi*, *tiki*, *veke*, *do* which do not involve colours, and verbal and adverbial reduplication. There were few incidences of borrowed intensifiers *sana* and *kabisa* from Kiswahili. While other languages commonly use the lexical strategy to express intensification, this study contributes to the body of knowledge coming from the use of morphological strategy which might be a characteristic of Bantu languages due to their agglutinative nature of this language family. This study recommends further studies in other Bantu languages so as to come with examine strategies of how intensifiers are expressed, typology and their functions. In addition, a comparative study may be conducted to examine similarities and differences between Bantu and non-Bantu languages. Further studies can be done on expression of intensification to the endangered languages to document and to examine the impacts of multilingualism in those contexts.

References

- Ashton, Ethel O. 1944. *Swahili grammar (including intonation)*. London: Longman.
- Chalker Sylvia & Weiner Edmund. 1994. *The Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Bowler, Margit, & Gluckman, John. 2017. Intensifying ideophones in three Luhya languages, in Vera Hohaus and Wanda Rothe (eds.), *Proceedings of Triple A 4*.
- Downing, Laura J. 2001. The tonal and morphological encoding of focus in Zulu. *Linguistics* 39(5). 907-942. <https://www.academia.edu/51163886?referrer=grok.com>
- Gibson, Hannah & Yoneda, Nobuka. 2018. Function of verb reduplication and verb doubling in Swahili. *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 96. 5-27.
- Hyman, Larry M. 2007. Reconstructing the Proto-Bantu verbal unit: internal evidence. In N. C.
- Hyman, Larry M. 2009. The natural history of verb-stem reduplication in Bantu. *Morphology* 19. 177-206.
- Huddleston, Rodney & Pullum, Geoffrey. 2002. *The Cambridge grammar of the English language*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Hurskainen, Arvi. 2024. Reduplication in Swahili language. Technical Reports on Language Technology.
- Kula, Nancy C. & Marten, Lutz. 2007(Eds.). *Bantu in Bloomsbury: Special issue on Bantu linguistics. SOAS Working Papers in Linguistics* 15: 201–211). London: University of London.

- Labov, William. 1985. Intensity. In D. Schiffrin (ed.). *Meaning, form and use in context: Linguistic applications*. Washington, 43–70. DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Lodhi, Abdliaziz Y. 2004. Strategies of emphasis and intensity in Swahili. *Africa and Asia* 4. 142-150. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228680487_Strategies_of_emphasis_and_intensity_in_Swahili?referrer=grok.com
- Lusekelo, Amani. 2010. Adverbs as a word category in Kinyakyusa. National Council of Less Common Taught Languages.
- Makino, Yuka. 2014. *Full and partial reduplication of verb stem in Swahili*. Osaka: Osaka University. (Master dissertation).
- Makino, Yuka. 2016. Reduplication of verb stem in Swahili: Function and condition of derivation. *Journal of Swahili and African Studies* 27. 1-16.
- Martínez, Ignacio P. M. 2016. Negative intensification in the spoken language of British adults and teenagers. A corpus-based study. *Nordic Journal of English Studies* 15(4). 45-77.
- Mreta, Abel. Y. 1998. *Analysis of tense and aspect in Chasu: Their form and meaning in the affirmative constructions*. Bayreuth: LIT Verlag, Hamburg. (Doctoral dissertation)
- Msuya, Justin. & Abel Mreta. 2019. Adaptation of loanwords in Chasu. *Journal of Linguistics and Language in Education* 13(1). 1-21.
- Msuya, Erasmus A. 2014. Mâatha: Descriptive study of litigation among Chasu speaking people. *International Journal of Linguistics* 6(4). 238–257.
- Msuya, Erasmus A. 2021. Ethno-linguistics analysis of names and naming in Northern Chasu. *Journal of Kiswahili Studies* 19(2). 173-191.
- Partington, Alan. 1993. Corpus evidence of language change: The case of the intensifier. In M. Baker, E. Tognini-Bonelli & G. Francis (eds.). *Text and Technology: In Honour of John Sinclair*. 177–192. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Plank, Frans. 2001. Typology by the end of the 18th century. In S. Aroux et al. (eds.) *History of the Language Sciences: An International Handbook on the Evolution of the Study of Language from the Beginning to the Present*, II, 1399–1414. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Quirk, Randolph, Greenbaum, Sidney Leech, Geoffrey & Svartvik Jan. 1985. *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. London: Longman.
- Radionova, Ye. 2004. Intensivnost' i yeyo mesto v ryadu drugikh semanticheskikh kategoriy. *Slavyanskiy vestnik*. 2. M. MAKS Press. 303–308. (In Russian).
- Sebonde, Rafiki Y. 2012. Code-switching and social stratification in a rural Chasu community in Tanzania. *Language Matters* 43(1). 60-76.

Sebonde, Rafiki Y. 2014. Code switching or lexical borrowing: Numerals in Chasu language of rural Tanzania. *Journal of Arts and Humanities* 3(3). 67-76.

Sebonde, Rafiki Y. 2020. Personal naming practices and modes of address in the Chasu speech community. *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 29(2). 1-18.

Sebonde, Rafiki Y. 2025. Lexical borrowing and semantic change in Chasu speech community of Tanzania. *South African Journal of African Languages* 45(4). 564-572.

Tagliamonte, Sali. 2008. So different, so pretty, cool, recycling intensifiers in Toronto Canada: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/english-language-and-linguistics/article/abs/so-different-and-pretty-cool-recycling-intensifiers-in-toronto-canada/1B101ADDFAC4B450EA19693995753866>

Yohana, Rafiki. 2009. *A sociolinguistics analysis of variation in a rural African community. Chasu of Same District in Tanzania*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town. (Doctoral thesis).

Yujie, Su. 2017. Corpus-based comparative study of intensifiers: quite, pretty, rather and fairly. *Journal of World Languages* 3(3). 224–236.

Yuli, Suryaningsih & Tofan, Hardjanto H. 2021. Types of English intensifiers on social media. *Journal of Language and Literature* 15 (2). 201-208.

Zhiber, Eugenia V. & Korotina, Larisa V. 2019. Intensifying adverbs in the English language. *Training, Language and Culture* 3 (3). 70-88.

Rafiki Y. Sebonde
Department of Foreign Languages and Literature
The University of Dodoma
P.O. Box 259 Dodoma, Tanzania
e-mail: rafiki.sebonde@udom.ac.tz
rafikisebonde2@gmail.com

In SKASE Journal of Theoretical Linguistics [online]. 2026, vol. 23, no. 1 [cit. 2026-06-30]. Available on web page <http://www.skase.sk/Volumes/JTL61/02.pdf>. ISSN 1336-782X