An unattested person-alignment in Út-Ma'in with possible logophoric function

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Út-Ma'in (Kainji, Benue-Congo) does not have dedicated logophoric pronouns. In fact, if you only analyzed (1) extracted from a short narrative text, you might dismiss Út-Ma'in as a categorically non-logophoric language (Culy 1994). In (1) the reported speaker (RS) is referenced within the speech report by the 1SG pronoun, ūm, and the reported addressee (RA) by the 2SG pronoun, bɔ̄.

(1) ūm zê kwâ-t-u in-já ūm=dá 1SG substantive 1SG.SUBJ=FUT.NEG loan
     3SG say ring-C7 DEM-C7 2SG
     ‘he said, “that ring, I will not loan you.”’

However, in another narrative text both 2SG and 3SG pronouns are used to reference the same RA, within a reported speech event as in (2). The speech event begins in (2a). In (2b) the first clause of the speech report, the RS is referenced by the 1SG pronoun ūm as we saw in (1), but the RA is referenced by a 3SG form wá ’C1.OBJ’. The next two clauses contain a second reported speech event. In (2c-d) the same RS is again referenced by the 1SG ūm, but the same RA is referenced twice by 2SG forms, =rò ‘2S.POSS’ and bɔ̄ ’2SG’.

(2) a. ū zê C1.SUBJ say
     ‘He said’

     RS
     1SG 3SG
     RA
     =RA =2SG

     b. ūm wà-rá-gó wá 5r-rém
     1SG.SUBJ tell-PST c1.OBJ c4-word
     ‘I told him/you this before

     c. ū nà mà.yò nètù= rò é hà:b= t=fá
     REL.NPERS catch woman=2S.G.POSS with friend=ASSOC=c6 call
     ‘that they caught your wife with another man’

     RS
     1SG 2SG
     RA
     =RA

     d. ūm kó bɔ̄ zì-g bò kn ɗà
     1SG.SUBJ hear.PST 2SG say-PST 3SOMETHING NEG
     ‘I did not hear you say anything’

When a second consultant transcribed (2), he replaced the 3SG wá ‘C1.OBJ’ of (2b) with bɔ̄ ’2SG’ and translated the clause with only the 2SG meaning, ‘I told you’. Before dismissing this as a mistake, it should be noted that the alternation of 3SG and 2SG forms for RAs continues throughout the text, though not always in embedded speech report clauses.

This use of 1SG for RS and 3SG for RA within a speech report is unattested by Nikitina’s (2012: 256) typology of person alignment. This study examines the distribution of RS and RA pronouns in a corpus of Út-Ma’in narrative spoken texts in an effort to understand the extent of this unattested person alignment and what motivates the shift in pronouns between 2SG and 3SG for RAs.
References