

Morphosyntax and Movement: Verb Stems in Jóola Eegimaa

The agglutinative morphology of verb stems poses many problems for theory and analysis, insofar as distinct theoretical commitments as to what counts as a linguistic unit do not always align. The verb stem morphology of Jóola-Eegimaa (Eegimaa, henceforth), an Atlantic language of the Niger-Congo family, poses just such a challenge. We argue that our analysis, which relies on several operations that rearrange the underlying syntactic structure of the verb stem in Eegimaa, permits the various demands of syntax, semantics and morphology to receive a unified analysis for which there is striking empirical support. Insofar as the success of our analysis depends on core minimalist assumptions, our approach supports not just the minimalist approach in general, but also has implications for the copy theory of internal merge, for the typology of head movement, for the role of syntax in the derivation of words before surface morphological operations, for the nature of surface morphological operations, and for the compositional and decompositional analyses and interpretation of the verbal spine. In particular, we make an existence argument for a form of stem-internal long head movement that any revealing analysis of Eegimaa verb stem structure will require. Insofar as our approach is successful, it also avoids appeal to post-syntactic movement or other post-syntactic operations that alter structural relations created by syntax.