

## **Tone in Western Ejagham: the case of lexical and postlexical tone on verbs**

John R. Watters

SIL - USA

*The goal of this study is to provide an account of tone on verbs at the lexical and post-lexical levels in Western Ejagham, an Ekoid Bantu language of Cameroon and Nigeria. The study will build on an earlier study of tone on nouns at the lexical and post-lexical levels. Lexically the association of noun tone melodies to tone-bearing units follows a set of ranked principles, from most restrictive to least restrictive. The assignment of tone to noun prefixes also follow a set of ranked principles.*

*Most tone melodies on nouns and their association with tone-bearing units are straightforward, but the more complex melodies of HLHL and HLLH required further analysis. This analysis extended to certain analogies with the Hortative and Conditional verbal forms. So to provide a more comprehensive and complete understanding of tonal processes in Ejagham a study of the lexical and post-lexical tone on verbs is in order.*

*Though the set of ranked principles established for nouns holds for verbs as far as they go, verbs present a number of additional phenomena. These include the following. First, to account for at least the perfective forms, replacive tone melodies are required. Second, tonal morphemes, particularly aspect/mood prefixes, are necessary to account for various verb forms. Third, a set of what were historically lexical and post-lexical processes have converged to form new verbal prefixes that need to be accounted for in a synchronic way. Fourth, the potential presence of multiple downstepped high tones within one verb form needs to be accounted for by some modification to the current set of ranked principles. These are examples of phenomena that will potentially require further modifications to the principles established for tone on nouns in Western Ejagham.*