

## A Systemic Functional Exploration of Koro-Ashe Pronoun System

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### **Abstract**

*In every language, certain lexical items display similar behaviours which account for the grouping into the same word class with prototypical members, which manifest all the important features of the class. Koro-Ashe, as language, equally has lexical items which also belong to various classes. One of these classes is the pronoun. This study is an exploration of the pronoun system of Koro-Ashe with focus on the classifications. Halliday's (1961) Scale and Category is the theoretical underpinning for the study. The study employed a purposive random sampling technique and the data were generated using unstructured questionnaire, informal interactions with native speakers and introspection. Findings revealed that the pronouns of Koro-Ashe are classed into personal, possessive, reflexive, emphatic, demonstratives, interrogative, relative, reciprocal, numerical and quantifying pronouns. These pronouns appear in different forms for different purposes – referential coreferential and deictic. This research, therefore concludes that pronouns are part of the linguistic properties and systems of Koro-Ashe and are useful for the avoidance of needless repetitions and ensuring a coherent and concise communication.*

*Keywords: Systemic, Functional, Pronoun, Koro-Ashe*

### **1.1 Introduction**

There can never be a language without a people and vice versa. This implies that language is owned by a people and it exists because speakers or users of such a language exist and use it for different purposes. That is why language is never studied in isolation but rather in connection to

its users. Koro-Ashe is a member of the cluster of Koro languages whose family relation is traced to west-central plateau languages or Benue-Congo in the Niger-Congo group of languages (Godon, 2005). The nomenclature 'Koro-Ashe' has often served a twofold purpose – it refers to the people and their language as well. It is spoken in Kagarko Local Government Area of Kaduna State and Karu Government Area of Nassarawa State. Arams *et al.*, (2017), SIL Nigeria (2018) and Blench (2020) identify two standard varieties of Koro-Ashe; they are Koro Ashe Itorn /itōr/ and Koro Icek associated with Ice. However, the difference between the two dialects is at the phonological level. Ashe is spoken by about forty thousand (40,000) people (Ashe Dictionary SIL, 2018). However, Eberhard *et al.* (2023), says the language has between 10 thousand to 1 million L1 users and it is a stable indigenous language though not institutionalised as it is not used beyond the mother tongue context.

Koro-Ashe has linguistic features noticeable at phonological, lexical, morphological, syntactic, and semantic level. At the lexical level, the pronoun class constitutes an integral component. The presence of pronouns in the grammar of every language is an indication of their indispensability and the important role they play in human communication. Affirming this, Radford (2009), notes that the pronoun class is one of the functional categories in the word class division, and though lacking lexical semantic content of its own, it is an important component of language. Pronouns in a language ensure precision and clarity of expressions and help to avoid needless mindless monotonous repetitions. They can convey various types of information depending on the language and these include indicating formality, reflecting cultural and social factors such as gender distinction, indicating number, expressing case and so on.

Even though the pronoun class is a universal phenomenon that cuts across different human languages, its forms and classifications in Koro-Ashe is different. This is because the Koro-Ashe grammar and its elements are peculiar to the language alone. Again, the pronoun system of Koro-Ashe has not been well examined, hence, the forms and classifications are yet to be identified and specified. Until this is done, the accurate description of the use and placement of these pronouns in the language cannot be determined. Also, most Nigerian indigenous languages, Koro-Ashe inclusive, have remained in the oral form with very few appearing in print such as translated Bibles, hymn books and dictionaries. Once a language remains oral and is not documented, it risks underdevelopment, endangerment and even extinction. Hence, there is the need to document and promote the language through scholarship such as this. This is a part of the

community concerted effort and contribution to promoting the language, preserving it and ensuring its survival and continual use. This study, therefore, aims at examining the forms and classification of the pronoun system of Koro-Ashe.

## **Literature Review**

### **Systemic Functional Grammar**

Systemic Functional Grammar is an approach and a paradigm to language study propounded by M.A.K. Halliday in 1961. Halliday, in his postulation, maintained that “a theory of linguistics must incorporate the functions of language in use.” In this regard, the theory centred on the notion of language function. The systemic places the function of language as primary, as the “fundamental property of language itself” (Halliday & Hassan, 1985:17). The Systemic began with Firth’s attempt to develop a model that relates language function and context. To achieve this, he proposed a framework based on the concept of the system, defined as an “enumerated set of choices in a specific context” (Kress 1978: xiii). This gave rise to two sets of contexts for any item: the context of culture and context of situation. The structural configuration restricts the choices that can be made. Therefore, the fusion of these two constructs – system and function - reveals that the main pursuits of Systemic Functional Grammar are to demonstrate a speaker’s actual use of language, to predict what choices the speaker can make and to show to what extent these choices are contextually conditioned. Halliday regards acts of speech as a simultaneous selection from among a large number of interrelated options.

### **The Pronoun Class**

In linguistics, word classes, also known as lexical categories, and parts of speech in traditional grammar, are groups of words that display similar grammatical properties, syntactic, morphological, and semantic behaviours. Halliday (1963), describes a class as a set of items that are in some respect alike. In the view of Quirk, *et al.* (1982), items belong to a class in that they have the same grammatical properties and structural possibilities as other members of the class. This suggests that a pronoun should possess grammatical properties similar to those of the other members of the same class. Greenbaun (1996), Radford (2004), and O’Grady and Archibald (2016) delineate the criteria upon which word classes are determined to include notional (meaning), morphology (form) and grammatical (relations with other words and language units).

In the linguistic configuration of categories, pronouns are classed as functional words because they pick out objects as full lexical nominal when they enter interpretation but they lack descriptive contents.

Many linguists have defined and described pronouns in several respects. Traditional grammar, for instance, views the category of pronoun to denote a class of words which is said to ‘stand in place of’ or refer back to noun expressions (Radford, 2004). According to Davidson (1874) as cited in Rauh (2010), a pronoun assumes the place of a noun, and indicating definite persons and comprising six accidents: person, gender, number, case, form, and species. Morley (2000), reconceptualises pronouns by regarding them as fitting to substitute for a nominal clause, a nominal phrase or, in just some cases, a nominal word, i.e. a noun. Harley (2006) espouses that since they stand in for a noun phrase, pronouns are themselves noun phrases, as far as their grammatical category goes. Concurring to this, Ogungbe and Bossan (2013) point out that the substitutionary role of pronouns to all nominal category is geared towards circumventing unnecessary repetition and besides avoidance of repetition, Ojo (2011, p.58), remarks a pronoun is used in a sentence also to ensure referentiality between elements in a sentence. Adding to the characteristics and function of pronouns, Greenbaun (1996, p.163), explains that pronouns are in effect closed set of nouns, and are typically deictic, pointing to entities in the situation or pointing to linguistic units in the previous or following context”. Baskervill and Sewell (2013), assert that pronouns are used because of the need for short, definite, and representative words. This is to say that the employment of pronouns in discourse is to ensure conciseness and precision of expressions.

### **Classification of Pronouns of English**

The classifications of pronouns of English have been approached from different standpoints by different scholars. Greenbaun (1996), groups pronouns into primary pronouns (personal, possessive and reflexive), wh-pronouns (interrogative, exclamative, relative, nominal, relative, wh–conditional), and indefinite pronouns (assertive, non-assertive, negative, quantifying, and universal). Other smaller sets are reciprocal pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, generic pronoun, and substitute pronoun. Quirk, *et al.* (1982 p.95), broadly distinguish between items with specific reference and those with more indefinite reference. Radford (2004), says that the different types of pronouns exist in English and other languages for some reasons. He identifies the types to

include pronominal noun (N-pronoun), pronominal quantifier (Q-pronoun) and pronominal determiner (D-pronouns).

### **2.1.1 Empirical Studies**

There are quite a number of studies on the pronoun system of different languages. These studies are reviewed because of their relevance to the current study.

A study was conducted by Rai (2013) on ‘A Comparative Study of Pronoun between English and Bantawa’ and aimed at identifying the types of pronouns in the two languages. The study purposively sampled thirty Bantawa native speaker students in both languages and data were gathered using questionnaire and observation. The study revealed that both languages have different types of pronouns. The result also proved that while some pronouns of English have one to one correspondence with Bantawa, others do not. Most significantly, since the study focused on the pronouns used by Bantawa native speakers in context in both English and Bantawa languages, it was discovered that that Bantawa native speakers commit error in reflexive pronoun of English language while learning English pronoun. The present study differs from the previous one, in that in addition to the types of pronouns, the various morphological features, and structural tendencies of English and Ashe pronouns as well as their functionality in discourse are examined. Furthermore, on instrumentation, this study combines questionnaire with recordings of informal interactions with native speaker of Ashe.

Another research was conducted by Faloju and Ajikobi (2017), comparative the personal pronouns in Russian and Yoruba languages. The paper, using a descriptive paradigm, focused on analysing the class, usage structure and meaning of the personal pronouns in Russian and Yoruba. The study established that a proper understanding of the personal pronouns of each language is the key to understanding the language and the culture of the two people since elements of culture are embedded in the personal pronouns. The study therefore concludes that denotative meaning is the primary role of personal pronouns in a given proposition, while connotative meaning is seen as the secondary role.

Research was conducted by Ekah (2018) on a contrastive analysis of demonstrative patterns in English and Ibibio. The data for this research were drawn from elicitation. The findings indicated that syntactically, Ibibio demonstratives consist of a three-way opposition while those of English consist of a two-opposition. It was also discovered that demonstratives in English inflect for

person and number while those of Ibibio behave in different ways, while some inflect for person and number, some do not. The paper further established that Ibibio has two classes of demonstratives, with each being syntactically different from the other. Findings also revealed that demonstratives in both languages can function as determiners, subject of the sentence, articles as well as a verb in Ibibio; properties which are not found in English. The previous studied demonstrative pronouns in English and Ibibio, while the present work explore the types of pronouns in Koro-Ashe.

Al-Jarrah1, *et al.* (2020), conducted a comparative study of personal pronouns, demonstrative pronouns and relative pronouns in Arabic, English and Spanish. The study aimed at unearthing areas of variances and resemblances in the types, classifications and main features among the three languages under investigation. The comparison was accompanied with illustrative examples to enhance understanding of the use of pronouns in the three languages. The research data were drawn from different linguistic resources including books, research papers and articles. Findings showed that pronouns in the three languages share the same referential function, which is assigning some elements to their actual referents. The analysis also portrayed that the three languages act differently in terms of using those pronouns, in the sense that the differences are mostly exhibited in the pronouns specifying the number of referents, their gender and distance from referents. The earlier study and the current one explored the pronouns system of different languages. While the former examined the personal pronouns, demonstrative pronouns and relative pronouns in Arabic, English and Spanish, the latter explored the whole classification of pronouns but in Koro-Ashe alone. Also, in the previous work, data were drawn from books, articles and research papers whereas the current work employed questionnaires and introspection.

Garba (2021) researched on “A Comparative Analysis of the Hausa and Jar Pronouns”. The work analytically compared the nature and positions of pronouns within sentences or noun phrase of both languages. The theoretical frame work upon which this work was anchored is comparative theory of languages. The data for this study were sourced by interviewing the native speakers from both languages as well as gleaning on information from some text books of both languages. Contrastively, Hausa demonstrates gender distinction in second and third person, Singular Pronouns ‘kai’, ‘ke’, ‘shi, and ‘ita’. While Jar languages have no gender in second and third person pronouns. Also, where English and Jar languages have shared the same rules in second

person and object pronouns (you), the rule differs with Hausa. Another difference is that some singular subject pronouns in Jar languages are most times placed after a verb in a sentence, while in Hausa, singular personal subject pronouns are most times positioned before a verb. Both the previous and the present study focused on the exploration of the pronouns. However, while the reviewed work compared the pronouns of two languages, the present study presented the classification of the pronoun system of Koro-Ashe.

Another work was carried out by Turdikulovna (2021), on the Comparative Study of Interrogative Pronouns ‘what’ and ‘who’ in English and Uzbek, centering on their semantic and morphological usages. The research was anchored on observations of the opinions of scholars who have conducted researches on the same subject. The results indicated that Uzbek is related to agglutinative as there are more words derived through the affixes. Thus, the interrogative pronouns ‘kim’ and ‘nima’ can be declined in category of case via the different inflectional suffix – ni, ning, ga, da, dan. In English, the pronoun ‘what’ does not manifest the characteristics of a case in grammatical category, but is generally regulated by the semantics and meaning. English interrogative pronouns remain unchanged, in both the number and gender. Being an analytical language English does not mark interrogative words ‘who’ and ‘what’ as the derived affixes it belongs to. Hence, it is seen that morphological differences between the languages taken in consideration are significantly greater than the similarities. Although grammatical categories of Uzbek are very close to those of English interrogatives, ‘kim’ and ‘nima’ in Uzbek show notable case. Even though the previous work is related to the present study in subject, the latter examines other types of pronouns in addition to the interrogative pronoun in Koro-Ashe. Again, while the previous work interrogates the semantic and morphological properties of the interrogative pronouns in Uzbek, the present research is a description of the various classification of pronouns.

From these existing studies, and to the best of the researcher’s knowledge, there is no existing work on the classification of Koro-Ashe pronoun system and this is the focus of this paper.

## **Methodology**

This study adopts descriptive research design in order to describe the forms and classifications of pronouns in Koro-Ashe. The study purposively selected two respondents from 50 years and above from three Koro-Ashe speaking communities – Katugal, Shadalafiya and Kondoro, using

the variables of language competence, duration of stay within the speech community and exposure to western education. The data were drawn from unstructured questionnaire, consisting of one hundred items, unstructured informal interactions with native speakers on traditional marriage rites and initiation into adulthood, and being a native speaker, the researcher also relied in introspection. These interactions were recorded and transcribed so as to identify the various pronouns in the language. The questionnaire helps to corroborate and validate the findings in the informal interactions. The data were presented in tabular forms according to the different classifications of pronouns in the language. The analysis was anchored based on Halliday (1961) Scale and Category Theory.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Scale and Category theory is Halliday's early thoughts on linguistic theory Halliday's (1961) Scale and Category was formulated on four grammatical categories – the unit, structure, class and system and the scale of rank, exponence and delicacy which relate to the categories. In the 'scale and category framework', the categories are essentially theoretical constructs, whereas the scales serve to relate the categories both to each other and to the textual data.

### **Unit Category**

The category of unit proposed by Halliday accounts for stretches of language of varying lengths and composition. It includes sentence, clause, group, word and morpheme. Units are hierarchical arranged on a scale such that each unit of a particular rank consists of one or more unit next below.

### **Structure Category**

Structure is the category set up to account for likeness between events in succession (Halliday 1961, p.59). It describes the pattern of syntagmatic relations at the grammatical level and captures the similarities between them.

### **Category of Class**

The category of class is the grouping of members of a given unit (sentence, group, word, and morpheme) which is defined by operation in the structure of unit next above (Halliday 1961).

According to Butler (1985), the class takes into account the paradigmatic possibilities associated with particular element of structure. How this relates to Halliday's model can be seen in the P-element (predicator) of a clause structure – for the group unit, there is a verbal class which has the potential for occurring in the P- Position.

### **System Category**

The category of system is set up to account for the occurrence of one rather than another from the group of members of like events (Halliday 1961). Specifically, a system is a set of terms with these characteristics: the number of terms is infinite, they can be listed A, B, C, D, and all other items E... are outside the system, each term is exclusive of all others as a given term A cannot be identical with B or C or D, and if a new term is added to the system, this changes the meaning of all other terms. The system may be number system, person system, gender system, polarity system, finiteness, tense mood and voice.

### **Scale of Rank**

Rank is a term which refers to one of the scales of analysis, which interrelates the categories of the theory, viz. the hierarchical arrangement of linguistic units within a linguistic level. The rank requires that every item in the unit is accounted for. A sentence consists of a single clause, which itself comprises a single group, containing a single word and which, in turn consists of single morpheme. These items undergo rank-shifting.

### **Scale of Exponence**

Scale of exponence relates terms in system of unit, class, and structure and allow the analysis to achieve a maximum generalisation (Butler, 1985). Through the scale of exponence, the categories are related to each other and to the textual data. The paradigmatic possibilities themselves illustrate the scale of exponence. Using the clause structure, the items, which represent, (expounds) the S-elements (subjects), are members of the nominal class of the group unit.

## Scale of Delicacy

The scale of delicacy is concerned with the degree of detail which is incorporated into the analysis. In other words, the scale of delicacy can be defined as that scale which refers to the degree of detail in which a structure is specified (Halliday, 1961 as cited in Fawcett, 2000).

## Data Presentation and Analysis

For the classification of the pronoun system of in Koro-Ashe, ten types are identified namely: personal, possessive, reflexive, emphatic, indefinite, relative, demonstrative, interrogative, reciprocal, numerical and quantifying pronouns. Each of these types is explained below with data:

### Classification of Koro-Ashe Pronoun System

#### Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns often refer to the trio agents in communication. Collins (2004), views personal pronouns as referring to something or someone that has already been mentioned, or to the speaker or hearer. Quirk *et al.* (1982), assert that personal pronouns function as replacements for co-referential noun phrases in neighbouring (usually preceding) clauses. The personal pronouns in Koro-Ashe also reflect the three participants in speech, that is, the addresser, addressee and the topic/subject. As seen in Table 1 below, the personal pronouns in Koro-Ashe contain various forms for each category from the speaker selects depending on the context.

**Table 1: Ashe Personal Pronoun**

Ashe	English	Category					
		Unit	Class	Structure	System		
					Person	Number	Gender
ime	I	group, word, morpheme	personal	Subjective	1 <sup>st</sup> person	singular	neutral
ime	me	„	„	Objective	„	„	„
inte	we	„	„	subjective	„	plural	„
inte	us	„	„	Objective	„	„	„
inyime	you	„	Personal	subjective &	2 <sup>nd</sup> person	plural	neutral

				objective			
iye	he		personal	subjective	3 <sup>rd</sup> person	singular	masculine
iye	she	„	„	„	„	singular	feminine
iye	it	„	„	„	„	singular	neuter
imbɔɔ	they	„	„	„	„	plural	generic
iye	him	„	„	Objective	„	plural	masculine
iye	her	„	„	„	„	singular	feminine
iye	it	„	„	„	„	singular	neuter
imbɔɔ	them	„	„	„	„	plural	generic

Source: Author’s Compilation (2024).

### Possessive Pronouns

Possessive pronouns show to whom the person or thing referred to belongs or is connected with (Collins, 2004). In much clearer term, Swick (2011), explains that possessive pronouns show ownership just as their noun counterparts. Koro-Ashe possessive pronouns are derived from the personal counterparts by affixing the vowel ‘e-’. These pronouns maintain the same form to express both pronominal and determinative functions. Table 2 below presents the possessive pronouns in Koro-Ashe capturing the three participants.

Table 2: Koro-Ashe Possessive pronouns

Ashe	English	Category					
		Unit	Class	Structure	System		
					Person	Number	Gender
e me	mine	group, word, morpheme	possessive	genitive	1 <sup>st</sup> person	singular reference	Neutral
e te	ours	„	„	„	1 <sup>st</sup> person	plural	Neutral
e ɲo	yours	„	„	„	2 <sup>nd</sup> person	singular	Neutral
e nyime	yours	„	„	„	2 <sup>nd</sup> person	plural	Neutral
e ye	his	„	„	„	3 <sup>rd</sup> person	plural	masculine
e ye	hers	„	„	„	3 <sup>rd</sup> person	singular	Feminine
e ye	its	„	„	„	3 <sup>rd</sup> person	singular	Neuter
e mbɔɔ	their	„	„	„	3 <sup>rd</sup> person	plural	Generic

Source: Author’s compilation, (2024).

## Reflexive Pronouns

According Greenbaun (1996), reflexive usually co-refers with the subject. The reflexive may be the direct object, the indirect object, the subject predicative, the object of a prepositional verb, or the agent in a by-phrase. In other words, reflexive pronouns indicate that the subject is performing an action on itself. It is through these pronouns that actions performed by the subject bounce back to the subject thereby, making it the target or recipient of the action. Swan (2016), affirms that reflexive pronouns are used as objects, in cases when the object refers to the same person(s) or thing(s) as the subject. In Koro-Ashe, there are pronouns that cause the effect of the action performed by the doer to bounce back to the doer. Koro-Ashe reflexives are derived by prefixing the morpheme ‘eche’ (literally meaning ‘head’ and translated ‘self’) to both singular and plural personal pronouns. In terms of person, 1<sup>st</sup> person (echeme; echete or echeyir), 2<sup>nd</sup> person (echejo; echeyim), 3<sup>rd</sup> person (echeye; themselves/echebɔɔ) as captured in Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Koro-Ashe Reflexive Pronouns**

Ashe	English Equivalent	Category					
		Unit	Class	Structure	System		
					Person	Number	Gender
echeme	myself	group, word morpheme	reflexive	objective	1 <sup>st</sup> person	singular	Neutral
echeyir	ourselves	„	„	„	1 <sup>st</sup> person	plural	Neutral
echejo	yourself	„	„	„	2 <sup>nd</sup> person	singular	Neutral
echeyim	yourselves	„	„	„	2 <sup>nd</sup> person	plural	Neutral
echeye	himself	„	„	„	3 <sup>rd</sup> person	singular	Masculine
echeye	herself	„	„	„	3 <sup>rd</sup> person	singular	Feminine
echeye	itself	„	„	„	3 <sup>rd</sup> person	singular	Neuter
echebɔɔ	themselves	„	„	„	3 <sup>rd</sup> person	plural	Generic

Source: Author’s compilation, (2024)

## Emphatic Pronouns

Greenbaun (1996), explains that emphatic reflexives function as a kind of apposition to a noun phrase, which they emphasise. If that noun phrase is the subject, the reflexive may either immediately follow the subject or occur at various positions later in the clause. The emphatic pronouns in Koro-Ashe appositive in nature and often reinforce their antecedents by emphasising the role of the subject in relation to the action performed or the state of being assumed. There are formed by prefixing the morpheme “naza” to the personal pronoun forms. They have different form with the reflexive pronouns. Table 4 below shows Koro-Ashe emphatic pronouns.

**Table 4: Ashe Emphatic Pronouns**

Ashe	English	Category					
		Unit	Class	Structure	System		
					Person	Number	Gender
nazame	myself	group, word & morpheme	emphatic	appositive	1 <sup>st</sup> person	singular	neutral
nazayir	Ourselves	„	„	„	1 <sup>st</sup> person	plural	neutral
nazaṅo	Yourself	„	„	„	2 <sup>nd</sup> person	Singular	neutral
nazayim	Yourselves	„	„	„	2 <sup>nd</sup> person	plural	neutral
nazai	Himself	„	„	„	3 <sup>rd</sup> person	Singular	masculine
nazai	Herself	„	„	„	3 <sup>rd</sup> person	„	feminine
nazai	Itself	„	„	„	3 <sup>rd</sup> person	„	neuter
nazaboo	Themselves				3 <sup>rd</sup> person	plural	neutral

Source: Author’s Compilation, (2024).

## Reciprocal Pronouns

According to Greenbaun (1996), the reciprocals co-refer only with noun phrases that are plural in form or meaning. The separation places a greater emphasis on the reciprocity. These pronouns express mutual relationship thereby indicating that two or more subjects are performing the same action towards each other. Herring (2016), in his description of reciprocal pronouns, says they are used to refer to two or more people who are or were the subject of the same verb, with both or all parties mutually receiving or benefiting from that action in the same way. Koro-Ashe displays three morphological forms of reciprocal pronouns – ‘adokyir’, ‘adokyim’ and ‘adokboo’

all of which cover for both two and more than two referents. Koro-Ashe has three forms of reciprocal pronouns which inflect to reflect the first, second and third person in speech as shown in table 5 below:

**Table 5: Ashe Reciprocal Pronouns**

Ashe	English	Category					
		Unit	Class	Structure	System		
					Person	Number	Gender
adɔkyir adɔkyim adɔkbɔɔ	each other	nominal group, word, morpheme	reciprocal	objective	1 <sup>st</sup> person 2 <sup>nd</sup> person 3 <sup>rd</sup> person	plural reference	neutral
adɔkyir adɔkyim adɔkbɔɔ	one another	”	”	”	1 <sup>st</sup> person 2 <sup>nd</sup> person 3 <sup>rd</sup> person	plural reference	neutral

Source: Author’s compilation, (2024).

### **Indefinite Pronouns**

Indefinite pronouns are used to refer to people or things without indicating exactly who or what they are (Collins, 2004). By implication, they reference unspecified referents. This view is sustained by Crystal (2008), who stresses that indefinite pronouns often convey indefiniteness and are incapable of specific identification. Greenbaun (1996), elucidates further that the indefinite pronouns assumed that nomenclature because they have a general reference. There are also pronouns in Koro-Ashe that do not point to a specific entity. These pronouns constitute one of the largest classes and some of the forms are capable of multiple reference while others can be used interchangeable. Table 6 below presents the indefinite pronouns in Koro-Ashe:

**Table 6: Ashe Indefinite Pronouns**

Ashe	English	Category					
		Unit	Class	Structure	System		
					Person	Number	Gender
Koinyãã	everyone	group, word, morpheme	indefinite	subjective objective	neutral	singular reference	Personal
Koinyãã	everybody	”	”	”	”	”	”
kouhwei	everything	”	”	”	”	”	non personal

koinyãã, uyom	anyone	”	”	”	”	”	Personal
Koinyãã	anybody	”	”	”	”	”	”
Kouwhei ubineye	anything	”	”	”	”	”	non personal
Abom	some	”	”	”	”	plural	personal/ non personal
Nyom	someone	”	”	”	”	singular	personal
Nyom	somebody	”	”	”	”	”	”
ibinyom	something	”	”	”	”	”	non personal
umeye	none	”	”	”	”	”	neutral
unyom/ emeye	no one	”	”	”	”	”	personal
unyom emeye	nobody	”	”	”	”	”	”
ubinyom	nothing	”	”	”	”	”	non personal
Unyom	another	”	”	”	”	”	neutral

Source: Author’s compilation (2024).

### **Relative Pronouns**

According to Greenbaun (1996), relative pronouns are used in the construction of relative clauses, which post modify nouns. They normally are used to introduce relative clauses. In agreement with Greenbaun, Swick (2011), observes that two sentences can be combined by using a relative pronoun as a subordinator. Baskervill and Sewell (2013), state that because relative pronouns have conjunctive use, they help to unite short statements into longer sentences, thereby making discourse effective. Koro-Ashe relative pronouns are pronouns which serve as binders of clauses of unequal status – independent and dependent. There exists a single form of relative pronoun in Koro-Ashe which references its antecedent whether subject, object or possessive as illustrated in able 7 below.

**Table 7: Ashe Relative pronouns**

Ashe	English	Category					
		Unit	Class	Structure	System		
					Person	Number	Gender
sha	who	group, word, morpheme	relative	subjective	neutral	neutral	personal
sha	whom	„	„	objective	„	„	personal
shu/sha	whose	„	„	genitive	„	„	personal
sha	which	„	„	subjective objective	„	„	Non personal
sha	that	„	„	neutral	„	„	neutral

Source: Author’s compilation, (2024).

### **Demonstrative Pronouns**

Demonstrative pronouns are pointers – they point to specific entities in relation to the location or distance of the entities they are referring to. The demonstratives present two types of contrast. The first is a contrast in number (singular and plural), while the second is a contrast in proximity - indicate relative nearness and relative remoteness. In addition, the proximity may be in space or in time (Quirk et al., 1982). The general meanings of demonstratives are those of ‘near’ and ‘distant’ reference. Koro-Ashe demonstratives point to entities and there are multiple forms which are used in relation to their antecedent as well roles (pronominal or determinative). From the above table, Ashe has several forms of demonstrative pronouns because the context of use and the antecedent that is referenced may allow for selection of a different form. For instance, ecee, igwene, iyene, umi, ocee iyee; correspond to ‘this’ in English though in relation to the referent and its number. Also, imbone, imbene, abee, ogwee, akee, equals ‘these’ in English; iyococ, uyoc, iyoc, eococ, relate to ‘that’ in English and akoc, ogwoo, aboc, imbococ tally with the ‘English ‘those’. Even though these forms are used specially for the determinative function of the demonstratives, some of them assume the pronominal role.

**Table 8: Ashe Demonstration Pronouns**

Ashe	English	Category					
		Unit	Class	Structure	System		
					Person	Number	Gender
Igwene, iyene	This	group, word	demonstrative	subjective objective	Neutral	singular	neutral
iyɔnɔɔ, uyɔɔ, cho	That	„	„	„	„	singular	„
imbone, imbene	These	„	„	„	„	plural	„
abɔɔ	Those	„	„	„	„	plural	„

Source: Author’s compilation (2024).

### Interrogative Pronouns

To Swick (2011), the interrogative pronouns are used to introduce or ask a question. On a similar stance, Crystal (2008), affirms that the interrogatives are typically used in the expression of questions. It is also noted that interrogative pronouns represent a piece of missing information that the speaker wants the hearer to supply and like other pronouns, they replace nouns (Greenbaun, 1996). Table 9 below indicates that Koro-Ashe has pronouns used for asking questions. In Koro-Ashe, a form can be used for dual reference and two forms can have the same referents.

**Table 9: Ashe Interrogative Pronouns**

Ashe	English	Category					
		Unit	Class	Structure	System		
					Person	Number	Gender
inyãã	who	Group, word	interrogative	subjective	neutral	neutral	personal
inyãã	whom	„	„	objective	„	„	personal
enyãã	whose	„	„	genitive	„	„	personal
shu shoje	which	„	„	subjective objective	„	„	non personal
uwhei	what	„	„	subjective objective	„	„	non personal

Source: Author’s Compilation (2024)

## Numerical pronouns

Greenbaun (1996) and Swick (2011) identify numeral as another class of pronouns. Elucidating this, Swick establishes that if a pronoun is a word that replaces a noun, then a number that does the same thing can be considered a pronoun. If the number stands alone, it is no longer just a numerical value or an adjective modifying a noun, but rather functions as a pronoun. In Koro-Ashe, numbers can stand alone to function as pronouns. Ashe also inflects on its cardinal in order to realise the ordinals. Take for instance, awhei-ewhele, itar-atarke, ina-enai, okou-okokpe etc. In Ashe, the article is fused to the ordinal. Ashe has numerals in the cardinal group such as unyiŋ, awhei, itar, ukow, ishōkiwhei, etc. The ordinals include ihĩidei, ewhele, entarke, enai, ukokpe etc. Ashe also has quantifiers like arere, kochak, kepiu, be mak, /be cika etc., as represented in table 10 below:

**Table 10: Ashe Numerical Pronouns**

<i>Ashe</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Category</i>					
		<i>Unit</i>	<i>Class</i>	<i>Structure</i>	<i>System</i>		
					<i>Person</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Gender</i>
unyiŋ	one	group, word, & morpheme	numerical	subjective objective	neutral	singular reference	Neutral
awhei	two	”	”	”	”	singular & plural	”
itar	three	”	”	”	”	”	”
ukow	ten	”	”	”	”	”	”
ishōkiwhei	twenty	”	”	”	”	”	”
ihĩidei	first	”	”	”	”	singular	”
ewhele	second	”	”	”	”	”	”
entarke	third	”	”	”	”	”	”
ukokpe	tenth	”	”	”	”	”	”
imaatake	last	”	”	”	”	”	”

Source: Author's compilation, (2023).

### **Quantifying Pronouns**

When quantifiers do not precede nouns but stand alone in the slot of nominals, they are regarded as quantifying pronouns. In Koro-Ashe, there are quantifying words that serve pronominal roles. They can be used to refer to either large quantity or number of things or small quantity or number of things. Their use in respect to count and non-count reference matches the position outlined in connection with their determiner function. Table 11 below shows the quantifying pronouns in Koro-Ashe:

**Table 11: Ashe quantifying pronouns**

<i>Ashe</i>	<i>Englis</i> <i>h</i>	<i>Category</i>					
		<i>Unit</i>	<i>Class</i>	<i>Structure</i>	<i>System</i>		
		<i>Group, word, morpheme</i>	<i>Numerical</i>	<i>Subjective objective</i>	<i>Person</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Gender</i>
arere	many	„	quantifier	„	„	plural reference	„
kochak	all	„	„	„	„	singular & plural	„
arere	much	„	„	„	„	non-count	
kepiu	few	„	„	„	„	plural	„
be mak	enough	„	„	„	„	non count & plural	„
kepiu/ be cika	little	„	„	„	„	non count	„
arere	much	„	„	„	„	non count	„

Source: Author's compilation, (2023).

## **Discussion of Findings**

The pronoun system of Ashe is classified to include personal, possessive, reflexive, emphatic/intensive, reciprocal, relative, interrogative, demonstrative, indefinite, numerical and quantifying pronouns. Ashe Personal Pronouns include ime, inte, iṅo, inyime, iye, and imbɔɔ. They are used for referential roles. The possessive pronouns are e me, e te, e ṅo, e nyime, e ye, e mbɔɔ used for referentially and are employed to express possessiveness. Also, the reflexive pronouns comprise echeme, echete or echeyir, echeṅo, echeyim, echeye and echebɔɔ while the emphatic pronouns consist of nazame, nazayir, nazaṅo, nazayim, nazai/nazaye and nazabɔɔ. It is indicated in the study that reflexivity and emphasis are expressed through pronouns. The both reflexive and emphatic pronouns in Koro-Ashe are derived through affixation particularly prefixing the morpheme “eche” for reflexive and “naza” for emphatic pronouns. This result corroborates some previous studies. For instance, Dhami (2019), found that reflexive pronouns in Bajhangli are formed by adding ‘afui’ suffix to both singular and plural reflexive pronouns. Tafida’s (2008) work showed that the reflexive in Nupe language is expressed by adding a syllable ‘tso’ to all the subjective personal as well as prefixing with the letter ‘E’. Furthermore, Koro-Ashe express reciprocity of action between two participants. This is conveyed through reciprocal pronouns such as adɔkyir, adɔkyim and adɔkbɔɔ. These pronouns even reflect the trio agent in communication. Koro-Ashe can refer to things without being specific. This act of general reference is conveyed through indefinite pronouns including ko inyãã, unyom, unekeye, ume e iye, ubin, ubineye/ubinyom, ubin kochak/ko uhwei, and abom. In a long stretch discourse, pronouns are deployed as subordinators binding two or more stretches of sentences in Koro-Ashe, the relative pronouns sha, and shu serve that function. Koro-Ashe equally has demonstrative pronouns such as che/igwene/iyene, iyɔnɔɔ/uyɔɔ/cho, imbɔne/imbene, and abɔɔ which are used to point at reference referred to. In addition, the interrogative pronouns which include inyãã, e nyãã, shu shoṅe, and uṅwe aid the framing of question. Finally, the numerals - unyiṅ, awhɛi, itar, ukow, ishɔkiwhei, ihĩidei, ewhele, entarke, enai, ukokpe and quantifiers - arɛrɛ, kochak, kepiu, be mak, /be cika also assume the functional role of pronouns in Koro-Ashe.

## **Conclusion**

Human languages have properties that are common to and shared among them as well as those that are atypical to each language and it is on this ground that the pronoun system of Koro-Ashe

was investigated. The study indicated that there are various classifications of pronouns across different languages, and in the case of Koro-Ashe, ten classes are identified. Each of the classes has its members which share similarly functional possibilities. It is worthy of note that the classification may not be the same in other language grammar as language is specific. However, it is logical to assert that pronouns are fundamental properties of human language and just as they make up the lexical element of Koro-Ashe, they are likely to be found in every human language. The presence of pronouns in the linguistic properties of Koro-Ashe is not accidental as language is well structured and patterned to require and employ them for a more cohesive and coherent discourse. Suffice it to say that communication is placed at the heart of language and a coherent and effective discourse is achievable if referential, coreferential and deictic elements such as pronouns are adequately employed.

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