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Put and Take in Yélî Dnye, the Papuan language of Rossel Island

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This paper describes the linguistic treatment of placement events in the Rossel Island (Papua New Guinea) language Yélî Dnye. Yélî Dnye is unusual in treating PUT and TAKE events symmetrically with a remarkable consistency.
In what follows, we first provide a brief background for the language, then describe the six core PUT/TAKE verbs that were drawn upon by Yélî Dnye speakers to describe the great majority of the PUT/TAKE stimuli clips, along with some of their grammatical properties. In Section 5 we describe alternative verbs usable in particular circumstances and give an indication of the basis for variability in responses across speakers. Section 6 presents some reasons why the Yélî verb pattern for expressing PUT and TAKE events is of broad interest.

1. 'Put' and 'Take' verbs – the theoretical resonance

Verbs of 'putting' and 'taking' may seem about as interesting as a random selection of any verbs out of a dictionary. But there are reasons to think that a close examination of them may yield quite interesting theoretical insights. First, the domain has, for chattel-loaded non-nomadic peoples anyway, a prominence in daily life shown by the early acquisition of these verbs (Slobin et al., 2010). Second, the domain partakes of crucial spatial distinctions, which are interestingly variable across languages. Third, 'put' and 'take' are converse relations, both belonging to the relatively small set of natural triadic predicates in a language, along with 'give' and 'take' and other verbs of caused change of location or possession. These have an interesting 'frame semantics', presupposing intentional agents, locations, and modes of movement.

It is in this context that the data in this chapter from an offshore Papuan language of New Guinea are of special interest. First, the language fractionates the core domain into minimally six distinct verbs (three each for 'putting' and 'taking') – that is, there is no general 'put' or 'take' verb available. Unlike in nearly every other reported language, the core put-and-take domain is treated as symmetrical: there are just as many distinctions in 'taking' as there are in 'putting'. Each of the three 'put' verbs has its exact

converse, or paired 'take' verb. Second, the system turns out to be parasitic on spatial distinctions encoded in intransitive positional verbs – there are three positional verbs, asserting location but presupposing the specific shape and canonical orientation of physical objects. Speakers select a 'put' or 'take' verb according to the positional verb that would have applied to the object in question – but there is no derivational or other overt formal relation between the 'put' and 'take' roots and the positional roots. In this sense the underlying semantics of object types is covert, and expressed covertly through verbs of different form classes, forming in a minimal way the kind of lexical structure we have recently called a *semplate* (Levinson & Burenhult, 2009). A semplate is a structured set of semantic distinctions onto which a number of distinct lexical sets from different form-classes are mapped. In this case, the intransitive stative positional verbs with just three members presuppose distinctions between shape and canonical positions of objects, and the identical distinctions determine the choice between one of three transitive 'put' verbs and one of three transitive 'take' verbs.[1]

This covert patterning of causative placement verbs on the basis of semantic distinctions made by positional verbs is interesting for a number of reasons. It shows first of all that the language does treat 'putting' and 'taking' as a coherent, single domain, despite the fractionation into six distinct verbs. In addition, it shows that even in a language in which verbs are derivationally opaque, verbs of 'putting' and 'taking' are treated as causative alternates of locative verbs of position, thus supporting the old Generative Semantics analysis of verbs as 'decomposable' into their underlying compound expressions.

For at least these reasons – lack of 'cover' or general verbs, unusual symmetry in 'put/take' distinctions, covert reference to positional distinctions – the 'put' and 'take' verbs of Yélî Dnye prove to be of unusual interest.

2. The language

Yélî Dnye is an isolate, with no clear relation to any other existing language. It is spoken on Rossel Island, about 450 km offshore from Papua New Guinea, by 4000 people. There is a sketch grammar of the language by Henderson (1995) and a full scale grammar in preparation by the first author (other works are few, and mostly by the first author). The language has 90 phonemes, some complex enough to require IPA tetragraphs, which are represented in the practical orthography used here by up to three characters: for example, *dn* and *nd* are unrelated phonemes (the first is a postalveolar

1. A fourth set, inchoative intransitives of getting into a position, also match the template (see Table 2), but these are semantically much more restricted in scope, applying only to animate beings – things that can get themselves into positions. The positionals and transitive PUT and TAKE verbs, in contrast, apply to the whole world (e.g., a cyclone can 'put' a mountain somewhere).

stop with a devoiced nasal release, the second a prenasalized postalveolar stop). The language is a case-marking language, thoroughly ergative in character, with elaborate cross-marking on the verb which codes for tense/aspect/person/number and many other factors like negation and counterfactuality. Especially relevant for this chapter are the following facts. Although locative NPs are marked by a rich set of postpositions, there is no marking of source and goal on NPs, since verbs subcategorize for one or the other, never both. Two thirds of verbs supplete, making for lexical mayhem: a single verb, understood as a semantic concept with a lexical frame, can have up to nine suppletive parts (i.e., different forms of the verbal lexeme), depending on such factors as tense, aspect, mood, person, number and negation. All nominal concepts, whether concrete or abstract, are classified by a set of positional verbs which are used in locative and existential statements.

3. The six core verbs for expressing PUT and TAKE

We turn straight to the lexicon of 'putting' and 'taking'. English is a poor metalanguage in this as in many other semantic domains, and specifically English speakers should note that English *take* has two rather unrelated meanings:

(1) remove from a location, as in 'take it off the table'
(2) transport, as in 'take it with you to New York'

All the following remarks concern only the first sense, hereafter TAKE in caps. Rossel Island language uses completely unrelated verbs for TRANSPORT.[2]

The best way to do crosslinguistic comparison of a semantic domain is to use the same stimulus materials across the languages to ensure that we have extensional equivalence. The remarks here are based on scenes of putting and taking, as depicted in the video stimulus materials developed by the Event Representation project at MPI (Bowerman et al., 2004). We ran these video clips with a total of 10 Rossel speakers (3 male, 7 female, aged between about 20 and 50). With one of these consultants intensive elicitation was conducted to establish the range of possibilities for expressing PUT and TAKE events. Before the application of these materials, our understanding of the relevant verbs in Yélî Dnye was actually mistaken. For it turns out that there is an underlying key to the system, which had completely escaped us. The key is a covert system of nominal classification by verbs.

Yélî Dnye employs a set of positional verbs for all static descriptions and existential statements. This classifies entities – whether material or immaterial – in three ways, according to whether they take the 'standing', 'hanging' or 'sitting' positional verb

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Table 1. Positional Verbs (with inherently continuous aspect)

		'sit/lie'	'stand'	'hang'
Indicative, Proximal tense	**Sing/Dual**	*tóó*	*kwo*	*t:a*
	Plural	*pyede**	*wee*	*t:a*
Non-Indicative, or Non-Proximal tense	**Sing/Dual/Pl**	*ya*	*kwo*	*t:a*

* Increasingly, young people are regularizing this form, and replacing it with *tóó té* 'sit Intransitive+Contin. Aspect+Prox.tense+Plural-Subject'; similarly, *wee* is sometimes replaced with *kwo té*. Speakers who use *pyede* will only optionally use the plural enclitic *té* – marking the plurality once is sufficient.

(see Levinson, 2000a, 2006a).[3] As is the norm in this language, the verbs have suppletive forms, shown in Table 1.

The collocations are not always as one might expect: a plate or bowl 'stands' on a table, people 'sit' but animals 'stand', and a shoe 'hangs' on someone's leg, the sun 'sits' but the moon 'hangs'. For abstract and vaporous objects there are also assignments: 'steam' stands, but smoke 'hangs', darkness 'sits' but dawn 'hangs', thirst 'hangs' but happiness 'sits', etc. For physical objects, there are underlying principles that govern the assignment of a positional verb to the corresponding nominal concept, but these are not simple, and conventional collocations may overrule physical principles (see Levinson, 2000a). Apart from these special conventional collocations (which have to be learned by heart), assignment involves such factors as whether an object is free-standing or attached, whether it projects from a ground, whether it has a long vertical axis or not, and so on. A schematic decision tree for choosing the appropriate positional verb is shown in Figure 1.

Any locative statement, and any existential statement, positive, negative or interrogative, requires one of these verbs.[4] In terms of the typology of different kinds of positional verbs, Yélî Dnye belongs to the language type that has a small set of contrastive verbs which classify referents by canonical position – alternative collocations can be used to signify that the referent is not in its canonical position (see Ameka & Levinson, 2007).

The assignment of nominal concepts to positional verbs turns out to be absolutely crucial for deciding which PUT or TAKE verb to use; for each of the positional verb categories ('sit', 'stand', 'hang') there is a corresponding specialized PUT verb and a specialized TAKE verb. Or to put it another way, the six main PUT and TAKE verbs

3. There is one other verb that plays a similar role in locative and existential statements, namely *m:ii*, meaning 'be located in the medium, or move with the characteristic motion of, the natural kind' (so of fish it means be swimming in water, of birds it means be flying in air). However, it is an infrequent verb, and plays a much smaller role in the classification of nominals (distinguishing only between animals and the rest).

4. In contexts where the object is unknown, 'sitting' is the default.

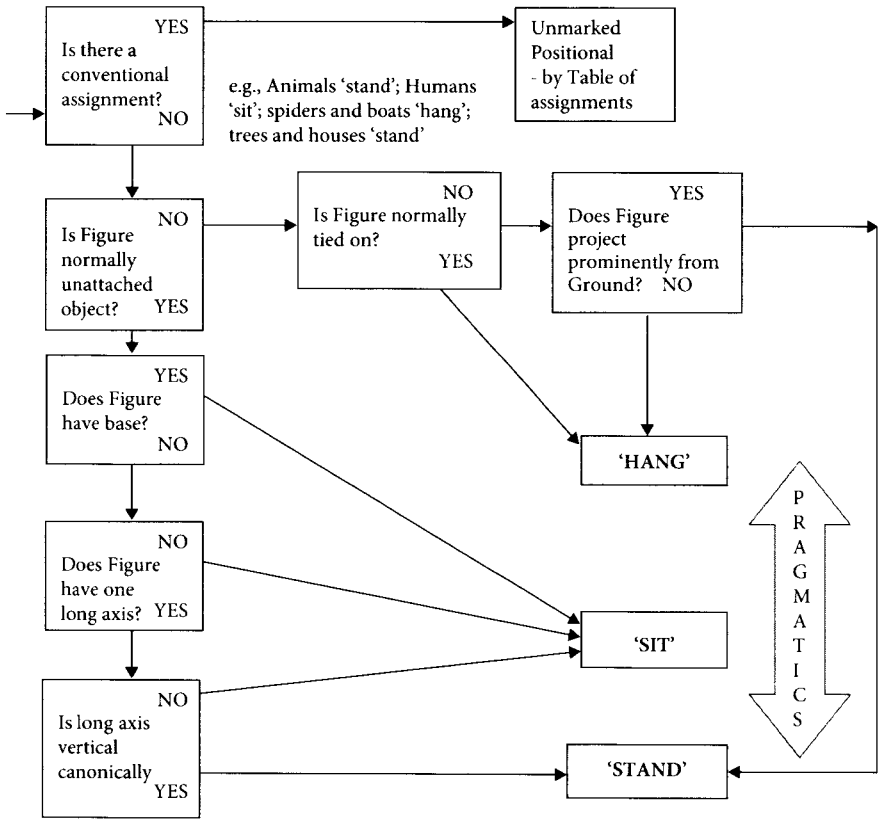

Figure 1. Choosing a Positional Verb: Semantics of novel applications

are strictly subcategorized following the same categories used for the three stative positional verbs. Thus if an object 'stands', it is 'put (standing)', and 'taken (standing)', although there is no superficial (formal or lexical) relation between the three verbs – it is only a shared semantic category. To make this clear, consider the sentence in (3) (placement verbs are in bold type in the examples):[5]

5. Glosses in the examples include the following abbreviations:
1, 2,3 – 1st, 2nd, 3rd person
Cert – evidential certainty
CI – Continuous Indicative
Close – deictically proximal
dualS – dual subject
ERG – Ergative
Indef – Indefinite
ImmPast – Immediate Past

(3) scene 101 (take cup off table)
kaapî tapil mbêmê ka ***kwo,*** *pyópu ngê da* ***y:oo***
cup table on is standing girl ERG 3past.perf. take.standing
'The cup was standing on the table, a girl took (standing) it.'

Here, since one uses the stative positional 'stand' for any object with a base or vertical long axis (Levinson, 2000a), the TAKE verb must be the corresponding 'take-standing' verb *y:oo* 'take (of standing object)'. Nothing else will do. In general, usage seems very consistent with this rule: use the TAKE or PUT verb that corresponds to the positional that would have been employed. The responses to some of the stimulus clips in the PUT and TAKE series illustrate this perfectly:

(4) scene 118 (take flower out of hair)
kwodo mê ka kwo, mbêmê yi 'ne'ne ngma a ***kwo,***
maiden again is standing on.head tree flower Indef is standing.
'Again a girl is standing, a tree flower is standing on her head,

pyââ ngmê ngê kada ***y:oo.***
woman Indef ERG Cert.3PresCI+Close take.standing.thing
a woman takes.standing.thing (removes the flower),

kêma ***kââ***
Cert.3.Again put.standing.thing
she stood it back again (stuck it back in again).'

Note that a flower is held to *kwo* 'stand' when inserted in hair, and so the corresponding TAKE verb is *y:oo* 'take (a standing thing)' and the corresponding PUT verb is *kââ* 'put (a standing thing), stand a thing up'.

Example (5) illustrates the use of the 'take (of hanging thing)' verb. The 'hang' positional verb basically applies to any attached or tied-on object unless it projects stiffly from a ground object – thus socks are said to 'hang' (*t:a*) on feet, and consequently one takes them off with the verb for 'take (of hanging thing)', *ngee*:

(5) scene 126 (take off sock)
kî pini ngê yuwo soksi a dê ***t:a*** *mo,*
this man TOPIC lower.leg.LOC socks 3PresCI dual hanging dualS.intrans
'This man has two socks hanging on his lower legs,

intrans – Intransitive
LOC – Locative
past.perf. – past perfect
PI – Punctual Indicative
Pres. – Present
ProxPastPunct – Proximate Past Punctual
RemPast – Remote Past
TOPIC – 'as for NP'

kpââlî woni yi mbêmê dê yé,
upper.leg the.one lower.leg on.top 3ImmPast put.sitting
he put (sitting) his calf on the other thigh,

socksi da ngee, woni da kuwo
sock 3ImmPast+Close take.hanging, the.one 3ImmPast+Close left
he took (hanging) a sock off, the other he left on.'

If we take into account the corresponding internally caused verbs ('make oneself stand up', etc.), each semantic category ('sitting', 'standing', 'hanging') has a tetrad of verbs, as shown in Table 2.

Note that these PUT and TAKE verbs are at the highest general descriptive level – more detailed ones also exist, but one cannot find more general verbs. Furthermore, usually only one verb is applicable. An additional curiosity of the 'take' verbs is that they all obligatorily require the grammatical category +Close, a portmanteaux form of the preverbal inflection that typically indicates motion towards the deictic centre. This helps to distinguish them from their homonyms, and makes sense as a narrative shift of the deictic centre to the subject's (the taker's) point of view.

So far, the verbs have been given in their citation form. However, most verbs in the language have two or three suppletive forms, depending on such factors as tense, aspect and whether or not there is a following inflectional enclitic Levinson, 2007. The main suppletive parts for the PUT and TAKE verbs are shown in Table 3. These are mostly tense and aspect suppletions ('followed root' suppletions occur where there is a following inflectional enclitic, mostly triggered by dual/plural subjects); imperative suppletions are not shown here.

These six verbs of putting and taking, which distinguish whether the object placed or removed canonically 'sits', 'stands' or 'hangs', are the unmarked verbs of PUTTING and TAKING – there is no verb that is semantically general over these distinctions which at the same time has anything like the same generality of application. But there are in contrast more specialized verbs of PUTTING and TAKING, with glosses like 'stuff in', 'pull out', 'stick body part in', 'attach, stick', 'unstick', etc., which ignore the canonical collocations with positional verbs and instead make different semantic

Table 2. Correspondence between positional verbs and verbs of PUT and TAKE

Stative Positionals (intransitive)	PUT Causative (transitive)	TAKE Undo Causative (transitive) +CLOSE	TAKE A POSITION Active (intransitive)
kwo 'be standing'	*kââ* 'put standing, stand something up'	*y:oo* 'take standing, take something which stands'	*ghê* 'stand up'
tóó 'be sitting'	*yé* 'put sitting, put something down'	*ngî* 'take sitting, take something which sits'	*yââ* 'sit down'
t:a 'be hanging'	*t:oo* 'put hanging, hang something up'	*ngee* 'take hanging, take something which hangs'	*kaali* 'make oneself hang' (e.g., a flying fox)

Table 3. Suppletive parts of the three major PUT and three major TAKE verbs

PANEL A:

PUT verbs and their parts				
PUT	**proximal tenses**	**followed root**	**remote past**	**continuous aspect**
kââ 'put (standing)'	*kââ*	*kaa*	*kââ*	*kapî*
yé 'put (sitting)'	*yé*	*(yé)*	*yó*	*yiyé*
t:oo 'put (hanging)'	*t:oo*	*t:ee*	*tângo*	*teemî*

PANEL B:

TAKE verbs and their parts				
TAKE	**proximal tenses**	**followed root**	**remote past**	**continuous aspect**
y:oo 'take (standing)'	*y:oo*	*y:ee*	*yângo*	*yémî*
ngî 'take (sitting)'	*ngî*	*(ngî)*	*ngódu/ngêêdî*	*ngêênî*
ngee 'take (hanging)'	*ngee*	*(ngee)*	*ngópu*	*ngêêpî*

distinctions. We will take these up in Section 5, but first we sketch some grammatical properties of the six core PUT and TAKE verbs.

4. Notes on the argument structure and syntax of the core PUT and TAKE verbs

The syntactic properties of the three verbs belonging to each class, the PUT verbs and the TAKE verbs, appear to be identical. They are all canonical transitive verbs with overt subjects in the ergative case and overt objects in the absolutive case. But the PUT verbs subcategorize for a locative GOAL (the place where the thing is put), while the TAKE verbs subcategorize for a locative SOURCE (the place from which the thing is taken). In the language, location is indicated by a rich series of locative postpositions,[6] but there is no ablative/locative marking for motion, so GOAL and SOURCE are distinguished only by the collocating verb:

(6) scene 119 (take stone out of pot of water)
a. *pyââ ngê d:ââ k:oo mbywuu kêdê yé*
woman ERG pot inside flesh Cert3ImmPastPl put.sitting
'The woman put (sitting) the flesh inside the pot.'

6. For the kinds of distinctions these postpositions make, see Levinson, 2006a.

b. *pyââ ngê d:ââ k:oo mbywuu kada ngî*
woman ERG pot inside flesh Cert3ImmPastPI+Close take.sitting
'The woman took (sitting) the flesh (from) inside the pot.'

The two sentences are parallel in their structure with the same agentive ergative NP *pyââ ngê* 'the woman' (*ngê* is the ergative marker), and the same patient absolutive NP *mbywuu* 'flesh, meat' (absolutives are unmarked). Note too that the a. (PUT) and b. (TAKE) sentences have the identical noun phrase, *d:ââ k:oo* 'inside the pot', indicating the Ground – given a PUT verb this must be interpreted as GOAL, and given a TAKE verb as SOURCE. Like English *put*, these verbs thus subcategorize for a locative NP – they are three-argument verbs. Unlike English, all these NPs are optionally expressed. Ergative and absolutive NPs are cross-referenced on the verb – here the ergative in the PUT sentence is cross-referenced by the preverbal clitic *kêdê*, and in the TAKE sentence by its variant *kada* encoding deictic 'hither' (an obligatory feature of TAKE verbs). The patient is cross-referenced by a null enclitic, coding proximal tense, singular agent and singular object. The Ground (Source/Goal) NP has no cross-referencing, but can equally be omitted.

This pattern whereby SOURCE or GOAL is indicated by the choice of verb, which subcategorizes (lexically stipulates) for one or the other, is entirely general in the language. Verbs of motion, for example, subcategorize for a GOAL as in (7) or a SOURCE as in (8). As is typical for inanimate sources and goals, (7) shows no case marking or postposition on the goal NP; note, too, that although the source NP in (8) is marked with a postposition (*k:oo* 'inside'), this indicates the source location, not the direction or path.

(7) (Levinson 2006a)
Wulî dê lê
Wulî.Island ImmPast3s go(ProxPastPunct)
'He went (today) to Wulî Island.'

(8) (Levinson 2006a)
ngomo k:oo da pwii
house inside 3ImmPast+Deic exit
'He exited from the inside of the house.'

It follows from these subcategorization facts, together with the unmarked nature of SOURCE/GOAL NPs, that it is impossible to construct a single clause which specifies both SOURCE and GOAL for a single motion event (see Bohnemeyer et al., 2007). For example, for the stimulus clip in which a woman takes an apple from on top of a pile of books and moves it to on top of a boot, the shortest possible full description was with two clauses:

(9) scene 051 (take apple from pile of books and move to shoe)
kî pyópu ngê yi kigha puku.dmi dyuu mbêmê da
that woman ERG that fruit book pile on 3ImmPastPI+Close

ngî, *boot* *mbêmê* *dê* *yé*
took.sitting boot on 3ImmPastPI put.sitting
'The woman took (sitting) the fruit from the book pile and put (sitting) it on the boot.'

Note how this forces a segmentation of an event into two subevents, with interesting implications for universals of event construal (Bohnemeyer et al., 2007).

5. Pragmatic pre-emption: The six core PUT and TAKE verbs vs. more specific verbs

5.1 More specific verbs of insertion and extraction

The six core PUT/TAKE verbs represented the bulk of responses to our elicitation stimuli (73%), but they were apparently not applicable to all the scenes depicted. There are a number of more specialized verbs of PUTTING and TAKING deemed more appropriate for particular scenarios. In general, these specialized verbs can be applied when the object to be placed or removed is not static in its location simply by force of gravity, but rather is held in place by other forces (e.g., by pressure or adhesion). Thus if the object transferred will freely 'sit', 'stand', or 'hang' when in the container, then the relevant PUT or TAKE verbs (as above) can be used. But if not, then other verbs are relevant.[7] Altogether, fifteen placement verbs were used in responses to the PUT stimuli, and thirteen verbs for the TAKE scenes (see Appendix 3 for list). These additional verbs involve such semantic parameters as 'tight fit', 'attach to', or 'immerse, bury', or they may involve special kinds of figure or theme (the object placed or removed), for example. Like the six main PUT and TAKE verbs, these verbs often seem to come in doublets, with equal specificity for goal-oriented and source-oriented verbal concepts. Verbs used to describe the stimulus set included the following (see also Table 4, below):

1. TIGHT FIT verbs. One important pair of verbs is:
   knî – 'insert, stuff in, push in'
   pêêdî – 'extract, pull out'

These presuppose 'tight fit' (i.e., Figure is held in Ground by pressure), and are used for scenes like putting a knife into a sheath, a rag into a hole, etc. These conditions seem

7. There is some, perhaps diachronic, relation between some of the PUT and TAKE verbs and verbs of GIVING and TAKING. For example, the verb for 'give to 3rd person' is *y:oo*, with the identical suppletive parts as 'take a standing thing' – the sense is disambiguated by the obligatory 'hither' inflection with the 'take' verb (so perhaps the semantic bridge is 'take something to give it'). Similarly, *ngee* 'take a hanging thing' is the verb used to 'receive something from someone's hand' – here the semantic bridge is more evident. GIVE verbs mark the GOAL with the dative case.

to pre-empt the use of the six main PUT/TAKE verbs, that is, speakers prefer the use of the more specific verbs in these situations.

2. ADHESION is another semantic parameter of importance. The language has special adpositions of adhesion (e.g., *p:uu* 'stuck on', *'nedê* 'stuck on by spiking', etc.). The relevant matching verbs here are:
   d:ii (past *dyîngo*, continuous *dimi*) – 'to attach', 'put on' (of e.g., paint, plaster)
   pywalî – 'to remove an attached thing'

So one could say:

(10) (elicited)
Yidika ngê ngomo p:uu dumo ***dyîngo,*** *awêde da*
Yidika ERG house attached.to wall attached, today 3ImmPastPI+Close
pywalî
unattach
'Yidika attached the wall to the house (some time ago), now he's unattaching (removing) it.'

In contrast, where the object is conceived of as 'hanging' (like a picture on a wall), the canonical 'put/take-hanging' verbs are utilized:

(11) 128 (take picture off wall)
kî dmââdî ngê horse w:ââ yi kââ d:omo paa da
that girl ERG horse dog their picture wall on 3ImmPastPI+Close
ngee
take.hanging
'This girl took(hanging) the picture of the horse and dog.'

In contrast to:

(12) 028 (put poster on wall)
kî pyópu ngê horse u kââ ngmê da 'nuw:o
that woman ERG horse its picture Indef 3ImmPastPI+Close bring
'd:omo p:uu dê ***t:oo***
wall attached 3ImmPastPI put.hanging
'A woman brings a picture of the horse and puts (hanging) it on the wall.'

3. FIGURE or GROUND SPECIFICITY. Special Figures or Grounds motivate other special verbs. For example, *kwolo* 'put animate thing in' (e.g., pig inside corral), including 'put bodypart inside', the converse of which is the more general *pêêdî* 'pull out' (note though in (13) the speaker uses the basic 'take.sitting' verb as converse, focussing on the orientation of the object). This verb and the following *pudo* are thus specialized to theme animacy.

(13) 135 (take pen marker from a hole)
kî pini ngê yi kn:ââ u mênê kóó dê ***kwolo,***
that man ERG tree base its inside hand 3ImmPastPI put.animate.in
marker y:i da ***ngî***
marker there 3ImmPastPI+Close take.sitting
'This man put his hand in the tree base, and took (sitting) the pen there.'

For scenes of this kind, we also find the use of *pudo* 'put body part inside enclosed space' (e.g., hand or foot in hole):

(14) 123 (put hand in hole)
yi kn:ââ ka ***podopodo***
tree base 3ImmPastPI put.bodypart.in
'She's putting her body part in the tree stump.'

Another verb is specialized to goal specificities: *kmênê* 'put something in water or soil, i.e., immerse, bury', as in:

(15) 024 (put head in bucket)
mbodo kêdê ***kmênê*** *buketi k:oo, mbwaa d:ââ k:oo*
head Cert3sImmPastPI immerse bucket inside water pot inside
mbwaa d:ââ k:oo
water pot inside
'She put.in.water her head in the bucket, the water pot.'

Another kind of specificity has, in addition to requiring a container goal, special aspectual qualities, requiring the caused state to persist: *ché* 'put in container (basket, pot, canoe) and leave there' as in the following:

(16) 012 (drop apple into bag)
kî pini ngê kéme kígha peekî k:oo dê ***ché***
that man ERG mango fruit bag inside 3ImmPastPI put&leave
'He puts mango inside a bag.'

Note that although *ché* is an important, relatively frequent PUT IN verb, it is quite specialized and could not be used to describe, for example, the insertion of a stick in a hole (not a container) nor a hand in a bucket (since the hand would have to be severed to meet the condition that the theme be left in the place described). For the latter case, *pudo* is the specialized verb, used especially to describe things like putting one's hand under coral to look for shell fish. The verb *kwolo* is specialized to putting animate things (including hands, heads, etc.) into enclosures – e.g., putting a pig inside its fence or a chicken in a coop, although in response to the stimulus set it was also used for putting hands into holes. (See Burenhult, this volume, for another language, Jahai, with specific bodypart-insertion terms.)

Table 4. Some more specialized PUT and TAKE verbs

PANEL A:				
		PUT IN		
PUT	**proximal**	**followed**	**remote past**	**continuous**
ché 'put in and leave'	*ché*		*chângo*	*ch:em*
kwolo 'put animate in, etc.'	*kwolo*	*kalê*	*kwólu*	*kîgha*
knî 'stuff in', 'put up (of hands)', put in boat'	*knî*	*km:êê*	*kmungo*	*kmîmî*
pudo 'put bodypart in hole'	*pudo/pódu*	*(pudo/pódu)*	*(pudo/pódu)*	*pudopudo/ pwede*
kmênê 'put in water, bury'	*kmênê*	*(kmênê)*	*(kmênê)*	*kmênêkmênê*
PANEL B:				
		TAKE OUT		
TAKE	**proximal**	**followed**	**remote past**	**continuous**
pêêdî 'pull'	*pêêdî*	*(pêêdî)*	*pêêdî*	*peede/paapaa*
pw:ii 'cause to exit'	*pw:ii*	*(pw:ii)*	*pw:ii*	*pw:iipw:ii*
mbyw:o 'pull out (normally vertical thing)'	*mbyw:o*	*mbyw:ee*	*mbyongo*	*mbwyêmî*

Some details of these additional PUT IN/TAKE OUT verbs are provided in Table 4. Note that here the generally expected asymmetry between PUT and TAKE seems to hold – consultants used a wider array of PUT verbs than TAKE verbs (which differed principally in manner of extraction, or in the case of the causative 'make exit', avoids a specific positional commitment).

5.2 Pre-emption and variability across speakers

Pragmatic pre-emption plays a crucial role in language understanding: for example, if today is Friday and I say "Friday", you assume I don't mean today. The principle of course is Grice's (1989: 26) first maxim of Quantity 'Make your contribution as informative as is required', and the outcome is that *ceteris paribus* the more specific statement is generally expected where applicable (Levinson, 2000b). Saying "He dived off and went to shore" instead of "dived off and swam to shore" is not false, but leaves open the possibility that the speaker has other means of transport in mind. The same relation holds between our six core PUT and TAKE verbs and the more specific verbs just elucidated – we can, generally speaking, expect the more specific ones to be used where applicable, but also expect a certain variability in use.

We examined carefully the consistency of usage across our ten consultants who did the PUT and TAKE task. We half expected variation due to age and sex, but generally speaking that is not what we found. Obviously, there is room for alternative construals of the same event (e.g., construing a scene where someone puts their hand into a hole in a tree and pulls out a pen as a 'put in' scene). But setting these aside, we found that cross-speaker variability was relatively limited. For the 'put' events, twenty-five of the thirty-four target scenes (74%) had at least 70% agreement about the placement verb. For 'take' events a comparable proportion (21/29, or 72%) had at least 70% agreement about the TAKE verb.

The main source of discrepancy across speakers, other than misconstrual, was precisely in the area of pre-emption. Some scenes in particular seemed to invoke the need for more specific descriptions. Of the 34 PUTTING events, just two scenes elicited the *least* consistency in responses across consultants (where four or fewer speakers used the same verb). These were:

(17) 009 drop book accidentally onto floor: (3 verbs were used: ***ghay***, 'fall', ***pw:ono*** 'drop', ***dyimê*** 'fall to ground')

Nine of our ten consultants construed this scene intransitively, but using different fall verbs. The tenth misconstrued the scene as a 'carrying' event.

(18) 012 drop apple into bag (4 verbs were used – ***yé*** 'put(sitting)', ***ché*** 'put inside', ***kwolo*** 'put animate thing in', ***kéé*** 'discard')

Here only three of our consultants used the core 'put' verb *yé*, others preferring the more specific *kéé* 'throw', *ché* 'put in and leave', or *kwolo* which has as its core meaning 'put animate thing in'.[8] By avoiding the canonical verb, speakers can implicate that this was something other than a normal placement event, e.g. it was careless, or seemed specially deliberate.

Of the TAKING events, six scenes had a comparable level of inconsistency (four or fewer speakers using the same verb) across all the speakers' responses:

(21) 113 knock over bucket so blocks spill out (7 verbs – transitive and causative ***pii*** 'spill/pour', ***vy:a*** 'hit', ***chedê*** 'pour', ***pyw:oo*** 'spill', and intransitive ***ghay*** 'fall', ***dyimê*** 'fall out', ***pwii*** 'come out', and ***danê*** 'drop')

Not unexpectedly, this unintentional displacement item, at best a marginal 'putting' scene, has no focal description.

(22) 114 take candle out of candle stand and 115 take a cucumber out of a recorder case (the same 4 verbs were used for each – ***y:oo*** the canonical 'take. standing' verb, ***mbyw:o*** 'pull out vertical long thing', ***pêêdî*** 'pull, tug', ***pw:ii*** 'cause to exit').

8. *Kwolo* can refer, for example, to the action of putting a hand into a hole, or equally, to putting something into the hole using the hand.

Here we see both the appropriate use of the core 'take.standing' verb, and pre-emption by an even more precise verb (e.g., for pulling out long vertical things, like posts, or pulling out of tight fit).

(23) 116 take stone out of pocket, (4 verbs – ***mbyw:o*** 'pull out vertical long thing', ***pw:ii*** 'cause to exit', ***pêêdî*** 'pull, tug', ***pwy:o(o)*** 'find, spill' and three misconstrued scenes)

Interestingly, the majority vote here construes the ground (Source) as a vertical sheath, and imposes that verticality on the contents.

(24) 123 take hand out of hole in tree (3 verbs – ***pêêdî*** 'pull, tug', ***pw:ii*** 'cause to exit', ***mbyw:oo*** 'pull out vertical long thing' (and 5 misconstrued scenes[9])

Here the majority vote focuses on manner of extraction ('pull, tug').

(25) 124 take head out of bucket (2 verbs – ***pêêdî*** 'pull, tug', ***y:oo*** 'take.standing') (the rest were misconstrued)

Note that, as the head would normally stand on the body, here the extraction reflects the positional assignment.

We can conclude that the six-verb core system is widely shared and comparably used across our ten speakers. These verbs are part of the core vocabulary. Variation is found just where on theoretical grounds one might expect it, namely where pragmatic pre-emption seems to require a more specific verb.

5. Summary and conclusions

The core Yélî Dnye PUT and TAKE verbs are of some interest for the following reasons:

- They indicate that the three-way classification of nominal concepts forced by the positional verbs is a thorough-going underlying semantic template which shows up in other domains, like PUT and TAKE verbs. Such systematic verbal classification of nominal concepts in PUT and TAKE verbs is crosslinguistically unusual. The relation between the positional verbs, the set of active intransitive verbs, and the PUT and TAKE verbs constitutes a 'semplate' – a recently noted type of covert organization in the lexicon (Levinson & Burenhult, 2009).
- The six main verbs are unusual in exhibiting an exact symmetry, with three distinctions each in the PUT vs. TAKE subdomains – most languages display more subdivisions in the PUT subdomain than the TAKE one. This parity seems generally true even of the more specific verbs described in Section 5. The systematic

9. This scene was widely misconstrued as a PUT scene.

nature of the oppositions indicates that PUT and TAKE forms a coherent domain or semantic field in this language, which may be less evident in other languages.

- The argument structure of these verbs specifies three arguments for each: an agent, a patient and a SOURCE or GOAL argument. Case is assigned as follows: ergative to agent, absolutive to patient, and unmarked oblique to the SOURCE or GOAL Ground argument, which may take a (static) locative postposition within its scope (so the whole may be understood as, for example, 'from inside the house'). The verb itself assigns SOURCE vs. GOAL to the Ground argument. A clause can thus only have either a SOURCE or a GOAL NP, but not both.
- There are no more general verbs for PUT or TAKE, but there are more specific ones. Some of these also come in PUT vs. TAKE doublets (e.g. 'stuff in' vs. 'pull out of tight fit'). The specific constraints encoded include force dynamics as well as specific properties of the patient (as in 'put bodypart in') or goal (as in 'put.in.water', 'put.in.canoe').

When we began the research detailed in this paper, we had no idea that this little semantic domain would yield the semantic coherence that we have found in the underlying semplate that is expressed in the six core PUT and TAKE verbs. As so often in linguistic research, investigation finds the 'blind watchmaker' at work in every nook and cranny of linguistic organization. Such are the marvels of cultural and linguistic evolution.

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Appendix 1. Summary of responses to 34 PUT stimuli clips, 10 consultants

clip code	clip description	Example: Yidika responses	% agreement on PUT verb
001	put cup on table	*tapil mbêmê dê* ***kââ*** 'she puts it on the table'	100% *kââ* 'put standing'
002	put plastic cup on table with mouth	*dê* ***kââ*** 'put it on the box'	90% *kââ* 'put standing'
003	put banana on table with long tongs	*tapil mbêmê dê* ***yé*** 'she puts it on the table'	100% *yé* 'put sitting'
004	put armload of books on table	*mbême dî yé té* 'put them on the table'	70% *yé* 'put sitting', 20% *kââ* 'put standing' 10% *wó*
005	put a fistful of rice on a table	*pileti k:oo dê* ***yé*** *(té)* OR ***ché*** 'she puts the [keemi nut kernels] on the plate'	90% *yé* 'put sitting', 10% *wó* 'gather multiple things'
006	put box up on shelf	*poki u kwo têdê dê* ***kââ*** 'stood it [box] in its proper place'	70% *kââ* 'put standing', 30% *yé* 'put sitting'
007	put book on floor	*mbwódo dê* ***yé*** 'she put it on the ground'	100% *yé* 'put sitting'
008	drop book deliberately onto floor	*mbwódo dê* ***kéé*** 'she drops it on the ground'	80% *kéé* 'toss', 10% *pw:ono* 'drop', 10% *yé* 'put sitting'
009	drop book accidentally on floor	*da* ***ghay*** 'it fell'	40% *ghay* 'fall', 40% *pw:ono* 'drop', 10% *dyimê* 'fall/throw'
010	toss book on floor	*mwada katéni dê* ***d:ii*** 'he throws it on the other side'	30% *d:ii* 'throw', 60% *kéé* 'toss', 10% *yé* 'put sitting'
011	put apple in bowl	*mwee k:oo dê* ***yé/ché*** 'she puts it in the bowl'	100% *yé* 'put sitting'
012	drop apple into bag	*peekî k:oo dê* ***ché*** 'he puts it [mango] inside a bag'	30% *ché* 'put inside/drop', 30% *yé* 'put sitting', 20% *kéé* 'toss', 20% *kwolo* 'put in'

clip code	clip description	Example: Yidika responses	% agreement on PUT verb
013	flip block off notepad into bowl	*nmoko k:oo dê yé/ché / dê kéé* 'then she puts it in a wooden dish' (*tóó* > *yé*) – or threw it'	60% *kéé* 'toss', 30% *yé* 'put sitting', 10% *dyimê* 'fall/throw'
014	put a candle into a candle stand	*dê kââ* 'stood it [candle] up there'	100% *kââ* 'put standing'
015	put celery bunch into a recorder case	*yina woo u ngm:ââ u mênê dê kââ (knî)* 'she puts (standing) the seed inside its cover'	70% *kââ* 'put standing', 20% *kwolo* 'put in', 10% *ché* 'put inside/drop'
016	put stone into pocket	*u trousers mênê dê yé* 'she put them in her pocket'	20% *yé* 'put sitting', 50% *kwolo* 'put in', 30% *kââ* 'put standing'
017	stuff rag into car exhaust	*kpîdî pee y:i dê knî* 'he stuffs a bit of cloth there'	30% *knî* 'insert/stuff into', 60% *kââ* 'put standing', 10% *mywenê* 'push'
018	put flower into hair – skewer	*dê kââ* 'she stood it' [flower]	90% *kââ* 'put standing'
019	put stone into pot of water	*d:ââ k:oo dê yé* (or *ché*) 'puts it inside the pot'	90% *yé* 'put sitting', 10% *ché* 'put inside/drop'
020	pour liquid into container	*d:ââ k:oo da pii* 'she poured it into a pot'	90% *pii* 'spill/pour', 10% *chedê* 'pour out'
021	spill water onto table when pick up glass	*mbwaa tepil mbêmê da chedê* 'she spills the water on the table'	10% *chedê* 'pour out', 80% *pii* 'spill/pour',
022	give a cup to someone	*ka kaapî kêdê y:oo* 'she gives her that cup'	100% *y:oo* 'take standing/give'
023	put hand into hole in tree	*kóó yi kn:ââ puu u mênê dê knî* 'she pushes her hand inside the hole in the tree base'	20% *knî* 'insert/stuff into', 50% *kwolo* 'put in', 10% *pudo* ' put bodypart in', 10% *kââ* 'put standing'
024	put head into a bucket	*bucket k:oo mbodo dê knî* 'he stuffs his head into a bucket'	20% *knî* 'insert/stuff into', 20% *kmene* 'bend/put in water', 50% *kââ* 'put standing'
025	put a hat on head	*mbémê dê kââ* 'he put it on it'	100% *kââ* 'put standing'
026	put boot on foot	*yuu wéni pee n:ii u mênê dê knî* 'he put (stuffed) his right side leg inside that one'	10% *knî* 'insert/stuff into', 90% *t:oo* 'put hanging'

clip code	clip description	Example: Yidika responses	% agreement on PUT verb
027	hang rope over tree branch	*yi kpââlî kn:ââ vyuwo dê* ***yé*** 'she puts it [the bundle of rope] on the base of the branch'	50% *yé* 'put sitting', 40% *t:oo* 'put hanging', 10% *d:ii* 'throw'
028	put poster on wall	*p:uu dê* ***t:oo*** 'puts in on the wall'	100% *t:oo* 'put hanging'
031	put saucer on top of cup	*kaapî mbêmê dê* ***kââ*** 'put it on the cup'	80% *kââ* 'put standing', 20% *yé* 'put sitting'
033	put on coat	*da ngî, kóó woni wu, pee n:ii u mênê dê knî, kóó woni wu pee n:ii u mênê dê knî, yed:oo u mbwo dê* ***t:oo*** 'he takes(sitting) it, he pushes one hand in one side, he puts the other in the other side, then he puts(hanging) on his trunk'	100% *t:oo* 'put hanging'
035	put pen in a hole	*u mênê dê* ***yé*** 'she puts it in [the tree hole]'	70% *yé* 'put sitting', 10% each *kwolo* 'put in', *mywene* 'push', and *ngmo* 'hide'
050	take bag of corn from table and move to chair	*kî dmââdî ngê rice kwédi tapil mbêmê* ***da ngî****, chair mbêmê* ***da yé*** 'The girl took(sitting) the rice on the table, and put(sitting) it on the chair'	100% *ngî* 'take sitting', *yé* 'put sitting'
051	take apple from pile of books and move to shoe	*kî pyópu ngê yi kigha puku dmi dyuu mbêmê* ***da ngî****, boot mbêmê* ***dê yé*** 'The lady took(sitting) the fruit from the book pile and put(sitting) it on the boot'	100% *ngî* 'take sitting', *yé* 'put sitting'
052	push suitcase from car to tree	*car u kuwó kî pini ngê péé kmee d:uu kââ ka d:êmêd:êmê, dê nuw:o yi kmee d:uu* ***kââ*** 'At the back of the car, the man pushes the basket, he moves it to under the tree, he went and put it there'	SOURCE: variable, GOAL: 80% *kââ* 'put standing'

Appendix 2. Summary of responses to 29 TAKE stimuli clips, 10 consultants

clip code	clip description	Example: Yidika responses	% agreement on TAKE verb
101	take a cup off a table	*da* ***y:oo*** 'she takes it' [cup]	100% *y:oo* 'take standing/ give'
102	take plastic cup off table with mouth	*da* ***y:oo*** 'she takes it'	100% *y:oo* 'take standing/ give'
103	take banana off table with long tongs	*tapil mbêmê dê* ***ngî*** 'took it from on top of the table'	80% *ngî* 'take sitting'
104	take armload of books off table	*tapil mbêmê da* ***ngî*** 'she took it [book pil] from the table'	80% *ngî* 'take sitting'
105	take a handful of beans from flat surface	*tapil mbêmê da* ***ngî*** *té* 'she takes [a pile of pea seeds] on the table'	80% *ngî* 'take sitting'
106	take box down from shelf	*da* ***y:oo*** 'takes it [from its place']	80% *y:oo* 'take standing/ give'
107	take magazine from floor	*da* ***ngî*** 'she takes(sitting) it'	90% *ngî* 'take sitting'
111	take orange from box	*yi kigha kada* ***ngî*** 'he takes the tree fruit [from the carton on the table] '	90% *ngî* 'take sitting'
112	dump blocks out of tin	*mbwódo da* ***chedê*** ['no translation']	10% *chedê* 'pour out', 10% *kéé* 'toss', 80% *pii* 'spill/pour'
113	knock over bucket so blocks spill out	*bucket dê tpaa. chêêpi kuwa dê* ***pw:ii*** *dmi* '... the bucket turns over. The stones come out. '	20% *pii* and 20% *chedê* 'pour out', 10% each *pw:ii* 'cause to come out', *ghay* 'fall', *dyîmê* "fall', *pyw:oo* 'spill', *danê* 'drop'
114	take a candle out of a candle stand	*da* ***y:oo***. 'she takes it [from its place]'	30% *y:oo* 'take standing/ give', 40% *mbyw:o* 'pull out of tight fit', 20% *pêêdî* 'extract', 10% *pw:ii* 'cause to come out'

clip code	clip description	Example: Yidika responses	% agreement on TAKE verb
115	take a cucumber out of a recorder case	*pumkini u ngm:ââ u mênê da* ***pêêdî*** 'she pulled the pumpkin out' [tight fit]	30% *pêêdî* 'extract', 30% *mbwy:o* 'pull out of tight fit', 30% *y:oo* 'take standing/ give', 10% *pw:ii* 'cause to come out'
116	take stone out of pocket	*chalk ghi y:i da* ***pêêdî*** 'she pulls out a piece of chalk (da ngî would be OK too)'	10% *pêêdî* 'extract', 10% *pyw:oo*, 30% *mbwy:o* 'pull out of tight fit', 20% *pw:ii* 'cause to come out'
117	take rag out of car exhaust	*kpîdî pee n:ii dê kââ, mê kada* ***pêêdî*** 'he is pulling out the cloth which he put in (*kââ*)'	60% *pêêdî* 'extract', 40% *mbwy:o* 'pull out of tight fit'
118	take flower out of hair – unskewer	*da* ***y:oo*** 'she took it out/off'	100% *y:oo* 'take standing/ give'
119	take stone out of pot of water	*da* ***ngî*** 'she takes it (out)'	90% *ngî* 'take sitting'
120	pour water out of a tin	*mbiye mbêmê da* ***chedê***, *ó mbiye mbêmê da* ***pii*** 'she pours (***chedê*** or ***pii***) it away on the grass'	80% *pii* 'spill/pour'
122	take a coke can from someone	*kwólo da* ***ngee*** 'he gets it from her hand'	50% *ngee* 'take hanging', 50% *y:oo* 'take standing/ give'
123	take hand out of hole	*myembó mêdê* ***pêêdî*** 'and then pulled it (hand) out again'	30% *pêêdî* 'extract', 10% *mbyw:o* 'pull out of tight fit', 10% *pw:ii* 'cause to come out'
124	take head out of bucket	*dîyo mêdê* ***pêêdî*** 'then she pulls it out [head from bucket']	30% *pêêdî*, 30% *y:oo* 'take standing/ give'
125	take off hat	*kmîmêkmîmê da* ***y:oo*** 'she takes off the hat'	100% *y:oo* 'take standing/ give'
126	take off sock	*socksi da* ***ngee*** 'took off a sock'	100% *ngee* 'take hanging'

clip code	clip description	Example: Yidika responses	% agreement on TAKE verb
127	unhang rope from tree branch	*yed:oo da* ***ngee*** 'then he took it' [string bundle, from branch]	90% *ngee* 'take hanging'
128	take poster off wall	*da* ***ngee*** 'he took (hanging)'	70% *ngee* 'take hanging', 30% *pywali* 'take off attached thing'
129	put suitcase out of room, while staying in room*	*k:ene kuwa dê* ***kââ*** 'she stood it outside the door'	90% *kââ* 'put standing'
130	take suitcase out of elevator, going out of room	*da* ***y:oo*** *kuwa dê pwii* 'he took it and went out'	90% *y:oo* 'take standing/ give'
131	take saucer off cup	*pileti kaapî mbêmê da* ***y:oo*** (ó *da* ***ngî***), 'takes (take-stand or take- sit) the plate'	70% *y:oo* 'take standing/ give', 30% *ngî* 'take sitting'
133	take off coat	*u nkuwo kpîdî u mbwo da* ***ngee*** 'she took her coat'	100% *ngee* 'take hanging'
135	take pen out a hole	*da* ***ngî*** 'he took it [the marker]'	80% *ngî* 'take sitting'

*Informants treated scene 129 as a 'put' scene.

Appendix 3. Glossary of placement and removal verbs used in PUT/TAKE task (citation form) (the 6 core verbs are in boldface type)

Verb	Gloss	# of responses using the verb
kââ	**'stand something up'**	**103**
yé	**'put(sitting) something down'**	**102**
t:oo	**'hang something up'**	**33**
y:oo	**'take standing/give'**	**90**
ngî	**'take sitting'**	**83**
ngee	**'take hanging'**	**46**
ché	'put inside, drop'	5
chedê	'pour something out, spill'	7
danê	'drop (from above)'	1
d:ii	'throw something, kick something'	4
dyimê	'fall to ground, throw'	2
ghay	'fall'	5
kéé	'toss, discard something you don't want'	23
kmênê	'bend, put something in water'	3

Verb	Gloss	# of responses using the verb
knî	'insert, stuff into'	8
kwolo	'put in, release, let go'	16
mbwy:o	'pull something out of clothes, tight fit'	16
mywenê	'push something, e.g. canoe, suitcase'	3
ngmo	'hide'	1
pêêdî	'extract, pull out'	19
pii	'spill, pour' 'put in, release, let go'	35
pudo	'put bodypart in hole'	1
pw:ii	'cause to come out'	5
pw:ono	'drop'	5
pywalî	'uncover, open up, bird flying, take off/remove attached thing'	2
pyw:oo	'spill, pull something out of clothes, tight fit, find something'	3
wó	'gather multiple things'	3
TOTAL	27	624