Résumés

Lecture 1: "African language classification beyond Greenberg"

The widely accepted genealogical classification of African languages to date is Greenberg's (1963) scheme that comprises just four indigenous super-families, namely Khoisan, Niger-Congo, Nilo-Saharan, and Afroasiatic. Despite the long-standing popularity of his proposal, specialists of historical-comparative linguistics have noticed that it is methodologically and empirically questionable (cf., e.g., Campbell and Poser 2008). This lecture provides a new comprehensive approach to genealogical language classification in Africa according to Güldemann (2018b) that is based on unitary criteria oriented toward the standards of the general discipline. According to such criteria, the publicly available evidence is only sufficient for accepting two large language families, Niger-Congo and Afroasiatic, both in a narrower sense. Greenberg's two other supergroups, Khoisan and Nilo-Saharan, should for the time being be broken down into a number of smaller units. According to this approach, Africa is far more diverse than commonly assumed in hosting 40 to 45 linguistic lineages.

Lecture 2: "The macro-areal profile of Afrabia"

In addition to his first comprehensive genealogical classification of African languages, Greenberg (1959, 1983) is also the first author to deal with a fuller areal survey of the continent. This work was followed by Heine's (1975, 1976) continent-wide survey of word-order patterns. This lecture provides an updated survey of macro-areal feature aggregations in Africa based on similar research resumed since the late 1990s by Güldemann (e.g., 1998, 2005, 2008, 2010) and Clements and Rialland (e.g., 2008). A wider areal-linguistc approach to Africa, which should include the Arabian Peninsula, must not only recognize contact-induced zones of convergence but also large areas formed by linguistic spreads as well as areas characterized by more stable linguistic diversity. The macro-areal profile emerging from this perspective will be discussed, including potential geographical correlates.

Lecture 3: "Language contact as an alternative to assumed genealogical relationships"

There are various cases of African languages displaying considerable linguistic isoglosses that for a long time have been assumed but not proven to be explained by genealogical relationships. A possible way out of this longstanding problem is a more dedicated search for possible contact relations across major group boundaries. This lecture focusses on the results of language contact research that may provide an alternative explanation for linguistic similarities among presumably unrelated languages. Several such cases are discussed starting out from the case of the Kalahari Basin hypothesis (cf. Güldemann and Fehn 2017) that replaces Greenberg's equivocal Khoisan hypothesis.

Lecture 4: "Language families in space and time"

It is well known that the modern profile of genealogical language groups is shaped by both family-internal dynamics and external factors relating to their geographical setting and the associated contact with unrelated languages. At the same time, it is not yet common practice to model the history of language families in a holistic way by taking both internal and external factors systematically into account. This lecture discusses several linguistic lineages in Africa that are argued to be better assessed historically as soon as their diverse macro-areal alliances

are considered in order to trace their historical trajectories and structural diversification through space and time.