



Word formation in Jarawa Language

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Abstract

The word formation process is an inevitable part of a language, playing an essential role in enriching it by either coining a new word form or entering a new complex word into the system or word class. Generally, a language makes use of this process through derivation. It indicates that this process is part of morphology; however, it sometimes becomes necessary for syntax in order to achieve sentential requirements. Moreover, different languages employ different strategies for word formation. In this paper, an attempt is made to investigate the word-formation process in the Jarawa language.

The Jarawa community resides along the western coast of the Andaman Islands and has remained largely untouched by modern civilization for centuries. They came into contact and started welcoming the outsiders in 1998; otherwise, they used to attack everyone outside their community. These people are reminiscent of the Palaeolithic population, and their language is representative of that period. The study of word formation in this language may shed light on the evolution of human language.

Keywords: morphology, word formation process, Jarawa, Andaman, compounding, reduplication, denominalization.

1.0 Introduction

Word formation processes are an inevitable part of grammar, which helps in the enrichment of the lexicon of a language either by coining a new word form or entering into a new complex word of the system or different word class (Halle, 1973; Aronoff, 1976, 1983; Lieber, 1980; William, 1981; Selkirk, 1982; Kiparsky, 1982; Anderson, 1982; Scalise, 1984; and Bauer, 2001). Languages typically employ the process of derivation for word formation. Since derivation is part of the word formation process, it is dealt with in the morphology; however, the creation of new lexical items may also be the requirement of different syntactic operations. In this

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paper, an attempt is made to describe the word-formation processes found in the Jarawa language of the Andaman. The paper is organized as section 1.1 focuses on the word formation process in general, section 1.2 concentrates on the Jarawa community, section 2 discusses the Jarawa language, section 3 describes the methodology used in data collection among Jarawa, a monolingual community of Andaman, section 4 concentrates on the word formation processes found in Jarawa language, and conclusion is presented in section 5.

1.1 Word Formation Processes

One of the significant characteristics of any human language is that it continues to undergo innovation, particularly in terms of its language structure and lexicon. This innovation helps language keep pace with the needs of community members in terms of communication. Although language structure takes time to change, its lexicon continues to add new words regularly. These new words are introduced in the language through borrowing or coinage. In borrowing, language takes words from some other languages, but in coinage, it applies its own phonological and morphological rules to create new words. When a language applies its own phonological and morphological rules to create new words, we call it word formation.

Word formation is not restricted to the creation of new words, but its domain includes other inflectional and derivational processes of the language. Thus, the creation of new words is one of the processes of Word formation. In this paper, I will focus on the word formation processes, including compounding, denominalization, reduplication, and other processes found in Jarawa.

1.2 Jarawa Community

The Jarawa is a community residing along the western coast of the South and Middle Andaman Islands in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, a Union Territory of India and has been untouched by modern civilization for centuries. They came into contact and began welcoming outsiders in 1998 (Kumar, 2012); otherwise, they had been known to attack everyone outside their community. According to Radcliff-Brown (1948), the word 'Jarawa' derives from the Aka-Bea language of the Great Andamanese group and means 'stranger' or 'someone one should be afraid of', though they call themselves *ᅇᅇ*. In this paper, the term 'Jarawa' refers to the community, its people, and their language.

Undoubtedly, the Andaman Islands have been a matter of speculation as well as a scientific inquiry for centuries, for the indigenous communities of the islands are reminiscent of the first Paleolithic population of Southeast Asia (Thangaraj et al., 2003), and they remained in isolation for a more extended period than any known population of the world (Kashyap et al., 2004). It is, however, challenging to ascertain the exact time of the early occupation of the Andamans based on archaeological confirmation, as the evidence is inadequate due to the wandering lifestyle of the inhabitants and the limited number of available explorations. At present, the oldest confirmed radiocarbon date is just over 2000 years old, and there are no artefacts to suggest contact or trade

with the world outside the archipelago (Cooper, 1993). The native islanders' relationship with Palaeolithic colonizers and their isolation from the outside world for extended periods have attracted the interest of scientists, anthropologists, archaeologists, human evolutionists, and linguists in order to understand human evolution.

The Andaman Islands house four indigenous populations, namely the Great Andamanese, Onge, Jarawa, and Sentinelese. The Great Andamanese is an amalgam term for ten different communities that once inhabited the region from South Andaman to North Andaman. These communities are Aka-Cari, Aka-Kora, Aka-Bo, Aka-Jeru, Aka-Kede, Aka-Kol, Oko-Juwoi, Aka-Pucikwar, Akar-Bale and Aka-Bea (Abbi, 2006; Kumar, 2012). The Onge community once inhabited the entire Little Andaman, but they are now settled in Dugong Creek of the Little Andaman, a settlement area for the Onge people. Their population is approximately 104 (Abbi, 2006). Their language appears to be similar to that of the Jarawa (Abbi, 2006; Blevins, 2007). The Sentinelese are the inhabitants of Sentinel Island. They have resisted all possible contact with the outsiders to date. Hence, little is known about them and their language.

2.0 Jarawa Language

Jarawa language is an SOV language. It has 41 distinctive sounds, comprising 28 consonants and 13 vowels. Qualitatively, this language has a vowel system with quantitative distinction. Only one vowel, i.e. high-mid, unrounded central vowel /i/, does not have length distinction. In consonant series, we have retroflex and voiceless aspirated plosives, which contrast with unaspirated plosives; however, bilabial plosive is an exception to this distinction. In plosives, we have bilabial, dental, retroflex, palatal, and velar consonants. In the category of nasals, there are bilabial, dental, palatal and velar ones. In fricatives, we have only voiceless fricatives at the bilabial, palatal and pharyngeal levels. We have one trill, one tap, and one lateral sound, as well as bilabial and palatal approximants.

Morphologically, Jarawa is agglutinating in nature and employs simple morphology in terms of affixation. There are a few prefixes and suffixes in this language. In the prefix category, there are pronominals and a referentiality/definiteness marker. In contrast, in the suffix category, mood and evidentiality marking with verbs, plural marking with nouns, and state/evidentiality marker with adjectives are attached. Pronouns are prefixed to a verb as either a subject or an object of a clause. However, the third person pronoun {*hi-*} can either be used as the subject or object of the clause, or it is used as a co-referencing element where it indicates a non-specific and non-visual nominal object of the clause.

Interestingly, nominal roots can be classified into two types: free roots and bound roots. The bound roots are those roots which take possessive prefixes obligatorily. These are human body-part and kinship terms. Other than these roots, all the roots are free roots. Human-specific verbs and adjectives are found as bound roots. In the pronominal category, there is no number distinction, i.e. the same pronoun is employed for singular and plural. However, countable nouns are inflected for number distinction.

In verbal morphology, no agreement, tense, or aspect marking is attested; i.e., the language is not marked morphologically for agreement, tense, or aspect. Instead, verbs take mood and evidentiality marking. Negation is formed morphologically as well as syntactically. Jarawa makes use of lexical, morphological, and syntactic causatives.

In the adjective category, there are descriptive adjectives, numerals, and demonstratives, and Jarawa also expresses the degree of an adjective through various means. Like verbs, adjectives also take mood and evidentiality markers.

Syntactically, Jarawa is an SOV language, where descriptive adjectives follow the nouns, while numerals and demonstratives precede them. Like other SOV languages, they make use of post-positions. No syntactic case is marked morphologically, though semantic cases are expressed with the help of post-positions.

3.0 Methodology

Since the community is monolingual, I employed two methods: participant observation and the trial-and-error method. First, I accustomed my ears to the sounds of the language. Then, I collected words related to body parts, animals, fish, and other objects by using pictures. The words related to daily activities were elicited by using gestures or pointing to the activities. Sentences were collected from spoken forms and dialogues. Gradually, I began to pick up some parts of the language. There was a conscious effort on my part to learn the language. I do not claim native-like fluency in the language; however, I picked up some of the Jarawa language and was able to communicate with them. Most of the data were collected from the Jarawa living in the Kadamtala region, although I also visited the Middle Straits and Tiroor regions during my fieldwork from 2003 to 2006, and these are the only sources of data for the present study.

4.0 Word Formation in Jarawa

Several word-formation processes are attested in the Jarawa language. Jarawa utilizes compounding, a widespread morphological process found in the languages of the world. Jarawa employs the process of denominalization, in which verbs are formed from nouns through derivation, a process used by all languages of the world. Reduplication is another word formation process that is abundantly found in the languages of South Asia, although many languages worldwide also utilize this process. Jarawa employs a unique process to form compounds, in which two-word forms of compounding are combined into a shortened form. I have named it 'Reduced form'. Jarawa employs a morpheme with proper nouns which do not have a specific meaning. I called this morpheme an 'Empty morpheme', and I think this process must be discussed in the word formation processes of Jarawa. These word formation processes found in Jarawa will be discussed in the following sub-sections.

4.1 Compounding

Jarawa employs compounding of two or more words to coin a new word. The pattern to make compounds is to use two nouns to form a compound, as given in (1).

(1) *ən-ijapo-talaŋ* = nostril

[+HUMAN]-nose-hole

In (1), we have two nouns, *ijapo* 'nose' and *talaŋ* 'hole', which altogether denote the word 'nostril'. Since this is a body part noun, it takes {*ən-*}, a Human possessive maker, as an obligatory prefix, as discussed in section 2.

Similarly, Jarawa makes use of nouns and adjectives to form compounds. For instance, in (2), *ijtapo*, 'freshwater' is a compound having two words, a noun *ij* 'water' and an adjective *tapo* ', good'.

(2) *ij-tapo* = fresh water (drinking water)

water-good

Additionally, we can have a three-word compound in Jarawa consisting of two nouns and one adjective. For example, *h^waiŋtapo* 'watercourse' in (3) is having three words. *h^wa* 'stream' as well as *ij* 'water' are nouns while *tapo* 'good' is an adjective. It altogether refers to the noun *h^waiŋtapo*, 'watercourse or a stream with clear and good drinking water'.

(3) *h^wa-ij-tapo* = watercourse (stream with clear, good drinking water)

stream-water-good

There are several examples of such compounding in the Jarawa language. Some of them are presented in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Examples of some of Jarawa compound nouns

Jarawa	English
<i>ən-ik^hwag-talaŋ</i> [HUM-ear-hole]	earlobe
<i>ən-epo-hi^wugə</i> [HUM-eye-ball]	eyeball
<i>ən-epo-t^hugə</i> [HUM-eye-small.hair]	eyebrow

4.2 Denominalization

In Jarawa, a noun can be converted into a verb through affixation, a process known as denominalization. Usually, nouns can be changed to verbs by the process of suffixation. The verbalizer suffix (VS) {-*le*} serves the function of changing nouns to verbs. For instance, *ča:q̄q̄ale* 'to construct a hut' in example (4) has a noun *ča:q̄q̄a* 'hut/house' and verbalizer suffix {-*le*} is attached to it to form a verb. Similarly, in (5), we have *uq̄q̄ule* 'to cough', where *uq̄q̄u* 'cough' is a noun and, after attaching the verbalizer suffix {-*le*}, it becomes a verb.

- (4) $\check{c}a:d\check{d}a + le = \check{c}a:d\check{d}ale$
hut + VS = to construct a hut
- (5) $ud\check{d}u + le = ud\check{d}ule$
cough + VS = to cough

There are numerous examples in the Jarawa language where a noun is converted into a verb by affixing a verbalizer suffix $\{-le\}$. Some of the examples are presented in Table 1.2

Table 1.2: Examples of Jarawa denominalised verbs

Jarawa	English
$t^huh\check{a}b-le$ fire-VS	to burn wood
$wo\check{c}ewo\check{c}e-le$ piling-VS	to put together
t^hui-le swing-VS	to swing
$ta\check{ng}-le$ bicycle ² -VS	to ride bicycle
$ipo-le$ bark-VS	to remove the bark of a tree

4.3 Reduplication

Reduplication in Jarawa is the repetition of a syllable or a word. Sometimes, we have repetition of morphemes. The repetition of a morpheme is shown in (6) and (7). The words *eweewe* ‘itching’ and *wo\check{c}ewo\check{c}e* ‘piling’ exhibit repetition of morphemes *ewe* and *wo\check{c}e* respectively; however, these words in isolation do not have any meaning.

- (6) *eweewe* ‘itching’
(7) *wo\check{c}ewo\check{c}e* ‘piling’

However, an entire word can also be reduplicated. If a word like a verb (only verbal category is present in my corpus) is reduplicated, it has the function of the adverbial modifier. The example in (8) demonstrates how the word *\check{c}ajwaj* ‘walk’ is reduplicated.

²This word refers to a bicycle or a vehicle; thus, this verb refers to riding using any vehicle.

- (8) *mi čawaja-čawaja allema*
 1 walk walk come
 I came walking.

4.4 Empty Morpheme

An empty morpheme is attached to nouns. The meaning of this empty morpheme is not clear; hence, it is classified as an "empty" morpheme. This empty morpheme has two allomorphs, {-i} and {-e}. It is generally attached to personal names, but in certain cases, it is also attached to other nouns. For instance, in examples (9) and (10), {-i} is attached to the noun³ 'official' and *dippu*⁴ 'a name of a person'. In example (11), it is attached with *ij* 'water'; however, in (11), we have the morpheme {-e}.

- (9) *babu-i*
 official-EM
 Official

- (10) *dippu-i*
 Dippu-EM
 Dippu (Personal Name)

- (11) *ij-e*
 water-EM
 Water

These two allomorphs – {-i} and {-e} – are in complementary distribution. The allomorph {-i} is attached to words which end with a high vowel, and the allomorph {-e} is attached elsewhere.

4.5 Reduced Form

There is a general tendency in Jarawa to reduce the form of a nominal or verb when it is used in construction with a possessive pronoun or in compound words. For example, there is a construction where we have a possessive pronoun {*ma*} and a noun {*pa^ho*} and the resultant construction is given in (12).

³ 'babu'.

It is a borrowed noun in the Jarawa language, which is taken from local Hindi.

⁴This is the name of the staff working with Andaman Adim Janjati Samiti, a wing of the Department of Tribal Affairs, Andaman and Nicobar Island Administration.

- (12) *ma-t^ho*
 1 GEN-EM
 My/our arrow

In (12), *ma^ho* ‘my/our arrow’ is a compound consisting of /*mi*/ and /*pa^ho*/. Thus, in /*ma^ho*/, there are two words, *mi* ‘1 GEN’ and *pa^ho* ‘arrow’, where /*pa^ho*/ is reduced to /*t^ho*/ and combines with /*ma*/ to become /*ma^ho*/. The general rule to reduce the form is to take the last syllable of the possessed noun and join it with the possessive prefix. Another example is with the noun-verb compound given in (13).

- (13) *ugi-k-t^he*
 bird-EM-go
 fly

In (13), the compound word *ugi-k-t^he* ‘fly’ comprises /*ugi*/ and /*bət^he*/. Thus, in (13) there are two words /*ugi*/ ‘bird’ and /*bət^he*/ ‘go’ and when they combined together, the first syllable of verbal root is deleted. In (13), we observe the insertion of *the* /-k-/ morpheme, which does not bear any meaning here; thus, I refer to it as an empty morpheme.

5 Conclusion

In this paper, an attempt is made to examine and discuss the various word-formation processes found in the Jarawa language. As we have noted, Jarawa employs five strategies, namely compounding, denominalization, Reduplication, Reduced form, and Empty morpheme, for creating new words or changing the class of words. In other words, five word-formation processes are used in Jarawa for the enrichment of its lexicon. The other processes include the reduction of form and the use of empty morphemes with nouns. Since the Jarawa represent a Palaeolithic population, the discussion of word formation processes in Jarawa may shed some light on the process and pathway of human language evolution.

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