APPENDIX 5.

Conjunctions And Alternatives in Kpelle
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Every language has its own system of putting two different
things, or two sets of things together to be considered as one
unit or as one group. Moreover, each language has its own sys-
tem of indicating alternatives. In English, for instance, we
may group John and Peter together by the use of the conjunction
"and" (John and Peter have come). And we may show alternatives
in various ways by the use of the word "or" (John or Peter should
come. Do your work or you be punished. For your work, I will
give you two dollars or some cloth.

Now, if we observe the Kpelle language, we will discover
different ways or systems of putting things together and also
different ways of showing alternatives. For instance, in put-
ting things (i.e., nouns or pronouns) together, we use the pro-
nouns /dà/, /kà/, kwà/, and the adjectival /-pɛlɛɛ/. And for
indicating alternatives we use several words or phrases, such as
/kpàa/, /kpàa/, /kpaa máɔ/, /à wàla kɛ́ tí, and /yíni fêi/.

dà, kà, kwà

/dà/ which is often used as a pronoun (third person plural)
may be said to be used superficially like an English conjunction.
We can say /Fúlomo dà Tòkpa da líi/, Fulomo and Topka are going.
The first /dà/ may be considered as a conjunction joing Fulomo
and Topka, and the second /dà/ is a pronoun whose antecendents
are Fulomo and Topka. However, in the real sense, the first
/dà/ is not used as the conjunction "and" is used in English.
Basically speaking, /dà/ is here used as pronoun referring to
~~Fkom~~ Fulomo and Topka. In fact, the limitation in the use of
this word as a conjunction may clearly show that it is not, in
the real sense a conjunction. For instance, we cannot use it
to relate two persons of either the first person nor the second
person. That is, we cannot say /yɛ́ dà Sumo ka pá/, you and
Sumo come. Neither can we ~~sayxtíx~~ /ńyáa da yɛ́ kwaâ pá/, you
and I have come. But it is always used only for the third
person. /díi kɛ́-selaai dà wule tóo-selaa daâ pá/, the workers
and the singers have come. The literal translation would be,
(the workers they the singers they have come). Hence the
word /dà/ is often used as a pronoun instead of a conjunction.

Similarly, /kà/, which is a pronoun indicating the second person plural, may be said to be used as a conjunction. We may say /Tòkpa, kà Noai ka pá/, Tokpa, you and Noai must come. Many persons may, perhaps, claim that is used in this sense as "and" is used in English, but as a pronoun. For instance the literal translation of the above Kpelle sentence would be, 'Topka, you Noai you come'. Here one discovers that the plural form of the pronoun indicate that the speaker is referring to two persons. Hence, in relating two or more things, /kà/ is still used as a pronoun, but the form of the pronoun and the names of the things help to provide the condition in which the sense of conjunction presents itself. At this point, however, it is needless to discuss /kwà/, because it is used exactly as /dà/, and /kà/, only that it indicates the first person plural. And also we must not forget to note that these pronouns, which are used to connect two or more things, always appear in the plural forms. For instance, /dà/ is the plural form of /à/, /kà/ the plural form of /yà/, and /kwà the plural form of /và/.

-pɛlέɛ....mà

If we look at the use of the phrase /-pɛlέɛ...mà/, we will discover that it functions more like an English conjunction. Its use often conveys the concepts of "and", "plus" (as is used in mathematics), and "addition" (adding things together). Further, unlike the pronouns /dà/, /kà/, and /kwà/, /-pɛlέɛ...mà/ can be used for all persons, that is, for the first person as well as the second and third persons. For instance, we may say /Fúlomo pɛlέɛ Tòpka mà daã pá/, Fulomo and Topka have come. Or we may say /yá ipɛlέɛ ɪ̀ ñyáa mà kwaã pá/, you and I have come. Also /è pà a wúru pɛlὲɛ tée mà/, he brought sticks and chickens. But this word is mostly used in expressing mathematical concepts. When we say /-pɛlέɛ...mà/, we mean adding one thing to another, as we would say two plus two, /feerɛ ɪ̀ pɛlέɛ feerɛ mà/. Hence, /-pɛlέɛ...ma/ is more like a conjunction than are /dà/, /kà/, and /kwà/.

Or: kpàa, kpaa máɲ, à wàla kɛ́ ti, and yíni fêi

As it has been said above, we use several words or phrases in Kpelle to show alternatives, such as /kpàa/, /kpàa máɲ/, /à wàla kɛ́ ɫɫ tí/, /yíni fêi/. And if we observe these words, we will discover that they convey exactly the same meaning, although they may be used in different contexts.

Kpaa

The word /kpaa/ in itself means no; it is not so; I do not agree. But ɫɫ it may be used to show two or more alternatives. We may say /sɛve kpàa kolɔ, nɛnê sɛ́ ya ɔ̀wêlii/, cloth or a book, which do you like. /Ya lîi kpàa ífé lîi?/, are you going or you are not going? These statements are showing two alternatives between which one must choose. And they are not alternatives which indicate equivalence or equality.

Kpàa máɲ

The phrase /kpàa máɲ/ means in itself no-also, ɫɫɫˋ /máɲ/ meaning also. It is also used to present two or more alternatives. Hence, it is used as "or" in English. But in presenting alternatives by the use of /kpàa máɲ/, the speaker is showing his free will; he is leaving everything entirely to the discretion of the listener, showing him that he does not care for his choice. Here the speaker does not show any concern or any friendly feelings. For instance, I may tell someone, /í tíi kɛ́-oo kpàa máɲ í fɛ́ tíi kɛ́-oo, ḿvɛ́ kpàa ni/, whether you work or not, I do not care.

À wàla kɛ́ tí.

This phrase actually means "if that does not happen, or if it does not happen in that way". It is used in the sense that if one of the two things does not happen, the other one should happen. The curious thing about this form of "or" is that one alternative is given which may not be altered unless it is impossible to be accomplished. And this impossibility may be caused by the fact that the listener may fail to accept the alternative, or that the alternative in itself is difficult to accomplish. But usually,

the speaker gives one alternative.   For instance, I may tell
someone, /zevei wáa à wàla kɛ́ tí, í bɛ́rɛi mù kóɔ/, wash the
clothes if not clean the house.   In this case the speaker
is giving one alternative but under the condition that if
this alternative is impossible, there is a possibility of
another alternative.   Hence, the listener is not given two
things between which he can choose, but one which he must do
unless he fails, in which case another alternative will be
possible.   Another use of this phrase conveys the idea that
you should work or you do not eat, /tíi kɛ́, à wàla kɛ́ tí í
fé pâi íláa mií/.

Yíni fêi

This phrase means "if that is not", or "that is not",
and is used exactly as /à wàla kɛ́ tí/.   It presents one
alternative, but making an allowance for another alternative.
There is always the major alternative which the speaker
emphasizes.   /lí í pá à yá, yíni fêi, í pá à koi/, go and
bring water if not wood.   However, in the second use of this
phrase, like the phrase /à wàla kɛ́ tí/, one alternative is
given, which is only changed as a result of not accepting the
alternative.   For instance, I may tell someone, /lí í pá à
yá, yíni fêi, í fé pâi íláa mií/, go and bring water, if not,
you will not eat.

In short, beside /-pɛlɛɛ...mà/ the words /dà/, /kà/, and
/kwà/, in the real sense, are not used as conjunctions, but
as ~~pronoun~~ pronouns.   And regarding "or", one may say various
phrases are used in Kpelle almost exactly as "or" is used in
English, but only that in several cases the Kpelle speaker
gives only one alternative, instead of two.

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