The Syntax of Relative Clause Construction in Etulo

Abstract

This paper examines the relative clause (RC) construction in Etulo, an Idomoid language spoken in Benue State, Nigeria. It discusses the formal morpho-syntactic means of encoding relative clauses in Etulo , and highlights how the features of Etulo RC align with or diverge from the canonical features of the RC construction as proposed in (Dixon 2010). It is observed that relative clauses in Etulo are externally headed and are characterized by gapping. They are introduced by the relativisers; *nwu* (+human) and *nwi* (-human) which are in certain contexts, substituted by the relative pronouns *onwu* and *onwi*. The latter form onwi is gradually evolving as a general relative marker following the increasing restriction in the use of *nwu*. Etulo allows subject, direct object, indirect object and possessive relatives. Sometimes, the relative marker is replaced by the morpheme *ŋ*, which can co-occur with relative pronouns. This work discusses the Etulo RC in the light of a typological framework for relativization, particularly in African languages as proposed in Kuteva and Comrie (2005).

Key word: Etulo, relativisers, gapping, relative clause, relative pronouns, African languages