

## Noun Class Prefix Questionnaire – version 1.3

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### Introduction:

This questionnaire is designed to elicit an inventory of the noun class affixes in your language and to detect patterns in the morphology of these affixes and to identify the forms that are used in the contexts where they are used to express agreement. It is assumed that you speak a Bantu language and that the basic classification numbers for noun classes is familiar to you (but if not see 1.1 below). You will be asked for single word translations and for sentence translations, and at times, if you find it useful to make an illustrative chart, by all means do so, but do not use it as a substitute for the details requested below. There are a few general things to keep in mind:

- For every example, please provide a latinized version of the pronunciation as it might appear in works written in your language (the ‘original text’ line), and if there are no standard representations that make the pronunciation clear, please indicate to us as much as you can (in some prefatory remarks) how your transcriptions should be pronounced. If you find it best to use the phonetic alphabet, please do so, but it is not necessary as long as your instructions are clear enough.

- Present each example with a morpheme breakdown as well indicating, as best you can, the distinctions between the morphemes. All morphemes within the same word should be separated by dashes and any morpheme that codes several features in an undecomposable form should distinguish the relevant elements by separation with periods. The following examples from Xhosa are illustrative.

a) A-ba-fazi ba-nced-a u-m-ntwana w-a-khe  
c2-c2-woman SM.c2-help-fv c1-c1-child SM.c1-AP-pronoun.c1  
“The women are helping his child.”

b) i-n-dlovu  
c9-c9-elephant  
i-n-dlovu i-zi-bon-il-e  
c9-c9-elephant SM.c9-OM.c10-PF-fv  
“The elephant saw them “ (where ‘them’ are other elephants)

## 1. Class prefixes on nouns

### 1.1. The basic paradigm

#### 1.1.1. The format

Please provide the paradigm for class prefixes on nouns in your language, i.e. the entities corresponding to the initial parts of Xhosa *um-fazi* “woman” and *aba-fazi* “women”, based on the forms nouns have when they occur as subjects or direct objects in sentences without negation. The paradigm should be organized using the standard numbering for Bantu noun classes, using the following Xhosa paradigm (reproduced from text books) as a model (where *N* represents a homorganic nasal):

- |                     |                   |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| (1) cl 1 <i>um-</i> | cl 2 <i>aba-</i>  |
| 3 <i>um</i>         | 4 <i>imi-</i>     |
| 5 <i>i(li)-</i>     | 6 <i>ama-</i>     |
| 7 <i>isi-</i>       | 8 <i>izi-</i>     |
| 9 <i>iN-</i>        | 10 <i>i(z)iN-</i> |
| 11 <i>u(lu)-</i>    |                   |
| 14 <i>ubu-</i>      |                   |
| 15 <i>uku-</i>      |                   |

Please include all variants/allomorphs in each class.

### 1.1.2. Comments for achieving this task

#### (a) What if there is no prefix?

While carrying out this task, you may discover that there may be no prefix in some class with all or some of the nouns in that class. For example, some class 5 nouns in Venda seem to have no prefix instead of the regular class 5 prefix *li-*, e.g. *fobvu* “thief” (plural *mafobvu* in class 6). In such cases you may list  $\emptyset$  as (a variant of) the class prefix in the paradigm.

This situation should be distinguished from the more complicated case, where no class prefix appears, but the initial segment of the noun root is changed. For example, some Venda nouns in class 5 resemble *fobvu* in that they have no *li-*, but on the other hand their initial consonants are different from what we see when they occur in class 6 (as plurals), e.g. class 5 *fuyu* “wild fig” - class 6 *mahuyu* “wild figs” vs *fobvu* – *mafobvu* and *gole* “cloud” – *makole* “clouds”. Likewise, class 9 nouns in Venda may have no prefix, but change the initial consonant of the root although in a way different from what we see in class 5, e.g. *khangwa* “forgetfulness” vs *hangwa* “forget”. In such cases, you should represent (a variant of) the class prefix as an abstract morpheme X in your paradigm, and provide comments immediately following the paradigm that show the effect it has on the following noun, e.g. by listing pair of consonants defining the morphophonological alternation, like  $X = f - h$ ,  $g - k$  etc for the Venda class 5 variant X and  $Y = kh - h$ .  $kh - k$  etc for the Venda class 9 variant Y.

#### (b) What if there are two or more parts in the prefix?

In some Bantu languages the prefix on a noun can be broken up into two or more components. In Xhosa, for example, the prefix on a noun generally begins with a vowel in all the classes, e.g. class 1 *u-m-ntu* ‘man’ or class 2 *a-ba-ntu* ‘men, people’. This break-down is motivated (in Xhosa) by the fact that the initial vowel (also called “augment” or “preprefix”) falls away in certain syntactic contexts (in the scope of negation and in vocatives) and that only one of the two parts is used to mark subject agreement on verbs (the *u* in class 1 and *ba* in class 2). By these criteria, the class 10 prefix *i-zi-n* (as in *i-zi-n-to* ‘things’) has three parts: The initial vowel falls away in the contexts mentioned above, *zi* marks verbal agreement with a class 10 subject (or object) and the agreement marker on adjectives is *zi-n*.

In other languages, the augment is not just a vowel in all cases. In Lubukusu, for example, the class 1 prefix is *u-mu*, but the class 3 prefix is *ku-mu* and the class 2 prefix is *ba-ba*. But the same criteria for segmentation apply, since, for example, the subject agreement marker on the verb corresponds systematically to the first part of the prefix on nouns, e.g. class 1 *u*, in some contexts, but class 3 *ku* and class 2 *ba*.

In some languages, the augment may indicate definiteness or specificity and may then have to disappear in sentences like *There arrived a foreigner*.

When the prefix on the noun has more than one component in any class, please show the breakdown and simply repeat the noun class number in the glosses as in the example given. If you have some notion about how the different parts of the prefix differ in their function, please comment as best you can on what you think the difference might be.

(b) *Tones*

Please also show the tone patterns for the prefixes. Using the abbreviations in (2), you can form a separate paradigm as in (3) (where the tones indicated are merely chosen for the sake of illustration) by representing each tone-bearing unit in the prefix as one of the abbreviations in (2) and separating the different tone-bearing units with a dash:

- (2) H = high  
L = low  
HL = falling  
LH = rising

- (3) cl 1 H – L                  cl 2 H  
      3 H – L                  4 H – L

etc

If more than one pattern is found in any given class, list all variants.

(c) *Commenting the basic paradigm*

For all the cases where a class prefix has different allomorphs (including  $\emptyset$  or an abstract morpheme X), you should provide a characterization of the factors conditioning the choice between the different allomorphs. For example, the Xhosa class 5 prefix has the allomorphs *ili-* and *i-*, as indicated in (1), and the choice between them depends on whether the nominal root is monosyllabic or not. Some cases may be more complex. In class 10 Xhosa uses the prefix variant *iziN-* only on monosyllabic roots and *iiN-* elsewhere, e.g. *iindlovu* “elephants”, but monosyllabic and polysyllabic rules may both have the same prefix *ziN-* in negated sentences, e.g. *andiboni zindlovu* “I don’t see any elephants”. You should provide as much detail as you can, and be sure to illustrate your remarks with examples as often as you can. In the comments you should also include information about variation between different tone patterns, if there is any, stating whether the variation depends on the root or something else. Again, your information is most helpful if it is as detailed as possible.

(d) *Sentence data*

Please use a noun of each class in a sentence where that noun is the subject that agrees with the verb. Please provide all sentences with present tense but also provide a past or future form if the agreement for it varies from that of present tense. Also include an adjective modifying the subject noun so that we can see the form of agreement on the adjective. For example, if our target noun is ‘baboon’, then an appropriate sentence would be ‘The grey baboon is eating a banana’. A Xhosa example would look like this:

I-m-fene e -ngwevu i -dya i-bhanana

c9-c9-baboon RC.c9-grey SM.c9-eat c5-banana

For all of your sentence data, please clearly indicate morpheme boundaries as best you can and provide class number as part of your gloss of every affix that expresses it. Our gloss for subject agreement is SM.cX-) where ‘c’ indicates class and X corresponds to the number of the noun class agreement.

NOTE: For first and second person subjects, please provide sentences that show the marking on the verb. An example from Xhosa would look like this:

Ndi - ni - bon-il-e  
SM.c1.1<sup>st</sup> -OM.c2.2<sup>nd</sup> -see- PF-fv  
I saw you(pl.)

If your language permits phrases like ‘we linguists’ or ‘you linguists’ or even ‘you who are linguists’, please provide sentences where these nominal phrases control agreement on the verb.

## 1.2. Superimposition of prefixes

### 1.2.1. Superimposition

Superimposition occurs when a nominal prefix is added on top of (a part of) another class prefix as in Shona *pa-mu-sha* ‘at the home’ where the class 16 prefix *pa-* is added onto the class 3 prefix *mu-*.

### 1.2.2. Superimposition in your language

Are any of the prefixes listed in the paradigm you have given for your language, added to a stem that already has a class prefix? Which? If any, list them, grouping them into three categories depending on whether they have a locative meaning (like the Shona class 16 prefix *pa-*), a diminutive/augmentative meaning or neither of the preceding two.

### 1.2.3. Suppression or replacement of noun class prefixes in your language

In some languages, the prefix will not appear in contexts where certain kinds of forms precede it. In Lubukusu, for example, the first of two noun class prefixes will disappear after the preposition *khu* (which means ‘about’, ‘to’ or ‘on’, amongst other things), so the noun *babaana* ‘children’, which is *ba-ba-ana*, c1-c1-child, will merge with this preposition as *khubaana*, and *kamatore*, *ka-ma-tore*, c6-c6-banana, i.e., ‘bananas’ will appear as *khumatore*, ‘about (the) bananas’. It is unclear in this case whether or not *khu* is replacing the pre-prefix or suppressing it, but this is an instance where your morpheme breakdown and gloss can show what is missing in the original text line.

### 1.2.3. Agreement

When a prefix is added on top of another class prefix modifying elements like adjectives, demonstratives etc may show class-agreement with either the first or the second one of the two prefixes, as in the Shona *pa-mu-sha uyo* ‘at that home’ with the demonstrative *uyo* of class 3 freely alternating with *pa-mu-sha apo* with the demonstrative *apo* of class 16.

When a prefix is superimposed on another prefix in your language, do the modifiers of the noun agree with the first prefix, the second prefix or optionally with either one? Please answer this for each of the prefixes that can be superimposed.

#### 1.2.4 Sentence data

Illustrate superimposition for each class that undergo it (two nouns per class) and for each combination with a sentence in which the ‘superimposed noun’ is the subject of the sentence such that it determines agreement with the verb. Once again, use present tense, but add another sentence if the shape of agreement is different in that tense. Make sure that the superimposed noun is modified with a demonstrative and an adjective. For instance, an example sentence illustrating superimposed locative might look like this: ‘At this gray house live many workers’.

### 1.3. Singular/plural

#### 1.3.1. Exceptions from the general pattern

As suggested by the organization of the paradigm in (1), a given singular class is paired with a specific plural class, e.g. class 1 is paired with class 2, class 3 with class 4 etc. But the pairing of a singular class X with a plural class Y doesn’t always mean that all nouns in class X form their plurals in class Y, or that no other singular class forms plurals in class Y. In Xhosa, for example, some class 1 nouns have plurals in class 6 (*amaXhosa* “Xhosas”) rather than class 2, and class 10 is the plural class both for class 9 and class 11 (*uluthi* “stick” – *izinti* “sticks”).

Assuming that the paradigm you have provided already reflects the general singular/plural class pairing in your language, what are the exceptions to this pairing?

#### 1.3.2 Sentence data

Illustrate singular and plural pairs with sentences of which the target noun is the subject. Use different nouns than those you used to illustrate each class in 1.1.1. Thus we will want pairs like ‘The book fell off the table’ paired with ‘The books fell off the table’. Illustrate every sort of pairing your language allows.

#### 1.3.3. Plurals and superimposition

If your language has nominal prefixes that are added on top of other class prefixes, you should specify whether the singular/plural opposition is expressed in the first prefix only, the second prefix only or both. The answer to this question may conceivably be different for different categories of superimposed prefixes.

If a diminutive/augmentative prefix can be added on top of a plural class prefix, is the meaning “small/big Xs” or “a small/big number of Xs”?

#### 1.3.4 Sentence data

Illustrate singular and plural pairs of superimposed nouns (of all the sorts illustrated in 1.2.1) with sentences of which the target noun is the subject. If you have already given a form with singular/plural agreement in 1.2.1, then give its counterpart. Thus we might get pairs like ‘in this village live many workers’ and ‘in these villages live many workers. Illustrate every sort of pairing your language allows.

### 1.4. Prefixes in vocatives and in the scope of negation:

#### 1.4.1. Vocatives

When you use a noun as a vocative addressing one or more interlocutors, as in (does its class prefix change its form in any way (including tone changes)? Please translate all the numbered sentences in 1.4.

(1) Good morning, students!

Construct sentences (as far as possible) with nouns from all the different noun classes replacing *students* in (1).

#### 1.4.2. *The object in negated sentences*

Likewise for cases like (2):

(2) I don't see any students

Does the prefix on *students* undergo any changes (including tone pattern) from what it is like in (3)?:

(3) I see the/some students

If yes, characterize those changes. Construct sentences with nouns from all different noun classes replacing *students* in (sentences like) (2)-(3).

### 1.5. Nouns following *a*

#### 1.5.1. *The associative prefix*

In some Bantu languages the associative prefix *a* used in possessive constructions change its shape under the influence of the following noun. For example, *a* may show up as either *a*, *o* or *e* depending on the class membership of the following noun, or it may take the form *e* regardless of which class the following noun belongs to, but is still *a* in front of pronouns and prefixless nouns. Some preposition-like elements like *na* “with, and” and *nga* “with” may behave similarly.

If your language forms possessive constructions by means of an associative prefix like *a*, and the shape of this prefix varies as a function of the class membership of the following noun, please give the whole paradigm showing which form the associative marker takes in each class and illustrate each form of the associative marker with a nominal phrase of the form ‘X AM Y’ (AM=our gloss for Associative Marker) where X is the owned thing and Y is the possessor.

#### 1.5.2. *Other prepositional elements*

If your language also has other prepositional elements whose form changes because of a following noun, you should list them and indicate whether their paradigms are exactly like the one for *a* or not. If not, you should show the differences and illustrate them with nominal phrases of the form above, where the preposition in question substitutes for the AM.

#### 1.5.3. *The effect of negation*

If your language has an associative *a* or other prepositional prefixes that change their form when followed by a noun, please also state whether the relevant change(s) also must occur in negative sentences in your language. (In Xhosa, for example *unomntwana* “she has a child”

becomes *akanamntwana* “she doesn’t have any child” with negation.) Please support your observations with examples sentences.

## **2. Agreement markers**

### **2.1. Subject markers on verbs**

#### *2.1.1. The task*

The task you will carry out is to provide a paradigm showing the subject markers which occur on verbs with subjects of different class. The paradigm should follow the same format as the one previously given for the class prefixes in your language. As in the case of the class prefixes on nouns, there may classes where no subject marker seems to appear, or there is only a change in the initial vowel of the verb stem. In such cases, you should list  $\emptyset$  in the paradigm or an abstract morpheme X whose phonological effect should be characterized immediately below the paradigm, exactly as for the class prefixes on nouns.

If the subject markers take on a different form when immediately followed by a vowel, e.g. by elision, state this, list the forms and specify whether the change occur anytime the subject markers precede a vowel or only in some cases (which?).

#### *2.1.2. How to do it*

For this task we already have sentences showing subject agreement for the various classes, but if your description of the paradigm brings to mind any instance of an agreement pattern not illustrated in 1.1.1, please provide sentences like those mentioned in 1.1.1. for these additional cases.

If the subject marker in any given class has allomorphs that do not seem to be phonologically conditioned, all allomorphs must be listed and illustrated in sentences. For all such cases, please describe their relative distribution in your comments to the paradigm.

### **2.2. Other agreement markers**

#### **2.2.1. Object markers**

If your language can identify an object of the verb by prefixing a nominal class marker to the verb root, as in Xhosa *ndi-ya-m-bona* “I see her/him”, please provide a full paradigm for these object markers, following the same guidelines as for the subject markers.

#### **2.2.2. Subject markers on adjectives**

Does your language have a set of adjectives used as predicates with subject markers different from those used with verbs, as in, for example, Xhosa *umntwana u-ya-dlala* “the child is playing” vs *umntwana m-hle* “the child is beautiful”? If so, please provide their paradigm following the same guidelines as for the subject markers on verbs. Please illustrate all members of the agreement paradigm with predicative sentences, that is, for each class of noun that can affect the agreement on the predicate adjective, please provide an appropriate sentence. Also show the person paradigms for these cases, including 1<sup>st</sup> singular/plural, 2<sup>nd</sup> singular/plural (and dual, if your language has it).