Language Group Specific Informational Reports

Produced by Graduate Students in the M.Ed. In TESL Program
In the Feinstein School of Education and Human Development

Language Group: Kru
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KRU IS A MEMBER OF THE NIGER-CONGO A FAMILY OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES

AFRICAN LANGUAGES ARE BROKEN DOWN INTO SIX FAMILIES

FAMILIES ARE GROUPED ACCORDING TO SHARED STRUCTURES SUCH AS THE EMPLOYMENT OF CLICKS, PREFIXES AND SUFFIXES, OR OF A NOUN CLASS SYSTEM
KRU or CREW?

Liberia is a coastal country

Coastal people “know the ropes”

Traders took advantage of the Liberian people’s knowledge of the sea
LANGUAGE IS EVER CHANGING

- KRU EVOLVED OUT OF CONTACT WITH AN IMMENSE VARIETY OF LANGUAGES SUCH AS THOSE OF COLONISTS, TRADERS AND AFRICAN TRIBES.

- THIS CONTACT LED TO THE EXPANSION AND SHIFTING OF LANGUAGES.
SYNTACTIC PATTERNS

**KRU IS A MIXED ORDER SYSTEM**

- Word order depends on the type of sentence.
- Basic word order = Subject/Verb/Object/Other.

**SUFFIXING**

- All Kru languages are exclusively suffixing.
- Tense is represented by suffixes.
  - Suffixication may indicate recent past, far past, present, near future, distant future and more specific tenses.
- Qualities such as number and definiteness may be marked by suffixes.
- Many of the languages use a noun class system where suffixing is used.
KRU ALPHABETS

KRU LANGUAGES HAVE BETWEEN 7 AND 9 VOWELS
MOST HAVE NASAL VOWELS
AVERAGE OF 25 CONSONANTS
KRU IS TONAL

+ TONES ARE ATTACHED TO VOWELS

+ 3 TONES MOST COMMONLY EMPLOYED:
  + HIGH
  + MID
  + LOW

+ 5 TONES MAY BE EMPLOYED:
  + HIGH
  + MID-LOW
  + DRAG
  + GRAVE
  + DOUBLE
ERRORS IN PHONOLOGY

/l/ phoneme lessened or omitted
  ex. alright = a’right.
  ex. fool = foo’.

f/voiced “th” substitution at end or middle of word
  ex. teeth = teef
  ex. nothing = nufin’

d/voiced “th” substitution at the beginning, middle of words
  ex. this = dis
  ex. brother = broder
POSSIBLE ERRORS IN SYNTAX

**TENSE**

+ Since tenses are represented by suffixes in KRU, words used to mark tense may be left out or misused.
+ Urge to use suffixes to convey tense may change meaning of speech.

**WORD ORDER**

+ Words may be misordered in attempts to convey meaning.
+ Omitting words especially articles and adverbs.
EXAMPLES OF ERRORS IN SYNTAX

- Omission of 3\textsuperscript{rd} person singular tense marker
  
  He talks a lot. >>> He talk a lot.

- Omission of noun possessive
  
  That’s the woman’s car. >>> That the woman car.

- A pronoun may be used to restate the subject
  
  Sam surprised me. >>> Sam, he surprised me.
People who speak the Kru languages generally reside in Liberia and the Ivory Coast. Therefore, the communication styles are similar to most people from West Africa:

- Children are not to maintain eye contact with adults since it is considered defiant to do so.
- Adults are expected to maintain eye contact since it is considered respectful unless one is speaking with his or her boss or teacher.
- Good oration is valued so people take their time getting their point across.
- One must always greet others on the street, especially once eye contact has been made. It is a taboo to ignore this cultural value.
- Greetings are made by a handshake with a finger snap (soft snap for women, harder snap for men).
- Maintain an arm’s distance while communicating.
- It is not uncommon to touch another’s leg if seated while communicating.

(www.culturecrossing.net)
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


Internet Sites


Images

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