

Modifiers in the Fur Language of the Sudan (Nilo-Saharan)

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Abstract

The Fur language is a Nilo-Saharan language spoken in the Darfur region in the Sudan. There are some Fur speakers across the border in Chad.

The objective of this paper is to introduce the general idea about modifiers and discuss the main classes of the modifiers and comparisons of the modifiers in the Fur language. The paper includes nominalization of modifiers.

The modifiers play a significant role in the Fur language. An interesting thing about the Fur modifiers is, they sometimes act like adjectives and adverbs in English. The same modifier that is used as an adjective describing a noun could be used as an adverb to modify a verb, sometimes with a slight tone change on the vowels. The modifiers could be categorized according to their various degrees. Here are a few examples to support the claim.

In dem d#ó man tullê good -ii. 3sg.is

(1) *"This is a good man."*

Kuu	däy	kirrô	ammie.
cow.pl	grass	green	3pl.ate

(2) *"The cattle ate green grass."*

In the above sentences, the two modifiers are clearly describing the nouns “d#ó” and “däy” the grass. The position of the modifiers is obvious that the noun precedes them and the tone placed on the last vowel on the modifier is the same falling tone.

1	2	3	4
simmó	simmô	simmôn	simmôndij
<i>sweet</i>	<i>sweeter</i>	<i>sweetest</i>	<i>very sweet</i>
raaré	raarê	raarên	raarêndij
<i>light</i>	<i>lighter</i>	<i>very light</i>	<i>too light</i>

A modifier has more than three levels of comparison as they are in English. If it is modifying a noun, it comes after the noun that it describes. And if a modifier describes a verb, it comes before the verb. Here are a few examples.

Reference

Waag, Christine. 2010. *The Fur Verb and its Context*. (Nilo-Saharan, Vol. 26). Cologne: Ruediger Koeppe Verlag.

Mathew, Dryer 2008. *Noun-Modifier Order in Africa*. Geographical Typology and Linguistics Areas: With special reference to Africa (p. 308)