

Borderline cases in Grassfields Bantu morphology and their historical significance in a wider (Benue-Congo) perspective

Roland Kießling

University of Hamburg – Germany

Grassfields Bantu languages provide various highly instructive clues to the historical interpretation of Benue-Congo morphology. The talk explores borderline cases from the periphery of the morphological domain (representing initial and terminal stages of grammaticalisation) for the stories they can tell about the development of salient features in Benue Congo morphology such as (1) the origin of non-concatenative morphology and the fate of high vowel reduplication, and (2) the development of noun class morphology in three perspectives, i.e. (a) the dynamics of change of coding strategies regarding the transition from prefix to suffix marking systems, (b) the phonologization of noun class morphology, and (c) the rise of nominal classificatory systems.