



Conference on

The Expression of Phasal Polarity in sub-Saharan African languages

2nd-4th February 2018, Department of Asia-Africa Studies, University Of Hamburg

Call for papers

Specialized linguistic items expressing concepts of Phasal Polarity (PhP), i.e. ALREADY, STILL, NOT YET and NO LONGER, are well described in a bulk of excellently documented European languages. In sub-Saharan African languages, however, this category of expressions has not received major attention. In most descriptive works on these languages, PhP expressions are not delineated, or they are analyzed in a rather unsystematic way. This may be due to methodological problems that arise in seeking to elicit these (essentially pragmatically motivated) items. It is also possible that, in an individual language, there is no clear PhP paradigm consisting of four items sharing similar morphosyntactic features as in many European languages, or dedicated morphemes for the coding of PhP concepts may be absent altogether. However, general typological study of PhP expressions cannot do without an adequate consideration of languages spoken in the sub-Saharan parts of Africa. Thus, this symposium aims to contribute to the understanding of the coding, rise and functional dimensions of PhP expressions in these languages.

Contributions are most welcome that describe the coding of PhP expressions in (an) individual language(s) focusing on questions such as:

- Do specialized linguistic elements exist to express all four PhP concepts? If there are coding gaps, which PhP concept(s) has/have to be paraphrased or is/are expressed through (a) semantically vague/ambiguous construction(s)?
- Are PhP items involved in the coding of more than just one PhP concept (e.g. in German *noch* in STILL (*noch*) and NOT YET (*noch nicht*) expressions)?
- Does the use of PhP expressions affect the coding of TAM (e.g. blocking of TAM categories, neutralization of TAM distinctions, use of different TAM values)?
- What are the functional dimensions of specific PhP expressions? How strongly are they associated with the coding of counter-expectation?
- Is the point of polarity change, whose transgression ALREADY and NO LONGER expressions imply, associated with the notion of lateness or earliness?
- Can the meaning/function of the source item be determined from which the PhP element developed? Is there evidence for further grammaticalization of PhP elements (e.g. into markers of negation)?
- How can PhP expressions be analyzed from a structural point of view (e.g. as affixes, clitics, adverbs, phrases, collocations)?

As a first approach to a comparable description and classification, I propose six parameters along which PhP expressions may be analyzed: three are more concerned with functional values (COVERAGE, PRAGMATICITY, TELICITY), the other three rather reflect their formal properties (WORDHOOD, EXPRESSIBILITY, PARADIGMATICITY). These parameters are outlined in detail in a separate position paper that is available online at the conference homepage (<https://www.aai.uni-hamburg.de/afrika/PhP2018.html>).

We invite contributions to the conference that speak to the above questions and the parameters outlined in the position paper, but we also welcome papers on other topics related to PhP expressions in sub-Saharan African languages. Please submit the titles and abstracts (100-150 words) of your papers by October 30th, 2017 to raija.kramer@uni-hamburg.de.