

Limbum Grammar Sketch
by
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1. Introduction

Limbum is an Eastern Grassfields Bantu language grouped under Mbam-Nkam together with other languages like Mfumte, Yamba, Kwaja, Dzodinka, Mbe and Ndaktup. Limbum is also classified as Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Wide Grassfields, Narrow Grassfields, Mbam Nkam, Nkambe (Gordon 2005).¹ As can be seen in the “Atlas Linguistique du Cameroun” (Dieu and Renaud 1983), the reference number for Limbum is 903. According to 2006 national census, Limbum is spoken by more than 600,000 people. It is the language of the Wimbun people, who live in Donga Mantung division of the North West province of Cameroon. The language is made of three significant dialects. The differences between the dialects are phonological, and do not affect intelligibility. These three dialects have been labelled as ' Nlinti' (North Limbum), ' Nlila' (Central Limbum), and ' Nliyaa' (South Limbum). The central dialect as has been used in the grammar sketch has been selected for writing Limbum by the Wimbun Literacy Association (WILA).

The alphabet described in this document is the result of research, which was begun in 1972 by Miss Lynne Fiore who wrote the first phonology of Limbum. After her departure from the area, her colleague, Miss Pat Peck, continued her work and then Miss Ginny Bradley who, in consultation with the Wimbun Literacy Association, modified the earlier representation of some of the vowels. The modified orthography has been used in the two Limbum primers, “*Bkìnfêr 1 - Tàta ba Nyakò*” and “*Bkìnfêr 2 - Tàta, Nyakò, Fàaká ba Nfò*” and in the Easter Story from St. Mark's Gospel, “*Jisòs à Ye Dge' a Kwe a Fuu efa Rkwe.*” It has also been used in many other publications including “*Lè' Fi*” (The New Testament), which was published and launched in November 2003. Previous studies in Limbum that we still hope to make use of include Mpoche (1993) Dissertation “The Limbum Noun Phrase – A Generative approach”, Mpoche (2007) Long Distance Anaphora in Limbum, Ndamsah (1997) Dissertation “The Sentential Structure of Limbum” and Mfonyam and Ngah (1986) Mfonyam (1989) Mbam-Nkam tonal studies. Following Limbum dictionary work by Francis Wepngong Ndi, which began in May 2002, the need for more phonological analyses was felt. As such, he did an additional phonological analysis with Dr. Stephen Anderson, Dr. Robert Hedinger (SIL Cameroon, Linguistic Consultants) and Coleen Anderson (SIL Togo). The grammar findings as have been presented here are the results of the

¹ Gordon G. Raymond. 2000. *Ethnologue, Languages of the World. SIL International Dallas Texas USA.*

elaboration of the dictionary, which led to the exploration of more semantic domains and grammar findings.

2. Alphabet

The Limbum segmental alphabet is made up of twenty-six consonants and seven vowels. They are represented below in upper and lower cases:

A a, B b, C c, D d, E e, $\text{E } \epsilon$, F f, G g, Gb gb, Gh gh, H h, I i, J j, K k, Kp kp, ' , L l, M m, N n, Ny ny, $\text{D } \eta$, O o, P p, R r, S s, Sh sh, T t, U u, $\text{U } \text{u}$, V v, W w, Y y, Zh zh.

2.1 Consonants

Consonant Chart

	Labial	Alveolar	Palato-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Libio-velar	Glottal
Stops	p b	t d			k g	kp gb	'
Affricates				c j			
Fricatives	f v	s	sh zh		gh		h
Nasals	m	n		ny	\eta		
Thrill		r					
Laterals		l					
Glides				y		w	

The consonant phonemes, their allophones and graphemes are presented in Table I below. We also show their use in various positions in words.

Phoneme	Allophone	Grapheme	Initial position	Medial position	Final position
/p/	[p]	P p	—	kapni <i>bargain</i>	ncep <i>advice</i>
/t/	[t]	T t	tu <i>head</i>	kate <i>wrap</i>	—
/k/	[k]	K k	kaŋ <i>pan</i>	rèkòp <i>whistling bird</i>	—
/kp/	[kw] ¹	Kp kp	kpar <i>snap</i>	—	—
/ʔ/	[ʔ]	'	—	\etaò'shi <i>economise</i>	\etaka' <i>fence</i>

¹ These allophones are mostly dialectal though some youths have adopted them as the main phoneme. Other dialectal allophones have not been included because the dialect used here has been selected for writing Limbum, should be considered as the standard.

Phoneme	Allophone	Grapheme	Initial position	Medial position	Final position
/b/	[b]	B b	bii <i>dance</i>	maabu' whistling juju	—
/d/	[d]	D d	dù <i>go</i>	kìdàṅ <i>bench</i>	—
/g/	[g]	G g	gòr <i>much</i>	àgeṅ <i>beside</i>	—
/gb/	[gw] ¹	Gb gb	gbàgbaṅ <i>k.o. insect</i>	mgbò' <i>large</i>	—
/dʒ/	[dʒ]	J j	jù' <i>elephant</i>	muunje <i>female child</i>	—
/tʃ/	[tʃ]	C c	cu <i>stay</i>	mucàr <i>little</i>	—
/f/	[f]	F f	fa <i>give</i>	tàafù' <i>ground larva</i>	—
/s/	[s]	S s	sà' <i>knife</i>	bèesi <i>turn</i>	—
/ʃ/	[ʃ]	Sh sh	shà <i>corn beer</i>	ghashi <i>hold</i>	—
/h/	[h]	H h	ha'ntini <i>last week</i>	ehè <i>emphatic no</i>	—
/v/	[v]	V v	vúp <i>bone</i>	—	—
/ɣ/	[ɣ]	Gh gh	ghar <i>crown</i>	ghàaghèr <i>quick</i>	—
/m/	[m]	M m	muu <i>child</i>	mambe <i>yard</i>	ṅgèm² <i>gong</i>
/n/	[n]	N n	niṅ <i>enter</i>	ntini <i>today</i>	mbàn <i>bamboo ceiling mat</i>
/ɲ/	[ɲ]	Ny ny	nyo <i>snake</i>	nàanyor <i>pride</i>	—
/ŋ/	[ŋ]	Ŋ ṅ	ṅip <i>pinch</i>	kaṅsi <i>roll downwards</i>	caṅ <i>run</i>
/l/	[l]	L l	lip <i>beat</i>	malû <i>mother-inlaw</i>	—
/r/	[r]	R r	raa <i>clean</i>	bà'ri <i>build</i>	fër <i>work</i>
/w/	[w]	W w	war <i>cry</i>	àwàa <i>carelessly</i>	—
/j/	[j]	Y y	ye <i>him</i>	àyì' <i>no</i>	kibay <i>subchief</i>

² Final position examples of m and n are extremely rare

Phoneme	Allophone	Grapheme	Initial position	Medial position	Final position
/ʒ/	[ʒ]	Zh zh	zhe <i>eat</i>	mbàzhìr <i>place of dead</i>	—

2.1.1 Prenasalized Consonants

One kind of consonant cluster found in Limbum consists of clusters where the first consonant is a nasal consonant that is pronounced at the same place of articulation as the following consonant, as in the following chart:

Consonant Cluster	Allophone	Grapheme	Initial position	Medial position	Final position
/nt/	[nt]	Nt nt	ntee <i>heart</i>	munte <i>child</i>	—
/ŋk/	[ŋk]	Ŋk ŋk	ŋkàa <i>basket</i>	ŋkaŋka <i>butterfly</i>	—
/mb/	[mb]	Mb mb	mbàp <i>rat</i>	àmbò <i>like, as</i>	—
/nd/	[nd]	Nd nd	ndap <i>house</i>	sànde <i>bamboo mat</i>	—
/ŋg/	[ŋg]	Ŋg ŋg	ŋger <i>power</i>	korŋger <i>fall off</i>	—
/mgb/	[mgb]	Mgb mgb	mgbon <i>bare</i>	—	—
/ndz/	[ndz]	Nj nj	njèe <i>sheep</i>	nduunjì <i>road</i>	—
/nf/	[nf]	Nf nf	nfàŋ <i>rib</i>	—	—
/ns/	[ns]	Ns ns	nsuŋ <i>news</i>	kìnsii <i>feathered cap</i>	—
/nʃ/	[nʃ]	Nsh nsh	nshe <i>soil</i>	kìnshaŋ <i>dwarf galago</i>	—
/ŋʎ/	[ŋʎ]	Ŋgh ŋgh	ŋghòp <i>hook</i>	—	—
/ŋw/	[ŋw]	Ŋw ŋw	Ŋwè <i>person</i>	—	—
/nzh/	[nzh]	Nzh nzh	nzhèe <i>thief</i>	—	—

2.1.2 Palatalized Consonants

Another kind of consonant cluster is where we have as the second consonant the palatal glide [j], which is always written in Limbum as “y”. Quite a few consonants may be followed by this glide, as in the following chart:

Phoneme	Allophone	Grapheme	Initial position	Medial position	Final position
/kj/	[kj]	Ky ky	kyèè <i>tie</i>	—	—
[bj]	[bj]	By by	byè <i>plant</i>	—	—
/fj/	[fj]	Fy fy	fyèè <i>untie</i>	nfyeŋ <i>gizard</i>	—
/mj/	[mj]	My my	myè'te <i>be muddy</i>	—	—

2.1.3 Labialized Consonants

The last kind of consonant cluster is where we have as the second consonant the labiovelar glide [w], which is always written in Limbum as “w”. Quite a few consonants may also be followed by this glide, as in the following chart:

Consonant Cluster	Allophone	Grapheme	Initial position	Medial position	Final position
/tw/	[tw]	Tw tw	twèè³ scrub robin	—	—
/kw/	[kw]	Kw kw	kwe <i>die</i>	karkwe <i>owl</i>	—
/bw/	[bw]	Bw bw	bwaa <i>mine</i>	—	—
/gw/	[gw]	Gw gw	gwè <i>fall</i>	zhigwa <i>wrestling</i>	—
/tʃw/	[tʃw]	Cw cw	cwe <i>slice</i>	—	—
/ʃw/	[ʃw]	Shw shw	shwà' <i>comb</i>	—	—
/ŋw/	[ŋw]	Ŋw ŋw	ŋwà' <i>book</i>	mŋwaa <i>soot</i>	—

2.2 Vowels

Vowel Chart

	Front	Central	Back
High	i	ɯ	u
Mid-high	e		o
Mid-low	ɛ		
Low		a	

³ In Limbum, this consonant cluster is very rare.

The Limbum language has seven short vowel phonemes and seven long vowel phonemes as presented with their allophones and proposed graphemes in the following tables.. The sounds are shown as they occur in different positions in words.

Short Vowels

Phoneme	Allophone	Grapheme	Initial position	Medial position	Final position
/i/	[i]	I i	—	ncir <i>law</i>	ntini <i>today</i>
/i/	[i]	Ƴ u	—	lu'te <i>stammar</i>	bu <i>ash</i>
/u/	[u]	U u	—	tuŋ <i>dig</i>	tu <i>head</i>
/e/	[e]	E e	entombũ <i>first</i>	byèshi <i>sharpen</i>	ye <i>him</i>
/o/	[o]	O o	—	bòŋ <i>be nice</i>	bo <i>hand</i>
/ɛ/	[ɛ]	Ʒ ɛ	ɛno <i>yes</i>	bep <i>he-goat</i>	Ɔwèè <i>moon</i>
/a/	[a]	A a	àtər <i>easy</i>	tàp <i>hut</i>	ta <i>shoot</i>

Long Vowels

Phoneme	Allophone	Grapheme	Initial position	Medial position	Final position
/i:/	[i:]	Ii ii	—	liisi <i>quench</i>	bii <i>dance</i>
/i:/	[i:]	Ƴu uu	—	cũute <i>whisper</i>	buu <i>white</i>
/u:/	[u:]	Uu uu	—	buumi <i>sleep</i>	tuu <i>send</i>
/e:/	[e:]	Ee ee	—	beer <i>red</i>	bèè <i>people</i>
/o:/	[o:]	Oo oo	—	mòoshi <i>try</i>	boo <i>children</i>
/ɛ:/	[ɛ:]	Ʒɛ ɛɛ	—	bɛri <i>thank</i>	tɛɛ <i>wait</i>
/a:/	[a:]	Aa aa	—	tàami <i>remain</i>	baa <i>fufu</i>

2.2.1 Vowel Length

As seen above, Limbum has both short and long vowels, written as a sequence of two vowels.

Minimal pairs of these are given below:

bate	<i>trap in-between</i>	ber	<i>raw</i>
baate	<i>close</i>	beer	<i>red</i>

3. Tone

Eight surface tones have been identified in Limbum: They are phonetically represented by three level tones which are high [á], mid [ā] and low [à] and extra-low [ã] which is marked as low [à] alongside five contour tones, low-high [ǎ], high-low [â], mid-low [ã] and high-mid [ā̃]. Only the low, low-high and high-low are marked in orthography.

3.1 Lexical Tone Contrasts Marked by Diacritics

As of this point in time, we have discovered numerous minimal tone pairs for words that contrast high, mid, low, high-low and low-high tone with each other or with the low and extra-low tones. As a result of the fact that minimal tone pairs are so rare between high-mid and high or mid tones, mid-low and low or mid tones, the first proposal⁵ that an orthography where high-mid is unmarked as well as mid-low tones and extra-low tones marked as low should be maintained. Both high and mid tones too remain unmarked. Below are examples of diacritics over vowels:

Toneme	Allotone	Tone Mark	Examples on short vowel	on long vowel
/ / (h)	[´]	unmarked	fa "give"	baa "madness"
/ -/ (m)	[-]	unmarked	ba "past tense"	baa "corn fufu"
/ ` / (l)	[`]	´	bè´ "count!"	tèe "be hard"
/ 7 / (hm)	[7]	unmarked	—	baa "two"
/ ˆ / (hl)	[ˆ]	ˆ	sâp "file"	kwâa "corn"
/ ˘ / (ml)	[˘]	unmarked	"ta" father	"bcaa" those ones
/ ˘ / x l	[˘]	˘	sùŋ "python"	bàa "bag"
/ ˇ / (lh)	[ˇ]	ˇ	ngǎr "ant"	tǎa "in here"

Table of Lexical Tones

⁵ Alphabet and Orthography Statement for Limbum by Ian P. Cheffy

It is fairly easy to find Limbum words where the only difference between them is tone. For example, note the minimal tone pairs below between the four most frequently contrasted tones:

rbi	[rbī]	<i>birth</i>	tap	[táp]	<i>goitre</i>
rbi	[rbi]	<i>kola</i>	tàp	[táp̄]	<i>hut</i>

baa	[bāa]	<i>two</i>	baa	[b āa]	<i>corn fufu</i>	baa	[bāa]	<i>madness</i>
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mbar	[mbār]	<i>branch</i>	rluŋ	[rlúŋ]	<i>harp</i>
mbàr	[mbàr]	<i>edible cocoyam leaves</i>	lùŋ	[lùŋ]	<i>salvation</i>

As mentioned above, there are rare tone pairs that contrast mid and high or low and extra-low tones. It is our feeling that these words can be marked with the same diacritics and that they will be disambiguated by how they are used in context. All of the orthographically ambiguous word pairs that we have found are shown below:

ba	[bá]	<i>and</i>	rlii	[rlíi]	<i>his</i>
ba	[bā]	<i>today past</i>	rlii	[rlīi]	<i>name</i>

ŋkàr	[ŋkà̄r]	<i>young female hen</i>
ŋkàr	[ŋkà̄r]	<i>basket of corn</i>

We feel that the Limbum words for “and” and “today past tense marker” as well as for “his” and “name” will rarely be confused in context because they belong to different grammatical classes. The two nouns “young female hen” and “basket of corn”, however, are distinguished by the fact that [ŋkà̄r] is higher than [ŋkà̄r]. It is because of these facts that we dare to write mid and high tones as well as low and extra-low tones without using diacritic marks to distinguish them.

3.2 Grammatical Meanings Marked by Diacritics

Limbum grammatical tone can be witnessed with the presence of the extra-low tone [ˊ], which is marked as low. It indicates that the word is a noun whereas the low tone can be seen with any part of speech and other nouns. The low-high tone [ˋ] also marks possession as it can mostly be seen with compound words.

bàa	[àa]	<i>plough (v.)</i>	njii	[ii]	<i>back</i>
bàa	[àa]	<i>bag (n.)</i>	ŋkõnjii	[õ]	<i>upper part of the back</i>
còo	[òo]	<i>steam (v.)</i>	ŋkùŋ	[ù]	<i>tail</i>
còo	[còo]	<i>big drum(n.)</i>	ŋkǔŋwe	[ǔ]	<i>dog's tail</i>

4. Nouns

For all nouns, the noun class gender is given in the form of the usual Bantu numbering system. Limbum has the following singular/plural combinations: 1/2, 1/6, 1/10, 1a/2, 1a/6, 5/2, 5/6, 7a/2, 7/2, 7/6. The gender 1/2 consists of the singular noun class 1 and the plural noun class 2. The genders have not been determined on the basis of the noun alone.

4.1 Noun Classes

The criteria through which the noun classes have been established are through adjectival and possessive concord. Possessive pronoun concord is the most extensively used. The odd numbers indicate the singular classes; whereas the even numbers mark the plural classes as can be seen in the following table.

Class	Noun Prefix	Agreement prefixes	
		adjective	pronoun
1	n-	n-	yàa
1a	∅	n-	yàa
2	b-	b-	vi
5	r-	r-	la
6	m-	m-	ma
7	∅	∅	yaa
7a	n-	∅	yaa
10	∅	Reduplication	yaa

Examples:

ŋkuu	chief	bkuu	<i>n 1/2</i>	chiefs
ntaa	market	mntaa	<i>n 1a/6</i>	markets
ce	tree	bce	<i>n 1a/2</i>	trees
ŋkùp	box	mkùp	<i>n 1/6</i>	boxes
ngù	seed	ngù	<i>n 1a/10</i>	seeds
rlà'	reward	blà'	<i>n 5/2</i>	rewards
rdoŋ	horn	mdoŋ	<i>n 5/6</i>	horns
ŋkwàa	slave	bkwàa	<i>n 7a/2</i>	slaves
cùu	mouth	bcùu	<i>n 7/2</i>	mouths
kùu	foot	mkùu	<i>n 7/6</i>	feet

There are many nouns that have neither singular nor plural distinctions e.g.

mbu	<i>n 1a/10</i>	goat
bsàp	<i>n 2</i>	length
rjèr	<i>n 5</i>	journey
mŋkùŋ	<i>n 6</i>	flour
nca	<i>n 7</i>	fish

Since 7 and 10 have no prefix and the same concord, the two have been written as belonging to class

4.2 Nominalisation

Nouns formed from verbs are obtained by adding various noun class prefixes to verb roots. They can be nominalised either into various double or single class genders.

4.2.i Double Class Genders

Verbs	Singular	Nouns Gender 1/2 Gender 1a/2 Gender 5/6 Gender 5/2 Gender 7/2	Plural
zhèè - steal	nzhèè - thief		bzhèè - thieves
fàa – make a mistake	fàa – mistake		bfàa – mistakes
yèr – sweep	ryèr – broom		myèr – brooms
là' - pay	rlà' - way of paying		blà' - payment/reward
yèè - sing	yèè - song		byèè - songs

4.2.ii Single Class Genders

Verb	Nouns Class 1 Class 1a Class 2 Class 5
tar - entertain	ntar – entertainment
fùp – be poor	fùp – poverty
bor – be lazy	bbor – laziness
raa – be clean	r-raa – cleanness

4.3 Compound Nouns

Nominal compounding is done by bringing two nouns together whereby we can obtain a genitive rendition or nominal association in which we can obtain a possessive rendition.

4.3.i Nominal Compounds

In compounds, there is always singular agreement with the first and the second noun but not necessary the noun class agreement. The plural is sometimes marked on both the first and the second noun e.g.

Noun	Plural
rkìṅ ndàmbà' - pipe pot tobacco	mkìṅ ndàmbà' - pipes pots tobacco

ɲwè ɲgar - soldier
person gun

ɲgàa ɲgar - soldiers
persons gun

mbùu kùu - heel
back foot

mmbùu mkùu – heels
backs feet

tu ndap - roof
head house

btu mndap - roofs
heads houses

4.3.ii Nominal Association

Possession is marked in nominal association. The first noun is the possessed noun whereas the second noun is the possessor. But in case we have the reverse which becomes genitive, a possessive pronoun can precede the possessed noun. The possessive pronoun prohibits possessive marking on the nouns.e.g.

Singular		Plural	
siɲ muu bird child	- the child's bird	bsiɲ muu birds child	- the child's births
muu siɲ child bird	- young bird	boo siɲ children birth	- young birds
yàa muu siɲ my child bird	- my young bird	yàa boo siɲ my children bird	- my young birds

5. Numerals

Limbum makes use of cardinal and ordinal numbers.

5.1.i Cardinal Numbers

Limbum cardinal numbers are as follows:

mòsir	1	ntuufu	6
baa	2	sàambâ	7
taar	3	waami	8
kyèè	4	bù'rû	9
tâ	5	rû	10

The numbers 11 – 19 are composed by prefixing **ncòp** meaning “and ten” before the unit. e.g

ncòp mò'sir	11 “one and ten”	ncòp ntuufu	16 “six and ten”
ncòp baa	12 “two and ten”	ncòp sàambâ	17 “seven and ten”
ncòp taar	13 “three and ten”	ncòp waami	18 “eight and ten”
ncòp kyèè	14 “four and ten”	ncòp bù'rû	19 “nine and ten”
ncòp tâ	15 “five and ten”		

For clarification between the various two digit numbers, they can be counted as:

ncòp mò'sir à rù	11 “one and ten”	ncòp ntuufu à rù	16 “six and ten”
ncòp baa à rù	12 “two and ten”	ncoàb saèmbaè à rù	17 “seven and ten”
ncòp taar à rù	13 “three and ten”	ncòp waami à rù	18 “eight and ten”
ncòp kyèè à rù	14 “four and ten”	ncòp bù'rù à rù	19 “nine and ten”
ncòp tâ à rù	15 “five and ten”		

That distinction is further done with other numbers as follows:

ncòp mò'sir à mbaa	21 “one and twenty”
ncòp mò'sir à mtaar	31 “one and twenty”
ncòp mò'sir à mkyèè	41 “one and twenty”

5.1.ii Counting Tens

To count tens a pre-posed bilabial syllabic nasal is added to the single unit cardinal numbers.

mbaa	20
mtaar	30
mkyèè	40
mtâ	50
mntuufu	60
msàambâ	70
mwaami	80
mbù'rù	90

5.1.iii Counting on Base Hundred

This goes from one hundred to nine hundred. As such, the singular is **rjèr** “100” and the plural is **mjèè** “100s” e.g.

rjèr	=	100
mjèè mbaa	=	200
mjèè mtaar	=	300
mjèè kyèè	=	400
mjèè tâ	=	500
mjèè ntuufu	=	600
mjèèr sàambâ	=	700
mjèè waami	=	800
mjèè bù'rù	=	900

The rest of the numbers in-between will counted in the following manner:

mjèè mtaar ba ncòp baa à mkyèè = 342 “Three hundred and forty two”

hundreds three plus tens two and forty

mjèè ntuufu ba ncòp ta à msàambâ =675 “Six hundred and seventy five”

hundreds six and tens five and seventy.

5.1.iv Counting on Base Thousands

The word for thousand is **ncùkì**. It becomes the prefix to the basic units in order to compose numbers in thousands.

ncùkì	=	1000
ncùkì tâ	=	5.000
ncùkì sàambâ	=	7.000
ncùkì rû	=	10.000

In case of any additions we use the conjunction **ba** as above. e.g

ncùkì tâ ba ncòp taar à rû = 5013 “Five thousand and thirteen”

Thousand five and three of ten.

ncùkì ntuufu nè mjèe tâ ba ncòp sàamba à mtaar = 6537 Six thousand five hundred and thirty seven”

Thousand six with hundred five and tens seven of thirty

Counting on million base is **malàr**.

5.2 Ordinal Numbers

Limbum ordinal numbers have no direct relationship with cardinal numbers as cardinal numbers run into the thousands. Limbum has only three basic ordinal numbers.

entòmbì	=	“the first”
embenjì	=	“second/behind”
elusimbù	=	“last”

However, Limbum has also made use of loan words from English to improve its system of ordinal numbers. The word “nomba” has been borrowed from the English word “number” to provide ranking after the second position e.g

nòmbà taar	= 3 rd	nòmbà sàambâ	= 7 th
nòmbà kyèe	= 4 th	nòmbà waami	= 8 th
nòmbà tâ	= 5 th	nòmbà bu’rû	= 9 th
nòmbà ntuufu	= 6 th	nòmbà rû	= 10 th

Under ordinal numbers is an adverbial particle of frequency **nfè’** meaning “time”, which Limbum uses to express the number of times an activity has occurred e.g.

nfè’	mò’sir	= once
nfè’	baa	= twice
nfè’	taar	= thrice
nfè’	kyèe	= four times
nfè’	tâ	= five times

5.3 Fractions

When it comes to sharing items, the following morphemes or words are used:

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| (a) bɛbɛ' | Fraction of a loaf or something that can be sliced (bread) |
| (b) kùkùu | Fraction of some long item that can be cut (sugar cane) |
| (c) tete | Fraction of some elastic item (meat, rope) |
| (d) sɛsɛp | Fraction of a thing with flat surface (kolanut) |
| (e) toto' | Fraction of a round object. |

Note that fractions are obtained by the process of reduplication.

6. Pronouns

Limbum has an incredible number of pronouns. This constitutes most of the grammar finding that we have been able to come up with in the course of developing the Limbum Dictionary. We have been able to identify more than fourteen pronoun types whose forms are more than three hundred. Only personal pronouns, their possessive counterparts, subject markers, object pronouns and demonstrative pronouns have been presented in this grammar sketch.

6.1.i. Simple Pronouns

Unlike English, Limbum personal pronouns are numerous. Sometimes there may be more than one Limbum simple pronoun for the same English pronoun or two Limbum simple forms can be combined to form complex pronouns. Limbum personal pronouns are independent of the noun class of the noun to which they refer, though all of them refer primarily to human beings or anthropomorphized beings.

6.1.ii. Personal Pronouns: 1+2 as a value for person

1+2 is a value for person for personal pronouns. Like other values such as 1st person, 2nd person and 3rd person, 1+2 has a singular and a plural form. Pronouns have 4 values for person and 2 values for number yielding 8 different simple pronouns for each set. Personal pronouns and possessive pronouns distinguish person and number but not gender. Person and number are independent categories.

Simple personal pronouns

	Singular	Plural
1	mè, ì	wèr
2	wè, à	wèe
1+2	sò	sèe
3	ye, e	woowèe, a

m̀, à and **e** (I, you, s/he) can be used as subjects before **ce** and **be** which are aspect and tense markers respectively whereas **m̀, ẁ** and **ye** are used in object positions when referring to humans. They are different from non-human object pronouns. But it should be noted that these personal pronouns are not used in subject positions if there is a full subject noun. They replace the subject like in a situation where one can say **Jôn, e ce vù**. – John, he is coming. **Jôn** is the addressee and not the subject of the sentence. **E** cannot act as an agreement marker.

Examples:

(1) **m̀, ì**

1SG SBJ

(a) **M̀ zhe baa.**
 1SG eat fufu.
 I have eaten fufu.

1SG OBJ

(b) **E ba fa nè m̀.**
 3SG PST1 give BEN 1SG
 He gave it to me.

1SG SBJ.

(c) **M̀ be fu dù foŋ.**
 1sg FUT2 go also
 I will also go.

6.1.ii. The Inclusive Pronouns

Limbum inclusive pronouns refer both to the speaker and addressee (first person plus second person). These inclusive pronouns include a singular “dual” (1+2) form and a plural form. They can both be used in any syntactic function in which a noun or any other pronoun can be used. The singular “dual” form is **sò** ‘you(sg) and I, you(sg) and me’. This is the only simple dual pronoun form in all of the Limbum pronominal system. This dual form refers to both the first person singular and second person singular and only to them. As such, it is inclusive in meaning.

The plural inclusive pronoun reference requires that either one or both of the first and second person referents be plural. In this case, the plural inclusive pronoun refers to two participants and a singular third person referent in an imperative mood. There is only one inclusive plural form which is *sèe* 'we, us', which can be used in any syntactic environment.

6.1.ii. Complex Pronouns

Complex personal pronouns are a combination of two simple personal pronouns, and they denote two units of referents. The first component of the complex is formally plural and may take the value of 1st (exclusive or inclusive) *wèr* and *sèe*, respectively, or 2nd person *wèe*. The second component of the complex can only take the form of 3rd person (singular or plural) and denotes the value 'non-participant'. This second component always uses the object form of the simple personal pronoun, i.e. *ye* for singular, *woowèe* for plural, even if syntactically the complex pronoun functions as subject. It also has to be noted that such complex structures do not appear within the domain of possessives. The forms of the complex personal pronoun are displayed in table 3 as follows:

	complex pronoun	referents of speech act scenario	
		participant value	non-participant value
dual reference value (only two persons referred to)	<i>wèr ye</i>	speaker (SPK) (1st + 3 rd person SG)	non-participant (N) (3rd person)
	<i>wèe ye</i>	addressee (A) (2 nd + 3 rd person SG)	
	-----	speaker + addressee (SPK, A) (1st + 2nd person)	
plural reference value (more than two persons referred to)	<i>wèr woowèe</i>	speaker (SPK) (1 st SG/PL + 3 rd person PL)	
	<i>wèe woowèe</i>	addressee (A) (2 nd SG/PL + 3rd person PL)	
	<i>sèe woowèe</i>	speaker + addressee (SPK, A) (1st + 2 nd + 3rd person PL)	

Table of Complex personal pronouns

Note the gap in the table where one could expect a form * *sèe ye*. However, such a form is indeed not to be expected, since *sèe* semantically already implies duality (i.e. two persons), and, after adding the obligatory non-participant, this construction would no longer signal dual reference. Rather, it would have to be placed with 'plural reference', as more than two persons are being referred to (i.e. speaker, addressee and non-participant). And this is indeed where *sèe* appears, but here with the second component being obligatorily in the plural form, *sèe woowèe*.

Consider the following examples. Syntactically, complex pronouns may function in subject position as in (a) below and as complements in an oblique phrase following the preposition *nè* 'BENEFACTIVE', as displayed by examples (b).

Subject position

- (a) **Wèr ye** **be fuu dù** **ser** **Bèɛŋkàa.**
 CMP.PRO.S+EXCL.DU FUT2 go LOC Binka
 We ('speaker-dual') will go to Binka.

Oblique position

- (b) **E** **fa** **nè** **wèr ye.**
 3SG give BEN CMP.PRO.S+EXCL.DU
 He has given it to us ('speaker-dual').

6.2. Subject Agreement

Subject markers follow the subject of the sentence. They follow nouns, possessive pronouns, possessive adjectives or possessive focused adjectives with which they agree in numbers and the class gender. We can find them after first, second and third person plural pronouns but never after the singular pronoun forms. They occur in these positions only when the verb is in the past tense or the sentence is in the interrogative. Some subject pronouns are important in that they show the number person distinction in sentences. *à* refers first and second persons singular and *zhi* refers to third person plural agreeing with class one, seven or ten nouns, *rli* refers to third person singular agreeing with class five nouns, *mmi* refers to third person plural agreeing with class six nouns, *a* refers to third person plural human subject, and *bvi* refers to third person plural agreeing with class two non-human subjects.

Subject Markers

1/2/3human/animate	a
CL.1	à
CL.2	bvi
CL.5	rli
CL.6	mi
CL.7	zhi
CL.10	zhi

Examples:

- (a) **Dgwe** **à** **bu.**
 CL1a-Dog CL1-3SG.SM lost
 The dog is missing.

- (b) **Dgwe zhi bu.**
 CL7-Dogs CL7-3PL.SM lost
 The dogs are missing.
- (c) **La rtaa rli sii.**
 CL5-1SG.POSS.ADJ CL5-cap CL5.3SG.SM dirty
 My cap is dirty.
- (d) **Bcè' bvi sà'nger mè.**
 CL2- Clothes CL2-3PL.SBJ.AGR torn 1SG.
 My clothes are torn.

6.3.i Subject Pronouns

The second person singular pronoun subject *à* is used in interrogatives involving the present and in future affirmative constructions whereas *wè* is used with the other tenses. The *à* as used below should not be confused with the way it agrees with the subject as seen above. The third person plural subject pronoun *woowèe* followed by *a* in the subject position can be replaced by *a* in the same environments but *à* cannot be used in the same way.

Examples:

- (a) **À be no kɛ?**
 2SG. FUT1 drink what
 What will you drink?
- (b) **Wè mu du mbo a?**
 2SG. PST2 go there Q
 Did you go there?
- (c) **Woowèe a be vù àyaṅsè.**
 3PL. 3PL.SBJ.AGR FUT1 come tomorrow
 They will come tomorrow.
- (d) **A be vù àyaṅsè.**
 3PL. FUT1 come tomorrow
 They will come tomorrow.

6.3.ii Object Pronouns

Beside simple pronoun forms that we have seen above as occurring in the object positions, there are other pronoun forms, which take the object forms. They have the same forms as some possessive adjectives, some subject pronouns and simple object pronouns. They also agree with the number and class of the nouns they are referring to. It should be noted that they replace only non-human objects in sentences. These object pronouns include: *zhi*, *bvi*, *rli*, *rmo'*, *mo*, *mò'*, *mmo'*, and *mmi*

Those that can be used only in the subject position are CL6 *mò'*, or the alternate form CL5 *rmo'*, *e*, 'he/she' *à* 'you(sg)' and *a* 'they'. *Ye* 'him/her' can be used only in the object position. The first person singular pronoun subject changes from *mè* to *m̃* in the present or future tense e.g.

- (a) **Dgwe** **à** **lòr** **zhi.**
 Dog 1SG.SM take CL7-3SG.OBJ.
 The dog have taken it.
- (b) **Lè** **bvi** **njep** **bàa.**
 Put CL2-3PL.OBJ.PRO Prep. bag
 Put them in the bag.
- (c) **E** **lòr** **rli.**
 1SG take CL5-3SG.OBJ.
 He has taken it.
- (d) **Wè** **lè** **bvi** **fɛ?**
 2SG. keep CL2-3PL.OBJ.PRO where
 Where have you kept them?
- (e) **E** **lòr** **mmo'** **a** **ma'.**
 3SG. take CL6-3PL.OBJ.PRO CONJ. throw.
 He has taken some and thrown.

6.4 Possessives

In Limbum, the possession of a noun may be indicated in two different ways at the level of the noun phrase: (1) using a possessive pronoun to modify a noun phrase with the head noun and by (2) using a possessive pronoun to replace the noun, e.g., *mine*. We therefore have possessive pronouns and possessive adjectives in Limbum, which are also dependent on noun classes in that they acquire concord prefixes of the noun they modify (possessive adjectives) or refer to (possessive pronouns). Thus the possessive adjectives are divided into Possessive adjectives and Possessive focused adjectives. Possessive pronouns are built on the out-of-focus form² of possessive adjectives, which are themselves already marked for noun class agreement.

6.4.i. Adjectival Possession

Possessive adjectives have more forms than the possessive pronouns. They can be divided into possessive focused adjectives and possessive adjectives. Possessive adjectives precede nouns whereas possessive focused adjectives follow the nouns. Most

² *The normal order in a Limbum noun phrase whose possessive adjective is out-of-focus is: possessive adjective + head noun, e.g., la rtaa 'my cap'. When the possessive adjective is in focus, the order becomes: head noun + SBJ.AGR + in-focus possessive adjective, e.g., rtaa r-laa 'my cap (not your cap)'.*

of the forms that we will see in table 2 below as possessive focused adjectives are possessive pronouns which replace nouns. Possessive adjectives have the same forms except when r, b and m prefixes are added to form some possessive focused adjectives.

6.4.i.a Default Adjectival Possession

Possessive (default) adjectives precede the noun, thus **la rtaa** ‘my cap’. This word order is remarkable in Limbum. Below a few examples:

- (a) **yàa ndap** = ‘my house’
- (b) **wa mndap** = ‘my houses’
- (c) **yàa mbu** = ‘my goat’
- (d) **yaa mbu** = ‘my goats’

Class	Singular				Plural			
	1SG	2SG	1+2SG	3SG	1PL	2PL	1+2PL	3PL
1	yàa	yòo	zhisò	zhii	yèr	yèe	zhisèe	yàp
2	wa	wo	visò	vi	wer	wee	visèe	wap
5	la	lo	lisò	li	ler	lee	lisèe	lap
6	ma	mo	misò	mi	mer	mee	misèe	map
7	yaa	yoo	zhisò	zhii	yer	yee	zhisèe	yap
10	yaa	yoo	zhisò	zhii	yer	yee	zhisèe	yap

Table of possessive (default) adjectives

6.4.i.b Focused Possession

In focused possession, possessive adjectives follow the noun, thus **rtaa rlaa** ‘my cap’. This is the unmarked order in Limbum examples:

- (a) **ndap yàa** = ‘my house’
- (b) **mndap bwaa** = ‘my houses’

The possessive focused adjectives of noun classes 1, 7, 7a and 10 are similar to their default counterparts. Those of class 2, 5, and 6 have a double concord structure, in which a weaker agreement marker is attached to the stronger default form. The agreement marker onset seems to correspond phonologically with the initial consonant of the original morpheme, as /w-/ or /v-/ is preceded by /b-/ , /l-/ by /r-/ , and /m-/ by /m-/.

Table of possessive focused adjectives

Class	Singular				Plural			
	1SG	2SG	1+2SG	3SG	1PL	2PL	1+2PL	3PL
1	yàa	yòo	zhisò	zhii	yèr	yèe	zhisèe	yàp
1a	wàa/àa	wòo/òo			wèr/èr	yèe/èe		wàp/àp
2	b-waa	b-woo	b-visò	b-vii	b-wer	b-wee	b-visèe	b-wap
5	r-laa	r-loo	r-lisò	r-lii	r-ler	r-lee	r-lisèe	r-lap
6	m-maa	m-moo	m-misò	m-mii	m-mer	m-mee	m-misèe	m-map
7	yaa	yoo	zhisò	zhii	yer	yee	zhisèe	yap
7a	yaa	yoo			yer	yee		yap
10	waa	woo			wer	wee		wap

The possessive focused adjectives belonging to noun classes 1 and 10 have two forms, one with and one without the initial /y-/. The latter is only used upon a specific set of words referring to siblings, relatives and close friends. Examples of this type are **muu wàa** ‘my child’ and **ŋkar àa** ‘my friend’.

In the focal form, the tone of the possessed noun in some cases also changes. This especially holds true for low-tone words. This change, however, is optional and entangled with dialectical variation. The following pairs, derived from the fieldwork sessions, illustrate this:

- (a) **yàa njèe** = ‘my sheep (default)’ – **njèe yàa** = ‘my sheep (focus)’
 (b) **yaa kùu** = ‘my leg (default)’ – **kùu yaa** = ‘my leg (focus)’

6.4.i.c. The differences between Focused and Default Possession

Focused adjectival possession is used in cases of comparison, conflict or confusion, and therefore in situations in which the relation between the possessor and the possessed noun needs to be underlined and all other possible possessor-candidates need to be excluded. The form does not inherently express anger or impoliteness. **Rtaa rlaa**, then, could be translated in different ways during the sessions, each time in agreement with the context of the discourse; ‘my cap, not yours’, ‘my own cap’, ‘my cap’, or simply ‘my cap’.

Apparently, the usage of possessive constructions within the specific word group referring to siblings, relatives and close friends that we saw in 3.2 is restricted to the focal

mode. Hence, the correct forms are *muu wàa* ‘my child’ and *boo waa* ‘my children’, not **yaa muu* and **yaa boo*.

6.4.ii Substantial Possession

The substantially used possessive pronouns are similar in form to the possessive focused adjectives (table 2).

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------|------------|------------------|--|
| (a) Mbu | anà | a | yaa | |
| CL1-goat | DEM | is | CL1-3PL.POSS.PRO | |
| Those goats are mine. | | | | |
| (b) Yaa | | à | bu. | |
| CL1-1SG.POSS.PRO | | CL1-1SG.SM | lost | |
| Mine is missing. | | | | |
| (c) Rloo | | rli | yû? | |
| CL5-2SG.POSS.PRO | | CL5-3SG.SM | be where? | |
| Where is yours? | | | | |

6.4.iii Focus Distinction in the Possessive Adjectives

Limbum has two different types of possession at the level of a noun phrase:

- 1) Adjectival possession; the combination of a possessive adjective and a noun
- 2) Substantial possession; the replacement of a noun by a possessive pronoun

The former can be subdivided into focused and default adjectival possession. All forms are used in consensus with the corresponding noun classes.

6.5 Other Forms of Possession

In case of double possession, the two items are juxtaposed:

- (a) **boo yòo maku** = ‘the children of your grandmother’
- (b) **boo maku yòo** = ‘the children of your grandmother (focused)’

However, in constructions of the type ‘your X of his Y’, in which both items has a possessive pronoun, a relative clause needs to be made.

- (c) **mbăa yoo ce e fa wè** = ‘your share of his money’ (literally: ‘your money that he has given’)

6.6 Demonstratives Pronouns

Classification of Limbum demonstratives is based on the position of the speaker in relation to the addressee and the referent. The object referred to may be near speaker (NS) far away from speaker and addressee (FS/A) or closer to addressee (NA).

The form of the demonstrative changes according to the noun class that is being referred to and also depends on whether the noun is singular or plural. The tables below illustrate the singular and plural forms of demonstrative pronouns as per the noun classes.

Demonstrative Pronouns

Noun Class	NS	NA	FS/A
1	ca “this”	cà “that”	cenà “that one”
2	bca “these”	bcà “those”	bcenà “those ones”
5	rca “this”	rcà “that”	rcenà “that one”
6	mca “these”	mcà “those”	mcenà “those ones”
7	ca “this”	cà “that”	cenà “that one”
10	ca “these”	cà “those”	cenà “those ones”

Referential Demonstrative Pronouns

NC	NS	NA	FS/A
1	cane “this one”	zhianà “that one”	caa “that one”
2	bcane “these ones”	bwănà “those ones”	baaa “those ones”
5	rcane “this one”	rlănà “that one”	rcaa “that one”
6	mcane “these ones”	mmănà “those ones”	mcaa “those ones”
7	cane “this one”	zhianà “that one”	caa “that one”
10	cane “these ones”	zhianà “those ones”	caa “those ones”

The difference between the FS/A for the demonstratives and the referential demonstratives is the low and the mid low tone plus the long vowels respectively. The demonstrative pronouns and the referential demonstrative pronouns can be used in the place subject nouns or follow them. The difference between them is that the referential demonstratives are used for specification or emphasis e.g.

6.6.i Demonstrative Pronouns

- (a) **Rdoŋ** **rca** **a** **rlaa** (NS)
 CL5-horn CL5-DEM.PRO is CL5-1SG.POSS.PRO
 This horn is mine.
- (b) **Rdoŋ** **rcà** **a** **rloo** (NA)
 CL5-horn CL5-DEM.PRO is CL5-2SG.POSS.PRO
 That horn is yours.
- (c) **Rdoŋ** **rcenà** **a** **rlišò** (FS/A)

CL5-horn CL5-DEM.PRO is CL5-DU.INCL.POSS.PRO
 That horn is ours.

6.6.ii Referential Demonstratives Pronouns

- | | | | | | |
|-----|----------------------------------|--------------|----------|----------------------|--------|
| (a) | Rdoŋ | rcanɛ | a | rɫaa | (NS) |
| | CL5-horn | CL5-DEM.PRO | is | CL5-1SG.POSS.PRO | |
| | This (particular) horn is mine. | | | | |
| (b) | Rdoŋ | rlǎnà | a | rloo | (NA) |
| | CL5-horn | CL5-DEM.PRO | is | CL5-2SG.POSS.PRO | |
| | That (particular) horn is yours. | | | | |
| (c) | Rdoŋ | rcaa | a | rlisò | (FS/A) |
| | CL5-horn | CL5-DEM.PRO | is | CL5-DU.INCL.POSS.PRO | |
| | That (particular) horn is ours. | | | | |

It is important to note that the singular referential demonstrative pronouns are **canɛ**, **zhianà** and **rlǎnà** refer to one out of many in the same manner as the plural forms **bcanɛ**, **bwǎnà** and **mmǎnà** refer to specific ones (group) out of many (Nforgwei Sammy 2007).

7. Verbs

Limbum verb forms are mostly mono or disyllabic. Disyllabic verbs that can be considered as roots are rare in Limbum. When disyllabic verb forms are further analyzed, the separate parts or morphemes do not constitute distinct meanings, but when they do have separate meanings, the meanings of the two morphemes cannot be allocated to the meaning of the whole word. The structure of the monosyllabic root is either CV or CVC, while the disyllabic structure is CVCV. e.g.

7.1.i Monosyllabic Verbs

- | | | |
|-----|-----|--|
| (a) | CV | yɛ - see
no - drink
fa - give
kà - pluck |
| (b) | CVV | yɛɛ - sing
laa - cook
luu - bite
koo - catch |
| (c) | CVC | kɛ' - call
niŋ - enter
war - cry
kur - tie |
| (d) | CCV | byè - plant
kwe - die
cwe - cut slightly
gwè - fall |

- (e) CCVV gwɛɛ - be fond of
 cwaa – chew continuously
 kyɛɛ - tie together
 kwàa – scrape /clean thoroughly

7.1.ii Disyllabic Verbs

- (a) CVCV bumi – sleep
 cɛmi – clear
 bute – be rotten
 kani – refsue
 (b) CVCCV bà'ri – build
 cà'ni – greet
 dùŋshi – show
 nòŋsi - keep
 (c) CCVCV byemi – accept
 fyèni – sell

7.2 Infinitive Form

Infinitives are are formed by adding 'à' and an 'r' prefix to the verb. It has been done in this way in order to avoid the confusion with the class 5 nominalised form of the verb e.g.

	Indicative	Infinitive
(a)	zhe – eat	à rzhe – to eat
(b)	no – drink	à rno - to drink
(c)	kɛ - call	à rkɛ' - to call
(d)	ba' - weave	à rba' - to weave

7.3 Tense Markers

Limbum expresses three time references with respect to the moment of speech: past, present and future tenses. Limbum expresses past and future tenses by using tense markers and present tense by using aspect markers.

7.3.i Past tense

We can distinguish four levels of past tenses :P0, P1, P2, P3

PST0	ø	Mè	zhe	baa.	
		1SG	eat	corn-fufu	
		I have eaten corn-fufu (a few minutes ago)			
PST1	ba	Mè	ba	zhe	baa
		1SG	PST1	eat	corn-fufu
		I ate corn-fufu (today)			
PST2	mu	Mè	mu	zhe	baa.
		1SG	PST2	eat	corn-fufu

I ate corn-fufu (yesterday)
 PST3 m Mè m zhe baa.
 1SG. PST3 eat corn-fufu (last month or many years ago)

7.3.ii Present tense

Only one level of the present tense can be distinguished.

∅ ce Ṁ ce zhe baa.
 1SG ASP.CONT eat corn-fufu
 I am eating corn-fufu.

7.3.iii Future tense

We can distinguish four levels of the future tense.

FUT0 be Ṁ be zhe baa.
 1SG FUT1 eat corn-fufu
 I will eat corn-fufu (in a few moments)

FUT1 be lò Ṁ be lò zhe baa.
 1SG FUT2 eat corn-fufu
 I will eat corn-fufu (later today)

FUT2 be fu Ṁ be fu zhe baa.
 1SG FUT1 eat corn-fufu
 I will eat corn-fufu (tomorrow or in a few days)

FUT3 be kii Ṁ be kii zhe baa.
 1SG FUT1 eat corn-fufu
 I will eat corn-fufu (after a few months/years)

7.3.iv Perfective vs Imperfective

The imperfective is done by adding the continuous aspect marker **ce** after the tense marker or just by using the habitual aspect marker **ke**. The perfective is done by adding the perfective marker **nè** with the combination of **a** after the tense marker e.g.

PERF E ba vu ṁ ba nè a zhe baa.
 3SG PST1 come 1SG. PST1 PERF eat corn-fufu
 He came when I had already eaten corn-fufu

IMP Ṁ ba ce zhe baa.
 1SG PST1 ASP.CONT eat corn-fufu
 I was eating corn-fufu (in a few moments ago).

HAB Ṁ ke zhe baa.
 1SG ASP.HAB eat corn-fufu
 I eat corn-fufu

7.3.v Aspect and Mood

From the above we can see that aspect makers are *ce* for continuous and *ke* for habitual. Mood is marked by *bo* e.g.

MOOD **Ḿ** **be** **zhe** **baa** **ḿ** **bo** **nòŋ** **i.**
1SG FUT1 eat corn-fufu 1SG MOOD sleep vowel echo
I will eat corn-fufu so that I should sleep.

7.4 Verb Extensions

Limbum verb extensions are often formed by adding suffixes to roots, called extensions. These verbs acquire meanings that are slightly different from the meanings of the roots. Occasionally we can find verb extensions which do not have a meanings of their own. Fransen Margo (1995 :199 - 207) have grouped them into aspectual and relational extensions. Under aspectual extensions she has attenuative, pluractional, iterative and separative. Under relational extensions she has causative, neutro-passive and reciprocals. Though the verb extension meanings may also depend on the verb, the meaning differences can be seen as in the following:

- (a) **bàŋ** v. be red; be ripe.
 bàŋsi v. make ripe ; **bàŋri** v. *int* redden
- (b) **tɛ'** v barricade.
 tɛ'shi v. cover.
- (c) **kwe** v. die
 kwɛŋger v. die in a series
- (d) **bàa** v. hate
 bàani v. hate each other
- (d) **bi** v. give birth
 bisi v. assist in childbirth
- (e) **fu** v. affected by cold
 fute v. become cold
- (f) **ghàa** v. search, grope
 ghàase v. search around
- (g) **tee** v. cut
 teeti v. cut by itself

8. Adjectives

In Limbum, adjectives follow nouns and can be divided into derived and non-derived adjectives. Limbum adjectives can be attributive or predicative. When used predicatively they take concord markers and copular particles

8.1.i Non - Derived Adjectives

Non-derived adjectives maintain their forms in all syntactic constructions and they take the noun class agreement markers of the nouns they modify e.g.

(a) beer	-	red	(d) còŋ	-	wet
(b) buu	-	white	(e) cuŋ	-	hot
(c) fi	-	new	(f) gòr	-	big

8.1.ii Attributive Use

The adjective is in post nominal position e.g.

(a) cè'	fi	-	new cloth
cloth	new		
(b) lè'	kè'	-	small calabash
calabash	small		

8.1.iii. Predicative Use

In predicative usage, the noun class agreement marker is added to the adjective. The copular is inserted between the noun and the adjective e.g.

(a) Rtaa	rli	yu	rbuu.
CI5-cap	CI5-3SG.SM	be	CI5-white
The cap is white.			
(b) Muu	bii	ŋkè'	
CI1-child	be still	CI1-small	
The child is still small.			
(c) Mrù'	mi	yu	gòr.
CI6-wine	CI6-3PL.SM	be	much
The wine is much.			

8.2 .i Comparative and Superlative

In comparative constructions, adjectives are instead used as the copular verbs. These verbs can be followed by the intensifier “sê or gòr” to express the comparative and “ba à sê, gòr sê, àgòr sê or gòr ba à sê” to express superlative concepts.

Verb	Comparison	Superlative
(a) fup “white” be white	fup sê /gòr “whiter than” white much /big	fup gòr sê “whitest” white big much
(b) yu còŋ “wet” be wet	yu còŋ sê “wetter” be wet much	yu còŋ ba àgòr sê “wettest” be rather too wet

8.2 .ii Alternative Comparative and Superlative

The general tendency is to express the comparative and superlative notions as shown above. The alternative way is to use **caa** - “pass” to express a comparison and **caa sê /gòr** - “pass sê” to express the superlative.

Verb	comparison	Superlative
(a) sàp “long” be long	sàp a caa “longer” be long CONJ pass	sàp a caa sê “longest” be long CONJ pass much
(b) kù’ “big” be big	kù’ a caa “longer” be big CONJ pass	kù’ a caa gòr “longest” be big CONJ pass big

8.3 Derived Adjectives

In Limbum, derived adjectives are formed from verbs. They can reduplicated and non-reduplicated derived adjectives.

8.3.i Non-reduplicated Derived Adjectives

These are disyllabic verbs that are followed by vowel echoes in syntactic constructions whose tone on the post posed verb on the first syllable changes from low to high on the first syllable and on the last syllable changes from high mid /high to low. In such constructions, another copular is inserted between the subject and the verb e.g.

	Verb		Adjective
(a) Zhi	fùpri i “become light” 3SG white vowel echo It has become light	Zhi	yu fupri. “light” 3SG be light It is light
(b) Rli	coomi i “become deep” CI5-3SG deep vowel echo It has become deep	Rli	yu coomi “deep” CI5-3SG be deep It is deep.

8.3.ii Attributive Use

Non- Reduplicated derived adjectives can be used attributes during which the copular is absent e.g.

- | | | | |
|-----|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| (a) | tù' | nfugrì | “deaf ear” |
| | ear | deaf | |
| (b) | nduunjì | ɲwɛɛsì | “narrow road” |
| | road | narrow | |

Tone plays a big role in the formulation of non-reduplicated derived adjective as the high tone of the last syllable of the verb changes to low in the adjective as can be seen in the examples above.

8.3.iii Reduplicated Derived Adjectives

Reduplicated derived adjectives are formed from monosyllabic verbs e.g.

Verb		Adjectives
(a) bɛ'	“break”	bɛbɛ' “piece”
(b) bòŋ	“be good”	bòŋbòŋ “good”
(c) rìr	“be heavy”	rìrìr “heavy”
(c) raa	“be clean”	rara “clean”

Reduplicated derived adjectives often precede the noun they describe. When used in this way, they express intensity and do not take any agreement markers like in examples 1 below, whereas when used post-nominally they agree with the nouns they modify as in the following juxtaposed examples:

(a.i)	sheshe tàa	“burnt insect”
(a.ii)	jarŋger jarŋger ɲwè	“careless person”
(b.i)	mbïï msii	“black kolanuts”
(b.ii)	btàa bsheshe	“burnt insects”
(b.iii)	bèe bcici	“useless persons”
(b.iv)	mrù' mtatap	“strong wine”

9. Prepositions

Limum has many prepositions that are used as spatial concepts conveyed by directional verbs. These prepositions are locative markers, which come before locative nouns. But not all prepositions bear this spatial concept.

9.1.i Locative Markers

They include **mbà** “down there”, **kù** “up there”, **nje** “over at /inside DIS”, **njep** “inside PROX”, and **ser** “at” (sideways). Suffixes like **-naa** and **-naanà** can be added to indicate that the distance is longer as in **sernaa** “at” (sideways further), and **sernana** “at” (sideways much more further) e.g.

- (a) **Mbaa** **yu** **nje** **kòp.**
 Leopard be PREP forest
 The leopard is in the forest.
- (b) **Nfòò** **à** **dù** **mbà** **kòp.**
 Nfor 3SG.SM go PREP forest
 Nfor has gone down the forest.
- (c) **Mbu** **yu** **kù** **rtùu**
 Goat be PREP hill
 The goat is up the hill.
- (d) **Mamuu** **yu** **ser** **ndàp**
 Mother be PREP house
 Mother is at the house.

9.1.ii Locative Adverbs

Some prepositions function as locative adverbs and substitute nouns in discourse. There are *soso* / *ser* “there” (sideways) *mbăă* “down there” *mboo* “up there” *kǎo* “in there upwards” *njoo* “inside” e.g

- (a) **Jôn** **yu** **mbà** **kòp.**
 John be PREP forest
 John is down at the forest.
- (b) **Jôn** **yu** **mbăă**
 John be LOC.ADV
 John is down there.
- (c) **Nfòò** **yu** **ser** **kòp**
 Nfor be PREP forest
 Nfor is at the forest.
- d) **Nfòò** **yu** **soso**
 Nfor be LOC ADJ
 Nfor is there (horizontal)

When these prepositions take an *e-* prefix the meanings change to “from”

9.2.i Speaker Environment Locative Adverbs

The following locative adverbs are used within the speaker’s environment. **àfaa** “here in this area”, **tăă** “in here” and **mbena** “here” **kùna** a bit up (upwards). e.g.

- (a) **Nfòò** **yu** **àfaa**
 Nfor be LOC.ADV
 Nfor is in here (in this area)
- (b) **Nfòò** **yu** **tăă.**
 Nfor be LOC.ADV
 Nfor is in here (in this house)

9.2.ii Horizontal /Vertical axis Locatives

Some locatives are used to express a horizontal or vertical axis position. It could be within or without the speaker's environment: **àbbgwàgwan** "sideways", **àbbke'** "sideways", **àgeŋ** "beside PROX" **àgee** "beside DIS", **mbeŋi** "behind", and **mbetar** "between". Sometimes, **àboŋkòp** "by the left" and **àbomà'** "by the right" **mbeki** "upright / upwards", **njepmbe** "outside", **mbendu** "on top of" and **njepitii** "inbetween" and **njepmbùu** "under" e.g.

(a) **Ndap tɛɛ mbetar bce bbaa.**
House stand LOC CL2-trees CL2-two
The house is standing between two trees.

(b) **Ce zhi tɛɛ àgee mo'.**
Tree CL1a.3SG.SM stand LOC INDEF.PRO
The tree is standing near another.

9.2.iii Cardinal Directions

Cardinal directions (points) are often expressed using the following locatives:

- (a) **kùntii** - upper horizon "East"
- (b) **mbàntii** - horizontal horizon "West"
- (c) **kùtù** - vertical horizon "North"
- (d) **mbàmbùuntii** - Lower horizon "South"

They refer to directions or positions with the speaker at the centre of the axis. e.g.

- (a) **Mbèŋ à sii kùntii.** ""
Rain CL1-3SG.SM dark LOC
Rain has clouded in the east
- (b) **Bù yu kùtu rò.**
Tadpole be LOC stream
There is a tadpole upstream

9.3 Other Prepositions

Prepositions like **nè** . "to" and **ese** - "from" have benefactive as well as associative meanings e.g

- (a) **Mè fa ŋwà' nè Jôn.**
1Sg give book PREP John
I have given the book to John.
- (b) **E jòo ŋwà' nè bo.**
3SG touch book ASSO hand
He has touched the book with his hand.
- (c) **Mè koo ŋwà' ese Jôn.**
1SG take book PREP John
I have taken the book from John.
- (c) **A mmbi ce mi vù ese John.**
Is CL6.cola-nuts ASP.CONT CL6-3PL.SM come ASSO John.

They are those John's colanuts.

10. Adverbs

In Limbum, adverbs usually come after the verbs which they modify. They can be divided into three groups- time, location and manner adverbs. Unlike adjectives, Limbum adverbs do not have any systematic morphology.

10.1 Adverbs of Time

Adverbs of time state when something will happen (happens).

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| (a) nèḡkùr | “yesterday” |
| (b) àḡàḡsèè | “tomorrow” |
| (c) nè mooti | “in the afternoon” |
| (c) àmbùuḡkùr | “in the evening” |

They maintain their forms in all structures and do not undergo comparison.

10.2 Locative Adverbs

They state where something happens or where something goes.

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| (a) kùntombi | “ahead” |
| (b) kùyèè | “straight up (vertically)” |
| (c) seryèè | “straight (horizontally)” |
| (c) mbàyèè | “down (straight downwards / southwards)” |

10.3.i Manner Adverbs

They are used to describe the way in which something happens or is done. (142)

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------|
| (a) àtèr | “easily” |
| (b) àwàa | “carelessly” |
| (c) àwaḡ | “openly” |
| (d) àfoàfo | “frequently” |

These take the **à** prefix, which corresponds to the English “ly”, but when deleted some of the words become semantically void. An example is **àfoàfo** “frequently” in which the form “**fòàfo**” without the **à** is semantically empty. However, some words change category. An example is **àndèè** “better” whereby the deletion of the adverbial prefix **à** allows us to obtain noun **ndèè** - “customs”.

10.3.ii Alternative Manner Adverbs

Some manner adverbs do not take the adverbial prefix, but they describe the manner in which something is done.

- (a) **cərcəɾ** “to do something quickly”
- (b) **mɯwèɛ** “to do something slowly”
- (c) **wàrwàɾ** “to go about freely”

10.4 Derivation of Adverbs

Some adverbs are derived from adjectives and verbs by the use of the prefix **mu**, which means “a bit like” or “-ish.” English adjectival suffix. When an adverb is derived in this way, the effect of the lexical change is that the adverb has a comparative meaning, as can be seen in the following e.g

Adjective		Adverb	
(a) duŋtèè	“uneven”	mɯduŋtèè	“a bit more unevenly than”
(b) cuŋ	“hot”	mɯcuŋ	“a bit hotter than”
(c) coŋ	“wet”	mɯcòŋ	“a bit wetter than”
(d) fi	“new”	mɯfi	“a bit newer than”

Verb		Adverb	
(a) ce’	“to be bitter”	mucece’	“a bit much bitter than”
(b) tap	“to be difficult”	mutatap	“a bit more difficult than”
(c) cɛp	“to be sharp”	mucɛcɛp	“a bit sharper than”

11. Interrogatives

Limbum interrogatives make use of interrogative determiners, quantifiers, interrogative marker **a** that are usually found at the end of the sentences. In focused questions, the interrogative determiners come after verbs.

11.1.i Interrogative Markers **a** and **lɛ**

The interrogative marker **a** and **lɛ** are used at the end of sentences. **Lɛ** is mostly used in narratives and it also has a semantic notion of a clarification request e.g.

- (a) **À be no mrù’ a?**
2SG. FUT1 drink wine Q
Will you drink wine?
- (b) **Wèè be nòŋ a?**
2PL FUT1 sleep Q
Will you sleep (here)?
- (c) **Wèè `à mu yu’ lɛ ?**
2PL 2PL.SM PST2 hear Q
Did you say that you heard?

- (c) **E làa enɛ e be vù lɛ?**
 3SG say 3SG.SP.INTRO 3SG FUT1 come Q
 Did he say that he will come?

11.2 Interrogative Quantifiers

The marker for interrogative quantifier **sɛ'** can take the object noun class prefix to which it refers e.g.

- (a) **Wèè à yuu buu à bàa sɛ'?**
 2PL 2PL.SM buy things PREP money Q
 For how much did you buy the things?

- (b) **Bkuu bvi yu bsɛ'?**
 CL2-beds CL2-3PL.SM be CL6-Q
 How many beds are there?

- (c) **Mmaa mi yu msɛ'?**
 CL6-1SG.POSS.PRO CL6-3PL.SM be CL6-Q
 How many do I have?

11.3.i Interrogative Determiners

Interrogative determiners include: **nda** - "who?", **kɛ** - "what?" and **fɛ** - "where?" They can be used in sentences as follows:

- (a) **À ce ròo ba nda?**
 2SG ASP.CONT search FOC Q
 Who are you searching for?

- (b) **À ce ròo ba kɛ?**
 2SG ASP.CONT search FOC Q
 What are you searching for?

- (c) **À be dù ba fɛ?**
 2SG FUT1 go FOC Q
 Where will you go?

11.3.ii Focusing

Focusing is done by fronting the interrogative determiner e.g.

- (a) **A nda e ce ròo mè?**
 Is Q 3SG.SM ASP.CONT search 1SG.OBJ
 Who is searching for me?

- (b) **A kɛ zhi ce koni wè?**
 Is Q 3SG.SM ASP,CONT happen 2SG.OBJ
 What is happening to you?

11.4 Other Interrogatives

Another interrogative words **yû** - “be where” is a synonymous to **fɛ** - “where” interrogative determiner but they cannot be used interchangeably. However, **se’kɛ** “when”, **ànjěkɛ** - “how” and **njokɛ** . “why” are other forms of the interrogative determiners used for seeking time, manner and reason respectively e.g

(a) **Jôn a Mɛri a yû?**
John CONJ Mary 3PL.SM be-Q
Where is John and Mary?

(b) **Wè vù àse’kɛ?**
2SG. come Q
When did you come.

12. Negation

There are two types of negation in Limbum, one comes before the verb and the other comes after the verb. The one that comes after the verb **fa** is prohibitive. e.g.

- (a) **Fa saŋ i.**
NEG write
Don’t write.
- (b) **Fa saŋ ka’.**
NEG write NEG
Don’t write.
- (c) **Jôn à jòo ka’.**
John 3SG.SM touch NEG
John has not touched it.
- (d) **E be vù ka’.**
3SG. FUT1 come NEG
He will not come.

When answering questions, the negation marker can be **àyì’** or **ka’** e.g.

- (a) **Àyì’, m̀ be no ka’.**
NEG 1SG FUT1 drink NEG
No, I will drink.
- (b) **Ka’ e be vù ka’.**
NEG 3SG FUT1 come NEG
No, he will not come.

The **ka’** negation marker is reduplicated when used for prohibition. In that case we can have a double negation. e.g.

- (a) **Kaka, fa lòr ka'.**
 NEG NEG take NEG.
 No, don't take it.

With the use of these negation markers, the intrinsic properties of grammatical units whether word, phrases, clauses or sentences are not affected. Thus, noun or verb forms are not influenced semantically nor tonally as the word order remains the same.

13. Limbum Sentence Structures

Limbum has a rigid word order of subject verb object SVO. No matter the morpho-syntactic structure or variation in clausal or phrasal morphology, the structural arrangement is basically the same except in focus constructions. From simple to complex sentences, mostly the noun and verb phrases undergo various modifications.

13.1 Simple Sentences

A simple sentence in Limbum will be up of a single or modified noun that is followed by the verb and the object as can be seen as follows:

- (a) **Jòn kòn ñgwe.**
 John like dogs
 John likes dogs.

- (b) **Ndi à koo mbaa.**
 Ndi 1SG.SM catch leopard
 Ndi has caught a Leopard.

The subject marker also called subject pronoun or presumptive pronoun is an independent (free) morpheme which functions as a subject. Noun phrases can be modified by demonstratives, possessive adjectives and numerals e.g.

- (c) **Ndoñ ca a yàa.**
 CL1-cup DEM.PROX is CL1-1SG.POSS.PRO
 This cup is mine.

In case of focalisation the above sentence can be written as:

- (d) **A yàa ndoñ na.**
 Is CL1-1SG.POSS.ADJ CL1-cup DEM.PROX
 This is my cup.

Verb phrases in simple sentences can be made up of the tense or aspect markers e.g.

(e) **Mè ba koo mbaa.**
 1SG. PST1 catch leopard
 I caught a leopard.

(f) **M̃ ce zhe baa.**
 1SG ASP.CONT eat corn-fufu
 I am eating corn-fufu.

The rigid word order can be illustrated when constructions active / passive voice is concerned e.g

(a) **Mbaa à koo mbu.**
 Leopard 1SG.SM catch goat.
 The leopard caught the goat.

(b) **A mbaa e ba koo mbu.**
 Is leopard 3SG PST1 catch goat.
 The goat was caught by the leopard.
 It was the leopard that caught the goat.

For focalisation, the above can be written as:

(c) **A mbu ce mbaa à ba koo.**
 Is goat REL leopard 1SG.SM PST1 catch.
 It is the goat that was caught by the leopard.

Limbum would have a relative phrase for focalisation than the passive voice in the order of 'OVS'
the goat was caught by the leopard.'

13.2 Relative Clauses

As seen in focalisation above, relative clauses are worth dealing with separately as they differ in how main clauses are realised in Limbum. The structure of a Limbum relative clause is in the way that we can have a relativiser **ce** which may agree with the head noun or a relative pronoun which agrees with the head noun or a combination of the relativiser and the relative pronoun. It may be closed by an optional **nà**. e.g.

(a) **A nà' ce m̃ PST3 fa ye.**
 Is cow REL 1SG m give 3SG,OBJ
 It is the cow that I gave him.

(b) **A rtaa rce m̃ yuu.**
 Is CL5-cap CL5-REL 1SG buy
 It is the cap that I bought.

- (c) A **mbu** **zhǐ** **ngwe** **à** **mu** **koo.**
 Is CL1-goat CL1.REL dogs 3SG.SM PST2 catch
 Is is the goat that the dog caught.
- (d) A **mbu** **zhì** **ce** **ngwe** **à** **mu** **koo.**
 Is CL1-goat CL1.REL REL dogs 3SG.SM PST2 catch
 Is is the goat that the dog caught.
- (e) **Mbu** **zhì** **ce** **ngwe** **à** **mu** **koo** **nà** **yû?**
 CL1-goat CL1.REL REL dogs 3SG.SMPST2 catch DEM Q
 Where is the goat that the dog caught?

14. Conclusions

This short grammar sketch has been designed with the aim of illustrating new orthography reforms after we came up with more phonological and grammar findings as a result of recent work on the Limbum Dictionary. Though it may not provide a lot of insights into Limbum grammar, we hope that it will be a useful tool for reading and writing standard Limbum as of this point in time. Suggestions and remarks are welcome as we think that a more comprehensive grammar book for Limbum is still to be written. We strongly recommend that any work that includes the other Limbum dialects should be focused on phonological variation. This is because there are no other dialect differences at any other level of Limbum grammar.

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