Remnants of a noun class system in Bezen (Southern-Jukunoid)

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Abstract

Bezen looks like a typical Benue-Congo noun class language: A rich variety of prefixes adorn its nouns. Contrary to the linguist's expectation, the agreement system does not reflect the high number of nominal prefixes but is reduced to four classes: One singular and three plural classes. The function of the nominal prefixes is not restricted to number-marking, however. They also serve to derive a large array of nouns from verbs and adjectives.

Zusammenfassung

Bezen Nomen sehen wie typische Benue-Kongo Nomen aus, sie bestehen aus einem Präfix, das Singular oder Plural markiert und einer Wurzel. Entgegen aller Erwartungen spiegelt sich die Vielfalt der Präfixe nicht im Konkordanzsystem der Sprache wider: Es sind nur noch vier Klassen von einem ehemals wohl elaborierterem System übrig. Die Funktion der Präfixe ist nicht auf Numerusmarkierung reduziert, sie sind äußerst produktiv bei der Derivation von Nomen.

1. Introduction[1]

<1> Bezen nouns have the typical appearance of Benue-Congo nouns, having a prefix and a root, with one set of prefixes marking singular, the other plural. The prefixes have the form CV- or V-; C can be represented by */k/* or */b/;* V having the form */a/, /i/, /e/, /o/, or /u/*[2]. The root prototypically has the form CVC, but there are also roots bearing the form CV or VC. In the latter case, a consonant loss might be responsible for the syllable-structure. More complex roots, as CVCCVC, CVCVC, or CVCV are assumed to be the result of compounding or associative constructions.

2. Nominal Prefixes

2.1. Morphophonemic processes

<2> Many nouns show a qualitative coherence of the nominal prefix and the root vowel as a result of assimilatory processes that may operate in both directions across morpheme boundaries. That means that in some cases, the prefix vowel can trigger a phonetic change of the root vowel and in other cases, the root vowel triggers an allophonic change of the prefix. And sometimes, the change of a prefix vowel just cannot be explained anymore.

2.1.1. Allomorphy of nominal prefixes

<3> Regressive assimilatory processes, in which the quality of the nominal root vowel influences the prefix vowel, lead to a high allomorphic variety of the latter. One possible assimilation pattern is presented in Table 1, where V represents the plural prefix. While an */a/* in the root triggers an *a-* as the plural prefix

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2   */e/, /o/* and */u/* have the free variants */ɛ/, /ɔ/* and */ʊ/*, respectively. The examples in this paper represent the phonetic realization of Bezen lexemes and utterances.

morpheme, the unrounded vowels /ɨ/ or /i/ lead to an ε- as the plural morpheme. A rounded vowel /u/ in the root triggers the prefix vowel o-. This pattern occurs also occurs with bV- and kV-prefixes. However, it is not universal, and there are many examples that do not show assimilation.

Table 1: Allomorphy of nominal prefixes

V	→	a- / _ Ca(C), e.g. kɨzá / àzá		winnowing tray
V	→	ε- / _ Cɨ(C), e.g. kídɨr / édɨr		sausage tree (Kigelia Africana)
		ε- / _ Ci(C), e.g. kíʃí / éʃí		egg
V	→	o- / _ Cu(C), e.g. kíkúr / ókúr		end

<4> The nominal prefixes additionally show a variation of the prefix vowels /u/ ~ /o/ and /i/ ~ /ε/, which will be considered as allophonic in the following, but is not triggered by the quality of the root vowel. Prischnegg, (2008: 133), who noticed the same phenomenon in Yukuben, proposes that the variation is the result of an assimilatory process, where the underlying prefix vowel /u/ or /i/ merges with a root-initial vowel /a/. However, it is difficult to provide an evidence for such an explanation in Bezen, as there are very few vowel-initial nominal roots left in this language. Shimizu (1980b) also recognizes the variant oo- of the noun class prefix u- in Yukuben, but he does not explain the variation and considers it as an allomorphic phenomenon. Shimizu's reconstructions of Proto-Jukunoid nominal roots and the classes they belonged to (1980b, 1980c) might give a hint to the former class membership of Bezen nouns. Anyhow, in time lexemes might change their class belonging and sometimes different lexical roots are used in Bezen instead of the reconstructed PJ-roots. Thus, the number of corresponding cognates in an original class is quite small. A final explanation for the variation of these prefix vowels cannot be provided here.

2.1.2. Allophonic variation of the root vowel

<5> Furthermore, in many lexemes an allophonic variation of the root vowel can be observed. Depending on the roundedness of the prefix vowel, the root vowel /ɨ/ might change to its allophones /ʏ/, or /ʉ/, respectively, as shown in Table 2. Rounded prefix vowels trigger the realization /ʉ/ of the root vowel, palatalized root-initial consonants trigger the realization /ʏ/, whereas unrounded prefix vowels do not have an effect on the root vowel. This process might also be triggered by bV- and kV-prefixes.

Table 2: Allophonic variation of nominal root vowel

/ɨ/	→	[ʉ, ʏ, ɨ]			
/ɨ/	→	[ʉ] / V$_{[+round]}$C _(C)	e.g.	/ūtɨb / [ūtʉb]	spear
/ɨ/	→	[ʏ] / V$_{[+round]}$Cy_(C)	e.g.	/ùhyɨ̄n / [ùhyʏ̄n]	boundary
		[ʏ] / V$_{[+round]}$y_(C)	e.g.	/ùyɨ́n / [ùyʏ́n]	monkey
/ɨ/	→	[ɨ] / V$_{[-round]}$C_(C)	e.g.	/ītɨb / [ītɨb]	spears
		[ɨ] / V$_{[-round]}$Cy_(C)	e.g.	/ìhyɨ̄n / [ìhyɨ̄n]	boundaries
		[ɨ] / V$_{[-round]}$y_(C)	e.g.	/bèyɨ́n / [bèyɨ́n]	monkeys

Just as with the processes that have been described before, not all nouns adhere to this assimilation patterns and there are many exceptions.

<6> Corresponding SG and PL prefixes bear the same tone in most cases. Therefore, it must be concluded that the prefix tone is prescribed by the tonal value of the root. However, the variety of tonal patterns of the nouns does not allow a conclusion about how exactly the tone of the root influences the prefix tone.

2.2. Singular / Plural pairings

<7> Bezen lacks an elaborate agreement system, and the agreement markers that are left can often be used interchangeably. Therefore, a sharp division of noun classes is not possible anymore. Thus, the singular/ plural pairings will be presented before an elaboration of the agreement system, which will be dealt with in chapter 3. The combination of several SG/PL pairs into one group is partly based on formal criteria as the assimilatory phenomena described above. Furthermore, the Bezen prefixes have been compared with Proto-Benue-Congo (De Wolf 1971) and Proto-Jukunoid (Shimizu 1980a; 1980b) reconstructions. In few cases, a semantic grouping of nouns can be observed with one SG/PL-pair, human beings for example are often denoted by nouns bearing *u-* ~ *o-* / *b*V- prefixes, while animals prefer *i-* ~ *ɛ-* / *b*V-. Liquids are exclusively found with a *b*V- prefix bearing a mid- or a high tone.

2.2.1. *u-* ~ *o-* / *ba-* ~ *bo-*

<8> Six nouns combine the singular prefix *u-* ~ *o-* which bears a mid- or low-tone with a *ba-* plural prefix. Five of the nouns denote human beings (1) – (3) or animals (4) and (5). The lexeme *ùtàr* 'garment', which also allows the plural prefix *i-*, is a semantic exception within this set of nouns. It is not clear, why lexemes (1) – (4) have an *o-* prefix, while (5) has an *u-* in the SG. Shimizu (1980b: 172) reconstructs a class *u-* / *ba-* noun root *ngiT 'person', which seems to be a cognate of the Bezen lexeme.

(1)	*ōkɨ̄b / bākɨ̄b*	woman
(2)	*ōlɨ̄m / bālɨ̄m*	man
(3)	*ōɲɨ̄ / bāɲī*	person
(4)	*òkūn / bàkūn*	antelope
(5)	*ūwāk / bāwāk*	chimpanzee

2.2.2. *u-* ~ *o-* / *bɛ-*

<9> Further nouns that denote human beings appear within the prefixes *u-* / *bɛ-*, as in (6) – (8).

(6)	*ūpí / bɛ̄pí*	slave
(7)	*ūdɨ̄ŋ / bɛ̄dɨŋ*	chief
(8)	*úlɨ́m / bɛ́lɨ́m*	child

<10> Other nouns within this group denote inanimate objects (9), (10).

(9)	*ùtɨ̄k / bɛ̀tɨ̄k*	steep place
(10)	*ɔ́kūn / békūn*	horn

It is arguable, whether a separate group *u-* ~ *o-* / *bɛ-* is justified or whether these prefixes should be considered as a part of the *u-* ~ *o-* / *ba-* ~ *bo-* group. One evidence for a joined *u-* ~ *o-* / *ba-* ~ *bo-* ~ *bɛ-* group would be the lexeme *ūpí* 'slave', for which a class *u-* / *ba-* PJ-root *pyí has been reconstructed by Shimizu (1980b: 10). Considering examples (6) – (8), one could argue that the *bɛ-* PL-prefix is a result of regressive assimilation to an unrounded close front- or central-vowel. However, the nouns in (1) – (3) show the same vowels in the root, but bear a *ba-* PL prefix, for which there is no obvious explanation. Therefore, two different groups have been established here.

2.2.3. *i-* ~ *ɛ-* / *ba-* ~ *bo-*

<11> In Bezen, many nouns denoting animals have the prefix *ì-* ~ *ɛ̀-* in the singular and *bà-* ~ *bò-* prefix in the plural (11) – (15). The quality of the plural prefix vowel is affected by the roundeness of the root

vowel, resulting in *bò-,* when the root vowel is rounded (11) – (12) and in *bà-* when it is unrounded (13) – (15)[3]. *īkáʒim / bā̄-* 'spider' is an exception within this group of nouns, bearing a mid-tone prefix.

(11) *ìkúr / bòkúr*   crocodile
(12) *ìsín / bòsʉ́n*   fowl
(13) *ìhīr / bàhīr*   helmeted guinea fowl
(14) *ìkār / bàkār*   baboon
(15) *ìkāháŋ / bàkāháŋ*   bushfowl

<12> A set of nouns denoting animals have *ɛ̀- / bà-* as prefixes, among them *ɛ̀mʌ̄n* 'goat', *ɛ̀ɛ̀m* 'hippo' and *ɛ̀ɛ̀r* 'buffalo'. A comparison with the closely related languages Yukuben and Kuteb shows that the latter two nouns have lost a root initial glide */y/* in Bezen. Regressive assimilatory processes have led to a lowering of the SG prefix *ì-* to *ɛ̀-* and a change of the root vowel in the plural, triggered by the *bà-* prefix (16). Why *ɛ̀mʌ̄n* 'goat' decided to take *ɛ̀-* as its SG prefix, is not clear.

(16) **Bezen**   **Yukuben**   **Kuteb**

ɛ̀ɛ̀m / bààm   *īyìm / bēyìm*   *ìyém / ìyém*   hippo
                  (Prischnegg 2008: 142) (Koops 2009: 277)

ɛ̀ɛ̀r / bààr   *īyà / bāyà*   *ìyāg / ìyāg*   buffalo
                  (Prischnegg 2008: 141) (Koops 2009: 99)

<13> Five relational nouns bear the prefixes *i- / ba- ~ bo-* with mid-tones in (17) – (19), the lexemes *ìrâ / bàrâ* 'friend' and *ímbār / bámbār* 'sibling' being the only examples with a L-tone or a H-tone.

(17) *īwān / bāwān*   husband
(18) *īwū / bōwū*   wife
(19) *īzīn / bōzʉ̄n*   child/young animals

2.2.4.   *ì- ~ ī- / bɛ̀- ~ bɛ̄-*

<14> Several nouns that denote animals and humans bear the prefixes *ì- ~ ī- / bɛ̀- ~ bɛ̄-* (20) – (25).

(20*)* *ìgbīr / bɛ̀gbīr*   dog
(21)   *ìkyàm / bɛ̀kyàm*   horse
(22)   *ìkyìn / bɛ̀kyìn*   guest
(23)   *īyī / bɛ̄yī*   in-law
(24)   *īmbyɛr / bɛ̄mbyɛr*   mother-in-law
(25)   *ītʃīn / bɛ̄tʃīn*   parent

Here again, it is arguable, whether it would make more sense to combine the two prefix groups *i- ~ ɛ- / ba- ~ bo-* and *ì- ~ ī- / bɛ̀- ~ bɛ̄-* to one, as both groups contain nouns denoting animates. However, considering a joined group, there would be no plausible explanation, why in some cases the plural prefix vowel is */a/,* but in others */e/,* as both vowels co-occur with unrounded root vowels.

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[3]   This rule also applies to the prefixes with a mid- or high-tone.

2.2.5.   Single prefix *ba-*

<15> Several nouns denoting abstract concepts (26) and (27), transnumerals, which can refer to singular or plural objects (28) and (29), and fluids (30), take a *ba-* prefix.

(26)	*bàtīŋ*	thought
(27)	*bàgān*	struggle
(28)	*bātsɨ̄*	mane
(29)	*bàwàn*	farm house roof
(30)	*bátɔ̄k*	wine

2.2.6.   Single prefix *bi- ~ bɛ-*

<16> Other abstract nouns (31) and (32) transnumerals (33) and (34) and fluids (35) and (36) take the prefixes *bi- ~ bɛ-*. Nouns denoting fluids appear exclusively with mid- and high-tone prefixes.

(31)	*bɛ̄ŋmàm*	laziness
(32)	*bɛ̄ɛ̄n*	whistling
(33)	*bìkpōŋ*	forehead
(34)	*bīmám*	bushy end of a tail
(35)	*bɛ̄sɨ̄m*	corn beer
(36)	*bímí*	Water

<17> Two ethnonyms are found with the L-tone prefix *bì-* (37) and (38).

(37)	*bìmām*	Nser
(38)	*bìlàŋ*	Furu-Bana

2.2.7.   Single prefix *bu- ~ bo-*

<18> Further mass nouns (39) and (40) and abstracts (41) and (42) bear the prefix *bu- ~ bo-*.

(39)	*bòmbūtū*	grass sp.
(40)	*būhyùb*	gravel
(41)	*būmīn*	wisdom
(42)	*būhyūm*	illness

One could consider a joint grouping of the five prefixes *ba-, bi- ~ bɛ-* and *bu- ~ bo-* as they appear with nouns bearing the same semantic content. Even though there is a tendency of rounded root vowels triggering rounded prefix vowels, not all nouns adhere to this assimilatory pattern, as in (30) – (33) and (41). For this reason, the three groups are kept apart.

2.2.8.   *u- ~ o- / i- ~ e-*

<19> Nouns with a mid- or high tone SG prefix *u-* take almost exclusively the PL prefix *i-* (43) – (47).

(43)	*ūkúŋ / īkúŋ*	edge
(44)	*ūsɨ̄n / īsɨ̄n*	hair
(45)	*ūzɨ̀ / īzɨ̀*	broom
(46)	*úsàn / ísàn*	farm
(47)	*úyāk / íyāk*	stirring stick

<20> A part of the nouns has the mid- or high-tone variants *o-* / *e-* as number marking prefixes (48) – (51).

    (48)   *ōkūn / ēkūn*   firewood
    (49)   *ōtʃī / ētʃī*   tree
    (50)   *ɔ́ɔ̄ŋk / ɛ́ɛ̄ŋk*   flute
    (51)   *ómɨ̄n / émɨ̄n*   raw one

Furthermore, three nouns take the L-tone prefixes *ù-* / *ì-* (52) – (54). The lexeme *ùhyūn* 'boundary' (53) allows *bɛ̀-* as alternative PL-prefix and *ùtàr* 'garment' (54) accepts the alternative *bà-*.

    (52)   *ùŋbɨ̀b / ìŋbɨ̀b*   lid
    (53)   *ùhyūn / ìhyɨ̄n*   boundary
    (54)   *ùtàr / ìtàr*   garment

A remarkable number of nouns denoting elongated objects is found within this group of nouns, as in the examples (45), (47) – (50) and (53).

2.2.9.   Single prefix ī- ~ í- ~ ɛ̄- ~ ɛ́-

<21> The prefixes *i-* ~ *ɛ-* occur with mid and high tones in transnumerals (55) and (56) mass nouns (57) and (58) and nouns that denote abstract concepts (59) and (60).

    (55)   *ɛ̄kūk*   mushroom
    (56)   *īfárák*   anthill
    (57)   *íʃí*   soil
    (58)   *Íkún*   sorghum
    (59)   *ɛ̄ryɛ̄n*   dream
    (60)   *ɛ́yɛ́yɨ̄n*   truth

2.2.10.   *ki-* / *a-* ~ *o-* ~ *ɛ-*

<22> The SG prefix *ki-* appears with a low, mid or high tone and combines with a tonally fitting PL prefix *a-* ~ *o-* ~ *ɛ-*. The vowel of the plural prefix is dependent on the quality of the nominal root vowel. While an /a/ in the root leads to *a-* as plural prefix (61) and (62), a rounded root vowel /u/ prescribes the plural prefix *o-* (63) and (64) and any other unrounded vowel as /ɨ/ or /i/ leads to an *ɛ-* plural prefix (65) and (66).

    (61)   *kīgār / āgār*   forest
    (62)   *kìbàr / àbàr*   bag
    (63)   *kíhùr / óhùr*   hole
    (64)   *kíkúr / ókúr*   bundle
    (65)   *kìhyɨ̄ŋ / ɛ̀hyɨ̄ŋ*   drum
    (66)   *kīʃī / ɛ̄ʃī*   head

<23> Even though the majority of the nouns adhere to this assimilation pattern, there are also exceptions: Some nouns combine a rounded root vowel with an unrounded plural prefix (67) and (68) or the other way around (69). *kízɨ́n* allows the alternative plural form *ɛ́zɨ́n* in all three meanings.

    (67)   *kìfúk / ɛ̀fúk*   banana flower
    (68)   *kīkūn / ākūn*   crowd

(69) *kízɨn / ózɨn*   tooth; name; loaf

2.2.11. Single prefix *a-*

<24> A set of transnumerals and abstract nouns appears with an *a-* prefix, bearing either a L, M, or H-tone (70) – (75). Two lexemes that denote human beings show an *ā-* prefix without a fitting plural form: *āyà* 'mother', *and ābà* 'father'.

(70) *àfùk*   lungs
(71) *àmbwār*   immature groundnuts
(72) *ātʃí*   medicine
(73) *āʃí*   laughter
(74) *átā*   pepper
(75) *ákūn*   palm chaff

2.2.12. *kà- ~ kā- / kù- ~ kò- ~ kō-*

<25> There are three nouns denoting inanimates that bear the prefix *kà- ~ kā-* in the SG and *kù- ~ kò- ~ kō-* in the PL (76) – (78). The examples are too few to allow a conclusion regarding the direction of assimilation in (77) and (78), but the long vowels in both nouns indicate a consonant loss.

(76) *kàkāŋ / kòkāŋ*   cap
(77) *kàátàk / kùútùk*   calabash
(78) *kāār / kɔ̄ɔ̄r*   canoe

2.2.13. *ka- ~ kɛ- / a-*

<26> A small number of nouns bears the prefix *ka- ~ kɛ-* in the singular and an *a-* prefix in the plural. The quality of the SG prefix vowel is again dependent on the root vowel of the noun: While */a/* as root vowel triggers *ka-* as SG-prefix (79) and (80) any other root vowel as */u/, /ɛ/, /ɨ/* or */i/* will trigger *kɛ-* (81) – (84).

(79) *kāsām / āsām*   peeling
(80) *kàwāb / àwāb*   small bag for hunting equipment
(81) *kɛ̄kún / ākún*   stone for sharpening
(82) *kɛ̄rɛ̄n / ārɛ̄n*   small basket for sifting
(83) *kɛ̄nnɨ̄ / ānnɨ̄*   gong
(84) *kɛ́bɨ̄ / ábɨ̄*   circumcision knife

2.2.14. Single prefix *ka-*

<27> Several transnumerals (85) – (88) and a noun that denotes an abstract concept (88) bear the prefix *ka-*.

(85) *kàdàr*   bark cloth
(86) *kāāŋ*   rock
(87) *kázāk*   tree (sp.)
(88) *kāām*   rainy season

2.2.15. *ku- ~ ko- / a- ~ o-*

<28> A set of nouns appears with the SG prefix *ku- ~ ko-* and the PL prefix *a-* (89) – (94).

(89)	*kōtɨ̄ / ātɨ̄*	bow
(90)	*kōkún / ākún*	cup
(91)	*kùmán / àmán*	grasshopper
(92)	*kùgbān / àgbān*	lizard
(93)	*kókùŋ / ákùŋ*	sugarcane
(94)	*kóbɨ̄ / ábɨ̄*	palm frond

<29> In two cases the plural prefix *a-* seems to be assimilated to the rounded root vowel and has the shape *o-* (95) and (96).

(95)	*kūbū / ōbū*	arm
(96)	*kūgūn / ōgūn*	leg

2.2.16. *kū- / ī-*

<30> Three nouns show the number-prefix pairing *kū- / ī-* (97) – (99).

(97)	*kūnāŋ / īnāŋ*	cheek
(98)	*kūwūŋ / īwūŋ*	song
(99)	*kūyū / īyī*	year

2.2.17. *kū- / bɛ̄-*

<31> This prefix pair is found in only one lexeme *kūlɨ́fì* 'cotton'.

2.2.18. *bi- / bu- ~ bo-*

<32> Lexemes with *bi-* as SG prefix might take *bu- ~ bo-* in the PL (100) – (105).

(100)	*bìkpūk / bòkpūk*	kidney
(101)	*bìkpúk / bùkpúk*	frog
(102)	*bīdáŋ / būdáŋ*	chair
(103)	*bīkàn / būkàn*	axe
(104)	*bíhyɨ̄n / búhyɨ̄n*	cocoyam
(105)	*bínàm / búnàm*	tree (sp.)

2.2.19. *bī- ~ bí- / ī- ~ í-*

<33> In three cases the pairing *bī- ~ bí- / ī- ~ í-* can be observed, for example in (106) – (108).

(106)	*bīʒī / īʒī*	animal
(107)	*bīzɨ̄m / īzɨ̄m*	intestine
(108)	*bísɨ́r / ísɨ́r*	caterpillar; maggot

2.2.20. *bū- / bī- ~ bɛ̄-*

<34> Two nouns appear with *bū-* as the singular prefix and *bī- ~ bɛ̄-* in the plural (109) and (110).

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(109)	*būsɨ̄ / bēsɨ̄*	opening
(110)	*būʃímí / bīʃímí*	anus

2.2.21.   *bū- / ī-*

<35> The singular prefix *bū-* combines with the plural prefix *ī-* in *būlāk* 'palm oil tree'.

2.2.22.   Loanwords and neologisms

<36> Loanwords in Bezen originate from Hausa (111) – (115) and Jukun (116). These nouns alert attention because of their mostly missing noun prefix in the singular. Bezen speakers integrate these nouns into their nominal number system by adding a *bò- ~ bō-* prefix in the plural. *àlémố* 'orange' in (114) has a Bezen atypical SG-prefix *à-*, which is not dropped in the PL. The Bezen might have borrowed the lexeme from Hausa or Jukun, together with the additional phonological material. The prefix *ū-* of *ūtábā* 'to-bacco' in (115) could be of Bezen origin, as there is an array of Bezen lexemes bearing this prefix in the SG. It is the only loanword bearing the plural prefix *bē-*.

(111)	*górò / bōgórò*	colanut
(112)	*kúlē̄ / bōkúlē̄*	cat
(113)	*tásā / bòtásā*	iron pot
(114)	*àlémố / bòàlémố*	orange
(115)	*ūtábā / bētábā*	tobacco
(116)	*lóŋ / bòlóŋ*	trousers

Neologisms are treated just as loanwords: a *bò-* prefix is added in the PL. *bàkwàr* is a newly created lexeme to designate a short type of bananas, which grow in the area of the Bakuri people in South-western Cameroon.

3. Noun Class System

<37> Bezen differentiates four different agreement classes: one singular and three plural classes. In the singular, all nouns trigger the agreement prefix *u- ~ o-,* bearing a mid- or high tone. In the plural, three different agreement markers, *i- ~ ɛ-, ba- ~ bɛ- ~ bo-,* and *a-* with the same tonal values as in the SG are found[4] (Table 3). The quality of the vowels is dependent on the target's root vowel and will be discussed in the following.

Table 3:   Agreement morphemes

SG	for all nouns	*u- ~ o-*
PLi	for non-humans and inanimates	*i- ~ ɛ-*
PLIIii	for humans and inanimates	*ba- ~ be- ~ bo-*
PLiii	for *āllɨ̄* 'days'	*a-*

<38> In the SG all nouns trigger the agreement marker u- ~ o- in adjectives, numerals, and demonstratives (117) – (120). Agreement is furthermore found with interrogative adjectives. As that is more elaborated and deviates from agreement with the other three targets, it will be explained in detail in the according chapter.

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4   A larger number of gender categories in plural than in the singular seems to be typologically exceptional. Greenberg (1968: 95) states in his universal nr. 37 that "a language never has more gender categories in non-singular numbers than in the singular". This atypical situation in Bezen is a result of the decline of its noun classes.

(117) *ōkɨb*   *ú-mān*
      SG.woman   SG-red
      red woman (European woman)

(118) *úsàn*   *ū-lákàr*   *ó-yùnə̄*
      SG.farm   SG-big   sg-one
      one big farm

(119) *ímbar*   *ú-nānɨ́*
      SG.sibling   SG-this
      this sibling

(120) *bīdáŋ*   *ú-nânɨ*
      SG.chair   SG-that
      that chair

<39> Considering the plural, the picture becomes more blurred. Whereas nouns denoting human beings prefer a *bV*-prefix (121) and (122), all other nouns vary in their usage of the two plural agreement prefixes (123) – (125). Assuming semantic agreement, non-humans would not allow *bV*-agreement, but they sometimes do, as in (124). Formally motivated agreement would mean that nouns that have a *bV*-plural prefix trigger *bV*-agreement, which is also not always the case (125). That means that agreement in Bezen has to be learned together with the noun. However, the speakers allow for variation and often disagree among each other upon the "right" agreement marker. A learner of Bezen would be on the safe side to use *bV*-agreement with humans, and nouns that carry a *bV*-plural prefix and *i*- with all other nouns.

(121) *bākɨb*   *bá-kyɨ́r*
      PL.women   PLii-small
      small women

(122) *bámbār*   *bɛ̄-wúŋ*
      PL.siblings   PLii-other
      other siblings

(123) *ísàn*   *ī-lákàr*   *ī-tār*
      PL.farm   PLi-big   PLi-three
      three big farms

(124) *īlīk*   *bɛ́-yī*
      PL.ropes   PLii-new
      new ropes

(125) *bɔ̀hɔ̀r*   *í-nânɨ́nɨ́*
      PL.hook   PLi-those (not visible)
      those hooks

3.1. Agreement with adjectives

<40> Bezen has a relatively small set of adjectives that refer to the color, age, or quality of objects or people. The most prominent ones are *lákàr* 'big', *màn* 'red', *rì* 'good' and *bì* 'bad'. The agreement marker *ú-* ~ *ó-* is the same for all singular head nouns: In (126), *lákàr* 'big' refers to a human being and in (127) *bì* 'bad' to an inanimate entity.

(126) *ōɲᵾ̄*   *ū-lákàr*
SG.person   SG-big
big person

(127) *īkpáb*   *ó-bì*
TR.money   SG-bad
bad money

<41> In the plural, three different agreement morphemes can be observed: *bV-*, *i-* ~ *ɛ-* and *a-*. Whereas the agreement marker *a-* only occurs with the pluralic noun *āllī̄* 'days', the other two morphemes are evenly distributed with the overall number of Bezen nouns. However, no clear-cut distinction of classes can be made, as one noun might take different agreement morphemes with different adjectives, or take one agreement morpheme for adjectives and another for demonstratives. Certain is that nouns denoting human beings take the agreement marker *bV-* with all adjectives (128) – (130).

(128) *bāɲī̄*   *bá-bì*
PL.person   PLii-bad
bad people

(129) *bɛ̄dᵻ̄ŋ*   *bɛ̄-wúŋ*
PL.chiefs   PLii-other
other chiefs

(130) *bámbār*   *bá-rɛ̀*
PL.siblings   PLii-good
good siblings

<42> Non-humans take the *i-* or the *bV-* prefix in the plural. The adjective *wúŋ* 'other' plays an exceptional role, as many nouns might take *i-* as agreement morpheme with all adjectives but *wúŋ*, which would take *bV-* instead. These nouns do not necessarily have a *bV-* plural prefix or are animated, as in (131) – (134).

(131) *íɲí*   *ɛ́-kyᵻ́r*
PL.mouths   PLi-small
small mouths

(132) *íɲí*   *bɛ̄-wúŋ*
PL.mouths   PLii-other
other mouths

(133) *ɛ̄kūn*   *ī-lákàr*
PL.firewood   PLi-big
big firewood

(134) *ɛ̄kūn*   *bɛ̄-wúŋ*
PL.firewood   PLii-other
other firewood

<43> However, there are also nouns that strictly take the agreement marker *i-*. These nouns tend to have a *KV-* SG-prefix (135) – (138).

(135) ɛ́ɲín   ɛ́-kyír
PL.scars   PLi-small
small scars

(136) ɛ́ɲín   ī-wúŋ
PL.scars   PLi-other
other scars

(137) ākún   ī-lákàr
PL.cups   PLi-big
big cups

(138) ākún   ī-wúŋ
PL.cups   PLi-other
other cups

The noun *bɔ̀hɔ̀r* 'hooks' (SG *bɛ̀hɛ̀r*) takes *ì-* agreement with all adjectives in the plural, disregarding its *bV-* SG and PL-prefixes.

<44> The variation of the agreement morphemes *u- ~ o-*, *i- ~ ɛ-* and *ba- ~ bɛ-* depends on the quality of the target's root vowel. An */a/* in the root of the adjective triggers the agreement prefixes *u-* in the SG and *ba-* and *i-* in the PL (139), whereas a root containing the vowel */u/* leads to the prefixes *u-*, *bɛ-* and *i-* (140). The vowels */ɨ/* and */i/* trigger the prefixes *o-*, *ɛ-*, and *ba-*, respectively (141) and (142). Here, the *ba-* plural prefix might indicate an ancient adjective-initial vowel */a/* which results in *o-* and *ɛ-* when meeting the prefixes *u-* and *i-*. Whereas in the *u-*, *i-*, *ba-* set, the *ba-* prefix might be the result of regressive assimilation to the root vowel of the adjective.

(139a)	*ūdūŋ*	*ūlákàr*	b)	*bēdɨŋ*	*bālákàr*	c)	*bɔhɔr*	*īlákàr*
	SG.chief	SG-big		PL.chiefs	PLii-big		PL.hooks	PLi-big
	big chief			big chiefs			big hooks	

(140a)	*bīdáŋ*	*ū-wúŋ*	b)	*būdáŋ*	*bē-wúŋ*	c)	*bàkār*	*ī-wúŋ*
	SG.chair	SG-other		PL.chairs	PLii-other		PL.baboons	PLi-other
	other chair			other chairs			other baboons	

(141a)	*úlɨ́m*	*ó-kyír*	b)	*bɛ́lɨ́m*	*bá-kyír*	c)	*átīn*	*ɛ́-kyír*
	SG.child	SG-small		PL.children	PLii-small		PL.mortars	PLi-small
	small child			small children			small mortars	

(142a)	*ímbār*	*óbì*	b)	*bámbār*	*bá-bì*	c)	*bàkār*	*ɛ́bì*
	SG.sibling	SG-bad		PL.siblings	PLii-bad		PL.baboons	PLi.bad
	bad sibling			bad siblings			bad baboons	

3.2. Agreement with numerals

<45> The Bezen numeral system is quintesimal, that is all numerals from six to nine are expressed through compounds based on 5. The agreement morphemes are *ó-* in *óyùnə̄* 'one' and *i- ~ ɛ-*, *bV-* or *a-* in the plural and are marked on both numerals in case of compounds. *óyùnɨ̄* 'one' is identical in combination with all nouns (143) and (144), the numbers above take different agreement markers dependent on the

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head noun of the phrase (145) – (148). The vowel of *bV-* is prescribed by the root vowel of the numeral: it is */a/* when the root vowel is */a/* as in *bátār* 'three' (147), */ɛ/* if the root contains the unrounded vowel */i/* as in *bēɲī* 'four', and */o/* if the root vowel is rounded as */o/* as in *bōtsōŋ̀* 'five' (147). *ɛ́ɛn* 'two' is an exception, as here a mutual interference of the prefix and the root vowel can be observed, resulting in *báān* with a *bV-* prefix (145) and (146).

(143)   *kìbàr*   *ó-yùnɨ̄*
          SG.bag   SG-one
          one bag

(144)   *ōlɨ̄m*   *ó-yùnɨ̄*
          SG.man   SG-one
          one man

(145)   *àbàr*   *ɛ́-ɛ̄n*
          PL.bags   PLi-two
          two bags

(146)   *bālɨ̄m*   *bá-ān*
          PL.men   PLii-two
          two men

(147)   *bālɨ̄m*   *bō-tsōŋ̀*   *bá-tār*
          PL.men   PL-ii-five   PLii-three
          eight men

(148)   *ātʃáŋ*   *ī-tsōŋ̀*   *ī-tār*
          PL.houses   PLi-five   PLi-three
          eight houses

<46> The numerals above ten are expressed through phrases (149) and (151) – (153) or nouns (150). However, the numeral roots never appear in their bare form: They are always accompanied by a prefix, as in (149). Here, *ɛ́ɛn* 'two' does not agree with any constituent in the noun phrase so that it might be plausible to establish a basic form of the numerals 2-5 that contains the PLi-prefix. Likewise, *óyùnɨ̄* 'one' never appears without the *ó-* prefix. *kēkɨ̄m* 'twenty' has a plural form *ākɨ̄m* which is used in the formation of numerals of forty and more. In (152), an assimilation process seems to be responsible for the agreement prefix *á-* in *áān*, as in the next example, *ītār* 'three' is bearing the prefix *i-* instead of an expected *a-* (153).

(149)   *bālɨ̄m*   *kūwūb*   *ōgbū*   *ɛ́-ɛ̄n*
          PL.men   SG.ten   pass.FACT [5]   two
          twelve men

(150)   bāɲī   kēkɨ̄m
          PL.people   **SG**.twenty
          twenty people

(151)   *bālɨ̄m*   *kēkɨ̄m*   *ōgbū*   *ó-yùnɨ̄*
          PL.men   SG.twenty   pass. FACT   SG-one
          twenty-one men

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[5]   The factative is an aspect form that denotes an action that can have taken place in the past or in the present, depending on the situation. The factative is marked by a mid- or high-tone on the verbal root and a mid- or high tone on the vocalic prefix.

(152)   *bāɲī*   *ākɨm*   *á-ān*
PL.people   PL.twenty   PLI-two
forty-two people

(153)   *bāɲī*   *ākɨm*   *ī-tār*   *ōgbū*   *kūwūb*
PL.people   PL.twenty   PLI-three   pass.FACT   SG.ten
seventy people

3.3. Agreement with demonstrative pronouns

<47> Bezen has a set of demonstrative pronouns that shows the same agreement pattern as adjectives and numerals. The demonstrative pronoun *nānɨ* denotes an object or a person that is close to the speaker. The tonally modified *nânɨ* refers to an object that is further away from the speaker, but visible, whereas *nânɨnɨ* indicates an object that is not visible for the speaker (154) – (156)[6]. The agreement remains constant with all three targets and is *ú-* in the singular and *ɨ́-* or *bɛ́-* in the plural. Example (155) shows a noun denoting a human being, bearing *kì- / à-* prefixes, which is rather unusual. The agreement is formally motivated, as the targets bear the *ɨ́-* agreement marker. These three examples illustrate how disintegrated the Bezen agreement system really is. Whereas in (154) both, animacy and formality could play a role in triggering the *bV-* agreement prefix, in (155), agreement is formally motivated and in (156), formality does not play a role and the noun triggers PLi agreement, disregarding its *bV-* plural prefix.

(154a)   *èmɨn*   *ú-nānɨ*   b)   *bàmɨn*   *bɛ́-nānɨ*
SG.goat   SG-this   PL.goats   PLii-these
this goat   these goats

(155a)   *àndàb*   *ɨ́-nânɨ*   b)   *àndàb*   *ɨ́-nânɨnɨ*
PL.young. women   PLi-those   PL.young.women   PLi-those (non-vis)
those young women   those young women (non-visible)

(156a)   *būtsúk*   *ú-nânɨ*   b)   *bētsɨ́k*   *ɨ́-nânɨ*
SG.banana   SG-that   PL.bananas   PLi-those
that banana   those bananas

3.4. Agreement with interrogative adjectives

<48> The interrogative adjectives *māŋ* 'how many?' and *rɨŋ* 'which? / who?' show agreement which is more elaborated than agreement with adjectives, numerals and demonstratives. Furthermore, the same adjectival stem is used to derive different question adjectives, as shown in the following.

3.4.1. *māŋ* 'how many?' / 'how much?'

<49> For the question adjective *māŋ* 'how many?', three different categories of nouns have to be differenciated: human/non-human and non-countable. Additionally to that, the word *āl1ɨ* 'days' has its own agreement morpheme. Nouns denoting non-humans are referred to by the prefix *ɨ́-* (157) and those denoting human beings by the prefix *bá-* (158). While in (157) *àwū ɨ́māŋ* 'of them how many?' is a NP with an attributively used question adjective, in (158)the interrogative adjective refers anaphorically to afore mentioned human beings. Nouns denoting non-countable entities, or transnumerals, trigger the agreement marker *ká-* (159). This agreement marker only appears with the question adjective *māŋ* and does

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6   All three demonstrative pronouns might be used ad- and pronominally.

not occur with adjectives, numerals and demonstratives. The agreement morpheme *a-* only occurs with the lexeme *āllɨ* 'days' and is consistent with all targets (160)

(157)   *w-ōkú*   *àwū*   *í-māŋ?*
        2SG-catch.FACT   3PL.O   PL-how.many
        How many of them did you catch? (referring to fish)

(158)   *bá-māŋ*   *āwū?*
        PL-how.many   come.FACT
        How many came? (referring to people)

(159)   *bátɔk*   *nɨ́*   *ēnɨ́*   *ká-māŋ*
        TR.palmwine   DEF   allow.FACT   TR-how.much
        How much palmwine is left?

(160)   *w-āŋɨ*   *āllɨ*   *á-māŋ*   *ádɨ*   *ēwūm*
        2SG-stay.FACT   PL.days   PLiii-how.many   LOC.village   Wum
        How many days did you stay in Wum?

3.4.2.   *rɨ̄ŋ* 'which?' / 'who?'

<50> For the question adjective *rɨ̄ŋ* 'which?', the differentiation between singular and plural becomes relevant again. In the singular, the agreement marker is *ó-* (161). Different from the aforementioned targets, no differentiation is made between nouns that denote human or non-human beings. All nouns in the plural are referred to by *ɛ́rɨ̄ŋ* (162) and (163).

(161)   *ó-rɨ̄ŋ*   *w-ōkú*
        SG-which   2SG-catch.FACT
        Which one did you catch? (referring to fish)

(162)   *ɛ́-rɨ̄ŋ*   *w-ōkú*
        PLi-which   2SG-catch.FACT
        Which ones did you catch?

(163)   *ɛ́-rɨ̄ŋ*   *ārə̄*   *ùtɨ́ŋ*   *ùwù*
        PLi-which   be.FACT   SG.own   2 SG.POSS
        Which ones are your own? (referring to children)

<51> The same adjectival root is used to ask for 'who?', referring to several people (164) and (165). Even though agreement might have been the source of the *bá-* prefix, it is not indicated anymore in the interlinearization as singular and plural referents are distinguished by different roots (see below).

(164)   *bárɨ̄ŋ*   *áwū*   *ámúŋ*   *kírī*   *nɨ́*
        who   come.SUB   here   yesterday   DEF
        Who came here yesterday (knowing that there were many)?

(165)   *ārə̄*   *bárɨ̄ŋ*
        be.FACT   who
        Who are they?

<52> Asking for one person, a different question adjective, *ānɨ̀ŋ* is employed (166) and (167).

(166) *ānɨ̄ŋ áwū ámúŋ kírī nɨ́*
who come.SUB here yesterday DEF
Who came here yesterday?

(167) *ārə̄ ānɨ̄ŋ*
be.FACT who
Who is this?

<53> It is remarkable that the same adjectival root *nɨ̀ŋ* is also used to create further question adjectives as *kànɨ̀ŋ* 'how?' (168) and *ēnɨ̀ŋ* 'what?' (169). The interrogative adjective *ēnɨ̀ŋ* 'what' can only be used when asking for processes, not for things. 'what is this?' would be *ánɨ́ ārə̄ ɛ̀sɨ̀ŋ?*.

(168) *w-āyī ìyì kànɨ̀ŋ?*
2SG-do.FACT 3SG.O how
How did you do it?

(169) *wāyī ēnɨ̀ŋ?*
2SG-do.FACT what
What did you do?

The usage of one root for different question adjectives could hint to a former elaborate agreement system that later developed into different question adjectives.

3.5. What happened to subject marking on verbs?

<54> Verbs do not show agreement with the nominal subject in Bezen. However, all verbs in the finite form do show a prefixed thematic vowel that is not part of the root and might have been an agreement marker in former times (see also Prischnegg 2008: 178). The vocalic prefix has the form *a-, ɛ-*, or *o-*, which is mostly dependent on the quality of the verbal root. Roots containing unrounded vowels as /a/, /e/, /ə/ or /ɨ/ have either *a-* or *ɛ-* as prefix (170) and (171)[7]. Verbs containing a round vowel in the root in most cases will have an *o-* as prefix as V1 in (173), but sometimes also have an *a-* prefix as V2 in the same example. The vowel might change in order to mark 3pl, however, this is the only case and very predictable and would only show with verbs that do not bear a prefix /a/ anyway. The vowel seems to be semantically completely empty, but functions as a carrier of tones that indicate different TAM categories.

(170) *bōzú ātsāk*
SG.problem lack.FACT
There is no problem.

(171) *à-ērī ēmyə̄n*
3PL-eat.FACT finish.FACT
They finished eating.

(172) *ōlūm nɨ́ ōsū āwū*
SG.man DEF descend.FACT come.FACT
The man came down.

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[7] The tone of the prefix vowel depends on modal features of the verb.

3.6. Conclusion noun class system

<55> Which conclusion can be drawn from the described agreement phenomena? It is certain that the Bezen noun class system is highly disintegrated and unsystematic. It must once have been semantically motivated, but nowadays formality also plays a role in the determination of agreement morphemes. There is a tendency for head nouns denoting human beings to trigger a *bV-* agreement marker, while a noun denoting non-humans will ask for *i- ~ ε-* as agreement morpheme. However, there are many exceptions, as nouns denoting non-humans might also trigger the *bV-* agreement marker, disregarding the semantics (173). Furthermore, there are nouns denoting animates and humans, bearing a *bV-* plural prefix, and triggering an *i- ~ ε-* agreement marker in an adjective (174), but the *bV-*agreement in a numeral (175). The strangest case is where the same head noun triggers different agreement prefixes with different adjectives (176) and (177).

(173) *bɛ̄tsīk* *bā-ān* two bananas
PL.bananas PLii-two

(174) *bālīm* *ɛ́-tīn* white men
PL.men PLi-white

(175) *bālīm* *bā-ān* two men
PL.men PLii-two

(176) *bòlùlù* *ɛ́-kyɪ́r* small pigs
PL.pig PLi-small

(177) *bòlùlù* *bɛ́-wùr* black pigs
PL.pig PLii-black

Thus, the overall picture is blurred and does not allow the drawing of a sharp boundary between the classes. Anyanwu reports (personal communication) that Yukuben also has a 'crazy' noun class system, which gives hope that the lack of systematics in the Bezen noun class system is not only due to the author's brain capacity. The scattered occurrence of the additional agreement morphemes *a-* and *ka-* hints at a formally more elaborated system of concordance in Bezen.

4. Derivation

<56> The nominal prefixes described before are used to derive nouns from verbs and adjectives, by prefixing them to the verbal or adjectival root. A large number of derived nouns can be observed in the Bezen lexicon: Agentive and instrumental nouns are among them, but also action and state nouns. Furthermore nouns that denote the objects of actions or embodiments of qualities can be observed. However, the grouping of the nouns is often tentative and based on the interpretation of the author so that the categories should not be considered to be irrevocable.

4.1. Agentive nouns

<57> Comrie & Thompson (2007: 336) characterize an agentive noun as a lexeme that denotes « one which 'verbs' ». In Bezen, the agentive noun *ūʒí* 'thief' is derived from the motion verb *ʒí* 'to steal' by prefixing *ū- / bɛ̄-*. Further agentive nouns are derived using a *ki-* prefix (178) – (180).

(178) *kīb* follow → *kìkīb / èkīb* younger sibling ("the follower")
(179) *wūr* refuse → *kíwūr* enemy ("the refuser")
(180) *būŋ* roll → *kìbūŋ ēmí* dung beetle ("roller of dung")

4.2. Embodiment of quality

<58> This group of derived nouns could be considered as a subsection of agentive nouns, except that the agents here are derived from stative verbs or adjectives, resulting in nouns that mean "sb. or sth. that is like that" (181) – (183). In the singular, the nouns bear the prefix *ū- ~ ú-*, in the plural, the prefix is *bɛ̄- ~ bɛ́-* if the agent is human a) and *ɨ̄- ~ ɨ́-*, if it is non-human b).

(181) *yɨ̄* → *ūyɨ̄* a) b*ɛ̄yɨ̄* b) *ɨ̄yɨ̄*
new   new one   new ones (HUM)   new ones (non-HUM)

(182) *?* → *úlɨ́m* a) *bɛ́lɨ́m* b) *ílɨ́m*
child   children   fresh ones (non-HUM)

(183) *mā*n → *úmān* a) *bámān* b) *ímān*
red   red one   red ones (HUM)   red ones (non-HUM)

Three more nouns belonging semantically into this group of nouns are derived by the prefixes *bì-*, *kù-* and *kɛ̀- / à-* (184) – (186)[8].

(184) *wār* glue → *bìwār* glue ("something that sticks")
(185) *tàm* hide → *kùtàm* secret ("something that is hidden")
(186) *kɨ̄b* old → *kɛ̀kɨ̄b / àkɨ̄b* elder sibling ("the one that is old")

4.3. Instrumental nouns

<59> In Bezen, kV- prefixes are especially prominent in the creation of instrumental nouns (187) – (190). Three different instrumental nouns can be derived from the verb rɛ̀n 'to sift': ùrān / bèrɛ̄n 'basket' and the nouns in example (187). ùrān is the only example in the corpus that employs the prefixes ù- / bɛ̀- for the derivation of an instrumental noun.

(187) *rɛ̄n* to sift/untie/thatch → *kɛ̄rɛ̄n / ārɛ̄n* small basket for sifting
       → *kìrɛ̀n* palmwine filter
(188) *hāk* grind → *káhāk / áhāk* upper part of a grinding stone
(189) *gbɨ̄n* open, uncover → *kɨ̄gbɨ̄n / ēgbɨ̄n* key, opener
(190) *bɨ́b* break → *kìbɨ́b āhām* sth. that breaks stones, f.e. hammer

4.4. State nouns

<60> The group of state nouns contains by far the largest amount of nouns which can be derived from verbs (191) – (196), and adjectives (197) – (199). The prefixes *b*V- (191) – (195) and kV- (196) – (199) predominate here. The resulting nouns denote abstract qualities.

(191) *līb* be heavy → *būlīb* eaviness
(192) *hyɨ̄m* be sick → *būhyūm* illness
(193) *tɨ̄ŋ* think → *bàtɨ̄ŋ* thought
(194) *ŋmàm* be lazy → *bɛ̄ŋmàm* lazyness
(195) *tsùn* burn → *bótsùn* heat
(196) *hàm* be mad → *kɛ̀hɛ̀m* madness
(197) *mān* red → *kímān* redness
(198) *yū* new → *kɨ̄yɨ̄* newness
(199) *kyɨ́r* small → *kɛ́kyɨ́r* smallness

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8   The root *kɨ̄b* 'old' can be used as an adjective, taking agreement morphemes, but also as a verb, bearing the vocalic prefix and tense/aspect markers.

4.5. Passive Nouns

<61> Comrie and Thompson report from the Bantu language Si-Luyana, where nouns with a passive meaning can be derived from verbs (Comrie & Thompson 2007: 341; Givón 1970: 74ff.). However, Givón has doubts concerning these derived nouns and shows examples that back their verbal status (1970: 77). In Bezen, the derivations are clearly nouns with the meaning the «thing/person that is 'verbed'» (Comrie & Thompson 2007: 341). In the derivation of passive nouns, *k*V- prefixes are prominent (202) and (203), few examples appear with the prefixes *ī- / bā-* and *ū- / ī-* (200) and (201). The noun kā*sā*m 'peeling' could as well be interpreted as 'the result of peeling' (202).

(200)	*wān*	marry a man	→	*īwān / bāwān*	husband ("the one who is married")
(201)	*tíb*	pin	→	*ūtʉ́b / ītʉ́b*	spear ("the one which is pinned")
(202)	*sām*	peel	→	*kāsām / āsām*	peeling ("the one which is peeled")
(203)	*bʉ̀k*	die	→	*kìbòk kōhūn*	bird (sp.) ("the one which has been died with camwood")[9]

4.6. Derivation summarized

<62> There is a large amount of derived nouns in Bezen and in several cases, different nouns can be derived from one verbal or adjectival root (see also example (187): The root *līb* 'be heavy' opens two ways of derivation: in (204a), the prefix *bū-* creates a state noun referring to the quality of an object, while in b) *bō-* derives a noun that denotes a concrete embodiment of the quality. In (205a), an agentive noun is derived by the prefixes *ū- / bē̄-*, while in (205b) the prefix *bū-* derives a state noun bearing an abstract meaning. The verb *wān* 'marry a man' allows the derivation of two nouns (206), the abstract concept of 'marriage', *kīwān* a) and the object of a marriage, the 'husband' *īwān* b). *īwū* 'wife' c) could be considered as the agent of the marriage but it would be the only case in Bezen, where the root of the verb loses a consonant in the derivation process. Similar to the previous example, the adjective *mān* 'red' (207) allows the derivation of a noun denoting an abstract concept a) and the agents of 'redness', here in the human b) and non-human form b).

(204)	*līb*	be heavy	→	a)	*būlīb*	heaviness	b)	*bōlīb*	load
(205)	*ʒí*	steal	→	a)	*ūʒí / bē̄ʒí*	thief	b)	*būʒí*	theft
(206)	*wān*	marry	→	a)	*kīwān*	marriage	b)	*īwān / bāwān*	husband
							c)	*īwū / bōwū*	wife
(207)	*mān*	red	→	a)	*kímān*	redness	b)	*úmān / bámān*	the red one (+HUM)
							c)	*úmān / ímān*	the red one (-HUM)

<63> Furthermore, noun to noun derivation can be observed, even though to a smaller extent than verb to noun derivation. The abstract concept 'chiefdom' is derived from the noun *ūdōŋ* 'chief' (208). The plural form of the noun *īzīn* 'child', which is a relational concept, does not mean 'children', but 'young animals'. For 'children', the pluralic noun *bélím* is used, instead. The noun *kīzīn* 'grandchild', is derived from 'child' *īzīn*.

(208)	*ūdōŋ / bēdīŋ*	chief	→	*kīdīŋ*	chiefdom
(209)	*īzīn*	child	→	*bōzūn*	young animals
			→	*kīzīn*	grandchild

<64> Semantically, some parallels to non-derived nouns are observable: many non-derived nouns denoting abstract concepts also carry a *k*V- prefix (210) – (213), whereas abstract nouns carrying a *b*V- prefix are mostly of derived origin (191) – (195). Furthermore, many derived (187) – (190) and non-derived instruments (214) – (217) are found with *k*V- / V- or only *k*V-prefixes.

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9   The bird has the colour of camwood; *kōhūn* 'camwood'.

(210)	*kísāŋ*	time
(211)	*kɔ́lɔ́zū*	grievance, anger
(212)	*kūlák*	desire
(213)	*kèdāŋ*	noise
(214)	*kìhyɨ̄ŋ / èhyɨ̄ŋ*	drum
(215)	*kɛ́tɨ̄n / ātɨ̄n*	mortar
(216)	*kīmāŋ / āmāŋ*	machete
(217)	*kìlɔ̄m / òlɔ̄m*	paddle

5. Conclusion

<65> Bezen nouns show a large variety of nominal prefixes that indicate SG and PL and which are not reflected in the agreement system. A tendency towards semantic grouping of nouns with similar prefixes can be observed. The agreement system is reduced to four classes, one SG and three PL classes. It seems as if agreement in Bezen used to be semantically motivated, differentiating between humans and non-humans. However, the system has disintegrated and nowadays formality also plays a role in the determination of agreement markers[10]. The prefixes are furthermore used to derive nouns from verbs and adjectives, with state nouns denoting abstract concepts being the most prominent outcome of derivation. The Bezen noun class system fits very well into the Southern Jukunoid noun class-pattern. The Bezen nominal prefixes are almost identical with those of Yukuben, which has retained a slightly more elaborated agreement system. This hints to a probably more complex former noun class system in Bezen that has been reduced either as part of the general tendency to decline of Benue-Congo noun class systems or as part of an overall, language-intern dismantling process.

Abbreviations

C	consonant
DEF	definitive marker
DUR	durative
FACT	factitive n
HUM / +HUM	
non-HUM / -HUM	
O	object
PL	plural
PLi	plural agreement inanimate
PLii	plural agreement human and inanimate
PLiii	plural agreement inanimate for 'days'
POSS	possessive
SG	singular; singular agreement prefix
SUB	subordination
TR	transnumeral, a noun that can be used as singular and plural
(sp.)	species
V	vowel
V1 / V2	verb 1, verb 2 etc. in a multiverb construction

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[10] Givón concludes that for the development of the Bantu noun class system and states "what is now largely a system of 'grammatical' genders, was once a system of semantic classification of the noun universe" (1971: 34).

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