Lexicalisation of temperature concepts in Gbaya, (an Ubanguian language of C.A.R.)
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Lexicalisation of temperature concepts in Gbaya,
(an Ubanguian language of C.A.R.)

Abstract

The chapter provides a systematic description of the temperature terms found in Gbaya, an Ubanguian language spoken in Central Africa. Gbaya has very few nouns and verbs dedicated to temperature but many adjectives – verbal adjectives and ideophonic adjectives. I first present the word classes and the syntactic constructions involved in expressing temperature and examine the different systems of temperature terms with respect to the following five domains: weather conditions, body-parts, the house, food, and water. I then indicate the main cultural specificities or metaphors used to refer to temperature. In conclusion, the domain of temperature is organised opposing two levels WARM / COLD and it is only by juxtaposing the many lexical and syntactic possibilities that an understanding of ways of expressing temperature emerges.

1. Introduction

The Gbaya languages according to the classification of Greenberg, belong to the group 1 of the oriental branch of the sub-family 6 “Adamawa oriental” of the Niger-Congo family, which today are called Ubangian languages. The specific dialect I am studying is Gbaya ’Bodoe as spoken in the Republic of Central Africa (see Map 1).

This introductory section presents the basic information necessary to contextualize the language and the culture.

The Gbaya people are hunters, gatherers and cultivators who live in the West part of the Central African Republic in small villages. Living at a high altitude in a tropical zone of luxuriant savanna, the Gbaya people have all year long an average temperature of 26°C. The nights may be cold, particularly in the dry season. The Gbaya are not accustomed to very hot temperature and complain about it when it goes over 30°C, which only happens at the end of the dry season (end of February).

Gbaya is an isolating language with weak morphology. It is a tonal language with two basic levels, high (´) and low (´). There is a supra segmental tonal determiner – a high tone noted (D) in the glosses – which occurs between various elements modifying the tonal melody of the first element
Map 1. The gbaya languages depending on the tone of the second one. It is an SVO language, which also makes use of non-verbal predication. Gbaya verbs always express a process where the obligatory subject is either external to the process (transitive construction = transitive voice) or included in the process (intransitive construction = middle voice). Verbs have no lexical tones thus tones on the verb are grammatical elements (TAM). While the verbal predication is dedicated to processive predication, the non-verbal predicates include an essential predicate (PRED.ESS), a locative predicate (PRED.LOC) and presentative participles. There is also a nominal predication expressing possession. Gbaya has a clear distinction between verbs and nouns and has three categories of adjectives that may be used both attributively and predicatively as I will develop below.

The present paper is based on natural discourse data collected in the field between 1970 and 2012.

2. Word classes and syntactic constructions

2.1. Nouns

Gbaya has two basic nominal concepts of temperature, opposing the noun *gêô* ‘cold’ to the noun *wêô* ‘heat’. The noun *gêô* ‘coldness’ refers to the

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1 In the glosses, the point is the morphem separator. The glosses that are not in the Leipzig Glossing Rules are: D = Tonal modifier, PRED.ESS = essential predicate, PRED.LOC = locative predicate.

prototypical meaning, while the noun wèè primarily refers to the permanently hot object ‘fire’ from which the temperature term ‘heat’ has developed, as seen in (1) and (2).

(1) yi bàá gèè.
   water PFV.catch.D cold
   ‘The water is cold.’

(2) yi bàá wèè.
   water PFV.catch.D fire = heat
   ‘The water is hot.’

Both nouns are used as object of the transitive verb ba ‘to take, to catch’ to express that the subject, be it an entity or the experiencer (expressed by the noun tè meaning ‘body’) is cold or warm. Therefore, when the subject is the human body, it expresses the personal-feeling temperature:

(3) tèm bàá gèè.
   body.D.1SG PFV.catch.D cold
   ‘I am cold.’

(4) tèm bàá wèè.
   body.D.1SG PFV.catch.D fire = heat
   ‘I am hot.’

These two terms can also be the subject of the verb ye ‘to enter’ to express the intense feeling of cold and heat on the part of the experiencer:

(5) gèè yeè sòròm.
   cold PFV.enter.D sensation_of_fullness
   ‘He is frozen to the bones.’

It should be noted that the term sòròm refers only to personal-feeling and is required.

(6) wèè yeè sòròm.
   fire = heat PFV.enter.D sensation_of_fullness
   ‘He is very hot.’

These are the only two parallel constructions accepted by these nouns. Determined by the definite marker -à: gèè (cold.D.DEF) means ‘its cold’ and wèè (fire = heat. D.DEF) means ‘its heat’ or ‘its fire’ depending on the context. In a locative construction, gèè keeps its value of ‘cold’ referring to

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3 In the glosses, the English verbs are written without ‘to’: ‘catch’ and not ‘to catch’.
4 It is most often a human body, it may also be the body of an animal.
5 Another stimulus could be ‘food’, as in n̄ọ́ m̀ h̀ yeè sòròm (food PFV.enter.D sensation_of_fullness) ‘He is completely full’.
ambient temperature but weë cannot refer here to ambient temperature but only to its basic meaning ‘fire’.

(7) gëë ḥa sènè
cold PRED.LOC inside
‘It’s cold.’

(8) weë ḥa sènè
fire PRED.LOC inside
‘There is a fire.’

Furthermore gëë has an extension in the lexical field of illness meaning then ‘fever’. So it can be the subject of the transitive verb de ‘to make’ which has the experiencer as object in (9) or be the second term of a nominal sentence in (10).

(9) gëë dë dí.
cold PFV.make.D. person
‘One is feverish.’

(10) wëwë tì a nè gëë
man 3SG.TOP with cold
‘The man caught a cold.’ (from cold to illness)

These two nouns are among the few Gbaya nouns that can be used, without any formal modification, as an adjective in an attributive construction. Both express the property by conversion when placed before the noun they determine. In the following attributive constructions they mean then ‘cold’ and ‘hot’:

(11) gëë yì
cold.D water
‘Cold water’

(12) weë yì
fire = heat.D water
‘Hot water’

2.2. Verbs

In section 2.1 we saw examples where ‘heat’ and ‘cold’ appear with three different verbs which meaning is not dedicated for expressing temperature: ba ‘take’, ye ‘enter’ and de ‘make’. In this section we will look at five verbs

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6 Used as adjectives, they can never be used in a predicative construction.
which meaning focuses specifically temperature when used in an intransitive construction with a specific subject. These subjects have an expected neutral temperature which serves as a point of reference in evaluating the way temperature raises or falls. So do water, body, weather and food, but not house. Thus this domain is not concerned. Verbs do not refer to a specific value as nouns do but indicate a change of temperature (see Table 1).

Table 1. Verbs of temperature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temperature</th>
<th>V intr</th>
<th>meaning</th>
<th>possible subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COLD</td>
<td>dengi</td>
<td>to cool down</td>
<td>water, body, weather (thing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ga</td>
<td>to get colder</td>
<td>water, body, weather (thing), food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WARM</td>
<td>wosi</td>
<td>to get slightly warm</td>
<td>water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gbenŋ</td>
<td>to warm up, to heat up</td>
<td>body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kpɔr</td>
<td>to get very hot</td>
<td>water, weather (sun)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of these verbs are specific to some subjects and cannot be used with all of them as I will show.

Water, as rain or water river, is cold, but when it stays in the sun, it warms up: *wosi* ‘to get slightly warm or lukewarm’, and when it is put on fire it gets very hot: *kpɔr* ‘to get very hot’. After reaching a certain degree of heat or warmth, an object’s temperature—may go down, as expressed by the verbs *dengi* ‘to cool down’ and *ga* ‘to get colder’.

For the human body, the verb *gbenŋ* ‘to heat up’ expresses the process of warming up that always refers to sweat. The cooling of the hot body is expressed by two verbs: *dengi* ‘to cool down’ and *ga* ‘to get colder’.

For weather, is it the permanent hot object, the sun, that is the subject of the verb *kpɔr* ‘to be very hot’ to express a very hot temperature. On the other hand, when the weather is ‘getting cool or cold’, the verbs *dengi* or *ga* are used with the term *mɔ* ‘thing’ as subject to refer to the ambient cool temperature.

It is only the verb *ga* ‘to get colder’ that can be used with food as subject referring to tactile temperature. It always expresses the process of cooling, as in the following examples.

(13) ʔám ʔèè há kpɔðú gá sé.
1SG PFV.leave.D so_that meal IPFV.cool before

‘I let the meal cool down first.’

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7 And hot iron too which gets colder when put in water.
‘Meal is cold.’ (lit. has cooled well)

‘Meal is already cold.’

Section 3 illustrates the use of these verbs and the domains to which they refer.

2.3. Adjectives

Gbaya has three subclasses of adjectives⁹: (i) a closed word class of primary adjectives exclusively expressing a primary state [raw, new, crude...] and two open word classes of adjectives including (ii) adjectives derived from verbs that express quality as the result of the process of the verb and (iii) ideophonic adjectives whose original lexical form is well established and stable, that express all the qualities, including those already expressed by the two other subclasses. They are particularly used to convey the notion of degree; they can also often associate more than two semantic values such as ‘tall and heavy’, ‘big and high’, for instance; or they can be specific to a referent (‘swollen for a short element’, ‘swollen for a long element’, etc.). Thus the quality WHITE is conveyed by the adjective bú ‘crude, white’, by the verbal adjective fëŋ ‘faded, whitened’, by the ideophonic adjectives mbûyêlê ‘white [temporary]’, ndål-ndål ‘very white’ and nànnànnûţ ‘with white patterns against red’. From a syntactic point of view, these three categories can be used in an attributive construction – placed as attribute before the noun that they qualify –, and can all be nominalised producing a derived noun (for ex. ‘white’ will give ‘the white one’). However, they have different ways of being used in a predicative construction – being complement to the copular verb ŋ which means primarily ‘to lie’. All of them can, depending on variety of modalities, be used as adverbs (like the -ly adverbs in English).

There is no primary adjective referring to temperature. The temperature adjectives in Gbaya are either (i) verbal adjectives (VA), or (ii) ideophonic adjectives (IDEO.A). All of them express a temporary concept characteristic of an entity opposing two levels WARM / COLD.

³ In Gbaya transcription the hyphen is used to link the elements of a compound name, as in the French transcription for ‘œil-de-boeuf’ for example.
2.3.1. Verbal adjectives

Each of the temperature verbs presented above (see Table 1) produces a verbal adjective (VA) that expresses temperature as the result of the process of the verb they are derived from. Table 2 shows that there are five VAs expressing temperature (3 for WARM and 2 for COLD) which are only used within four domains of temperature, water, body, sun and food.

Table 2. Verbal adjectives of temperature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temperature</th>
<th>VA</th>
<th>meaning</th>
<th>specific to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COLD</td>
<td>déngá</td>
<td>cooled down</td>
<td>water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gá</td>
<td>cool, cooled down</td>
<td>water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WARM</td>
<td>wósá</td>
<td>slightly warm</td>
<td>water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gbéŋá</td>
<td>warm, heated up</td>
<td>body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kpórá</td>
<td>very_hot</td>
<td>water, sun</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The use of these verbal adjectives no longer refers to the process they come from, rather, they only have a qualifying meaning as in the case of other adjectives. They are more often used in an attributive phrase as kpórá wèsé (very_hot/sun) ‘scorching sun’, déngá káfè (cooled_down/coffee) ‘cold coffee’, wósá yi (slightly_warm/water) ‘tepid water’, gbéŋá tè (heated_up/body) ‘sweaty body’ and gá as in the example below.

(16) ṭám Ṽòŋə ᶽə dákálè
    1SG PFV.eat.D cold sweet_potatoe
    ‘I ate a cold sweet potato.’

Used in a predicative construction the VA has to be nominalised and preceded by the instrumental nè ‘as’.

(17) Ṽòŋə-mò nè gbá
    meal as cold.NOMINALIZER
    ‘The meal is cold.’ (lit. meal as the cold one)

(18) yì bè nè wósá ná
    water IPFV.can_be as slightly_warm.NOMINALIZER NEG
    ‘The water is not tepid.’

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10 The VA wósá ‘slightly warm’ that can be translated by ‘tepid’ or ‘lukewarm’ is the first step of warming up for water.
11 But it is a rare construction; most often the same can be expressed using the verbal expression ba gëgë (catch/cold) as in (1) and (3) above.
2.3.2. Ideophonic adjectives

Gbaya expresses gradability of temperature lexically. For this purpose, there are 17 ideophonic adjectives (IDEO.As) which express specific values of temperature (12 for WARM, 5 for COLD). Most of them refer to a degree – higher or lower than the default value – and some of them to a specific domain – weather conditions, body-parts, the house [indoors], food, and water, as indicated in Table 3.

Table 3. Ideophonic adjectives for temperature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AA</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Specific domain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wòsì-wòsì</td>
<td>warm</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gòsì-gòsì</td>
<td>warm (cosy)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fàdiŋ</td>
<td>warmed up</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fàtáną</td>
<td>warmed up</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jnèè</td>
<td>warm +</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>万多kósó</td>
<td>hot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kpóyóyó</td>
<td>hot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hiò-hió</td>
<td>hot</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>giwín-giwín</td>
<td>warm or hot</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kpóróró</td>
<td>very hot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hélélé</td>
<td>burning hot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kpóngóngó</td>
<td>very feverish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dìmìi</td>
<td>cool</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bún-bún</td>
<td>cold</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngít-ngít</td>
<td>very cold</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yìngbìngbì</td>
<td>very cold</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yírírí</td>
<td>icy</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These temperature IDEO.As are most often used in a predicative construction. They follow directly the copular verb ?ʔ. In such a construction, the IDEO.A is used with its basic temperature meaning. The IDEO.As can also be placed, without any morphological change, after a

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12 Some IDEO.As that have a basic meaning not referring to temperature but that can be used for expressing temperature in some particular domain are not presented in Table 3, but are considered in later discussion as zéé-zéé ‘tasteless’ (22) and hàlòè ‘too strong’ (31).
temperature verb and function as adverbial modifiers of the verb bringing a semantic characterisation (degree or specific domain).  

So in Gbaya, while verbal adjectives are accepted as attributes most of the time, and more rarely as predicates, IDEO.As are most often used as predicates or as adverbial modifiers when combined with a verb.

I shall present in the next paragraph the use of each of these IDEO.As within the domain they express temperature.

3. The different systems of temperature terms

Gbaya temperature concepts are organised according to the semantic domain they refer to: weather conditions, body-parts, the house, food, and water, each of them constituting a system on its own.

3.1. Weather conditions or ambient temperature

There are five IDEO.As expressing ambient temperature, however none of them are specific to this domain, both being used for weather and body temperature.

3.1.1. Cold

There are no impersonal constructions in Gbaya. The subject of a clause must be a noun or a pronoun and all pronouns refer to animates. Then to express weather conditions Gbaya uses specific nouns as *bük* ‘wind’ *kórô* ‘rain’, *zân* ‘sky’, etc. It is also possible to have the noun ‘thing’ *mô* as subject in some cases, in particular to express the ambient cold.

(19) \[ \text{mô dêngá} / \text{gââ} \]
\[
\text{thing PFV.cool_down PFV.cool} \]
\[ \text{‘It’s cool.’} \]

Referring to cold is the usual way to say ‘good afternoon’ or ‘good evening’ using the verb *gâ* ‘to cool’, alongside ‘good morning’ does not refer to temperature but to daylight, the verb used then is *sô* ‘to be clear, to be clean’.

(20) \[ \text{mô gââ mê ndé?} \]
\[
\text{thing PFV.coolD 2S INTERROGATIVE} \]
\[ \text{‘Is it cool for you?’} \]

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13 All the other adjectives can also be used as adverbial modifiers but, unlike the IDEO.As that remain unchanged, they have to be nominalized and placed after the instrumental *mê* ‘as’, like for the predicative construction in (17) and (18).
The IDEO.A *dəmɪ̀* ‘cool’ identifies the sensation of coldness as being a nice sensation.

(21) mò gắ dəmɪ̀
thing PFV.cool.D well_cooled

‘It is nicely chilled.’

Between 5 and 6 in the morning, just before the sun comes out, the cold caused by the lack of sun is expressed by the IDEO.A *zé-zé* ‘tasteless’ that refers also to a lack of taste.\(^\text{14}\)

(22) tútuyè zéééé...
morning tasteless.DURATIVE

‘In the cool early morning...’

Independently of the time you refer to, it is always the noun *gèè* ‘cold’ that is used to express the neutral value of cold as in (7). In the example below it is the subject of the verb *dɛ* ‘to make’ with the noun *mò* ‘thing’ as object when referring to ambient temperature.

(23) kà gèè dɛ mò ?é...
when cold IPFV.make thing already

‘When it’s already cold...’ (day or night)

The IDEO.A *ngìt-ngìt* ‘very cold’ specifies a higher degree of cold that can be expressed too by mentioning an excess as in (25).

(24) gèè péí ngìt-ngìt-ngìt
cold IPFV.return very_cold.DURATIVE

‘It’s very cold.’

(25) gèè nèm ná.
cold IPFV.suit NEG

‘It’s too cold.’

The cold of hail which is the highest degree of cold is often expressed by using the IDEO.A *yíríí* ‘icy’.

(26) gèè bɔ̀rɔ̀ ?á yíríí
cold.D hail IPFV.be icy

‘Hail is icy.’

\(^{14}\) Referring to food, it only means ‘tasteless’ mostly by lack of seasoning. Its use is so specific for sun that I prefer not to count it within the temperature IDEO.A of Table 3.
3.1.2. Heat

For weather conditions, the term wèè ‘fire’ cannot be used to refer to ‘heat’. It is the ‘sun’ wèse, the main source of heat and light, which is the permanent hot temperature reference the Gbaya refer to.

It is only after 8 o’clock in the morning that the sun produces warmth. The sun that begins warming things up, when it is sunny, is called a ‘half-sun’ sàkà-sàkà wèse, which people like very much. Then the sun ‘shines’ nei (lit. be in the distance), first ‘beating’ bàŋ-bàŋ, next ‘glaring’ będędë.

(27) wèse nei nè dskàà
sun IPFV.be_in_the_distance as a_lot.NOMINALIZER
‘It’s very warm.’

It is only from 10 o’clock that the sun ‘is hot’ kpɔr (be very hot).

(28) wèse kpɔr àé
sun PFV.get_very_hot.D already
‘The sun is beating down.’

There are two IDEO.As that can modify this verb kpɔr (get very hot) expressing two further degrees of ambient temperature heat: kpọyọyọ ‘hot’ for a first degree and kpóróró ‘very hot’ for a higher degree.

(29) wèse kpɔr kpọyọyọ
sun PFV.get_very_hot.D hot
‘It is hot’ (lit. the sun is hot) (between 10 and 11 in the morning)

(30) wèse kpɔr kpóróró
sun PFV.get_very_hot.D very_hot
‘It is very hot’ (lit. the sun is very strong) (at noon)

At noon, the sun is specifically called the ‘noonday sun’ bú wèse (blank/sun) which burns everything as expressed by the IDEO.A hɔlɔ̀ ‘too strong’.15

(31) wèse kpɔr hɔlɔ̀
sun PFV.get_very_hot.D too_strong
‘It is too hot.’ (lit. the sun is too hot / is burning).

After it has been very hot, then in the afternoon it’s cool as express in (19) and (21).

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15 As for zèè-zèè, that first characterises a very hot chilli, its use is so specific for sun that I prefer not to count it within the temperature IDEO. As of Table 3.
3.2. Body temperature or Personal-feeling

There are 12 IDEO.As expressing personal-feeling temperature. They are used most often in constructions where the experiencer supported by the ‘body’ is the subject of the verb.

The natural wellbeing for personal-feeling is a neutral temperature which Gbaya refers to using the adverb géè ‘ordinary’:

(32) tɛm dúk géè
body.D.1SG IPFV.stand ordinary
‘I feel well.’

However the temperature of the body can change, either heating up or cooling down as follows.

3.2.1. Cold body

There are four IDEO.As to express degrees of cold for the body. None of them are specific to the body.

Two of them follow the verb ga ‘to get colder’ expressing the physical sensation that one feels cool as one’s body is cold.

(i) The IDEO.A dɔmìì ‘cool, well cooled’ expresses a sensation of cold produced by an external factor that refreshes the body to a nice cool sensation the same way it is used for weather temperature in (21).

(33) ?ám yèè dɔ̀ gùà tɛm gàà dɔmìì
1SG PFV.enter.D under.D shadow body.D.1SG PFV.cool.D well_cooled
‘I stand under the shadow and my body feels nice and cool.’

(ii) The IDEO.A bʊn-bʊn ‘cold’ refers to a neutral physical sensation of cold which is also used for food as in (64).

(34) tɛm gàà bʊn-bʊn
body.D.1SG PFV.cool.D cold
‘I feel cold.’

The main factors that cool the body temperature down are yi ‘river water’\(^\text{16}\), which is always cold, or gù̀ ‘shadow’, which protects from sun, so one feels cool. These stimuli are used as the subject of the verb in a transitive construction with the experiencer supported by the ‘body’ as object.

\(^{16}\)This term means both ‘river’ and ‘water’.

12
To express a sensation of higher degree of cold, the only stimulus Gbaya always mentions is the noun gêéê ‘cold’. It is then the subject of the verb dé ‘to make’, with the experiencer supported by a body-part as object.

(36) gêéê dé dë nánám
      cold       PFV.make.D  foot.D.1SG
‘My feet are cold.’

With the same construction, if the object is the whole person, this can mean either ‘to be cold’ or ‘to have fever’ as in (10).

(37) gêéê dé ʔó bêm
      cold   IPFV.make  PL. child
‘Children have fever / are cold.’

The IDEO.A ngit-ngit ‘very cold’ expresses a higher degree of cold for the body. It is also used for weather conditions as in (24). The stimulus gêéê ‘cold’ that produces the cold can be specified as in example below.

(38) gêéê yi dëm ngit-ngit
      cold         water  IPFV.make.1SG  very.cold
‘I am freezing because of cold water.’

The highest degree of cold for the body is expressed by the IDEO.A yîřîrí ‘icy’ following the copular verb ʔó.

After a long time under rain, you can say:

(39) tën ʔó yîřîrí
      body.D.1SG  IPFV.be   icy
‘I am completely frozen’

When you are frozen, your arms and legs covered in ‘goose bumps’ kûí-gêéê literally named ‘eggs of cold’.

3.2.2. Hot body

There are nine IDEO.As which express degrees of heat for the body. Four of them are specific to the body. The factors that can raise the body temperature are usually a physical effort and illness.

The IDEO.A wòsî-wòsî ‘warm’ introduced by the copular verb ʔó refers to thermal comfort. It is also used for the house as in (60).
The IDEO.A ɓąɗąŋ ‘warmed up’ is specific to the body. When used with the verbal expression ba wèè (catch/fire), it denotes a spontaneous reaction of the skin to an external contact.

‘Sleeping in the same bed, we keep one another warm.’

The first degree of warmth always related to a beginning of a fever is expressed by the IDEO.A ɲèè ‘warm’ that can be used also for warm water as in (69).

‘This child is a little feverish.’ (lit. has a warm body)

The IDEO.A kpóyóyó that is also used for weather temperature as in (29) and ɓìò-ɓìò that is specific to the body both mean ‘hot’. They refer, when following the copular verb ʔa or the verbal expression ba wèè (catch/fire), to a hot body, be it the result of a physical effort or illness, without any reference to sweat.

‘He is hot.’

The IDEO.A ɓìò-ɓìò ‘hot’ can also be used with the verb gbèŋ ‘to warm, to heat up’ that always refers to gbèŋ-mì ‘sweat’, literally ‘the heated up thing’ with focus on its relation to hot temperature.
‘I feel too hot, I want to go and take a bath.’ (lit. I am sweating and I am hot)

The IDEO.A giwîŋ-giwiŋ ‘warm or hot’ is only used for a localised part of the body (feet, head and belly) as in the examples below: walking overheats the feet and pain overheats the head.17

(47) kɔ̀ nànàm ?5 giwîŋ-giwiŋ
inside.D foot.D.1SG IPFV.be hot
‘The soles of my feet are hot.’

(48) zàm ?5 giwîŋ-giwiŋ
head.D.1SG IPFV.be hot
‘I have a headache.’ (lit. a hot head)

The IDEO.A kpôròró ‘very hot’ referring to the body expresses a higher degree of heat. It is also used for weather temperature as in (30).

(49) têà ?5 kpôròró
body.D.3 SG IPFV.be hot
‘He is very hot.’

The IDEO.A hêlêlê ‘burning hot’ that is specific for the body is always related to sweating, be it the result of a physical effort or illness.

(50) têà ?5 hêlêlê
body.D.3SG IPFV.be burning_hot
‘He is very hot and sweats’

While using the verb gbëŋ ‘to warm, to heat up’ with the experiencer as subject always refers to external factors meaning ‘to feel hot’ as in (46), the interpretation of a hot body by using the verbal expression ba wèè (catch/fire) depends on whether there are external factors (sun or physical effort) or not. If there are no external factors it always refers to fever that raises body temperature as in (49) and (51).

(51) tè wí bá wèè
body.D person IPFV.catch fire = heat
‘One is feverish.’ (lit. his body is hot)

Lastly the IDEO.A kpôngôngó refers to the highest degree of temperature for the body which always results from illness meaning ‘very feverish’.

17 For the belly, it is hunger that causes a rise of its temperature.
Although ‘fever’ is named *gêê ‘cold’, as presented in § 1.1. (9), its effect on body temperature is always to make it hot. This reference of fever via both domains of HOT and COLD is also mentioned by A. François in this volume for Vanuatu languages.

When you are no longer cold or feverish, your body temperature goes down and you feel well.

3.3. The house

Five IDEO.As characterize the house temperature, three of them are specific to it. The house that every man builds for his wife is the family home. In fact, all the houses have a fire inside which is used for cooking and for warming up the place: indoor has to be warm.

3.3.1. Cold house

There are two IDEO.As which express degrees of cold within the house. If the fire is put out, the IDEO.A *ɓún-ɓún ‘cold’ expresses that the house is cold, as it also does for the body as in (34), food and water as in (64).

When a house is unoccupied for a long time, it is referred to literally as ‘a cold house’ *gêê tùà (cold/house) because there is nobody in it and no fire inside. This can be expressed by using the IDEO.A *yingbingbi ‘very cold’ which is specific to the house.
It’s very cold in the house.’

3.3.2. **Warm house**

There are three IDEO.As which express degrees of heat for the house. The IDEO.A *giwĩŋ-giwiŋ* ‘warm or hot’ that expresses it as a warm ambient temperature focuses on the presence of a fire inside, the same way it is used for the body focusing on a hot body part as in (47) and (48).

‘It’s warm in the house.’

The IDEO.A *wọsĩ-wọsĩ* which expresses that the house is ‘warm’, because it’s a heartily welcoming place (cosy), is also used for referring to thermal comfort of the body as in (40).

‘My house is cold, when my wife will come back it will become warm.’

By contrast the IDEO.A *gọsĩ-gọsĩ* which expresses that the house is ‘warm’ because people enliven it, is specific to house temperature expressing a personal-feeling temperature:

‘They have stayed a long time in the house, it’s well warm.’

3.4. **Food**

This section discusses the temperature words for food, which are made cold or warm/hot on purpose. Three IDEO.As characterize the food temperature, two for heat and one for cold. None of them are specific to food.
3.4.1. Hot food

The verbal expression *ba wèè* (catch/fire) ‘it’s hot’ is used for food and there are two degrees on the scale of this food temperature: *fátátá* ‘warmed up’ and *kpóyóyó* ‘hot’.

(61)  kà kòtò yérè bá wèè fátátá,
      when skin.D buffalo IPFV.catch fire warmed_up,
    ?éí  nół ngèrèm-ngèrèm
    one IFV.eat crunchy

‘When buffalo skin warmed up it is crunchy to eat.’

(62)  ?éé wà sáŋ ?é ká wèè
      and.D 3PL IPFV.pack INF.PFV.put side.D fire
    há bá wèè kpóyóyó
    in_order_to IPFV.catch fire hot

‘[Dracaena root is crushed] and packed aside the fire to get hot.’

3.4.2. Cold food

Food is usually cooked and has to be hot to be eaten. Then most frequently its cold is the result of a cooling process expressed by just using the verb *ga* ‘to get colder’ with no reference value as in (63), while combined with the IDEO.A *ɓún-ɓún* ‘cold’ it refers to the property fixing a objective value as in (64).

(63)  nół-mò gàá gàá
      food PFV.cool.D cool.DET

‘Food is cold’ (lit. has cooled down)

(64)  nół-mò / yì gàá bún-bún
      food/water PFV.cool.D cold

‘Food / water is cold’

3.5. Water

There are four IDEO.As expressing water temperature, three for hot and one for cold.

3.5.1. Cold water

Whether it be river water or rain, *yì* ‘water’, is the basic reference to express cold for the Gbaya. This is expressed by using the IDEO.A *ɓún-ɓún* ‘cold’, also used for the body as in (34), the house as in (55) and food as in (64).

To simply express that hot water gets colder, the verb *dengi* ‘to cool down’ is also used focusing more on the drop of temperature that on the lukewarm property. This verb is not specific to water.
(65) kèì ?é yì té-wèè,
when.one IPFV.put water on_fire
kèì bá ?é nù, ká dèngá
when.one IPFV.take INF.PFV.put ground then PFV.get_colder.D
‘When you heat up some water and take it out of fire, it cools down.’

(66) yì dèngà ?é
water PFV.get_colder.D already
‘The water has already cooled down.’

3.5.2. Hot water
The verb wosi ‘to get slightly warm’ and the verbal adjective derived from it, wòsá ‘slightly warm or lukewarm’, are both specific to water. They are used for the first step of warming up, when water warms up in the sun, but also when water just put in fire is not yet hot.

(67) yì kpör ná,
water IPFV.get_very_hot NEG
yì wòsá wòsí
water IPFV.get_slightly_warm get_slightly_warm.DET
‘Water is not boiling, it gets lukewarm.’

Every day women carry water from the spring to the house where it is kept in a large pot and used for drinking and cooking. Most often water is put on the fire to be heated up. There are three IDEO.As which express degrees of heat for the water: fátátá ‘warmed-up’ < pèè ‘warm’ < wòlòkòsò ‘hot’.

The IDEO.A fátátá ‘warmed-up’ only refers to a warming up process and is used with the verbal expression ba wèè (catch/fire) or the copular verb ?è. It cannot be used with the verb wosi ‘to get (be) lukewarm’ which expresses without any IDEO.A the same temperature although in relation to a cooling down process as in (61).

(68) yì báá wèè fátátá
water PFV.catch.D fire = heat warmed-up
‘Water is slightly warm’ or ‘water is lukewarm.’

The IDEO.A pèè ‘warm’ refers to the right temperature for bathing a baby. It is the last degree of warmth before getting hot, which can be compared for the body to the first step of fever it refers to as in (43).

(69) wà ?é yì té-wèè hú dé pèè,
3PL IPFV.put water on_fire in_order_to IPFV.make warm
They put water on fire to be warm and they bathe the baby.’

The IDEO.A wòlòkòsò ‘hot’ refers to a higher degree of warmth that does not reach boiling yet.

(70) yì dé ɲɛɛ, ɗọŋàà dé wòlòkòsò
water IPFV.make warm, after.DEF IPFV.make hot
‘Water is warm, after it’s hot.’

When referring to coffee it expresses a hot temperature that the Gbaya consider as lukewarm, because people want coffee to be boiling hot.

(71) kàfèè dé wòlòkòsò ʔé, ʔám nò bò ná
coffee IPFV.make hot already 1S IPFV.drink still NEG
‘When coffee is hot I no longer drink it’ or ‘when coffee is lukewarm I no longer drink it.’

Later, when water is boiling, it is only expressed by using the verb kpɔr ‘to get very hot’ in order to focus on this very hot temperature.

(72) yì kpɔrà ʔé.
water IPFV.get_very_hot.D already
‘Water is already very hot.’

4. Cultural specificities or metaphors

Beside all these domains, there are possible extensions of temperature terms that refer to the linguistic “image” of an element that does not objectively reflect the external world but rather offer a cultural picture based on Gbaya’s experience and rooted in their culture, like for example, the expression of feelings.18

4.1. The liver = centre of feelings

In Gbaya, sèè wí (liver.D/person) ‘the liver’ is the centre of feelings. When one’s liver is ‘cool’ gb (cold) one feels all right. One is glad and happy when it is ‘good’, so dí-sèè (good/~) means ‘happiness’; unhappy when it’s ‘bad’, so dàŋy-sèè (bad/~) means ‘unhappiness’; and impatient when it’s ‘red’, so gbɛ-sèè (red/~) means ‘impatience’. When one’s liver suffers, it heats up, using the verb gbɛn, meaning one is angry.

When you feel no longer angry, you liver cools down.

‘He has already calmed down.’

When the VA gbéŋá occurs with the noun ‘liver’ or with the compound word yík-sèè (surface-liver) ‘liver surface’ in the expression gbéŋá sèè/yík-sèè (heated up/~) it refers to ‘stomach ache’.

4.2. Heating up = agitation, excitement and violence

The verb kpɔr ‘to get very hot’ is used to refer to agitation and most often to characterize a mischievous child or an uncontrollable person.

‘He is a very mischievous child’

It is also used to express quarrel.

‘I tell off the child.’

‘They quarrel.’

When referring to physical contact, the IDEO.A hiò-hiò ‘hot’ is combined with the verbal expression ba wèè (to catch/fire) to express excitement and not just warmth as in (45) and (46).

‘When they lie in bed, they are burning [with desire].’

Otherwise the term wèè ‘fire’ can express various things, carrying the meaning of violence. Thus, if ‘something makes fire’ (de), it refers to great
events or miracles. When drums ‘take fire’, they do not burn, but are very loud, making everybody dance to their rhythm. Someone who ‘puts fire in it’, is someone who is totally concentrated on what he is doing.

(79) ká yòk kómé dé wèè mó-bà sàfì
then net of.2 SG IPFV.make fire INF.VIRTUAL.catch animal
‘Then your hunting net is fantastically good to catch animals.’

In Gbaya, to be refused something can be expressed by the verb dò ‘to burn’ with the experiencer as object showing that according to Gbaya thought a refusal can hurt somebody in the same way as fire does.

(80) ?ám kòfá ndààkà ?éráà, ?á-náá dóm
1SG PFV.ask.D tobacco hand.D.3SG, and_now.3SG PFV.burn.D.1SG
‘I begged him for tobacco and he refused.’

Refusing is conceived as burning somebody as in the proverb:

(81) ñóg ngá má dó máá nè yì ná
to_eat hard thing IPFV.burn each_other with water NEG
‘Those who eat together don’t refuse one another water.’

4.3 Cooling down = calm and well being

When the body is nicely cool, whether the weather is cold or hot, this sensation no longer refers to temperature but to quiet, expressed by the verb gá ‘to get colder’ or the verbal adjective gà ‘cold’.

(82) gá tèmè
IMP.calm_down body.D.2SG
‘Be quiet.’

(83) ?á tó wèn nè gá tè
3SG IPFV.say speech with cold body
‘He speaks quietly.’

Using the IDEO.A bùn-bùn ‘cold’ with the verb gá means feeling cool as in (34) whereas with the expression ba gëgë (catch/cold) it refers to quivering with pleasure.

(84) kò tám ?ókóò,
when.one IPFV.touch woman
ká tèf báá gëgë bùn-bùn
then body.D.person PFV.catch.D cold cold
‘When you touch a woman you quiver with pleasure.’
The VA déngá ‘cooled down’ when referring to a person means ‘shy’.

(85) ʔå né déngá béí
3SG PRED.ESS cooled_down person
‘He is a shy person.’

5. Conclusion

There is no generic name for the domain of temperature in Gbaya. The Gbaya temperature terms are organised into three word classes: nouns, verbs and adjectives.

The two nouns ‘cold’ and ‘heat’ provide the basis of the Gbaya temperature system with two levels COLD / WARM. The first one has only the prototypical meaning of ‘cold’, while the second ‘heat’ is the name of a permanently hot object, the ‘fire’. The ‘sun’, another permanently hot object is only used for weather condition and never gets the prototypical meaning of ‘heat’, in the same way as ‘water’ and ‘hail’ never get the prototypical meaning of ‘cold’.

There are five verbs which indicate a change of temperature. They express a process that focuses on the way temperature rises or falls and do not refer to a specific value. Each of them related to a particular subject as water, human body, weather and the sun which have an expected default value serving as point of reference in evaluating this modification, and food which are made cold or warm/hot on purpose.

Otherwise Gbaya uses a lot of adjectives expressing a temporary concept characteristic of an entity. Gbaya has no primary adjective expressing temperature, but there are five verbal adjectives which express objective qualifying meanings corresponding to the temperature values resulting from each verbal process and 14 ideophonic-adjectives which lexicalise temperature grades. Most of them are specific to one or two domains, but no one is valid for all of them, illuminating the importance of the cultural point of view they support.

All these categories stratify the temperature domain into the same two levels COLD and WARM as nouns do, but there are more terms for heat (65%) than for cold (35%). The human body is the domain with the most numerous IDEO. As showing the significant weight of personal-feelings for Gbaya speakers. Water is the domain with the most numerous verbs characterizing it as an element particularly prone to react to temperature changes.

It is only by combining the many lexical and syntactic possibilities that a specific domain for expressing temperature emerges.
References


