

THE PRONOUN AND HOW IT BEHAVES IN T’KURMI LANGUAGE

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Abstract

This work carries out a contrastive analysis of T’kurmi and English pronouns. As an area of linguistic investigation, this study attempts to explore the differences and similarities in forms and structures of the pronouns of T’kurmi and English and how they are used. There is a contact and communication between the languages under study because both languages are assessable to the author; while the former is a native language, the latter is a second language. For this reason, introspection method among other procedures is employed in data generation in T’kurmi, based on competence and native intuition. Apart from the use of English grammar texts, data (especially) for T’kurmi pronouns were obtained through the researcher’s L1 ability as a speaker of T’kurmi, complemented with rapid anonymous observation of the speech of Akurmi speakers with a view to collecting the pronouns of the language. The data was also forwarded to some Akurmi elders for authentication in order to avoid shallowness. The study observes that though there are several theories of contrastive analysis, the structural theory of linguistics is the basis for the analysis of the data in this research. The research reveals that though we have pronouns in both English and T’kurmi, they do not totally behave in the same way, despite the resounding similarity. Like most second language speakers of English language, Akurmi speakers sometimes transfer the patterning of T’kurmi pronouns into the English language which affects the structure of their English language usage and renders it incorrect. This poses a problem to the acquisition and use of English language in general. As such, this study, apart from serving as a literature of T’kurmi language literacy also forms a study in contribution to grammar of African languages and the field of linguistics in general.

Introduction

Pronouns as a type of linguistic category run across most, if not all languages. However, the way that they behave in one language may not be exactly the same way that they behave in another language. The pronoun in each language is unique according to the provisions of the given language. This may be attributed to several reasons one of which is the fact that languages belong to different language families and have different structures. According to James, T'kurmi, belongs to the Niger Congo linguistic group of Plateau languages (3) , while English is a Germanic language.

Pronouns have always been known to take the place of nouns. *Writing and Grammar* observes that, “ They are generally used when it would not make sense to repeat a noun over and over again.”(n.p.) Pronouns therefore do not have any other functions apart from taking the place of nouns in order to avoid repetition. The functions they perform in English are the same as the ones they perform in T'kurmi.

This research observes that there is an overwhelming similarity between English pronouns and their T'kurmi equivalents. However, as overwhelming as this similarity is, there also exists an area of contrast, it is this contrast that forms the crux of this paper. This lays credence to Procter's (119) observation that, it interests learners of language to discover that though different languages do not express things the same way, there are some basic similarities in all languages. The fact that no work as far as the writer knows has been done on T'kurmi pronouns makes the work necessary. The work paves a way for the exploration of the grammar of the language as well as a means of language preservation of T'kurmi as an endangered language, in Lere local government of Kaduna state.

Different scholars such as Enighe and Afangideh (2001), Kure (2001), Ahmed (2012), Alobo (2006), Adeyi, Ogwuche and Mohammed (2013) have had one or two things to say concerning the pronoun and its different categories. These categories serve as the template within which T'kurmi pronouns are situated. Having looked at these other works, they tend to agree with the functions and classifications of pronouns which align with this present work. However, this study differs from the latter works in that, it presents a peculiar problem faced by T'kurmi speakers of English language, which is the insertion of pronouns where they should not, which is however correct in the structure of T'kurmi, though incorrect in English. The pronoun antecedent problem among Akurmi therefore differentiates the present research from others before it and this is treated later on in this paper.

The rationale behind this study of T'kurmi pronouns is hinged on the fact that, Nigerian languages provide a lot of material for research and scholarship, especially minority languages in the like of T'kurmi. This also supports the current need to study our native languages, which is the “key to the soul of the people” (Oduyoye, 32), this in addition to aiding the development of linguistic theories, we might be contributing to the much needed education materials.

Theoretical Framework

Several theories may be employed in contrastive analysis; however, for the present research, the structural theory of syntax is employed. Ferdinand de Saussure is known as the father of structuralism, where he shows the relationship between langue and parole, forms and substance on one hand and synchronic and diachronic linguistics on the other. Bloomfield, an American linguist also contributed to the development of this theory. His contribution according to Lyons (1995) is considered as “the most distinctive manifestation of American structuralism.” He develops on the concept of langue and parole when he talks further about competence and performance.

The theory of structuralism treats each language as a unique, coherent and integrated system. It is based on this premise that the theory is adopted. Since each language is seen as a unique system, it is only expedient that two unique languages may be compared in order to establish the similarities and differences between them. Being unique means having unique structures. These structures may therefore only be studied using a theory of structuralism. In the case of this study, the structure of pronouns in both languages is similar, especially in the aspect of types. However, the numbers of the types in each language differ. The manner in which the pronouns are used also differs because what may seem correct in T’kurmi, when translated literally into English is actually incorrect. This is as a result of the fact that the languages have different structures. This study therefore sees T’kurmi as a unique system and as such, its structure may be studied using structuralism in comparison with the structure of English language.

T’kurmi Pronouns

Demonstrative pronouns

Demonstrative pronouns point at objects which are either close or far from the speaker. Quirk and Greenbaum observe that, “ The demonstratives have number contrast and can function both as determiners and pronouns. The general meanings of the two sets can be stated as ‘near’ and ‘distant’ reference.” (107).

English (singular)	T’kurmi (singular)	English (plural)	T’kurmi (plural)
This	Wee	These	Hai/teh
That	Wina	Those	Hana/tena/yena

In the case of T’kurmi demonstrative pronouns, especially the plural forms, they have more than one form unlike their English equivalents which have single forms. The forms of demonstrative plural pronouns depend on the noun being pointed at. **Tena** may be used for houses- **T’kura tena** meaning those houses, **ewase yena** meaning those dogs, **anyane hana** meaning those young men, **ashiya hana**, meaning those young ladies. A remarkable difference between T’kurmi and English pronouns as shown above is the fact that, in English the demonstrative pronouns come

before the object they are pointing at while in T'kurmi they come after the object being pointed at. Still on the plural demonstrators, there is a basis for the use of either *hana* or *tena* which is the alphabet or sound that begins the noun being pointed at. While *tena* is mostly used with nouns beginning with consonant sounds, *hana* is mostly used with nouns that begin with vowel sounds. There are also some demonstrators that are used to show the size of the thing being pointed. *Kai* (this) is used to point at something or someone that is small without (sometimes) attaching another noun to it because it is complete in itself. *Kai* is a singular demonstrative pronoun (this). *Kana* is another demonstrative pronoun (that) which is used to refer to something or someone that is smallish but far from the speaker.

Personal Pronouns

First person

English- I	ME	MY	MINE(singular)
T'kurmi- N	mee	bom/wom/tom/ham	wom(singular)
English- WE	US	OUR	OURS (plural)
T'kurmi- te	haro	woro	woro/toro (plural)

Second person

English- you	your	yours (singular)
T'kurmi- boo	wobo/bobo	yobo/habo (singular)
English- you	your	yours (plural)
T'kurmi- yeh	wee/teh/hai	hai (plural)

Third person

English- he/she/it	him/her/its	his/hers/(singular)
T'kurmi- O	woo/	noo/hau/toh/ yoo(singular)
English- they	them	their theirs (plural)
T'kurmi- Aa'	haa	wah yaa/taa/wah (pural)

The personal pronouns show a great similarity between English and T'kurmi, in that in both cases they have first, second and third persons- in the case of first person singular and plural I, US and WE, they have single forms in both T'kurmi and English. However, for *my* and *mine*, T'kurmi has more than one forms which refer to *my* and *mine* respectively, while English has single forms. In second person, we have the same case where *your* and *yours* have more than one forms in T'kurmi, this all depends on the context in which the particular form is used. Going to the third person, *his*, *her*, *their* and *theirs* have more than one form also.

A careful observation of the third person singular pronouns-he, she and it, T'kurmi lacks gender as is clearly stated in the English language. As such, in T'kurmi woo, noo, o can be used for *he*, *she*, and *it* respectively. Therefore, English has an equivalent of each pronoun in terms of gender. In T'kurmi all neuter, feminine and masculine pronouns are represented by the same pronoun as the case maybe.

It is also worthy of note that possessive pronouns which form a particular type of pronouns have been immersed under personal pronouns based on first, second and third persons respectively.

Relative Pronouns

Relative pronouns according to Ahmed (2012:16) are words used to join clauses that are embedded on other clauses (main clauses). There are five relative clauses in English which include *that*, *which*, *who*, *whom* and *whose* (16). Before we go any further, it should be noted that not all relative pronouns in English are found in T'kurmi. To cite examples of relative pronouns in T'kurmi, sentences are used below. The T'kurmi sentences are closely followed by a transliteration of the sentences and finally their translation in English language to show the relative pronouns, underlined and how they are used in the two languages.

1. T'kurmi-Na vana ma sa o ku ye.

This boy the who he came.

English- This is the boy who came.

2. T'kurmi- Na Okura wu sa ki te chugin.

This house the where we lived.

English- This is the house where we lived.

3. T'kurmi- Na owunda wu sa o ta o kana o Payo.

This road the that it will lead to Payo.

English- This is the road that leads to Payo.

4. T'kurmi- Na b'gana ma sa ki bi nai nabai.

This man the whom you saw.

English- This is the man whom you saw yesterday.

5. T'kurmi- Na b'gana ma sa a ka chuu omuata.

This man the who they stole his car.

English- This is the man whose car was stolen.

The words which are underlined in both T'kurmi and English sentences above are relative pronouns. In the case of the English sentences, the pronouns are explicit and there is a word for each. However, T'kurmi seems to have a single word-*sa*, which represents all the relative pronouns in English. The interpretation of such therefore mainly depends on the context in which the pronoun is used and its meaning but it makes perfect sense to the speakers and hearers of the language.

Interrogative Pronouns

Interrogative pronouns are used to begin questions. Some relative pronouns can also be used as interrogative pronouns. Interrogative pronouns in English are five (*what, which, who, whom, whose*). T'kurmi interrogative pronouns are placed along sides their English counterparts below;

English

T'kurmi

What

yina

What is it?

Aa yina?

Whom/who

anna

From whom did you buy the car?

A ke anna ki b'jana omuata wu?

In T'kurmi who and whom are represented by the same pronoun-anna.

Which

ujeu/ajea

Just like who, which also has two forms-the singular which is ujeu and the plural which is ajea. This is in direct contradiction to English language which has the single form '*which*' that can only make sense when other words are attached to it.

Whose

anna

From the foregoing, it can be observed that *whose, who* and *whom* are represented by the pronoun *anna* in T'kurmi language as exemplified in the sentences below;

1. **Who** is that?

Anna zen?

2. From **whom** did you buy the car?

A ke *anna* ki bi jana omuata wu?

3. **Whose** shirt is this?

Orega wu *anna* zeh?

As cited above, context is the determining factor for the interpretation of the use of *anna* in the sentences above. As such, while English has five interrogative pronouns, T'kurmi has only three.

Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite pronouns refer to people, places or things, often without specifying which ones. Indefinite pronouns may be either singular or plural in both English and T'kurmi, though English indefinite pronouns are more than their T'kurmi equivalents. Below are examples of singular indefinite pronouns;

English

T'kurmi

Another

onanke

Anybody/each

kode anna

Anyone

kode anna

Everything

kode ayina

Little/small

chim

Much/many

gai

Someone/somebody

bigi

Somebody

something

The plural indefinite pronouns are:

All

duki

Most

oyawance

In T'kurmi the word *another* has singular and plural forms; *onanke* for the singular form and *ananke* which could be used both as singular and plural. Other indefinite pronouns such as *most*, *none*, *nothing*, *neither*, *either*, *others*, are often expressed through descriptions. For instance, *others* is often expressed in T'kurmi as *osaurau*, which may be interpreted as the remaining. 'Nothing' is often expressed as '*hara anankafa*' meaning '*it is not something*' which is a sentence when translated to English. *Either* and *neither* do not also have equivalents in T'kurmi. However, when they are used at all, they are used via description.

Some singular indefinite pronouns in T'kurmi could also have more than one equivalent in English language, for instance, '*gai*' could be used for either *much* or *many* just as *chim* could mean either small or little. *Kode anna* could also mean '*anybody*', *anyone*, *each* or *everyone*.

Reflexive Pronoun

Reflexive pronoun according to Adey et al "shows that the subject and the object in a given sentence are the same. That is, the subject of a given sentence performs an action of the verb (on) herself or himself"(13). The major feature of pronouns in this category is that they end with '-self' in the singular form and '-selves' in the plural forms. They include *herself*, *himself*, *myself*, *yourself*, *itself*, *ourselves*, *yourselves* and *themselves*.

The aforementioned are the reflexive pronouns of English. In T'kurmi, there are no lexical equivalents of the pronouns in this category, rather, descriptions are used. However, these descriptions are able to capture each of the pronouns. Their examples are presented below;

English	T'kurmi
Myself	N'nichiye nom
Yourself	n'nichiye nobo
Him/her/itself	n'nichiye noh
Ourselves	ne'achiye haro
Themselves	ne'achiye ha
Yourselves	ne'achiye hai

The reflexive pronouns in T'kurmi are expressed using descriptions. *Nichiye* means *head* while *achiye* means *heads*. As such when used reflexively, the expression for *myself* is *n'nichiye nom* which maybe transliterated as *with my head*. The same goes for the rest of the reflexive pronouns in all the other cases.

Reciprocal Pronouns

There is only one reciprocal pronoun in T'kurmi, 'achiye ha' which is used for both *each other* and *one another*.

The Pronoun Antecedent in T'kurmi vs English

The antecedent of a pronoun is the noun which the pronoun replaces. In English, normally the pronoun replaces the noun so that it (the noun) may not necessarily be used at the same time with the pronoun. However, in T'kurmi the pronoun and its antecedent sometimes have a special appearance, where it may look like the pronoun is misused and may be grammatically incorrect when translated to English language. This shows that the syntactic structure of T'kurmi differs from that of the English language. This fact is exemplified in the following sentences:

Ya wobo O gase boh.

Mother your she is calling you.

Your mother is calling you.

The second sentence is a transliteration of the T'kurmi sentence. The pronoun and its antecedent are underlined. In T'kurmi, the use of Ya (mother) and O (she) is correct but when translated literally to English it becomes incorrect. This phenomenon is sometimes transferred into English by T'kurmi speakers of English which serves as a kind of mother tongue interference, such that one hears learners of English language using constructions such as the second sentence above. This goes a long way in establishing the fact that the two languages under observation have different structures; hence the difference in usage which stand to be contrasted.

Conclusion

Most, if not all, languages have parts of speech of which one is the pronoun. T'kurmi as a language has pronouns which are used in place of nouns. This study has discovered that there exist lots of similarities between the pronouns of English and those of T'kurmi. However, there are also areas of contrasts in that some pronouns have single forms in English while T'kurmi has several forms and vice versa. The paper therefore concludes that, a pronoun is very important as it saves language users the unnecessary repetition that may come with the use of some nouns. Apart from the above, this is a linguistic study and language is a very vital tool for the survival of society. As a contrastive study of a native Nigerian language, just like other researches in the field, this study is in no small measure a contribution to the development of the society since education is the bedrock of society.

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