Grammatical Gender Marking of English Loanwords in Ng'aturukana

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Abstract: **Borrowing of words is one of the inevitable outcomes of the multilingual and multicultural societies across the globe. This paper sought to answer two questions. First, what grammatical genders do English words acquire when borrowed into Ng'aturukana? Second, what arguments exist in Ng'aturukana that model the assignment of specific grammatical genders to the borrowed words? Data were drawn from local radio stations discussions broadcasting in Ng'aturukana and from native speaker's intuition. Another competent native speaker verified and validated the data. The grammatical gender assigned and the explanations guiding in the assignment were noted and explained. From the analyses, the paper reports that nominal loans were assigned either the masculine or the feminine gender when borrowed into Ng'aturukana. It also established that the Turkana native knowledge of concepts, uses of the referred objects, specific gender (people) associated with the objects and the general activities under which the referred objects are used determined the specific gender assigned to a loan term. The paper is expected to contribute to the existing discourse on the borrowing of words phenomenon and may act as a basis through which other gender marking languages can be investigated and compared.**

Key words: **Borrowing, Loanwords, Grammatical gender, Ng'aturukana, English**

I. INTRODUCTION.

This paper investigated the grammatical gender assignment of the English loanwords borrowed into Ng'aturukana. Grammatical gender has been argued to be one of the most stable features of languages (Corbet 1991; Di Garbo, 2014). Loanword borrowing has become common in many languages due to the high rate of multilingualism and multiculturalism embraced across the globe. Ng'aturukana is a gender sensitive language in its noun, preposition and pronoun groups (Dimmendaal, 1983). Prior researches conducted on Ng'aturukana have noted the complex nature of Ng'aturukana, especially on grammatical gender marking. A more interesting scenario occurs when it borrows words from the other languages. English nouns occur as neuter. Ng'aturukana, on the other hand, assigns the masculine and feminine genders prefixationally. Neuter gender is associated with the diminutive cases in Ng'aturukana.

Syncretism is also observed to exist in Ng'aturukana prefixes which mark gender because they also carry number, cohesion/agreement and case features information. This behaviour is illuminated in the nominal case often perceived as the absolute case with a clear gender marking structure and the locative case. This study, however, ignored these other

information and only focused on the grammatical gender. The 'what' and 'why' Ng'aturukana designates grammatical gender to each of the loan nouns borrowed are what this paper sought to identify. The paper first introduces the concept of grammatical gender and semantic gender systems from both a universal and Ng'aturukana specific perspectives. The next part discusses the concept of borrowing and the motivations behind borrowing in Ng'aturukana.

Grammatical Gender

Grammatical gender is a complex phenomenon that is marked in the nouns. By definition, grammatical gender is a system that defines a class of nouns in relation to the other word classes co-occurring with it in syntactical environments (Corbet, 2013; Di Garbo 2014; Corbet & Fedden, 2016). In the overt cases, grammatical gender may refer to the characteristics of a noun in terms of its natural sex inferences and/or references. Focusing on this definition, it is apparent that gender can be marked by not only focusing on a word in isolation but largely on the other words in its neighbourhood. Words such as numerals, articles, adjectives and pronouns may portray gender class agreement features in different languages of the world. English portrays gender marking in the third person pronouns and a small number of nouns that indicate the gender of the person involved in an activity, for instance, waiter-waitress, actor-actress, host- hostess among others (Comrie, 1999).

Ng'aturukana has a tripartite gender marking system in that its non-derived nouns can be classified as feminine, masculine, or neuter. These genders are marked using the prefixes; outlined in the table below. The data in the table shows two cases, nominal and locative. This paper dwelt on the nominative because it is the one that is natural to nouns per se.

Table I: Grammatical Gender Prefixes in Ng'aturukana

	Gender markers in the nouns			
	A Nominal gender markers (-restrictive)		B Locative gender markers (+restrictive)	
Gender	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Fem	a-	ŋa-	nà-	na-
Masc	e-/ɛ-	ŋɪ-	lò-	lu-
Neuter	i-/-ɪ-	ŋɪ-	nɪ̀-	lu-

Adopted from (Dimmendaal, 2000; Grimm, 2012)

Ng'aturukana assigns any of the three genders above to both animate and inanimate objects. In the case of 'animate beings', except a small class of nouns such as birds and insects, gender is determined on the basis of sex. The young ones (implying age) of animate beings, including human beings are classified as neuter (Dimmendaal, 1983).

As for the inanimate beings, gender is marked in relation to the semantics and the overall cultural view of the object in Ng'aturukana. Linguists that have worked on Ng'aturukana, up to the present day, do not agree on the semantic typological classification of grammatical gender in the attested language nouns. This has an implication because even the inanimate nouns can be classified as masculine, feminine or neuter in it.

The complexity noted in Ng'aturukana is that nouns have formal prefixes that assign grammatical genders to a word. However, they also depend on some other conceptual definitions in assigning a particular gender to a word. As such the cultural dimension of a given equipment or activity in Ng'aturukana plays a great role in assigning a loanword a gender class.

Semantic Gender System

The semantic gender system relies heavily on the meaning of a given noun in a bid to assign it a specific gender. Accordingly, if the gender of a noun is given, one can work out the meaning of the signified (Corbet, 2013; Corbet & Fedden 2016). The construal/conceptual inference is central here than the formal appearance of a word. Most African languages including those in the Nilotic group such as the Maasai and Ng'aturukana, among others, employ this system (Payne, 1998). Also, English, an Indo-European language, portrays such a behaviour because some of its pronouns, for instance, personal pronouns are used in place of the antecedent human and non-human referents. Pronouns such as 'he' in English would, therefore, be used in masculine antecedents while 'she' would be used for feminine antecedents and 'it' is applied for the non-living things, animals and plants. A few exceptions such as names of places, countries and institutions which are classified as feminine, however, exist. The parameter behind that classification is the semantic one.

Loanwords Borrowing and Ng'aturukana.

According to Haspelmath (2009), borrowing is a situation in language contact where a source language lends its vocabulary item to another without losing it in its inventory at a certain point in history. The recipient language receives the borrowed item and configures it through various adaptation techniques when and if necessary. As long as the original cultural setting from which two or more languages in contact differ, borrowing of words is eventually inevitable. Most languages which lack or has few reference words for certain concepts in their native worlds end up borrowing foreign terminologies from the ones that have them.

Language contact does not occur in a vacuum, but rather, in the domains of language use and interaction. More so, languages tend to borrow more in situations where their native worlds do not provide or have concepts for some objects or phenomena (Mwaniki, 2013). Ng'aturukana, has since the colonial era, existed in contact with English. Due to this contact, Ng'aturukana tends to borrow English words with a view to acquire a reference term for the new concept its speakers encounter. Contextually, the avenue through which borrowing takes place is the semantic domain.

The four main semantic fields through which Ng'aturukana mainly borrows English words from are; trade, education, science/technology and health. The preference to use loans as opposed to native words can be attributed to the foreign culture which has infiltrated the Turkana world through these semantic fields. Most objects that are sold in the local trading markets come with the English names. However, because they never existed in the ancient Turkana world, the speakers of Ng'aturukana alter them to sound or structure as Ng'aturukana. In addition, one of the premier languages of instruction in the Kenyan education and administration is English. Therefore, school related items, notions and other inventions end up being altered to conform to the borrowing Ng'aturukana phonology and morphology. This paper aimed to explain and account how Ng'aturukana loanwords structure in relation to the grammatical gender system evident in its native words.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Dimmendaal, (2000; 2018), Shroeda (2008), Grimm (2012) and Barasa (2017) all argue that grammatical gender assignment is an inherent and complex feature in the Teso-Turkana group of languages. They all content that there is no one universal way of determining gender in Ng'aturukana, Karamojong, Toposa and Ateso languages. They unanimously agree that these languages have the grammatical gender feature which is variedly realized and marked by different prefixes. In this vein, Ng'aturukana in particular is singled out to be marking gender on its nouns, the noun modifiers and the pertinent nominal class. The gender assignment in the noun class is inherent and highly unpredictable in Ng'aturukana (Dimmendaal, 2000).

Dimmendaal (2000, 2018) and Grimm (2012) study Ng'aturukana nouns using different viewpoints. They report that gender is morphemically marked through prefixes in the singulative and the plurative forms of the nouns, and the general nominal class in Ng'aturukana. Furthermore, the gender prefixes (morphemes) additionally carry with them number, cohesion/agreement, and case features. This behaviour is exemplified in the nominal case often perceived as the absolute case with a clear gender marking structure and the locative case. Both Dimmendaal and Grim agree that Ng'aturukana generally relies on the semantic gender marking paradigm as opposed to the morphological one. Their argument is corroborated by Corbet (2013) and Corbet and

Fedden (2016) who report that some languages use a semantic gender system that heavily rely on the meaning of a given noun in assigning a specific GG. These studies were the backdrops upon which GG noted in Ng'aturukana borrowed words are clarified.

On the complexity of grammatical gender, Noske (2000) while examining the feature [ATR], posits that Ng'aturukana grammatical gender prefixes are a factor of vowel harmony. The masculine gender in particular surfaces as non-ATR distinct but becomes [-ATR] when followed by a [-ATR] strong root. Barasa (2018) also confirms this in the related Ateso language.

Neumann (2001), Schiller and Caramazza (2006) and Onysko, Callies and Ogiermann (2013)while studying the phenomenon of loanword phonology in their own Indo-European languages postulates that, indeed, there exist a paradigm which the native languages depend on when assigning gender in their languages. Onysko, Callies and Ogiermann (2013) in particular notes that besides the semantic definition of the borrowed Anglicism in German, some loanwords tend to fit in the existing semantic fields which are associated with specific grammatical genders. All 'drinks' in German are categorised as masculine just as it is with Ng'aturukana.

III. METHODOLOGY.

The data analysed in this paper was collected from two radio stations discourses (Akicha and Sayari) broadcasting in Ng'aturukana and the main researcher's intuition. Eight radio shows on education, trade and health were recorded. The audio records were later transcribed. The words were examined for grammatical gender. Intuition was used to supplement the data collected from the radio discourses. Fifty loanwords were collected from these two methods. Both data were subjected to validation through a second adult speaker for accuracy. The purposive sampling technique was applied in all the stages.

In order to account for the semantic and sociolinguistic issues in the observed loanwords, three adult speakers aged between forty five (45) and sixty (60) years of age who are native speakers of Ng'aturukana were used. These respondents were asked questions regarding the grammatical gender assigned to the loanwords from the Turkana perspective. It is through their knowledge that the semantic approach stems from.

IV. ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section deals with the analyses of data, the results and discussions. The first section is a discussion on the grammatical gender acquired by the borrowed words. The second section deals with the semantic gender distinctions observed to be key in the assignment of grammatical gender in the loanwords borrowed into Ng'aturukana.

Grammatical Gender (GG) Marking

This sub-section discusses GG as one dominant grammatical category in Ng'aturukana morphology. The study first sought

to examine whether all borrowed nominal terms collected are first assigned specific GGs when borrowed into Ng'aturukana before other adaptations take place. If gender is assigned, number is realizable. All the data on nominal loans group collected were observed to pick a particular grammatical gender as guided by Ng'aturukana morphology. Sample loanwords with respective GGs are presented in the table below. The symbol '**x**' in the table signals the specific GG assigned to the output**.**

Table II: Sample Loanwords with GG marking in Ng'aturukana.

SL Input	BL Output	Output G.G		Gloss
		Fem.	Masc.	
a.{ɒfɪz}	{a-pɪsɨ}	x		'office'
b. {səʊfə}	{ɛ-sɔpa}		x	'sofa'
c. {waɪə}	{a-waɟa}	X		'wire'
d. {pɪləʊ}	{ɛ-pìlɔ}		x	'pillow'
e. {gʌm}	{e-gaàmʉ̧}		x	'gum'
f. {dɪzl}	{a-dɪsɛl}	x		'diesel'
g. {kɑd}	{a-kaàd}	x		'card'
h. {hɒspɪtl}	{ɛ-sɪbɪtaɾɨ̧}		X	'hospital'

From the table above, it is evident that English loanwords borrowed into Ng'aturukana systems are assigned specific grammatical genders through prefixation of the gender marking affixes. The marking of symbol (**x**) indicates the type of GG acquired by the loanword. The affixes /a/ and /e-ɛ/ are morphologically used to mark GG in the native Ng'aturukana. A word beginning with {a} refers to a feminine entity while {e} or {ɛ} refers to a masculine entity. Because of this morphological characteristic, Ng'aturukana is linguistically categorised as a GG sensitive language in the nominal group of words. Haspelmath (2009) posits that gender marking languages often assign gender classes to words. This study established that loan nouns borrowed into Ng'aturukana are marked for grammatical gender.

Semantic Gender Assignment on Loanwords

Another noted phenomenon from the data collected in this sub-section was how the semantics gender marking approach (an approach that relies on the cultural meaning and use of an object in determining the GG assigned to an object) poses to be another key strategy of how the loanwords are assigned gender in Ng'aturukana. The table below shows a sample of loanwords and the cultural meanings associated with them in the Turkana culture. Generally, the grammatical gender assigned on each loanword borrowed into Ng'aturukana seemed puzzling and worth attention. English language, as already outlined, does not have an overt grammatical gender of the general feminine and masculine gender. Instead a larger number of nouns are neuter. Therefore, Ng'aturukana morphology has a way in which it marks grammatical gender. After an investigation on this assumption, Ng'aturukana

words were discovered to be assigning grammatical gender through different strategies. This paper identifies four most key strategies. These include; the actual semantics/ construal conception of a word, the gender roles in the Turkana way of life, the nature of occurrence of an object and certain static semantic fields in Ng'aturukana.

Semantic Conception and Grammatical Gender

This was the first strategy identified to be very central and common during grammatical gender assignment on the borrowed words. When the loanwords were defined in Ng'aturukana, concepts relating to gender and a group of gender using the object would be mentioned. From the associated grammatical gender, words would be assigned as either feminine or masculine when borrowed. The table below shows some sample loanwords and their definitions.

Table III: Semantic Gender Marking of Loanwords in Ng'aturukana.

Borrowed Word	Meaning/activity (In the sense of the Ng'aturukana)	GG	Semantic field	Gloss
{a-pìsi̧}	A house- A place for shelter-associated with women. Men do not sit in the house during the day but under trees.	Fem.	Education	'office'
{ɛ-sɔpa}	Seat- An instrument used by men for sitting. It is the men who use seats and not the feminine gender.	Masc.	Education	'sofa'
{a-wàɟa}	Something for tying or knotting – women tie sticks when building huts.	Fem.	Trade	'wire'
{ɛ-pɪlɔ}	Something/entity used to raise heads with while asleep- it is equivalent to multi-functional men's seat (ekicolong)	Masc.	Trade	'pillow'
{e-gaàmʊ̧}	Used to hold things tight/to seal gaps- associated with family/community ties often dictated/maintained by the men	Masc.	Technology	'gum'
{a-dɪsɛl}	Something that supports life- implying body fluids (all fluids are feminine in Ng'aturukana except colostrum)	Fem.	Technology	'diesel'
{a-pàkit}	An entity which carries/stores something- a role of women in Ng'aturukana.	Fem.	Health	'packet'
{ɛ-sɪbɪtari̧}	A place where people visit to get help when they fall ill/sick- associated to healers –often an activity of the men among the Turkana.	Masc.	Health	'hospital'

Table III above shows that Ng'aturukana relies on the semantic gender system approach in determining the GG of a given word. All the words cited above have an associated meaning that can be attributed to a given gender. The

semantic gender system is dependent on the meaning and the cultural usage attached to the specific objects in determining a word's GG. Accordingly, if the meaning of a noun is given, one can work out the gender of the signified (Corbet & Fedden, 2016). The construal/conceptual inference is central here as opposed to the formal appearance of a word. Ng'aturukana depends on the psychological meaning of a word and the work performed using the referred entity to dictate the GG assigned to it. When a particular gender is derived, the respective affixes are applied.

Gender Roles and Grammatical Gender

Different objects, activities, and commodities are associated with different GGs in Ng'aturukana because gender roles are defined. Some materials are associated with people of a specific gender than the other. Consider the examples given below.

Loanword	Gen. Role	GG	Gloss
i) {awaja}	building	feminine	'wire'
ii) {a-pìsi̧}	building	feminine	'office'
iii){ɛ-sɪbɪtari̧}	healing	masculine	'hospital'
iv) {ɛ-gaàmʊ̧}	unifying	masculine	'gum'
v) {ɛ-sɔpa}	decision making	masculine	'sofa'
vi) {araba}	cleaning	feminine	'rubber'
vii) {ɛswɛta}	protecting	masculine	'sweater'
viii) {apaɪl}	carrying	feminine	'file'

The examples for an 'office' and a 'wire' in the data set above are categorised as feminine in Ng'aturukana. It is the women who spend time and sleep in the huts/houses. Men spend most of their time under the trees. Therefore, any form of a house is coded with the feminine gender including an 'office' that men and women use in the contemporary world. The entity for 'wire' {a-wàɟa}, for instance, is used for knotting/tying things together. Culturally, it is the women who are associated with this duty of building houses, carrying firewood and sewing among the Turkana people. The entity is, therefore, assigned the feminine gender.

There are also gender roles that are performed by the masculine gender. For example, the entities for 'hospital' {{ɛ-sɪbɪtari̧} and 'sweater' {ɛswɛta} are assigned the masculine gender based on the associated duties traditionally performed by men. The word for 'hospital' is assigned the masculine gender because traditionally, it is the men who perform the duty of healing in Ng'aturukana. Besides, all herbs and anything related with medicine is regarded as man hence the masculine gender. The concept on the protection of a community, family or the weak ones in traditional African societies was a duty of men. This duty is specific to men in Ng'aturukana. Clothes are worn to protect one from cold or harsh weather. Therefore, any piece of clothing regardless of the gender wearing is assigned a masculine gender. The word

for 'sweater' in Ng'aturukana ({ɛswɛta} is thus assigned the masculine gender.

Nature of Object and Grammatical Gender

Some words in Ng'aturukana are assigned grammatical gender just by the way they occur i.e liquids, pointed/sharp or small. All liquids in Ng'aturukana except 'colostrum' {edos} and drinks of any kind are considered feminine in Ng'aturukana. The weak and fluid nature of most liquids in the Turkana culture sense renders them feminine gender in Ng'aturukana. The words for milk, blood, water, saliva etcetera are assigned the feminine gender. Sharp and pointed items in Ng'aturukana on the other hand are classified masculine. The samples given below follow the same course in assigning gender.

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	Loanword	Nature	GG	Gloss
i)	{ɛpɛtɛrɔl}	fluid	feminine	'petrol'
ii)	{adısɛl}	fluid	feminine	'diesel'
iii)	{awɔıl}	fluid	feminine	'oil'
iv)	{ɛpɛɛn}	pointed	masculine	'pen'
v)	{epensel}	pointed	masculine	'pencil'

Semantic Fields and Grammatical Gender

Some words in Ng'aturukana can be placed in some semantic fields based on their structure and activity. Notably some borrowed words could not be specified for grammatical gender assignment semantics but can fit to a class whose gender is already known in Ng'aturukana.

a)   Shoes

All shoes and related items are considered feminine in Ng'aturukana regardless of their shapes, types or the genders associated with them. Concerning the loanwords, all concepts for the object 'shoe' appeared with the feminine gender. Both the singular and plural feminine prefix markers occurred in the borrowed words. The samples are given below.

	Loanword	GG	Gloss
i)	{ŋabʊt̪i}	feminine	'boots'
ii)	{ŋasɔkisɪ}	feminine	'socks'

	iii){atair}	feminine	'tyre'
	iii){ŋasılıpasıa	feminine	'slippers'

b)   Drinks

All drinks are also specified for a specific grammatical gender in Ng'aturukana. As such all forms of drinks whether alcoholic or non-alcoholic were traditionally associated with the adult men in the society. Women and children were prohibited from taking them. Therefore, any terminology borrowed from English to refer to drinks is assigned the masculine gender. Two examples are given below.

	Loanword	GG	Gloss
i)	{ɛsɔda}	masculine	'soda'
ii)	{ɛbɪja}	masculine	'beer'

c)   Counting/ Numbers/ Time

Words, numbers or expressions related to counting or time i.e numbers and words to show a part of a certain phenomenon also tend to be assigned grammatical gender. Precisely, all expressions of number (number system) or any reference related to counting are assigned the feminine gender in Ng'aturukana. All the number figure, for instance, when counting would exhibit the feminine gender prefixations. Numbers do, however, become masculine when they post modify a noun when they refer to a number of objects/animals/people. Consequently, all the loanwords included in this semantic field are assigned a feminine gender in Ng'aturukana. A few samples from the data are given below.

Loanword	GG	Gloss
i){akalɛnda}	feminine	'calendar'
ii){akalıkʊlɛta}	feminine	'calculator'
iii){ataam}	feminine	'term'
iv){aıkıt̪}	feminine	'week'

d)   Trees/plants

All plants and trees including the grass, pasture and vegetables are assigned the masculine gender in Ng'aturukana (Dimmendaal, 1983). Therefore, loanwords referring to any of the above mentioned group appear with the masculine gender. The loanwords for 'cabbage' and 'spinach' are assigned the masculine gender in Ng'aturukana as shown below.

Loanword	GG	Gloss
i){ɛsıpınacɪ}	masculine	'spinach'
ii){ɛɣabɛɟ}	masculine	'cabbage'

Information and Related Equipment

Words that are associated with news and information are assigned the feminine grammatical gender. In the same way, all the modes/channels or equipment used in this semantic field are assigned the natural gender. 'A message/information'

in Ng'aturukana is regarded feminine. Loanwords related to this field collected, especially the equipment construed in Ng'aturukana as associated to dissemination or sources of information were marked with the feminine gender. The samples are given below.

Loanwords	GG	Gloss
i) {aɣɔmpjʊṱa}	feminine	'computer'
ii){asɛnɛma}	feminine	'cinema'
iii){arɛdʝo}	feminine	'radio'
iv){aṱɪpɪ}	feminine	'TV'

Several words from the technological semantic field related to all the items above are adapted with feminine gender. The concepts of talking and being noise is the pejorative attribute associated with women among the Turkana people.

V. CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the data analyses of loanwords, this paper confirms that indeed Ng'aturukana grammatical gender is a dominant phenomenon, especially on nominal forms. The language assigns specific grammatical gender to each of the borrowed words in its vocabulary system. As such, all the neuter nouns borrowed from English are reassigned and re-interpreted for grammatical gender to acquire one of the two grammatical genders; feminine or masculine. Precisely, Ng'aturukana has a clear demarcation between what is regarded as male or female based on the characteristics the signified objects have.

Moreover, the paper has established that the formal aspect alone is insufficient and inadequate in accounting for the morphological phenomenon; grammatical gender, in the morpho-semantic gender distinct languages. The paper has shown evidence on the existence of a semantic gender marking paradigm in the so called gender sensitive languages. As such, there is a confluence between morphology and semantics and semantics and sociolinguistics in Ng'aturukana's grammatical gender marking assignment. A nominal loan is first placed in one of the five groups identified as per the sociolinguistics and semantics of Ng'aturukana and then assigned a gender associated with that group. From the semantic approach, the paper reports that the conceptual description of a loanword, the use and the activity they are used in, their nature of occurrence and Ng'aturukana particularistic semantic fields largely influence grammatical gender assignment.

The paper recommends further studies be undertaken on the loanword morphology, especially on the gender sensitive languages of the Nilotic languages. It would be very didactic to identify other strategies also used by these languages. The paper also observes that the existing Ng'aturukana noun class system by (Dimmendaal, 1983) is insufficient and inadequate to depend on, particularly on the grammatical gender marking.

Ng'aturukana noun system by class and semantic fields and the gender assignment should, therefore, be revisited.

Also, identifying grammatical gender and assignment alone in the nominal forms of Ng'aturukana is not exhaustive and dependable. There may be more that is worth linguistic scrutiny in the grammatical gender phenomenon in relation to other words co-occurring with the nominal forms, especially in higher linguistic levels; phrases, clauses and sentences. The different grammatical forms, for example, in a sentence must agree for a message to be communicated properly. It will be interesting to learn about concord in the higher levels as dictated by the specific gender assigned to a loanword. Two related questions would be; how does the gender assigned to a nominal borrowed form influence the formal structure of other words in syntax? What other grammatical categories are realizable in a loanword borrowed into Ng'aturukana.

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