

THE PERSON-MARKERS IN SAMOAN

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0. Introduction.

0.1 For the most part linguists describing Polynesian languages have found that part of morphological analysis which involves the isolating of morphs and their assignment to morphemes to be plain sailing. Exceptional in this respect, however, are the Polynesian person-markers.

It is not easy to offer a description of the person-markers which is simple and uncontroversial, and yet in accordance with currently accepted standards of morphemic analysis. The resistance offered by the Polynesian person-markers to satisfactory analysis is perhaps an indication that the morpheme concept is not so universally valid or applicable as that other basic analytical concept of the linguist, the phoneme. More specifically the indication is that the data in this case does not have the clear-cut structure of most morphological data in Polynesian languages.

0.2 The following analysis is concerned with the person-markers in the Western Polynesian language of Samoan. While some of the problems discussed are peculiar to Samoan, most have been met and dealt with by students who have attempted structural descriptions of other Polynesian languages.¹ The solutions adopted in this description derive in part from these previous accounts, and in particular from discussions with my teacher, Professor Bruce Biggs, concerning the person-markers of New Zealand Maori.

1. Meaning, form, and distribution of the person-markers.

1.1 *Meaning.* The following semantic components specifying person and number are isolated. Singular, dual, and plural numbers. First (exclusive and inclusive), second, and third persons. First person exclusive excludes the person(s) spoken to, while first person inclusive includes them.

Three further semantic components are isolated: emphatic, descriptive, and emotional.

Person-markers carrying the meaning *emphatic* are selected by the speaker when he wishes to emphasize the persons involved in a situation rather than any other elements also present. For example, in reply to questions such as "Who was there?" and "Did you win or did he?" a speaker will normally cite either the personal names of the actors or the appropriate emphatic person-markers.

Person-markers carrying the meaning *descriptive* are selected when the speaker wishes to emphasize some element in a situation other than the persons referred to, for example, the actions performed by them, the position occupied by them, or the objects possessed by them. In narrative speech the descriptive person-markers occur more frequently than the emphatic person-markers; the Samoan narrator, once he has established the identity of the actors in his narrative, is chiefly concerned to describe their behaviour and other aspects of the events in which they participate.

The meaning *emotional* is carried by two (first person singular) person-markers only. The speaker may select an emotional person-marker to express a plea, or a sympathy or emotion felt for himself, as for example, in utterances such as //ʔua tigaa //l-o-ta lima // 'my (poor) hand is hurting'; //ʔau-mai // ʔi-aa-ta-ʔita// '(Oh please) give it to me'; // ua ta fia ʔai// 'I'm hungry!'.

1.2 *Form and distribution.* This description concerns person-marker form and

1. cf. Biggs 1961:21, and Buse 1960:122-137.

distribution in formal speech.² The distributional statement is not intended to be exhaustive, either in respect of the total morphemic arrangements in the phrase unit³ in which the person-markers occur, or in respect of the immediate morphemic environments in which they occur. It is intended, however, to contain sufficient information concerning form and distribution to indicate which person-markers are in contrasting or complementary distribution, and when combined with the semantic analysis, to allow morphemic analysis to be completed.

In the formulae // indicates a phrase boundary, and indicates the position in the frame filled by the person-marker.

Of the following three frames some person-markers fill three, some two, and some a single frame only, as shown in the table below.

Frame 1: // E — // where E represents any of the following morphemes, or morpheme sequences, which mark or specify the person-marker as 'actor', 'goal' or 'possessor': *ʔo* 'specifier', *mo* 'for', *ʔi-aa-te-* 'to', *i-aa-te-* 'position', *mai-aa-te-* 'from', *i-loo* 'than', a dominant possession', 'of', *o* 'subordinate possession', 'of'. *-te* is realized as *|-ta-|* before *ʔita|* 'first person singular emotional', and *|-te-|* elsewhere. In formal speech the first and third person non-singular person-markers occur with a prefix *ʔi* in frame 1 environments, except after *o* and *a*.

Frame 2: //Ta — alu//. Ta represents any of the following morphemes, which share a meaning constant 'tense-aspect marker', and mark the following person-marker as 'actor': *ʔua* 'perfect', *ʔo* 'imperfect', *ʔaa* 'future', *e* 'non-past', *saa* 'past', *na* 'past', *seʔi* 'deferential imperative', *neʔi* 'negative imperative', *ʔia* 'imperative-subjunctive', *ina* 'completive', 'purposive', *ʔona* inceptive', *ʔana* unfulfilled condition'. *Alu* 'go' represents a large number of base morphemes which may occur phrase-finally after a tense-aspect marker.

Frame 3: // A-o|a — uso // . A represents any of the following morphemes, which share a meaning constant 'article'. (Allomorphs are described only if the morpheme occurs in the texts quoted). *le* 'singular definite article' (*|l-|* occurs before *o* and *a* (see below), *|le|* occurs in all other environments in the examples quoted); *se* 'indefinite singular' (*|s-|* occurs before *o* and *a*, *|se|* elsewhere); *si* 'singular diminutive', *sin-* 'quantitative diminutive', \emptyset 'plural definite' (zero phonemic shape), *ni* 'plural indefinite', *ni* 'plural indefinite', *naai* 'plural diminutive'. *-o/a* indicates alternative occurrence of *o* 'subordinate possession' or *a* 'dominant possession'. (*o* is realised as *|oo|*, and *a* is realised as *|aa|*, before third person person-markers, and before first and second person non-singular person-markers, when they precede *uso* or any other base morpheme in the phrase. Elsewhere they are realized as *|o|* and *|a|* respectively). *Uso* 'sibling of the same sex' represents a large number of base morphemes which fill this position in the frame. Occurrence after *o* or *a* marks a person-marker as 'possessor'.

The privileges of occurrence of the person-markers in these frames are shown in the table below.

2. Phonologically colloquial and formal speech differ as follows:

colloquial *|k|* corresponds to formal *|t|* and *|k|*, colloquial *|g|* to formal *|n|* and *|g|*.

There are also a number of differences in the distribution of the person-markers in colloquial and formal speech. The possible morphemic solutions, however, are similar for both varieties of Samoan, in respect of the person-markers.

3. The phrase normally consists of a morpheme or a short sequence of morphemes. Phrase boundaries are definable in terms of morpheme sequences, or, in all cases which are ambiguous in respect of morpheme sequences, in terms of the occurrence of pause or juncture.

Frame 1

Frame 2

Frame 3

1st pers. sg.
emphatic

1st pers. sg.
descriptive.

1st pers. sg.
emotional emphatic.

1st pers. sg.
emotional descr.

2nd pers. sg.
emphatic.

2nd pers. sg.
descriptive.

3rd pers. sg.
emphatic.

3rd pers. sg.
descriptive.

1st pers. exc. dl.
emphatic.

1st pers. exc. dl.
descriptive.

1st pers. inc. dl.
emphatic.

1st pers. inc. dl.
descriptive.

2nd pers. dl.
emphatic.

2nd pers. dl.
descriptive.

3rd pers. dl. emphatic.

3rd pers. dl. descriptive

1st pers. pl. exclusive

1st pers. pl. inclusive

2nd pers. pl. emphatic.

2nd pers. pl. descriptive

3rd pers. pl.

aʔu		
	ʔouʔoʔu - ʔu	-ʔu
ʔita		
	ta	-ta
ʔoe		-ʔoe
	ʔeʔee	-u
ia	ia	
	na	-na
maaʔua		maaʔua
	maa	maa
taaʔua		taaʔua
	taa	taa
ʔoulua	ʔoulua	ʔoulua
	lua	lua
laaʔua		laaʔua
	laa	laa
maatou	maatou	maatou
taatou	taatou	taatou
ʔoutou	ʔoutou	ʔoutou
	tou	tou
laatou	laatou	laatou

the person-marks
are the morphemes
adopted.

2.0 Morph
are the morphemes
adopted.

1.3 The following examples illustrate the points made in 1.1 and 1.2. marks phrase boundary.

// na alu // aʔu // 'I went'; // na ʔou alu // 'I went'; // le naifi // a aʔu // 'my knife', the knife of mine'; // l-a-ʔu naifi // 'my knife'; // na alu // ʔoe // 'you went'; // na ʔee alu // 'you went'; // l-aa-ʔoe ipu // 'your cup'; // l-a-u ipu // 'your cup'; // l-oo-lua fale // 'your (dual) house'; // le fale // o ʔoulua // 'your (dual) house', 'the house of yours'; // na lua oo // 'you went'; // na ʔoulua oo // // na oo // ʔoulua // 'you went'; // l-oo-maatou fale // 'our house'; // le fale // o maatou // 'our house', the house of ours'.

2.0 Morphological analysis. There are several possible morphemicizations of the person-markers, each having its own advantages and disadvantages. The following are the morphs isolated and their assignation into morphemes in the solution which I have adopted.

aʔu	first person singular emphatic.
ʔita	first person singular emotional emphatic.
ʔoe	second person singular emphatic.
ia	third person singular emphatic.
maa-	first person exclusive.
taa-	first person inclusive.
ʔou-	second person non-singular.
laa-	third person non-singular.
-ʔua ~ -lua	dual number. (-lua occurs after -ʔou 'second person non-singular'; -ʔua occurs elsewhere).
-tou	plural number.
-ʔu~ʔou~oʔu	first person singular descriptive. (-ʔu occurs after o 'subordinate possession' and a 'dominant possession'. It varies freely with ʔou and oʔu after tense aspect markers ending in a, o . oʔu occurs after tense-aspect markers ending in a consonant; after other tense aspect markers it is in free variation with ʔou . Before te non-past ʔou occurs).
ta	first person singular emotional descriptive.
-u~ʔee~ʔe	second person singular descriptive. (-u occurs after o 'subordinate possession' and a 'dominant possession'. Before te 'non-past' ʔe occurs. In all other environments ʔee varies freely with ʔe .
na	third person singular descriptive.
maa	first person exclusive dual.
taa	first person inclusive dual.
lua	second person dual.
laa	third person dual.
tou	second person plural.

3.0 An alternative morphemicization. In the above morphemicization I have regarded certain formally differing first and second person singular forms, namely $|-ʔu\simʔo-$ $u\sim oʔu|$ and $|-u\simʔee\simʔe|$, as allomorphs of the same morphemes. This done on grounds of complementary distribution, similar or identical meaning, and the fact that there are seven single-alternant morphemes, each of which occurs in both frame 2 and frame 3 environments, and thus has a distribution covering the total distribution of the allomorphs of the multi-alternant morphemes.

But there are also morphemes which occur in a single shape in frame 1, 2 and 3 environments, covering the full distribution of the corresponding singular forms which fill these frames. For example *laa-* 'third person non-singular' has a distribution covering the combined distributions of $|ʔu|$, $|ʔou|$, $|oʔu|$, $|aʔu|$, $|ʔita|$ and $|ta|$ which share the meaning 'first person singular', or $|-u|$, $|ʔe|$, $|ʔee|$, and $|ʔoe|$ which share the meaning 'second person singular', or $|na|$ and $|ia|$ which share the meaning 'third person singular'.

A solution in which singular person-markers sharing person and number meaning are included in the same morphemes is rejected, however, because there are situations in which such forms contrast. The contrast, in these cases, is between the meanings 'emphatic', 'descriptive', and 'emotional'. For example $|ta|$ and $|ʔou|$ contrast as in // $ʔua ʔou fia ʔai$ // 'I have become hungry' (matter of fact statement of sudden awareness of hunger) and // $ʔua ta fia ʔai$ // 'How hungry I am!'; 'I'm hungry!'. Examples of contrast between $|-ʔu|$ and $|-ta|$, and $|ʔita|$ and $|aʔu|$ were given in 1.1. $|ʔoe|$ and $|-u|$ contrast as in // $l-aa-ʔoe ipu$ // 'your cup' (which you alone use or own) and // $l-a-u ipu$ // 'your cup' (emphasis on object and not possessor, who may, for example, have just been handed the object for momentary use). $|ia|$ and $|na|$ 'third person singular' contrast as in // $saa ia alu$ // 'he went', and // $saa na alu$ // 'he went'. (The former rather than the latter is a suitable reply to a question such as "Who went?", though both $|ia|$ and $|na|$ are used in the narrative context described in 1.1.)

In terms of the distributional statement made in 1.2 $|aʔu|$ is in complementary distribution with $|ʔu\simʔou\sim oʔu|$ and $|ʔita|$ with $|ta|$. A closer examination of the data indicates that there are, in fact, instances in which these forms occur in the same immediate environments, although they remain in complementary distribution if the total phrase is regarded as the unit of distribution. For example, both $|aʔu|$ and $|ʔu|$ occur after a 'dominant possession' and before *lava* 'own', 'particular', 'intensive', as in // $a-ʔu lava pusi$ // 'my very own cat' and // $le pusi$ // $a aʔu lava$ // 'the cat of mine'. The occurrence of one form rather than the other in the environment $a - lava$ cannot be predicted, unless the wider frame of the phrase is used. (One form requires a following base in the phrase, while the other is incompatible in the phrase with base morphemes). In these circumstances either solution is possible. The solution adopted is preferred because it is not certain that the forms in question do not contrast, and because it permits the singular person-marker morphemes to be described as a single distributional class.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

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