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A sketch of Akum (Southern Jukunoid)

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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 Prischneegg between 2004 and 2007 and Viktoria Kempf in 2013 and 2014. Prischneegg elicited her language material during three visits in Shibong 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 /ɲɲ/ and labialised sounds as /b^w/, /k^w/, /m^w/, /s^w/, /ɲ^w/. Apart from labialisation, Akum also shows palatalisation, as in following phonemes: /m^j/, /kp^j/, /mb^j/. Our data includes e.g. the pair *kpār* ‘be barren’ vs. *kp^jár* (CA) ~ *kpár* (NA) ‘to answer’ suggesting a possible phonemic contrast between the simple labiovelar /kp/ and its palatalised counterpart /kp^j/. 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

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Labio-velar
Plosive	b		t d	c ɟ	k g	kp gb
Nasal	m		n	ɲ	ŋ	ŋm
Prenasalised	mb		nd	ɲɟ	ŋg	
Trill			r			
Fricative		f	s ʃ			
Affricate			ts (tʃ) dz (dʒ)			
Approximant				j		w
Lateral Approximant			l			

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’ <i>āfi</i> | <i>āfi</i> |
| | ‘child’ <i>álɔmfī</i> | <i>álàmfī</i> |

2.1.1 Minimal pairs

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

g/ŋ	<i>tság</i> ‘be hard’	<i>tsáŋ</i> ‘dig’
	<i>ātɔg</i> ‘palm wine’	<i>ātɔŋ</i> ‘cocoyam’
	<i>ìbɔg</i> ‘farm’	<i>ìbɔŋ</i> ‘hot time’
	<i>kúg</i> ‘touch’	<i>kùŋ</i> ‘scratch’
	<i>ùcòg</i> ‘guest’	<i>ùcòŋ</i> ‘lip’

	<i>jíg</i> (CA)~ <i>ǰǰg</i> (NA) 'to play'	<i>ǰǰ</i> 'search'	
dz/ts	<i>ādzí</i> 'names' <i>ādzàb</i> 'forests'	<i>átsì</i> 'some' <i>àtsāb</i> 'tortoises'	
f/w/b	<i>āfǰǰ</i> 'fingers' <i>āfā</i> 'calabashes'	<i>àwúǰ</i> 'liver' <i>āwà</i> 'armpits'	<i>ábūǰ</i> 'cloud' <i>ábá</i> 'feet'
g/gb/ǰg	<i>àgō</i> 'those'	<i>āgbǰ</i> 'arms'	<i>āǰgò</i> 'drum'
l/j/ǰ	<i>ālǰm</i> 'rainy season'	<i>ájǰmí</i> 'my female friends' <i>āǰǰǰ</i> 'body' <i>āǰǰǰ</i> 'honey'	
n/ǰ	<i>ánǰǰ</i> 'noses'	<i>ǰǰmā</i> 'salt'	
m/ǰm	<i>ǰmā</i> 'red'	<i>wùr</i> 'ascend'	
g/r	<i>wúg</i> 'hear; listen' <i>àtǰg</i> 'beans' <i>ǰǰǰg</i> 'sour taste'	<i>átàr</i> 'garments' <i>ǰkwǰr</i> (CA) ~ <i>ǰǰr</i> (NA) 'cheek'	
ǰ/r	<i>tāǰ</i> 'think' <i>ábūǰ</i> 'cloud' <i>ācǰǰ</i> 'five' <i>ǰkǰǰ</i> 'rivers'	<i>tàr</i> 'change' <i>ábùr</i> 'bite' <i>ácǰr</i> 'stars' <i>àkùr</i> 'crocodiles'	
m/ǰ	<i>ǰfǰm</i> 'property' <i>lǰm</i> 'jump' <i>ǰkpǰm</i> 'far' <i>āwúǰm</i> 'seed' <i>àtsǰm</i> 'Kuteb people'	<i>ǰfǰǰ</i> 'chests' <i>lǰǰ</i> 'lick' <i>ǰkpǰǰ</i> 'elbow' <i>àwúǰ</i> 'liver' <i>ātsǰǰ</i> 'pots'	
mⁱ/ǰ	<i>ǰmⁱám</i> 'tongue'	<i>ǰǰnàǰ</i> 'good taste'	
t/ts	<i>tǰǰ</i> 'again'	<i>tsǰǰ</i> 'dig'	
t/d	<i>ǰtǰǰ</i> 'right'	<i>ǰdǰǰ</i> 'chief'	
c/ǰ	<i>ǰcá</i> 'fish'	<i>ǰǰā</i> 'house'	
	<i>ǰcǰg</i> 'guest'	<i>ǰǰǰg</i> 'vein'	
ǰ/s	<i>ǰfǰ</i> 'few'	<i>ǰsǰ</i> 'soul, spirit'	

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 /ǰ/. The phoneme /ǰ/ only occurs in this position. Optionally, it may be dropped and the preceding vowel is nasalized,

as in *íbòṅ* ‘hot season’, which is pronounced as [íbò̃]. Word-final bilabial plosives /b/ and /g/ are devoiced and not released.

Table 2. Consonants in different surroundings

	#CV	VCV	VC#
b	<i>bá</i> ‘come’	<i>ábúr</i> ‘fight’ (n)	<i>īsáb</i> ‘heel’
m	<i>máy</i> ‘only’	<i>òmòṅ</i> ‘meat’	<i>kām</i> ‘meet’
f	<i>fī</i> ‘be dry’	<i>īfàṅ</i> ‘chest’	XX ¹
t	<i>tāṅ</i> ‘think’	<i>ōtá</i> ‘arrow’	XX
d	<i>dáṅ</i> ‘thank’	<i>ōdāb</i> ‘heart’	XX
n	<i>nè</i> ‘for’	<i>ònà</i> ‘fufu’	XX
r	<i>rá</i> future tense	XX	<i>īkúr</i> ‘hole’
s	<i>sōṅ</i> ‘know’	<i>ìsáṅ</i> ‘neck’	XX
ʃ	<i>ʃm̄kābār</i> ‘rice’ (Hausa loan)	<i>ōʃb</i> ‘wind’	XX
l	<i>lóg</i> ‘say’	<i>ōlāb</i> ‘load’	XX
ɲ	<i>ɲì</i> ‘leave’	<i>āɲōṅ</i> ‘body’	XX
j	<i>jīr</i> ‘stand’	<i>ājìṅ</i> ‘blood’	XX
c	<i>cú</i> ‘descend’	<i>ōcōṅ</i> ‘pain’	XX
ʒ	<i>ʒíg</i> (CA) ~ <i>íʒóg</i> (NA) ‘to play’	<i>òʒōg</i> ‘vein’	XX
k	<i>kūg</i> ‘hold’	<i>īkūr</i> ‘ten’	XX
g	<i>gé</i> ‘that’	<i>égì</i> ‘yesterday’	<i>wóg</i> ‘hear’
ŋ	no evidence	no evidence	<i>ōtōṅ</i> ‘ear’
w	<i>wòr</i> ‘ascend’	<i>ówà</i> ‘wife’	XX
ts	<i>tsām</i> ‘kill’	<i>ōtsī</i> ‘hair’	XX
dz	<i>dzá</i> ‘steal’	<i>ìdzī</i> ‘name’	XX
tʃ	<i>tʃáb</i> ‘be quiet’	<i>ítʃà</i> ‘lake’	XX
dʒ	<i>dʒí</i> ‘eat; win’	<i>ádʒār</i> ‘dream’ (n)	XX
kp	<i>kpú</i> ‘die’	<i>īkpàṅ</i> ‘spear’	XX

1 XX = probably not possible.

gb	<i>gbī</i> ‘break’	<i>ḡbó</i> ‘arm’	XX
mb	<i>mbág</i> ‘to help’	<i>ĩmbár</i> ‘stomach’	XX
nd	<i>ndār</i> ‘see’	<i>ĩndàr</i> ‘elephant’	XX
ŋm	<i>ŋmá</i> ‘drink’	<i>ĩŋmí</i> ‘breast’	XX
ɲ	no evidence	<i>ĩŋyār</i> ‘person’	XX
b^w	no evidence	<i>āb^wī</i> ‘rain’	XX
k^w	<i>k^wḡŋ</i> (CA) ~ <i>kḡŋ</i> (NA) ‘do’	<i>ĩk^wī</i> ‘many’	XX
m^w	no evidence	<i>ām^wī</i> ‘water’	XX
s^w	<i>s^wī</i> ‘be cold’	<i>ēs^wī</i> ‘shame’	XX
ɲ^w	no evidence	<i>ĩɲ^wè</i> ‘bird’	XX
m^j	no evidence	<i>ũm^jám</i> ‘tongue’	XX
kp^j	<i>kp^jár</i> ‘to answer’	no evidence	XX
mb^j	no evidence	<i>úmb^jè</i> ‘in-law’	XX

2.2 Vowels

Akum contrasts at least 6 vowels - /a/, /ɔ/, /u/, /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 Prischneegg (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], [ʊ], [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 [ɪ] 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]/[ʊ]. The unclear status of the central vowel [ə] is known from Yukuben (Prischneegg 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, Kapyra).

2.2.1 Minimal pairs

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

ə/a	səm 'live'	səm 'turn'
	òfám 'brain'	òfāmn 'sunshine, daylight'
ɛ/a	ōmē 'war'	ōmā 'red'
ɔ/a	āfɔŋ 'fingers'	āfāŋ 'rocks'
ʊ/a	ōmbūg 'place, direction'	ōmbāg 'help'
ʊ/ɪ	ōdʒú 'funeral'	ōdʒì 'food'
ə/ʊ	tsəŋ 'dig'	tsòŋ 'sew'
	āndàr 'elephants'	àndòr 'hills'
ə/ɪ	ábâr 'black'	àbír 'claws'
ɛ/ɪ/ʊ	īwé 'nose'	íwī 'tear'
		īwù 'snake'

	<i>ìtsì</i> ‘beard’	<i>ĩtsù</i> ‘family’
	<i>àtsé</i> ‘tails’	<i>átsì</i> ‘some’
ɔ/ʊ	<i>àgɔ́</i> ‘those’	<i>ágù</i> ‘there’
	<i>ògbɔ́</i> ‘arm’	<i>kpù</i> ‘die’
a/ɔ/ʊ	<i>cā</i> ‘laugh’	<i>cò</i> ‘sing’
		<i>cú</i> ‘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.

L vs. M

kàm [110Hz (m)] ‘tell’

kām [155 (m)] ‘meet’

LL vs. MM

òtâr [147Hz; 143Hz (f)] ‘garment’

õtāŋ [183Hz; 181Hz (f)] ‘back’

LL vs. HL

àtâg ‘beans’

átâg ‘shoulders’

LL vs. LM

ìdzì ‘tooth’

ìdzĩ ‘name’

LM vs. MH

òlā ‘fire’

ōlá ‘sleep’

LM vs. HL

àgbōr ‘dogs’

ágbòr ‘caterpillars’

ML vs. MH

ḡbòŋ [155Hz; 135Hz (f)]

‘wall’

ḡbóŋ [170Hz; 196Hz (f)]

‘song; fruit’

ML vs. LH

ĩwò ‘snake’

ĩwú ‘walking stick’

ML vs. MM

ōnà ‘gift’

ōnā ‘food’

MH vs. LH

átá ‘three’

àtá ‘buttocks’

MH vs. MM*íkáb* ‘compound’*íkāb* ‘bones’**HL vs. MH***átsàŋ* [170Hz; 150Hz (f)]

‘smoke’

ātsám [136Hz; 145Hz (m)]

‘beer’

HL vs. LH*íkṗì* ‘axe’*íkṗí* ‘chicken’**HH vs. MH***ékám* [183Hz; 187Hz]

‘twenty’

ékák [166Hz; 186Hz]

‘wrist’

HH vs. LH*íkám* ‘twenty’*íkám* ‘dead person’**HL vs. LL***ák^wè* ‘horns’*àk^wè* ‘villages’**HL vs. MM***ǰkpà* [190Hz; 155Hz (f)] ‘harmattan’*ǰkpā* [170Hz; 170Hz (f)] ‘skin’**HL vs. ML***ájà* ‘mothers’*ājà* ‘flowers’**HH vs. MM***íkí* ‘trees’*íkī* ‘head’**HH vs. LL***ókúŋ* ‘river’*òkùŋ* ‘hunting’**Tonal triplets***cò* [165Hz (f)] ‘sing’*cō* [190Hz (f)] ‘fall’*cú* [200Hz (f)]

‘descend’

ǎfàŋ ‘rocks’*áfàŋ* ‘chests’*ǎfáy* ‘lands’*íkùr* ‘crocodile’*íkùr* ‘hole’*íkūr* ‘ten’*òkàb* ‘opposite’*òkāb* ‘bone’*òkáb* ‘cooking spoon’**Dynamic tones***Falling**dzá* [167Hz (m)] ‘steal’*dzâ* [194/143Hz (f)] ‘blow’*Raising**èk^wàk* [151Hz; 152Hz (f)]

‘collarbone’

èkwàk [214/240Hz 157Hz (f)] ‘man’**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 $\bar{\epsilon}$ -. The verb $d\bar{z}\acute{i}$ ‘win’ is a semantic extension of $d\bar{z}\acute{i}$ ‘eat’ and has the same semantic role structure as the source verb. Thus, $\bar{a}\bar{y}\bar{i}\eta$ ‘Bezen’ acts as the direct object, following the verb. In (2b), $\bar{\epsilon}s^w\acute{i}$ ‘shame’ is encoded as the subject that affects the experiencer, encoded in the 3pl pronoun $b\hat{o}$ and following the verb $k\bar{u}g$ ‘hold’.

(2a) $\bar{\epsilon}$ - $d\bar{z}\acute{i}$ $\bar{a}\bar{y}\bar{i}\eta$ $m\acute{a}\eta$
 1PL-win Bezen only
 ‘We have only won against the Bezen.’

(b) $\bar{\epsilon}s^w\acute{i}$ $k\bar{u}g$ $b\hat{o}$
 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

SG	PL
u -	a -
i -	i -

The singular prefix u - has the allomorph \bar{o} - and the prefix i - the allomorph $\bar{\epsilon}$ -. Most of the nouns carrying an u - prefix in the singular form the plural with an a -prefix. Only a few nouns combine the prefixes u - and i - in Akum. These are nouns denoting long and thin objects, as it is also known from Yukuben and Bezen (Prischneegg 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 Prischneegg 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

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

Class 1 (abstract concepts without PL):

òfáj ‘hunt’, *ókpa* ‘harmattan’, *ómá-ēsàk* ‘thunder’ *òsūr* ‘sun’, *òfǎb* ‘wind’

Class pair 1/4:

òkǎb pl. *ìkǎb* ‘bone’, *òlǎg* pl. *ìlǎg* ‘rope’, *òkʷǎb* pl. *ìkʷǎb* ‘root’

Class pair 1/6:

òbún pl. *ábún* ‘song’, *òtún* pl. *átún* ‘ear’, *ògbó* pl. *ágbó* ‘arm’, *òkpùb* pl. *ákpùb* ‘bat’, *òkùn* pl. *ákùn* ‘river’, *òkí* pl. *ákí* ‘leg’, *òsù-kpí* pl. *àsù-kpí* ‘door’, *òtá* pl. *átá* ‘arrow’, *òtān* pl. *ātān* ‘back’, *òtār* pl. *átār* ‘garment’, *òyūg* pl. *áyūg* ‘vein’, *òwà* pl. *áwà* ‘wife’, *òlám* pl. *álám* ‘husband’

Class 6 (abstract concepts without SG): *ábúr* ‘fight’, *ádzār* ‘dream’, *àsáŋ* ‘smell’, *ábūŋ* ‘cloud’, *áyì* ‘one’, *áfâ* ‘two’, *àtà* ‘three’, *āŋù* ‘four’, *ācǎŋ* ‘five’, *ākúm* ‘Akum’, *āŋŋ* ‘Bezen’

Class pair 9/6:

èbà pl. *àbà* ‘bag’, *èŋmà* pl. *āŋmà* ‘leaf’, *ìkʷè* pl. *ākʷè* ‘village’, *ìdzí* pl. *ádzí* ‘tooth’

4.2 Agreement

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

SG	PL
<i>īkī úfī</i> ‘small head’	<i>ākī ífī</i> ‘small heads’
<i>īgūr úfī</i> ‘small dog’	<i>āgūr ífī</i> ‘small dogs’

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

SG	PL
<i>èbà āfī</i> ‘new bag’	<i>àbà āfī</i> ‘new bags’
<i>īyā ūtām</i> ‘big house’	<i>āyā ūtām</i> ‘big houses’
<i>īcōη úfī</i> ‘small stone’	<i>ācōη úfī</i> ‘small stones’
<i>òk^wáb ádzè</i> ‘sharp knife’	<i>àk^wáb ádzè</i> ‘sharp knives’

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.

SG	PL
<i>ákàb úfī</i> ‘small woman’	NA: <i>ákàb ífī</i> ‘small women’
	CA: <i>ákàb úfī</i> ‘small women’

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

	Subject independent	Subject dependent	Object	Possessive
1sg	èjí	ì-/è-	mì	nám, m
2sg	ówí/úwí	ó-/ú-	mú	ná/nú-
3sg	ǫjí	í-/é-	mí	ǫjí
1pl	ējí	ī-/ē-	rā	rā/ró
2pl	òmì/òwí	ō-, ū-	rū	rū
3pl	ābō	ā-	bó	ābō

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 èjí, but the vowel quality of the dependent pronouns varies between ì- and è-. Different from the other sets, the tone of the dependent 2pl subject pronoun ò-/ò- deviates from the tone of the initial vowel of the independent pronoun òmì/òwí. 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 ró for the 1pl pronoun. All independent 3pl pronouns contain the root bɔ 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

	Subject independent	Subject dependent
1sg	èjí sî-dzî ūnā 1SG IMPFV-eat fufu 'I am eating fufu.'	ì-sî-dzî ūnā 1SG-IMPFV-eat fufu 'I am eating fufu.'
	èjí sâ-bā 1SG FUT-come 'I will come.'	ì-ǫǫ bó 1SG-like 2PL.O 'I like them.'

	Subject independent	Subject dependent
2sg	<i>úwí f́óŋ b́ó</i> 2SG like 3PL.O 'You like them.'	<i>ú-f́óŋ b́ó</i> 2SG-like 3PL.O 'You like them.'
	<i>śwí sá-īŋmā ām^wī</i> 2SG IMPFV-drink water 'You are drinking water.'	<i>ś-ābā ~ ú-ābā</i> 2SG-come 'You are coming'
3sg	<i>ījí īmbár</i> 3SG be.pregnant 'She is pregnant.'	<i>í-f́óŋ m̀ì</i> 3SG-like 1SG.O 'He likes me.'
		<i>í-mbā īfī</i> 3SG-deliver twins 'She gave birth to twins.'
1pl	<i>ējí ākóm sóciál clúb ēdzí</i> 1PL akum social club win 'We, 'Akum social club' have won.'	<i>ī-f́óŋ b́ó</i> 1PL-like them 'We like them.'
		<i>ī-sī-īdzí ūdzī</i> 1PL-IMPFV-eat food 'We are eating food.'
2pl	no data elicited	<i>ś-dźí āŋīŋ n̄</i> 2PL-win bezen Q 'You won against the Bezen people?'
3pl	<i>ābō sī-ābā</i> 3PL IMPFV-come 'They are coming.'	<i>ā-sā-bā</i> 3PL-FUT-come 'They will come'
	<i>ābō ŋmá ātsám = m̀</i> 3PL drink beer = PERF 'They have drunk beer.'	<i>ā-gán ābá</i> 3PL-want come 'They want to come.'

5.1.2 Object pronouns

The object pronouns are presented in context in the following:

1sg: *í-sūŋ m̀ì òlā*
3SG-make 1SG.O fire
'He makes the fire for me.'

- ōkí* *nó* *ŋwá* *mì*
 tree DEM.PROX scratch 1SG.O
 ‘This tree scratched me.’
- 2sg: *í-sūŋ* *mó* *òlā*
 2SG-make 2SG.O fire
 ‘He makes the fire for you.’
- 3sg: *í-tí* *mí*
 3SG-lost 3SG.O
 ‘He lost it.’
- 1pl: *ābō* *nā* *ró* *ìfá*
 3PL give 1PL.O calabash
 ‘They gave us a calabash.’
- 2pl: *ègbār* *dzóm* *rō = m̄*
 dog bite 2PL.O = PERF
 ‘The dog has bitten you (pl).’ (CA)
- 3pl: *ī-sā-nā* *bó* *ìfá*
 1PL-FUT-give 3PL.O calabash
 ‘We will give them a calabash.’

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 *m̄* is used. Whenever a noun ends with a bilabial nasal, the complex form *nám* is used instead.

- 1sg: *éjò m̄* ‘my female friend’
īdā m̄ ‘my father’
ówà m̄ ‘my wife’
āgbēm nám ‘my male friend’
áfàm nám ‘my property’
ōlám nám ‘my husband’
- 2sg: *éjò ná* ‘your female friend’
īdā ná ‘your father’
ībā ná ‘your house’
- 3sg: *īdā ní* ‘his/her father’
ībā ní ‘his/her house’

ábǎ ní ‘his/her footprints’

1pl: *īdā ró* ‘our father’
ījā ró ‘our house’
ítám ró ‘our work.’

2pl: *ījā rō* ‘your house’

3pl: *īdā ābô* ‘their father’
ādā ābô ‘their fathers’
ījā ābô ‘their 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) *búndá ījē mósīs gán á-kár īkōŋ*
 Bunda with Moses want 3PL-walk farm
 ‘Bunda and Moses want to go to the farm.’

b) *īgbījí í-kúg īgbàr*
 child 3SG-catch caterpillar
 ‘The child caught a caterpillar.’

c) *īgbūr (í-)tūr mí ábán ní*
 dog (3SG-)follow 3SG.O footprints 3SG.POSS
 ‘The dog follows his footprints.’

d) *ákàb (í-)já òmòŋ ījē òkʷáb*
 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 *nú* is used to express demonstrative singulars proximate to the speaker. *ná* 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 *íné* and *ònú* is used respectively. *néjá* ~ *nújó* is used for demonstrative plurals proximate to the speaker. *gú* and *wó* 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. *wó* is also used as relative pronoun (see 8.2). The plural form of these two pronouns seems to be *gó*. The sets are shown in table 7:

Table 7: Demonstrative pronouns

	DET	DEM.PROX	DEM.DIST
SG	<i>ná</i>	<i>nú</i>	<i>gú</i> ~ <i>wó</i>
PL		<i>nújó</i> ~ <i>néjá</i>	<i>gó</i>

In the following, the demonstrative pronouns are presented in combination with different nouns. An example with the demonstrative pronoun *ònú* is given in (18e) below.

DEM.PROX

<i>ēgbī ná èkì</i>	‘The child cries.’	
<i>āgbī ná ēkì</i>	‘The children cry.’	
<i>ákàb nú/ nú-á</i>	‘this woman’	
<i>ákàb nújó</i>	‘these women’	
<i>ōkī nú</i>	‘this tree’	
<i>īkī néjá</i>	‘these trees’	
<i>kùg ìṅā nú</i>	‘hold this thing’	
<i>ṣ-rá-dzī</i>	<i>íné</i>	<i>ó-sá-àkpú</i>
2SG-FUT-eat	DEM.PROX	2SG-FUT-die
‘If you eat this, you will die.’		

DEM.DIST

<i>ákàb gú</i>	‘that woman’
<i>ákàb gó</i>	‘those women’
<i>ìṅàr wó</i>	‘that man’

6 Numerals

Akum has a quinary number system. The numerals up to *ācǒṅ* ~ *ācǒṅ* ‘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’ *íkám* are expressed either through a simple multiplication of ‘twenty’ plus eventual addition of *íkūr* ‘ten’. The numeral ‘hundred’ is again a simplex lexeme, *ifá*.

<i>ájì</i> ‘one’	<i>ācǝŋ-ījì</i> ‘six’
<i>áfâ</i> (CA) ~ <i>āfâ</i> (NA) ‘two’	<i>ācǝŋ-áfâ</i> ‘seven’
<i>àtà</i> (CA) ~ <i>ātā</i> (NA) ‘three’	<i>ācǝŋ-ātā</i> ‘eight’
<i>āɲì</i> ‘four’	<i>ācǝŋ-āɲì</i> ‘nine’
<i>ācǝŋ</i> ‘five’	<i>íkūr</i> ‘ten’
<i>íkūr kâ ájì</i> ‘eleven’	11
<i>íkūr kâ āfâ</i> ‘twelve’	12
<i>íkūr kâ ācǝŋ āɲì</i> ‘nineteen’	19
<i>íkám</i> ‘twenty’	20
<i>íkám kâ ájì</i> ‘twenty-one’	21
<i>íkám kâ íkūr</i> ‘thirty’	30
<i>íkám kâ íkūr kâ ájì</i> ‘thirty-one’	31
<i>ákám āfâ</i> ‘forty’	40
<i>ákám āfâ kâ íkūr</i> ‘fifty’	50
<i>ákám ātā</i> ‘sixty’	60
<i>ákám ātā kâ íkūr</i> ‘seventy’	70
<i>ákám āɲì</i> ‘eighty’	80
<i>ákám āɲì kâ íkūr</i> ‘ninety’	90
<i>ifá</i> (<i>ájì</i>) ‘hundred’	100

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.

	CV	CVC
Low tone	<i>ɲì</i> ‘leave’	<i>k^wǝŋ</i> ‘do’
	<i>cò</i> ‘sing’	<i>wàm</i> ‘slide’
Mid tone	<i>s^wī</i> ‘be cold’	<i>kām</i> ‘meet’
	<i>cã</i> ‘laugh’	<i>tsəm</i> ‘kill’
High tone	<i>dzí</i> ‘eat; win’	<i>lóg</i> ‘say’
	<i>bá</i> ‘come’	<i>kár</i> ‘trek’

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 *ì-*. 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) *ì-bá* *égì* *àsùrdzì*
 1SG-come yesterday evening
 ‘I came yesterday evening.’
- b) *ìgbī* *ījē* *īdā* *jí* *kā* *ūdžī*
 child with father 3SG.POSS share food
 ‘The boy and his father shared the food.’
- c) *īnwè* *sām* *ifām* *úbág*
 bird sit roof on.top.of
 ‘A bird sits on the roof.’
- d) *í-kár* *ījā* *jí*
 3SG-walk house 3SG.POSS
 ‘He walks to his house.’

7.1.2 Perfect

The perfect tense is marked by a clause enclitic = *m̄* in Akum of Cameroon and = *kī* in Akum of Nigeria. The verbal root carries its lexical tone.² In (5a), the perfect enclitic = *m̄* is directly attached to the verb *bá* ‘come’, whereas in (5b) it follows the adverb *ké* ‘very’. In (5c), the enclitic follows the direct object *ātsām* ‘beer’.

² In Bezen, the perfective aspect is indicated by the clause enclitic = *mí* which also follows the direct object whenever it is mentioned in a sentence (Kempf 2017: 27).

- 5a) *ì-bá = ì*
1SG-come = PERF
'I have come.'
- b) *èjík sâb ké = ì*
game be.good very = PERF
'The play was very good!'
- c) *í-ημά ātsám = ì*
3SG-drink beer = PERF
'S/he has drunk beer.'

Similar to (5a), the enclitic =*kī* is directly attached to the verb in (6a), whereas in (6b-c) it follows the direct object *ūdžī* 'food' (6e) and the 3sg object pronoun *mí* (6f).

- 6a) *ābō bá = kī*
3PL come = PERF
'They have come.'
- b) *ī-dží ūdžī = kī*
1PL-eat food = PERF
'We have eaten food.'
- c) *í-kòη mí = kī*
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 *ābō* and in (7b) in the bound prefix *ā-*. In both cases, the future prefix *rá-* directly precedes the verbal root.

- 7a) *ābō rá-lóg gé nâη ja*
3PL FUT-say that what again
'What will they say again?'
- b) *ā-rá-cō dīzēmba*
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 *ημά* '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 *èjí sà-ηmá ām^wì* ‘I will drink water.’
 2sg *ōwí sâ-ηmá āmwì* ‘You will drink water.’
 NA: *ówí sà-ηmá āmwì* ‘You will drink water.’
 1pl *ējí sâ-ηmá āmwì* ‘We will drink water.’
 3pl *ābō sâ-ηmá āmwì* ‘They will drink water.’
- b) 1sg *ì-sà-ηù* ‘I will leave.’
 3sg *éjí sâ-ηù* ‘He will leave.’
 3pl *ābō sâ-ηù* ‘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 *kòŋ* ‘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- ~ ì-*, the imperfective prefix *sɪ-* carries a low tone, whereas with the 2sg and 3sg prefixes *ó-* and *í-* 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-kòŋ* ‘I am doing something.’
 2sg *ó-sí-kòŋ àdʒí* ‘What are you doing?’
 3sg *í-sí-kòŋ mí* ‘He is doing it.’
 3pl *ā-sī-kòŋ àdʒí* ‘What are they doing?’
- b) 1sg *ì-sì-dʒí ūdʒí* ‘I am eating.’
 3sg *í-sí dʒí ūnā* ‘He is eating.’
 1pl *ī-sī ìdʒí ūdʒí* ‘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) $\acute{f}\text{-s}\grave{a} = \acute{m}$ $\acute{f}\text{-g}\acute{b}\grave{u}$ $\acute{u}k\acute{u}\eta$
 3SG-IMPV = 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 \acute{s} - is added to the root (11d)).

- 11a) $\acute{k}\acute{p}\acute{r}$ ‘Answer!’
 b) $\acute{b}\acute{a}$ ‘Come!’
 c) $\eta\acute{m}\acute{a} \acute{a}m^w\acute{i}$ ‘Drink water!’
 d) $\acute{s}\text{-}\eta\acute{m}\acute{a} \acute{a}m^w\acute{i}$ ‘Drink water (pl.)!’

7.1.6 Negation

Negation is marked by the clause enclitic = $k\acute{s}$. 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) $\acute{e}\text{-}\acute{b}\acute{a} = k\acute{s}$ b) $\acute{i}t\acute{s}\acute{s}\eta$ $n\acute{u}$ $\acute{b}\acute{a}g = k\acute{s}$
 3SG-come = NEG pot DEM.PROX be.big = NEG
 ‘She did not come.’ ‘This pot is not big.’
- c) $\acute{e}j\acute{i}g$ $k\acute{a}r$ $\acute{e}\text{-}s\acute{a}b = k\acute{o}$
 game trek ?-be.good = NEG
 ‘Was the game not good?’
- d) $\acute{i}\text{-}s\acute{s}\eta$ $\acute{i}n\acute{a}$ $\acute{e} = k\acute{s}$
 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 *dží* ‘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) <i>ì-bá</i> <i>kà = ò</i>
1SG-come go-PERF
‘I have come.’ | b) <i>ì-dží</i> <i>ɲmá</i>
1PL-eat drink
‘We ate and drank.’ |
| c) <i>ì-kù</i> <i>ì-nā</i> <i>mí</i>
1SG-take 1SG-give 3SG.O
‘I give it to him.’ | d) <i>ì-dží</i> <i>kám</i> <i>ì-ɲmá</i>
1PL-eat finish 1PL-drink
‘We ate and drank’. |

8.2 Relative clauses

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

- | | |
|--|---|
| 14a) <i>ék^wāk</i> <i>wó</i> <i>nè</i> <i>bá</i> <i>wó</i>
SG.man DEM.DIST ? come REL
‘That man who came, [...]’ | b) <i>āɲɲār</i> <i>jí</i> <i>nè</i> <i>bá</i> <i>wó</i>
PL.people ? ? come REL
‘The people who came, [...]’ |
|--|---|

In (15), a simple clause structure containing a subject and the intransitive verb *èkì* ‘cry’ (15a) is compared to subordinate clauses in the singular (15b) and plural (15c), both marked by *wó*. 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) <i>ēgbī</i> <i>ná</i> <i>èkì</i>
SG.child DET cry
‘This child cries.’ | b) <i>ēgbī</i> <i>ná</i> <i>ēkì</i> <i>wó</i>
SG.child DET cry REL
‘This child that cries, [...]’ |
|--|---|

- c) *āgbī* *nó* *ēkì* *wó*
 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 *gé*. In example (7a) *gé* 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 *āryáŋ* ‘say’ or *ótān* ‘tell’ may be omitted and the complement clause is introduced solely by the quotative marker *kò* (Kempf 2017: 62).

- 16a) *ābō* *gé* *à-cū* *ākòm*
 3PL that 1PL?-descend Akum
 ‘They said that we will go down to Akum.’
- b) *í-gé* *ú-ŋmá* *āmwì*
 3sg-that 2sg-drink water
 ‘He said that you should drink water.’
- c) *í-gé* *ì-ŋù*
 3sg-that 1sg-leave
 ‘He said that I should leave.’
- d) *í-gé* *ú-bā*
 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 Bazim (Kempf 2017; Lovegren 2012: 11).

- 17a) *ākpaŋ* *ś-ndār* *ś*
 Akpəŋ 2SG-see Q
 ‘Akpəŋ, didn’t you see it?’

- b) \bar{s} - $s\bar{a}$ - $b\acute{a}$ \grave{a}
 2SG-FUT-come Q
 ‘Will you come?’

Content questions are formed by interrogative pronouns such as $\grave{a}j\bar{i}r\acute{o}$ / $\grave{a}j\bar{i}$ ‘who?’, $\acute{i}n\acute{a}\eta$ / $\acute{a}d\bar{z}\bar{i}$ ‘what?’, $l\grave{o}\eta$ ‘when?’ and $\acute{a}m\grave{a}\eta$ ‘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) $l\grave{o}\eta$ ‘when?’

\acute{s} - $b\acute{a}$ $l\grave{o}\eta$
 2SG-come when
 ‘When did you come?’

b) $\acute{a}j\bar{i}r\acute{o}$ / $\acute{a}j\bar{i}$ ‘who?’

$\acute{a}j\bar{i}r\acute{o}$	$\bar{\epsilon}$ - $d\bar{z}\bar{i}$	$\acute{a}j\bar{i}$	$d\bar{z}\acute{a}m$	$\bar{i}g\bar{b}\acute{a}t\bar{s}\acute{\epsilon}$	$\bar{i}j\bar{i}$
who	3SG-win	who	kill	lion	3SG
‘Who has won?’		‘Who killed the lion?’			

$\bar{i}d\bar{z}\bar{i}$ $n\acute{a}$ $\acute{a}j\bar{i}$
 name 2SG.POSS who
 ‘What is your name?’

c) $\acute{a}m\grave{a}\eta$ ‘how many?’

\bar{s} - $d\bar{z}\bar{i}$ $\acute{a}m\grave{a}\eta$
 2PL-win how.many
 ‘How much did you win?’

d) $\acute{i}n\acute{a}\eta$ ‘what?’

\bar{s} - $k\bar{w}\grave{o}\eta$	$\acute{i}n\acute{a}\eta$	$j\grave{\epsilon}$	$b\bar{s}$	\acute{s} - $w\acute{u}g$	$\acute{i}n\acute{a}\eta$
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) $\acute{a}d\bar{z}\bar{i}$ ‘what?’

\bar{a} - $s\bar{i}$ - $k\grave{o}\eta$	$\acute{a}d\bar{z}\bar{i}$	\acute{u} - $t\bar{a}\eta$	$\acute{a}d\bar{z}\bar{i}$
3PL-IMPV-do	what	2SG-think	what
‘What are they doing?’		‘What do you think?’	

ònú ðd̥zĩ
 DEM.PROX what
 ‘What is this?’

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.

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