

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/20916> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

**Author:** Bobuafor, Mercy

**Title:** A grammar of Tafi

**Issue Date:** 2013-05-30

## 2 PHONOLOGY

This chapter covers the phonology of Tafi. Section 2.1 looks at the syllable structures of the language. Sections 2.2 and 2.3 present the inventory of the consonant and vowel phonemes of Tafi. The tone system of the language and phonological processes are discussed in sections 2.4 and 2.5 respectively. Loanwords are examined in section 2.6 followed by Tafi orthography in section 2.7.

### 2.1 Syllable structure

In Tafi, the syllable is a tone bearing unit and it may be made up of an onset and a peak; a peak; or a peak and a coda. The onset includes any consonant that precedes the peak. The peak which always carries a tone consists of a vowel or a syllabic nasal and it is the most sonorous element in the syllable and it is also the one required component of the syllable. Thus, the smallest syllabic unit in the language consists of a vowel or a syllabic nasal. The coda is made up of a consonant. There is a strong preference for open syllables except for two grammatical contexts – pronouns and numerals – where some closed syllables occur as in (1b). The syllable comprising a peak and a coda occurs as a result of (historical) loss of the second vowel in a (C)VCV sequence. The possible syllable types in the language are as follows<sup>9</sup>:

- 1a. V/N
- 1b. VC
- 1c. CV
- 1d. CVV
- 1e. CCV i.e., CL/GV

#### 2.1.1 The V/N syllable

The V syllable can occur in any position in a word. Syllables consisting of only a vowel element are most often pronouns or prefixes of the stem of a word. The examples in (2) are prefixes of nouns. In the examples given in this section, the syllable boundaries are marked by a dot (.).

- |        |                |               |     |                |              |
|--------|----------------|---------------|-----|----------------|--------------|
| 2. /i/ | <b>i.si.sí</b> | ‘pestle (pl)’ | /u/ | <b>u.go.bó</b> | ‘navel (pl)’ |
|        | <b>i.vu.tó</b> | ‘roof (pl)’   |     | <b>u.mu.nó</b> | ‘cloud (pl)’ |
- 

<sup>9</sup> Casali (2005) identifies a CVN syllable type but I treat such structures as consisting of two syllables where the N is syllabic in all the cases. The N always bears a tone. Sometimes, the tone is different from the surrounding ones.

	<b>i.dzyi</b>	‘heart (pl)’		<b>i.kpá</b>	‘life’
	<b>i.ku.ku</b>	‘elbow (pl)’		<b>i.tsɾĩ</b>	‘leg (pl)’
<b>/e/</b>	<b>e.ku.sí</b>	‘chief’	<b>/a/</b>	<b>á.nyí</b>	‘man’
	<b>e.le.té</b>	‘owner’		<b>a.yĩ.sĩ</b>	‘sand’
	<b>e.tsí</b>	‘bee’		<b>a.ga</b>	‘animal’
	<b>é.kū</b>	‘yam (pl)’		<b>a.nú.vɔ̃</b>	‘child’

The 1SG, 2SG and 3SG subject pronouns are also examples of a V syllable, all the plural subject pronouns have an initial consonant. The following are examples:

- 3.
- |             |               |
|-------------|---------------|
| <b>í.tú</b> | ‘I pound’     |
| <b>í.kɔ</b> | ‘I give’      |
| <b>ó.bú</b> | ‘you remove’  |
| <b>ó.vɪ</b> | ‘you go’      |
| <b>é.yū</b> | ‘s/he weaves’ |
| <b>á.ɖɔ</b> | ‘s/he says’   |

Nasals can also form syllables by themselves. In Tafi, all the nasals except **/ny/** occur as syllabic consonants. The N syllables occur in word-medial or word-final positions in nouns. Whenever they occur in word-medial position, they are homorganic with the following consonant which belongs to the next syllable. The examples in (4) illustrate this point.

- 4.
- |            |                     |                      |                |
|------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| <b>/m/</b> | <b>ka.m.pé</b>      | ‘a pair of scissors’ | (CV.N.CV)      |
|            | <b>ká-m.pi.e.sí</b> | ‘armpit’             | (CV.N.CV.V.CV) |
| <b>/n/</b> | <b>bú.ũ.ñ.do</b>    | ‘shoulder’           | (CV.CV.N.CV)   |
| <b>/ŋ/</b> | <b>tú.ŋ.gbá</b>     | ‘a type of antelope’ | (CV.N.CV)      |
|            | <b>kó.ŋ</b>         | ‘very much’          | (CV.N)         |

Moreover, there are instances where we have **/n/** and **/m/** occurring as syllabic consonants in word-final position. This is due to the deletion of the vowel that occurs after them during speech. For instance, when the definiteness article **ní** ‘the’ occurs after a noun, most often, speakers tend to delete its final vowel (see also section 2.5.2). This also happens with the first person object pronoun **mí** ‘me’. When these final vowels are deleted, their tones remain and they are shifted leftwards onto the nasals. The examples in (5) are illustrative of this point.

- 5a.
- |                 |             |           |
|-----------------|-------------|-----------|
| <b>á.nyí.ń</b>  | ‘the man’   | (V.CV.N)  |
| <b>a.dzi.ń</b>  | ‘the woman’ | (V.CV.N)  |
| <b>o.sí.ń</b>   | ‘the tree’  | (V.CV.N)  |
| <b>ki.kū.ń</b>  | ‘the yam’   | (CV.CV.N) |
| <b>ku.kpá.ń</b> | ‘the fish’  | (CV.CV.N) |

- 5b. **sí.nɔ.ɾɪ** ‘greet me’ (CV.CV.N)  
**kɔ.ɾɪ** ‘give me’ (CV.N)  
**plí.nɔ.ɾɪ** ‘help me’ (CV.CV.N)

### 2.1.2 The VC syllable

The VC syllable in Tafi comprises a vowel (peak) and a consonant (coda) which occurs as a result of the deletion of the vowel of the second syllable in numerals, i.e., the multiples of ten except for the word for thirty **áfaatá** and fifty **áfeití**, or when the final vowel of **balí** ‘3PL.IND’ occurs as the final word in a clause. As object pronoun, its initial consonant is also elided yielding **al** a VC syllable. Thus, /f/ and /l/ are the only consonants that occur as the coda. The following are examples:

- 6a. **áf.ta.lĩ** ‘forty’  
**áf.te.gé.né** ‘seventy’  
**áf.ta.sũ** ‘eighty’  
**áf.te.zhi.tá** ‘ninety’
- 6b. Ésí átɔ́ ’édɔ́ kɔ́ ’ál’.  
**Ésí á-tɔ́ kɪ-dɔ́ kɔ́ balí**  
 Ésí SM-cook CM-thing DAT 3PL  
 ‘Esi cooked for them.’

### 2.1.3 The CV syllable

CV syllables are the most common. Most of the monosyllabic words have CV syllables and there are no restrictions on the occurrence of such a syllable in polysyllabic words. Examples are:

7. **wɔ** ‘play’ (CV)  
**tsú** ‘dig’ (CV)  
**dí** ‘look’ (CV)  
**ɔ.kɔ́** ‘place’ (V.CV)  
**bé.kē** ‘finish’ (CV.CV)  
**a.nó.vɔ́** ‘child’ (V.CV.CV)  
**bu.tu.tú** ‘saliva’ (CV.CV.CV)  
**bé.gu.gu.dɔ** ‘mad people’ (CV.CV.CV.CV)

### 2.1.4 The CVV syllable

The CVV syllable is made up of a consonant and a long vowel. This syllable type is found only in loanwords or in ideophones and they can occur in word-initial,

word-medial and word final positions. Examples of words with the CVV syllable type include:

8.	<b>ge.lee</b>	‘much’	(CV.CVV)
	<b>pé.tée</b>	‘all’	(CV.CVV)
	<b>nyáá</b>	‘each, every, any’	(CVV)
	<b>faá.nɔ̃</b>	‘too much’	(CVV.CV)
	<b>ri.dji.dji</b>	‘continuously’	(CV.CVV.CV)

### 2.1.5 The CCV syllable

The CCV syllable comprises a consonant cluster and a peak. The consonant cluster consists of two consonants, the second of which is either a liquid [l] or [r] yielding a CLV subtype as shown in (9); or a glide /w/ or /y/ yielding a CGV subtype as illustrated in (10). This syllable type can occur in any position in a stem. It is significant to note that most often, when a consonant is followed by a [+high] front vowel in a vowel sequence, this vowel is analysed as /y/ and thus it forms a cluster with the consonant onset. Likewise when a consonant is followed by any of the back vowels in a vowel sequence, it is analysed as /w/ which occurs as the second consonant in a consonant cluster.

9.	<b>gbɪ.gblä</b>		‘big, huge’	(CV.CLV)
	<b>ke.kplɪ.ɾɪ</b>		‘palm (of hand)’	(CV.CLV.N)
	<b>kla</b>		‘count, read’	(CLV)
	<b>trɔ̃</b>		‘spin (thread)’	(CLV)
10.	<b>buia</b>	/bwia/	‘pay’	(CGV.V)
	<b>tiatá<sup>10</sup></b>	/tya.tá/	‘three’	(CGV.CV)
	<b>ɔ̃bhia</b>	/ɔ̃.bhya/	‘friend’	(V.CGV)
	<b>kámpiesí</b>	/ká.ɾɪ.pye.sí/	‘armpit’	(CV.N.CGV.CV)

In the phonological system, [l] and [r] are in complementary distribution when they occur as the second C in a CCV syllable. [l] occurs after consonants that are labial, labio-dental, velar and labial velar. These can be characterized as [-coronal]. [r] occurs after alveolar and palatal consonants. One exception to this is the word **frɪdɪ** ‘white’. Some loanwords and ideophones also deviate from this general pattern. Thus, we find [r] after labials and velars as in **prɪdɪ** ‘fly’ and **ɔ̃brahɪní<sup>11</sup>** ‘sugarcane’. The allophony and distribution of [l] and [r] in Tafi can also be found in neighbouring Ewe and Logba (Dorvlo 2008).

<sup>10</sup> This is the form the numeral ‘two’ takes when it modifies a noun from the **ba(a)**- class.

<sup>11</sup> Some speakers also call the sugarcane **ɔ̃brahɪní**.

## 2.2 Consonants

The consonant sounds in Tafi are shown in Table 2.1 below. The consonants in the chart are described in terms of:

- Place of articulation
- Manner of articulation and
- Phonation

The eight (8) different places of articulation, which are arranged from left to right are bilabial, labio-dental, alveolar, post-alveolar, palatal, velar, labio-velar and glottal. The manners of articulation are arranged vertically on the chart. With regard to manner of articulation, consonants may be described as stops, fricatives, affricates, nasals, liquids and glides. Pertaining to phonation which is the voice feature, the sounds which occur on the left are voiceless and their voiced counterparts are on the right. On the second line in the rows, we have either aspirated, labialised or nasalised sounds. Phonetically /y/ represents the palatal approximant [j].

Table 2.1 The Tafi Consonant Chart

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Labio-velar	Glottal
Stops	p    b b <sup>h</sup>		t    d	ɖ		k    g	kp    gb	ʔ
Fricatives	ɸ	f    v fw	s    z		ʃ    ʒ	x    xw		h    fi hw
Affricates			ts    dz		tʃ    dʒ tʃw			
Nasals	m		n		ɲ	ŋ    ŋw		
Liquids			l, r					
Glides					y		w    w̃	

The representation of some of the sounds in the table deserves to be commented on:

In the table, the representation of the sounds is in IPA symbols. The following IPA representations /b<sup>h</sup>/, /ɸ/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /tʃ/, /tʃw/, /dʒ/, /fi/, and /ɲ/ are orthographically represented as ‘bh’, ‘f’, ‘sh’, ‘zh’, ‘tsy’, ‘tsyw’, ‘dzy’, ‘h’, and ‘ny’ respectively and these are the symbols used throughout this work.

As will become evident in the following discussion, some of the sounds represented in the table are allophones of one another. [ɾ] is in complementary distribution with [l] in the second position in the syllable. [h] and [ɦ] are in free variation. Similarly, [ɲw] and [ɰ̃] are in free variation occurring only before nasalised sounds and are both in complementary distribution with [w]. [ɸ] is a loan phoneme.

/f/ is a voiceless labial fricative which has no voiced counterpart. This sound got introduced into the language as a result of borrowing from Ewe. /f/ occurs intervocalically. In my database, /f/ only occurs in two words as shown in example (11a).

- 11a. /f/      **afu**                    ‘sea’  
              **Abuiɸe**<sup>12</sup>           ‘the name of one of the Tafi communities’

[ɦ] is a voiced glottal fricative. It seems that it is in free variation with [h] even in the speech of the same speaker. In this work, the two sounds are not orthographically distinguished and are represented as ‘h’. Examples of words in which [ɦ] occurs include:

- 11b. /ɦ/      [o-ɦwi]            ~ [o-hui]            ‘rope’  
              [ka-ɦukpɔ]       ~ [ka-hukpɔ]       ‘hand’  
              [kíɰ̃ɰ̃ɦũ]           ~ [kíɰ̃ɰ̃hũ]           ‘eye’  
              [ɦu]                ~ [hu]                ‘strike, hit’

A number of words in my database contain the sound [ɰ̃]. The sound [ɰ̃] is a nasalised labial velar glide which occurs immediately before nasalised vowels. In this respect, [ɰ̃] and [w] are in complementary distribution. Depending on the speaker, this sound oscillates between [ɰ̃] and the labialised velar nasal [ɲw].<sup>13</sup> Examples of words with [ɰ̃] include:

12.      [ɰ̃]      **ɰ̃-ɰ̃mĩ**                ‘thread’  
              **buɰ̃á**                ‘in vain’  
              **ɰ̃ĩ**                    ‘appear’  
              **ki-ɰ̃ɰ̃**                ‘a strip (of cloth)’

---

<sup>12</sup> See footnote 1 under Chapter 1.

<sup>13</sup> Words that are pronounced by speakers with either of these consonants are represented as such in this thesis.

### 2.2.1 Stops

All the stops in Tafi occur in pairs differentiated by voice. /b<sup>h</sup>/ and /d/ however do not have voiceless counterparts.

The voiceless bilabial stop /p/ mainly occurs in word-initial position in verbs, conjunctions and ideophones. It also occurs in word-medial position. With regard to nouns, it occurs in stem-initial position and intervocalically. Moreover, it occurs in word-initial position of some few nouns which are loanwords. This is exemplified below:

13.	/p/	<b>prūdū</b>	‘fly (v)’	<b>bu-pá</b>	‘house’
		<b>pó</b>	‘wait (for)’	<b>a-putó</b>	‘mud’
		<b>pī</b>	‘(be) good’	<b>o-púpú</b>	‘door’
		<b>pó</b>	‘but’	<b>ke-plukpá</b>	‘book’
		<b>prítí</b>	‘plate’ (loanword)	<b>kí-pó</b>	‘wound, sore’
		<b>púi</b>	[pwí] ‘roast’		

The voiced bilabial stop /b/ can occur in word initial position and intervocalically. In nouns, it occurs as the initial consonant of some noun class prefixes. Below are some examples:

14.	/b/	<b>bá</b>	‘come’	<b>ba-pá</b>	‘houses’
		<b>bísi</b>	‘ask’	<b>bu-lí</b>	‘oil palm’
		<b>bālī</b>	‘spill’	<b>be-blidzyā</b>	‘snakes’
		<b>bú</b>	‘remove’	<b>o-brazhíní</b>	‘sugar-cane’
		<b>bubo</b>	‘bend down’	<b>ki-bui</b> [kibwi]	‘case, matter’
		<b>glebe</b>	‘roll’		

In any consonant clusters in which /p/ or /b/ occurs as the first consonant, the following consonant is [l] or [r] or [w] as illustrated by some of the examples in (13) and (14) above.

/b<sup>h</sup>/ is an aspirated voiced bilabial stop. This sound has no voiceless counterpart in the language. The following are examples with this sound:

15.	/b <sup>h</sup> /	<b>kábhā</b>	‘top, on’	<b>o-bhoshi</b>	‘sheep’
		<b>bhutí</b>	‘do, make’	<b>ɪ-bha</b>	‘two’
		<b>sóbha</b>	‘rain’	<b>bu-bhi</b>	‘hunger’
		<b>bhulí</b>	‘small’	<b>bhui</b>	‘cut’

/t/ and /d/ are voiceless and voiced alveolar stops respectively. They occur in word initial position or intervocalically. The following examples illustrate them:

16.	/t/	<b>tá</b>	‘throw’	<b>bu-tó</b>	‘ear, potash’
		<b>tú</b>	‘pound’	<b>ti-sí</b>	‘earth (soil)’



	<b>trõ</b>	‘spin, twist’	<b>é-fleté</b>	‘leopard’
	<b>tí-kā</b>	‘hair, fur’	<b>bu-tú</b>	‘mountain’
17. /d/	<b>dumí</b>	‘like’	<b>á-dá</b>	‘sister’
	<b>dí</b>	‘look’	<b>ki-dri</b>	‘wall’
	<b>danī</b>	‘open’	<b>o-di</b>	‘line’
	<b>dí</b>	‘sell’	<b>ke-de</b>	‘back’

/d/ is a voiced post-alveolar retroflex stop which occurs in stem initial position or intervocalically. This is exemplified in (18) below:

18. /d/	<b>ka-dɔ</b>	‘speech’	<b>prūdū</b>	‘fly’
	<b>o-dútsū</b>	‘stew’	<b>dɔ</b>	‘say’
	<b>ɔ-dá</b>	‘iron, metal’	<b>frɔ́ɔ</b>	‘white’

/k/ and /g/ are velar stops. Both sounds have a wide distribution in the sense that they can occur stem-initially, and also before /l/. /k/ also occurs at the beginning of certain singular noun prefixes in the language. There is an instance where /k/ occurs before [r] in the word /akro/ ‘boat’ which is borrowed from Ewe even though the Baagbo also use the expression **keniabha opúpú** ‘boat, canoe’ which is a direct translation of the Ewe expression ‘**tɔdzivú**’ which literally means ‘river-top vehicle’. The following examples illustrate the consonants /k/ and /g/ in different positions in a word:

19. /k/	<b>kí-pɔ́tí</b>	‘cloth’	<b>ke-sisí</b>	‘mortar’
	<b>ka-wí</b>	‘axe’	<b>kí-níki</b>	‘tongue’
	<b>ɔ-kó</b>	‘place’	<b>kí-kū</b>	‘yam’
20. /g/	<b>bú-glebē</b>	‘wing’	<b>géné</b>	‘seven’
	<b>gɔganí</b>	‘strong, hard’	<b>gɔ</b>	‘remain’
	<b>ágɔlɔ</b>	‘each other’	<b>bú-gū</b>	‘custom’

/kp/ and /gb/ are double articulated labial-velar stops. They have a wide distribution. They can occur before and after any vowel and before /l/ in a cluster as shown in the following examples:

21. /kp/	<b>kpí</b>	‘wear’	<b>ke-plukpá</b>	‘book’
	<b>e-kpú</b>	‘corpse’	<b>ki-kplí</b>	‘fist’
	<b>ke-tukpě</b>	‘hill’	<b>ke-sukpogunū</b>	‘tree stump’
22. /gb/	<b>gbɔgbɔlā</b>	‘big’	<b>gba</b>	‘sweep’
	<b>kí-sígbé</b>	‘ring’	<b>ke-gbu</b>	‘stool’
	<b>gbe</b>	‘refuse (v)’ (loanword)	<b>gbokɔé</b>	‘toad’

There is a glottal stop /ʔ/ in Tafi which is used to mark negative utterances (see Chapter 7, section 7.3.5 for further details). It is considered as a prosodic clause marker and not a contrastive systemic sound in the language. It is included here for the sake of completeness.

### 2.2.2 Fricatives

The voiceless labio-dental fricative /f/ and its voiced counterpart /v/ occur in stem-initial and medial positions as well as intervocally. In consonant clusters, /f/ occurs as the first consonant before [l] and [r] while /v/ only occurs before /l/. These sounds are illustrated in the examples below:

23. /f/	<b>flă</b>	‘pass (by)’	<b>kí-fṣ</b>	‘ten’
	<b>fátī</b>	‘carve’	<b>é-fleté</b>	‘leopard’
	<b>ki-fú</b>	‘light, fire’	<b>frúḡ</b>	‘white’
24. /v/	<b>vi</b>	‘go’	<b>vu</b>	‘catch’
	<b>vuno</b>	‘hold’	<b>bú-vū</b>	‘building’
	<b>ká-vlṣ</b>	‘towel’	<b>vubṣ</b>	‘bury’

/s/ and /z/ are voiceless and voiced alveolar fricatives respectively. They occur in stem-initial and medial positions. They also occur intervocally. /s/ and /z/ occur in clusters of /sr/ and /zr/. The former only occurs in loanwords such as **asrā** ‘tobacco’ and **sra** ‘visit, smear (pomade)’. The latter occurs as a result of syncope in words like **zurú** which is pronounced in rapid speech as **zrū**. These sounds are exemplified in (25) and (26) below.

25. /s/	<b>ke-sí</b>	‘beneath’	<b>a-srā</b>	‘tobacco’
	<b>saprādă</b>	‘onion’	<b>ká-sālă</b>	‘tortoise’
	<b>kpásī</b>	‘learn’	<b>a-yísṣ</b>	‘young man’
26. /z/	<b>zi</b>	‘(be) bad, spoilt’	<b>e-zi</b>	‘thief’
	<b>za</b>	‘dwell, stay, sit’	<b>o-lizatṣ</b>	‘dawn’
	<b>zurú</b>	‘steal’	<b>ki-zṣ</b>	‘housefly’

The palatal fricatives /ʃ/ and /ʒ/ occur stem-initially or intervocally. /ʃ/ sounds like the initial sound of the English word ‘shoe’ and the /ʒ/ sounds like the /s/ in the English word ‘leisure’. In this work, /ʃ/ is represented by ‘sh’ and /ʒ/ is represented by ‘zh’. Here are some examples:

27. /ʃ/ (sh)	<b>i-shú</b>	‘body’	<b>she</b>	‘grow’
	<b>ki-shĩ</b>	‘stick’	<b>shĩ</b>	‘leave’
	<b>a-shá</b>	‘horns’	<b>shūkū</b>	‘shake’

28. /ʒ/ (zh)	<b>zhítá</b>	‘nine’	<b>ká-zhuě</b>	‘bird’
	<b>zha</b>	‘sing’	<b>bu-zho</b>	‘cheek’
	<b>zhi</b>	‘descend’	<b>ki-zhuě</b>	‘whistle, flute’

/x/ and /h/ are velar and glottal fricatives respectively. Both sounds are voiceless and they occur in word-initial and medial positions as illustrated in (29) and (30).

29. /x/	<b>kpákpáxě</b>	‘duck’	<b>xogo</b>	‘gather’
	<b>xixā</b>	‘choke’	<b>ki-bhluxǝé</b>	‘spoon, laddle’
	<b>xúń</b>	‘as for’	<b>xátsá</b>	‘bend’
30. /h/	<b>he</b>	‘pull, drag’	<b>o-hui</b>	‘rope’
	<b>huno</b>	‘touch’	<b>ǎ-hě</b>	‘pig’
	<b>ɿ-hě</b>	‘knife’	<b>bú-hihe</b>	‘sweat’
	<b>ho</b>	‘grind’	<b>ki-halí</b>	‘throat’

### 2.2.3 Affricates

Affricates which occur in the language are /ts/, /dz/, /tʃ/ and /dʒ/. /ts/ and /dz/ are voiceless and voiced alveolar affricates respectively and /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ are voiceless and voiced palatal affricates respectively. The palatal /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ are represented orthographically by ‘**tsy**’ and ‘**dzy**’ respectively. These sounds can occur either in stem-initial position or intervocalically. Here are some examples of words in which they occur:

31. /ts/	<b>ki-tsikpǐ</b>	‘pot’	<b>ki-tsá</b>	‘needle’
	<b>tsú</b>	‘dig’	<b>tsí</b>	‘die’
	<b>tsokú</b>	‘enter’	<b>ɔ-tsɿ</b>	‘leg’
32. /dz/	<b>dzɪdzǎ</b>	‘red’	<b>kí-dzě</b>	‘egg’
	<b>dzí</b>	‘sit’	<b>ki-dzō</b>	‘road’
	<b>dzú</b>	‘erect, plant’	<b>ka-tabuiadzō</b>	‘scorpion’
33. /tsy/	<b>tsyínā</b>	‘turn’	<b>tsyómō</b>	‘(be) rotten’
	<b>tsyánō</b>	‘meet’	<b>ki-tsyíní</b>	‘louse’
	<b>tsyūrū</b>	‘wipe (off)’	<b>ká-ńtsyótsyóé</b>	‘bladder’
34. /dzy/	<b>é-dzyuǐ</b>	‘mouse’	<b>dzyíní</b>	‘break’
	<b>é-blidzya</b>	‘snake’	<b>dzyo</b>	‘straighten’
	<b>dzyosǔ</b>	‘blood’	<b>á-dzyā</b>	‘brother’

### 2.2.4 Nasals

The nasals in the language are /m/, /n/, /ɲ/ and /ɳ/. /m/ and /n/ have a wide distribution. They occur as the initial consonants of words or stems, in medial

position or intervocalically. In my database, they occur with all the vowels. /m/ and /n/ also occur in final position in some few words as shown in (35) and (36) respectively. /ɲ/ and /ŋ/ occur in initial, medial, and intervocalic position of a word or stem as in (37) and (38). /ŋ/ occurs in the final position of the loanword **kóŋ** ‘very much’ and some ideophones such as **kpéŋkpéŋ** and **tsíréŋkéŋ**. /ɲ/ does not occur word finally.

35. /m/	<b>mó</b>	‘suck breast’	<b>kí-pluímēké</b>	‘dove’
	<b>ku-mó</b>	‘breast’	<b>ká-pamī</b>	‘matchet’
	<b>munɔ</b>	‘swallow’	<b>o-tumú</b>	‘darkness’
	<b>míni</b>	‘taste’	<b>ke-kplím</b>	‘palm (of hand)’
36. /n/	<b>némī</b>	‘bite’	<b>tsyínā</b>	‘turn round’
	<b>o-nugbū</b>	‘mouth’	<b>ke-ní</b>	‘river’
	<b>a-nóvɔ</b>	‘child’	<b>o-bón</b>	‘today’
37. /ɲ/ (ny)	<b>nyínā</b>	‘hold’	<b>nyá</b>	‘tie’
	<b>ki-nyí</b>	‘name’	<b>ɔ-nyó</b>	‘smoke’
	<b>ɔ-nyí</b>	‘firewood’	<b>bu-nyā</b>	‘sickness’
	<b>e-nye</b>	‘male’	<b>nyónɔ (aga)</b>	‘rear (animal)’
38. /ŋ/	<b>ŋa</b>	‘eat’	<b>kóŋ</b>	‘very much’
	<b>kí-dŋíŋá</b>	‘food’	<b>kuŋa</b>	‘right (side)’
	<b>gběŋgbě</b>	‘praying mantis’	<b>ŋwĩ</b>	‘drink’

Apart from /ɲ/ all the other nasals occur in a sequence of homorganic nasals plus an obstruent and they are homorganic with the consonant that occurs after them. Consider the following examples:

39.	<b>ká-ŋpiesí</b>	‘armpit’
	<b>túŋgbá</b>	‘antelop’
	<b>ká-ŋtsyótsyóé</b>	‘bladder’

There are certain nouns whose roots begin with the syllable **yĩ**.<sup>14</sup> In rapid speech, these syllables get deleted and are replaced by /n/ which is homorganic with the following consonant. The following examples are illustrative of this point:

40.	<b>ká-yĩtsě</b>	→	<b>ká-ñtsě</b>	‘calabash’	<b>ā-yĩsĩ</b>	→	<b>ā-ñsĩ</b>	‘sand’
	<b>á-yĩdzi</b>	→	<b>á-ñdzi</b>	‘mother-in-law’	<b>o-yĩtsí</b>	→	<b>o-ñtsí</b>	‘hawk’
	<b>ki-yĩtɔ</b>	→	<b>ki-ñtɔ</b>	‘nose’	<b>a-yĩsɔ</b>	→	<b>a-ñsɔ</b>	‘young man’

<sup>14</sup> A similar process happens in the plural noun **awɔhũ** ‘eyes’ where the initial syllable of the root **wɔ** is elided and the nasalisation docks on the prefix yielding **āhũ**. No further instances of this process have been encountered.

### 2.2.5 Liquids

/l/ is an alveolar lateral and it has a wide distribution. It occurs in word-initial position and between vowels. It occurs with all the vowels in the language. /l/ also occurs in consonant clusters as the second consonant after non-coronal consonants. In addition, it occurs syllable-finally in expressions like **al** ‘3SG.IND’ (see § 2.1.2). The examples below illustrate the distribution of /l/:

41. /l/	<b>lɪlā</b>	‘lose (something)’	<b>bu-lu</b>	‘wine, beer’
	<b>bulē</b>	‘take off (cloth)’	<b>ká-vlɔ</b>	‘towel’
	<b>ke-kplīm</b>	‘palm (of hand)’	<b>bú-glebē</b>	‘wing’
	<b>o-blō</b>	‘anger’	<b>ku-bhluxɔé</b>	‘spoon, ladle’

[r] is a voiced alveolar trill. It is an allophone of /l/. They are in complementary distribution when they occur as the second C in CC sequences. /l/ occurs after [-coronal] sounds whereas [r] occurs after alveolar and palatal consonants. Some loanwords and ideophones do not conform to this pattern. The only occurrence of [r] in word-initial position in my data is in the ideophone **ridjɪdɪdɪ** ‘continuously, for a long time’. [r] occurs word internally. In intervocalic or syllable-initial position, it occurs with the vowels /i/, /u/, /a/ or /u/. During fast speech, one is likely to hear some speakers say, for example, **ririiriiri** instead of **ridjɪdɪdɪ** ‘continuously, for a long time’ or **áro st...** in place of **ádɔ st...** ‘s/he said that...’. It appears that in this intervocalic position, [r] is historically /d/. Thus in this environment, [d] and [r] are free alternants. For example,

42. [r]	<b>zurú</b>	‘steal’	<b>tu-rá</b>	‘sleep’
	<b>tsirí</b>	‘be.on’	<b>o-drekekpú</b>	‘corner’
	<b>trō</b>	‘spin (thread)’	<b>ɔ-tsɪ</b>	‘foot’
	<b>frɪdɪ</b>	‘white’	<b>ɔ-brahunɪ</b>	‘sugar-cane’
	<b>trɔ</b>	‘plan (v)’	<b>ka-tsrukɔ</b>	‘foot’

### 2.2.6 Glides

/y/ is a palatal glide and it occurs with all the nine vowels in the language in stem or syllable-initial position as well as intervocalically. This is exemplified below:

43. /y/	<b>yékē</b>	‘swell’	<b>yě</b>	‘split, break’
	<b>á-yakpá</b>	‘bush’	<b>yí</b>	‘kill’
	<b>yofoe yi</b>	‘a white man’	<b>yukɔ</b>	‘take’
	<b>yú</b>	‘weave (cloth)’	<b>yúyɔ</b>	‘damp, cool’

/w/ is a labial-velar glide. It occurs in stem-initial position and intervocalically as illustrated in (44).

44. /w/	<b>wólɪ</b>	‘fall’	<b>tu-wá</b>	‘grass’
---------	-------------	--------	--------------	---------

<b>welě</b>	‘moon, month’	<b>kí-wī</b>	‘day’
<b>wulú</b>	‘bathe’	<b>tí-wulé</b>	‘guts, intestines’

/y/ and /w/ also occur as second consonants in CC clusters (see § 2.1.5).

It is important to note that Tafi has some labialised sounds which occur in the environment of unrounded vowels: /fw/ is a labialised voiceless labio-dental fricative; /tsyw/ is a labialised voiceless palatal affricate; /xw/ is a labialised voiceless velar fricative; [ɣw] is a labialised velar nasal and /hw/ is a labialised voiced glottal fricative. Each of these sounds is illustrated below.

45. /fw/      **fwě**      ‘breathe’  
               **ɔfufwě**      ‘spirit’  
               /tʃw/ (tsyw)      **tsywĩ**      ‘tear (v)’  
                                   **otsywĩ**      ‘clitoris’  
               /xw/      **kíxwĩ**      ‘work (n)’  
                                   **xwĩ**      ‘satisfy’
46. /hw/      **sáhwĩ**      ‘spider’  
                   **hwa**      ‘move’  
               [ɣw]      **ɔɣwã**      ‘side (of body)’  
                                   **ɣwĩ**      ‘drink’

## 2.3 Vowels

Vowels are sounds produced without obstruction or audible friction in the vocal tract. Tafi has a nine (9) oral vowel system as presented in Table 2.2 below. These vowels are divided into two (2) sets based on the position of the tongue root. That is, the tongue root can either be advanced, [+ATR], in which case, it is pushed forward or unadvanced, [-ATR], that is, it is retracted. Thus, as shown in Table 2.2 below, the vowels / i, e, o, u / are [+ATR] while / ɪ, ɛ, ɔ, ʊ / are [-ATR]. In Tafi, the [ATR] value of the (initial) vowel of the noun or verb stem determines the [ATR] value of the vowel of the prefix. A stem-initial /a/ vowel triggers a -ATR prefix vowel however a prefix with an /a/ vowel can occur with a ±ATR vowel (see examples (65) – (67) under § 2.3.1). This co-occurrence restriction on vowels in words which is referred to as vowel harmony is discussed in detail in §2.3.1.

Table 2.2 Tafi Vowel Phonemes

	Front		Central	Back	
	[+ATR]	[-ATR]		[+ATR]	[-ATR]
High	i	ɪ		u	ʊ
Mid	e	ɛ		o	ɔ
Low			a		

The vowels are described and exemplified below.

/i/ is an advanced high front unrounded vowel. Examples are:

- |     |              |         |              |         |
|-----|--------------|---------|--------------|---------|
| 47. | <b>e-tsí</b> | ‘bee’   | <b>i-nī</b>  | ‘soups’ |
|     | <b>i-lí</b>  | ‘necks’ | <b>ki-wí</b> | ‘sun’   |

/ɪ/ is an unadvanced high front unrounded vowel. Examples are:

- |     |              |            |             |        |
|-----|--------------|------------|-------------|--------|
| 48. | <b>ka-wī</b> | ‘axe’      | <b>fātī</b> | ‘peel’ |
|     | <b>ɔ-nyí</b> | ‘firewood’ | <b>pī</b>   | ‘want’ |

/e/ is an advanced mid front unrounded vowel. The following are examples:

- |     |             |         |              |          |
|-----|-------------|---------|--------------|----------|
| 49. | <b>she</b>  | ‘grow’  | <b>é-kū</b>  | ‘yams’   |
|     | <b>e-lé</b> | ‘teeth’ | <b>e-kpú</b> | ‘corpse’ |

/ɛ/ is an unadvanced mid front unrounded vowel. Examples are:

- |     |               |         |                 |                |
|-----|---------------|---------|-----------------|----------------|
| 50. | <b>gugɔ́é</b> | ‘last’  | <b>kí-lē</b>    | ‘wind’         |
|     | <b>yě</b>     | ‘break’ | <b>ki-shɔ́é</b> | ‘small basket’ |

/a/ is a low central unrounded vowel. This vowel is illustrated in (51):

- |     |              |         |             |          |
|-----|--------------|---------|-------------|----------|
| 51. | <b>ká-pā</b> | ‘hoe’   | <b>á-dá</b> | ‘sister’ |
|     | <b>ɔ-dá</b>  | ‘metal’ | <b>á-kā</b> | ‘father’ |

/ɔ/ is an unadvanced mid back rounded vowel. Examples are:

- |     |               |         |           |        |
|-----|---------------|---------|-----------|--------|
| 52. | <b>ɔ-tɔmí</b> | ‘beard’ | <b>dɔ</b> | ‘say’  |
|     | <b>ɔ-gɔbɔ</b> | ‘navel’ | <b>tɔ</b> | ‘cook’ |

/o/ is an advanced mid back rounded vowel. The examples in (53) illustrate this vowel:

- |     |             |        |              |          |
|-----|-------------|--------|--------------|----------|
| 53. | <b>o-nī</b> | ‘soup’ | <b>xogo</b>  | ‘gather’ |
|     | <b>o-lí</b> | ‘neck’ | <b>o-blɔ</b> | ‘anger’  |

/u/ is an unadvanced high back rounded vowel. Examples are:

- |     |              |               |                  |                    |
|-----|--------------|---------------|------------------|--------------------|
| 54. | <b>bu-tɔ</b> | ‘ear, potash’ | <b>tu-wulē</b>   | ‘guts, intestines’ |
|     | <b>bu-wā</b> | ‘medicine’    | <b>bú-shúshɔ</b> | ‘urine’            |

/u/ is an advanced high back rounded vowel. Examples are:

55. **dzynosũ** ‘blood’                      **bú** ‘remove’  
**tsú** ‘dig’                                      **o-kuku** ‘elbow’

The examples in (56) illustrate some near minimal pairs:

56. SOUND                      MINIMAL PAIRS
- |          |              |            |              |               |
|----------|--------------|------------|--------------|---------------|
| a. i / ɪ | <b>yí</b>    | ‘kill’     | <b>yí</b>    | ‘3SG.IND’     |
| b. ɪ / e | <b>ɪ-nyí</b> | ‘firewood’ | <b>e-nyí</b> | ‘names’       |
| c. u / i | <b>tsú</b>   | ‘dig’      | <b>tsí</b>   | ‘die’         |
| d. ʊ / a | <b>bu-ya</b> | ‘farm’     | <b>ba-ya</b> | ‘farms’       |
| e. a / u | <b>tá</b>    | ‘shoot’    | <b>tú</b>    | ‘pound’       |
| f. ɪ / u | <b>vɪ</b>    | ‘go’       | <b>vu</b>    | ‘catch’       |
| g. ɔ / i | <b>só</b>    | ‘hoe (v)’  | <b>sí</b>    | ‘run’         |
| h. a / ɔ | <b>má</b>    | ‘divide’   | <b>mó</b>    | ‘suck breast’ |
| i. o / i | <b>o-lí</b>  | ‘neck’     | <b>i-lí</b>  | ‘necks’       |

All these vowels except /o/ have counterparts which are inherently nasalised. They do not necessarily have the nasalised feature because they occur in the vicinity of nasal consonants. So far, only one instance of /ẽ/ has been found. The nasal vowels are illustrated in Table 2.3 and exemplified in (57).

Table 2.3. Tafi nasal vowels

	Front		Central	Back	
	[+ATR]	[-ATR]		[+ATR]	[-ATR]
High	ĩ	ĩ		ũ	ũ
Mid	ẽ	ẽ			õ
Low			ã		

- 57a. **ĩ** **gbĩĩ** ‘heavy’; **kpĩ** ‘plenty’  
b. **ĩ** **ɲwĩ** ‘drink’; **a-yĩsĩ** ‘a young man’; **ã-yĩsĩ** ‘sand’; **tsywĩ** ‘tear’  
c. **ẽ** **tẽ** ‘slash’  
d. **ẽ** **ɔ-shẽ** ‘branch’; **ka-hlĩẽ** ‘deer’; **okĩẽ** ‘soap’  
e. **ã** **tã** ‘chew; burn (intr.)’; **ká-sālã** ‘tortoise’; **kpã** ‘fade’  
f. **õ** **náwõ** ‘hasten’; **fõ** ‘defecate’; **sõ** ‘be equal’; **kí-sõ** ‘maggot’  
g. **ũ** **wũnõ** ‘you (pl.)’; **kí-wũwĩ** ‘star’; **ká-wũwĩ** ‘broom’; **tɪ-wũlĩ** ‘rubbish’  
h. **ũ** **wũsẽ** ‘repair’; **xũĩ** ‘as for’; **kúmũ** ‘cover’; **lũku** ‘smell’

In the next section, I discuss vowel harmony which is important in accounting for the different types of prefixes that occur with stems of nouns or verbs.



### 2.3.1 Vowel harmony

Vowel harmony in a language can be stem-controlled in the sense that the initial vowel of the stem triggers harmony to its left (Clements 2000). The vowel harmony system of Tafi is stem-controlled and the ATR value of the initial root vowel spreads to the prefixes of a word and in line with this it is possible to find polysyllabic words whose vowels do not belong to the same set. Thus, the stem of words always remains the same but the prefix may have varied forms. Vowels in prefixes have two forms depending on the [ATR] value of the initial vowel of the stem. As already stated, vowels in Tafi are divided into two harmonising sets ( $\pm$ ATR) as shown in Table 2.2 above such that if the initial vowel in the stem is a [+ATR] vowel, then one of the following vowels will be chosen as the prefix vowel: /i/, /e/, /o/, or /u/. On the other hand, if it is [-ATR], then the vowel in the prefix will either be /ɨ/, /ɛ/, /ɔ/ or /ʊ/. Hence, the vowel harmony system accounts for the alternate prefixes in (58a) and (58b), (59a) and (59b), (60a) and (60b), (61a) and (61b), and (62a) and (62b).

58a.	<b>á-nyí</b>	‘man’
58b.	<b>e-pí</b>	‘mosquito’
59a.	<b>kí-níkí</b>	‘tongue’
59b.	<b>ki-lé</b>	‘tooth’
60a.	<b>ka-hlɔ́ɛ</b>	‘deer’
60b.	<b>ke-sisí</b>	‘mortar’
61a.	<b>ɔ-tómí</b>	‘beard’
61b.	<b>o-kuku</b>	‘elbow’
62a.	<b>bu-tsé</b>	‘monkeys’
62b.	<b>bu-pā</b>	‘hoes’

As shown in the vowel chart in Table 2.2, it is obvious that, unlike the other vowels, /a/ occurs with vowels from either set. Its occurrence with +ATR stem vowels is illustrated by the examples in (63). (63d) and (63f) are loanwords from Ewe. (64a) exemplifies the vowel /a/ occurring with -ATR stem vowels.

63a.	<b>ka-kudzɔgɛ</b>	‘dog’
63b.	<b>ká-ɲpiesí</b>	‘armpit’
63c.	<b>a-gudũ</b>	‘bear’
63d.	<b>a-bhlendɛ</b>	‘pineapple’
63e.	<b>a-zĩ</b>	‘groundnut’
63f.	<b>a-hosĩ</b>	‘widow’

The vowel /a/ behaves asymmetrically with regard to vowel harmony. Whereas /a/ may precede vowels from either set as shown by the examples in (63) above and (64a) below, it selects only [-ATR] prefixes when it is the (initial) root vowel in the stem as shown in (64b).

- |      |                |            |      |               |           |
|------|----------------|------------|------|---------------|-----------|
| 64a. | <b>á-nyí</b>   | ‘man’      | 64b. | <b>bu-pá</b>  | ‘house’   |
|      | <b>ka-hlóé</b> | ‘antelope’ |      | <b>ɔ-zakó</b> | ‘shelter’ |
|      | <b>a-núvɔ̃</b> | ‘child’    |      | <b>ki-kpá</b> | ‘knot’    |
|      | <b>a-bó</b>    | ‘termite’  |      | <b>ɪ-tá</b>   | ‘three’   |

The behaviour of /a/ as shown in the examples above is characteristic of many other vowel harmony systems including Akan (Clements 1981, Dolphyne, 1988). In Tafi, nouns with an /a/ prefix vowel and noun stems with a [-ATR] initial vowel are as common as those with a prefix vowel which is [-ATR] and /a/ occurring as the initial vowel of the noun stem as illustrated in (64a) and (64b) respectively. Nouns which have a [+ATR] stem-initial vowel with /a/ as the prefix vowel are very few, and include loanwords as shown in (63).

The distribution of /a/ in nominal prefixes as well as root-initial syllables in nouns in Tafi is summed up in (65) – (68): In (65), we have a (C)V prefix with /a/ as the prefix vowel and a root-initial CV-syllable with a -ATR vowel. In (66), the vowel of the root-initial (C)V-syllable is [+ATR] and the prefix vowel is /a/. In (67), the prefix vowel is [-ATR] in value while the initial vowel of the root is /a/. Finally, as shown in (68), Tafi does not have nouns whose prefix vowel is [+ATR] with the initial vowel of the root being /a/. It should be noted that in nominal prefixes, subject pronouns and agreement markers, /a/ alternates with /e/ as its +ATR counterpart (see Chapter 3).

- |     |                               |            |     |                                |         |
|-----|-------------------------------|------------|-----|--------------------------------|---------|
| 65. | <b>(C)a-CV<sub>-ATR</sub></b> |            | 66. | <b>(C)a-CV<sub>+ATR</sub></b>  |         |
|     | <b>á-kā</b>                   | ‘father’   |     | <b>a-gudũ</b>                  | ‘bear’  |
|     | <b>ka-tsrukpó</b>             | ‘foot’     |     | <b>ká-kudzɔgě</b>              | ‘dog’   |
|     | <b>ká-gbó</b>                 | ‘squirrel’ |     | <b>á-feití</b>                 | ‘fifty’ |
| 67. | <b>(C)V<sub>-ATR</sub>-Ca</b> |            | 68. | <b>*(C)V<sub>+ATR</sub>-Ca</b> |         |
|     | <b>ɔ-ma</b>                   | ‘town’     |     |                                |         |
|     | <b>bu-pá</b>                  | ‘house’    |     |                                |         |
|     | <b>ki-plă</b>                 | ‘buttocks’ |     |                                |         |

Subject pronouns also harmonise with the initial vowel of the verb stem. The examples in (69) illustrate this. The vowel in the verb **tú** ‘pound’ is [+ATR] while that of **tɔ̃** ‘cook’ is [-ATR] so the vowel of the subject pronoun they take is [+ATR] and [-ATR] respectively.

- |         |             |         |         |              |        |
|---------|-------------|---------|---------|--------------|--------|
| 69a.    | <b>tú</b>   | ‘pound’ | 69b.    | <b>tɔ̃</b>   | ‘cook’ |
| Sing. 1 | <b>í-tú</b> |         | Sing. 1 | <b>í-tɔ̃</b> |        |

	2	<b>ó-tú</b>		2	<b>ó-tó</b>
	3	<b>é-tú</b>		3	<b>á-tó</b>
Plural	1	<b>bú-tú</b>	Plural	1	<b>bó-tó</b>
	2	<b>no-tú</b>		2	<b>no-tó</b>
	3	<b>bé-tú</b>		3	<b>bá-tó</b>

When the initial vowel in the verb stem is any of the following [+ATR] vowels /i, e, o, or u/, the vowel of the pronoun is realised as a [+ATR] vowel as in (69a) and when the initial vowel of the verb stem is [-ATR], i.e., /ɪ, ɛ, a, ɔ, or ʊ/, the vowel of the pronoun is realised as [-ATR] as in (69b).

The forms of the preverb markers are also determined by the ATR feature of the initial syllable of the verb root. The sentences in (70) and (71) exemplify variants of the future marker in Tafi. Moreover, apart from ATR vowel harmony there is also rounding harmony triggered by the 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronouns – **ó** ‘2SG’ and **no** ‘2PL’ which spreads as far as to the last preverb before the verb stem as illustrated in (71a) and (71b) (see Chapter 7 on preverb markers). Whereas the initial vowels of noun and verb roots trigger harmony to the left, in the sentences in (71a) and (71b), the second person singular subject triggers harmony to the right.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>70a. Ábató ásí.<br/> <b>á-ba-tó</b>                      <b>á-sí.</b><br/>         3SG-FUT-cook    CM-rice<br/>         ‘S/he will cook rice.’</p> | <p>70b. Ébetú mankaní.<br/> <b>é-be-tú</b>                      <b>mankaní.</b><br/>         3SG-FUT-pound cocoyam<br/>         ‘S/he will pound cocoyam.’</p>                                    |
| <p>71a. Óbotá ásí.<br/> <b>ó-bo-tá</b>                      <b>á-sí.</b><br/>         2SG-FUT-eat CM-rice<br/>         ‘You will eat rice.’</p>       | <p>71b. Óbot’ ósíí.<br/> <b>ó-bo-té</b>                      <b>o-sí</b>                      <b>ní.</b><br/>         2SG-FUT-slash    CM-tree    DEF<br/>         ‘You will slash the tree.’</p> |

## 2.4 Tone

Tone plays a significant role in Tafi and many other African languages. Ford observes that “the Central-Togo languages present some of the most complex data in this area of grammar” (Kropp Dakubu and Ford 1988:128). This observation was made after he had worked at length on the area of intonation in different languages belonging to five language families and also after working extensively on the tone system of Avatime to which he devotes several pages in his thesis (Ford 1971). The tone system of Tafi presents several complications but only the essential features of tone are discussed here. The Tafi tone system requires further investigation.

In connected speech in Tafi, both level and contour tones occur. It has three level tones: Low (L), Mid (M) and High (H). In addition to the three levels, there are

gliding tones which are phonetically realised on the peak of one syllable. There are three falling tones: High-Mid (HM), High-Low (HL) and Mid-Low (ML) and two rising tones: Low-Mid (LM) and Low-High (LH). The contour tones are marked as ML, HM etc., indicating their beginning and end points. The notational conventions used for marking tones are as follows:

H	´	(acute accent)
M	-	(macron)
L	unmarked or ` on nasals	(grave accent)
Rising	LM ˘ or LH ˘	(grave accent and macron (LM) or hacek (LH))
Falling	HM ˆ or HL ˆ or ML ˘	(acute accent and macron (HM) or circumflex (HL) or macron and grave accent (ML)).

Syllable boundaries are marked by a dot between the two letters used to represent the tones. For instance, L.H is a Low-High sequence on two separate syllables while LH represents a Low-High contour on one syllable.

Tone in Tafi functions both lexically and syntactically. Lexically, differences in tone on a word result in differences in meaning as shown in the examples in (72) and (73). The examples in (72) are verbs whereas those in (73) are nouns.

72.	<b>tú</b>	‘pound’	<b>tū</b>	‘beat (a person)’
	<b>yí</b>	‘kill’	<b>yī</b>	‘resemble’
	<b>yó</b>	‘be cold’	<b>yɔ</b>	‘sharpen (knife)’
	<b>bú</b>	‘remove’	<b>bu</b>	‘respect’
	<b>yúkū</b>	‘(be) full’	<b>yūkū</b>	‘vomit’
73.	<b>ki-lé</b>	‘tooth’	<b>ki-lě</b>	‘lizard’
	<b>ki-mǔ</b>	‘breast’	<b>ki-mǔ</b>	‘rubber, gum’
	<b>kí-fū</b>	‘fear’	<b>ki-fū</b>	‘light’
	<b>ki-kpǎ</b>	‘fish’	<b>ki-kpǎ</b>	‘knot’

For the syntactic function of tone, see section 2.4.2 for more details.

#### 2.4.1 Tone patterns in verbs and nouns

The tone patterns found on monosyllabic verb stems can be any of the following: L, M, H, LH, LM and HM. The examples in (74) are illustrations of these patterns:

74a.	Low tone			
	<b>mɔ</b>	‘see’	<b>bho</b>	‘beat (drum)’
	<b>ɔɔ</b>	‘say’	<b>hɔ</b>	‘grind’

	<b>ge</b>	‘row, drive’	<b>gba</b>	‘sweep’
	<b>sho</b>	‘stab’	<b>dzi</b>	‘buy’
74b.	Mid tone			
	<b>bō</b>	‘crow’	<b>nī</b>	‘extinguish’
	<b>fū</b>	‘blow (of wind)’	<b>hū</b>	‘hit’
	<b>nī</b>	‘enlarge, widen’	<b>kpū</b>	‘hide’
	<b>shī</b>	‘leave’	<b>wū</b>	‘climb’
74c.	High tone			
	<b>ná</b>	‘be perfect’	<b>bú</b>	‘remove’
	<b>dé</b>	‘come from’	<b>ká</b>	‘wring clothes’
	<b>kú</b>	‘arrive’	<b>tsí</b>	‘die’
	<b>tsú</b>	‘dig’	<b>yú</b>	‘weave’
74d.	Low-high Tone			
	<b>flǎ</b>	‘overtake, pass (by)’	<b>fwě</b>	‘breathe’
	<b>srǎ</b>	‘smear (pomade)’	<b>yě</b>	‘break, smash’
	<b>trǒ</b>	‘spin (thread), twist’	<b>tsǐ</b>	‘sneeze’
74e.	Low-Mid			
	<b>nū</b>	‘hear (in the present)’		
	<b>bā</b>	‘come (in the present)’		
74f.	High-Mid tone			
	<b>pī</b>	‘want, desire, look for’		
	<b>fī</b>	‘push’		
	<b>tī</b>	‘throw’		
	<b>kplā</b>	‘mark out (ground)’		

Disyllabic verb stems may carry any of the following tones: L.L, L.M, L.H, M.M, M.H, and H.M. The following are examples:

75a.	Low-Low	
	<b>xogo</b>	‘gather, accumulate’
	<b>vuno</b>	‘hold’
	<b>lūku</b>	‘smell (sth)’
75b.	Low-Mid	
	<b>bhufī</b>	‘do’
	<b>danī</b>	‘open’
	<b>dzikī</b>	‘forget’
	<b>bhusā</b>	‘stir’
	<b>yekē</b>	‘get, receive’

- 75c. Low-High  
**zurú** ‘steal’  
**tsokú** ‘enter’  
**wanyá** ‘sprinkle’  
**tukú** ‘carry’
- 75d. Mid-Mid  
**shūkū** ‘shake’  
**wūlū** ‘blow with mouth’  
**bālī** ‘spill (liquid)’  
**yūkū** ‘vomit (v)’  
**prūdū** ‘fly’  
**tsyūrū** ‘wipe off (excreta)’
- 75e. High-Mid  
**bākā** ‘remember’  
**bīsī** ‘ask’  
**dzyínī** ‘break’  
**dzyín̩** ‘marry (a man)’  
**fātī** ‘carve, peel’

There are two disyllabic verbs, **wl̩m̩**<sup>15</sup> ‘write’ and **xátsá** ‘bend’, whose tone patterns are HL.M and H.H respectively. **xátsá** ‘bend’ is a loanword from Ewe.

Tafi has very few trisyllabic verbs. So far, the trisyllabic verb stems that I have come across include:

76. **shɪɪɪ** ‘be slippery’ (L.L.L)  
**kpaplín̩** ‘lean against’ (L.H.M)  
**kpatón̩** ‘chase away’ (L.H.M)

**Shɪɪɪ** ‘be slippery’ is an ideophone which is used to describe the way a person slips and falls down. The verbs **kpaplín̩** ‘lean against’ and **kpatón̩** ‘chase away’ also seem to consist of two morphemes **kpa** and **plín̩** and **tón̩** respectively. **Plín̩** means ‘help, add’ and **tón̩** means ‘follow’. The meaning of **kpa** is not yet clear.

Most nouns have prefixes. These prefixes are made up of either V or CV syllables. Tones on the prefixes of nouns are either High or Low.<sup>16</sup> All the three level tones as well as the contour tones may occur in any position in the noun stem. A noun stem in Tafi is either monosyllabic or polysyllabic. This is illustrated in examples in (77) – (79). The examples in (77) illustrate prefix-less nouns, those in (78)

<sup>15</sup> Some speakers pronounce the word for ‘write’ as **ɲwl̩m̩**.

<sup>16</sup> So far, I have come across only one noun **ā-mī** ‘face’ whose prefix carries a HM tone.

illustrate nouns with V or CV prefixes with monosyllabic stems while the examples in (79) illustrate nouns with V or CV prefixes with polysyllabic stems. In (78) and (79), the first letter in the third column indicates the tone on the prefix.

77.	<b>doku</b>	‘turkey’	L.L
	<b>blaf</b>	‘pawpaw’	L.M
	<b>wolē</b>	‘moon’	L.LH
	<b>suká</b>	‘money’	L.H
	<b>dēkē</b>	‘crocodile’	M.M
	<b>Kpáyā</b>	‘God’	H.M
	<b>tédzyí</b>	‘donkey’	H.H
	<b>kpákpáxē</b>	‘duck’	H.H.M
	<b>túńgbá</b>	‘antelope’	H.H.H
	<b>hohlomuá</b>	‘grasshopper’	L.L.L.H
	<b>sāprádā</b>	‘onion’	M.HL.LH

Some loanwords are found among this group of nouns.

The tone on monosyllabic noun roots may be a level or a contour tone as illustrated in the examples below.

78.	<b>o-sí</b>	‘tree’	L.H
	<b>e-kle</b>	‘thatch’	L.L
	<b>ɔ-shě</b>	‘branch’	L.LH
	<b>o-gū</b>	‘root’	L.ML
	<b>a-nɔ̄</b>	‘person’	L.HM
	<b>á-kā</b>	‘father’	H.M
	<b>á-dá</b>	‘sister’	H.H
	<b>tu-pī</b>	‘excrement’	L.M
	<b>ki-lé</b>	‘tooth’	L.H
	<b>kí-kū</b>	‘yam’	H.M

The following are examples of tonal patterns found on polysyllabic noun stems.

79.	<b>o-bhoshi</b>	‘sheep’	L.L.L
	<b>ɔ-tsɪnī</b>	‘okra’	L.L.M
	<b>e-kusí</b>	‘chief’	L.L.H
	<b>a-núvɔ̄</b>	‘child’	L.H.M
	<b>i-shúpí</b>	‘skin’	L.H.H
	<b>a-tokpě</b>	‘hill (pl)’	L.L.LH
	<b>á-dɔyū</b>	‘weaver’	H.L.M
	<b>é-fūfū</b>	‘flower’	H.M.M
	<b>kí-būlí</b>	‘snail’	H.M.H
	<b>o-mumɔ̄é</b>	‘lemon’	L.L.L.H
	<b>ki-kpítsúkū</b>	‘owl’	L.LH.H.M

<b>kí-pósúkú</b>	‘testicle’	H.H.H.H
<b>o-sumúdúdú</b>	‘dust’	L.L.H.H.H
<b>kí-plúíměké</b>	‘pigeon’	H.H.H.M.H

#### 2.4.2 Tonal Morphemes

The difference between the present progressive and past progressive markers is indicated by tone. The progressive is formed by copying the vowel of the morpheme to which it is attached. The progressive morphemes are attached to the element that immediately precedes it. The present progressive is indicated by a high tone and the past progressive by a low tone. These tones are linked to the copied vowel. The sentences in (80) and (81) exemplify the present and past progressive markers respectively.

80. í-í-gā  
**í-í-gā**  
 1SG-PRSPROG-walk  
 ‘I am walking.’
81. í-t-ga  
**í-t-gā**  
 1SG-PSTPROG-walk  
 ‘I was walking.’

#### 2.4.3 Changes in tone

Tones of words in connected speech may be different from their tones they carry when they are said in isolation. These tones may be influenced by tones of preceding or following words. For instance, in NPs with modifiers, a final high tone on the noun spreads rightwards until the penultimate syllable of a nominal modifier when this modifier is a numeral or the interrogative quantifier as shown in (82b) and (83b) respectively. Concerning the numerals, this may not be a global rule. It works without exception for the spread onto the numeral ‘one’ but for the plural numbers it appears to be restricted to the **ba(a)-** and **a<sup>2</sup>-** classes (see Table 3.4 for illustration). In (82a) and (83a), there is no high tone spreading because the final tone of the noun is non-high.

- 82a. L.L                      L.L.H                      L.L                      L.L.H  
**a-ga**                      +                      **tedjìkpó**                      →                      **a-ga**                      **tedjìkpó**                      ‘one animal’
- 82b. H.L.H                      L.L.H                      H.L.H                      H.H.H  
**é-fleté**                      +                      **tedjìkpó**                      →                      **éfleté**                      **tédjìkpó**                      ‘one leopard’



- 83a. L.L.L      L.L.M      L.L.M      L.L.M  
       **baa-ga**    +    **tuashĩ**    → **baa-ga** **tuashĩ**    ‘how many animals?’
- 83b. H. L.H      L.L.M      H. L.H      H.H.M  
       **bé-fleté**    +    **tuashĩ**    → **bé-fleté** **tíashĩ**    ‘how many leopards?’

Also, when two vowels, i.e., the final and initial vowels of two words following each other, come together, one of them gets elided and in many cases, it is the first vowel. If the elided vowel has a high tone it spreads to the following vowel. The effect is if the following vowel has a [-high] it becomes high and if it is [+high] it stays high. The examples in (84) illustrate body-part possession while those in (85) illustrate two nouns following each other.

- 84a. H      L.H      H.H  
       **mí** + **olí**      → **m’olí**      ‘my neck’
- 84b. H      L.M      H.M  
       **yí** + **otsrĩ**      → **y’otsrĩ**      ‘his/her/its leg’
- 84c. H      L.H.H      H.H.H  
       **yí** + **ishúpí**      → **y’ishúpí**      ‘his/her/its skin’
- 85a. L.L.H      L.H      L.L.H.H  
       **otsuní** + **oní**    ‘okra’ + ‘soup’ → **otsun’óní**    ‘okra soup’
- 85b. L.L.H      L.H      L.L.H.H  
       **otsuní** + **eyí**    ‘okra’ + ‘seed’ → **otsun’éyí**    ‘okra seed’

In pronominal kinship possessive structures, the high-toned final vowel of the pronominal together with its tone are elided. If the prefix tone of the kinship term is high, it becomes low. If the prefix tone is low it stays low. The following examples illustrate this point.

- 86a. **mí** + **ákā**    ‘1SG.IND’ + ‘father’ → **m’aka**      ‘my father’
- 86b. **yí** + **éni**    ‘3SG.IND’ + ‘mother’ → **y’eni**      ‘his mother’
- 86c. **mí** + **ádzýā** ‘1SG.IND’ + ‘brother’ → **m’adzyā**    ‘my brother’
- 86d. **balí** + **ádá**    ‘3PL.IND’ + ‘sister’ → **bal’adá**    ‘their sister’

Contrary to what happens in the examples in (84) in which low tones on the prefixes of possessed nouns etc. are replaced by high tones of personal pronouns, in the examples in (86), high tones on the prefixes of kinship nouns are lowered when they occur after possessive pronouns.

## 2.5 Phonological processes

### 2.5.1 Deletion of consonants

In connected speech, initial consonants of prefixes (/b/ and /k/) or even whole prefixes are deleted. This is a case of simplification or erosion of noun class prefixes. Funke (1910) already observed this about Nyagbo-Tafi. This happens when compound nouns are being formed as illustrated in (87), when nouns occur after possessive pronouns as in (88), or when they occur in object position as in (89) and (90).

87. **bé-shēulu**<sup>17</sup> ‘palm wine’ ← **bé-shē** ‘local’ + **bu-lu** ‘drink’  
**be-tsuní** ‘honey’ ← **be-tsí** ‘bees’ + **bu-ní** ‘water’  
**bu-nietsukpú** ‘waterpot’ ← **bu-ní** ‘water’ + **ke-tsukpú** ‘pot’  
**sukūuya** ‘school farm’ ← **sukū** ‘school’ + **bu-ya** ‘farm’
88. **m’upá** ‘my house’ ← **mí** ‘1SG.IND’ + **bu-pá** ‘house’  
**bló ’eshí** ‘our stick’ ← **bló** ‘1PL.IND’ + **ki-shí** ‘stick’  
**kal’ugble** ‘its kennel’ ← **kalí** ‘3SG.IND’ + **bu-gble** ‘kennel’  
**y’uya** ‘his farm’ ← **yí** ‘3SG.IND’ + **bu-ya** ‘farm’
89. **bhui ’itokpú** ‘behead’ ← **bhui** ‘cut’ + **ki-tokpú** ‘head’  
**di ’uya** ‘farm (v)’ ← **di** ‘cultivate’ + **bu-ya** ‘farm’  
**vu ’ifú** ‘be hot’ ← **vu** ‘catch’ + **ki-fú** ‘fire’
- 90a. Ámā átó ’udzo.  
**Ámā á-tó bu-dzo**  
 Ámā SM-cook CM-palm.oil  
 ‘Ama prepared palm oil.’
- 90b. ányín ébúkú ’ulu.  
**á-nyí ní é-búkú bu-lu**  
 CM-man DEF SM-be.drunk CM-drink  
 ‘The man is drunk.’
- 90c. édzí ’íkū.  
**é-dzí kí-kū**  
 3SG-buy CM-yam  
 ‘S/he bought yam.’

---

<sup>17</sup> **beshelu** is also used by some speakers. In this case, the whole prefix of **bu-lu** ‘drink’ is deleted.

As can be seen in the sentences in (90), the initial consonants of the prefixes of the object pronouns are not realised. When I once tried to produce the same sentences with the complete prefix, my consultants reacted saying “if you speak like that, everybody will know you are a learner of the language or a stranger”. Moreover, if the full forms of these prefixes are used in such sentences, the native speakers’ judgment is that “the sentence is not wrong but that it is not how we say it”.

### 2.5.2 Vowel elision

Whenever two vowels (final and initial vowels of two words following each other) come together, one of the vowel gets elided. However, in careful speech, speakers do not always elide the vowels as is the case in (91d) which is an elicited sentence. In this sentence, neither the final vowel of the verb **némī** ‘bite’ nor the initial vowel of **áyadī** ‘farmer’ is elided. In the examples in (91a) - (91d), the (final) vowels of **Kofī**, **yí** ‘3SG’, **tá** ‘shoot’ and **é-blidzya** ‘snake’ have been deleted because they are followed by another vowel **a-** in (91a) and (91b) and by **o-** and **e-** in (91c) and (91d) respectively.

- 91a. Ámā Kof’ágbán̄.  
**Ámā Kofī á-gbán̄**  
 Ama Kofi SM-marry  
 ‘AMA Kofi married.’
- 91b. Ámā y’ágbán̄.  
**Ámā yí á-gbán̄**  
 Ama 3SG.IND SM-marry  
 ‘AMA he married.’
- 91c. át’ótún̄.  
**á-tá o-tú ní**  
 3SG-throw CM-gun DEF  
 ‘He shot the gun.’
- 91d. éblidzy’enémī áyadún̄.  
**é-blidzya é-némī á-yadī ní**  
 CM-snake SM-bite CM-farmer DEF  
 ‘A snake bit the farmer.’

Another example of vowel elision involves the definiteness marker. The full form of the definiteness or topic marker in Tafi is **ní** ‘DEF’/‘TOP’. Most often, its final vowel is elided in fast speech and the reduced form is attached to the word immediately preceding it. The tone carried by the deleted vowel, however, remains and it moves leftwards on to the alveolar nasal /**n**/ as shown in examples (91c) and (91d) above and also in (92) and (93) below.

92. **ba-ga ní** → **ba-gań** ‘the animals’  
**ba-ga gbıgblā ní** → **ba-ga gbıgblāń** ‘the big animals’  
**ba-ga gbıgblā tíábhā ní** → **ba-ga gbıgblā tíábhāń** ‘the two big animals’
- 93a. ányínúvǎēń éféké y’áfukpǎń  
**á-nyínúvǎē ní é-féké yí ba-fukpǎ ní**  
 CM-boy DEF SM-lift 3SG.IND CMPL-shoe DEF  
 ‘The boy lifted his shoes.’ (FS)
- 93b. ɔdʒń ótá.  
**ɔ-dʒ ní ɔ-tá**  
 CM-bell DEF SM-strike  
 ‘The bell has sounded.’

Also, most often, when the 1st person singular object pronoun **mí** ‘1SG.IND’ is cliticised to the verb its vowel gets elided and as it is with the definiteness marker, its tone shifts leftwards on to the bilabial nasal. This is illustrated in (94).

94. **tsiré mí** → **tsiréń** ‘tell me’  
**bísí mí** → **bísíń** ‘ask me’  
**tu mí** → **tuń** ‘beat me’  
**kasí mí** → **kasíń** ‘teach me’  
**kafú mí** → **kafúń** ‘praise me’

### 2.5.3 i/t-insertion

The process of **i/t**-insertion occurs after the deletion of the initial consonant **/k/** of the **ka-** class prefix of nouns or postpositions. The choice of **/i/** or **/t/** depends on the [ATR] value of the prefix vowel. The examples in (95) are made up of a noun and a postposition. Those in (96a) and (96b) consist of a verb and a postposition while in (96c) - (96e), we have a verb followed by a noun.

- 95a. **bu-túíábhā** ‘on a mountain’ ← **bu-tú** ‘mountain’ + **kábhā** ‘top’  
 95b. **kplǎíábhā** ‘on a table’ ← **kplǎ** ‘table’ + **kábhā** ‘top’  
 95c. **bú-vūiede** ‘behind a house’ ← **bú-vū** ‘house’ + **kede** ‘behind’  
 95d. **kplǎíésí** ‘under a table’ ← **kplǎ** ‘table’ + **kesí** ‘under’  
 95e. **bu-túíédé** ‘behind a mountain’ ← **bu-tú** ‘mountain’ + **kede** ‘behind’
- 96a. **ɲiabhā** ‘defeat’ ← **ɲa** ‘eat’ + **kábhā** ‘top’  
 96b. **ziesí** ‘sit down’ ← **za** ‘be.at:NPRES’ + **kesí** ‘down’  
 96c. **ɲiedzĩ** ‘be costly, dear’ ← **ɲa** ‘eat’ + **ke-dzĩ** ‘market’  
 96d. **tieyū** ‘fight a war’ ← **tá** ‘throw’ + **ké-yū** ‘war’  
 96e. **viepí** ‘go home’ ← **vi** ‘go’ + **ke-pí** ‘home’

After the **i/ɪ**-insertion, if the noun preceding a postposition has a final high tone, this high tone spreads rightwards on to the **i/ɪ** vowel that has been inserted and then onto the syllables of the postposition or noun that bear low tones until the penultimate syllable as illustrated in (95a) and (95d). In (96), after the prefix consonant **/k/** of the postposition or noun is deleted, the vowel of the verb also gets elided before the vowel **/i/** or **/ɪ/** is inserted. Furthermore, contrary to the high tone spreading in (95a) and (95d), in (96d), the high tone of the deleted vowel of the verb **tá** ‘throw’ is not maintained. Moreover, the high tone on the first syllable of the postposition in (96a) and of the noun in (96d) is also lowered.

#### 2.5.4 Vowel Rounding

In addition to [+ATR] vowel harmony, there are instances of rounding harmony in the language. Rounding harmony is triggered by the 2<sup>nd</sup> person subject pronouns and spreads to preverb markers. The morphemes **ba** and **za** in (97) and (98), for example, mark the future and repetitive respectively. The vowels in these markers assimilate the rounding feature of the vowel of the 2SG and 2PL subject pronouns as illustrated in the sentences in (97b), (98b) and (98c). The (a) sentences are examples with these markers occurring with other subject pronouns. In (98c), we have four preverb markers co-occurring. They are the repetitive, persistive, ‘again’ and future markers.

- 97a. Ábavɪ sukũ.  
**á-ba-vɪ**            **sukũ**  
 3SG-FUT-go school  
 ‘S/he will go to school.’
- 97b. Óbɔvɪ sukũ.  
**ó-bɔ-vɪ**            **sukũ**  
 2SG-FUT-go school  
 ‘You will go to school.’
- 98a. Azavɪ sukũ.  
**a-za-vɪ**            **sukũ**  
 3SG-REP-go school  
 ‘S/he went to school again.’
- 98b. Ózɔvɪ sukũ.  
**ó-zɔ-vɪ**            **sukũ**  
 2SG-REP-go school  
 ‘You went to school again.’
- 98c. Kliso, ɔzɔkɔvɪɔbɔŋwĩ ’ulu?

<b>kliso</b>	<b>ɔ-zɔ-kɔ-vlɔ-bɔ-ŋwĩ</b>	<b>bu-lu</b>
so	2SG-REP-PERS-again-FUT-drink	CM-drink
‘So, you are going to drink again?’		

### 2.5.5 Changes in vowel height/ quality

When two words follow each other and the first word ends with the vowel /a/ while the second word begins with a prefix whose vowel is /i/ or /u/, both vowels become /e/ as shown by the examples in (99). With the exception of (99a), in (99b) – (99e), the prefix consonant, /k/, of the following word is deleted first. After that, the vowel /a/ lowers the prefix vowel i/u in height to become /e/. Subsequently, the /e/ vowel of the verb or noun assimilates the /a/ vowel to become /e/.

99a.	<b>ŋe</b>	<b>'ekpá</b>	‘enjoy life’	←	<b>ŋa</b>	‘eat’	+	<b>ɪ-kpá</b>	‘life’
99b.	<b>ge</b>	<b>'edzɔ</b>	‘travel’	←	<b>ga</b>	‘walk’	+	<b>ki-dzɔ</b>	‘way’
99c.	<b>ŋe</b>	<b>'edɔ</b>	‘eat’	←	<b>ŋa</b>	‘eat’	+	<b>kí-dɔ</b>	‘thing’
99d.	<b>ɔ-dʒéshĩ</b>		‘metal stick’	←	<b>ɔ-dʒá</b>	‘metal’	+	<b>ki-shĩ</b>	‘stick’
99e.	<b>ɔ-hɛeshĩ</b>		‘in a company’	←	<b>ɔ-ha</b>	‘group’	+	<b>ki-shĩ</b>	‘midst’

Similarly, when the vowel /ɔ/ occurs in final position of a preceding word and it is followed by another word whose prefix vowel is /i/, the height of the /i/ vowel is lowered to /e/. In (100a) – (100c), the consonant /k/ of the prefix is, first of all, elided before the vowel /i/ is lowered to /e/.

100a.	<b>a-nɔ</b>	<b>'ɛvu</b>	‘a person’s stomach’	←	<b>a-nɔ</b>	‘person’	+	<b>ki-vu</b>	‘stomach’
100b.	<b>bɔ</b>	<b>'ɛzhuɛ</b>	‘blow a whistle’	←	<b>bɔ</b>	‘blow’	+	<b>ki-zhuɛ</b>	‘whistle’
100c.	<b>tɔ</b>	<b>'édɔ</b>	‘cook’	←	<b>tɔ</b>	‘cook’	+	<b>kí-dɔ</b>	‘thing’

### 2.5.6 [+ATR] feature assimilation

Vowels in a preceding word can assimilate the ATR features of vowels in the following word. This is illustrated by the example sentences in (101). (101a) is a proverb in which we have the verb **mɔ** ‘give birth, bear’ followed by the noun **eyĩ** ‘child’ and in (101b), the verb **tɔ** ‘cook, boil’ precedes the noun **elĩ** ‘palmnuts’. The [-ATR] vowel of these verbs becomes [+ATR] in the environment of the [+ATR] prefix vowel of the following noun. Also in (101c), we have an independent pronoun followed by a verb stem whose vowel is +ATR. In (101c), the final vowel of the independent pronoun is deleted and its initial vowel assimilates the +ATR feature of the following vowel (i.e., the vowel of the subject marker on the verb). In (101d), we have a matrix clause comprising a 2SG subject pronoun **o** and the verb **ti** ‘know’ (**ótĩ** ‘you know’) followed by the complementiser **sĩ** marked by the 2SG pronoun **ɔ** (**ɔsĩ**). The vowel of the verb **ti** ‘know’ is elided and the 2SG subject pronoun on this verb then assimilates the -ATR value of the subject marker on the complementiser.

- 101a. Kásālā 'tīmō eyí gɪ edeyí 'íbulí?  
**ká-sālā**      **ka-tí-m̩**      **e-yí**      **gɪ**  
 CM-tortoise SM-NEG1-bear CM-child REL  
**e-de-yí**      **kí-bulí**  
 3SG.DEP-ITIVE-resemble CM-snail  
 'The offspring of a tortoise will not resemble a snail.' (Proverbs #42)
- 101b. Ábató élin̩ ɔwōlago.  
**á-ba-tó**      **e-lí**      **ní**      **ɔ-wōlago**  
 3SG-FUT-cook CMPL-palmnut DEF CM-evening  
 'S/he will boil the palmnuts in the evening.'
- 101c. Ogugu tolí ol'óyí ní 'klí an̩.  
**o-gugu**      **to-lí**      **olí**      **ó-yí**      **ní**      **ɪ-klí**  
 CM-shout AM-INDEF 3SG.INDEF SM-sound LOC CM-there  
**an̩**  
 TOP  
 'There is a sound coming from there.'
- 101d. Klíso, ɔt'ɔsí an̩ kásālā ...  
**klíso**      **ó-ti**      **ɔ-sí**      **an̩**      **ká-sālā**  
 so 2SG-know SM-COMP NEGCL CM-tortoise  
 'That is why had it not been that tortoise ...' (Kásālā)

### 2.5.7 Compensatory lengthening

The process of compensatory lengthening occurs in contexts where whole prefixes or syllables of, for instance, some nouns in the **bu-** classes, other nouns and the verb **yuk̩** 'take' get elided in connected speech. Also, when interrogative pronouns are formed out of the interrogative quantifier **-shí** 'how many/much' they usually have two forms, a long and a short form. These interrogative pronouns are formed by prefixing the independent pronouns of the various noun classes to the interrogative quantifier together with its agreement prefix. In the short form, the root of the independent pronoun is elided with the prefix remaining. This deletion is compensated for by lengthening the prefix vowel as shown in (102a) and (102b) (see chapter 3, § 3.2.2.4 for further discussion). With regard to the verb **yuk̩** 'take', in fast speech, speakers at times elide its first syllable and then the vowel of the morpheme immediately preceding it may be lengthened as illustrated in (102c). Similarly, the **bu/bu-** prefix of some nouns in the **bu-** classes also gets elided in rapid speech and then the (final) vowel of the preceding word is lengthened. In the sentences in (102d) and (102e), the vowel of the verbs has been lengthened after the deletion of the initial syllable (102d) and the prefix (102e) of the following word.

- 102a. **ulí tífíshĩ** → **uí-tífíshĩ** ‘how many (of them)?’ (i- class)  
 102b. **alí tááshĩ** → **aa-tááshĩ** ‘how many (of them)?’ (a<sup>2</sup>- class)

102c. ... **ká** **ɔ-yíko** **ɔ-balı** **ɔ-kpí** **gazé** **gbıgbılǎ**  
 then 2SG-take SM-pour SM-put.into metal.pot big  
**ní kumu**  
 DEF in  
 ‘... then you pour (it) into the big metal pot.’

102d. **Kofí á-ɲa fufuo**  
 Kofí SM-eat fufu  
 ‘Kofi ate fufu.’

102e. **á-za bu-pá kumu kí-wí í-lílíní**  
 3SG-stay CM-house inside CM-day AM-DEM  
 ‘He stayed at home on that day.’

### 2.5.8 Vowel Coalescence

Vowel coalescence is a process in which vowels which were originally distinguishable from each other merge together. In Tafi, this process occurs at morpheme boundaries where two contiguous vowels fuse into a different vowel to which none of the original two are directly related in terms of vowel quality. This can thus be represented as V1 + V2 = V3 where a vowel that ends a preceding word (V1) and a vowel that begins the following word (V2) coalesce into a single vowel (V3) with a different quality. In my corpus, all cases of coalescence involve **a** as V1 and **i/i** as V2 resulting in **e** as V3. V2 could be a prefix vowel or it could result from the deletion of an initial consonant of a CV syllable such as the consonant **k** in **kumu** ‘inside’ as in example (103a). Vowel coalescence also occurs when the diminutive suffix **-i/i** is attached to a noun whose final vowel is **a** yielding **-e** as shown in (103b).

- 103a. **bu-ya** ‘farm’ + **kumu** ‘inside’ → **bu-yem** ‘in a farm’  
 103b. **ki-pidzya** ‘CM-goat’ + **-i** ‘DIM’ → **ki-pidzye** ‘a small goat’



## 2.6 Loanwords

Loanwords in Tafi are mainly from inland Ewe<sup>18</sup> in particular, with some few from Akan and English. Heine (1968:131) observes that the main source of borrowing for the southern and eastern Togo Remnant languages is Ewe while for their counterparts on the western side it is Twi. In view of the fact that the contact between the Baagbo and the Ewes is intense, the flow of borrowing from Ewe seems to be greater than from Akan and English. Heine (ibid) also notes that loanwords from other European languages like Portuguese and Dutch found in these languages entered them through Ewe and Twi which are lingua francae. In Tafi, as in Nyagbo, Logba and Avatime, Ewe and English are used as a means of instruction, in schools, in churches, hospitals, markets as well as mass media - radio, TV, and newspapers.

Usually, when a language borrows from another, the ensuing effect on the borrowing language is that there is either loss of linguistic features, addition of features, or replacement of old native linguistic features by new interference features. In the case of Tafi, for instance, in the phonology, we find that the voiceless bilabial fricative /ɸ/ which was previously not in the language got introduced into it as a result of borrowing from Ewe. This is illustrated by the words **afu** ‘sea’ and **Abuifé** which is an Ewe appellation for **Ofú** one of the Tafi communities.

Also, some nouns borrowed into the language are allocated to certain noun classes because their prefixes bear phonological resemblance to either the singular or the plural prefix of that class. Some of these prefixes are maintained while others are modified. For example, the prefixes of the borrowed nouns in (104a) – (104c) seem to bear some phonological resemblance to the plural prefixes of the **ku-/a<sup>2</sup>**-singular/plural and **o-/i-** singular/plural classes while the prefixes of those in (104d) and (104e) also sound like the singular prefix of the **o-/i-** class. The singular form of the loanwords in (104a), (104b), and (104c) are assigned the prefixes **ku-**, **ɔ-**, and **o-** respectively by backformation whereas the plural forms of those in (104d) and (104e) are assigned the prefix **ɪ-** and **i-**, also by backformation.

Tafi				Source language			
104a.	<b>a-kpǎ</b>	‘fish (pl)’	<	Ewe	<b>akpà</b>	‘fish’	
104b.	<b>ɪ-gla</b>	‘jaw (pl)’	<	Ewe	<b>e-glā</b>	‘jaw’	
104c.	<b>i-tú</b>	‘gun (pl)’	<	Ewe	<b>e-tú</b>	‘gun’	
104d.	<b>ɔ-ma</b>	‘town, village’	<	Akan	<b>ɔmán</b>	‘state’	
104e.	<b>o-frákaá</b>	‘flag’	<	Akan	<b>ɔfrǎŋkaá</b>	‘flag’	

---

<sup>18</sup> The inland Ewe dialects are the Ewe varieties spoken in Kpando, Anfoega and Ve.

Moreover, when loanwords are adopted into the language, there may be changes in the vowels and consonants of some of these words as exemplified in (105) below. Some oral vowels are nasalised and vice versa as illustrated in (104a) and (104b) above as well as in (105b).

105a.	<b>a-fukpǎ</b>	<	<b>a-fǒkpǎ</b>	‘shoe’	(Ewe)
105b.	<b>ɪ-hě</b>	<	<b>e-hě</b>	‘knife’	(Ewe)
105c.	<b>ɪ-só</b>	<	<b>e-só</b>	‘horse’	(Ewe)
105d.	<b>pĩ</b>	<	<b>pɛ</b>	‘want’	(Akan)
105e.	<b>i-dzyi</b>	<	<b>e-dzi</b>	‘heart’	(Ewe)
105f.	<b>agbedɔ̃</b> <sup>19</sup>	<	<b>a-gbeli</b>	‘cassava’	(Ewe)
105g.	<b>gelee</b>	<	<b>gedɛe</b>	‘many’	(Ewe)

The tones that these loanwords carry may vary or remain the same. As shown by the following examples in (106) and in (105a) – (105e) above, some prefixes with mid tones in the source language carry low tones in Tafi.

106.	Tafi	Ewe	Gloss
	<b>a-yĩ</b>	<b>ā-yi</b>	‘beans’
	<b>e-nyĩ</b>	<b>ē-nyi</b>	‘elephant’ <sup>20</sup>
	<b>a-zĩ</b>	<b>a-zi</b>	‘groundnuts’

Also, low or high tones on some stem syllables in Ewe become either LH or H while some LM tones become LH in Tafi. This is illustrated by the first example in (107) below and also by the examples in (106) above. There is no change in tones on the last two borrowed words in (107).

107.	Tafi	Ewe	Gloss
	<b>trǒ</b>	<b>tró</b>	‘twist’
	<b>kúnú</b>	<b>kúnú</b>	‘funeral’
	<b>pétée</b>	<b>pétée</b>	‘all’

Loanwords in Tafi whose source is English are only a handful. These words are modified to conform to the syllable structure of the language. For instance, any loanword with a CVC syllable structure is always pronounced with a vowel added to the final consonant. Thus, instead of a single CVC syllable we have two syllables, CVCV, with each syllable bearing its own tone as shown in (108). Also, diphthongs are reduced to monophthongs as illustrated in (109).

<sup>19</sup> Some speakers also use the same form of the Ewe word for cassava.

<sup>20</sup> The original meaning of **ē-nyi** in Ewe is ‘cow’.

	English		Tafi		Ewe
108.	cup	/kʌp/	<b>kópu</b>		<b>kópu</b>
	bucket	/bʌkɪt/	<b>bókiti</b>		<b>bókiti</b>
	cork	/kɔ:k/	<b>kɔki</b>		<b>kóki</b>
	cigarette	/sɪgəret/	<b>sigaréti</b>		<b>sigaréti</b>
109.	trousers	/trauzəz/	<b>trɔza</b>		<b>trɔza</b>
	plate	/pleit/	<b>prɪti</b>		<b>prente</b>
	paint	/peint/	<b>péti</b>		<b>péti</b>

As illustrated in (108) and (109) above, the Tafi loanwords and most of the Ewe loanwords are phonologically similar. Therefore, it is not yet clear whether these loanwords entered Tafi through Ewe or not. It could be that these words were borrowed into Tafi directly from English.

## 2.7 Tafi orthography

As at now, there is no standard orthography available for Tafi. In this section, I present some of the orthographic conventions used in this grammar, some of which are based on the Ewe orthography because Tafi speakers who are literate in Ewe are familiar with the Ewe orthographic conventions. This would facilitate the transition from Ewe writing practices to the Tafi ones.

The consonant sounds in (110) below are represented with the same character and these have more or less the phonetic value of the IPA symbols:

110. /p, b, f, fw, v, t, d, s, z, k, g, kp, gb, x, xw, h, hw, ts, dz, m, n, ŋ, ŋw, l, r, w, ɰ/

The following sounds are represented differently from the IPA symbols:

- The voiced aspirated bilabial stop [bʰ] is written as ‘bh’.
- The voiced post-alveolar stop [ɖ] is written as ‘ɖ’.
- The voiceless palatal fricative [ɟ] is written as ‘sh’.
- The voiced palatal fricative [ʒ] is written as ‘zh’.
- The voiceless palatal affricate [tʃ] is written as ‘tsy’.
- The voiceless labialised palatal affricate [tʃw] is written as ‘tsyw’.
- The voiced palatal affricate [dʒ] is written as ‘dzy’.
- The palatal nasal [ɲ] is written as ‘ny’.
- The glide [j] is written as ‘y’.

The vowels /i, ɪ, e, ɛ, a, ɔ, o, u/ are written as i, ɪ, e, ɛ, a, ɔ, o, u and u. Nasal and nasalised vowels are written with a tilde ( ~ ) above the vowel symbol: **ĩ, ɪ̃, ẽ, ẽ̃, ã, ɔ̃, õ** and **ũ**. With respect to tone marks, an acute accent [ ´ ] on a tone-bearing

segment, usually, a vowel or a syllabic nasal, represents a high tone, a macron [ ¯ ] represents a mid tone and instances where a particular vowel is not tone-marked represents a low tone. However, a grave accent [ ` ] on a syllabic nasal represents a low tone. A rising tone is marked with a haček [ ˇ ] or a grave accent and a macron [ ˇ̄ ] on the segment while a circumflex [ ^ ] or an acute accent and a macron [ ^̄ ] or a macron and a grave accent [ ^̄ ] on a tone bearing segment represents a falling tone.

Orthographic vowel sequences where the first vowel is a high front vowel **i** or **ɪ** or a back vowel **o**, **ɔ**, **u**, or **ʊ** are phonologically a sequence of a palatal glide and a labial velar glide respectively. They are written as vowel sequences following the Ewe orthographic convention for such sound sequences as shown by the examples in (112) and (113).

- |      |                         |            |                      |
|------|-------------------------|------------|----------------------|
| 111. | <b>zi</b> <b>zia</b>    | /zyazya/   | ‘often, usually’     |
|      | <b>tí</b> <b>áshĩ</b>   | /tyáshĩ/   | ‘how many/ much’     |
|      | <b>tí</b> <b>etĩ</b>    | /tyeti/    | ‘five’               |
|      | <b>ká</b> <b>mpiesĩ</b> | /kámpyesĩ/ | ‘armpit’             |
| 112. | <b>kó</b> <b>éyĩ</b>    | /kwéyĩ/    | ‘exit’               |
|      | <b>eh</b> <b>oé</b>     | /ehwě/     | ‘cowries’            |
|      | <b>gug</b> <b>ɔé</b>    | /gugwě/    | ‘last’               |
|      | <b>kahl</b> <b>ɔé</b>   | /kahlwě/   | ‘antelope’           |
| 113. | <b>kib</b> <b>uí</b>    | /kibwĩ/    | ‘word, matter, case’ |
|      | <b>bhui</b>             | /bhwi/     | ‘cut’                |
|      | <b>pú</b> <b>ĩ</b>      | /pwĩ/      | ‘roast, bake’        |
|      | <b>káz</b> <b>hué</b>   | /kázhwě/   | ‘bird’               |
|      | <b>kub</b> <b>uí</b>    | /kubwĩ/    | ‘dew’                |

The verb and its markers – subject markers and preverb markers constitute one phonological word. They are therefore written together as one orthographic word. In sentence (114a), the subject marker /o/ which precedes the verb is written together with it and in (114b), the subject pronoun, the repetitive, persistent, ‘again’ and ventive preverb markers are attached to the verb.

114a. Osín odzyíni.

**o-sí ní o-dzyíni**  
 CM-tree DEF SM-break  
 ‘The tree broke.’

114b. Ɔzɔkɔvlɔbɔwĩ ’ulu.

**ɔ-zɔ-kɔ-vlɔ-bɔ-wĩ** **bu-lu**  
 2SG-REP-PERS-again-VENT-drink CM-drink  
 ‘You are going to drink again.’

An elided initial consonant or syllable of a noun is indicated by an apostrophe sign ('). Where two sounds in a sequence are elided only one apostrophe is used. I do not show the elision in postpositions where it concerns the elision of their initial consonants. This is because the elision is a process of their grammaticalisation from nominals to postpositions. I also do not indicate the elision of the vowel of the definiteness or topic marker **ní** with an apostrophe because **ní** 'DEF' or 'TOP' is developing from a particle to a clitic. This also applies to the first person singular pronoun **mí** which is also developing into a clitic. The examples in (114a) above and (115) below are illustrations.

Moreover, the noun, the definiteness marker and the reduced form of postpositions are written together as shown in (115a) and (115b) below.

115a. Okútún ókpasí kúsúgbáním.

**o-kútú ní ó-kpasí kí-súgbá ní kum**  
 CM-orange DEF SM-be.in CM-bowl DEF inside  
 'The orange is in the bowl.'

115b. Keplukpán 'étsirí kplǎíábhā.

**ke-plukpá ní ké-tsirí kplǎ kábhā**  
 CM-book DEF SM-be.on table top  
 'The book is on a table.'

As illustrated in (115a) and (115b), the definiteness marker is attached to the subject NP. Also in (115a), the definiteness marker and the postposition following the object NP have been written together with it. In (115b), the postposition which directly follows the object NP is written together with it.

Furthermore, there is a liaison between the reduced forms of words that end in a consonant (e.g. the definiteness marker **ní**) and the following word beginning with a vowel. See for example, the sentences in (115) above.