

A phonological sketch of Lokaa language

1.0 The phonology of Lokaa language

The phonological word is the unit of potential stress placement. This definition was accepted by Berry E. (1966), when she posited that other features in distinguishing the word are vowels harmony, and possibly the limitations of tone patterns that can occur in the word. The word is often seen as consisting the nucleus, and a prenuclear margin. The nucleus consists of a nuclear vowel or nasal, or a nucleus followed by a post nuclear consonant, functioning in the margin of the word. Length normally occurs in nuclear syllables; it is only rarely found in marginal syllables.

Features of the word as earlier stated are stresses and vowel harmony. Stress always goes with a high tone, stresses are not prominent. In the language, Vowel harmony operates in all words though only to a limited extent in compound words. The eight vowels that operate in the language are placed in three groups, and the vowels in the margin will be of the same group as that in the first syllable of the nucleus.

Where there is an independent vowel the prefix vowel will be of the same group as that of the second nuclear syllable. In compounds the vowels of the margin will harmonize with the first root vowel. The syllable consist of a nucleus with an optional prenuclear margin and an optional post-nuclear consonant. When the nucleus is a nasal the syllable has no prenuclear or post-nuclear consonant. Any consonant can fill the prenuclear place, including clusters of two consonants with either [kw] or [gw] as a second element. Only nasals, laterals or semi vowels can fill the post nuclear margin.

The syllable that only consist of only a nucleus occurs only with word initial. The most common type of syllable is that consisting of

pronuclear consonant followed by a nucleus, and this may occur initially, medially, and finally in the word. The nucleus consisting of a nucleus with both prenuclear and post nuclear margin may occur initially, medially and finally The syllable with only a post nuclear ;margin is very rare and it occurs only word initially in a few words. Long syllables occur most frequently word finally in two syllables words, and word medially and finally in three syllables word they only occur rarely in word initially..

1.2 Syllable And Morpheme structure of Lokaa Phonology

Every language has a pattern in structure morpheme, syllable and words. The patterns are identified by the combinations of vowels and consonants in a word. Below are the most common word patterns in the lokaa language:

V for vowels as in	[e] him [o] You [a] I
CV as in	[da] friend [tə] lets
VCV as in	[nə] will [ebə] grave [ɛtɔ] house [ata] stones
VCVC as in	[ɛtal] kite [Ebal] axe [edəl] Shrine
CVCV as in	[Kɔfɛ] leg [lokə] face [ɔnɛn] person

VCCV as in	[omle] enter [ɔbla] name
VCVCV as in	[ɔbɛla] spetula [ɔbasɛ] God [ɔbele] pot
CVCVC	[koton] gift [kɛtam] sanctuary [kɛtəm] lizard
VCVCVC as in	[okonɛn] soldier [anənənɛ] jobs
CVCVCV as in	[kɛgɔnɔ] sweat [kɛpolə] sign
CVCCVC as in	[kɛplən] ant [lɔplɔŋ] crow

1.3 SYLLABLE PATTTTERNS.

V as in	[ɛbə] grave [odəm] man
CV as in	[da] friend [kofɛ] leg
CVC as in	[koton] gift [kotɔn] roof
CCV as in	[kɛplə] foofoo [kɛpla] plate
CCVC	[ɛplɔŋ] head scarf [lɔplɔŋ] crow
ŋ as in	[nkau] coconuts

1.4 INTERPRETATION OF SUSPICIOUS SEGMENTS IN LOKAA LANGUAGE.

The following sounds have been identified in lokaa as suspect sounds: [i], [u], [y] and [w], the reason for this conclusion is the closeness of these sounds to one another [i] and [y], [u] and [w] in order to remove any confusion in the use of these identical sounds the following interpretation becomes necessary

1. [i] Now written [y] is a consonant when it occurs between vowels.
2. [u] Now written [w] is a consonant when it occurs between vowels.
3. [i] still written [i] is a vowel when it occurs between consonants.
4. [u] still written [u] is a vowel when it occurs between consonants.

1.5 SUSPECT SEQUENCES AND INTERPRETATIONS.

Among the consonants we have the following suspect sequences.

[kp], [gb], [dz], [kw], [gw], [pl], [bl], and [ml].

Vowels: [i], [e:], [ɛ:], [u:], [ɛ:], [ɔ:], [o:] and [a:]

Diphthongs: [au], [ai], [ə:], [ɔi], [ei], [ɔu] and [oi]

1.6 INTERPRETATION

The entire long vowels pattern as a single vowel written same, since there are non-suspect vowel clusters in Lokaa.

All the diphthongs listed above, patterns as single vowel, phonologically represented as [au], [ai], [əi], [ɔi], [ei] and [oi]

These are phonologically represented as [au], [ai], [əi], [ɔi], [ɔu], [oi].

There is apparently no vowel cluster in the non-suspect patterns.

The following consonants [dʒ], [gb], [kp], [gw] pattern as single consonants written same, since the only consonant cluster that occur in the nonsuspect patterns are [pl], [bl], and [ml] in which the bilabials [p], [b] and [m] are followed by the lateral [l] and pronounced as such.

1.7 JUDGEMENT AND CONCLUSIONS

Long vowels: Since it has been proven that the Lokaa language has no vowel clusters, we therefore conclude that words with unusual vowel stress and elongation shall be regarded as long vowels and written by doubling the vowel. Eg Yooł (snake). Especially where there is a contrasting word with different meaning using the short form, eg da (friend) 'daa' (there).

Vowel diphthongs would orthographically be represented as vowel clusters. Eg. [oi] becomes oi as in 'okoi' and 'lekoi' (drum).

The phonetic sequence of consonant sound [dj], [gb] and [kp] shall be orthographically written the same, eg 'kpakpa' (groundnut) 'gbangbang' (basin).

And since the only consonant cluster found in the language are [ml], [pl] and [bl] they shall be recognised as separate consonants joined together to produce a diffusion of both sounds eg. Yamle, (oil) 'ebla' (dog) 'epla' (market).

2.0 THE CONSONANT SYSTEM

A consonant is any sound in which there is some obstruction or friction in the mouth in contrast to a vowel where the air passage over the tongue is without obstruction. All languages have consonants and vowels. But they do not all use them in the same way. Each language has unique ways of putting them together to form words.

2.1 The Lokaa language work chart:

p t k
b d g
s
l
m n ŋ
y

A total of 21 consonants have been identified in Lokaa language with the plosive /p/ and /b/ and /m/ as bilabial. The fricative /f/ and /r/ as labiodental. The /t/ and /d/, the fricative /s/, nasal /n/ and lateral /l/ as alveolar. The affricate /dʒ/ is found at the palao alveolar level. The palatalized nasal /ɲ/ and the voiced semi vowel /y/. The plosive velar /k/, /kw/ voiceless /g/ and /gw/ and the voiceless and voiced /g/ and /gw/ and the velar nasal /ŋ/ are found. The labio-velar voiceless /kp/ and /gb/ and the semi – vowel labio-velar /w/ were identified. And finally the syllabic nasal /n/ constitutes a significant sound in the language.

The following are examples of the sounds in the language.

Labial consonants made with the lips.

- | | | | |
|----|------|---------|---------------|
| 1. | p | | kp |
| | pa | (pluck) | kpa (beat) |
| | pali | (pluck) | kpana (fold) |
| | pali | (cut) | kpali (skip) |
| | pana | (touch) | kpaal (fold) |
| 2. | b | | gb |
| | bali | (cut) | gbangbang |
| | boli | (pass) | gboli (shave) |

baani (urine)

egbe (swing)

baan (arrange)

ogbongonọ (key)

3. Alveolar and palatal consonants made with the tongue on the roof of the mouth.

T	d	l	r
tali (pull) (beans cake)	daali (take)	lede (greeting)	akara
tata (master)	daani (there)	luji (food)	ewura
taali (loud)	deedeesa(night)	lega (teeth)	Arit (name)
Tooli (return)	deel (night)	loja (quarrel)	

Velar and labio – velar consonants. Sounds made at the back of the mouth.

K	g	w
Kepu (wrestle)	igarri (garri)	wen (child)
Konana (soup)	gaba (jump)	won (return)
Kekpi (tortoise)	oge (marchet)	ewi (sun)
Kopoo (cup)	eglani (cricket)	lewi (day)

Nasal consonants (Consonants made through the nose)

M	n	ng
Mina (here)	naan (take)	jang (never)
ema (mouth)	na (will)	nang (do)
maani (there)	konana (soup)	ntongi (okro)

4.0 CONTRASTIVE PRINCIPLES APPRECIATIONS

Two sounds contrast in the language if the difference between them marks a difference in meaning.

In any language, there are a lot of variations of pronunciations, some sounds are pronounced in slightly different ways, depending on the other sounds around them. It is therefore necessary to discover which of the phonetic differences are significant and are variations of what is basically the same sound.

4.1 Contrast in identical environment.

The following consonants in Lokpa language contrast in identical environment.

[p] and [b] as in	[epu] ‘monkey’	[ebu] ‘goat’
	[apaa] ‘place’	[abaa] ‘you’
[p] and [kp] as in	[εpε] ‘moon’	[εkpε] ‘lion’
	[epe] ;belch’	[ekpe] ‘name sake’
[t] and [d] as in	[εtɔ] ‘house’	[εdɔ] ‘then’
[d] and [n] as in	[du] ‘beat’	[nu] ‘scatter’
	[dε] ‘buy’	[nε] ‘defecate’
[d] and [l] as in	[dau] ‘laugh’	[lau] ‘wripe’
	[sida] ‘sweep’	[sila] ‘seal’
[k] and [g] as in	[aka:] ‘mother’	[aga:] ‘teeth’
	[ka:m] ‘help’	[ga:m] ‘dish’
[k] and [kp] as in	[nko] ‘ages’	[mkpo] ‘barns’
	[kə] ‘at’	[kpə] ‘behold’
[kp] and [gb] as in	[ekpe] ‘name sake’	[egbe] ‘swing’
	[εkpa] ‘belt’	[εgba] ‘totem’
[n] and [ŋ] as in	[εkɔkɔni] ‘bee’	[εkɔkɔŋi] ‘elbow’
	[εkaan] ‘group’	[εkpaan] ‘row’
[n] and [l] as in	[yoni] ‘elephant’	[yoli] ‘bitter kola’
	[kaani] ‘there’	[kaali] ‘seperate’

Note that two sounds contrast in identical environment if they show a difference of meaning between two words, which are otherwise identical.

4.2 The following consonants contrast in near identical environment.

[f] and [v] as in [lifala] ‘live sticks’ [ivala] ‘yaws’

[s] and [z] as in [nsau] ‘fishes’ [nzau] ‘ropes’

[kw] and [gw] as in [kwa:li] ‘scratch’ [gwa:l] ‘quick’

4.3 VOWEL CONTRASTING IN IDENTICAL ENVIRONMENT

[a] and [ə] as in [ɛta:l] kite and [eta:] rainy season

[e] and [i] as in [ekpi] rat and [itom] abomination

[o] and [ə] as in [kotoon] gift and [kotən] roof

[o] and [u] as in [koowa] tomorrow and [kuuwa] open

[o] and [ɔ] as in [koyuu] and [koyuu] goodness

[e] and [ɛ] as in [ekpe] name sake and [ɛkpe] lion

[o] and [o:] as in [lobo] igbo and [lobo] divination

[ɔ] and [ɔ:] as in [kɔbɔ] packing and [kɔbɔɔ] hand

4.4 VOWEL DIPHTHONG CONTRASTING IN IDENTICAL ENVIRONMENT

[e] and [ei] as in [kpe] judge and [kpei] selling

[ɛ] and [ɛi] as in [neɛ] defiate and [nei] deficating

[ə] and [əi] as in [fuuka] count and [fuukai] counting

[ɔ] and [ɔi] as in [nkɔ] cloth and [nkɔi] I went

[a] and [ai] as in [laa] scatter and [lai] erasing

[o] and [oi] as in [leko] war and [lekoi] drum

[a] and [au] as in [[da] friend and [dau] laugh

5.0 VARIATIONS

In any language, sounds tend to vary depending on their environment. Often they become more like their environment. This conditional variation – that is variation predictable in terms of context.

If it is possible to make a ‘only never’ statement such as can make us conclude that these two sounds are conditional variants of the same basic sounds. They do not contrast. They are members of the same phoneme. “Phonemes” are sounds that contrast with each other with each other in a language. One phoneme may have several phonetic allophones or variations of the one contrastive sound. An allophone is alternative forms of one phoneme.

Conclusively, if sounds contrast in a language, they separate phonemes. But if it can be shown that they never occur in the same environment, then they are members of the same phonemes.

Variations could be free, mutual exclusive and comparative distributive. Free variations occur when some sounds may have alternative pronunciations of the same sound. Either pronunciation may be acceptable. In this case, differences between these sounds are free variations.

In Lokaa language the following sounds are in free variations. They do not contrast and are allophones of the same phoneme.

[dʒ] and [z] as in [adʒam] ‘beans’ [azam]

[dʒe:n] ‘name’ [ze:n]

[l] and [d] as in [ɔbɛla] or [ɔbɛda] ‘spetula’

[taali] or [taadi] ‘pull’

[r] and [l] as in [akara] or [akala] ‘beans cake’

[ewura] or [ewula] ‘dress’

[okpokoro] or [okpokolo] ‘table’

The following contrast are also found:

[kw] and [gw] as in [ikwe] and [igwe] names

[g] and [[gw] as in [agaa] teeth [agwa] beana

[k] and [kw] as in [kaali] separate [kwaali] scratch

5.1 Conditional variation:(vowel contrast in identical environment

/ɛ/ and /a/ as in [bɛn] children [baan] arrange

[bɛ] them [ba] of

/e/ and /ə/ as in [ebe] swamp [ebə] grave

[kpe] sell [kpə] behold

/a/ and /ɔ/ as in [agaa] teeth [ɔgɔ] occipult

[ɛfa} power [ɛfɔ] bitterleaf

5.2 Long Vowels in C.I.E

[i] and [i:] as in [yima} know [yiima} remind

[e] and [e:] as in [del] night [deel] year

[a] and [a:] as in [pa] pluck [paa] invent

[ɔ] and [ɔ:] as in [ɔyɛ} funnel [ɔɔyɛ} not shifted

[ə] and [ə:] as in [ebə] grave [ebə:] all

[ɛ] and [ɛ:] as in [yanɛn] people [yanɛ:] woman

[u] and [u:] as in [kuwə} squat [kuuwa} open

6. PHONEMIC CONSONANTS

Earlier in this study we made a phonetic work chart for Lokaa language to help us circle out pairs of similar sounds and forms. This we were able to identify contrast in both identical and near identical environment.

Now we are going to examine a work chart based on the phonemes in the language. Note that phonetically similar sounds are members of one

phoneme; hence they would be represented on this chart by one phoneme.

Hence:

P is phonetically similar to b, kp, and also unreleased p

T is phonetically similar to d, gb, and also unreleased t

K is phonetically similar to g, kp, and also unreleased k

B	is	„	„	p, gb	„	„	p or b
D		„	„	t, dʒ	„	„	t or d
G		„	„	k, gb			k or g
M		„	„	b			
N		„	„	d			
ŋ		„	„	g, n			
F		„	„	v			
L		„	„	r, t, d and all variants of r			
R		„	„	to all variants of r, l, d and n.			

In fact any sound should be considered phonetically similar to its voiced or voiceless counterpart. In the case of vowels, every vowel should be considered phonetically similar to the corresponding short or long vowel, the corresponding rounded or un-rounded state. In the case of vowel glides, any glide should be considered similar to any vowel which forms a part of the glide, eg. /ei/ is similar to /e/ and /i/.

In addition, each vowel should be considered similar to the neighbouring vowel on the chart.

i	u	i is similar to ε
e	ə	ε is similar to i and o
ε	ɔ	a is similar to ε and ɔ
a		ɔ is similar to a and u

u is similar to ɔ
 ə is similar to o and e

6.2 PHONEME CHARTS

6.2.1 CONSONANTS

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Alveol.	Palato-Alv.	Palatal	Velar	Labio-Velar
Plosives: Voiceless	/p/		/t/			/k//kw/	/kp/
Voiced	/b/		/d/			/g/ /gw/	/gb/
Fricatives: voiceless		/f/	/s/				
Voiced		/v/					
Nasal: Voiced	/m/		/n/			/ŋ/	
Lateral: Voiced			/l/				
Semi-Vowel: voiced					/y/		/w/
Affricate: Voiced					/dʒ/		
Syllabic nasal:	/m/		/n/			/ŋ/	

6.2.2 The following are examples of the sounds in the language.

1. Labial consonants made with the lips.

P	kp
Pa (pluck)	kpa(beat)
Pali(pluck)	kpana(fold)
Pali (cut)	kpali (skip)
Pana (touch)	kpala (stand against)
B	gb
Bali (cut)	gbangbang

Bọ̀li (pass)	gboligboli (watery)
Banibani (level)	egbe (swing)
Baan (arrange)	ọ̀gbọ̀ngọ̀nọ̀ (key)

2. Alveolar and palatal consonants made with the tongue on the roof of the mouth.

t	d	l	r
Tali (pull)	dą̀li (take)	lẹ̀dẹ̀ (greeting)	akara (beans cake)
Tata (master)	daani (there)	luji (food)	ewura (gown)
Taali (draw)	deedeesa (night)	lẹ̀ga (tooth)	kọ̀gara (slope)
Tooli (return)	deeli (night)	lojau (quarrel)	Arit (name)

3. Velar and labio-velar consonants made with the tongue on the back of the mouth..

K	g	w
Kepu (wrestle)	igari (garri)	wẹ̀n (child)
Kọ̀nana (soup)	gaba (jump)	wọ̀n (return)
Kekpi (tortoise)	ọ̀gẹ̀ (matchet)	ewi (sun)
Kopoo (cup)	egani (cricket)	lewi (day)

4. Nasal consonants (Consonants made through the nose)

m	n	ng
Mina (here)	naan (take)	jang (never)
ẹ̀ma (mouth)	na (will)	naṅ (do)
Maani (there)	kọ̀nana (soup)	ntọ̀ngi (okra)

6.2.3 VOWELS PHONEME CHART

Vowels:

	Front	Central	Back
High		i	u
Mid	e	ə	o
Low	ɛ	ɑ	ɔ

Long Vowels:

	Front	Central	Back
Close	/ii/		/uu/
Half close	/ee/	/əə/	/oo/
Half open	/ɛɛ/		/ɔɔ/
Open		/aa/	

Diphthong phoneme chart

	Front	Central	Back
Close			
Half close	/ei/	/əi/ /əu/	/oi/
Half open	/ɛi/		
Open		/ai/ /au/	/ɔi/ /ɔu/

6.3 FORMATION AND STATEMENT OF THE PHONEMES

3.3.1 CONSONANTS:

/p/ voiceless lightly aspirated bilabial plosive. Example epu (Monkey)

/t/ voiceless lightly aspirated alveolar plosive. When it occurs word final in free fluctuation with [i] the aspiration is slightly more marked.

Example eti (stick)

/k/ voiceless very lightly aspirated velar plosive. Example lẹkaal (head pad).

/kp/ voiceless plosive labio-velar double plosive. Example ikpe (case)

/b/ voiced bilabial plosive. Example ebu (goat)

/g/ voiced velar plosive. Example agaa (teeth)

/gb/ voiced mplosive labio-velar. Double plosive. oḡbḡngḡḡḡ (key)

/g/ voiceless labio plosive. Example agaa (teeth)

/f/ voiceless labio - dental fricative. Mfa (power)

\s\ voiceless alveolar fricative. Example ẹṣẹ (feather)

/j/ voiced palatal affricate. Example yejo (yam)

/i/ voiced lenis alveolar lateral. This can occur word final when it follows a central vowel, it is hardly voiced but always articulated, freely with /t/ example yipḡl (calf)

/l/ voiced alveolar lateral. Occurring elsewhere. Example liboo (medicine)

/m/ voiced bilabial and syllabic nasal. When it occurs elsewhere.

Example ẹma (mouth) and mkau (kernels)

/n/ voiced alveolar, also nasal when it occurs somewhere else. Example naan (receive) and nwẹṅẹ (book) This sound as a velar syllabic nasal when it occurs word initially preceding a homorganic consonant.

/ŋ/ voiced lenis velar nasal occurring word finally. Example yonṅṅṅṅ (work)

6.3.2 Semi Vowel:

/w/ voiced labio-velar semi vowel. Example ewween (melon)

/y/ voiced alveolar - palatal semi vowel. Example yojiji (food)

6.3.3 Vowels:

/i/ high front close unrounded vowel. Example iseen (yesterday)

/e/ voiced mid front close vowels. Example ebḡ (grave)

/ə/ voiced mid central close unrounded vowel. Example emṅṅ (bamboo)

/a/ voiced low central open unrounded vowel. Example agaa (teeth)

/u/ voiced high back close rounded vowel. Example letu (head)

/o/ voiced mid back closed rounded vowel. Example yoni (elephant)

/ɔ/ voiced low back open rounded vowel. Example loto (harvest)

/ɛ/ voiced low front open unrounded vowel. Example ɛsɛ (feather)

7.0 DISTRIBUTION OF PHONEMES

The distribution of phoneme would be discussed in three sections of this study:

Consonants occurring singly, consonants clusters and vowels.

7.1 CONSONANTS OCCURRING SINGLY:

All consonants except [ng] can occur in word initial position. All consonants including [ng] can occur in syllable initial position and word midially. Example of consonants that can occur at the beginning of a word: b,d,f,r,j,k,kp,l, m,n, p, ng, s,t, v,w,y and gb.

Consonant that can occur at the end of a word: p,b, m.,n. l, ng.

Consonants that can occur at the end of a word, include all the consonants listed above.

7.2 CONSONANT CLUSTER

The following are the consonant clusters found in the language:

Pl, bl, ml, mpl, mkp, mgb, mm, nn, and nng. The strong nasals mm and nn occur only at word boundaries example kɔkpamma (governance) and paɲa (change) wɛɲna (his son).

Restrictions on consonants that can occur together in the same word are placed only on the bilabial /p/ and /b/ and /m/ followed by the lateral /l/. This does not in any way include the nasals.

7.3 VOWELS RESTRICTIONS

There are no vowel clusters in Iokaa language, but there exists a restriction on particular combinations of consonants and vowels. The following are some of the restrictions:

1. All the vowel diphthongs occur only word finally
2. [a],[u],[o] and [ɔ] do not occur before or after /gb/.
3. /a/, /u/ and /o/ do not occur before or after /j/.
4. /u/ and /o/ do not occur before or after /ng/
5. The following vowels do not occur word initially: [i],[e:], [ɛ:], [a:], and [u:].
6. Only these vowels do occur word initially; [o:], [a:] and [ɔ].
7. Long vowels occurring at the initial position of the word are acting as a grammatical function, either as a negative marker or tonal change.
8. All diphthongs occur only word finally.
9. [e] and [ɛ] do not occur in the same word.

7.4 VOWEL ELISION AND ASSIMILIATION

Vowel assimilation occurs at word boundaries Example.

Okaḡ ɛ okeḡ (he saw him)

Written spoken forms

You can see that the ɛ sound has assimilated the a sound in the spoken form. This nature of vowel assimilation is very common in the language, this actually constitute the reading fluency mechanism.

There are also some form of consonant assimilation in the language. An example can be found in the reduplicated edaḡldaḡal(sheep) pronounced as ‘edḡdḡal’. The [d] assimilates the [l] and tend to change it sound when spoken. Writers of the language must guide against the temptation of writing what they hear. Consistency must be placed on proper spelling.

7.5 VOWEL ELISIONS

A word final vowel may be elided when immediately followed by another vowel. When this occurs, the tone of the vowels combine as shown by the following illustration.

2nd vowel- H L HL LH

 H HH LL HL LH

 L LH LL HL LH

1ST vowel- HL HH HL

 LH LH HL

Examples:

ḡta ekoon (HL+L) - oteekoon (she used fire)

Obi ḡḡkḡi (H+LH) - obḡḡkḡi (he said he did not go)

Ota ḡkḡ (HL +H) - oteḡḡkḡ (She used cloth)

Yaya abḡḡ (LH+L) - yayaabḡḡ (they arrive at a place)

NOTES

1. Sequences of like tones remain at the same tone (LL or HH)
2. Sequence of different tones are realised as glides.
3. A sequence of HLH is realised as HHH.
4. A low tone following a LH glide is realised as a HL glide. Muckh more shall be said concerning tones in this study.

Consonants

Dotted Vowels

Clusters

/ɑ/, /ẹ/, /o/

/gb/, /kp/, /ng/

/nng/, /mm/, /nn/

/mbl/, mpl, /mkp

8. PHONEME OF THE LOKAꞂ LANGUAGE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

LOKAꞂ DIPHTHONGS

/ai/ , /ai/, /au/, /au/, /ei/, /oi/, /ou/

/oi/, /ui/

8.2 WORD SEPERATION

In LokꞂ a word may be defined as a sound or a sequence of sounds that are significantly capable of independent free in movement within a sentence structure. Professor Alex Iwara in his book “How to read and write LokꞂ language stated that, free movements of sequences that are meaningful in a given sentence structure constitutes a word. Note the following example: ‘OwoꞂkekeblaseen’ (He has returned farm yesterday) When one places this statement in the negative form, it would become ‘IseenkeblaꞂwoꞂni’ (Yesterday he has not returned from farm yesterday. A close look at the sequences show that; ke, iseen, owoꞂ and kebla moves freely as one sequence and since they are meaningful, they should be recognised as separate words.

The word in lokꞂ phonologically is the unit of potential stress placement. According to Berry(1969) the word consists of a nucleus, and a prenuclear margin. The nucleus consist of one or two syllables except in compounds where they may have more, She stated that syllables that function in the nucleus are those with prenuclear consonant. She went further to opine that syllables consist only of a nuclear vowel or a nasal, or of a nucleus followed by a post nuclear consonant, functioning in the margin of the word. Length normally occurs in nuclear syllables; it is only rarely found in marginally syllables.

She felt that features of the word are stress and vowel harmony. Stress usually goes with high tone; and where there is no high tone, stress is often not prominent. One can clearly see that vowel harmony which Berry posited as a fgeature in lokꞂ words, operates in all words though only to a limited extent in compounds. The eight vowels in the language are placed in three groups, and in the margin will be

of same group as that in the first syllable of the nucleus. Where there is an independent vowel the prefix vowel will be of same group as that of the second nuclear syllable. In compounds the vowels of the two roots do not harmonize, though the vowel of the margin will harmonize with the first root vowel.

8.3 PHONOLOGICAL HIERARCHY

The phonological hierarchy described in terms of the syllable, the word and the utterance, so far the first two levels only have been investigated in details. The syllable, the word and the utterance. The syllable consists of a nucleus with an optional pronuclear margin and an optional post-nuclear margin. The nucleus consists of a vowel or nasal. The pronuclear margin consists of one or two consonant. When the nucleus is a nasal the syllable has no pronuclear or post nuclear consonant. Any consonant can fill the pronuclear place, including clusters of two consonant, with one as the second element. Only nasals, laterals or semi-vowels can fill the post nuclear place. Features of the syllable are length and tones. A syllable is either short or long. In a short syllable, the tone focuses on the vowel nucleus, if the syllable is open, and on the vowel plus consonant when there is a post nuclear margin.

Within the phonological word, the syllable that consist of only a nucleus occurs only word initially. The most common type of syllable is that consisting of pronuclear consonant followed by a nucleus, and this may occur initially, medially or final in the word. The syllable consisting of a nucleus with both pronuclear and post nuclear margin is very rare, and occurs only word initially in a few words. Long syllables occur most frequently word final in two syllable words, and word medial and final in three syllable words. They only occur very rarely word initially.

8.4 SUPRASEGMENTED FEATURES

There are three suprasegmented features in the Loka language: They are tones, stress and intonation.

8.4. TONE

There are two significant tones in the language, high and low levels.

High tone is marked by an acute accent while low tone is marked by a grave accent,

Example of tone marking:

/èí/ stick /kokàm / fence /éí/ road
The tone bearing segment is the syllable. A short syllable carries one unit of tone. While a long syllable carries two contrastive sets showing bitonal combinations:

Second syllable open

/kòbò/ arm

/Kèpà / wound

second syllable closed

/kèpòm

/lòpòn /town

All possible bitonality combinations may occur on the second syllable of a two-syllable word, when the first syllable is low. The combinations on syllables in any other position is restricted. The following combinations do not occur.

1st syllable HH L
 LL L
 LH H

HL H

2nd Syllable HL L

Tone patterns within the word.

The following patterns are not found:

1, Monosyllables short L

 Long: HH

2. Two -syllables short: in this case all patterns occur.

1st syllable word long: LLL

 HHH

 HLH

 HHL

2nd syllable long: HLH

Both syllable long: only three of the syllable pattern occur.

HLL

LLHH

HLHH

3rd syllable long:

LLLH

LLLL

LHLL

LHHL

HLHL

HLLH

HLLL

Any combination with HH.

Note that words beginning on high tone are much less frequent, 2nd and 3rd syllable long begins with high tone. Example ləwòmàa(shouting)

Sometimes a combination of the pattern occurs in a word. Example dèédèèsa(night)

8.5 VOWEL HARMONY

Vowel harmony is a feature of the word, as stated before. To analyse this it is necessary to divide the eight vowels into three groups:

/i/, /u/ and /a/ independent

/e/, /a/ and /o/ group 1

/e/ and /o/ group 2

The vowels in the first syllable of the stem often determines vowel in the prefix.

Example

1st syllable of the stem	Prefix and other Syllables of the stem	Examples
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Group 1	Group 1, /i/, /u/, /a/	/kòkàmi/ injection
Group 2	Group 2 /i/, /a/	/yanən/ people
/a/	Group 2, independent	/əkata/ basket
/u/	Group 1, independent	/ebu/ goat
/i/	Group 1, independent	/kowiya/ wind

Where the second syllable has a group 2 vowel the prefix will be of the same group. /əninəŋg/ finger. But when /a/ is in the second syllable the prefix is unpredictable.

/kəpiya/ wall, /ketipa/ door

It should noted that /u/ may only occur with group 1. In compound nouns the vowel of the two roots are not made to harmonize though the prefix will always be in harmony with the first syllable.

/odəm man, + /wəŋ/child = /odəmwəŋ/ boy

/nnikpa/ shoes + /kəfə/ = konikpafə/ sandals

In verbs where /u/ occurs in the present tense as a variant of the stem vowel, the prefix does not alter. /əɖai/ he laughed, /əɖuuyi/ he is laughing

Residue:

/əkəpəŋg/ pepper, /kubləni/ mat, /kəplakoon/ afternoon

/əfi/ he is killing /ofəmi/ he collects bark

\əfuuka/ he gathers, /ənumukwa/ bicycle.

8.6 COMPOUNDS:

Compounds are most frequently formed by placing the prefix of one word before the word that modifies it, and the remainder at the end of it. When this occurs the prefix of on the other word does not appear, but its tone is carried by the prefix of the other word. Example. /lodu/ fruit and /ekooma/ pumpkin becomes /lokooma/ pumpkin fruit. /ntənwəŋə/ schools is formed by putting one word after the other.. In this case because high tone is on the first combined with low tone on the second,

the compound has a high-low glide tone.

Tones have grammar as well as lexicon function. This only operates in verbs where it has a lexical function also. Example of lexical function:

/dɛɛ/ buy /nndɛɛ/ I will not buy

/nndlei/ I didn't buy

/nndɛi/ when I buy.

8. 7 STRESS

Stress occur usually with high tone. If there is no high tone in the word, stress is not prominent.

Rules for the occurrence of stress:

1. Stress is most likely to fall on the second tone unit of the word if this is high, or if not, the fourth, and then the fifth..
2. If none of this is high but the first tone unit is high, it will fall on the first tone unit.
3. If there is no high tone, stress will fall on the second tone unit.
4. If the tone unit which would be stressed according to these rules is the second one of the a long syllable, the stress falls on the first unit of that syllable.
5. Stress in compound words follows the above rules.

8. 8 INTONATION

The intonation system has not yet been fully investigated. The only distinct patterns that have been observed are statements and questions. In a question at the end of the utterance, is low, irrespective of the normal pattern of the words.

Example:

/oda ɛbla/ it is a dog

/oda ɛbla/ is it a dog

/oda ɛtaal/ is it a hawk

/oda ɛtaal/ it is a hawk

9.00 SAMPLE TEXT

Ka mpe ntaannele kebantama lifofo liniyai yanen
Yamana ba ta yaji yejo, Akaa aajaa okoowa lebaku leya
Ke, ma kebee sima obool letitpo na ooom beendam
Yawe ta yakoom eti, edo mma opiiil lebaku. beenmana
Ben yamana beta yagan be amaan Kebee sima na
Apuuwa mmaanfe jagan yata yasengi yapammai
Keebe sima koni tuumkoduumi

9.1 LITERAL TRANSLATION OF THE SAMPLE TEST

At month year eight, new yams come people start to eat yams
The festival has come. During that time chief of wood joint will
Send boy his to wait road then before declaring festival open .
Maidens they wear them bangles working round time all
Cerebration that is at that time is great.

9.2 A FREE TRANSLATION OF THE TEXT ABOVE

By the month of August each year the new yams begin to arrive and folks start to enjoy the yams from their harvests. This is a sign to show that the new yam festival is at hand. The chief priest of Lebaḱu would have started the various rituals that characterises the herald of the very important festival. During this period young maiden of marriageable age are allowed to wear bangles on their legs and march around the town with their bodies decorated with traditional coiffures that enhances their beauty, to the admiration of everybody in the vicinity.

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