Tone in Wam (Kugama), an Adamawa language of Nigeria

Lora LITVINOVA
loravlitvinova@gmail.com
Adamawa Conference 2019, Mainz

1

General information on Wam

– ɲáː wàm 'the Wam language'
(KUGAMA)

- Yendang group of the Adamawa language family

- Spoken in a number of villages in Mayo-Belwa LGA and Fufore LGA of Adamawa State

- 5000 speakers (Ethnologue)

Previous research on Wam

- First field trip conducted in Yola, the capital of Adamawa State, in **January 2014** as part of research for my BA and later for my MA theses at St. Petersburg State University, Russia;

- Three field trips to Wam communities (Mayo-Belwa, Adamawa State, Nigeria) as part of my PhD project from Labex EFL (project LC2 "Areal phenomena in northern sub-Saharan Africa") in **March –June 2017**, **April – May 2018**, and **November 2018**.

Overview

- TBU and tone inventory
- Surface tone patterns of nouns
- Inalienable Possessive constructions as the tonal frame of nouns
- Downstep
- Phonetic tonal processes

TBU and tone inventory

- TBU in Wam is a mora
- Wam has three surface tone levels: H(igh), M(id) and L(ow)

- Monosyllabic functional morphemes, pronominals commonly carry one level tone, for example:

  (1)   a.   *nó* (2PL.PFV)

       b.   *tì* (PROG)

       c.   *ɲā* (NEG)

- But monosyllabic nouns commonly have a complex tone (with very few exceptions)

Surface tone patterns of nouns

Monosyllabic and disyllabic noun stems such as CV(V), CVC, CV(V).CV have the following tone patterns:

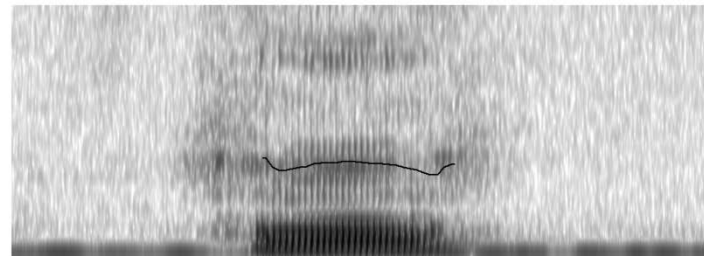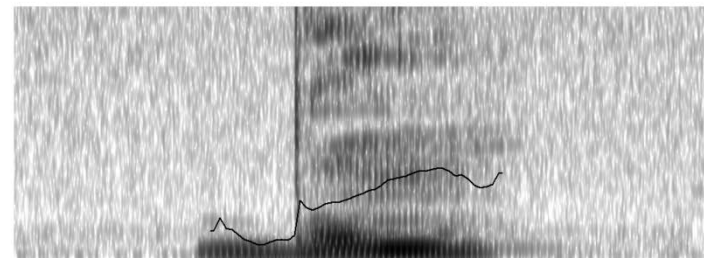|	CV(V)	CVC	CV(V).CV
HM	*váā* 'child'	*hɔ́y* 'calabash', *sūm* 'hair (of head)'	*bínā* 'granary', *náákī* 'cow'
MM	*kāā* 'machete'	*pūy* 'hole', *zɔ̄m* 'poison'	*tūkī* 'spitting cobra'
LM	*bàā* 'herd' *tɛ̀ɛ̄* 'chicken'	*pɔ̀y* 'face', *sàm* 'slave'	*gbènē* 'horse'
MH	*dāá* 'sheep'	*dŭm* 'hyena'	*gbīrɛ́* 'dwarf'
L	*sǐ* 'thing'	*kɔ̀y* 'date palm'	
HH			*dyéké* 'house'

HM: *hɔ́y* 'calabash'

KUG_20170424_AC_037
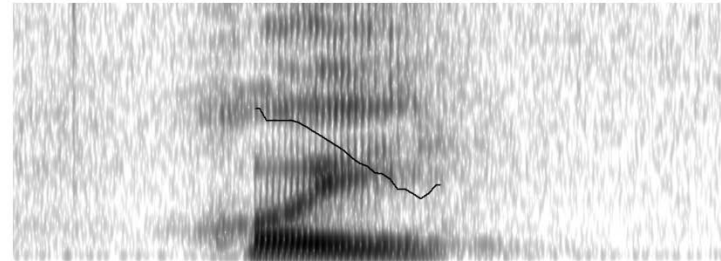
MM: *hǭ̰ǭ̰* 'food'

KUG_20170422_AC_035

LM: *bɔ̀m* 'roundhut, room'

KUG_20170424_AC_037

Inalienable Possessive constructions
as the tonal frame of nouns

1. Inalienable Possessive construction with Common nouns
(+nominal compounds)

[Possessee + floating L tone + Possessor]

the floating L docks to the left

2. Inalienable Possessive construction with Proper nouns

[Possessee + Possessor]

Inalienable Possessive constructions
as the tonal frame of nouns

- In both constructions the Possessee takes the Construct form

- The Construct form differs from the free (citation) form

The free (citation) form

- The free form of a noun includes an element, which can be deleted with the presence of a modifier. I call this element extension. Since it is not a morpheme I use the symbol $< + >$ to mark it.

(2)   a.   CVV+$^{\text{M}}$ *yíī* 'goat'

          b.   CVN+$^{\text{M}}$ *tɔ́ŋ* 'father'

          c.   CV+$^{\text{M}}$+y   *ɓɛ̂y* 'stomach'

          d.   CVCV+$^{\text{M}}$ *gérɛ̄* 'pig'

          e.   CCV/CVV+$^{\text{M}}$+kV   *ɗyé.ké* 'house'

The free form and the construct form

- Inalienable Possessive construction with Common nouns: segmental and tonal extensions are deleted

- Inalienable Possessive construction with Proper names: segmental extensions are deleted

(2) a. CVV + ^{M} *yíī* 'goat'

     b. CVN + ^{M} *tɔ́ŋ* 'father'

     c. CV + ^{M} + y   *ɓɛ́y* 'stomach'

     d. CVCV + ^{M} *gérɛ̄* 'pig'

     e. CCV/CVV + ^{M} + kV   *ɗyé.ké* 'house'

The free form and the construct form

		CV+$^{\text{M}}$+y 'stomach'	CCV+$^{\text{M}}$+kV 'house'	CVN+$^{\text{M}}$ 'father'
Allomorph 1	Free form	ɓɛ̃́y	ɗyéké	tɔ́ŋ
Allomorph 2	Construct form 1	ɓáá	ɗyé	tɔ́ŋ
Allomorph 3	Construct form 2	ɓáā	ɗyē	

(3) a. *ɓɛ̃́y* 'stomach', *nááƙī* 'cow' → *ɓáá ꜜnááƙī*
'stomach of the cow'

b. *ɓɛ̃́y* 'stomach', *Àlí* (male name) → *ɓáā Àlí*
'stomach of Ali'

(4) a. *dyéké* 'house', *wɛ̄m* 'person' → *dyé* ꜜ*wɛ̄m*
'house of the person'

dyéké 'house', *Àlî* (male name) → *dyē* *Àlî*
'house of Ali'

The free form and the construct form 1

Free form		Construct form 1		
H +^{M}	*ɓɛ̄y* 'stomach' *gérē* 'pig'	H	*ɓáá ꜝnáákī* *géré ꜝdyéké*	'stomach of the cow' 'domestic pig'
L +^{M}	*lɛ̄y* 'cheek' *dǫ̀ǫ̀rī* 'star'	L	*làà dꞮ̄ī* *dǫ̀ǫ̀rì gāátē*	'gill' 'Orion'
M +^{M}	*hǭǭ* 'food'		*hǫ̀ǫ̀ sɔ̄m*	'dish made of guinea corn'
HM	*dóō* 'rope'	HL	*dóò bèkī*	'hunting net'
LM	*tȩ̀ȩ̄* 'chicken' *gbɛ̀nē* 'horse'	MH	*tȩ̄ȩ́ ꜝbàā* *gbēnɛ́ ꜝbàā*	'chicken of the flock' 'horse of the herd'
MH	*dȩ̄ȩ́* 'sheep'		*dȩ̄ȩ́ ꜝbàā*	'sheep of the herd'

- Variations between speakers:

(5)   a.   *váá ꜝɓá ꜝyēy*   ~ *váà ɓá ꜝyēy*   'bastard'
                                                          (child - stomach/inside - wind)

   b.   *tóŋ ꜝwɛ̄m*   ~ *tôŋ wɛ̄m*   'father of the person'

   c.   *dūmlè tárī*   ~ *dūmlé ꜝtárī*   'son-in-law'
                                                          (son/child - father-in-law?)

Downstep

- The floating L tone causes downstep between the Possessee and the Possessor

KUG_20181130_BB_066

nɔ̀ɔ̀	yéŋ	⁺yéŋ	⁺yéŋ	⁺yéŋ	
daughter	mother	mother	mother	mother	
...mother's mother's sister					
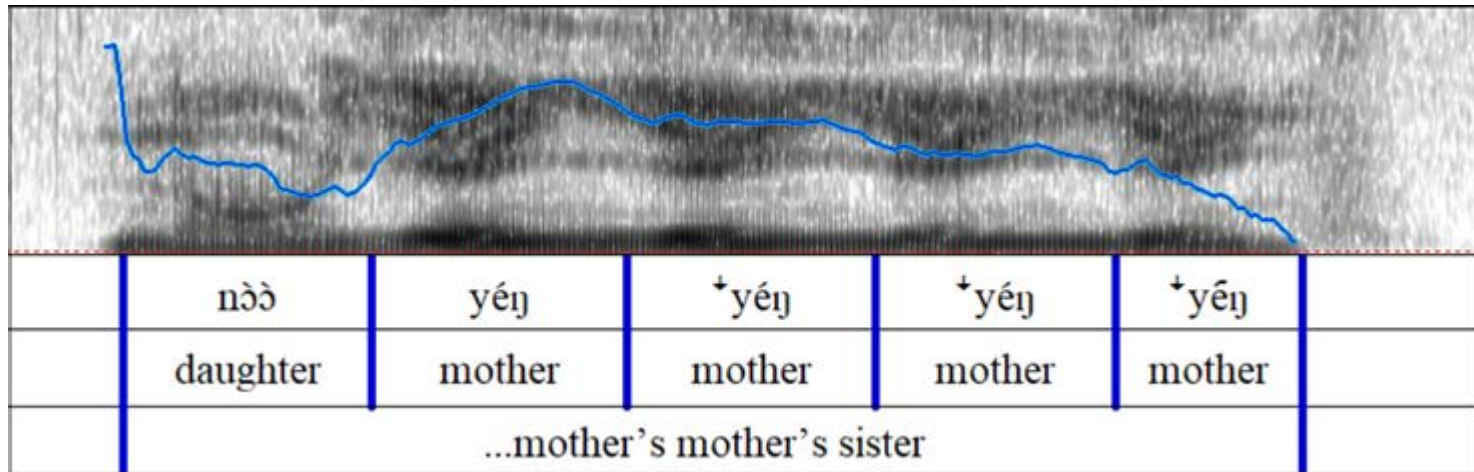
Downstep (continued)

- The floating L tone causes downstep between the Possessee and the Possessor

KUG_20181130_BB_066

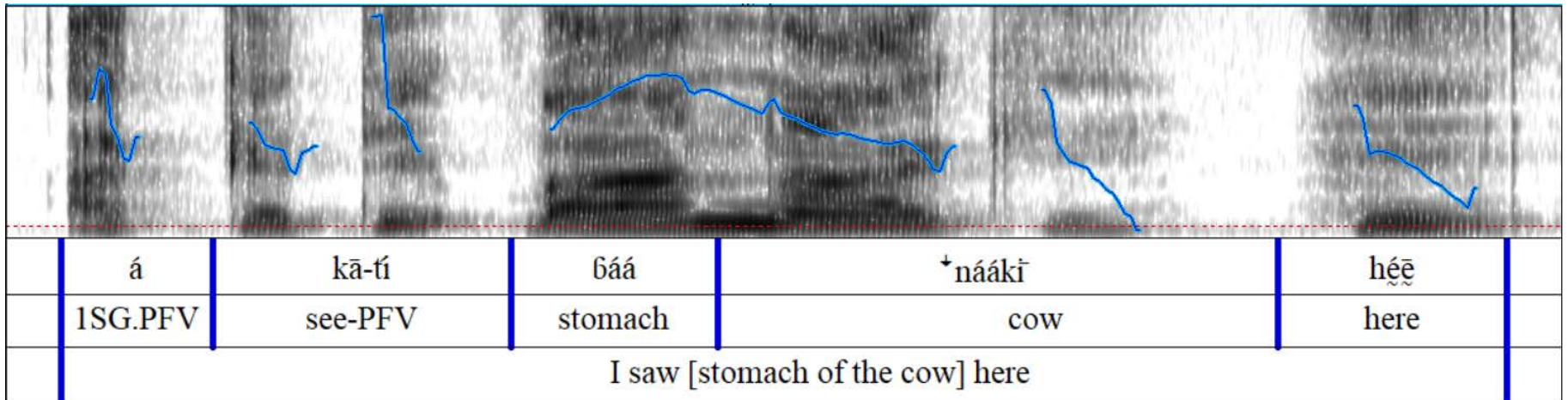| vísí	ꜜnáá	ꜜgérɛ́	ꜜɗyéké
finger	hand	pig	house
finger of the domestic pig			
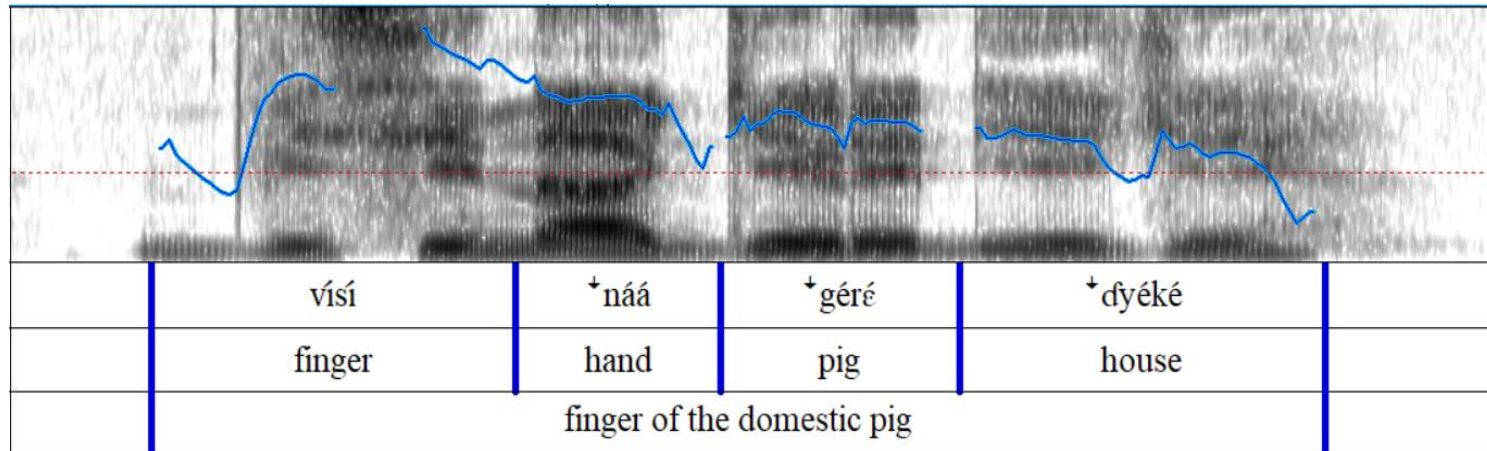
H-raising/upstep

- H-raising regularly occurs as a phonetic realization of phonological downstep by anticipatory dissimilation of the H to the left of the floating L

- H-raising takes place when

- H precedes the floating L of the possessive linker

- HL on one syllable

(6) a.   *ɓáá ꜜnáákī*   'stomach of the cow'

     b.   *ɓáà yéní ꜜnáákī*   'steer'

     c.   *yîîkī*   'kill' (c.f. *yíkī* 'beat')
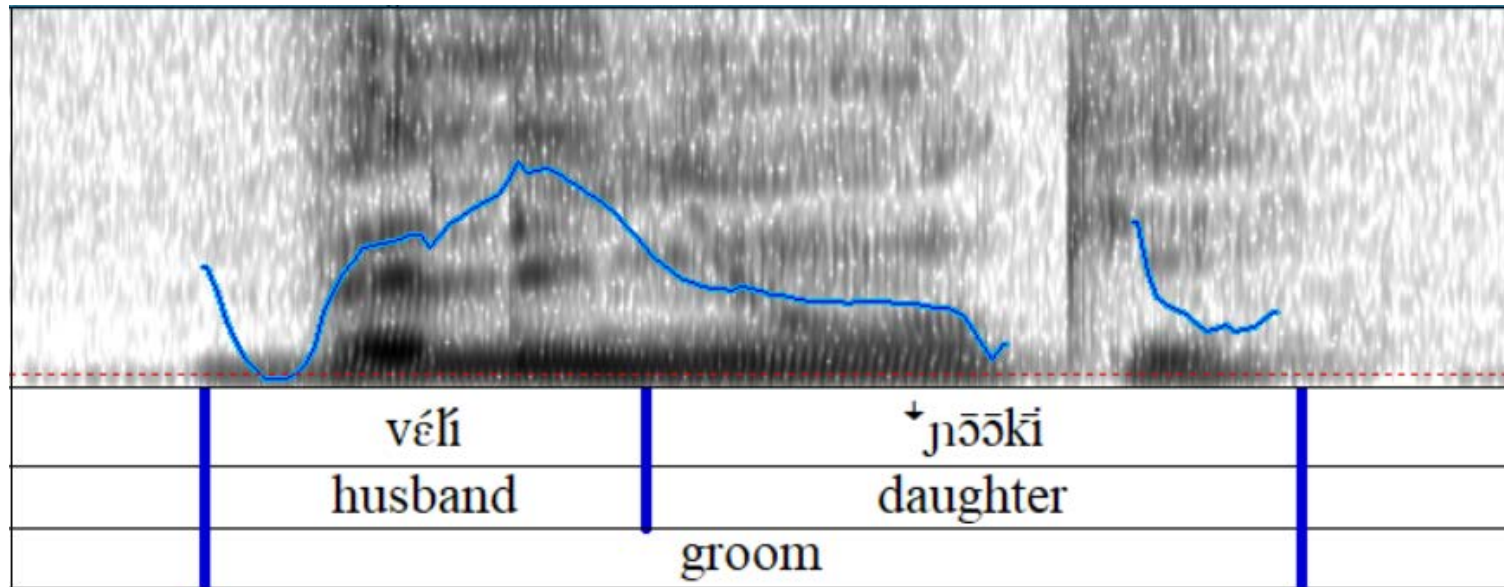
H-raising/upstep (continued)

KUG_20180417_AC_001

á	kā-t͡í	ɓáá	ꜛnáák͡i̥	hɛ́ɛ̰̄
1SG.PFV	see-PFV	stomach	cow	here
I saw [stomach of the cow] here

H-raising/upstep (continued)

- When there is a succession of syllables with H, the H pitch is raising towards the right edge of the domain

KUG_20170501_AC_049

véĺí	↓ɲɔ̄ɔ̄kĭ
husband	daughter
groom	

The case of anticipatory assimilation

▪ L is raised when it is followed by extra-H

(7)   a.   *gbēnɛ́ ꜝbàā*   'horse of the herd'   *gbènɛ̄* 'horse', *bàā* 'herd'

      b.   *gāā síꜜtààpɔ̄*   'pipe stick'   *gààsì* 'stick', *síꜜtààpɔ̄* 'pipe'