
Reviewed by Michael R. Marlo, Joshua Frost, Elizabeth Kujath, Cara Lawlor, Sarah Pribe, Emily Raney, Patrick Skrivan, and Alexa Thein, University of Missouri*

The phonology of Chichewa (TPOC) is the first monograph-length study of the segmental and tonal phonology of Chichewa, a Bantu language spoken primarily in Malawi. The text focuses on the standard central Malawian variety, the variety spoken by the second author, Al Mtenje. TPOC draws on data from several sources, including field notes and prior published research by Mtenje and coauthor Laura J. Downing. Data from other sources, which sometimes represent other dialects of Chichewa, are retranscribed to reflect Mtenje’s variety.

TPOC contains eleven chapters, beginning with an introduction (Ch. 1) and a grammar sketch (Ch. 2). Next are two chapters on segmental phonology, one on consonants (Ch. 3) and one on vowels (Ch. 4), each emphasizing distributional patterns of segments in the inventory. Following a chapter on syllable structure (Ch. 5), there are three chapters on tone: Ch. 6 describes the lexical tone patterns of nouns and verbs; Chs. 7–8 are concerned with the grammatical tone patterns of verbs in main-clause affirmative constructions (Ch. 7) and negative and relative clauses (Ch. 8). Ch. 9 discusses prosodic morphology, focusing on reduplication and disyllabic minimality conditions found on words and reduplicates and imposed as selectional requirements of certain affixes. Ch. 10 deals with phrasal phonology. Penultim ate lengthening and tonal processes that are sensitive to the final two syllables of the phrase serve as diagnostics for the right edge of phonological phrases. The chapter summarizes the role of syntax in defining prosodic phrase boundaries in Chichewa. Finally, Ch. 11 surveys intonation patterns in different sentence structures.

TPOC marks several important milestones in the study of Bantu languages. First, it is the second volume on a Bantu language in the prominent Oxford University Press series ‘The phonology of the world’s languages’, appearing just over twenty years after Odden’s (1996) volume on Kimatumbi. Second, this book makes Chichewa one of the best-described Bantu languages, as there are now dedicated monographs on the syntax (Mchombo 2004) and phonology of the language, each published in premier venues and written by a native-speaker linguist.

Overall, TPOC is an excellent compilation of the available knowledge on Chichewa phonology, and it will be a standard reference on the language for years to come. The book is well organized, and there are ample appropriate cross-references throughout the text. The chapters on segmental phonology have internally parallel structures and are easy to navigate. The extra detail on certain syntactic structures in the grammar sketch appropriately lays the foundation for the discussion of phonology-syntax interface issues in Ch. 10.

TPOC is well researched and serves as an entry point to all prior literature on Chichewa phonology. The text also serves as a springboard into cases where Chichewa data have been brought to bear on theoretical issues, such as the analysis of vowel-height harmony (Ch. 4) and the interface between syntax and phonology (Ch. 10). One area where some appropriate background research is not cited is in Ch. 3, where we learn that some Chichewa dialects have whistled fricatives. It would have been helpful to refer to studies of whistled fricatives in other Bantu languages, such as Bladon et al. 1987, Shosted 2011, and Lee-Kim et al. 2014, at the first mention of these fricatives here. Two other omissions are the questionnaires on questions and relative clauses in volumes 53 and 55 of ZAS Papers in Linguistics (Downing et al. 2010 and Downing 2011, respectively). The question ‘Do you want coffee or tea?’ is directly from the questionnaire in Downing 2011, but unattributed as such.

Largely following the questionnaire-based approach of Marlo 2013 and the models in Odden & Bickmore 2014, the description of verbal tone in Chs. 7–8 represents one of the most detailed treatments of any Bantu language. The authors identify eight numbered inflectional tone ‘pat-

* This review was developed collaboratively as part of an undergraduate Honors Tutorial at the University of Missouri, led by the first author.
terns’ found in affirmative main-clause constructions. A common set of tonal outputs, found in pattern 1 constructions like the Imperative, is for /H/ verbs to end with H on the final two vowels, while /θ/ verbs have no H tone at the end. In other numbered patterns, the lexical tonal contrast is neutralized, as both classes have H on the final two vowels, or, depending on the pattern, on the penult. Another numbered pattern maintains the lexical contrast, but has an additional H at the left edge of the stem. Some patterns possess /H/-toned prefixes, while others do not. The authors systematically go through each of the numbered patterns, showing the tonal outputs of /θ/ and /H/ verbs of different stem shapes in phrase-final position, with an object marker, and with /H/ suffixes such as the intensive -i ts/-êts.

One payoff of this approach is that it allows for nuanced discussion on tone in reduplicative structures to follow in Ch. 9. Moreover, the rich coverage adduces further support against claims by Myers (1999) and Kaplan (2008) that tone doubling in Chichewa is not a phonological process, but rather reflects phonetic peak delay. In pattern 5, the H of the tense markers does not undergo the general doubling process. Similarly, the /H/ of the subject prefix in the pattern 6 Present Habitual also fails to undergo doubling. There is thus a robust contrast between Hs that undergo doubling and those that do not, which is deeply problematic for a purely phonetic account of doubling.

One broad critique of the treatment of tone in TPOC is that the analysis of the tone system is not well developed. Most tonal processes of Ch. 6 are not formalized, and in general, there is no analysis of the inflectional tone system in Chs. 7–8. At the end of Ch. 7, there are citations of other works where aspects of the inflectional tone system are analyzed, but those analyses are not integrated into the chapter. No analysis is provided for the basic and most common pattern whereby the underlying H tones contributed by /H/ roots and /H/ extensions surface on the final vowel. Nor are we given an analysis of the divergent tonal behavior of object prefixes in different numbered patterns.

This lack of analysis leads to some questionable choices in the pattern-based classification of the inflectional tone system. Ch. 8 presents two classifications of inflectional tone beyond the eight patterns identified for main-clause affirmative constructions: one for negative constructions and one for relative clauses. Each of these classifications is based on comparison with the corresponding main-clause affirmatives. One pattern of each type (‘Negative tone pattern 1’ and ‘Relative tone pattern 1’) is identical to the main-clause affirmative (or is identical plus an H-toned prefix). Other numbered patterns, of which there are three for negatives and two for relatives, may lack or require Hs on certain prefixes (negative prefixes, subject prefixes, or tense/aspect prefixes) and/or may impose an inflectional H tone on the penult.

In work on inflectional tone in other Bantu languages, such as Marlo’s (2007, 2008, 2009) research on Luyia, a numbered ‘pattern’ has some analytical/theoretical grounding in that it unites constructions that are generated by the same principles of inflectional tone assignment. Lettered subpatterns distinguish constructions that are superficially different, for example, due to the presence of /H/ prefixes or exceptional behavior with respect to a tonological rule like doubling. In the present work, numbered patterns sometimes distinguish constructions that have the same tonal profile within the (macro)stem, resulting in an unnecessary proliferation of numbered patterns. For example, patterns 1 and 3 have the same stem tone profile, but pattern 3 has /H/-toned tense prefixes. Similarly, patterns 1 and 7 appear to be identical, except that subject prefixes are /H/ in pattern 7. Pattern 8 appears to be a variant of pattern 4 with /H/ subject markers.

The classification of negative and relative constructions with an entirely different taxonomy obscures the possibility of a uniform analysis of verb tone in the language. It is certainly useful to track how the tonal patterns of corresponding affirmatives and negatives and main-clause vs. relative-clause forms compare. However, if their tonal patterns are not part of the same inflectional tone system as main-clause affirmatives, it is unclear how their surface tone patterns would be derived. Surely the tonal outputs of the Negative Present Progressive are generated by the same principles as its corresponding pattern 4 affirmative, as the only difference is that the negative has the sI- prefix. This classification system leads to missed generalizations, such as the fact that the Negative Imperative has the same tonal profile as the pattern 6 Present Habitual and that the Neg-
ative Present Habitual has a stem tone pattern unlike all others we have encountered in any construction type.

As there are few book-length descriptions of the phonology of any Bantu language, and as TPOC extensively covers topics in Chichewa segmental, tonal, and prosodic phonology, it is likely to be a model to other researchers for how the phonology of a Bantu language should be described. Nevertheless, we found two types of occasional shortcomings of the work as a gold-standard descriptive reference. First, there are some underexemplified generalizations or missing data types:

- In §3.4 on NC phonology, the nasal cl. 9–10 marker is shown combining with roots beginning with various segment types, but not liquids, glides, nasals, implosives, or vowels.
- In §5.5.5, it is claimed that vowel hiatus across word boundaries is maintained. The supporting data all have the same syntactic structure: a noun in subject position immediately before the verb. Other combinations such as V + N or N + Adj/Det are not provided.
- Inflectional tone patterns are generally illustrated only with verbs in phrase-medial position; the possibility of phrasal alternations of inflectional tones is not discussed.
- Although §8.2 is called ‘Relative paradigms’, supporting data are not provided for many relative constructions.
- In §9.3, it is observed that prefixes cannot be recruited to satisfy minimality, but no starred forms are provided. Ch. 9 also lacks discussion of the reduplicative patterns of V-initial verb stems, which are a standard data type in studies of reduplication in Bantu languages.
- Ch. 10 fails to show the unity of complement clauses and relative clauses; the examples with complement clauses on p. 234 also have relative clauses. We need a complement clause of the ‘say/think’ verb followed by a higher adverbial, for example, ‘he said that … loudly’.

Second, there are some places in TPOC where inappropriately complex examples are provided, or where data types or processes are introduced in a suboptimal position. For instance, in §2.4.2.2 on polar questions, there are no simple yes/no questions of a basic SVO sentence, and the rest of the section includes only complex examples with clefts, disjunctions, and object markers. The sections that include clefting should follow the sections on relative clauses, since clefts are formed with relative clauses. In Ch. 6, final retraction should be introduced much earlier because the process applies in many examples before it is discussed.

Although we have identified a few areas in which the description and analysis of Chichewa phonology could be improved, TPOC remains as an important contribution to the field that we hope will inspire the next generation of insightful research into the phonological systems of African languages.

REFERENCES


DOWNING, LAURA J.; ANNIE RIALLAND; JEANMARC BELTZUNG; SOPHIE MANUS; CÉDRIC PATIN; and KRISTINA RIEDEL (eds.) 2010. Papers from the Workshop on Bantu Relative Clauses. (ZAS papers in linguistics 53.) Berlin: Zentrum für Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft.


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Africa’s endangered languages: Documentary and theoretical approaches brings together contributions from scholars who presented at the 45th Annual Conference on African Linguistics. The editors, Jason Kandybowicz and Harold Torrence, co-organized the conference, whose theme was focused on raising awareness of the interconnectedness between language documentation and linguistic theory, casting aside long-standing views holding the two as largely separate and unrelated ventures. This volume offers perspectives on these approaches and how research programs that combine them ultimately yield stronger and more robust outcomes. Several of the chapters in the volume have been written with this interconnectedness clearly in mind, while a few others appear to have focused on theory first, with only a brief subsection related to documentation added as more of an afterthought.

There are nineteen chapters, all of which, either directly or indirectly, address combined documentary/theoretical approaches to African language research. One is immediately struck by the array of issues covered, from methodological approaches to case studies ranging from phonetics to formal syntax. The contributor list contains many seasoned African linguistics scholars, but also junior faculty, postdoctoral fellows, independent researchers, and students.

In Ch. 1, Jason Kandybowicz and Harold Torrence provide background on the state of research on endangered African languages compared to analogous work in other world regions. They argue that work on African languages lags behind partly due to a misconception that these languages are not as threatened as others because the linguistic threats against them are ‘internal’ rather than from nonindigenous colonial languages. The editors discuss ‘symbiosis’ between documentary and theoretical approaches, which resurfaces in subsequent chapters.

The rest of the volume is separated into thematic sections, though this is not indicated nor necessarily clear from the table of contents. Ch. 2 is a survey of endangered languages in Africa. Chs. 3–6 stem from one documentation project, and Chs. 7–8 describe community-based approaches to documentation. Chs. 9–12 cover topics more aligned with morphology and syntax, while Chs. 15–19 concern themselves primarily with phonetics and phonology. Chs. 13–14 bridge the gap between the two broader topic areas in focusing on morphophonology.

An overview of often conflicting perspectives on African language endangerment is given by Bonny Sands (Ch. 2); she illustrates how complexities/conflicts stem from incompatible, in-

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