

Reference tracking and logophoricity in reported discourse in Kushi (West Chadic)

Gian Claudio BATIC

University of Naples L'Orientale

Abstract

The distribution and frequency of logophoric pronouns across the Chadic family is limited to a few languages, with a high concentration of the feature in the Tangale sub-group of the Western branch. Kushi, a Tangalic language spoken in Gombe State, Nigeria, has developed a set of disjoint reference pronouns (**pèemò/pèe/pìimè** 3M, 3F, PL) that are used to code a) non-coreference between the subject of the matrix clause (i.e. the clause with the verb of saying) and the subject of the complement clause, and b) a distinction between the speaker and the addressee of the reported discourse. Coreference, on the other hand, is realised through the use of the standard subject pronoun. It is shown that in reported discourse these pronouns can also function in other syntactical environments, for instance as independent possessives, possessive modifiers or emphatic reflexives. The reference tracking system of Kushi seems to position itself halfway between the reference tracking systems of its two neighbouring Chadic languages, Kholok and Pero. The former presents a fully-fledged ('anti')-logophoric system, while the latter exhibits instead a reduced logophoric system limited solely to the speaker-addressee distinction.

1 Introduction¹

The aim of this article is to describe the system of reference tracking in reported discourse in Kushi (<ISO 639-3: kuh; Glottocode: kush1236>), a west Chadic language of the Bole-Tangale group spoken near the north-eastern slopes of the Muri Mountains (Gombe State, Nigeria). Kushi, like other Chadic languages in the area, makes use of different sets of pronouns in embedded clauses to mark co-reference or disjoint reference with a speaker or addressee encoded in a verb-of-saying matrix clause. In order to illustrate the functioning of these sets of pronouns, the article is organised as follows: first of all, the main characteristics of the logophoric or pronominal-based reference tracking systems of the Bole-Tangale languages will be briefly outlined; then, some features of the language will be presented, especially with regard to gender and number. Finally, the instances of coreference, non-coreference and the use of pronouns to signal distinct participants (i.e. speaker vs addressee) will be exemplified and analysed. All data are taken from samples of natural speech collected through fieldwork in the Kushi village area.

2 Logophoric and ‘anti-logophoric’ systems in Chadic

Logophoric systems have been referred to as referential aids or devices “to avoid ambiguity between the source of information [...] and a protagonist in a logophoric domain” (Ameka 2017: 530, cf. Kibrik 2011). Logophoric systems make use of at least a logophoric set of pronouns in order to code coreference between the subject of a complement clause and the subject (speaker) and/or the indirect object (addressee) of a matrix clause with a verb of saying. In a Chadic fully-fledged logophoric system like the one that is found in Mupun (<sur; mwag1236>), coreference is realised through three distinct sets of specialised pronouns: two sets to mark co-referentiality of the subject and the object of the embedded clause with the speaker and one set to mark co-referentiality with the addressee (Frajzyngier 1985, 1993). Two sets of logophoric pronouns code coreference with the speaker and the addressee in Tangale (<tan; kalt1239>) (Jungraithmayr 2002, Leger & Zoch 2006) and Ngas (<anc; ngas1240>) (Burquest 1986), while Pero (<pip; pero1241>) displays one set of logophoric pronouns to code the distinction between the speaker and the addressee (Frajzyngier 1985, 1989).

The rise of specialised pronominal sets functional for reference tracking has not always resulted in proper logophoric systems. This is the case, for instance, of the so-called anti-logophoric systems (Ameka 2017: 522) in which it is the default subject pronoun that is used to code coreference with the speaker, while the anti-logophoric pronoun would signal disjoint reference. Kholok displays two sets of pronouns to

indicate disjoint reference with the speaker and the addressee respectively (Leger & Zoch 2006, Baldi & Leger 2020). Kushi, as will be discussed in the next section, has a system similar to that of Kholok, but with only one set of specialised pronouns marking disjoint reference.

As seen above, those Chadic languages that have developed pronominal sets as a means to code reference tracking in reported discourse display a heterogeneous array of solutions. Languages such as Mupun, Tangale, Ngas, Kholok, Kushi and (to a certain extent) Pero have developed pronominal sets as a means to code coreference or disjoint reference between the speaker and addressee of the matrix clause and the subject (or even the object, as in the case of Mupun) of the embedded clause. In some of these language (Mupun, Tangale, Ngas), these pronominal sets have a logophoric value, while in others (Kholok, Kushi) they code non-coreference.

The situation in Chadic is summarised in Table 1 below. Table 1 shows the use of default subject pronouns (S) and of specialised logophoric or disjoint reference pronouns (A, B) to code (a) \pm coreference with the subject and the indirect object of the matrix clause (I, II.a, II.b), and (b) a distinction between speaker and addressee (II.b, II.c).

	speaker		addressee		speaker \neq addressee	Sample languages
	disj.	coref.	disj.	coref.		
I.	S	A	S	B		Mupun, Ngas, Tangale
II.a	A	S	B	S		Kholok
II.b	A	S			A	Kushi
II.c					A	Pero

Table 1. Logophoric and disjoint reference pronouns in Chadic: A typology

The distribution and frequency of logophoricity in the Chadic family is limited to a few languages, with a high concentration of the feature in the Tangale sub-group of the Western branch. Considered most likely as “the result of borrowing of an areal feature” (Frajzyngier 1985: 36), the adoption of logophoric systems in southern Bole-Tangale languages such as Tangale, Pero, Kholok and Kushi has certainly been favoured by the close proximity of the different language groups living in the area adjoining the north-eastern fringes of the Muri Mountains.

Although reconstructing the penetration process of the feature in the Bole-Tangale languages risks to be a rather cumbersome operation, the pronominal morphology can give us some insights into the notion underlying the disambiguation function performed by pronoun-based reference tracking systems in reported speech. As can be seen by observing the pronominal forms, some sets are ‘suspiciously’ long, being

disyllabic pronouns (like the ones found in southern Bole-Tangale logophoric – or anti-logophoric – systems) indicative of a compounding process. According to Jungraithmayr, the Tangale pronouns signalling non-coreference and coreference with the addressee are morphologically composed of an element meaning ‘person’ (**mbéé-/péé-/paa/pii-**) and a demonstrative marker (**-ndám/-mó/-zẹ/-mo**) (Jungraithmayr 2002, cf. Leger&Zoch 2006). According to Frajzyngier, the presence of the element ‘**pe**’ across West Chadic “must be considered [...] a common retention from Proto-West Chadic” (1985: 34). As shown in Table 2 below, several A2 and A3 languages display cognate ‘**pe**’ disyllabic pronominal sets. It is noted that the ‘**pe**’ element generally appears in the pronominal set that is coreferential with the addressee.

West Chadic						
A2				A3		
Tangale		Pero	Kholok	Kushi	Mupun	Ngas
mbéëndám	péémó	peemo/u	pèemò	pèemò	gwar	gwa
mbáastám	paazẹ	peeje	pèeyè	pèe	paa	pe
mbíndám	piimo	piime	píimè	píimè	nuwa	nywe

Table 2. Compound \pm coreference pronouns in West Chadic: cognate ‘**pe**’ sets

3 Background

Kushi displays large consonant (37 phonemes) and vowel inventories (10 phonemic vowels that harmonise in \pm ATR system). The syllabic structure is moderately complex and the tone system is based on a two-way contrast with tone levelling towards low tone. The underlying word order of clause constituents is SVO with the possibility of VS; the word order of phrase constituents is N-Gen and Adj-N. Kushi has a two-term masculine/feminine gender opposition in the reference system in the second and third person singular pronouns. Nouns are not overtly marked for gender and a gender distinction based on biological sex is productive in a limited number of lexical items with a human referent (mother, father, woman, man), while all other nouns are feminine. This phenomenon of gender levelling, *Genusnivellierung*, in favour of the feminine is well attested in several other southern Bole-Tangale languages such as Kwaami (<ksq; kwaa1269>), Piya (<piy; piya1245>), Kholok (<ktc; khol1240>), and Nyam (<nmi; nyam1285>) (Leger 1998, Baldi & Leger 2011, Leger 2014). As far as the nominal number is concerned, apart from a few suppletive plural forms there is no morphological distinction between singular and plural nouns. Verbal plurality, on the contrary, is a productive feature and pluractionals – used to indicate either the plurality of the subject or of the action – are characterised by a

robust set of morphological derivation rules involving suffixation, infixation, and gemination (Batic 2019). The situation in Kushi is consistent with the observation that “the levelling of the gender distinctions to the benefit of feminine gender is not only paralleled by a breakdown in the system of noun plurality, but also corresponds with an increase of the use of verbal plural formations (“pluractionals”)” (Baldi & Leger 2011: 27).

4 Reference system in reported discourse in Kushi

Kushi has developed (or retained) only one set of reference pronouns in addition to the default subject pronouns. Coreferential and non-coreferential pronouns are used in complement clauses following a matrix clause with a verb of saying such as **yàa** ‘say’ and **tèwò** ‘tell’. The coreference/non-coreference distinction is relevant in reported discourse in the third person singular and plural only. The two pronominal sets used to code \pm coreference are given in Table 3.

	<i>coreference</i>	<i>non-coreference</i>
3M	shìi	pèemò
3F	tè/tèi	pèe
3PL	shínúí	piimè

Table 3. Coreference and disjoint reference pronouns

Like in Kholok, **pèemò/pèe/piimè** signal disjoint reference, but differently from some of its neighbouring language (which displays two sets of disjoint reference pronouns), the reference tracking system of Kushi had to specialise its only ‘anti-logophoric’ pronouns even further in order to signal different non-coreference relations between the participants.

In Kushi, disjoint reference pronouns are used to code a) non-coreference between the subject of the matrix clause (i.e. the clause with the verb of saying) and the subject of the complement clause, and b) a distinction between the speaker and the addressee of the reported discourse.

4.1 Coreference vs disjoint reference

Coreference is realised through the use of the standard subject pronoun. The subject of the main clause can be either pronominal (as in ex. (1)) or nominal (2).

- (1) **tè₁ ténnà yà tè₁ tà yée-rù-nì khà kíríppó**
 3F tell.PFCT COMPL 3F FUT call-DIST-3M.OBJ COM evening
 ‘She₁ said that she₁ will call him in the evening.’

- (2) **Kérfòtàyà₁ yàa shìi₁ wànnà ’in gàsshò ’án nèi**

- (2) **Kérfòtàyà₁ yàa shì₁ wànnà 'in gàsshò 'án nèi**
 Kerfotagha say.PFCT 3M come.PFCT AOR find.NEU possessor of fight
 ‘Kerfotagha₁ said that he₁ came to find a fighter.’

The use of disjoint reference pronouns is mandatory when there is no coreference between the participants. In example (3), **pèemo** is used to signal the distinction between the participants and has as its referent the closest participant mentioned in the previous discourse, i.e. **pèemo/pèe/piimè** have also an anaphoric function.

- (3) **mò Shòmì₁ yàa oo! pèemò₂ tà gàsshàn 'án nèi**
 REP Shomi say.PFCT INJ 3M.DISJ FUT find.VN possessor of fight
 ‘Then Shomi said, oh!, he will look for a fighter.’

Coreference can be partial, i.e. the subject pronoun in the embedded clause may include participants other than the speaker. The sentence in example (4) below codes partial coreference between **Shòmì/shì** ‘Shomi/he’ and the third person plural pronoun **shínúí** ‘they’. The use of the pronoun **shínúí** as opposed to **piimè** is possible because the speaker is included among the participants encoded in the subject pronoun of the relative clause.

- (4) **mò Shòmì₁ yàa shì₁ tà lì kódfi yèn shínúí₁₊**
 REP Shomi say.PFCT 3M FUT put time REL 3PL

tà wàrà yò nèi pèemò₂-n wàrò
 FUT come do fight 3M.DISJ-AOR come.NEU

‘Then Shomi₁ said that he₁ will establish a time when they₁₊ will fight, so that he₂ (Kerfotagha) will come [at that time].’

4.2 Speaker-addressee distinction

When a sentence encodes both a speaker and an addressee, the function of **pèemò/pèe/piimè** is to signal that the speaker and the addressee are distinct participants. Consider the following excerpt from a Kushi tale which has been divided into three blocks for ease of analysis:

- (5) a. **mò Pírkàlàng₁yàa gáak-nì₂ dòmà pèe₂ tí tèm̀m̀m̀**
 REP Pirkalang say old_mother-3SG.POS COMPL 3F.DISJ HAB cleaning

tà mínà nò pèe₂ ?
 in house L 3F.DISJ

‘Pirkalang said to his old mother, Is she usually cleaning her house?’²

- b. **mò gáayà₁ yàa tè₁ tí tèm̀m̀m̀nà-m ,**
 REP old_mother say.PFCT 3F HAB clean.VN-NEG
 ‘The old mother said that she was not cleaning [it],’

c. \emptyset_1 yàa m̀ p̀eè₂ sár-nì t̀èrèt
 [he] say.PFCT COMPL 3F.DISJ bring-3M.OBJ broom

yà-shì₁ t̀èmm̀-**n** tí p̀eè₂.
 say-3M clean.NEU-AA in 3F.DISJ
 ‘then [Pirkalang] said that she should bring him a broom so that he will
 clean [it] for her.’

(5a) shows that the use of disjoint reference pronouns is obligatory even when the difference of gender between the subject argument of the speaking-verb (Pirkalang, masculine) and the addressee (**gáayà** ‘old mother’) excludes coreference. In (5b), it is the ‘old mother’ who takes on the role of speaker, hence the pronoun **t̀è** in the embedded clause marks coreference. In 4c, however, a change of roles is again observed: Pirkalang is addressing his mother and the pronominal elements in the complement clause that have the addressee as referent are realised with **p̀eè**.

The example shows that a marked distinction between the participants is not limited to the subject pronoun of the embedded clause, but it extends to other syntactic environments where the referent is the addressee: in (5a) **p̀eè** functions as an independent possessive following the linker **ǹò**, while in (5c) it is used as a preposition-governed object pronoun.

In example (6), the addressee is coded by a modifier in the construction ‘go into the abuse of *x*’. The embedded clause is introduced by the complementiser **yà** and the disjoint reference pronoun **p̀eem̀ò** appears in the noun phrase **gb̀è g̀óŋ̀è p̀eem̀ò** ‘big belly of his’ as a possessive modifier.

(6) Sh̀òmì₁ ’ìn ẁàn-nì₁ k̀àwak-ǹò ’Ankark̀enshè₂ yà
 Shomi SUBJ go-3M.ICP abuse-L Viper COMPL

gb̀è g̀óŋ̀è p̀eem̀ò₂ k̀á l̀ùr̀ò shél j̀ə̀
 big belly 3M.DISJ like bag put.VN beans
 ‘Shomi₁ started abusing Viper₂ [saying] that the big belly of his₂ is like a bag for
 beans.’

The disjoint reference pronoun can be used as an emphatic reflexive. The pronominal element takes on an enclitic linker and is followed by a noun. In (7), the disjoint emphatic reflexive coding the addressee appears in the matrix clause.

(7) m̀ mém̀m̀è₁ ỳàà p̀eem̀ò-n Pirkalang₂ ỳà k̀àbàng
 REP people say.PFCT 3M.DISJ-L Pirkalang COMPL axe

Regarding the nature of reported speech, i.e. whether it is direct or indirect, two observations must be formulated. The first concerns the fact that a clear-cut distinction between direct and indirect speech seems to be –though not exactly a “grammatical fiction” (Ebert 1986: 156) – rather problematic. In addition to the case that emerged in example (5a), where the speaker directly addresses the only other participant while retaining third person pronouns in the reported content, third person pronouns combined with interrogative markers (ex. (9) below) and interjections (as in ex. (3)) in the same embedded clause constitute a case in point of the double-faceted nature of reported discourse.

- (9) **Shòmì ’ìn pèrù yàa pèe tà kóŋŋò wènéé ?**
 Shomi AOR come.NEU say 3F.DISJ FUT cry INTERR
 ‘Then Shomi came saying, what she would be crying for?’

However, even if we set out to determine the exact nature of the reported discourse, the question would still remain as to whether it is relevant to the analysis of reference tracking. As convincingly argued by Frajzyngier, “whether the speech is direct or indirect is irrelevant for the functions of logophoricity, [...] Logophoricity is a function within the reference system, while direct and indirect speech are functions within the domain of how a speech is reported” (Frajzyngier, forthcoming). Consistently with this distinction of the two functions, at no point in the present analysis has it been necessary to determine how the speech is reported in order to understand the functional and syntactical behaviour of disjoint reference pronouns.

5 Conclusion

This article has illustrated the functioning of the set of disjoint reference pronouns **pèemò/pèe/pìimè**. These pronouns are obligatory in reported discourse and display characteristics that bring them closer to both Kholok (which has a fully-fledged logophoric system) and Pero (which instead has a reduced logophoric system limited solely to the distinction between speaker and addressee). Their morphology indicates that they are related to the logophoric (or ‘anti-logophoric’, as in the case of Kholok) sets found in other West Chadic languages, and specifically to the set that in a logophoric system indicates coreference with the addressee (the set labelled C set in Frajzyngier’s analysis, see Frajzyngier 1985).

Among the aspects that should be further investigated is the issue of the sign change of the logophoric system: why did Kushi develop a system to indicate non-coreference using pronominal forms that cross-linguistic analysis shows to have originated in the logophoric domain? Another issue concerns the reduction of the system, i.e. the adoption of a single pronominal set. If we examine Kholok, Kushi

and Pero – languages spoken in contiguous areas – we observe on the one hand a phenomenon of bleaching of the reference tracking system in reported discourse, and on the other hand the resilience of the ‘pe’ set. The question we are posing is whether Kushi lost a pronominal set functional to reference tracking and therefore had to ‘specialise’ the ‘pe’ set further, or whether it acquired a single pronominal set (originally used to signal either coreference or disjoint reference) from a neighbouring language.

Abbreviations

AA	additional argument	M	masculine
AOR	auriste	N	negation
COM	comitative	NEU	neuter
DISJ	disjoint reference	OBJ	object
DIST	ventive	PFCT	perfect
F	feminine	PL	plural
FUT	future	POS	possessive
HAB	habitual	REL	relative
ICP	intransitive copy pronoun	REP	reported evidential
INJ	interjection	SG	singular
INTER	interrogative	SUJ	subjunctive
L	linker	VN	verbal noun

Notes

¹ I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback and suggestions.

² It is observed how the English translation would require a choice between direct and indirect speech, since the speaker (Pirkalang) is directly addressing an addressee (his mother). However, in Kushi this distinction is neutralised by the use of the logophoric pronoun. The translation provided here is literal, i.e. gender and number of pronouns of the Kushi sentence are maintained in the English equivalent.

³ Probably through a process of grammaticalisation of which we can hypothesise the following steps: SAY + **m̩** ‘it is said that’ > Ø **m̩** ‘(it is said) that’ > reported evidential. Mother-tongue speakers, when asked about the meaning of this element, tend to translate it with the Hausa verb *bari* ‘let’, which works very well from the point of view of the fluidity of the translation, although it does not correspond to the lexico-grammatical reality of the term.

Bibliography

- Ameka, Felix K. 2017. Logophoricity. In Alexandra Y. Aikhenwald and R.M.W. Dixon (eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Linguistic Typology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 513-537.
- Baldi, Sergio and Rudolf Leger. 2011. Some diachronic observations on gender and number in Bole-Tangale languages. In Doris Löhr and Ari Awagana (eds.), *Topics in Chadic Linguistics VI. Papers from the 5th Biennial International Colloquium on the Chadic Languages, Leipzig, June 10-14, 2009*. Köln: Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 23-33.
- Baldi, Sergio and Rudolf Leger. 2020. Innovative features of nouns and pronouns in Chadic languages of the Nigerian Gongola-Benue basin. In Nina Pawlak and Izabela Will (eds.), *West African Languages. Theory and Communication*. Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 46-56.
- Batic, Gian Claudio 2019. Verb pluractionals in Kushi, *AION* 79: 3-17.
- Burquest, Donald A. 1986. The pronoun system of some Chadic languages. In Ursula Wiesemann (ed.), *Pronominal systems*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 71-101.
- Dimmendaal, Gerrit J. 2001. Logophoric marking and represented speech in African languages as evidential hedging strategies, *Australian Journal of Linguistics* 21 (1): 131-157.
- Ebert, Karen. 1986. Reported speech in some languages of Nepal. In Florian Coulmas (ed.), *Direct and Indirect Speech*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 145-159.
- Frajzyngier, Zygmunt. 1985. Logophoric Systems in Chadic, *Journal of African Languages and Linguistics* 7: 23-37.
- Frajzyngier, Zygmunt. 1989. *A Grammar of Pero*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer.
- Frajzyngier, Zygmunt. 1993. *A Grammar of Mupun*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer.
- Frajzyngier, Zygmunt (forthcoming). *A Typology of Reference Systems*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jungraithmayr, Herrmann. 2002. *The emergence of new pronouns in Tangale*, Ms.
- Kibrik, Andrej. 2011. *Reference in discourse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Leger, Rudolf. 1998. Grammatical gender in some southern Bole-Tangale languages: Kwami, Kupto, Kushi and Piya. In Institute of African Studies (ed.), *Africa: Society, culture and language*. Moscow: IAS, 204-216.

- Leger, Rudolf. 2014. Some observations on typological features in languages of the Bole-Tangale group. In Anne Storch, Johannes Harnischfeger, and Rudolf Leger (eds.), *Fading delimitations. Multilingual settlements in a convergence area – Case studies from Nigeria*. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 229-262.
- Leger, Rudolf and Ulrike Zoch. 2006. Logophoric pronouns in the southern Bole-Tangale languages. In Bernard Caron and Peter Zima (eds.), *Sprachbund in the West African Sahel*, Leuven/Paris: Peeters, 205-214.