

## Phonological foot in Jowulu (Samogo, Western Mande)

0. **Jowulu** is a Samogo (< Western Mande) language spoken by about 15 000 people within a small area at the border between Mali and Burkina Faso. Here I am going to present an attempt to apply to Jowulu the notion of phonological foot.

1.1. Normally, the notion of **phonological foot** is used in connection with **stress** languages and usually it presupposes the presence of a stress by its definition. However, being slightly modified, this notion can be valuable also when describing the behavior of syllabic structures and prosodies in some languages which **do not** have stress. In [Kuznetsova 2007] and [Vydrin 2008] such an approach has been provided for analyzing the data of Guro, Bamana and several other Mande languages.

1.2. The fact is that in many Mande languages two- and three-syllable sequences (usually the ones occurring within a single word) can have a high degree of **internal integrity**, which manifests itself in various phenomena (unlike sets of consonants permitted in each position of the sequence, restricted set of possible toneme combinations, nasalization and/or vowel quality harmonization etc.). Such facts make us assume that sequence of this kind comprises a **special phonological unit**. Since one of the syllables of such sequence is also usually **predominant** in one way or another, the parallel between this unit and the foot of stress languages seems quite rightful.

2. Jowulu [Carlson 1993; Djilla et al. 2004; Hochstetler et Ouattara 2000] features **open** syllables with structure **V** (very rare), **CV**, **CVi**, **CV<sub>1</sub>V<sub>1</sub>** (long vowels are analyzed as biphonemic combinations), **NCV**, **NCVi**, and **NCV<sub>1</sub>V<sub>1</sub>**; the most frequent are CV и CV<sub>1</sub>V<sub>1</sub>. Also, due to a tendency to elision of vowels, **closed** syllables with structure **...L**, and syllables beginning with a **CL... cluster** can occur.

3. **Disyllabic** sequences (within a word) with an intervocalic **alveolar sonorant** ([l], [r] or [n]) show certain special features in Jowulu. (Precise notation of such sequences would be (N)CV(V).LV(V), but further I will use a simplified notation CV.LV).

3.1. **Occasional vowel elision** can take place in CV.LV sequences, in which the first and/or the second syllable nucleus consists of a single **close vowel** ([u], [ʊ], [ɯ], [ʊ̃], [i] or [ĩ]):

CU.LV → CLV (cf. *k(ú)ló* ‘hip’; *s(ì)nàmḡi* ‘worm’)

CV.LU → CVL (cf. *fʷǒn(ì)zèr(ì)sér(í)* ‘earthquake’)

CU.LU → CUL (cf. *bìl(ì)túr(ù)* ‘to burn’)

3.2. Another process taking place in CV.LV sequences is **occasional vowel harmony**. If the second syllable nucleus consists of a single vowel [i] or [ĩ], this vowel can assimilate to that of the first syllable, cf.:

*kòlì* ~ *kòlǒ* ‘(species of monkey)’;

*gbéì* ~ *gbéè* ‘(species of tree)’.

3.3. An analysis of Jowulu lexis (based on a dictionary by Robert Carlson [1993: 28–108], which has 693 lexemes in total) showed that more than **58%** of all **disyllabics** have CV.LV structure. Also about **83%** of all (other) **polysyllabics** contain CV.LV disyllabic sequences and at the same time do not contain disyllabic sequences of another structure...

4. Introduction of such phonological unit as **foot** may facilitate the description of these phenomena and of the rhythmic organization of Jowulu in general. We can postulate two main types of foot in Jowulu: monosyllabic ((N)C(L))V(V)(L) and disyllabic (N)CV(V).LV(V).

## Abbreviations

<b>V</b>	—	vowel
<b>V<sub>1</sub>(...)<b>V<sub>1</sub></b></b>	—	identical vowels
<b>V<sub>1</sub>(...)<b>V<sub>2</sub></b></b>	—	different vowels
<b>U</b>	—	close vowel ([i], [ɨ], [u], [ɯ], [ɔ], [ʊ])
<b>C</b>	—	consonant
<b>N</b>	—	nasal consonant ([m], [m <sup>ɰ</sup> ], [n], [n <sup>ɰ</sup> ], [ŋ], [ŋ <sup>ɰ</sup> ])
<b>L</b>	—	alveolar sonorant ([l], [r], [ɹ])
<b>.</b>	—	syllable boundary

## References

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