

Ministry of Scientific
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Grammar Sketch of Nulibie

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1.0

Introduction

Nulibie is spoken in Yambasa, South-East of Bokito around the Mbam and Sanaga rivers, in the Elip canton, Mbam department, Central Province. It is classified as follows:

Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo,
Bantoid, Southern, Mbam, Yambasa (A.60)

The analysis presented here is based on study of a Nulibie text, "Giána gi Ihínehíne" ("The story of Ihinehine"), included in the appendix. The text was transcribed with French gloss by Mr Tite Ologa, of Yambassa, Mbam, Cameroon, and typed by Mr David Crozier in England. Additional grammatical information was obtained from Mr Esseba Ombessa Lambert and Mr Baboga Achilles, also of Yambassa, both of whom were also involved in editing and revision of the text.

2.0

Basic Word Order

The basic word order in Nulibie is SVO. The subject may consist of one word or two, or a phrase, the verb may be a single word or a verbal phrase and the object may be a noun, noun phrase, or a pronoun. Examples of this can be found at

001/a Ihínehíne ua dónon bógób má-nyam...
Ihinehine 3s call his c6.animals
Subject Verb Object
Ihinehine called his animal friends.

004/a A bá bul bu-óli.
3p begin c14.work
Subject Verb Object
They began work.

036/c ...ua dónon mu-ón ua egé ua ɔgón.
3s call c1.son 3s arrive AM eldest
Subject Verb Object
... he called his oldest son.

3.0

Adjectives and adjectival phrases

There are only a few occurrences of adjectives and adjectival phrases in this text. The adjective occurs after the noun it is modifying. For example, this phrase meaning 'all the way':

040/a ... ηη-ili gidigid.
c3.way all

In the case of adjectival predicates, the word order is: noun/noun phrase, verb, adjectival predicate introduced with infinitive prefix. For example:

013/a Sé ma sé ed gu-dóó.
c4.3p T/A c4.3p leave to-be.empty
They (cooking pots) were already empty.

021/b ... ni-muendé nia ég nye gu-nóóh.
c9.stomach c9 3s.poss be to-be.heavy
... his stomach is heavy.

Often when there is no single adjective to convey a specific meaning, a qualifier phrase is used, consisting of the word 'na' (meaning 'with') followed by a noun. For example, in Nulibie 'generous' is translated as 'na nufóf', literally 'with generosity'. The associative marker may also be used to link the noun. For example, this phrase meaning 'at the fifth time':

033/a Oguá ú-dényi uá gátánóo ...
 at c3.time AM five
 At the fifth time ...

4.0

Adverbs and Adverbial Phrases

There are several different ways of expressing the way an action was performed, whether with a single-word adverb, or a phrase, although there are not many true adverbs in Nulibie, as with other Bantu languages.

Adverbs generally occur after the verb they modify, for example:

029/b ... imá sá bísánan **beseé**.
 I.me not incant **well**
 I have not incanted well.

035/a A bá gód yó imbóg na dugónd **tíŋ** ...
 they tie him hand and foot **tightly**
 They tied him tightly hand and foot.

Some adverbs, however, occur immediately before the verb they modify, such as 'anda', meaning 'again'. Many of these adverbs are derived from verbs:

007/a Maná gesegel ma **andá** dómbóo ...
 little time T/A **again** pass
 a little time passed again ...

032/b ... ua **anda** hulugu ...
 3s **again** jump
 He jumped again

Adverbs do not take a noun class marker.

Prepositional phrases may be used to express adverbial meanings in Nulibie. They are often constructed from the word 'na' (meaning 'with') and a noun.

- 024/a Ɔ́nùne ua hulug ua busiúo ...
 tortoise 3s jump 3s first
 Tortoise jumped first ...
- 036/b ... ua éđ gé héhenye na bugaga ...
 3s leave for shout with strength
 He gathered up his strength to shout ...
- 040/a Ua gúg na nyiúnyi Ɔ́nili gidigid.
 3s return.home with tear road all
 He returned home, crying all the way.

5.0

The Place of Direct and Indirect Objects

There are two occasions in 'The Story of Ihinehine' where both an indirect object and a direct object occur in the same clause. In both cases the same word order is followed:

- 002/a Ua námban bó gunyá.
 3s prepared them food
 S. V. I.O. D.O.
- 014/b ...bá hémínye bó gunyá.
 3p take-out them food
 S. V. I.O. D.O.

The indirect object occurs immediately following the verb, and the direct object follows the indirect object.

6.0

Pronouns

Personal pronouns in Nulibie have a distinction between first, second and third persons on the one hand, and between singular and plural on the other. In the third person there are also different pronoun forms for each noun class.

6.1 Subject Pronouns, Class 1 and 2 Nouns:

There are two subject pronouns for each distinction, PRO 1 and PRO 2, one of which is omitted in certain circumstances. The subject pronouns occur in a verb complex, which includes PRO 1 or PRO 2 or both, one or more tense-aspect markers and the verb root.

(PRO 1) (PRO 2) (T/A) (T/A 2) + V

The subject pronouns can be categorised thus:

PERSON	PRO 1	PRO 2
1 st sg	i, ya	- / ma?
2 nd sg	a	-
3 rd sg	u	a
1 st pl	di	-
2 nd pl	nu	-
3 rd pl	a	bá
	e	bé
	o	bó

Which pronoun is used in the 3rd person singular PRO 1, and 3rd person plural PRO 1 and 2, is regulated by the rules of vowel harmony, depending on the vowels contained in the following word. The 3rd person singular PRO 1 can occur with any of the PRO 2 options. In the case of 3rd person plural, there are several forms due to vowel harmony.

The following pronoun forms were used in the text following a nominal subject:

PERSON	PRO 1	PRO 2
3 rd sg	u	a / -
3 rd pl	e	bé
	i	bié
	ɔ	mó
	o	bó
	o	mól
	-	bo

Some of the variations noted in the 3rd person are due to vowel harmony; some are due to noun class concord. Note that the 3rd person singular PRO 1 may be used without a PRO 2, and at least one form of the 3rd person plural PRO 2 may be used without a PRO 1. Other forms were not present in the text.

The pronoun usually follows immediately the nominal subject it refers to, however these elements may be separated by a short adjectival or adverbial clause (eg. 019/a “Tortue, chef de sagesse et intelligence, elle...”; 012/a “Thinehine, avec courage lui tout, il...”; 015/a “Thinehine, qui savait chose que lui en train faire, il...”).

In certain circumstances, one of the pronouns is omitted. This may be in a dependant clause or when the subjunctive mood is used. The pronouns then are as follows:

PERSON	PRO 1	PRO 2
1 st sg	i	-

2 nd sg	a	-
3 rd sg	u	-
1 st pl	di	-
2 nd pl	no examples	
3 rd pl	-	bá

Every case of the 3rd person plural found in the text had high tone. The single instances of 1st and 2nd person singular had low tone. This may or may not be true in other situations. The 3rd person singular and 1st person plural may occur with low or high tone.

Some examples of impersonal pronouns for the 3rd person that change depending on the noun class of the subject were also found.

Class 4: 013/a Sέ ma sέ ed gudóó
c4.3p T/A c4.3p leave to-be.empty
They (cooking pots) were already empty.

Class 7: 017/a Gisan ege óndín Giémbé
c7.affair c7.3s return.to Giembe
The affair found Giembe guilty.

6.2 Object Pronouns:

The object pronouns occupy the place immediately after the verb, with an indirect object preceding a direct object. It seems with the data so far that the object pronoun does not change depending on whether it is direct or indirect. In this text only 3rd person examples were found. They are as follows:

PERSON	PRONOUN
3 rd sg	yó / yó / yóó
3 rd pl	bó

These pronouns are not affected by vowel harmony. The basis for the variation in 3rd person singular pronouns is unknown at this time.

6.3 Emphatic Pronouns:

Emphatic pronouns are used to emphasise the noun.

PERSON	EMPHATIC PRONOUN
1 st sg	yaŋua
2 nd sg	aŋua
3 rd sg	umuanyé
1 st pl	basua

2 nd pl	banua
3 rd pl	bamuan

They seem to be used in the place of PRO 1 for the pronoun being emphasised:

018/a	Umuanyé	sósón	ua	bísáséeg.
	3s.emph	also	3s	deny
	He also denied it.			

6.4 Demonstrative Pronouns:

There is one example in the text of deictic demonstrative pronouns. It has the meaning 'these', and if there is a noun class marker it is not clear:

038/b	... du-olí	u-do ...
	c13.cord	PRO.c13.these
	these cords	

There are also locative pronouns, which may be differentiated as 'here', 'there' and 'over there', although more examples would be needed to ascertain this.

012/a,b	ua	gundune	i-ndól	eseé	gu-nyá	má	bá	gó.
	3s	open	c5.cook-pots	of.which	c15.food	T/A	T/A?	there
	He opened the cooking pots where the food had been.							

034/a	A	bá	yugie	yu	agánye.
	3p		take.from	3s.DO	there (from his home)
	They took him from there.				

038/c	... iṅuín	aga ...
	1s.die	here
	...I will die here...	

041/a	Gu	bul	bu-ósé	u-bu	gányé...
	for	start	c14.day	PRO.c14	there
	Beginning that day...				

'a gaá' (two separate words) is also glossed elsewhere as 'là où...' ('there where...'), and 'a gá...' is glossed as 'chez...' (in this case meaning 'at...'). Two of more of these may be different forms of the same word.

In any case, it appears that 'aga' means 'here', 'gó' means 'there (close by)' and 'agánye', or 'gányé', means 'over there'.

6.5 Possessive Pronouns:

Possessive pronouns occur after the noun that they refer to, and consist of a noun class prefix, which agrees with the noun, and a stem.

021/b ... ni-muendé nia ég ...
 c9.stomach c9 3s. poss
 ... his stomach ...

036/c ... mu-ón ua egé ...
 c1.son c1 3s.poss
 ... his son ...

PERSON	POSSESSIVE PRONOUN	EXAMPLE	GLOSS
1 st sg	am	ni-madé ní am c9.courage c9 1s.poss	My courage
2 nd sg	ah	ni-madé ní ah c9.courage c9 2s.poss	Your courage
3 rd sg	eg, egé	ni-madé nia ég c9.courage c9 3s.poss	His courage
1 st pl	asó	ni-madé ni asó c9.courage c9 1p.poss	Our courage
2 nd pl	ánó	ni-madé ní ánó c9.courage c9 2p.poss	Your courage
3 rd pl	óbó	ni-madé ní óbó c9.courage c9 3p.poss	Their courage

7.0

Temporal References in Ihinehine Text

Expressions indicating the progression of time are used in narrative texts to keep interest and to mark new scenes or actions (discontinuities). Actions are spaced using several different time phrases throughout the story.

In the story of Ihinehine, there is no introductory expression to set the time or location. The first indication of time progressing is in 005/a, 'after a few moments'. The animals have worked for a while, and now the focus switches to Giembe, who becomes ill and goes to sleep. The time phrase occurs at the beginning of the sentence before the main clause.

005/a Ni-síŋ de ma-ná Giémbé ua gua gunúma
 c9.moment AM c6.smallness Giembe 3s fall to-be.ill
 After a few moments, Giembe fell ill.

Then 007/a tells the reader that a little time passed, and switches the action back to Ihinehine. This discontinuity is marked by a clause, including a noun, tense/aspect marker and verb.

007/a Ma-ná gɛ-sɛgɛl ma andá dɔmbóɔ ...
 c6.smallness c7.time T/A T/A pass
 A little while later ...

In 011/a the action returns to the animals with a sentence beginning: 'When they had finished working...'. This sentence consists of two clauses: the first clause contains the temporal reference and the second clause contains the next event. They both look like independent clauses, and don't seem to be linked by any connective word, but perhaps the tense aspect markers, or word order, in the first clause mark it out as dependent.

011/a Bá maá má dɔg bu-óli...
 3p T/A T/A finish c14.work
 When they finished working ...

The storyline is then moved along by repetition for a while as the animals all jump over the grave, and the main character, Ihinehine, keeps falling in. Finally, 'at the fifth time', the repetitive action is cut:

033/a Oguá ú-dényi uá gátánóɔ...
 at c3.time AM five
 At the fifth time ...

This phrase adds to the humour of the story as the reader imagines the other animals patiently watching Ihinehine. But their mood changes abruptly with this phrase. They accuse him and tie him up in the field. They leave him there, for an indeterminate length of time. The next series of actions is introduced by this phrase:

036/a Ni-gué maá gá sésényé yúu ...
 c9.death T/A for disturb 3s.DO
 When death came to disturb him ...

023/a contains one temporal reference that does not serve to indicate the progression of time. Rather it is used adverbially to modify the main verb of the clause in which it occurs. Here the temporal expression occurs finally in the clause.

023/a Bi-gaga ɛ biá dím ɔ-mbél a gá gi-légilé
 c8.strong 3p dig c3.grave in.no.c7.time
 The strong animals dug a grave in no time.

8.0

Appendix

8.1 Story of Ihinehine

author: tite ologa

\lx giána gi ihínehíne

\xn histoire de Ihinehine

\xe Story of Ihinehine

\ref 001/a

\lx ihínehíne ua dónon bógób mányam

\xn Ihinehine 3s appela siens c6a.animal

\xe Ihinehine called his animals

\lx gá gólié yó ga ég gá buóli.

\xn pour aider lui son pour c14.travail.

\xe to help him with his work.

\ref 002/a

\lx ua námban bó gunyá.

\xn 3s prepara eux c15.manger.

\xe He cooked food for them.

\ref 003/a

\lx bá maá má ége oguá mésígée,

\xn 3pl étant arrivé à le c6a.champs,

\xe Once they had arrived at the field,

\ref 003/b

\lx a bá bídón a gá mba.

\xn 3pl se déchargèrent sous mba.

\xe they unloaded under mba (a tree).

\ref 004/a

\lx a bá bul buóli.

\xn 3pl commencèrent travail.

\xe They started work.

\ref 005/a

\lx nisín de maná giémbé ua gua gunúma.
\xn Quelques instants Giembe 3s tomba malade.
\xe After some time Giembe became ill.

\ref 006/a

\lx ua na bédémén a gá mba
\xn 3s partit se coucher sous mba
\xe He went and lay down under mba

\ref 006/b

\lx eyéé bá má bídón gunyá.
\xn duquel 3pl étaient déchargémanger.
\xe where they had unloaded the food.

\ref 007/a

\lx maná gesegei ma andá dómbóo,
\xn Un peu c7.temps il passa,
\xe Some time went by,

\ref 007/b

\lx ihínehíne ua éd gá bíhuá mimbi.
\xn Ihinehine 3s partit pour boire c6.eau.
\xe Ihinehine went for a drink of water.

\ref 008/a

\lx u ma égé a gaá mimbi maá baa,
\xn 3s lui arrivé là où c6.eau elle était,
\xe When he arrived where the water was,

\ref 008/b

\lx ua nyén gá gunyá uós.
\xn 3s mangea pour manger tout.
\xe he ate everything up.

\ref 009/a

\lx ua gól megúdú,
\xn 3s prit c6.huile,
\xe He took some oil,

\ref 009/b

\lx ua huénen giémbé oguá níd.
\xn 3s frotta Giembe sur la c9.bouche.

\xe he rubbed it around Giembe's mouth.

\ref 010/a

\lx ua bá da guond gá buóli.

\xn 3s après retourna pour c14.travail.

\xe Then he returned to work.

\ref 011/a

\lx bá maá má dɔg buóli,

\xn 3pl après avoir fini c14.travail,

\xe After they finished the work,

\ref 011/b

\lx a bá ól a gá mba.

\xn 3pl.eux venus chez mba.

\xe they came to mba.

\ref 012/a

\lx ihínehíne na nimadé nia ég gidigid ua gundune indól

\xn Ihinehine avec c9.courage lui tout 3s ouvrit c4.marmite

\xe Ihinehine, with all his courage, opened the cooking pots

\ref 012/b

\lx εεέ gunyá má bá gó.

\xn duquel manger lui était là.

\xe where the food had been.

\ref 013/a

\lx sé ma sé ed gudó.

\xn 3pl déjà étaient vides.

\xe They were already empty.

\ref 014/a

\lx manyam a ma ól má óndeé a má ɔyɛɛn ihínehíne

\xn c6.animal 3pl autres 3pl.eux disent ihinehine

\xe The other animals told Ihinehine

\lx na giémbé anée

\xn et Giembe que

\xe and Giembe to

\ref 014/b

\lx bá hémínye bó gunyá.

\xn 3pl sortirent eux manger.
\xe bring out the food for them.

\ref 015/a

\lx ihínehíne maá múnyán buand ɔ bóó ú má ála ua ɔyed aneé,
\xn Ihinehine savait chose que 3s avait faire 3s dit que,
\xe Ihinehine knew what he had done and said,

\ref 015/b

\lx anaá dí bí ganen ogúá éjíd.
\xn <<Que nous regardions à les c10.bouche.
\xe "Let's look at each others' mouths.

\ref 016/a

\lx u gaá bianó mégúdú oguá nid
\xn Celui qui aura c6.huile à la c9.bouche
\xe The one who has oil around his mouth,

\ref 016/b

\lx tá bó ée ú sá nyá gunya.
\xn c'est.que 3s a mangé manger.>>
\xe he's the one who ate the food.

\ref 017/a

\lx gisan εεε óndin giémbé.
\xn c7.affaire elle retourna Giembe.
\xe The affair came back to Giembe.

\ref 018/a

\lx umuanyé sósón ua bisáséeg.
\xn Lui aussi 3s nia.
\xe He also denied it.

\ref 019/a

\lx ηηúne, ɔgúná ua mpiga na nuggedie, ua ɔnen nugál.
\xn tortue, c1.chef de c3.sagesse et c11.intelligence, 3s demanda c11.parole.
\xe Tortoise, chief of wisdom and intelligence, asked to speak.

\ref 020/a

\lx ua ɔyed anee,
\xn 3s dit que:
\xe She said,

\ref 020/b

\lx anaá dí dímé ɔmbélé,
\xn <<Que nous creusèrent c3.fosse,

\xe "Let's dig a grave,
\ref 020/c
\lx di hulugen.
\xn nous sautons.
\xe and we'll jump.

\ref 021/a
\lx mɔ̀ndɔ u sá nyá gunyáa,
\xn c1.personne 3s a mangé manger,
\xe The one who has eaten the food,

\ref 021/b
\lx nimuɛndé nia ég nye gunɔ́h.
\xn c9.ventre pour lui est lourd.
\xe his stomach will be heavy.

\ref 022/a
\lx ú gaá guanó.
\xn C'est.lui.qui va.tomber.>>
\xe He is the one who will fall."

\ref 023/a
\lx bigaga ɛ biá dí́m ɔ̀mbél a gá gilégilé.
\xn c2.forts 3pl creusèrent c3.fosse en.rien.de c7.temps.
\xe Being strong, they dug the grave in no time.

\ref 024/a
\lx ηηúne ua hulug ua busío,
\xn c3.tortue 3s sauta la première,
\xe Tortoise jumped first,

\ref 024/b
\lx ua dómb.
\xn 3s passa.
\xe and passed.

\ref 025/a
\lx giémbé ua hulug
\xn Giembe 3s sauta
\xe Giembe jumped

\ref 025/b
\lx ua dómb.

\xn 3s passa.
\xe and passed.

\ref 026/a

\lx basógá bá modí a bá hulugen
\xn c2.autres 3pl certains 3pl sautèrent
\xe Some of the others jumped

\ref 026/b

\lx a bá domban.
\xn 3pl passèrent.
\xe and they passed.

\ref 027/a

\lx ihínehíne ua ne sién.
\xn Ihinehine 3s resta.
\xe Only Ihinehine was left.

\ref 028/a

\lx u ma eléé
\xn 3s se dit
\xe He told himself / geared himself up

\ref 028/b

\lx u hulugu,
\xn 3s saute,
\xe to jump,

\ref 028/c

\lx ua gua oguá dá gua ómbél.
\xn 3s tomba à interieur.de c3.fosse.
\xe he fell into the grave.

\ref 029/a

\lx ua oyed aneé,
\xn 3s dit que:
\xe He said,

\ref 029/b

\lx imá sá bísanan beseé.
\xn <<je.moi ne pas incantations bien.>>
\xe "I didn't say my incantations well."

\ref 030/a

\lx a bá yugie yú.

\xn 3pl.lui sortirent lui.

\xe They took him out.

\ref 031/a

\lx ua bísánan.

\xn 3s fit.incantations.

\xe He said his incantations.

\ref 032/a

\lx u ma elée

\xn Il se dit

\xe He told himself / geared himself up to

\ref 032/b

\lx ua anda hulugu,

\xn 3s encore saute,

\xe jump again,

\ref 032/c

\lx ua anda gua.

\xn 3s encore tomber.

\xe but he fell again.

\ref 033/a

\lx u guá údényi uá gátánóó, bágóó a bá óndinye yú aneé

\xn A.la fois de cinq, c2.autres ils.eux repondirent lui que

\xe At the fifth time, the others told him that

\ref 033/b

\lx ú maá nyá gunyá

\xn lui avait mangé manger

\xe he had eaten the food.

\ref 033/c

\lx ua ond

\xn 3s rentra

\xe He turned away

\ref 033/d

\lx ua gɔnc guhona bó.
\xn 3s commença rire.à eux.
\xe He started to laugh at them.

\ref 034/a

\lx a bá yugie yu agánye.
\xn 3pl.eux sortirent lui là.
\xe They pulled him out of there.

\ref 035/a

\lx a bá gód yó imbóg na dugónd tíŋ,
\xn 3pl.eux attachèrent lui c4.mains et c13.pied fortement,
\xe They tied him tightly, hands and feet,

\ref 035/b

\lx a bá sió yú u gudánye.
\xn 3pl.eux laisser lui au champs.
\xe and left him in the field.

\ref 036/a

\lx nígué maá gá sésényé yúu,
\xn c9.mort quand déranger lui,
\xe When death started to bother him,

\ref 036/b

\lx ua éd gé héhenye na bugaga,
\xn 3s partit pour crier fort,
\xe he started to shout loudly.

\ref 036/c

\lx ua dóŋɔn muón ua egé ua ɔgón
\xn 3s appelle c1.fils lui.de ainé.
\xe He called his oldest son.

\ref 037/a

\lx muón ua siegéne,
\xn c1.fils 3s arriver,
\xe The son arrived,

\ref 037/b

\lx ua óhún sié aneé, baba, giag gé.
\xn 3s demanda c1.père que: <<Papa, quoi?>>
\xe and asked his father, "Papa, what?"

\ref 038/a

\lx ihínehíne uá ondinye yú aneé,
\xn Ihinehine 3s repondit lui que:
\xe Ihinehine answered,

\ref 038/b

\lx inculún duolí u dɔ,
\xn <<Moi.detache c13.corde celle-ci,
\xe "untie me these cords.

\ref 038/c

\lx iɲuín aga,
\xn je.meurs ici,
\xe I will die here.

\ref 038/d

\lx a di inyoó.
\xn tu pas m'enterrer.>>
\xe Don't bury me.

\ref 039/a

\lx muón ua al haná
\xn c1.fils 3s fit comme
\xe The son did as

\ref 039/b

\lx sié ua egé ú má oyédɛn yó.
\xn c1.père lui il à.lui dit lui.
\xe his father had told him.

\ref 040/a

\lx ua gúg na níonyi ɲjili gidigid.
\xn 3s rentre avec c9.pleur c3.chemin tout.
\xe He returned home crying all the way.

\ref 041/a

\lx gu bul buósé u bu gányé
\xn Pour débiter c14.jour même là,
\xe Starting that day,

\ref 041/b

\lx mányam yiganaá oгуá mból kanda nyonone.

\xn c6.animaux pourrissent à.la c3.surface sans enterrer.
\xe animals rot on the surface without being buried.