A sketch of Akum (Southern Jukunoid)

Viktoria Kempf & Tamara Prischnegg

Universität Hamburg & University of Vienna

viktoria.kempf@uni-hamburg.de
tamara.prischnegg@univie.ac.at

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Universität Hamburga & University of Viennab
viktoria.kempf@uni-hamburg.de
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Abstract:
This article presents data on the little researched Southern Jukunoid language Akum which is spoken in five villages of the Cameroon-Nigerian border area. Akum shows the typical Benue-Congo syllable structure (CV, CVC) as well as typical sounds of the Benue-Congo consonant inventory (double and secondary articulation). As is known from other Southern Jukunoid languages, only the consonants r, b, g, and nasals are permitted in word-final position and – because they are unreleased – the distinction voiced/voiceless is neutralized. The number and qualities of phonemically distinct vowels remains debatable.

Concerning the nominal morphology, the Akum nominal prefix system is reduced in several aspects compared to its Southern Jukunoid relatives: it only has a set of 4 different nominal prefixes which are vocalic in form and it shows only marginal agreement on adjectives. The quinary numeral system and SVO basic word order are similar to its Southern Jukunoid relatives Bezen, Yukuben and Kuteb.

Keywords: Southern-Jukunoid, language description, endangered language

1 Introduction

Akum is a little described language spoken in five villages of the Cameroon-Nigerian border area. Three of the five villages, Upkack, Idzong and Konkum are located in the Furu-Awa subdivision in Cameroon, and the other two villages, Shibong 1 (Igba) and Shibong 2 are found in the Takum local government area in Nigeria (Akumbu & Brye 2002: 2). Akum is classified as a Southern Jukunoid or Yukuben-Kuteb language and the number of speakers ranges between 1400 (Eberhard et al. 2021) and 7000 (Akumbu & Brye 2002: 2).
This is a preliminary sketch of the Akum language, based on data (altogether ca. 20 hours of recordings) gathered by Tamara Prischnegg between 2004 and 2007 and Viktoria Kempf in 2013 and 2014. Prischnegg elicited her language material during three visits in Shilbong 1 with Musa, a middle-aged, blind primary school teacher, who was born and raised in this village; David, a Yukuben whose mother was Akum and who grew up bilingually; and three housewives, whose names unfortunately were not noted, but who kindly offered their time for one recording session. Kempf recorded her Akum data in Bezen, a village in Furu-Awa. In October 2013, she elicited lexical material with Tampa, an elderly lady who grew up in Idzong and has been living in Bezen for 20 years. In September 2014, when a football team from an Akum community was visiting Bezen, she took the chance to record a conversation between two speakers. The conversation, which revolves around the football game, was partly translated with Tukura William, an Akum speaker who was working in Bezen at that time.

2 Phonology

This section is a tentative approach to the phonology of the language, due to the restricted volume of the data.

2.1 Consonants

We find typical consonants of the Benue-Congo languages in Akum, as the labiovelars /kp/, /gb/ and /ŋm/. Furthermore, there is a set of prenasalised stops as /mb/, /nd/ and /ɲɟ/ and labialised sounds as /bʷ/, /kʷ/, /mʷ/, /sʷ/, /ɲʷ/. Apart from labialisation, Akum also shows palatalisation, as in following phonemes: /mʲ/, /kp ʲ/, /mbʲ/. Our data includes e.g. the pair kpə̄r ‘be barren’ vs. kpʲə́r (CA) ~ kpə́r (NA) ‘to answer’ suggesting a possible phonemic contrast between the simple labiovelar /kp/ and its palatalised counterpart /kpʲ/. However, the volume of our data is too restricted to finally determine whether labialisation and palatalisation are triggered by their phonetic surroundings or whether they are true phonemes.
Table 1. Preliminary table of consonants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bilabial</th>
<th>Labiodental</th>
<th>Alveolar</th>
<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
<th>Labiovelar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plosive</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>ɟ</td>
<td>k g kⁿ gⁿ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasal</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
<td>η</td>
<td>η</td>
<td>ηm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prenasalised</td>
<td>mb</td>
<td>nd</td>
<td></td>
<td>ηη</td>
<td>ηg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trill</td>
<td></td>
<td>r</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fricative</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>s ʃ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affricate</td>
<td>ts (tʃ)</td>
<td>dz (dʒ)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximant</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>w</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lateral</td>
<td></td>
<td>l</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Akum lacks the voiced counterparts of the phonemes /s/ and /ʃ/, the sounds [z] und [ʒ]. However, they occur as components of affricates in /dz/ and /dʒ/. The voiceless counterparts of these affricates, /ts/ and /tʃ/ are also part of the phonemic inventory of the language. [p] only occurs word-finally. However, since word-final bilabials are, as all final plosives, not released, we treat [p] as irrelevant for the consonant inventory of Akum (see below); we instead interpret it as a voiced bilabial /b/.

There seems to be a variation between /f/ and /ʃ/ in the Cameroonian and the Nigerian varieties, as can be seen in the following examples (1).

(1) Akum Cameroon Akum Nigeria
    ‘new’   āfɪ̀   āʃɪ̀
    ‘child’  álə́mfɪ̀  álə̀mʃɪ̀

2.1.1 Minimal pairs
In the following, minimal pairs are presented that account for the consonant inventory proposed above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Akum Cameroon</th>
<th>Akum Nigeria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>g/ŋ</td>
<td>tsáɡ ‘be hard’</td>
<td>tsáŋ ‘dig’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ātɔ̀g ‘palm wine’</td>
<td>ātɔ́ŋ ‘cocomam’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ibɔ̀ ‘farm’</td>
<td>ibɔ́ŋ ‘hot time’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kʊ́g ‘touch’</td>
<td>kʊ̄ŋ ‘scratch’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʊ̀cʊ̀g ‘guest’</td>
<td>ʊ̄cʊ̄ŋ ‘lip’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.1.2 Distribution of consonants

Not all consonants occur in all positions within a word. As shown in table 2, most of the consonants may occur at the beginning of the syllable onset. The first column mainly contains verbs, which can have a consonant at the beginning of the word. The second column mainly contains nouns, where the root is obligatorily preceded by a vocalic nominal prefix. The coda-position is reserved for the phonemes /r/, /b/, /g/, /m/ and /ŋ/. The phoneme /ŋ/ only occurs in this position. Optionally, it may be dropped and the preceding vowel is nasalized,
as in íbòŋ ‘hot season’, which is pronounced as [íbɔ̃̀]. Word-final bilabial plosives /b/ and /g/ are devoiced and not released.

Table 2. Consonants in different surroundings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#CV</th>
<th>VCV</th>
<th>VC#</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>bá ‘come’</td>
<td>ábôr ‘fight’ (n)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>máŋ ‘only’</td>
<td>òmôŋ ‘meat’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>fî ‘be dry’</td>
<td>īfàŋ ‘chest’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>tåŋ ‘think’</td>
<td>òtá ‘arrow’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>dôŋ ‘thank’</td>
<td>òdãb ‘heart’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>nè ‘for’</td>
<td>ònã ‘fufu’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>rá future tense</td>
<td>XX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td>sôŋ ‘know’</td>
<td>ìsãŋ ‘neck’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j</td>
<td>jînkãbâr ‘rice’ (Hausa loan)</td>
<td>ìʃôb ‘wind’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l</td>
<td>lòg ‘say’</td>
<td>ìlãb ‘load’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>nì ‘leave’</td>
<td>ìŋôŋ ‘body’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j</td>
<td>jîr ‘stand’</td>
<td>ìjîŋ ‘blood’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>có ‘descend’</td>
<td>ìcũŋ ‘pain’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ñ</td>
<td>jîg (CA) ~ ýjôg (NA) ‘to play’</td>
<td>ìjôg ‘vein’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>kôg ‘hold’</td>
<td>ìkôr ‘ten’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>gê ‘that’</td>
<td>ìgì ‘yesterday’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ñ</td>
<td>no evidence</td>
<td>no evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w</td>
<td>wôr ‘ascend’</td>
<td>ìwà ‘wife’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ts</td>
<td>tsôm ‘kill’</td>
<td>ìtsî ‘hair’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dz</td>
<td>ðzô ‘steal’</td>
<td>ìdzî ‘name’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tf</td>
<td>tfib ‘be quiet’</td>
<td>ìtfì ‘lake’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dʒ</td>
<td>ðʒi ‘eat; win’</td>
<td>ðdzàr ‘dream’ (n)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kp</td>
<td>kpô ‘die’</td>
<td>ìkpàŋ ‘spear’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ XX = probably not possible.
2.2 Vowels

Akum contrasts at least 6 vowels - /a/, /ɔ/, /ʊ/, /ə/, /ɪ/, /ɛ/. All of these vowels are [-ATR] and seem not to be lexically contrastive with a [+ATR] variant. Nevertheless, it has to be mentioned that we found a few examples where the position of the tongue root is [+ATR]. This particularly occurs when a high front [-ATR] vowel is followed by a sibilant and the next following vowel is a high front one, too (f.e. í-sí-ná ‘He is sleeping.’). In this case both vowels are pronounced as [+ATR]. [i] does not seem to contrast with a [-ATR] variant and the [+ATR] pronunciation is possibly caused purely by the phonetic surroundings, i.e. a sibilant between two high front vowels and is thus phonemically not significant. The noun prefix ɪ- can be pronounced as [i], [ɪ] and sometimes even a very closed [e]. The more open mid vowel [ɛ] is never pronounced as [i] or [ɪ]. Whether a [+/- ATR] distinction is significant for grammatical constructions or not has to await future research.

It seems that in Cameroonian Akum (CA) mid vowels are more prominent than in Nigerian Akum (NA). This is particularly true for noun prefixes and pronouns (see below).
The phonemic status of nasal vowels remains unclear at this stage of research: We tend to interpret them as allophones of a vowel followed by a word final nasal /ŋ/ or /n/. In the probably closely related languages Kuteb and Yukuben, nasal vowels have been interpreted in different ways: Koops (2009) analyses them as being phonemic in Kuteb, whereas for Yukuben they are interpreted as phonemic by Anyanwu (2013), but considered free variants of V[ŋ]#/V[n]# by Prischnegg (2021).

The central vowel is phonetically best described as [ə] but shall be transcribed with the more customary grapheme <ə> henceforth. It mainly occurs in closed syllables. In the corpus of the Nigerian variety, the vowel qualities [a], [ɪ], [u], [ɔ] and [ɛ] seem to be restricted to open syllables. The Cameroonian variety of Akum shows a few instances of [ə] in coda position. Whether these instances of [ə] might be analysed as allophones of [i] or [ɛ] cannot be said at this stage of research. The Nigerian corpus suggests that the central vowel is simply an allophone of the front mid vowel in closed syllables. The assumption that [ɛ] and [ə] are allophones would explain the fact that the only phonetic contrasts for which no minimal pairs could be found are [ɛ]/[ɔ], [ɛ]/[ə] and [ɛ]/[u]. The unclear status of the central vowel [ə] is known from Yukuben (Prischnegg 2021) and Kuteb (Koops 2009) as well and seems to be characteristic for the whole Southern Jukunoid language group (Bezen, Bete, Lufu, Akum, Kuteb, Yukuben, Kapya).

### 2.2.1 Minimal pairs
The following minimal pairs account for the phonemic status of the above-mentioned vowels.

| Æ/Æ | sə̀m ‘live’ | sə̀m ‘turn’ |
| Ë/Æ | ōfə́m ‘brain’ | ōfə́m ‘sunshine, daylight’ |
| Æ/Æ | ōmə̀ ‘war’ | ōmə̀ ‘red’ |
| Æ/Æ | āfə́ ‘fingers’ | āfə́ ‘rocks’ |
| Æ/Æ | ōmbʊ́g ‘place, direction’ | ōmbʊ́g ‘help’ |
| Æ/Æ | ōdʒʊ́ ‘funeral’ | ōdʒʊ́ ‘food’ |
| Æ/Æ | tsə́n ‘dig’ | tsə́n ‘sew’ |
| Æ/Æ | āndə̀ ‘elephants’ | āndə̀ ‘hills’ |
| Æ/Æ | ābə́r ‘black’ | ābə́r ‘claws’ |
| Ë/Æ | ŋwə́ ‘nose’ | ŋwə́ ‘tear’ |
| Ë/Æ | ŋwə́ ‘snake’ |
Àtsè ‘tails’    átsì ‘some’
àgó ‘those’    águ ‘there’
àgbó ‘arm’    kpú ‘die’
cá ‘laugh’    có ‘sing’
có ‘descend’

2.3 Tone

Akum has a three-tone system. At this stage of research, we only find lexically distinctive tones in Akum. However, as data from other Jukunoid languages suggests (Storch 1999; Kempf 2017), tone may also play a significant role at the grammatical level.

2.3.1 Minimal pairs

The following minimal pairs show the role of tone in distinguishing lexical items. For some of the examples, the pitch values are indicated. However, it was not possible to measure them for all the lexemes due to surrounding noise in the recordings. Where the recordings were clear, the pitch values are indicated next to the lexemes, together with the gender of the speaker.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L vs. M</th>
<th>LL vs. MM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kàm [110Hz (m)] ‘tell’</td>
<td>ùtâr [147Hz; 143Hz (f)] ‘garment’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kām [155 (m)] ‘meet’</td>
<td>ùtâŋ [183Hz; 181Hz (f)] ‘back’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LL vs. HL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ãtãg ‘beans’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ãtãg ‘shoulders’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LM vs. MH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ðlæ ‘fire’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ðlæ ‘sleep’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ML vs. MH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ðbðŋ [155Hz; 135Hz (f)]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘wall’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ðbðŋ [170Hz; 196Hz (f)]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘song; fruit’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ML vs. MM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ðnà ‘gift’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ðnà ‘food’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MH vs. LH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ãtã ‘three’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ãtã ‘buttocks’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MH vs. MM  
ɪ̄káb ‘compound’  
ɪ̄kə́b ‘bones’  

HL vs. MH  
átsə̀ŋ [170Hz; 150Hz (f)]  
‘smoke’  
átsə́m [136Hz; 145Hz (m)]  
‘beer’  

HL vs. LH  
ɪ̄kpí ‘axe’  
ɪ̄kpí ‘chicken’  

HH vs. LH  
ɪ̄kám ‘twenty’  
ɪ̄kám ‘dead person’  

MH vs. MM  
ákʷɛ̀ ‘horns’  
àkʷɛ̀ ‘villages’  

HL vs. MM  
ɔ́kpà [190Hz; 155Hz (f)] ‘harmattan’  
ɔ̄kpa [170Hz; 170Hz (f)] ‘skin’  

HL vs. LH  
ájà ‘mothers’  
ájà ‘flowers’  

HH vs. LH  
ʊ́kʊ́ŋ ‘river’  
ʊ́kʊ́ŋ ‘hunting’  

Tonal triplets  
cɔ̀ [165Hz (f)] ‘sing’  
cɔ̀ [190Hz (f)] ‘fall’  
cɔ́ [200Hz (f)] ‘descend’  

Dynamic tones  
Falling  
dzə́ [167Hz (m)] ‘steal’  

Raising  
ɛ̀kʷàk [151Hz; 152Hz (f)] ‘collarbone’  

3 Basic clause structure

Similar as in the other Jukunoid languages, the basic order of syntactic constituents within the clause in Akum is SVO. The following examples in (2) show two basic sentences. In (2a), the subject is
encoded in the 1pl pronoun ē-. The verb dʒɪ́ ‘win’ is a semantic extension of dʒɪ́ ‘eat’ and has the same semantic role structure as the source verb. Thus, āɟɪ̄ŋ ‘Bezen’ acts as the direct object, following the verb. In (2b), ēsʷɪ́ ‘shame’ is encoded as the subject that affects the experiencer, encoded in the 3pl pronoun bɔ̂ and following the verb kʊ̄g ‘hold’.

(2a) ē-dʒɪ́ āɟɪ̄ŋ máŋ
1PL-win Bezen only
‘We have only won against the Bezen.’

(b) ēsʷɪ́ kʊ̄g bɔ̂
shame hold 3PL.O
‘They are ashamed!’

4 Nominal morphology

In the following two subchapters we describe the morphological composition of singular and plural nouns, together with the only instance of agreement in Akum that was found so far, agreement marked on adjectives.

4.1 Singular and plural marking

The Akum noun consists of a nominal root with the syllable structure CVC or CV and a nominal prefix expressing singular and plural respectively. The form of the nominal prefixes in Akum is always vocalic, as shown in table 3.

Table 3. Combination of singular and plural prefixes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SG</th>
<th>PL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ʊ-</td>
<td>a-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ɪ-</td>
<td>ɪ-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The singular prefix ʊ- has the allomorph ɔ- and the prefix ɪ- the allomorph ē-. Most of the nouns carrying an ʊ- prefix in the singular form the plural with an a-prefix. Only a few nouns combine the prefixes ʊ- and ɪ- in Akum. These are nouns denoting long and thin objects, as it is also known from Yukuben and Bezen (Prischnegg 2021; Anyanwu 2013; Kempf 2013). The vast majority of nouns form their plural with the a-prefix, which also occurs with mass nouns and nouns
denoting abstract concepts. A comparison with the better described Southern Jukunoid languages Yukuben, Kuteb and Bezen (see Prischnegg 2021; Anyanwu 2013; Koops 2009; Kempf 2013) shows that the numeral prefixes of Akum may be attributed to a former noun class system which has been drastically reduced. In table 4, the Proto Benue-Congo class prefixes are compared with the numeral prefixes of Akum, both in form and meaning.

Table 4. Semantic domains of nouns co-occurring with certain prefixes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PBC</th>
<th>Akum</th>
<th>Semantic domains</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class 1 (SG)</td>
<td>*ù</td>
<td>u- humans, abstract concepts, body parts, natural phenomena, long objects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 4 (PL)</td>
<td>*í</td>
<td>i- plural of long, thin objects, such as ‘rope’, ‘root’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 6 (PL)</td>
<td>*a</td>
<td>a- abstract concepts, numerals, names of ethnic groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 9 (SG)</td>
<td>*ì</td>
<td>i- various</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Class 1 (abstract concepts without PL):**


**Class pair 1/4:**

ɔ́kèb pl. įkèb ‘bone’, ɔ́lg pl. įlg ‘rope’, ɔ́kʷòb pl. įkʷòb ‘root’

**Class pair 1/6:**


**Class 6 (abstract concepts without SG):**


**Class pair 9/6:**

èbà pl. èbà ‘bag’, è́nymà pl. è́nymà ‘leaf’, īkʷè pl. īkʷè ‘village’, èdzì pl. èdzì ‘tooth’
4.2 Agreement

There are traces of number agreement marked on adjectives in Akum. In our corpus we find the prefixes ʊ- for SG and ɪ- for PL, compare:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SG</th>
<th>PL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ɪ̄kī ʊ̄fī ‘small head’</td>
<td>ākī ɪ̄fī ‘small heads’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ɪ̄gbőr ʊ̄fī ‘small dog’</td>
<td>āgbőr ɪ̄fī ‘small dogs’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, in the majority of cases, adjectives do not show agreement anymore. They carry either ʊ- or a- in both singular and plural forms, as presented in the following examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SG</th>
<th>PL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ēbà āfī ‘new bag’</td>
<td>ābà āfī ‘new bags’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ū́gā ū́tə́m ‘big house’</td>
<td>āyā ū́tə́m ‘big houses’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ū́cʊ̂ŋ ʊ̄fī ‘small stone’</td>
<td>ācʊ̂ŋ ɪ̄fī ‘small stones’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ū́kʷáb ̀ádʒɛ̀ ‘sharp knive’</td>
<td>ākʷáb ádʒɛ̀ ‘sharp knives’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In one case, there is a discrepancy between the Nigerian and the Cameroonian variety: whereas in Nigerian Akum the adjective agrees with the number of the noun, in Cameroonian Akum the adjective does not change its form in the plural.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SG</th>
<th>PL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ákàb ʊ̄fī ‘small woman’</td>
<td>NA: ákàb ɪ̄fī ‘small women’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CA: ákàb ʊ̄fī ‘small women’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The traces of adjective concordance may be a further indication of a former fully developed noun class system.

5 Pronouns

The pronominal system of the Akum language is presented in the following, focussing on personal and demonstrative pronouns.

5.1 Personal pronouns

Akum has a set of independent and dependent subject pronouns which are presented in table 5. The object and possessive pronouns have only one set each. It needs to be further explored, whether these are dependent or independent pronouns.
Table 5. Independent and dependent pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Subject independent</th>
<th>Subject dependent</th>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Possessive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1sg</td>
<td>ĕ́j́́ / ĕ́ / mɪ́nə́ / m̀</td>
<td>Ŭ̄- / è̄-</td>
<td>m̀</td>
<td>n má, m̀</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2sg</td>
<td>ōẃwí / ōẃí</td>
<td>ŋ̄- / ņ̄-</td>
<td>mû́</td>
<td>ná / nû́-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3sg</td>
<td>ĕ́jí</td>
<td>Ŵ̄- / ĕ̄-</td>
<td>mí</td>
<td>jí̄</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1pl</td>
<td>ĕ́jí</td>
<td>Ŭ̄- / ĕ̄-</td>
<td>rò́</td>
<td>rò́ / rò́ś́</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2pl</td>
<td>ɔ́m̀wí / ɔ́ẃí</td>
<td>Ŕ̄-, ŋ̄-</td>
<td>rò́</td>
<td>rò́</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3pl</td>
<td>ābò</td>
<td>ā-</td>
<td>bò́</td>
<td>ābò́</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whereas the independent subject pronouns have a VCV structure, the dependent pronouns only consist of the initial vowel of the independent counterparts. However, a slight variation in the vowel may occur. For example, the independent 1sg pronoun is ĕ́jí, but the vowel quality of the dependent pronouns varies between Ŭ̄- and ĕ̄-. Different from the other sets, the tone of the dependent 2pl subject pronoun ŋ̄- / ņ̄- deviates from the tone of the initial vowel of the independent pronoun ɔ́m̀wí. The dependent 1sg, 3sg and 1pl subject pronouns are differentiated solely by tone, just as the 2sg and 2pl pronouns.

The object pronouns have a CV-syllable structure. The plural pronouns of the object and possessive sets are structurally very similar, except for the variation rò́ for the 1pl pronoun. All independent 3pl pronouns contain the root ɓò with varying tones.

5.1.1 Subject pronouns

In the following table 6, the independent and dependent subject pronouns are presented in context.

Table 6. Independent and dependent subject pronouns in context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Subject independent</th>
<th>Subject dependent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1sg</td>
<td>ĕ́jí</td>
<td>i-sí-dźí</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>s̀-dźí / ŏná</td>
<td>1SG IMPFV-eat fufu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘I am eating fufu.’</td>
<td>‘I am eating fufu.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1sg</td>
<td>ĕ́jí</td>
<td>i-fóng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>s̀-bò</td>
<td>1SG FUT-come</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘I will come.’</td>
<td>‘I like them.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Published by Hamburg University Press
Subject independent | Subject dependent
---|---
2sg  | 2sg
ówí ʒɔŋ  bɔ́  | ó-ʒɔŋ  bɔ́
‘You like them.’  | 2SG-like 3PL.O
őwí ʒɔ-ŋmā āmɔ́ ’ | ó-ābà  ~ ó-ābà
2SG IMPFV-drink water  | 2SG-come
‘You are drinking water.’  | ‘You are coming’

3sg  | 3sg
ĩ́fì  ɪmbā́  | ɪ́-ʃɔ́ŋ  mʊ̀
3SG be.pregnant  | 3SG-like 1SG.O
‘She is pregnant.’  | ‘He likes me.’
ĩ́mbā  ĩfì  | ĩ-mbā  ĩfì
3SG-deliver twins  | 3SG-deliver twins
‘She gave birth to twins.’

1pl  | 1pl
ějí  ɩkʊ́m  ɹɔcɪ́l  ɬʊb  ɛdʒɪ́  | ɪ́-ʃɔ́ŋ  bɔ́
1PL akum social club win  | 1PL-like them
‘We, ‘Akum social club’ have won.’  | ‘We like them.’
ĩ́-sĩ́-ɪdʒɪ́  ūdʒɪ́  | ĩ́-sĩ́-ɪdʒɪ́  ūdʒɪ́
1PL-IMPFV-eat food  | 1PL-IMPFV-eat food
‘We are eating food.’

2pl  | 2pl
no data elicited  | ɔ́-dʒɪ́  āɟɪ́ŋ  nə̂
2PL-win bezen Q  | 2PL-win bezen Q
‘You won against the Bezen people?’

3pl  | 3pl
ābɔ́  sì-ābā  | ā-sā-bā
3PL IMPFV-come  | 3PL-FUT-come
‘They are coming.’  | ‘They will come’
ābɔ́  ɭmá ātsɔ́m=m  | ā-gán  ɑbá
3PL drink beer = PERF  | 3PL-want come
‘They have drunk beer.’  | ‘They want to come.’

5.1.2 Object pronouns
The object pronouns are presented in context in the following:

1sg:  ɪ́-sʊ̄ŋ  mʊ̀  ʊ́lā
3SG-make 1SG.O fire  | ‘He makes the fire for me.’
5.1.3 Possessive pronouns

There are two different 1sg possessive pronouns. At this stage of analysis, we may conclude that if a noun ends with a vowel, the simple form m is used. Whenever a noun ends with a bilabial nasal, the complex form nəm is used instead.

1sg:  ejò m ‘my female friend’
     iđà m ‘my father’
     ñwà m ‘my wife’
     āgbēm nəm ‘my male friend’
     áfàm nəm ‘my property’
     ūlám nəm ‘my husband’

2sg:  ejò ná ‘your female friend’
     iđà ná ‘your father’
     ūná ná ‘your house’

3sg:  iđà ní ‘his/her father’
     ūná ní ‘his/her house’
Nominal subjects may or may not be repeated in a dependent pronoun. In accordance with pragmatics and speaker intention there seems to be free variation in agreement. In examples (3a–b), the nominal subject is repeated in the 3pl dependent pronoun á- and the 3sg pronoun í-. In examples (3c–d), it is possible to omit the 3sg agreement morpheme í-.

(3a) bʊ́ndá  i̲jê  mó̄sîs  gõn  á-kár  ì̲kȭn
    Bunda with Moses want 3PL-walk farm
    ‘Bunda and Moses want to go to the farm.’

b) ɪ̲gbî̲jî  í̲-kʊ̄g  ɪ̲gbər
    child 3SG-catch caterpillar
    ‘The child caught a caterpillar.’

c) ɪ̲gbər  (í̲-)tʊ̄r  mĩ  ábán  ɲî
    dog (3SG-)follow 3SG.O footprints 3SG.POSS
    ‘The dog follows his footprints.’

d) ákã̂b  (í̲-)nā  õmȭn  i̲jê  ɔkʷá̂b
    woman (3SG-)cut meat with knife
    ‘The woman cuts the meat with a knife.’

5.2 Demonstrative pronouns

The meaning and underlying phonemic shape of Akum demonstratives is not well understood yet. At this stage of research, it is uncertain, whether the different forms of demonstratives are the result of noun class agreement or of vowel harmony triggered by the stem vowel of the head noun. It seems that the particle nó is used to express demonstrative singulars proximate to the speaker. nó seems to be a determiner unspecified for number and distance and can be
translated by the definite article ‘the’. If the demonstrative pronoun stands on its own, the forms \textit{înɛ́} and \textit{ðnʊ́} is used respectively. \textit{nɛ́já} \textasciitilde \textit{nʊ́jọ́} is used for demonstrative plurals proximate to the speaker. \textit{gό́} and \textit{wọ́} are demonstratives used with singular nouns to express ‘over there’. The former is used when the object is not visible, and the latter is used with objects in great distance to the speaker. \textit{wọ́} is also used as relative pronoun (see 8.2). The plural form of these two pronouns seems to be \textit{gό́}. The sets are shown in table 7:

Table 7: Demonstrative pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DET</th>
<th>DEM.PROX</th>
<th>DEM.DIST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SG</td>
<td>nó</td>
<td>nʊ́</td>
<td>gʊ́ \sim wọ́</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td>nʊ́jọ́ \sim nɛ́já</td>
<td>gό́</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the following, the demonstrative pronouns are presented in combination with different nouns. An example with the demonstrative pronoun \textit{ðnʊ́} is given in (18e) below.

**DEM.PROX**
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{ègbī nó èkì} ‘The child cries.’
  \item \textit{āgbī nó èkì} ‘The children cry.’
  \item \textit{ákàb nʊ́/ nʊ́-á} ‘this woman’
  \item \textit{ákàb nʊ́jọ́} ‘these women’
  \item \textit{ọkì nó} ‘this tree’
  \item \textit{ìkì nɛ́já} ‘these trees’
  \item \textit{kʊ̀g ɪ̄ɲā nʊ́} ‘hold this thing’
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
  \item 2SG-FUT-eat \textit{ðnʊ́} \textit{ó-sâ-àkpu} ‘If you eat this, you will die.’
\end{itemize}

**DEM.DIST**
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{ákàb gό́} ‘that woman’
  \item \textit{ákàb gó} ‘those women’
  \item \textit{ɪ̄nàr wọ́} ‘that man’
\end{itemize}

\section{6 Numerals}

Akum has a quinary number system. The numerals up to \textit{ācɔ́ŋ} \textasciitilde \textit{ācɔ́ŋ} ‘five’ are simple lexemes, whereas the numbers from ‘six’ to ‘nine’ are compounds of 5 + x. The decimals denoting 10 and 20 are again
simplex lexemes. Decimals above ‘twenty’ Ḣkám are expressed either through a simple multiplication of ‘twenty’ plus eventual addition of Ḣkūr ‘ten’. The numeral ‘hundred’ is again a simplex lexeme, Ḣfā.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ájì ‘one’</td>
<td>ācɔ̌ŋ-ájì ‘six’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>āfâ (CA) ~ āfâ (NA) ‘two’</td>
<td>ācɔ̌ŋ-āfâ ‘seven’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ātā (CA) ~ ātā (NA) ‘three’</td>
<td>ācɔ̌ŋ-ātā ‘eight’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>āɲì ‘four’</td>
<td>ācɔ̌ŋ-āɲì ‘nine’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ācɔ̌ŋ ‘five’</td>
<td>Ḣkūr ‘ten’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ḣkūr kā ájì ‘eleven’</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ḣkūr kā āfâ ‘twelve’</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ḣkūr kā ācɔ̌ŋ āɲì ‘nineteen’</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ḣkám ‘twenty’</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ḣkám kā ájì ‘twenty-one’</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ḣkám kā Ḣkūr ‘thirty’</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ḣkám kā Ḣkūr kā ájì ‘thirty-one’</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ākám āfâ ‘forty’</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ākám āfâ kā Ḣkūr ‘fifty’</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ākám ātā ‘sixty’</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ākám ātâ kā Ḣkūr ‘seventy’</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ākám āɲì ‘eighty’</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ākám āɲì kā Ḣkūr ‘ninety’</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ḣfā (ájì) ‘hundred’</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7 Verbal morphology

The verbal root in Akum has the syllable structure CV or CVC. Further research may reveal the presence of additional possible structures. The root vowel bears one of the three lexical tones: L, M or H.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low tone</td>
<td>CVC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jũ ‘leave’</td>
<td>kʷɔ̀ŋ ‘do’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cɔ̀ ‘sing’</td>
<td>wâm ‘slide’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid tone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sʷì ‘be cold’</td>
<td>kãm ‘meet’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cã ‘laugh’</td>
<td>tsõm ‘kill’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High tone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ɖʒi ‘eat; win’</td>
<td>lõg ‘say’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bã ‘come’</td>
<td>kãr ‘trek’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.1 TAM

The tense-aspect morphemes found so far are few, however, considering the complex tonally dominated TAM-system in Bezen (Kempf 2017), we expect the Akum system to be much more elaborate than presented here.

7.1.1 Aorist

Akum has an unmarked Aorist which may refer to present or past situations. The lexical tone of the verb (L, M or H) remains stable. In (4a), the H-tone verb bá ‘come’ is combined with the 1sg pronominal prefix ɨ-. The described event took place in the past, just as in example (4b). Here, the subject is expressed in a complex noun phrase and the verb kā ‘carry’ is morphologically unmodified. In examples (4c) and (4d), events are described which are ongoing at the time of speaking.

4a) ɨ̀-bá ɛ́gɪ̀ ɔ̀sʊ̀rdʒì
1SG-come yesterday evening
‘I came yesterday evening.’

b) ɨ̄gbɪ̄ ɨ̄jɛ̄ ɨ̄dâ ɲɪ́ kā ʊ̄dʒɪ̄
child with father 3SG.POSS share food
‘The boy and his father shared the food.’

c) ɨ̄nwɛ̀ sə̄m ɨ̄fə̀m ʊ́bág
bird sit roof on.top.of
‘A bird sits on the roof.’

d) ɨ́-kár ɨ̄ɟā ɲɪ́
3SG-walk house 3SG.POSS
‘He walks to his house.’

7.1.2 Perfect

The perfect tense is marked by a clause enclitic =m̀ in Akum of Cameroon and =kɪ̄ in Akum of Nigeria. The verbal root carries its lexical tone. In (5a), the perfect enclitic =m̀ is directly attached to the verb bá ‘come’, whereas in (5b) it follows the adverb kɛ́ ‘very’. In (5c), the enclitic follows the direct object ātsə́m ‘beer’.

2 In Bezen, the perfective aspect is indicated by the clause enclitic =mɨ which also follows the direct object whenever it is mentioned in a sentence (Kempf 2017: 27).
5a) ɪ̀-bá = m̀
   1SG-come = PERF
   ‘I have come.’

b) ŋjík  sáb  ké = m̀
   game  be.good  very = PERF
   ‘The play was very good!’

c) ɪ́-ŋmá  ātsə́m = m̀
   3SG-drink  beer = PERF
   ‘S/he has drunk beer.’

Similar to (5a), the enclitic = kĩ is directly attached to the verb in (6a), whereas in (6b-c) it follows the direct object ūdzĩ ‘food’ (6e) and the 3sg object pronoun mĩ (6f).

6a) ābɔ̄  bá = kĩ
   3PL  come = PERF
   ‘They have come.’

b) ɪ́-dʒĩ́  ūdzĩ = kĩ
   1PL-eat  food = PERF
   ‘We have eaten food.’

c) ɪ́-kɔ̀ŋ  mĩ = kĩ
   3SG-do  3SG = PERF
   ‘He has done it.’

7.1.3 Future

The future tense is marked by two verbal prefixes sa- or ra-. Whether there is a difference in meaning between the two morphemes, has to be clarified yet. In (7a), the 3pl is expressed in the independent pronoun ābɔ̄ and in (7b) in the bound prefix ā-. In both cases, the future prefix ra- directly precedes the verbal root.

7a) ābɔ̄  rá-lʊ́g  gɛ́  nəŋ  ja
   3PL  FUT-say  that  what  again
   ‘What will they say again?’

b) ǎ-rá-cũ̄  dɪ̀zɛ̄mba
   3PL-FUT-descend  December
   ‘They will go down in December.’

In elicitation, only the prefix sa- was used to indicate future activities. The morpheme occurs with a low tone with the 1sg pronoun and a falling tone with all other pronouns. The lexical tone of the verb seems to remain stable in inflection. In (8a), the H-tone verb ɲmá ‘drink’ is presented in combination with the Future prefix sa-. Whereas in the 1sg, the prefix carries a low tone, a falling tone is observed in 2sg, 1pl, and 3pl. In the Nigerian example, the 2sg form also carries a low tone. In (8b), the L-tone verb jì ‘leave’ is inflected.
Here, the Future-prefix also carries a falling tone with the 3sg form, a form in which was not elicited in the (8a) paradigm.

8a) 1sg ɛ̀jí sà-ŋmá ām’í ‘I will drink water.’
2sg ɔ̄wɪ́ sâ-ŋmá āmwí ‘You will drink water.’
NA: ɔ́wɪ́ sà-ŋmá āmwí ‘You will drink water.’
1pl ɛ̄jɪ́ sâ-ŋmá āmwí ‘We will drink water.’
3pl ābɔ̄ sâ-ŋmá āmwí ‘They will drink water.’

b) 1sg ɪ̀-sà-ɲɪ̀ ‘I will leave.’
3sg ɛ́ jɪ́ sâ-ɲɪ̀ ‘He will leave.’
3pl ābɔ̄ sâ-ɲɪ̀ ‘They will leave.’

7.1.4 Imperfective
An unbounded activity is indicated by the prefix sɪ-. This grammatical morpheme does not carry its own tone, either, but seems to take over the tone of the bound personal pronoun preceding it, as presented in (9a-b) with the low-tone verb kɔ̀ŋ ‘do’ and the high-tone verb dʒí ‘eat’. The examples also show that the lexical tone of the verb remains stable. When preceded by the 1sg bound pronoun è- ~ ɪ-, the imperfective prefix sɪ- carries a low tone, whereas with the 2sg and 3sg prefixes ʊ́- and ɪ́- it bears a high tone. When accompanied by a 1pl or 3pl bound pronoun, the imperfective prefix carries a mid tone. We do not have an example of the imperfective prefix in combination with the 2pl pronoun. However, since all bound pronouns in the plural carry a mid tone, we expect the imperfective prefix also to carry a mid tone there.

9a) 1sg è-sì-kɔ̀ŋ ‘I am doing something.’
2sg ū-sì-kɔ̀ŋ ādʒɪ́ ‘What are you doing?’
3sg ɪ-sì-kɔ̀ŋ mí ‘He is doing it.’
3pl ā-sì-kɔ̀ŋ ādʒɪ́ ‘What are they doing?’

b) 1sg ɪ̀-sì-dʒí ōdʒɪ́ ‘I am eating.’
3sg ɪ̀-sì dʒí ōná ‘He is eating.’
1pl ɪ̀-sì lɗʒí ōdʒɪ́ ‘We are eating.’

The imperfective prefix sɪ- and the perfect enclitic =m̀ may also be combined, as shown in (10). However, it is interesting that the enclitic occurs directly after the imperfective marker. More examples are needed to fully understand the combinatory potential of different TAM-morphemes.
10) ɪ́-sì̩=m̩ ɪ́-gêbò ʊ̄kōŋ
3SG-IMPFV = PERF 3SG-cross SG.river
‘He was crossing the river.’

7.1.5 Imperative
The Imperative singular is indicated by the bare verbal root (11a–c)). When addressing several people, the 2pl subject prefix ŋ̄- is added to the root (11d)).

11a) ᱪpír ‘Answer!’
b) ɓá ‘Come!’
c) ɲmá ām"i ‘Drink water!’
d) ŋ̄-ɲmá ām"i ‘Drink water (pl.)!’

7.1.6 Negation
Negation is marked by the clause enclitic =kɔ̄. The vowel quality varies between the closed vowel [o] and the open [ɔ] but may also be reduced to a mere [ə]. In examples (12a–c), the negation enclitic is directly attached to the verb, whereas in (12d) it follows the direct object.

12a) ɛ́-ɓá=kə
3SG-come = NEG ‘She did not come.’
b) ɪ̄tsɔ̄ŋ nʊ́ ɓág=kɔ̄
pot DEM.PROX be.big = NEG ‘This pot is not big.’
c) ɛ̄ɟɪ̄g  kə̄ ɛ̀-sâb=ko
game trek ?-be.good = NEG ‘Was the game not good?’
d) ī-sɔ̄ŋ ɪ̄ɲā ɛ́=kɔ̄
1SG-know SG.thing ?= NEG ‘I don’t know why!’

8 Syntax
8.1 Verbal serialisation
As other Southern Jukunoid languages, Akum features verbal serialisation: a single event is encoded by two or more verbs without coordinating or subordinating particles in between them. Furthermore, it is obligatory that the subject is shared by the verbs in sequence.
However, it is yet to find out, how exactly verbal serialisation works in Akum. For example, how often the subject can or must be marked on the verbs in series. Whereas in (13a–b) the subject is only indicated on the first verb in series (as it is also the case in Bezen (Kempf 2017)), in (13c) the subject is marked on both verbs. In (13d) the first verb dʒí ‘eat’ and second verb kám ‘finish’ seem to form a closer unit, sharing one subject marker, whereas the third verb ɲmá ‘drink’ encodes a separate event, introduced by a renewed marking of the subject.

13a) ɪ̀-bá  kà=m̀
     1SG-come  go-PERF
     ‘I have come.’

b) ɪ̄-dʒí  ɲmá
     1PL-eat  drink
     ‘We ate and drank.’

c) ɪ̀-kʊ̀  i-nā  mǐ
     1SG-take  1SG-give  3SG.O
     ‘I give it to him.’

d) ɪ̄-dʒí  kám  ɪ̄-ɲmá
     1PL-eat  finish  1PL-drink
     ‘We ate and drank’.

8.2 Relative clauses

Relative clauses seem to be indicated by a clause-final wɔ́ in Akum, irrespective of the number of the subject, as shown in (14a–b and 15b–c).

14a) ɛ́kʷāk  wɔ́  nɛ̀  bá  wɔ́
     SG.man  DEM.DIST  ?  come  REL
     ‘That man who came, […].’

b) āŋɟār  jɪ́  nɛ̀  bá  wɔ̂
     PL.people  ?  ?  come  REL
     ‘The people who came, […].’

In (15), a simple clause structure containing a subject and the intransitive verb ɛkì ‘cry’ (15a) is compared to subordinate clauses in the singular (15b) and plural (15c), both marked by wɔ́. Comparing the two types of clauses, a tonal difference on the initial vowel of the verb becomes evident. Whereas in the simple clause, it carries a low tone, it has a mid tone in the subordinate clause.

15a) ɛ̄gbī  nə́  ɛ̀kì
     SG.child  det  cry
     ‘This child cries.’

b) ɛ̄gbī  nə́  ɛ̄kì  wɔ̂
     SG.child  det  cry  REL
     ‘This child that cries, […].’
c) ṣgbī  nọ  ẹkị  wọ
   PL.children  DET  cry  REL
   ‘These children that cry, […].’

Since these are the only examples available to us, it is too early to make a final statement about the tonal marking of relative clauses in Akum. However, in Bezen, the relative clause is marked by a pronoun and a tonal change on the initial vowel of the verb (Kempf 2017).

8.3 Reported speech

Reported speech is introduced by a particle ẹgé. In example (7a) ẹgé follows the verb of utterance lóg ‘say’. In the following examples in (16) this verb of utterance is omitted. We find a similar structure in Bezen, where the verbs of utterance ąryáŋ ‘say’ or ọtūn ‘tell’ may be omitted and the complement clause is introduced solely by the quotative marker kò (Kempf 2017: 62).

16a) ẹbọ  ęgé  à-cọ  ākọm
   3PL  that  1PL?-descend  Akum
   ‘They said that we will go down to Akum.’

b) ị-ẹgé  ū-ẹmá  āmwi
   3sg-that  2sg-drink  water
   ‘He said that you should drink water.’

c) ị-ẹgé  ī-nị
   3sg-that  1sg-leave
   ‘He said that I should leave.’

d) ị-ẹgé  ū-bà
   3sg-that  2sg-come
   ‘He said that you should come.’

8.4 Questions

Polar questions are formed by a sentence-final vowel with a falling tone (17a). If the last word of the sentence ends with a vowel, this vowel is lengthened (17b). This process is well known from Bezen and Bazɨm (Kempf 2017; Lovegren 2012: 11).

17a) ākpọŋ  ọ-ndär  ọ
   Akpọŋ  2SG-see  Q
   ‘Akpọng, didn’t you see it?’
Content questions are formed by interrogative pronouns such as àjìrɔ́/àjì ‘who?’, ínâŋ/àdʒɪ́ ‘what?’, lùŋ ‘when?’ and àmàŋ ‘how many?’. They remain uninflected and may occur either at the end or the beginning of the clause.

Interrogative pronouns for subject and object remain in situ, i.e. interrogative pronouns in preverbal subject position are not shifted after the verb and interrogative pronouns in postverbal object position are not fronted (18b, d–e). Interrogative pronouns for time and quantity also remain in situ (18a, c).

18a) lùŋ ‘when?’
2SG-come when
‘When did you come?’

b) àjìrɔ́/àjì ‘who?’
who 3SG-win who kill lion 3SG
‘Who has won?’ ‘Who killed the lion?’

18c) àmàŋ ‘how many?’
2PL-win how.many
‘How much did you win?’

d) ínâŋ ‘what?’
2PL-do what with 3PL.O 2SG-hear what
‘What will you (pl.) do to them?’ ‘How are you?’
(lit. What did you hear?)

e) àdʒɪ́ ‘what?’
3PL-IMPFFV-do what 2SG-think what
‘What are they doing?’ ‘What do you think?’
A sketch of Akum

9 Conclusion

Akum shows the typical Benue-Congo syllable structure (CV, CVC) as well as typical sounds of the Benue-Congo consonant inventory (double and secondary articulation). As is known from other Southern Jukunoid languages, only the consonants r, b, g and nasals are permitted in word-final position and – because they are unreleased – the distinction voiced/voiceless is neutralized. The number and qualities of phonemically distinct vowels remain debatable. There are traits of an ATR-distinction, but they are not consistent across idiolects. Whether ATR is contrastive in the morphosyntax of the language cannot be said now. Rather, at this stage of research it seems that a former ATR contrast has broken down and left behind erratic traces. The dissolution of a former ATR harmony could have paved the way towards neutralization of the prior ATR contrast in a central vowel whose phonemic status remains debatable synchronically. These phenomena are also shared by other Southern Jukunoid languages such as Bezen and Yukuben.

The Akum pronominal system consists of a set of independent and dependent subject pronouns and object and possessive pronouns. Three dependent subject pronouns are distinguished only by tone.

Concerning the nominal morphology, the Akum nominal prefix system is reduced in several aspects compared with its Southern Jukunoid relatives: it only has a set of 4 different nominal prefixes which are vocalic in form and it shows only marginal agreement on adjectives. Yukuben and Bezen have far larger sets of prefixes with a CV- or V- syllabic structure and agreement on numerals, adjectives and demonstratives. The quinary numeral system and SVO basic word order are similar to its Southern Jukunoid relatives Bezen, Yukuben and Kuteb (Kempf 2017; Prischnegg 2021; Anyanwu 2013; Koops 2009). There is yet much to do concerning the description of Southern Jukunoid languages and we hope that this article invites more research.
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Abbreviations

ATR = advanced tongue root; CA = Cameroonian Akum variety; DEM = demonstrative; DET = determiner; DIST = distant; FUT = future; IMPFV = imperfective; NA = Nigerian Akum variety; NEG = negation; O = object; PBC = Proto Benue-Congo; PERF = perfect; PL = plural; POSS = possessive; PROX = proximate; Q = question; REL = relative; SG = singular.

References