Sierra Leone
Mende Language Manual









Hosted for free on livelingua.com

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement 1
Introduction. 2
Historical Background To the Tribe. 2
Political and Social Organization 3
Mende Orthography 4
Numerals. 5
Basic Greetings 8
Asking for the Chief 10
Nouns 11
Number 12
The Agentive Form 13
Pronouns 14
Introducing Oneself 17
Asking About One's Family 19
Pronouns 21
Identifying Objects 23
Bargaining 25
Introducing a Friend 27
Verbs 28
Transportation 32
Tenses 34
Consonant Mutation 36
Health 39
Seasons/Climate 41
Adverbs 42
Ideophones 43
Adjectives 44
Emphatic Functions 45
Fish Farmer 47
School Situation 49
Postpositions and Prepositions 50
Months of the Year 52
Swamp Rice Farming 53
Polygamy 56
Meal Times 57
Back From a Trip 61
Proverbs 62
Stories 66
Useful Phrases and Expressions 70
Glossary 72
References 78

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The task of updating this manual has been a herculean one. We found ourselves engaged in writing a new manual kind of, other than merely updating an existing one. However, it has been a wonderful experience.

What we now have as a 'Language and Cultural Manual' is the product of many human and material resources. We therefore wish to express our profound gratitudes to the following people for giving us some valuable information and advice:- Mr Joe Abu, a Senior Health Inspector in Kenema, a typical Mende who is a renowned hunter; Yea Mamie Conteh, an experienced old woman resident in Bo who deals in herbs for curing various diseases. We are also thankful to the staff of the Bunumbu Press in Bo (Provincial Literature Bureau) who gave us materials and guidelines, and for also going through the script.

We owe our obligations to Dr. Joko Sengova, Head of the Department of Linguistics and African Languages, Fourah Bay College (University of Sierra Leone) and Mr Joseph Opala of the Department of the Institute of African Studies (Fourah Bay College) for using valuable information from their lectures. We should also commend the Language/Culture Coordinator, Mr Swaray Conteh who pro- posed the updating of the previous manual. Nothing could have been achieved without the relentless efforts, concern and interest of the Programming Training Officer, Dr. Nanette Hegamin. We were moved and inspired by her continuous coachings and academic advice. We should also be thankful to Miss Kadie Kamara who typed the manuscripts.

Finally we thank all those, who, in one way or the other contributed to the successful completion of this manual.

Whatever shortcomings that show up in this piece of work will be purely our responsibility. We are however hopeful that it will serve as a useful resource material for the United States Peace Corps Volunteers in Sierra Leone who will need to learn Mende.

Alhaji Sheik Kuyateh
Frederick Conteh
1989

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this updated manual is to enable Peace Corps Volunteers in Sierra Leone to interact freely with the community in which they find themselves. One communicates and socializes through language; knowing the language and culture of a group of people is becoming part of those people. The Mende manual is specifically designed for those who will work in Mende-speaking areas. In order to acquire some proficiency in the language, the 'Brewster Method' should supplement these information.

This manual provides a more functional knowledge in both language and culture, for all Volunteers. It therefore focuses on all Peace Corps Volunteer occupations. It will also help Volunteers to work effectively with the local community.

Mende has two real dialects; Kpàà Mende spoken predominantly in the Moyamba District and in small areas in the Bo and Kenema Districts. The other dialect is the Kɔɔ Mende spoken mainly in the Kenema, Kailahun and Kono Districts. Mende speakers in the Pujehun District are referred to as the 'Wanjama' people, but this is no real dialect of mende. A big river runs through this area called 'Wanjei'. Their Mende is no less than that of the Kɔɔ.

Since much of the lexical and phonological variations in Kpàà are now giving way to the Kɔɔ system, we realize that modern spoken Mende is similar also to the Kɔɔ system. Kɔɔ Mende then has become mutually intelligible for all Mende speakers in Sierra Leone. Kɔɔ then is the dominant dialect in this manual.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE TRIBE

(Ref: Sierra Leone History from AD 1000 to present day - pamphlet - 1984, S.M. Koroma)

The Mendes are said to be the largest ethnic group in Sierra Leone. They are descendants of the Mane who were invaders. They arrived in Sierra Leone around 1550. They occupy the Southern and Eastern Provinces which is about 1/3 of the total surface area of Sierra Leone. The two Provinces comprise Bo, Moyamba, Pujehun, Kenema and Kalahun Districts. These people have a rich cultural and linguistic characteristics which help to mark them off as a distinct group in Sierra Leone.

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

There are about three sub-divisions of the Mende group.

A) Kpa (Gba) - These are found in the Moyamba and Bo Districts and part of Kenema District. They are very unique in their unflinching support and membership of the 'Wonde' secret society. They are renowned for their strong military traditions and those in Moyamba District particularly have a distinct dialect - Kpàà (Gba) different.

B) Sewa Mende - They live near and along the Sewa river commonly referred to as 'middle' Mende because they occupy a middle position between the Kpàà and the Koo - Bo, Kenema, Pujehun. They look upon themselves as the purest Mende speaking group.

C) Koo Mende - They are largely muslims and they regard themselves as the most knowledgeable and learned. They are found in the Kenema and Kailahun Districts.

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

These people have great regards and respect for the institution of chieftaincy. 'Ndomahei' (Paramount Chief) has wide ranging powers although with colonial rule and independence these powers have been considerably undermined and eroded. Before colonial rule, the Mahei (Chief) was King in his own right and was accorded all the powers befitting his supreme title. Warfare was a common factor for acquiring Chieftaincy or Kingship which implied that the King was usually the chief warrior. Today Paramount Chiefs are elected by tribal authorities.

The Mendes have a rich cultural heritage. They are rich in traditional music and folklore, with a powerful display in artistry - carving and weaving. They preserve their tradition in their secret societies. These societies play a very vital role in thier lives. There is the Poro and Wonde for men; Sande or Bondo for women; Njayei and humoi for both sexes.

They are predominantly farmers as they hail from areas which have rich and fertile soil for farming. They produce the major cash crops in the country. They farm in crops like rice - the staple food in Sierra Leone - cocoa, coffee, ginger, cassava, groundnuts and vegetables. Even educated Mendes are farmers of these products. Kenema and Kailahun Districts are rich in crops like cocoa and coffee. Fishing and hunting for game are also their pastime activities. They also exploit oil palm for oil and kernels.

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

Although connected to Islam and Christianity, the Mendes are mostly animist with strong belief in the worship of ancestors and in witchcraft and sorcery. They have a strong belief that actions of the living are largely influenced and conditioned by dead ancestors.

MENDE ORTHOGRAPHY

Consonants

b	- Bafa	- hut	p	- pɛlɛ	- house
d	- dawa	- leaf	t	- tɛɛ	- fowl
f	- folo	- sun	v	- vonu	- last year
g	- genda	- morning	k	- kali	- hoe
gb	- gbalɛ	- hurt	kp	- kpatɛ	- make
h	- haku	- tortoise	j	- jaka	- male lizard
l	- loli	- dance	n	- navo	- money
m	- maana	- plantain	w	- walɛ	- wooden state
mb	- mba	- rice	nd	- ndamba	- crocodile
ng	- ngɛli	- thorn	nj	- nja	- water
ny	- nyani	- spoil	ŋ	- ŋama	- blood
s	- sani	- bottle	y	- yabasi	- onion

Vowels

Mende has seven vowels

i	- ndili	- housefly
e	- tewe	- cut
ɛ	- mehɛ	- food
a	- paa	- kill
ɔ	- hɔlɔ	- sew
o	- tolo	- kolanut
u	- bulu	- horn

Long vowels should be doubled in writing.

E.g.:	paa	- kill
	kpaa	- farm
	Lɔɔlu	- five
	puu	- ten
	fajii	- the bucket

Note:

1. The name of each letter of the alphabet will be its sound i.e. Phonic Articulation will be used.

2. A final n to indicate the nasal sound will be indicated; e.g. Makatihun, kpaahun, kisihun.

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

3. Nasal combinations like nd, ny, mb and the labio-velar sounds kp and gb should be articulated as single sounds.

E.g.: Kpalɛ - pain Gbembe - board
Ndovo - frog Nyɔkɔ - sugar cane
Ngoto - waist

4. It should be noted that ŋ which is the final sounds in English words like sing, morning, and going can occur in initial and final positions in Mende.

E.g.: ŋoni - Bird
ŋama - Blood
Poloŋ - Far
Gbuŋ - Heavy falling sound

NUMERALS

The following numerals are used in counting.

Ita	- One
Fele	- Two
Sawa	- Three
Naani	- Four
Lɔɔlu	- Five
Weita	- Six
Wɔfla	- Seven
Wayakpa	- Eight
Taalu	- Nine
Puu	- Ten
Puu mahun yila	- Eleven
Numu gbɔyɔngɔ	- Twenty
Numu gbɔyɔngɔ mahun puu	- Thirty
Numu fele gbɔyɔngɔ	- Forty
Numu fele gbɔyɔngɔ mahun puu	- Fifty
Numu sawa gbɔyɔngɔ	- Sixty
Numu sawa gbɔyɔngɔ mahun puu	- Seventy
Numu naani gbɔyɔngɔ	- Eighty
Numu naani gbɔyɔngɔ mahun puu	- Ninety
Hɔndɔ yila	- One hundred
Tausi yila	- One thousand

Ngila (mutated form - yila) - one

Ita - used only in counting.

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

Ordinals

Haala - first
Yeso - first

Ngila, haala and yeso do not have the same grammatical distribution.

E.g.: Senti yila ve mbɛ - Give me one cent
Haala Pisko lɔ - This is the first Peace Corps
Nya yeso ngi wani - I came first

When ngila occurs with the prefix 'ye' - it means 'one of' as in:

Yengila wu bagihun - Put one of them in the bag
Yengila bɛ ii nya yeya - I don't have anyone

Note: Yilakpe (mutated form - yakpe)

Yakpe mia nya yeya - I have only one

'Haala' can take the agentive singular and plural markers.

Haalamui lɔ pɛɛ bu
Haalablaa ti fonga
Haalableisia ti kpɛlɛ yeyanga

The suffix - ngɔ occurs with the numerals fele to wayakpa.

Ti lɔɔlungɔ ti waa
Ti wayakpangɔ tia bi

-ngɔ is also contracted with fele and sawa to fengɔ and sangɔ respectively.

Fengɔ yeya
Sangɔ majia
Bi li lɔ a fengɔ?

Ngila, fengɔ and sangɔ are the only numerals whose initial consonants can be mutated.

Ngila - yila
Fengɔ - vengɔ
Sango - jangɔ

Mu jangɔ muli maa Bo
Ti vengɔ lɔ mbi
Ndo yila mia ngi yeya

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

When the suffix kpe is added to yila, fele and sawa they mean - only.

I ngeyani yakpe
Mu sawakpe mia mu li ni Bo
Ti felekpe mia ti nje ti le ni

When nouns are enumerated they do not take plural markers.

Mbala puu mia mu ngeya ni
Nyaha lɔɔlu mia mahei Buake yeya
Nya gɔ a mita fele

TONE

Tone is a very important feature of African languages. It is a distinctive feature because a change in tone on the same lexical item brings about a change in meaning.

Mende has two different tones; high and low.

High Tone		Low Tone	
Ndé	- say it	Bɔ̀lɔ̀	- hat/cap
Hélé	- elephant	Mbùlù	- intestine
Lá	- lie down	Hè	- blessing

There are also phonetic glides from low to high and high to low where two vowels with different tones come together without an intervening consonant.

Rising Glide		Falling Glide	
Tèí	- The fowl/chicken	Ngíí	- I not (neg. pron)
Ngùí	- The head	Hɔ́ndɔ́è	
Sèlèí	- The banana	Búkúí	- Book

Examples of words distinguished from each other according to their tones.

Ndɔ̀lí	- Hook	Ndɔ́lí	- Dance
Kálí	- Hoe	Kàlí	- Snake
Mbówó	- Clay	Mbòw`	- To fly

The meaning of certain sentences is determined by tone (intonation).

Béè lí? Won't you go?
Bèè li You can't go.

Máá bíá míá mù límá. We are going together
Máá bìà mìà mú límá? Are we going together?

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

LESSON ONE

BASIC GREETINGS

Cultural Explanation

When the child begins to talk, he grows up by learning to greet everyone in the house every morning after washing his face. It becomes part of the child as a custom to greet elders every morning and at other times of the day. The child should first greet the elder.

In typical Mende homes, women greet their husbands by kneeling down which shows a sign of respect and honour. Greetings are sometimes followed by shaking of the hands which shows sign of intimacy or friendship (affection). Greetings also show a sign of respect and a display of good manners.

Immense use is made of titles in the language. This is mostly based on age and position in society. Therefore due regards is given to these titles when greeting people.

DIALOGUE

PCV:	Ndiamɔ, buwaa	- Hello, friend
LH:	Mm, buwaa, bi sia	- Hello
PCV:	Gbɔɔ bi ngahun?	- How are you?
LH:	Kaye ii Ngewɔ ma, ɔ biabɛɛ?	- I'm well, and you?
PCV:	Nya bɛɛ kaye ii Ngewɔ ma	- I'm well too
LH:	Kɛ malɔ bɔma	- See you again
PCV:	E-ye malɔ hoe	- O.k. we shall see

Alternate Forms

Kahuin ye na?	- How are you?
Nya ngahun gbuangɔ	- I'm well
Oɔ bi waa	- Hello (answering a greeting)
Mm, kɛ ta mia	- O.k. we shall see

Hosted for free on livelingua.com





Hosted for free on livelingua.com

Useful Expressions

Ngenda tɛtei	-	Early morning
Ngendei	-	Morning
Folihun	-	Afternoon
Kpɔkɔ voe	-	Evening
Fitiima	-	Twilight
Kpindi	-	Night
Ngewohuin	-	Dawn

Literal Translation			Meaning
Buwaa	-	Have you come	Hello/good morning
Bia na	-	Are you there	Good afternon
Buuvaa	-	Did you spend the day	Good evening
Mu kpɔkɔ	-	Good night	Good night
Mua lɔɔ sina	-	We see tomorrow	See you tomorrow

Substitution Drill

Trainer's Cue			Trainee's Cue
Ndiamɔ	-	Friend	Ndiamɔ buwaa
Ngɔ	-	Elder brother/sister	
Ndake	-	Male contemporary	
Nyande	-	Male/female contemporary	
Nyapoi	-	Lady	
Maada	-	Grandfather / Paramount Chief	
Mama	-	Grandmother	
Kɛkɛ	-	Father	
Yie	-	Mother	
Kenya	-	Uncle	
Kinii	-	Youngman	
Mahei	-	Chief	
Ndɔ Mahei	-	Paramount Chief	

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

LESSON TWO

Asking For The Chief

Cultural Explanation

Chiefs in Mende land are held in high esteem. It is therefore necessary for Volunteers to acquaint themselves with chiefs in their respective villages if they are to live and work successfully.

Traditionally, when one visits a chief (especially for the first time) he is expected to take along a gift as a token of establishing relationship. Also in shaking hands with a chief, one is expected to bow a little as a sign of respect.

DIALOGUE

PCV:	Kɔntɛh buaa	Hello Conteh
LH:	Mm, buaa bi sia	Hello
PCV:	Ndaké nya longɔ bi mähei yɛ pɛɛla ɑɛ a nge	I want you to show me the chief's house
LH:	Mahei yɛ pɛɛla lɔ sɛmɛɛ gblanga kɛɛ ngi humɛa tɛɛ i ya jɛsiama	The chief's house is by the Court Barrie, but I understand he has gone for a walk
PCV:	Bi kɔlɔ mia i ya na?	Do you know where he is gone to?
LH:	Ngii kɔɔ. kɛlɛke bi ko ngi yɛ pɛɛla bi mɔli bia vuii.	I don't know, except you go to his house and ask for yourself

At The Chief's House

PCV:	A wuwaa bindo	Hello here
Occupants:	Mm mɔi bi waa	Hello
PCV:	Mahei yɛ pɛɛla lɔ?	Is this the chief's house?
Occupants:	Ɔɔ i wa sange gbɛ ngi ngi loi	Yes, he has just come, let me call him

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

Chief Enters

PCV:	Mahei buwaa	Hello chief
Chief:	M̀m ndiamɔ bi waa bi sie, mu gɛwoo	Hello friend, have seat
PCV:	Mahei, ngi waa lɔ kɔ mua bie mu gɔɔma	Chief, I have come to get myself acquainted with you
Chief:	Bi lei?	What's your name?
PCV:	Nya laa _____ Piskɔ mia a nge	My name is _____ I am a Peace Corps Volunteer
Chief:	Bi gbua milɔ?	Where are you coming from?
PCV:	Ngi gbua Ameika lɔ nya longɔ ngi hei bi lei jihun kɔ mua weni mu yaa kpaa yengei we	I'm coming from America. I want to stay in your village so that we can farm together
Chief:	Na nyandegoi. Nga pielɔ nya bondeisia ti magɔ	That's good. I'll let my people know about it
PCV:	Mahei fama loo woo gbe bi va	Chief, here is a small gift for you
Chief:	Ee, mɔi bi sie, Ngewɔ i ndo nya nɛmahun	O.k. thank you youngman, let me live to remember it through God's will
PCV:	Kɛ ngi ya lɛ pɛɛla	Then I'm going home
Chief:	E-ye mua gbla	O.k. see you

NOUNS

Indefinite and Definite Forms

Definiteness and number are functionally related, for the language does not only have definite singular forms but also definite and indefinite singular and plural forms. The indefinite form of a noun is simply that which does not have a definite marker.

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

The most common definite marker is the suffix i

Indefinite Singular Form			Definite Singular Form		
Hele	-	Elephant	Helei	-	The Elephant
Pɛlɛ	-	House	Pɛlei	-	" house
Ndopo	-	Child	Ndopoi	-	" child
Sani	-	Bottle	Sanii	-	" bottle
Bulu	-	Horn	Bului	-	" horn
Bɔlɔ	-	Hat	Bɔlɔi	-	" hat

There are a few exceptions to this pattern.

i) When the definite singular marker i is suffixed to a word ending in a the a is replaced by e/ɛ.

E.g.:

Indefinite Singular			Definite Singular		
Mba	-	Rice	Mbei	-	The rice
Haa	-	Death	Haei	-	The death

ii) A few nouns have their final vowels lengthened or their definite form.

Indefinite Singular			Definite Singular		
Mɛmɛ	-	Mirror	Mɛmɛɛ	-	The mirror
Ndola	-	Baby	Ndolaa	-	The baby
Kaŋa	-	Box	Kaŋaa	-	The box

NUMBER

The most frequently occuring plural markers are ngaa the indefinite plural marker, and only suffixed to indefinite forms of nouns; and sia sufixed to definite forms only.

Indefinite Singular			Indefinite Plural		
Maha	-	Chief	Mahangaa	-	Chiefs
Ndili	-	Housefly	Ndilingaa	-	Houseflies
Hele	-	Elephant	Helengaa	-	Elephants
Ndopo	-	Child	Ndopongaa	-	Children

Definite Plural

Mahangeisia	-	The chiefs	also	Maheisia	-	The chiefs
Ndiligeisia	-	The houseflies	"	Ndilisia	-	The houseflies
Helengeisia	-	The elephants	"	Heleisia	-	The elephants
Ndopoisia	-	The children				

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

Ni

Ni is another plural marker, and it occurs only with personal pronouns, and in folklore, with the names of animal characters. It means and others or groups.

Sualeni	Swaray and others
Isani	Issa and others
Dɔktani ti ya Salɔn.	Doctor and others have gone to Freetown

When ni is used with the pronouns mua, wua, and tia, it has flattering, derogatory or arrogant connotation.

Wuani we luwa	People like you don't fear
Tiani te nafa	People like them cannot prosper

Note that a noun takes the definite singular marker i before the definite plural marker. Pronouns can take the definite plural suffix, sia.

Wuanisia wu mɛhɛ yana	- That is not food for people like you
Muanisia mue jia goi	- People like us don't offend others

THE AGENTIVE FORM

Mɔ and its corresponding plural markers blaa and bleisia are roughly equivalent to English er and ers.

Ngenge	- Work	Ngengemɔ	- Worker (Indefinite singular)
Mɛ	- Eat	Mɛmɔ	- Eater (Indefinite singular)
Pie	- Do	Piemɔ	- Doer (Indefinite singular)

Ngengemɔi	- The worker	(Definite singular)
Mɛmoi	- The eater	(Definite singular)
Piemoi	- The doer	(Definite singular)
Ngengeblaa	- Workers	(Indefinite plural)
Mɛblaa	- Eaters	(Indefinite plural)
Pieblaa	- Doers	(Indefinite plural)
Ngengebleisia	- The workers	(Definite plural)
Mɛbleisia	- The eaters	(Definite plural)
Piebleisia	- The doers	(Definite plural)

Ngengemɔi waa mɛhɛ yiimoi gama	- The worker has come to the cook.
Pɛɛ loblaa lɔ mia	- The house builders are there
Ti humableisia hounga	- They have caught the thieves

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

PRONOUNS

Pronouns in Mende may be confusing because the form of certain pronouns varies with the aspect or tense of the verb with which they occur; whether the sentence is positive or negative.

The labels of the various sub-categories of pronouns are only convenient labels, meant to serve self explanatory purposes. The different categories will be treated as we advance with our dialogues.

Personal Pronouns

Positive Forms			Negative Forms			
Nya	- 1st per sing	- I	Ngi + ii	= ngii	- I not
Bia	- 2nd per sing	- You	Bi + ii	= bii	- You not
Ta	- 3rd per sing	- He/she/it	I + ii	= ii	- He/she/it not
Mua	- 1st per plu	- We	Mu + ii	= mui	- We not
Wua	- 2nd per plu	- You	Wu + ii	= wui	- You not
Tia	- 3rd per plu	- They	Ti + ii	= tii	- They not

Note: The negative forms occur with the negative particle ii; one i sound is elided and the other contracted with the pronouns. The contracted forms are therefore the negative pronouns.

Positive Expression

1. Nya lima Bo - I am going to Bo
2. Bia lima Bo - You are going to Bo
3. Ta lima Bo - He/she is going to Bo
4. Mua lima Bo - We are going to Bo
5. Wua lima Bo - You are going to Bo
6. Tia lima Bo - They are going to Bo

Negative Expression

1. Ngii lima Bo - I'm not going to Bo
2. Bii lima Bo - You are not going to Bo
3. Ii lima Bo - He is not going to Bo
4. Mui lima Bo - We are not going to Bo
5. Wui lima Bo - You are not going to Bo
6. Tii lima Bo - They are not going to Bo

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

HABITUAL/FUTURE/PRONOUNS

They occur with verbs referring to habitual or future activity, but this largely depends on the situation of the utterance and/or the addition of time element.

Positive Forms

1.	Nga kpaa yengei lɔ we	- I do farm work
2.	Nga mbei mɛɛ	- I eat rice
3.	Ba tisa yengei lɔ we	- You do a teaching work
4.	A ndowei bɔɔ	- He digs a hole
5.	Ma dodei mɛɛ	- We eat pig
6.	Wa kpetei laa	- You make swamp
7.	Ta hale yengei lɔ we	- They do health word

Negative Forms - Occur with verb stems

1.	Nge kpaa yenge we	- I don't do farm work
2.	Nge mba mɛ	- I don't eat rice
3.	Betisa yenge we	- You don't do teaching work
4.	E ndowa bɔ	- He does not dig a hole
5.	Mue ndodɛ mɛ	- We don't eat pig
6.	Wue kpete la	- You don't make swamp
7.	Te hale yenge we	- They don't do health work

Future Uses

Positive Expression

1.	Nga mbei mɛlɔ sina	- I shall eat rice tomorrow
2.	Nga walɔ	- I shall come
3.	Ta kpiti hawalɔ wei	- The will brush the grass sometime during the day

Negative Expression

1.	Nge mba mɛ sina	- I will not eat rice tomorrow
2.	Nge wa	- I shall not come
3.	Te kpiti hawa wei	- They will not brush the grass

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

OBJECT PRONOUNS

These always occur with the preposition a which invariably precedes them. One can also call them a-pronouns. They never occur as subjects.

Forms

Nge - Me
Bie - You
Ngie - Her/Him
Mue - Us
Wue - You
Tie - Them

Ya, Ni - Negative Markers

Positive Expression

1. Hindo lɔ a nge - I am a man
2. Gbe bi longɔ a tie? - Why do you like them
3. A na we a mue - Do that to us
4. Yɔ a ngie? - Who is he?

Negative Expression

1. Hindo yaa a nge - I am not a man
2 Gbe bi loni a tie? - Why don't you like them
3 Waa na we a mue - Don't do that to us

The third person singular ngie refers only to human nouns. Its variant form la refers to non-human nouns and to human nouns if the latter has been previously mentioned or the listener knows the noun it refers to.

Nya longɔ la - I like it
Nya longɔ a ngie - I love him
Nyapoi na nya longɔ la - That woman I like her

Hosted for free on livelingua.com



Hosted for free on livelingua.com

LESSON THREE

INTRODUCING ONESELF

Cultural Explanation

The Mendes are friendly people and therefore very searching. They like to know other people's identity when creating cordial relationships. This enhances better understanding, shows interest and friendship.

DIALOGUE

PCV:	Ndake bia naa	Afternoon friend
LH:	Mm bi siɛ, kahuin yena?	Hi, how are you?
PCV:	Nya ngahun gbuangɔ	I'm quite well
LH:	Bi lei?	What is your name?
PCV:	Nya laa____ Piskɔ mia a nge	My name is____ I am a Peace Corps Volunteer
LH:	Bi gbua mi lɔ?	Where do you come from?
PCV:	Ngi gbua Amɛika lɔ	I come from America
LH:	Ɓi vui ya ƙolɛ?	How old are your?
PCV:	Nya vui ya fo numugbɔ-yɔngɔ mahun naani	I am twenty four years old
LH:	Ba gbɛ yenge lɔ we?	What work do you do?
PCV:	Nga hale yengei lɔ we	I am a health worker
LH:	Mi gbe mia bi wei ndoɛ jihun?	When did you come to this country?
PCV:	Nge wei ŋgawuinahun lɔ i gbɔyɔnga	I came last month
LH:	Bi siɛ, ƙɛ malɔ	Thanks, see you then
PCV:	E-yɛ	O.k.

Alternate Forms

Bi biyei?	What is your name?
Bi ye gbua?	Where are you coming from?
	Where do you come from?
Gbɛ yenge mia ba pie	What work do you do?

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

Useful Expressions

Nya laa ____	My name is	Nya laa yana a -	My name is not
Bi laa ____	Your name is	Nya laá yaa	My name is not
Ngi laa ____	His/her name is		
Mu laa ____	Our name is		
Wu laa ____	Your name is		
Ti laa ____	Their name is		

Dɔkta mia a nge	-	I am a doctor
Tisa mia a bie	-	You are a teacher
Kpaa la moi mia a bie	-	You are a farmer
Dɔkta ya a nge	-	I am not a doctor
Tisa ya a bie	-	You are not a teacher
Kpaa la mɔ ya a bie	-	You are not a farmer
Huan mahun gbe mɔ mia a nge	-	I am in the Parks/ I am a Parks worker
Tisa mia a ngie	-	He is a teacher
Huan mahun gbe mɔ ya a nge	-	I am not a Parks worker
Tisa ya a ngie	-	He is not a teacher
I gbua mi lɔ?	-	Where is he/she coming from?
Bi maa mi lɔ?	-	Where are you going to?
Ngi ma ɛeihun lɔ	-	I am going to town

Substitution Drill

A.

Kabala		Ngi gbia Amɛika lɔ
Bo		
Kɛnɛma		Ngi lima ɛeihun lɔ
Salɔn	- Freetown/Sierra Leone	
Makeni		
Kono		
Ɛeihun	- Town	
Sukuihun	- School	
Kpaahun	- Farm	
Haiwɛbu	- Hospital	
Ndɔweihun	- Market day	

B.

Kpaa	Nga hale yengei lɔ we
Tisa	
Dɔkta	
Nyɛ make	
Huan mahun gbe	
Nja lowa bɔ	
Latii bɔ	

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

LESSON FOUR

Asking About Ones' Family

Cultural Explanation

The people do not only want to know about you, but also your family. In trying to create a genuine and cordial relationship they probe into ones' background. Because the Mendes care about visitors they like to know about them. In the family, husbands are expected to be older than their wives.

DIALOGUE

PCV and an Oldman

LH:	Stiv, buwaae, ndake	Hello! Steve
Stiv:	Mm kɛkɛ Ɔmɔ gbɛ va kahuin?	Hello, Pa Momoh, how are you?
LH:	Kaye ii Mahein ma. Ɔ bia bɛɛ?	Thank God, and you
Stiv:	Nya lɔɔ dɛdɛ ma	I am managing
LH:	Ndake nya ndiamɔ lɔ a bie hoe	Man, you are my friend, o.k.
Stiv:	Nya, nya kɛkɛ mia a bie	You are my father
LH:	Na manengɔ wale. Nya lo mia a bie hoe	That's fine, then you are a child to me
	Ɔ bi kɛkɛ taa bi nje?	Where is your father and mother?
Stiv:	Nya kɛkɛ taa nya nje lɔ Ameika	My father and mother are in America
LH:	Ti wovangɔ waa?	Are they too old?
Stiv:	Ɔɔ, kɛɛ nya nje wovei Nya kɛkɛ ma foo sawa	Yes, but my mother is three years older than my father
LH:	Ɛnɛn! mua mbi nyahan e wova ngi hini ma	Ah! we, here a wife should not be older than her husband
Stiv:	Bɛ gbɛhɛn yama lɛ na ɔɔma	What did you say, go over that again
LH:	Ngɛ, ndoɛ jihun nyahan wova a le ngi hini ma	I said, in this country, a wife should not be older than her husband
Stiv:	Ɛnɛn!	Mm!

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

LH:	Bi ndegaa ti lolɛ?	How many brothers and sisters have you?
Stiv:	Nya ndegaa ti naani hingaa ti fele kɛ nya-hangaa ti fele	I have four, two brothers and two sisters
LH:	Bi ndegaa kpɛɛ ta li lɔ sukụ?	Do all of them go to school?
Stiv:	Nva ndẹ nyahangaa sia lɛ lima suku. Nvá nde hingaa tia ti kpɔyɔa a sukuɪ, tia na yengẹ ma	My sisters are still attending school. My brothers have finished school, they are now working
LH:	Kɛ bi sie hoe	Thank you then
Stiv:	E-ye kɛ malɔ	O.k. see you

Useful Expressions

Bi ndẹ lɔ	This is a brother to you
Bi ndii lɔ	This is your brother
Bi nde nyahan lolɔ	This is a sister to you
Bi nde nyahanloi lɔ	This is your sister
Bi nde hindo lɔ	This is a brother to you
Bi nde hindoi lɔ	This is your brother
Bi kɛkɛ	Your father
Bi nje	Your mother
Bi kenya	Your uncle

POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS

Nya	-	My
Bi	-	Your
Ngi	-	His/hers/its
Mu	-	Our
Wu	-	Your
Ti	-	Their

Nya lomei nɔhɔngɔ	-	My shirt is dirty
Nya lomei ii nɔhɔni	-	My shirt is not dirty
Bi ndei lɔ	-	This is your brother
Bi nde ya ji	-	This is not your brother
Ngi kɛkɛ ya teihun	-	His father has gone to town
Ngi kɛkɛ ii li ni teihun	-	His father did not go to town
Ti leihun ya sɛwɛsɛwɛ	-	Their town is clean
Ti leihun ii sɛwɛsɛwei	-	Their town is not clean
Mu gbaa lɔ	-	This is our farm
Mu gbaa ya ji	-	This is not our farm

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

Wu loiblaa ti waa - Your dancers have come
Wu loiblaa ti ya wei - Your dancers have not come

If the possessed noun is plural the third person plural past pronoun ti occurs between it and the verb.

Nya yengeblesia ti haWahgɔ - My workers are lazy
Bi nyapoisia ti lole? - How many girl friends have you?

All possessive pronouns can occur with nda which means own.

Nya nda lomei lɔ - This is my own shirt
Nya nda lomei ya ji - This is not my own shirt

ɔ bi nda gowei? - Where is your own shoe?
Wu nda kopɔ ii na - Your own money is not there

When a possessive pronoun and nda occur without an overtly expressed noun, nda can take the definite singular and plural markers i and sia.

Nya ndei ve - Give me mine
Bi ndeisiaa mi? - Where are yours?

If however a noun is overtly expressed it takes the definite singular and plural marekers.

Bi nda nyapoi ii loni a bie - Your own girlfriend does not love you
Ngi nda huangaa ti mumungɔ - His animals are very small
Ti ti nda bɛleisia hɔnga - They have sewn their own trousers

Interrogative Pronouns

These are:

Ye	Who	Ye mia bi loni	Who sent you
Gbɛ	What	Ye mia a ngie?	Who is he?
Gbɔɔ	What	Gbɔɔ bi wumba?	What is on your head?
		Ye mia pɛɛla?	Who is at home?
		Gbɛ mia ba pie bi?	What do you do here?

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

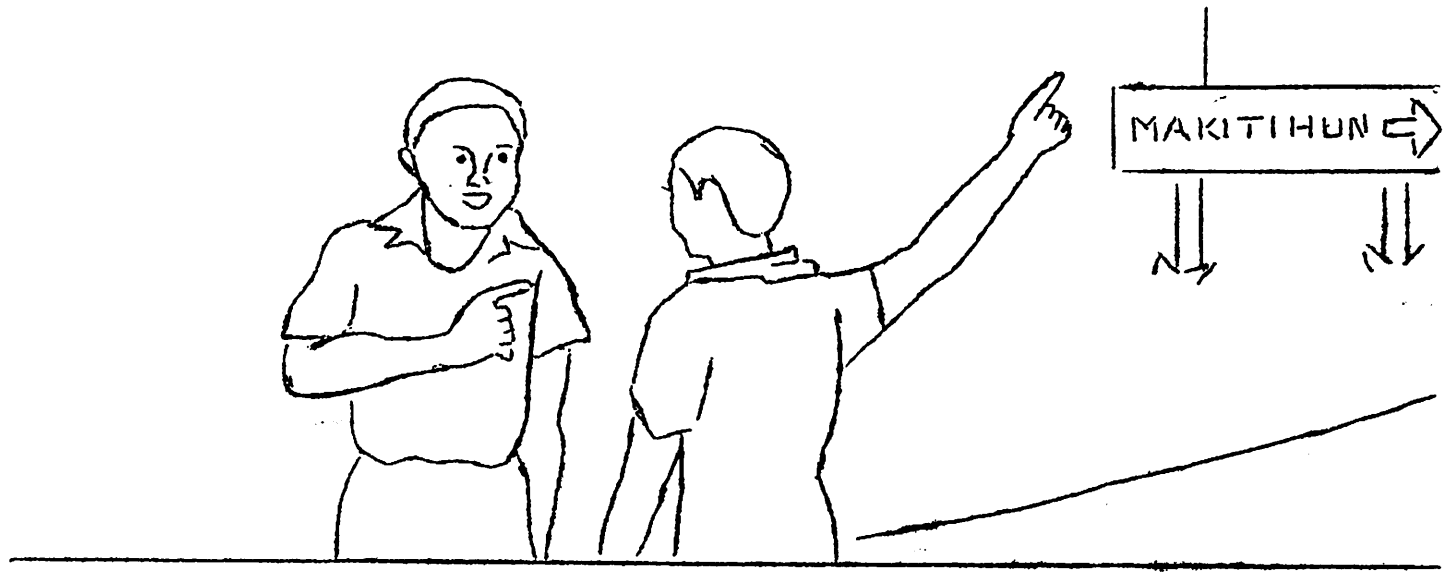
Reflexive Pronouns

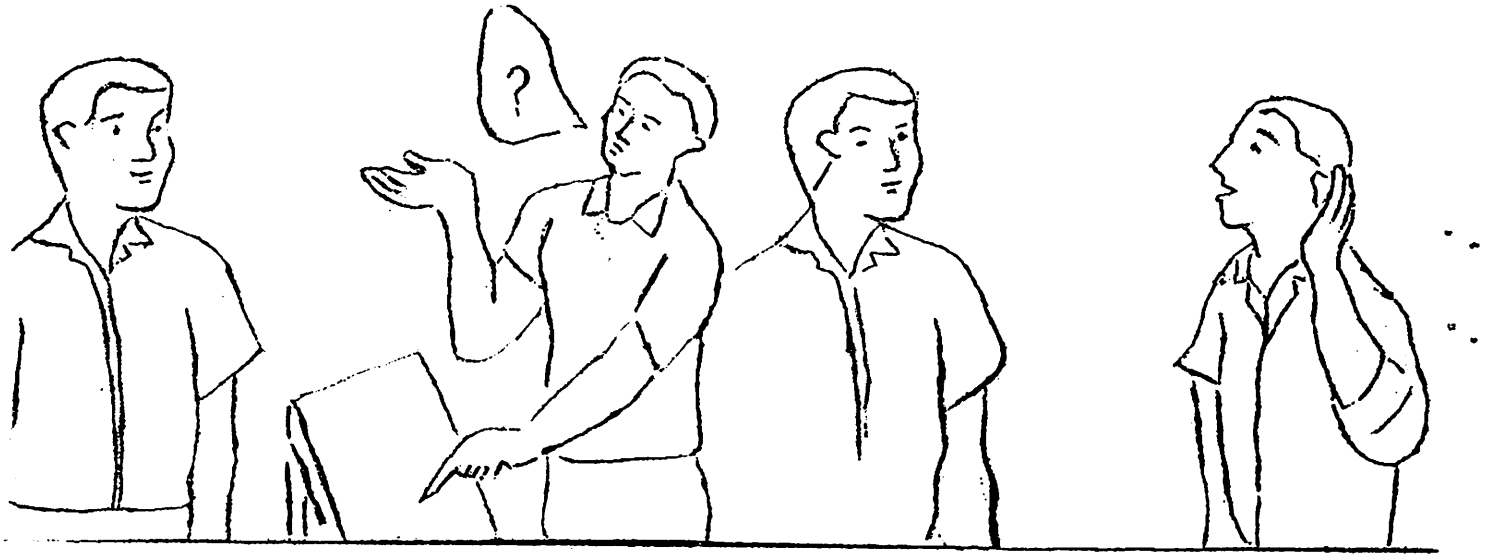
These are expressed by the word yekpe (self) which immediately follows the basic pronouns.

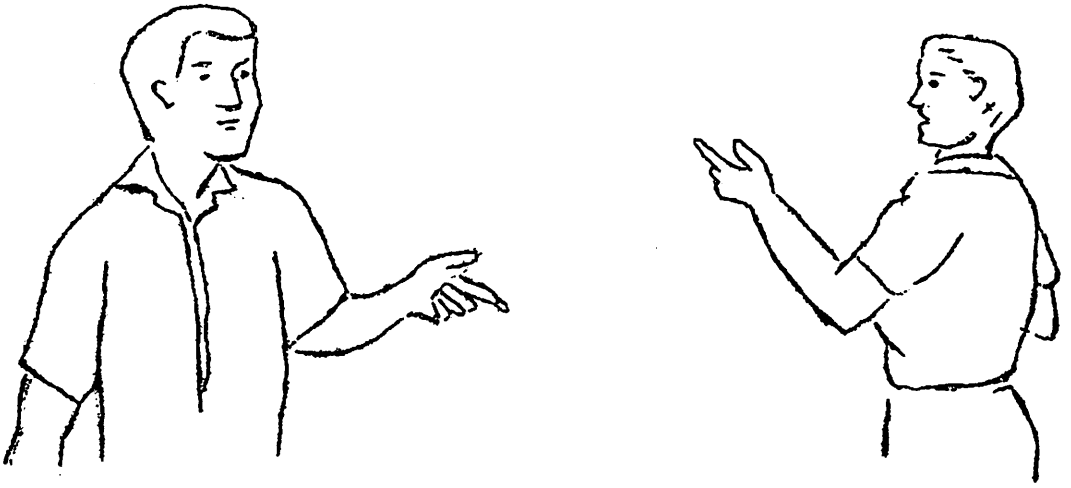
Nya + yekpe	Nya yekpe	Myself
Bia + yekpe	Bia yekpe	Yourself
Ta + yekpe	Ta yekpe	Him/herself
Mua + yekpe	Mua yekpe	Ourselves
Tia + yekpe	Tia yekpe	Themselves

Nya longɔ a nya yekpe - I love myself
Ti tia yekpe ŋɔnanga - They have wounded themselves

Hosted for free on livelingua.com







Hosted for free on livelingua.com

LESSON FIVE

IDENTIFYING OBJECTS IN THE MARKET

DIALOGUE

PCV:	Ansu nya longɔ ngi fee ngɔ	- Ansu I want to go shopping
LH:	Mu li makitihun	- Let's go to the market

Makitihun - In the Market

PCV:	Gbɛ lɔ a ji?	- What is this?
LH:	Pujei mia	- This is pepper
PCV:	Bɛ gbɛn? Ngi humɛi	- What did you say? I didn't hear you
	Nde lɛ bɔma yɛlɛn	- Say it again slowly
LH:	Ngɛ, pujei mia a ji	- I said, this is pepper
PCV:	Pu-jei. Ɛnɛn. Gbɛ mia a ye na?	- Pep-per. Ah. What is that one?
LH:	Sakii mia	- That is cassava leaves

Substitution Drill

Pujei - Pepper
Lumbee/Salui - Orange
Jowoi - Potato
Yabasi/Sibaa - Onions
Mbei - Rice
Nguloi - Oil
Tɔwoi - Beans
Hɔnduɛ - green beans
Nikii - Groundnut
Glɔ gboi - Palm oil
Tɛ yawui - Egg
Tei - Fowl
Huin - Meat
Nyi - Fish
Nyɛ wundi - Raw fish
Nyɛ bi - Dried fish

eg. Pujei lɔ - This is pepper

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

Demonstrative Pronouns

These are:

Ji	This	Jisia	These
Na	That	Nasia	Those

Pujei mia a ji	This is pepper
Ji mɛ	Eat this
Na vembɛ	Give me that one
Na yɛkpei ji ma	That is better than this
Jisia ti nyandei nasia ma	These are prettier than those

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

LESSON SIX

BARGAINING

Cultural Explanation

Bargaining is common among the Mendes. They always try to beat down prices of certain goods. There are however certain food items one cannot bargain for, one will know that as one continues going to the market.

Bargaining is especially necessary for PCVs because some traders take chances by inflating prices when selling to strangers.

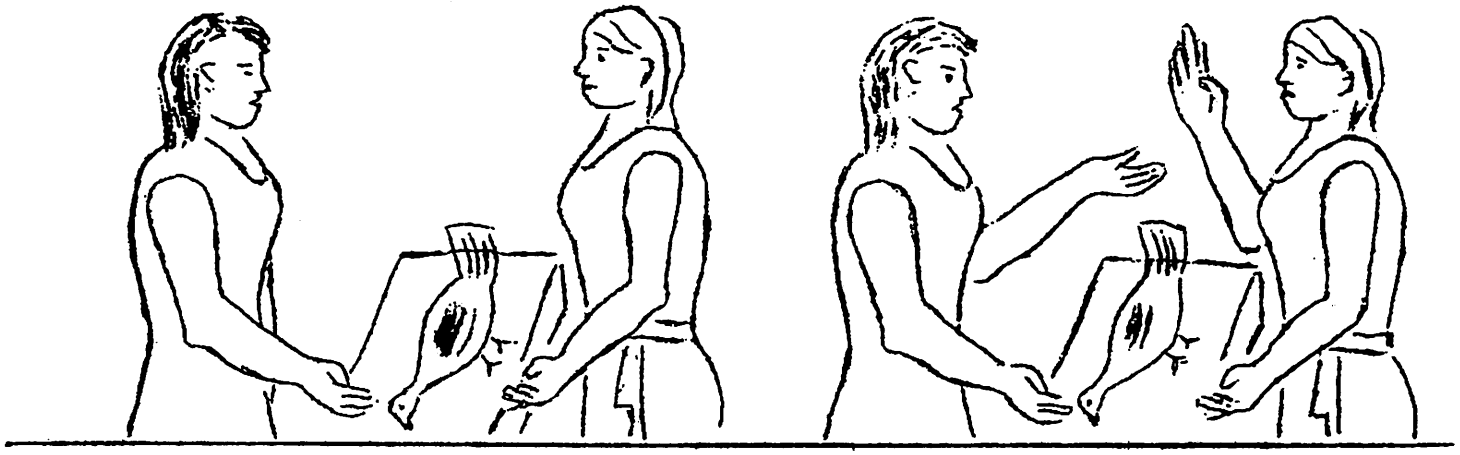
DIALOGUE

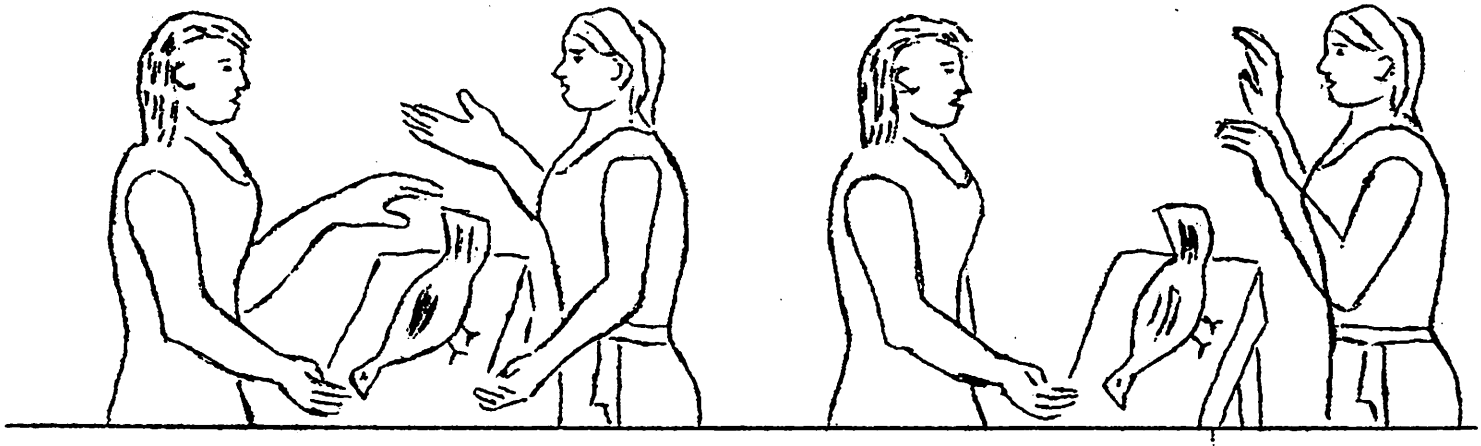
PCV:	Yie bia naa	Afternon, mum
MW:	Mm, nya lui bia naa	Yea, afternoon my child
	Gbɔɔ nga pie bie?	What can I do for you?
PCV:	Tɛɛ ngei jisia ti jɔngɔi?	What is the cost of these fowls?
MW:	Pon numufele gbɔyɔngɔ yila va	Le40.00 each
PCV:	Ti baa gba ngɔi yo	They are expensive though
	Be mahun yei klo nya wɛ?	Won't you reduce this price for me?
MW:	Gbɛnjɔngɔ mia bi yeya?	How much do you have?
PCV:	Pon numugbɔyɔngɔ mahun ɓuu mia nya yeya.	I have Le30.00
MW:	Pon lɔɔlu glua na ma	Add Le10.00 to that
PCV:	Kɔnɛ le ngi na ve.	Please let me pay that.
	Gbɛ-o-gbɛ ii ya nya yeya	I have nothing left with me
MW:	Kɛ wa la	Bring it then
PCV:	Tagbe, baika hoe	Here it is, thank you.
	Nya ndiamɔ mia a bie na	You are now my friend
MW:	E-ye malɔ	O.k. see you

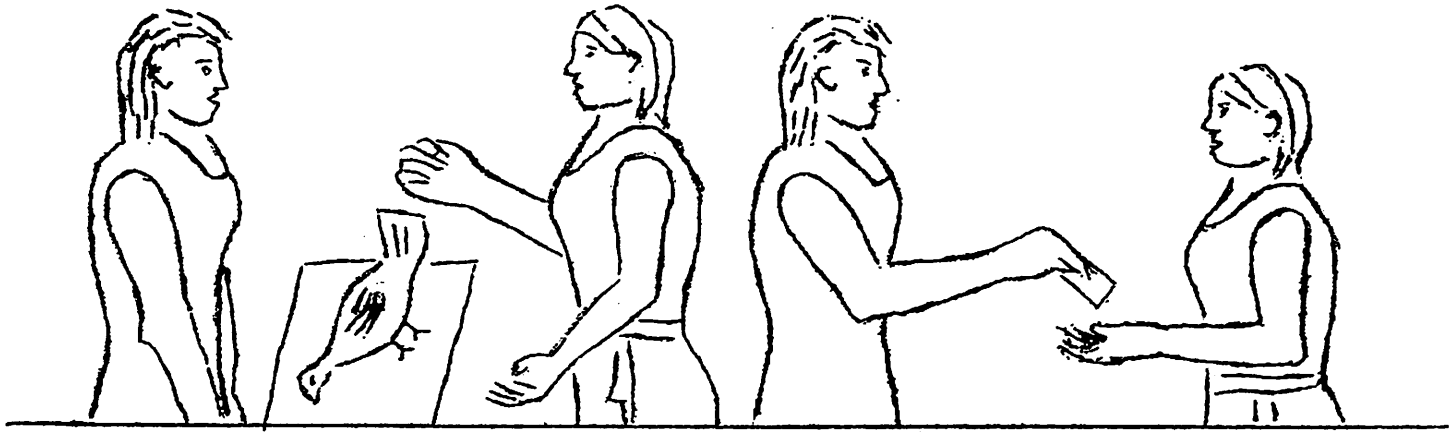
Alternate Forms

Tei gbɛ jɔngɔ?	How much is the fowl?
Pɔn lɔɔlu gbɛi na ma.	Add Le10.00 to that
Be tɛnga gbua ma nya wɛ?	Won't you reduce the price for me?

Hosted for free on livelingua.com







Hosted for free on livelingua.com

Useful Expressions

Nya longɔ a sakii - I want cassava leaf

Nya longɔ ngi nikii yeya - I want to buy groundnuts

Ngi paa waa Saloi na va - I won't pay for the orange

Bi gba gbi ya nya ma - I don't owe you anything more

Fufu mɛ min mia ha n a ma - I want to eat fufu today

Nya longɔ ha ngi tangei mɛ - I want to eat cassava root today

Bɔndɔ hapkei mia ha nga mɛ - I am going to eat okra plasa today

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

LESSON SEVEN

INTRODUCING A FRIEND

Cultural Element

It is right and fitting to introduce a friend or anyone else to other acquaintances. This is world-wide as it is a principle of social protocol.

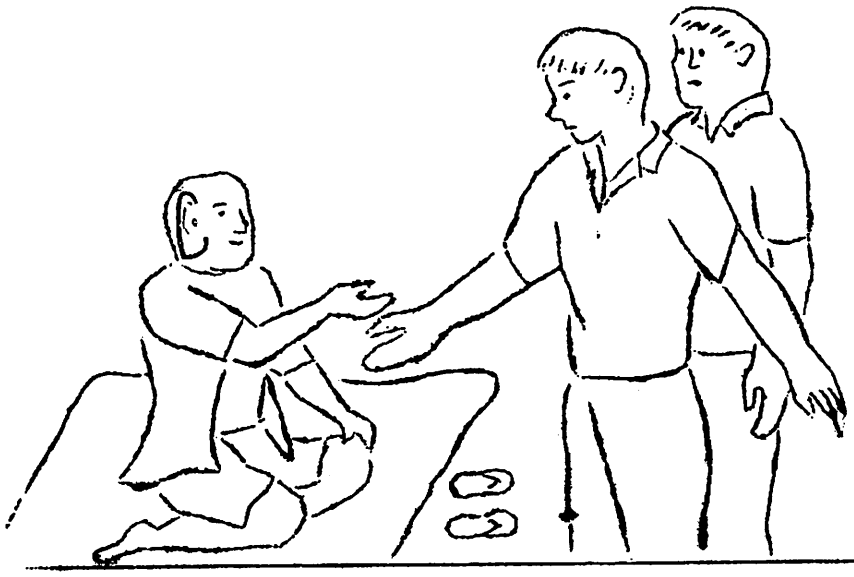
DIALOGUE

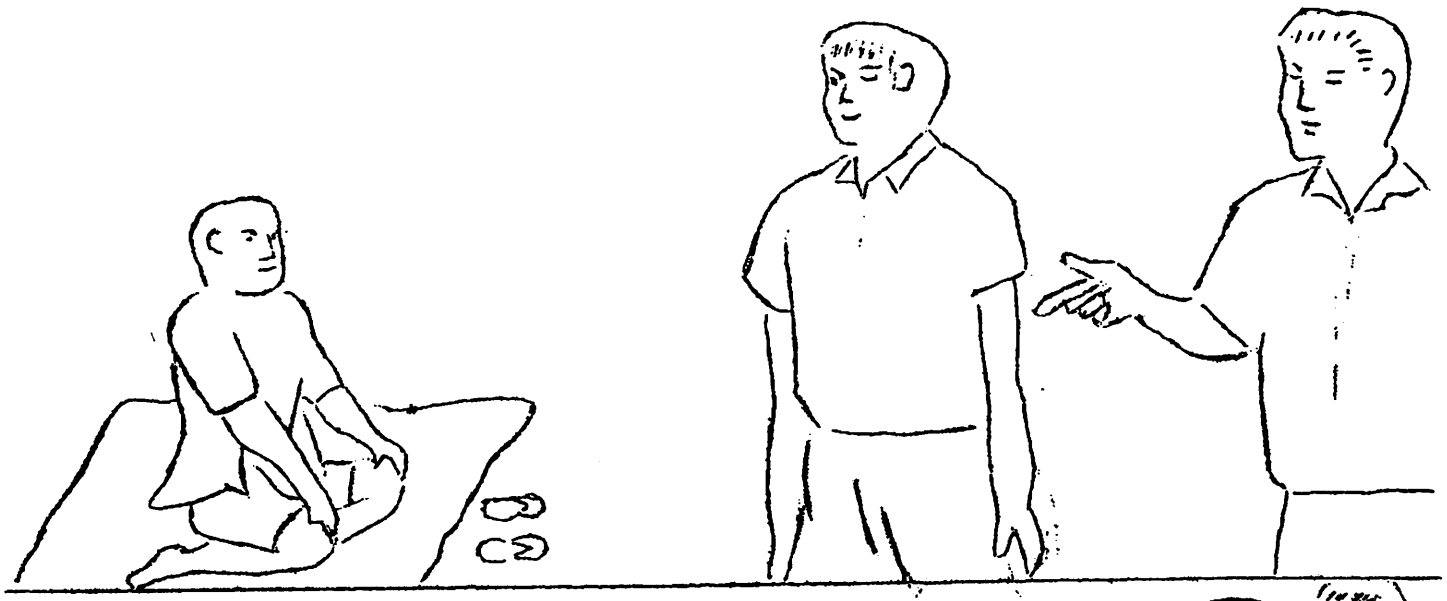
PCV:	Maada bia naa	Good afternoon, oldman/ grandpa
LH:	Mm, nya lui bi sic	Hi, good day my son
PCV:	Maada nya n damui lɔ ngi laa Al	Grandpa, this is my friend: he is called Al
LH:	Al buaa, nya gohun nengɔ bi lɔ va	Good day Al, I'm glad to see you
Al:	Nya bee nya gohun nengɔ bi lɔ va	I am also happy to see you
LH:	Ba yenge milɔ?	Where do you work?
Al:	Nga yenge Otamba lɔ	I work at Outamba
LH:	Mu ngewoo, hewui gbe	Please have seat
Al:	Bi sic	Thank you

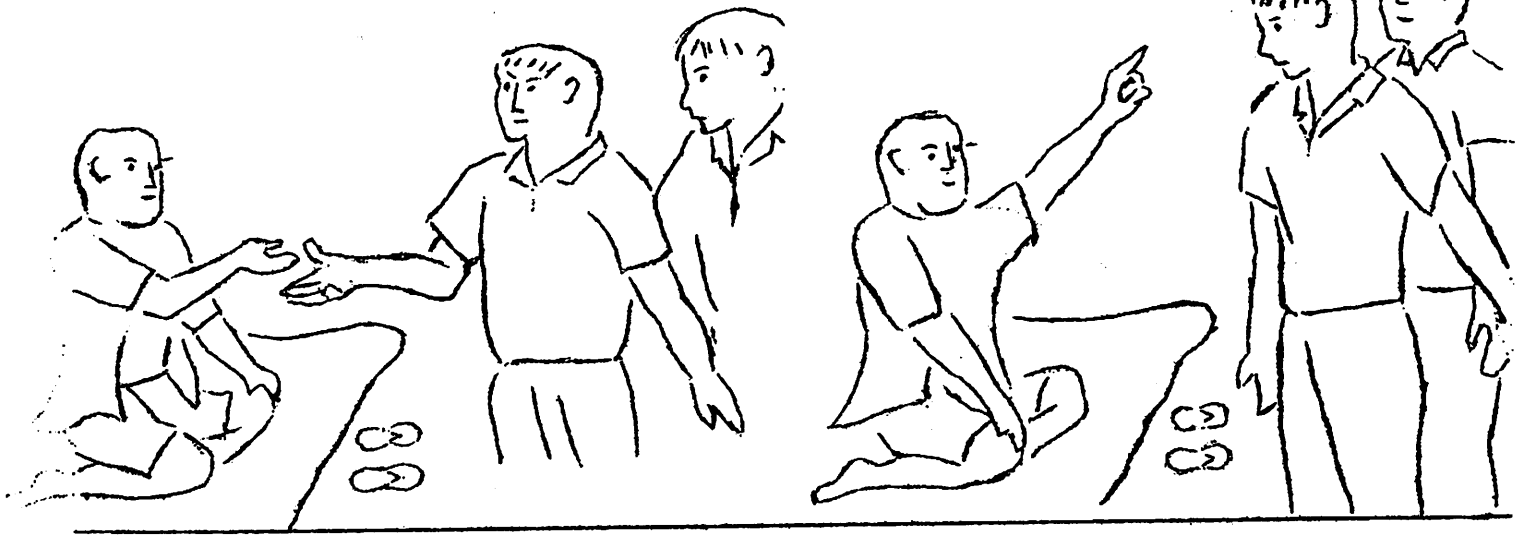
Alternate Uses

Ba gbɛ yenge lɔ wie?	What work do you do?
Gbɛ yenge mia ba pie?	" " " " "?
Mi mia ba yenge na?	Where do you work?

Hosted for free on livelingua.com







Hosted for free on livelingua.com

VERBS

TRANSITIVE VERBS

These take objects, overt or covert. The direct object precedes the verb.

Jɔn sɛlɛi mɛnga	John has eaten the banana
Ndopoi kɔti wiinga	The child has thrown the stone
Kamɔ ngi lewenga	The teacher has beaten him
I nja lowei bɔnga	He has dug a well

Intransitive Verbs

These do not take objects.

I windɛnga	He has jumped
Ti wimɛnga	They have run
Mua yiima	We are sleeping
Taa yɛɛma	He is laughing
Wua lapima	You are fighting
Tia laapima	They are swimming

Some verbs may or may not occur with mutated initial consonants. When they occur with unmutated initial consonants they behave transitively i.e. the direct object is understood even if not overtly present, but when they occur with mutated initial consonants they behave intransitively.

Nga fɛmbɛlɔ	I'll swing it/I swing it
Jo pindɛnga	Joe has jumped it
A kotolɔ	He will bend it
Ba vɛmbɛlɔ	You will swing
Wu potenga	You have turned it

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

Imperative Form

Only the stem of the verb is used for the singular form. If an object is unexpressed the verb has a mutated initial consonant, otherwise it has an unmutated initial consonant.

A. Verbs with mutated initial consonants: no objects are present or implied.

Lɛ	go up
Wa	Come
Li	Go
La	Lie down

B. Verbs have unmutated initial consonants: the objects are understood.

Fɛnda	Fill it
Njoyo	Send it
Ngatɛ	Set it
Koto	Bend it

Verbs of Posture

The state of a verb is marked by the suffix -ni and the act by the suffix -ma.

Swale lɔ loma	Swaray is standing (act)
Swale lɔ loni	Swaray is standing (state)
Nyaa hema	I am sitting (act)
Nyaa heni	" " " (state)
Taa wɛɛni	He is bowing down (state)
Taa wɛɛma	" " " " (act)

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

The Verb 'To Be' - 'Yɛ'

A. **Present Positive**

Nyaa	I am
Biaa	You are
Taa	He/she is
Muaa	We are
Wuaa	You are (plu)
Tiaa	They are

Present Negative

Nya yana	I am not
Bia yana	You are not
Ta yana	He/she is not
Mua yana	We are not
Wua yana	You are not
Tia yana	They are not

Past

Ngi yɛɛ	I was
Bi yɛɛ	You were
I yɛɛ	He/she was
Mu yɛɛ	We were
Wu yɛɛ	You were
Ti yɛɛ	They were
Ngi yɛɛ na	I was there
Ngii yɛ na	I was not there

Future

The pronoun changes and the future marker lɔ is used.

Nga yɛɛ lɔ	I will be
A yɛɛ lɔ	He/she will be
Ba yɛɛ lɔ	You will be
Mua yɛɛ lɔ	We will be
Ta yɛɛ lɔ	They will be
Nga yɛɛ lɔ na	I will be there
Ngei yɛɛ na	I will not be there

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

REDUPLICATION OF VERBS

Verbs are reduplicated in order to intensify or indicate repeated action. Reduplicated verbs have the same grammatical distribution as their single forms, and their second part has the same initial consonant.

Single Forms		Reduplicated Forms	
Tewe	Cut	Tewetewe	(teetee)
Mbla	Tear	Mblambla	
Pote	Turn	Potepote	
Faya	Scatter	Fayafaya	
Pili	Throw	Pilipili	

Some adjectives are reduplicated as intensifiers.

Single Forms		Reduplicated Forms
Nyande	Beautiful	Nyandenyande
Nɔhɔn	Dirty	Nɔhɔnɔhɔn
Nyamu	Ugly	Nyamunyamu

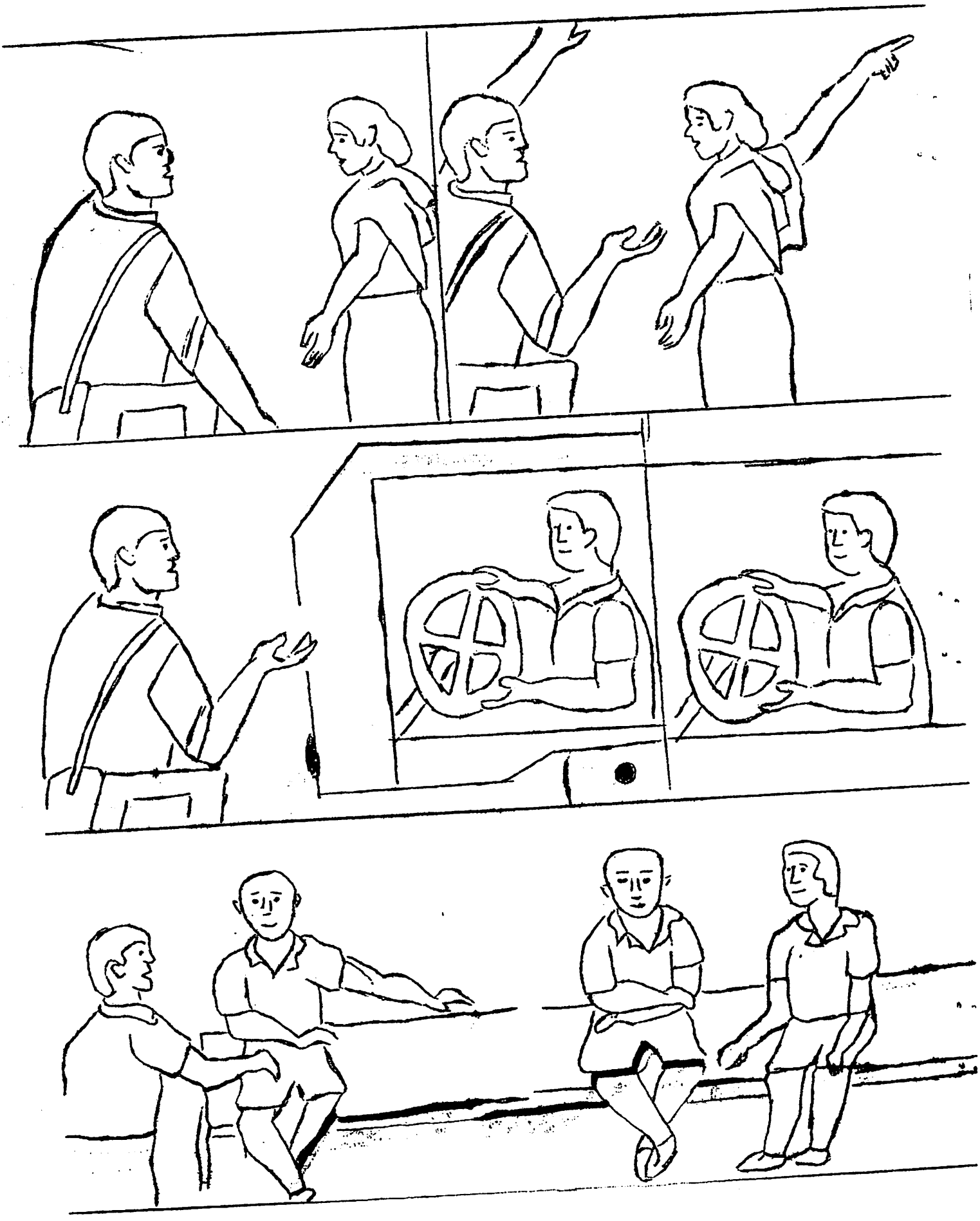
Numerals can also be reduplicated

Ngila	One	Ngilangila
Sawa	Three	Sawasawa
Puu	Ten	Puu puu
Fele	Two	Felefele

Adverbs too can be reduplicated.

Flo	Quickly	Floflo
Yɛlɛn	Slowly	Yɛlɛnyɛlɛn

Hosted for free on livelingua.com



Hosted for free on livelingua.com

LESSON EIGHT

TRANSPORTATION

Cultural Element

Transportation system in Sierra Leone is adversely different from other places. There are not enough commercial vehicles to meet the needs of the people. People can therefore travel on board vehicles together with livestock and domestic animals. Some people especially the youhs also afford to travel on top of vehicles even at their own risks. Overloading is common in all commercial vehicles. Transport fares are not fixed, so bargaining prevails. Only the Sierra Leone Road Transport Corporation buses and the other buses that travel betwee n Freetown and the provincial towns have fixed fares.

DIALOGUE

LH:	Nyande/ndake bia naa	Afternoon dear
PCV:	Mm buwaa bi sie	Afternoon
LH:	Nga to haka hui bi yeya. Bi ye lima a gendei ji?	I see you with a luggage. where are going to this morning?
PCV:	Ngi lima Moyamba lo	I'm going to Moyamba
	Mindo mia nga motoi mawulo na?	Where can I get a vehicle?
LH:	Lo leke jonsoe la, motoi ya le ma bi to, bi moli mia i lima na	Just stand at the juction, when any vehicle comes by, stop in and enquire where it is going to

Vehicle Stops

PCV:	Deva buaa, bi lima milo?	Hello driver, where are you going to?
Driver:	Bia bi lima mi lo?	Where are you going to?
PCV:	Ngi lima Moyamba lo	I'm going to Moyamba
Driver:	Nya be ngi lima na lo	I'm also going there
PCV:	Gbe jogo mia li va?	What is the fare to go there?
Driver:	Pon nunaani gbogo	Hundred and sixty leones

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

PCV:	Kpoo! kpotogoi yo Kɔnɛle ngi pɔn nusawa gbɔgɔmahun lɔɔlu ve	Oh! it's too much Please let me pay hundred and thirty leones
Driver:	Ndake na glo gɔ, pɔn lɔɔlu la ma	That is small please add ten leones
PCV:	Kulu goi	O.k.
Driver:	Hakaa bi yeya?	Do you have any luggage
PCV:	Duvu bagi wui ji mia lee nya yeya. Nga too lɔ pen ngɔma	I only have this small rafia bag. I can put it on my lap
Driver:	Kɛ lɛ yo	Get in then

In the Vehicle

PCV:	Ndiamɔ bi siɛ, kɔnɛle malukpe nya wɛ hoe (Passenger shifts) Baika	Good day friend, please shift a little for me. Thank you
	Bia bɛ bi ma Mɔyamba lɔ?	Are you also going to Moyamba?
Pass:	Ɔɔ	Yes
PCV:	Bia bi womia a mbalei ji?	Are you the owner of this sheep?
Pass:	Ɔɔ, ngi ma saa lɔ gbia- ma	Yes, I'm going to offer sacrifice

Alternate Forms

Bi ma mi lɔ?	Where are you going to?
Ba li mi?	" " " " " ?
Nga mɔtoi majɔ milɔ?	Where can I get a vehicle?
Nga mɔtoi wumbu milɔ	" " " " " " ?
Ngi bi ngɔ a pɔn...	Let me pay...leones

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

Useful Expressions

Nga ye pie ngi mɔtoi majɔ?	How can I get a vehicle?
Mindɔ ma mɔto lɔ?	Where is this vehicle from/going to?
Mɔtoi ji ye lima?	Where is this vehicle going to?
Ye mɔto lɔ?	Whose vehicle is this?
Bia bi wolɔ a mɔtoi ji?	Are you the owner of this vehicle?
Li a nge O	Please take me along
Dɛva nya gbuja bei	Put me down here
Hemaa na nya vaa?	Is there any space for me?

TENSES

The Habitual Form

Lɔ is the habitual tense marker. Its grammatical distribution is not, however, fixed; it occurs as a verbal suffix when it directly follows a verb and as an independent lexical item in other positions.

Mua lilɔ suku	We go to school
Ta kpetei la a hamei lɔ	They make swamp during the rainy season
A kpaa lalɔ fo gbi	He makes a farm every year
Nga li ngengemi a gendei lɔ	I go to work every morning

The Future Form

If a future element is added to the verb to which lɔ is suffixed, then the verb has a future reference.

Nga lilo Bo sina	I shall go to Bo tomorrow
Ta walɔ ha	They will come today
Mua kpaa la lɔ vonu	We shall make a farm next year
Ba nyɛ lowei bɔɔ sina yekei	You will dig a fish pond the day after tomorrow

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

The Progressive Form

-Ma is the progressive marker.

Taa mɛma	He is eating it
Nya hɔɔma	I am sewing it
Wua ndolii gama	Your are dancing
Tia lima	They are going

Note: Future

Futurity can also be expressed by using wama before the verb.

Ngi wama limaa teihun	- Literal translation - I am coming to go to town. I shall be going to town.
Mu wama lima Bo lɔ	We are coming to go to Bo We shall be going to Bo

Simple Past

Can be formed by adding lɔ to the verb.

Ngi lilɔ	I went
Piskɔisia ti pɛɛ lilɔ	The Peace Corps built the house

Elision

In rapid speech, consonants and vowels may be elided from a word sentence. They can occur in the following contexts.

a) Intervocalic l and w are generally elided

Unelided Word			Elided Sound	Elided Word
Tewe	-	Cut	W	Tee
Ndowu	-	Hide	W	Ndou
Pele	-	Road	L	Pee
Ngolo	-	Break	L	Ngoo

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

b) Consonants are frequently elided from the verbal suffixes:

-lɔ and -nga

Ngi liɔ	I went	(for ngi lilɔ)
I ndeiɔ	He said it	(for ndeilɔ)
Mu mɛa	We have eaten it	Mu mɛilɔ/mɛnga
Piskɔesia ti waa	The Peace Corps have come	Piskɔesia ti wanga

c) In the verbal sufixes, -malɔ and -ngalɔ the l may be elided and the ɔ assimilated to the preceding vowel.

Ngi lima	I am going	for ngi limalɔ
Ti piema	They are doing it	for ti piemalɔ
I wonga	It has broken	for i wongalɔ

d) The l of the emphatic particle, lɔ can be elided and the ɔ assimilated the last vowel of the preceding word.

Nya wama	I am coming	for nya lɔ wama
Taa mɛma	He is eating it	for ta lɔ mɛma

e) The vowels u, i, and e can be elided in certain words if they are followed by l.

Klɔ	in front	(for kulɔ)
Mbla	male in-law	(for mbila)

CONSONANT MUTATION

This is a feature of Mande languages. It is a system wherein the initial consonants in many words are mutated by simple lenision. This means that, because of phonological similarity, certain consonants change places in some words when in initial position. Normally, such consonants are phonetically similar in most respects.

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

The following table shows the mutations.

Unmutated		Mutated	
K	Kali	G	Gali
T	Towei	L	Lowei
Nd	Ndoli	L	Loli
S	Sani	J	Jani
F	Folo	V	Volo
Kp	Kpaki	Gb	Gbaki
Nj	Nja	Y	Ya
Mb	Mba	B	Ba
P	Pɛlɛ	W	Wɛlɛ
Ng	Ngatɛ	Y	Yatɛ
Ng	Ngoli	W	Woli

Note: Ng is mutated to y before the vowels a,e,i, but to w before o and u.

This process of mutation occurs only in connected speech in certain grammatical environments. In isolation, these words are said to have their natural consonants. The most common grammatical environments where consonant mutations are found are as follows:

A) When a noun is used in the possessive form the initial consonant changes.

Tokoi - The hand
Nya lokoi lɔ gbalɛ́mɔ
My hand is wounded/aching

Domei - The shirt
Bi lomei nɔhɔngɔ
Your shirt is dirty

Pɛlɛi - The house
Ngi wɛlei nyandengɔ
His house is beautiful

Kpukoi - The bed
Mu gbukoisia ti wovaa
Our beds are old

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

B) Where the first noun functions as an adjective, the initial consonant of the second noun is mutated in nominal compounds.

Ja	Water		
		= Ja-lowei -	Water well
NDowei	Hole		
Ndo	Child		
		= Mende lo -	Mende child
Mɛnde	Mende		
Pɔɔ	Earth/mud		
		= Pɔɔ vei -	Earthen pot
Fei	Pot		
Tɔkpɔ	Palm tree		
		= Tɔkpɔ yasei -	Palm branch
Jasei	Thatch		

C) When a verb comes after an object (noun) in a sentence, the initial consonant of the verb is mutated.

Ngi kpandilɔ	I heated it
Ngi jei gbandilɔ	I heated the water
Bi nguanilo	You washed (it)
Bi kluei wuanilɔ	You washed the clothes
Mundewenilɔ	We beat (it)
Mu ndoi lewenilɔ	We beat the child

D) Where a post position is preceded by a noun, a pronoun, the initial consonant of the post position is mutated.

Kplanga - Near

Lo kplanga	Stand near (it)
Lo pɛlɛi gblanga	Stand near the house

Poma - Behind

Hi poma	Sit behind (it)
Hi ngi woma	Sit behind him/her

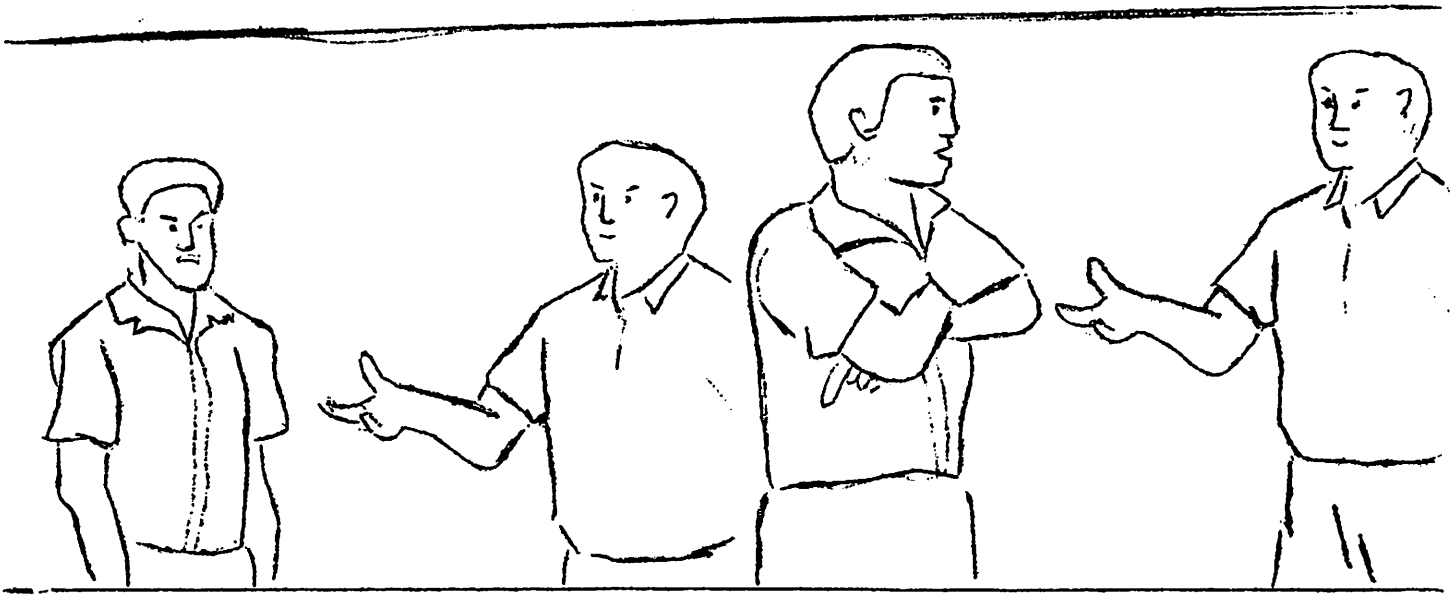
Kakama - By the side

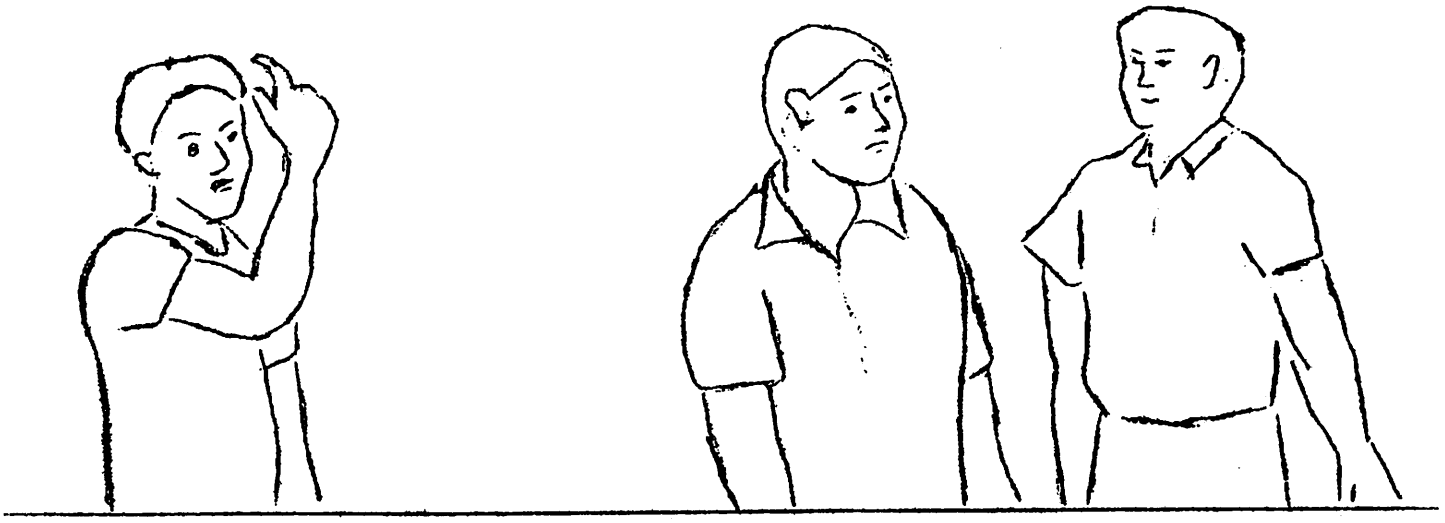
Nda kakama	Place (it) by the side
Nda kpukue gakama	Place it by the side of the bed

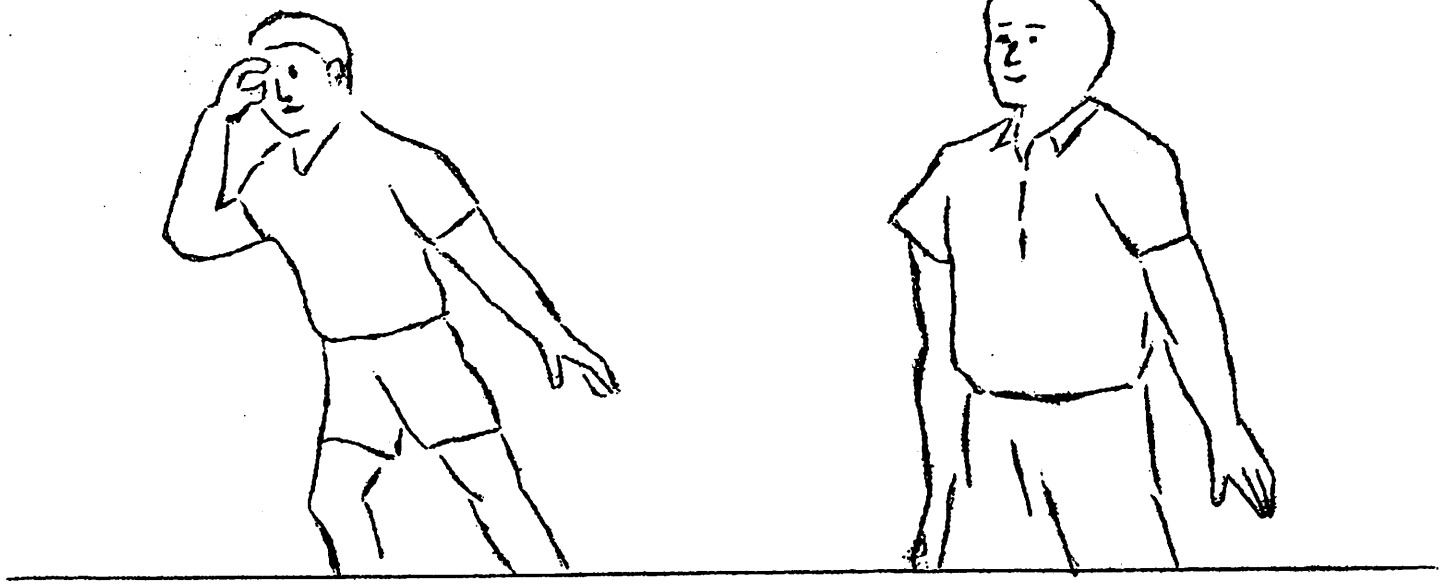
E) An adjective preceded by a noun, pronoun, has a mutated initial consonant.

Tɛli	-	Pɛlɛ lɛli	Black house
Kutu	-	Numu gutu	Short person

Hosted for free on livelingua.com







Hosted for free on livelingua.com

LESSON NINE

HEALTH

HOW TO COMPLAIN ILLNESS

LH:	Ndake, gbei bi ya ha kɔyɔ?	Friend, why are you so dull today?
PCV:	Nya gahun mia ii gbue	I am not feeling well
LH:	Gbɔɔ bi ma?	What is wrong with you?
PCV:	Nya gahuin gbi mia a gbaa kpaa. Nya wui a gbalɛ kɛ nya gblɔgei jia gbi. Kɔlei bɛ a wu nya ma.	I have pains all over my body. My head aches as well as my joints. I also feel feverish.
LH:	Kɛnga gbeloi mia bɛhin. Gbena hoe. Be li ba dɔkta lɔ haiwɛbu?	Perhaps it is malaria. Have my sympathy. Why not go and see the doctor in the hospital?
PCV:	Nga li lɔ sina wɛidihun	I will go to the hospital tomorrow
LH:	Ngewɔ i bi hale	May the Lord cure you
PCV:	Amina. Malɔ sina	Amen. See you tomorrow

Alternate Forms

Nya hingbɛgɔ	I am sick/I am not feeling well
Ngewɔ i bi bao	May the Lord cure you

Useful Expressions

Nya goihun a gbini	I have a gripe in the stomach
Nya goihun a le	I have frequent stool
Nɔhuin mia gbia nya luma	I have scabbies on my skin
Kanyei mia nya ma	I have gonnorhea
Bumblei mia ngi goweima	I have elephantiasis
Nya yami mia a gbale	My eye is aching
Fei mia laa nya ma	I have a boil
Kohun gbalɛ hale lɔ bi yeya?	Do you have any medicine for stomach ache

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

Parts of the Body

See parts of body in glossary/vocabulary.

List of Illness and Diseases

Gbeloe	Malaria
Kpɔkpɔɛ	Cripple/lame
Nyɔnyɛ	Measles
Tɔhɛn bei	Tuberculosis
Tɛtɛh	Small pox
Bandahei/Bumbulei	Elephantiasis
Luaa	Hernia
Fundii	Asthma
Vio lɔhɛn	Whooping cough
Kanyii	Gonnorhea
Nɔhuin	Scabbies
Puumui	Blindness
Malete	Leprosy
Kpalɛmei	Sore
Geli	Ulcer
Bobui	Small pox
Pɛni	Ringworm
Sugbui	Body wide scabbies
Ndivui	Small boil
Fehani	Tumour
Gbeli	Blue boil
Kaalei	Abscess muscular contraction
Kpoli	A worm of any kind
Gbale (v)	To pain
Bali (v)	To vomit
Kale hingbe	Rheumantism
Njii hingbe	Sleeping sickness
Popui	Skin diseases leaving white patches
Kewei	Yaws

Hosted for free on livelingua.com



Hosted for free on livelingua.com

LESSON 10

SEASONS/CLIMATE

WEATHER EXAMINATION

In Sierra Leone, we have two basic seasons, the dry season and the rainy season. During the dry season, we experience harmattan from November to December.

DIALOGUE

LH:	Ngɔ biana	Afternoon elder brother
PCV:	Mm, ndake bi siɛ	Hello youngman
LH:	Gbɛ voo lɔ a ha?	What day is today?
PCV:	Ha tɛnɛ, ta bi tua bɛ fui gbuamaa ha wa	Today is Monday, and it looks like its's going to be a sunny day
LH:	Ɛɛ, ngevuihun fui a gbua wa, taa nja e wa lee	That's right, in the the dry season it hardly rains
PCV:	Ngawu lolɛ va mia ngevui a loo?	For how many months does the dry season last?
LH:	A loo ngawu weita valɔ. A lɔto lugbu yawuihun lɔ i gbɔyɔ Buwuihun	It lasts for six months. It starts in November and ends in April
PCV:	Mm, kɛ na woma mia hami bɛɛ a lɔto?	Is it after that, that the rainy season starts?
LH:	Ɔ, hamihun ta jei a waa wati gbi. Tɛnga pen numu e ngu a jɛsia a jifa jei a bi lɛli lɔ	Yes, in the rainy season, it rains almost always. Infact sometimes no one is able to go out because you will get wet in the rain

Alternate Forms

Foe a gbua waa nge vuihun	The sun shines brightly during the dry season
Ngau weita va mia a lɔ	It lasts for six months

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

Substitution Drill

Trainers Cue		Trainers Cue
Tɛnɛ	Monday	Ha tɛnɛ
Taata	Tuesday	
Alaba	Wednesday	
Aikamisa	Thursday	
Aijuma	Friday	
Sibiti	Saturday	
Lahadi	Sunday	

Useful Expressions

Ngawui gbindingɔ	The moon is dark
Migbe mia bi lima teihun?	When are you going to town?
Sibitima mia nga li teihun	I'll go to town on Saturday
Fui gbadi gɔ waa ha	The sun is too hot today
Kɔlei lɔ wama wa ha	The weather is too cold today
Bodui lɔ waa wama	I'm feeling too hot today
Njei gbii ngɔ	It's cloudy - it may rain

Vocabulary

Hawa	Hour	Hawa lɔɔlu	Five Hours
Ku	Day	Ku fele	Two days
Lɔɔ	Day	Lɔɔ sawa	Three days
Folo	Day/sun	Foo gbadi	Hot sun
Ngau	Month/moon	Ngau puu	Ten months

Ngewohuin	At day break
Ngawui gbindigɔ	The moon is dark
Ngenda vui	Morning sun
Foe gbiaa	At sunrise/when the sun is up
Foe hingegoihun	At sunrise
Foo ngundie	noon
Kpɔkɔ voe	Afternoon/evening
Kpindi liei	Midnight

ADVERBS

These normally occur in postverbal and initial positions.

A)	Jia floflo	Walk quickly
	Baa jia yɛlɛn	Don't walk slowly
	Wa siahuna	Come now
B)	Na mia ngi lii na	It is there I went
	Bendo mia ba pie ma	It is here you have to do it
	Ha lɔ i waa	It is today he came

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

You can see from above that adverbs which occur in initial positions are generally adverbs of place and time.

Examples of adverbs

Kaaka	Quickly
Ngaungaun	Arrogantly, proudly
Panda	Cautiously, carefully
Lɔmbɔlɔ/gɔmɔndɔ	Sluggishly
Lɛɛlɛ	Slowly
Mbe	Here
Sina	Tomorrow
Sange	Soon
Baaba	Foolishly

IDEOPHONES

These are adverbs mostly of degree and manner whose sound suggest their meaning (onomatopoea). Very few ideophones can be said to have any English equivalent and no English translation can give the sound effect which is one of their most distinguishing features. Unlike most of the other adverbs, ideophones always follow their governing verbs.

I ngeyei leweilɔ kpe	He cut the rope...
Fendangɔ kpa	It is completely full
Ngi mɛnga nyaɔ	I have eaten everything
Guii guleilɔ gbuŋ	The tree fell...

The underlined words are ideophones.

Kpe means cutting something with a sharp instrument in one clear, clean sweep.

Nyaɔ does not only mean eating everything, but also eating it greedily.

Gbuŋ is the falling sound of, say, a big tree.

Other Ideophones:

Gbeleiŋ	-	Sound like that of a bell
Poloŋ	-	Far, very far

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

Interrogative Adverbs

Mi/mindo	Where?
Migbe	When?
Lolɛ	How many?
Gbei	Why?

Mindo mia bi lima na?	Where are you going to?
Migbe mia bi wani ndɔɛ jihun?	When did you come to this country?
Lolɛ mia bi meni?	How many did you eat?
Gbei bi ngi hɔɔni?	Why did you stone him?

ADJECTIVES

Adjectives follow the nouns they qualify.

E.g.:	Numu gbayangɔ ya a nge	I am not a strong person
	Numu gutu mia	He is a short person

When adjectives occur with a definite and/or plural noun, the definite and/or plural markers are suffixed to the adjective and not the noun.

Ndapo nyamui ya ha	The ugly child has gone today
Pee gbitii loe	Brush the bushy road
Tamba lɔ lumbe lulei mɛma	Tamba is eating the rotten oranges
Mita goweisia mawa	Wash the white spoons
Nu wovangaa leke mia ti wani	Only old people came

The most frequently used adjectival form is -ngɔ.

Nyandengɔ	He/she/it is beautiful
Ninangɔ	It is new
Govangɔ	It is old
Tɛlingɔ	It is black
Mahei mamuningɔ	The chief is proud/arrogant
Nyapoi nyandengɔ	The lady is beautiful
Ndomei lɛingɔ	The shirt is wet

-Ngɔ can take the definite singular and plural markers: i and sia.

Kena gutungɔii hanga	The short man has died
Baa ngengemɔ hawangɔi na gɔ	Don't give that lazy worker
Nika lilengɔisia gbɛ	Drive the angry cows away

-Ngɔ can also take the agentive singular and plural markers.

Masubamɔ mia a ngie	He is a dangerous person
Nyamublaa kpɛɛ ti gbua	Let all ugly people go out
Hawableisia ti ndei mia	That belongs to the lazy people

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

Negative Forms

Adjectives take the suffix -ni to form the negative.

Bi nyahin ii nyandeni	Your wife is not beautiful
Ndomei na ii nɔhɔni	The shirt is not dirty
Ngii hawani	I am not lazy

EMPHATIC FUNCTION

One of the functions of these particles is to positively emphasise.

In these examples the subjects are emphasised by these particles: le and mia

Nya le ngi pie ni	I did it (nya emphasised)
Yie mia wanga	It is mother who has come (yie emphasised)
Jo lɔ wani	It was Joe who came (Jo emphasised)

Le is more emphatic and has slightly different semantic implications. Mia suggests distance away from the speaker whilst lɔ suggests nearness. Le does not suggest either but it cannotes stronger emphasis than the others.

In the following sentences mia and lɔ can follow ye and nya but le is preferred because the speaker wishes to give an emphatic response that cannot be expressed by lɔ and mia.

Yie mia wanga?	Is it mother that has come?
Mm, ta le	Yes, it is she
Yɔɔ pɛɛ la?	Who is at the door
Nya le	I

Le occurs with stative verbs to emphasise them. The l is, however, normally elided and the two words contracted.

Nyandegɔe (for nyandegɔ le)	She is beautiful
Kutungoe (for kutungɔ le)	It is short
Kowengoe (for kowengɔ le)	It is white

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

PARTICLES

Negative Particles: Ya and ii

They occur in structures such as:

A)	Kɛkɛ ii lini suku	Father didn't go to school
	Nyapoi ii nyamuni	The lady is not ugly
	Ngii mbei mɛni	I did not eat the rice

Note that ii precedes the verb it occurs with.

Ya is normally followed by the preposition a with which it can be contracted to form yaa.

Nu yɛkpe yaa nge	I'm not a good person
Nu nyamu ya tie	They are not bad people
I yaa wani lɛ	He hasn't come yet

Lɔ, mia, le

These have some grammatical distribution in common; they nevertheless have individual characteristics.

A) A is used instrumentally.

Mɛ a loko	Eat with hand
Tee a mbowei	Cut it with the knife
Ndaala a kpaya	Draw it with strength

b) It introduces the object after certain verbs.

Ti wailɔ a mɛhɛn	They brought the food
I lilɔ a ngi navoe	He went with his money

C) It introduces dependent verbs.

I gbeilɔ a piela	He stopped doing it
I tɔtɔnga a wɔɔla	He has started crying
Gbe a yɛɛla	Stop laughing

D) It introduces a-pronoun

Tii loni a bie	They don't like you
Baa la a ngie	Don't believe him
Nya longɔ a tie	I like them

Kɛleke occurs in sentences such as:

Mu kpɛlɛ mulilɔ kɛleke Jɔn	We all went except John
Nge pie kɛleke bi nya pawa	I can't do it except you pay me

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

LESSON ELEVEN

FISH FARMER

DIALOGUE

Farmer:	Kini, bia ba gbɛ yenge lɔ wie?	Hello youngman, what work do you do?
PCV:	Nga nungaalɔ gaa a nyɛ makɛlei	I teach people fish farming
Farmer:	Ba ye ti makɛ?	How is fish farming done?
PCV:	Numu ba dowei lɔ bɔ kpeteihun, bi hungbua fo	You should dig a pond in swamp and clear it completely
Farmer:	Ye dowei a ye lakpa?	How large should the pond be?
PCV:	Ye gaami a wie lɔ sia nyɔkɔ paa ji ma na. Tawa bɔma mahugɔ ye kpetei ji jei i yɛhun wati gbi	It should be about the size of this palour. It should also contain water always
Farmer:	Mindoɔ ba nyɛngaa majɔ na puva ye dowei hun?	Where do you get the fish from to put in the pond?
PCV:	Nyɛ leengaalɔ ndoɛ jihun kpoto. Nyɛ makɛblaa ye pekeisia ta ti majia gbɔma	There are fingerlings throughout this country. Other fish farmers also sell them
Farmer:	Gbɔɔ ba fe tuɛ mɛɛ va?	What do you give them to eat?
PCV:	Ba ti gɔɔ a mba gei, ngiingaa, jowolaa, nika kpoi bɛsi kpoi, kɛɛ je kpoi bɛɛ	Feed them with rice bran, termites, cow dung, pig dung, potato leaves and even excreta of sheep
Farmer:	Ta gau lɔlɛ lɔ wumbu pen numu a ya ti mɛɛ?	How many months do they take before one eats them?
PCV:	Ta gau naani lɔ wumbu	They take four months
Farmer:	Bia bi ngiigɔ la kɛ liloma hinda lɔ?	Do you think this is a reliable venture?
PCV:	Hinda yekpe lɔ numu kpɛlɛva	This is a good thing for everyone
Farmer:	Kɛ nya bɛ ngi tatoma a nyɛgaa make la	Then I am also going to start fish farming
PCV:	Nga gohun a nɛɛ gbɔva bi ma	I will be very happy to help you

Hosted for free on livelingua.com



Hosted for free on livelingua.com

Useful Expressions

Nyɛ make lei manɛngɔ	Fish farming is good
Nyandegɔ nyi mɛva watigbi	It's good to eat fish always
Bi logɔ bi gaa a nyɛ yengei?	Do you want to learn fish work?
Ngɛ gbɔlɔ bi ma ye ngegei gaa va	I will help you to learn the work

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

LESSON TWELVE

SCHOOL SITUATION

A parent enquiring about his son's progress in school.

Cultural Explanation

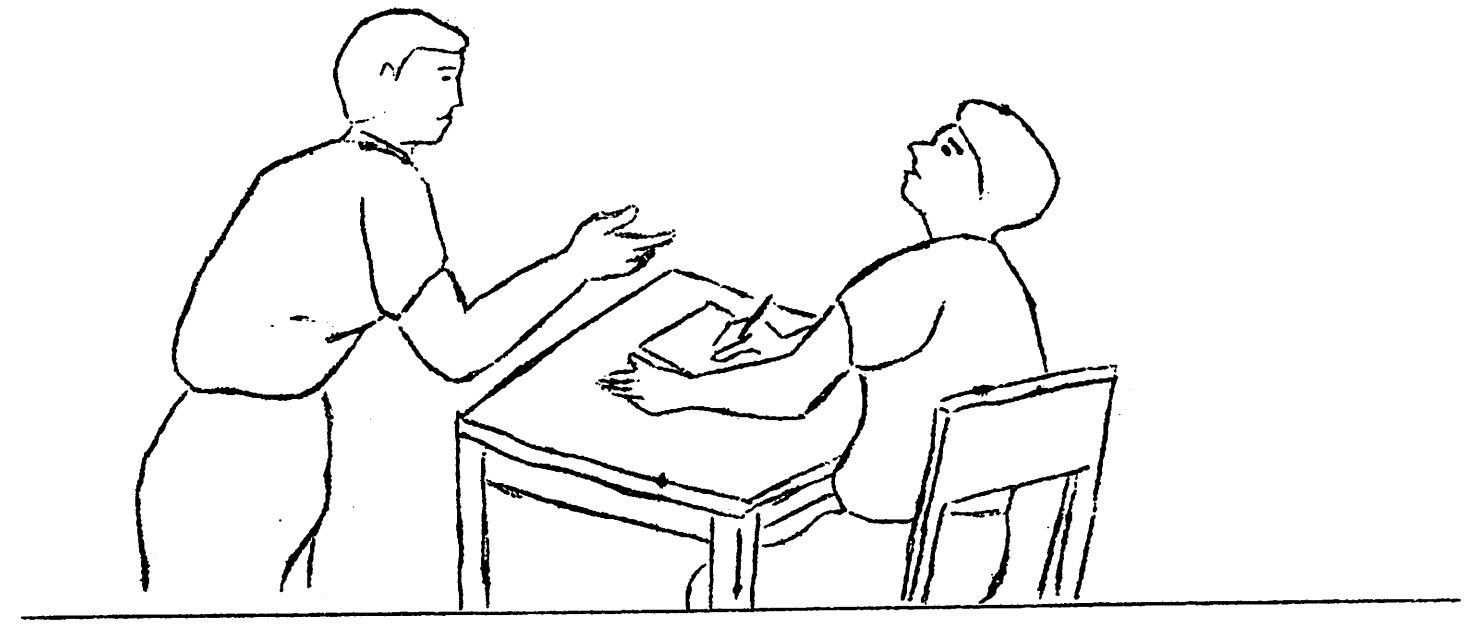
Authority is vested in teachers to discipline pupils in school. Corporal punishment can be meted out with the consent of the head of the school. Troublesome pupils at home are also brought to school by parents for appropriate disciplinary measures. Some good parents visit schools to find out the progress and conduct of their children.

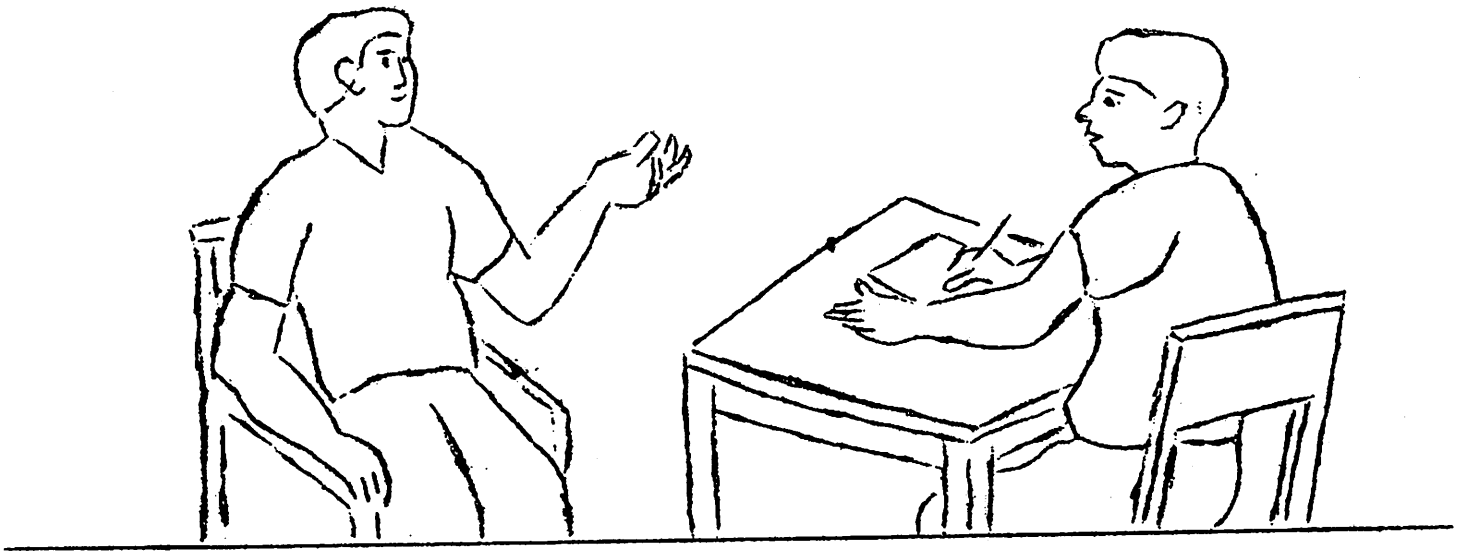
However, some parents detest corporal punishments for their children.

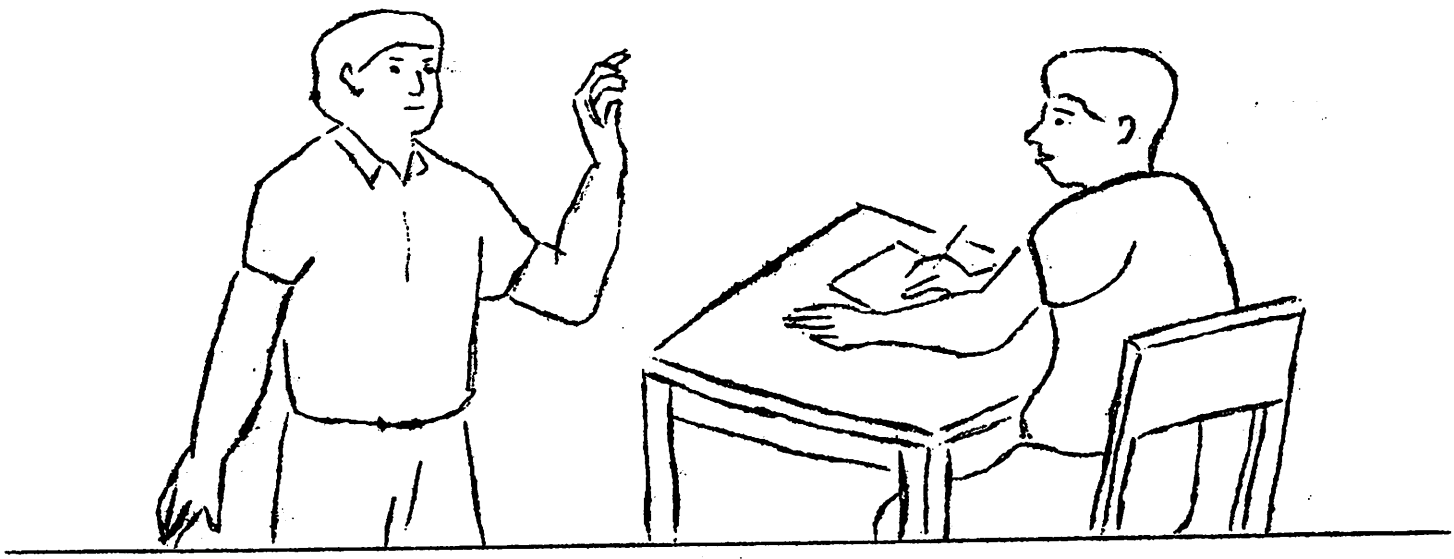
In School

Parent:	Tisa buwae	Good morning teacher
Teacher:	Kini buwae bi sic gbɔ jia a bie?	Good morning sir, how are you what is your mission?
Parent:	Ngi wa nye loi lɔ hinda hungbɛ ma	I've come to enquire about my child
Teacher:	A gbɛ	What for
Parent:	Sia ngi yegelokoi na sukuihun	About his progress and behaviour in school
Teacher:	Bi loi biyei?	What is your child's name?
Parent:	Ngi laa Buakei Sama	His name is Bockarie Sama
Teacher:	Oo! ngi ngi gɔɔlɔ, I nya klasihunlɔ Ngi nemahun le ngɔ Kɛ a sɛi waa glua klasihun. Nya pen ngɛ gii hungɛ va a bie kɔɔ bi ngi lahin	Ah! I know him, he is in my class He is very clever But he is very playful in class Infact I was thinking of telling you so that you will warn him
Parent:	Tisa bi sic ka na le ma na, nya logoi bi kpɔma yɛ nya ma ye hindei ngihun, gbɛva ndoi ta numu yila woo ii le. Ya yama lawo ngi ma nahin a we i luwa	Thank you very much, teacher, only that I want you to help me with this matter because a child does not belong to one person. Always keep an eye on him so that he can have some fear

Hosted for free on livelingua.com







Hosted for free on livelingua.com

Teacher:	Pa kulugoi ye ngaa Ngaa mua bie gɔyia le? Nga yaa na a ngi yaabɛ	O.k. sir I hope it is a compromise between us. I will now keep watching him
Parent:	Kɛ tamia tisa Ba ya a foo nyama	O.k. see you teacher Please be visiting me
Teacher:	E-ye kɛ malɔ	Alright. See you

Alternate Forms

Gbe a ngendei	What is your mission this morning?
Gbɛ va	What for

Useful Expressions

Nya loi lɔ kaa madihuma?	Is my child serious over his work?
A waa suku wati gbi?	Does he come to school always?
Wua wu dei we ti wa a navo?	Did you ask them to bring money?
Ngi wa nya loi hunveima	I have come to obtain permision for my child
Bi loi ji yukpa gɔ wa	Your child is very troublesome
Bi loi ii baa gɔɔ numu-gbima	Your child has no respect for anyone
Bi loi lɔ wa kɔɛ madihuma	Your child is very hard working/studies hard
Ya pie I ya humbu a wa sukuihun	See that he always comes to school very early

POSTPOSITIONS AND PREPOSITIONS

Postpositions generaly occur after nouns, pronouns, nominal phrases and verbs, whereas prepositions occur before them.

Postpositions

In the following examples, the postpositions occur in final positions vis-a-vis after nouns and pronouns.

Bukui la tebii ma	Put the book on the table
Buakei lɔ pɛɛ woma	Bockarie is behind the house
Nda nya gulɔ	Put it infront of me
Too ngi yakama	Place it by his side

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

Examples of some more postpositions.

Gblanga	Near	Kohun	Inside
Mahun	Top/upon	Nda	At
Mbu	In/into/under	Wɛ/vaa	For
Nduahun	Between	Ndia	Between/middle/among
Nga	On/at/in/from	Hun	In/from/to
Kakahun	Side	Woma	Behind
Gulɔ	Infront	Va	Of/for/to in infinitive mood

Bu and hun deserve special attention because they have several semantic equivalents in English, depending on the context in which they occur.

A) Tia kpaahun — They are in the farm
Sao gbuaa kpaahun — Sao has come from the farm
Mu li kpaahun — Let us go to the farm

Hun from the above examples shows different shades of meaning depending on different grammatical contexts.

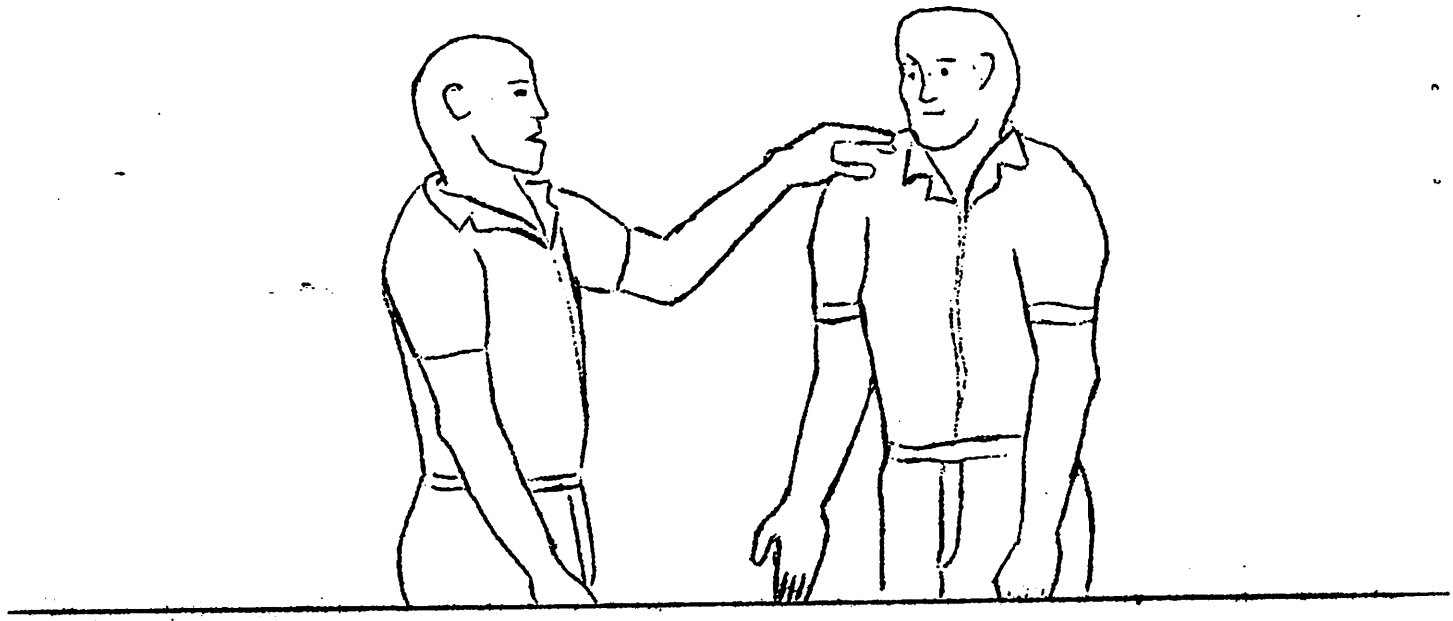
B) Nya nyahei lɔ pɛɛ bu — My wife is in the house
Baa li la pɛɛ bu — Don't take it into the house
Ngi gbɛ pɛɛ bu — Drive him from the house
Gɔnɛ lɔ tibii bu — The cat is under the table

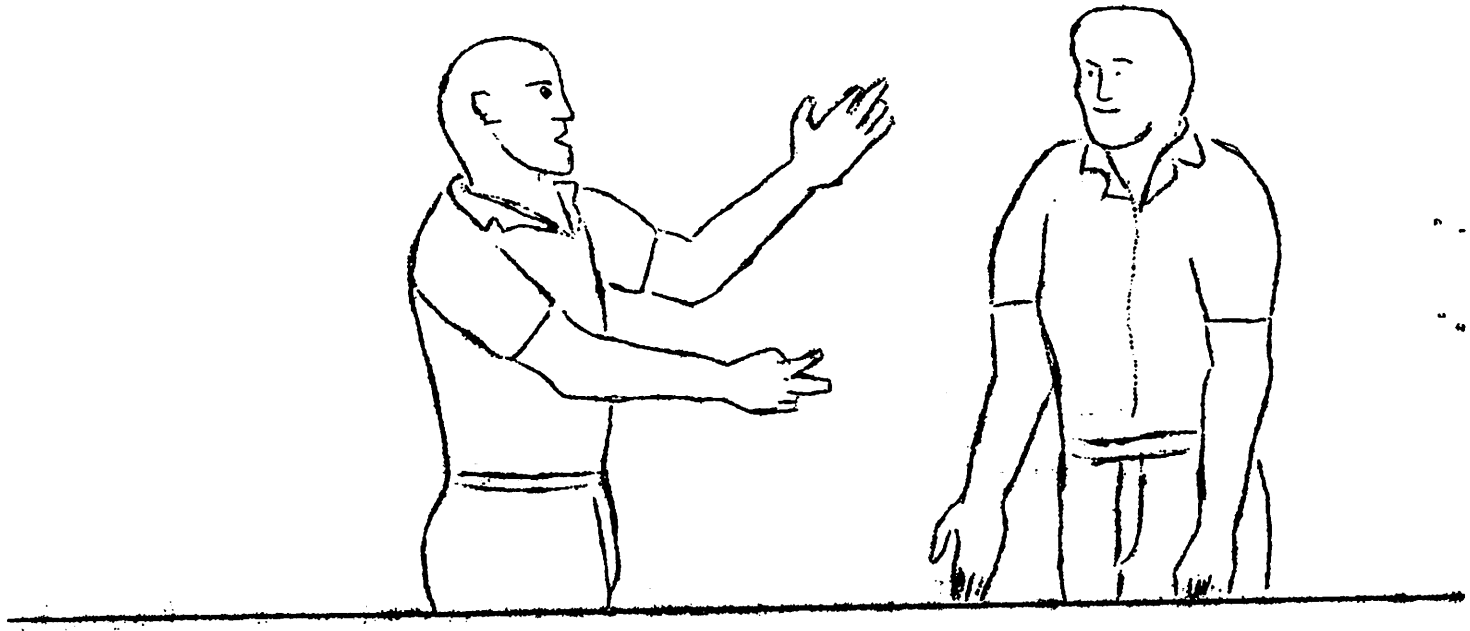
Note also that bu too can mean in, into, from and under depending on the grammatical context.

Prepositions

Only two prepositions are known a which roughly means with kɛleke which means except. A however has a much wider distribution.

Hosted for free on livelingua.com





Hosted for free on livelingua.com

LESSON THIRTEEN

MONTHS OF THE YEAR

DIALOGUE

PCV:	Jo, ndake galu lolɛ mia foihun?	Joe, how many months are there in a year?
LH:	Ngalu puumahun fele mia foihun	There are twelve months in a year
PCV:	Ba gulɔ bi ti laagbawa Mɛnde yeihun?	Can you name them in Mende?
LH:	Ɔɔ	Yes
PCV:	Kɛ ti laa gɛ a ngɛ	Then please show them to me
LH:	Wolo panda hoe	Listen carefully
PCV:	Nga wolo ma, kɛ ba nde lɔ maleigɔ	I'm listening, but please say it slowly
LH:	Pɛgbaa	January
	Vui	February
	Nyawɔlii	March
	Buwui	April
	Gooli	May
	Sucjuci	June
	Nanɔi	July
	Dawii	August
	Saai	September
	Galoi	October
	Lugbuyawui	November
	Pondoi	December
PCV:	Bi siɛ ka	Thank you very much

DAYS OF THE WEEK

PCV:	Fo lolɛ mia hoki yilahun?	How many days are there in a week?
LH:	Fo wɔfila mia hoki yilahun	There are seven days in a week
	Tɛnɛ	Monday
	Taalata	Tuesday
	Araba	Wednesday
	Aikamisa	Thursday
	Aijuma	Friday
	Sibiti	Saturday
	Lahadi	Sunday

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

LESSON FOURTEEN

SWAMP RICE FARMING

DIALOGUE A

PCV:	Kini Ɔmɔ buaa-e	Hello Mr Momoh
LH:	Mm, ndiamɔ bi sie	Hello friend
PCV:	I yena, migbe mia bi kpete yegei latoma?	How is it: when are you starting the swamp work?
LH:	Wati hintiama. Bia naalee ngi bi mawulo ma kɔ bi nya lo pema	It's already time. I'm only waiting for you to give me some advice on the work
PCV:	Kɛ ba lilɔ naa bi kpetei lue, bi gaa-yia, ki bi pujaa. Pen ba ya tato ba mbei saanilɔ, nahi-neve aa yɛ bi kpɔyɔ a bi gbetei wuja la mbei gugɔ a yɛlanaa hin va	You can now go ahead and brush your swamp, clear it and dig it. Before starting, you will be ready for transplanting by the time you finish digging your swamp
LH:	Ba nya ngɔɔ a mba huun wulɔ	Will you give me some?
PCV:	Gbei mba huun gbii bi yeya?	Why don't you have some?
LH:	Ɔɔ	Yes
PCV:	Kɛ wa sina nga bi gɔɔ a mba huin	Then come tomorrow, I'll give you some
LH:	E-ye, kɛ nya sina wama	O.k. then, I'll come tomorrow

DIALOGUE B

PCV:	Kini Ɔmɔ bianaa	Afternoof Mr Momoh
LH:	Sɛmbɛjɔmui bi ye luvei?	How is the day bigman?
PCV:	Nya lɔɔ dɛdɛma. Bi ye gɛlia a kpete yegei?	I'm managing. How far have you gone with the swamp work?
LH:	Mbei vaigoi naa, sina yekei mia nga taato a hinla. Kpetei kpɛɛ wuja goi naa	The rice has already germinated I'll start transplanting the day after tomorrow. The swamp is already dug

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

PCV:	Bi nja we leilɔ plɔ-tisia ti luahun?	Did you make drainages in-be-tween the plots?
LH:	Ɔɔ, sia le gɛ bi hun-gei la a nge	Yes, just as you instructed me the last time
PCV:	Kɛ nya sina wama ngi kpeteihun lɔ. Bi ya mbei hinma, ba ti lootoo waa gblagblaga	Then I'll be coming tomorrow to see the swamp. When trans-planting the rice, do not cluster them together
LH:	Ɔ bia vui lɔ sina wa ma bi na lɔ?	I suppose you'll be coming tomorrow to see there your-self
PCV:	Ɔɔ	Yes
LH:	Kɛ ba nya malelɔ Mua lɔ	Then you will meet me We shall see

Glossary of Tools/Useful Expressions on Farming

Bembei	Fishing net
Bumbui	Fishing Trap
Due	Brush
Due kpe	Brushing time
Fɛlei	Winnowing time
Gaaga kpe	Time for clearing after burning
Hambui	An object made of wire hung over fire for drying fish or meat
Kali	Hoe
Kondei	Mortar
Koni	Axe
Kɔboi	Mat (made out of bamboo)
Kpakai	Three legged wooden chair typical of Mendes - used especially on farms
Kpasei	Circular object used for climbing palm trees
Kpangbei	Broom
Kpawei	Forked stick
Kpuloi	Gourd/keg
Kpoe	Farm house
Lavulei	Sling used for scaring birds
Mbahui	Seed rice
Mbowei	Knife
Mbale bowei	Sickle/knife used for cutting rice
Ndoe bowei	Brushing knife
Mbogbei	Cutlass
Pɔ bogbei	Cutlass for cutting down trees
Ndɔgboi	Bush
Ndoli	Hook
Ngɔmbui	Fire
Piyei	Container for putting fish while fishing

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

Some Useful Expressions/Rice Seasons

Pɔ kpee	Time for cutting down large trees/felling time
Kpaa mɔ wati	Burning time
Mbawa kpee	Ploughing time
Gugbia kpee	Weeding time
Mbale kpee	Harvest season
Mɔtu kpee	Period of waiting for first rain before ploughing
Mba wufoi	Newly ploughed land
Mba vai	Germinated rice
Lobai	Unploughed land
Glangle	Gathering and clearing of unburnt shrubs

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

Alternate Forms

Nyahagaa ti lolɛ bi yeya?	How many wives have you
Nya nyahin yakpe	I have only one wife

Useful Expressions

Nya nyahangaa ti lɔɔlu	I have five wives
Nya nyahin haa vonu	My wife died last year
Nya nyahin ii ya ndo lei	My wife hasn't a child yet
Nya legaa ti nge lɔ	This is my chilldren's mother
Nyaha ii nya yeya lɛ	I don't have a wife yet

MEAL TIMES

Cultural Explanation

The Mendes have a communal lifestyle. They like to share what belongs to them with others especially strangers. Food is one of the basic things they always share. Their meal times are not divided into breakfast, lunch and dinner;
rather they eat mostly after the normal day's work on the farm. The meals at such times are usually very heavy. When there is communal labour on the farm, food is prepared for the workers which serves as lunch. In Mende, food prepared for workers is called kɔndei.

Certain etiquettes are observe during meal times.

a) There should be no talking - children especially are strictly forbidden to talk while eating.

b) Mendes hardly eat with spoons, so they should wash both hands properly before eating

c) One should not grab too much food from the dish at a go

d) One should not eat the meat in the food until it is shared, normally after eating

e) No one is expected to extend his hand in front of another person while eating together

f) No one is expected to eat at a faster rate, this will be gluttony

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

DIALOGUE

PCV:	Kini Blema biana	Goodday Mr Brima
LH:	Mm, ndiamɔ bi siɛ Wa mu mɛhɛn mɛɛ	Yea, goodday friend Come and let's eat
PCV:	Ɛnɛn, ndake na gbatɛgoi na	O.k. I'm alright now/I'm fed
LH:	Ndake, wa bɛ hɔ bi kulo mɛ	Man, come and have a bit at least
PCV:	Tɔnya mia, kɛ ndake genda mɛhɛn mia ha ngi mia, ye kove mia nya ma. Kɔnɛ le i yɛ a wati yeka	That's true, but man, I have eaten some morning food today and I'm still fed. Please let it be another time
LH:	Mm, ngi humɛinga ye	O.k. I've heard you
PCV:	Kɛ gbɛ ngi fo teihun nya wama	Let me go to town, I'll be back
LH:	E-ye, malɔ	O.k. see you

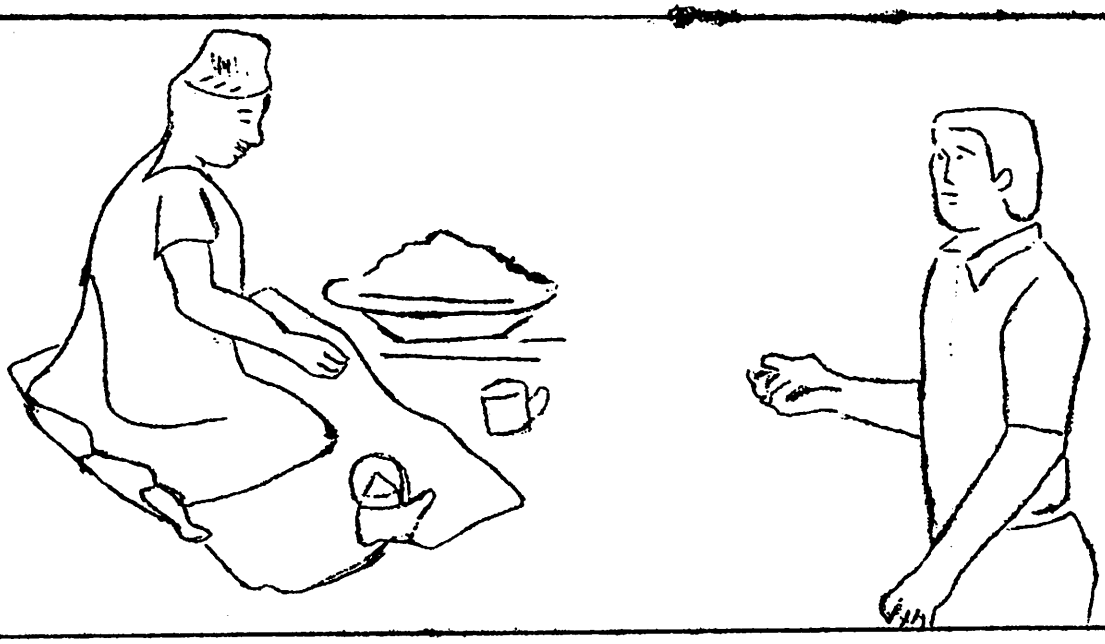
Alternate Forms

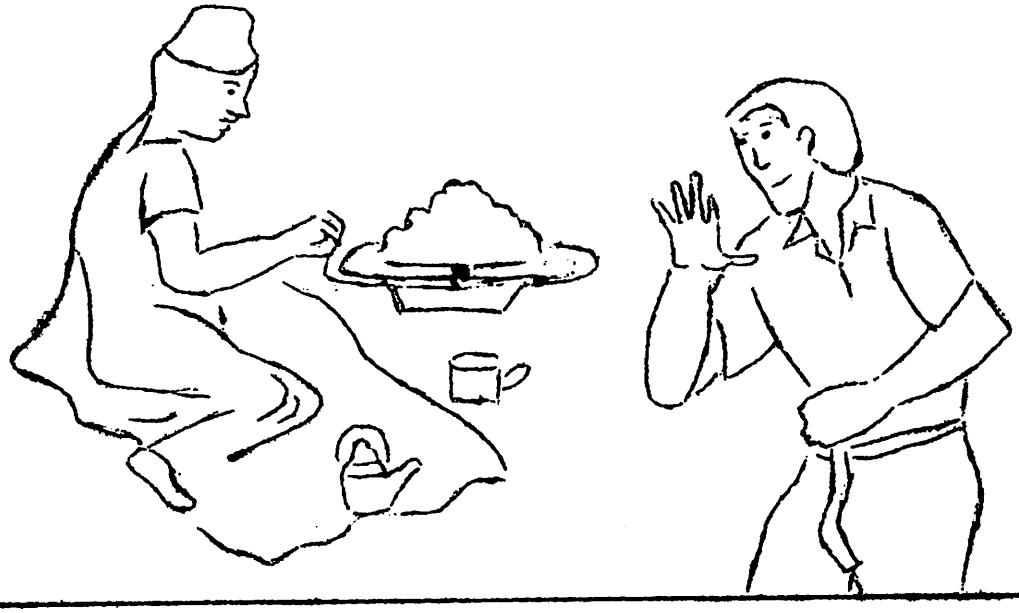
Nya govengoi	I'm alright/I'm fed
Nya foma teihun ngi wa	I'm going to town and back

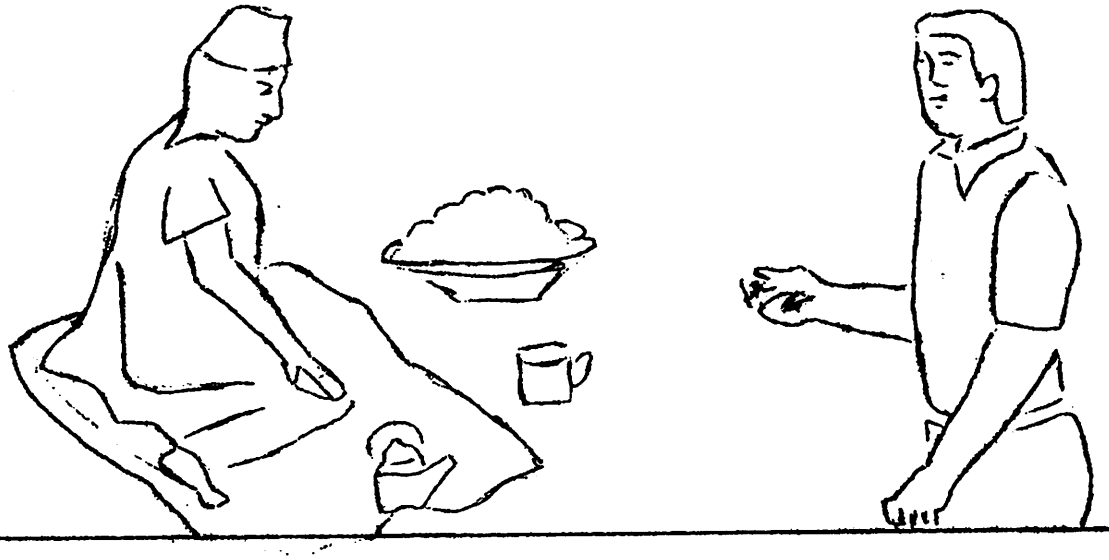
Useful Expressions

Tɔkopɛpɛ	Taking food with your hands at a faster rate
Kavei	Taking too much food at one go
Bi liingɔ wa	You are gluttinous
Bi lamingɔ wa	You are gluttinous
Bi hataigɔ	You are gluttinous
Bi mɛhɛnhindago	You are gluttinous (never satisfied with food)
Bi nɛhɛngɔ wa	You like to stand by for people's food
Bi vofulangɔ	You are voracious

Hosted for free on livelingua.com







Hosted for free on livelingua.com

Conjunctions

These act as 'joining words'

Examples

Taa/kɛ - and	Shɛk taa Fred lɔ Mende bukui nyii ma. Sheik and Fred are writing the Mende book.
	Bia kɛ nya, mu li ma teihun. You and I will go to town.
Bɛ - even, also, too	Ina bɛ i wei lɔ ngei li taahun. Even if he comes I will not go to town. I will not go to town even if he comes.
Jibɛ, kiabɛ - although	Mua li lɔ teihun kiabɛ njei i wama We will go to town although it is raining
	Ngi maa lɔ Salɔn kiabɛ navo ii nya yeya I will go to town although I have no money
Ina - if	Mua mu nda bei mɛɛ ina Atɔ ii humbuni a wa We shall eat our own rice if Arthur does not come in time

Other Conjunctions

Ji, kia, kɛa: When, while, like

Ɔ: or

Kɔ: So that

Kele: Except

Jiva, tamia, famia, fale: Therefore

Interjections

These express emotions, excitements or emphasis.

Examples

O! Suffix - especially when calling out in a

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

loud voice to add emphasis

A muli O! - Let's go!

E! - Calling out names
Musa e!

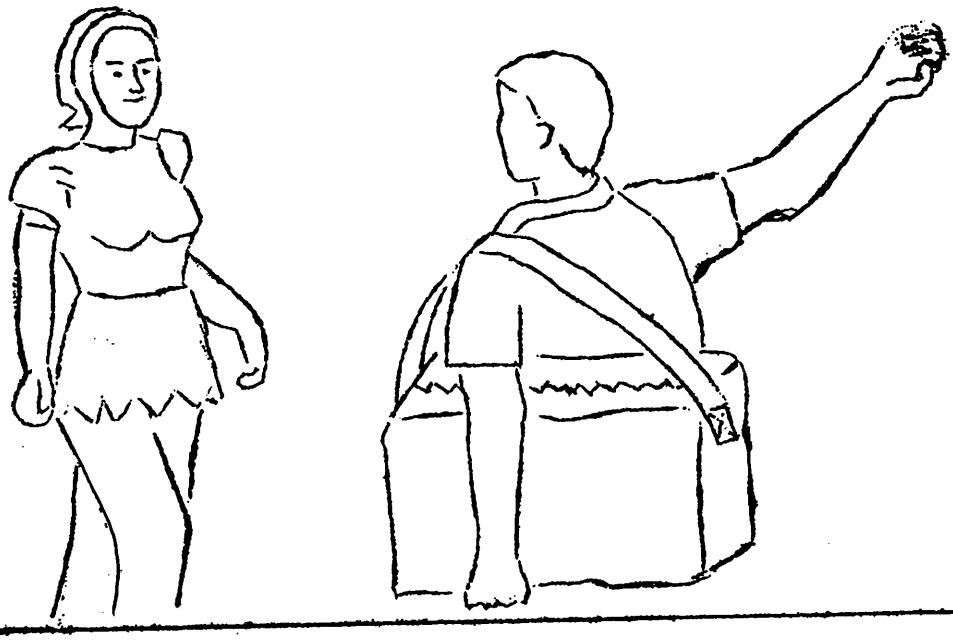
Ko! Exclamation of surprise
Ko! ba ngi nya nyɔnaaye
Oh! I have wounded myself

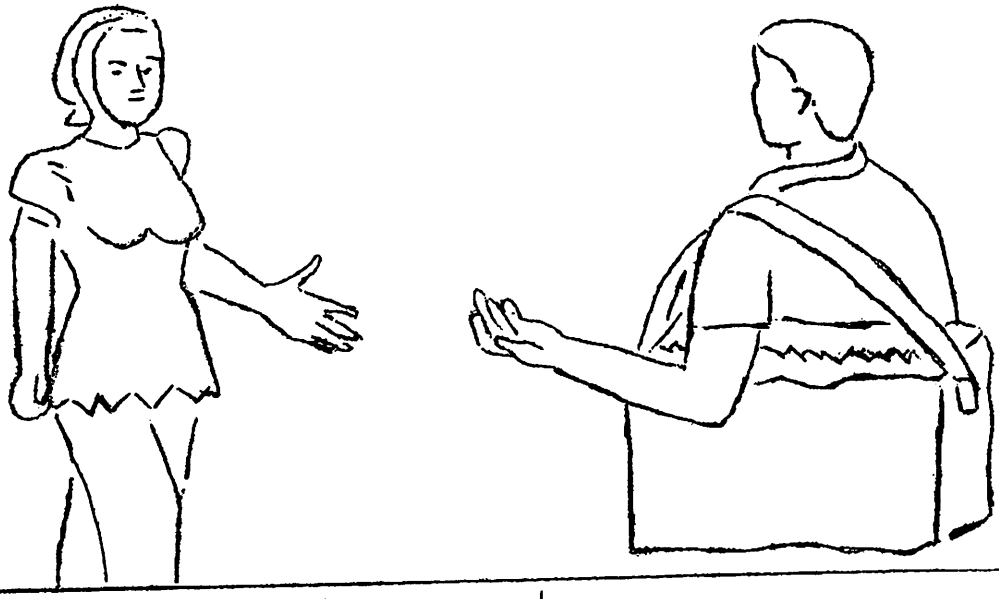
Aa ya! - also exclamation of surprise or regret

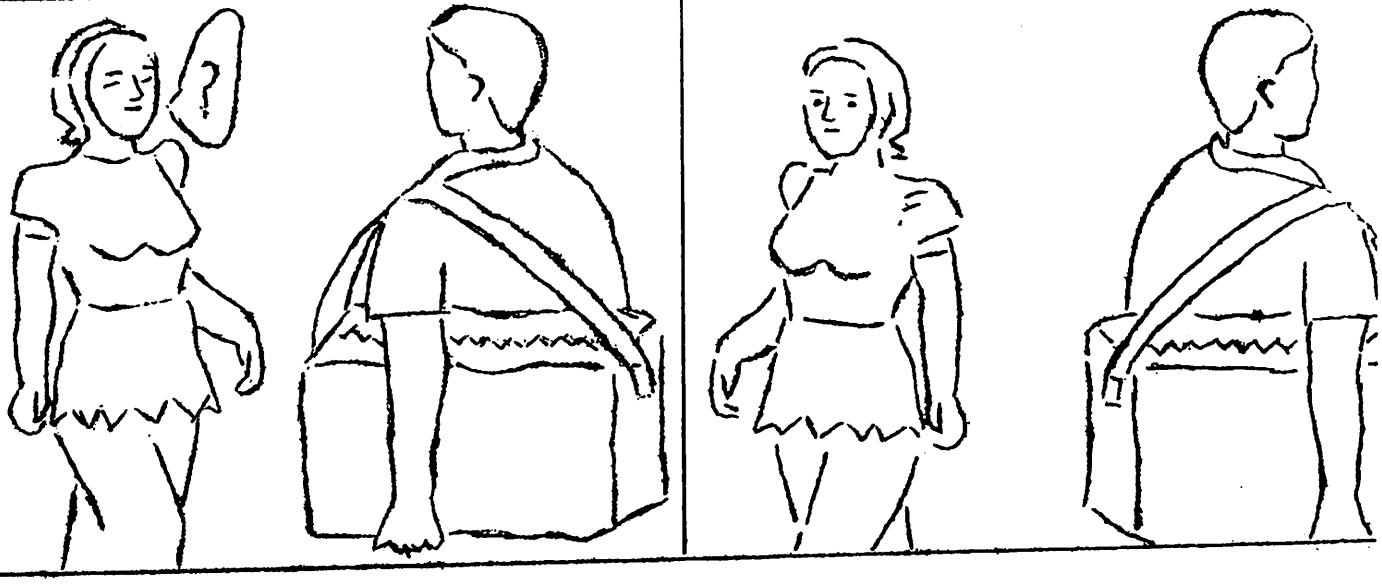
Hoe! - Emphasis - interrogative particle

Please/shall we

Hosted for free on livelingua.com.







Hosted for free on livelingua.com

LESSON 16

BACK FROM A TRIP

Cultural Explanation

It is usually expected that one brings gifts or presents back home for friends and relatives especially when one returns from a journey. However, there is always a way of evading this, if it should create any embarrassment.

DIALOGUE

LH:	Bɔ buaa	Hello friend
PCV:	Mm, nyande bi sie	Hello madam
LH:	Bi ye gbua ma?	Where are you coming from?
PCV:	Ngi gbua Salɔn lɔ	I'm coming from Freetown
LH:	GBɛva na?	How are things there?
PCV:	Ngi ye nyamu lui na	Not bad
LH:	Ɔ nya yoyoi?	What did you bring for me?
PCV:	Bia yeso nya glɔgbatei ve lɛ	Give me first what you kept for me
LH:	Gbɛ va?	Why?
PCV:	Kulɔ gbatɛ lɔ a joyo gbua	What is kept for someone encourages him to offer gifts
LH:	Kɛ gbɛ ngi ya a kɔkɔoi	Then let me be finding it
PCV:	Nya bɛ nga ya a joyoi gɔkɔoi	I will also be looking out for your gift
LH:	E-ye	O.k.

Alternate Forms

Ye nyamu ii na	Not bad
Gbɔ bi nya yoyoi la?	What did you bring for me
Gbɛɛ ngi ya ndɔlɔ	Let me be finding it

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

Useful Expresions

Migbe mia ba wa?	When will you come back?
Migbe mia ba yama?	When will you be returning?
Migbe mia ba li?	When will you go?
Migbe mia bi lima?	When will you be going?

Sina yekei mia ngi lima	I shall be going on the day after tomorrow
Sina yekei mia ngi li	I shall go on the day after tomorrow
Gbegi yekei mia mgi wani	I came on the day after yesterday
Ngi gbua le Makali lɔ	I am just coming from Makali
Nya hɔndei nyanilɔ ji ngi ye wama	My honda brokedown when I was coming
Mɔtoi nyanilɔ a mue	Our vehicle brokedown

PROVERBS

Proverbs are wise sayings very common among the Mendes especially chiefs and elders. A great writer Chinua Achebe did say that "Proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten". They have sense and salt. They are mostly used for giving advice, settling disputes or giving warning.

Some Mende proverbs will be examined by stating them, giving their literal translations and their meanings. The context or instances where they can be used will be imagined from the given meanings.

1. Njei ba lɛhun ta ba lohun

   The river you look low upon is the river that drowns you.
   You should not take anything lightly

2. Numugbi ngi mama a lilɔ maagbou yɔpoihun

   Everyone's grandmother must go to the plantain farm
   Fortune can smile on anyone with time

3. Ndɔgbɔ gbii na ndo nyamu wiliva

   There is no bush to throw a bad child.
   No matter how bad a child is, he cannot be disowned by his parents.

4. Numu ii fɛfei gbuawe ngɔ a tɛɛ wei lɛkpɛ.

   No one knows the direction of the wind that bends a fowls tail.
   No one can tell the future, so one should be careful

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

5. Ti bi loingaa a huanamoi, ti bi lei male wɛɛ pɛɛma.

When they call you a witch/wizard, let them meet your mouth on the wall.
One is usually identified or classed according to one's behaviour.

6. Numu bi tei makɛnga a tɛyawui, i njɛbia a wotɛ a kɔti lɔ

If you tame a fowl with an egg, when it grows up it will become a stone.
If you pet your child, he will grow to become a defiant and disobedient child.

7. Nja nɔhɔn bɛɛ a ngɔmbu lufelɔ.

Even dirty water can put off fire.
In the absence of something good, anything will do.

8. Njei a lo numu gohun lɔ i bali a ŋami

Water stays in one's stomach while one vomits blood.
One should reserve one's opinion on certain issues.

9. Hiwii bi loni a nyimi mɛvali a gbua bima.

A hill which does not want to be stepped on, should not grown edible mushroom.
If you desire respect, do not disrespect others.

10. Sɔmi nyakui ma, kɛɛ ngi bloi lɔ kaŋahun.

A crab has sexual desires but its penis is locked in a box.
Sexual desires could be controlled by ethical codes.

11. Sɔlɛ bakui ee taa loo.

Noisy weaver bird does not build a nest
Empty vessels make the most noise.

12. Ndoli na bii bɛni la baa kiula bi yemɔ wehun.

Don't start a dance you don't know at your mother-in-laws' house.
To avoid disgrace do not attempt doing anything you cannot do properly.

13. Ngɔmɔ lɔ a ngɔmɔ gɔ.

A river gives a giver.
One good turn deserves another.

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

14. Bɛki wopi ee gu a loo.

An empty bag cannot stand.
One needs motivation or courage to drive on.

15. Tei a kpua ngi mbaa la lɔ a kpoi.

A fowl takes it from another fowl's beak and swallows it.
Man live by man.

16. Kɔlu fele ee bɛ gbanyi ya.

Two metals cannot fit on one anvil.
One cannot run after two things at the same time.

17. Pimei a lɔto nyɛnyɛhun lɔ.

Running starts from fast walking.
Charity begins at home.

18. Kali ee nuu nyi kulɔ loova.

A snake does not bite you because you are walking in front.
Destiny is inevitable.

19. Nja yila ee luva a bɛlɛ gbua numu ma.

One river should not always take off one's trousers.
Too much of one thing is good for nothing.

20. Ndopo ee nu waa wumbu a loko yila.

A child does not take an elder with one hand.
Know your place.

21. Ngeya yaa bi ndeihun ndala.

When there is rope in your's, draw it.
Hit the nail when it is hot.

22. Mia ta nikei yili na, naa mia a mɛli na.

Where a cow is tied, that is where it feeds.
One benefits from one's status.

23. Ti ya ndopoma kpo lɔ tɔuma, ye ii ya hinti kale ma.

When they tell a child there is faeces on a kernel, he says it has not reached the nut.
Warning before wounded.

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

24. Sia ba bi gbukoi hun gbatɛ, hin na ba la hun.

As you make your bed so shall you lie on it.
Your future is in your hand

25. Nchɛmɔ ee ngi liwe gɛ.

A begger for food does not show his taboo.
Beggers have no choice.

26. Kpandɛ yia i yia.

When a gun fires, it has fired.
What has been done cannot be undone.

27. Ngulu yila ee wola.

One tree cannot give many trees.
One tree cannot make a forest
Many heads are better than one.

28. Laa na ba male njei ya ta ba njei le la.

The paddle you meet at the river, is the paddle
you use to cross the river.
When you go to Rome, you do as the Romans do.
Anywhere you find yourself, you should take after
what the people do there.

29. Bi loi lɔ a buni baalo a ngi hun gaa.

If you don't like berry, don't like the seeds.
If you love a woman, you should also love her child.

30. Sɛlɛ sɛlɛ mia a li a soke kawɔma.

A gradual movement takes the sparrow to the dustbin.
Little by little a bird builds its nest.
Every little effort contributes to a success.

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

STORIES

Stories are very important in the Mende culture. Most of the folklore normally depict various forms of human behaviour and their efects. It is therefore not uncommon that Mendes use stories when advising others or their children. Most of the Mende stories have moral lessons.

A lot of animal characters are usually used in stories based on the various habits of these creatures.

'Kasiwulo' (the spider) is renowned as a very greedy animal. The spider is therefore used in narrating stories related to greed.

'Hagbewulo' (the hare) is used to depict cunningness. Other common animals used in stories are 'haku' (tortoise), 'ndovo' (frog) and 'ngla' (dog).

The general purposes of story telling then are to entertain, amuse and to teach morals. We have endeavoured to include two stories of great repute in this manual. More stories will be narrated by Mende language trainers as the need arises.

Kasiwulo Tia Fula Naanisia

Story Teller: Dɔmio, dɔmiosia

Listeners: Jia a kɔdɛ

Story Teller:

Wati yilama mɛhɛmɛ gomɛngaa ti yɛɛ fula naanihun. Yɛ fula naanisia kpɛlɛ ti ngowi wili lɔ kasiwulo ngama kɔ i bɛ yɛ komijisia ma.

Ji kasiwulo ngowijisia humɛnini, i ngi lengaa kpɛlɛ lɛilɔma i nde tima ti li ti ngeya naaningaa lewe. Ngi lengeisia ti lilɔ ti ngeyeijisia lewe ti wa a tie ti ti ve ti kɛkɛ wɛ. Kia jumei yɛ hintima, kasiwulo tia ngi lengaa naanisia ti lilɔ a peleina i toma fula naani jisiahun. Ti lilɔ han kɛ ti fo nga pela gbuama naani a i to ma fula naanisia ma. Kɛ Kasiwulo ndenga ngi lengaa ma kɔ ti ngeya naanisia gblɔ ngi lia. I nde ti ma yɛ numu gbi i li fula yilahun. Ti ti kɛkɛ loi loni jɔnsoilaa ngeya naani gblɔ ngɔ ngi lia.

Ji leke seifani hintini kɛ i biama fula naani-jisia kpɛlɛ ti tɔtonga a mɛhɛn mɛla lenga. Ji wie ngɔɔ kɛ ngi lenga ti tɔtonga a ngeyei laalala. Ti ngeyei jisia laaleilɔ han kasiwulo ii ngui aa li fuleijisia ye ngla bɛhun a jifa ngi lengeisia ti yɛlɔ a ngi laala hungbi. Na wie lɔ na kɛ ngi lie ya lengi-lengi, i loi kulohin kɔ i haa.

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

Jinaa ngi lengeisia ni ngi laalanga han ti ngi loi, kɛ ti yamanga hungbɛ va ina gbɔ ti kɛkɛ wienga. Ji ti wei ti maleni i longa kulohin kɔ kasiwulo i haa a jifa ngi lie yelɔ lengi-lengi tawa gbɔma ii yɛ ngu a levu. Gama gamina ti ngi vuloi lɔ kaaka ti li a ngie fuleihun. I hiye folei na ma wɔ kasiwulo lia genyeni folei jibɛ kasiwulo gbi le ngitie ya kulohin.

Listeners: Gbɔ ji ye mbui le?

Story Teller: Mehen hinda ma ii neni

Translation - Spider and the Four Villages

At one time there were four big feasts in four vilages. All the four villages sent messages to spider so that he will be present at these gatherings.

When spider heard th messages, he summoned his four sons and told them to go and cut four ropes. His four sons went and cut the ropes and brought them to their father. When Friday was approaching, spider and his four sons took the road leading to the four villages. They went on until they arrived at a junction with roads leading to the four villages. Then spider told his four sons to tie the four ropes round his waist. He told each of them to go to one of the villages. They left their father at the junction with the four ropes tied round him.

When it was about time for the afternoon prayers (2pm), it coincided that all four villages started eating together. As soon as this happened, his four sons started drawing the rope. They drew the rope together so much that spider could not go to any one of the villages. Then his waist became very thin, so much that he almost died.

When his sons drew him so long without seeing him they went to find out what has happened to their father. When they came they found out that spider was almost dead because he was nearly cut into two and he was unable to breath. They immediately untied him and took him to the village. Since that day spider's waist became thin; since then every other spider has a very thin waist.

Listeners: What is the meaning of that?

Story Teller: Gluttony is not good

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

NDAKPU NYANDE

Story Teller: Dɔmiɔ, dɔmiosia

Listeners: Jia a kɔdɛ

Story Teller:

Fula yila yɛ wɔ na ta toi a Jɔmu. Yɛ fulei ji hun nyahan lo nyande gɔ wa yɛlɔna (ngi la Mɛsi). Hingaa gboto, kɔngaa O kpakogaa O ti yɛ Jɔmu ti loni lɔ a ye ndopoi ji hei va. Kɛ ji ti ngi wani sandeihun, ti ngi gbua, ii lumani a hindo gbi jɔ ye teijihun. Ji ti ngi mɔlini, i nde lɔ yɛ ii ya ngi lima hindo lɔni.

Jɔmu i yeni a taa lɔ wɔ mia ndɔwei a hei na jumagbi. Juma yila ma, mɛsi i yɛ jɔpɔwahunlɔ (makitihun) makiti majiamei kɛ i ndakpou nyandengɔ wa lɔnga. Ndakpe ji lɔngɔ O kɛ i gbengbanga wa ngi va. Ha kpɔ i hiyei lɔ mia i yɛ hei na kɛ i tɔtonga a tola ndakpejima. I loilɔ toma ngima han ndakpe i kpɔyɔ a fee ngɔla. Ji na ndakpe ji tɔtoni a yama la ngi yɛ, kɛ i tonga kɛ mɛsi lɔ loi ngi woma, Kɛ i ngi mɔlinga yɛ 'gbe nyande bi loi lee nya woma'? Kɛ mɛsi i ndenga yɛ ngi longɔ a ngie kɔ tia ta ta hii. Kɛ ndakpe ndenga ngima yɛ nyande bi nya ngɔ, bi nya lɔnga leę bɛ bi longɔ a nge? Kɔnɛle vama. Mɛsi i wɔloni dahinjima, kɛ i tonga huen tamui jima.

I toi lɔ ngi ma ti li polɔŋ dɔgboihun, ti foina hinda lenga lɔ kɛ ndakpou nyandei ji i tɔtonga a ngi magbua la. A wati ji mia lee na i kɔni kɛ ŋgafa mia a ndakpeji. Ji woma na i luwei lɔ wa. Ti lonilɔ lima Tamui ji i ngi magbua i lolee a kalɛ gbama. Kia mɛsi ji hun lɔni kɛ i lewenga a piimi, i wiiɱi lɔ hanni, kɛ ngafe ji ngi huilɔ huen. I lilɔ a ngi i ngiɛ mɛ.

Listeners: Gbɔ ji ye mbui le?

Story Teller: Ngohun gbɔnda ma ii nɛni

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

Translation - A Handsome Youngman

There was once a village called Johmu. In this village there was a very beautiful girl called Mesi. Many men, young as well as old who were in Johmu wanted to marry this young girl. But when she was initiated into the Bondo society, she did not agree to marry any man in this town. When they asked her why? She said she has not seen her choice.

Johmu was a town where a big market day was held every Friday. One Friday Mesi was selling in the market when she saw a very handsome youngman. As soon as she saw this man, she fell over heels for him. She at once left her seat and started following this man. She followed him until the man finished shopping. When the man started heading back for his home, he found out that Mesi was following him. Then he asked her "Why are you following me my dear?" Mesi told him that she wants him to be her husband. Then the man told her that 'you don't know me, you have just seen me and now you propose marriage to me. Please go back'. Mesi did not listen to this warning, but insisted on following the guy. She followed her until they went far away into the bush. When they arrived somewhere, this handsome man started undressing. Only then that she knew the man was a devil. After this she became very frightened. They went on until the man completely changed to a skeleton. When Mesi saw this, she ran away, she ran, and ran but the devil caught her. He took her away and ate her.

Listeners: What is the meaning of this?

Story Teller: Stubborness is not good.

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

SOME MORE USEFUL PHRASES AND EXPRESSIONS

MENDE	ENGLISH
Gbɛ ngi wa	Wait till I come
Nya mawo kulo	Wait for me a little
Wa mui	Come let's go
Ngi wa mui?	Shall I come with you?
Ndi mia bi pie ma?	Are you going?
Bi ya nga va ngi ma hoe	When you go extend my greetings to him/her
Bi totoa a mɛhɛɛ yiila?	Have you started cooking the food?
Njei ji a gulɔ bi va	Will this water be enough for you?
Bi ya gɛ milɔ?	Where did you go recently
Wɔɔgba ngi ya foi na	I have never been there
Saange mia ngi gbua na	I have just left there
Ngii ya ha a ngi loi	I have not seen him today
Pɔl lɔ mbi?	Is Paul here?
Hiye na	Get up from there
A gbua gitiya	Go outside all of you
Baa luwa nya ma	Don't be afraid of me
Baa wɔɔ	Do not cry
A longo	Be quiet
Gbe nya ma	Leave me alone
Baa nya vawei	Do not disturb me
Baa ndɛɛ gula nya ma	Don't lie on me
Bii makei	You have no manners
Hei panda	Sit carefully/sit properly
Ngi lima a gɔɔma welɔ	I am going on foot
Nya longɔ a ye pekei	I want the other one
Waa a peka	Bring another one
Ii na	He/she/it is not there
Taa na	He/she/it is there
Lampoi longa	Light the lamp/lantern
Kɛlɛ ngi tɔ	Let me see it
Kɔnɛle nde gbɔma	Please say it again
Ti gɛ a nge	Show them to me
Bi humenga?	Have you understood?
Yembui a gbɔɔ?	What is its meaning?
Ta ye boi ji loi Mende yie hun	How is this called in Mende
Bia ii le/Bia ya na	Not you
Bii ya kpɔyoi lɛ?	Haven't you finished it yet?
Ngi kpɔyɔa	I have finished (it)
Ti bi lei mi lɔ?	Where were you born?
Wa mbe kaka	Come here quickly
Wu kɛkɛ yakpe?	Do you have the same father?
Nji main lɔ nya ma	I am sleepy
Nja gbɔemei lɔ nya ma	I am thirsty
Wa a njei ngi kpoe	Bring me some water to drink
Wa a njei ngi mua	Bring me some water to bathe
Baa lema ba	Don't forget it
Baa lema nya ma	Don't forget me

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

Baa nde nuu gbi ma	Don't tell anyone
Baa ngi lee	Don't beat him
Baa nyani, fe mbɛ	Don't spoil it, give it to me
Baa nya nɛmu	Don't wound me
Baa kputa	Dont't burst it
Baa mbɔ	Don't dig it
Baa nya loi a pumoi	Don't call me whiteman
Nya la yana	That's not my name
Kɔnɛlɛ mavula	Please hurry up
Ba jaa la	Don't touch it
Baa yaa gbiti ma	Don't touch it again
Baa ngeya	Don't buy it
Baa li na	Don't go there
Wa bi lo nya gulɔ	Come and stand in front of me
I ye na?	How is it?
Wasi yɛ gbɛ	What time is it?
Gbɛ lɛ?	What is it?
Bi tɔa?	Have you seen it?
Nya gbe	Here I am/Look at me
Nga ye pie?	How can I do it?
Ndomei na bɛngɔ bi ma	That shirt suits you
Ngi lii nyaningɔ na va	He is sad for that
Mɛndemɔ mia vui a bie?	Are you a true Mende man?
Mua ta mu lɔa ha	We have seen each other today
We kpɛɛ ii le (yana)	Not all of you
Mu venjɔ kpɛɛ	Both of us
Yekɛlɛmayei	The last one
Yesembei	The big one
Yehaalɛyei	The first one
Ndondoi lɔ nya ma	I am feeling hot
Ngi nyahei lɔ koihun	His wife is pregnant
Mu li baa la	Let's go to the bar

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

GLOSSARY

Parts of the body

Dii	- Heart	Dihun galei	- Backbone
Gɔwɔhini	- Big toe	Gɔwɔwɔma late	- Tendon at back of foot
Gombui	- Lower part of belly	Gɔwɔyui	- Toe
Gbatoi	- Back teeth	Gbowi	- Ankle
Hamei	- Hip/waist	Hakai	- Calf
Hok pui	- Navel	Jɔvɔtei	- Testicles
Kakei(yakei)	- Rib	Kale (gale)	- Backbone
Kɔwe(gɔwe)	- Foot/leg	Kɔwɔlokoi	- Left hand
Kpaki	- Shoulder/ upper arm	Kpale	- Thigh
		Kpambui	- Armpit
Kpɛle	- Beard	Kpɔni	- Brain
Kpɔni	- Penis	Kpɔkpɔe	- Chin
Lagui	- Lip	Lokovɛle	- Palm
Lokoyui	- Finger	Lokohini	- Thumb
Mbulei	- Neck	Mbule	- Penis
Ngami	- Face, eye	Ngama gbekei	- Eyebrow/ eyelash
Ngombi	- Knee		
Njombui	- Hair of body	Ngengalui	- Fingernail
Ngundiei	- Hair of head	Ndenge	- Pubic Hair
Ndate(late)	- Vein	Ngɔnge	- Back of head
Nyɛni	- Liver	Nyini	- Breasts
Ngoli	- Ear	Nɔkoi	- Elbow
Kɔle	- Skin	Kɔwɔdigbi	- Heel
Tokoi	- Hand	Koi/goi	- Belly
Ngotui	- Buttocks	Yejalokoi	- Right hand
Pomei(womei)	- Back	Ndimei	- Chest
Yakei	- Side		

Trees, Plants, etc.

Nguli	- Tree	Kpiti	- Grass
Foni	- Elephant grass	Ngale	- Very tall coarse grass
Kɔwui	- Wood		
Tife	- Leaf,twig		
Mbekei	- Branch	Ndawei	- Leaf
Nyui	- Corn	Kale	- Seed
Kɔwoi	- Fallen tree	Pote	- Millet
Hewe wuli	- Tree with a medicinal fruit	Koji	- Garden eggs
		Njawuli	- Soap tree/ see apple
Yogui	- Tree (stains cloth)	Yolui	- Fibrous of nduvui
Nguwe	- Silk cotton tree	Bowuli	- Baobab
		Kpedei	- Red hardwood tree
Tijoi	- Hardwood with fibrous bark	Mbɛli	- Hardwood tree with buttress
Semi	- A big forest tree		

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

Mbei - Rice
Kpole - Egg plant
Mambui - Tree with soft nuts, edible
Buni - Baboon apple tree
Goyavei - Guava
Lumbe - Orange tree
Boboe - Funtania
Jenje - A rubber vine
Koboe - A rubber tree
Houlei - Tree with juice used for catching birds
Nyokoe - Sugar cane
Keti - Guinea corn
Kpatoi - A kind of wild walnut
Gboji - Tree with yellow palm like fruit with pleasant taste
Yumbu yambe - A tree with red fruit, size of an apple, rough skin, red inside

Reptiles, Fish, etc.

Nyi - Fish
Ndili - Python
Ndovo kpoli - Poisonous small fat snake 1ft long
Ndawudu gali - Green snake
Pami - Iguana
Kpeni - Speckled lizard
Ndokuli - Chameleon
Ngakui - Crab
Jiben - Bull-frog
Gbasonde - Green tree frog
Kondui - Small fish found in mangrove swamps
Kenji - Fresh water flying fish
Kali - Snake
Tupui - Puff-adder
Kenj gui - Tree snake, thin with brown stripes
Nguli - Black snake
Ndambe - Crocodile
Koli - Red-headed lizard
Kogo-njei - Slow worm; head at each end, tail same shape as head
Ndovoi - Toad
Kpegbi - Croaking frog
Banasowe - Fleshy coloured climbing frog
Hakui - Turtle
Bonge - Bonga
Tumui - Shark

Birds

Kokogbie - Grey eagle
Sekpendei - Grey hawk
Yibe - Vulture
Gomi - Black & white crow
Kpovovui - Green pigeon
Gowai - Clock-bird
Kpiangbie - Hornbill
Mbakui - Weaver bird
Sekuli - Small speckled hawk chases small birds/ chickens
Sasaloi - Red-legged partridge. Feeds more at night

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

Powi	- Pigeon	Hokei	- Guinea fowl
Bomukuli	- Dove	Kokoye	- Bush fowl
Fabui	- Parrot	Fokuloi	- Small brown partridge. Feeds on ground
Kakiboi	- King fisher		
Tɛchini	- Cock		
Dowui	- Duck		
Bogbotoi	- Turkey	Gule	- Toucon-two headed bird
Yonemgbe	- Egret; body white, beak yellow	Nduli	- Brown bird with white breast and mournful cry
Kowe	- Large black and white eagle	Tei	- Fowl
Geli	- Brown fish hawk	Tɛɛtoi	- Chicken
		Mbui	- Owl
Kingi	- Grey wading bird		

Palms

Tokpoi	- Palm tree	Nduvui	- Raffia, vinifera
Semi	- Bamboo		
Keni	- Bamboo	Keli	- Sharp-leafed palm
Kaavui	- Rattan		
Puloli	- Coconut palm	Mbalui	- Cane
Kewe	- Fan palm	Ngavui	- Inferior date palm

Products of Palm

Towui	- Oil palm nut	Kɛjui	- Fruit of raffia
Kaje	- Piassava		
Tokpo nyinii	- Flower of oil palm	Koni	- Raffia cane
		Dangule	- Palm kernel oil
Tokpo loi	- Palm wine		
Kale	- Kernel	Ngulo gboi	- Palm oil

Plants/Flowers, etc

Taavukei	- Snuff	Tawe	- Tobacco
Kamaamei	- A plant with coarse leaves used for sand paper	Kpule	- A large gourd
		Njowe	- A large poisonous bean
Nengbe	- A water lily with round leaves	Mbolui	- A creeper used to make a loop to climb palm trees
Foni	- A plant used for making baskets (giant elephant grass)	Fande wui	- Cotton plant
		Dawoi	- Wild palm
		Fali	- Mushroom/ fungus

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

Animals

Huei - Animal
Nika hei - Bull
Mbale - Sheep
Ndonde - Pig
Kɔwi - Jackal
Sugbui - Hyena
Njao - Lion
Kaikuli - A ground squirrel
Ndandakuli - Mongoose
Pewi - Bush cat; long tail
Gɔnɛ - Cat
Tɛwɛi - Bush goat
Hagbei - Weasel
Nyini - Rat
Lendoi - Mouse
Bovi - Wood squirrel
Gulei - Baboon
Towe - Big black monkey with long tail
Nyɔmui - Gorrila
Ndɔpe - Antelope/deer
Nike - Cow
Njii - Goat
Kɔɔli - Leopard
Nguanhi - Small animal like guinea pig
Pekuli - Small animal; sharp nose and mouth set underneath
Kuwuli - Big spotted bush cat. Hair rather than fur
Nyangbe - Bush cat; soft fur, spotted
Kanyi - Ant-eater
Tewui - Bush cow
Ngile - Dog
Kiwuli - Ground pig
Sewuli - Guinea pig
Dadei - Bat/small
Taje - Bat/medium
Hele - Elephant

Insects

Fuhani - Insects in general
Foi - Big biting fly
Komi - Bee
Siloi - Spider
Kekemi - Scorpion
Kowongaa - Driving ants
Pɛtui - Grasphopper
Kpakpadei - Dragon fly
Kongowetui - Grey stripped locust not hurtful
Kpekpeli - Caterpillar
Kpindiyiei - Cicada
Lelemi - Prayingmantis
Divɔvoi - Fly that bores holes in trees and bites
Ndi - Fly
Jokondi - Tarantala
Kpɔwivɔfoi - Beetle that rolls a ball of dung
Ndɔndɔi - Millipede
Kalɔndɔi - Centipede
Pundi - Mosquito
Hingboi - wasp
Ngili - White ants
Koli - Snail
Pupui - Small ants
Kimbui - A big edible cricket
Kondui - Locust - destructive kind
Kpɛkpɛi - Cockroach
Jike - Jigger
Fuvui - Borer
Fɔfɔi - Moth
Gbawe - Big white grub in oil palm

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

Spiritual Terms

Ngewɔ	- God	Ndɔbleisia	- Inhabitants of the lower world
Ngelegohun	- Heaven		
Ngelemahun	- Land of living	Ngafe	- Spirit; abstract or material
Ndɔɔ	- Lower world		
Haiwai	- Devil, spirit		

Natural Features

Kpeteihun	- Swamp with running water	Tumbeke	- Stars
		Batihun	- Swamp
Fofowaihun	- Large clearing in the bush	Fofoi	- Clearing
		Ngiyei	- Hill
		Pope	- Pond
Popawai	- Large lake	Kɔ	- East
Kpundɔhun	- West	Bulɔmi	- Flat ground
Kpolilei	- River mouth, entrance in the mangrooves	Bulihun	- Ground raised above water
		Kpoli	- River

Furniture/Utensils

Tibi	- Table	Pului	- Pillow
Kpukoi	- Bed	Kaŋa	- Box
Tɛnti	- Mosquito net	Ndivali	- Broom/fly brush
Kpangbe	- Broom		
Fei	- Pot	Mite	- Spoon
Fɔki	- Fork	Mbowe	- Knife
Sani	- Bottle	Glasi	- Glass
Bole	- Cup	Pleti	- Plate
Kalui	- Basin	Mɛmɛ	- Mirror
Fajii	- Bucket	Klɔki	- Clock
Wasi	- Watch	Kpɛgbe	- Wooden comb used by women
Komui	- English comb		
Sambe	- Broad open basket	Konde	- Mortar
		Gitii	- Pestle
Ngale	- Mat	Mbogbe	- Cutlass
Kɔgbe	- Hammer	Hipoi	- Heavy hammer
Kpatoi	- Axe	Gbanyi	- Pincers
Bume	- Gimlet	Kali	- Hoe
Sowi	- Saw	Gɔli	- Scissors
Lɔndimi	- Nail	Ndoli	- Hook
Hewui	- Seat		

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

Metals

Kani gbɔli	- Gold	Tongoi	- Brass
Kani gɔli	- Silver	Kɔli	- Iron
Tongoboli	- Copper	Sumbui	- Lead

Colours

Kole	- White	Tɛli	- Black
Bulu	- Blue	Tɛlingɔ	- It is black
Ngahunpui	- Assorted/ variegated	Kpou	- Red/brown
		Punɛn	- Green

Other Useful Words

Sɛwɛsɛwɛ	- Very clean	ŋdɛmbi	- Delay
Kpakpawui	- Ladder	Ndɔgboi	- Bush
Juumbui	- Sin	Kaye(gaye)	- Confession
Juumbumei	- Sinner	Nanyei	- Sound
Kpongbo	- Pound/grind/ iron	Mbilii	- Drum
		Tavei	- Pipe
Yemoi	- Mother-in-law	Kɔti	- Stone
Mbilei/ Mblei	- Father-in-law	Kawo	- Peel
		Pawei	- Payment/pay/ noun
Kpongbo	- Pound/grind/ iron		

Hosted for free on livelingua.com

REFERENCES

1. Sierra Leone History from AD 1000 to Present Day (1984).

   Salamu M. Koroma
   BA Hons (History) Dip Ed
   FBC, USL

   (Pamphlet)

2. A Grammar Of The Mende Language.

   Ethel G. Aginsky
   Located in Sierra Leone Studies
   June 1955

   (Pamphlet)

3. A Mende Grammar With Towes

   Rev. S. Brown
   Bo Protectorate Literature
   Bureau 1963

   (Pamphlet)

Hosted for free on livelingua.com