

Abstracts

Chadic Languages Stem from Multiple Proto-Languages

David Leonardi

This historical linguistic study involves lexical comparisons to investigate patterns of language diffusion within 63 Chadic languages for the purpose of discovering how to sort out relatedness due to genetic inheritance versus relatedness due to lexical diffusion. Data was drawn from Charles H. Craft's 'Chadic Wordlists' (1981). The interweaving of genetic inheritance with lexical diffusion has led us to incorrectly believe Chadic languages stem from a single proto-language; but by delineating different types of relatedness and observing degrees of relatedness, while categorizing etymological families of related words, we can both reconstruct historical steps in language development and trace vocabulary roots to proto-languages. Towards that end standard methods of lexical comparisons were used. The results fit the historical linguistic model outlined in Dixon's 'The Rise and Fall of Languages' (1997). Language diffusion in the Chadic language group shows evidence that 63 languages have derived from 5 protolanguages. Given a total of 10 main Chadic branches, we could hypothesize 10 protolanguages. Chadic languages from different main branches of the group will show about 10 to 15% relatedness due to lexical diffusion. Languages that branch off from the same node/ close node will show around 50% lexical relatedness. Phonological analysis will be required to reconstruct paths of development of such etymologies, including directions of diffusion, and will be a primary tool in reconstructing more detailed language histories.

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Allophonic Variation of Voiceless Bilabials in Kamasau

Chaz Holt & Joy Sanders

While transcribing recent language documentation videos in the Papuan Language, Kamasau, the authors noted that the sounds previously transcribed as bilabial and velar fricatives, which are obstruents, were often realized as approximants. This is in line with the tendency for flexible articulators to have less firm closure (Ladefoged and Maddieson 1996). Previous research on Kamasau includes a phonological description (Sanders and Sanders 1980) and a comparison of four distinct dialects (ibid. 1980). The analysis presented here draws from audio and video recordings of word lists collected from five mother-tongue speakers in Papua New Guinea in 2014, confirmed through acoustic analysis. Since the collection of the original data in the 1970s, various sociolinguistic factors may have influenced speakers of the language. One possibility is that orthographical choices have influenced phonetic variations in the language. This study investigates how allophonic variation for the voiceless bilabial obstruent is manifested. The allophones [p̥], [pʰ], [ɸ], and [ɸ̥] were confirmed by spectrograms. Based on the results, the authors posit that the voiceless bilabial obstruent is still the underlying form of the phoneme /ɸ/ due to phonological patterning; what had been analyzed as bilabial and velar fricatives, however, are indeed realized and pattern as approximants. Additional data from speakers of different ages and dialects would be needed to confirm these preliminary observations on sound change.

References:

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Feelings in Context: A Grounded Method for Exegeting the Emotions in Scripture

Josh Frost

Books on biblical background material abound, linguistically informed dictionaries proliferate, and debates about source and redaction criticism fill volumes beyond what one could read, but we have nothing even approaching a reliable commentary on emotions in the Bible. We do not have a guide for understanding the emotions within the text, nor a sound methodology for conducting our own exegesis. This is not to say that Christians have not delved into emotions. Quite the contrary, Christian contemplative literature and historical fiction novels that explore the depths of the Bible's emotional landscape fill Christian bookstores. These works do not, however, stand on firmly grounded scholarship. Biblical scholars such as Inselmann (2016), Wierzbicka (2018), and Spencer (2021), riding the recent wave of emotion studies, have begun to fill the gaps. In this paper, I combine the most recent and widely accepted research on emotions to form a methodology for exegeting emotions within the biblical texts and translating them across cultures. In the paper, I begin with an introduction to the study of emotions, then focus on the role of emotions in oral-aural communication. With that foundation, I outline what is necessary for a grounded exegesis of emotions, then demonstrate my methodology in a case study of Mark 5:21-43 with suggestions for the translation and checking process. I end the paper with suggestions for further research and concluding remarks.

References:

- Inselmann, Anke. 2016. "Emotions and Passions in the New Testament: Methodological Issues." *Biblical Interpretation* 24 (4-5): 536-54. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685152-02445P06>
- Spencer, F. Scott. 2021. *Passions of the Christ: The Emotional Life of Jesus in the Gospels*. Baker Academic.
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Which is Nicaraguan Sign Language?

Greg Vollmar

Nicaraguan Sign Language (Lenguaje de Signos Nicaragüense, LSN, Idioma de Señas de Nicaragua, ISO 639-3 code [ncs]) has received much attention from researchers in recent years as a newly-emerging sign language (Bouchard, 2018). However, this research has been concentrated in Managua. Based on interviews with Deaf people in Managua and elsewhere in the country, and drawing on other published videos and research, there are at least three other major regional sign varieties in Nicaragua. Although Managua may have the most advanced sign variety, due to its geographic advantage with access to technology and tourism and larger population, there is more to LSN than just Managua. The other regions with established deaf communities are: Jinotega (isolated and with limited access to technology), Leon (northwest of Managua near the Pacific Ocean), and San Carlos (at the southern tip of Nicaraguan Lake, near Costa Rica with influence from Costa Rican Sign Language (Polich, 2005)). Two other extremely isolated regions include Puerto Cabezas and Bluefields. Given the existence of these other varieties, the claim that LSN developed spontaneously in Managua needs to be re-examined. Ultimately, any characterization of LSN should include the whole country instead of just one point.

References:

Bouchard, Kelly (March 19, 2018). "[Seeing the signs: Renowned USM professor reflects on lifechanging language discovery](#)". Press Herald. Retrieved October 13, 2018.

Polich, Laura. *The Emergence of the Deaf Community in Nicaragua: With Sign Language You Can Learn so Much*. Gallaudet University Press, 2005.

Negation in Buh

Israel Ledo Wade & Yakubu Jacob Umar

This paper explains the operational systems of the concept of negation in Buh, an Eastern Benue-Congo language of the Proto-Niger Congo family, located in North Central Nigeria. The language has various dialects, with a total of 20,000 speakers spread across different parts of the region. The researcher observes the productivity of negation in the Nakri variety of Buh. Thus, wherever Buh is mentioned in the paper, it refers to the Nakri variety. The researcher used frame technique and the interviews to elicit data from competent native speakers of the language. The researcher uses a descriptive method for data analysis. The findings unveil that negation in the language is structured as a frame with the discontinuous morphemes *ran* /rã/ V ... *ran* /rã/#; the former precedes the verb, and the latter comes at the end of the sentence. In the case of declarative, the negative polarity items like *ran* ... *ran* maintain their forms, while in interrogatives, the vowel of the latter is lengthened, which aligns with the questions formation rule in the language. Thus, all final vowels of the final words in interrogatives are lengthened, including the negative polarity item *ran*. Therefore, it becomes *raan* /rãa/ in interrogatives. In the language, *ri* also is seen as a negative polarity item that occurs in some cases of negation; operating like 'any' in English, as in "he did not buy any books". The main motivation for this research is to enhance Buh language documentation as a way of averting it from going into extinction and to promote the efficiency of the ongoing translation work in the language.

Descriptive analysis of the Wanu Noun phrase

Omonor Wade, Nicholas Titus & Kenneth Kunza Agwadu

This paper explores the structure of the Wanu /wáānū/ noun phrase, one of the Jukun /Júkùn/ dialects alongside Wapan, Kona, Ichě, Kutɛp and others. Speakers of Jukun-Wanu are predominantly found in Benue and Taraba States of Nigeria, West Africa. The area of this study is Ibi /ibi/ in Taraba State. The motivation for this research is because of the dearth of literature on Wanu syntax. Two sources of data were used in this study, primary and secondary. Primary data were sourced from the interviews with competent educated native speakers while secondary data were obtained from published and unpublished works and the internet as well. A descriptive method was adopted for the analysis of the data. Findings show that this language operates a "head-first parameter" where the NP can be post-modified by determiners and adjectives, among others. The research has made its modest contribution to the ongoing research in African languages and as such will be relevant to would-be researchers who may be interested in the study of other languages. It will also enhance the ongoing translation of the Bible in the language.

Baba Yetu: How Video Game Music Brought The Lord's Prayer Around The World

Jeffrey Hansen

Christopher Tin's *Baba Yetu* is a musical setting of the Lord's Prayer in Swahili that was originally composed as the opening menu music for the 2004 video game Sid Meier's Civilization IV. However, since then, *Baba Yetu* has appeared in a number of drastically different contexts including a song-cycle, a fountain show in Dubai, the signing of a peace treaty, and in Christian worship. How is it possible to account for its use in so

many diverse settings? Dan Fitzgerald and Brian Schrag have developed a method for assessing an artistic expression based on its semiotic signs and its purposes (2014). Likewise, Nicholas Wolterstorff's (2015) theory of artistic interpretation is based around an artistic work's social function. By applying insights from Wolterstorff and using the analytical methodology of Fitzgerald and Schrag, it is possible to conduct an analysis of *Baba Yetu* and its social contexts which explains how the signs in the song can function effectively in those social contexts. Such an analysis indicates that the compelling synthesis of diverse signs from various cultures has contributed to its cross-cultural appeal. Conversely, the limited contexts in which lexical signs are recognized has allowed it to be accepted in contexts normally hostile to Christian liturgical texts. By exploring how the signs in *Baba Yetu* are interpreted in different contexts, it provides insight on how art can function effectively in multiple contexts. It also sets the groundwork for future inquiry on how globalized art forms may take on unique local meaning.

References:

Fitzgerald, Daniel, and Brian Schrag. 2014. "But Is It Any Good? The Role of Criticism in Christian Song Composition and Performance." *Global Forum on Arts and Christian Faith* 2(1), 1-19.

Wolterstorff, Nicholas. 2015. *Art Rethought: The Social Practices of Art*. 1st ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Strategic Use of Web-Based Search Terminology to Locate Unpublicized Diaspora Communities

Chris Troutman

This presentation explains a digital research methodology the author developed to solve a specific research problem, followed by a discussion applying these methods to other challenges as well. First, the initial problem is that the existence of many diaspora communities is not explicitly publicized online and are not easily locatable by a typical search engine approach. Unless one has prior knowledge of their existence, they are effectively invisible. However, these communities *do* leave a digital footprint accessible to the researcher. The author will share how he used strategic search criteria to solve the problem of locating lesser-known Russian diaspora communities, and then discovered many communities living throughout Asia, Europe, and Latin America.

In the second part of the presentation, the author will then explore how this methodology was further applied to research the new emigration trends of young Russians following the invasion of Ukraine. He proposes that the diaspora communities formed prior to the invasion were guided by different principles than those being witnessed now. Many stories in the news media have reported the massive influx of young Russians to cities such as Tbilisi or Belgrade, but whether or not they will migrate to lesser-known diaspora communities such as Phuket or Guangzhou remains to be seen. This methodology, then, will form a key part of the author's own efforts to track such trends. The conclusion is that other researchers may apply these same principles to their own research problems.