

Language contact and evidence of divergence and convergence in the morphology of Usaghade

BRUCE CONNELL

YORK UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

Usaghade, a Lower Cross (LC) language is, unlike other LC languages, in regular contact with several Bantu languages, particularly Londo, and has a functioning system of noun classification/agreement, whereas other LC languages have only remnants of a former system. A comparison of noun classification in Lower Cross and Usaghade and between Usaghade and Londo suggests that Londo may have played a role in shaping the noun classification system of Usaghade by providing, along with other neighboring languages, an ecology in which Usaghade speakers were able to maintain their own existing system rather than converge with Londo. Usaghade temporal marking and its apparent system of verb classification, also different from other LC languages and hardly attributable to contact-induced convergence, might be a result of contact-induced divergence. The situation of Usaghade supports the view that bound morphology is resistant to borrowing and suggests three possible outcomes of contact: convergence, divergence, and stability.

Keywords: noun classification/agreement; language contact; Lower Cross; Londo; contact-induced change.

1. Language contact, convergence and divergence

The expected outcome of language contact is the modification of one (or more) of the languages in the contact situation, in that it (or they) adopt(s) characteristics of one

(or more) of the other languages; that is, in some respect(s) the languages converge. Less expected and rarely reported are situations where languages in contact diverge, i.e. change occurs in a way that one (or more) of the languages seemingly reacts against the influence of the others. An extreme example would be the deliberate manipulation by speakers of a language to render it less like those of their neighbors; this explicitly appears to be the case among the Sepik languages of Papua New Guinea; as reported by (Laycock 2001: 169), speakers told him “it wouldn’t be any good if we all talked the same; we like to know where people are from”. Perhaps less consciously deliberate is the creation of Ma’a, an ‘ethno-register’ of Mbugu (ISO 639-3 [mhd]; Glottocode mbug1240), which as described by Mous “serves to stress the ethnic identity of the Mbugu as being different from their Shambaa and Pare neighbours” (Mous 2001: 313). In this case, speakers are said to have attempted to learn or approximate a language they had already given up. Among the reasons why there are so few reports of divergence in the literature may simply be that they are indeed rare or unrecognized, being counter to expectations; it may also be more difficult to establish divergence compared to convergence given an assumption that divergence must be deliberate. Apart from convergence and divergence, a third possible outcome of contact is that existing features of a language instead be stabilized through influence of contact, a situation that is essentially an areal phenomenon in nature though the latter are typically considered to involve convergence. In the view of Kühl & Braunmüller (2014: 14),

both stability and divergence occur in contact situations quite frequently, not only independently of language contact, but also as its direct outcome: a language may preserve its structural features due to, or even despite, undergoing contact with other languages.

Usaghade¹ (ISO 639-3 [usk]; Glottocode usag1244), also officially known as Isangele in Cameroon and as Usakedet among the Efik and Ibibio in Nigeria, is a Lower Cross language though, unlike other LC languages, it is in intimate contact with several Bantu languages. Most notable of these, as described below, is Londo (Bantu A11; ISO 639-3 [bdu], Glottocode lond1243), a language of the Oroko cluster. Usaghade differs

¹ As is common in the region one and the same term serves as both ethnonym and glottonym as well as place name.

in interesting ways from other Lower Cross languages, and the question arises as to whether these differences, or some of them, can be attributed to contact, or rather are a result of internal development. While a case might be made for its having been influenced by Londo or other neighboring languages, particularly at the level of the lexicon, other of its characteristics are difficult to attribute to convergence. Indeed, deeper study shows at least one of these, its noun class and agreement system, plausibly represents the third possibility mentioned above; rather than convergence, or divergence, an inherited feature has been stabilized through contact. One goal of this paper is to make the case for this assessment. To do this I look at the noun classification and agreement systems in both Usaghade and Londo, as well as evidence that exists of former noun classification in other Lower Cross languages and in Proto-Lower Cross. Its functioning noun classification and agreement system is the most obvious way in which Usaghade differs from other Lower Cross languages. Beyond this, I examine other characteristics of Usaghade in which it differs from the rest of Lower Cross, such as in its encoding of temporal distinctions, to assess whether or to what extent these may be ascribed to contact with neighboring Bantu languages. From a more general perspective, the situation of Usaghade as described here shows that stabilization of, or support for, a given linguistic structure, is indeed a possible outcome of language contact along with convergence and divergence. The description and discussion given here build on and elaborate that found in Connell (2001).

2. Usaghade and language contact

The contact setting of Usaghade can be understood in terms of its linguistic genealogy, its geographical setting and the associated demographics, described in the following paragraphs.

2.1. Lower Cross affiliation of Usaghade

Usaghade is a small and relatively remote community, accessible to the rest of Lower Cross only by water but it has a particular place in Lower Cross cosmology/mythology; for some it is their place of origin (e.g. this account is found

among the Obolo² and the Oꝛo³); for others (e.g. the Ibibio) it is a place of mystery and supernatural power. The language is not extensively discussed in the literature, however its place in Lower Cross as well as the classification of Lower Cross within Cross River is well established (Connell 1995, Connell & Maison 1994). Within Lower Cross, Usaghade appears as a relatively early branching, following only Obolo, as shown in Figure 1. The subgrouping of Lower Cross represented in Figure 1 is based on lexical data and arrived at using a Neighbor-Joining algorithm (Saitou & Nei 1987), available in Splitstree (Huson & Bryant 2013). With certain exceptions not germane to the present discussion⁴, it is supported in its details by phonological innovations (Connell 1995). The position of Usaghade is confirmed by several phonological innovations.

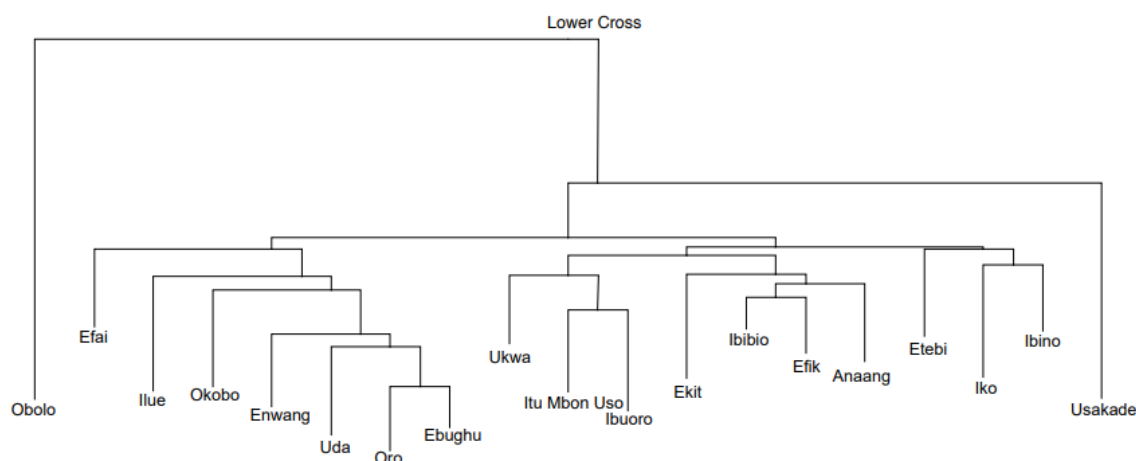


Figure 1: Groupings within Lower Cross based on lexical evidence.

Lower Cross itself is part of the Cross River group, which in turn has been grouped together with Bantoid to form the Bantoid-Cross group within Benue-Congo (Williamson & Blench 2000).

2.2. Location

The Lower Cross subgroup is situated in southeastern Nigeria, covering the lower part of the Cross River basin to the coast, and from the eastern fringe of the Niger Delta

² ISO 639-3 [ann], Glottocode obol1243.

³ ISO 639-3 [orx], Glottocode oroo1241.

⁴ For example, the Efai–Ebughu grouping shown in Figure 1 is not supported by phonological innovations.

to the estuary of the Cross River. The confluence of the Cross River (at its estuary) and its tributary the Yafe form the international frontier between Nigeria and Cameroon at this point.⁵ Both linguistic evidence and oral traditions (Connell & Maison 1994) suggest a relatively recent dispersal of the majority of the Lower Cross languages from a common homeland, likely reaching the coastal area in the 15th century; this date receives some support in accounts from early European visitors to the Cross River estuary, which report no settlements at locations (e.g. parts of what is now Calabar), which were then found occupied on subsequent visits (Latham 1973).

Usaghade itself is situated to the east of the Cross River (left bank), entirely in Cameroon in the area referred to in early sources as Rio del Rey (Ardener 1968), which includes the Bakassi Peninsula. The immediate coastal area is largely mangrove swamp and not well suited to permanent settlement, though fishing settlements exist representing many ethnolinguistic groups: Lower Cross (particularly Efik⁶ and Efai⁷, but also others), Bantu groups from along the coast to the south, as well as others from further west, such as Ijò groups from the Niger Delta. Slightly inland, the area surrounding Usaghade is home to other languages, in particular several Northwest Bantu languages. The immediate Bantu neighbors to Usaghade in addition to Londo, are Bakole (ISO 639-3 [kme], Glottocode bako1250), Balue (uncoded), and Barombi (ISO 639-3 [bbi], Glottocode baro1252) to the east, and Bima (uncoded) and Ngolo (uncoded) to the north-east. Beyond these but still in the immediate area are the Manenguba languages (Hedinger 1987), also Northwest Bantu languages. Durop (ISO 639-3 [krp], Glottocode koro1304), an Upper Cross language, lies to the north, as shown in Figure 2.

2.3. Demographics

As described in Connell (2001), the Usaghade community comprises three villages, Oron⁸, Amoto, and Bateka, and several smaller hamlets and fishing settlements, such

⁵ A 2002 ruling by the International Court of Justice declared Bakassi to be part of Cameroon, however dispute over this continues; the region remains part of a Nigerian federal constituency.

⁶ ISO 639-3 [efi], Glottocode efik1245.

⁷ ISO 639-3 [efa], Glottocode efai1241.

⁸ This village, Oron, is not to be confused with the town of Oron [óró] located on the Nigerian side of the Cross River estuary in Akwa Ibom State. The similarity in name appears to be coincidental.

as Atabong and Ataiyo. Recent census data are not available however the population figure given in Eberhard et al. (2022) is 5,000. Each of the three main villages has its own tradition of origin, which for Oron and Amoto are similar.



Figure 2: Location of Usaghade and its linguistic neighbors. (Map courtesy of Phil Braun.)

The Oron-Amoto tradition⁹ holds that the founders of these two villages were from Enyong, near Idere and Eki on the map in Figure 2; Enyong Creek is a tributary of the Cross River to the north-west of the estuary near Arochukwu and Enyong is today part of the Lower Cross speaking area and constitutes the northmost reaches of the Lower Cross language distribution, where they interface with Upper Cross languages. The Oron-Amoto tradition says they migrated down the Cross River and settled first among the Uda and Enwang on the west bank of the Cross River. The tradition does not tell us how long they stayed among the Enwang and Uda, only that a dispute arose between these two groups, with the migrants supporting the Uda. Fearing Enwang retaliation, the migrants fled in two groups, crossing the mouth of the Cross River at night to the Rio del Rey area. The two groups became the founders of the villages of Amoto and Oron. It is difficult to date this migration with confidence, but one version of the Oron-Amoto tradition has it that they migrated to the coast for

⁹ As given to me by Chief Anke of Oron village.

trade purposes, having heard of the arrival of Europeans. This would place it in the late 1500s or early 1600s (see below).

The people of the third village, Bateka, do not claim Lower Cross origin. Their traditions say they are originally Balondo, a Bantu people who inhabit the region adjacent to Usaghade. This is not disputed in Usaghade, and at the time of my research most of the older inhabitants of Bateka, despite having adopted Usaghade as their first language, still spoke Londo as a second language. The Bateka people claim to have been farmers and to have settled their present location while searching for new farmlands. These groups of people came together to form the community now known as Usaghade. I had the opportunity to work most closely with a speaker from Bateka resident in Calabar at the time, though our work together included one field trip to Usaghade (Bateka). Though still a young man in his late 20s, he spoke Londo; his principal language of daily use in Bateka however was Usaghade, and he was also fluent in Efik, English and Pidgin and had passive knowledge of other local languages to varying degrees. Anecdotally, he reported his daughter, aged four at the time, being exposed to these languages on a daily basis and acquiring them simultaneously.

Further insight into the multilingual nature of this region and its development can be had from two sources. Hedinger's (1987) study of the Manenguba languages includes a short description of the sociolinguistic situation as including "considerable complexity with regard to the number of languages used in different contexts" (1987: 31). This complexity includes use of mother tongue in the home and with members of the same clan to the extent that intelligibility permits. In border regions, bilingualism in local languages appear to be the norm. Pidgin English (Cameroon Pidgin, uncoded) is spoken throughout the region and either English or French or both are available as education is in these languages.

Attesting to the historical depth of this contact setting is documentary evidence, as presented in Ardener (1968). Ardener's work establishes that linguistic contact in the area, involving the groups in question (i.e. essentially Lower Cross and Bantu) goes back at least 500 years and presumably longer. Indeed, a part of Ardener's discussion constitutes the first modern linguistic examination of language contact in the Rio del Rey, as he presents an analysis of what appears to be the earliest wordlist collected by European traders in this region. While the origin of the list, i.e. exactly who collected it and whether it is from one or several locations, is subject to debate, Ardener argues it was the work of the Dutch trader Samuel Blommaert, who was active in the early 1600s. It clearly contains words from both Lower Cross and Bantu

languages. This allows Ardener (1968) to conclude that the linguistic situation of the region around the end of the 15th century was much as it is now, i.e. heterogeneous.

Thus, Usaghade demonstrably is and has been in an intense contact situation for several centuries both internally, through its heterogeneous origin, and externally through its being in close proximity to numerous other languages, as described above. It may be expected then that contact has played a part in its development, and those areas in which it differs from other Lower Cross languages may do so as a result of this contact. In the following sections of the paper I look at, in turn, nominal classification and agreement in Usaghade compared to what is found in other LC languages (§4, §5), and in Londo (§6, §7), and offer an account as to why its system has been relatively stable compared to other LC languages (§8). In §9 two other aspects of Usaghade morphology that differ from the LC canon are discussed with a view as to understanding how they came about. §10 moves from morphology to examine cases of lexical influence on Usaghade from Londo or other neighboring Bantu languages. §11 presents the conclusions of the paper concerning what the major influences on Usaghade were that made it different from other LC languages, and offers discussion as to the implications these findings have for a theory of morphological change in situations of language contact.

3. Nominal classification, grammatical agreement

The most interesting feature of Usaghade when considering it as a Lower Cross language is the presence of a fully functioning noun classification and agreement system, only vestiges of which are present elsewhere in Lower Cross. This system bears the hallmarks of noun classification and agreement systems found elsewhere among East Benue-Congo languages and beyond. Nouns and their dependent elements are morphologically marked with a prefix, on which basis they are assigned to a particular class, referred to here as nominal form (NF) classes. Prefixes encode number: singular, plural, or neutral; singular-plural pairings are deriflection classes (DERF; see Güldemann & Fiedler 2021), commonly referred to in the literature as genders. Agreement (or ‘concord’) exists between a head noun (the trigger) and any of several possible elements dependent on the noun, such as demonstratives, relativized nouns, associative constructions, and numerals, and between subject and verb, according to the subject and grammatical person, and is again marked prefixally. Nouns thus fall into agreement classes (AGR), singular-plural pairings of

which are referred to as genders (GEND). In some languages the AGR prefix is phonologically identical to the NF prefix, i.e. agreement or concord is alliterative, though this is frequently not the case; there is no necessary phonological identity between DERF classes and genders.

4. Nominal classification in Cross River Usaghade, Lower Cross and neighboring languages

4.1. Nominal classification and agreement systems in Cross River

Nominal classification/agreement systems are or were a feature of Cross River languages (see Faraclas 1986); functioning systems exist in several Upper Cross languages (for Durop see Connell 2021, Kastelein 1994; for Hohumono¹⁰ see Sterk 1976; for Lokəə¹¹ see Winston 1962; for Mbembe¹² see Barnwell 1969). Connell (1987) discusses the state of nominal classification in Lower Cross where, depending on the language, it ranges from the functioning system of Usaghade to vestigial evidence in languages like Obolo where the former noun prefix has disappeared from some nouns; across most of the group fossilized NF prefixes are present on most or all nouns. In the Ogoni languages bordering Lower Cross on the west, nominal prefixes have largely disappeared in Kana (ISO 639-3 [ogo], Glottocode khan1278) and Gokana (ISO 639-3 [gkn], Glottocode goka1239), while Eleme (ISO 639-3 [elm], Glottocode elem1253) and to a lesser extent Baan (ISO 639-3 [bvj], Glottocode baan1241) have apparent fossilized prefixes. It is interesting to note here the rough cline that exists; moving from east to west, the nominal classification/agreement system of languages has increasingly eroded and disappeared. Table 1 includes a representative set of Lower Cross languages and example lexical items to illustrate the loss of nominal classification following this cline; i.e. east-most Usaghade is at the top and west-most Obolo at the bottom, with other languages ordered between these two (see also Figure 1). Where a singular-plural alternation exists, the plural prefix follows the noun; otherwise the prefix is fossilized, or in two examples from Obolo, ‘oil palm’ and ‘water’, and possibly ‘slave’, it has disappeared. The LC languages are followed in the table by Kana (Ogoni) in which former prefixes have all but disappeared. To the

¹⁰ ISO 639-3 [bcs], Glottocode kohu1244.

¹¹ ISO 639-3 [yaz], Glottocode loka1252.

¹² ISO 639-3 [mfn], Glottocode cros1244.

west of the Ogoni languages are the Ijoid languages which have no identifiable traces of nominal classification and/or agreement systems.

	‘ear’	‘head’	‘person’	‘slave’	‘chief’	‘oil palm’	‘water’
Usaghade	ú-tóŋ / a-	ú-βô / m-	ǝ-wóm / ε-	ò-βúnàŋ / i-	ù-múô / a-	ú-tén	è-móŋ
Ọrọ	ú-tóŋ / ɔ-	ú-búgò / m-	ǝ-wì / e-	í-vôn	ǝ- ^l fóŋ	á-dà	ń-móŋ
Enwang	ú-tóŋ	ú-búgù / m-	á-wí	ǝ-fôn / mi-	ǝ- ^l vóŋ / mi-	á-dzì	ń-móŋ
Ebughu	ú-tóŋ	ú-búRò / m-	á-wí	ǝ-vλn	á- ^l búŋ / i-	á-jè	ń-móŋ
Efai	ú-tóŋ	í-búRò / m-	á-ŋWé	ǝ-fλn	á- ^l búóŋ	é-jè	ń-móŋ
Ibibio	ú-tóŋ	í-wú:d / ŋ-	á-wó	á-fín / i-	á- ^l bó:ŋ / m-	á-jòp	ń-mó:ŋ
Ekit	ú-tóŋ	í-búRò	á-ŋWé	í-fín / á-	á- ^l bóŋ	á-dzì	ń-móŋ
Obolo	ú-tóŋ	í-bòt	é-nè	gúwù	ú-bó:ŋ	kô:	múŋ
Kana	tó	ákóbee	nεε	–	méné	zóo	máá

Table 1: Fossilization/loss of prefixes in Lower Cross following an east to west cline, with Usaghade east-most and Obolo west-most.¹³

There is more, however, underlying the presence or maintenance of the functioning system found in Usaghade than geographical distribution. This system and reasons why it has been maintained, while in other LC languages it has been eroded, are explored in the following sections. First, additional details are given concerning the evidence for nominal classification in LC.

4.2. Retentions of nominal classification in Lower Cross

As just mentioned, for most LC languages, fossilized NF prefixes are present on most or all nouns. In Ọrọ, singular-plural prefix alternations have been maintained for about 10% of nouns in a comparative database comprising 550 glosses. Nominal form prefix alternations on these are suggestive of several DERF class pairings in the history of Ọrọ: u-/N-; u-/i-; u-/a-; o-/i-; o-/e-; i-/N-; and e-/N-. NF prefix alternation in Ibibio is present in most, if not all, [+human] nouns (1), and occasional other nouns (2). With rare exceptions, the prefix associated with the prefix is the same across SG–PL pairings and is determined by the stem tone.

- (1) á-^lbóóŋ / N- (or i-)^lbóóŋ ‘chief /chiefs’

¹³ Codes for languages not mentioned in the text are: Enwang (ISO 639-3 [enw], Glottocode enwa1245); Ebughu (ISO 639-3 [ebg], Glottocode ebug1241); Ekit (ISO 639-3 [eke], Glottocode ekie1246).

	à-kpáráwà /N-kpáráwà	‘young man /young men’
	à-bóíkà /ú-bóíkà	‘young woman /young women’
	á-tâ /N-tâ	‘specialist /specialists’ (of traditional knowledge)
	á-bià /N-bià	‘specialist /specialists’ (of traditional knowledge)
(2)	ì-kpàt /N-kpàt	‘foot /feet’
	í-só /N-só	‘face /faces’
	í-kpôñ /N-kpôñ	‘cocoyam /cocoyams’
	á-fâñ /N-fâñ	‘leaf /leaves’
	á-kók /N-kók	‘branch /branches’

For elements of the noun phrase other than the head noun, generally only fossilized cases of agreement, e.g. with adjectives, are present, as shown in (3), through examples from *Ibibio* (ISO 639-3 [ibb], Glottocode *ibib1240*), *Ọrọ*, and *Usaghade*. In these, the AGR prefix of the adjective alternates while, except in *Usaghade*, the (former) NF prefix of the noun has lost the alternation. In these examples the AGR prefix is *N-*, as is the case in most other examples in the data. It is assumed this is a result of merger of AGR prefixes, not that this was the case in an earlier functioning system in Lower Cross or Proto Lower Cross.

(3)	Ibibio		Ọrọ		Usaghade		
	SG	á-búbít	éwà	ì-dìók	áwà	ó-βiè	ó-wá
	PL	ń-búbít	éwà	ń-dìók	áwà	i-βiè	í-wá
		black	dog	bad	dog	short	dog

Subject–verb agreement is maintained to some degree in all LC languages in which this has been examined, including in *Obolo*, as shown in (4). Examples show the independent pronoun and the verb ‘buy’ with the subject–verb AGR prefix.

(4)	Obolo		Ibibio		Usaghade		Gloss	
	1SG	è-mì	ń-lép	à-mì	ń- ⁺ dép	à-mì	ń- ⁺ néí	I buy
	2SG	ò-wò	ó-lép	à-fò	à- ⁺ dép	à-fò	à- ⁺ néí	You buy
	3SG	ò-mô	ó-lép	à-ńé	á- ⁺ dép	ó-mò	ó- ⁺ néí	He buys
	1PL	è-jì	é-lép	ń-ńìn	í- ⁺ dép	á-ńìn	ì- ⁺ néí	We buy
	2PL	è-ńì	é-lép	ń-dùfò	è- ⁺ dép	ń-bùfò	è- ⁺ néí	You (pl.) buy
	3PL	è-mâ	é-lép	á-mmò	é- ⁺ dép	é-mmò	é- ⁺ néí	They buy

These few examples give some indication of the range and nature of retentions of what must once have been a functioning system of noun classification and agreement in Lower Cross. Further evidence and argument for this is available in Connell (1987).

5. Nominal classification and agreement in Usaghade

5.1. Nominal form classes

Usaghade nominal form (NF) classes are given in Table 2 with the allomorph(s) of each, their number category, and a sample noun for each. Number can be either singular (SG), plural (PL) or neutral (NTR), ‘neutral’ being those nouns which do not alternate prefixes and are typically non-count, denoting liquids or abstract qualities, or denoting items that are commonly referred to in a non-count sense, such as *ɨ́-kúndì* ‘beans’. Nominal form prefixes have no inherent tone, but rather bear the same tone as the stem. The semantic make-up of classes is typically heterogeneous, the most homogeneous being that for [+human] nouns.

NF	Allomorphs	Number	Examples
U-	u-	SG	ú-fàŋ ‘leaf’
		NTR	ú-núŋ ‘salt’
O-	o-, ɔ-	SG	ɔ-wóm ‘person’; ó-wá ‘dog’
		PL	ó-díáŋà ‘curse’
		NTR	ó-bûn ‘dust’
E-	e-, ɛ-	SG	é-kép ‘navel’
		PL	é-wóm ‘people’
		NTR	é-móŋ ‘water’
I-	i-	SG	í-náp ‘dream’
		PL	í-wá ‘dog’
		NTR	í-mòm ‘laughter’
A-	a-	PL	á-nèm ‘tongue’
		NTR	à-jóŋ ‘sky’
N-	m-, n-, ŋ-	PL	ń-só ‘face’
		NTR	ɨ́-kúndì ‘beans’

Table 2: Usaghade nominal form classes.

5.2. Deriflection classes

Deriflection classes (DERF) are singular–plural pairings of nouns according to their NF prefix; these are sometimes referred to as ‘genders’ in the literature (see Güldemann & Fielder 2019 for discussion). The term ‘gender’ here is reserved for groupings of nouns according to their agreement pattern, i.e. agreement classes (AGR), as is also found in the older literature. Ten DERF classes are found in Usaghade, the pairings shown in Figure 3.¹⁴

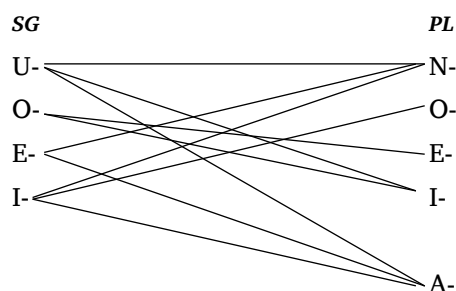


Figure 3: Usaghade deriflection classes

5.3. Agreement in Usaghade

Agreement in Usaghade exists between a head noun and dependent demonstratives, numerals, relatives, associatives, adjectives and subject–verb agreement. It is alliterative agreement: the AGR prefix is a copy of the NF prefix, both segmentally and tonally. While its possible exceptions may exist, there are no counterexamples in the available data. The genders (pairings of AGR markers) mirror the DERF classes shown in Figure 3 and there are thus ten GEND identified in Usaghade: u-/N-; u-/i-; u-/a-; o-/e-; o-/i-; e-/N-; e-/a-; i-/N-; i-/O-; and i-/a-. Examples from GEND o-/i- are given in (5–10). NF prefixes are in uppercase, as in Table 2, AGR prefixes are in lower case.

(5) DEM

- a. *ó-wá* *ó-ké*
 O-dog o-DEM
 ‘That dog.’

¹⁴ Four other pairings are present in the data, represented by just one word each. These are ‘inquorate classes’ (Corbett 1991: 170); their status as DERF (and GEND) is uncertain and in any case not relevant to the present discussion.

- b. *í-wá* *í-ké*
 I-dog i-DEM
 'Those dogs.'

(6) NUM

- a. *ó-wá* *tjén*
 O-dog -one
 'One dog.'
- b. *í-wá* *í-bà*
 I-dog i-two
 'Two dogs.'

(7) REL

- a. *ó-wá* *ó-nò* *ó-ká-dì-nè*
 O-dog o-REL o-PST-came-x
 'The dog who came.'
- b. *í-wá* *í-nò* *í-ká-dì-nè*
 I-dog i-REL o-PST-came-x
 'The dogs who came.'

(8) POSS

- a. *ó-wá* *ó-sè*
 O-dog o-POSS
 'The dog's' / 'of the dog.'
- b. *í-wá* *í-sè*
 I-dog i-POSS
 'The dogs' / 'of the dogs.'

(9) ADJ

- a. *ó-βíè* *ó-wà*
 o-short O-dog
 'The short dog.'
- b. *í-βíè* *í-wà*
 i-short I-dog
 'The short dogs.'

(10) s-v

- a. *ó-wá* *ó-dí*
 O-dog o-come
 ‘The dog came.’
 í-wá *í-dí*
 I-dog i-come
 ‘The dogs came.’

Figure 4 shows the relationship between NF prefixes and AGR prefixes, which is consistently alliterative.

<i>NF</i>	<i>AGR</i>
U- _____	u-
O- _____	{o-, ɔ-}
E- _____	{e-, ɛ-}
I- _____	i-
A- _____	a-
N- _____	{m-, n-, ŋ-, ɲ-}

Figure 4: Relationship between NF and AGR prefixes in Usaghade.

5.4. Summary

Summarizing, the system of noun classification and agreement found in Usaghade is typical of those found elsewhere in East Benue-Congo, in that a system of alternating prefixes, encoding singular or plural found on nouns and their dependent elements allows the grouping of nouns into different classes. Usaghade has six NF classes, nine DERF classes and nine genders.

6. Nominal classification and agreement in Londo

Noun classification and agreement in Londo is described in some detail in Kuperus (1985), which follows a form of analysis traditionally used in describing Bantu languages: nouns are grouped into genders following three criteria: first, the form of AGR (concord) prefixes; second, the form of noun prefixes (NF) and, third, the singular-plural class pairings. The NF of Londo are given below.

6.1. Nominal form classes in Londo

Londo nominal form (NF) classes are given in Table 3, with the main allomorph(s) of each, the number, SG, PL, or NTR, and an example of each. The class number they have with respect to usual practice in Bantu studies practice is included. Nominal form prefixes in Londo all bear Low tone, as is usual in Bantu languages, though the L surfaces as High when conditioned by a floating H tone associated with the stem. The semantics of categories are typically heterogeneous.

NF	Allomorphs	Number	Bantu Class
MO-	mò, m̀	SG	1, 3
∅	∅	SG	1a
BA-	bà	PL	2
ME-	mè, m̀	PL	4
DI-	dì	SG	5
MA-	mà	PL, NTR	6
E-	è, è̀	SG	7
BE-	bè, b̀	PL	8
N-	ḡ	SG, PL	9, 10
DO-	dò, d̀	SG	11
BO-	bò, b̀	PL	14
O-	ò, ò̀	SG	17
A-	à	SG	17a
I-	ì	SG	19

Table 3: Londo nominal form classes.

6.2. Londo Deriflection Classes

Singular-plural pairings of Londo nouns as DERF classes are given for Londo in Figure 5. Londo has 10 DERF classes, most of which are simple one-to-one pairings.

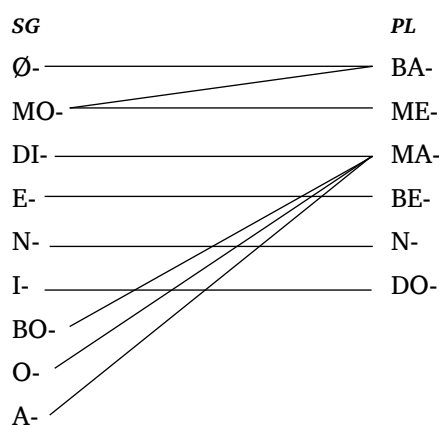


Figure 5: Deriflection classes in Londo.

6.3. Agreement in Londo

Agreement in Londo is present between a head noun and words modifying the noun, marked by a prefix.

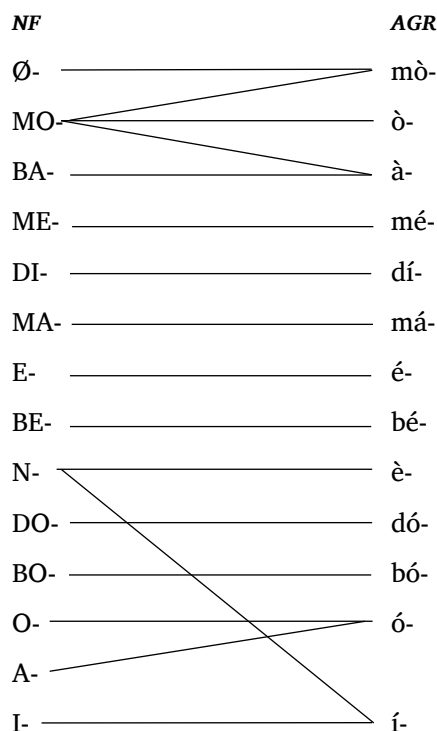


Figure 6: The relationship between NF and AGR prefixes in Londo.

Following Kuperus (1985), word classes subject to agreement are: demonstratives; 3rd person pronouns; adjectives; numerals one to five (one is considered an adjective); demonstratives; possessives; the ‘concording conjunctive’ ‘that’; and verbs (i.e. subject - verb agreement). Here I omit details found in Kuperus not germane to the present discussion. The NF prefixes and corresponding AGR prefixes are set out in Figure 6. It is apparent from the pairings shown here that there is a substantial amount of alliterative agreement but the agreement system is not strictly alliterative.

7. Similarities and differences between Usaghade and Londo

A comparison of the two systems, that of Usaghade and of Londo, shows that beyond the basic characteristics of such systems the two have little in common. The most striking similarity may be the extent to which the two show alliterative agreement,

however even in this the match is far from perfect. Agreement in Usaghade, as far as our data show, is consistently alliterative (Figure 4); Londo, on the other hand, despite being substantially alliterative, is not entirely so. Beyond this, the differences between the two systems are far more striking. Usaghade has six *NF* classes (Table 2), Londo fourteen (Table 3); five of the six in Usaghade are *V-*, the other is *N-*, while those of Londo include eight *CV-* prefixes. There are nine *DERF* classes in Usaghade, ten in Londo; the pairings that comprise these classes have only limited commonality across the two languages.

8. Whence nominal classification and agreement in Usaghade?

Given the extent of decay of nominal classification in Lower Cross, with the exception of Usaghade, and the contribution of Londo speakers to the formation of Usaghade outlined above (§2.3), the question arises whether the fully functioning system found in Usaghade is borrowed, i.e. a result of convergence with Londo in particular, or perhaps with other neighboring Bantu languages also contributing. The comparison given in the previous section shows this cannot be the case. The details of systems found in neighboring Bantu languages have not been examined, but if Usaghade speakers did not adopt this characteristic from Londo, whose speakers comprise a part of the make-up of Usaghade, it seems highly improbable they would have adopted it from a third source. One might also wonder whether contact with an Upper Cross language – Durop is in the immediate vicinity – may have had an influence, but without going into detail here it can be said many of the differences here parallel those just described in the comparison with Londo (see Connell 2021). Rather, when comparing Usaghade with the vestiges present in other Lower Cross languages, the system of Usaghade seems to be in a state of ‘arrested erosion’. Among the *NF* prefixes of Usaghade, as mentioned, we find no *CV-* prefixes, unlike in Londo (and other Bantu languages) or Durop (and other Upper Cross languages), but this is true throughout Lower Cross, though the *NF* prefixes can be associated with *CV-* prefixes; at least some are apparent reflexes of Proto Benue-Congo noun class prefixes (Connell 1987)). As noted (§4.2), there are *SG-PL* pairings among a small percentage of nouns in *Qrɔ* that point to seven former *DERF* classes in that language; the match between these and those of Usaghade is shown below in (11).

(11) <i>Qrɔ</i>	u-/N-	u-/i-	u-/a-	o-/i-	o-/e-	i-/N-	e-/N-	–	–
Usaghade	u-/N-	u-/i-	u-/a-	o-/i-	o-/e-	i-/N-	e-/N-	e-/a-	i-/a-

Examination of the content of each of these DERF classes would establish more conclusively their genealogical relationship, but the fact of the correspondences, together with other evidence indicating a genealogical relationship between the two languages, is strong evidence that the Usaghade system is an inherited, not borrowed, one. The one area where Londo may have influenced the Usaghade system is that both have alliterative agreement, whereas it is uncertain what form agreement took earlier in Lower Cross.

9. Other aspects of Usaghade inflectional morphology

The evidence for the origin of nominal classification and agreement in Usaghade as presented in the preceding section is reasonably convincing and the system cannot be attributed to convergence through contact with Londo or other language. There are at least two other aspects of Usaghade morphology that deviate from the Lower Cross canon. The available data are limited and therefore discussion and conclusions are tentative. These have to do with the encoding of tense and/or aspect distinctions and an apparent system of verb classification.

9.1. Temporal marking in Usaghade

Usaghade differs from other Lower Cross languages with respect to encoding temporal distinctions. In all Lower Cross languages for which temporal marking has been discussed (Welmers 1966 for Efik; Essien 1990a,b for Ibibio; Aaron 1994, Faraclas 1984, and Rowland-Oke 2003 for Obolo; Kuperus 1978 for Ọrọ), the relevant constituent, whether a tense or aspect marker, is pre-verbal. In Usaghade these are in some cases marked post-verbally, as examples 12-16 illustrate. The relevant tense/aspect markers and associated verbs are indicated in bold. With the exception of the FUT marker in (16) they are considered cognate, though whether this is the case is not critical; it is the position of the temporal marking constituent relative to the verb that is of importance. Whether a given constituent encodes tense or aspect is of potential importance, but determining this is difficult given the insufficient data available for a detailed analysis of temporal reference in Usaghade, and that these categories are not always as clearcut as the literature would have it. Distinguishing tense and aspect in Ibibio, to which Usaghade is compared in these examples, is not always a straightforward matter; Essien for example variously refers to the prefix *mé-*, (*mí-* in 14b), as a present tense marker (1990a), or marking proximate past and perfect (1990b, 1991). The contradiction is only apparent however, and may be seen as reflecting the difficulty in distinguishing these categories.

(12)

a. Usaghade

ń- **kú** **má** ó-ńwà̀n
 1SG see PFV woman

b. Ibibio

ń- **màá-kíd** áwóńwá̀n
 1sg PFV see woman
 ‘I saw the woman.’

(13)

a. Usaghade

̀n-súá ̀n-nià̀n è-kè é-βè ó- **ká-** **bá**
 year four mother 3PL.POSS 3PL.AGR PST die

b. Ibibio

̀i-súá ̀i-nà̀n è-kà á-mm̀ ò- **ké-** **kpá**
 year four see 3PL.POSS 3PL.AGR PST die
 ‘Their mother died four years ago.’

(14)

a. Usaghade

í- **mí-** **kú** ú-tín
 3PL PRF/PRS see sun

b. Ibibio

é- **mí-** **kíd** útín
 3PL PRF/PRS see sun
 ‘They see the sun.’

(15)

a. Usaghade

ó- **yíré** sé é-móń ké ú-dûm
 3SG bathe HAB water PREP stream

b. Ibibio

á- **sí-** **yíè** ì-dém ké í-dûm
 3SG HAB bathe body PREP stream
 ‘She bathes at the stream.’

(16)

a. Usaghade

é-wóm é- í- kǎ
men 3PL FUT go

b. Ibibio

ídên é- yâ- é- kǎ
men 3PL FUT.PROX 3PL go

‘The men will go.’

In (12), what is analyzed as a PFV marker is pre-verbal in Ibibio¹⁵, but post-verbal in Usaghade, and similarly in (15) the HAB marker is pre-verbal in Ibibio, but post-verbal in Usaghade. However in (13), the PST marker is in both languages pre-verbal, and similarly in (14) what might plausibly be analyzed as a PRS marker is pre-verbal and in (16) the FUT marker is preverbal. This suggests that what are tentatively analyzed as aspect markers have undergone a shift in Usaghade, from pre- to post-verbal. However, assuming this is the case, the question arises as to whether this shift is due to influence from Londo. Kuperus (1985: 145) provides the flectional template in (17) to characterize the structure of the Londo verbal complex, showing aspect may be marked both pre-verbally and post-verbally.

(17)	Mood	Person	Polarity	Time/ Aspect	Lexical Core	Aspect Suffix	Aspect/ Mood FV	Plur
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Kuperus identifies three markers in Londo, *-mò-*, *-mó-* and *-má-*, as indicating past reference and which occur in the time/aspect slot. Elements occurring in this slot which are referred to as aspect markers are *-ne-* (durative) and *-kèndé-*, *-kèé-*, and *-kà-*, which are indicative of motion, either direct or abstract. The lone aspectual suffix mentioned in Kuperus is *-àk-* referred to as a durative suffix. On the basis of this evidence, it is difficult to argue that the shift from pre- to post-verbal position for aspect markers, if this is indeed what they are, is a result of influence from Londo. The root cause of the change remains unclear.

¹⁵ Essien (1991) refers to it as a past tense marker but elsewhere (1990) treats it as PFV.

9.2. Verb classes in Usaghade

One further characteristic in which Usaghade differs from other Lower Cross languages also has to do with verbal suffixes, but again insufficient data are available to determine their status. Verbs may be grouped into four classes according to the suffix assigned, whether *-sé*, *-dà*, *-já*, or a zero suffix, *-Ø*. Of these, *-sé* defines the largest class (approximately 53% of verbs in the database), followed by *-Ø* (32%), *-dá* (9%) and *-jà* (6.5%). They appear to mark imperatives, though the available data are insufficient to assert this with confidence. The data include only very few instances of imperatives, though for these one of the suffixes is present. Otherwise, they appear only in the wordlist, and not in any sentential examples which are all in the indicative. Further data collection, not possible to this point, would resolve the issue. The important point however is that there are no corresponding forms present in any of the much better studied Lower Cross languages for which grammars or description of the verb phrase are available (e.g. *Ibibio*, Essien 1990b; *Obolo*, Faraclas 1984; *Orò*, Kuperus 1978), nor are they known to occur in Upper Cross and so it seems unlikely they are retentions in Usaghade. On the other hand, there is also no obvious source for them in *Londo*, where the mood-marking Final Vowel (see (17), above) is *-é*, *-è*, so they cannot be considered to be due to convergence/contact.

10. Evidence of contact leading to convergence

10.1. Lexical borrowings in Usaghade

Thus far this paper has examined characteristics of Usaghade which are conceivably a result of contact leading to convergence, though they have proved not to be. However, in situations of language contact, lexical borrowing is a default expectation, so we turn now to look for convergence in the area of the lexicon. When examining the lexicon of Usaghade, aspects of its history should be borne in mind (see §2). That is, there are at least three possible sources of Usaghade vocabulary: inherited vocabulary, vocabulary possibly borrowed through contact with neighboring Upper Cross languages before the migration to the coast, and borrowing of vocabulary from adjacent Bantu languages after arriving at their current coastal location some centuries ago. The database for the present discussion comprises some 550 glosses

collected for all Lower Cross languages known at the time. Upper Cross material is from unpublished wordlists collected by Jan Sterk, and Londo material from Kuperus (1985). The overlap between the different sources is considerably less than the 550 glosses available for Lower Cross. Sterk's Upper Cross wordlists are based on 400 glosses. Kuperus' Londo-English lexicon is considerably longer but still there are many words in the Lower Cross set that are not found there. A lexicostatistical analysis using a subset of these words (a Swadesh basic vocabulary list) was conducted and presented in Connell & Maison (1994); a similar analysis using a different set of core vocabulary is in Connell (to appear). In both studies, Usaghade is seen to share approximately 65% – 70% cognates with other Lower Cross languages. In other words, as many as 30% – 35 % are potential borrowings. Of these a portion are of apparent Bantu origin while others maybe Cross River (i.e. Upper Cross). Yet others are of uncertain provenance. Table 4 presents words in Usaghade that appear to be of Bantu origin though not all are attested in Londo, possible cognates are found in nearby Bantu languages suggestive either of gaps in the Londo data or contact with these languages.

So, at least a small number of lexical items in Usaghade can be attributed to contact, either with Londo or other neighboring Bantu languages. Most of these can be attributed to the migrating Usaghade finding themselves in a new environment.

11. Discussion

Usaghade differs from other Lower Cross languages with respect to its morphology in at least three interesting ways: in its nominal morphology, there is a functioning noun classification and agreement system, whereas in other Lower Cross there remain only remnants of an earlier system. In its verbal morphology, Usaghade marks at least some temporal distinctions post-verbally while elsewhere in Lower Cross all temporal distinctions are encoded pre-verbally. Usaghade also has a form of verb classification, marked suffixally, which has no parallel among other Lower Cross languages; the precise function of these suffixes is as yet unclear.

I considered the possibility that one or other of these characteristics arose in Usaghade through contact, most probably with Londo, given that a village of Londo

	Usaghade	Londo	Comment
beans	-kúh̄dì	-kóndì	PLC kótì
bone	-síp	-sé	The relation to Londo -sé is unclear; the Usaghade term may be cognate with Ibibio ásíp, 'tendon, vein'
cocoyam	-sónj	-sòngú	PLC *í-kpòŋ; cognates are not known elsewhere in CR.
compound	-wǎtʃè	-wóká	The Londo term refers to a temporary house on a farm; as k > tʃ is a regular development in Usaghade this is plausible as a borrowing.
cut (v.)	bì	-bè-	Londo 'cut meat'; one of very few verbs that may be a borrowing.
farm	-tʃá		Cognate forms are not found in CR, nor does the Londo form look cognate though possible cognates exist in other NW Bantu, e.g. the Manenguba cluster; PM *-jàg (Hedinger 1987)
friend	-kóró	-kódó	Cognate forms are not found in CR
hat	-kpòtó		Not available for Londo; cf. PM*-bòtV (Hedinger 1987)
heart	-bùmá		a Londo form is not available but nearby Bantu have -bùm 'stomach'; PM *-bùm (Hedinger 1987)
pepper	-dàh̄dúnj		No known cognate in LC; not available for Londo, but cf -dój in other nearby Bantu; PM *-dój (Hedinger 1987)
slave	ò-βúnàŋ	-φà	The Usaghade form is a compound, the first element of which appears cognate with the Londo form.

Table 4: Lexical borrowings in Usaghade from Londo or other Bantu languages.

speakers formed part of the nascent Usaghade community. However, as was shown, Londo differs from Usaghade in each of these three characteristics. Despite its having a noun classification and agreement system which is at least broadly speaking typologically similar, the Londo system shows considerable formal difference with that of Usaghade, making it improbable that Usaghade acquired or rebuilt its system through contact-induced convergence. On the other hand, it is plausible, even likely, that the presence of a noun class system in Londo and other neighboring languages

with which the Usaghade community interacted closely, served to help stabilize and maintain the existing system in Usaghade. That is, noun class/agreement systems are essentially an areal phenomenon in the region and this served to buttress and maintain its use in Usaghade.

The origin of the two characteristics of verbal morphology, the order of tense-aspect markers relative to the verb and the seeming verb classification system, in which Usaghade differs from the Lower Cross canon remains unclear. There is no evidence to date that suggests the post-verbal marking of certain temporal relations is retained from Proto-Lower Cross, and while it is not uncommon in the broader Bantoid region to find aspect marked post-verbally, this is not the case in Londo (or, as far as is known, other Bantu languages of the region) and so this too cannot convincingly be attributed to contact-induced convergence. Likewise, with no Londo equivalent or even near-equivalent to the verbal suffixes found Usaghade, it is difficult to attribute this characteristic to convergence. How, then, to account for these changes? Post-verbal marking of aspect is not uncommon and a shift of temporal encoding to a post-verbal position might somehow be seen as a natural development; nevertheless, some form of mediating factor would be expected and none, at present is available. Indeed, it is a *prima facie* instance of divergence and though there is no evidence now to suggest it is a result of deliberate manipulation, one might question whether divergence needs always to be deliberate in the sense of the examples of divergence presented in §1.

If one accepts that the developments in Usaghade reflect, in one case, the third possibility proposed at the outset of this paper, that contact in some circumstances can lend stability to features already present in a language, and in another case possible contact-induced divergence, it is still worth noting that convergence is also evident in Usaghade, at least in its lexicon, with several borrowings from Londo in evidence in the relatively small lexical database available to this study.

12. Conclusions: Usaghade and theories of morphological change in contact settings

The aim of this work has been to reach an understanding of the forces that have shaped Usaghade and made it different from other Lower Cross languages. The results and their interpretation presented here contribute to our understanding of the

maintenance of stability, in addition to convergence and divergence, as an outcome of language contact and are consistent with the view presented in Braunmüller et al. (2014), that all three outcomes are associated with contact and may indeed be present within the same contact setting.

At the same time, the conclusions reached are of interest to a theory of morphological change in situations of language contact. Bound morphology has frequently been considered, though not without debate, resistant to borrowing; Thomason and Kaufman (1988) provide a summary of this debate which tends to the view of its being resistant, though they also offer counter examples. Among the counter examples they cite is one from Thomason's own work, on Ma'a (Mbugu) (Thomason 1983), which is suggested to show the opposite, Bantu bound morphology (viz. the noun class system) having been borrowed into a Cushitic language. However Mous (2001), in his more detailed work mentioned in the introduction, argues for a different analysis and asserts that borrowing "cannot explain the present-day situation" (2001: 299). Mous is even more categorical in a general statement: "The Bantu (or Niger-Congo) noun class system is in its form unique in the world. It is never borrowed by other languages... it is hardly ever enriched" (2001: 298). The evidence presented here, that the system of nominal classification and agreement that exists in Usaghade has not been borrowed, substantiates Mous's view and lends further support to the view that bound morphology is resistant to borrowing. However, the claim that noun class systems are not borrowed does not preclude the possibility that their widespread presence areally provides a setting where they are, in a sense, mutually supporting; i.e. in the present case causing the system of Usaghade to be stabilized.

In short, the evidence from Usaghade suggests three possible influences in situations of language contact: convergence and divergence, as well as a third possibility, the stabilization or maintenance of existing features of a language.

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Abbreviations

1 = 1st person	FUT = future	NTR = neutral
2 = 2nd person	FUT.PROX = proximate future	PFV = perfective
3 = 3rd person	GEND = gender	PRF = perfect
ADJ = adjective	HAB = habitual	PL = plural
AGR = agreement (marker)	IMP = imperative	POSS = possessive
DERF = deriflection	NF = nominal form	REL = relative
FV = final vowel	NUM = number	SG = singular

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CONTACT

bconnell@yorku.ca