

## Complementizers and Interrogative Clauses in Avatime

In this talk, we present the results of a preliminary examination of the complementizer system of Avatime (Sideme), an endangered Ghana-Togo Mountain (>Kwa) language of eastern Ghana. The talk is a contribution to the Clausal Complementation and Selection Project, an AFRANAPH sister project. Although there is some previous descriptive and analytical work on Avatime syntax (Ford 1971, 1988; van Putten 2014), this is the first detailed study of clausal complementation and interrogation in the language.

Avatime is a particularly interesting language to investigate because it possesses a number of complementizer-like “particles” that indicate different question types (WH, Yes/No, emphatic, speaker uncertainty, etc.) and have a complex distribution. We use the morpho-syntactically distinct forms of interrogation in Avatime as a probe into structural aspects of complementation. Avatime has basic SVO word order and an active noun class system. Some particles occur on the right edge of questions (and non-questions):

- |        |                                 |       |                |                    |
|--------|---------------------------------|-------|----------------|--------------------|
| (1) a. | εε-dɔ                           | srasɛ | (na)           | Yes/No             |
|        | 3SG.PROG-sleep.PRES             | sleep | Q              |                    |
|        | ‘Is he sleeping?’               |       |                |                    |
| b.     | ege wo-ji                       | (na)  | Wh             |                    |
|        | what 2SG-buy.PAST               | Q     |                |                    |
|        | ‘What did you buy?’             |       |                |                    |
| c.     | εε-dɔ                           | srasɛ | (ũ)            | (Wondering) Yes/No |
|        | 3SG.PROG-sleep.PRES             | sleep | Q              |                    |
|        | ‘Is he sleeping(, I wonder)?’   |       |                |                    |
| d.     | ege wo-ji                       | (ũ)   | (Wondering) Wh |                    |
|        | what 2SG-buy.PAST               | Q     |                |                    |
|        | ‘What did you buy(, I wonder)?’ |       |                |                    |

As the translations indicate, the particles have varied semantic/pragmatic functions. In addition, Avatime allows for wh-questions not marked by a segmental particle (although there are still tonal effects that manifest on the right when the particles are absent). Avatime allows for wh-in-situ and wh-movement (Devlin, Lehman, Major, Torrence 2019).

Relative clauses involve activation of both the left and right peripheries. with the *gi* complementizer on the left edge:

- |     |  |           |     |               |           |      |
|-----|--|-----------|-----|---------------|-----------|------|
| (2) | mi-kpini                                     | odze-lo   | gi  | a-tɔ          | ava-na    | *(e) |
|     | 1SG-insult.PAST                              | woman-DEF | REL | 3SG-cook.PAST | beans-DEF | DET  |
|     | ‘I insulted the woman who cooked the beans.’ |           |     |               |           |      |

The right edge has an obligatory clausal determiner, ([e] in (2), which harmonizes and/or coalesces with a preceding vowel). There is a related wh-construction, which has the relative clause complementizer *gi*:

- |     |                         |     |               |             |      |
|-----|-------------------------|-----|---------------|-------------|------|
| (3) | nyawɛ                   | gi  | wɔ-da         | imwɛɛ-ne    | (*ɛ) |
|     | who                     | REL | 2SG-sell.PAST | oranges-DEF | DET  |
|     | ‘Who sold the oranges?’ |     |               |             |      |

Interestingly, (3) shows that in the relative wh-construction, the right edge clausal determiner cannot be present. Thus, this construction makes use of a subset of the “pieces” of the clausal periphery found in relative clauses, but not all of them. One conditional construction has the relative complementizer (*gi*) and a second complementizer, *xɛ*:

- (4) ma-dɔ                      sɾasɛ [xɛ    **gi**    Kofi    o-ji                      i]  
 1SG.FUT-sleep.FUT    sleep    COND REL kofi    3SG.FUT-arrive.FUT DET  
 ‘I will sleep if Kofi arrives.’

There is also a *wh*-interrogative construction where only the *xɛ* complementizer is present:

- (5) kite    **xɛ**    wɔ-tɔ                      ava-na  
 how COND 2SG-cook.PAST    beans-DEF  
 ‘How did you cook the beans?’

Embedded clauses reveal that Avatime allows for embedded peripheries, as in (3), where there are potentially two instances of the complementizer *si* (homophonous with a verb ‘say’):

- (6) wo-bu        **si**        (**si**)        mi-kpini                      odze-lo  
 2SG-think    COMP    COMP    1SG-insult.PAST woman-DEF  
 ‘You think that I insulted the woman.’

Preliminary data suggest that the presence of the second complementizer indicates speaker uncertainty about the truth of the embedded clause. In addition, a possible nominal element (homophonous with a pronoun and a noun class suffix), *le(e)*, can also intervene between the two complementizers:

- (7) wo-bu        **si**        (**le(e)**)    (**si**)        (**\*le(e)**)    mi-kpini                      odze-lo  
 2SG-think    COMP    DET?    COMP    DET?    1SG-insult.PAST woman-DEF  
 ‘You think that I insulted the woman.’

The *le(e)* cannot follow the second *si*. Interrogatives suggest that these complementizers are not simply lexical strings because a *wh*-item can undergo partial movement to some position between the two complementizers:

- (8) a. wo-bu        **si**        (**le(e)**)    **odze**    **woli**    **si**        mi-kpini  
 2SG-think    COMP    DET?    woman    which    COMP    1SG-insult.PAST woman-DEF  
 ‘Which woman do you think that I insulted?’

Returning to matrix clauses, there is a *right-edge* particle, *le*, that can occur in *wh*-questions:

- (9) ege    wɔ-mɔ                      **le**  
 what 2SG-see.PAST    Q  
 ‘What did you see?’

The interpretive import of using the right edge *le* is unclear. However, the fact that it is (for some speakers) homophonous with the left edge *le(e)* (found in 7/8), strongly suggests that cases like (9) involve elements of the left periphery that end up on the right periphery.

Overall, we present a description and initial analytical conclusions concerning the structural relations between the left and right peripheral complementizers and the predicates that select for them.