

LRAP: Documenting Guébie

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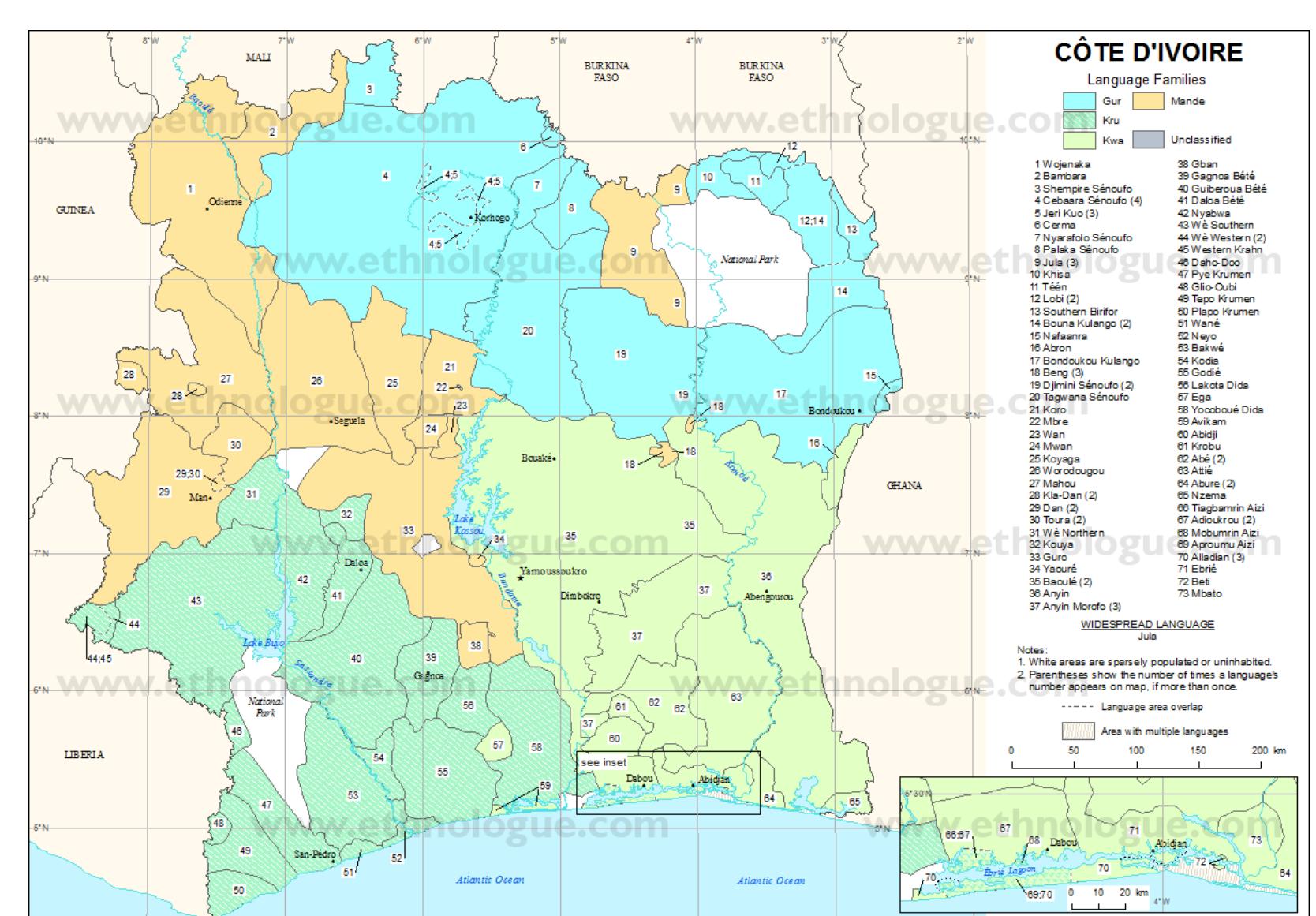
Overview

Through the Linguistics Research Apprentice Practicum (LRAP) we have been paired together as a graduate/undergraduate team of linguists to create an online database of an endangered language.

Background

The Language

- Guébie is a Kru language
- It is spoken in seven villages in the jungle of Côte d'Ivoire
- Number of speakers: 7,000
- All Guébie speakers are bilingual; they also speak French
- Prior to this documentation project, there has been no work done on the Guébie language
- There are no existing language resources for Guébie



The Data

- The data in our corpus comes from three years of working with Guébie speakers
 - One speaker in the US/Canada
 - Two summer fieldtrips to Gnagbodougnoua, Côte d'Ivoire
 - 6 speakers, 1 female and 5 males, between 18-76 years old
- Our data is in the form of recorded texts and elicited grammatical judgments
- Each utterance is transcribed in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), glossed for meaning, and translated into English and French



Figure 1: Serikpa Emil is the only living monolingual Guébie speaker. The majority of the texts in our database come from him.

Guébie people and language



e⁴ sra³² na⁴ 6ite^{2.4}
1SG.NOM build.IPFV 1SG.POSS house
'I am building my house'



kpakara^{2.2.2} me³ ne⁴ m³ a² pulu-li^{3.3.3}
mortar on and place 1PL.NOM press.IPFV-APPL
diok^w₃^{2.3} ej^a_{3.1} koji^{3.1}
fufu with pestle

'On the mortar we press the fufu with the pestle.'

Guébie people and language



jaci^{2.31} la³ sukulu^{1.1.3} me³ me³ ne⁴ ³
Jachi PST.PFV.NEG school to go and 3SG.NOM
pa-a^{2.1} d^wans^{2.2}
use.IPFV-HAB machete

'Jachi had not been to school and he was using a machete '



e⁴ li² ja³¹ koko^{4.4}
1SG.NOM eat.IPFV coconut everyday
'I eat coconuts everyday'



Challenges

- Working with a novel database brings unforeseen difficulties in online data entry
 - As a team we overcame these challenges to create a functional product
- With multiple people entering and cleaning data, consistency in transcriptions and glossing was difficult
 - We discovered mechanisms for consistent collaborative data glossing

What We Learned

- Formal glossing conventions
- Applied syntax
- Language documentation process
- Learning about a culture through its language
- Practice with IPA application
- Experience with a tonal language
- Collaborative work on a large project
- Opportunity to see and work on a database being built from the ground up
- Overcoming troubleshooting
- Developing a deep appreciation for a language we had never before heard of

Project Outcomes

- Online corpus of Guébie sentences, words, and stories
- The first dictionary of the language
- Books of word lists and stories for the community
- A dissertation and multiple qualifying papers
- Impact on linguistic theories by an otherwise undocumented language
- Contribution to comparative historical linguistic reconstruction projects
- Securing language data for future generations

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