

GLOBALIZATION

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The Study of Languages in Africa

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Department of Linguistics and Communication Studies,
University of Port Harcourt, **NIGERIA**



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Grand Orbit Communications
12/14 Njemanze Street
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e-mail: emhaibiz@yahoo.com
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30. Progressive Formation (PF) in Leggbo¹

Larry M. Hyman

University of California, Berkeley

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Imelda I. Udoh

University of Uyo, Nigeria

1. Introduction

The Leggbo language is a minority *Upper Cross* language (Faraclas 1989, Grimes 2000), spoken by about 60,000 people living in the present *Abi* and *Yakurr* Local Government Areas of Cross River State in south-eastern Nigeria. The variety described here is the *Letatama* variety spoken in Adadama.

Among the different aspects and moods distinguished by Leggbo, the most interesting segmental marking occurs in the progressive. Leggbo verbs are basically either monosyllabic or bi-syllabic. Structurally they are made up of many syllabic constituents. The basic verb pattern is an obligatory stem which in turn has an obligatory root. However, a third verb shape involves either reduplication of part of the stem or the addition of the suffix *-azi*, (which is a pluractional suffix) leading to tri-syllabic shapes. Progressive Formation (PF) on these Leggbo verbs shows and involves an interesting interface between Leggbo Morphology and Phonology.

Our description of PF in Leggbo verbs is presented in five sections. We begin in the next section with some kind of overview on the progressive and pluractional aspects, as well as the fortition prosody. In section 3, we present the PF as marked by fortition in verbs. Section 4 deals with another form of PF marked by pluractional affix. Some residual issues are presented in section 5.

2.1 The Progressive in Leggbo

The Progressive in Leggbo marks an ongoing, continuous activity. Like states in the unmarked (Perfective) form, Progressives are neutral in respect to temporal interpretation. There is no restriction on the formation of Progressives of verbs encoding any type of event as, every verb in Leggbo has a progressive form.

Essentially there are two ways to form a progressive in Leggbo. First, for most verbs, progressives are formed by suffixation of *-i* plus potential consonant fortition as shown in (1). At present we have 317 verbs listed with a progressive formed in this general way.

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- (a) about a quarter of Leggbo verbs have no specific Progressive form, but the Pluractional form is used in place of it.
 (b) about 20% of the verbs can have pluractional meaning in the Progressive form.

Thus, we may conclude that the Pluractional in Leggbo belongs to the same category as the Progressive, namely aspect.

2.3 The Fortition Prosody in Leggbo

Leggbo has two sets of consonants: Fortis and lenis. Fortition in Leggbo involves the articulation of consonants with extra compression of the articulators, especially in those consonants whose articulators are visible like bilabials, dentals, etc. There is also obvious consonantal lengthening as they contrast with their normal length counterparts. These features, coupled with some extra puff and release of the air burst gives strength in form of tension to the output. The fortis prosody is a feature of the whole syllable as it affects other sounds. The fortis consonants appear long while the vowels following them are short.

Fortition contrasts with lenition, which involves a weakening of the consonants. The lenis consonants appear shorter and the vowels following them appear longer than normal.

3. PF by Fortition

Fortition forms the general pattern of marking the progressive in Leggbo, thus causing a contrast between fortis and lenis forms, where the fortis versions mark the progressive. The following summarizes the lenis and fortis consonant equivalents in the language which alternate in PF:

| 5. | Lenis | Fortis | Example | Gloss | Progressive |
|----|-------|--------|---------|-----------------------------|-------------|
| | b | bb | bi | 'be done (food)' | bbii |
| | tʃ | ttʃ | tʃèè | 'divide, share out' | ttʃèi |
| | d | dd | du | 'beat, pound, crush' | ddui |
| | gb | ggb | gbòn | 'prevent' | ggbònni |
| | k | kk | kè | 'put' | kkèi |
| | kp | kkp | kpe | 'learn, teach' | kkpei |
| | kw | kkw | kwòlò | 'preach' | kwòddi |
| | l | ll | la | 'entangle' | llai |
| | | dd | zòlò | 'pour, sprinkle' | zòddi |
| | m | mm | mìna | 'lie down' | minni |
| | n | nn | nàa | 'take, receive' | nnài |
| | p | pp | pòm | 'rise early, do sth. early' | ppòmmi |
| | t | tt | tè | 'let, allow' | ttei |
| | v | ff | vì | 'go out, exit' | ffi |

| | | | | |
|---|-----------------|----|---------------|------|
| w | ww ² | wu | 'grate' | wwui |
| y | yy | yà | 'be satiated' | yyài |
| z | ss | za | 'babysit' | ssai |

The following observations should be made concerning the realizations of consonants in the progressive:

- a. /l/ has two different corresponding fortis consonants in the progressive, [ll] and [dd]. [ll] is the fortis analogue of an /l/ that is either stem-initial or in the coda of the non-progressive stem, e.g.:

| | | | | |
|----|-----|--------------|--------|-----------------|
| 6. | lù | 'shake up' | llùi | 'shaking up' |
| | tol | 'sleep with' | ttolli | 'sleeping with' |

[dd] is the fortis analogue of an intervocalic C2 [l], as shown in (7), and there are no exceptions.

| | | | | |
|----|-------|-------------|--------|---------------|
| 7. | bil-a | 'climb' | bididi | 'climbing' |
| | fil-a | 'germinate' | fiddi | 'germinating' |

- b. When made fortis in the progressive, the voiced fricatives /v/ and /z/ become voiceless geminates [ff] and [ss]

| | | | | |
|----|----|----------|------|------------------------|
| 8. | ve | 'kill' | ffeï | 'killing' |
| | za | 'reject' | ssai | 'reject'. ³ |

However, there are some consonants which are fortis. Such fortis consonants which do not occur as the result of PF include bby, ddz, gg, ggw, ddz, kkw, ŋw, and ppy.

3.1 PF in Monosyllabic Verbs

We summarize progressive formation by stem shape below, considering first monosyllabic:

| | | | | | |
|----|-------------|--------------------|----------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| 9. | stem | progressive | example | progressive | gloss |
| | CV | CCV-i | ta | ttai | 'contribute' |
| | CVV | CCV-i | yaa | yyai | 'scratch, itch' |

²There is one irregular verb, wɔl 'hit, flog' whose progressive is ggwɔlɔzi, i.e. not only with fortis ggw, but with the pluractional suffix /-azi/.

³This may seem surprising in that [vv] does independently exist, e.g. vvemɛ/vvemmi 'leave, go away'. Similarly, we suspect that fortis [dz], which also only appears stem-initially, and which the second author sometimes writes as "zz", is another correspondent to lenis [z], although there are no alternations.

| | | | | |
|------|---------|------|--------|-----------------|
| CCV | CCV-i | bbo | bboi | 'die' |
| CVC | CCVCC-i | nùm | nnùmmi | 'take' |
| CCVC | CCVCC-i | kkàm | kkàmmi | 'be big, great' |
| CVVC | CCVCC-i | màan | mmànni | 'give birth' |

As seen, long vowels are shortened in the progressive, the one exception being cases where a Ci verb takes an -i suffix: wì/wwù 'be bitter'.⁴ As expected, both CV and CVV verbs geminate their initial consonant. In the case of monosyllabic CCV stems, the progressive is marked by simple addition of -i.

| | | | | |
|-----|-----|---------------|------|---------------------|
| 10. | kkù | 'stay/remain' | kkù | 'staying/remaining' |
| | mmà | 'laugh' | mmài | 'laughing' |

Although there are almost no cases of lexical /ii/ or of CC followed by a long vowel, [ii] is derived by concatenation after a geminate in the progressive:

| | | |
|-----|----------|------------|
| 11. | lli/llii | 'bury' |
| | ssi/ssii | 'do, make' |

As also seen, CVC and CVVC verbs geminate both consonants the latter also undergoing vowel shortening.

| | | |
|-----|-------------|----------------|
| 12. | wèl/wwèlli | 'arrive, come' |
| | dèem/ddèmmi | 'bathe' |

As expected, when stem-initial /v/ and /z/ are initial in a CVC or CVVC stem, they geminate as [ff] and [ss], respectively:

| | | |
|-----|-------------|------------------|
| 13. | vɔŋ/ffɔŋŋi | 'want, look for' |
| | vaal/ffalli | 'plait (hair)' |
| | zɛɛl/sselli | 'be fast, run'. |

3.2 PF in Bisyllabic Verbs

We now turn to bisyllabic verb stems ending in /-a/. Note that the -i fully assimilates to a preceding mid vowel:

| | | | | |
|----|--------|------------------|--------------|------------|
| 14 | stem | progressive form | example | gloss |
| | CVC-a | CVCC-i | mana/manni | 'catch' |
| | CCVC-a | CCVCC-i | bbàla/bbàddi | 'remember' |
| | CVVC-a | CVCC-i | tɔŋɔ/tɔŋŋi | 'praise' |

⁴This applies also to the one exception Cii verb, nù 'give', whose progressive form is nnù.

| | | | |
|--------|--------|------------|---------|
| CVCC-a | CVCC-i | kuṅa/kuṅṅi | 'crawl' |
|--------|--------|------------|---------|

While CV(V)C verbs geminate both consonants in the progressive, we see above that CVC-a, CCVC-a and CVVC-a verbs only geminate their C2:

- | | | |
|-----|--------------|--------------------|
| 15. | vila/viddi | 'be far' |
| | kɔmɔ/kɔmmi | 'hear' |
| | kkele/kkeddi | 'stare into space' |
| | mmina/mminni | 'squeeze' |
| | zɛɛnɛ/zɛnni | 'hang, hook' |
| | dòṅo/dòṅṅi | 'be deep' |

This is also true of the one verb that has the shape CCVVC-a:

- | | | |
|-----|---------------|------------------|
| 16. | vvɛɛmɛ/vvɛmmi | 'leave, go away' |
|-----|---------------|------------------|

No verb has the shape CCVCC-a. As indicated to the right, all verbs having these three shapes form their progressives in this way. However, when the C2 consonant is already a geminate, only 4 out of 17 verbs in the lexicon permit a simple substitution of -i for /-a/:

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| 17. | vunṅa/vunṅṅi | 'count' |
| | kuṅa/kuṅṅi | 'crawl' |
| | ggwekke/ggwekki | 'lift up, raise' |
| | nàṅṅa/nàṅṅi | 'bring down a pot from the fire' |

4. PF by Pluractional Form

The remaining 12 verbs use the pluractional form with progressive meaning, as shown in (18):

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------|----------|
| 18. | dakka/dakkazi | 'dream' |
| | kubba/kubbazi | 'enter' |
| | kpɔddɔ/kpɔddɔzi | 'fold' |
| | mɛmɛ/mɛmɛzi | 'remove' |

Such a resistance to regular PF is even more in evidence when a verb stem ends in -i:

- | | | | | |
|-----|-------------|-------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| 19. | stem | progressive form | example | |
| | CVC-i | CVCC-i | bàli/bàddi | 'step on' |
| | CCVC-i | CCVCC-i | bbɔli/bbɔddi | 'peel' |
| | CVVC-i | CVCC-i | kpeeni/kpenni | 'miss time to do sth' |

Only five out of 43 *i*-final verbs allow regular PF. The remaining verbs form their progressive by means of the pluractional suffix *-azi* as shown in (20):

| | | |
|-----|-----------------|-----------|
| 20. | vili/vilazi | 'cut' |
| | ttali/ttalazi | 'untie' |
| | kòòli/kòòlòzi | 'scoop' |
| | yìddi/yìddazi | 'fear' |
| | ddaddi/ddaddazi | 'rejoice' |

What this means is that verb stems that already carry one or both marks of the progressive will resist regular PF. Verbs which have neither a C2 geminate nor an *-i* suffix will readily undergo PF. Only 5 out of 17 of the CVCCa verbs that have a geminate C2 undergo PF, while only 1 out of the 8 CVC-*i* verbs which have an *-i* suffix (but not a geminate C2) will undergo PF. As seen, verb stems which have both marks, i.e. CVCC-*i* and CCVCC-*i* verbs, will not undergo PF at all. We conclude, therefore, that Leggbo speakers will tend to use the pluractional *-azi* suffix instead of PF whenever a derived progressive form cannot be distinct from the non-progressive stem in the two ways indicated.

5. Residual Issues

Progressive formation in Leggbo involves two ways : by fortition and suffixation of *-i*, as well as by the use of the pluractional suffix *-azi*. However, there are some residual issues arising from these generalizations like:

- a. The verb *tèmmè* 'embrace' has an irregular progressive, *tèbbezi*.
- b. The verb *cèl* 'resemble' has both a regular progressive form, *cèlli*, and an irregular one, *cènni*.
- c. The verb *ddaddi* 'rejoice' has two progressive forms: *ddaddazi* (as expected) and *ddalazi*.
- d. The verb *ffu* 'come' is defective in that it does not have a perfective form. Instead, the perfective form of *wèl* 'come', viz. *wèli*, is used.

Apart from these irregularities, the general rule of PF formation is by fortition and suffixation. The *-azi* pluractional complements this general rule.

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