

**Issues in the morphology of tense and aspect in Mundabli, Western Beoid
(Cameroon)**
Rebecca Voll

Leiden University – The Netherlands

Mundabli belongs to the Western Beoid languages, a group of languages that has received very little attention in the past. The Beoid languages, though closely related to Bantu, are isolating rather than agglutinating. Though they do still have agreement within the noun phrase, noun class prefixes on the noun and verbal agreement are generally lost.

Mundabli has various past and future tenses. Together with variations in aspect and modality these form a complex TMA system. Most words are monosyllabic and distinctions in tense and aspect (as well as other categories) are coded by particles that generally precede the verb on the one hand and by a very complex system of tonal alternations on the other hand. In most cases, it is a combination of these strategies that is applied. But there is also a third strategy to code aspect, which is characteristic for the languages of this area: stem alternation in the verb. In related languages verb stems alternate between a CV in the perfective and a CVC form in which the final consonant is mostly velar in the imperfective. In Mundabli, which has lost all non-sonorant codas, this opposition can be realized as alternation between an a plain vowel in the perfective and a pharyngealized vowel in the imperfective CV-stem.

The Western Beoid languages look very much like the closely related Grassfields languages which are famous for their complicated tonal systems. But their morphology seems to be even more eroded than that of most Grassfields languages.

While some work has been done on Eastern Beoid languages (Hyman 1981), only a few wordlists and a survey (Hamm et al. 2002) are available for Western Beoid languages. The Mundabli data show that Western Beoid in some aspects differs considerably from what is known about Eastern Beoid languages. Having just come back from my second fieldtrip, I will present my results, i.e. data and a first analysis of the tense aspect system with a focus on tonal marking.