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# Without 'without': expressing caritive semantics in a language without a specialized caritive marker (the case of Gban)
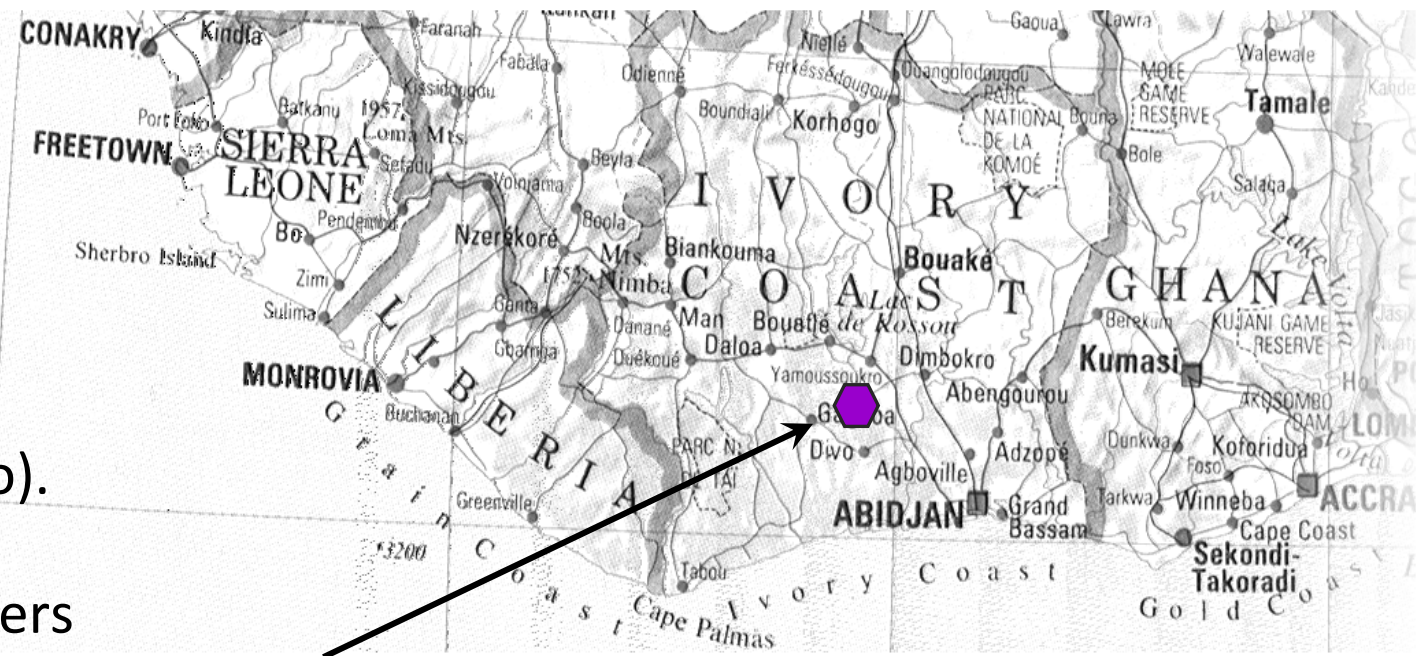
# Introduction[1]

**Gban** (*gbá̰*):
a South **Mande**
language (< Niger-Congo).

~ 60 000 native speakers
in the central part of **Côte d'Ivoire**.

The study is based on my own field data
from Bovo dialect, collected in 2011–2019.

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2

# Introduction

I am immensely grateful to my late friend Taki Oya Robert ( Täkǐ Wěyä Wlöbɛ́ ) (1975–2020), a speaker of the Bovo dialect of Gban, a Gban literacy worker, and a great enthusiast and promoter for Gban language and culture, who worked with me as a consultant throughout almost a decade and who was the main source of data for all my studies on Gban, including this one.

May his soul rest in peace.
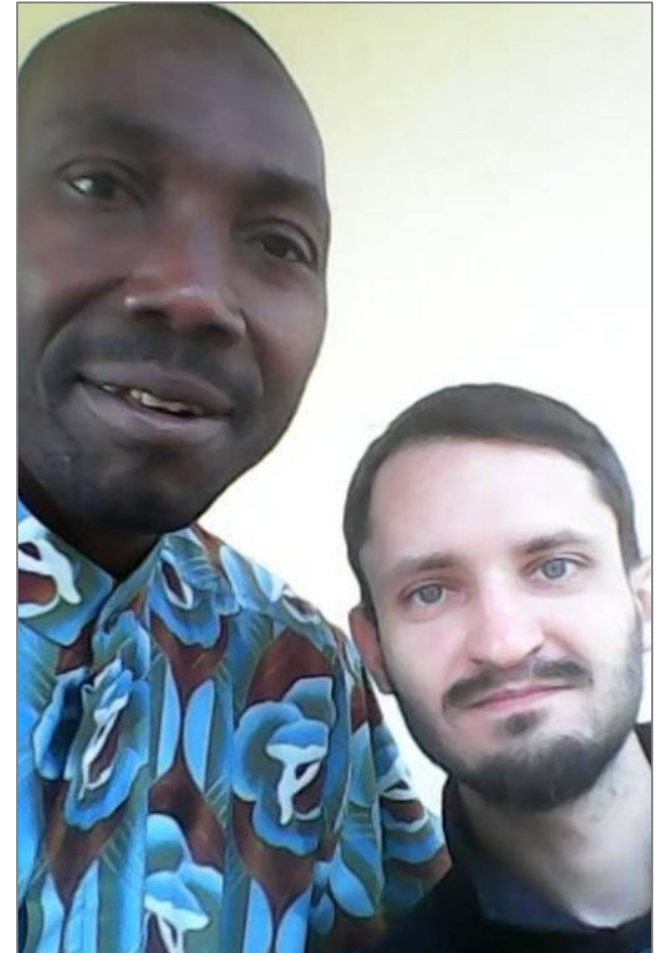
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(The end.)

# Introduction

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But it nevertheless does employ some **non-specialized**, "**periphrastic**" means whenever there is a need to express such meanings — to express absence or non-participation of someone or something in a situation. Cf.:

(1)  *Bòàm̰ṵ̀*   ∅-*kě*          *t=ɛ̈*,
     leader   3SG-COND.NEG   IPFV\be.NEG=there
     *bë̈ǎ*   ∅-*kè*          *wò*        *dɔ̀*.
     work   3SG-IND.NEG   put[INF]   IPFV\do.well
     'People can't work [well] without a leader'
     (lit. "If there's no leader, work doesn't~won't go well").

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[2] This lack is probably related to the fact that Gban, as well as other languages of the area, has in general no specialized means of marking any **low-level negation** — negation in non-finite clauses, privative/antonymic negation, etc.

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So we may look at what these means are, how they function and how they compete with each other.

(There will also be a separate short case study of a specialized, but, alas, not-quite-caritive postposition *blè* and its relatives.)

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(There will also be a separate short case study of a specialized, but, alas, not-quite-caritive postposition *blè* and its relatives.)

The study is based mostly on elicited data, consisting of sentences translated from French stimuli with the preposition *sans* 'without' in different uses.

# Outline of the talk

- Introduction

- 1. Multi-clausal periphrases and lexical means

- 2. Comitative postposition with clausal negation

- 3. Caritive-related specialized postpositions: *blè* and its relatives

- Conclusions

# 1. Multi-clausal periphrases and lexical means

The most frequent means of rendering caritive semantics in my data were different types of multi-clausal periphrases. In such periphrases, the main predication is expressed in one clause, and the secondary predication of absence, non-participation — in a separate clause (cf. "type B" in [Stolz et al. 2007]).

Many observed periphrases involve one of the standard non-verbal constructions — **negative existential**, **negative identifying**, or **negative (predicative) possessive** construction.

Let us first look at these constructions separately, in their standard (autonomous) uses…

# (Non-verbal predication constructions in general)

## Existence

Affirmative existential construction:

(2a) *Kwlɛ̰̈ " **yɛ̈** **yɛ̈.***
  God  3SG  IPFV\be  there
  'There is God / God exists'.

(2b) *Mű dò yɛ̈-é* **yé** **yɛ̈** ⟨…⟩
  man one 3SG-IPFV.PREH IPFV\be there
  'There was a man ⟨…⟩'.

**Negative** existential construction:

(3) ⟨…⟩, *ä dònű* **kè** **tà** **yɛ̈** / **t(ɛ̈)=ɛ̈.**
  him any 3SG-IND.NEG IPFV\be.NEG there IPFV\be.NEG=there
  '<Those cloths that I bought this year>, **there isn't** any [anymore] (i.e. there's none left)'.

*Notes*:
 1. The verb *yè(è)* in Gban is obligatorily substituted with *tǎ* (< 'walk') in all negative sentences.
 2. The form …*t ɛ̀* is a contraction of …*ta yɛ̈* <IPFV\be.NEG there>
 (the same way as affirmative …*ye yɛ̈* <IPFV\be there> is sometimes contracted to …*y(ɛ) ɛ̈*).

# (Non-verbal predication constructions in general)

**Identification**

Affirmative identifying construction (topic-oriented):

(4) *Sɔ̀kǔ* **lì** *yɔ̀.*
Soku FOC_OBJ this_is
'[— Who's this?] — This is Soku'.


**Negative** identifying construction (topic-oriented):

(5) *Sɔ̀kǔ* *∅-lè-kè* **nì,** *Zá̰á̰* **lì** *yɔ̀.*
Soku 3SG-FOC-IND.NEG IPFV\be_it John FOC_OBJ this_is
'[That thief,] — it's not Soku, it's John'.

# (Non-verbal predication constructions in general)

**Predicative possession**

<u>Two</u> affirmative predicative possessive constructions:

(Simplifying things a little, the *yɛ̏*-construction codes legal ownership and more stable possessive relations, while *kɔ́*-construction codes the same legal ownership and more temporary possessive relations.)

(6a) [*Zá̰á̰ kä̈ö*] " ***yɛ̌*** *yɛ̏.*
    John field 3SG IPFV\be there
    'John has a field'.
    (lit. "There's **[**John's field**]**")

(6b) *Kä̈ö* " ***yɛ̌*** [*Zá̰á̰* ***kɔ́***].
    field 3SG IPFV\be John palm
    'John has a field'.
    (lit. "Field is on John")

(7a) [*Ḭ̀ (mɔ́) sá̋*] " ***yɛ̈ë̈*** *yɛ̏.*
    me for house 3SG IPFV\be there
    'I have a house'.
    (lit. "There's **[**my house**]**")

(7b) *Sá̋* " ***yɛ̈ë̈*** [*ḭ̀* ***kɔ́***].
    house 3SG IPFV\be me palm
    'I have a house'.
    (lit. "House is on me")

# (Non-verbal predication constructions in general)

**Predicative possession**

The <u>two</u> corresponding **negative** predicative possessive constructions:

(8a) *[ZJ́J́ wɔ̀tló] ∅-**kè*** ***t=ɛ̀.***
    John  car      3SG-IND.**NEG**  IPFV\be.NEG=there

(8b) *Wɔ̀tló ∅-**kè***     ***tà***            *[ZJ́J́ **kɔ̰́**]*.
    car    3SG-IND.**NEG**  IPFV\be.NEG  John  palm

   'John **doesn't** have a car'.

               (9a) *[Ḭ̀  mɔ́ sá̰] ∅-**kè***     ***t=ɛ̀.***
                   me  for  car  3SG-IND.**NEG**  IPFV\be.NEG=there

               (9b) *Sá̰ ∅-**kè***     ***tà***           *[ḭ̀   **kɔ̰́**]*.
                   car  3SG-IND.**NEG**  IPFV\be.NEG  John  palm

                 'I **don't** have a house'.

# 1. Multi-clausal periphrases and lexical means

In caritive contexts, these four constructions are used in an **ancillary** clause, which is subordinate or coordinated to the semantically main one:

(10)    *Wötló* **∅-lè-kě** **nǐ**,

       car     3SG-FOC-COND.NEG  IPFV\be_it

       *ɛ̈-kè*         *sè*       *ɛ̈-kè*         *yà*     *bì.*

       3SG-IND.NEG  IPFV\can  3SG-IND.NEG  IPFV\go  there

   '**Without a car/bus**, he can't go there'

   (lit. "**If it's not** a car, he can't go there").

15

# 1. Multi-clausal periphrases and lexical means

(1)     *Bòàmṵ̀*     ∅-***kě***     ***t=ɛ̏****,*
       leader     3SG-COND.NEG     IPFV\be.NEG=there
       *bë̋ắ*     ∅-*kè*     *wò*     *dɔ̀.*
       work     3SG-IND.NEG     put[INF]     IPFV\do.well
       'People can't work [well] **without a leader**'
       (lit. "**If there's no** leader, work doesn't~won't go well").

(11)    *Kɛ̋*    ∅-***kè***    ***tà***    *ä̀*    ***kɔ́***,    ***lɛ̏***    *ɛ̈*    *bë̋ắ*    *wő.*
       hoe    3SG-IND.NEG    IPFV\be.NEG    him    palm    then    3SG    work    IPFV\put
       'He's working **without a hoe**'
       (lit. "He does**n't have** a hoe (on him) **and** he's working").

# 1. Multi-clausal periphrases and lexical means

(1)     *Bòàm* ̰ù     ∅-***kě***     ***t=ɛ̈***,
        leader     3SG-COND.NEG     IPFV\be.NEG=there

        *bë̋ắ*     ∅-*kè*     *wò*     *dɔ̀.*
        work     3SG-IND.NEG     put[INF]     IPFV\do.well
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        hoe  3SG-IND.NEG  IPFV\be.NEG  him palm    then  3SG  work  IPFV\put
        'He's working **without a hoe**'
        (lit. "He does**n't have** a hoe (on him) **and** he's working").

   This construction is integrated into a subordinate **conditional** clause (1), (10) for irrealis (generic/conditional) contexts.

   Or into a simple coordinate **indicative** clause (11) for realis (concrete/non-conditional) contexts.

# 1. Multi-clausal periphrases and lexical means

(Plus some other types with less abstract predicates, cf. (15b) in the next section)

**Fully lexical** means can also be employed, of course, — with a greater or lesser loss of semantic detail.

For example, 'The bus departed without me' can be rendered in Gban as, literally, "The bus left me".

Or, 'He's working without a hoe' — as "He's working barehanded".

Or, 'He came without his brother' — as "He came alone".

## 2. Comitative postposition with clausal negation

Second, in many cases, a mono-clausal construction was employed, which contained a standard **comitative-instrumental** postposition $y\tilde{\varepsilon}$ and a standard **clausal negation** marker (cf. "type A" in [Stolz et al. 2007]).

# 2. Comitative postposition with clausal negation

Second, in many cases, a mono-clausal construction was employed, which contained a standard **comitative-instrumental** postposition *yɛ̋* and a standard **clausal negation** marker (cf. "type A" in [Stolz et al. 2007]).

First, let us look at standard uses of *yɛ̋*:

(12)  *Gbɛ̏gbɛ̏    Sɔ́kù nṳ̏              ȁ    nɑ̰̀    yɛ̋    ɩ̰̀    yɔ̋    sɔ̋ɔ̋.*
      normally   3SG   IPFV\come  him  wife  **with**   me   at_place  yard
    'Normally Soku comes to my place **with his wife**'.

(13)  *Ɩ̰̀    yűkwɩ̏   klɛ̀        gbɛ̏ɛ̰̏   yɛ̋.*
      1SG   tree      IPFV\cut   knife   **with**
    'I cut wood **with a knife**'.

# 2. Comitative postposition with clausal negation

…mono-clausal construction with a standard comitative-instrumental postposition $y\v{\varepsilon}$ and a standard clausal negation marker:

For example, 'He's working without a hoe' can be rendered as, literally, "He is**n't** working **with** a hoe". Given that constituent negation is syntactically impossible in Gban, and so negation with a narrow focus is too expressed by clausal negation, it can also be understood as "He's working **not with** a hoe":

(14)  $\v{\ddot{\varepsilon}}$-**kè**      $b\ddot{e}\v{a}$   $w\v{o}$      $k\v{\varepsilon}$  $y\v{\varepsilon}$.
       3SG-IND.NEG   work   IPFV\put  hoe  with
   'He's working **without a hoe**'
   (lit. "He is**n't** working **with** a hoe").

# 2. Comitative postposition with clausal negation

…mono-clausal construction with a standard comitative-instrumental postposition *yɛ̋* and a standard clausal negation marker:

(15a) *M̰ǎlí ∅-kè*      *bɛ̋ǎ wő*      *Zá̰ yɛ̋ ǹɔ̰̀ sɔ̰̀.*
     Mary 3SG-IND.NEG work IPFV\put John with here today
'Mary's working **without John** today'.
(lit. "Mary is**n't** working **with** John today").

(15b) *M̰ǎlí ɛ̋ bɛ̋ǎ wő*      *sɔ̰̀, Zá̰ ∅-kè tà à vɔ̰̋.*
     Mary 3SG work IPFV\put today John 3SG-IND.NEG IPFV\be.NEG him alongside
'Mary's working **without John** today'.
(lit. "Mary's working today, John **isn't alongside** her").

# 2. Comitative postposition with clausal negation

…mono-clausal construction with a standard comitative-instrumental postposition *yɛ̋* and a standard clausal negation marker:

(16) *Wà   nɛ̰̀yë,   ɛ̰̈-**kɛ̋**        nṵ̈          lɑ̋lä̀   **yɛ̋**   lɔ́ɔ́là̀.*
      time   this   3SG-IND.NEG\PST   come\PFV.HEST   money   with   market
      'This morning, he came to the market **without money** [he forgot it]'
      (lit. "He **didn't** come to the market **with** money").

## 2. Comitative postposition with clausal negation

What is important is that semantically, such structures do **not** (obligatorily) involve in Gban:

a) neither an indication of **non-existence** of the situation itself (e.g. 'isn't working at all', 'didn't come to the market at all') (on the contrary, such examples can seemingly assert that the situation itself did take place),

b) nor metalinguistic negation (~'It's not correct to word what's going on as "him working with a hoe" / "him coming to the market with money"')

c) nor an indication that the situation **included some other** same-role participant instead of the lacking one (e.g. 'worked not with a hoe [but with something else]', 'came not with the money [but with something else]')

— **unlike** the English (or Russian) literal counterparts.

## 2. Comitative postposition with clausal negation

In Gban such a sentence can be naturally continued with a sentence presupposing that the situation in question did in fact occur:

(14') *Wíɛ̀  ɛ̈-kɛ̋  bɛ̈ɑ̋  wɔ̀  kɛ̋  yɛ̈.*
yesterday 3SG-IND.NEG\PST  work put\PFV.HEST hoe  with

<sup>OK</sup>*...Yɛ̈-è  yè  gbɰ̋gàbèà.*
3SG-IPFV.HEST[PST]  IPFV\be  tire:work

'Yesterday, he worked **without a hoe**'
(lit. "Yesterday, he did**n't** work **with** a hoe").
<sup>OK</sup>'...It was a [very] tiring work. [He did work, but not with a hoe, <sup>OK</sup>without a hoe, without any instrument, barehanded: for example, he weeded.]'

# 2. Comitative postposition with clausal negation

In Gban such a sentence can be naturally continued with a sentence presupposing that the situation in question did in fact occur:

(16′) *Wà    nɛ̀yë,  ɛ̈-**kɛ̋**              nü̈                    lɑ̋lä   **yɛ̋**  lɔ́ɔ́là.*
    time  this    3SG-IND.NEG\PST  come\PFV.HEST money  with market

  **ОК** *...Kɛ̋  ä   dɔ̈ő  ɛ́        lɑ̋lä   sɛ̈  nɔ̰̀              ä    nɛ̰̀.*
    but   him friend 3SG\PST money  little give[PFV.HOD]  him  on
    'This morning, he came to the market **without money** [he forgot it]'
    (lit. "He **didn't** come to the market **with** money").
  OK '...<u>But his friend lent him some money [at the market]</u>.'

## 2. Comitative postposition with clausal negation

This differs from the situation in **Russian** or **English**, where a combination of a comitative preposition with negation (clausal or constituent) always has one of the above-mentioned interpretations:

*On **ne** RABOTAET motyg**oj**. / He IS**N'T** working **with** a hoe.*

*On **ne** PRIŠËL na rynok **s** den'gami. / He DID**N'T** come to the market **with** money.*

— such sentences are either rather weird-sounding in Russian (and English?) — in any case, they would involve a negation of the whole situation, — **or** they are cases of metalinguistic negation.

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*On rabotaet **ne** MOTYG**OJ**, (a LOPAT**OJ**).*
*/ He does**n't** work **with** a HOE, (but **with** a SHOVEL).*

*On prišël na rynok **ne s** DEN'GAMI, (a **s** PISTOLETOM).*
*/ He did**n't** come to the market **with** MONEY, (but **with** a PISTOL).*

— these sentences involve a semantically sentential (**high-level**) negation with a **narrow focus**: ~'It is **not true** that (what he came to the market with was MONEY) [it was a pistol]'.

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Cf. impossibility of continuing these sentences with:
# *On prišël na rynok ne s* DEN'GAMI, *no ego drug odolžil emu nemnogo.*
'# He didn't come to the market with MONEY, but his friend lent him some'.
# *On ne* PRIŠËL *na rynok s den'gami, no ego drug odolžil emu nemnogo.*
'# He DIDN'T come to the market with money, but his friend lent him some'.

29

# 2. Comitative postposition with clausal negation

That being said, I need to add that, of course, in Gban also are present uses similar to the ones from Russian and English cited above (for example, with narrow focus).

But it is important that in addition to them there are such uses as (14') and (16'), which have a different interpretation.

So it seems that such uses in Gban, just as is the case with normal caritives, too involve a semantically **low-level** negation: ~'He came to the market (**not** having money on him)', although it is expressed by a syntactically sentential=clausal negative marker.

(All that was said until now concerned adverbial (i.e. instrument, adverbial-possessive, and companion) uses, but not attributive uses.

In Gban, in such uses **relative** constructions will be used (…))

# 3. Caritive-related specialized postpositions: *blè* and its relatives

While Gban lacks a specialized marker for caritive semantics, it has a peculiar specialized marker (postposition) *blè* for a related sense '**without** X **perceiving** ~ **without** X **knowing**':

(17) *M̰ä̰lí* " *yä̰* *kpḛ́ő* **ä̰** **n̰ḭ́** **blè**.
  Mary 3SG IPFV\go abroad:in him child without_knowing
  ~~'Mary's travelling abroad **without her child**'.~~
  → 'Mary's travelling abroad **without her child knowing**'.

(Cf. French and Russian composite preposition-like expressions *à l'insu de* X and *bez vedoma* X-*a* 'without X knowing'.)

# 3. Caritive-related specialized postpositions: *blè* and its relatives

This marker sometimes appeared in translations of caritive stimuli — cf. 'You're eating <u>without me</u>', 'Soku wants to celebrate his birthday with his family and <u>without his friends</u>', 'The bus departed <u>without you</u>'.

However, further investigation showed that it does not in fact convey a caritive semantic component proper (non-participation in the situation), but only indicates the lack of conscious perception of the situation by the participant.

# 3. Caritive-related specialized postpositions: *blè* and its relatives

There are also two other postposition-like expressions derived from *blè*:

**blè-ò** (with the postposition =(*g*)*ö* 'in'): 'unexpectedly ~ accidentally for X',

**blè-à** (with the postposition =(*l*)*à* 'on'): 'by X's oversight ~ because X forgot not to'

(18)  *Sɔ̀kǔ  y       ä       tökǟäyɛ̋  bě*
       Soku   3SG\PST  him  totem    eat\PFV.HEST

  *ä       **blè-à***                        / ^OK *ä   **blè-ò**.*
  him    without_knowing-on     him  without_knowing-in
  'Soku ate his totem [which is considered very bad], **not knowing it**.
  [He **forgot to** ask about the ingredients of the meal]'.

# Conclusions

- The most frequent means of rendering caritive semantics in my data were different types of **multi-clausal periphrases**, especially containing **non-verbal** predication constructions.

- Second, a mono-clausal construction with a **comitative postposition** and a **clausal negation** marker is used.

- It can be shown to indeed convey a **low-level negative operator** — and, thus, **caritive meaning proper**, — unlike its Russian or English counterparts.

- "Pseudo-caritive" postposition **blè** and its two derivatives sometimes appear in translations of caritive stimuli, but in fact have different semantics: they express lack of conscious perception and similar meanings.

- In general, studying **periphrastic** ways of expressing meanings pertaining to the caritive domain may be fruitful even for the theory of what grammaticalized caritive markers really express.

**Thank you**

**Ấ lìè kɔ̰́**

**Glosses**: 1/2/3 — 1st/2nd/3rd person; COND — conditional; CTNV — continuative; FOC — subject focus; FOC_OBJ — direct object and genetival dependent focus; HEST — hesternal; HOD — hodiernal; IMP — imperative; IND — indicative; INF — infinitive; (I)PFV — (im)perfective; M — masculine; NEG — negation; NMLZ — nominalization; (N)PST — (non-)past; PL — plural; PREH — pre-hesternal; PURP — purpose; SG — singular; SBJV — subjunctive.

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**Stolz et al. 2007** — Thomas Stolz, Cornelia Stroh, Aina Urdze. WITH(OUT): On the markedness relation between comitatives/instrumentals and abessives // *WORD: Journal of the International Linguistic Association*. Vol. 58, Iss. 1-3, (2007 Apr-Dec): Pp. 63–122. DOI: 10.1080/00437956.2007.11432575.