

Supplement 11

*West African Linguistics:
Papers in Honor of Russell G. Schuh*

Paul Newman and Larry M. Hyman, editors

Studies in

AFRICAN

Linguistics



Published by the
Department of Linguistics and
The Center for African Studies

Ohio State University
Columbus

Studies in African Linguistics

Editor

David Odden

Associate Editors

G. Tucker Childs (Portland State University)
Bruce Connell (York University)
Katherine Demuth (Brown University)
Omar Ka (University of Maryland, Baltimore)
Ronald P. Schaefer (Southern Illinois University)
John V. Singler (New York University)

Publisher

The Department of Linguistics and the Center for African Studies
Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

Cover Design

Tina Messmer

Journal webpage: <http://ling.osu.edu/sal>

Studies in African Linguistics is published twice a year. Occasional supplements are published at irregular intervals and are available to current subscribers at reduced rates. It is printed and bound in the United States by Western Newspaper Publishing Co., Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana.

Contributions to the journal should be sent to: The Editor, *Studies in African Linguistics*, Department of Linguistics, 222 Oxley Hall, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH 43210. Contributors please refer to "Guidelines for Contributors" inside the back cover.

Correspondence concerning subscriptions or other business should be sent to: Managing Editor, *Studies in African Linguistics*, Department of Linguistics, 222 Oxley Hall, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH 43210. Subscription rates are the following:

	<i>North America</i>	<i>Elsewhere</i>
Individuals	\$25.00 per year	\$33.00 per year
Institutions:	\$50.00 per year	\$60.00 per year
Single issue:	one half the yearly rate	
Supplements:	variable price depending on supplement	

Make checks payable to **Studies in African Linguistics**.

Supplements 11 • 2006

ISSN 00390-3533

RELIC NOUN-CLASS STRUCTURE IN LEGGBO

Larry M. Hyman and Imelda Udoh

1. Introduction*

In many West African Niger-Congo languages, historical noun class prefixes undergo significant levelling and/or fusion with the noun stem. Starting from a full set of singular-plural markers both on nouns and on agreeing elements, the logical endpoint of such changes can be the total loss of noun classes, as has happened some of the best-known Benue-Congo and Kwa languages, e.g., Akan, Ewe, Yoruba, Igbo. Resistance to this tendency can be found in certain subgroups in Nigeria, e.g., Upper Cross, where languages such as Mbembe (Barnwell 1969a,b), and Lokaa (Iwara 1982) have been reported to have full-fledged noun class marking and concord systems. It is thus striking that closely related Leggbo has lost all noun class agreement. Still, it is possible to identify a prefix-stem structure on the basis of a number of arguments.

The purpose of this paper is to document relic noun-class structures in Leggbo, an Upper Cross minority language. Leggbo is spoken by an estimated 60,000 Agbo people in two local government areas, recently named Abi and Yakurr, in Cross River State. In §2 and §3 we demonstrate that although Leggbo has lost the inherited noun class system, nouns must still be analyzed as consisting of a prefix-stem structure. Sections §4 and §5 provide further evidence from reduplication and compounding, respectively, and §6 illustrates relics of

* The present study is based on a field methods course held at the University of California, Berkeley during the academic year 2001-02, with the second author serving as consultant. Other work on Leggbo includes Sprea & Sprea (1966, 1969), Hyman et al. (2002), Hyman & Udoh (2003, n.d.), Paster (in press). We are grateful to Jeff Good, Ahmadu Kawu, Julie Larson, Ian Maddieson, Heiko Narrog, Mary Paster, and Keith Sanders, for their input during the course.

earlier noun class agreement found on possessive pronouns. The conclusion is that Leggbo represents an intermediate stage on the way to becoming like Yoruba and Igbo.

2. Basic Noun Structure

Most nouns in Leggbo consist of a prefix and a stem, the latter consisting of one or two (rarely more) syllables. Some 6% (35 out of 569) of the nouns collected are prefixless including the following, the last three of which are borrowings:

sìn	'hair'	nònón	'finger'
ddèn	'eye'	coco	'small frog (sp.)'
dzè	'crocodile'	ttètɛɛ	'grandfather'
dzò	'snake'	kkàkki	'pants'
kkwàl	'boat'	fùfù	'fufu'
vvóm	'thing'	bìlèèdi	'bread'

Many of the bisyllabic and longer prefixless nouns are reduplications; cf. also *kkpakkpa* 'groundnuts', *kkwàkkwá* 'locust tree', *gbòngbòŋ* 'can, tin', *koolikoòli* 'flower'. Others may be historical compounds whose parts can no longer be identified, or they may be borrowings, e.g., *jǎkpu* 'cassava', *tálatòlo* 'mumps'.

A noun prefix may have the shape CV- or V-, or it may consist of a homorganic (syllabic) nasal N-. Leggbo distinguishes the following prefixes.

li-	i-	N-	[m-, n-, ŋ-]
lɛ- (~ le-)	ɛ- (~ e-)		
gi-	a-		
gɛ- (~ ge-)			

The vowels in the prefixes are limited to /i/, /ɛ/ and /a/, round vowels being prohibited. Prefixal /ɛ/ harmonizes to [e] when followed by /i/, /e/, /u/ or /o/ in the root, e.g., *lèsàl* 'tooth', *lèbèl* 'beard'. While the /l/ of *li-* and *le-* is stable, prefixal /g/ may optionally be lenited to a continuant [ɣ] or be dropped entirely, e.g., *gìvála* ~ *ìvála* 'guilt', *gèbɔ* ~ *èbɔ* 'arm, hand'. Finally, note that of the 566 prefixed nouns entered into the lexicon, 371 carry L tone, while 187 carry M tone. This leaves only the following 8 nouns with H tone prefixes:

liddaddil	'rejoicing'	ákkpaŋ	'plate'
lídzil	'food'	líkpaal	'community'
íkílíbí	'cowry'	ánàlà	'garden egg'
ékko	'vegetable (sp.)'	éwàwàé	'child-like'

The first two are nominalizations (cf. *ddaddi* 'rejoice', *dzi* 'eat'), while others may be borrowings. Each of the Leggbo prefix shapes is illustrated below.

li-	: litól 'ear', livól 'belly', lidèèl 'name', linyumil 'thorn'
le-	: lèbàl 'axe', lèzàŋàl 'river', lèttol 'head', lèbèl 'beard'
gi-	: gítáá 'witchcraft', gívála 'guilt', gittù 'life', gíbáà 'marriage'
ge-	: gèbò 'arm, hand', gèvè 'foot', gètti 'tree', gèkù 'hoe'
i-	: iwà 'spirit', izù 'gourd', itóbo 'monkey', izòòm 'knife'
ε-	: ènòn 'person', ètèem 'meat, animal', èbbi 'goat', ènùŋ 'salt'
a-	: àzi 'blood', àsi 'water', ànààn 'oil', aggbà 'chin', àjí 'feast'
N-	: m̀bom 'cheek', ǹzún 'nose', ǹnyón 'maggot', ǹkò 'nut'

As seen in the following examples, indigenous Leggbo personal names also begin with these prefixes:

li-	: líddaddil (<i>m./f.</i>) ('happiness')
le-	: lètòòŋòl (<i>m./f.</i>) ('praise')
gi-	: gittù (<i>m./f.</i>) ('life')
ge-	: ?
i-	: icéji (<i>f.</i>), ikkò (<i>m.</i>), iccá (<i>m.</i>)
ε-	: elémi (<i>m.</i>), èkàma (<i>f.</i>) (< èkà amán 'our mother'), ekpaa (<i>m.</i>), èbìà (<i>f.</i>), ènni (<i>m./f.</i>)
a-	: ámòn (<i>m.</i>), àdiàaha (<i>f.</i>), àggbómi (<i>m.</i>)
N-	: ntòmo (<i>f.</i>), ǹkáánu (<i>m./f.</i>)

Any other initial vowel indicates that a name has been borrowed from another language, e.g., from Efik: *okôn* (*m.*), *ùdò* (*m.*), *ódùdù* (*m.*).

The above prefixes are frozen relics of a former noun class system which conditioned full agreement—and which can be observed in nearby Upper Cross languages such as Lokaa (Iwara 1982) and Mbembe (Barnwell 1969a,b). In some cases these prefixes suggest a former grouping of nouns by semantic features:

First, we have found approximately 20 nouns denoting human beings with prefix *ε-* in the singular and *a-* in the plural (almost all of them with L tone):

èbóbóno	'native doctor'	pl. àbóbóno
ècècèna	'guest, stranger'	pl. àcècèna (cf. cce 'expect')
èdum	'husband'	pl. àdum
egbó	'Leggbo person'	pl. agbó
ègògòmó	'fool'	pl. àgògòmó
èkaala	'European'	pl. àkaala
èkkà	'mother'	pl. àkkà
èkkàkkàya	'carpenter'	pl. àkkàkkàya (cf. kka 'carve')
èllà	'servant, maid'	pl. àllà
ènnè	'in-law'	pl. ànnè
etataano	'sorcerer, wizard'	pl. atataano
etatama	's.o. of Adadama'	pl. atatama
ètètèèa	'blacksmith'	pl. àtètèèa (cf. tèèè 'burn')
ètètèla	'madman'	pl. àtètèla
ètte	'father'	pl. àtte
ètùlùkpa	'senior'	pl. àtùlùkpa
èvaal	'chief'	pl. àvaal
èvèvè	'thief'	pl. àvèvè
èvóli	'servant, Igbo'	pl. àvóli
èvvúà	'poor person'	pl. àvvúà
èyòò	'friend'	pl. àyòò

As seen, some of these nouns are agentives derived from verbs. However, most agentives in Leggbo are phrasal in natural:

ènnò (áke) nè ttui àtèèmi	'farmer' = person (who) cultivates farm
pl. ànnò (áke) banà ttui àtèèmi	
ènnò (áke) nè waal gèdi	'tapper' = person (who) taps palm tree
pl. ànnò (áke) banà waal gèdi	
ènnò (áke) è nneni vvóm	'owner' = person (who) has/owns something
pl. ànnò (áke) bà nneni vvóm	

Others are formed by compounding or use of the associative construction, e.g., *ènnò likwé-kol* 'hunter' (person of hunting), or by nominalizing the verb with *è-* followed by an object. They do not take a plural in *a-*.

èttùì àtèèmì	'farmer'	(cultivator + farm)
ètú gèzù	'dancer'	(dancer + dance)
èkkpó ètto	'house-builder'	(builder + house)

In addition to 'husband', 'mother', 'father', and 'in-law', a small set of other human terms involve a change of initial consonant in singular vs. plural forms:

gwàno	'woman'	pl. bàno
wàdum	'man'	pl. bàdum
wàé	'child'	pl. bèé
wákkà	'sibling'	pl. bákkà

To these we can add àggwèéyè 'wife' (pl. àbbèéyè) which both has a prefix and has undergone initial consonant change to form its plural. Several other kinship terms are derived by means of the above four nouns, e.g., wàé a ggwàno 'daughter', wàé a wàdum 'son', wákkà a ggwàno 'sister', wákkà a wàdum 'brother', wààwáá 'grandchild' (pl. bèé a wàà). Very few human nouns occur with other prefixes, e.g., ikku 'family, relatives', m̀kpàláwa 'boy, young man' (< Efik), gituùtù(wé) 'baby', iyaà 'grandmother, old woman'. The prefixless nickname ttette 'grandfather' is derived from ètte 'father' via reduplication.

Except for è-bbi 'goat' (pl. à-bbi), non-human nouns taking either *ε*- or *a*-prefixes do not show a difference in sg/pl forms, e.g., è-kómi 'cotton tree(s)', è-yím 'onion(s)', è-tto 'house(s)'. This includes the rather sizeable number of (mostly L tone) nouns denoting animals:

ècín	'porcupine'	èvààm	'cow'
ekilíkílí	'weaver bird'	èvòm	'tsetse fly'
èkkwò	'snail'	èvù	'monkey (sp.)'
ènyì	'elephant'	èvva	'dog'
eppà	'hawk'	ewòwòŋ	'hippopotamus'
èsè	'tiger'	eyá	'shrimp'
èttàmà	'guinea fowl'	èyù	'antelope (sp.)'
èteen	'animal, meat'	èzéém	'python'
ètùwán	'bushcow'	èzì	'bushpig'

Several animal names consist of compounds, genitive constructions, or full sentences: èvàà likóól 'rabbit' (cf. èvààm 'cow', likóól 'bush'), èvva-kko 'hyena' (cf. èvva 'dog', kko 'lack'), èvàà esú emmà 'puff adder' ('he who is able to peck