

DOWNSTEP DISPLACEMENT IN KIKUYU (abstract)

Kevin C. Ford
 University of Nairobi

G. N. Clements
 Harvard University

1. We are concerned with a number of processes in Kikuyu tonal phonology involving downstep, and with the contribution Kikuyu affords to our understanding of the status of downstep in phonological theory. Specifically, we propose to view downstep as a phonological entity ordered among the tonemes which constitute an independent level of phonological representations [Clements 1976], rather than, as in some treatments, an intonational process determined by certain features (or configurations of features) within the feature matrices defining tones.

We review the major tonal processes involving DS (downstep) in 23 Kikuyu idiolects, representative of the northern, southern, and western districts of the Kikuyu-speaking region. The processes in question are rules of phrase phonology (rules of "external sandhi"), dependent upon both a bipartite division of nongrammatical morphemes (for the most part, independent words) into two tonal classes, I and II, and the syntactic configurations in which these may occur. These processes are summarized in the following sections. In several cases, it can be shown that significant generalizations can be formulated only if DS is viewed as an entity ordered among strings of tonemes. Space permits the discussion of only two such cases in this abstract.

2.1 Noninterrogative sentences are marked finally by intonational processes of key-lowering which can be summarized as follows:

R.O. $\emptyset \rightarrow / \text{---} L_Q (H_Q) \#_S$ (where L_Q is a maximal string of
 L tones $_Q$)
 né mwayáhiŋá [- - -] 'he's a weakling'
 mwayáhiŋá mórito [- - - -] 'heavy weakling'

It will be noted that DS is "total" (Meeussen) in the sense that a sequence L^1H is phonetically equivalent to the sequence LL , the sequence H^1H to the sequence HL , etc. As RO is an automatic, exceptionless process in these sentences the DSs it introduces are fully predictable and are not indicated in the examples.

not impossible that this diacritic marking may be eliminable in favor of a purely phonological analysis, but this will not affect our discussion. All unstable H (UH) tones become L before a H tone across a WB, provided that no DS intervenes:

R4. UH → L / ____ # H

As before (sec. 2.5), no special mention need be made of the condition that no DS intervenes, since a string of the shape UH # ! H does not meet the SD of the rule.

2.7 Two contiguous DSs undergo context-free deletion:

R5. !! → ∅

2.8 These rules can be illustrated by the following further derivation (all items crucially involved are class I):

he	gave	Njuguna	banana	heavy	one	long ago	very	
/né	ahéiré	njoyóná	iriyo	irito	rémwé	tene	monó	/
H L	L H	L H H!	L L L	L L L !	H H !	L L !	L H !	(by DS intro)
H L	L H	L H H	H H H	H H H !!	H H	H H !!	L H !	(by R1)
H H	L H	L H H	H H H	H H H !!	H H	H H !!	L H !	(by R2)
H H	L H	L H L	H H H	H H H !!	H L	H H !!	L H !	(by R4)
H H	L H	L H L	H H H	H H H	H L	H H	L H !	(by R5)

Naturally, single DSs remaining in strings after the operation of R1 are not deleted (see e.g. the example in sec. 2.3). Sentence-final DSs have no phonetic effect.

3.0 The summary of Kikuyu tone sandhi presented here can only be regarded as a very schematic overview of a system that offers many complexities. We believe, however, that it accurately characterizes the nature, if not the detail, of the tonal processes involved.

REFERENCES

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