

Tone as a distinctive lexical feature in the Lexicon of Gi-Gichugu dialect, Gikuyu Language

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Abstract:

This study is an investigation of tone as a lexically distinctive feature in the lexicon of Gi-Gichugu dialect of Gikuyu language. It focuses on the distinctive role of tone in Gi-Gichugu nouns, verbs, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs and prepositions. The study investigates the lexical function of tone in the grammatical categories identified above and explores distinctive tone patterns realized in the said categories. The Autosegmental theory of phonology as propounded by Goldsmith (1976) is used in this study as the model for tone representations. This model places phonological representations larger than the segments on independent tiers and hence an effective tool for tonal representations in this study. In chapter one, the background to the study is given and the statement of the problem, objectives and hypothesis of the study stated. The theoretical framework on which the study is based is illustrated. Also, a review of pertinent literature on the nature of tone and tone in Gikuyu language is given. Chapter two shows Gi-Gichugu phonemic inventory and word classification. Gi-Gichugu segmental composition is analyzed with the vowels and consonants systems highlighted. Further, a description of the grammatical categories used in this study is given in brief. Also given this chapter is an overview of Gi-Gichugu syllable structure in which TBUs are subsumed in line with APT's skeletal tier. Chapter three investigates lexical function of tone in Gi-Gichugu dialect of Gikuyu language. An analysis of the tone in Gi-Gichugu is given with detailed illustration of their realizations in respective grammatical categories. The chapter also investigates tone pattern in Gi-Gichugu. The data used for tonal illustrations in this study is on syllabic basis. The data is drawn across the grammatical categories under study. The distinctive tones and tone patterns in Gi-Gichugu lexicon are extensively illustrated in this chapter. In particular, the lexical functions of tone in Gi-Gichugu is illustrated in detail to show the role of tone in conveying meaning of words and signaling grammatical categories. The minimal pairs used for illustrations are drawn across Gi-Gichugu grammatical categories where possible.