

The realisation of tense/aspect morpheme tones in Bafut

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Some tenses and aspects (e.g. the yesterday past, the hortative past, the past progressive and the future) are segmentally marked in Bafut. There are however others (e.g. the present progressive, and the perfective) that are floating tones like in many other Bantu languages. Even those that are segmentally realised bear tones which produce puzzling effects on the structures in which they occur, making it difficult to understand what these morphemes are especially in the verb and its subject. In this paper, we analyse constructions in which these morphemes are found to demonstrate that the perfect in Bafut is a LH melody which has replacive properties and replace the underlying tone of the verb completely, while the progressive aspect is a H tone which is non-replacive. While the perfect LH melody is realised on the subject and the verb, the progressive is realised on any morpheme before the verb: on the last syllable of the subject if nothing separates the subject and the verb, and on any other morpheme, tense, Aspect negation etc. that precedes the verb and follows the subject of the verb. The tonal complexity in the Bafut sentence which we describe in this paper, can be accounted for once these assumptions are made and it is recognised that all subject pronouns in Bafut, with the exception of the 1pl which is LH and the 3pl which is H, are toneless. The paper demonstrates that the direction of association in this language is essentially right to left in its domain, with some tones prelinked.