Tone patterns and dissimilation in Wushi

Liliane Hodieb, INALCO/PLIDAM

ACAL 51-52, 8-10 April 2021

Outline

1) Introduction: Wushi
2) Lexical tone
3) Grammatical tone
4) Conclusion
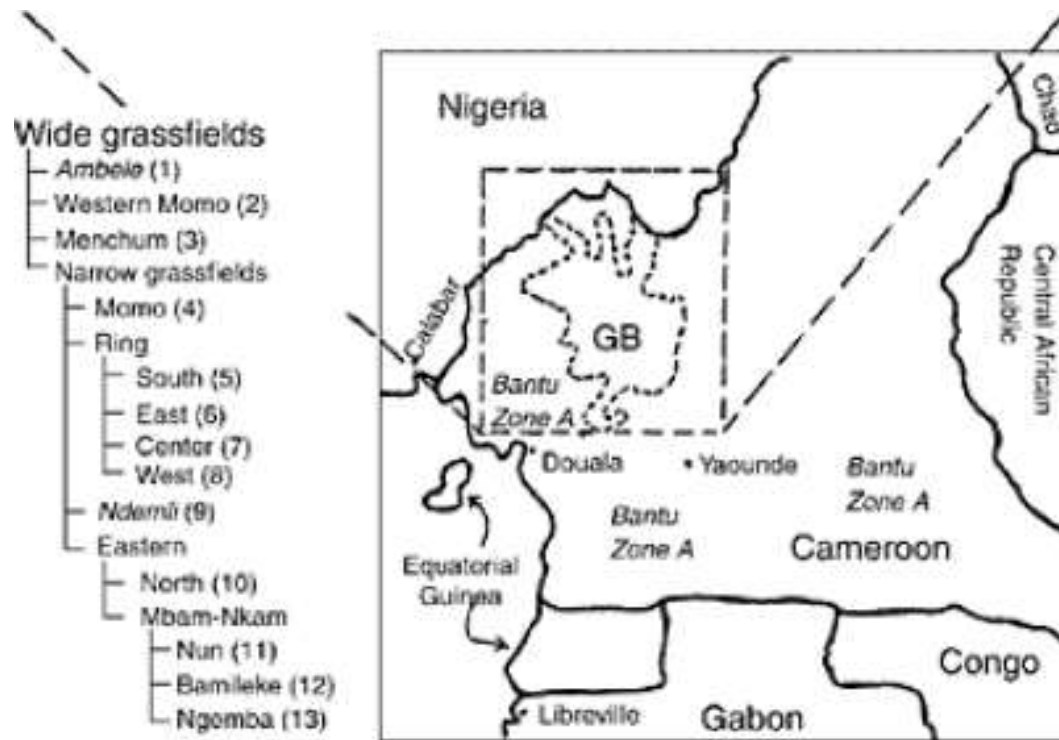
1. Wushi

1. Wushi

- 25,000 people, Babessi, North-West Cameroon (Ethnologue, 2008)
- Atlantic-Congo > Volta-Congo > Benue-Congo > Bantoid Cross > Bantoid > South Bantoid > Wide Grassfields > Narrow Grassfields > Ring > South Ring > Wushi (Blench 2009)
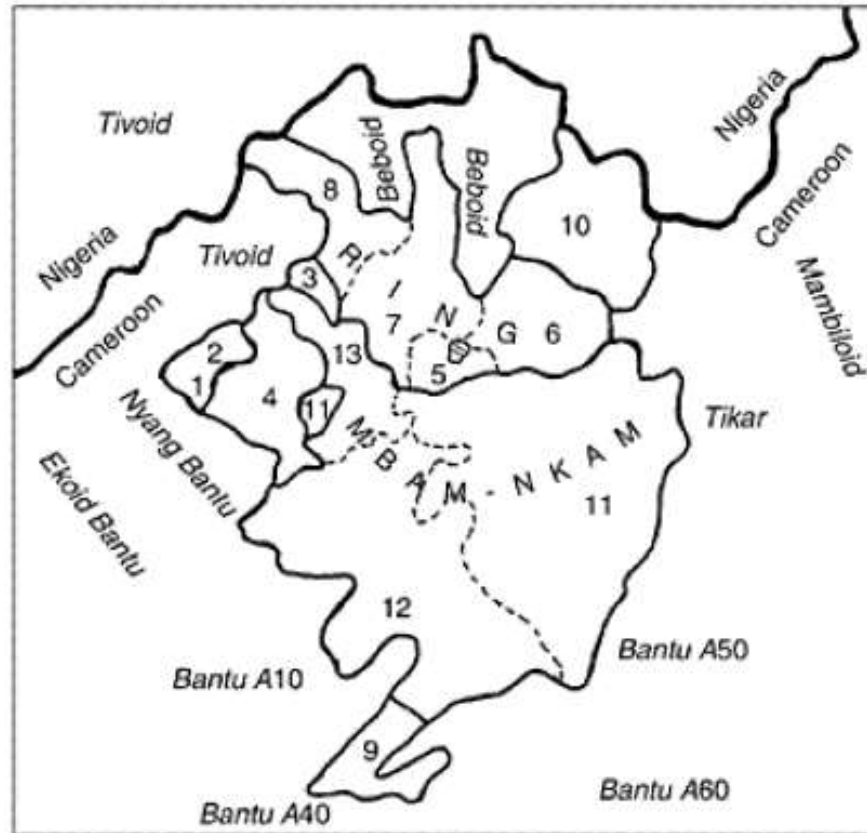
1. Wushi

Wikipedia

1. Wushi

Watters (2003)

1. Wushi

Watters (2003)

2. Lexical tone

2. Lexical tone

- H and L for Proto-Grassfields (Watters 2003)
- Loss of final syllable: disyllabic → monosyllabic with floating tone
- Tone patterns with floating tones underlyingly → Tonal perturbations on the surface
- Tone patterns (Snider 2018)

2. Lexical tone (nouns)

- Simple tone patterns: H, L, HL, LH

Tone	UR	SR	Gloss
H	tá	tá	father
L	ŋkà	ŋkà	basket
HL	mbɔ̂	mbɔ̂	man
LH	ntǎ	ntǎ	potato

2. Lexical tone

- Complex tone patterns: HL̥, LH̥, LL̥

Tone	UR	SR	Gloss
HL̥	ndó `	ndo᷇	husband
LH̥	ntɔ̀ː ´ + -kə	ntɔ̄ːkə̄	elephant
LL̥	ʃ̀ı `	ʃ̄ı	grave

3. Grammatical tone

3. Grammatical tone

- TAM
  - Indicative
  - Possibility

3. Grammatical tone

- TAM
  - ❖ Indicative
  - ❖ Possibility
- Tone target: prosodic groups (vs. the verb stem in Bantu languages (Marlo & Odden 2019)

3. Grammatical tone

- TAM
- ❖ Indicative
- ❖ Possibility
- Tone target: prosodic groups (vs. the verb stem in Bantu languages (Marlo & Odden 2019) → Tone patterns vs. Individual tones

3. Grammatical tone

- The structure of the verb in Wushi

3. Grammatical tone

- The structure of the verb in Wushi
- Subject – Mood – Aspect – Verb – Object

3. Grammatical tone

- The structure of the verb in Wushi
- Subject – Mood – Aspect – Verb – Object
- Aspect prominent: perfective, imperfective, retrospective (anterior), potential, distal

3. Grammatical tone

- The structure of the verb in Wushi
- Subject – Mood – Aspect – Verb – Object
- Aspect prominent: perfective, imperfective, retrospective (anterior), potential, distal
- No affixation except *ì-* and three verbal extensions (suffixes), -sə, -tə, -nə

3. Grammatical tone

- The structure of the verb in Wushi
- Subject – Mood – Aspect – Verb – Object
- Aspect prominent: perfective, imperfective, retrospective (anterior), potential, distal
- No affixation except *ì-* and three verbal extensions (suffixes), -sə, -tə, -nə
- No concord marking

3. Grammatical tone

- The structure of the verb in Wushi
- Subject – Mood – Aspect – Verb – Object
- Aspect prominent: perfective, imperfective, retrospective (anterior), potential, distal
- No affixation except *ì-* and three verbal extensions (suffixes), -sə, -tə, -nə
- No concord marking
- TAM: auxiliaries

3. Grammatical tone

- Indicative mood

3. Grammatical tone

- Indicative mood

PERFECTIVE

ŋə́ jɔ̌ʔ 'He sings' L → LH

ŋə́ tʃɔ̌ʔ 'He speaks' L → LH

ŋə́ bě 'He sleeps' H → LH

ŋə́ sàːtə́ 'He reads' H → LH

3. Grammatical tone

- Indicative mood

PERFECTIVE

ŋə́ zə̌ ŋgɔ̀ːkə̀ 'He eats a banana' H → LH

ŋə́ jɛ̌ ŋgɔ̀ːkə̀ 'He sees a banana' H → LH

ŋə́ tǎʔ ŋgɔ̀ːkə̀ 'He wants a banana' L → LH

ŋə́ fɛ̌ ŋgɔ̀ːkə̀ 'He sells a banana' L → LH

3. Grammatical tone

- Indicative mood

NEGATIVE

ŋə́ tī̄ jɔ̀ʔ 'He does not sing'   H H L → H M L

ŋə́ tī̄ tʃɔ̀ʔ 'He does not speak' H H L → H M L

ŋə́ tī̄ zə↗ 'He does not eat'   H H H → H M M↓

ŋə́ tī̄ jɛ↗ 'He does not see'   H H H → H M M↓

3. Grammatical tone

- Indicative mood

PROGRESSIVE

ŋə́ nɔ̌ jɔ̀ʔ 'He is singing'   H LH L

ŋə́ nɔ̌ ʧɔ̀ʔ 'He is speaking'   H LH L

ŋə́ nɔ̌ zə́ 'He is eating'   H LH H

ŋə́ nɔ̌ jɛ́ 'He is seeing'   H LH H

3. Grammatical tone

- Indicative mood

Prosodic groups

3. Grammatical tone

N°	Examples	Gloss
1.	ŋə́ *tĭ kə̄* **jɛ̄↓** ŋgɔ̀ːkɛ̀	He didn't see the banana
2.	ŋə́ *tĭ wɔ̄ʔ* **zə↓** ŋgɔ̀ːkɛ̀	He will not eat the banana
3.	ŋə́ *tĭ wɔ̄ʔ* **saːˉ↓tə↓**	He will not read
4.	ŋə́ *tĭ wɔ̄ʔ* **ɲu↓**	He will not drink
5.	ŋə́ *tĭ kə̄* **jɔ̀ʔ**	He will not speak
6.	ŋə́ *tĭ wɔ̄ʔ* **tʃɔ̀ʔ**	He will not speak
7.	ŋə́ *tĭ lā* **be↓**	He will never sleep

3. Grammatical tone

- ❑ Indicative mood

Prosodic groups

Subject – Mood/Aspect – Verb

A   B   C

3. Grammatical tone

- Indicative mood

Prosodic groups

Subject – Mood/Aspect – Verb

A   B   C   → dissimilation

3. Grammatical tone

- Indicative mood

Prosodic groups

Subject – Mood/Aspect – Verb

  A   B   C → dissimilation

(+ extrametrical final object)

3. Grammatical tone

- Modality: POSSIBLE

3. Grammatical tone

□ Modality: POSSIBLE

1) làkè wɛ́ gɛ̀

   PSB   you go
are free to go

2) làkè ŋɛ́ tì dʒʉˆ tsɛ̀tsɛ̀

   PSB   he NEG come

He cannot come

3) làkè mɛ́ dʒʉ̀ mbóːkɛ́

   PSB   I   come play   You
Can I come play?

4) làkè ŋɛ́ tì tʃɔˆʔ ŋɛ́

   PSB   he NEG speak he dumb

He cannot speak, he is dumb

3. Grammatical tone

- Modality: POSSIBLE

làkə̀ wə́ gɛ̀
làkə̀ ŋə́ tì dʒʉ̂
làkə̀ mə́ dʒʉ̀ mbóːkə́
làkə̀ ŋə́ tì tʃɔ̂ʔ ŋə́ tsə̀tsə̀

  A   B   A   B   → dissimilation

4. Conclusion

4. Conclusion

- Simple verbal morphology

4. Conclusion

- Simple verbal morphology
- Tone targetting prosodic groups

4. Conclusion

- Simple verbal morphology
- Tone targetting prosodic groups
- Tone assignment governed by an underlying dissimilation principle

Thank you

liliane.hodieb@yahoo.fr
liliane.hodieb@inalco.fr