

Goo, an unknown language of Côte d'Ivoire

Goo is spoken in 10 villages to the north of Man, these villages are jammed between the Tura- and Dan-speaking areas. The language variety spoken by the Goo is not mutually intelligible with Dan, and its intelligibility with Tura is also difficult (the Goo people say that they do understand Tura, but Tura do not understand the Goo; the one-way intelligibility can be also explained by a frequent Goo-Tura bilingualism). The Goo people seem to have a strong ethnic identity, distinct from both Dan and Tura.

By its vocabulary, Goo is rather close to Tura; on the other hand, unlike Tura, it has two back unrounded vowels, /ɤ/ and /ʌ/, which brings it closer to Dan.

The vocalic system of Goo reveals an unusual feature: presumably, there are four degrees of aperture, and at the same time, there is a \pm ATR contrast (which is yet to be verified).

Like in Tura, Goo has several series of subjective pronouns expressing various TAM-polarity meanings; however, there are some indications of transformation of the subject pronouns to pronominal predicative markers (which brings the Goo language closer to the Dan).

The progressive verbal construction in Goo is very untypical; in this construction, pronouns which are otherwise appear as non-subjective, are used in a subjective function. This is an instance of grammaticalisation of a cleft-construction, resulting in a merger of a copula with the ex-subject pronouns and reinterpretation of the former by-copula pronouns into subject pronouns.

Goo data represents a great interest for the typological and comparative studies of South Mande languages.