The Grammatical Use of –Self or -Selves in English and Bopp in Wolof: From Reflexivity to Intensifying Uses

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INTRODUCTION

Today, many researches have been conducted on grammar, which refers to the discipline that focuses on morphology and syntax, whether from the perspective of language learning (for example, French grammar, Latin grammar), from the perspective of language description, or from the perspective of general linguistics, where ‘grammar’ has the status of a sub-discipline alongside phonetics, phonology, semantics and so on. Then, a reflexive pronoun is a part of grammar; its function is to add information to a sentence by pointing back to a noun or pronoun near the beginning of the sentence.

Reflexive pronouns in Modern English can be regarded as a process that combined personal pronouns with the intensifier -self of Old English and Middle English (e.g. her + self > herself). Intensifiers in Modern English, as well as in many other languages like wolof have at least three uses such as an adnominal and two adverbial ones. An adnominal use is the fact that the intensifier combines with a noun phrase to form another noun phrase (Edith herself), whereas it is a part of the verbal phrase in an adverbial case (to earn himself).

According the modern system, Co-reference with an antecedent in the same clause or within some local domains is more and more, signalled by compound self-forms (reflexive anaphors), whereas coreference across clause boundaries is still expressed by personal pronouns (Joseph is ashamed of himself/him). In Middle English, bare pronouns are used most of the time to indicate co-reference in a local domain. According to Keenan, most of the self-forms are intensifiers, rather than reflexives. There is a significant rise in the use of self in object position to indicate co-reference (local binding). However, Wolof, mainly spoken in Senegal, uses the word bopp for « head » as a conceptualization in this language, and as a typologically oriented study of the grammaticalization of this notion. According to (Heine & Kuteva, 2001: 167-9), there are two major semantic domains for the grammaticalization of the body part noun for HEAD.

In presenting our reasoning on the morpho-syntactic analysis of the reflexive -self in English and bopp in wolof, we will proceed by an approach of language change that is a typological contrastive work. Such an approach not only allows to distinguish the wolof reflexive « bopp » from the English suffix -self or –selves but also discuss and answer intricate questions related to the results of the study. The objective of this work is to enlighten and identify all the problems of misunderstanding of the grammatical rules especially the correct use of bopp and self in an utterance.
The analysis of the reflexive –self or –selves
The morphological use of –self or –selves

In morphology, when we want to study more clearly the reflexive pronouns, one can refer to the use of the old form. The old form the-self may be mentioned to represent the third person singular. Indeed, the article the is used as an inflexion of it. That can be illustrated by this case: the child will the-self, if you do not take away the knife. Then, the+self may stand for it+self. Throughout this system, this following uniform paradigm can be used: POSSESSIVE + SELF/SELVES.

Some possessive adjectives are also used in order to form reflexive pronouns. In fact, each reflexive pronoun contains two morphemes like a possessive adjective plus -self or –selves, for instance, myself, yourself.

The English third person singular distinguishes the feminine from the masculine or the neuter, which is agreed with its referent. The other forms of reflexive pronouns can refer to any gender.

The third-person feminine pronoun herself can be built while basing on the possessive or the object form.

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{She} & \text{has} & \text{hurt} \\
3\text{PSG} & \text{V} & \text{her-self.} \\
\text{Ref. P} & & \\
\end{array}
\]

In addition, the third-person singular neuter form itself consists of the alternative possessive pronoun it+self. Otherwise, in old English the first-person singular pronoun usually has the form like meself. One can that the use of the possessive form me for my. At present, the possessive adjective my plus the word “self” become the bound morpheme my-self.

Generally, this kind of reflexive pronoun may be found in the seventies. Thus, in the Canterbury Tales manuscripts, for instance, we have the reflexive pronouns “ourself and theirselves. This particular case may produce the formal and emphatic usage such as our + selve, their + selve.

Many English dialects mainly use the possessive pronouns to reflexive pronouns. This regularization of the reflexive pronoun system is regarded as one of the characteristics of the British social dialects rather than regional dialects, since the system is extremely widespread.

The form theirself has also been attested in Suffolk, according to old English, “the forms himself and theirselves“ are part of the reflexive pronoun system in Suffolk. On the other hand, in the formal British English Dialect, the form of the third-person plural reflexive is them +selves. In the south-west data of the British English Dialect, the form theirself still occurs, as illustrated by the examples, I likes to see people enjoy their + self.

The syntactic use of -self or -selves

Reflexive pronouns reflect back to the subject or object. They also provide emphasis; they make another word stronger. We use reflexive pronouns to talk about action where the subject and the object are the same person. The -Self-pronouns such myself, himself, and so on, have a very limited usage. They can add (I myself will blow up the mud balloon) or show the person doing the action in the sentence (She will clean herself later).

Most of these pronouns change in form, depending on the way they are used in a sentence. On the other hand, the nouns that these pronouns stand for do not change.

Therefore, reflexive pronouns and nouns may be combined to form compound subjects, compound indirect objects, and compound direct objects. However, nouns can be tricky, too. They change form depending on how they are used—as in singular.

As seen above, reflexive pronouns are formed by adding - self / -selves to the determiner possessives (myself, yourself, ourselves, yourselves) or to the objective case forms of the personal pronouns (himself, herself, itself, themselves), for instance,

1. I spoke to him myself.

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{I} & \text{spoke} & \text{to} \\
1\text{PSG} & \text{V} & \text{him} \\
3\text{PSG} & \text{Ref. P} & \text{myself.} \\
\end{array}
\]

In English, the subject and the reflexive pronoun are in co-referential relation, I’m teaching myself French. He shaves himself every morning.) Then, the reflexive pronouns occur in the following cases:
1. with verbs that are always reflexive: pride oneself, absent oneself, ingratiate oneself, demean oneself
2. with verbs that are reflexive in certain meanings: behave, avail, enjoy, apply, acquit
3. with some verbs that are optionally reflexive: dress, wash, prove, shave, prepare, hide, worry
4. Whenever the object or the predicative is identical with the subject of the sentence.
5. After the prepositions among and between, with a reciprocal value.

If a preposition expresses a locality, a spatial relation, the self-pronouns are not used (She placed the case beside her. He took the book with him.) Sometimes, Reflexive pronouns are used instead of personal pronouns, for example, she suspected they recognized her sister but not herself. My wife and myself were invited to the party.

Reflexive pronouns can also enter a number of expressions: of oneself, to come to oneself, to do something with oneself, to speak for oneself, to keep to oneself. Therefore, we need to know how reflexive pronouns function in a sentence. A reflexive pronoun can function as direct object, indirect object, prepositional object or predicative.

They can play the Emphatic role mainly called –self pronouns. In this way, they are used for the sake of emphasis. They can be also omitted without destroying the sense of the sentence.

From the syntactic point of view, they are either placed at the end of the sentence or immediately after the noun or pronoun.

2. You yourself told me the story.

In addition, when emphatic pronouns are preceded by the preposition by, they have the meaning of “alone”, “without help”, for example, he lives all by himself. However, oneself may be a reflexive or an emphatic pronoun. Then, emphatic pronouns can function as appositions.

THE ANALYSIS OF THE NOUN ‘BOPP’

The morphological aspect

The Wolof morphological forms of words are studied in order to have new lexemes. In this case, it is possible to distinguish different kinds of lexemes. To study Wolof reflexive pronouns, we may refer to the method of derivation. Morphologically, Wolof language uses the endocentric compounded form, which is composed of the possessive adjective plus the noun bopp as the modifier.

In Wolof, some suffixes like -u and -eeKu may be added to certain verbs to indicate reflexivity and particularly the construction the Wolof reflexive pronouns. These suffixes can be considered as the equivalents of reflexive pronouns, for example, damay sangu.

This expression is composed of the verb sang plus the suffix –u. Therefore, the verb gaañ can be used with the suffix –u to express the reflexive form gaañu. Wolof reflexive pronouns can be also employed in negative sentences, so the suffix –u becomes –oo, for instance, sangoo gu ma. We can notice that the Wolof reflexive pronoun is built from the anaphoric morpheme –oo.

As most of Wolof pronouns, reflexive pronouns agree in number with the verb they modify. There are three persons for the singular form and three persons for the plural.

3. Sangnañu sunu bopp

Verbs are often regarded as roots, which are added to the lexemes to create the reflexive forms. Reflexive pronouns are employed as noun phrases. Each language has its own specific rules particularly the use of reflexive pronouns in English and Wolof.

The syntactic aspect

Otherwise, in Wolof, reflexive pronouns can be formed by referring to some words like bopp and the predicator laa. Thus, reflexive pronouns can also function as an object of the verb.
The word bopp is usually independent, it will be never used as a compounded item in a sentence. When the word bopp is employed with a personal pronoun, the latter can agree with its referent in person. In this case, we will have three persons for the singular and three persons for the plural.

4. Demalal sa bopp
   TAM POSS
   (Go yourself)

In Wolof, various ways may be used to form reflexive pronouns mainly the use of the possessive pronouns plus the word bopp. In this case, the possessive pronouns are added to the word bopp in order to get these forms: sama bopp, sa bopp, bappam su nu bopp, seen bopp.

5. Damm na boppam
   TAM 3PSG RE.P
   (He breaks one’s leg)

In this sentence above, the word bopp is placed after the possessive pronoun and is regarded as a modifier. Reflexive pronouns can also be employed in an affirmative or a negative sentence. In addition, although these cases are very rare in Wolof, they can function as an object of the verb and occur in the final or the initial position.

The Wolof reflexive pronouns can agree with their referents in number as in other languages. In the sense that number distinguishes singular and plural.

6. Yeena ko defal seen bopp
   2psg TAM 2PSG RP
   (YOU DO IT YOURSELF)

In Wolof, there are three persons for singular and three cases for the plural forms. The syntactic structure and its semantic component are in accordance with the emphatic uses of the reflexive construction. For few verbs like gaañ ‘to hurt, to injure’, wat ‘to shave’, the two constructions are possible. In such cases, the reflexive with ‘his head’ emphasizes the agentive role and the responsibility of the subject, for instance,

1. Mën nga, sang sa bopp.
   CAN PR.2SG bath POSS.2SG head
   (you can take shower by yourself)

2. Sa ñawaay xamoo sa bopp.
   1PSG ugly TAM 2PSG Ref.P
   (You are ugly you don’t know yourself)

Reflexive pronouns can also function as an object and, they may be either in the initial position of a sentence with the object predicator “la” or follow the subject in other cases.

3. Sa bopp nga saga di
   POSS Adj head 1psgp insult
   (You insult oneself)

Wolof reflexive pronouns can emphasize an identity, for instance, sëriñ bi ci boppam ray na talibe bi. Rather than emphasizing the genitive role of the subject, the reflexive pronoun lays stress on the identity of the person, as a distinguishing quality for participating in the event expressed in the predicative relation. In this example, the emphasis on the agentive role of the subject is not completely absent (since the subject is the agent of an intentional process), but the emphasis on his identity is more salient. This is due to the semantics of the term ‘sëriñ’ indicating the highest position.

This social identity is an aggravating factor for the event: the prepositional reflexive centers on the implication of the top of a hierarchy in the process, eliminating the (expected) alternative participants. This higher position can also account for the use of the prepositional reflexive, for example ‘my own brother has lied’. This type of use of the adnominal reflexive phrase for emphasizing the identity of the participants in the process is neither restricted to hierarchical terms nor to agentive subjects.

These examples above show that the bopp-prepositional phrase is always postposed to the modified constituent, whatever its position in the clause. This element has to be a noun or any term in a nominal function.
Reflexive pronoun may also emphasize the inclusion in an ordered list (‘even him or her’). In another type of use, the prepositional reflexive phrase takes on a meaning close to that of even, ãttãa’. For example, ãttãa’ Naři gaañu na. The contrast with alternative participants is still present here but the specificity of this type of use is to indicate that alternative participants have undergone or performed the process. This example can be contrasted with another one, where the direct reflexive was used to emphasize the agentive role and the responsibility of the subject in affecting him or herself.

Some verbs may have the role of reflexive pronouns, indeed, they occur in a verbal position. In Wolof, reflexive pronouns agree with their referent in number.

Contrastive study between self or selves and bopp

The system of usage of reflexive pronouns in English and Wolof are different, because Wolof uses various ways to form reflexive pronouns, for example, defal na ko boppam (he does it himself) but English has another method.

**DIFFERENCE IN THE USE OF SELF OR SELVES AND BOPP**

**Morphological differences**

In English grammar, a reflexive pronoun indicates that the person who is realizing the action of the verb is also the recipient of the action. In fact, you will probably notice that you yourself use reflexive pronouns frequently when speaking or writing.

The forms of English reflexive pronouns vary according to case, person, number, and gender. English reflexive pronouns are: myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves while Wolof uses the word bopp plus the predicator laato form reflexive pronouns.

In term of gender, English reflexive pronouns have three genders: masculine, feminine and neuter whereas Wolof does not know gender in the use of reflexive pronouns. Feminine reflexive pronouns involve female sexual organs, such as herself.

Neuter personal pronouns are used when the sexual state of referents is not mentioned, such as itself. Masculine reflexive pronouns involve male sexual organs, such as himself.

To form the English third person singular, the personal pronouns him, her and it are added to the suffix –self. Contrary to English, the word bopp is almost added to all possessive pronouns to express the idea of reflexivity.

Thus, English uses personal pronouns plus self + for the singular reflexive pronouns and plural personal pronouns +selves for the plural forms but Wolof uses the word bopp for both plural and singular.

Sometimes, English bases on the old usage of reflexive pronouns to form reflexive pronouns, for example, the article the + self. The construction is very rare in Wolof. We may also take the first person singular me instead of my to form the first person singular reflexive pronoun, which is not the same in Wolof.

By contrast, in Wolof, the oblique reflexive is possible with intransitive, transitive verbs provided that the -al applicative derivation is used in this construction or sometimes alternatively the preposition ci. In the oblique reflexive construction, the -al applicative derivation does not follow the same patterns as in the active construction, concerning both the semantic roles added by the applicative derivation and the transitivity requirements.

Through this derivation, the reflexive pronoun can express coreferentiality of the agentive subject with a recipient, a beneficiary role, and most often with a “human instrument” (‘by him or herself). As a result, since the Subject is already agentive, in the last case the reflexive construction emphasizes the agentive role of the Subject in the process.

4. Moo
FOC.S.3SG
dem-al
bopp
go-APPL
head
-am.
-Poss.3SG
(She left on her own accord.)

The prepositional reflexive can be used as an adnominal intensifier. In another type of uses, the bopp phrase is introduced by the general locative preposition ci (ci boppam, ‘in his head’). What is the syntactic scope and the semantic contribution of the reflexive anaphora in this case? Actually, except of a few cases in which the prepositional phrase is
used to introduce a real oblique complement, in the plentiful occurrences, this “locative” reflexive is used as an adnominal intensifier.

12. Khady ci bopp
N.PR in head.POSS.3S GFOC.S.3SG noo moo yàq kërë
<Khady destroyed her house (by) himself>

Syntactic differences

In contrasting the two languages, which are typologically different from each other as Wolof and English, one is presented with abundance complex structures. An English reflexive pronoun is a type of pronoun that is preceded by an adverb, an adjective, a pronoun, or a noun to which it refers, so long as that antecedent is located within the same clause.

In English, there are many verbs that are always reflexive such as behave, enjoy, acquit, however, this kind of structure does not exist in Wolof. Most of these verbs are conjugated in present continue.

Sometimes, the prepositions expressing locality or spatial relation may be used to represent a reflexive pronoun in English, whereas, Wolof has often the word bopp to indicate the reflexivity.

One can say that “man ci sama bopp”, in this example, three items appear to express the idea of the reflexivity, contrary to English, only one word can be used “myself” to the translation of the pronominal phrase.

In English, the word oneself can go with several verbs to create expression like to come, to oneself, to do something with oneself, to speak for oneself; while, Wolof uses “bopp” to present many cases of reflexive pronouns.

To form Wolof reflexive pronouns, a possessive adjective is often placed before the noun and the latter precedes the word bopp in a sentence, for example, sama këru bopp. By contrast, we can have in English: “I have my own house”.

Generally, English reflexive pronouns are positioned at the beginning or at the end of a sentence, which is different from the Wolof one. The component “bopp” may never be at the beginning of a sentence.

“Bopp” is used as a reflexive marker; it coexists with a competing middle marker rather than evolving into a middle marker. It has developed other kinds of uses along another well-known path for the grammaticalization of head.

Besides, its nominal uses for referring to the body part ‘head’, bopp has various grammaticalized uses. In all of them, bopp is used as a reflexive marker. It can be gone with an inflecting possessive modifier exhibiting person and number agreement with its antecedent.

In a first set of grammatical usages, the bopp-phrase (‘his head’) is used as a pronoun. Let us take this first type as a starting point. The most salient grammatical use of ‘his head’ in Wolof as a reflexive marker in a prototypical reflexive construction. For example, the fact of indicating the co-reference of a patient object with an agentive subject.

13. Abdu dafa bopp -am
N.PR FOC. V.3SG love head POSS.3SG
<Abdu loves himself>

This example attests that Wolof and English use reflexive pronouns differently. English has various cases while Wolof refers to the noun bopp to form reflexive pronouns. The bopp-phrase functions as a reflexive pronoun but this pronoun retains other syntactic properties of the noun.

One can notice that the English reflexive pronoun “yourself” may correspond to two items in Wolof. Obviously, Wolof can use a reflexive pronoun or a verb to focus on reflexive pronouns.

Similarities in the use of self or selves and bopp

Morphological similarities

In English, as in Wolof, to form reflexive pronouns, a possessive adjective is added to the morpheme -self or bopp. Wolof and English share many characteristics as reflexive pronouns are concerned. In conclusion, English and Wolof reflexive are endocentric compounds because both item “bopp and self” may be considered as modifiers.
Therefore, in the two languages, reflexive pronouns agree with their referent in number and person. In English, there are three persons for the singular and three persons for the plural forms as well. This same structure can be found in Wolof.

The Wolof and English reflexive pronouns may be employed in the negative, affirmative and interrogative forms, for example, in Wolof, defalumako sama bopp. This sentence can be translated into English, as follows: I don’t do it myself.

Generally, in morphology, Wolof and English reflexive pronouns may be created from the free morphemes myself and bopp. Briefly, Wolof and English almost share the same way to form reflexive pronouns.

Syntactic similarities

In both languages, we use reflexive pronouns to talk about action where the subject and the object are the same person. Reflexive pronouns may be used to replace persons, things and animals.

As far as syntax is concerned, reflexive pronouns are often placed after the verb in some cases in the two languages. In English, a sentence or an utterance cannot start by a reflexive pronoun. This rule also exists in Wolof.

Reflexive pronouns may be combined with other items to form compound subjects. They can provide emphasis and use other items in a clause, for example:

14. Fatou ak man ci sama bopp ųoo ko def
Fatou PR 1P.Pr REF.P 1PP TAM
〈Fatou and I have done it.〉

Otherwise, English and Wolof are similar with the uses of head and self in a genitival phrase. When the reflexive construction with ‘his head’ is used in a genitival phrase, the possessive modifiers can be attached to the noun. This fixed position of the possessive modifier seems to indicate that the bopp-construction has grammaticalized in this genitival reflexive.

In this part, I have enlightened the similarities and differences that exist between English and Wolof. This analysis has shown that each language is governed by a set of specific rules, which allow the performance of these languages.

CONCLUSION

The use of Wolof pronouns, especially reflexive pronouns (head), may cause lots of confusion for the English learners of Wolof. There are many kinds of English reflexive pronouns; they can be inflected for number, person and gender. Reflexive pronouns indicate that the sentence subject receives the action of the verb. From the morphological point of view, reflexive pronouns end in -self or -selves. However, the Wolof morphological forms of words are studied in order to have new lexemes. In this case, it is possible to distinguish different kinds of lexemes. To study Wolof reflexive pronouns, we refer to the method of derivation. Morphologically, Wolof language uses the endocentric compounded form, which is composed of the possessive adjective plus the noun bopp as a modifier.

Besides, Bopp is used as a reflexive marker, along with an inflecting possessive modifier exhibiting person and number agreement with bopp’s antecedent. In a first set of grammatical uses, the bopp-phrase (‘his head’) is used as a pronoun filling the syntactic role of a nominal argument. Even if Wolof and English have many differences, they share some morpho-syntactic common points. Reflexive pronouns can be employed with personal pronouns. In this case, English and Wolof reflexive pronouns precede them. As English reflexive pronouns are compounded of my+ SELF, the bound morpheme self can never be placed before “my”. When we use the structure, obviously, the meaning can change. This same rule may be applied in Wolof.

The results of this research have revealed many problems and issues that need to be resolved in each language. These are a part of an ongoing research paradigm that puts figurative language at the core of the language faculty in both theory and pedagogical practice. This study is also helpful for the promotion of the local languages such as Wolof in the worldwide.

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