

CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF SUBJECT PRONOUNS OF ENGLISH, FUR AND ARABIC LANGUAGES

Dr. MOHYELDEEN MOHAMED BABIKER¹, Dr. AHMAD MUHAMMAD AHMAD²

¹Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics -Al Fashir University-Faculty of Arts- Sudan

²Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics- Al Fashir University – Faculty of Arts- Sudan

*Email: omadtara166@gmail.com



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ABSTRACT

This research aims to compare and contrast the subject pronouns of English, Fur and Arabic languages to find out the similarities and differences between them. The researchers have adopted contrastive methodology to do this research. They compared and contrasted the subject pronouns in English, Fur and Arabic languages. The results of the research revealed that the three languages almost share the same subject pronouns. The English, Fur and Arabic first person singular subject pronouns (I , Ká /ka, Ana أنا) are used for masculine and feminine genders in the three languages. The English, Fur and Arabic first-person plural subject pronouns (we, Kí/ki, Nahno نحن) are used for masculine and feminine genders in the three languages. Moreover, the three languages belong to different language families. English is from an Indo-European language family, whereas, Fur belongs to Nilo-Saharan language family, and Arabic belongs to Afro-Asiatic language family. There are two kinds of second person singular pronouns (أنت/أنتِ) in Arabic language, meanwhile, the English and Fur have one which used for masculine and feminine gender. There is only one third person singular in Fur that refers to both genders feminine and masculine, whereas, Arabic and English languages have two forms (he/she هو/هي). The differences in subject pronouns between the three languages result in problems encountered by the Arabic and Fur languages learners in learning English and vice versa.

Keywords: pronouns, person, plural, singular, gender

Introduction

Contrastive Analysis

Contrastive Analysis (CA) contrasts and compares the two or more languages that are genetically distinct with a view to identifying their structural differences and similarities. Thus, CA studies the structures of three languages from three different language families. English is an Indo-European language family as the source language whereas; Fur is Nilo-Saharan and Arabic belongs to Afro-Asiatic language family as the target languages so as to determine the points where they are different. These differences are the main cause of problems in learning a second language.

The Statement of Problem

The approximately 29 million inhabitants of Africa's largest country, Sudan, speak at least 135 distinct languages belonging to three different language families, Afro-asiatic, Niger–Congo, and Nilo–Saharan (A.R. Mugaddam and G.J.Dimmendaal 265;2006).

This research attempts to find out the similarities and differences which exist between the three languages as well as the effects which this linguistic difference may have on the process of teaching and learning of English, the foreign language in Sudan. It is to be expected that speakers of the languages experience difficulties due to the fact that the grammatical structure of the three languages are slightly different in nature. In this context, it is expected that contrastive analysis of English, Arabic and Fur grammar will be of pedagogical benefits to the Fur and Arabic learners of English as a foreign language in particular and the other Nilo-Saharan languages speakers in general.

The Objectives of Research

This research aims to:

1. identify the areas of similarities in subject pronouns of the English, Arabic and Fur languages;
2. describe the differences between the English, Arabic and Fur subject pronouns;

The Questions of Research

This research attempts to answer the following questions:

1. To what degree do the English, Arabic and Fur subject pronouns differ from one another?
2. How far do English, Arabic and Fur subject pronouns have similarity with one another?

The Methodology of Research

The researchers have adopted contrastive analysis methodology to conduct this research. They contrast and compare some examples of subject pronouns of Arabic, Fur and English languages. The data was collected from English books, grammar books of Fur and Arabic languages as well as related websites and journals.

The Hypotheses of Research

This research hypothesizes the following:

1. The English, Arabic and Fur subject pronouns differ from each other.
2. English, Arabic and Fur subject pronouns have similarity with one another.

Importance of Contrastive Analysis

Contrastive analysis was used extensively in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) in the 1960s and early 1970s, as a method of explaining why some features of a target language were more difficult to acquire than others. According to the behaviourist theories prevailing at the time, language learning was a question of habit formation, and this could be reinforced or impeded by existing habits. Therefore, the difficulty in mastering certain structures in a second language (L2) depended on the difference between the learners' mother language (L1) and the language they were trying to learn (Wikipedia.org/wiki12-4-2020).

Languages Families

Most languages belong to language families. A language family is a group of related languages that developed from a common historic ancestor, referred to as protolanguage (*proto-* means 'early' in Greek). The ancestral language is usually not known directly, but it is possible to discover many of its features by applying the comparative method that can demonstrate the family status of many languages. Sometimes a protolanguage can be identified with a historically known language (<https://www.mustgo.com/worldlanguages/language-families/>9 December 2022).

Indo-European Languages

According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (2022,11,26) The Indo-European languages are a language family native to the overwhelming majority of Europe, the Iranian plateau, and the northern Indian subcontinent. Some European languages of this family, English, French, Portuguese, Russian, Dutch, and Spanish, have expanded through colonialism in the modern period and are now spoken across several continents. The Indo-European family is divided into several branches or sub-families, of which there are eight groups with languages still alive today: Albanian, Armenian, Balto-Slavic, Celtic, Germanic, Hellenic, Indo-Iranian, and Italic; and another nine subdivisions that are now extinct.

Today, the individual Indo-European languages with the most native speakers are English, Hindi–Urdu, Spanish, Bengali, French, Russian, Portuguese, German, and Punjabi, each with over 100 million native speakers; many others are small and in danger of extinction. In total, 46% of the world's population (3.2 billion people) speaks an Indo-European language as a first language — by far the highest of any language family. There are about 445 living Indo-European languages, according to an estimate by Ethnologue, with over two-thirds (313) of them belonging to the Indo-Iranian branch.

All Indo-European languages are descended from a single prehistoric language, linguistically reconstructed as Proto-Indo-European, spoken sometime in the Neolithic to Early Bronze Age. The geographical location where it was spoken, the Proto-Indo-European homeland, has been the object of many competing hypotheses; the academic consensus supports the Kurgan hypothesis, which posits the homeland to be the Pontic–Caspian steppe in what is now Ukraine and southern Russia, associated with the Yamnaya culture and other related archaeological cultures during the 4th millennium BC to early 3rd millennium BC.

Nilo-Saharan Languages

According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (2022,11,26) The Nilo-Saharan languages are a proposed family of African languages spoken by some 50–60 million people, mainly in the upper parts of the Chari and Nile rivers, including historic Nubia, north of where the two tributaries of the Nile meet. The languages extend through 17 nations in the northern half of Africa: from Algeria to Benin in the west; from Libya to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the centre; and from Egypt to Tanzania in the east.

As indicated by its hyphenated name, Nilo-Saharan is a family of the African interior, including the greater Nile Basin and the Central Sahara Desert. Eight of its proposed constituent divisions (excluding Kunama, Kuliak, and Songhay) are found in the modern countries of Sudan and South Sudan, through which the Nile River flows.

In his book The Languages of Africa (1963), Joseph Greenberg named the group and argued it was a genetic family. It contains the languages which are not included in the Niger–Congo, Afroasiatic or Khoisan groups. Although some linguists have referred to the phylum as "Greenberg's wastebasket", into which he placed all the otherwise unaffiliated non-click languages of Africa, specialists in the field have accepted its reality since Greenberg's classification.^[3] Its supporters accept that it is a challenging proposal to demonstrate but contend that it looks more promising the more work is done.

Some of the constituent groups of Nilo-Saharan are estimated to predate the African Neolithic. Thus, the unity of Eastern Sudanic is estimated to date to at least the 5th millennium BC. Nilo-Saharan genetic unity would necessarily be much older still and date to the late Upper Paleolithic. The earliest written language associated with the Nilo-Saharan family is Old Nubian, one of the oldest written African languages attested in writing from the 8th to the 15th century AD.

Afro-Asiatic languages,

Afro-Asiatic languages, also called **Afrasian languages**, formerly **Hamito-Semitic**, **Semito-Hamitic**, or **Erythraean languages**, languages of common origin found in the northern part of Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and some islands and adjacent areas in Western Asia. About 250 Afro-Asiatic languages are spoken today by a total of approximately 250 million people. Numbers of speakers per language range from about 150 million, as in the case of Arabic, to only a few hundred, as in the case of some Cushitic and Chadic languages.

The name Afro-Asiatic gained wide acceptance following the classification of African languages proposed in 1955–63 by the American linguist Joseph H. Greenberg. Scholars in the former Soviet Union prefer to call these languages “Afrasian.” The name Hamito-Semitic (or Semito-Hamitic), although occasionally still used, is largely considered obsolete; many scholars reject it because it is linguistically wrong—there is no linguistic entity “Hamitic” to be contrasted, as a whole, to “Semitic.” Other designations, such as Erythraean and Lisramic, have gained little acceptance(2022.12.2 www.britannica.com/topic/Afro-Asiatic-languages).

Pronouns

Aarts et al (2014, p.336) states that pronoun is a member of a closed class of words that function as the head of a phrase that can perform functions typically carried out by noun phrases (subject, direct object, etc.). For this reason pronouns are often regarded as nouns (e.g. in CaGEL, OMEG). However, other grammars stress that pronoun: (i) show distinctions of case (he/him), person (first, second, third), and gender (he/she); (ii) typically do not have inflectional plurals (with one being an exception); (iii) are very limited with regard to the dependents they take; (iv) function as the head of phrases that do not have independent reference. For these reasons a grammar like CGEL treats pronouns as constituting a separate word class. The class of pronouns can be subdivided in various ways. A commonly accepted subdivision recognizes demonstrative pronouns, indefinite pronouns, interrogative pronouns, personal pronouns, possessive pronouns, reciprocal pronouns, reflexive pronouns, and relative pronouns. Traditional grammars define pronouns as words that can replace or stand in for a noun. But this is problematic. Compare the following examples: We have lots of cats, but it’s a problem because my husband hates them I asked my neighbour if he would cut our grass.

Subject

Subject is a constituent in a sentence or clause that typically comes first, and of which the rest of the sentence is predicated. It often, though by no means always, performs the semantic role of agent, and specifies the topic of the sentence (Aarts& et al 2014,p.394).

Subject Pronouns

The subjective case is inflection typically carried by pronouns when they function as the subject of a sentence or clause. (Also called subject case or nominative case.) Only six distinct subjective pronouns (or subject pronouns, nominative pronouns) occur in modern English (Aarts& et al 2014,p.396).

Data Presentation

Subject Pronouns of English, Fur and Arabic languages

Table(1)English Subject Pronouns

Three persons	English comparable	Fur comparable	Arabic comparable
1st person singular	I	Ká /ka	Ana أنا –
1st person plural	We	Kí/ki	Nahno نحن
2nd person singular	You	Jí/ji	Anta/anti أَنْتَ/أَنْتِ
2nd person plural	You	Bí /bi	Antum/أَنْتُمْ antunna أنتوما
3rd person singular	He/she	Yé/yee	• Huwa هو/hiya هي
3rd person plural	They	yienj	Hum/ هُنْ humn هم

Table (2) Fur Subject Pronouns

Three persons	Fur comparable	English comparable	Arabic comparable
1st person singular	Ká	I	أنا
1st person plural	Kí	We	نحن
2nd person singular	Jí	You	أَنْتَ/أَنْتِ/أَنْتُمْ
2nd person plural	Bí	You	أَنْتُمْ/أَنْتُمْ
3rd person singular	Yé	He/she	هو/ هي
3rd person plural	Yienj	They	هن/ هم

Table(3) Arabic Subject Pronouns

Three persons	Arabic comparable	Fur comparable	English comparable
1st person singular	أنا	Ká	I
1st person plural	نحن	Kí	We
2nd person singular	أنت/أنتِ/ أنتما	Jí	You
2nd person plural	أنتم/ أنتن	Bí	You
3rd person singular	هو/ هي	Yé	He/she
3rd person plural	هن/ هم	Yieŋ	They

Data Analysis**Subject Pronouns of English, Fur and Arabic languages****English first person singular subject pronoun**

From the above table (1) the English first person singular subject pronoun (**I**) is used for masculine and feminine gender, for example:

I am Muna (a woman).

The girl said ' I am 14 years old'.

Adam (a man) said ' I am a doctor'.

Fur first person singular subject pronoun

As shown from the above table (2) the first person singular subject pronoun (**Ká**) is used for masculine and feminine gender, examples:

A man said 'Ká ewel gís waa'. I told you before.

A woman said 'Ká ewel gís waa'. I told you before

Arabic first person singular subject pronoun

As shown from the above table (3) the first person singular subject pronoun (**ana**) can be used for masculine and feminine gender, examples:

- A man: I am glad that you spoke to her الرجل: أنا سعيد بأنك تحدّثت إليها
- A woman: I am glad that you spoke to her المرأة: أنا سعيدة بأنك تحدّثت إليها

From above examples it is clear that the Arabic first person subject pronoun (أنا) used for both masculine and feminine gender.

Table (4) English first person plural subject pronoun

Three persons	English comparable	Fur comparable	Arabic comparable
1st person plural	We	Kí	نحن

The above table (4) displays English subject plural pronoun (we) and its counterparts in Fur and Arabic languages. It is used for both masculine and feminine gender, examples:

We are successful men.

We are successful women.

Table (5) Fur first person plural subject pronoun

Three persons	Fur comparable	English comparable	Arabic comparable
1st person plural	Kí	We	نحن

The above table (5) shows Fur subject plural pronoun (Kí) and its counterparts in English and Arabic languages. It is used for both masculine and feminine gender, examples:

Kí tugûr kámi saare/ we ate kisra in the morning .

Kí dééj soór kéérel/we are standing behind him.

Table (6) Arabic first person plural subject pronoun

Three persons	Arabic comparable	Fur comparable	English comparable
1st person plural	نحن	Kí	We

The above table (6) shows the Arabic subject plural pronoun (نحن) which is used for masculine and feminine gender as English and Fur do examples:

We drink coffee. نحن نشرب قهوة.

We are girls. نحن بنات.

We are boys. نحن اولاد.

These plural subject pronouns do not cause problem to the speakers of these languages.

Table (7) English 2nd person singular subject pronoun

Three persons	English comparable	Fur comparable	Arabic comparable
2nd person singular	You	Jí	أنت/أنتِ/ أنتما

This table (7) shows the English 2nd person singular subject pronoun (you) which refers to singular 2nd person spoken to, it be masculine or feminine gender, examples:

You are a man.

You are a woman.

Table (8) Fur 2nd person singular subject pronoun.

Three persons	Fur comparable	English comparable	Arabic comparable
2nd person singular	Jí	You	أنت/أنتِ/ أنتما

It shown from above (8) this second singular subject pronoun (Jí) can be used for masculine and feminine gender, example:

Jí tugûr jámi . You ate Kisra.

Table (9) Arabic 2nd person singular subject pronoun.

Three persons	Arabic comparable	Fur comparable	English comparable
2nd person singular	أنت/أنتِ	Jí	you

This table (9) shows the Arabic 2nd person singular subject pronouns (أنت/أنتِ) there are two kinds of second person singular pronouns, (أنت) / anta as in example 1) is used for masculine gender, meanwhile, (أنتِ) / anti as in example 2) refers to feminine one, examples:

1. You love sport (a man) . أنت تحب الرياضة -1

2. You obey your mother (a woman). أنتِ تطيعين أمك -2

This can cause problem to speakers of English and Fur languages, because these languages lack such characteristics.

Table (10) English first person plural subject pronoun

Three persons	English comparable	Fur comparable	Arabic comparable
2nd person plural	You	Bí /bi	أنتم Anntum/ أنتن antunna Antuma\أنتما

As can be seen from this table (10) the English second person plural pronoun (you) is used for masculine and feminine gender, for instances:

You are good boys.

You are very clever girls.

Table (11) Fur first person plural subject pronoun

Three persons	Fur comparable	English comparable	Arabic comparable
2nd person plural	Bí /bi	you	أنتم Anntum/ أنتن antunna Antuma\أنتما

This table (11) shows the Fur 2nd person plural (Bí) which refers to masculine and feminine gender, for instances:

Bí abbaṅa bang. You are men.

Bí nyaṅa bang. You are women.

As shown from above tables(10),(11) English and Fur 2nd person plural pronouns (you , Bí) are used for both genders masculine and feminine, whereas, Arabic has three forms.

Table (12) Arabic 2nd person plural subject pronoun.

Three persons	Arabic comparable		Fur comparable	English comparable
2nd person plural	dual	plural	Bí	you
	Antuma/أنتما	أنتم Anntum/ أنتن /antunna		

The above table (12) shows the three kinds of plural subject pronouns; dual form which refers to the two persons spoken to (Antuma أنتما) whether are masculine or feminine gender, as the following:

You (dual) are thinkers أنتما مفكران.

You (dual) are experts أنتما خبيرتان

The dual pronoun which refers to the two persons spoken to , it is a unique characteristic of the Arabic language; it is a problematic case that would be encountered by English and Fur speakers when they learn Arabic language.

The above table (12) displays the Arabic 2nd person plural pronouns (أنتم Anntum) refers to the plural masculine second person spoken to.

You are teachers(males) أنتم مُعَلِّمُونَ

Meanwhile, (أنتن antunna) is used for the feminine second person spoken to.

You are teachers (females) أنتنَّ مُعَلِّمَاتٌ

The both languages English and Fur do not have such features, which can cause grammatical problems to their speakers when learning Arabic language.

Table (13) English 3rd person singular subject pronouns

Three persons	English comparable	Fur comparable	Arabic comparable
3 rd person singular	He/she	Yé/yee	• Huwaهو/hiya هي

The above table (13) shows the English 3rd person singular subject pronouns(he/she). It well known that (he) is used for masculine gender, whereas, (she) refers to feminine gender, as the following:

He is a boy. He is a man.

She is a woman. She is a queen.

The English 3rd person singular subject pronouns (he/she) are comparable to the Arabic(Huwaهو/hiya هي) which have the same characteristics , whereas, there as is only one in Fur 3rd person singular subject pronoun(Yé) which refers to masculine and feminine gender. This surely, cause problem to the Fur speakers when they learn English or Arabic languages.

Table (14) Fur 3rd person singular subject pronoun

Three persons	Fur comparable	English comparable	Arabic comparable
3 rd person singular	Yé/yee	He/she	• Huwaهو/hiya هي

As displayed from this table(14) there is one 3rd person singular pronoun in Fur language which is used to masculine and feminine gender, as the following:

Yé sagal ay . He is a king.

Yé méeram ay. She is a princee.

Table (15) Arabic 3rd person singular subject pronouns

Three persons	Arabic comparable	Fur comparable	English comparable
3 rd person singular	Huwaهو/hiya هي	Yé/yee	• He/she

This table (15) displays the Arabic 3rd person singular subject pronouns (Huwaهو/hiya هي) they are comparable to the English (he/she) which have the same features , whereas, there as is only one in Fur 3rd person singular subject pronoun(Yé) which refers to masculine and feminine gender. Arabic examples:

He has a lot of money هو لديه الكثير من المال.

She has a car. هي عندها سيارة

Table (15) English 3rd person plural subject pronoun

Three persons	English comparable	Fur comparable	Arabic comparable
3 rd person plural	They	yienj	هم Hum/ هن hunn

This table (15) shows English 3rd person plural subject pronoun (they) which is comparable to the Fur 3rd person plural subject pronoun (yienj). They refer to plural 3rd person spoken about masculine and feminine gender, whereas, there are two kinds of 3rd person plural subject pronouns in Arabic language (هم Hum/ هن hunn). Here are English examples:

They are good boys. They are very clever girls.

Table (16) Fur 3rd person plural subject pronoun

Three persons	Fur comparable	English comparable	Arabic comparable
3 rd person plural	yienj	They	هم Hum/ هن hunn

This table (16) displays Fur 3rd person plural subject pronoun (yiej) which is comparable to the Fur 3rd person plural subject pronoun (they). They refer to plural 3rd person spoken about masculine and feminine gender, whereas, there are two kinds of 3rd person plural subject pronouns in Arabic language (هم Hum/ هن hunn). Here are Fur examples:

Yiej tómbol kaldul (men). They beat the drum (men).

Yiej tómbol kaldul (women). They beat the drum (women).

Table (17) Arabic 3rd person singular subject pronouns

Three persons	Arabic comparable	Fur comparable	English comparable
3 rd person plural	هم Hum/ هن hunn	yiej	They

This table (17) displays the Arabic 3rd person plural pronouns (هم Hum) refers to the plural masculine third person spoken about. Whereas, (هن hunn) is used for 3rd person plural feminine gender, examples:

هم يذهبون الى المدرسة كل يوم. (males). They go to school every day.

هن يذهبن الى المدرسة كل يوم. (females). They go to school every day.

Findings

The contrastive analysis of English, Fur and Arabic subject pronouns has revealed that there are differences and similarities between English, Fur and Arabic subject pronouns as the following:

Similarities

- The English, Fur and Arabic first person singular subject pronouns (I, Ká /ka, Ana أنا) are used for masculine and feminine genders in the three languages.
- The English, Fur and Arabic first person plural subject pronouns (we, Kí/ki, Nahno نحن) are used for masculine and feminine genders in the three languages
- The second person singular subject pronouns (you, jí) refer to the masculine and feminine gender in both languages English and Fur.
- There is second person plural subject pronoun (you, bí) in English and Fur languages which refers to masculine and feminine genders.
- There are two kinds of third person singular pronouns (he/she, هو/هي) in Arabic and English languages, (he/هو) which are used for masculine, whereas, (she/هي) refer to feminine gender.
- The third person plural subject pronouns (they/ yiej) which refer to masculine and feminine gender in English and Fur languages.

Differences

- The three languages belong to different language families. English is from an Indo-European language family, whereas, Fur belongs to Nilo-Saharan language family, and Arabic belongs to Afro-Asiatic language family.
- There are two kinds of second person singular pronouns (أنت/أنتِ) in Arabic language, meanwhile, the English and Fur have one which used for masculine and feminine gender.
- There is a unique second person plural (dual) (أنتما) in Arabic which refer to two persons being masculine or feminine, whereas, English and Fur lack it.
- There are two kinds of second person singular pronouns (أنت/أنتِ) in Arabic language, meanwhile, the English and Fur have one which used for masculine and feminine gender.

- There are two kinds of second person plural pronouns (أنتم Anntum/أتنتن/antunna) in Arabic language, meanwhile, the English and Fur have one which used for masculine and feminine gender.
- There is only one third person singular in Fur that refers to both genders feminine and masculine, whereas, Arabic and English languages have two forms (he/she هو / هي).
- The Arabic language has two forms of the third person plural subject pronouns (هم / هن) they are used for masculine and feminine genders.

Conclusion

This research article has done a contrastive analysis between English, Fur and Arabic subject pronouns. The analysis began with comparing and contrasting between subject pronouns of English, Arabic and Fur languages. In the light of contrastive analysis (CA) the grammar difficulties for the learners of Fur, English and Arabic language were predicted based on the differences in subject pronouns of the three languages. These difficulties are due to grammatical differences of the subject pronouns of three languages, English belongs to Indo-European language family, Arabic belongs to Afro-Asiatic language family and Fur belongs to Nilo-Saharan family. The tutors should be acquainted with the results of CA for three languages; they enable them to teach accurate grammar to the foreign language learners in general as well as Arabic and Fur learners in particular.

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