

**The syllabification of VV-sequences in Dàgáàrè**  
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This paper analyses VV-sequences in Dàgáàrè, a Gur language spoken in north-western Ghana and Burkina Faso (Bodomo, 1997), showing that tone serves as one diagnostic for determining syllable boundaries. The corpus on which this work is based was collected in Sombo, and comprises of ~22500 word tokens from wordlists and narratives.

**Previous work on syllable structure.** Anttila & Bodomo (1996) discuss association of H to the penult as a possible diagnostic for the syllabification of VV-sequences. This paper extends this analysis by looking at the distribution of tone on derived, underlying, and morphologically concatenated VV-sequences.

**Findings.** We present an argument for contextually based hetero-/tauto-syllabification of VV-sequences. We find that derived long vowels surface with level tone. Examples include number inflection (1) and nominalization (2) below. Where they surface with two distinct tones, the source can be traced back to morphological concatenation or underlying tones, as in (3).

**(1) Number inflection, tone of long vowel morae are identical**

- |    |               |               |
|----|---------------|---------------|
| a. | pèpélíí       | pèpél-é       |
|    | ‘scar(sg)’    | ‘scar(pl)’    |
| b. | gbéríí        | gbéré-é       |
|    | ‘cripple(sg)’ | ‘cripple(pl)’ |

**(2) Nominalization, tone of long vowel morae are identical**

- |    |                                     |           |     |      |              |           |           |
|----|-------------------------------------|-----------|-----|------|--------------|-----------|-----------|
| a. | Stem: ηmàà                          |           |     |      |              |           |           |
|    | dàà- rí                             | ηmáá-bú   | ì   | lá   | jèl          | nímbí-zíé |           |
|    | wood-PL                             | cut-NMLZ  | COP | FOC  | issue/matter | eye- red  |           |
|    | ‘The cutting of wood is important.’ |           |     |      |              |           |           |
| b. | Stem: wà                            |           |     |      |              |           |           |
|    | ò                                   | wáá- bú   | dà  | kú   | tí           | lá        | nmáàn     |
|    | 3SG                                 | come-NMLZ | PST | give | 1PL.O        | FOC       | happiness |
|    | ‘His return brought us joy.’        |           |     |      |              |           |           |

**(3) Intervening morpheme boundary, tone of long vowel morae may be different**

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|---------------------|---------------------|
| nùzè-rí             | nùzè-é              |
| ‘unblical cord(sg)’ | ‘unblical cord(pl)’ |

Diphthongs follow a similar pattern: when they are derived, they surface with identical tone, whereas distinct tones is a result of morphological concatenation.

**(4) Diphthongs behave similarly**

- |               |           |
|---------------|-----------|
| pòpúó         | dàgì-é    |
| ‘stomach(sg)’ | ‘jaw(pl)’ |

Both types of VV-sequences permit unlike tones only when a morpheme break intervenes. If the VV-sequence occurs in the same morpheme and is derived, the tone on both Vs is identical. This asymmetry provides evidence for the syllable as the tone bearing unit. Further, the asymmetry corresponds to two structures, tautosyllabic [VV]σ and heterosyllabic [V]σ[V]σ. Long vowels

correspond to the first, while concatenated vowels correspond to the second. Diphthongization, which result from a constraint on derived long mid vowels (Antilla & Bodomo, 2019), is analyzed as multiple correspondence, compared to the hiatus forming VV-sequences.

### References

Anttila, Arto & Adams Bodomo. 1996. Stress & Tone. Manuscript

Anttila, Arto & Adams Bodomo. 2019. Metrically conditioned vowel length in Dagaare. In Emily Clem, Peter Jenks, & Hannah Sande (eds.), *Theory and description in African Linguistics: Selected papers from the 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on African Linguistics*, 21-39. Berlin: Language Science Press.

Bodomo, Adams. 1997. *The structure of Dagaare*. Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications.