

VOWEL HARMONY AND VOWEL MERGER IN AGOI

Shirley Yul-Ifode

This paper describes the vowel harmony system and patterns of vowel merger in Agoi, an Upper Cross language. Data indicate that a once fully operative system of vowel harmony has now been generally restricted to the non-high vowels, with a few residual instances of /I u/-determined harmony. The evolution of this change is described.

FLOATING TONES IN GĀ

Mary Paster

This paper provides robust empirical evidence for floating tones in Gã, a Kwa language of Ghana. As will be shown, floating tones are crucial to an analysis of verbal tense/aspect/mood distinctions. I begin by describing two tonal processes, the HL rule and Plateauing. While these are regular processes of the language, both are blocked in the perfective. I show that the blockage is the result of a floating low tone that marks the perfective, and that the floating tone marker explains other anomalous tonal effects in the perfective. I then give an analysis of floating tone prefixes that mark certain tenses/aspects/moods by associating to the subject prefix, thus overwriting the lexical tone of the subject prefix. Finally, I give examples of suffixed floating tones that mark tense/aspect/mood by associating to verb stems, causing the underlying stem tones to delink. In these tenses/aspects/moods, we find evidence for an underlying L vs. toneless contrast, constituting another phenomenon where, as with floating tones, there is a mismatch between the number of tones and tone-bearing units. Thus, a major prediction of Autosegmental Phonology (Goldsmith 1976, Clements and Ford 1979) is borne out in Gã.

ON THE PROPERTIES OF EMAI'S *KHI* COPULA CONSTRUCTION

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This paper examines the equational identity (EI) construction in Nigeria's Edoid language Emai. It weighs this construction's grammatical properties against a complex of equational identity patterns developed in the crosslinguistic investigations of Stassen (1997). Although EI properties reveal its functional heritage, they fail to conform fully to Stassen's findings. While EI noun phrases are sensitive to information structure and definiteness values, the construction as a whole fails to exhibit crucial features. It evinces no third person limitation, manifests limited predicational structure, and demonstrates compatibility with a restricted range of temporal categories, although not indicative tense/aspect. It is the last of these that highlights the EI construction's obligatory subjunctive marking and its non-deictic temporal character.

DYNAMICS OF INTERACTING POPULATIONS: LANGUAGE CONTACT IN THE LWOO LANGUAGES OF BAHR EL-GHAZAL

Anne Storch

Number inflection systems in Western Nilotic languages appear highly complex and diverse. Comparative work on Nilotic and other Nilo-Saharan families has shown that these languages have a morphologically tripartite system with marked plurals and a bare root singular, marked singulatives constructed from unmarked collectives, and a replacement pattern with morphologically marked singulars and plurals. Historical comparison of the formatives used to construct the different number categories has proven difficult. A number of little-explored Western Nilotic languages of Bahr el-Ghazal have been in contact with Niger-Congo (predominantly Ubangi) languages and have undergone typological as well as specific grammatical changes. An investigation into the historical and present contact situations is needed in order to shed light on how the number inflection systems of these languages were created historically. Sprachbund phenomena include the diffusion of a *ka-* plural prefix into the Belanda languages, while a convergence phenomenon whose origin is probably more recent is the gradual loss of suffixing singulatives in the Lwoo languages that are in contact with Niger-Congo, which itself does not use singulatives. Retentions and innovations within the system of number inflection of certain Lwoo languages of Bahr el-Ghazal are discussed and analysed in terms of the history of these languages. This paper argues that crucial changes and differences within Western Nilotic noun morphology cannot be understood without taking into account the long and complicated contact history of these languages.