

Ewe dental and retroflex stops

Ewe belongs to the 'Kwa' group of languages and is spoken in **Ghana and Togo**, West Africa. G. Ansre, writing in the 1960s, considers it one of the best documented West African languages, and gives the number of speakers as nearly 2 million.

It is a good example of the quite numerous languages that contrast two stops in the region from dental to what might loosely be called retroflex.

L&M characterize the distinction as laminal dental (or dentalalveolar) vs. apical (post)-alveolar, the latter often being referred to (and transcribed) as retroflex. See L&M p.25/26 for palatograms and further discussion. They feel that the apical sound shows only slight retroflexion, possibly less than the retroflex sounds of **Hindi**, which in turn probably has less retroflexion than the corresponding sounds in Dravidian languages such as Tamil or **Malayalam**.

*laminal
dental*

*apical postalveolar
(retroflex)*

ḍḍì

ṛṛì

▶ “long”

▶ “burial”

(Notes: (1) the accent indicates low tone, (2) L&M use the subscript dot, e.g [ḍ] , rather than the traditional IPA symbol used here, for lightly retroflexed sounds.)

[Click here](#) for sonagrams of both words.

It is very difficult to see much difference in the formants. However, the dental shows more noise in the region around 5kHz at stop release, indicating more affrication than the apical retroflex. The greater amount of frication can also be seen in the timewave ([click here](#)).

[Additional words with dental stops](#)

[Additional words with retroflex stops](#)