

Phrasal phonological processes in Kom

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Using the descriptive design, this paper presents the phrasal phonological rules attested in Kom, a Grassfields Bantu language spoken in Boyo Division in the North West Region of Cameroon. This paper demonstrates that in the phonology-syntax connection, the hierarchically fashioned domains in the prosodic structure provide the desirable platform for a better and holistic explanation of post-lexical phonological processes that exist in the language. Theoretically, the study employs the Prosodic Hierarchy Theory (Schema), initially developed by Selkirk, Hayes, Nespor, and Vogel in the 1980s and by Hayes in the 1990s to analyse some phonological processes that occur at the boundaries of the phrases in Kom. Empirically, it involves recorded and transcribed words, phrases, clauses and sentences from 20 Kom speakers of both genders, distributed equally with age range between 35 to 60. Two major current trends account for rules that refer to phrasal conditions. The first trend assumes that phonological rules have access to syntactic information and that this information should simply be included in the structural description of the phonological rule. This approach, advocated by Clements (1978), Odden (1987), and Kaisse (1985), is generally referred to as the 'Direct Approach'. The second trend is represented by linguists who claim that the 'Direct Approach' gives too much power to phonology. This approach is known as the 'Prosodic Hierarchy Theory'. Findings from this study show that some rules that occur post-lexically or at the frontiers of the phrases in Kom include: Tone Raising, Vowel Raising, Vowel Insertion, and Nasal Deletion. Two key innovations arising from this study are the existence of a boundary high tone and vowel lengthening which occur at the frontiers of the phrases in the language.

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