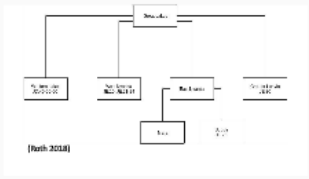
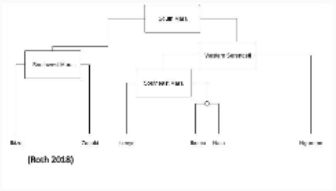


The Mara region and languages



Western Serengeti languages

Ikoma-Nata-Ishenyi (ntk, JE45) and Ngoreme (ngq, JE401)

- Ikoma 19,000
- Ishenyi 8,000
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1) Introduction
2) Presentation of the challenge(s)
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What else?

How?

With whom?

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- A digital platform: website
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KONEEN SÄÄTIÖ

CHALLENGES CONSTRUCTING A MULTILECTAL GRAMMAR

The case of the Western Serengeti languages

Lotta Hurtig, Tuomas Bernander, Anni Laine, Tero Roth
Descriptive Grammars and Typology
Helsinki 23-25 March 2019

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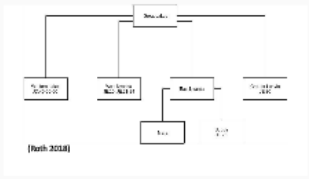

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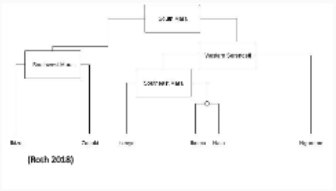

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The Mara region and languages

- Region in Northwestern Tanzania, between Lake Victoria and the Serengeti
- 20 or so Bantu varieties (JE20 & JE40) in the East Nyanza branch of Great Lakes Bantu (Glottolog lists 12 ”languages” in E-Nyanza)
- Other language phyla are also present: Luo, Maa and Datooga represent the three main branches of Nilotic, and there is evidence of a Cushitic presence in the past as well

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Linguistic Variation as an Indicator of Historical Relations and Language Contact: A comparative grammar of four Mara Bantu languages (Tanzania)

- University of Helsinki project funded by the Kone Foundation
- We're studying the 4 (or 5) Western Serengeti (WS) varieties, which show remarkable microvariation especially in their vowel and tone systems, several aspects of morphosyntax, and their tense & aspect systems

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muyo	*chááchaβa*	*iβere.*
in	coins	two

'He also saw a poor widow **putting** in two very small copper coins.'

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Ngoreme and Iko
(present,

Luke 18:36-37

Ngoreme:

Enkaaɣa	*ooɣúúre*	*aβánto*	*aβaaru*	***βa-ku-hét-a***	*hayó,*	*a-ka-βóóri,*
when	he heard	people	many	3.PL-SIT-pass-FV	there	3.SG-NARR-ask

"Keho ke?"	*βa-ka-mu-βóórr-a,*	*"Yéésu wa Násareti*	***a-ra-hét-a.*** *"*
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Ikoma:

Hano	*óɣwire*	*aβááto*	*βááru*	***βa-ra-hét-a***	*háyo,*	*a-ka-βóóri,*	*"Neke*
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Luke 21:2

Ngoreme:

A-ka-murór-a	*ɣwíki*	*omosíno*	*omwé*	*omutóβu*	***a-ra-tóór-a***	*muyo*
3.SG-NARR-3.SG-see	also	widow	one	poor	3.SG-IPFV-put-FV	in

chisaraafu	*iβére*	*chensúúhu*	*tu*
coins	two	small	only

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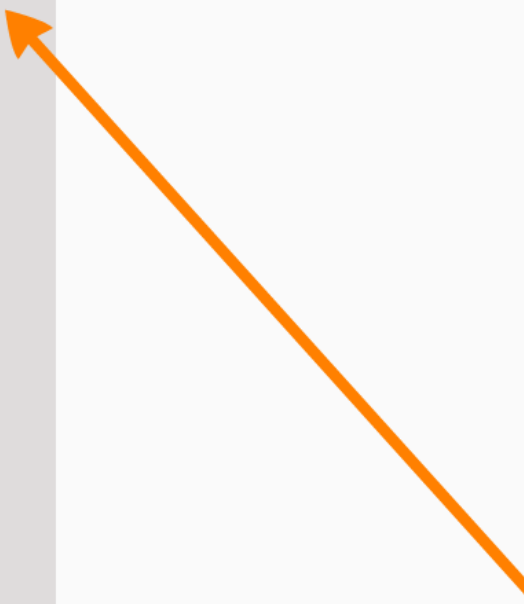

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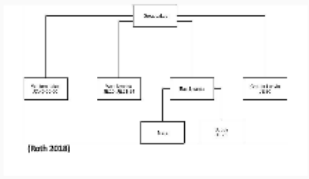

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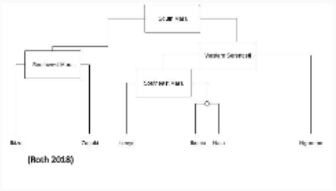

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Our project

Linguistic Variation as an Indicator of Historical Relations and Language Contact:
A comparative grammar of four Mara Bantu languages (Tanzania)

- University of Helsinki project funded by the Emil Aaltonen Foundation
- Möttönen (eds) Stock (ed.) Modern Komagali (MK) on Kaby, rabbit, silver: remarkable subordination capacity in their casual and formal systems, crossed aspects of morphosyntax, and their former 3-aspect system

KONEEN SÄÄTIÖ

CHALLENGES CONSTRUCTING A MULTILECTAL GRAMMAR

The case of the Western Serengeti languages

Lotta Hurtig, Tuomas Bernander, Anni Laine, Tero Roth
Descriptive Grammars and Typology
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- ALL 4 language varieties are to be described
  - All these language varieties are endangered (to a varied degree)
  - None of them have been adequately described before

Why multilectal grammar?

1 Both descriptive and explanatory advantages with a multilectal approach:
Making use of the complementary and mutually beneficial strategies of language-internal synchronic analysis AND historical-comparative analysis

2 Allows inferences on historical as well as ongoing language change:
-Synchronic (micro-)variation = instantiation of different stages along the same diachronic pathway
NB: Also for investigating the process of integration and further development of borrowed matters & patterns

3 Works the other way around as well.
The historical-comparative evidence may:
i) offer an explanation to the variation found
ii) help to explain peculiar synchronic traits

Imperfectives in Ngoreme and Ikoma

	Ngoreme	Ikoma
they ARRIVE	*fa-ra-hik-a* 2.SP-IPFV-arrive-FV 'they arrive, are arriving, will arrive'	*n-ba-ake-hik-a* FOC-2.SP-IPFV-arrive-FV 'they arrive, are arriving, will arrive'
we SPEAK	*tu-ra-yaimbaa-a* 1.PL.SP-IPFV-speak-FV 'we speak, are speaking, will speak'	*n-to-aya-sliker-a* FOC-1.PL.SP-IPFV-speak-FV 'we speak, are speaking, will speak'
we DIG	*tu-ra-tiik-a* 1.PL.SP-IPFV-dig-FV 'we dig, are digging, will dig'	*n-to-aya-tiik-a* FOC-1.PL.SP-IPFV-dig-FV 'we dig, are digging, will dig'

But how to present it?

How do we provide a systematic presentation of the description and analysis of the language data? Problems arise when the subsystems vary to the degree that they are not parallel

Ngoreme and Ikoma progressive aspects (present, past, and future)

Ngoreme	Ikoma
n-ko-VB-a SBJ-V-ni	*SBJ-ra-VB-a*
n-ko-VB-a SBJ-aire	*n-SBJ-V-ré SBJ-ra-VB-a*
SBJ-ra-fia SBJ-ra-VB-a	*n-SBJ-ku-fia SBJ-ra-VB-a*

Onomasiologically
a single meaning is expressed through different strategies in the different varieties

OR

Semasiologically
the same form have different meanings in different varieties

General problems: Similar complications as for monolectal grammars
a) How do we make the results easily retrievable, analyzable but also reproducible for other researchers?
b) How do we make the results easily retrievable and beneficial **for the actual speakers?**