

## NOUN CLASS AND CONCORD IN IVIE

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Ivie (North Ibie), a dialect cluster of Northern Edoid, is a Kwa language displaying characteristics of a nominal class system. The language does not, however, fall within the main stream Bantu nominal class system of Guthrie's type of analysis. In Ivie, the noun structurally comprises a class prefix and the base lexeme. In the complex noun phrase it displays a system of syntactic concord and pronominal references that go with the noun such as demonstratives, anaphorics and others. In this way such marking for number, animacy/inanimacy and even augmentativeness/ diminutiveness is ensured.

L'ivie (l'ibie du nord), l'un des groupes de dialecte de Edoid du nord appartient au groupe de langues Kwa qui manifestent un système de traits de classe nominale. Néanmoins, la langue ne compte pas, d'après l'analyse Guthrie, parmi celle des systèmes de classe nominale des branches principales bantou. En Ivie, le nom comprend structuralement une classe préfixale et la racine lexicale. Dans un syntagme nominale complexe, il manifeste un système d'accord syntaxique et des références pronominales tels que les démonstratifs, les anaphoriques et autres qui accompagnent le nom. De cette façon de tels marqueurs de nombre, de la distinction animé/inanimé et même de l'accroissement/diminutivité sont assurées.

## 0. INTRODUCTION

Ivie, one of the dialect clusters of the language referred to by Diedrich Westermann (1952) as Kukuruku and by Laver (1969) as Etsako is another example of an Edoid Language of the Kwa languages that operates a noun class system plus class concord. More recently these languages have been referred to as Edoid (Elugbe, 1980). Though much reliance is based on Hedinger's work on Akoose as well as Guthrie's work on Bantu, it must be remarked here that Ivie has no traces of belonging to the mainstream Bantu noun class system - hence our pattern of numbering has not conformed strictly to Guthrie's classic work. Some further light was shed on the analysis by Elugbe's 'Noun class vestiges in Degema'.

## 1. THE NOUN CLASSES

Ivie can be classified as a language with thirteen noun classes. In the table below, the noun class prefixes and their concordial morphemes are presented. While prefixes are distinctive for most nouns, concord marking has distinctiveness in number as well as animacy/inanimacy selection.

TABLE 1  
NOUN PREFIXES AND CONCORDIAL MORPHEMES

NOUN CLASS	PREFIXES							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 u	óní/óní	óní..òná	ó..égbòlì	ó..ò	ó	úwí	ò	nó
2 i	éni	éni..èná	é..égbéwè	é..wè	é/í	iyé..wè	è	né
3 o/o	óní/óní	óní..òná	ó..égbòlì	ó..ò	ó	úwí	ò	nó/ná
4 e	éni	éni..íná	é..égbéwè	wè	é	iyéwè	è	né/ná
5 o	óní	óní..òná	ó..égbòlì	ó..ò	ó	úwí	ò	nó/ná
6 a	éni	éni..èná/èyò	é..égbéwè	é..wè	ó	iyé..wè	è	né
7 e	óní	óní..òná/òyò	ó..égbòlì	ó..ò	ó	iyí	ò	né/ná
8 a	óní	óní..òná/òyò	ó..égbòlì	ó..ò	ó	úwí	ò	nó/né/a
9 a	óní	óní..òná/òyò	ó..égbòlì	ó..ò	ó	úwí	ò	nó/né/nó
10 o	óní	óní..òná/òyò	ó..égbòlì	ó..ò	ó	úwí	ò	nó/né
11 e	óní	óní..òná/òyò	ó..égbòlì	ó..ò	ó	úwí	ò	nó
12 i	éni	éni..èná/èyò	é..égbéwè	é..wè	é	iyí	è	nó
13i/a/o	óní	óní..òná/òyò	é..égbòlì	ó..ò	ó	úwí	ò	nó

Note: The vowels following the column of numerals indicate the prefixes of the nouns. In columns 2,3 and 4 the dotted lines indicate discontinuous elements that go together e.g. **óni atasa ona** 'this plate'. **ò lélé égbòlì** 'he deceived himself.' In column 6 the morphemes are not discontinuous but must take an object e.g. **úwí ò (úw'ò)** 'his own'; **iyé wè** 'their own'.

The numbers in the columns above refer as follows:

1. concord marker for definite as in **óní ùkákwi** 'the spoon'.
2. demonstratives as in **óní ùkákwi òná** 'this spoon' **óní ùkákwi óyò** 'that spoon'.
3. Pronominal marker for the emphatic and reflexive as in **ùbèné ò gbé égbòlì á** 'the gourd breaks itself'. **Iògbò è gbé égbéwè á** 'the people kill themselves'.
4. Subject and object pronouns (respectively 1st and 2nd elements) e.g. **ò twé ànhè gyí ò** 'He takes water to him'.
5. The numerical concord prefix marker as **ùtèkù ógwò** 'one chair' **iògbò àvá/ásè** 'two persons, three persons'.
6. The associative marker as in **ùgóbò úwí ùtsèdè** 'the handle of the pot' **èdé iyí ikpòtsò** 'clothes of the women'.
7. Pre-verbal pronominal prefix or word e.g. **óní òdé ò tí** 'the cloth it is good'. **éni èdé ètí** 'the cloths are good'.

8. Relativising element as in *òdé nó dé* 'the cloth that he bought' *òdé né dé* 'the clothes that they bought'.

The noun classes have been established on the usual criteria, viz:

- (a) The noun prefixes.
- (b) The presence of a specific set of concord markers.
- (c) Where applicable, the existence of gender or singular/plural pairing.

It is on these basic criteria that the thirteen noun classes have been established. Note that there are seeming discrepancies in Class 1, 3, 4, 6, 8 and 9. The allomorphic variants have been sub-classified as sub-classes within the basic classes. Fuller explanation follows as each class is described.

## 2. THE NOUN PREFIX

In this section each of the classes is discussed in numerical order. Since it is possible within the same class to have allomorphs as variant prefixes, the dominant form or variant is identified as the basic prefix for the class.

### 2.1 CLASS I

/u-/ precedes consonantal initial stems. The class comprises predominantly inanimates. It is a productive class since by a process of diminutivisation other nouns can be transferred to the class. Thus for example 'kp' for the diminutive can be infixated between the prefix u- and the main word to give a derived word as in *óbò* 'hand' *ù-kp-óbò* 'fingers'. By a process of reduplication of the bound morphemic element (which incidentally is a specifying element) one has a derivation of partitiveness as in *okyemi o-kye-* 'slice' *emi* 'yam', *u-kye-kyemi emi* 'slice of yam'. Thus there is within this class an amorphous grouping of diminutives and partitive elements. Examples:

1. *ù-káfùe* 'shell fish spoon'  
*ù-tsèdè* 'big pot for cooking'  
*ù-gbà* 'thorn'  
*ù-bènè* 'gourd'
2. Diminutives: *ù-kp-ówè* 'toe'  
*ù-kp-ó-bò* 'finger'  
*ù-kp-ù-bú kò* 'small cup'

Class 1a: The nominal prefix /u-/ not only cooccurs with the nominal stem but also with specifiers. Such specifiers go with nouns as their headwords in the nominal group. Examples:

3. Specifiers: *ù-dzàdzàmi* 'foolish'  
*ù-kákpí* 'stupid'  
*ù-kúkù* 'small'
4. Partitives: *ù-bèbèmi* 'splinter of'  
*ù-kúlí* 'bundle of'  
*ù-kyékyèmi* 'slice of'

## 2.2 CLASS II

/i-/ precedes the consonantal initial stem. The semantic content of this class is varied; there is both animacy and inanimacy. It also has nouns with mass and count usage. Examples:

5. ì-kpòtsò	'women'	í-dzíbó	'pineapples'
ì-gùmà	'slaves'	ì-kafùè	'shellfish spoon'
í-gyédè	'hunters'	ì-tsèdè	'big pot for cooking'
í-tjie	'peppers'		

Note that both animate and inanimate have a common plural morpheme. In their singular form, their concord markers are differentiated for the animacy and inanimacy distinction. There is a minimally productive bound morphemic element *ɪŋvi* 'offspring of or children of'. Plurals of the group diminutives and partitives are:

6.	í-bébèmi
	í-kyékyèmi
	í-kpàmi

Following the Bantu system, the plural class is the next higher class but our classification is strictly on the criteria stated earlier i.e. noun prefix, sameness of plural concord marker and gender.

## 2.3 CLASS III

/ɔ/, /o-/

/ɔ/ precedes consonant initial stems. In most cases these nouns indicate humans.

/o/ precedes consonant initial stems. They indicate other animates or a few human and generic terms for all animates as in *óŋvi* 'child of'. Examples:

7. ó-mòsè	'man'	ò-gùmà	'slave'
ó-mò	'child'	ò-dzi	'rat'
ó-bò	'native doctor'	ó-ŋvi	'child of'

Note that there are some derived nouns. Thus the base form of the verb *pfiólémí* 'tell a lie', or *kpòkyí* 'cut first' is prefixed by /ɔ/ to give the agentive noun form.

8.	ò-pfiólémí
	ò-kpòkyí
	ò-yishèmi

## 2.4 CLASS IV

/e-/ precedes consonantal initial stems. Examples:

9. é-mòsè	'men'	é-mì	'yams'
é-bò	'native doctors'	é-làmhi	'goats'
é-gbò	'witches'	é-tò	'pubic hairs'

This class is a plural gender.

## 2.5 CLASS V

/o-/ This is a small class of body parts constituting gender with class VI:

- |                     |              |
|---------------------|--------------|
| 10. óbò             | 'hand'       |
| òwè                 | 'foot'       |
| óbùd <sub>3</sub> í | 'buttock(s)' |

## 2.6 CLASS VI

/a-/ Examples:

- |          |         |                      |            |
|----------|---------|----------------------|------------|
| 11. á-bò | 'hands' | à-kò                 | 'teeth'    |
| à-wè     | 'feet'  | á-bìd <sub>3</sub> í | 'buttocks' |

This class is quite limited and comprises only body parts.

## 2.7 CLASS VII

/e/ precedes consonant initial stems. Examples:

- |        |         |      |         |
|--------|---------|------|---------|
| è-luè  | 'eye'   | étjè | 'stone' |
| è-kwì  | 'tooth' | è-dè | 'clan'  |
| è-kóbò | 'palm'  |      |         |

## 2.8 CLASS VIII

/a-/ precedes consonant initial stems. Examples:

- |             |              |          |             |
|-------------|--------------|----------|-------------|
| 13. à-kàchí | 'horse'      | à-tsètsè | 'hedgehog'  |
| á-fèé       | 'fish'       | á-guí    | 'vulture'   |
| á-kábú      | 'chimpanzee' | á-kòkì   | 'cameleon'  |
| à-nyàkà     | 'fox'        | à-wè     | 'partridge' |

## 2.9 CLASS IX

/a-/ same as VI above but unlike VI the concord marking affix is different i.e. in the demonstrative ònà instead of ònà. Examples:

- |          |         |         |             |
|----------|---------|---------|-------------|
| 14. à-gà | 'net'   | á-chè   | 'pepper'    |
| á-kpàmi  | 'barn'  | á-khè   | 'pot'       |
| à-tásá   | 'plate' | à-gbòlí | 'pen knife' |

## 2.10 CLASS X

/o-/ precedes consonant initial stems. Examples:

- |          |         |         |                    |
|----------|---------|---------|--------------------|
| 15. ó-dè | 'road'  | ó-gwà   | 'forest'           |
| órè      | 'plant' | ó-khà   | 'silk cotton tree' |
| ò-chí    | 'spear' | ò-khémé | 'laziness'         |

On the basis of a common concord marker, the /o-/ and /o/ prefixes have been assigned the same noun class.

## 2.11 CLASS XI

/e-/ precedes consonant initial stems. This class is predominantly without plural/singular distinction. Examples:

16. èkè	'earth'	è-wòlì	'smoke'
é-kphà	'ceiling'	è-kpàmi	'cheek(s)'
è-khàshè	'sand'	è-bwì	'grass'
è-nwè	'ashes'		

## 2.12 CLASS XII

/i-/ precedes consonant initial stem. Examples:

17. ì-mà tò	'charm for seeing beyond the ordinary'
í-bòmì	'foretelling future'
ì-bíshìèlémí	'hatred'
í-sàmì	'thinking'
í-zèmì	'strength'
í-nàmì	'running'

## 2.13 CLASS XIII

/i-/, /a-/, /o/ precede consonant initial stem. Examples:

18. í-tfíkù	'rubbish dump'	à-tàlìmì	'burial ground'
í-shèmì	'farm'	ògbá	'garden'

Though the noun prefixes differ, we consider them allomorphic variants and group them as a class because semantically they are locatives and also have the same concord marker. A peculiarity of the group is a lack of plural formation for some of them.

## 3. THE NOUN GENDERS

## 3.1 DOUBLE AND SINGLE CLASS GENDERS

Most noun classes are paired for the singular and the plural. This pairing is referred to as gender; some nouns, especially the mass or non-countable ones cannot be so paired and therefore have their membership restricted to one class.

TABLE 2

Singular	Plural
1, 1A	2
3	4
5	6
7	
8, 8a	?
9	
10	
11	
12	
13	

The gender system can be seen from the above table. The column to the left constitutes the singular while that to the right is the plural or double. Classes 2 and 4 are the most widely used plural gender. The nouns in class 9 have gender pairings with some nouns in Class 2 and 4.

TABLE 3

DOUBLE CLASS GENDERS			SINGLE CLASS GENDERS		
Gender	No. of Nouns	Percentage	Gender	No. of Nouns	Percentage
1,1a/2	72	26.0	10	6	12.8
3/2	79	28.2			
3/4	14	5.4	11	33	70.2
5/6	4	1.4	12	8	17.0
7/4	7	2.5			
7/2	10	3.6			
8/2	50	18.1			
9/4	24	8.7			
9/2	15	5.4			
13/2	2	0.7			
TOTAL	277	100%		47	100%
GRAND TOTAL		324			

Note that the percentages for double class and single class genders are worked on respective column totals.

From the above table the following observations can be made:

- i. Over 85.5% of the nouns in our sample belong to the double class gender.
- ii. Of these, numbers 1,1a/2,5/6 and to a lesser extent 3/2 and 7/2 are the most typical of this group of genders.
- iii. The single class genders are relatively limited, and constitute only about 14.5% of our total sample i.e.

$$\frac{47}{277+47} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

The double class nouns constitute 85.4% of our sample.

### 3.2 THE SEMANTICS OF NOUN GENDERS

Unlike the classic Bantu Noun Classes that may have had a semantic classification of nouns, Ivie nouns portray no clear semantic classification. Rather, some general features are observable:

1. Most human referents occur in classes II and III.
2. Paired body parts occur in V and VI. It is not a productive class.
3. Abstract nouns - mostly of infinitive formation - occur in class XII whereas locatives occur in class XIII.
4. Many animals occur in class VIII.

5. Most other classes are mixed including objects, plants etc.

### Double Class Genders

Presented below are examples of double class gender:

Gender 1,1a/2 u-, i-:

19.	ù-káfuè	ì-káfuè	'shellfish spoon(s)'
	ù-tsèdè	ì-tsèdè	'cooking pot(s)'
	ù-gùgù	ì-gùgù	'shell(s)'
	ù-wúkó	ì-wúkó	'he-goat(s)'

Gender 3/2 o, i-:

20.	ó-móshì	í-móshì	'girl(s)'
	ó-suè	í-suè	'lazy one(s)'
	ó-dùmí	ì-dùmí	'hyena(s)'
	ózuòdè	í-zuòdè	'married woman(women)'

Gender 3/4 o-, e-:

21.	óbè	ébè	'enemy(ies)'
	ógbò	égbò	'witch(es)'
	ógò	égò	'inlaw(s)'
	òkpà	èkpà	'cock(s)'

Gender 5/6 o-, a-:

22.	òwè	àwè	'foot(feet)'
	óbò	ábò	'hand(s)'
	óbùd <sub>3</sub> í	ábùd <sub>3</sub> í	'buttocks'

Gender 7/4 e-, e-:

23.	èkwè	èkwè	'shoe(s)'
	échè	échè	'stone(s)'
	èná	èná	'cow(s)'
	élàmì	élàmì	'animal(s)'

Gender 7/2 e-, i-:

24.	évwà	ívwà	'grass cutter(s)'
	èwè	íwè	'kolanut'
	èkpè	íkpè	'gift/prize'
	èghè	ìghè	'buffalo'
	èká	ìká	'coral beads'

Gender 7/6 e-, a-:

25.	èkuè	àkò	'tooth(teeth)'
	èluè	àlò	'eye(s)'

Gender 8/2 a-, i-:

26.	àkàchí	ìkàchí	'horse(s)'
	ávávà	ívávà	'mosquito(es)'
	áviórhè	íviórhè	'cassava(s)'
	àkpá	ìkpá	'lamp(s)'

Gender 8/4 a-, e-:

27. àwẹ èwẹ 'partridge(s)'

Gender 9/2 o-, i-:

28. òchí ìchí 'spear'  
 òtsàkà ìtsàka 'trousers'  
 òbèkó ìbèkó 'hooked stick for plucking'  
 òkhémé ìkhémé 'laziness'

Gender 9/4 o-, e-:

29. ó-vià é-vià 'yam(s)'  
 ówà é-wà 'house(s)'  
 ó-dẹ é-dẹ 'road(s)'  
 òdé èdé 'cloth(s)'

#### The Single Class Genders:

Gender 11 e-:

30. émúgbè 'potato(es)' édè 'grey hairs'  
 éshilé '(beans)' édzò 'elders'  
 èkàshẹ 'sound' ènwẹ 'ashes'  
 èvọlì 'smoke' àmẹ 'water'

Gender 12 i-: These are made of infinitive constructions.

31. íbóh 'destiny' igólí 'loving'  
 ísàmi 'thinking' òshító 'sitting'  
 ízèmi 'strength' ípfọmí 'sluggishness'  
 ínàmi 'running' ìpfuìnùwá 'saying the taboo'

Gender 13 i-, a-, o-: This class comprises locative terms such as:

32. ìtsíkù 'rubbish dumping ground'  
 íshèmi 'farm'  
 àtálimì 'burial ground'  
 átèkhẹ 'quarry'

#### 4. THE CONCORD MORPHEMES

In table 1 the following concord prefixes were enumerated, viz, the demonstrative, the personal pronoun (emphatic and object forms) and the relative pronoun. In this section of the paper, the distribution of these sets of concord markers will be discussed.

##### 4.1 PERSONAL PRONOUN: Object Forms

The following object forms of the personal pronouns are attested:

	<u>Singular</u>		<u>Plural</u>	
1st person	mhẹ	'me'	éyẹ	'us'
2nd person	gyè/e	'you'	vẹ	
3rd person	ọ	'him/her'	wẹ	

These forms display concord marking in sentences such as these:

- |       |                         |                     |
|-------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 33.a. | Jè àmẹ́ kú éní érhẹ́    | -Jè àmẹ́ kú wẹ́     |
|       | Pour water on the trees | -Pour water on them |
| b.    | Jè àmẹ́ kú óní órhẹ́    | -Jè àmẹ́ kú ọ́      |
|       | Pour water on the plant | -Pour water on it   |
| c.    | Jè àmẹ́ gyí éní ísùmà   | -Jè àmẹ́ ná wẹ́     |
|       | Give water to the sheep | -Give water to them |
| d.    | Jè àmẹ́ gyí ọ́ní ósùmà  | -Jè àmẹ́ ghí ọ́     |
|       | Take water to the sheep | -Take water to it   |

Concord distinction at this level is in the third person and most marked with singular/plural number distinction.

#### 4.2 RELATIVE CONSTRUCTION

The relativiser in the language is *na* which encliticises with the pronominal referent. This therefore calls for concord marking. Example:

- |       |  |
|-------|--|
| 34.a. | órhẹ́ n'ó dé (three + relativiser + pn + verb) |
|       | 'tree that fell'                               |
| b.    | àwóshí n'ọ́ dé (dog + relativiser + pn + verb) |
|       | 'dog that fell'                                |
| c.    | érhẹ́ n'í dé (trees + relativiser + pn + verb) |
|       | trees that fell                                |
| d.    | iwóshí n'é dé (dogs + relativiser + pn + verb) |
|       | dogs that fell                                 |

In the sentences a, b, c, d, there is concord marking for inanimacy/animacy distinction - in *n'ó* and *n'ọ́* respectively. These distinctions are neutralised for plurality of reference, hence c. *n'í* and d. *n'é*.

#### 4.3 DEMONSTRATIVES

Four groups of demonstratives are distinguishable, viz:

- |      |                |              |            |                        |
|------|----------------|--------------|------------|------------------------|
| (a)I | ònà            | 'this one'   | ọ́yọ́      | 'that one' (animacy)   |
| II   | ònà            | 'this one'   | ọ̀yọ́      | 'that one' (inanimacy) |
| e.g. | òní àwóshí ònà | 'this dog'   |            |                        |
|      | óní órhẹ́ ònà  | 'this tree'  |            |                        |
| (b)I | óní..ònà       | 'this here'  | óní..ọ́yọ́ | 'that there' (animacy) |
| II   | óní..ònà       |              | óní..ọ̀yọ́ | (inanimacy)            |
| (c)  | ènà            | 'these'      | éyọ́       | 'those'                |
| (d)  | éni - ènà      | 'these here' | éni - éyọ́ | 'those there'          |

In set (a) demonstratives we have órhẹ́ ònà 'this tree'  
àwóshí ònà 'this dog'.

In set (b) the demonstratives are discontinuous. Thus we say:

óní órhẹ ònà 'this tree here'  
 ọní àvoshí ọnà 'this dog here'

In set (c) we have érhẹ ènà 'these trees'  
 iwóshí ènà 'these dogs'

In set (d) we have éní érhẹ ènà 'these trees here'  
 éní iwoshí ènà 'these dogs here'  
 éní érhẹ éyọ 'those trees there'  
 éní iwoshí éyọ 'those dogs there'

There is an animacy/inanimacy distinction with demonstratives. This is, however, neutralised in the case of plurals.

The other areas of concordial relationship that need mention are the pre-verbal pronominal element, the associative markers and prefixes of qualifiers.

#### 4.4 THE PRE-VERBAL PRONOMINAL ELEMENT.

- 35.a. úkpókyámè ọ á bàlè 'My friend is coming'  
 friend my he is coming
- b. óní órhẹ ò á tuà 'The wood is burning'  
 The wood it is burning
- c. éní íviè è á bálè 'The children are coming'  
 The children they are coming

There is anaphoric relationship between ọ and úkpókyámè (animate singular noun), /o/ and orhe (inanimate singular noun) and /e/, a plural pronoun with animacy/inanimacy distinction neutralised.

#### 4.5 THE ASSOCIATIVE MARKER

The associative marker marks a relationship between two nouns. It is marked in Ivié by the use of a lexical item úwí 'singular' íyí 'plural' or a zero morpheme which operates through a phonological conditioning of the tone of the second noun viz a regressive assimilation of the last syllable of the vowel of the first noun into the first syllable of the second noun with a consequent heightening of the last tone of the last syllable of the first noun into a high tone of the first syllable of the second noun.

36. úkòmhí égbhẹ úkhómhí égbẹ 'knee or head of knee'  
 úgwà évwà úgwá évwà 'bone of grass cutter'  
 ótà ówà ót'ówà 'house rent'  
 ùlùlù àwẹ úlúl'awẹ 'partridge's feather'

#### 4.6 LEXICALISED ASSOCIATIVE MARKER

37. àwùlú úwí óbá 'Oba's shirt'  
 àpfié úwí ògjiè 'King's house'  
 èdè íyí óbá 'Oba's clothes'

There does not seem to be any class restriction in the selection of associative marker. The associative marker operates also between pronominal referents as in *úwíọ̀lì* 'his own' *iyí ọ̀ lì* 'his own, plural possessed element' *úw'éwè* 'their own, singular possessed element' *iy'éwè* 'their own, plural possessed element'

#### 4.7 NUMERICAL CONCORD MARKER

In a linguistic context, when numerical reference to a noun is involved, the animacy/inanimacy distinction is present. Thus one says *ébé ọ̀gwò* 'one book' but *ómòsé ọ̀gwò* 'a man', *émòsé àv́á* 'two men', *íkhè èv́á* 'two pots'. *iògbò àv́á*, *iògbò ásè*, *iògbò ànè*, *iògbò óshè*, *iògbò òtiàlì*, 'two men, three men, four men, five men, nine men' respectively; but *itàsá èv́á*, *itàsá ésè*, *itàsá ènè*, *itàsá íshè*, *itàsá itílì*, 'two plates, three plates, four plates, five plates'.

The vowel changes for the animacy/inanimacy distinction here need further research, but it is not the main thrust of the present paper.

#### 4.8 REFLEXIVE MARKER

38. *àtásá ò gbé égbòlì á* 'The plate breaks itself'  
*Pétèr ọ̀ gbé égbòlì á* 'Peter kills himself.'  
*èní émòsé è gbé égbéwè á* 'The men kill themselves.'  
*èní itásá è gbé égbéwè á* 'The plates break themselves'

The preverbal pronouns (*o*, *ọ̀*, *e*, *ẹ̀*), functioning also anaphorically, are in concord with their antecedent nouns. Besides, the bound morphemic elements *ọ̀* in *egbòlì*, and *wẹ̀* in *egbéwẹ̀* mark respectively singular/plural reference. Note that the initial concord marker *e* for the plural neutralises the animacy/inanimacy distinction in plural contexts.

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