

The Anaphoric System in Ibibio

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Abstract

The focus of this work is on the descriptive analyses of anaphors and anaphoric strategies in the Ibibio language. The major aim is to identify the anaphors and the anaphoric strategies used in this language to encode the interpretative dependencies. Data for these descriptive analyses was collected from ten mature native speakers through elicitation method. The results of the data analyses show that Ibibio attests a very complex anaphora system with four strategies for encoding anaphoric and reciprocal relations including a relatively productive logophoric and backward anaphoric systems. The most productive of these strategies is the “Idem X” strategy which constitutes a compositional term made up of a noun plus a genitive pronoun. The noun part “Idem” literally means “body” and does not vary with number and person while the genitive pronoun is a variable that can morphologically reflect the number and person of the antecedent. The variable part of the Idem X strategy may be dropped to form the null-pro strategy while the reflexive meaning is intact. Both the Idem X and the null-pro strategy encode reciprocal reading in addition to reflexive reading when anteceded by a plural noun though there is a morphologically marked Du-CV strategy used specially for reciprocity. The least productive is the CV strategy. This reflexive strategy is a verbal suffix which consists of a homorganic consonant and a harmonizing vowel. The reflexive morphology in this strategy behaves like the English passive morphology in that it tends to absorb the theta role and or the phonological features of the internal argument such that when the reflexive morphology appears on the verb, the internal argument becomes phonologically null. The theoretical implications of these analyses may suffice for subsequent research into the Ibibio anaphoric system.