

## An Overview of Noun Class System in Isanzu (Bantu, Central Tanzania)

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This study presents the outcomes of a short linguistic fieldwork on a Bantu lect Isanzu (F31B) that is spoken in the north central Tanzania. According to the *Ethnologue* database Isanzu is a threatened language (6b) because of the relatively small number of speakers (26 000) and the low intergenerational transmission. Data collection aimed at basic description of phonetics and morphology. Method used to achieve this goal consists of translational elicitation of the 207-item Swadesh list, H. Batibo’s questionnaire on Bantu morphosyntax as well as of recording and transcribing narratives (fairy tales and a “Pear story”). The analyses of data show that Isanzu noun class system comprises 15 agreement classes that are summarized in the table 1.

<i>Class</i>	<i>Prefix</i>	<i>Example</i>	<i>Adj. conc.</i>	<i>Poss.</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Object</i>	<i>Proximal dem.</i>
1	mo	monho ‘person’	mo	wa	ya	mo	oyo
2	a	anhu ‘people’	a	a	a	wa	awa
3	mo	mote ‘tree’	o	wa	o	o	owo
4	me	mete ‘tress’	me	a	e	e	eye
5	i	ije ‘egg’	i	la	la	la	ere
5a	lo/ro	lodigi ‘rope’	lo	la	lo	lo	oro
6	ma	maje ‘eggs’	ma	a	a	ma	aya
7	ke	kenho	ke	ka	ke	ke	eke
9	N	m-boli	N	i	i	i	eye
10	N	m-boli	N	ya	i	i	izi
11	lo	lwala ‘disease’	o	wa	o	o	owo
13	ka	kanamburi ‘small goat’	ka	ka	ka	ka	aka
15	ko	kong’wa ‘drinking’	ko	kwa	ko	ko	oko
16	po	opole ‘there is’	pa	pa	pa	pa	apa
17	ko	okole ‘there is’	ko	kwa	ko	ko	oko
18	mo	omole ‘there is’	mo	mwa	mo	mo	omo

**Table 1: Isanzu Noun Class System**

Noun prefixes with /o/ are augmented with *o*, other noun prefixes are augmented with *e*.

Classes 1/2 include people. Animals that are usually marked with class 9/10 prefixes may take agreement markers of class 1/2, especially in narratives when they act as characters.

Classes 3/4 are reserved for plants.

Classes 5/6 include body parts, food, common objects and liquids. Class 5a is peculiar because of its special morphology. Instead of *i* it uses prefix *lo* with the allomorph *ro* when preceded by the pre-prefix *o*.

Class 7 includes things, names of languages and body parts. Class 7 nouns form plural forms with the class 6, 10 prefixes (lodigi CL5a – ndigi CL10).

Classes 9/10 contain common objects, names of animals and fruits. The noun and adjectival prefixes of this classes consist of homorganic nasal that adjusts its place of articulation to that of the following sound (mburi ‘goat/s’ < N+buri [+bilabial], nharanga ‘peanut/s’ < N+karanga

[+alveolar]).

Class 11 contains abstract nouns. Class 13 contains diminutives. Class 15 contains substantivized infinitives.

Classes 16, 17, 18 are locative classes and are employed to express spatial meanings (16 – being somewhere in an unknown place, 17 – being somewhere in a known place, 18 – being inside).

Classes 8, 12, 14 are not attested in our data.

The presented noun class system shows typical features of Easter Bantu noun class systems. However the interesting observation is the absence of the classes 8 and 14 which results in redistribution of the lexical items characteristic for these classes into other classes (10 and 11 accordingly).