



RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

M.Ed. In TESL Program Language Group Specific Informational Reports

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Language Group: Ewe
Author: Gilberto Arciniegas

Program Contact Person: Nancy Cloud (ncloud@ric.edu)

LANGUAGES SPOKEN IN RI

EWE LANGUAGE
Gilberto Arciniegas
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TESL 539

Ewe is a language spoken in Ghana, Togo and the region East of the Volta River. The total speakers are over 5 million, with 500,000 second language speakers

Language Family Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo
Volta-Niger

Gbe

Ewe

Writing system Latin alphabet

Ewe language resources WIKIPEDIA 2011

VOWELS

Front Back Close

i, ɪ u, ũ

Close-mid

e o

Open-mid

ɛ, ẽ ɔ, õ

Open a, ã

Ager

Aa Bb Dd Đđ Dzdz Ee εε Ff Ff Gg Gbgb Yy

[a] [b] [d] [d̥] [dz] [e] [ε] [f] [f] [g] [gb] [y]

Hh Ii Kk Kp kp Ll Mm Nn Nyny Dŋ Oo Oo Pp

[h] [i] [k] [kp] [l] [m] [n] [n] [ŋ] [o] [o] [p]

Rr Ss Tt Ts ts Uu Vv Uv Ww Xx Yy Zz

[r] [s] [t] [ts] [u] [v] [β] [w] [x] [y] [z]

LOCATION

Ghana

[Wikipedia](#)



Numbers

- ▣ Premier: nukəntən.
- ▣ Deuxième: wegə.
- ▣ Troisième: atəngə.
- ▣ Quatrième: ɛnɛgə.
- ▣ Cinquième: atəwngə.
- ▣ Sixième: ayizɛngə.
- ▣ Septième: tɛnwegə.
- ▣ Huitième: tantəngə.
- ▣ Neuvième: tɛnnɛgə.
- ▣ Dixième: wogə.

PRAGMATICS

The Ewe language uses phrases of overt politeness, such as “Please” and Thank you.” A common, friendly greeting extended to an individual of a European descent is “White person.”

Communication Styles

Ghanaians tend to generally embrace strangers so when speaking people are sometimes going to get closer than the expat would feel comfortable about.

In terms of eye contact, people in Ghana will generally not look straight into another person's eyes when communicating since doing so is sometimes interpreted as rude

This is especially true when one is communicating with an elderly person or a superior (remember, our society is hierarchical).

They do generally hand-shake.

people will generally not touch each other. Two exceptions: First, it is common among very close friends to touch one another to make a point during conversation

The second exception is when an elder is talking to a young person.

People usually use a lot of hand gestures when speaking

Public displays of affection are not common in Ghana. People will generally not kiss, hug and embrace in public

Issues of Ewe Speakers when Learning English

- ▣ *Ewe is a tonal language with four tones: a rising tone marked by an acute accent (é), a falling tone marked by a grave accent (è), a falling-rising tone marked by a caron accent (ě), and a rising-falling accent marked by circumflex accent (ê). However the tones are not always marked.*
- ▣ *A tilde (~) indicates a nasal.*

morphology

- ▣ The basic syllable form of Gbe languages is commonly rendered $(C_1)(C_2)V(C_3)$, meaning that there at least has to be a nucleus V , and that there are various possible configurations of consonants (C_{1-3}) . The V position may be filled by any of the vowels or by a syllabic nasal. It is also the location of the tone. While virtually any consonant can occur in the C_1 position, there exist several restrictions on the kind of consonants that can occur in the C_2 and C_3 positions. In general, only liquid consonants may occur as C_2 , while only nasals occur in the C_3 position.
- ▣ There is for example no subject-verb agreement whatsoever in Gbe, no gender agreement, and no inflection of nouns for number. The Gbe languages make extensive use of a rich system of tense/aspect markers.

grammar

- ▣ The basic word order of Gbe clauses is generally Subject Verb Object, except in the imperfective tense and some related constructions. The Gbe languages, notably Ewe, Fon and Anlo, played a role in the genesis of several Caribbean creole languages – Haitian Creole for example is classifiable as having a French vocabulary with the syntax of a Gbe language.^[11]

Sample text in Ewe

- ▣ Wodzi amegbetɔwo katã ablɔɖeviwoe eye wोजना bubu kple gomekpɔkpɔ sɔsɔe. Susu kple dzitsinya le wo dometɔ ɖesiade si eyata wodze be woanɔ anyi le ɖekawɔwɔ blibo me.
- ▣ TRANSLATION
- ▣ All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.
(Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

TONES

- The Gbe languages are tonal languages. In general, they have three tone levels, High (H), Mid (M), and Low (L), of which the lower two are not phonemically contrastive. Thus, the basic tonemes of Gbe are 'High' and 'Non-High', where the High toneme may be realised as High or Rising and the Non-High toneme may be realised as Low or Mid. The tones of Gbe nouns are often affected by the consonant of the noun stem. The voicing of this consonant affects the realisation of the Non-High toneme roughly as follows: If the consonant is a voiced obstruent, the Non-High toneme is realised as Low (è-dà 'snake') and if the consonant is a voiceless obstruent or a sonorant, the Non-High toneme is realised as Mid (āmē 'person', á-fī 'mouse'). The consonants that induce tonal alternations in this way are sometimes called depressor consonants.

VOCABULARY

- ▣ didi: to be long
- ▣ lolo to be big, large, fat
- ▣ kó to be tall, high
- ▣ kpuĩ' to be short, low (height, length, or time)
- ▣ é to be strong, difficult, hard
- ▣ boo to be soft, easy
- ▣ fá to be cold, cool
- ▣ tri to be thick
- ▣ xo dzo to be hot, to be many ("to receive fire")
- ▣ sogbo to be enough

How to make questions

- ▣ It is similar to Japanese in the use of suffixes to make questions
- ▣ Japanese
- ▣ Anata wa sensei des (affirmative)
- ▣ Anata wa sensei des ka? (interrogative)
- ▣ Ewe
- ▣ atí lá kó 'the tree is tall' (affirmative)
- ▣ Atí lá kóá? 'Is the tree tall?' (interrogative)

EWE VARIETIES BY REGION

Ewe	Gen	Aja	Phla-Phera	Fon	
Adan	Kpando	Agoi	Dogbo	Alada	
Agbome	Agu	Kpelen	Anexo	Hwe	
Ayizo	Arohun	Anfoin	Kpesi	Gen	
Sikpi	Gbesi	Kpase	Avedakpa	Peci	
Gliji	Tado	Kotafon6	Gun		Aveno
	Towun	Saxwe	Maxi	Awlan	Ve
	Se	Weme	Be	Vlin	Tofin
Dayin	Vo	Toli	Fodome	Waci	
Xwela	Gbin	Wance	Xwla	Ho	

Table 1: Classification of Gbe varieties (Capo 1986)

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M.Ed. in TESL Program
Nancy Cloud, Director
Educational Studies Department
Rhode Island College, HBS 206 #5
600 Mt. Pleasant Avenue
Providence, RI 02908
Phone (401) 456-8789
Fax (401) 456-8284
ncloud@ric.edu

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