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Sample texts in Beng

Section 15

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Sample texts in Beng

Section 15

Denis Paperno

15.1. Text in transcription: Two people on a trip

- 1 The humorous story was recorded by Wolfgang Paesler in November 1981 from Kouassi Jean Clement, transcribed by Kouadio Kouadio Destin, and translated by Kouadio Kouadio Patrice into French.

1.	<i>Sḡḡ</i>	<i>plāḡ</i>	<i>ḡó</i>	<i>tá</i>	<i>bḡ-mḡ.</i>
	person	two	3PL:PST+	go:L	place-CONT
‘Two people went somewhere’.					

- 2 Commentary. *tá bḡmḡ* is an idiomatic expression ‘to take a trip’, literally ‘to go someplace’, related to the usage of *bḡ* ‘place’ as an indefinite pronoun.

2.	<i>ḡó</i>	<i>sró</i>	<i>wē</i>	<i>nḡ</i>	<i>ḡó</i>	<i>ḡò</i>	<i>gbà</i>	<i>pḡ-blē-lē.</i>
	3PL:PST+	arrive:L	there	TOP	3PL:PST+	3PL	give:L	thing-eat-NMLZ
‘When they got there they were given food’.								

- 3 Commentary. *pḡblēlē* 𑑑𑑑 is structurally relativization of the direct object using event nominalization, literally ‘thing eaten’, or ‘eating something’, compare 6.2.

3.	<i>Dō</i>	<i>á</i>	<i>pè</i>	<i>sḡ</i>	<i>ó</i>	<i>kḡ-nḡ.</i>
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	one	3SG:PST+3	say:L	that	3SG:PST+	get.satiated-PRF
	'One of them said he was full'.					

- 4 Commentary. The portemanteau pronoun \bar{a} contains the obligatory 3rd person direct object of the speech verb, literally 'He said it that he was full'.

4.	$D\bar{o}$ -lè	$dr\bar{e}$	\bar{a}	$w\bar{o}$	$p\bar{o}$	ó	$p\bar{o}$ -lè	$bl\bar{e}$.
	one-DEF	EMPH	3SG:PST+3	hand	wash:L	3SG:PST+	thing-DEF	eat:L
	'The other one washed his hands and ate'.							

- 5 Commentary. Here, the portemanteau pronoun \bar{a} contains a possessive pronoun, literally 'He washed **his** hand'. Note juxtaposition of two clauses as the translation equivalent of verb phrase conjunction. Also notable is the usage of $dr\bar{e}$ as a topic switch marker.

5.	$G\bar{e}\bar{n}\bar{j}$	$kl\bar{o}$	$n\bar{g}$	$d\bar{o}$	$l\bar{e}$	ó	$y\bar{u}\bar{o}$	$b\bar{o}$.
	beautiful	little	TOP	do	DEF	3SG:PST+	oral.cavity	extract:L
	'After a little while, the first one yawned'.							

- 6 Commentary. $G\bar{e}\bar{n}\bar{j}$ $kl\bar{o}$ is an idiomatic expression 'a little later'. It is marked by an overt topic marker, as usual with topicalized adverbial elements. $y\bar{u}\bar{o}$ $b\bar{o}$ is an idiomatic expression 'to yawn'. The semantic motivation of the expression is transparent: when someone yawns, the oral cavity becomes visible.

6.	$P\bar{o}$ - $bl\bar{e}$ -lí	$l\bar{e}$	\bar{a}	$l\bar{a}$	$k\bar{e}s\bar{g}$	ó	$l\bar{e}$	$l\bar{o}w\bar{a}$.
	thing-eat-AG	DEF	3SG:PST+3	ask:L	that	3SG:PST+	COP:L	how
	'The one who had eaten asked him what the matter was'.							

- 7 Commentary. $ó$ $l\bar{e}$ $l\bar{o}w\bar{a}$? is the idiomatic Beng expression for 'why', literally 'How is it?'. The portemanteau pronoun \bar{a} includes a direct object: "He asked **him**". Note the specific event reference in the interpretation of the agent nominalization in -lí.

7.	\bar{A}	$p\bar{e}$:	$p\bar{o}p\bar{o}$.
	3SG:PST+3	say:L	nothing
	'He said: "Nothing."'		

- 8 Commentary. *p̄p̄* ‘nothing’ is derived by reduplication from *p̄* ‘thing’.

8.	Oṛṛ	yúó	bò	mũṣ̣.
	3SG:PST+	oral.cavity	extract:L	again
	‘He yawned again’.			

9.	<i>P̄-blē-lí</i>	<i>lè</i>	<i>á</i>	<i>là</i>	<i>mũṣ̣,</i>	<i>á</i>	<i>pè:</i>	<i>p̄p̄.</i>
	thing-eat-AG	DEF	3SG:PST+3	ask:L	again	3SG:PST+3	say:L	nothing
	‘The one who had eaten asked him again’, ‘and he said: “Nothing.”’							

10.	<i>Ṣò-ó</i>	<i>bl̄</i>	<i>dÉĒ</i>	<i>á</i>	<i>pè</i>	<i>yī</i>	<i>Oṛṛ</i>	<i>ṣ̣</i>	<i>dè.</i>
	3PL-ST+	there.FOC	if	3SG:PST+3	say:L	hunger	3SG:PST+	1SG	kill:L
	‘They were there, and the other one said he was hungry’.								

- 9 Commentary. Here complementizer *dÉĒ* ‘if’ is used in the sense of ‘when’. The verb *dē* (base sense ‘to kill’) is used in the sense of ‘experience’ with nouns of feelings and senses like ‘hunger’, ‘fear’, ‘heat’, etc. as subjects, and the experiencer in the direct object position.

11.	<i>P̄-blē-lí</i>	<i>lè</i>	<i>á</i>	<i>pè</i>
	thing-eat-AG	DEF	3SG:PST+3	say:L
	‘The one who had eaten said:’			

12.	<i>sá</i>	<i>mà</i>	<i>pé</i>	<i>mĩ</i>	<i>nĩ</i>	<i>é?</i>
	that	1SG:PST-3	say:L	2SG	BENEF	NEG
	‘Hadn’t I told you?’					

- 10 Commentary. The structure of the preterite TAM construction is obscured by high tone spread to the verb stem and the tone sandhi, whereby instead of the original *mǎ pè* (LH L) we see *mà pé* (L H).

13.	<i>Sá</i>	<i>ṣ̣</i>	<i>tá</i>	<i>bĩ</i>	<i>mà</i>	<i>ná,</i>
	that	3PL:CND+	go	place	CONT	TOP

	'That when one goes somewhere',
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- 11 Commentary. Conditional mood is used here according to the general rule of marking habitual aspect in temporal and conditional clauses.

	ɲà	yèɲrè	pɔ̃-blē-lè	lō	é.
	3PL:HAB-	be.ashame:L	thing-eat-NMLZ	with	NEG
	'one is not shy of eating'.				

- 12 Commentary. The verb *yèɲré* selects postposition *lō*. Note the interpretation of *pɔ̃blēlè* contrasting with the object nominalization interpretation in sentence 2.

14.	ɲó	zrĕ	è	põpõ	nyĕ	ɲó	tá	ē	ná,
	3PL:PST+	road	DEF	request:L	FOC	3PL:PST+	go:L	FOC	TOP
	'When they said goodbye and went away',								

- 13 Commentary. To “request the road” is a common formula for guests asking permission to leave from their host in West Africa. Here the focus (and the topic) constructions are used to mark temporal sequence of events.

	à	gɔ̃ló	lè	ó	bédà	zrĕ	lè	yé,
	3SG	friend	DEF	3SG:PST+	lie:L	road	DEF	mouth
	'his friend lay down on the road',							

- 14 Commentary. *zrĕ* is one of the nouns that requires locative postposition *yé* without the ‘on the edge’ meaning of the latter.

15.	nà	wà	zì	yā	drĕ	é.
	DT	3SG:HAB-	can:L	walk	anymore	NEG
	'he could not walk anymore'.					

- 15 Commentary. Particle *drĕ* is the way to express ‘anymore’ in Beng in the context of the negative particle *é*.

15.2. Text in orthography: Chimpanzee's house

- 16 This folktale was recorded by Wolfgang Paesler in November 1981 from Kouassi Jean Clement, transcribed by Kouadio Kouadio Destin, and translated by Kouadio Kouadio Patrice into French. For comparison with 15.1, this text is reproduced in the orthography (Kouadio, Kouakou 1997) and in phonological transcription, to provide a sample of this orthography.

1.	<i>Ganmlàn</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>gbèe</i>	<i>gbɔ.</i>
	<i>Gāmlà</i>	<i>ó</i>	<i>gbě</i>	<i>gbó.</i>
	chimpanzee	ST+	village	old
'Of old, Chimpanzee used to live in the village'.				

- 17 Commentary. See 12.1.2 for discussion of time reference.

2.	<i>O</i>	<i>suo</i>	<i>dɔ̀</i>
	<i>ó</i>	<i>súó</i>	<i>dɔ̀</i>
	3SG:PST	house	build:L
'He built a house',			

<i>fɛn</i>	<i>sɔ̀nɛ̀</i>	<i>nùnɛ̀</i>	<i>ɲo</i>	<i>tà</i>	<i>à</i>	<i>cà</i>	<i>nan,</i>
<i>fɛ̀</i>	<i>sɔ̀ɛ̀</i>	<i>nɛ̀</i>	<i>ɲó</i>	<i>tà</i>	<i>à</i>	<i>cà</i>	<i>ná,</i>
Rel	person	PL	3PL:PST+	go:L	3SG	watch:L	TOP
'and when people came to see it',							

- 18 Commentary. The sentence features a serial construction where one subject pronoun shares two verbs in the same (low tone) form.

3.	<i>ɲo</i>	<i>à</i>	<i>pè</i>	<i>san</i>
	<i>ɲó</i>	<i>à</i>	<i>pè</i>	<i>sá</i>
	3PL:PST+	3SG	say:L	that
'They said:				

<i>ganmlàn,</i>	<i>min</i>	<i>suo</i>	<i>lè</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>lè</i>	<i>gɛŋ.</i>
<i>ḡāmlā,</i>	<i>mī</i>	<i>súó</i>	<i>lè</i>	<i>ó</i>	<i>lè</i>	<i>ḡēṅ.</i>
chimpanzee	2SG	house	DEF	3SG:PST+	COP:L	beautiful
'Chimpanzee, your house is nice'.						

4.	<i>Drɛ</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>guan nan</i>	<i>pɔ</i>	<i>do.</i>
	<i>Drē</i>	<i>ó</i>	<i>ḡṽḡ-nḡ</i>	<i>pō</i>	<i>dō.</i>
	but	3SG:PST+	remain-PRF	thing	one
'But one thing is missing'.					

- 19 Commentary. Note the postverbal subject NP with a preverbal subject pronoun, peculiarity of the verb *ḡṽḡ* 'to remain'.

5.	<i>Ganmlàn</i>	<i>aà</i>	<i>pè</i>	<i>san:</i>	<i>pɔ</i>	<i>pó</i>	<i>pɔ?</i>
	<i>Ḡāmlā</i>	<i>á</i>	<i>pè</i>	<i>sá:</i>	<i>pɔ</i>	<i>pó</i>	<i>pɔ?</i>
	chimpanzee	3SG:PST+3	say:L	that	like	what	like
'Chimpanzee said: "Like what?"'							

- 20 Commentary. *pɔ X pɔ* 'like X' expresses comparison in Beng, usually occurs in nominal positions.

6.	<i>Sònnḡ</i>	<i>nùnḡ</i>	<i>ŋo</i>	<i>à</i>	<i>pè</i>	<i>san</i>	<i>pɔ</i>	<i>kpinḡ</i>	<i>pɔ.</i>
	<i>Sòḡ</i>	<i>nùḡ</i>	<i>ŋó</i>	<i>à</i>	<i>pè</i>	<i>sá</i>	<i>pɔ</i>	<i>kṗṗḡ</i>	<i>pɔ.</i>
	person	PL	3PL:PST+	3SG	say:L	that	like	door	like
'The people said: "Like a door."'									

7.	<i>Ganmlàn</i>	<i>aà</i>	<i>pè</i>	<i>san:</i>
	<i>Ḡāmlā</i>	<i>á</i>	<i>pè</i>	<i>sá:</i>
	chimpanzee	3SG:PST+3	say:L	that
'Chimpanzee said:'				

8.	<i>pɔ</i>	<i>fɛn</i>	<i>ɲà</i>	<i>sì</i>	<i>kɔ̀ɲɲ</i>	<i>nan,</i>
	<i>pɔ̄</i>	<i>fɛ̄</i>	<i>ɲà</i>	<i>sì</i>	<i>kɔ̀ɲ̃</i>	<i>ná,</i>
	thing	Rel	3PL:HAB+3	call:L	door	TOP
“The thing that they call door,”						

<i>manɲ</i>	<i>màn</i>	<i>nyɾɛ̀ɛ̀n</i>	<i>tɔ</i>	<i>man sà</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>ɛ.</i>
<i>mā̃ɲ</i>	<i>mā̃</i>	<i>ɲɾɛ̃</i>	<i>tɔ́</i>	<i>mā̃-sà</i>	<i>dō</i>	<i>é.</i>
1SG:FOC	1SG:PST-	this	name	hear-PRF-	one	NEG
“me, I have never heard this word.”						

- 21 Commentary. *ɲɾɛ̃* is a demonstrative noun, here used as an appositive modifier of *tɔ́* ‘name’. Adverbial *dō*, identical to the numeral ‘one’, combines with perfect aspect and means ‘ever’.

9.	<i>Aà</i>	<i>pè</i>	<i>san:</i>
	<i>Ã</i>	<i>pè</i>	<i>sá:</i>
	3SG:PST+3	say:L	that
‘He said:’			

<i>nyɾɛ̀ɛ̀n</i>	<i>pɔ</i>	<i>drɛn</i>	<i>bɛɛ</i>	<i>bì-lè</i>	<i>màn</i>	<i>zín</i>	<i>à</i>	<i>wo</i>	<i>ɛ.</i>
<i>ɲɾɛ̃</i>	<i>pɔ̄</i>	<i>drɛ̃</i>	<i>bɛ̃ɛ̃</i>	<i>bì-lè</i>	<i>mā̃</i>	<i>zĩ</i>	<i>à</i>	<i>wō</i>	<i>é.</i>
this	thing	work	big	this-DEF	1SG:PST-	can	3SG	do	NEG
“This big work, I can’t do.”									

- 22 Commentary. Modal *zĩ* ‘can’ is exceptional as it combines with preterite subject pronouns while itself staying in base form, selecting a verb phrase in a base form, and having present semantics. *zĩ* is also attested in the regular habitual construction, while still selecting a base form verb phrase.

10.	<i>Nyɛn</i>	<i>ganmlàn</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>wlo</i>
	<i>ɲɛ̃</i>	<i>gā̃mlā̃</i>	<i>ó</i>	<i>wló</i>
	FOC	chimpanzee	3SG:PST	move.out:L

	'And Chimpanzee left'
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o	dà	klɛŋ	nìn	wo	ɛ.
ó	dà	klɛ́ŋ	nì	wó	ē.
3SG:PST+	reach:L	forest	DEF	IN	FOC
'and reached the forest'.					

11.	Nàn	ganmlàn	ò	nun	guàn	klɛŋ	wo	nan
	Nà	gāmlà	ò	nū	gūà	klɛ́ŋ	wó	ná
	for.to	chimpanzee	3SG:HAB+	come	remain	forest	IN	TOP
	'For Chimpanzee to stay in the forest',							

à	din-lè	o	bò	kpinŋ	màn
à	dí-lè	ó	bò	kpiń	mà
3SG	cause-DEF	3SG:PST+	come.from:L	door	CONT
'the reason came from the door'					

nyɛn	ganmlàn	o	guàn	klɛŋ	wo	ɛ.
ɲē	gāmlà	ó	gūà	klɛ́ŋ	wó	ē.
FOC	chimpanzee	3SG:PST+	remain:L	forest	IN	FOC
'that Chimpanzee stayed in the forest'.						

- 23 Commentary. The last sentence of this text was reproduced and discussed earlier as example (268).

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