

PRONOUNS IN AKOJOSE*

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The pronouns of Akooose, both simple and complex, are described. The subject markers with which they co-occur have also been presented. Venn diagrams have been used to show the relationships of the different grammatical persons expressed by the complex pronoun set. These complex pronouns combine references to the speaker (first person), addressee (second person) and the spoken about (third persons) in a way not always apparent from their surface forms.

1. Introduction

All languages, in spite of occasional neutralizations, grammaticalize at least the following semantic distinctions: "person" divided into first, second and third, and "number" divided into singular and plural. The resulting pronominal systems thus reflect the basic human need to distinguish both "myself" (the speaker) and "yourself" (the hearer) from other subjects being spoken about. They also show the need to be able to distinguish between a specific individual and a group of individuals.

The long recognized categories of "person" and "number" can be illustrated with English in the following table:

Table 1: English subject pronouns

	1st	2nd	3rd
sg	I	you	he, she, it
pl	we	you	they

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Table 1 illustrates a simple system of the intersection of the two categories of "person" and "number". Note that in English in the second person the distinction between singular and plural is neutralized whereas in the third person singular, the intersection with a further category "gender" results in three forms in that box.

2. The Simple Pronouns of Akɔɔse

Looking at the pronouns in Akɔɔse, a Bantu language belonging to the so-called "Mbo cluster" (Guthrie's A.15), a similar basic system is found, but the total pronominal system is much more elaborate. In Table 2 below the basic set of pronouns is presented.

Table 2: Akɔɔse subject/object pronouns

	1st	2nd	3rd	class
sg	mè	wè	mé	1
pl	sé	nyí	bé	2

Like any other Bantu language, Akɔɔse has a noun class system characterized by distinctions in the noun prefixes as well as by concording elements on various other word classes (demonstratives, possessives, verbs, numerals, etc.). As indicated, Table 2 above gives the pronouns corresponding to classes 1 and 2 which are typically in Bantu the classes containing human nouns. The pronouns for the other classes, where there is no first, second, and third person distinction, are given in Table 3:

Table 3: The pronouns for classes 3 to 19

pronoun	class
mé	3, 4, 6
dé	5, 13
čé	7, 9, 10
bé	8, 14, 19

another and without whose help this study would not have been possible. I am also thankful to U. Wiesemann for providing the initial stimulus for writing this paper, to Stephen C. Anderson for detailed comments, and to my wife for typing the initial draft and making many helpful comments.

The classes grouped together in this table are further distinguished by differences in the noun prefixes and other word classes. For a full description of the Akɔɔse noun class system, see Hedinger [1980].

The following two examples illustrate the use of simple pronouns in object position:

- (1) àwêd mwǎnyàŋ à-hèdè mè à-nyén čǎn
our brother he-wants me to-see tomorrow

'our brother wants to see me tomorrow'

- (2) mǎ-¹húd¹ bé á ñjòŋ
I will remove it(cl.14) in planting-season

'I will take it (honey) out in the planting season'

Having briefly presented the simple pronouns, the complex pronouns can now be discussed.

3. The Complex Pronouns of Akɔɔse

Already in 1900, Dorsch [1910/11:250] recognized the presence of complex pronouns in Akɔɔse which are not found in European languages, though complex pronouns are also common in Grassfields Bantu languages [Hyman 1979, Voorhoeve 1967]. In Akɔɔse, there are pronouns like the following: sú¹mé 'we two' or 'I and he'. In form, this appears to be a juxtaposition of a first person plural plus a third person singular pronoun, but semantically it combines a first person singular and a third person singular human. Another example is syá¹bê . This pronoun appears in form to be a fusion of a first person plural with a third person plural pronoun. Semantically, however, it can express any of the following: first singular plus third plural, first plural plus third singular, or first plural plus third plural.

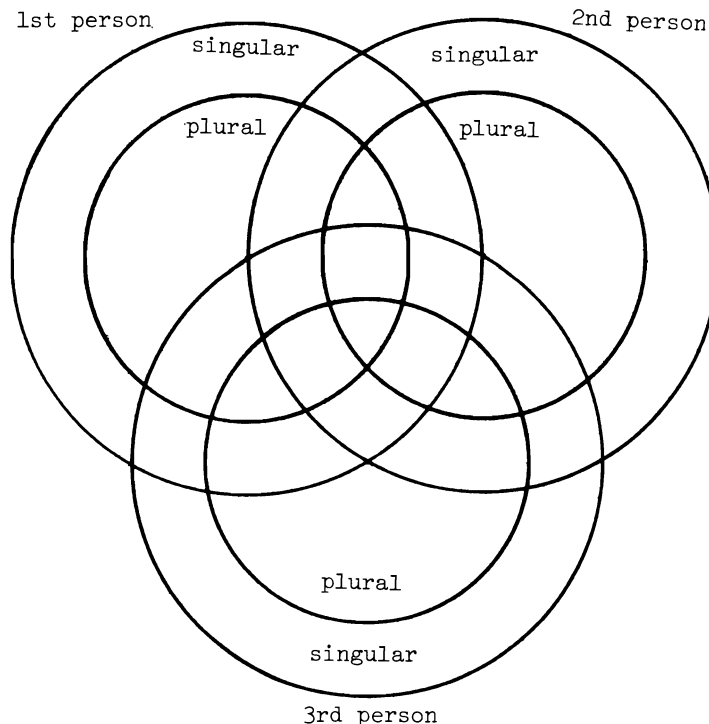
These two examples above show that besides the simple pronouns, Akɔɔse has pronouns expressing different combinations of first, second, and third persons.

To set out all the theoretically possible intersections of person and number, it has proved fruitful to use Venn diagrams,² as in Table 4 below.

¹The symbol ¹ indicates downstep.

²I am indebted to Stephen C. Anderson for suggesting the usefulness of

Table 4: A Venn diagram showing the intersection of persons and number

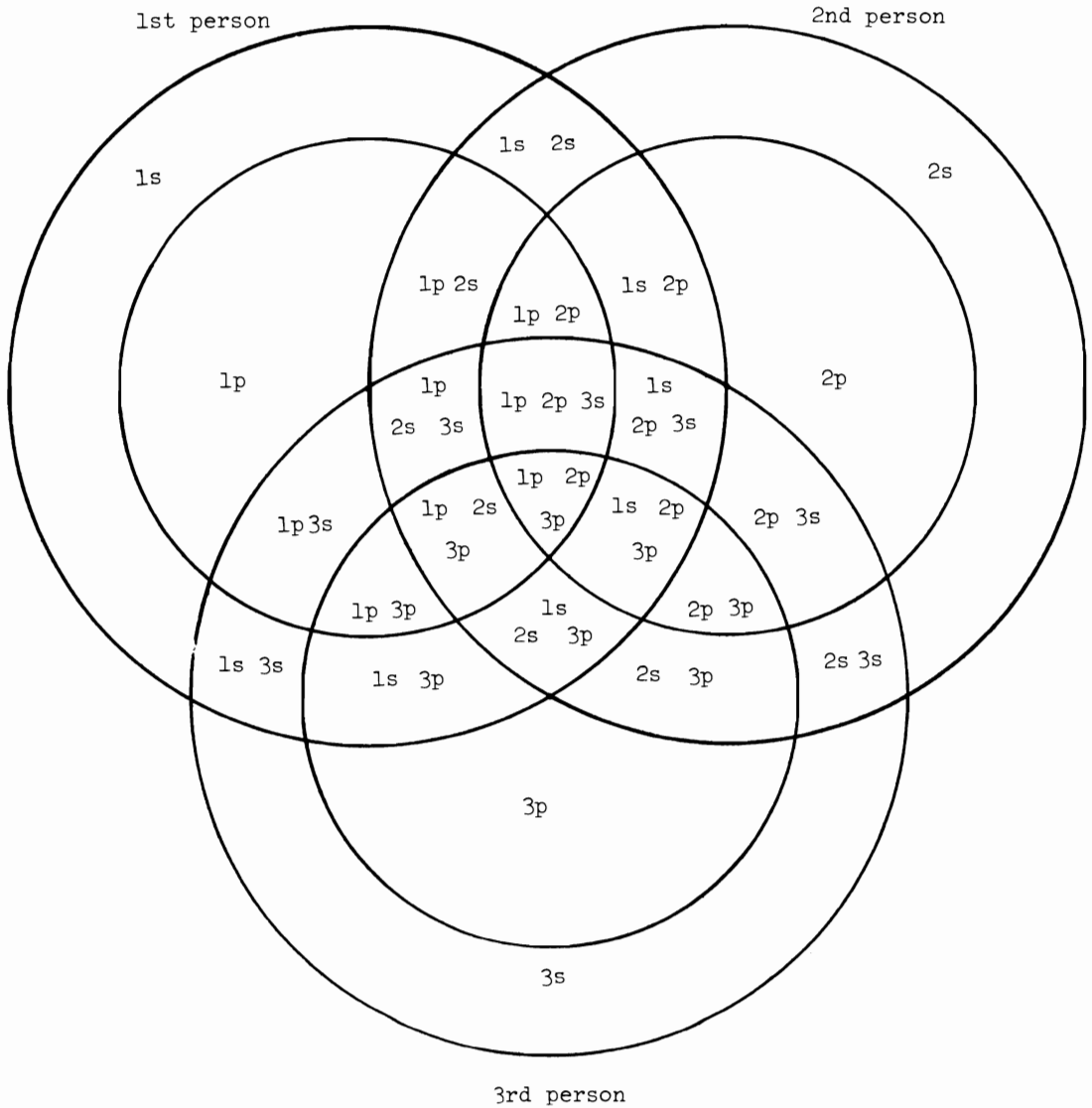


The three sets of two concentric circles each represent one "person". The larger circle stands for the category singular, the inner circle for plural. Each intersection of circle with circle represents a combination of two or more categories. In Table 5 on the next page all the theoretically possible combinations are indicated.

In each field, the resulting combinations have been indicated. There is, however, one limitation to the chart: at the centre of the diagram we find the intersection of first, second and third person plural. In the fields adjacent to it, six combinations of *three* persons are found. However, one possible combination—the intersection of first, second, and third person *singular*—is excluded due to the fact that double (concentric) circles have been

Venn diagrams in pronoun display.

Table 5: The theoretically possible combinations of persons and number



s = singular, p = plural, 1 = first person, 2 = second person, 3 = third person

used.³

This limitation is not serious for Akɔɔse, since there are no pronouns expressing 1st plus 2nd plus 3rd persons. However, it is inadequate for a language where such forms do exist such as the nearby Bamileke-Dschang language (Ouamba Fabian, personal communication).

The Venn diagram given in Table 5, however, needs further modification to account for examples in Akɔɔse such as bú'mé 'the two of them' or 'he and he'. This is a pronoun which includes two third singular persons. To account for such forms, a second circle for third person has to be added.⁴

In Table 6, a Venn diagram is presented showing which Akɔɔse pronouns signal the specific categories of person and number. The simple pronouns can be seen in the parts of the circles which do not intersect with any other.

At the intersection of two singular persons, we find what is usually labelled as the "dual" person. *Dual*, it appears, does not need to be set up as a basic category on the same level as singular and plural, but is simply a derivation from two singular persons combined. The dual pronouns are summarized in Table 7 below:

Table 7: The "dual" pronouns

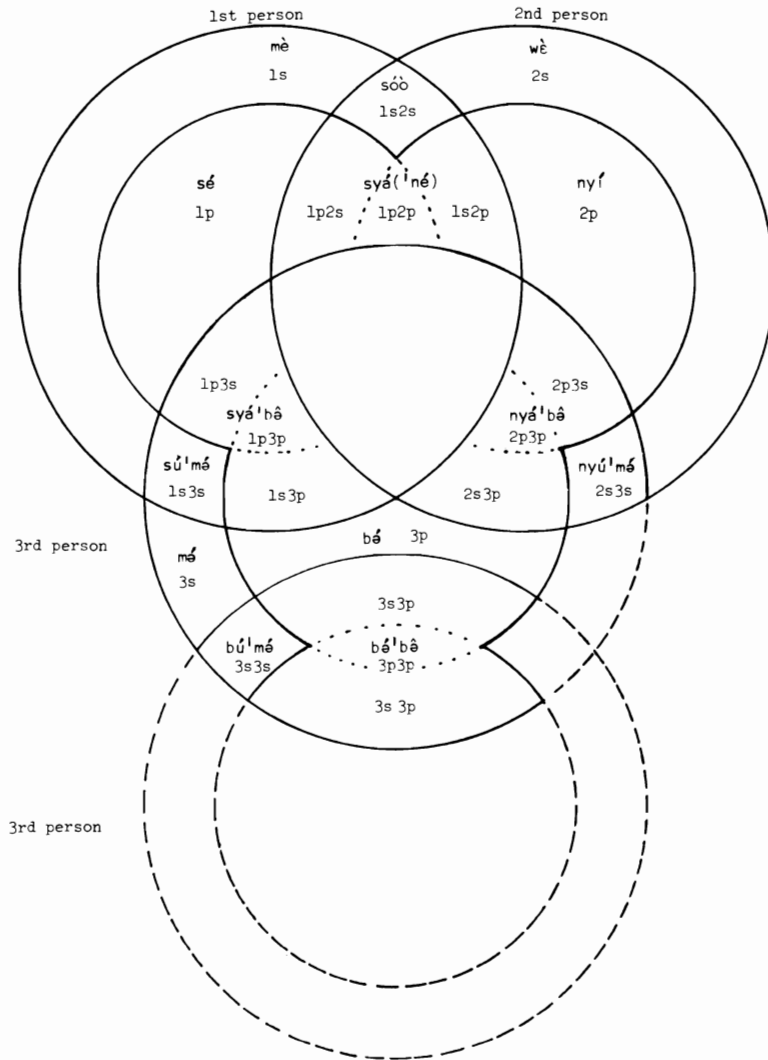
persons	pronoun	
1s + 2s	sóò	(< sé + ? + wè)
1s + 3s	sú'mé	(< sé + ? + mé)
2s + 3s	nyú'mé	(< nyí + ? + mé)
3s + 3s	bú'mé	(< bá + ? + mé)

Note that the pronouns involving a third person always have a mé as the second syllable. This corresponds to the third person singular pronoun. The two pronouns involving a first person singular begin with an s-, pointing

³By making the outer circles plural and the inner ones singular, 1p 2p 3p at the centre are simply replaced by 1s 2s 3s, all other combinations being retained.

⁴Some linguists might prefer to call this second third person a fourth person. We have chosen to call it a third person because it doesn't occur independently as a simple pronoun with a distinct form.

Table 6: Venn diagram with Akɔɔse pronouns



to a first person *plural* form as found in the pronoun sé 'first person plural' (cf. Table 2).

An example illustrating the use of a dual pronoun follows:

- (3) bé-'čámé sóò ngùn 'they will cook corn for us'
 they-will-cook-for 1s + 2s corn

Looking now at the remaining pronouns where two grammatical persons intersect, we observe that each pronoun covers three sections. Each section involves at least one plural person. These pronouns are therefore labelled "plural" and are shown in the following table:

Table 8: The "plural" pronouns

persons	pronoun	
1 + 2	syá('né)	(< sé + à + nyí)
1 + 3	syá'bê	(< sé + à + bé)
2 + 3	nyá'bê	(< nyí + à + bé)
3 + 3	bé'bê	(< bê + ? + bé)

The brackets around the 'né indicate that it is not always present. As with their dual counterparts, there is an s- where a first person is involved. In the second syllable, bê, a reflex of the third person plural rather than mé occurs when a third person is present.

Example (4) illustrates the use of a "plural" pronoun:

- (4) ...bwēm ábè é?-bàgè syá'né mònè
 things which they(cl.14)-give 1 + 2 money
 '... the things which produce money for us'

There is a clear dichotomy between pronouns which involve two singulars and those which involve at least one plural person. Any of the forms in Table 8 can express three different underlying realities: for example, syá('né) expresses 1s + 2p, 1p + 2s, and 1p + 2p. For this reason, reference to the singularity and plurality of the persons was omitted from the table.

As has been pointed out above, the first syllable of a complex pronoun is a reflex of a plural pronoun, and the second syllable is either a reflex of a singular form in the "dual" pronouns or a reflex of a plural form in the "plu-

ral" pronouns. The following generalization can be made about the number of participants referred to by the complex pronouns: the first part of a complex pronoun signals the totality of participants referred to, that is, more than one person is involved. The second part of the complex pronoun indicates the number of individual participants: when it is singular, then there are only two singular persons involved; when it is plural, then at least one of the two persons involved, or both, is plural.

Table 9: Participant number in complex pronouns

		I	II	examples
Complex	"Dual"	(pl)	(sg)	sú'mé
pronouns	"Plural"	(pl)	(pl)	syá'bê

I = Total participants, II = Individual participants

4. The Subject Markers

In sections 2 and 3 above, the simple and complex pronouns have been presented. These pronouns may function as object, as in the examples already presented, or as subject. When functioning as subject, they are obligatorily followed by a subject marker (SM), as are all subjects, pronominal or nominal. The SM is prefixed to the verb and its form is determined by the person, number, and noun class of the subject. If the subject is of any of classes 3 to 19, then the SM is of that particular class. The following table illustrates the pronouns and SM's for classes 3 to 19.

Table 10: The pronouns and subject markers for classes 3 to 19

pronoun	SM	class
mé	mé-/m'-	3,4
dé	dé-/á-	5,13
mé	mé-	6
čé	é-	7,10
bé	bé-/é?-	8,14,19
čé	è-	9

It should be noted that there are more distinctions in the SM's than in the simple pronouns (cf. Table 3). Where there are two forms of the prefix

for the same class(es), the two forms are in complementary distribution: the one with the CV structure occurs before vowels and syllabic NC sequences, the other forms occur elsewhere. An example of subject pronoun plus its SM follows below:

- (5) sàá dé á-nyénnédéè nén bòòb è
 is-not it(cl.5) SM(cl.5)-is-seen this now Q-marker
 'isn't that proved now?'

Having presented the SM's for classes 3-19, the SM's for classes 1 and 2 (which occur with both the simple and the complex pronouns) will now be introduced.

In Table 11, a Venn diagram for the SM's is given covering the same semantic area as the one given in Table 6 for the pronouns. Each SM covers the semantic area enclosed by solid lines. That means that if a pronoun given in Table 6 functions as subject of a clause, the verb takes the prefix from Table 11 which covers the same semantic area. If, for example, mè is the subject, then the verb takes the mè- \bar{N} - prefix, as in the following example where pronoun and SM are underlined:

- (6) mwé kúl-èé mè m-pémé⁵ è
 friend tortoise-focus I I-carried Q-marker
 'is it my friend the tortoise that I have carried?'

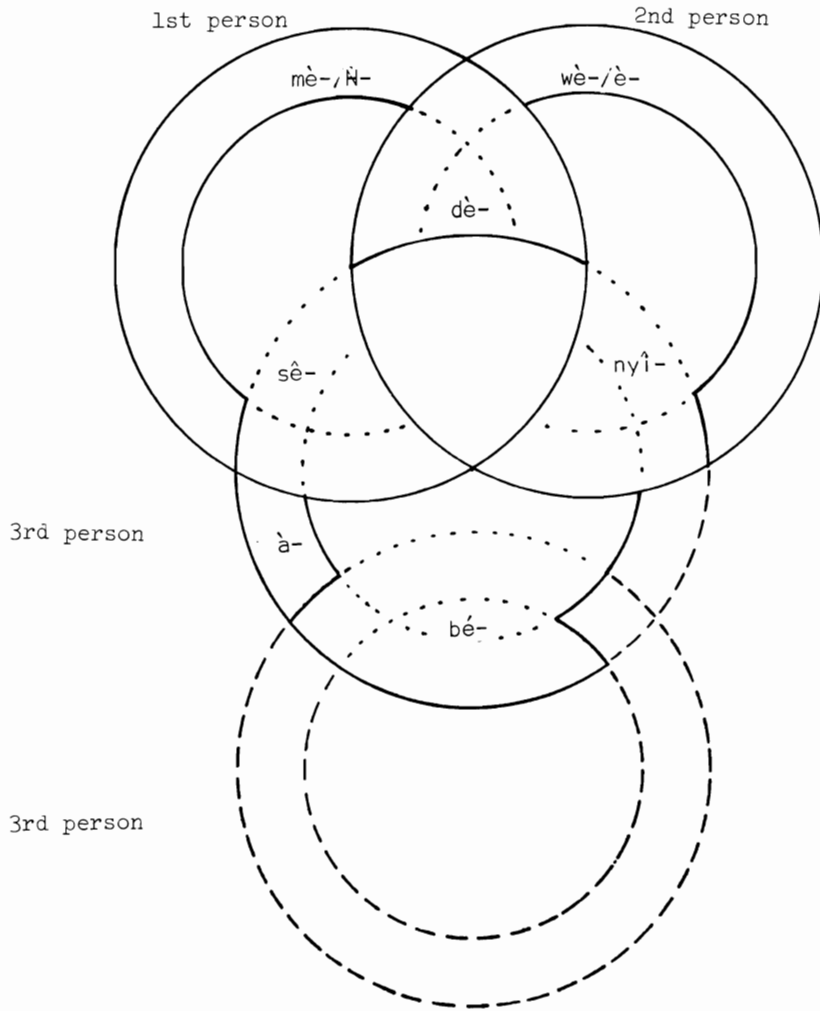
If either nyí, nyú'mé or nyá'bê are subject, then the verb is prefixed by nyí-, as in the following example:

- (7) nyú'mé nyí-súè? wê dyàd á-díí
 2s + 3s you-return where town it(cl.5)-is
 'you two return to the town!'
- (8) è-nyénné wê nyá'bê nyé-pòngé⁶
 he-will-not-see where 2 + 3 you-will-pass-through
 'he will not see where you will pass through'

⁵The low tone of N- '1st sg' is raised to high in this focussed construction.

⁶Nyé- is underlyingly nyí- 'second person' plus à- 'future marker'. No attempt has been made to give precise information as to tense, aspect, etc. in the examples. A paper on the verb tense-aspect system is in preparation.

Table 11: The subject markers (SM) of classes 1 and 2



If sé , sú'mé , or syá'bê are subject, then sê- is the SM used:

- (9) sú'mé sê-pèdé áwèm ndáb tè
 1s + 3s we-arrived loc-my house in
 'we (I and he) arrived at my house'

All the pronouns and the corresponding SM's for classes 1 and 2 are summarized in Table 12:

Table 12: Summary of class 1 and 2 pronouns and SM's in Akɔɔse

	person(s)	singular and dual		plural	
		pronoun	SM	pronoun	SM
simple	1	mè	mè-/Ñ-	sé	sê-
	2	wè	wè-/è-	nyí	nyí-
	3	mé	à-	bé	bé-
complex	1 + 2	sóò	dè-	syá('né)	dè-
	1 + 3	sú'mé	sê-	syá'bê	sê-
	2 + 3	nyú'mé	nyí-	nyá'bê	nyí-
	3 + 3	bú'mé	bé-	bá'bê	bé-

It should be noted that the grammatical distinction between dual and plural is neutralized in the set of SM's.

One co-occurrence of pronoun and SM which has been observed in natural texts is not included in the above table. Both sú'mé and syá'bê are shown in Table 12 to take sê- as SM. However, instances have been observed where the same pronouns are followed by the dè- SM. This is puzzling since dè- is the "inclusive" SM when it occurs without a pronoun. This is confirmed by the fact that it occurs normally with the 1 + 2 pronouns.

The hypothesis that the 1 + 3 pronoun when co-occurring with the dè- , which is 1 + 2, yields a combination of 1 + 2 + 3 has been rejected by native speakers, and so no plausible explanation has been found to account for sú'mé sê- versus sú'mé dè- . Perhaps there is a historical change in progress leading to a neutralization between sê- and dè- .

An example of this still unresolved co-occurrence of 1 + 3 pronoun with the dè- SM is example (10):

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