

RIGWE PRONOUNS



[DRAFT CIRCULATED FOR COMMENT]

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 Introduction	1
2 Subject pronouns	3
3 Object and Dative.....	5
4 Indefinite pronouns.....	8
5 Emphatic or focus pronouns.....	9
6 Exclusivity.....	11
7 Reflexives.....	11
8 Logophorics.....	12
9 Reported speech	13
10 Possessive pronouns	13
11. Possessive adjectives	14
12. Conclusion.....	15
References	15

TABLES

Table 1. Irigwe vowels	2
Table 2. Irigwe consonants	2
Table 3. Rigwe subject pronouns	3
Table 4. Rigwe object and dative pronouns	5
Table 5. Rigwe indefinite pronouns	8
Table 8. Rigwe focus pronoun paradigm	9
Table 6. Rigwe emphatic pronouns	10
Table 7. Rigwe emphatic pronominal phrase paradigm.....	11
Table 9. Rigwe pronouns with exclusivity marker	11
Table 10. Rigwe logophoric pronouns	12
Table 11. Rigwe pronouns in reported speech	13
Table 12. Rigwe possessive pronouns	14
Table 13. Rigwe possessive adjectives.....	14

ABBREVIATIONS

nFOC noun focus
vFOC verb focus.

1 Introduction

The Rigwe (Irigwe) is spoken by a people living in Miango (SW of Jos), Kwall and several other hamlets in Bassa local government, Plateau State and Kauru local government, Kaduna State, Nigeria. D.A. Daniel and J.K. Barry, *An Outline of Irigwe Phonology and Grammar* (1983) estimate a total Irigwe population at over 60,000. However, Ethnologue (2005) quotes a 1985 figure for Rigwe speakers of only 40,000. It is quite likely that the population 100,000 today. The Rigwe language has a very little dialectal variation among speakers. Although Hausa is widely spoken as a second language and often, for example, used in church services, the language is being transmitted to younger speakers and there is no reason to consider it endangered. Rigwe is used in radio and television broadcasts from Plateau Radio Television Corporation, based in Jos. Map 1 shows the Rigwe-speaking area, with the main towns and roads.

[insert Map 1 here]

The immediate neighbours of the Rigwe are the Che (Rukuba) to the northeast, the Chawai to the west, the Berom to the south, the Eten to the southwest and the Izere (Jarawa) to the east. Jos town borders on Rigwe territory, directly due east. Historically, Rigwe women married the Berom, Chawai and Che and conversely, women from these peoples could marry in. Rigwe marriage systems are described in more detail in Muller & Sangree (1973) and Sangree (1972). As a consequence there has been lexical interchange with these languages. However, the closest relatives of the Rigwe are the speakers of the Tyap cluster (Tyap, Kagoro, Jju, Ataka, Moroa etc.) and Izere, with whom they are not in direct geographical contact today. In recent years, a JIKA Association has been formed consisting of the Jarawa [=Izere]-Irigwe-Kataf [=Tyap]-Ataka peoples, who recognise that their languages form a related set. Details of the phonology, such as lateral fricatives and glottalised consonants also point to contact with Chadic languages, although there are no languages with these features in the area of Rigwe today.

No published reference book has noted the correct ethnonyms of the Rigwe people. These are;

One Rigwe person	ʔjɪrɪg ^w ɛ̀
Rigwe people	jɪrɪg ^w ɛ̀
Rigwe language	rɪg ^w ɛ̀

It can be seen from this that ‘Rigwe’ would be a better general name for the people and language than Irigwe and there is current interest in changing to this name, reflected in the title of this paper.

Rigwe is a member of the Central sub-group of Plateau languages of Benue-Congo, along with the Izere cluster and Tyap cluster. It must have historically been a language with alternating nominal affixes and a concord system, but these have been much reduced and the tone system has become correspondingly more complex. Early linguistic publications which make some reference to Rigwe are Gerhardt (1983) but this data is not used here.

Although some work on writing the Irigwe language has been in place since 1919, and there have been some vernacular publications, the analysis of Rigwe phonology has remained at best incomplete. A more comprehensive overview of the history of Rigwe orthography is contained in *Reading and Writing Irigwe* (2006) a product of the Irigwe Language and Bible Translation Project. This booklet is the main source of current Rigwe orthographic practice although it does not provide proof for its assessment of the Rigwe sound system. Rigwe phonology, summarised below, is highly complex and is the subject of a much longer treatment in Gya & Blench (forthcoming).

Rigwe vowels are shown in Table 1;

Table 1. Irigwe vowels

Vowels	Front			Central			Back		
Close	i	ii	ĩ				u	uu	ũ
Close-Mid	e	ee	ẽ						
Open-Mid	ɛ	ɛɛ	ẽ				ɔ	ɔɔ	õ
Open				a	aa	ã			

The doubled vowels have been described as long vowels in other publications. However, they are better treated as sequences of two identical vowels, especially as they often bear distinct tones.

Rigwe consonants are shown in Table 2, together with their labialised and palatalised counterparts;

Table 2. Irigwe consonants

	Bilabial	Labial-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Palato-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Labial-velar	Glottal
Plosive vl	p p ^j			t		c c ^j	k k ^w	kp	
vd	b b ^j			d		c ^w	g g ^w	gb	
						ʃ ʃ ^j ʃ ^w			
Nasal vd	m m ^j (m ^w)			n		ɲ ɲ ^w	ŋ ɲ ^w	ŋm	
							ŋ ^{wj}		
Fricative vl		f (f ^j)		s	ʃ ʃ ^w				h h ^j
vd		v (v ^j)	ð ð ^j	z	ʒ ʒ ^w				
Affricate vl	(ps)			ts ts ^j	tʃ tʃ ^w	tɕ			
vd					dʒ dʒ ^w	tɕ ^w			
Flapped vd	v ¹			r r ^j r ^w					
Trill vd				r r ^j r ^w					
Lateral				l l ^j					
Lateral-fricative vl				ɬ					
Appro vl						ɥ ²		ɰ ɰ ^j	
vd						j ɥ		w w ^j	

Rigwe is remarkable for the very large number of possible consonants plus modifications in initial position. Many of these are extremely rare in the overall lexicon and may only occur once or twice. It is therefore not always possible to provide unambiguous proof of their phonemic status. Rigwe also permits preglottalisation, prenasalisation and clusters with [l], [r] and [ɹ] as well as combinations of many of these.

Tones are marked throughout this paper as follows;

¹ /v/ in Rigwe language is not a labial-dental flap as described in the International Phonetic Alphabet revised © 2005, but a bilabial flap. The use of this IPA symbol is due to lack of an IPA symbol for the sound.

² /ɥ/ and /ɥ/ are labial-palatal consonants rather than palatal.

High	'
Mid	Unmarked
Mid over a nasal	-
Low	`
Extra-Low	˘
Falling	ˆ
High-mid fall	˝

The typical word order of a Rigwe sentence is SVO;

1. **ɔvú** **ˈrɔ́** **minsɛ̀**
 dog bit cat
 the dog bit the cat

However, where the object is a pronoun, the order changes to SOV;

2. **ɔvú** **ˈgí** **ˈrɔ́**
 dog him bit
 the dog bit him

Verbal auxiliaries are placed before the verb. Thus SAuxVO;

3. **ɔvú** **jí** **ˈrɔ́** **minsɛ̀**
 dog will bite cat

The pronominal systems of the Plateau languages of Central Nigeria remain little-described. Rigwe pronouns are marked for number but not gender, as is usual in Niger-Congo. They do not mark the inclusive/exclusive distinctions found in some languages in this region. Many Plateau languages have a comprehensive incorporation of aspect in pronominal forms but this seems to be residual in Rigwe.

2 Subject pronouns

Table 3 shows the paradigm of Rigwe non-emphatic subject pronouns. Only one of these is marked for tense/aspect, the third person singular.

Table 3. Rigwe subject pronouns

	Singular	Plural
1 st p.	ɲdʒé	nʒí
2 nd p.	ɲʷé	ɲí
3 rd p.	à, àá	á

The sentences below show that the 2nd person singular subject pronoun remains invariable when the aspect changes.

4. **ɲʷé** **ɲíɲ** **ˈɲʷa** **ɲtɕɛ** **kô zóðhù** **ɔtú**
 you sg. me give money every day
 You give me money every day

Where the subject is a noun and the verb is intransitive, the subject pronoun must follow the determiner;

5. **̀̀ne ̀̀nà [à]á sra á jà ɔ́tú**
 man the he lived in some day
 One day, the man

Where the first verb in a series is intransitive and the second transitive, the pronoun must be copied exactly;

6. **á dezè á miími ne tsú àpca.**
 they got up they there to gather things.
 They stood up and gathered their things.

7. **á 'sra á 'ʃe ̀̀mgbà 'kpâ**
 they lived they found big he-goat
 they soon saw a big he-goat

The subject pronoun must be repeated when the valence changes in a string of serial verbs. In this sentence, the first two verbs are intransitive but 'come' is deemed to have an implied object and so requires the head pronoun to be repeated.

8. **mà tóòtɔ ɲʷɛ já vé ɲʷɛ bé mí**
 OK, running you go fetch you come with.
 OK, run and bring some of it here.

The object/dative pronoun in habitual sentences has a downstep before the main verb, giving it a surface low tone. In the completive aspect the downstep shifts leftwards to precede the pronoun, and this is the only mark of the change in aspect.

9. **ɲʷé 'nínɲ ɲʷà ̀̀tɕɛ**
 You sg. have me given money
 You have given me money

By contrast, the 3rd personal singular uses the pronoun **àá** for the completive aspect. Compare;

10. **à nínɲ ɲʷà ̀̀tɕɛ kô zóòhù ɔ́tú**
 he me gives money every day
 He gives me money every day

with;

11. **àá 'nínɲ ɲʷà ̀̀tɕɛ**
 He has me given money
 He has given me money

Example 12. shows how the subject pronoun is unchanged when combined with an auxiliary marking future;

12. **̀ndzɛ** **ʃi** **rɛ** **ɲʷa**
 I FUT you sg. give
 I will give it to you

3 Object and Dative

Rigwe does not mark a distinction between object and dative pronouns, but in sentences where they occur, the typical word order SVO changes to SOV. Table 4 shows the object/dative paradigm. No pronouns in this set have segments marked for aspect. However, a downstep precedes the first person singular pronoun in the completive aspect.

Table 4. Rigwe object and dative pronouns

	Singular	Plural
1 st p.	níŋ, nʷ	níŋ
2 nd p.	rɛ	níŋ
3 rd p.	↓gi, ↓'i, ↓u	we

As noted in Example 9. a downstep precedes the object/dative pronoun when the aspect is completive. In the case where the object pronoun is replaced by a substantive, the word order changes to SVO and there is now downstep in the habitual.

13. **ɲʷɛ** **ɲʷa** **ɲɲʷɛ** **̀ntɕɛ** **kô zóðhù** **otú**
 you sg. give chief money every day
 You give the chief money every day

In the completive aspect the verb has a preceding downstep, in contrast to the pronominal version of the sentence.

14. **ɲʷɛ** **ʰɲʷa** **ɲɲʷɛ** **̀ntɕɛ**
 You sg. have given the chief money
 You have given the chief money

There is no significant difference in meaning between the long and short forms of *níŋ* when applied to the first person singular. However, when it is contracted, it is assimilated to the point of articulation of the following word as in the examples below.

All forms of the 1st person singular *níŋ* can contract to *Nʷ*, where the nasal is homorganic with the following consonant. N has four allomorphs, n-, m-, p-, and ɲ-. Thus;

Before bilabials;

15. ɔvú 'ín' 'p̥e
 dog me caught
 the dog caught me

Before palatals;

16. ɔvú 'j̥í' 'jé
 dog me eaten
 the dog ate me

Before velars;

17. ɔvú 'ɣ' 'gará ɔnu
 dog me put mouth
 the dog licked me

Before all other consonants;

18. ɔvú 'ń' 'ɾʒ
 dog me bit
 the dog bit me

The examples show the first person pronoun in object and dative positions. Where the tone of the subject is mid or low, the tone on the pronoun remains stable.

19. wɛ níŋ ŋʷa
 Someone FUT to me give
 Someone will give [it] to me

Or;

20. wɛ ń' ŋʷa
 Someone FUT to me give
 Someone will give [it] to me

When the word preceding *níŋ* ends with a high tone, the pronoun takes a preceding downstep, which lowers the tone so that it now sounds mid. Moreover, a second downstep is now heard on the following word. Thus;

21. ɔvú 'níŋ 'ɾʒ
 dog me bit
 the dog bit me

Or in the shortened form;

22. **ɔvú** **ʼí'** **ʼɾɿ**
 dog me bit
 the dog bit me

The third person singular, *ʼgí*, can also be shortened during speech to $-^iV$, where V is a high vowel. When elided, it has two allomorphs, depending on the final vowel of the preceding word. *ʼú* follows -u, and *ʼí* follows all other vowels. The unelided form is as follows;

23. **ɔvú** **ʼgí** **ʼp'e**
 dog it caught
 the dog caught it

Elided forms are;

24. **ɔvú** **ʼú** **ʼp'e**
 dog it caught
 the dog caught it

25. **mínsè** **[è]é** **ʼ[ɡ][í]** **ʼp'e**
 cat FOC it catch
 the cat catches it

26. **mínsèé** **ʼí** **ʼp'e**
 cat it caught
 the cat catches it

27. **ritʃé** **[è]é** **ʼ[ɡ][í]** **kpè** **e** **táɡɔ**
 charcoal nFOC him falls vFOC shirt
 charcoal fell on him shirt

28. **ritʃèé** **ʼí** **kpè**
 charcoal him fell
 charcoal fell on him

àá has an allomorph **èé** following *é*. **àá** is the third person singular aspect pronoun 'he has' used for focus. **àá** is deleted without trace following -u and -a final vowels in the preceding word. Following *ɔ* it becomes *ɔ* in shortened forms. Where **àá** becomes *é*, if the tone of the final *é* is low, then the two identical vowels coalesce. Where the final *é* is different in tone, a glide on the final *é* of the noun is produced.

29. **ɔvú** **àá** **a** **ʼgí** **p'è**
 dog FOC COMP it caught
 the dog caught it

30. uúmɔ̃ àá ʼ[g]í te
 wasp FOC him stung

àá →ó following ɔ;

31. ùúṁṣó ɿ te
 wasp him stung

4 Indefinite pronouns

Rigwe also has an indefinite pronoun set, corresponding to ‘someone’, ‘some people’ (Table 5).

Table 5. Rigwe indefinite pronouns

Tense/aspect	sg.	pl.
FUT	wɛ	wɛ́
COMP	à, àá	á

The plural forms are functionally equivalent to passives. The examples show their use in contrastive sentence frames;

32. we ré ngwa
Someone FUT you give
Someone will give [it] to you

33. wé ré ngwa
Some people FUT you give
You'll be given [it]

Another way of expressing this concept for completed actions is **jàá ñne** ‘one, a certain, someone’ and **já ñne** ‘some people’;

34. jàá níne ʔnín ʔɛ
a certain person me beat
someone has beaten me

35. jǎá níne shî níng ʔtɛ
 a certain person is me beat
 someone is beating me

36. jàá ríne shi níng t'cé
a certain person will me beat
someone is going to beat me

37. **jàá** **ńne** **é** **be** **tà** **rí** **ndzé**
 some man FOC came down house my
 some man came down to my house [but I do not know who]
38. **já** **ńne** **e** **ʔnín** **ʔtɛ**
 some people FOC me beat
 some people have beaten me

jàá and **já** can stand on their own as adjectival forms preceding nouns denoting persons;

39. kò ní jàá gimbé ɲʷê wé ka rimí?
NEG is some brother your not or how?
I hope he's not one of your brothers [but he might be]

5 Emphatic or focus pronouns

Rigwe has an elaborate focus system and one element is pronominal focus. The formula PRON-FOC-PRON, where the second pronoun copies the first except in the third person. Table 6 shows this Rigwe focus pronoun paradigm;

Table 6. Rigwe focus pronoun paradigm

	Singular	Plural
1 st p.	̀ndʒé... ̀ndʒé	n̄́ɛ́í... n̄́ɛ́í
2 nd p.	ɲ ^w é... ɲ ^w é	n̄́í... n̄́í
3 rd p.	ɲú...à	m̄́bé... m̄́bé

The focus particles are a single central or front vowel and show limited concord with the final vowel of the pronoun. Some examples of this in use are;

40. **ndʒé** **è** **ndʒé** **he** **ne** **ɲí** **he** **ɲi** **né**
 I FOC I say to you say you go
 I am telling you to go
41. **ɲú** **à** **à** **he** **ne** **ɲí** **he** **ɲi** **né**
 He FOC he say to you say you go
 He is telling you to go

The first member of the focus pronoun paradigm is used in sequential constructions, for example ‘then he did s.t.’

42. ɲú a gì ɲ^{wà}
 he then gave him
 then he gave [it] to him

43. ñdʒé è ñdʒé ε he ne jí he ɲi né
 I FOC I COMP say to you say you go
 I told you to go

Table 7. Rigwe emphatic pronouns

The tones on the repeated pronoun for the first person singular remain unchanged.

This is typically used in a sentence context as below;

However, the other pronominal formulae in the focus pronoun set change the tone on the repeated pronoun in a not entirely predictable fashion (Table 8).

Table 8. Rigwe emphatic pronominal phrase paradigm

I myself	̀ndʒé	wé	ˈritʃí	̀ndʒé
	I	only	head	I
you yourself	ɲʷé	wé	ˈritʃí	ɲʷê
	you	only	head	you
he himself	ɲú	wé	ˈritʃí	ɲû
	he	only	head	he
we ourselves	̀nʒí	wé	̀ntʃí	̀nʒi
	we	only	heads	we
you yourselves	ɲí	wé	̀ntʃí	ɲi
	you	only	heads	you
they themselves	̀mbé	wé	̀ntʃí	̀mbe
	they	only	heads	they

6 Exclusivity

A related pronoun paradigm is used with the exclusivity marker **ṅgàá** ‘alone’. The pronouns bracket a sentence and show similar pairings and tone changes to the emphatic set given above. However, the 3rd person singular and plural have the **à** typical of unmarked subject pronouns as the first member of the set (Table 9).

Table 9. Rigwe pronouns with exclusivity marker

	Singular	Plural
1st p.	̀ndʒé... ̀ndʒe	̀nʒí... ̀nʒi
2nd p.	̀ŋʷé... ̀ŋʷê	̀ní... ̀ni
3rd p.	̀à... ̀ŋû	̀á... ̀m̀be

The example shows the operation of the exclusivity pronoun in a sentence context.

46. **ndʒé** **tɕ** **be** **we** **ŋgàá** **ndʒe**
 I walk come only alone I
 I am coming on my own

This type of pronoun-copying is clearly related to the ICP phenomenon prevalent in Plateau languages (e.g. Wolff & Gerhardt 1977). The striking feature of Rigwe is the bracketing of the entire sentence, rather than repeating the copy pronoun between the two verbs, as would occur in Tarok, for example.

7 Reflexives

Reflexivity is expressed by the invariant morpheme **jáà**, ‘self’, after the subject pronoun. In contrast to many other languages, **jáà** does not appear to be a grammaticalised body part. In Tarok, for example, this expression would have a standard SVO order as if ‘self’ were a direct object, but the SOV word order here points to **jáà** being analysed as part of the subject. The pronouns used with this are identical to non-emphatic subject pronouns in Table 3;

47. ñdʒé ʔjáà tʃɛ
 I self cut
 I cut myself
48. ñdʒé ʃɪ jáà tʃɛ
 I PROG self cut
 I am cutting myself
49. àá jáà tʃɛ
 He self cut
 He cut himself

8 Logophorics

The Rigwe logophoric pronouns are shown in Table 10. The pronouns come in pairs and bracket the verb that introduces the indirect speech. The pronouns are invariant with respect to tense/aspect;

Table 10. Rigwe logophoric pronouns

	Singular	Plural
1st	̀ndʒé..n̄	n̄ʒí...n̄ʒi
2nd	ɲ ^w é...ɲ ^w ε	ni...ni
3rd	ɲú...rè	mbé...re

The examples show the operation of these different sets.

Uncompleted aspect

50. He ne ɛ́dʒé he n̄ bé
Say to me say me come
Tell me to come
51. He ne ɣú he rè bé
Say to him say him come
Tell him to come
52. He ne n̄zɪ́ he n̄zi bé
Say to us say us come
Tell us to come
53. He ne jí he ɲi bé
Say to you pl. say you pl. come
Tell you pl. to come

Completive aspect;

54. àá he ne jí he ɲi bé
 he COMP said to you pl. say you pl. come
 He told you pl. to come

55. àá he ne ñdʒé he ñ né
 he has said to me say me go
 He told me to go

56. àá he ne m̃bé he re né
 he has said to them say them go
 He told them to go

9 Reported speech

Reported speech uses the set given in Table 11. Only the first person singular has a two-member set.

Table 11. Rigwe pronouns in reported speech

	Singular	Plural
1st	ñdʒé..ñ	ñʒi
2nd	ɲʷe	ɲi
3rd	rè	re

The sentences give typical examples of this pronoun set in use;

57. à he [ne ñdʒé] [he] ñ jʷa á kàáwé
 he says [to me] [saying] I go to market
 he said ‘You should go to the market’

In fast speech, the repeated verb can be omitted as well as the first introduction of the pronoun [shown in red].

58. à he [ne ñʒi] [he] ñʒi jʷa á kàáwé
 he says [to us] [saying] we go to market
 he said ‘we should go to the market’

10 Possessive pronouns

Possessive pronouns are formed by placing **nâ** in front of the second member of the pronoun paradigm used with the exclusivity marker (Table 12 and see also Table 9);

Table 12. Rigwe possessive pronouns

	Singular	Plural
1 st p.	nd̥ʒe	nd̥ʒi
2 nd p.	ŋʷê	ɲi
3 rd p.	ŋû	m̥be

A downstep is usually heard in front of the sentence-final pronoun. The examples show this in the context of sentences;

59. à ɲí nâ ʔnd̥ʒe
 it is POSS me
 it's mine

60. à ɲí nâ ʔŋʷê
 it is POSS yours
 it's yours

61. à ɲí nâ ʔŋû
 it is POSS him
 it's his

62. à ɲí nâ ʔnd̥ʒí
 it is POSS we
 it's ours

63. à ɲí nâ ʔɲí
 it is POSS you pl.
 it's yours

64. à ɲí nâ ʔmbé
 it is POSS me
 it's mine

11. Possessive adjectives

Rigwe possessive adjectives are shown in Table 13. They resemble the possessive pronouns (Table 12) except for their tone.

Table 13. Rigwe possessive adjectives

	Singular	Plural
1st p.	nd̥ʒé	nd̥ʒi
2nd p.	ŋʷê	ɲì
3rd p.	ŋû	m̥bè

The examples show the use of the possessive adjective.

65. à tɔ́ be ñw'é ñdʒé
 he FUT coming place my
 He will come to my place
66. ñké nê jí ɔvú ñdʒé
 this this is dog my
 this one is my dog
67. erí nê jí erí 'ɣû
 house this is house his
 This house is his house
68. ñtɕù nê jí ɣgè 'ɣwê
 chair this is thing your
 This chair is your own

12. Conclusion

Rigwe has a very elaborate set of pronouns covering different grammatical functions. It is striking that the only related language for which there is comparable data, Tyap, apparently has quite unrelated pronominal sets (Follingstad 1991).

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