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AUTHOR Thach, Sharon V.; Dwyer, David J.  
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ABSTRACT

This book is intended for the person who has had 100-200 hours of language training in Kpelle, a language of Liberia. The text has six parts: (1) an introduction to the languages of Liberia, including charts and maps showing the distribution of African languages, the location of Liberian languages, and indications on the relatedness of the languages; (2) a lengthy instruction on a method of learning a language on one's own; (3) instructions for native language tutors; (4) a short reference grammar summarizing the basic grammatical structures in Kpelle; (5) a Kpelle-English dictionary; and (6) a description of the sound system of Mande languages and instructional material on learning the sound system of a language. (AMH)

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# KPELLE

## A Reference Handbook

of

PHONETICS, GRAMMAR, LEXICON

AND

LEARNING PROCEDURES

BY

by Sharon V. Thach  
with David J. Dwyer

for

THE UNITED STATES PEACE CORPS

at

THE AFRICAN STUDIES CENTER

of

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

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## INTRODUCTION

Most language textbooks are written with a presumption that the language would be taught under the auspices of a trained and experienced language teacher. And while this situation does prevail in the teaching of European languages, such is not the case with the lesser-known languages of the third world, particularly outside the walls of higher learning.

In the learning of African languages, it is more frequently the case that language teachers are untrained (owing to the minimal demand for such teachers) or that the learning situation is outside the classroom. Although I have no access to statistics, my impression of Peace Corps language training is such that, even with 100-200 hours of language training, the learner will need additional study before being able to use the language with any facility.

Thus, it is the reality that much of the learning of African languages will, inevitably take place outside the classroom in situations that are in some ways ideal, but which lack an experienced language tutor. It is this reality that gives rise to this volume for it was written for the learner who has the commitment to further his/her language study, but who lacks the general knowledge of how to proceed. It is the purpose then to give the learner the sufficient skills and knowledge to be able to carry out the orderly study of a foreign language on his/her own.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION TO THE LANGUAGES OF LIBERIA

In addition to English, which is widely spoken in Liberia, there are three major groups of languages spoken there: West Atlantic, Kru and Mande, all of which are subdivisions of the Niger-Congo branch of Niger-Kordofanian, the largest grouping of languages in Africa (see figure 1).

The Kru languages, spoken in both southern Liberia and the western part of the Ivory Coast, include the following Liberian languages: Krahn, Bassa, Kru, Grebo, Dei and Kuwaa (also known as Belleh). The West Atlantic languages are spoken from Liberia north to Senegal and include the Gola and Kissi, spoken in the northwestern and northern parts of Liberia respectively. These languages are virtually surrounded by languages of the third group known as the Mande languages. This group covers a much larger area than the other two, including not only the above-mentioned countries, but Guinea, Upper Volta and Mali as well.

The Mande languages have a Western branch and a (South)eastern branch. Mano and Gio (hard g) are Southeastern Mande languages spoken in Nimba county. The Western branch has two sub-branches, Northwestern and Southwestern. Both Vai, spoken in the Cape Mount area, and Manya (also known as Mandingo) spoken in the border area between Guinea and Liberia are Liberian languages of the northern branch. The other branch contains a set of very closely related languages called the Southwestern Mande languages of which only Loko is spoken outside of Liberia, in Sierra Leone. The rest, Mende, Bani, Kpelle and Lorma are spoken in the northern part of Liberia.

The location of the Mande languages in Africa is shown in figure 1, the location of the languages of Liberia is shown in figure 2, and figure 3 shows how these languages are related.

FIGURE 1: THE DISTRIBUTION OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES

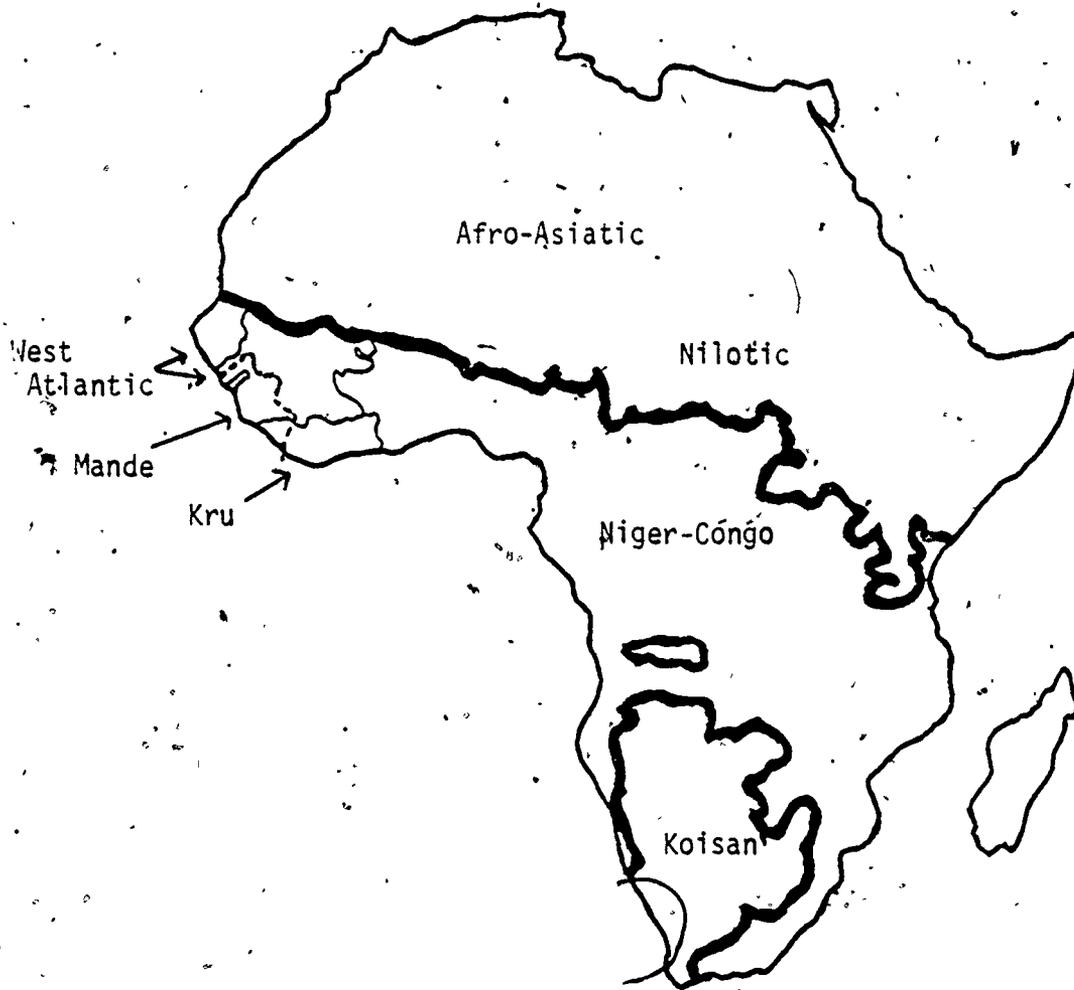


FIGURE 2: LOCATION OF LIBERIAN LANGUAGES  
(from Liberia in Maps; von Gnielinski (ed. 1972))

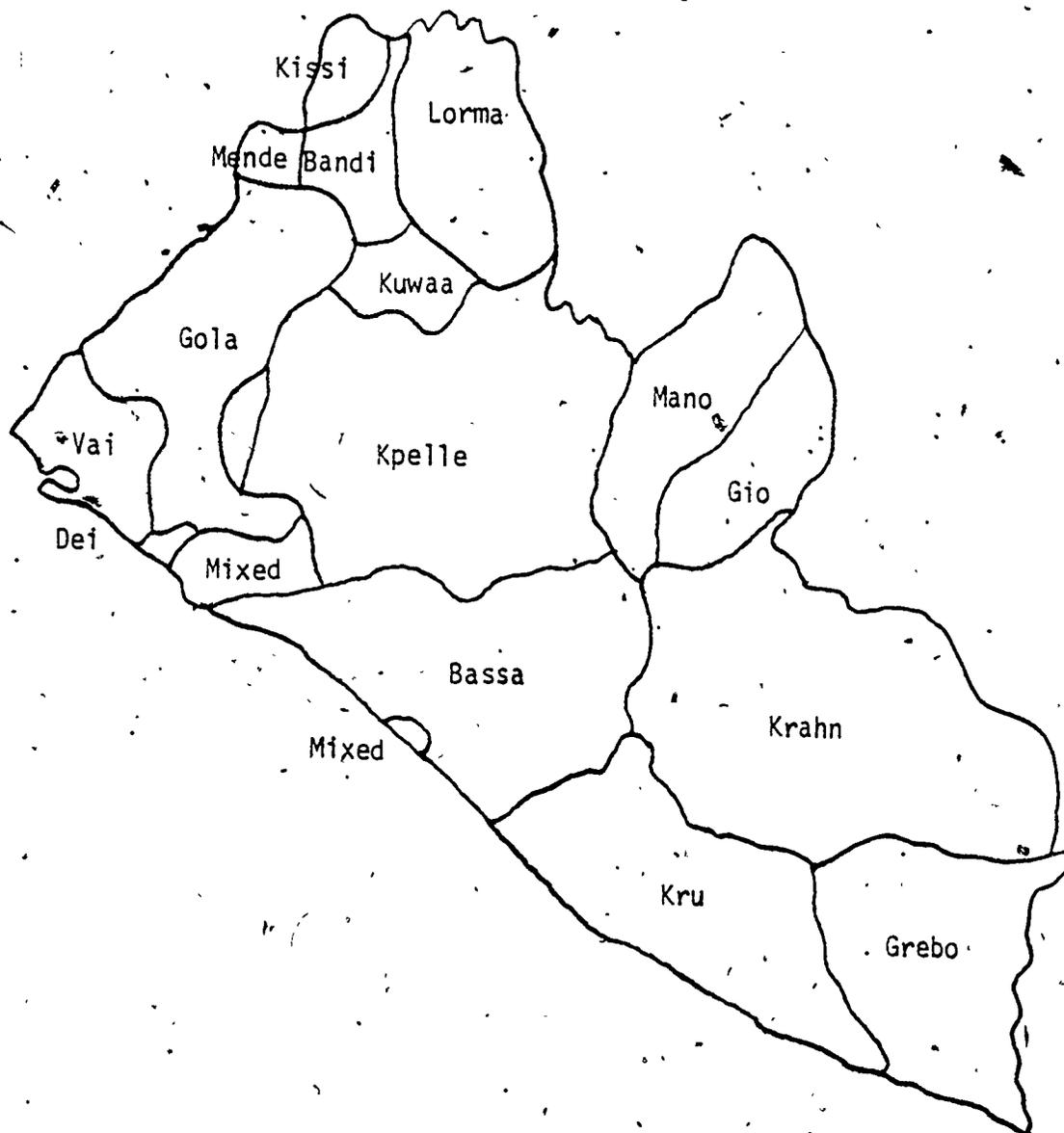


FIGURE 3: THE RELATEDNESS OF THE LIBERIAN LANGUAGES

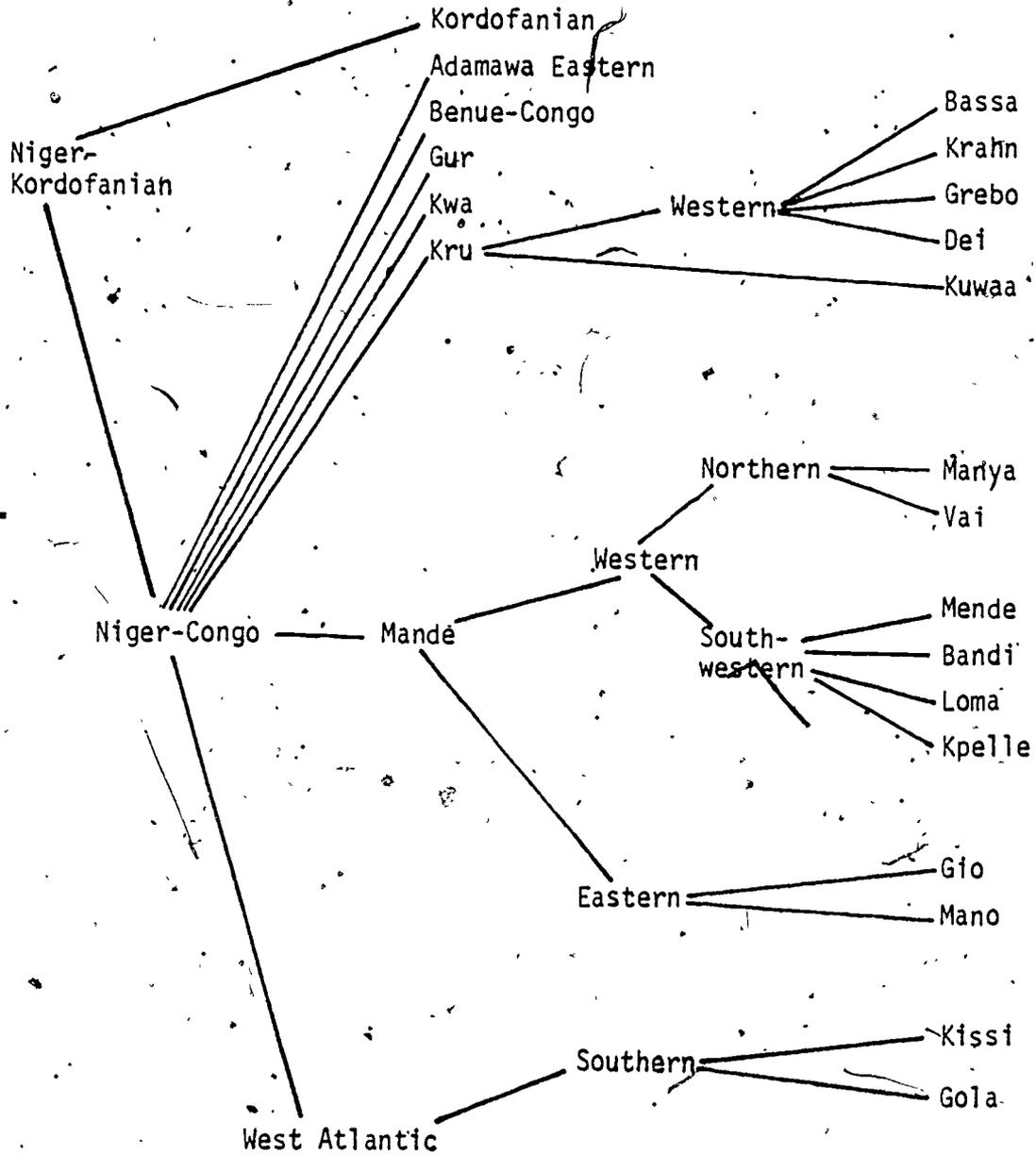


FIGURE (4A)

Indo-European correspondences from Greenberg (1957:42)

LANGUAGE	ONE	TWO	THREE	HEAD	EYE	EAR	NOSE	MOUTH	TOOTH
Breton	ünan	dau	tri	penn	lagad	skuarn	fri	geny	dant
Irish	ö:n	da:	tri	kjan	su:lʃ	kluas	sre:n	bjal	fjakal
Welsh	in	da:	tri	pen	blagad	klist	truin	keg	dant
Danish	en	to:ʔ	tre:ʔ	ho:dho	əjə	o:pə	nə:sə	monʔ	tanʔ
Swedish	en	tvo	tre	hüvud	öga	öra	näsa	mun	tand
Dutch	e:n	tve:	dri:	ho:ft	o:x	o:ir	nö:s	monē	tant
English	won	tuw	θriʃ	hed	aj	ihr	nowz	mawē	tuwē
German	ajns	tsvaj	draj	kopf	augə	o:r	na:ze	munt	ʃat:n
French	œ, yn	dö	trwa	tə:t	œl/jö	ore:ʃ	ne	buuʃ	dä
Italian	uno,	due	tre	testa	okkjo	orakkjo	naso	bokka	dente
Spanish	una,	dos	tres	kabesa	oxo	orexa	naso	boka	diente
Rumanian	un	doj	trej	kap	okju	ureke	naʃ	gura	dinte
Albanian	n'a	du	tre	koko	sü	vesh	hunda	goja	dbəmə
Greek	enas	dhjo	tris	kefali	mäti	afsi	mifi	stoma	dböndi
Lithuanian	viegas	du	tris	galva	akis	ausis	ndsis	burna	gantis
Latvian	viens	divi	tri:s	galva	atss	auss	deguns	mute	zobs
Polish	Jeden	dwa	trzy	głowa	oko	ucho	nos	usta	zób
Czech	Jeden	dva	tri	hlava	oko	uxo	nos	usta	zup
Russian	adjin	dva,	trji	galava	oko	uxo	nos	rot	zup
Bulgarian	edin	dva	tri	glava	oko	uxo	nos	usta	zab
Serbo-Croatian	jedan	dva	tri	glava	oko	Uho	nos	usta	zub
Finnish	üksi	kaksi	kolme	pa:	sihnä	korva	nena	su:	hammas
Estonian	üks	kaks	kolm	pea	siln	wilja-pea	nina	su:	hammas
Hungarian	ed	ke:t	há:rom	fű: fej	sem	rül	orr	sa:j	fog
Basque	bat	bi	hirü	bürü	begi	belari	südü	aho	orts

FIGURE (4B)

Some West African Language Correspondences

LANGUAGE	ONE	TWO	THREE	EAR	EYE	MOUTH	TOOTH	HEAD	NOSE
Fulbe	do	di	tati	nofru	viere	hunnuko	nyifre	hoore	knal
Biafada	numa	bihe	biivo	nufa	-gire	musu	keede	gaga	-sini
Theme	-in	reŋ	-sas	lens	-far	-seŋ	-sək	-bump	soŋ
Limba	funte	taae	tatat	ifa	-ifa	-foŋ	ɛliŋ	kafa	peren
Kissii	pelec	miŋ	ngaa	nilen	-ifo	sondo	kinde	bolecŋ	milindo
Bullom	bul	tin	ra	niu	-hol	nyphol	chag	-bol	-min
Gola	gun	tiel	taal	kenu	efe	onya	kesfa	edi	emia
Bambara	kileŋ	fila	saba	tulo	nyŋ	da	nyŋ	kun	nun
Dyula	kele	fila	saba	toro	nyaden	da	nyŋ	kun	nun
Kuranko	gelen	fila	sawa	tule	ye	de	namen	kun	nun
Manyakan	kele	fila	sawa	toio	nya	da	nyŋ	kun	nun
Kono	nkele	fela	sawa	toro	ya	daa	gire	kun	nun
Yai	dondo	fela	sagba	tolo	ja	da	nyŋ	kun	nun
Sosso	keden	firiŋ	saxan	tuli	ye	de	nyinni	xu	noem
Loko	ngila	fele	sawa	nguo	ngau	nda	ngongu	ngu	hokpa
Hende	ŋta	fele	sawa	ngoli	ngahu	ndo	ngongolu	ngu	hokpa
Bandi	ngila	fele	sawa	ngoli	ngasu	nda	ngongolu	ngu	sokpa
Lorma	gila	felego	saago	goi	gaazuve	daa	niin	wun	sokpai
Kpelle	tono	feere	saaba	woli	nei	la	nyŋ	ŋun	sda
Mano	doo	peete	yaaka	too	nyle	le	sɔ	wakele	nyu
Dan	do	pira	yaka	tu	nyaga	di	sɔ	goga	nyu
We	do	pire	yaka	turu	nyawe	le-bɔ	sɔ	wun	ne
Ma	do	pilo	a	pe	lon	laga	sɔ	me	nye
Mã	do	ple	yaga	trona	yirebe	di	sɔ	moru	nyŋ
Bé	do	plao	ngao	turun	yowore	ye	sɔ	mwunu	nye
Guro	du	fia	yaa	tone	yile	le	sɔ	mbɔ	mi
Bisa	dinne	hira	karko	tur	yer	le	sɔ	min	mi
Bobo, Fing	tele	pla	saxa	turu	nyoho	do	nyinf	nyon	bi
Dei	boo	sɔ	tã	lɔ	gire	neen	gire	duru	merã
Bassa	do	sɔ	tã	lɔ	gire	uno	gire	tru	mõlã
Guere	doo	sɔ	tã	nggu	gie	guo	nye	de	mera
Grebo	do	sɔ	tã	nua	yie	wun	nye	lu	mia
Kuwaa	dee	sɔ	tã	noi	si	wɔ	kala	wulu	nyu
Akan-Twi	baako	abien	abieasa	aso	ani	ano	eso	eti	ehwene
Ga	ekone	enjo	etɔ	toi	hiwci	daa	no	yitso	gugo
Yoruba	eni	aji	eta	eti	oju	eno	envi	oii	imu

Invariably, the question of language versus dialect arises in the discussion of African languages, as in the phrase "he spoke an African dialect." The implication of this phrase is of course that there is but one African language. If we draw the recognized distinction between language and dialect, that of mutual intelligibility (if you can't understand the speech of someone, he is speaking a language different from your own, while if you can, it is a dialect of your own language) then the notion of dialect discussed earlier is quite wrong. By the above definition, Africa has somewhere between 1000 - 1500 distinct languages (estimates vary). Many of these languages also have several dialectal variants. At least four distinct dialects have been identified for Kpelle and for Lorma.

Although we may have resolved the problem of dialect, the reader may still be wondering just how closely these languages are related and in what ways they are related. The answer to this question is unfortunately quite complicated so that in the following paragraphs only a partial answer can be given.

To begin with, languages can be compared on the basis of their sound systems, their syntax, their vocabulary and their meaning (see Chapter II for definitions). The most common way to compare languages is to compare how two or more languages will represent a given word. As a general rule, the more basic words two languages have in common, the more closely the two languages are related. Figure 4 shows a comparison of some common words in European languages and in some of the languages in West Africa.

One of the assumptions behind the comparison of figure 4 and the chart in figure 3 is that of divergent development. At one time there was a single group of people who later separated into two or more groups. Once isolated, the language of the two groups developed in different ways until finally after a long period of time, they were no longer mutually intelligible. Presumably, this process has continued repeatedly and is the primary explanation for the degree of linguistic diversity in Africa today.

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Yet in addition to divergence, there is also convergent development, that of two different languages becoming more similar as a result of contact and commercial intercourse. It is possible to find two distinct language groups living together, sharing not only similar words, but turns of expression and cultural items. Thus with both the processes of convergence and divergence the precise relation of any one language to another may prove to be extremely complex, much more so at least than figure 3 would have you believe.

## CHAPTER II

### HOW TO STUDY A MANDE LANGUAGE ON YOUR OWN

#### 1. Introduction

People have been learning foreign languages for centuries both with formal instruction and without. This fact is at least encouraging, though at this point, history has revealed no outstanding method or approach to language learning. Here in Zorzor, I know some high school students who are studying French in school...they are getting nowhere, at the same time, there are high school students who came from other parts of Liberia who learn Lorma within a year outside their daily academic studies.

This anecdote suggests two things, 1) a formal approach does not guarantee learning and 2) an informal approach does not necessarily inhibit it. Furthermore, most efforts to determine what is the most effective method to learn language have usually concluded that the most crucial differences in classroom effectiveness center around the quality of teacher, the organization of classroom procedures and learner interest and discipline. The method involved has rarely been deemed significant.

What this evidence means is that crucial to learning a language is a well-organized learning procedure (no matter what method is involved) and hard work; the more you work, the more you learn (within reason).

What this also means is that any method can be used to learn. Nevertheless it is important that the learner be aware of the variety of these approaches and their implications.

#### 2. Aspects of Language Learning to Consider

If you have ever studied a foreign language before, you probably

encountered most of the following situations:

- (a) You know what you want to say, but you don't know how to say it either because you don't know the word or how to use it;
- (b) Two or three words sound alike, but have very different meanings;
- (c) You figured out how to ask the question, but couldn't begin to comprehend the answer;
- (d) You said something that you thought was appropriate and everybody laughed.

All of these problems are real, and represent different aspects of language learning that you need to know about.

The first problem points out that there are two modes of meaning in language: that found in words, and that found in the relationship between words. These two modes of meaning are more formally called vocabulary and syntax.

The second problem is another system, the means by which these modes of meaning are signaled. This system, more formally termed the sound or phonological system, concerns the contrastive sounds used by the language.

The third problem concerns an overemphasis on the production of sentences and an underemphasis on the comprehension of sentences.

The fourth problem concerns the social context in which the language is embedded, that is, what you said was technically correct in terms of (a) and (b) above, but appeared out of context. Your comment could have been humorous for any of the following reasons:

- (a) Thus it was correct, but not expected. That is, since so few foreigners say the right thing at the right time in the right way that the very correctness of the response is out of context.

- (b) Your comment may have been correct, but inappropriate, that is, in the specific context, another comment is required. You would no more think of greeting people at a funeral with "hi there" than you would of showing up in a bathing suit.
- (c) Your comment may have been humorous for other reasons as well. It may have been correct, but carried an additional meaning. In French if you say you are full rather than satisfied you mean that you are pregnant...a strange thing to say after a fine meal, particularly for a male. When you are in the process of learning the vocabulary and syntax of a language, you can expect some surprisingly humorous developments.
- (d) Your comment may have meant something other than intended. In The Lonely African by Colin Turnbull, one missionary is credited with saying "your bottom" rather than "good morning" because the user failed to make a tone distinction. This kind of error is normal when learning the sound system of the language.

For Lorma speakers learning English, the pronunciation of final consonants (the consonants at the end of words) are a problem. One of the general strategies which speakers use is that "when in doubt add an l." Thus I have heard will for way. But for good humor dead bottle for dead body (John Singler, personal communication) is supreme. Let's face it, these things are funny and the best way to deal with them is to laugh together. You may as well, for you are certain to be next if you are serious about learning a Liberian language.

These differences may be due to pronunciation, as in the above examples or to the wrong choice of words (malaprops).

These problems then, underscore the aspects of language that you need to know about in order to effectively study language. These can be summarized as 1) the organization of language: vocabulary, syntax, phonology; 2) speaking vrs. listening; and 3) social context (usage).

### 3. The Organization of Language

Language consists of three subsystems: 1) phonology (the sound system of the language); 2) the lexicon (the vocabulary of the language); and 3) the syntax (the system of putting words together to make sentences). In everyday language, language consists of 1) a set of distinctive sounds, 2) a vocabulary, and 3) a grammar: a set of rules stating how sentences are formed.

#### 3.1 Phonology (the sounds of a language)

Every language has a finite set of distinctive sounds which are used to convey meaning. These sounds are called phonemes. While the inventory of these sounds is not the same from language to language, they are similar enough in most cases not to cause problems. Yet there are inevitably cases, however, where one language makes a distinction which the other doesn't. For some reason, if these distinctions are not part of your native language they will be hard to hear and hard to produce, yet with practice they can both be heard and pronounced giving you the same access to the phonemic distinction that native speakers have. Chapter VI contains sound drills designed to help you learn to hear the differences between those sound contrasts found in Liberian languages, but not in English.

#### 3.2 Lexicon and Syntax (vocabulary and word order)

With the distinction between lexicon and syntax as that of words and their combination into sentences, it is worth while to consider what this means. Meaning in language is of two types, that which is general and systematic, and that which is individual and idiosyncratic. For example, we can say that elephants are big and mice are small or we can say that some elephants and some mice are big for their species, or small for that matter. This way of relating size to different items is general and systematic and can be constructed by relating one word to another, that is it can be expressed syntactically.

But it is also possible to express size in another way as the following sets illustrate:

drop, puddle, pond, lake, sea, ocean  
 baby, child, youth, adult, aged  
 pebble, rock, boulder

This usage is idiosyncratic, that is: drop, puddle, etc., are not systematically related to each other in form, but are simply different words. Thus the expression of systematic and general meanings is the domain of syntax while the expression of idiosyncratic meanings is the domain of the lexicon.

### 3.3 Syntax:

It is important to bear in mind that the division between lexical and syntactic meanings is not exactly the same from language to language though it is nearly so. Nevertheless, we may find one language expressing a notion syntactically whereas the other uses a single word. Below are some examples:

<u>English</u>	<u>Typical Mande</u>
calf:	cow child
to dance:	to do dance
sea:	big water
house:	place where one lives
potash:	bitter salt

Thus in your exposure to a new language, you will find that what you expect to be one word is actually several. One of the nice things about Mande languages is that if you learn that the way to say "worker" is literally "farm-work-do-person" and you know the words for "farm," "work," "do" and "person", you do not have to really learn any new words, only a new combination which turns out to be easier for most people. You can also expect to find words which require several words for translation into English.

### 4: What Does Language Ability Entail?

Everyone has heard of someone who speaks six or seven languages. The questions that this raises are what does this entail and how did they do it.

#### 4.1 Competence and Performance:

In order to speak a language, you have to have considerable knowledge about the language. You have to know the sound system, though perfect knowledge of it isn't absolutely necessary. You have to know some words and some syntactic rules. The question arises, how many words and how many rules?

The number of words one needs to know varies from language to language because of differences in the way concepts are expressed, whether by syntactic devices, or by word compounding or by having one word covering a wide range of concepts. But by rephrasing the question as "how many concepts are necessary?", the question can at least receive an answer, though to my knowledge little systematic study of this question has been carried out. Rather cautiously, then, I throw out the figure of 1,000 to 2,000 concepts as being necessary to comprehend 90-95% of a conversation. This percentage marks the level at which one can keep up with the general meaning of the discussion.

A language is not just a collection of words but, as we have pointed out, it also contains a syntactic system. This syntactic system consists of a set of rules about how to combine words to make sentences. The answer is that you need to know most of them, something any good language text should present. While the general set of syntactic expressions are fixed, the way they are expressed may be straightforward or complex. Plurals in English are easy, but complex in German. Pronouns in English are straightforward but complex in the Mande languages.

#### 4.2 The Question of User Utility:

It is one thing to talk about the kind of information you need to speak a language and another to talk about how it is actually used. For example we can tell someone about how to do multiplication, which principles are involved. That is, we can say that  $6 \times 7$  is  $7$  added  $6$  times. Yet when we ask someone "what is  $6 \times 7$ ?", the answer will be given in less time than it could possibly take to add seven six times. In doing arithmetic, we found it to our advantage to memorize the individual products rather than calculate them each time we need them. The calculator, on the other hand does just the opposite.

This example is intended to emphasize that simply stating the kind of knowledge that is involved in language does not necessarily mean that this is the form in which this information is used. In language teaching, two positions have been taken. One which might be called a "deductive" approach, and the other an "inductive" approach.

The deductive approach presents the learner with a set of rules to learn. Once these rules are learned, the learner is free to construct sentences. The inductive approach argues the reverse, that if you present the learner with a set of sentences that the learner will figure out the general patterns.

This second approach usually also presumes that there is relatively less to generalize about than the first. That is, what people do in learning a language is to learn a sentence type and develop variants of it by substituting words at various places.

These two views are quite different and presume two different notions of the human mind. The deductive approach presumes that the mind is like a calculator with little memory capacity and prefers therefore to generate new information rather than store it. The inductive approach considers the mind to have a much greater capacity for memory.

In this regard, it is true that the mind has a vast capacity for memory. Think of all the experiences, events, jokes and facts you can recall. Think of the words that are available to you, these number somewhere between 10,000 and 20,000 items. What is truly remarkable about this is you can inventory them all within a split second. If I ask you which of the following are English words: "house", "tire", "fleurten", "vice"; you will have no difficulty whatsoever picking out fleurten as the non-English word. In this regard, the human mind is far superior to the computer.

It is this tremendous memory capacity that leads me to emphasize the importance of an approach which stresses the importance of the inductive approach: working with real sentences.

#### 4.3 Integrating the Two Approaches:

This conclusion does not exclude a deductive approach however. The formal presentation of rules and generalizations can help a learner understand why a given sentence is expressed the way that it is and why each element is present. This kind of knowledge cannot be obtained directly from a native speaker of any language unless that person has been trained in linguistics. Such knowledge can be most easily obtained from the grammatical section of a language textbook which has been prepared by someone with formal linguistic training.

These rules are particularly useful in the beginning stages of language learning because they provide the learner with a set of statements with which to evaluate and interpret both incoming and outgoing sentences. However, when the learner becomes more competent in the language, to the point of actively producing and comprehending sentences in an ongoing conversation more or less spontaneously, the learner will no longer have need of these devices. That is, the kind of knowledge that they represent will have been converted into a more useable form.

#### 5. Listening:

Much of traditional language teaching has placed great emphasis on production: the generation of sentences. This approach has implicitly assumed that if you can speak sentences, then you can also comprehend them. We are beginning to take note that these two skills (production and listening) are quite different activities and should be treated separately.

Earlier, we mentioned a problem of learning how to generate questions, but being unable to comprehend the answers. This is a typical problem of traditional approaches. At this time, language teachers are beginning to place more emphasis on being able to comprehend what is said during the earlier stages of language learning. This is not to say that no language production is emphasized, but rather that that comprehension should precede production at all times. This means that early emphasis is placed in understanding what is going on about you rather than being able to talk about it, and emphasis is placed on why a given sentence has the form that it does, rather than how to produce it.

After the learner has developed a listening fluency in certain areas, and knows what is being said and why, then is the time to encourage production of sentences for that topic.

## 6. Context

The process of communication involves two aspects; the message and the context in which the message is situated. A traffic light presents to us very little information (red, green and yellow) yet the context (a street intersection) permits us to provide a rich interpretation of the message: to stop, to go or to proceed with caution.

Learning a language can also be seen in this light, the message and the context. That is, in understanding a sentence, one can take advantage of the context in which the message is embedded for the interpretation of the communication as well as the message. The use of context is particularly useful for a beginning learner of a language, with only an incipient ability to interpret a message. For example, the context in which a greeting takes place is easily identifiable. The messages which can be asked are finite. The learner does not need to know the entire language, or even hear the entire sentence to know what is being said. A key word identified from a sentence may be sufficient for full comprehension of the message.

In teaching children to read; educators have found that context is very important. Beginning readers have a large amount of context (pictures) compared to the message (one sentence per page). When a child first approaches a new page, he/she will first examine the picture to delimit the range of possible messages that the sentence could represent. At one stage my son only used the first letter in each word, along with the context to construct the message. Not knowing how to recognize the words beyond the first letter, he would guess at its meaning, given the context, and pick a word that started with the same sound as the one he was reading and which made sense in the given context. Quite often he was correct and in so doing gradually built up his reading competence, but often he was not, though he might even complete a sentence having missed two or three words in the process. But the interesting thing was

that if the sentence made sense given the context he would continue reading, while if it did not, he would rescan the sentence for a better reading.

The point here is not how to teach children to read, but the value of context in learning a language. This means that if you can control the context, you have a better chance of comprehending the messages.

### 6.1 Ways of Controlling Context

Of course, the classroom is an ideal way of controlling context. Here you can define the range of what is being expressed within very narrow limits and thereby optimize context. Some of these techniques are given as follows:

#### (a) Sensit Build Up:

In this drill, the learner is given a list of messages which will be presented to him/her, whether a list of nouns, commands, activities, numbers or anything. Ideally this list should be in the form of pictures, real objects or demonstrations. The important thing however, is that the learner knows the order of presentation.

The tutor then says the first message. (The learner should know in advance the meaning of what is being said.) If it is a command then the learner should carry it out. If it is a picture, the learner should point to the cell. If it is a thing, then the learner should point it out.

The learner should know at this point, that the tutor will either repeat the message or utter something new. If it is a new message, it has to be the second item. Once the second item has been introduced, the tutor then drills the learner on the first two messages.

At this point, the learner can expect one of two messages which are known, or if not that, a new message will be the third item on the list. When the third item is introduced, the tutor will drill the learner randomly on the first three items until the learner can identify them easily.

Then the root in question is introduced and drilled in the same way until the list is complete.

Usually only seven items should be introduced in this way during one drill, and if more messages are to be introduced, then the messages should be divided into two drills.

(b) Practical Sentences:

This approach can also be used to drill practical sentences that the learner would like to use. Here the learner draws up a list of seven practical sentences that he/she would like to know and the tutor introduces them to the learner in the target language in that order.

(c) Comprehending a Text.

Dialog and dialog drills can be initially presented as totally unknown messages (no context). Learners then attempt to pick out what is already familiar to them from previous lessons or experience. This can profitably be repeated only two or three times.

Next the learner is allowed to look at the text to see how it is written. This helps the learner separate the flow of sounds into word sequences and will usually result in the identification of more words and more of the meaning of the sentence.

Next the learner is permitted to study the translation and go over the analysis of the text so that every aspect of the text is understood: the meaning of each word, and the reason for the presence of each element in the sentence. At this point, the learner should know what is going to be said, that is, the context has now been provided, but the usefulness of the text has not yet been exhausted.

The learner can listen to the text again, following along the written text, but this time he/she should be aware of what is being said and should know the meaning of each sentence. In order to do this, it may be necessary to hear the text several times, or to refer back to the analysis to be sure.

Finally, the learner can listen to the text without the use of written material, and should continue to do so until comprehension is 100%.

These texts should be returned periodically to be sure that comprehension is retained, and to reinforce the retention of this knowledge.

NOTE: To repeat a text verbatim is a virtual impossibility for most tutors, either due to boredom or to lack of experience in reading the language you are studying. For this reason it is preferable to record the text initially and rely on your recorder for repetitions rather than your tutor.

By the time the learner has gotten this far, he/she will know a lot of the language even though he/she still cannot produce it. Nevertheless, the production stage will be a lot easier because of this breakdown.

(d) Translation Drills:

One of the problems in production as well as recognition is figuring out or knowing how things would be said in a language. One method is trial and error, (learner says something and is, if lucky, corrected). An alternative to this is the translation drill. The learner either writes a composition in English for the learner to translate, or asks the learner to translate sentence by sentence. Here the learner knows what is going to be said and should have some idea of the words to be used and the kind of construction involved. Thus when the sentence appears, most of the context has already been provided.

Such drills should be taped, so that they can be reused.

(e) Known Event:

Here the learner asks the tutor to talk about a commonly shared event, such as going to the market, visiting a friend's house, or

even a foreigner to do in English. Again the learner will have narrowed the range of contexts and should be able to interpret the message more richly than otherwise.

(f) Picture Drills:

Another way of controlling the context is to use a picture of some scene or activity that the learner is (1) interested in learning about or (2) has some familiarity with already. The learner then asks the tutor to talk about the picture or asks the tutor questions about the picture.

(g) Eavesdropping:

If you find yourself in a situation where the language is being spoken, e.g. a bar, in a taxi, or cookshop, listen to the language with the aim of trying to pick words you know and getting a general idea of what the conversation is about.

(h) Outside the classroom there are also techniques which can be used to narrow the context. One is to place one's self in a place where a known activity will take place. Greetings, marketing, bartering and so forth. When I was in Mexico City a few years ago, I had at my grasp very little Spanish, but I did know the seemingly useless sentence "where is the post office?" Well, I found the post office, walked about a block away and asked my question. I knew what the answer had to be so I was able to figure out what the Spanish had to mean. Then I moved two blocks away and repeated the drill. Variations to this kind of exercise are limited only by lack of imagination.

We cannot underestimate the important role that memory has in language learning. We have already suggested that to have a minimum operating capacity a user must have a minimum of 1,000 to 2,000 concepts available for use both in recognition and production, as well as the understanding of how these words are organized into sentences (syntax).

In describing how to develop recognition skills, we suggested that the learner should spend considerable time listening in context: sentences should appear in a context in which their meaning would be clear, words should appear in the context of a sentence. This approach also suggests developing a familiarity with a fixed number of sentences.

Just think what this means: that while the specific goal of the exercise was the recognition of the given words, it is clear that in addition familiarity with these words has developed so that they might be recognized in other contexts. Furthermore, the specific sentences learned serve as the basis for recognizing a ~~set~~ of sister sentences in which only one word has been changed so that, even if the learner does not know the new word, the sentence may be understood due to context. Finally, the learner has learned to listen, a technique which will provide the primary source of new information about the language.

#### 7. Learning Production

But production deserves its due. One cannot go around listening all the time, though I suspect one would be better off with an ability to comprehend what was going on about than with an ability to talk about it. Anyway, learning to produce sentences is also an important language ability.

To this end, particularly during the beginning we recommend that sentences as a whole be memorized. Now everyone claims that they have a weak memory and that memorizing scores of sentences is a real impossibility. Yet such is not the case, though one's language learning memory may not be operating at full capacity. That is, whether it is true or not, we should take the view that one's brain is like a muscle (an increasingly popular view) and that the more you exercise it, the stronger it gets. In partial support of this view is a report by August Schliemann, the archaeologist who discovered Troy, who incidentally claimed that he had a weak memory. Source: Ilios by Henry Schliemann. 1880; London, John Murry).

First of all I took pains to learn to write legibly, and this I succeeded in doing after twenty lessons from the famous calligraphist Magnée, of Brussels. Afterwards, in order to improve my position, I applied myself to the study of modern languages. My annual salary amounted only to 800 francs (£32), half of which I spent upon my studies; on the other half I lived--miserably enough, to be sure. My lodging, which cost 8 francs a month, was a wretched garret without a fire, where I shivered with cold in winter and was scorched with the heat in summer. My breakfast consisted of rye-meal porridge, and my dinner never cost more than two-pence. But nothing spurs one on to study more than misery and the certain prospect of being able to release oneself from it by unremitting work. Besides, the desire of showing myself worthy of Minna created and developed in me a boundless courage. I applied myself with extraordinary diligence to the study of English. Necessity taught me a method which greatly facilitates the study of a language. This method consists in reading a great deal aloud, without making a translation, taking a lesson every day, constantly writing essays upon subjects of interest, correcting these under the supervision of a teacher, learning them by heart, and repeating in the next lesson what was corrected on the previous day. My memory was bad, since from my childhood it had not been exercised upon any object; but I made use of every moment, and even stole time for study. In order to acquire a good pronunciation quickly, I went twice every Sunday to the English church, and repeated to myself in a low voice every word of the clergyman's sermon. I never went on my errands, even in the rain, without having my book in my hand and learning something by heart; and I never waited at the post office without reading. By such methods I gradually strengthened my memory, and in three months' time found no difficulty in reciting from memory to my teacher, Mr. Taylor, in each day's lesson, word by word, twenty printed pages, after having read them over three times attentively. In this way I committed to memory the whole of Goldsmith's Vicar of Wakefield and Sir Walter Scott's Ivanhoe. From over-excitement I slept but little, and employed my sleepless hours at night in going over in my mind what I had read on the preceding evening. The memory being always much more concentrated at night than in the day-time, I found these repetitions at night of paramount use. Thus I succeeded in acquiring in half a year a thorough knowledge of the English language.

I then applied the same method to the study of French, the difficulties of which I overcame likewise in another six months. Of French authors I learned by heart the whole of Fenelon's Adventures de Telemaque and Bernardin de Saint Pierre's Paul et Virginie. This unremitting study had in the course of a single year strengthened my memory to such a degree, that the study of Dutch, Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese appeared very easy, and it did not take me more than six weeks to write and speak each of these languages fluently.

With the effect of the moist air of Holland, my complaint in the chest gradually disappeared during my first year's residence in Amsterdam, and it has never returned. But my passion for study caused me to neglect my mechanical occupation in the office of Mr. F. C. Quën, especially as I began to consider it beneath me. My principals would give me no promotion; they probably thought that a person who shows his incapacity for the business of a servant in an office proves thereby his unfitness for any higher duties. At last, however, through the intercession of my worthy friends, Louis Stoll of Mannheim and J. H. Ballauf of Bremen, I had on the 1st of March, 1844, the good fortune to obtain a situation as correspondent and bookkeeper in the office of Messrs. B. H. Schröder & Co. of Amsterdam, who engaged me at a salary of 1200 francs (£48); but when they saw my zeal, they added 800 francs a year more by way of encouragement. This generosity, for which I shall ever be grateful to them, was in fact the foundation of my prosperity; for, as I thought that I could make myself still more usefull by a knowledge of Russian, I set to work to learn that language also. But the only Russian books I could procure were an old grammar, a lexicon, and a bad translation of Les Aventures de Télémaque. In spite of all my enquiries, I could not find a teacher of Russian, since, with the exception of the Russian Vice-Consul, Mr. Tannenberg, who would not consent to give me lessons, there was not one in Amsterdam who understood a word of the language. So I betook myself to the study of it without a master, and, with the help of the grammar, I learned the Russian letters and their pronunciation in a few days. Then, following my old method, I began to write short stories of my own composition, and to learn them by heart. As I had no one to correct my work, it was, no doubt, extremely bad; but I tried at the same time to correct my mistakes by the practical exercise of learning the Russian Aventures de Télémaque by heart. It occurred to me that I should make more progress if I had some one to whom I could relate the adventures of Telemachus; so I hired a poor Jew for four francs a week, who had to come every evening for two hours to listen to my Russian recitations, of which he did not understand a syllable.

As the ceilings of the rooms of the common houses in Holland consist of single boards, people on the ground-floor can hear what is said in the third storey. My recitations therefore, delivered in a loud voice, annoyed the other tenants, who complained to the landlord, and twice while studying the Russian language I was forced to change my lodgings. But these inconveniences did not diminish my zeal, and in the course of six weeks I wrote my first Russian letter to Mr. Vasili Plotnikoff, the London agent for the great indigo dealers, Messrs. M.P.N. Malutin Brothers, at Moscow, and I found myself able to converse fluently with him and the Russian merchants Matwieff and Froloff, when they came to Amsterdam for the indigo auctions. After I had completed my study of the Russian language, I began to occupy myself seriously with the literatures of the languages I had learned.

## 8. F.S.I. Levels

There can be no doubt about it, Schliemann's system worked. Most people however would say, is this the most direct way to language mastery? Can't this approach be made more efficient? The answer is of course yes. And to explain this, we need to examine the system by which the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) determines the language competence of an individual.

The FSI examination is based on six levels ranging from S-0 (no competence) to S-5 (equivalent to that of a native speaker). The crucial level however is S-3 which is really the first stage at which the speaker has good control of the language and can continue developing language competence without special study. I call this level minimal language working capacity.

To attain an S-3 in a foreign language is a real accomplishment and one which a learner who has attained this level can really feel proud of, though this should not by any means undervalue the attainment of the intermediate S-1 and S-2 levels. Furthermore, the development of these intermediate levels should be seen as targets in themselves and as steps along the way. These levels are summarized by the following self-test check list.

A CHECK LIST FOR SELF-APPRAISAL  
OF SPEAKING PROFICIENCY

(All answers must be YES to achieve at least the level of proficiency listed on the left, except for four items at the S-3 level.)

		<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
S-0+	Can you use a minimum of thirty words in appropriate contexts? (i.e., not just count or recite the days of the week).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
S-1	Can you tell someone how to get from here to the nearest hotel, restaurant, or post office?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Can you ask and tell the time of day, day of the week, date?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Can you order a simple meal?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Can you negotiate for a hotel room or a taxi ride at a just price?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Can you buy a needed item of clothing or a bus or train ticket?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Can you understand and respond correctly to form questions about your nationality, marital status, occupation, date and place of birth, etc.?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Can you make a social introduction and use appropriate leave-taking expressions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Can you use the language well enough to assist someone who does not know the language in coping with the situations or problems covered by the S-1 range?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
S-1+	Can you meet all S-1 requirements and at least three of the S-2 requirements listed below?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
S-2	Can you describe your present or most-recent job or activity in some detail?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Can you give detailed information about your family, your house, the weather today?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Can you give or take simple messages over the telephone? (Forget the telephone, can you give or take simple messages?)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Can you hire an employee or arrange for special services, taking care of details such as salary, qualification, hours, special duties?(can you order a table from a carpenter?)

Can you give a brief autobiography including a statement of your immediate plans and hopes?

Can you describe the geography of the United States (or some other country) or familiar location?

Can you describe the basic structure of the United States government?

Can you describe the function and purpose of the organization you represent?

Do you feel confident that you understand what native speakers want to tell you about the above topics at least 80% of the time?

S-3

Are you afraid that you will misunderstand information given to you over the telephone?

(Answers should be YES)

Can you speak to a group of educated native speakers on a professional subject and be sure you are communicating what you want to, without obviously amusing or irritating them linguistically?

Can you listen, take notes, and summarize accurately a speech or an informal discussion on your area of special interests, heard on the radio or over a public address system?

Can you (on a social occasion) defend U.S. attitudes toward culture, race relations, or foreign aid from attack by an anti-American student or politician?

Can you cope with such trying linguistic situations as broken-down plumbing, an undeserved traffic ticket, a serious social or diplomatic blunder made by you or a colleague?

Can you follow connected discourse on a non-technical subject, e.g., a panel discussion on the status of women?

Can you serve as an informal interpreter on subjects in the S-3 range?

Do you feel that you have a professional command (rather than just a practical one) of the language?

S-3+ Can you meet all S-3 requirements and at least three of these S-4 requirements?

S-4 In professional discussions, is your vocabulary always extensive and precise enough to enable you to convey your exact meaning?

Are you able to alter your speech deliberately, depending upon whether you are talking to university professors, close friends, employees, etc.?

Can you serve as an informal interpreter for a U.S. senator or cabinet official on all diplomatic and social functions?

Do you practically never make a grammatical mistake?

Do you think you can carry out any job assignment as effectively in the language as in English?

S-4+ In discussions on all subjects, is your vocabulary always extensive and precise enough to enable you to convey your exact meaning?

S-5 Do native speakers react to you as they do to each other?

Do you sometimes feel more at home in the language than in English?

Can you do mental arithmetic in the language without slowing down?

Is your vocabulary at least as extensive and precise as in English?

Do you consider yourself a native speaker of the language?

The difference between S-2 and S-3 is really that between knowing a language so that you can use it in any context, and knowing enough of the language so that you can use it in a fixed context. This means that the skills listed under S-1 and S-2 can be specifically targeted for. That is, it is possible to define a specific set of contexts: biography, greetings, simple messages, etc. in which it is possible to build a working language competence. This can be accomplished by developing a listening ability for the range number of sentences which are likely to appear in that context and a speaking capacity for the specific skills.

By specifically targeting for these goals, it should be possible to achieve an S-1 after 50-60 hours of study (assuming that this time is being used effectively) and it should also be possible to achieve an S-2 after another 100 hours. One of the important things to remember about this phase of language study is that performance rather than competence is being measured, thus it is not how much you know, but how well you use it that counts. This is why context is so very important, for comprehension is as much anticipating what is to be said (context) as it is understanding the content of what is being said. Thus, "hanging in there" and making the effort to communicate (even if by gesture) is at least half the battle.

But while these targets are goals in themselves which the learner can aim for and accomplish, they can also be seen as steps on the way toward real language competence (S-3). The internalizing of a few hundred sentences can serve as the basic corpus of messages which can be expanded and applied to other situations.

In the communications handbook that accompanies this text, this has been the design: the first lessons are aimed at S-1 skills, while the later lessons aim at S-2 skills, so that by the time the book is completed, the learner should achieve an S-2 level and be well on the way to achieving an S-3 ability. Though in all honesty that level will require continued study.

Earlier we suggested ways of developing listening comprehension, what follows is a way of completing the use of the text, the learning of how to produce it.

## 9. Memorizing a Text (Layering)

Memorization of a text can be viewed as a sequential process beginning with the first word and going on to the next and so forth. Yet there is another way to view the process, and that is to see the text as a series of layers. For example, in learning to comprehend a text (discussed earlier) several steps were outlined, each one gleaning more information from the text, building up in the learner's mind layer upon layer of information about the text. When a learner has learned to comprehend a text, the job of memorizing the text is already half completed. The following steps are listed below:

- A. Go over the text sentence by sentence (phrase by phrase and even word by word if necessary) with your tutor to develop as accurate a pronunciation as possible.

One procedure for doing this is for the learner to attempt to say the sentence. If the sentence is correct the tutor will say that it is correct (or signal so by not saying anything); if the sentence is incorrect, the tutor will repeat the sentence. This should continue until the learner at that point has done his/her best.

The major problem at this stage is the generosity of the tutor. The tutor really has to be encouraged to be critical. Thus the learner must repeatedly ask the tutor if that is the real way it is said, or whether it can be said better and should show enthusiasm in the tutor's pointing out these fine points. Otherwise the tutor will be inclined to let pronunciation slide.

- B. Once the text has been gone over carefully, the text should be repeated sentence by sentence until a normal rate of speed is achieved. This can be practiced using a variety of techniques. Repeating the sentences after the tutor (or a tape recorder), along with the tutor or by tracking.

Tracking is a technique of repeating a sentence after about a second's delay. This has the effect of separating the listening part of the task from the production part of the task:

- C. To be sure you are aware of all the distinctions, the learner should practice writing the sentence down after hearing it. This dictation drill should be done sentence by sentence, and in beginning stages, the sentence should be repeated as many as three times.
- D. Writing down the text from memory is also a good exercise. This is a form of self-test which will give the learner a good idea of what is known and what isn't.
- E. This stage should be followed by the learner attempting to say the text from memory with the tutor prompting at first.
- F. The task is complete when the learner can rattle off the entire text at a normal rate of speed.
- G. This exercise can be followed up by a question-answer drill in which the tutor asks questions in such a way that the memorized sentences will be the answers to the questions.

NOTE: Initial texts do not have to be long, as few as five sentences. But the learner should try to increase the length of these texts as soon as possible.

#### 10. Self-Instructed and Learner-Centered Approaches

There are a number of reasons for emphasizing this kind of approach to language acquisition.

1. African-languages are usually under such low demand for foreign language instruction that, teachers are unavailable, untrained or at best minimally trained. This means that when a tutor is hired, that person will never make the teaching of the targeted language his profession (unlike French, Chinese or Russian) and will probably be given a crash course in how to teach the language. Inevitably, this person will feel awkward because of the expectations

placed on him/her and the inadequate training given. This situation will create an avoidable tension in the classroom.

2. It is the learner who is the person who will either profit or suffer from the experience. It is the learner who has the most at stake. A successful language learning program will lead to a deeper and a more effective experience for the volunteer or other language learner. This being the case, it would be better to concentrate efforts on helping the learner to learn rather than on helping the teacher to teach.
3. Many language training programs allow insufficient time, regardless of how that time is used to allow for the achievement of a minimal speaking competence. This means that serious learners will have to continue their learning outside the classroom anyway.
4. Learners trained in a teacher-centered program in which they have little control in how the class will be run, are ill equipped to make the transition to learning on their own.

For these reasons, many educators are moving to learner-centered approaches. These approaches place more attention on the learner, giving the learner the sophistication in the types of learning techniques that are available, the ways drills should be run and so forth. While these approaches have their own drawbacks and may be slower during the initial stages, they do have a number of advantages.

1. Tutors are released from their anxiety. Their responsibilities are consonant with their training and experience. They are responsible for (1) providing a model of the target language (2) correcting learner responses and (3) running drills which the learner will help to establish. The tutor is not responsible for preparing lessons, for the success of the student, or for grading the student's progress. Thus the tutor is only responsible for what any native speaker of a language is capable of doing. This situation eliminates the tension of the classroom that arises when these responsibilities are placed on the tutor. As a result the relationship between tutor and learner is more of cooperation rather than apprehension.

2. The learner being placed fully in charge of learning no longer must bear the burden of suffering under a tutor whose methods the learner objects to. If the methods being used are unsuitable, they can be changed.
3. Given insufficient time in a training program, learners will be forced to switch to a learner-centered program anyway if they are going to continue their language learning, so why not begin a learner-centered emphasis from the start?
4. A learner who has experienced learner-center training from the start, will be well prepared to make the transition program to learning on their own.

However, learner-centered language training requires a considerable amount of training of the learner in the techniques and approaches of language learning. This cannot only be done in the abstract, but requires supervision by an experienced language teacher and ideally a textbook which is oriented toward this approach to language learning such as the following textbook. In the communications handbook accompanying this volume, each lesson is both aimed at the learner (though it can be used by a classroom teacher or a partially trained tutor) and contains detailed instructions as to how drills should be run and dialogs used. It presents the grammatical notes in terms which an untrained learner can understand and contrasts the target language with English so that the learner can see exactly where the major points of contrasts. Finally the handbook contains a set of suggestions for self-study, procedures which the learner can carry out on his/her own to continue language study.

### 11.1 Tutor Selection

When making the transition from a formal language training program to a totally learner-centered program, the first major task will be to locate a tutor who will be willing to help you.

In this regard, it is important for the learner to remember that a number of factors are involved in the tutor learner relationship. Some of these are listed as follows:

1. Personality. There is always the possibility of a personality clash. That for some reason the tutor and the learner do not hit it off, or for that matter they may. Factors here may be age, sex, education and cultural background as well as pure personality differences.
2. Relationship. In most cases, a learner-tutor arrangement will necessarily develop into a deeper relationship involving mutual reciprocations based on available resources. The learner will be given things, have things done for him/her as well as being informed about the workings of the community. In return, the learner can be expected to return the favor in terms of textbooks or school fees if the tutor is a student, money or other gifts. This relationship can be controlled by both parties, and it is in general sound advice to deepen the relationship slowly.
3. Knowledge of language. It is commonly accepted that the real language is known by old people, and not by young schoolboys and girls, therefore, it is often said that if you want to learn the real language it is best to contact the old people. This approach too, has its problems, however, for it may well be that old people do not know English or any other medium of common communication, therefore the learner may actually at first engage a tutor who knows English.
4. Knowledge of how to write the language. For most Liberian languages, a writing system has been established, and which is in use by at least some members of the community. If this is so, it is preferable to find a tutor who can read and write in the target language, for it will help you in recording texts and writing down sentences. You can even ask your tutor to prepare texts, dialogs and sentences for you to study.
5. Reputation of the tutor. Not everyone in the town has the same esteem in the eyes of the community. To some extent the esteem of the tutor will rub off on the learner and vice versa.

These points suggest that in engaging a tutor that one should proceed cautiously. The learner should wait until he/she is established in town or until sufficient contacts are made before showing interest in a tutor. Then one should ask respected members of the community who might be recommended. (Hiring someone without a recommendation is a real gamble.) One might ask other volunteers, teachers, your landlord, village head, pastor or other such persons.

It is always good to not commit one's self too soon. That is by saying that the period is temporary, for a few weeks only, or that one wants to try a number of people, one can avoid the problem of being stuck with someone who isn't working or of the embarrassment of having to fire someone.

Finally, when the learner has found a tutor with whom he/she feels confident, the arrangement can be made more permanent. It is only at this time that the learner should gradually allow the relationship to deepen.

## 11.2 Organizing a Learning Schedule

The most important point to be made here is consistency. That is whatever program the learner decided to set up, it should be followed religiously. It is far better to maintain a modest commitment of only a few hours or even less than to set a schedule of learning that is too ambitious to keep. The learner should endeavor to establish learning times that are unlikely to be disturbed by special events, and in the event that they are, the language session should be rescheduled.

The second most important thing is to structure the sessions so that the learner and the tutor are aware of what is supposed to take place during the session and what is supposed to be done by the learner as preparation or follow-up. The following schedule is designed for a learning session involving three contact periods per week. This structure is probably too ambitious for the learner who is also holding down an 8 hour job, but if followed will allow the learner to progress rapidly. In the event that the learner has less time to commit to the learning of the language, the schedule can be pared down.

A well-written language textbook ought to have a large number of drills that can be used in the self-instructional mode. Most such textbooks are organized so that a chapter be completed each week by a class meeting five hours per week. The following outline suggests one way in which a textbook chapter can be organized into a weekly lesson plan.

### 11.3 Use of a Spoken Dialog

- |                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Class<br>Period<br>#1 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Listen to the dialog with book closed, for comprehension. Record the dialog with a cassette tape recorder for later use.</li> <li>(2) Listen to the dialog, this time following the book (listening for word-divisions and other phonological cues).</li> <li>(3) Analyze the dialog for content. Work with your tutor if necessary so that you understand the full meaning and structure of each sentence.</li> </ol>  |
| Home-<br>work<br>#1   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Listen to the dialog on the cassette recorder for comprehension so that each sentence is correctly identified and each word is heard as a separate entity.</li> <li>(2) Repeat the above as often as is necessary. If the structure of the dialog is unclear, return to the written text, following the spoken dialog, word by word until it becomes clear.</li> <li>(3) Write the dialog several times, copying directly from the text (not from memory).</li> <li>(4) Enter new vocabulary items into your notebook.</li> </ol> |
| Class<br>Period<br>#2 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Listen again to the dialog spoken by the tutor.</li> <li>(2) Practice saying each sentence with the tutor (using a backward buildup if necessary) until each sentence of the dialog is said flawlessly at a normal rate.</li> <li>(3) Practice dialog with tutor or with other learners in the class.</li> </ol>  |

Home-work #2 (1) Memorize dialog for following class. For beginners this dialog will be quite short (3-4 lines) but by the end of the first year, these dialogs will enlarge to about 20 lines per week.

Class Period #3 (1) Use the dialog in class. Remember to simulate the context of the dialog completely; stand, sit, look the other person in the eye at the appropriate times, use props.  
 (2) Develop variations on the dialog using word substitution or sentence "transformation" as appropriate to your level of knowledge.

#### 11.4 Use of Written Texts

Written texts should consist of short (ten-sentence) descriptions, stories relevant to a specific context. As the course progresses, the texts will become longer.

Class Period #1 (1) Presentation, recording and analysis of the text.

Home-work #1 (1) Listening comprehension of the text (sentences as units, words as discrete entities) and the writing out of the text (not from memory).

Class Period #2 (1) Practice in hearing the text with phonemic accuracy, practice in saying the text at normal speed with phonemic accuracy.

Home-work #2 (1) Memorization of the text (now that it is understood both syntactically and phonetically). This will involve writing it out, saying it orally, and tracking the taped version to achieve normal speed and timing.

Class Period #3 (1) Recitation of text orally and/or writing it down from memory.

Homework #3 (1) Correction of noted errors.

## 11.5 Use of structural drills

All drills should be taped for home listening and practice.

### 1) Phonological drills:

Basic phonological transcription can be learned through dictation exercises. Errors in these dictation exercises will reveal problem areas in phonemic discrimination.

In consultation with the language coordinator and the textbook, discrimination drills, including minimal pair exercises can be prescribed, recorded and used, both in class and at home.

It is important to remember that learners must be able to hear phonemic differences before they can be expected to articulate them.

Once phonemic differences are mastered, accuracy can be further improved through transcription exercises. Articulation can be further improved through dialog and text repetition, tracing and memorization.

### 2) Syntactic Drills:

Each drill begins with listening comprehension. It is important that learners comprehend what is going on: the purpose of the drill, the meaning of the words and constructions involved, and what they are supposed to do with it.

Once the drill is understood, learners should go through the drill, repeating each sentence after the tutor if necessary until normal speed and accurate pronunciations are achieved.

The drill is run according to the specifications given in the textbook. Answers and responses must be given at normal speed. If that is impossible, either go back to the preceding step or abandon the drill and consult with the language coordinator. The drill should be practiced until it is carried out perfectly, though this mastery need not be achieved during the first running of the drill in class.

## 3) Vocabulary:

A minimum of 40 lexical concepts should be acquired each week. These may come from the text or from the generalized vocabulary lists.

Several types of drills have been developed for the learning of vocabulary in the Communications Handbook companion volume. Space does not permit a detailed statement of these drills, but the following list is indicative of the types involved.

- (a) vocabulary
- (b) flash cards with pictures on one side
- (c) related vocabulary lists
- (d) the sens-it-cell

12. Conclusion

This chapter has summarized the thinking, strategy and methodology involved in the study of a foreign language and has gone into the planning and construction of these learning materials. It is presented here for the express purpose of providing the learner with a general understanding of the task and the way to proceed.

## CHAPTER III

### INSTRUCTIONS TO TUTORS

#### 1. General Remarks

The chances are that if you have been asked to tutor someone in a Liberian language, you probably have never taught your language to a foreigner before. If this is the case, you may be very worried because you are not sure about what to do. If you are worried, continue to read this chapter, for it contains a set of suggestions about what is important in a language learning situation.

#### 2. Preliminary Considerations

Even before you get started, there are some important considerations, the first is the organization of the learning situation. The learning sessions have to be considered important by both the tutor and the learner. To emphasize the importance of these sessions, it is important to "mark" these learning sessions as follows.

##### A. Time:

The sessions should have a specific beginning time and a closing time. These times should be kept the same from week to week. There should also be a penalty for lateness and no matter what the reason, missed sessions should be made up.

##### B. Place:

The sessions should be held in a specified place which is considered good for learning. Tables and straight chairs are considered better than sofas and beds. Classrooms are better than homes, but homes are better for most people than bars.

### C. Agenda:

There should be an agenda or class plan of what is to be done during each period. This can be prepared either by the learner or by the tutor, depending on what has been arranged. An agenda should contain a list of topics to be covered, including: (1) pages in the textbook, (2) correction of homework, (3) practice of dialog, (4) taping of dialogs, (5) vocabulary study, (6) free conversation and so forth. These agendas (technically called "lesson plans") should be stored somewhere (a file, notebook, etc.) as a record of accomplishment during the course of study.

### D. Preparation/Followup

A learner should expect to do out-of-class preparation and followup for each session. This may involve studying the dialog, grammar, cultural notes, taped aspects of the class session, vocabulary work, preparation for class discussions or taking excursions into the language community to practice what has been learned. Whatever the event, the tutor and learner should agree to the preparation and followup activities, preferably in writing (see agenda) before the end of the preceding class.

## 3. The Role of the Tutor

In most cases, the tutor is not required to be an experienced language teacher or someone who knows a great deal about the grammar of the language being studied. Rather, what is expected of the tutor is simply what follows:

- A. An ability to speak your language clearly
- B. An ability to be patient
- C. An ability to point out and correct mistakes.

#### 4. Classroom Rules of Order

There are a number of rules of running a class, which if followed will help to make the class situation useful and productive.

- A. Always have a session agenda and stick to the topic.  
(see 2C above)
- B. Always begin on time and stay within agreed upon time blocks.
- C. Emphasize the use of the target language. The tutor should try at first to explain things, directions, concepts and so forth in the target language using English only if absolutely necessary (the use of English is usually a hinderance rather than an aid to learning another language).
- D. Drills should be run smoothly with no delays or interruptions. If the learners are taking too long to respond, it will be necessary to simplify or change the drill. The instructions for running each drill are given along with each drill in the communications handbook. A drill can be simplified either by skipping the drill altogether or by eliminating some of its complexity. One way to do this is to treat the drill like a dialog to be learned (see instructions for learning dialogs in the communications handbook). Once familiar with the content of the drill, it can then be reintroduced as a drill; this time with better results.

Another way is to have the students read the drill from the textbook, though the normal way to run a drill is without student use of textbooks. These drills should also be recorded onto tape so that they can be replayed as one of the homework activities.

If you and the class are still having trouble with a drill, ask the language supervisor or whoever is in charge of the program to help you.

While many tutors think that they have to provide more than this, this is all that is truly necessary. But, at the same time, the ability to do these things is very important. Because of this, the above points are discussed in more detail below.

#### A. Speaking Clearly

When you speak your language to your students, you should try to speak at a normal rate of speed. This means that you should not speak too rapidly as if you were in a hurry, or too slowly, as if you were talking to a small child.

#### B. Being Patient

It is important to remember that learning a language is a slow process because it requires a lot of learning: not only new words, but new ways of saying things which are very different from the way that the learner is used to saying things. You will find that a learner will forget much of what you tell him and that is why you must repeat things frequently: dialogs, stories, drills, and so forth. From the viewpoint of the tutor, it appears as though the learners are not very smart. This is why it is so necessary for the tutor to be very patient with the learner.

#### C. Correcting Responses

While it is important to be patient, it is also necessary to correct errors in the responses that learners give. If they say something incorrectly, they should be told that it is incorrect and be asked to say it again correctly. One way to do this is to simply repeat the response correctly following an incorrect response. The learner hearing this will then correct his response following the model of the tutor. If it is a matter of pronunciation, and the student is unable to pronounce it correctly after two or three tries, then the tutor should tell the learner that the pronunciation is still incorrect, but that it will be possible for him/her to correct it later on. Remember, if the student is shown that his pronunciation of certain sounds is incorrect, the chances are that the student will learn to pronounce the sounds correctly in time. 46

## CHAPTER IV

### KPELLE SHORT SUMMARY REFERENCE GRAMMAR

#### Preliminary Remarks

This reference grammar is a summary of the basic grammatical structures in Kpelle. It is written for the general reader. Those who wish more detail or a more sophisticated linguistic analysis are referred to the linguistic materials available in professional publications, particularly those of William Welmers on phonology and morphology. As much as possible, I have tried to use Welmers' terminology to reduce confusion. The reader is expected to refer to other sections of this handbook for detail on Mande phonetics and the Mande languages.

## THE SOUNDS OF KPELLE

You will understand and pronounce Kpelle better if you begin your study with the Introduction to Liberian Languages. This section provides an introduction to hearing and producing the sounds of Kpelle. You will find it helpful to review this lesson periodically throughout your study.

To speak Kpelle well, you must first learn to hear it. Many times you will think you are hearing - and even speaking - correctly, only to find that you are mistaken. Try to practice the drills in this lesson until you are fairly proficient, then the rest of the lessons will be easier and you will learn faster.

### The Alphabet

The sounds of Kpelle are represented by the following alphabet. Examples of words containing each sound are given. Have your tutor pronounce them for you. (You may want to tape these at the end of the session so that you can listen to them as you have time.) Be careful - do not expect the letters to represent the same sounds as they do in English. The two-letter combinations like /gb/ and /kp/ represent single sounds.

<u>Sound</u>	<u>Examples</u>	<u>Notes</u>
/a/	ɓala 'sheep' namu 'fight' sãle 'medicine'	similar to /a/ in 'mama'
/ã/	fãa 'wind' sãa 'honest'	strongly nasal
/b/	bèrè 'trousers' bòki 'bucket' bàla 'bush dog'	some speakers do not distinguish this sound from /ɓ/
/ɓ/	ɓá 'rice (cooked)' ɓéla 'split' ɓó 'open' sɓɓó 'groundhog'	

<u>Sound</u>	<u>Examples</u>	<u>Notes</u>	
/d/	da Deniŋ Dukòò	'and' 'April' 'Monrovia'	
/e/	de nêne pene	'river' 'which' 'turn'	this is not like English sound /ay/ in 'say' - listen carefully
/ɛ̃/	kpɛ̃la	'water deer'	
/ɛ/	lɛlɛ meni	'good' 'business'	
/ɛ̃/	fiɛ̃	'head pad'	
/f/	fãã folo	'wind' 'shine'	
/g/	gãla gwe	'box' 'banana'	
/gb/	gbai gbómò gbêe	'corn' 'wasp' 'who'	this is not /g/, /b/, or /b̃/
/ɣ/	ɣau ɣɛlɛ ɣele	'yam' 'when' 'day'	
/i/	ílãã gbìŋ mina pili	'your name' 'bed' 'spoon' 'throw'	this represents 2 sounds: the vowel similar to /e/ in 'he' and the vowel similar to /i/ in 'hit'
/ʃ/	sʃi tʃya	'spider' 'taboo'	
/k/	kãã kê/ kòlo	'see' 'do' 'poor'	

<u>Sound</u>	<u>Examples</u>		<u>Notes</u>
/kp/	kpao kpee kpɔ kpɔ	'no' 'finish' 'knock-knock'	contrast with /gb/
/l/	fláa léle lí	'name' 'good' 'go'	this is similar to English /l/ in some dialect areas and less similar in others. Follow your tutor's pronunciation.
/m/	mēni muluŋ mina	'business' 'dust' 'spoon'	
/n/	naaŋ naa nia	'four' 'there' 'older sibling'	
/ny/	nyii nyɔɔ nyee	'sleep' 'bad' 'fish'	like /ny/ in 'canyon'
/ŋ/	ŋɔni naaŋ íŋuŋ	'bird' 'four' 'your head'	similar to /ng/ in 'sing'
/o/	owèi kôya kôlo	'yes' 'far away' 'poor'	
/ɔ/	ɔɔ kɔɔ	'market' 'book'	
/ɔ̄/	gɔ̄ɔ pɔ̄ye	'crow' 'write'	
/p/	pala pɔɔ	'weave' 'get old'	
/s/	saa sama	'today' 'gift'	

<u>Sound</u>	<u>Examples</u>	<u>Notes</u>
/t/	taan koti	'one' 'coat'
/u/	puu tuna nua	'ten' 'rain' 'people'
/ū/	fūa īsūa	'powder' 'nose'
/v/	vōlō va.	'black snake' 'comb'
/w/	wala woo	'thousand' 'language'
/y/	yaba yee yoo	'onion' 'hill' 'wet'
z	zoo	'doctor'

### Tones

There are three levels of tones in Kpelle: high, mid, and low. Further, there are two contour tone patterns: high to low, and mid to high to low. They are marked on the vowel as follows:

high - / <sup>ˆ</sup> /	zoo	'native doctor'
mid - /no mark/	tuna	'rain'
low - / <sub>ˆ</sub> /	nyōō	'be afraid'
high-low - / <sup>ˆ</sup> / <sub>ˆ</sub> /	saa	'today'
mid-high-low - / <sup>ˆ</sup> / <sub>ˆ</sub> / <sub>ˆ</sub> /	tisō	'sneeze'

## PHONOLOGY

1. Consonants (as represented in the orthographic system)

p	t	k	kp'
b	d	g	gb
f	s		
v	z		
b	l		
w	r	y	
m	n	ŋ	

Dialect Notes

- In the areas nearest the coast, /s/ is similar to the English /s/. In the middle section of Kpelle territory, it is often closer to English /sh/; while in the northern areas, it is often pronounced as an English /h/.
- In the northern areas, an /l/ will often sound midway between /l/ and /n/ when it is the first sound in a word, or sometimes be replaced altogether by /n/.
- In the northern areas, /y/ between two vowels will often be elided or changed to a /y/ type sound.
- In the northern areas, an /r/ between two vowels (as written in the texts) will be pronounced as an /l/.

2. Vowels

	Front	Mid	Back
High	i		u
Mid	e		o
	ɛ		ɔ
Low		a	

- Vowels may occur long or short. When long, they are written as two vowels.

- b. Round back vowels, when followed by a front vowel, are less rounded and somewhat more fronted.
- c. /i/ after /y/ is not pronounced.
- d. Nasalization is significant. There is a difference in meaning between sīi, 'spider' and s̄i, 'tribe', for example.

### 3. Tones, Stress, Intonation

- a. There are three pitch levels: high, mid, and low.
- b. There are five possible patterns in a word:
 

high throughout:	pēle	'also'
mid throughout:	pɛle	'to start'
low throughout:	pèle	'small'
high to low:	-pêre	'side (of the body)'
mid to high-low:	pomûŋ	'germinate'
- c. Words with high, high-low, and low tone patterns have stress on the initial syllable. Mid-high-low have stress on the second vowel, since this stress is automatic and does not differentiate one word from another (as English stress does in 'progress' as a noun and 'progress' as a verb). In the area around Gbarnga, /k/, /g/, and, most frequently /y/ are not pronounced when they are in an unstressed syllable between two front vowels.
- d. In some words, the pattern high or high-to-low becomes high-to-mid. These are marked in the Totota orthography.
- e. The patterns presented apply to words without prefixes or suffixes. Affixes carry their own tone patterns.
- f. In a pause, usually marked in writing by a comma, as in English, the last syllable tone will rise sharply, and a slight pause will ensue.
- g. To mark a question: the last non-low tone will be noticeably higher. If the sentence has only low tones, all low tones are slightly higher and tense.

4. Other

a. After a mid tone, low tone becomes high-low.

Example: pére tònò 'one house'

taa tònò 'one town'

b. Kpelle, like several other Mande languages, changes the initial consonants of some words when a nasal sound (/m/, /n/, /ŋ/) comes before it, or when a low tone is placed on the syllable. This happens frequently in Kpelle. These are the changes:

p	→	b	ɓ	→	m
t	→	d	l	→	n
k	→	g	ɣ	→	ŋ
kp	→	gb	w	→	ŋw (or ŋ before u, o, ɔ)
f	→	v	y	→	ny or n
s	→	v			

## WORDS AND CONSTRUCTIONS

Nouns and Noun Phrases1. Independent and Dependent Nouns (Alienable and Inalienable)

Independent nouns are items which are either abstractions which are not usually possessed by anyone or items which can be obtained and disposed of by a person. Independent nouns may occur with or without a possessor indicated.

Dependent nouns are those items regarded as integral parts of the possessor - they cannot be transferred or discarded. Most of these nouns are body parts, relatives, or membership names. They always must have an identified possessor. Dependent nouns fall into two groups - persons and non-persons. Persons alternate consonants, while non-persons do not.

Example: í lee 'your mother'      gálon ñee 'the chief's mother'  
           í pôlu 'your back'        gálon pôlu 'the chief's back'

Persons also have a plural form: the suffix /-ni/ (after /ŋ/, /-ni:/).

Example: í lón 'your child'      í lónni 'your children'

There are also some dependent nouns derived from verbs by the addition of a suffix /-i/.

Example: see 'sit down'      í seei 'your seat'

2. Plurals

Most Kpelle nouns have a single form to represent both singular and plural. Whether there is one or more of something than one is indicated by the context. However, there is one category of nouns which does have a plural form - nouns which name or refer to people, such as mother, father, child, etc. The plural is indicated in this way when the noun is dependent: (pronoun) + noun + ni. (If a noun ends in /ŋ/, it will have a /ni:/ for the plural.)

When the noun is independent, the plurals are varied. They will be given in the vocabulary in the beginning. If you learn a word which you think should have a plural, ask your tutor.

Examples: nūu 'person'      nūa 'people'  
 lôlon 'child'      nīa-pelee 'children'

### 3. Possessive

In marking possession, the possessor always comes immediately before the possessed noun. Generally, the first noun will be in the specific form.

Example: Nôlon goi 'the child's stomach'

A pronoun is also used with dependent nouns if it is a noun denoting a person.

Example: Nôlon nēe 'the child's mother'

### 4. Specific and Non-Specific Nouns

In English there is a difference between "the table" and "a table". Kpelle makes a similar, but not identical, reference. For example, in English we always say, "the sun is shining", but Kpelle uses the nonspecific form: "a sun is shining." On the other hand, a name to whom you owe respect is always addressed by his title in the definite form: "the Sir." Others may or may not receive such a mark of respect. Dependent nouns almost never occur in the specific form.

The specific is indicated by:

low tone + noun + i
---------------------

d

Examples:

péle	house	béleí	the house
boli	goat	molíí	the goat
wúlu	tree	nwúlíí	the tree

The low tone affects the initial consonant (see the Grammar Note in Lesson 1.) There are two additional notes:

- When a word ends with a /ŋ/, then the /-i/ suffixed is lost.  
Example: gálon... 'the chief'.
- The two falling tones fall only to mid in the specific.  
Example: kálon... 'chief'      gâlon... 'the chief'
- When the word ends in /u/, it will change to an /i/ when the /-i/ suffix is added.  
Example: wúru... 'tree'      nwúríí... 'the tree'
- An /N/ may accompany the low tone.  
Example: wúru...nwúríí

One additional note: if there are two or more adjectives and the noun in the specific, only the last adjective has the specific marker as well.

## 5. Compounds

Two or more words may be combined to form a new word. In all compounds, the final stem has a low tone (or high-low if the preceding word has a mid-tone).

Examples:

kɔlɔ	'book'	lāa	'leaf'	kɔlɔ-lāa	'page'
tóu	'palm nut'	wúlɔ	'oil'	tóu-wúlɔ	'palm oil'
kéleŋ	'motor vehicle'	pere	'path'	kéleŋ-pere	'road'
tée	'chicken'	ɣálon	'egg'	tée-ɣálon	'chicken egg'
míí	'to eat'	sále	'medicine'	míí-sále	'pill'

A special class of compounds are reduplicative forms.

Example: kpèya-kpèya 'important'

6. Noun phrase

The word order for a noun phrase is as follows:

- 1) possessor; 2) noun; 3) adjective; 4) numeral; 5) specific suffix;
- 6) demonstrative pronoun.

Pronouns1. Subject Pronouns

Kpelle has three sets of subject pronouns. Note that it distinguishes between a singular and plural 'you'.

Affirmative - for Present, Future, Customary tenses

	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
1st	ŋa 'I'	kwa 'we'
2nd	bà (ya) 'you'	ka 'you'
3rd	a 'he, she, it'	da (di) 'they'

Negative - for Present, Future, Past, Hortative-Consecutive tenses

	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
1st	é	kúfé
2nd	ífé	káfé
3rd	vé	dífé

Affirmative - for Past, Hortative-Consecutive tenses

	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
1st	ŋá	kú
2nd	í	ká
3rd	è (é)	dí

Affirmative - for Conditional tense

	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
1st	ŋà	kwà
2nd	bà	kà
3rd	à	dà

Negative - for Customary tense

	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
1st	fa	kúfa
2nd	ífa	káfa
3rd	va	dífa

Negative - for Contrary to Fact; Conditional tenses

	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
1st	ŋai	kûi
2nd	îi	kâi
3rd	èi	dîi

The forms below are alternative pronoun formations. The first set really represents the verb kâa + a subject pronoun. It is often used as a substitute for the pronoun alone.

I'm coming.	ŋgâa pâi.	ŋa pâi.
You're coming.	îkâa pâi.	ba pâi. (ya pâi.)
He's coming.	gâa pâi.	a pâi.
We're coming.	kûkâa pâi.	kwa pâi.
You're coming (pl.).	kâkâa pâi.	ka pâi.
They're coming.	dîkâa pâi.	da pâi.

2. Object Pronouns

	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
1st	Ŋ 'me'	kû 'us'
2nd	î 'you'	kâ 'you'
3rd	'him, her, it'	dî 'them'

These pronouns come directly before the verb.

Examples: ŋgâa 'see me'  
kûîé 'teach us'

3. Indirect Object

In English it is possible to say either 'give me the book' or 'give the book to me.' Kpelle also distinguishes between an object (book in the above example) and the person to whom things are given, said, shown, etc. For this second function Kpelle uses a special set of pronouns:

mà	me	kûa	us
yâ	you	kâa	your
mà	him/her/it	dîa	them

These always come after the verb as in:

è mò mâ.

"He told it to me."

You will find that many of the Kpelle verbs which use this "ma" series are the same as those in English which are "to me" verbs. But this is not always the case. In Kpelle, for example, "help" ...kpon, uses the "ma" series, while "give"...fé uses a different pronoun set, altogether, the "mi" series. Hint: Use "ma" whenever the sentence seems to require a "to \_\_\_" form. You will be right more often than not. Whenever you notice a verb with a "ma" after it, take note of it, so you will remember.

The "mi" series generally indicates 'on behalf of' or 'for'.

mí	kúe
yé	káa
mì	díe

Example: Ge mí. 'Do it for me.'

#### 4. Possessive Pronouns

##### Independent Nouns

ḡá	'my'	kú	'our'
f	'your'	ká	'your'
ḡà	'his, her, its'	dí	'their'

When a possessive pronoun is used, the specific suffix must be placed on the noun.

Example: ḡápersí 'my house'

Dialect Variation: The singular possessive pronouns vary somewhat. In the northern areas you may hear /ḡá/ or /a/ for 'my', /f/ for 'your', and /ḡà/ for 'his, her, its'. Thus, listen carefully for what your informant and neighbors say. Also, make sure you use the right tone or there may be some confusion.

### Dependent Nouns

Dependent nouns require a possessor.

N	'my'	kú	'our'
f	'your'	ká	'your'
	'his, her, its'	dí	'their'

Examples:	nân	'my father'	kúnân	'our father'
	ínân	'your father'	kánân	'your father' (pl.)
	nân	'her father'	dínân	'their father'

### 5. Independent Pronouns

Independent pronouns are used in marked complement construction and also in some emphatic situations. These are:

nyá	'I'	kuá	'we'
fá (yá)	'you'	káa	'you'
nyá (lâ)	'he, she, it'	diá	'they'

Examples:	nyá be.	'It's me.'
	lí à-dia.	'Take them.'

### 6. Conjunctive Pronouns

ká	you
dá	he
dwa	we

Conjunctive pronouns are used only with another noun or a singular pronoun in this format:

pronoun \_\_\_\_\_ pronoun + remainder of sentence

Examples:

Dá Moses dá pâi.	"He and Moses are coming."
Kwá Moses kwa pâi.	"Moses and I are coming."

This can also be used to express the idea of accompanying someone or some people. Thus, the sentences above could also be translated "He is coming with Moses" and "I am coming with Moses."

### 7. Compound Expressions

The first element of a compound expression is the pronoun ka, da, or kwa.

The second element is: a pronoun showing either the person you are speaking to, or those you are speaking about.

The third element, -mi, occurs only after kâa or dîa to indicate that the whole reference group encompasses more than two people.

Examples: da ñyaa	'they (including him)'
da diâ-ni	'they (including more than 2)'
kwa yâ	'you and I'
ka ñyaa	'you and he' (you including him)

The subject pronoun in the sentence follows three pronouns and agrees in person and number with the first pronoun in the combination. So:

Kwa ñya kú lì daai su.	'We (he and I) went into town.'
Ka Flomo ká lì?	'Did you go with Flomo?'

### 8. -pɔ

-pɔ is a dependent noun which occurs frequently in Kpelle. Basically, it expresses two kinds of ideas: indirect object and possession. To an English speaker it will seem like a pronoun. Examples of its use: "give it to us"...dee kúpɔ; "where is your home?"...ipɔ taai kɔɔ. Sometimes it will best be translated as a possessive pronoun - ours, mine, his, etc. But in Kpelle, it is a dependent noun.

## Adjectives

Adjectives function differently in Kpelle from the way they do in English. First, there are 2 major classes of adjectives: predicating and attributing. Predicating adjectives, by far the largest class, are derived from verbs. In other words, if you know the verb, you can predict the adjective form. The meaning, however, may differ slightly from the meaning of the verb from which it was derived. The word kéte, 'big' is the only adjective that does not differ from the verb form. The chart below shows you how adjectives are formed. Although this chart will help you produce the right adjective forms, fluency will only come when you are so familiar with the adjective forms that you do not have to use these forms.

### Verb Stem

	Monosyllabic Stem Consonant + Vowel	Bisyllabic Stem. Consonant + Vowel + Consonant + Vowel	Consonant + Vowel + Vowel
Suffix é	C + i, e, or ε	CVC + i, e, or ε	C V + i, e, or ε
Suffix á	C + a	CVC + a	C V + a
Suffix ó	all others	all others	all others

### Examples:

táma	"to be plentiful"	támaa	"a lot of"
léle	"grow, flourish"	lélee	"fine, nice, pretty"
kpólu	"get ripe, redden"	kpólus	"ripe"
wie	"get heavy"	wiee	"heavy"

Note: the suffix has a high tone except when the stem has a low tone; then the suffix tone is also low.

Alternatively, the adjective can be formed by simply altering the tone of the verb: low tone replacing the stem tone and high-low where there is a mid tone on the noun it modified.

Example:

yoo  
seye yoo

"get dry"  
"dry clothes"

### 1. Uses of Adjectives

More important are the uses of adjectives. They can be predicative - that is, act as a verb. Remember, not all adjectives can be used this way.

object + adjective stem + suffix vowel + i

Examples:

fãai

"It's hot."

nyai fãai.

"The water is hot."

kú ketei

"We are big."

Note: the English translation uses a subject where Kpelle uses an object.

Negative:

fé + adjective stem + ní

Examples:

Fé fãa ní.

"It is not hot."

Nyai fé fãa ní.

"The water is not hot."

Kufé kete ní.

"We are not big."

Adjectives can also be used with a noun to form compound words. And as in the case of compounds, the second member (the adjective) has a low tone.

Example:

fólò

"empty"

seŋ-folo

"dish"

The English speaker will find it difficult at first to know when to use the verb stem and when to use the adjective stem as if it were a verb. Generally the verb stem is used in descriptions ... "That girl is pretty." ... not "That is a pretty girl." Also, the predicative implies only that a certain quality is present. The verb is used in expressing the activity, how the subject got the quality, who made it so, etc. So, in saying something is red, we use the adjective form "kpɔluɔ." If we want to say it got dry, will be dry, the sun dried it, etc., we use the verb form "kpɔlu."

Verbs can also function as nouns without adding any suffixes. For example: ηύμα... "to steal":

A ηύμαì.	"He is stealing it." (low tone marks the object it)
A ηύμα κέì.*	"He is making steal."
ηύμαàì.	"He is a thief."

\*ηύμα is a noun here, the object of the verb κέ... "to make, do."

## 2. Adjectives as Nouns

Adjectives can also be used as nouns. For example:

κέτε	"big"
γέτε	"a big one"
γέτει	"the big one"

The speaker assumes that you know which things are being discussed.

## 3. Adjectives as Adverbs

They also function as adverbs - in marked complement phrases.

à + low tone + adjective

Note: a is the preposition or particle meaning with.

Examples:

Ké à nélee. . . "Do it well."

Gaa à nélee. "It is good."

E ké à nélee. "It was good."

Note: the kaa forms are equivalent in meaning to the regular predicative. The "é ké" forms indicate past.

#### 4. Comparisons

English has comparison using different forms of the adjective - large, larger, largest. In Kpelle, there is no change in the adjective for any of these meanings. Often, the meaning comes from the context: if you ask what animal is big, by implication you are asking which is biggest. When the meaning is unclear, Kpelle speakers will express the comparison explicitly using the verb tie to pass or surpass. So: for something er than something else:

é tée ... ma      -er

Example:

zeyei ní néleei é tée nyita ma.

"This shirt is better than that one."

Literally: this shirt is good, it surpasses that one.

If something is the ---est:

noun + specific + adjective + specific

Example:

zeyei néleei "the best shirt"

If two things or actions are similar:

.... yêe ....

(for things)

Example:

zeye ɔ́ nèleèi yêe nyiti.

"This shirt is pretty like that one."

... yêe berei ...

for activities,  
abilities, etc.

Example:

Fa seŋ kaa yêe berei ya gaa lai.

"I don't see the way you do."

Numerals1. Numbers

The Kpelle numbers 1-10 are as follows:

təno	1	lɔɔlu mei da	6
feere	2	lɔɔlu mei feer	7
saaba	3	lɔɔlu mei saaba	8
náan	4	lɔɔlu mei náan	9
lɔɔlu	5	puu	10

To express a number 11-99, this is the form:

puu <u>X</u> kau <u>X</u>
---------------------------

If you are expressing 20, 30, 40, etc., then it is just:

puu <u>X</u>
--------------

Examples:

puu feere = 20

10 + 2 = 20

puu káu lɔɔ lu mei feere = 17

10 kau + 7 = 17

puu saaba káu feere = 32

10 + 3 kau + 2 = 32

To say a number in the hundreds:

ηun (pɔlu) <u>10's</u> _____
------------------------------

Examples:

ḡḡ tónɔ pòlu puu náḡ káu ḡḡ = 144  
 100 4 polu 4 kau 4 = 144

ḡḡ lóɔ lu mei feere = 700  
 100 x 7 = 700

To say a number in the thousands:

wála \_\_\_\_\_ ḡḡ \_\_\_\_\_

Examples:

wála feere ḡḡ saaba pòlu puu = 2310  
 1000 + 2 100 + 3 polu + 10 = 2310

Note: In counting, the lóɔlu of lóɔlu mei da, etc. is usually omitted.

## 2. Numerals

Numerals are similar to nouns in Kpelle. They can be given a prefixed low tone to indicate that a certain number of the total is being discussed and are known to speaker and hearer:

tónɔ	'one'	dónɔ	'one of them'
ta	'some'	da	'some of them'

If the numeral is modifying a noun, however, then the low tone only affects the noun and the number keeps its stem form.

Example:

bere ta

"some houses (of those already mentioned)"

The specific suffix can also be indicated with numbers:

tɔ̃ɔ̃... 'one'	dɔ̃ɔ̃... 'one of them'	dɔ̃ɔ̃i... 'the only one'
feɛɛ... 'two'	veɛɛ... 'two of them'	veɛɛi... 'the two of them'
		'both of them'

Note that neither ta nor keelee takes the specific.

### 3. Noun + Number

In Kpelle, the noun comes first, then the numeral.

Example:

tɛɛ naan	"four chickens"
----------	-----------------

There are several words which act as numerals.

Example:

ta	"some, any"
keelee	"all"
tɛɛ támaa káa bɛ.	"There are a lot of chickens here."
támaa	"a lot of, many"

Do not use the specific form for the independent (the first) noun.

You can use numbers without the noun.

Example:

veɛɛ	"2 of them"
veɛɛi	"the 2 of them"

Other1. Identification

To ask what the name of an object is, you say:

- Lé ðe ní? - 'What is it?'  
 Lé ðe ńí? - 'What is this?'  
 Lé ðe tí? - 'What is that?'

The answer is:

- X ká ńí. - 'This is X.'  
 X ká tí. - 'That is X.'

Examples:

- Lé ðe ńí? - 'What is this?'  
 Kpee ká ńí. - 'This is a chair.'

2. Location

"Where" questions are very similar to "what" questions. The form is as follows:

_____	lá koo?	Where is _____?
_____	lá ðé.	_____ is here.
_____	la naa.	_____ is there.

- Examples: Kpee lá koo? 'Where is the bench?'  
 Kpee lá ðé. 'The bench is here.'

Location and identification sentences both form their negative in the same way:

_____ fé ní.	'This is not _____.'
_____ fé tí.	'That is not _____.'
_____ fé bé.	'_____ is not here.' or: 'There is no _____ here.'
_____ fé naa.	'_____ is not there.' or: 'There is no _____ there.'

Examples:

Kpee fé tí. 'That is not a bench.'  
Kpee fé naa. 'There is no bench there.'

A variant is this:

\_\_\_\_\_ féi. 'This/that/it is not \_\_\_\_\_.'  
'\_\_\_\_\_ is not here/there.'  
'There is no \_\_\_\_\_ here/there.'

The meaning of the statement depends on what was asked.

Example: Kpee féi. 'This isn't a bench.'  
'There is no bench here.' etc.

### 3. How Much/How Many

The Kpelle word yeelu is a question word requesting information about quantity. It translates into English as either 'how much' or 'how many'.

Examples:

How much (does it cost)? = yeelu bé?  
How many are there? = yeelu káa naa?  
How many \_\_\_\_\_ did you bring? = Yá pà à \_\_\_\_\_ yeelu?

4. Locatives

In English we usually describe the location of something by using a prepositional phrase - "in the box," "on the table," etc. Kpelle uses a system of nouns to express these ideas. You have already learned here/there. (naa/bɛ). As you can see in the dialogue and text, the other locative expressions are noun phrases: generally an independent noun followed by a dependent noun. Formally it is:

possessor noun + locational/spatial noun, dependent  
+ specific form

Examples:

Possessor NounDependent Noun

pere 'house' + mù 'space inside'  
= bɛrei mù... 'inside the house'

pere 'house' + lá 'space at, space near'  
= bɛrei la... 'near the house'

Nenîi gáa bɛrei mù... 'The woman is in the house.'

Further, if you want to indicate the location of the activity expressed by the rest of the sentence, this phrase is placed after the verb. If placed elsewhere in the sentence, these noun phrases can be used to express slightly different ideas:

as indirect object: kú kàa bɛrei mù... "We looked inside the house."

as the subject: bɛrei mù tei... "The inside of the house is big."

5. Marked vs. Unmarked Complements

In Kpelle only a few phrases come after the verb in a sentence. These phrases are generally referred to as complements. There are two types of complements. Those labeled unmarked are so called because they carry no explicit grammatical marking.

Examples: bérei káa daai pòlu. 'The house is on the other side of town.'  
 bérei káa naa. 'The house is there.'

Others are called marked complements; for example, Gé a maa felaa, 'Do it quickly.' /a/ is the marker. The important point: these are the only types of phrases which come after the verb in Kpelle. Complements are a very small set of constructions in Kpelle.

6. Marked Complements

Kpelle uses a marker /a/ where in English we might use an unmarked object. Quite often the idea is "with something" or "in such and such a way." So, for example:

dí pà à nyée.	"They brought fish."
is more literally:	"They came with fish."
è gè à n'ée.	"He did it well."
is more literally:	"He did it in a good way."

You will generally use this correctly if you can turn the sentence into a "how" question: "How did he do it?", "How did they come?"

/à/ is sometimes expressed in a pronoun form /là/, which is just 'it', 'him', or 'her'. Thus, pá là, 'bring it.'

Note: a is the preposition or particle meaning with.

Examples:

Ké à n'ée.	"Do it well."
Kaa à n'ée.	"It is good."
È kè à n'ée.	"It was good."

Note: The kàa forms are equivalent in meaning to the regular predicative. The è kè forms indicate past.

### 7. Objects

In Kpelle, all direct objects come before the verb.

Example: Kú zuai sɔŋ. 'We catch animals.'

### 8. be

Do not think of /be/ as 'is'. It isn't. be is used in two ways. The first is the use as part of the question 'What is this/that?' Notice that /be/ is mid-toned, not high, in this phrase. (/bé/ with high tone occurs in questions about location.)

### 9. Emphasis

bé is used in emphasizing a word or phrase in Kpelle. (In English we can resort to a change in voice tone. Do not try it in Kpelle.)

a. to emphasize the subject of a sentence...

subject + bé + .....

for present (conditions), past, and future, the subject pronoun is not present. In other tenses bé + pronoun forms ba.

Example:

Nee baâ saa.

"His mother died."

Lit: "His mother, she died."

b. to emphasize an object: move the object to the front of the clause + bé + remainder of the sentence.

Example:

ná mɔlɔŋ ní nyà.

"I bought this rice."

Mɔlɔŋ ní bé ná nyà.

"This is the rice I bought."

c. to emphasize a complement:

for marked complement: place complement without marker at the beginning of the sentence + bé followed by the remainder of the sentence + là.

Example:

ná òúrii tée à gbêya. "I cut the tree with a cutters."  
 Gbêya bé ná òúrii tée là. "It was a cutters I cut the tree with."

for an unmarked complement: there are two forms which express a slightly different meaning. The first expresses the idea of emphasis on the particular location, while the second emphasizes where altogether. So, for example:

ná bù òeyii sù. "I poured it in the pot."

can be:

òeyii bé ná bù zù. "It was THE POT I poured it into."  
 òeyii sù bé ná bù "It was the POT (not something else)  
 naa. I poured it into."

For the first type, the complement, but not the dependent locative word, is moved to front followed by bé and then the remainder of the sentence + the dependent noun with a 3rd singular possessive pronoun. In the second case, the whole phrase, including the noun, is moved, followed by bé; the remainder of the sentence and finally naa in the place of the complement. (Expressions of time may be treated as either object or marked complements.)

10. wɔ... 'own'

wɔ is sometimes used to indicate or emphasize possession. Often it means that part of something is yours - you have a share.

Examples:

i wɔ loii

"your country"

ku wɔ mɔlɔŋ

"our rice (our share of the total)"  
(our own rice)

11. Next Week

nòkui ni means next week unless used with a past construction; then it means last week.

12. Yes and No. "Owei" really means "what you said is correct", and "kpao" means "what you said is not correct." Thus the correct answer to "Don't you have bananas?" is "Owei" or "Yes, I have no bananas."

13. "Kpera ye" is often translated as "please". However, it is more indicative of supplication than the English please. It is quite polite Kpelle to omit a "please" where we feel it necessary in English. The Kpelle will use "kpera ye" where the request is seen as unusual or serious, or to indicate persistence. You can best learn its use by observing when it is used. (Also, the use of "I beg you" in Liberian English is parallel to "kpera ye" in Kpelle.)

14. Yá li mií-ta?

/ta/ is a word which makes the question more polite. This is Jorquellie Kpelle. In Sanoyea Kpelle, the word used is /ná/. These are placed after the verb in short questions when addressing someone to whom you want to show respect or friendship. Failure to use them is not rude, however.

15. Connectives

Just as in other languages, sentences and words can be linked in many ways:

- a. da which is usually translated as "and" joins only 2 nouns or a noun and a third person pronoun.

Example:

ná mólò yá da yába.

"I bought rice and onions."

Sumo dá Fulomo pá.

"Sumo and Fulumo came."

- b. kpéni fèi means "because" or "for". kpéni fèi means "It is not without a reason", so it always introduces the cause or reason for the previous statement.

Example:

Kpéni, fèi, yá támaa káa naa.

"Because there is a lot of water there."

- c. máa-meni na means "for this reason". (You also hear meni ma). It emphasizes that what you said is the reason.

Example:

Kú pá yába meni mà.

"He came for onions."

- d. à kè tí means "in that case." It generally introduces a sentence and refers to what has just been said.

Example:

À kè tí, fêe í manan mii.

"In that case, you'll have to eat cassava."

- e. nyaa bé can be translated as "consequently" or "as a result."

It can connect two clauses or introduce a sentence by referring to what has gone before.

Example:

Nyaa bé, ná líi.

"And so I went."

- f. kéle means "but" and for the most part is used just as in English.

Example:

Kéle, kú fe pá ní.

"But we didn't come here."

## Relative Clauses

In Kpelle, a relative clause is a sentence marked with the specific suffix *-i* attached to the final word to indicate that it is functioning as a relative clause. The object or complement refers to what is in the relative clause portion:

Examples:

Fé núui kólŋ è pài.

"I don't know who came."

Lit.: I-not the person know he it came.

Gaa gólŋi lónŋi, Sumo è dèè bŋi.

"He is reading the book that Sumo gave him."

Lit.: See him reading the book, Sumo he it gave to him.

(Sometimes, *nyii* ("who" "which") or *yii* may occur at the beginning of the main clause.) Of course, an entire sentence may serve as a sentence subject or modifier.

Examples:

Núui è wée pài, è lì  
saa.

"The person who came yesterday went today."

Béi kélee à li nãai, bià  
máng ba pŋri lŋi.

"Wherever he went, you may go also."

Béi, which comes from *bé + i*, is used to make a relative clause indicating "where."

Béi + clause + naa + _____ + i
--------------------------------

Note: even if the final word in the phrase has a specific marker *-i*, still add an *-i*. If the word ends in *-ii*, however, do not add a third.

Example:

Béi na lŋi naái...

"Wherever I'm going..."

Béi na li naa a mólŋ...

"Where I took the rice..."

Verbs1. Verb Forms

Present or Progressive	na pái. Fé pái.	I am coming. I am not coming.	stem + i stem' + i
Future	na pái pái. Fé pái pái.	I will come. I will not come.	stem + i stem + i
Past	ná pá. Fé pá ní.	I came. I did not come.	low stem
Customary	na pá. Fa pá.	I come. I do not come.	low low
Conditional	nà pá, ... nà wàla pá, ..	If I come, ... If I do not come, ...	low stem
Imperative	Pá! Ka pá! Ífé pá!	Come! (s.) Come! (pl.) Do not come!	stem low
Hortative-Consecutive	... ná pá ... fé pá	... and (I) came ... and (I) didn't come	stem low
Completed Action	na pá.	I have come	stem
Irrevocable or Recently Completed Action	naá pá.	I have just come.	stem
Contrary-to-Fact Conditional	nái pá, ... Féi wàla pá, diféi lí.	If I had come, ... If I had not come, they would not have gone.	low stem low

from Spoken Kpelle  
William E. Welmers  
Liberia, 1955

2. Imperative

In Kpelle the imperative is expressed:

(ye)	+	verb stem	-	"you (sing.)"
kwa	+	verb stem	-	"we"
ka	+	verb stem	-	"you (pl.)"

Examples:	(ye) pá.	Come (sing.).
	ka pá.	Come (pl.).

This is used in the same situations as the English imperative.

The negative imperative is formed as follows:

negative pronoun + verb stem + low tone
---

Examples:	ifé pá.	Don't come (sing.).
	kafé pá.	Don't come (pl.).

3. Present Progressive

This is the same as the English /-ing/ form of the verb: "I am coming.", "He is cooking.", etc. In Kpelle, this form is expressed:

subject pronoun + verb stem - i
---------------------------------

Examples:

a pái.....'he is coming'.....a - he + pá - come + i - ing  
 di lónoi.....'they are counting'.....di. - they + lóno + i

The negative is very similar:

negative subject pronoun + verb stem + i
--

Examples:

vé pài.

'He is not coming.'

dife lónoi.

'They are not counting.'

This verb form is quite useful - think how often you use the English equivalent. There is also another similarity to English: it can be used to indicate something which will happen soon - he is coming (this afternoon). (The low tone of the suffix /i/ affects mid tone verbs so that the sequence is mid - high - low. Example: a paài...he is killing.)

#### 4. Immediate Future

Just as in English we say, "I am going to go to school." with the meaning "I will go to school soon", Kpelle speakers say "na lii li"... "I am going to go." This is not the only future, but it is often used.

subject noun + liî + verb stem

Examples:

a liî miî.

'He is going to eat.'

di liî lé.

'They are going to teach.'

#### 5. Future

The future is expressed by:

subject pronoun + pài + verb stem + i.

Examples: na pài liî.

"I will go."

a pài miî.

"He will eat."

The negative:

Fé pronoun + pâi + verb stem + i

Examples: Fe pâi liî. "I will not go."  
 Va pâi mii. "He will not eat."

This is used when we use "will..." in English and also the future senses of "going to" as in "I'm going to town tomorrow."

#### 6. Past Tense

The ordinary past, used to refer to activities that occurred before present is formed:

pronoun + verb + low tone

(same as Hortative)

Examples:

e lono. 'He spoke.'  
 kú bá mii. 'We ate rice.'

Negative:

negative pronoun + verb stem + ni

Examples:

ve lononi. 'He didn't speak.'  
 ífe mii ní. 'You didn't eat.'

7. Completive

This expresses the idea that a process or action is over (completed). For example, water is heating and when it is hot, it is hot: nyái aã fãã - 'the water is hot.' It is finished getting hot. In other words, a completive expresses a state of being which is the result of previous activity. This is the commonly used verb form for the useful verb kaa, 'see', which, in Kpelle is seen as a verb expressing an outcome. You have looked for or at something and the result is that you see it. The formula for the completive is:

-aa pronouns + verb stem\*

Example: Daã lí. "They are gone."

(\*Some verbs with mid-tone are high-tone after a high or mid-tone.)

The formula for the negative is:

fé + níi + verb stem + ní

Examples: Difé níi li ní. "They haven't gone yet."

Nyái fé níi-fãã ní. "The water isn't hot yet."

This verbal expression has a slightly different meaning, than an adjective - like form:

- a) Nyái aã fãã. "The water is hot." (Completive)  
 b) Nyái fããí. "The water is hot."

Essentially the difference lies in the emphasis - on whether the interest is the outcome of a process or just a statement of fact. So in the example above, a) would be correct if you were waiting for the water to heat up; b) would be correct if you tested the water - it is hot or not.

8. Completive General

This differs in meaning from the completive (recent) only in that it makes no statement in itself about when something happened or how permanent the change in state is. The general form is not restricted to recent events.

---

na pronouns + verb stem

---

Example: a pá. "He has come."  
 vs.: a à pá. "He has come (recently)."

The negative is the general past or the completive (recent). However, with some verbs - like do, promise, agree, believe - this verb form is emphatic. It essentially expresses the idea that the commitment has been made and is not changed.

Some verbs - agree, promise, believe, do, etc. - sometimes use the completed action verb form for emphasis even though the speaker may be referring to a present activity.

Examples: A fáa. "He does agree." "He agrees."  
 "He has agreed."

Using A fáa for the idea "He agrees/does agree" is more emphatic than A fáai... "He is agreeing."

9. Used to.

To express the idea "used to" when referring to a period prior to the last 4 or 5 months, you may use kaa (kana).

pronoun (present) + kaa + verb

Example: e kaa ke a nēlēē. "He used to do it well."

Negative:

fa + kaa + verb

Example:

fa kaa ké à nélee. "He didn't use to do it well."

### 10. Habitual

This verb form is used to describe an activity or ability that occurs as a matter of course such as "I go to church on Sundays," or "I eat rice with pepper."

present pronouns + verb + low tone

Example:

Da kpèlee-woo bò. "They speak Kpelle."

This can express the idea "I come every day." "You swim (every day)."

### 11. Stative

Stative is a term used to refer to a class of verbs which use a marker to indicate a condition of being: I sitting, I am standing, etc. For now, you need only remember three of them: sit, stand, sleep. "-ni" is always used in Sanoyea Kpelle. In Jorquellie, it is sometimes omitted.

subject pronoun + a + stem + ni

Example: Kaa seeni... "You (pl.) are seated."

As you might suspect, it is not the commonest verb form.



This form is also used for the second of two verbs when it expresses the result or goal of the first verb.

Examples: pá íqáa. Come and see it.  
(Lit. - Come you it see.)  
ná ṅwēlii ná lí. I want to go.  
(Lit. - I it want I go.)

To form the hortative or consecutive:

pronoun + verb stem

These are the pronouns:

ná	I	kú	we
í	you (sing.)	ká	you (pl.)
é	she, he, it	dí	they

As you can see, they differ only in the singular from the other pronouns.

The negative is formed as follows:

negative pronoun + verb stem + low tone

If the first verb is negative, then the negative pronoun is not used for the second.

Examples: fēe vé pà. It's necessary that he not go.  
He shouldn't go.  
fé ṅwēlii ná lí. I don't want to go.

This verb form is also used for narratives (relating stories, etc.)

14. fêe

If you use fêe and a clause with the verb in the hortative-consecutive, then the meaning is that something is required. This is the idea we express in English as 'must' or 'have to.'

Example: Fêe í lí. 'You must go.'

15. yele da - 'suppose ... then'

A sentence beginning with yele da, with the verb in the consecutive or the conditional, carries the meaning 'suppose ... then.'

Example: yele da núu pá, ge, ... 'Suppose someone goes, then ...'

16. Contrary to Fact

The following verb form does just what the name suggests: used to tell of a condition or wish that is not true.

past pronoun + -i + verb stem + low tone

or

past pronoun + stem + i

Example:

gâi pá or gâi pâi "I wish I were coming..."

lôloŋ èi pá, èi "If the child were coming...he"

Note: if you add a third action (if the child were going, he could take money and buy it), then use the consecutive for the third verb.

past pronoun + -i + wàla + verb stem

Example:

èi wàla pá... "If he hadn't come..."

then in the main clause use:

past negative pronoun + i + stem + low tone

Note: alternatively the main clause may be: pronoun + i + fe + i  
and/or the verb stem + i.

Example:

kufei pa. "we would not have come"

This verb form can also be used to express "should have."

pronoun + i + p̄ri + stem + low tone

Example:

ei p̄ri pa... "he should have come"

### 17. The Conditional

Most often the idea expressed by this form can best be expressed as "when..." in English. Sometimes, "if..." will also be appropriate. This verb form is used to discuss something that has not happened or happens only sometimes, or is not specific.

pronoun + verb + low tone

Examples:

à m̄i "when he ate..."

à kp̄ala "when it is dry..."

Pronouns:

n̄a kw̄a

ḡa(ya) k̄a

à d̄a

Negative:

pronoun + là + verb stem

(or wàla)

Examples:

à là mi-

"if he doesn't eat..."

à wàla kpála

"if it doesn't dry..."

Note: sometimes

ké + verb stem + i

is used for the negative form.

This is slightly different in meaning. Example:

à là ké bá mi.

"If he is not eating rice..."

à là bá mi.

"If he does not eat rice..."

Also, past action is often expressed by using a relative clause for the when...clause.

18. There are two other ways to express obligatory action:

- a. Maa-n̄ē + hortative-consecutive sentence means should do something.

Example:

Maa-n̄ē ná wúle tóo.

"I should sing."

Maa-n̄ē ná li.

"I should go."

- b. Gáa sen + hortative-consecutive sentence expresses "need to" or "ought to."

Example:

Gáa sen ná wúle tóo.

"I ought to sing."

Gáa sen ná li.

"I need to go."

19. To Have

In Kpelle "to have something" is generally expressed by using a verbal form of "in my hand".

Independent nouns:

$\underline{X}$  káa + possessor pronoun + yéé + ì

This is equivalent in meaning to "I am having it in my hand".

Negative:

$\underline{X}$  fé + yeé + ì

There are a few other verbals of this sort: they have both noun and verb characteristics, and a meaning of place and continuous action.

Examples:

tée káa nyééi.

"I have a chicken."

tée fé nyééi.

"I don't have a chicken."

mí òà ipò taâi?

"Where is your home?"

(Where is the living place?)

20. kòlòŋ "to know" can also mean "to suppose" "to guess" or "to think."

a. To express a meaning of "I know something (now)" use the hortative-consecutive pronouns and the verb in the stem tone.

Example:

ǎ nūui kòlòŋ.

"I know the man."

b. If a sentence follows kòlòŋ rather than just a nominal object, then the meaning is suppose, or guess.

Example:

ḡá gólŋ a líi. "I think she's going."

To express the idea of "know" in this context (with a sentence complement), kpó à gée is used between kólŋ and the sentential clause.

Example:

ḡá gólŋ kpó à gée a líi. "I know (for sure, for true) she's going."

- c. To express a past meaning, the auxiliary verb kè is used.

pronoun + kè a + kólŋ

or

pronoun + kólŋ + kè

Example:

ḡá gólŋ kè a líi. "I knew she was going."

- d. In all other tenses it has the meaning of "know."

## 21. wéli

Wéli has some parallel distinctions. However, in the present it is treated as a stative verb if you mean "like" or "love."

Example:

ḡá nūui ḡwélini. "I like that person."

If kè is used as an auxiliary with past tense, then wéli means "want" rather than "like." To indicate the "want" meaning is present, use the regular present.

Examples:

na òweli. "I liked her."

na ke a oweli. "I wanted it."

(Note: use weli in an adjective form.)

na òweli... "I want to..."

22. Ke is used before the verb stem + -i to indicate intensification. This can take several forms - as it answers the tense for the clause.

Examples:

e ke pai. "He was coming."

a pai kei pai. "He will be coming."

23. A ke is used when the speaker does not know whether an event will occur or not - corresponding to our "if." A ke is placed before the remainder of the phrase which is in conditional form.

Examples:

a ke a ba mi. "If he eats rice..."

a ke a kpala. "If it dries..."

24. Kee is used to express the idea "while."

pronoun + kee + verb

Example:

di kee pai. "while they were coming..."

di kee mi. "while they were eating..."

25. The Conjunction ké

Ké is used to connect two phrases which have the same subject.  
 (These phrases do not express the idea of first one thing and then another - use consecutive for that.)

phrase + ké + phrase: verb with low tone
--

Examples:

A bá mii, gé seye pala.	"He eats rice and weaves cloth."
A bá mii.	"He eats rice."
A seye pala.	"He weaves cloth."

26. More Coordinate Sentences

a. Fêe followed by the negative conditional or consecutive, but not at the beginning of the sentence expresses "except" or "unless".

Example:

Fe mii-sen, wêlii fêe tuma-laa.  
 "I don't want any food except greens."

b. If the verb occurs in another tense, then the idea is "before."

Example:

Ku pori lii fêe é pá.  
 "We can go before he comes."

c. If until is meant, use: kwa pai + clause describing first activity then second clause.

Example:

Kwa pai kulaa mii ku lee serii Gbomue.  
 "We will eat before we reach Gbomue."

1.b and 1.c may both translate as "before" in English. The difference in Kpelle is this:

Fêe "before" means that something must be done before the activity described in the second clause.

Kwa paí "until" or "before" simply means the action will occur before the action in the second clause.

## CHAPTER V

### KPELLE-ENGLISH AND ENGLISH-KPELLE DICTIONARY

The process of writing a dictionary is a large and tedious process of checking and rechecking entries against usages not only by one speaker, but by many speakers. A good dictionary should contain samples of sentences to illustrate usage of the entry. What follows then by definition is less than a dictionary, but on the other hand it is more than a word list, for it does contain information on parts of speech, dialectal variants and usage. When using this dictionary the reader is encouraged to correct or modify transcription in the light of experience and to make additions when new words are identified.

**DICTIONARY (KPELLE - ENGLISH).....a tō búlo-kwélee**
**A.**

- a  
particle used in post verbal phrases, often "with", "for" "by means of"
- a  
(contraction of káa)
- Ábe  
Harbel
- ába  
hour
- Áfeko  
Ivory Coast
- à fūo  
unconscious
- a gēe  
in order to
- à gēe len  
how
- a kē (conj)  
in order to, so that
- a kē bálo  
to be getting better
- a maa felaa  
right away, immediately, soon
- à tǎi su-koya seye é lee kpee  
a long time to get well

**B.**

- bála  
rattan
- bála  
bush dog
- bêle  
trousers, pants
- bene  
still
- bia  
beer
- Bikâna  
Buchanan
- Bon yeei ma  
Bong River
- bôki  
bucket
- bôlie-zu  
thin
- bôlo-pôlo  
old, ancient
- bôron-kpalai  
November
- bôyee (see pōye)  
color
- búlo-kwélee  
eggplant

bá..... bora-yale

## Б

bá	bear fruit	béle-kpe-goi (kpɔara) hate
bá	cooked rice	béle toli boɔ to invite
báa-ke-maa	to obey	bɛn, bɛlɛn (Jorquellie) chair, bench
báa-kúlà-maa	to disobey	bɛrei-bɔnɔ (Jorquellie) wall
bálo	to cure, to heal	bese sesame: bese-káo 'sesame seed'
bara	brass	bó speak, open
baraa-yée-mei-yaleɔ	to win	bò (conj.) (in phrase): ké bò 'and also' Also: gé bò, è bò.
barân	fellowmate, peer, friend: pl. barâa	bóa knife
bâre	trap: bâre tɛ 'set a trap'	bɔi wild boar, bush hog, pig
bé	part. (used to emphasize subj., obj., compl. and after question words)	boli goat
bé (adv)	here: bé-pere 'this way', bé nɪ ma 'over here', béi kélee...naa (in phrase) 'wherever'	bólɔn resemble, looking like
-bela (suff)	(irregular plural form of núu): tɪi ké-nuu 'worker', tɪi ké-bela 'workers'	bolôn grave
béela	black deer	boon (variant) arm
béle	respect	boon wolo (variant) armpit
		bora-yalé bracelet

.....Dùkoo

grow

father-in-law

son-in-law

hat, cap, bag sack

money bus

soft

add

pig

**D.**

da and

dàa-daa doctor, nurse, medical person

da kúla zu subtract

dàla dollar

danaj September

dæ-gie, thick

dénin April

denen pond, lake

Den St. Paul River

dika digger

digbo (Jorquellie) small

Dõan loii Lofa County

Dõa-ŋa Loma

dan-kõrõn pawpaw, papaya

dõsin dozen

Dùkoo Monrovia

fáa.....fólo té-eei ñuŋ ma

**F.**

fáa	answer	fêe	fan (rice)
fãa	hot, heat, get hot: i kolo fãai yâ? 'Do you have a fever?'	-fêlee-zoo	nurse
fãa	wind	fêna	mushroom
fãa kête	storm	fene-sen	wild animal, meat
fála	cut, tear	fêŋ-kpalaŋ	field (already burned)
fanâ-bo	offer	fie-fie	in a rush, with haste
fê	hand over, give	fii	tiredness: mvií aà kpêe 'I'm tired'
Fê yani	day after tomorrow	-file	first
feere	two: di feere ñoo 'both of them'	fólo	empty, vacant: sen-folo 'dishes'
féla	wage due for work, taxes, tuition: dí í féla fè? 'Did they pay you?'	fólo	day, sun
Felaide	Friday	fólo	shine
félaa	a maa félaa 'fast, right away, immediately', imaa féla 'be fast'	fólo a _____ tée _____ days ago	
féla-fe	pay	fólo-kpanân	umbrella (sun shade)
fêe	must, compelled: fêe é pá 'he must come'	fólo-laa bo yele	dry season
		fólo maa láa	noon
		fólo té-eei ñuŋ ma	afternoon

fólo tóo yele.....Gió 13ii

fólo tóo yele  
sunny (sunshine time or  
season)

fon  
5¢

-fúle  
lungs

fúloí  
first

fúlon  
come loose, loosen:  
maa è fúlon 'she gave  
birth'

fulu  
alive: fulu-sen 'living  
thing', fulu-laa 'life'

**G.**  
gála  
fence

gãla  
box, herb used to dye  
clothes black

gáli-kalal  
May

gálon  
gallon

gaméne  
orange: gaméne-lon  
'lemon', gaméne kpaya  
kpaya 'grapefruit',  
gaméne pele-pelee  
'tangerine'

Gan-taa  
Ganta

gára  
mat

gau-see gie-ŋa  
bone setter

gàu-see gie-ŋa  
set a bone

geên  
crab

gè-zu-feere kwii zoo'  
doctor (M.D.)

Gíni  
Guinea

Gilebo  
Grebo

Gió 13ii  
Nimba County

Gio.....gbôno

Gio

Gio

Gisi

Gissi

gôi ~ gwêi

banana: gôi kpaya-kpaya  
'plantains'

Gôla

Gola

gônog

gourd, calabash

gotó

grasshopper, locust

goru

gold

golé-yalón-leei

January

golé-yalón-lon

December

guro-yale-núu

jeweler

## Gb

gbâa

almost

gba béle

hat, helmet

gbai

corn

Gbâni

Bandi

gbêya

cutters

gbène fé lélee ni

unhealthy

gbene (gbune) kété

fat

gbène-lélee

healthy

gbéhé polie zu

medium size

gbêe

who?

gbe kée

gourd

Gbelee loii

Bong County

gbin

bed

gbininí pú ma

loom

gbôdo

leprosy: gbôdo-nuu  
'leper'

gbôno

ring

gbolo.....yale

gbolo  
green, unripe

yala-pere  
church

Gbôlo  
Bassa

yale  
break

gbonoi-léle (gòlò-i-pòno)  
healthy

yalee  
broken

gbón-tolon  
handbag

yálon  
moon, month

gbóra  
one-half

yáu  
yams

gbôto  
leprosy

yelé  
day, sky, heaven:  
yélé dā 'someday,  
maybe, sometime',  
yélé kété 'holiday',  
a yélé-waia pepe 'at  
daybreak', yélé-kuu  
'working, day', a  
veere-yélei 'the second  
time', yélé-gbana  
'thunder', yélé-waai  
ni su 'this morning'

gbómò  
wasp

gbô-laa  
a type of water green

gboro  
rice farm before burning,  
when all trees are cut

yéléi  
upward, toward the sky:  
íwóo té yéléi 'speak  
louder'

gboyóóí  
July

gbúnò bele  
eddoes

yela-kòlon  
cloud

yélé-waa  
morning

yélé-wii-fólo  
sundown, sunset

yélé-wu(lii)  
evening

yéelu  
how much? how many?

yélé  
when?

γέλε.....káne

γέλε  
laugh

γέλι  
rope

γέλι-κρόμο  
nine

γίλα  
dog

γίλι maa sêye  
Lápa, skirt

γίλι  
cook

γίλι-περε  
cook shop

γίρι  
bunch, bundle

γίρι  
tie

## H.

háya (saa-ya)  
rice bird

## I.

í gbeli  
greeting

ikólóí ponoóí  
Are you well?

## K.

káa a vúlu  
alive

káa búma  
dead

kaa koléi  
to be sick

káa saái  
to be dying

kaaka wúru  
cocoa tree

káan  
shoulders

kaân-kau  
feces

kafálo  
excuse me (to one person),  
ka kafálo. 'excuse me-(to  
several persons)'

kala  
grass, weed; trash,  
chaff, peeling, scale  
(of fish); ikala-  
kalai 'you are hard to  
deal with, stingy'

kala bó  
to husk, to shell

kali  
snake

kali  
hoe

kálon  
chief, king; kálon-laa  
'chiefdom'

káne  
silver

kane-tōōŋ ..... kona

kane-tōōŋ  
tuberculosis

-kili  
mind

kāŋ  
wall

-kili a gēē / a gēē -kili  
remember (keep in mind)

kāpa  
one cent, penny

kire  
speed, hurry, haste

kara  
spoiled, rotten

kiyēŋ  
pepper

-kau  
bone

-koi / -kui / -koo  
stomach; goi a tēēi  
'he has diarrhea'

(kéle)-lōō (tōō-lōō)  
palm wine

koi kaa mā  
to be pregnant

kélee  
all

koi-kāna  
constipation

kéleŋ  
vehicle, boat, canoe, ship,  
car, truck: koōŋ-kéleŋ 'air-  
plane', yā nā-kéleŋ 'ship,  
steamboat', kéleŋ sia-nuu  
'driver', kéleŋ-pere 'highway'

koi-nia  
pregnant woman

koi-nyii gbeli  
hookworm

kera  
uncle (mother's brother)

koi-saa  
barren woman

kere  
palaver hut

koi ta nina  
newborn baby

kereŋ  
burn

koi-tēē  
diarrhea

ké  
do, be, happen, say: - da ké mā  
'they call it...'

kolā  
rice bag

kéleŋ-sia-nuu  
doctor

kole  
white: kwii-kole  
'white man'

kete  
big, important

komo  
basket

kie  
together, each other

kona  
mortar

kooŋ-kelen.....-kɔna

kooŋ-kelen  
airplane

kooŋ-sen sale  
insecticide

kóran  
fence

kóya  
long

kófe  
coffee

kóí  
firewood

kóle  
nearness, vicinity

kóle  
sell

kóle  
cold in stool

kóle  
sick

kóle a téi  
have a chill

kóli  
iron, motor, machine

kóli-yale-nuu  
blacksmith

kóli  
open mole

kóli-déna  
screen

kɔɔ

skin, book, paper, litter:  
kɔɔ ná-kɔɔ 'shoe', kɔɔ-  
kpau 'pencil', kɔɔ-laa  
'sheet of paper', kɔɔ-  
pere 'schoolhouse',  
kɔɔ siye 'sue in court',  
kɔɔ pɔye-nuu 'clerk,  
secretary, writer'

kɔɔ bó  
to peel

kɔɔ-kɔɔ  
palover sauce

kɔɔ-laa  
page in a book

kɔɔi a naa pɔno  
to be recovered (was  
sick, now well)

kɔɔi pɔnoí  
to be well

kɔɔ-fela  
illness

kɔɔ-kole  
bright

kɔɔ-kúlaa  
clean

kɔɔ-pere-nuu  
student

kɔɔ-wɔɔ  
scratch

-kɔna  
throat

kɔ̃hi seye kelen	kwí-tou
kɔ̃ni seye kelen train	kúla sáa ma after today
kɔ̃lɔ̃n know, learn, find out	kúls sugar cane
-kɔ̃n neck	kulu-lɔ̃ɔ̃ piassava wine
kɔ̃n na kɔ̃n 'raise, bring up, rear'	kúluŋ-na Kru
kɔ̃ɔ̃ where	kuraté small (Sanoyea)
-kɔ̃ɔ̃ foot, leg: kɔ̃ɔ̃-pílanii 'beginning', kɔ̃ɔ̃-kwana 'ankle', kɔ̃ɔ̃-yeé mɛi-pere 'on the left'	kuro-te (dɛkpé) little, small
-kɔ̃ɔ̃-gbua toe	kuruh Kru
kɔ̃ɔ̃-na kɔ̃lɔ̃ shoes	kuu-na crew, work party
kɔ̃ɔ̃-yeé-mɛi-pere (the) left	kúyen potato
kɔ̃ɔ̃n moan	kúyen-laa potato greens
kɔ̃ɔ̃n weigh	kwa-bo brush (a fan)
kɔ̃pan compound	kwa-sii-ɛɛ brush
kɔ̃pu cup, tin can, rice measure ment	kwa-kelen brushed farm
kɔ̃rɔ̃n year	kwatara old
kula take out, come out, get out, surprise, come across: su- kula 'explain', nɛnɛ kula 'marry a woman'	kwɛlɛɛ bitterball
	kwɛyɛn necklace
	kwí-tou pineapple

kwii.....kpele

kwii

white person, European/  
American, educated person;  
kwii-kole 'white man', kwii-  
tee 'duck'

kwii-toli

coconut

kwii-zoo

doctor (M.D.)

kpá-saa

head tie, scarf

kpaa (mán)

or

kpaa

no

kpála

dry

kpálan

farm, field

kpálo

piassava palm branch

kpanán

village

kpao

bridge

kpao

no

kpára

head-tie

kpasa

handkerchief

kpawo

fishhook

kpáwo

bridge

kpaya-kpaya

big, large

kpela

became physically  
mature (female)

kpele

drink, swallow, suck

kpelen.....-kpono

kpelen  
yellow

kpelen-kēen  
yellow fever

kpeli  
earthworm

kpeli  
remainder, rest, the other

kpēnē fāa-maa  
(kpono kelēn-maa)  
malaria

kpēra  
stop, beg, ask: 'kpēra yē  
'please, I beg of you'

kpete / kolo-kūla  
clean

kpēye  
opposum

kpēlee  
name of the Kpelle tribe in  
Liberia: kpēlee-nuu 'Kpelle  
man', kpēlee-ŋa 'Kpelle people'

kpēlee kēre  
country kitchen

Kpēlee-sale  
country (traditional) medicine

kpēlin  
shake, tremble

kpēnēn  
mortar

kpete  
fix, make, create, grow,  
decide, get rich, circum-  
cize

kpīnāŋoŋ  
'cooked

kpīni  
night, darkness: kpīni  
sama 'midnight', kpīni-  
seye 'nightgown'

kpīniŋ  
wrap, fold, curl up

kpīniŋ  
shady

kpīniŋ  
region, neighborhood

-kpīn (Totota)  
kpōŋ (Gbangba)  
-self

kpīri  
bend

kpīri  
load

kpīri-kolo  
sandals

kpō-pere  
latrine

kpolo  
salt

kpōlo  
bread

kpolo-nyēe  
smoked fish

-kpono  
body, person, self:  
gbonōi 'through him, in  
his body'

kpòno.....kpùra

kpòno  
log (to sit on)

kpòno-fāa-maa.  
have a fever

kpòno kē-maa sɔɔ bôî  
gain weight

kpòno maa-pāa  
camwood

kpôŋ  
bottom of anything

kpôŋ  
door

-kpôro  
ankle

kpôwo  
path

kpɔ̄  
very much: né lêî kpɔ̄ 'very good'

kpɔara  
hate

kpɔ̄ kpɔ̄  
hammer, "knock-knock" (one says this word when arriving at a door; equivalent to knocking)

kpɔɔ  
underbrush, thick bush, shrub

kpɔɔ  
basket

kpɔlu  
red

kpɔlu  
red, ripen, dye red, ripe, difficult: meni-kpɔlu 'trouble, difficulty'

kpɔmɔ  
root, vine

kpɔŋ  
crowd

kpɔŋ  
help, gather, collect, pile up

kpɔ̄ɔ̄  
harvested farm, young bush: a lí kpɔ̄ɔ̄i 'he went to farm'

-kpɔ̄ɔ̄ (Gbarna)  
-kpɔ̄ŋ (Totota) } sàka  
cut oneself

kpɔ̄ɔ̄ } wāna  
kpɔ̄ŋ } hurt oneself

kpɔ̄rɔŋ  
rickets

kpua  
short

-kpua  
piece, section

-kpulɔŋ  
joints

kpuaa  
short

kpune  
whole, unbroken

kpùra  
half, a part

la.....leyi

## L.

la	it (substitute for <u>a + noun</u> when the noun is not expressed) it (in commands when noun is expressed)	-lāa-yá spit
		lāái bed, sleeping place
-lá	mouth, opening, open top of a container, entrance, doorway, bank (of a stream), side of a surface (in English translated with prepositions by, at, next to)	layi shout
		lái cold
		laié cold
lāa	place, set, put, trust, lay, lie down	láo soup (Liberian stew to eat with cooked rice)
-lāa	name	lé what
lāa	leaf of plants: tōu-lāa 'palm leaf', kɔɔ-lāa 'page of a book'	-lee mother (title of respect used with name for older person): pere-lee 'main road', pɛrɛ-lee 'head wife'
lāa kēle	sweep	-léya hair, feathers
lāa-kpaa	leap	-lêye younger sibling
lāa-lāa	sloppy	-leye-nɛni younger sister
lāa mii-yée mei-pere	(the) right	-leye-surɔŋ younger brother
lāa-nɔnu	green	leyi pot, cooking pot: a leyi yilii 'she is cooking'
lāa-see	last (prior)	
lāa-seye / pèle-mei-sèye	lapa	

leyi.....lókura

leyi

pan, pot

leyi-yili-koli

stone

lén

how?

-lenei

waist

lé

show, appoint, teach: sɛŋ lɛ-  
nuu 'teacher'

lélé

grow, develop

lélé

good, nice, fine, beautiful

léléé aɲanaa

beautiful

lɛni-maa

now

léwo

breathe, breath

lí

go, take with

-líá

older sibling: níá-sun 'my  
older brother, níá-neni 'my  
older sister'

líá

to forget

lí bí

dirty

-líí

liver (center of emotion):  
líí-sɛlɛŋ 'worry, anxiety',  
níí nɛéí 'I'm happy', níí  
ŋwánaai 'I'm angry', líí-  
láa 'satisfaction', líí-maa-  
waa 'pure in heart', líí-  
kpele 'courage, patience,  
boldness', líí-sɛe 'peace',  
líí-ma-sɛŋ 'treasure,  
favorite'

líí

raffia palm

líí ma sɛŋ

choice

líí-nɛɛ

happy

líí wana

vexed, angry

-líí / -woni (Gbarŋa)

liver

líí tóó pólú (Káa yaôí)

afraid

lííyɛŋ

sweet, savory

loa

hoe

loai

between, the area in  
between

loai ma

area in between, border

lókuro

baby, small child

lôlon.....luu à naa seye

lôlon

child; Pl. nia peles 'children'

lôlu

five

lôma

red deer, antelope

lôo

forest, bush, jungle

lômpo

room

lúu

mist, fog, dew

-lônii

children: pl. of lón; kali-lonii 'members of the snake society'

-luu à naa seye

scab

lonii ma

right away, soon

lóno

speak, count: kôlô lóno 'read a book'

-lón

child

loon

squirrel

lô

enter, put

Lôba-po / vái lóii  
Robertsport

lôba wúra (māan wúru)  
rubber tree

lôba yá (māan gá)  
sap, latex

lôku ~ lôo-kuu  
week

lôii

land, floor, earth, ground,  
soil: lôii-meni 'tribal,  
customary matter

lôii peles

turn the soil, till

-mà .....mese

**M.**

-mà	on, surface of a thing	manan-siaa	pounded-cassava, ready to use
ma kanân / saa	carve	mano	Mano
maa-fela-laa	set a bone: from maa-feja "change"	man	also, too
maa koli	fence in, enclose	mahun	mango
maa kori	study	-marê	question (in phrase only): marê ké 'ask him a question', mare-kee ké 'ask a question'
maa-neêi	it is advisable, one should	mare-ké	ask a question
maâ-tinano	late	mela	strip
maamu	spouse	-mei	above, the area above another thing
mâki	vaccination	meni	matter, thing, business, palaver
mâla	dance	meni	hear, obey
-mâlen	nephew	meni-kpôlu	danger
mâlen / mâlen-neni	nephew / niece	meni-kpôlu à nanaa	dangerous
mânaa	over there	Menin	Mandingo
manaai	August	mese	sesame seed: Also base
manan	cassava		
manan-laa	cassava greens		

.....mu-tai-ee

mi where  
mɔlɔŋ-tɛɛ tã  
rice harvest (season)

mii eat  
Mɔne  
Monday

miliŋ trouser leg  
mɔɔ  
red, ripe

mina spoon  
-mũ  
under, the area under something

m̃m̃ or m̃m̃  
yes (used as a response to greetings or to indicate you are listening)  
mua  
boil, sore

mɔ-nyii  
measles  
muluŋ  
dust

Mɔa  
Mano  
muluŋ / muluŋ-kpolo  
dust

mɔlɔŋ yala  
rice straw  
muluŋ-pɔɔɔ  
soil dust

mɔlɔŋ  
rice (uncooked); mɔlɔŋ-kao  
'rice seed'  
mu-seye  
tall

mɔlɔŋ kao  
rice seed  
mu-tai-ee  
blue

mɔlɔŋ kɛɛŋ  
seed rice

mɔlɔŋ kɛre  
granary, rice kitchen

mɔlɔŋ kpala  
upland rice

mɔlɔŋ mɔŋɔɔ  
sprouted rice

mɔlɔŋ sia-pɛre lã  
rice mill



naa.....	.....nii
<b>N.</b>	
naa	nene <u>with</u> ná comfort, console
there	nêne which?
-nâo ~ nawe	nênî woman, wife: Pl. neyâd 'women'
friend (also used to address a social equal or acquaintance)	nênî ma yeke dress
-nana	-nêŋ tongue
vein	nêŋ boil: yâ nêŋo 'boiled water'
nân	-ni (to indicate plural for few irregular nouns)
father, father's brother (also used to address an older person to show respect)	nîa forget
nân nân	-nîa' older sibling: nîa- surŋ 'my older brother', nîa-nênî 'my older sister'
grandfather	nîa will, desire
nân nâsaa-bôolo / nêe nêee	nîa-pelee children, pl. of dôlon 'child'
aunt, grandmother	nîye-liyei June
nânîŋ	nîi (used with <u>à</u> as a dialect variation for <u>à</u> <u>ke</u> ) "if..."
skip over, step over, take over, overlook	
nei	
after a while; later	
neyen	
face	
nêre	
nail	
nêe	
delicious, sweet, good tasting, happy	
nêi	
dime, ten cents	
nêlee agêe ifé nîa ma	
it's important not to forget	
nêmu	
breathe	

nii.....	nyuo-la
nii yet, still	nyá molōŋ swamp rice
nina new	nyále cat
ninaŋi next (as in next day)	nyēē ~ nyēē fish
nini shade	nyēē denēŋ kpētee stock a fish pond
niniŋ shadow, shade	nyēē kolāŋ fish pond
nina cow: nina nini-ya 'miTk'	nyēē-kpala dried fish
no only, just	Nyēŋ-yēŋ February
nōmu stay (awhile)	nyie groan
nōo dirt	nyii sleep
nūu-tēi-kwii zoo black bagger	-nyīŋ tooth
nuu pōlo-ŋa ancestors, elders	nyīŋi this
nūu-belaa operate	nyití that
nūa men, people: Pl. of <u>nūu</u>	nyōmōo bad, ugly
nūu man, person: nūu-kpune 'human being'	nyōo bad: (contr. of <u>nyōmōo</u> )
nuu-kole Peace Corps Volunteer	nyōo be afraid
nweei October	nyōo within the year
	nyuo-la mother-in-law

-na ..... nweei

η

-na (to pluralize nouns):  
gbelee-na 'the Kpellé people

na on top of, top area of a thing

naa contraction of nama  
blood (only contracted form used)

naa-bo wake up

naan four

nali sharpen (a knife)

naana a lot, much

nanua my family

nan then

nela rabbit

nelen yelen fry

-nei eyes, face, appearance

nei-ke mo-mò smile

neya sand

ni this

ni breast

ni bird

ni kpée to scare away birds

ni again

ni fire

ni-tena fireplace

niya guest, visitor, stranger

ni-ko-li motor bike

ni knee

ni hundred

-ni head, chapter in a book

ni awaken, wake up

-ni-leya hair (head)

ni tano 100

ni tu-pere above

ni-soli cold (fresh cold)

nwana bitter: nwana-loo-nuu 'a violent, wicked person',  
lii-wana 'anger'

nweei name of the month of October (named after the call of the bird kpála ni that returns at this month)

owēi ..... pili

## O.

owēi  
yes

## P.

pá  
come, bring

paa  
paa kée núu (body part) na.  
sore, hurt  
sore (body part)

pāi  
pint

pala  
weave

pala  
sore

pāma-sii  
paramount chief.

panān ma  
yard

pāne  
pan: pāne-kalan 'corrugated  
iron for roofing'

pān  
4 unit: pān tōn - \$4  
usage confined noways to the  
older generation

pāra  
swamp: pāra-mōlōn 'swamp-  
rice'

pāra-na sēye (paa-na hēn)  
bandage

pāu  
pound (measurement)

pēle  
game, entertainment

pelen  
straight

pene  
turn, stir, change

pepe  
way, road, path.

pēle  
start, begin, bend over,  
bend down

pēle  
also, besides (in phrase:  
é pēle...mā)

pēle  
small: pēle-pelee 'small',  
nāna-peleei 'my children'

pēme, lēn-kau  
star

pēre  
house, hut, building

pēre-kpēya  
thatch roof

pēre-laa-lei  
house, enhance

-pēre  
side (of one's body)

pīi  
porcupine

pīlan  
get down, descend, put  
down, follow

pīleti  
plate

pīli  
broadcast (rice)-

poà.....	.....puu
poa fruit, flower	-poo dependent noun ownership: mine, yours, his
póa lake, pond	equivalent to possessive pronoun in English. use with <u>a</u>
-pôlu bac of body, back	pôri can, is able to, ability (to do something)
pôlu-pere backwards	pôro soil, dirt, topsoil, clay, mud
pomo carry on the back	pôron inside of a house
pono clear, light-colored, fair	pôron-boi house boy
pokôn picture, image, copy, imitate	pôye write, mark: kolo pôye- nuu 'writer, clerk, secretary' design, color
polo old, to get old: sie-polo 'old man'	pôye maa fálen dye
poloji last (as in last month)	pôye pú ma embroider
pôlo spin	pú pour, run away, empty out
pôlon tribal initiation school	-pulu intestines
pôlo to spindle	pumu ant
pômûn sprout, germinate	puru hunger: puru kaa mâ 'I'm hungry'
pôn fell (a tree), cut down, chop	puu ten
-pôn spouse	
poo to own	

saa.....séyai

**S.**

saa	die, hew, carve	sále-péɛ	hospital
sâa	today	sale-péɛ kéte	hospital
sâa	straight, honest, just	sale-péɛ loŋ	clinic
sââ	things: pl. of <u>sɛŋ</u>	sale-tii-kɛ-núu	pharmacist
saa ba	three	sama	gift, 'to give a gift: sama-sɛŋ, 'gift, present'
sâa yele ɲi	this day	sâma	space in between or among objects, waist, middle, center
-sâabɔlo	one's sibling of the opposite sex, i.e. a man's sister	samâ-ya yele	rainy season
sâyɛ	a dwarf antelope (the wise animal of the Kpelle folk tales)	same	root
sayilaŋ	needle: sayilaŋ siye 'get an injection	samu	turtle
sayilaŋ-tée	give an injection	sane	bottle
sâla	sacrifice: sâla kûla 'make a sacrifice	sán	parable, proverb
Salaide	Saturday	saŋûla	calf and skin (of the leg)
sale	medicine	see	sit, sit down, place, set
sale-kau	tablet, pill	-seêi	a place to sit
sale-kpele	liquid medicine	séyai	coast, coastal area, coastwards

seye.....	seye-kau
seye clothes	seye-kau money, change
seye-nina new cloth	seye-kau sɔɔ-bɔɔ earn money
seye-sɔɔ-nuu tailor	seye-kau kɔi kelen taxi
seye yee-koya sleeve (long)	seye-le-nuu teacher
seyen clear up, melt	seye shake hands, snap fingers
sele elephant	si plant: kwaa si 'plant rice'
selen shilling (used to be worth 20 cents)	sia walk, rub, beat: kili- na-sia 'to think', sia-sia 'walk about, stroll', kelen sia 'drive a car'
seri arrive, come (as in time comes), reach	sia argument
sêbe talisman, medicine container (hung around a child's neck to protect)	si-sen plant, sapling
seyê thanks: seyê fe 'give thanks', fseyê 'thank you'	si-sen bá (kúlaa) pod
sêlen hang up: lii-selen 'worry'	si-yá porch
Seɔɔn Sierra Leone	sié chair
sen thing: pl. sãã 'things', mi- sen 'food'	siε-pɔɔ old man
sen-fólo dishes	siyan borrow, rent

siye.....  ...sɔɔ

siye	pick up, take, carry, take hold, lift, move from	somoi	early
-sii	kind, type, variety, tribe	somu	go early, go right away
sii	spider	sonia	wives of a polygamous man
sii-sen gbin	hill	son	catch, arrest
sii-sen mɔɔ	sprouted seed	sɔno	corner
si-sen mɔn	seedling	soo	horse: soo-koli 'bicycle', soo-falen 'camel', wale-soo 'donkey'
si-sen si kolaŋ	garden	sɔo	funnel
sii-sen si tai (yele)	planting time (season)	sɔbele	shovel
sina	termite, bug-a-bug	sɔbo	groundhog
sinaa	men: pl. of <u>suran</u>	sɔlo	sew
siŋ	shore	sɔlo with bɔ	get receive
siŋ	deep	Sone	Sunday
siŋ	dig	-sɔŋ	deed, action, behavior, guilt
siŋan	iroko or mulberry tree	sɔɔ	pipe vine
soboo	early	sɔɔ	daub, hurt, injure, hit
soli	hurt, ache		

sôw.....surôh polo

sôw  
anteater

sûh  
fast

sôw - sôw  
price, value

surôh  
man, husband, male:  
surôh-loo 'small boy'

sôw  
lock (on a door)

surôh } polo  
neni } umbilical cord

sôw-ketêi  
expensive

sôya  
rice bird, weaver bird

-su  
inside, in, area inside of a  
place or object

su-kpanâw  
strong

sua  
animal, meat

sûa  
garden

-sûa  
nose

sua kpâlaa  
dry meat

-sûa yâ pû  
runny nose

sûbêlé  
yam-like tuber

sûlô  
first

sulû  
waterfall

Sune  
Sunday

ta.....tí

**T.**

ta	some, any	tela	also, before
taa	town, village	telân	peanuts, groundnuts
taa-tulɛ-kpo	manure, fertilizer	tená	coal
táan	one (used only in counting) Also: táyan	têya	pump
taan-kpala	tobacco	té	go up, climb, rise, raise, lift, close
tâba	towel	tɛɛ	pass by, send, give, surpass: nâlon tɛɛ tí 'last month'
tâi	time	tée	chicken: kwii-tɛɛ 'duck'
tâma	to be much, plentiful	tée	blow
tâmaa	much, many, plenty	tɛɛ kée é zaa	hatch an egg
tâpi ké-núu	rubber-tapper	tée-péɛ	chicken coop
tâpia kɔli	unburned brush	Tɛyɛide	Thursday
tâpin-kée	tap (a rubber tree)	tei	blacken
téa	pumpkin, squash	tei-tɛi	one by one, several, a few
tée	harvest, cut	tei-tɛi / tɔnɔ-tɔnɔ	once, one at a time
téɛbele	table	tí	that
Tɛide	Thursday		

tian.....tôn

tian  
load

tii  
work, farm

tii-kelen  
burn the farm

tii kelen tai  
burning time

tii-ké-nuu  
farmer

tiin  
charcoal

tiyi  
charcoal

tina or tuna  
rain

tinaa  
tomorrow

tinaa maa  
spin

tinan  
turn around, surround, delay

tini  
silent

tin  
noise, sound

tisô  
sneeze

tiya  
taboo

tiyen  
cross (a river), go across

tôli  
call

tôlo  
jealousy: tôlo kûla  
'be jealous'

tôlon  
pigeon, dove

-tôn  
top (of a surface)

tono  
guinea fowl

too  
fall, fell, put on,  
dress, shine

tôu  
palmnut

tôa  
Loma

tôko  
young (note: this word  
has a wide range of mean-  
ings: fruits not yet  
ripe, food that is  
cooking, but which is  
not yet cooked, etc.)

tôTê  
cough: naa-tôle 'T.B.',  
zu-koo-tôle 'whooping  
cough'

tôli  
palm kernel

tono  
one

tôn  
law

tɔŋ.....tɔŋ

tɔŋ  
quietness, silencetɔɔ  
beantɔɔ  
build, stand up, being rich,  
raise, breedtɔɔ  
wait, stoptɔɔ-sɛŋ (lɔɔ)  
rashtɔɔŋ  
beanstɔɔŋ  
coughtɔɔŋ saa  
produce a coughtúa  
spend a long time, behave:  
tua-pere 'behavior, custom'tua  
scratch, bruisetúa  
king monkeytúaŋ  
push, move over-túe  
front of, front area of some-  
body or a thingTuide  
Tuesdaytúe  
(in compounds): taa-túe  
'domestic animals'tulê  
kola nut, colatúlun  
garbage piletuma  
fishing nettúma  
nettuma-laa  
greens, herb, vegetables-túme  
heel (on the foot)túmo  
shake, deceive, fooltúmu  
cassava snaketúna  
raintun  
news

vãa.....wólon

**V.**

vãa

greeting: vãa ké 'greet  
someone (by snapping fingers)'

Vái

Vai

vólo

màa-làai  
afternoon (see fólo)

vólo

aa kúla  
sun up

vólo

aa nyii see  
morning

vóloi

à kúla  
east

vóloi

à yen  
west

vòlo

black snake

Võŋ-sen-ma

Voinjoma

vuu-layii

March

**W.**

waa

wash

wãa

(wawa)  
broom

waa

gãla  
bath house

wãla

thousand

Wêide

Wednesday

wene

window

wee

yesterday

wee

fólo pôlu ma  
day before yesterday

Wêede

Wednesday

wéli

want, wish, like, love:  
weli-kε-maa 'love'

wie

heavy

wôbe

urine

wôla

savannah

-wóli

ear

woli-kweyèn

earring

wólon

sour

-wóo ..... yee

-wóo

word, voice, sound, language,  
noise, speech: wóo-ké-sen  
'letter', wóo-yeli 'sentence',  
wóo-kpua 'syllable'

wólo

cry

wólo-saa zu

sob

wólo- wólo

a long time ago

wúma-nuu

rogue

wúlo

palm oil, oil, fat, grease

wúnu

new (things or people who are  
new to a place)

wúru

tree, stick

wuru-ba

fruit

wuru-ba-kao

fruit salad

wúru-kau

stick

wúru-kólo

bark

wúru-pónoo

logs, cut trees

wúru-tii-ké-nuu

carpenter

## Y.

yá

buy

yá

river, creek

yá nyá tēi

well

yaba

onion

yata-laa

water green

ye bu gie ma

multiply

ye gbinj ma

weave

ye lee laai

stay in bed

ye nemu a zu-wiee

breathe deeply

yee

thread

-yee

hand

yee

hill

-yee-gbua

finger

yee-kete

mountain

yee-kon

muscle

yee

say (used always with a  
pronoun prefixed)

yêke..... zùedu

yêke  
shirt

yifa  
pocket

yoô  
wet

yuôo  
axe

yúo  
ocean, Atlantic Ocean, lake:  
yuo-na 'American'

**Z:**  
zeye zu  
choose

zie  
ceiling mat

ziéi  
ceiling

zoo  
medical man, traditional  
doctor

zóló  
sew

Zozo  
Zorzor

zu-kpalango,  
strong, manly

zu-saa  
lazy

Zúedu  
Zwedru

**DICTIONARY (ENGLISH - KPELLE)** .....above to arm

<b>A</b>	also, too mãŋ
above ŋuŋ tũε-pere	also, before tela
above, the area above another thing -mɛi	also, besides pɛlɛ (in phrase - é pɛlɛ...ma)
action -sɔŋ	American yũo-ŋá
add. bu gie ma	ancestors, elders nuu pɔlɔ-ŋa
it is advisable, one should maa-neêi	and da
afraid lii tóo pólú káa yaói	and also ké bô
to be afraid nyoo	anger lii-ŋwana nii wanaai - I'm angry
after today kúla sáa ma	animal meat sua
afternoon fólo tɛ-ɛɛi ŋuŋ ma vólo maa-láaí	ankle -kpóro koo-kwana
again ŋoŋo	answer fáa
airplane kooŋ-kelen	ant pumu
alive fulu	anteater sôo
all kélee	April Dɛniŋ
almost gbáa	argument sía
also bô ébo gé bô	arm boon (variant)

armpit.....Bassa

armpit

boon wolo (variant)

arrive, come (as in 'time comes')

reach

seri

ask, beg

kpera

ask a question

marê-ké

at

-lá

August

Manaai

aunt, grandmother

nân ɲɔsaa-ɔɔɔɔ

née ɲɔhée

awaken, wake up

ɲún

axe

yuɔɔ

## B

baby, small child

lókuro

newborn baby

koi ta nina

back

pôlu

back of body

-pôlu

backwards

pôlu-pere

bad, ugly

nyɔmɔɔ

nyɔɔ (contraction of nyɔmɔɔ)

bag

bɔrɔ

kolâ - rice bag

banana

gôî

gwêi

bandage

pâra-ɲa seye

paa-ɲa heɲ

Bandi

gbâni

bark (of tree)

wûru-kɔɔ

barren woman

koi-saa

basket

kômo

kpôlo

Bassa

gbôlo

bath house.....boat

bath house  
waa gâla

space in between or among objects;  
waist, middle, center  
-sâma

be  
ké

bicycle  
soo-koli

bean  
tôo  
tôon - beans

big, important  
kéte

bear fruit  
bâ

big, large  
kpaya-kpaya

beautiful  
lêlê  
lêlê ananaa

bitter  
ŋwâna  
ŋwana-lôo-nuu - a violent, wicked  
person

bed  
gbîŋ

bitterball  
kwêlee

bed, sleeping place  
lââi

bird  
ŋoni

beer  
bia

black bagger  
nuu-tei-kwii zoo

beg  
kpera

black deer  
bêela

begin  
pêlê

blacksmith  
koli-yale-nuu

beginning  
kôo pilanii

black snake  
vôlo

behave  
tûa

blacken, black  
tei

behavior  
-sôŋ

blood (only contracted form is used)  
ŋâa (contraction of nâma)

bend  
kpîri

blow  
têe

bend over  
pêlê

blue  
mu-tei-ee

between, the area in between  
-loai

boat  
kêlen

body ..... Buchanan

body, person, self  
-kpono

to boil  
nɛŋ  
yá nɛŋɔɔ - boiled water

boil, sore  
mua

boldness  
lii-kpele

Bong County  
Gbɛlɛɛ loii

Bong River  
Bon yeei ma

book  
kɔɔ

bone  
-kau

bone setter  
gau-see  
gie-ŋa

border  
loai ma

borrow, rent  
siyan

both of them  
di feere

bottle  
sane

bottom (of anything)  
kpɔŋ

box  
gāla

bracelet  
bora-yale

brass  
bara

bread  
kpólo

break  
yale

breast  
-ŋíni

breathe, breath  
lêwo

breathe  
nɛmu  
ye nɛmu a zu-wiɛɛ - breathe deeply

breed  
tɔɔ

bridge  
kpaɔ  
kpáwɔ

bright  
kɔɔ-kole

bring  
pá

broadcast (rice)  
pili

broken  
yaleɛ

broom  
wáa  
wáwa

brush  
kwa-sii-ɛɛ

brush (a farm)  
kwa-bo

Buchanan  
Bikana

bucket.....cassava snake

bucket  
bôki

build, stand up, to be rich,  
raise, breed  
too

bunch, bundle  
yiri

burn  
kéreŋ

burn (the farm)  
tii-kereŋ

burning time  
tii kereŋ tãï

business  
meni

bush  
loo

bush dog  
bãla

buy  
-yá

by  
-lá

## C

calf and shin (of the leg)  
-saŋûla

call  
tôli

camel  
soo-faleŋ

camwood  
kpono maa-pâa

can, is able to; ability (to do some-  
thing)  
pôri

canoe  
kéleŋ

car  
kéleŋ

carpenter  
wûru-tfi-kée-nuu

carry  
siye

carry (on the back)  
pomo

carve  
ma kanãŋ  
saa

cassava  
manãŋ

cassava greens  
manãŋ-laa

pounded cassava (ready to use)  
manãŋ-siaa

cassava snake  
tûmu

cat ..... coal

cat	nyàle	children <sup>a</sup>	lónii (pl. of ló) nîa-pelɛɛ (pl. of <u>lôlo</u> )
catch, arrest	soŋ	choice	lii ma seŋ
ceiling	ziê	choose	zeye zu
ceiling mat	ziɛ	church	yâla-pere
center	-sama	circumcize	kpetɛ
chair	sîɛ see-seŋ	clay	pôro
chair, bench	bɛŋ belɛŋ	to clean	kpetɛ kɔlo-kûla
to change	maa-fela	clean	kɔlo-kûlaa
chapter in a book	ŋuŋ	clean up, melt	séyeŋ
charcoal	tiŋ tiyi	clear, light-colored, fair	pono
chicken	tɛɛ	climb	tɛ
chicken coop	tɛɛ-pére	clinic	sale-pére loŋ
chief, king	káloŋ	to close	tɛ
chiefdom	káloŋ-laa	clothes	seye
child	lón lôloŋ	cloud	yele-káloŋ
		coal	téŋa

coast.....crooked

coast	séyáí	cook shop	yíli-pere
cocoa tree	kaaka wúru	cooked rice	ǎa
coconut	kwii-toli	copy	pókôn
coffee	kófe	corn	gbai
cold	lái laie	corner	sôŋo
cold (fresh cold)	nuŋ-soli	corrugated roofing	páne-kalaŋ
cold in stool	kále	to cough	tǝŋ tǝŋ saa - produce a cough
color	bǝyee	cough	tǝlê
come	pá	country kitchen	kpélee kère
come (time comes)	seri	country (traditional) medicine	kpélee-sale
come loose, loosen	fúlon	courage, patience, boldness	lii-kpéle
come out	kula	cow	nina
comfort, console	nene (with <u>na</u> )	crab	geen
compound	kópaŋ	create	kpete
constipation	koi-kána	crew, work party	kuu-ŋa
cook	yíli a leyí yílii - she is cooking	crooked	kpináŋoo

to cross.....to delay

to cross (a river), go across  
tiyen

crowd  
kpɔŋ

cry  
wɔlɔ

cup, tin can, rice measurement  
kɔpu

to cure, to heal  
balo

curl up  
kpiniŋ

custom, behavior  
tua-pere

cut, tear  
fala

cut down  
pɔŋ

cut oneself  
pronoun + -kpɔɔ saka  
(Gbarnga)  
" -kpiŋ saka  
(Totota)

cutlass  
gbeya

## D

dance  
mala

danger  
meni-kpɔlu

dangerous  
meni-kpɔlu a nanaa

daub, hurt, injure, hit  
sɔɔ

day, sun  
fɔlo

day  
yele

day after tomorrow  
fe yani

day before yesterday  
wee fɔlo pɔlu ma

— days ago  
fɔlo a tee

dead  
kaa buma

deceive  
tumo

December  
Gole-yaloŋ-loŋ

decide  
kpete

deed, action, behavior, guilt  
-sɔŋ

deep  
siŋ

to delay  
tinaŋ

delicious.....	duck
delicious, sweet, good tasting, happy nɛɛ	doctor (M.D.) gɛ-zu-feerɛ kwii zoo kwii zoo
design, color pɔyɛ	dog yɪla
dew lúu	dollar dála
diarrhea koi-tɛɛ gol a tɛɛi - he has diarrhea	domestic animals taa-tulɛ
difficult kpɔlu	domesticated (in compounds) túlɛ
difficulty meni-kpɔlu	donkey wele-soo
dig siŋ	door kpɔŋ
digger diká	dozen dɔsiŋ
dime, ten cents nɛi	dress nɛni ma yeke
dirt nɔɔ	to dress too
dirty libi	drink, swallow, suck kpele
dishes seŋ-fólo	drive (a car) kɛleŋ sia
disobey baa-kúla-maa	driver kɛleŋ-sia-nuu
do, be, happen, say kɛ da kɛ mà - they call it...	dry kpála
doctor, nurse, medical person dãa-daa	dry season fólo-laa bo yeke
doctor kɛleŋ-sia-nuu	duck kwii-tɛɛ

dust.....enter

dust, soil dust  
múlun  
mulun-kpolo  
mulun-poro

dwarf antelope (the wise animal  
of the Kpelle folk tales)  
sàye

dye  
pōye ma fálen

to be dying  
kãa saâi

## E

each other  
kie

ear  
-wóli

early  
somôl  
soboo

earn money  
sep-kau  
solu-boo

earring  
woli-kweyen

earth  
loii

earthworm  
kpeii

east  
vóloi à kúla

eat  
mii

eddoes  
gbunabele

eggplant  
bulu-kwelee

elephant  
sele

embroider  
pōye pú ma

empty, vacant  
fólo

enter, put  
15

European.....feces

European, American (n.)  
kwii-kole

European, American (adj.)  
kwii

evening  
yele-wu  
yele-lii

excuse me (to one person)  
kafalo

excuse me (to several people)  
ka kafalo

explain  
su-kula

expensive  
sɔɔŋ-ketei

eyes, face, appearance  
-ŋɛi

## F

face  
neyeŋ

fall, fell, put on, dress, shine  
too

my family  
ŋanua

to fan (rice)  
fɛɛ

farm, field  
kpalaŋ

brushed farm  
kwa-kelen

farmer  
tii-ke-nuu

fast (adj.)  
felaa

to be fast  
maa felaa

fast (n.)  
suŋ

fat  
gbene kete  
ybune kete

father, father's brother (also used to  
address an older person respectfully)  
naŋ

father-in-law  
boɔ lo

February  
Nyey-yey

feces  
kaŋ-kau

fell (a tree).....forget

fell (a tree), cut down, chop  
pɔŋ

fellowmate, peer, friend  
-barãŋ  
-barãa - pl.

fence  
gãla  
kôraŋ

to fence in, enclose  
maa koli

to have a fever  
kpono-fãa-maa

finger  
-yee-gbua

field (already burned)  
fẽŋ-kpala

fire  
ŋɔŋ

fireplace  
ŋɔŋ-tẽŋã

firewood  
kõi

first  
fãle  
fũlɔi  
sũlɔi

fish  
nyee  
nyẽe

dried fish  
nyẽe-kpala

smoked fish  
kpolo-nyẽe

fishhook  
kpawɔ

fish pond  
nyẽe kôlaŋ

fishing net  
tuma

five  
lɔɔlu

five cents  
foŋ

fix, make, create, grow, decide, get  
rich, circumcize  
kpete

floor  
lɔii

fog  
lúu

to fold  
kpiniŋ

follow  
pãlaŋ

food  
mii-sen

to fool  
túmo

foot, leg  
-kɔɔ

for  
ã

forest, bush, jungle  
lɔɔ

forget  
nia

it's important not to forget.....give birth

it's important not to forget  
nêlêe a gee ifé nia ma

four  
nân

four (unit)  
pân  
pân tano - four dollars

Friday  
Felaide

friend (also used to address a  
social equal or acquaintance)  
-nâo  
nawe

friend  
-barân  
-barâa - pl.

front of, front area of somebody  
or a thing  
-tuc

fruit, flower  
poa

fruit  
wuru-ba

fruit seed  
wuru-ba-kao

fry  
nêlen  
yêlen

funnel  
sôo

## G

gain weight  
kpono kê-maa solo bôl

game, entertainment  
pêle

Ganta  
taa

gallon  
gâlôn

garbage pile  
tûlôn

garden  
sûa  
si-sen si kôlan

get down, descend, put down, follow  
pîlan

get, receive  
solo (with bô)

get out  
kula

to be getting better  
a kê-balo

to gift, to give a gift  
sama

gift, present  
sama-sen

Gio  
giô

Gissi  
gisi-na

to give birth  
fûlôn  
maa e fûlôn- she gave birth

go early.....	guilt
go early, go right away sômu	grave bolôn
go, take with lî	Grebo gilebô
go up, climb, rise, raise, lift, close tê	green (color) laa-gunu
goat boli	green, unripe gbolô
Gola gôla	greens, herb, vegetable tuma-laa
god goru	potato greens kûyen-laa
good, nice, fine, beautiful léle	a type of water green gbô-laa
gourd gbekêe	greeting vâa ké
gourd, calabash gônôn	to greet someone (by snapping fingers) vâa
grandfather nân nônan - his grandfather	groan nyte
grandmother nân nôsaa-bôlo nee nônee - his grandmother	ground loii
grainery, rice kitchen môlôn kêre	groundhog sôbo
grapefruit gamêne kpayà-kpayà	grow bôolo kpete
grass, weed, trash, chaff, peeling scale (of fish) kala	grow, develop léle
grasshopper, locust gotô	guest, visitor, stranger nôya
	guilt -sôg

Guinea.....rice harvest

Guinea  
Gfini

guinea fowl  
tono

## H

hair feathers  
-léya

hair (head)  
-nɔŋ-leya

half, a part  
kpûra

one-half  
gbôra  
gbûra

hammer, "knock-knock" (said when  
arriving at a person's door).  
kpô kpô

hard  
yéé

handbag  
gbôŋ-tolon

handkerchief  
kpasá

hand over, give  
fé

hang up  
sêlɛŋ

happen-  
ké

happy  
lji-nɛɛ  
nɛɛ  
ni neêi - I'm happy

Harbel  
Abɛ

rice harvest (season)  
molɔŋ-tée tã

to harvest.....	horse
to harvest, cut tée	heaven yele
harvest farm, young bush kpõõ a li kpõõi - he went to farm	heavy wie
haste kireɔ	heel (of the foot) -túme
hatch an egg tee .kée é zaa	help, gather, collect, pile up kpon
hat, helmet gbabéle	herb tuma-laa
hat, cap, bag, sack boro	here bé bé-pere - this way bé ní ma - over here béi kélee...na - wherever
to hate kpõara	hew, carve saa
hate bèle-kpe-goj	highway kelen-pere
to have a chill. kolé a téi	hill yée sii-sen gbin
head, chapter in a book -nɔn	hit soo
head-tie, scarf kpasa kpá-saa	hoe kâli loa
to heal bálo	holiday yele kète
healthy gbène-léle  gbõnoi léle gõloi-põno	honest saa
to hear, obey meni	hook worm koi-nyii gbeli
heat fãa	horse soo

hospital.....to husk

hospital  
sále-pere kéte

hurt oneself  
pronoun + -kpó wána  
" -kpiŋ wána

hospital, clinic  
sále-pere

to husk, to shell  
kala ðo

hot, heat, to get hot  
fāa  
kolo fāai yā? - do you have  
a fever?

hour  
āba

house, hut, building  
pére

house boy  
pɔrɔŋ-ðoi

house entrance  
pere-laa-lei

how?  
lén

how  
à gèe len

how much; how many  
yeelu

hundred  
ŋuŋ

hunger  
puru  
puru kaa má - I'm hungry

hurry  
kire

to hurt  
sɔɔ

hurt, ache  
sólí

illness.....June

illness  
kolo-fela

important  
kete

to get an injection  
sayilan siye

to give an injection  
sayilan-tee

injure  
sco

in order to  
a gee

in order to, so that  
a ke

insecticide  
koon-sen sale

inside, area inside, in  
-su

inside of a house  
poron

intestines  
-pulu

invite  
bele toli. boo

iroko, mulberry tree  
sigan

iron, motor, machine  
koli

it  
la

Ivory Coast  
Afeko

## J

January  
Gole-yalon-leei

jealousy  
tolo

to be jealous  
tolo kula

jeweler  
guro-yale-nuu

joints  
-kpujon

July  
Gboyooi

June  
Niye-liyei

kind:.....leaf

## K

kind, type, variety  
sii

king monkey  
túa

knee  
-nũmie

knife  
bóa

know, learn, find out  
kólɔŋ

kola nut  
tulê

Kpelle  
kpelee  
kpelee-nuu - Kpelle man

Kru  
kúluŋ  
kúruŋ

## L

lake, pond  
púa

land, floor, earth, ground, soil  
lɔii

language  
-wóo

lapa  
laa-seye  
pèle-mei-sêye

lapa, skirt  
yili maa sêye

last (as in last month)  
pɔlɔi

last price  
laa-see

late  
maá-tinaŋɔ

later, after a while  
nèi

latrine  
kpó-pere

laugh  
yéle

law  
tón

lay  
lâa

lazy  
zu-saa

leaf  
lâa  
laa-kpaa - leaf of plants  
tôu-laa - palm leaf

learn.....louder

learn

kɔlɔŋ

left

kɔɔ-yée-mei-pere

on the left

kɔɔ-yee mei-pere

leg

-kɔɔ

lemon

gaméne-lɔŋ

leper

gbôdo-nuu

leprosy

gbôto

gbôdo

letter

kɔlɔ

letter (in a word)

wóo-ke-sen

lie down

lǎa

life

fulu-laa

lift

té

siye

to like

wéli

liquid medicine

sale-kpele

little, small

kuro-te

dekpé

liver (center of emotion)

-líi

-woni (Gbarnga)

living thing

fulu-sen

load (n.)

tian

kpíri

lock (on a door)

sɔɔŋ

Lofa County

Dŏaŋ lɔii

log (to sit on)

kpòno

logs, cut trees

wúru-pɔŋɔɔ

Loma

tǎa

long

kòya

a long time ago

wɔlɔ wɔlɔ

a long time to get well

a tǎi su-koya seye é lee kpee

loom

gbiniŋ pú ma

loosen

fúlɔŋ

a lot, much

ŋanaa

speak louder

í wóo té yelèi

love..... May

love  
wéli-ké-maa

to love  
wéli

lungs  
-fûle

## M

machine  
kɔli

main road  
pere-lee

malaria  
kpene fāa-maa  
kpono kelèn-maa

man, husband, male  
surɔŋ  
surɔŋ-loo - small boy

man, person  
núu  
nuu-kpune - human being

Mandingo  
meniŋ

mango  
maŋuŋ

Mano  
mɔ̃a  
mánɔ

manure, fertilizer  
taa-tulé-kpo

March  
Vuu-layii

to marry a woman  
není kula

mat  
gára

matter, thing, business, palaver  
eni

to become physically mature (female)  
kpela

May  
Gáli-kalai

maybe.....muscle

maybe

yele da

measles

mō-nyii

dry meat

sua kpálaa

medical man, traditional doctor

zoo

medicine

sale

medium size

gbene polie zu

melt

seyen

men, people

núa - pl. of nuu

men, males

sinâa - pl. of surôn

middle

-sama

midnight

kpîni sama

milk

nîga ñini-ya

rice mill

mɔlɔŋ sia-páre lá

mist, fog, dew

lúu

moan

kōŋ

Monday

Mone

money bus

bosi kpayá-kpayá ña

money, change

sen-kau

Monrovia

Dúkoo

month, moon

yálon

morning

yele-waa

vólo aá nyii see

this morning

ñele-waai ñi su

mortar

kpenên

koná

mother (title of respect used for older woman)

-lee

mother-in-law

nyúo-la

motor bike

ñosoo-koli

mountain

yée-kete

mouth, opening, open top of a container, entrance, doorway, bank (of a stream), side of a surface. (In English translated with prepositions - by, at, or next to.)

-lá

move from

siye

much, many, plenty

támaa

mud

pârɔ

muscle

yée-kon

mushroom.....night

mushroom  
fêna

must, compelled to  
fêε

multiply  
ye bu gie ma

## N

nail  
nêre

name  
-lâa

nearness, vicinity  
kôle

neck  
-kôŋ

necklace  
kweyêŋ

needle  
sâyilan

neice  
mâleŋ-neni

nephew  
-mâleŋ  
mâleŋ

new  
nina

new (things or people who are new to  
a place)  
wûnu

new cloth  
séye-nina

news  
tuŋ

next (as in next day)  
ninai

next to  
-lá

night, darkness  
kpîni

nightgown.....one

nightgown  
kpíni-seye

Nimba County  
Gio lóii

no  
kpaá  
kpao

noise, sound  
tín

noon  
fólo maa láa

nose  
-súá

now  
lèni-maa

November  
Borɔŋ-kpalai

nurse  
-daa-daa  
fêlee-zoo

## O

to obey  
bâa-ke-maa  
meni

ocean, Atlantic ocean, lake  
yúo

October  
ŋweei

offer  
fanâ-bo

oil, fat, grease  
wúlo

old  
kwatara

old, to get old  
pɔlo

old, ancient  
bɔlo-pɔlo

old man  
siɛ-pɔlo

older sibling  
-lía  
nia-surɔŋ - my older brother  
nia-nɔni - my older sister

on, surface of a thing  
-má

once, one at a time  
tei-têi  
tɔno-tɔno

one  
tɔno

one (used only in counting)  
táŋ  
tayŋ

one by one.....paramount chief

one by one, several, a few  
tei-tei'

one cent, penny  
kápa.

onion  
yába

only, just  
no

open mole  
kóli

opening  
-lá

operate  
nuu-belaa

oppossum  
kpeye

or  
kpaá  
máŋ

orange  
gaméne

overlook  
naŋŋ

over there  
mánaa

to own  
póó

ownership: mine, yours, his  
-póó (with à)

## P

page in a book  
kóló-láa

palaver  
meni

palaver hut  
kére

palaver sauce  
kóló-kóló

palm kernel  
toli

palm nut  
tóu

palm butter  
tou kpóro

palm oil, oil, fat, grease  
wúlo

palm wine  
kéle-lóó  
tóo-lóó

pan, pot  
leyi

pan  
páne

pants  
bêle

paper  
kóló

paramount chief  
páma-sii

particle.....planting time

particle (used to emphasize  
subject, object, compl. and  
after question words)  
bē

pass by, send, give, surpass  
tēē  
ḡalḡḡ tēē ti - last month

path  
kpōwo  
pere

patience  
lii-kpele

pawpaw, papaya  
dḡḡkḡḡḡḡ

pay  
fēla-fe

peace  
lii see

Peace Corps Volunteer  
nuu-kole

peanuts, groundnuts  
telḡḡ

peel  
kḡḡḡ bḡḡ

pencil  
kḡḡḡ-kpau

people  
nūa (pl. of nūu)  
-bēla (irr. pl. of nūu)

pepper  
kiyēḡ

person  
nūu

pharmacist  
sale-tīi-kē-nuu

piassava palm branch  
kpālo

piassava wine  
kulu-ḡḡḡ

pick up, take, carry, take hold, lift,  
move from  
siye

picture, image, copy, imitate  
pḡkḡḡ

piece, section  
-kpua

pig  
bḡi

pigeon, dove  
tḡḡḡḡ

pineapple  
kwii-tou

pint  
pāi

pipe vine  
sḡḡ

to place, set, put, trust, lay, lie  
down  
lāa

to plant  
sī  
kwaa sī - to plant rice

plant, sapling  
sī-sēḡ

plantains  
gḡi kpaya-kpaya

planting time (season)  
sīi sēḡ sī tāi  
sīi sēḡ sī yeḡe

plate.....put

plate

pīleti

proverb

saŋ

please, I beg you

kpera yê

pumpkin, squash

téa

plentiful

táma

pump

têya l

suffix used to pluralize nouns

-ŋa

pure in heart

lii maa-waa

pocket

yifa

push, move over

tuŋ

pod

si-sen bá

kúlaa

put

lɔ

pond, lake

denŋ

porch

si-yá

porcupine

pīi

pot, cooking pot

leyi

potato

kúyen

pour, run away, empty out

pú

pound (measurement)

páu

to be pregnant

koi káa má

pregnant woman

koi-nia

price, value

sɔɔ

sɔɔŋ

question.....red deer

## Q

question (in phrase only)

-marè

màrè ké - ask him a question

mare-kèè ké - ask a question

quietness, silence

tòṅ

## R

rabbit

ṅela

raffia palm

lîi

rain

túna

tina

rainy season

samâ-ya yeḷe

rash

tòò-sen

lòò

rattan

bala

raise

tòò

raise, bring up

kón

ṅá kón - rear

reach

seri

receive

sòlò (with bó)

to be recovered (was sick, is now well)

kolòi a naa pórò

red, ripen, dye red, ripe

kpòlu

red, ripe

mòò

red deer, antelope

lòma

region.....	room
region, neighborhood kpiniŋ	rice straw mɔlɔŋ yala
remainder, rest, the other kpɛli	rice (uncooked) mɔlɔŋ-kao
remember (keep in mind) -kili a gɛɛ a gɛɛ-kili	rice, upland mɔlɔŋ kpala
rent siyaŋ	to be rich tɔɔ
resemble, look like bɔlɔŋ	to get rich kpɛtɛ
respect bɛlɛ	rickets kpɔrɔŋ
rice mɔlɔŋ	right away, immediately, soon a maa felaa
rice bird haya saa-ya	right away, soon lonii ma
rice bird, weaver bird sɔya	(the) right laa mii-yee mei-pere
rice farm before burning, when all trees are cut gbɔrɔ	ring gbɔno
rice kitchen mɔlɔŋ kɛre	rise tɛ
swamp rice nyá mɔlɔŋ	river, creek yá
rice grain mɔlɔŋ kao	road pere
rice seed mɔlɔŋ kɛɛŋ	Robertsport lɔba-po Vai loii
rice, sprouted mɔlɔŋ mɔŋɔɔ	rogue wuma-nuu
	room lɔmpo

root.....scarf

root

same

root, vine

kpom

rope

yeli

rotten

kara

rubber-tapper

tâpi ké-núu

rubber tree

loba wûru

mãan wûru

runny nose

-sûa yá pu

in a rush, with haste

fie-fie

S

sacrifice

sâla

sâla kula - make a sacrifice

St. Paul River

Den

salt

kpolo

sand

ñeya

sandals

kpiri-kolo

sap, latex

mãan yá

loba yá

satisfaction

lii-kaa

Saturday

Salaide

savannah

wôla

say

ké

say (used always with a pronoun pre-  
fixed)

yee

scab

-luu à naã seye

to scare away birds

ñoni kpêe

scarf

kpâsa

kpâ-sâa

schoolhouse ..... show

schoolhouse  
kolo-pere

shade  
nini

scratch  
kolo-wolo

shadow, shade  
niniŋ

scratch, bruise  
tua

shady  
kpiniŋ

screen  
koli-dena

shake, deceive, fool  
tumo

the second time  
a veere-yelei

shake, tremble  
kpeŋiŋ

secretary  
kolo poye-nuu

shake hands, snap fingers  
seere

seedling  
si-sen mon

sharpen (a knife)  
nali

-self  
kpiŋ (Totota)  
kpoo (Gbarnga)

shilling (used to be equivalent to  
20¢)  
seien

sell  
kole

shine  
folo  
too

send  
tee

shoe  
koo na-kolo

sentence  
woo-yeli

shore  
siŋ

September  
Danai

short  
kpua

sesame  
bese  
mese

shoulders  
kaan

sesame seed  
bese-kao

shout  
layi

set a bone  
gau-see gie-na  
maa-fela-laa

shovel  
sobele

sew  
solo

show, appoint, teach  
le

ship.....son-in-law

ship, steamer  
yá ná-kelen

shirt  
yêke

sibling of the opposite sex -  
i.e., man's sister  
-sáábolo

sick  
kóle

to be sick  
kaa kolèi

Sierra Leone  
Sêlon

side (of one's body)  
-pêre

silence  
tôn

silent  
tíniŋ

silver  
káne

sit, sit down, place, set  
see

a place to sit  
-seèi

skin, book, paper, letter  
-kolo

skip over, step over, take over,  
put over, overlook  
nanŋ

skirt  
yili maa sêye

sky  
yele

sleep  
nyii

sleeve (long)  
seye yêe-koya

sloppy  
lâa-lâa

small  
kuraté (Sanoyea dialect)  
digbo (Jorquellie dialect)

small  
pêle  
pêle-pelas  
ŋania-pelasi - my children

smile  
ŋei-ke  
mo-mô

snake  
kali

Snake Society members  
kali-lonii

sneeze  
tisô

sob  
wolo-saa zu

soft  
bovuu

soil, dirt, topsoil, clay, mud  
pôro

some, any  
ta

someday, sometime  
yele da

son-in-law  
bocolo-lon

sore.....stop

sore

mua  
pala

sore (adj.)

paa  
paa kée núu (body part) ma -  
sore body part

soup (stew or soup to eat with  
cooked rice)

láo

sour

wólon

speed, hurry, haste

kire

speak, count

lóno

speak, open

bó

speech

-wóo

spend a long time, behave

túa

spider

sii

spin

tiñaa maa  
pólo

to spindle

pólo

spit

-láa-yá

spoiled, rotten

kara

spoon

mina

spouse

maamu  
-Pôŋ

sprout, germinate

pomun

sprouted seed

sii-sen mōo

squirrel

loon

stand up

tōo

star

pêmelen-kau

start, begin, bend over, bend down

pele

stay (a while)

nōmu

stay in bed

ye lee laaj

step over

nanin

stick

wuru-kau

stingy

kala-kalai (lit., you are hard  
to deal with)

stock a fish pond

nyēē denēŋ kpétee

stomach

-koi

-kui

-koo

stop, beg, ask

kpera

kpera yē - please, I beg of you

storm.....syllable

storm

fāa kēte

sunny (sunshine time or season)

fólo tóo yele

stove

leyi

yili

koli

surpass

tee

surprise

kula

straight

pelen

surround

tinan

straight, honest, just

sāa

to swallow

kpele

stranger

nōya

swamp

pāra

strip

mela

swamp rice

para-molon

strong

su-kpanānōo

sweep

lāa kēle

student

kolo-perε-nuu

sweet, savory

liyen

study

maa kori

nee

subtract

de kula zu

syllable

wóo kpua

sue in court

kolo siye

sugar cane

kulo

sun

fólo

Sunday

Soné

sundown, sunset

yele-wii-fólo

sun up

vólo aā kula

tablé.....three

## T

table  
téebele

tablet, pill  
sale-kau

taboo  
tīya

tailor  
seye-solo-nuu

take out, come out, get out,  
surprise, come across  
kula

talisman, medicine container  
(hung around a child's neck for  
protection)  
sêbe

tall  
mu-seyee

tangerine  
gaméne-pele-pelee

tap (a rubber tree)  
tapiŋ-kée

taxes  
féla

taxi  
seŋ-kau kōi kelen

teach  
lé

teacher  
seŋ-lé-nuu

ten  
puu

termite, bug-a-bug  
sina

thanks

seyê  
seyê fe - give thanks  
iseyê - thank you

that

tí

that

nyítí

thatch roof

pére-kpēya

then

ŋaŋ

there

naa

thick

dée-gie

thin

bolie-zu

thing, matter  
meni

thing, object

seŋ  
sāā - plural

think

kili-ŋa-sia

this

ŋí

this

nyíŋi

thousand

wála

thread

yee

three

saaba

throat.....truck

throat -kɔna	on top of, top area of a thing nã
thunder yele-gbana	towel tãba
Thursday Teyɛide	town, village taa
tie yiri	train kɔni seye kelɛn
time tãi	trap bãre bãre too - set a trap
tin can kɔpu	trash kala
tiredness fii mũii aã kpɛɛ - I'm tired	treasure, favorite lii-ma-seŋ
tobacco taaŋ-kpala	tree, stick wũru
today sãa	tremble kpeliŋ
today, this day sãa yeke ni	tribal, customary matter loii-meni
toe kɔɔ-gbua	tribal initiation school pɔlɔŋ
together, each other kie	tribe -sfi
tomorrow tinaa	trouble meni-kpɔlũ
tongue -nɛn	trousers, pants bɛle
tooth -nyin	trouser leg miliŋ
top (of a surface) -tɔn	truck kelen

to trust.....urine

tò trust  
láa

tuberculosis  
kané-tṣṣṅ  
ṅaa-tṣṣle

Tuesday  
Tuide

turn, stir, change  
pene

turn around, surround, delay  
tinaṅ

turn the soil, till  
loii pelee

turtle  
samu

two  
feere

## U

umbilical cord  
surṣṅ-pṣṣṣ  
neni-pṣṣṣ

umbrella (sun shade)  
fólo-kpanāṅ

unconscious  
à fūo

unburned brush  
tāpia kṣṣli

uncle (father's brother)  
-nāṅ

uncle (mother's brother)  
-kēra

under, the area under something  
-mū

underbrush, thick bush, shrub  
kpṣṣṣ

unhealthy  
gbēne fé lelee ni

unripe  
gbolò

upward, toward the sky  
yelèi  
i woó té yelèi - speak louder

urine  
wòbe

vaccination.....weave

## V

vaccination  
mákiVai  
váívegetable  
tuma-laavehicle, boat, canoe, ship, car,  
truck  
kélenvein  
-nanavery much  
kpɔ́  
nèlèi kpɔ́ - very goodvexed, angry  
lii wanavicinity  
kɔ́lɛvillage  
kpanánvine  
yeli-kpɔ́mɔvisitor  
nɔ́yavoice  
-wɔ́Voinjama  
Vɔ́n-sɛn-ma

## W

wage due for work, tuition, taxes  
féla  
dí í féla fè? - did they pay you?wait, stop  
tɔ́waist  
-leŋei  
-samawake up  
ŋaa-ɔ́walk, rub, beat  
siawalk about, stroll  
sia-siawall  
káŋ  
ɔ́erei-ɔ́nɔ́ (Jorquellie dialect)want, wish, like, love  
wéliwash  
waawasp  
gbɔ́mɔwaterfall  
sulúŋwater green  
yata-laaway, road, path  
pereweave  
pala  
ye gbiniŋ ma

Wednesday.....work

Wednesday	Wêede	who	gbêe
weed	kala	whole, unbroken	kpune
week	lôku lôo-kuu	whooping cough	zu-koo-tôle
weigh	kwôn	wild animal, meat	fene-sen
well	yá nyá tēi	wild boar, bush hog, pig	bôl
to be well	kaloí pónoôí	will, desire	nia
west	vóloi à yèn	wind	fãa
wet	yoô túma	to win	baraa-yeé-mei-yalee
what	lé	window	wēne
when (?)	yele	with	a
where	koo	within the year	nyôo
where	mí	wives of a polygamous man	sonia pêre-lee - head wife
which	nēne	woman, wife	nēnī nēyāa - pl.
white	kole kwii-kole - white person, European, American, educated person	word, voice, sound, language, noise, speech	-wôo
		work, farm	tii

worker.....younger sibling

worker  
tʰi kɛ-nuu  
tʰi kɛ-bɛla - pl.

working day  
yɛlɛ-kuu

worry  
lii-ʒɛlɛŋ

wrap, fold, curl up  
kpiniŋ

write, mark  
pɔ̄yɛ

writer, clerk, secretary  
kɔlɔ-pɔ̄yɛ-nuu

## Y

yams  
yáu

yam-like tuber  
súβɛɛ

yard  
panáŋ ma

year  
kóran

yellow  
kpɛlɛŋ

yellow fever  
kpɛlɛŋ-kɛɛŋ

yes  
owéi

yes (used as a response to greetings,  
or to indicate you are listening)

m̄m̄  
m̄m̄

yesterday  
wɛɛ

yet, still  
nii

young (note: this word has a wide  
range of meanings: fruits not yet  
ripe, food that is cooking, but that  
is not yet cooked; etc.)

táks

younger sibling

-lɛyɛ

-lɛyɛ-surɔŋ - younger brother

-lɛyɛ-nɛni - younger sister

Zorzor.....Zwedru

Z

Zorzor  
Zozz

Zwedru  
Züedu

## CHAPTER VI

### LEARNING THE SOUND SYSTEM OF MANDE LANGUAGES

#### A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter is designed to provide a deeper basis for the understanding of the sound systems of the Mandé languages of Liberia. Although every attempt has been made to reduce the amount of technical language used to convey the information in this chapter, it has not been eliminated altogether, for what is used is felt to be necessary for the presentation.

Nevertheless, what follows can be followed by an enthusiastic reader with no previous training in linguistics or language learning. For those seeking only further practice in the recognition of the phonetic distinctions found in Mandé it is possible to skip directly to section F where there are listening exercises which may be carried out with the accompanying cassette tape. Then, if there is some confusion about the nature of the sound contrast being studied, the learner may then refer back to the section which discusses the nature of this contrast.

#### B. THE SYSTEM OF SOUNDS

A language consists of three major subsystems. It has an inventory of words known as a lexicon. It has a set of rules by which these words are arranged into sentences, known as syntax. Finally it has a sound system which consists of a set of discrete contrastive sounds, known as phonemes. Phonemes, or rather strings of phonemes are used to render words as sound images so that they may be spoken and understood. This chapter is about how those sounds are organized and understood.

While phonemes are written using Roman alphabetic characters, they should not be confused with the letters used to write English. These are non-phonemic, because they violate the principle that a phoneme

stands for only one contrastive sound. The following examples illustrate that the English alphabet violates this condition.

<u>Letter</u>	<u>Sound</u>	<u>Word</u>
s	s	<u>s</u> ee
	z	rai <u>s</u> e
	ʒ	mea <u>s</u> ure
c	s	<u>c</u> ity
	k	<u>c</u> ow
o	a	p <u>o</u> d
	ɔ	l <u>o</u> g
	i	w <u>o</u> men
	ow	sm <u>o</u> ke

Because of these discrepancies, English is not perfectly phonemic which means that it is not always possible to determine how a word is going to be pronounced (given its spelling) or written (given its sound). Because of these indeterminacies in the writing system of English and many other written languages, linguists have found it useful to develop a phonemic writing system to use when analyzing a language. This writing system is also of value to learners of a language because it eliminates the guesswork in reading and writing in the language.

When you first hear a new language, you will first note that it is made up of a series of syllables. The syllable is a good place to begin breaking down the sounds of language because all three major phonetic elements: consonants, vowels and suprasegmental features are associated with the syllable.

At the heart of the syllable is a syllabic unit which is generally, though not always (as is pointed out later) a vowel. Vowels are sounds that receive their distinctive acoustical properties through the resonant properties of the mouth (oral cavity) and the throat (pharyngeal cavity) through adjustments of the tongue, tongue root, lips and jaw. The various resonances produced by these different oral shapes can be explained by the same principle as the resonant sound produced by blowing on a beer bottle, though the resonances produced by the more complex shapes of the vocal tract are of course more complex.

## C. VOWELS

1. Classification

Linguists find it useful to classify vowels by:

a) the location of the tongue:

1. Is it toward the front of the mouth or
2. is it toward the back of the mouth?

b) the location of the jaw:

1. Is the jaw closed so that the tongue is high in the mouth or
2. is the jaw open so that the tongue is low in the mouth?

c) the shape of the lips:

1. Are the lips rounded or
2. are the lips unrounded?

The reason for this classification is that linguists have found that vowels that share common properties, (i.e. high vowels, front vowels or rounded vowels tend to function alike as we will show later). The classification of the vowels used in the Mande languages in Liberia is given in the following chart.

	Front	Back	Back & Rounded
High	i	ɨ	u
High Mid	e	ɛ̃	o
Low Mid	ɛ	ʌ	ɔ
Low	(æ)	a	

None of these sounds exactly like those of English therefore the following equivalents should only be taken provisionally, to help you learn to recognize the sounds associated with the symbols. Drills are given in section F to familiarize you with the use of this system in transcribing Mande sounds.

## 2. Description of Individual Vowels

### 2.1 The front, unrounded vowels:

/i/     bee, neat, tidy, me

The English vowel differs from the Mande /i/\*, by being glided, that is, followed by y a semivowel (see below). Thus the word bee when transcribed phonetically is /biy/. If you say this word slowly, you may sense the /y/ at the end of the vowel.

Due to historical change, English words spelled with an i (e.g. bite) are no longer pronounced with an i (ee sound) but rather an eye sound. In making the transition to the phonemic writing system you may confuse the orthographic i (eye) and the phonemic /i/ (ee).

/e/ ("closed e")     day, take, say

The English vowel differs from the Mande e in that it is glided, like the high vowel, it is followed by a y semivowel (see below). Thus the English word day, when transcribed phonetically, is /dey/ or perhaps /dey/. You can detect this y glide by saying the word day very slowly. You will note that while you start on the vowel /e/, you end with the vowel /i/. In learning to say this vowel say it slowly and cut off the y "offglide". For many speakers, the first part of the vowel is lower (closer to a phonetic /ɛ/) than a phonetic /e/. You can approximate the higher and tenser /e/ by tightening your lips, as in a smile.

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\*The use of the slashes here is to distinguish phonemic transcriptions from orthographic.

Lorma and Kpelle have a definite suffix -i which when added to a word ending in a front vowel produces something like the glided vowels discussed above. This gives an opportunity to hear the glided and nonglided as contrastive forms.

<u>Lorma</u>	<u>indefinite</u>	<u>definite</u>
porcupine	píví	pívíí
road	péle	péleí
house	péle	péleí

/ɛ/ ("open e")      bed, lead, red, better

The English sound is virtually identical to the corresponding Mande sound.

/ə/ ("diagraph")      bath, laugh

This sound does not occur in the Mande languages, but has been included in the list, because of the potential confusion between the written (orthographic) a of English and the phonemic /ə/ (see 3 below).

## 2.2 The back, rounded vowels:

/u/      school, pool, tube, coo

This vowel, like the English iy is glided, but this time with the semivowel /w/ rather than /y/. Thus the above words are rendered phonetically as /skuwl/, puwl, tuwb, kuw/.

/o/ ("closed o")      go, row, tone, toe

Like the vowel /ey/ this vowel is heavily glided. Again if you say these words slowly, you will note the presence of a w semivowel following the vowel nucleus (e.g., /gow, row, town and tow/.

/ɔ/ ("open o")      caught, law, frog, log

This vowel is quite similar in sound and production to the underlined English vowels to the left. The only problem being that the ɔ sound does not exist in some dialects of American English. If,

for example, when you say the words caught and cot the same way, or cannot hear any appreciable difference between them, you are going to have to learn to hear and produce this contrast. Secondly, speakers from different regions do not agree on which English words have this open o sound. For some, words such as frog, log, hog, and so forth are pronounced with an a vowel, while for others they are pronounced with an open o.

### 2.3 The back (or central) unrounded vowels:

/ɨ/ ("barred i") just (see comments)

This is not a contrastive sound in English but occurs as a variant of the general unstressed vowel known as schwa, /ə/. Therefore it is roughly the equivalent of the second vowel in muffin or in the word just when unstressed.

/ɨ/ appears as a variant of the corresponding front vowel /i/ in Kpelle and southwestern dialects of Lorma, particularly following velar consonants (see below) which because they are articulated with the tongue back tend to draw the front vowel back.

Kpelle (ɲilɨ/ = [ɲɨlɨ] 'bugabug'. (Square brackets are used to mark variant pronunciations). The Lorma u, particularly the word su 'in' is sometimes pronounced with this variant, e.g. sɨ.

/ë/ none

/ë/ is the higher mid equivalent of barred i. It appears as a variant of /e/ in Kpelle and Lorma, particularly following velar consonants. (k, g, ɣ, ŋ). For a definition of "Velar" see section D2.1. Kpelle: /Kele/ = [Kële]

/ʌ/ ("carrat") but, cut, put, hut

This vowel is found in some but not all English words written with a short u, (note the pronunciation of put, which has an oo sound rendered phonetically as a lax u written but not described here.

Like the two back unrounded vowels ɔ is also a variant of the corresponding front vowel ɛ in Kpelle and Lorma, particularly following velars. Kpelle: /kɛlɛ/ = [kɔlɔ]

/a/      hot, lot, hopper

This is the only low vowel in Mande, and should cause little difficulty to the speaker of English other than the tendency to confuse it with the written (orthographic) a which as we pointed out earlier is pronounced as /æ/.

### 3. Diphthongs

Diphthongs are sequences of a vowel and a semivowel which tend to act as a single unit. We have already mentioned the diphthongs /iy, ey, uw and ow/ above. In addition, English has the diphthongs /ay/ as in sky, tie and light, /aw/ as in cow and now, /oy/ as in boy, toy and noise. These sounds do not occur in the Mande languages. However, the sequences /ii, ei, ɛi and we now add /ai/ are found in some of the Mande languages but because i acts as a full vowel and not a nonsyllabic semivowel, these are generally not considered diphthongs.

### 4. Orthographic Conventions

As mentioned earlier the phonemic writing system is not in wide use for the writing of Liberian languages. For example personal names and locations have been rendered in standard English orthography. Because of the inadequacies of the English orthography to render certain Africa sounds, a number of conventions have been developed. These are given as follows:

Convention	Phonimic Value	Comments/Examples
ie	/i/	Bodegie = /Bodegi/
ue	/u/	Bague = /Bagu/
eh	/ε/	Zleh Town = /Zlε taŋ/
ea*	/ε/	Salayea = /Salayε/
or	/ɔ/	Zorzor = /Zɔzɔɔ/ Lorma = /Lɔɔma/

\*This seems to be a Lorma/Kpelle convention only.

### 5. Nasalized Vowels

A nasalized vowel is a vowel in which some sound is allowed to escape through the nose (nasal cavity) as well as the mouth (oral cavity). While nasal vowels exist in English they are noncontrastive variants of oral vowels usually derived from the nasalization of an adjacent nasal consonant spilling onto the vowel, as such words as moon, [mūwn]; soon [sūwn]; and can't [kæ̃t] illustrate. Nasalization is marked by placing a tilde /~/ over the vowel. In the Mande languages, nasalization is contrastive...especially in Kpelle.

### 6. Vowel Length

Mande languages have contrastive vowel length. That is some syllables may be longer in duration than others. This difference can signal a difference in meaning as in the following Lorma examples:

kálf ..... hoe  
másfí ..... chief

káálf ..... snake  
máásfí ..... corn

## D. LEARNING MANDE CONSONANTS

1. Classification

In addition to the vowels, which form the nucleus of most syllables, are the consonants. They are so called because they "sound with" the vowel and are accordingly found on either side of the vowel. While it is common to find consonants on either end of the English syllable, s t r e n g t h, consonants in Mande tend to appear before rather than after the vowels. In other words, Mande syllables tend to be "open" (an open syllable is one in which no consonants follow the vowel, e.g., pɛ, lɛ, kpɔ). The one exception to this is the velar nasal /ŋ/ in Kpelle. Some open syllables cause trouble for English speakers, because the sound ɛ does not occur in English open syllables. (This is the reason for the development of ea and eh as a way of writing /ɛ/: see section C.)

Furthermore, Mande allows very few consonant clusters in a syllable initial position (before the vowel). These clusters only involve /l/, (as in /Flomo/, 'personal name' and as in /kwele/ 'big.')

The consonants of the Mande languages are given in tabular form below:

	Labial	Dental	Palatal	Velar	Labio Velar
STOPS:					
Voiceless	p	t	č	k	kp
Voiced	b	d	j	g	
IMPLOSIVES:	ɓ	ɗ			gɓ
FRICATIVES:					
Voiceless	f	s	š		
Voiced	β	z	ž		
NASALS:	m	n	ɲ	ŋ	ɲm
LIQUIDS:		l, r			
SEMI VOWELS:			y		w

These sounds have been arranged in such a way that the rows and columns

contain similar classes of sounds. For example, it was pointed out in the preceding section that the front vowels (/i, e and ε/) were often backed (converted to ɨ, ɛ̃ and ɛ̃ respectively) or that vowels tended to be nasalized following a nasal consonant. These terms, of course do not have to be learned, though they may be useful in helping you understand the pronunciation of these sounds.

## 2. Points of Articulation

Part of the production of a consonant involves either the complete or partial obstruction of the flow of air in the oral cavity. This is accomplished through bringing an articulator, lower lip, or the front, mid or back of the tongue into proximity with a point of articulation associated with the upper part of the mouth. These points of articulation are discussed below. Individual sounds will be discussed later.

### 2.1 Labial:

The term labial means "pertaining to the lips." There are two types of possible labial articulation: bilabial (both lips) /p, b, and β/ and labial dental (lower lip and upper teeth) /f, and v/.

### 2.2 Dental:

Dental articulations involve moving the front part of the tongue behind the upper teeth as in /t, d, s, z, n, r and l/.

### 2.3 Palatal:

While these sounds are rare in Mande languages they do occur. They are produced by bringing the mid part of the tongue in the hard palate region as in /č, ĵ, đ, ž, ñ and y/.

### 2.4 Velar:

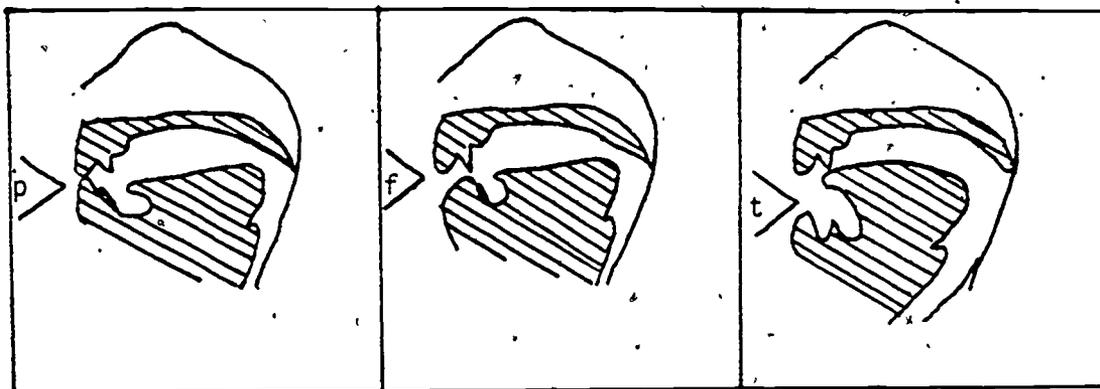
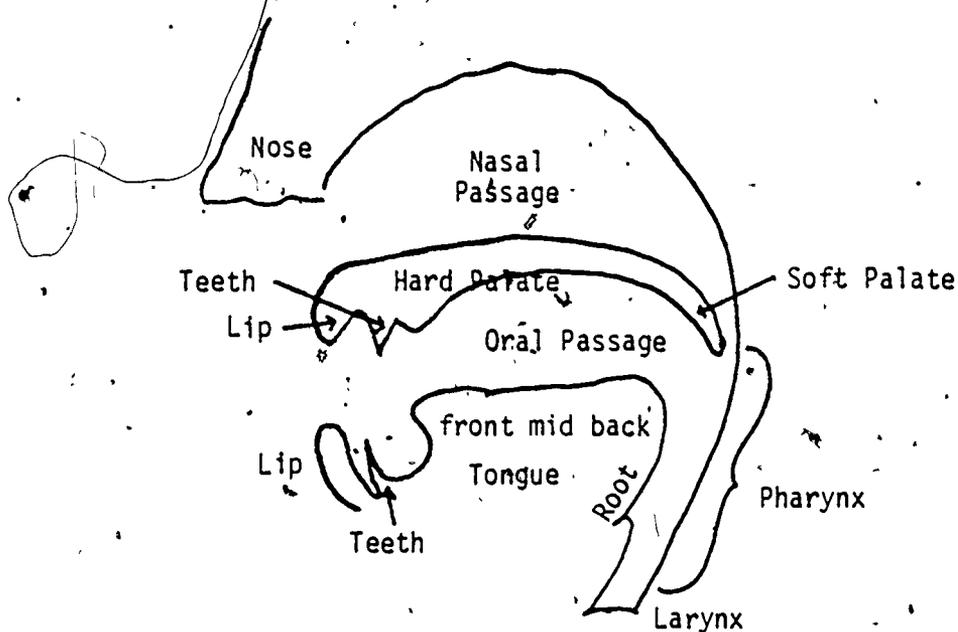
This sound is produced by raising the back of the tongue to the region of the soft palate as in /k, g, γ, ŋ/

### 2.5 Labio-Velar:

This sound is the most difficult sound for speakers of English to master. First it involves the simultaneous articulation of a labial and a velar. It is as though you were trying to say cookpot or lugbolt but with open syllables (e.g. coo-kpot and lu-gbolt). Secondly, these sounds are often pronounced with ingressive air (the air moves into the mouth during the first moments of articulation before it is followed by egressive air from the lungs (the normal mode). This implosion is more typical of gb than kp.

3. Picturing the Points of Articulation.

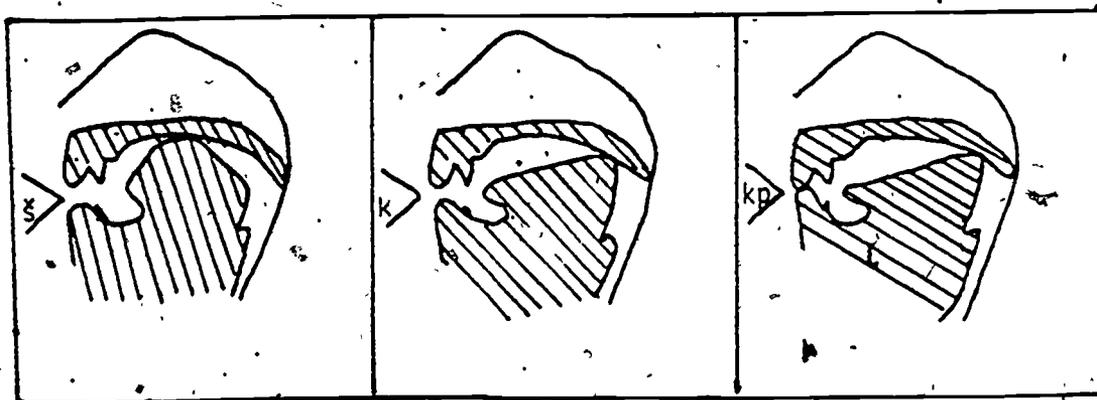
The following cross sections of the human vocal apparatus may prove useful in understanding how the various points of articulation are located.



Bilabial Stop

Labial-Dental

Dental



Palatal

Velar

Labio-Velar

#### 4. Manner of Articulation

Sounds can also be classified by how they are produced at the point of articulation. This is called the manner of articulation.

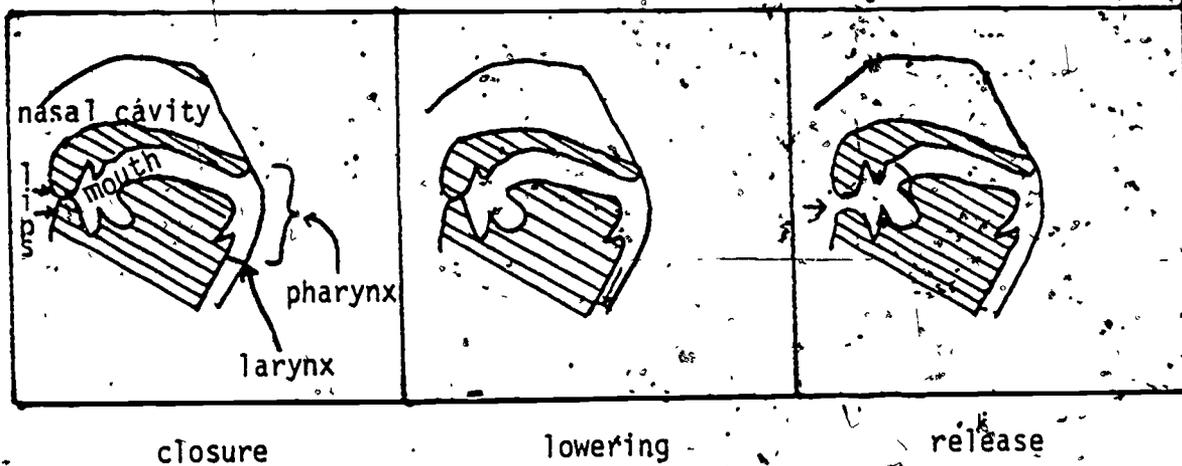
##### 4.1 Obstruents:

Obstruents are sounds which involve a radical obstruction of the air stream, either complete blockage as in stops or partial blockage as in fricatives. Obstruents may be either voiced or voiceless which means that the vocal cords are either vibrating or not respectively. You can detect the difference between voicing and nonvoicing either by putting your fingers on your larynx (Adam's apple) or in your ears while you are saying these sounds. You will no doubt notice that in English, the fricatives /f/ and /z/ are more heavily voiced than the stops /b, d and g/. This is because in English, the voiceless stops /p, t, and k/ are heavily aspirated. This means that they are followed by a puff of air (capable of blowing out a candle) which devoices the beginning of the following vowel. Because the aspiration also serves to distinguish English voiceless vowels, the voicing distinction is not crucial. Fortunately for English speakers, the voiceless obstruents of Mande are also aspirated, though not as heavily. The two sounds /č/ and /ǰ/ listed as palatal stops in the previous illustration are actually affricates. This means that phonetically they consist of a stop followed by a fricative [tʃ] and [dʒ] respectively. However because they function as a unit, they are given the unitary symbols /č/ and /ǰ/.

##### 4.2 Implosives:

The normal manner of articulation involves the use of (egressive) air coming from the lungs. In the articulation of implosives, air is drawn into the mouth by creating a partial vacuum in the pharynx by first closing it off at either end by making a velar, dental or labial stop at one end and a glottal stop (closing the larynx) at the other end. Then the pharynx is stretched by lowering the larynx and in so doing creating a partial vacuum in the pharynx. Thus when the

stop is articulated, for a brief moment, air will rush into the mouth briefly giving it its distinctive sound before the egressive air from the lung resumes.



The remaining set of consonants, the nasals, semi-consonants and semivowels are all voiced. Nasals can best be defined as voiced stops with the added feature of the opening up of the nasal passage.

The semi-consonants and the semivowels are like the nasals are resonant which means that there is less obstruction of the air stream than in the case of the stops and fricatives (known collectively as obstruents). The lack of obstruction allows the vocal tract to resonate giving the nasals, semi-consonants and semivowels their distinctive acoustical character.

Unlike the nasals where the resonance is produced in the nasal cavity, the resonance of the semi-segments is produced in the oral cavity. Semi-consonants are distinguished from semivowels in that semi-consonants are considered less obstructed or weakened consonants while the semivowels are considered more obstructed than true vowels.

#### 4.3 Sonorants:

The remaining sets of consonants are called sonorant because in addition to having an oral obstruction of some sort they also have

resonance. For example in the nasals, the way is opened for sound to move into the nasal cavity which is a resonant chamber. In the case of the liquid *l*, the air is permitted to escape around the sides of the tongue producing resonance. And finally, in the case of the semivowels /y/ and /w/ which are nonsyllabic vowels, (i and u respectively) the resonance is merely dampened. Sonorants, which also include all the vowels are generally voiced. All sonorants have the capacity to be syllabic. As pointed out above the syllabic equivalents of /y/ and /w/ are /i/ and /u/ respectively. Other syllabic sonorants can be marked by placing an apostrophe directly under the segment. In the Mande languages nasals are often syllabic as in Kpelle: mbulú, Banié: ndambangi. Lorma once had these sounds but they have since been lost.

#### 4.4 Concluding Remarks

Much of what was presented here was quite technical and beyond what you really need to know to learn a Mande language. Yet it was presented for a number of reasons:

- (1) it may help you to better understand how the consonant system of a language is structured
- (2) that Mande languages are an interesting and fruitful area of scientific inquiry
- (3) and because we thought you'd like to know.

## E. MANDE SUPRASEGMENTALS

1. Classifications

In addition to consonants and vowels, a syllable may also possess a number of characteristic features called suprasegmentals. They are so called because their distinctiveness may transcend a single segment.

Features often considered to be suprasegmental are stress or syllable prominence, tone, vowel length and nasalization. Vowel length and nasalization have been presented in the section on vowels.

2. Stress

While stress is generally non-contrastive in Mande it is generally distinctive. In Kpelle, it falls on the first high-toned syllable in the word, or if the word has no high tones, it falls on the first syllable. Stress is acoustically marked by an increase in the loudness of the syllable and is often accompanied by a slight increase in the length of the syllable.

3. Tone

Tone in Mande is characterized by relative pitch. That is a high tone is relatively higher in pitch than a low tone and vice versa. No Mande language has more than three distinctive pitch levels. Kpelle and Mano have three: high, mid and low, while Lorma and Manya have two. The following contrasts are from Kpelle:

high	péle	'house'
mid	pēle	'road'
low	bèle	'trousers'

The remaining Mande languages have only two level tones, high and low. The above contrasts appear in Mende as follows:

high	péle	'house'
low high	pèle	'road'
low	bèle	'trousers'

In Lorma due to some historical change, the tones of the above words are 'high, though the different words to exert an influence on the following word as the following examples show.

pélé	'house'	péléniinë	'new house'
pélé	'road'	péléniiné	'new-road'
bélé	'trousers'	béléniinë	'new trousers'

### 3.1 Contour Tones

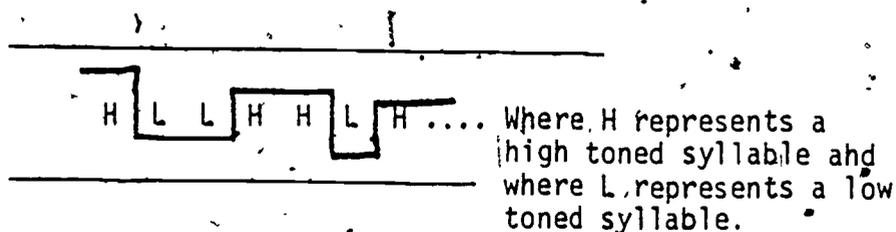
Contour tones are tones that actually rise or fall, rather than remain at the same pitch throughout the syllable. When these tones appear on a single syllable, they are written as follows:

falling	∨	Kpelle: bú	'owl'	Mende: mbû	'owl'
rising	∨	Kpelle: m̄ɔ̄lɔ̄n̄à	'rice'	Mende: mbã	'rice'

Rising tones and falling tones are heard in Lorma as sentence level intonations: A comma or a question mark following a low tone will produce a rising tone. A period following a high tone will produce a falling tone. Since this is not a property of the word, and since the tonal influence is really marked by the punctuations, these rising and falling tones are not otherwise marked.

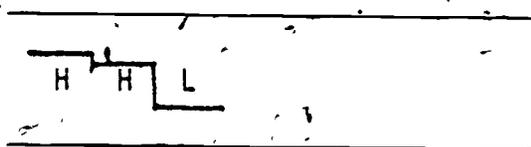
### 3.2 Down-Drift and Down-Step

In most Mande languages there is some downdrift and downstep. Downdrift is a general condition where a high tone following a string of one or more low tones is not as high in absolute pitch as the high tone preceding the low tone. Graphically this condition can be shown as follows:



### 3.3 Downstep

Downstep is very much like downdrift except here the lowered high follows a high tone directly. It is as though the intervening low tones were lost. Downstepped high tones are marked with an apostrophe before the high-toned syllable as in the following graphic example:



Downstep is not found in Lorma and has only a limited distribution in Kpelle where it occurs only at the end of sentences.

### 4. Word Types

Although not strictly speaking suprasegmental, it is worth mentioning that Mande words have definite phonological shapes. As mentioned earlier Mande syllables tend to be open and preceded by a single consonant. Such a syllable structure can be represented as CV where consonants are represented by the symbol C and vowels by V.

Pronouns, postpositions and verbal particles tend to be monosyllabic while nouns and verbs tend to be bisyllabic; words containing more than two syllables are either borrowings or morphologically complex (composed of more than one word). Given these facts, the learner can say a lot about the nature of the word simply on the basis of its phonological shape.

## F. LISTENING AND TRANSCRIPTION EXERCISES

The following exercises have been recorded on tape. They are constructed in such a way that you may either do them orally, by covering up the answer with a card, or you may practice writing down the answers either in the space provided, or preferably on a sheet of scratch paper. Please note, that while these exercises will give you a general ability to recognize and transcribe these sounds you will find that additional work will be necessary with your target language before you can hear them clearly.

The Vowels

1. e vrs ey (If the vowel is glided write /ey/ while if it is not, write /e/.

- |     |       |      |     |       |       |
|-----|-------|------|-----|-------|-------|
| 1.  | _____ | ey   | 11. | _____ | sem   |
| 2.  | _____ | e    | 12. | _____ | seym  |
| 3.  | _____ | e    | 13. | _____ | le    |
| 4.  | _____ | ey   | 14. | _____ | ley   |
| 5.  | _____ | bat  | 15. | _____ | sesey |
| 6.  | _____ | beyt | 16. | _____ | teyle |
| 7.  | _____ | feyl | 17. | _____ | meme  |
| 8.  | _____ | fel  | 18. | _____ | kete  |
| 9.  | _____ | peyn | 19. | _____ | sey   |
| 10. | _____ | pen  | 20. | _____ | se    |

2. i vrs e

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_ i
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_ e
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_ e
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_ i
- 5. s \_\_\_\_\_ si
- 6. s \_\_\_\_\_ se
- 7. t \_\_\_\_\_ te
- 8. t \_\_\_\_\_ te
- 9. t \_\_\_\_\_ ti
- 10. l \_\_\_\_\_ le

- 11. l \_\_\_\_\_ li
- 12. p l \_\_\_\_\_ pele
- 13. p l \_\_\_\_\_ pili
- 14. p z \_\_\_\_\_ pize
- 15. p z \_\_\_\_\_ pizi
- 16. f l \_\_\_\_\_ fili
- 17. f l \_\_\_\_\_ feli
- 18. f l \_\_\_\_\_ file
- 19. l p \_\_\_\_\_ lepe
- 20. l l \_\_\_\_\_ lili

3. e vrs e vrs i

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_ e
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_ e
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_ e
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_ e
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_ i
- 6. \_\_\_\_\_ e
- 7. \_\_\_\_\_ e
- 8. s \_\_\_\_\_ se
- 9. s \_\_\_\_\_ se
- 10. s \_\_\_\_\_ si

- 11. p l \_\_\_\_\_ pele
- 12. p l \_\_\_\_\_ pele
- 13. p l \_\_\_\_\_ pili
- 14. p l \_\_\_\_\_ pile
- 15. p l \_\_\_\_\_ peli
- 16. p l \_\_\_\_\_ pele
- 17. s l \_\_\_\_\_ selei
- 18. t l \_\_\_\_\_ telei
- 19. t l \_\_\_\_\_ tile
- 20. p l \_\_\_\_\_ pele

4. o vrs ow

1. \_\_\_\_\_ o  
 2. \_\_\_\_\_ ow  
 3. \_\_\_\_\_ ow  
 4. \_\_\_\_\_ o  
 5. g \_\_\_\_\_ go  
 6. g \_\_\_\_\_ gow  
 7. s \_\_\_\_\_ sow  
 8. s \_\_\_\_\_ so  
 9. t \_\_\_\_\_ tow  
 10. t \_\_\_\_\_ to

11. t n \_\_\_\_\_ town  
 12. t \_\_\_\_\_ to  
 13. f l \_\_\_\_\_ folo  
 14. f l \_\_\_\_\_ folow  
 15. k l \_\_\_\_\_ kolo  
 16. k l \_\_\_\_\_ kole  
 17. k \_\_\_\_\_ koo  
 18. k \_\_\_\_\_ kow  
 19. m l \_\_\_\_\_ molo  
 20. b n \_\_\_\_\_ bono

5. o vrs u

1. \_\_\_\_\_ o  
 2. \_\_\_\_\_ u  
 3. \_\_\_\_\_ o  
 4. \_\_\_\_\_ o  
 5. \_\_\_\_\_ u  
 6. g \_\_\_\_\_ go  
 7. l \_\_\_\_\_ lo  
 8. l \_\_\_\_\_ lu  
 9. t l \_\_\_\_\_ tolo  
 10. p l \_\_\_\_\_ pulu

11. f l m \_\_\_\_\_ folomo  
 12. g l \_\_\_\_\_ gulu  
 13. g l \_\_\_\_\_ gulo  
 14. k l \_\_\_\_\_ kolo  
 15. k l \_\_\_\_\_ kolu  
 16. m l \_\_\_\_\_ mulu  
 17. m l \_\_\_\_\_ molu  
 18. n w \_\_\_\_\_ nowo  
 19. n w \_\_\_\_\_ nowu  
 20. t \_\_\_\_\_ too

6. o vrs o

1. \_\_\_\_\_ o  
 2. \_\_\_\_\_ o  
 3. \_\_\_\_\_ o  
 4. \_\_\_\_\_ o  
 5. \_\_\_\_\_ o  
 6. \_\_\_\_\_ o  
 7. t \_\_\_\_\_ to  
 8. t \_\_\_\_\_ to  
 9. g \_\_\_\_\_ go  
 10. g \_\_\_\_\_ go

11. g l \_\_\_\_\_ golo  
 12. k l \_\_\_\_\_ kolo  
 13. k l \_\_\_\_\_ kolo  
 14. g l \_\_\_\_\_ gulu  
 15. g l \_\_\_\_\_ golo  
 16. t l \_\_\_\_\_ tolo  
 17. t l \_\_\_\_\_ tolo  
 18. t l \_\_\_\_\_ tolu  
 19. p l \_\_\_\_\_ polu  
 20. p l \_\_\_\_\_ polu

7. a vrs o

1. \_\_\_\_\_ a  
 2. \_\_\_\_\_ o  
 3. \_\_\_\_\_ a  
 4. \_\_\_\_\_ o  
 5. p \_\_\_\_\_ pa  
 6. p \_\_\_\_\_ po  
 7. p l \_\_\_\_\_ polo  
 8. p l \_\_\_\_\_ pala  
 9. t l \_\_\_\_\_ tola  
 10. t l \_\_\_\_\_ tolo

11. t l \_\_\_\_\_ talai  
 12. p l \_\_\_\_\_ polai  
 13. p l \_\_\_\_\_ polu  
 14. p l \_\_\_\_\_ palu  
 15. p l \_\_\_\_\_ palo  
 16. p l \_\_\_\_\_ pola  
 17. p l \_\_\_\_\_ pola  
 18. p l \_\_\_\_\_ palo  
 19. k p \_\_\_\_\_ kopo  
 20. k p \_\_\_\_\_ kapa

8. Λ vrs a vrs ë

1. \_\_\_\_\_ a  
 2. \_\_\_\_\_ Λ  
 3. \_\_\_\_\_ a  
 4. \_\_\_\_\_ a  
 5. b \_\_\_\_\_ ba  
 6. b \_\_\_\_\_ bΛ  
 7. b l \_\_\_\_\_ ba<sup>l</sup>a  
 8. b l \_\_\_\_\_ bΛ<sup>l</sup>Λ  
 9. p l \_\_\_\_\_ pa<sup>l</sup>a  
 10. p l \_\_\_\_\_ pΛ<sup>l</sup>u

11. t l \_\_\_\_\_ tala  
 12. t l \_\_\_\_\_ tΛ<sup>l</sup>e  
 13. t l \_\_\_\_\_ tē<sup>l</sup>ë  
 14. g l \_\_\_\_\_ gΛ<sup>l</sup>Λ  
 15. g l \_\_\_\_\_ gē<sup>l</sup>ë  
 16. g l \_\_\_\_\_ ga<sup>l</sup>a  
 17. p \_\_\_\_\_ pa  
 18. p \_\_\_\_\_ pē  
 19. p \_\_\_\_\_ pΛ  
 20. p \_\_\_\_\_ pē

9. Λ vrs ë vrs i

1. \_\_\_\_\_ bΛ  
 2. \_\_\_\_\_ bē  
 3. \_\_\_\_\_ b<sup>i</sup>  
 4. \_\_\_\_\_ g<sup>i</sup>  
 5. \_\_\_\_\_ gē  
 6. \_\_\_\_\_ gē  
 7. \_\_\_\_\_ sΛ  
 8. \_\_\_\_\_ sē  
 9. \_\_\_\_\_ sē  
 10. \_\_\_\_\_ s<sup>i</sup>

11. \_\_\_\_\_ k<sup>i</sup>  
 12. \_\_\_\_\_ kΛ  
 13. \_\_\_\_\_ k<sup>i</sup>  
 14. \_\_\_\_\_ kē  
 15. \_\_\_\_\_ fē  
 16. \_\_\_\_\_ f<sup>i</sup>  
 17. \_\_\_\_\_ fΛ  
 18. \_\_\_\_\_ fa  
 19. \_\_\_\_\_ fē  
 20. \_\_\_\_\_ t<sup>i</sup>

10. Λ vrs ë vrs † vrs e vrs ε

1. \_\_\_\_\_ tɛɛ

2. \_\_\_\_\_ tɛɛ

3. \_\_\_\_\_ geɛ

4. \_\_\_\_\_ gɛɛ

5. \_\_\_\_\_ kɛɛ

6. \_\_\_\_\_ kɛɛ

7. \_\_\_\_\_ keɛ

8. \_\_\_\_\_ kɛɛ

9. \_\_\_\_\_ kɛɛ

10. \_\_\_\_\_ keɛ

11. \_\_\_\_\_ mɛ

12. \_\_\_\_\_ me

13. \_\_\_\_\_ mi

14. \_\_\_\_\_ mɛ

15. \_\_\_\_\_ bɛ

16. \_\_\_\_\_ ti

17. \_\_\_\_\_ sɛ

18. \_\_\_\_\_ fɛ

19. \_\_\_\_\_ fe

20. \_\_\_\_\_ gɛ

Mande Consonants

The following consonants should give you little difficulty and for that reason no drills are given: p, t, k, b, d, g, f, v, s, z, m, n, l, y and w.

11. kp vrs p vrs k

1. \_\_\_\_\_ ka

2. \_\_\_\_\_ pa

3. \_\_\_\_\_ kpa

4. \_\_\_\_\_ kpa

5. \_\_\_\_\_ ka

6. \_\_\_\_\_ pa

7. \_\_\_\_\_ kpe

8. \_\_\_\_\_ ke

9. \_\_\_\_\_ pe

10. \_\_\_\_\_ kpe

11. \_\_\_\_\_ kpaka

12. \_\_\_\_\_ pakpa

13. \_\_\_\_\_ kapa

14. \_\_\_\_\_ kpapa

15. \_\_\_\_\_ kpiki

16. \_\_\_\_\_ pike

17. \_\_\_\_\_ kpolo

18. \_\_\_\_\_ kulu

19. \_\_\_\_\_ pulu

20. \_\_\_\_\_ kpekpe

12. gb vrs g vrs b vrs kp

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_ ba
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_ ga
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_ gba
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_ gba
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_ gbe
- 6. \_\_\_\_\_ be
- 7. \_\_\_\_\_ be
- 8. \_\_\_\_\_ ge
- 9. \_\_\_\_\_ gu
- 10. \_\_\_\_\_ bu

- 11. \_\_\_\_\_ gbu
- 12. \_\_\_\_\_ bulu
- 13. \_\_\_\_\_ gulu
- 14. \_\_\_\_\_ gbulu
- 15. \_\_\_\_\_ saba
- 16. \_\_\_\_\_ sagba
- 17. \_\_\_\_\_ saga
- 18. \_\_\_\_\_ taba
- 19. \_\_\_\_\_ tokpo
- 20. \_\_\_\_\_ tokpo

13. gb vrs b vrs b vrs g vrs kp

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_ ga
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_ gba
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_ ba
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_ gba
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_ ba
- 6. \_\_\_\_\_ ba
- 7. \_\_\_\_\_ be
- 8. \_\_\_\_\_ be
- 9. \_\_\_\_\_ be
- 10. \_\_\_\_\_ be

- 11. \_\_\_\_\_ bo
- 12. \_\_\_\_\_ gbo
- 13. \_\_\_\_\_ kpoli
- 14. \_\_\_\_\_ boli
- 15. \_\_\_\_\_ buli
- 16. \_\_\_\_\_ gbuli
- 17. \_\_\_\_\_ buli
- 18. \_\_\_\_\_ kpuli
- 19. \_\_\_\_\_ puli
- 20. \_\_\_\_\_ bababa

## 16. p vrs β vrs v vrs f

1. \_\_\_\_\_ pa
2. \_\_\_\_\_ fa
3. \_\_\_\_\_ va
4. \_\_\_\_\_ fa
5. \_\_\_\_\_ va
6. \_\_\_\_\_ βa
7. \_\_\_\_\_ fa
8. \_\_\_\_\_ va
9. \_\_\_\_\_ va
10. \_\_\_\_\_ βa

11. \_\_\_\_\_ βi
12. \_\_\_\_\_ vi
13. \_\_\_\_\_ vili
14. \_\_\_\_\_ βili
15. \_\_\_\_\_ fili
16. \_\_\_\_\_ βulu
17. \_\_\_\_\_ vulu
18. \_\_\_\_\_ folo
19. \_\_\_\_\_ βolo
20. \_\_\_\_\_ volo

## 17. š vrs ž vrs č vrs ĵ

1. \_\_\_\_\_ sa
2. \_\_\_\_\_ ča
3. \_\_\_\_\_ sa
4. \_\_\_\_\_ či
5. \_\_\_\_\_ ĵi
6. \_\_\_\_\_ je
7. \_\_\_\_\_ že
8. \_\_\_\_\_ še
9. \_\_\_\_\_ se
10. \_\_\_\_\_ še

11. \_\_\_\_\_ zowo
12. \_\_\_\_\_ žowo
13. \_\_\_\_\_ sii
14. \_\_\_\_\_ šii
15. \_\_\_\_\_ čii
16. \_\_\_\_\_ kpaza
17. \_\_\_\_\_ masa
18. \_\_\_\_\_ tiča
19. \_\_\_\_\_ baĵi
20. \_\_\_\_\_ žošo

18. y vrs g

- |           |    |           |      |
|-----------|----|-----------|------|
| 1. _____  | ga | 11. _____ | saya |
| 2. _____  | ga | 12. _____ | gaya |
| 3. _____  | ya | 13. _____ | yili |
| 4. _____  | ya | 14. _____ | gili |
| 5. _____  | yi | 15. _____ | yale |
| 6. _____  | yu | 16. _____ | yale |
| 7. _____  | gu | 17. _____ | paya |
| 8. _____  | yu | 18. _____ | paga |
| 9. _____  | ye | 19. _____ | payo |
| 10. _____ | yo | 20. _____ | pagu |

Suprasegmental Drills

19. Long vrs Short Vowels

- |           |          |           |           |
|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. _____  | babaa    | 11. _____ | tilaa     |
| 2. _____  | baaba    | 12. _____ | tiilaa    |
| 3. _____  | sasasaa  | 13. _____ | tasaata   |
| 4. _____  | saasasa  | 14. _____ | kpaasagii |
| 5. _____  | sasaasaa | 15. _____ | mukulu    |
| 6. _____  | soola    | 16. _____ | maaneeye  |
| 7. _____  | teveea   | 17. _____ | niinei    |
| 8. _____  | masagii  | 18. _____ | bovelaale |
| 9. _____  | fiibee   | 19. _____ | kooligii  |
| 10. _____ | saago    | 20. _____ | pagu      |

20. Nasalized vrs Oral Vowels

- |     |       |        |     |       |         |
|-----|-------|--------|-----|-------|---------|
| 1.  | _____ | ba     | 11. | _____ | kālā    |
| 2.  | _____ | bā     | 12. | _____ | kala    |
| 3.  | _____ | babā   | 13. | _____ | poo     |
| 4.  | _____ | bāba   | 14. | _____ | pēēsoe  |
| 5.  | _____ | lamāā  | 15. | _____ | mādigo  |
| 6.  | _____ | lamaa  | 16. | _____ | sōōti   |
| 7.  | _____ | lāmaa  | 17. | _____ | wīigii  |
| 8.  | _____ | lamaa  | 18. | _____ | pəkopa  |
| 9.  | _____ | tɔlɪɪɪ | 19. | _____ | pivugii |
| 10. | _____ | tutita | 20. | _____ | mūlūba  |

21. High Tone vrs. Low Tone

- |     |       |      |     |       |        |
|-----|-------|------|-----|-------|--------|
| 1.  | _____ | bábá | 11. | _____ | tátátá |
| 2.  | _____ | bábà | 12. | _____ | tátátà |
| 3.  | _____ | bàbá | 13. | _____ | tàtátá |
| 4.  | _____ | bàbà | 14. | _____ | tàtátà |
| 5.  | _____ | bábà | 15. | _____ | tàtátà |
| 6.  | _____ | títí | 16. | _____ | kákátá |
| 7.  | _____ | títì | 17. | _____ | tákákà |
| 8.  | _____ | kúlú | 18. | _____ | màmámá |
| 9.  | _____ | kúlù | 19. | _____ | màmámà |
| 10. | _____ | kúlú | 20. | _____ | kúlùkú |

22. High Tone, Low Tone and Downstep

- |     |                 |                          |     |                 |                                     |
|-----|-----------------|--------------------------|-----|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1.  | <u>        </u> | bá <b>á</b> bá           | 11. | <u>        </u> | tá <b>t</b> tá <b>t</b> á           |
| 2.  | <u>        </u> | bá <b>á</b> bá           | 12. | <u>        </u> | tá <b>t</b> tá <b>t</b> á           |
| 3.  | <u>        </u> | bá <b>á</b> bá           | 13. | <u>        </u> | tá <b>t</b> tá <b>t</b> á           |
| 4.  | <u>        </u> | bá <b>á</b> bá <b>á</b>  | 14. | <u>        </u> | tá <b>t</b> tá <b>t</b> á           |
| 5.  | <u>        </u> | bá <b>á</b> bá <b>á</b>  | 15. | <u>        </u> | tá <b>t</b> tá <b>t</b> á           |
| 6.  | <u>        </u> | kó <b>k</b> ó <b>k</b> ó | 16. | <u>        </u> | ká <b>k</b> á <b>t</b> á            |
| 7.  | <u>        </u> | kó <b>k</b> ó <b>k</b> ó | 17. | <u>        </u> | tá <b>k</b> á <b>t</b> á            |
| 8.  | <u>        </u> | kú <b>ú</b> lú <b>ú</b>  | 18. | <u>        </u> | má <b>á</b> lá <b>á</b>             |
| 9.  | <u>        </u> | fú <b>ú</b> lú <b>ú</b>  | 19. | <u>        </u> | gá <b>á</b> lígá                    |
| 10. | <u>        </u> | pú <b>ú</b> lígí         | 20. | <u>        </u> | pú <b>ú</b> lú <b>ú</b> lú <b>ú</b> |

23. High, Low, Rising, Falling

- |     |                 |                |     |                 |                           |
|-----|-----------------|----------------|-----|-----------------|---------------------------|
| 1.  | <u>        </u> | bá <b>á</b> bá | 11. | <u>        </u> | tá <b>t</b> tá <b>t</b> á |
| 2.  | <u>        </u> | bá <b>á</b> bá | 12. | <u>        </u> | tá <b>t</b> tá <b>t</b> á |
| 3.  | <u>        </u> | bá <b>á</b> bá | 13. | <u>        </u> | tá <b>t</b> tá <b>t</b> á |
| 4.  | <u>        </u> | bá <b>á</b> bá | 14. | <u>        </u> | tá <b>t</b> tá <b>t</b> á |
| 5.  | <u>        </u> | bá <b>á</b> bá | 15. | <u>        </u> | tá <b>t</b> tá <b>t</b> á |
| 6.  | <u>        </u> | bá <b>á</b> bá | 16. | <u>        </u> | tá <b>t</b> tá <b>á</b>   |
| 7.  | <u>        </u> | bá <b>á</b> bá | 17. | <u>        </u> | tá <b>t</b> tá <b>á</b>   |
| 8.  | <u>        </u> | bá <b>á</b> bá | 18. | <u>        </u> | tá <b>t</b> tá <b>á</b>   |
| 9.  | <u>        </u> | bá <b>á</b> bá | 19. | <u>        </u> | tá <b>t</b> tá <b>á</b>   |
| 10. | <u>        </u> | bá <b>á</b> bá | 20. | <u>        </u> | tá <b>t</b> tá <b>á</b>   |