

## Tonal System of Looma Language: The Woi-Balagha Dialect<sup>1</sup>

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Looma is one of the Southwestern Mande languages. It is spoken in Liberia and Guinea.

There are some works on the Looma tonal system based on the data of Liberian dialects: Gizima, Ziema, Bulima (Sadler 1949/2006, Vydrine 1989); Gbunde (Dwyer 1973). The present work is based on the data of the Guinean Woi-Balagha dialect which is the source for the literary variant of Looma in Guinea. This dialect is spoken in the Woi-Balagha area with its center in Macenta in the Guinea Forestière Region. The data were collected during the expedition in Guinea in January and February of 2009.

### **0. Some preliminary notes on the Looma language system**

#### **0.1 Phonemic system**

There seem to be two vowel sets in Looma, nasalized and non-nasalized, though the question of phonemic status on nasality in Looma needs further investigation (see Chart 1).

Chart 1

<i>i</i>		<i>u</i>		<i>ĩ</i>		<i>ũ</i>
<i>e</i>		<i>o</i>		<i>ẽ</i>		<i>õ</i>
	<i>ɛ</i>	<i>ɔ</i>			<i>ɛ̃</i>	<i>ɔ̃</i>
		<i>a</i>				<i>ã</i>

According to the morphological criterion, long vowels in Looma should be considered biphonemic units, as far as they can be split by a morphemic boundary. Still the question of the phonemic status of long vowels in Looma is yet to be clarified.

The consonant set in Woi-Balagha are presented at the Chart 2.

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Chart 2

<i>p</i>		<i>kp</i>	<i>t</i>			<i>k</i>
<i>b</i>		<i>gb</i>	<i>d</i>			<i>g</i>
	<i>f</i>		<i>s</i>			
	<i>v</i>		<i>z</i>			<i>ʃ</i>
<i>ɸ</i>	<i>ʋ</i>					
<i>m</i>			<i>n</i>		<i>ɲ</i>	<i>ŋ</i>
				<i>l</i>		
<i>w</i>					<i>y</i>	

## 0.2 Initial consonant alternation

One of the most prominent morphophonological phenomenon of the Looma is the initial consonant alternation which is a distinctive feature of all Southwestern Mande languages. It means that in certain syntactic positions the first consonant of a word is represented by a so-called “strong” initial consonant which alternates with its “weak” counterpart when the word appears in some other syntactic positions. Diachronically, some words in Proto-Southwestern Mande had a stem-final element *\*-ŋ*. In modern Looma, it is reflected by a stem-final *-g* which appears when a vocalic suffix is adjoined; before a pause, *-g* is mute. If a word ending with a mute *-g* is followed by another word, the initial consonant of the latter is “strong”, otherwise it is “weak”.

Another source of the initial consonant alternation is the nasal prefixes reconstructed for the Proto-South-Western Mande. A referential article *\*ŋ-* acted in a way that the initial “strong” consonant of the stem was preserved (in other words, it produced exactly the same effect as the mute *-g*). In the modern Looma, the adjoining of the high-tone referential article *ŋ-* takes place at the underlying level only. On the surface level, this prefix manifests itself in the fact that the initial consonant of a word is represented by its “strong” alternant and the word form gets a high tone throughout. As a result, almost all nouns in their quotation form are pronounced with a high tone throughout. The same is true for the verbs and the qualitative verbs whose quotation form is nominalized and thus adjoin the referential article *ŋ-*; therefore, it carries a high tone and has a “strong” initial consonant, just like nouns.

The high-tone third person singular pronoun of the common case series causes the same effect of the initial consonant alternation (etymologically, the referential article *\*ŋ-* originates from the third person singular pronoun). It does not appear at the surface level, but manifests itself by a high tone it imparts to the following word and a by maintaining of the “strong” initial consonant of that word. The first person

singular pronoun of the common case set differs in the tone only: it maintains the “strong” initial consonant of the following word, too, but imparts a low tone to it. See 1.5.

### **0.3 Noun**

All nouns in Looma can be divided in two groups: free and relational ones. Relational nouns include names of body parts, physiological liquids and most of the kinship terms. The difference between both groups consists in the way of expressing possessiveness, see below.

### **0.4 Pronoun**

One of the most remarkable features of the Southwestern Mande languages is a complicated system of pronoun series. The choice of a series depends on the type of the sentence, the syntactic function of the pronoun, the polarity, and the TAM meanings. According to its syntactic functions, every pronoun series in Looma can be defined as subject, indirect object, common case, possessive or emphatic. A subject pronoun serves a TAM marker, along with a verbal suffix and an auxiliary.

### **0.5 Qualitative verb**

Lexemes belonging to this part of speech can be used in three syntactic functions: the predicate in a qualificative sentence, the attribute in an attributive phrase, and a predicative adjective in a prepositional construction<sup>2</sup>. Their use in quotation will be discussed in 2.2.

### **0.6 Types of simple sentence**

A non-verbal sentence in Looma requires an auxiliary. There are four types of non-verbal sentences in Looma: existential, locative, presentative, equative.

The basic word order in a verbal sentence is S – Aux – DO – V – IO.

### **0.7 Tonology**

There are two register tones in Looma, high and low. The domain of a toneme is a morpheme (at least, we will treat it so at the present stage of study). At surface, every syllable carries a tone. A sequence of identical tones constitutes a level tonal contour of a word form, and a sequence of different tones represents a rising or a falling contour.

In the quotation form, almost all nouns, verbs and qualitative verbs are pronounced with high tone throughout because of the adjoining the article *ɲ*- (see 0.2).

In a phrase, lexical tones of a word are also eliminated in the majority of the contexts and are replaced by grammatical tones or by lexical or surface tones of other words.

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<sup>2</sup> The latter function will not be examined in the present article.

In what follows, the tonal behavior of different word classes will be discussed with regard to their syntactic functions.

## 1. Noun

### 1.1 Tonal classes

According to their tonal behavior in phrases of different types, all nouns in Woi-Balagha can be grouped into seven classes:

Chart 3

Class	Lexical tonal contour	Influence on the tone of the adjective <sup>3</sup> in an attributive phrase	Examples
1	high tone throughout	the tone of the adjective is high	<i>péle</i> ‘road’, <i>kóvó(g)</i> ‘fish (species)’
2	low tone throughout	the tone of the adjective is low	<i>pèle</i> ‘house’, <i>kizè(g)</i> ‘pepper’
3	low tone throughout	the tone of the adjective is falling, only the first syllable of the word has high tone	<i>sèè</i> ‘elephant’, <i>wòn(g)</i> ‘tail’
4	high tone throughout	no influence (the adjective keeps its lexical tone)	<i>lákólí</i> ‘school’, <i>mándáliní(g)</i> ‘mandarin’
5	low tone throughout	no influence (the adjective keeps its lexical tone)	<i>bìlikì</i> ‘brick’, <i>lòòmà</i> ‘Looma’
6	rising	no influence (the adjective keeps its lexical tone)	<i>wòibàlàgá</i> ‘Woi-balaga’, <i>ɲòmé</i> ‘camel’
7	falling	no influence (the adjective keeps its lexical tone)	<i>fásáɓ</i> (name of a canton), <i>sóvâlè(g)</i> ‘mule’

Nouns forming the 3<sup>rd</sup> class have restrictions on their structure. Phonemically, they can be represented by one- or two-syllable words of the following segmental types: CV/CV(g), CVV/CVV(g) or C<sub>1</sub>VC<sub>2</sub>V, where C<sub>2</sub> is a sonant.

### 1.2. Quotation form

In their quotation form, nouns of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> tonal classes carry a high tone and have a “strong” initial consonant. It can be explained by the influence of the high-tone referential article *ɲ-* which is present at the underlying level (see 0.2). The

<sup>3</sup> Here and further on, the term “adjective” will be used for the qualitative verbs in their attributive function.

high tone spreads over the whole word form, including the definite article *-i*, irrespective of the lexical tone of the noun: *péleí* ‘road’ (the 1<sup>st</sup> class, high tone), *péleí* ‘house’ (the 2<sup>nd</sup> class, low tone). Nouns of the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> classes do not adjoin the referential article, because these classes consist of loans, ethnonyms, toponyms and anthroponyms. As a result, nouns of the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> classes keep their lexical tones even in the quotation form: *Yâbòlèà* ‘Gabolea’ (name of a canton), *ɲòméí* ‘(the) camel’.

The definite article *-i*, as can be seen from the examples above, is added to the nouns even in their quotation form. It does not have its own tone and is assimilated tonally by the preceding syllable. To the contrary, the definite plural suffix *-tì* has its own low tone and keeps it when following the definite article: *záláítì* ‘the lions’, *wìgìtì* ‘the white people’.

### 1.3. Attributive phrase

Attributive phrase is marked with a low grammatical tone on the adjective. The tonal behavior of its components is described by the following set of rules:

1) The adjective gets low tone as a marker of the syntactical relationship.

2) The grammatical low tone spreads on the definite article.

3) If the first component of the phrase is a noun of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> tonal class, its lexical tone spreads on both adjective and its definite article suffix.

4) The referential article, which can be represented at the underlying level as *ɲ-* prefixed to the head noun, spreads its high tone on the noun of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> tonal classes; the initial consonant of the noun remains “strong”.

5) If the first component of the phrase is a noun of the 3<sup>rd</sup> tonal class, the first syllable of the adjective also gets high tone.

So, the lexical tone of an adjective never manifests itself in an attributive phrase, and the low grammatical tone (marking the attributive relationship) appears on the adjective if the determined noun belongs to the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> tonal classes, which nouns are not numerous. Compare the following examples where *díyí* ‘pot’ belongs to the 1<sup>st</sup> tonal class, *pèlè* ‘house’ belongs to the 2<sup>nd</sup> class, *séé* ‘elephant’ belongs to the 3<sup>rd</sup> class, and *mándáliní(g)* ‘mandarin’ belongs to the 4<sup>th</sup> tonal class:

(1) *díyí wólá-í*  
 REF\pot big-DEF  
 ‘the big pot’

(2) *péleí wòlà-ì*  
 REF\house big-DEF  
 ‘the big house’

(3) *séé wólà-ì*  
 REF\elephant big-DEF  
 ‘the big elephant’

(4) *mándáliní gòlà-ì*  
 mandarin big-DEF  
 ‘the big mandarin’

Note that the adjective *gòlà* ‘big’ has a low lexical tone which is irrelevant when this adjective appears in the attributive phrase.

#### 1.4. Possessive phrase

Only alienable nouns can form possessive phrases in Looma. A possessor is represented by a pronoun of the special possessive series, Table 4 (the phrase where a possessor is represented by a noun will be analyzed below, see 1.5).

Chart 4

		Singular	Plural
1SG	inclusive	<i>nà(g)</i>	<i>gá</i>
	exclusive		<i>dá</i>
2SG		<i>dà</i>	<i>wà</i>
3SG		<i>ná(g)</i>	<i>tá</i>

The 1<sup>st</sup> person singular pronoun and the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular pronoun differ in the tone only. The initial consonant of the subsequent word is “strong”.

The possessiveness is marked with an underlying high grammatical tone on the possessed noun (which therefore loses its lexical tone). Tonal behavior of words in a possessive phrase obeys the following rules:

1) The noun representing the possessed object acquires a high tone as a syntactic marker.

2) The grammatical high tone spreads over the definite article.

3) The tone of the possessive pronoun spreads over the noun, excluding the definite suffix.

4) If the noun stem has no mute *-(g)* at the end, the high tone of the suffix spreads leftward over the final syllable of the noun stem.

The results of application of these rules can be illustrated by the examples (5)-(6) where *sàya* ‘sheep’ belongs to the 2<sup>nd</sup> tonal class:

(5) *nà sàya-í*  
 POSS.1SG sheep-DEF  
 ‘my sheep’

- (6) *ná*            *sáyá-í*  
 POSS.3SG sheep-DEF  
 ‘his sheep’

It can be seen from the example (5) that while the low tone on the noun stem results from the tonal influence of the possessive pronoun, the final syllable of the noun carries a high tone acquired from the suffix. Possessive phrase seems to be the only context where a regressive tone spread is observed. In all other cases tone spreads progressively (rightwards).

### 1.5. Genitival phrase

The rules of tonal interaction of words within a genitival phrase depend on its contents: when the second member of a phrase is an alienable noun, its surface tone spreads on the article *-i*, as in (7), where *zùnù* ‘man’ is a noun of the 2<sup>nd</sup> tonal class and *pélé* ‘road’ belongs to the 1<sup>st</sup> class. However, when the second member is an inalienable noun, its tone does not spread over the suffix, as in (8), where *kòwò* ‘foot’ belongs to the 2<sup>nd</sup> tonal class:

- (7) *zùnù*        *pèlè-ì*  
 REF\man road-DEF  
 ‘the male road (used only by men)’

- (8) *níká*        *wówó-ì*  
 REF\cow foot-DEF  
 ‘the cow’s foot’

With relational nouns, the possessor is expressed by pronouns of the common series, see Chart 5.

The 1<sup>st</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular pronouns differ only in tone. They have no exponent at the surface level, they manifest themselves by the tone they impart to the subsequent word and by maintaining of the “strong” initial consonant of that word. Here is an example of a genitival phrase where a possessor is represented by the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular pronoun (example 9).

Chart 5

		Singular	Plural
1SG	inclusive	<i>(ǵ)</i>	<i>ǵé</i>
	exclusive		<i>dé</i>
2SG		<i>è</i>	<i>wò</i>
3SG		<i>(ǵ)</i>	<i>tí</i>

(9) *kògí* |*ɲ kógi*| ‘my neck’.

In sum, the tonal behavior of words within a genitival phrase can be described by the following set of rules:

1) The lexical tone of the noun appearing as the second member of the phrase spreads on the definite article, if any.

2) The tone of the pronoun or the basic tone of the last syllable of the phrase-initial noun spreads over the second member of the phrase, excluding the definite article.

3) When the second member of the phrase is a free noun, its surface tone spreads over the suffix.

4) If the first component of the phrase is a noun of the tonal classes 1, 2 or 3, it adjoins a referential article which can be represented as *ɲ-* at the underlying level; the high tone of the article spreads over the entire noun.

Kinship terms for senior relatives, as well as the noun *zée* ‘hand’, can not have the definite article *-i*, and their lexical tone appears to be irrelevant for the phrase of this type, since this suffix is the only element where lexical tone occurs.

### 1.6. Numeral phrase

Numerals in Looma always keep their lexical tones, and the lexical tone of a noun does not affect the tone of a numeral. As for a noun, it acquires a high tone from the referential prefix *ɲ-* if it belongs to the tonal classes 1, 2 or 3, and retains its lexical tone if it belongs to the tonal classes 4, 5, 6 or 7. Compare (10), where *níká* ‘cow’ belongs to the 1<sup>st</sup> tonal class, and (11), where *sóvâlè(g)* ‘mule’ is a noun from the 7<sup>th</sup> class:

(10) *níká*            *nàà̀nìgò*  
       REF\cow    four  
       ‘four cows’

(11) *sóvâlè* *nàà̀nìgò*  
       mule    four  
       ‘four mules’

### 1.7. Derivation

Some processes of noun formation are accompanied by modifications of tonal features of the word.

One of the methods of derivation is affixation. Prefix *mà-*, when added to the nouns for liquids or dry matters, forms new words without any additional semantic component: *ɲámá* ‘blood’ > *màɲàmà* ‘blood’. This prefix imparts its low tone to the noun stem; thus all nouns formed by this prefix belong to the tonal class 2.



Suffix *-gò* is a component of numerous names of animals and birds, for example, *wùpùgò* ‘poisonous snake (species)’. In other dialects, there may exist variants of words without this suffix: *siizi* ‘hawk’ (Gizima) (Vydrine 1987: 109)<sup>4</sup> – *sìzìgò* ‘hawk’ (Woi-Balagha). All nouns with the suffix *-gò* belong to the tonal class 2.

Reduplication as a means of derivation is rarely used. There are two forms, simple and reduplicated ones, for certain nouns in Looma, which forms do not differ semantically: *pàlà* ‘mud’ > *pàlàvàlà* ‘mud’. All reduplicated nouns belong to the tonal class 2.

## 2. Qualitative verb

### 2.1. Tonal classes

There are two tonal classes of qualitative verbs in Woi-Balagha:

Chart 6

Tonal class	Lexical tone	Tone of the suffix of the qualificative verb <i>-vɛ/-ɛ</i>	Examples
1	high	high	<i>kédé(g)</i> ‘be healthy’, <i>kpádí</i> ‘be hot’
2	low	low	<i>pà(g)</i> ‘be beautiful’, <i>gàzèyè</i> ‘be transparent’

At the surface level, a qualitative verb never carries its lexical tone, the latter manifests itself on the suffix (see 2.4).

### 2.2. Quotation form

Qualitative verb, in its quotation form, is nominalized. Therefore, it adjoins the referential article (whose underlying form is  $|\text{ɲ-}|$ ), keeps its “strong” initial consonant and acquires a high tone throughout: *kólégí* ‘the white one’, *góláí* ‘the big one’.

### 2.3. Attributive phrase

As follows from 1.3, in an attributive phrase the surface realizations of tones on a qualitative verb are determined by the influence of a low grammatical tone (4) and by the lexical tone of the preceding noun (1)-(3).

### 2.4. Qualificative sentence

When a predicate in qualificative sentence, a qualitative verb adjoins suffix *-vɛ/-ɛ*. The lexical tone of the qualitative verb spreads over this mark, while its stem bears the surface tone spread from the final syllable of the preceding noun. Thus, in the examples (12)-(13), surface tone of the qualitative verbs is high, and their lexical

<sup>4</sup> The dictionary in (Vydrine 1987) has no tonal marks.

tones (which is low for *pà(g)* ‘be beautiful’ and high for *kédé(g)* ‘be healthy’) appear on the suffix:

- (12) *Pélé-í*                      *vág-è*  
 REF\house-DEF    be.beautiful-QUAL  
 ‘The house is beautiful’.

- (13) *Zúnú-í*                      *yédég-é*  
 REF\man-DEF    be.healthy-QUAL  
 ‘The man is healthy’.

### 3. Verb

#### 3.1. Tonal classes

At the surface level, the lexical tone of a Looma verb never appears on the verb stem itself. And still, two tonal classes of verbs should be distinguished in Woi-Balagha according to the tonal realizations on the verbal suffixes *-zu/-su* (the imperfective mark) and *-vɛ/-ɛ* (the past tense mark):

Chart 7

Tonal class	Lexical tone	Tone on the suffixes	Examples
1	high	high	<i>séí</i> ‘sit down’, <i>méní(g)</i> ‘hear’, <i>tóó</i> ‘fall, drop’
2	low	low	<i>pà</i> ‘come’, <i>kàà</i> ‘see’, <i>dà</i> ‘lie down, put’

Other verbal inflectional suffixes, such as perfect suffix *-á* and perfective suffix *-ní*, carry an unalterable high tone.

#### 3.2. Quotation form

In their quotation form, the verbs appear as verbal nouns, i.e. they have the definite article *-i* and the prefixed referential article *|ǰ-|*. Therefore the tone of such a verbal noun is always high, irrespective of the lexical tone of the verb: *dááségí* ‘swimming’ (tonal class 1), *gálúgí* ‘counting’ (tonal class 2), etc.

#### 3.3. Imperative

Imperative is marked with a high grammatical tone. Compare the following imperative forms of the verb *dí* ‘go’ (tonal class 1) and *dà* ‘lie down’ (tonal class 2):

- (14) *Lí*                      *gà*                      *súvílá!*  
 go\IMP    with    REF\speed  
 ‘Go faster!’

- (15) *Lá*                      *gà*    *súvílá!*  
 lie.down\IMP with REF.\peed  
 ‘Lie down faster!’

### 3.4. Tonal influence of the direct object

When the direct object is pronominalized, it is represented by the pronominal series of the common case (see 1.5). The tone of a pronoun spreads over the verb, while the verbal lexical tone appears on the suffixes *-zu/-su* and *-ve/-ε*, if available:

- (16) *Zúnú-í*                      *yà*    *káá-zù*                      *níná.*  
 REF\man-DEF COP COMM.3SG\see-IPFV now  
 ‘The man is observing him now’.

The tone of the suffix *-zu* is low, because the lexical tone of the verb *kàà* ‘see’ is low. In the meantime, the surface tone of the verb is high, which results from the spread of the tone of the third person singular pronoun of the common case series.

Tonal interaction is more complicated when the direct object is expressed by a noun. It affects the verb twice: first, its lexical tone spreads over the verb, then the surface tone of the direct object affects the tone of the verb. If the noun stem has a final *-(g)*, it prevents spreading of its secondary (surface) tone on the verb. Thus, in the example (17), the low tone of the verbal predicate is determined by the drifting of the low lexical tone of the noun *kòmì(g)* ‘bee’ (tonal class 2), and the stem-final element *-(g)* prevents a spread of the high surface tone on the verb:

- (17) *Zúnú-í*                      *yà*    *kómíg-í*                      *zò-sù*                      *níná.*  
 REF\man-DEF COP REF\bee-DEF catch-IPFV now  
 ‘The man is catching the bee now’.

But if the surface tone of the direct object does spread on the verb, it affects the first syllable of the verb only:

- (18) *Máság-í*                      *yà*    *pélé-í*                      *wòdì-zù.*  
 REF\chief-DEF COP REF\house-DEF sell-IPFV  
 ‘The chief is selling the house’.

The lexical tone of the verb *wòdì* ‘sell’ is low, which can be deduced from the tone on the suffix. The low lexical tone of the noun *pèlè* ‘house’ (tonal class 2) spreads on the verb stem, which does not modify the lexical low tone of the verb (because the lexical tones are identical), and the high surface tone of the noun acquired from the referential article spreads only on the first syllable of the verb.

Thus, the tonal realizations on the phrase “direct object – verb” are determined by the following set of rules:

- 1) Lexical tone of the verb is shifted to the suffixes *-zu/-su* or *-ve/-ε*, if available.

2) If the direct object is represented by a noun, its lexical tone spreads on the definite article *-i*.

3) The lexical tone of the direct object NP spreads over the verb, excluding a verbal suffix.

4) If the direct object noun belongs to the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> tonal class, it receives referential article *ɲ-* whose high tone spreads over the noun and its definite article *-i*, and its “strong” initial consonant is maintained.

5) If the noun stem has no final element *-(g)*, the surface tone of the noun spreads over the first syllable of the verb.

### 3.5. Tonal influence of the subject

When a subject precedes a verb immediately, its tone spreads over the verbal stem. In Looma, only an intransitive verb in a sentence without an auxiliary can follow a subject immediately and thereby be affected by its tone. If a sentence does not require an auxiliary, its subject can be expressed by a pronoun belonging to the basic set. Compare examples (19)-(20), where subject pronouns differ only by their tones, and the lexical tone of the verb is low (*dòwò(g)*):

(19) *È lòwò-ní wógì.*  
 SUBJ.2SG rest-PFV yesterday  
 ‘You (sg.) rested yesterday’.

(20) *É lówó-ní wógì.*  
 SUBJ.3SG rest-PFV yesterday  
 ‘He rested yesterday’.

Here is an example of the influence of the surface tone of a noun subject on the verb (*dò* ‘enter’):

(21) *Máság-í ló-ní.*  
 REF\chief-DEF enter-PFV  
 ‘The chief entered’.

It can be seen from (21) that a subject influences the tonal realization of a verb differently from a direct object: firstly, the lexical tone of the subject (*màsà(g)* ‘chief’, the 2<sup>nd</sup> tonal class) does not affect verbal tone. Secondly, the surface high tone of the noun spreads on the entire verbal stem, and not only its first syllable, as it was with the direct object. Thirdly, a final *-(g)* of the noun stem does not constitute an obstacle for the tone spreading.

### 3.6. Derivation

Like nouns, verbs can adjoin prefix *mà-* which imparts the semantic component ‘act on a surface’, for example, *wóín(g)* ‘scrape’ > *màwóín(g)* ‘scratch’, *bálé(g)*

‘brush’ > *màbálé(g)* ‘sweep up, clean’. The tone of this prefix does not spread over the verbal roots (contrary to what is observed in the nominal derivation):

- (22) *Zúnú-í yà zó-í mà-bálé-sú níná.*  
 REF\man-DEF AUX REF\ground-DEF PREF-sweep.up-IPFV now  
 ‘The man is sweeping the ground now’.

Reduplication of verbs expresses a long duration or an intensity of the action: *kòlò* ‘crash’ > *kòlòwòlò* ‘destroy, break up’. The lexical tone of a verb does not change after the reduplication; the derived verb has the same tonal influence on the verbal suffixes as the original verb. The only difference consists in the influence of a direct object on the verb: the surface tone of a direct object spreads not only on the first syllable of a verb, but on the whole first reduplicand:

- (23) *Sívìlì yà pélé-í wólówòlò-zù*  
 Sivili AUX REF\house-DEF destroy-IPFV  
 ‘Sivili is destroying the house’.

#### 4. Negative copula

The negative copula *là* in Looma is used both in non-verbal (25) and verbal sentences (27). Bearing its own low tone, *là* imparts a high tone to the following verb, including its suffix. Compare (24)-(25) and (26)-(27), where *nòwò* ‘be dirty’ and *dò* ‘enter’ have low lexical tones:

- (24) *Gílé-í nówó-vè.*  
 REF\dog-DEF be.dirty-QUAL  
 ‘The dog is dirty’.
- (25) *Gílé-í là nówó-ní.*  
 REF\dog-DEF NEG.COP be.dirty-QUAL  
 ‘The dog is not dirty’.
- (26) *Máság-í yà lò-zù níná.*  
 REF\chief-DEF COP enter-IPFV now  
 ‘The chief is entering now’.
- (27) *Máság-í là ló-zú níná.*  
 REF\chief-DEF NEG.COP enter-IPFV now  
 ‘The chief is not entering now’.

### Abbreviations

AUX	auxiliary
DEF	definite article
EXCL	exclusive
IMP	imperative
INCL	inclusive
IPFV	imperfective
NEG	negative
COMM	common case pronoun
PFV	perfective
PL	plural
POSS	possessive pronoun
REF	referential article
SG	singular
QUAL	suffix of qualificative verb
SUBJ	subject pronoun

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