Lesson 2

The structure of the Lexical Morpheme

Introduction

In lesson 2, I shall introduce you to the lexical structure of a word in mâŋkuŋ. It is very important that you take note of this structure and understand it very well. If you understand it very well, it will improve your writing skills in nɨɣam nɨ́ mâŋkuŋ or simply mâŋkuŋ.

The basic structure was from Mafo Jacqueline Leroy's *Le Mankon.* The examples and analysis in the lessons were, for the most part, mine. I have also identified some exceptions to the basic rules in the writing system developed by Mafo Leroy which should help you understand the logic behind the system. I have tried to keep the explanations simple without using linguistic jargon in order to make the learning easy.

After introducing the lexical structure of words in mâŋkuŋ, I link the lesson to Lesson one which dealt with nominal prefixes. In this lesson you will realize that a non-nasalized word in mâŋkuŋ always has either a prefix and/or a suffix.

Try to think about such a word as a man from mankon wearing a traditional tɔ́ɣə. A tɔ́ɣə is not complete without the front and back pieces known collectively as mɨʃú?ə. The front ɨʃúɣə (singular word for mɨʃúɣə) must always be shorter than the back ɨʃúɣə.

2.0 The Lexical Morpheme

The root or lexical morpheme (smallest unit) in an un-nasalized mâŋkuŋ word has the following structure: A consonant (C_1), Vowel (V_1), consonant (C_2), and a Floating vowel (V_2). We can represent this structure as $C_1V_1C_2V_2$. A majority of words in mâŋkuŋ have the format $C_1V_1C_2V_2$. Note that root words are usually verbs or adjectives.

C_1	V_1	C_2	V_2	Transcription
z	ə	ŋ	ə	zəŋə́ (slant)
f	ɯ	ŋ	ə	fɯŋə́ (to lock)
f	u	ʔ	ə	fuʔə́ (to harvest)

The floating vowel is represented by the vowel [ə] is in positions V_2 and marks the end of an assertive morpheme. The floating vowel can also be referred to as an assertive suffix.

There are also root words in mâŋkuŋ that do not carry the assertive prefix. These words have the root structure $C_1V_1C_2$

C_1	V_1	C_2	Root
l	a	m	lam
t	a	ŋ	taŋ
z	ɔ	b	zɔb

These words do not carry the assertive suffix. For instance: a lam ndžǎ zá?. We can also say: a zɔb ɨkom wá?. None of the two sentences above are

assertive. They become assertive only when we deploy the floating vowel at the end of word.

There are also words that have the lexical structure CV. Some are nasalized while others are not. For instance: [a bé nə̰́?]. The word bé is not nasalized while nə̰́ is nasalized. See table below for some nasalized non-nasalized root words with CV structure.   The nasalized words have the tilde below the vowel.

C₁	V₁	Root	Sentence
s	ŏ̰	[sŏ̰]	ma sŏ̰
z	ḛ̆	[zḛ̆]	ma zḛ̆
t	ã̆	[tã̆]	ma tã̆

A few words have only one character

V
à
e
o

Examples: [ò mé?] where are you; [a mé?] where is he; [e] yes

We can thus summarize as follows: A word in mâŋkuŋ can have any one of the following structures: [C₁V₁C₂V₂], [C₁V₁C₂], [CV] or [V]. A majority of lexical root words have the structure C₁V₁C₂V₂ .   It is very important to understand this structure; for, it is very important in determining how words

must be written in mâŋkuŋ. These four lexical structures are very critical in written mâŋkuŋ.

2.1 Nasal archiphonemes

There is a nasal archiphoneme [ǹ] [ŋ̀] with a low tone in maŋkuŋ. This archiphoneme appears before the lexical morpheme CVCV and is not separable from the lexical core. This nasal archiphoneme, [ǹ] [ŋ̀], never appears before a nasal consonant or a silent consonant. Rather, in front of a silent consonant we have the archiphoneme [ɨ].

The Nasal archiphoneme [ǹ] [ŋ̀] [m̀] with homorganic realization
1. ǹ as in [ǹdâ]; [ǹdɔŋ]; [ǹtǒ];
2. ŋ as in [ŋ̀kamə́] ; [ŋ̀gárɨ́] ; [ŋ̀kabə]
3. m̀ as in [m̀buʔə́] ; m̀baŋə]; m̀byɛ́

In item 1 above, the structure of the word is CV because of the presence of the nasal archiphoneme which is articulated at the same location as the first consonant C in ǹdâ, and ǹtǒ. Therefore, for all intent and purpose, ǹd is considered as one character in the CV structure above. The same would be true for item 2 and 3 where the nasal archiphoneme is considered as one character in the CVCV structure.

The Archiphoneme [ɨ] infront of a silent consonant

ɨ as in [ɨ̀ɲam]; [ɨ̀ʃú]; [ɨ̀mìə́]; [ɨ̀sŏ]

Note: archiphonemes are sounds that are articulated from the same location but have different sound qualities. Example: ɨ and ə are archiphonemes that have the same point of articulation but have different sound qualities.

2.2 Ligatures and diphongs

There are other consonants and vowels that are strung together, thus giving one the impression that the words are out of format. For instance, you may come across a word such as: nɨvwô (death). We learned in Lesson one that nouns in mâŋkuŋ always carry a prefix. nɨ̀vwô is an abstract noun. The core here is vwô. For all intent and purpose vw is ligature and considered as one character (see list of alphabets). Hence the word nɨ̀vwo has a CV structure. Other examples are: ŋ̀pfwó or ŋ̀kfwó (died); ŋ̀kfuó or ŋ̀pfuó (died); and ŋ̀gvwó/m̀bvwó (dog).

The characters ŋ̀kf/ŋ̀pf and m̀bv have nasal archiphoneme with homorganic realization (i.e sounds occurring from the same location) hence are considered as one sound. The character gv is a ligature and thus is considered as one character in mâŋkuŋ (see your list of alphabets); wo is a diphthong and uó is a vowel ligatures; thus, both are considered as one character in the syntagma of the words above. What this means is that all these weird syntagmas all fall under the overall CVCV structure.

It is important to note that while the lexical morpheme may appear alone, for the most part, it is accompanied by a prefix and/or a suffix (refer to lesson one). A noun in mâŋkuŋ thus never appears naked. For intstance, the syntagma (lexical arrangement) of **azɔbə** consists of the prefix a, the lexical core **zɔb** and the suffix **ə**. The noun **afɯŋə** (lock) is made up of three elements: the prefix **a,** the lexical core **fɯŋ** and the suffix **ə.** The abstract noun **niɣam** is made up of two elements: the prefix **ni** and the lexical core **ɣam** (with a CAV structure). All nouns in mâŋkuŋ must therefore have a prefix, a lexical core and in some cases a suffix.

Note: You can either use the alphabet pf or kf in mâŋkuŋ. Both are phonologically correct. The most important thing you need to know in this lesson is that a word in mâŋkuŋ has a lexical core with the structure CVCV, CVC, CV or V; and, that each word you write must take either one of these core structures. Secondly, each noun may have a peripheral element surrounding the core. This element or noun is either a prefix [iʃúɣə̂ m̀byi] or a suffix [iʃúɣə̂ ndzum]. The core, we shall, for lack of a better word, refer to it as iɲé (body). We can diagrammatically represent a non-nasalized noun as follows:

iʃúɣə̂ mbyi ⟹ iɲé ⟹ iʃúɣə̂ ndzum