

A preliminary analysis of tone in Uwu

Anja Choon
(SOAS)

Uwu is a Benue-Congo language spoken in the linguistically highly diverse Nigerian Middle Belt. In the literature and in the surrounding communities Uwu is known by the Yoruba label Ayere. The language may be closely related to Yoruba, Ahan and/or the Akokoid languages.

A look at the possible surface tones on nouns and verbs suggests a three-way tonal distinction in Uwu and peak delay, a kind of tone spreading which turns HL and LH sequences into [H.HL] and [L.LH] respectively. However, this does not automatically mean that Uwu also has three tones on the underlying level. It is possible that M is a default tone that surfaces when a tone bearing unit is underspecified for tone or that it surfaces when H and L share a mora, which seems to be too short for hosting a contour tone.