

NOUN CLASSES AND CLASS AGREEMENT IN AKEBU

Nadezhda Makeeva and Andrey Shluinsky
Institute of Linguistics RAS, Russia
umuta11@yandex.ru, ashl@yandex.ru

Abstract

This paper presents an overview of noun class system in Akebu, a Kwa language of Togo. Based on agreement, there are seven noun classes in Akebu that we label by the form of the corresponding object pronouns. In nominal morphology, there are both prefixal and suffixal noun class markers. The form of prefixes differentiates morphological subclasses of some classes, but these subclasses are not relevant for agreement. Four noun classes are singular and contain only nouns referring to singular objects. One noun class is plural and contains only nouns referring to plural objects and some uncountable entities. Two classes are ambinumeral and refer both to singular and plural objects. There are class correlations between singular and plural nouns. The meaning of noun classes is not transparent, except for the fact that one of them contains most animate nouns and another one is its plural correlate. A number of cases of class conversion is attested. 3rd person pronouns differ for all of the seven noun classes. Object pronouns are the basic ones; independent pronouns, intensifiers and possessive pronouns are derived from them. The verb agrees in noun class with the subject. A number of verb agreement series with different TAM semantics are distinguished. Simple numerals less than ten agree with the head noun.

Keywords: noun class, Akebu, Kwa, agreement, pronouns, verb, numerals

Résumé

Les classes nominales et l'accord de classe en akébou

Cet article présente un aperçu sur le système des classes nominales en akébou, une langue kwa parlée au Togo. Dans cette langue, sept classes nominales se distinguent selon le modèle d'accord. Dans la morphologie nominale il y a des marques préfixales et des marques suffixales. Les classes sont étiquetées par les formes des pronoms objectifs correspondants. Des sous-classes morphologiques de quelques classes nominales se distinguent selon les formes des préfixes, ce qui n'a pas d'incidence sur le fonctionnement de l'accord de classe. Quatre classes sont singuliers et ne contiennent que des mots qui désignent des objets singuliers. Une classe est plurielle et ne contient que des noms qui désignent des objets pluriels et quelques entités incalculables. Deux classes mixtes comportent des objets singuliers et pluriels. Il y a des corrélations entre des noms singuliers et des noms pluriels. Le sémantisme des classes nominales n'est pas transparent, sauf le fait que l'une d'eux contient la plupart des noms animés et l'autre est son corrélat pluriel. Un nombre de cas de conversion est attesté. Chaque classe a son propre pronom de la 3^e personne. Dans le paradigme pronominal, les pronoms objets peuvent être considérés comme les pronoms de base dont les autres séries pronominales (autonome, intensive, possessive) sont dérivées. Le verbe s'accorde avec le sujet en classe nominale. On trouve un nombre de séries des marques verbales d'accord qui expriment du coup les valeurs de TAM. Des numéraux simples moins que dix s'accordent avec la tête de la phrase nominale.

Mots-clé: classe nominale, akébou, Kwa, accord de classe, pronoms, verbe, numéraux

1. Introduction

This paper deals with the system of noun classes and class agreement in Akebu. Akebu (Kebu) is a Kwa language of the group Kebu-Animere¹ spoken mainly in the prefecture of Akebu of Togo. It is spoken by ca. 70 000 people (Gblem-Poidi & Kantchoa 2012; Simons & Fennig (eds.) 2017) that evidently form different dialect groups, but the dialects of the language require further research.

The language is very poorly described. By now the following literature on Akebu is available. Wolf (1907) published a brief grammar sketch. Some issues of phonology and noun class system are briefly described and discussed in historical perspective by Heine (1968: 70–73, 110, 126, 182–184). Djitovi (2003) has made a preliminary description of phonology. Storch & Koffi (2000) and Amoua (2011) describe noun systems and noun classes. Adjeoda (2008) describes some issues of morphosyntax. Koffi wrote a dissertation on sociolinguistic issues of Akebu (1984) as well as a dictionary (1981), and proposed a description of the pronominal system (2010). M'boma (2012, 2014) invented and proposed an original writing system.

¹ This little group is classified as a part of a unity referred to as Ghana-Togo Mountain languages, or Togo Remnant languages. Still, the internal classification of Kwa family in general, and in particular the genetic status of this unity is largely debatable (cf. Stewart (1989) vs. Blench (2009)). That is why we limit ourselves only with the lowest taxon of Kebu-Animere and with the biggest one of Kwa.

Makeeva, Muraviev and Shluinsky published preliminary data on Akebu phonology, nominal and verbal morphology and syntax (Makeeva 2013, 2016; Makeeva & Shluinsky 2013, 2015a, 2015b; Muraviev 2015, 2016; Shluinsky 2015)

This description is based on the data collected during three field trips in 2012, 2013 and 2016 to the village of Djon and neighbouring villages of Kotora and Djitrane in the prefecture of Akebu. Since the goal of the paper is descriptive, the description is framework-free and does not follow any specific linguistic theory and uses terminological system that is more or less widespread in general and African linguistics. Akebu data is presented in a phonological transcription that is not in the focus of this study; some phonemes have variants and allophones (e.g., [ɸ] and [β] for **p**, [w̃] for **ɲ**) that we do not mark separately.

The noun class system of Akebu is small if one compares it with the general Niger-Congo background: up to two dozens of noun classes are reported for some Niger-Congo families. We define noun classes primarily based on class agreement and get a system containing seven classes that we label by the form of the object pronouns: **ŋU**, **PƏ**, **ʈƏ**, **WƏ**, **YƏ**, **KƏ**, **KPƏ**. Compared with other Kwa languages, the Akebu noun class system is elaborate, since most of them either have no noun class system, or a residual one, as shown by Konoshenko (2016). Moreover, a remarkable feature of Akebu is the combination of the residual Proto-Kwa noun class marking by prefixes and of the newly developed noun class marking by suffixes. This study may therefore contribute not only to the description of Akebu, but as well to the general typology of noun class systems in Africa.

This paper is divided into nine sections. Section 2 summarizes previous studies. Section 3 describes the morphology of Akebu noun classes. Section 4 deals with the relation between noun classes and number. Section 5 describes the lexical meaning of noun classes and class conversion. Section 6 introduces the system of pronouns corresponding to the noun classes. In Sections 7 and 8 we discuss the class agreement of verbs and numerals. Section 9 draws the conclusion.

2. Previous studies on Akebu noun class system

Although Akebu remains underdescribed, it is exactly the system of noun classes that has already been the focus of a number of studies. Our study gives a new account, providing the necessary precisions. Existing descriptions of Akebu noun classes differ significantly from each other and from the results of our own study presented in this paper. We prefer a non-chronological order of the studies in focus, starting from the most detailed one and comparing it with the other ones.

Amoua (2011) describes Akebu nouns as consisting of four genders², each of which consists of two classes – a singular class and a plural class; his description is summarized in Table 1, where both his Roman numeral labels of the classes and our mnemonic labels are present. Number correlations are therefore the only basis for distinguishing genders and noun classes in Amoua's paper. If a plural class correlates with different singular classes, Amoua analyzes it as two different classes: his IV and VIII classes are in fact morphologically and morphosyntactically identical (and compose the **YƏ** class in our description). The same analytical decision is made by Amoua if a class contains both singular and plural nouns: his singular VII class and his plural VI class are presented as different classes, although they also behave identically (and make the **KPƏ** class in our description). A more serious disadvantage of Amoua's analysis is placing nouns that differ both formally and by agreement into a single class. His III class contains two different singular classes (labeled **ʈƏ** and

² In this section we use the term 'gender' following the tradition that was introduced in African linguistics by Guthrie (1948): gender is a pair of two noun classes that make a number correlation (or, more rarely, more than two noun classes that make a more complicated correlation). This notion fits the way the data are organized in most of the previous studies (moreover, Amoua (2011) uses the French correlative term 'genre'). Still, in our own description we refrain from this term and from this notion and prefer simply to speak of the existing number correlations of noun classes.

WƏ in our description) that have different morphological markers, different pronouns and agreement markers; this is even shown by Amoua (2011: 49–50) himself, as well. Finally, Amoua’s description lacks some of the possible number class correlations that are possible in Akebu.

Table 1. Akebu noun class system as presented in Amoua (2011).

gender	classes	
	singular	plural
I	I (ŋŪ)	II (PƏ)
II	III (TƏ, WƏ)	IV (YƏ)
III	V (KƏ)	VI (KPƏ)
IV	VII (KPƏ)	VIII (YƏ)

Wolf (1907) distinguishes between four genders, as well, as shown in Table 2. His analysis shares a problem with Amoua’s analysis: morphologically and morphosyntactically different singular classes fit into his III and IV genders. Moreover, Wolf’s description is problematic, because – at least based on the contemporarily attested data – there is no morphological difference between the nouns that are classified as belonging to the III and IV genders.

Table 2. Akebu noun class system as presented in Wolf (1907).

gender	classes	
	singular	plural
I (“bö” ³)	ŋŪ	PƏ
II (“kö-gbö”)	KƏ	KPƏ
III (“ir”)	TƏ, WƏ, KPƏ	YƏ
IV (“e”)	TƏ, WƏ	YƏ

M’boma (2012) proposes one more variant of a four-gender classification of Akebu nouns, summarized in Table 3. His choice of joining the KPƏ and WƏ classes in one singular class of the gender 2 is intuitively better than Amoua’s and Wolf’s: as shown in the Section 7, it is these two classes that have the same marking in the verb agreement system and therefore have more in common than other pairs of classes. Still, these two classes have different pronouns, as shown in Section 6. M’boma’s description does not account for all the possible number correlations either.

Table 3. Akebu noun class system as presented in M’boma (2012).

gender	classes	
	singular	plural
1 (“masculine” ⁴)	KƏ	KPƏ
2 (“feminine”)	KPƏ, WƏ	YƏ
3 (“neuter”)	ŋŪ	PƏ
4 (“mixed”)	TƏ	YƏ

Finally, Adjeoda’s (2008) description (see Table 4) distributes Akebu noun classes and their number correlations among four genders. Formally, Adjeoda mentions five genders, but her fifth gender covers mass nouns that have no number correlations independently of their morphological and morphosyntactic behaviour and

³ We cite here the labels of the classes used by Wolf based on the form of suffixal class markers. His transcription does not always coincide transparently with the transcription used by later authors and with the pronunciation attested by us. It is not clear if this is just the question of his graphical solutions or should be explained through dialectal variation.

In Tables 5 and 6 we cite Heine’s and Storch & Koffi’s transcriptions respectively, as well.

⁴ M’boma’s (2012) labels of the genders are reminiscent of the traditional gender labels in Latin-style grammar, but as he notes himself, they are absolutely conventional and have nothing to do with the meanings of the nouns and with the genders in European languages.

therefore should not be analyzed as a gender. This analysis is again problematic both because the author combines distinct classes and splits the same class.

Table 4. Akebu noun class system as presented in Adjeoda (2008).

gender ⁵	classes	
	singular	plural
1	ŋŪ	PƏ
2	TƏ, WƏ, KPƏ	YƏ
3	TƏ	YƏ
4	KƏ	KPƏ
5	ŋŪ, WƏ	–

Heine (1968: 126) provides the most precise, yet brief account of Akebu noun classes. He speaks of six genders ('class pairs') as presented in Table 5, that include all of the existing Akebu noun classes and capture all of the most prominent number correlations (other correlations, of which we speak of in Section 5.2, are more marginal). Therefore our description may in a sense be seen as adding details to the one made by Heine.

Table 5. Akebu noun class system as presented in Heine (1968)

gender	classes	
	singular	plural
I ("–ŋu/–bə")	ŋŪ	PƏ
II ("–wo/–e(–yə)")	WƏ	YƏ
III ("–rə/–e(–yə)")	TƏ	YƏ
IV ("–kə/–gbə")	KƏ	KPƏ
V ("–kə/–e(–yə)")	KƏ	YƏ
VI ("–gbə/–e(–yə)")	KPƏ	YƏ

Finally, Storch & Koffi (2000) do not use the notion of gender in their description and describe the system as consisting of eleven noun classes, providing some information on number correlations (Table 6). The main criterion they use for distinguishing the classes is the morphological one (they consider both class suffixes and class prefixes of nouns), but they also analyze singular and plural nouns with the same morphological marking as belonging to different classes. Therefore their analysis of the class system considers what we mention as morphological subclasses of the YƏ and KPƏ classes to be different classes and singular and plural meanings of the KPƏ class (in its **wə-** subclass) to be different classes as well. Given this, their description provides more or less the same morphological data as ours, but we discovered more possibilities of number meanings and number correlations. Besides describing the morphology of the classes, Storch & Koffi provide wordlists of nouns belonging to different noun classes and propose impressionistic generalizations about the semantics of each class. They give the most important information on the noun class agreement, as well.

⁵ Adjeoda (2008: 26–28) speaks of two "genders" and of five "classes" that are in fact genders in the aforementioned sense. "Gender 1" includes genders 1–3, and "gender 2" includes genders 4–5, but this is not in fact relevant for the analysis.

Table 6. Akebu noun class system as presented in Storch & Koffi (2000)

class (Storch & Koffi)	prefix	suffix	number meaning	class (our description)
1		-yê	sg	ŋŪ
2	ÿ-	-bê	pl (of 1)	PƏ
3	ÿ-	-kê	sg	KƏ
4		-kê	sg	KƏ
5	ù-	-kpê	pl (of 3,4,6)	KPƏ
6	kà-	-kê	sg	KƏ
7		-kpê	sg	KPƏ
8	ÿ-	-yê	pl (of 7,9,10,11)	YƏ
9	ù-	-kpê	sg	KPƏ
10		-rê	sg	TƏ
11		-wê	sg	WƏ

3. Morphology and morphophonology of noun class markers

3.1. Class prefixes and class suffixes of nouns

Akebu nominal morphology involves two subparadigms of noun class markers. On the one hand, there are prefixes that are typical class markers in those Kwa languages that have noun classes (as shown in Heine 1968) and more generally in the Niger-Congo context. In Akebu we deal only with a residual class prefix system, and frequently there is no segmental prefix. The system of prefixes has no connection with the class agreement system except for the class agreement of numerals. On the other hand, there are suffixes that are not typical in a comparative perspective and therefore should be a recently grammaticalized phenomenon. Suffixes are more productive and correspond to the rest of the class agreement system including both pronouns and agreement markers of the verb.

As we have already mentioned, we distinguish noun classes primarily through agreement and label them by the form of the corresponding object pronouns. This form almost directly matches the class suffixes, except for the homonymous suffixes **-yê** of the ŋŪ and YƏ classes. For KƏ and KPƏ classes different forms of prefixes distinguish between morphological subclasses, but these are not relevant for agreement.

Table 7 represents the system of noun class marking in Akebu. Classes that have prefixal subclasses have different lines for the subclasses. The cells that contain classes and subclasses having both singular and plural nouns present examples of both types.

Table 7. Class markers and examples

class	prefix	suffix	examples
ŋŪ	∅-	-yê	fūŋí-yê 'bird'
PƏ	ÿ-	-pê	à-pōŋ-pê 'oil' ò-fūŋí-pê 'birds'
TƏ	∅- (voicing)	-tê	gò-tê 'liver'
WƏ	∅-	-wê	náá-wê 'fire'
YƏ	ÿ-	-yê	à-kpò-yê 'bag' à-náá-yê 'fires'
KƏ	∅- (voicing)	-kê	gà-kê 'meat'
	ÿ-		à-kāā-kê 'hand'
	kà-		kê-tōō-kê 'feather'
KPƏ	wà-	-kpê	wê-tāā-kpê 'market' wê-tōō-kpê 'feathers'
	∅- (voicing)		gú-kpê 'room'

There are rare syntactic contexts where class suffixes (in contrast to class prefixes) may be omitted. This issue requires further research, but one of such contexts is the position of the head noun of an NP containing a *wh*-word, as in (1). Both (1a) where the noun **kà-fūēē-kā** ‘book’ contains the class suffix and (1b) where the suffix lacks are acceptable.

- (1) a. **əlā lā kà-fūēē-kā wá əlā-fá ?**
 who POSS KƏ-paper-KƏ FOC 2SG.PFV-take
 ‘Whose book have you taken?’
 b. **əlā lā kà-fūēē wá əlā-fá ?**
 who POSS KƏ-paper FOC 2SG.PFV-take
 ‘Whose book have you taken?’

3.2. Variation and vowel harmony of class prefixes

The prefix **wə-** of the KPƏ class is convergent to a phonetic variation and has variants [wə], [wò] and [ò], cf. **wə-fāā-kpā** [wəfāākɸā], [wòfāākɸā], [òfāākɸā] ‘fonio’.

The prefix **kə-** of the KƏ class may assimilate to back vowels in the first syllable of the root and in this context may be realized as [kə] or as [kù], cf. **kə-nù-kā** [kənùkā], [kùnùkā] ‘arm’.

The PƏ and YƏ classes and one of the morphological subclasses of the KƏ class have a prefix that consists of an underspecified vowel **v̆-** that is subject to the regular regressive vowel harmony, described by Makeeva (2016).⁶ The rules of the harmony are summarized in (2).

- (2) **v̆ ~ e / _e, i**
v̆ ~ o / _o, u
v̆ ~ ə / _ə, i
v̆ ~ a / _a, ɛ, ɔ, ɒ, ɪ

As one can see from (2), the prefix **v̆-** takes the form **à-** by default – with open, open-mid and -ATR vowels in the root, cf. **à-nàṅ-pā** ‘scorpions’, **à-kāā-kā** ‘hand’, **à-kúkó-pá** ‘hens’, **à-mēē-pā** ‘sheep (pl)’, **à-fūtū-yā** ‘fingernails’, **à-tī-yā** ‘anuses’; the form **è-** with front +ATR vowels in the root, cf. **è-píí-pá** ‘children’, **è-nímí-yá** ‘eyes’, **è-léé-pá** ‘mothers’; the form **ò-** with back +ATR vowels in the root, cf. **ò-fūtí-pá** ‘birds’, **ò-tù-yā** ‘things’, **ò-tō-yā** ‘sheafs (of wheat or rice)’; the form **ə-** with central vowels in the root, cf. **ə-tá-pá** ‘fathers’, **ə-səlī-yā** ‘eggs’, **ə-tīṅtə̀̀-yā** ‘villages’.⁷

The vowels /u/ and /i/ before other vowels are realized as glides [w] and [j] and do not participate in the vowel harmony. The prefix **v̆-** takes the form conditioned by the subsequent vowel. cf. **à-ṅúáá-yá** ‘doors’, **à-tià-yā** ‘suffering’.

3.3. Voicing of initial consonants with zero prefixes

Zero class prefixes are of two types. With ŋU and WƏ classes no changes happen with the initial consonant of the root. But with the TƏ class and zero prefix subclasses of the KƏ and KPƏ classes, zero prefix leads to the voicing of the initial consonant of the root that in the lexical representation of Akebu nouns is always voiceless if it is not a nasal or an approximant, cf. **gà-kā** (not ***kà-kā**) ‘meat’. Initial nasals and

⁶ This vowel harmony assimilates vowels of different prefixes and proclitics to the first vowel of the root. In particular, it is relevant for person-number and TAM markers of the verb (see Table 9) and possessive pronouns (see Table 8).

⁷ There are exceptions to the vowel harmony in the noun class prefixes, e.g. **à-cíkèé-pā** ‘dogs’, **à-síká-pá** ‘money (pl)’. Such exceptions require further research.

approximants have no alternation, cf. **nàń-tǎ** ‘cloth’. This voicedness alternation might be explained historically through a loss of a segmental prefix in these classes.

The process of the voicing of the initial consonant can be shown through two types of correlations. Firstly, plural correlates of the nouns that belong to the classes in focus always belong to classes that have a segmental class prefix and always contain a voiceless initial consonant, cf. **gbáà-tǎ** ‘granary’ ~ **à-kpáà-yǎ** ‘granaries’ for the Kǎ class; **gà-kǎ** ‘meat (sg)’ ~ **wà-kà-kpǎ** ‘meat (pl)’ for the KPǎ class; **gú-kpǎ** ‘room’ ~ **ò-kú-yǎ** ‘rooms’ for the Yǎ class. Secondly, composite nouns have a voiced initial consonant of the first root and a voiceless initial consonant of the second root, although they take the noun class and class marking from the second root, cf. **gà-kǎ** ‘meat’, **fáń-yǎ** ‘pig’ ~ **váń-kà-kǎ** ‘pork’; **dú-tǎ** ‘helve’, **kǎ-sǎ-sǎ-kǎ** ‘axe’ ~ **zǎ-sǎ-tú-tǎ** ‘axe helve’.

In some borrowed nouns of the ǨǨ class and of the corresponding plural PǨ class no correlation of a voiced obstruent in singular with a voiceless one in plural is attested, and both cases of voiced and voiceless kept in both correlative classes are also present in our data, cf. **púúsù-yǎ** ‘cat’ ~ **ò-púúsù-pǎ** ‘cats’, **gláásì-yǎ** ‘glass’ ~ **à-gláásì-pǎ** ‘glasses’. Therefore, for this class we deal with cases of lexical idiosyncrasy.

3.4. Contraction and reduction of class suffixes

The suffix **-tǎ** of the Tǎ class undergoes a contraction with the stems that end with /l/ or /t/ and a vowel. The attested cases of the contraction are summarized in (3).

- (3) **lit, lut** → **l**
tǎt, tit, tut → **t / d**

As shown in (3), when the final /l/ and a vowel takes the suffix **-tǎ**, it gives /lǎ/, cf. **zǎlǎ** ‘egg’ (← **zǎlǎ-tǎ**, cf. **ǎ-sǎlǎ-yǎ** ‘eggs’), **gǎlǎ** ‘rope’ (← **gǎlǎ-tǎ**, cf. **ò-kǎlǎ-yǎ** ‘ropes’), **gǎlǎ** ‘last day of the traditional week’ (← **gǎlǎ-tǎ**, cf. **ò-kǎlǎ-yǎ** ‘last days of the traditional week’). /t/ and a vowel in final position gives [tǎ] or [dǎ] that we conventionally spell as /dǎ/, [dǎ] being the more frequent variant, cf. **gǎdǎ** ‘breast’ (← **gǎdǎ-tǎ**, cf. **ǎ-kǎdǎ-yǎ** ‘breasts’), **gǎdǎ** ‘female young animal’ (← **gǎdǎ-tǎ**, cf. **ǎ-kǎdǎ-yǎ** ‘female young animals’), **gbǎdǎ** ‘cassava’ (← **gbǎdǎ-tǎ**, cf. **ǎ-kpǎdǎ-yǎ** ‘cassavas’), **vǎdǎ** ‘life’ (← **vǎdǎ-tǎ**, cf. **ǎ-fǎdǎ-yǎ** ‘lives’). Full forms, such as e.g. **gbǎdǎ-tǎ** ‘cassava’, **gǎlǎ-tǎ** ‘last day of the traditional week’, **zǎlǎ-tǎ** ‘egg’, are accepted by the speakers, but are not attested to be produced as the main variant.

The suffixes **-yǎ** (of the ǨǨ and Yǎ classes) and **-wǎ** undergo phonological reduction. These suffixes may be realized in their full form, cf. **ò-kú-yǎ** ‘rooms’ [òkújǎ], **nǎń-wǎ** ‘tip’ [nǎńwǎ]; may be reduced to one segment, cf. **ò-kú-yǎ** ‘rooms’ [òkúí], **nǎń-wǎ** ‘tip’ [nǎńí], **ǎ-kǎń-yǎ** ‘ways’ [akǎńí], **nǎmí-wǎ** ‘needle’ [nǎmíy]; may be reduced to the coarticulated form of the preceding segment, cf. **wǎtǎ-wǎ** ‘bracelet’ [wǎtǎó]; reduced and non-reduced forms seem to vary arbitrarily, but this issue requires further research.

3.5. Tonal features of class suffixes

The tone of the class suffixes depends on the preceding tone. After a middle or low tone the tone of a class suffix is middle, but after a high tone it is high, cf. **yǎ-tǎ** ‘head’, **gǎ-tǎ** ‘nest’, **gǎ-tǎ** ‘beard’.

⁸ An optional raising of the low tone of the first syllable is also attested in the reduced forms: **gǎlǎ** [gǎlǎ ~ gǎlǎ] ‘rope’; **gǎdǎ** [gǎdǎ ~ gǎdǎ] ‘female young animal’. This process requires a further research.

It is typical that at the end of a noun phrase one attests a falling tone, starting from the high or middle level depending on the expected tone. Because of this, high-low and mid-low tones are regularly attested at the class suffixes, as e.g. in (4a). Still, this phenomenon has no direct relation with the class suffixes, since it also involves postpositive noun phrase modifiers, as in (4b). Since this tonal process remains underinvestigated, it is not marked in our transcription (and, therefore, we always transcribe class suffixes with flat level tones, though on practice they regularly undergo a fall).

- (4) a. **lā-kúláǰ** **ò-tù-yā** [òtùyā]
 3.PFV-gather Yə-thing-Yə
 ‘He has gathered the things.’
 b. **kúláǰ** **ò-tù-yā** **sā** [òtùyā sā]
 gather.IMP Yə-thing-Yə this
 ‘Gather these things!’

3.6. Incorporation of adjectives and verbs

Stems of adjectives are regularly incorporated between the stem of a noun and the suffixal noun class marker, as in (5). Ordinal numerals may be regarded as a subclass of adjectives and do the same (6).

- (5) a. **ḍū-ṭā** b. **ḍū-pálóǰpálóǰ-ṭā**
 stone-Ṭə stone-round-Ṭə
 ‘stone’ ‘round stone’
 (6) a. **ṇàǰ-ṭā** b. **ṇàǰ-tā-tá-ṭā**
 cloth-Ṭə cloth-three-ADJ-Ṭə
 ‘cloth’ ‘the third cloth’

The same process involves stative verbs, as in (7), and dynamic verbs, as in (8).⁹

- (7) a. **kə-kpá-kə** b. **kə-kpá-tí-kə**
 Kə-shirt-Kə Kə-shirt-black-Kə
 ‘shirt’ ‘black shirt’
 (8) a. **ò-tù-yā** b. **ò-tù-fú-yá**
 Yə-thing-Yə Yə-thing-buy-Yə
 ‘things’ ‘bought things’

This strategy is absolutely regular with adjectives and stative verbs and is the main way of expressing a qualitative meaning. With non-stative verbs, it seems to be more restricted, but requires further research. This process is analyzed as purely morphological, since no other constituents can be inserted into this slot, including, for example, adverbials related to incorporated qualifiers. (9b) contains an ungrammatical expression of such type, in contrast to a relative clause (9c) or other types of constructions (9d-e) that can be used for the intended meaning.

- (9) a. **ò-tù-fú-yá** b. ***ò-tù-fú-əsāǰkā-yá**
 Yə-thing-buy-Yə Yə-thing-buy-yesterday-Yə
 ‘bought things’ intended ‘things bought yesterday’
 c. **ò-tù-yā** **wé** **yə-fúú** **əsāǰkā**
 Yə-thing-buy-Yə DEM Yə-buy_{FCT} yesterday
 ‘things that were bought yesterday’

⁹ Akebu distinguishes between adjectives and verbs by the way they are used as predicates: adjectives need a copula and stative verbs are heads of clauses on their own. Stative verbs are distinguished from non-stative verbs by their stative vs. past interpretation of the factative form.

- d. **əsə̀əkə́ lɛ̀ ò-tù-fú-yə́** e. **ò-tù-fú-yə́ wé ə̀sə̀əkə́**
 yesterday POSS Yə-thing-buy-Yə Yə-thing-buy-Yə DEM yesterday
 ‘bought things from yesterday’ ‘things bought yesterday’

4. Noun classes and number

4.1. Number meaning of noun classes

Following the tradition established in African linguistics, we analyze number forms of nouns as belonging to different noun classes. The $\eta\upsilon$, $\tau\theta$, $w\theta$ and $k\theta$ classes are singular and contain only nouns that refer to single objects. The $p\theta$, $y\theta$ and $kp\theta$ classes contain both nouns that refer to plural objects and those referring to single objects.

In the $p\theta$ class, nouns referring to singular objects are few and express non-count entities, such as liquids or powders, cf. **à-pɔ̀ŋ-pə́** ‘oil’, **ə̀-fə̀ŋ-pə́** ‘wine’; such nouns may be considered as pluralia tantum, and therefore the class may be referred to as the plural class $p\theta$. The $y\theta$ class contains nouns referring to non-count entities and names of paired objects, as well, cf. **è-nì-yə́** ‘time’, **à-kpàtàpà̀ŋ-yə́** ‘trousers’; but it also contains nouns that refer to single objects with no evident ‘pluralia tantum’ semantics, cf. **à-kpù-yə́** ‘bag’, **à-tàkà-yə́** ‘box’ (moreover, such nouns may refer to singular and plural objects with the same class marking). For the $kp\theta$ class nouns referring to singular objects is in fact the default option, cf. **wə̀-tàà-kpə́** ‘market’, **gù-kpə́** ‘room’, although non-count nouns are present there, as well, cf. **móótù-kpə́** ‘rice’. The $y\theta$ and $kp\theta$ classes are therefore ambinumeral and cannot be characterized as having only one of the two number meanings. In its plural meaning the $kp\theta$ class is represented only by its morphological subclass with the prefix **wə̀-**.

4.2. Number correlations of noun classes

As singular and plural forms belong to different noun classes, the plural is formed by class conversion. There are several possible number correlations between classes that contain corresponding singular and plural forms. Some of the number correlations are very productive, some of them are marginal.

The most productive number correlations are (10)–(13). They cover dozens of nouns and are the default options of the plural form for the four singular classes.

(10) $\eta\upsilon$ (sg) ~ $p\theta$ (pl)

cíkèé-yə́ ‘dog’ ~ **à-cíkèé-pə́** ‘dogs’
fùtí-yə́ ‘bird’ ~ **ò-fùtí-pə́** ‘birds’
ŋòŋtè-yə́ ‘rain’ ~ **a-ŋòŋtè-pə́** ‘rains’

(11) $\tau\theta$ (sg) ~ $y\theta$ (pl)

nìmí-tə́ ‘eye’ ~ **è-nìmí-yə́** ‘eyes’
gò-tə́ ‘liver’ ~ **ò-kò-yə́** ‘livers’
gbáà-tə́ ‘granary’ ~ **à-kpáà-yə́** ‘granaries’

(12) $w\theta$ (sg) ~ $y\theta$ (pl)

tù-wə́ ‘thing’ ~ **ò-tù-yə́** ‘things’
náá-wə́ ‘fire’ ~ **à-náá-yə́** ‘fires’
cíí-wə́ ‘piece of wood, stick’ ~ **è-cíí-yə́** ‘pieces of wood, sticks’

(13) $k\theta$ (sg) ~ $kp\theta$ (pl)

gà-kə́ ‘meat’ ~ **wə̀-kà-kpə́** ‘meats’
à-kā-kə́ ‘hand’ ~ **wə̀-kā-kpə́** ‘hands’

gúú-ká ‘spoon’ ~ **wə-kúu-kpə** ‘spoons’
kə-tōō-kə ‘feather’ ~ **wə-tōō-kpə** ‘feathers’

Number correlations (14), (15) and (17) are less, but still productive and involve a few dozens of nouns. (14) is the standard option for the singular nouns of the ambinumeral KPƏ class.

(14) KPƏ (sg) ~ YƏ (pl)
wə-tàà-kpə ‘market’ ~ **à-tàà-yə** ‘markets’
gú-kpə ‘room’ ~ **ò-kú-yə** ‘rooms’
wə-ṅàṅ-kpə ‘cave’ ~ **à-ṅàṅ-yə** ‘caves’
wə-púéṅ-kpə ‘jug’ ~ **à-púéṅ-yə** ‘jugs’

(15) is attested only for a group of nouns of the singular KƏ class (all of them belong to the morphological subclass with the prefix **kə-**) and always coexists with (13), since two plural classes are available for such nouns. The competing plural forms of the KPƏ and YƏ classes may differ in their meaning: the form of the KPƏ class expresses a set of separate objects, while the form of the YƏ class expresses the whole object that consists of a mass or a pair of singular objects. The KPƏ class is compatible with numerals in a standard way, as in (16a), while the competing YƏ class is not grammatical with numerals, see (16b).

(15) KƏ (sg) ~ YƏ (pl)
kə-tūkòṅ-kə ‘ear’ ~ **ò-tūkòṅ-yə** ‘(two) ears’, cf. **wə-tūkòṅ-kpə** ‘ears (in general)’
kə-nṅé-kə ‘work’ ~ **à-nṅé-yə** ‘things to do’, cf. **wə-nṅé-kpə** ‘professions, occupations’
kə-nù-kə ‘arm’ ~ **ò-nù-yə** ‘(two) arms’, cf. **wə-nù-kpə** ‘arms (in general)’
kə-púéè-kə ‘fish’ ~ **à-púéè-yə** ‘fish (mass)’, cf. **wə-púéè-kpə** ‘fishes’

(16) a. **wə-nù-kpə** **wə-yí** b. ***ò-nù-yə** **è-yí**
 KPƏ-arms- KPƏ KPƏ-two YƏ-arms-YƏ YƏ-two
 ‘two arms’ exp. ‘two arms’

(17) shows that singular nouns of the ambinumeral YƏ class have no morphological number distinction and belong to the same class while referring to both a singular object and to a plural object.

(17) YƏ (sg) ~ YƏ (pl)
à-kpàtàpàṅ-yə ‘trousers(sg)’ ~ **à-kpàtàpàṅ-yə** ‘trousers(pl)’
à-kpò-yə ‘bag’ ~ **à-kpò-yə** ‘bags’
à-tàkà-yə ‘box’ ~ **à-tàkà-yə** ‘boxes’
à-fùè-yə ‘vagina’ ~ **à-fùè-yə** ‘vaginae’

Number correlation (18) is marginal. The only attested noun stem that always takes the option (18) is **píí** ‘young animal’. For complex animate nouns of the TƏ class this correlation competes with (11) (which is standard for this class), and two plural forms are possible.

(18) TƏ (sg) ~ PƏ (pl)
bíí-tə ‘young animal’ ~ **è-píí-pə** ‘young animals’
mèèpí-tə ‘lamb’ ~ **à-mèèpí-pə** ‘lambs’, cf. **à-mèèpí-yə** ‘lambs’

Finally, a number of nouns have no attested singular vs. plural distinction both in morphology and semantics. These include non-count nouns of the P Θ class, such as the aforementioned **à-p ω ñ-p ω** ‘oil’, **è-f ω ñ-p ω** ‘wine’. But most of other noun classes contain nouns that disclose no number distinction, as well, cf. **n ι -t Θ** ‘lie’ (T Θ class); **k \grave{a} -t ι -k \acute{e}** ‘funeral’ (K Θ class); **w \grave{e} -p ω ñ-kp \acute{e}** ‘grease’ (KP Θ class); **f \grave{a} -w \acute{e}** ‘joy’ (W Θ class).

5. Lexical meaning of noun classes and class conversion

5.1. Lexical meaning of noun classes

Correlations of noun classes with lexical meaning are not transparent in Akebu.

The $\eta\upsilon$ class is the default class for animate objects. Most singular animate objects belong to this class (their plural form belongs, then, to the P Θ class), cf. **n ι -y \acute{e}** ‘person’, **c $\acute{\imath}$ k \acute{e} -y \acute{e}** ‘dog’, **f \acute{u} t $\acute{\imath}$ -y \acute{e}** ‘bird’, **k \acute{a} t \grave{a} ñkp \acute{a} -y \acute{e}** ‘flea’, **y \acute{u} k \acute{e} -y \acute{e}** ‘louse’. Still, on the one hand, there are counterexamples: **g ω d \acute{e}** (<g ω t \acute{u} -t Θ) ‘female young animal’ or **m \acute{e} èp $\acute{\imath}$ -t Θ** ‘lamb’ belong to the T Θ class; **k \grave{a} -p \acute{u} èè-k \acute{e}** ‘fish’ or **k \grave{a} -p ω ñ-k \acute{e}** ‘snake’ belong to the K Θ class. On the other hand, there are inanimate nouns in the $\eta\upsilon$ class; this is typical for borrowings (cf. **g \grave{a} m \grave{d} -y \acute{e}** ‘iron trap’ < Ewe **ga ma**, **s $\acute{\imath}$ k \acute{a} -y \acute{e}** ‘money’ < Akan **sik \acute{a}** , **gl \acute{a} ás $\acute{\imath}$ -y \acute{e}** ‘glass’ < English **glass**), but there are inanimate nouns in this class that have no transparent source of borrowing, as well (cf. **k ω l \acute{a} át $\acute{\imath}$ -y \acute{e}** ‘banana’, **s \acute{e} p \acute{e} -y \acute{e}** ‘amulet’).

The W Θ class is the default class for inanimate objects and contains the noun **t \acute{u} -w \acute{e}** ‘thing’ that has a very general meaning, but inanimate nouns are arbitrarily distributed among the noun classes.

The T Θ and K Θ classes take most of the nouns denoting body parts, e.g. **l \acute{e} -t Θ** ‘belly’, **n $\acute{\imath}$ m $\acute{\imath}$ -t Θ** ‘eye’, **y \acute{u} -t Θ** ‘head’, **g \acute{o} p $\acute{\imath}$ -t Θ** ‘bone’, **v \acute{o} ñ-t Θ** ‘corn’, **g \acute{o} -t Θ** ‘liver’ belong to the T Θ class and **à-k \acute{a} à-k \acute{e}** ‘hand’, **k \grave{a} -n \acute{u} -k \acute{e}** ‘arm’, **k \grave{a} -kp \acute{a} t Θ -k \acute{e}** ‘foot’, **k \grave{a} -t \acute{o} ò-k \acute{e}** ‘feather’, **k \grave{a} -t \acute{u} k \acute{o} ñ-k \acute{e}** ‘ear’ belong to the K Θ class. Still, there are exceptions, e.g. **t \acute{u} t \acute{u} -w \acute{e}** ‘chest’ that belongs to the W Θ class.

The \check{v} - subclass of the K Θ class is used for nominalizations of verbal stems, as shown in (19)–(20).

- (19) **n \acute{e} -t $\acute{\imath}$ é** **w \grave{e} -c \acute{o} -kp \acute{e}** **l \acute{a}** **à-t \acute{e} ñ-k \acute{e}**
 1SG.PFV-begin KP Θ -tale-KP Θ POSS K Θ -say-K Θ
 ‘I began telling the tale.’
- (20) **m \acute{e}** **ò-k \acute{o} -k \acute{e}** **k \grave{a} -l \acute{e} è** **kp \acute{r} úñkp \acute{r} út \acute{u} ñ**
 1SG.POSS K Θ -go-K Θ K Θ -be_{FCT} necessary
 ‘I have to go (lit. My going is necessary).’

5.2. Noun class conversion

Besides number correlations, there are other cases of conversion, when different noun classes have the same stem. So far, we do not have enough examples of any of these correlations to declare that they are productive. Here we provide examples that are currently attested in our data.

- (21) $\eta\upsilon \sim T\Theta$
p $\acute{\imath}$ -y \acute{e} ‘child’ ~ **b $\acute{\imath}$ -t Θ** ‘young animal’
k ω t \acute{u} -y \acute{e} ‘girl’ ~ **g ω d \acute{e}** (← **g ω t \acute{u} -t Θ**) ‘female young animal’

- (22) W $\Theta \sim T\Theta$
k \acute{o} ò-w \acute{e} ‘fruit stem; umbilical cord’ ~ **g \acute{o} ò-t Θ** ‘navel’
t $\acute{\imath}$ -w \acute{e} ‘palm branch, palm cluster’ ~ **q $\acute{\imath}$ -t Θ** ‘palm nut’
t \acute{o} ò-w \acute{e} ‘raffia branch’ ~ **q \acute{o} ò-t Θ** ‘raffia’

wēē-wō ‘organism, disease’ ~ **wēē-tā** ‘respiration’
fúú-wó ‘tail’ ~ **vúú-tá** ‘penis’
kúlū-wō ‘traditional week’ ~ **gúlū-tā** ‘last day of the traditional week’
ɲúŋèè-wō ‘thread’ ~ **ɲúŋèè-tā** ‘cotton’

(23) Wə ~ KPə

cíí-wó ‘piece of wood, stick’ ~ **wə-cíí-kpá** ‘tree’
tí-wō ‘palm branch, palm cluster’ ~ **wə-tí-kpā** ‘palm tree’
fūŋ-wō ‘hole’ ~ **wə-fūŋ-kpā** ‘pit’

(24) Kə ~ Wə

kə-léétí-kó ‘side (of an inanimate object)’ ~ **léétí-wó** ‘side (of an animate being)’
kə-cúmá-kó ‘job, errand’ ~ **cúmá-wó** ‘work (in general)’

(25) ŋU ~ KPə

nùŋ-yō ‘husband’ ~ **wə-nùŋ-kpā** ‘wedding’

(26) ŋU ~ Kə

púétáá-yó ‘friend’ ~ **kə-púétáá-kó** ‘friendship’
kpəè-yō ‘Akebu (person)’ ~ **kə-kpəè-kā** ‘Akebu (language)’

(27) Yə ~ Kə

à-tià-yō ‘suffering’ ~ **kə-tià-kā** ‘funeral’

(28) Kə (kə-) ~ Kə (v-)

kə-màà-kā ‘back (of an inanimate object)’ ~ **à-màà-kā** ‘back (of an animate being)’

(29) Pə ~ KPə

à-pōŋ-pā ‘oil’ ~ **wə-pōŋ-kpā** ‘grease’

6. Pronoun series of noun classes

6.1. Paradigm of pronoun series

The main agreement pattern that allows one to distinguish noun classes is the 3rd person pronouns that form paradigms of seven items corresponding to seven noun classes. Table 8 presents four series of Akebu 3rd person pronouns: object pronouns, independent pronouns, intensifiers and possessive pronouns. Object, independent and possessive pronouns are used anaphorically and agree in class with an antecedent in another clause, while intensifiers agree with the subject.

Table 8. Pronoun series

class	object pronoun	independent pronoun	pronoun-intensifier	possessive pronoun
ŋU	ŋù ¹⁰	ŋù	ŋùŋù	nú ¹¹
Pə	pā	ŋpā / bā	ŋpāŋpā / bāŋpā	pā lú
Tə	tā	ŋtā / dā	ŋtāŋtā / dāŋtā	tā lú
Wə	wū	ŋwā / wā	ŋwāŋwā / wāŋwā	wā lú
Yə	yā	ŋyā / yā	ŋyāŋyā / yāŋyā	yā lú / yú
Kə	kā	ŋkā / gā	ŋkāŋkā / gāŋkā	kā lú
KPə	kpā	ŋkpā / gbā	ŋkpāŋkpā / gbāŋkpā	wā lú

¹⁰ A cliticized form of the object pronoun of the class ŋU ŋ is attested, as well.

¹¹ See 3.2 for the rules of the underspecified vowel v.

6.2. Object pronouns

Object pronouns are morphologically most simple and are used in most part of contexts.

These are anaphoric markers that are used as a verb's objects and with prepositions. The former context is shown in (30b), (31b), (32b), and the latter in (33b) and (34b).

- | | | | | | |
|---------|--|--|-------------------------------------|---|-------------------|
| (30) a. | ná-ɲìḡ
1SG.PFV-see
'I saw the bird.' | fū́tí-yó
bird-ŋŪ | b. | ná-ɲìḡ
1SG.PFV-see
'I saw it.' | ɲò
ŋŪ.O |
| (31) a. | ná-ɲìḡ
1SG.PFV-see
'I saw the oil.' | à-pᵔḡ-pᵔ
Pᵔ-oil-Pᵔ | b. | ná-ɲìḡ
1SG.PFV-see
'I saw it.' | pᵔ
Pᵔ.O |
| (32) a. | ná-ɲìḡ
1SG.PFV-see
'I saw the stick.' | cíí-wá
wood-wᵔ | b. | ná-ɲìḡ
1SG.PFV-see
'I saw it.' | wᵔ
wᵔ.O |
| (33) a. | nó-pᵔ
1SG.PFV-come
'I came with the lamb.' | mᵔ
with/and | mᵔḡpí-tᵔ
lamb-tᵔ | | |
| | b. | nó-pᵔ
1SG.PFV-come
'I came with it.' | mᵔ
with/and | tᵔ
tᵔ.O | |
| (34) a. | nó-tú
1SG.PFV-come from
'I went out of the market.' | tᵔ
in | wᵔ-tàà-kpᵔ
kpᵔ-market-kpᵔ | | |
| | b. | nó-tú
1SG.PFV-come from
'I came out of it.' | tᵔ
in | kpᵔ
kpᵔ.O | |

6.3. Independent pronouns

Independent pronouns are derived from object pronouns by adding the **ɲ-** prefix or by alternating the initial voiceless consonant with a voiced one; this varies both among speakers and in the speech of the same speakers. For the **ŋŪ** class the form of the independent pronoun is the same as the form of the object pronoun.

Independent pronouns are attested as topicalized noun phrases, as in (35b), (36b), (37b), and in coordinated structures, as in (38b) and (39b).

- | | | | | | |
|---------|--|--|---------------------------|--|-------------------|
| (35) a. | fū́tí-yó, ná-ɲìḡ
bird-ŋŪ 1SG.PFV-see
'As for the bird, I saw it.' | ɲò
ŋŪ.O | b. | ɲò, ná-ɲìḡ
ŋŪ.INDP 1SG.PFV-see
'As for it, I saw it.' | ɲò
ŋŪ.O |
| (36) a. | mᵔḡpí-tᵔ, ná-ɲìḡ
lamb-tᵔ 1SG.PFV-see
'As for the lamb, I saw it.' | tᵔ
tᵔ.O | b. | ɖᵔ, ná-ɲìḡ
tᵔ.INDP 1SG.PFV-see
'As for it, I saw it.' | tᵔ
tᵔ.O |
| (37) a. | gúú-ká kᵔ-lā-tᵔ
spoon-kᵔ kᵔ-3.PFV-fall
'The spoon fell down.' | | b. | ɲkᵔ, kᵔ-lā-tᵔ
kᵔ.INDP kᵔ-3.PFV-fall
'As for it, it fell down.' | |
| (38) a. | fū́tí-yó mᵔ né
bird-ŋŪ with/and ŋŪ.POSS
'the bird and its nestling' | | bíí-tᵔ
young-tᵔ | | |
| | b. | ɲò mᵔ né
ŋŪ.INDP with/and ŋŪ.POSS
'it and its nestling' | bíí-tᵔ
young-tᵔ | | |

- (39) a. **mḕpí-t̪** **m̄** **cíkèé-ȳ** b. **ɔ̄** **m̄** **cíkèé-ȳ**
 lamb-τ̪ with/and dog-η̪ τ̪.INDP with/and dog-η̪
 ‘the lamb and the dog’ ‘it and the dog’

6.4. Intensifiers

Intensifiers are a reduplicated form of the independent pronoun. In the first syllable the same variation as in the form of the independent pronouns is attested, and in the second syllable **ɲ-** is always used.

Intensifiers are controlled by the subject and are used in emphatic contexts and express the subject’s marked status. Examples (40)–(42) illustrate the use of intensifiers with different noun classes.

- (40) **m̄** **t̪** **l̄-p̄** **η̪η̪**
 1SG.POSS father 3.PFV-come η̪U.INT
 ‘My father came himself.’
- (41) **mḕpí-t̪** **l̄-t̪** **ɔ̄t̪**
 lamb-τ̪ 3.PFV-fall τ̪.INT
 ‘The lamb fell down itself.’
- (42) **n̄áá-w̄** **w̄ɲw̄** **w̄-l̄-t̪**
 fire-w̄ w̄.INT w̄-3.PFV-go_out
 ‘The fire went out itself.’

6.5. Possessive pronouns

For possessive pronouns, in most of the noun classes we deal with a combination of an object pronoun and the possessive marker **l̄** that is used with full noun phrases, as well. Still, the η̪U class has a special form of the possessive pronoun **n̄**, and the Y̪ class has an optional contracted form **ȳ**. The KP̪ class uses the idiosyncratic form **w̄** in the possessive construction. This form corresponds to the KP̪ class form in verbal agreement, but not to other pronominal forms. This is why in our analysis they form a separate series.

Possessive pronouns are used in noun phrases. (43b) shows a morphologically transparent case of the class P̪ where the possessive marker is combined with a pronominal marker that has the same form as the corresponding object pronoun. (44b) shows the use of the form **w̄** in the class KP̪. (45b–c) illustrate the full and the contracted form of the possessive pronouns of the class Y̪. Finally, (46b) shows the special form of the possessive pronoun of the class η̪U.

- (43) a. **à-p̄ɲ-p̄** **l̄** **ɲí-t̪** b. **p̄** **l̄** **ɲí-t̪**
 P̪-oil-P̪ POSS smell-τ̪ P̪ POSS smell-τ̪
 ‘the smell of the oil’ ‘its smell’
- (44) a. **ḡú-kp̄** **l̄** **ɲúáá-t̪** b. **w̄** **l̄** **ɲúáá-t̪**
 room-KP̪ POSS door-τ̪ KP̪ POSS door-τ̪
 ‘the door of the room’ ‘its door’
- (45) a. **à-n̄áá-ȳ** **l̄** **à-f̄èè-ȳ** b. **ȳ** **l̄** **à-f̄èè-ȳ**
 Y̪-fire-Y̪ POSS Y̪-place-Y̪ Y̪ POSS Y̪-place-Y̪
 ‘places of the fires’ ‘their places’
- c. **ȳ** **à-f̄èè-ȳ**
 Y̪.POSS Y̪-place-Y̪
 ‘their places’
- (46) a. **cíkèé-ȳ** **l̄** **è-p̄í-p̄** b. **n̄** **è-p̄í-p̄**
 dog-η̪ POSS P̪-young-P̪ η̪U.POSS P̪-young-P̪
 ‘the dog’s puppies’ ‘its puppies’

Animate nouns of the $\text{ʈ}\text{ə}$ class prefer semantic agreement of the possessive pronoun and take the possessive pronoun $\mathbf{n}\mathbf{v}$ of the animate class ηU , as in (47b), although the standard form $\mathbf{t}\mathbf{\bar{a}}$ $\mathbf{I}\mathbf{v}$ is also possible (47c). Inanimate nouns of the $\text{ʈ}\text{ə}$ class take only the standard form (48b), and the form $\mathbf{n}\mathbf{v}$ is ungrammatical with them (48c). Note that this type of semantic agreement is not possible e.g. with object pronouns, cf. (49b–c).

- (47) a. $\mathbf{m}\mathbf{\bar{e}}\mathbf{\bar{e}}\mathbf{p}\mathbf{i}\text{-}\mathbf{t}\mathbf{\bar{a}}$ $\mathbf{l}\mathbf{\bar{a}}$ $\mathbf{f}\mathbf{\bar{e}}\mathbf{\bar{e}}\text{-}\mathbf{w}\mathbf{\bar{a}}$ b. $\mathbf{n}\mathbf{\bar{a}}$ $\mathbf{f}\mathbf{\bar{e}}\mathbf{\bar{e}}\text{-}\mathbf{w}\mathbf{\bar{a}}$ c. $^{\text{OK}}\mathbf{t}\mathbf{\bar{a}}$ $\mathbf{l}\mathbf{\bar{a}}$ $\mathbf{f}\mathbf{\bar{e}}\mathbf{\bar{e}}\text{-}\mathbf{w}\mathbf{\bar{a}}$
 lamb- $\text{ʈ}\text{ə}$ POSS place- $\text{w}\text{ə}$ ηU .POSS place- $\text{w}\text{ə}$ $\text{ʈ}\text{ə}$ POSS place- $\text{w}\text{ə}$
 ‘the lamb’s place’ ‘its place’ ‘its place’
- (48) a. $\mathbf{g}\mathbf{\bar{o}}\text{-}\mathbf{t}\mathbf{\bar{a}}$ $\mathbf{l}\mathbf{\bar{a}}$ $\mathbf{f}\mathbf{\bar{e}}\mathbf{\bar{e}}\text{-}\mathbf{w}\mathbf{\bar{a}}$ b. $\mathbf{t}\mathbf{\bar{a}}\text{-}\mathbf{l}\mathbf{\bar{a}}$ $\mathbf{f}\mathbf{\bar{e}}\mathbf{\bar{e}}\text{-}\mathbf{w}\mathbf{\bar{a}}$ c. $^*\mathbf{n}\mathbf{\bar{a}}$ $\mathbf{f}\mathbf{\bar{e}}\mathbf{\bar{e}}\text{-}\mathbf{w}\mathbf{\bar{a}}$
 liver- $\text{ʈ}\text{ə}$ POSS place- $\text{w}\text{ə}$ $\text{ʈ}\text{ə}$ -POSS place- $\text{w}\text{ə}$ ηU .POSS place- $\text{w}\text{ə}$
 ‘the liver’s place’ ‘its place’ ‘its place’
- (49) a. $\mathbf{n}\mathbf{\bar{a}}\text{-}\mathbf{j}\mathbf{\bar{i}}\mathbf{\bar{n}}\mathbf{\bar{e}}$ $\mathbf{m}\mathbf{\bar{e}}\mathbf{\bar{e}}\mathbf{p}\mathbf{i}\text{-}\mathbf{t}\mathbf{\bar{a}}$ b. $\mathbf{n}\mathbf{\bar{a}}\text{-}\mathbf{j}\mathbf{\bar{i}}\mathbf{\bar{n}}\mathbf{\bar{e}}$ $\mathbf{t}\mathbf{\bar{a}}$ c. $^*\mathbf{n}\mathbf{\bar{a}}\text{-}\mathbf{j}\mathbf{\bar{i}}\mathbf{\bar{n}}\mathbf{\bar{e}}$ $\mathbf{\eta}\mathbf{\bar{u}}$
 1SG.PFV-see lamb- $\text{ʈ}\text{ə}$ 1SG.PFV-see $\text{ʈ}\text{ə}$.O 1SG.PFV-see ηU .O
 ‘I saw the lamb.’ ‘I saw it.’ ‘I saw it.’

7. Class agreement of the verb

7.1. Agreement series of the verb

The Akebu verb agrees in noun class with the subject. The morphological structure of the verb may be represented by the two patterns (50), where CPN means class-person-number marker, R means the stem of the verb, and TAM means a separate tense-aspect-modality marker. The pattern (50a) is the most typical, since class-person number markers express cumulatively class-person-number and TAM meanings, as well as polarity, and the pattern (50b), where an additional TAM marker is present, is rare. More details on verb structure and on the use of verbal forms may be found in (Makeeva & Shluinsky 2013).

- (50) a. CPN-R
 b. CPN-TAM-R

Table 9 presents the form of the class agreement markers of the eight main verb class agreement series.¹² Some markers have variants. Conjoint markers of the ηU class are presented in curly brackets.

¹² There are more series that are marginal, as well, but they require further research.

Table 9. Class agreement markers of the verb

class	default series		perfective series		prospective series		negative perfective-factative series	
	simple	conjoint	simple	conjoint	simple	conjoint	simple	conjoint
ŋŪ	∅-	ŋ-	l̄v-	n̄v-	l̄v̄v-	n̄v̄v-	l̄v̄v-	n̄v̄v-
PƏ	pə-		pə-l̄v-		pə-l̄v̄v-		pə-l̄v̄v-	
ʈƏ	∅- (voicing)		l̄v-		l̄v̄v-		l̄v̄v-	
WƏ	wə-		wə-l̄v-		wə-l̄v̄v-		wə-l̄v̄v-	
YƏ	yə-		yə-l̄v- / yv̄-		yə-l̄v̄v- / yv̄v-		yə-l̄v̄v- / yv̄v-	
KƏ	kə-		kə-l̄v-		kə-l̄v̄v-		kə-l̄v̄v-	
KPƏ	wə-		wə-l̄v-		wə-l̄v̄v		wə-l̄v̄v-	
	habitual series		negative prospective-habitual series		‘adhabitual’ series			
	simple	conjoint	simple	conjoint				
ŋŪ	l̄v̄v-	n̄v̄v-	l̄iḥ-	n̄iḥ-	m̄iḥ-			
PƏ	pə-l̄v̄v-		pə-l̄iḥ-		p̄iḥ-			
ʈƏ	l̄v̄v-		l̄iḥ-		l̄iḥ- / t̄iḥ-			
WƏ	wə-l̄v̄v-		wə-l̄iḥ-		w̄iḥ-			
YƏ	yə-l̄v̄v- / yv̄v-		yə-l̄iḥ- / yv̄iḥ-		ȳiḥ-			
KƏ	kə-l̄v̄v-		kə-l̄iḥ-		k̄iḥ-			
KPƏ	wə-l̄v̄v-		wə-l̄iḥ-		w̄iḥ-			

As one can see from Table 9, most class agreement series of the verb can be analyzed as a composition of two separate affixes – the noun class marker and the 3rd person marker of the corresponding series.¹³ For most of the series the 3rd person marker begins with /l/. In (51) this structure is exemplified by some forms of the perfective series. The 3rd person marker of the perfective series is **-lā-**. The ŋŪ and ʈƏ classes have no segmental class prefix for such forms, cf. (51a–b), but other classes do, as shown in (51c–d) for the classes WƏ and KƏ. For the class YƏ both the standard form (where the class marker can be separated) as in (51e), and a contracted form, as in (51f) are possible.

- (51) a. **fūṭí-yó** **lā-tò** b. **mēèpí-tá** **lā-tò**
bird-ŋŪ 3.PFV-fall lamb-ʈƏ ʈƏ.3.PFV-fall
‘The bird fell down.’ ‘The lamb fell down.’
- c. **cíí-wə** **wə-lā-tò** d. **gúú-kə** **kə-lā-tò**
wood-WƏ WƏ.3.PFV-fall spoon-KƏ KƏ.3.PFV-fall
‘The stick fell down.’ ‘The spoon fell down.’
- e. **è-cíí-yó** **yə-lā-tò** f. **è-cíí-yó** **yā-tò**
YƏ-wood-YƏ YƏ.3.PFV-fall YƏ-wood-YƏ YƏ.3.PFV-fall
‘The sticks fell down.’ ‘The sticks fell down.’

The default series is morphologically the simplest, and has only class markers, cf. (52a) where the marker is zero for the ŋŪ class and (52b) where it has a standard form for the class. This series is used for subjunctive and factative forms that are distinguished by stem form.

- (52) a. **ṅì-yə** **sā** **∅-pōnú** b. **gà-kə** **kə-pōnú**
person-ŋŪ this ŋŪ-good_{FACT} meat-KƏ KƏ-good_{FACT}
‘This man is good.’ ‘The meat is good.’

¹³ Note that the 1st and 2nd person forms have different structures, and therefore one cannot analyze 3rd person markers as TAM markers.

Markers of the ‘adhabitual’ series cannot be seen as a synchronic combination of morphologically simple class markers and a 3rd person marker, but can be divided into the first consonants that depend on the class and the sequence /ɛ̃ɲ/, cf. (53a) and (53b) for the classes KƏ and ʦƏ respectively.

- (53) a. **kə-kpá-kə** **kə-léé-cè** **ḱíɲ-cí**
 KƏ-shirt-KƏ KƏ-3.HAB-be_frequent KƏ.ADHAB-dirty
 ‘The shirt becomes dirty frequently.’
- b. **ɲúáá-ʦə** **léé-cè** **líɲ-cí**
 door-ʦƏ ʦƏ-3.HAB-be_frequent ʦƏ.ADHAB-dirty
 ‘The door becomes dirty frequently.’

7.2. Default series of the ʦƏ class

The ʦƏ class has no segmental agreement marker in the default series, but triggers an alternation of initial consonant of the verbal root. (54) shows the contrast of the segmental marker for the KƏ class (54a) with the non-segmental marking in the ʦƏ class (54b) when the default series is used for the factative form. (55) shows the segmental markers of the ɲU (55a) and YƏ (55b) classes and the non-segmental marker of the ʦƏ class (55c) when the default series is used as the subjunctive.

- (54) a. **gà-kə** **sā** **kə-ʦāní**
 meat-KƏ this KƏ-tasty_{FCT}
 ‘This meat is tasty.’
- b. **gbèdḱə** **ḱāní**
 cassava.ʦƏ ʦƏ.tasty_{FCT}
 ‘The cassava is tasty.’
- (55) a. **nə́-ḱə** **fūʦí-yə** **ɲ-tò**
 1SG.HAB-want bird-ɲU JNT.ɲU-fall
 ‘I want the bird to fall down.’
- b. **nə́-ḱə** **è-cíí-yə** **yə-tò**
 1SG.HAB-want yə-tree-YƏ YƏ-fall
 ‘I want the trees to fall down.’
- c. **nə́-ḱə** **mḕpí-ʦə** **ḱə**
 1SG.HAB-want lamb-ʦƏ ʦƏ.fall
 ‘I want the lamb to fall down.’

The alternation consists in voicing the initial consonant of the verbal root that is always voiceless if is not a nasal or an approximant in the lexical representation of Akebu verbs. (56a) shows a lexical voiceless form of an obstruent that alternates with the corresponding voiced obstruent in the subjunctive form of the ʦƏ class (56b). (57) and (58) are analogous pairs with an approximant and a nasal that do not alternate.

- (56) a. **mḕpí-ʦə** **lā-ḱpè**
 lamb-ʦƏ ʦƏ-3.PFV-lie
 ‘The lamb lay down.’
- b. **nə́-ḱə** **mḕpí-ʦə** **gbè**
 1SG.HAB-want lamb-ʦƏ ʦƏ.lie
 ‘I want the lamb to lie down.’
- (57) a. **mḕpí-ʦə** **lā-yí**
 lamb-ʦƏ 3.PFV-stand
 ‘The lamb stood up.’

- b. **nóó-pó** **mēèpí-ťó** **yí**
 1SG.HAB-want lamb-ťó ťó.stand
 ‘I want the lamb to stand up.’
- (58) a. **mēèpí-ťó** **lā-nìh** **mí**
 lamb-ťó 3.PFV-see 1SG.O
 ‘The lamb saw me.’
- b. **nóó-pó** **mēèpí-ťó** **nìh** **mí**
 1SG.HAB-want lamb-ťó ťó.see 1SG.O
 ‘I want the lamb to see me.’

7.3. Conjoint agreement markers of the η U class

The η U class distinguishes simple and conjoint markers in each series. The use of conjoint markers is preliminarily described by Shluinsky (2015) – they are used in some dependent clauses (first of all, relative clauses), with focalized noun phrases (including the cases of wh-movement), after the marker of clause coordination. As shown in (59), other classes than η U have no simple vs. conjoint distinction. In (59b–c) we deal with the same syntactic context as in (59a), but in (59a) the subject of the η U class triggers a conjoint perfective marker, and in (59b–c) the W \emptyset and ťó classes trigger the standard perfective marker, the W \emptyset class having an overt class agreement marker and the ťó class having only a zero one.

Most series have a 3rd person marker that begins with /l/. In the conjoint markers this /l/ is changed by /n/, as shown in (59a).

- (59) a. **ná-nìh** **fūťí-yó** **wé** **nā-tò** **wè**
 1SG.PFV-see bird- η U DEM JNT.3.PFV-fall SUB
 ‘I saw the bird that fell down.’
- b. **ná-nìh** **wè-cíí-kpó** **wé** **wè-lā-tò** **wè**
 1SG.PFV-see KP \emptyset -tree-KP \emptyset DEM KP \emptyset -3.PFV-fall SUB
 ‘I saw the tree that fell down.’
- c. **ná-nìh** **cíkèépi-ťó** **wé** **lā-tò** **wè**
 1SG.PFV-see puppy-ťó DEM ťó.3.PFV-fall SUB
 ‘I saw the puppy that fell down.’

In the default series the conjoint marker η - (60b) contrasts with the simpler zero marker (60a).

- (60) a. **kōťó-yō** **sā** **ø-pōnú** **mí**
 girl- η U this η U-good_{FCT} 1SG.O
 ‘I like this girl. (lit. This girl is good for me.)’
- b. **kōťó-yō** **wé** **η-pōnú** **mí** **ø-kpí**
 girl- η U FOC JNT. η U-good_{FCT} 1SG.O η U-be_{FCT}
ťó **gú-kpó** **sā**
 in room-KP \emptyset this
 ‘The girl that I like is in this room.’

7.4. Default agreement and variation of agreement

Default agreement with no controlling subject is taken by the W \emptyset class, as seen from (61a). Nominalizations may or may not control the verb’s agreement, so that the verb may agree with them by their K \emptyset class, as in (61b), or take the default agreement by the W \emptyset class, as in (61c).

- (61) a. **wə-lə̃ə kɔ́júkɔ́jú kə ɔ́-fú kē̃tí-wə**
 Wə-be_{FCT} necessary SUB 2SG-buy food-wə
 ‘You have to buy food. (lit. It is necessary that you buy food.)’
- b. **kē̃tí-wə ló ɔ́-fú-kə kə-lə̃ə kɔ́júkɔ́jú**
 food-wə POSS Kə-buy-Kə Kə-be_{FCT} necessary
 ‘It is necessary to buy food.’
- c. **kē̃tí-wə ló ɔ́-fú-kə wə-lə̃ə kɔ́júkɔ́jú**
 food-wə POSS Kə-buy-Kə Wə-be_{FCT} necessary
 ‘It is necessary to buy food.’

7.5. Agreement resolution

We have only preliminary data on verb agreement resolution with a coordinated subject. There are two strategies of agreement resolution in Akebu.

First, the verb may agree with the closest conjunct. In (62) nouns of the KP̃ and T̃ classes are coordinated, and the verb agrees with the right one, by the T̃ class marker in (62a) and by the KP̃ class marker in (62b), depending on the linear order of the conjuncts.

- (62) a. **wə-t̃à-kp̃ mə ɔ́jú-t̃ lā-wɔ́**
 KP̃-market-KP̃ with/and road-T̃ T̃.3.PFV-be_{destroyed}
 ‘The market and the road were destroyed.’
- b. **ɔ́jú-t̃ mə wə-t̃à-kp̃ wə-lā-wɔ́**
 road-t̃ with/and KP̃-market-KP̃ KP̃-3.PFV-be_{destroyed}
 ‘The road and the market were destroyed.’

Secondly, the verb may take the class agreement marker by the class that is the plural correlate of one of the conjuncts, disregarding their linear order. In (63), there are two conjuncts of the W̃ and K̃ classes, their plural correlates being Ỹ and KP̃ respectively (**tùkū-wə** ‘knife’ ~ **à-tùkū-yə** ‘knives’; **kə-s̃s̃-kə** ‘axe’ ~ **wə-s̃s̃-kp̃** ‘axes’). The verb may agree by both the KP̃ (63a) and Ỹ (63b) classes with the same linear order of the conjuncts.

- (63) a. **tùkū-wə mə kə-s̃s̃-kə wə-lā-t̃**
 knife-wə with/and Kə-axe-Kə KP̃-3.PFV-fall
 ‘The knife and the axe fell down.’
- b. **tùkū-wə mə kə-s̃s̃-kə yə-lā-t̃**
 knife-wə with/and Kə-axe-Kə Ỹ-3.PFV-fall
 ‘The knife and the axe fell down.’

If conjuncts are animate, the second option of agreement resolution through the plural correlate is the only one possible. In (64a), two animate nouns of the ŋ̃ class are coordinated, and the verb agrees by the P̃ class that is its plural correlate; agreement by the ŋ̃ class is not possible (64b). Rare animate nouns that belong to other classes than ŋ̃ may have both standard plural and semantic agreement resolution. In (65), animate nouns of the K̃ class are coordinated, and the verb may agree by both the KP̃ class that is its plural correlate (65a) and by the P̃ class that is the standard plural class for animates (65b).

- (64) a. **p̃t̃ə̃-yə mə t̃iè-yə p̃-lə-p̃**
 man-ŋ̃ with/and woman-ŋ̃ P̃-3.PFV-come
 ‘The man and the woman came.’
- b. ***p̃t̃ə̃-yə mə t̃iè-yə lə-p̃**
 man-ŋ̃ with/and woman-ŋ̃ 3.PFV-come

- (65) a. **kə-púéè-kə mə kə-pɔɔ-kə wə-lə-pə**
 Kə-fish-Kə with/and Kə-snake-Kə Wə-3.PFV-come
 ‘The fish and the snake came.’
- b. **kə-púéè-kə mə kə-pɔɔ-kə pə-lə-pə**
 Kə-fish-Kə with/and Kə-snake-Kə Pə-3.PFV-come
 ‘The fish and the snake came.’

8. Class agreement of the numeral

8.1. Simple numeral agreement

Numerals in Akebu follow the head noun. Simple numerals up to 9 agree with the head in noun class. The numeral **cēñcēñ** ‘one’ agrees differently than numerals starting from **yí** ‘two’. Table 10 shows agreement markers of numerals.

Table 10. Class agreement markers of numerals

class	numeral ‘1’ markers	numerals ‘2’–‘9’ markers
ŋŪ	∅-	*
Pə	∅-	ṽ-
ʦə	∅- (voicing)	*
Wə	∅-	∅-
Yə	∅-	ṽ-
Kə	kə-	*
KPə	wə-	wə-

The numeral **cēñcēñ** ‘one’ is compatible with all of the noun classes and has no overt agreement marker with most of them, cf. (66a–c) for the ŋŪ, Wə and Yə classes. The Kə and KPə classes have segmental agreement markers, cf. (66d–e), and the ʦə class triggers its standard non-segmental marking, which consists in voicing the initial obstruent, as in (66f).

- (66) a. **pí-yə cēñcēñ**
 child-ŋŪ one
 ‘one child’
- b. **tù-wə cēñcēñ**
 thing-Wə one
 ‘one thing’
- d. **à-kpàʦàpà-nyə cēñcēñ**
 Yə-trousers-Yə one
 ‘one (pair of) trousers’
- d. **kə-fūēē-kə kə-cēñcēñ**
 Kə-paper-Kə Kə-one
 ‘one book’
- e. **wə-ʦàà-kpə wə-cēñcēñ**
 KPə-market-KPə KPə-one
 ‘one market’
- f. **záá-ʦə jēñcēñ**
 chair-ʦə ʦə.one
 ‘one chair’

The numerals starting from **yí** ‘two’ cannot be combined with three of the four singular noun classes, namely ŋŪ, ʦə and Kə. Such combinations, as in (67a–c) are consistently rejected by the speakers.

- (67) a. ***pí-yə yí**
 child-ŋŪ two
 exp. ‘two children’
- b. ***dū-ʦə yí**
 stone-ʦə two
 exp. ‘two stones’
- c. ***gúú-kə yí**
 spoon-Kə two
 exp. ‘two spoons’

Nouns of other classes combine with numerals starting from **yí** ‘two’ and, except for the Wə class, trigger overt agreement markers, cf. (68a) for the plural Pə class

and (48b) for the plural W Θ class. Ambinumeral classes take the same agreement with singular and plural nouns, cf. (69a) and (69b) for the KP Θ class.

- (68) a. **ò-fūṣí-pḥ** **è-yí** b. **tù-wā** **yí**
 P Θ -bird-P Θ P Θ -two thing-w Θ two
 ‘two birds’ ‘two things’
- (69) a. **gú-kpḥ** **wḥ-yí** b. **wḥ-kúú-kpḥ** **wḥ-yí**
 room-KP Θ KP Θ -two KP Θ -spoon-KP Θ KP Θ -two
 ‘two rooms’ ‘two spoons’

Singular nouns of the W Θ and KP Θ classes normally combine with numerals in the singular form of these classes, as in (70a) and (71a). Still, their plural correlate, belonging to the Y Θ class, as in (70b) and (71b), is also acceptable with the same meaning.

- (70) a. **wḥ-ṭàà-kpḥ** **wḥ-yí** b. **à-ṭàà-yā** **è-yí**
 KP Θ -market-KP Θ KP Θ -two Y Θ -market-Y Θ Y Θ -two
 ‘two markets’ ‘two markets’
- (71) a. **cíí-wḥ** **yí** b. **è-cíí-yḥ** **è-yí**
 wood-w Θ two Y Θ -wood-Y Θ Y Θ -two
 ‘two pieces of wood’ ‘two pieces of wood’

8.2. Simple numerals ‘10’+

Simple numerals starting from **tḥ** ‘ten’ have the same restrictions on the combination with noun classes, as numerals starting from **yí** ‘two’, but trigger no agreement, cf. (72a–b) showing classes P Θ and Y Θ .

- (72) a. **è-píí-pḥ** **tḥ** b. **ò-ṭū-yā** **tḥ**
 P Θ -child-P Θ ten Y Θ -stone-Y Θ ten
 ‘ten children’ ‘ten stones’

For the KP Θ class agreement marking is accepted with the numeral **tḥ** ‘ten’, as in (73b), although the simple form, as in (73a), is standard. With other simple numerals higher than ‘ten’ agreeing forms are not possible, cf. the unacceptability of (74b).

- (73) a. **gú-kpḥ** **tḥ** b. **gú-kpḥ** **wḥ-tḥ**
 room-KP Θ ten room-KP Θ KP Θ -ten
 ‘ten rooms’ ‘ten rooms’
- (74) a. **gú-kpḥ** **tìyí** b. ***gú-kpḥ** **wḥ-tìyí**
 room-KP Θ twenty room-KP Θ KP Θ -twenty
 ‘twenty rooms’ exp. ‘twenty rooms’

8.3. Complex numerals

In complex numerals, only the last part indicating the units digit has noun class agreement. **cēṅcēṅ** ‘one’ (75a), (76a) and numerals starting from **yí** ‘two’ (75b), (76b) have the same agreement marking in complex numerals, as does their simple form.

- (75) a. **gú-kpḥ** **tìyí** **mā** **wḥ-cēṅcēṅ**
 room-KP Θ twenty with/and KP Θ -one
 ‘twenty one rooms’

- b. **gú-kpé** **tìyí** **mā** **wè-yí**
 room-KPƏ twenty with/and KPƏ-two
 ‘twenty two rooms’
- (76) a. **ò-ṭū-yā** **tìyí** **mā** **cēṅcēṅ**
 YƏ-stone-YƏ twenty with/and one
 ‘twenty one stones’
- b. **ò-ṭū-yā** **tìyí** **mā** **è-yí**
 YƏ-stone-YƏ twenty with/and YƏ-two
 ‘twenty two stones’

9. Conclusion

An overview of the Akebu noun class system is presented in this paper.

Based on agreement, there are seven noun classes in Akebu that we label based on the form of the corresponding object pronouns. In nominal morphology, there are both prefixal and suffixal noun class markers. The form of prefixes differentiates morphological subclasses of some classes, but these subclasses are not relevant for agreement.

Four noun classes are singular and contain only nouns referring to singular objects. One noun class is plural and contains only nouns referring to plural objects and some non-count entities. Two classes are ambinumeral and refer to both singular and plural objects. There are class correlations between singular and plural nouns. The meaning of noun classes is not transparent, except for the fact that one of them contains most animate nouns and another one is its plural correlate. A number of cases of class conversion is attested.

3rd person pronouns distinguish all of the seven noun classes. Object pronouns are the most simple ones, independent pronouns, intensifiers and possessive pronouns are derived from them. The verb agrees in noun class with the subject. A number of verb agreement series with different TAM semantics are distinguished. Simple numerals less than ten agree with the head noun.

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Abbreviations

ŋŊ, pƏ, tƏ, wƏ, yƏ, kƏ, kpƏ – noun class markers of corresponding classes; 1, 2, 3 – 1st, 2nd, 3rd person; ADHAB – adhabitual series; ADJ – adjectivizer; DEM – demonstrative; FCT – factative stem; FOC – focus marker; HAB – habitual series; INDP – independent pronoun; INT – intensifier; JNT – conjoint marker; O – object pronoun; PFV – perfective series; pl – plural; POSS – possessive marker or pronoun; SG, sg – singular; SUB – subordinative conjunction.

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Appendix: A vocabulary of Akebu nouns

ŋŪ (sg) ~ PƏ (pl)

stem	singular form	plural form	English translation	French translation
cíkèé	cíkèé-yə	à-cíkèé-pə	dog	chien
fáń	fáń-yə	à-fáń-pə	pig	porc
fúfí	fúfí-yə	ò-fúfí-pə	bird	oiseau
gámò	gámò-yə	à-gámò-pə	iron trap	piège en fer
gláási	gláási-yə	à-gláási-pə	glass	verre
káńàńkpá	káńàńkpá-yə	à-káńàńkpá-pə	flea	puce
kókó	kókó-yə	à-kókó-pə	hen	poule
kòláátíá	kòláátíá-yə	à-kòláátíá-pə	banana	banane
kɔ́jó	kɔ́jó-yə	à-kɔ́jó-pə	girl	fille
kèé	kèé-yə	à-kèé-pə	animal	animal
kpàə	kpàə-yə	ə-kpàə-pə	Akebu (person)	akébou (personne)
léé	léé-yə	à-léé-pə	mother	mère
mèè	mèè-yə	à-mèè-pə	sheep	mouton
nàń	nàń-yə	à-nàń-pə	scorpion	scorpion
nì	nì-yə	è-nì-pə	person	personne
nùń	nùń-yə	ò-nùń-pə	husband	mari
ńòńté	ńòńté-yə	à-ńòńté-pə	rain	pluie
píí	píí-yə	è-píí-pə	child	enfant
píń	píń-yə	ə-píń-pə	man	homme
púétáá	púétáá-yə	è-púétáá-pə	friend	ami
púúsù	púúsù-yə	ò-púúsù-pə	cat	chat
sépè	sépè-yə	è-sépè-pə	amulet	amulette
siká	siká-yə	à-siká-pə	money	argent
tá	tá-yə	ə-tá-pə	father	père
tiè	tiè-yə	è-tiè-pə	woman	femme

TƏ (sg) ~ YƏ (pl)

stem	singular form	plural form	English translation	French translation
cì	ńi-tə	è-cì-yə	day	jour
cóí	ńóí-tə	à-cóí-yə	smell	odeur
fɔ́tɔ	vɔ́dɔ	à-fɔ́tɔ-yə	life	vie
fúú	vúú-tə	ò-fúú-yə	penis	penis
kɔ́tɔ	gɔ́dɔ	à-kɔ́tɔ-yə	breast	sein
kóń	góń-tə	à-kóń-yə	way	chemin
kɔ́tɔ	gɔ́dɔ	à-kɔ́tɔ-yə	female young animal	jeune animal femelle
kò	gò-tə	ò-kò-yə	liver	foie
kòlù	gòlè	ò-kòlù-yə	rope	corde
kóó	góó-tə	ò-kóó-yə	navel	nombriil
kópí	gópí-tə	ò-kópí-yə	bone	os
kpáà	kpáà-tə	à-kpáà-yə	granary	grenier
kpèfí	gbèdɔ	è-kpèfí-yə	cassava	manioc
kú	gú-tə	ò-kú-yə	beard	barbe
kù	gù-tə	ò-kù-yə	nest	nid
kúlù	gúlè	ò-kúlù-yə	last day of the traditional week	dernier jour de semaine traditionnelle
lè	lè-tə	à-lè-yə	belly	ventre
ńàń	ńàń-tə	à-ńàń-yə	cloth	pagne
ńímí	ńímí-tə	è-ńímí-yə	eye; tears	œil; larmes
ńíń	ńíń-tə	à-ńíń-yə	name	nom
ńúńèè	ńúńèè-tə	à-ńúńèè-yə	cotton	coton
ńúáá	ńúáá-tə	à-ńúáá-yə	door	porte
sáá	záá-tə	à-sáá-yə	chair	chaise
sàlì	zàlè	ə-sàlì-yə	egg	œuf
sú	zú-tə	ò-sú-yə	yams	igname
tóń	dóń-tə	à-tóń-yə	road	route
fí	dí-tə	è-fí-yə	palm nut	noix de palme
tò	dò-tə	ò-tò-yə	sheaf (of wheat or rice)	gerbe (de paille ou de riz)
tòò	dòò-tə	ò-tòò-yə	raffia	raphia
tú	dú-tə	ò-tú-yə	helve	manche
tù	dù-tə	ò-tù-yə	stone	caillou
vòń	vòń-tə	ò-fòń-yə	corn	corne
wèè	wèè-tə	à-wèè-yə	respiration	respiration
yù	yù-tə	ò-yù-yə	head	tête

WƏ (sg) ~ YƏ (pl)

stem	singular form	plural form	English translation	French translation
cíí	cíí-wə	è-cíí-yə	piece of wood, stick	morceau de bois, bâton
cómá	cómá-wə	à-cómá-yə	work	travail (habituel)
fèè	fèè-wə	à-fèè-yə	place	endroit
fúú	fúú-wə	ò-fúú-yə	tail	queue
fūñ	fūñ-wə	ò-fūñ-yə	hole	trou
fùfù	fùfù-wə	à-fùfù-yə	finger-nail	ongle
kēēfi	kēēfi-wə	è-kēēfi-yə	food	nourriture
kóó	kóó-wə	ò-kóó-yə	fruit stem; umbilical cord	bout de fruit; cordon ombilical
kúlū	kúlū-wə	ò-kúlū-yə	traditional week	semaine traditionnelle (de 5 jours)
lééfi	lééfi-wə	à-lééfi-yə	side (of an animate)	côté (d'un être animé)
mèñ	mèñ-wə	à-mèñ-yə	water	eau
náá	náá-wə	à-náá-yə	fire	feu
nímí	nímí-wə	è-nímí-yə	needle	aiguille
níñ	níñ-wə	è-níñ-yə	tip	bout
núñèè	núñèè-wə	à-núñèè-yə	thread	fil
tiñtəə	tiñtəə-wə	à-tiñtəə-yə	village	village
tí	tí-wə	à-tí-yə	anus	anus
tí	tí-wə	è-tí-yə	palm cluster	régime de palmier
foó	foó-wə	ò-foó-yə	raffia branch	branche de raphia
tù	tù-wə	ò-tù-yə	thing	chose
tòkù	tòkù-wə	à-tòkù-yə	knife	couteau
túfú	túfú-wə	ò-túfú-yə	chest	poitrine
wáfə	wáfə-wə	à-wáfə-yə	bracelet	bracelet
wēē	wēē-wə	à-wēē-yə	organism, disease	organisme, maladie

KƏ (sg) ~ KPƏ (pl)

stem	singular form	plural form	English translation	French translation
kà	gà-kə	wə-kà-kpə	meat	viande
kúú	gúú-kə	wə-kúú-kpə	spoon	cuillère
cú	ò-cú-kə	wə-cú-kpə	stove	fourneau
kāā	à-kāā-kə	wə-kāā-kpə	hand	main
māā	à-māā-kə	wə-māā-kpə	back (of an animate being)	dos (d'un être animé)
téé	à-téé-kə	wə-téé-kpə	field	champ
fūēē	kə-fūēē-kə	wə-fūēē-kpə	paper, letter, book	papier, lettre, livre
kpá	kə-kpá-kə	wə-kpá-kpə	clothing, shirt	habit, chemise
māā	kə-māā-kə	wə-māā-kpə	back (of an inanimate object)	derrière (d'un objet inanimé)
pəə	kə-pəə-kə	wə-pəə-kpə	snake	serpent
púétáá	kə-púétáá-kə	wə-púétáá-kpə	friendship	amitié
səə	kə-səə-kə	wə-səə-kpə	axe	hache
foó	kə-foó-kə	wə-foó-kpə	feather	plume

KPƏ (sg) ~ YƏ (pl)

stem	singular form	plural form	English translation	French translation
kú	gú-kpə	ò-kú-yə	room	chambre
móófú	móófú-kpə	à-móófú-yə	rice	riz
cíí	wə-cíí-kpə	è-cíí-yə	tree	arbre
cō	wə-cō-kpə	ò-cō-yə	tale	conte
fāā	wə-fāā-kpə	à-fāā-yə	fonio	fonio
fūñ	wə-fūñ-kpə	ò-fūñ-yə	pit	tombeau
nāñ	wə-nāñ-kpə	à-nāñ-yə	cave	grotte
nūñ	wə-nūñ-kpə	ò-nūñ-yə	wedding	mariage
faā	wə-faā-kpə	à-faā-yə	market	marché
tí	wə-tí-kpə	è-tí-yə	palm tree	palmier
púéñ	wə-púéñ-kpə	à-púéñ-yə	jug	jarre

KΘ (sg) ~ KPΘ (pl) ~ YΘ (pl)

stem	singular form	plural forms	English translation	French translation
cómá	kà-cómá-ké	wə-cómá-kpé à-cómá-yá	job, errand	travail (individuel)
kpátə	kà-kpátə-kə	wə-kpátə-kpə à-kpátə-yə	foot	pied
lééfi	kà-lééfi-ké	wə-lééfi-kpé à-lééfi-yá	side (of an inanimate)	côté (d'un objet inanimé)
nəné	kà-nəné-ké	wə-nəné-kpé à-nəné-yá	work	travail
nù	kà-nù-kə	wə-nù-kpə ò-nù-yə	arm	bras
tūkòṅ	kà-tūkòṅ-kə	wə-tūkòṅ-kpə ò-tūkòṅ-yə	ear	oreille
púéé	kà-púéé-kə	wə-púéé-kpə à-púéé-yə	fish	poisson

YΘ (sg) ~ YΘ (pl)

stem	singular form	plural form	English translation	French translation
fùè	à-fùè-yə	à-fùè-yə	vagina	vagin
kpàfàpàṅ	à-kpàfàpàṅ-yə	à-kpàfàpàṅ-yə	trousers	pantalon
kpù	à-kpù-yə	à-kpù-yə	bag	sac
nì	è-nì-yə	è-nì-yə	time	temps
ɬàkà	à-ɬàkà-yə	à-ɬàkà-yə	box	caisse
ɬià	à-ɬià-yə	à-ɬià-yə	suffering	souffrance

TΘ (sg) ~ PΘ (pl)

stem	singular form	plural form	English translation	French translation
píí	bíí-ɬé	è-píí-pé	young animal	jeune animal

no number correlation

class	stem	form	English translation	French translation
PΘ	pōṅ	à-pōṅ-pə	oil	huile
PΘ	fəṅ	ə-fəṅ-pə	wine	vin
TΘ	nià	nià-ɬə	lie	mensonge
KΘ	ɬə	ə-ɬə-kə	nature	nature
KΘ	ɬià	kə-ɬià-kə	funeral	funérailles
KΘ	kpəð	kə-kpəð-kə	Akebu (language)	akébou (langue)
KPΘ	pōṅ	wə-pōṅ-kpə	grease	graisse
WΘ	fà	fà-wə	joy	joie