

Number asymmetries in logophoric systems: Towards a historical explanation

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Logophoric pronouns are used in the context of quoted speech to encode the role of Reported Speaker (Hagège 1974; Clements 1975; Nikitina 2020, *inter alia*). For example, in (1), from Wan (Mande; Côte d'Ivoire; Nikitina 2012), the logophoric pronoun refers back to the subject of the verb *gé* 'say', while a third person pronoun in the same context points to some other participant not directly involved in the reported speech situation:

- (1) è gé **ḃā** / è séŋgè lū [Wan]
3SG say LOG 3SG knife bought
'He₁ said he₁ / he₂ bought a knife.'

Languages with logophoric pronouns have been traditionally classified into *pure* and *mixed* logophoric languages, depending on whether the pronouns are associated exclusively with the logophoric function or appear outside reported speech as well (Culy 1994, 1997). Some of the languages, however, do not fit neatly into either category as their logophoric pronouns show a characteristic number asymmetry: a dedicated logophoric pronoun is used in the singular, but not in the plural. In Wan, for example, the "logophoric" plural pronoun signalling co-reference with a reported speaker (ex. 2) can also be used as a long-distance anaphor pointing to an antecedent outside the clause; the singular logophoric pronoun in (1) has no such use.

- (2) à gé **m̄** séŋgè lū [Wan]
3PL say LOG.PL knife bought
'They₁ said they₁ bought a knife.'

We discuss data from several unrelated languages in which the same asymmetry is attested: Ainu (isolate, Japan; Tamura 2000, Bugaeva 2008), Nyesam (Adamawa, Nigeria; Villa *f/c.*), Aghem (Narrow Grassfields, Cameroon; Hyman 1979). We discuss possible motivations for this asymmetry and suggest that it may develop due to a difference in frequency between singular and plural logophoric contexts. Examples with singular Reported Speaker (such as 1) are more frequent than examples where the Reported Speaker is in the plural (such as 2). This difference can result, in some languages, in the retention of an originally non-specialized singular pronoun in a logophoric function after it has been replaced by a new pronoun in all other contexts.

In the languages that we survey logophoric pronouns develop from different sources. In some, the singular logophoric pronoun is the only relic of an old third person pronoun which has been replaced by a new form in all other functions (Hyman 2018). In others, it is a relic of an old demonstrative, only surviving in the context of reported speech. The different scenarios result in different versions of the asymmetry. In Nyesam, regular third person plural pronouns appear in logophoric contexts, so that the logophoric/non-logophoric distinction is completely neutralized in the plural. In Wan, the same plural pronoun appears in logophoric contexts and encodes long-distance coreference. In Ainu, the same plural pronoun is associated with the logophoric meaning and with the meanings of first person plural inclusive and honorific second person. Crucially, the different subtypes share the same basic number asymmetry, with dedicated logophoric pronouns restricted to singular Reported Speakers.

We hypothesize that the frequency effect observed in our data is ultimately grounded in the general principle described by Bybee & Thompson (1997): frequently used expressions are resistant to analogical change, both at phonological and syntactic level (Krug 2000; Diessel 2007, *inter alia*). In our case, however, the frequency-based explanation has to refer specifically to the association of pronouns with specific semantic roles (since logophoricity characterizes a syntactically heterogeneous set of contexts). This suggests that the role of Reported Speaker can become dissociated, when frequently encoded by a particular pronoun, from all other roles the same pronoun can encode across different construction types.

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