

# On Logophoric Pronouns in African Languages: Universals, Variation, and Larger Comparisons

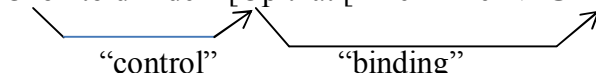
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Logophoric pronouns are special pronouns that are used in embedded clauses in many West African languages to refer to the agent-subject of the matrix clause, as in (1) from Ibibio. These pronouns typically cannot be used in simple main clauses at all (see (2)), nor can they be used to refer to an argument of the matrix verb other than its agent-subject ((1) again).

- (1) Okon a-ke-dòkkò Edem ke Emem i-mma-gha imò. (Ibibio)  
 Okon told Edem that Emem like-NEG LOG  
 ‘Okon<sub>i</sub> told Edem<sub>k</sub> that Emem doesn’t like him<sub>i,\*k</sub>’
- (2) Okon a-ma-a-dòkkò eka ọmọ/\*imọ mbak.  
 Okon told mother his/LOG news  
 ‘Okon told his mother the news.’

This talk will study these logophoric constructions at two levels of granularity. First, I compare logophoric constructions across a range of West African languages (Ibibio, Edo, Yoruba, Abe, Ewe). Second, I compare logophoric constructions with indexical shift constructions as found in a range of languages in Asia and beyond, especially in Magahi.

I begin by sketching a theoretical framework for analyzing logophoric constructions, within a tradition initiated by Koopman and Sportiche (1989). According to this view, the relationship between the logophoric pronoun and its antecedent is mediated by a phonologically null noun phrase (“Op”) near the complementizer of the embedded clause. This Op is controlled by an argument of the matrix verb, and in turn it binds logophoric pronouns inside the embedded clause it is associated with, as sketched in (3).

- (3) Ozo told Edem [Op that [Emem like-NEG LOG]]  


After giving some initial motivations for this style of analysis, I comment briefly on where Ops can appear and the nature of the control relationship. Then I focus in more detail on the binding relationship between Op and the logophoric pronoun. At first this seems quite chaotic, with different patterns in every language that has been studied. However, the variation can be sorted out into a universal part and a variable part. The universal part is that no language allows an ordinary pronoun to be interpreted as being coreferential with a logophoric pronoun that it *c-commands* (roughly “is higher in the clause than”). I claim that this is because logophoric pronouns are semantically bound variables, whereas ordinary pronouns are referring expressions, and a referring expression cannot c-command a variable that it depends on. This is the so-called Strong Crossover condition, known from the study of quantifiers and interrogative constructions. Other arrangements of plain pronouns and logophors vary in acceptability from language to language. I claim that this depends on whether or not the logophoric/nonlogophoric

distinction is encoded in the language as a morphosyntactic feature, on a par with gender or number, giving some evidence that it can be so encoded from agreement in Ibibio.

In the last part of the talk, I undertake a broader comparison of logophoric constructions in African languages with indexical shift constructions in languages like Magahi (an Indo-Aryan language of India). An example of indexical shift is (4). Like (1), the “special” pronoun in the embedded clause can refer to the agent/subject of the matrix clause but not to the goal argument. Unlike (1), this pronoun is also used in simple sentences to refer to the speaker of the sentence.

- (4) Santeeaa      Banteeaa-ke    kahl-ai    ki      ham      Ram-ke      dekh-I-i-au    hal.  
Santee      Bantee-ACC    told-3S    that    I      Ram-ACC      saw-1S-NHA    be  
‘Santee told Bantee that I (=Santee, not=Bantee) saw Ram.’

I claim that these constructions can also be analyzed as in (3), with the sole difference that “Op” in Magahi bears the feature “first person”, whereas in the African languages it does not. Which kinds of clauses can contain an Op is very similar in both cases. Which arguments of the matrix verb can control the Op is essentially identical in the two cases. Finally, issues of crossover do not arise with indexical shift, because all languages treat 1<sup>st</sup> versus 3<sup>rd</sup> person as a morphosyntactic feature, whereas only some languages treat +/-logophoric in this way. Therefore, a principled unified analysis of logophoricity and indexical shift seems to be possible. And that is a very welcome result, because this unified theory is applicable to a much wider range of languages from around the world, whereas a narrow theory of logophoric constructions would necessarily be limited to one rather narrow linguistic area.