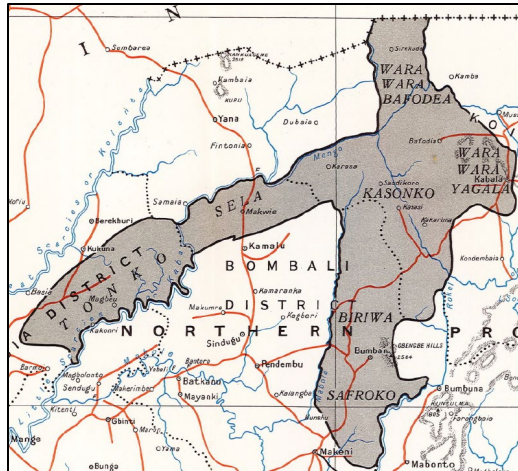
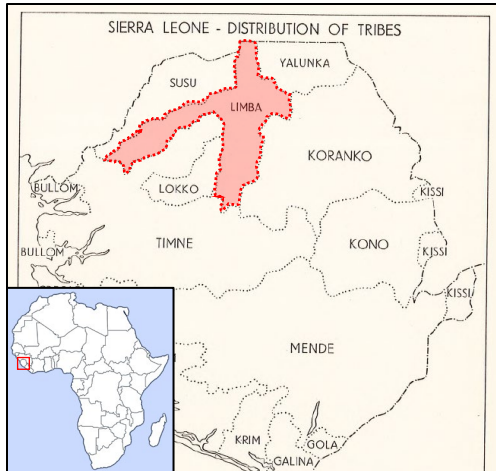


“Analytic issues in Limba, a Niger-Congo isolate of Sierra Leone”

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- (1) Today’s presentation: Morphosyntactic issues in the Limba language [hù-yímbà], stemming from recent fieldwork funded by ZAS (2022 and 2023)
 - a. Glottocode [[limb1267](#)], ISO 639-3 [[lma](#)]/[[lia](#)]
 - b. Likely an isolate within Niger-Congo phylum (Pozdniakov *et al.* 2019)
 - c. Isolation corroborated by cultural and genetic studies (Fanthorpe 1998; Jackson *et al.* 2005)
- (2) Data focus: Limba-Wara Wara dialect in the north (collaborating with Kondeh Mansaray)
 - a. Materials at California Language Archive (notes, databases, audio, videos, texts): <https://cla.berkeley.edu/collection/?collid=11303>
- (3) Location (Maps from Finnegan 1965)



1 Nouns

1.1 Noun classes

- (4) Robust noun class system with alliterative concord (data from Biriwa dialect – Berry 1958)
 - a. **ṇayeṇ ṇasəṇwunthe ṇaləḥəi ṇa, ṇa thimoyii ṇa, ṇeṇ kiṇ do**
 board six good DEF REL seek-you DEF they are here
 ‘the six good boards you are seeking are here’
- (5) 13 noun classes (i.e. distinct morphological concord patterns triggered by noun)

| Class | Ø-prefix | Pseudo-prefix | Class-prefix | DEF |
|--------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------|
| CL1 (O-CL) | hàti ‘child’ | | ò-pápéṇ ‘boy’ | òṇ |
| CL2 (BE-CL) | m̀pàti ‘children’ | | bì-thànthè ‘elders’ | bèṇ |
| CL3 (KO-CL) | | k̀t̀t̀ ‘body’ | k̀-̀ỳr̀ ‘bush yam’ | k̀ṇ |
| CL4 (NG-CL) | | ṇàtí ‘pot scrapings’ | ṇà-̀ỳr̀ ‘bush yams’ | ṇṇ |
| CL5 (HO-CL) | (hù-)pàsà ‘diarrhea’ | h̀d̀t̀ ‘ash’ | h̀-̀r̀k̀ ‘stone’ | hṇ |
| CL6 (TH-CL) | | thàbà ‘tobacco’ | thà-̀r̀k̀ ‘stones’ | thṇ |
| CL7 (KI-CL) | | | ̀-̀t̀t̀ ‘intestine’ | kṇ |
| CL8 (BA-CL) | kàràṇ ‘school’ | bàrà ‘meat’ | bà-̀ẁ ‘ribs’ | bṇ |
| CL9 (MA-CL) | | m̀mp̀ ‘palm wine’ | m̀-̀s̀p̀ ‘keys’ | mṇ |
| CL10 (BU-CL) | | b̀ỳ ‘gold’ | b̀-̀th̀ṇ ‘palm fibers’ | bṇ |
| CL11 (U-CL) | | | ̀-̀th̀r̀ ‘art’ | ̀ṇ |
| CL12 (MU-CL) | | | m̀-̀th̀ṇ ‘food’ | mṇ |
| CL13 (KA-CL) | | | k̀-̀th̀h̀ṇ ‘overseas’ | k̀ |

- (6) Real prefixes show alternations:
- Singular/plural pairs:
kù-yòró ‘bush yam’ vs. **ḡà-yòró** ‘bush yams’
 - Diminutive **ù-/mù-** CL11/CL12 replacement
kù-só ‘palmnut’ ⇒ **ù-só** ‘little palmnut’
ḡà-só ‘palmnuts’ ⇒ **mù-só** ‘little palmnuts’
 - Used to derive nouns (V ⇒ N)
kər- ‘kill’ ⇒ **hu-kəri** ‘killing, to kill’ (CL5)
ma-kəri ‘manner of killing’ (CL9)
 - Create semantically related nouns (N ⇒ N)
kù-sìnè ‘*Kusine* tree’ (CL3) ⇒ **ḡ-sìnè/bù-sìnè** (CL7/CL10)
‘leaf/leaves of the *Kusine* tree’
- (7) Pseudo-prefixes:
- The initial consonant dictates the noun class (pure alliteration)
 - No alternations: Singular/plural is formed by prefixing a class marker
 - kòtò** ‘body’ ⇒ **ḡà-kòtò** ‘bodies’
 - kù-ḡàtí** ‘pot scraping’ ⇐ **ḡàtí** ‘pot scrapings’
- (8) A note on plurality: Always possible to mark overtly with **-yḡ/-iḡ/-ḡ** or **-ni/-ní**
- kàḡkò** ‘bat’ **kàḡkò-yḡ/kàḡkò-ní** ‘bats’
 - hù-bèkô** ‘adam’s apple’ **thà-bèkô/thà-bèkô-ní** ‘adam’s app’s’
- (9) The following data are both telling and frustratingly non-consistent:
- kù-sàmàthè** ‘one single shoe’
 - sàmàthè-yḡ** ‘a pair of shoes’ (two next to each other)
 - sàmàthè-ní** ‘shoes’ (e.g. a bunch in a pile, like at the market)

1.2 *Genders*

(10) Most common genders (i.e. unique singular/plural pairings): Top 6 (A-F) ≈ 90%

| Gender | Class pair | n= | SG | PL | Meaning | Notes |
|--------|--------------|-----------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| A | 1/2 (O/BE) | 266 | yóḡkó | / yóḡkó-yḡ | ‘chameleon’ | Default (ANIMATE) |
| B | 8 (BA) | 116 | thìkà | / thìkà-yḡ | ‘wrapper’ | Default (INANIMATE) |
| C | 3/4 (KO/NG) | 183 | kù-yèḡ | / ḡà-yèḡ | ‘tree’ | |
| D | 5/6 (HO/TH) | 174 | hù-gbùḡ | / thà-gbùḡ | ‘knee’ | |
| E | 7 (KI) | 49 | ḡ-gbàsí | / ḡ-gbàsí-ḡ | ‘ladder’ | |
| F | 9 (MA) | 51 | mèti | / mèti-ḡ | ‘salt’ | |
| G | 10 (BU) | 18 | bù | / bù-ní | ‘fire’ | |
| H | 5/9 (HO/MA) | 8 | hù-sápà | / mà-sápà | ‘key’ | |
| I | 3/8 (KO/BA) | 4 | kù-wá | / bà-wá | ‘rib’ | |
| J | 12 (MU) | 12 | mù-thù | / mù-thù-ḡ | ‘garden’ | |
| K | 5/8 (HO/BA) | 1 | hù-dèmpírèḡ | / bà-dèmpírèḡ | ‘orange’ | |
| L | 11/12 (U/MU) | (DERIVED) | ù-só | / mù-só | ‘little groundnut’ | DIMINUTIVE |
| M | 7/10 (KI/BU) | (DERIVED) | ḡ-sìnè | bù-sìnè | ‘leaf of <i>Kusine</i> ’ | <i>leaves, hair</i> |
| ... | | | | | | |

(11) Question: How do we treat marginal genders (set 2) or the purely derived genders (set 3)?

1.3 How do we analyze this?

(12) Four patterns involving CL5 (HO-class)

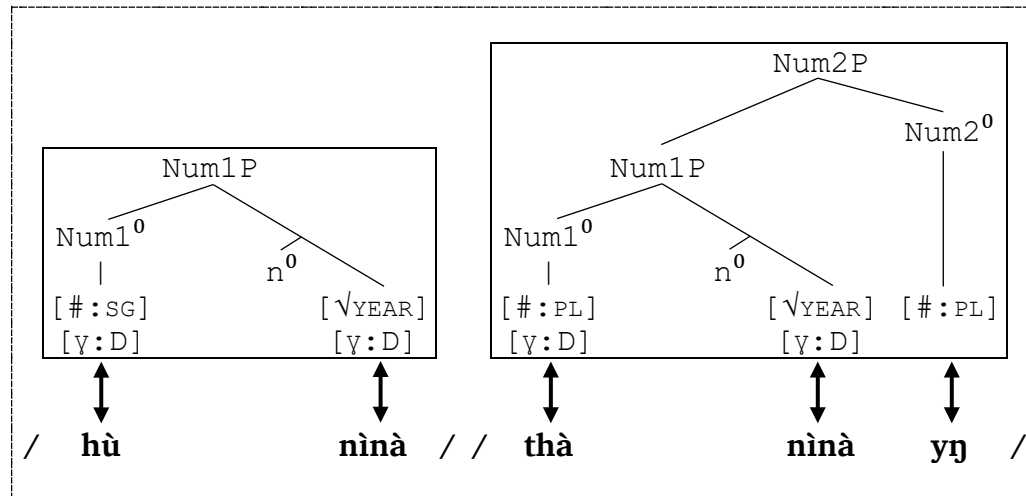
| | Regular | Pseudo-prefix | Vowel-initial root | H-form only |
|--------|--|--|--|---|
| SG | hù-nìna hǎŋ | hòndí hǎŋ | h-èrè hǎŋ | hóyâ hǎŋ |
| PL | thà-nìna(-yŋ) thǎŋ 'the year(s)' | thà-hòndí thǎŋ 'the grass(es)/straw' (*thondi, *thandi) | th-èrè thǎŋ 'the charcoal(s)' (*tha-here) | hóyâ-nì hǎŋ 'the lie(s), untruth' (*tha-hoya, *thaya) (*hoya-ni thaj) |
| SG.DIM | ù-nìna | ù-hòndí | ù-hèrè | ù-hóyâ |
| PL.DIM | mù-nìna(-yŋ) | mù-hòndí (*mu-tha-hondi) | mù-hèrè/ mù-thèrè | mù-hóyâ-nì |

(13) Ingredients: Challenge is to relate the two sides

| Ingredients in morphosyntax | ↔ | Ingredients in morpho-phonology |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| √ROOT | | stems (e.g. nìna 'year') |
| [n] | | noun class prefixes (e.g. hù-) |
| [Y : GENDER] | | plural suffixes (e.g. -ni) |
| [# : NUMBER] | | |
| [DIM] | | |

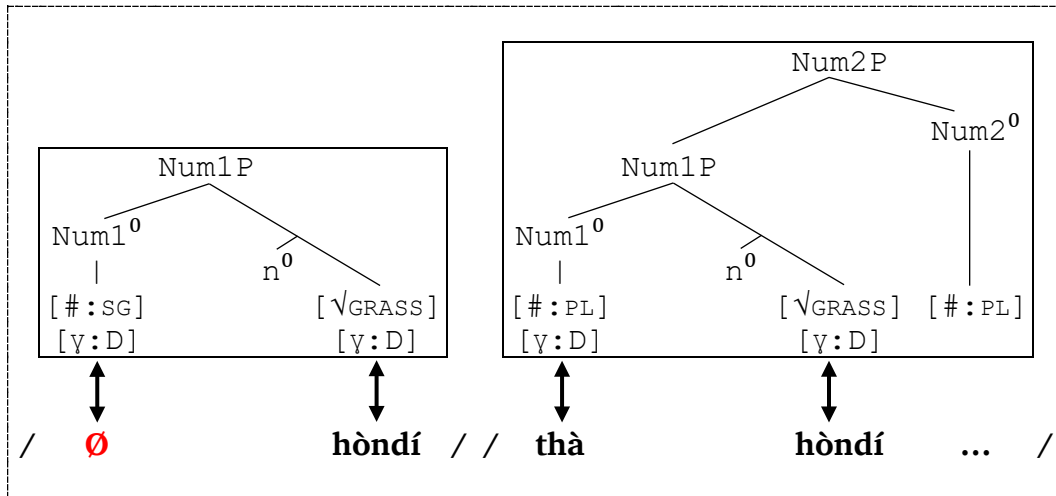
(14) Question: In cases of plural “multiple exponence”, can we posit two number heads?

(15) Regular morphology



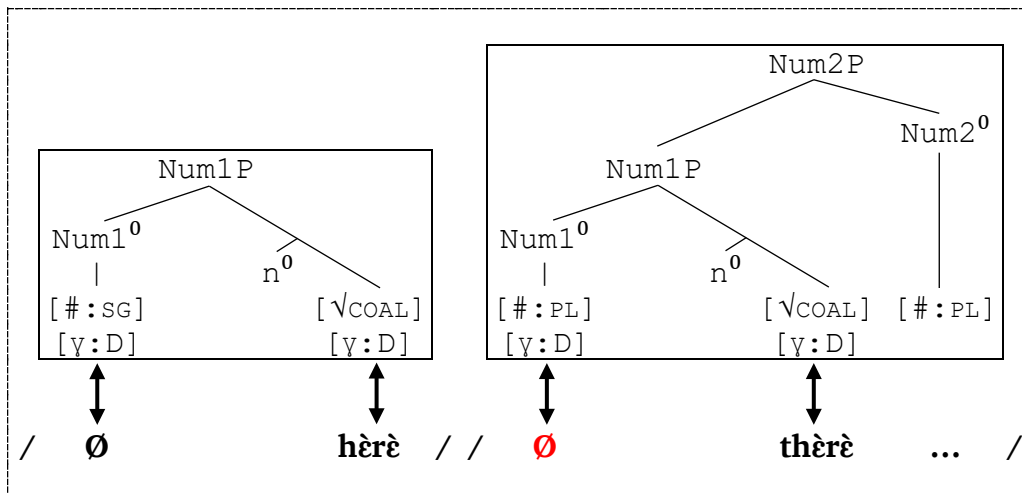
- (16) [#:SG] [Y:D] ↔ **hù**
- (17) [#:PL] [Y:D] ↔ **thà**
- (18) [#:PL] ↔ **yŋ**

(19) Pseudo-prefix



(20) [#:SG] [Y:D] ↔ Ø / __ {√GRASS,...}
 hò (elsewhere)

(21) Vowel-initial root



(22) [#:SG] [Y:D] ↔ Ø / __ {√GRASS, √COAL, ...}

hò (elsewhere)

(23) [#:PL] [Y:D] ↔ Ø / __ {√COAL, ...}

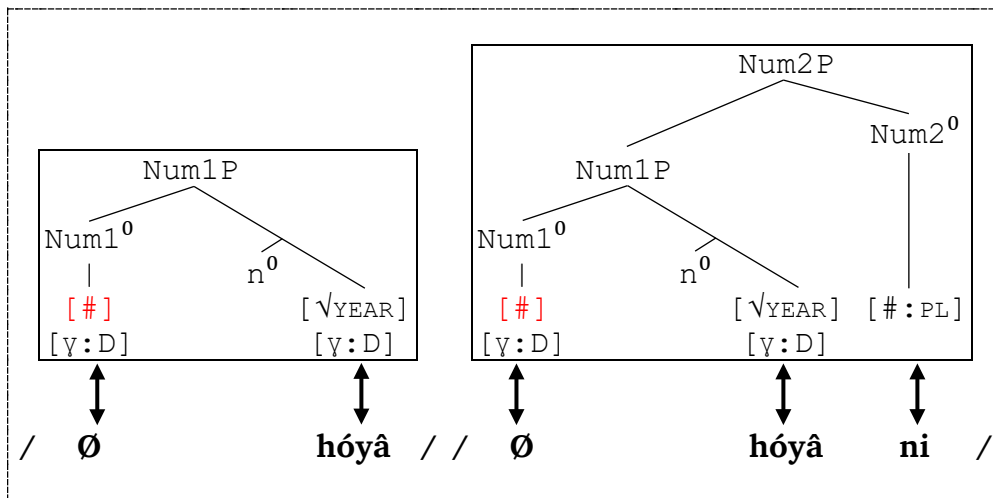
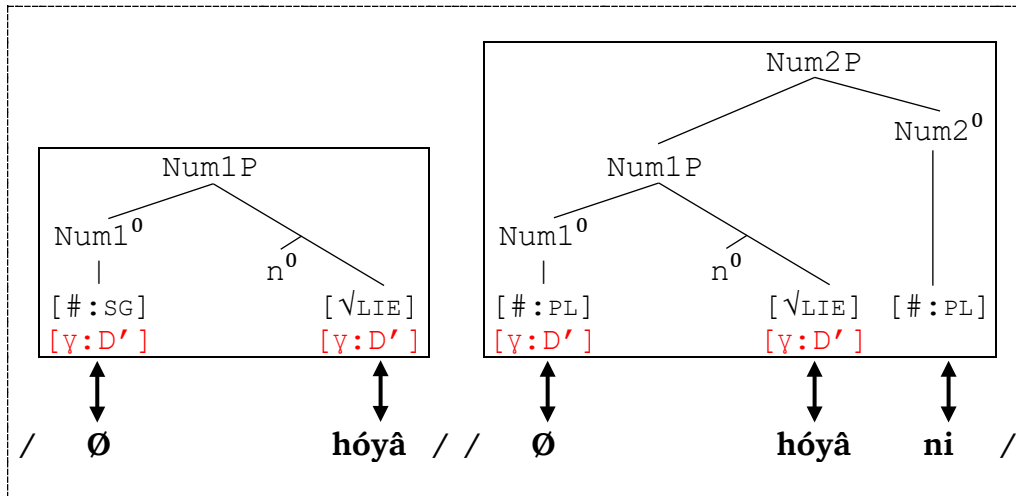
thà (elsewhere)

(24) [√COAL] [Y:D] ↔ thère / [#:PL] __

hère (elsewhere)

(25) While unsatisfactory in some ways, this does correctly predict possibility of mù-hère ~ mù-thère plural diminutive variation (if we allow for the right locality domains)

(26) H-form only



2 Basic clause-level word order

(27) Default [SUBJECT] [VERB] [OBJECT] word order

- a. *ándò thòy bàṅká hélèṅ*
yáṅ ndò thòy bàṅká hélèṅ
 1SG AGR.PART build\INFL house again
 ‘I can build a house again’
- b. *Siyá ò kà pónà sísá*
Siyá ò kà pónà sísá
 Siya AGR.CL1 CONT cook\CONT rice
 ‘Siya is cooking rice’

(28) Left dislocation with focus marker **nǎ** FOC – Eliminates otherwise obligatory agreement

- a. **bàṅká nǎ yáṅ Ø dònđòyṅ thòy**
 house FOC 1SG here build\INFL
 ‘A house is what I will build in this place’
- b. **sísá nǎ Siyá Ø kà pónà**
 rice FOC Siya CONT cook\CONT
 ‘It is rice that Siya is cooking’

- (29) These are also the only contexts which maintain [SUB][VERB] word order in out-of-focus
- UNTIMED (no overt marking other than default tonal inflection on the verb)
 - CONTINUOUS with **kà** (with **-a** inflectional marking on the verb)
- (30) Otherwise: obligatory [SUB][VERB/PART]→[VERB/PART][SUB] inversion in out-of-focus
- COMPLETIVE (**-e** COMP), all NEGATIVE (**sá** NEG.UNT, **thá** NEG.COMP, **ta** NEG.INCEP), with various particles (e.g. **thùŋ** ‘still’) and auxiliaries (e.g. **thôy** ‘know how’)
- (31) Obligatory inversion in completive (**-e** marked verb)
- DEFAULT, ‘ALL-FOCUS’:

| | | | | | |
|------|------|------|--|---|-----------------------------|
| S | V | O | | ← | |
| Sìyá | póné | sìsá | | | Obligatory <u>S-V</u> order |
| | | | | | ‘Siya cooked rice’ |
 - OBJECT-FOCUS:

| | | | | | | |
|------|-----|------|------|--|---|-------------------------------|
| O | FOC | V | S | | ← | |
| sìsá | nà | póné | Sìyá | | | Obligatory <u>V-S</u> order |
| | | | | | | ‘It is rice that Siya cooked’ |
- (32) Obligatory inversion in negatives (**thá** negative completive marker)
- DEFAULT, ‘ALL-FOCUS’:

| | | | | | | |
|------|-----|------|------|--|---|-------------------------------|
| S | NEG | V | O | | ← | |
| Sìyá | thá | pônŋ | sìsá | | | Obligatory <u>S-NEG</u> order |
| | | | | | | ‘Siya did not cook rice’ |
 - OBJECT-FOCUS:

| | | | | | | | |
|------|-----|-----|------|------|--|---|----------------------------------|
| O | FOC | NEG | S | V | | ← | |
| sìsá | ‘ná | thà | Sìyà | pônŋ | | | Obligatory <u>NEG-S</u> order |
| | | | | | | | ‘Rice is what Siya did not cook’ |
- (33) Obligatory inversion with particles (**thùŋ** ‘still’)
- DEFAULT, ‘ALL-FOCUS’:

| | | | | | | | |
|------|-----|------|------|------|--|---|--------------------------------|
| S | AGR | PART | V | O | | ← | |
| Sìyá | ò | thùŋ | pônŋ | sìsá | | | Obligatory <u>S-PART</u> order |
| | | | | | | | ‘Siya is still cooking rice’ |
 - OBJECT-FOCUS:

| | | | | | | | |
|------|-----|------|------|------|--|---|---|
| O | FOC | PART | S | V | | ← | |
| sìsá | nà | thùŋ | Sìyà | pônŋ | | | Obligatory <u>PART-S</u> order |
| | | | | | | | ‘it is rice that Siya is still cooking’ |
- (34) Obligatory inversion with auxiliaries (**thôy** ‘know how’)
- DEFAULT, ‘ALL-FOCUS’:

| | | | | | | | |
|------|-----|------|------|------------------------|--|---|--|
| S | AGR | AUX | V | O | | ← | |
| Sìyá | ò | thôy | pònà | nàthám ¹ bá | | | Obligatory <u>S-AUX</u> order |
| | | | | | | | ‘Siya knows how to cook beans very well’ |
 - OBJECT-FOCUS:

| | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|-----|------|------|------|--|---|--|
| O | FOC | AUX | S | V | | ← | |
| nàthám ¹ bá | ‘ná | thôy | Sìyà | pònà | | | Obligatory <u>AUX-S</u> order |
| | | | | | | | ‘Beans are what Siya knows how to very well’ |
- (35) Question: How do we connect these observations? Movement of **S**? Of **V/PART**? Both?
- All-focus

| | | | | |
|---|-----|------|---|--|
| S | AGR | V | | |
| S | AGR | ka | V | |
| S | AGR | PART | V | |
| S | AGR | PART | V | |
 - Out-of-focus

| | | | |
|------|----|---|--|
| S | V | | |
| S | ka | V | |
| S | V | S | |
| PART | S | V | |
| PART | S | V | |