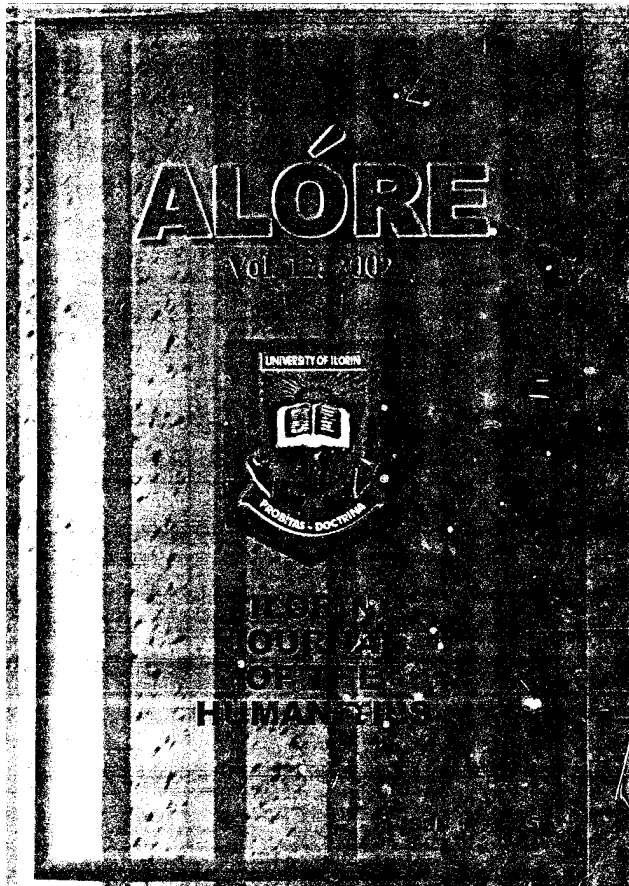




A SURVEY OF SUBJECT-AGREEMENT MARKERS IN SELECTED AFRICAN LANGUAGES

Issa O. Sanusi

**Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages,
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.**

Introduction

In Government and Binding (GB) theory (otherwise known as Principles and Parameters theory), agreement (AGR) features, in terms of person, number, gender, case, etc., are given greater attention than hitherto considered. For instance, Chomsky (1986:160-1) assumes that the traditional 'auxiliary node' is represented by what is now known as INFL (inflection) node, consisting of tense and agreement elements as well as modals.

This paper examines the phenomenon of resumptive or recapitulatory pronoun as a unique subject-agreement marker (i.e. subject concord) in selected African languages like Auga, Batbnu, Ebira, Hausa and Kiswahili. The fact that these languages belong to different African language families provides a good opportunity for us to compare the occurrence and grammatical function of the subject-agreement makers among the languages.

The traditional notion about such subject-agreement markers is that they merely function as resumptive or recapitulatory pronouns, that are co-referential with their subject-NPs. However, such overtly marked agreement elements are now considered as forming an important component part of a tensed INFL node that licenses grammatical functions like Case and Theta role assignment in a grammatical sentence (cf. Marantz, 1984:73).

In natural languages, nouns and pronouns are commonly found as independent lexical categories. However, in languages that display the phenomenon of recapitulatory/resumptive pronouns, such pronouns always co-occur with the subject - NPs, as subject-agreement markers, in grammatical sentences.

In other words, the principle of recapitulation requires that whenever a subject-NP starts a sentence, it is followed by a pronoun that is co-referential with the subject-NP. Such a pronoun is referred to as resumptive pronoun or subject-agreement marker. This agreement element is technically referred to in the GB literature as "AGR-S". It is otherwise named "clitic doubling" by some linguists (see Trask 1993: 47 and Spencer 1995:384).

This syntactic relationship between the subject—NP and its co-referential resumptive pronoun could be likened to a case of nouns in apposition, in which two contiguous nouns (or noun phrases) refer to the same person, animal, place or thing. For example, in English, we can say: 'John came yesterday', where 'John' is the subject NP, that could be replaced by the subject pronoun 'he', in that language. In a language that exhibits resumptive pronoun, as subject-agreement marker, the pronoun 'he' will automatically follow the subject-NP-'John' to produce a sentence like:

"John he came yesterday"

where the resumptive pronoun 'he', in that context, has no grammatical function other than a mere agreement marker/subject concord. Through that type of construction appears ungrammatical in English, it is quite acceptable in some African languages that exhibit the phenomenon of resumptive/recapitulatory pronouns.

Defining Agreement Relation

Steel (1990:73) defines agreement (AGR) as: "a condition requiring compatibility among its members, yielding a unit with a single value regard less of the number of its members".

Following Chomsky (1981), Riemsdijk and Williams (1986:274) observe that the agreement relationship between the AGR-S marker and the subject can be expressed by coindexing:

$$[s \text{ NP}_i (\text{INFL } (\pm\text{tns}) \text{ AGR}_i) \text{ INFL VP}]_s$$

It is this type of agreement relationship between the subject-NPs and their coindexed resumptive pronouns (i.e., AGR-S markers) that will be the focus of this paper.

The Nature of Resumptive Pronouns among African Languages

Given a syntactic arrangement of constituents within a grammatical sentence, some African languages could be described as exhibiting the phenomenon of resumptive pronoun. Linguists working on African languages observe that languages like Auga, Batonu, Etsako (Edo) Hausa, Kiswahili, etc. do display resumptive/recapitulatory pronouns (of. Welmers (1952, 1973), Adiva (1989), Sanusi (1983), Ayeni (1987), Awobuluyi (1983), among others. However, we shall, in this paper, limit our discussion of resumptive pronouns to such African languages like Auga, Batonu, Ebira, Hausa and Kiswahili. Apart from the above mentioned African languages, Sharvit (1999:591) also reports that it was argued in the literature 'that Hebrew allows resumptive pronouns in relative clauses, but not in questions.

Resumptive Pronouns in Hausa

Hausa is a Chadic language in the Afro-Asiatic family of languages. It is spoken as a first language by more than twelve million people in Northern Nigeria and Niger Republic (of. Dresel, 1977:1). The language is also spoken by many non-native speakers in many parts of the world.

Hausa is one of the most popular African languages that "exhibit resumptive pronouns. Whenever a subject-NP is directly followed by a pronoun that agrees in gender, person, and number with that subject-NP, we can conveniently refer to such a pronoun as a resumptive pronoun in Hausa. This phenomenon is demonstrated in the succeeding section with relevant Hausa examples.

Resumptive Pronouns as Gender Agreement Markers

As shown in (1) and (2) below, it could be observed that Hausa exhibits resumptive pronouns that function as gender agreement markers, in grammatical sentence, in the language.

- (1) a. Masculine: *Tankoj ya₁ zo¹
 *Tanko he come
 AGR-S
 'Tanko came',
b. Feminine: *Bintaj a_i zo
 Binta she come
 AGR-S
 'Binta came'.

In (1) a., the resumption pronoun "ya" 'he' agrees in gender, person, and number (i.e., 3rd person singular masculine) with the subject-NP (Tanko) in the language. Similarly, the resumptive pronoun "ta" 'she' (1) b. also agrees in gender, person, and number with the subject-NP (Binta).

Based on gender agreement, it would be ill-formed in Hausa to realise the sentences (1) a. and b. as (2) a. and b. respectively.

- (2) a. Masculine: *Tankoj ta_j zo
 Tanko she come
 AGR-S
 'Tanko came',
b. Feminine: *Bintaj ya_i zo
 Binta he come
 AGR-S
 'Binta came'.

The ill-formedness of sentences (2) a. and b. resulted from lack of gender agreement between the subject-NPs (i.e., Tanko and Binta) and their coindexed resumptive pronouns (i.e., "ta" and "ya") respectively. In other words, a violation of the gender agreement between the subject-NP and its resumptive pronoun will always produce ungrammatical sentences as in (2) a. and b. above.

Resumptive Pronouns as Number Agreement Markers in Hausa

The grammar of Hausa requires that whenever the subject-NP is in the plural form, its resumptive pronoun must also be in the plural to ensure that the pronoun agrees in number with the subject-NP as in (3):

- (3) [Issa da Salisu]_i sun_i zo
 Issa and Salisu they come
 AGR-S

'Issa and Salisu came'.

However, unlike in (2) a and b., there is no gender distinction in the use of plural form of the resumptive pronoun- "sun" "they", as in (3) above. That is, Hausa uses the same form of the resumptive pronoun in the plural, irrespective of the gender class of the subject-NPs that are involved in such construction.

It should be noted that, apart from its syntactic function as a resumptive pronoun, each of the subject pronouns in Hausa can also function as an autonomous subject-NP in a grammatical sentence, as exemplified in (4);

- (4) (i) Ya Kawo litafi
3SG bring book
'He brought a book'.
- (ii) Ta Kawo litafi
3SG bring book
'She brought a book'.
- (iii) Sun Kawo litafi
3 PL. bring book
'They brought a book'.

Batonu as a Noun Class Language

Batonu is a language of the Gur (Voltaic) subgroup of the Niger-Congo family of the Niger-Kordofanian phylum. Both the language and its speakers are popularly referred to by non-native speakers as "Bariba" or "Baruba". Batonu is spoken as a first language in two adjacent countries in West Africa- Nigeria and the Republic of Benin (of. Welmers, 1952 &. 1973 and Sanusi 1983).

The language is a noun class language with seven prominent noun classes. Unlike Kiswahili and other Bantu languages, the Batonu noun classes are not recognized on the basis of singular-plural alternation of noun class prefix markers, but on, the basis of suffix class- marker (CM) that each of the noun classes, selects. The noun CM in the language include:- wi, -te, me, -m, -ye, -ge, and -si², as exemplified in (5) (i – vii):

- (5) (i) duro-wi 'The man'
man CM
- (ii) tire-te 'The book'
book CM
- (iii) nim-me 'The water'
water CM
- (iv) boo-go 'The goat'

- goat CM
- (v) deka-ye 'The stick'
stick CM
- (vi) gbere-ni 'The maize/corn'
corn CM
- (vii) yaka-si 'The grass'
grass CM

Resumptive Pronouns as AGR-S Markers in Batonu

The use of resumptive pronouns as **AGR-S** markers in each of the seven prominent noun classes can be demonstrated with the examples in (6):³

6. (i) -wi class
- a. tonduror_i wi u nim-me nor-a
man CM he water CM drink + PAST
AGR-S
'The man drank water'.
- b. tonkuro_i -wi u demunu-ye keer-a.
Woman CM she orange CM peel + PAST
'The woman peeled the orange'.
- (ii) -te class
- a. boo_i-te ta bunu.
Bag CM it heavy
AGR-S
'The bag is heavy'.
- b. weke_j -te ta kpa.
Pot CM it heavy
AGR-S
'The pot is big/large'.
- (iii) -me class
- a. nim_j -me mu sum.
Water CM it hot
AGR-S
'The water is hot'.
- b. bom_j -me mu yem.
milk CM it cold
AGR-S
'The milk is cold'.
- (iv) -ge" class
- a. nemu_j -ge ga_j wa.
antelope CM it beautiful
AGR-S

The antelope is beautiful'.

(v) -ye class

- a. dekaj-ye yuj diu
stick CM it long
AGR-S
'The Stick is long'.
- b. yagede-ye ya, taaburu woio.
banana CM it table oil
AGR-S
'The banana is on the table'.

(vi) -ni class

- a. gbere-ni nu j wa.
corn CM it good
AGR-S
'The corn/maize is good'.
- b. yabo- ni nu j Kpimimu.
Okro CM it fresh
AGR-S
'The okro is fresh'.

(vii) -si- class

- a, yaka- si su j biresu.
grass CM it green
AGR-S
'The grass is green'.
- b. si i- si su j sum.
Iron CM it hot
AGR-S
'The iron is hot'.

- (viii) [tonduro-wi ka tonkuro-wi] j ba dueya dii-te so]
man CM and woman CM they sleep room CM in
AGR-S
'The man and the woman slept in the room'.

- (ix) [gum-me ka tim-me] j mu do gea]
oil CM and honey CM they sweet very
AGR-S
'Both the oil and the honey are very sweet'.

- (x) [musuku-'ge' ka kirikiri-te] j nu j gira ne]

cat CM and mouse CM they run after each other
 AGR-S
 'The cat and the mouse are running after each other'.

- (xi) [nen tire-te ka wunen gobi-ye] j nu j beruwa boo te so]
 my book CM and your money CM they kept bag CM inside
 AGR-S
 'My book and your money are kept inside the bag'.

Also, as evident in (6) above Batonu, unlike Hausa, has no gender distinction as far as the use of resumptive pronoun is concerned.

Resumptive Pronouns as AGR-S Markers in Ebira

Ebira is spoken as a first language in some Local Government Areas of Kogi State in Nigeria. It belongs to the Kwa group of Niger Congo languages (cf. Greenberg 1970 and Adiva 1989).

Like some other African languages, Ebira makes use of resumptive pronouns as AGR-S markers (cf. Adiva, 1989:118). However, unlike Hausa, Ebira has no gender distinction in its use of resumptive pronouns. The use of resumptive pronouns in the language can be exemplified as in (7):

- (7) (i) Tahiru j oo j ri Isa.
 Tahiru he eat food
 AGR-S
 'Tahiru ate food'.
- (ii) Abibatu, ri Isa
 Abibatu she eat food
 AGR-S
 Abibatu ate food
- (iii) [Ahmed oniri Fatima] EE' ri Isa.
 Ahmed and Fatima they eat food
 AGR-S
 'Ahmed and Fatima ate food'.

Adiva (1989:118) observes that apart from subject nouns, subject pronouns can also co-occur with resumptive pronouns in Ebira, as exemplified in (8) below.

- (8) (i) emi maa ri ' Isa.
 ISG I eat food
 AGR-S
 'I ate food'.
- (ii) ,ewu waa ri Isa
 2SG you eat food

AGR-S
 "You ate food'.

- (iii) oni oo ri Isa
 3SG he/she/it eat food
 AGR-S
 'He/she/ate food'.
- (iv) eyi yee hu ece.
 1 PL they drink wine .
 AGR-S
 'He drank some wine',
- (v) enini EE_J hu ece.
 3PL they drink wine
 AGR-S
 They drank some wine'.

etc.

Auga as a Noun Class Language ;

Auga is a language spoken in the Akoko district of Ondo State, Nigeria. It belongs to the Kwa group of Niger-Congo languages. Ayeni (1987:20) describes Auga as a noun class language, with five distinct noun classes.

The noun class system in Auga is similar to the type found among the Bantu languages. The classes are distinguished on the basis of singular-plural alternation of the noun prefix class markers. The classes are described as in (9)

(9)	Class	CM	Number
	I	:E-/e-:	(Singular)
	II	: o/o-:	(Singular)
	III	: u - :	(Singular)
	IV	: i- :	(Plural of class-1)
	V	: a- :	(Plural of classes II and III)

Resumptive pronouns as AGR-S Markers in Auga

Each of the prefix noun class markers in Auga could be used as an AGR-S marker in the language. The phenomenon of resumptive pronoun in Auga, as described in Ayeni (1987) can be exemplified as in (10):

- (10) (i) u-lubo, u-riri roo u_j-kol.
 CM cassava CM long that it break
 AGR-S
 'That long cassava broke'.
- (ii) u-lubo u-riri raa a_j-kol
 CM cassava CM long those they break
 AGR-S
 'Those long cassavas broke'.
- (iii) u-lubo_j u-t u_ra .
 CM cassava CM mine it finish
 AGR-S
 'My cassava is finished'.

As could be observed in (10) i-iii, apart from using the prefix noun class markers as AGR-S markers, Auga uses the prefix noun class markers for number agreement (i.e.; singular and plural). All the major lexical categories in the language are required to be in grammatical concord in terms of noun class and number whenever such lexical categories co-occur with other constituents in a grammatical sentence.

Kiswahili as a Noun Class Language

Kiswahili belongs to the Bantu language family. It is a noun class language having its noun class markers as prefixes. The noun class markers are capable of functioning as number agreement markers and as resumptive pronouns or AGR-S markers in the language.

Considering 'grammatical concord' as one of the features with which one can identify a Bantu language, Guthrie (1970:47) remarks that:

As is widely known, in Bantu languages grammatical concord is operated by means of prefix agreement a fact which is moreover one of the criteria used to determine whether or not a given language is to be accepted as Bantu. .

Carstens (1991:13) also confirms that:

In general, each noun of a Bantu language belongs to one of a number of Noun Classes. Class membership determines the type of agreement borne by a noun's modifiers and complements, and by auxiliaries and verbs in relevant syntactic relations with it.

Nouns in Kiswahili are generally grouped into six different classes, with each of the classes having its pair of prefixes (singular and plural) as shown in (11) below:

(11)	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>	<u>Gloss</u>
(a)	m-tu	wa-tu	'Person'
(b)	m-zigo	mi-zigo	'Load'
(c)	o-ofali	ma-tofali	'Brick'
(d)	Ki-tasa	vi-tasa	'Lock'
(e)	N-ndizi	N-ndizi	'Banana'
(f)	U-bao	N.mbao	'Plank'

Resumptive Pronouns as AGR-S Markers in Kiswahili

Following Welmers (1973:171-2) and Myachina (1981), we can illustrate cases of resumptive pronouns functioning as AGR-S markers in Kiswahili, as shown in (12):

- (12) (i) m-tu a; likuja.
 CM person he come
 AGR-S
 'A person came',
- (ii) m-shale u-lianguka.
 CM nail it fall
 AGR-S
 'A nail fell'.
- (iii) m-toto a livumja ki-kombe.
 CM child he break CM cup
 AGR-S
 'The child broke the cup'.
- (iv) mama a-nawasomea wa-toto wake ki-tabu.
 Mother she read CM children her CM book
 AGR-S
 'The mother reads the book to her children'.

Identifying the Syntactic Position and Function of the AGR-S

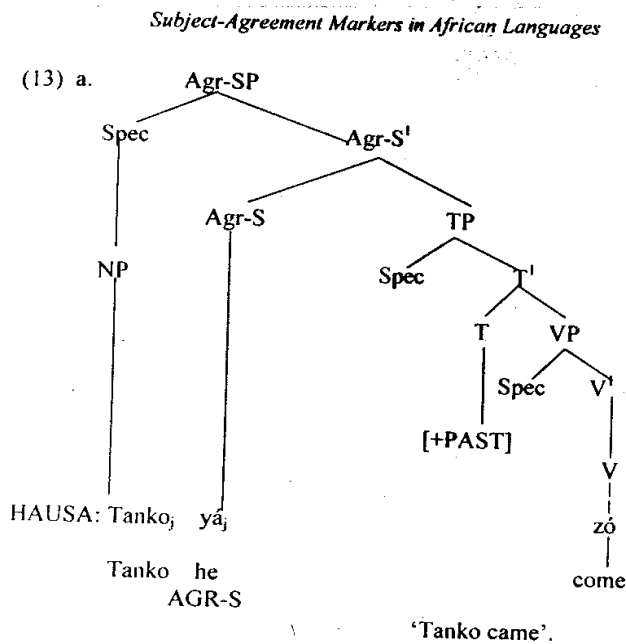
Considering the syntactic status of the agreement element (AGR) of INFL as a nominative Case assigner, Chomsky (1986:162) expresses the view that:

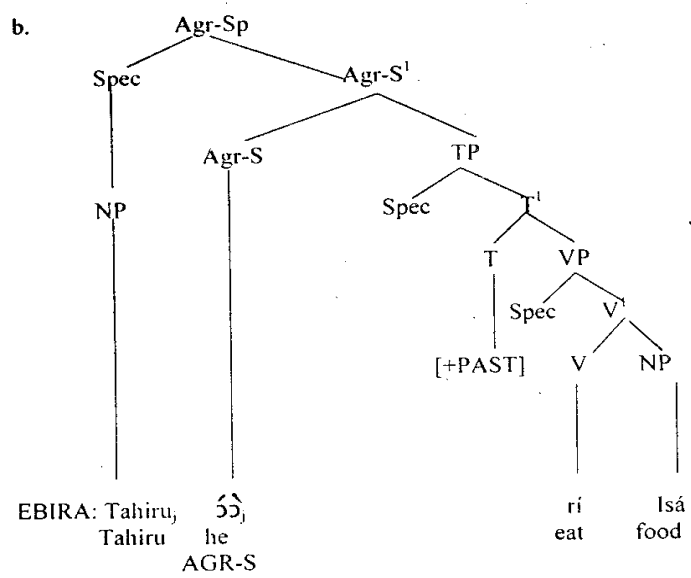
We assume that the agreement element (AGR) of INFL, which is "nominal" in the sense that it contains the features person, number, and gender, counts as a governor so that AGR governs the subject. Assume further that AGR is automatically co-indexed with the subject to express the agreement relation.

As exemplified in each of the languages under consideration, -the subject-agreement marker (i.e., AGR-S marker) occupies a unique nominal syntactic position that enables it to assign a nominative Case to its co-indexed subject- NP. This function is made possible by virtue of agreement relation as well as satisfied adjacency condition existing between a subject-NP and its AGR-S element.

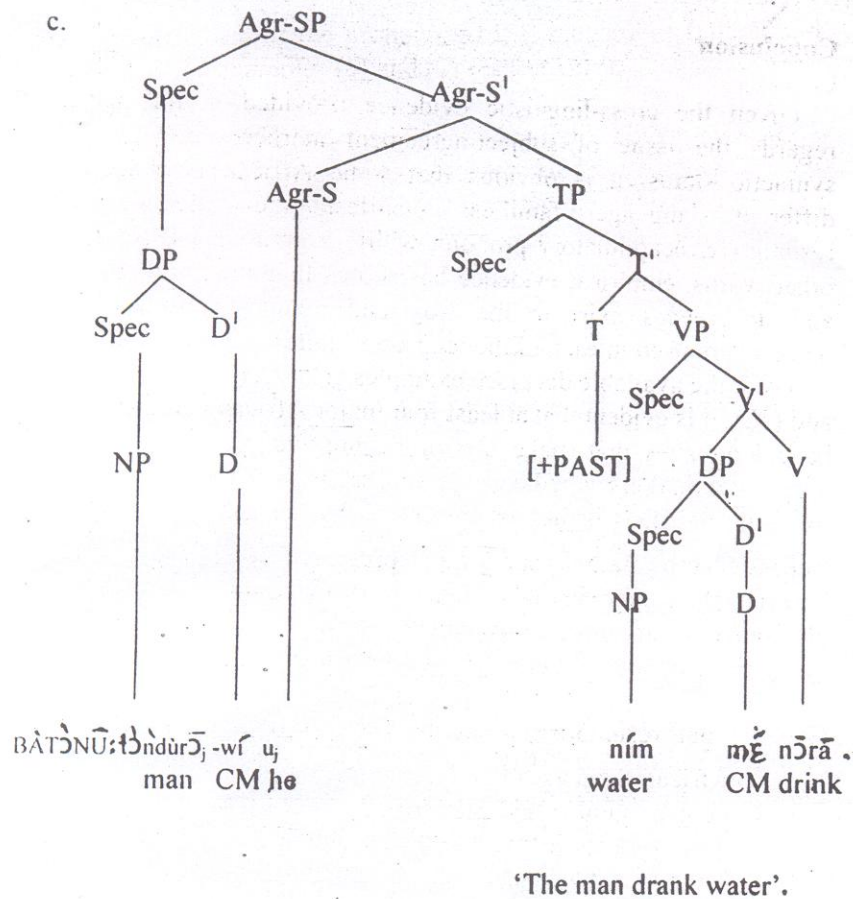
Given the assumption that the INFL node is specified for (AGR) (cf. Chomsky 1986:162 and Haegeman 1991:117); and given the Split-INFL⁴ hypothesis of Pollock (1989), the described syntactic position of a resumptive pronoun vis-a-vis its corresponding subject-NP, as attested in each of the languages under analysis, can be depicted as in (13) a-c below, where:

Agr-SP = Subject -Agreement Phrase
 TP = Tense Phrase
 Spec = Specifier .
 DP - Determiner Phrase
 NP =Noun Phrase
 VP - Vcrbh.use 68





'Tahiru ate food'.



Conclusion

Given the cross-linguistic evidence provided in this paper, as regards the issue of subject-agreement marker (AGR-S) and its syntactic status, it is obvious that some African languages, from different language families, manifest the phenomenon of resumptive/recapitulatory pronoun within a grammatical sentence. In other words, empirical evidence has shown that structural similarities and differences exist in the way and manner subject-agreement markers are used in each of the languages under consideration.

From the available data (see examples (1), (2), (3), (4), (6), (8), (10) and (12), it is evident that at least four major African language families have languages that make use of resumptive pronouns as subject-agreement markers. The language families include: Bantu (represented by Kiswahili), Chadic (represented by Hausa), Gur (Voltaic) (represented by Baonu) and Kwa (represented by Ebira and Auga).

From the foregoing, some general claims could be made about the phenomenon of subject-agreement markers, as manifested in the syntactic structures of the languages discussed in this paper.

- (i) That resumptive pronouns (i.e., AGR-S markers) in some African languages like Hausa, BatDnu, Ebtra, etc., do agree in person, number and gender with the subject-NPs with which they co-occur in a grammatical sentence.
- (ii) That in a language that has gender distinction, like Hausa, resumptive pronoun/subject-agreement marker will have different forms that correspond to different gender classes in that language. For example, as shown in example (1) above, Hausa has two forms of subject-agreement marker - "ya" 'he' and "ta" 'she', with each of them representing masculine and feminine gender, respectively.
- (iii) That if a language has no gender distinction, in terms of the grammatical use of subject-agreement marker, such agreement marker will appear in only one form, most especially the singular form of the pronoun, as it is the case in Batonu and Ebira (see examples (6) and (7) respectively).

Finally, the use of Pollock's (1989) 'Split-INFL Phrase Structure', as demonstrated in (13) a - c above, has provided a better explanation of the actual syntactic position occupied by the subject-agreement markers, within grammatical sentences, in each of the languages under consideration.

Notes

¹. For the purpose of this paper, our system of tone-marking, in each of the languages under consideration, excluding Kiswahili, is made to reflect the I.P.A. convention:

High tone: [/]
 Mid tone: [—]
 Low tone: [v]

². Each of the noun class markers in Batonu is a definite determiner meaning 'that' in the language(cf. Welmers 1973: 159).

³. There is phonetic correlation between the noun class markers and their corresponding allomorphic resumptive pronouns/AGR-S markers in Batonu. With the exception of the "-wi" class marker, which deletes its initial consonant, other class markers in the language do normally retain their initial consonants whenever they function as AGR-S markers.

⁴. According to Poeppel and Wexler (1993:28), "In a Split-INFL Phrase Structure, AGR-SP must be hierarchically located above TP, so that the verb can pick up the TENSE and subsequently agreement morpheme".

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