

Sεεε 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 Sɛlɛɛ



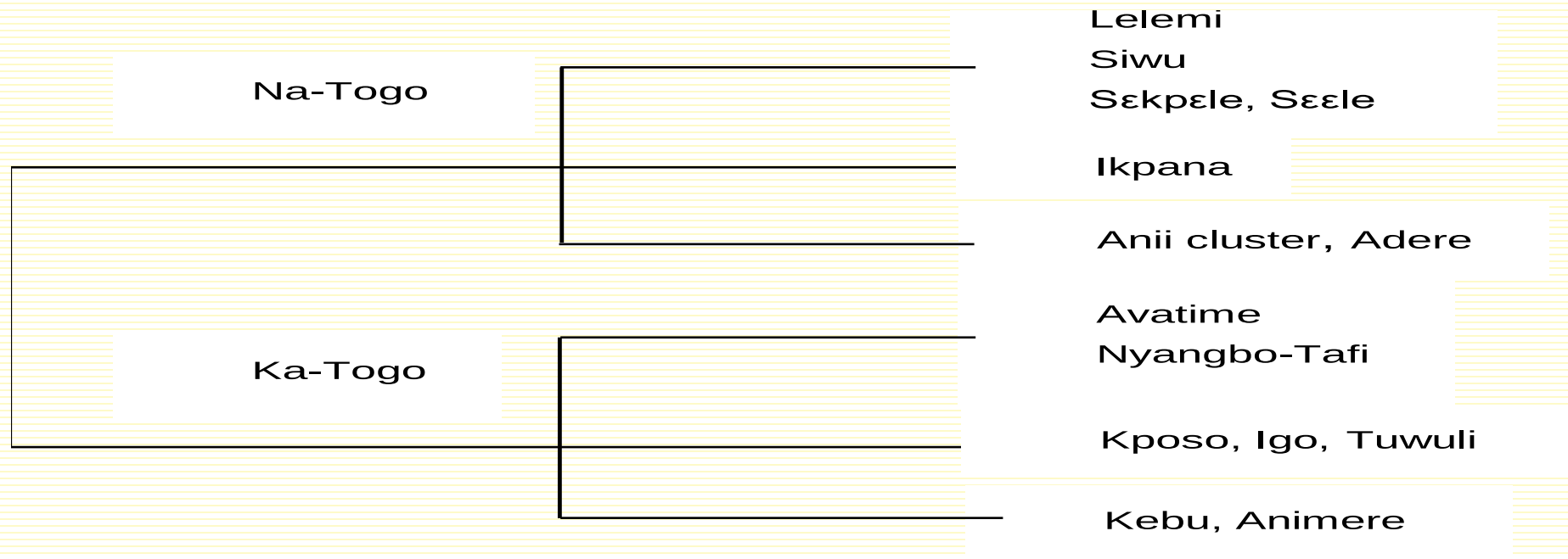
GTM classification

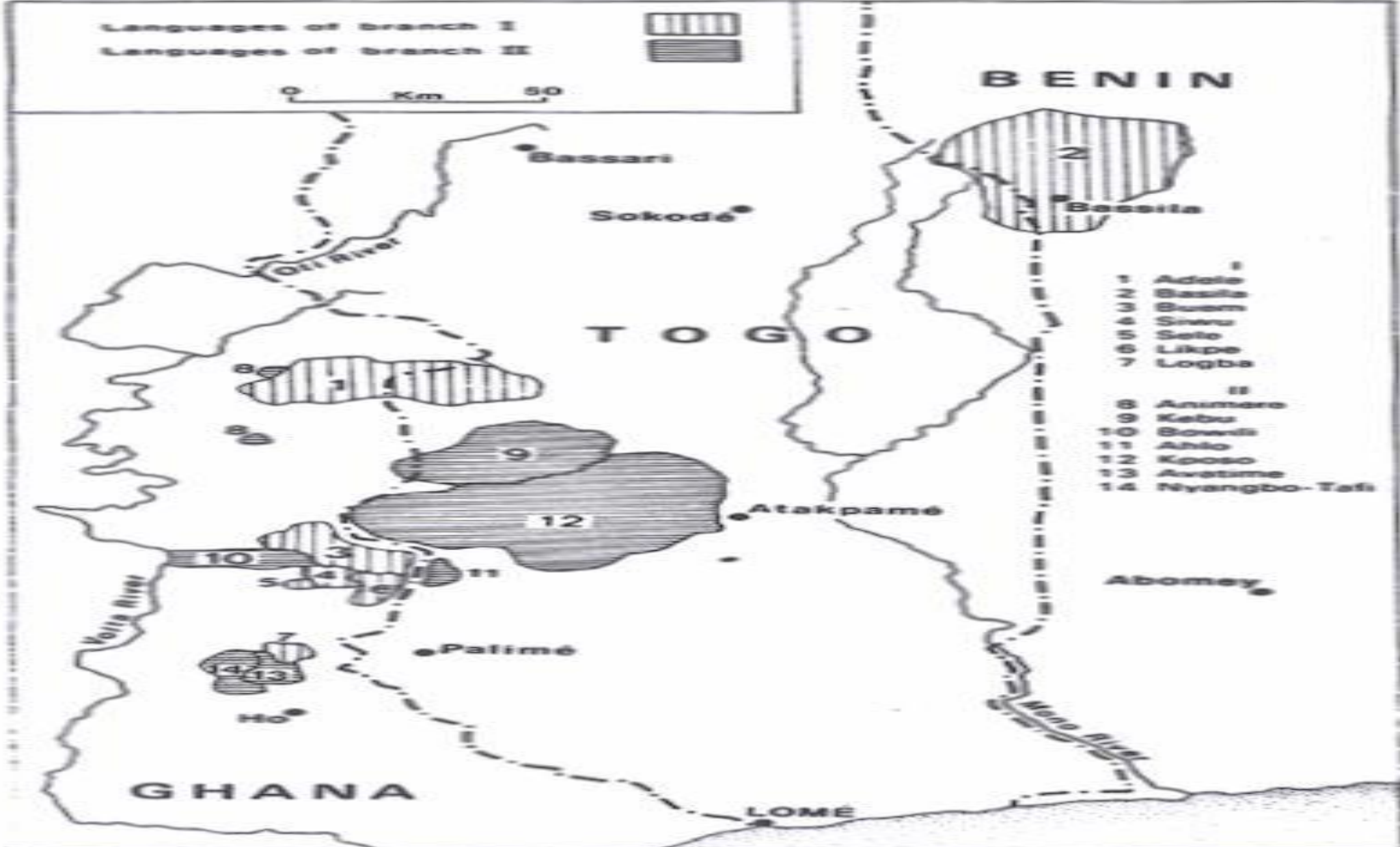
- ❖ The GTM languages were first called “Togorestsprachen” (Struck 1912) or “Togo Remnant languages” (Westermann and Bryan 1952)
- ❖ Today they are referred to as the Ghana-Togo-Mountain languages (GTM) after a suggestion by Ring (1995).
- ❖ Christaller (1889) included them within Kwa. Westermann (1927) 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.



GTM Classification

- ❖ Heine (1968) sub-classified the fifteen languages into two subgroups designated as NA-Togo and KA-Togo based on the terms for 'meat'.





Distribution of the Central Togo Languages
 (Source: Bernd Heine. *Verbreitung und Gliederung der Togorestsprachen*
 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, Sɛlɛɛ 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) *sɛ-kpɛlé* 'Likpe language'
 - ɔ-kpɛlé* 'a Likpe person'
 - ba-kpɛlé* 'Likpe people'



Vowel harmony

❖ Vowel harmony in Sɛlɛɛ

noun class	class 1	class 4	class 5	class 7	vowel of the 1st syllabl of the noun stem
prefixes	o-	si-	di-/li- /ni-	ku-	i, u
	o-	se-	le-	ko-	e, o
	ɔ-	sɛ-	lɛ-	kɔ-	ɛ, ɔ, a



Vowel harmony

❖ Tutrugbu examples:

- (2) a. *ε-ba-bá*
1SG-FUT-come
'I will come.'
- b. *ɔ-bɔ-bá*
2SG-FUT-come
'You will come.'
- c. *o-hui-ε* *gɔɔgagāli*
CM-rope-DEF no:longer-be.strong
'The rope will no longer be strong.'



Vowel harmony

❖ Tuwuli example: Harley (2005: 64)

- (3)
- a. *Kofi lε-ya* 'Kofi came'
 - b. *Kofi li-te* 'Kofi remained'
 - c. *Kofi lɔ-tɔ* 'Kofi fell'
 - d. *Kofi lu-ku* 'Kofi died'



Tone

- ❖ 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 Sɛlɛɛ: 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)



Tone

❖ (Bobuafor 2013: 37, exs 80 & 81)

- (4) a. *í-í-gā*
 1SG-PRSPROG-walk
 ‘I am walking.’
- b. *í-ɪ-ga*
 1SG-PSTPROG-walk
 ‘I was walking.’



Tone

❖ Agbetsoamedo (2014)

- (5) a. *bùo-lòo*
 1PL.RP-finish
 ‘We finished’
- b. *búo-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 Sɛlɛ 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. *ìyo* *ma-tsue-dze* *ɔ-kpi*
 house AM-build-AGENT SCR:AOR-die
 ‘The builders of the house are dead.’
- b. *ɔ-turi* *gɔ* *lò-kpi*
 ɔ-person REL.ɔ DEP-die
 ‘the person who died’ [Dingemanse 2011: 114 & 115]



Relativization

- ❖ The relativizer in Siwu is made up of *g-* and an agreement marker *-ɔ* 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 *-nĩ*.
- ❖ 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 Sɛkpɛle 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.
- ❖ Sɛlɛɛ stands out so far in having a four tense system.
- ❖ Sɛlɛɛ has remoteness distinction in the past: hodiernal past and prehodiernal past.



(7a)

TMAQ_34

o-bè lele n-tù nwu n-bíobíó

CL1-time more CL6-water DET LSM.HAB-warm

kafɔ ko-leele ko-mmle di-ε-nyènènè

but CL7-harmattan CL7-this 3SG-HOD-cold

‘The water is usually warm, but this harmattan it (the water) is cold.’



(7b)

TMAQ_35

o-bè	lele	n-tù	nwu	n-bíobíó	kafoó	ko-leele	ko
CL1-time	more	CL6-water	DET	LSM.HAB-be.warm	but	CL7-harmattan	CL7
ni-ε-bafe	nii	di-α-nyènyènè					
REL-HOD-pass	PART	3SG-PHOD-be.cold					

‘The water is usually warm, but last harmattan it (the water) was cold.’



Tense and aspect systems

- ❖ 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).



Locative predication

- ❖ 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.
- ❖ Sɛkpɛle 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.



Ameka, Felix and Essegbey, James (2017:19)

Tab. 1: Locative prepositions in some GTM languages.

Language	Locative preposition
Avatime	<i>ni</i>
Tafi	<i>ní</i>
kposso	<i>n̄</i>
Tuwuli	<i>nε</i>
Tutrugbu	<i>nε</i>
Lelemi	<i>na</i>
Sɛkpɛle	<i>lí/lə</i>
Sɛlɛɛ	<i>di</i>
Siwu	<i>i</i>



- ❖ 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* *lá* *dí-yó*
 3SG-be.in LOC CM-house
 ‘She is in the house.’
- b. *o-kpée* *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-trɛ* *ní* *ke-pe=a* *m*
 C1s.SBJ-go LOC C6s-house=DEF inside
 ‘He went home.’
- b. *a-trɛ́* *ke-pe=a* *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. *kandie* *n-te* *di* *ka-sɔ*
 lantern SCR-lie LOC CL3-ground
 ‘A lantern lies on the ground.’
- b. *kandie* *n-te* *kaa-sɔ*
 lantern SCR-lie CL3.LOC-ground
 ‘A lantern lies on the ground.’



Adjectives in Sɛlɛɛ

- ❖ 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



Sɛlɛɛ Adjectives

- ❖ Adjectives in Sɛlɛɛ fall into two main categories:
 - Underived
 - Derived



Undersived non-ideophonic adjectives

- ❖ The undersived non-ideophonic adjective class has only two members: *kplɛ* 'big' and *lɛ* 'good'
- ❖ Both can function predicatively

(6) a. ò-sankó nwu lɛ-kplɛ
CL1-woman DET LSM.HOD-big
'The woman is good'



❖b. ò-sankó nwu n-lɛ
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 kplè 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-suóto bienlè ‘the good man’



Undersived ideophonic adjectives

- ❖ They form the vast majority of adjectives in Sɛlɛɛ.
- ❖ They are characterized by reduplicative stems and long vowels.
- ❖ They are not targets of agreement.
- ❖ They mostly function attributively



Ideophonic adjectives with reduplicated stems

(7)	<i>kùkùdùkù</i>	hard (of a ground, banku)
	<i>fòkyòfòkyò</i>	spongy
	<i>kàkyàkàkyà</i>	rough
	<i>pɔ́lɔ́pɔ́lɔ́</i>	smooth
	<i>flèlèflèlè</i>	silky (cloth)
	<i>kpɔ́lɔ́kpɔ́lɔ́</i>	slippery
	<i>kpàlàkpàlà</i>	sour (lemon)
	<i>mùnmùmùnù</i>	circular



Ideophonic adjectives with long vowels

(8)	<i>kpòò</i>	motionless
	<i>tìì</i>	stiff
	<i>wèèfèè</i>	black
	<i>yààà</i>	tasteless / blant
	<i>púú</i>	protruding (belly / balloon)
	<i>olòò</i>	bitter



Derived adjectives

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

(10)	sɛ̀ɛ	'be ripe \ red'	→	sɛɛlè	'red'
	okofó	'be old'	→	kofolè	'old'
	kaana	'be tall'	→	kaanalè	'tall \ long'
	yò̀ò	'be soft'	→	yɔ̀olè	'soft'
	fíla	'be hot'	→	filalè	'hot'
	nyènɛnɛ	'be warm'	→	nyɛnɛnɛlè	'warm'



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'
	onotũ	'be heavy'	→	notulè	'heavy'
	fin	'be important'	→	finlè	'important'



Derived adjectives

- ❖ 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)	fɔɔlɛ	'new'	←	*fɔɔ	'be new'
	kɔɔnɛ	'green'	←	*kɔɔn	'be unripe'
	bienɛ	'good'	←	*bie	'be good'



Derived adjectives

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

(13)	mbá	'salt'	→	mbamba	'salty'
	ntù	'water'	→	ntuntu	'watery'
	o-bí	'child'	→	biibii	'small'



HOD /e- \ /ε- + property verbs

- (14) a. awu lε-sɛɛ
 dress LSM.HOD-be.red
 'The dress is red'
- b. bà-maŋgò lε-yòò
 CL2-mango LSM.HOD-be.soft
 'The mangoes are soft'



c. kò-wósó nwu lε-kaana
CL7-tree DET LSM.HOD-be.tall
'The tree is tall'

d. o-bìso nwu le-kùнку
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-sié*
CL1-work LSM-be.at CL1-strength
'The work is difficult. Lit: The work has strength'
- b. *a-tòò* *n-kpe* *o-notũ*
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. ò-sankó-bí nwu n-kpe sɛ-wa
 CL1-woman-DIM DET LSM-be.at CL4-fastness
 ‘This girl is fast’
- b. ò-sankó-bí nwu n-naa sɛ-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 b̀̀ib̀̀i nwu n-tóò-kpi
CL7-tree small DET LSM-PERF-die
'The small tree died'
- b. ku- b̀̀ib̀̀i nwu n-tóò-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!



Reference

- ❖ The slides were mainly based on:
- ❖ Ameka, Felix and Essegbey, James (2017): Divergence and convergence among the Ghana-Togo Mountain languages Language. *Typology and Universals* (STUF)70(2).7-18

Other sources are:

- ❖ Agbetsoamedo, Yvonne. 2014. Aspects of the grammar and lexicon of Sɛlɛɛ. PhD thesis. Stockholm University.
- ❖ Heine, Bernd. 1968. *Die Verbreitung und Gliederung der Togorestsprachen*. Berlin: Reimer.

