

THE SO-CALLED REFLEXIVE PRONOUNS AND
REFLEXIVIZATION IN IBIBIO¹

Okon E. Essien
University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria

In Ibibio, there are certain NP's which superficially look like English reflexive pronouns. This paper critically examines such NP's and presents facts and arguments to demonstrate that they are in fact not reflexive pronouns but possessive NP's. In addition, the paper relates the *emphatics*, whose forms in Ibibio, like their English counterparts, are similar to the so-called reflexive pronouns. Since the facts of Ibibio strongly suggest that the so-called reflexive pronouns are in fact examples of possessive NP's, it is suggested that these NP's be derived by the rule of Possessive pronominalization rather than by reflexivization. The paper finally considers the implication of such an analysis for the Ibibio grammar.

1. Introduction

Pronominalization can be looked upon as a rule that is concerned with the derivation of pronouns in relation to other NP's in a specified phrase marker. In a standard transformational approach [Lees and Klima 1963:147ff.], pronominalization derives a pronoun from an underlying more fully specified NP, provided, of course, such an NP satisfies certain conditions. Following Postal's [1966:61-66] further development and refinement of the mechanisms of this approach, pronominalization consists in specifying a noun stem as [+Pro] and additionally as [+Ref1] in the case of reflexivization, a particular type of pronominalization. In Jackendoff's interpretative theory, pronominalization consists in specifying the relation between two NP's, one of which is a pronoun, in particular marking them as coreferential. In this approach [Jacken-

¹Ibibio is spoken by about four million people in the Cross River State of Nigeria. It is very closely related to Efik.

doff 1972:108ff.], such a rule is not a syntactic but a semantic one of interpretation.

There are several types of pronominalization, the best known of which may be referred to as simple pronominalization, e.g. English *he/him*, *she/her*, etc.; reflexivization, e.g. English *himself*, *herself*, etc.; and relativization, e.g. English *who/whom*, *which*, etc.

There are other less discussed types of pronominalization such as reciprocal pronominalization (English *each other*, *one another*, etc.) and possessive pronominalization (English *his*, *their*, etc.). Even Lees and Klima [1963], in what has now become standard transformational reference for pronominalization, made no mention at all of possessive pronominalization. Yet the phrase "possessive pronoun" is quite often used by linguists (see Quirk and Greenbaum [1973:105-106], for example). Moreover, there are cases such as the following in English:

- (1) a. John sold his car.
 b. The men saw their wives.

These involve a rule of pronominalization, but judged by the forms of the pronouns (*his/their*) and their relationship to the other elements in the sentences, they apparently differ from any of the well known types—simple pronominalization, reflexivization, and relativization—as they are generally formulated.

This paper examines the so-called reflexive pronouns and in comparison with English reflexive pronouns, which are currently derived by reflexivization, suggests that such NP's in *Ibibio* are not in fact reflexive but possessive. It further suggests that if reflexivization as currently formulated handles only reflexive pronouns, then the reflexive-like NP's in *Ibibio*, which are in fact possessive NP's, cannot be handled by the same rule. More importantly, the syntactic behaviour of *Ibibio* possessive NP's, which is substantially different from that of English reflexive pronouns, strongly suggests that possessive pronouns, themselves possessive NP's, be derived by another pronominal rule. That rule, in our view, is possessive pronominalization. Unlike reflexivization, possessive pronominalization, as we shall see, enables

us to relate the so-called reflexive pronouns to the emphatics, both of which have identical forms in Ibibio.

2. The So-called Reflexive Pronouns and Reflexivization

Definitions of reflexive pronouns are at best casual or informal. Jespersen [1964:111] defines them in terms of the identity between the subject and the object of a sentence: "When the subject and object are identical, we use for the latter the so-called reflexive pronouns." In other words, there is no mention of the SIMPLEX or CLAUSE-MATE condition that is commonly associated with reflexivization. For Quirk and Greenbaum [1973:103], "Reflexive pronouns replace a coreferent noun phrase, normally within the same finite verb." Here the definition is not only in terms of identity or coreference, but also in terms of the function of the pronoun, namely the replacement of a coreferent NP. And for Akmajian and Heny [1975:195ff.], each reflexive pronoun "may be thought of as composed of a noun stem with a possessive pronoun (such as *my*, *your*, *her*) attached to it." In this case, the definition is from the point of view of the composition of the pronoun itself.

So from the above definitions (or so-called definitions), the following characteristics of the reflexive pronoun in English may be abstracted.

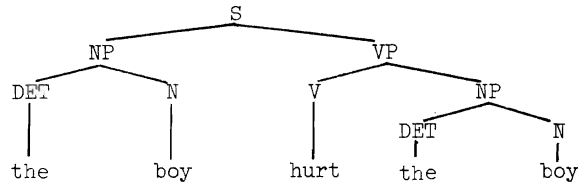
- (1) It occurs as object of a sentence and is identical or coreferent with the subject of the sentence.
- (2) This sentence in which the reflexive pronoun occurs is normally a simple clause.
- (3) It is a COMPOSITE pronoun consisting of a stem and some kind of modifier.

In recent years these characteristics have been formulated as a rule or transformation known as Reflexivization. As we have already pointed out above, this rule is a type of pronominalization.

From a typical standard transformational standpoint, e.g. Lees & Klima [1963:147ff.], Chomsky [1965:145-146], such a rule in English applies in a phrase marker of the following sort, provided the identity and the clause-mate conditions are met (See example (1) on the next page).

In Jackendoff's interpretative theory, the identity condition is not necessary, since there are semantic rules of interpretation which "establish relations between pairs of noun phrases marking them coreferential or non-coref-

(1)



erential with each other" [Jackendoff 1968:5].

We maintain that reflexivization, whether in the standard transformational theory or in Jackendoff's interpretative theory, is not the rule that derives Ibibio pronouns. As we shall see, the facts of Ibibio strongly suggest that these pronouns are a combination of Noun + Determiner of a possessive nature. Accordingly, our derivation of these pronouns will take this into consideration.

3. Facts and Arguments

To begin with, let us consider the forms of the so-called reflexive pronouns in Ibibio.

- | | | | | | |
|--------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|---|-----------------------|
| (2) a. | (à ² m̀) ² | ńnyàà ² à ² | ídém (m̀m̀) | 'I am helping myself' | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 ----2----- 4 3 |
| b. | (à ² fò) | ànyàà ² à ² | ídém (m̀fò) | 'you are helping yourself' | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 -----2----- 4 3 |
| c. | (ànyé) | ányàà ² à ² | ídém (ám̀) | 'he/she/it is helping himself/herself/itself' | |
| | 1 | 2 | | | ----1----- ----2----- |
| d. | (h̀nyɛ̀n) | ńnyàà ² à ² | ídém (h̀nyɛ̀n) | 'we are helping ourselves' | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 -----2----- 4 3 |
| e. | (h̀dùfò) | ènyàà ² à ² | ídém (h̀dùfò) | 'you are helping yourselves' | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 -----2----- 4 3 |

²Tones are indicated as follows:

- ' High Tone
 - ! a combination of High Tone and Downstepped Tone in a syllable
 - ∨ Rising Tone
 - ^ Falling Tone
 - ` Low Tone
- pure Downstepped Tone is unmarked

both a noun stem in a reflexive function and a purely lexical item meaning 'body' is not unique in Ibibio. A good number of the languages in the Cross River State of Nigeria with which I am familiar show this characteristic. Thus in Óróń, which is related to Ibibio, the interpretation of *ile* in (4a) is 'self' while in (4b), the interpretation is 'body'.

- (4) a. *ńtù ílé mì* 'I shot myself'
 1 2 3 --1--- 3 2
- b. *ńtù ílé ízìghí* 'I shot his body'
 1 2 3 --1--- 3 2

Similarly, in Ûsàk Èdèt, a language spoken by a small community near the Nigerian border with the United Republic of Cameroun, *únem* in (5a) means 'self' while in (5b) it means 'body'.

- (5) a. *mbàràdá únem mì* 'I touched myself'
 1 2 3 ----1---- 3 2
- b. *mbàràdá únem use* 'I touched his body'
 1 2 3 ----1---- 3 2

Returning to Ibibio, let us begin by examining the object NP's *ídém òmì*, *ídém òfò*, *ídém àmò*, etc. in (2) above. We claim that these NP's are in fact possessive NP's similar to those in (3). In that case the main difference between the possessive NP's in (2) and those in (3) is that in (2) the NP's occupy the object position while those in (3) occupy the subject position. Let us now consider the facts supporting our claim.

First, just as possessive NP's take articles, the so-called reflexive pronouns or NP's also take articles. Consider the following examples:

- (6) a. *ímé áyém ùdémé àmò ádò* 'Ime wants that share of his'
 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 5 3 4
- b. *ímé ákíd idem amò ádò ábòxo* 'Ime is very arrogant' (lit. Ime
 1 2 3 4 sees himself art. too much (above others))
 1 2 3 ---4---

The possessive NP in (6a) is *ùdémé àmò* 'his share', the so-called reflexive pronoun is *ídém àmò* 'himself' in (6b), while the article is *ádò*.

Second, both kinds of NP's take adjectives, as the following examples show:

- (7) a. Àtâ áyèm ètλk áyɪn àmò 'Ata is looking for his small child'
 1 2 3 4 -----1----- 4 2 3
- b. Àtâ áma ètλk ídèm àmò òko 'Ata also likes his small self'
 1 2 3 4 5 5 1 4 2 3

Third, both the possessive NP and the so-called reflexive pronoun allow quantifiers, as the following examples show:

- (8) a. èté ádò áyèm àfft ínìè àmò 'the man wants all his wealth'
 1 2 3 4 5 6 2 1 3 4 6 5
- b. èté ádò áyie àfft ídèm àmò 'the man has washed his whole body/self'
 1 ----1-----

Fourth, and very crucially, if the so-called reflexive pronoun is in fact a possessive NP, then *ídèm*, the thing possessed, can be replaced by a pronominal element *ákè* 'own'. The object possessed is easily replaceable by *ákè*, as the following examples show:

- (9) a. Àtâ áyèm ímòtò m̀fò, ídóxo ímòtò m̀mì 'Ata wants your car, not my car'
 1 2 3 4 5 1 3 2 4 5
- b. Àtâ áyèm ímòtò m̀fò, ídóxo ákè m̀mì 'Ata wants your car, not my own'

The same sort of replacement observed in (9) is evident in the following examples, which involve the so-called reflexive pronouns:

- (10) a. ònyaana idem m̀mì, àfò nyááǵá ídèm m̀fò 'I am helping myself, you help
 1 2 3 -----1----- 2 3
 yourself'
- b. ònyaana idem m̀mì, àfò nyááǵá ákè m̀fò 'I am helping myself, you help
 your own'

The sentences in (10a) and (10b) are, of course, paraphrases of each other and they show a real difference between the reflexives in English and the so-called reflexives in Ibibio. They also very convincingly show that such "reflexives" in the latter language are in fact possessive in nature.

Related to this and very interesting is the behaviour of *ákè* with the first person singular *m̀mì*. *Ákè* and *m̀mì* may coalesce, as it were, to become one word in certain sentence types. Consider the following examples which are paraphrases of each other:

- (11) a. dép òwèd m̀fò kpλǵ òwèd m̀mì 'buy your books, leave my books'
 1 2 3 4 5 1 3 2 4 5

- b. *dép òwèd òfò, kpáŋ ákám* 'buy your books, leave my own'

The same coalescing process observed in (11), which illustrates obvious cases of possession, also takes place in the case of the so-called reflexive pronouns, as the following pairs of examples show:

- (12) a. *kéré ídém òfò, kpáŋ ídém òmí* 'think of yourself, leave me' (lit.
 1 2 1 2
 think of yourself, leave myself)
 b. *kéré ídém òfò, kpáŋ ákám* 'think of yourself, leave me' (lit.
 think of yourself, leave my own)
- (13) a. *ímé ásuennè ídém ámò, ídóxó ídém òmí* 'Ime has disgraced himself,
 1 2 -----1-----
 not me' (lit. Ime has disgraced him-
 2
 self, not myself)
 b. *ímé ásuennè ídém ámò, ídóxó ákám* 'Ime has disgraced himself, not me'
 (lit. Ime has disgraced himself, not
 my own)

Now, although (12) and (13) are grammatical only in the context of a contrast, they nevertheless touch on an important and fundamental aspect of reflexivization. It is constantly maintained that the reflexive pronoun, as the object, must be identical to its subject in the sentence in which the two occur. Indeed that is the essence of the word *reflexive*. But in (12a), the subject of the clause *kpáŋ ídém* (lit. leave myself) is *òfò* 'you', while the object is *ídém òmí* 'myself'. Similarly in (13a), the subject of the second clause *ímé* and the object of that clause, *ídém òmí*, are not identical. If we derive the so-called reflexive pronouns from reflexivization, we have to make an exception in the identity condition to accommodate the sentences in (12) and (13). But no such problem arises if we derive them as possessive NP's. After all, not all possessive NP's undergo possessive pronominalization.

Fifthly, the fact that elements like *mmí* 'my', *mfo* 'your', *ámò* 'his/her', etc. can be deleted, as pointed out earlier, follows from the fact that in possessives the possessor element can be deleted in cases where the possessor is obvious. Consider the following examples, where items in the brackets are deletable:

The same arguments that apply to Efik in this regard also apply to Ibibio, a very closely related language. Similarly, the same possessive rule that handles the so-called picture nouns in Efik [Essien 1978:130ff] can also handle the so-called picture nouns, such as the following, in Ibibio:

- (17) a. $\acute{M}mek\acute{i}d$ ndise $\acute{i}d\acute{e}m$ $\grave{m}m\grave{i}$ 'I have seen a picture of myself'
 b. $\acute{B}\acute{a}ss\acute{e}y$ $\acute{a}ta\eta$ $\grave{n}b\grave{a}k$ $\acute{i}d\acute{e}m$ $\acute{a}m\acute{o}$ 'Bassey has told a story of himself'

Since both the so-called picture nouns and the so-called reflexive pronouns in Ibibio are possessive in nature, they can be derived by the same possessive rule that derives ordinary possessive NP's. In other words, one does not need two different rules to handle the so-called reflexive pronouns and those reflexive-like forms connected with the so-called picture nouns. A revision of the 1978 possessive rule will be given in Section 4.

Finally, let us consider the emphatic cases which contain the reflexive-like elements. In doing this we shall first of all return to the examples in (12) and (13) so that we may be able to relate them to other emphatic cases.

The examples in (12) and (13) involve some emphasis that arises from contrast. As we see presently, they are in fact just examples of emphatic cases that involve the use of the lexical item $\acute{i}d\acute{e}m$ and the possessive pronoun, or any other possessive nominal for that matter. This fact relates the so-called reflexive pronouns to the emphatics, both of which have the reflexive-like forms, and makes our analysis more revealing. Under reflexivization as currently formulated, this relationship has not been, and indeed cannot be, accounted for.

Before we consider other emphatic cases, let us point out two facts. First, the grammaticality of (12) and (13) arises from the contrast. Thus the following is ungrammatical in isolation:

- (18) a. $*kp\acute{A}\eta$ $\acute{i}d\acute{e}m$ $\grave{m}m\grave{i}$ '*leave myself'
 1 2 3 1 3 2

But in the contrast situation in which $\acute{a}f\acute{o}$ 'you' is the subject of both S's in the underlying phrase marker and in which the so-called reflexive pronoun occurs in the first of the S's in (12), this NP, i.e. the so-called reflexive pronoun, is apparently attracted in the second S, hence the grammaticality of (12). Second, the non-reflexive form $m\acute{i}\grave{n}$ 'me' would, of course, be grammatical in (12), as the grammaticality of (18b), where $m\acute{i}\grave{n}$ has replaced

ídém òmì , shows:

(18) b. kéré ídém òfò, kpáŋ mìn 'think of yourself, leave me'

In terms of meaning, however, much of the emphasis or force in (12) is lost in (18b) by the use of mìn in place of ídém òmì .

The commonest type of emphatic cases (hereafter referred to simply as emphatics) is exemplified by the following:

(19) a. ìmé ké ídém ámò 'Ime himself'
 1 2 2 1

 b. àfò ke ídém òfò 'you yourself'
 1 2 3 1 3 2

In some cases, possession involving emphasis is formally marked as in (19), where the emphatic marker ké (also used in cleft sentences) follows the "emphasized" nominal, and in the following examples:

(20) a. Òkón ádò áyfn kè ìdém òmì (ídóxó àníè òdópké)
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

'Okon is my real/natural child (not an adopted one)'
 1 4 -----3----- 2 5 7 6

 b. nám útóm ádò òtè útóm kè ìdém òfò (ídóxó ákè àwò àfén)
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

'do that job as your personal job (not as someone else's)'
 1 3 2 4 7 6 5 8 10 11

In the case of (20), the ké is optionally deletable. Thus, (21a,b) are paraphrases of (20a,b), respectively:

(21) a. Òkón ádò áyfn ídém òmì (ídóxó àníè òdópké)

'Okon is my real/natural child (not an adopted one)'

 b. nám útóm ádò òtè útóm ídém òfò (ídóxó ákè àwò àfén)

'do that job as your personal job (not as someone else's)'

Observe that the particle ké occurs between two nominals. In (19), it occurs between ìmé/àfò and ídém and in (20), between áyfn/útóm and ídém. One way of deriving the particle is to introduce it transformationally depending on the NP configuration (see the expansion of the NP in Section 4 below). Alternatively, ké could be generated in the base in all emphatic cases. Then in the case of (12), it is obligatorily deleted, where there is no immediately preceding nominal. It is, however, optionally deletable in the case of (20), as (21) shows. It is not deletable in the case of (19).

How *ké* is to be derived is not the issue. The issue is that some cases of emphasis require the use of *ídém* in possessive relationship with other nominals.

4. Formulation of the Possessive Rule

Essien [1978:127] proposed the following expansion of the NP to account for the facts of possessive NP's in Efik, where NOM stands for nominal:

- (i) NP → N DET
- (ii) DET → (NOM) ART
- (iii) NOM → NP

Given the above expansion of the NP, the possessor NP will be dominated by the NOM of the DET. This then accounts for the "Determiner" behaviour of the possessor nominal observed in Efik (and in Ibibio, as pointed out in Section 3, pp. 96-102).

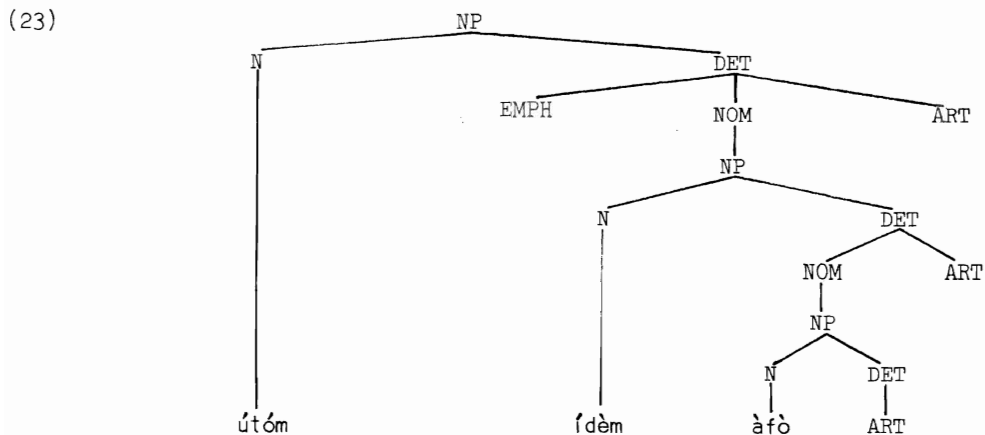
The above expansion rules as they are cannot account for all the facts of Ibibio possessive NP's presented above. For example, it cannot account for emphasis in the NP. However, with a little amendment to the rules to include EMPH (Emphasis), which is a required category anyway, e.g. the expansion of the VP must include EMPH to account for emphasis in the VP, the facts of Ibibio can be accommodated. Accordingly, we propose the following expansion rules:

- (22) (i) NP → N DET
- (ii) DET → (EMPH) (NOM) ART
- (iii) NOM → NP

With the above rules, then, both the emphatic and the non-emphatic cases of NP can be accounted for by the selection or non-selection of EMPH respectively in the rule application.

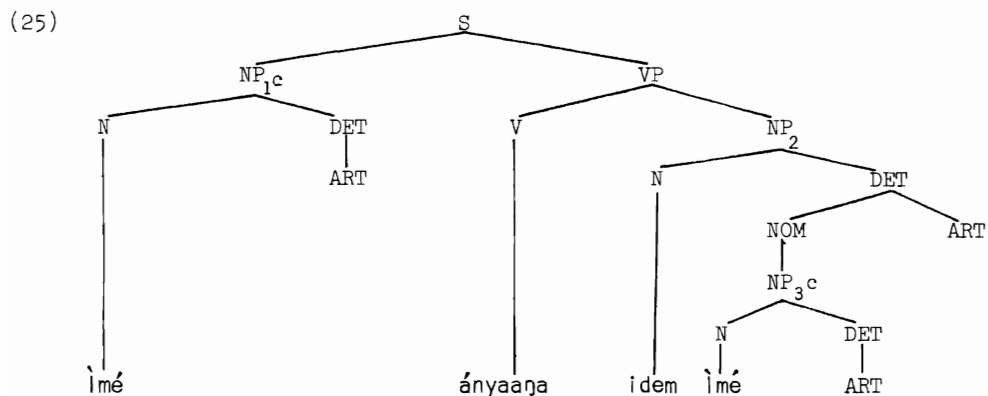
Given the rules in (22) above, a possessive NP with emphasis such as *útóm ídém òfò* 'your personal job' in (21b) is structured as (23) on the next page.

So far we have been concerned with the base rules that derive possessive NP's. Let us now turn to Possessive Pronominalization, by which, in our definition, possessive pronouns are derived when such pronouns, e.g. *ámò* in (24) on the next page, have coreferent interpretations.



(24) ìmé ányaana idem amò 'Ime is helping himself'
 1 -----1-----

Underlying (24) is (25), omitting irrelevant details.



We restate, with a slight modification of the 1978 position, how Possessive Pronominalization applies. Given a structure such as (25), the rule applies, provided that

- (i) there are two coreferent NP's (NP₁ and NP₃) such that one of the NP's is dominated by a NOM;
- (ii) the latter NP, i.e. NP₃ in our example, is immediately preceded by an N;

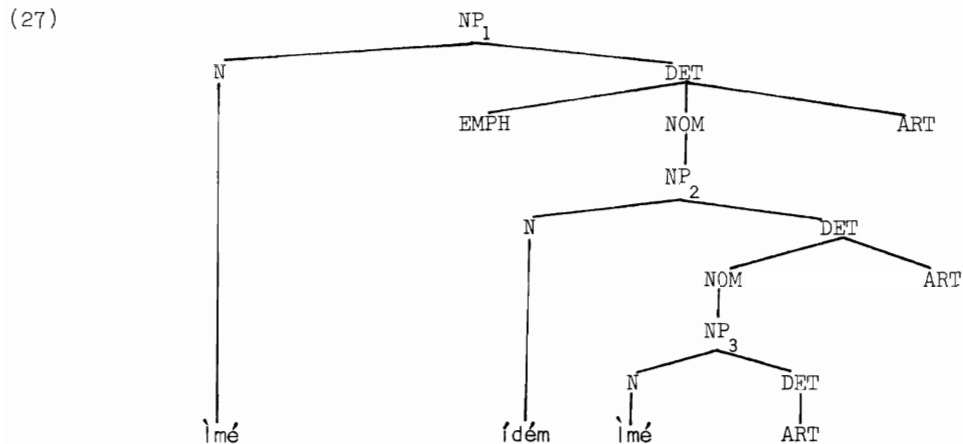
- (iii) the N that immediately precedes the NP dominated by NOM must be the head noun of the DET that dominates the NOM that in turn dominates the NP, i.e. NP₃ in our example.

When the rule applies, it will mark the feature [+Pro] and [+Pos] (Possessive) on the NP dominated by NOM. If the NP is already [+Pro], then the rule will simply mark it [+Pos]. In the case of (25), the NP will be realised later as ámò, after the necessary phonological rule(s) have applied, given a Chomskyan grammar.

Sometimes the coreferent NP's occur in one complex NP. Consider the following example:

- (26) ìmé ké ídém ámò 'Ime himself'

Clearly ámò in (26) refers to ìme in the example. Given the rules in (22), (26), which is a possessive NP with emphasis, is structured as (27) below:



Assuming that NP₁ and NP₃ in (27) are coreferential,³ then Possessive Pronominalization can apply, since conditions (ii) and (iii) for the rule application are also met, and NP₃ will eventually become ámò.

³Here we overlook the problems of what constitutes coreference or identity raised by Jackendoff [1968:5] and others. In any case, if NP₁ and NP₃ cannot be said to be coreferential (which is not to say equal), the N's dominated by these NP's are identical, indeed strictly identical.

To derive *ké*, which occurs in (26), the surface counterpart of (27), we probably need a *ké*-INSERTION rule to introduce this particle. Alternatively, and better still, in our opinion, it can be introduced during what is often referred to as "a second lexical pass" which also lexicalizes ART, which in our grammar is "empty" in the base. This is fully discussed in Essien [1974: 76ff.].

So the three conditions stated above are sufficient for the application of Possessive Pronominalization, whether in an S or NP configuration. Given the above possessive rule, how can we handle the ambiguity of the following sentence:

- | | | | | |
|------|-----------------------------|-----------------|---|-------------|
| (28) | `ímé ámà át fgha ídem (amò) | 1 2 3 | a. 'Ime shot himself' | 1 3 2 |
| | | | b. 'Ime shot his body', e.g. as opposed to head | 1 3 2 |

Possessive Pronominalization in itself cannot solve this problem, since *fdém* as 'self' or 'body' in the sentence will still have the same underlying structure. That is, whether *fdém* is interpreted as 'self' or 'body' in (28), that sentence is still derived from one underlying source. But that source structure is subject to Possessive Pronominalization. Since Possessive Pronominalization will apply in either case and reduce the structure to (28), that rule cannot solve the ambiguity. But if the ambiguity cannot be solved syntactically by Possessive Pronominalization, it can be solved lexically. This does not need further defence, since we have made the point quite clear that *fdém* is a lexically ambiguous item.

5. Implications

The analysis presented above has certain implications for Ibibio grammar. First, reflexivization as currently formulated does not exist in Ibibio and should be viewed merely as a grammatical device for accounting for reflexive actions in some languages, English, for example. Assuming that all languages can express reflexive actions, then the grammatical device for doing this in Ibibio (and perhaps other languages too in the Niger-Congo family) is Possessive Pronominalization.

Second, the similarity in form between the so-called reflexive pronouns

and the emphatics merely reflects the relationship between the two: they are both traceable to one source, possession. It may well be that the same sort of similarity in form between the reflexive pronouns and the emphatics in English is not accidental, after all.

Third, and very important, our analysis reveals that Possessive Pronominalization is an important aspect of pronominalization in Ibibio, especially as it also acts as a grammatical device for expressing reflexive actions.

REFERENCES

- Akmajian, A. and F. Heny. 1975. *An Introduction to the Principles of Transformational Syntax*. Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press.
- Chomsky, N. 1965. *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press.
- Essien, O.E. 1974. "Pronominalization in Efik." Doctoral thesis, Edinburgh University.
- Essien, O.E. 1978. "Possessive pronominalization and the so-called picture nouns in Efik." *Studies in African Linguistics* 9:121-142.
- Jackendoff, R. 1968. "An interpretative theory of pronouns and reflexives." Bloomington: Indiana University Linguistics Club.
- Jackendoff, R. 1972. *Semantic Interpretation in Generative Grammar*. Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press.
- Jespersen, O. 1964. *Essentials of English Grammar*. University, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- Lees, R.B. and E.S. Klima. 1963. "Rules for English Pronominalization." In D.A. Reibel and S.A. Schane (eds.), *Modern Studies in Transformational Grammar*, pp. 145-159. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Inc.
- Postal, P. 1966. "On so-called pronouns in English." In R.A. Jacobs and P. S. Rosenbaum (eds.), *Readings in English Transformational Grammar*, pp. 56-87. Waltham, MA: Ginn and Company.
- Quirk, R. and S. Greenbaum. 1973. *A University Grammar of English*. London: Longmans.