A DIALECTOLOGICAL STUDY OF TONGA

BY

ALICK SIBAJENE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN LINGUISTIC SCIENCE

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA

LUSAKA

2013
DECLARATION

I, Alick Sibajene, do hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work. I also declare that the dissertation has not been submitted for a degree at this university or any other university, and that it does not include any published work or material from another dissertation.

Signed……………………………………

Date…………………………………….
APPROVAL

This dissertation of Alick Sibajene is approved as fulfilling in part the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in Linguistic Science of the University of Zambia.

Signed: Date:

Signed: Date:

Signed: Date:
ABSTRACT

This study investigated some linguistic differences between two dialects of the Tonga language spoken in Zambia. These are Valley Tonga (VT) and Plateau Tonga (PT). Tonga is spoken in the Southern and some parts of the Central provinces of Zambia. Dialects considered in the study include Valley Tonga spoken in Siavonga and Plateau Tonga of Mazabuka, Monze, Choma and Kalomo. The study was conducted in order to identify variations at phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical levels of linguistic analysis.

Data was collected using a modified Swadesh word list of basic vocabulary and a list of sentences drawn from Tonga grammar books by Hopgood (1992), Thompson (1989) and from a Tonga novel by Mweemba (1980). The researcher purposively selected two native speakers for VT and two native speakers for each of the four PT dialects considered in the study. Each of the informants was given the word list and the sentence list in English and was asked to supply the equivalents in their respective Tonga dialects. The researcher, being a native speaker of the language being investigated, was also able to correct wrong data through native speaker intuition. The data that was collected was then analyzed in accordance with the objectives of the study which were: to identify phonetic variations between Valley Tonga and Plateau Tonga, to point out morphological variations between Valley Tonga and Plateau Tonga, to distinguish syntactic variations between Valley Tonga and Plateau Tonga, to establish lexical differences between Valley Tonga and Plateau Tonga. The findings were analyzed and interpreted in line with the levels of linguistic analysis applied in the study, that is, phonology, morphology, syntax and lexis.

Overall findings of the study were that Valley Tonga and Plateau Tonga exhibited some dialectal variations at the various levels of linguistic analysis applied in the study. The study revealed that there were more variations at lexical and phonological levels than there were variations at morphological and syntactic levels. The linguistic variations between Valley Tonga and Plateau Tonga were attributed to the concept of divergence. Valley Tonga is rather geographically farther from the four dialects that are spoken on the plateau. The study observed that there were very few morphological and syntactic differences between Valley Tonga and Plateau Tonga.

The researcher has recommended that a dialectological study of Tonga which is wider than the current one be conducted to focus on all sub-dialects within Valley Tonga and Plateau Tonga so that conclusions to be made would be based on all dialects of Tonga. In addition, Linguists should be encouraged to conduct dialectological studies of Bantu languages in general and Zambian languages in particular. If this was done, it would widen the teaching and learning material base for Bantu languages.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife and friend, Edith and my children: Mizinga, Nanzila and Kubanza.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all those who contributed to the success of this study in one way or the other.

Among these, I am deeply indebted to my academic supervisor and mentor, Nkolola Wakumelo (PhD) for her guidance, material support and time spent on the study.

I am grateful to the lecturers in the Literature and Languages Department of the University of Zambia for their guiding comments during the proposal presentation stage of this research.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to my loving wife, Edith for her unwavering patience, understanding and moral support throughout my study period. May God richly bless you.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title of Dissertation...........................................................................................................i  
Declaration.......................................................................................................................ii  
Approval..........................................................................................................................iii  
Abstract...........................................................................................................................iv  
Dedication.........................................................................................................................v  
Acknowledgements..........................................................................................................vi  
Table of contents.............................................................................................................vii  

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.............................................................................1  
1.0 Introduction...............................................................................................................1  
1.1 Background to Tonga...............................................................................................1  
1.2 The Concepts of Dialect and Dialectology...............................................................2  
  1.2.1 Dialect..................................................................................................................2  
  1.2.2 Dialectology..........................................................................................................3  
1.3 Statement of the Problem .......................................................................................3  
1.4 Aim of the Study .....................................................................................................4  
1.5 Objectives of the Study .........................................................................................4  
1.6 Research Questions ...............................................................................................4  
1.7 Significance of the Study .......................................................................................4  
1.8 Theoretical Perspectives .......................................................................................5  
  1.8.1 Descriptive Linguistics .......................................................................................5  
  1.8.2 Generative Dialectology .....................................................................................7  
  1.8.3 Structural Dialectology ....................................................................................9  
  1.8.4 Traditional Dialectology ..................................................................................9  
1.9 Operational Definitions .......................................................................................10  

vii
1.10 Methodology .................................................................................................11
1.10.1 Introduction ............................................................................................11
1.10.2 Study Area ............................................................................................11
1.10.3 Data Collection Instruments .................................................................12
1.10.4 Data Collection .....................................................................................13
1.10.4.1 Primary Sources of Data ....................................................................13
1.10.4.2 Secondary Sources of Data ...............................................................13
1.10.4.3 Data Collection Procedure .............................................................14
1.10.5 Data Analysis .......................................................................................14
1.11 Limitations of the Study ........................................................................15
1.12 Structure of the Dissertation ..................................................................15
1.13 Summary ..................................................................................................16

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW .......................................................17
2.0. Introduction ..............................................................................................17
2.1. Studies on Tonga ....................................................................................17
2.2. Dialectological Studies of Other Languages ..........................................19
2.3. Summary ..................................................................................................32

CHAPTER THREE: A BASIC STRUCTURE OF TONGA ......................33
3.0 Introduction ..............................................................................................33
3.1 Some Phonological Aspects of Tonga .....................................................33
3.1.1 Consonantal Phonemes and Semi-vowels in Tonga .......................34
3.1.2 Tonga Vowel Phonemes .......................................................................37
3.1.3 Tonga Syllable Structure .......................................................................38
3.1.4 Tonga Suprasegmental Phonemes .....................................................39
3.1.4.1 Tone……………………………………………………………………………………..39
3.1.4.2 Length ………………………………………………………………………………………..40
3.2 Some Morphological Aspects of Tonga ………………………………………………………..40
3.2.1 The Structure of the Noun in Tonga…………………………………………………….40
3.2.1.1 Noun Classes in Tonga…………………………………………………………...41
3.2.2 The Structure of the Verb in Tonga………………………………………………….45
3.2.2.1 Verb Extensions……………………………………………………………………...46
3.3 Some Syntactic Aspects of Tonga……………………………………………………….49
3.4 Summary…………………………………………………………………………………54

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION…………..55
4.0 Introduction…………………………………………………………………………55
4.1 Phonological Level…………………………………………………………………55
4.1.0 Introduction……………………………………………………………………55
4.1.1 Vowels……………………………………………………………………………55
4.1.2 Consonants and Semi-vowels……………………………………………………56
4.1.3 Phonetic Variations between Valley Tonga and Plateau Tonga………………...60
4.1.4 Phonetic Variations between Plateau Tonga Dialects ……………………………65
4.2 Morphological Level………………………………………………………………69
4.2.0 Introduction……………………………………………………………………69
4.2.1 Nominal Morphology……………………………………………………………69
4.2.2 Verbal Morphology……………………………………………………………..74
4.3 Syntactic Level……………………………………………………………………80
4.3.0 Introduction……………………………………………………………………80
4.3.1 Simple Negation……………………………………………………………………81
4.3.2 ‘Yes-No’ Question Marking………………………………………………………83
Appendix F: Sentence list translated into the Kalomo dialect..........................135
Appendix G: Interview Schedule...............................................................140

LIST OF TABLES:
Table 1: Some phonological variations between some Kaonde dialects..................30
Table 2: Some lexical variations between some Kaonde dialects..........................31
Table 3: Phonemic chart of the consonants and semi-vowels in Tonga....................35
Table 4: Tonga vowels..................................................................................37
Table 5: Nominal class prefixes in Tonga......................................................42
Table 6: Phonemic chart of the consonants and semi-vowels in Valley Tonga.........56
Table 7: Phonemic chart of the consonants and semi-vowels in Plateau Tonga.......58
Table 8: Phonetic differences involving [f] and [h] ........................................61
Table 9: Phonetic differences involving [v] and [ɦ]........................................62
Table 10: Phonetic differences involving [ʃ] and [h] ........................................62
Table 11: Phonetic differences involving [s] and [h] .......................................63
Table 12: Phonetic differences involving [z] and [ɦ]......................................64
Table 13: Phonetic differences involving [k] and [□] .....................................64
Table 14: Phonetic differences involving [ʧ] and [ʃ].......................................65
Table 15: Some Phonetic variations between Plateau Tonga dialects.....................66
Table 16: Negative markers in Valley Tonga and Plateau Tonga dialects..............83
Table 17: Examples of lexical items inherited from Proto Bantu by V T..................87
Table 18: Examples of human body parts-related terms that VT has alone.............88
Table 19: Examples of house hold-related terms that VT has alone........................89
Table 20: Examples of agricultural-related terms that VT has alone.....................89
Table 21: Examples of miscellaneous terms involving verbs that VT has alone.........90
Table 22: Examples of miscellaneous terms involving nouns and adjectives that VT has alone...............................................................91

Table 23: Examples of lexical items that VT shares with the Choma and Kalomo dialects.................................................................92

Table 24: Examples of lexical items that VT shares with the Mazabuka and Monze dialects.................................................................93

Table 25: Examples of lexical items that VT shares with the Monze, Choma and Kalomo dialects.................................................................93

Table 26: Examples of lexical items that VT shares with the Mazabuka, Choma and Kalomo dialects.................................................................94

Table 27: Examples of shared lexical items between VT and Plateau Tonga inherited from Proto Bantu.................................................................95

Table 28: Examples of shared lexical items between VT and PT not inherited from Proto Bantu.................................................................96

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

C Complement
Chm. Choma
FV Final Vowel
IV Initial vowel
Klm. Kalomo
Lit. Literal meaning
Maz. Mazabuka
Monz. Monze
N Noun
Neg. Negation
NS Nominal Stem
O Object
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OM</td>
<td>Object Marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td>Plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pref.</td>
<td>Prefix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PT</td>
<td>Plateau Tonga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAD.</td>
<td>Radical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG.</td>
<td>Singular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SM</td>
<td>Subject Marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TM</td>
<td>Tense Marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VT</td>
<td>Valley Tonga</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

xiii