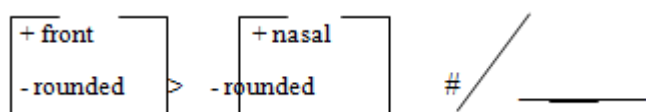


14. Ankle

Erubata enkeju [ɛrubatɛŋkɛju]	WUA, SIK, DAL, KIS, SAM,
oloure- kokoyo [ɔlɔurɛkɔkɔjɔ]	KAP, AIT, PUR, KEE, OIT
emurt enkeju [ɛmurɛŋkɛju]	SIR, KAP, TUK, DAL, ARU
oloidoloki [ɔlɔidɔlɔki]	ARU, BAR, ILTIAM, SAL, SER

In the above examples, the compound noun erubata-enkeju has the final [a] of erubata and the initial [ɛ] of the gender morpheme en- coalesce to form the diphthong [æ]. This is a front vowel that is not rounded. These are distinctive features exhibited by both [a] and [ɛ]. The responsible rule is a+e=æ



The noun emurtenkeju also exhibits vowels coalescence as the base form is the clause emurt e enkeju which means ‘the neck of the leg.’ The lone ‘e’ between meaning ‘of’ merges with the genitive ‘e’ of enkeju into one ‘e’ in the surface realization.

4.6 Double articulation and Co – articulation

This process involves the articulation of different sounds in a continuum that appears almost simultaneous. Danilof (1973) points out that during speech the tip of the tongue blocks the aggressive airstream about 8 times in a second. With double and co- articulations it is possible to utter between 12-18 sounds per seconds. Some nouns in Maasai have sounds that even though one has the potential of assimilating the other, they tend to be articulated separately but simultaneously as in the following example;

15. Cat

<i>em-paka</i> [ɛmpaka]	SIR, WUA, DAM, KEE, AIT
<i>em-puus</i> [ɛmpu:s]	KEE, SIK, KAP, AIT, PUR
<i>n-kus</i> [ŋkus]	SAM
<i>enyau / em-purra</i> [ɛŋau] / [ɛmpurra]	ARU, BAR
<i>n-kura</i> [ŋkura]	ILTIAM

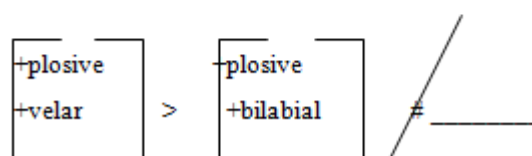
The synonym empaka, empuus, and nkus above may have their origin in the neighbouring Bantu languages which may suggest that the SIR, SIK, KAP, PUR, WUA, DAM, KEE and AIT Maasai may have began keeping cats rather recently after interacting with the Swahili (who call it paka), the gusii (who call it ekepusi) , the Luhya (who call it lipuusi) or even from the English (who call it pussy – cat). The double articulation is realized in the form empuus if taken as a derivative of n- kus. Through a dissimilative process the introduction of the genitive [ɛ] and the initial bilabial [p] automatically raises the need to use a bilabial nasal [m] in place of the alveolar nasal [n] which is actually realized as [ŋ] or ng’ the m-p of empuus

articulation is not realized as a nasal as expected but rather as double simultaneous articulation. A speaker who is not fluent Maasai would most likely pronounce the m-p as a nasal which would be wrong. Two rules come into play here;

a) [n] > [m] / # _____



b) [k] > [p] / # _____



The same double articulative process can be observed in the forms n-kura and em-purra . These forms are probably the original synonyms from the Proto -Nilosaharan language as they also appear in Nilotic luo as “mboora” [mbɔ: ra]. The form ‘enyau’ can be traced to a number of Bantu languages.

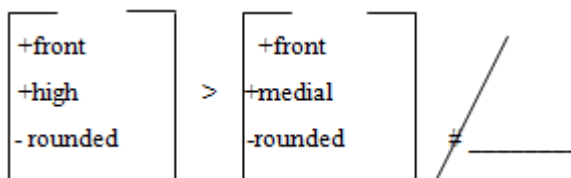
4.7 Vowel raising and lowering

This is a process involving a change in vowels where a low vowel may transform into a high and vice versa. This is realized in the examples below.

16. Ear

<i>n-kiyyok</i> [ŋkijɔk]	SAM PUR, KEE, OIT, DAM, DAL, OOD, KAP, AIT,
<i>e-nkiok</i> [ɛŋkiɔk]	MAT, SIK, TOK, DAL, ARU
<i>n-keok</i> [nkeɔk]	ILTIAM, BAR
<i>e-ning’et</i> [ɛniŋɛt]	SIK, SAL, SER

If the noun nkeok is taken to be a generation of n- kiyyok and e- nkiok, then it is a result of a vowel lowering rule [i] > [e] / ____ # ____

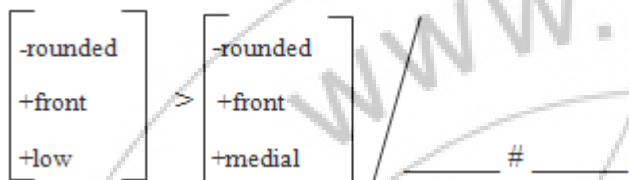


The noun e-ning’et of SIK, SAL and SER was formed through an associative word formation process and brings out the meaning ‘that which hears’. It may also have been derived from the verb a- ning (to hear). See Meitamei (2008) for more information on verb derivation in Maasai.

17. Left

<i>Kedianye</i> [kediɔɲe]	SIR, PUK, KEE, OIT, DAM, OOD, KAP, AIT, MAT, SIK, ARU, TOK, DAL	<i>olchang'itosapuk</i> <i>l-tomir</i> <i>l-tome</i> <i>ol-tome / en-tome</i> <i>Saalishoi</i> <i>lkanchawi</i> <i>olkanchawai</i> <i>olkanchawi</i> SIR <i>oleng'kaina</i>	KIS OIT, PUR, BAR SAM AIT, ARU, MOIT, BAR, PUR SAM LTIAM SIK AIT DAL, KAP MAT, DAM SER, DAL, AIT, DAM, KAP, KEE, PUR, OIT OOD, SER
<i>Kidienye</i> [kediɲe]	SAM, ILTIAM, BAR		

Here, the medial vowel [a] in the noun *kedianye* is raised to the vowel [e] in the SAM and ILTIAM and BAR form *Kidienye* following the [a] > [ɛ] / _____ # _____ rule.



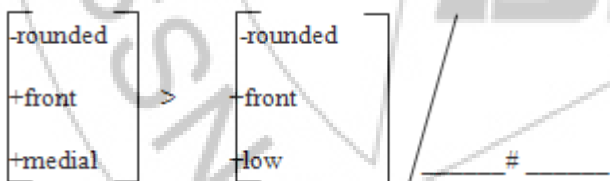
a-saalishoi / e-saalishoi } KAP, AIT, PUR, OIT
(Vossen, R. 1988).

Other nouns that shows marked divergence are

18. Dream

<i>n-kidetidet</i> [ɲkɪdɪtɪdɪt]	SAM, ILTIAM SAL, SER, BAR UAS, MOIT, ARU	Face <i>Enkomom</i> PUR <i>Enkirribo</i> SER <i>Entakula</i> <i>Niagulai</i>	AIT, SAM, LTIAM, OOD, KAP SAL, SIR, OIT, BAR, DAM, ARU, KIS, MOIT,
<i>en-kidetidet</i> [ɛɲkɪdɪtɪdɪt]	SAL, SER, KEE, OIT, DAM, TOK, DAL PUK, DAL, OOD, KAP, KIS	Chin <i>Olboony</i> <i>Olmunyei</i>	PUR, DAM, OOD, KAP, ARU SAM, SIR, PUR, OIT, AIT
<i>n-kidatidat</i> [ɲkɪdɪtɪdɪt]	SIR, , ILTIAM, BAR	Nine <i>Naaudo</i> <i>Enturuj</i> <i>Saal</i>	SIR, ARU, SAM, ILTIAM, PUR KIS, BAR, SAL, MOIT, SER
		Thirty <i>Tomoni uni</i> <i>Osom</i>	SIR, KIS, PUR, MOIT, SER ARU, BAR, SAL BAR, SAM, ILTIAM
			SIR, AIT SAM, ILTIAM

This paradigm exhibits the vowel lowering process through the transformation of the medial and final [ɛ] of *n- kidetidet* and *en- kidetidet* to the medial and final [a] of the noun *n- kidatidat*. The rule governing the process is [ɛ] > [a] / _____ # _____.



Hohenburger (1958) describes the variant *enturuj* (nine) as a dialectic form while *osom* (thirty) as having been borrowed from the southern Cushitic speakers. *Tomoni uni* of course is a dialectic form and is essentially Maasai.

5. Conclusion

Noun lexicon in Maasai dialects differ morphophonologically across various semantic field such as body parts, places, wild animals, among other fields. The variation observed cannot justify the claim that the dialects are different languages. The correct position is that the noun variants are actually synonyms only differing in their phonemic and morphemic configurations. It is a case of internal differentiation of a language's lexicon which Vossen (1988) calls heteronymy characterized by a degree of identity, divergence and partial divergence. Examples of noun variants that exhibit wide divergence are those referring to the elephant found in many areas inhabited by the Maasai. The variant are;

There is a notable identity between the Northern Iltiamus and other southern Maasai dialects. The dialect's nouns exhibit a high degree of heteronymy reflecting arepresentation of the lexicon from other dialects. It is tempting to conclude the LTIAM is the epicenter of all the other dialects. Heine (1980) also noted this and suggested that fugitives fleeing from the great Maasai civil war of the late 19th century may have found refuge in central Baringo among the Iltiamus speakers and therefore occasioning the heteronymy. This may be true but it is also possible that the Baringo area could have been the last joint Maasai settlement as the migrated from the North. This may also explain the heteronymy. In the ILTIAM, SAL and SAM dialects *sapa* means seven. The Southern dialects except SAL use *naapishana*. This form are either Nilo-Saharan as the Kalenjin also have 'Tisaf'

or the noun is universal as the Swahili use 'saba' while the English use 'seven'. Hohenberger has also associated sapa with Southern Cushitic speakers. He also associates saal (nine) used by BAR, SAM, and ILTIAM with Sagal (nine) from the Somali language. Could there be a linguistic relationship between these languages requiring further research? This work hopefully serves as brief introduction into one area of a language still waiting to be explored.

5.1 Future scope

This work is part of a greater research undertaken during the 2013 and 2014 period on the morphophonology of Maasai dialects of Kenya and Tanzania. It is a work that concentrates only on the noun word class. Other open classes that get affected by both phonological and morphological processes are verbs and pronouns. Papers on these word classes will be written in future as well. The current work was also basically phonological although some aspects of morphology have also been mentioned. Future papers will concentrate more on morphology and the syntax of this language.

Maasai is an Eastern prong of the Nilo-Saharan languages spoken across the Sahelian region which extends from Mali, Niger, Northern Nigeria, Chad, Sudan, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. It will be interesting to investigate the relationship between Maasai and other Nilo-Saharan languages from a theoretical linguistic perspective. Taking Maasai as a Nilo-Saharan language is based on historical linguistics on oral traditions. More linguistic research may confirm this or reveal hitherto undiscovered facts about this language.

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