

The unexplored language varieties of Morogoro - a comparative study

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This presentation will address both sociolinguistic and structural aspects in a comparison of 8 poorly described language varieties spoken in the Morogoro region of Tanzania. The language varieties include: Kagulu [G12], Zigula [G31], Ng'hwele [G32], Zaramo [G33], Ngulu [G34], Luguru [G35], Kami [G36] and Kutu [G37].

In terms of morphosyntactic structure, the varieties appear to be quite similar and some can most likely be considered to be dialects of a single language. When it comes to comparative Bantu features, all varieties allow locative inversion, both the inherent class and class 8 can be used for partial agreement of conjoined noun phrases, object marking is asymmetric and no variety allows multiple object markers.

However, differences between the varieties raise questions about the internal structure of Guthrie's G subgroup and areal effects on languages in the region. For instance, while most of the 8 varieties are losing the use of the initial vowel (augment), in Luguru the usage is increasing. What is more, Luguru and Ngulu appear to have retained tones while tones are lost in many of the other varieties. Some language varieties, for instance Kutu and Zigula, pair their plural classes with their singular ones in unusual ways, and some still make use of class 12 as a diminutive. Finally, all languages use ha- as a negation in the indicative other than Kagulu where reflexes of ha- are used elsewhere, namely in the subjunctive. In this paper, the existing genetic grouping of these languages (Nurse and Philippson 1980) will be examined and reanalysed and some new parameters for Bantu comparison will be explored using original fieldwork data from the region.