Səlɛɛ and the GTM languages

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Outline

- GTM classification
  Some shared features of the GTM languages
  - 2 phonological features:
    - vowels and vowel harmony
    - tone
  - morpho-syntactic features:
    - noun class systems
    - relativization
    - tense and aspect systems
    - locative predication
- Adjectives in Sɛɛɛ
GTM classification

- The GTM languages were first called “Togorestsprachen” (Struck 1912) or “Togo Remnant languages” (Westermann and Bryan 1952)
- Today they are referred to as the Ghana-Togo-Mountain languages (GTM) after a suggestion by Ring (1995).
- Christaller (1889) included them within Kwa. Westermann (1927) and Westermann and Bryan (1952) put them outside Kwa as a language isolate in Niger-Congo
- Greenberg (1963) put them back in his Western Kwa, which is present day (New) Kwa.
Heine (1968) sub-classified the fifteen languages into two subgroups designated as NA-Togo and KA-Togo based on the terms for ‘meat’.

- **Na-Togo**
  - Lelemi
  - Siwu
  - Sekpele, Selele
  - Ikpana

- **Ka-Togo**
  - Anii cluster, Adere
  - Avatime
  - Nyangbo-Tafi
  - Kposo, Igo, Tuwuli
  - Kebu, Animere
Distribution of the Central Togo Languages
(Source: Bernd Heine, Verbreitung und Gliederung der Togoresprachen, Dietrich Reimer Verlag, Berlin, 1968)
Vowel and vowel harmony

- All GTM languages manifest a form of ATR vowel harmony although they have different vowel systems.
- Ford (1973) proposes that proto-Kwa had 10 vowels based on a study of 4 Na and 3 Ka languages, as well as three Ewegbe varieties.
- Siwu, Sɛɛɛɛɛ and Tutrugbu have a seven-vowel system.
- Tafi and Avatime the two closely related languages have maintained the nine-vowel system.
- Another language which has seen a drop in the vowel inventory is Sɛkpɛle (Likpe) which currently has eight.
- In contrast, Akebu and Ikposso have maintained the ten vowel system.
Vowel harmony

- All GTM languages have root-controlled ATR systems where the value of the first syllable in the root determines the ATR value of prefixes.
- Derivational processes result in the suffixation of roots which have a different ATR.
- Example:
  
  (1)  `se-kpelé` 'Likpe language'
  `e-kpelé` 'a Likpe person'
  `ba-kpelé` 'Likpe people'
Vowel harmony

Vowel harmony in Sɛɛɛ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>noun class</th>
<th>class 1</th>
<th>class 4</th>
<th>class 5</th>
<th>class 7</th>
<th>vowel of the 1st syllable of the noun stem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>prefixes</td>
<td>o-</td>
<td>si-</td>
<td>di-/li-</td>
<td>ku-</td>
<td>i, u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>/ni-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o-</td>
<td>se-</td>
<td>le-</td>
<td>ko-</td>
<td>e, o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ɔ-</td>
<td>sɛ-</td>
<td>lɛ-</td>
<td>kɔ-</td>
<td>ɛ, ɔ, a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Vowel harmony

Tutrugbu examples:

(2)  a.  ɛ-ba-ɓá
    1SG-FUT-come
    ‘I will come.’

     b.  ɔ-bɔ-ɓá
     2SG-FUT-come
     ‘You will come.’

     c.  o-hui-ɛ  gɔɔgagãli
         CM-rope-DEF  no:longer-be.strong
         ‘The rope will no longer be strong.’
Vowel harmony

- Tuwuli example: Harley (2005: 64)

(3) a. *Kofi le-ya* ‘Kofi came’
    b. *Kofi li-te* ‘Kofi remained’
    c. *Kofi lo-tɔ* ‘Kofi fell’
    d. *Kofi lu-ku* ‘Kofi died’
Like all Kwa languages, GTM languages are tone languages. The tone systems are more complex in some languages than the others.

Essegbey (in prep) argues that Nyagbo has four level tones: low, mid, high and extra-high.

Allan (1974) also argues for four level tones for Sɛɛɛ: extra-low, low, mid and high.

Ford (1971) and Schuh (1995) earlier suggested that Avatime had also had four level tones. Recent research however showed that Avatime has three level tones.
Tone

- Tone functions both lexically and grammatically.
- In Avatime, for example, argument focus is marked by a high tone (Putten 2014).
- In Tafi, the difference between present and progressive is signaled by tone (Bobuafor 2013)
(Bobuafor 2013: 37, exs 80 & 81)

(4)  

a. ı-ı-gā
   
   1SG-PRSPROG-walk
   
   ‘I am walking.’

b. ı-ı-ga
   
   1SG-PSTPROG-walk
   
   ‘I was walking.’
Agbetsoamedo (2014)

(5) a. Büo-løo
1PL.RP-finish
‘We finished’

b. Büo-lóo
1PL.NEG.RP-finish
‘We did not finish’
Noun class systems

- GTM languages are characterized by their active noun class system.
- Westermann and Bryan (1952) referred to them as the Class languages where their noun class system is like the Bantu system.
- While the class system is active in almost all the languages, Ikposso turns out to be the only exception.
- In all the languages, qualifiers such as adjectivals, ordinals and intensifiers are not targets of agreement within the noun phrase.
Noun class systems

- Heine (2013) reconstructs 14 classes for proto-GTM but synchronically the languages differ with respect to the number of classes and the degree of cross pairings.

- Comparing the system in nine languages (5 NA languages and 4 KA languages), Agbetsoamedo (2014) observes that the classes range from eight to thirteen, with Sɛlɛɛ and Lelemi possessing the lowest number while Siya has the highest.

- All the languages except Logba mark class 1 (which refers to animate entities) by a vowel prefix while the plural counterpart is marked with ba- or its variant ma-.
Relativization

- In all the GTM languages, relative clauses occur postnominally and are externally headed.
- Most of the languages use a relativizer.

(6)  

a.  

\[ \text{ìyo} \quad \text{ma-tsue-dze} \quad \text{ɔ-kpi} \]  

house AM-build-AGENT SCR:AOR-die  

‘The builders of the house are dead.’

b.  

\[ \text{ɔ-turi} \quad \text{gɔ} \quad \text{lò-kpi} \]  

ɔ-person REL.ɔ DEP-die  

‘the person who died’  [Dingemanse 2011: 114 & 115]
The relativizer in Siwu is made up of $g$- and an agreement marker $-\omega$ that refers back to the head of the relative clause.

(Fiedler and Schwarz 2005) note that Lelemi also has a similar strategy, although the agreement marker precedes the morpheme $-nǐ$.

The relativizer is invariable in other languages.

In Tuwuli, the relativizer $kĩ$ is evolved from the proximal demonstrative $kĩ(i)$.

Logba borrowed its invariant relativizer $xé$ from Inland Ewe dialects.

Other languages like Sêkpêle do not have a relative marker.
Tense and aspect systems

- Kwa languages and other West African littoral languages are known to be aspect prominent rather than tense prominent.
- The GTM languages however, differ from these languages in being tense languages.
- Most of them have a three tense system—present, past and future.
- Selɛɛ stands out so far in having a four tense system.
- Selɛɛ has remoteness distinction in the past: hodiernal past and prehodiernal past.
(7a)
'The water is usually warm, but this harmattan it (the water) is cold.'
‘The water is usually warm, but last harmattan it (the water) was cold.’
Sɛkpɛle has a periphrastic present progressive construction that is most likely due to contact with Ewe (Ameka 2002).

Avatime also has both a habitual and a recurrent aspect marker, similar to Dangme (Defina 2009).
The GTM languages also show diversity with respect to the coding of locative relations. Many of the languages have a form class of positionals used for talking about the position and location of entities, but the size of the class varies.

Sêkpêle deploys 15 such verbs in its basic locative construction (Ameka 2007)

Tafi uses seven (Bobuafor 2013), Avatime also uses seven (Putten 2014, Defina 2016) while Tutrugbu has 4 (Essegbey 2010).
There is a special feature that sets these languages apart.

For instance in Avatime, these verbs have a specific subject markers paradigm.

For all these languages predicates that can be glossed as ‘be.at’, ‘be.in’, ‘be.on’ and ‘hang’ form part of the class.

GTM languages tend to have two inherited prepositions: one expresses a general locative relation and the other comitative/instrumental functions.

The comitative preposition gets deployed in Noun Phrase coordination, as is common in the languages in the area.
- The second preposition is a general locative preposition.
- The forms of the locative in the individual languages are, in all probability, cognate with a locative *ni* form in Bantu.
**Tab. 1:** Locative prepositions in some GTM languages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Locative preposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avatime</td>
<td>(ni)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tafi</td>
<td>(ni)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kposso</td>
<td>(n\d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuwuli</td>
<td>(n\e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutrugbu</td>
<td>(n\e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lelemi</td>
<td>(na)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sɛkpɛle</td>
<td>(li/le)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sɛlɛɛ</td>
<td>(di)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siwu</td>
<td>(i)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interestingly, in several of the languages, the locative preposition has a reduced realization in some contexts.

In Sɛkpɛle when the locative preposition is not realized the vowel of the preceding verb is lengthened as in (8).

(8) a. o-kpé ló dí-yó
    3SG-be.in LOC CM-house
    ‘She is in the house.’

b. o-kpéé dí-yó
    3SG-be.in:LOC CM-house
    ‘She is in the house.’
In Avatime the reduced form involves the elision of the segmental form \( ni \) leaving its extra high tone which docks on the preceding syllable as in (9).

(9)  

a. \( a\text{-}trɛ \quad nî \quad ke\text{-}pe=a \quad m \)  
    C1s.SBJ\-go \ LOC \ C6s\-house=DEF \ inside  
    `He went home.'

b. \( a\text{-}trɛ́ \quad ke\text{-}pe=a \quad m \)  
    C1s.SBJ\-go:LOC \ C6s\-house=DEF \ inside  
    `He went home.'
In Sɛlɛɛ, the preposition seems to be incorporated in the class marker of the reference object nominal leading to a lengthening of the prefix vowel as shown in (10).

(10)  

a.  
\[ \text{kandie} \quad n\text{-te} \quad di \quad ka-sɔ \]
  lantern SCR-lie LOC CL3-ground
  ‘A lantern lies on the ground.’

b.  
\[ \text{kandie} \quad n\text{-te} \quad kaa-sɔ \]
  lantern SCR-lie CL3.LOC-ground
  ‘A lantern lies on the ground.’
Adjectives in Sɛɛɛ

- Features of derived and non-derived adjectives
- Constructions used to encode properties
  - Use of the hodiernal past marker le-/lɛ-
  - Existential verb ‘kpe’ (be at)
  - Negative existential marker ‘naa’
  - Perfective construction
- Nominalization of adjectives
Sɛɛɛ Adjectives

- Adjectives in Sɛɛɛ fall into two main categories:
  - Underived
  - Derived
The underived non-ideophonic adjective class has only two members: *kplè* ‘big’ and *lè* ‘good’

Both can function predicatively

\[(6) \text{ a. } \text{'sankó } \text{ nwu lè-kplè} \]

CL1-woman DET LSM.HOD-big

‘The woman is good’
b. ò-sankó nwu n-ľe
CL1-woman DET LSM-good
‘The woman is big’
Unlike the VALUE adjective *good*, the DIMENSION adjective *big* can be used attributively.

(6) kò-wósó kplɛ nwu

CL7-tree big DET

‘The big tree’

However, when the adjective *good* is expressed attributively, an alternative adjective which also means *good* is used instead.

- ò-suótɔ bènlɛ ‘the good man’
Underived ideophonic adjectives

- They form the vast majority of adjectives in Sεlɛɛ.
- They are characterized by reduplicative stems and long vowels.
- They are not targets of agreement.
- They mostly function attributively.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideophonic adjectives with reduplicated stems</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kùkùdùkù</td>
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<tr>
<td>fòkyòfòkyò</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kàkyàkàkyà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pòlòpòlò</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fìlèfìlèfìlè</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kpòlòkpòlò</td>
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<tr>
<td>kpàlàkpàlà</td>
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<tr>
<td>mùnùmùnù</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ideophonic adjectives with long vowels</td>
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<tr>
<td>(8)</td>
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</table>
**Derived adjectives**

- Adjectives can be derived from property denoting verbs by the use of the adjectiviser –*le*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property Denoting Verb</th>
<th>Derived Adjective</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'be ripe'</td>
<td><em>sèè</em></td>
<td>'red'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'be old'</td>
<td><em>okofó</em></td>
<td>'old'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'be tall'</td>
<td><em>kaana</em></td>
<td>'tall\long'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'be soft'</td>
<td><em>yòò</em></td>
<td>'soft'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'be hot'</td>
<td><em>fila</em></td>
<td>'hot'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'be warm'</td>
<td><em>nyènènè</em></td>
<td>'warm'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Derived adjectives

- Adjectives can be derived from property denoting verbs by the use of the adjectiviser –le with stem modification.

(11) osié ‘be hard’ → sienlè ‘difficult\hard’
bé ‘be cooked’ → benlè ‘old\cooked’
onotu ‘be heavy’ → notulè ‘heavy’
fin ‘be important’ → finlè ‘important’
Certain adjectives appear to have been derived from verbs by the presence of the adjectivizer.

The stem of such adjectives are not found in the lexicon of the language.

(12) fɔɔle 'new' ← *fɔɔ 'be new'
    kɔnle 'green' ← *kɔn 'be unripe'
    bienlè 'good' ← *bie 'be good'
Derived adjectives

- Adjectives are also derived from nouns by the process of reduplication.

(13) mbá ‘salt’ → mbamba ‘salty’
    ntù ‘water’ → ntuntu ‘watery’
    o-bî ‘child’ → biibii ‘small’
HOD le-\lɛ- + property verbs

(14) a.  awu le-sèè
      dress LSM.HOD-be.red
   ‘The dress is red’

   b.  bà-mangò le-yòò
       CL2-mango LSM.HOD-be.soft
   ‘The mangoes are soft’
c. kò-wósó  nwu  lɛ-kaana
   CL7-tree  DET  LSM.HOD-be.tall
   ‘The tree is tall’

d. o-bìsɔ  nwu  le-kùnku
   CL1-child  DET  LSM.HOD-be.short
   ‘The child is short’
The existential verb kpe 'be.at' + property nouns

(15) a. ɔ-kpɛ n-kpe o-siɛ
      CL1-work LSM-be.at CL1-strength
      ‘The work is difficult. Lit: The work has strength’

b. a-tɔɔ n-kpe o-notũ̲
      CL8-load LSM-be.at CL1-heaviness
      ‘The loads are heavy. Lit: The loads have heaviness’
The negative existential marker naa + property nouns

(16) a. ṣ-sankó-bí nwu n-kpe sẹ-wa
   CL1-woman-DIM DET LSM-be.at CL4-fastness
   ‘This girl is fast’

b. ṣ-sankó-bí nwu n-naa sẹ-wa
   CL1-woman-DIM DET LSM-NEG.be.at CL4-fastness
   ‘This girl is slow’
c. ò-suótó nwu n-kpe o-sié  
 CL1-man-DIM DET LSM-be.at CL1-strength  
 ‘The man is strong’

d. ò-suótó nwu n-naa o-sié  
 CL1-man-DIM DET LSM-NEG.be.at CL1-strength  
 ‘The man is weak’
Perfective marker + verb

(17) a. kaa nwu n-tóò-bé
    CL1.car DET LSM-PERF-cook
    ‘The car is old’

    b. a-yò nwu n-tóò-kofo
    CL8-house DET LSM-PERF-be.old
    ‘The houses are old’
Nominalisation of adjectives

- Adjectives can be nominalized by prefixing noun class markers to them.

(18)a. puusù kplè nwu n-tóò-sifi
CL1.cat big DET LSM-PERF-leave
‘The big cat left’

b. ɔ- kplè nwu n-tóò-sifi
CL1-big DET LSM-PERF-leave
‘The big one left’
(19) a. kò-wósó bìmì nwu n-tòò-kpi
   CL7-tree small DET LSM-PERF-die
   ‘The small tree died’

   b. ku- bìmì nwu n-tòò-kpi
   CL7-small DET LSM-PERF-die
   ‘The small one died’
Conclusion

- There are two subgroups of adjectives in Sɛlɛɛ: underived and derived adjectives.
- Underived adjectives fall into two categories: non-ideophonic and ideophonic.
- Adjectives may be derived from property verbs and nouns. Constructions used to encode properties include the use of hodiernal past tense marker, the existential verb ‘kpe’ (be at), the negative existential marker ‘naa’ and the perfective construction.
That's all Folks!
The slides were mainly based on:


Other sources are:
