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Ewe
(Kwa, Benue-Kwa)
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10.1 General

Nearly 2.5 million people (1,615,000 in SE Ghana, 860,000 in southern Togo, where it is the predominant language) speak Ewe as a first language. At least another half million speak it as second language. Ameka (p.c.) regards these figures as suspect and understated.

There are fourteen distinctive vowels: seven oral (/i, e, ɛ, a, ɔ, o, u/) and the same nasal. Ewe has five phonetic but two phonemic tones (rising and falling are viewed as sequences of H and L). High is marked below, by the acute accent; low is unmarked. Most verb roots are monosyllabic. In this chapter, a hyphen (-) represents a bound inflection, an equals sign (=) represents clitic status. The sources concentrate more on segmental than tonal features, and it is evident in bits of data below that some constructions may involve tonal details that we have overlooked. Ewe is one of Africa's better documented languages. The following relies on Schadeberg (1985) and Pasch (2002), with much advice from Felix Ameka[1].

There appears to be a tradition of terminology for verbal categories in Ewe. We accept some parts of this but have modified other parts in line with the general practice in this book. The Introduction discusses this further.

10.2 Word order

Basic word order is S (AUX) V O, as in:

(1)   a   **nyɔ́nu=a   ɸle   dze**
            woman=DEF buy.FAC salt
            'The woman bought salt.'

        b.   **é=ná   ga   ŋútsu lá**
            3s=give.FAC   money man   DEF
            '3s gave the man money.'

        c   **mí du-na   nú   ga   wóeve me**
            we eat-IPFV   thing   hour   twelve in
            'We usually eat at 12 o'clock.'

        d   **Kofí tási ná   akutsá   m̀ etsɔ**
            Kofi aunt give.FAC sponge   me yesterday
            'Kofi's aunt gave me a sponge yesterday.'

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e	**é=fiá**	**wó**	**fia**	**lá**
	3s=show.FAC	them	chief	DEF

'3s showed them to the chief.'

In the Progressive and Prospective aspects, however, the order is S AUX O V, where the V appears to be a verbal noun, so:

(2) a **me=le** **dɔ́** **wɔ-ḿ**
1s=be.IPFV work do-PRG
'I'm working.'

b **me=le** **dɔ́** **wɔ-gé**
1s=be.IPFV work do-PROS
'I am going to work, intend to work.'

c **me=nɔ-a** **dɔ́** **wɔ-ḿ**
1s=be.FAC work do-PRG
'I used to be working.'

Basic order can also be altered by emphasis/focus/topicalisation, which involve fronting:

(3) **edze** **yé** **nyɔnu=á** **ɸle**
salt FOC woman=DEF buy.FAC
'The woman bought <u>salt.</u>'

10.3 Verb structure

All pre-stem material is analytic (AUX above). Ameka (p.c.) says his approach is analytic "with some agglutinative and fusional tendencies". Schadeberg writes the verb and its satellites more analytically, Pasch more synthetically, presumably reflecting a difference in interpreting cliticised elements. The only bound elements are the suffixes PRG, PROS, and IPFV. All other categories are independent or cliticised. All extensions have been lost and their function largely taken over by "co-verbs" and AUXs. A schema for AUX and V combined, using subject and object pronouns, follows. Some details of cliticisation may be missing.

(4)   (SP=) $NEG_1=M_1=A_1$ # DIR_1 # M_2 # M_3 # DIR_2 # be # root-A_2 (=OP) # NEG_2

SP (cliticised to the right): 1s **me** (**me** preceding negative **mé** is realized as **nye**. See example 8(b)), 2s **e/ne**, 3s **é/wo** (**ye** logophoric), 1p **míé**, 2p **mie**, 3p **wó**.

NEG_1 and NEG_2 : see §10.7, below.

M_1:   (**l**)**á** Potential, **ná** Subjunctive
A_1:   **ga** Iterative

DIR$_1$: **hé** Itive, **ɖa** Altrilocal. These may co-occur.

M$_2$: **nyá** voice, and certainty (some M$_2$ and M$_3$ morphemes are illustrated in (7) i, j and k, below)

M$_3$: **gbé** immediate, **xa** frustration

DIR$_2$: **vá** Ventive

A$_2$: Ø Factative, **-ḿ** Progressive (locative), **-gé** Prospective, **-(n)a** Imperfective

OP: **m, wo, e, mí, mi, wó**

All authors show additional "augmenting particles" between A$_1$ and root. In the Progressive and Prospective of intransitive verbs, the root is usually reduplicated. Serial verb constructions consist of two or more verbs juxtaposed asyndetically. Subject, object (and NEG) are only stated once on the first verb. Examples:

(5) a **é=trɔ́ vá tó gbɔ-nye yi aɸé**
he=turn come pass place-my go home
'He turned, came, passed my place, (and) went home.'

  b **míí ɖa fufu ɖu**
we cook fufu eat
'We cooked fufu and ate it.'

10.4 Aspects, and a "tense/mood"

This section deals with the six categories called Factative (the traditional term is Aorist), Imperfective (Habitual), Iterative (also Repetitive), Progressive (also Continuous), Prospective (Intentive, Ingressive), Potential (Future/Potential) in the sources, although as will be seen in §10.5, other, less grammaticalised, aspectual, modal, and directional categories occur also. These six are expressed as follows:

(6) Perfective, unmarked:

  a **é=tɔ́ ßu=á**
3s=stop.FAC car=DEF
'3s stopped the car.'

  b **fufu ti=m**
fufu tire.FAC=me
'I am fed up with fufu.'

  c **é-ná ga ŋútsu lá**
3s-give.FAC money man DEF
'3s gave the man money.'

Imperfective, suffixal -(**n**)**a**:

d   **me=wɔ-a   dɔ́**
           1s=do-IPFV   work
           'I work.'

e   **ame   kú-ná**
           person die-IPFV
           'Humans are mortal.'

Iterative, pre-verb **ga**:

f   **me=ga   yi**
           1s=ITR   go
           'I went again.'

g   **é=ga   le dɔ́   wɔ-ḿ**
           3s=ITR be work   do-PRG
           '3s is still working.'

h   **mé=ga   yi o**
           NEG=ITR go NEG
           'Don't go!'

Progressive, 'be' and -**m**:

i   **me=le   dɔ́   wɔ-ḿ**
           1s=be.IPFV   work   do-PRG
           'I am working.'

j   **me=nɔ   dɔ́   wɔ-ḿ**
           1s=be.FAC   work do-PRG
           'I was working.'

Prospective, 'be' and -**gé**:

k   **me=le   dɔ́   wɔ-gé**
           1s=be.IPFV   work   do-PROS
           'I intend/am about to work.'

l   **tsi   le dzadza-gé**
           water be rain-PROS
           'It's about to rain.'

Potential, pre-verb (**l**)**a**:

m **m=a** **yi**
   1s=POT go
   'I'll go.'

   Pasch (2002:42) says that when the "aorist" is used with stative/inchoative verbs, it denotes the result of a past action, and thus is translated typically by using an English present (6b); with dynamic verbs, it typically denotes a past action (6a). In fact, she has examples where the translation has English past and present but does not comment further, as in (6c). She also says that other authors have claimed that the aorist characterizes situations as "perfectiv/accompli". It seems to us that this is a classic factative and we will use that label. Of the "habitual", she says that it is used of situations that occur regularly, repeatedly and in the same way. Since structurally (suffix, or lack thereof) and functionally this contrasts with the preceding category, we refer to it as Imperfective (6d, e).

   With Factative, the Iterative refers to a past repeated once (6f), but with Progressive Pasch translates it as 'be still verbing' (6g). These might be best labeled by the general term Iterative. Iterative **ga** also occurs in negative commands, as in (6h), above. This resembles the use of suffixal (imperfective) -**ag**- in some Bantu languages.

   The Progressive refers to a situation ongoing at the time of reference (6i, j). Pasch says the Prospective expresses that the speaker intends to do something or that the speaker is convinced that a situation will take place (6k, l). Traditionally and by Schadeberg, implicitly by Pasch, the **a**-form has been termed a Future (tense). However, Ameka calls it Potential (mood), following a new analysis[2].

   This points up an interesting issue: many languages, Benue-Congo and also other non-Benue-Congo languages in West Africa, have been analysed as only having tenses in the future, that is, as having one or more future "tenses", but is this a correct analysis? Worldwide, in languages with a single tense contrast, it is predominantly past versus non-past, not future versus non-future. So is this a West African areal feature or is it the result of in incomplete or incorrect analysis? Ameka (p.c.) feels the analysis as a Future tense in Ewe, at least, is incorrect and that it is better analysed as Potential mood, because "what we are calling the 'prospective' is an imperfective aspect construction that is used to express imminent future, purposive and approximative and attemptive meanings. The main argument for claiming that (**l**)**a** is not a future marker is that it can be used with both future and past time reference with 'potential' meaning. Furthermore, it is not predictive. There is a coercive reading of the future in some contexts but that is not the invariant meaning of the form."

   Given that Ameka and Essegbey are linguists and native Ewe speakers, we follow their lead here, and replace Future (tense) by Potential (mood). Consequently Ewe should be considered an aspect, not a tense-aspect, language.

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[2] Ameka (2008); Essegbey (2008).

10.5   Other categories

It can be seen in (4) that the Ewe verbal complex encodes other verbal categories beside aspect. We cannot discuss them all here and restrict ourselves to directionals, focus, relativisation, imperative, mood, and voice. Each is discussed briefly below, and then all are exemplified in (7).

10.5.1   Directionals

The sources give **hé/há** (7d) Itive/serial, **ɖa** (7b,c) Altrilocal/goal, **vá/vɛ** Ventive (7a), and maybe others (e.g. **yi**, 7h) show the function of these, although not all in the template position of the verb complex.

10.5.2   Focus

Focused and topicalised constituents are moved left or fronted and often involve a particle (**é**, **yé**) after the constituent affected (7e)). Only one constituent can be focused.

10.5.3   Relativisers

All relativised clauses, whether they involve subject or object of the relative clause, are flanked by post-nominal *si* and optional clause final **lá**[3] (7f, g).

10.5.4   Imperative

The sources distinguish Imperative (2nd persons s and p) from Jussive (1st and 3rd). The 2nd person singular consists of the bare verb stem with certain tonal modifications (Schadeberg 1985:20). Jussives have a special set of subject pronouns (all high-toned except one) and are (optionally) preceded by **ná/né**. See (7h).

10.5.5   Mood

Beside **ná/né**, which Ameka calls subjunctive marker, there are other particles at M_2 and M_3 which might be better labelled modals, and translate roughly by English terms such as "bother/frustration, immediate, certainty, alleviating ". See (7i, j).

10.5.6   Voice

Ameka (2005) considers one of the functions of **nyá** (Ameka 2005) to be voice-related (illustrated in (7k), below), voice being defined as a strategy "for attaching the various participant roles (such as agent, patient, recipient) to the various grammatical relations (subject, object, etc)" (Trask 1997:234). **Nyá** is related to the verb 'know'.

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[3] In certain phonological contexts the second vowel of the preceding noun has a high tone.

(7)   a   **Kofi mé=mli   kpé=á   vɛ   o**
Kofi NEG=roll.FAC stone=DEF come NEG
'Kofi didn't roll the stone here.'

b   **wó=nyã=e   ɖá   kaba**
3p=chase.FAC=3s away   quickly
'They chased 3s away quickly.'

c   **nyɔ́nu=a   yi   fíásé me ɖa=ɸle   taku**
woman=DEF go.FAC shop in there=bought shawl
'The woman went into a shop and bought a shawl'

d   **wó=á=e   tsi   á=ɖu   nú   á-há   mlɔ́ anyí**
they=POT=bathe water POT=eat thing POT=Itive lie earth
'They will bathe, eat, and lie down'

e   <u>**ŋútsu=lá**</u> **é   me=wɔ   dɔ   ná**
man=DEF FOC 1s=do.FAC   work   for
'I worked for <u>the man.</u>'

f   **atí si   me=dó   lá kú**
tree REL   1s=plant.FAC REL die.FAC
'The tree which I planted is dead.'

g   **amé si   kpɔ́   da=lá   lá   né   vá   wu=i**
person REL   see.FAC snake=DEF REL SBJ   come kill-it
'Person who saw the snake should come and kill it.'

h   **yi** 'Go!(s)'   **mi=yi** 'Go!(p)'

me=ga yi o 'Don't go!(s)'   **mi (mé)=ga yi o** 'Don't go!(p)'

(na=)má=yi 'Let me go, I should go.'

(na=)yi 'You (s) should go.'

(né=)yi or (ná=)yi 'He should go.'

na=mí=dzó 'Let's depart.'

mé=ná=ga yi o 'He shouldn't go.'

mí=má=ga yi o 'Let's not go.'

i   **me=xa   le atikɛ   wɔ-ḿ**
1s=in.vain   be medicine   take-PRG
'I'm taking medicine for nothing.'

j   **dɔlelé=á**   **ká**   **bɔbɔ**   **víé**
       sickness=DEF   soften.FAC   light   slightly
       'The sickness has improved slightly.'

k   **nyɔ́=a**   **nyá**   **kpɔ́-ná** (**ná-m**)
       woman=DEF   nyá   see-IPFV (DAT-1s)
       'The woman is beautiful (to me).'
       Lit: 'the woman is seeable (to me)'

Compare to   **me-kpɔ́ ny**   **nyɔ́nu=a**
                  1s-see.FAC   woman=DEF
                  'I saw the woman.'

10.6 Negation

All negation is encoded by **mé**, following the subject and preceding all verbal constituents, and clause-final **o**:

(8)   a   **atí**   **lá**   <u>**mé**</u>   **kɔ́**   <u>**o**</u>
          tree   DEF   NEG   tall   NEG
          'The tree is not tall.'

     b   **nye**   <u>**mé**</u>   **ga**   **le**   **tsitsi-ḿ**   <u>**o**</u>
          1s   NEG   ITR   be.IPFV   growgrow-PRG   NEG
          'I'm no longer growing.'

     c   <u>**mé**</u>   **ga**   **yi**   <u>**o**</u>
          NEG   ITR   go   NEG
          'Don't go!'

     d   **wó**   <u>**má**</u>   **ga**   **yi**   <u>**o**</u>
          3p   NEG.POT   ITR   go   NEG (ma < me+a)
          'They shouldn't go.'

10.7 'Be', "co-verbs", auxiliaries

The PRG and PROS consist of 'be' and a nominalised verb with suffix. **Le** (Imperfective 'be') is used to refer to the present; **nɔ** (Perfective 'be') is used to refer to the non-present (past or future). Pasch shows **nɔ** as an independent verb, variously translated as 'stay' or 'remain' (verweilen)[4]. There are several other verbs (of motion) which belong in this category but are not discussed here.

       A small set of words, referred to as "co-verbs" or "verbids", function both as verbs or prepositions: **le** 'be somewhere, at/in', **tsó** 'come from, from', **ná** 'give, to/for', **ɖé** 'reach, towards', **tó** 'pass, through'. So:

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[4] **Le** and **nɔ** 'be and condition, quality, place, time' contrast with **nye** 'equational be'.

(9) a **é=ná   ga   ŋútsu lá**
         3s=give.FAC money man   DEF
         '3s gave the man money.'

     b **é=fi   ga   ná=m**
         3s=steal.FAC money for=me
         '3s stole money for-me.'

     c **é=le   avě=a   me**
         3s=be   woods=DEF   in
         '3s is in the woods.'

     d **é=ku   le ga   etɔ̃   me**
         3s=die   at hour three   in
         '3s died at 3 o'clock.'

Finally, other verbs occur in constructions similar to those involving serial verbs but the details differ somewhat, so they are treated differently: **yi** 'go' (direction there), **vá** 'come' (direction here), **vɔ** 'finish' (completive), **kpɔ́** 'see' ('already', 'yet'), and others. Thus:

(10) a **é=té   zikpui lá   yi**
         3s=drag.FAC   chair   DEF   go
         '3s dragged the chair away'

     b **Kofi mé=mli   kpé=á   vɛ̂   o**
         Kofi NEG=roll.FAC   stone=DEF   come NEG (vɛ̂ < va and 3s)
         'Kofi didn't roll the stone this way.'

     c **é=wɔ=e   vɔ̀**
         3s=do.FAC=it   finish
         '3s has finished it.'

     d **égbe   nye=mé=ɖu   kpɔ́ o**
         today   1s=NEG=eat.FAC   yet NEG
         'Today I have eaten nothing yet.'

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