

The position of the Pre-language: Gur or Kru?

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The Pre is spoken in the north of Côte d'Ivoire by less than one thousand people. It is surrounded by Mande and Gur languages. Unfortunately, the Pre is almost a dead language and has remained undescribed and unclassified. Its name became known first in the recent years through one unpublished work of Denis Creissels and N'Guessam Kouadio. The Pre-Language has been for the first time mentioned in a publication in Williamson and Blench (2000: 18). They tried to classify the Pre as a part of the West Volta-Congo branch of the Niger-Congo family. However, they avoided giving exact information about its position within this group.

According to what is known, it is by all means not a Mande language, even if the cultural influence of the Koro on the Pre is strong. It misses also clues for a closer genetic relationship to other major languages, the Baule (Kwa). However, it is not excluded in a way that the Pre could be an old Kru or Gur island.

My communication will consider the exact position of the Pre. From the different possibilities of affiliation between this language and those previously mentioned, I will try to propose a better classification for the Pre. Emphasis will be put not only on lexical and phonological similarities, but also on morphological and syntactic one.