

## The Phono-Syntax of Pronoun System in Àbèsàbèsì

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### Abstract

The nature of linguistic research into languages has evolved into inter-lading boundaries between distinct levels of analysis. From interaction between semantics and syntax, socio-phonetics, Morpho-syntax to practically obscure region such as phono-syntax, new discoveries are beginning to direct more profitable research from the distinct levels to inter-relational approach. The way one level of language structure interacts with other levels are providing insights into previously seemingly inexplicable phenomena. The phonology of Àbèsàbèsì as illuminated in Agoyi (2008) presented a clear idea of the phonological operations the languages of communities spread across two local government areas of Ondo state in Nigeria. Seven communities within Akoko North-West and one in Akoko North-East use speech form belonging to the Àbèsàbèsì language family. The focus has shifted away from the distinct level of phonological patterns to interaction between the phonology and other levels. In this work, we look at the phono-syntactic relation that could explain some constraints on the form of pronouns system in the language. The work examines the alternation of certain forms in respect of the syntactic structuring of phrases involving the use of a subcategory of verbs and pronouns. We argued that the nature of these alternations can be traced to a non-phonological variance but can be explained in view of the syntax of the verb phrases and nominal phrases in the language. We specifically illustrated the role of syntax in the phonological alternations of pronoun forms. Our data show that certain grammatical features in verbs and functional elements such as persons and numbers do activate alternations in pronoun forms. We therefore suggest an interaction between the phonology and syntax of Àbèsàbèsì and we believe that this may extend to other areas of the grammar of the language. Therefore, the study of Phono-Syntax of the language is strongly proposed.

**Keywords:** *Phonology, Syntax, Phono-Syntax, Pronouns, Àbèsàbèsì.*

### Introduction

Pronouns and Pronominal<sup>1</sup> are usually considered as a closed group of grammatical operatives words of language. They are generally considered to be used in place of referential antecedents and are therefore without independent referential capacities. The pronouns are also often subjected to inflectional modifications in varying grammatical environment. These modifications are always in terms of agreement with grammatical features of the implicit or explicit antecedent.

Pronouns are words used to represent Nouns or Noun phrases. This is a typical definition in most classical descriptive grammar book. There is always the inclination to overlook the grammar of Pronouns in most grammatical description of the overall outlook of language by scholars. Most people who give pronouns any attention are apt to look only at the paradigm of distribution in respect of the grammatical features such as person (i.e 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>),

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<sup>1</sup> Awobuluyi (1978:22,) refers to lexical items in this category in Yoruba as "polymorphic nouns" because "most of them have three different forms they take when functioning as subject, object and genitival qualifiers" in syntactic structure.

number (Singular versus Plural) and case (nominative, accusative, dative and genitive). Works such as Williamson (1968), Awobuluyi (1978), Bamgbose (1983), Olumuyiwa (2013) and a host of many others have discussed pronouns from many Nigerian languages ranging from the major ones like Yoruba to less prominent speech forms like Kalabari. Most if not all of these accounts are descriptive and primarily restricted to either forms or distributions observed in the languages. Studies into how the phonological forms are restricted or motivated by grammatical parameters are very rare and uncommon amongst previous literature on the subject.

While some other attempts may have focused on the phonological structure (not that we know any of such attempts), very little have been said about the interface that seems to occur between the phonological forms of the pronoun and their syntactic distribution. In some discussion of the Yoruba pronouns, some suggestive statement may be deduced from the attempts by Awobuluyi (1979) in his classification of the Yoruba Pronouns as part of the grammar of the language. Agoyi (1997) discussed the morphological structure of pronouns in Èkiròmi a dialect of Àbèsàbèsì. We however believe that these attempts and many others like it are inadequate when the focus is to unravel the syntax-phonology interface subsisting in the system of pronouns. This inadequacy is the primary motivation for this study and guides our objectives and what the study hopes to achieve.

In this work, we examined the pronouns of Abèsàbèsì language with reference to their phonological structures and the effect of their syntactic distribution on these structures. In the next section we will present data on the syntactic distribution of the pronouns. To do these, the following objectives are set for the work;

- Identifying pro-forms and their distributions in the Àbèsàbèsì cluster
- Review the forms in respect of syntactic positions
- Evaluate the restriction and/or motivation within the syntax determining the distribution and forms of the pronouns.

### **Abèsàbèsì Pronouns and Pronominal**

Awobuluyi (1978, 2013) using functional syntactic model considers Yoruba pronouns and pronominal<sup>2</sup> as polymorphemic nouns because almost all of them do function either in the object or subject position in sentence. He further observes that some Yoruba pronouns refer to only [+human] Such as:

1a).	Pronoun		
	Person	Singular	Plural
	1st	mi/mo 'I	a
	2nd	(w)ò/o	ẹ
	3rd	(un)	wọ̀n/wọ̀n

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<sup>2</sup> Pronominal such as the six forms in 1b are 'traditionally known as emphatic pronouns' with similar properties of nouns such as occurring with 'qualifiers', motivating 'tonal change in monosyllabic verbs' such that underlying 'low tone changes to mid tone before them'. In addition, 'a high tone syllable occurs between them and verbs when they function as subjects'. The pronoun forms are seen as 'unemphatic pronouns' that do not manifest the properties indicated in pronominal above (Awobuluyi (1978:12).

1b)	Pronominal		
	Person	singular	plural
	1st	èmi	àwa
	2nd	ìwọ/írẹ	ẹyin
	3rd	òun/írẹ	àwọn

And only the 3rd person pronouns have the [-+ human] feature

2a)	3rd	(un)	wọn/wọn
		(Awobuluyi1978:22-24, 2013:26-34)	

Deep Structure:	mo fun ọmọ/ewúré ni óúnjẹ	mo fun àwọn ọmọ/ewúré ní óúnjẹ
	I give child/goat infl food	I give Infil child.goat infl food
	'I fed a child/goat'	'I fed children/goats'

Surface Structure:	mo fun un ni óúnjẹ	mo fun wọn ní óúnjẹ
	'I give he/him/it Infil food'	'I give them food'

In addition, we observe that the second person pronouns also have the [+ human] feature.

2b)	2nd	(i)	(w)ọ/o	ẹ
			o wá ilé	ẹ wá ilé

may be understood as

(ii)	ọmọ/ewúré wá ile	awọn ọmọ/ewúré wá ile
	child/goat come/came house	[+PL] child/goat come/came house
	child/goat came home	children/goats came home

For a deep and insightful discussion, we will prefer to adopt the terms pronominal and pronoun as separate units in our consideration of Àbèsàbèsì similar lexical components. The separation is motivated by the phonologically controlled variants in syntactic domain of the pronouns phenomena observed. Our research, we observe that Àbèsàbèsì pronoun and pronominal are comparable to the system existing works have identified for Yoruba language. For convenience of discussion as already stated above, we will consider Pronominal as a separate group. This will enhance a thorough analysis of the data collected.

### Àbèsàbèsì Pronominal

This set of lexical items behaves as nouns in sentence. The example presented in 3a below, show the variant form of each item as the dialects attest.

3a)	Person	Singular		Plural	
	1 <sup>st</sup>	pronom	òní 'I'	àbèsì/èbèsì	'we'
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	pronom	òsì 'you'	àbèni/èbèni	'you'
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	pronom	àwu 'he/she'	àba	'they'

Examples in 3b show the nominative pronominal in syntactic structures.

3b).	Singular	Plural
	òní gí ó	àbèsì gí ó
	I that is	we that is

'I am'	'we are'
òní gí ba 'I am that arrive(d)	àbèsì gí ba 'we that arrive(d)'
òní gí ka ba 'I am that had arrived	'we are that had arrived'
'I am/was that have arrived'	we are that had arrived'
òní ìní Òjọ́ ba	àbèsì ìní Òjọ́ ba
I and Òjọ́ came	we and òjọ́ come
'I came with Òjọ́'	'we came with Òjọ́'
òní ìní àwu ye é	àbèsì ìní àwu ye é
'I and he/she see/saw it'	'we and he/she see/saw it/'
òní ìní àba sà	àbèsì ìní àba sà
'I and they know/knew	'we and they know/knew'
òsì gí ó	àbèni gí ó
you that is	you that is
'you are'	'you are'
àba gí das	'they that go/went'

These set of lexical items can occur with complements in syntactic domain such as in 4a below.

3c)	Person	Singular	Plural
	1st	òní ekìn	àbèsì ikìn
		I one	we +one
		'only me	'only us'
	2nd	òsì ekìn	àbèni ikìn
		you one	you +one
		'only you'	'only you'
	3rd	àwu/àu ekìn	àba ikìn
		he/she one	they +one
		'only him/her	'only them'

We observed from the example 4a that the noun qualifier is inflected for number as the initial vowel 'e' in ekìn 'one' changes to 'i' to reflect more than (+) one<sup>3</sup>. It is important to state here that Àbèsàbèsì pronominal can feature both in the nominative and accusative for in a syntactic constituent. For example:

3d	Olú ye òní ìní òsì	Olú ye àbèsì/èbèsì ìní èbèni
	Olú see/saw I and you	Olú see/saw us and you
	Àdé sà àwu/àu ekìn	Adé sà àba
	Adé know/knew him/her one	Adé know/knew them

### Àbèsàbèsì Pronouns

The set of lexical items treated as Àbèsàbèsì pronouns are similar to the set of Yoruba lexical. In Yoruba language according to Awobuluyi (2013), there are basically two types of pronouns namely short versus long pronouns. The two types are said to be distributed in respect of the features of numbers (Singular/Plural), + or – Human, Persons (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup>) and Case (Nominative, Accusative and Genitive). We will adopt case assignment criterion to group Àbèsàbèsì pronoun for a systematic discussion.

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<sup>3</sup> Agoyi (2001) discusses the phenomenon of category of numbers in a Inquire in African Languages and Literature volume 4:64-80. In the paper she compared the morphological process of inflection for number in Èkìròmì with similar feature in the Edoid Languages as reflected in Elugbe (1989) Comparative Edoid.

## Nominative Pronoun

Pronouns in this group function in object position of a sentence. The lexical items 4a below, are pronouns that function in object position in Àbèsàbèsì.

4a)	Person	Singular	Plural
	1st	nń 'I'	àá 'we'
	2nd	ọọ 'you'	àń 'you (plural)'
	3rd	ọ 'he/she'	bàá 'they'

Examples in 4b feature examples items in 4a in syntactic structure.

4b)	nń sà 'I know/knew'	àá sà 'we know/knew'
	nń ka sà 'I had known'	àá ka sà 'we had known'
	nń sẹmẹ 'I greet(ed)'	àá sẹmẹ 'we greet(ed)'
	nń ka sẹmẹ 'I greet(ed)'	àá sẹmẹ 'we had greeted'
	ọọ sà 'you know/knew'	àń sà 'you know/knew'
	ọọ ka sà 'you had known'	àń ka sà 'you had knew'
	ọọ sẹmẹ 'you greet(ed)'	àń sẹmẹ 'you greet(ed)'
	ọọ ka sẹmẹ 'you had greet(ed)'	àń ka sẹmẹ 'you had greet(ed)'
	ọọ ye 'you see/saw'	àń ye 'you see/saw'
	ọọ ke ye 'you had seen'	àń ke ye 'you had seen'
	ọọ mi 'you do/did'	àń mi 'you do/did'
	ọọ ke mi 'you have/had done'	àń ke mi 'you have/had done'
	ọọ joò 'you had procreated'	àń ko joò 'he had procreated'
	ọọ ko joò 'you had procreated'	àń ko joò 'you had procreated'
	ọọ ku 'you fall/fell'	àń ku 'you fall/fell'
	ọọ ko ku 'you had fallen'	àń ko ku 'you had fallen'
	ọ sà 'he/she know/knew'	bá sà 'they know/knew'
	ọ ka sà 'he/she had known'	bá ka sà 'they had knew'
	ọ ye 'he/she had known'	bé ye 'they had see/saw'
	ọ ke ye 'he/she had seen'	bé ké ye 'they had seen'
	ọ ke be ye 'he/she will had seen'	bé ke be ye 'they will had seen'
	ọ mi 'he/she do/did'	bé mi 'they do/did'
	ọ ke mi 'he/she had done'	bé ke mi 'they will had done'
	ọ ke be mi 'he/she will had done'	bé ke be mi 'they will have done'
	ọ joò 'he/she procreate(d)'	bó joò 'they procreate(d)'
	ọ ko joò 'he/she had procreated'	bó kó joò 'They had procreated'
	ọ ko bo joò 'he/she will have procreated'	bó kó 'bó joò 'They will have procreated'

Example in 4b feature variants of some lexical items in syntactic constituents. This phenomenon will be discussed in the later section of this paper.

Unlike Yoruba pronouns, Àbèsàbèsì nominative pronouns feature the non human variant for 3rd person singular and plural forms. See example 5 below.

5.	Singular	Plural
2rd person	é 'it (-human)'	Í 'they (-human)'
	é ba 'it come/came'	í ba 'they come/come'
	é ka ba 'it has/had come'	í ka ba 'they have/had come'

Again the issue of phonological change in the shape vowels of a lexical item to reflect number is reflected in example 5 above in that ('it -human)' 'ẹ' ⇒ 'i' (they -human).

The next sub section presents the accusative pronouns in Àbèsàbèsì

### Accusative

Items in this section can only feature in object position of a sentence.

6a)	Person	Singular	Plural
	1 <sup>st</sup>	na/no/nọ 'me'	èsì 'us'
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	/sa/so/sọ 'you'	èni 'you'
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	wu/u/mi 'her/his'	ba/bo/bọ 'them'

They occur in a syntactic structure thus:

6b)	nń sà sa 'I know/knew you'	sà èni 'I know/knew you'
	nń ka sà sa 'I had known you'	àá ka sà èni 'we had known you'
	ọọ sà na 'you know/knew me'	àn sà èsì 'you know/knew us'
	ọọ bá sà u 'you will know him/her'	àn bá sà ba 'you know them'
	ọọ ka sà èsì 'you had known us'	àn kà sà ba 'you had known them'
	ọọ sẹmẹ na 'you greet(ed) me'	àn sẹmẹ na 'you greet(ed) me'
	ọọ ka sẹmẹ na 'you had greet(ed) me'	àn ka sẹmẹ na 'you had greet(ed) me'
	ọọ ye no 'you see/saw me'	àn ye bo 'you see/saw them'
	ọọ ke ye no 'you had seen me'	àn ke ye bo 'you had seen them'
	ọọ joò bo 'you had procreated them'	àn ko joò bo 'they had procreated them'
	ọọ ko jo ò bo 'you had procreated them'	àn ko joò bo 'you had procreated them'
	ọ sà u 'he/she know/knew him/her'	bá sà ba 'they know/knew them'
	ọ ka sà u 'he/she had known'	bá ka sà ba 'they had knew them'
	ọ ye no 'he/she/she see/saw me'	bé ye no 'they had see/saw me'
	ọ ke ye no 'he/she had seen me'	bé ké ye no 'they had seen me'
	ọ ke bé ye no 'he/she will had seen me'	bé ke be ye no 'they will had seen me'
	ọ mi so 'he/she do/did you'	bé mi so 'they do/did you'
	ọ ke mi so 'he/she had done you'	bé ke mi so 'they will had done you'
	ọ ke bé mi so 'he/she will had done you'	bé ke be mi so 'they will have done you'
	ọ joò so 'he/she procreate(d) you'	bó joò so 'they procreate(d) you'
	ọ ko joò so 'he/she had procreated'	bó kó joò so 'They had procreated you'
	ọ ko bo joò so 'he/she will have procreated'	bó kó 'bó joò so 'They will have procreated you'

Again we observe that some items in 6a and 6b feature variant forms that are phonologically conditioned; the phenomenon which is feature in the nominative case (see example 4a, and 4b above). Again we will discuss the variation in later sections of this paper.

The [-human] form is as in example 6c below.

6c)	[-human]	é 'it'	í 'them'
		ọ ye ẹ	ọ ye í
		he see/saw it [-human]	he see/saw them [-human]

It is pertinent to note that there is no noticeable significant difference in the shape of the [-human] nominative and accusative pronouns except for the change in tone on the singular form. While the nominative for feature a high tone level, the accusative features mid tone. We presume the phenomenon is a result associated to mid to changing to high to in syntactic constituent in most African languages. Compare example 5 to 6c

In essence form for [-human] pronoun in Àbèsàbèsì can occur in any word position in a syntactic structure.

### Possessive

Àbèsàbèsì attests possessive pronouns. However, the pronoun in this group are derived from the pronominal by deletion and some other morpho-phonological processes that are not within the scope of this paper. The processes will be discussed another paper. The lexical items under investigation are presented in 7a below.

7a)	Person	Singular	Plural
	1 <sup>st</sup>	ènó/enó 'mine'	èsì 'mine'
	Emphatic	ènóòńó/ènóòńó 'my very own'	ènyenyèsi 'our very own'
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	èsó/esó 'yours'	èni 'yours'
	Emphatic	èsóòsó/èsóòsó 'my very own'	ènyenyèni 'your very own'
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	èyówu/èyómi 'his/hers'	èyóbo/èyóbo 'theirs'
	Emphatic	èyóòyówu/èyóòyómi 'his/her very own'	èyóòyóbo/èyóòyóbo 'their very own'

Data in 7a) can occur in syntactic structure as in 7b below

7b)	Person	Singular	Plural
	1 <sup>st</sup>	ọbani èńó mhild mine my child	ọbani èsi chid ours 'our child'
	Emphatic	ọbani èńóòńó/ènóòńó child mine my own child	ọbani ènyenyèsi child ours 'our own child'
	2 <sup>nd</sup> Person	ọbani èsó child yours your child	ọbani èni child yours your child
	Emphatic	ọbani èsóòsó/ èsóòsó child yours your own child ọbani èyóú child his/hers his own child	ọbani ènyenyèni child yours your own child ọbani èyóbo child theirs their own child

8.	Conditional		
	1 <sup>st</sup>	ná/né/nó 'if I'	àsá/àsé/àsó 'if we'
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	sá/sé/só/sí 'if you'	àné 'if you'
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	ó 'if he/she'	bá/bé/bó/bọ 'if they'
	-human	é 'if it'	í 'if they'

### Conditional Pronouns

9.	1 <sup>st</sup>	ná sà 'if I know/knew' ná ka sà 'if I had known' ná tşẹrẹ 'if I mend/mended' ná ka tşẹrẹ 'if I had mended' né ye 'if I see/saw' né ye 'if I see/saw' né ke ye 'if I had seen' né tşì ẹmu 'if I have/had money' né ke tşì ẹmu 'if I have/had had money'	àsá sà 'if we know/knew' àsá ka sà 'if we had known' àsá tşẹrẹ 'if we mend/mended' àsá ka tşẹrẹ 'if we had mended' àsé ye/saw àsé ye 'if we had see/saw' àsé ke ye 'if we had seen' àsé tşì ẹmu 'if we have/had money' àsé ke tşì ẹmu 'if we have/had had money'
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	nó ku 'if I fall/fell'	àsó ku 'if we fall/fell'
	nó ko ku 'if I had fallen'	àsó ko ku 'if we had fallen'
	nó joò 'if I give birth/put to bed'	àsó joò 'if we give birth/put to bed'
2 <sup>nd</sup>	nó ko joò 'if I had given birth'	àsó ko 'if we had given birth'
	sá sà 'if you know/new'	àná sà 'if you know/new'
	sá ka sà 'if you had known'	àná ka sà 'if you had known'
	sé ye 'if you see/saw'	àné ye 'if you see/saw'
	sé ke ye 'if you had seen'	àné ke ye 'if you had seen'
	sé mi isumì 'if you done work'	àné mi isumì 'if you had done work'
	só ku 'if you fall/fell'	ànó ku 'if you fall/fell'
	só ko ku 'if you had fallen'	ànó ko ku 'if you had fallen'
3 <sup>rd</sup>	só ko joò 'if you had given birth'	ànó ko joò 'if you had given birth'
	ó sà 'if he/she know/new'	bá sà 'if they know/new'
	ó ka sà 'if he/she had known'	bá sà 'if they had known'
	ó ye 'if I see/saw'	bé ye 'if they see/saw'
	ó ke ye 'if he had seen'	bé kè ye 'if they had seen'
	ó mi isumì 'if he do/did work'	bé mi isumì 'if they do/did work'
	ó ke mi isumì 'if he had done work'	bé ke mi isumì 'if they had done work'
	ó ku 'if he/she fall/fell'	àsó ku 'if they fall/fell'
	ó ko ku 'if he had fallen'	àsó ko ku 'if we had fallen'

### The Phonology of Abesabesi Pronoun

Agoyi (1997) identified all of the pronouns of Èkiròmì, a dialect of Àbèsàbèsì. She presented them as part of a description of the morphology of the language. In her description, she revealed that Pronouns forms in the language are specified for a number of grammatical features which include persons, numbers and case. Agoyi's view is a common phenomenon in all Àbèsàbèsì dialects. Apart from these, Àbèsàbèsì pronouns are also specified for infiniteness. Illustration of the pronouns is presented using case assignment.

### Nominative Pronouns

Ṃ́ first person singular finite nominative pronoun.

10a)	Ṃ́	ye bo
	1SGNOMLRTS	see 3pl 'I see them'
	Ṃ́	dze é
	1SGNOMLRTS	eat 3sg 'I ate it'

While Agoyi (1997) suggested the form *no* for the first person singular pronoun, recent data from Agoyi (2008, 2012) have shown that the first person singular nominative pronoun is actually *Ṃ́*. The first person singular pronouns in the data above have the phonological structure that is predominantly nasal. In the nominative case, the form of the pronoun is an anteriorated sequence of syllabic nasal. In the accusative case, the pronoun is a sequence of a nasal and an ATR controlled round (inevitably nasalized) vowel. The dominance of the nasal feature cannot be a coincidence.

In the plural forms, the nominative form shows the presence of a low tone low central vowel followed by a high tone identical vowel. The second vowel in this case is considered a subject-marking element as it only occurs with the nominative forms. This is not uncommon with

dialects of other languages around Abesabesi speech community as the same high tone syllable has been observed in Yoruboid and other YEAI languages such as Edoid, Akokoid and Idomoid. This will be further explored in later discussion. The plural forms show no obvious core phonological element marking their value. From the nominative case to the accusative form, the plural forms are in all cases physically unrelated. The accusative first person plural pronoun is disyllabic with a V-CV shape. A mid-high front vowel preceded an alveolar fricative and front high vowel. The two syllables in the pronoun are produced with relatively low pitch.

In addition to the above observation it is pertinent to state that the use of syllabic nasal in singular finite nominative case as Àbèsàbèsì data attests is prevalent in Niger-Congo language family such as the Yoruboid, Edoid, Ukaan, etc languages. The phonological form and syntactic constituent of the àá first person plural nominative pronoun is presented in 10b) below:

- 10b) à            ye so/sọ  
           1PL(LRS) see 2SG ‘we see/saw you’
- àá            dʒe ẹ́  
           1PLLRTS eat 3SG ‘we eat/ate it’

Data collected reveal a similarity of phonological behavior of the second person singular and plural pronoun in Àbèsàbèsì. Therefore, we need to present the second person pronoun for a comprehensive discussion on the phonological of the presumed phonological behaviour of the lexical items.

- 11a) ọ́ọ́ second person singular finite nominative pronoun.  
       ọ́ọ́        ye no/nọ  
       2SG see 1SG  
       you see me
- ọ́ọ́ dʒe ẹ́  
       2SG eat 3SG  
       you ate it.
- ọ́ọ́        dọ no/nọ  
       2SG want 1SG  
       you want me
- ọ́ọ́        sà na  
       2SG know/new 1SG  
       you know/new me
- ọ́ọ́        sẹmẹ na/nọ  
       2SG greet 1SG  
       you greet/greeted me
- ọ́ọ́        kọ na/nọ  
       2SG teach/taught 1SG  
       you teach/taught me
- 11b) àn'        ye no/nọ  
           2PL see 1SG  
           you see me

àn'dzẹ e  
2PL eat 3SG  
you ate it.

àn' dọ no/nọ  
2PL want 1SG  
you want me

àn' sà na  
2PL know/new 1SG  
you know/new me

àn' sẹmẹ na/nọ  
2PL greet 1SG  
you greet/greeted me

àn' kọ na/nọ  
2PL teach/taught 1SG  
you teach/taught me

Note that the influence of Yoruba culture has affected the semantic behavior of àn' in the language in that it is used as a honourific pronoun<sup>4</sup> in the language.

In the case of the second person singular nominative pronoun, the form is a mid-low round back vowel with a low tone accompanied by the aforementioned HTS. In addition, the shape of the first person plural, and second person plural pronouns are similar in that they both feature low vowel with the perceived HTS. However, the HTS tone-bearing unit on the second person plural is a syllabic nasal. Unlike the first person pronoun, there appears to be no phonological relation between the nominative case and the accusative form of the pronoun as can be observed below.

so Second person singular accusative pronoun

12. Ìn' ye so  
1SG see 2SG  
I see you

àá ye so  
1PL see 2SG  
we see you

Apart from roundness, there seems to be no phonological resemblance between the nominative and accusative forms of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular pronouns. Where the nominative is arguably a single low tone back vowel, the accusative form is a CV structure with an alveolar fricative preceding a mid-high back vowel.

One interesting aspect in the form of the pronouns discussed so far is about those that are composed of sequence of vowels. It has been argued in Oluseyi (2006) that such sequences are predictably consistent in the tone pattern (usually Low tone follow by a high tone). We are therefore proposing that the pronouns in these cases are the low tone vowel. The high tone

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<sup>4</sup> Honourific pronoun feature in Àbèsàbèsì is a synchronic language contact feature broved from Yorùbà by the educated speakers.

identical segment after it is considered a high tone syllable (HTS) known to accompany subjects in some Kwa languages (Ajiboye 1998). The function of the HTS is still a controversial topic in Yoruba, but its existence is generally accepted. (Oshodi 2016).

### Third person Pronouns

Third person pronouns in Àbèsàbèsì present an exception to generalities in terms of both forms and syntactic properties. Apart from the general distinction for case, number and persons, these pronouns show variance in forms for human versus non-human antecedent. This is not a common grammatical feature in languages in the area. Therefore, it is worth mentioning and will be further explored for classification purposes.

[+human]

13a) Singular  
 ọ'ba  
 he/she come/came                      they come/came

13b). àu      íni      Olú sà  
 3SG      CON      Olú know/knew  
 He/she and Oú know/knew

àu onyónyo/onyónyo/onyényé ta      iṣo  
 3SG Gender                                      build/built house  
 he/she woman                                      build/built house

àu ye je  
 3SG see eat  
 he/she see eat  
 'he/she is contented'

bàá ba  
 3PL come/came  
 bèé ye  
 3PL see/saw

bòó ku  
 3PL fall/fell

ẹẹ – third person singular nominative pronoun (non-human)

13c) ẹ                                      ye nọ  
 3SG NOM(NON-H) see 1SG ACC  
 'It saw me'

ẹ ye ẹje  
 3SG(NH) see eat  
 'it had something to eat'

ẹ – third person singular accusative pronoun(non-human)

ọ-third person singular nominative pronoun (human)

àu– third person singular accusative pronoun(human)

í-Third person plural nominative pronoun (non-human)

í-Third person plural accusative pronoun (non-human)

bàá ~bèé~bòó-Third person plural nominative pronoun (Human)

ba~be~bo-Third person plural accusative (human see 6a and b)

## Accusative Pronouns

In this section the pronouns that can function in objects position in a syntactic domain are presented for discussion. We also present examples us the person as well as singular/plural grouping.

14.	Person	Singular	plural
	FIRST	Olu ye no/nọ	Olu ye èsì
		Olu see/saw me	Olu see/saw us
		Olú ko no/nọ	Olú ko èsì
		Olu sing/sang me	Olú sing/sang us
		Olú exposes me	Olú exposes us
		Olú mí no/nọ	Olú mí èsì
		Olú do me	Olú do us
		'Olú create/created problem for me'	' Olú create/created problem for us'
		Olú mọngọ na/nọ ẹmu	Olú mọngọ èsì ẹmu
		Olú lend/lent me money	Olú lend/lent us money
		Olú sẹmẹ na/nọ	Olú sẹmẹ èsì
		Olú greet/greeted me	Olú greet/greeted us
		Olú tşẹrẹ na/nọ	Olú tşẹrẹ èsì
		Olú mend(ed) me	Olú mend(ed) us
		Olú sà na	Olú sa èsì
		Olú know/knew me	Olú know/knew us
		Olú sàgì na	Olú sàgì ènì
		Olú call/called me	Olú call/called us
	SECOND	Olu ye so/sọ	Olú ye èsì
		Olu see/saw you	Olu see/saw you
		Olú ko so/sọ	Olú ko ènì
		Olu sing/sang you	Olú sing/sang you
		Olú exposes you	Olú exposes you
		Olú mí so/sọ	Olú mí ènì
		Olú do you	Olú do you
		'Olú create/created problem for you'	' Olú create/created problem for you'
		Olú mọngọ sa/sọ ẹmu	Olú mọngọ ènì ẹmu
		Olú lend/lent you money	Olú lend/lent you(pl) money
		Olú sẹmẹ sa/sọ	Olú sẹmẹ ènì
		Olú greet/greeted you	Olú greet/greeted you
		Olú tşẹrẹ sa/sọ	Olú tşẹrẹ ènì
		Olú mend(ed) me	Olú mend(ed) you
		Olú sà sa	Olú sa èsì
		Olú know/knew you	Olú know/knew us
		Olú sàgì sa	Olú sàgì ènì

	Olú call/called you	Olú call/called you
THIRD	Olú ye u Olú see/saw him/her	Olú ye bo/bọ Olú see/saw them
	Olú ko u Olú sing/sang him/her Olú exposes him/her	Olú ko bo/bọ Olú sing/sang them Olú exposes them
	Olú mí u 'Olú create/created problem for him/her'	Olú mí bo/bọ Olú create/created problem for them'
	Olú mọṅṅọ u ẹmu Olú lend/lent him/her money	Olú mọṅṅọ ba/bọ ẹmu Olú lend/lent them money
	Olú sẹmẹ u Olú greet/greeted him/her	Olú sẹmẹ ba/bọ Olú greet/greeted them
	Olú tşẹrẹ u Olú mend(ed) him/her	Olú tşẹrẹ ba/bọ Olú mend(ed) them
	Olú sà u Olú know/knew him/her	Olú sa ba/bọ Olú know/knew them
	Olú sàgì u Olú call/called him/her	Olú sàgì ba/bọ Olú call/called them

Observe that the vowel of first, second person singular and third person plural accusative as well as conditional pronouns have variants derived by the shape of the vowel of the verb.

Agoyi (2012) discusses the type of vowel harmonies Àbèsàbèsì attests as ATR + Round and Low harmony. The lect which attest ATR + ROUND harmony chooses no~na while The ATR +ROUND reduced Low harmony chooses nọ~na. The vowel of first, second person singular pronouns as well as third person plural conditional pronouns feature HTS as well as three vowel harmony conditioned variants. The variants are: nó~né~ná on one hand, só~sé~sa as well as bó~bé~ba. See example 9. This confirms Agoyi's (2008, 2012) observation on Àbèsàbèsì vowel harmony.

### Possessive pronouns

Possessive pronouns are pronoun types indicating ownership or possession. The possessive pronouns in Àbèsàbèsì are invariant with the accusative forms. Possessions are indicated using more than one accusative pronoun. However, our suggestion is that this may not be unconnected with the syntactic structure for indicating possession which often appears to be a PP constituent.

### The Syntax of Abesabesi Pronouns

Pronoun is a very important grammatical property of any language. Distribution of pronouns often reflects other grammatical operations that are peculiar to a language as well as the kind of generalizations that one could derive from the language. Oluseyi (2016) argued that since

pronouns often contributes to the overall grammatical outlook of a language, it necessary to describe it as property of the general grammar of the language. Fromskin (2000) consider the grammar of pronoun as essential insight into the nominal phrase discussion. In this part of the paper, we look at the grammar of the pronouns of Àbèsàbèsì. We will also look at some indication that the grammar has some role in the phonological outlook of the pronoun forms.

Àbèsàbèsì is an SVO language. This is of course the structure dominant in her simple sentences. Pronouns in subject position are marked by selecting the nominative form as well as the presence of the HTS. Elugbe (in personal conversation) suggested that high tone seems to have only syntactic functions when found in some Edoid languages. This will give credence to the behaviour of the high tone as observed in these pronoun forms.

Accusative pronouns are subjected to two possible source of variance; vowel harmony constraint which is quite strict in the language. For examples;

16. gba ná  
give 1SG ACC  
give me (something)
18. gba sá  
give 2SG ACC  
give you (something)
19. gba şába  
give Prep.3.SG.ACC.H  
Give him/her (something)

However, we have also note that in some occurrence, there is usually consistent contraction of a preposition with the accusative pronoun.

21. gba şau (gba şáu)  
give Prep.3.SG.ACC.H  
give him
22. gba şesi (gba şì esi)  
give Prep.1.PL.ACC  
give us

The preposition seems to always block vowel harmony and is a not a feature of the first person singular accusative pronouns

23. \*gba şina  
give Prep.1.SG  
give me

The forms *şau*, *şesi*, *şeni* and *şaba* are however real possibilities in the language. The preposition in question here could be seen other occurrences.

24. ye şì olú  
see Prep olú  
see olú

25.     yaasi si olú  
          give prep olu  
          accept olú

### **Pronouns in Conditional Structures**

We observed that the pronouns of Àbèsàbèsì also show variance in conditional structures. Pronoun of Àbèsàbèsì takes accusative form when it is singular first person or second person while plural of first person in conditional and the accusative plural first person forms are identical. From the data in 5, the same cannot be said of the second person plural in conditional structure. It has the form *ane*.

### **Relevance**

This work has presented a descriptive illustration of the syntactic conditions on the pronouns forms in the Abesabesi cluster. We have shown that Pronoun forms are subjected to certain phonological variation condition by syntactic positions as well as contiguous grammatical element such as verbs and particles. These pointed to the relevance of the levels of phonology to syntactic studies and vice versa. The work also revealed some phenomena such as conditional pronouns restrictions and a potential system of bi-directional vowel harmonic spreading from lexical verbs to contiguous elements.

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