PRONOUNS IN ETULO

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Abstract

This study is a preliminary investigation of Etulo pronominal system. The purpose of the study is to identify the different types of pronouns in Etulo, their tone patterns as well as their functions in simple sentences. Data for the study was collected from Etulo informants resident in Adi, Buruku Local Government Area of Benue State. Five classes of pronoun are identified and they are the personal, demonstrative, interrogative, reflexive and indefinite pronouns. Our findings reveal that to a large extent, the personal pronouns are identical in their segmental and tonal composition. Reflexivity is expressed by attaching a noun àbuwò 'self' to the object form of the pronoun while possession is marked by a prefixation to the object form of the pronoun. The demonstrative pronouns comprise two proximal and two distal demonstratives that maintain an inherent tone pattern within a noun phrase.

Keywords: pronoun, Etulo, language

1.0 Introduction

Pronouns in most languages occur as independent word forms and usually have the same distribution as a full noun phrase. To use a pronoun effectively, it is often needful to identify the noun that the pronoun is standing in for i.e. the antecedent. Pronouns also agree with the antecedent in number, person, etc.

This study provides an account of the types, forms and functions of pronouns in Etulo, the language of a minority group in Benue State. Etulo language belongs to the Idomoid group of the West Benue Congo languages of the Niger Congo language family. Etulo like most African languages is a tone language and in this study, high tones are left unmarked, low tones are marked with a grave accent (ˋ), mid tones are marked with a macron (ˉ) while the rising falling tones are marked with a circumflex accent (^).

1.1 Pronouns

Yule (1995:88) defines pronouns as words used in place of noun phrases typically referring to things already known. This lexical category according to him is often described in terms of person and number in the English language. Pronouns substitute for noun and noun phrases. Pronouns also refer directly to some aspect of the situation surrounding the speaker or writer.

Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2011:167) see pronouns as lexical items that can get their meaning from other NPs in the sentence or in the larger discourse. There are subclasses of pronoun. Such sub classes include the personal pronouns which are the main means of identifying speakers' addressees and others. In the English language, mine, yours, hers etc are the possessive pronouns. They express ownership as in' it is hers.' Other sub classes include demonstrative, reflexive and interrogative pronouns

For Bloomfield (1933:249), a pronoun is a grammatical element of variable reference which stands for some noun previously given, explicitly or implicitly in the context. He describes the pronoun in the light of its function in 'derived sentences' that is sentences within which nouns have been replaced with pronoun (masculine, feminine etc) as appropriate. For example, the utterance in

1. He will be here in a moment, presupposes the previous occurrence of some masculine noun or noun phrase to which the pronoun 'he' refers.

Hatch and Brown (1995:234) opine that pronouns refer to nouns that have already been mentioned in the discourse or points ahead to a noun that is about to be mentioned. They distinguish between anaphoric and cataphoric reference. Anaphoric points back in the discourse to a noun that has already been established while cataphoric reference points forward to its referent. For example in

2. Christy Essen is called the lady of songs, she sings traditional African music'. The pronoun 'she' is anaphoric.

Ruying (2005:1906) in his study on the pronominal system of English and Mandarin observes that substantial differences exist in the morphology, syntax and semantic/pragmatic functions of the pronominal systems of both languages. He claims that Mandarin personal pronoun forms are simpler than their English counterpart because there are no gender, animacy and case contrast in forms. Also each person consistently shares the Mandarin phonetic core and informaton such

as plurality and possessive case are all encoded by one common morpheme attached to the stem. This, contrasts the English pronominal paradigm where a common phonetic core cannot be extracted. Syntactically, English has obligatory subject and uses co referential pronouns while Mandarin is null subject (or pro drop) and prefers zero anaphora.

Edo, a Niger Congo language spoken in Benin city distinguishes three persons (first, second and third) and two numbers (singular and plural) in its pronominal system. The language also has four series of pronouns which are the subjective, objective, emphatic and copulative series (Uchihara 2010:1). Edo distinguishes pronouns according to the grammatical function of subject and object as well as the contrast between the non emphatic forms (subjective /objective) and emphatic forms. Uchihara (2010:11) also claims the existence of logophoric pronoun and general person pronoun. The latter corresponds to impersonal or indefinite pronouns in other languages and is used when the speaker cannot or does not want to specify the human subject of a sentence as in

3   ā   (yan   w(□)   ōkpıa   nī   mà

    Gp   (3.pl)   COMP   man   DET   be good

It is said that the man is good.

The former however are special pronouns used to refer to person whose words, thoughts, knowledge or emotions are being reported in a stretch of discourse. Edo uses the strong form of 3SG pronoun ((ı) yen) for logophoric reference as in

4 Osagie   w(□)   ı yēn   y(o)   evbā

    Osagie   COMP   3sg EMPH   went   there

    Osagie said he$_i$ went there.

In (3) above, ā is not specific on the human subject of the sentence while in (4), the person referred to with the pronoun 'iyēn is understood to be the same as the subject of the main verb 'say' which is Osagie.

Kari (2007:94) highlights a three way distinction in the pronominal system of Odual, a language spoken in Cross river state. He points out that an interesting and distinguishing feature of Odual pronominal system especially as regards the personal pronoun is the distinction the language makes between inclusive and

exclusive first person plural. Kari (2007:95) citing Givon (1984:354) claims that the inclusive and exclusive pronouns pertain to the hearers' inclusion in or exclusion from the referential scope of 'we' either dual or plural. This inclusion or exclusion according to him is not directly predictable from the speaker and hearer rather they are potentially ambiguous and it is only natural that they are given overt specification. He exemplifies as follows

5   èzìrə   noò   -ru
     1PLS   1pl PRES PERF   come
     We (incl) have come

6   èzəər   noò   -ru
     1PLS   1pl.PRES PERF   come
     We (excl) have come

The first person plural subject 'èzìrə' is used when the hearer is included within the referential scope while 'èzəər' is used when the hearer is excluded.

1.2 Pronouns in Etulo

1.2.1 Personal Pronouns

Etulo distinguishes three types of personal pronouns. The three types of personal pronoun are the subject, object and possessive pronouns. Etulo does not make any gender distinction in its pronominal system. It distinguishes between the first, second and third person. The first person is used by the speaker to refer to himself or to a group which the speaker is part of. The second person is used to refer to the hearer or to a group which the hearer is part of while the third person refers to persons or things excluding the speaker and hearer. In respect of number in the personal pronoun, the language distinguishes between the singular and plural pronouns. The language however lacks any overt distinction between the second person singular and the second person plural.

1.2.1.1 Subject Pronouns

 Subject pronouns occur before the verb and function as the subject of a sentence. In isolation, the pronouns are produced in the following forms

Table 1

Singular

1st m/anî   I

2nd abû   you

3rd ò   he/she/it

Plural

1st èjî   we

2nd emâ   you

3rd a   they

Segmentally, all subject pronouns begin with a vowel. The first and second person singular subjects have the same tone pattern (i.e.) starting with high tone and ending with a rising falling tone. In Etulo /m / and /anî / are used interchangeably as the subject forms of pronoun.

7 illustrate the use of these pronouns in the subject position.

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 anî          bâ          wà
1sgS          come        1sg pres perf
I have come
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abû           bâ          wà
2sgS          come        2sg pres perf
you(sg) have come
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O             bâ          wà
3sgS          come        3sg pres   perf
He/she has come
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èjî           bâ          wà
1pl           come        1pl pres perf
We have come
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emâ	bâ	wà
2pl	come	2pl pres perf

You(pl) have come

a	bâ	wà
3pl	come	3pl pres perf

They have come.

In 7, all subject pronouns maintain their inherent tone patterns in sentences except the pronoun that refers to the third person singular subject which has a low tone in isolation and becomes high when used in a sentence. It is also observed that the present perfect marker is CV. The vowel of the verb stem agrees with the vowel of the present perfective marker. The form /wa/ is associated with the first, second and third person's singular subjects as well as the plural subject pronouns. This is opposed to what obtains in the English language where the third person singular subject has a different form of present perfective marker.

1.2.1.2 Object Pronouns

Object pronouns occur after the verb, and function as the object of a sentence. These pronouns, in their isolation forms are identical with their subject counterparts both segmentally and tonally except the object pronoun referring to the third person singular and plural objects. Object pronouns are also consistent in their tone patterns when used in a sentence.

Forms of Object Pronoun

Table 2

Singular

1st anî   me

2nd abû   you

3rd n   him/her

plural

1st èjî   us

2ⁿᵈ emâ   you(pl)

3ʳᵈ amâ   they

8 illustrates the use of these pronouns in object positions

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 ò          kà          dı       anî
 3sgS       3sg fut      -see     1sgO
 He will see me


 m          kà          dı       abû
 1sgS       1sg fut      -see     2sgO
 I   will see you


 m          kà          dı       n
 1sgS       1sg fut      -see     3sgO
 I    will see him


ò           kà          dı      èjî
 3sgS        3sg fut    -see     1plO
 he will see us


èjî          kà          dı      ma
1plS         1pl fut      -see    3plO
we will see them.
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It is observed that the future marker has a CV form. /ka /the future marker remain the same and does not distinguish between number and person in the object forms of Etulo pronouns.

1.2.2 Possessive Pronouns

Ownership in Etulo is expressed by the use of possessive pronoun. This is achieved by prefixing 'mgba' to the form of the object pronoun. When the possessive marker 'mgba' is in associative construction with the object forms of pronoun, the last sound segment (a) is elided.

Forms of possessive pronoun:

Table 3

Singular

1st mgbanî   mine

2nd mgbabû   yours(sg)

3rd mgban   his/hers

plural

1st mgbejî   ours

2nd mgbemâ   yours(pl)

3rd mgbamâ   theirs

9 illustrates the use of these pronouns in possessive noun phrases

ìgbe   mgbanî
bag   1sgPOSS
my bag

ìgbe   mgbabû
bag   2sgPOSS
your (sg) bag

 ìgbe   mgban
bag   3sgPOSS
his/her bag

ìgbe   mgbejî
bag   1plPOSS
 our bag

ìgbe   mgbemâ
bag   2plPOSS
 your(pl) bag

 ìgbe   mgbamâ
bag   3plPOSS

their bag

In a possessive noun phrase, the possessive pronouns retain their inherent tone pattern. Also the possessive noun phrases do not undergo any alteration in segments.

Table 4: Summary of Etulo personal pronouns

	Subject	Object	Possessive
1SG	m/anî 'I'	anî 'me'	mgbanî 'mine'
PL	ejî 'we'	ejî 'us'	mgbejî 'ours'
2SG	abû ' you'	abû 'you'	mgbabû 'yours'
PL	abû 'you'	abû 'you'	mgbemâ yours
3SG	o 'he/she '	n him/her	mgban 'his/hers
PL	a 'they'	emâ 'them'	mgbamâ 'theirs

1.2.3 Reflexive Pronouns

Reflexivity in Etulo is expressed by the use of a construction which involves the combination of a noun 'àbuwò' and the object forms of the pronoun. The pronouns always succeed the noun as shown in the table below.

Table 5

àbuwò anî
self   1sgO
myself

àbuwò abû
self   2sgO
 yourself

àbuwò   n

self   3sgO
himself/herself

àbuwò èjî
self   1plO
ourselves

àbuwò abû
self   2plO
yourselves

àbuwò emâ
self   3plO
themselves

 Below are sentence examples of the reflexive pronouns

10.m   fo   àbuwànî
   1sgS   hear   1sgPOss
    I   heard myself

abû   fo   àbuwabû
2sg S   hear   2sgPOSS
 you heard yourself

O   fo   àbuwon
3sgS   hear   3sgPOss
He heard himself

èjî   fo   àbuwèjî
1plS   hear   1plPOSS
we heard ourselves

a   fo   àbuwèmâ
3plS   hear   3plPOss
 they heard themselves

The noun /àbuwò/ 'self' remains the same for both singular and plural antecedent. It is also observed that the last sound segment of this form meaning self is elided except for the 3SG possessive pronoun where the last sound segment is retained.

1.2.4 Demonstrative Pronoun

Etulo has four demonstrative pronouns. These pronouns express contrast between distant and near and both substitute for objects which are known to both speaker and hearer.The four demonstrative pronouns in Etulo are divided into two proximal demonstratives /nenì/'this' and/nanì/'that' and two distal demonstratives /tenenì/'these' and /tananì/'those'. Forms of demonstrative pronouns are shown below

Table 6

nenì   this
nanì   that
tenenì   these
tananì those

In isolation, the proximal demonstratives /nenì/'this' and/nanì/ 'that' have high-low tone pattern. This tone pattern is maintained when they co-occur with other words. This is also true of the distal demonstratives tenenì/'these' and/tananì/'those'. 11 illustrates demonstrative pronouns in noun phrases

11. òzû   nenì
    house   sg.prox
    this house

 òzû   nanì
 house sg dist
 that house

òzû   tenenì
house pl. prox
these houses

òzû   tananì
house   pl.dst
those houses
In the above construction, the demonstratives follow the nouns they modify.

1.2.5 Interrogative Pronoun:

 Some of the interrogative pronouns identified in the study include:

Table7

lème   who /what

mòle   how

mt∫osìnè   why

làlʊnwʊɔ   why

zòle   where

Some illustrative examples of interrogatives are

lème   ze menâ
who   there
who is there?

ìjı   abû lème
name   you   what
what is your name?

The forms mt∫osìnè and làlʊnwʊɔ   can be used interchangeably to mean why as in 12

mt∫osìnè abu   lı   nwìkpɔ
why   you   be   cry
why are you crying?

làlʊnwʊɔ   abu lı   nwìkpɔ
why   you   be   cry
why are you crying

Conclusion

The pronominal system of Etulo has been examined. Our findings show that most forms of subject pronoun maintain their inherent tone and do not alter segmentally in simple declarative sentences. Reflexivity is marked by a combination of a noun àbuwò meaning self and the possessive pronoun. It is however noted that the noun marking reflexivity does not vary in form irrespective of whether its antecedent is singular or plural. Also observed is the fact that tense markers do not have distinct forms that reflect the differences in the forms of pronoun.

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