Studies on Bantu languages in general and Gikuyu in particular are rather scanty compared to studies on Western language for example. Theories rarely test their claims on Bantu languages and as lihiste (1970: 19) notes, there is a tendency to generalise what holds for English to be true in general. The need to test such theories on Gikuyu data prompted our interest to investigate the Gikuyu verb.

This study is an investigation of the phonological process that occur following affixation within the Gikuyu verb complex. The effect of these phonological processes are explained within the Lexical phonology Theory (Kiparsky, 1982). In order to acquire a comprehensive picture of the affixation process and its effects, the study sample both derivational and inflectional affixes as well as pre-root and past-root affixes. Also catered for, is the phonological structure of both the verb roots and the affixes.

Our analysis involved juxtaposing affixes with various phonological structures with verbs of different structures and observing the phonological changes taking place as a result. We discovered that affixation effects phonological processes such as delection of sounds, assimilation and dissimilation among others.

Our analysis revealed that most of the phonological changes affected the affixes rather than the roots and this stands as a challenge to the Lexical Phonology theory, which categorizes affixes on the basis of whether they affect the root.

Secondly it was observed that in a number of cases of phonological process was blocked because of lexical considerations. For instance, to block words with multiple meanings, the process of metathesis occurs.

Given this observation, we found it difficult to apply the Lexical Phonology criteria of distinguishing inflectional from derivational affixes in Gikuyu. For example, it apparently identifies one tense affix as inflectional and another tense affix as derivational.

Our recommendations were two-fold, that a more rigorous comprehensive and therefore reliable criteria for distinguishing between inflectional and derivational affixes be developed. Two that more studies be done in Bantu within the Lexical Phonology theory to find out if the bulk of phonology processes can be accounted for in the said theory.

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter one provides the preliminary information and the methodology employed in the study. Chapter two is an examination of related literature on Bantu languages and on Gikuyu. Chapter three shows the phonological changes attending affixation while chapter four discusses these changes within the Lexical Phonology. Chapter five includes a summary of our findings and suggestions on areas for further research.