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A brief outline of the typological features of the Yoruba language

Abstract

The article presents materials on the phonetic and grammatical structure of Yoruba – one of the most widely spoken languages of West Africa, which, along with its literary form, exists in many dialectical variants. Using examples selected from modern normative speech usage, the author – a native speaker of the Standard Yoruba – demonstrates the ways of expressing semantic content, various grammatical meanings and categories in the Yoruba language, whose structure has significant differences from known modern analytical (English, French) and synthetic (Russian) languages of Europe. The results of the study show that, first, lexical meanings in Yoruba language can be differentiated by changing tone pitch; second, reduplication and agglutination are vital to the process of word formation; third, the categories of verb tense, definiteness / indeterminacy, comparative and superlative adjectives are expressed by lexical means; finally, syntactic constructions due to the non-inflectional nature of words in Yoruba, as in European analytical languages, are constructed according to a fixed model.

Keywords: Yoruba, language tones, language meaning, spelling, word formation, grammar.

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