

EkeGusii Morphopragmatics and the Junction with Iconicity *

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Abstract: The intersection between morphology and pragmatics in EkeGusii, a Bantu language spoken in Kenya among the natives of Kisii and Nyamira Counties, is the concern of this paper. Besides the lean evidence of previous research on EkeGusii morphopragmatics, the argument is presented in four parts. The first examines the interplay between affixation and pragmatics, especially contextually sanctioned diminution and augmentation. This happens in the revelation of attitude at the lexical, and post-lexical levels, where in the latter, vowel lengthening is an alternative way of modifying degrees of augmentation and diminution. Diminution and augmentation also relate to style as manner with language, social relations, persuasion and euphemism in clitic-like groups, and augmentative prefixation where the function of the amplifier prefix is defined. The second part posits that metaphorical compounds acquire idiosyncratic meanings supported by context. The third part presents the meanings of iconic reduplicatives as isomorphic, and dependent on context. The final part delves into the portmanteau morph, a knotty problem as evidenced in EkeGusii, arguing that it can only be described as serving pragmatic functions with greater reliance on syntax and semantics, which in turn abet covert morphological change. The portmanteau morph, from a morphopragmatic viewpoint, is more of a question to ponder than a conclusion.

Keywords: clitic-like groups, amplifier prefix, metaphorical compounding, portmanteau morph

1. Introduction

Communication is pegged on aspects of the speech situation: time, location, setting and participants' roles, and elements of the speech event; speaker's strategies, plans, goals, and

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intentions (Kiefer, 2001). Morphology, the study of the systematic co-variation in the form and meaning of words (Haspelmath, 2002) is sometimes influenced by such pragmatic factors, which attracts interface concerns to the linguist. Even more, while morphological patterns depend on pragmatic conditions for certain meaning impressions, they appear iconized, that is have something in them that is imitative of the real world as in diagrammatic strings. EkeGusii, a Kenyan native Bantu language of the Niger Congo family labeled E. 42 in Guthrie (1971, cited in Cammenga, 2002:20), indicates a clear intersection between its morphology and pragmatics. In this paper, I argue that morphological processes including prefixation, reduplication and others akin to cliticization or incorporation appear motivated by factors of pragmatics, and sometimes, are prosodically or diagrammatically iconized, where in the latter, the structure of linguistic form reflects the structure of reality, attesting to the complexity of human language as a system of communication. EkeGusii Morphology reveals aspects of attitudes, style, social relations, persuasion or concealment of truth, and overstatement in relevant contexts. It also relates metaphorical compounding to negative evaluation or disapproval, achieved via isomorphic reduplicants. The portmanteau morph as a stem or word that expresses two or more cumulative meanings in EkeGusii is presented as a challenged concept. The evidence I raise in this discussion is pivotal only to a research agenda that can be better documented in an exhaustive investigation to describe the morphopragmatics of EkeGusii, establish the extent to which iconicity is intertwined, and explore the presence and function of the portmanteau morph beyond the current discussion.

Morphopragmatics is a model that was pioneered by Dressler & Merlini-Barbatesi (1986, 1987, 1989, and 1994, cited in Dressler & Merlini-Barbatesi, 2017). As observed by Dressler & Kilani-Schoch (2016), it is those morphological rules whose meaning is dependent on pragmatic variables that are relevant to morphopragmatics. Such are diminutives, augmentatives, pejoratives, and plural doublets, among others. It is therefore proper to argue that this paper will examine the extent to which the integration of morphological rules and pragmatic conditions is attestable, and the level to which morphopragmatics is related to semiotic motivation, in EkeGusii.

Cammenga (2002) is one of the most vibrant and extensive studies on the phonology and morphology of EkeGusii. I examine Cammenga's discussion on diminutives and augmentatives as it is most relevant to our present purposes. From Cammenga (2002:204-223), it is clear that diminutives and augmentatives can combine with adjectives and adverbs to express extreme degrees of pejoration at the post-lexical level. Cammenga clarifies that syntactic and semantic factors determine whether or not a word may take an augmentative or non-augmentative prefix at lexical and post-lexical levels, besides rich exemplification. The challenges I posit to address include the lack of the pragmatic aspect of diminutives

and augmentatives which see Cammenga's research lean towards their pejorative aspect to the exclusion of other possibilities. The argument is that pragmatic factors sanction such affixes for their purposes. Further, I introduce the iconic aspect of post-lexical vowel lengthening as supporting diminution and augmentation all tied to pragmatics, as an alternative strategy for expressing extreme degrees, instead of using adjectives and adverbs. Finally, I re-describe and show the function of a qualifier prefix that occurs between the augmentative prefix and the nominal roots in EkeGusii, herein termed the amplifier prefix.

Magachi (2015) applied the relevance theory in the analysis of riddles in EkeGusii without having concern for any morphological aspects. Magachi concludes that riddles are understood and interpreted on the basis of context and cultural information. Perhaps, Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory may be extended to the study of pragmatic aspects, but not the morphopragmatic concerns. Ondari and Michieka (2012) examined vague expressions which are ascertained not to be deviations, but important parts of communication strategies in EkeGusii; they aid speakers to carry out communication when they are unable to access precise words, avoid taboo or offensive language, and function as strategies of politeness among other functions. Any morphopragmatic concerns are not part of Ondari and Michieka's engagement.

An assignment paper by Mayaka (2014), presented at Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University, Kenya, and uploaded on the Academia.edu website, makes a commendable effort to examine the morphopragmatics of EkeGusii, especially on availing relevant data. Nevertheless, a few concerns can be raised on the arguments presented. The claims around amelioration seem to negate native-speaker intuition, and moreover, lack support of any etymological evidence. It is clear that diminution is unsustainably claimed to be the source of neutral forms, the opposite of which should actually be the case. The arguments around expressive morphology appear overtaken by extra-grammatical morphology, the detail of which is in Dressler & Merlini-Barbatesi (2017). While diminutives and augmentatives may actually convey pejoration depending on context, there seems to miss a distinction between diminutives and pejoratives. Narrowing, borrowing, and nativization equally seem to have missed due attention (See Morara, 2017); words such as *omotoka* 'motorcar', *abukato* 'avocado' and *amarabuoni* (*rabuon* [borrowed from Dholuo^①]) 'sweet potatoes', are clear instances of semantic borrowing, as opposed to narrowing, which have undergone morphophonological adjustments. Coinage is more of an imposed concept which seems to displace copy reduplication whose diagrammaticity further appears to have been overlooked altogether. Finally, although the portmanteau morph *ninki* 'what/why/with

^① Dholuo is a Nilotic language spoken in Tanzania, and in Kenya around Lake Victoria, bordering AbaGusii, speakers of EkeGusii.

what' is clearly identified, its cumulative expression of three meanings is sententially, rather than pragmatically, revealed. These, among other questions, warrant a review of this area, with an aim to re-describe, reorganize and tailor linguistic information around the morphopragmatics of EkeGusii, whose exhaustive description may still not be attained in a research paper of this extent, save for the direction suggested. While a systematic examination of EkeGusii morphopragmatics is yet to be availed, it can be hoped that Mariera (2020), and Mariera (2021), will avail substantive discussions on the iconic aspects of the language.

2. The morphopragmatics and iconicity junction, and other interfaces in EkeGusii

Morphopragmatics is the main concern of this paper. I further present evidence of how morphopragmatics appears iconized, first at the post-lexical level, and later at the lexical level, in compounds. Under the portmanteau morph, pragmatically-sanctioned syntax and semantics come to the aid of morphology which is treated as covertly interacting with pragmatics.

2.1 Affixation and attitude

Diminutives and augmentatives have a morphopragmatic function in EkeGusii. At the lexical level, they can be considered neutral or non-neutral. They are non-neutral when they convey pejoration or impressions on the opposite of the spectrum. Diminutive and augmentative roles can also be augmented by iconic strategies that apply at the post-lexical level, in particular the autonomous vowel lengthening that relates to meanings at the lexical level. The word "attitude" is taken as a cover term for a number of linguistic delineations discussed in the sections that follow.

2.1.1 Lexical diminution and augmentation

Dressler & Merlini-Barbatesi (2017) pursue the interaction between morphology and pragmatics. For instance, they classify augmentatives and diminutives as evaluative affixes which form a part of the word formation mechanisms where such affixes confer on the bases connotative and pragmatic meanings. EkeGusii nouns will basically fit the morphological description [preprefix + nominal class prefix + nominal stem] (Cammenga, 2002; Nash, 2011). Augmentative and diminutive prefixal morphemes are dependent on pragmatic variables as observed by Dressler & Kilani-Schoch (2016). These morphemes convey the speaker's attitudes whose meaning impressions become contextually clearer. Precisely, they convey the judgment or attitude of the speaker hence their evaluative feature (Dressler & Merlini-Barbatesi, 2017). Consider the following examples.

(1) *o-mo-sacha*

PREPREF-CLASS PREF-man

'a man'

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(2) *ri-sacha*

AUG CLASS PREF-man

'a huge man'

(3) *a-ga-sacha*

PREPREF-DIM CLASS PREF-man

'a small man'

(4) *e-ge-sacha*

PREPREF-DIM CLASS PREF-man

'a nasty small man'

A similar analysis (as above) can be done for *o-mo-mura* 'boy', *ri-mura* 'huge boy', *a-ka-mura* 'small boy', and *e-ke-mura* 'nasty small boy'. It should be noted that the class prefixes are the pragmatic meaning carrier morphemes, whose meanings are conferred on the nominal stems. While the class marker in (1) is neutral, dignified, and respectful as in ordinary speech, the class markers in (2-4) are non-neutral. In (2) the augmentative prefix appears iconized^① to imply size and shape, either with judgmental or admiral attitudes. Usually, depending on the context, the tone may sound critical if the traits or conduct of the man in question are not found favourable, so that the speaker conveys annoyance with the said man. On the other hand, a man that is perceived as big, strong and able to sort out issues may be described as in (1), whose positive attributes may be amplified in (2). In (3), the class prefix diminutivizes the man, implying a small size and contemptible shape or appearance. Usually, such happens during banter among women of the same age-set where one cracks a joke about another's the husband, or in serious situations such as quarrels and bitter exchanges. Derision is the core impression conveyed by such usage even when a man rises against another whom they feel poses a lighter challenge. The pejorative diminutive in (4) diminishes the smallness in size and augments the dislike associated with ugliness in shape, nastiness in conduct, and a contemptible general outlook. Usually, the impression may stretch to perceived inadequacy in manliness, even to the extent of sexual incompetence, implying that the described is a 'lesser man' in a wider social dimension. It should be noted that while (2) and (3) may or may not attract augmentative and diminutive pejoration, depending on contextual factors, (4) is a context-independent pejorative diminutive in which the negative evaluation is amplified. Therefore, to restate the position in Cammenga (2002:205), (2) should be described as [AUG, ± pejorative], (3) as [DIM, ± pejorative], and (4) as [DIM, + pejorative].

On a wider scale, diminution will serve a number of pragmatic functions. Child-centered

^① This is associated to size-sound symbolism under phonaesthetic iconicity, where *ri-* occurs as part of a cluster of words with negative connotations, all beginning with *ri-*. The salience of this idea is explored in Mariera (2021).

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emotional tenderness is expressed in *a-ka-mwana* ‘little child’, the same way it works in pet-centered tenderness in *a-ka-mooni* ‘little cat’. In both cases, the prefixal form *-ka-* confers its pragmatic meaning on the stems. Depending on the pragmatic conditions, the same prefix in *a-ka-gaka* ‘small old man’ may be used to convey endearment and feigned contempt, as in banter, or genuine contempt, or sarcasm, thereby revealing a negative attitude. Equally, speakers convey meiosis with a motive for downplaying the severity of a situation or minimizing the gravity of a problem. For instance, *n’e-bi-marwa bikomongaina* (it’s the little alcohol /cheating him, ‘he is only under the influence of a little alcohol’) will be used to tone down a drunk’s misconduct by making it sound like ‘he is still a good person, only that he was cheated by liquor’. This is more of a ‘protective’ rejoinder from a close one. The same applies to *nimbwate a-ka-bokongu gete* (I do have /a small problem /somewhat, ‘I have a certain small problem’). In case the speaker needs help from the addressee, diminution is equally a persuasive strategy to make the hearer see it as solvable, and come on board. Similar persuasion can be realized in *ing’a a-ga-tuko akamo* (give me /a small day /one, ‘lend me one small day’). When the speaker is persuading the addressee to spare a day off to lend a hand or accord company, say to an occasion, the diminutive makes a day off one’s tight schedule sound affordable to spare for the sake of the requesting party. Diminution is also a strategy of politeness, as commonly used before extending gifts which are usually made to sound ‘very small’.

On the other hand, diminution can be used in understatements to convey mockery or direct ridicule. One could express derision at another perceived as socially domineering or arrogant, by use of diminutives as in *o-bo-besa bwao mbokong’aina* (little money /of yours /not cheat you, ‘do not be cheated by your little money’). The plural diminutive *-bo-* implies that the addressee is perceived as being in a better financial position (has some money) but is being cautioned of his money-fuelled arrogance. Diminution can also be used to conceal truth, or feign generosity and attract self-disqualification by the hearer. For instance, a mother before an unwelcome visitor may send a cue by shouting an enquiry to the children to serve the “small dish” in case it was left, as in *agatoke akwo ngatigara moretere omogeni?* (that little banana /was left /you bring to /the visitor? ‘was that little banana left to serve the visitor?’) On hearing this, the visitor may appreciate the “generosity” in advance and say, “No. thank you. I am fed already.” Speakers use diminution to feign humility before releasing a shocker to the hearer as in *inaagora akagari ngotarera!* (I recently bought /a small car /I go around with! ‘I bought a small private car!’) The message is ‘I bought a car’, and the speaker minimizes the surprise. In a different context, of course, the same statement can be used as a means of toning down on pride. The interpretation depends greatly on what the speaker and hearer know about each other, the key of the conversation, and the whole context of situation.

There is a noticeable twist in the diminutive prefixes in modern youth-code-mixed EkeGusii in relation to pragmatics. For instance, while examples like (3) are contextually modifiable to serve hypocoristic functions as in *agasacha kane* (small husband /of mine, ‘my lovely little husband’), and *akang’ina kane* (small wife /of mine, ‘my lovely little wife’), to convey endearment and empathy, youths’ expressions have borrowed, nativized and therefore adulterated hypocoristics such as (5) below.

- | | |
|--|---|
| (5) <i>e-ki-se</i> | <i>ki-a-ne</i> |
| PRE PREF-little.DIM CLASS PREF-old man | little.DIM CLASS PREF-of.POSS-mine.POSS |
| ‘my little old man’ | |

It is interesting to see how far the language is getting modified; the nominal stem originates from the Kiswahili word *mzee* ‘old man’, from which the first and last parts have been clipped, leaving a devoiced part of it which carries the sense of ‘old man’. The diminutive form of Swahili *mzee* ‘old man’ could equally be *kizee*^① which must be the source of the adopted diminutive which is preceded by the prefixed augment (preprefix) to nativize the word. A copy of the diminutive resurfaces before the possessive markers *-a-ne* ‘of mine’. Depending on context, this phrase could be used by a female speaker to refer to her husband, or her boyfriend, or just a close male friend who is her claimed ‘husband’ in banter, especially at places of work. The phrase, therefore, functions as a modern hypocoristic among the youth.

2.1.2 Iconized post-lexical diminution and augmentation

Iconicity is a semiotic concept where there is a relationship between the form of words and their meanings; there is correspondence between words and their referents in the world (Hiraga, 2005; De Cuypere, 2008; Hancil & Hirst, 2013). For a richer discussion on prosodic iconicity in EkeGusii, which is the focus of this section, see Mariera (2021). There is evidence for an alternative way in which degrees of diminution and augmentation are increased at the post-lexical level, in comparison to Cammenga’s (2002) findings of combining diminutives with adjectival modification, with or without added adverbs. This attests to the reality of morphologized pragmatics being augmented by imitative vowel lengthening, which is our first argument for the intersection between morphopragmatics and iconicity. We first take an example from Cammenga to help illustrate our point.

- | |
|-------------------------------|
| (6) <i>e-ke-mo-nto</i> |
| PREPREF-DIM-CLASS PREF-person |
| ‘a small person’ |

^① Possibly, Gusii speakers have nativised the Kiswahili diminutive as both languages are Bantu, and both fix diminutive prefixes the same way. Since the EkeGusii prefixal diminutive should have a copy of the preprefix, it can be assumed that it is the Kiswahili diminutive that is in use here.

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|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| (7) <i>e-ke-mo-nto</i> | <i>ε-ge-ke</i> | |
| PREPREF-DIM-CLASS PREF-person | PREPREF-DIM-small | |
| ‘a very small person’ | | |
| (8) <i>e-ke-mo-nto</i> | <i>ε-ge-ke</i> | <i>mono</i> |
| PREPREF-DIM-CLASS PREF-person | PREPREF-DIM-small | very |
| ‘a very, very small person’ | | |

The examples above (6-8) have been modified and simplified with changes on the diminutive markers in the adjectives. Clearly, while the diminutive in (8), *ekemonto* is already pejorative, the following adjective makes it more pejorative, as the added adverb makes it further pejorative. Notably, Cammenga’s discussion does not touch on pragmatics. How else can the same effect be achieved as sanctioned by pragmatic conditions? This is our next concern. Consider examples (9-10).

- | | | |
|---|------------------------|-----------|
| (9) <i>e-ke-mo-nto</i> | <i>e-ge-sini: ...</i> | <i>ni</i> |
| PREPREF-DIM-CLASS PREF-person | PREPREF-DIM-very, very | small |
| ‘a very, very small person indeed’ (pejorative) | | |
| (10) <i>ri-ka-ngina</i> | <i>ri-ne: ...</i> | <i>ne</i> |
| AUG-AMP PREF-old woman | AUG-very, very | huge |
| ‘a very, very, huge, old woman indeed’ (super pejorative) | | |

Instead of the adverb added in Cammenga’s case in (8) above, a speaker takes the option of lengthening the vowels of the adjective to a desired level of impression transfer, to increase the degree of diminution or augmentation, of course with connotations of pejoration. Vowel lengthening is a concept of prosody where vowels may not be counted but considered expandable to infinity (Odden, 2011); the longer the vowel, the smaller or bigger the impression created. This is pragmatically sanctioned in contexts of narration or generally in face-to-face interactions, so that speakers express the actual impressions they wish to transfer to addressees. Such vowel lengthening usually co-occurs with gestural and facial demonstrations that augment the whole picture as detailed in Mariera (2021). Such imitative vowel lengthening occurs at the post-lexical level to augment the picture created at the lexical level, whether it is diminution or augmentation, with pejorative connotations. It should be remembered that diminution and augmentation can also be amplified by vowel lengthening with positive attitudes. For instance, young men are fond of describing their girlfriends with such hypocoristic diminutives as *a-ka-mwana aka: ...ya* (small child /ve...ry good, ‘a very, very, good little child, indeed’), where “child” stands for girl. The same happens in *ri-ka-gondo rine: ...ne* (big land /ve...ry big, ‘a very, very, huge chunk of land, indeed’). Evidently, prosodic lengthening augments pragmatically conditioned lexical diminution and augmentation.

2.2 Affixation and style

We will be more interested in degrees of formality and elevation which are to be socially understood as associated with certain generations, social positions or ranking, age groups, perceived levels of social wisdom, and such other social parameters. The range of a speakers' choices is illustrated in (11-15) below.

(11) *na-mo-kwan-ir-i-e*

SBJ-OBJ-greet-PERF-TRANS-FV

'I greet you all.' (elevated style, the singular object marker *-mo-* stands for plural)

(12) *na-ba-kwan-ir-i-e*

SBJ-OBJ-greet-PERF-TRANS-FV

'I greet you.' (neutral, where the prefix *-ba-* is the accepted plural subject marker)

The greeting in (11) is rare, and is getting outmoded as present-day speakers of EkeGusii are, by and by, using a more polluted variety of EkeGusii. However, it is still being used by older people, to convey a sense of identification with a particular age set that uses the greeting as a 'golden off-youth salutation' to communicate an impression of a higher social ranking, social distance, formality and elevation, and announces social boundaries that attract automatic reverence for the user. The whole difference between (11) and (12) lies in the object prefixes. While (12) is the day-in-day-out way of passing greetings, (11) uses the singular form *-mo-* which in context is understood as plural, special and elevated, thereby leaving (12) to pass for the ordinary. It is therefore impractical for a youth to use (11) for a group of age mates who would find it weird and possibly laughable for claiming a 'false' social status.

(13) *ri-a-kwan-an-ir-i-e*

SBJ-ASP-greet-RECIP-PERF-TRANS-FV

'They have greeted each other.' (dual, subjective, third person, narrative, gossip related)

Example (13) uses a rare stylish subject marker *ri-* in place of an ordinary subject marker *ba-* with the following aspect marker *-a-*. This class subject marker also surfaces as the alveolar homorganic *ndi-* depending on phonological factors (as in when preceded by a focus morpheme *na-* which turns the alveolar trill *r-* to a homorganic alveolar stop *nd-*). A number of things have to be noted about the subject marker in (13). Firstly, the subject marker is usually dual as opposed to the usual *ba* which stands for both dual and many. Secondly, the subject marker *ri-* is used for parties on two opposite ends such as husband-wife, fiancé-fiancée, or brother-brother foes. Thirdly, the subject marker is used by speakers who perceive the dual party as inseparable, or as having sharp differences that have kept them apart for a while but have still maintained an impenetrable social wall. Finally, the dual party is perceived as exclusive of the speaker and the hearers, so that this subject marker is only used in 'behind-their-backs' conversations such as gossip. Generally,

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this class marker serves pragmatic functions of engaging in scandalous, rumor-based, grapevine or chit-chat conversations, where participants find it juicy to while away time on other people's affairs. By this morpheme, the speaker shares 'guarded' information, about the 'two' enemies or lovers, usually passed in low tones. We now turn to demonstrative phrases that refer to 'this year'.

- (14) *o-mwak* *o-yo*
NOM CLASS PREF-year.NOM STEM CLASS PREF-DEMON
'This year' (conventional)
- (15) *mwak* *o-no*
Year.NOM STEM CLASS PREF-DEMON
'This year' (special reference, rare, old-fashioned)

It should be noted that both (14) and (15) refer to this year as inherently understood demonstrative phrases, for a year is an abstract entity. While (14) has a nominal class prefix before the nominal stem as in all other ordinary nouns in EkeGusii, (15) has the nominal class prefix elided making it unique and stylish. As noted in the parenthetical notes, (15) is old-fashioned, very rare, and almost extinct. Regardless, among the seasoned speakers, it resurfaces every other time a special or unique event happens in a year, such as when a dry spell prolongs, when hunger is looming, when locusts strike or when deaths are on the rise. It is therefore used as an exclamative warning preemptive of an impending bad omen, and is usually used alone as a clausal or sentential category. This phrase, too, is a preserve of the senior members of the community.

2.3 Affixation and social relations

The question we want to address here is how prefixation reveals social distance or proximity, and different levels of formality; how people relate as co-wives, cousins, distant relatives, members of the larger family, common-interest groups and so on. These may be reflected by different choices of lexical affixation preferred from one context to another to reveal such social relations. Consider (16) and (17) where the singular and plural prefixes mark possession and serve class functions as well.

- (16) *o-mwabo*
SG POSS PREF-their house
'cousin' (general, endearing)
- (17) *ba-mwabo*
PL POSS PREF-their house
'cousin' (particular, relational, plain)

According to Bosire and Machogu (2013), while (16) is considered a singular relational term used between wives and their cousins (communally perceived as co-wives), (17) is its plural variant. However, ordinary usage does not support this prescriptive position. The

sure difference between the two is currently diminishing so that they are almost used interchangeably across the genders, but synonymy is not correct either. Usually, (16) is considered distant and propositional so that it is easier for strangers in the community to use it with a purpose of striking common ground, announcing or seeking safety in the company of the other, and use it as a place holder for the addressee's name that is hitherto unremembered or unknown. On the other hand, (17) is proximal and more realistic, so that true cousins will normally use not (16) but (17). The prefix *ba-* in (17) has lost supposed plurality so that it is now used both as a singular and plural marker. It will actually be unpalatable if a cousin addresses another using (16) unless he or she is announcing informality. With speakers becoming more liberal with language, the two are sometimes used between strangers to seek endearment, such as when unfamiliar people initially meet at a place of work. With the same liberalism, it happens that when wives to cousins use (16) to recognize one another it is more popular with younger women as older mothers naturally drop it and prefer the more particularizing *(o)mongina* 'old woman'. One more difference must be noted. In a situation where strangers have gotten into loggerheads, either of them will address the other using (17) and not (16) as in *bamwabo ndagoake bobo* (brother /I can beat you /badly, 'brother I can hit you badly'). (16) is actually automatically never used because it connotes endearment. This confirms the higher levels of formality of (17) as compared to (16) which is more casual and banter-oriented. It is clear that the functional differences between the two affixal forms can only be defined on a pragmatic basis, which lexicographers like Bosire and Machogu (2013) could not afford in a dictionary.

The foregoing argument is supported by two other related lexical items that may erroneously pass as synonyms, *o-moko* [ɔmɔkɔ] and *moko-yone* [mɔkɔjɔnɛ], both of which are addresses for brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law. It follows that the former is used by the members of the extended family such as cousins to address their relations-in-law whereas the latter is particularly used by immediate family members to address their brother-in-law or sister-in-law. In the event that one's immediate relative-in-law addresses a brother-in-law as *o-moko* [ɔmɔkɔ], it might be assumed that the addressor has not grown up in the culture, or is young in age, is sounding casual, or is simply taking the relationship for granted. A few conservatives will actually take offense if addressed as such, especially if the addressor is of age, for flouting the unwritten rules of communication. Levels of usage that are context-modulated will therefore vary as revealed in morphological adjustment to distinguish between lexical items that may pass as pseudo synonyms. We now turn to (18-20).

(18) *o-mo-kungu*

PREPREF-CLASS PREF-woman

'a woman' (neutral, conventional)

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(19) *mo-kungu*

CLASS PREF-woman

'woman' (used between women, banter-based, age set bound)

(20) *a-ba-kungu*

PREPREF-PL CLASS PREF-woman

'women' (a general reference sometimes used as a dismissive representative of the group)

It should be noted that (18) which has the preprefix *o-* and the nominal class prefix *-mo-* before the nominal stem *-kungu* is the neutral reference that means 'a woman' as summarized in the interlinear parenthetical notes. Nevertheless, the reference can also be used on a man when the intention is to ridicule or convey sarcasm, when a man portrays features of femininity such as cowardice, has female tones, has female-like curves, or sticks with female company, especially for married men. Such ironic usages have universal evidence across languages and cultures. When the preprefix is omitted as in (19) the word becomes a preserve of younger women especially those married within the same extended family. The word is mainly used in situations such as small talk, in banter, as an opener to a following cordial conversation, as a signal of a conversation wind-up and so on. Never will a younger woman address an older woman with it; it is as good as an insult that may hold her 'answerable'. Ordinarily, (20) is the plural form of (18). The usage in this case need not be emphasized. However, in the event that a man comes into conflict with the wife, or two women get into conflict for instance, then (18) is used synecdochically to dismiss the woman as though she were the whole group. A man can make a chauvinistic utterance like *abakungu nababe* (women /are bad, 'women are bad'), even when he actually implies his wife is bad. The opposite of this is also true. We wind up this section with (21) and (22) where again in the former the possessive marker serves class functions which are shifted to the preprefix in the latter which in turn functions as a prefix.

(21) *o-yo-minto*

PREPREF-POSS PREF-our house

'my/our brother/sister' (formal, between real relations such as siblings, or first cousins)

(22) *o-minto*

POSS PREF-our house

'my/our brother/sister' (pampering, endearing, casual between colleagues, exclusive of non-members)

The morphological difference between (21) and (22) is that the latter omits the possessive prefix *yo-*. This prefix is the source of the formality conferred on the nominal stem *-minto*, which allows (21) to function as a noun that identifies a sibling in formal occasions such as in dowry negotiations. It is extended to cover first and other cousins in the extended family especially when making introductions that do not demand detail of

identification. However, when one has received a favour of outstanding magnitude from a friend or even a stranger, they can appreciate the aid giver by saying *aye noyominto* (you /are ours, ‘you are my brother/sister’). It may only be used with strangers to identify friends as ‘brothers’ especially when one is making a ‘necessary lie’ (withholding truth) to conceal unneeded detail. The levels of formality associated with it drop a little further as in when look-alikes happen to work at a place or live in the same environment. In this case, either calls the other *oyominto* ‘my brother/sister’ using it more as part of jocular small talk. Just as (16) and (19) are used above, (22) is also casual, pampering, inviting and endearing, so much that while it inherently speaks volumes of the relational gap between or among the users (addressor and addressee), it also sounds exclusive of the ‘outsiders’ that have not been membershiped into the ‘brotherhood’. It can be seized as a tool of mockery in indirect addresses to ‘non-members’ when it is used for those ‘brothers’ that extend favours to the exclusion of the ‘outcasts’. In such a context, the ‘outsider’ is being disciplined or reprimanded. It is clear that context influences morphology.

2.4 Persuasive, and euphemistic diminution in clitic-like groups

Mboga, Ondondo & Ongarora (2019) availed evidence of EkeGusii possessive markers being clitics. This is especially because they freely attach to noun stems and infinitive bases, missing the semantic and morphological idiosyncrasies of affixes, and are in combination with their hosts, not being subject to syntactic rules. So, why use the label ‘clitic-like groups’ here? From (23) below, we will notice that the cliticized part of *bw’enda* ‘of stomach’ and the last morpheme of the possessive group *ya’ne* ‘of mine’ have been blended, where *bw’-* and *ya’-* are prior clitics hosted by the noun *enda* ‘stomach’ and the possessive marker *-ne*. However, in the blend, there is an attached possessive *o-* ‘of’, a common possessive marker in the language, which appears derived from the possessive clitic *bw-*, and the deletion of *ya’-* ‘of’ leaving *-ne* [nɛ] ‘mine’ which in turn behaves like an enclitic. It is the hosting of such formatives that allows us to use the label ‘clitic-like groups’. Such hosting of particles is also witnessed through (24-26), where *ki-*, *mok-* and *mw-* appear before the possessive clitic *-a-*, an apparent endoclititic, and since it will not be easy to decide on what hosts which formative, the label ‘clitic-like groups’ will suffice for our present purposes. The nature and function of clitics are detailed in Spencer & Luís (2012). We now turn to focus on the morphopragmatic issues of concern around each of the phrases.

(23) *bw’enda yane* → *o-nda-ne*
POSS-stomach-mine
‘of my stomach’

It turns out that *ondane* [onda:ne] ‘of my stomach’, which is a common collocate of *tata* ‘son’ (in this context) in the popular phrase *tata ondane* (son /of my stomach, ‘son of my

stomach'), is a result of morphological fusion which is used by mothers to address male children. This is considered pampering, imploring, formal, and rare, especially when used by one's own mother. In the event that one's mother is desperate to convince a child, especially a grown-up son, to carry out a task or withdraw some intent which in the eyes of the mother is undesirable, then this phrase is used. Otherwise, mothers are expected to communicate a sense of authority. In other contexts, other mothers in the community will use it, sometimes casually, but persuasively, and endearingly, to pass polite requests to one of their sons in the clan to extend a favour. Though this is usually a preserve of elderly mothers for sons, it sometimes applies to daughters who are addressed as *baba ondane* (mother /of my stomach, 'daughter of my stomach'). A variant of *tata ondane* is *tata yane* (father /of mine, 'my little son'), which is probably morphologically adjusted to *tat'one* (father /of mine, 'my son'), and is commonly used by older men to address their sons. However, *tata yane* is preferred by mothers to express tenderness to children, while *tatone* is more of a preserve of fathers for their grown-up sons when requests are passed. Interestingly, the possessive marker *-o-* is sandwiched between the clipped form of *tata* and the possessive marker *-ne*; from *tata + oyone* (father /of mine, 'son of mine') we have *tat-o-ne* [ta:tɔnɛ] 'my son'. Such evidence of endoclitics still allows us to maintain our label 'clitic-like groups'. We now turn to (24).

(24) *ki-a-ne*

DIM-POSS-mine

'little something of mine'

While this reference is used ordinarily with things as a possessive for 'my thing', as in *egento kiane* (a thing /of mine, 'a thing of mine'), the metaphorical transfer of meaning in other contexts accords it fairly variant meaning usually dependent on shared knowledge between speakers and hearers. This is used by men to refer to their lovers to mean 'little one of mine', as a hypocoristic that is sexually connotative, as the speaker sounds protective while the hearer feels excluded, as the addressee feels possessed and protected. This is actually a form of euphemistic metonym where the sexual organ of a woman represents the woman in the 'my little thing' hypocoristic. This is exclusively used among age mates or between lovers.

(25) *mok-a-ne*

wife.SBJ-POSS-mine

'my wife'

Regardless of its literal reference to 'my wife', example (25) is used within limits of age sets or with a degree of liberties between speakers and hearers since it connotes intimacy, compromised modesty, impudence, and sexual knowledge. It is so category-bound that it applies in non-serious conversations as in friendly gossips about people's spouses. For

instance, when a married male meets a friend he has not met for many years, say since high school days, they may introduce their spouse as *oyo nere mokane* (this one /is /my wife, ‘meet my wife’). This can be playful, suggestive of love and intimacy, and most likely, before these friends, the lady may feel ‘properly’ identified. On the contrary, to one’s parents, senior relations, in public fora, and to younger people, the same speaker must avoid this reference lest he causes sharp embarrassment and turns the whole situation distasteful. Alternatively, the speaker will prefer the option in (26), for this new context.

(26) *mw-a-ne*

house.SBJ-POSS-mine

‘my wife’ (literally, ‘my house’, a metonymical reference)

The alternative in (26) is considered modest, formally intimate, dignified and euphemistic, especially before senior people or elders. It is actually figurative and particularly a synecdochal (metonymical) reference where a house represents a wife, usually in the plural sense to minimize particularization, as in the question *eye nero mwao?* (this /is /your house? ‘is this your house?’) to mean ‘is this your wife?’ The speaker may respond with *eye nero mwane* (this /is /my house, ‘this is my house’), to mean ‘this is my wife’. An equivalent of this is *abanto ba-ne* (people /mine, ‘my people’) which also uses the plural subject marker *ba-* to allow a woman to be seen as the source of a larger family. A similar example occurs in Mayaka (2014). As it will be noted, the choices are dictated by pragmatic conditions, which allows us to agree with Dressler & Merlini-Barbaresi (2017), that pragmatics is morphologized, as revealed in the interlinear glosses where possessive markers and object particles appear attached to and hosted by one another^①.

2.5 Augmentative affixation for hyperbole or pejoration

Dressler & Merlini-Barbaresi (2017) classify augmentatives and pejoratives together with diminutives under evaluative affixes. Such are prefixal forms in EkeGusii which convey a speaker’s perceptual judgements sometimes riddled with feelings that lean towards negative evaluations. Examples are presented as follows.

(27) *o-mo-nto*

PREPREF-CLASS PREF-person

‘a person’ (neutral, or distantive for strangers)

(28) *ri-mo-nto*

AUG PREF-CLASS PREF-person

‘a huge person’ (augmentative, with impressions of ‘so big’)

^① Claims around clitics and cliticization are confusing morphological endeavours that have remained knotty in linguistic debates, and which may not be resolved in this paper. The label ‘clitic-like groups’ implies clear lack of commitment on this position. For more detail on clitics, see also Spencer & Zwicky (2007).

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(29) *ri-ka-mo-nto*

AUG PEF-AMP PEF-CLASS PEF-person

'a very huge person' (super-augmentative connoting to 'too big a person')

(30) *ri-ge-nto*

AUG PEF-CLASS PEF-thing

'a huge something/thing' (pejorative augmentative, with impressions of 'ugly, and too big')

While (27) is a neutral reference to a person (known or unknown to the speaker), the augmentative in (28) may incorporate both negative and positive connotations, [\pm pejorative]. On the positive, a parent may use it to refer to his or her big-bodied child, especially to highlight certain masculine qualities. The same applies to other speakers who use it in banter. Equally, it may be used to express the plain fact that one is relatively huge-bodied. Pejoratively, the reference is used to express dislike, say of certain behaviour such as when one does what he or she is considered to have outgrown. The super-augmentative in (29) may equally be termed as the amplified augmentative since it expresses a degree beyond the augmentative as in extra-ordinarily huge. This applies mostly in narrative contexts where the speaker desires to express an amplified description of size. Whether it achieves hyperbole or factual description, the super-augmentative is rare in speech just as extra-ordinarily tall and huge people are. The pejorative augmentative in (30) is used for things that are of course too big, but when used with people, then the pejorative aspect becomes clear as the person being described is 'thingfied', that is, perceived negatively as 'a huge something'. Generally, attitudes are clear, and progress down the list as explained. The same picture holds for (31-33).

(31) *o-mo-kungu*

PRE PEF-CLASS PEF-woman

'a woman' (neutral reference)

(32) *ri-kungu*

AUG PEF-woman

'a big woman' (non-neutral, augmentative)

(33) *ri-ga-kungu*

AUG PEF-AMP PEF-woman

'a very big woman' (non-neutral, amplified pejorative)

Though (31) is a neutral reference to 'woman', pragmatic conditions may dictate other uses such as sarcasm and other forms of insults which, though, are not morphologically expressed as noted above in (18). The prefix *ri-* in (32) is augmentative, and its usage again conveys evaluative perceptions; the woman being described is usually tall or big-bodied, and is judged as having unpalatable character. Such a woman is perceived as mouthy, uncouth, immoral, unhygienic, unreliable, and treacherous, among other negative qualities.

In case a speaker labours extra pain, utter disgust, higher degrees of vexation with a particular huge-bodied woman, then (33) applies.

As observed in Cammenga (2002), affixation in nouns starts from the root, so that extension prefixes are added first, then final vowels rightwards, and class prefixes are added first, then preprefixes (augments) last, leftwards. It happens that the amplifier prefixes in (29) and (33), which are voiceless and voiced variants of the same morpheme, cannot be affixed whatsoever without the augmentative prefix *ri-*, which doubles as a class marker. This amplifier prefix again happens nowhere else apart from in this environment. This means that this is an attachment to the augmentative nominal class prefix *-ri-* which has room for it. It comes as a sort of qualifier prefix whose role is to amplify the already existing pejoration or amelioration as may be pragmatically dictated. This prefix comes dependent on the augmentative prefix, morphologically, pragmatically, and semantically. It would be termed an ‘amplifier interfix’ but it comes between a hosting prefix and the nominal root. We therefore stick with the tentative label ‘amplifier prefix’.

One thing to be noted about this amplifier prefix is that it sounds alien to some speakers of EkeGusii. While it sounds so familiar with many others in the two counties (Kisii and Nyamira), interlocutors from Ekerenyo Sub-county of North Mugirango Constituency of Nyamira County, and from Suneka Division of Kisii South Sub-county in Bonchari Constituency, completely denied its existence or having heard such a common noun as *ri-ka-ngina* ‘a huge, ugly, old woman’. However, on a comparative basis, it was found to have appeared in Cammenga (2002), of course not labeled as above, as also established in the present discussion.

3. Metaphorical compounding

If we take compounding as a word formation process in which two (or more) lexemes or bases are concatenated to form a single new lexeme (Lardiere, 2006; Fromkin, Rodman & Hyams, 2007; Katamba, 1993; Matthews, 1991), this serves our present purposes. However, when the resultant phrasal lexemes acquire idiomatic meaning as in (34-37), thereby appealing to contextual information for their meanings to be understood, ‘metaphorical compounding’ should be a sustainable label since morphological derivation and pragmatics intersect. In the following examples, the [+] in the interlinear glossing marks compound base boundaries.

- (34) *ensari*’=*mache*
spoiler + water
‘fun spoiler’ (literally, ‘a water stirrer’ to mean trouble maker, equivalent to ‘fly in the ointment’)

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(35) *embuga=bobe*

noise maker + evilly

'villain' (literally, 'owl', to mean a person taken as a sign of bad omen, spell castor or witch)

(36) *engenda= 'nse*

mover + on the ground

'evildoer' (literally, 'snake', to imply 'secretive and evil, with snake-like' character)

(37) *e-ke-nya-ba-it-an-i-a*

PREPREF-DIM-PREP-PL.OBJ-beat-RECIP-TRANS-FV

'instigator or stirrer' (the one with instigation or stirring of enmity by trading rumour)

Example (34) would be taken from the literal sense of a cow that stirs water at the river making it dirty before the rest drink. The 'water spoiler' image is metaphorical when transferred to a human being that spoils good fun or a party by way of his or her conduct. Only relevant pragmatic conditions must prevail so that speakers and hearers understand one another on the basis of shared knowledge. In (35), *embuga-bobe* is used for the 'owl' which is an unwelcome 'visitor' to any home as community members believe that the bird announces death. Someone that is associated with evil is metaphorically called *embuga-bobe*, and the compound becomes appropriate when such a person is spotted or pays an unexpected visit. The same case applies to (36) where a villainous person is construed as a 'snake' that stealthily moves on the ground and strikes unexpectedly. Witches, spell castors, sorcerers, husband-snatchers, evil-eyed people, thieves, night runners and others of this kind can all be described using the compounds in (35) and (36) so long as relevant conditions of context prevail. The compound in (37) is termed metaphorical on the basis that the first part has a pejorative diminutive *-ke* which confers the meaning of 'something that causes trouble' on the first base, hence the whole new lexeme. Once this meaning is transferred to someone that stirs trouble especially by trading rumors, he or she is perceived as a contemptible 'nasty something' that instigates enmity among people. Such meaning is also conveyed in relevant pragmatic conditions as in when such a troublemaker appears, and when he is known as such, to both the speaker and the hearer. Matthews (1991) observes that in English too, resultant lexemes (compounds) tend to have idiosyncratic meanings, making them acquire degrees of opacity. For instance, 'blackbird' is neither a bird nor anything black.

4. Iconized reduplication and pragmatics

Reduplication may be considered as the systematic repetition of all or part of the base of a lexeme (Lieber, 2009; Downing & Stiebels, 2012). This morphological process happens to be motivated in certain occasions (not all reduplication is motivated), drawing mappings between reality and the linguistic forms, where more form implies more content.

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Reduplication only becomes iconized when it serves a depictive function by suggesting meanings (Dingemanse, 2015). Let us consider the following examples.

- (38) *o-go-kwana-kwana*
PREPREF-CLASS PEF-speak-speak
'to speak now and then' (implies a lack of calmness, expressing disapproval)
- (39) *o-go-sioma-sioma*
PREPREF-CLASS PEF-peep-peep
'to peep or appear repeatedly' (implying suspicion and ill-manners)
- (40) *o-ko-maga-maga*
PREPREF-CLASS PEF-look-look
'to look here and there' (implying suspicion, discomfort or stress or ill motive)
- (41) *o-go-sega-sega*
PREPREF-CLASS PEF-move-move
'to move to-and-fro' (implying a troubled state)
- (42) *o-go-tuma-tuma*
PREPREF-CLASS PEF-jump-jump
'to jump up and down repeatedly' (implies disapproval, reprimand)
- (43) *o-go-chara-charoka*
PREPREF-CLASS PEF-jump-jump
'to jump over and over' (implies disapproval, reprimand, unsettled behaviour)
- (44) *o-ko-riga-rigereria*
PREPREF-CLASS PEF-look-look
'to look here and there severally' (implies suspicion, inattentiveness, or a troubled mind)
- (45) *o-ko-ruta-ruta*
PREPREF-CLASS PEF-throw-throw
'to throw here and there' (implying a disorderly way of placing things)
- (46) *o-ko-bwata-bwata*
PREPREF-CLASS PEF-hold-hold
'to hold this and that' (implies greed, uncontrolled desire, and disorder)

On examining the patterns of reduplicative bases throughout (38-46), it is clear that there are two main types of reduplication; reduplicatives with internal stem change in (39, 43 and 44), and copy reduplicatives in all the rest. As noted in Mariera (2021), in those reduplicatives with internal stem modification, a transitive or causative morpheme is elided in the first part of the reduplicative base for the purpose of easing articulation, in a process referred to as deletive or elisive reduplication where, for instance, the penultimate morpheme *-i-* is elided in the first part in (39), or, on the other hand, an internal part of the base is elided by combining the first part with the final vowel as in (43 and 44). Wherever

deletion occurs, we use the term deletive or elisive reduplicatives, and where it does not, copy reduplicatives.

We now turn to the iconic aspect of the said reduplication above. This type of iconicity is called diagrammaticity, where reduplication is what signals that whatever happens in the real world is done repeatedly, severally, here and there, over and over, up and down, among other impressions implying iteration, a repetition of some sort. These are the mappings between the words and what they refer to in the world. Meaning is therefore morphologically iconized; the structure of words reflects the structure of what happens, so that more content means more form (Brdar, 2013).

That pragmatic conditions dictate that reduplication be relied upon to convey meanings according to user accounts for the relevance of reduplication to morphopragmatics. As it will be noted from all the parenthetical notes after the glosses, iteration in all these activities implies discontent on the part of the speaker. For instance, in (38) speaking now and then, especially before visitors, may imply a lack of proper manners or wisdom, and show levels of immaturity which attracts dissatisfaction on the part of the speaker who may question why the targeted speaker is speaking now and then. Generally, all the meaning impressions lean towards the negative. Such reduplicatives are therefore used when some sort of repeated behaviour creates a wrong impression and calls for reprimand, usually coupled with the relevant tones. As correctly observed by Mayaka (2014), most of such reduplicatives may be used to imply a sense of 'hurry', as in when the speaker gives exhortation that the activity at hand should be done quickly without desire for so much order as it could be getting late, or they could be running out of time. For instance, at the beginning of a meeting that takes off late in the evening, the chairperson can use (38) exhortatively, as in *kwanakwana togende* (speak, speak /we go, 'make your contributions very quickly so that we may leave'). Our main concern has been to adduce evidence that context motivates imitative morphology, therefore making the junction between morphology and pragmatics diagrammatic.

5. The question of the portmanteau morph

We are addressing the portmanteau morph last for a number of reasons. Firstly, the interrogative sentence we will use to explain the EkeGusii portmanteau morph is adopted from Mayaka (2014). Secondly, I am persuaded that it begs for review since the morphopragmatic aspect is possibly elusive, and could not survive outside syntax. Thirdly, the whole concept will go beyond morphology and pragmatics to border on syntax, semantics, and tonology, in my opinion, attesting to the complexity of human language. Further, there is confusion around its definition in this language as evidenced in Mboga, Ondondo & Ongarora (2019). Finally, the presentation herein will certainly wax the debate

more than suggesting a conclusion. Let us examine the interrogative sentence presented by Mayaka (2014) in an ad hoc tabular re-analysis in (47a-c), with the three variant meanings as re-arranged below, before considering the semantically anomalous (47d), whose possible and superfluous meaning is not mentioned by Mayaka.

- (47) *(ni)nki* *kwa-mo-nyeny-er-a?*
a. what.(FOC) PT you.SBJ- him.OBJ (BEN)-slaughter.ROOT-APPL-FV
 ‘What did you slaughter for him?’ (hypothetical context: Someone paid you visit)
b. why.ADV you.SBJ- him.OBJ (PT)-cut.ROOT-APPL-FV
 ‘Why did you cut him?’ (hypothetical context: You caused someone injury)
c. with what.(FOC) INS you.SBJ- him.OBJ (PT)-cut.ROOT-APPL-FV
 ‘With what did you cut him?’ (hypothetical context: You caused someone injury)
d. why.ADV you.SBJ- him.OBJ (PT)-cut.ROOT-PERF-FV
 ‘*Why did you slaughter him?’

The portmanteau morph *(ni)nki* ‘what/why/with what’ is prefixed by a focus morpheme (in brackets) which some speakers pronounce optionally in spontaneous speech, and which almost all competent speakers tend to omit when the lexical item is used as an adverbial, the reason why (FOC) is omitted before the adverbial in (47b). The bracketing of the focus prefix shows its optionality which agrees with the bracketing in the analysis. The portmanteau morph takes two syntactic theta-roles (patient and instrument) as shown in (47a) and (47c), as other theta-roles are assigned to the object prefixes. The glosses enclosed in single inverted commas show how the theta-roles are arrived at; whether someone benefits or suffers. The verb root in the agglutinative verbal complex can be termed ‘echoic’ in the sense that it is imitative of the sounds of cutting (according to the ‘communal cognitive ear’) which may allow us to term it ideophonic, or the onomateme, which in turn makes it diagrammatic as it appears reduplicative, being reflective of the act of cutting something like flesh (see detail of diagram in Mariera, 2021).

At this point we need to define what the portmanteau morph is. Following insight from Haspelmath (2002), a portmanteau morph is a suppletive affix or stem that cumulatively expresses two or more meanings that would be expected to be expressed separately. This deviates from Mboga, Ondondo & Ongarora’s (2019) definition which finds it a representation of different morphological categories. It can be observed that in (47a-c), each hypothetical context sanctions its own theta-roles with different semantic implications, in as much as the elements of morphology appear unchanging. It therefore means that relevant morphemes are aided by syntax to realize various semantic values, on which the user rides with each varying context. The user cannot modify the pragmatic conditions, but he/she is understood on the basis of prevailing circumstances. This portmanteau morph *(ni)nki* is understood, or conveys relevant meaning, on the basis of existing pragmatic conditions,

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whose semantic values morphology affords via the aid accorded it by syntax. The cycle goes on if we realize that context aids syntax in turn; only contextually can the sentences be disambiguated. If a speaker uttered this sentence out of the relevant context, the addressee would be left at a loss. The inevitable value of semantics can be demonstrated by (47d) whose interpretation is blocked for being anomalous, for human beings are never slaughtered for food as the syntax may imply. If the object prefix *-mo* is replaced with another one like *-nye-* with the same patient theta-role, as in *ninki kwanyenyeyera?* (why /you have it cut? ‘Why did you slaughter it?’) the semantics allows it since it comes with the [-human] features of what can be slaughtered, such as a hen, a goat, or a cow. This gives us evidence to posit that this discussion technically survives within morphopragmatics as we look at the morphemes as undergoing covert context-dependent morphological change. Arguably, pragmatics, syntax, morphology, and semantics converge, attesting to the multifaceted nature of human language.

It should further be noted that the pitch assigned the tone bearing unit of the subject prefix is the same (impressionistically rising), to imply that the action, regardless of meaning, happened a while ago. If this tone is changed, of course with a lengthened subject marker vowel, the sentence will imply that the action happened recently in (47a-c). Since the variation of mora pitches does not touch the portmanteau morph for our present interests, it is recommended that such pitch variation be ascertained on a speech analyzer program such as *praat* (Boersma & Weenink, 1992-2022).

It is clear that the concept surrounding the EkeGusii portmanteau morph is far from being understood. The debate is presumed to be language-specific and comparative. The EkeGusii portmanteau morph appears to be a residue (or a blend) of a longer string whose clue may lie in examples like the following.

- (48) a. *Kwamonyenya na gento ki?* (You cut him /with /something /what? ‘With what did you cut him?’)
b. *Kwamonyenya na ki?* (You cut him /with /what? ‘With what did you cut him?’)
c. *Kwamonyenyera ki?* (You cut him /why? ‘why did you cut him?’) / (you slaughtered for him /what? ‘What did you slaughter for him?’)

If *ki* ‘what’ can meaningfully stand alone, then we can argue that *(ni)nki* is a blend of the three forms, and may be treated wholly as a portmanteau morph or as a result of a [FOCUS MORPHEME + A PORTMANTEAU MORPH]. This hypothetical position can only be verified by further research.

6. Conclusion

It is clear that EkeGusii avails a lot of evidence for morphopragmatics, mainly through diminutives and augmentatives. Whether there are clitic groups or clitic-like groups in the

language is unresolved. Future research has room to account for cliticization in EkeGusii. As evidenced by youth language, EkeGusii is threatened. For instance, a number of the expressions in section 2.2, are now obsolete. The evidence available for the iconic aspects of EkeGusii is yet to be exhausted. As evidenced, there is more around interface issues in EkeGusii, which again should be handled by future investigations. The concepts around metaphorical compounding can be better addressed by cognitive approaches to attain sustainable explanations. The question of the portmanteau morph as a morphopragmatic concept has only gotten the lid blown off. The whole dish is yet to be served. The position presented in Adger (2003) on the autonomy of syntax may not agree with the arguments I have presented herein about context supporting syntax and vice versa, and the convergence of four linguistic fields. However, the discussion is considered language-centered, and is an ignition for further research.

Abbreviations and symbols

ADVB	Adverbial	OBJ	Object Morpheme
APPL	Applicative Morpheme	PERF	Perfective
AMP PREF	Amplifier Prefix	PL	Plural
ASP	Aspect Marker	POSS	Possessive Morpheme
AUG	Augmentative	PREP	Prepositional Morpheme
BEN	Benefactive	PREPREF	Preprefix (Augment)
CAUS	Causative Morpheme	PREF	Prefix
DEMON	Demonstrative	PT	Patient
DIM	Diminutive	RECIP	Reciprocal Morpheme
FOC	Focus Morpheme	SG	Singular
FV	Final Vowel	SBJ	Subject Morpheme
INS	Instrumental	TRANS	Transitive Marker
NOM	Nominal		

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