

Morphological stress in Kambaata

[Oral presentation in person]

Kambaata (Cushitic; Ethiopia) is a language with a rich inflectional and derivational morphology. It is agglutinating-fusional with many portmanteau morphemes. With the exception of a process of partial pre-reduplication, the language is exclusively suffixing. Kambaata has morphological stress, i.e. suffixes are not only realized segmentally but also suprasegmentally by a specific stress position.

While related Cushitic languages are known for their simple tone systems (e.g. Oromo), every Kambaata word has one prominent, stressed syllable. The bound roots of (pro)nouns, adjectives and verbs are *not* specified for stress. Derivational morphemes following the root (i.e. verbal extensions like the causative, or nominal number markers like the singulative and plurative) are equally stressless. Instead, the stress pattern of a word is introduced by the inflectional morphology. Inflectional morphemes are minimally realized by a stress suprafix or, in most cases, jointly by a segmental suffix and a suprafix. As stress is inseparably linked to inflection, the language has no lexical minimal pairs but many systematic grammatical minimal pairs or triplets of the type given in (1). Here the nominative is marked by a suffix that imposes stress on an immediately preceding syllable (*'-a*); the accusative is marked by a suffix with a stress on itself (*-á*); and the stress of the genitive suffix (*-a_´*) is realized on the rightmost syllable of the word, as (2) proves, and not, as one might assume, on the syllable immediately following the case marker.

In my paper, I propose a **classification** of Kambaata's suffixes, depending on their suprasegmental realization. First, they are divided into stress-neutral and stress-determining suffixes. All derivational suffixes and most suffixes following the inflection are **stress-neutral** (e.g. object and possessive suffixes as well as clause-final pragmatically determined morphology, e.g. attitude markers). In the class of **stress-determining** suffixes, we find case/gender morphology and verbal suffixes for aspect, mood, polarity and syntactic dependency. Some of the stress-determining suffixes have no segmental realization at all and are pure suprafixes, among them is the relative suprafix, which is realized at the rightmost edge of the verb (3). There it causes the deletion of the existing stress on the inflected verb.

Two of Kambaata's many suffixes are not easily classified as they are stress-determining in one morphological context and stress-neutral in another.

While cases of tonal suprafixation are discussed in the morphological literature (see Palancar & Léonard 2016 as one representative example), stress suprafixation has so far not attracted much attention by typologists – the repeatedly cited “token” example usually comes from English derivation, e.g. *cónflict* vs. *conflict* (cf. Mel'čuk 2000: 529). The importance of suprasegmental morphology has also been systematically underestimated in the description of most Cushitic languages. This paper demonstrates that stress is no “extra” that can simply be discussed in passing, but that an analysis of where and when stress is realized has to be an integral part of the morphological description of Kambaata and its closest relatives, where suffixes are not only segments but also suprasegments.

[489 words]

Data

(1) *lokk-* (root) 'foot'

lókk-a-nne (foot-F.NOM-1PL.POSS) 'our feet' vs.

lokk-á-nne (foot-F.ACC-1PL.POSS) 'our feet' vs.

lokk-a-nné (foot-F.GEN-1PL.POSS) 'of our feet'

(2) *lokk-a-kki'nné* (foot-F.GEN-2PL.POSS) 'of your (PL) feet'

(3) *azzaz-* (root) 'order'

azzaz-éenno-ssa (order-3HON.IPFV-3PL.OBJ) 's/he (HON) ordered them' + relative suprafix -'

→ *azzaz-eenno-ssá* (order-3HON.IPFV-3PL.OBJ.REL) 'which/who/where s/he (HON) ordered them'

References

Mel'čuk, Igor. 2000. [53.] Morphological processes. In Geert Booij, Christian Lehmann, Joachim Mugdan, Wolfgang Kesselheim & Stavros Skopeteas (eds.), *Morphologie. Ein internationales Handbuch zur Flexion und Wortbildung*, 523.535. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.
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Palancar, Enrique L. & Jean Léo Léonard (eds.). 2016. *Tone and inflection: New facts and new perspectives*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.