The Post-nominal Pronoun Construction in Esan

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1. Overview

This paper provides a description of the post-nominal pronoun construction in Esan (ISH) [Edoid, Benue-Congo, Niger-Congo: Edo State, Nigeria]. Within this construction, the initial, left-edge (pro)nominal of a sentence is immediately followed by a pronoun, referred to as a post-nominal pronoun[1]. This pronoun is co-referential with the initial (pro)nominal, and the semantic interpretation of the pronoun is not immediately apparent. Only third person pronouns occur as a post-nominal pronoun, regardless of the grammatical person of the preceding (pro)nominal. The third person singular pronoun *ọ* 3SG 'he/she/it' occurs following all singular antecedents, and also first and second person plural pronoun antecedents *mhan* 1PL 'we' and *bha* 2PL 'you_pl'. This is shown in (1.1-1.2). The third person plural pronoun *e* 3PL 'they' occurs following third person plural antecedents. This is shown in (1.3)[2]. The post-nominal pronouns are in bold.

(1.1)　　First person singular + post-nominal pronoun:
　　　　Mẹ **ọ** lọnnebe.

mẹ$_i$	**ọ$_i$**	lẹn	ọni	ebe
1SG	**3SG**	know	DEF	book

　　　　"I knew the book."

(1.2)　　Second person plural + post-nominal pronoun:
　　　　Bha **ọ** gbinletter.

bha$_i$	**ọ$_i$**	gbẹn	iletter
2PL	**3SG**	write	letter

　　　　"You_pl write letters."

(1.3)　　Third person plural + post-nominal pronoun:
　　　　Enafiamẹna **e** gha ghọnghọn.

[eni	afiamẹ	na]$_i$	**e$_i$**	gha	ghọnghọn
DEF	bird	PROX	**3PL**	CONT	be happy

　　　　"These birds were happy."

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[1] The description "post-nominal pronoun" is chosen over "post-subject pronoun" or "subject marker" because it is not straightforward whether the initial (pro)nominal which the post-nominal pronoun follows is in subject position, in a topic position, or some other position altogether. This is discussed in §3.3.

[2] The first line represents the spoken form after elision processes. The second line represents the full forms of the words. Glossing abbreviations:　COMP 'complementizer', CONT 'continuous', DEF 'definite', DIST 'distal', FULL 'full pronoun form', FUT 'future', LINK 'linker', LOC 'locative', PL 'plural', PRS 'present', PROX 'proximal', and REL 'relativizer'.

　　　Esan orthography here generally follows Okojie & Ejele (1987). Orthographic letters correspond to the International Phonetic Alphabet value with the following exceptions:

<kp> = k͡p; <gb> = g͡b; <ch> = tʃ; <j> = dʒ; <g> = g, dʒ; <kh> = x; <gh> = ɣ; <bh> = β; <mh> = β̃; <r> =ɹ; <y> = j; <i> = i, j; <u> = u, w; <ẹ> = ɛ; <ọ> = ɔ; and <Vn{C, #}> corresponds to a nasalized vowel.

Within this paper, I illustrate the distribution of post-nominal pronouns, the forms which these post-nominal pronouns take, and discuss the semantics of these constructions. Generally, the presence of a post-nominal pronoun conveys (1) that the speaker is confirming or reporting something, and/or (2) that an event has happened less recent with respect to a specific reference point, often the point of speaking. Without the post-nominal pronoun, this often expresses an event going on presently, or one that has happened more recent with respect to a specific reference point, often translated with a perfect aspect (i.e. 'to have (done)'). These data suggest that the post-nominal pronoun construction is a type of dislocation structure, in which a (pro)nominal has moved from subject position to a position in the left periphery before the rest of the clause, with a co-referential resumptive pronoun surfacing in its place.

2. Esan language background

Esan is an Edoid language of Edo State, Nigeria, with approximately 300,000 to 500,000 speakers, though estimates vary (see Okojie & Ejele 1987, Okojie 1994: 10, and Osiruemu 2005: ix, citing Segynola 1993). The dialect studied here is the Ogwa dialect, spoken in Esan West Local Government Area (LGA). Data for this current paper were collected from language consultants living abroad in the Greater Toronto Area, and during fieldwork in Oyo and Edo States, Nigeria.

Esan is an analytic language with very little morphology, and maintains a canonical SVO word order. There is no case or grammatical role marking system, no subject-verb agreement, and no (active) noun class system. Demonstratives, quantifiers, cardinal numerals, relative clauses, and possessors follow the head noun. Determiners indicating definiteness precede the head noun. A general outline of word order within the clause is provided below in (2.1); an example is given in (2.2)[3]. The abbreviation "V - obj. - V - obj." in (2.1) represents a serial verb construction.

(2.1)   Clause structure:
      (pro)nominal - pronoun - PVMs - adverbial - continuous marker - V - obj. - V - obj. - adjunct

                      pre-verbal markers:
                e.g. irrealis, negation, future marker, etc.
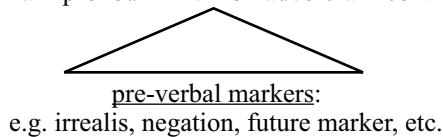
(2.2)   **Mẹ ọ** rẹ khian giẹgie duigho mu bhibank...

mẹ[i]	**ọ**[i]	rẹ	khian	giẹgie	do	igho	mu	bhi	ibank
1SG	**3SG**	although	FUT	quickly	steal	money	carry	LOC	bank

      "I was going to quickly steal money from the bank, (but...)"

2.1. The Esan pronominal system

Personal pronouns in Esan maintain a distinction with respect to grammatical person (1st, 2nd, 3rd), and grammatical number (singular, plural); there is no gender distinction. Pronouns in Esan have two forms: a full form and a reduced form. This correlates roughly to a common distinction in West African languages between strong/independent/emphatic pronouns versus weak/deficient/non-emphatic pronouns (e.g. *Edo*, Agheyisi 1990: 54; *Emai*, Schaefer 1987: 18; *Ivie* (*North Ibie*), Emuekpere-Masagbor 1997; *Yoruba*, Adesola 2006: 2071; *Kaakyi*, Agbedor & Adonae 2005: 98; among others).

A list of pronouns is provided in Table 1. Where more than one pronoun is given separated by a comma ",", the first form is used primarily in Ogwa. When separated by a tilde "~", both are variants of the same form in Ogwa. Not included here are an impersonal pronoun *a* 'one, people, we', a negative pronoun *ẹ* 'he/she/it is not', a logophoric pronoun *ọbhọ* (used by some speakers), possessive pronouns, or reflexive/reciprocal forms.

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[3] As the reviewer points out, it is odd that I have chosen not to mark tone, given the extensive role it plays in languages of Nigeria. Grammatical tone falling on verbs and nouns is highly prevalent in Esan (Ejele 1986, 2000, 2003), as well as in Edoid languages in general (e.g. *Edo*, Agheyisi 1990, Ọmọruyi 1991: 8; *Emai*, Schaefer & Egbokhare 2007: 25-30). How grammatical tone interacts with the data presented here has not been worked out yet, and rather than provide a piecemeal account, I have chosen not to include tone marking. Research is being conducted currently to correct this shortcoming for future scholarly works.

English	Full form	Gloss	Reduced form	Gloss
'I/me'	*imẹ*	1SG.FULL	*mẹ, (i)*	1SG
'you_sg'	*uwẹ*	2SG.FULL	*wẹ, (u)*	2SG
'he/she/it/him/her'	*ọle*	3SG.FULL	*ọ*	3SG
'we/us'	*imhan ~ imhain*	1PL.FULL	*mhan ~ mhain*	1PL
'you_pl'	*ibha*	2PL.FULL	*bha*	2PL
'they/them'	*iyain ~ ilain, (ele)*	3PL.FULL	*e*	3PL
Table 1: Esan personal pronouns					

The pronoun form which is used depends on the semantic, syntactic, phonological, and/or discourse context. Generally, the full form is used as (1) an emphatic (when in subject position), (2) as the complement of verbs, (3) with phonologically reduced grammatical markers (e.g. *bi* 'and', *je* 'where', etc.), (4) with the reflexive/reciprocal marker *egbe-* '-self', and (5) in possessive relative clauses. The reduced form is used elsewhere. The distribution of these forms is somewhat more complex than this, but falls outside of the scope of this paper.

3. The post-nominal pronoun construction

This section describes the Esan post-nominal pronoun construction. Comparable constructions occur in a number of West African languages, in which the initial, left-edge nominal of the clause is immediately followed by some co-referential element. Such elements are viewed differently depending on the author and language, and by no means exhibit uniform behavior or distribution as a whole. Descriptions/analyses include (1) **(subject) concord markers** (Amayo 1975; Bamgbose 1980; Elugbe 1989: 302; *Isoko*, Donwa 1982: 171), (2) **PRO-copy** (*Edo*, Ọmọruyi 1989: 282), (3) **subject agreement markers** (*Ivie, Yẹkhee (Etsakọ)*, Emuekpere-Masagbor 1997; *Kaakyi*, Agbedor & Adonae 2005: 99), (4) **subject clitics** (*Degema*, Kari 2005), and (5) **resumptive pronouns** and/or **expletives** (*Vata*, Koopman & Sportiche 1986; *Akan*, Marfo 2005: 48; *Yoruba*, Adesola 2005). See also Creissels (2000: 235) for discussion of such subject markers as verbal prefixes.

Within this section, I discuss the form of the post-nominal pronoun in §3.1, its semantic contribution in §3.2, and initial evidence that suggests the post-nominal pronoun construction involves a type of sentential emphasis triggering left-dislocation in §3.3.

3.1. The form of the post-nominal pronoun

In Esan, the post-nominal pronoun is invariably a third person pronoun. The third person singular pronoun *ọ* 3SG 'he/she/it' occurs following all singular antecedents (e.g. in 3.1a-c), and also first and second person plural pronoun antecedents *mhan* 1PL 'we' and *bha* 2PL 'you_pl' (e.g. in 3.1d-e). The third person plural pronoun *e* 3PL 'they' occurs following third person plural antecedents (e.g. in 3.1f).

(3.1) Form of the post-nominal pronoun:
  a. First person singular:
    Mẹ **ọ** lọnnebe.
    mẹ   **ọ**   lẹn   ọni   ebe
    1SG   **3SG**   know   DEF   book
    "I knew that book."

b. Second person singular:
    Wẹ **ọ** gualotọlẹ?

wẹ	**ọ**	gualọ	otọlẹ?
2SG	**3SG**	seek	bottom

"Are you investigating (this)?"

c. Third person singular:
    Omon **ọ** kpoluwa.

Omon	**ọ**	kpolo	uwa
Omon	**3SG**	sweep	house

"Omon swept the house."

d. First person plural:
    Mhan **ọ** rẹ muhẹn gha gbikhiẹn,...

mhan	**ọ**	rẹ	mu hẹn	gha	gbe	ikhiẹn
1PL	**3SG**	although	start	CONT	dance	dance

"We started off dancing,..."

e. Second person plural:
    Bha **ọ** gbinletter.

bha	**ọ**	gbẹn	iletter
2PL	**3SG**	write	letter

"You write letters."

f. Third person plural:
    Enafiamẹna **e** gha ghọnghọn.

eni	afiamẹ	na	**e**	gha	ghọnghọn
DEF	bird	PROX	**3PL**	CONT	be happy

"These birds were happy."

If a third person pronoun *ọ* or *e* is already the first nominal of the sentence, no post-nominal pronoun is found:

(3.2)   a. Ọ ghọnghọn.

ọ	ghọnghọn
3SG	be happy

"He is happy."

b. *Ọ **ọ** ghọnghọn.

ọ	**ọ**	ghọnghọn.
3SG	**3SG**	be happy

*"He is happy."

c. E ghọnghọn.

e	ghọnghọn
3PL	be happy

"They are happy."

d. *E **e** ghǫnghǫn.
    e   **e**   ghǫnghǫn
    3PL   **3PL**   be happy
    "They are happy."[4]

Table 2 displays the distribution of forms of the post-nominal pronouns (abbreviated as PNP).

Gloss	Translation	Initial (Pro)nominal	PNP	Gloss	Translation	Initial (Pro)nominal	PNP
1SG	'I'	*mę*	*ǫ*	1PL	'we'	*mhan*	*ǫ*
2SG	'you_{sg}'	*wę*	*ǫ*	2PL	'you_{pl}'	*bha*	*ǫ*
3SG	-	NP_{sg}	*ǫ*	3PL	-	NP_{pl}	*e*
	'he/she/it'	*ǫ*			'they'	*e*	
Table 2: Distribution of post-nominal pronoun forms							

3.1.1. The linker gh- *LINK*

The linker *gh-* may be placed between the initial (pro)nominal and the post-nominal pronoun with certain speakers. This is glossed as a linking marker LINK, and may be related to the complementizer element *ghenia* 'that' used by one of the consultants. The linker *gh-* is found irregularly, and appears to play no necessary functional role. This marker does not occur in many dialects[5]. Examples (3.3a-b) illustrate *gh-* with *ǫ* 3SG; example (3.3c) illustrates its use with *e* 3PL.

(3.3)   <u>Post-nominal pronoun with the linker *gh-*:</u>
    a. Mę **ghǫ** yęki nimę rǫ khięnsin.
        mę   **gh-ǫ**   yo ęki   ni   imę   rǫ   khięn ęsin
        1SG   **LINK**-3SG go market COMP 1SG.FULL go and sell   pepper
        "I went to the market (in order) to go and sell pepper."

    b. Bha **ghǫ̀** gbinletter.
        bha   **gh-ǫ-̀**   gbęn   iletter
        2PL   **LINK**-3SG-PRS   write   letter
        "You write letters."

    c. Enikpia **ghè** gbinletter.
        eni   ikpia   **gh-e-̀**   gbęn   iletter
        DEF   man.PL **LINK**-3PL-PRS write   letter
        "The men write letters."

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[4] These sentences were tested with one of the consultants. The sentences were written down, containing two separate instances of *ǫ* or *e*, and were pronounced individually to clarify what was being asked. These were said to be ungrammatical by the consultant. It may turn out, however, that such constructions actually have undergone an elision process masking underlying structure, i.e. *e + e → e*. Elision processes to resolve vowel hiatus are commonplace in Esan and Edoid, and have been documented occurring between an initial (pro)nominal and a post-nominal pronoun, e.g. *mę* 1SG + *ǫ* 3SG → *mǫ*. New data which could potentially resolve this issue involve tone changes, the acceptability of the linker *gh-*, use of full versus reduced pronouns, among others.

[5] Further, I have not yet been able to successfully determine the underlying vowel (if any) of *gh-*, as it only appears in contexts where elision occurs.

3.1.2. Full versus reduced pronouns

The examples shown thus far illustrate the post-nominal pronoun construction with the reduced form of a third person pronoun. The full forms *ọle* 3SG.FULL (3.4a-b) and *iyain* 3PL.FULL (3.4c) can also occur in this position. The use of the full form expresses additional emphasis on the co-referential nominal.

(3.4)   Use of full form pronouns in post-nominal position:
   a.   **Agbons ọle** kpọlọ le.
        Agbons$_i$ **ọle$_i$**   kpọlọ   le
        Agbons   **3SG.FULL**   be big   surpass
        "Agbons is bigger (than someone else)." (emphasizing Agbons)

   b.   **Ọnokpia** nọ ribhibodeni nọ huẹnmhọnnọmamẹ **ọle** dọnebe.
        [**ọni**   **okpia**]$_i$ ni   ọ   ri   bhi   ibodeni
        DEF   **man**   REL   3SG   be located   LOC   over there

        ni   ọ   huẹnmhẹn   ọni   ọmamẹ   **ọle$_i$**   dẹ   ọni   ebe
        REL   3SG   like   DEF   girl   **3SG.FULL**   buy   DEF   book
        "The man over there who likes the girl bought the book."

   c.   **Enẹbhoni iyain** tenọta.
        [**eni**   **ẹbho**   **ni**]$_i$ **iyain$_i$**   ta eni   ọta
        DEF   **people**   **DIST**   **3PL.FULL**   say DEF   word
        "Those people there are broadcasting." (More lit.: those people they are saying the word)

3.1.3. Variation of the form of the post-nominal pronoun

A small number of tokens, which were gathered from elicitation sessions not targeting the post-nominal pronoun construction directly, show variation of the pronoun. For example, in (3.5a), a conjoined noun phrase *ọni okpia bi ọni okhuo* 'the man and the woman' occurs with the third person plural pronoun *e* 3PL 'they'. However, in (3.5b), a conjoined noun phrase *Akhere bi Ivie* 'Akhere and Ivie' occurs with singular *ọ* 3SG 'he/she/it', which is unexpected given the typical distribution provided in Table 2.

(3.5)   Variation with conjoined noun phrases:
   a.   Ọnokpia biọnokhuo **e** lengbe.
        [ọni   okpia   bi   ọni   okhuo]$_i$ **e$_i$**   lẹn   egbe$_i$
        DEF   man   and   DEF   woman   **3PL**   know   self
        "The man and the woman know each other."

   b.   Akhere bi Ivie **ọ** huẹnmhengbe.
        [Akhere bi   Ivie]$_i$ **ọ$_i$**   huẹnmhẹn   egbe$_i$
        Akhere and   Ivie   **3SG**   like   self
        "Akhere and Ivie like each other."

Examples such as (3.5b) with unexpected post-nominal pronouns are not widely attested, however[6].

3.2. Semantic contribution of post-nominal pronouns

The semantics of constructions with post-nominal pronouns does not appear to be straightforward. It is difficult to determine whether the post-nominal pronoun itself provides the semantic contribution, or whether the semantics falls out from the entire configuration itself. Regardless, certain generalizations can be made. The presence of a post-nominal pronoun conveys (1) that the speaker is confirming or reporting something, and/or (2) that an event has happened less recent with respect to a

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[6] Similar variability might also exist for the noun *ẹbho* 'people' (also meaning 'land', 'town', 'language', depending on speaker and context).

specific reference point, often the point of speaking. Without the post-nominal pronoun, this often expresses an event going on presently, or one that has happened more recent with respect to a specific reference point, often translated with a perfect aspect (i.e. 'to have (done)'). This latter type does not have a confirmation function.

For example, it was said that the sentence without a post-nominal pronoun in (3.6a) can be used if one is currently seeing Omon dancing, or has recently seen him dance, whereas the sentence with the post-nominal pronoun in (3.6b) is used if one is trying to convince someone that Omon can, does, or did indeed dance.

(3.6)   <u>Comparison with and without post-nominal pronouns</u>:
    a. Omon gbikhiẹn.
        Omon   gbe   ikhiẹn
        Omon   make   dance
        "Omon is dancing.", "Omon has danced."

    b. Omon **ọ** gbikhiẹn.
        Omon   **ọ**   gbe   ikhiẹn
        Omon   **3SG**   make   dance
        "Omon did dance.", "Omon does dance.", "Omon can dance."

Further, in (3.7), the example without a post-nominal pronoun is used to express current motion by the agent (i.e. the man is walking), whereas the example with a pronoun expresses confirmation, ability, or prediction (i.e. did/can/will). Additional examples are in (3.8-3.11). In all of these examples, the translations provided approximate the interpretations by the speakers in imagined contexts, though they do not necessarily represent the exhaustive set of translations[7]. The information in parentheses following the translations provides additional context given by the consultant.

(3.7)   a. Enokpia khian.
        eni   okpia   khian
        DEF   man   walk
        "The man is leaving/going/walking."

    b. Enokpia **ọ** khian.
        eni   okpia   **ọ**   khian
        DEF   man   **3SG**   walk
        "The man did walk.", "The man can walk.", "The man will walk."

(3.8)   a. Johni tọlohuẹn
        Johni   tọlọ   ohuẹn
        John   cough   cough
        "John has coughed.", "John is coughing." (I saw/see it)

    b. Johni **ọ** tọlohuẹn
        Johni   **ọ**   tọlọ   ohuẹn
        John   **3SG**   cough   cough
        "John coughed.", "John coughs." (I am telling you it happened)

(3.9)   a. Omon giẹgie kpoluwa.
        Omon   giẹgie   kpolo   uwa
        Omon   quickly sweep   house
        "Omon has swept the house quickly (recently)." (I see this/evidence for this)

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[7] Many of these different interpretations likely correspond to different grammatical tonal patterns. As mentioned in footnote 3, these aspects of the grammar have not yet been worked out completely.

    b.   Omon ọ̀ giẹ̀gie kpoluwa.

         Omon   **ọ̀**   giẹ̀gie   kpolo   uwa

         Omon   **3SG**   quickly sweep house

         "Omon swept the house quickly (a long time ago)." (I am reporting that it happened)

(3.10)   a.   Mẹ mudia.

         mẹ   mudia

         1SG   stand up

         "I am standing up."

    b.   Mẹ ọ̀ mudia.

         mẹ   **ọ̀**   mudia

         1SG   **3SG**   stand up

         "I did stand up."

(3.11)   a.   Ọnawa kpọlọ.

         ọni   awa   kpọlọ

         DEF   dog   be big

         "The dog is getting/becoming big." (i.e. it is "biggen-ing")

    b.   Ọnawa ọ̀ kpọlọ.

         ọni   awa   **ọ̀**   kpọlọ

         DEF   dog   **3SG**   be big

         "The dog is big."

For some speakers, the semantic difference between sentences with and without a post-nominal pronoun is less clear. Further research is required[8].

3.3. The post-nominal pronoun construction as a dislocation structure

The data suggest that the post-nominal pronoun construction is a type of dislocation structure, in which a (pro)nominal has moved from a canonical argument position to a position in the left periphery before the rest of the clause. The dislocation here involves a (pro)nominal dislocating from subject position. In its place in subject position, a resumptive pronoun occurs which is co-referential with the dislocated (pro)nominal. Dislocation into the left field is widely attested cross-linguistically (Rizzi 1997), given that the alteration of word order produces a salient distinction with neutral canonical word orders, and is often the best means for conveying information changes and/or emphasis.

I discuss two pieces of evidence for a dislocation interpretation:

(3.12)   <u>Evidence for dislocation</u>:

      1.   Semantic contribution is attributable to a type of sentential emphasis

      2.   Similar dislocation constructions documented already in Esan and Edo

I do not explicitly address here the aspectual semantics of these data.

The first piece of evidence is that the semantic contribution of the post-nominal pronoun is attributable to a type of sentential emphasis. Recall from §3.2 that the presence of a post-nominal pronoun can express that the speaker is confirming or reporting something. This fact implies that the participants of a discourse are having a meta-discussion of the event itself. In the contexts often imagined by the consultants, one person is trying to convince another person that the event did indeed happen. Thus, they are placing additional emphasis on the validity/truth of the event. Because in such a context both participants must be aware of the event and actors being discussed in order to discuss its validity/truth, both the event and the actors can be understood as common ground information, shared by all participants in the discourse. If we accept (1) that common ground information is old information, and (2) that if a nominal is established as old information, under certain circumstances of emphasis it may be realized as a grammatical topic, then (3) these structures may be understood as a

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[8] Of our consultants, those for whom this distinction was less clear were three younger speakers living in Benin City, outside of Esanland.

special type of topicalization dislocation. Thus, even though emphasis is being placed on the entire proposition itself, the markedness of a (pro)nominal in a dislocated topic position functions to express this meaning[9].

Secondly, structures identical or similar to the post-nominal pronoun construction data here have been documented previously, which can be understood as exhibiting dislocation. For instance, in the Ekpoma dialect of Esan (also spoken in Esan West LGA), Ejele (2002: 76) notes that the use of a post-nominal pronoun indicates habituality, with specific accompanying tonal patterns, and would likely be an answer to a question of the type "What does someone do?". In such statements, the someone being discussed is established as the topic of conversation, therefore permitting grammatical topicalization, and the left-dislocation of the noun from subject position. Examples are given in (3.13). Third person singular *ọ* occurs with the singular noun *Odede* (a proper name); third person plural *e* occurs with the plural noun *íbhokhàn* 'children'.

(3.13)   <u>Post-nominal pronoun construction indicating habituality:</u>
    a.   odedé   **ộ**   sẹ   ená
          odede **she** reach   here
          "Odede reaches here" (*Ekpoma Esan*, Ejele 2002: 76)

    b.   íbhokhàn **ê**   ye-   emi-   ré
          children   **they** remember- thing-   remember
          "children remember things" (*Ekpoma Esan*, Ejele 2002: 76)

Further, a similar topicalization construction exists in the related Edoid language Edo (Amayo 1975, Ọmọruyi 1989, Adesola 2005 citing Uyi Stewart). In (3.14), the grammatical topic occurs in a left-peripheral position, and a co-referential pronominal copy occurs in the lower clause position.

(3.14)   <u>Topicalization in Edo:</u>
      Òsàrọ́ᵢ   (è ré)   **ọ́ᵢ**   bọ́   òwá
      Osaro   it be   **PRO** build   house
      "Osaroᵢ, heᵢ's building a house" (*Edo*, Ọmọruyi 1989)

These pieces of evidence together suggest that the initial (pro)nominal in a post-nominal pronoun construction is in a left-dislocation position, likely a topic position[10].

4. Concluding remarks

This paper has provided a description of the post-nominal pronoun construction in Esan. There are a number of places which require additional research. In addition to researching how grammatical tone interacts with these data, one question in particular which stands out is why the post-nominal pronouns are invariably third person, and further, why do seemingly plural pronouns *mhan* 1PL 'we' and *bha* 2PL 'you_pl' co-occur with the third person singular pronoun *ọ* 3SG 'he/she/it', rather than the third person plural *e* 3PL 'they'? As noted in §3, constructions similar to these Esan data are found across

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[9] This type of topicalization might also be understood as "verum focus" (Höhle 1992, Leonetti & Escandell-Videl 2009, Gutzmann & Castroviejo Miró 2011), in which what is emphasized is not a particular new or old constituent *per se*, but rather the polarity (i.e. validity/truth/affirmation) of the entire proposition. In English, verum focus can be expressed by do-support with accompanying prosodic prominence, as in "John DID wash the car". As shown in examples (3.6b, 3.7b, 3.10b), post-nominal pronoun constructions in Esan are sometimes translated into English with verum-focus do-support.

Particularly relevant here is Leonetti & Escandell-Videl's (2009) study of fronting in Spanish, showing that object fronting can be a means of expressing verum focus. They relate this proposal to Erteschik-Shir's (2007) notion of "altruistic fronting", in which some element moves not to focus that element itself, but rather as a means of imposing "a 'thetic' or 'all-focus' interpretation" (Leonetti & Escandell-Videl 2009: 175; Erteschik-Shir's evidence is from German and Danish). The dislocation of the subject in the Esan data, therefore, can be considered "altruistic" in this sense. I thank Martina Wiltschko for bringing the matter of verum focus to my attention.

[10] See Rolle (2010: §5.1) for argumentation against viewing the post-nominal pronoun construction in Esan as subject-verb agreement. See Emuekpere-Masagbor (1997) for comparison, who analyzes similar constructions as subject-verb agreement in the Edoid language Ivie (North Ibie).

West Africa. However, within these languages, either (1) there is full matching of grammatical person and number between the left-peripheral (pro)nominal and its lower pronominal copy, e.g. Ewe (Badan & Buell 2010: 2), or (2) there is no matching of grammatical person and number in such a construction, e.g. Yoruba (Adesola 2005: 103) and Edo (Amayo 1975: 16, Ọmọruyi 1989: 281), which use default third person singular in all contexts. Thus when viewed comparatively, Esan represents a typologically anomalous case, and should be situated both within a historical perspective, and within the current theoretical models of feature sharing.

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Selected Proceedings of the 41st Annual Conference on African Linguistics: African Languages in Contact

edited by Bruce Connell and Nicholas Rolle

Cascadilla Proceedings Project   Somerville, MA   2012

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