

THE SEMANTIC PROPERTIES OF SEPARATION VERBS IN GURENE

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Abstract

The paper discusses the semantic properties of separation verbs in Gurene. The language uses a rich set of verbs to describe different kinds of separation events with fine-grained semantics. The separation verbs are classified into CUT and BREAK (C&B events henceforth), and opening or detachment verbs. The C&B verbs describe the severance or the destruction of an object while the opening or detachment verbs describe the separation of a distinguishable part of an object from another. In this paper, I discuss in detail the semantics of the separation verbs in Gurene to show that verb meaning in the language is highly specific and precise. The paper further explores the syntax of the verbs in light of the Guerssel et al. (1985) causative-inchoative hypothesis in their study of separation verbs in four languages (*Berber, English, Hocak & Warlpiri*) that BREAK verbs but not CUT verbs participate in causative-inchoative alternation. The Gurene data show that CUT verbs as well as both BREAK and opening verbs do participate in the causative-inchoative alternation. The discussion is pursued from a descriptive and typological perspective. The data is largely based on elicitations with six native-speaker consultants using the C&B video stimuli designed by Bohnemeyer et al. (2001) and Majid et al. (2007).

Key words: separation events, CUT and BREAK, opening or detachment events, Gurene, verb semantics, typology

1. Introduction

The paper investigates verb semantics in a particular semantic domain in Gurene: separation verbs. Separation verbs or verbs of separation as used in this paper designate a class of verbs that describe both cutting and breaking events, and opening or detachment events (cf. Majid et al. 2007a:134, 2008:236-237; van Staden 2007:298). The verbs are classified into CUT and BREAK verbs, henceforth, C&B verbs¹, (for cutting and breaking), and opening or detachment verbs in Gurene. The C&B verbs describe the minimal or maximum severance or material destruction of an object with or without an instrument and may also require the presence or absence of a causing agent. The result of the severance or destruction in cutting or breaking events is usually not reversible. The opening or detachment verbs, however, such as *yo'e* 'open' do not result in any destruction of the object. They describe the separation of one distinguishable part of an object from another which is usually reversible. The focus of this paper, therefore, includes the C&B verbs and the verbs for opening.

In a recent special issue of the journal, *Cognitive Linguistics* appeared a number of articles which explored the linguistic encoding of cutting and breaking events in about 30 languages in 16 different language families from a cross-linguistic perspective. The study adopted a common psycholinguistic methodology to collect the data using video clips depicting different scenes of cutting and breaking events caused by an agent or occurring spontaneously (cf. Majid et al. 2007a, 2007b, 2008). This volume included a few African languages from the Niger-Congo family. Notable among them are Ameka and Essegbey (2007) on Ewe, Ameka (2007) on Likpe, Lüpke (2007) on Jalonke. In all

¹ The C&B video elicitation tool can be found at www.fieldmanuals.mpi.nl/cut and break

these languages, the authors demonstrate that cutting and breaking events constitute an important semantic domain worthy of attention for cross-linguistic investigation. Another work which was not part of this typology is Schaefer and Egbokhare (2012) discussion of Emai separation verbs and telicity. They observed that Emai separation verbs encode cutting and breaking events to indicate the different degrees of separation with respect to the destruction of the object such as slicing, tearing, snapping or smashing.

Although some significant findings have been made in these studies on the phenomenon in African languages to point out some parallels and divergence in the individual languages, the Gurene data further presents some interesting insights on the phenomenon. In particular, the rich semantics of the separation verbs requires the use of very specific verbs to describe with precision different types of separation events. The paper, therefore, aims to contribute to the discussion and, thereby deepen our understanding on the semantic domain of separation verbs in Gurene.

The paper provides a detailed semantic account of the separation verbs in Gurene and also discusses the syntactic properties of the verbs focusing on the claim by Guerssel's et al. (1985:48) that BREAK verbs participate in causative/inchoative alternation while CUT verbs do not in their sample of four languages. An example of the causative/inchoative construction in English is, *Tom broke the cup vs. the cup broke*. It is shown with data from Gurene that the CUT verbs and the BREAK verbs as well as the opening verbs can participate in the causative-inchoative alternation.

2. Sketch of the relevant grammatical features of Gurene

Gurene belongs to the Oti-Volta subgroup of Mabia (Gur) of the Niger-Congo family in Africa. It is an under described Mabia (Gur, Niger-Congo) language spoken in Northern Ghana. Some of the most salient grammatical features of Gurene also prevalent in other Gur languages include; noun class and concord systems, vowel harmony, tone, verb morphology, serial verb constructions, and SVO structure (cf. Nsoh 1997, 2002, Dakubu 2005, Atintono 2011, 2013, 2015; in preparation). The noun classes are marked by suffixes triggering concord between a noun head and its modifiers within the noun phrase.

Gurene like other Gur and African languages also has a cross-height vowel harmony system which accounts for the division of vowels based on the feature, Advanced Tongue Root (ATR): +ATR [i e u o] and -ATR [ɪ ɛ ʊ ɔ a] sets. For example, in Gurene, the words *pik* [pik] 'come upon' and *pikɛ* [pikɛ] 'to unshell nut' differ in terms of the ATR value of the vowels in the words. Thus, if the root vowel in the first syllable of a word belongs to one set then the suffix vowel must also belong to the same set as shown in some of the verbs discussed in the paper. The distribution of vowels in a word, therefore, is strictly conditioned by the vowel harmony (Atintono 2004, 2011).

The language is a tone language with two level tones. These are high and low tones marked with the acute accent (´) and the grave accent (`). In this paper, tone is not marked as it does not have any implications for the meanings of the verbs discussed in this paper.

The verb morphology manifests in verbal suffixes to express both derivational and inflectional functions. One aspect of the verb morphology that is relevant to follow the analysis in this paper is the use of the suffixes to express verbal number in terms of singular or plural marking of events or participants (cf. Atintono in preparation). For example, a number of the C&B or opening verbs has one of these suffixes -ge/ε, -ke/ε, -ne/ε as in the verbs *kurege* 'cut', *yirege* 'uncoil or untwist rope' *vuke* 'open, of objects', *vune* 'pierce' to express the single performance of the event and also involve a single

participant. The plural marking of the event performance or participants is generally marked by the suffix *-se/ε* as in the verbs *belese* (sg. *bεlege*) ‘cut a piece more than once’, *vumese* (sg. *vuηe*) ‘pierce more than once’ *peese* ‘peel, more than once’, and *ku’use* ‘cut, more than once’. However, there are some irregularities or deviations in the verbal number marking system as some of the singular suffixes ending with *-ge/ε* will require the dropping of the suffix to express the plural instead of using *-se/ε*. An example is *ηworege* ‘sg. break’, *ηwore* ‘pl. break’. Yet there are other similar separation forms such as *larege* ‘cut open, along an axis’ with the plural form being *larum*, *nyerege* ‘sg. split into two’ and *nyerum* ‘pl. split more than once.’

Further, some of the singular forms of the verbs have lost their suffixes. However, it is predictable to identify the singular forms through testing of their plural derivational forms. For example, the verb *ga’ε* ‘open, unlock’ has the plural form as *ga’ase* while *yo’e* plural form is *yo’ose* ‘open, more than once’. The verbs discussed in this paper show up either in the singular or plural depending on the form which is frequently used to describe the C&B events or the opening events. The complexity of the verb morphology and number marking cannot be exhaustively discussed here but this sketch is enough to follow the discussions in the paper. As much as possible, I try to point out the singular or plural forms in the tables with the list of verbs and in the discussion of the individual verbs.

Serial verb construction is also an important grammatical feature in Gurene. Verb serialization is a phenomenon in which a sequence of verbs or verb phrases occurs in a clause to express a single event, which also share the same subject and may or may not share the same object (cf. Atintono 2005:57). As we shall see later in the paper, some of the C&B verb expressions involve serial verb constructions to express result and state. Gurene has the basic subject verb order (SVO) constituent order.

3. Method and data

The study employed the MPI typological and experimental methodology using the C&B video stimuli entitled CUT and BREAK clips designed by Bohnnemeyer et al. (2001) and Majid et al. (2007) to elicit the data from six native-speaker consultants. It contains 61 short clips. Thus, the data collected is largely based on the elicitation of responses from the six native-speaker consultants using these video clips. The video clips depict one or two actors cutting or breaking various objects (sticks, carrots, pieces of cloth or string, etc.) using various instruments (a knife, a hammer, an axe, their hands, etc.), or situations in which various kinds of objects break spontaneously. The clips are used to elicit descriptions of actors’ actions and the state changes that the objects undergo. In this study, each consultant was first asked to observe and describe the video clips by providing an appropriate expression to describe the scene. I interviewed the consultants further to find out why a particular CUT or BREAK verb was preferred over another for the description of the different cutting or breaking events. The consultants during the elicitation sessions also offered other verbs for describing different cutting and breaking events which were culturally specific that they did not observe in the video clips but are very relevant for the study. Some of these are included in the analysis.

One other source of data involves the construction of some sentences involving cutting and breaking events based on my own native speaker intuition which were cross checked with and discussed with the consultants. The resulting dataset contained more than forty separation verb tokens in Gurene. Supplementary data were also collected from the Gurene-English dictionary corpus (Dakubu et al. 2007).

4. The semantics of separation verbs in Gurene

The separation verbs in Gurene as noted in the introduction refer to separation in the material integrity of objects and opening or detachment events (cf. Hale and Keyser 1987 cited in Bohnemeyer 2007:157; van Staden 2007:298). As I pointed out in the introduction, the verbs are divided into C&B, and opening or detachment verbs. In this section, I shall discuss the semantic properties of the three types of verbs in this order: CUT, BREAK and opening or detachment verbs.

4.1 CUT verbs

The meaning of the CUT verbs in Gurene is determined by a number of semantic and syntactic factors. First, the most important semantic factor is that the meaning of the verbs inherently involves the use of a sharp or piercing instrument such as a blade, knife, dagger, scissors, machete, axe, spear, metal spike or needle to perform a cutting event. Thus, if the instrument used to bring about a change of state is specified in the semantics of the verb, then it is a CUT verb, not a BREAK verb. The instrument may be left out in the cutting event expression but the properties of a sharp instrument will still be part of the verb meaning. This feature significantly differentiates the CUT verbs from BREAK verbs. The latter usually requires the use of a blunt but not a sharp instrument. A second factor is that the use of the verbs often requires an agent to perform the cutting event. As a result the verbs often occur in transitive constructions but can also occur in intransitive construction that do not have passive or middle construction reading. Example (1) is a transitive construction with an agent using an instrument to perform the cutting. Notice that (2a) is not acceptable because of the construction type although it is intransitive it is a middle construction. Gurene does not permit the middle construction. However, (2b) is an intransitive construction and it is acceptable because of the presence of the affirmative particle *mε* in the final clause position which conforms to the syntax. In this context, the construction is understood to have been caused by an unexpressed agent in an intransitive clause.

- (1) A *dike* *la* *su'a* *ɣmaε* *nεɣɔ* *la*
 3SG take FOC knife cut meat DEF
 ‘He took a knife and cut the meat.’

- (2) a. **Nεɣɔ* *la* *ɣmaε*
 Meat DEF cut
 ‘The meat is cuts.’
 b. *Nεɣɔ* *la* *ɣmaε* *mε*
 Meat DEF cut AFF
 ‘The meat is cut.’

A third factor is the manner of the separation of the cutting event. This includes whether or not it involves the application of force with a large instrument, stabbing with a sharp pointed instrument, making a fine or neat cut with a sharp instrument such as a knife. A fourth factor is that the result state encoded in CUT verbs but not BREAK verbs is that the destruction of the object often does not scatter the object over a place.

In Gurene, there are different types of verbs that are used to describe very specific different types of cutting events based on the agent, type of sharp instrument used, the

type and nature of the object, the manner, and the locus of cutting. Table 1 and Table 2 present the summaries of the list of CUT verbs with their meanings followed by the discussion of their semantics.

Table 1: Summary of Gurenɛ CUT verbs

Verb	Meaning	Instrument	Object (Examples)	Manner	Result state
1. <i>ɲmaɛ</i> (pl. <i>ɲma</i>)	cut, generic	knife, blade, sharp instrument, scissors	meat, fruits, vegetables, clothing	no application of force and clean cut produced	partial or complete severance
2. <i>sɛ'</i>	cut, with force	machete, axe, any large sharp instrument	wood, bones, trees,	application of force and no clean cut produced	maximal destruction involving partial or complete severance
3. <i>kagɛ</i>	cut or chop	axe, machete	trees, wood	application of force and no clean cut produced	maximal destruction involving partial or complete severance
4. <i>kuregɛ</i> (pl. <i>kuresɛ</i>)	cut	axe, machete	wood, branches, poles, iron rods	application of force	complete severance
5. <i>ku'e</i> (pl. <i>ku'usɛ</i>)	cut	knife, blade, scissors	yarns, sticks, ropes, twines	minimal force applied	complete severance
6. <i>sɛ</i>	cut, groom	scissors, hair cutting clipper	hair	grooming	complete severance, irreversible
7. <i>sie</i>	shave, prune	blade, machete	hair, tree branches	grooming or pruning	complete severance, irreversible
8. <i>seele</i>	cut, groom	blade, nail cutter	finger and toe nails	precision and carefulness, grooming	complete severance, irreversible
9. <i>sere</i> (sg. <i>serege</i>)	cut, shred, slice	knife, blade	vegetables e.g cabbage, okra; tubers	precision and neat cutting	complete severance
10. <i>sɔ̃</i>	saw	saw	wood	application of force	partial or complete severance

Table 2: Summary of Gureɛ CUT verbs contd.

Verb	Meaning	Instrument	Object (Examples)	Manner	Result state
11. <i>larege</i> (pl. <i>larum</i>)	cut open	knife, blade, sharp instrument, scissors	hollowed or pod-like objects e.g gourd, pumpkins; dressed whole meat e.g chicken	no application of force, clean cut produced	partial severance
12. <i>belege</i> (pl. <i>belese</i>)	cut	knife, blade	meat, tyre, elastic	cutting into pieces	minimal destruction complete severance
13. <i>zesege</i> (pl. <i>zese</i>) <i>/kesege</i> (pl. <i>kesese</i>)	cut	axe, machete, chisel	flexible objects e.g, grass, ropes, stalks	application of force and no clean cut produced	maximal destruction involving complete severance
14. <i>siibe/kiibe</i>	cut open	knife, sharp instrument	gourd, calabash fruit, fresh wall	carefulness and precision	complete severance
15. <i>korege</i> (pl. <i>korum</i>)	cut, slit, slaughter	knife, blade	body of animates e.g, humans, animals	slashing	complete severance
16. <i>wesege</i> (pl. <i>wese</i>)	cut, make a nick	knife, blade	body of animates e.g, humans, animals	cut lightly	minimal separation
17. <i>peese</i> (sg. <i>pesege</i>)	peel, carve	knife, axe	tubers, wood	apply minimal force	complete severance, irreversible
18. <i>lu</i>	pierce, bore	knife, dagger, spear, nail, syringe, needle	objects and animates	stabbing	partial severance, irreversible
19. <i>vuje</i> (pl. <i>vumese</i>)	cut, bore	knife, dagger, spear, nail, syringe, needle	walls, pots, plates,	minimal force, piercing	partial severance, irreversible

4.1.1 *ɣmaɛ* (pl. *ɣma*) ‘cut, with knife or blade’

The verb *ɣmaɛ* ‘cut’ describes cutting events that involve the use of a sharp or bladed instrument for the singular performance of the cutting event. The objects that can be described with *ɣmaɛ* include meat, vegetables, fruits, clothing, plants etc. The prototypical instrument used to effect *ɣmaɛ* events is the knife. The verb *ɣmaɛ* is used to describe both complete and incomplete severance. It is also used to express the meaning that a precise cut is produced. For example, in clip 12 where a knife is used to cut a piece of cloth into two parts it is described with *ɣmaɛ* ‘cut’ as in example (3) while in clip 14 where a knife is used to make a cut on the melon without complete severance, the expression in (4) is used.

- (3) A *dike* *la* *su’a* *ɣmaɛ* *fuo*
 ‘3SG take FOC knife cut cloth
 ‘He took a knife and cut the cloth.’ (clip 12)

- (4) A *dike* *la* *su’a* *ɣmaɛ* *mɛlɔm*
 3SG take FOC knife cut melon
 ‘He took a knife and cut the melon.’ (clip 14)

Similarly in clip 49 in which a knife is used to cut off a rope the consultants described it as illustrated here.

- (5) A *ɣmaɛ* *mi’a* *la*
 3SG cut rope DEF
 ‘He cut off the rope.’ (clip 49)

The plural form of the verb *ɣma* is used by speakers to describe a cutting event that may be performed more than once on one entity or to many entities (see Atintono 2004:61, Atintono forthcoming) for details on verb plurality in Gurenɛ. For example, in clip 28 where a lady used a knife to cut a fresh fish in two separate actions to divide it into three parts the expression in (6) is used to depict the multiple cutting. In this context, the verb *ɣmaɛ* would not have been grammatical and acceptable since the action is performed more than once. The two verb forms describe cutting events but *ɣmaɛ* is used for singular events while *ɣma* applies to plural events.

- (6) *Pɔka* *la* *dike* *la* *su’a* *ɣma/*ɣmaɛ* *zifo* *la*
 woman DEF take FOC knife cut fish DEF
 ‘The woman took a knife and cut the fish.’ (clip 28)

The consultants also explained that in harvesting guinea corn where a knife is usually used to cut off the tassel leaving the stalk the verb phrase, *ɣma si* literally ‘cut millet’ is appropriate because it is performed to several entities.

The manner in which the cutting is carried out is of significance for the use of *ɣmaɛ/ɣma* separation events. It encodes the manner of cutting and the material. For instance, the consultants explained that *ɣmaɛ* is used when the cutting does not involve the application of force such as raising the hands high e.g., over the shoulders to effect the cut. It should be performed gently on the object without exerting force. Further, the nature of the object must not be very hard or tough. Thus, objects such as *fuo* ‘cloth’, *karɔti* ‘carrot’, *nɛnɔ* ‘meat’, are not very tough or hard and therefore, can attract the use of *ɣmaɛ*. If a person accidentally cuts himself or herself with a knife as occurred in clip 18 where a man cutting an orange also cut his finger, the verb *ɣmaɛ* is used because of the soft nature of the skin or flesh. Ameka and Essegbey (2007:244) point out that *tso* ‘cut’ in Ewe is used when it is obvious that the cut could only have been effected with a

sharp instrument. This is the case with the verb *ɣmaɛ* in Gurenɛ. The result state of *ɣmaɛ* ‘cut’ events usually leads to destruction which is irreversible. The verb can occur in transitive construction as in (7) but in the intransitive it is not acceptable without the final clause affirmative marker *mɛ* as shown in (8).

- (7) *Pɔka la ɣmaɛ zifo la*
 woman DEF cut fish DEF
 ‘The woman cut the fish.’
- (8) a. *zifo la ɣmaɛ mɛ*
 zish DEF cat AFF
 ‘The fish is cut.’
- b. **zifo la ɣmaɛ...*
 fish DEF cut
 ‘The fish cut.’

4.1.2 *sɛ’* ‘cut, with force or with a large sharp instrument’

The verb *sɛ’* describes cutting events that involve the use of heavy or large cutting sharp instruments such as a machete or an axe. The use of the verb also requires the application of force to effect the cut. The meaning of *sɛ’* also incorporates the manner of the cutting i.e the application of force. Thus, the up and down swinging of the instrument to effect the cutting is crucial for its interpretation. For example, the verb *sɛ’* was used to describe clips 3 and 51 in the video task in which a man used a machete to cut a branch of a tree and split a melon as shown below.

- (9) *Budaa la dike la sukɔbegɔ sɛ’ wile la wike*
 Man DEF take FOC machete cut branch DEF separate
 ‘The man took a machete and cut off the branch and separated.’ (clip 3)
- (10) *Budaa la dike la sukɔbegɔ sɛ’ mɛlɔm la wɛkɛ*
 Man DEF take FOC machete cut melon DEF split
 ‘The man took a machete and cut the melon to split it.’ (clip 51)

The used the expression in (11) to describe the event of using a knife to cut a piece of cloth in cutting of objects that are generally considered to be hard, strong and not flexible such as wood, bones and millet stalks are described with the use of *sɛ’*. The verb *sɛ’* can be used regardless of the size and nature of the object. The main factor determining the use of the verb *sɛ’* is the manner of the cutting. For example, consultants clip 4. This is because of the application of force and the use of a sharp instrument.

- (11) *Budaa la dike la su’a sɛ’ fuo la wike*
 man DEF take FOC knife cut cloth DEF separate
 ‘The man took a knife and cut the cloth to separate it.’ (clip 4)

Usually when a knife is used to effect a cut *ɣmaɛ* is considered to be appropriate as we have noted above but because the man raises his hand in an up and down movement to perform the cutting with force the preference is for *sɛ’*. In clip 6 where a man uses a cutlass to cut carrots into pieces with force, the action is described as *sɛ’* as indicated in the example below.

- (12) *Budaa la dike la su'a se karoti la*
 Man DEF take FOC knife cut carrot DEF
 'The man took a knife to cut the carrot.' (clip 6)

When an axe is used to cut a rope stretched taut between two tables it is also described with the verb *se'* (clip 13). Cutting events that involve *se'* produce rough or messy separation compared to *ɲmaɛ/ɲma* which produces a clean cut. It must be noted, however, that when an axe or machete is used to fell a tree the verb used is *kage* literally 'chop' as described in the next section.

For scenes in the elicitation task where a blunt instrument like a hammer is used in a swinging manner to cut off a cloth tied across two tables, the consultants rejected the use of *se'*. Instead, they used the verb *zã* literally 'hit' as in example (13) below explaining that the instrument is not sharp but blunt.

- (13) *A dike la hama zã fuo*
 3SG take FOC hammar hit cloth
 'He took a hammer and hit the cloth.' (clip 23)

4.1.3 *kage* 'cut or chop, of trees or wood'

The meaning of the verb *kage* is similar to *se'* discussed in the preceding section for it also involves the use of a large cutting instrument such as a machete or an axe to cut a tree or wood. Its use is restricted in this context. The crucial meaning component of the verb is that it described the manner of cutting an object by chopping it bit by bit along the circumference. This example was offered by my consultants.

- (14) *Budaa la kage tia la lube*
 man DEF cut tree DEF fall.down
 'The man cut (chop) the tree down i.e the man fell the tree down.'

4.1.4 *kurege* (pl. *kuresɛ*) 'cut, of stretched hard and big objects'

Cutting events that involve very hard, stretched, and large objects such as wood, poles and iron rods are described with *kurege*. The plural form of the verb is *kuresɛ*. The verb describes complete severance of an object. The instruments used to effect this type of cutting events are machete and axe. The manner of cutting requires the application of force in cutting the object in a chopping manner. This verb is similar to *ku'ɛ* 'cut, of hard or flexible linear small objects' but varies with slight shade of meaning difference with respect to the size of the objects. For while *kurege* is usually used to describe the cutting large objects that are hard or rigid *ku'ɛ* is used to describe the cutting of small objects that are flexible or hard such as ropes and sticks. The example below serves to illustrate the use of *kurege*. The plural form of the verb is *ku'usɛ* is used to refer to the cutting of more than once of the same object or different objects.

- (15) *Dɔ-wɛgera la kurege dɔɔ la*
 wood-splitter DEF cut wood DEF
 'The wood splitter (a person specialized in cutting wood) has cut the wood.'

4.1.5 *ku'ε* 'cut, of rigid or hard and small objects'

This verb *ku'ε* is similar to *kurege* but with slight shade of difference in meaning in terms of the objects that they are used to describe. The former is applied to the description of cutting events that involve small hard or flexible objects such as ropes, thread/yarn, sticks, stalks, pencils but the latter is used to describe large hard objects. The result state of the separation involving *ku'ε* is complete severance. The instruments used to effect this type of cutting events are blades, scissors, and knives. Consultants used *ku'ε* to describe clips 24 and 49 in the video elicitation task. Both tasks involved the cutting of a rope into two with a pair of scissors and a knife respectively. In clip 20 in which a twig is cut off with a knife *ku'ε* was also applied. The verb has a plural form which is *ku'use* to refer to cutting an object into pieces or doing so to many objects.

- (16) A *dike* *la* *su'a* *ku'ε/kurege* *mi'a* *la*
 s/he take FOC knife cut rope DEF

'S/he took a knife and cut the rope.' (clips 24 and 49)

Using *ku'ε* to describe a karate-chop to sever a carrot and a piece of cloth in clips 32 and 34 in the elicitation task was rejected. Consultants were of the view that those scenarios were culturally unfamiliar (cf. Lükpe 2007) on Jalonke speakers. Besides even if a knife was used to effect the cutting of the carrot *ɲmaε* 'cut' would be used because of the fleshy nature of the carrot.

4.1.6 *sε* 'cut or crop hair with scissors, cut plants or moo grass'

The verb *sε* describes the use of a pair of scissors to cut or groom African type of hair or the use of a sickle to cut plants e.g, grass, rice on the fields. In the C&B task, consultants rejected the use of *sε* with a pair of scissors to cut off part of the long hair of a white person (clip 27). They pointed out that because the hair is long and you will have to hold one part at a time and cut, the expression *ku'use zometo* 'cut hair, many times' is preferred instead. The use of a pair of scissors to cut off a rope in the stimuli task elicited the example below. Recall that the semantics of *ku'ε* 'cut, of small linear hard and flexible objects' discussed above requires the use of a scissors.

- (17) *Nεra* *la* *dike* *la* *migesega* *ku'ε* *mi'a*
 person DEF take FOC scissors cut rope

'The person took a scissors and cut the rope.' (clip 24)

The consultants pointed out that the other instances in which one can use *sε* to describe include the traditional way of harvesting rice on the fields or cutting thatch for roofing where the instrument used is either a knife or a sickle (a curved sharp instrument). In this regard the expressions used are *sε mui* literally 'cut rice' and *sε muɔ* 'cut grass.'

4.1.7 *sie* 'shave hair, prune trees'

This verb *sie* came up during the discussion because of the preceding verb *sε* 'cut hair or grass'. It is used mainly to refer to using a razor to make a clean shave of human hair on the head or body. It is a common practice in Gurene culture for people to shave their hair clean after the death of a parent, spouse, close relative or for any other ritual or cultural purposes. Some of the expressions used are *sie zuo* literally 'shave head' and *sie teεpa* 'shave beard'. Example (18) below is used in the context of the shaving of the hair of a widow after the performance of the funeral of her husband.

- (18) *Budaa la sie la pokuure la zuo*
 Man DEF shave FOC widow DEF head
 ‘The man shaved the widow’s hair.’

When a tree is also completely pruned the expression *sie tia* literally ‘shave tree’ is also used to imply that the branches are completely cut off from the tree. It is not used to describe the cutting of plants, and grass rather the verb *sɛ* will be used.

4.1.8 *seele* ‘cut, of finger or toe nails’

The cutting of finger or toe nails with a razor or any bladed instrument is described with the phrase *seele nu-ɛɛsi* ‘cut finger nails’. Also using a nail cutter to cut nails will be described with *seele*. The manner of cutting involves precision and carefulness with the intention to groom. The objects that can occur as complements of *seele* are very restricted to only nails.

- (19) *A dike la bileete seele bia la nu-ɛɛsi*
 s/he take FOC blade cut child DEF finger-nails
 ‘S/he took a blade to cut the child’s finger nails.’

The expression *seele tuba* ‘cut ears’ is used metaphorically to refer to the punishment meted out to thieves in times past by slashing their ears with a blade when caught.

4.1.9 *sere* (sg. *serege*) ‘cut or shred, of vegetables’

The verb *sere* ‘cut or shred’ is the plural form of *serege* ‘cut, shred’. The plural form is commonly used rather than the singular. It is used to describe the manner of cutting up or slicing vegetables such as okra, pumpkins, cabbage into smaller and neat pieces to prepare soup. The verb encodes the manner of cutting which involves slicing vegetables or tubers such as yam or potatoes for cooking or frying. The instrument used is a knife or bladed instrument. It is only used to describe the cutting of fresh vegetables and tubers. The cutting of bread into slices is described with *ɲmaɛ* ‘cut’ discussed earlier above. For clip 10 in the video stimuli where a knife is used to slice a carrot in a crosswise manner it was described with *sere* as shown in the example below.

- (20) *A dike la su’a sere karɔti*
 3SG take FOC knife shred carrot
 ‘He took a knife to shred the carrot.’ (clip 10)

This kind of cutting also requires precision and carefulness to ensure that the pieces cut are uniform and neat. The manner of cutting can be done along the circumference of the object or in a crosswise manner.

4.1.10 *sɔ̃* ‘cut, of sawing’

Cutting events that involve the use of a rough edged instrument to cut an entity into sections in several sawing strokes requires the use of the verb *sɔ̃*. A typical instrument used for this type of cutting is a rough edged knife or a saw for cutting wood as used by carpenters. An example in the stimuli data is clip 15 in which a saw is used to cut a stick. The consultants described it using this example.

- (21) *A dike la su’a sɔ̃ dibega ku’ɛ*
 3SG take FOC knife saw stick cut
 ‘He used a saw to cut a stick.’ (clip 15)

The focus of this type of cutting is on the rough edge nature of the instrument and the

several up and down movement of the saw in the cutting. The verb *sɔ̃* appears to have been borrowed from English ‘saw’ as it is not typical to have such instruments for cutting in the culture.

4.1.11 *larege* (pl. *larum*) ‘cut open or gut, of objects’

The use of a knife to cut open a fresh enclosed or hollowed object is described using the verb *larege*. It involves the cutting of hollowed or pod-like objects such as pawpaw, kapok fruit or dressed meat such as animals, chicken or fish and thereby opening them up. Its use entails the orientation of the cut along the axis or longitudinal cutting. For example, the expression in (22) described the use of a knife to cut open or gut a dressed chicken from the chest to the rear part for cooking or roasting.

- (22) A *dike* *la* *su’a* *larege* *nua* *la*
 S/he take FOC knife cut.open chicken DEF
 ‘He took a knife and cut open the chicken.’ (clips 32 and 34)

The splitting of some fresh fruits in the Gurene community such as a fresh kapok fruit with a knife is described likewise. The verb is also used to describe a doctor using a sharp instrument to cut open a patient’s abdomen to operate. The result states of cutting events involving *larege* produce incomplete or partial severance of the object.

4.1.12 *belege* ‘cut, of piece of meat or elastic object’

This verb is usually used to describe cutting events that involve the use of a knife or razor blade to cut a very small piece of meat, animal skin or a small piece of an elastic object such as a bicycle, motor or lorry tyre or tube.

- (23) *Nenkɔɔsa* *la* *belege* *nɛŋɔ* *la* *bo* *bia* *la*
 butcher DEF slice meat DEF give child DEF
 ‘The butcher sliced the meat and gave it to the child.’

The type of the object is of interest in this type of cutting. The object must be flesh or elastic. None of the C&B video clips include the verb.

4.1.13 *zesege* (pl. *zese*)/*kesege* (pl. *kese*) ‘slash, of long flexible objects’

The verbs *zesege*/*kesege* are used for describing slashing events. They describe the use of a heavy sharp instrument such as a machete, chisel or axe to slash an object to effect a complete severance. Usually the slashing is done with the application of force or pressure in a single movement of the hand to cause the separation. Culturally common scenes include slashing of grass, ropes, stalks and creeping plants. The example below was used to describe video clip 2 where a single chisel blow is used to snap or slash a rope into two.

- (24) A *dike* *la* *sitega* *zesege* *mi’a* *la*
 s/he take FOC chisel slash rope DEF
 ‘She took a chisel and slashed the rope.’ (clip 2)

One slight distinction that can be made between the two verbs is that when a person

uses his or her teeth to cut a rope or twine *kɛsege* can apply but not *zɛsege*. Thus, suggesting that latter use is restricted to the involvement of an external sharp instrument.

4.1.14 *siibɛ/kiibɛ* ‘cut open, of enclosed objects’

The cutting out of pod-like objects along an axis with a knife or a sharp instrument to open them up is described with the verbs *siibɛ* or *kiibɛ*. The two verbs are the same but are dialectal variants, *siibɛ* (Nankani) and *kiibɛ* (Bolga). The meaning of the verb is similar to the verb *larege* ‘cut open’ but it differs in the sense that the cutting is always crosswise but not longitudinal. This type of cutting also involves carefulness and precision. Objects that are described with this type of cutting are fresh objects such as a gourd or calabash. In the culture a thin line is made around the gourd before cutting along this axis to split it open into two equal parts. No video clip presented a scene involving the use of this verb but the consultants offered the verb and provided the following example.

- (25) *Budaa la dike la su’a kiibɛ wanɛ la*
 man DEF take FOC knife split calabash DEF
 ‘The man took a knife and split the calabash.’

Sometimes traditional mud houses are constructed without any entrance. Instead, after completion of the construction, a knife or cutlass will be used to carefully cut open the entrance. In such instances, the expression *kiibɛ bɔ’ɔ nuurɛ* literally ‘cut open room mouth’ will be used.

4.1.15 *kɔrege* (pl. *kɔrum*) ‘cut, slaughter or slit throat’

The verb *kɔrege* typically describes cutting events that involve the use of a knife or a bladed instrument to cut or slit the throat of animates such as humans, animals and birds. The locus of the cutting is the throat. The cutting usually does not involve complete separation or decapitation. The meaning also triggers the imagery of blood as its use is restricted to only the killing of animates. None of the C&B tasks depicted a scene involving the use of the verb but below is an example given by my consultants during the discussion sessions.

- (26) *Tindaana la kɔrege la bua kaabɛ bagerɛ la*
 Land.priest DEF slaughter FOC goat sacrifice shrine DEF
 ‘The land priest slaughtered a goat to offer sacrifice to the shrine.’

4.1.16 *wesege* (pl. *wese*) ‘cut, make a nick’

This verb *wesege* describes a small cut, nick or incision made on a human body or an animal with sharp instruments like razor blades and knives used to make a small mark on someone’s cheek as in the example below.

- (27) *Ba wesege la a yagerɛ*
 3PL cut DEF 3SG cheek

‘They cut a nick or mark on his cheek. i.e. They made a nick on his cheek.’

The cut is usually a single mark made intentionally for the purpose of treating the human being or the animal by applying some powdered medicine into the cut. Sometimes the cut

is made on humans for ritualistic purpose to ward off evil or for ethnic identification.

4.1.17 *peese* (sg. *pesege*) ‘peel, with knife’

The plural form of the verb *peese* is used frequently than the singular form *pesege*. The verb prototypical use describes the use of a knife to cut up the surface to remove the skin of raw tubers such as yams, cassava, potatoes, or unripe fruits such as oranges, and pawpaw. It is also used to describe the carving of wood into artistic pieces using a sharp instrument.

The meaning of *peese* is in contrast with the verb *muule* ‘peel, with hand’ discussed in §4.3 under separation verbs of opening. The former is used only when the tuber or fruit is in its raw state but the latter applies to when the tuber is in its roasted or boiled state. These examples serve to illustrate.

- (28) *Pɔka la peese leemu la za’a koose*
 woman DEF cut orange FOC all sell
 ‘The woman used a knife to peel(cut surface) all the oranges and sold.’

- (29) *nyuure ti a peese*
 yam that 3SG cut
 ‘It is yam that she peeled.’

The manner of cutting is usually not performed deeply but lightly on the entity’s surface to remove the outer skin. When the cutting is deep then speakers will use *ɲmaɛ* ‘cut’ discussed in §4.1.1.

4.1.18 *lu’* ‘cut, stab or pierce with sharp pointed instrument’

The verb *lu’* describes piercing an object or stabbing an animal or person with a sharp pointed instrument such as knife, dagger, spear, nail, syringe, needle or any such instrument. It can be used to describe all kinds of separation events that involve piercing or stabbing an entity. Both animates and inanimates can be pierced or stabbed. The nature of the cutting is determined by the size of the instrument, the object and the manner in which it is performed. Thus, *lu’* ‘stab’ is used when the stabbing instrument is large like a dagger, knife or spear held with the thumb upwards and the instrument downwards to perform the stabbing with force. Also *lu’* ‘pierce or prick’ is used when the instrument is small such as needles, nails or syringes to pierce objects or animates. The verb *lu’* is used in the example below to describe the injection given to a patient by a doctor.

- (30) *Dɔgeta la lu’ bā’ara la pania*
 doctor DEF pierce patient DEF injection
 ‘The doctor injected the patient.’

4.1.19 *vuje* ‘cut, bore a hole’

Using a sharp pointed instrument such as a knife, needle, arrow, nail, to bore a small hole on an object or ears or nose of humans or animals attract the use of *vuje* to describe the cutting. When the piercing is performed on any body part of humans it is intended for adornment purposes such as rings put on ears or nose as shown in the example below.

- (31) *Bilia la ma n vuje a tubere yuli tubekayulesi*
 baby DEF mother who cut 3SG ear hang earrings
 ‘The baby’s mother pierced her ear and put on earrings.’

4.2 BREAK Verbs

The BREAK verbs in Gureɛ are different from the CUT verbs based on a number of semantic and syntactic factors. First, the BREAK verbs unlike the CUT verbs do not obligatorily require an instrument as part of their meaning for the separation to be effected. Where an instrument is involved it is usually a blunt instrument. However, if it is a sharp instrument used to cause the breaking, the meaning will focus on the manner but not the instrument. Thus, instrument is not an important part of the semantics of the BREAK verbs as is the case with the CUT verbs in the language. A second factor is that the use of the verbs may or may not require a causative agent to carry out the breaking event. The reason being that the verbs can be used to describe spontaneous breaking events which otherwise cannot be expressed with CUT verbs. A third important semantic feature of BREAK verbs is, they tend to focus more on the manner of the separation and the nature of the object e.g., breaking of glasses and plates into pieces, tearing apart of clothes or breaking apart of ropes. In terms of their syntax, they can be used both transitively and intransitively (see§5 for details). A summary of the verbs is provided in Table 3 below before a discussion of their semantics.

Table 3: Summary of Gureɛ BREAK Verbs

Verb	Meaning	Instrument	Object (example)	Manner
1. <i>ɲwɔrege</i> (pl. <i>ɲwɔrege</i>)	break, of fragile objects	hands, sticks or spontaneous	earthenware pots, plates, cups, glassws, calabashes, CDs	shattered, break into pieces, complete separation
2. <i>wɛke</i> (pl. <i>wɛge</i>)	break, split into two	hands, knife or spontaneous	wood, gourd, fruits, cola nut	splitting along an axis, complete severance
3. <i>nyerege</i> (pl. <i>nyerum</i>)	break, split of rigid and straight objects	teeth, blade	stalks, straw	lengthwise splitting, partial or complete severance
4. <i>asege</i> (pl. <i>aasum</i>)	tear, of flexible two dimensional objects	hands or spontaneous	paper, cothing, skins,	partial or complete separation, irreversible
5. <i>tũe</i>	tear, of flexible objects	hands	clothing, paper, fibre	partial or complete separation
6. <i>kɔ'</i>	break	spontaneous	sticks, bones, stalks, ropes, pencils, pens, yarns, machete, hoes, knives, tall walls, branches	complete separation

7. <i>tɔsege</i> (pl. <i>tɔse</i>)	break, snap	hands or spontaneous	ropes, twines, yarns	complete separation
8. <i>wike</i> (pl. <i>wige</i>)	break, of linear rigid objects	hands or spontaneous	tubers, carrots, bread	complete separation
9. <i>tāse</i>	crack	spontaneous	walls, pots, plates, floors, calabashes	minimal separation
10. <i>bure</i>	break, crumble	hands or spontaneous	cakes, biscuits, bread	complete separation into pieces
11. <i>merege</i> (pl. <i>merum</i>)	break, crush	stone, heavy metal	fruits, meat	complete destruction into pulp
12. <i>zɔre</i>	break, into pieces of solid food	hands	solid food e.g, thick porridge, boiled potatoes	complete separation
13. <i>ɔlege</i>	break, crumble	spontaneous, water	earthenware pots and bowls, wet walls or buildings	complete separation
14. <i>kirege</i> (pl. <i>kirum</i>)	break, fulrum break	spontaneous	bones at joints of humans and animals	complete separation

4.2.1 *ɲwɔrege* (pl. *ɲwɔre*) ‘break, of fragile objects’

The verb *ɲwɔrege* describes the breaking or shattering of fragile objects into pieces. Its plural form is *ɲwɔre*. The destruction resulting from this type of breaking is always messy and irreversible. Speakers use it to describe the breaking of fragile objects such as eggs, earthenware pots, calabashes, enamel bowls, eggs and glasses into fragments. The object may fall from a distance to the ground or an external instrument may be used by an agent to smash or hit it as in example (32). The verb could also be used to describe the spontaneous breaking as shown in example (33). As observed by Ameka and Essegbey (2007:247) this type of breaking event is a distinctive feature of most African languages but not English. Example (32) is a description of clips 39 and 40 in the stimuli task in which a hammer is used to smash a pot and a plate.

(32) *Budaa la dike la hama ɲwɔrege dukɔ la pilete la*
 man DEF take FOC hammar break pot and plate DEF
 ‘The man took a hammer and broke the pot and the plate.’ (clips 39 & 40)

(33) *Bama za’a yɔa aɲa ɲwɔre ya*
 DEM all pots DEM break.pl AFF
 ‘All those pots are broken.’ (folktale_text_api_2010)

Similar to Ameka and Essegbey’s (2007:247) observation that in using the verb *gba* ‘break’ in Ewe it does not matter whether or not the broken pieces fall apart Gurene

ɲwɔreɛ is characterized in a similar manner. The only slight difference being that if an object falls without shattering but with several visible cracks it will be described as *ɲwɔreɛ* but if there is one or two cracks on the object the verb *tāse* ‘crack’ will be used as attested in this example.

- (34) *laa la tāse mɛ*
bowl DEF crack AFF
‘the bowl cracked.’

4.2.2 *wɛkɛ* ‘split, into two equal parts’

The verb *wɛkɛ* is one of the few breaking verbs that may require the use of an instrument or not to describe the splitting of an object into two equal parts. Even though it may involve the use of a sharp instrument such as a knife or blade to cut along a line to split an object it is considered a breaking verb because its meaning is more about the nature of the breaking. That is splitting an object lengthwise but not crosswise. So the instrument is not crucially part of its semantics but rather the nature of the breaking. In the C&B typology Essegbey (2007:235) made a similar observation about the Sranan verb *koti* which translates as ‘cut’ but actually describes the nature of the cutting and is considered a break verb. The important thing to note here is that the use of hands to split cola nuts into two equal parts is described with *wɛkɛ* (see example (35)). An example in the stimuli task is the lengthwise cutting of a carrot in clip 9 into two pieces with a knife is described in (36).

- (35) *A wɛkɛ la gu’urɛ*
3SG split FOC cola nut
‘He split the cola nut.’

- (36) *Budaa la dike la su’a wɛkɛ karɔti*
Man DEF take FOC knife split carrot
‘The man took a knife and cut the carrot into two.’ (clip 9)

The splitting of a fresh gourd or calabash fruit along its axis into two equal parts with a knife is also described as *wɛkɛ*. It is similar to *siibɛ* ‘cut open with precision’ discussed in §4.1.14. Such separation events usually demand some expert skills in the culture. Again the nature of the splitting is of interest here but not the use of the knife to perform the cutting. The semantics of this verb appears to fit in the bipolar proposal by Bohnemeyer (2007:161) that some languages in their typological sample such as Biak, German, Mandarin, and Yukatek have verbs that encode semantic properties that belong to both C&B but not either.

4.2.3 *nyɛreɛ* ‘split, of stalks’

The verb *nyɛreɛ* ‘split’ is applied to the splitting of stalks e.g. guinea corn stalks used for weaving baskets and local cages for keeping domestic birds such as chicken and guinea fowls. It is also used to describe the splitting of elephant grass straw for twisting into ropes for weaving straw hats. The instrument used in the splitting of stalks is a knife while the straw is usually the front teeth although one can also use a blade-like instrument. But the meaning of the verbs is packaged in the manner but not the instrument. My consultants offered the example below to illustrate.

- (37) *kinka'ana ti a nyerege*
stalk that 3SG split
'It is a stalk that he split.'

4.2.4 *asege* 'tear, of two-dimensional flexible objects'

The semantic features relevant for the analysis of *asege* 'tear' include the use of hands to tear two-dimensional flexible objects such as paper, animal skins and cloth. Usually the semantics of the verb suggests that the tearing is not done intentionally. The tearing might involve an agent or not. Thus, example (38) describes the spontaneous tearing of a cloth without a causal agent in the video elicitation task in clip 8.

- (38) *fuo la asege me*
cloth DEF tear AFF
'the cloth got torn.' (clip 8)

The verb *asege* was also used to describe clip 1 and clip 38 in which a woman used hands to tear a cloth into two separate pieces and one other cloth partly torn without complete separation. The tearing event does not include the use of an instrument such as knife or scissors. This is similar to Ameka and Essegbey's (2007:247) observation concerning the Ewe verb *vuvu* 'tear' that its use does not involve an instrument.

4.2.5 *tũe* 'tear, of soft and flexible two-dimensional objects'

The break verb *tũe* is similar to *asege* described in the preceding section except that it is used to describe the intention of the actor to perform the separation of objects such as a cloth, meat or paper into smaller parts or pieces without the intention to destroy. Thus, the tearing scenes of clips 1 and 38 in the video task involving the tearing of cloths were described with this verb by my consultants as attested in the example below.

- (39) *A tũe fuo la me*
3SG tear cloth DEF AFF
'S/he tore the cloth.' (clips 1 and 38)

It was explained by the consultants that the type of objects that undergo this type of breaking are mostly soft and flexible two-dimensional objects. This notwithstanding it is the only verb used in the culture to describe the tearing of fibre from a fibre stalk. The use of *asege* in this context is inappropriate.

4.2.6 *kɔ'* (sg. *kɔ'ɔge*) 'break, of hard or flexible linear objects'

The meaning of the verb *kɔ'* 'break' refers to the spontaneous breaking or snapping of hard, rigid or flexible objects such as wood, bones, sticks, stalks, ropes, and threads. The use of hands to break sticks in clip 19 with complete severance, and clip 25 without complete severance were both described with *kɔ'*.

- (40) *A kɔ' dibega la*
3SG break stick DEF
's/he broke the stick.' (clips 19 & 25)

Similarly, the spontaneous breaking of a stick in clip 16 and the breaking of the rope apart in clip 46 without the presence of any causal agents were described with the break verb *kɔ'* in the examples below:

- (41) *dibega la kɔ' mɛ*
stick DEF break AFF
'the stick broke.' (clip 16)
- (42) *mi'a la kɔ' mɛ*
rope DEF break AFF
'the rope broke.' (clip 46)

4.2.7 *tɔsegɛ* (pl. *tɔsɛ*) 'break, snap of flexible weak objects'

The verb is similar in terms of its semantics to *kɔ'* but its use is restricted to the breaking of flexible weak linear objects such as a piece of yarn or a rope that does not require greater pressure or force to cause the break. It does not require an external causal agent acting on objects. The breaking scenes in clips 35 and 38 where someone was seen breaking yarn rolled up on a bundle are typical examples in which the verb was used to describe the breaking. In clip 35 the plural form *tɔsɛ* 'break, more than once' was used to refer to the breaking of a yarn into several pieces as in example (44) while in clip 38 the single action of breaking the yarn was described with *tɔsegɛ* 'break' as shown in (43).

- (43) *Budaa la tɔsegɛ guɔ la*
3SG DEF break yarn DEF
'The man broke the yarn.' (clip 38)
- (44) *Budaa la tɔsɛ la guɔ la*
3SG DEF break.PL FOC yarn DEF
'The man broke the yarn.' (clip 38)

4.2.8 *wike* 'break, of not rigid and stretched objects'

The verb *wike* is a break verb that is used to describe the breaking into two separate parts of linear objects such as sticks, tubers, cobs that are considered not to be very hard or very rigid. Clip 17 where a carrot broke spontaneously without the participation of any agent is attested in the example below.

- (45) *Karɔti la wike mɛ*
carrot DEF break AFF
'The carrot broke.' (clip 17)

In this type of breaking, the separation of the parts must not necessarily be equal but it is crucial for the two parts to involve complete separation.

4.2.9 *tãse* 'break or crack, of objects'

The verb *tãse* 'crack' describes cracks on clay or ceramic containers such as pots, bowls or cups; floors, ground and walls. The crack may be caused by a physical agent or a spontaneous event. Examples (46) and (47) illustrate both spontaneous and agent involvement of breaking events with the use of *tãse*. In this type of breaking, the separation is usually minimal on the object and it is reversible through some form of repair depending on the nature of the object.

- (46) *dangoone la tãse mɛ*
wall DEF crack AFF
'The wall cracked.'

- (47) *Naafɔ n ɲmɛ dangoone la tãɛ*
 cow FOC beat wall DEF crack
 ‘A cow hit the wall and it cracked.’

4.2.10 *bure*(sg. *burege*)/*meregɛ* (pl. *mɛɛ*)/*zɔɛ* ‘break, crumble or smash or crush objects’

All these three breaking verbs are similar in their semantics. They are used to describe the smashing of objects into pieces with subtle differences relating to the type and the nature of the object. The verb *bure* ‘crumble’ is applied to soft objects like cakes which may break or crumble but *meregɛ* ‘crush’ describes the smashing of fresh fruits such as melon, oranges, mangoes or vegetables such as tomatoes into pulp.

- (48) *Ma’asere la bure mɛ*
 cake DEF crumble AFF
 ‘the cake crumbled.’

- (49) *Kugere n meregɛ kamantɔɔ-si la*
 stone FOC crush tomatoe-PL DEF
 ‘A stone crushed the tomatoes.’

The verb *meregɛ* is used to describe the crushing of animates such as an animal, person or snake by any heavy object falling on them or a car running over them. The verb *zɔɛ* ‘break into tiny pieces’ on the other hand, has the meaning of using the hand to break solid food such as cakes, bread, tuo zaafi (thick porridge), kenkey, banku or meat into tiny pieces. This example illustrates its use. The three verbs encode information about the nature of the objects and the manner of the breaking.

- (50) *Ba zɔɛ sagebɔ la bo baa-si la*
 3SG break.pieces thick.porridge DEF give dog-PL DEF
 ‘They sliced the thick porridge into pieces for the dogs.’

4.2.11 *ɔlegɛ* ‘break, crumble, of objects’

This verb specifies the spontaneous breaking apart of earthenware objects such as pots, bowls or buildings as a result of being over-soaked in water or because they were poorly constructed at start. Usually, a non-human agent is capable of causing this type of destruction for the fact that humans will not do this deliberately.

- (51) *Dukɔ la ɔlegɛ mɛ*
 pot DEF break AFF.
 ‘The pot broke.’

In the culture if a house or a building is flooded and its walls begin to fall apart it is often described using the verb *ɔlegɛ*.

- (52) *Ko’om n ɔlegɛ yire la*
 water FOC crumble house DEF
 ‘The water crumbled the house.’

4.2.12 *kirege* ‘break, of fulcrum breaks’

This verb primarily describes fulcrum breaks in humans and animals. That is the breaking of bones occurring at the joints of humans or animals such as neck, shoulder, knee, ankle, waist, etc. In medical terms it is described as a dislocation.

(53) A *na'arɛ* n *kirege*
 3SG leg FOC break
 ‘His/her leg is dislocated.’

Such breaks occur as a result of impact or pressure brought to bear on the bones at the joints which results in a shift.

4.3 Opening or detachment verbs

The opening or detachment verbs unlike the C&B verbs discussed in §4.1 and §4.2, describe the separation of one distinguishable part of an object from another. The separation involves opening, removing or detaching part of an object or a whole object from another. Some of the verbs involve the use of an instrument usually a hand to perform the separation. The result state of the separation for most parts does not usually lead to the destruction of the object and often can be reversible. Their number is limited compare to the C&B verbs. Ten verbs have been identified in this study. All the verbs describe different types of separation events which involve either opening, removing or detaching of objects such as tins, boxes, cups, doors, windows, and pen tops which are either closed or stacked together into each other. Most of these separation events are also reversible without the material destruction of the objects involved. They verbs are presented in Table 4 followed by the discussion of the verbs.

Table 4: Gurenɛ opening or detachment verbs

Verb	Meaning	Instrument	Object (Examples)	Manner
1. <i>yo'e</i> (pl. <i>yo'ose</i>)	open, generic	hands	doors, jars, bags, drawers, cabinet, zips, cupboards	separation with no destruction, reversible
2. <i>ya'e</i> (pl. <i>ya'ase</i>)	open, of mouth or entrance	hands	mouth of animates, openings of objects	separation with no destruction
3. <i>ga'e</i>	open, separate	hands, metals or spontaneous	belts, buttons, interlocked objects, wrestling contestants	minimal force required to separate
4. <i>lake</i>	open, of flat objects	hands or spontaneous	books, paper, clothing, skins, purse, wallet	partial or complete separation, reversible
5. <i>vuke</i>	open, remove	hands or spontaneous	hats, lids, tops of objects	complete separation
6. <i>suke</i>	remove, of	hands or	container with	complete separation

	container with convex base	spontaneous	convex base	
7. <i>vake</i>	remove	hands or natural force e.g wind	thatch, roofs	complete separation
8. <i>foe</i>	remove, of loose grip	hands or natural force	books on shelf, stacked plates or cups, cards in a pack, arrows	complete separation
9. <i>fuke</i>	remove, of firm attachment	hands, natural force	pillars, poles, pegs	complete separation
10. <i>vue</i>	remove, of large objects or plants	hands, machines, natural force	trees, plants, pillars, poles	complete separation
11. <i>muule</i>	peel	hands	ripe fruits, boiled tubers with skin e.g. potatoes, yam, cassava.	complete separation

4.3.1 *yo'e* 'open, generic'

The general verb for open is *yo'e*. It is used to describe the opening of objects such as doors of houses and vehicles, jars, bags, cupboards, drawers, cabinets, and zips of clothing. In the videoclips, my consultants used it to describe clip 60 where someone opened a door as illustrated here.

(54) *Budaa la yo'e la kuleŋa*
 man DEF open FOC door
 'The man opened the door.'

In all its uses, distinguishable parts of an object are separated from each other without any destruction of the parts involved. The object usually will be closed and have some parts secured such as locks, zips or buttons.

4.3.2 *ya'e* 'open, of mouth or entrance'

A specific verb used for the description of opening of a mouth of animates or the entrance of an object is *ya'e*. Its use applies to humans, and the cavities of animals, entrance or openings of objects. For example, asking someone to open his or her mouth to be fed or for examination by a dentist will be described with *ya'e*. It is also used when opening the mouth of flexible or flat containers without a lid such as a baggie or tube for storing food. If the container has a lid then the opening verb *vuke* 'open lid' discussed above will be used. The example below is a spontaneous text for illustration.

- (55) *Bia la ya'ε la nɔɔrε ti ba lε e*
 child DEF open FOC mouth and 3PL feed 3SG
 'The child opened his/her mouth and they fed him.'

4.3.3 *ga'ε* 'open, of buttons, belts, etc. '

Separation events that involve unlocking of objects that are fastened such as buttons or belts on clothing, seat belts on cars and planes, the verb *ga'ε* is appropriate. Its use applies to the separation of two objects or entities in a tight fit or firm grip.

- (56) ...*a kuriga la ga'arega la ga'ε mε*
 ...3SG shorts DEF button DEF open AFF.
 '...his shorts button is opened.'

My observation in the community shows that even though these are the prototypical uses, the speakers also use it when objects such as rings, hoes, ploughs are interlocked and needs separation. Also when wrestlers are locked up in a wrestling contest or boxers when they hold each other tightly during a fight requiring separation by a referee, the verb is used.

4.3.4 *lake* 'open or turn, of flat object'

The verb *lake* generally describes the detachment or turning of a flat object that is attached e.g. the turning of a page of a book, a cover of purse or a wallet. The opening of a book page in clip 33 of the stimuli task was described with the verb *lake* 'turn a page' as shown in this example.

- (57) *A lake gɔŋɔ la mε*
 3SG open book FOC PRT
 'he turned the page of a book.' (clip 33)

4.3.5 *vuke* 'open or remove, of hat, lid or top, box or a container'

The verb *vuke* 'opening, of a lid or top, box or a container' is used when opening a box or a lid of a bowl or pen top, turn a container face up such as a bowl, pot or calabash. In the C&B stimuli, consultants used it to describe clip 41 that showed someone opening a box, and another person opening a lid of a pot in clip 44.

- (58) *A vuke la daka la bii dukɔ la liŋa*
 3SG open FOC box DEF or pot DEF lid
 'S/he opened the box or lid of the pot.' (clips 41 & 44)

4.3.6 *suke* 'remove, of container with convex base

The description of the removing or taking off a container or a lid with a convex base sitting on top of another container attracts the use of the verb *suke* as in the expression below.

- (59) *dukɔ la liŋa suke mε*
 pot DEF lid remove AFF
 'the lid of the pot is removed.'

The meaning of the verb is similar to *vuke* discussed in the preceding section except that

it is applied to the detachment of containers with a convex base from another.

4.3.7 *vake* ‘remove, of thatch or roofs’

The verb *vake* describes the removal of thatch or roof either by humans or some other natural force such as wind or hurricane. Its use is specific to this context.

- (60) ...*kusebego* *n* *vake* *detine* *la* *muɔ*
 ...wind FOC remove hut DEF grass
 ‘...the wind removed the thatch of the hut.’

4.3.8 *foe* ‘remove, from loose or sloppy attachment’

The verb *foe* describes the removal or the detachment of an object from firm attachment to another object. The removing of objects that are stacked together or from a pack such as cups, plates, books stacked in shelves, pack of cards, arrows in a quiver they are described with *foe*. Examples in the stimuli are the clips 11 and 22 where a person is observed in two different scenes removing a cup from a stack and a pen from its top were described using *foe*.

- (61) *A* *foe* *la* *kɔpi/peni* *la* *liŋa*
 3SG remove FOC cup/pen DEF lid
 ‘S/he removed the cup or top of the pen.’ (clips 11 and 22)

4.3.9 *fuke* ‘remove, of firm attachment’

One other separation event concerns the removal of long objects that are firmly fixed to the ground or stacked to each other and is described with *fuke* ‘remove’. The objects include pillars, poles, pegs firmly stuck to the ground or are firmly stacked to each other requiring the application of force to remove them. Consider this example below.

- (62) *Kaara* *la* *n* *fuke* *bua* *ka’a* *la*
 Farmer DEF FOC remove goat peg DEF
 ‘It is the farmer who removed the goat’s peg.’

In the culture it is common to tether animals on the field during the farming season using a rope and a wooden or metal peg to prevent them from eating crops on the farm lands.

4.3.10 *vue* ‘remove, usually of plants or large objects with force from the ground’

The verb *vue* describes a specific separation type involving the removal of plants or large poles or pillars firmly fixed to the ground. The verb is similar to the preceding verb *fuke* ‘remove, of firm attachment’ but differs from the latter from the point of attachment. The verb *vue* is concerned with the removal of firm attachment to the ground but does not include objects stacked together as is the case with *fuke*. During the discussion sessions, consultants gave example (62) to show the use of the verb to describe the uprooting of trees during rainstorms. It is also appropriate to use it when hurricanes uproot trees, poles or pillars.

- (62) *Saa* *kusebego* *la* *n* *vue* *tia* *la*
 Rain wind DEF FOC remove tree DEF
 ‘The rainstorm uprooted the tree.’

Also in describing separation events such as thinning of young millet plants and the harvesting of peanuts the verb *vue* is used.

4.3.11 *muule* ‘peel, with hand’

The removing of the skin of a ripe fruits e.g, bananas, oranges or cooked or roasted tubers with skin such as yam, potatoe, cocoyam, and cassava with the hand but not with knife is described as *muule* ‘peel’. This is a kind of opening. For example, in clip 29 where someone removed the rind of an orange with hands and in clip 30 where a banana was peeled, the expressions *muule leemu* ‘peel orange’ and *muule kodu* ‘peel banana’ were used respectively.

- (63) A *dike* *la* *nu'o* *muule* *kodu* *la*
 3SG take FOC hand peelee banana DEF
 ‘He took his hand to peelee the banana.’ (clips 29 & 30)

The use of the verb is restricted to the removal of soft covering or skin of fruits or boiled tubers with covering. The meaning of the verb *muule*, is in contrast with the CUT verb *peese* ‘peel’ discussed in §4.1.17 which involves the use of a knife to cut the skin of raw tubers or fruits but not in their boiled or roasted state.

5. The syntax of the separation verbs

This section discusses the syntactic properties of the separation verbs with respect to their lexical semantic structure. In the cross-linguistic literature on verb semantics it has been shown that the lexical semantics structure of a verb encodes aspects of the meaning of the verb that determine the types of arguments and the thematic relations holding between them to define the relevant syntactic structures that the verb can occur (Mckoon & Macfarland 2000:833; Bohnemeyer 2007:153-154; Levin & Rappaport Hovav 1995). In this respect, the semantic properties of the separation verbs encode the relevant information to determine the syntactic structures that the verbs can occur.

As part of the objective of this paper, the Gurene data is discussed in the light of Guerssel al. (1985) generalization that separation verbs have different privileges in participating in the causative/inchoative alternations. This proposal has become a reference point for the cross-linguistic discussion of the argument structure of the separation verbs (see Bohnemeyer 2007; Ameka & Essegbey 2007). First, for an understanding of these two concepts, I turn to Haspelmath (1990:90) definition that the causative/inchoative verb alternation refers to the same basic ongoing situation of change of state but differ only in that causative verb meaning includes an agent participant who causes the situation, whereas the inchoative verb meaning excludes a causing agent and presents the situation as occurring spontaneously. Thus, (64a) presents the causative situation with an agent involvement in the breaking event while (64b) is a case of an inchoative situation without an agent’s participation.

- (64) a. The boy broke the stick *causative*
 b. The stick broke *inchoative*

Note that whereas (64a) is transitive that of (64b) is intransitive. Further, in terms of voice the inchoative includes the passive while the former is aligned with the active. A point to also note here is that the voice function in English differentiates the inchoative from the causative as well. In some languages such as Russian the verb forms used for

either construction type could be different with one being basic and the other derived. For example, the Russian causative and transitive verb *rasplavit* ‘melt’ is the basic form while the inchoative and intransitive *rasplavit’-sja* ‘melt’ is derived from it (Haspelmath 1993:81). Based on the causative/inchoative alternation, Guerssel al. (1985) further argue that the semantic properties of the separation verbs influence the syntactic structure of the verbs. As a result, the BREAK verbs participate in the causative/inchoative alternation but the CUT verbs do not. Even though this hypothesis was based on their sample of four languages (*English, Berber, Warlpiri & Hoc k*) it had significant implications for the cross-linguistic analysis of this class of verbs in the literature (cf. Bohnemeyer 2007:155). Example (65) illustrates English BREAK verbs participation in the causative/inchoative alternation. The transitive construction in (65a) has an agent acting on a patient/theme while its intransitive counterpart expresses the theme entering into a state. In contrast, example (66) shows the non-participation of the CUT verbs in the causative/inchoative alternation. The case of (66a) involves the transitive with an agent in the causative construction but (66b) is ungrammatical because the verb ‘cut’ cannot be used intransitively to express the inchoative. Levin and Rappaport (1995) suggest that CUT verbs do not participate in the causative/inchoative alternation because their semantics include manner and instrument.

(65) a. John broke/shattered the plate.

b. The plate broke/shattered.

(66) a. John cut/sliced the bread.

b. *The bread cut/sliced.

Guerssel al. (1985) further point out that the intransitive constructions of the CUT verbs if acceptable in a language then they are considered as the conative or the middle construction. In this case, both CUT and BREAK verbs occur in the middle construction as the examples below attest.

(67) a. The plate breaks/shatters easily.

b. The cake cuts/slices easily.

Bohnemeyer (2007:156) explains that the distinction between the inchoative and middle construction is that the former may refer to individual events under specific time reference and do not introduce a cause or agent unlike the latter.

In light of the preceding discussions it is important to make some general remarks about Gure  syntax and tie it with the syntax of the separation verbs. The language permits transitive and intransitive constructions but does not have passive and middle constructions like English.

The three semantic classes of separation verbs discussed in this paper namely CUT verbs, BREAK verbs and Opening verbs as part of their lexical semantic structure describe externally change of state. That is the change is brought about by some outside force or conceived of not occurring within but by an agent or a spontaneous happening without an explicit agent. The verbs are therefore, either transitive or intransitive. In line with Haspelmath (1993:90) observation, the transitive verbs correspond to the causative while the intransitive aligns with the inchoative. In this respect, most of the separation verbs except a few from the three subclasses participate in the causative-inchoative alternation and occur in transitive or intransitive constructions. The transitive verbs occur in constructions that require an agent subject to perform the separation event on a patient object. The construction has an agent involved in the performance of the cutting, breaking or opening events. The verbs also express information about the manner and the use of the instrument. The intransitive counterparts express state changes but lack real or an explicit agent.

In contrast to the proposal by Guerssel et al. (1985) and Haspelmath (1993) that CUT verbs do not participate in the causative/inchoative alternation because of the presence of an agent, the Gurene data suggest that some cut verbs can participate in this alternation if the intransitive construction includes the affirmative verbal particle *mε*. The prototypical cut verb *ηmaε* is used in (68) to illustrate causative/inchoative alternation. While (68a) is the transitive and presents the causative with an agent oriented, meaning the (68b) is the intransitive without an agent but has an inchoative interpretation. The intransitive presents the cutting event as occurring without an agent. Notice that (68c) is not acceptable because the construction is presented like the middle construction in English and this is not permissible in Gurene.

- (68) a. *Budaa la ηmaε neηɔ la*
 man DEF cut meat DEF
 ‘The man cut the meat.’
 b. *Neηɔ la ηmaε mε*
 Meat DEF cut AFF
 ‘The meat is cut.’
 c. **Neηɔ la ηmaε*
 Meat DEF cut

Among the nineteen CUT verbs discussed in Table 1 in §4.1 almost all the verbs can participate in this alternation except a few. Five of such verbs cannot participate in the alternation and include *sɔ̃* ‘saw’, *sε* ‘cut hair’, *sie* ‘prune trees’, *wesege* ‘cut a small mark’, and *lu* ‘stab or piece’. They can only be used in the transitive but not intransitive as attested below with the use of the verb *sɔ̃*.

- (69) a. *A sɔ̃ la dɔɔ la*
 3SG saw FOC wood DEF
 ‘He sawed the wood.’
 b. **dɔɔ la sɔ̃ mε*
 wood DEF saw AFF

All the Gurene BREAK verbs unlike the CUT verbs participate in the causative/inchoative alternation. They can be used both in the transitive and intransitive constructions. Consider example (70a) with an agent oriented reading which represents the transitive and the causative while (70b) is the intransitive and the inchoative.

- (70) a. *Naafɔ la n kɔ’ mi’a la*
 Cow DEF FOC break rope DEF
 ‘The cow broke the rope.’
 b. *Mi’a la kɔ’ mε*
 rope DEF break AFF
 ‘The rope broke.’

The third type of separation verbs discussed in §4.3 are the opening verbs which also exhibit the same syntactic properties like the BREAK verbs. All the fourteen verbs in this class participate in the causative/inchoative alternation. The examples in (71) and (72) illustrate the two alternations.

- (71) a. *Bia la yo’e la kuleŋa la*
 Child DEF open FOC door DEF
 ‘The child opened the door.’

- b. *Kuleŋa la yo'e mɛ*
 Door DEF open AFF.
 'The door opened.'
- (72) a. *A wɛkɛ gu'urɛ la*
 3SG split cola nut DEF
 'He split open the cola nut.'

- b. *Gu'urɛ la wɛkɛ mɛ*
 Cola nut DEF split AFF
 'The cola nut split open.'

In all the three classes of separation verbs, the causative and inchoative alternation we note that the causative constructions provide information about the nature of the cause or change. For example, the manner in which the change is brought about with the involvement of an agent or not and how the theme is affected in these alternations. The syntax of CUT verbs requires an agent and an instrument as part of their lexical semantic structure. The BREAK and the Opening verbs for the most part do not require the presence of an agent and also do not involve an instrument in their syntax. Another point to note is that in Gurene, the same form of the verb is used for the causative and the inchoative. Haspelmath (1993:92) calls it the labile alternation when there is no change in the verb form.

One other syntactic property that is not related to the causative/inchoative phenomenon but also interesting is that in the Gurene data most of the separation verbs often appear as resultative verbs in serial constructions to express clearly the nature of the separation (cf. Enfield 2007:289 on Lao separation verbs). The following C&B expressions attest to this phenomenon. In example (73), the first verb *kɔ'e* 'break' expresses the breaking of the stick but the second verb *nyure* 'bend' in the serial verb construction describes the nature and the final result state of the object.

- (73) *A kɔ'e dibega la nyure mɛ*
 3SG break stick DEF bend AFF
 'He broke the stick and bent it.' (clip 25)

Also in (74) there are three token verbs in the serial verb construction performing different functions. The verbs are *dike* 'take', *ŋma* 'cut' and *ku'e* 'cut off'. The take verb is used to recruit the instrument for the performance of the cutting event and the last cut verb *ku'e* expresses the nature of severance which is complete severance.

- (74) *Pɔka la dike la su'a ŋma zifo ku'e*
 Woman DEF take FOC knife cut fish break
 'The woman took a knife and cut the fish into pieces.' (clip 28)

6. Conclusions

The paper discussed the semantics of separation verbs in Gurene and also tested the generalization by Guerssel et al. (1985) that BREAK verbs but not CUT verbs participate in the causative/inchoative alternation. The separation verbs can be classified into three subclasses CUT, BREAK and opening verbs based on their semantic properties. The CUT verbs as noted require the use of a sharp instrument in their semantics but the BREAK verbs do not necessarily require an instrument. Instead, the manner of the separation is crucial for the semantics of the latter. The opening verbs

describe separation events that result in the detachment of one part of an object with minimal or no destruction of the other part and can often be reversible.

An important finding is that Gurene separation verbs provide very specific descriptions of different separation events compare to English or some other languages discussed in the C&B typology (see Majid et al. 2007). As a result, the language uses over forty verbs to describe the different types of separation events.

The syntactic properties of the separation verbs is discussed based on the lexical semantics structure of the verbs to essentially test the Guerssel et al. (1985) proposal that BREAK verbs but not CUT verbs participate in the causative/inchoative alternation. Although, I am aware of Bohnemeyer (2007) re-analysis of this hypothesis from a morpholexical transparency perspective based on a sample of seventeen languages in Majid et al. (2007) typology, the discussion of the Gurene data is pursued in light Guerssel et al. (1985). In line with this objective, an important finding in the paper is that most CUT verbs in Gurene participate in the causative/inchoative alternation while all the BREAK verbs and Opening verbs also participate in the alternation. Thus, the facts of the Gurene data does not support Gurssel et al. (1985) claim on their sample that CUT verbs do not participate in the causative/inchoative alternation but BREAK verbs. This finding has significant implications for the typology of these verbs and provides further insights from the Gurene data.

Abbreviations

1	first person	PL	plural
2	second person	SG	singular
3	third person	DEF	definite
FOC	focus	AFF	affirmative
-ATR	minus advanced tongue root	+ATR	plus advanced tongue root
C&B	CUT and BREAK		

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