The French Reflexive Verb and its Urhobo Equivalent

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French and Urhobo languages are so linguistically different one from the other, yet their grammars show traces of similarities and differences that raise questions. Questions, which, when answered would elicit further research into the nature and various nuances of these languages; i.e. their speeches and articulations, discourses, nouns, verbs etc. In this study, the French reflexive verb and its Urhobo equivalent were examined. A description of the reflexive verb in French and Urhobo show elements of possible structural and semantic convergences and or divergences. Is every French reflexive verb also reflexive in Urhobo? Are their structural sequences the same? These and some others which surfaced in the course of this study are the questions which were answered during this study. French language is fully documented while Urhobo is much less documented. For this reason, method of research was varied. This study was based mainly on the theory of Transformational grammar also known as Transformational Generative Grammar. But because of some inherent elements of translation, Eugene Nida’s theory of equivalence was also brought into play.

Key Words: French, Reflexive, Verb, Urhobo, Equivalent.

INTRODUCTION

Background to the study

Studies about the Urhobo people and their language are few when compared to studies on other languages especially Modern European languages. When one thinks about a people it is expected that questions would be asked. For instance, one wants to know their origin; where they come from. What they do. Which language they speak. Etc. Speaking about where they come from, Okumagba (1982) describing some of the physical features of the Urhobo land posits that:

The Urhobo country is bounded on the North by the Benin Province. The provincial boundary lines cut through Ossimo on the North-West touching near Oghara villages of Ogoma, Ovade, Utefe and across the Jamieson River at a point near the Ijderhe village of Okpekele down wards to the Ethiope River North Eastwards to a point between Abraka and Obiaruku. ... It is bounded on the North East by Abob Division, on the East by Isoko Division, on the South by Western Ijaw Division and on the West by Warri Division. The Divisional line starts from the Benin River at a point where the Benin creeks meet it. Then along the “HOLE IN THE WALL” to Elume and then east wards to Ughotor water side then to Ogunu, Enerhe, round Warri town along the Warri river down to Odube creek putting Alaja in the Urhobo Division, down to a point near the Forcados flats.

Most recent data puts the population of the Urhobo people at about two million. Aweto and Igben, (2011), cited in Akpofure, (2015). Concerning the origin of the Urhobo people there was first, the idea of aucthotony. According to Otite (2003), the people were thought to be aborigenes of Urhobo territory. He confirms however, that this story was not documented. According to the second tradition, (and this one is documented), the Urhobo people migrated from an original territory of Edo. This claim is supported by Ekeh, (2006) who states that “Urhobo collective folk memory holds strongly that the Urhobo, as a people, migrated from the lands that are now called Benin ...”. The map below shows the location where the Urhobo settled on arrival in the delta region of the country.
Okumagba (op cit.) reaffirms that "Reverend S.O. Efeturi history of Erhowa also confirms the approximate period of their migration from Benin and the first place of their settlement. Egharevba confirmed at page 5 of his book that Urhobos left Benin after the end of the first period (1052 A.D. – 1170 A.D.). Otite, (op cit.) discusses the political institutions of the Urhobo people and he "highlights the outstanding contributions made by the Urhobo people at all levels and arenas of constitutional government in Nigeria, involving the executive, the legislature and the judiciary". Also, Otite (op cit.) discusses the "Ukale and other Urhobo in diaspora". This is about how the Urhobo, haven migrated from Edo to Urhoboland, some of them found the location too small, they therefore migrated to Yoruba land in order to acquire a bigger and better location as well as a higher standard of living. One would have thought that this move would affect their spoken Urhobo language negatively. This was not so. An encounter with some of those in diaspora over in Yoruba land showed that they had stronger control of the language than those who were at home in Urhobo land. (This must be because the head of the home made a point of speaking Urhobo to his children whether they were out at the farmland or at home. The Researcher knows this because she had interacted with some of such children. They informed her that they spoke Urhobo with members of the family and spoke Yoruba with others. (Although this information is not applicable here, but it is worth noting). Concerning the population of the Urhobo, Otite (op cit.), cited in Akpofure-Okenrentie, (2017) and (2018) reveals that: "The present (2002) overall population of the Urhobo is more than 2 million taking into consideration Urhobo migrants living in other parts of the country and abroad".

As touching the Urhobo language, Okumagba,(op cit.) cited in Akpofure (2015) states that:

At Erhowa, the Urhobo families settled with the Western Ijaw family of Oproza. By frequent contact and inter marriage it became difficult for the Urhobo families to retain the original Benin language. There was therefore an unceremonial marriage of the Edo and Western Ijaw languages. Consequently, a new language (Urhobo) evolved which is classified as a dialect of the Edo language.

Ohwovoriole, (N.D.) also produced a book titled Obe Resosuo Re Urhobo. It is not dated but details of its publication indicate that it must have been written in the 1970s. It is actually like a picture dictionary of Urhobo words. It also talks about the seven vowels of the Urhobo language. From lesson 10 it graduates from single words into short sentences. By the time it reaches lesson 54 it has progressed to very short stories. The final lesson which is lesson 55 is a display of alphabets in Urhobo language. Another book, titled Modern Urhobo Readers by Onokpasa, B.E., the foreword of which is dated 19th August 1959, is a compilation of reading passages. There is also Oto re eta (a dictionary of Urhobo words with proverbs and pithy sayings).

On the question of the Urhobo alphabet. Ekeh (2005), cited in Akpofure, (2015), strikes me as significant as he talks about “the letter “R” in Urhobo and Benin languages”. According to him “… the most deployable letter in the Urhobo alphabet appears to be ”r” yet it is largely suppressed in Benin language”. After this assertion he goes on to relate the “range” of its uses in Urhobo language; and this, he says is wide:

First, it appears quite frequently in double consonant formations, coming only next to the prolific “h”. It also appears in the few cases of triple and quadruple consonant formations. In contrast, in Benin language, the “r” is quite often suppressed in cases of double consonant formation. That is why Benin language
deleted “r” from “Urhobo”, yielding “Uhobo”, which is what Benins call Urhobos. Second, “r” dominates all instances of possessive indications in Urhobo language. In English grammar, the possessive can be indicated (a) by employing “of” before what the subject belongs to. (e.g., Ovie of Agbon); (b) by the apostrophy “s”, (e.g. Olomu’s King); by a possessive adjective (e.g. Nigerian towns) or by possessive pronouns (his, her, its). In Urhobo grammar, all these instances of possession would be handled in only one way; through the use of possession-indicating preposition which is “r”.

To conclude this quotation here are examples of possession-indication in Urhobo language. (My Father’s house) Uwēvvì re Ôśēmè. (My Sister’s dress) Èwù re Ônìòvò mé. It is worthy of note that in Urhobo grammar the apostrophy is no longer used in the case of vowel elision. This was agreed on at one of the meetings of the Urhobo Studies Association some years back. This means that while the preposition “re” is written in full, the vowel in the preposition is elided in spoken language. That is to say it is written this way (Uwēvvì re Oseme) but spoken this way (Uwevwi r Oseme). Akpofure, (2015) also discusses the letter “R” of the Urhobo alphabet. She notes that it is the eighteenth letter and the twelfth consonant of the Urhobo alphabet. She also describes the various processes of articulating the Urhobo “r”.

Concerning the language, Okumaqba (op cit.) has a chapter titled “Important Urhobo Words and Their English Meaning showing the Plural where applicable” highlighting their synonyms and homonyms.

In her article, the “Neutralization of Contrast in the Vowel System of Urhobo”, Aziza, (2008) states that “Urhobo, a South-Western Edoid language of the Niger-Congo family is spoken in Delta State, Nigeria”. This article throws light on the previous studies on the vowel systems of SWE languages as she discusses the vowel system of Urhobo, the behaviour of ɛ, o, ɛ in verbs, the infinitive, constructions in the present tense, constructions in the past tense, constructions in the future tense, the behaviour of ɛ, o, ɛ in nouns, plural formation and phrasal combinations. A very rich article which indeed facilitates studies in this area. As touching the reflexive verb, nothing has really been found about it in Urhobo language Studies, but in Crystal David’s, Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics, there is a definition of the reflexive verb.

**METHODODOLOGY**

Given the documentary situation of the Urhobo language, the approach to this study was varied. Also, because Urhobo is a tone language there were recordings of articulation and intonations which had to be listened to repeatedly in order to determine to what extent the tonal expressions required for particular morphemes had been accomplished, especially as they reflect processes of different tenses in Urhobo reflexive structures. Recourse was also made to a bit of translation since the study involved two languages.

**OBJECTIVE**

The aim of this study is first to identify the differences and similarities that exist in the French and Urhobo reflexive verbs, and then to highlight some of the reflexive verbs that were identified yet hitherto undocumented in Urhobo language. Another aim also is to determine the differences existing in the various modes and uses of the reflexive verbs in both languages.

**Theory of Transformational Grammar**

Native languages such as Urhobo, Edo, Yoruba and others indeed have their own complex grammars. Compared to the French language grammar, the grammar of the Urhobo language still lacks a lot of structural processes which need to be unearthed in order to build it up and enrich it. These processes do not get created in a vacuum. There are supportive theories which are applied to them. One of these theories is the Transformational grammar. For Uzer (2015) Transformational grammar (TG) or transformational-generative grammar (TGG) is, in the study of linguistics, part of the theory of generative grammar, especially of naturally evolved languages, that considers grammar to be a system of rules that generate exactly those combinations of words which form grammatical sentences in a given language. TG involves the use of defined operations called transformations to produce new sentences from existing ones.

For the Editors of The Encyclopaedia Britannica, (2018) also cited in Akpofure-Okenrentie, (2018) (unpublished), it is “... a system of language analysis that recognizes the relationship among the various elements of a sentence, among the possible sentences of a language and uses processes or rules (some of which are called transformations) to express these relationships”. Innovateus (2006-2013) also states that:

Transformational Grammar also " refers to the theory of generative grammar of a natural language, developed by Chomsky. Transformational grammar is basically a theory to understand the processing of grammatical knowledge in the human brain. Noam Chomsky, the U.S. linguist, was the main propagator of transformational grammar in the 1960’s. His theory opposed the earlier theories..."
of structuralism by rejecting the idea that each language is different from the other. In fact, transformational grammar analyses language on the basis of certain universal tenets in languages.

According to Innovateus (op cit), Transformational grammar:

(i) describes a language with the help of transformational rules. It involves logical reasoning to understand fully the meaning of the selected words. As such transformational grammar goes a step ahead of structural grammar which focuses more on the sentence structures used for communication.

(ii) Apart from the use of correct sentence structure, transformational grammar analyses the words with reference to its underlying thoughts.

(iii) Transformational grammar employs most of the linguistic tools such as syntax and context to explore the possible meanings of words.

This state of the Urhobo language actually gives rise to the research and discovery or possible creation of new concepts as regards the reflexive verb in Urhobo. With this in mind the theory of Transformational grammar would be seen as very appropriate for this study, and so it is adopted. Urhobo as a language is still in the process of evolution. This means that it still has more room for growth.

The Reflexive Verb

Generally, the reflexive verb is understood to be the type of verb whose action is executed upon the subject; i.e. the one who is speaking. Taxel, (2017) expresses this same idea when he states that

In grammar a reflexive verb is loosely, a verb whose direct object is the same as its subject. For example, “I wash myself”. More generally, a reflexive verb has the same semantic agent and patient (typically represented syntactically by the subject and the direct object). For example, the English verb to perjure is reflexive, since one can only perjure oneself. In a wider sense, the term refers to any verb form whose grammatical object is a reflexive pronoun, regardless of semantics; such verbs are also referred to as pronominal verbs, especially in grammars of the Romance languages.

Still on the question of the reflexive verb, Crystal (2009) cited also in Akpofure-Okenrentie, (2018) means the same thing when he says that it is an:

(adj. In.) (refl, REFL, reflex) A term used in GRAMMATICAL description to refer to a VERB or CONSTRUCTION where the SUBJECT and the OBJECT relate to the same entity. English uses reflexive pronouns to express this relation (e.g. he kicked himself), but the same verbal MEANING is often present without the pronoun (e.g. I shaved (myself)). … In TRANSFORMATIONAL grammar, reflexivization refers to a rule which introduces the reflexive pronouns into a sentence – in one formulation by changing the syntactic feature on the object personal PRONOUN from [-reflexive] to [+reflexive], when it is CO-REFERENTIAL with the subject, e.g. she saw her = she saw herself. In GOVERNMENT-BINDING THEORY, reflexives, together with RECIPROCALS, NP-TRACES and PRO, are BASE-generated ANAPHORES – a class of NPs. Other classes are pronouns and R-EXPRESSIONS.

Ade Ojo (2005) does not say anything different from the others when he describes pronominal verbs as:

… Verbs whose present infinitives are accompanied by the reflexive personal pronoun. This accompanying pronoun changes during the process of conjugation, as the person, numbers and the endings (desinences) of the verb change.

E.g. Je me, Tu te, Il / Elle se. Note for se laver: Je me lave, Tu te laves, Il / Elle se lave, Nous nous lavons, Vous vous lavez, Ils / Elles se lavent.

The action expressed by these verbs is reflected on and performed by the doer (the subject of the verb).

In Ege (1985) the verb is noted in Urhobo as “ótāíruọ” meaning “word of action / action word”. Nothing is indicative of the reflexive verb in the Urhobo grammar as yet; neither in the Urhobo grammar books or documents nor on the internet have I noted any topic that treats specifically the term ‘reflexive’ in Urhobo grammar. Going by the English definition of the reflexive verb, one would say this verb in Urhobo would be:

“ótāíruọ re ṣe lọ̀ṣẹ̀ kpāhe ọmā”,
A verb whose actions falls on oneself.

Also, “ótāíruọ” re ọ̀ṣẹ̀ phiyọ ọmā.
A verb whose action is done on oneself.

There is actually the existing notion (though unwritten), that the reflexive verb is non-existent in Urhobo. But, if one says in Urhobo

“Mé wọ̀nmá” / “Je me suis blessé” / I hurt myself then the verb wọ̀nmá” - to hurt, in this context, is reflexive. The action of the verb “wọ̀nmá” to hurt is on “ọmā”, that is “myself”. Let us take again the verb “ho” / “bath”. The infinitive of which is “Eho” / to bath E.g.

“Mé hò”. Subject / Object Verb
Mé hò
The action of the verb “ho” is directly on the pronoun “Me”. This shows that the verb is reflexive, although the emphasis seems to be on the pronoun. In French, the reflexive verb is recognised by the presence of the pronoun “se”. Hence in French one would say “se baigner”. While the French reflexive verb “se baigner” is easily recognised, the Urhobo “ho” is not that easily recognised. If the sentence structure is such that clearly indicates the subject, verb and object thus:

Subject Verb Object
B. “Mé ho ómá mè” Mé ho ómá mè

The use of “ómá mè” at this point would seem excessive, because the pronoun internalises the object since “ómá mè” still refers to “me”. Also, “Mé ho ómá mè” is not exactly “ómōshāré” / “boy”; it is on “ómōtè” / “girl”. It is noted that in French the verb “se laver” / “to wash oneself” can also be translated by “ómé ëhwôrhé” / “to wash oneself”. In this sense, it is also reflexive E.g.

Mé hwôrho ómá / Je me lave / I wash myself.

It is now established that the reflexive verb does exist in Urhobo. But, the prefix “oma” added to “ëhwôrhé” now makes it a noun. In Urhobo linguistics, this is referred to as the ‘pronominal noun’ or pronominal pronoun as the case may be.

The Reflexive Verb in Urhobo

It had been noted earlier that in Urhobo grammar more emphasis has thus far been laid on the pronoun than on the verb. Considering Taxel, (op cit) and Crystal (op cit)’s definition, as well as the context in which the pronominal noun “Ómá” and the verb “wônma” are linked and used, it would not be out of place to say that the Urhobo verb “wônma”, mentioned in the example above is indeed reflexive. Outside this context, it ceases to be reflexive. For example:

Ómôshāré na wan ómôté na ómá
Le garçon a blessé la fille
The boy has hurt the girl.

In this sequence, the action of the verb is executed on the subject herself.

So, it can be said that depending on the context in which a verb is used, the “reflexive verb” really does exist in Urhobo. Such verbs might indeed be few, but they do exist and further researching and laboratory structural exercises would certainly highlight more of them. Take for an instance, the example given above.

“I wash myself” / “Je me lave” / “Mé ho”.

The verb “ho”, (infinite form – “ého” / se laver) can be said to be reflexive in Urhobo when the following structure is considered. Ého / se laver / to wash oneself, to take a bath.

In order to equate the Urhobo reflexive structure with the French the following exercise was carried out in the laboratory.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urhobo</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st ps</td>
<td>Mé hó</td>
<td>Je me lave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd ps</td>
<td>Wó hó</td>
<td>Tu te laves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd ps</td>
<td>Ó hó</td>
<td>Il/Elle se lave</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Se laver” can also be translated by “ómé ëhwôrhé” / “to wash oneself”. In this sense, it is also reflexive E.g. Mé hwôrho ómá / Je me lave / I wash myself.

Considering Five French Reflexive Verbs

For the purpose of this study, five verbs have been picked. These are:

i) S’appeler – to call, ii) S’agenouiller – to kneel, iii) Se battre – to fight, iv) Se blesser – to be injured, v) Se cacher – to hide. The aim is to distinguish between the French reflexive verbs that also serve as reflexive verbs in Urhobo and those that cannot serve as reflexive in Urhobo or vice-versa.

i) Appeler (S’appeler)

According to Carrero (2015) the verb “appeler” comes “From Old French apeler with the P and L added back to reflect the original Latin appellāō. In its infinitive form it means “to name” (attribute a name to), to call, to call out”. Its Urhobo equivalent is “se” to name, to call, i.e. “se òdè” / give it, or give him a name, Call it or call him a name. Mu òdè kē / Nommez le/la. / Give him / her a name.

S’appeler – Se - to call. / A call – Úsè – Un appel /. “Usé” is the noun from the verb “se”. For example:

“Mi sé wè” / Je t’appelle / “I call you”, “I am calling you” “É sé wè” / “On t’appelle” / “Someone is calling you” “Usé” wè nà kpārè re òl. Ton appel - ci est si urgent! This call of yours is so urgent!

Se òdè – s’appeler. Se òdè òdè / s’appeler du nom. Now, “se” is the verb. The prefix e “ese” makes it the infinitive. Whereas the prefix “ómá” added makes it a noun “Ómá ësè”, the affix “ómá” is what now makes it reflexive. We now have “se òdè” BUT it cannot translate as – s’appeler. In Urhobo, “òdè òmá” implies nickname / surnom.
The reflexive verb s'appeler does not really exist in Urhobo in the French context. The nearest equivalent to it is "ódě re ómá èsè", which simply means "calling of self" name. S'appeler means "to call oneself", In Urhobo this would be "Se ómá" even though it does not really signify the verb s'appeler, in the French context, while the noun becomes "ómá èsè". For example:

Mí se ómá me Ívōkè – I call myself Voke – Je m'appelle Voke.

"Mí se ómá me Ívōkè" may be grammatically correct but it is not the usage in Urhobo. The Urhobo person would rather say:

"Ódě me Ívōkè" / Mon nom est Voke. / My name is Voke. Again, "Mon nom est Voke" would not be the usage in French either. Also, the correct and acceptable structure in Urhobo, "Ódě me Ívōkè" clearly leans more towards the English phrase structure. E.g.

"My name is Voke" / "Ódě me Ívōkè"; with "Ódě mè" as "My name", "Ívōkè" - "is Voke". Another example is the response to the question in Urhobo: "Die ye ode we?" / "What is your name?" and not: "Mávó wó se ómá wè?" / "Comment tu t'appeles"? / "How do you call yourself?" The French equivalent to the Urhobo "Ódě me Ívōkè" would be "Mon nom est Voke". This would not be the usual acceptable structure in French grammar.

Neither would "Mí se ómá me Ívōkè be acceptable in Urhobo. Yet the clause "se ómá", although it is the Urhobo equivalent of "s'appeler", has not really been documented in Urhobo grammar usage as reflexive. But Urhobo is a living and evolving language and the transformational theory allows for the inclusion of new words and concepts in the grammar of a language. Therefore from the verb "se", the prefix e gives the infinitive èsè; the prefix ómá creates the noun ómá èsè and the affix ómá gives the reflexive form se ómá. Let it be noted however that the phrase "Mávó wó se ómá wè?" Could be used in a derogatory sense. Eg:

"Mávó wó se ómá wè?" Pour qui tu te prends? /Who do you think you are?
"Dié wó se ómá wè?" Pour qui tu te prends? /What do you think you are?

However, in a completely different sequence "se ómá" could be used reflexively. Example: "se ómá brúchè" – to call oneself to order which in French means "s'appeller à l'ordre". Structural laboratory exercises were carried out on this area because of the context in which it is being used reflexively with special reference to tenses i. Mí se ómá brúchè / I called myself to order / Je me suis appelé à l'ordre
Wó se ómá brúchè / You called yourself to order / Tu t'es appelé à l'ordre
Ô se ómá brúchè / He called himself to order / Il s'est appelé à l'ordre
Âvwářèn se ómá brúchè / We called ourselves to order / Nous nous sommes appelé à l'ordre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urhobo</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Present cont.
| Mí se ómá brúchè | Je m'appelle à l'ordre | I am calling myself to order |
| Past tense
| Mí se ómá brúchè | Je me suis appelé à l'ordre | I called myself to order |
| Future tense
| Mí chè se ómá brúchè | Je vais m'appeler à l'ordre | I will call myself to order |

More examples:

"Óděyè, mî se ómá brúchè" / Hier, je me suis appelé à l'ordre
Yesterday, I called myself to order

Ótiōyè nà, mî se ómá brúchè / Maintenant, je m'appelle à l'ordre
Now I call myself to order

The present continuous is expressed with one low tone and one high tone. [mí ]

In opposition to the shortening of the vowel /i/ in the past tense, the past interior is expressed with three sequences of tones i.e. "high-mid-high" articulated thus: [mî] For example:

i. Óděyè, mî se ómá brúchè / Yesterday, I called myself to order /
Hier, je me suis appelé à l'ordre

It should be noted that in order to enunciate the present tense of the reflexive verb in Urhobo it has been necessary to insert tone marks in the example given. It is with the tone
marks that tenses are indicated. Here is what Aziza (2007) says of it: “Tense – Aspect marking is carried out by tone in Urhobo. For example, to claim that action or event is on-
go, i.e. continuous, a floating high tone … is inserted before the verb. This tone then takes the phonetic form of the preced-ing vowel to it”. This is why this has been applied in order to indicate the present continuous and the past tense of the verb in Urhobo.

2. Agenouiller. “a- + genou + -er, via its old French root genouill (knee). Carrero (2015), Kneel – She ígù / S’agenouiller – to kneel. Literally, in Urhobo,”mì she ígù” translates as “I fall on knees”. But, “Je m’agenouille” translates as “Mì she ómâ me ígù”, “I kneel myself”. “Mì she ómâ me ígù” is not said in Urhobo. Although one can say “Ómëwëe ígù”; where Ómëwë = Je ígù = genou = knees.

This would mean “Je genou” / “I knees”, which makes no sense without a verb.

It is noted that in Urhobo, both the pronoun and preposition are internalised. Hence, whereas in Urhobo “Ómëwëe ígù” makes full sense, it is not so in French where “Je genou” makes no sense at all. In this case, there is a clear divergence as it concerns the French reflexive verb “S’agenouiller” and the Urhobo “She ígù” “igue ëshé” being the noun. In Urhobo language, the verb modulates entirely from the idea of kneeling, to “shë” to fall. To make it reflexive, the action falls upon the subject, which is the pronoun “mi”. Example: “Mì she ígù” / “Je m’agenouille” / I kneel. “Mì she ígù” effectively translates “Je m’agenouille”. It is the direct equivalent of “Je m’agenouille”. This means that the French reflexive verb “s’agenouiller” has an equivalent reflexive form in Urhobo. Another possible way of using this expression in Urhobo could be the application of the verb “phi” – “mettre” – “to put”. Example:

Mi phi ómâ mé phi ígù
Je me mets à genou
I put myself on knees

This structure, “Mi phi ómâ mé phi ígù” translates as Je me mets à genou. This is a clear indication of a reflexive form. Which is in line with the reflexive verb “se mettre”. The difference in structure when it comes to the reflexive verb in the two languages is clear. It should be noted that while “She ígù” is the verb, it also indicates the reflexive while “igue ëshé” is the noun.

3. Se battre

Bouvier (2006) notes that “battre” is Middle French from Old French “batre”, from late Latin “battere”, present active infinitive of “battō”, alternative French of Latin “battuō” (“beat, pound, fight”), of Gaulish origin. The Urhobo equivalent of the verb “Se battre” is “hôrómâ”, while “Óma éhôrô” is the noun. (Literally, Self - fighting). It can also be translated by “óma èhwwé”, “óma èghwì”, “óma ètèyó”. The verb “hôrê”, the infinitive is éhôrô; the reflexive is hôrómâ; the noun is Óma éhôrô. This sequence is easily reflexive in Urhobo language because it is already an action that is carried out on oneself. Take for instance that someone is so angry that he or she executes an action on himself/herself. (This may not necessarily be the case in French). In Urhobo, the futile efforts of a jealous wife to keep her flirtatious husband to herself could result in an action described as “Óma éhôrô”. Such a woman would grumble and murmur; she is angry at herself and everything around her. In Urhobo, one would say:

i. “Ó hôró ómâ rôyê /
Elle se bat, elle se trouble, Elle se tracas”.
“She is fighting herself”

ii. “Ó hwe ómâ rôyê /
Elle se tue”.
“She is killing herself”.

Same is the case of an angry child who hurts himself by banging his head on the wall. In Urhobo one says:

Ómôhô hôró ómâ rôyê / L’enfant se bat The child is fighting himself.

Imagine an instance when someone is angry about a situation which he can do nothing about; perhaps a situation emanating from his own mistake which forces him to hate himself and fight himself. He says:

“Mê hôró ómâ mê” / “Je me bats” / “I am fighting myself”. He can also be told:

“O wɔ̀ ôbò rù wò sè rû, wó dê hôró ómâ wè” / “Tu ne peux rien faire! Tu te bats seulement”

“There is nothing you can do. You are only fighting yourself”. Also, two different communities get into a fight over a sore issue. For example land. This is expressed in Urhobo as:

Ayé hôró óhwôhwô / Ils se battent / They fight themselves. They are fighting themselves.

4. Se blesser - The verb is “wonma” - To hurt one’s self. The prefix “oma” which is added makes it a noun - Óma éwàn / Blessure / Injury. In the noun “Óma éwàn”, both spelling and sound change. The reflexive form of the verb remains “wonma”.

From Antimoon (2007), “The word “blesser” comes from old Frankish “blettjen” and originally meant “to bruise” … but there is a common Germanic origin and a probable relation to “blood”. Migrant (2015) confirms Antimoon's assertion as he notes the word “blesser” as coming:

From Middle French blesser, from Old French bleicier (“to injure, to hurt”), from Frankish blētjan, (“to bruise”), from Proto-Germanic blaitjang, (“to discolour, bruise”), from *blaitaz (“pale, discoloured”), from Proto-Indo-European *bhōlH₂ (“pale, pallid”). Cognate with Old High German bleizzza (“livor, bruise”), Old English blēt (“pale, livid”) More at blate.
“Óma éwán” is an Urhobo word which means “injury” which in urhobo is expressed with two words i.e. /ómá – body/, /éwán – injury/. The word “éwán” on its own also has other meanings like “to farm”, “to pass by” etc. This is why, for it to be properly defined as a verb it must be joined to “ómá” , body, which in this context is expressed by “self”. Hence we have “wán ómá” with “ómá éwán” being the noun. Literally therefore, “ómá éwán” means “the hurting/injuring of the body” / “to hurt oneself/. Example:

/Me wónmá/, /Je me blesse/, / I hurt myself/. 

But “mé wónmá” in this sense does not express the present tense which is expressed in the French “je me blesse”. On the contrary, it expresses the past tense. The injury has already happened and stopped, “mé wónmá” For it to have the same sense as “Je me blesse”, it would have to be expressed in the present continuous tense, indicated only with the tone marks. E.g.

/Mé wónmá / - Je me blesse / I am hurting myself.

Other examples include:Ma wan emona ómá/ Nous avons blessé les petits enfants/ we’ve hurt the little children. The pronoun also changes according to the number. (Áwárén and Má are the plural forms of the singular pronoun /Mé/.

Mè wónmá  Áwárén wónmá  / Má wónmá
Wo wónmá  Ówá wónmá  / Wá wónmá
Ó wónmá  Áyé wónmá

Note that at this point the verb changes according to the type of verb

5. Se cacher

According to Blasckhe (2016), the verb “cacher” is “From Old French cacher, from Vulgar Latin *coacticare, present active infinitive of coactició, ultimately from Latin coactō Se cacher - Djávwómá - to hide oneself
Je me cache /Mé djávwén ómá /I hide myself.

The verb “se cacher” is easily expressed in Urhobo as a reflexive verb. The impression noted above had been that the reflexive verb is non-existent in Urhobo. This is confirmed by the absence of the reflexive in the documentation of grammar in Urhobo. The structure of “ómá édjávwèn” negates that notion. This implies that in French as well as in Urhobo, one notes the existence of reflexive verbs although many of the French reflexive verbs may not appear as reflexives in Urhobo in certain contexts because of the nature of the Urhobo verb.

The following are the various forms of reflexive structures used in the laboratory exercises: The structures are modelled after the sentence structures in the use of the Urhobo reflexive “Djávwómá” / se cacher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urhobo</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st ps</td>
<td>Me djávwómá</td>
<td>Je me cache</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st ps</td>
<td>Oma édjávwèn me épáhá</td>
<td>Je suis en train de me cacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd ps</td>
<td>Oma édjávwèn wó épáhá</td>
<td>Tu es en train de te cacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd ps</td>
<td>Oma édjávwèn wó épáhá</td>
<td>Tu es en train de te cacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd ps</td>
<td>O épáhá</td>
<td>Il se cache</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd ps</td>
<td>Oma édjávwèn ó épáhá</td>
<td>Il est en train de se cacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st pp</td>
<td>Awárén djávwèn ómá</td>
<td>Nous nous cachons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st pp</td>
<td>Oma édjávwèn ma épáhá</td>
<td>Nous sommes en train de nous cacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd pp</td>
<td>Owa djávwèn ómá</td>
<td>Vous vous cachez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd pp</td>
<td>Oma édjávwèn wa épáhá</td>
<td>Vous êtes en train de vous cacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd pp</td>
<td>áyé djávwèn ómá</td>
<td>Áyé djávwèn ómá</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd pp</td>
<td>Oma édjávwèn áye épáhá</td>
<td>Ils sont en train de se cacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FINDINGS

In the course of this study it was noted that:

1. Contrary to the notion that the reflexive verb is non-existent in Urhobo, it was found that this type of verb is indeed very much available in Urhobo language. It is actually quite common in daily use; and it is referred to as the reflexive noun, pronoun; but up till now it had not been documented. Of the five verbs studied, the verb s’appeler was found to be not directly reflexive in Urhobo, but with grammatical restructuring, the reflexive form was created. The verb “se laver”/ “whorhoma” was found to be reflexive in French as well as in Urhobo. The verb “s’agenouiller”/ “she igue” is reflexive in French as well as in Urhobo. With the verb “s’agenouiller” certain technicalities had to be accommodated as the verb modulated from one type of verb to the other. The fourth and fifth verbs “se battre”/ “horoma”, “horohwohwo” and “se cacher” / “Djávwómá” are both reflexive in French as well as in Urhobo.

It was found that:
1. The root verb in urhobo is a single word. Eg “ho” The infinitive takes the prefix e to be formed: Eg. “éhó”
The reflexive takes the affix “ómà” to be formed e.g., “Hómà”
It also takes the prefix “ómà” to become a noun. E.e. “Ôma ēhô”.

(2) In the course of the study, not finding urhobo reflexive verbs per se, clauses were created to form reflexive verbs. This was achieved with the prefix of the noun or pronoun added to the root of the verb. Note that whereas to recognise the reflexive in French you look for the pronoun se, to recognise the reflexive in Urhobo you look for the affixed noun ómà.

(3) To the question “Is every French reflexive verb also reflexive in Urhobo”? The answer is “No” Every French reflexive verb is not also reflexive in Urhobo. Many are, although the structures differ. Many are also not. Examples of such are

1. “Se peigner” / to comb one’s hair. In Urhobo it is “Fa étô” / Comb hair
2. “Se brosser” / to brush one’s teeth In Urhobo it is “Hwôrhe ākô” / Wash teeth

(4) Are their structural sequences the same? No. Semantically, they may have the same sense, but structurally, the sequences are very different. So much so that a retranslation could lead to another meaning in source language. Differences in the structures of reflexive phrases in both languages were noted. To solve this problem, there was an option for the semantic equivalence in the Urhobo language, i.e.: “Je m’appele Voke” / “Ôdé me Ívôkè”.

(5) Where in French the pronoun comes before the verb, in Urhobo the noun comes after the verb as an affix to form the reflexive verb.
The under-listed are verbs which could possibly be classed as reflexive in Urhobo:

1. Biómà / Se pousser / To shift oneself. (Reflexive in Urhobo as well as in French)
2. Brómà / Se presser/ To hurry. (Reflexive in Urhobo as well as in French)
3. Hiómà / Se tracasser / To worry. (Reflexive in Urhobo as well as in French)
4. Phuómà / se vanter / To brag. (Reflexive in Urhobo as well as in French)
5. Fuërómà / s’examiner / To examine oneself. (Reflexive in Urhobo as well as in French)
6. Nómà / se regarder / To look at oneself. (Reflexive in Urhobo as well as in French)
7. Riómà / Se connaître / To know oneself. (Reflexive in Urhobo as well as in French)
8. Rhërômà / Se retourner /To turn around. (Reflexive in Urhobo as well as in French)
9. Rôvvômà / Se reposer / To rest. (Reflexive in Urhobo as well as in French)
10. Kénômà / S’éviter / To avoid. (Reflexive in Urhobo as well as in French)
11. Siômà / Se rejeter / To reject oneself. (Reflexive in Urhobo as well as in French)
12. Dùriômà / S’inviter / To invite oneself. (Reflexive in Urhobo as well as in French)
13. Dàvvômà / S’examiner / To examine oneself. (Reflexive in Urhobo as well as in French). Contrary to the above-listed verbs, the under listed verbs are reflexive in Urhobo but not so in French.

1. Tètômà / d’être meticuleux / To be meticulous
2. Vuómà / D’avoir honte / To be ashamed.
3. Shômà / Flirt / To flirt.

Actually, the verb stands alone as “shë” / vendre / to sell. But when the noun òmà comes in as a prefix it is now referred to as a pronominal noun. The verb is completely forgotten. E.g. “òmà” + “éshë” become the noun verb “ómà-éshë”, But, when the noun comes in as an affix “shë + oma” the reflexive form is created. Hence “shômà” is the reflexive form of the verb to flirt, but which in French, would not be reflexive. The French “Flirt” is not reflexive.

CONCLUSION

The claim to have really exhausted the subject of reflexive verbs in French and Urhobo languages is not made at this point. There could have been a continuation in checking and experimenting more reflexive clauses because the zeal for this exercise has only just been ignited. Even as this exercise is being concluded there is an influx of a mass of Urhobo words; these are words and expressions that must be poured forth. Why are we starting so late? Be that as it may, time and space constraint me and this work cannot continue now, except to begin another article. This study is on the French reflexive verb and its Urhobo equivalent. It is recommended that Urhobo scholars join in this quest. There is the conviction that the Urhobo language will indeed be richer in reflexive verbs. It will also experience more increase in vocabulary than it has done hitherto.

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