

ABSTRACT

An Autosegmental Study of the Lexical and Phrasal Tonology of Kalabari

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This study presents an account of the tonal system of Kalabari, a lect of the Ijoid branch of Niger Congo, spoken in the Niger Delta area of Southern Nigeria. The aim is to provide further understanding of the interaction between segmental and tonal phonology on one hand, and particularly of the complex interface between tonology and morphosyntax of Kalabari. The account is presented within autosegmental approaches to tone.

Contrary to the more usual situation, where tones associate from left to right, it will be shown that tone association proceeds from right to left in Kalabari. Further, at the lexical and phrasal levels, vowel deletion will be shown to result in floating tones, which in the case of floating L tone, accounts for the occurrence of downstep.

Kalabari being an SOV language, lexical items combine into syntactic phrases which are right-headed. At this level, the lexical tone and the morphological class of the initial item in the phrase will be seen to determine the melody of the phrase. The tonal head of the phrase can thus be seen to be leftmost, whereas the syntactic head is rightmost in the phrase. The association of tones within the phrase proceeds from left to right, in accordance with the left-headedness of the tone phrase.

The prosodic structure of the tone phrase can therefore be claimed to be built within the boundaries of the syntactic phrase, but independently of the syntactic structure within those boundaries. Finally, a difference in tonal behaviour will be demonstrated which is based on the syntactic distinction between lexical and functional heads.