

Plurality in Anaang Language

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ABSTRACT

Human knowledge of an entity at any point in time always has underneath it the concept of number because of the possibility of using the entity in speech or writing. The act of counting and having ‘one’ or ‘more than one’ entity as reference in speech or writing is a common phenomenon in the use of language. In concrete situations, every language user finds himself tending to express number or talking about ‘one’ or ‘more than one’ entity. Number is indispensable in the use of language. Entities that constitute the subject and, or object in sentences often occur in singular or plural form and languages grammaticalise the concept differently. Proper reference to entities in number is essential in constructing a grammatical sentence. This paper investigates plural marking in Anaang language. The Anaang language is one of the Lower Cross languages under the Delta Cross in the New Benue Congo family. The data for the study were collected from naturally occurring language recorded from native speakers of Anaang language during a fieldwork. The study used Lexical morphology and Aronof’s (1976) Unitary Base Hypothesis (UBH). The study reveals that Anaang language pluralizes entities through vowel alternation at the initial and at the medial positions, zero morpheme and through stem change, among other processes.

Key Words: Anaang, language, nominal, plural and singular

INTRODUCTION

Plural marking presents a complex area of grammar and it varies in languages because of the divergent structure of languages. The variations are the consequences of the different grammatical rules that govern different languages and the linguistic background of the speakers. Some of the processes of plural marking are productive because they introduce new word forms into the vocabulary of the language through different morphological processes. Morphology, according to Agbedo (2000), is the study of ‘word forms’. It studies the internal structure of words and the processes of word formation. The process of plural formation as observed in some other languages illustrated in the examples below exhibits some processes of affixation among others. The concept of plural is often associated with entities which occur in “more than one” quantity and form in languages. Count nouns do not just occur singly without its “more than one” form. When they occur in ‘more than one’ form, there are strategies that may be peculiar to the language that are adopted to yield the forms. They are so marked grammatically in the language and the processes have been observed to yield the new form. Each language has devised strategies to refer to a single entity and the “more than one” as well, while speaking or writing. (Crystal 2003) says that the English language has both the singular and the plural forms and demonstrates the difference between “one” and “more than one” using the plural suffixes which include –s, -es, and -ves among others depending on word endings as in the following examples:

1. Tree –trees,
2. Bridge – bridges,

3. Wife –wives.

There are other instances where the form merely changes structurally as in:

4. Man- men,

5. Goose – geese,

6. Mouse – mice.

Also, there are others with the zero morpheme method where the input and the output retain the same form as in

7. Sheep – sheep,

8. Salmon – salmon,

9. Chinese – Chinese.

In this case, both the plural and the singular forms do not look different from each other, but have semantic/number difference. Therefore, it can be inferred that a language can employ more than one strategy to mark plurality.

It is worth remarking here that the same stem-changing processes have also been observed in the Hausa language as illustrated in examples 10 – 11 below:

10. Fari farare ‘white’

11. Gida gidaye ‘house’

Nouns are essential components of grammatical sentences in languages because they constitute the subject and/or the object of sentences. The subject or object can occur in singular or in ‘more than one’ (plural) form. The plural form of entities are derived from the singular form through word-formation processes. Word formation processes in language can involve the transformation of one representation into another either through affixation, movement, insertion or deletion of an element under certain conditions that result in structural change. The processes vary between languages but conform to the grammatical (morphological and syntactic) rules which are applicable in the language. The output is often a new form that can belong to a different category that performs a grammatical function that is different from the input. One of such grammatical functions is plural marking. Plural marking is a basic feature in the grammar of many languages in the world. Some of the processes use already existing elements in the language. Examples are the English and Hausa languages that employ class-maintaining derivational affixes to mark plurality overtly by creating new forms of the same words using inflectional suffixes as earlier illustrated. There are other instances where new forms of word can be created from elements that do not exist in the language through borrowing and loan-blend. These processes are not productive in word formation because both take words from another language and fix in the vocabulary of the recipient language to form a part of the lexicon of the language. They do not have any multiplier effect on the number of the entity or an already existing words in the language but an addition to the language’s lexicon. Udoh, Anyanwu and Osuagwu (2019) say that borrowing is simply the process of taking words from one or more languages to fit into the vocabulary of another. Few examples in English include:

12. alcohol (borrowed from Arabic);

13. zebra (borrowed from Bantu).

New forms of words in a language can maintain the same class with the input while others can change. Some new forms of words created in languages mark plurality. Etim and Udodata (2019) say that words carry meaning unlike phonemes and syllables which are simply elements of sound constructed as needed and then discarded. Words are fundamental building blocks of communication and are permanently stored in a speaker's mental dictionary or lexicon for use as the need arises. The forms for the singular and the processes for the formation of the 'more than one' form are familiar to the speakers. This article examines plural marking in nominal in Anaang language to identify the processes involved and the plural morphemes.

Etu (2018) avers that just like the concept of number, plural seems to be present in every language. She further avers that counting is an indispensable phenomenon in language. But Everett (2005) says that Piraha language has no words for numerals at all. The language has no singular – plural morph. Frank, Everett, Fedorenko and Gibson (2008) further emphasize that Piraha has no linguistic method of expressing any exact quantity, even one. It can be inferred therefore, while the concepts of number and plurality seem to be universal, there are languages that do not have morphological markers for this phenomenon in their grammatical constructions. Therefore, there are languages that lack plural marking strategies. That is, the languages have no morphological forms for representing the distinction between 'one' and 'more than one'.

Our aims are to demonstrate the synthetic nature of Anaang language to increase linguistic attention given to the language as well as increase the availability of literacy material. The study also investigates how plural forms in nominal in Anaang are obtained and the possible alternating segments. The study is significant because it gives a clearer picture of the composition of the plural forms of most subjects and objects in sentences in Anaang, as the product of morphological operations. Unitary Base Hypothesis (UBH) becomes handy in this analysis. The Hypothesis states that syntactically or semantically defined base form of words always allow word formation operation that can lead to the formation of new forms of words. The affixations to the base form of nouns in Anaang language can yield new grammatical forms.

1.1 The concept of plurality and Perception:

The word 'plural' comes from the old French word "plurel" derived from the Latin word 'pluralis' which means 'concerning many'. Rotge (2009) says that in the word 'plural', there is evidence of the word "plus" signifying more. Therefore, plural suggests that we are dealing with many or 'more than one'. The concept is more relative to singular. It encompasses anything beyond one to infinity. Apart from numerals which act as modifiers that attribute the sense of quantity or number to noun phrases, plurality can be marked by other strategies. Counting gives the countable entity the attribute of number or quantity by addressing the question of "how many" whenever number is in focus. The indispensability of plural marking is obvious when the measurable properties of a countable entity is being considered. It is important for many reasons one of which is the concord the subject has to mark with some other components of the sentence for grammatical reasons.

According to Carnie (2007), plural refers to the quantity of an entity. The definition suggests the measurable properties of a thing that gives clarity of number which may be considered to be the prominent character in question. This is distinct from other modifying qualities like colour, shape, size, etc of the entity. Crystal (2007) avers that plurality refers to the grammatical category used for the analysis of word classes displaying such contrast as singular, plural etc. Bradbury (1992) asserts that plural is the term used for a noun, pronoun, determiner or verb when it refers to two or more people, things or groups. He further states that the term 'plural' implies consisting of more than one person or thing or different kinds of people or things. According to Collins A-Z online dictionary of English, plural is defined as "a grammatical number category referring to two or more items or units". Therefore, the concept of plural implies consisting more than one, but the 'number concept' is differently denoted in languages by the speakers of the different languages when they are speaking.

Plurality is perceived differently in languages. In English, any other digit or numeral whether it is a whole

number or not, that occurs alongside another digit like 1 indicates plurality. The English noun phrase (NP) ‘*1.5 kilometers*’ is realized in the plural form, but realized in French as a singular NP – ‘*1.5 kilomètre*’. It implies that a decimal fraction below ‘1’ if added to a singular whole subject or object, can trigger plurality. The English language expressions 0.5 kilometers, is grammatically justified by the presence of the fraction – “*.5*”, but semantically it should be treated as singular as it is treated in French – 0.5 kilomètre, because it is synonymous with ‘half’. Rotge (2009) says that singular in French goes from 1 to 1.999 In English, the singular is restricted to 1 and does not include 0.9 (which corresponds to “*0 – nought*”. More than one in English includes any fraction added to one. Croft (2003) defines English plural to mean “*more than one*”. Just as there are differences in the perception of plurality as illustrated between English and French, so are the marking strategies in different languages; (even languages that belong to the same family). This paper investigates how the speakers of Anaang language denote “more than one” subject in the language.

The concept “Anaang”

The word “Anaang” refers to an ethnic group and the language spoken by the group in the North-western part of Akwa Ibom State in South-south geo-political zone of Nigeria. Anaang language is one of the Lower Cross languages under the Delta Cross in the New Benue Congo family. Anaang is one of the three major ethnic groups in Akwa Ibom State. The Anaang people are found in eight (08) of the thirty-one local government areas in Akwa Ibom State, thus making them the second largest ethnic group in the state. According to Udondata (2006), the Anaang speaking area occupies a total land mass of 2.37 square kilometers. But relying on the 2006 national population information, the people are about 1.1 million. The Anaang area is bounded on the North by Ngwa (Igbo speaking group) in Abia State, on the West by Bonny people in Rivers State, and on the South and North-east by the Ibibio-speaking areas of Akwa Ibom state. The Anaang speaking Local Government Areas include Abak, Etim Ekpo, Ikot Ekpene, Oruk Anam, Essien Udim, Ika, Obot Akara and Ukanafun. Figure 1 below is the linguistic geography of Akwa Ibom showing the Anaang speaking areas (marked with yellow colour).

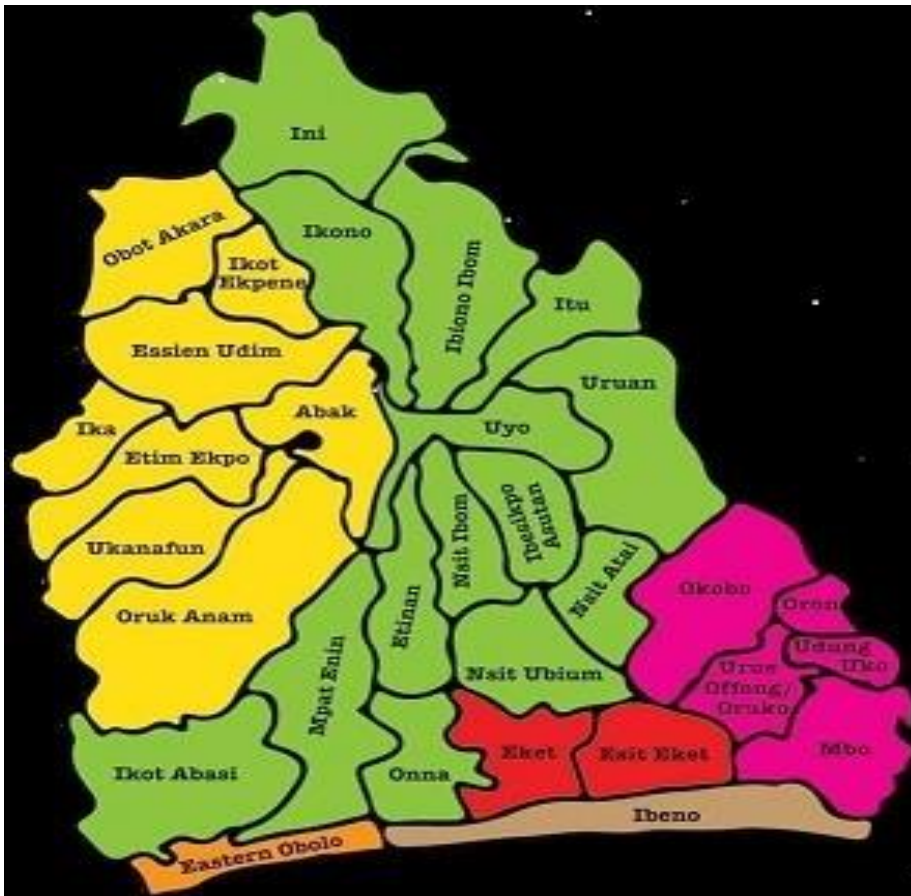


Fig.1: Linguistic Map of Akwa Ibom State showing Anaang speaking area.

Excerpt from Akproko247 Magazine in www.google.com

Nominal:

Nominal, according to Crystal (2003), is a descriptive term used as a substitute for a noun or a noun phrase (NP) in some grammatical models. The expression is equivalent to a single word subject or object. Eka (1977) asserts that 'a nominal is a word or a group of words that can serve as a substitute for a noun in an utterance. The term nominal also refers to a category used to group together nouns and adjectives based on shared properties. The other elements in the group might have suggested Napoli's (1996) definition of the nominal as a noun with or without a paraphernalia. A one word utterance may not just be a noun but a noun phrase. Ndimele (2003) says that a nominal refers to all the words which can be found in all positions designated for substantive nouns or pronouns. Etu (2018) says that nominals refer to words which have some of the attributes of nouns but not all. One of such similarities is the syntactic occurrence as the subject or object of a sentence, despite that it may have more than one word. A nominal may differ structurally from a noun but acts as one syntactically. For example, the English word:

14. "The *wise* are accepted".

15. "The society celebrates the *wise*".

16. *The society celebrates the wisers.

The word '*wise*' functions as a noun both as the subject in 13 and as the object in 14 respectively. But it cannot accept any plural morpheme in its structure in the circumstance. Therefore, 15 is ungrammatical. A group of words which represents an entity can also be described as nominal. For example, the group of words in 16 below:

"The young American army colonel who was sitting on the bench...",

can be understood as a nominal group. The whole stretch can occupy the position of one word (a noun or a pronoun) and function as the subject. Silas (2008) says that a nominal is a noun or a pronoun equivalent ... or a multiple-word subject or object in a sentence. A noun phrase has an obligatory head and other paraphernalia that give more specifics about the noun head (NH) as illustrated in 16 above. The words "young, American, army and sitting" give specific details about the Noun Head (NH) – "**colonel**".

The different processes for plural marking and the morphemes in Anaang nominals are the concerns of this study. The data for this work were obtained from primary sources during our field work. Some noun phrase expressions showing singular and plural forms were recorded from native speakers, specifically those who reside in Nkwot Ikot Ebo, Ibio Nung Achat and Obong Ntak villages in Etim Ekpo Local Government Area (which are some of the Anaang speaking areas). The methodology for this study are Lexical morphology and Aronof (1976) Unitary Base Hypothesis (UBH).

Plural marking in selected languages

In the discussions below, we take an overview of how plural is marked in some selected languages. Dryer (2011) observes that there are two basic ways of plural marking. The first way involves changing the morphological form of the noun as in English "*king to kings*", "*goose to geese*", "*house to houses*", etc. The other instance is where plural is marked by reduplicating the stem. Depending on which part of the stem that is reduplicated, the process can be described as either prefixation (if the initial segment of the stem is reduplicated), or suffixation (if the final segment of the stem is reduplicated). Guided by the views expressed by Dryer 2011, we have illustrated below the processes of stem change in Hausa language as

observed by Udoh, Anyanwu and Osuagwu, (2019):

Stem Change in Hausa:

17. Fari Farare ‘white’
18. Gida Gidaye ‘house’

In Hawaiian language, Campbell (1985) illustrates plural marking through prefixing as illustrated in examples 19 (a – b) below:

Reduplication (prefixation) in Hawaiian language

19. (a) rayis **rahrayis** root
- (b) tukat **tuhtukat** spider

From the data above, plural marking is achieved through the reduplication of the initial syllable and the insertion of /h/. The reduplicated segment carries the measurable property of the item described. A similar process has also been observed in Ilocano language spoken in the Philippine as illustrated in 20(a – e) below:

Reduplication (prefixation) in Ilocano language

20. (a) úlo **ulúlo** head
- (b) dálan **daldálan** road
- (c) múla **mulmúla** plant

Wiltschko (2016) identifies the following processes – reduplication, infixation and ablaut (alternation), in Halkomelem language as illustrated in the examples in 21 (a – c) below: Halkomelen language is an Amerindian language spoken in British Columbia and Washington (www.jstor.org/stable).

Prefixation (in Halkomelen)

- 21 (a) méle **mámele** child

Infixation (in Halkomelen)

- (b) q’ámi **q’alemi** girl

Ablaut (in Halkomelen)

- (c) Swiweles **Swóweles** boy

Udo (2003) discusses a case of complete reduplication to mark plurality in Legbo language, an Upper Cross language in Cross River State, Nigeria. The adjective modifying the nominal reduplicates itself to pluralize the noun head. See the illustration in (d) below:

- (d) léttòl ggwénè **léttòl ggwénè ggwénè** white head

This same process has been observed in Papago – Pima language spoken in Southern Arizona in USA and in Sonora in Mexico where plural in nouns is marked through complete reduplication as shown in the example

in (j) below:

(e) gogs **goggogs** dog

There are other languages that use a morpheme that occurs elsewhere outside the noun head expression to mark plurality as illustrated in the data below from Hawaiian. The word *mau* (in 'f') has the same function as the plural suffix "s" in English. The *mau* occurs in isolation as a separate word from the head which it modifies. See the example below:

(f) **iamauia** many fishes

From the data drawn from Hawaiian and Halkomelen languages, a language can employ more than one method to mark plural in nominals. The Hawaiian employs prefixation and a plural marker that occurs elsewhere outside the noun head while Halkomelen employs reduplication, infixation and segmental alternation or ablaut for plural marking.

Another method of plural marking is the zero morpheme method. Mela-Athanasopoulou (2009) discusses the zero morpheme process as a word formation process which causes a change of category ... without any modification of the input word that serves as the base. It is a null morpheme. Etu (2018) discusses plural marking in nouns in Kohumono, an Upper-Cross language spoken predominantly in Abi Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria and identifies vowel alternation, prefixation processes, among others as shown in the examples in (22) below.

Vowel alternation (in Kohumono)

/u/ → /i/

- (a) Ûpá ìpá calabash
- (b) ùbèd ìbèd room
- (c) ùsà ìsà road

/o/ → /i/

- (d) Ókpó íkpo cap/hat
- (e) Òkpókòró íkpókòró table
- (f) Òzà ízá

/e/ → /a/

- (g) Rètá ràtà rope
- (h) Rèhòn ràhòn mat
- (i) Réjè ràjè day

The 'ba' prefixation (in Kohumono)

- (a) Gwa **ba-gwa** woman

- (b) Òróm **ba-òróm/bàróm** man
- (c) Óbó **ba-óbó/bàbó** doctor.

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA IN ANAANG

The presentation in this section discusses the different processes of marking plural in Anaang language. Some of the processes discussed in the work include zero morpheme, segment alternation, prefixation, suffixation and lengthening.

Zero morpheme

Zero morpheme affixation changes the word category without any structural modification of the structure of the input. The morpheme that triggers the change is a null morpheme. The input and the output remain alike. Some examples of the process in Anaang are listed below:

Plural marking with zero morphemes in Anaang

- (a) M̀kpáráfìong M̀kpáráfìong a piece of broken earthen pot
- (b) Á̀làn á̀làn oil
- (c) Ǹnùwè ǹnùwè (eatable) termite
- (d) Ǹtántàáfìong ǹtántàáfìong

Segmental alternation

Segments can alternate to mark plural in Anaang. The alternation can occur initially. In the examples that follow, the lowcentral vowel /a/ alternates with a high back vowel /u/, and with the syllabic nasal /ñ/ and /m/ at different instances to yield plural outputs of their respective inputs.

Alternation from /a/ to /u/

- (a) À̀báíkpa ú̀báíkpa lady

Alternation from /a/ to /ñ /

- (b) Á̀kánànwààn ñ̀kánànwààn old woman
- (c) Á̀kánàdèèn ñ̀kánàdèèn old man
- (d) Á̀táà(-ìkọ̀t) ǹtáà(-ìkọ̀t) expert in the bush/hunter

Alternation from /a/ to /m/

- (e) Á̀wìà-ìbọ̀k m̀bià/m̀mià-ìbọ̀k soccerer
- (f) À̀kpàráwà m̀kpàráwà young man
- (g) À̀fíá(-étò) m̀fíá(-étò) white stick/tree

(h) Awiakpo ŕbiakpo (native bone) healer/doctor

More than one process can operate simultaneously to mark plurality in Anaang. Alternation and lengthening can operate simultaneously. In (i) below, the low central vowel /a/ at the initial position alternates with the alveolar nasal consonant /n/ at the initial position and the low central vowel /a/ is also lengthened at the medial position. In (j& k), the mid front vowel /e/ alternates with the bilabial nasal /m/ and further attract the affixes 'kpoon' (as against the singular form 'kpon') and 'bon' respectively as illustrated below:

(i) Àdádàt ásákón ndáádndát ásákón ripe orange

(j) Èkámhá ágwò mkpóón ágwò big person

(k) Étó ádhè étó mbóndhè hose stick/tree

It is possible for the mid front vowel /e/ to alternate with the nasal /n/ to mark plurality in the language. The examples in (l) demonstrate this:

Alternation from /e/ → /n/

(b) Ètok-ajen ntok-ajen child

(c) Ètòkètòk (ètò) ntòkntòk(ètò) small tree/stick.

The illustrations below show that plural marking in an NP in Anaang can be marked by a morpheme that occurs elsewhere in the construction:

(m) Agwo mbon/ulimagwo person/human being

(n) Ibaan mbon/ulim ibaan woman

(o) ideen mbon/ulim ideen men

The plural marker 'mbon' is used in the pre-head position with human entity only. The other 'ulim' can be used for other non-human entities as illustrated below:

(p) akwook ulim akwook bee *mbon akwook

(q) Ñsũñ ulim ñsũñ fly *mbon ñsũñ

(r) Ebok ulim ebok monkey *mbon ebok

In Anaang, demonstratives that act as post-modifiers can pluralize noun head in constructions.

See the examples below are drawn from Silas (2008)

(s) Eto ami Eto mbon this stick/tree

(t) Eto ade Eto Mbonde that stick/tree (far from the speaker only)

(u) Eto Ako Eto Mbonko that stick/tree (far from both the speaker and the hearer.)

CONCLUSION

This article discussed plural marking in nominals in the Anaang language. Plural marking is a common feature in languages, but marked differently. This article established that Anaang mark plurality and also examined some nominal structures in Anaang and the formation of their plural forms using morphological theories and Unitary Base Hypothesis. The findings reveal that plural marking in nominals in Anaang language involve zero morpheme process, segment alternation and prefixation processes. It is also revealed that a plural marker can occur outside the noun head to pluralise the head. The paper further reveals that more than one process can be employed in the formation of plural form in a single nominal. The processes of alternation observed involve alternation between vowels, vowels and nasal consonants, but cannot occur between consonants. There is also a combined process that involves alternation and lengthening. The combination of the low front vowel and nasal is productive in plural marking. Prefixation processes discovered involved syllabic structures like *da* and *bon*. The work can serve as a useful material for pedagogy, language documentation and preservation on Anaang. This study is also a step towards enriching the pool of linguistic material on Anaang as well as development of the language. It is our hope that this study has contributed to the existing literature on Anaang and would serve as a reference point to other researchers. It is therefore recommended that more research be carried out in other areas of Anaang language by an enlarged group of Anaang scholars to develop a curriculum, syllabus and text books. The scholars should also organise seminars/workshops to students and pupils of Anaang origin on the need to speak and communicate in the language. These will help to preserve our cultural artifacts and practices and expose the rich features of the language to the whole world and prevents it from being extinct. The article can also serve as a material for a comparative study with what is obtained in other languages.

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APPENDIX “A”

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is plural marking or plurality in language?
2. How are plural forms of nominal in Anaang language obtained
3. How do the elements that signal plurality in nominal in Anaang occur?
4. At which environments do the plural markers occur in Anaang?
5. What elements constitute the plural markers in Anaang?
6. Is plural formation in Anaang limited to a single process per word?
7. Can more than one process be employed in a single word in the Anaang language?

Data

Data

1. The plural form of some nominals in the Anaang language:

S/No	Singular	Plural	Gloss
1.	Ajen	Nto	baby/child
2.	Ntan (one grain)	Ntan	sand
3.	Akparawa	Mkparawa	boy
4.	Akanawaan	Ñkananwaan	(old) woman
5.	Akanadeen	Ñkanadeen	(old) man
6.	Abaikpa	Ubaikpa	lady
7.	Afia	Mfia	white
8.	Awia ibok	Mbia ibok	sorcerer
9.	Ataikot	Ntaikot	hunter
10.	Adadat	Ndaadndaad	Red (...)
11.	Etok-ajen	Ntok-ajen	child
12.	Akwook	ulim akwook	bee
13.	Ibaan	ulim/mbon ibaan	woman
14.	Ideen	mbon/ulim ideen	man
15.	Íkparáfiong	Íkparáfiong	a piece of broken earthen pot
16.	Nnùwè	nnùwè	(eatable) termite
17.	Ñtàntàáfiong	ntàntàáfiong	star.
18.	Èkámhá ágwò	mkpóón ágwò	big person