

Università di Napoli L'Orientale
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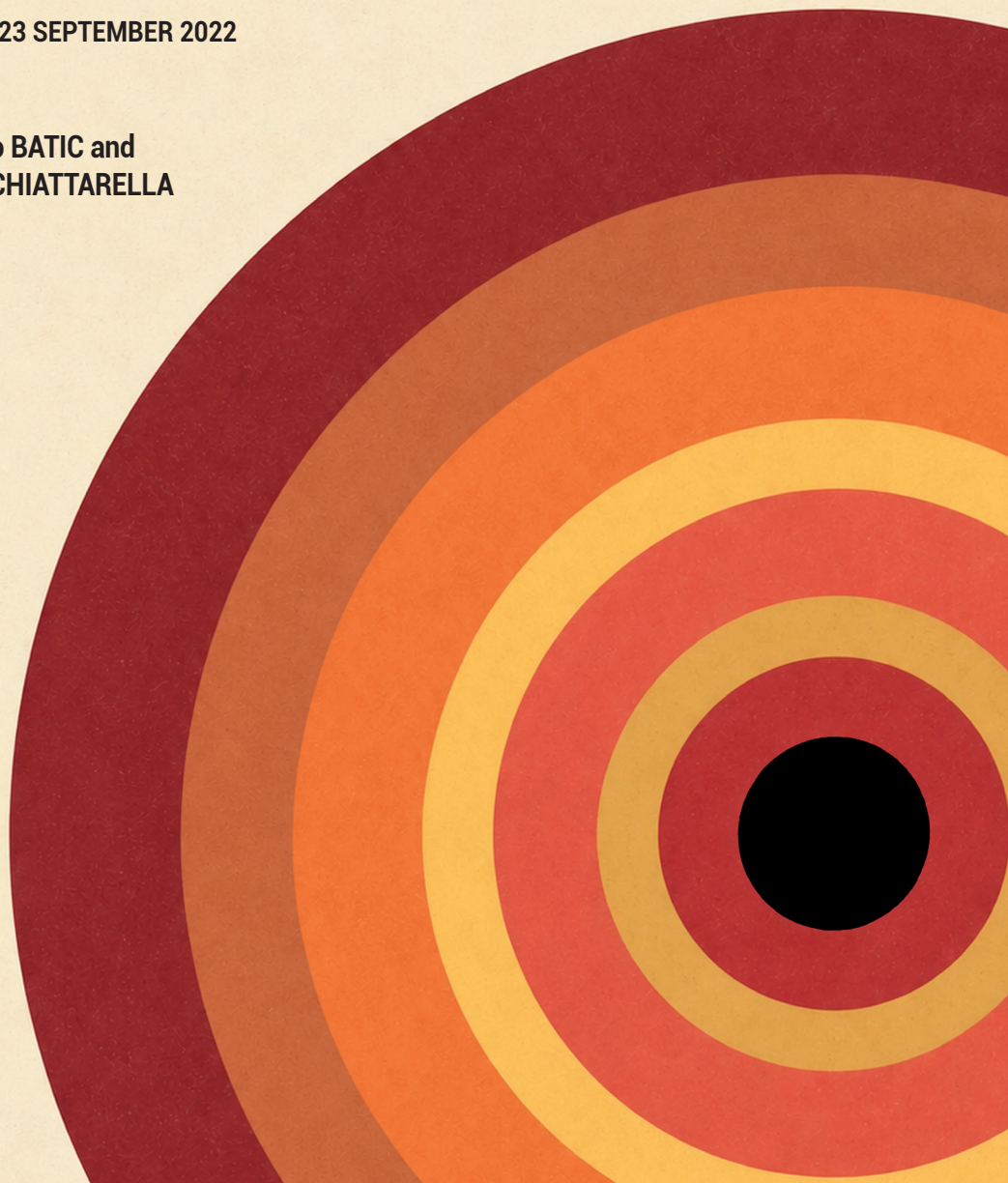
PROCEEDINGS OF THE 4TH SYMPOSIUM ON WEST AFRICAN LANGUAGES

NAPLES, 21-23 SEPTEMBER 2022

edited by
Gian Claudio BATIC and
Valentina SCHIATTARELLA



UniorPress



Studi Africanistici

Serie Ciado-Sudanese

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Napoli 2026

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ISSN 1828-5910

ISBN 978-88-6719-381-3

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Via Nuova Marina 59, 80133 Napoli

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Foreword

Gian Claudio BATIC and Valentina SCHIATTARELLA

This volume offers a selection of the papers presented at the 4th *Symposium on West African Languages* (Naples, 21-23 September 2022). Created with the vocation of serving as a forum to discuss all aspects of the studies on African languages spoken in West Africa and West African languages used elsewhere, in its various editions the Symposium has brought together scholars engaged in the most diverse aspects of linguistic, literary, and socio-linguistic analysis of African languages.

The first edition of the Symposium (SyWAL2014) was hosted in Naples by the Department of Asian, African and Mediterranean Studies, University of Naples L'Orientale, the second edition (SyWAL2016) was held at the Institute for African Studies, University of Wien, and the third edition (SyWAL2018) was organized in Poland by the Chair of African Languages and Cultures, University of Warsaw. The fourth edition of the Symposium took place at the Department of Asian, African and Mediterranean Studies, University of Naples L'Orientale, and was attended by 47 scholars from 23 academic institutions spanning 12 countries (Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Cameroon, France, Germany, Italy, Nigeria, Poland, Portugal, Senegal, and the United States).

SyWAL2022 has been in a way a special edition. After the unexpected pause imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, which forced us to suspend SyWAL2020 (also scheduled to take place in Naples), SyWAL2022 has been an opportunity to celebrate the full return to in-presence activity. One of the choices that marked this event was the preference for a presential mode of participation. In fact, it was particularly important for us to recover the primary nature of a symposium, bringing together colleagues in a space of intellectual and human exchange, i.e. combining the more strictly academic side with a physical and convivial dimension – that is, with a limited presence of multimedia intermediaries. Of course, conferences do not exist in a vacuum and reality is always there to remind us that Manichean approaches risk proving less beneficial than previously thought. For this reason, while maintaining the conference's presential approach, efforts were made to neutralise the inevitable challenges that characterise international events (first and foremost, the lack of funds and the practical or administrative

difficulties involved in applying for and obtaining a visa), and (limited) remote participation was therefore allowed.

Thirteen of the thirty-three presentations given during the Symposium found their way into this volume, which well represents the main topics and research problems discussed. These contributions reflect the significance that the research on West African languages holds for linguistics, anthropology, cultural studies, and the broader humanities. Boasting hundreds of languages spanning the Niger-Congo, Nilo-Saharan, and Afroasiatic linguistic phyla, West Africa is one of the world's most linguistically diverse regions. This linguistic diversity reflects the rich cultural histories and dynamic social practices of its peoples. Research in this field not only contributes to the theoretical development of linguistic science but also supports language preservation efforts, which are critical in the face of increasing globalization and language endangerment. The documentation and analysis of phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic structures in West African languages provide key insights into typological variation and linguistic universals. Furthermore, these studies inform applied areas such as language policy, education, and computational linguistics.

Bringing together a collection of cutting-edge research papers that explore various dimensions of West African languages, from descriptive linguistics to sociolinguistic studies, these contributions underscore the dynamic and evolving nature of linguistic scholarship.

The proceedings open with a study by Umma ALIYU MUSA, Jibril Shu'aibu ADAMU, and Virginija LICKUNAITE on the work of the Hausa singer Hajiya Salamatu mai Gurmi, followed by a first overview of Nupe and Yoruba loanwords in Hausa by Sergio Baldi. The next two contributions are devoted to the analysis of some peculiar aspects of three Atlantic languages spoken in Senegal: the first, by Lamine BODIAN, offers an analysis of the role of the [ATR] feature in Joolɓ fooñi and Gũñaamɔɔ languages, while the second, by Anna Marie DIAGNE, illustrates the verbal system of sereer palor. Zygmunt FRAJZYNGIER takes into consideration the Chadic languages Mina and Gidar to discuss the effects of the gender system on the reference system, and in particular on the distinction between the domains *de dicto* and *de re*. Asabe Usman KABIR observes that "Hausa proverbs are known to have changed over time [...] to express contemporary issues and to assimilate the new technological and social order, giving rise to new meanings and uses" (p. 101) and offers an analysis of the process by which some of them have adapted by incorporating modern elements and meanings. Rudolf LEGER's paper is dedicated to a very fascinating

issue: the genesis and treatment of the aorist-conjunctive within the aspectual system of the Chadic languages. In his analysis, the author considers the Chadic language Kupto (Nigeria) and postulates the idea according to which the aorist and the subjunctive – which present two distinct conjugational patterns but one and the same verbal form – switched to an aspectual ‘neutral’ model distinct from both the perfective and the imperfective. Solange MEKAMGOUM and Roland KIEBLING analyse a peculiar feature of the Ngəmba language (Eastern Grassfields Bamileke, spoken in Cameroon), namely the co-presence of two distinct classification systems: a gender system of the Eastern Grassfields Bantoid type and an emerging numeral classifier system. Ebitare OBIKUDO’s paper instead discusses the role of linguistic gender in the categorisation of names in Ñkòròḍò, a Niger-Congo language of Nigeria in which gender assignment is overtly semantic and referent-based. The focus of Anna RICCIO’s paper is on a syntactic phenomenon widespread in many African languages: Serial Verb Constructions. The author uses the Mabilia languages to test the validity of the Reference Role Grammar theoretical approach to this type of constructions in which two or more verbs are joined in a single clause without any grammatical indicator of linkage or subordination. Ronald P. SCHAEFER and Francis O. EGBOKHARE also focus on gender system, with a presentation of the system productive in North Ivié (Nigeria), a Northern Edoid speech variety. Jason SMITH discusses the strategies for marking focus in Mende (Sierra Leone) from the perspective of Information Structure, arguing that in this language focus is mainly syntactic and morphological. In the last paper included in the volume, Colin BROWN, Zhuo CHEN, Matthew N. CZUBA, Blake LEHMAN, and Harold TORRENCE illustrate the five morpho-syntactic strategies for forming polar questions in Dschang, a Bamileke language spoken in Cameroon.

We, the editors, extend our heartfelt gratitude to the contributors whose dedication and scholarship have made this volume possible. We salute their efforts in advancing linguistic knowledge and fostering critical dialogues that will undoubtedly shape future research. It has been a privilege to curate this collection, which stands as a testament to their academic rigor and passion.

Salamatu mai Gurmi: A hijab among the gurmi instrumentalists

Umma ALIYU MUSA ¹

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Abstract

This paper is pioneering the work of Hajiya Salamatu mai Gurmi in the field of oral literature. As the only female voice in the field of Hausa music performing with Gurmi instrument, some aspects of her work including recordings of her performance in Hausa language and account of her development through the years will be presented. The purpose of this analysis is to develop an understanding of her accomplishment and recognition as a Gurmi traditional player among prominent Hausa male oral singers like late(s) Malam Haruna Uji, Aliko Makaho and Musa Kanen Yalo, to mention but a few that were known to have left their marks. As the only female oral performer in this field, this article will showcase her style and progress over the years, her extraordinary talent for music, creative exemplifications and public acceptance. Assessing her two masterpieces **bakandamiya**, *Wakar Amarya da Ango* ('Song of the Bride and the Groom') and *Allah Ka Ci Da Maraya* ('It's Allah that Feeds the Orphan') will provide an insight into a female's original oral compositions, interpretation of Hausa culture, royalty and travels particularly in northern Nigeria.

Key words: Gurmi, Hausa, oral singer and performer, female

1. Introduction: Gurmi performance in northern Nigeria

Gurmi, or two-string plucked lutes, of different types and design have long been part of West African heritage (CHARRY 1996). In the Niger Republic and northern Nigeria, the gurmi is mostly played by Hausa men, who have made their mark by popularizing this performance. Gurmi performers are known to travel and perform from village to village, and even into cities. There was a time when performing with an instrument was in vogue. In some places in northern Nigeria, instruments like the garaya, goge and kukuma had their seasons, but when the gurmi came into fashion, like a wave, it consumed

popular interest, becoming one of the most powerful instruments played in villages.¹

Once Nigeria gained its independence, “several radio and television stations were established by the then State Governments” (ADAMU 1999: 5). This enabled access to radios, followed by the opportunity to buy audiocassette tapes, to regale in traditional Hausa soul *gurmi* music. Among this genre’s memorable performers were Haruna Uji (1946-1998),² Ali Makaho (1962-1997),³ Shehu Karamba mai Gurmi,⁴ Hussaini Jikan Boka, Haruna Karamba,⁵ Rabe mai Gurmi Zindar, Malam Maman Barka (1958-2018),⁶ Danmani Gumel and Alhaji Lawal Dangoma (b. 1937).⁷

Social media outlets have helped reintroduce past performers but also feature other *gurmi* performers that were perhaps known only in their respective areas. The internet has provided opportunities as well to find several *gurmi* performers. For example, there are YouTube channels that

¹ Interview with Salamatu mai Gurmi, 23 May 2013.

² Haruna Uji was born in Hadejia, formerly a town under Kano State and presently in Jigawa State, Nigeria. Apart from having a sound education in religious studies, he was also a skilled farmer and hunter. Later on, Uji became a long distance driver after learning under Jibrin dan Amingo. Having not come from a family of singers and instrumentalists, Uji started singing as a hobby. His first encounter with the *gurmi* was through a road worker called Danmato, who played it during his leisure time. Having observed the instrument and experimented with a can, stick and rope to create his own version of the *gurmi*, Uji went on to create a real one, which subsequently launched him towards recognition as the king of Hausa *gurmi* performers.

³ Also known as Ali Maimandula, Ali Makaho was born in Magarya, under the Itas-Gadau Local Government, Bauchi State. He grew up in Gololo, a small town under the Gamawa Local Government, Bauchi State. *Makaho*, meaning ‘blind’, became part of his name because he was born blind. Ali Makaho performs with the help of a *gurmi* instrumentalist, and they go to marketplaces and hotels to perform. His songs are mainly praise songs, with *Wakar Mandula* (‘The Song of the Mandula’) bringing him to popularity in 1984. The song speaks of the ill effects of smoking marijuana (DEUTSCHE WELLE 2017).

⁴ This name is mentioned in MOHAMMED (2017).

⁵ Salamatu mai Gurmi mentioned this name during her interview (15 August 2022). She said that he is from a town bordering the Niger Republic in Yobe State, and that he also performs in the Karai-Karai language. According to Salamatu, Haruna Karamba’s style of *gurmi* performance is slightly different, yet similar to that of Hussaini Jikan Boka, another popular *gurmi* performer.

⁶ A popular *gurmi* instrumentalist from the Niger.

⁷ Interview with Dr Aliyu Ibrahim Kanfara, Department of Geology, Federal University Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State, 4 September 2022.

feature gurmi performers like Sani Mai Gurmi Ajiwa, Umaru Bazaza, Babangida mai Gurmi, Musa Gumel mai Gurmi, Rabi'u mai Gurmi and Tsahirou mai Gurmi and Musa Kanen Yalo.⁸

Despite the gurmi's prominence as a unique instrument with several known and undocumented performers, the acknowledgement of female gurmi performers is almost non-existent, thus making it a vastly male dominated tradition. According to ADAMU (2019: 170):

Generally, music and popular entertainment are not seen as credible or acceptable career options for women in a traditionally closeted society... Islamicate societies – societies with Islamic social institutions that do not operate with strict Islamic constitutions because of the secular nature of the larger nation-state – nonetheless do not encourage mixed-gender social spaces.

The first and only social media documentation of a female Hausa gurmi performer is that of Hajiya Salamatu mai Gurmi. Salamatu has been performing since the early 1990s, but knowledge about her was limited until recently, thanks to social media uploads. AMES (1973: 44) noted lutes made from sardine tins that were used for “the production of music by non-professionals among the Hausa of Zaria [by] women and children”, but there is no documentation of performances by women.

Thus, in a male-dominated profession, Salamatu mai Gurmi is one performer whose foray into this instrument enables the redefining of gender boundaries. Her ability to sing, build her own instrument and perform garnered her respect, even among her male counterparts. Documenting her milestone achievement is very important, as no such documentation has taken place. This paper thus preserves the significance of the gurmi and its playing among women in northern Nigerian Hausa-speaking areas. This paper begins with an overview of Salamatu mai Gurmi's early life and the plentiful inspiration behind her achievements. Her travels with her band demonstrate the power of her abilities, as well as her dedication to her instrument. This culminates with the analysis of her two masterpieces, ‘Wakar Amarya da Ango’ (‘Song of the Bride and the Groom’) and ‘Allah Ka Ci Da Maraya’ (‘It’s Allah that Feeds the Orphan’).

⁸ See ALIYU SULAIMAN Musa (2006).

2. Salamatu mai Gurmi⁹

Salamatu mai Gurmi was born in 1971 in a Fulani settlement **ruga** called Adiraushin Sale mai rake,¹⁰ on the outskirts of the Auyo Local Government (formerly the Kafin-Hausa Local Government), formerly under Kano State (now under Jigawa State after the split from Kano in 1991). She grew up speaking Fulfulde and Hausa fluently. Salamatu comes paternally from a family of religious scholars, herders and farmers. Her maternal grandfather was chief of the Sarkin Baka hunters. Her childhood was punctuated by herding,¹¹ Qur'anic schooling and household chores.

Growing up, Salamatu remembers household tasks such as preparing food or washing dishes. The breakfast in Salamatu's family usually consisted of **ɗumame** (leftover food). In the morning, Salamatu would pound millet grains to make balls of **fura** that were served with yoghurt for lunch. In the afternoon, broken millet **burabisko** was a popular food, while dinner was millet or guinea cornballs **fufu** with **miyar kuka** (baobab soup), **miyar yakuwa** (sorrel soup) or **miyar kuɓaiwa** (okra soup).

Like other young Fulani girls at that time, Salamatu married very young. DE ST CROIX (1972) noted that, "Nomadic Fulani children are betrothed when very young... the time of their 'marriage' (banga) will be some six or seven years after betrothal; when the girl is fourteen years old, and the lad seventeen years old..."

Salamatu was in fact first betrothed to her cousin Abubakar, whom she loved dearly. Unfortunately, he died young during his **almajiranci** (Islamic education abroad). As a consequence, she married his elder brother and Qur'anic teacher Malam Musa, who already had a wife and three children. The marriage did not last long.

By this time, Salamatu had tried practising garaya, a two-stringed guiter which she found quite difficult. After her marriage with Malam Musa dissolved, Salamatu moved on to playing the gurmi, at that time a very popular

⁹ Interviews conducted with Hajiya Salamatu mai Gurmi in 2013 and in 2022 formed part of this paper.

¹⁰ There are two possible locations when referring to Adiraushi: Adiraushin Kundawa and Adiraushin Sale mai rake. The village Adiraushin Sale mai rake got its name for its sugar cane plantations.

¹¹ As a young Fulani girl, Salamatu was accustomed to herding 15-20 cattle at a time.

instrument in Hadejia. She practised at night, when it was quiet. Her gurmi playing brought in a small amount of money, as well as motivation to keep practising and performing. That was exactly what she did for about three years, until she got married a second time to a policeman whom she had met at the Kafin-Hausa market. A mother to four children, Salamatu would later divorce again and go on to perform professionally with her band across neighbouring towns and villages.

2.1 Salamatu's process of self-actualization

Gurmi performance is a tradition known to the Hausa and Fulani people, but it is not inherited or passed down in families. Even so, Salamatu's first inspiration regarding musical instrument was her maternal uncle, Kawu Wuff-wuff.¹² Despite his untimely passing, Salamatu remembers him not only as a hunter, but also as a performer who played garaya during hunting trips in the forest to motivate the hunters in their efforts to catch game. As a griot, he never made his passion his profession, but he became Salamatu's first access to understanding the artistic impulse and the creative process of constructing musical instruments. She even attempted to construct a garaya using a rectangular sardine can due to its similar shape to the real instrument. This one-string lute proved difficult to play, despite the efforts she put into learning it.

Another golden opportunity was when she saw a travelling performer, Sale Mesa, for the first time after he came to play the gurmi at the village square (**dandali**). As a young girl, Salamatu was drawn with the other children to instrumentalists every time they came to her village. She was particularly impressed by his performance and inspired by Sale Mesa.¹³ She also saw how the travelling musicians created each gurmi and repaired broken ones, which subsequently led her to create her own gurmi instrument.

A third inspiration for Salamatu was the radio. When she was a young girl, radio was the most powerful means of mass communication. In addition, in Nigeria, especially the Fulani people were known for their enthusiasm for radio.

¹² **Kawu** means uncle (specifically elder brother of the mother). **Wuff-wuff** is a nickname he got due to the barking of his hunting dogs. As part of the Fulani culture, addressing an elder with his or her name directly, especially by children, is not allowed. This respect caused Salamatu to forget his real name, even after his death. Interview with Salamatu mai Gurmi, 15 August 2022.

¹³ Sale Mesa stayed as a guest at the house of Shugaban Samari, the youth leader.

So, while in Hadejia, Salamatu was able to listen on her family's International brand radio to gurmi performer Haruna Uji. Since these radios came with cassette players, Salamatu also got to hear one of Haruna Uji's most popular recorded performances, 'Bello Maitama dan Isubu'. The steady exposure to his music helped increased her interest in playing the gurmi properly.



Figure 1 – Salamatu with her gurmi

It has not been an easy procedure. Though, Salamatu couldn't recollect a specific incident, she did recall parents were the first to put her under pressure to cease. Her mother made it clear to Salamatu that this profession is only for male. Despite her parent's verbal concerns, Salamatu's persistence prevailed. Worried about her tenacity, they resort to prayers and **kiranye** (relying on charms to get her to abandon where she was and return home). It took the insight of an uncle to warn her parents not to pursue the use of such charms, due to its damaging effect. Her determination in transgressing these societal boundaries, grudgingly won the support of her family, who embrace performance as part of her life, and pray that everything goes well with her and that she is safe wherever the gurmi takes her. Additionally, during that time, there is encouragement from people in the surrounding villages who learn

about her and invite her for a solo performance. Her first performance while at home was of the song 'Masu Karya ku Daina, Gaskiya ta Wakana' ('Liars Stop Doing so, the Truth Has Surfaced').

2.2 Travelling with the band

The above listed inspirations and her tenacity set Salamatu apart from other women at that time, when most did not have the opportunity to be heard or were even allowed to follow their passion. Growing up as a woman in a society with a desire to play an instrument, she lacked the support and the voice to be heard, a daunting experience. After the dissolution of her first marriage, Salamatu's performance became limited to the confines of her parents' home in the evenings, diligent plucking away on her gurmi. In her second marriage, as living in police quarters at Kafin-Hausa afforded her the opportunity to practise more, still within the confines of her marital, and as a hobby.

After her second divorce, while living with her parents (as is the custom for *divorcées*), Salamatu's persistence started to garner notice among her family. When it became apparent that she was interested in performing, a relative approached her mother, and after a deep talk proposed that this was perhaps her destiny. At that point, her mother and close family gave their official approval for Salamatu to pursue her dream of being an instrumentalist. She thus sold her cow and used the proceeds to buy loudspeakers and amplifiers, specifically with the intention to become a travelling performer.

Unlike other musicians who perform as a group and back a singer, Salamatu began to travel solo in 1987, creating her own sound as a female gurmi player without dancers or chorus members; there was only her gurmi to accompany her on her journey. Still relatively young, this reflects her strong desire to play her instrument as fated. Recalling her adventures alone, Salamatu says:¹⁴

Ni kadai nake makala gurmina, duk wani taron da za a yi, ko ban san garin ba. In dai hidimar yin ta ake yi, kuma ana bukar masu sana'a irin mu, to, in na makala shi, na je, to In Sha Allahu, zan sami rabona. A wurin ma, zan sami marokan da ko a da, ban san su ba. Tun da sana'armu daya, gonarmu daya, za su mara mini baya, mu ci arziki, mu rabu lafiya

¹⁴ Interview with Salamatu mai Gurmi, 23 May 2013.

Alone I sling my lute, to any event that will take place, even if I don't know anyone. If there really is an event and there is a need for professionals like us, when I strap it on and go there, God willing, I will get my share. At that place, I will meet other praise singers that I don't even know. Since we share the same profession, same passion, they will have my back, each will get his share and we part peacefully

Travelling with heavy loudspeakers and amplifiers required teamwork. As such, Salamatu gradually put together an all-male group with her as leader:

Sale makadin kalangu	Hourglass-shaped double membrane (talking drum)
Mamuda mai kalangu	Talking drum
Alhassan Umar Ningi¹⁵	Salamatu's assistant
Mai kuntukuru	Small bowl-shaped drum hung around the neck
Idi Marokin baka	Praise singer
Dan Wailare	Another gurmi performer; an extra hand
Ali (from Auyo)	Helped carry the loudspeakers and amplifiers



Figure 2 – Salamatu mai Gurmi with her assistant Alhassan Umar Ningi

¹⁵ Alhassan Umar Ningi is from the village of Rumbu in Ningi, Bauchi State. He learned to perform the instrument through his Fulani friend.

Salamatu's early forays started with going from village to village to perform, particularly in the evenings. She still remembers performing in villages like Kwangwalam,¹⁶ Tumbin dawa and Tumbin Buduma,¹⁷ then moving on to villages near Borno State like Doron Baga, Duguri Masaram, Kangarwa and Malam Fateri. Most of the people living in these villages were fishermen interested in traditional music. In the evening, with the light from the moon and the stars, the fishermen gathered around their lakes, many in their canoes. Golden lanterns created shadows in the dark as they listened to Salamatu's performance all through the night. Though there was no fixed rate, listeners enjoyed the music and paid what they wished.

When they left Borno State, Salamatu and her band moved on to Gongola,¹⁸ performing in places like Yola, Fufore, Jimeta, Mubi, Michika, Gombi, Masallacin Kara, Jada, Ganye, Kojoli and even Turwa, a town in Cameroon.

As a traditional performer, Salamatu's songs are all natural compositions, making it easier for her to on the spot compose a song and connect to the music she plays. Her inspiration returns to her as soon as she is asked to perform. One characteristic of traditional performers is getting to know the names of people and places to add to their songs when they perform. Since gurmi performance is a music about love and praise singing, her themes also reflect this. She sings about what she likes. Some of Salamatu's original compositions performed while travelling and then after she eventually settled in Bauchi are:

- *Wakar Masu karya ku daina, Gaskiya ta Wakana*¹⁹ ('Song of Liars Stop Doing so, the Truth Has Surfaced')
- *Wakar Amarya da Ango* ('Song of the Bride and Groom')
- *Wakar Allah Ka Ci da Maraya, Ko Da Mai Uwa Bai So Ba* ('It's Allah that Feeds the Orphan, even if No One Wants To')
- *Wakar Duniyar Nan Dai Ba Gida Ba Ce* ('Song of this World Is Temporary')
- *Wakar Alhaji Isa Matori*, 1992 ('Song of Alhaji Isa Matori')
- *Wakar Aliyun Giade, Yarima Aliyu*, 1994 ('Song of Aliyu of Giade, Prince Aliyu')
- *Wakar Gwamna J. Y. Kaku*, 1994 ('Song of Governor J. Y. Kaku')

¹⁶ A border community in the Mai'adua Local Government, Katsina State, Northern Nigeria.

¹⁷ An area near Lake Chad.

¹⁸ A state created on 3 February 1976. It was divided in 1991 into two states: Adamawa and Taraba.

¹⁹ Salamatu's first song.

- *Wakar Danmasanin Bauchi, Salisu Matori*, 1994 ('Song of Salisu Matori')
- *Wakar Jarman Bauchi, Alhaji Garba Noma*, 1994 ('Song of Alhaji Garba Noma')
- *Wakar Sarkin Dawaki mai Tuta 1*,²⁰ 1994 ('Song of Chief Dawaki mai Tuta')
- *Wakar Wazirin Bauchi, Alhaji Bello Kirfi*, 1994 ('Song of the Bauchi Vizier, Alhaji Bello Kirfi')
- *Wakar Sanusi Baban Takko*, 1994 ('Song of Sanusi Baban Takko')
- *Wakar Fulani* ('Song of the Fulani')
- *Wakar Mahauta da Makera*, 1994 ('Song of the Butchers and Blacksmiths')

3. Creating the gurmi

The building of gurmi instrument is primarily done by males. Salamatu's engagement in the creation of her instrument solidifies her connection to it, further demonstrating another area in which women have been excluded.

For example, Salamatu uses the skin of the land (**damo**) or water monitor (**guza**), because it is used for gurmi making, while goat skins are best suitable for drums.²¹ In comparing the land or water monitor as the better and longer lasting, she says that **damo** skin functions better than **guza** skin on the body resonator as the former does not cave in.

The specific items required to create a gurmi are:

- a) Cut gourd (used as a body resonator): **butar duma (kumbo/kurtu)**
- b) Tack nails: **ƙananan ƙusoshi**
- c) Skin of a land or water monitor: **fatar damo ko guza**
- d) Leather binding string: **alguwa**
- e) A wooden stick: **mulmulallen sanda**
- f) A coin: **ƙwandala**
- g) Fishing line: **ka-fi-lilo**
- h) Guinea corn stalk: **karan dawa/jakin gurmi**
- i) Indigo plant seeds: **'Ya'yan baba**
- j) Ring (placed on finger): **zobe**

²⁰ This is a royal position. The song was composed for the then royal title-holder late Alhaji Babayo Yakubu Wanka, born in 1952 and he died in 2015. Information obtained from Ado Danrima Garba, Wakilin Tarihin Bauchi, 09 May 2023.

²¹ Interview with Salamatu mai Gurmi, 04 May 2023.

Salamatu finds the right size of gourd and cuts it from above, not midway as is done with a calabash for domestic use or for the **amada** instrument. This serves as the main body resonator. The **damo** or **guza** skin is soaked for several hours. In the meantime, using an awl needle, holes are gently pierced into the tip of the big opening on the gourd. This is where the tack nails go. The wet skin is then tightly stretched over half of the body resonator and held in place by the tack nails. Before tacking the nails to the gourd, however, three holes the size of a coin are made; two pull the already smoothed wooden stick (the neck) through, and one is left open to insert a small microphone during performances. The coin is placed on the right area of the body resonator, so that when Salamatu places the ring on her finger, it will hit the coin to create a pitch in tune with the sounds emanating from the plucked strings (fishing line), which are attached to the length of the body resonator and the wooden stick. When playing the gurmi, additional sounds, apart from the coins and strings, emanate from the indigo plant seeds inserted into a dried guinea corn stalk of 2-3 centimetres. This stalk is wedged between the strings and the body resonator.



Figure 3 – Salamatu's gurmi

4. A view into Salamatu's poetic masterpieces

A **bakandamiya**, or poetic masterpiece, is a poetic oral song that a singer or listeners feel connected to. The singer may feel so attached to a song that he declares it his masterpiece, as in the case of Ibrahim Narambada Tubali²² and

²² Hausa singer, born in 1890 and died in 1963.

Mamman Shata Katsina,²³ or listeners may pick a song and see it as a singer's masterpiece because of the wisdom interwoven into it by the performer. In his analysis of great poets and oral praise singers like Muhammadu Na Birnin Gwari, Narambada and Shata, MUHAMMED (1981: 68-69) featured other terms that oral singers have used that "[constitute] a bakandamiya", such as 'waka babba' (a great poem about 'mutum babba', a great man) and 'uwar wako'ki/uwar manyan wako'ki' (Lit. mother of all songs). His analysis of Hausa praise singers presented a **bakandamiya** as a song that shows the skill and wisdom of the singer to compose an outstanding and dynamic piece that is continuously being added to, has different versions at any time the singer is performing and has the power to captivate listeners. Two Hausa praise singers, Narambada and Shata, have used the term **bakandamiya** to announce a particular song as their masterpiece. This indicates their open connection to it, as it can be "the poet's private and favourite song" (MUHAMMED 1981: 65). As such, **bakandamiya** masterpieces fall under the following categories:

- The artist claims one of his/her songs as the masterpiece.
- Critics/fans pick an artist's song as their masterpiece.
- It is in the masterpiece that an artist feels he/she has shown highest brilliance, praises for the self or for someone, or shows how much of an expert he/she is.
- An artist continuously adds more verses to his/her masterpiece, making the song longer.
- The masterpiece has a different version at each performance.

Salamatu has two songs that are considered masterpieces by both herself and the public. The one that critics have deemed a masterpiece is 'Amarya da Ango'. In contrast, Salamatu considers 'Allah Ka Ci Da Maraya' her masterpiece, as she connects to its detailing of her journeying to places, including royal houses, and her travels with her band and gurmi.

4.1 Bakandamiya 1: Amarya da Ango

The theme of the song *Amarya da Ango* is **gulma**, or rumour-mongers, particularly people who spread rumours with the malicious intent to destroy homes. The song details a young, happily married couple. The husband is a hard-working farmer who leaves his young bride at home to work all day on his farm:

²³ Hausa singer, born in 1923 and died in 1999.

Sai kana da matarka	You have your wife
Tana son ka, kana son ta	You love her, she loves you
Sai ka bar matarka	Then you left your wife (at home)
Ka tafi can aiki a gona	You have gone to work at the farm

In the performance, Salamatu gives a pictorial presentation of a married home in Hausa society and the “separate gender mandates” (MACK 2004: 6), such as the chores Hausa women partake in and men’s activities on the farm:

Ta daura sanwa	She [the bride] starts cooking
Har ta buga talgenta	She adds a liquid mixture of flour in boiling water
Kai ko kana aiki a gona	While you [the groom] are busy on the farm
Ko tuwo babu a gona	There is no food on the farm
Kana daga fartanya	You are lifting your hoe
Ku ga yana ta shirin susa a baya	You see, he continuously scratches the back
Gero kuwa akwai susa a baya	With millet always comes the itching

The song’s message refers to more than just activities. It is about the appreciation of responsibilities. For example, having no food at home implies the necessity of the husband’s tending to the crops, even if they make him itchy. The song draws attention to the husbands’ circumstances; working under the hot sun, which causes sweat, and because it is in the farm, there is dust, further causing itchy skin.

In the husband’s absence, an older woman visits the home and informs the new bride that she has seen her husband holding hands with another young girl. The old woman makes sure to ask the bride:

“Amarya, ina angon ya je shi?”	“Bride, where did your husband go?”
Ta buɗe bakinta, amarya	The bride says
“Ya tafi can aiki a gona”	“He went to work at the farm”
Ta buɗe bakinta ‘yar gulma	The rumour-monger says
“Yar nan amarya	“My dear
Ba gona ya je ba	He didn’t go to the farm
Ya samu yarinya...	He has found a young girl
Sun tafi can yawon shan iska”	They have gone out on a date”

This narrative performance raises the question of older women in general and how the elderly are conceptualized in literary and cultural contexts (GIANGONG 2021). Though, as part of the Hausa culture and even in literary texts, older

women are accorded great respect (ALIYU 2021), songs like this cast them in a non-positive light. As such, instead of saying 'elderly woman', Salamatu's song instead refers to her as a rumour-monger. A popular book by SADA (1971), *Uwar Gulma* (literally 'the mother of gossips'), provides a similar dramatic narrative of an elderly woman who enters the house of Malam Hayatu by pretending to sell her wares, then preys on his young wife's innocence by inciting her against her husband and disrupting the peace in their home.

In Salamatu's song, upon his return, the husband thus meets a very angry wife and no dinner:

Yau, ko tuwo babu a gona	"Today, there is even no food at the farm"
Ta buɗe bakinta amarya	She, the bride opened her mouth
"Ba ni son shirin iska na banza	"Don't take me for a fool
Ai ba gona ka je ba	You really didn't go to the farm
Ka ba ni takardata	You should divorce me
Ni gidanmu zan koma..."	I will return to my [parent's] home..."

Overall, Salamatu's performance highlights narrative dialogues between the young bride and the older woman and between the young bride and her husband. Songs of admonishment entertain as well as inform about certain ailments that affect society. What lingers in the hearts of listeners are more than the words. So too arise the special sounds from Salamatu's *gurmi* to accompany her voice when singing *Amarya da Ango*.

4.2 *Bakandamiya* 2: Allah Ka Ci Da Maraya

Salamatu's second **bakandamiya** showcases her personal recollections of the places she visited as a travelling performer. The fact that it is her "private and favourite song" marks it as a masterpiece, which she entitled 'Allah Ka Ci Da Maraya'. She speaks of places and emirs, now deceased, that have positively influenced her life and encouraged her in her career. In her words: "I sing for the royals because they respect me. Traditional royals see us performers with respect, and they show us that they appreciate what we do".²⁴

²⁴ Interview with Salamatu mai Gurmi, 23 May 2013.

In as much as this piece takes us through some of her journey, Salamatu's "personal recollections... which are transmitted without control" are mostly "preserved in the memory" of the performer (VANSINA 1965: 160).

Before delving into how connected Salamatu feels to this song, it is important to note how she opens her performance. As with all gurmi performers, Salamatu also sings when she plays her gurmi. When asked to perform this **bakandamiya**, she gives an affirmative and starts plucking her gurmi, connecting to her instrument and falling in tune with the sounds with her eyes half closed. What follows is her opening doxology, a call to Allah:

Allah (3x)
 The protector²⁵
 The protector of his servant
 ...
 Allah bless us

An "opening and closing doxology" (MACK 2004: 108) is a common feature of Hausa songs. For example, in the song of gurmi performer Maman Barka titled 'Song of Amairam', he started also with an open salutation to Allah:

Allahu Sarki, Allahu Rabbi,	O Allah the King, O Allah the Lord,
Allahu, ni Mamman na yi roko	O Allah, I Mamman am beseeching

Still, not all gurmi performers open with salutations to the Almighty. In Haruna Uji's song titled *Balaraba*, he delves right into the sounds of his gurmi and lyrics that clearly declare his love for Balaraba.

Salamatu proceeds with self-praise in her **bakandamiya** by directly mentioning her own name:

One should be known by his profession
 Before he stops [singing], and it becomes known

This is said by Salamatu...
 I Salamatu extend greetings to my followers

²⁵ The contributors make all translations of the interviews and songs into English from Hausa.

In order to show her connection to the best gurmi player of all time, Salamatu continues her renditions:

The last of Haruna Uji
The husband of 'yar Inna

In so mentioning Haruna Uji, Salamatu conveys her respect for the man, which arose well before meeting him. Listening to his songs on audio cassettes was one of the main inspirations she carried with her as she became a performer. The fact that they are geographically from the same region eventually granted them the opportunity to meet at a market square in the village of Madaci. While talking to him, it became apparent that Salamatu knew one of his wives, who happened to be from her village. This strengthened their relationship and she became a frequent visitor at Haruna Uji's house, whenever she was performing in Hadejia. They have never performed together, but they still talk about performances and gurmi music making. Perhaps one of the most inspiring comments Salamatu heard about herself came from Haruna Uji, after he witnessed one of her performances:

Yarinya, na yi miki jinjina, kiɗa da waƙa, ba ƙaramin aiki ba ne. Kiɗa da waƙa, ba ƙaramin mawaƙi ba ne yake yi ba.

Young lady, you have my respect. It takes a lot of skill to perform and sing at the same time. An excellent artist is one who can sing and play.²⁶

As 'Allah Ka Ci Da Maraya' goes on, Salamatu plucks her lute, and her performance lauds her connection to her instrument:

Let me hold my drum
...
What did you say my drum
Please give me an explanation
Me and my little kumbi
...
I pick my little gurmi
I said to my little gurmi
God willing, to Bauchi I am moving...

²⁶ Interview with Salamatu mai Gurmi, 08 August 2022.

Salamatu is in a dialogue with her gurmi. She calls her gurmi a drum, even though it is not one. Drums are very much part of Hausa musical tradition, and her calling her gurmi a drum is just an indication of her attachment to her instrument. Kumbi is another name for the gurmi calabash and many gurmi performers use it as another name for their instrument as well. Haruna Uji also used this term in his 'Kainuwa'. In her song, Salamatu also speaks directly to her gurmi, with the sounds emanating from the instrument seeming like an affirmative response. This personification is reflected as well in Haruna Uji's song 'Balaraba'. After plucking for a few seconds, his opening starts with:

Ni ja ni mu je gurmina

Drag me and together we go, my gurmi

Salamatu's **bakandamiya** provides insight into the life of a touring performer. As an oral artist, her performance when recorded may vary as she adds to or alter some portions of what she has said. Still, this does not diminish her connection to the places she has been and the people she has met. This just represents the fundamental characteristics of **bakandamiya** songs: their ability to be a captivating piece whenever the performer sings it.

4.2.1 The sojourn of the gurmi

Salamatu's masterpiece *Allah Ka Ci Da Maraya* narrates a passionate journey through the cities and towns of northern Nigeria and her connection to the places and the people she has met. This journey was not possible without the gurmi. In fact, in her first few verses, she speaks of a journey in which she asked the gurmi to explain to her a promise between her and the people of Bauchi. While she was in her town Hadejia, she picked her gurmi, and:

Na ce wa ɗan gurmin nan
Bauchi State zan koma
Garin Sarki Sulaimanu²⁷
Allah Jifan Sulaimanu

I told my little gurmi that
 I will move to Bauchi State
 The town of Emir Sulaimanu
 May Allah forgive Sulaimanu

Salamatu's narration regarding her journey starts with Bauchi, not because that is the first place she visited, but because that is her final abode. Gurmi performers sing from the heart. They sing about anything that inspires them.

²⁷ Sarki Sulaimanu was the Emir of Bauchi from 27 July 1982 until his death on 24 July 2010 at the age of 77.

They sing for love, and about the things they love. The essence of Salamatu's masterpiece, which is embedded more in the sounds of her instrument than in the words she expresses, tells of the great memorable connections she has with all the places she has travelled through her gurmi. Her mention of Emir Sulaimanu reflects her experience of meeting him, and praying for his soul because he is a memory she relives, even though he is no longer alive.

From Hadejia in north-west Nigeria, Salamatu's passion for the gurmi took her to the north-eastern state of Gongola. Recounting this journey, Salamatu sings:

Na je cikin Gongola
Mambila duk na taka

I went to Gongola
I have been all over Mambilla

Her trip took her to the Sardauna Local Government, where Mambilla is situated:

Garin Mamman Lamido
Muhammadu Mamman Mansur²⁸
Muhammadu jikan Sambo

The town of Mamman Lamido
Muhammadu Mamman Mansur
Muhammadu, the grandson of Sambo

It should be noted that gurmi performers are not praise singers for the royals. One praise singer, Mamman Shata, has a song he made for Emir Muhammadu Mamman Mansur. Shata praises the emir for:

Ya debo shanu ya ba ni
Ya dauko sutura ya ba ni
Ya dauki kuɗi ya ba ni...

He gave me cows
He gave me clothes
He gave me money...

Despite the fact that Salamatu's **bakandamiya** is filled with the names of the emirs of the places she has visited, the meaning behind them is deeper than that. At the time of her travels, the roads to Mambilla were unpaved and the climb was more dangerous. As such, she and her band stopped at Baruwa Sarti at the Hama Gabdo's palace. Transportation at Gindin Hawa picked people for their first stop at Maisamari, then they proceeded to Guroji and then to Gembu, where they met with Emir Muhammadu Mamman Mansur.

²⁸ Muhammadu Mamman Mansur was born on 12 May 1925 and ruled from 1962 until his death in 2002. Information comes from his son Aliyu Muhammad Mansur, the Galadima of Mambilla.

Salamatu's connection to the emir is connected to the culture of northern Nigeria. Traditionally, when a visitor enters a town or village, his/her first point of entry is to announce his or her presence at the emir's palace. The emir ensures that the visitor has a place to stay and is made to feel welcomed. For Salamatu, to make the emir's palace her first point of entry created awareness about her as a travelling performer, and ensured that she had security and was provided with the amenities she needed, both for herself and her entourage.

Moving forward, Salamatu's gurmi takes her to another town called Takum, where she was welcomed by Emir Sarki Aliyu. After a few days, Salamatu moved on to Donga and spent 8 days there, having been welcomed by Emir Alhaji Danjuma L. Garshena.²⁹ This sojourn brought her into the areas of former Gongola State, presently Taraba State. Salamatu's last point of call in her song in this region is Ibi,³⁰ where she stayed under then-Emir Ibrahim.³¹ According to Salamatu, as a female gurmi leader, she gets the honour of having her own private place to stay, with her band given separate quarters. During their stay, they enjoy exploring the town and performing.

Regaling her sojourn to more places, other towns that are reflected in Salamatu's masterpiece are Kafanchan in Kaduna State (north-west Nigeria). As usual, her memories of these places include showing gratitude by documenting the names of the emirs of that time. In Namu, her gratitude goes to Emir Sulaimanu:

Na duba Sarkin Namu	I checked on Emir of Namu
Sarki Sulaimanu	Emir Sulaimanu
Ga shi dogon Sarki, kuma tsohon soja	He is a very tall Emir and a former soldier

In north-central Nigeria, Salamatu describes visiting Namu and Wamba in Plateau State and meeting the Emir of Wamba, Musa Nagogo Ibrahim;³² at the time he was ill, and she got to see him briefly and wish him well.

²⁹ Emir of Donga from 1982 to 1991. Information obtained from Isa Adamu Baba, staff member with the Jalingo Local Government Council, Taraba State.

³⁰ A Local Government under Taraba State.

³¹ There are contestations regarding this name. Records on Ibi's emirs do not mention the name Ibrahim. Instead, there was Emir Alhaji Salihu Danbawuro, who reigned from 1962 to 2004. Information from Isa Adamu Baba, Jalingo Local Government Council, Taraba State.

³² Emir of Kafanchan from 1991 to 2007. Interview with Samson Rimkat Rimdap, 02 May 2023.

Her visit to Kafanchan was during the time of Emir Isa, son of Muhammad and father of Mamman, the grandson of Abdu. It was also met with a big event in which Salamatu performed to a large crowd. An important personality that Salamatu honoured with her performance was of Aliko Muhammad,³³ the Vizier of Kafanchan, who at the time had an important position as secretary to the military president Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida. Emir Isa enjoyed her performance so much that he wanted her to stay permanently, but a chance meeting with some royals from Bauchi State sealed her fate:

Taro ya taru, Sarakuna sun zozzo
Sai ga baba Yarima, Ajiya na Giade
Da shi da Talban Bauchi, Ibrahim
Tahir
Sai suka ce, "Akwai nadi na sarauta
Sarauta na Sarki Sulaimanu
Zai yi nadi na Waziri
Alhaji Bello Kirfi"
Sai suka ba ni wasika
Sannan na zo nan Bauchi
To, kun ji zuwa nan Bauchi

A very big gathering, Emirs have all come
 Then there was Yarima, the Ajiya of Giade
 He and the Talba of Bauchi, Ibrahim Tahir

They say, "There will be a turbanning
 A royal position by Emir Sulaiman
 He will enthrone a Vizier
 Alhaji Bello Kirfi"
 Then they gave me a letter
 Then I came here to Bauchi
 Now, you have heard about my coming to
 Bauchi

Now living in Bauchi, Salamatu continues her practice at events and travels whenever she is invited to perform. Here, the concept of an **ubangida** (patron) portrays itself as part of the reasons that cemented her stay in Bauchi, despite Emir Isa's wishes to have her stay in Kafanchan.

³³ Also known as Wazirin Jama'a, born in 1937 and died 15 December 1997. Due to his achievements, in 1989 he was appointed as the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Nigeria.

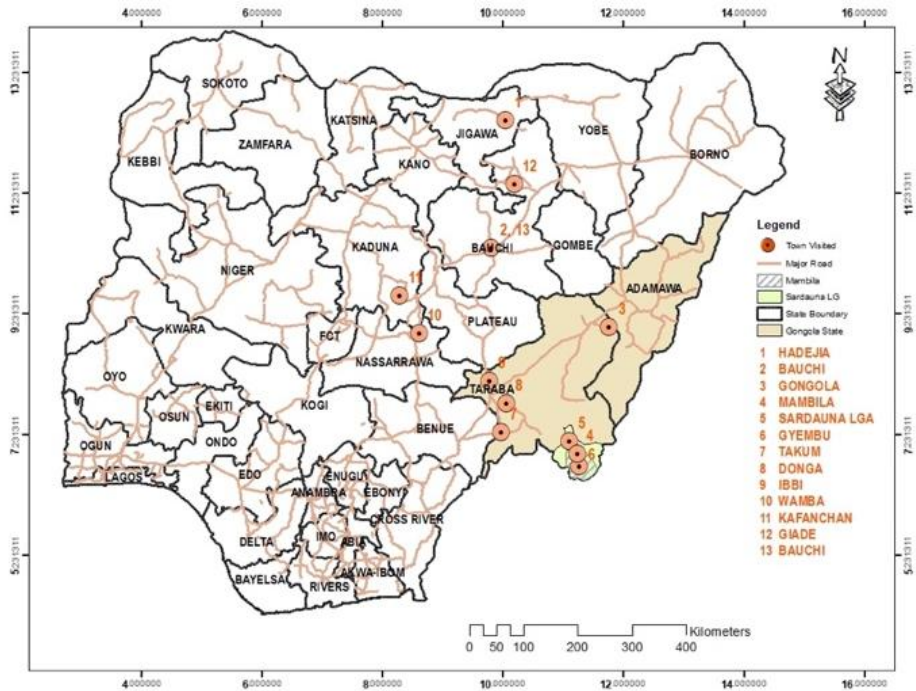


Figure 4 – Map of Nigeria featuring places mentioned in Salamatu’s bakandamiya.

Source: Authors’ figure

Patronship is part of Hausa singing tradition, as many prominent singers are known to have one. GUSAU (undated) defines **ubangida** as someone a performer sees as a patron and compose songs that are laced with stunning figurative expressions that show high respect, love, and esteem regard. GUSAU (2008) provided a list of Hausa singers and their patrons; for example, the Emir of Daura Mamman Bashar³⁴ was singer Mamman Shata’s patron. For Salamatu, Alhaji Muhammadu Bello Kirfi became her patron. At every Eid festival, where royals participate in processions known as **hawa**, Salamatu shows her loyalty by following the entourage of Vizier Bello Kirfi. Her connection to her patron is so well-known that at one time, while performing, the then governor of Bauchi (1999 and 2007) recognized her as Bello Kirfi’s praise singer, and paid for her to perform at Hajj in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

³⁴ Reigned from 1966 to 2007.

Another of Salamatu's motivations to stay in Bauchi arose during a state cultural festival, when she was shortlisted to perform. The performance took place at the Bauchi Open Air Theatre (then under the military regime of General Sani Abacha), where out of the 20 local governments in Bauchi State, she earned the number one position due to her solo performance. This feat enabled her selection for a national performance in Abuja to represent Bauchi State.

5. Conclusion

Hausa oral performance is a place where very few women have made their mark. In the art of solo performance, where a performer sings and plays an instrument, Salamatu mai Gurmi stands out as the only professional female Hausa gurmi performer. Her performances have taken her to several places, made her a female leader of an all-male group, connected her to royal houses and garnered her recognition and awards.

Presently, Hausa traditional performance is suffering a setback. ADAMU (2019: 107) attributed this setback to factors that include no one desiring to follow performers' footsteps, because it is considered a "lowbrow and unrewarding occupation". Youths enthralled by more modern Hausa, Indian and Western music has also contributed to the decline in appreciation for Hausa music and instruments.

Still, Salamatu mai Gurmi lives as an instrumentalist icon who has scaled hurdles to become the only female solo performer in the history of Hausa gurmi performance, and this article, which has showcased her life and her performance, evidenced a recorded history that protects her legacy.

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On some Nupe and Yoruba loans in Hausa

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Abstract

Hausa is a Chadic language and also the most studied and widespread West African language. It represents a lingua franca for millions of people. The existing scientific literature also makes it one of the most studied of all African languages. A simple glance at Paul Newman's *Hausa and the Chadic Language Family: A Bibliography*, later published online in its updated versions, shows us that the number of existing works on this language is far greater than all those published on other Chadic languages. Nevertheless, the study of its lexicon still represents a field to be systematically explored. If we consider the study of loans in Hausa, there are many important works, as shown in the References, but these exclusively concern Arabic, English, French, Kanuri and Tuareg, with still not one on Nupe.

Key words: loanwords, Nupe, Yoruba, Hausa, Chadic

1. Introduction

The present paper aims to examine loans from some West African languages which have not yet been the subject of a systematic study in this respect, despite the fact that they have left vestiges in the Hausa language. One of the languages that has not been studied in this sense is Nupe (also known as Anufe, Nupenci, Nyffe, Takpa), which is a Volta-Niger language of the Nupoid branch primarily spoken by c. 3.5 million individuals¹ in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. Its geographical distribution is limited to the west-central portion of this region and it maintains pre-eminence in Niger State as well as Kwara Kogi and the Federal Capital Territory. The number of loans from this language in Hausa is, not surprisingly, large, considering the territorial proximity of the two languages. The mutual exchange of loans is, however, undoubtedly to the advantage of Nupe from Hausa, especially in conveying Arabic terms, see KAWU (2002: 39-47) in this regard.

¹ According to *National African Language Resource Center* (retrieved 10.4.2021).

2. The Nupe loans

Let us examine some probable borrowings starting with some Hausa words:

àdàkō ‘small waistcloth worn by women over their other clothing’. The term does not seem to be Chadic. In fact, I have searched in other Chadic languages, taken at random and I have not found a similar one. ROBINSON (1925: 5a) marks **adiko** ‘handkerchief, napkin’ as a Yoruba word, as does SKINNER (1996: 2), who gives a doubtful origin from Yoruba **idiku**, cf. Ewe **duku** < Danish **dug** ‘dew’ or Dutch **doek** ‘cloth’. Its origin might be ascribed to a Germanic language given that in 1658 the Danes founded several trading posts on the Gold Coast, where they were present with the Dutch, the Norwegians and the Swedish. Skinner does not mention the possibility of the loan being from Nupe, though in my view it is a loan from that language through the word **àdiko** ‘handkerchief tied at each corner and hung on the shoulder’. The presence of the Dutch had been discussed by Nicoline VAN DER SIJS (2010), who found some 50-60 Dutch loanwords in Akvambu, Ewe, Fon, Gã and Twi. These include words for people in authority such as **admiraal** and **baas** (boss), food such as **suiker** (sugar) and **kaas** (cheese) and household items such as **ketel** (kettle) and **kop** (cup). Through Gã, spoken around the capital, Accra, some of these words have been incorporated into other local languages such as Ewe and Twi, and we can reasonably assume that they were imported into other languages further north, as in the case of Portuguese loans:² **kanjū** ‘cashew’ (< **acaju** ‘mahogany, *Swietenia Mahogoni*’), **àdakà** ‘wood or metal box’ (< **arca** ‘box’), **kujèrā** ‘seat’ (< **cadeira** ‘chair’), **kaŕtā** ‘card-playing’ (< **carta** ‘letter; playing card; plan’), **cōkālī** ‘spoon’ (< **cucharra** ‘spoon’), **wukā** ‘knife’ (< **faca** ‘knife’) in Hausa;

àkàrà³ ‘bean flour-cake; European biscuit’ < Nupe **kàrà** ‘a cake or biscuit made from flour; fried cakes or doughnuts’, as claimed by ROBINSON (1925: 8a);

àmàmē ‘mat of **tukurwā**⁴ used by canoe-men camping on river-banks’ < Nupe **miàmìà** ‘a large mat, made from **èba** palm branches, and used much as a shade or tent’;

² See BALDI (2023).

³ ABRAHAM (1962: 14b) considers it a loan from Yoruba.

⁴ The palm *Raphia vinifera*.

- bàntē** ‘loincloth’. SKINNER (1996: 16) observes correctly that in Hausa “-te rather than -ce suggests loanword” and the word is “widespread on the Atlantic coast” < Nupe **bènte** ‘apron; loincloth’, as already correctly reported by ROBINSON (1925: 33a);
- bēguwā** ‘a porcupine (*Hystrix sp.*)’ < Nupe **beguwa** ‘porcupine’ (ROBINSON 1925: 40);
- daudù** ‘a title of respect given to a ruler’⁵ < Nupe **dawudù** ‘a salutation for certain ranks’ (ROBINSON 1925: 75b; SKINNER 1996: 46);
- gwangwanī** ‘basin, bowl’ < Nupe **gbángbámí** ‘a large European pan or basin’;
- kàcā** ‘used in ~ **mūgùn jībì** gruel (**kōko**)’ < Nupe **kàtsá** ‘a gruel made from guinea-corn’;
- kwātā** ‘quay; mooring-place for boats’ < Nupe **kpàta** ‘a watering-place; a wharf; a harbour’;
- karau** ‘glass bangle’ < Nupe **káráwú** ‘a glass or stone armlet’; cf. Ar. **qārūra** (WEHR: 752b) ‘long-neckled bottle’;
- lābūjè** ‘type of superior kola-nuts’ < Nupe **labozi** ‘a species of kola nut, originally grown at Labozi: the nut has only two segments’;
- tungā** ‘a small hamlet of hunters, fishermen, etc.’ < Nupe **tunga** ‘a settlement; a colony; started by the Fulahs placing prisoners or slaves on a farm to work’;
- zàmbū** ‘a Nupe blancmange wrapped in leaves’ < Nupe **zambu** ‘a certain food made from guinea-corn’.

3. The Yoruba loans

Yoruba is another language from which Hausa took loans. These represent a limited number and, without a doubt, far fewer than those that Yoruba took from Hausa. In fact, through Islamization, carried mainly through the Hausa people, a large number of terms entered the language, most of which were in Hausa as loans from Arabic (BALDI 2001: 45-65). The loans arrived also from other languages, however, i.e. Tuareg **talaqi** ‘poor woman’ > (Hausa **taluka**⁶ >) Yor. **tálákà** ‘poor P.’. If we consider the loans from Hausa which were not loans

⁵ ROBINSON (1962: 75b) gives also: “in Kano it is given to the heir to the throne; in Zaria to the **galadīma**”.

⁶ The word in Hausa, as well as in Mandingo, Songhay, Kanuri, Teda, etc., is a loan from Tuareg and not from Arabic, see GOUFFÉ (1974: 374).

from Arabic (thus not examined in this paper), the number of examples is quite long, here a few examples:

àdìrè ‘Yoruba black and white cloth’ < Yor. **àdìrẹ** ‘cloth dyed in patterns by the Yoruba’;

àgōgo ‘watch, clock’ < **agogo** ‘bell, clock, time of the day’. It is interesting to note that Professor SACHNINE (1997: 39b) considers the term in Yoruba a loan from Hausa;

àgushī ‘melon-seeds for making soup’ < Yor. **ègúsí** (ABRAHAM 1958: 180b) ‘a food made from seeds of melon’;

àkàrà (1) ‘bean-flourcake’ (2) ‘European biscuit’ < Yor. **àkàrà** (ABRAHAM 1958: 41a) ‘an oily cake made from beans ground and fried’;

àkàwu ‘clerk’ < Yor. **akòwé** ‘clerk, secretary’;

aku ‘parrot’. The word has sometimes been linked to Yoruba **ayékòótó** ‘parrot’ (*Psittacus erithracus*), but it is certainly an areal West Atlantic term that comes from a language in the Gulf of Benin. In fact, we find it in Bagirmi **aku**, Bidiya **’akkú**, Bidyogo **ẹkāyo**, Bole **àkku**, Ewe-Fon **akō**, Fulfulde **aku**, Gã **akoi**, Hausa **àku**, Kanuri **akú**, Ngizim **àkku**, Songhay **akuu**, Tubu **aku**, Twi **ako**, Zaar **akú** (via Hausa) and even present in the Arabic dictionaries of Kaye and Roth-Laly;

àkwàtì ‘box’ < Yor. **àpótí** (ABRAHAM 1958: 59b) ‘ox, chest, case’; cf. Nupe **kpàtì** ‘box; chest; trunk; case’; Gwandara **akwati**;

akyarā [Zaria] ‘tobacco’ < ? Yor. **agírá** (ABRAHAM 1958: 30b) ‘snuff, tobacco’;

àladè ‘pig, boar’ < Yor. **ẹlẹdẹ** (CROWTHER 2002: 76b) ‘pig, swine’; cf. Bole **aladè** ‘pig’. Among the Hausa, being Muslims, the common word for this animal is the Arabic word **àlhànzîr** / **àlhìnzîr**;

àlayyàhō ‘spinach’ < Yor. **ẹlẹfọ** (CROWTHER 2002: 76b) ‘one who sells edible herbs’;

amālanke ‘two-wheel push-cart’ < Yor. **ọmọnlānke** ‘pushcart’;

amamēji ‘the epidemics of 1914 and 1920’ < ? Yor. **ìbeji** (CROWTHER 2002: 102a) ‘twin’;

ànīnī ‘tenth of a penny (obs.); button; military officer’s star of rank’ < Yor. **ọnini** (ABRAHAM: 521a) ‘button; the coin worth one-tenth of a penny’ (CROWTHER 2002: 26b) ‘button’;

falè-falè id. ‘thin and flimsy’ < ? Yor. **fele-fele** (CROWTHER 2002: 83b) ‘thin, thinly’;

gwālè-gwālè ‘military punishment, fatigue duties’ < Yor. (CROWTHER 2002: 95a): **gbálẹgbálẹ** ‘thin, thinly’;

gwànjō ‘auction’ < Yor. **gbañjo** ‘auction sale’ (CROWTHER 2002: 95b);

- gyàlè** ‘shawl (for woman)’ < Yor. **gèlè** ‘head-tie, handkerchief’ (CROWTHER 2002: 92b);
- ibì** ‘type of kola-nut known to Hausa kola-dealers in Yorubaland’ < Yor. **obì** ‘kola-nut’ (CROWTHER 2002: 166b);
- ìgwā** ‘artillery-gun’ < Yor. **àgbá** ‘a great gun or cannon, barrel, cask’;
- ìkko** ‘Lagos’ < Yor. **Èkó**;
- kanjū** ‘cashew’ < ? Yor. **kajú** (ABRAHAM 1958: 358a) ‘West African cashew; *Anacardium occidentale*’. The loan, ultimately, came through the Portuguese term *acaju* (*Swietenia mahogoni*) from the Tupi **acá** + **jub**; (CROWTHER 2002: 135b): **kajú** ‘cashew’;
- kātākō** ‘plank’ < Yor. **páta**ko ‘plank, board’ (CROWTHER 2002: 193b);
- kwāki** ‘cassavaflour’ < ? Yor. **pákí** ‘cassava’ (CROWTHER 2002: 191a);
- kwālī** ‘carton box; cardboard’ < cf. Yor. **páálí** ‘cardboard, cardboard box’ (CROWTHER 2002: 192a): **pāli** ‘cardboard’;
- kwàtā** ‘slaughterhouse’ < Yor. **patà** ‘to kill for the purpose of selling’ (CROWTHER 2002: 193b);
- kwata-kwata** id. ‘completely, absolutely’ < cf. Yor. **pátapáta** ‘on the whole, altogether, absolutely, entirely, totally’ (CROWTHER 2002: 193b);
- tàlo-tàlo** ‘turkey’ < Yor. **tòlótolo** ‘turkey’ (CROWTHER 2002: 196b), cf. Nupe **tòlótòlò** ‘turkey’;
- tīti** ‘girl’ < Yor. **titi**;
- tītī** ‘street’ < ? Yor. **títí** ‘public road, street thoroughfare’ < En. **street** (CROWTHER 2002: 224a);
- wāgàshī** ‘cream cheese’ < Yor. **wàrakàši** ‘a sour-milk, boiled cheese’ (CROWTHER 2002: 228a);

4. Conclusions

In its long history, the Hausa language has received many loans from other languages that have left traces in it given that it has been a rapidly expanding language, especially in the last two centuries. If we compare the area occupied by Kanuri, which reached as far as Libya in the nineteenth century, Hausa expanded and became the predominant language in West Africa. Alongside Arabic loans at around 20%, (reaching 30% including the terms generated in the language from the original loans), 5% of loans are from English and 2% from Fulfulde. All the others come from other languages and do not exceed 3%. On the basis of looking at the lexicon of Hausa, however, it can be hypothesized

that only 60%, or perhaps even less, of the lexicon is of Chadic origin (BALDI, 1988: 58). In fact, an in-depth study of the Hausa lexicon could highlight the presence of other loanwords coming from languages spoken in the vicinity of its homeland and perhaps also coming from some spoken in more distant places.

The number of Nupe loanwords in Hausa is greater than that indicated in dictionaries, but in any case, fewer than those present in Nupe from Hausa, mainly because many of them are themselves Arabic loanwords, as previously remarked by CROWTHER (1864: ii-iii). On the contrary, the number of Yoruba loans in Hausa is considerable and more than the 16 indicated by ABRAHAM in his Hausa dictionary, but lower, nevertheless than the number of Hausa loans in Yoruba, again, for the reason that many of them are of Arabic origin and conveyed through Hausa.

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La pertinence du trait ATR et de l'allongement vocalique en joolɛ fooŋi et en guñaamɔɔ, langues atlantiques du Sénégal

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Résumé

Cette étude analyse la pertinence du trait ATR et de l'allongement vocalique en joolɛ fooŋi et en guñaamɔɔ, langues atlantiques parlées en Casamance (Sénégal). Elle a permis de noter l'existence de paires de mots formellement comparables avec une différence phonique (qui se situe au niveau du trait ATR et de l'allongement vocalique) et une différence sémantique. Le trait ATR et l'allongement vocalique ne s'opposent que dans des radicaux nominaux ou verbaux généralement monosyllabiques dont les syllabes sont fermées. La substitution d'une voyelle -ATR par une voyelle +ATR ou bien d'une voyelle brève par une voyelle longue dans un même radical nominal ou verbal permet d'obtenir une différence de sens. Un tel phénomène est productif dans certaines langues atlantiques telles que le joolɛ kaasa, le mandinka.

Mots-clés : pertinence, ATR, allongement, verbal, voyelle

1. Introduction

La présente étude met en évidence la pertinence du trait ATR et de l'allongement vocalique en joolɛ fooŋi et en guñaamɔɔ. La pertinence se manifeste au moyen de la substitution d'une voyelle -ATR par sa correspondante +ATR ou bien d'une voyelle brève par sa correspondante longue entraînant ainsi une différence de sens. Une telle opération relève de la dérivation qui est un ensemble de procédés permettant de créer de nouvelles unités lexicales à partir d'un thème nominal ou verbal. Ce dernier a, d'un point de vue sémantique, un sens qui lui permet d'être répertorié comme un individu du lexique et consiste, d'un point de vue structural, en un radical.

Cette étude se repose essentiellement sur les documents produits sur ces langues (thèses, ouvrages, articles) par BODIAN (2017: 34) et DIOP (2017: 72) pour le guñaamɔɔ, et par HOPKINS (1995: 18), SAMBOU (1983) et SAPIR (1965: 38) pour

le joolɛ fooŋi. Nous avons également consulté, pour ce qui est du joolɛ fooŋi, d'autres documents tels que le dictionnaire bilingue joolɛ fooŋi/français (COLY 2008), le manuscrit de DE TRESSANT (1979) et l'ouvrage de terminologie de la classe bilingue français/joolɛ de la DALN (sans date). Ces données sont aussi complétées par des informations recueillies auprès de nos informateurs.

Les différents travaux portant sur le joolɛ fooŋi ont diversement interprété les voyelles longues. SAMBOU (1983: 19) interprète, pour le joolɛ fooŋi, les voyelles phonétiquement longues comme des séquences de voyelles brèves, tandis que SAPIR (1965: 5) et GERO & GERO (1994: 20) les traitent comme des phonèmes unitaires.

BODIAN (2017: 22) a analysé le statut phonologique des voyelles longues comme des séquences de voyelles brèves, étant donné qu'elles n'apparaissent jamais devant des consonnes géminées et devant des prénasales. Quant à DIOP (2017: 70), elle les considère comme un phonème. Toutefois, les différents auteurs n'ont pas analysé leur pertinence distinctive de l'allongement vocalique.

Cette recherche se veut donc une contribution à la description de la pertinence distinctive exprimée par le trait ATR et l'allongement vocalique dans ces langues parlées au sud du Sénégal (Casamance).

La deuxième section présente l'état de la documentation dans les deux langues et la démarche méthodologique (2). La troisième section met en exergue les généralités, sur le joolɛ fooŋi et sur le guñaamɔɔ, utiles à la description des propriétés des voyelles (3). La quatrième section discute de la pertinence du trait ATR (4). La cinquième expose la pertinence de l'allongement vocalique dans ces langues atlantiques (5). La dernière section discute de la pertinence de l'allongement (6).

2. L'état de la documentation en joolɛ fooŋi et en guñaamɔɔ

Le joolɛ fooŋi a fait l'objet de description phonologique, morphologique et syntaxique par quelques auteurs parmi lesquels on peut citer SAPIR (1965) et HOPKINS (1995). Nous avons remarqué que les auteurs mentionnés ci-haut ont abordé l'harmonie ATR, mais rarement la pertinence distinctive du trait ATR et de l'allongement vocalique dans leurs travaux.

BODIAN (2017) et DIOP (2017) ont travaillé sur le guñaamɔɔ et ils ont abordé de façon détaillée le statut phonologique des voyelles dans leurs travaux respectifs, notamment le trait ATR. Toutefois, ces deux travaux n'ont pas abordé le procédé dérivatif consistant à allonger une voyelle d'un radical

nominal ou verbal ou à substituer une voyelle –ATR par sa correspondante +ATR qui sont des procédés sur lesquels se focalise cet article.

C'est ainsi que nous avons élaboré un corpus constitué de textes transcrits phonologiquement, grâce à la collaboration de nos informateurs. L'analyse du corpus a permis de relever que le trait ATR et l'allongement vocalique peuvent avoir une fonction dérivationnelle.

Notre approche qui se veut neutre (elle ne se repose pas sur une théorie spécifique), consiste à mettre en relief ces deux procédés morphologiques que le joolɛ fooŋi et le guñaamɔɔ emploient pour créer de nouvelles unités.

3. Les généralités sur le joolɛ fooŋi et sur le guñaamɔɔ

3.1 La classification linguistique

Le joolɛ fooŋi et le guñaamɔɔ appartiennent à la famille atlantique du Phylum Niger-Congo. POZDNIKOV & SEGERER (2016) classent le guñaamɔɔ dans le sous-groupe atlantique-nord et les langues joolɛ dans le sous-groupe bak. La figure 1 présente une vision globale de la classification des langues atlantiques parlées au Sénégal.

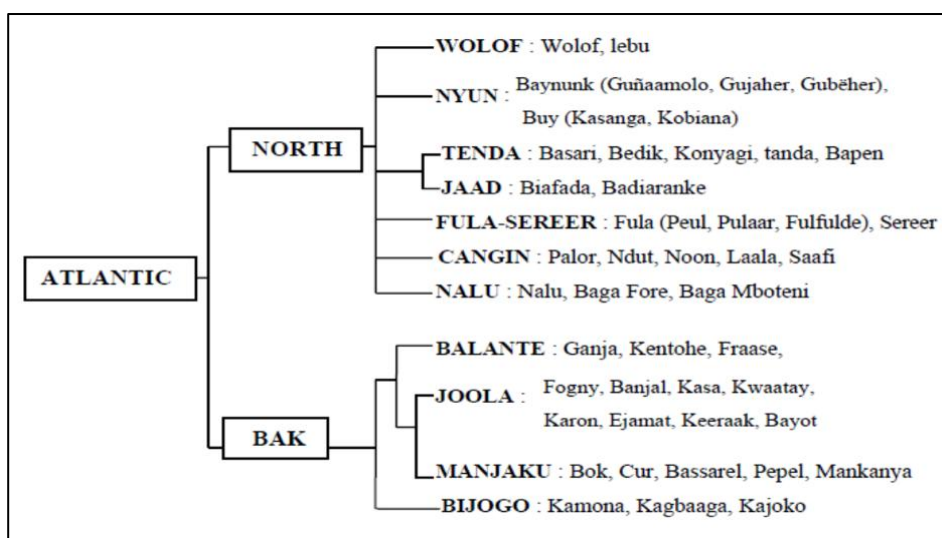


Figure 1 – La classification des langues atlantiques (POZDNIKOV & SEGERER 2016)

3.2 Les classes nominales

Le joolɛ fooñi et le guñaamɔɔ sont des langues à classes nominales dont les marques sont préfixées, à l'image d'autres langues atlantiques. Dans ces langues, c'est le nom qui gouverne l'accord en classe nominale comme l'indiquent les exemples ci-après.

- (1) a. **fɔ-gɔɔl-af f-umbɛɛm f-ɔfɛ** [joolɛ fooñi]
 CL-stick-DEF CL-my CL-this
 'This is my stick.'
- b. **u-bɛɛr-ɛw w-ɛɛmɛkɛw ɔ-lɔ-lɔ**
 CL-tree-DEF CL-big-DEF CL-fell-fell
 'The big tree fell.'

(SAPIR 1965: 24)

- (2) a. **ɔ-dikaam-ɔ ɔ-tirɪn-ɔ ɛ-dek-i was** [guñaamɔɔ]
 CL-femme-DEF CL-petite-DEF 3SG-marcher-INAC vite
 'La petite femme marche vite.'
- b. **i-n-digen-o i-n-tirɪn-ɔ ɛŋ-gir-i was**
 CL-POST-homme-DEF CL-POST-petit-DEF 3PL-courir-INAC vite
 'Les petits hommes courent vite.'

(BODIAN 2017: 96-97)

3.3 Les systèmes vocaliques du joolɛ fooñi et du guñaamɔɔ

Le joolɛ fooñi et le guñaamɔɔ présentent des systèmes vocaliques à dix voyelles réparties en deux groupes selon le trait $\pm$ ATR que STEWART (1967: 164) appelle Advanced Tongue Root ou ATR en abrégé, comme l'indique le tableau ci-après. En joolɛ fooñi, SAPIR (1965: 5), GERO & GERO (1994: 20) et HOPKINS (1995: 18) traitent les voyelles comme des phonèmes unitaires. Alors que SAMBOU (1983: 19) les interprète phonologiquement comme des séquences de voyelles brèves. En guñaamɔɔ, si BODIAN analyse les voyelles longues comme la réalisation de deux phonèmes en séquence, DIOP (2017: 56) par contre, les traite comme des phonèmes de la langue. Dans ce travail, nous avons adopté pour une analyse biphonématique des voyelles longues, étant donné qu'elles ont une distribution lacunaire du fait qu'elles n'apparaissent jamais devant les consonnes géminées ou devant les prénasales.

Lâches ou –ATR		Tendues ou +ATR	
Antérieures	Postérieures	Antérieures	Postérieures
i	ʊ	i	u
ɛ	ɔ	e	o
a		ɐ	

Tableau 1 – Les phonèmes vocaliques du joolɛ fooŋi et du ɡɔŋaamɔɔ

- (3) a. **kasɪkɛn** [joolɛ fooŋi]
to poison
'to poison'

- b. **feegiir**
three
'three'

(SAPIR 1965: 7)

- (4) a. **ɛ-lʊʊp-ɛy** [joolɛ fooŋi]
CL-maison-DEF
'la maison'

- b. **bu-bɛɛr-ɛb**
CL-arbre-DEF
'l'arbre'

(HOPKINS 1995: 19)

- (5) a. **taari** [ɡɔŋaamɔɔ]
perroquet
'un perroquet'

- b. **k-o-cufun**
CL-POST-lapin
'un lapin'

(BODIAN 2017: 17)

(6) a. **kʊʊl** [gɔ̃ñaamɔɔ]

feu

‘un feu’

b. **bɛɛh**

père

‘un père’

(DIOP 2017: 71)

4. La pertinence du trait ATR en joolɛ fooñi et en gɔ̃ñaamɔɔ

Le trait ATR fait partie des propriétés phonologiques que les spécialistes tels que Cléments et Rialland dans HEINE & NURSE (2008: 164) rangent parmi les particularités phonologiques des langues africaines. Ce trait manifeste un contraste entre les voyelles –ATR (avec une rétraction de la racine de la langue) et les voyelles +ATR (avec un avancement de la racine de la langue) dans certaines langues atlantiques, notamment en joolɛ fooñi et en gɔ̃ñaamɔɔ. Dans ces langues avec l’harmonie ATR, tous les radicaux nominaux et verbaux comportent seulement des voyelles d’un groupe ou de l’autre, mais pas les deux. La valeur ‘dominante’ de l’ATR (généralement +ATR, dans ces langues) est celle qui provoque la modification de l’autre valeur qui va s’assimiler à elle.

4.1 La pertinence du trait ATR en joolɛ fooñi

Les données de notre corpus révèlent l’existence de radicaux verbaux et nominaux dont les voyelles –ATR peuvent commuter avec leurs correspondantes +ATR pour créer de nouveaux radicaux qui acquièrent un sens différent du premier. Le changement de sens peut provenir d’un radical verbal vers un radical nominal (4.1.1), d’un radical verbal vers un radical verbal (4.1.2) ou bien d’un radical nominal vers un radical verbal (4.1.3) ou encore d’un radical nominal vers un radical nominal (4.1.4). Au niveau des illustrations, les radicaux comportant des voyelles –ATR sont à gauche et ceux des voyelles +ATR sont à droite.

4.1.1 Du radical verbal au radical nominal

En joolɛ fooñi, la substitution d’une voyelle –ATR d’un radical verbal par sa correspondante +ATR permet d’obtenir une forme nominale comme l’indiquent les exemples suivants.

- (7) a. **ε-tuok** > **e-tuuk**
 CL-fabriquer CL-foule
 'fabriquer' 'une foule'
- b. **ε-pus** > **e-pus**
 CL-puiser dans le grenier par petite quantité CL-chenille
 'fait de puiser dans le grenier par petite quantité' 'une chenille'

4.1.2 Du radical nominal au radical verbal

Lorsqu'on commute dans un radical nominal une voyelle –ATR avec sa correspondante +ATR, on obtient un radical verbal comme l'attestent les illustrations ci-dessous.

- (8) a. **ε-mul** > **e-mul**
 CL-tronc CL-murir
 'un tronc' 'fait de mûrir'
- b. **ε-nuk** > **e-nuk**
 CL-animal domestique CL-frapper quelqu'un au corps
 'un animal domestique' 'fait de frapper quelqu'un au corps'

4.1.3 Du radical nominal au radical nominal

Le joole fooñi emploie un autre procédé de dérivation consistant à alterner une voyelle –ATR d'un radical nominal avec sa correspondante +ATR, pour créer un nouveau mot. Ce type de dérivation est typiquement intracatégorielle en ce sens qu'il consiste à dériver un lexème nominal à partir d'un radical nominal (ex.9). Ce procédé de dérivation est assez productif dans cette langue.

- (9) a. **fu-tanj** > **fu-tonj**
 CL-talon CL-rouleau de tissu
 'un talon' 'un rouleau de tissu'
- b. **b-uul** > **b-uul**
 CL-visage CL-nid
 'un visage' 'un nid'
- c. **ε-suk** > **e-suk**
 CL-poison CL-village
 'un poison' 'un village'

- | | | |
|------------------|---|----------------|
| d. fɔ-sɪl | > | fu-siil |
| CL-termitière | | CL-cuisine |
| ‘une termitière’ | | ‘une cuisine’ |

4.2 La pertinence du trait ATR en *goñaamɔlo*

L’analyse des exemples ci-dessous montre un certain nombre de paires minimales mettant en évidence la pertinence distinctive du trait ATR en *goñaamɔlo*. Cette pertinence distinctive du trait ATR peut provenir d’un radical verbal vers un radical verbal ou d’un radical verbal vers un radical nominal ou bien d’un radical nominal vers un radical nominal.

4.2.1 Du radical verbal au radical verbal

En *goñaamɔlo*, lorsqu’on substitue dans un radical verbal une voyelle –ATR par sa correspondante +ATR, on obtient un radical verbal comme le montrent les exemples ci-après.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|------------------|
| (10) a. bɔ-fur | > | bu-fur |
| CL-couvrir.avec.un toit | | CL-sortir |
| ‘fait de couvrir avec un toit’ | | ‘fait de sortir’ |
| b. bɔ-wəy | > | bu-woy |
| CL-filtrer | | CL-nager |
| ‘fait de filtrer’ | | ‘fait de nager’ |

4.2.2 Du radical verbal au radical nominal

Lorsqu’on commute dans un radical verbal une voyelle –ATR avec sa correspondante +ATR, on crée un autre radical nominal comme l’illustrent les exemples suivants.

- | | | |
|------------------------------|---|---------------|
| (11) a. gɔ-kar | > | bu-kər |
| CL-arrêter de pleuvoir | | CL-jardin |
| ‘fait d’arrêter de pleuvoir’ | | ‘un jardin’ |
| b. bɔ-kab | > | bu-kəb |
| CL-mordre | | CL-piège |
| ‘fait de mordre’ | | ‘un piège’ |

4.2.3 Du radical nominal au radical nominal

Le *gũñaamɔɔ* dispose de radicaux nominaux dont les voyelles –ATR peuvent alterner avec leurs correspondantes +ATR pour créer une nouvelle forme nominale comme l'indiquent les illustrations suivantes.

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| (12) a. ra-ŋ-kub | > | rɛ-ŋ-kub |
| CL-POST-crabe | | CL- POST -initiation |
| 'un crabe' | | 'une initiation, circoncision' |
| b. bɔ-kɔɔr | > | bu-koor |
| CL-village | | CL-coude |
| 'un village' | | 'un coude' |
| c. gɔ-hɔɔr | > | gu-huur |
| CL-coude | | CL-étoile |
| 'un coude' | | 'une étoile' |

5. La pertinence de l'allongement vocalique en *joolɛ fooŋi* et en *gũñaamɔɔ*

La distinction de l'opposition entre voyelle brèves et voyelles longues est très élevée dans ces deux langues, et cette distinction joue un rôle morphologique important.

5.1 La pertinence de l'allongement vocalique en *joolɛ fooŋi*

Nous avons observé une alternance entre voyelle brève et voyelle longue dans la réalisation de certains lexèmes verbaux ou nominaux monosyllabiques. En *joolɛ fooŋi*, les voyelles longues apparaissent dans des syllabes fermées, c'est-à-dire des syllabes se terminant par une consonne. Ces voyelles forment le noyau d'une syllabe accentuée (celle-ci se trouve normalement à la fin d'un mot) puisque l'accentuation favorise leur allongement. L'alternance entre voyelle brève et voyelle longue peut partir d'un radical nominal vers un radical nominal ou aller d'un radical verbal vers un radical verbal ou provenir d'un radical verbal vers un radical nominal.

5.1.1 Du radical nominal au radical nominal

La substitution d'une voyelle brève d'un radical nominal avec sa correspondance longue permet d'obtenir un radical nominal comme l'indiquent les exemples ci-après.

- (13) a. **ε-gəl** > **ε-gəəl**
 CL-bâton CL-coin d'une maison
 'un bâton' 'un coin d'une maison'
- b. **k-al** > **k-aal**
 CL-cheveu CL-marigot
 'un cheveu' 'un marigot'

5.1.2 Du radical verbal au radical verbal

La commutation d'une voyelle brève d'un radical verbal avec sa correspondance longue débouche sur la création d'un nouveau radical verbal comme le montrent les illustrations suivantes.

- (14) a. **ε-cɪk** > **ε-cɪɪk**
 CL-coudre CL-écrire
 'fait de coudre' 'fait d'écrire'
- b. **ε-bab** > **ε-baab**
 CL-fermer CL-ê.inconfortable
 'fait de fermer' 'fait d'être inconfortable'
- c. **ε-tɔk** > **ε-tɔɔk**
 CL-faire un poignet CL-fabriquer
 'fait de faire un poignet' 'fait de fabriquer'

5.1.3 Du radical verbal au radical nominal

La substitution des voyelles brèves d'un radical verbal par leurs correspondantes longues permet d'obtenir un radical nominal comme le montrent les exemples ci-après.

- | | | | |
|---------|---|---|---|
| (15) a. | ɛ-lɛk
CL-attacher.des.feuilles.de.rônier.sur.une.corde
'fait d'attacher des feuilles de rôniers sur une corde' | > | ɛ-lɛɛk
CL-coude
'un coude' |
| b. | e-lus
CL-offenser
'fait d'offenser' | > | e-luus
CL-torche
'une torche' |
| c. | ɛ-ñab
CL-masser
'fait de masser' | > | ɛ-ñaab
CL-éléphant
'un éléphant' |

5.2 La pertinence de l'allongement vocalique en guñaamolo

On parle d'allongement vocalique lorsque la réalisation d'une voyelle prend plus de temps que celle d'une voyelle brève. Cet allongement vocalique est pertinent en guñaamolo en ce qu'il permet d'obtenir de nouveaux radicaux sémantiquement différents. Le changement sémantique peut provenir d'un radical verbal vers un radical verbal ou bien d'un radical nominal vers un radical nominal.

5.2.1 Du radical verbal au radical verbal

La corrélation de quantité qui est observée en guñaamolo peut concerner un radical verbal vers un radical verbal. En commutant les voyelles brèves avec leurs correspondantes longues d'un même radical verbal, on obtient un radical verbal comme l'attestent les exemples ci-après.

- | | | | |
|---------|--|---|--|
| (16) a. | bu-ner
CL-ê.malade
'fait d'être malade' | > | bu-neer
CL-donner
'fait de donner' |
| b. | bu-lur
CL-piler
'fait de piler' | > | bu-luur
CL-ê.chaud
'fait d'être chaud' |
| c. | bɔ-dəh
CL-ê.court
'fait d'être court' | > | bɔ-dəəh
CL-prendre
'fait de prendre' |
| d. | bɔ-lɔf
CL-coudre
'fait de coudre' | > | bɔ-lɔɔf
CL-enfoncer
'fait d'enfoncer quelque chose' |

5.2.2 Du radical nominal au radical nominal

L'opposition de quantité est significative en guñaamɔɔ comme en témoignent les paires minimales ci-après. Le caractère distinctif est avéré lorsque la commutation d'une voyelle brève d'un radical nominal avec sa correspondante longue entraîne une différence de sens. Dans les illustrations ci-dessous, les mots comportant les voyelles brèves sont à gauche et ceux regroupant les voyelles longues sont à droite.

- (17) a. **bɔ-nɪn** > **bɔ-nɪɪn**
 CL-boa CL-œuf
 'un boa' 'un œuf'
- b. **gu-bon** > **gu-boon**
 CL-poussière CL-fétiche
 'une poussière' 'un fétiche'

Un tel phénomène existe également dans d'autres langues atlantiques parlées au Sénégal telles que le mandinka et le seereer singandum. Le mandinka est une langue mandé parlée en Casamance (Sénégal). Comme les langues voisines à savoir le joolɔ fooñi et le guñaamɔɔ, elle connaît également le phénomène de la pertinence de l'allongement vocalique. Dans cette langue, la substitution d'une voyelle brève dans un radical nominal par sa correspondante longue entraîne la création d'un autre radical nominal comme le montrent les exemples suivants dans lesquels les radicaux de gauche comportent les voyelles brèves, alors ceux de droite, les voyelles longues.

- (18) a. **kutoo** > **kuutoo**
 tortue varan de terre
 'une tortue' 'un varan de terre'
- b. **sutoo** > **suutoo**
 buisson nuit
 'une buisson dense' 'une nuit'
- c. **jatoo** > **jaatoo**
 lion aubergine
 'un lion' 'une aubergine'

La pertinence de la longueur vocalique est un phénomène que l'on rencontre aussi en seereer singandum, une langue atlantique parlée au centre ouest du Sénégal, dans les régions du Sine Saloum. Dans cette langue, lorsqu'on substitue la voyelle brève d'un radical verbal avec sa correspondante longue, on obtient soit un radical nominal comme le montrent les énoncés de l'exemple (19), soit un radical verbal comme l'attestent les énoncés de l'exemple (20). Dans les illustrations ci-dessous, les radicaux de gauche comportent les voyelles brèves et ceux de droite, les voyelles longues.

- | | | |
|----------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| (19) a. bak | > | baak |
| ramener | | pain |
| 'ramener à soi' | | 'pain de singe' |
| b. xut | > | xuut |
| dépecer | | variété.d'herbe |
| (20) a. fel | > | feel |
| ê.bon | | frapper.avec.le plat de la main |
| 'être bon' | | 'frapper avec le plat de la main' |
| b. bir | > | biir |
| traire | | râcler |
| 'traire' | | 'râcler' |
| c. bor | > | boor |
| glisser.le.long.de | | effeuiller |
| 'glisser le long de' | | 'effeuiller, enlever' |

6. Discussion

La contribution sémantique du trait ATR et de l'allongement vocalique n'a pas, à notre connaissance, fait l'objet d'étude dans les descriptions portant sur les langues joolé et sur le *gñaamolo*. Les travaux existants sur ces langues se sont généralement limités à mentionner les propriétés phonologiques du trait ATR et de l'allongement vocalique, telles que l'harmonie vocalique ATR et le statut phonologique des voyelles longues. La réalisation longue des voyelles est interprétée comme la réalisation de deux réalités phonologiques vocaliques identiques en séquence. Or, dans ce travail, il est plutôt question de mettre en exergue les propriétés sémantiques du trait ATR et de

l'allongement vocalique dans ces deux langues qui cohabitent dans la même aire géographique. Le trait ATR et l'allongement vocalique sont deux traits pertinents dans ces langues en ce sens qu'ils participent tous les deux à la création de nouveaux lexèmes.

Pour augmenter leurs unités lexicales, les deux langues recourent à la stratégie de substitution d'une voyelle –ATR, dans un thème nominal ou verbal, avec sa correspondante +ATR ou bien de commutation d'une voyelle brève, dans un thème nominal ou verbal, avec sa correspondante longue impliquant un changement sémantique. Une telle stratégie dérivationnelle vient s'ajouter aux autres stratégies de création lexicale telles que la dérivation affixale consistant à adjoindre des préfixes et/ou des suffixes à des thèmes nominaux ou verbaux pour obtenir de nouveaux mots.

Il existe des langues atlantiques parlées au Sénégal telles que le mandinka et le seereer singandum qui ont aussi recours à la stratégie de l'allongement vocalique pour augmenter leurs stocks lexicaux.

7. Conclusion

L'étude de la pertinence du trait ATR et de l'allongement vocalique révèle que les deux langues utilisent ces deux traits pour enrichir leurs lexiques. Cette stratégie de création lexicale qui consiste à substituer, dans un même radical verbal ou nominal, soit une voyelle –ATR avec sa correspondante +ATR ou soit une voyelle brève avec sa contrepartie longue, permet d'obtenir un mot nouveau. Un tel procédé qui est peu étudié dans les travaux existants sur les deux langues vient s'ajouter à d'autres opérations de création lexicale telles que la dérivation affixale, la composition et la reduplication.

La contribution sémantique du trait ATR et de l'allongement vocalique n'a pas, à notre connaissance, fait l'objet d'étude dans les descriptions portant sur les langues joolo et sur le goñaamolo.

Abréviations et symboles

ATR Advanced Tongue Root, DEF défini, ê être, CL classe nominale, DALN Direction de l'Alphabétisation des Langues Nationales, INAC inaccompli, POST post-classificateur, Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar, 3SG 3^e personne du singulier, 3PL 3^e personne du pluriel

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Le système verbal du palor

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Résumé

Le seereer palor (fap) est une langue atlantique membre du sous-groupe cangin qui regroupe quatre autres langues : le laala (cae) le noon (snf), le saafi-saafi (sav) et le ndut (ndv). Au sein des langues cangin, le ndut entretient une relation quasi-dialectale avec le palor, l'intercompréhension n'étant cependant que partielle (PICHL 1966; WILLIAMS 1994). Leurs règles grammaticales étant sensiblement les mêmes, le ndut et le palor sont souvent évoqués ensemble dans les travaux existants, notamment pour ce qui concerne le système de classification nominale (DIAGNE 2015) et le système verbal (D'ALTON 1987 ; MORGAN 1996). Dans cet article, les descriptions de d'Alton pour le palor et de Morgan pour le ndut seront confrontées aux données que nous avons recueillies sur les marqueurs grammaticaux du système verbal du palor.

Mots-clés : palor, système verbal, langues cangin, Sénégal

1. Information sur le palor¹

Le palor (code iso : fap) est l'une des cinq langues du sous-groupe cangin des langues atlantiques (PICHL 1966 ; MORGAN 1996). Les autres langues du groupe sont le laala, le ndut, le saafi-saafi et le noon. La langue la plus proche du palor est le ndut avec lequel il entretient une relation quasi-dialectale. L'intercompréhension entre les deux langues n'est cependant que partielle. Le schéma ci-dessous de GORDON (1994) montre les rapprochements lexicostatistiques entre les langues du sous-groupe :

¹ Les données de cet article ont été collectées lors de plusieurs missions de terrain, certaines financées par le projet Senelanguages (ANR - 09 - BLAN - 0326) et d'autres par l'IFAN Ch. A. Diop.

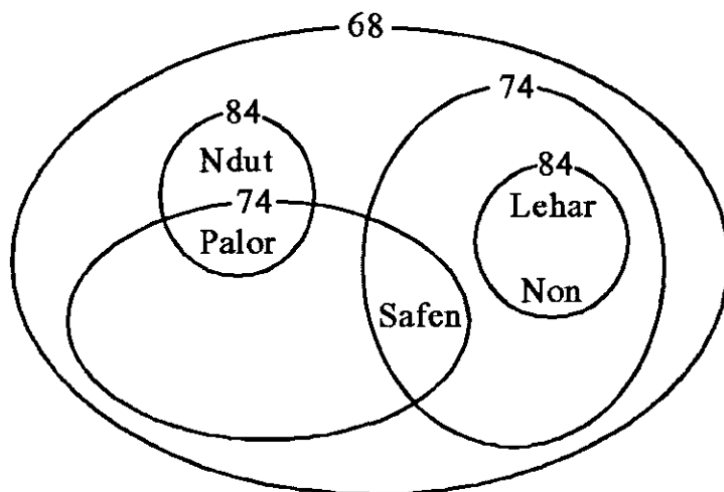


Figure 1 – Contours de similarité lexicale (extrait de GORDON 1994: 51)

Du point de vue dialectologique le palor compte deux variantes nommées selon le royaume traditionnel wolof qui leur était géographiquement le plus proche : la variante plus au nord est celle du Kajoor tandis que celle plus au sud est nommée Bawol. Ces variantes se distinguent par des variations phonologiques et lexicales. Il y a cependant une intercompréhension totale entre elles.

La structure phrastique du palor est de type SVOX.

2. Le système des pronoms

Les pronoms sujets du palor sont des morphèmes indépendants préposés au verbe, tandis que les pronoms objets sont des suffixes.

Pronoms sujets		Pronoms objets	
mi	SBJ.1SG	-so	OBJ.1SG
fɔ	SBJ.2SG	-ro**	OBJ.2SG
dɪ*	SBJ.3SG	-rɪ**	OBJ.3SG
jɛn	SBJ.1PL.INCL	-jɛn	OBJ.1PL.INCL
fɔn	SBJ.1PL.EXCL	-fɔn/-vɔn	OBJ.1PL.EXCL
dɔn	SBJ.2PL	-rɔn**	OBJ.2PL
ɓa*	SBJ.3PL	-wa	OBJ.3PL

Tableau 1 – Les indices pronominaux du palor

Les pronoms sujets de la 3^e personne (marqués d'un astérisque) peuvent être omis, notamment au début d'un énoncé.

- (1) a. **(dī)** **ɔtte** **kukeje**
 SBJ.3SG voir-PRF l'enfant
 'Il voit l'enfant'
- b. **(6a)** **ɔlote** **kukeje**
 SBJ.3SG voir-PRF l'enfant
 'Ils voient l'enfant'

Les pronoms objets ayant la consonne /r/ à l'initiale (marqués de deux astérisques) sont sujets à une assimilation consonantique, selon l'environnement précédent selon le schéma : r/ l/ n /d.

3. Marquage du pluriel

Seul le pluriel est marqué au niveau du verbe en palor au moyen du morphème **-u(n)**, soumis à la variation ATR, pour toutes les conjugaisons, à l'exception de l'impératif qui forme son pluriel au moyen du suffixe **-i** qui a la particularité de gouverner le trait ATR de la base verbale à laquelle il est affixé (voir en 7.1).

∅	SG
-u(n)	PL
-i	IMP.PL

Tableau 2 – Le marquage du nombre verbal en palor

La forme **-un** n'apparaît que dans les pluralisations de la focalisation du verbe (section 6.1) et de l'obligatif (section 7.2). Cette forme, dont nous estimons que **-u** est la forme tronquée, n'est recensée ni par D'ALTON dans son étude du palor, ni par MORGAN pour le ndut.

4. Le marquage de la négation

La négation est marquée par différents morphèmes en palor. Il existe un marquage général, utilisé dans plusieurs conjugaisons qui admettent la

négation et trois morphèmes spécifiques à des conjugaisons, listés dans le tableau ci-dessous :

-(a)j	Perfectif, focus du verbe, progressif
ini...-ra	Progressif
ka	Obligatif
fεε	Prospectif

Tableau 3 – Les morphèmes de la négation

5. L'aspect

Nous avons recensé six aspects en palor : le perfectif, le progressif, le duratif, le présentatif, l'habituel et le prospectif. Ils vont être présentés dans les sections suivantes.

5.1 Le perfectif

Le perfectif est marqué par le morphème **-te**.

La consonne initiale du morphème positif est sujette à l'assimilation selon le contexte précédent :

Base verbale	Perfectif	Glose
naa	naaʔte	'être blanc'
leggeej	leggejte	'travailler'
lεεw	lεεwte	'cuire (vapeur)'
səx	səxte	'planter'
mah	mahte	'construire'
nεʔ	nεʔte	'dormir'
hʊʊr	hʊʊrte	'déchirer'
gənel	gənelte	'converser'
nagan	nagante	'ramper'
ʒakat	ʒakatte	'courir'
jεd'	jεdte	'donner'
lam	lampe	'hériter'
gap	gappe	'plonger'
jaab	jappe	'avoir faim'
wijn	wijnce	'étendre'
hac	hacce	'creuser'
daaj	dacce	'clouer'

Base verbale	Perfectif	Glose
haŋ	haŋkɛ	'être large'
fɛɛk	fɛkkɛ	'chanter'
lɔf	lɔffɛ	'répondre'
pɛs	pɛssɛ	'vivre'

Tableau 4 – Les allomorphes de **-te** selon le contexte

-te a une valeur générale de perfectif : l'action ou l'état signifié par le verbe est considérée dans sa totalité, sans prise en compte de sa valeur temporelle (COMRIE 1976). Il revêt une valeur de présent avec les verbes d'action et une valeur de passé avec les verbes d'état.

C'est l'aspect le plus souvent utilisé dans les récits. Par rapport au wolof, l'aspect perfectif du palor remplit la fonction de deux tiroirs verbaux : ceux du parfait et du narratif (GUÉRIN 2016).

- (2) a. **dɪ** **lɔffɛ**
 SBJ.3SG répondre-PRF
 'I/elle a répondu'
- b. **fun** **tahutɛ**
 SBJ.1PL.EXCL accepter-PL-PRF
 'Nous avons accepté'

La négation se fait au moyen du morphème **-(a)j** :

- (3) a. **lahaj** **dɔɔlɛ**
 avoir-NEG force
 'I/elle est sans force'
- b. **fun** **waakɔj** **hɔl**
 SBJ.1PL.EXCL vouloir-PL-NEG mourir
 'Nous ne voulons pas mourir'

5.2 L'habituel

L'habituel a, en palor, une valeur de présent. Il revêt une valeur de vérité générale ou indique qu'une action ou un état se produit régulièrement. L'habituel est marqué par le suffixe **-an**. Nous n'avons pas relevé pour cette conjugaison de morphème de négation.

- (4) **jaava** **daa** **na** **tahan** **kəən**
 cela FOC DUR causer-HAB PST
ḡahaja **wan** **tɪ** **nɛ**
 les anciens dire CONJ que
kukeji **lahaj** **nijaaj** **kəlan** **koomin**
 un enfant-CNT avoir-NEG oncle entendre-HAB le cercle-là
 ‘C’est pourquoi les anciens disaient/ avaient l’habitude de dire que l’enfant qui
 n’a pas d’oncle apprend du cercle à palabres.’

5.3 Le progressif

Le progressif indique qu’une action est en train de se dérouler au moment de l’énonciation. Il est marqué en palor au moyen d’une expression discontinue formée d’un auxiliaire **ɛn** préposé au verbe et d’un morphème **-ra** suffixé au verbe ou à l’argument directement régi par le verbe. La consonne initiale du suffixe **-ra** est sujette à l’assimilation selon le contexte précédent. **ɛn** a comme variante libre **ɛɛ**, sauf dans le cas où cette particule est suivie d’un pronom objet ; dans ce cas seule la forme **ɛn** est admise.

- (5) a. **mɛɛ²** **kɛɛnna**
 SBJ.1.SG.PROG tomber-PROG
 ‘Je tombe’
 b. **ɛn** **ḡekɪɖ** **kukejɛɛ**
 PROG habiller l’enfant-PROG
 ‘Elle habille l’enfant’
 c. **ɛn** **ḡekɪɖ** **kukejɛ** **bubɖɛ**
 PROG habiller l’enfant habit-PROG
 ‘Elle met à l’enfant un vêtement’
 d. **mɛɛ** **aɲɖa** **a** **ḡojizo**
 S.1SG.PROG venir-PROG avec mes gens
 ‘Je viens avec mes partisans’

² La forme **mɛɛ~mɛn** est issue de la contraction du pronom sujet de 1^{ère} personne du singulier **mɪ** et de **ɛɛ~ɛn**.

La négation de **en... -ra** est **ini...-ra** ; cependant on trouve le plus souvent la négation en **-(a)j**.

- (6) a. **ini** **6ɛkɪd** **kukejere**
 PROG.NEG habiller l'enfant-PROG
 'Elle n'habille pas l'enfant'
- b. **6ɛkɪdaj** **kukejere**
 habiller.NEG l'enfant-PROG
 'Elle n'habille pas l'enfant'

Il est possible qu'il y ait un conditionnement énonciatif qui gouverne le choix de l'une ou l'autre forme du négatif. Les locuteurs consultés ne font pas à priori de différence et estiment que les deux formes sont équivalentes et interchangeables.

D'ALTON considère que cette conjugaison exprime le présentatif (1987: 122) et liste ce que nous avons identifié comme progressif comme l'une des valeurs exprimée par le duratif. Nous proposons une conjugaison à valeur de présentatif, en 5.5.

Pour le ndut, MORGAN ne liste pas de conjugaison présentative en tant que telle. Il propose pour cette valeur une expression composée d'un « auxiliaire médial existentiel » 'medial existential auxiliary' suivi du pronom démonstratif singulier ou pluriel (1996: 97).

5.4 Le duratif

Il est marqué par l'auxiliaire **na**, pour décrire une situation qui se déroule ou qui continue au-delà du moment de l'énonciation.

- (7) a. **6a** **ana** **6eep** **həmanduute**
 SBJ.3PL deux tous être assis ensemble-PL-PRF
- tɪgalka** **na** **gəɳɛɛlʊ**
 le lit DUR converser-PL
 'Tous deux sont assis ensemble sur le lit à converser'
- b. **6a** **nejruute**
 SBJ.3PL être ensemble-PL-PRF
- 6a** **na** **sajʊ** **puut**
 SBJ.3PL DUR aller-PL Pout
 'D'un commun accord, ils vont à Pout'

na est également utilisé pour décrire une succession d'actions :

- (8) **kukej** **wahambaane** **lappɛ** **sɔnvi** **ponis**
 enfant adolescent monter-PRF sur cheval
- na** **jakatɪ** **dɪ** **na** **jakatɪ** **dɪ**
 DUR courir-CNT OBJ.3SG DUR courir-CNT OBJ.3SG
- na** **jakatɪ** **dɪ**
 DUR courir-CNT OBJ.3SG
- na** **taggɛ** **lɔja**
 DUR annoncer les funérailles
- 'L'adolescent monta sur le cheval, il galopa, il galopa, il galopa, annonçant les funérailles'

D'ALTON a recensé le même aspect et lui donne également une interprétation durative. Elle lui affecte également la valeur de progressif « une action dans son déroulement » (1987: 127) qui à notre sens est impliquée dans la notion de duratif.

5.5 Le présentatif

Le présentatif est marqué par une particule, **kii**, préposée au verbe. Ce dernier reste dans sa forme de citation :

- (9) a. **mi** **kii** **muuk** **kukeje**
 S.1SG PRES tresser l'enfant
 'Je tresse l'enfant'
- b. **mi** **kii** **pajɔh**
 S.1SG PRES se soigner
 'Je me soigne'

Outre sa fonction dans le système verbal, le marqueur **kii** est utilisé en palor comme premier composant des pronoms indépendants :³

³ Nous posons que le morphème **ki** apparaît en finale avec une voyelle longue et à l'interne avec une voyelle brève.

Palor	Glose
kɪzɔ	'le mien'
kɪkɔ	'le tien'
kɪkɪ	'le sien'
kɪjɛn – kɪvɔn	'le notre'
kɪkɔn	'le leur'
kɪwɔ	'le leur'

Tableau 5 – possessifs indépendants en palor

Notre interprétation est que **kii** a une fonction déictique, ce qui explique son emploi dans une conjugaison à valeur de présentatif. Cet emploi n'a été listé ni par D'ALTON pour le palor, ni par MORGAN pour le ndut. La valeur de présentatif est marquée pour ces auteurs par ce qui nous avons identifié comme le progressif.

5.6 Le prospectif

Le prospectif est utilisé pour exprimer une action imminente ou future. Il est marqué en palor de différentes manières selon que l'on est à l'affirmatif ou au négatif.

À l'affirmatif, le prospectif est marqué par une expression discontinue composée d'un auxiliaire **aj~ac** (à ne pas confondre avec le suffixe du négatif -**(a)j** préposé au verbe) et d'un suffixe à valeur locative **-e/ɛ**. Les éventuels marqueurs verbaux (pluriel, passé, perfectif) sont suffixés à l'auxiliaire.

- (10) a. **mac**⁴ **aje**
 1SG.PROS venir-PROS
 'Je viendrai'
- b. **jɛn** **ajɔ** **hɔmɛ**
 S.1PL.INCL PROS-PL s'asseoir-PROS
 'Nous allons nous asseoir'

Au négatif le prospectif est marqué par la particule **fɛɛ**, invariable et préposée au verbe.

⁴ Issu de **mɪ+ac**.

- (11) a. **mɪ** **fɛɛ** **ac**
 SBJ.1SG PROS.NEG venir
 ‘Je ne viendrai pas’
- b. **jɛn** **ajɔ** **hɔmɛ**
 SBJ.1PL.INCL PROS-PL s’asseoir-PROS
 ‘Nous allons nous asseoir’
- c. **jɛn** **fɛɛ** **hɔm**
 SBJ.1PL.INCL PROS.NEG s’asseoir
 ‘Nous n’allons pas nous asseoir’

Cette conjugaison est identifiée par MORGAN et D’ALTON comme « futur » ou « futur imminent ». Nous avons préféré en faire un aspect, en raison de sa possibilité d’emploi dans des situations de présent et de la forme de sa négation qui ne se fait pas au moyen de l’auxiliaire **aj**. En ndut, MORGAN indique que le morphème du « futur » négatif est **yii~cii~ii** (1996: 98). Pour D’ALTON « l’imminent (futur) » a comme négation en palor **dii~ jii** (1987: 132). Nous n’avons pas recensé ces morphèmes, avec cet emploi, dans notre corpus.⁵

6. La focalisation

Dans certaines langues, la flexion verbale peut refléter des distinctions relatives à l’organisation discursive de l’unité phrastique dont le verbe est le noyau prédicatif (CREISSELS & ROBERT 1998). C’est le cas du wolof qui comprend des conjugaisons focalisantes pour le sujet, le verbe et l’objet. Le palor, langue atlantique comme le wolof, semble également avoir des tiroirs verbaux dédiés à la focalisation.

6.1 La focalisation du verbe

Le focus du verbe est marqué en palor par la reduplication de la base verbale. Les marques de TAM et de nombre sont affixées à la base verbale. Le reduplicat lui est postposé. Un suffixe **-o** est obligatoirement suffixé au reduplicat.

⁵ Nos données ayant été obtenues pour cette conjugaison uniquement en élicitation, il reste à confirmer nos résultats par des données obtenues en corpus libre.

- (12) **tirva** **waak** **waakɔ** **ndawal** **nak**
 la mère aimer RED-FOC viande vraiment
 ‘C’est que la mère aime vraiment la viande’

Ce suffixe **-o** est similaire au suffixe vocalique flexionnel obligatoire identifié pour les langues bantu (HYMAN 2009). Ce suffixe n’a pas de signification ou de fonction autre que d’indiquer que le morphème est un reduplicat dans l’opération de focalisation du verbe.

- (13) a. **mɔlɔb** **mɔlɔbɔ**
 être liquide RED-FOC
 ‘C’est liquide’
 b. **tam** **tamɔ**
 être chaud RED-FOC
 ‘C’est chaud’

La négation se fait par affixation du morphème **-aj** à la base verbale.

- (14) **tamaj** **tamɔ**
 être chaud-NEG RED-FOC
 ‘Ce n’est pas chaud’

La négation du verbe focalisé peut se faire sans la reduplication.

- (15) **mɔlɔbaj**
 être liquide-NEG
 ‘Ce n’est pas liquide’

Outre le fait de marquer le focus du verbe, le reduplicat a comme particularité d’être un révélateur de la forme lexicale des radicaux verbaux. Le fait qu’il soit formé à partir de la forme lexicale à laquelle est affixé le suffixe final **-o** permet de se rendre compte que la consonne finale de la forme de citation de certains verbes n’en est pas la forme lexicale, ce qui explique que ce n’est pas celle-ci qui apparaît à la frontière avec le suffixe :

Forme de citation	Perfectif	Focus verbal	Forme lexicale	Glose
dɛŋ	dɛŋkɛ	dɛŋ dɛgɔ	dɛg	‘poser’
ac	acce	ac aɟɔ	aj	‘venir’
dɔf	dɔffɛ	dɔf dɔvɔ	dɔv	‘extirper’
ɛlɛk	ɛlɛkkɛ	ɛlɛk ɛlkɔ	ɛlk	‘faire nuit’
hap	happe	hap hawɔ	haw	‘tuer’
ɔt	ɔttɛ	ɔt ɔlɔ	ɔl	‘voir’
huris	hurisse	huris hurzo	hurz	‘ressusciter’
ic	icce	ic iɟɔ	iɟ	‘retourner’
ponis	ponisse	ponis ponzo	ponz	‘déplier’
səm	səmpe	səm səbɔ	səb	‘tirer’
waj	wajɲɛ	waj wajɔ	waj	‘montrer’

Tableau 6 – Variation entre base verbale et reduplicat

Les données du tableau indiquent également que le type de frontière morphologique entre le suffixe du reduplicat et celui du perfectif, entre autres, est de nature différente.

D’ALTON identifie la même conjugaison mais considère qu’il s’agit d’une « modalité ‘état acquis’ » (1987: 127). Elle n’en donne pas de définition. CREISSELS & ROBERT (1998: 168) avaient déjà soupçonné qu’il s’agissait de l’expression du focus verbal, le schéma de focalisation présenté par D’ALTON ne semblant n’avoir qu’un seul terme, celui du sujet (la « modalité emphatique »). La section suivante montrera que le palor comporte un schéma complet de focalisation, pour le verbe, le sujet et le complément.

6.2 La focalisation du sujet et du complément

La focalisation de ces deux arguments a en commun d’être signalée par un même marqueur : **daa**. Dans le cas du focus du sujet, le marqueur **daa** est postposé au sujet :

- (16) a. **ḡəjɟi faava daa sɔzv ɡɪnɛɛ**
 les gens ceux-là FOC fonder-PL ce village
 ‘Ce sont ces gens qui ont fondé ce village’
- b. **ḡa daa haalandv ɛkɔl**
 SBJ.3PL FOC entrer ensemble-PL école
 ‘Nous sommes entrés en même temps à l’école’

Dans le cas de la focalisation du complément, celui-ci est déplacé en première position de proposition et suivi de **daa** ; au verbe est suffixé le locatif **-ra** :⁶

- (17) **fakfe daa kukeje ɔtda**
 l'oiseau FOC l'enfant voir-LOC
 'C'est l'oiseau que l'enfant a vu'

Le même déplacement en tête d'énoncé existe en wolof comme expliqué par CREISSELS & ROBERT (1998: 171):

Le complément focalisé apparaît alors en premier dans l'énoncé : il est « sorti » de la relation prédicative et suivi de la marque flexionnelle d'Emphatique du Complément, elle-même suivie du reste de la relation prédicative.

Comme dans le cas du sujet, **daa** est postposé à l'argument, sauf si ce dernier est un pronom ; dans ce cas le pronom est suffixé au marqueur **daa** :

- (18) **daari kukeje ɔtda**
 FOC-OBJ.3SG l'enfant voir-LOC
 'C'est celui que l'enfant a vu'

D'ALTON recense une conjugaison « modalité emphatique » avec le morphème **daa** (1987: 129), mais qui ne concerne que le sujet. Elle ne présente pas d'« emphatique du complément ». MORGAN ne présente pas de conjugaison focalisante pour le ndut.

7. Les modalités injonctives

Le palor comprend des formes obligatives et des formes impératives. Il y a une distribution complémentaire dans le choix des personnes :

- Les formes impératives concernent les secondes personnes du singulier et du pluriel ;
- Les formes injonctives concernent les première et troisième personnes du pluriel.

⁶ Il s'agit du même suffixe que pour le progressif. Nous ne posons cependant pas de morphème discontinu **daa...-ra** pour la focalisation du complément, **-ra** auquel nous donnons une valeur locative, n'étant pas systématique pour tous les emplois de **daa**.

7.1 L'impératif

L'impératif positif est marqué par des suffixes vocaliques selon le nombre :

-**ε/e** pour la 2^e personne du singulier

-**i** pour la seconde personne du pluriel. Ce suffixe exerce une harmonie vocalique régressive sur la base verbale.

- | | |
|---|---|
| (19) a. həzε
laver-IMP.SG
'lave !' | b. hozi
laver-IMP.PL
'lavez !' |
|---|---|

La négation se fait au moyen de la particule de l'injonctif négatif **ka/ke** issu de la grammaticalisation du verbe **kaa** « refuser ». Au singulier le suffixe de l'impératif est exclu, tandis que celui du pluriel est maintenu.

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| (20) a. ka
INJ.NEG
'ne lave pas !' | həs
laver | b. ke
INJ.NEG
'ne lavez pas' | hozi
laver-IMP.PL |
|---|---------------------|---|-----------------------------|

La modalité que nous avons identifiée comme impérative est désignée par D'ALTON comme « injonctive » (1987: 131). Elle correspond à ce que nous avons recensé : elle ne concerne que les secondes personnes du singulier et du pluriel, avec le suffixe **-i** qui « provoque l'harmonisation régressive des voyelles dans le syntagme » (1987: 131), et la négation marquée par **ka**.

Les mêmes formes sont attestées par MORGAN pour le ndut (1996: 90), mais les exemples donnés ne permettent pas de confirmer le comportement du suffixe **-i** concernant la gouvernance de l'harmonie vocalique.

7.2 L'obligatif

À l'affirmatif la forme injonctive est formée du pronom (1/3 PL) et de la base verbale.

- | | |
|---|-----------------------|
| (21) jən
SBJ.1PL.INCL
'lavons !' | həsən
laver |
|---|-----------------------|

Au négatif, l'injonctif est formé du pronom, du morphème **ka** et de la base verbale à laquelle est suffixé le morphème **-un/-un** :

(22)	jɛn	ka	həzʊn
	SBJ.3.PL	INJ.NEG	laver-PL
	'ne lavons pas'		

L'obligatif, tel que défini ici, n'est pas documenté par D'ALTON (1987) et MORGAN (1996).

8. Le temps : passé et non passé

En palor seul le passé est morphologiquement marqué, au moyen d'un suffixe et d'une particule. D'ALTON ne relève pour sa part dans son travail que le suffixe **-i** comme seule marque du passé (D'ALTON 1987: 122; 133). Les exemples qu'elle donne montrent en outre que le suffixe **-i** exerce une harmonie +ATR sur la base verbale, conditionnement que nous n'avons pas pour ce morphème, dans notre corpus, quel que soit le dialecte.⁷

En ce qui concerne le ndut, MORGAN indique qu'il ne semble pas y avoir de morphème du passé en ndut, le perfectif pouvant avoir dans cette langue une valeur de passé (MORGAN 1996: 79) :

-i	Passé	kəʊn	Passé
ø	Non passé	ø	Non passé

Tableau 7 – Les morphèmes du passé

La distribution des deux expressions du passé se révèle par leurs compatibilités avec les différents aspects du palor.

8.1 Compatibilités du morphème **-i**

Avec le perfectif :

⁷ Un tel conditionnement existe pour un suffixe homophone marquant l'impératif pluriel (Cf. section 7.1)

- (23) **đi** **homite** **ḡahii**
 SBJ.3SG être-PST-PRF un ancien-CNT
fu **juhte** **bititi**
 S.2SG savoir-PRF CONJ
tiiki **borte** **ḡinjɪ** **caak**
 son nom se propager-PRF village-CNT beaucoup
 ‘C’était un Ancien tel que son nom était connu dans nombre de villages’

Avec le focus du verbe :

- (24) **faam** **paa** **moodu** **lahɪ** **laho**
 maison père Modou avoir-PST RED-FOC
tal **bardi** **gaan**
 tronc xəl grand
 ‘Dans la maison de Père Modou, il y avait un grand tronc de xəl’

Avec le prospectif :

- (25) **fajitɛ** **paje**
 SBJ.2.SG.PROS-PST-PFT partir-PROS
 ‘Tu partais/tu partirais’

8.2 Compatibilités du morphème *kəən*

Avec le perfectif + objet :

- (26) **kəəpɛ** **dimilɛʔteri** **kəən**
 Dieu aider-PRF-OBJ.3SG PST
đi **lahte** **alal**
 SBJ.3SG avoir-PRF richesse
 ‘Dieu l’avait assisté, il était riche’

Avec la négation :

- (27) **kəjka nok jarɔjaj kəən**
 l'enfant alors être poli-NEG PST
 'Quant à l'enfant, il n'était pas respectueux'

Avec un complément oblique :

- (28) **pənkəljə fə həmpɛ**
 les anciens SBJ.2SG s'asseoir-PRF

a wə kəən
 avec OBJ.3PL PST

ɓa wanən wənɔ
 SBJ.3PL parler-PL RED-FOC

a kəjjiwə a setjiwo
 avec leurs enfants avec leurs petits-enfants
 'Les anciens, quand tu étais avec eux, ils parlaient avec leurs enfants,
 avec leurs petits-enfants'

Avec les verbes dérivés :

- (29) **fə wanaalaʔ kəən**
 SBJ.2SG talk-COPART PST

cadumvə əj əjle
 le prix PROS diminuer-PROS
 'Si tu avais marchandé, il aurait diminué le prix'

Avec la négation :

- (30) **kən mɪ wulaj kəən**
 donc SBJ.1SG être loin-NEG PST
 'Donc, je n'étais pas loin'

Le non passé, marqué par la base verbale sans marque de passé, a une valeur de présent par défaut, mais peut avoir différentes interprétations selon le contexte.

9. Remarques finales

Le système des marqueurs grammaticaux du palor tel que détaillé dans cet article présente des caractéristiques particulières qui donnent lieu à quelques remarques.

Deux morphèmes du passé ont été recensés, qui ont des contextes d'emploi différents. Le morphème **kɔɔn**, non relevé par D'ALTON, pourrait être relativement récent et issu d'un emprunt au wolof **wɔɔn** qui a la même valeur de passé. **kɔɔn** est employé dans des contextes où le suffixe **-i** pourrait devenir difficile à détecter en raison d'amalgames dus à la complexité morphologique du verbe (par exemple par dérivation) ou syntaxique (présence d'un oblique). Dans certains cas, les deux formes du passé sont possibles. Une étude plus approfondie des contextes d'apparition de ces cas concurrents, notamment dans des textes, devrait permettre de clarifier leurs conditions de sélection.

Le morphème du perfectif **-te** est celui le plus productif du système. En plus de dénoter le perfectif, c'est l'aspect de la narration. Il correspond donc à la fois au parfait et au narratif du wolof. Il est également similaire au morphème **-Ca** du saafi, autre langue cangin (géographiquement proche des villages Bawol du palor), qui lui n'est utilisé que dans la narration (STANTON 2011).

Nous avons montré que le palor comprend un schéma complet de focalisation. Le focus du verbe est marqué par la reduplication de la base verbale, le reduplicat comportant un suffixe final qui est propre à cette conjugaison ; les focus des arguments sont obtenus par la postposition d'une particule, **daa**.

Certains des morphèmes verbaux de la langue sont issus d'un processus de grammaticalisation : l'auxiliaire du prospectif **aj** est issu du verbe homonyme signifiant « venir » ; le morphème de l'injonctif négatif **ka** du verbe « refuser » **kaa** ; le morphème du présentatif **kii**, probablement d'un démonstratif.

En ce qui concerne la négation, il y a une tendance du morphème **-(a)j** à se généraliser. Il est en effet utilisé comme forme unique ou de substitution dans plusieurs conjugaisons. Les conjugaisons injonctives constituent une poche remarquable de résistance : elles conservent un morphème de négation qui leur est propre, sans substitution possible avec **-(a)j**.

Des recherches supplémentaires sont nécessaires, notamment avec un corpus libre plus large que celui utilisé pour cette étude, pour vérifier les différences entre les morphèmes recensés et ceux de l'étude de D'ALTON, par exemple pour ceux de l'injonctif négatif. L'écart temporel entre notre étude et celle de D'ALTON étant de plus de vingt ans et compte tenu des mutations et de

la perte de structures du palor, il est possible que la variété de morphèmes constatée par D'ALTON se soit érodée comme cela est le cas pour le système des classes nominales (DIAGNE 2015) ; il est également possible qu'un corpus plus important fasse apparaître ces morphèmes dans des contextes d'énonciation non relevés dans notre corpus ou avec d'autres emplois.

Abréviations

ACP accompli, CNT connectif, CONJ conjonction, COPART coparticipation, DUR duratif, EXCL exclusif, FOC focalisation, , HAB habituel, IMP impératif, INCL inclusif, INJ injonctif, LOC locatif, NEG négatif, OBJ indice personnel objet, PL pluriel, PRES présentatif, PRF perfectif, PROG progressif, PROS prospectif, PST passé, RED base redoublée, SBJ indice personnel sujet, SG singulier, 1^{ère} personne, 2^{ème} personne, 3^{ème} personne

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The effects of gender on the reference system

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Abstract

The present study provides the evidence that gender distinction and gender agreement is a formal means of coding a variety of functions within the system of reference. The evidence consists of contrasting two related languages, one of which has gender and the other does not. The system of reference is therefore a motivation for the existence of gender and gender agreement.

Key words: gender, agreement, system of reference, de dicto domain, Gidar, Mina

1. Aim of the study

In what follows I demonstrate that if a language has a gender system, it may also distinguish between the domains de dicto and de re in the reference system. A language that does not have a gender system does not code such a distinction in its reference system. The argumentation of the two propositions is provided by the analysis of two Central Chadic languages, Mina and Gidar. The function of a given form is determined by its place within a functional domain that is encoded in the grammatical system of a given language and not by inferences about reality from the use of the form in a selection of utterances. The present study provides the evidence that gender distinction, which is a prerequisite for gender agreement, and gender agreement itself code functions within the system of reference.

2. Selected controversies

MARTINET (1967), FRAJZYNGIER (1997, 2023) FRAJZYNGIER & SHAY (2003), FRAJZYNGIER & BUTTERS (2020), claim that gender systems and nominal classification systems and associated agreement systems are coding means within the reference system.

CORBETT in a series of books and papers (1991, 2005, 2013) claims that gender is a 'feature' as defined in his system of canonical morphology. In his (2013)

paper he defines gender in the following way “I shall take a canonical approach (CORBETT 2011), examining what the canonical morphosyntactic feature would look like, and the possible deviations from this canonical ideal.” (CORBETT 2013: 94). He follows this statement with a further explanation “I use ‘feature’ for constructs like gender, number, case and person (some, like Matasović above, use the term ‘(grammatical) category’). Within each feature there is a set of ‘values’: masculine, feminine, neuter and so on for gender, singular, plural, dual, paucal and so on for number, and similarly for other features” (CORBETT 2013: 95). In the theoretical approach adapted in the present study, some of the features in CORBETT’s list are formal means of coding, e.g. case marking, and some are functions, e.g. person.

With respect to agreement, CORBETT considers three functions. One is providing redundancy, as proposed by LEVIN (2001), which CORBETT rejects. The second one is the function with respect to reference system, about which CORBETT writes

“A second view of agreement is that it contributes substantially to reference tracking, allowing the hearer to keep track of the different referents in a discourse. The agreement features, particularly gender and number, facilitate reference tracking (particularly if anaphoric pronouns are included within the agreement targets...). There seems to be some truth in this; on the other hand, when we recall the exuberant marking of gender and number on various targets within a single clause in Tsakhur (...), it is difficult to see each instance as contributing to reference tracking. The third suggested function is a syntactic one, marking constituency; agreement is claimed to indicate which elements are constituents, even when they are separated. On the face of it this sounds plausible. Yet we saw instances in Tsakhur where it was hard to fathom why the agreement domains were as they were; for instance, the restrictive particle agrees not with the constituent to which it applies but with the absolutive argument (...).” (CORBETT 2005: 293-274).

CORBETT’s own conclusion is “Given that the evidence for each of the proposed functions is not fully convincing, it appears unlikely that agreement is to be explained in terms of a single function. Rather, it has different combinations of functions in different languages” (CORBETT 2005: 275). CORBETT is perfectly right in stating that it is impossible to find a common function of agreement across languages. But the same conclusion is true for all coding means in the language including adpositions, pronouns, all inflectional markers, serial verb constructions, and linear orders.

AIKHENVALD (2000, 2006) attributes to noun class and genders the function of categorizing nouns:

“Almost all languages have some grammatical means for the linguistic categorization of nouns and nominals. The continuum of noun categorization devices covers a range of devices, from the lexical numeral classifiers of Southeast Asia to the highly grammaticalized gender agreement classes of Indo-European languages.” (AIKHENVALD 2006: 463).

It is not clear what communicative function ‘noun categorization’ performs.

3. Theoretical bases and the methodology of the proposed approach

3.1 The theoretical approach

The theoretical model underlying the current approach is the one developed in FRAJZYNGIER & SHAY (2003), FRAJZYNGIER with SHAY (2016), FRAJZYNGIER & BUTTERS (2020) and FRAJZYNGIER (2023). Within this theoretical approach, the grammatical structure of every language encodes a unique semantic structure, which consists of a finite number of functional domains. Each functional domain consists of several functions. All functions within the functional domain share the defining feature of the functional domain, and each function differs from another function in just one feature. The systems of reference allow the speakers to provide the instructions as to whether the listener(s) should identify the participants in the events or states, and if so, how to identify the participants.

3.2 Methodology of discovery of functions

The existence of a given function in the language is evidenced only by some formal means of coding the functions. These means may include lexical categories and sub-categories, linear orders of constituents or words, inflectional and derivational morphology, phonological and prosodic means, and as demonstrated in this study, gender and number systems in some languages.

The fundamental tool in the research methodology is the interaction of various coding means in the coding of various functions. If two formal means cannot co-occur that indicates that either they code the same function or that they code different but incompatible functions. An example of incompatible functions would be the deployment of the sequence of determiners ‘this that’ before a noun. If the two coding means can co-occur within one syntactic unit,

it means that they code different functions. In addition, if the two means are in complementary distribution, that means that they code the same function within the grammatical system, e.g. possessive pronouns and the definite article in English, both of which enable the listener to identify the referent of a noun. This is just a property of the grammatical system in English. Morphemes referred to as definite articles and possessive pronouns in other languages may have different functions.

To assess the role of a given coding means within the grammatical system, a useful methodology is a comparison between languages with a given coding means, e.g. gender system, with a language that does not have the given coding means. To rule out a variety of factors that may affect the grammatical system, the languages should belong to the same family, and even the same subgroup within the family, be spoken in similar geographical, social, and historical conditions. For this study, I have selected two languages belonging to different branches within Central Chadic: Mina (no gender distinction, two numbers) and Gidar (two genders, two numbers), spoken at the most proximate points about 30km from each other. Speakers of Mina and Gidar are farmers, cultivating the same crops, practicing the same religion, and sharing much of the history of the area.

In what follows I briefly describe important points of the reference systems of both languages followed by a discussion of those functions where the similarities and differences may be attributed to the presence or absence of gender. For the full description of the reference systems in both languages see FRAJZYNGIER (2023).

4. Mina

Mina is spoken in and around the town of Hina Marbak in the North of Cameroon. For a full description of Mina see FRAJZYNGIER & JOHNSTON with EDWARDS (2005). The language has the categories subject and object marked for nouns by linear order SVO and for pronouns by distinct sets of subject and object pronouns. The language has no gender distinction in either nouns, pronouns, or any other nominal category. Mina has a two-number distinction in nouns and three number distinction in the first-person pronouns, but not in demonstratives and determiners. Verbal affixes include obligatory subject marking and object marking for specific functions.

4.1 The formal means of coding in Mina

The verb in Mina may be simple or reduplicated. The reduplicated form of the verb has subject pronouns before the last reduplicant. Object pronouns can also be suffixed to the verb. One suffix, **-w**, codes the presence of a specific third-person object, unmarked for number.

A noun phrase in Mina may consist of a bare noun, a noun modified by a determiner, or a possessive pronoun. Bare nouns in Mina denote entities rather than semantic concepts (for the theoretical distinction between the reference to entities and reference to semantic concepts, see FRAJZYNGIER (2023)). Inherent modifiers and quantifiers can function as arguments even though they do not have gender markers. Deployment of a noun phrase constitutes a coding means in the system of reference. Other coding means include the omission of a noun phrase from a place where it could occur; the demonstrative and determiners **wà**, **n**, **mbì**, **mà**, **kà**, and subject, object, and possessive pronouns. All pronouns, like other grammatical markers, have a clause-internal form derived through reduction of the final underlying vowel and a clause-final form derived through the addition of the suffix **-n** to the underlying form. Table 1 represents subject pronouns in clause-medial and clause-final position. Note that in the first person there is a distinction between singular and plural. For the explanation of the phonological form of pronouns, see FRAJZYNGIER & JOHNSON with EDWARDS (2005).

Person	Singular		Dual		Plural	
	Internal		Internal		Internal	Final
1	s		nám	nàmú	nin	nènéŋ EXCL nòkóŋ INCL
2	hú	hó-n			nòk	hìnénŋ
3	t'	taŋ			tàtà	tàtàŋ
Switch reference anaphor						
	mbí	mbénŋ				

Table 1 – Subject pronouns in Mina

The tone on forms **tà** and **taŋ** is low after verbs and polar after nouns and other lexical categories.

The class of demonstratives includes the series **wa**, **ma**, and **ka** whose clause-final forms are derived through the addition of the suffix **-cín**, or **-hín**, as in

wàhín, wàcín, màhín, and màcín. The demonstrative can occur alone as an argument or can determine a noun, in the position following the noun.

5. Gidar

Gidar is a Central Chadic language spoken in Northern Cameroon in the towns and villages of Guider, Lam [ɣám], Bidzar, Fighil, and Libe [ɣìbé]. For a full description see FRAJZYNGIER (2008). Gidar has the syntactic categories subject and object, coded through configuration and the pronominal system: The subject is coded by the position preceding the verb and by subject pronouns. The object is coded by the position following the verb. Subject-less clauses do occur. Even if a clause has a nominal subject, a pronominal subject prefix on the verb must also be used. The dative/benefactive and causative categories are coded by prepositions followed obligatorily by pronominal complements, even if there is a nominal complement in the clause. Both dative and causative complexes form one phrase with the verb, as shown by the position of the perfective marker and the position of plural subject markers that occur after the dative and causative complexes. Adjuncts are coded either by inherent adverbs or by prepositions. Adjuncts do not form a verbal complex in the way that causative and dative categories do. Unlike causative and indirect object prepositional phrases, the locative prepositional phrases do not form one phrase with the verb.

Gidar distinguishes two genders and two numbers in nouns, pronouns, determiners, and on the inflectional system on the verb. There is no gender distinction in the plural, which may lead to the conclusion that there are three genders (see also TSEGAYE et al. 2013). The language has means to derive feminine/ diminutive nouns from inherently masculine nouns. The feminine/diminutive suffix may also occur with adjectives, demonstratives, and previous mention markers. The feminine/diminutive suffix cannot co-occur with the plural suffix, which points to plural being another gender.

Gidar has a distinct subject pronoun for the third-person subject in focus, but this is used only for masculine nouns. Previously mentioned objects are obligatorily marked by object pronouns. In addition, definiteness of the nominal object, even if not previously mentioned, is marked through object pronouns on the verb. Gidar has a rich system of demonstratives and determiners that code functions belonging to either the domain of the speech environment or the domain of discourse. Within each of these domains there is

a further distinction between proximate and remote distance from the place or the time of speech.

The verb obligatorily codes person and gender of the subject through prefixes and codes plural number through suffixes (FRAJZYNGIER & SHAY 2008), regardless of whether the clause has a nominal subject. The subject prefix in the third-person plural is identical with the masculine prefix, regardless of the gender of the referents. There are two third-person masculine subject prefixes. A transitive verb may (a) occur with the point-of-view of object marker; (b) code a definite object whose features person, gender, and number are coded on the verb; or (c) occur without any of these markers.

Other formal means in the coding of reference include:

- Bare nouns
- Absence of nouns from the positions where they could occur
- Independent pronoun
- Omission of a noun
- Omission of a pronoun
- A rich system of demonstratives and determiners

Dative, causative, and associative prepositions code through possessive suffixes, the features of gender and number of the participant, even if the participant is overtly coded by a noun. No other prepositions have this property.

Independent pronouns have the syntactic properties of a full noun phrase in that their presence in the clause requires the subject pronouns prefixed to the verb:

Person	Singular	Plural
First	ì-ná	mó-ná-mù
Second	ì-sí	mó-nó-kùm
Third m.	ndó-ní	ndó-dáj
Third f.	ndó-tá	

Table 2 – Independent pronouns

Person	Singular	Plural
First	nè	mè
Second	kè	kè . . àn/nì
Third m.	à	à . . àn/nì
Third m. foc	dà	dà . . àn/nì
Third f.	tè	

Table 3 – Pronominal subjects

In one class of verbs, the subject must be marked not only by a prefix but also by a suffix, whose form is identical with the possessive suffix added to the noun (see FRAJZYNGIER 2011 for an analysis of such pronouns in Wandala):

Person	Singular	Plural
First	-wà	-mò
Second	-kù	-ŋ
Third m.	-n(i)	-ŋ
Third f.	-tà	

Table 4 – Subject suffixes

Independent possessive pronouns, formed by the genitive marker **ná** followed by a personal possessive suffix, serve to topicalize the participant represented by pronouns:

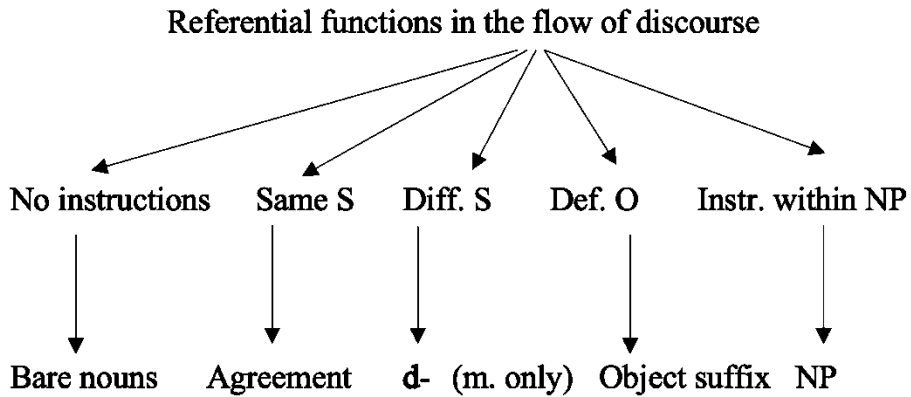
Person	Singular	Plural
First	ná-wà	ná-mù
Second	nó-kù	nó-kùm
Third m.	ná-n	né-tì
Third f.	ná-tà	

Table 5 – Independent possessive pronouns

The determiner series consists of five sets of markers: **s**, **và**, **ná**, **ndá/dá**, and **n**. The markers **ndá/dá** and **n** have phrase-final variants formed by the marker **k** and the appropriate gender and number markers.

Base	Suffix or independent?	Masc.	Fem/dimin	Plural
s	Both	s-ká	kà-s-kà	s-k-í
ná(kà)	Independent	ná(kà)	ná(kà)	ná(kà)
n	Both	n-ká	ká-n-ká	n-kí
(n)dá	Independent	ndá-k, dá-k	ká-dá-k	ndé-kì

Table 6 – Gidar demonstratives



The term 'no instructions' designates a function whereby the speaker does not tell the addressee to identify the referent.

'Same S' designates the subject as the same that has been previously mentioned.

'Diff. S' designates a subject that is previously mentioned but is different from the immediately preceding subject. This applies only to masculine and plural subjects and does not apply to feminine subjects. Why there is this distinction remains to be explored.

'Def. O' designates a definite object.

'Instructions within NP' indicates that the NP contains instructions as to how to identify the referent.

The term 'agreement' designates the coding of the subject through a system of prefixes coding person and gender and the suffix coding plural. The inflectional coding of subject on the verb indicates that the subject of the clause is the same as the preceding subject or topic.

6. Different coding of the same function: coreference and disjoint reference with the subject

In a language without gender, the coreference with the preceding subject whether in the new subject or object role is coded by the absence of the noun or a pronoun.

Absence of the third-person pronoun indicates coreference with the preceding subject. The example (2), which follows example (1) in discourse, has

no overt marking of the subject, indicating that the subject is the same as in the example (1), viz. Bahaman:

- (1) **bàhámàn nd-á gàr** [Mina]
 Bahaman go-GO stand
 ‘Bahaman went there and stood.’

- (2) **dfiyà séitin go wàcín syì** [Mina]
 start muezzin call DEM COM
 ‘[He] started to make the call.’

A different subject than the preceding subject, but a previously mentioned third-person subject, is coded by the deployment of the subject pronoun **à**:

- (3) **séy Bàhámàn wurt’ pàláh à** [Mina]
 then Bahaman leave (F.) out 3SG
zá ndè séyťínà bá dàp
 COMP go ‘call’ again
 ‘Then Bahaman went out. *She*¹ said to him, “Go make that call again.”’
 (**séyťínà** (Fula) ‘muezzin’s call in the morning’)

The coreference with a preceding subject in a language that has a gender system is coded by the agreement on the verb. In the following example (4), the third-person feminine prefix **tà** in the verb **tà-kày-í-k** ‘she searched’ refers to the topic of this fragment of the narrative, i.e. the woman who had a calabash:

- (4) **dè ɣìmbé tà-y á vá-t ɓà** [Gidar]
 ASSC ax be-COP:M PREP hand-3F NEG
ɣén ná tà-kày-í-k sèsémè é
 even COMP 3F-search-3M-PFV wood also
 ‘Although she didn’t have an ax, she nevertheless was looking for the firewood.’

¹ Mina does not code gender. The gender markings in English translations are based on the contexts of the discourse in which the pronouns were used.

The third-person masculine prefix **a-** and the plural suffix **-ŋ** indicate that the subject of the clause is the same as the preceding plural subject, (example (5)). The third-person feminine prefix **tà-** indicates that the subject of the clause is the same as the preceding third-person feminine subject:

- (5) **sá zà à-gàpá-ŋ á wrá dák àkén** [Gidar]
 from side 3M-reach-PL PREP field woman REL.F
dà hílíw' tà-ngólà- kímbe á vá-t
 ASSC calabash 3F-ask-PFV ax PREP hand-3F
mbàdà-tá yánj tà-bóŋ
 co-wife-3F CONJ 3F-refuse
 'When they got to the field, the woman with the calabash₁ asked her co-wife₂ for the ax, but she₂ refused.'

7. Different third-person subject

7.1 Language with no gender system

In Mina, a language with no gender system, a different subject in sequential clauses is marked by the use of subject pronoun. If the first clause has a nominal subject, the use of the third-person singular pronominal subject in the next sequential clause codes a different but previously mentioned subject:

- (6) **kwáyànj tánj à zá s kè dá tséy zà** [Mina]
 squirrel go 3SG COMP 1SG INF do finish EE
 'The squirrel went. He [the monkey] said, "I finished."'

7.2 Language with a gender system

The coding of the new, but previously mentioned, subject in Gidar, a language that has a gender system, depends on the gender of the subject. For the masculine subjects, Gidar has a special third-person masculine and plural pronoun, **dá-**, which is deployed in a variety of grammatical structures. It is an obligatory third-person masculine subject prefix in relative clauses and in negative clauses. The deployment of this pronoun in affirmative matrix clauses implies that the third-person subject has been previously mentioned but it is different from the immediately preceding subject. Here is the evidence for the different subject function of the prefix **dá**.

In (7), the verbal piece **dó-mdàgàng-én** ‘he should bring’ refers to the father of the family a subject that is different than the immediately preceding subject, viz. the chief of the village:

- (7) **páy tákà kàn ná mǎliy ná wàlánglá** [Gidar]
 day one then COMP chief GEN village
à-kíy-í-k wàtì mízìlín sá-n áfà-n glá
 3M-bring-3M-PFV COW male DAT-3M father-3M house
dó-mdàgàng-én wàtì ván dè wútá-nì
 3M.FOC-bring back COW DEF ASSC child-3M
 ‘One day, the chief of a village brought a bull to the father of the family, so that he [the father of the family] would bring the bull back together with its calf.’

In (8), the prefix **dó** refers to a subject other than the subject of matrix clause:

- (8) **à-ná sè-né-k ná mà-ddó-ŋ** [Gidar]
 3M-say DAT-3M-PFV COMP IMP.PL-go:TOT-PL
mè-ná sá-n sómbò ná biin ná-w
 IMP.PL-tell DAT-3M Sombo COMP roof GEN-1SG
tà-ì ná èrmá pùmó dó-zé
 PROG-3M GEN cover tomorrow 3M.FOC-come:VENT
gìnì dó-sá-n gèn á ddóf-nì
 SUBJ 3M.FOC-be-3M SUBJ PREP inside-3M
 ‘He₁ told him that they should go and tell Sombo that I have a roof to be covered tomorrow, and that he₂ should come and stay inside it [the roof].’

The new but previously mentioned feminine subject in Gidar is marked through the deployment of the full noun. This is the case in the last line of the example (5) above, where the noun **mbèdà-tá** ‘her co-wife’ refers to a participant in the event narrated in the preceding discourse.

Intermediate summary. The coding of the same subject and of a different but previously mentioned subject has different forms in languages without a gender system and in languages with a gender system. The absence of the

pronoun in a language without the gender system codes coreference. The presence of the third-person pronoun in a language without a gender system codes a different subject. In a language with a gender system, the coreference with the preceding subject is coded by the agreement system, and a different subject is coded in different ways depending on the gender of the subject.

8. Reference to the domain of discourse versus environment of speech

In a language with a gender system there are formal means to distinguish between the domain of discourse, the domain *de dicto*, and the environment of speech (which is sometimes called ‘*deixis*’ and which is here called domain *de re* (FRAJZYNGIER 1991). In a language that does not have the gender distinction, there is no distinction coded in the grammatical system between the two domains.

Gidar makes a distinction between reference to entities in the environment of speech and previous mention. The number of distinctions within the environment of speech is larger than the number of distinctions in the coding of previous mention (FRAJZYNGIER 1991). To code entities within the speech environment, the form **và** is followed by gender and number markers. In this function it refers to an entity present in the environment of speech. The use of this form is not necessarily accompanied by pointing at the entity. The same marker **và** with the masculine singular suffix **-ní** indicates that the referent of the head noun has been mentioned in speech between the speaker and the addressee, as opposed to reported speech. In this function, the marker **vàní** is not sensitive to the features gender and number of the head noun and is used with inherently masculine, inherently feminine or marked feminine nouns as well as inherently plural or marked plural nouns.

The marker **và**, with possessive markers coding the features gender and number of the head noun, has the forms **và-ní** for masculine nouns, **và-tá** for feminine nouns, and **vè-tí** for plural nouns. The full forms with the underlying vowel occur in the phrase-final position. In this function, the form **và** is glossed as *ES* for the ‘environment of speech’:

- (9) a. **ďǎf** **và-ní** [Mina]
 man ES-M
 ‘this man’
- b. **wán** **và-tá**
 girl ES-F
 ‘this girl’
- c. **zèl** **vè-tí**
 husbands ES-PL
 ‘these husbands’ (**zəl** ‘husband’)
- d. **gíl** **vè-tí**
 women ES-PL
 ‘these women’

In the phrase-internal position the de re markers have reduced vowels and shifted tone, resulting in the forms **ván** (m.), **vát** (f.) and **vét** (pl.) respectively.

The form **và** followed by other demonstratives can serve as the head of its own phrase. It indicates that its referent is available in the environment of discourse. Its antecedent may be part of the discourse just mentioned, as illustrated by the following fragment. The example (10) provides a background to the example (11):

- (10) **áfú-t** **wánk** **gè̃m** **ďíi** **ná** [Gidar]
 father-3F girl CONJ people GEN
- mékgé** **à-náhá-ŋ-k** **ná** **glùk**
 neighborhood 3M-say-PL-PFV COMP woman
- ná** **tímé** **tá** **glùk** **ná** **tímé** **tá**
 GEN sheep COP.F woman GEN sheep COP.F
- ‘The father of the girl and the neighbors said, “The woman belongs to Sheep, the woman belongs to Sheep.”’

The example (11), the phrase **và-s-ká** refers to the content of what just has been said in (ex. 10) and therefore its referent is a part of the environment of speech:

- (11) **sá zà dèríné à-prəm và-s-ká** [Gidar]
 from side hyena 3M-hear ES-DED-PF
à-d-ók gádóvá
 3M-cook-PFV stomach
 ‘When the hyena heard that [i.e. what the father and people said], it became angry.’

In the example (12) the speaker has just approached the addressee and refers to an object **háy vá-n** ‘this corn’ that was not previously mentioned and was not a part of the narration but is present in the environment of speech:

- (12) **ví mì kà-dà rg-á háy** [Gidar]
 for what 2-D.PROG thresh-OBJ corn
vá-n púm dè púmmò dī
 ES-M morning ASSC morning SQ
 ‘Why are you threshing this corn so early in the morning?’

The masculine form **vàní** modifying the noun tells the addressee that the noun has been previously mentioned in conversation between the speaker and the addressee, regardless of the gender and number of the head noun. In its anaphoric function, the form **vàní** is represented without the hyphen separating the morphemes and glossed as PM for ‘previous mention’. The final vowel of the marker is reduced in phrase internal position. When that is the case, the tone shifts to the preceding syllable, and the previous mention marker is realized as **ván**. The evidence that the masculine form is used regardless of the gender of the antecedent is provided by the masculine form of the determiner with inherently feminine heads:

- (13) **glúk vàní** [Gidar]
 woman PM
 ‘the woman’ (instead of **glúk và-tá**, which would be used to refer to the woman in the environment of speech)

The distance between previous mention and current mention plays no role in the deployment of the marker **vàní**. The previous mention may have occurred in the same sentence or in preceding sentences (**wàti mížilín** ‘male cow’, ‘bull’):

- (14) **páy tákà kán ná mǎlìy ná** [Gidar]
 day one then COMP chief GEN
wàlánglá à-kíy-í-k wàtì mížìlín
 village 3M-bring-PFV cow male
sá-n áfà-n glá dǎ-mdàgàng-ón
 DAT-3M father-3M house 3M.FOC-bring back-3M
wàtì ván dǎ wútá-nì
 cow PM ASSC child-3M
 ‘One day, a chief of the village brought a male cow₁ to the father of the family₂, so that he₂ would bring it back together with its₁ calf’.

In the following example (15) the phrase **ìnkílè vání** ‘that water’ refers to water **ìnkílè** mentioned in the same sentence:

- (15) **sá zà tà-bèhé mbàdà-t tà-łáy-à-tá-k** [Mina]
 from side 3F-bend co-wife-3F 3F-push-OBJ-3F-PFV
á ddáf vòf né-t ìnkílè mbà-gá-n
 PREP in hole GEN-3PL water leaving-CAUS-3M
wátá-t á má vòf né-t ìnkílè₁ vání
 child-3F PREP mouth hole GEN-3PL water PM
 ‘After she bent down, her co-wife pushed her inside the well, leaving her child at the edge of the well.’ (**ìnkílè** ‘water’ is inherently plural)

In Mina, which has no gender system, there is no formal distinction between the reference to the environment of speech and the environment of discourse. The marker **wà** can refer to entities in the environment of speech or to the entities in the environment of discourse. The use of **wà** in direct quotes provides the evidence that the referent is indeed within the scope of the speaker’s vision, as in (16) with the phrase **skèŋ wà** ‘this thing’:

- (16) **à ǵá nd-á tìy skèŋ wà mók** [Mina]
 3SG say go-GO see thing DEM won’t you
mbù tá hìdì gènák táŋ á ndà-há tìy syì mómóŋ
 child GEN man black go 3SG go-GO see COM mother.3SG
 ‘He said, “Come and look at this thing.” The human child came and saw that it was his mother.’ **hìdì gènák** ‘black person’ = ‘human being’)

In example (17), people coming across a river that has filled use the demonstrative **wàcín** to refer to the river present in the environment of speech:

- (17) **nòk kè dál žì vàngáy kè ǵáj làkwát wàcín** [Mina]
 1PL INF do then how INF cross river DEM
 ‘How are we going to cross this river?’

In example (18b), the phrase **ǵà wà** ‘these cows’ refers to cows present in the environment of speech as evidenced by the clause in (18a):

- (18) a. **báy tì ǵ-yñ dúngùr dá skù** [Mina]
 chief look COW-PL hump exist NEG
 ‘The chief saw that the cows did not have humps.’
 b. **à zá mè ǵà dúngùr tá ǵà wà ví** [Mina]
 3SG look REL cut hump GEN COW DEM who
 ‘He asked, “Who cut off the hump[s] of these cows?”’

Here is the evidence that the form **wàcín** can refer to entities mentioned in the previous discourse. In each case, the referent of the noun modified by the demonstrative **wàcín** is not present in the environment of speech:

- (19) **kwáyàn à ndín bà làkáf** [Mina]
 squirrel 3SG fear ASSC baboon
 ‘The squirrel was afraid of that baboon.’ (i.e. of the baboon mentioned in the previous discourse, not just any baboon)

- (20) **nd-á dēw ká á bór màllúm wàcín** [Mina]
 GO-GO sit POS PRED side teacher DEM
 ‘He came to sit next to this teacher.’ (The teacher was the topic of the previous paragraph, but its last mention as **màllúm** was five sentences earlier. In between there were several other participants mentioned. The teacher is not present in the environment of speech, as the discourse is a narration of the event).

- (21) **í ká mál zá á n mīšīl wàhín** [Mina]
 3PL IN seize EE PRED PREP theft DEM
 ‘They arrested him for this theft.’ (not for general stealing). (The noun **mīšīl** ‘theft, thief’ was mentioned five clauses earlier, while the specific act of stealing was mentioned two clauses earlier.)

The demonstrative **wàcín** may be the sole member of the noun phrase, referring to a previously mentioned noun, whether singular or plural. In the example (22) the phrase-final form **wàcín** refers to a stone mentioned earlier in discourse:

- (22) **í hók rə wàcín séy wàl wà** [Mina]
 3PL lift D.HAB DEM then wife DEM
ḡàt á ḡàt fòrém náka bá vènjéh
 take 3SG take horn rem ASSC pepper
ḡíyà á ḡí ká nò mà
 put 3SG put in PREP mouth
 ‘When they were lifting it [the stone], the wife took the horn which contained pepper and put it in her mouth.’

- (23) **íf á íf-é tá n fòrém wà dàp** [Mina]
 blow 3SG blow-GO GEN PREP horn DEM just
 ‘She just blew out what was in the horn.’

9. Conclusions

The study has demonstrated that the same functions within the domain of reference are coded in different ways, depending on whether the languages have gender system or not.

The same function, e.g. coreference with the preceding participants or disjoint reference with the preceding participants are coded by different means in a language that has gender distinction and a language that does not have gender distinction.

The presence of the gender distinction allows for the coding of functions that are not coded in the language without the gender distinction. In a language with gender distinction there is a formal difference between previous mention

and reference to the entities in the environment of speech. No such distinction exists in the language without the gender system.

The overall conclusion. While one cannot assign a cross-linguistic narrow function for gender systems, it is a coding means for a variety of functions within the system of reference.

Abbreviations

1 first person, 3 third person, ASSC associative, CAUS causative, COM comment marker, COMP complementizer, CONJ conjunction, COP copula, D pragmatically dependent, DAT dative, DED deduced, DEM demonstrative, EE end-of-event, ES environment of speech, F feminine, FOC focus, GEN genitive relationship, not genitive case marker, GO goal, HAB habitual, IMP imperative, INF infinitive, M masculine, OBJ object, PFV perfective, PL plural, PM previous mention, PREP preposition, REL relative, SG singular, SQ specific question, content question, SUBJ subjunctive, TOT totality, VENT ventive

Acknowledgments

This study was supported by the Fulbright Specialist Program that allowed me to do research in Naples and interact with colleagues from L'Orientale, especially Gian Claudio Batic and Valentina Schiattarella. I owe my gratitude to Erin Shay for reading and commenting on various versions of this study, and to Valentina Schiattarella for excellent editing. All the errors of fact and interpretation are my own doing.

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Dynamism of the language of Hausa proverbs in the era of social media

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Abstract

Proverbs are believed to be the true expressions of the people who use them and are handed down from generations through generations as a universal cultural heritage. They are employed not only to entertain, educate, advice but also to buttress points, and to give arguments universal acceptability. And because they express the values and beliefs of a people, they happen to be one of the most relevant expressions of human wisdom, knowledge of nature, psychology, and reality for the Hausa people of northern Nigeria. *Karin Magana* is the Hausa term for proverbs. As society develops, changes in culture happen and as an aspect of a dynamic culture, Hausa proverbs are known to have changed over time with new varieties being created or coined to express contemporary issues and to assimilate the new technological and social order, giving rise to new meanings as well as new usage. Using the participant observation and functional theories of oral literature, this paper attempts a contextual analysis of selected contemporary Hausa proverbs which have changed over time as a result of modernity, and which are fast being disseminated through social media which is now the new normal for easy accessibility.

Key words: proverbs, language, Hausa, dynamism, social media

1. Introduction

Although there is so far no perfect definition of proverb, certain characteristics are generally ascribed by scholars to this genre. Put simply, a proverb may be defined as a piece of folk wisdom expressed with terseness and charm. The “terseness implies a certain economy in the choice of words and a sharpness of focus, while the ‘charm’ conveys the touch of literary or poetic beauty in the expression” (OKPEWHO 2004: 226). Proverbs are said to be short and brief statements that sometimes express ageless wisdom or truths. Most times, proverbs are dressed in stylistic elements like assonance, alliteration, parallelism, imagery, metaphor, etc. for emphasis.

Structurally, proverbs have been described by ABRAHAMS (1972:120) as “descriptions made up of two or more elements, and these elements often conform to the two parts of the balanced structure; these two or more elements are usually tied together either by a verb of equivalence or a verb of causation”. In defining the proverb functionally, ABRAHAMS & BABCOCK (1977: 121) sees the proverb as “descriptions that propose an attitude or a mode of action in relation to a recurrent social situation”. DUNDES (1975:115) also defines proverb as, “a traditional propositional statement consisting of at least one descriptive element; a descriptive element consisting of a topic and a comment”. The Hausa term for proverb is *Karin Magana* which SKINNER (1980:2-3) defines as, “a sentence or sentences which a group of Hausa people agree is a *Karin Magana*”. BICHI (1995: 76 and 1997: 150) describes proverbs as *wisdom talk* and one of the most popular genres of Hausa verbal folklore. According to him, the Hausa language is apparently very rich in proverbs and new ones are constantly being created.

Hausa proverbs fulfill several functions in society. Proverbs do have an entertainment value: whether we refer to the way they are used in spicing up statements or making them more exciting to listeners, or whether we refer to their preludial or interludial use in narrative performance or even songs made up entirely of proverbial lines, there is clearly a sense of beauty attached to them that appeals to the ears and to the imagination of the audience (OKPEWHO 2004: 235).

Proverbs are sometimes used, in arguing court cases; in formal instruction during initiation ceremonies; in chants during ceremonial dance performances; in competitive games; and as depictions on royal gold weights (see FINNEGAN 1970: 392-416). In addition, they are “used in conversations at least, they help to provide a certain pointedness and clarity of focus to speech” (OKPEWHO 1992: 235). Commenting on the function of proverbs, especially in inculcating obedience in children, BICHI (1995: 77) opines that: “Indeed, proverbs are capable of correcting behaviour lapses, admonishing, settling arguments and disputes, etc”. Thus, one proverb can occur under various themes or can be used to relate to different situations.

Proverbs are also often employed to deliver arguments in debates to settle problems, to uncover the truth, to give advice, to offer observations and to arrive at judgments on the application of customary and unwritten laws. Proverbs are also used sumptuously to heighten and add to the craftiness of conversation: they employ literary devices such as irony, humour, emphasis, satire, sarcasm, and under-statement, among many others.

2. Method of data collection and procedure of analysis

Most of the proverbs used in this paper were collected from social media sources like Whatsapp, Tiktok, Facebook, and Twitter, among others. We then selected several proverbs randomly which we call the original/traditional/conventional proverbs used in day-to-day discourse, which are popular among the Hausa people, and which we have used in previous research (KABIR 2009a, 2009b 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2017). We then got new proverbs that are used from the social media, which have been slightly altered or completely used to replace the traditional ones to suit modern usage. The first step in the analysis of data was transcribing the Hausa proverbs. This was then followed by the translations of the proverbs into English. In translating the proverbs, we adopted the literal translation method. This is because the literal translation usually retains most of the original features of the proverb and at the same time, accepts the “use of words in their usual sense or commonly accepted meaning” (EMEABA 1987: 110). This way, the translation retains most of the features of the original proverb while at the same time makes sense to the reader. This is then followed by the meaning or the interpretation of the proverb as well as the social context in which the proverb(s) can be applied because one needs to ask not only what counts as a proverb, but also for information as to other components of the situations in which proverbs are used. What are the rules governing who can use proverbs or particular proverbs, and to whom? What exactly is the contributing contextual factor which makes the use of proverbs or a particular proverb, possible or not possible, appropriate or inappropriate (AREWA & DUNDES 1964: 70-85)? The philosophical depth of proverbs, which is the result of a careful and sensitive observation of human conduct and experience and of the surrounding nature are overwhelming. “It is this vast knowledge that proverb users draw from, both when they hold informal conversation and when they engage in formal discourse” (OKPEWHO 1992:235).

3. The concept of proverb(s)

Proverbs have been defined variously by scholars. NA’ALLAH (1994: 104) defines proverbs as, “wise sayings or compositions intended to give credence and intelligent support to our assertions and discussions. They are often used to check the cultural excesses of a group; they also aim to advice, rebuke or

suggest”. Proverbs could also be said to be traditional oral sayings, which are handed down from generation to generation as a common inheritance. Probably, the most consistently accepted generalization concerning proverbs in any language is that “they are traditional, and it is this traditionality, the senses of historically derived authority or community sanctioned wisdom that they convey that make them work” (SHIRLEY 1995: 1). DAVID (1995: 184) comments on the nature of the proverbs by pointing out that “The effectiveness of a proverb lies largely in its brevity and directness. The syntax is simple, the images vivid, and thus easy to understand”. “Proverbs are terse general statements; often using figurative language and touching on some aspects of life” (IBEKWE 1998: 1). In justifying the roles of proverbs in society, BASCOM (1954: 469) recognizes the following four as the most obvious functions of folklore of which the proverb is a genre; it first and foremost, “plays a significant role in traditional education; it enforces conformity to social norms; it validates social institutions and religious rituals; and provides a psychological release from the restrictions imposed by society”. Thus, proverbs serve as basic teaching tool and a fundamental means for approaching life for the oral culture. A fundamental characteristic of proverbs is that they are almost never applied in their literal sense (LEACH 1949: 23). FINNEGAN (1970: 390) posits that “in many African cultures a feeling for language, for imagery, and for the expression of abstract ideas through compressed and allusive phraseology comes out particularly in proverbs”. It will be safe therefore, to say that of the many genres of oral literature that are found in many African societies, proverbs are the most popular. In Africa and Nigeria in particular, focus has mostly been on the nature, features, functions, performance, content and context of traditional proverbs. Examples can be found in FINNEGAN (1970), OLATUNJI (1984), NA’ALLAH (1994), OKPEWHO (1992); ƳƳƳƳƳƳƳƳƳƳƳƳ (1997, 2012), (YUSUF 1998), ƳƳƳƳƳƳƳƳƳƳƳƳ (1998), (IBEKWE 1998); KOLAWOLE (1999), KABIR (2005, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2017), RAJI-OYELADE (2004), JEGERE (2008), and RAJI (2004) among many others. These scholars and many others have in different write-ups discussed proverbs from different viewpoints.

The Hausa term for proverb is *Karin Magana* which SKINNER (1980: 2-3) defines as, “sentences which a group of Hausa people agree is a *Karin Magana*”. The *Karin Magana* is not different from English proverbs though it is more inclusive than the English ones. Proverbs relate to the day-to-day lives of the people who use them, their aspirations, morality, religions, history, thinking and expectation. In the Hausa society like in other African oral societies, “proverbs touch on

every aspect of the life of the people so much so that there are proverbs for every imaginable context” (HEALEY & SYBERTZ 2004: 35), in short, everything about the worldviews of the people. The use of proverbs is seen in the total life pattern of the Hausa people from entertainment to games and even to very serious discussions. Proverbs are a significant rhetorical force in various modes of communication, and they are universal occurrences, so much that there is no speech or language in which they are not found. Thus, proverbs are believed to communicate reliable or trustworthy qualities, which give life and meaning to the socio-cultural activities within any given human community (KOLAWOLE 1999: 8-9).

4. Dynamism of Hausa proverbs: the birth of postproverbials

For centuries, Hausa proverbs like proverbs the world over have undergone various and continuous transformations and in the last few decades many proverbs have changed and have been distorted so comprehensively that their new forms are sometimes used and heard more often than the original forms. As a result of this, Wolfgang Mieder coined the term ‘Antispruchwort’ (anti-proverb) for such deliberate proverb innovations (also known in English as ‘alterations’, ‘mutations’, ‘parodies’, ‘transformations’, ‘variations’, ‘wisecracks’, ‘deliberate proverb innovations’, or ‘fractured proverbs’). Mieder’s term ‘Antispruchwort’ has been widely accepted by proverb scholars all over the world as a general label for such innovative alterations, and reactions to traditional proverbs (MIEDER 2004, 2007; LITOVKINA 2005, 2007b, 2015; LITOVKINA & MIEDER 2006: 1-54). There is hardly a topic that conventional and new Hausa proverbs do not address. They continue to comment on all levels and occurrences in daily life. In fact, most importantly, modern proverbs are intended to activate us into overcoming the naive acceptance of traditional wisdom. Thus, there is no sphere of life where new innovations in Hausa proverbs are not used. Talking about changes that occur in proverbs, (MIEDER 2011: 17) says “proverbs are alive, they breathe, they are born, they die, and above all, they are part of the ever more rapidly changing mores of those who employ them”.

It is in line with these arguments of alteration, innovations and changes that occur within or in proverbs by different scholars that RAJI (RAJI-OYELADE 1999; RAJI 2012) advances his views of modern proverbs which he calls “supplementary proverbs or postproverbials”. This paper, therefore, concurs

with RAJI-OYELADE (1999) and RAJI's (2012) views that changes do occur in proverbs and that the changes that occur over time in traditional proverbs have resulted in radicalized or new proverb types which are referred to as postproverbials, and are altered versions of conventional/traditional proverbs. This paper also aligns with RAJI (2012: 123) who suggests that "Postproverbial is a common occurrence in many cultures, and it will certainly be a continuous process – especially with digital media – because humans today seem to be artistically gifted with a 'manipulative imagination'". Our working definition of Hausa postproverbial in this paper, therefore, is that, "Hausa Postproverbial is a new proverb coined from a traditional/ conventional/ original/ existing proverb because of changes in socio-political, economic and cultural realities of the Hausa society". Viewed critically therefore, we cannot but also agree that the relationship between the traditional proverb and the postproverbial lies in the changes that occur during discourse and this is what makes it dynamic.

This claim can therefore uphold the definition of postproverbials as "parallel, modernist recreations that are derived from, and that they exist side-by-side in rather equal phonocentric status with traditional proverbs" (RAJI-OYELADE 1999: 76). Thus, postproverbials or supplementary proverbs can be defined as, "alternate creations derived from and which stand against traditional proverbs" (RAJI-OYELADE 1999: 75). Postproverbials in Hausa society can be said to be the emergence of Hausa perverted proverbs. Our findings therefore suggest that in Hausa society, postproverbials occur due to contemporary, sociopolitical, and economic experiences or changes the Hausa people find themselves in. People also deliberately modify or change proverbs with the intention of creating new proverbial wisdom that fit new times or desired innovations.

5. The data and the analysis

As MIEDER (1989: 239) points out, "We can thus characterize the particular choice of proverbs in any given context by the popular proverb...". In a similar view, (LITOVKINA 2017: 12), believes that "a person chooses a proverb according to the demands of the situation not due to its universal abstract sense, and any situation can be interpreted in more than one way". The relevance of proverbs and their meaning emerge only in their application and use in specific contexts. She further posits that, "since proverbs tend to express wisdom in an authoritative way, the coiners of anti-proverbs undermine that authority to

express changing attitudes towards proverbial wisdom today” (LITOVKINA 2017: 13).

In line with these arguments therefore, and for the purpose of our analysis, we will refer to the original proverb as ‘proverb’ and the new proverb as ‘postproverbial’. We shall place each proverb with a postproverbial we think it fits into. It is important to note that we may have more than one postproverbial for an original proverb.

- (1) **In ka ga rafumi, ka ga buzu** (proverb)
 ‘When you see the camel, you also see the Tuareg’
In ka ga ’yan Boko Haram, ka ji durum! (postproverbial)
 ‘When you see Boko Haram, you also hear the gun shot!’
- (2) **In ka ga wata, ka ga zara** (proverb)
 ‘When you see the moon, you also see the big star guiding it’
In ka ji jiniya, ka ga motar ’yan sanda (postproverbial)
 ‘Once you hear a siren, you will sight a security vehicle’

Analysis: These proverbs are equivalent to the English “birds of the same feather flock together”. Just as the camel is never seen alone but with the Tuareg who guides it to where it must go, the presence of Boko Haram insurgents/terrorist in Nigeria is heralded by gun shots. While the moon is guided by the big star known as *Zara* that illuminates its path and they are always seen together; the siren also heralds the arrival of security vehicle. These proverbs are used to emphasize the closeness of two things/people.

- (3) **Zama da maɗaukin kanwa, ke sa farin kai/gashi** (proverb)
 ‘Keeping company with the potash carrier makes one have a dusty/grey head/hair’
Zama da maɗaukin turare, ke sa kamshin kaya (postproverbial)
 ‘Keeping company with the perfume carrier makes one’s clothes to scent’

Analysis: Just like two wrongs do not make a right, so also a single person cannot always be wrong. This is like English saying “there are two sides to a coin” or “it takes two to tango.” These proverbs can be used to show that blames should

be accorded equally for any wrong deed done. In other words, fair hearing should be accorded fair hearing in a dispute.

- (4) **Karfin mata, sai yawan magana** (proverb)
 ‘The strength of women is but in a plenitude of words’

Karfin ɗan siyasa, yawan karya (postproverbial)
 ‘The strength of a politician is in telling lies’

Analysis: According to these proverbs, women are seen as very talkative and unserious just like Nigerian politicians. They have too much time to waste in talking, backbiting, tarnishing image, character defamation, quarrelling among many other vices. The proverbs could be used to shut up a very talkative person or anyone who talks without caution.

- (5) **Majurin casar dawa, sai kwararren macashi** (proverb)
 ‘Only an expert thresher can have the patience to thresh guinea corn’

Majurin dimokradiya, sai kwararren ɗan siyasa (postproverbial)
 ‘Only an expert democrat can have the patience of being a politician’

Analysis: Guinea corn which is a staple grain among the Hausa people is first threshed before it becomes edible. The threshing of the corn is not only tedious and difficult, but the chaff is also very itchy once it touches a person’s body. The Nigerian political scene is also viewed as a difficult and scandalous endeavour which only experts can survive in. Therefore, only an expert thresher/politician succeeds in threshing/politics. These proverbs recommend the need to remain resolute in whatever one sets out to achieve in life no matter the hardship.

- (6) **Mai uwa Sarki ne, mai uba Lamido** (proverb)
 ‘One with a mother is a king, while one with a father is a prince’

Mai uwa president ne, mai uba vice president (postproverbial)
 ‘One with mother is a president, while one with a father is vice President’

Analysis: The proverb suggests that a mother is better than a father. While the proverb rates a father second place, the mother is rated first place. The child under the care of the mother is metaphorically called king for he would have all his wishes or desires attended to by the mother, just like a king is attended to by his servants. On the other hand, a child under the care of a father has only some of his needs attended to. The same goes for the postproverbial which also suggests that the child of the president has more prestige over the child of the vice-president.

- (7) **“Mu gani a kasa” an ce da kare ana biki a gidansu** (proverb)
 “Let us see it all over the floor” says the dog when it was told, there is a feast in their house’
- “Mu gani a result”! Student ta ce, lecturer saurayinta ne!** (postproverbial)
 “Let us confirm it from your result”! The student who claims the lecturer is her boyfriend is told’

Analysis: In other words, the proverb suggests that you believe best what you see. In traditional Hausa society, dogs are not kept as pets; they are kept for hunting or as trained guards in the houses; therefore, they are not humanly cared for; some are not even fed by their owners but are only given leftovers; some others go from one dustbin to the other, in search of a meal. The dog believes, anytime it has enough to eat, then, the household no doubt has food in excess to be thrown away; since the dog is used to this system, it is of the belief that only by seeing food in abundance on the floor would it believe that a feast is holding in their house. The young girl who goes into a relationship with a lecturer expects to pass examinations with flying colours. That too, is not guaranteed until the results are out. These proverbs are used by people who insist on seeing a thing or action performed before it is believed.

- (8) **“Kowa da al’adar garinsu” an ce, ango ya rufe kai da turmi** (proverb)
 “Everyone has his/her ethnic culture” exclaimed the illegal child who had a share of the inheritance’.

“Kowa da al’adar gidansu” shege a rabon gado (postproverbial)

“Everyone has his/her ethnic culture” exclaimed the illegal child who had a share of the inheritance”.

Analysis: The mortar is an African household utensil carved out of wood or used to pound; the Hausa people like other Africans use it to turn their grains to flour. Due to its importance, almost every bride in traditional Hausa society is taken to her matrimonial home with a mortar; and since, it is carved out of wood, it is very heavy, but most importantly, it is used by women and not men. Therefore, when, people see the bridegroom using it as a cover over his head, it becomes a thing to be laughed at, but the groom is quick to correct the notion people have about his actions. Cultures differ, what is accepted in one culture could be frowned at in another culture; therefore, his act should not be seen as dim-witted. The same irony is played out when an assumed illegal child who should culturally and religiously not have a share from the inheritance of his supposed father is given a share in the inheritance. These proverbs could be used to explain why someone did something which other people consider idiotic, imprudent, or out of place.

(9) **Abin nema ya samu, wai matar falke ta haifi ɗan jaki** (proverb)

‘What is sought for has been gotten for the itinerant trader’s wife has given birth to a donkey’

Abin nema ya samu, matar makadī ta haifi ganga (postproverbial)

‘What is sought for has been gotten for the drummer’s wife has given birth to a drum’

(10) **Abin nema ya samu, wai matar ɗan sanda ta haifi ɓarawo** (proverb)

‘What is sought for has been gotten for the drummer’s wife has given birth to a drum’

Abin nema ya samu, matar bafulatani ta haifi rediyo (postproverbial)

‘What is sought for had been gotten, the Fulani man’s wife has given birth to a radio’

Analysis: When one is looking for something which he/she considers important and suddenly, out of the blues that thing is given free then one is saved the trouble of going out or leaving his/her surrounding to find that things. Just as the itinerant trader seeks for the donkey; so also, a drummer seeks a drum; the policeman seeks for a thief to arrest, and the Fulani man seeks for a radio to listen to. Therefore, if the trader's wife can give birth to a donkey; a drummer's wife a drum; a policeman's wife a thief; and the Fulani man's wife a radio (the Fulani's most cherished media possession), what else would they be looking for outside when they have these things free in their homes and at their disposal? Thus, just as the context suggests, these proverbs could be used to congratulate one who unexpectedly gets what he/she has been seeking for.

- (11) **Ga fili, ga mai doki** (proverb)

'Here is the field, and here is the horse rider'

Ga titi, ga mai boris (postproverbial)

'Here is the express way, and here is the racer'

- (12) **Ga gona, ga fartanya, sai maki noma** (proverb)

'Here is the farm; here is the hoe, except if the person does not want to farm'

Ga goshi ga al kibla, sai maki salla (postproverbial)

'Here is the forehead; here is the east'

Analysis: These proverbs seek to suggest that both the atmosphere and situation are conducive for the act proposed unless one has suddenly developed cold feet. A rider on the horseback is offered the field, which has enough space for him to gallop, and is expected to go ahead and ride without hesitation. While the car racer has the express way to exhibit his/her expertise, the farmer is presented with the needed farming tools to work with. Both the proverb and postproverbials advocate seriousness in doing things.

- (13) **Ba a sake da kiwon zabo a waje, don ko masoya ne da shi da yawa** (proverb)

'One is never careless in rearing a guinea fowl for it has a lot of admirers'

Ba a sake da kiwon ya mace a waje, don ko masu kai (postproverbial)
mata hari na da yawa

‘One should never be careless about the upbringing of maiden for those who will take advantage of her are many’

Ba a sake da aljihun babban riga, da akwai daloli a ciki (postproverbial)
 ‘One should never be careless with the pocket of the flowing gown that contains dollars’

Analysis: The guinea fowl is a beautiful domestic bird reared by the Hausa people. It is also believed to be tastier than any other bird when cooked. Thus, many people value it, making it very expensive to purchase. A maiden is a valued asset in every family in Hausa society especially if she is beautiful and has good upbringing. The flowing gown that has dollars stocked in the pocket is also an asset that needs special attention. Wisdom therefore calls on people who rear the guinea fowl; have a beautiful maiden or a pocket full of dollars to be very cautious for once left out of sight they could disappear within a twinkle of an eye. These proverbs call on people to value what they have.

(14) **“Tashin ku tashi na” in ji mai jiran gawa** (proverb)

“‘I will also leave as soon as you profess to do so”, says the man who professes he is also waiting for the arrival of the corpse’

“Tashin ku tashi na” in ji sojan Sambisa (postproverbial)

“‘I will also leave as soon as you profess to do so” says the soldier in Sambisa’

“Tashin ku tashi na” in ji dan NGO a Sambisa (postproverbial)

“‘I will also leave as soon as you profess to do so” says the NGO personnel in Sambisa’

Analysis: When a loved one dies, even his immediate relations are in most cases frightened to be left alone with the dead body before the burial; this is due to the natural fear most people have for the dead; thus, the person who claims to be brave enough to watch over the corpse of a loved one, suddenly decides to leave with the mourners. The first postproverbial shows the soldier who is posted to the Boko Haram ravaged Sambisa forest suddenly deciding to abscond

from duty because the forest is no longer safe for him and those he is there to protect have refused to stay with him; while the second postproverbial also shows the NGO personnel who also voluntarily went into Sambisa forest for humanitarian services also deciding to leave despite earlier showing act of bravery since the people he is there for have refused the stay. This goes to show that whatever is good for the goose must be good for the Gander. The proverb could be used to insist upon the need for togetherness or collective decision.

(15) **“A yi a nade dai” in ji farawon tabarma** (proverb)

“Be fast about rolling up the mat” says the thief who wants to steal it’

“A yi a kwashe dai” in ji farawon kujeru (postproverbial)

“Be fast about taking the chairs” says the thief who wants to steal them’

Analysis: When the mat is spread out and people are seated on it, no one dares touch it; but as soon as it is rolled up and kept aside for use later, the thief who has his eyes on it can easily take it away without being noticed. This thief is depicted as one who is in a hurry and wants to move on to steal more things as a result, he is so eager for the mat to be rolled up or the chairs to be packed so that he could pick what he wants and leave. These proverbs could be used to advise one to hasten up in doing a job that needs to be done quickly.

(16) **“An raba mani hankali” an ce da raggo sha fura, ka je gona** (proverb)

“My attention has been divided” says the lazy man who was asked to take *fura* and then go to the farm’

“An raba mani hankali” ga kayan danna kirji, ga amarya (postproverbial)

“My attention has been divided” says the woman who was given gratification to accept a co-wife’

Analysis: By nature, the lazy man hates doing any type of work that would stress him out and suddenly, he was directed to take **fura** (cooked molded guinea corn flour mixed with milk) and go to the farm. **Fura** is a staple beverage in Hausa society and is consumed at any time of the day to cool one off stress and tension;

after taking it, one may likely feel drowsy or drained. Now here is the lazy man being asked to consume **fura** and then proceed to the farm to work; no one will blame him if he acts sluggishly and refuses to do anything tangible. Likewise, in the Hausa society, when a co-wife is to be brought into a woman's home, gifts like clothing, jewellery etc are given to her by her husband to douse the tension. So, it is a choice between the devil and the deep blue sea for this woman who has accepted the gifts even though she is not favourable to her husband's decision to take another wife. These proverbs could be used by one who is in a dilemma or is forced to make a choice between priorities.

(17) **“Haka dai aka ce” in ji mafaryaci** (proverb)

“So, it was said” or “so I heard” alleged the liar’

“Haka dai aka ce” in ji dan jarida.” (postproverbial)

“So, I heard” said the journalist’

Analysis: The liar is known to give false information; when the liar was confronted about certain information he gave and which was found to be untrue, his only way out was to say, “so it was said” or “so I heard”. Since he has no source for his story, no one is going to be held responsible for any confusion the story may cause. The journalist also claimed the information he had earlier given were just hearsay. The proverb and postproverbial could be used as ridicule or scorn to anyone known to have given information which was found later to be false.

(18) **“Zancen kake so”, karuwa ta ji mai wa’azi** (proverb)

“You are wasting your time”, the prostitute says to the preacher’

“Zancen kake so”, dan wiwi ya ji mai wa’azi (postproverbial)

“You are wasting your time”, the drug addict/ Hemp addict says to the preacher’

Analysis: Reform is out of the question, so the preacher is only wasting time preaching to the prostitute or the drug addict to change for the better. These proverbs could be used to admonish anyone who thinks he/she can change things or society for the better.

- (19) **“Wuce ni”, karuwa ta ga maras kwabo** (proverb)
“Pass on”, the prostitute says to the penniless man’
“Wuce ni”, Area boy ya ga maras kwabo (postproverbial)
“Pass on”, the area boy says to the penniless man’

Analysis: The penniless man is of no use to the prostitute, just as the penniless man is of no use to the political tout/thug known in Hausa society as “area boy”. What both the prostitute and area boy need is money and since they cannot get any, they both say, “pass on”. These proverbs could be used on anyone who is considered insignificant.

- (20) **Ina ruwa ya ci makafi, kina ganga ya jike** (proverb)
‘While I am complaining that the drummer is drowned,
you are busy telling me that the drum is wet’
Ina an sace dan Fulani, kina ga burodinsa (postproverbial)
‘While I am complaining that the Fulani man has been
kidnapped, you are busy telling me you have found his
bread’
Ina an sace waya, kana ga recharge card (postproverbial)
‘While I am complaining that the mobile phone has been
stolen you are busy giving me the recharge card’
- (21) **Ina raba ki da kiwon kyalla, kina akuya ta haihu** (proverb)
‘While trying to prevent you from rearing a red goat
you are there telling me the female goat has birth a calf’
Ina raba ki da Buratai, kina ga ’yan Shii’a (postproverbial)
‘While I am shielding you from Buratai you are telling
me the Shi’ites are approaching’

Analysis: Everyone has individual priorities. Thus, one man’s food could be another man’s poison because what could be of importance to one person may not be to another. But still there are important issues as well as there are trivial ones. The former is considered important and need immediate attention and are discussed immediately. Thus, if a person decides to pay more attention to issues that are considered generally trivial and less important, any of these proverbs or postproverbials could be used to caution such a person or shut the person down.

- (22) **Ana kukan targade, sai ga karaya ta samu** (proverb)
 'Just when we were complaining of dislocation then suddenly a fracture was detected'

Abin nema ya samu, matar makadi ta haifi ganga (postproverbial)
 'What is sought for has been gotten for the drummer's wife has given birth to a drum'

- (23) **Ana kukan ba a koshi ba, sai ga baki sun zo** (proverb)
 'We were complaining that we were still hungry and suddenly visitors show up'

Ana kukan 'yan Boko Haram, sai ga kidnappers (postproverbial)
 'While still lamenting about the menace of Boko Haram insurgents, then the kidnappers start operating'

Analysis: Just when one is complaining about simple issues/happening, more serious ones are detected; more serious to be handled or contained. Looking at the proverbs, one can agree that a dislocation is not as serious as a fracture but before the dislocation could even be treated a fracture is detected; having Ebele Jonathan a one-time Nigerian president as life president is considered better than the Ebola disease which has no cure. One who is hungry and does not have enough to feed will no doubt feel displeased and be in a dilemma when important guests who need to be fed suddenly appear. Likewise, it appears a knotty situation to the Nigerian authorities when the menace of the Boko-Haram insurgent has not been taken care of and out of the blues, the menace of kidnapping rears its ugly head. If one finds him/herself in a very difficult situation or dilemma, one could use any of these proverbs or postproverbials.

- (24) **Samu ya fi iyawa, kuturu da zobensa** (proverb)
 'To own is better than to know how, a leper with a ring'

Samu ya fi iyawa, kurma da earphones (postproverbial)
 'To own is better than to know how, a deaf and dumb with earphones'

- (25) **Samu ya fi iyawa, hawan dokin maciji** (proverb)
 'To own is better than to know how a snake riding a horse'

Samu ya fi iyawa, kuturu da waya (postproverbial)
 'To own is better than to know how, a leper with a mobile phone'

Analysis: Surely to own something is better than to just know how to operate the thing. The owner of a thing can boast of owning that thing even if he cannot operate it. The person with the knowledge of how to operate a thing cannot boast of owning it. Whatever he/she lays his/her hand on is just temporary. Therefore, a leper possessing a ring, a deaf and dumb an earphone, a snake possessing a horse and the leper possessing a mobile phone, no doubt surpasses one who has knowledge of using the things without owning them. These proverbs are used in ironical situations and can be used to mock backbiters and negative critics of a thing/person.

(26) **Gaskiya ta fi kwabo** (proverb)
 'Truth is better than a penny (wealth)'

Gaskiya ta fi naira (postproverbial)
 'Truth is better than *naira*'

(27) **Gaskiya ta fi jakar kudi** (proverb)
 'Truth is worth more than a bag of money'

Gaskiya ta fi Ghana must go (postproverbial)
 'Truth is worth more than 'Ghana must go''

Analysis: These proverbs and postproverbials call on people to make truth a guiding principle of life no matter the situation or temptations of the material world. This is because, wealth may be exhausted but truth will forever remain.

(28) **Maras gaskiya ko cikin ruwa zai yi gumi** (proverb)
 'A liar would sweat even in freezing cold water'

Maras gaskiya ko cikin A.C zai yi gumi (postproverbial)
 'A liar would sweat even when the A.C is on'

Analysis: No matter how cold the weather, a liar would still sweat due to guilt. Both the proverb and proverbial suggest that a guilty person's action or behaviour will always give him/her away. It could also be used accordingly.

6. Conclusion

Proverbs and postproverbials deal with an integral part of the African people's consciousness especially the Hausa people who often see them as true expressions of a natural, God-designed constituent of existence. As a genre of folklore, they not only give insight into human behaviour and psychology, but also serve as reflections of the cultural values of the society. They are employed not only to entertain but are most often used as reinforcement to actions, as well as to give arguments the mantle of general appropriateness. Nothing is closer to the heart of the Hausa people and thought than their proverbs and postproverbials. More than any other Hausa tradition, they express the essence of Hausa wisdom. Hausa proverbs are variously classified, and each proverb is subdivided into the theme that best suits it. They are capable of a variety of meaning according to how and when they are used. The examples given above show that Hausa Proverbs are used in enriching the social and moral life of the people and ensuring the continuity of their linguistic culture. The examples also show that many of these postproverbials are a blend of the old and the new. Most of the expressions used are unique styles of communication which express various values according to the understanding of not just the speakers but also the hearers of the language. We believe that the best way to keep proverbs and postproverbials alive is to stick to indigenous languages so that they develop because languages are in the hands of their speakers. We conclude this paper by professing that both proverbs and postproverbials are common phenomena in Hausa culture just as in many other cultures, and it will certainly be a continuous process especially with digital media because humans today seem to be endowed with a 'manipulative imagination'. This paper proves that proverbs and postproverbials are the products of intelligent reflection, and careful study has shown that they are alive and dynamic.

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The ‘aorist-subjunctive’ in Kupto: Its aspect neutral classification

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Abstract

The aspectual position of the ‘aorist-subjunctive’ was and still is a matter of argument in Chadic languages. Some controversy theories have been established by various scientists who either classify the ‘aorist-subjunctive’ to the perfective aspect, whilst others count it to the imperfective aspect. In Kupto – a minority West-Chadic language of the Bole-Tangale group – the ‘aorist’ as well as the ‘subjunctive’ are expressed by one and the same paradigm encoding concurrently a ‘narrative’ as well as a ‘modal’ verbal form. This twofold ambiguity, i.e. ‘narration’ and ‘modality’ may be regarded as ‘neutral’ in terms of any aspectual conception saying that both assessments do not fit into one of the two contradictory aspectual dichotomies: ‘perfective’ versus ‘imperfective’. Its aspect ‘neutral’ position and its possible genesis are subject of the following paper.

Key words: West-Chadic, Bole-Tangale, Kupto, verbal system, aspect classification, aorist-subjunctive

1. Introduction

Kupto, a West-Chadic language of the southern Bole-Tangale group (cf. HOFFMANN 1971: 3; NEWMAN 1977: 4, 37) is spoken in northeastern Nigeria by about as of now 500 speakers. It displays seven main verbal paradigms, i.e. continuous or progressive, three different types of future, habitual, perfect (which displays morphologically two distinctive forms) and ‘aorist-subjunctive’. The last-mentioned paradigm always was and still is a matter of argument in Chadic, since its aspect classification became often controversially disputed. It may be counted to the imperfective aspect or to the perfective aspect according to where one may lie its significance on (cf. KLINGENHEBEN 1928/29: 241f.; JUNGRAITHMAYR 1966: 229f.; 1977: 81f.; WOLFF, 1991: 163f.; LEGER 1994: 248). In Kupto – as already encoded in its composed terminology – the ‘aorist-subjunctive’ is designed by one single paradigm and expresses a ‘narrative’ as well as a ‘modal’ form. This ambiguity doesn’t lead to any aspectual classification (although a dichotomy between a perfective and

imperfective aspect exists), saying that the ‘aorist-subjunctive’ in Kupto is a ‘neuter’ (it is a ‘neutral’) form. Its neutral, i.e. ‘non-aspectual’ status and its possible genesis may be discussed in detail in the following.

2. Models of possible aspectual categories

When considering the verbal paradigms mentioned above one may observe a fundamental opposition between two basic patterns of the verb. One set of paradigms is exclusively made up by nominal and the other by verbal forms. Verbal nouns are used in continuous/progressive, and in two future forms, i.e. future I and II, whereas all other paradigms (future III, habitual, perfect and aorist-subjunctive) are made up by verbal forms. One could now presume that a certain aspectual dichotomy is based on the opposition between the use of verbal nouns and the use of verbal forms (saying whenever verbal-nominal forms are employed we deal with the imperfective aspect and whenever verbal forms are existent we deal with the perfective aspect). Schematically it may be depicted as follows:

Verbal noun	Verbal form
continuous/progressive	future III
future I	habitual
future II	aorist-subjunctive
	perfect (I and II)

Table 1 – Aspectual dichotomy

This picture, however, may change when we take the various TAM morphemes into consideration. Here a different image may arise. TAM morphemes do appear – apart from continuous/progressive and future I and II – also in the paradigms of future III and habitual. No TAM morphemes are existent in paradigms of perfect and aorist-subjunctive. This may lead us to the conclusion: wherever and whenever TAM morphemes obligatory have to be used we deal with paradigms belonging to the imperfective aspect just in contrary to those without using TAM morphemes, i.e. perfect and aorist-subjunctive. Therefore, an aspectual dichotomy may be established on the employment of TAM morphemes saying that perfect and aorist-subjunctive – where there are none – oppose all other paradigms in terms of an aspectual classification. See the following table:

+ TAM morphemes		- TAM morphemes
continuous/progressive	à	aorist-subjunctive
future I	kù	perfect (I and II)
future II	rò	
future III	kà	
habitual	kú	

Table 2 – ± TAM morphemes

A further hint how to approach an aspectual dichotomy in Kupto may lie in the use of certain extensions - and here in particular of the altrilocal-ventive morpheme, which is the most prominent among all languages belonging to the Bole-Tangale group (cf. LEGER 1994: 222; 2014: 244). Apart from perfect, which uses the altrilocal-ventive morpheme */-(i)na/*, all other paradigms, however, operate with the extension-morpheme */-tu/* (allomorph */-ti/*). If we only restrict an aspectual classification on this feature we could presume that perfect opposes all other paradigms so that it may be perceived to be the only one representative of the perfective aspect (whilst all others progressive/continuous, future I, II and III as well as the habitual and the aorist-subjunctive are belonging to the imperfective aspect). Cf. the following table:

<i>/-tu/</i>	<i>/-(i)na/</i>
continuous/progressive	perfect (I and II)
future I	
future II	
future III	
habitual	
aorist-subjunctive	

Table 3 – Altrilocal/ventive morphemes

A further important hint for an aspectual classification may give us the so-called Intransitive Copy Pronouns (cf. LEGER & ZOCH 2011: 11f., esp. 31). These pronouns which copy number and gender onto the verb (cf. NEWMAN 1974: 16, esp. 28) do only appear in paradigms where verbal forms are employed, i.e. in future III, habitual, perfect and aorist-subjunctive. See the following table:

- intransitive copy pronouns	+ intransitive copy pronouns
continuous/progressive	future III
future I	habitual
future II	aorist-subjunctive
	perfect

Table 4 – ± intransitive copy pronouns

One may now argue that an aspectual dichotomy in Kupto is based on the appearance (say = perfective aspect) or absence (say = imperfective aspect) of ICPs. Paradigms where they can be used belong to the perfective aspect and paradigms where they can't be employed may be counted to the imperfective aspect.

But surprisingly enough they morphologically do not appear in one and the same shape. There are two distinct ICP-series which I may term */-o/* and */-a/* forms (so after the 1st person singular). */-o/* forms are used with verbal forms of future III and habitual; */-a/* forms, however, do exclusively only appear in forms of the perfect paradigm. The aorist-subjunctive, however, obligatory (!) combines the pronouns of the two sets, which can be observed by the following examples:

Set 1	
ICPs (-o set, imperfective)	
nè kà réy-nò	'I will come back'
nè kú réy-nò	'I use to come back'
Set 2	
ICPs (-a set, perfective)	
nè rèy-nà	'I have come back'
Set 3	
ICPs (ne-uter/non-aspectual) -a plus -o set	
(?àká) nè réy-nà-nò	'I have come back'

Table 5 – Aspectual sets

3. Evaluation

If we now connect all these parameters in accordance with their semantics the following aspectual picture in Kupto may arise:

(1) Continuous/progressive doubtlessly belongs to the imperfective aspect, which is clearly indicated by their semantics saying, that the action or the event is either presently ongoing or envisaged to be performed in situ. Grammatically a (verbal) noun is used with a TAM morpheme. They subject pronouns carry a high tone which substitutes the TAM morpheme.

(2) Future I is again formed with a TAM element and a verbal noun. It commonly signifies that an action or event may be carried out in 'near' future to which certain preparation might have already taken place. It often conveys the 'real' intention, the 'concrete' concept or the 'sincere' possibility to perform the envisaged endeavours. The accomplishment is somehow 'just a matter of time' and a 'particular certainty' can be assumed, which brings it close - at least in translation - to a 'future progressive'.

(3) Future II - or distant future - is built with a TAM element plus a verbal noun or - to a lesser extent - with a verbal substantive. The subject pronouns are lengthened by */-a/* and carry a high tone, an indication of imperfectivity (cf. above under (1)). Future II seems to convey two semantic components. One factor is that the action or event will be somehow performed or be expected in a time distant from now - not yet specifically known, which rationally comprises a great uncertainty and second, if something takes place then it requires a certain length of time or the action or event will last disproportionately long.

(4) Much more completed is the arrangement of future III within the aspectual categorisation, since is built by a verbal form (although possessing a TAM element and using the ventive extension morpheme */-tu/*). "Future in general" is perceived imperfective, since actions or events in a forthcoming time are usually not completed. This semantic perception, however, doesn't hold for future III in Kupto, since it belongs to the perfective aspect. Its semantics is entirely directed to the completeness of the verbal action or the envisaged state. The time when this will be is not of importance, since it can be in near or far future. Important is the certainty and finality of the action or state for itself. The definiteness is anticipated in the aspectual perspective as if the decisive event has already been reached.

(5) The habitual may be counted to the imperfective aspect, although some "semantic-cognitive" as well as grammatical features may 'prima facie' contradict its arrangement into this category. Such arguments - counting the habitual to the perfective aspect - comprise the cognition of habituality which says that "to do something habitually, one must have done it successfully

before, otherwise it will not be done any longer” (JUNGRAITHMAYR, p.c.). But there are some further striking grammatical facets which may bring the habitual close to perfectivity. These are the use of a verbal form and the employment of ICPs (of set 1), the employment of low tone subject pronouns as well as the employment of specific object pronouns (as observed in future III and perfect paradigms). But the arrangement of the habitual to the imperfective aspect lies much more in its semantically ongoing and forthcoming regularity of recurrent actions as well as grammatically in the compulsory employment of a TAM morpheme and in its altilocal-ventive formans with */-tu/* (although a verbal form is displayed.). All these parameters are – in addition with the altilocal-ventive element – proficient indications for its aspectual imperfective classification.

(6) The perfect belongs doubtlessly to the perfective aspect. It semantically expresses actions which either are completed or the resultative state has been achieved. It specifies in Kupto how the event is viewed, be it punctual or durative (this why we have perfect I and II), but typically the action has definitively come to an end. The event is viewed in its totality or as a bounded unit, saying that no specification can be perceived without its completion. Grammatically as well as syntactically the perfect is the only representative among the Kupto verbal paradigms displaying a specific altilocal-ventive extension (with */(-i)na/*), a special set of ICPs (c.f. set 2) as well as the absence of any TAM elements. It uses, however, the same low tone subject pronouns and shares the same object pronouns appearing in future III, habitual and aorist-subjunctive (i.e. in paradigms where also verbal forms are employed). The event of the verbal action is viewed totally as a “bounded unit” which doesn’t tell us much about the internal structure of that event” (VILLUPILLAI 2012: 210). Although the perfect also tends to push a narration forward of what is next, but it never has such a “vitality” like the aorist-subjunctive, since “it views each event in its complete totality” (VILLUPILLAI 2012: 211).

(7) What remains is the aspectual classification of the aorist-subjunctive. The aorist-subjunctive belongs – according to my findings and to my hypothesis – to none of these dual aspectual categories. It says that the aorist-subjunctive is ‘neutral’. It represents an aspectual neuter (‘ne-uter’) type, which therefore neither belongs to the perfective nor to the imperfective aspect category. It is the typical narration form in Kupto referring to events in an aspectual neutral way, which means that “the whole event including its course and limits is envisaged as an integral part without any specific point being highlighted”

(JOHANSON 2001: 11). The aorist-subjunctive drives the action forward and only the mere events are stated without any limiting objectives, regardless of how they came into existence and how they may end. Its main purpose intention is to narrate issues and affairs without any specifications whatsoever, except that the “event is (or was or will be) taking place” (VELLUPILLAI 2012: 210). The stretch of such equal ranking sequences (in a narration) do not look upon the completeness of the action but rather focus on the narration itself, i.e. “we want to know what happens next”. The aorist-subjunctive is therefore not perfective, since its implication is not oriented towards any definite goal or any final termination. This, however, stands in opposition to perfect as a “perfective external view” (cf. COMRIE 1976: 4) which basically is meant to change the situation as a whole and give the narration an outside “boundary”, i.e. a termination of the event, which is definite.

But the aorist-subjunctive is also not imperfective. The events are not described “with specific attention to its internal structure” (cf. JOHANSON 2001: 11) or to the “internal temporal constituency of the situation” (COMRIE 1976: 4), which says that the imperfective aspect looks back to the start or to end of the event – or to any situation lasting without any beginning or any end (cf. COMRIE 1976: 4-5). For the aorist-subjunctive the introspection (‘a view from within’) is irrelevant, since the event is neither perceived with a specific awareness to the beginning nor to the termination of the situation, and likewise the length of duration is equally not of importance. Important is the expansion of the event in which both limits may be implied, but none of them is highlighted (cf. also JOHANSON 2001:12). Within this course the events may be presented in a continuous and temporally unstructured course to advance the plot in narrative texts. The “double face” of the ‘aorist-subjunctive’ may be perceived as sharing grammatical features, which partly belong to the perfective as well as to the imperfective aspect. For the first speak the identical subject as well as object pronouns (of set 2, but also found in future III and habitual), the usage of ICPs exclusively applied in perfect paradigms (cf. the 1.pers.sgl. */-na/* form of set 2). For the second, i.e. the imperfective aspect speak the altrilocal-ventive extension */-tu/* and a presumed TAM element, i.e. a “TAM toneme” which appears after pronominal subjects (cf. Leger: forthcoming) as well as the (additional) employment of such ICPs belonging to the imperfective paradigms (as found in future III and habitual). According to the translation of the aorist-subjunctive, the usual form is the ‘imperfectum a connatu’ saying that we basically use the imperfect tempus for translating the Kupto narrative verbal forms.

4. Viewpoint at aspectual categories

The findings above justify that Kupto displays a binary aspect system (imperfective versus perfective). The aorist-subjunctive, however, doesn't belong to none of these two categories. It stands outside the system as an 'aspectless category' and can't therefore not be considered to be part within a binary aspect scheme as proposed by some Chadists (cf. GOUFFÉ 1966: 151f.; JUNGRAITHMAYR 1966: 229; WOLFF 1982: 183f, esp. 186) who want to have this paradigm arranged to the perfective aspect (although proposed as a third division for an aspectual oversimplification).

To summarise briefly the assessments above we can state that for semantic and grammatical reasons the continuous, future I and II are representatives of the imperfect aspect. The same counts for the habitual, since it semantically displays a customary action ongoing regularity in an extended period of time and grammatically expressed by using TAM elements, a characteristic feature for imperfectivity. Future III is classified to the perfective aspect. The main reason is based in its semantics, since the action is anticipatory thought as if it has already finished but also some grammatical features like the usage of ICPs may indicate its perfectivity. The perfect is 'per se' to be arranged to the perfective aspect, since it differs from imperfective aspect in terms of its semantics and grammatically by using distinct icps (of set 2) as well as displaying a specific altrilocal-ventive extension morpheme *-(i)na*.

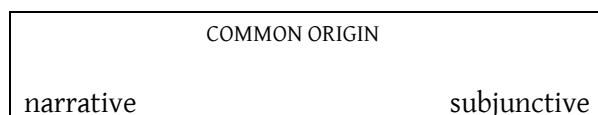
A special case is the aorist-subjunctive. Its aspectual categorisation is 'neuter', i.e. neither perfective nor imperfective. The "aorist", the first 'component', is the typical narration form which is always overemphasized to the disadvantage of its 'subjunctive part'. The latter being the "stepchild" brother has been hitherto somehow neglected. The reason may be that subjunctivity, i.e. modality can 'per se' not be aspectual classified (which can also be assumed for the imperative or hortative forms). This however may lead me to the following question:

1) Why does one and the same grammatically indistinguishable verbal form carry two semantically distinct meanings? And:

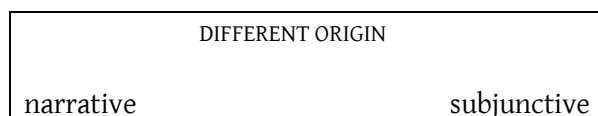
2) Was there historically a split of a formal one single paradigm leading to a narrative and a modal dichotomy? Or were there historically two different paradigms merging into one, still preserving, however, their own distinctive features?

As to the first question one could argue, that the aorist-subjunctive has historically been only 'one' paradigm, – a view which by the way may not be so

astonishing – since every narration goes along the lines of reflecting an “opinion or the attitude or a commitment of the speaker to what he says” (cf. LYONS 1977: 452; PALMER 1986: 2, 51). It means that every narration can somehow be always viewed as a fiction basically involving “the notations of possibility and necessity”, which semantically correlates very well to the ‘subjunctive’ (to be seen schematically in the following chart):



I may not follow this hypothesis, since – compared with other Chadic languages like Hausa and especially Tangale and Kwami, i.e. the closest neighbours – there are two distinct paradigms for ‘aorist’ and ‘subjunctive’, i.e. for narrative and modal forms (cf. JUNGRAITHMAYR 1991: 47f. esp.54; LEGER 1994: 238, 241).



The coincidence or better the ‘collapse’ of two distinct conjugational patterns into one in Kupto may still be proved by its ‘mixed’ morphology, i.e. by applying for example the altrilocal-ventive extension */-tu/* as used in imperfective aspect as well as by the combination of two different sets of ICPs, used in perfective and imperfective paradigms.

This issue, however, leads me to the next question: Why can ‘aorist’ and ‘subjunctive’ be represented by one and the same verbal form?

The answer is that only an ‘aspectual-neutral’ form can serve such a heterogeneous consignment. The following hypothesis may be offered, which will be defined as an ‘aspectual cascade’. It says that the ‘aorist-subjunctive’ has originally been a member of the perfective aspect (cf. JUNGRAITHMAYR 1974: 583f; WOLFF 1991:MS). The incursion of ‘new’ perfect paradigms (esp. those displayed in perfect I and II) weakened its perfective status which finally led to a complete loss of its perfectivity (although partly still remembered by the ‘perfect set of ICPs’). Finding another ‘aspectual’ domain where to move into, is principally not possible (since a hitherto perfect form can’t ‘automatically’ become or change into an imperfective one). The only solution was to switch to an

aspectual ‘neutral’ model which doesn’t belong to none of the two basic aspects (standing somehow outside of the two aspects). Now, since the aorist became neutral, the subjunctive could take the chance to use the same paradigm, since itself has no aspectual quality.

4. Conclusive remarks

Let me very briefly summarising my hypothesis of aspect within the framework of general Chadic studies: Chadic languages have always been considered as having a strict binary aspect system, saying that a verbal action is either completed or not completed. Under this ontological argument there was no way out for any other line of reasoning, which contradicts it. A problem, however, always was the arrangement of the aorist-subjunctive under this binary system. The majority of the Chadists (cf. GOUFFÉ 1966: 151f.; JUNGRAITHMAYR 1980: 5f.; WOLFF 1982: 181, esp. 187) voted for its perfectivity. Of course, this view could be accepted in a sense, since the aorist was historically once a member of the perfective domain and has therefore preserved certain characteristics. Characteristic features – like the ‘perfect ICP-forms’ as to be seen in the above cited example (**?àká**) **nè rèy-nà-nò** – still indicate its origin. The penetration of a ‘new’ perfect – which I guess with a formans **/-go/-ngo/-wo/**, etc. – found within the whole Bole-Tangale group (cf. LUKAS 1970/71: 275; FRAJZYNGIER 1989: 97-98; SCHUH 1978: 3-5; NEWMAN 1990: 109; LEGER 2009: 179f.) forced the aorist to give up its perfectivity. This is why it can now be extended by the altrilocal-ventive morpheme **/-tu/**, which is basically reserved for verbal-forms of the imperfective aspect.

To the question of how one and the same verbal form may carry two different semantics, i.e. ‘narration’ and ‘subjunctive’ it may be argued – by a comparison of neighbouring languages like Kwami and Tangale – but also Hausa – that there were originally two different paradigms which united. This “marriage”, however, could only happen on the base of a “zero-aspect”.

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Nominal classification in Ngamba (Eastern Grassfields Bamileke)

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Abstract

The nominal grammar of Ngamba, an underresearched Ghomala' variety of Bamileke Eastern Grassfields spoken in the West region of Cameroon, is characterised by the concurrency of two distinct systems of classification: a full-fledged gender system of the Eastern Grassfields Bantoid type and a newly emerging numeral classifier system. The present contribution aims at providing an analytical account of the gender system with particular reference to morphosyntactic aspects of noun class marking and agreement, basically following frameworks such as CORBETT (1991) and GÜLDEMANN & FIEDLER (2019).

Key words: gender, noun classes, nominal classification, numeral classifiers, Ngamba, Eastern Grassfields Bamileke

1. Introduction

This paper describes the system of nominal classification in Ngamba (Bamendjou dialect), an under-researched Eastern Bamileke variety of the Ghomala' cluster spoken in five towns of Western Cameroon by about 500,000 people (MEKAMGOUM 2022). While its lexical inventory has been compiled in various dictionaries (DEEH SÉGALLO 2015, 2016, SOH 2017) and also attracted scholarly attention for pragmatic aspects of its use (MEKAMGOUM 2013, 2021; MENSAH & MEKAMGOUM 2017), its verbal grammar (MEKAMGOUM 2021; MEKAMGOUM & KIEßLING 2023) and its loanwords (FOSSI & OUAFO 2012), the very basics of its nominal grammar have received rather little systematic attention apart from SOH 2008 and MEKAMGOUM & KIEßLING 2022. The present contribution seeks to set this straight by providing an overview of the Ngamba system of nominal classification according to typological standards set by CORBETT (1991) and FIEDLER & GÜLDEMANN (2019). Following this introduction, Ngamba agreement classes are defined according to various sets of agreement targets with particular reference to complexities that arise in the interaction of nouns

with quantifiers (Section 2). Section 3 describes how agreement classes pair in genders. Section 4 explores the deriflectional classes of noun forms and the way they pair across number and how they map on the agreement classes. The conclusion in Section 5 summarizes the findings.

2. Agreement classes

Eight noun classes can be identified on the basis of five sets of agreement marker series whose distribution is determined by agreement targets, i.e. modifiers within the noun phrase, as listed in Table (1).¹ Possessive pronouns agree by series A that presents the maximal set of noun class differentiations, reflecting a general trend in Eastern Grassfields Bamileke languages (HAMM 2011: 19). Agreement on numerals and the interrogative pronoun ‘how many’ cuts partially across the agreement system established on the basis of possessive concord in that nouns of plural classes 2 and 6 are re-distributed according to humanness. Agreement series C, D and E show different degrees of neutralisation with respect to noun class contrasts. Series C merges classes 1 and 3 on the one hand and classes 7 and 9 on the other hand. Series D merges both, thus reducing noun class contrasts in the singular to an opposition of class 5 vs. the rest. In series E, finally, all singular classes are lumped together in opposition to a three-way class contrast in the plural. Generally, classes 5 and 10 are only distinct by their different number values.

¹ The data have been transcribed according to the conventions of the general alphabet of Cameroonian languages (AGLC) (TADAJEU & SADEMOUO 1984). The following differences to IPA should be noted: c [tʃ], sh [ʃ], gh [ɣ], bh [β], j [dʒ], zh [ʒ], ɥ [y, ʉ], ' [ʔ]. Aspiration [h] and palatalization [j] are represented by h and y. Beside the common symbols ['] for high tone, [`] for low tone, [ˊ] and [ˋ] for contour tones rising from low to high or falling from high to low, respectively, the absence of a tone mark on vowels denotes a mid tone.

cl.	n.	A possessive pronouns	B numerals, 'how many?'	C pronominal demonstratives, 'which?'	D postnominal demonstratives, relative pronoun	E 'what, who, where'
1	SG	w - ~	wít-	w-	ø-	ø-
3		w - ~				
7		zh - ~	zhít-	zh-		
9		zh - ~				
5		ts -	tsít-	ts-		
10	PL	ts -	tsít-	ts-	ts-	ø-
2		p' -	mómá- [HUM], m-ít- / m-ín- [nHUM]	p-	p-	pà- 'who, where'
6		m' -		m-	m-	mà- 'what'

Table 1 – Agreement classes and concordial series

Noun class numbering follows the canonical Bantu system according to the Bleek-Meinhof conventions (KATAMBA 2003) and applied to the Grassfields Bantu situation of Bamileke (VOORHOEVE 1968; HYMAN et al. 1970). Noun class membership is, to a limited extent, overtly marked by nominal prefixes (NPx) in the noun itself, as discussed in Section 4. Noun classes pair for number in genders, as detailed in Section 3. In the following, the details of the agreement systems will be discussed according to agreement targets.

2.1 Possessives

The Ng̃amba pronominal system shows a complexity characteristic of the Grassfields Bantu zone (HAMM 2021; AKUMBU & KIEßLING 2024) in differentiating an inclusive and an exclusive 1st person plural from a dual pronoun with reference to 1st and 2nd person, as evident in Table 2 which presents the possessive pronominal roots deduced from their full pronominal forms.

	Singular	Dual	Plural
1	a	àghà (1+2)	ək (excl.) ø (incl.)
2	ɔ	-	ɯ
3	í	-	op

Table 2 – Pronominal possessive roots

Ngamba possessive pronouns come in two different sets, depending on their syntactic position with respect to the head noun (MEKAMGOM 2022: 71), i.e. postnominal possessives (Table 3) vs. prenominal possessives (Table 4).

	Singular classes					Plural classes		
	1 w' ~`	3 w' ~`	5 ts'	7 zh' ~`	9 zh' ~`	2 p'	6 m'	10 ts'
1SG	à	á	ts-á	á	à	p-á	m-á	ts-á
2SG	ð	ó	ts-ó	ó	ð	p-ó	m-ó	ts-ó
3SG	i	í	tsts-í	í	i	pp-í	mm-í	tsts-í
DU1+2	w-òghò	w-òghò	ts-òghò	zh-òghò	zh-òghò	p-òghò	m-òghò	ts-òghò
1PL.EXCL	w-ək	w-ək	ts-ək	zh-ək	zh-ək	p-ək	m-ək	ts-ək
1PL.INCL	w-ø	w-ø	ts-ø	zh-ø	zh-ø	p-ø	m-ø	ts-ø
2PL	w-ú	w-ú	ts-ú	zh-ú	zh-ú	p-ú	m-ú	ts-ú
3PL	w-op	w-óp	ts-óp	zh-óp	zh-op	p-óp	m-óp	ts-óp

Table 3 – Postnominal possessive pronouns

	Singular classes					Plural classes		
	1 (w')	3 (w')	5 (ts')	7 (zh')	9 (zh')	2 (p')	6 (m')	10 (ts')
1SG	w-à	w-á	ts-á	zh-á	zh-à	p-á	m-á	ts-á
2SG	w-ð	w-ó	ts-ó	zh-ó	zh-ð	p-ó	m-ó	ts-ó
3SG	ww-ì	ww-í	tsts-í	zhzh-í	zhzh-ì	pp-í	mm-í	tsts-í
DU1+2	w-òghò	w-òghò	ts-òghò	zh-òghò	zh-òghò	p-òghò	m-òghò	ts-òghò
1PL.EXCL	w-ək	w-ək	ts-ək	zh-ək	zh-ək	p-ək	m-ək	ts-ək
1PL.INCL	w-ø	w-ø	ts-ø	zh-ø	zh-ø	p-ø	m-ø	ts-ø
2PL	w-ù	w-ù	ts-ù	zh-ù	zh-ù	p-ù	m-ù	ts-ù
3PL	w-òp	w-óp	ts-óp	zh-óp	zh-òp	p-óp	m-óp	ts-óp

Table 4 – Prenominal (independent) possessive pronouns

In contrast to the pragmatically neutral postnominal possessives, the prenominal possessives are pragmatically marked in that they are used for contrastive purposes. Furthermore, they can be used independently as anaphoric possessive pronouns.

Formally, the postnominal possessive set differs from its prenominal counterpart by the reduction of agreement markers to their tonal components in the singular possessive forms of all singular classes except class 5.

The 3rd person singular possessive is exceptional in that it has a lengthening effect on the initial consonant of all agreement prefixes.

Three types of tonal interactions of noun class prefixes and pronominal roots can be observed. First, the low tone pronominal roots **əghə** (1+2 DUAL) and **ə** (1PL.INCL) retain their low tone in all concordial forms. Second, the high tone pronominal roots **í** (3SG), **ák** (1PL.EXCL), **ú** (2PL) and **óp** (3PL) have their tone lowered to mid in classes 1 and 9 of the postnominal set and to low in the pronominal set. Third, the toneless pronominal roots **a** (1SG), **o** (2SG) simply take over the tone of the agreement marker.

Table 5 illustrates the postnominal, pronominal and independent usage of the 1st person singular possessive pronoun for all classes.

	Postnominal (neutral): 'my X'	Prenominal (contrastive): 'MY own X (not yours)'	Independent: 'this is mine.'
1 'male teen'	mé-mbàṅà à	w-ǎ mé-mbàṅà	w-ǎa w-à
2 'male teens'	pó-mbàṅà p-á	p-â pó-mbàṅà	p-ǎa p-á
3 'pot'	mbàṅà á	w-â mbàṅà	w-ǎa w-á
5 'name'	nə-tsú(n) ts-á	ts-â nə-tsú	ts-ǎa ts-á
6 'words'	mà-ghà m-á	m-â mà-ghà	m-ǎa m-á
7 'thing'	zhwô á	zh-â zhwó	zh-ǎa zh-á
9 'house'	ndœ à	zh-ǎ ndœ	zh-ǎa zh-à
10 'chickens'	ngœp ts-á	ts-â ngœp	ts-ǎa ts-á

Table 5 – Possessive pronoun forms of 1st person singular for all classes²

2.2 Demonstratives

Ngəmba distinguishes three deictic categories in demonstratives, namely the speaker-proximal **a** ('this here near to me'), the hearer-proximal **aa/o** ('that there near to you') and the distal **e** ('that over there away from both of us'), as shown in Table 6. As with the possessives, demonstratives can be postnominal or pronominal and independent. In postnominal position, demonstratives agree according to series D of Table 1 above, i.e. agreement in all singular classes except class 5 is reduced to zero. In contrast, pronominal and independent demonstratives take concordial series B. The crucial difference is

² Some tonal phenomena in the pronominal and independent possessives are not well understood, e.g. the contour tone polarity of rising tone formation in the low tone classes 1 and 9 of the pronominal possessives vs. falling tone formation in the remainder, i.e. the high tone classes, and the general rising tone in the independent possessive pronouns.

in the singular agreement classes 1, 3, 7 and 9 that retain a contrast of concords **w-** for classes 1 and 3 vs. **zh-** for classes 7 and 9.

	Class	Postnominal/independent				Prenominal		
		speaker- proximal: ǎ	hearer- proximal: ɔ / áa		distal: ě	speaker- proximal: à	hearer- proximal: ò	distal: è
SG	1, 3	ǎ	ɔ	áa	ě	w-à	w-ò	w-è
	7, 9					zh-à	zh-ò	zh-è
	5	ts-ǎ	ts-ɔ	ts-áa	tsě	ts-à	ts-ò	ts-è
PL	10	ts-ǎ	ts-ɔ	ts-áa	tsě	ts-à	ts-ò	ts-è
PL	2	p-ǎ	p-ɔ	p-áa	pě	p-à	p-ò	p-è
	6	m-ǎ	m-ɔ	m-áa	mě	m-à	m-ò	m-è

Table 6 – Demonstratives

All three demonstratives are low-toned in prenominal usage, as listed in Table 6 above and exemplified for the speaker-proximal set in Table 7 below. With the postnominal and independent usages, illustrated in the last column of Table 5 above, tonal contrasts surface, i.e. the speaker-proximal and the distal demonstratives bear a rising tone, while the hearer-proximal demonstrative carries mid tone in its form *ɔ* and a contour tone falling from high to mid in its form *áa*.

	Prenominal (contrastive): 'THIS X close to speaker (not that one)'
1 'male teen'	w-à mé-mbàǵà
2 'male teens'	p-à pó-mbàǵà
3 'pot'	w-à mbàǵá
5 'name'	ts-à nǝ-tsú
6 'words'	m-à mǝ-ghà
7 'thing'	zh-à zhwó
9 'house'	zh-à ndóé
10 'chickens'	ts-à ɲǝcép

Table 7 – Prenominal speaker-proximal demonstratives for all classes

2.2.1 Interrogative *é* 'which'

The interrogative adjective *é* 'which?' is restricted to prenominal position and agrees according to series C, as shown in Table 8.

Number	Class	é
SG	1, 3	w-é
	7, 9	zh-é
	5	ts-é
PL	10	ts-é
	2	p-é
	6	m-é

Table 8 – Interrogative adjective é ‘which?’

Table 9 illustrates the use of the interrogative adjective é ‘which?’ with different concordial prefixes.³

	Prenominal interrogative adjective é ‘which?’
1 ‘male teen’	w-é mé-mbàŋǎ
2 ‘male teens’	p-é pó-mbàŋǎ
3 ‘pot’	w-é mbàŋâ
5 ‘name’	ts-é nǝ-tsû
6 ‘words’	m-é mǝ-ghǎ
7 ‘thing’	zh-é zhwô
9 ‘house’	zh-é ndôe
10 ‘chickens’	ts-é ngôep

Table 9 – Interrogative adjective é ‘which?’ for all classes

2.2.2 Relative clause marker

Ngəmba relative clauses are formed by combination of the low-toned relative pronoun è and a terminal definite marker lá in a circumclitic manner. The relative pronoun agrees with the noun class of the relativized head noun according to series D, as shown in Table 10, i.e. all singular class concords except class 5 are reduced to zero.

³ Terminal contour tone effects are due to lexical tones interacting with the question intonation.

Number	Class	Relative pronoun
SG	1, 3, 7, 9	è
	5	ts-è
PL	10	ts-è
	2	p-è
	6	m-è

Table 10 – Relative pronoun è

Examples (1a-h) illustrate the use of the relative pronoun è with different concordial prefixes.

- (1) a. **mé-mbàṅà Ø-èè sùʔú lá**
 MÉ-1.male.teen Ø-REL.3SG come DEF
 ‘The male teen who came.’
- b. **pó-mbàṅà p-èè sùʔú lá**
 PÓ-2.male.teen 2-REL.3SG come DEF
 ‘The male teens who came.’
- c. **Ø-mbàṅá Ø-èè sě lá**
 Ø-3.pot Ø-REL.3SG burn DEF
 ‘The pot that broke.’
- d. **nə-tsú(n) ts-èè ttš lá**
 NƏ-5.name 5-REL.3SG call DEF
 ‘The name that s/he called.’
- e. **mə-ghà m-èè ghă lá**
 MƏ-6.word 6-REL.3SG say DEF
 ‘The words that s/he said.’
- f. **Ø-zhwó Ø-èè ppĩ lá**
 Ø-7.word Ø-REL.3SG get.lost DEF
 ‘The thing that got lost.’
- g. **Ø-ndóe Ø-èè wwă lá**
 Ø-9.house Ø-REL.3SG collapse def
 ‘The house that collapsed.’
- h. **Ø-ṅgóep ts-èè ppĩ-cə lá**
 Ø-10.chicken 10-REL.3SG get.lost-PL DEF
 ‘The chickens that got lost.’

2.2.3 Interrogative pronouns **wó** ‘who’ and **kə** ‘what’

Basic interrogative pronouns **kə** ‘what’ (2a) and **wó** ‘who’ (2b) are inflected for number. While the singulars remain unmarked, the plural forms reflect a distinction for human referents indicated by class 2 concord **pə-** prefixed to **wó** ‘who’ (3b) vs. non-human referents indicated by class 6 concord **mə-** prefixed to **kə** ‘what’ (3a).

- (2) a. **zh-ě** **ngə** **kə**
 7-DIS.LOC.COP QT what
 ‘What is that over there?’
- b. **w-ě** **ngə** **wó**
 1-DIS.LOC.COP QT who
 ‘Who is that over there?’
- (3) a. **m-ě** **ngə** **mə-kə**
 6-DIS.LOC.COP QT 6-what
 ‘What are those things over there?’
- b. **p-ě** **ngə** **pə-wó**
 2-DIS.LOC.COP QT 2-who
 ‘Who are those people over there?’

2.2.4 Numerals and interrogative quantifier **súʔú** ‘what number of?’

Numerals from one to five and the interrogative quantifier **súʔú** ‘what number of?’ agree with their head noun by series B of Table 1 above. Agreement series B differs in two major ways from all other concordial sets. On the formal level, it adds a component **ít/iN**, as identified and exemplified in Table 11 below. On the content level, it installs a humanness-based assignment system that partially cuts across the groupings established by the other agreement series. In more concrete terms, plural nouns of class 6 are realigned according to humanness. Since this agreement series has no distinct class 2 concord, human nouns of class 2 join the few human nouns of class 6 in taking the class 6 quantifier concord **mə-**, whereas non-human nouns of class 2 join non-human nouns of class 6 in taking the class 6 concord **mín-**.

	Class	1, 9	3, 7	5
SG	Prefix	w-ít-	zh-ít-	ts-ít-
	‘how many’	wít-súʔú	zhí-tsúʔú	tsít-súʔú
	‘one’	wít-mòʔó	zhít-mòʔó	tsít-mòʔó
	‘two’	wít-ppa	zhít-ppa	tsít-ppa
	‘three’	wít-tét	zhít-tét	tsít-tét
	‘four’	wít-nókkhwà	zhít-nókkhwà	tsít-nókkhwà
	‘five’	wít-tè	zhít-tè	tsít-tè
	Class	10	2/6 (human)	2/6 (non-human)
PL	Prefix	ts-ít-	mó-	m-ít- / m-ín- ⁴
	‘how many’	tsít-súʔú	mó-súʔú	mín-súʔú
	‘one’	-	-	-
	‘two’	tsít-ppa	mó-ppa	mím-ppa
	‘three’	tsít-tét	mó-tét	mín-tét
	‘four’	tsít-nókkhwà	Ø-nókkhwà	mít-nókkhwà
	‘five’	tsít-tè	mó-tè	mín-tè

Table 11 – Agreement series for numerals and **súʔú** ‘how many’

The question word **súʔú** and numerals from one to five are instantiated with two class 6 nouns, one animal (4) and one inanimate (5) and a class 10 noun (6).

(4) **nà** (6, animal)

a. **mè-nà m-ó mín-súʔú**

Mè-animal 6-2SG.POSS 6NHUM-what.number.of
 ‘What number of animals do you have?’ (Question)

b. **wóp mín-ppa**

3PL 6NHUM.two
 ‘They are two.’ (Answer)

⁴ The basic form of the non-human agreement marker seems to be **mín-**. Its final nasal undergoes homorganic assimilation in combination with non-nasal consonants, as in the case of **ppá** ‘two’, and dissimilation yielding **mít-** in combination with a following nasal consonant, as in the case of **nókkhwà** ‘four’.

(5) **pàʔà** (6 non-human)

- a. **mə-pàʔà m-á mín-súʔú mmyǽ**
 mə-building 6-1SG.POSS 6NHUM-what.number.of finish.P1.QINT
 ‘What number of buildings of mine are completed?’ (Question)
- b. **mə-pàʔà mím-ppa**
 mə-building 6NHUM-two
 ‘Two buildings.’ (Answer)

(6) **ŋgǽp** (10, animal)

- a. **ø-ŋgǽp tsít-súʔú tsəghó**
 ø-chicken 10-what.number.of survive.P1.QINT
 ‘What number of chickens survived’ (Question)
- b. **ø-ŋgǽp tsít-ppa**
 ø-chicken 10-two
 ‘Two chickens.’ (Answer)

While most Ngəmba nouns are specified for number by a deriflectional system of prefix alternation, as described in Section 4, the number distinction seems to be in a process of gradually fading out. This is attested by singular forms of non-human such as **pàʔà** (7/6) ‘building’ that have acquired a certain degree of referential vagueness in that they can be applied in contexts of multiple reference such as (7a), in free alternation with their corresponding plural forms, e.g. **mə-pàʔà** (7b). Referential vagueness such as this does not apply to nouns for humans, though, i.e. nouns such as **mé** (1/2) ‘child’ require the plural form **pó** in contexts of multiple reference (8a) and cannot be replaced by their corresponding singulars (8b).

(7) **pàʔà** (7/6) ‘building’

- a. **á kwut pàʔà zhít-tét**
 S3.SG tie 7.building 7-three
 ‘S/he has built three houses.’
- b. **á kwut mə-pàʔà mín-tét**
 S3.SG tie 6-building 6NHUM-three
 ‘S/he has built three houses.’

(8) **mé** (1/2) ‘child’

- a. **á wě pó mé-ppa**
 S3.SG have 2.child 6HUM-two
 ‘S/he has two children.’
- b. **á wě *mé *wít-ppa**
 S3.SG have 1.child 1-two
 ‘S/he has two children.’

Beside nouns that can be combined directly with numerals or the interrogative **sú?ú** ‘how many’, there is a sizable group of nouns in Ngəmba that require an additional classifier item, as exemplified in (9). When it comes to counting certain items such as **mə-sǒŋ** ‘teeth’, it is not enough to simply add a numeral such as **ppá** ‘two’, but it must be accompanied by a sortal classifier which has to be **njaŋ** in this case – that classifies the enumerated noun for salient haptic properties, i.e. as oblong and rigid in shape.

(9) Numeral classifier **njaŋ**

- mə-sǒŋ mé njáŋ ppá wwù**
 6-teeth 1.child CLF<STICK two fall
 ‘Two of the child’s teeth have fallen out.’

Remarkably, sortal classifiers such as **njaŋ** apply to nouns of high countability, “dividing the inventory of count nouns into semantic classes, each of which is associated with a different classifier” (GIL 2005: 226). More remarkably still, in these classifier constructions, numeral agreement according to quantifier pattern B is suspended, i.e. the numeral **ppá** ‘two’ in (9) neither takes the numeral agreement prefix **mín-** for non-human plurals of class 6, as for **mə-sǒŋ** ‘teeth’ or **mə-njáŋ** ‘sticks’, nor does it take the agreement prefix **wít-** for **njáŋ** (9/6) ‘stick’. Rather, the numeral classifier seems to be on its way of slipping into the role of numeral agreement, instantiating a development by which the inherited Ngəmba noun class system is partially undermined and replaced by an incipient classifier construction for nominal modification by numerals.

Most, but not all, Ngəmba classifiers are etymologically transparent, since they derive – in cognitively motivated ways – from coexistent nouns, as summarized in Table 12. Thus, the item **njaŋ** used for classifier function in (9) derives from the noun **njáŋ** (9/6) ‘stick’.

Classifier (source form)	(Source) meanings of classifier items
mbaŋ (3/6) ‘kernel’	small roundish objects: groundnut, bean, corn, rice, taro, palmnut, macabo, African plum, person [...]
ndóŋ (9/6) ‘horn, whistle’	oblong fruits and tubers: sweet yellow yam, African plum, okra, groundnut pod, [...] oblong containers like ampoules and small flacons for medicinal products
njáŋ (9/6) ‘stick, string’	longish objects: wood, broom, tooth, hair, syringe (injected with fluid), grass [...]
ŋgòem (9/6) ‘grain’	smallish grainy things with curvy outlines: nuts, pepper, bean, corn, fish, bee, cricket, mosquito, worm, lice, ant, ticks, weevil, fly [...]
păp (7/6) ‘stain’	flat objects: leaf, plot of land, textile, iron sheet, plank
tă (7/6) ‘well, borehole’	sizable roundish objects: avocado, orange, pineapple, coconut, papaya, mango, onion, tomato [...]
tthwó (7/6) ‘head’	sizable roundish objects: cabbage, pineapple, papaya, faeces, soil, salt, stone
ŋgút (9/6)	offshoot-like object or splash of liquid: mushroom, splosh of water [...]
nò? (1/6)	objects with a non-straight buckled shape: banana, plantain, sweet potato, cassava, worm
ntè (9/6)	long flexible string-like objects: thread, liana, cable [...]
tóem (7/6)	sizable roundish solid tubers: macabo, taro, Irish potato
mbaŋ (3/6) ‘kernel’	small roundish objects: groundnut, bean, corn, rice, taro, palmnut, macabo, African plum, person [...]

Table 12 – Ngəmba sortal numeral classifiers

In addition to the sortal numeral classifiers listed in Table 12 above, Ngəmba comprises of more than fifteen mensural classifiers (MEKAMGOUM & KIEßLING 2022).

3. Gender

Ngəmba agreement classes pair in nine genders in total, i.e. 1/2, 1/6, 1/10, 3/6, 5/6, 5/10, 7/6, 7/10, 9/6, as listed in figure 1. Of these, six are major genders (marked by bold lines in figure 1) and three are inquorate or minor genders. All classes except 2 and 10 form single class genders accommodating transnumeral nouns, as indicated by encircling. A small number of nouns allow for alternative plurals, e.g. **fōk** (1/6~10) ‘cowife’.

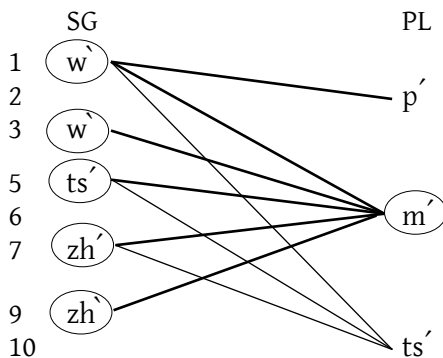


Figure 1 – Ngamba gender system (possessive concord)

Gender 1/2 accommodates mostly nouns for humans as listed in Table 13. However, not all designations for humans are assigned to this gender, e.g. **fók** (1/10) ‘cowife’. Apart from nouns for humans, it also accommodates all nouns that originate in compounds with **mé / pó** (1/2) ‘child’, irrespective of whether the referent is human or animate non-human, and inanimates.

Singular	Plural	Gloss
mé	pó	‘child’
ɲè	pò	‘person’
fók	mə-fók	‘cowife’
mɛ-ɲgɔ́p	pó-ɲgɔ́p	‘chick’
má-sáɲ	pó-má-sáɲ	‘bird’
khúp	mə-khúp	‘fingernail’

Table 13 – Gender 1/2

Gender 1/6 is a major gender that includes nouns for animates and inanimates, as shown in Table 14.

Singular	Plural	Gloss
tóttá	má-tóttá	‘ant’
(mà-)ncchè	mà-(mà)ncchè	‘road, way’
nə-zhìn	mà-zhìn	‘way of walking’
kàk	mà-kàk	‘type of basket’
pəɲgrússi	mə-pəɲgrússi	‘bolt’
kókhúp	mə-kókhúp	‘chest’

Table 14 – Gender 1/6

Gender 1/10 is a minor gender which accommodates animates exclusively, as shown in Table 15.

Singular	Plural	Gloss
mə-mbbvə	mbbvó	‘dog’
mə-ŋgàp	ŋgáp	‘chicken’
mə-mpphyə	mpphyé	‘goat’
fók	nə-fók	‘cowife’

Table 15 – Gender 1/10

Gender 3/6 is a major gender that includes nouns for inanimates, as shown in Table 16.

Singular	Plural	Gloss
mbàŋá	mə-mbàŋá	‘pot’
ssó	mə-ssó	‘face’
mók	mə-mók	‘fire’
sshyə	mə-sshyə	‘water’
kwëndə	mə-kwëndə	‘bed’
mbëndé	mə-mbëndé	‘wall’
ŋgwòʔə	mə-ŋgwòʔə	‘grinding stone’

Table 16 – Gender 3/6

Gender 5/6 is a major gender that accommodates miscellaneous nouns, as shown in Table 17.

Singular	Plural	Gloss
nə-tsák	mə-nák	‘eye’
nə-hák	mə-hák	‘twin’
nə-ghà	mə-ghà	‘word, language’
nə-tsě	mə-tsě	‘foreground’
nə-lan	mə-lan	‘type of aloe vera’

Table 17 – Gender 5/6

Gender 5/10 is minor with only one single member identified so far, i.e. **nə-ppfít** (sg) / **pfá-ppfít** (pl) ‘cooking tripod’.

Gender 7/6 is a major gender that includes all types of inanimates, as shown in Table 18.

Singular	Plural	Gloss
cchóé	mə-cchóé	‘tree’
tthwó	mə-tthwó	‘head’
lón	mə-lón	‘non sweet yellow and hairy yam’
se	mə-se	‘market’
pəlán	mə-pəlán	‘plank’

Table 18 – Gender 7/6

Gender 7/10 is minor with only two nouns, i.e. **fà?** ‘work’ and **zhwó** (sg) / (**mə**)-**tsó** (pl) ‘thing’.

Gender 9/6 is a major gender with miscellaneous content, as shown in Table 19.

Singular	Plural	Gloss
nét	mə-nét	‘body’
ndóé	mə-ndóé	‘house’
ntú?	mə-ntú?	‘cup’
nnyóé	mə-nnyóé	‘machete’
mbəlàn	mə-mbəlàn	‘bed cover’
njâ	mə-njâ	‘axe’

Table 19: Gender 9/6

Table 20 below lists the single-class genders 1, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 9 that accommodate nouns for entities viewed as uncountable so that there is no formal distinction between singular and plural. They are grouped according to semantic domains such as liquids, botanical items, insects, natural environment and meteorological phenomena and abstract concepts.

	Liquids	Botanical items	Insects	Natural environment	Abstract concepts
1		sók ‘pepper’, mbəzhán ‘groundnuts’, sóssú ‘eggplant’		fəfət ‘wind’	
3	ɲwá? ‘honey’, ppfwu ‘type of slimy sauce’	nchwò ‘nuts (sp.)’			ntti ‘hunger’
5	nəkkhí ‘local’	nətò ‘palm nut’,		nəhàn ‘sky’	nəkhít

	vinegar'	nəlɔʔ 'sweet hairy yellow yam'		'behaviour', nəfɔ 'nobility/royalt y', nəkàŋ 'magic'
6	məlùʔ 'wine', mənét 'oil', məcchœ 'blood', məttí 'saliva'	məsàŋá 'corn flower', məkwá 'rice/beans'		məkùʔ 'respect, honor'
7	kùkúlùʔ 'pap', tsɛʔnə 'sweat', ffyœ 'pus'	tso 'African plum', pé 'taro', ghəghàŋ 'okra'	ŋwáʔ 'bees', llhó 'magnet ants', ŋgwəʔə 'soil, earth', 'termites'	kwəŋə '(mutual) love', tsɛ 'fate', ŋgwá 'gossip', cchó 'famine'
9	náʔ 'sauce'	ŋjəʔ 'pumpkin seeds', ŋjap 'vegetable'	nchut 'lice'	ndiʔ 'moment', pə 'hatred', ndò 'curse'

Table 20 – Content of single-class genders

4. Noun forms and deriflectional classes

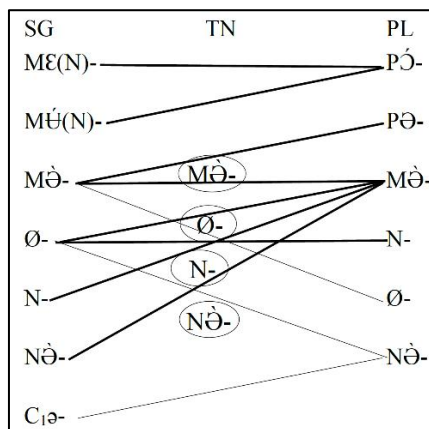
Apart from their assignment to agreement classes and genders, as discussed in Sections 2 and 3 above, Ngəmba nouns fall into nine “deriflectional” classes in the sense of FIEDLER & GÜLDEMANN (2019: 99). These classes are based on the noun forms as defined by their adnominal prefixes (NPX), listed in column 3 of Table 21 below and exemplified by a selection of nouns in column 4.

Class	independent possessives	NPX	Examples
1	w-à	Ø- N- ME(N)- MÚ(N)- Mə- Nə-	sók 'pepper', tét 'father' m-é 'child', ŋ-è 'person', n-dúm 'male', ŋ-gù 'guest' mén-dù 'adult', mə-ŋgœp 'chick' mú-mmà 'sibling', mám-pùʔ 'knife' mə-ŋkkhú 'kid', mə-ŋgœp 'chicken' nə-zhìn 'way of walking'
2	p-á	Pə/Pó- Mə-	pə-ŋkkhú 'kids', pó-mámma 'siblings' mə-ghù 'guests', mə-fɔ 'chiefs'
3	w-á	Ø-	ssó 'face', ŋwáʔ 'honey'

5	ts-á	Nè-	nə-səŋ ‘tooth’, nə-tǝ ‘palm nut’
6	m-á	Mè-	mə-səŋ ‘teeth’, mə-tǝttá ‘ants’, mə-lù? ‘wine’
		N/Ø	m-bbó ‘hands’, m-bum ‘eggs’, ŋgwán ‘salt’
7	zh/y-á	Ø-	tthwó ‘head’, ŋwá? ‘bees’, ŋgəsán ‘corn’
9	zh/y-à	Ø-	ntú? ‘cup’, ná? ‘sauce’
10	ts-á	Ø/(Mè)-	ŋgép ‘chickens’, mbbvó ‘dogs’, mpphycé ‘goats’, (mə-)tsó ‘things’
		Nè-	nə-fók ‘co-wives’
		C ₁ ə-	pfá-pfít ‘cooking tripods’

Table 21 – Adnominal noun class prefixes

Figure 2 below shows how these deriflectional classes pair across number in a crisscrossed fashion. One of the reasons of this crisscrossing is the comparatively high amount of number-unspecific forms. Of the total of nine noun form types established by adnominal prefixes, four are number-unspecific, i.e. **mə-**, **nə-**, **N-** and zero, as can be seen in figure 2 below from the fact that they occur to both sides of the number divide and in transnumeral nouns. The remaining five noun form types are number-specific in the sense that they are restricted to either singular, i.e. **mɛ(n)-** and **mú(n)-**, or plural, i.e. **pó-**, **pə-** and **C₁ə-**.

Figure 2 – Deriflectional class pairings⁵

⁵ Slim lines indicate minor deriflectional pairings, e.g. the pair **Ø-/Nè-** includes only one member, i.e. **fók** (1/10) ‘co-wife’, and **Mè-/Ø-** includes three nouns for domestic animals, i.e. **mə-ŋgép** (1/10) ‘chicken’, **mə-mpphycé** (1/10) ‘goat’ and **mə-mbbvó** (1/10) ‘dog’.

From the mapping of noun forms on agreement classes in figure 3 below we can read more reasons for the crisscrossing: (a) the high variability of noun forms assigned to agreement class 1, probably reflecting different stages of reduction of the item **mé** (1/2) ‘child’ as first component in compounds; (b) the wide diffusion of the zero marker across different agreement classes, reflecting a process of adnominal noun class prefix loss, commonly observed in Eastern Grassfields (HYMAN et al. 1970).

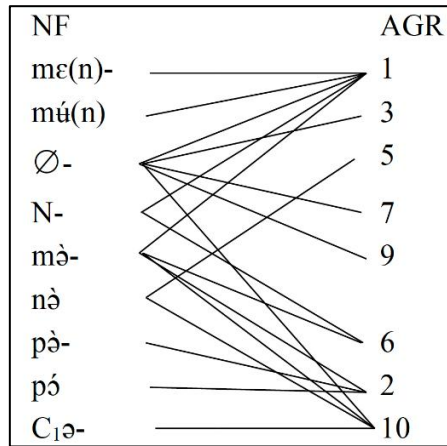


Figure 3 – Mapping of noun forms on agreement classes

In consequence, it is hardly possible in Ngəmba to determine a noun's agreement class on the basis of its form, since various adnominal prefixes reoccur across more than one agreement class, e.g. **mà-** (1, 2, 6, 10), **nə** (1, 5, 10) and zero (1, 3, 7, 9, 10).

5. Conclusion

The Ngəmba gender system operates eight noun classes that pair across number to form nine genders. In accordance with a general trend in Eastern Grassfields, its full array of noun class contrasts unfolds in the pronominal possessives only, all other syntactic targets showing agreement series with different degrees of reduction. The interaction (of the gender system) with quantification reveals two innovative trends: first, numerals from one to five and the interrogative

quantifier **súʔá** ‘what number of?’ require a divergent agreement system that is based on humanness, partially cutting across the groupings established by the pronominal possessive agreement series. Second, a sizable subgroup of Ngəmba nouns do not index their noun class directly on the numeral via the appropriate concordial marker. Instead they rather require a numeral classifier that categorizes the counted items for their shape and texture (saliently one-dimensional long and rigid vs. two-dimensional flat shape vs. three-dimensional globular), their partition (morsel vs. lump vs. slice) and their arrangement or aggregation (pile vs. bunch vs. tuft), as elaborated in more detail in MEKAMGOM & KIEßLING (2022). Remarkably, the numeral classifier construction lacks the concordial prefix in the numeral that characterizes the corresponding plain modifier construction, presenting the image of a complementary distribution of the concordial prefix for the numeral and the numeral classifier. Thus, the numeral classifier seems to be on its way of slipping into the role of the numeral concord, instantiating a development by which the inherited Ngəmba noun class system is partially undermined and replaced by an incipient classifier construction for nominal modification by numerals.

Abbreviations

AGR agreement class, CLF classifier, DIS distal demonstrative, DU1+2 dual 1st person inclusive pronoun, EXCL exclusive, HUM human (agreement), NHUM non-human (agreement), INCL inclusive, H high tone, L low tone, NF noun form, NH hearer-proximal demonstrative, NPX adnominal noun (class) prefix, PL plural, POSS possessive, PROX speaker-proximal demonstrative, QINT question intonation, SG singular, SM subject marker, TN transnumeral
Numbers 1 to 10 refer to agreement classes according to the Bantu canon.

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The gender system of Ñkòròò (Kìrikà)

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Abstract

This paper describes how linguistic gender is employed in the categorization of nouns in Ñkòròò, an Ijoid language belonging to the Niger-Congo phylum. The gender system is based on the semantic properties of sex and humanness and is conflated with number. There are three genders based on sex – feminine, masculine and neuter as reflected in the third person singular pronouns and singular proximal demonstratives, and two genders based on humanness – human and non-human as reflected in the plural proximal and distal demonstratives. The agreement domain is within the noun phrase, between the noun and its determiners. Agreement of targets with a nominal trigger is determined by the semantic properties of the noun. There is a class of nominals that occurs with nouns to express the notions of sex, humanness and number. These nominals are not gender markers but point to a deriflection system. Although gender is well attested in Ijoid, further work has not been done in line with current research within the Niger-Congo phylum. This study intends to bridge that gap.

Key words: Ñkòròò, Ijoid, gender, nominal classification, deriflection semantics

1. Introduction

Nominal classification systems refer to the ways nouns are categorized in languages based on some typological feature(s). According to AIKHENVALD (2016), most languages have nominal classification devices in their grammar that are based on semantic criteria. Nominal classification can be defined as “a grammatical device that groups a given language’s nouns into semantic and/or morphological groups. These groups are morphosyntactically marked either by classifiers or gender/noun class markers” (PASSER 2016: 1). Gender is thus a nominal classification device.

Etymologically, the term ‘gender’ is derived from Latin ‘genus’ meaning ‘kind’ or ‘sort’. Gender is a multifaceted notion that means different things to different people in different disciplines (AIKHENVALD 2016). Generally, gender can be distinguished in terms of natural or biological gender and grammatical

gender. Natural or biological gender refers to items that relate to the sex of entities in the real world, for instance, masculine, feminine and neuter. Grammatical gender refers to the grammatical relationships between words in a sentence not on the basis of sex but on some other semantic notion. AIKHENVALD (2016) identifies three types of gender; linguistic gender, natural gender and social gender. In this work, we are interested in linguistic gender which can be described as a nominal classification device by which nouns are categorized based on their behavior with associated words as reflected in their forms (HOCKETT 1958, CORBETT 1991, AIKHENVALD 2016, PASSER 2016). In other words, gender is not always reflected in the form of the noun itself, but it may influence the form of other words that associate with it.

Gender is a morphosyntactic feature. The gender of a noun must be marked on at least one element other than itself. This implies that there must be agreement between the noun (which is the controller or trigger) and the associated word (which is the target). Agreement is a necessary condition in the identification of gender systems. Gender systems operate with a semantic core, typically based on the conceptual features of sex, animacy or humanness. According to KRAMER (2020: 56), "there are correlations between linguistic properties and genders in every language with gender". She further states that many Niger-Congo languages assign gender using humanness.

In terms of typology, CORBETT (1991) identifies two types of gender systems; formal and semantic gender systems. Gender assignment in formal gender systems is based on morphological and/or phonological features while in semantic gender systems, nouns are assigned gender according to semantic features. PAYNE (1998: 161) classifies semantic gender systems into lexical, referential and cognitive where gender depends on the lexical meaning of the noun, on the features of the noun's intended referent and on the speaker's interpretation of the intended referent respectively. Furthermore, PAYNE (1998: 163) lists the common features in semantic gender systems as animate versus inanimate, human versus non-human, rational versus non-rational, male versus female, male versus other, female versus other, strong versus weak, and augmentative versus diminutive.

The objectives of this paper are to identify the type of gender system Nkɔrɔɔ operates, to describe the linguistic properties or semantic features by which the gender of nouns is categorized and to show how this classification works in the language.

2. The Nkɔ̀rɔ̀ people and their language

Nkɔ̀rɔ̀ is an Eastern Ijoid language that belongs to the Ijoid family of the Niger-Congo phylum. It is spoken in Opobo/Nkɔ̀rɔ̀ local government area of Rivers state, Nigeria, West Africa and is coordinate with the mutually intelligible dialect cluster of Ibañi, Kalabari and Kiriķe (JENEWARI 1989, WILLIAMSON & BLENCH 2000). The Nkɔ̀rɔ̀ people refer to themselves and their language as Kirika, named after their forefather who led the migratory journeys to their present site. However, in the official records, both the people and the language are called Nkɔ̀rɔ̀. At a participatory orthography workshop organized in 2017, the people decided that they would want the name 'Kirika' recognized as the name of their language, while the name 'Nkɔ̀rɔ̀' be retained as the name of the people. However, this decision has not yet been implemented in the official records as at the time of writing and so the term 'Nkɔ̀rɔ̀' is used here to refer to both the language and its people.

The sound system of Nkɔ̀rɔ̀ consists of seven vowels /i e ε a ɔ o u/ (HARRY 1987, OBIKUDO 2008, 2013) and twenty-six consonants consisting of four nasals /m n ɲ ŋ/, ten plosives /p b t d k g kp gb kʷ gʷ/, one implosive /ɓ/, one affricate /dʒ/, six fricatives /f v s z ɣ h/, three central approximants /r j w/ and one lateral approximant /l/ (OBIKUDO 2013). Proto-Ijoid has a nine vowel system /i ɪ e ε a ɔ o u/ written orthographically as i ɪ e ɛ a ɔ o u and u respectively. The seven vowel system in Nkɔ̀rɔ̀ is as a result of vowel mergers that have reduced the vowels from nine (OBIKUDO 2008). Nkɔ̀rɔ̀ operates a two tone level system consisting of low [ˀ] and high [ˀ] tones plus a downstepped high [ˀ̌]. In Ijoid orthography, the low tone is left unmarked, high tone is marked with an acute accent (á) while the downstepped high tone is marked with a macron (ā). In the Nkɔ̀rɔ̀ data presented in this work, all tones are marked phonetically and all sounds transcribed. Examples from other Ijoid languages are presented as cited from the authors.

3. An overview of the Ijoid gender system

The Ijoid family belongs to the Niger-Congo phylum. Among the languages found within the Niger-Congo phylum, the Ijoid family is quite distinct. Some of its distinguishing features include SOV word order, postpositions, head-last noun phrases and a gender system that is reflected in its determiners and distinguishes feminine human from masculine and sometimes masculine from

neuter (WILLIAMSON & BLENCH 2000). A review of available literature shows that Ijoid operates a semantic gender system. Gender assignment is based on the meaning of the noun and not on its form. Ijoid gender is marked morphologically and expressed in its determiners. Gender agreement is thus between the noun and its determiners, namely pronouns, articles and demonstratives. The semantic core of this system is based mainly on sex and humanness. Sex-based gender is the commonest type and all Ijoid dialects distinguish between feminine, masculine and neuter in the third person singular pronoun. In the following subsections, we shall examine how gender is expressed in five Ijoid dialects as seen in the literature.

3.1 The *Iḡanị* gender system (Eastern Ijoid, Rivers state, Nigeria)

Iḡanị employs a sex-based pronominal gender system as reflected in the third person singular personal, possessive and reflexive pronouns, thus exhibiting “anaphoric gender agreement” (AIKHENVALD 2016:14). Examples are cited from BENAMAISIA (1997).

Personal	Possessive	Reflexive	Gloss
árì, á	ára	á bú gbòrù, á b́aránā	3 rd person singular feminine pronoun
òrì, ò/ò	òyè	ò bú gbòrù, ò b́aránā	3 rd person singular masculine pronoun
ànì	ànì	ànì bú	3 rd person singular neuter pronoun

Table 1 – Sex-based gender in *Iḡanị* third person singular pronouns

The feminine and masculine pronouns refer to human nouns while the neuter form refers to non-human nouns. This shows that the *Iḡanị* sex-based gender system overlaps with a human versus non-human distinction. In the pronominal gender system, gender agreement is between the anaphoric pronoun which is the target and its antecedent (the trigger).

3.2 The *Defaka* gender system (Ijoid, Rivers state, Nigeria)

Defaka is reported to have a sex-based gender system reflected in its third person singular pronoun (JENEWARİ 1983, CORBETT 1991, ESSIEN 2013). Examples are cited from ESSIEN (2013).

Pronoun	Gloss
ò	3 rd person singular masculine pronoun
á	3 rd person singular feminine pronoun
jè	3 rd person singular neuter pronoun

Table 2 – Sex-based gender in Defaka

In addition, ESSIEN (2013: 56) identifies a human versus non-human distinction. Non-human here implies [– human, + animate]. An analysis of the data presented in ESSIEN (2013: 56) shows that there are a set of nominals that signal a feminine versus masculine distinction when they occur with either human or non-human nouns. The nominal **èmènè** ‘male’ expresses a masculine reference while **éséré** ‘female’ expresses a feminine meaning with human nouns. The sex of the human nouns in question are usually unmarked, generic or neuter. On the other hand, **óbái** ‘male’ and **ólúlá** ‘female’ signify masculine and feminine reference respectively with non-human animates, specifically animals as seen on Table 3.

míní ‘people’	èmènèmíní ‘men’, ‘adult males’	masculine, human
bòm ‘child’	èmènèbòm ‘boy’, ‘male child’	masculine, human
míní ‘people’	éséréminí ‘women’, ‘adult females’	feminine, human
bòm ‘child’	ésérébòm ‘girl’, ‘female child’	feminine, human
óbórí ‘goat’	óbáíóbórí ‘he-goat’	masculine, non-human, animate
óbórí ‘goat’	ólúláóbórí ‘she-goat’	masculine, non-human, animate

Table 3 – Feminine-masculine distinction expressed in Defaka nominals

The examples above do not conform to the dual criteria for identifying gender systems as earlier stated in the introduction; that gender must be marked on at least one other element apart from the noun itself and that there must be agreement between the trigger and the target. Therefore, these nominals are clearly not gender markers. According to CORBETT (2005:127), “this is a matter of lexical semantics, and not a gender system”. This is not peculiar to Defaka. Other Ijoid varieties (including those that possess human gender markers) reflect similar nominals in the lexicon. Defaka thus operates a sex-based pronominal gender system only.

3.3 The Bùmọ gender system (Western Ijoid, Bayelsa state, Nigeria)

Bùmọ expresses sex-based gender (distinguishing between feminine, masculine and neuter) in the third person singular pronouns as well as in the definite article and singular proximal demonstrative. Agreement is between the noun and its determiners. The examples following are cited from BORNFORDE (2015).

Pronoun	Gloss
àrá	3 rd person singular feminine pronoun
èrí	3 rd person singular masculine pronoun
àní	3 rd person singular neuter pronoun

Table 4 – Sex-based gender in Bùmọ third person personal pronouns

Definite article	Gloss
túbò bàí	‘the child’ (masculine, singular)
túbò máá	‘the child’ (feminine, singular)
túbò míí	‘the child’ (unmarked sex, neuter, singular)

Table 5 – Sex-based gender in Bùmọ definite articles

- (1) a. **bàíbè** **ìní** **túbò**
 DEM.SGM 1SG.POSS child
 ‘This is my child’ (masculine, singular)
- b. **máámú** **ìní** **túbò**
 DEM.SGF 1SG.POSS child
 ‘This is my child’ (feminine, singular)
- c. **míímí** **ìní** **túbò**
 DEM.SGN 1SG.POSS child
 ‘This is my child’ (neuter, singular)

3.4 The Nembe gender system (Eastern Ijoid, Bayelsa state, Nigeria)

The Nembe gender system is based on sex and humanness with an overlap of these features. WILLIAMSON (1972: 5) identifies five gender classes namely; Human feminine, Masculine, Common, Non-human marked and Neuter. JENEWAR (1979: 87) reanalyzes the gender classes and renames them; Human feminine, Human masculine, Human neuter, Non-human masculine and Non-

human neuter respectively. However, the available data in WILLIAMSON (1972) and JENEWARI (1979) reveal that the human masculine and non-human masculine are assigned the same marker (e.g. **tọ̀gụ̀ ẹ̀bẹ̀** ‘the boy’, **ọ̀bírí ẹ̀bẹ̀** ‘the dog’). The masculine gender thus does not make a distinction between human and non-human.

Based on the fact that Nembe operates a semantic gender system, we reanalyze the gender system on the grounds of its semantic core, identifying three genders based on sex – feminine/masculine/neuter and two genders based on humanness – human/non-human. Sex-based gender is conflated with singular nouns and expressed in the third person pronoun, definite article and proximal demonstrative. Gender based on humanness is conflated with plural nouns and reflected in the definite article, proximal and distal demonstratives. A gender assignment summary based on this reanalysis is shown on Table 6.

Gender	Features	Examples
Feminine (singular)	+Human, +Feminine	a ‘she’, ‘her’, ma ‘the’; má ‘this’
Masculine (singular)	±Human, –Feminine	ó ‘he’, ‘him’, ẹ̀bẹ̀ ‘the’, ẹ̀bẹ̀ ‘this’
Neuter (singular)	±Human, –Feminine, –Masculine	aní ‘it’, ‘its’, mí ‘the’, mí ‘this’
Human (plural)	+Human, –Feminine, –Masculine	mein ‘the’, meín ‘these’, ení ‘those’
Non-human (plural)	–Human, –Feminine, –Masculine	ma ‘the’, mamámá ‘these’, ará ‘those’

Table 6 – A reanalysis of gender classification in Nembe

3.5 The Kalabari gender system (Eastern Ijoid, Rivers state, Nigeria)

JENEWARI (1979: 71–72) identifies five gender classes based on a combination of the semantic features of sex, animacy and humanness. They are inanimate neuter, non-human masculine, human neuter, human masculine and human feminine. He states that Kalabari gender system has a “dual dichotomy system of classification” where there is an overlap of semantic features (JENEWARI 1979: 69).

The data available however, show that Kalabari expresses sex-based gender conflated with number in the third person singular pronouns as well as in the singular definite article and singular proximal demonstrative. The Kalabari examples are cited from JENEWARI (1979).

Pronoun	Gloss
árí	3 rd person singular feminine pronoun
òrí	3 rd person singular masculine pronoun
àní	3 rd person singular neuter pronoun

Table 7 – Sex-based gender in Kalabari third person singular pronoun

Definite article	Gloss
bé	‘the’ (masculine, singular)
má	‘the’ (feminine, singular)
mé	‘the’ (unmarked sex, neuter, singular)

Table 8 – Sex-based gender in Kalabari singular definite article

Demonstrative	Gloss
bí	‘this’ (masculine, singular)
má	‘this’ (feminine, singular)
mí	‘this’ (unmarked sex, neuter, singular)

Table 9 – Sex-based gender in Kalabari singular proximal demonstrative

Feminine and masculine genders reference human nouns while the neuter gender references both human (where the sex is unknown) and non-human nouns. JENEWARI identifies a human versus non-human distinction in what he calls replacive pronouns namely, **bó** ‘person/one’, **ápú** ‘persons/ones’, **yé** ‘thing/one’ and **ái** ‘things/ones’. On the contrary, these are nominals that combine with other nouns to express human or non-human meanings. Again, this is a case of lexical semantics (CORBETT 2014) and not gender marking. Based on the fact that the defining characteristic of gender is agreement between the trigger and its target (CORBETT 1991, 2005), the data in JENEWARI (1979) show that the Kalabari gender system is sex-based. Gender is marked on the determiner and not on the noun itself, thus reflecting agreement between the noun and its determiners.

4. Gender in Nkọrọọ (Kirika)

The Nkọrọọ gender system is a natural gender system that is based on the semantic properties of sex and humanness. Semantic gender assignment in Nkọrọọ is both lexical and referential because gender is determined either by the lexical meaning of the noun or by the features that a speaker attributes to

the referent of its nominal antecedent and of the nominal designated deictically (PAYNE 1998, MCCONNELL-GINET 2014). There is a two-way number distinction between singular and plural in Nkọrọọ and gender markers encode either distinction thus conflating gender and number.

4.1 Sex-based gender in Nkọrọọ

Sex-based gender is reflected in determiners (in the third person pronoun and proximal demonstrative) and is conflated with singular entities. The distinction is between feminine, masculine and neuter. Feminine and masculine genders reference human nouns (although animals may be personified in folktales). Neuter gender refers to non-human nouns (animate and inanimate) and human nouns whose sex is unknown. There is an overlap of the semantic features of sex and humanness with number (singular).

Personal	Possessive	Reflexive	Gloss
áré'é	á, ájè	á 6ú òdù	3 rd person singular feminine pronoun
òrè	ò, òjè	ò 6ù òdù	3 rd person singular masculine pronoun
àrè	à, àjè	à 6ù òdù	3 rd person singular neuter pronoun

Table 10 – Sex-based gender in Nkọrọọ third person singular pronouns

- (2) a. **máà** **wò** **ì** **tàkù**
 DEM.SGF NOM 1SG.POSS child
 ‘This is my child’ (fem., human, sg.)
- b. **6ói** **wò** **ì** **tàkù**
 DEM.SGM NOM 1SG.POSS child
 ‘This is my child’ (masc., human, sg.)
- c. **mí'mí** **wò** **ì** **tàkù**
 DEM.SGN NOM 1SG.POSS child
 ‘This is my child’ (neuter, human, sg.)
- d. **mí'mí** **wò** **ì** **d3ìrì**
 DEM.SGN SM 1SG.POSS book
 ‘This is my book’ (neuter, non-human, sg.)

The neuter form of the singular proximal demonstrative is the unmarked form for it can occur with all nouns within the noun phrase.

4.2 Gender based on humanness

Human and non-human gender distinction is signaled in the plural proximal and distal demonstratives. The plural proximal demonstrative **mámámá** is used to reference non-human nouns while **mánààpù** and **ḡénààpù** refer to human nouns only. On the other hand, the plural distal demonstrative **àmà** is restricted in its reference to human nouns while **àkà** refers to non-human nouns. However, the use of **àkà** with human nouns is possible only if the demonstrative is accompanied by the plural noun **àpù** ‘people’, suggesting that this is a case of semantic extension.

- (3) a. **mámámá wò àkpà**
 DEM.PL NOM bag
 ‘These are bags’ (non-human)
- b. **mánààpù wò àwò**
 DEM.PL NOM children
 ‘These are children’ (human)
- c. **ḡénààpù wò àmààpù**
 DEM.PL NOM male.people
 ‘These are men’ (human)
- (4) a. **àmà jè àwò**
 DEM.PL 1SG.POSS children
 ‘Those are my children’ (human)
- b. **àkà òbìrì má ìnè**
 DEM.PL dog PL.GEN mine
 ‘Those dogs are mine’ (non-human)
- c. **àkà àpù má wò kíní**
 DEM.PL people PL NOM people
 ‘Those people are humans’ (human)

4.3 Number of genders in Nkọrọọ

“Gender agreement provides the basis for defining gender and for establishing the number of genders in a language” (CORBETT 1991: 105). According to GÜLDEMANN & FIEDLER (2021: 223), “identifying agreement classes in a first step

and genders in a second step is at the heart of the analysis of gender systems in most languages.”

Agreement in the Nkq̄r̄q̄ gender system is between the noun and its determiners, specifically the personal, possessive, reflexive and demonstrative pronouns. Gender assignment is based on the semantic features of sex and humanness. Based on sex, we can identify three genders namely; feminine, masculine and neuter. Sex-based gender is observed in the third person singular pronoun and the singular proximal demonstrative. Based on humanness, two genders can be identified; human and non-human.

Sex-based gender	Gender based on humanness
Feminine (singular): Human, Non-human (higher animals)	Human (plural)
Masculine (singular): Human, Non-human (higher animals)	Non-human (plural)
Neuter (singular): Human, Non-human	

Table 11 – A summary of Nkq̄r̄q̄ genders

4.4 Deriflection semantics

Deriflection, a term derived from derivation and inflection, consists of a class of nominals established on account of the same morphological and/or phonological variation that is triggered by derivational and inflectional features (GÜLDEMANN & FIEDLER 2018, 2019, 2021). In Nkq̄r̄q̄, there is a class of nominals that combine the features of sex and humanness and may be used to inflect the noun for number or combine with either nouns or verbs to derive other nouns that reflect these semantic features. We can group them into two types:

I. The first group conflates sex with humanness to reflect a feminine versus masculine distinction with humans and higher animals. They include: **ówóí/ówéí** ‘male’ (used for masculine, human and non-human animate reference), **àrà** ‘female’ (used for feminine, human reference) and **óróró** ‘female’ (used for feminine non-human animate reference).

Noun		Masculine		Feminine	
ìkià	‘friend’	ìkiàòwèi	‘male friend’	ìkiàrà	‘female friend’
àrì	‘witchcraft’	àrìòwèi	‘wizard’	àrìàrà	‘witch’
ḡḡàkà	‘chicken’	ówóí ḡḡàkà	‘rooster’	óróró ḡḡàkà	‘hen’
óḡórí	‘goat’	ówóí óḡórí	‘he-goat’	óróró óḡórí	‘she-goat’

Table 12 – Feminine/masculine distinction in humans and animals

II. The second group conflates humanness with number. This is derived in three ways; first, through the use of the nominals **ḡḡ** ‘person’ and **àpù** ‘persons’ to mark number (singular and plural respectively) in human nouns. They may be used to derive ethnic or group membership, agentive nouns and deverbative nouns.

Nouns		Human nouns (sg)		Human nouns (pl)	
ìkià	‘friend’	ìkiàḡḡ	‘friend’	ìkiààpù	‘friends’
àmà	‘male’	àmàḡḡ	‘man’	àmààpù	‘men’
Nouns		Ethnic nouns (sg)		Ethnic nouns (pl)	
ìdèni	‘Andoni’	ìdèniḡḡ	‘an Andoni person’	ìdèniàpù	‘Andoni people’
kìrikà	‘Nkọrọọ’	kìrikàḡḡ	‘an Nkọrọọ person’	kìrikààpù	‘Nkọrọọ people’
Nouns		Agentive nouns (sg)		Agentive nouns (pl)	
fìrì	‘work’	fìrìḡḡ	‘worker’, ‘messenger’	fìrìàpù	‘workers’, ‘messengers’
sàfì	‘prostitution’	sàfìḡḡ	‘prostitute’	sàfìàpù	‘prostitutes’
Verbs		Deverbative human nouns (sg)		Deverbative human nouns (pl)	
fúró	‘steal’	fúróḡḡ	‘thief’	fúróápù	‘thieves’
sékí	‘dance’	sékíḡḡ	‘dancer’	sékíápù	‘dancers’

Table 13 – Number distinction in human, ethnic, agentive and deverbative nouns

Secondly, the noun **jé** ‘thing’ may be used to derive singular non-human (inanimate) deverbative nouns. Unlike Kalaḡari, Nkọrọọ lacks the plural form.

- (5) a. **ófòrò** + **jé** → **ófòròjè**
 ‘blow with mouth’ ‘thing’ ‘flute’
- b. **pìrì** + **jé** → **pìrìjè**
 ‘give’ ‘thing’ ‘gift’

Thirdly, the form of certain human nouns may be inflected for number by adding the suffix **-àni**. The nouns include **kíní** ‘person’, personal names and the kinship terms for father, mother and wife.

Singular		Plural	
kíní	‘person’	kíníáni	‘persons’
dàà	‘father’	dààni	‘fathers’
nìngì	‘mother’	nìngiàni	‘mothers’
tàà	‘wife’	tààni	‘wives’

Table 14 – Plural marking in kinship nouns

- (6) a. **ì dzíá bómá-áni òrí**
 1SG some PN-PL.HUM see
 ‘I saw some Bomas’
- b. **ì bómá-áni òrí**
 1SG PN-PL.HUM see
 ‘I saw Bomas’
- c. **ì bómá-áni má òrí**
 1SG PN-PL.HUM PL see
 ‘I saw lots of Bomas’

5. Conclusion

This paper describes how natural linguistic gender is employed in the categorization of Ñkòròpò nouns. An overview of the Ijoid gender system shows that sex and humanness form the semantic core. Ijoid varieties operate either a sex-based gender only such as Iḡani, Bùmò, Defaka and Kalabari or a system based on sex and humanness as in Nembe and Nkòròpò.

Gender assignment in Nkòròpò is strictly semantic and referent-based. We identify three genders based on sex – feminine, masculine and neuter, that conflate with singular entities as expressed in the third person singular pronouns and singular proximal demonstratives, and two genders based on humanness – human and non-human that conflate with plural entities as expressed in the plural proximal and distal demonstratives. There is also a deriflection system that is reflected in the morphology of the noun to express the features of sex, humanness and number.

Abbreviations

1/2/3 1st/2nd/3rd person, DEM demonstrative, F feminine, HUM human, M masculine, N neuter, NOM nominative, PL plural, PN personal name, POSS possessive, SG singular

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Syntax-semantics linking in Mabia consequential serial verb constructions

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to discuss the syntactic and semantic characteristics of consequential SVCs in Mabia languages. The attention is focused on their argument and event structures. The data are described within the syntax-semantics interface using the framework offered by the Role and Reference Grammar (RRG), i.e. the layered structure of the clause, the nexus types, and the Logical Structures of constructions (VAN VALIN & LAPOLLA 1997; VAN VALIN 2005). The resulting analysis shows that RRG provides a useful theoretical perspective to capture some peculiarities of Mabia consequential SVCs.

Key words: serial verb construction, consequential serial verb, Role and Reference Grammar, predicate-argument structure, event structure

1. Introduction

A large number of languages in the world have sequences of two or more verb phrases (including any complements and adjuncts) that express single events or closely related events without any marker of syntactic dependency. Consider examples in (1a) and (1b) from Dàgáàrè, a Mabia language spoken in the Upper West region of Ghana:

- (1) a. ò dà tòng-Ø lá tómá kò-Ø má
 3SG PST work-PERF FOC work give-PERF 1SG
 ‘S/he worked for me.’
- b. ò dà dàà-Ø má lá lóó-Ø
 3SG PST push-PERF 1SG FOC CAUS.fall- PERF
 ‘S/he pushed me down.’

(LUKE & BODOMO 2000: 173, 174)

The verbs **tòng** ‘work’ and **kò** ‘give’ in (1a), and **dàà** ‘push’ and **lóó** ‘CAUS.fall’ in (1b) express two sub-events that are construed as a single whole, respectively.

This phenomenon is known as “serial verb construction” (henceforth SVC) (BALMER & GRANT 1929), or “serial verbs” (henceforth SVs) (ANSRE 1966).

SVCs are prevalent in West African languages, the African Caribbean creole languages, Oceanic languages, South-East Asian languages, and American languages. Though they have been widely studied over the years,¹ no precise definition of SVCs that accommodates all the serializing languages, as well as no agreed-upon formal criteria for the identification of true SVCs as a distinctive construction have been found.

AIKHENVALD’s definition (2006: 1) is one of the most widely cited prototype-based definitions in the literature:

A serial verb construction (SVC) is a sequence of verbs which act together as a single predicate, without any overt marker of coordination, subordination, or syntactic dependency of any other sort. Serial verb constructions describe what is conceptualized as a single event. They are monoclausal; their intonational properties are the same as those of a monoverbal clause, and they have just one tense, aspect, and polarity value. SVCs may also share core and other arguments. Each component of an SVC must be able to occur on its own. Within an SVC, the individual verbs may have same, or different, transitivity values.

Her definition is certainly useful for providing the reader an intuitive understanding of SVCs, but fails to precisely delimit the category. A recent study on SVCs by LOVESTRAND (2021) points out misunderstandings and disagreements in the literature about general defining features, such as verbhood (morphosyntactic and semantic criteria), clausehood (negation, tense-aspect, argument structure, eventhood), and the status of morphosyntactic markers.

The aim of this paper is to discuss the syntax-semantics linking in some Mabia consequential SVCs through the theoretical framework developed by Role and Reference Grammar (RRG), with particular attention to the layered structure of the clause, the nexus types, and the Logical Structures of constructions (VAN VALIN & LAPOLLA 1997; VAN VALIN 2005).

The rest of the paper is organized into five sections. Section 2 presents the data investigated in this study. Section 3 introduces the RRG theoretical

¹ CHRISTALLER 1875; BALMER and GRANT 1929; WESTERMANN 1930; WESTERMANN & BRYAN 1952; STEWART 1963; ANSRE 1966; BOADI 1968; AWOBULUYI 1973; BAMBOSE 1974; GEORGE 1975; DOLPHYNE 1987; LAWAL 1989; ZWICKY 1990; SCHILLER 1990; LORD 1993; BODOMO 1993, 2002, 2022; AGBEDOR 1994; OSAM 1994; 2003; 2004; AIKHENVALD & DIXON 2006; AMEKA 2006; MÜLLER & LIPENKOVA 2009; AMAECHI 2013; LEE 2014; HASPELMATH 2016; ROSS 2021, among others.

framework. Section 4.1 describes the syntactic representations of SVCs within RRG. Section 4.2 illustrates the syntax-to-semantics mapping in SVCs. Section 5 concludes this paper.

2. The data

SVCs exemplified in this paper are taken from Mabia languages, a sub-group of Niger-Congo languages spoken in Ghana, Burkina Faso, Togo and Ivory Coast. In particular, this work focuses on the following languages: Bùlì (Mid-Central), Dàgáárè (Western Mabia), Gurene (Central Mabia), Kusaal (Eastern Mabia), Mampruli (Southern Mabia), and Mooré (Northern Mabia).²

BODOMO (2002: 33) suggests five constraints for SVCs in Dàgáárè, that may be generalized on to other Mabia languages, and summarized by the following definition:

A construction *c* is an SVC iff:

All the different verbal predicates in *c* share the same structural or functional subject and object (*subject sameness constraint and object sharing constraint*)³ and are in the scope of a TAP node (*TAP – tense, aspect, polarity – constraint*) with no connector *y* such that *y* intervenes between the row of verbs (*connector constraint*) in *c* which expresses a single event or tightly related events (*predicate constraint*).

Bodomo's constraints are put forward in AIKHENVALD (2006) (see section 1) and Haspelmath (2016). The latter excludes the criteria 'single event', as well as 'single predicate', that are "impractical criteria" (HASPELMATH 2016: 306). On the other hand, he proposes some key components on SVCs from a comparative standpoint, such as construction, monoclausality, independent verbs (V1, V2, V_n), no linking element, and no predicate-argument relation between the verbs. His definition is not without problems (cf. AIKHENVALD & DIXON 2019).

The analysis focuses on SVCs that STEWART (1998, 2001) calls "consequential SVCs" (CSVCs). These structures are characterized as follows. There are transitive verbs in both the V1 and V2 slots. The verbs in the V1 and V2 slots are ordered sequentially in a precedence-consequence iconic relation, that is one sub-event (*e*₁) must temporally precede the other (*e*₂). The action of V2 is not a result

² For a more in-depth discussion of Mabia (Gur) languages, see BODOMO, ABUBAKARI & ISSAH (2020).

³ The italicized text in parentheses is mine.

directly caused by that of V1, but rather a more indirect consequence, the second step of an overall plan on the part of the agent (STEWART 1998: 17). In a consequential SVC, the verbs exhibit temporal ordering rather than causation. The sequence of separate micro-events is interpreted as a culturally relevant and cohesive natural event (GRUBER 1992). There are cultural constraints on what verbs can appear together with enough regularity to merit grouping them into a larger macro-event (BRUCE 1988; DURIE 1997; DILLER 2006). In consequential SVCs, both verbs are unrestricted and of equal status, and belong to the symmetrical type (AIKHENVALD 2006: 257). Moreover, the two verbs share both subject and object arguments. Consider example (2) from Bùlì, a language spoken in Sandema in the Upper East Region of Ghana:

- (2) **Àtì:m sè lām ɲàbì** [Bùlì]
 Atim roast meat eat
 ‘Atim roasted (and) ate meat.’
 (SULEMANA 2021: 124)

In (2), V1 **sè** ‘roast’ and V2 **ɲàbì** ‘eat’ are transitive verbs in both the V1 and V2 slots, that are ordered sequentially. The consequential reading is implied and the second verb is asserted. The serial verbs share both subject **Àtì:m** and object **lām** ‘meat’. V1 **sè** ‘roast’ overtly expresses the internal argument **lām** ‘meat’ that can be interpreted as the object of V2 **ɲàbì** ‘eat’. In other words, **lām** ‘meat’ is simultaneously understood as the entity belonging to both V1 and V2 (*subject sameness constraint* and *object sharing constraint* in BODOMO 2002; *argument sharing* in BAKER 1989; COLLINS 1997; STEWART 1998; CROWLEY 2002; BAKER & STEWART 2002; CARSTENS 2002; AIKHENVALD 2006).

The following examples in (3), (4), (5), (6), and (7) are from other Mabia languages. All represent SVCs similar to the one illustrated in (2):

- (3) **ò dà sé lá néné òò** [Dàgáàrè]
 3SG PST roast FOC meat eat
 ‘He roasted meat (and) ate (it).’
 (HIRAIWA & BODOMO 2008: 243)

- (4) **Atia daa dugɛ nyua obe** [Gurene]
 Atia PST cook yam chew
 ‘Atia cooked yam (and) ate.’
 (AYAMGA 2018: 121)

- (5) **Asibi da dug nyur di** [Kusaal]
 Asibi PST cook yam eat
 ‘Asibi cooked yam (and) ate (it).’

(ABUBAKARI 2011: 25)

- (6) **o da dug la sinkaafa ɲmɔbi** [Mampruli]
 3SG PST boil A.M rice eat
 ‘He boiled some rice (and) ate (it).’

(BODOMO 1993: 40)

- (7) **o sa duka mui di** [Mooré]
 3SG PST (yesterday) boil rice eat
 ‘(Yesterday,) he boiled some rice (and) ate (it).’

(BODOMO 1993: 46)

All previous serializing languages show monoclausal constructions in which series of verbs code single macro-events or series of activities that are closely related. They imply an overarching goal “cooking for eating”, that is, the actions required for achieving a task such as cooking a meal. Their syntactic structures have Subject Verb Object (SVO) word order. When the direct object is shared, it appears between the two transitive verbs (V1 O V2). Its in-between presence makes SVCs non-contiguous structures. In addition, all SVCs have no connective markings and TAMP (Tense, Aspect, Mood, Polarity) sharing. Only one tense particle occurs in SVCs above. The past preverbal particle (PST) always occurs before the V1 in the series.⁴ Consider example (8) from Mooré:

- (8) **o da dug suma (*da) onb** [Mooré]
 3SG PST cook groundnut PST chew
 ‘S/he boiled some rice (and) ate (it).’

(PAJANCIC 2017: 17)

⁴ BENDOR-SAMUEL (1971) and BODOMO (1993) have identified the existence of preverbal particles in all the Mabia languages. These are used to express tense, aspect, mood and polarity, and are not independent lexical items and neither can inflect for tense, and aspect.

The repetition of the tense marker *da* before V2 makes the sentence ungrammatical.

The negation marker in Mooré has two particles, **ká...ye** or **pá...ye**, one occurring before the verb and one at the end of the sentence. However, there can only be one negation marker in SVCs, taking scope over all verbs. An example is given from Kusaal in (9):

- (9) **o bo dug nim onb** [Kusaal]
 3SG NEG cook meat chew
 ‘S/he did not cook meat (and) chew (it).’

(ABUBAKARI 2011: 46)

The negative polarity element **bo** can only occur before V1, and any attempt to have it repeated or before V2 results in ungrammaticality. Otherwise, the negative element can appear before V2 in an overt coordination, as in (10):

- (10) **o bo dug nim ka bo onb li** [Kusaal]
 3SG NEG cook meat CONJ NEG chew it
 ‘S/he cook meat and didn’t chew it.’

(ABUBAKARI 2011: 46)

The basic difference between SVCs and coordinate constructions (CCs) is also noticed by the repetition of the tense marker. As in Dàgáàrè CCs in (11):

- (11) **ò dà sé lá sìnkáá, à (dà) òò á** [Dàgáàrè]
 3SG PST roast FOC groundnut.PL CONJ PST eat them
 ‘He roasted groundnuts and then ate them.’

(HIRAIWA & BODOMO 2008: 244)

Unlike the Dàgáàrè SVC in (3), V1 and V2 in (11) are coordinated by the overt marker **à** and the tense particle can optionally be repeated. Moreover, unlike SVCs, the second verb in a CC can have a pronoun that is coreferential with the argument of the first verb. In (10), the presence of the object pronoun **li** ‘it’ is also licit.

3. Role and Reference Grammar

Role and Reference Grammar (RRG) is generally classified as a monostratal theory within the functional paradigm (VAN VALIN & LAPOLLA 1997; VAN VALIN 2004, 2005, 2006, 2013). A single syntactic representation for each sentence is linked to a semantic representation by means of a set of linking rules, i.e. *linking algorithm*, more specifically the layered structure of the clause, the actor undergoer hierarchy, the privileged syntactic argument selection hierarchy (PSA), that account for the syntax-semantics interface. The components of the RRG linking system are given in Figure 1:

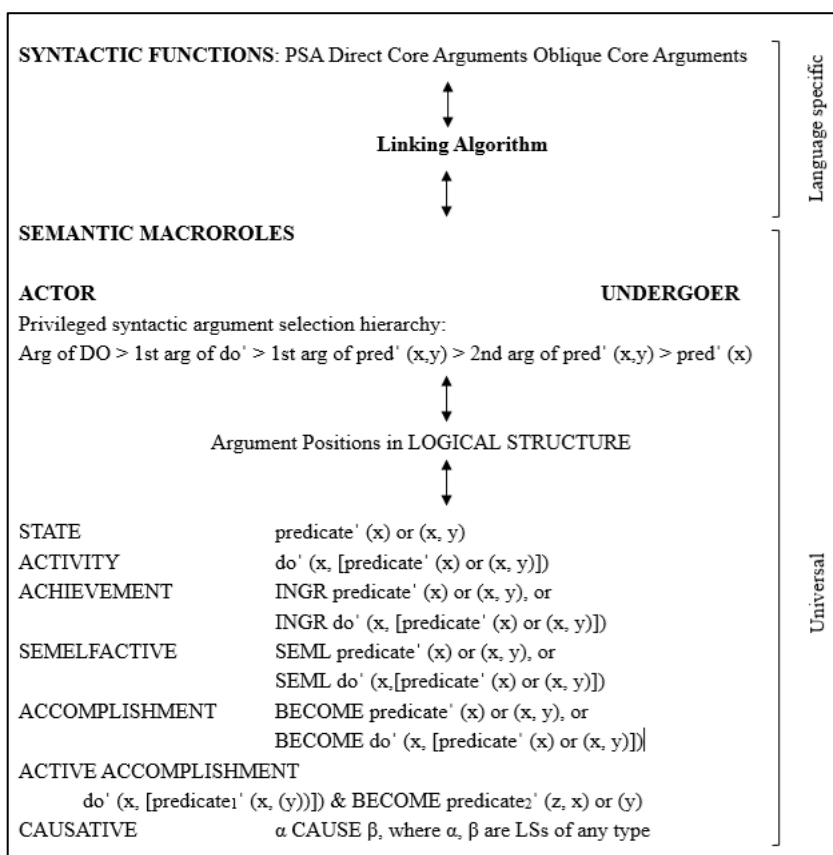


Figure 1 – RRG Linking System (revisited from VAN VALIN 2005: 129)

RRG is a projectionist theory of language, where many features in the syntactic realization of clause arguments are mapped from the lexical entries of verbs. An example of the schema of the layered structure of the clause with constituent and operator projection is given in 4.1, Figure 2. The RRG layering model is based on two interacting dimensions: juncture and nexus. Juncture refers to the layer involved in a connection between units in a clause, i.e. nuclear juncture, core juncture, and clausal juncture (VAN VALIN 2005: 188). A nuclear juncture combines the nuclei with a single set of arguments expressing a single, complex event. The SVCs in section 2 combine two cores within a single clause (see the syntactic representation in Fig. 2). A clause juncture construction contains two or more independent clauses with their own arguments and they are usually combined by a clause linkage marker (e.g., conjunction) (see examples (10) and (11)). Nexus refers to the type of linkage between units in a clause, i.e., coordination, subordination, and the innovative cosubordination (OLSEN 1981; FOLEY & VAN VALIN 1984; VAN VALIN 2005). Cosubordination involves constructions that are structurally coordinate (equivalent and independent at the level of juncture) but have a syntactic operator dependency (i.e., dependent coordination) (VAN VALIN 2000; VAN VALIN 2005; PAVEY 2010). In this study, SVCs may more typically involve cosubordinate constructions occurring at the core level of juncture (see Fig. 2).

The double-headed arrows in Fig. 1 show that the linking system works both from semantics to syntax and from syntax to semantics. Section 4.2 illustrates a constructional scheme of the latter case.

The semantic representation in RRG describing the semantic and argument structure of predicates is based on the Logical Structures (LSs) by combining features from VENDLER's Aktionsart classes (1967) (i.e., states, activities, achievements, and accomplishments), and Dowty's decompositional system (1979) (VAN VALIN 2013). The selection and position of the two semantic macroroles, actor and undergoer, in an LS is ruled by the actor-undergoer hierarchy (AUH), based on the assumption that, given the LS for a transitive verb, the leftmost argument in it will be the actor and the rightmost will be the undergoer (VAN VALIN 2004).⁵

The next section 4 examines the linking syntax and semantics in consequential SVCs.

⁵ Actor and undergoer are the two primary arguments of a transitive predication, and an intransitive verb may take an actor or an undergoer as its single argument.

4. Syntax-to-semantics mapping in SVCs

This section describes the consequential SVCs syntactically, as illustrated in section 4.1, while section 4.2 looks at them semantically, by carrying out them through the syntax-semantics interface.

4.1 Layered structures of SVCs

The SVCs described in section 2 have the same layered structure of the clause. The essential components of their syntactic representation are the presence of two nuclei (NUC), each one contains V1 and V2, and two cores, each one the nucleus plus the arguments of the predicate in the nucleus. Consider example (5), repeated below for your convenience in (12):

- (12) **Asibi da dug nyur di** [Kusaal]
 Asibi PST cook yam eat
 ‘Asibi cooked yam (and) ate (it).’

(ABUBAKARI 2011: 25)

The SVC combines two transitive verbs, **dug** ‘cook’ (V1) and **di** ‘eat’ (V2), denoting two separate sub-events that happen in a linear temporal order: the first action is conducted for the purpose of fulfilling the second action. For this reason, both sub-events are of low semantic integration, and semantically compositional.

V1 and V2 share syntactically both the internal argument **nyur** ‘yam’ and the external one **Asibi** in a monoclausal construction (cf. *object sharing constraint* and *subject sameness constraint* in BODOMO (2002)).

Based on these semantic and syntactic features, the sentence in (12) looks on the surface like a core SVC, with the following structure [NP1 [[V1 NP2] V2]]. A syntactic template is given in Figure 2:

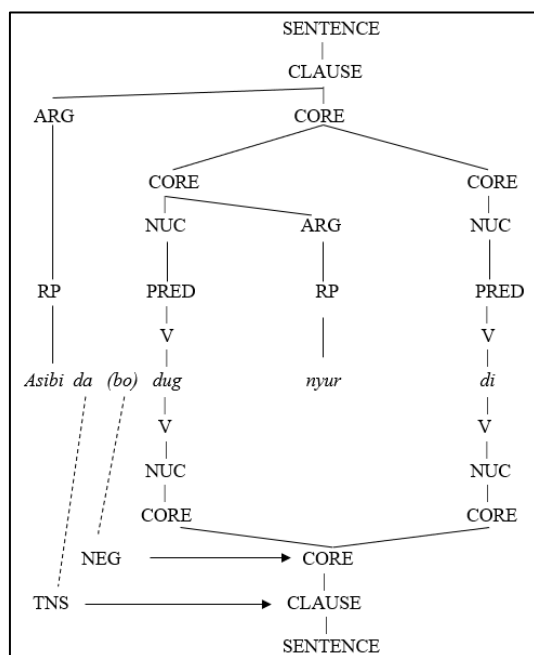


Figure 2 – Core cosubordination of (12)

Operator dependence constitutes a crucial feature for distinguishing the juncture-nexus types in an SVC. Both verbs in Fig. 2 are in the scope of a TAP node (see also example (9)). In the presence of a tense particle in Kusaal SVCs, the negative particle occurs after the tense particle but still before the verb.⁶ Negation is a core operator in RRG that has narrow scope over the entire core. Consequently, Fig. 2 illustrates a cosubordination at the core level, given that the V1 and V2 share the core negation operator (when it is present in the clause).

The tense operator, *da* ‘PST’, whose scope level is the clause, makes the SVC in (12) to have the Macro-Event Property (MEP), that assesses event representations in terms of their compatibility with temporal modifiers (BOHNEMEYER & VAN VALIN 2017). All the SVCs examined in this study are multi-core constructions in a cosubordinate linkage that packages an event

⁶ If the negative element appears before V2, the construction is an overt coordination, as in example (10).

representation such that any tense markers necessarily have scope over all of the subevents in the construction.

4.2 Syntax-semantics interface of SVCs

The consequential SVCs illustrated in section 2 express a fully coded sequence of culturally related activities, such as the distinct subevents of cooking and eating.

Consider the verbs of cooking. The verbs **duge** ‘cook’ in (4) and **dug** ‘cook’ in (5) have the semantic interpretation of the cooking of a food item but they do not distinguish the method with which these food items become meals, whereas the following verbs inherently encode the primitive concepts of the method of preparation of the meals. The verbs **sè** ‘roast’ in (2) and **sé** ‘roast’ in (3) function syntactically and semantically as verbs of heating, and **dug** ‘boil’ in (6) and **duka** ‘boil’ in (7) as verbs of parboiling (cf. AGBO 2009).

In RRG terms, the meaning components of the verbs are analysed within a Logical Structure based on a lexical representation, that includes a specification of the internal aspect of the predicate (cf. Aktionsart class) (see Fig. 1), and that of its argument structure by means of the macroroles and syntactic functions.

The action of roasting verbs (heating class) in (2) and (3) is not instantaneous, and they can be classified as active accomplishments. Their Logical Structure is represented in (13):

(13) *do'* (x, Ø) & BECOME *roasted'* (y)

The connective ‘&’ means ‘and then’, and thus expresses temporal succession.

The verbs of parboiling in (6) and (7) imply that their uncountable object NP is put in cold water and the water brought to a boil. Unlike the verbs of heating, the method of parboiling takes a short time to reach the change of state (the achievement) that is instantaneous and inherent. Such verbs can be classified as active achievements.⁷ Their lexical representation is illustrated in (14):

(14) INGR *do'* (x, [*boil'* (x, y)])

⁷ However, the verb *boil* is semantically problematic in that it can also behave as an active verb, as in ‘John boiled the eggs for five minutes’. John makes the eggs done, and, therefore eatable.

The punctual change of state operator 'INGR' captures the fact that the resulting state sets in closely with the activity's end (VAN VALIN 2005).

The verbs of eating in V2 ('eat', 'chew') in the SVCs denote an event or a process that has an ending. They can be classified as active accomplishments, and have the lexical representation illustrated in (15):

(15) *do'* (x, [*eat'* (x, y)]) & 'INGR *consumed'* (y)

For the analysis proposed in this study, the focus is on the broad actions of cooking and eating. Consider example (12), repeated here as in (16):

(16) **Asibi da dug nyur di** [Kusaal]
 Asibi PST cook yam eat
 'Asibi cooked yam (and) ate (it).'

(ABUBAKARI 2011: 25)

The LS of the SVC under the RRG system of lexical decomposition may be the following in (17):

- (17) a. **dug** *do'* (x, [*cook'* (x, y)] & [INGR *exist'* (y)])
 b. **di** *do'* (x, [*eat'* (x, y)] & [INGR *consumed'* (y)])
 c. **dug-di** [*do'* (x, [*cook'* (x, y)] & [INGR *exist'* (y)])] & [*do'* (x, [*eat'* (x, y)] & [INGR *consumed'* (y)])]

Both verbs are active accomplishments involving the telic use of an action. The connective operator '&' represents the coherence between the two micro-events, as well as the expected consequential action of eating.

As can be seen in Fig. 1, the arrows show the bidirectionality of the semantics-syntax mapping. The linking is governed by the *Completeness Constraint* (VAN VALIN 2005: 129-130), which stipulates that all the referring expressions in the clause must be linked the arguments in the semantic representation of the clause.

The syntax-to-semantics linking is carried out in three main steps in the algorithm. The first step is to extract all of the information possible from the overt morphosyntactic form of the SVC (i.e., how many arguments each verb takes). The second step is to retrieve the logical structure of the predicate(s) in

the nucleus from the lexicon, the actor and/or the undergoer, and other core argument(s) in the clause (i.e., whether the arguments from two different verbs denote the same entity (AUH)). The third step is to map the arguments into semantics relations and select the PSA (cf. RICCIO 2017).

Fig. 3 below illustrates the syntax-to-semantics mapping for example (16):

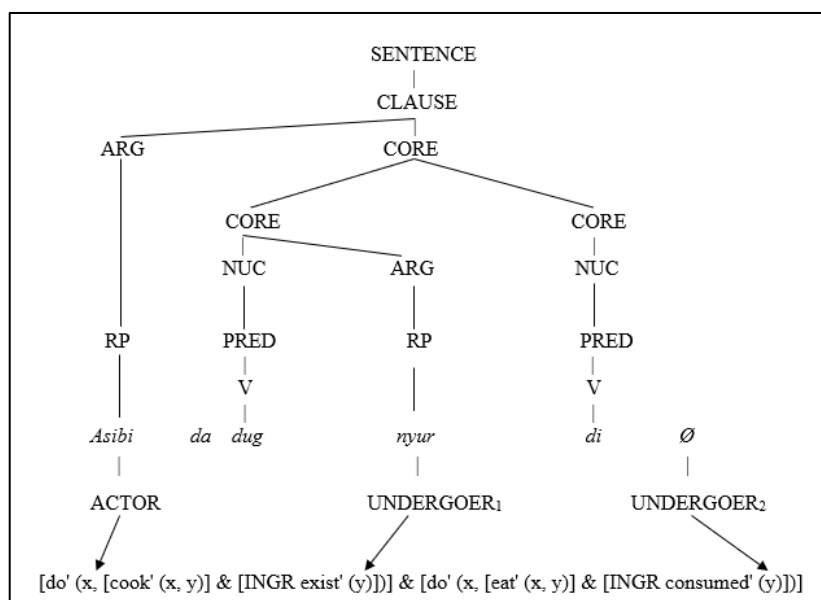


Figure 3 – From syntax to semantics for example (16)

The actor **Asibi** is selected as the privileged syntactic argument (PSA) that participates in the initiation of the cooking event and in the end of the eating event. The direct argument **nyur** ‘yam’ of V1 is the Undergoer1, as well as the object Undergoer2 of V2. When two macroroles refer to the same entity, Undergoer1 is the macrorole syntactically expressed in a higher hierarchy, whereas Undergoer2 is not (Ø).

5. Concluding remarks

This study allowed us to test the validity of the RRG theoretical approach to consequential SVCs in Mabia languages. After presenting the data in section 2, starting with the definition of SVCs proposed by BODOMO (2002), section 3 gives

a brief overview of the RRG framework, especially the parts useful for discussion. Section 4.1 illustrates the constituent projection that characterizes all the sym-metrical Mabilia SVCs investigated, i.e., the core juncture with a cosubordinate nexus. V1 and V2 behave together with their respective argument structures as single cores, sharing operators (see Fig. 2). The nexus and juncture types of SVCs are analysed in terms of the RRG system of lexical decomposition in section 4.2. in order to represent their event schema (see example (17)). The section also addresses the distinction between different types of subevents of cooking (see examples (13) and (14)) referring to active accomplishment verbs (e.g. verbs of heating) and to active achievements (e.g. verbs of parboiling). The syntax-to-semantics mapping in Fig. 3 shows the crucial role of the semantics macroroles in the linking system to capture the condition of sharing subject and object argument (i.e., actor and undergoer, respectively).

The conclusive evidence of this study leads us to positively evaluate the application of the theoretical RRG framework to explain the syntactic and semantic features of SVCs in Mabilia languages.

Abbreviations

A.M. affirmative marker, CAUS causative, CONJ conjunction, FOC focus, NEG negation, PERF perfective, PL plural, PST past, SG singular, TAMP tense, aspect, mood, polarity, TNS tense, 1 first person, 3 third person

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On the gender system of North Ivie

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Abstract

We review and assess the gender system of a Northern Edoid speech variety. Some elements of nominal classification in North Ivie were identified in a previous study (MASAGBOR 1989). But North Ivie exhibits prefixes that align with nominal form classes and agreement form classes. It determines agreement in a semantically asymmetric manner. In the singular, prefixes reflect agreement that cumulates with grammatical number and animacy values. In the plural, prefixes signal agreement and number, not animacy. Affected thereby are indexes of the subject-verb relation and most adnominals. An exception to this reduced plural pattern consists of adnominals that refer to numerals greater than one. They consistently retain agreement forms that are based on head noun values for grammatical number and animacy. Our review also revealed the absence of information required to assess gender in North Ivie more completely. We found no examples that bear on whether agreement applies to the adnominal classes adjective and genitive. Similarly, we encountered no head nouns that triggered agreement on target classes by non-prefixal, lexical means, as happens in some other Edoid languages. Future studies will be required to remedy these conditions.

Key words: gender system, nominal form class, agreement form class, North Ivie, Edoid

1. Introduction

For some time, nominal form classes (NFC) in the Edoid group of southern Nigeria have been recognized (WESTERMANN & BRYAN 1952; WILLIAMSON 1970; ELUGBE 1983, 1989b). Far less attention has been devoted to agreement classes (AGR) and the overall gender system. This situation is evident in Proto Edoid reconstructions (ELUGBE 1973, 1989a), which feature nominal form classes but not agreement classes.

In this paper, we review and assess the gender system for a speech variety within Edoid's northern boundary. Although we have conducted some fieldwork in this area, our primary data derive from a publication on North Ivie by MASAGBOR (1989). It does not pretend to be exhaustive. It was influenced by

the Bantu tradition of “noun classes,” where an alliterative relation among nominal and agreement prefixes is often assumed or at least highly valued. One perspective we bring derives from GÜLDEMANN & FIEDLER (2019, 2021), which notes that a frequent complication in the analysis of agreement systems is their deployment of features other than gender. One of these more frequent features is grammatical number. GÜLDEMANN and FIEDLER also remind us to distinguish form class marking on controller nominals from agreement marking on adnominals and other targets.

North Ivie occupies a distinct geographic region among the Northern Edoid. It appears in the hill country of Edoid’s northeast. It is spoken across four villages, including Okpekpe. West of North Ivie are the highest elements of the Igara Formation, sharp outcroppings and whaleback shapes of granite rock that stretch north-south and east-west through the landmass between the rivers Osse and Niger.

Linguistically, North Ivie manifests a seven-vowel system, lexical and grammatical tone, as well as prefix morphology. It exhibits a gender system that comprises exponents that designate nominal form class and agreement form class. Form class prefixes that trigger agreement appear on nouns. Target forms that designate agreement appear as prefixes on adnominal modifiers and serve as indexes of the subject-verb relation. Throughout, vowels *ɔ* and *ɛ* are represented in lexical examples as *o* and *e*.

Our paper is organized around three data-oriented sections. They are ordered as North Ivie nominal classification, North Ivie agreement, and the North Ivie gender system. All of these occur between the Introduction and Conclusion.

2. North Ivie nominal classification

North Ivie manifests a relatively streamlined gender system, at least when compared to other Benue Congo gender systems. We consider exponents for nominal form classes initially followed by an exposition of agreement form classes.

NFC	MORPH	NUMBER	LEXICAL	EXAMPLE
1	ɔ-	SG	ó-mòsé	‘man’
2	O-	SG	ó-sùmà	‘sheep’
3	ɛ-	SG	è-ná	cattle’
4	E-	PL	é-rhè	‘trees’

5	I-	PL	í-sùmà	'sheep (pl)'
6	A-	SG	à-wóshí	'dog'
		PL	á-bò	'hands'
7	U-	SG	ú-kpókyá	'friend'

Table 1 – North Iwie exponents for nominal form class

There are seven prefixes in Table 1 that designate nominal form class and grammatical number. One of these forms expresses singular or plural (A-), four only singular (ɔ-, ɒ-, U-, ɛ-), and two only plural (E-, I-). That is five prefixes denote a singular value and three a plural value. We look now at Figure 1.

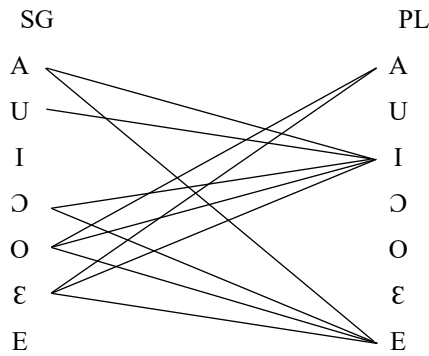


Figure 1 – Mapping of number values for North Iwie nominal form classes

Figure 1 graphically represents the mapping from singular to plural of grammatical number values for North Iwie nominal form class prefixes. One can readily discern that singular to plural mapping in North Iwie is complex. Mapping relations are primarily crossed, although one relation is convergent. No relations are parallel or isomorphic. Convergent, for example, refers to a singular value associated with multiple plural values, while crossed designates convergence from both singular and plural perspectives (HANSFORD 1990; GÜLDEMANN 2000). A third mapping type is parallel, which indicates an isomorphic relation between singular and plural values. No parallel relation among form class exponents is evident.

3. North Ivie agreement

We now direct attention to exponents that signal agreement form class in North Ivie. There are five prefixes that express agreement form class, grammatical number, and animacy, as shown in Table 2. Two convey singular values (**ɔ-**, **o-**), and three display plural values (**i-**, **e-**, and **a-**). Exponents of agreement in North Ivie are also determined by animacy. This is so for singular **ɔ-** and **o-** as well as plural **i-** and **e-** as well as plural **o-** and **a-**. It is not true for plural **e-** on non-numeral modifiers, which, as noted in Table 2, agrees with either animate or inanimate head nouns when not prefixed to a numeral.

AGR	MORPH	ANIMACY	NUMBER	EXAMPLES
1	ɔ-	A	SG	ó-ní 'the'
2	o-	I	SG	ó-ní 'the'
		A	PL	ó-shè 'five'
3	e-	A/I	PL	é-ní 'the'
		I	PL	è-vá 'two'
4	i-	I	PL	í-shè 'five'
5	a-	A	PL	à-vá 'two'

Table 2 – North Ivie exponents for agreement form class

When we map North Ivie exponents of NFC to those of AGR (without regard to number or animacy), we have the representation in Figure 2. As indicated, relations among exponents are convergent and crossed, with convergent dominating. Multiple NFC forms link to multiple AGR marks. There is no parallel relation.

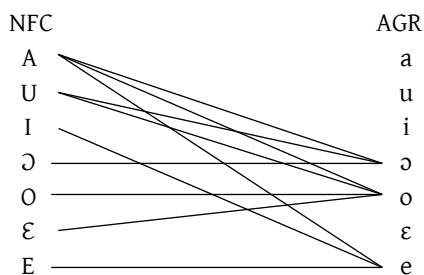


Figure 2 – Mapping relations between NFC and AGR

As was suggested by word form illustrations in Table 2, exponents of agreement are not assigned evenly across target types. A fuller representation of their asymmetric distribution is shown in Table 3 (where A=animate and I=inanimate).

AGR	ANIMACY	NUM	DA	DEM	ONE	+ONE	SI
1	A	SG	ǎ-	ǎ-	ǎ-		ǎ-
2	I	SG	o-	o-	o-		o-
3	A / I	PL	e-	e-			e-
4	I	PL				e-	
5	I	PL				i-	
6	A	PL				a-	
7	A	PL				o-	

Table 3 – Exponents of agreement aligned as to animacy and grammatical number for adnominals and subject verb indexes

Table 3 reveals that agreement targets in North Ivié consist of adnominals, both non-numeral and numeral, as well as subject-verb indexes. Agreement exponents on these three target sets overlap but are not identical. Across two target sets agreement forms take the shapes ǎ-, o- for the singular and e- for the plural. It is only exponents for numerals greater than one that employ agreement forms differently with respect to grammatical number (plural o- instead of singular elsewhere), animacy affiliation (inanimate e- instead of either animate or inanimate elsewhere), and exponent addition (plural animate a- and plural inanimate i- not found elsewhere in the agreement system). Thus, agreement exponents that mark numerals greater than one diverge from North Ivié's normative pattern of agreement marking, which we find on non-numeral adnominals, the numeral for one, and subject-verb indexes.

Relying on information provided in Masagbor, we illustrate each of the three agreement categories non-numeral adnominals, subject-verb indexes, and numeral adnominals. For each we present example phrases or clauses.

Non-numeral adnominals consist of the definite article (DA) and the proximal demonstrative (DEM). The definite article has base stem -ní. Within a phrase, it precedes its head noun. In the singular, stem -ní occurs with class 1 agreement prefix ó and class 2 agreement prefix ó- (leftside of 1). In the plural (rightside of 1), stem -ní takes class 3 prefix é-.

- | | | | | |
|--------|-------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|
| (1) a. | ó-ní | ó-sùmà | é-ní | í-sùmà |
| | 1-DA | 0.1-sheep | 3-DA | 1.3-sheep |
| | 'the sheep' | | 'the sheeps' | |
| b. | ó-ní | ó-rhè | é-ní | é-rhè |
| | 2-DA | 0.2-tree | 3-DA | E.3-tree |
| | 'the tree' | | 'the trees' | |
| c. | ó-ní | à-wóshí | é-ní | ì-wóshí |
| | 1-DA | A.1-dog | 3-DA | I.3-dog |
| | 'the dog' | | 'the dogs' | |

The proximal demonstrative has base stem **-nà**. It follows its head noun and most often co-occurs with the definite article. It, too, appears in the singular with **ó** and **ó-** (leftside of 2) and in the plural with **é-** (rightside of 2).

- | | | | | | | |
|--------|-------------|----------------|-------------|---------------|----------------|-------------|
| (2) a. | ó-ní | à-wóshí | ò-nà | é-ní | ì-wóshí | è-nà |
| | 1-DA | A.1-dog | 1-DEM | 3-DA | I.3-dog | 3-DEM |
| | 'this dog' | | | 'these dogs' | | |
| b. | ó-ní | ó-rhé | ò-nà | é-ní | é-rhé | è-nà |
| | 2-DA | 0.2-tree | 2-DEM | 3-DA | E.3-tree | 3-DEM |
| | 'this tree' | | | 'these trees' | | |

Exponents that mark agreement on numerals exhibit an asymmetric pattern. In the singular, agreement forms align with exponents employed by demonstratives and the definite article. In the plural, where numeral stems express values greater than one, agreement forms do not align with demonstratives and the definite article. Instead, numerals greater than one select from a set of four agreement exponents, two of which on demonstratives and the definite article appear with different values for animacy or number. In the next paragraphs, we review agreement on numerals in the singular first, followed by agreement in the plural.

For numeral stem **-gùò** 'one', agreement prefixes vary according to animacy of the phrasal head noun. Agreement prefixes employed are **ɔ-** for animate and **o-** for inanimate.

- (3) **ó-mòsé** **ó-gùò** **á-khè** **ó-gùò**
 ɔ.1-man 1-one A.2-pot 2-one
 ‘one man’ ‘one pot’

Numerals greater than one divide into two sets (4). Those in (4a) control two agreement exponents. Those in (4b) control two different agreement exponents. Within each set of agreement exponents, animacy plays a determining role.

- (4) a. **-vá** ‘two’ **-sè** ‘three’ **-nè** ‘four’
 b. **-shè** ‘five’ **-tíli** ‘nine’

For head nouns that are animate, such as **é-mòsé** ‘men,’ agreement prefixes in the plural are **à-** and **ó-** (leftside of 5). For head nouns that are inanimate, such as **í-khè** ‘pots,’ plural agreement prefixes are **è-** and **í-** (rightside of 5). Given a cursory view of these examples, one might initially assume that numerals greater than one distribute in an odd vs. even split assignment. Further inspection reveals exceptions to this tentative conclusion. That is the stem for three **-sè** patterns with even numbers, not odd numbers as would have been expected. In addition, no examples are cited in Masagbor for stems that designate six, seven, eight, and ten. Until these stems and their agreement prefixes are identified, one can only speculate as to the basis for numeral agreement in the plural.

- (5) a. **é-mòsé à-vá / á-sè / á-nè** **í-khè è-vá / é-sè / é-nè**
 E.5-man 5-two 5-three 5-four I.3-pot 3-two 3-three 3-four
 ‘two / three / four men’ ‘two /t hree / four pots’
 b. **é-mòsé ó-shè / ò-tíli** **í-khè í-shè / ì-tíli**
 E.2-man 2-five 2-nine I.4-pot 4-five 4-nine
 ‘five / nine men’ ‘five / nine pots’

Prefixes for agreement indexes that relate to a lexical subject show a pattern like non-numeral adnominals. That is the forms **ò-**, **ò-**, and **è-** distribute across indexes according to grammatical number and animacy. Agreement form **ò-** occurs with lexical subjects of the animate class that are singular such as **ú-kpókyá** ‘friend’ (6), while **ò-** appears with lexical subjects of the singular

inanimate class, e.g. **ó-rhè** ‘tree’ (7). In the plural, agreement form **è-** occurs on lexical subjects such as **í-viè** ‘child’ and **é-rhè** ‘wood’ (8a-b), thus not recognizing animacy as determining agreement value for these nouns. As previously mentioned, the three agreement exponents **ò-**, **ò-**, and **è-** mark not only subject indexes but also stems that designate non-numeral adnominals and the numeral for one.

- (6) **ú-kpókyá ò-gùò ò á bàlè.**
 U.1-friend 1-one 1.3.SI PROG come
 ‘One friend is coming.’

- (7) **ó-ní ó-rhè ò á tùà.**
 2-DA 0.2-tree 2.3.SI PROG burn
 ‘The tree is burning.’

- (8) a. **é-ní í-viè è á bàlè.**
 3-DA 1.3-child 3.3.SI PROG come
 ‘The children are coming.’
 b. **é-ní é-rhè è á tùà.**
 3-DA E.3-wood 3.3.SI PROG burn
 ‘The trees are burning.’

Pronominal forms that occupy subject position in a relative clause also vary according to values for animacy and grammatical number. Pronominals of this type immediately follow linker morpheme **ná**, which signals a relative clause. Preceding **ná** is the lexical head of the relative clause. The form of subject pronominals in relative clauses mirrors that of subject indexes in main clauses, as expressed in (6-8). When an animate noun in the singular is relativized, the pronominal index is **o** (9a leftside). When an inanimate noun in the singular is relativized, the pronominal index has form **o-** (9b leftside). When the lexical nominal is plural, regardless of whether it is inanimate or animate, the pronominal index is **e-** (9a-b rightside). For North Ivié in the plural, it is number value that neutralizes the animacy distinction at play in the corresponding singular.

- (9) a. **à-wóshí ná ó dé** **ì-wóshí ná é dé**
 A.1-dog LKR 1.3SI fall I.3-dog LKR 3.3SI fall
 ‘the dog that fell’ ‘the dogs that fell’
- b. **ó-rhé ná ó dé** **é-rhé ná é dé**
 0.2-tree LKR 2.3SI fall E.3-tree LKR 3.3SI fall
 ‘the tree that fell’ ‘the trees that fell’

4. North Ivie gender

Assessment of the gender system in North Ivie can be undertaken with respect to various parameters. We take such assessments as an initial step toward articulating the historical gender system from which today’s Edoid languages emerged. Whether description of this proto-system will ever be achieved, especially given the fast-changing socio-cultural and economic landscape in Nigeria, is another matter. Before leaving this issue, we will mention that two other Northern Edoid language clusters, which together consist of some thirty-two villages in the northern reaches of the Igara Formation, are Okpamheri and Okpella. Since their linguistic systems have received little attention, we view comparison of gender systems in Northern Edoid to be incomplete without their inclusion. Similar statements apply to single-village languages near the center of the Igara Formation. These include Akuku, Enwa, Sasaru, and Ososo.

A summary of the gender system in North Ivie is presented in Table 4. Relative to the available data, it identifies the number of genders, their pairing of agreement form classes, the prefixes that expone agreement, and the nominal form class prefix pairs aligned with each gender. There are six genders overall. Of note is that the manuscript on which we base our assessment consists of twelve pages, only three of which are devoted to agreement matters. The nine pages that remain analyze the semantic character of nominal form classes and their division into ontological categories like human, body part, and place as well as linguistic categories such as count vs. mass nominals, gerundives, and nominalizations. The result of this analysis is referenced by MASAGBOR (1989: 81) as the North Ivie “gender” system. Since this analytic strategy addresses only nominal form class prefixes, it instantiates the issue in traditional Niger-Congo language studies raised by GÜLDEMANN & FIEDLER (2019): conflation of gender with nominal declension, deriflection, or simply noun classes. Doing so ignores agreement form class marking and its fundamental role in gender systems.

GENDER	AGR CLASSES	AGR PREFIXES	NFC PREFIXES
I	1/3	ɔ-/e-	o-/I- 'sheep' A-/I- 'dog' ɔ-/E- 'man' o-/I- 'child'
II	2/3	o-/e-	o-/E 'tree' A-/I- 'pot' A-/I- 'plate'
III	1/6	ɔ-/a-	ɔ-/E- 'man' o-/I- 'child'
IV	1/7	ɔ-/o-	ɔ-/E- 'man' o-/I- 'child'
V	2/4	o-/e-	A-/I- 'pot' A-/I- 'plate'
VI	2/5	o-/i-	A-/I- 'pot' A-/I- 'plate'

Table 4 – Genders and associated AGR and NFC elements

As is evident in Table 4, only a small number of nominal form class elements illustrate our tentative interpretation of the North Ivie gender system. Far more nominals are identified in the Masagbor manuscript, roughly 75, but only a few are deployed in illustrating the agreement system. Beyond the few that we were able to select there are various transnumeral types whose interaction with agreement form classes is not obvious. They include mass nouns (*àmè* 'water,' *èwòlì* 'smoke'), gerundives (*ísàmì* 'thinking,' *òshító* 'sitting'), and locatives (*íshèni* 'farm,' *àtàlimì* 'burial ground'). Do nominals such as these take any of the agreement prefixes that cumulate animacy and singular number such as **ɔ-** and **o-**? Do they take only plural **e-**? Or do they take some other agreement marker? It is for this reason that we call for a more extensive exploration of a wide range of nominal types in the gender system of North Ivie and their agreement behavior.

For the remainder of this section, we organize our initial assessment of the gender system in North Ivie around four linguistic topics. These are morphosyntax, semantics, morphophonology, and tone. The last of these, tone, has received no attention in this paper. We include it here because tone has been the subject of investigations at the clause and noun phrase level within other Edoid studies (AMAYO 1975, 1976; ELIMELECH 1978; ELUGBE 1989a). None

have interlaced the analysis of tone with gender in any explicit way. We propose that this condition needs to be remedied.

We turn now to gender and its relation to components of morphosyntax and semantics. The broadest generalization that one can make is that North Ivie exhibits a morphosyntactic gender system that is reduced. We assume this based on a gender system evident in one other Northern Edoid language. The village vernacular of Ogbe exhibited fourteen gender classes (SCHAEFER & EGBOKHARE 2021). North Ivie has seven agreement classes, and not all were evaluated relative to the full set of agreement targets. At the same time, North Ivie has multiple semantic values that determine assignment of agreement form class to adnominal stems and subject indexes. It relies on grammatical number and animacy, as well as grammatical number alone. In fact, the features of animacy and grammatical number do not cumulate with agreement in a uniform manner. Number is retained across all targets and target types. Animacy is not. In the plural, animacy fails to be determinative for non-numeral adnominals, indexes of the subject-verb relation, and the numeral stem that denotes a singleton. However, animacy is determinative along with number for numerals greater than one. For the latter one may even speculate that they represent some of the more conservative elements of the North Ivie gender system.

There is a second morphosyntactic generalization concerning North Ivie. It manifests an adnominal stem for the definite article that articulates with the gender system through prefix attachment. Important from the perspective of linear order is that the North Ivie definite article precedes rather than follows the nominal head of a noun phrase. All other adnominal forms in North Ivie followed the head noun, although MASAGBOR (1989) made no mention of adjective and genitive modifiers. Despite this difference with respect to the definite article, North Ivie tends to order adnominal modifiers in the post-nominal domain. Such ordering is a notable point of common ground across Northern Edoid.

A final morphosyntactic generalization concerns so-called neutral or null prefix nouns. They show no overt nominal form class prefixes that alternate to express grammatical number. In North Ivie there was no mention of neutral nouns. They may exist, but we have no evidence bearing on neutral nouns. How forms of this nature should be treated and where and when they might occur in the gender systems of Northern Edoid will require additional investigation.

5. Conclusion

In this paper we attempted an initial assessment of the gender system in one of the Northern Edoid languages of southern Nigeria. Our data were based on a prior presentation of “noun classes” in North Ivié by MASAGBOR (1989). We found that there were prefixes that expressed nominal form class and agreement form class. Mapping relations within noun classes was complex, as was the mapping from nominal form class to agreement form class. Nonetheless, the primary form class components of the North Ivié gender system were not distributed symmetrically. North Ivié had a single set of agreement exponents for adnominals and subject indexes and another for markers assigned to numerals greater than one. As gender markers, agreement prefixes on numerals greater than one constituted a unique set. They were distinct in form and behavior from the plural mark on non-numeral adnominal modifiers and subject indexes. Beyond this matter, North Ivié determined agreement form based on grammatical number and animacy values of a head noun, as opposed to agreement based exclusively on number values. Clearly, there are further details about North Ivié and Edoid gender systems that require attention. Here, we have only been able to offer a glimpse of the complexity evident in North Ivié.

Abbreviations

3 third person, A animate, AGR agreement, DA definite article, DEM demonstrative, I inanimate, LKR linker, MORPH morpheme, PL plural, PROG progressive, SG singular, SI subject index, NFC noun form class

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What's *lɔ* got to do with it?

Focus in Mende

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Abstract

Research on Information Structure (IS) has tended to focus on European languages, which are relatively homogenous, compared to the diversity of languages in Africa (GÜLDEMANN et al. 2015). There has been very little research on IS in the Mande language family of West Africa. In Mende (ISO 639-2 men) pragmatic focus is marked primarily syntactically and morphologically. In this paper I describe both the in-situ and left peripheral constructions utilized to mark focus in Mende. I show that there is no correlation between the construction and the type of focus that it indicates (AISSEN 2015). There is, however, a subject – non-subject asymmetry with subjects being more likely to be marked by left peripheral focus while non-subjects are more likely to be marked via in-situ focus.

Key words: Mende, focus, left-periphery, in-situ

1. Introduction

GÜLDEMANN et al. (2015) note that Africa hosts close to one-third of the world's languages, while also suggesting that there is a substantial bias in research on information structure (IS) towards European languages, which are relatively homogenous in comparison to the diversity found in Africa. While they further argue that African languages have recently played a significant role in the advancement of knowledge about IS, I would propose that the Mande language family has, in large part, been left out of the discussion. Using data gathered from native speakers in Bo, Sierra Leone, in this paper I provide the first description and an initial analysis of one of the principle aspects of information structure, namely, focus, in Mende, (ISO 639-2 men), a Southwestern Mande language. Following ROTH (1985, 1992) I define the focus semantic value of a sentence as contrasting with its ordinary semantic value, that is, the set of alternatives from which the actual semantic value is selected.

Typical of many languages cross-linguistically (ABOH et al. 2007), Mende uses syntax, morphology, and phonology to mark pragmatic focus. (1a) shows canonical SOV Mende word order, while (1b) shows in-situ focus and (1c) shows left peripheral focus.

(1) a. *Canonical construction*

Mary mangu-i-sia yeya-nga
 Mary mango-DEF-PL buy-PRF
 ‘Mary bought the mangoes.’

b. *In-situ focus*

Mary mangu-i-sia lo / mangu-i-sia-a yeya-nga
 Mary mango-DEF-PL FOC.I mango-DEF-PL-FOC.I buy-PRF
 ‘Mary bought THE MANGOES.’

c. *Left-peripheral focus*

mangu-i-sia mia Mary ti yeya-nga
 mango-DEF-PL FOC.L Mary 3PL buy-PRF
 ‘It is the mangoes that Mary bought.’

In (1b) the direct object **manguisia** ‘the mangoes’ is marked in-situ by the focus marker **lo**, which can also surface as a lengthening of vowel **-a**, while in (1c) **manguisia** surfaces at the left edge of the clause and is marked by the focus marker **mia**.

Since there is no previous analysis of focus in Mende, this paper necessarily takes an introductory and descriptive approach, considering one small aspect of focus constructions. After some introductory comments on information structure in African languages and a brief introduction of Mende, I document two strategies used in marking focus in Mende. AISSEN (2015) identifies five types of focus, questioning whether the distinctions between them are categorical, and as such manifesting differing grammatical forms, or gradient, involving degrees of emphasis. I briefly discuss these five types of focus and describe how they are marked in Mende. I subsequently explore whether there might be a connection between the type of focus and morphosyntactic structure in Mende. The Mende data that I present in this paper does not point toward a categorical distinction in the language, and any gradient difference seems to be minimal as well. This paper, therefore, contributes to our

understanding of focus by providing novel data from a language family that has not previously been examined in the literature.

In Section 2 of this paper I briefly introduce Mende and previous research on the language. In Section 3, I discuss relevant aspects of the literature on focus, including Aissen's work. Section 4 looks at focus marking strategies in Mende, while section 5 considers whether there is any connection between Aissen's five types of focus and the manifestation of focus in Mende, arguing that there is not. Section 6 concludes the paper.

2. Previous research on Mende

Mende is spoken by two million people in the southern and eastern parts of Sierra Leone, as well as in Liberia (EBERHARD et al. 2023). It is a Western Mande language, similar to Kpelle and Loma, and there are four major dialects: Kpa, Koo, Waanjama, and Sewama, with most previous research focused on Koo Mende. My research is focused on the Sewama dialect, spoken in and around Bo, and is the first research focused on this dialect. Most previous work on Mende has focused on tone (c.f. INNES 1967, and SPEARS 1967 both document tone in the language while LEBEN 1973 and GOLDSMITH 1976 use it in their development of autosegmental phonology) and consonant mutation (DWYER 1969; CONTEH et al. 1986; TATEISHI 1990). In my investigation of Sewama Mende, I have found that tone plays a minimal role in the language, and as such I have little to say about it in this paper.

Grammars include AGINSKY (1935), CROSBY & WARD (1944), and SPEARS (1967), along with the substantial work of INNES (1961, 1967, 1969). SENGОВА (1981) is a dissertation by a native speaker considering tense and aspect in the language. SMITH (2023, 2024) look at island constructions and constraints in the language, while SMITH (2022b) looks at verbal constructions and word order. SMITH (2022a) looks at wh-constructions and resumption in Mende.

3. Focus in African languages

ADAMOU et al. (2018) argue that information structure (IS) categories are universal but are expressed by various language-specific means. Yet, much research has focused on well-studied languages. Crucially, they further argue that research on lesser known languages can challenge our theoretical assumptions.

Consider, for example, the role of phonology in focus constructions. Cross-linguistic work on focus has predominantly been concerned with its phonological properties (c.f. JACKENDOFF 1972; TRUCKENBRODT 1995; BÜRING 2010). AISSÉN (2015) describes various manifestations of the relationship between prosody and focus: pitch accent marks focus in English, tone is used in languages like Swedish, and Bengali, pitch range increases for focused constituents in Japanese, vowel lengthening can occur in Portuguese, and prosodic phrase boundaries are inserted in languages like Hungarian, Chichewa, and Japanese. In a similar vein, TRUCKENBRODT (1995) proposes a constraint based on JACKENDOFF (1972: 152) which states that “If a phrase P is chosen as the focus of a sentence S, the highest stress in S will be within P”. ABOH et al. (2007), however, indicate that in various Kwa, Gur, Bantu, and Chadic tonal languages that syntactic movement accounts for the role that stress provides in many German and Romance intonation languages.

As indicated above, in my investigation of Sewama Mende, I have found tone to play a minimal role, which is quite a dramatic departure from the research carried out in the 1960s and 1970s noted above. While it is unclear why the current data differs from previous research, it may be that Sewama Mende has never had the same tone patterns as those indicated fifty years ago (note that INNES (1967) uses the Koo dialect), or the patterns have changed over the half-century. Regardless of the prominence of tone in Mende, it does seem that it patterns like tonal languages in utilizing syntactic transformations above phonological processes in marking tone.

Whether the focus strategies used by Mende more broadly represent the Mande language family is still quite unclear, as there is a dearth of analyses of focus in the Mande languages, apart from NIKITINA’s (2018) analysis of Wan. The data that Nikitina presents show only in-situ focus, and, as such, it is not clear whether movement of a focused object to the left periphery is even utilized in Wan. In contrast, Mende tends to utilize ex-situ focus-fronting frequently. Given the paucity of data on focus in other Mande languages, it is unclear whether they align with Mende, Wan, or neither. A goal of this paper, in any case, is to provide a baseline for future research in both describing and analyzing focus in the Mande language family.

Working within the framework established by ROTH (1985, 1992) and KISS (1998), AISSÉN (2015) looks more concretely at how to document focus in languages. She suggests that focus is concerned with differentiating that which is new information (focus) from that which is already known (background). She

identifies five types of focus: an information focus and four types of identificational or contrastive focus. Information focus provides new information, while contrastive focus selects one member of a set of alternatives, while others are rejected. The four types of contrastive / identificational focus are correction, which corrects a previous utterance, selection which selects from alternatives proposed in a previous utterance, addition which adds more information to make an answer exhaustive, and exhaustive focus which chooses one alternative as exhaustive. In order to consider whether these types of focus can be distinguished in Mende, in the following section, I introduce focus and *wh*-constructions in the language.

4. Focus marking strategies

4.1 Left peripheral focus

As noted in (1) focus in Mende can be either in-situ or in the left periphery. In this section, I look at left peripheral focus. The arguments of the verb can be focused in the left periphery when they precede the left peripheral focus marker **mia**. (2a) is a canonical sentence, while in (2b) the direct object **manguisia** 'mangoes' surfaces in the left periphery, and the 3rd person plural resumptive pronoun **ti** surfaces in its canonical position. In (2c) the dative object **ndupuisia** 'children' surfaces in the left periphery. It is ungrammatical for the preposition **a** 'to' to surface in the left periphery. Instead, the preposition remains in its canonical position and the 3rd person plural resumptive pronoun **tiye** surfaces. (2d) shows that the subject can also be focused, but interestingly there is no resumptive pronoun that surfaces when the subject surfaces in the left periphery.

(2) a. Canonical sentence

Mary mangu-i-sia gɛ-nga a ndupu-i-sia
 Mary mango-DEF-PL show-PRF to child-DEF-PL
 'Mary showed the mangoes to the children.'

b. Object focus

mangu-i-sia mia Mary ti gɛ-nga a ndupu-i-sia
 mango-DEF.PL FOC.L Mary 3PL show-PRF to child-DEF-PL
 'It is the mangoes that Mary showed to the children.'

c. *Dative focus*

(*a) **ndupu-i-sia mia Mary**
 to child-DEF-PL FOC.L Mary
mangu-i-sia gɛ-nga a tiye
 mango-DEF-PL show-PRF to 3PL
 'It is to the children that Mary showed the mangoes.'

d. *Subject focus*

Mary mia (*ngi) mangu-i-sia gɛ-nga a ndupu-i-sia
 Mary FOC.L 3SG mango-DEF-PL show-PRF to child-DEF-PL
 'It is Mary who showed the mangoes to the children.'

In addition to verbal arguments, adjuncts can also surface in the left periphery. In (3a) the locative **betii ma** 'on the table' surfaces in the left periphery, with the resumptive pronoun **na** 'there' surfacing in its canonical position. In (3b) the instrumental object **mboweisias** 'knives' surfaces in the left periphery, however, the preposition **a** 'with' cannot surface with it, remaining in-situ instead with the resumptive pronoun **tiye** replacing the focused constituent. Finally, in (3c) the manner adverb **a babahunwe** 'with carelessness' surfaces in the left periphery.

- (3) a. **beti-i ma mia Peter mangu-i-sia wu-nga na**
 table-DEF on FOC.L Peter mango-DEF-PL put-PRF LOC
 'It is on the table that Peter put the mangoes.'
- b. (*a) **mbowe-i-sia mia ndupu-i-sia**
 with knife-DEF-PL FOC.L child-DEF-PL
ti kpiti-i-sia hawa-nga a tiye
 3PL rope-DEF-PL cut-PRF with 3PL
 'It is with knives that the children cut the ropes.'
- c. **a babahunwe mia Mary mahe-i latu-nga**
 with carelessness FOC.L Mary chief-DEF praise-PRF
 'It is carelessly that Mary praised the chief.'

While arguments and adjuncts of the verb can surface in the left periphery, the verb itself cannot, either with a dummy verb as in (4b) (c.f. GÜLDEMANN et al. 2014 for dummy verb constructions in Hausa) or via verb doubling (4c) (c.f. ABOH 2006 for verb doubling in Gbe languages and Yoruba).

(4) a. *Canonical sentence***Peter Mary latu-nga**

Peter Mary praise-PRF

'Peter praised Mary.'

b. *Focus with dummy verb****latu mia Peter Mary wie-nga**

praise FOC.L Peter Mary do-PRF

Intended: 'It is praise Mary that Peter did'

c. *Focus with verb doubling****latu mia Peter Mary latu-nga**

praise FOC.L Peter Mary praise-PRF

Intended: 'It is praise Mary that Peter did.'

Wh-questions can also surface in left-peripheral constructions. In (5b), the direct object is transformed into a wh-phrase and surfaces in the left periphery as **gbɛ** 'what' with the resumptive 3rd person plural pronoun **ti** in its canonical position. In (5c) the subject is transformed into a wh-phrase and moved into the left periphery where it surfaces as **ye** 'who,' and there is no resumptive pronoun.

(5) a. *Canonical sentence***Mary mangu-i-sia gɛ-nga a ndupu-i-sia**

Mary mango-DEF-PL show-PRF to child-DEF-PL

'Mary showed the pineapples to the children.'

b. *Wh-targeted object***gbɛ mia Mary ti gɛ-nga a ndupu-i-sia**

what FOC.L Mary 3PL show-PRF to child-DEF-PL

'What is it that Mary showed to the children?'

c. *Wh-targeted subject***ye mia mangu-i-sia gɛ-nga a ndupu-i-sia**

who FOC.L mango-DEF-PL show-PRF to child-DEF-PL

'Who is it that showed the mangoes to the children?'

4.2 In-situ focus

In addition to left peripheral focus, it is also possible for verbal arguments to be focused in-situ with the in-situ focus marker **lɔ**. The data in (6) show that the object (b), dative (c), and subject (d) can all be focused in-situ. It should be noted, however, that subject focus with **lɔ** is uncommon.

(6) a. *Canonical sentence*

Mary mangu-i-sia gɛ-nga a ndupu-i-sia
 Mary mango-DEF-PL show-PRF to child-DEF-PL
 'Mary showed the mangoes to the children'

b. *Object focus*

Mary mangu-i-sia lɔ gɛ-nga a ndupu-i-sia
 Mary mango-DEF-PL FOC.I show-PRF to child-DEF-PL
 'Mary showed THE MANGOES to the children.'

c. *Dative focus*

Mary mangu-i-sia gɛ-nga a ndupu-i-sia lɔ
 Mary mango-DEF-PL show-PRF to child-DEF-PL FOC.L
 'Mary showed the mangoes TO THE CHILDREN.'

d. *Subject focus*

Mary lɔ mangu-i-sia gɛ-nga a ndupu-i-sia
 Mary FOC.I mango-DEF-PL sho-PRF to child-DEF-PL
 'MARY showed the pineapples to the children.'

Likewise, adjuncts can be focused in-situ, including manner adverbs (7a), locative adjuncts (7b), and instrumental adjuncts.

(7) a. *Manner adverb*

Mary a babahunwɛ lɔ mahe-i latu-nga
 Mary withcarelessness FOC.I chief praise-PRF
 'Mary CARELESSLY praised the chief.'

b. *Locative*

Peter mangu-i-sia wu-nga beti-i ma lɔ
 Peter mango-DEF-PL put-PRF table-DEF on FOC.I
 'Mary put the pineapples ON THE TABLE.'

c. *Instrumental*

ndupu-i-sia ti kpiti-i-sia hawa-nga a mbowe-i-sia lo
 child-DEF-PL 3PL rope-DEF-PL cut-PRF with knife-DEF-PL FOC.L
 'The children but the ropes WITH THE KNIVES.'

Verbs can be focused in-situ, as seen in (8) where the verb **latu** 'praise' is focused by the in-situ focus marker **lo**.

(8) a. *Canonical sentence*

Peter Mary latu-nga
 Peter Mary praise-PRF
 'Peter praised Mary.'

b. *Verb focus*

Peter Mary latu-nga lo
 Peter Mary praise-PRF FOC.I
 'Peter PRAISED Mary.'

Wh-constructions follow the same pattern and can surface in-situ. While (9a) is a canonical sentence, in (9b) the direct object is transformed into the wh-phrase **gbɛ** 'what.' This wh-word is marked by the in-situ focus marker **lo**, and through a process of regressive vowel-harmony, the vowel in the wh-word aligns with the vowel in **lo**, yielding **gbɔ-ɔ** 'what-FOC.I.' A similar process occurs with the wh-subject, which becomes **ye** 'who', before the vowel in the focus marker **lo** triggers vowel change in the wh-phrase, yielding **yɔ-ɔ** 'who-FOC.I.'

(9) a. *Canonical sentence*

Mary mangu-i-sia gɛ-nga a ndupu-i-sia
 Mary mango-DEF-PL show-PRF to child-DEF-PL
 'Mary showed the mangoes to the children.'

b. *What*

Mary gbɔ-ɔ gɛ-nga a ndupu-i-sia
 Mary what-FOC.I show-PRF to child-DEF-PL
 'What did Mary show the children?'

c. *Who*

yɔ-ɔ mangu-i-sia gɛ-nga a ndupu-i-sia
 who-FOC.I mango-DEF-PL show-PRF to child-DEF-PL
 ‘Who showed the pineapples to the children?’

4.3 *Lexical focus markers*

In addition to the left-peripheral and in-situ focus markers, there are three adverbs that function as lexical focus markers in the language: **lee** ‘only’ (10), **bɛɛ** ‘also’ (11) and **vui** (12), which is an emphatic marker.

- (10) **John mangu-i-sia lee ve-nga nya wɛ**
 John mango-DEF-PL only show-PRF 1SG to
 ‘John gave me only mangoes (not pineapples or bananas).’

- (11) **John nika-nga sawa bɛɛ maji-nga**
 John cow-INDEF three also sell-PRF
 ‘John also sold three cows (in addition to selling two goats).’

- (12) **nyapu-i {vui} kali-i {vui} gɛ-nga {vui} a mahe-i {vui}**
 girl-DEF EMPH snake EMPH show-PRF EMPH to chief-DEF EMPH
 ‘The girl showed the snake to the chief.’

5. *Discerning different types of focus in Mende*

AISSÉN (2015) following ROTH (1992) suggests that it is the presence of alternatives that distinguishes information focus from contrastive focus. Information focus communicates information without any sense of whether alternative propositions are true or false, while contrastive focus requires that alternatives are known and rejected. She acknowledges, however, that the question of what exactly is necessary for focus to be contrastive is unclear, as is a typology of contrastive focus. The question that she highlights and that I take up in this section is whether there are grammatical distinctions that align with these five types of focus in Mende, acknowledging that these distinctions could be either categorical or gradient. I look specifically at whether information focus can be distinguished from identificational focus and whether there is any further distinguishable grammatical structure that specifies the different types of identificational structure. As seen in the following data, the short answer to

this question is that I can discern no grammatical difference in how Aissen's different types of focus are marked.

In order to test her hypothesis, I first elicited grammaticality judgments to establish baseline neutral (that is non-focused) constructions. I then created scenarios intended to elicit responses that could be categorized under the five types of focus set out by Aissen. In these scenarios, I provided an initial context for my consultants, describing a situation. I subsequently asked them how one of the characters in the context would provide initial information or ask an initial question, allowing my consultants to create the dialogue. Next, I asked them how the other character in the context would answer or respond to the initial question or information, with these responses intended to be examples of the means by which Aissen's five different types of focus are expressed in Mende. It should be noted that these are simply a first attempt at understanding whether Mende distinguishes between different types of focus, with a more nuanced analysis requiring a much more significant investment of time and, even more beneficially, collaboration with trained native speakers.

5.1 Information focus

I first consider information focus, and in the following example consider object focus. The context is as follows: *Peter went to the market, and upon his return his wife Grace asked him who he saw at the market.* My consultant identified two ways in which Grace could ask Peter this question. The left peripheral question and answer are in (13), while the in-situ question and answer are in (14). In both cases the answer mirrors the question. Note in (13) that in both the question and answer that 3rd person singular resumptive pronoun **ngi** surfaces in the canonical position of the *wh*-word / focused answer. In considering this and other examples, impressionistically, focus-fronted questions and answers are more common. I discuss possible reasons for this in section 6.

(13) Left peripheral question / answer

- a. **ye mia bi ngi lɔ-nga njɔpɔwa hun**
 who FOC.L 2SG 3SG see-PRF market in
 'Who did you see at the market?'
- b. **Mary mia ngi ngi lɔ-nga**
 Mary FOC.L 1SG 3SG see-PRF
 'It was Mary that I saw.'

(14) *In-situ question / answer*

- a. **bi yə-ə lə-nga njəpəwa hun**
 2SG who-FOC.I see-PRF market at
 'Who did you see at the market?'
- b. **ngi Mary lə lə-nga**
 1SG Mary FOC.I see-PRF
 'I saw MARY.'

5.2 *Correction focus*

Correction focus in Mende also uses both **mia** and **lə**, with **mia** being used to focus the subject, while **lə** is used for non-subjects. This variation can be seen in the following examples. The context for (15) is the following: *Paul gets angry when things don't go his way. Last night he and his friend John were sneaking around the village and were stopped by the chief. A confrontation occurs and the chief was insulted. A is telling B about it, but A does not have all of the details right, and B corrects A.* (15a) is a statement that includes the wrong information, namely that it was John who insulted the chief. Note that John is the subject of the sentence, and the correction in (15b) correspondingly uses left peripheral focus.

- (15) a. **John mahe-i gbafa-nga**
 John chief-DEF insult-PRF
 'John insulted the chief.'
- b. **ə ə, Paul mia ngi gbafa-nga**
 No, Paul FOC.L 3SG insult-PRF
 'No, it was Paul who insulted him'

This contrasts with correction focus of a dative, as seen in (16). The context is as follows: *George just bought a new motorbike and decided to give his old one to his friend Mary. A and B are talking about it, but A does not have the correct details. When Mary walks by, she corrects A's wrong information.* In this construction the incorrect information is in the dative phrase that it was to Peter that George gave his old motorbike. The correct information in (16b) uses an in-situ focus construction to communicate the correct information. In these examples we see a subject-non-subject asymmetry. The subject is focused in a left peripheral construction, while the dative construction is focused in-situ.

- (16) a. **George vɔngregeje wove-i ve-nga Peter wɛ**
 George motorbike old-DEF give-PRF Peter to
 'George gave his old motorbike to Peter.'
- b. **ɔ ɔ, George fe-nga nya-a wɛ**
 No, George give-PRF me-FOC.I to
 'No, George gave his old motorbike TO ME.'

5.3 Selection focus

This asymmetry also surfaces in selection focus constructions, as seen in the following contrast between focus of a subject (17) and focus of an object (18). Here is the context for the selection focus construction: *A and B are discussing whether Mary or Jane bought mangoes at the market. A poses the initial question with B selecting one of the alternatives and rejecting the other.* The question in (17a) queries whether it was Mary or Jane who bought mangoes, with the answer in (17b) using a left peripheral focus construction to answer a subject focus question.

- (17) a. **Mary ɔ Jane mangu-i-sia yeya-nga**
 Mary or Jane mango-DEF-PL buy-PRF
 'Did Mary or Jane buy the mangoes?'
- b. **Mary mia mangu-i-sia yeya-nga**
 Mary FOC.L mango-DEF-PL buy-PRF
 'It is Mary that bought the mangoes.'

In contrast, an in-situ focus construction is used when the focused constituent is in a non-subject position, as in (18) with the following context: *A and B are discussing whether Mary or Jane bought mangoes at the market. A poses the initial question with B selecting one of the alternatives and rejecting the other.* In this context the members of the set from which one will be selected are in the object position, and an in-situ construction is used.

- (18) a. **Mary mangu-i-sia ɔ sɛɛ-i-sia yeya-nga**
 Mary mango-DEF-PL or banana-DEF-PL buy-PRF
 'Did Mary buy the mangoes or the bananas?'
- b. **Mary mangu-i-sia lo yeya-nga**
 Mary mango-DEF-PL FOC.I buy-PRF
 'Mary bought THE MANGOES.'

5.4 Exhaustive focus

Exhaustive Focus constructions follow a similar pattern, while incorporating the use of the lexical focus marker **lee** ‘only.’ The data in (19) shows a context in which two possible options are provided, with only one being selected. The context is as follows: *John and Paul are brothers, and they got in a fight at school with George. Their teacher Mr. Lawrence calls the boys’ mom Mary. Mary asks if both John and Paul hit George, but Mr. Lawrence responds that only John did so.* In (19a) *John and Paul* are both indicated as possible subjects, while in (19b) *John* is chosen as the exhaustive answer to the query. A left peripheral construction is used **lee** ‘only’ follows the focus marker **mia**.

- (19) a. **John ta Paul ti George lugba-nga**

John and Paul 3PL George hit-PRF

‘Did John and Paul both hit George?’

- b. **John mia lee Paul lugba-nga**

John FOC.L only Paul hit-PRF

‘It is only John who hit Paul.’

An in-situ focus construction is used to mark exhaustive focus of a non-subject, as seen in (20a). The context is the following: *A has heard that Mary has extra cassava and asks if she ate it with Peter, Paul, and John. B answers that she ate it only with John.* In this construction there are three members of the set proposed as the possible answer, namely Peter, Paul, and John. In (20b) the exhaustive answer Peter is selected from among them and is marked with in-situ focus. Interestingly, in this construction **lee** ‘only’ precedes the focus marker **lɔ**.

- (20) a. **Mary tange-i mɛ-nga a Peter, Paul, kɛ John**

Mary cassava-DEF eat-PRF with Peter Paul and John

‘Did Mary eat the cassava with Peter, Paul, and John?’

- b. **ɔ ɔ, Mary tange-i mɛ-nga a Peter lee-lɔ**

No Mary cassava-DEF eat-PRF with Peter only-FOC.I

‘No, Mary ate the cassava with ONLY Peter.’

5.5 Addition focus

The final type of focus that I consider is addition focus, and in this type of focus we find a slight deviation from the patterns seen in the other types of focus. Specifically, there is no focus marker used in the answer. Consider the data in (21) with the following context: *A went to his farm today to plant rice and cassava. When he gets home, B asks him if he has planted rice. He answers that he has, but adds that he has also planted cassava.* In this construction a question is asked as to whether **mbei** 'rice' was planted at the farm today. The response indicates that it was, and that in addition *tangei* 'cassava' was also planted. In this construction, it is ungrammatical for either **lo** (21b) or **mia** (21c) to surface. The answer is given with the lexical marker **bɛɛ** 'also' following the focused constituent.

- (21) a. **bi mbe-i hin-nga ha kpaa hun**
 2SG rice-DEF plant-PRF today farm on
 'Did you plant rice at the farm today?'
- b. **ɔɔ, ngi tange-i bɛɛ (*lo) hin-nga**
 Yes 1SG cassava-DEF also FOC.I plant-PRF
 'Yes, I also planted cassava.'
- c. ***ɔɔ, tange-i mia ngi bɛɛ hin-nga**
 Yes rice-DEF FOC.L 1SG also plant-PRF
 'Yes, it is cassava that I also planted.'

5.6 Discussion

Any conclusions regarding the distinction of different types of focus in the language should be provisional in nature. Fundamentally, it is not immediately evident that there is a distinction in how each of the five focus types are marked in Mende. Both **mia** and **lo** are used in marking information, correction, selection, and exhaustive focus, while addition focus uses **bɛɛ** 'also' and neither **mia** nor **lo**. Based on this data, my initial conclusion is that Aissen's five types of focus cannot be grammatically distinguished in Mende. Not only is any distinction between different types of identificational focus opaque, the question of whether any particular grammatical structure separates identificational from informational structure remains equally unclear.

Much more can and should be considered in order to have a more precise understanding of how different types of focus surface in Mende. First, I would propose that there is something of a subject non-subject asymmetry in how focus is marked that should be further investigated. Superficially, it seems there is a strong tendency for subjects to be focus-marked by **mia** while non-subjects are focus marked by **lo**. That data suggests that it is much more predictable that an object would be marked by **lo** than that a certain construction would mark it as a specific type of focus (e.g. information focus, addition focus, etc.).

Second, in querying my consultants, they have provided various, and at times seemingly conflicting, insights as to why a speaker might ask a question using an in-situ or focus-fronted construction, as well as why they might choose one option over another in answering. They have described ‘formal’ register (**mia**) vs. ‘informal’ register (**lo**) speech and ‘normal’ (**mia**) vs. ‘fast’ (**lo**) speech as indicators of which pattern a speaker is likely to use. Further investigation might provide fruitful in uncovering predictable patterns.

Finally, when asked what percentage of speakers (e.g. in a market setting) would use **mia** versus **lo** in asking a question, they suggested a 70% - 30% breakdown in favor of **mia**. This is somewhat surprising as it normalizes ‘formal’ speech. My inclination is that the more important distinction is ‘normal’ vs. ‘fast’ speech. Most speakers use the ‘normal’ construction with **mia**, but when they are in a hurry they utilize **lo**. In any case, a more ethnographic or sociolinguistic approach might prove productive in seeing and analyzing patterns of use. This may be particularly constructive in teasing out whether there is a gradient distinction, as this initial data seems much less supportive of an eventual argument for a categorical distinction.

6. Conclusion

In developing this initial analysis, methodologically, I have utilized an approach to documenting focus in Mende that first elicits both non-focus and focus data to establish a baseline and analyze how focus might be grammatically marked. This is a relatively straightforward process. I subsequently established contexts that would enable me to elicit Aissen’s five types of focus in order to discern whether they might be grammatically marked. This approach at most allowed for tentative initial observations. Further work with trained native speakers could be quite productive in developing a more fine-grained analysis.

Descriptively, I argue that focus in Mende is principally syntactic and morphological in nature, similar to what has been proposed for tone languages

(ABOH et al. 2007). I show how focus is marked in Mende, describing the distribution of the focus markers *lo* and *mia*, which also take part in the question formation process. I also briefly describe the semantic focus markers *bεε* 'also' and *lee* 'only', in addition to the emphatic marker *vui*.

I further provide some initial data as part of a consideration of whether there is any grammatical distinction in how different types of focus are marked in Mende. Theoretically, the Mende data seems to indicate, at least initially, that there is no distinction in how different types of focus are marked in Mende. Given the limited data sample, this conclusion should be open to modification with further data.

In light of how little research has been done on focus or information structure more broadly in the Mande languages, this paper brings some new data to bear on our understanding of focus marking. Syntax and morphology seem to play the key roles, though many questions remain. In this regard, Mende affirms the observation of ADAMOU et al. (2018) in noting that much work on information structure utilizes well-known languages with lesser known languages challenging those assumptions. This data, I believe, raises some questions.

There are a number of aspects of this research that warrant further study. A more fine-grained consideration of the role of pitch might show Mende to align with the tonal languages indicated by ABOH et al. (2007) in using syntactic movement to mark focus. The exact nature of *mia* and *lo* should also be further studied. Are they clitics, syntactic heads, or something else entirely? Finally, this research could also prove fruitful in understanding the distribution and function of focus constructions in other Mande languages.

Abbreviations

1 first person, 2 second person, 3 third person, DEF definite, EMPH emphatic, FOC.I in-situ focus, FOC.L left-peripheral focus, INDEF indefinite, LOC locative, PL plural, PRF perfective, SG singular

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Varieties of polar questions in Dschang

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Abstract

This paper investigates polar questions in Dschang, a member of the Bamileke cluster spoken in Cameroon. Five morpho-syntactically distinct strategies for forming polar questions are discussed. We show that these are distinguished in their morphology, syntax, and pragmatics by comparing the felicity of the different constructions in varied contexts. We also briefly discuss, Medumba, another Bamileke language that possesses an elaborated system of polar question formation.

Key words: Grassfields, syntax, pragmatics, interrogative

1. Introduction

In this paper, we outline and discuss a number of strategies for forming “canonical” and “non-canonical” questions in Dschang, focusing on Polar Questions, and compare these results to strategies found elsewhere in the Grassfields Languages. A Polar Question concerns the truth/polarity of the proposition and is usually answered by “yes” or “no”. We show that canonical polar questions are formed in three ways (tonal and segmental morphology). Broadly, Dschang is of interest because it displays a number of strategies to encode speaker bias and belief. As question formation has not been widely studied in the Grassfields languages, the current paper on Dschang contributes to the description of these complex constructions.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents background on the Dschang language. In Section 3 we discuss the types of polar questions found cross-linguistically, while Section 4 introduces the morpho-syntax of polar question types in Dschang. Section 5 moves to a discussion of speaker bias and how this can be encoded in Dschang polar questions. Section 6 presents a preliminary comparison between Dschang and Medumba, another language of

the Bamileke cluster that also possesses and elaborated system of biased-question formations. We conclude with in Section 7 with a summary and outlook.

2. Background on Dschang

Dschang (ISO 639-3 ybb) is also known as “Yemba” and “Bamileke-Dschang”. It is a Grassfields Bantu language of Western Cameroon, Bamiléké cluster, along with Fe’fe’, Ghomálá, Kwa’, Mengaka, Nda’nda’, Ngyemboon, Ngomba, Ngombale, and Ngwe. There are approximately 300,000 speakers (as of 1996: *Ethnologue* (13th ed., 1996)). There are 4 surface-level tones and 8 noun classes (TADADJEU 1975, HYMAN & TADADJEU 1976, HARRO & HAYNES 1991). The unmarked word order is STVO (Subject > Tense > Verb > Object), as in (1a-b). Negation is bipartite, with the first element consisting of a clause-internal **te** (for the tenses that we discuss here), which follows past tenses (1c), but precedes future tenses (1d). The second negative element consists of a tone-bearing moraic element that occurs in sentence-final position.

- (1) a. **Shufó le káj mbap¹**
 shufo DIST.PAST fry meat
 ‘Shufo fried the meat.’
- b. **Shufó luú káj mbap**
 shufo DIST.FUT fry meat
 ‘Shufo will fry the meat.’
- c. **Shufo le te káj mbap á**
 shufo DIST.FUT NEG1 fry meat NEG2
 ‘Shufo did not fry the meat’
- d. **Shufo te luú káj mbap á**
 shufo NEG1 DIST.FUT fry meat NEG2
 ‘Shufo will not fry the meat.’

¹ Thanks to Rolain Tankou for sharing his language and insights with us.

3. Polar Question Types Cross-linguistically

Cross-linguistically, several different “flavors” of polar questions (and content/wh-questions) have been identified (FARKAS 2020). In describing polar question types, it is useful to consider a proposition p and its negation $\neg p$. In a neutral or canonical question, the speaker does not have a bias towards whether p is true or false. That is, there is no bias towards the truth of p or $\neg p$. So-called “biased questions” are a type of non-canonical/neutral question. For a proposition p , a biased polar question is one where the speaker holds a negative or positive bias as to whether p is true or false (roughly following ideas in LADD 1981, ROMERO AND HAN 2004, ASHER AND REESE 2007, REESE 2007, SUDO 2013, HOLMBERG 2016, KEUPDIJO AND WILTSCHKO 2018). Use of a neutral English question like (2), indicates that the speaker is not biased towards the truth of either “Mary won the game” or “Mary did not win the game”.

(2) Did Mary win the game?

Positive Polar Question

English has multiple types of biased questions. In a “high negation” question like (3), the speaker is biased towards truth of the proposition “Mary won the game”:

(3) Didn't Mary win the game?

High Negation Polar Question

Morpho-syntactically, the High Negation question involves the presence of the negative clitic **n't** attached to the inverted pre-subject auxiliary. In a “Low Negation” question (4), the speaker is biased towards truth of the proposition “Mary did not win the game”:

(4) Did Mary not win the game?

Low Negation Polar Question

An additional type of biased question in English is the much-studied “Tag” question, where a short interrogative “tag” clause is appended to the main clause:

(5) Mary won the game, didn't she?

Tag Question

There are different kinds of tag questions in English, but the type in (5) is biased towards truth of “Mary won the game”. In summary, polar questions do not form a homogenous category cross-linguistically. That is, within this category, there are several subtypes that are distinguished morphologically,

syntactically, and pragmatically. With this in mind, one outstanding issue is the characterization of the inventory of polar question types that are grammatically encoded across the world's languages. To this end, we next turn to polar question types in Dschang.

4. Question types in Dschang

4.1 Neutral questions

There are three types of neutral questions. Taking (6a) as a base, (6b) shows a 'simple' neutral question:

- (6) a. **o** **le** **lí-i** ¹**zo**
 2SG DIST.PAST sleep-S.CONC yesterday
 'You slept yesterday.'
- b. **o** **le** **lí-i** **zo** ¹**o** Simple Neutral Question
 2SG DIST.PAST sleep-S.CONC yesterday Q
 'Did you sleep yesterday?'

Simple neutral questions are marked by the presence of a sentence-final low tone bearing mora, which we take to be a question particle. Note that this is distinct from the clause-final moraic negation marker (NEG2) given in (2c-e).

The second type of neutral question, a '**te** neutral question', involves a left edge **te** and the clause-final question particle. Thus, both the left and right clausal peripheries are marked in this construction.

- (7) **Te** **o** **le** **lí-i** **zo** ¹**o**
 Q 2SG DIST.PAST sleep-S.CONC yesterday Q
 'Did you sleep yesterday?'

Morphologically, the **te** found in this construction is homophonous with clause-internal negation 'NEG1' (2c-d). Negative morphology is often found in polar question formation cross-linguistically as in Mandarin (CHEN 2022), Teochew (COLE AND LEE 1997), Vietnamese (DUFFIELD 2013), and Gitksan (RIGSBY 1986), among others.

In the third neutral construction, there is a clause-final high tone **lé**. (The **lé** is typically preceded by the moraic Q marker, although there is somewhat

inconsistent induction of vowel lengthening to our ears.) It is also possible to place an optional **te** at the left edge of this type of interrogative clause:

- (8) **(te) o le lí-i zo o lé**
 Q 2SG DIST.PAST sleep-S.CONC yesterday Q Q
 ‘Did you sleep yesterday?’

The presence of multiple question particles raises questions about the syntax of these constructions and of the semantic contribution of the different particles.

4.2 Disbelieving questions

In the ‘disbelieving’ or ‘surprise’ biased question construction, the speaker expresses surprise at the contra-expectation of the truth of the proposition *p*, as indicated in the context above (9). In Dschang this type of question is a complex construction that may be biclausal. This is suggested by the presence of a (sometimes audible) pause after the **lé**:

Context: The speaker knows that Shufo is bad with money and usually broke. Someone has told the speaker that Shufo has been spending money on expensive things. This is surprising given what the speaker knows.

- (9) **á ku le, Shufo wée ŋkap u**
 FOC what Q shufo have money Q
 ‘Shufo has money!?’

The construction appears to involve the Q-particle **le** with an unexpected low tone, preceded by the focus marker and the word for ‘what’. In addition, the clause following **lé**, has the right edge Q-particle.

4.3 Confirmation questions

Another type of biased question grammatically encoded in Dschang is what we call “confirmation” questions. For these, the speaker already believes that the proposition *p* is true and seeks confirmation or assurance from the interlocutor that *p* is indeed true. This is exemplified in the context given for (10a):

Context: Speaker believes (for some reason or other) that the children have passed the test and wants confirmation.

- (10) a. **wəŋku** **le** **tək-ə** **sukuu** **á** **pup** **'u**
 children DIST.PAST pass-S.CONC school FOC like.that Q
 'The children passed the test, right?'
 b. **məŋ** **le** **kón** **pa'** **Shufo** **le** **zap** **'pup**
 1SG DIST.PAST like how shufo DIST.PAST sing like.that
 'I like the way that Shufo sang.'

In this construction, the proposition to be confirmed is followed by three elements. There is the by-now-familiar clause-final moraic Q-particle. It is unclear how to characterize the other material. As a working hypothesis, we take the **á** to be the focus marker. The **pup** is potentially a noun that corresponds roughly to “like that” or “that way”, as in (10b). We leave this point to be clarified by future research.

4.4 Doubtful questions

The last type of biased question that we discuss here, are “doubtful” questions. These are used when the speaker doubts that the proposition *p* holds and seeks (dis)confirmation. These are potentially pragmatically similar to the disbelieving/surprise questions discussed in Section 4.2, as the context above (11) suggests. Impressionistically, the doubtful question lacks (or has less of) a surprise flavor.

Context: The speaker knows that Shufo is bad with money and usually broke. Someone has told the speaker that Shufo has been spending money on expensive things.

- (11) **'ŋ-xu** **Shufo** **le** **wé-e** **ŋkap** **a**
 CONS-say shufo DIST.PAST have-S.CONC money Q
 'Does Shufo really have money?'

Doubtful questions are introduced by the “consecutive”/nasal-prefixed form of the verb “say” (which also functions independently as a complementizer). The consecutive form otherwise found in non-future serial verb constructions. The clause-final Q marker also present. The consecutive form of ‘say’ is also found in matrix “optative” constructions:

- (12) a. **'ŋ-xu Shufo gɔ' mbiyaŋ**
 CONS-say shufo grind peanut
 'I wish that Shufo would grind the peanuts.'
- b. **'ŋ-xu ndo' Shufo gɔ' mbiyaŋ**
 CONS-say NEG shufo grind peanut
 'I wish that Shufo wouldn't grind the peanuts.'

(We note in passing that the negation in this clause type as in (12b), **ndo'**, is different from that found in ordinary matrix clauses. We leave the issue of the distribution of the different negations for future research.)

Table 1 below summarizes what we have shown in this section. Namely, Dschang has multiple neutral and biased question strategies:

QUESTION TYPE	FORM
Simple neutral	[CP] μ
te Neutral	te [CP] μ
le Neutral	(te) [CP] μ le
Surprise	a ke le [CP] μ
Confirmation	[CP] a pup μ
Doubtful	ŋxu [CP] μ

Table 15 – Templates of Question Forms in Dschang

The polar interrogative differs morphologically, syntactically, and pragmatically.

5. Bias in polar questions

In this section we manipulate contextual information as a way to explore the biases associated with particular Q-particles and constructions. Specifically, we provide the speaker with a context/background and check the (in)felicity/oddness of a particular Q-particle/construction. In Section 4, we posited that certain types of polar questions are sensitive to a speaker's bias toward an underlying proposition. We essentially follow the method used in KEUPDIJO & WILTSCHKO (2018).

In applying this method to Dschang, we consider first some of the English biased questions discussed previously, with the context above (13).

Context: Jason has been a vegan for years. Tim knows this, but Susan has just said that Jason ate pork rinds at a party. He asks a mutual friend about this.

- (13) a. **Did Jason eat pork rinds at the party?** Neutral
 b. #Didn't Jason eat pork rinds at the party? Positive Bias
 c. **Jason didn't eat pork rinds at the party, did he?** Negative Bias

Given the context, the neutral (i.e. no bias encoded) question in (13a) is fine. On the other hand, (13b), with a positive bias question is infelicitous. That is, for the question in (13b), Tim expects *p* ("Jason ate pork rinds at the party") to be true, but this is at odds with what Tim knows about Jason. (13c) has a negative bias question and is felicitous. In this case, the negative bias means that Tim expects $\neg p$ to be true, ("Jason did not eat pork rinds at the party").

In investigating bias, we first consider a context of ignorance and the felicity of neutral question constructions. Consider a context like the following:

Context: A and B are complete strangers. A is going from house to house doing a transit survey for the city. A wants to find out how many cars are in each neighbourhood. A asks B:

- (14) a. **u** ¹**wé-é** **matúwə** **ə** Neutral Simple
 2SG have-S.CONC car Q
 'Do you have a car?'
 b. **te** **u** ¹**wé-é** **matúwə** **ə** Neutral **te**
 Q 2SG have-S.CONC car Q
 'Do you have a car?'
 c. **u** ¹**wé-é** **matúwə** **ə** **lé** Neutral **lé**
 2SG have-S.CONC car Q Q
 'Do you have a car?'

Holding the context steady, examples in (15) below show the infelicity of confirmation and doubtful questions:

- (15) a. **#ŋ-xú** **u** ¹**wé-é** **matúwə** **ə** Doubtful
 CONS-say 2SG have-S.CONC car Q
 'Do you have a car?'
 b. **#u** ¹**wé-é** **matúwə**, **á** **pup** **ə** Confirmation
 2SG have-S.CONC car FOC like.that Q
 'Do you have a car?'

Out of the blue, with A having no knowledge or expectation with regard to B's car ownership, biased utterances are infelicitous. The speaker commented: "You could say this if something made you think it's possible that I have [or don't have a car], like tire prints."

Contexts of familiarity are also helpful in teasing apart bias in questions. In this case, we take a context that is negatively biased. That is, we look at the behavior of questions where the speaker expects $\neg p$ to hold:

Context: I am your doctor. I have known you for a long time and I know that you have a very healthy lifestyle. You are not a teetotaler, but you rarely drink. You are scrolling on your phone showing me pictures of a party you went to a while ago. There is a blurry picture of someone apparently drinking palm wine and it might be you. It wouldn't be a crazy thing for you to do, but I ask you about it:

- (16) a. **o le nú-u melu'lá a** Neutral Simple
 2SG DIST.PAST drink-S.CONC palmwine Q
 'Did you drink palmwine?'
 b. **te o le nú-u melu'lá a** Neutral **te**
 Q 2SG DIST.PAST drink-S.CONC palmwine Q
 'Did you drink palmwine?'
 c. **o le nú-ù melu'lá a lé** Neutral **le**
 2SG DIST.PAST drink-S.CONC palmwine Q Q
 'Did you drink palmwine?'

Thus, neutral questions are felicitous with or without speaker bias toward p . In contrast, in such a negatively biased context, doubtful questions are felicitous:

- (17) **'ǰ-xu o le nú-ù melu'lá a** Doubtful
 CONS-say 2SG DIST.PAST drink-S.CONC palmwine Q
 'You didn't drink palmwine, did you?'

Doubtful Questions in a negatively biased context are felicitous when the speaker has an expectation that $\neg p$ holds. In this case, however, it is not true that the hearer drank palm wine. The speaker observed that, "[Using a 'Doubtful Question'] is like someone told you and now you're making sure. [...] It's based on what you already know. You just want to hear this from me."

At the same time, in this context, a confirmation question is infelicitous:

- (18) **#o le nú-ù mɛlu'lá, ǎ pup ə** Confirmation
 2SG DIST.PAST drink-S.CONC palmwine FOC like.that Q
 'You drank palmwine, didn't you?'

Confirmation Questions are infelicitous when the speaker has a positive bias toward *p*, i.e. A deems it possible that the hearer drank palm wine at the party. With this context, the speaker reported, "[By using a "Confirmation Question"] you really think that I did it and you want to make sure. 'You drank it. I know that you don't usually normally do it, but you drank it. Is it true?'"

Different patterns of felicity are observed when the context is changed to a familiar one with positive bias. That is, we consider the behaviour of questions in a context like the following where the speaker expects that the proposition *p* is true:

Context: I know that you love to fry meat. In fact, fried meat is your favorite food. You eat other things too, but when there's a chance, you'll usually fry meat. We're talking about a party that you attended. It's expected that you fried meat.

- (19) a. **wo le kâŋ mbap ə** Simple Neutral
 2SG DIST.PAST fry meat Q
 'Did you fry meat?'
- b. **te wo le kâŋ mbap ə** Neutral **te**
 Q 2SG DIST.PAST fry meat Q
 'Did you fry meat?'
- c. **wo le kâŋ mbap ə lé** Neutral **lɛ**
 2SG DIST.PAST fry meat Q Q
 'Did you fry meat?'

Once again, neutral questions are felicitous irrespective of speaker bias (17a-c). Consider next the felicity of doubtful and confirmation questions:

- (20) a. # **ʔ-ɣu** **wo** **le** **kân mbap ə** Doubtful
 CONS-say 2SG DIST.PAST fry meat Q
 'Did you fry meat?'
 b. **te wo le** **kân mbap á** **pup ə** Confirmation
 Q 2SG DIST.PAST fry meat FOC like.that Q
 'Did you fry meat?'

With the contextually supplied bias now reversed from negative to positive, "Doubtful Questions" are no longer felicitous. By contrast, "Confirmation Questions" are licensed.

To summarize, neutral questions in Dschang are insensitive to speaker biases (at least for the contexts we examined). In contrast, "Doubtful" and "Confirmation" questions are sensitive to speaker bias. These properties can be teased apart by putting these

6. Beyond Dschang-Polar Questions in Grassfields Languages

Complex systems of question formation are not limited to Dschang. KEUPDIJO & WILTSCHKO (2018) report on Medumba, a language of the Bamileke cluster, also from the Western region of Cameroon. They observe that there are seven different polar question constructions (21-23) that are distinguished morphologically and pragmatically: (21a) shows a neutral polar question, while (21b) gives a negatively biased question (i.e., the speaker expects $\neg p$ to be true). (All examples adapted from KEUPDIJO & WILTSCHKO 2018: 18).

- (21) a. **ú yùú bhú kí** Neutral
 2SG have dog PRT
 'Do you have a dog?'
 b. **ú yùú mbhú á-á** Negative Bias
 2SG have dog FOC-PRT
 'No! You have a dog? (I am really surprised! I don't believe it!'

In (22a) the speaker has a weak positive bias towards the truth of the proposition p , while (22b) is a case of strong positive bias towards the truth of

p. Interestingly, they note that the strength of bias in these questions is based on a previous conversation.

- (22) a. **ku ú yùú mbhú á** Weak Positive Bias
 PRT 2SG have dog PRT
 ‘So, do you have a dog then?’
- b. **ú yùú bhú á** Strong Positive Bias
 2SG have dog PRT
 ‘No! You have a dog? (I am really surprised! I don’t believe it!’

Medumba is particularly interesting because it has additional biased question forms that are based on previous situations (as opposed to previous conversations):

- (23) a. **kulá ú yùú bhú á** Positive Bias
 PRT 2SG have dog PRT
 ‘So, do you have a dog then?’
- b. **kùlá ú yùú bhú** Strong Positive Bias
 PRT 2SG have dog
 ‘So, from what I see, you have a dog?’
- c. **kulá ú yùú bhú kò** Weak Positive Bias
 PRT 2SG have dog PRT
 ‘Do you have a dog?’

To summarize, both Dschang and Medumba possess multiple polar question strategies. In both languages, the polar question strategies relate to speaker certainty, bias, and source of evidence. For Dschang, more careful, fine-grained investigation to tease apart pragmatic/evidential/epistemic differences between different constructions is needed. More broadly, at least two Bamileke languages grammatically encode differences between bias question types in the morphology and syntax. Medumba and Dschang highlight the need for further detailed study of the incredibly rich polar question constructions across Grassfields languages.

7. Conclusions and prospects

Dschang's inventory of polar question strategies draws on numerous aspects of its grammar: segmental morphology, tonal morphology, and various morphosyntactic configurations. Polar questions encoding speaker attitudes such as bias and belief appear to employ strategies which are not morphologically "tailor-made" for biased questioning, but borrow from other parts of the language: i.e. compositional formation via the use of negation coupled with lexical verbs and/or pronouns. These strategies also appear to be parasitic on particular aspects of discourse (prior conversations, prior events/situations).

To fully investigate the inventory and organization of biased polar questions in Dschang, our methodology should be supplemented with even richer contexts. These will aid in distinguishing the sensitivity of each individual PQ strategy to positive/negative bias, strength of bias, time of bias formation, and more. Given that the closely related Medumba seems to have a distinct, but rich inventory of polar questions.

Abbreviations

1 first person, 2 second person, 3 third person, CONS consecutive marker, DIST.FUT distant future, DIST.PAST distant past, FOC focus marker, Q question particle, NEG negation marker, PRT particle, S.CONC subject concord

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Prodotto presso il Centro Pleiadi
Sezione Officine Grafico-Editoriali - Il Torcoliere
Università di Napoli L'Orientale
finito di stampare nel mese di ottobre 2026

