

Emilienne Ngangoum

When synchrony meets diachrony

The negation system of Fɛʔfɛʔ in the light of the Jespersen Cycle

This dissertation is concerned with synchronic variation as the reflection and residue of language change. It springs from the need to account for the numerous ways of expressing negation in contemporary Fɛʔfɛʔ (Grassfield Bantu), given the observation that many languages across the continents make use of a single marker for the same purpose. The leading research question is whether there exists a roadmap susceptible to lead from one of the extremes to the other. The answer to this question establishes a connection between synchronic variation and diachrony.

Using cross-generational variation within Fɛʔfɛʔ, macro-variation data from languages with historical records, and micro-variation data from closely related Bamileke languages, it is argued that grammar internal variation of the kind observed in Fɛʔfɛʔ is the manifestation of language change. This approach constitutes an inspiration for the analysis of languages that don't have written records from previous generations.

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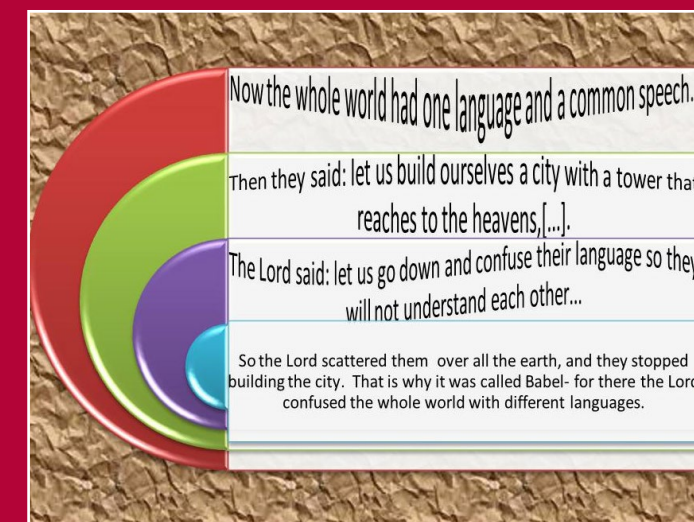
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