

Introduction: Forms and meanings in Africa

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This special issue is a collection of papers that are contributed by some members of the joint research project in ILCAA, 'Typological Studies of Information Structures and Linguistic Forms in Africa'. The collection includes a phonological study of Kilimanjaro Bantu languages, a semantic study of Bende (a Bantu language), a syntactic study of Wolaytta (an Omotic language), a semantic study of Kupsapiny (a Nilotic language), a pragmatic study of Juba Arabic (an Arabic-based creole language), and a pragmatic study of Acooli (a Nilotic language). All these papers are concerned with one of the themes of the joint research project, namely the relation between forms and meanings in languages.

Keywords: descriptive studies, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, information structure

1. Introduction
2. The studies in this special issue

1. Introduction

The following six papers are contributed by some members of the joint research project 'Typological Studies of Information Structures and Linguistic Forms in Africa' organized in Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa¹. The joint research project is not limited to those who are interested in information structure solely, but is open to researchers that are interested in African language studies, including phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic studies. This special issue exhibits what topics Japanese researchers on African languages are interested in and what approaches they adopt for their research. Their topics widely spread over various fields of linguistics including phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Their research fields also widely spread over African continent. Languages spoken in African continent are classified into four language phyla; Afrasian (Afroasiatic), Nilo-Saharan, Niger-Congo, and Khoisan. The languages that the researchers are engaged in extend over three language phyla except for Khoisan. Some authors study Bantu languages in

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¹ The joint research project 'Typological Studies of Information Structures and Linguistic Forms in Africa' (2011-2014) organized by Osamu Hieda, Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa.

Niger-Congo language phylum and others study Nilotic languages in Nilo-Saharan phylum. Moreover, one author studies Afrasian languages and another engages in research on a creole language spoken in Africa. However, common characteristics to their approaches are that at least they make a full description of languages directly based on the data collected by their own field research. From the language description, they discuss their topics sufficiently and try to propose more general explanation or formalization. Their explanation is sometimes concentrated synchronically but sometimes extends to diachronic perspectives.

Their main concerns discussed by the authors included in this collection are not limited within a single module such as phonology, syntax, semantics, or pragmatics. They discuss the relationship between forms and meanings beyond the range of the modules. The authors' position concerning forms is not that forms are restricted within morphology. Namely, forms are not restricted to morphemes or words. For the authors, variations of forms include those in phonological features including prosody, morphological features, syntactic order of constituents, or pragmatic rearrangement of constituents' order.

While phonology, syntax, semantics or pragmatics themselves construct a single module, they do not construct an independent module from others. They are connected to each other through interfaces. The authors do not regard only syntax as an input to the other modules, phonology or logical structures. Escaping from syntax-centralism gives rise to research of interfaces between one module and another, such as between phonology and syntax, phonology and semantics, phonology and pragmatics, syntax and semantics, syntax and pragmatics etc. For example, Kumam, a Nilotic language spoken in Uganda, has evidential strategy by making use of a syntactic device such as complementation. Evidentiality functions as expressing characteristics of information sources. Since characteristics of information sources are determined by semantic and pragmatic factors, the evidential strategy demonstrates extensive phenomena in syntax, semantics and pragmatics. Evidentiality is an appropriate example to discuss the interface among them².

2. The studies in this special issue

In this section I will briefly survey the studies included in this special issue, touching upon what seems to be the salient points involved with respect to the relation between forms and meanings in languages.

Kilimanjaro Bantu languages: Kilimanjaro Bantu languages are spoken by the Chaga people on the slopes of Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. This is a typological study from the perspective on micro-variation. Kilimanjaro Bantu languages as well as other Bantu

² See Hieda (In preparation).

languages are structurally rather uniform, which makes their general typology apparently simple. In this article the author adopts the typology based on micro-parameters in order to reveal typologically significant micro-variation. From the perspective on micro-variation, similarity on 'Vowel Copy Clitic' between Western Kilimanjaro and some Forest Bantu languages suggests that possibly language contact between the preexistent language and that of the direct predecessors of the Chaga people.

Bende: Bende is a Bantu language spoken in Western Tanzania. Bantu languages constitute a biggest branch in Niger-Congo language phylum. This is a sketch of Bende persistive aspect. The author records two forms for the persistive aspect in Bende. According to the author, the persistive has five meanings; Typical Persistive, Inceptive, Immediate Past, Persistive Proximative, and 'No-longer'. The author discusses some semantic developments of the persistive from the view point of grammaticalization.

Wolaytta: Wolaytta belongs to Omotic branch in Afrasian language family. Wolaytta is spoken in Southwestern Ethiopia. While Wolaytta shows canonical SOV order, OSV order deviated from the canonical one is commonly used in transitive sentences. According to the author, the deviation is due to the pragmatic and psychological motivation. Pragmatically, when an object is old information, it is preposed before the subject that is new information. Psychologically, OSV order is used to reduce hearers' burden in interpreting sentences.

Kupsapiny: Kupsapiny belongs to Southern Nilotic branch of the Nilotic languages in Nilo-Saharan language phylum. Kupsapiny is spoken in Uganda. The author describes two types of conditional subordinate construction. These two types are distinguished on the basis of which types of responses to them are possible or not. The two types of constructions differ from each other in a few respects (i.e. the recoverability etc.). The author suggests that one developed later from the other in the historical development of the insubordinated constructions.

Juba Arabic: Juba Arabic is an Arabic-based creole language spoken in South Sudan. This article describes the syntactic and semantico-pragmatic value of two ex-situ focus constructions in Juba Arabic. The author proposes the possible grammaticalization process (Existential > (Focus Copula) > Focus Marker).

Acooli: Acooli belongs to Western Nilotic branch of the Nilotic languages in Nilo-Saharan language phylum. Acooli is spoken in Uganda. This article is a pragmatic study to manifest focus structure in languages. Acooli has at least two types of focus construction; unmarked focus and contrastive focus. While the contrastive focus is marked lexically, the unmarked focus is marked syntactically. Namely, Acooli has a particular position in sentences for expressing unmarked focus. In this article, the author discusses the unmarked focus construction. The unmarked focus position for core

elements is the final position in the core, while the unmarked focus position for peripheral elements is the final position in the periphery.

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