Documentation and instrumentation of Togolese languages

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The linguistic situation of African countries is convoluted. It usually features coexistence between one foreign language (that of the former colonizer) and national African languages. Under such circumstances of languages in mutual contact, local languages are restricted to a rather subordinate usage in contrast to colonizers' languages. The situation has remained unchanged despite the many debates held in African States on the contribution of national languages to development. Not only, are these languages not yet integrated in a process of endogenous, sustainable and consistent development of the countries where they are used, but above all they belong to the category of endangered languages.

Looking at such a gloomy picture and taking into account the fact that current language policies in Africa preferentially value languages of former colonizers, one can feel nothing but concern for the future of African languages in general, and that of the forty languages spoken in Togo in particular. Obviously, because most of these languages are not yet properly studied and documented, they unquestionably form part of the "90% of world languages that could become extinct by the end of the 21st century" if no rescue action is taken.

The project, documentation and utilization of Togolese languages seeks to alleviate the tongue deficiency by contributing to revitalization of Togolese languages through linguistic, ethno-linguistic and anthropological research, as well as computerized data processing, exploitation and dissemination of results.

Achieving these objectives requires several steps, the first one being the development of a linguistic map of Togo, the content of which content we will present. The document is structured around four items, namely:

- the conceptual framework;
- the methodological framework;
- the difficulties encountered;
- the research results.

A conclusion provided as an evaluation of the first stage, will outline the next step.