Same subject reference in Northern Toussian

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Toussian

Two/three languages

- Northern Toussian
- Southern Toussian
- Potentially another variety called Moami Kan

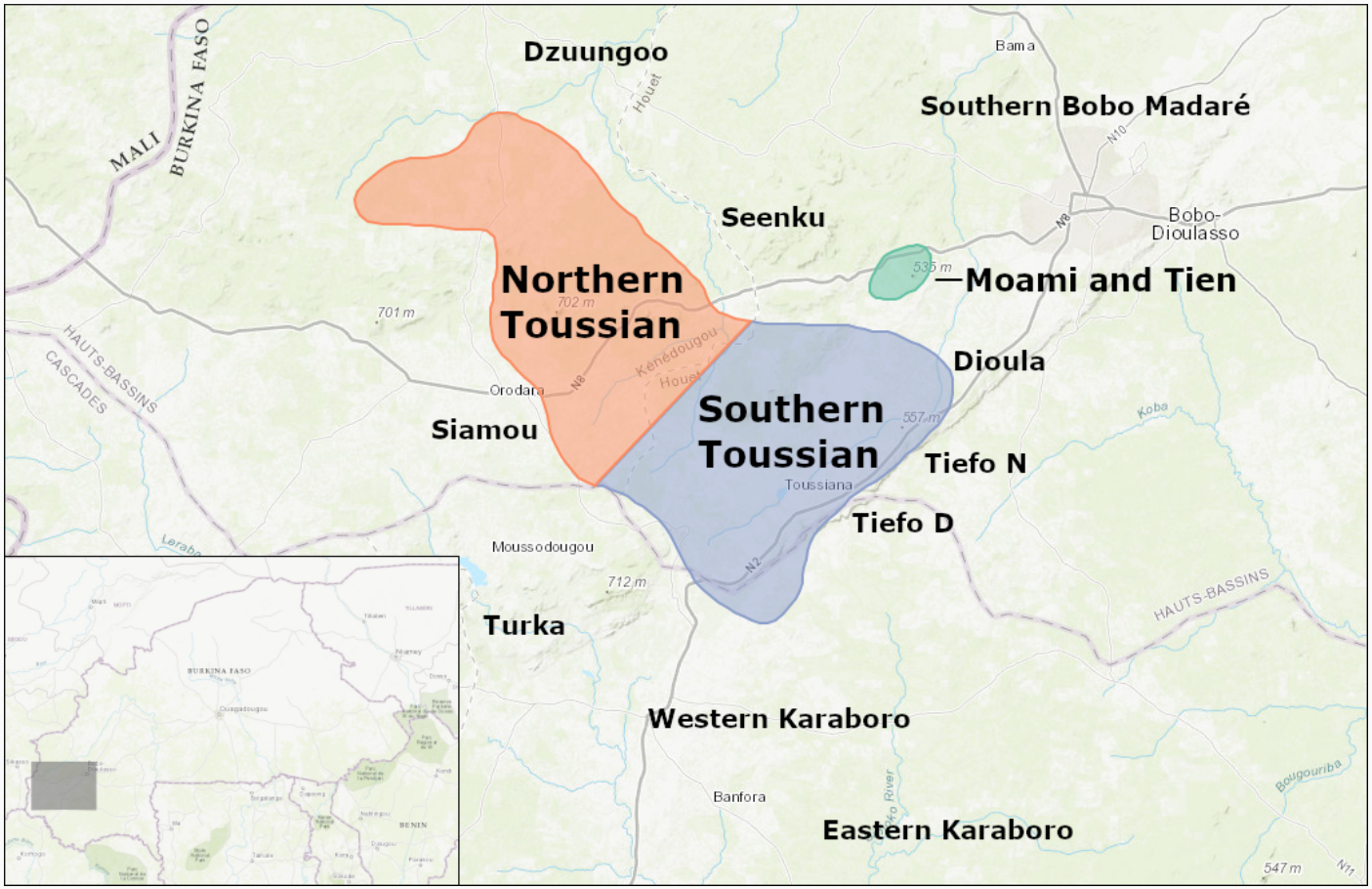
Genetic classification is uncertain

- Traditionally classified as a Gur language (Niger Congo) (Manessy, 1979; Naden, 1989)
- Recent work has cast doubt on this classification (Güldemann, 2018)

Geography

Spoken in southwest Burkina Faso

~20,000 speakers of NT (last surveyed 1995) (Eberhard et al., 2020)



Same subject reference

Northern Toussian employs two strategies for coreference

1. Logophoric pronouns
2. A morpheme *nə̀* which denotes same subject reference in non-logophoric contexts

The distribution of this morpheme *nə̀* shares many similarities with a form of switch reference called ‘echo reference’ found in several languages of southern Vanuatu (Hammond, 2014; Gijn & Hammond, 2016)

Goals

This talk seeks to fulfill the following goals:

1. Describe same subject reference and how Northern Toussian employs it, drawing comparisons to languages with switch reference systems
2. Discuss Northern Toussian logophoric pronouns and their function
3. Demonstrate how same subject reference and logophoricity work in tandem within the wider discourse system

Switch reference

Switch reference is a diverse set of phenomena that tracks coreferent entities across clauses.[1]

Switch reference systems involve a same subject morpheme (SS) and/or different subject morpheme (DS).[2]

[1] See van Gijn (2016) and de Sousa (2016) for specific diagnostics.

[2] Some non-canonical switch reference systems can refer to other constituents such as objects and some authors prefer other terms such as *coreference* and *disjoint-reference* or *identity* and *nonidentity*, etc.

Switch reference

Switch reference morphemes are typically affixes on the verb in the first clause, indicating whether the subject of the current clause matches or differs from the subject of the following clause.

However, the type and location of the switch reference markers differ widely cross-linguistically.

Switch reference

The Papuan language Usan demonstrates canonical switch reference. In (1), the verbal suffix *-ab* is a same subject marker and *-ine* is a different subject marker. Both of these morphemes are affixed to the verb of the first clause.

(1) Usan, Reesink (1983, pg. 355), cited in Gijn & Hammond (2016, pg. 2)

a. ye nam su-**ab** isomei
1SG tree cut-**SS** I.went.down
'I cut the tree and went down.'

b. ye name su-**ine** isorei
1SG tree cut-**DS** it.went.down
'I cut the tree down,' i.e. 'I cut the tree and it went down.'

Same subject reference in Northern Toussian

Northern Toussian employs a same subject (SS) marker, which is realized as *nə̀~ǹ=*.

It surfaces in the same location as personal pronouns, and indicates that the subject of the current clause is coreferent with the subject of a prior clause.

Personal pronouns

The Northern Toussian personal pronouns can be seen here.

Person		SG	PL
1st	Non-emphatic	mə́	ą́
	Emphatic	mɔ̂	ą̄n
2nd	Non-emphatic	á	í
	Emphatic	ár̄	yī́n
3rd HUM	Non-emphatic	à	pə̀
	Emphatic	tə̂r	pə̄n
3rd NONHUM	Non-emphatic	kə̀	sə̀
	Emphatic	krɛ̂	sə̄n

Table 1: Personal pronoun paradigm

Same subject reference

Below, (2a) shows an example of same subject reference, where the same subject morpheme *nà* refers back to *sīdí* ‘cat.’

Conversely, when the non-human pronoun *kà* is used in (2b), it refers instead to the object, *pàntō* ‘dog.’

(2) a. Same subject reference

sīdí pàntō wé **nà** tú
cat dog see **SS** run

‘The cat$_j$ saw the dog$_k$, it$_j$ ran away.’

b. Different subject

sīdí pàntō wé **kà** tǔ[3]
cat dog see **3SG.NONHUM** run

‘The cat$_j$ saw the dog$_k$, it$_k$ ran away.’

[3]The difference in tone is not fully understood—see the appendix for more information

Same subject—*nə̀* vs. *ǹ=*

There are two forms of the same subject morpheme, *nə̀* and *ǹ=*.

nə̀ is used at slow rates of speech and *ǹ=* is used at fast rates of speech; there is no difference in meaning.

(3) a. *nə̀*

sīdí pàntō wé **nə̀** tú
cat dog see **SS** run

'The cat$_j$ saw the dog$_k$, it$_j$ ran away.'

b. *ǹ=*

sīdí pàntō wé **ǹ=**tú
cat dog see **SS=**run

'The cat$_j$ saw the dog$_k$, it$_j$ ran away.'

Same subject—conjunctions

This morpheme does not appear to be a conjunction, as conjunctions can be used between the two clauses.

(4) sīdí pàntō wé ǹnɛ́ **ǹ**=tú
cat dog see and **SS**=run
'The cat_j saw the dog_k and it_j ran away.'

Same subject—third person referents

The same subject morpheme can refer to any person or number. Here, the SS morpheme *nə̀* refers to *pə̄n*, a third person plural emphatic pronoun.

(5) **pə̄n** pɔ̄ pwó **nə̀** pwó pɛ́y ɟàmànà tégí=sɛ̄
3PL.EMPH IS[4] come **SS** come do[5] land owner=with
'When they came, they then became village chiefs.'
(0080)

[4]Immediate sequencing morpheme, it gives the sense 'when…then…'
[5]'Become' is expressed with the construction *x pɛ́y Y=sɛ̄*, lit. 'X does with Y.'

Same subject—second person referents

In example (6), the same subject morpheme refers to a 2PL antecedent.

(6) krɛ̂ kɔ́r-yǎr-yǎr
3SG.NONHUM.EMPH meaning-REFL-REFL

kə̀ pɛ̌y á̱yɔ̄
3SG.NONHUM do as if

í sə́ kɛ́y tə́ sú tɛ̱́mɔ́
2PL DUB go 3SG.HUM.POSS father help

nə̀ swā pɛ́y
SS field do

“[Bride price’s] true meaning, it is basically that you would go help her father and farm the fields.” (0084)

Same subject—first person referents

In the example below, the same subject morpheme *ǹ=* refers to the first singular pronoun *mə́*

(7) **mə́** pàntō wé **ǹ=**tú
1SG dog see **SS=**run
'I saw the dog (then) I ran.'

Same subject—chaining

Several clauses in a row can bear the same subject marking. Example (8) comes from a discussion of marriage customs and the bride price.

(8) *maintenant est-ce que* kə́ wáɟíbíyá-nɔ̄ ˈpé *que*
now INT 3SG.NONHUM.POSS oblige-NOM COP COMP

flê-ḿpm̄pár bíā tāŋ=rí yɔ́ dī́=rɛ́
woman-child house members=JUSS say man=LOC

í fwɔ̂ **nə̀** tɔ̰̄ hɛ́kɛ́=mè kɔ̰̌
2PL good **SS** millet beer amount=DEM give

nə̀ ǹwə̌r hɛ́kɛ́=mɛ̀ kɔ̰̌
SS kola amount=DEM give

‘Now, is it an obligation that the members of the girl’s house say to the man, “you are good, give this amount of millet beer, give this amount of kola nuts”?’

Switch reference

Switch reference can take many forms, and the morphological marking of switch reference systems can vary widely. The Northern Toussian data resembles the switch reference systems of several southern Vanuatu languages, including Lenakel and Whitesands.

Their switch reference systems have been called ‘echo reference’ because the switch reference morpheme is found in the right clause instead of the left clause.

Switch reference—echo reference

The Vanuatu language Lenakel demonstrates echo reference, where *m-* is a same subject marker.

(9) Lenakel, Lynch (1978, pg. 211), cited in Gijn & Hammond (2016, pg. 17)

a. i-ɨm-vɨn (kani) r-ɨm-apul
1EXCL-PST-go (and) 3SG-PST-sleep
'I went and he slept.'

b. i-ɨm-vɨn (kani) **m**-ɨm-apul
1EXCL-PST-go (and) **SS**-PST-sleep
'I went and slept.'

Echo reference

If the personal pronoun is used instead of the SS morpheme in an echo reference system, then it indicates that there has been a switch in subject.

(10) Whitesands, Hammond (2014, pg. 276)

a. iepəu t-ue **m**-Ø-alwaiŋ anah
child 3SG.NPST-go **SS**-SG-hide still
'The little boy still goes to hide'

b. iepəu t-ue **t**-alwaiŋ anah
child 3SG.NPST-go **3SG.NPST**-hide still
'The little boy goes and (a different one) still hides.'

Echo reference—comparison

Below is a corresponding set of Toussian phrases.

(11) Whitesands, Hammond (2014, pg. 276)

a. iepəu t-ue **m**-Ø-alwaiŋ anah
child 3SG.NPST-go **SS**-SG-hide still
'The little boy still goes to hide'

b. iepəu t-ue **t**-alwaiŋ anah
child 3SG.NPST-go **3SG.NPST**-hide still
'The little boy goes and (a different one) still hides.'

(12) Northern Toussian

a. ḿpm̄pā́r kɛ̌y **ǹ**=tə́ núíŋ
child go **SS**=3SG.REFL hide
'The boy$_j$ went (and) he$_j$ hid.'

b. ḿpm̄pā́r kɛ̌y à tə́ núíŋ
child go 3SG.HUM 3SG.REFL hide
'The boy$_j$ went (and) he$_k$ hide.'

Same subject reference summary

The Northern Toussian morpheme *nə̀~ǹ=* marks coreference between the subject of a clause and a subject found in prior clauses.

It can refer to any person or number.

The morpheme can be used serially when several clauses in a row refer to the same entity.

It appears to be a form of switch reference that resembles the echo reference systems of Whitesands and Lenakel.

Logophoricity

Northern Toussian, like many languages in the Macro-Sudan belt, employs logophoricity to mark coreference in reported and indirect discourse.

Logophoricity can be marked in a number of ways, including with pronouns or verbal markers (Ameka, 2017). Northern Toussian employs a series of logophoric pronouns, seen in table 2.

	SG	PL
non-emphatic	pə́	pə́
emphatic	pə̂r	pə̄n

Table 2: Paradigm of logophoric pronouns

Logophorics—basic use

Typologically, Northern Toussian uses reported speaker logophoric pronouns, where the logophoric pronouns refer to the agent who said, thought, or felt what is being reported (Ameka, 2017).

In (13), the logophoric pronoun *pə́* refers to *plɛ́̄* ‘rabbit.’

(13) plɛ́̄ yɔ̌ **pə́** kə́ ǹ=tíā-nkɔ́ kàrì
rabbit say **LOG** NEG NPST=go.NPST-can today
‘The rabbit said that **he** will not be able to go today.’
(0182)

Logophorics—basic use

Northern Toussian logophoric pronouns are not restricted to being subjects—they can be verbal objects, objects of postpositions, possessive pronouns, etc.

In example (14), the first logophor acts as a possessive pronoun and the second as an object of a postposition

(14) ɟòró yǒ **pə̂r** lê-é nāŋ kàpá
lion say **LOG**.EMPH.POSS pet peeve-IDENT[6] person NEG.IMP
vìŋ sa̰ **pə̂r** ɲīŋ
lie put **LOG**.EMPH on

‘The lion$_i$ said that that is her$_i$ pet peeve, a person must not lie about her$_i$’ (0182)

[6] An identificational morpheme, used to identify entities in ‘it is X’ sentences.

Logophorics—domain of logophoricity

The domains of logophoricity can be nested, where two or more different verbs of speaking trigger reported/indirect discourse, and there can be multiple logophoric pronouns within a clause referring to different antecedents.

A longer phrase will be shown together to demonstrate this phenomenon. To facilitate interpreting it, important elements will be color coded.

Logophoric pronouns will be colored in **blue**, the **same subject marker** in **orange**, and **3rd person pronouns** in **green**.

Logophorics—domain of logophoricity

The following example (16) comes from a story about a rabbit who instituted a law which requires animals who broke their legs to be buried alive. The very same rabbit has just broken his own leg and, in an attempt to save his life, devises a plot to trick the people who would bury him.

Logophorics—domain of logophoricity

Logophoric pronouns; same subject marker; 3rd person pronouns

(15) plɛ̄$_j$ yɔ̌ [pɛ̀$_k$ = rí kɛ́y pə̂r$_j$ fą̰ tīŋ bìʃɔ̄
rabbit$_j$ say 3PL$_K$ = JUSS go LOG.EMPH.POSS$_J$ hole dig palm tree
sə̀k͡píŋ = ā]
base = DEM

‘The rabbit$_j$ said that [they (the grave diggers)$_k$ must go dig his$_j$ hole (i.e. grave) at the base of that palm tree].’

nɛ̀$_j$ pɔ̄ *d’accord* sə̀kə̄ŋ$_l$ = sɛ̄
SS$_J$ IS make agreement agama lizard$_l$ = with

‘Then he$_j$ made an agreement with the agama lizard$_l$.’

Logophorics—domain of logophoricity

Logophoric pronouns; same subject marker; 3rd person pronouns

pə́$_k$ and *pə̂r*$_j$ are both in the same clause, but have different antecedents.

(16) ǹ$_j$ = yɔ́ [pə́$_j$ nə̀ nīŋ = sɛ̄ səkə̄ŋ$_l$ kə̰ kə̀$_l$ = rí
SS = say LOG NPST water = with agama lizard supply 3SG.NONHUM = JUSS
dɛ̂ kɛ́y tɛ̰ bīɛ̄ = rɔ̌
climb go sit palm tree = in

'He$_j$ (the rabbit) said that [he$_j$ will give the agama lizard$_l$ water. Let it$_l$ go climb and sit in the palm tree'

pə̀$_k$ = à pə́ pwó yɔ́ [pə́$_k$ nə̀ pə̂r$_j$ ɲìŋ pə́$_j$ nə̀ yɔ̌
3PL$_K$ = IF COND come say LOG$_K$ NPST LOG.EMPH$_J$ bury LOG$_J$ NPST say
lɛ̀ = pwɛ́ nâx]]
phrase = SG one

'If they$_k$ say that [they$_k$ will come bury him$_j$, he$_j$ will say a phrase]].' (0182)

Interaction of the SS morpheme and logophoric pronouns

Both the same subject morpheme and the logophoric pronouns can mark coreference of the subject of one clause with the subject of a prior clause.

Logophoric pronouns appear to take precedence over the SS morpheme—if a clause is found in a logophoric context, a logophoric pronoun will be used, even if the pronoun acts as the subject of the clause and is coreferenced with the subject of the prior clause.

Interaction of the SS morpheme and logophoric pronouns

In example (17a), the logophoric pronoun is the subject of *tú* ‘run,’ even though the child is the subject of the prior clause.

If this clause is not in a logophoric context, as is seen in (17b), the same subject marker *nə̀* will be used.

(17) a. ḿpm̄pā́r yǒ [**pə́** pàntō wé **pə́** tǔ]
child say **LOG** dog see **LOG** run
‘The child$_j$ said that [he$_j$ saw the dog$_k$ and he$_j$ ran away].

b. dī́ yǒ [ḿpm̄pā́r pàntō wé **nə̀** tú]
man say child dog see **SS** run
‘The man$_j$ said that [the child$_k$ saw the dog$_l$ and he$_k$ ran away].

Coreference and discourse

The same subject marker appears to refer to antecedents which are on a similar syntactic level, i.e. the same subject marker will not refer to the subject of a prior clause which is subordinate to a different clause.

Coreference and discourse

Logophoric pronouns; same subject marker; 3rd person pronouns

The same subject morpheme *nə̀* refers to *plɛ́̄* ‘rabbit’ even though the 3PL pronoun *pə̀* is the closest subject because *nə̀* and *plɛ́̄* are on the same syntactic level.

(18) plɛ́̄$_j$ yə̌ [pə̀$_k$ = rí kɛ́y pə̂r$_j$ fa̰ tīŋ bìʃɔ̄
rabbit$_j$ say 3PL$_K$ = JUSS go LOG.EMPH.POSS$_J$ hole dig palm tree
sə̀k͡píŋ = ā]
base = DEM
‘The rabbit$_j$ said that [they (the grave diggers)$_k$ must go dig his$_j$ hole (i.e. grave) at the base of that palm tree.]’

nə̀$_j$ pɔ̄ *d’accord* sə̀kə̄ŋ$_l$ = sɛ̄
SS$_J$ IS make agreement agama lizard$_l$ = with
‘Then he$_j$ made an agreement with the agama lizard$_l$.’ (0182)

Northern Toussian discourse and typology

Logophoricity is quite common in West and Central Africa, and the Northern Toussian pronouns appear to act canonically.

The same subject marker appears to be a switch reference morpheme. Switch reference systems appear to be rare in West Africa.[7]

[7] See Apel (2019) for a description of Serer switch reference.

Conclusion—same subject reference

Northern Toussian uses a same subject marker characteristic of switch reference systems.

It marks coreference of subjects across clauses.

It particularly resembles the echo reference systems found in the southern Vanuatu languages Lenakel and Whitesands.

Conclusion—logophoric pronouns

Northern Toussian logophoric pronouns largely exhibit typical logophoric behavior.

They engage in a nesting phenomenon, where two logophoric pronouns in the same clause can be coreferenced with different agents.

Conclusion—NT discourse

The same subject morpheme interacts with logophoric pronouns and personal pronouns in Northern Toussian, enabling efficient tracking of agents across clauses.

Logophoric pronouns take precedence over the same subject morpheme during conflicts.

Coocurrence of logophoricity and switch reference appears to be quite rare.

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Appendix—tone change

Northern Toussian appears to have a floating L tone that docks onto the verb which indicates intransitivity/absence of an object.

(19) a. Transitive with *ná* ‘hear’

sīdí pàntō ná
cat dog hear

‘The cat heard the dog.’

b. Intransitive with *ná* ‘hear’

sīdí nă
cat hear.INTRANS

‘The cat heard.’

Appendix—tone change

Northern Toussian appears to have a floating L tone that docks onto the verb which indicates intransitivity/absence of an object.

(20) a. Transitive with *plā̃x* ‘betray’

ádámá zàkí plā̃x
Adama Zaki betray

‘Adama betrayed Zaki.’

b. Intransitive with *plā̃x* ‘betray’

ádámá plə̂̃x.INTRANS [LHM]

‘Adama made a mistake.’

Appendix—tone change

When the same subject marker is used, the floating tone will not be found in intransitive phrases. It is not yet understood what motivates this difference.

(21) a. Same subject reference

sīdí pàntō wé **nə̀** tú
cat dog see **SS** run

'The cat$_j$ saw the dog$_k$, it$_j$ ran away.'

b. Different subject reference

sīdí pàntō wé **kə̀** tŭ
cat dog see **3SG.NONHUM** run

'The cat$_j$ saw the dog$_k$, it$_k$ ran away.'