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A grammar of Gaahmg, a Nilo-Saharan language of Sudan

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16 Conclusion

Gaahmg is a morphologically rich language, employing many suffixes and clitics on nouns, adjectives, and verbs. [ATR] quality and tone distinguish a significant number of lexemes and grammatical functions. Several specific processes of consonant weakening, vowel elision, [+ATR] spreading, [+round] spreading, and morphological tone rules, account for the vast majority of alternations when morphemes are combined.

Gaahmg suffixes differ in alternation and function from clitics, where the former are mostly inflectional morphemes which attach to underlying root segments, whereas the latter are mostly functional, derivational or clausal morphemes which attach to surface stem segments.

All pronouns except interrogatives use vowel features to represent the person referred to, the three persons coinciding with the language's three vowel harmony pairs. Nouns may attach singular and plural suffixes, although plural suffixes are by far more common, and have various segmental and tonal allomorphs which mostly have no semantic correlation with the nouns to which they attach. Nouns and adjectives attach one or more of seven clitics to the stem, each with segmental or tonal allomorphs which depend on the stem-final segment.

The verb has five morpheme slots in addition to the root. Antipassive and causative morphemes attach immediately following the root, followed by modal and aspect morphemes which are also included in the stem. Derivational, pronominal, and clausal clitics attach to the verb stem, many of which have various segmental or tonal allomorphs depending on the subject person or inflectional verb form to which they attach. Gaahmg has morphological marking for both perfect and imperfect aspect, which can both attach to completive and incompletive verbs. Tone is added to verb stems for subject person inflection, tone distinguishes past from non-past tense in the continuous form, and tone replacement is used in the formation of antipassives, causatives, and verbal nouns.

Prepositions, body part locatives, adverbs, and conjunctions are distinct lexical categories. Body part locatives are similar in form and meaning to inherently possessed body part nouns, but are a distinct lexical category in that they do not refer to person and have different tone than body part nouns. Although they are separate morphemes, some of these locatives undergo the same segmental and tonal alternations as clitics, depending on the final segments of the preceding noun of reference.

Agentive passive, agentless passive, antipassive, and causative verb forms are syntactically and morphologically distinct and combine in nearly all possible ways.

In non-verbal clauses, copular clitics may take the place of separate copula particles, which are functionally equivalent but differ in form. Relative clauses are morphologically marked for definiteness and grammatical function in place of the marking on the head noun they modify. Subordinate clauses are morphologically marked clause-finally, and the verbs of subordinate clauses can also be marked according to the type of subordinate clause. Interrogative clauses attach the agented passive when an agent is post-verbal, the clause-final subordinate when any of the interrogative pronouns are pre-verbal, and the verb-final subordinate when an interrogative pronoun replacing an adverb is pre-verbal.