

Erosion and loss processes in the study of negation markers in Ghómálá'

Francine F. Moguo
University of Buea

This paper provides an overview of how negation is expressed in Ghómálá' (an Eastern Grassfields Bantu language spoken in the western region of Cameroon) with particular attention to the nature of the negation morpheme, its distribution, and evolution over time. Sentential negation in Ghómálá' usually makes use of double negation marking, that is, a discontinuous morpheme. Apart from other negation patterns in the language which will be discussed, three discontinuous negation markers are used in the language, namely: *kā... pǎ*, *tǎ ... pǎ*, *lǎm ... pǎ*. However, the second segment of this morpheme always found at sentence final position, is gradually becoming optional with time and tends to be omitted in speech. It, therefore, seems that this second element, which remains unaltered, is likely to be grammaticalised from a focus marker, an assertion marker, to some kind of reinforcer. The focus here is on the discontinuous negation pattern and I argue that the distribution of the second part of the negation morpheme has gradually evolved from complementation to emphasis and finally is being eroded and is in the process of being lost in Ghómálá'.