

The Independent Personal Pronouns of Lakota

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Lakota is a language of the Dakotan group of the Siouan-Caddoan family of North American languages. The group comprises Dakota, Lakota, Assiniboine and Stoney, of which Lakota and Dakota and possibly also Assiniboine are mutually intelligible. The outlying Stoney language is not mutually intelligible with the rest. Lakota is spoken in the region of the Northern Plains and has been described since the early 20th Century. The closely related Dakota form was described from the late 19th Century. Fluent speakers of Lakota can still be found, but mainly among the older generation. Strenuous efforts are being made to preserve the language as a spoken form.

The talk will treat the two Lakota independent personal pronoun sets. Although morphologically simple, the definition of the usage of these pronouns and the choice of the particular set is quite involved. The factors involved seem to be partly distributional and partly semantic. The 3rd person set is more complex in its usage than the 1st and 2nd person set, partly because 3rd person can be morphologically unmarked in Lakota. One set can occur in company with a co-referent noun and is in a sense 'deletable'. The other set is less easily deletable and often constitutes a core element of the sentence.