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The morphological processes of ATSAM language

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ABSTRACT

Morphology is the study of forms or shapes of words. Atsam is a minority language spoken by the Atsam people in Southern Kaduna State in Nigeria. Its morphology has not been adequately studied in a way that the internal structure of word is explicitly analysed. So, this work is to bring about increase in awareness and understanding of the morphology and morphological processes of the language. Data were collected from four adult native speakers who were available, through both oral interview and structured questionnaires. A combination of introspect method and structured interview were employed to gather the data for the work. Hockett's (1954) morphological model of IA (Item and Arrangement) was used to carry out the morphological analysis of the data. It was revealed that Atsam uses more of inflectional morphemes than derivational morphemes. Moreso, of all the morphological processes, Atsam attests to the following; affixation, reduplication, borrowing, compounding and clipping. This work will help to preserve the language from being vulnerable to extinction since Atsam is a language with fewer speakers.

Keywords: atsam, clipping, derivational, inflectional morpheme, processes.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Linguistically, Nigeria may be one of the most complex countries in Africa, and in the world. Three major language families of African are represented in Nigeria which are; Niger Congo language (Yoruba, Igbo, Igala etc), the Afro- Asiatic language (Hausa, Margi, Bade, etc) and Nilo-Saharan (Zarma, Dendi, Teda, etc).

There are about 67 languages spoken as first language in Kaduna State. GBARI and HAUSA are the major languages, others are small and endangered minority language due to the influence of "HAUSA". "SHENI" language is reported to be almost extinct. Kaduna State in the northwest is divided into two regions, which are "The Southern and Northern region". The southern

region in Kaduna State is made up of 12 Local Government Area and holds 51.2% population in Kaduna state based on the 2006 census population. According to the research it is said that out of 46,000sqkm, southern Kaduna covered 26,000sqkm in Kaduna State and has 57 registered ethnic nationalities out of 67 identified ones.

The language of study ‘‘ATSAM’’ is a minority language spoken by the Atsam people in Southern Kaduna in Kauru LGA in Kaduna state. The population of Atsam as at 1982 was 30,000 and by 2022 the number grew to 104,000. The language is spoken in plateau, Nassarawa and The Federal Capital Territory (Abuja). The people are also in ‘‘Lare and Zango kattaf’’. Zango kattaf is about 5 kilometers distance from Atsam, Atsam is spoken in seven districts in kauru LGA area. There are: Zambina, Maizanko, Fadan Chawai, Pari, Kizakoro, Kidundun, Badurum. Each district is headed by a district head. Atsam is also known as Tsam while the people speaking the language are called ‘‘ATSAM’’. The language is called ‘‘CHAWAI’’ by the Hausa people. Atsam language is considered not to have been adequately studied compared to other neighbouring languages. This is because the available works on Atsam language are still very few. The reason responsible for this is that, the language has not been adequately describe linguistically, so it is not being used in formal setting, teach in school or use as medium of instruction in schools, there are no existing reference teaching materials. This work focuses on the ‘‘Morphological Processes of Atsam Language’’. ‘‘Morphology’’ refers to the knowledge or study of forms or shape of words. Morphology studies the internal structure of a words and word formation rules. It describes morphemes and how they occur within a word. This research work is to examine the word structure in Atsam language, identifying the morphemes, classify the morphemes, morphological processes, and so on so as to contribute to the growth of linguistic research on Atsam and serve as a teaching material especially in schools and further advance Knowledge and research in the language.

1.1 Genetic Classification of Atsam Language

Early studies of the Atsam language of 1908, by W.P GOWER and VAN BLUCK, classified Atsam, Amo, Afizere, Berom and Piti under the sub-Bantu language. Subsequent classification by JOSEPH GREENBERG (1963:8) places these groups with Benue Congo speakers, within which plateau language were sub divided into seven subgroups. Afrizere, Berom, Irigwe, Kachecheri, Rukubi, Moroa, were grouped together, Atsam, Amo, Buji, Piti, Ribang were also grouped together. Later studies by CARL HOFFMAN and KIYOSHI SHIMIZA (1976) on the plateau languages further split Greenberg’s subgroup

into several clusters. In the new classification, Amo, Piti, Buji, Ribang, Jinji, Binawa, Surubaetc, were classified under WESTERN PLATEAU while Afizere, Berom, Rukuba, Irigwe, Moroa, Kachecheri, Kataf were classified as EASTERN PLATEAU. Therefore, Atsam belongs to the western plateau family of a subgroup of Benue Congo. The Platiod is a subfamily of Benue Congo of the Niger Kordofonia language family.

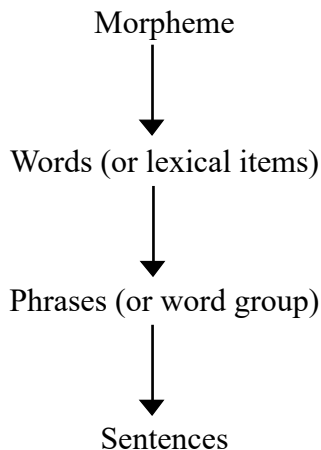


Fig. 3 The Tree diagram showing the genetic classification of African Language (Blench 1992:54)

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1.2 Morphological Concept and Morphological Process

Morphology as a subfield of linguistics has developed some necessary concepts like any other field of study so as to be able to describe and analyse adequately the structure of words in the languages. The minimal unit of grammatical analysis in language is the “morpheme”. It is the unit of the “lowest” rank out of which other larger units are built up in successive stages, viz:



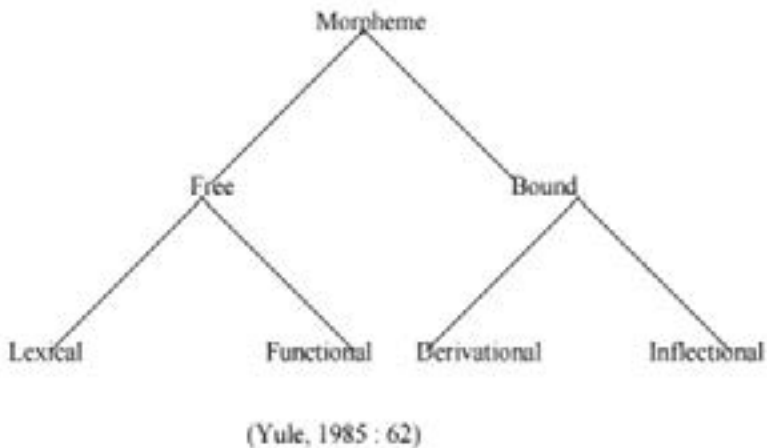
In Morphology, morphemes are the “morphological atoms” and therefore the ultimate elements of morphological analysis (Haspelmath, 2002:17). The morpheme in this study is defined as the smallest (or indivisible) unit of language that has semantic or grammatical meanings. This means that there are morphemes that are explicitly meaningful. In addition, a series of morpheme can make up a word. The morpheme itself is not directly considered to be part of a word. Morphemes are realized phonologically by “morph”. When words are segmented into parts, the shapes of these elements as they are actually pronounced or written are referred to as “morphs”. However, when a morpheme is solely phonological realized in a phonological form it is called “allomorph”. Allomorphs are the alternative representations of morphemes or grammatical abstract unit in forms of phonological realization (Mathew, 1972:83)

1.2.1 Types of Morphemes

There are different types of morphemes, some of which appear to be the core of words while some are additions or appendages in words. The very “heart” or core of a word is known as the “ROOT” of the word to which other morphological pieces are attached. The root cannot be analyzed further into constituent morpheme. “root” morpheme is different from “stem”. The ‘stem’ of a word is the “base” or that part of the word to which the morpheme in the word is structurally added. A stem can be simple, consisting of one piece (or root) or complex comprising root and other morphemes. Where a word has only one root and no additional free or bound morpheme, it is called “base word” and where a word has only one root and a number of bound or free morpheme, it is called “derived word” (another name, complex word) (Tomori,

1977:34). A free morpheme can stand alone by itself as a single word but a bound morpheme cannot. It is typically attached to another form. Examples of free morpheme in English language are: work, food, play, jump, courage, shift etc. Free morpheme is "subdivide into lexical and functional morpheme". Lexical (free) morphemes are of the categories of Noun, Adjective, Verb, and Adverbs that really belong to open-ended class. The example in Atam language are: 'pang' (stone, noun), 'adagyorok' (beautiful, adjective), nyalak (cut, verb), 'kabini' (now, adverb) functional morpheme deals with the category of word that belongs to close-ended class like: 'ingye' (that, pronoun), 'ingwo' (this, determiner), 'gyishu' (on, preposition), 'nigye' (and, conjunction).

Bound morpheme occurs in different form and at different positions of the word under the collective term "affixes". Affixes are morpheme that are added either to the beginning or middle or end of a word. The morpheme that is added to the beginning of the root morpheme is called a "prefix", while the morpheme that is added to the end of the root morpheme is a "suffix". For example, in "unveil", "indiscriminate", the "un" and "in" morpheme are prefixes and in "foolishness", "education", the "-ness" and "-ion" morpheme are suffixes. Following Yule (1985) the relationship between the basic morphological concepts as explained above is hereby presented in form of a diagram:



Inflectional and Derivational Morphology

The application and effect of affixes on word formation bring about the inflectional and derivational dichotomy in morphology. Inflection involves the formation of grammatical forms of a single word dictated by the sentence structure (Arnoff and Fundeman, 2005:45). Therefore, inflections are morphemes that perform grammatical functions in a word without changing the word class of the particular word. For example, in English, the word <skip> has many forms: skip <base form>, skipping <present progressive>, skipped <past tense>. The inflectional morphemes ‘-ing’ and ‘-ed’ are added to the base word ‘skip’ to indicate the tense of the word.

Derivational, on the other hand, involve adding to a root or stem of an affix or affixes in order to provide a new word. Derivations can occur as prefixes and suffixes in words. For example, in “unkind”, “misrepresent”, “sadness”, and “education”, the morpheme “un-”, “mis-”, “-ness”, and “-ion” are derivational affixes. The morphemes “-un” and “-mis” are prefixes while, “-ness” and “-ion” are suffixes. In English, derivational suffixes in words usually change the word class of the word to which they are attached. For example, “quick” is an adjective but “quickly” which is a derivational suffix changes the word to an adverb.

Affixation is a process of adding a morpheme that is attached to the base word to change the form and its meaning. According to Katamba (1993:4) “an affix is a morpheme which only occurs when attached to some other morpheme or morphemes such as root or stem or base” obviously, by definition affixes are bound morpheme.

According to Haspelmath and Sims (2010:19) “word-form in an inflectional paradigm generally share (at least) one longer morpheme with concrete meaning and are distinguished from each other in that they in addition contain different shorter morpheme with an abstract meaning are called “affixes”. Besides according to Carstairs and Carthy (2002:20) states that affixation is process of adding an affix to the root. There are three types of affixes to the root. There are three types of affixes namely: prefixes, suffixes and infixes (Carstairs and Cathy 2002:2).

The term reduplication has been variously defined in linguistic study with the central point of duplication, copying or repetition as the basis of all the definition. O Grady and Guzman (1981:43) state that another common morphological process in certain language (but not English) is reduplication, which reduplicate all part of the base to which it applies to make a grammatical or semantic contrast. Descriptively, reduplication is a morphological process whereby there is repetition of redial element or part of it, usually occur at the beginning of a word, occasionally within the word (pel 1996:2002). If we look at reduplication throughout the world language, we encounter what at

first seems to be a great variety of types. The reduplication can take place to the left of the root as a prefix, to the right as a suffix or inside the root as an infix. The material of reduplication can be a whole word, a whole morpheme, a syllable or a sequence of syllables. Reduplication may be complete or partial. It is complete or full if the entire word is repeated or copied to form another word. In contrast, it is partial if a part of the base word is copied.

Compounding refers to the process of combining two or more already existing base or free words into a single morphological unit called “compound”. A compound is a unit of consisting two or more bases that have an independent existence also functions in sentences a single word (Malmkjear, 1991:39). Furthermore, compounds do express syntactic relationship between the compound words but the word class of the whole compound (Akmajan et al, 2001:33). For example, “pickpocket” is a compound word formed from the verb “pick” and noun “pocket” (verb + noun) but the head of the compound is “pocket” and thus, the whole compound is a noun. However, where a compound is a hyponym of the head word or in its meaning names the entire thereby specifying some features related to the compound or bahuvrhi). For example, “wrist watch”, “football” are endocentric compounds. On the other hand, where a compound is not a hyponym of the headword or does not name or specify features of compounding base words like endocentric, it is exocentric compound. For example, in “scapegoat”, “pickpocket”, the meaning of each compounding base word is in the contrast with the meaning of the whole compound (Quirk and Greenbaum, 1972:447). An example in Atsam language, /bòrò(bag) + wok(hand)/ = /bòròwok (handbag)/, \nuk ‘pot’+ anin ‘water’/ = /ainnuk ‘waterpot’/ etc.

Clipping refers to the subtraction or reduction of one or more syllables from a word or words to a shorter form (Yule, 1985 :54). The shortening may occur at the beginning or ends of the word. There are many examples in English like ‘lab’ for “laboratory”, ‘phone’ for “telephone”, ‘ad’ for “advertisement”, ‘plane’ for “aeroplane” etc. however, the clipped form tends to be used especially in informal discourse (Quirk and Greenbaum, 1973 :445). Example in Atsam language; Abubakar ‘abu’, Adullahi ‘abdu’ etc

Borrowing is one of the major ways languages use in enriching their lexicon. It is a morphological process whereby words are borrowed from one language into another. It involves taking lexical items from one language into another. Borrowed words are known as loan words

1.3 Theoretical Framework

The chosen theory for this research work is the “Morpheme Based Morphology”. The theory has been decisively used in this work owing to its

indispensable relevance to morphological analysis of Atsam language. In this approach, word forms are analysed as arrangements of morphemes. The two American Structuralist who happens to be the leading proponents in the development of the Morpheme- Based- Theory were Leonard Bloomfield and Hockett.

The morphological theory known as the ‘Morpheme Based Morphology’ was developed in structuralist theories of language in which word formation is be viewed as the disposition of morpheme in a word (Spencer, 1991:49). According to Spencer, 1991:49 Morphology (i.e the Morpheme Based Approach) came to be dominated by the metaphor of word analysis rather than word formation as linguistic theory sought to provide technique for decomposing words into their component morpheme. Thus, the approach of the morpheme based was referred to as item and arrangement (IA) theory by Hockett (1958).

In Item and Arrangement Model otherwise known as Morpheme Based Morphology, according to this theory, words are represented as individual items, in a particular arrangement. The arrangement of the morphemes determines the meaning and the grammatical function of the word. For example, in a word like “independently”, it is assumed that the morphemes in this word are: in, depend, -ent, and -ly. ‘depend’ is the root and the other morphemes are, in this case, derivational affixes. In a word like ‘dogs’, we say that ‘dog’ is the root and that ‘-s’, is an inflectional morpheme. An example in Atsam language, in the word ‘amánkùn (fruits), the root word is ‘mánkùn (fruit) and the prefix ‘a-’ is an inflectional morpheme which signifies plurality. The IA theory identifies several different types of the morphological processes that can be used to create new words. These include affixation, which involves adding prefixes or suffixes to a base word as well as compounding, blending and conversion. Overall, the IA theory provides a useful framework for understanding how morphemes and morphological processes are used in language to create new words and meanings.

1.4 Morphology of Atsam Language

As stated earlier, morphology is the study of morphemes and their arrangement in the formation of words. The basic concept of morphology is the “morpheme”. There are two types of morphemes in Atsam language. These are Free and Bound Morpheme.

1.4.1 Free Morpheme in Atsam Language.

Yule (1997:75) defines free morpheme as morpheme which stand by themselves as a single word. A free morpheme is a type of morpheme that can

stand on its own without the support of any appendage(s). These categories of morphemes are otherwise known as independent or matrix morpheme. Lexical or Content words and Functional words fall under this category. They are morpheme that exist in isolation.

Examples of free morpheme in Atsam Language include:

Word	Gloss
{gyón}	‘dance’
{sīsīt}	‘walk’
{kún}	‘tree’
{susog}	‘girl’
{jəɬje}	‘bush’
{wógkú}	‘car’
{gasiryim}	‘bad’
{ǎní}	‘buy’
{ryis}	‘man’
{màn}	‘money’

They are independent in form and has meaning. They act as root and are ready to take any additional morpheme. The free morpheme can be subdivided into two viz:

- (i) lexical morpheme
- (ii) grammatical morpheme

1.4.2 Lexical morpheme

Lexical morpheme as defined by Yule (1997:76) are set of ordinary nouns, adjectives and verbs which were considered as the words which carry the content of the message conveyed. Lexical morphemes belong to the open –class of words in the language and they are used to form words of different grammatical categories. Example in Atsam language includes:

2.	Noun	Atsam	Gloss
		(i) {gyénwar}	‘book’
		(ii) {Tzànzìrk}	‘hoe’
	Verb	(i) {çwēri}	‘jump’
	Adjective	(i) {gasiryim}	‘bad’
		(ii) {rəkçū}	‘good’

1.4.3 Grammatical morpheme

These are known as ‘closed morpheme’, they are those non-content words such as conjunction, prepositions, articles, pronouns, etc. because new functional morphemes are seldomly added to language, so, these categories of morphemes are described as ‘closed class of words’. Example in Atsam language includes:

3i Article

Definite	{sai}	{sai zezam}		
		↓ ↓		
	‘The’	the boy		‘the boy’
		{sai seso}		
		↓ ↓		
		the girl		‘the girl’
Indefinite	{ah}	{ah riás}		
		↓ ↓		
	‘a’	a man		‘a man’
	{ah}	{ah tʃikor}		
		↓ ↓		
	‘an’	an egg		‘an egg’

ii preposition

{ngyerye}	{boll ngyerye kujara}		
	↓ ↓ ↓		
‘under’	ball under table		‘the ball is on the table’
{ghi}	{ghi sai kujara}		
	↓ ↓ ↓		
‘on’	on the table		‘on the table’

iii Conjunction

[nī]	[zezam nī suso]		
	↓ ↓		
‘and’	boy and girl		‘a boy and a girl’

1.4.4 Bound morpheme

A bound morpheme has already been defined as a morpheme which stand on its own; but must be attached to another morpheme to form a word. Bound morphemes are of two types, they are Inflectional and Derivational bound morpheme. Atsam has both inflectional and derivational bound

morpheme but they are few.

1.4.5 Inflectional Morpheme in Atsam Language.

Inflectional morphemes add more information to the root morphemes that they are attached to. Inflectional morphemes do not change the syntactic class of a word. The following are bound morphemes in Atsam language.

‘a-’ plural marker.

The plural marker ‘a’ a morpheme denoting plurality is the prefix added at the beginning of a noun that is pluralizing.

4. Word	Gloss	Word	Gloss
Hù	‘woman’	ahù	‘women’
pát	‘knife’	apát	‘knives’
Shikun	‘bread’	ashikun	‘breads’
Tsur	‘spoon’	atsur	‘spoons’
pók	‘room’	apók	‘rooms’
Ták	‘leg’	áták	‘legs’

‘Zim-’ aspectual marker: The aspectual marker ‘zim’ a suffix on verb to derive continuous form.

5. Word	Gloss	Word	Gloss
sóm	‘run’	sómmzim	‘running’
Hwo	‘carry’	hwozim	‘carrying’
fātsák	‘wash’	fātsákzim	‘washing’
jéj	‘cry’	jéjzim	‘crying’
Rí	‘eat’	Rízim	‘eating’
ḡḡní	‘buy’	ḡḡnízim	‘buying’

Derivational Morphemes in Atsam Language

Derivational morphemes are those morphemes that are used to derive new word and also change the syntactic classes of the root morphemes. The following are based morphemes that perform derivational function in Atsam language.

‘Ye-’ nominalising maker

‘ye-’ is a prefix that changes a verb to a noun that it is attached to;

6. Gyon	‘dance’	yegyon	‘dancer’
Sīsīt	‘walk’	yesīsīt	‘walker’

ḡñí 'buy'	yeḡñí	'buyer'
sóm 'run'	yesóm	'runner'
sām 'sing'	yesām	'singer'

1.5 Morphological processes in Atsam language

Morphological processes are processes used by languages to form words. These processes include affixation (prefixation, infixation, suffixation), borrowing, blending, clipping, reduplication, compounding, among others. New words are derived or formed through all these processes.

The following morphological processes are attested in Atsam language; Affixation, Reduplication, Borrowing, Compounding and clipping

1.5.1 Affixation in Atsam Language

Affixation is a process whereby new words are formed by attaching morphemes. Such morpheme may be added before (prefix), within (infix) or after (suffix) the words. Atsam only attests prefixation and suffixation.

Prefixation in Atsam language: Prefixation is a morphological process in which a morpheme is added to a root morpheme at its initial position.

An example of a prefix in Atsam language is as follows:

7. ṡḡ	'egg'	a + ṡḡ	eggs	→
mánkùn	'fruit'	a + mánkùn	fruits	→
jàn	'ear'	a + jà	ears	→
rà	'house'	a + rà	houses	→
kánḡ	'broom'	a + kánḡ	brooms	→
riás	'man'	a + riás	men	→

From the above examples, it can be observed that Atsam language has the prefix 'a-' and 'ye-' added to the free morpheme. Whereby, 'a' is added to the free morpheme to signify plurality while 'ye' is added to a free morpheme which change verb to noun.

Suffixation in Atsam language

Suffixation is when a morpheme is added to the root morpheme at the end of the word to form another word. Examples of how new words are derived in Atsam language through suffixation are shown below:

8. Fātsák	'wash'	fātsák + zim	washing
Jéj	'cry'	jéj + zim	crying
Rí	'eat'	rí + zim	eating
ḡñí	'buy'	ḡñí + zim	buying

1.5.3 Borrowing in Atsam language

Borrowed words are known as loan words. Atsam language borrowed extensively from Hausa language because Atsam is dominated by Hausa language. Most the claimed Atsam lexical words are Hausa words borrowed which differ only by intonation, this is so because of the dominance of Hausa. This can be seen from the examples below. Hausa words borrowed into Atsam are shown in the following examples:

13.	Hausa		Atsam
nāmǵórá	‘animal’	nāmǵórá	‘animal’
kamar riga	‘T-shirt’	kamar riga	‘T-shirt’
jenkafa	‘rice’	jenkafa	‘rice’
alede	‘pig’	alede	‘pig’
taklimi	‘shoe’	taklimi	‘shoe’
makaranta	‘school’	makaranta	‘school’

Atsam also borrowed from English language seen in the following examples:

14.	Atsam	English
	Jooji	judge
	Kootu	court
	Digiri	degree
	Janareetoo	generator
	Bankii	bank
	Reediyoo	radio

1.5.4 Compounding in Atsam Language

Compounding is a morphological process where two free morphemes are joined together to form a word. It is the joining of two separate words to produce a single form. Atsam language make use of compounding in word formation. In Atsam language, two words can be combined to form a word as in the following examples:

15.	/chea + na'am/	→	[na'amchea]
	Bush meat	→	meat bush
	/jan + akun/	→	[akunjan]
	Fire wood	→	firewood
	/rá + hú /	→	[húra]
	House wife	→	housewife
	/bòrò + wok/	→	[bòròwok]
	Bag hand	→	handbag

/nuk + anin/	→	[aninnuk]
Pot water	→	waterpot
/asei + kut/	→	[aseikut]
People village	→	villagers

1.5.5 Clipping

Clipping is a linguistic phenomenon whereby a longer word is shortened by removing one or more syllable. This process can occur in any language and is often used to create new words or expressions, or to make existing words more convenient to say. It is a type of word formation process that is distinct from other methods such as affixation, compounding or conversion. In Atsam, the affix (prefix or suffix) is removed, remaining the root morpheme that is clipped

Example in Atsam language (16i)			
	Full form	clipped form	gloss
	ḡāmzí	ḡām	sing
	zezam	zam	boy
	aghiyeze	yeze	coming
	kundun	dum	back
ii.	personal names:	full form	clipped form
	Abubakar	bakar	
	Muhammed	madu/muda	
	Khadija	dija/dije	
	Aishatu	shatu	

1.6 Findings

It is observed that Atsam language uses more inflectional morpheme than derivational. Prefixes and suffixes are present in the language in which ‘a’ serves as the plural marker, ‘ye’ added to a free morpheme to bring about change in meaning and change the word class (verb to noun) and ‘zim’ that shows a continuous form. Moreso, the language attests to few morphological processes which are compounding, reduplication, clipping, affixation and

borrowing. Also, loan words from Hausa language are internalized through intonation. Hausa dominance also has great influence on the language.

1.7 Conclusion

Atsam is a less spoken language that is almost going into extinction as a result of Hausa dominance. A comprehensive analysis of the internal structure of Atsam words was done as well as exploring various word formation processes, such as affixation, compounding, derivation etc.. The study provided valuable insights into the morphological aspect of Atsam. The study has covered the underlying rules, patterns, and linguistic processes involved in word formation. This knowledge not only contribute to the understanding of Atsam but also provide a foundation for further research on other aspects of the language

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