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Hiatus resolution in formosan austronesian and selected Bantu languages :a comparative analysis

Fang, Chen-Shu

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to present a comparative analysis of common hiatus resolutions of a number of languages from the Bantu and Formosan Austronesian language families. Luganda, ciNsenga, ChiShona and isiXhosa belong to the Bantu language family, whereas Isibukun Bunun and Squliq Atayal belong to the Formosan Austronesian language family, that is, the Austronesian language spoken by aboriginals in Taiwan. The two language families are geographically distant from each other. However, due to the extent of coverage of Austronesian languages, Madagascar is the final point where Bantu and Austronesian language merge. Malagasy, the language spoken in Madagascar, is still categorized as one of the Austronesian languages, but it contains words of Bantu, Swahili, Arab, English, and French origin.

Although prior studies indicate that these languages have different phonological structures, they all disfavored hiatus (Huang, 2006; Casali, 2011; Kadenge & Simango, 2014; Rosenthall, 1997). Other previous studies (Busser, 2011; Kadenge, 2014; Park, 1997) that compare hiatus resolution using Optimality theory (OT) focus on the languages of the same language family or dialects of the same languages. This study thus aiming to compare the common hiatus resolutions two different distant language families. A vast corpus of ciNsenga, ChiShona, Luganda, isiXhosa, Isbukun Bunun and Squliq Atayal, with other supporting language data from Bantu and Formosan Austronesian languages, is drawn from the existing studies and presented in the analysis chapter. Glide formation occurs in all the selected languages. It is triggered when V_1 is high in ciNsenga, ChiShona, and Luganda. In addition, V_2 becomes a long vowel in Luganda after V_1 turns into a glide. Glide formation targets high vowels regardless of the position of V_1 or V_2 in Isbukun Bunun and Squliq Atayal. In isiXhosa, only a round V_1 before a following non-round vowel glides (/o+i/, /o+e/, /o+a/, /u+i/, /u+e/, and /u+a/) without a compensatory lengthening. Coalescence is not the hiatus repair strategy of ciNsenga and Luganda, but is one of the strategies to resolve hiatus in ChiShona, isiXhosa, Isbukun Bunun and Squliq Atayal. Coalescence takes place when the stem-final vowel and the following vowel are identical in both languages. In Squliq Atayal, when the stem-final vowel and the following –VC suffix create a falling-sonority sequence (a+u), coalescence is also triggered. Luganda has a similar strategy to deal

with two juxtaposed vowels. However, it is categorized as Twin Vowel Deletion. Coalescence takes place in isiXhosa when V_1 is non-high and V_2 is high.

The overall findings of the study show that different rankings of the same set of constraints distinguishes one language from another, and also highlight the similarities between the two language families.