A sociolinguistic survey of the Gbe language communities of Benin and Togo
Volume 2
Ayizo language area

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A SOCIOLINGUISTIC SURVEY OF THE GBE LANGUAGE COMMUNITIES
OF
BENIN AND TOGO

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References
Abstract

This paper presents a sociolinguistic survey conducted in the Ayizo language communities (Kwa language family) of Benin. The Gbe languages continuum is situated in the southeastern part of West Africa. Expanding westwards from southwestern Nigeria, the Gbe communities occupy large areas in southern Benin, Togo, and southeastern Ghana. To date in Benin, as far as Gbe varieties are concerned, Aja, Fon, Gen, and Gun have undergone language development on a larger scale. A survey of the Ayizo communities was conducted to assess whether and to what extent existing literature and literacy efforts in Fon could extend to the Ayizo communities and to determine the nature and extent of SIL’s possible involvement among these communities.

After a general overview of the taxonomic and geographic language situation, test results are reported. Survey interview and group test results are presented on comprehension of Fon. Results are given on language attitudes toward both written and oral forms of Fon and toward the development of Ayizo. In addition, the following topics were investigated: language vitality and the relationship of Ayizo to related Gbe varieties in terms of comprehension and language attitudes. Also, information by local leaders on the literacy and religious situations and on migration history is given.

The group comprehension test results show, at least preliminarily, that the Ayizo have good comprehension of Fon and overt attitudes toward Fon are positive. Though the preference everywhere is for literacy in Ayizo, Fon literacy appears to be a workable solution for literacy needs in the Ayizo speech communities provided there is adequate institutional support. Regarding Ayizo language vitality, the data suggest that Ayizo is in widespread use in most domains.

1. Introduction

This paper reports on a sociolinguistic survey conducted in the Ayizo speech communities of Benin. The Ayizo speech variety belongs to the Gbe language continuum (Kwa language group) which is situated in the southeastern part of West Africa. Expanding westwards from southwestern Nigeria, the Gbe communities occupy large areas in southern Benin, Togo, and southeastern Ghana.

Among the Gbe varieties, five have thus far undergone language development on a larger scale: Fon, Gen, and Gun in Benin, and Ewe in Togo. To assess whether and to what extent existing literature and literacy efforts in these Gbe speech varieties could extend to the remaining Gbe communities, or whether additional language-based development programs in some of the remaining communities would be beneficial, and to determine the nature and extent of SIL’s possible involvement among these communities, a sociolinguistic study of the Gbe communities of Benin and Togo was launched in the late 1980s.

The sociolinguistics survey reported here is part of this larger study and was carried out between March and May 1998 by M. McHenry, J. Schmidt and D. H. Hatfield, researchers of SIL. The survey data reported here results from community interviews administered in the villages of Kpodji-Dénou, Tori-Kada, and Yékon-Aga, as well as a Rapid Appraisal Recorded Text Tests (RA-RTT) in Fon administered in Kpodji-Dénou and Yékon-Aga.
In Section 2, pertinent background information on the Ayizo speech variety is presented. Some of these data were gathered during the field interviews with members of the Ayizo language community. This section is followed by a presentation of the research questions (Section 3) and a description of the methodology as applied during this survey (Section 4). In Section 5, the findings are discussed, followed by a set of conclusions (Section 6). The report closes with a set of appendices and a list of references.

2. Background

2.1. Language name and classification

The *Ethnologue* (Grimes 1996:165) lists Ayizo as Ayizo-Gbe [ISO code: ayb] and gives the following classification:

- Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Kwa, Left Bank, Gbe, Aja

Alternative names are:

- Ayizo, Ayzo (Grimes 1996:165)
- Ayizɔ, Aĩzo, Ayizo, Ayize (Capo 1986:13)

In *Renaissance du Gbe* (1986) and *A comparative phonology of Gbe* (1991), H. B. C. Capo classifies the Gbe lects (Kwa language family) into five groupings based on shared phonological and morphophonological characteristics: Aja, Ewe, Fon, Gen, and Phla-Phera. Ayizo is classified as a dialect in the Phla-Phera group which is comprised of: “Alada, Ayizɔ, Phla, Tɔli, Phelá, Tɔfìn, Tsáphɛ, Kotafon, Gbesi” (Capo 1991:14, see also 1986:101). According to Capo (1986:100), the Phla-Phera varieties are similar phonologically, but they differ substantially in their vocabulary; nevertheless, there is a rather high degree of intercomprehension between the speakers of these varieties.

The *Atlas sociolinguistique du Benin* (CNL du Bénin 1983:55) reports that there is a striking level of intercomprehension between Ayizo, Kotafon, and Ci (“entre les langues de ce sous-groupe ou continuum existe une intercompréhension si frappante ...”).

Ci is not included in any of Capo’s (1986, 1991) five groupings, even though it is listed as one of the Gbe lects (1986:13, 1991:3). Another Gbe variety in the Ayizo region is that of Arohún which Capo (1986) groups with Fon. According to B. Kpataclo (1998, personal communication), a Beninese linguist affiliated with the Université Nationale du Bénin (UNB), Arohún is the Fon name for the Ayizo people who live on the western side of the railroad tracks at Allada.

Wordlists and phraselists were previously collected among 50 Gbe lects (Kluge 1997). The results are not included in this report due to the uncertainty as to the area of origin of the Ayizo informant.

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1[Editor: See also the current version of the *Ethnologue* (Lewis 2009) for an updated entry on Ayizo.]

2Capo (1986:96ff) refers to Ewe as Vhe, to Aja as Ajá, and to Phla-Phera as Phla-Pherá.

3The *Atlas sociolinguistique du Benin* (CNL du Bénin 1983:55) refers to Kotafon as Kogbe and to Ci as Cigbe.

4B. Kpataclo who assisted the survey team in their research, speaks Gen, Fon, Ayizo, Tofin, Toli, French, and English.
2.2. Language area

According to the *Atlas sociolinguistique* (CNL du Bénin 1983), Ayizo is spoken in the Atlantique and Mono département⁵ (for a map of the area, see Appendix A). In the Atlantique département, Ayizo is spoken in:

- The communities of Abomey-Calavi, Akassato, Zinvié, Kansoukpa, and Togba in the sous-préfecture of Abomey-Calavi
- The villages of Hinvi, Ahito, and Loto-Dénou in the sous-préfecture of Allada (with the exception of the town of Allada)
- The villages of Gbèfadji and Dékanme in the sous-préfecture of Kpomasse
- The sous-préfecture of Toffo
- The sous-préfecture of Tori-Bossito
- The villages of Wawata and Zounto-Hunsagodo in the sous-préfecture of Zè

In the Mono département, Ayizo is spoken in:

- The villages of Tokpa-Aizo and Kotokoli, found in the sous-préfecture of Grand-Popo

2.3. Population

Combining the *Atlas sociolinguistique* (CNL du Bénin 1983) listings with population data elicited from the 1992 Benin Census (Ministère du Plan et de la Restructuration Economique du Bénin 1994a), which gives population totals both by ethnic group as well as by political community, results in a population figure for Ayizo of 328,237.

Alternatively, looking at the census data by ethnic group and département, the Ayizo are reported to make up 21.5% of the Atlantique département, which gives a population of 231,402. The Ayizo do not form a significant enough population of the Mono département to be reported. Therefore, the Ayizo-speaking population is presumed to be between approximately 231,000 and 328,000. (Ministère du Plan et de la Restructuration Economique du Bénin 1994b,c)

2.4. History of migration

In his *Introduction à l’histoire de l’aire culturelle Ajatado*, Pazzi (1979) writes that at the beginning of the modern age, four Gbe languages originated from the Tado region in Togo: Evè, Aja, Ayizo, and Xwla. The Fon language was born later from a mix between one of the Tado languages and the Gèdè of Agbome in present-day Benin.

Elements of the Aja kingdom in Togo migrated eastward from Tado to establish the villages of Doutou, Kpindji, Dodomè, and finally Allada. From Allada came the birth of a new kingdom which Pazzi (1979:18) believes corresponds with the modern-day Ayizo people group. The “lengua Arda”

⁵At the time of the survey Benin was divided into six governmental provinces called “départements,” each containing a varying number of “sous-préfectures” composed of rural communes and urban circumscriptions. All town names are spelled according to the general map of Benin (IGN France and IGN Bénin 1992) or the sous-préfecture maps of the 1992 Benin census data (Ministère du Plan 1994b,c).
A sociolinguistic survey of the Ayizo language area is first mentioned in 1658 in the writings of a Catholic priest acting as the Spanish ambassador to the king of Allada. This notation is the first written document of what was spoken in Allada before the Fon invasion and conquest in 1724.

At the time of the Fon invasion, a group of Ayizo fled west to the Ko region and became known as the Kotafon. They did not have much contact with the surrounding peoples who mistakenly thought they were Fon. The name Kotafon means “the Fon of Ko” (Pazzi 1979:18).

The Ministère du Plan et de la Restruction Economique du Bénin (1994a:3) reports that the Ayizo are strongly attached to their land and to their agricultural way of life. According to Kpataclo (1998, personal communication), the name “Ayizo” means “les Aja qui sont partis de loin” (the Aja who went far away). In contrast, the language informants in Tori-Bossito maintained the name is derived from the voodoo fetish located in Allada that is believed to protect the region. The people who live within this fetish’s protective geographic radius refer to themselves accordingly.

3. **Research questions**

The purpose of this survey is twofold: (1) to assess whether and to what extent existing literature and literacy efforts in Fon and Gen could extend to the Ayizo communities, or whether an additional language-based development program in Ayizo would be beneficial, and (2) to gather data that would help determine the nature and extent of SIL’s possible involvement among these communities.

For the current study, the evaluation of need for separate literature is based on criteria established by Marmor (1997). More specifically, the evaluation of literature development needs is based on the factors of dialect intercomprehension, language vitality, and language attitudes. Pertinent to the issue of a potential reference dialect for the Phla-Phera cluster, information regarding the Ayizo dialect situation and the relationship of Ayizo to other Gbe varieties (dealt with under dialect intercomprehension and language attitudes) was collected.

1. **Dialect intercomprehension**
   - What are the geographical boundaries of the Ayizo speech variety, which dialects of Ayizo, if any, exist?
   - What are the Fon comprehension levels throughout the Ayizo communities and might these levels be adequate for the use of Fon written materials?
   - Are there any other developed Gbe varieties that are understood at high levels throughout the Ayizo community and which Gbe varieties would the Ayizo communities choose to group themselves with in terms of comprehension?

2. **Language vitality**
   - Are there indications of occurring or impending language shift?

3. **Language attitudes**
   - What are the Ayizo community’s attitudes toward the oral and written forms of Fon?
   - What are the Ayizo community’s attitudes toward other related Gbe varieties?
   - What are community attitudes toward the development of Ayizo?
There are some additional questions, most of which are directly related to the priority and strategy criteria outlined above and which provide updated information for the area. These questions are:

- What is the ethnic identity of Ayizo speakers?
- What is the size of the Ayizo population?
- Are there already literacy classes in the Ayizo area? If so, in which language(s)?
- What is the religious make-up of the Ayizo communities and which languages are used in the religious domain?

4. Methodology

4.1. Assessment techniques

The survey approach was based on Stalder’s description of Rapid Appraisal Survey (Stalder 1996a). The main research techniques used were the community interview, and Rapid Appraisal Recorded Text Tests (RA-RTTs).

Community questionnaires were used to explore the following topics: dialect intercomprehension, language vitality, language attitudes, ethnic identity, literacy situation, and religious make-up. RA-RTTs were administered to investigate Fon and Gen comprehension. (See Appendix B for an example of the questionnaire and Appendix C for the RA-RTT texts.)

RA-RTTs allow for a general indication of comprehension, either good, partial, or no comprehension. These levels are defined by Stalder (1996b:26) as follows:

- **Level 3** Good comprehension: The story is retold accurately and the people are able to give details.
- **Level 2** Partial comprehension: When retelling the different sections, people invent and add to the story. If asked, they are not able to answer details.  
- **Level 1** No comprehension: The group is not able to respond even to the general story lines.

The Gen text was developed in 1997 by a first language (L1) speaker of Gen, a national linguist. The Fon text was elicited in 1998 from an L1 speaker of Fon, a translator for Alliance Biblique. This translator was assisted by another Fon translator for the word-by-word and free translations into French.

Baseline calibration was performed by administering the tests to five native speakers of Fon and three native speakers of Gen, respectively, playing two or three sentences at a time, and asking the L1 speakers to report what they had heard. Only those items which were retold accurately were retained on the tally list for that particular test. During the calibration of the three texts, the researchers were assisted by the two L1 speakers from whom the texts had been elicited.

This survey’s modifications to Stalder’s (1996b) method are the baseline calibration and shorter replay sections.

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6Stalder (1996b:26) adds that “it is interesting to observe attitudes and to compare what the same people expressed about intercomprehension in the context of the enquiries based on questionnaires.”
Before the survey was commenced, preliminary interviews were held to gather pertinent background information from the following sources:

- The King of Allada’s counselors at the King’s Palace in Togoudo (near Allada).
- The sous-préfet of Tori-Bossito who provided information on the Ayizo-speaking locations in his sous-préfecture.
- B. Kpataclo, a Beninese linguist from the Abomey-Calavi area, and a pastor for the Allada Assemblies of God Church.
- B. Belli and J. Singerman, two Southern Baptist missionaries who live in Allada and work in the surrounding Ayizo language area.

4.2. Implementation

The vast majority of Ayizo speakers live in the Atlantique département, while they do not form a significant enough population of the Mono département. Hence, the research was conducted in three villages the Atlantique département, initially chosen based on information taken from the *Atlas sociolinguistique du Bénin* (CNL du Bénin 1983:62f; see also Section 2.2 ‘Language area’). In choosing these villages an effort was made to choose those Ayizo communities which were assumed to be representative of the existing Ayizo varieties.

The following villages were selected:

- Kpodji-Dénou (an Ayizo-Kogbe speaking village in the sous-préfecture of Allada, rural commune of Lon-Agamey)
- Tori-Kada (and Ayizo-Tori speaking village in sous-préfecture of Tori-Bossito, rural commune of Tori-Kada)
- Yékon-Aga (an Ayizo-Séto speaking village in the sous-préfecture of Abomey-Calavi, rural commune of Glo-Djigbe)

Although the researchers did not visit Ayizo villages in the sous-préfectures of Kpomasse, Toffo, or Zè where Ayizo is also spoken, some questions were posed about the Ayizo speakers in those areas (see also Section 2.2 ‘Language area’).

During informal interviews held with the chief of each village in order to make arrangements for the official community interviews, it was confirmed that these villages were Ayizo-speaking.

Ideally, community interviews are conducted in conjunction with the RA-RTTs. While the community interviews may be administered to a small group of community leaders, the RA-RTTs should be administered to larger groups. Ideally, a group with at least five participants from each of the following “social groups” takes part in the test:

- Men of about 20 years of age (“younger men”)
- Men of about 40 years of age (“older men”)
- Women of about 20 years of age (“younger women”)
- Women of about 40 years of age (“older women”)


During the Ayizo survey, the community interviews were administered to the village chief (mayor of the commune or appointed délégué) and his counselors and/or elders. It was, however, not possible to administer the Fon RA-RTT in all three survey locations to large and heterogeneous groups.

Only in Kpodji-Dénou, there were at least five people from each social group, if not many more, who took part in the community interview and the Fon RA-RTT. However, in Yékon-Aga, only men were present for both the community interview and the RA-RTT. In Tori-Kada only the intellectuals of the community were present for the interview, so it was decided not to do the RA-RTT with them as they were not a representative sample of the population.

The RA-RTT was executed by first playing the whole narrative to the group, and then replaying it section by section (a section being about 2 or 3 sentences). During replay, after each section, one social group was to retell the contents of the section in Ayizo with some care being taken to include the whole social group in the process, e.g. by each time asking a different person from the targeted social group to retell the narrative section. If necessary and feasible, the social group was asked to furnish more details and if requested, the section was replayed. During the retelling, a tally was taken based on the tally lists previously established during the baseline calibration of the test.

During the field research, the researchers were accompanied by a Beninese linguist from the Abomey-Calavi area, and by a pastor for the Allada Assemblies of God Church. Both served the researchers as interpreters.

5. Results

In the following sections, data gathered from the community interviews and the preliminary interviews, as well as the results from the Fon RA-RTT, will be presented according to the following topics: Ayizo dialect situation (Section 5.1), Ayizo and related Gbe varieties (Section 5.2), tested comprehension of Fon (Section 5.3), language vitality (Section 5.4), literacy situation (Section 5.5), and religious situation (Section 5.6). Language attitudes toward Ayizo, Fon, and other Gbe varieties will be discussed under pertinent sections as appropriate.

5.1. Ayizo dialect situation

5.1.1. Dialect areas

All survey interviewees identified themselves as Ayizo (an identity apparently linked to the area fetish in Allada) who have migrated from the Ajatado (or Tado) region in Togo to the Abomey-Calavi region in southern Benin. More specifically, the Ayizo-speaking region can be encompassed by a line beginning at the town of Abomey-Calavi running counter-clockwise to Kpomè, Toffo, Lon-Agamey, then south to just west of Tori-Bossito and returning to its point of origin (see also Appendix A for a map of the area).

According to the information gathered in the three community interviews, in the region around Abomey-Calavi, the Ayizo are found bordering RNIE 2 (the principal north/south highway), up to Allada. They also live in the area directly north of Abomey-Calavi around Zïnvié and Sèdjè-Dénou to Aguiaakpa. Some of these villages’ populations are mixed with Tofin speakers. In the region around Allada, the northernmost limit of the Ayizo-speaking area is found at the village of Kpomè (northeast
of Sèhouè on RNIE 2 towards Bohicon). The western border is a roughly drawn line between Toffo and Lon-Agamey. In this area some villages have mixed populations with Fon speakers. West of this line are Ci villages. The Ayizo region around Tori-Bossito begins south of Allada continuing south to a point roughly two-thirds of the distance between Tori-Bossito and Ouidah. Some of these villages have mixed populations of Kogbe (that is, Ayizo-Kogbe (see the following)), Fon and Saxwe speakers. The eastern border of the Ayizo variety around Tori-Bossito is not easily distinguished from that of the variety around Abomey-Calavi. The western border is a laterite road that branches off from the paved road connecting Tori-Bossito and Ouidah and circumnavigates Tori-Bossito at a radius of approximately 10 kilometers.

Within the Ayizo language area, three geographical varieties are most commonly distinguished: Ayizo-Kogbe, Ayizo-Tori, and Ayizo-Séto.

− Ayizo-Kogbe is spoken in the north and north-western part of the Ayizo area. The dialect area stretches west to east from the Kouffo River to the Ouémé River. The valley at Sèhouè defines the northern limits of this variety and Allada is reported to be the southern border.

− Ayizo-Tori is spoken in the south-central Ayizo language area. The dialect area begins just south of Allada to the area all around Tori-Bossito continuing south, west of the main road to Lake Nokoué. Its influence wanes where the Xwela influence takes over, approximately two-thirds of the way to Ouidah from Tori-Bossito.

− Ayizo-Séto is spoken in the east and south-eastern portion of the Ayizo language area. The dialect area encompasses the town and region of Abomey-Calavi stretching north to Zinvié and ending around Sèdjè-Dénou. The name “Séto,” “sé” (God) and “to” (a source of water), meaning “the well that comes from God” is an apt one as this region touches the western shoreline of Lake Nokoué.

More specifically, the interviewees in Kpodji-Dénou and Yékon-Aga confirmed that they refer to their own speech varieties as Ayizo-Kogbe (or simply Ayizo) and Ayizo-Séto, respectively. In Tori-Kada, the informants most often referred to their language as Tori rather than Ayizo-Tori.

Although survey informants distinguished between these three varieties, they also considered the other groups as their “brothers.” The Kogbe informants in Kpodji-Dénou, however, consider the Séto and the Tori “comme nos frères qu’on ne connaisse pas” (as our brothers whom we do not know). This statement possibly reflects the reported perceptions with respect to dialect intercomprehension between the three groups (for more details see Section 5.1.2 ‘Dialect intercomprehension’).

While most informants distinguished three geographical varieties of Ayizo, some informants claimed that there are five different varieties. Some interviewees divided Ayizo-Kogbe into an eastern and a western variety of Ayizo-Kogbe and some interviewees in Tori-Kada (who were mostly the “intellectuals” of the area) also noted Zè as a different variety.

Kpataclo (1998, personal communication) also distinguished more than three varieties of Ayizo. He claimed that the Ayizo variety spoken in Abomey-Calavi is the original Ayizo dialect and differs from that spoken in Tori-Bossito which is again different from those spoken in Zè, Allada, Toffo, and Ouèdo. These differences are slight, however, and most Ayizo speakers can understand each other.

7The Ayizo-Séto informants in Yékon-Aga included the Tofin among those they regard as their brothers along with the Ayizo-Kogbe and Ayizo-Tori.
Grimes (1996) lists Kadagbe as a dialect of Ayizo. However, this name was not used by any of the informants during the field research. It perhaps derives from Tori-Kada, the name of the village close to Tori-Bossito where a community interview was done for this survey.

5.1.2. Dialect intercomprehension

Since there are three, or perhaps five, geographical varieties of Ayizo, the question of degree of comprehension between speakers of these varieties arises.

According to information given during the community questionnaires regarding comprehension between the three varieties of Ayizo-Kogbe, Ayizo-Tori, and Ayizo-Séto, the speakers of Ayizo-Séto and Ayizo-Tori have the least difficulty understanding the others’ speech. The informants in Tori-Kada (Ayizo-Tori) reported that the two are, in fact, the same language, and that even the farmers (those who have not traveled from the Tori region) understand Séto. The informants in Yékon-Aga (Ayizo-Séto) did report that there are small phonetic differences but that this does not impede comprehension, and that children can understand Tori. Even those interviewed in Kpodji-Dénou (Ayizo-Kogbe) reported that Ayizo-Tori and Ayizo-Séto speakers understand each other.

With respect to Ayizo-Kogbe, the Ayizo-Séto interviewees in Yékon-Aga speakers maintained that Fon and Gun are mixed into Kogbe. Along similar lines, the Ayizo-Tori informants in Tori-Kada perceived Kogbe to be mixed with Fon (“un fon tourné”), and that Kogbe is closer to Fon than to Tori. Hence, farmers in their area would not understand this Ayizo variety. Likewise, Tori farmers would not understand the Ayizo variety spoken in Zè which is somewhat different from Kogbe with respect to its lexicon. The Tori informants added, however, that speakers from the Kogbe and the Zè areas understand one another well.

While Tori and Séto speakers perceived Ayizo-Kogbe as mixed with Fon (and Gun), the Ayizo-Kogbe speakers in Kpodji-Dénou claimed that their variety of Ayizo is the “true Ayizo.” Concerning their comprehension of Ayizo-Tori and Ayizo-Séto, they reported that they have more difficulty understanding Tori than Séto. The interviewees added that they switch to Fon whenever they have difficulties in interacting with Tori or Séto speakers. They also reported that Kogbe-speaking children understand Fon better than they understand Tori or Séto, presumably due to contact with Fon. In contrast, Kpataclô (1998, personal communication) believed that an Ayizo-Kogbe speaker who remains in the village will understand the other two geographical varieties of Ayizo better than Fon.

5.2. Ayizo and related Gbe varieties

In order to arrive at some indication of which other Gbe varieties the Ayizo would choose to group themselves with, the communities surveyed were asked to classify related Gbe varieties as being “like” or “unlike” Ayizo. Respondents in all three community interviews were also asked which varieties they find easiest, or hardest, to understand, as well as to describe which varieties they would choose to use when faced with a need to communicate with a speaker of another Gbe variety.

The reported data are presented below with the speech varieties included in Capo’s (1986) Phla-Phera grouping discussed first in alphabetical order, followed by Ci, Fon, Gun, and Gen.
5.2.1. Kotafon

The Kotafon area is located to the northwest of the Ayizo-Kogbe area. Respondents in Kpodji-Dénou (Ayizo-Kogbe area) differed in their opinions about Kotafon. Some said it was a bit different while others maintained it was the same language and easier to understand than Fon. The informants even stated that when the Kotafon come to the Ayizo-Kogbe area, the local people cannot identify the origins of their visitors. This implies high similarity between the varieties.

Informants in Tori-Kada reported that they find Kotafon harder to understand than Ayizo-Kogbe, and that when they interact with Kotafon speakers, they both use Fon.

Interviewees in the Ayizo-Séto area said that Kotafon, Tori and Séto are similar, and that they use Ayizo-Séto when speaking with Kotafon speakers who in turn respond in Kotafon. Therefore, it seems that Kotafon is very similar to Ayizo-Kogbe, and perhaps closer to Ayizo-Séto than to Ayizo-Tori. At the same time, however, the Ayizo-Séto informants said that they understand Fon better than Kotafon.

5.2.2. Saxwe

The Saxwe area is located to the west and southwest of the Ayizo area, to the west of the Kouffo river while the Ayizo area is located to the east of the river. One informant in Tori-Kada claimed that the people living east of the Kouffo river call all those who live to the west of the river “Aja,” while many are actually Saxwe speakers. Some informants spoke of Aja speakers living in the Tori-Bossito sous-préfecture, but they are probably Saxwe. These statements suggest a lack of contact with the people groups living west of the river, including the Saxwe.

5.2.3. Toli

Toli turned out to be an ambiguous term. Throughout the survey there was some confusion among respondents to distinguish between the Gbe variety Toli which is spoken in the Porto Novo area and the Ayizo dialect Ayizo-Tori (maybe the confusion was due to the r/l distinction). The Ayizo-Tori in Tori-Kada speakers reported that the speech of the Toli speakers who live north of Porto Novo has accent differences when compared with Tori speakers in the Tori-Bossito region. These differences, however, are said to be minor and do not impede comprehension.

In addition, the Ayizo-Tori interviewees reported that they identify with the Toli of Porto Novo. More specifically, they explained a link between ceremonies in the area which require Toli speakers from the Porto Novo area to be present in order for the ceremonies to work properly. There is also a connection between the King of Porto Novo and the Allada region, in that when he dies it is said that “he goes to Allada.”

Ayizo-Séto speakers maintained that they use Séto while the Toli speakers use Toli when interacting with each other. The interviewees also reported that there is a tie between their group and the Toli due to mixed marriages.

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8This confusion might be an indication that there is not much difference between both speech varieties, a hypothesis to be explored in a future survey in the Porto Novo area.
Ayizo-Kogbe speakers said they do not understand Toli.

5.2.4. Xwela

The Xwela area is located in the Ouidah area, to the south of the Ayizo area. The Ayizo-Kogbe speakers reported no understanding of Xwela. Those in Tori-Kada said they use Fon with Xwela speakers, and those in Ayizo-Séto use their language, and the others respond in Xwela.

5.2.5. Xwla

The Xwla area is located in the Grand-Popo area to the southwest of the Ayizo area. There seems to be very little contact with or understanding of this Gbe lect, except among the Ayizo-Tori who reported that they understand Xwla a little bit.

5.2.6. Ci

The Ci area is located to the northwest of the Ayizo-Kogbe area. Respondents in Kpodji-Dénou (Ayizo-Kogbe area) reported that Ci is different from their language, but that they understand it. When they speak with a Ci speaker, each uses their own language, implying some degree of mutual comprehension. In addition, marriage was reported to be a tie between the Kogbe and the Ci.

The Ayizo-Tori and Ayizo-Séto respondents were not familiar with Ci.

5.2.7. Fon

In all survey locations the informants reported high levels of Fon comprehension. The only people who reportedly do not understand Fon were some older people (in Tori-Kada) and children before they begin school (Ayizo-Séto area). In addition, one interviewee maintained that Ayizo speakers may not understand the Fon Bible as well. In Kpodji-Dénou, the informants maintained that the children understand Fon better than Ayizo-Tori and Ayizo-Séto.

This high level of Fon comprehension appears to be due to the linguistic closeness between Ayizo and Fon as well as due to language use patterns. Concerning the linguistic closeness between both varieties, some informants stated that the only difference between the two varieties is the accent, while other informants claimed the difference lies in the tones. With respect to language use patterns, Fon is used in addition to Ayizo in public domains, in churches, for interactions between various language groups, and in literacy. Moreover, Fon is the language of choice in interactions between Ayizo and Fon speakers.

The Ayizo informants also noted that Fon speakers have a harder time understanding the Ayizo than vice versa. This could be due to linguistic factors but also due to the language use patterns in the area in

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9 The Séto informants also reported mixed marriages between the Séto and the Tofin.

10 Pazzi (1979:24) maintains that two tonal systems exist among the Gbe languages: the Ayizo have a “ton ponctuel” (punctual tone) while the Fon have a “ton modulation” (moderated tone).
that Fon and not Ayizo is the language of choice in interactions between Ayizo and Fon speakers. The Ayizo-Kogbe informants added that when they use Fon, the Fon speakers still realize that they are L1 Ayizo speakers.

Overall, the attitudes expressed toward Fon were positive. There was also some evidence of it being seen as a prestige language. Sometimes Ayizo who have lived away from their home area use Fon to display a broader than local identity and to demonstrate that they have lived away from their home area. Some Ayizo also use Fon when in another area to show that they are from a different Ayizo area. In addition, “intellectuals” use Fon at times in their discussions. Along similar lines, Kpataclo (1998, personal communication) thought that some young Ayizo want to assimilate to the Fon. Only in Tori-Kada, informants reported that some young people insist on using Tori in public meetings rather than Fon.

5.2.8. Gun

Interviewees in the Ayizo-Kogbe area reported that they understand Gun very well, while those in the Ayizo-Séto region reported lack of understanding. In Tori-Kada the informants said that “Alada-gbe” is the same as Gun.

5.2.9. Gen

All informants claimed that they do not understand Gen.

5.2.10. Summary

Among the above varieties, Kotafon is understood the best in the northern Ayizo area and Toli in the southern. Only the Ayizo-Kogbe speakers are familiar with Ci. Xwla and Xwela are reportedly not widely understood.

5.3. Tested comprehension of Fon

As explained in Section 4.1 ‘Assessment techniques,’ RA-RTTs result in an assessment of understanding on a three-level scale: good, partial or no comprehension. Overall, the RA-RTT results indicate “good comprehension” (Stalder 1996b) of Fon, i.e. the story was retold accurately and the people were able to give details.

It is noted though that only in Kpodji-Dénou, the Fon RA-RTT was administered to all four social groups while in Yékon-Aga, only men were present for the RA-RTT. In Tori-Kada, the Fon RA-RTT was administered due to an unrepresentative sample of the population who participated in the research.

More specifically, in the Ayizo-Kogbe speaking village of Kpodji-Dénou, all four social groups displayed “good comprehension.” In Yékon-Aga, both the older and younger men also displayed “good comprehension;” in this Ayizo-Séto speaking village only men participated in the community interview and Fon RA-RTT.
5.4. Language vitality

In all the survey locations, the local Ayizo variety was reportedly firmly in use in all private and public domains.

In addition to Ayizo, however, Fon is also used in public domains, in churches, and in literacy. Fon is also used to accommodate non-Ayizo speakers in public settings. At Tori-Kada, for example, the only exception where Ayizo is not spoken is at the sous-préfectures when Fon is in use. The explanation given for this arrangement was stated in the following terms, “Ils ne sont pas des autochtones” (They (meaning the officials) are not from the region). Paralleling this accommodation are judgments in the family if a member is of another language group, then his/her language is also used.

Several cases were mentioned that indicate a shift in language usage for some individuals. As mentioned previously, Ayizo speakers who leave their villages to travel and then return to the Ayizo area will often speak Fon in their homes, and some intellectuals use Fon among themselves. However, the situation does not appear to be widespread.

Contact with Fon speakers, however, appears to be prevalent throughout the Ayizo area. Interviewees in all three survey locations reported that Fon speakers were living in most villages, having moved into the area as farmers or as government workers. In addition, mixed marriages with the Fon were reported in all three areas.11 Due to this contact, Ayizo children are reportedly fluent in Fon by the age of 12 if not younger. The primary source of Ayizo children’s contact with Fon speakers comes when they go to “collège” (secondary school). When Ayizo children are among the Fon, they will speak Fon, but they are readily recognized as Ayizo by their accent. Fon speakers do not attempt to speak Ayizo.

While attitudes toward Fon are positive, overt attitudes towards Ayizo are generally also very positive. On several occasions during the community questionnaires, for example, remarks were made in Fon and others would urge the participant to speak in Ayizo. Along the same lines, interviewees in Yékon-Aga stated, “Nous sommes trop habitués avec le fon” (We are too accustomed to hearing Fon). During this same interview the mayor of the commune said, “I want my language to be officially recognized; they are passing over us with the other languages” (i.e., Fon and French).

One of the survey interpreters, however, felt that the Ayizo are sometimes ashamed to speak their language. Historically, the Ayizo were viewed by the more populous groups in the south as being mere “villageois” (simple villagers). However, as the city of Cotonou has spread into traditionally Ayizo areas in the last ten to fifteen years, the perception of the Ayizo as villagers is changing as they have become more “cosmopolitan” in the sense of acquiring higher education, diplomas and holding positions in the government.

Some of the informants expressed fears, however, that due to the expansion of Cotonou the Ayizo language is losing ground to Fon as it is the Ayizo who must linguistically accommodate the more numerous Fon speakers.

In summary, the reported data gathered in this survey demonstrate that Ayizo is in widespread use in most domains and in no immediate danger of being replaced by Fon. However, there may be more usage of Fon than is recognized at a conscious level. As both survey interpreters remarked, code-

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11 One informant stated that intermarriage with Gen, Gun, Yoruba, and northern peoples is also highly prevalent among the Ayizo population. This assertion was reinforced during the Yékon-Aga interview when the mayor of the commune of Glodjigbè, who is married to a Mina woman, remarked “La langue ne limite pas l’amour” (Language does not limit love).
switching in Ayizo villages between Ayizo and Fon is not uncommon, and much of the time is apparently unconscious.

5.5. **Literacy situation**

5.5.1. **Ayizo**

Early in the development of a national literacy program, the Beninese government grouped languages together for literacy purposes. As a result of this policy, Ayizo was grouped under the Fon literacy program where it remains today.

However, the informants in all three survey locations expressed interest in Ayizo literacy materials and classes, and would prefer literacy in Ayizo to Fon. The “intellectuals” who were present at the Yékon-Aga interview even expressed interest in being involved in Ayizo language development. During this discussion on Ayizo development, the question was posed in Tori-Kada regarding which Ayizo to use for the written form. Some of the interviewees thought that all three dialects would need to be used. So far, however, none of interviewees had seen anything written in Ayizo (except for reportedly a few words in Séto), or knew of anyone who tried to write in Ayizo. The informants thought, though, that it would not be difficult to adapt the Fon alphabet to form one for Ayizo. The mayor of the Yékon-Aga explained that those who make such attempts use the Fon alphabet, each one having his/her own way of writing.

In contrast to these reports, Belli (1998, personal communication) and Singerman (1998, personal communication) reported the existence of two Ayizo primers which appear to be the limit of Ayizo language development to date. The second primer set contains three books, but at the time of the survey, these materials had not yet been distributed. Reportedly, the initial Ayizo primer did not please the literacy workers due to several vocabulary choices in the text. Belli reported that it was evident that the primer was put together by an Ayizo speaker from Zè due to some word choices in the materials.

5.5.2. **Fon**

Presently, there are Fon literacy programs in the sous-préfectures in all three survey locations. However, at the village level, the literacy classes in Yékon-Aga, begun at the time of Benin’s Marxist government, were shut down due to a lack of funding. Since that time, Fon and French literacy classes have been reinstated, funded, and maintained by an order of Catholic sisters in the commune. Fon literacy is comprised of one cycle per year. The syllabus uses three books requiring nine months to work through. Classes are held two to three times each week and at the end of the completed cycle, the sous-préfet presents the diplomas to the graduates.

The current Fon literacy project in Allada is tied to an agricultural credit union (CLCAM) and the volunteer literacy workers teach both adults and children alike. Belli (1998, personal communication) spoke of a training course in Hinvi for literacy workers. Of the twenty volunteers in training, it is reported that there are L1 Ayizo speakers among them. After training, these volunteers work primarily in the villages. In Kpodji-Dénou it was reported that with a Fon primer, in one and a half months people could learn to read Fon.
The overall attitude expressed regarding Fon literacy in the survey locations is positive. In Yékon-Aga, a comment was made that many of the women would also be interested in such classes. However, if given a choice between Fon and Ayizo literacy, the general consensus was that they would prefer literacy in Ayizo.

5.6. Religious situation

The Ayizo people are traditionally animists. However, there is also a strong Christian presence in the area. Islam is also represented in the region, to a lesser extent though: no mosques were known to exist in areas of Kpodji-Dénou and Yékon-Aga.

Throughout the Ayizo language area a variety of different church denominations exists: Assemblées de Dieu, Catholic, Christianisme Celeste, Eglise Evangélique Universelle, Eglises de Renaissance, Eglises Evangéliques, Pentecôte de Foi, and many small Pentecostal churches.

The languages predominantly used in the churches throughout the Ayizo language area are Fon and French and, to a lesser extent, Ayizo. In some areas, Gun is also used. The congregations, reportedly, consider the use of Fon to be a major improvement over the past, when church services were held in French only. Nowadays, French is still used in some denominations, e.g. for Bible readings or sermons, but usually translations into Fon are provided. Overall, the churches along the main paved road are reported to use Fon, while the others use a mixture of Fon and Ayizo.

More specifically, interviewees from Kpodji-Dénou reported that when the Fon Bible is read, a translation is not needed because everyone understands Fon, but an explanation is given in Ayizo in order that it “stays in the hearts” of those who hear it. For sermons, prayers, announcements, and church meetings Ayizo is used. Songs are sung in Fon as they have not been written in Ayizo. In the area of Tori-Kada, Fon is reportedly the predominant language in the churches, although French is also used for Bible readings in Pentecôte Church and for songs in the Catholic Church. In Yékon-Aga, both Fon and French are used. In the Catholic Church, women’s meetings are held in Ayizo-Séto and youth meetings in French and Ayizo-Séto, unless a Fon speaker attends, and then Fon is used so that they will understand.

6. Summary and conclusions

The purpose of this survey was to assess whether and to what extent existing literature and literacy efforts in Fon could extend to the Ayizo communities, or whether an additional language-based development program in Ayizo would be beneficial, and to gather data that would help determine the nature and extent of SIL’s possible involvement among these communities. The following areas were investigated:

1. Comprehension and language attitudes with regard to Fon
2. Language vitality of Ayizo
3. Language attitudes towards Ayizo language development

Pertinent to the issue of a potential reference dialect for the Phla-Phera cluster was the issue of the Ayizo dialect situation and the relationship of Ayizo to other Gbe varieties (comprehension, language
attitudes, and use regarding related Gbe varieties). In the following, this issue will be summarized under ‘Ayizo and other related Gbe varieties’ (Section 6.4).

6.1. Comprehension and attitudes with regard to Fon

Regarding comprehension of Fon, the RA-RTT results indicate overall “good comprehension” in Ayizo-Kogbe (among all social groups) and in Ayizo-Sétó (among the men); (women were tested in the Ayizo-Sétó area and no comprehension testing was conducted in the Ayizo-Tori area). That is, the testees were able to tell the story accurately and did not add details to the story.

All interviewees reported high comprehension of Fon, as well as the ability to speak Fon when interacting with Fon speakers. This indicates not only a receptive knowledge of Fon, but also a productive knowledge. The question remains as to whether there is competence in Fon in all language domains, particularly at higher levels, and for all the social groups in the region.

This high level of Fon comprehension appears to be due to the linguistic closeness between Ayizo and Fon as well as due to language contact and language use patterns. Contact reported was with government workers and farmers living in the region, and for children when they begin to attend secondary school. Fon is the language of choice in interactions between Ayizo and Fon speakers and used in addition to Ayizo in public domains, in churches, and in literacy. There were a few reports of lack of comprehension of Fon – among some older people and children before they begin school. Also, explanations in church are sometimes given in Ayizo, presumably to be sure that the information is well understood.

In general, the Ayizo speakers’ attitudes toward Fon are positive. The ability to speak Fon is perceived as a mark of an education and/or of someone who has traveled beyond the confines of his/her village.

6.2. Ayizo language vitality

Ayizo is reportedly in use in all village domains and shows no immediate danger of being replaced by Fon. Fon is used in official and church contexts and is sometimes included alongside Ayizo in situations when the audience is not entirely Ayizo-speaking. However, in all other domains Ayizo is used.

6.3. Attitudes towards Ayizo language development

Overall, the Ayizo people expressed positive attitudes towards Ayizo language development and people would prefer written materials in Ayizo to Fon. However, these expressed attitudes need to be seen in view of the fact that efforts by the Ayizo people to promote the development of their language are apparently very limited.

None of the interviewed literacy workers or village communities reported any organized literacy efforts in Ayizo nor had anyone seen any materials written in Ayizo, including the two sets of Ayizo primers mentioned by Belli (1998, personal communication) and Singerman (1998, personal communication).

While people would prefer literacy in Ayizo, they were not opposed to having materials in Fon.
6.4. Ayizo and other related Gbe varieties

The Ayizo language as a whole is not linguistically uniform. It appears to be grouped into three, geographically distinct varieties, that is, Ayizo-Kogbe, Ayizo-Tori and Ayizo-Séto, although some informants reported five varieties. Ayizo-Tori dominates the south-central Ayizo language area. Ayizo-Séto is spoken in the east and south-eastern portion of the region. Ayizo-Kogbe is found in the north and north-western part of the language area. Intelligibility varies between the Ayizo dialects. Ayizo-Tori and Ayizo-Séto speakers have the highest reported degree of intercomprehension. This is followed by Ayizo-Kogbe and Ayizo-Séto who have a good degree of intercomprehension. The lowest degree occurs between speakers of Ayizo-Tori and Ayizo-Kogbe. Fon remains the default language when communication difficulties arise in any of the above combinations. Intelligibility is affected by contact, one factor being geographical proximity.

It is difficult, if not impossible, for the researchers to say whether the recognized solidarity within the Ayizo group is primarily based on religion (the shared fetish), history, or on language. Indications of all factors were raised during the survey.

Comprehension of other neighboring Gbe languages varies across the three Ayizo dialect areas:

- Ayizo-Kogbe speakers reportedly have high comprehension of Kotafon and Gun and good comprehension of Ci, but no comprehension of Toli, Xwela, and Gen. Likewise, the Ayizo-Kogbe seem to have no comprehension of Xwla or any contact with Xwla speakers. Neither do they seem to be familiar with the Saxwe.
- Ayizo-Tori speakers have reportedly high comprehension of Toli, but low comprehension of Xwla. Likewise, they seem have low or no comprehension of Xwela, using Fon in interactions with Xwela speakers. Neither do they have any comprehension of Gen. Comprehension of Kotafon is lower than that of Ayizo-Kogbe, with informants using Fon in their interactions with Kotafon speakers. The Ayizo-Tori informants are not familiar with Ci and neither do they seem to be familiar with the Saxwe.
- Ayizo-Séto speakers have high comprehension for Kotafon, and good comprehension for Toli and Xwela. The Ayizo-Séto seem to have no comprehension of Xwla and no contact with Xwla speakers. Further, the informants reportedly have no comprehension of Gun and Gen and are not familiar with the Ci. Neither do they seem to be familiar with the Saxwe.

6.5. Conclusions

The Fon comprehension test results demonstrate “good comprehension” in the limited contexts in which they were examined for this survey. In addition, the interviewees reported high comprehension of Fon and the ability to speak Fon. Therefore, it appears likely that written materials in Fon would be adequately understood throughout the Ayizo community. A Fon literacy program is already in place in the Ayizo language area and reported attitudes toward literacy in Fon appear to be positive, even though the Ayizo would prefer literacy in Ayizo to Fon.

These findings suggest that Fon literacy might be a workable solution for the literacy needs of the Ayizo-speaking region provided there is adequate institutional support.
As stated above, the SIL strategy is to encourage the use of already developed language materials as widely as possible. In light of this, it appears that there is currently no need for SIL-related Ayizo language development.
Appendices

Appendix A. Map of the Ayizo language area

Figure 1: Map of the Ayizo language area (based on Microsoft Corporation 2002)\(^1\)

\(^1\)The data contained in this map represent the perceptions of the Ayizo informants and have not been otherwise confirmed. This map displays those places known to Microsoft Encarta’s “World atlas” (Microsoft Corporation 2002), and Google’s Map data (Google Maps 2009). The map does not display the rural commune of Gbédjafô (see Section 2.2 ‘Language area’).
Appendix B. Community questionnaire

(rev 4/98, SIL T/B)

Effectué le _____________ à ________________ par ______________________

Identité ethnique du chef: _______________; des vieux: _______________________

Abréviations:

A= Ayizo, C= Ci, F= Fon, Fr= French, Ge= Gen, Gu= Gun, K= Ko, Pl= Phla, Pr= Phera, T= Toli,
O= Oui, N= Non

1. LA LANGUE DE L’ENQUETE ET LES LANGUES VOISINES

1.1. Comment vous appelez votre propre langue? _________________________________

1.2. Quelle est l’origine du peuple de ce village? (Sonde la relation avec les fon)

Pour trouver l’étendue de la région où la langue est parlée, montrez une photocopie d’une carte de la région, et posez les questions suivantes. (Utiliser les feutres en couleur)

1.3. Dans quels villages votre langue (Ayizo) est-elle parlée? (demandez pour chaque village)

(Encerclez les villages où la langue est parlée; mettez des parenthèses autour des noms des villages où il n’est pas certain que la langue soit parlée)

1.4. Y a-t-il des villages où plusieurs langues sont parlées?

(Encadrez les villages où l’on trouve des locuteurs de plusieurs langues différentes)

1.5. Dans quels villages parle-t-on une langue différente que la votre? Quel est le nom de cette langue / ces langues?

(Soulignez les villages où il est certain que l’on parle une langue différente que celle en question, et écrivez le nom de celle-ci à coté du village – ceci pour déterminer les frontières de la langue étudiée)

2. DIALECTES DE LA LANGUE DE L’ENQUETE ET INTERCOMPREHENSION ENTRE LES VARIANTES

2.1. Nous avons entendu qu’il existe au moins 3 dialectes d’Ayizo, est-ce que c’est juste ou pas? Oui Non

(Si les informants mentionne Ayizo-kogbe, il faudra demander s’il y a des variantes là-dedans)

(Selon les renseignements fournis par l’enquêté, l’enquêteur devrait ...
− mettre la lettre A à coté des villages qui parlent le dialecte de l’enquête, B à coté des villages d’un autre groupe, C, etc.;
− tracer les lignes des frontières dialectales avec les lignes continues et pointillées.

2.2. Comment appelle-t-on les variantes qui parlent:

A? ___________________________ B? ___________________________

C? ___________________________ D? ___________________________
2.3. Est-ce que vous avez tous les mêmes origines?  O  N ______________________________

2.4. Est-ce que vous avez le même roi?  O  N ______________________________

2.5. Est-ce qu’ils sont comme des étrangers ou comme vos frères?  ______________________

2.6. Parmi les villages où votre langue (Ayizo) est parlée, où est-ce qu’ils parlent exactement comme vous?

2.7. Dans quels villages est-ce qu’ils parlent un peu différemment, mais vous les comprenez quand même?

2.8. Dans quels villages est-ce qu’ils parlent très différemment?  ______________________

2.9. Quelles sortes de différences existent entre (votre variante) et (les autres) (prononciation, vocabulaire emprunté)?

   Variety A – B:  ______________________________

   Variety A – C:  ______________________________

   Variety A – D:  ______________________________

   Variety A – E:  ______________________________

2.10. Quel dialecte avez-vous le plus de difficulté à comprendre?  ______________________

2.11. Lequel comprenez-vous le plus facilement?  ______________________________

2.12. Tous les enfants ici au village comprennent-ils bien les locuteurs ...?

   A:  Y  N
   B:  Y  N
   C:  Y  N
   D:  Y  N

2.13. Où est-ce qu’on parle votre langue le mieux?  ______________________________

3.  LES RELATIONS AVEC D’AUTRES LANGUES

3.1 Quelles autres langues se ressemblent à votre langue?  K  C  T  F  Ge  Gu  Autres: _________
(Sonde les autres possibilités)
3.2 Est-ce vous avez jamais parlé avec quelqu’un de:

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a) Vous parlez quelle langue avec eux?
   ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____

b) Ils vous répondent en quelle langue?
   ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____

3.3 La langue que vous comprenez le mieux, c’est laquelle?
   F K C T

3.4 C’est quelle langue que vous comprenez le moins bien?
   F K C T

3.5 Est-ce qu’un enfant de six ans de ce village (nommez le nom du village) peut comprendre
   Le fon? O N
   Le gen? O N

3.6 Sinon, quand il grandit, c’est à quel âge qu’il va comprendre le fon? ______ Le gen? ______

4. L’USAGE DE LA LANGUE/VARIANTÉ

4.1. La majorité de la population ici sont de quelle langue? _______ Les minorités? _______

4.2. Il y a des mariages mixtes? O N Si oui, avec qui? ________________________________
   La plupart des mariages mixtes sont avec quelle langue ________________________________

4.3. Quelle langue utilisez-vous pour:
   Annonces dans le village A F
   Rites de coutumes A F
   Jugements dans la famille A F
   Jugements au village A F
   Conseils d’anciens (au village) A F
   Réunions du conseil traditionnel (régionaux) A F

4.4. A part votre langue, quelle langue est utilisée le plus souvent
   ici dans votre village? ________________________________________________
   dans la région? ________________________________________________

5. ALPHABETISATION

5.1. Il y a des classes d’alphabétisation au village? O N __________________________
   Dans quelle(s) langue(s)? ________________________________________________
   Ça se passe combien de fois chaque année? ________________________________
Dans la région?  

O  N __________________________________________

Dans quelle(s) langue(s)? __________________________________________

Ça se passe combien de fois chaque année? __________________________________

5.2. Est-ce que vous avez jamais vu quelque-chose écrite en Ayizo?  

O  N __________________________

5.3. Est-ce que vous connaissez quelqu’un qui écrit en Ayizo?  

O  N __________________________

5.4. Si on va commencer un programme d’alphabétisation en fon, est-ce que les gens d’ici vont s’intéresser à ça et s’inscrire pour la classe?  

O  N __________________________________________

Et pour l’ayizo?  

O  N __________________________________________

6. INFORMATION GENERALE SUR LA COMMUNAUTE

6.1. Est-ce qu’il y a des églises ici?  

O  N __________________________________________

Si oui, quelle langue est utilisée pour:
le serment/l’homilie?  

A  F
pour les chants?  

A  F
les prières?  

A  F
les annonces?  

A  F
les réunions de prière ou des autres rendez-vous?  

A  F

6.2. Est-ce qu’il y a des mosquées ici?  

O  N __________________________________________

Si oui, quelle langue est utilisée pour:
prêcher?  

A  F
interpréter la lecture du Coran?  

A  F
Appendix C. RA-RTT Fon narrative

The following lines are in Fon, interlinear French and standard French.

1. hwenu e un do kpe ví ɔ, un nɔ kplá tɔ ce yi gle ta.
   Moment que je être petit je accompagne père mon aller champ sur.
   Quand j’étais petit j’accompagne mon père au champ.

   un nɔ yi xwa gbɛ xá ε.
   Je vais sarcler herbe avec lui.

2. enj mĩ xwa gbɛ fó ɔ, é jẽ hwelekkɔ ɔ, cõbonú mĩ nà lekɔ yì
   Si nous sarcler herbe terminer, il arriver après-midi avant que nous futur retourner
   Quand nous finissons le sarclage, dans l’après-midi avant de rentrer

   xwé gbe ɔ, mĩ mɛ yɔkɔnvú leɛ, mĩ do fɛca kpevi kpevi dɛ leɛ bó nɔ dɔ, 
   aller maison dans, nous petit plur., nous tendre piège petit petit plur. 
   à la maison, nous les enfants,

   bó nɔ dɔ wli afin, ogbɛjá ná dɔ gle me.
   et tendre et pour attraper souris rat avec être champs dans.
   nous tendons de petits pièges pour attraper des souris, des rats.

   ényi dɔ j lɛ mĩ dɔ ɔ, mĩ wã gle ta zãnzãn ɔ, mĩ nɔ yi kpɔn.
   Si nous tendre, nous venir champ sur matin, nous aller voir.
   Si nous tendons les pièges, le matin quand nous revenons au champ, nous les contrôlons.

3. é wù je gbe ḥokpo bɔ un dɔ fɛca ce.
   Il arriver tomber jour un et je tendre piège mon.
   Un jour, j’ai tenu mon piège.

   un mɔ dɔ afin wά ḥu finlínnyɛ dɔ fi dɛ, bó dɔ fɛca ɔ dɔ fínɛ 
   Je vu que souris venir manger manioc être endroit et tendre piège le là endroit
   J’ai constaté que les souris ont mangé le manioc sans un endroit et j’ai tendu là mon piège
bó blá finlínnye kpeví d'éj; hûn afin we un dò féca s ná.
et attacher manioc petit un sur donc souris c’est je tendre piège le pour
et attaché un petit morceau de manioc là-dessus;

4. gbe éné gbe 3, sibîgbe we, gbadanu, bó éé un dò féca 3, mî wâ yi xwé,
Jour ce jour samedi c’est, soir et lorsque je tendre piège le, nous venir aller maison
C'était un samedi soir, quand j'ai tendu le piège nous sommes retournés à la maison
be je aklunzángbe zânzân bó nyi dôkpono só nû bó wâ
et il tomber seigneur jour matin et moi seul apprêter
et le dimanche matin, je suis parti seul (dans le champ)
xwé yi gbe féca ce kpon gbé. aklunzángbe 3, medébî lecn nô wâ gleta â.
et venir aller aller piège mon regarder. Seigneur jour personne ne venir champ sur
pour aller regarder le piège. Le dimanche personne ne va au champ.

5. hûn nyi dôkpono géé we só nû bó yi gle 3 ta, bó ná yi kpon féca ce bó nû wâ yi.
Donc moi seul c’est apprêter et aller champ le sur, pour aller regarder piège mon
Donc je suis allé seul au champ pour aller regarder le piège pour revenir
xwé nû e gbé un tûn kpowun é jên né,
maison. Chose que je sortir seulement – ça
à la maison. Voilà le seul but que j’ai visé.

6. bó éé un yi gle 3 ta 3, un mlé odogbô
et lorsque je aller champ le sur, je suivre frontière
Arrivée dans le champ, j’ai pris par la frontière sur

e j un dò féca 3 dô 3, bó dô jijî we. ée un sekpo féca
rel sur je tendre piège le – et être aller c’est. Lorsque je approcher piège
laquelle j’ai tendu le piège. Lorsque je m’approche du piège
3 lê 3, bó kpon sédô lê kpowun 3, azêxe jên un ko mû dô
le aussitôt, et regarder de loin aussitôt seulement, sorcellerie-oiseau je déjà vu être
je l’ai regardé de loin, à une grande surprise, j’ai vu un hibou
fèca ce j' nukún klolo duu,
piège mon sur oeil “klolo duu”
sur mon piège, avec des yeux gros, arrondis (assortis),

7. bo xesi dì mì bɔ un hɔn dò un kpo də vû; nukûn tɔn ɔ, é kló dîn,
et peur ressembler moi et je fuir, car je encore être petit; oeil son – il gros trop
j'ai pris peur et j'ai pris la fuite parce que je suis encore petit, ses yeux sont trop gros,
un nɔ se azëxe xó, amɔ un mɔ eëdëcëdë mɔ kpɔn gbedé ɔ;
je entendra sorcellerie-oiseau parole mais je voir clairement ainsi jamais négatif;
j'entends parler d'hibou mais je ne l'ai jamais vu correctement,

8. nukûn nukontɔn ɔ ne un mɔ nè, bɔ nukûn tɔu dɔ duu dɔ fèca ɔ j.
premièrement cela, je voir là, et oeil son être “duu” être piège le sur
c'est pour ma première fois et ses yeux sont assortis sur le piège.

9. bɔ un dɔ xe élôsɔ, jô un kâ nà jô dô a? un dô nà hu i jen wc hûn.
et je dire oiseau ce laisser je laisser ques je devoir fut tuer le obliger
et j'ai dit cet oiseau, faut-il le laisser? Mais je does quand même le tuer.
Nê un nà wá gbọu? nye ịakpônc gëé wc ịa gle ɔ tə fi.
c'est donc comment je? faire Moi seule c'est être champ le sur ici
Qu'est-ce que je vais faire? Je suis seul ici dans le champ.

10. éne ɔ, un wá yi gbo kpo, kpo gaga dê bɔ un sixû kpûn nukûn tɔn mɛ ā.
Alors je venir aller couper bâton bâton long un et je pouvoir regarder oeil son dans neg
Alors je suis parti chercher un long bâton, et je ne peux pas regarder son visage.
Appendix C: RA-RTT Fon narrative

11. boné 5, nyi laó un dó ko zo; un dó ko ce zo bó dó féca 5 kɔn
et ainsi moi aussi je tourner cou loin je tourner cou mon loin et être piège le près de
alors moi aussi j’ai tourné mon regard ailleurs et je m’approche du piège

yi we dëdë, dëdë, bó un no fini kpón bléwun, un no fin kpón bo
aller c’est doucement doucement et je voler le regarder vite je voler le regarder et
très très doucement, jéssai de l’épiller (je ne le fixe pas), lorsque je suis

dée un sekpó e gángí kpowun 5, un bó kpo 5 dó n í;
 lorsque je approcher lui bien seulement je rouer bâton lui
bien proche de lui, je lui donne des coups,

12. un dó kpo 5 e. kúká nú un ná dó we, aton kpowun 5, é nyí kɔyɔɔ, bó nukún,
je taper bâton le lui avant que je taper deux, trois seulement, il être écrouler et oeil
je lui ai donné des coups. À peine il a reçu un ou deux coups, ils’est écroulé, et ses yeux

5 bû bó un dó éé né, un hu lan égbe.
le disparaître et je dire voilà je tuer viande aujourd’hui
sont fermés et j’ai dit voilà “très bien” j’ai tué un gibier aujourd’hui.

13. éé é kú nɔ 5 nukún 5 bɔdɔ, bó un wá yi féca 5 kɔn bó ke bó
lorsque il mourir ainsi oeil le fermer et je venir aller piège le près de et ouvrir et
Quand il est mort comme ça ses yeux se ferment (reserrer), je m’approche du piège, je
l’ouvre,

dée e sín me bó jó féca 5 myi do 5 nu finé, bó zé wá yi xwé;
enlever le dedans et laisser piège le être trou le bord là et prendre venir aller maison
je le sors et j’ai abandonné le piège à la place et j’emporte mon gibier à la maison

un zé wa yi
je prendre aller venir
j’emporte mon gibier à la maison
14. *xwé 5 un wá yi mǎ nàvì ce lec bô mǐ sun, mǐ sun bǐ bó bó,*
maison, je venir aller voir frère mon pl et nous déplumer, nous déplumer tout et et
Quand je l’amène à la maison, j’ai vu mes frères et nous l’avons déplumé, nous l’avons
complètement déplumer.

*qà qú bô lan tän viví qèsú.*
prepare manger et viande son doux beaucoup
Nous l’avons préparé, et sa viande est très douce.

*amɔ nga déyi ta 5 bó qo lé ta ɔ émí ná dô wa nũ nã.*
Mais homme un recevoir tête et dire que tête le lui avec faire chose avec.
Mais un homme a pris sa tête, il a dit qu’il va faire gris-gris avec la tête.

15. *mì dɛ ɛa qú ta 5 ɔ; amɔ nũ e kpo qo wůtu tän bó kpo lea bũ ɔ,*
Nous autres manger tête non; mais chose qui reste corps son et rester plu tout,
Nous n’avons pas mangé la tête, mais nous avons mangé tout le reste;

*mì ɔ̄;e viví sin ɡañj.*
nous manger; il doux eau bien
Il est très succulent.

16. *lëe un hu æ̃zex gbɔn ɔ, ëe nã, bɔ un flín le ɔ,*
comment je touer sorcellerie-oiseau ainsi, voilà, et je rappeler aussitôt,
Voilà comment j’ai tué un hibou. Chaque fois je me rappele cette histoire,

*ē nɔ hwën nû mi kâkå bɔ un nɔ ko, qò éé un mɔ e ɔ, xesì e qì mi ë*
il rire pour moi tellement et je rire, car lorsque je voir lui, peur qui ressembler moi,
ça me paraît ridicule et je ris (même) parce que quand je l’ai vu j’ai pris peur

*ṣyën bɔ un nɔ sœsœ qò te, bɔ un ka qo dandàn me ɔ, un nɔ nã hu.*
il est et je trembler debout, et je dire obligatoirement, je fut tuer
et j’ai tremblé. Mais j’ai dit que je dois forcément le tuer.

17. *hnún sánnu ɔ, súnnu jën nyì.*
Donc garçon le, garçon effectif être
Donc il n’y a pas un homme petit; l’homme est l’homme.
é ná nyí súnnu gán wé un dó ã ɔ, un ná jó xe ɔ dó nyi féca ɔ mè
Il non être garçon force c’est je taper je laisser oiseau le être piège le dans
Si je ne mets pas en jeu la force d’un homme (si je n’agit en tant qu’homme), je vais
laisser l’oiseau dans le piège
bɔ é sixú wá zɔn yi
et il pouvoir avenir voler aller
et il peut s’envoler.
hǔn lè un hu azɛxe gbɔn ɔ nè.
donc ainsi je tuer sorcellerie-oiseau ainsi
Donc voilà comment j’ai tué un hibou.
References


