

Nasality in Fon: Synchrony vs Diachrony, Phonology vs Morphology

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Fon is a Gbe language spoken in the Republic of Benin. Like other Gbe languages, it has been analyzed as a language with no nasal phonemic consonants (Capo 1991, Clements & Rialland 2008). The purpose of this presentation is to posit that Fon would not only lack phonemic nasal consonants, but would also lack phonemic nasal vowels. Nasality in Fon is analyzed here as a floating feature underlyingly independent from both consonants and vowels spreading from the right edge of the word to its left and realizing itself as a nasality feature on vowels and consonants or as a syllabic nasal consonant, depending on the context. Nasality would also have a morphological function, marking a morphological domain by spreading all over it. Internal evidence from Fon as well as external evidence from other Gbe languages suggests a different distribution of nasality in the history of the language, as well as another morphological function consisting in marking adverbs and adjectives.