

VOWEL HARMONY IN KIPSIGIS:
AN AUTOSEGMENTAL PHONOLOGY THEORY
APPROACH

BY
CHEBETT KOSKE

University of NAIROBI Library



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UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
EAST AFRICANA COLLECTION

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ABSTRACT

This study is an attempt to make a precise phonological analysis of the Kipsigis vowels to achieve vowel harmony within the paradigm of Autosegmental Phonology (AP) Theory.

Chapter one is an introduction to the study. It includes, among many other things, a brief account of the Kipsigis dialect, a statement of the problem, the objectives and the hypothesis. It also includes the review of literature, the theoretical framework and the methodology to be used in this study.

Chapter two is devoted to discussing Vowel Harmony in Kipsigis. It is concluded in this chapter that Kipsigis has a ten (10) vowel system symmetrically divided into the Advanced Tongue Root feature [ATR]. In this case we have the advanced tongue root [+ATR] and the retracted tongue root [-ATR]. Further, we realized vowel harmony advocates that, in a word all vowels must contain similar features for [ATR]. We also note that there are two types of control which are: the dominant harmony and recessive (adaptive) harmony controls. Kipsigis has both harmony controls.

Chapter three deals with noun vocabulary and affixes involved. A very clear link between the root morpheme and affixes (prefixes and suffixes) is established. The link is that of vowel harmony where dominant harmony or recessive harmony may be realized. At this point, the AP theory is applied to illustrate the direction of spreading and the dominating [ATR] that triggers harmony.

Chapter Four deals with various theoretical issues of the Autosegmental Phonology theory including Vowel Harmony. The important role of AP theory has been highlighted, including the bidirectional spreading of the [ATR] feature. There exists a special group of opaque morphemes called neutral morphemes that neither trigger assimilation nor change and assimilate to the feature of the morpheme attached to it.

Chapter Five concludes that the Autosegmental Phonology theory is very useful in any sound discussion on Vowel Harmony of Kipsigiş when one considers its ability to characterize the intrinsic linguistic competence of the speakers.