

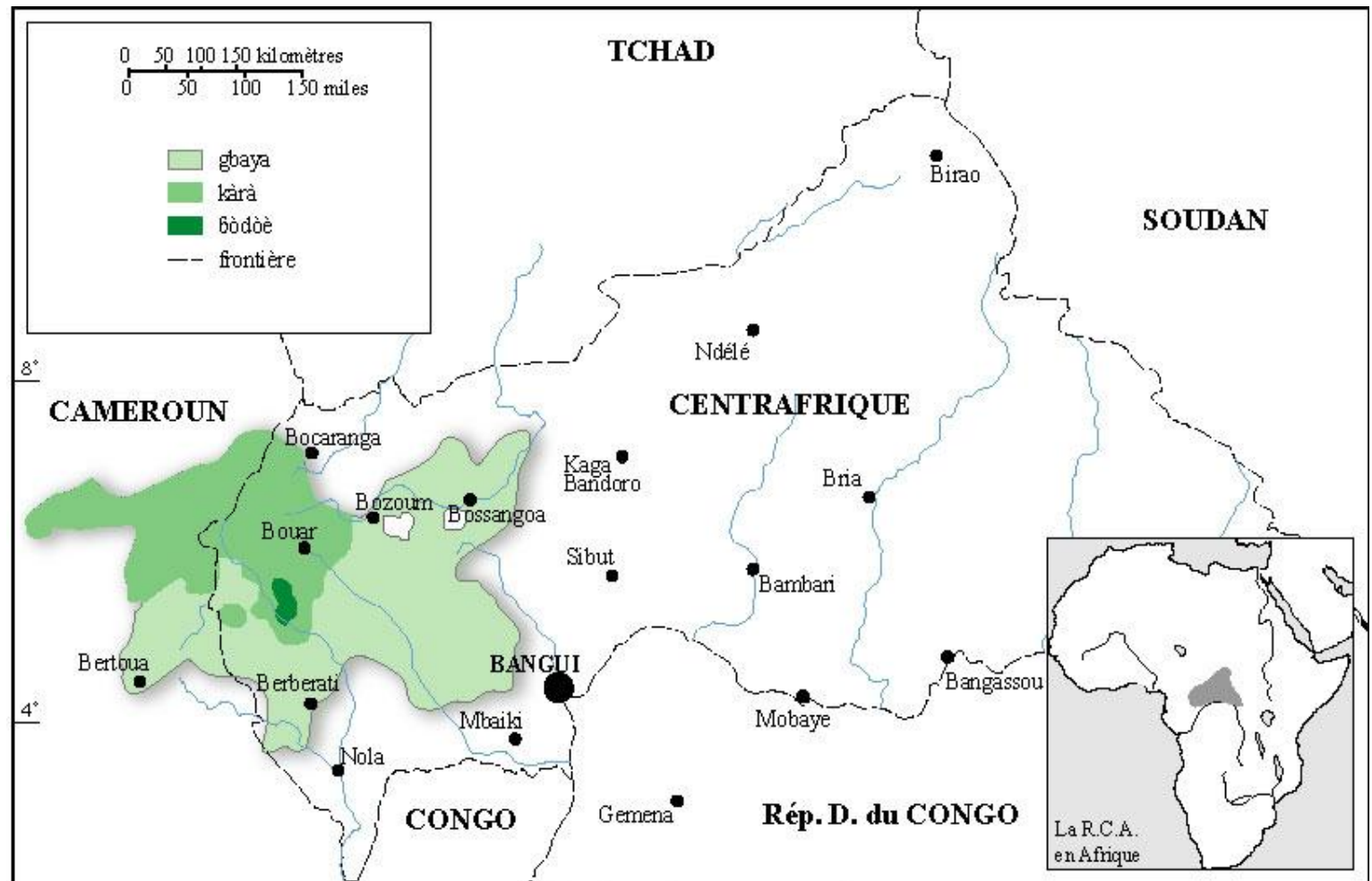


Some characteristics of gbaya ideophones

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Localisation of gbaya languages



Gbáyá bòdòè, an Ubanguian language (Niger-Congo family) spoken in the northwest part of the Central African Republic

Ideophones: a subcategory of adjectives

- An open class that constitutes the numerically most important subgroup of adjectives (2040 items, that represent 30% of the lexicon).
- Original terms that cannot be related to other terms in the language.
- They use the existing phonological potential by giving it a different distribution and have many reduplicated forms.
- They can express all semantic domains, and are used in all types of speech.
- On the syntactic level, they behave in the same way as two other main subcategories of Adjectives.
- They constitute a part-of-speech class that I call 'adjective-adverbs' (AA).

Syntactic uses of the various subcategories of Adjectives

Specificities ↓	Subcatégories of Adjectives				
	A (21)	VA (167)	AA (2040)	RA (89)	< N (21)
<i>Semantism of quality</i>	primary state	resultative	all qualities	relational	prototype
Expressive modulations			x		
<i>Nominalization</i> (-à)	x	x	x	x	x
<i>Attributive use</i>	x	x	x	x	x
Placed before Noun	x	x	x [+ TR]	x	x
Absolute superlative		x			
Modified by AUG / DIM		x			
Placed post Noun	x [nè X.MNLZ]		x		
<i>Adverbial use</i>	x [nè X.MNLZ]		x		
<i>Predicative uses</i>					
Post copula verb ʔo	x [nè X.MNLZ]		x		
In junctapositive predication A/B	x [nè X.MNLZ]		x / x [nè X.MNLZ]		
Holophrastic use			x [LH.AA]		

Abbreviations:

A adjective, VA Verbal adjective, AA Adjective-adverb, RA relational adjective, N noun, AUG augmentative, DIM diminutive, TR Tonal raising, NMLZ nominalisation

The tonal structure of AAs

- The lexical tonal pattern of AA is either high or low, it remains unchanged in most uses. There are three cases of syntactic regular changes.
- In attributive use, when placed before the noun, the tonal pattern is raised (RT). The high-scheme AAs are not modified, the low-scheme AAs are modified as follows: (b̀̀r̀̀n̄ and b̀̀m-b̀̀m)

1. b̀̀r̀̀n̄	z̀̀m̄é	2. b̀̀m-b̀̀m̄	t̀̀m̄é
long and pointed:RT	head:MT:2SG	swollen on small piece:RT	body:MT:2SG
<i>Egg-shaped head</i>		<i>Swollen and small body</i>	

- A HL scheme on AAs in adverbial use as a specific mark of topicalization.
- A LH scheme can characterize the holophrastic use of any AA, whatever its lexical tonal pattern

Overview on AAs syntactic uses

- Occurrences of AAs in a reference corpus of spontaneous speech of 4.5 hours.

Syntactic uses :	Nbr	%	Constructions	% in each use	
Attributive use	20	7,2%			
			Placed before Noun (Dt Dé)	9	45%
			Placed post Noun (Dé Dt)	11	55%
Adverbial use	219	79,1%			
			At the beginning of a clause	58	26,5%
			At the end of a clause, post verbal group	161	73,5%
Predicative use	38	13,7%			
			Post copula verb ʔo	27	71%
			In juxtapositive predication A/B	3	7,8%
			Holophrastic use	8	21,2%
Total	277	100%			

- I will present the holophrastic use which is a specificity of AAs

Holophrastic use of AAs

- The ability of AAs to function as complete, autonomous utterances. A LH scheme characterizes this use.

a) AA in a subordinated clause (*gbèngém* « resonating loudly »)

ʔà né kàá nò kà gbèngém

3sg INAC:go REP-ADD walk so that LH:resonating loudly

She walks as usual, so that it resonates loudly. (ankle bells)

b) Clause with juxtapositive predication (*bìt* « in short pieces »)

zěr sàdī hẹ̀ bìt

ear:MT animal PROX LH:in short pieces

The ears of animals make a bunch of short pieces

ʔĩ́ bá kú sók ʔòwáà wòón *Everyone takes his leg, plugs it in, and off they go.*

Unlike AAs, onomatopoeias are never used holophrastically, they are always placed after the verb "to do" or certain speech verbs.

Interjections, on the other hand, have a holophrastic use when they are used in response, in interlocution.

Finally a few rare adverbs have a holophrastic use (*hógó*)

Semantic domains of AAs

- On the basis of the 2235 AAs collected (cf. Roulon-Doko, 2008), I was able to distinguish that they supported very varied semantic domains.

Semantic domains	Nbr.	Semantic domains	Nbr.	Semantic d.	Nbr.
movement	383	quantity	93	fill_in	24
size-shape	352	drink-eat	88	cooking	22
position-attitude	198	color	86	wet-dry	19
occupation_of_space	178	feeling-sensation_speech	82	how_to_tie	18
sound	178	speech	46	hot-cold	18
fall-break-flow	136	pain	46	swelling	17
aspect	125	opening	39	hit	17
consistency	109	cleanliness-dirt	30	smell	15
		light	29		

Group A 15% - 17%

Group B 5% - 8%

Group C 1% - 5%

Group D 0,5% - 0,8 %

Organization of the meanings

- AAs support certain types of meanings on a regular basis, such as:
 - 1) the quantitative degree such as very, too, a little, etc.,
 - 2) a relationship to a specific medium (men, round objet, etc.),
 - 3) an association of meanings, often two, sometimes more than two.
- For example, « big » can be expressed by an A "big, important" *gbà* - an essential value -, by an VA "big, big" *gásá* - a value defined at the base as expressing the result of a process (< *gasi* "to grow") -, and five AAs which take into account various values built from 'big'.

AA	Meaning	Specificity
rùkpùtù-rùkpùtù	too big, too tall	degree
tàlàngàzàṅ	big for a child of 10-12 years old	specific medium
hèr-ngèzèṅ	big and tall	2 values
kpéngém	not too big and straight	2 values
zòlòbòtò	big and heavy	2 values

AAs for 'cold'

AA	Sens	Spécification
bún-bún	cold	neutral
yìngbìngbì	very cold [sp. house]	specific medium
pòsòp	refreshing	degree
ɲèè	cool	degree
dòmù	quite cool, chilled	degree
ngìt-ngìt	very cold	degree

AAs for 'hot'

AA	Sens	Spécification
kpóróró	hot	neutral
fádán	warm	degree
gìwìn-gìwìn	warming up	degree
fátátá	well heated	degree
kpóyóyó	very hot	degree
gèzè-gèzè	overheated	degree
hìò-hìò	burning, feverish	degree
gòsì-gòsì	warm [sp. house]	specific medium
wòsì-wòsì	warm and cozy [sp. house]	specific medium
kpóngóngó	very feverish [sp. body]	specific medium

- AAs for « soft »

TACTILE CONTACT	TASTE CONTACT
soft without spring	specific for pastes (pumpkin, sesame...)
ḡòl-ḡòl soft	mbòlàè-mbòlàè in soft mass
mbór-mbór uniformly soft	tùlàì-tùlàì ramolli [casava dough]
yòkò-yòkò softened	ḡùtùkùyù softened [oleaginous paste]
yòkòtò dampened	hòwèè too soft
tùḡḡḡ softened by cooking	yòlòp-yòlòp smooth and flowing
ḡùlàè soft and white	specific for meat and tubers
soft with spring	mùdḡ-mùdḡ tender
fùkàm elastic	mùḡḡkè melt-in-the-mouth
gbòòl flange	yòr-yòr deliquescent by cooking
doughy	ḡétú-ḡétú too soft
hèḡè-hèḡè in paste	fùfùp ; fùp-fùp spongy
bètè-bètè in liquid paste	specific for leaf-vegetables
dèkpè-dèkpè in a muddy mass	mbòr-gòḡḡ smooth
hòlàì soft as shit	hòr-gòḡḡ very creamy
	réké-réké too creamy

Conclusion

- Thus, AAs carry semantic values that are always related to a specific notional framework in which the elements considered relevant are defined. This is difficult to translate into a single term in the target language and produces in translation various meanings, each of which has one or more specificities whose unity is difficult to identify. Thus, for example, the expression of degree, which is often rendered by morphological procedures, is here largely lexicalised, producing for each degree a term of its own without relation to any other term in the language. The same is true of the multiplicity of AAs to express the same value, but in different media, which reveals the speakers' conceptualisation of the world.
- The holophrastic use of AAs confirms that they have a well-defined meaning, sufficient to reconstruct the situation of which they express a specific characterisation.
- To conclude, AAs which are the largest group of gbara adjectives, offer a great lexical variety representative of all culturally conceptualised semantic domains.