Concord, classification & contact in Baïnouk

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THE HANS RAUSING Endangered Languages Project
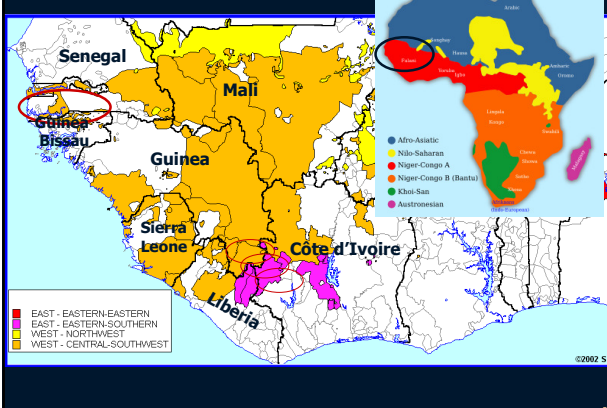
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Structure of the talk

- Introduction to Baïnouk
- A funky phenomenon: literal alliterative concord (LAC)
- The importance of LAC for the nominal classification system of Baïnouk
- The role of contact for LAC and Baïnouk in general
- Outline of a research paradigm

Although the task focuses on a particular language, it is hoped that it will be of general relevance for the question of what knowledge to document in multilingual settings.
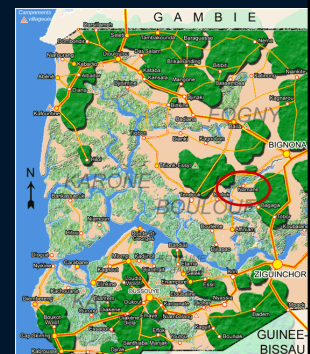

Introduction to Baïnouk

West Africa

Senegal

Mali

Guinea Bissau

Guinea

Sierra Leone

Côte d'Ivoire

Liberia

- Afro-Asiatic
- Nilo-Saharan
- Niger-Congo A
- Niger-Congo B (Bantu)
- Khoi-San
- Austronesian

EAST - EASTERN-EASTERN
EAST - EASTERN-SOUTHERN
WEST - NORTHWEST
WEST - CENTRAL-SOUTHWEST

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Casamance

- Casamance is a hotspot of linguistic diversity (and language endangerment) in Senegal.
- Around 20 languages are spoken in the area.
- Their number is likely to be downplayed because of lumping tendencies dominant so far.
- A civil war made research impossible in the past.

The Baïnouk

- Are the first known inhabitants of the Casamance region of Southern Senegal (de Lespinay 1987, 1996, Bühnen 1994)
- Occupy a number of isolated villages scattered throughout Casamance.
- Group their language into three main varieties, Gunyaamolo, Gubaher and Gujaher.
- Live in a complex multilingual context, where they speak between 3 and 6 languages on a daily basis.

7

Not the language, a way of life is threatened

- People don't give up Baïnouk because of:
  - Multilingualism
  - Confinement of Bainouk to the oral sphere
  - The role of the official language French
  - Lack of transmission to children

The villages themselves are disappearing due to massive rural exodus, and with them the sole context of use of Baïnouk. People adopt a different pattern of multilingualism in towns.c
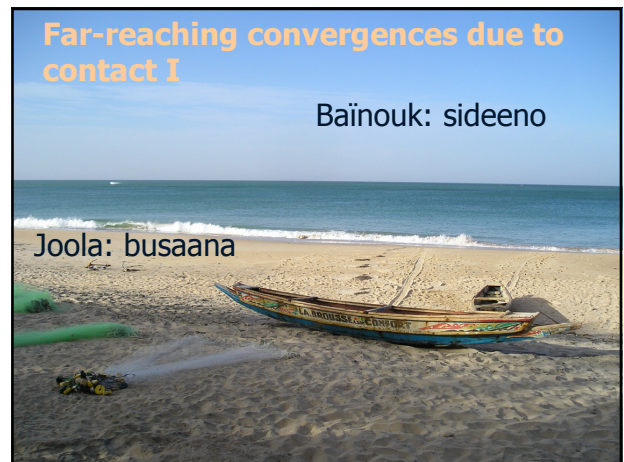
8

Domains of multingualism

At home: Baïnouk (and Wolof)

In the fields: Baïnouk, Joola, and Mandinka

On the way to town: Joola, Mandinka, Wolof and French

At the market: Joola, Mandinka, Wolof, and French

Writing: Mainly in French

CERTIFICAT
d'Études d'Alphabétisation

... and to a very limited extent in Baïnouk

Far-reaching convergences due to contact I

Baïnouk: sideeno

Joola: busaana

Far-reaching convergences due to contact II

Baïnouk : sideeno

Joola: busaana

Literal alliterative concord (LAC) in Baïnouk

The Baïnouk noun class system

Prefix	Stem		Gloss
si-			'mango tree'
mu-			'mango trees'
	mango		
bu-			'mango fruit'
di-			'mango fruits'
	Diminutive prefix replaces other class markers		
ko-			'small mango'
ni-			'small mangos'

Ca. 20 classes are organised in singular-plural pairings typical for Atlantic and Niger-Congo languages. All eligible nouns combine with diminutive and augmentative class markers.

Prefixless nouns in Baïnouk

Prefix	Stem	Suffix	Gloss
ø		-ɛŋ	'goat'
	fajamen		'goats'
ko-			'small goat'
ko-		-ɛŋ	'small goats'

According to Sauvageot (1967), ca 30% of the nominal lexicon are prefixless nouns with a suffixed plural that only occur with diminutive and augmentative prefixes.

Concord (agreement) in Baïnouk

NC-stem-DEF	DEM-NC	
si-nɔŋ-ɔ	ɪn-sɪ	'this tree'
mʊ-nɔŋ-ɔ	ɪm-mʊ	'these trees'
ø-fajamen-ɔ	ɪn-fa	'this goat'
ko-fajamen-ɔ	ɪn-kɔ	'this small goat'

Recall: fa is not a class marker because it isn't replaced by the diminutive marker ko.

A subset of prefixless nouns copies the first syllable of the stem onto agreeing elements.

Literal alliterative concord (LAC) in Baïnouk

- LAC creates a potentially open set of noun class markers.
- LAC challenges theories that assume the principle of phonology-free syntax (cf. Zwicky 1969& Pullum 1986)
- LAC is cross-linguistically extremely rare and has only been postulated for less than a handful of languages, among them Bainouk (Dobrin 1995, Aronoff 1998)

However, LAC is not unconstrained. Only a subset prefixless nouns exhibits it, the others take the agreement suffixes –nɔ and –Vŋɔ.

The role of contact in LAC

Hypothesis: prefixless nouns are loanwords

- According to Sauvageot (1967), the majority of prefixless nouns are loanwords, mainly from Mandinka, a Mande language without noun classes.
- He also claims that the suffixed definite marker (only in the Gunyaamolo variety of Bainouk) and plural are borrowed from Mandinka as well.

However, suffixed plurals are also attested in the related language Buy (Doneux 1991), which has been less in contact with Mandinka. Suffixed class markers are attested in several Atlantic languages alongside or instead of prefixes.

Prefixes that are not quite prefixes

fajamen > Joola e-jamen (Sg.)/si-jamen (Pl.)

> Where does fa come from?

fe:bi 'goat' in Bainouk Gubaher and archaic form in Gunyaamolo

fa- NC prefix in other Atlantic languages, among them the closely related Buy (Doneux 1991)

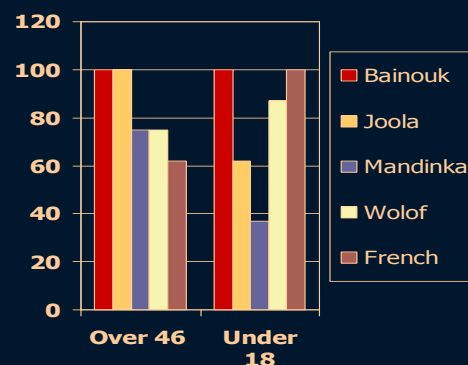> Hypothesis: LAC comes about through the combination of etymological knowledge and borrowing.

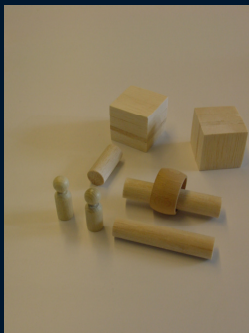# Outline of a research paradigm

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It's a lot of work!

- Inclusion of data from all three varieties of Baïnouk.
- Establishment of an inventory of nouns with agreement properties in all Baïnouk varieties and the contact languages.
- Combination of sociolinguistic data with linguistic data in order to determine plausibility and direction of borrowing.
- Use of McMahon & MacMahon's (2006) Hi-Hi and Lo-Lo Swadesh sublists to detect borrowings in basic vocabulary.
- Experiments comprising naming tasks for novel objects and definition/classification/sorting and word creation tasks and elicitation of concord data for novel nouns (cf. Seifart 2005, Sagna 2008).

Combining sociolinguistic and linguistic data to corroborate assumptions on borrowing

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Naming and sorting tasks

Definition/classification/word creation tasks

- Is a bugusɔ
  - a) an instrument for cutting
  - b) a fruit
  - c) a body part?
- Kamun means 'steering wheel'. How do you say 'this steering wheel'?
- Invent a Bainouk word for 'window'.

> More ideas?