
Nominal Modifiers in Kana

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Abstract: The paper analyzed nominal modifiers in Kana within a formal linguistic framework. The paper identified ten discrete nominal modifiers in the grammatical structure of Kana. The paper found that pre-head and post-head modification are attested in the grammar of Kana as seven of the modifiers occur before the head noun while three occur after the head noun in the grammatical structure of the noun phrase. The paper reported that there is no distinction between mass and count nouns in the use of quantifiers in Kana. The paper noted that there can be no intervening element between the prepositional phrase modifier and the head noun. The study also showed that the demonstrative can only co-occur with the head noun in the maximal projection of the noun phrase in mutually exclusive distribution with the prepositional phrase, and noted that the numeral modifier does not participate in the maximal expansion of the NP. The paper therefore recommended a detailed investigation of numerals and numeracy in Kana in order to ascertain the structural status of the numeral element in Kana.

Keywords: Kana, modifiers, noun phrase, grammatical structure and head noun.

1. Introduction

This study provides a grammatical description of nominal modifiers in Kana within a formal linguistic framework. Kana is one of the four major languages of Rivers State and it is closely related to Baan, Eleme, Tee and Gokana. These languages form a genetic unity and Williamson and Blench (2000:33) classify them in Delta-Cross of Cross River within the Bantoid-Cross of the East Benue-Congo branch of Benue-Congo.

According to Ikoro (1996:1):

“The Kana people are surrounded by neighbours, most of whom speak different but closely related languages. To the Northeast are the Ndoki, who speak the Ndoki dialect of Igbo. To the Northwest are Baan and Eleme, who speak the Baan and Eleme languages respectively. To the South are the Andoni, who speak Obolo and to the Southeast are the Gokana, speakers of the Gokana language. Among all these neighbors, the Baan, Eleme and Gokana are considered to have the same historical origin as the Kana. There are little or no cultural differences, and they consider themselves as one indivisible political entity called Ogoni. Their languages have been shown to be closely related, but still significantly and sufficiently different from each other to be called separate languages (cf. Wolff 1959b, 1964, and Williamson 1985)”.

Given the fact that modification is a crucial syntactic relation within language structure, the present study attempts a description of the grammar of nominal modifiers in Kana.

2. On the Phenomenon of Nominal Modifiers

Ndimele (1996:44) describes modifiers as elements which limit or specify the reference of a noun. He asserts that an NP may consist of a noun alone as head or accompanied by one or more modifiers. He acknowledges that modifiers which occur before the head are pre-head

modifiers while those that follow the head are post head modifiers.

Huddleston (1988:85) recognizes two types of modifying structures within the noun phrase. He refers to these structures as dependents of the noun phrase. An NP will consist of a noun as head alone or accompanied by one or more dependents. He claims that some dependents precede the head while others follow. He distinguishes these dependents as pre-head and post-head dependents. He argued that the pre-head dependents are of two main types, determiners and modifiers while he recognizes complements, modifiers and peripherals as post-head dependents.

A number of studies (e.g. Quirk and Greenbaum) (1977), Radford (1988), Jenkins (2003) and Radford (2003) agree that modification is a crucial syntactic relation within language structure. Radford (2003:19) argues that the linear directionality between the head and its complements determines the head (position) parameter in more recent syntactic theory.

Carnie (2006:49) asserts that modifiers are always attached within the phrase that they modify. In essence, the modifier must share spatial contiguity with the modified in a basic construction. Thus, the movement of a modifier from its source position is often the consequence of the application of a given transformational rule to the kernel structure.

3. Methodology

The researchers collected data from fluent native speakers of Kana with the help of field assistants. Direct oral interview was also used to elicit comparative data from native speakers of the language. Also, secondary sources of data such as texts and library materials were utilized.

4. Analyzing Kana Nominal Modifiers

There are basically two categories of nominal modifiers in the grammatical structure of Kana: Pre-head modifiers and Post-head modifiers. The pre-head modifiers precede the head element while the post-head modifiers occur after the head element.

4.1 Pre-Head Modifiers

There are a number of nominal modifiers in Kana that occur before a noun in a noun phrase structure. These modifiers are analyzed below.

4.1.1 Possessives

These are words that show possession or ownership. In Kana, possessives cannot be used alone in a noun phrase. It must follow the noun where possession is indicated. This modifiers occur in two sets, as may be seen in (1a-c) and (2a-c) below:

- 1a) ndaa kpá
 Poss book
 ‘mybook’
- b) áloo kpá
 Poss book
 ‘yourbook’
- c) áleę kpá
 Poss book
 ‘his/herbook’

- 2a) nà kpá
 Poss book
 ‘my book’
- b) o kpá
 Poss book
 ‘yourbook’
- c) ye kpá.
 Poss book
 ‘his/her book’

There are grammatical distinctions between these sets of possessives. The possessives that occur in (1a-c) are considered emphatic while those in (2a-c) are non-emphatic. These two sets of possessive markers have their plural counterparts. The plural emphatic possessive occurs in (3a-c) while the plural non emphatic possessive occurs in (4a-c) respectively:

- 3a) álii kpá
 Poss(pl)book
 ‘ourbook’
- b) ábírí kpá
 Poss(pl)book
 ‘yourbook’
- c) álába kpá
 Poss(pl)book
 ‘theirbook’
- 4a) i kpá
 Poss(pl)book
 ‘our book’
- b) bii kpá
 Poss(pl)book
 ‘yourbook’
- c) wá kpá
 Poss(pl)book
 ‘theirbook’

4.1.2 Adjectives

An adjective is a word that describes or modifies a noun. In Kana, an adjective must always occur before a noun whenever it co-occurs with a noun in a noun phrase structure. However, adjectives can be used attributively or predicatively. Adjectives that basically occur within a noun phrase are functionally attributive, as in (5a-d):

- 5a) bié bẹ́lọ́

- Dirty cloth
 ‘a dirtycloth’
- b) pià nẹwá
 ugly/bad woman
 ‘an ugly/badwoman’
- c) lé dùm
 good life
 ‘a good life’
- d) keé nwii
 differentchild
 ‘a differentchild’

On the other hand, adjectives that occur after a verb in a sentence are said to be functionally predicative, as in (6a-d) below:

- 6a) Barisi lúbié
 PN bedirty
 ‘Barisi isdirty’
- b) Barika lúpià
 PNbe ugly/bad
 ‘Barikaisugly/bad’
- c) Bialelúlé
 PNbe good
 ‘Bialeisgood’
- d) Zorbarilúkée
 PN be different
 ‘Zorbariisdifferent’

Kana adjectives are invariable in form. They do not change their form through affixation as in English (e.g. tall, taller, tallest). But Kana adjectives can achieve contrast of degree through the use of intensifiers, as in (7).

- 7) Káána piánẹwá
 Int uglywoman
 ‘a very uglywoman’

4.1.3 Intensifiers

Crystal (1997:189) defines an intensifier as “a word which has a typically heightening effect on the meaning of another word”. In Kana, intensifiers cannot modify a noun directly, rather they co-occur with an adjective in order to enable the adjective to show contrasts of degree, as in (8a-c):

- 8) Degree of contrast:

Positive

- a) píá nẹwá
ugly woman
'an uglywoman'

Comparative:

- b) Káána píáneewá
Int ugly woman
'anuglierwoman'

Superlative:

- c) gbẹnẹ píáneewá
Int uglywoman
'anugliestwoman'

It is evident that (8b) and (8c) differ in the degree of modification. The intensifiers, 'káána' and 'gbẹnẹ' which is superlative, increase the strength of the meaning of the following adjective 'píá' 'ugly' to the comparative and superlative degrees. Therefore, the modification effect in (8c) is stronger than (8b) while (8a) is basically positive.

4.1.4 Quantifiers

A quantifier is a modifier that expresses the idea of quantity. It usually precedes the head element that it modifies within the NP structure. Consider the following:

- 9a) dẹdẹ nẹ
Quant. Person
'everybody'
- b) zĩzĩkabe
quant. Compound
'each compound'
- c) máà tọ
quant. House
'many houses'
- d) sigà máá
quant. Water
'some water'

In Kana, there is no distinction between countable and uncountable nouns in the use of quantifiers. Consider this data:

- 10a) sigà tọ
quant. houses
'some houses'
- b) sigà máá

- quant. water
 ‘some water’
 11a) máá máá
 quant. Water
 ‘much water’
 b) máá tọ
 quant. House
 ‘many houses’

Notice that in (10-11), the quantifiers sigà and máá can freely co-occur with countable and uncountable nouns. Thus, in Kana, there is no distinction between the quantifiers ‘many’ and ‘much’. The gloss of sigà and máá as ‘some’, ‘many’ and ‘much’ merely depends on the English distinction between countable and uncountable nouns. Kana makes no count/mass distinction in the use of quantifiers. Thus, sigà may freely gloss as ‘some’ while máá can also freely gloss as ‘many’ or ‘much’.

Numerals are considered a type of quantifier in Kana. Thus, the quantifier and the numeral cannot co-occur in a single NP or co-modify a single nominal element.

4.1.5 Numeral

Numerals are numbers used in counting entities. They occur as pre-head modifiers and can directly precede the head noun in Kana. There are two categories of numerals evident in the linguistic literature. They are cardinal and ordinal numerals. From our data only cardinal numerals are morphologized in Kana. Cardinal numerals in Kana can directly modify nouns that refer to units of time. (e.g. dee ‘day’, kaá ‘week’, ènoó ‘month’ and zuá ‘year’), as shown in Figure 4.1:

Figure 4.1 Cardinal Numerals and Time Units In Kana

Cardinal Numerals	Cardinal Numerals + Time Units
zĩ ‘one’	zĩènoó ‘one month’
bàà ‘two’	bààènoó ‘two months’
tàá ‘three’	tàáènoó ‘three months’
nià ‘four’	nià dee ‘four days’
ò-òò ‘five’	ò-òò dee ‘five days’
ìni-ì ‘six’	ìni-ì dee ‘six days’
èrẹbà ‘seven’	èrẹbàkaá ‘seven weeks’
èrẹtáá ‘eight’	èrẹtáákaá ‘eight weeks’
ànìnià ‘nine’	ànìniàkaá ‘nine weeks’
lòb ‘ten’	lòbzuá ‘ten years’
tub ‘twenty’	tub zuá ‘twenty years’
bóó ‘four hundred’	bóózuá ‘four hundred years’

By contrast, only the ordinal numeral for ‘first’ and ‘last’ is morphologized in Kana. The word for ‘first’ is túá while ‘last’ is kpedùme, as in (12a-d) and (13a-d):

- 12a) túá ènoó
 First month
 ‘First month’

- b) túá zuá
First year
'First year'
- c) túá nwii
First child
'First child'
- d) túá nu
First thing
'Firstthing'
- 13a) kpeḍùmeènoó
Last month
'last month'
- b) kpeḍùmezuá
last year
'lastyear'
- c) kpeḍùmenwii
last child
'lastchild'
- d) kpeḍùmenu
last thing
'lastthing'

Observe that there is no semantic restriction on the co-occurrence of the two ordinal numerals morphologized in Kana. They can directly modify any head element within a noun phrase without an intervening element.

4.1.6 Pluralizers

Nominals in Kana lack grammatical ways of demonstrating singular/plural contrasts as in English (e.g. girl/girls, bag/bags). There are no specific forms to show nominal plurality. In Kana, the number category is lexicalized through the lexical pluralizer **píá**. This pluralizer is also a type of nominal modifier. This is because plurality is realized in the language through the lexicalization process of modification. Thus, the pluralizer **píá** is a modifier and directly precedes the head noun that it modifies in a noun phrase structure. It is important to note that the plural modifier **píá** occurs as a general plural marker in the NP. Thus, whenever **píá** directly modifies any nominal element, the nominal acquires a plural reading. Consider the data below:

- 14a) píá péé
Pl goat
'goats'
- b) píá àkùè

- Pl spoon
‘spoons’
- c) pía nám
Pl animal
‘animals’
- d) pía kpá
Pl book
‘books’
- e) pía búto
Pl family
‘family members’
- f) pía bùe
Pl village
‘villagers’

Observe that without the plural marker **píáin** (14a-f), the nouns will freely give a singular reading or hover between a singular or plural meaning as in (15a-c):

- 15a) péé as in goat: bà núàpéé
Theybring goat
‘Theybrought a goat’.
‘They brought goats’.
- b) àkùè as in ‘spoon: bànúààkùè
Theybring spoon
‘Theybrought a spoon’.
‘They brought spoons’.
- c) kpá as in ‘book: bànúààkpá
Theybring book
‘Theybrought a book’.
‘They brought books’.

4.1.7 The Definiteness Marker

Kana has **lo** as its definiteness marker. It delimits the reference of a noun with respect to definiteness, and directly precedes the head noun in an NP structure. This definiteness modifier **lo** can freely co-occur with all nouns. Consider the following examples:

- 16a) lo gbó
def. dog
‘thedog’
- b) lo péé

- def. goat
‘the goat’
- c) lo bíràbù
def. anger
‘the anger’
- d) lo neḡ
def. person
‘the person’
- b) lo gbàrà
def. man
‘the man’

4.2 Post-Head Modifiers

This term is used to describe all the modifiers that occur after the head noun in the noun phrase structure in Kana. In what follows, we analyze each of the modifiers:

4.2.1 The Demonstrative

Demonstratives function as a nominal modifier in Kana and occurs after the noun it modifies, that is, they follow the head noun. Three demonstratives are attested in Kana. They are realized as bound morphemes, specifically suffixes: -iya, -aya and -ama. These suffixes specify the location of the noun to which they are affixed with respect to the distance of the speaker or hearer, or both. The demonstratives -iya and -aya show distal reference while -ama shows proximal reference. Consider the examples below:

- 17a) Zorle weè èb kpá -aya
PN PST look book DM
‘Zorle looked at that book’.
- b) Zorle weè èb kpá -iya
PN PST look book DM
‘Zorle looked at that book over there’.
- c) Zorle weè èb kpá -ama
PN PST look book DM
‘Zorle looked at this book’.

It is pertinent to note that unlike English demonstratives which change their form in response to number contrasts (e.g. that/those, this/these), Kana demonstratives do not change their form since the notion of number is lexicalized in the language.

4.2.2 The Prepositional Phrase Modifier

The prepositional phrase occurs in the Kana noun phrase structure as a post-head modifier. Consider the examples below:

- 18a) pèè [lòò deè]
Pear for road

- ‘a pear by the roadside’
- b) úè [bú tọ]
- talk in house
- ‘a matter for the family’
- c) sọ [nyó daá]
- discussiononbed
- ‘bedtimediscussion’

Notice that the prepositional phrases that co-occur with the nouns in (18a-c) delimit the meaning of these nouns. The PP modifies the noun and enters into construction with it to form an N-bar. However, the PP is optional in the NP structure as it is not required for its grammaticality. Thus, it basically occurs to signal a modification function. The PP as a nominal modifier in Kana occurs after the noun it modifies. It can never precede the noun and there can be no intervening element between the PP and the nominal head. There must be strict spatial continuity between the PP and the noun it modifies.

4.2.3 The Relative Clause Marker

In Kana, the relative clause occurs as a post-head modifier. Unlike the PP, there can be an intervening element between the RC and the head noun. For example:

- 19a) pěẽ [é Barika weè kaàná bu kpédúmé zuá-á]
- Pear that PN PST pluck in last year
- ‘The pear that Barika plucked last year’
- b) pěẽ [lóó deè] [é Barika weè kaàná bu kpédúmé zuá-á]
- Pear for road that PN PST pluck in last year
- ‘The pear that Barika plucked last year’

Observe that in (19b), there is an intervening PP between the head NP and its modifying RC. Thus, while the RC modifies the N-bar (pěẽlóódeè), the PP (lóódeè) directly modifies the noun (pěẽ). It holds, therefore, that the RC modifies the N-bar and not just the noun itself.

4.3 Co-occurrence Restrictions of Nominal Modifiers

The grammar of Kana provides a structure for the modification of nouns in the language. Although, all the modifiers freely occur with the noun, there is a constraint on the maximum number of modifiers a noun can carry at a time within a single NP configuration. Evidently, the NP can house a total of five pre-head modifiers and three post-head modifiers at a time, as seen below:

- 20) sìgà píá ndaa gbene biirá pěẽ lóó deè
- quant. Pl poss. int. adj. pear for road
- ‘some of my very dark roadside pears
- é Barika weè kààná aya
- that PN PST pluck DEM
- that Barika plucked’

Note that the nominal modifiers in (20) do not follow one another in a random order. Within

the Kana NP, the relative position of certain word classes is fixed. The linear order is as follows:

- i. Pre-Head Modifiers
 - a) Quantifiers
 - b) Pluralizers
 - c) Possessives
 - d) Intensifiers
 - e) Adjectives
- ii. Post-Head Modifiers
 - a) Prepositional phrase/demonstrative
 - b) Relative clause

From our analysis, ten nominal modifiers are evident in the grammar of Kana, out of these, seven occurs as pre-head modifiers while three are post-head modifiers. Also, eight of these modifiers can maximally co-occur with the head noun in a single noun phrase. The demonstrative occurs in the maximal expansion in mutually exclusive distribution with the prepositional phrase while numeral modifiers are not captured in the maximal expansion of the noun phrase.

4.4 Structural Categories of Kana Nominal Modifiers

Kana nominal modifiers occur within the following structural affinities:

- a) Affix/Morpheme

The demonstrative modifiers –iya, -aya, -ama occur in this group.

- b) Lexical items

The adjectives, possessives, numerals, pluralizers, intensifiers, quantifiers and definiteness marker occur in this category.

- c) Phrases

The prepositional phrase is the only phrase type that occurs as a nominal modifier.

- d) Clauses

It is only the relative clause that occur as a nominal modifier in Kana.

5. Conclusion

This work analyzed nominal modifiers in Kana. Ten discrete nominal modifiers are attested in the grammar of the language; out of which seven occur as pre-head modifiers while three are classified as post-head modifiers. The paper showed that there is no distinction between countable and uncountable nouns in the use of quantifiers. The study observed that there can be no intervening element between the prepositional phrase modifier and the modified head noun.

The study also showed that the demonstrative can only co-occur with the head noun in the maximal projection of a noun phrase in mutually exclusive distribution with the prepositional phrase. The paper revealed that the Kana nominal modifiers can be realized as a bound morpheme, lexical item, phrase or clause in grammatical structure.

6. Recommendations

The paper recommended a detailed study of numerals and numeracy in Kana in order to ascertain the structural status of the numeral element in Kana and document the grammatical features that highlight the co-occurrence restrictions of numerals in the maximal expansion of the Kana noun phrase.

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