

## NOUN CLASSES IN TUTRUGBU

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This paper discusses the noun class system in Tutrugbu. Breaking away from earlier descriptions that treated the classes as a paired singular-plural set, I adopt the single-set notion of noun classes. I distinguish the classes based on morpho-syntactic criteria such as agreement on demonstratives, a specific determiner, and numeral quantifiers. Also considered are subject-verb agreement and pronominal forms. I show that the system is undergoing decay with speakers, particularly the younger ones, using generalized agreement makers or dropping them altogether. This has led to the merger of some classes based on the phonological shape of the noun-class prefixes.

Cet article discute le système de classes nominales en Tutrugbu. Plutôt que de traiter ces classes comme un ensemble de singuliers-pluriels comme il a été fait auparavant, j'adopte la notion de "single-set" des classes nominales. Je distingue les classes basées sur des critères morphosyntaxiques, comme l'accord sur les démonstratifs, un déterminant spécifique, et les quantifieurs numériques. L'accord entre le sujet et le verbe ainsi que les formes pronominales seront également considérées. Je montre que le système s'affaiblit à cause de ses locuteurs, particulièrement les jeunes, car ils utilisent des marqueurs d'accord généralisés ou les abandonnent tout à fait. Ceci a conduit à la fusion de certaines classes, en fonction de la forme phonologique des préfixes de celles-ci.

### 0. INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses noun classes in Tutrugbu, a Kwa (Niger-Congo) language spoken in Ghana. I discuss the criteria for identifying the classes and take a preliminary look at the semantics of the words that occur in them.<sup>1</sup> According to Schuh (1995:128), the term noun class is used in two distinct ways in the description of African languages. The first use refers to "a single set of morphological concords which may show up as affixes on noun stems, affixes on modifiers, and pronominal referents to nouns." By contrast, the second use refers to "a paired set of concords [of the previous type] where one member of the pair has a singular referent and the other member of the pair is the plural corresponding to the singular." Previous discussions of the noun class system in Tutrugbu have adopted the latter definition of noun classes. This has led to the situation where a particular class could occur in more than one pair because it happens to be the plural of more than one class. Schuh argues that this is actually a gender system and should be kept apart from class identification.

In this paper, I adopt the first notion of noun classes. I identify morpho-syntactic criteria for distinguishing the various classes. These are distinct prefixes that show up on the nouns, morphological sets that mark agreement between the nouns and numeral quantifiers, the specific but non-definite determiner **ŋi** 'a certain', the demonstrative, as well as those that mark subject-verb agreement. Other criteria that I discuss are the resumptive pronoun in a construction which I characterize as the "identification construction", and other pronominal forms which have anaphoric function. One thing that stands out in the study of this system is that it is undergoing decay such that some distinctions that might have existed earlier (e.g., Heine 1968, Ford 1973) are no longer

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available. For instance I will argue that there has been a merger of different **kɛ-** and **bɔ-** classes.

The paper is organized as follows, in section 1 I discuss vowel harmony in Tutrugbu. This discussion is necessary for understanding variation in the noun class prefixes. Section 2 looks at earlier noun classes identified by Heine (1968) and Ford (1975). Both treat the classes as paired items. In section 3, I identify individual classes based on criteria introduced in the previous section. I show that the noun class system in Tutrugbu is decaying and that younger speakers are dropping agreement patterns made by adults. Section 4 discusses the gender of the classes while section 5 concludes the paper.

## 1. VOWEL HARMONY IN TUTRUGBU

Tutrugbu belongs to Heine's (1968) KA- branch of Ghana-Togo-Mountain (GTM) languages. It is spoken on the western side of the Ghana-Togo mountain and is bordered by Avatime, Tafi and Ewe. The ethnonym for the speakers is **Batrugbu** (also pronounced **Batugbu**, singular is **Atrugbu**). However, the official name for the language and people is Nyagbo (its ISO is 639-3:nyb)<sup>2</sup>. The majority of the speakers, with the exception of those from one town called Emli, also describe themselves and their language as Nyagbo to outsiders. In this section, I discuss vowel harmony which is important in accounting for the different types of prefixes that occur in the various classes. However, before tackling vowel harmony, I say a few words about tone which is an important typological property of Tutrugbu.

There are three level tones and what appear to be two contour tones in Tutrugbu. The level tones are high, low and mid, as illustrated by the tones of the form **mɔ** in the following examples: high as in **àmɔ** 'breasts', low as in **àmò** 'he/she saw', and mid as in **ámɔ** 'he/she is seeing'. One contour tone is rising as in **mě** 'be non-existent' as in **ishùmè mē** he/she is not healthy (literally, his/her health is non-existent) and **dǒ** 'be thick'. Although the language appears to have falling tone as well, the only word with a falling tone that I've got in my data is **kpâ** 'be dry'. In this paper I mark high and contour tones. I now turn to a discussion of vowel harmony.

Tutrugbu has seven oral and seven nasal vowels. It also has an active cross-height vowel-harmony system in which affixes assimilate to the tongue root position and, sometimes, the height of the root vowel. As I show presently, rounding also plays a minor role in assimilation. The vowels are given below:

	Front		Central	Back	
	[+ATR]	[-ATR]	[-ATR]	[+ATR]	[-ATR]
High	i, í			u, ũ	
Mid	e, ě	ɛ, ě		o, ǒ	ɔ, ǔ
Low			a, ǎ		

Table 1. Vowels in Tutrugbu

To a large extent, these vowels participate in a cross-height harmony where the ATR value of a root and its height determines the vowel of a prefix. This means that a particular class prefix could have different realizations. An example of a harmony based on [ATR] is the **ɔ**-class prefix which is realized as / **o** / or /**ɔ**/ depending on

<sup>2</sup> Nyagbo is mostly spelled as Nyangbo in other literature. However, most of the people I worked with said they preferred the spelling without the n.

whether the initial vowel of the root is [+ATR] (e.g. **o-pupú** ‘door’) or [-ATR] (e.g. **ɔ-kɔkɔ** ‘fowl’). Pronominal prefixes also assimilate to the [ATR] value of the initial vowel of the root, as shown by (1a) and (1b):

(1) Assimilating pronominal prefixes

a. Focus1-July-20-2007.006<sup>3</sup>

<b>ɛ-mɔ</b>	<b>yofó-áné</b>	<b>ba - dzě</b>	<b>tá- bha</b>
1SG-see	white.person-PL	3PL-woman	AM-two

I see white people two women.

b. **i-vũ**                      **eží**  
 1SG-catch                  thief  
 I caught a thief.

The choice of the pronominal forms is dependent on the [ATR] value of the verb root. Note that I stated that the initial vowel of the root is what determines the [ATR] of the prefix. This specification is necessary because vowels of bisyllabic words do not necessarily have the same tongue root position. An example is **o-mumóé** ‘lemon’ which has a [+ATR] class prefix because of the tongue root of /mu/. Contrast this with **ke-klagbũ** ‘stone’ whose [-ATR] class prefix **ke-** is determined by /ka/. However, although /a/ is [-ATR] it is able to occur as the prefix of a [+ATR] vowel in one class which I discuss in section 3.6. An example is **a-kukolí** ‘bead’.

As I noted above, lip rounding plays a secondary role in the assimilation of the vowels, a phenomenon generally known as labial harmony. The interesting thing here is that unlike the general [ATR] harmony this process is not determined by the root. Instead, it is determined by the pronominal prefix. Rounding assimilation affects affixes such as the future affix **ba-** and the auxiliary **teŋu** ‘be able’. Compare (2a) to (2b) below:

- (2) a. **a-ba-téŋú**                      **á-pléno**                      **mé**  
 3SG-FUT-be.able                  SC-help                      1SG  
 He/she will be able to help me.
- b. **o-bo-tóŋú**                      **á-pléno**                      **mé**  
 2SG-FUT-be.able                  SC-help                      1SG  
 You will be able to help me.

The future affix which is **ba-** in (2a) becomes **bo-** under the influence of the pronoun **o-** in (2b), and the /e/ of the auxiliary also changes to /o/. Labial harmony also plays a role in the realization of the definite article which has a free form **no**, and bound forms **-ɛ** and **-ɔ**. The affixal forms are dependent on the lip posture of the final vowel of the noun. Thus a noun ending in an unrounded vowel will take **-ɛ** while one ending in a rounded vowel will take **-ɔ**. Examples are **osíé** ‘the tree’ and **ebúó** ‘the dog’. In the case of lip rounding involving the definite article, ATR does not play a role. This is because ATR in Tutrugbu is regressive rather than progressive.

<sup>3</sup> Where an example is taken from an annotated text, the ID of the text which gives the file name, date the recording was done, and the line of the text is provided, as in (1a). The following abbreviations are used in glossing: 1 = first person, 2 = second person, 3 = third person, AM = agreement marker, CM = class marker, DEF = definite, FUT = future, IDEO = ideophone, NEG = negation, PERF = perfective, PL = plural, POSS = possessive, PROG = progressive, REP = repetitive, RP = resumptive pronoun, SG = singular, SPECI = specific.

Note that some speakers do not harmonize the pronominal prefix if it is the first person pronoun and precedes the future morpheme. Consider the examples below:

- (3) a. **ε-ba-ténú**            **vε**  
       1SG-FUT-be.able    go  
       I will be able to go.
- b. **i-ba-ténú**            **vε**  
       1SG-FUT-be.able    go  
       I will be able to go.
- c. **e-be-ténú**            **vε**  
       1SG-FUT-be.able    go  
       I will be able to go.

One would have expected the [+ATR] feature of the auxiliary verb **ténú** ‘be able’ to spread to both the future and the pronominal. However, this is not what happens in (3a). In (3b) although the pronominal changes to [+ATR], the future morpheme does not change. Speakers find the pronominal forms in the two sentences acceptable. This variation is due to the fact that there may have been a change in the vowel of the class prefix from /ɪ/ to /i/. Support for this suggestion comes from Tafi, the closest related language to Tutrugbu (considered by many to be a sister dialect of Tutrugbu) in which the first person pronoun remains -i. The discussion suggests that there is [+ATR] dominance in Tutrugbu. That is to say I assume that the unmarked form of these morphemes are [-ATR], and they are assimilated to [+ATR] when they occur with [+ATR] vowels of the root (cf. Casali 2003). In the next section, I provide the noun classes established in Tutrugbu by Heine (1968) and Ford (1975).

## 2. HEINE’S AND FORD’S TUTRUGBU NOUN CLASSES

As I mentioned in the introduction Heine’s (1968) and Ford’s (1975) description of the noun-class system is as a paired set of concords comprising the singular and the plural. Heine identifies eight such pairs while Ford identifies seven. These are provided in this section.

### 2.1. HEINE’S (1968) NOUN CLASSES

#### Class I. a-/ba-

a-/ba-	agã, bagã	‘animal’
ε/ba-	eyě, bayě	‘horse’
e-/be-	ebú, bebú	‘dog’
ø-/ba-	pampró, bapampró	‘bamboo’
ø-/be-	sefofo, besefofo	‘flower’

#### Class II. o-/ε-

o-/i-	ozĩ, izĩ	‘hole’
o-/ε-	otsré, etsré	‘leg’

#### Class III. ke-/bo

ke-/o-	kedzyá, bodzyá	‘meat’
ki-/bu-	kiplukpá, buplukpá	‘book’

#### Class IV. ke-/a-

ki-/e-	kidzõ, edzõ	‘road(s)’
ke-/a-	kepoté, apoté	‘cloth’

#### Class V. bo-/ba-

Bu-/be-	butú, betú	‘mountain’
bo-/ba-	bowá, bawá	‘medicine’

#### Class VI. ka-/bo-

Ke-/bu-	kevũ, buvũ	‘building’
Ka-/bo-	kazhwe, bozhwe	‘bird’

Class VII. **bɔ-/tɛ**<sup>4</sup>  
**Bu-/ti**  
**bɔ-/tɛ-**

Class VIII. **ka-/ba-**  
**Ke-/be- kelí, belí** ‘day’

One issue I discuss in section 3 is that the noun class system is decaying. As such, some of the distinctions noted by Heine are no longer being made. For example, I could not find a speaker who would accept the singular-plural distinction in class VII. A more remarkable change is the merging of classes that have similar prefixes such as **ka-** and **bɔ-** classes which we discuss below. Note that treating the classes as individual sets instead of paired sets would mean that the plural in classes I, V, and VIII could be the same.

## 2.2. FORD’S (1975) CLASSES

Class I	Sg.	Pl.	Class II	Sg.	Pl.
	<b>e-</b>	<b>be-</b>		<b>o-</b>	<b>i-</b>
	<b>a-</b>	<b>ba-</b>		<b>ɔ-</b>	<b>ɛ-</b>
	<b>ø-</b>	<b>be-</b>			
	<b>ø-</b>	<b>ba-</b>			
Class III	Sg.	Plu	Class IV	Sg.	Pl.
	<b>ki-</b>	<b>bu</b>		<b>ki-</b>	<b>e-</b>
	<b>ke-</b>	<b>bɔ-</b>		<b>ke-</b>	<b>a-</b>
Class V	Sg.	Pl	Class VI	Sg.	Pl.
	<b>bu-</b>	<b>be-</b>		<b>ke-</b>	<b>bu-</b>
	<b>bɔ-</b>	<b>ba-</b>		<b>ka-</b>	<b>bɔ-</b>
Class VII	Sg.	Pl.			
	<b>bu-</b>	<b>ti-</b>			
	<b>bɔ-</b>	<b>tɛ-</b>			

It can be seen that Ford’s classes are basically the same as Heine’s. The only difference is that he does not have Heine’s **ka-/ba-** class (VIII). One possible explanation for this is that Heine’s **ka-** class behaves like the singular of Ford’s class VI while its **ba-** component behaves like the plural of Ford’s class I.

## 3. DISTINGUISHING THE INDIVIDUAL CLASSES

In this section I discuss the individual sets of classes. First I use the prefixes with which the nouns occur as the point of departure for setting up potentially different classes. Then using agreement markers and pronominal forms, I sort out the ones that are variants of the same class from the ones that belong to distinct classes. Tutrugbu has eighteen etic forms. These are **a-**, **e-**, **ɛ-**, **Ø-**, **ba-**, **be-**, **o-**, **ɔ-**, **i-**, **ki-**, **ke-**, **ka-**, **bu-**, **bɔ-**, **tɛ-** and **ti-**. However, many of these prefixes group together as members of specific classes. The challenge is to identify these classes. This task is complicated by the fact that the noun class system in Tutrugbu is decaying. One clear sign of the decay is a generalization of agreement markers. Among several speakers,

<sup>4</sup> Heine gives **buŋú** and **bɔyé** as the examples for this class. He translates the former as “pilz” (i.e., ‘mushroom’) and the latter as “palmzweig” which is ‘palm’. Our consultants only accept **tiŋú**, the supposed plural, as the form for mushroom. They say that there is no plural form. Secondly, they do not recognize **bɔyé** but note that **teyé**, its supposed plural form, refers to palm fronds. This form has no singular. This is symptomatic of some of the changes in the class system which I discuss in the paper.

**a-** is used to cross-reference the subject on the verb when it is singular, and **ba-** is used when it is plural. Consider the examples below which illustrate a generalization of the **a-** prefix:

(4) Generalizing agreement markers

- a. **a-nyé-é**      **á-lé**      **bɔ-pá**      **mɛ**  
 CM-man-DEF AM-be.at CM-house inside  
 The man is at home.
- b. **o-kutú-ó**                      **a-kpase**                      **a-gbɛ**      **nó**      **mɛ**  
 CM-orange-DEF      AM-be.contained CM-bowl DEF inside  
 The orange is in the bowl.
- c. **ke-he**                      **a-má**  
 CM-struggle AM-not:be.at  
 There is no problem.
- d. **Ba-no**                      **ba-lɛ**                      **bɔ-pá-m**  
 CM-person AM-be.at CM-house-inside  
 The people are in the house.
- e. **Bɔ-dzyá**      **be-kpe**                                      **né**      **a-gbɛ**      **nó**      **mɛ**  
 CM-meat AM-become.plenty PREP CM-bowl DEF inside  
 (Different kinds of) meat abound in the bowl. (cf Essegbey et al 2006)

I show presently that **anyé** ‘man’, **okutú** ‘orange’, and **kehe** ‘struggle’ belong to different classes. As such one would expect them to have different agreement markers. However, they all occur with the **a-** prefix which, historically, was only appropriate for **anyé** ‘man’. In the same way, **banɔ** ‘people’ and **bɔdzyá** ‘foods’ belong to different classes. However, the **ba-** prefix, which really belongs to the former, is gradually being generalized across all plural classes.<sup>5</sup> The generalization which is based on number can be compared to a similar process in Igo where, in addition to number, animacy plays a role in the choice of agreement marker. Gblem-Poidi (2007) has the following agreement paradigm:

	Animate	Inanimate
Sg	<b>u-</b>	<b>ki</b>
Pl	<b>bu-</b>	<b>ke-</b>

According to the above paradigm, verbs in Igo take **u-** and **bu-** prefixes if the nouns they agree with are animate singular and plural respectively, and **ki-** and **ke-** if they are inanimate singular and plural respectively.

In Tutrugbu, some speakers drop the agreement prefix altogether, as shown by example (5) taken from a folktale about the spider and the orphan which was narrated by a 76-year old man:

<sup>5</sup> The appropriate prefixes for the other words are discussed below.

- (5) Dropping agreement marker before verb

**ko ki-tsikpĩ nɔ tɔ bɔ-dɔ**  
 Just CM-pot DEF cook CM-thing  
 Just then the pot cooked (food). (Spider-and-orphan.046)

Tɔ ‘cook’ does not take any prefix in (5).

One possible cause for the decay in the Tutrugbu noun class system could be a tendency to drop either the whole prefix or the initial consonant of the prefix of nouns that occur as complements of verb and prepositional phrases, as well as heads of the possessive noun phrase (i.e., when they occur clause or phrase internally). Consider examples (6a-c):

- (6) Dropping noun class prefixes

- a. **ba-pé vɔbɔ, fakɔ ba-ba-mɔ vɔbɔ?**  
 3PL-search frog where 3PL-FUT-see frog  
 They looked for frog, where were they going to find frog?
- b. **empa n ábha n' ú-vũ-ɔ-m**  
 Bed DEF top PREP CM-room-DEF-inside  
 on the bed in the room.
- c. **i-ti-nyí m' élí nyé**  
 1SG-NEG-know 1SG.POSS mother name  
 I don't know my mother's name.

All the sentences or phrases were used in narrations. The citation form for ‘frog’ is **kevɔbɔ**, while that of ‘room’ is **buvũ**, and that of ‘name’ is **kinyé**. In the sentences, they are realized as **vɔbɔ**, **uvũ** and **nyé** respectively. In the case of **buvũ** ‘room’, the initial consonant of the prefix is deleted even though the vowel is maintained. It is conceivable that the constant use of nouns without their prefixes can lead to a situation where speakers forget the class to which they belong. More specifically they can lead to the merger of classes with identical prefixes.

While the tendency to leave out the agreement marker or use a generalized one is common, that is not to say that all speakers of Tutrugbu fail to mark subject-verb agreement properly at all times. As the next two examples from the spider and orphan folktale which I referred to in (5) indicate, some speakers do mark agreement, at least some of the time:

- (7) Marking agreement on the verb

- a. **ki-tsikpĩ nɔ ke-yɔlɔ bɔ-dɔ tɔ**  
 CM-pot DEF AM-stop CM-thing cook  
 The pot stopped cooking. (Spider-and-orphan.050)
- b. **ge o-kotokú nɔ lo-yí so-ɔ,**  
 As CM-sack DEF AGR-be.full therefore-TP,  
**ge a-á-ba bɔ-ɲaɲa túlí bɔ-wɔle**  
 as 3SG-PROG-come CM-food SPECI AM-fall  
 Because the sack was full, as he went some of the food fell out. (Essegbey et al 2006)

In (7a) **kitsikpí** takes the appropriate agreement marker (i.e. **ke-**) while in (7b) **okotokú** ‘sack’ takes **lo-** as its agreement marker, and **boŋaŋa** ‘food’ takes **ba-**.

The contrast between sentences like (5) and those like (7) raises the following questions, who are the people dropping the agreement marker and when do they do it?<sup>6</sup> To answer these questions I went through narrations which I elicited using Mayer’s (1969) “Frog where are you?” picture book. The book is about a boy (**anyenúvæ**), a dog (**ebú**), a frog (**kevóbó**) and a bird (**kazhwe**). The frog, which is a pet of the boy, escapes and the boy goes out into the woods with the dog to look for it. Among the adventures they encounter during their search is one in which the bird flies out of a hole in a tree while the boy is climbing it. Speakers narrated the story after going through the picture book and constructing a mental picture of what happened. Such narrations necessarily involved mention of the four entities because they were engaged in one activity or the other. For the purposes of this paper, I reviewed the narrations of six children between the ages of 11 and 17, and three adults (including one female) between 64 years and 76 years. The recordings are very revealing of the change that is taking place. First of all they show that both young and adult speakers are more likely to drop the agreement marker rather than use it. Secondly, if the agreement marker is used, it is more likely to be the generalized **a-** and **ba-** prefixes exemplified in (4a-e). Of the four protagonists, the **a-** prefix is appropriate for **anyenúvæ** ‘boy’ and **ebú** ‘dog’ only. The third, and most striking thing about the recordings, is that not a single child used the appropriate agreement marker for verbs occurring with **kevóbó** ‘frog’ and **kazhwe** ‘bird’. Sentences (8a) and (8b) from an 11-year old boy illustrate the strategy that the children used:

- (8) a. **kele e-bú-ó á-kpé tákpúnó tumpá nó me**  
 then CM-dog-DEF AM-put head.DEF bottle DEF inside  
 Then the dog put its head inside the bottle.
- b. **ke-vóbó wóssó tumpá nó me**  
 CM-frog lie bottle DEF inside  
 Frog lay in the bottle.

**Ebú** ‘dog’ triggers the **a-** marker on **kpé** ‘put’ in (8a) while **kevóbó** ‘frog’, by contrast, fails to trigger any such agreement on **wóssó** ‘lie’ in (8b). Adults, on the other hand, occasionally adopted the appropriate agreement markers. For instance, the 76 year old male who narrated the spider and the orphan folktale also said the following:

- (9) a. **ko ke-vóbó ke-ka-lí ke-siakpá**  
 Just CM-frog AM-REP-be.at CM-ground  
 And the frog was still on the ground.
- b. **ka-zhwe nó ka-bhéte predede**  
 CM-bird DEF AM-do IDEO  
 The bird flew.

Note that contrasting example (5) in which the narrator left out the agreement marker with (9) in which he uses the appropriate markers are indications that it is not only the young speakers who make these “mistakes”. Instead, what this suggests is that the Batrugbu have the tendency to leave out agreement markers altogether or, when they

<sup>6</sup> These questions were raised by an anonymous reviewer.



choose to use it, use a generalized marker. The data do show that younger speakers do this more than adults.

In contrast to agreement marking where adult language use is somewhat different from that of children, pronominal use is similar among speakers of all age groups: both adult and young speakers either use the generalized pronominals **a-** for singular entities and **ba-** for plural entities, or they use the appropriate class marker. Consider example (10) which was said by a 17-year old boy:

- (10) **ka-zhwe tǎlí kóéyi.**  
 CM-bird SPECI exit  
**ke-kóéyi ko ke-tǎ a-nuvo hǔ ke-siakpá**  
 3SG-exit just 3SG-push CM-child hit CM-ground  
 A certain bird came out. It just came out and pushed (the) child to the ground.

There are two sentences here with the second consisting of two clauses. Although **kóéyi** ‘exit’ does not take any agreement marker in the first sentence, both it and **tǎ** ‘push’ which occur in separate clauses in the second sentence are assigned the appropriate pronominal prefixes.

The above situation has led to the merger of some class markers, and occasional disagreements among speakers as to what constitutes the appropriate agreement marker for a class. In what follows, therefore, I do not restrict myself to one diagnostic. Instead, I combine distinctions made in three different agreement patterns with the pronominal forms of the classes. The agreements are between the head noun and numeral quantifiers, the specific but non-definite determiner, **í** ‘a certain’, and a resumptive pronoun in a construction which I have termed the “identification construction”. The identification construction is a topic construction in which a noun occurs with the demonstrative which functions as a topicalizer. The demonstrative takes an agreement marker and serves to pick an entity expressed by the verb from among several others. Note that the demonstrative also agrees with the noun, thereby giving us an extra agreement diagnostic. A resumptive pronoun is then prefixed to a following identification copula **nu** ‘to be’ which is in turn followed by either a possessive noun phrase or a possessive pronoun. The result is a construction that translates as ‘this/that x, he/she/it is mine’ or ‘this/that x, he/she/it is y’. Consider (11a) and (11b):

- (11) a. **a-nyé a-le ye-nú m’ á-ka**  
 CM-man AM-this RP-be 1SG:POSS CM-father  
 This man, he is my father.  
 b. **o-kútú ó-le o-lo-nu mo-yé**  
 CM-orange AM-this RP-??-be 1SG-POSS  
 This orange, it is mine.

The resumptive pronouns **ye-** and **o-lo-** enable us to distinguish between the classes to which **anyé** ‘man’ and **okútú** ‘orange’ belong. Unlike (4a) and (4b) where they both take the **a-** marker, that generalization is not possible in the identification construction. Using these diagnostics enable us to distinguish nine individual noun classes in Tutrugbu. These are **a-**, **ba-**, **ɔ-**, **ε-**, **ke-**, **a2-**, **ka-**, **bo-**, and **tε-**. They are discussed in turn.

## 3.1 THE A-CLASS

Most nouns belonging to this class take an **a**-prefix and are singular in number. Examples are **agǎ** ‘animal’, **ánobɔɛ** ‘cat’, and **ano** ‘person’. The nouns take **a-** or **e-** as their subject-verb agreement marker (the choice depends on the ATR of the verb’s initial vowel), and **ye-** as the marker before the identification copula. Both are illustrated below:

- (12) a. **kele ano a-lɔ né mpá n’ ábha**  
 Then CM-person AM-rise PREP bed DEFtop  
 Then the person got up from the bed.
- b. **a-nyé-é e-é-lu a-gudũ**  
 CM-man-DEF AM-PROG-rear CM-tiger  
 The man is rearing a tiger.
- c. **a-nɔbɔɛ á-le ye-nu ma-yé**  
 CM-cat AM-this RP-be 1SG-POSS  
 This cat, it is mine.

Note that the agreement marker for nouns in this class is **a-** before the [-ATR] root **lɔ** ‘rise’, and **e-** before the [+ATR] root **lu** ‘rear’. The resumptive pronoun, on the other hand, is **ye-**.

There are also nouns in this class that take an **e-** or **ɛ-** prefix. The example below in which nouns with these prefixes take **ye-** before the identification copula supports placing them together in the **a**-class:

- (13) **e-bú/ɛ-sɔ á-le ye-nú ma-yé**  
 CM-dog/CM-horse AM-this AM-be 1SG-POSS  
 This dog/horse is mine.

There are also nouns in this class that do not have a prefix at all. Most of these are words that are borrowed from Ewe, the dominant regional language. Examples are **séfofo** ‘flower’ and **blafóé** ‘pawpaw’. As examples (14a) and (14b) illustrate, these nouns also take **a-** as their subject-verb agreement marker and **ye-** before the identification copula.

- (14) a. **blafóé á-lé m’ á-hɔɛ**  
 pawpaw AM-come 1SG:POSS CM-hand  
 I have pawpaw (literally pawpaw is located in my hands).
- b. **séfofo á-lé ye-nú má-yé**  
 flower AM-this RP-be 1SG-POSS  
 This flower is mine.

From the following discussion we note that nouns belonging to the **a**-class trigger **a**-agreement on the demonstrative pronoun while taking **ye-** as the resumptive pronoun in the identification construction. Another agreement morpheme for nouns belonging to this class is the **te-** affix (**te-** for –ATR) in numeral quantifiers and the specific but non-definite determiner. This is illustrated by such examples like **anyé ténúkpó** ‘one man’, **ánobɔɛ ténúkpó** ‘one cat’, **ebú ténúkpó** ‘one dog’, **séfofo ténúkpó** ‘one flower’ and **blafóé ténúkpó** ‘one pawpaw’, for the numeral quantifier. The determiner which has **-li** as its root is illustrated in **anyé télí** ‘a certain man’, **blafóé télí** ‘a certain pawpaw’, and **dzyoké télí** ‘a certain antelope’. Let us now consider the pronominal form.

The pronominal form of the **a**-class is **a-** before a [-ATR] root vowel and **e-** before a [+ATR] root vowel. Sentences (15a) and (15b) could be given in response to the question ‘where is the man’ or ‘where is the flower?’

- (15) a. **a-le**      **bɔ-pá**      **mɛ**  
           3SG-be.at    CM-house    inside  
           He/it is at home.
- b. **e-tsokú**    **bu-vũ-ɔ**      **mɛ**  
           SG-enter    CM-room-DEF    inside  
           He/it entered the room.

In sum, using the subject-verb agreement marker, the agreement markers for the numeral quantifier, the demonstrative and the specific determiner, coupled with the resumptive pronoun before the identification copula and the pronominal form of the classes, I have identified the prefixes **a-**, **e-**, **ɛ-**, and **ø-** as belonging to the **a**-class. There is another **a**-class in which nouns also take **a-** and **e-** prefixes. This class, which I refer to as the **a2**-class, is discussed in section 3.6. As I show there, some of its agreement markers and pronominal form are different. In terms of its semantics, the present **a**-class is the main receptacle for individually occurring animate entities. Almost all human entities and most animals belong to this class. Furthermore, it happens to be the default class for most newly borrowed words thereby making it rather varied.

### 3.2. THE **BA**-CLASS

Nouns belonging to this class are in the plural. Although entities expressed by nouns in the **a**-class also occur in this class when there are several hence plural, there are a few nouns in the **bɔ**-class (discussed below) which also have their plural nouns occurring in this class. Nouns in the **ba**-class take a **ba-**, or **be-** agreement prefixes. Those with a [-ATR] initial vowel take the **ba**-prefix while those with a [+ATR] vowel take a **be**-prefix. Examples with [-ATR] vowels are **bayamúno** ‘pregnant women’ and **babhebhɛ** ‘hunters’, while those with [+ATR] initial root-vowel are **bebhi** ‘buffaloes’ and **benu** ‘drinks’.

The subject-verb agreement prefix for the **ba** class is also **ba-** or **be-** depending on the initial vowel of the verb while the resumptive pronoun before the identification copula is **ba-le-**. These are shown in the examples below:

- (16) a. **batrugbu-ɔ**    **tsyé**    **ba-ve**    **bu-tú**      **n’**    **ábha**  
           Batrugbu-DEF too    AM-go    CM-mountain    DEF top  
           The Batrugbu also went to the top of the mountain.
- b. **bá-nɔbɔɛ**    **á-lé**      **ba-le-nú**    **ma-yé**  
           CM-cat      AM-this    RP-??-be    1SG-POSS  
           These cats are mine.

Nouns in the **ba**-class trigger a **ta-** agreement before the numeral quantifier root **-bha** ‘two’ and **te-** before the specific determiner **-lí** ‘a certain’. Examples with the numeral quantifier are **babhebhɛ tabha** ‘two hunters’, **benu tabha** ‘two drinks’, and **bahɛ tabha** ‘two knives’. Examples that illustrate determiner agreement are **babhebhɛ telí** ‘certain hunters’, **benu telí** ‘certain drinks’, and **bahɛ telí** ‘certain knives’.

The pronoun for the **ba**-class is **ba-** or **be-**, with the choice, as in the subject-verb agreement case in (16a), dependent on the initial vowel of the verb it is predicated of. Consider the examples below:

- (17) a. **be-tsiđi**      **ɔ-kplǎ**      **n'**      **ábha**  
           CM-support    CM-table    DEF    top  
           They are on the table.
- b. **ba-kpase**      **a-gbe**      **nó**      **me**  
           CM-contain    CM-bowl    DEF    inside  
           They are inside the bowl.

One intriguing thing about the **ba**-class, as mentioned above, is that not all the nouns that occur in it have their singular in the **a**- class. Instead, some nouns like **benu** 'drinks' and **bawá** 'medicines' have their singular occurring in the **bo**-class which we discuss below. There is the temptation to separate these nouns from the ones that have an **a**- prefix for their singular. However, this will be falling into the trap of treating gender as class. This is because when we followed the criteria laid down in this section, we find that all the nouns that have a **ba**-class prefix behave alike.

Finally, recall that I mentioned in section 3 above that many speakers tend to generalize the **ba**-pronoun to make it the plural pronoun for all classes. This means that (17a) and (17b) could also refer to nouns that do not belong to the **ba**- class but are in the plural.

### 3.3. THE **ɔ**-CLASS

The **ɔ**-class has nouns which take an **o-** or **ɔ-**prefix depending on the initial vowel of the root. As to be expected, the former occurs with initial [+ATR] root vowels while the latter occurs with initial [-ATR] root vowels. Nouns from the **ɔ**- class are in the singular. Examples of the former are **ohui** 'rope' and **olí** 'soup', and examples of the latter are **ɔkplǎ** 'table' and **ɔdzedzě** 'story'. The subject-verb agreement marker for nouns belonging to this class is **lo-** or **lɔ-**, while the resumptive pronoun that occurs before identification copula is **o-lo-**. This is illustrated below (18a is a repetition of 7b):

- (18) a. **ge**      **o-kotokú**      **nó**      **lo-yí**                              **so-ɔ,**  
           As      CM-sack    DEF    AGR-become.full      therefore-TP
- ge**      **a-á-ba**                                      **bo-ɲaɲa**      **túlí**      **bo-wóle**  
           as      3SG-PROG-come                              CM-food      SPECI AM-fall  
           Because the sack was full, as he went some of the food fell out.
- b. **o-hui**      **ɔ-le**      **o-lo-nú**      **mɔ-yé**  
           CM-rope    AM-this    RP-??-be    1SG-POSS  
           This rope is mine.

Note that the possessed pronoun in (18b) takes a rounding form that agrees with the rounding of the class prefix suggesting labial harmony.

Nouns belonging to the **ɔ**- class trigger the agreement marker **to-** before the numeral quantifier root **nukpó** 'one' and the specific determiner **lí** 'a certain'. These are illustrated by **ɔhɛ tonukpó** 'one hand', **ɔkɔkɔ tonukpó** 'one fowl', and **ɔdzedze tónúkpó** 'one story', for the quantifier, and **ɔɔp tólí** 'a certain net', **olí tólí** 'certain soup', and **ogũ tólí** 'a certain root', for the determiner.

The pronoun for the  $\mathfrak{c}$ -class is also **lɔ-** or **lo-** depending on the initial vowel of the verb. The two are exemplified in sentences (19a) and (19b):

- (19) a. **o-dzinidzini a-pe a-nye-ε petee lo-ge-mɔ-é**  
 CM-earthworm AM-search CM-man-DEF all 3SG-NEG-see-3SG  
 Earthworm looked everywhere for the man but did not see him

- b. **kliso nyimó nyimó ye o- gū-ɔ**  
 therefore shrub.name shrub.name 3SG:POSS CM- root-DEF

**lɔ-le vevě ṅútó**  
 3SG-be.at important very

Therefore *nyimɔ*, *nyimɔ*'s root is very important

(transcript of Odumase Herbs, recorded July.6.2008, line 259)

- c. **ye ɔ-tómé lo-she**  
 3SG-POSS CM-beard AM-grow  
 His beard is grown.

Sentence (19a) is a paratactic construction with **logemɔé** 'it did not see him' as the conjoined clause.

### 3.4 THE $\mathfrak{E}$ -CLASS

Nouns in the  $\mathfrak{E}$ - class have an **i-** or **ε-**prefix depending on the ATR value of the initial vowel of the root: while **i-** occurs with roots which have [+ATR] as the initial vowel, **ε-** occurs with those that have [-ATR]. Nouns in the  $\mathfrak{E}$ - class are plural and take the  $\mathfrak{c}$ -prefix in the singular. Examples are **ihui** 'ropes' and **ikpǒ** 'clubs' for [+ATR] roots, and **edzedze** 'stories' and **ekplǒ** 'tables' for [-ATR] roots.  $\mathfrak{E}$ -class nouns take an **e-** agreement marker before the demonstrative and **i-li-** as the resumptive pronoun before the identification copula. This is shown below:

- (20) a. **i-hui ε-le i-li-nú mε-yé**  
 CM-rope AM-this RP-??-be 1SG-POSS  
 These ropes are mine.

- b. **ε-ɖɔ ε-le i-li-nu mε-yé**  
 CM-net AM-this RP-??-be 1SG-POSS  
 These nets are mine.

Nouns belonging to the  $\mathfrak{E}$ -class trigger **te-** agreement on the numeral quantifier **bha** 'two' and **ti-** on the specific determiner, **li** 'a certain'. Examples with the numeral quantifier are **ihui tebha** 'two ropes' and **εɖɔ tebha** 'two nets', while those with the determiner are **εɖa tilí** 'certain metals' and **εbhia tilí** 'certain friends'. The pronominal form for nouns belonging to this class is **le-** before a [-ATR] vowel and **le-** before a [+ATR] vowel. Consider the following responses to questions (21a) and (22a):

- (21) a. **fakó ε-ɖá nɔ lé**  
 Where CM-metal DEF be.at  
 Where is the metal?

- b. **le-tsidj o-vutón' ábha**  
 3SG-support CM-roof DEF top  
 It's on top of the roof.

- (22) a. **fakó** **i-bledzymá** **nó** **lé**  
 Where CM-green.snake DEF be.at  
 Where are the green snakes?

- b. **le-kpase** **a-yakpá** **mɛ**  
 3PL-contain CM-bush inside  
 They are in the bush.

The **ɛ**-class is therefore identified by the resumptive pronoun **i-li**, the agreement markers **tɛ-** before the numeral quantifier and **te-** before the specific determiner. Its pronoun is **le-/le-**.

### 3.5. THE **KE**-CLASS

Nouns occurring in this class take either a **ki-** or **ke-** prefix which, for the most part, depends on their ATR value. **Ke**-nouns are in the singular. Examples are **kitsikpí** ‘pot’ and **kivũ** ‘stomach’ for [+ATR], and **ketakpú** ‘head’ and **kenyotó** ‘nose’ for [-ATR]. The roots **-pí** and **-dě** take a **ke-** prefix instead of a **ki-** prefix, thereby yielding **kepí** ‘place’ and **kedě** ‘back’. **Ke****pí** contrasts with **kikpli** ‘fist’ and **kitsikpi** ‘pot’ given above, in which roots with /i/ take a **ki** prefix while **kedě** contrasts with **kitede** ‘anthill’ and **kilě** ‘lizard.’ The subject-verb agreement marker for this class is **ke-** or **ki-**, while the agreement marker for the demonstrative is **e-**. The resumptive pronoun before the identification copula is **ki-li-**. Examples are provided below:

- (23) a. **ki-tsikpi** **nó** **ke-yólo** **bɔ-dɔ** **tɔ**  
 CM-pot DEF AM-stop CM-thing cook  
 The pot stopped cooking.

- b. **ki-tsikpi/ke-wě** **(é)le** **ki-li-nú** **mɛ-yé**  
 CM-pot/CM-finger AM-this RP-??-be 1SG-POSS  
 This pot/hand is mine.

Some speakers use the demonstrative **ale** instead of **ele** for the **ke**-class. Moreover, in this particular elicitation, one speaker used **kelinú** instead of **kilinú**. Recall that I mentioned in section 1 that Tutrugbu may once have had an **i**-prefix whose loss has affected vowel harmony. It is possible that the variation encountered here is a residual effect of the disappearance of this vowel. That is to say its disappearance may have led some speakers to begin to use the [-ATR] **a**-prefix in order to maintain an appropriate harmony between the vowel of the demonstrative and the prefix while others simply shifted to **-i**.

Nouns belonging to the **ke**-class trigger **ti-** agreement before the numeral quantifier **nukpó** ‘one’ as well as the specific determiner **lí** ‘a certain’. Examples are **kibúlí tíníkpó** ‘one snail’ and **kegɔ tíníkpó** ‘one year’, for the quantifier, and **kepoté tílí** ‘a certain cloth’ and **kiníké tílí** ‘a certain tongue’, for the determiner. The pronoun form for the **ki**-class is **ke-**. Consider the sentences below:

- (24) **keyéke** **pɔ**  
 3SG-receive wound  
 It’s wounded. (referring to kebhami ‘kidney’)

- (25) a. **fakó**    **ki-fuflu**            **a-lé**  
 Where    CM-bread            AM-be.at  
 Where is the bread?
- b. **ki-tsiđi**                    **o-kpló**    **n'**    **ábha**  
 3SG-be.supported    CM-table    DEF top  
 It's on the table.

Most body-part terms are found in the **ki**-class. I will revisit this issue when I discuss the semantics of the classes.

### 3.6 THE **A2**-CLASS

As I noted in section 3.1, there is a second a-class which is distinguished from the one discussed above by the marker it takes before the identification copula. I refer to this as the **a2**-class. Nouns belonging to this class occur in the plural and take an **a-** or **e-** prefix. The **a-** prefix occurs with roots which have a [-ATR] initial vowel, as illustrated by **anyotó** 'fingers', **apoté** 'cloths', and **ahalukóé** 'adam's apples'. Roots which have [+ATR] as the initial vowel take the **e-** prefix, as illustrated by **edě** 'backs', **evũ** 'stomachs', and **eníké** 'tongues'.

The **a2**-class triggers **ta-** agreement before the quantifier **bha** 'two' and **te-** agreement before the specific determiner. Examples with the quantifier are **ablindě tábha** 'two pineapples', **apoté tábha** 'two cloths' and **anyotó tábha** 'two noses', while those with the determiner are **eníké télí** 'certain tongues' and **atowi télí** 'certain shadows'. Nouns belonging to the a-class also trigger an **a2-** prefix before the demonstrative as well take **a-le-** as the resumptive pronoun before the identification copula. This is illustrated in example (26):

- (26) **a-poté**    **á-le**    **a-le-nu**    **ma-yé**  
 CM-cloth    AM-this    RP-??-be    1SG-POSS  
 These cloths, they are mine.

The pronominal form for the **a2**-class is **la-** or **le-** depending on the [ATR] value of the root vowel.

- (27) a. **fakó**    **a-poté**    **á-lé**  
 Where    CM-metal    AM-be.at  
 Where are the cloths?
- b. **le-tsiđi**            **mpá**    **n'**    **ábha**  
 3SG-support    CM-bed    DEF top  
 They're on the bed.
- (28) a. **fakó**    **a-blindě**    **nó**    **a-lé**  
 Where    CM-pineapple    DEF    AM-be.at  
 Where are the green snakes?
- b. **La-le**    **buvĩ-o**    **me**  
 3PL-be.at    CM-room    inside  
 They are in the room.

While there are some similarities in the agreement patterns between the **a**-class and the **a2**-class, subject-verb agreement and the resumptive pronoun in the identification construction, as well as the pronoun show that the two classes are different.

### 3.7. THE KA- CLASS

Words in this class take the most number of noun prefixes, namely **ke-** as in **kehe** ‘struggle’, **ke-** as in **keɖe** ‘nail’, **ki-** as in **kikū** ‘yam’ and **ka-** as in **kagba** ‘hut’. Heine (1968) divides them into two different **ka-** classes based on the fact that they take two different plural forms. Although it is probable that there were two distinct classes sometime in the past, when properties which we have used to identify the other classes are considered, they turn out to be the same for the two forms identified by Heine. That is to say all these nouns currently take a **te-** agreement marker before the numeral **nukpó** ‘one’ and the determiner **lí** ‘a certain’. Examples with the quantifier are **kexolě tenukpó** ‘one horn’, **kikū tenikpó** ‘one yam’, **keɖe tenukpo** ‘one nail’ and **kagba tenukpó** ‘one hut’. Those with the determiner are **kexole telí** ‘a certain horn’, **kikū telí** ‘a certain yam’, **keɖe telí** ‘a certain nail’ and **kagba tíelí** ‘a certain hut’. Examples (29a) and (29b) show that nouns occurring in this class take the same resumptive pronoun in the identification construction:

- (29) a. **ke-li**    **a-le**        **ka-le-nú**    **mia-yé**  
 CM-day    AM-this        RP-??-be    1SG-POSS  
 This day is mine.
- b. **kagba/kefikékpú**    **á-lé**        **kale-nú**    **mia-yé**  
 Hut/pond            AM-this        RP-??-be    1SG-POSS  
 This hut/pond, it is mine.

Furthermore, the pronominal prefix for both forms is **ka-** or **ke-** depending on the vowel of the verb. Examples are given below:

- (30) a. **ka-salā**    **mō same.**    **Ka-lóko**    **ka-hǒ**        **ve-no**  
 CM-tortoise    see happiness.    3SG-take    CM-squirrel    come-COM  
**bo-pá**        **me**  
 CM-house    inside  
 Tortoise was happy. It carried squirrel with it to the house.
- (31) a. **fakó**    **ke-gbu**    **a-lé**  
 Where    CM-stool    AM-be.at  
 Where is the stool?
- b. **ke-tsidj**            **o-kpló**    **n'**    **ábha**  
 3SG-be.supported    CM-table    DEF    top  
 It's on the table.

This shows that there is presently no principled reason to distinguish between the two **ka-** forms. **Ka-**nouns are in the singular.

### 3.8. THE BO-CLASS

**Bo** is the class that has undergone the most dramatic merger. Presently, nouns that refer to entities in the singular such as **buluhū** ‘language’ and **bulí** ‘palm tree’, and those that refer to entities in the plural, such as **buplukpá** ‘books’ and **bobhe** ‘bracelets’ all behave similarly with regard to agreement properties and pronominal forms. I therefore begin by treating them as belonging to a single class. When I come

<sup>7</sup> For the words that have a **ki-** prefix, some speakers prefer a **ti-** agreement marker for the numeral quantifier. This reflects an agreement with the vowel of the prefix.



to the discussion of gender, I will divide the class into two subclasses. The class prefix is **bu-** before roots with an initial [+ATR] vowel and **bɔ-** before roots that have an initial [-ATR] vowel. Examples of the former are **buhehe** ‘sweat’, **bunu** ‘drink’, and **bulí** ‘water’ while examples of the latter are **bɔwá** ‘medicine’ and **bɔnyényé** ‘penis’. Members of the class that express entities in the singular trigger a **tu-** agreement before the quantifier **nukpó** ‘one’, while those expressing plural entities trigger a **tɔ-** agreement before plural numeral quantifiers. Examples are **bunu tunukpó** and **bɔpá tunukpó** for those in the singular and **bɔhɔkpó tɔbha** ‘two wrists’ and **buplukpá tɔbha** ‘two books’ for the ones expressing plural entities. All the members of the class trigger a **tu-** agreement on the specific determiner, yielding **bunu túlí** ‘a certain drink’, **bɔpá túlí** ‘a certain drink’, **bɔbhe túlí** ‘certain bracelets’ and **buplukpá túlí** ‘certain books’. There is some disagreement as to whether the demonstrative takes an agreement marker or not, and what the form of the resumptive pronoun in the identification construction. While some put an **ɔ-** prefix before the demonstratives, others leave it out altogether, and while some take **bu-li-** to be the resumptive pronoun others argue that it is **bɔli**. I have a recording in which a consultant starts by saying it is **buli-** but as we continue, she changes it to **bɔli-**. Then in the end she says both are acceptable. A second speaker also confirmed that both forms could be used. The examples below show that whichever form a speaker chooses the distinction is not based on number:

- (32) a. **bu-nu**            **(ɔ)-le**            **bu-linú/ bɔ-li-nú mɔ-yé**  
           CM-drink        AM-this            RP-??-be            1SG-POSS  
           This drink, it is mine.
- b. **buplukpa**        **(ɔ)-le,**            **bu-li-nú/bɔ-li-nú mɔ-yé**  
           CM-book        AM-this            RP-??-be            1SG-POSS  
           These books, they are mine.
- c. **bɔ-ɲaɲa** **(ɔ)-le**        **buli-nú/bɔli-nú mɔ-yé**  
           CM-food AM-this    AM-be            1SG-POSS  
           These foods, they are mine.

It is striking that **bɔlinu** should be considered acceptable considering that it violates vowel harmony. This is further evidence of an earlier [-ATR] vowel /ɪ/ which has disappeared from the language. The subject-verb agreement marker as well as the pronominal form for the **bɔ-** class is **bɔ**, with realisation as **bu-** before [+ATR] vowel.

- (33) **yɛ**            **a-ba-kɔ**            **sɛ**    **bu-nu-ɔ**            **bɔ-ba-gagãlí**  
       3SG    AM-FUT-give    that CM-drink-DEF    AM-FUT-become.hard  
       It will make the drink strong (Making-Palm-Wine-July-17-2007.006)

In sum, all the nouns in the **bɔ-** class take a **bɔ** pronoun which becomes **bu-** before a [+ATR] vowel irrespective of whether they designate a singular or plural entity. In the identification construction, there is some variation in the choice of the resumptive pronoun. Crucially, however, this is not dependent on whether the noun designates a singular or plural entity either.

### 3.10. THE **TE**-CLASS

The final class is the **te**-class. Nouns belonging to this class occur with a **ti-** or **te-** prefix, as illustrated by **tisí** ‘sand’ and **tekã** ‘hair’ respectively. Nouns in this class are non-count and, therefore I could not elicit sentences in which they occurred with a

numeral quantifier. However, I did establish that they all take **ti-** before the specific determiner, as illustrated by **tewá tǐlǐ** ‘a certain type of grass’ and **tewonɔ tǐlǐ** ‘certain rubbish’. They take **a-** before the demonstrative and **te-li-** before the identification copula. This is illustrated below:

- (34) **tɛ-kǎ a-le te-li-nú ma-yé**  
 CM-hair CM-this RP-??-be 1SG-POSS  
 This hair, it is mine.

Some speakers give **te-** as the pronominal form while others give **a-**.

### 3.11 SUMMARY OF THE CLASSES

I have now identified nine individual noun classes in Tutrugbu based on “sets of morphological concords” which may show up as affixes on the nouns, numeral quantifiers, demonstrative and specific non-definite determiners, the resumptive pronoun in the identification construction and the pronoun.

Class	Number	Determiner	Demons	Subj- Verb Agr	Pronoun	Resumptive Pronoun
<b>a-</b>	<b>tɛ-</b>	<b>tɛ-</b>	<b>a-</b>	<b>a-</b>	<b>a-</b>	<b>ye-</b>
<b>ba-</b>	<b>ta-</b>	<b>tɛ-</b>	<b>a-</b>	<b>ba-</b>	<b>ba-</b>	<b>ba-le</b>
<b>ɔ-</b>	<b>to-</b>	<b>to-</b>	<b>ɔ-</b>	<b>lɔ-</b>	<b>lɔ-</b>	<b>o-lo</b>
<b>ɛ-</b>	<b>tɛ-</b>	<b>ti-</b>	<b>ɛ-</b>	<b>le-</b>	<b>le-</b>	<b>i-li</b>
<b>kɛ-</b>	<b>ti-</b>	<b>ti-</b>	<b>ɛ-</b>	<b>kɛ-</b>	<b>kɛ-</b>	
<b>a-</b>	<b>ta-</b>	<b>tɛ-</b>	<b>a-</b>	<b>la-</b>	<b>la-</b>	
<b>ka-</b>	<b>tɛ-</b>	<b>tɛ-</b>	<b>a-</b>	<b>ka-</b>	<b>ka-</b>	
<b>bɔ-</b>	<b>tɔ-</b>	<b>tu-</b>	<b>(ɔ)-</b>	<b>bɔ-</b>	<b>bɔ-</b>	
<b>tɛ-</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>ti-</b>	<b>a-</b>	<b>tɛ-</b>	<b>tɛ-/a-</b>	

Table 2. Noun classes in Tutrugbu

The table shows a reduction of what was potentially eleven or more singly occurring classes to nine. The variation in some of the affixes is an indication that the change is not complete. McLaughlin (1997) shows that in Wolof, the phonological shape of a class, in addition to three other factors, namely morphology, semantics, and sociolinguistics, determines agreement. In the case of Tutrugbu, the merger of classes is being determined by the phonology of the class. That is to say all words with a **kɛ-** affix are treated as belonging to the same class just as those with **bɔ-** affix. The only phonologically similar classes that are distinguished are the **a-** and **a2-** classes. In the next section, I look at their broad semantics, and which ones pair with which.

## 4. ON THE MEANING AND GENDER OF THE CLASSES

This section discusses the singular-plural pairing of the noun classes, noting the major semantic grouping within each. As already stated in section 3.1, nouns in the **a-** class express mostly human and other animate entities. Human nouns particularly occur in this class alone such that compound nouns that refer to humans are given this prefix. For example, landlord, which is formed in Tutrugbu by compounding **bɔpǎ** ‘house’ and **ɛleté** ‘owner’, becomes **apǎleté**. Note, however, that since the **a-** class is also the default class for borrowed items, a lot of non-animate entities have found their

way into the class. Examples are **kranté** ‘cutlass’, **takó** ‘headgear’, **ahe** ‘knife’ and **kóxóé** ‘village’, which are all borrowed from Ewe. Unlike those referring to humans, a few nouns that refer to animals occur in other classes. The plural form for the class is **ba-**. As such, the plural of all human entities and most animal entities occur in this class. However, **a-** is not the only class that has its plural in the **ba-** class. Another is a subpart of the **bo-** class which I discuss further below.

The **ɔ-** class also contains a handful of animal-referring nouns as well as two human-referring nouns that do not belong to the **a-** class. The nouns that refer to animals include **odzínídzini** ‘earthworm’, **okókó** ‘fowl’, and **obledzimá** ‘a type of green snake’. The two nouns that refer to humans in the class are **otokú** ‘deaf person,’ which is taken from the Ewe word **tókú** and **ɔbhíá** ‘friend’. The **ɔ-** class also contains artifacts. These include words like **ɔbhíá** ‘torch’, **oputso** ‘mat’ **opupú** ‘door’, and **ɔteteré** ‘blowpipe’. 15 out of 46 nouns that occur in this class refer to different types of artifacts making it the biggest semantic grouping within the class. 5 of the nouns also refer to body parts. Trees and tree-products such as **ɔnyé** ‘firewood’ also belong to this class. Most of the artifacts alluded to earlier are made of trees. The plural of the **ɔ-** class is the **ɛ-** class. Examples are **ekókó** ‘fowls’ and **idzínídzini** ‘earthworms’. The only word in the **ɛ-** class class that does not express a plural entity is **idzi** ‘heart’ that is borrowed from Ewe, where it is **edzi**. Speakers do not have a separate word to indicate the plural form of the noun.

The **ke-** class contains the most words that refer to body-parts. In a database of 50 words belonging to this class, 20 refer to body parts. Examples are **kiné** ‘tooth’ and **kiniké** ‘tongue’ and **kenyotó** ‘nose’. The plural class for words that occur in the **ke-** class is **ɛ**. Examples are **eniké** ‘tongues’, **ené** ‘teeth’, and **anyotó** ‘noses’.

The largest semantic grouping within the **ka-** class is location. This includes such words as **kampe** ‘side’, **kabha** ‘top’, and **kepí** ‘hometown’. It also contains a few body-part terms like **kaplátó** ‘buttock’ and **kahokpo** ‘wrist’. Some artifacts such as **kawe** ‘axe’ and **ketsukpu** ‘big pot’ also occur in this class. The one surprise in the class is **kebité** ‘young woman.’ Interestingly, the word for bracelet, i.e., **kabhe**, also occurs in the class that contains the words for young woman and wrist. The only animals in the class are **kagbo** ‘squirrel’ and **katabuyadzyo** ‘scorpion’. The plural of the **ka-** class is the **bo-** class. However, as I mention in section 3.8, the **bo-** class also contains nouns in the singular. These either refer to liquids such as **bunu** ‘alcoholic beverage’ and **bulí** ‘water’. Also occurring in the class are the words for language (**buluhú**), palm tree (**bulí**) and house (**bopá**). All of these nouns take their plural in the **ba-** class. The **bo-** class is also for expressing abstract nouns. Verbs are nominalized by prefixing them with **bo**. Thus **nya** ‘be ill’ becomes **bonya** ‘illness’ and **wulú** ‘bath’ becomes **bewulú** ‘bathing’. Other abstract nouns are **boŋa** ‘sharpness’ and **bodzyé** ‘sweetness’, although these do not have verbal counterparts.

**Te** represents the class for non-count nouns. It includes such words as **təhšé** ‘chaff’, **tisí** ‘clay’, **tewɔno** ‘rubbish’ and **tewá** ‘grass’. It is also the class in which nouns derived through gerundive nominalization which involves the reduplication of verbs occur. Examples are **tezazá** ‘staying’, **tikuklu** ‘calling’ and **tekakasé** ‘teaching’. Specific languages such as **Tutrugbu** and **Tingbě** ‘the Ewe language’ also belong to this class. Not surprisingly, nouns belonging to this class do not have a plural counterpart.<sup>8</sup> The figure below summarizes Tutrugbu gender system.

<sup>8</sup> My attention has been drawn to the fact that **tesé** refers to a single feather while **bosé** refers to several. This represents the only **te-/bo-** pairing that I am aware of.

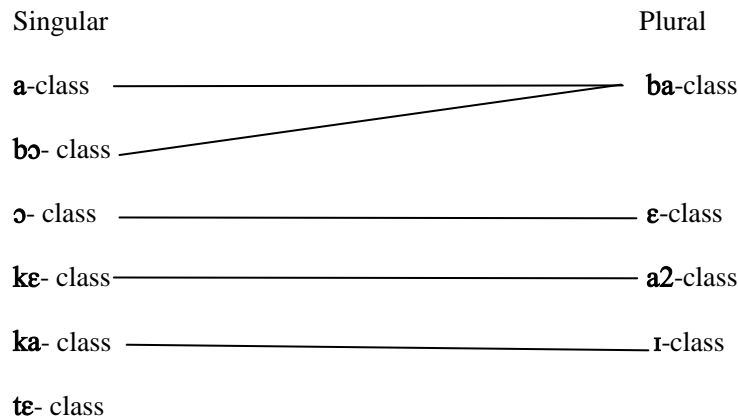


Figure 1. Tutrugbu gender

## 5. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have distinguished nine individual classes in Tutrugbu mainly based on morpho-syntactic properties such as subject-verb agreement marker and pronominal forms which happen to be the same, agreement on the numeral quantifier, specific determiner and demonstrative, and the resumptive pronoun in the identification construction. I have shown that the system is undergoing decay such that some distinctions that were discussed only a few decades ago are no longer being made. This change appears to be driven by the phonological shape of the noun-class prefixes. With the exception of **a**- and **a2**- classes which have the same shape, all other prefixes with the same phonological shape are treated as belonging to the same class.

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