Logophoricity in Northern Toussian

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1 Introduction

- In this talk
  - Description of the Northern Toussian logophoricity system
  - Situation of this system within the typology of logophoric systems
    - ⁎ I show a counterexample to a purported universal of logophoric systems
  - Discussion of nested logophoric domains and strategies to disambiguate their antecedents

2 Logophoricity

- In English, a sentence like *Emma*$_i$ *said that she*$_{i/j}$ *left* is ambiguous
  - Does *she* refer to Emma or another woman?
- Many languages have strategies to disambiguate such constructions
  - Strategies that mark coreference between the speaker and an actor in the reported speech are called *logophoric*
- Some languages employ special morphology used exclusively in logophoric contexts
  - Logophoric pronouns
  - Logophoric verbal affixes
  - etc.

(1) Ewe (Clements 1975)
  a. Kofi be yè-dzo
     Kofi say LOG-leave
     'Kofi$_i$ said that he$_i$ left'

b. Kofi be ne-dzo
Kofi say 1SG-leave
'Kofi$_i$ said that I$_j$ left'

c. Kofi be e-dzo
Kofi say 3SG-leave
'Kofi$_i$ said that (s)he$_j$ left'

- Other languages leverage morphology with additional non-logophoric grammatical functions (e.g., reflexive pronouns) in logophoric contexts

(2) Kannada (Lidz 1995, cited in Huang 2000)

raamu shyaamu tann-annu priitis-utt-aane anta namb-utt-aane
Raamu Shyamu self-ACC love-PRES-3SG-M that believe-PRES-3SG-M

'Raamu$_i$ believes that Shyamu$_j$ loves self$_i$'

- Languages that have dedicated logophoric morphology are called "pure" logophoric languages
- We'll be looking at a pure logophoric language today

3 Language Background

- Northern Toussian (Struthers-Young 2025a)
  - Spoken in southwest Burkina Faso by around 40,000 speakers
  - One of two, possibly three Toussian languages
    - Northern Toussian (NT)
    - Southern Toussian (ST)
    - Variety spoken in villages Moami and Tien—not mutually intelligible with NT or ST, looks more closely related to ST
  - Niger-Congo language whose precise affiliation uncertain
    - "Peripheral Gur" language—shares many typological similarities with Gur languages, but hasn't been proven to be Gur
    - Other peripheral Gur phyla include Viemo, Tiéfo, Senoufo, Kulango, Natioro, and Wara
- Highly analytic language
- SAuxOVX word order

  - Areal feature of the Macro-Sudan Belt (Güldemann 2007)

- Contrastive pharyngeal vowels
- Complex tone system
  - Three level tones
  - Many lexical contour tones, including three-tone contour tones on CV syllables, e.g., *bêˊ* 'again' or *flɛ̂ˋ* 'spike trap'
  - Profuse use of downstep in multiple contexts, including some instances of double downstep (Struthers-Young 2025b)

4 Pronominal system

Table 1: Pronouns

	Singular				Plural		
	S	O	Obl	Emph	S/O	Obl	Emph
1	ḿ = ∼má	ḿ = ∼má	ḿ = ∼má	mɔ̂	á̰	á̰	ā́n
2	á	ǹ	á	âr	í	í	yī́n
3.H	à	à	tá	târ	pà	pá	pā́n
3.NH	kà	kà	ká	krɛ̂ˢ	sà	sá	sā́n∼sân
3.LOG	pá	pá	pá	pâr	pá	pá	pā́n

- Personal pronouns
  - Three persons (1st, 2nd, 3rd; no 1pl clusivity distinction)
  - Two numbers (singular and plural)
- Semantic agreement system with the third person pronouns
  - Distinguishes between human and non-human antecedents
  - No canonical noun class system
    - There are distinct singular and plural stems that likely originated from erstwhile noun class suffixes fusing with the root
    - Adjectives, numerals, verbs, etc., do not agree in class with nouns
- Some pronominal forms differ according to grammatical role
  - 2SG ACC form *ǹ*, vs. *á* elsewhere
  - Several forms differ in non-structural (oblique) contexts, i.e., when not subject or object

    - Reflexives
    - Reciprocals
    - Complements of postpositions
    - Possession

- Emphatic forms
  - Phonologically independent (other pronominal forms appear to be clitics)
  - Focus
  - Topic

- Logophoric pronouns
  - Basic (non-emphatic) logophoric pronouns have the same singular and plural form (*pə́*)
  - Emphatic plural logophoric pronoun syncretic with the 3PL.H pronoun *pə̄n*.

- (3) illustrates the basic use of logophoric pronouns

(3) a. álímátā yǒ [pə́ wən]
Alimata say.APVA LOG leave
'Alimata$_i$ said that she$_i$ left'

b. álímátā yǒ [à wən]
Alimata say.APVA 3SG.H leave
'Alimata$_i$ said that (s)he$_j$ left'

5 Typological properties of NT logophoricity

- A handful of studies have identified common cross-linguistic patterns in logophoric systems (Hyman & Comrie 1981, Culy 1994, Huang 2000)
- From this work, several implicational universals have been postulated
- The following sections show how the NT logophoric system is situated within these hierarchies
  - NT is a counterexample to one of the universals (§5.4)

5.1 Grammatical hierarchy

- Grammatical hierarchy: subject > non-subject (Hyman & Comrie 1981)
  - In a given language, if a logophoric pronoun can act as object, complement of an adposition, etc., it will also act as subject

- In NT, a logophoric pronoun can fill any grammatical role
  - Subject (4a)
  - Object (4b)
  - Possessor (4c)
  - Postpositional complement (4d)

(4) a. dɔ̰ dǐ à pə́ ǹ=kwán twá-n-ˡsā̰
so man COND TEMP IPFV=salt carry.on.head-LINK-put

nə̀ yɔ́ [**pə́** rí kə̀ tɛ̰̌]
CON say LOG SBJV 3SG.NH grab

'When the man$_i$ puts down the salt placed on his$_i$ head, he$_i$ decides that he$_i$ would pick it$_j$ up.' (NAO20180913)

b. tə̂r sɛ́dyà ńtò pɔ̄ pwó ˡyɔ́ tə́$_j$ rɛ́
3SG.H.EMPH elder.woman REL IS come say.APVA 3SG.H.OBL at
'That old woman$_i$ came to say to her$_j$'

[pə̂r ǹ=à tɛ́mɔ́ à n=fā̰́
LOG.SG.EMPH IPFV=3SG.H help 3SG.H IPFV.APVA=escape

'that she$_i$ will help her$_j$ escape'

mɛ̄ à rí **pə́** sùtrá]
but 3SG.H SBJV LOG snitch

'but she$_j$ mustn't rat her$_i$ out'

c. jòró yɔ̌ [**pə̂r** lê=é
lion say LOG.SG.EMPH pet.peeve=IDENT

nɔ̄ŋ kə̀pə́ vìŋ sā̰ **pə̂r** ɲīŋ]
person NEG.SBJV lie put LOG.SG.EMPH head

'The lion$_i$ said it's his pet peeve, a person$_j$ must not lie about him$_i$ (lit. a person must not place a lie on his head)' (NAO20180913)

d. flê-ḿpəmpā̂r fáná yɔ̌ [à nɔ́nɔ̄ **pə́** rɛ́]
woman-child also say.APVA 3SG.H please LOG at
'The girl$_i$ also said that she$_i$ likes him$_j$.'

5.2 Person hierarchy

- Person hierarchy: 3rd > 2nd > 1st (Hyman & Comrie 1981)

  - If a logophoric pronoun can have a 1st person antecedent, it can have a 2nd or 3rd person antecedent

- In NT, only 3rd person logophoric antecedents are possible

(5) a. * mə́ yǒ [**pə́** wən]
1SG say.AVPA LOG leave
Intended: 'I$_i$ said I$_i$ left.'

b. * á yǒ [**pə́** wən]
2SG say.APVA LOG leave
Intended: 'You$_i$ said you$_i$ left.'

c. mə́ yǒ [**mə́** wən]
1SG say.APVA 1SG leave
'I$_i$ said I$_i$ left.'

d. á yǒ [**á** wən]
2SG say.APVA 2SG leave
'You$_i$ said you$_i$ left.'

5.3 Number hierarchy

- Number hierarchy: sg > pl (Hyman & Comrie 1981)
  - If a logophoric pronoun can have a plural antecedent, it can have a singular antecedent

- In NT, both singular (6a) and plural (6b) antecedents are possible

(6) a. jòró yǒ [**pə̂r** lê=é
lion say LOG.SG.EMPH pet.peeve=IDENT
nɔ̄ŋ kàpə́ vìŋ sa̰ **pə̂r** ɲīŋ]
person NEG.SBJV lie put LOG.SG.EMPH head
'The lion$_i$ said it's his pet peeve, a person$_j$ must not lie about him$_i$ (lit. a person must not place a lie on his head)' (NAO20180913)

b. dɔ́ **pə̀** yǒ [**pə̄**=rí tɔ́ sa̰]
therefore 3PL.H say.APVA LOG.SBJV=SBJV group put
'They$_i$ said, let them$_i$ organize a group$_j$ (of workers).' (NAO20180913)

5.4 Licenser hierarchy

- Licenser hierarchy: Speech predicates > epistemic predicates > psychological predicates > knowledge predicates > perceptive predicates[1] (Culy 1994, Huang 2000, Ameka 2017)
  - If a perceptive predicate (e.g., 'hear,' 'see') can trigger a logophoric domain, then so can knowledge, psychological, epistemic, and speech predicates

[1]Huang (2000) also includes 'unmarked directional predicates' as the rightmost predicate in this hierarchy. However, these predicates have not been found to condition logophoric marking in any African pure logophoric languages, Because of this, like Ameka (2017), I do not include it in the hierarchy

- Attested predicates that trigger logophoric domains:

(7)

Speech predicates	*yɔ́*	‘say’
	páɣnˈjá	‘ask’
Epistemic predicates	*sa̰*	‘think’
	mírí	‘think’
	tə́ fɛ̄ˢ=rɔ̌	‘hope’
Knowledge predicates	*pɔ̰ŋ*	‘know’
Perceptive predicates	*ná*	‘hear’
	wé	‘see’

- Examples:

(8) a. Speech predicate

sɛ̰-nɔ̄ báló-wū jĭn-n-tɛ̰ tə́ pə́-flê páɣnˈjá
bee-PL raise-AGT rise.APVA-LINK-sit 3SG.H.OBL daughter ask

[ǹyɔ́ **pə́** sɛ̰ sa̰ ˈpé dê]
COMP LOG bee red COP.APVA where

‘The beekeeper$_i$ asked his$_i$ daughter$_j$ where his$_i$ red bee$_k$ is’ (SKT20180801-04)

b. Epistemic predicate

dɔ̰ à mìrí
therefore 3SG.H think.APVA

[ǹyɔ́ **pə̂r** sə́nɔ́ á dí-pə̄r mɛ̄ fúr]
COMP LOG.SG.EMPH IRR PST man-small DEM marry

‘She$_i$ thought if she$_i$ had married the short man$_j$…’ (SKT20180801-10)

c. Knowledge predicate

yàní búmblâɣ rí pɔ̰ŋ
before hyena SBJV know

[bùfú **pə̂r** kɔ́r pɔ̰ŋ bùfú tŭ]
billy.goat LOG.SG.EMPH plan know billy.goat run.APVA

‘Before the hyena$_i$ realized, the billy goat$_j$ knew his$_i$ plan: the billy goat$_j$ fled.’ (NAO20180916)

d. Perceptive predicates

à nă [**pə́** kěy]
3SG.H hear.APVA LOG go.APVA

'(S)he$_i$ heard that she$_i$ left'

- A gap: psychological predicates
  - With these predicates, the anaphoric pronoun used to refer to the antecedent is a third person pronoun, not a logophoric pronoun
  - Ambiguous between a coreferent and non-coreferent reading

(9) a. ádámá fɛ̄ˢ ją̰ [à sǎɣ]
Adama stomach heat.APVA 3SG.H fall.APVA
'Adama$_i$ got upset that he$_{i/j}$ fell'

b. tā̰ɣ ˩˩pé tə́ rǔ
fear COP.APVA 3SG.H.OBL in
[**à** kàpə́ ˩pwó **tə́** màndímí]
3SG.H NEG.SBJV come.APVA 3SG.H.OBL hurt
'He$_i$ is scared that he$_{i/j}$ will get hurt '

c. [à fɛ̄ˢ tɛ̂ˢ] kà nɔ́nɔ̄ **tə́** dyē
3SG.H stomach take 3SG.NH please 3SG.H.OBL spirit
'She$_i$ is happy that she$_{i/j}$ is pregnant'

- All psychological predicates employ an idiomatic/schematic construction
- This is not the cause of the absence of logophoric pronouns, as there are similar constructions that condition logophoric domains and logophoric pronouns

(10) a. tə́ fɛ̄ˢ rǔ [**pə́** kà pɛ̌y]
3SG.H.OBL stomach in LOG 3SG.NH do
'(S)he$_i$ thought that (s)he$_i$ did it.'

b. à sɛ̰̌ kə́ ɲīŋ [pə́ kà pɛ̌y]
3SG.H sleep.APVA 3SG.NH.OBL on LOG 3SG.NH do
'(S)he$_i$ claims/hopes that (s)he$_i$ did it'

- NT appears to be a counterexample to the licenser hierarchy

6 Nested logophoric domains

- Nested logophoric domains are those that have two different predicates each of which introduce a separate logophoric domain
  - *she$_i$ said that she$_j$ said that she$_{i/j}$ left*

In all cases I've found (not many) where this phenomenon is discussed, the antecedent of the logophoric pronoun is always ambiguous

- Wan (Nikitina 2012, p.c.)
- Ewe (Clements 1975)
- Ibibio (Baker & Ikawa 2024)

- In NT, when basic logophoric pronouns are used in nested logophoric domains, the antecedent is likewise ambiguous

(11) a. àlî$_i$ yɔ̌ álímátā$_j$ yɔ̌ pə́$_{i/j}$ wən
Ali$_i$ say.APVA Alimata$_j$ say.APVA LOG$_{i/j}$ leave
'Ali$_i$ said that Alimata$_j$ said that he$_i$ left', or 'Ali$_i$ said that Alimata$_j$ said that she$_j$ left'

b. àlî$_i$ yɔ̌ álímátā$_j$ yɔ̌ pə́$_{i/j}$ pə́$_{i/j}$ wé
Ali$_i$ say.APVA Alimata$_j$ say.APVA LOG$_{i/j}$ LOG$_{i/j}$ see
'Ali$_i$ said that Alimata$_j$ said that she$_j$ saw him$_i$', or 'Ali$_i$ said that Alimata$_j$ said that he$_i$ saw her$_j$'

- When an emphatic logophoric pronoun is used, it obligatorily refers to the outermost antecedent.

(12) a. àlî$_i$ yɔ̌ [álímátā$_j$ yɔ̌ [pə̂r$_i$ wən]]
Ali$_i$ say.APVA Alimata$_j$ say.APVA LOG.SG.EMPH$_i$ leave
'Ali$_i$ said that Alimata$_j$ said that he$_i$ left'

b. àlî yɔ̌ [álímátā yɔ̌ [pə́ pə̂r wě]]
Ali$_i$ say.APVA Alimata$_j$ say.APVA LOG$_j$ LOG.SG.EMPH$_i$ see
'Ali$_i$ said that Alimata$_j$ said that she$_j$ saw him$_i$'

c. àlî$_i$ yɔ̌ [álímátā$_j$ yɔ̌ [pə̂r$_i$ pə́$_j$ wé]]
Ali$_i$ say.APVA Alimata$_j$ say.APVA LOG.SG.EMPH$_i$ LOG$_j$ see
'Ali$_i$ said that Alimata$_j$ said that he$_i$ saw her$_j$'

- The following nested logophoric domain is attested in texts
  - It behaves identically to those above
- In this example, the outermost logophoric trigger is several clauses prior to the nested logophoric domain
  - Further context is provided in the appendix

(13) plɛ̄ yǒ…
rabbit say.APVA

[pə̀=à pə́ ˈpwó ˈyɔ́ [pə́ ǹ=pə̂r ɲìŋ]
3PL.H=COND TEMP come.APVA say.APVA LOG IPFV=LOG.SG.EMPH bury

pə́ n=ˈyɔ́ lè-n-pwɛ̃ nâɣ ˈpé
LOG IPFV.APVA=say.APVA phrase-LINK-CL.NH.SG one COP.APVA

pə́ rí krɛ̂ˢ yǒ]
LOG SBJV 3SG.NH.EMPH say

'The rabbit said… When they come and say that they will bury him, he will say that he has something to say.'

- This construction has the function of disambiguating the antecedent of embedded logophoric domains
- Question for future research:
  - Is this phenomenon a true disambiguation strategy or epiphenomenal?
    - Does it arise from more general information structural properties of the language (e.g., patterns in focus marking)?
  - How frequent are embedded logophoric domains?
    - Only the one attested passage with nested logophoric domains in texts
    - Is this disambiguation strategy the norm with embedded domains?

7 Conclusion

- The NT logophoric system
  - Pure logophoric system
  - Dedicated logophoric pronouns
  - Robustly used and frequent in texts
- Notable typological properties
  - Is a counterexample to the licenser hierarchy universal
  - Has a disambiguation strategy for embedded logophoric domains
    - Emphatic pronouns appear to necessarily refer to the outermost logophoric domain

Abbreviations

APVA	Absent preverbal (non-subject) argument marker
CL	Classifier
COMP	Complementizer
COND	conditional marker
CON	Connective marker (used especially in clause chains)
EMPH	Emphatic pronoun
H	Human
LOG	Logophoric pronoun
NH	Non-human
PROS	prospective marker
SBJV	Subjunctive
TEMP	Temporal clause marker

Appendix

Textual example of nested logophoric domains

The rabbit is the wily trickster in traditional West African stories. In this story, he had helped pass a law saying that any animal that breaks its leg must be buried alive. Soon thereafter, he falls and breaks his leg, and quickly concocts a way out of being executed. He convinces the executioners of a prophesy that, if it rains during his burial, it'll never rain again. The following passage shows the scheme he plots with the agama lizard to make sure that it will rain while he's being buried.

The rabbit will be in orange, the agama lizard in blue, and the executioners in pink. I will also color the clause chain marker *nà* with the color of the relevant antecedent.

(14) a. Outermost logophoric trigger

plɛ́ yɔ̌
rabbit say.APVA

'The rabbit said,'

b. Context before

ǹyɔ́ pà rí ˡkɛ́y pə̂r fa̰ tīŋ bìsyɔ̄ sàkwíŋ yā
COMP 3PL.H SBJV go.APVA LOG.SG.EMPH hole dig palm.tree base in.front

'let them go dig his grave at the base of the palm tree.'

nà pɔ̄ dákɔ́r sàkɔ̃́ŋ sɛ̄
CON IS agreement lizard with

'He then made an agreement with the agama lizard'

ǹyɔ́ pə́ ǹ = nīŋ ꜜsɛ̄ səkɔ̄ŋ kɔ̰́
COMP LOG IPFV = water with lizard give

‘that he will give the agama lizard water.’

kə rí dɛ̂ˤ nə kɛ́y tɛ̰̀ byɛ̄ˤ rɔ̌
3SG.NH SBJV climb CON go sit palm.tree in

‘Let it go climb and sit in the palm tree.’

c. Portion with nested logophoric domains
pə̀ = à pə́ ꜜpwó ꜜyɔ́ [pə́ ǹ = pə̂r ɲìŋ]
3PL.H = COND TEMP come.APVA say.APVA LOG IPFV = LOG.SG.EMPH bury
‘When they come and say that they will bury him,’

d. Context after
pə́ n = ꜜyɔ́ lè-n-pwɛ̄ nâɣ pé
LOG IPFV.APVA = say.APVA phrase-LINK-CL.NH.SG one COP.APVA

pə́ rí krɛ̂ˤ yɔ̌
LOG SBJV 3SG.NH.EMPH say

‘he will say that he has something to say.’

pə́ n = pī n = yɔ́ pɛ̄y pə̀ = à pə̂r
LOG IPFV.APVA = PROS IPFV.APVA = say EXCL 3PL.H = COND LOG.SG.EMPH
ɲìŋ
bury

‘He will say, that if they bury him;’

nɛ́ twī à kə́ n = mɛ̄ pɛ́y pɛ̄ pē pē pē pē pē
and rain COND NEG IPFV = then do EXCL at.all at.all at.all at.all at.all

‘and if it doesn’t then rain at all,’

nīŋ = rí ꜜkwé
water = SBJV pour.APVA

‘water must be poured.’

ǹkà twī à n = pɛ́y pə̂r ɲîŋ-ǹ-tyē-ǹ-dê nɛ̄ŋ
but water COND IPFV = do LOG.SG.EMPH bury-LINK-when after

nīŋ kəpə́ ꜜkwé
water NEG.SBJV pour

‘If it rains after burying him, water won’t fall’

donc pə́=à pə́ ˈyɔ́ m̀bàrì↗
so LOG=COND TEMP say.APVA like.that

‘So when he gives the signal’

sə̀kɔ̃ŋ=rí nīŋ sɔ̂r syàmɔ́
lizard=SBJV water little throw

‘let the agama lizard throw a little water’

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