

Pronouns in Kétu: A Dialect of Yoruba

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Abstract

*Pronoun has been identified as one of the functional categories in the literature that can be understudied to trace the diachronic changes in the Language for recent past. This paper is presented to look into the detail description of pronoun in Anglo-phone Kétu residing at Ogun West Senatorial district. Data were collected from ten people, whose age ranged between 40 – 80 years. Seven were between the age range of 60 – 80 years. We decided to use data from this sub-group of people because they are more familiar with the basic form of the pronouns in the dialect. Our findings reveal that (i) pronouns in Kétu are mono-morphemic, (ii) the dialect has much more variants of pronoun occurring in different syntactic constructions than the pronouns in the Standard Yorùbá, (iii) the dialect has a complete occurrence of pronoun in all stages of person. That is, the third singular subject pronoun in the dialect is conspicuously reflected (*ún* or *ò*), (iv) the total number of pronouns in Kétu exceeds the number of pronouns in the Standard Yorùbá, (v) the dialect has six varieties of *un* which takes either low, mid or high tone in different syntactic positions. Based on the aforesaid findings, we hereby encourage further researches into the pronouns of other Yorùbá dialects in the hope of bringing new items of information that will broaden our knowledge on the pronouns of the Standard Yorùbá.*

Keywords: Ketu Dialect, Morpho-Syntactic, Advanced Tongue Root, Mono-Morphemic, Persons.

Introduction

Pronoun is the only syntactic category in Kétu and Yorùbá in general where the through case system is characterized. Studies have shown that pronouns are definite and predictable. Predictable in the sense that the native speaker of any dialect knows how to use its right variant that conforms to the internationalized rule in the dialect; most especially, the use of honorific pronoun which somehow deviates from the acceptable syntactic norm. Therefore, the use of right pronoun in the syntactic position implies the competence of the native speaker in the language. Kétu, a tribe of Yorùbá, was partitioned between the French and the British colonial masters in the early 20th century. This partitioning of course, results into having Franco-phone ketoeu and the Anglo-phone Kétu. Ilàrà, a small town beside Ìmèkò, serves as the administrative boundary between the two Kétu. However, the partitioning has great influence on their dialects because the Francophone Kétu do speak a distinct Yorùbá dialect that resembles the sub-dialects of their immediate neighbours in the Benin Republic. The diachronic overview of the Francophone Kétu results into an heteronous (see Chambers and Trudgill 1984: 11 – 12) dialects among which *Mòfòlí* stands out. The Anglophone Kétu which covers sub-dialects of Yorùbá, such as: Ìmèkò, Àfòn, Ilàrà, Àlàgbé, Ìdòfà, Ìwòyè, Òkè-Àgbé, Mòríwú, Wáàsìmi-Òkúta, Òlogede Owode, Atapele, Obada and Obolo (Adédèji 2000: 28) maintain cohesive language relation with other sub-dialects of Yorùbá in Nigeria.

This paper tends to discuss pronouns in Anglo-phone Kétu in the hope of bringing out useful items of research information that would be explored to clear some linguistic puzzles in Yorùbá Grammar. Awóbùlúyì (1998: 2 – 3) hints that the South West Yorùbá suffers the greatest setback in the literature. Therefore, we decide to look at one of the dialects in the group (Kétu) in the hope of making literary contributions to the syntactic analysis of the standard Yorùbá.

Our theoretical analysis is basically descriptive to accord us opportunities of presenting our discussion on the basis of the intuitive knowledge of the native speakers of the dialect. We shall try to use standard Yorùbá, and most especially Bámgbóšé (1967, 1990) as our reference language for our comparative analysis on the topic. Bámgbóšé (1967:10-11) defines pronoun as “a word which cannot have a qualifier in the nominal group”. He presents a table for the pronoun in standard Yorùbá as:

A.

Number	Subject Pronouns	Pronouns in the Object Positions
1 st person singular	Mo	Mi
2 nd person singular	O	o/e
3 rd person singular	Ó	Vowel of the Verb
1 st person plural	A	Wa
2 nd person plural	E	Nyín
3 rd person plural	Nwón	Wón

Bámgbóṣé (1967:10-11)

Bámgbóṣé (1967:10) explains that the first and second person pronouns have alternant forms which are variants of the base forms as in;

When preceded by verbal particle **n**.

- 1a.(i) 1st person singular: Mo lọ -- Mò n lo (I am going)
(ii) 2nd person singular: O lọ -- Ò n lo (You are going)
(iii) 1st person plural: A lọ -- À n lo (We are going)
(iv) 2nd person plural: È n lo (You [pl.] are going). These examples are mine).

He also presents an alternant form occurring before the verb form ‘a’ (‘will’) in the subject positions as:

B.

Person	Singular	Plural
1 st	Mà	A
2 nd	Wà	È
3 rd	A	Nwón

As in:

2. (i) Mà á lo -- “I will go”
(ii) Wà á lo -- “You will go”
(iii) À á lo -- “He will”

Bámgbóṣé (1967) also hints that the tone of the pronoun object depends on that of the preceding verb. That, it is a mid-tone after a high tone verb, and a high tone after a mid or a low tone verb, as in:

3. (i) Ó rí mí -- “he saw me”
(ii) Ó jọ mí -- “he resembles me”
(iii) Ó wò mí -- “he looked at me”
(iv) Ó gbà á -- “he got it”.

All these syntactic variations would be touched upon in the pronouns in Kétu dialect. The variants of pronoun in Kétu dialect are hereby presented in the tables **C** and **D** as follows:

Pronouns in Kétu dialect

C.

Number	Subject Position	Object Position
1 st person singular	Mò/mò/un	Un/un/mu
2 nd person singular	Ò/ò, un, ì	e/é
3 rd person singular	ò/un	Un
1 st person plural	À	Ni
2 nd person plural	È	Yín
3 rd person plural	Un	Un/un

D.

Number	Qualifier
1 st person singular	Mu
2 nd person singular	Rè/ẹ
3 rd person singular	È
1 st person plural	Ìni
2 nd person plural	Un
3 rd person plural	Uń

We shall try to provide examples of pronoun forms of various morpho-phonological variants in different syntactic positions as exemplified in the above table.

Analysis

For sequence and coherent explanations, we shall try to proceed on the 1st person short pronouns in Kétu.

First Person Pronouns in Kétu.

Generally, pronouns in Kétu adopts a system of numbers (singular and plural). The singular form refers to one person while the plural form identifies two or more peoples. First person short pronoun in Ketu have more than these. The dialect has variant forms of 1st person singular subject and object pronouns in different syntactic constructions.

Syntactic Description of First-Person Singular Pronoun (F.P.S.P) Forms in Subject Position

First person singular pronouns in Kétu are: **Mò, Mọ, ùn**. These alternant forms appear in different syntactic positions in the dialect. For instance, the dialect parades two forms **mò/mọ** as the 1st person singular subject in a declarative sentence as in:

5. (i) Mọ gbọ bá a -- "I heard so".
 (ii) Mọ fẹ í tètè dé -- "I expect you to come on time".
 (iii) Mò ti lọ lònàá -- "I have gone yesterday".
 (iv) Mò ẹ é -- "I did it".

The usage, as identified above, in the different syntactic variations depends on the Advance Tongue Root Feature (hereafter ATR) of the vowel of the main verb. For instance, **mò** agrees with verb thus has '+ATR' feature while **mọ** cooccurs with verb that has '-ATR' features (see Archangel, D. and D. Pulleyblank 1989; and Adékúnlé M. A. 2001:46-56 for further explanations). However, when tense marker appears in between the subject and the verb, **mo** is usually adopt as it appears in 5iii.

Also, when the habitual or progressive tense marker, exists or intercedes between the subject pronoun and the main verb, the pronoun changes to **un**, with the mid tone'. Therefore, **un** serves as the first person pronoun for habitual and progressive tense marker constructions in the dialect as its exemplified in the below sentences.

6. (i) Un ún kanju -- "I am in haste".
 (ii) Un ún sişẹ un -- "I am doing my work".
 (iii) Un ún jẹbà -- "I am eating ẹbà".
 (iv) Un ún rí i -- "I do see him/her/it frequently".

The use of **un** in the latest examples creates a linguistic ambiguity. One may guess that progressive assimilation does occur between the First person singular pronoun and progressive tense marker **ún** – as its conventionally claim in S. Y. However, such a claim is adulterated when one considers its variant form in habitual tense marker as in **olú máa ún sùn** (Olu use to sleep) in Kétu dialect.

Also, we observe from these latest examples that, Kétu has **ún** as the habitual and **ún** as the progressive sentence marker respectively; while the Standard Yorùbá faction uses the duo of **n** and **máa n'** respectively as shown in the below examples:

- | | | | | |
|--------|--------|-----------|-----|---------------------|
| 7a.(i) | Olu | máa n | sùn | (Olu use to sleep.) |
| | (name) | hab. T.M | v | |
| (ii) | Olu | n | gbọ | (Olu is listening) |
| | name | prog. T.M | v | |

Kétu however would have the below statements as the replacement to the latest examples as:

- | | | | |
|-------|------|------------|------------------------|
| b.(i) | Olu | máa ún sùn | (Olu use to sleep) |
| | Name | hab. T.M. | V |
| (ii) | Olu | ún | gbọ (Olu is listening) |
| | Name | prog. T.M. | V |

The inferences we deduced from the above examples is that;

8. (i) **un** replaces **n** as habitual marker.
 (ii) It is phonetically possible to trace the underlying base form of nasal consonant syllabicity to **un**. This is possible having considered the phonetic realization of the duo as in: (+ nasal), (+ syllable) which are the reduction of the basic phonetic features of **un** as in:

- un**
 + nasal
 + syllabic
 + high
 + vowel
 + back

When **un** lost parts of its basic phonetic characterizations such as: **high**, **vowel** and **back** (as claimed in Adékúnlé 2019), the remaining phonetic feature (nasal and syllabic) could be orthographically represented as in: **n** stands for nasal, while tone represents syllabicity in Yorùbá language. Owolabi (2011) stresses that the number of syllables in a given word must correspond with the number of the tones.

Object Position

Kétu uses two variants of first person singular object pronoun. These are **un** or **mu**. The tone mark of the preceding verb would determine the tone of the pronoun. For instance, if the verb possesses low tone, the object pronoun would take high tone, but when the preceding verb or preposition takes high tone, the object pronoun would take mid tone as in:

- | | | | |
|--------|----------------|----|----------------------|
| 9. (i) | Ò purọ́ fún mu | -- | “He tells lie to me” |
| (ii) | Olú pè mú | -- | “Olu calls me” |
| (iii) | Kólá rí mu | -- | “Kola sees me” |
| (iv) | Bímíbó jòmú | -- | “Bimbo resembles me” |

This tonal change phenomenon is unique to Yorùbá language in the same syntactic configuration as claim by Awóbùlúyì (2013:106).

So, either of the variants **mu** or **mú** may definitely appear as the first person singular object in such syntactic construction. Also, **un** variant takes the same objective position as a direct object in sentences where prepositional phrase modifies the objective case as in:

- | | | | |
|--------|-------------------|----|----------------------------|
| 10.(i) | Olú jí un lówó | -- | “Olu steals my money” |
| (ii) | Ó tà un nípàá | -- | “He/she hits me with legs” |
| (iii) | Bímpé jẹ un níyàn | -- | “Bimpe argues with me” |

- (iv) Bàbá fún un lórúkọ -- “Father gives me name”

Taking cognisance of the fore-going examples, it is observed that **un** also has phonological variant depending on the tone of the verb: **ún**, **un**. Nonetheless, the dialect does not allow the first person singular object pronoun to take low tone. They take either **mid** or **high** tone.

Before we round off our analysis on F.P.S.P in Kétu dialect, we shall also mention its variants as a qualifier in the dialect. Kétu allows ‘mu’ as the only variant to represent F.P.S.P as a nominal qualifier. It has neither phonological or morphological variants as it is exemplified in the below sentences.

- 11.(i) Ìwé mu ún wà bẹ̀ẹ̀ -- “My book is there”
 (ii) Bàbá mu ún dé lònàá -- “My father came yesterday”
 (iii) Ògbín mu ún tóbi -- “My snail is big”
 (iv) Erí or ìsèkú mu ún dara -- “My head is good”

Syntactic Description of Second Person Singular Pronoun (S.P.S.P)

The second person singular pronoun in Kétu can be divided into three different syntactic variants as: subject, object and qualifier. The S.P.S.P form in subject position in Ketu dialect are **o**, **o**, **i**, and **un**. These alternants observe ATR feature in their syntactic distribution and take the tonal pattern (mid tone). When they function in different syntactic constructions in the dialect, **o** or **o** appears as S.P.S.P form in declarative statement such as:

- 12.(i) O lọ lònàá -- “You went yesterday”
 (ii) O pè mú -- “You called me”
 (iii) O rí i -- “You saw him/her/it”

Notice that **o** co-occurs with a main verb possesses - ATR vowel feature, while **o** agrees with main verb with +ART vowel feature. Another S.P.S.P variant is **un** which serves as subject pronoun form in the same syntactic position for habitual or progressive tense marker sentence as in:

- 13.(i) Un ún lo -- “You are going”
 (ii) Un ún bo -- “You are coming”
 (iii) Un máa ún jẹ́ ẹ́ -- “You usually eat it”
 (iv) Un máa ún rí i -- “You usually see it”

Aside from the aforementioned variants, the S.P.S.P form for negative sentence in Kétu is **i**. This form has no variant in such a syntactic construction because it occurs with either **kò/kọ** (as variants of negative sentence marker) in the dialect as in:

- 14.(i) I kọ gbà -- “You do not accept”
 (ii) I kọ se ẹ́ -- “You did not do it”
 (iii) I kọ í gbọ̀ràn -- “You do not listen”
 (iv) I kọ jẹ́ ẹ́ -- “You do not eat it”.

Also, the S.P.S.P form for objective case in Kétu is **e**. This phoneme has phonological variants as **e** or **é** depending on the tone mark of the preceding verb. If the tone mark is low or mid the object will take high tone **é** but if the verb has high tone, the object would possess mid tone **e** as follows:

- 15.(i) Mọ́ fẹ́ rí e -- “I want to see you”
 (ii) Ún ún pè ẹ́ -- “He/she is calling you”
 (iii) Mò rí ẹ́ lònàá -- “I saw you calling”
 (iv) Olú ún kí e -- “Olu is greeting you”

Now, we shall be discussing the description of third person singular pronoun forms.

Morpho-syntactic Description of Third Person Singular Pronoun Forms

Kétu uses two variants of pronoun as third person singular pronoun in the dialect. These are **ún/ó** for subject position and **un** or **ún** in the object position. The pronoun in the object position is toneless from the base. This assumption is reached because the tone of the verb will definitely determine the tone of the object pronoun. For instance, if the verb has high tone, the object will take mid tone but if the verb has low or mid tone, the object will take high tone. This is display in the below examples:

- | | | | |
|--------|---------------|----|--------------------------|
| 16.(i) | Ó rí ún | -- | “He/she sees it/her/him” |
| | (ii) Ó se ún | -- | “He/she does it/her/him” |
| | (iii) Ó jẹ ún | -- | “He/she eats it” |
| | (iv) Mò pé ún | -- | “I called him/her” |
| | (v) A rí ún | -- | “We saw him/her” |

The occurrence of **un** or **ún** in the object position corroborates Awóbùlúyì (2008) claim that the basic morpho-syntactic pronoun in the object position in standard Yorùbá is **un**. Although, the subject position has two variants – **ún/ó**. **Ó** is commonly used for third person singular pronoun for subject position in the declarative statement while the dialect chooses **ún** in the habitual or progressive sentences as in:

- | | | | |
|--------|------------------------|----|----------------------------|
| 17.(i) | Ún ùn su | -- | “I do not sleep” |
| | (ii) Ún ùn gbo | -- | “I do not hear” |
| | (iii) Ún máa ún jẹ èbà | -- | “He eats èbà frequently” |
| | (iv) Ún máa ún gégi | -- | “He/she use to fell trees” |

The inferences we are able to make from the use of **ún** or **ó** as the third person singular objection pronoun in Kétu is that the two variants take high tone. Meanwhile, the third person subject pronominal in Kétu is **òun**. Therefore, if there should be any phonological reduction, it ought to be one of the following as in: **ò / ùn / o / un**.

Awóbùlúyì (2008, 2013) hints that since **ó** appears as the third person singular subject pronoun in Yorùbá literature, whereas other pronouns take mid tone, he believes the third person singular subject pronoun in Yorùbá language is zero morpheme. He stressed that what appears as the third person singular subject pronoun is basically concord marker or referential functor. However, the usage of **ó** and **ún** in the same syntactic position informs that Awóbùlúyì (2013) and Taiwo, O. and J. Asiwaju (2012:273 – 274) position on the non-occurrence of third person subject pronoun in the standard Yoruba needs to be re-examined. We observe that the same morpho-phonological process does occur in Standard Yorùbá, where **wọ̀n** as third person plural subject pronoun remains the short form of **àwọ̀n** which is the third person plural subject pronoun in the language. Our position on zero morpheme realization of the third person singular pronoun will be explicitly demonstrated in another paper.

Having explained the morpho-syntactic description of pronoun in the singular number in the dialect, we want to proceed on the plural counterparts.

Morpho-syntactic Description of the Plural Pronouns in Kétu Dialect

The graphical demonstration of pronoun tables **C** and **D** in Kétu convincingly represent the plural variants of the pronouns in the subject, object and qualifier positions in different syntactic variations. We shall proceed our description from the first-person plural pronouns.

Morpho-syntactic Description of the First-Person Plural Pronoun Forms

Kétu uses three variants of pronoun as first-person plural pronouns in various sentence constructions in the dialect as in:

- | | |
|--------|--|
| 18.(i) | À – first person plural subject pronoun |
| | (ii) Nì – first person plural object pronoun |
| | (iii) Un – first person plural qualifier pronoun |

These are demonstrated sequentially in the below sentences as in:

19. **a**
- | | | | |
|-------|-----------------|----|-----------------------------|
| i. | À rí i | -- | “We see it/her/him” |
| ii. | À jẹ é | -- | “We eat it” |
| iii. | À ti gbọ | -- | “We have heard” |
| iv. | À ti sù | -- | “We have slept” |
| v. | À ún máa ún gbọ | -- | “We do heart it frequently” |
| vi. | À ún máa ún sù | -- | “We sleep frequently” |
| vii. | A kò gbà | -- | “We did not accept” |
| viii. | A kò pè é | -- | “We did not call you” |

Notice that **À** is the only morpho-syntactic entity that occupies the first person plural subject position in the aforementioned examples. However, we notice phonological variants of **A** in the last two examples, **19vii – viii**. These sentences are negative statements which exhibit negator **ko** or **kò**. Instead of **A** with low tone, **A** takes mid-tone. However, the changes observed are allophonic and not morphological variants. Also, the appearance of **ún** between the first person plural subject pronoun **À** and progressive sentence marker **máa ún** has been mentioned in this study. Its appearance creates an enormous linguistic constraint based on:

- 20.a. Should we consider it as a concord marker (cm).
 b. Should we identify it as additional progressive sentence marker.
 c. Could it be allotted to the noun phrase in the syntactic description.

A cursory attention ought to be observed so that we would not come with vague propositions. If option **a** is adopted, that means we will have to explain how CM does exist with pronoun in the dialect. Option **c** also has syntactic problem because pronoun in the dialect does not take a qualifier. It is only option **b** that is attestable but we need to explain the reason why **ún** does not exist in other progressive sentences in the dialect. We hope future studies would look into the problem. Furthermore, the first person plural object pronoun in Ketu is **ni**. This is exemplified in the below sentences:

- 21.(i) Olú pè ni -- “Olu called us”
 (ii) Kólá bú ni -- “Kola abused us”
 (iii) E rí ni -- “You saw us”

Note that **ni** has no allomorphic alternants in the foregoing examples. Notwithstanding, **ini** serves as the first person plural pronoun qualifier in Ketu dialect. We believe **ni** is a shorter form of **ini**, while **ini** is a dialectal variant of **ení** in Ijebu dialect as in:

- 22.(i) Ọmọ ení dé lónàá -- “Our child arrived yesterday”
 (ii) Iye ení kú -- “Our mother dies”
 (iii) Asọ ení ra à ya -- “Our cloth is not torn”

Also, **ini** (Ketu) or **eni** (Ijebu) seems to be a reduction of **òníyàn** (Ifè dialect), **èníyan** (Standard Yorùbá) and **oníyàn** (Ègbá dialect). We agree that reduction and vowel shifting analysis could be used to account for the changes as proposed in Adekunle (2019).

Morpho-syntactic Description of the Second Person Plural Pronouns (S.P.P)

Ketu uses three morpho-phonological variants as S.P.P pronouns in the dialect. They are **è**, **ún** and **yin**. Their phonological characterization is basic because they have no phonological allophones. The following examples attest to this as in:

- 23.(i) È dé lónàá -- “You arrived yesterday”
 (ii) È ti lọ nílé -- “You have gone home”
 (iii) È ún máa un jẹ ẹ -- “You usually eat it”
 (iv) È un bọ -- “You are coming”

(v) E kò ra aso	--	“You did not buy cloth”
(vi) Mò ríyin	--	“I see you”
(vii) Ûn ún gbóyin	--	“I am hearing you”
(ix) Ó pèyín	--	“He/she is calling you (pl.)”.
(x) Ọmu jòyin	--	“Your child resembles you (pl.)”.

Kétu operates verb + pronoun incorporation system which is peculiar to the dialect. More examples are:

24.(i) Ọgá pèmú	--	“Master called me”
(ii) Ọmọ náà jóni	--	“The child resembles us”
(iii) Mò ríyin	--	“I saw you pl.”
(iv) Olú pèni	--	“Olu called us”
(v) Mò ún gbóyin	--	“I am listening to you”.

We wish future research would look into the incorporation system in the dialect in detail.

The only irregular form or variants we observe in the dialect in the latest examples is **e** (with mid tone) as indicated in example 23v. Here, the conventional low tone **è** changes to mid tone **e**. Our explanation on second person singular subject pronoun is strictly applicable.

Before we round off this sub-section, we want to expand upon the third person plural pronoun forms in the dialect.

Morpho-Syntactic Description of the Third Person Plural Pronoun Forms

Kétu uses **un** as third person plural pronoun form in the language. The phonological variants of **un** serves as the alternant forms in the subject, object and qualifier syntactic distributions. This prosodic phenomenon serves as the major distinction of the alternant forms endorse for each syntactic distribution as in:

25.(i) Ûn	--	3 rd person plural in subject position
(ii) Ûn/un	--	3 rd person plural in object position
(iii) Ûn	--	3 rd person plural a qualifier.

This may be illustrated by the following examples;

26.(i) Ûn ti lo	--	“They have gone”
(ii) Ûn délé mu	--	“They came to my house”
(iii) Ûn kò gbó	--	“They use to quarrel”
(iv) Mò pèún	--	“I called them”
(v) Olú jóún	--	“Olu resembles them”
(vi) Mò ríún	--	“I saw them”

Conclusions

The study uses descriptive grammar to discuss the morpho-syntactic analysis of the pronouns in Anglo-phone Kétu as a sub-dialect Yorùbá language. Aside from presentation of varieties of pronoun alternants in Kétu dialect, we presented a lot of morpho-syntactic comparative analysis between pronouns in Kétu and pronouns in Standard Yorùbá. The study explains the authenticity that surround the phono-morphological varieties between pronouns in Kétu dialect and the pronouns in Standard Yorùbá. Our findings reveal that Kétu uses many variants of pronoun than the Standard Yorùbá in different syntactic positions. All this linguistic distinctiveness is fully explained in this paper. Also, the study recommends further studies on few syntactic configurations where we think we had inadequate information. Furthermore, the study recommends future study on Incorporation in Kétu dialect.

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