

Studies in African Linguistics

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Rose O. Aziza: *Neutralization of Contrast in the Vowel System of Urhobo*

Urhobo, a South Western Edoid language of the Niger-Congo family, is spoken in Delta State, Nigeria. In the synchronic phonology of the language, there are seven surface vowels: [i, e, ε, a, ə, o, u], but the behavior of some vowels, especially *e, o, ε*, is sometimes at variance with their expected vowel behavior, indicating that there may be abstract underlying vowels */i, u, ə/ which have merged with /e, o, ε/. The result, when compared with sister languages such as Degema and Isoko, is that the Urhobo system appears quite complex. The focus of this paper is showing that abstract underlying */i, u, ə/, which are Proto Edoid vowels, still have an effect in the synchronic phonology: thus, /i, e/ become [e], /u, o/ become [o], and /ə, ε/ become [ε] and possibly [a]. When we account for the ‘awkward’ behavior of apparent /e, o, ε/, the Urhobo vowel system is clear and straightforward.

Mohamed Lahrouchi: **A Templatic Approach to Gemination in the Imperfective Stem of Tashliht Berber.**

Tashliht Berber uses, among other processes, gemination to form the imperfective. Most accounts of this phenomenon make reference to syllabic or prosodic structure. In this paper, I diverge from this trend, claiming that imperfective gemination is better analyzed as a templatic-based phenomenon resulting from morphological activity at the skeletal tier. I will argue for the use in the imperfective of a fixed-shape template over which consonant gemination is realized. Moreover, I will show that tri-, bi- and monoconsonantal verbs share the same template. The surface irregularity that bi- and monoconsonantal verbs display is viewed as the consequence of the identification of templatic positions.

Benson Oduor Ojwang': *Encoding Polar Questions in Dholuo*

Most languages have both content questions and polar questions (Dryer 2005a). Previous studies on Dholuo have considered content questions in detail (cf. Okoth 1997; Omondi 1982, 1993). However, research on the nature of polar questions in Dholuo remains inconclusive. Omondi (1993) identifies a few particles in polar interrogatives but does not offer the full range of possible pragmatic interpretations beyond the structural function of these words. Onyoyo (2001) also outlines some particles in interrogatives of Dholuo, but does not place them in context and simply states that such particles provide more meaning. In this paper, I present descriptive data to illustrate the semantic, syntactic and pragmatic properties of polar questions in Dholuo. The two main strategies considered here are interrogative uses of question particles and affixations to the verb.

Nashipu Julius Pepandze: **A Generative Account of Consonant Alternations in Baba 1**

This paper analyses and accounts for various patterns of alternations exhibited by consonants as they interact within morphemes in Baba 1. Most of the alternations manifested by the consonantal segments of this language are in accordance with general phonological principles. Nevertheless, there are some apparently complex alternations that may not be sufficiently accounted for using simple phonetic logic, and that exhibits some typological novelties, which may be of some theoretical interest to specialists in the field. Moreover, the underlying consonant system of this language constitutes a typological curiosity rarely documented in the world's languages. The contrast between voiced and voiceless consonants is highly restricted, appearing only with labio-dental, but never alveolar sounds.