An introduction to Zul

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Introduction to Zul

- ❖ The Zul language is part of the Polci cluster, which in turn is West Chadic B, Zaar subgroup.

- ❖ It is said to be the same as Barma or Mbaram in older sources, but the Mbaram is probably a related dialect

- ❖ The Zul language is called Bi Zule, one person Nya Zule pl. Man Zule.

- ❖ Zul was reported in older sources to be dying out and to have very few speakers

- ❖ However, this appears to be wrong. There are both more speakers and the language more lively than previously thought Zul is spoken in some fifteen villages in Bauchi State, Bauchi and Toro LGAs.

- ❖ The number of speakers varies considerably from one source to another, but is probably about 4000.

Zul sociolinguistics

❖ The Zul are split between Christian and Muslim affiliation, and so far only the Christians have shown interest in literacy

❖ Zul has recently undergone a remarkable recovery, with a community-based reading and writing book produced (2006) and preliminary Bible translation underway.

❖ There is, obviously, an issue with younger speakers switching to Hausa, but the language seems to be surprisingly free of Hausa loanwords

❖ It is said to be intercomprehensible with Mbaram, but so far I haven't been able to check this

❖ Fieldwork in the Zul area is fairly difficult due to the proximity to Bauchi town, where attacks on communities are quite prevalent

Zul language

- ❖ There is practically no existing work on Zul. There is some lexical material on Polci and work with the last speakers of Luri by Bernard Caron.

- ❖ Further afield it can be compared with other South Bauchi languages, first surveyed by Shimizu and then in more detail by Bernard Caron

Zul Phonology I

- The basic consonant phonemes are;

Table 1. Zul consonant phonemes

	Bilabial		Alve-olar		Post-Alveolar		Palatal		Velar		Glottal
Plosive	p	b	t	d					k	g	ʔ
Implosive		ɓ		ɗ							
Nasal		m		n			ɲ		ŋ		
Tap				r							
Fricative			s	z	ʃ	ʒ	tʃ	dʒ	ɣ		h
Lateral fricative			ɬ	ɮ							
Lateral				l							
Approximant		w						y			

Zul Phonology II

- Zul permits the following contrastive labialised consonants

- gw, kw, mw, ɣw

gw	gwagɨmi	ours
	gwazini	theirs
kw	kwałe	shell
	kwałi	pluck
	kwani	admire
mw	mwan	open
ɣw	ɣwahum	nine
	ɣwa	last year
	ɣwatɨra	temper
	ùɣwíínà	tree sp.
but		
	ɣ^wundiri	to hide

Zul Phonology III

- And the following palatalised consonants
- ɓy, ky, gy, mby, my

ɓy	ɓyari	brothers
ky	kyáy	support
	kyankyay	gong
	kyansi	spear grass
gy	gyałi	laugh
mby	mbyati	kick
my	myakan	three

Zul Phonology IV

- Homorganic prenasalisation before bilabials is permitted. Some examples of /m/ appear to bear a tone, others do not

mb

| mba'i | thumb ring for archers |
| m̀bəlési | swift, swallow |

- The glottal stop only appears in a few words;

- not, no   daʔa
- river   ɓùláʔì
- thatching needle   cáʔì

Zul Phonology V

- Zul has a fairly standard six-vowel system;

Table 2. Zul Vowels

	Front	Central	Back
High	i	ɨ	u
Mid	e		o
Low		a	

- The following vowels show long/short contrast

a/aa	labi	call
	laabi	put in the mouth
e/ee	le	to close
	lee	to rear (animal)
i/ii	dìrí	to come
	dììrì	to bring

Zul Phonology VI

- Zul permits ay and aw sequences

- pay   to finish
- ɓay   to fix
- tlay   to press
- raw   how?

- And there is one example of **ae** ɗae pestle

Zul Phonology VI

- Zul has two basic tones, H & L

- Language, mouth   bí
- to give   bì
- 1 sg. Obj PRON   mí
- 1 pl. Obj PRON   mì

- Phonetic mid-tones probably conditioned. But not ordinary downstep;
- upper grindstone   ɗàmə̄né
- parlour   ɮàbə̄ní
- fighting   ɮàntə̄né

Zul grammar I

- Zul has no systematic number marking on nouns and no overt TAM marking
- This resembles many Plateau languages.
- TAM is usually marked on the pronoun, but not in every case, and tense may be inferred from adverbs

Zul grammar II

- Zul subject pronouns are as follows

Person	Singular	Plural
1st	ami (IMPF), à (PF), áá (FUT)	mɨ
2nd	ki	kɨn, kii (FUT)
3rd	tɨ	wi (IMPF, FUT), wu (PF)

○ and object pronouns

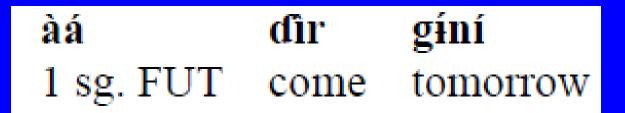| Person	Singular	Plural
1st	mí	mì
2nd	í	inè
3rd	tɨ	wuri

Zul grammar II

- Zul present or present continuous

àmí   rá   ɗè
I   COP   here
I'm here

àmí   dèn   ɗìr   tíné
I   IMPF   come
I'm coming
but
wì   dèn   ɗìr   tíné
they   IMPF   come

Zul grammar III

- Future marked with pronominal

àá	ɗìr	gíní
1 sg. FUT	come	tomorrow

❍ Past or perfective

à	ɗìr	sèkɨ́ní
1 sg. PF	come	today
wù	ɗìr	sèkɨ́ní
3 pl. PF	come	today

Zul numerals

○ Zul compared with Luri and other S Bauchi, indicating closeness of the languages

Table 4. Zul numerals in comparative perspective

English	Zul	Luri	Comment
one	nùm	nə̂m	Typical of South Bauchi, not found elsewhere unless mən forms are cognate
two	róp	róp	Scattered throughout West Chadic
three	myákán	míígə́n	Scattered through West and Central Chadic
four	wúpsé	wúpsə́	Typical of South Bauchi in this form. J & I relate this to widespread Chadic p/f-d- roots.
five	nántám	nántám	Typical of South Bauchi, not found elsewhere
six	múkkà	máágà	Typical of South Bauchi, e.g. Dot mààmàk
seven	ɲíɲí	ɲíɲé	But cf. Dot wúsúr-mààkə́
eight	wú zúpsé	wúsə́séé	Typical of South Bauchi, e.g. Dot wúsúpsì
nine	ɣwá núm	ʔánə́ə́n	But cf. Dot nàtə́rə́psì
ten	kùł	zùp	Also in Geji, but not otherwise South Bauchi. ? related to Ron forms.
eleven	kùł cèt nùm	zúp tèè nə̀m	Typical of South Bauchi, e.g. Dot sùp-cèdíí-nə̀m
twenty	hauya num	?	
hundred	hauya nantam	?	

Zul grammar IV

- Zul doesn't mark number or gender in nouns. TAM is marked on the pronominal system
- The pronoun system looks quite similar to Luri, described by Bernard Caron, but further comparison is in order
- I hope to do more work on Zul in the coming dry season
- However, security concerns in the Bauchi area

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