

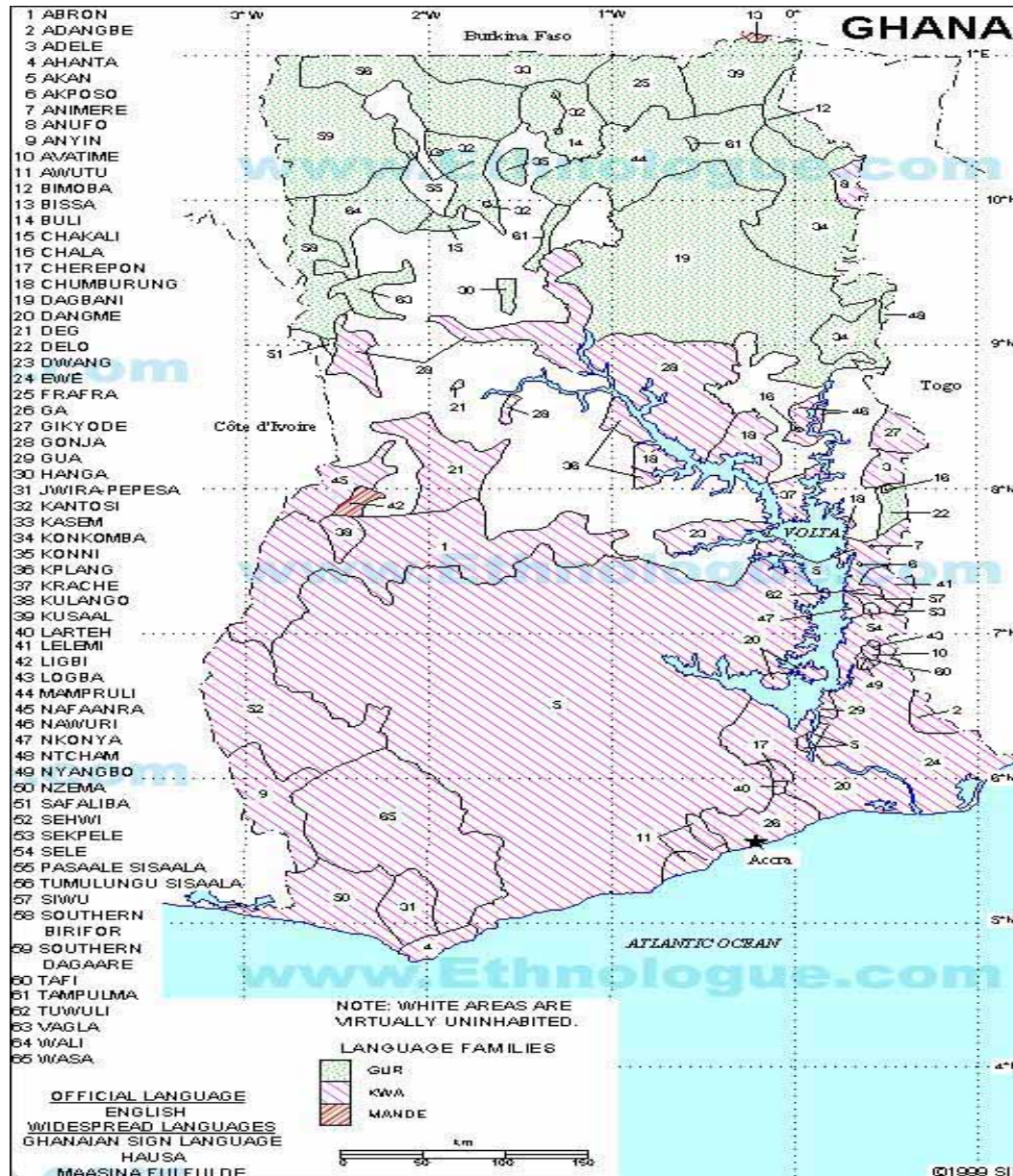
NOUN CLASS AND AGREEMENT SYSTEMS IN LOGBA



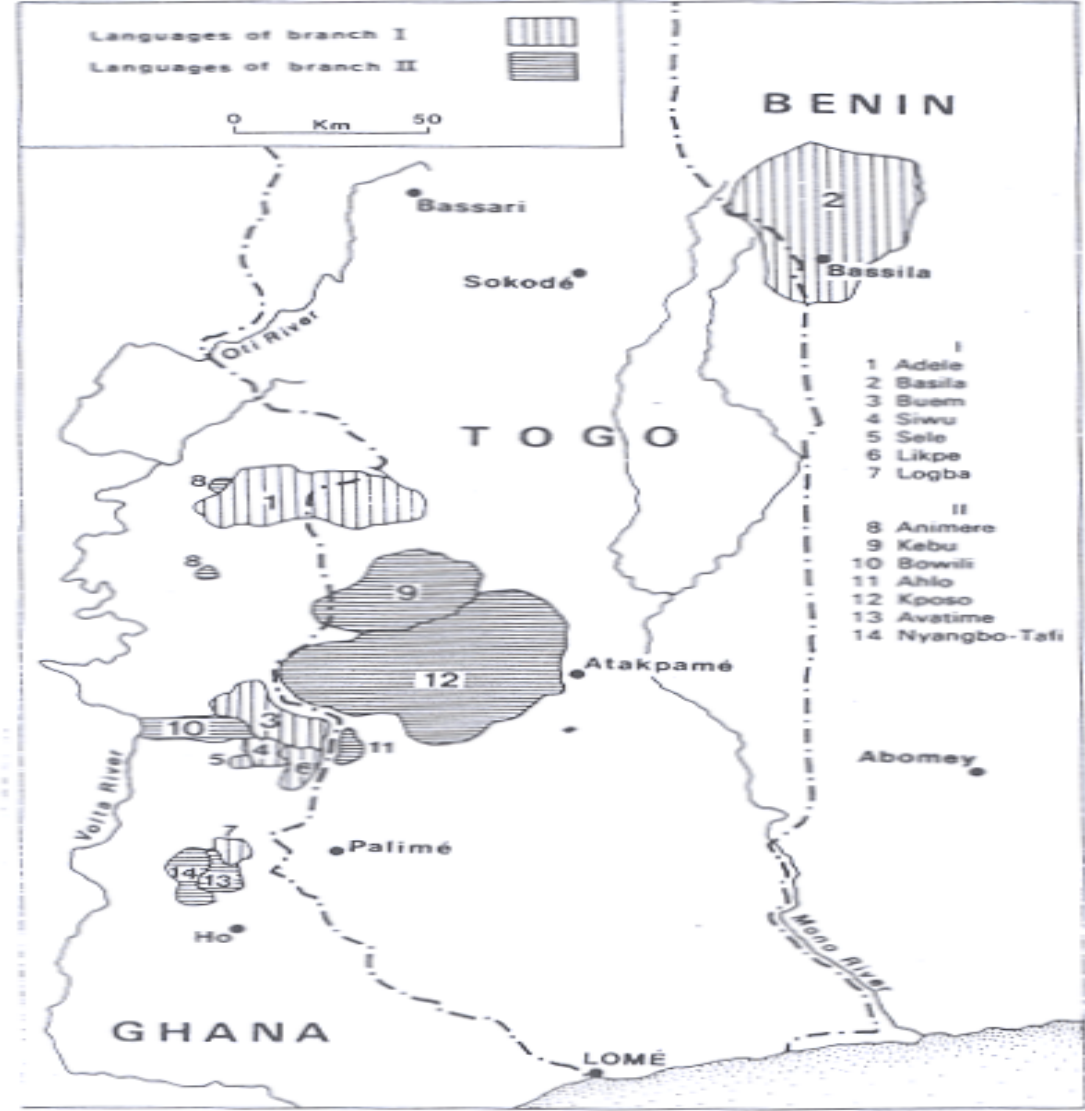
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LANGUAGES OF GHANA



TOGOESPRECHEN MAP OF GTM LANGUAGES



Distribution of the Central Togo Languages
 (Source: Bernd Heine, *Verbreitung und Gliederung der Togoestsprachen*
 Dietrich Reimer Verlag, Berlin, 1968)

CLASSIFICATION OF THE GTM LANGUAGES

- 1. Struck (1912) Togoresprechen
- 2. Westermann & Bryn (1952)
Vocabulary items related to Kwa and a Noun Class similar to Bantu
- 3. Greenberg (1963)
Kwa sub group B of the Niger – Congo family
- 4. Heine (1968)
Sub-classified the languages into two – Ka Togo and Na Togo
- 5. Dakubu & Ford (1988)
Named the languages Central Togo languages
- 6. Ring (1995)
Named the languages Ghana Togo Mountain languages

Typological features of Logba

Vowels are in two sets

	FRONT	CENTRAL	BACK
	[+ATR] [- ATR]		[+ATR] [-ATR]
CLOSE	i		u
MID	e ε		o ɔ
OPEN		a	

Typological Features in Logba

Logba has two tones H and L. Tone is realised on vowels and syllabic nasals. Monosyllabic words can be Low tone or High tone. This is exemplified below:

bà 'kill'	mì 'take'	ṅ-tá 'hand'
bú 'ask'	ṅú 'see'	ṅ-gbó 'rashes'

Noun roots can also have Low or High tone. The noun prefix is either Low tone vowel prefix or nasal prefix.

This is shown below:

ì-sò 'faeces'	ì-và 'thing'
ṅ-wù 'dresses'	m̀-và 'medicines'
ù-kú 'bone'	ò-tú 'gun'

Typological Features in Logba

All possible tonal patterns (LL, LH, HH, HL) are attested in disyllabic roots below:

LL	qàsè ‘thank’	fìfì ‘break’
LH	tòl’é ‘send’	gànú ‘greet’
HH	q’óq’í ‘love’	húhú ‘wave hand’
HL	dónù ‘shrink’	dzúbà ‘return’

Tone combinations in disyllabic noun roots are shown below

L-LL	à-bùbà ‘termite’	à-dzàgò ‘millet’
L-HH	à-búkpá ‘shoulder’	è-bítsí ‘child’
L-LH	à-dzàyí ‘firewood’	ù-zùgbó ‘head’
L-HL	à-fàsà ‘landlord’	ò-zúmè ‘tomorrow’

Typological Features in Logba

In Logba, tone has both lexical and grammatical functions. Tone is used to indicate the difference between the **Habitual aspect** and the **Past progressive aspect**. The former is said with a low pitch and the latter with a high pitch.

HABITUAL - LOW

ò-tò-kpè ì-dzó
3SG-HAB-eat CM-yam
'He/She eats yam'

PAST PROGRESSIVE - HIGH

ò-tó-kpè ì-dzó
3SG-PSTPROG-eat CM-yam
'He/She was eating yam'

Typological Features in Logba

The basic constituent order of the clause is subject followed by the verb and in a transitive clause; the verb is followed by a direct object. In a double object construction, the **Goal** comes before the **Theme**.

SUBJ	VERB	GOAL	THEME
ɔsá	ɔgbla	ebitwɔ	akɔnta

In locative constructions, the first pre-verbal argument is the **Theme** and the postpositional phrase **Location**. The adjunct occurs after the core arguments in the clause.

THEME	VERB	LOCATION
Kɔpu-ε	ɔε	ɔkplɔ-a tsú
FIGURE		GROUND

The linear order of constituents in the clause is shown below:

SUBJ	VERB	OBJ 1	OBJ 2	ADJUNCT
------	------	-------	-------	---------

Typological Features in Logba

The verb usually has a vowel or a nasal prefixed to it. This prefix is a marker that shows the class of the noun and the vowel harmony in the verb stem. This vowel pronominal prefix therefore signals the agreement between the subject and the verb.

Selorm ɔ-né bladzo

Selorm SM.SG-buy plantain

‘Selorm bought plantain’

N-dú n-tó u-zi=é yó

CM-water SM-pour CM-door-DET skin

‘Water poured on the door’

i-nɔ i-tsi fútsú=é nu

CM-meat SM-be.in soup-DET in

‘Meat is in the soup’

Typological Features in Logba

Apart from the vowel pronominal prefix, **the verb** is able to host **aspectual markers**. All these occur as prefixes to the verb root.

Agbe té o-ló-mo-du

a-nú

o-du

CM-dog say 3SG-PRSPROG-NEG-be CM-mouth CM-sickness

‘The dog says it is not attacked with “mouth-sickness’

This feature of the verb differentiates it from other categories: **Nouns have prefixes** to mark the class they belong to but can not be a host of aspect and negative markers.

The Prefix Classes

PREFIX	SINGULAR	PREFIX	PLURAL
a	a- bia 'chair'	N	m-bia 'chairs'
u	u-nansa 'chief'	e - / ε -	e- nansa 'chiefs'
e- / ε	e – fieyi 'calabash'	N -	n- fieyi 'calabashes'
o - / ɔ -	o – wɔ ' mortar'	i -	i – wɔ 'mortars'
N-	n-dú 'water'		
i-	i – bè 'time'		

Some differences in the Prefix classes

There is additional suffixation of the plural marker -wɔ to some plural nouns with a nasal noun prefix. The following nouns attest to this:

a-ugutɔ 'bat'

ŋ-gutɔ-wɔ 'bat'

a-dzimi 'mudfish'

n-dzimi-wɔ 'mudfish'

e-féshí 'sheep'

n-féshí-wɔ 'sheep'

Some differences in the Prefix classes

Some nouns have only [-wɔ] attached to them without the alternation of the noun prefix. These nouns are **loans** either from **Ewe** or can be traced to other languages in the area. The plural morpheme in Ewe is [=wó]. It is probable that the Logba form [-wɔ] is based on this morpheme. These nouns show the same agreement as their singular counterparts.

The following nouns are examples:

a-kpɔ́nɔ ‘biscuit’

u-kplɔ́ ‘table’

a-kó ‘parrot’

a-kpɔ́nɔ-wɔ ‘biscuits’

u-kplɔ́-wɔ ‘tables’

a-kó-wɔ ‘parrots’

Some differences in the Prefix classes

There are other prefixless nouns which take the plural suffix **-wɔ**. These nouns can be traced to **Ewe**. Some of the words, for example, **a-bladzo** have prefixes in Ewe, the language from which these nouns are suspected to be borrowed.

mango ‘mango’

mango-wɔ ‘mangoes’

bladzó ‘plantain’

bladzó-wɔ ‘plantains’

fesre ‘window’

fesre-wɔ ‘windows’

sefófó ‘flower’

sefófówɔ ‘flowers’

Simplification of the Prefix system among the youth

There is a simplification of the singular-plural prefix system going on. In an elicitation session in the schools on nouns and their plurals from students who are native speakers between 16 to 21 years of age, the students added the suffix -wɔ to all the nouns.

Older speakers in the communities frowned on this. An indication that the class system will be simplified if the older speakers pass on and what will remain will be difficult to notice.

Semantic basis of Noun classes

A semantic range is typical of each noun class. In Logba, each class has nouns which are not easily accounted for by a single semantic feature.

a- class

The a- class hosts a large number of nouns.

Three sub-semantic groups emerge.

These are:

a. animals.

b. Body parts

c. artefacts.

a- class

Animals

a-n.dɔ 'cat'

a-gbé 'dog'

a-n.kó 'chicken'

a-kló 'goat'

Insects

a-zuzɔ 'housefly'

a-nyɔ 'louse'

Visible parts of the body

a-tró 'breast'

a-ɲaɲa 'rib'

a-fuí 'thigh'

a-gbashi 'arm'

Artefacts

a-lé 'clay-bowl'

a-kóntí 'basket'

a-kpó 'farm-bag'

a-só 'pot'

u-class

This class contains at least four semantic clusters.

Kinship terms

u-gusa ‘brother’

u-tí ‘father’

u-gu ‘husband’

u-má ‘mother’

Social group terms

u-sá ‘clan’

u-nánsa ‘chief’ (status)

Human category terms

u-dzé ‘woman’

u-bí ‘child’

Socio-culturally salient entities and their parts

u-tsá ‘house’

u-loégbé ‘grinding stone’

u-bo ‘farm’

u-mútsí ‘barn’

u- class

Human category terms

u-dzé 'woman'

u-bí 'child'

Socio-culturally salient entities and their parts

u-tsá 'house'

u-loégbé 'grinding stone'

u-bo 'farm'

u-mútsí 'barn'

e-class

This is a small class comprising natural elements and items relating to ritual and religious practices.

Lakoff (1987) points out that the class system of a language may be based on the myth and belief system of the culture. It is possible that when some of these myths are lost it will be difficult to state clearly. I observe a custom performed in Logba and saw how these items were used. This attests to the fact that they belong to a class.

e-ví ‘sun’

ε-kpé ‘year’

e-tsí ‘ground’

e-gbe ‘stone’

e-kele ‘grass’

e-fiéyí ‘calabash’

o-class

The nouns in this class refer to God, man, important people, big animals and soft and attached human body parts. This class can be referred to as the augmentative class- the class of important things.

God and important people

ɔ-kpaya 'God'

o-núkpá 'king'

ɔ-sá 'man'

Big animals

ɔ-sámínángo 'leopard'

o-dró 'elephant'

o-gbómí 'monkey'

Soft and attached body parts

o-lómí 'testis'

o-tsóe 'ear'

ɔ-tó 'cheek'

N-class

This class is dominated by nouns referring to non-individuated entities especially liquids. Some of the members are:

n-da ‘liquor’

n-dú ‘water’

n-fú ‘oil’

i-class

Non-count nouns which refer to either abstract entities like *peace* or masses made up of particles such as *rice* or *sand* are in this class.

i-be 'time'

i-yánu 'air'

imúnyí 'hair'

i-yóyú 'peace'

i-tsí 'soil'

i-hanágo 'indiscipline'

Agreement

Agreement is a formal relationship between elements whereby a form of one word requires a corresponding form of another.

The determiner has number agreement with the head noun. The adjective does not take any prefix to mark agreement.

Ma-ne m-fúta kɔŋkɔ n-nyɔ m-mé pétée Ugé
1SG-buy CM-cloth old AM-two AM-DEM all Accra
'I bought all these two old clothes in Accra'

Head noun and the numeral

With the singular prefix classes, nouns belonging to **u-**, **e-/ε-**, **o-/ɔ** take the **o-/ɔ-** agreement on the number.

Countable nouns belonging to the **N**-class take the **N-** agreement marking on the number. The a-prefix class of artefacts takes a-agreement marker.

The a- noun prefix class of animates take **o-/ɔ-**.

The **e-/ε-** plural nouns take the a- agreement marking on the number.

The choice between **e-/ε-**, and **o-/ɔ-** depends on the [ATR] harmony in the word.

Ebitsi ɔ-kpɛ

‘One child’

Afuta drui a-kpɛ

‘One red cloth’

Head noun and Demonstrative

In the singular, **o-/o-** is used as a prefix to the demonstrative, **a-** for plural, **i-** for mass nouns and other **i-**-prefix nouns. **N-** is the agreement marker for liquid nouns and any other **N-**-prefix nouns.

SG. COUNT NOUN	Ebiti o-mε ođá ‘This child is fat’
PLU. COUNT NOUN	Ebitwo a-mε ađá ‘These children are fat’
SG. -ANIMATE	Afuta a-mε azi ‘This cloth is good’
PLU. -ANIMATE	Mfuta m-mε nzi ‘These clothes are good’
LIQUID	Nđa m-mε mbo intse ‘This drink is strong’
MASS	Iđa i-mε ibo iđu ‘This metal is heavy’

Noun head and the interrogative

The plural agreement marker **a-** is used.

For mass nouns and other **i-**noun prefix nouns, **i-**agreement marker is used.

N- agreement marker is used for both liquid nouns and **N-**prefix nouns.

Other question words which combine with singular nouns use **o-/ɔ-** as a prefix to the question word.

- SG. COUNT NOUN **ɔsa ɔ-mɔ́á** ‘Which man?’
- PLU. COUNT NOUN **Aha a-mɔ́á** ‘Which persons?’
- SG. –ANIMATE **Afuta a-mɔ́á** ‘Which cloth?’
- PLU. –ANIMATE **Mfuta m-mɔ́á** ‘Which clothes?’
- LIQUID **Nɖu m-mɔ́á** ‘Which water?’
- MASS **Iɖa ibé i-lá** ‘What is the time

Agreement between subject NP and the verb

The verbal subject marker is specified as SM.SG when it refers to a singular noun and SM.PLU when it refers to a plural noun. The subject marker is left unspecified for singular or plural when it refers to liquid and mass nouns, SM is used; with no class distinction indicated.

A-ndɔ=á ɔ-zó ɔ-dzátsumɛ.

CM-cat=DET SM.SG-go CM-kitchen

The cat went to the kitchen.

N-kó=á ñ-dó.

CM-fowl=DET SM.PLU-go.out

The fowls went out.

Agreement between subject NP and the verb

Ɔ-gblawò=é ɔ́-la Kofi.

CM-teacher=DET SM.SG-beat Kofi

‘The teacher beat Kofi.’

I-nɔ í-tsi futsu=é nu.

CM-meat SM-be.in soup=DET in

‘Meat is in the soup’

N-dú ń-tó u-zí-e yó.

CM-water SM-pour CM-door=DET skin

Water pours on the door.

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