Aspects of KYAK phonology, morphology and syntax

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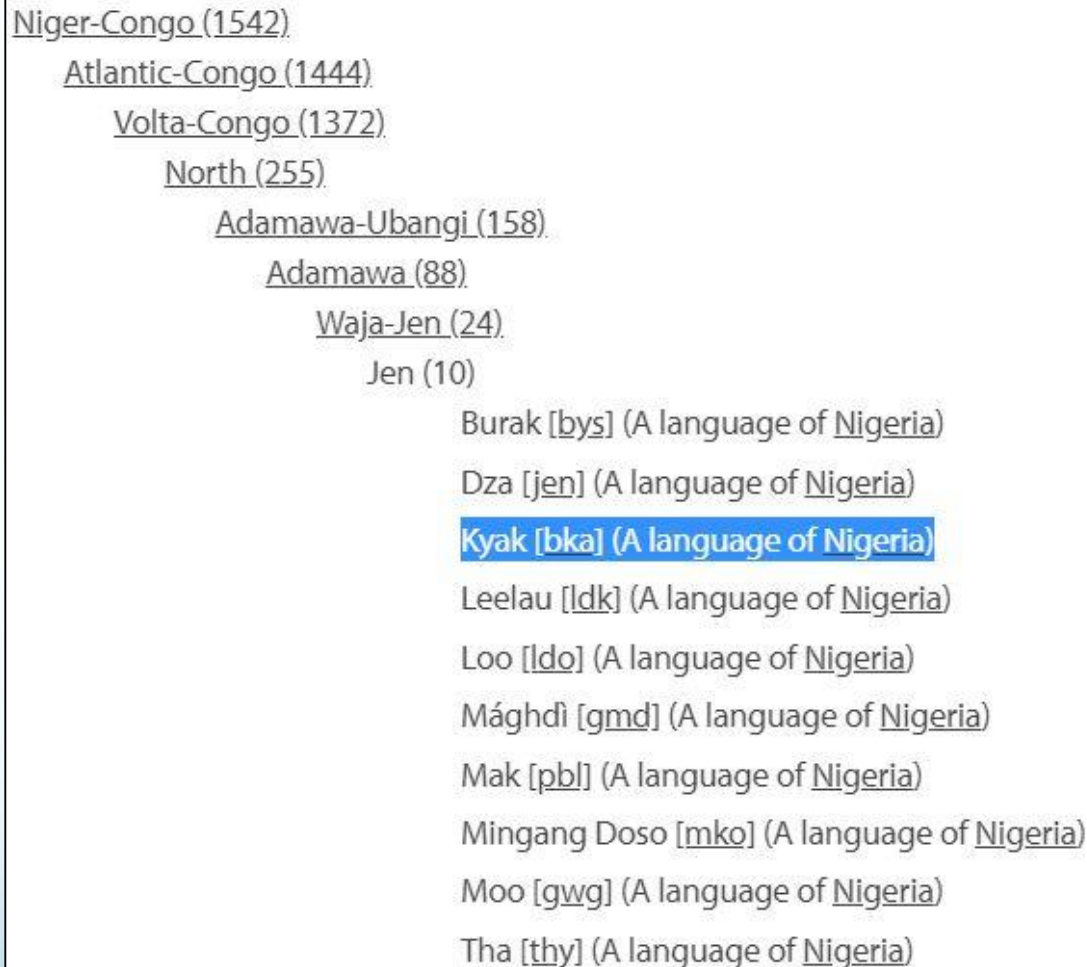
Adamawa Conference

Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz, Germany
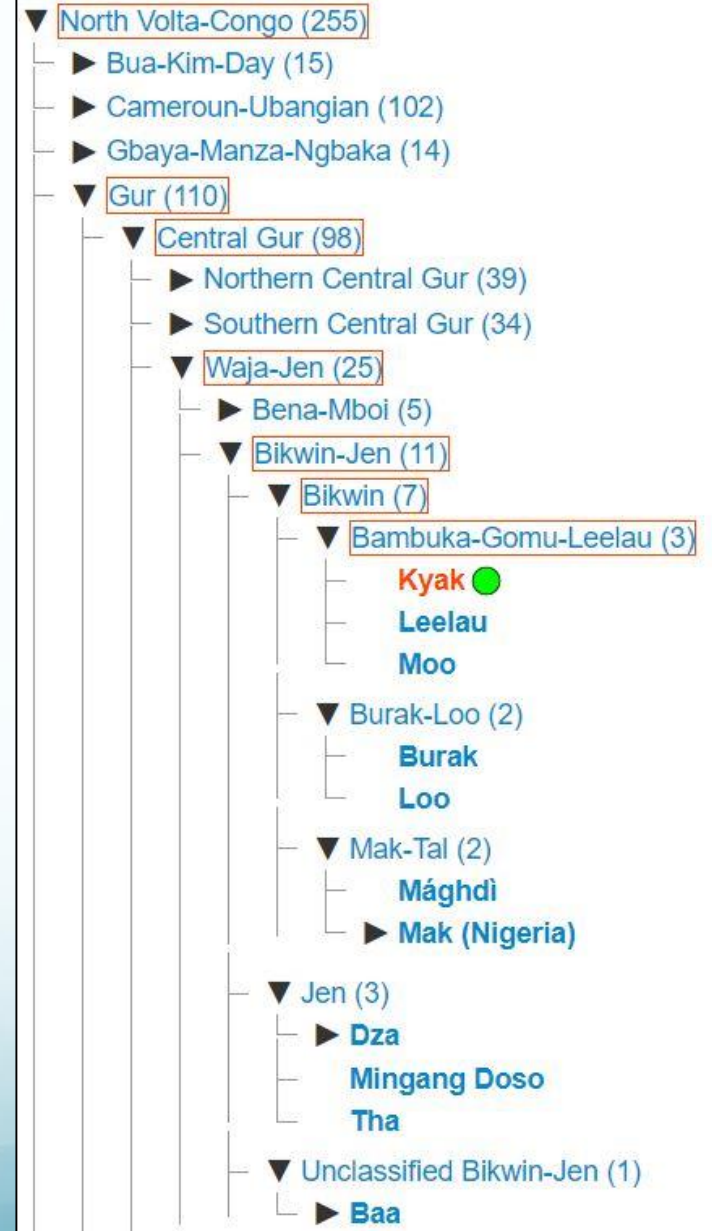
9-11 September 2019

Basic info

- Kyak [bka] (Bambuka)

- Almost completely undocumented

- EGIDS level: 6a (Vigorous); spoken by all age-groups

- Population: 5,000 (1995) => 9,000-10,000 (2019)

- Spoken mostly in Karim Lamido LGA of Taraba State, but also in Adamawa State. Not spoken in Gombe State.
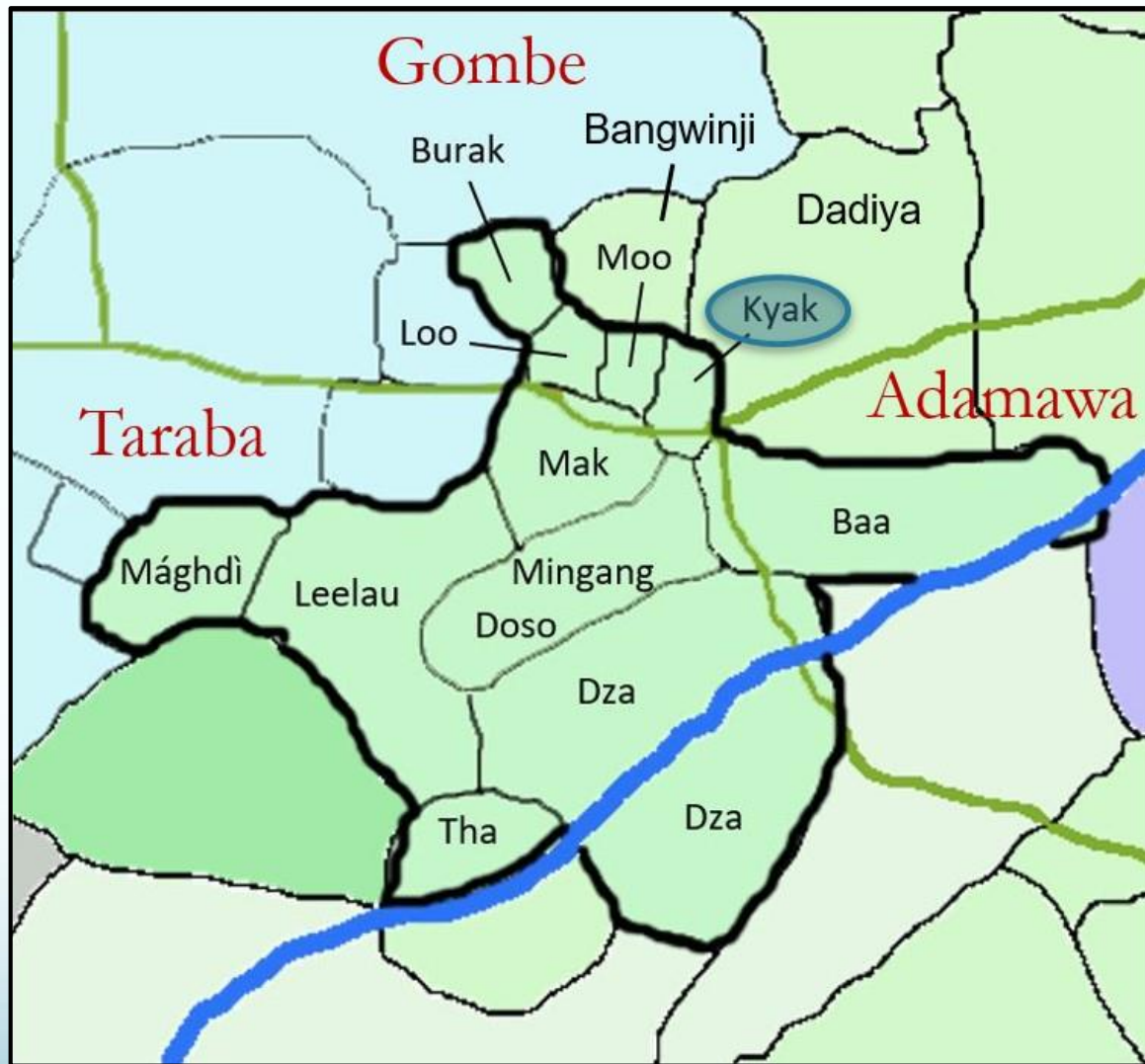
Ethnologue

Niger-Congo (1542)
  Atlantic-Congo (1444)
    Volta-Congo (1372)
      North (255)
        Adamawa-Ubangi (158)
          Adamawa (88)
            Waja-Jen (24)
              Jen (10)

- Burak [bys] (A language of Nigeria)
- Dza [jen] (A language of Nigeria)
- Kyak [bka] (A language of Nigeria)
- Leelau [ldk] (A language of Nigeria)
- Loo [ldo] (A language of Nigeria)
- Mághdì [gmd] (A language of Nigeria)
- Mak [pbl] (A language of Nigeria)
- Mingang Doso [mko] (A language of Nigeria)
- Moo [gwg] (A language of Nigeria)
- Tha [thy] (A language of Nigeria)

Glottolog

- ▼ North Volta-Congo (255)
  - ► Bua-Kim-Day (15)
  - ► Cameroun-Ubangian (102)
  - ► Gbaya-Manza-Ngbaka (14)
  - ▼ Gur (110)
    - ▼ Central Gur (98)
      - ► Northern Central Gur (39)
      - ► Southern Central Gur (34)
    - ▼ Waja-Jen (25)
      - ► Bena-Mboi (5)
      - ▼ Bikwin-Jen (11)
        - ▼ Bikwin (7)
          - ▼ Bambuka-Gomu-Leelau (3)
            - Kyak 🟢
            - Leelau
            - Moo
          - ▼ Burak-Loo (2)
            - Burak
            - Loo
          - ▼ Mak-Tal (2)
            - Mághdì
            - ► Mak (Nigeria)
        - ▼ Jen (3)
          - ► Dza
          - Mingang Doso
          - Tha
        - ▼ Unclassified Bikwin-Jen (1)
          - ► Baa

The (Bikwin-)Jen cluster

Adapted from Lewis, Simons and Fennig (2016)

The (Bikwin-)Jen cluster

Othaniel (2017)
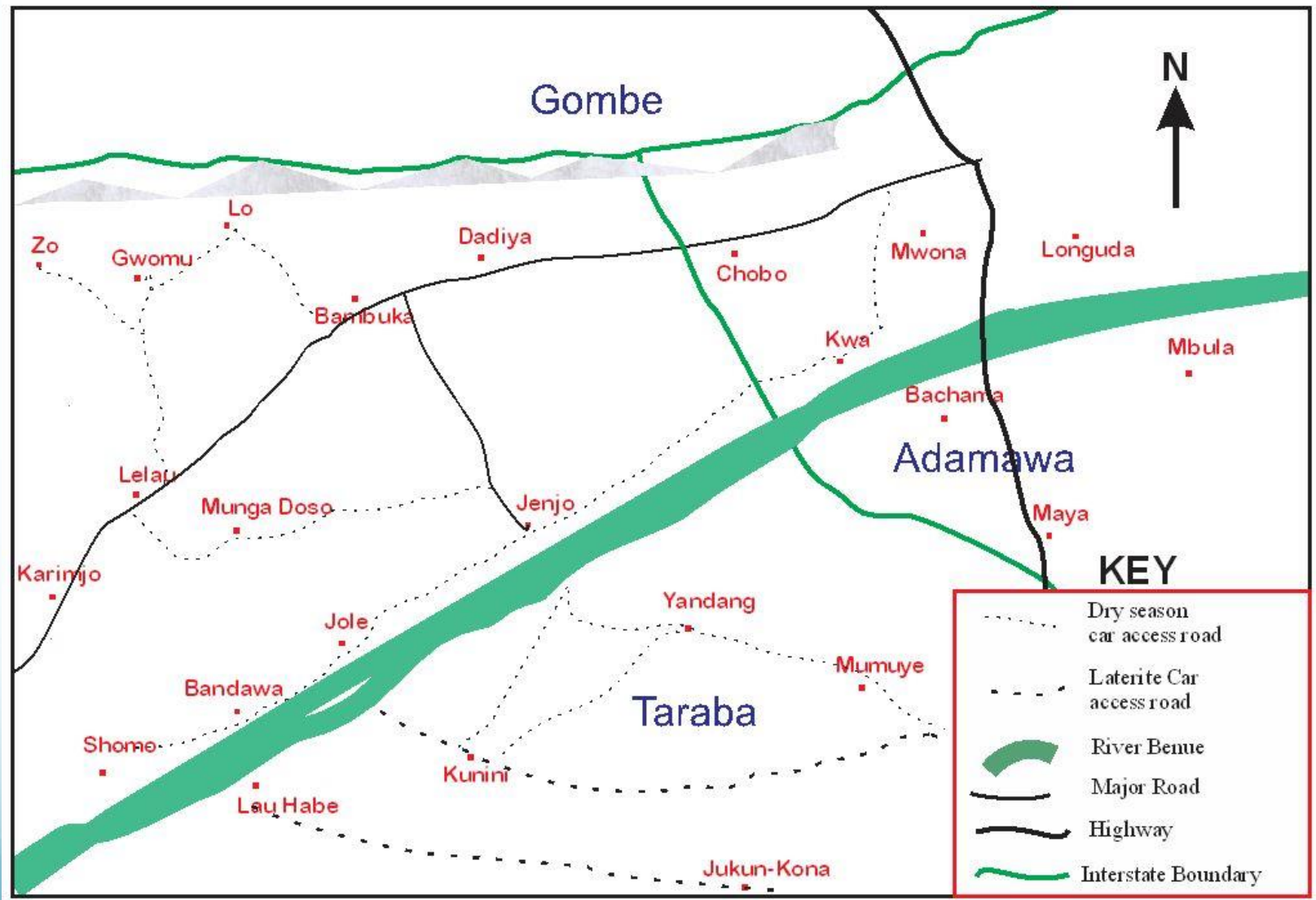
River Benue at Dza

Road out of Dza towards Bambuka

Geographical & Social Setting

- Karim Lamido, Jalingo, Lau, Zing, Ardo Kula LGAs (Taraba State)

- Lamurde, Demsa, Numan LGAs (Adamawa State)

- Not in any LGAs in Gombe State.

- Major towns: Bambuka, Liangum, Boko, Lissa, Lida, Krack, Bojim (all in Karim Lamido LGA, Taraba State)

- Main local markets: Bambuka, Gomu, Jen, Krack, Karim Lamido.

- Strong social links (e.g. markets, intermarriage) with Gomu (Moo), Dadiya, Jenjo (Dza), Munga, Leelau.

- Major L2s are Hausa and English

Data

- Elicited wordlist (600-700 words)

- 300-word comparative wordlist (Nlabephee 2017)

- TCNN student data collection assignments (Soji 2010)

- One good, natural, narrative text, checked

- A few other unchecked texts

Consonants

	Labial		Alveolar		Palatal		Velar		Labial-velar		Glottal	
Plosive	p pʷ pʲ	b bʷ bʲ	t tʷ	d dʷ	c cʷ	ɟ ɟʷ	k kʷ (kʲ)	g gʷ	kp	gb	(ʔ)	
Implosive		ɓ ɓʷ ɓʲ		ɗ ɗʷ	ʄ					(gɓ)		
Fricative	f fʷ	v	θ/s sʷ	ð/z zʷ								
Nasal		m mʷ mʲ		n		ɲ ɲʷ	ŋ ŋʷ					
C. Approx.						j jʷ				w		
Trill / Flap				r / ɾ								
L. Approx.				l								

Peculiarites

	Kyak	Moo	Leelau	Dza	Minga Doso	Tha
finish	ðəm~zəm	zɨm	ðəm			
walk	ðɔ~zɔ	zɔ	ðəu	ho	ho	ðobo
chaff	ðɛk~zɛk			dzoː		
bag	θɔː~sɔː			hoː		
buffalo	θɛ̀̃ː~sɛ̀̃ː			hə		
termite	θɛ́̃ː~sɛ́̃ː			ʃĩː		

	Kyak	Moo	Leelau	Dza	Minga Doso	Tha
hit	gɓəp	ɓop	ɓwap	gbə	gbə	gba

Vowels

8 basic oral vowels, 3/4 nasal vowels:

	Front		Central		Back	
High	i	ĩ			u	-
Mid-High	e	-			o	-
Central			ə	-		
Mid-Low	ɛ	ɛ̃			ɔ	ɔ̃
Low			a	(ã)		

Breathy vowels?

	Kyak 🔊	Moo	Leelau	Dza	Minga Doso	Tha	Mak	Maghdi	Loo	Burak
four	n̤n̤ɛ̤	nɛ	nəi	ɲə	nəɲe	nəɲe	net	nəɾ	neet	nɛ̤t

[n̤n̤ɛ̤] – four

[nɛ] – mother
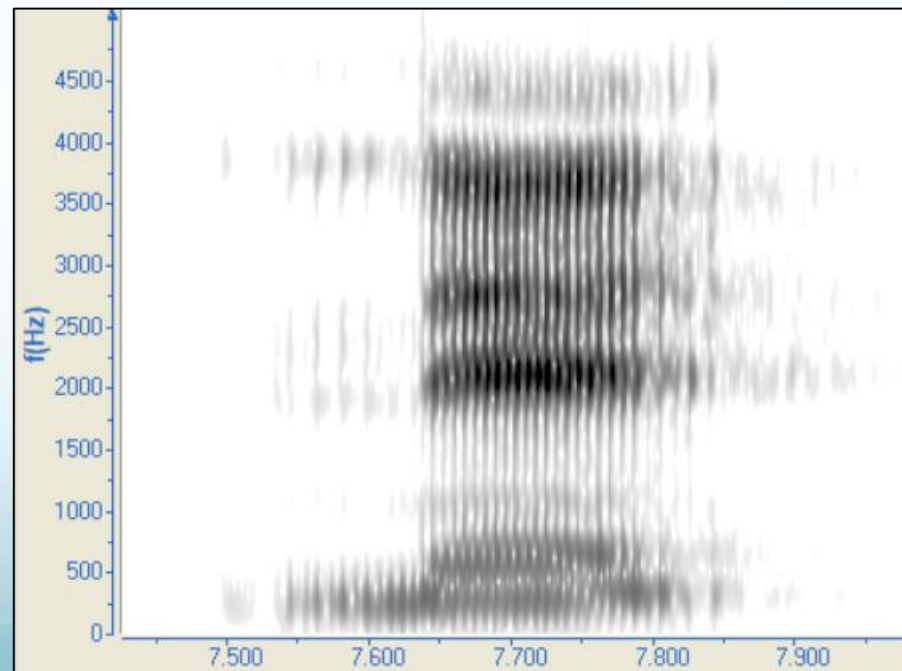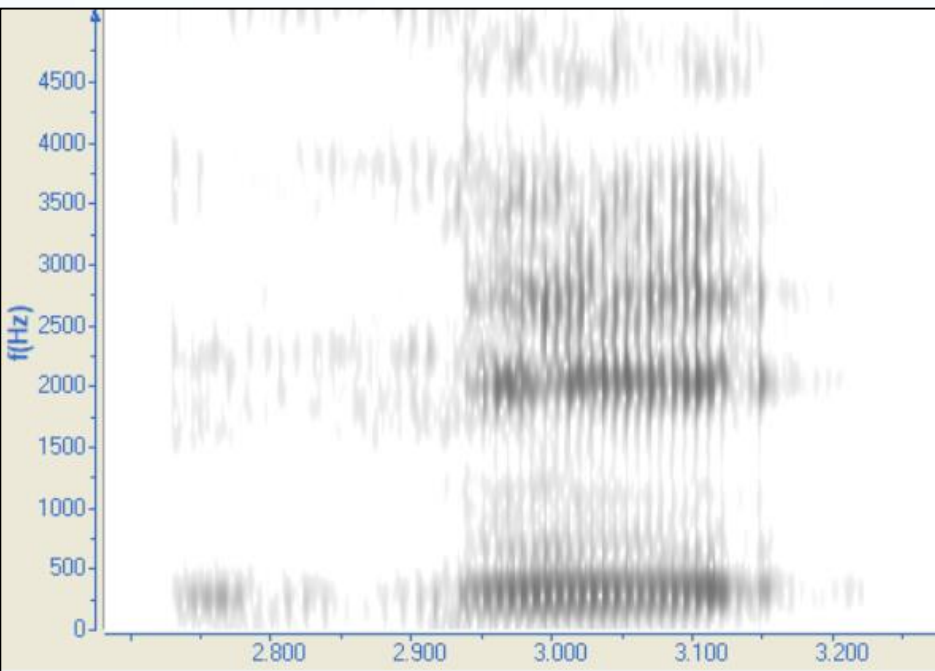
Long vowels?

No clear contrasts, but vowel length mostly optional and used symbolically, or for emphasis:

u	**bɛ**	nuŋ	naa	g-u	kɛ	u	da	a	lo
3.sg	pull	thing	own	P-3.sg	DEM	3.sg	put	LOC	head

he pulled his things onto his head (they were light)

u	**bɛɛ**	nuŋ	naa	g-u	kɛ	u	da	a	lo
3.sg	pull	thing	own	P-3.sg	DEM	3.sg	put	LOC	head

he slowly pulled his things onto his head (they were heavy)

Tone

High, Low and Falling tones:

sə́m   -   pot

sə̀m   -   monkey

sə̂m   -   servant

Reduction of /ɛ/ to [ə]?

ɗɛ - 'give'   u   ɗə-m   ɗaɾwa
                     3.sg   give-me   book

                     'He gave me a book'

tɛ - 'go'   u   tə   gwe
                     3.sg   go   house

                     'He went home'

Looks like /ɛ/ reduces to [ə] clause-internally.

/ə/ never occurs before a pause.

Phonological processes

…but no reduction of [ɛ] in other cases:

lɛ - 'tooth'	[lɛɛm]	[lɛma]	[lɛ dauda]
	/lɛ-əm/	/lɛ-ma/	/lɛ dauda/
	tooth-my	tooth-your	tooth Dauda
	'my tooth'	'your tooth'	'Dauda's tooth'

…and /ə/ and /ɛ/ contrast word-medially:

zwɛl – 'shoulder'   zəl – 'locust'

…so you'd expect them to contrast word-finally.

Comparative data shows that a pre-pausal [ɛ] which does change in Kyak corresponds to a final /ə/ in closely related languages:

	Kyak	Moo	Leelau	Dza	Minga Doso	Tha
go	tɛ	tə	tə	tə	tə	ɗɨ
give	dɛ	dɨ	də	tə	də	ɗə
come	wɛ	wa	wə	wu	wə	wə
stab	bɛ	bʲɛ	bəi	pə	bəu	bə

But a final [ɛ] which doesn't change, doesn't always correspond to a final /ə/ in other languages:

	Kyak	Moo	Leelau	Dza	Minga Doso	Tha
mother	nɛ	na	na	na	na	na

Therefore /ə/ --> [ɛ] before pause.

Nominal morphology

- No number marking on nouns

- Adjectives both before and after nouns, sometimes either

- Optional number marking (via reduplication) on adjectives following nouns

/bram tal/ = **/tal   a-bram/**

smooth   stone   stone   ADJ-smooth

smooth stone

/tal   a-bram-bram/

stone   ADJ-smooth-smooth

smooth stones

/ɟo   ɲam/

cook   meat

cooked meat

/ɲam   a-ɟo-ɟo/

meat   ADJ-cook-cook

cooked meat

Pronominal possession

Inalienable (body parts and kinship terms, but optional for some kinship terms)

Poss. Adj.	swi - ear	na – hand	dwəl - neck	gõ – chest	jɔŋ – brother
1sg	swi-əm	na-əm [naːm]	dwəl-əm	gõ-əm [gõːm]	jɔŋ-əm
2sg	swi-ma	na-ma	dwəl-ma	gõ-ma	jɔŋ-ma
3sg	swi-u	na-u [nau] / [nɔː]	dwəl-u	gõ-u [gõː]	jɔŋ-u
1pl	swi-ɓi	ne-ɓi	dwəl-ɓi	gõ-ɓi	jɔŋ-ɓi
2pl	swi-ɓa	na-ɓa	dwəl-ɓa	gõ-ɓa	jɔŋ-ɓa
3pl	swi-i	na-i [nei]	dwəl-i	gõ-i	jɔŋ-i

Alienable

Poss. Adj.	jiɓe-chicken	ɓəl-rope	nyam - meat
1sg	jiɓe-g-əm	ɓəl-g-əm	nyam-g-əm
2sg	jiɓe-ma	ɓəl-ma	nyam-ma
3sg	jiɓe-g-u	ɓəl-g-u	nyam-g-u
1pl	jiɓe-gə-ɓi	ɓəl-gə-ɓi	nyam-gə-ɓi
2pl	jiɓe-gə-ɓa	ɓəl-gə-ɓa	nyam-gə-ɓa
3pl	jiɓe-g-i	ɓəl-g-i	nyam-g-i

Note:
- Alienable /g-/ morpheme not used in 2.sg, nor with non-pronominal possession.

Verbal morphology

- Verbs with stable roots

Obj. Pro.	ɓi-see	kəm-embrace	tɔk-push
1sg	u ɓi-m	u kəm-əm	u tɔk-əm [tɔɣm̩]
2sg	u ɓi-a	u kəm-a	u tɔk-a [tɔɣa]
3sg	u ɓi-u	u kəm-u	u tɔk-u [tɔɣu]
1pl	u ɓi-ɓi	u kəm-ɓi	u tɔk-ɓi
2pl	u ɓi-ɓa	u kəm-ɓa	u tɔk-ɓa
3pl	u ɓi-i	u kəm-i	u tɔk-i [tɔɣi]
NP	u ɓi Dauda	u kəm Dauda	u tɔk Dauda

- Verbs with unstable roots (usually ending with an unreleased plosive)

Obj. Pro.	gɓəp-hit	zəb – kill
1sg	u gɓəm	u zəm
2sg	u gɓa(a)	u za(a)
3sg	u gɓoo	u zoo
1pl	u gɓəp-ɓi	u zəb-ɓi
2pl	u gɓəp-ɓa	u zəb-ɓa
3pl	u gɓee [ugɓeː/ugɓei]	u zee
NP	u gɓəp Dauda	u zəb Dauda

Tense-aspect

Future 1 (default)

	tɛ - go
1sg	mən tɛ
2sg	ma tɛ
3sg	u tɛ
1pl	ɓi tɛ
2pl	ɓa tɛ
3pl	i tɛ

Future 2 (more definite)

	tɛ - go
1sg	mən tətɛ
2sg	ma tətɛ
3sg	u tətɛ
1pl	ɓi tətɛ
2pl	ɓa tətɛ
3pl	i tətɛ

Reduplication in the future

Future (definite) - intransitives

	tɛ - go
1sg	mən tətɛ
2sg	ma tətɛ
3sg	u tətɛ
1pl	ɓi tətɛ
2pl	ɓa tətɛ
3pl	i tətɛ
NP	Dauda a tətɛ

Future (definite) - transitives

	gɓəpˀ - hit (him)
1sg	mən gboo ngbəpˀ
2sg	ma gboo ngbəpˀ
3sg	u gboo ngbəpˀ
1pl	ɓi gboo ngbəpˀ
2pl	ɓa gboo ngbəpˀ
3pl	i gboo ngbəpˀ
NP	Dauda a gboo ngbəpˀ

Evidentiality vs Indefiniteness

/u   tə   Abuja/
3.sg.   go   Abuja

he went to Abuja
(e.g. I know, e.g. because he told me himself, or I saw him go)

/u   tə-ŋ   Abuja/
3.sg.   go-INDEF   Abuja

he went to Abuja
(I think he did, but I'm not totally sure, or I'm aware that he did, e.g. because I heard it from someone else)

/u   tə-ŋ   ple   nde/
3.sg.   go-INDEF   place   all

he went everywhere (no particular place)

Evidentiality vs Indefiniteness

- /-ŋ/ attaches to the end of the core (verb + object):

/m   ɓi-ŋ/
1.sg   see-INDEF

I saw (it)
(but I can't find it now)

/m   ɓi   pita-ŋ/
1.Sg   see   Peter-INDEF

I saw Peter
(somebody is asking me where Peter is, but I don't know where he went)

Logophoric pronouns

- Logophoric pronouns are traditionally defined as elements that:

  (i) obligatorily occur in the scope of an attitude predicate such as 'believe' or 'say', and

  (ii) are obligatorily construed as referring to the bearer of the attitude, such as the subject of 'believe' or 'say'.

  (Pearson 2015)

- Default pronouns may or may not be construed as referring to the bearer of the attitude.

- Logophoric pronouns are very common in West African languages (e.g. Ewe, Yoruba, Goemai).

Logophoric pronouns

A. **/u** **agə** **(i)** **mʷɛn** **u** **jaŋ/**
3.sg. RPM 3.sg.LOG thank 3.sg for:sure

he_i (said) that he_i thanked him_j

B. **/gɔk** **dʒe** **u** **dʒe** **agə** **(u)** **kʷe/**
dove say 3.sg say RPM 3.sg shrink

/u **tə** **sʷa/**
3.sg go down

dove_i said that he_j should squat down

Logophoric pronouns

/**səbe**	**dʒe**	**agə**	**m-bea**/
hare	say	RPM	1.sg.be:sorry

hare₍ᵢ₎ said, "I'm sorry,

/**d-i**	**dʒe**	**agə ...**	**i**	**gəm**	**jik**	**nde**	**jaŋ**/
PROG-LOG	say	RPM	LOG	gather	cleverness	all	for:sure

he₍ᵢ₎ (hare) was thinking that...he₍ᵢ₎ had gathered all the cleverness,

/**ɛ-rɛ**	**sɔɔ**	**rɛ**	**ni**	**jaŋ**	**ŋa**
NOM-remain	one	remain	?	for:sure	SEQ

but one remained;

/**(u**	**gɔk)**	**u**	**jik**	**u**	**pəl**	**i**	**jaŋ**/
3.sg.	dove	3.sg	be:clever	3.sg	surpass	LOG	for:sure

he₍ⱼ₎ dove, he₍ⱼ₎ was cleverer than him₍ᵢ₎ for sure."

For further research

- The clause-final word /jaŋ/
  - Occurs in Kyak and Dzə
  - Typically glossed as 'Completive'
  - Doesn't occur in non-speech subordinate clauses
  - Usually optional
  - Seems to indicate a strong commitment of the speaker to the belief of the proposition; means something like 'for sure'
  - Used sparsely in narrative. Often used in the final performative at the end of a narrative:

/mumʷɛn	tə	bwa	mbuŋ	jaŋ/
Story	go	hole	crab	for:sure

'(my) story has now ended'