Classification of Guébie within Kru

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1 Introduction

• Problems:
  – Guébie is currently classified twice (Lewis et al., 2013)
    1. As a dialect of Bété-Gagnoa
    2. As another name for Dida-Lakota
  – Neither of the current classifications is accurate based on data collected from a native speaker since September 2013.

• Goals:
  – To show that Guébie is more closely related to Vata and other Dida languages than to Gbadi and other Bété languages.
  – To show that Guébie is not synonymous with Dida-Lakota

Roadmap

§ 1 Introduction
§ 2 Background: The current classification of Guébie
§ 3 Methodology
§ 4 Phonetic and phonological evidence
§ 5 Syntactic evidence
§ 6 Implications and Conclusions

2 Background: The current classification of Guébie

• Kru is a branch of Niger-Congo (cf. Marchese-Zogbo (2012) spoken in Liberia and southwest Côte d’Ivoire.

• There are two major branches of Kru languages, Eastern and Western.

• Bété-Guébie is an undescribed Eastern Kru language spoken in three small villages in southwest Côte d’Ivoire, just south of Gagnoa.

• The data presented here comes from original work with a native speaker of Guébie.

1Further elicitation will be carried out with a larger number of Guébie speakers during Summer 2014.
• Classification
  – As far as I know, there is no published documentation or description of Guébie.
  – Due to geographic, historical, and possibly ethnic reasons, Guébie has been called a dialect of Bété-Gagnoa, spoken by about 150,000 people (Lewis et al., 2013).
  – Due to linguistic similarity, Guébie is also listed as a second name for Dida-Lakota, an Eastern Kru language spoken to the east of Gagnoa.

3 Methodology

• Accepted means of establishing genetic relationship among languages: The Comparative Method (Bloomfield 1933, and others).
  – Requirement: dictionaries or lists of lexical items in the languages in question.
  – Problem: Kru is too underdocumented for such resources to be available.
  – Available resources: Grammatical descriptions of some Kru languages and the lexical items contained in grammatical examples.

• Basing genetic relationship on syntactic correspondences is less widely accepted (Garrett (2012); Ringe and Eska (2014) and citations therein).

• However, lexical items are most likely to be borrowed heavily from neighboring languages, and morphosyntactic correspondences are more likely to be consistent or slowly undergo regular change (grammaticalization) over time.
  – Melchert (2013) on Proto-Anatolian
  – Hübschmann (1875) on Armenian

• In the following sections I compare the linguistic properties of Guébie with its two geographically closest documented neighbors:
  – Bété-Gbadi, a variety of Bété-Gagnoa (Eastern Kru) spoken just north of the Guébie speaking area (data from Zogbo (2005); Koopman (1984))
Vata, a Dida language spoken east of the Guébie-speaking areas (data from Kaye (1982); Koopman (1984))².

- I demonstrate that the linguistic properties of Guébie and Vata are too similar (and too distinct from those in Bété) to be due to chance.
- Words and sounds that correspond in Guébie and Bété must be due to borrowing, or were present in Proto-Eastern-Kru.
- The linguistic features compared in the following sections are ones described for each of the relevant Kru languages, namely, Bété-Gbadi, Vata (Dida), and Guébie.
- Any assumptions about the features of Proto-Kru come from Marchese (1979); Marchese Zogbo (2012)

4 Phonetic and phonological evidence

- Marginal tonal evidence
  - There are four contrastive tonal heights in Guébie.
    * There are four contrastive tonal heights in Dida-Lakota.
    * It is controversial whether there are three or four contrastive tonal heights in Bété-Gbadi.
  - The four tonal heights posited for Proto-Kru (Marchese-Zogbo 2012) have collapsed into three in Bété (cf. Marchese 1979, 1989).
  - Tones here are marked with numbers 1-4, where 4 is the highest tone and 1 is the lowest. A period between tones separates syllables, and two numbers within a syllable signify a contour tone.

(1) Four contrastive tone heights in Guébie

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a.</th>
<th>ko¹ ‘line/row’</th>
<th>ko² ‘pestle’</th>
<th>ko³ ‘skin’</th>
<th>ko⁴ ‘cadavre’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td></td>
<td>no² ‘beverage’</td>
<td>no³ ‘woman’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>dζœ¹ ‘egg’</td>
<td>dζœ³ ‘star’</td>
<td>dζœ³ ‘number’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2) Contour examples

- dζœ⁴³ ‘coconuts’
- vœ¹³ ‘horns’
- su² ‘tree’
- su¹³ ‘to shove’

²Ideally, data from Dida-Lakota would be used as a comparison rather than data from Vata; however there is very little written work on Dida-Lakota. While I am certain that it is a distinct language from Guébie, based on the little data available I posit that the two are quite closely related. In the absence of sufficient Dida-Lakota data, I use data from Vata, the geographically next-closest Dida language.
• Vowels

  - There are ten contrastive vowels in Guébie, distinguished by height, backness, and ATR value:

  ![Vowel Chart]

  - There are ten contrastive vowels in Dida-Lakota, the same as the Guébie vowel inventory in the chart above.
  - There are only seven contrastive vowels in Bété-Gbadi. There is only an ATR distinction in high vowels.
  - There are marginal nasal vowels [ɛ̆, ɔ̆, ɑ̆] in Guébie, likely due to contact with nearby Kwa or Mande languages, which have contrastive nasal vowel distinctions.
  - Nasal vowels are also marginally present in Gbadi, and in many of the same words that they are in Guébie: kpâc⁴.²
  - Both Guébie and Gbadi are in contact with neighboring Kwa languages which have contrastive nasal vowels.
  - Proposal: This similarity between Guébie and Gbadi is due to the fact that both languages separately borrowed words containing nasal vowels from the nearby Kwa languages.
  - Both Guébie and Dida-Lakota have pervasive ATR harmony, while Bété-Gbadi does not (Koopman 1984).

(3) Vowel harmony data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guébie</td>
<td>tʃi-o⁴.¹</td>
<td>‘to cause to learn’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>jɛ-a⁴.²</td>
<td>‘to cause to dance’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vata</td>
<td>sle-o².³</td>
<td>‘the house’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gbadi</td>
<td>li-a².²</td>
<td>‘to cause to eat’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>jue-a⁴.²</td>
<td>‘the children’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• If Guébie is more closely related to Bété than to Dida languages, vowel harmony must have arisen separately in both Vata and Guébie, or it was lost relatively recently in Gbadi.

• If Guébie is more closely related to Dida, we can say that Proto-Dida but not Proto-Bété had vowel harmony. This way, vowel harmony would have only had to arise in one language, not in two, separately.

• Consonants

  - There is too little lexical data available from documented Bété and Dida languages to show regular sound changes that led from a Proto-language to the currently spoken languages.

• Summary: Until further data is collected, the existing phonological data on these languages do not tell us much about their genetic relationship.
5 Syntactic evidence

- All three languages have S AUX O V alternating with SVO word order.

- There are numerous syntactic elements of Guébie that more closely resemble Dida-Lakota than Bété-Gbadi and other Bété varieties.

- **Aspect marking**
  - The two major aspectual distinctions in Guébie, imperfective and perfective, are distinguished by tone.
  
  * Vata (and Dida-Lakota (Kaye, 1982)) also marks imperfective and perfective aspect with tone.

  * Bété-Gbadi distinguishes imperfective from perfective aspect with auxiliary particles, and the verb surfaces finally.

  (4) **Perfective vs Imperfective in Guébie**

  a. 3\( ^{3} \) li\( ^{2} \) d\( ^{3}a^{31} \)
  
  3.SG eat.IMPF coconuts
  
  ‘He eats coconuts’

  b. 3\( ^{3} \) li\( ^{3} \) d\( ^{3}a^{31} \)
  
  3.SG eat.PERF coconuts
  
  ‘He ate coconuts (recently)’

  (5) **Comparing aspect distinctions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Perfective</th>
<th>Imperfective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guébie</td>
<td>Tonal</td>
<td>Tonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vata</td>
<td>Tonal</td>
<td>Tonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gbadi</td>
<td>Particle</td>
<td>Particle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Causation**
  - In all three languages causatives can be formed with a verbal suffix.

  - In Guébie and Vata, but not Gbadi, there is a second means of causative formation:

  (6) **Clausal causative in Guébie**

  kəgulŋə-wa\( ^{4.2.2.2.3} \) gba\( ^{2} \) ne\( ^{4} \) ju-wa\( ^{4.4} \) ə\( ^{3} \) li\( ^{2} \)
  
  farmer-DEF speak and boy-DEF 3.SG eat.PERF
  
  ‘The farmer is making the boy eat’

  (7) **Clausal causative in Vata**

  n\( ^{3} \) gba\( ^{2} \) le\( ^{3} \) yə-ə\( ^{3.3} \) li\( ^{2} \)
  
  I speak and boy-def eat
  
  ‘I made the boy eat.’
• Wh-questions

- According to Koopman (1984:87), Wh-questions are formed in Gbadi with an initial Wh-word and a clause-medial questions marker, while in Vata they are formed with an initial Wh-word and a final question marker.

(8) Wh-questions in Guébie

a. ñakpa\(^{3,3}\) touri\(^{1,1,3}\) ji\(^3\) letri\(^{3,2}\) kopa\(^{3,23}\) na\(^3\)
   who Touri.NAME will letter send Q
   ‘To whom will Touri send a letter?’

b. bëba\(^{2,2}\) touri\(^{1,1,3}\) ji\(^3\) džatjë\(^{2,2}\) kopa\(^{3,23}\) na\(^3\)
   what Touri.NAME will Djatchi.NAME send Q
   ‘What will Touri send to Djatchi?’

(9) Wh-questions in Vata

aô\(^{1,4}\) o\(^1\) le\(^2\) saka\(^{3,4}\) la\(^1\)
who he eat rice WH
‘Who eats rice?’

(10) Comparing Wh-constructions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Initial</th>
<th>Medial</th>
<th>Final</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guébie</td>
<td>Wh</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>+Q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vata</td>
<td>Wh</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>+Q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gbadi</td>
<td>Wh</td>
<td>+Q</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Gerunds

- There is a parallel verbal nominativizing procddss (gerund formation) in Guébie and Vata. There is no gerund form in Gbadi (Koopman, 1984:47).

(11) Gerunds in Guébie

saka\(^{3,3}\) la\(^2\) li-li-je\(^{2,2}\)
rice GEN eat-eat-NOM
‘Rice-eating’

(12) Gerunds in Vata

saka\(^{3,4}\) la\(^2\) pi-li\(^{2,1}\)
rice GEN eat-NOM
‘Rice-preparing’
Summary

- We have seen that Guébie syntax is similar to Vata in aspect marking, causation, wh-question formation, and gerunds.
- The two have further syntactic properties in common not shown here for purposes of time: applicative formation, negation marking, long-distance wh-movement, etc.
- Gbadi either does not have these syntactic constructions or they surface distinctly from Guébie and Vata.

(13) Summary table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Bété</th>
<th>Dida</th>
<th>Guébie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of tones</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of vowels</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspect</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clausal causation</td>
<td>particle</td>
<td>tone</td>
<td>tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wh-question particle</td>
<td>medial</td>
<td>final</td>
<td>final</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6 Implications and Conclusions

- We have seen evidence from the phonological and prosodic systems, and the morphophonology of Guébie, that it resembles Vata, a Dida language, more closely than Gbadi, a Bété language.

- Further research on Bété and Dida languages will allow for lexical comparison.

- Conclusion: Guébie should be classified as a Dida language, closely related to Vata and Dida-Lakota, but not synonymous with them.

- More data is needed to know more about the historical splits within Eastern Kru, but the evidence here shows that Guébie is more closely related to Dida than Bété.

- Finer grained classification will require further research. Work such as Kaye (1982), “Les dialects dida,” is a start toward this kind of comparative research in Kru.
References


