

Sparse notes on Baazəm

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1 Introduction

This document is a summary of the data collected concerning the Baazəm language, spoken in the village of Munka (Cameroon, Northwest Region, Menchum Division, Fungom Subdivision).¹ Baazəm is not listed in the Ethnologue (Lewis, 2009) or in ALCAM (Dieu and Renaud, 1983). In the Ethnologue, as well as one report from a conservation society (Ekinde et al., 2005:7), the area is reported to be Isu-speaking [isu]. The possibility that there might be a non-Isu language within the Isu region became apparent when I happened upon a message on an internet bulletin board associated with the ECUDEM (Isu cultural development meeting) organization, containing the following passage:

Munkep/Gayam Region: This region was formed following a sensitization tour from the 2nd to the 4th of June 2006 by the Home Regional President, Vice and National Cultural Coordinator. The Munka people had to boycott this exercise, reason being that they are not Esu people, their language and culture different and none of the corpses of their relatives transported to the village...²

In May of 2012, while in Wum for fieldwork on Mungbam [mij], I attempted to visit the region, along with my guide, George Ngong, a native of Mekaf. In Isu, I met with the DO of Fungom Subdivision and the current Fon of Isu, who denied me permission to visit the region, citing security concerns. Mr. Ngong continued without me, and brought two natives of Munka to Wum where I could interview them for a day. The Baazəm speakers were two men, aged ~40 and ~50 years, both natives of the area. The two men were both sons of Baazəm fathers. One of them had a mother from Kpep, while the other had a Baazəm mother. Both claimed to be able to speak Baazəm, Isu [isu], Njikum [jbu], Kpep/Beezen [bnz], and Pidgin English [wes]. The interviews were conducted in Pidgin English.

Mr. Ngong reported that people speaking a language which was different from Isu and different from Njikum or Beezen/Kpep were living in Munka village. He reported that the language was spoken throughout Munka by people of all ages, in all settings, and estimated the population of the village at 300–500. Gayama, which is further North and West of Munka, is said to be inhabited mostly by Isu speakers.

Baazəm speakers, residents of Munka, then, are surrounded on all sides by Isu speakers. They are also under the traditional authority of the Chief of Gayama (an Isu man), who is in turn answerable to the Fon of Isu. Isu people and Baazəm people give two different reasons for this situation. The Isu version, told to me by several different Isu people, is that at some time in the recent past, the Baazəm people, fleeing war, were granted exile in Isu territory, and given a portion of land to settle. As a condition of their admittance, Baazəm people were required to submit themselves to Isu political authority, and swear to a peace pact

¹ A map of the region is available in Breton (1993: 110).

² <http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/Ndzem-Usu/message/3678> (accessed 28-Mar-2012)

with the Isu, adopting the name Munka as a symbol of this pact. According to the Baazəm version of the story, Baazəm people were settled at their present site before Isu people were in the area. The Isu settled Gayama in an attempt to usurp control of the Baazəm territory, which divides Gayama from the center of the Isu fonom. Given the numerical superiority of the Isu, the Baazəm did not resist the encroachment, and agreed to a peace pact with the Isu. The two informants reported that the name Munka (Isu for ‘I have sworn’), which was given to them by the Isu, was not used within the Baazəm community. They further noted that the Baazəm, as a show of reciprocity, had adopted, in addition to their usual name **Ndiwum** for the Isu, a commemorative name **Múpóm** (Baazəm for ‘You lie’) for the Isu, mocking the Isu’s name for themselves, **Kónóm**.

The linguistic information reported here is based on only a one day interview, and must be treated as highly tentative. Normally, information of this quality would not be suited for wider circulation, except for three factors which favor immediate release of the information: First, the very existence of the language is not yet established in the linguistics literature or in the Ethnologue. Second, related languages are only beginning to be documented, and linguists concerned with those may find this information helpful. Finally, I do not expect to have the opportunity to make further inquiries in the future, so I would like to make this information available with the hopes of stimulating interest in other scholars.

2 Is Baazəm different from other reported languages?

The name of the language is suspiciously similar to Beezen (referred to as “Kpep talk” by my consultants), which is spoken at Kpep. The two informants claimed that they were able to understand and speak Kpep, and that people from Munka have little difficulty in learning Kpep. Since I used the standard wordlist included in SIL rapid appraisal surveys, it is possible to compare what data there is for Baazəm with the published wordlists for Beezen (Brye, 2004: 11–4). A glance at table 1 shows that, even allowing for errors in transcription or elicitation (especially the sources for both languages are from authors with very little exposure to the languages), it should be clear that Baazəm and Beezen are distinct, albeit related, languages. For the meantime, then, Baazəm might be classified as a sister of Beezen, under the Kuteb-Yukuben subbranch of Jukunoid.

3 Segmental phonology

No careful investigation was made into the number of possible vowel contrasts. Consequently, there are probably fewer contrastive vowels than the transcription symbols in the tables below suggest. Particularly, it seems doubtful that there is actually a contrast between **ɪ** and **ə** in closed syllables. The second-degree vowels **e** and **o** probably do contrast with **ɛ** and **ɔ**, though the former two are not attested in very many words. The high vowels **i** and **u** are usually produced with some frication, which is not uncommon in languages of this area. Languages further south have some particularly subtle vowel distinctions, so it would also not be surprising if two distinct vowels have been merged in my transcriptions.

Likewise, the consonant system is far from fully understood. It is not known, for example, whether there is actually a contrast between **v** (the transcription symbol chosen for a bilabial spirant approximant (IPA β̞)) and **w**. Some interesting properties, however, are immediately noticeable with a short exposure to the data. First, the language contains coda obstruents, with **r**, **p**, **ɣ** (in order of increasing frequency) attested. Second, the language contains doubly-articulated labial-coronal stops **ṭp** and **ḍb**, which are of course far from common cross-linguistically. Another interesting observation is of the presence of non-

| | English gloss | Baazəm | (sg) | · · · (pl) | Beezen (Brye, 2004) |
|-----|---------------|-----------|--------|------------|---------------------|
| 1 | mouth | ū-ndzū | | ī-ndzū | úɲú |
| 2 | eye | kī-ɕī | | ē-ɕī | kíyí |
| 3 | head | kī-tʃī | | ē-tʃī | kìfì |
| 4 | hair | ō-zōŋ | | | ùsùn |
| 5 | tooth | kē-dīŋ | | ā-dīŋ | kízíŋ |
| 6 | tongue | kē-mī | | ā-mī | kájám |
| 7 | nose | kē-fāwā | | ā-fāwā | kén |
| 8 | ear | kō-tūŋ | | ā-tūŋ | kótóŋ |
| 9a | neck | ū-tsū | | | kìkímítsú |
| 9c | throat | ō-vāŋ | | ē-vāŋ | úmìnítsú |
| 10 | breast | kī-mjōŋ | | ē-mjōŋ | kímyám |
| 11 | arm/hand | kū-bū | | ē-bū | kíbú |
| 12 | claw/nail | kí-ɲú | | é-ɲú | ázíp |
| 13a | leg | kū-tpī | | ī-tpī | kígún |
| 13b | foot | kē-tpjōŋ | kū-tpī | | kíwárógún |
| 14 | buttock | kē-tā | | ā-tā | kékú |
| 15 | belly | ké-lúŋ | | á-lúŋ | kéwúró |
| 16 | navel | bī-bjúkūr | | | ùhú |
| 17 | intestines | ē-dzīm | | | ízím |
| 18 | blood | bō-jōŋ | | | béyóŋ |
| 19 | urine | bā-dzīm | | | bézím |
| 20 | bone | kē-kōp | | ā-kōp | kíkíp |
| 21 | skin | kō-kpā | | ā-kpā | éyóró |
| 22 | wing | kō-vār | | ā-vār | kábáb |
| 23 | feather | ká-túŋ | | á-túŋ | éhìŋ |
| 24 | horn | ū-ɕī | | ī-ɕī | ókún |
| 25 | tail | ū-līŋ | | ī-līŋ | órán |

Table 1: Some body part terms in Baazəm and in Beezen.

homorganic nasal-stop sequences, e.g. in the verb **i-nbì** ‘hit’.³

In some contexts an intervocalic consonant can be softened. The most salient manifestation of this process is the spirantization of word-final **p**, which is realized as **v** at times. Word final **ɣ** is voiced to **ʁ** or omitted entirely when softened.

- (1) a. à-nāŋ āmī à-lōp
PR-be 3sg PR-fear
“It is him who is afraid.”
- b. mā-lōv ò
2sg.PR-fear Q.POLAR
“Are you afraid?”
- c. ū-tīp
I.sg-spear
‘spear’

³ This could of course be an error in transcription, with the correct (assimilated) form being **i-ndbì**.

- d. ū-t̪wə́ wú
 I.sg-spear DEM.SG
 ‘this spear’

4 Tonal contrasts

Tone was only studied in a systematic way for nouns. This means that throughout this report, tonal transcriptions should be considered more or less accurate on nouns (and then only for those nouns given in tables 2–7), but cannot be fully trusted for all other word types. A group of eighty seven nouns were checked for tone and divided into groups having the same tonal melody. Almost all nouns so considered were disyllabic with a syllabic prefix and a monosyllabic stem. Six categories were formed by the grouping process, each of which is characterized by a sequence of two “level” tones drawn from the set (L, M, H). Since the smallest category contains only one noun, there is a good chance that the six categories identified do not exhaust all the possible two-tone sequences in the language. That being said, there are two more secure generalizations that can be drawn. The first is that there is good evidence that the language can be classified as a “three tone level” language, and probably not a two- or four- tone level language. The second is the clear dominance of the M–M group, which contains close to 70% of all of the nouns considered. Because of this fact, the overall entropy of the tonal contrasts is only 1.57 bits/word, which is the same as that for a system where only three categories (rather than six) contrasted, with the relative frequencies of the categories being more or less evenly distributed.

| | | | | | |
|---------|-----------------|----------|-------------|----------|----------------|
| ū-lū | ‘man’ | ōkwō | ‘woman’ | ū-gbūŋ | ‘child’ |
| ū-ndzū | ‘mouth’ | kī-ɔ̄ɪ | ‘eye’ | kī-t̪ɪ | ‘head’ |
| ō-zōŋ | ‘hair’ | kē-d̪ɪŋ | ‘tooth’ | kē-mī | ‘tongue’ |
| kē-fāwā | ‘nose’ | kō-tūŋ | ‘ear’ | ō-vāŋ | ‘throat/pipe’ |
| ū-tsū | ‘front of neck’ | ō-tpī | ‘harmattan’ | ū-ɔ̄ɪ | ‘horn’ |
| ī-wū | ‘body’ | ō-fū | ‘house’ | ō-lē | ‘fire/gun’ |
| bū-lō | ‘war’ | bī-ɔ̄ɪ | ‘animal’ | ē-lē | ‘louse/lice’ |
| ō-t̪ɪ | ‘tree’ | kī-ɪ | ‘egg’ | bē-t̪ɪmō | ‘fish’ |
| bī-gjū | ‘snake’ | ū-t̪ɪp | ‘spear’ | ē-juī | ‘husband’ |
| kō-vār | ‘wing’ | kō-kpā | ‘skin’ | ō-vī | ‘path’ |
| kū-bū | ‘hand’ | kē-tā | ‘buttocks’ | kū-tpī | ‘leg’ |
| ē-dzīm | ‘intestines’ | ī-mbī | ‘honey’ | ō-lāχ | ‘rope’ |
| ē-zāχ | ‘pepper’ | ū-kj̄ɪp | ‘vein/root’ | ō-kē | ‘money’ |
| kē-kōχ | ‘bark’ | kī-mj̄ōŋ | ‘breast’ | ū-līŋ | ‘tail’ |
| ū-kū | ‘firewood’ | ē-lū | ‘days’ | bā-kpā | ‘sky’ |
| ō-zē | ‘shah’ | bwō-tōŋ | ‘ash’ | kītīm | ‘tailfeathers’ |
| ō-gbūŋ | ‘wind’ | bō-mūŋ | ‘water’ | ē-wūŋ | ‘rain’ |
| bē-nāŋ | ‘iron’ | ū-ŋgī | ‘person’ | bō-jōŋ | ‘blood’ |
| kē-kōp | ‘bone’ | ō-ŋgbōχ | ‘farm’ | ō-dbī | ‘moon’ |
| bā-dzīm | ‘urine’ | bā-dz̄ɪp | ‘salt’ | | |

Table 2: M–M melody: 59 nouns

| | | | | | |
|--------|-----------|---------|----------------|--------|--------|
| ó-záj | ‘friend’ | kó-vóχ | ‘country bowl’ | bó-ηjí | ‘oil’ |
| kí-ηú | ‘claw’ | ké-lúη | ‘belly’ | ké-vóχ | ‘dark’ |
| ká-túη | ‘feather’ | ó-kpúη | ‘fowl’ | á-gbá | ‘fat’ |
| bí-kóm | ‘corn’ | bí-kjáj | ‘cocoyams’ | | |

Table 3: H–H melody: 11 nouns

| | | | | | |
|---------|----------|---------|---------|--------|---------|
| ī-fī | ‘ground’ | bā-mì | ‘dew’ | kē-pòχ | ‘cloud’ |
| kē-ηgbà | ‘leaf’ | bwō-zòη | ‘smoke’ | | |

Table 4: M–L melody: 5 nouns

| | | | | | |
|-------|--------------|--------|------------|-------|--------|
| ù-wòχ | ‘chimpanzee’ | ù-wùη | ‘cow’ | ù-ηùη | ‘bird’ |
| kò-kà | ‘soup’ | ò-ndàχ | ‘elephant’ | | |

Table 5: L–L melody: 5 nouns

| | | | | | |
|--------|----------|--------|---------|---------|------------|
| ò-gbōχ | ‘dog’ | ù-mū | ‘goat’ | ò-kpēm | ‘god’ |
| ù-vīm | ‘stream’ | ù-kwōp | ‘knife’ | kì-kwīn | ‘tortoise’ |

Table 6: L–M melody: 6 nouns

| | |
|-------|--------|
| é-lūη | ‘sand’ |
|-------|--------|

Table 7: H–M melody: 1 noun

5 Noun classes

All of the nouns elicited have a noun class prefix. The noun class prefixes have shape V-, kV-, or bV-. A fully accurate understanding of the noun class system is at this point not possible, due to several factors, including (i) my limited exposure to the data, (ii) the degenerate nature of the concord system, (iv) an apparent vowel harmony process which makes it difficult to treat with certainty prefixes having different vowels as belonging to different classes. Though the sketch of the noun class system offered here will certainly undergo revision as more information about the language becomes available, what is offered here will have to serve as a stopgap measure until such a time comes. I discuss separately the prefix system and the concord system.

5.1 Prefixes

Table 8 lays out almost all of the attested singular/plural prefix pairs. It seems very likely that an analysis based on more evidence would have fewer genders, since it seems likely that several of the pairs of prefixes might be related by a rule of vowel harmony. The basic observation motivating a vowel harmony analysis is that the prefixes containing high vowels (**i** and **u**) are (with very few exceptions) only associated with noun stems which themselves contain a high vowel (**i**, **u**, or **ɨ**). A vowel harmony analysis is a bit complicated by the fact that some of the prefixes with non-high vowels are associated with noun stems containing a high vowel (whence the conservativeness of table 8).

There is one noun where the stem vowel alternates in the singular/plural forms: **ɔ-logwə** / **ɛ-legwə** ‘cassava’. This is also the only noun which is transcribed with second degree vowels **e/o**. Stem vowel mutations of this sort are more widespread in Beezen (Jeff Good, p.c.). It may be that in Baazəm the process is

| Gender | sg. prefix | pl. prefix |
|--------|------------|------------|
| I | u- | i- |
| II | ɔ- | ɛ- |
| III | u- | bɔ- |
| IV | ɔ- | ba- |
| V | ka- | kɔ- |
| VI | ki- | ɛ- |
| VII | kɛ- | ɛ- |
| VIII | ku- | ɛ- |
| IX | kɛ- | a- |
| X | kɔ- | a- |
| XI | bi- | bu- |
| XII | bi- | i- |
| XIII | bɛ- | ɛ- |

Table 8: Some singular-plural noun class prefix pairs

generally in effect as well, except that only *e/o* are targets of the assimilation process.

5.2 Concord

Noun class concord has been observed on numerals, adjectives, and demonstratives. The variety of concord forms, however, are not as extensive as the variety of prefixes, and the consultants were not fully consistent in producing concord forms. However, very little time was dedicated to careful elicitation of concord forms, so these points should only be considered as provisional.

5.2.1 Concord on numerals

Numerals 1–10 were elicited for four different nouns. These showed variation in their prefixes, clearly some kind of concord effect, but the concordant prefixes were not very consistent (see table 9).

| | fowl(s) (ɔ- / ba-) | egg(s) (ki- / ɛ-) | snake(s) (bi- / bu-) | spear(s) (u- / i-) |
|-------|--------------------|-------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| one | ɔ-jəŋ | ki-jəŋ | bi-jəŋ | u-jəŋ |
| two | éví | éví | éví | éví |
| three | bā-tàχ | ɛ-tàχ | ɛ-tàχ | ɛ-tàχ |
| four | bɔ-nɕì | nɕì | nɕì | i-nɕì |
| five | bɔ-tɔŋ ~ i-tɔŋ | ɛ-tɔŋ | i-tɔŋ | i-tɔŋ |
| six | í-təŋ ɔjəŋ | təŋ ɔjəŋ | | |
| seven | í-təŋ éví | í-təŋ éví | | |
| eight | í-təŋ ètəχ | í-təŋ ètəχ | | |
| nine | í-təŋ ɛnɕì | | | |
| ten | í-ŋgjíp | | | |

Table 9: Numerals 1...5

5.2.2 Concord on demonstratives

Forms of the proximal demonstrative (translatable as **dis** in Pidgin English) were also elicited for a handful of nouns.⁴ The limited data suggest that there is one singular form **wú** which applies to nouns belonging to any gender, and two different plural forms, **jí** and **bá**. The latter corresponds to nouns with gender III prefix **bɔ-**, while the former corresponds to nouns with any V- or kV- plural prefix. Unfortunately, forms corresponding to nouns with **ba-** or **bu-** plural prefixes were not elicited. There is, however variability, as the same noun is observed with both of the possible plural prefixes.

- (2) a. ɔ-kwɔ wú
 IV.sg-woman DEM.SG
 ‘this woman’
- b. kɔ-kpā wú
 X.sg-skin DEM.SG
 ‘this skin’
- c. kū-bū wú
 VIII.sg-hand DEM.SG
 ‘this hand’
- (3) bɔ-ŋgi bá
 bɔ-ŋgi jí
 III.pl-person DEM.PL
 ‘these people’

5.2.3 Concord on adjectives

A few nouns modified by the adjective **-tʃī** ‘white’, which shows concord with the noun it modifies, were elicited.

| | | | | | |
|----------|-------|--------------------|----------|--------|--------------------|
| ù-wùŋj | ù-tʃī | ‘white cow’ | bɔ-wùŋj | bā-tʃī | ‘white cows’ |
| kī-dīŋj | ō-tʃī | ‘white egusi (sg)’ | ē-dīŋj | ēī-tʃī | ‘white egusi (pl)’ |
| kē-dīŋj | ō-tʃī | ‘white tooth’ | ā-dīŋj | ī-tʃī | ‘white teeth’ |
| bí-kjóŋj | ō-tʃī | ‘white cocoyam’ | bú-kjóŋj | ēī-tʃī | ‘white cocoyams’ |
| | | | bá-tóχ | bā-tʃī | ‘white mimbo’ |

Table 10: Concord on adjective **-tʃī** ‘white’

⁴ The elicited forms might instead be definite determiners, though there was no time to look for different forms associated with demonstratives and determiners.

5.3 List of nouns w/ singular/plural pairs, grouped approximately by gender

| | sg. prefix | pl. prefix | | sg. prefix | pl. prefix |
|------------|------------|----------------------|--------------|------------|----------------------|
| | u- | i- | | ki- | ε- |
| man | ū-lū | ī-lū | eye | kī-ɕī | ē-ɕī |
| mouth | ū-ndzū | ī-ndzū | head | kī-tī | ē-tī |
| horn | ū-ɕī | ī-ɕī | egg | kī-ŋī | ē-ŋī |
| spear | ū-tīp | ī-tīp | breast | kī-mjōŋ | ē-mjōŋ |
| tail | ū-līŋ | ī-līŋ | claw | kī-ŋú | é-ŋú |
| stream | ù-vīm | ì-vīm | tortoise | kì-kwīn | è-kwīn |
| firewood | ū-kū | ī-kū | egusi | kī-dīŋ | ē-dīŋ |
| root/vein | ū-kjīp | ī-kjīp | plantain | kē-zōŋ | ē-zōŋ |
| | ɔ- | V _{front} - | palm nut | ké-tóχ | é-tóχ |
| throat | ɔ-vāŋ | ē-vāŋ | foot... | kε-tpjóŋ | ε-tpjóŋ |
| path | ɔ-vī | ī-vī | | ku- | V _{front} - |
| house | ɔ-fū | ē-fū | hand | kū-bū | ē-bū |
| fire | ɔ-lē | ē-lē | foot | kū-tpī | ī-tpī |
| rope | ɔ-lāχ | ē-lāχ | song | kū-wūŋ | ē-wūŋ |
| palm | ɔ-vāχ | ē-vāχ | | kV- | a- |
| juju | ɔ-kəm | ē-kəm | tooth | kē-dīŋ | ā-dīŋ |
| cassava | ɔ-logwə | ε-legwə | tongue | kē-mī | ā-mī |
| moon | ɔ-dbī | ē-dbī | nose | kē-fāwā | ā-fāwā |
| sun | ɔ-lū | ē-lū | buttock | kē-tā | ā-tā |
| | ɔ- | bV- | belly | ké-lúŋ | á-lúŋ |
| friend | ɔ-záj | bá-záj | bone | kē-kōp | ā-kōp |
| dog | ɔ-gbōχ | bà-gbōχ | bark | kē-kōχ | ā-kōχ |
| tree | ɔ-tī | bā-tī | leaf | kē-ŋgbà | ā-ŋgbà |
| god | ɔ-kpōm | bā-kpōm | grass | kē-tōm | ā-tōm |
| elephant | ɔ-ndàχ | bà-ndàχ | ear | kō-tūŋ | ā-tūŋ |
| fowl | ɔ-kpúŋ | bá-kpúŋ | skin | kō-kpā | ā-kpā |
| money | ɔ-kē | bā-kē | wing | kō-vār | ā-vār |
| woman | ɔ-kwō | bō-kwō | soup | kò-kà | à-kà |
| | u- | bV- | country bowl | kó-wóχ | á-wóχ |
| child | ū-gbūŋ | bō-gbūŋ | feather | ká-túŋ | á-túŋ |
| cow | ù-wùŋ | bò-wùŋ | | bV- | V _{front} - |
| goat | ù-mū | bò-mū | animal | bī-ɕī | ī-ɕī |
| bird | ù-ŋùŋ | bò-ŋùŋ | fish | bē-tfēmō | ē-tfēmō |
| knife | ù-kōp | bò-kōp | | bi- | bu- |
| chimpanzee | ù-wòχ | bò-wòχ | snake | bī-gjū | bū-gjū |
| | ε- | bV- | cocoyam | bí-kjóŋ | bú-kjóŋ |
| husband | ē-juī | bō-juī | thing | kī-ŋīm | bū-ŋīm |
| | ka- | kɔ- | iron | bē-nāŋ | bō-nāŋ |
| cutlass | ká-tāχ | kó-tāχ | | | |
| cap | kā-káj | kō-káj | | | |

6 Proforms

Proforms corresponding to subjects, objects, and possessors were elicited. It is not known whether these labels will turn out to be correct once more is known about the language; they are chosen on the basis of English translation equivalents.

| | Subject | Possessor | Object |
|-----|---------|-----------|--------|
| 1sg | mb- | āmbè | mbè |
| 1pl | ɕī | èɕī | ɕī |
| 2sg | mō | ōndū | mō |
| 2pl | jī | | jī |
| 3sg | mi | īnɕī | mī |
| 3pl | wù | ēvā | wà |

Table 11: Proforms

As will be noted in the following section, the first person singular subject cannot be said to have an associated vowel, as its vowel has the same quality of the prefix vowel of the associated verb.

7 Verbs

Interestingly, verbs in Baazəm show a kind of prefix-stem structure. The prefix is a vowel (**i**, **u**, **ə** or **a**). In imperatives, the prefix is omitted, and in clauses with a first person pronominal subject, the prefix coalesces with the first person subject pronoun. With other subject pronouns, the coalescence seems to be optional. When the subject is a lexical NP, or a proform other than 1sg, the full prefix+stem form is observed.

- (4) a. ŋgbā ī-mbī
 drink I/XII-honey
 “Drink honey [beer]!”
- b. ū-ŋgī wú à-ŋgba ī-mbī
 III.sg-person DEM.SG PR-drink I/XII-honey
 “This man drinks honey [beer]”
- (5) a. mbù-tsū ē-tsàŋ
 1sg.PR-spit saliva
 “I have spit.”
- b. ū-ŋgī wú ù-tsū ē-tsàŋ
 III.sg-person DEM.SG PR-spit saliva
 “This man has spit.”
- (6) a. tùŋ ɔ̄-lāχ
 pull II.sg-rope
 “Pull the rope!”
- b. mbà-tùŋ ɔ̄-lāχ
 1SG.PR-pull II.sg-rope
 “I have pulled the rope.”

- (7) a. gbōm mbè
push 1SG.OBJ
“Push me!”
- b. ū-ŋgī wú à-gbōm mbè
III.sg-person DEM.SG PR-push 1SG.OBJ
“The man has pushed me.”
- a. mō a-lèv ìngì
2sg.sbj fear who
“Whom do you fear?”
- b. mā-kù jī ì
2sg.PR-fall PRF Q.POLAR
“Have you just fallen?”

| | | | | | |
|--------|----------------|---------|-----------|--------|------------------|
| i-tsōm | ‘hurt’ | u-gjòχ | ‘count’ | a-lōp | ‘fear’ |
| a-dū | ‘say’ | a-tū | ‘sing’ | a-tùŋ | ‘pull’ |
| a-gbōm | ‘push’ | a-mbù | ‘swell’ | u-vōχ | ‘blow’ |
| u-tsū | ‘spit’ | a-mā | ‘suck’ | a-kpà | ‘vomit’ |
| a-ŋgbā | ‘drink’ | a-nçī | ‘eat’ | ə-vōp | ‘roast’ |
| i-tōm | ‘send’ | a-kù | ‘fall’ | u-gū | ‘pass the night’ |
| a-nāŋ | ‘pass the day’ | i-jù | ‘go’ | u-wèn | ‘fly’ |
| u-kwí | ‘run’ | a-tfā | ‘leave’ | i-vī | ‘pour’ |
| i-ndzè | ‘bite’ | u-gōχō | ‘hear’ | u-tóχò | ‘show’ |
| u-mūŋ | ‘wash’ | i-dzāχ | ‘split’ | a-ndā | ‘give’ |
| i-çì | ‘steal’ | u-mbù | ‘squeeze’ | i-gjīp | ‘work’ |
| i-nçì | ‘bury’ | u-tsóχà | ‘burn’ | a-kōm | ‘urinate’ |
| a-tā | ‘tell story’ | a-gba | ‘excrete’ | i-tpī | ‘tie’ |
| i-nbì | ‘hit’ | u-ŋgjù | ‘kick’ | u-kjū | ‘die’ |

Table 12: Some verbs

8 Basic clause structure

The basic word order in simple declarative clauses is SV in intransitive clauses and SVO in transitive clauses.

- (8) ū-gbūŋ à-lōp
III.sg-child PR-fear
“The child is afraid.”
- (9) ū-ŋgī wú ù-mbù ī-mbī
III.sg-person DEM.SG PR-squeeze I/XII-honey
“The man has squeezed honey.”

One sentence suggests that focus-induced changes in constituent order might be expected:

- (10) ɔ̄-kā wú mō ì-ɔ̄ɔ̄ kà
 IV.sg-money DEM.SG 2SG PR-steal where
 “[from] Where did you steal this money?”

Some verbs require or allow “dummy” objects representing an instrument or theme associated with the event they denote.

- (11) a. ū-ŋgī ú ì-ndzà̄m mbè (kē-dī̄ŋ)
 III.sg-person DEM.SG PR-bite 1SG.OBJ (IX.sg-tooth)
 “This man bit me.”
- b. ū-ŋgī ú ì-nbì ù-wù̄ŋ kū-bū
 III.sg-person DEM.SG PR-hit COW VIII.sg-hand
 “This man hit a cow.”
- c. ū-lū ú ū-ŋgjù mbèkū-tpī
 I.sg-man DEM.SG kick 1SG.OBJ VIII.sg-foot
 “This man kicked me.”
- d. mbā-gba ā-mū̄ŋ
 1SG.PR-excrete excrement
 “I have excreted.”
- e. ū-ŋgī ú ù-tsū ē̄tsà̄ŋ
 III.sg-person DEM.SG PR-spit saliva
 “This man has spit.”

9 Questions

I elicited sentences corresponding to polar questions, emphatic polar questions, and content questions.

Polar questions are formed with a low sentence-final boundary tone and a lengthening of the final vowel or nasal consonant of the sentence. If the sentence ends in a consonant, a vowel is added:

- (12) a. mū-gū ʃi ì
 2sg.PR-stay.night PRF Q.POLAR
 “Have you slept?” (customary greeting in morning)
- b. mā-kù ù
 2sg.PR-fall Q.POLAR
 “Did you fall?”
- c. kū-bū ī-tsīm mō ī-tsīm ì̄
 VIII.sg-hand PR-hurt 2SG.OBJ PR-hurt Q.POLAR
 “Does your hand hurt??”
- d. mā-lōv ə̄
 2sg.PR-fear Q.POLAR
 “Are you afraid?”

Emphatic polar questions are formed by repeating the main verb the end of the sentence. In some cases, the repeated verb bears a different prefix from the main verb. This possibly suggests that the repeated verb is or was a nominalized form.

- (13) a. kɛ́-lúŋ ì-tsīm mō ì-tsīm m̄
 IX.sg-belly PR.-hurt 2sg.OBJ PR.-hurt Q.POLAR
 “Does your belly hurt??”
- b. mō ā-kù ē-kù ù
 2SG PR-fall PR-fall Q.POLAR
 “Did you fall??”
- c. à-nāŋ āmī ù-kjū k̄-kjū ù
 PR-be 3sg PR-die PR-die Q.POLAR
 “Is it him who fell??”

Question words appearing in content questions are shown in table 13. Content questions where the questioned element functions as a subject were not elicited. In content questions where the questioned element functions as an object, the question word is in situ.

- (14) mō vɔ́p èjà
 2sg fear what
 “What are you afraid of?”

| | |
|------|----------|
| ìŋgì | ‘who?’ |
| èjà | ‘what?’ |
| kà | ‘where?’ |

Table 13: Interrogative words

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