

The Noun Phrase in Gyeli

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1 Preliminaries

Note that transcriptions are based on IPA and not on common Bantu orthography.

1.1 Location of the “Gyeli noun phrase” within the dissertation— A description of Gyeli

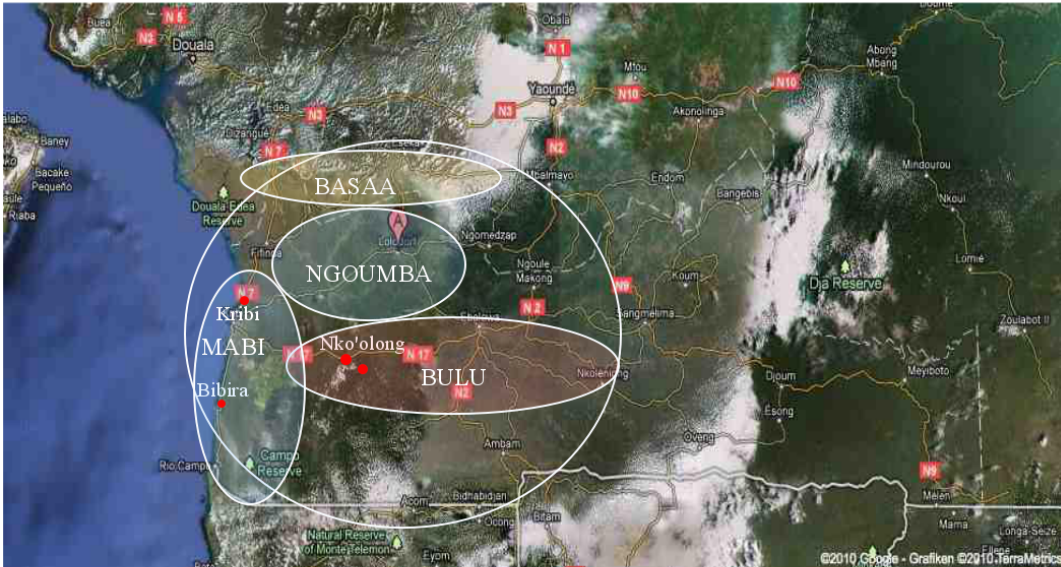
+ Preliminary structure of the thesis

1. Introduction
2. Phonology and tonology
3. Nouns and the noun phrase
4. Verbs and the verb phrase
5. TAM
6. Clause types
7. Texts
8. Lexicon

+ The project

DoBeS, the project, the team, distribution of work, the first year

1.2 Basic information on Gyeli



- ISO 639-3: gyi
- “Pygmy” hunter-gatherers in southern Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea (4000-5000 speakers scattered in a vast area)
- Bantu A80 (Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Northwest, A, Makaa-Njem (A.80))

- controversial status: language (Ethnologue) vs. dialect (Bahuchet in prep.) - Gyeli also known under the names Bagyeli, Bakola, Bajelli, Bako, Bogyel, Likoya, Babinga...
- contact with farming communities of other Bantu languages (Basaa, Kwasio, Bulu, Fang, Ewondo, Bakoko, Yasa)
- different varieties of Gyeli depending on contact language
- endangered language because of change of subsistence
- variety of my dissertation spoken in the Bulu region
- data: mostly own fieldwork, previous work by Renaud (1976) concentrates on variety in contact with Mvoumbo speakers and on phonology + morphology; there are significant differences between the two varieties/descriptions in terms of lexicon, phonology and morphology

1.3 Basic phonology

+ Consonant inventory

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Nasal	m		n	ɲ	ŋ	
Plosive	p, b		t, d		k, g	ʔ
Implosives	[ɓ > b]		[ɗ > d]			
Prenasalized stops	(mp), mb		nt, nd		ŋk, ŋg	
Prenasalized fricatives			(ns), nz			
Fricatives	[β > b]	f, v	s, z		[ɣ > g]	
Affricates	pf, bv		tʃ, dʒ			
Trill			[r > d]			
Lateral approximants			l			
Semi-vowels	w			j		

Table 1: Gyeli phoneme inventory

- in [x > y] brackets: x is supposedly allophone of y
- in () brackets: unclear status as to phonemic status or consonant cluster
- labialized consonants: k^w, g^w, f^w
- palatalized consonants: p^j, b^j, d^j, k^j, g^j, m^j, n^j, nd^j, ŋg^j

+ Vowel inventory

- 7 vowels: Ngué Um (2011) reports 7 vowels /i, u, e, o, ε, ɔ, a/ for the Basaa variety and Renaud the same for the Mvoumbo variety, but there might be even 9 including /ɪ, ʊ/
- nasal counterparts for each oral vowel, supposedly because of loss of nasal coda
- vowel length: long vowels attested for at least /iː, uː, oː, εː, ɔː, aː/, but not (yet) for /ɪː, ʊː, eː/; long vowels seem at least sometimes to be the result of the omission of intervocalic

consonants

- no vowel harmony attested so far

+ **Tone**

- two level tones L and H dù *oven* vs. dú *lie*

- a rising HL and a falling LH tone sâ *thing*; lè-wǎ *twin*

- lexical tone, grammatical tone expected in TAM system

- tonal processes: H tone spreading and downstep

+ **Syllable structure (of nouns)**

- most frequent in nouns are bisyllabic roots, then monosyllabic ones, nouns with 3 syllables occur sometimes, those with 4 or 5 are very rare and constitute reduplications and/or borrowings

- mostly open syllables

- consonant clusters or labialized/palatalized consonants as onset

- only nasal coda

+ **Open questions**

- Are there really implosives? If so, are they phonemic or variants?

- How to analyze prenasalized/labialized/palatalized consonants? Are they phonemic?

- How to analyze the vowel system? 7 or 9 vowels? Vowel harmony?

2 The Gyeli noun phrase

2.1 Elements of the noun phrase

+ **Noun**

- the Gyeli noun consists of a root which may or may not take a prefix as in lè-kàá *clan* vs. Ø-tídí *animal*

+ **Demonstratives**

- two sets of demonstratives: proximal and distal

- proximal and distal demonstratives differ in tone and/or vowel length

- proximal demonstratives: singular classes have a falling HL, plural classes a H

- distal demonstratives: all H, all long vowels

- Ngué Um (2011) reports anaphoric demonstratives for the Kola variety in the Basaa area, so there may also be anaphoric demonstratives in the Gyeli variety in the Bulu region, but I haven't come across them yet

	proximal	distal
1	nû	núú
2	bá	báá
3	wô	wóó
4	mí	míí
5	lê	léé
6	má	máá
7	jê	jéé
8	bé	béé
9	ɲî	ɲíí
14	bê	béé

Table 2: Gyeli demonstratives

- if the noun is modified by a demonstrative only, the demonstrative obligatorily follows the noun as in (1)

- (1) a. m-ùrì nû
 1nc-man DEM.PROX.1
 ‘this man’
- b. m-ùrì núú
 1nc-man DEM.DIST.1
 ‘that man’

+ Possessive pronouns

- possessive pronouns in Gyeli have the roots as in Table 3 and take an agreement prefix (see also Table 6)

- classes 1 + 9 show a different tonal pattern than the other classes

	Singular	Plural	cl. 1	+ 9	other	classes
1	-ã	-isi	-â	-ìsì	-â	-ísì
2	-ɔ	-inɛ	-ô	-ìné	-ô	-íné
3	-ɛ	-awɔ	-ê	-àwó	-é	-áwó

Table 3: Basic possessive paradigm

- cl. 1 + 3: first high front vowel in 1. + 2. Pl changes to high back vowel (wúsì, wúné in AGR cl. 3 vs. mísì, míné in AGR cl. 6) after the semi-vowel /w/

- if the noun is modified by a possessive only, the possessive obligatorily follows the noun as in (2)

- (2) a. só w-â
friend.1 1-1SG.POSS
'my friend'
- b. bà-só b-â
2nc-friend 2-1SG.POSS
'my friends'

+ Numerals

- high variability among Gyeli speakers in terms of counting skills (depending on whether Bagyeli have been to school or not)
- Gyeli numerals very similar to Mabi (Kwasio) numerals → borrowing or genealogical relation?

	Gyeli	Mabi
'1'	wúrù	wúrè
'2'	bí báà	bá
'3'	bí láálè	bí lá
'4'	bí nâ	bí ná
'5'	bí tánè	bí tán
'6'	ntùó	ntùó
'7'	mpúèré	mbúèré
'8'	lòmbì	lòmbì
'9'	rèbvùá	rèbvùá
'10'	lèwúmò	wúm

Table 4: Enumeratives in Gyeli and Mabi

- Gyeli numerals '2' - '5' are modifiers and agree with the noun
- '10', '100' and '1000' are nouns and belong to different genders: '10' to 5/6, '100' to 7/8 and '1000' to 1/2
- status of '1' and '6' - '9' is unclear, they are probably not nouns, anyway they don't take agreement prefixes
- higher numerals are constructed by addition and multiplication
- addition is expressed by coordination (nominal-numeral COM numeral)
- multiplication is expressed by a N + MOD noun phrase (see Table 5)

Addition		Multiplication	
‘11’	lè-wúmò ná wúrũ	‘20’	mà-wúmò má-báà
‘12’	lè-wúmò ná bí-báà	‘30’	mà-wúmò má-láálè
‘13’	lè-wúmò ná bí-láálè	‘40’	mà-wúmò má-nâ
‘14’	lè-wúmò ná bí-nâ	‘50’	mà-wúmò má-tánè
‘15’	lè-wúmò ná bí-tánè	‘60’	mà-wúmò ntùó
‘16’	lè-wúmò ná ntùó	‘70’	mà-wúmò mbúèré
‘17’	lè-wúmò ná mpúèré	‘80’	mà-wúmò lòm̀bì
‘18’	lè-wúmò ná lòm̀bì	‘90’	mà-wúmò rè̀bvùá
‘19’	lè-wúmò ná rè̀bvùá	‘100’	bwújà
		‘200’	bì-bwújà bí-báà
		‘1000’	tó̀djì̀nì
		‘2000’	bà-tó̀djì̀nì bá-báà

Table 5: Gyeli complex numerals

- when quantifying a noun, simplex (monomorphemic) numerals form either a noun phrase with the quantified noun (modifier numerals as in (3)) or enter a N + N construction (nominal numerals as in (4))

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>(3) a. só wúrũ
friend.1 one
‘one friend’</p> <p>b. bà-só bá-báà
2nc-friend 2-two
‘two friends’</p> | <p>(4) a. lè-wúmò lí bà-só
5nc-ten 5:CON 2nc-friend
‘ten friend’</p> <p>b. bwújà (yá) bà-só
hundred.7 7:CON 2nc-friend
‘hundred friends’</p> |
|---|--|

- complex numerals:

- if the complex numeral is a multiplication noun phrase, the quantified noun precedes the NP as in (5a)
- if the complex numeral is a coordinated noun phrase expressing addition, the quantified noun is R₂ and the nominal numeral R₁ in a N + N construction while the modifier numeral agrees with R₂ as in (5b)
- a complex numeral including multiplication and addition is expressed via a coordination whose two conjuncts constitute NPs (N + MOD): the first conjunct comprises the multiplication NP with the nominal numeral, the second conjunct includes the quantified noun which is modified by the numeral modifier as in (5c)

- (5) a. b-ùdì mà-wúmò má-báà
2nc-person 6nc-ten 6-two
‘20 people’

- b. lè-wúmò lí b-ùdì ná bá-báà
 5nc-ten 5:CON 2nc-person COM 2-two
 ‘12 people’
- c. mà-wúmò má-báà ná b-ùdì bá-báà
 6nc-ten 6-two COM 2nc-person 2-two
 ‘22 people’

+ Adjectives?

- probably there is no ‘adjective’ category

- best candidates for ‘adjectives’ (good, bad, big, small) behave a bit nouny, but are not quite like the other nouns

- some come with a plural form (but not all)
- sometimes followed by an element which could be a connective
- they cannot be modified by demonstratives or possessives

- (6) a. só wà mpá / bíwò
 friend.1 1:CON? good / bad
 ‘good/bad friend’
- b. bà-só bá mp[↓]á / bíwò
 2nc-friend 2:CON? good / bad
 ‘good/bad friends’

- reversiveness of mpá

- (7) a. mpá yá ndàwó
 goodness?.7 7:CON? house.9
 ‘good house/goodness of the house’
- b. mà-mpá má ndàwó
 6nc-goodness? 6:CON? house.9
 ‘good houses’

- semantic change in reversing bíwò

- (8) a. m-wánò wà bíwò
 1nc-child 1:CON? bad
 ‘bad child (character)’
- b. (wè) bíwò m-wánò
 PRST bad 1nc-child
 ‘ugly child’

- c. *bíwò *CON* m-wánò
 bad *CON* 1nc-child
 ‘bad/ugly child’

- predicative use

- (9) a. m-ùrì nû n mp^á
 1nc-person DEM.PROX.1 3Sg? good
 ‘this person is good’
 b. m-ùrì nû à bíwò
 1nc-person DEM.PROX.1 3Sg? ugly/bad
 ‘this person is ugly/*bad’

2.2 Gender/agreement system

- agreement targets are: possessive pronouns, demonstratives, non-nominal numerals, quantifiers, connective markers, relative markers? and verbs

- ten agreement classes form seven genders (see Table 6 and Figure 1)

- agreement class 14 is only established by a tonal difference from class 8 in the proximal demonstrative

	noun class prefix	agreement prefix (posses- sives)	example
1	N or ∅	w- + special tone pattern	mùdâ wê <i>his wife</i>
2	bà-	b-	bùdâ bé <i>his wives</i>
3	N	w-	nlô wé <i>his head</i>
4	mì- or mìn?	mì-/m ^j -	mìnlô m ^j é <i>his heads</i>
5	lè-	l-	lèmáá lé <i>his cheek</i>
6	mà-	m-	màmáá mé <i>his cheeks</i>
7	mostly ∅, sometimes N	j-	síngì jé <i>his cat</i>
8	bì-	bì-/b ^j -	bìsíngì b ^j é <i>his cats</i>
9	N	ɲ- + special tone pattern	ɲúlê ɲé <i>his body</i>
14	synchronically no prefix, but all roots start with /b/ or /v/	bì-/b ^j -	bwálè b ^j é <i>his pirogue</i>

Table 6: Noun class and agreement prefixes

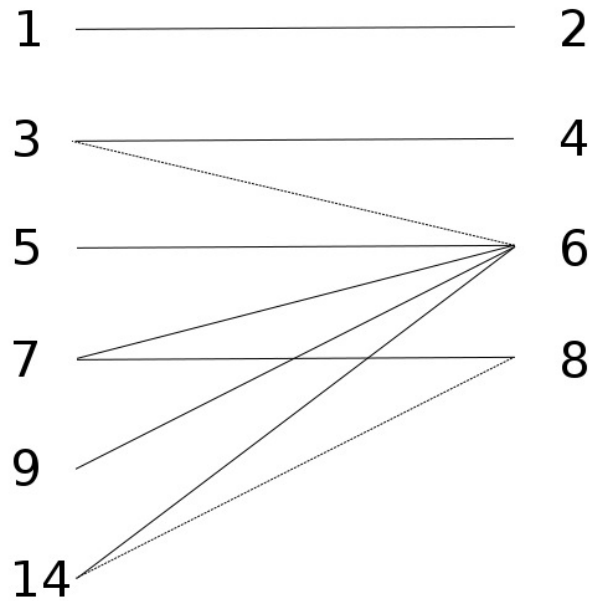


Figure 1: Gyeli gender system

- some genders have more members than others (1/2 and 7/8 bigger than 9/6 or minor genders such as 7/6 or 14/6)
- plural is always overtly marked on the noun → loss of class 10 and its replacement by class 6

Gender	Size	Semantic tendencies
1/2	120/511	many humans, some animals, lots of loan words
3/4	65/511	many body parts, some humans, animals, a few plants, tools
5/6	83/511	body parts, animals, plants, tools
7/8	131/511	body parts, animals, plants, clothes, tools, loan words
9/6	30/511	no discernible pattern
7/6	12/511	no discernible pattern
14/6	5/511	fire, night, sun, medicine, boat

Table 7: Size and semantics of Gyeli genders

- problem to affiliate initial nasals in the singular to either the noun class prefix or the nominal root:
 - Where does the nasal belong to? Is it a noun class prefix or part of the root? If it is a noun class prefix, is it frozen in the plural? Or do I have different types of nouns, namely those where the nasal is a noun class prefix and does not appear in the plural and those where the nasal is part of the root and does show up in the plural?
- argument for nasal belonging to the nominal root: if the nasal occurs in the plural form, then it might be part of the root

- argument for nasal prefixes: nasals often constitute a TBU and therefore are probably not part of the nominal root, their occurrence in the plural can be explained as frozen prefixes

- 1/2: ɲâ, bàɲâ *mother,s*; ɲdzóʔò, bàndzóʔò *elephant,s* but òtì, bà-tì *in-law,s*; ɲdzíbí, bà-dzíbí *thief/ves*
- 3/4: òlò, mìnò *head,s*; òkù, mìnkù *hole,s* but òsùnέ, mì-sùnέ *calf,ves*; òvèwò, mì-vèwò *breath*
- 7/8: ɲdzí, bìndzí *place,s* but àwó, bì-làwó *branch,es*

2.3 Connective constructions

- connective construction: dependency relation between two nominal constituents: HEAD (R₁) - RELATOR (REL[glossed CON]) - DEPENDENT (R₂) (See Van de Velde forth.)

- canonical CON is an overt relator which agrees in an agreement prefix with R₁ and has, as in Proto-Banu, the canonical root -a with a tone that is harmonic with preceding prefix (Meeussen 1967)

AGR class	Connective
1	wà
2	bá
3	wá
4	mí
5	lé
6	má
7	já
8	bí
9	ɲà
14	bí / βí

Table 8: Gyeli connectives

- How do I analyze the structure of Gyeli connectives elegantly? Do I assume an underlying stem with some variation in classes 4, 5, 8 and 14? Or do I have to say that a potential stem is totally opaque synchronically?

- special case: if R₂ is a personal name, the connective takes a fixed form ɲgá for all agreement classes without being modified when R₁ is singular; if R₁ is plural, ɲgá takes a plural prefix

- (10) a. m-pòmbó ñgá nadine
1nc-face CON PN
'Nadine's face'
- b. bà-mpòmbó bá-ñgá nadine
2nc-face 2-CON PN
'Nadine's faces'

- (11) a. n-kwèé ñgá nadine
3nc-basket CON PN
'Nadine's basket'
- b. mì-nkwèé mí-ñgá nadine
4nc-basket 4-CON PN
'Nadine's baskets'

- connective optionality: sometimes the use of the CON marker is optional; speakers have clear judgments about the contexts when CON can be omitted, but the rules for CON optionality are unclear to me, so I tested several hypotheses

- Note: connectives in brackets indicate their optionality while those without brackets are obligatory

- CON optionality conditioned by number morphology? More often, plural connectives are optional while their singular counterpart is obligatory; however, in (12) the singular CON is optional as well

- (12) a. n-sínó (wá) má-ká
3nc-color 3:CON 6nc-leaf
'color of leaves'
- b. mì-nsínó (mí) má-ká
4nc-color 4-CON 6nc-leaf
'colors of leaves'

- CON optionality conditioned by gender or agreement class morphology? Does connective optionality depend on the gender/noun class of R₁ or R₂?

→ no, because changing the noun class of R₁ (13) and R₂ (14) gives both obligatory and optional CON

- (13) a. só (wà) ñgjê
friend.1 1:CON stranger.1
'friend of the stranger'
- b. ndzì ñà ñgjê
path.9 9:CON stranger.1
'path of the stranger'

- (14) a. só (wà) ñgjê
friend.1 1:CON stranger.1
'friend of the stranger'
- b. só wà ñ-kwàno
friend.1 1:CON 3nc-honey
'friend of honey'

- it also doesn't depend on whether R₁ and R₂ belong to the same noun class or not:

- (15) a. só wà kùsì
friend.1 1:CON parrot.1
'friend of the parrot'
- b. só (wà) sîngì
friend.1 1:CON cat.7
'friend of the cat'

- CON optionality conditioned by tonal pattern?
- hypothesis: if the H tone of the CON spreads to the otherwise L prefix of R₂, the tonal process might mark the dependency relation and an overt connective marker is not necessary as in (16)

- (16) a. ò-lô wá tíd⁴í
 3nc-head 3:CON animal.1
 ‘the head of the animal’
- b. m̀-ò-lô (mí) bá-tíd⁴í
 4nc-head 4-CON 2nc-animal
 ‘the heads of the animals’

- (17) falsifies the tonal hypothesis because in (17a), there is no H spreading, but the use of CON is still optional while in (17b) there is H spreading, but the CON is still obligatory

- (17) a. m̀-páà (wà) n-làmbó
 1nc-president 1:CON 3nc-country
 ‘president of the country’
- b. bá-páà bá n-làmbó
 2nc-president 2:CON 3nc-country
 ‘presidents of the country’

- CON optionality conditioned by phonological environment? → tendency: monosyllabic R₂ require CON as in (18) compared to (19); however, there are exceptions as in (13a)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>(18) a. só wà ò-tí
 friend. 1:CON 1nc-in.law
 ‘the friend of the in-law’</p> <p>b. bà-só bá n-tí
 2nc-friend 2:CON 1nc-in.law
 ‘the friends of the in-law’</p> | <p>(19) a. só (wà) bà-tí
 friend.1 1:CON 2nc-in.law
 ‘the friend of the in-laws’</p> <p>b. bà-só (bá) bá-tí
 2nc-friend 2:CON 2nc-in.law
 ‘friends of the in-laws’</p> |
|---|--|

- CON optionality conditioned by semantics of R₁ and R₂?
 → there must be something to it because all nominal numerals in R₁ position have an optional CON even though they belong to different noun classes
- however, other semantic patterns (e.g. human, animacy, plants, etc.) are less clear and there are always counterexamples

→ CON optionality conditioned by a complex set of phonological and semantic rules?

2.4 Order of modifiers in the NP

- if only one modifier in the NP, then modifier follows noun
- if two or more modifiers in the NP, things get more complicated

- I look at NPs with two modifiers; modifiers comprise: POSS, DEM, NUM + ‘ADJ’ and their combinability and position

- NP with two modifiers (excluding numerals) as in Table 9:

- if the noun is in the initial position, the order of two following modifiers is free → no modifier seems to be more bound to the noun than others

- maximally one slot before the head noun → noun cannot occur at final position

N	POSS	DEM	N	DEM	‘ADJ’	N	POSS	‘ADJ’
mwàńó	wâ	nû	mwàńó	nû	wa mpá	mwàńó	wâ	wa mpá
mwàńó	nû	wâ	mwàńó	wa mpá	nû	mwàńó	wa mpá	wâ
nû	mwàńó	wâ	wa mpá	mwàńó	nû	wa mpá	mwàńó	wâ
wâ	mwàńó	nû	nû	mwàńó	wa mpá	wâ	mwàńó	wa mpá
* nû	wâ	mwàńó	* wa mpá	nû	mwàńó	* wa mpá	wâ	mwàńó
* wâ	nû	mwàńó	* nû	wa mpá	mwàńó	* wâ	wa mpá	mwàńó
‘this	my	child’	‘this	good	child’	‘my	good	child’

Table 9: NP with two modifiers (excluding numerals)

- NP with two modifiers including numerals as in Table 10:

- less restrictions and clear rules for modifier order

→ What does it say about the morphosyntactic properties of the NUM wúrù *one*?

→ need to check with NUM that takes an agreement marker

N	DEM	NUM	N	POSS	NUM	N	NUM	‘ADJ’
mwàńó	nû	wúrù	mwàńó	wâ	wúrù	mwàńó	wúrù	wa mpá
mwàńó	wúrù	nû	mwàńó	wúrù	wâ	mwàńó	wa mpá	wúrù
nû	mwàńó	wúrù	wúrù	mwàńó	wâ	* wúrù	wa mpá	mwàńó
nû	wúrù	mwàńó	wúrù	wâ	mwàńó	wúrù	mwàńó	wa mpá
? wúrù	mwàńó	nû	wâ	mwàńó	wúrù	wa mpá	mwàńó	wúrù
? wúrù	nû	mwàńó	wâ	wúrù	mwàńó	wa mpá	wúrù	mwàńó
‘this	one	child’	‘my	one	child’	‘one	good	child’

Table 10: NP with two modifiers (including numerals)

- even more complex with three ‘modifiers’ in the NP since ‘rules’ for two modifiers don’t hold for three modifiers (N POSS DEM ‘ADJ’)

- free order of modifiers following the noun as in (20)
- only one slot before the head noun as in (21)

- (20) a. wa mpá m-wà^hnó wá nû
 ? good 1nc-child 1-1SG.POSS DEM.PROX.1
 ‘this my good child’
- b. *wa mpá m-wà^hnó nû wá
 ? good 1nc-child DEM.PROX.1 1-1SG.POSS
 ‘this my good child’
- (21) nû wá m-wà^hnó wa mpá
 DEM.PROX.1 1-1SG.POSS 1nc-child ? good
 ‘this my good child’

2.5 The status of basic color terms

- What part of speech are basic color terms in Gyeli? - while new color innovations in Gyeli are all nouns, the traditional basic color terms have different morphosyntactic properties (see Table 11)

Gyeli color	POS	English correspondence
ná vyûvyû / (nsìnó wá) ná vyû	?	‘black’
(nsìnó wá) ná mbàmbàlà	?	‘white’
ná bìbì / (nsìnó wá) ná bì	?	‘red’
ná yêyê / (nsìnó wá) ná yê	?	‘kind of white’ (lost color)
ná pfûpfû / (nsìnó wá) ná pfû	?	‘kind of white’ (changed color)
mpùlé / (nsìnó wá mpùlé)	noun	‘yellow’ (type of tree with yellow bark)
máká / (nsìnó wá máká / léká / ká)	noun	‘green’ (leaves)

Table 11: Gyeli color terms

- What is **ná**?
- they are not nouns since they don’t trigger agreement and don’t have a plural form
- they are not verbs (but are probably derived from verbs) since **ná** is not a subject agreement marker
- they are not adjectives or any other modifier agreeing with the noun since they don’t take any agreement marker

- (22) dʒìjò ná bìbí
 chair.7 ? red
 ‘the red chair’ or ‘the chair is red’

- (23) Mvoumbo
 a. á bìbì tèbèdì
 ? red table?
 ‘the red table’

- b. tètèdì ná bìbì
table.? ? red
'the table is red'

other occurrences of ná:

- COM marker (see e.g. complex addition numerals)
- máná *morning* → ná máná *tomorrow, until tomorrow*
- kùyú *evening* → ná kùyú *yesterday*

Concluding remarks and discussion

- Noun class prefixes
- Morphosyntactic status of 'adjectives'
- Connective optionality
- Modifier order in the NP
- Part of speech of basic color terms and status of ná
- Suggestions on glossing

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