

## THE PRAGMATIC IMPORT OF PRONOMINAL USAGE IN CHISHONA DISCOURSE

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*This article discusses the pragmatic significance of chiShona pronouns by examining the use of different pronouns: personal, enumerative, and demonstrative, and by demonstrating their address and referential value and social meanings. Two important issues are addressed. First, we demonstrate that a purely grammatical analysis of pronouns, which emphasise the internal analysis and the anaphoric function of pronouns, fails to capture the complexity of pronominal usage in ordinary conversations. Second, the discourses that we analyse in this article demonstrate how in particular communicational contexts, specific speakers use pronouns to index referents other than the ones conventionally associated with a particular pronominal form in an analysis based on grammatical analysis. For example, besides its generic self-reference, the first person pronoun may be used to refer to a second or third person. The second person pronoun, apart from having a second person reference, can, be used as a second first or third person reference. The third person may, apart from its conventional reference, be used to mean either the first or second person. The pronoun switches also involve indirectness, reflecting a wide range of social meanings which have politeness implications.*

### INTRODUCTION

In this article, we demonstrate the pragmatic significance of chiShona pronouns or pronominal categories by examining how they alternate and vary in terms of address, and the social meanings which these variations and alternations realise.

The term pronoun and derived terms such as pronominalisation have long been part of the metalanguage of traditional grammarians. 'The term has been used in the grammatical classifications of words to refer to a closed set of [nominal] lexical items that can substitute for a noun or noun phrase' (Muhlhausler & Harre, 1990: 9). The notion of 'closed set' implies that in human languages only a small, definite repertoire of pronoun forms is found in each case. However, 'such sets differ enormously in complexity and range of discrimination'; there are languages 'with a mere handful of pronouns and others with as many as 200' (ibid.). Most writers on pronouns further distinguish subclasses of pronouns such as personal, possessive, demonstrative, indefinite, and so on and also describe pronominal systems in terms of person, number and gender. Table 1, below, shows the classification of chiShona personal pronouns according to person and number:

**Table 1: Classification of Shona personal pronouns in terms of person and number, with possessive stems, demonstratives and agreement morphemes**

		<b>Singular</b>				<b>Plural</b>				
Person	Pronoun	Poss. Stem	Dem	AM-Pre/Fut	AM-Past	Pronoun	Poss stem	Dem	AM-Pre/Fut	AM-Past
1 <sup>st</sup> person	Ini	-ngu	-	Ndi-	Nda-	Isu	-du	-	Ti-	Ta-
2 <sup>nd</sup> person	Iwe	-ko	-	U-	Wa-	Imi	-nyu	-	Mu-	Ma-
3 <sup>rd</sup> person	Iye	-ke	Uyu/uyo	A-	A-	Ivo	-vo	Ava/avo	Va-	Va-

Several linguists emphasise the syntactic function and status of the pronoun in a noun phrase or in a sentence. Leech and Svartvik (1975: 275) define pronouns as ‘words that can function as a whole noun phrase (e.g. in being subject or object of a clause) or as the head of a noun phrase. Many of them act as substitutes or ‘replacements’ for noun phrases in the context’. The process of substitution referred to in Leech and Svartvik’s definition is pronominalisation. Many linguists perceive pronominalisation as a mechanical process used in producing mere surface variants of underlying structures. Hence, in the original Chomskian version of transformational grammar pronouns were not located in deep structure, but introduced transformationally.

Semantically, traditional grammarians assert that pronouns provide information about ‘who is speaking and who is listening’ (Grimes, 1975: 71), and about whom or what they are speaking. Leech and Svartvik (1975: 57) define the pronoun *we* as ‘stand[ing] for a group of people including the speaker’. This definition implies that *we* has the same reference in every context. This is a kind of one morpheme equals one meaning principle which we seek to question.

In this article, we will illustrate how chiShona pronouns, like pronouns in other languages, perform diverse roles and functions depending on the communicational contexts in which they are used. Taking another perspective, Reichenbach (1966) remarks that pronouns are pointers of variables that perform two basic functions: anaphoric and deictic. Duranti (1984) notes that in addition to looking at their referential functions, linguists should also look at the work pronouns do in defining the role of a given character in a story, as well as the judgements being made about the character in the story. Specifically he argues that Italian subject pronouns are devices through which speakers define main characters in a narrative and/or convey empathy or positive affect towards certain referents. Speakers/Authors, on the other hand, use demonstratives to define inanimate objects, minor characters, and people with whom they show no empathy.

We will also show how chiShona interactants sometimes use pronouns to index referents that differ from the person conventionally associated with a particular form. Kahananui and Anthony (1970), Wills (1977) and Head (1978) discuss the use of one pronoun to index another (for example, using the first person to mean the second person) when referring to or addressing someone. Kahananui and Anthony, for example, argue that the use of the first person dual inclusive in Hawaiian is considered a polite form of address for greeting an

individual. For his part, Head (1978: 172) notes that the use of the first person plural to refer exclusively to the referent to show similarity of interests with the referent occurs in many languages, notably English, German, Swedish, Danish and French.

We will also show that in chiShona, as Obeng (1997) has shown with regard to Akan (largely spoken in west Africa), pronouns in conversation often violate certain grammatical [syntactic] rules and involve changing and shifting their prototypical meaning as described in conventional grammars. This change or shift in reference is in part attributable to sociolinguistic and pragmatic factors, which formal grammars tend to exclude.

The data which forms the basis of the analysis in this article show that the simplicity of grammatical pronominal paradigms can not successfully capture the complexity of pronoun use resulting in a loss of awareness of the pragmatic significance of pronouns in ordinary conversations. Further comments on the limits of a grammatical approach will follow the analysis of the data on specific instances of pronoun use.

Recent pragmatic consideration of the way in which European, especially English pronouns are actually used in context 'indicates that pronouns are far from categorical, and indeed, their interpretation is mediated by a range of social and personal factors producing a range of possible uses and interpretations' (Wilson, 1990: 45). Much of the contemporary work was stimulated by Brown and Gilman (1960) work on French, German and Italian, which Hodge and Kress (1988: 40) describe as an exemplary analysis with implications for 'many other semiotic codes'. We would argue, however, that the context of pronominal usage that both grammatical pronominal paradigms and the Brown and Gilman based studies involve undervalues conversations. For that reason they are not relevant to this study.

chiShona conversationalists use several devices to define characters or participants in an ongoing conversation. Among these discourse tools are the use of pronouns. As the data used in this study demonstrates, conversations are 'populated with a cast of actors, present and absent, whose explicit characterisations and implicit known identities give shape and meaning to the talk' (Malone, 1997: 43). In a study of conversations among members of a food cooperative, Labov (1980 cited in Malone, 1993: 43) argues that collections or categories of people are often indexed in implicit ways by references to group membership, past activities or characterisations, times or places, or plurals hidden in singulars.

Given the potential complexity of interactional reference alluded to above, how do conversationalists know or think they know to whom reference is being made? Speakers and hearers seem in most cases to know who is being spoken to or about and are able to get on with their conversations without frequent need for clarification. Proponents of the conversational analysis approach (CA) would argue that 'this knowledge is neither the result of some external institutional order which provides rules to follow' (Wilson, 1991: 27 in Malone, 1997: 43), nor does it result from a cognitive model possessed by each talker. It is the interaction order with its concomitant demands of self-presentation and sense-making that provides a framework within which such practical knowledge is possible.

Contrary to CA analysts, our data will show that 'the institutional external order', the culture of the society in which the interactants are members, sometimes constrains the speaker's choice and use of pronouns in a conversation. Mashiri, Mawomo and Tom (2002) show of chiShona as does Obeng (1997) of Akan that some interactive rules or conditions (e.g. in

African societies) may require the use of indirect or ambiguous reference. The participants' shared or assumed knowledge: 'unspoken and unstressed' (Ellis, 1992) also determine pronominal use. Obeng sums it up well in his statement that '[u]se of indirectness, as well as the mechanism for understanding indirect speech acts, depends in part on mutually shared background information and on the cultural background of the discourse participants'.

## **THE COLLECTION OF DATA FOR THE STUDY**

The qualitative data that form the basis of this study came from two sources: (a) transcripts of 15- to 20-minute natural conversations, and (b) transcripts of semi-structured personal interviews. We recorded thirty conversations in all, twenty six of these in Harare in 2001 and the remaining four in the town of Norton (40km west of Harare), in 2002. Although this study is based on urban chiShona, the observations made have general relevance to the chiShona both sociolinguistically and pedagogically. We were attempting to demonstrate the differences between the chiShona as described in chiShona grammar books and the emerging variety as used in urban Zimbabwe (Makoni and Meinhof 2003, Makoni and Mashiri in press). All the interactants were unaware at first that they were going to be recorded. However, when we later informed them of the proposed recordings, they consented to being recorded on condition that their identities were disguised, and the data were used for academic purposes only. We conducted 10-minute interviews with eight chiShona speakers between the ages of eighteen and sixty-five. Five of the interviewees were selected from the interactants engaged in conversations recorded earlier and the other three were colleagues. Both men and women were involved.

The data from the interviews complemented the conversations. Hence, the questions were derived from the patterns of pronominal usages observed in the conversations. They were centred on the reason(s) behind the pronominal choices and switches, what messages were spoken to the addressees or implied in the references and what situations the speakers considered as 'unspeakable'.

In our discourse analysis we paid particular attention to the range and types of pronouns used, the role relationships between the speaker and the addressee or referent (where the speaker is not the referent) and the situations in which the discourses occurred. We also observed the situation in which the conversations occurred and the role relationships between the interlocutors since these were directly relevant to what was said. We considered the background information such as the identity of the interactional participants, the situational context of the discourse and the purpose of the interaction. We also paid attention to the content and form of the message, its purpose, manner, tone and effect and the interpretation the other participants give on the basis of shared knowledge and other previous encounters. Lastly, our intuition and inside knowledge of chiShona language and culture enhanced our insights into the communicational events. In the discussion that follows, we use the first names of the participants only to disguise their identity.

Before examining the non-conventional uses of chiShona pronouns in ordinary conversations and the social meaning deriving from these uses, we will briefly describe how pronouns are said to function grammatically in chiShona.

## STANDARD FUNCTIONS FOR SHONA PRONOUNS

The following examples show how pronouns serve their expected functions according to a grammatical model. Consider Example 1 and Example 2:

1. Martin: **Ini ndinoda mukadzi anosevenza.**  
(I prefer a woman who is formally employed.)  
  
Tariro: **Unoda iye here kana kuti unoda mari yake?**  
(Do you love a woman as an individual or you love her for her money?)
2. Vanhu vomuno muZimbabwe **vane** tsika chaizvo. **Hatina** basa ne*Mother's day* nokuti **tinoda** vanamai vedu nguva dzose. **Tine** zviyerwa zvinoti**tirambidza** kuvarova kana kuvatuka.  
(We Zimbabwean are very courteous people. We do not value Mother's day since we show love to our mothers all the time. In our culture there are taboos that discourage beating or berating one's mother.)

In 1, Martin, aged 21, and Tariro, aged 20, students at the Catholic University in Zimbabwe are engaged in a social discussion during a literature class. In Martin's utterance, the pronoun *Ini (I)* refers to the first person singular, the speaker and it functions as the subject of the sentence. The *u-* (you) in the string '*Unoda iye here kana kuti unoda mari yake?*' (Do you love the woman as an individual or you love her for her money?) also functions as the subject of the sentence, but *iye* (she), the third person singular pronoun functions as the object of the sentence and determines the possessive stem of the modifier of the noun *mari* (money) in the object noun phrase *mari yake* (her money). In other words, the pronouns in the utterances in 1 perform their expected functions grammatically.

Example 2 is part of an interview on general cultural issues that the researcher had with Jonathan, aged 45, a high school teacher. In this example, the third person subject concord/pronoun *va-* (they) refers (back) to the noun phrase *Vanhu vomuno muZimbabwe* (Zimbabweans) which, functions as the subject of the sentence. The subject concord/pronoun *ti-* (we) in '*Hatina basa...*' (We do not value...) also performs its normal or conventional function – inclusive first person plural pronoun. Although there is an intersentential pronominal switch from third to first person in Example 2, this appears to be a typical switch that does not interfere with the ordinary/referential meanings of the respective pronouns.

In the remaining part of this article, we will focus on data that reflects how interactants' use pronouns to index referents that differ from the person typically associated with a particular form and reflect contextually determined meanings which cannot be successfully captured in a grammatical model of pronouns.

## DATA ANALYSIS

### *First person reference*

In this section we will examine how the first person singular and plural chiShona pronouns derive their multiple meanings from the contexts in which they are used. Malone (1997: 58) stresses the interdependence of meaning and situation: ‘the indexicality of talk, its unalterable connectedness to a particular situation, is played out in pronoun choices which create alignments between talkers and their topics and their hearers’. This implies that the relationship between the speaker and the hearer(s), the topic and the situation of talk, among other things, are significant in enhancing our understanding of a pronoun’s social or pragmatic meanings.

### *First person singular*

In traditional grammar, the first person singular pronoun *I* refers only to the person who uses it, that is the speaker. The data analysed in this study reflects the complexities of pronoun use in conversations. Consider:

3. Ndiri kuda maassignments **angu** nhasi nokuti ndinoda kuamaka paweek-end.  
(Please hand in my [= ‘your’] assignments today so that I can mark them over the week-end.)
4. Hapana zvandichagona kuita **ndega** ipapa. **Ndikawana andisimudzawo akandiisa** pamushana ndizvozvo. Upenyu hwakaona mukwasha!  
(I am [= ‘She’] now bed-ridden. I now rely on the good will of others for taking me out to enjoy the sun and back into the house.)
5. 1. Zvinhu zvakaoma mazuva ano. Zvako zvokuswera uchiti, ‘**Handidiyi**  
2. manhuchu **ini**’, he-e, ‘handidye chingwa chisina bhata’, wotozvirega.  
3. Ini handichazvikwanisa zvokuti chingwa mangwana mangwana. Kamwe  
4. chete pasvondo kana tazvigonawo tazviona.  
(The cost of living is now very high. Your petty excuses that ‘I [= ‘you’] don’t like *manhuchu* and I also dislike bread without butter’ have got to stop. I can’t afford to buy bread every day anymore. Once a week is the best I can do.)

The use of the first person singular pronoun, its subject concord or possessive form in examples 3, 4 and 5 above is not self-referential. We recorded Example 3 in a High school classroom. This utterance is used by a teacher to direct students to submit their assignments on that particular day. Some students probably attempt to give excuses for not being able to meet the deadline; hence, the teacher uses the first person possessive pronoun *ngu-* (mine), to index the second person plural pronoun *nyu-* (yours), to stress his authority, rights and duties to direct the students’ actions and the students’ lack of power to challenge the command.

This is so since in African [chiShona] culture, the teacher-student relationship is an asymmetrical one; the teacher is older and more knowledgeable than the students. The teacher is expected to be in control, ‘to preserve an appropriate distance from students, and to instruct and inform the students’ (Holmes, 1983: 97). In fact, the surface structure of the utterance that the teacher uses conforms to the form akin to a type of English directives

Ervin-Tripp (1976: 29) calls 'personal need or desire statements' directed down-wards to subordinates primarily. Such directives start with the phrase, 'I need....'. Changing from the prototypical use of second person plural to first person singular is a way of 'asserting, maintaining, and perhaps increasing power' (Pearson, 1988: 79).

Example 4 is an extract from an interview that the researchers had with Angela, aged 36, who is nursing her younger sister living with AIDS. Since Angela narrates her sister's ordeal to the researcher with the sister as a co-present referent, she employs what Mashiri, Mawomo and Tom (2002: 228) refer to as 'pronoun substitution or pronoun mismatches' to save face<sup>1</sup> in a face threatening situation. The speaker uses the first person singular subject concord /*ndi-*/ to refer to the third person (her sister, in this case), while ostensibly referring to herself.

The utterance in Example 5 is one of several instances of such utterances observed in conversations involving varied and mixed interlocutors where the speaker uses the first person pronoun or its subject concord /*ndi-*/ (lines 1 and 2) to refer to the hearer. Urban (1989 cited in Malone, 1997: 63), calls a pronoun used in direct [and indirect] quotation, as in Example 5, quotative *I*. The quotative *I* here takes the form of what Goffman (1974: 534) calls 'say-fors' or mimicry. In this case the speaker is 'saying-for' or acting out as the hearer or addressee in a mannered voice.

The use of the auxiliary verb /*ti-*/ (say), in line 1, before the quotation syntactically marks the boundary between reference to the speaker and reference to the hearer between what the speaker says and what the hearer said. It introduces an embedded quote in which the speaker is mimicking another person. The prosodic markers such as '*he-he*' (what-not), (line 2) clearly reveals that he is putting on another persona. The use of this prosodic marker reflects a change from a normal to a marked voice quality to suggest that a different person is doing the speaking. In the present example, as in many others in our data, syntactic and prosodic devices are used simultaneously. The pragmatic import of the use of the quotative *I*, in Example 5 is sarcasm and caricature. In this case the speaker derides the hearer's behaviour with the objective to influence and shape social behaviour. While the first person pronoun used in Example 5 refers to the second person, there are instances in the data which may refer to the third person singular. Extracts in which the quotative *we* is used are illustrated in the next section.

The use of the first person singular, then, in interaction makes it referentially more complex than the self-referentiality as described in a strictly grammatical description of chiShona. It becomes a resource that speakers can use to do a variety of interactional work, including dramatising the personae of others by imitating their voices to articulate social meanings while saving the 'face' of the person being spoken about.

#### *First person plural*

As in the previous section, our concern in this section is the speakers' manipulation of pronouns, in this case the first person plural, within various social contexts. We are interested in the speakers' selectional choices in referring to themselves and others and the distributional range of the first person plural pronoun. Our assumption is that the individual choices and the distributional range of pronouns may indicate how they treat the meaning of the first person plural pronoun in each context of use. In other words 'the proportional use of certain pronouns may itself affect the interpretation (meaning) of certain pronouns for certain speakers' (Wilson, 1990: 56).

Table 1 shows that the chiShona first-person plural pronoun is *Isu* (we). This, like all the other pronouns in Shona, and like in other languages, occurs in a sentence or in discourse as noun phrase (NP). Hartmann and Stork (1972: 155) defines an NP as ‘a word or a group of words with a noun or pronoun as its head and functioning as the subject, object or complement of a sentence’. When a pronoun appears in a sentence, overtly or covertly, as subject, it is followed or substituted by a pronominal subject concord that varies according to the tense of the verb (see Table 1, above) and by an object concord, when it functions as an object.

The data analysed here shows that the chiShona first person plural pronoun has a wide range of non-conventional referencing possibilities within everyday talk. Before we demonstrate the choices made and the social meanings implied in the varied uses of the first person plural pronoun we should explain the exclusive/inclusive distinction. Consider the following examples:

6 (a) Ngatinyararei tiri muimba yaMwari.  
(Please, let’s be silent, we are in church.)

(b) Jerry: Ari kuti chiiko muface uyu?  
(What is this fellow talking about?)

Rungano: Ndinofunga kuti tiri kungobatwa kumeso chete ini. Iwe uri better sha, **isu** vamwe zvakatodzvanya.  
(I think we are simply being fooled. You seem to be managing better than some of us friend, who are in precarious situations.)

Example 6(a) involves a church minister at a congregation in Highfields (a suburb in Harare) who directs members of his congregation to be silent during a worship session. In this context the directive meant that only the congregation but not the minister himself, should be silent. Hence, the *ti-* here excludes the speaker although compliance with the directive would be to his benefit. Describing the use of the English exclusive *we*, Muhlhausler and Harre (1990: 173) say, ‘the principle function of the directive *we* is to get others to perform an action that is in the speaker’s (and his group) own interest’. Goffman (1981) has argued that the use of forms like the exclusive *we* serves to distance the speaker (‘animator’) from what it is that is being said.

However, discussing instances of pronominal use comparable to Example 6(a), Mashiri (2003a: 122) stresses that the use of the exclusive *ti-* gives the addressee(s) an impression of the speaker’s inclusion in the action ensuing from the directive. This means that the directive is perceived as a face-threatening action (FTA) that requires the use of some mitigating device. In fact, in Example 6(a) the mitigation is emphasised by adding the accounting statement, ‘*tiri muimba yaMwari*’, hence, shifting the real author (speaker) of the directive to God. Mitigation is also evident in the speaker’s preference to using the hortative formative *nga-* (let) followed by *ti-* to the direct imperative form, *Nyararai* (Be quiet please.). The context forces the minister to employ the exclusive pronoun with mitigating devices in order to manage the addressees’ emotions. The speaker’s identity as a religious leader, the church setting that demands piety and egalitarianism, and the cultural rules of respect influence the minister’s pronominal usage.



Now let us take Example 6(b) where Jerry and Rungano are discussing a local politician's speech broadcast on television. In this case it is clear that *ti-* (in boldface) refers to both the speaker and the addressee, thus it is inclusive. The *ti-* in this case refers to Jerry and Rungano's shared situation at the moment of making the utterance. When Rungano uses *ti-*, he assumes that he is speaking for Jerry as well. However, Rungano's use of *isu* (*vamwe*) in the second line shows a referential shift in the same utterance. At this stage Rungano no longer speaks for Jerry, but includes some unspecified others. Thus, the *isu* creates and calls attention to a new identity boundary. Commenting on the use of the American English *we*, Malone (1997: 65) says, '*We* has shifting sets of referents of greater or lesser inclusiveness, and is a prime example of one of the ways speakers can shift their 'footings', creating new alignments with others, in the course of very brief stretches of talk'.

Although the pronoun *isu* in 6(b) could refer to Rungano and the unspecified other, we observed in other contexts that the first person plural pronoun, when used this way could also be self-referential. In this case, the first person plural stands for the first person singular pronoun as in the Example 7 below:

7. Mandisa: Mune chokutaura here panyaya iyi mukoma?  
(Would you have anything to say on this issue brother?)  
Mutape: **su** vamwe hatipo panyaya dzenyu. Itai zvamafunga.  
(Do not drag us (= 'me') in your mess. Do as you please.)  
Mandisa: Hazvinzarwo mukoma! Chivi hachidzoreranwi.  
(Calm down brother! Two wrongs cannot make a right.)  
Mutape: **Tisiye zvedu!**  
(We (= 'I') have no interest meddling in your affairs.)

The form of first-person plural that Mutape uses approximates what Head (1978: 165) calls the 'plural of modesty'. The effect here of using *isu/ti-* (*we*) is one of disassociation with a certain idea, position or affiliation and to index a negative emotional disposition. There are however other examples in the data which reflect how the speakers may reveal how they are aligned with particular ideas through their use of pronouns.

We also observed that some speakers employ the first-person plural pronoun to refer to themselves when they relate general experiences that in fact apply to them personally. We observed such usages in social conversations involving mixed groups of workmates in terms of age, sex and rank, often held during lunch breaks in the industrial sites. Example 8 is the contribution of Beauty, aged 29, to one such discussion:

8. **Isu** madzimai **ti**noonekwa setisina kuzvibata nguva dzose.  
Ukangosekererana nemunhurume zvonzi wava kutodanana naye. Munhu anogona kutorambirwa izvozvo.  
(We (= 'I') women are always viewed as people of loose morals. Any friendly interaction with a man is misconstrued as an illicit relationship. Some men divorce their wives on account of such allegations.)

A follow up interview with Beauty established that she herself is, in fact, estranged from her husband because of her suspected infidelity. Nevertheless, the discourse style represented in Example 8 is not unique to the speaker in this particular conversation. In Example 8 the speaker relates her own experience in an indirect way. By using the first-person plural

pronoun, she associates herself with a much wider class of women (who become victims of gender stereotyping), downgrading her own experience to incidental status of the discourse, phrasing it as something that could or would be anybody's.

The analysed data shows that at times speakers use the first person plural pronoun instead of the first person singular pronoun to show the relationship between the speaker and the other person (s) implied in the *we*:

9. **Isu** hatifungi kuti zvine basa kuendeswa mwana kukiresi inotaurwa Chirungu. Tinodada nomutauro wedu. Maattitudes chete ndiwo anonetsa vanhu vatema.

(We (= 'I') do not believe that it's necessary to send a child to an English speaking crèche. We are proud of our language. In fact, Blacks tend to have an attitudinal problem.)

10. Highlanders **takairakasha pahome** payo chaipo nezuro.

(We (= 'they') thoroughly beat Highlanders on their home ground yesterday.)

Example 9 is an extract from a recording of a discussion on raising children by a group of Christian newlywed couples group. The speaker, Richard, aged 37, sits with his wife Tendai, aged 32 and glances occasionally at her as he speaks. Although Richard gives his own opinion, his *isu* (we) refers to him and Tendai. Hence, the *isu* in Richard's utterance serves an integrative function. According to Weiner and Mehrabian (1968), personal reference is used to establish verbal and social immediacy, with *we* pronouns signalling greater psychological inclusion (or integration of identities) and *I/you* pronouns establishing greater separation of self and other. Commenting on the functions of language in marital relations in Western society Ellis and Hamilton (1985) and Fitzpatrick, Bauman and Lindaas (1987) classify couples, which use *we* pronouns as 'interdependent', stable and homogenous and place high value on togetherness and sharing. Since the current study has not extensively analysed marital conversations, we do not have adequate evidence to test the applicability of these observations to the chiShona [Africa] context. It is clear, however, that the use of the first person plural pronoun in such situations as exemplified by Example 9 above implies a level of intimacy which is consistent with the research done by Ellis and Hamilton (1985) and Fitzpatrick and Lindaas (1987) research.

In Example 10, the *ta-* (we) also serves an integrative function, but of a different nature. In this example the first person plural pronoun refers to the third person plural (representing the Highlanders players). By using the *we* pronoun the speaker (the sports fan) shows his commitment to 'his' team, although he did not participate in the game personally.

Another example of usage with a similar effect is found in Example 11 below:

11. Svondo rakapera **takadzidza** chii zviya nezvechirwere chomukondombera?

(What did we (= 'you') learn about HIV/AIDS last week?)

We recorded Example 11 in a junior high school class. The teacher is referring to a previous class she gave. The pronoun *we*, in this case represented by the subject concord *ta-* refers to

the students and does not include the teacher. By using the pronoun the teacher simply expresses her commitment to the successful instruction of her students.

We also observed how the first person plural pronoun could be used to refer to the second-person singular. Consider Example 12 and Example 13:

12. Riri sei gumbo **redu** nhasi ambuya?  
(How is our (= 'your') leg today granny?)

13. Ngatidyeika mwanangu. Chidyai vamwene. Honai ini ndiri kudya. O-  
o, chiti kabu kabuki zimhandara.

(Let us (= 'you') eat my child. Please eat mother-in-law. See, I am eating. Look, eat quickly my big girl.)

The use of the first person plural pronoun in Example 12 is in the context of a follow-up visit by an old woman to a medical doctor. This form of pronominal use is an example of the so-called 'nursery *we*' (Laberge & Sankoff, 1980, Muhlhausler & Harre, 1990). Laberge and Sankoff suggest that the 'nursery *we*' is used in English when doctors and nurses or other caregivers express their strong commitment to patients or children they are responsible for. However, the data for this study seem to show that besides commitment, the speaker's use of the pronoun in such instances also connotes compassion and solidarity with the addressee.

The data analysed in this study show that the use of the first-person plural pronoun in address is common in the language used in caretaker speech/baby talk (Head, 1978:172). According to (Head) 'baby talk', reference may be either to both the speaker and the addressee, in order to encourage participation by the latter in a mutual activity, or only to the addressee, as a means of showing interest or may serve as a directive. This variable range of inclusiveness makes the use of the first person in addressing small children ambiguous.

We observed that chiShona speakers use the first-person plural pronoun when addressing small children, whether reference is to both the speaker and the addressee or to only the latter. When referring to both, the speaker and the addressee, the parent or caregiver, acting as the speaker, participates in the activity in question in a phony voice in order to encourage the child to perform the activity. When Chenai, aged 32, instructs her daughter to eat her food in 13, the former takes only two spoons of porridge and lets her daughter finish the rest. The address form *mwanangu* (my child), the social honorific *zimhandara* and the relational honorific *vamwene* (mother-in-law) complement the illocutionary force<sup>2</sup> of the pronoun by adding the social meanings of closeness, affection and patronage (Mashiri 2004, in press), resulting in the child eating all her food.

One other use of the first-person plural pronoun similar to the 'baby talk' that we observed is when parents, Sunday school teachers and Pre-school teachers order small children, in a polite manner, to stop certain actions:

14. Hatitambi tichirova vamwe *and* kana tichida kuenda kutoilet tinokumbira kuna  
*auntie*.  
(We (= 'you') should not beat other children. When we (= 'you') want to visit the  
toilet, ask the teacher's permission.)

The utterance in 14 is part of a statement that a pre-school teacher for a beginners' class at a private crèche in Harare gave to the children in her class in 2002. In an interview, the teacher, Tecla, aged 39, says that while she made this utterance as part of the routine classroom discipline reminders, she was, in fact, indirectly issuing an order to one particular boy who was in the habit of pinching other children and going to the toilet without asking for permission. We observed that the use of indirect directives shown in Example 14 is most common among children under the age of six. Tecla notes that a direct, firm and stern-sounding directive could negatively affect the delinquent child both psychologically and socially. The use of the first-person pronoun in 14 is used, first, to deal with a case at hand, but as Torode (1976: 93) reminds us, 'this use of *we* is not [only] located within the present situation-at-hand, it is portrayed within a realm whose time-span transcends any particular spatially and temporally bounded occasion'.

Our data also show how speakers use the first person plural pronoun to indirectly refer to a co-present referent (third person) both the speaker and the addressee assume to be a non-speaker of Shona or a passive bilingual. The pronoun is used as a referent term in gossip involving the core-referent. Consider Example 15:

15. Baba ava vanonetsa. Izvozvi zvati **tiri** ipapa **tiri** kusapura asi **tiri** kusapotwa neUN. Basa nderokungosweroteedza ndari yemuZimbabwe.  
(My friend, this is a problem student. Currently, we (= 'he') are due to write supplementary examinations, despite that we get full funding from the United Nations. How can he do well when he spends time boozing in Zimbabwean bars?)

Example 15 features James, aged 38, a lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe who describes a foreign student's academic problems and social behaviour to the researcher. The use of the first person plural pronoun in Example 15 is exactly the same as that of its singular form in Example 4, which we noted as an instance of pronoun substitution or mismatch. The figurative nature of this discourse style makes the utterance in Example 15 inaccessible to non-native speakers of Shona. This style enables the speaker and the addressee to exclude the co-present referents from the discussion and to gossip about or insult them freely. In Example 15, the reference term *baba* (father), modified by the demonstrative *ava* (this), reflects a derogatory tone that connotes the referent's immature and irresponsible behaviour contrary, to that expected of a father-figure denoted by the noun *baba*.

In the last example, we show Shona speakers' non-self-referential use of the first person plural pronoun in narratives or utterances that involve direct or indirect quotation similar to the use of the first-person singular pronoun illustrated in Example 5. The quotative *we* may refer to more than one addressee (numerical plural), the addressee and unspecified others associated with him/her, the addressee alone or overhearers who have no association with the addressee. This kind of ambiguity (seen in Example 15) is also evident in Example 16:

16. Imi vanaChamu munoswera muchizviti '**Tiri** mawar vet, **tiri** mawar vet', yet ndimi maiva vanamujibha. Pamwe pakarwiwa hondo yacho maiva musati mambozvarwa futi!  
(People like you Chamu who go around saying, 'We (= 'you') are veterans of the war of liberation, we are veterans of the war', were probably just war collaborators. It's also possible that the war was fought before you were born.)

Besides the deriding and sarcastic tone of the mimicry, the referent ambiguity in the quotation makes it possible for the speaker to attack overhearers who would not be ratified addressees. In Example 16, Gerald, aged 41, makes these comments to Chamu, aged 37, during a friendly chat at a friend's wedding party attended by members of their social circle. Membership of the gathering gives Gerald the licence to speak freely without risking an altercation with anyone or being quoted out of context.

### ***Second-person pronoun***

In ordinary use the second person refers to the person addressed by the speaker. As Brown and Levinson (1987) suggest, when a speaker refers to a hearer as 'you', that hearer is an 'addressed recipient', a 'target' of the speaker's words. But, as the data for this study will show, the second person has a wide range of interactional uses that can index alternation of person to convey social meanings. Hence, the data analysed in this section will reveal that the second person pronoun can be used as a marked address pronoun and can be allocated to first, and third person, as well as the more generic second person.

#### *Use of the second person as a marked address pronoun*

chiShona grammars for both linguistic purposes and for second language learners (see e.g. Chimhundu and Mashiri, 1996, Brauner, 1995, Erickson, 1988 and Fortune, 1980) have typically described the unmarked forms of the second person pronoun. According to Brauer (1995:34), grammatically, the second person singular is usually used for one person and the 'second person plural has two functions: address to a majority of persons and honorific plural form for one person'. The explanation for this categorisation is sociolinguistic in nature. Both the social distance and the relative social status between interlocutors determine the speaker's choice for either the singular or plural [honorific]. Boxer (1993: 105) writes:

Whereas the relative social status is viewed primarily in a vertical sense of higher or lower status, social distance differs from this concept in that it refers to the horizontal relationship between participants in a speech sequence. While the former has to do with one's social position in a community owing to age, occupation or level of power, the latter has to do with the level of friendship/intimacy between interlocutors. These are two variables having the potential of interacting and/or overriding each other, depending on the context of the interaction.

Some researchers have viewed the social distance scale as a continuum (e.g. Boxer, 1993; Holmes, 1990; Wolfson, 1988) in line with Wolfson's theory of social distance termed the 'The Bulge'<sup>3</sup>. In the continuum, we would find complete strangers at one extreme and intimates at the other end, with friend and acquaintances nearer to the middle. 'The categories of 'strangers', 'friends', and 'intimates' are not discrete categories but are points along the continuum' (Boxer, 1993: 104). Social distance and social status would interact where speakers comply with the Shona rule that a speaker is expected to address a hearer using the second person honorific pronoun if the latter is an acquaintance or a stranger who occupies a higher social status than the former. However, social distance may override social status where the interlocutors are intimates, hence their pronominal choice is determined by other contextual variables other than age or other forms of social status.

The data presented here will show that the patterns of language use characterised above disregard the speaker's creative usage and violation of conventional grammatical or cultural rules in order to achieve social meaning or pragmatic intent. An example of a marked use of the second person singular address pronoun can be seen in the following conversation between an adult married woman aboard a commuter omnibus and a teenage bus conduct:

17. Conductor: *Ambuya seberai uko umwe agare.*  
(Lady could you please move over to create room for one other person.)

Woman: Silence and no movement.)

Conductor: (Angrily) **Imi** ambuya **imi** seberai kuside uko. Maita seiko?  
(I am talking to you lady, please push over that side. Is there a problem?)

Woman: *Ndinosebera kupi kwacho? Iyo seat iyi yakazombogarwa nevanhu four kupi kwacho?*  
(I do not see any space to push over to. Isn't it strange that you want the four of us to sit here?)

Conductor: (Moving closer to the woman) **Iwe uri aniko iwe?** Uri *girlfriend yadriver* here kana kuti uri hure? Unoda kushamisira kunge uri mumota mako sei? Kana usingakwane buruka tione! Uri kupedza nguva yedu.  
(You, what authority do you have to challenge me? Are you the driver's girl or just a prostitute? Why do you behave so arrogantly as if you are in the comfort of your personal car? If you have problems pushing over, then out you go! You are wasting our time.)

Woman: (Silent as she gets down).

In his first and second utterances the conductor uses the unmarked forms of address for the adult female stranger. The kin term *ambuya* (mother-in-law) and the second person plural pronoun *imi* (you) express the politeness/respect expected between strangers in service encounters. The shift from the second person plural to the singular pronoun *iwe* (you), and from the kin term of respect to insulting labels, such as *hure* (prostitute) shows the conductor's anger and desire to embarrass the woman for refusing to co-operate with him or comply with the bus rules. The encounter in Example 17 is not unique. Similar uses of the second person singular to addressees whom speakers are normally expected to give the honorific (either because the addressees are strangers to or are older than the speaker(s) or both) were observed in other service encounters, especially those involving queues and gate-keeping such as medical health-centres, registry offices, supermarkets, and banks.

#### *Use of the second person for reference to the speaker/first person*

In Shona the use of the second person pronoun to refer to oneself is widespread. Example 18 will help to make this clear.

18. **Unodoedzawo kufadza murume asi hapana anokuoona.** Ndaneta tete. Murume wangu anorova.

(You (= 'I') try everything possible to please your (my) husband but he does not notice you (me). I am fed up auntie. My husband is abusive.)

The context captured in this example is that of Ruth, aged 33, narrating her experiences with her abusive husband to her aunt. In this case it is clear that the second person subject concord *u-* (you) and the object concord *ku-* (you) in '... *anokuon*' are actually intended to refer to the speaker herself. At issue in Ruth's utterance is her own experience with her abusive husband. But, by using the second person proforms she assimilates herself to a much wider class of women, downgrading her own experience to incidental status in the discourse, phrasing it as something that could be anybody's (Laberge & Sankoff, 1980: 281). The pragmatic effect of using the second person pronoun to mean the first person in this case is to evoke sympathy and solidarity and to legitimise the speaker's subsequent action or decisions. While the *you* in Example 18 seems to refer to the speaker only, the one used in Example 19 tends to be rather ambiguous. James, aged 29, a graduate high school teacher relates his financial situation to the researcher in an interview:

19. Ndiri *graduate teacher* asika **unoshaya** mari *yerent* chaiyo **iwe** **une** *degree* iroro.  
(I am a graduate teacher yet you (= 'I') can not afford to pay my rentals in spite of the degree.)

Example 19 shows how a speaker may choose to refer to himself in the second person rather than in the first person. The ambiguity referred to above relates to the possibility of the second person in this example to refer to the speaker only or the speaker and others like him, possibly including the addressee. In this case 'you' has been allocated to first and third person as well as the conventional second person. Support for this position has been implicitly noted in the work of Laberge and Sankoff (1980). The use of 'you' in this case is what Laberge and Sankoff and Wilson (1990) call 'situational insertion' (p. 280). 'Situational insertion' argues Wilson, involves 'the conversion of one's own personal experience into experiences which might be, or can be, shared by the addressee' (p.56). This kind of generalisation has the effects of locating the speaker in a potentially repeatable activity or context (Laberge & Sankoff, 1980: 281).

There are also instances where the second person indexes the first person plural. Consider the utterance in example (20) which we recorded from the sentiments of one male member of the Association of University Teachers (AUT) of the University of Zimbabwe to a member of the University Council at a salaries dispute meeting in 2003:

20. It's not like *tinoda kuenda pastrike*. The question is **unoita chii** ne\$400 000,00 *mazuva ano?* **Ukabhadhara** *rent* nokutenga *chikafu*, ko *transport?* **Unopedzesera** *wakweretaka* kuti **uwane** mari *yefees* muna *January!*  
(It's not like we want to strike for the sake of it. The question is what do you (= 'we') buy with Z\$400 000,00 these days? You (we) can only pay rent and buy some groceries and remains with no money for travel expenses. One has no option but to borrow money to pay children's school fees in January!)

Here *u-* is repeated a number of times and in no case does it seem to legitimately refer to the addressee, the second person singular or plural. Instead, because it refers to the speaker as

well as the hearer(s), it seems to mean ‘all of us’. This use of the second person implicitly refers to an indefinite reference.

### *Indefinite second person*

Malone (1997: 69) notes that, ‘When a speaker uses the indefinite second person, he or she generalises about experiences that presumably relate to the whole group’. Let us consider Example 21 (a) and 21(b):

- 21 (a) Kana **uchida** kuchengetedza murume mufadze paura. Muitire zvose zvaanoda. *Zvemawomen’s rights* hazviite mumba.  
(If you (= ‘one’) want to keep your husband, cook good food for him. Do everything to make him happy. Women’s rights are not applicable in the home.)
- (b) **Munhu** kana **uchinoroora** rega kubva **wazviratidza** kuti **uri** shoroma. Ukada kuenda nepajero **unozochema**. Chide vakaziva kuti uri kuUK! Vanotoda kana 5 million chaiyo yerusambo.  
(A person who goes to pay bride-wealth should not make it obvious that he is rich. Once the in-laws see you (= ‘one’) driving a Pajero to their home, they will raise the bride-wealth. Pity you (one) if they discover that you work in the United Kingdom! They might ask for Z\$5 million for *rusambo*.)

A female research assistant recorded Example 21 (a). It forms part of Marian’s, (aged 47), speech to young women attending a baby shower and we recorded Example 21 (b) from an informal discussion on gender issues by male colleagues at a construction site. Although one could say that the *u-* (you) concord Marian uses refers primarily to the bride, it could also index a hypothetical activity open to anyone, that is, how to keep a husband happy in a married relationship. In this case, as in many others, it is fairly clear that the ‘indefinite agent’ serves as a rather transparent guise for the speaker’s own experience and opinions.

As is shown in Example 21 (b), there are many instances where the term *munhu* (person), (equivalence of the English pronoun *one* and French *on*), is used with the indefinite second person. Like the English pronoun *one* and the French pronoun *on*, (Laberge and Sankoff, 1980: 280) the Shona noun *munhu* is often used in Shona speech as a kind of pronoun to generalise, to avoid the problems of simply talking about personal experiences. This seems to be the distancing technique where the speaker does not want to make a personal statement but creates a separate persona and attributes his/her feelings to that persona. This technique results in reference ambiguity and, by so doing, allows assertions of greater generality and in some cases the ‘formulation of morals and truisms’ (Laberge & Sankoff, 1980: 280). This is precisely what Marian does in Example 21 (a) where *munhu* is understood to be the headword of the sentence ‘Kana [*munhu*] *uchida kuchengetedza munrume mufadze paura*’, and the speaker in Example 2 (b) does with *munhu* in his utterance ‘*Munhu kana uchiroora...*’.

Besides foregrounding morals, a lower status speaker can also use the indefinite pronoun to indirectly refer to a co-present referent of a higher social status to avoid embarrassing the referent in public. Similarly, an equal status speaker can use this pronoun to achieve the same effect. We observed the use of a second person pronoun to indirectly refer to a third person



higher status referent, either when the referent is a co-present or in the presence of overhearers who could act as whistle blowers. At a construction site Mako, aged 26, an assistant to the builder indirectly ridicules a plasterer Mupositori, aged 38, for habitually borrowing money from him without paying him back, by treating an equal status colleague, Patrick, aged, 25 as a pseudo addressee:

22. Patrick: **Ndipowoka** mari yesadza Mako.

(Mako, could you please lend me (= 'him') money to buy sadza.)

Mako: Ndini bengi **rako** ini? Kana **uchida** chinja birth certificate rake woti ndini baba vakoka nevana vako vava vazukuru vangu. Kusina mai hakuendwi Patrick.

(Am I your (= 'his') bank? If you want to depend on me so much why don't you have you birth registration changed to reflect me as your father and your children's grandfather. You have to learn to be self-reliant Patrick.)

We discovered that both the first person pronoun *ndi-* (I), that Patrick uses for self-reference, and the second person pronoun *-ko/u-* (you), that Mako uses to refer to Patrick, ostensibly refer to the third person, Mupositori. The non-verbal communication cues from the context made the interpretation of this pronominal shift simple. It became obvious from Mupositori's angry look and the overhearers' gazes and giggles that the speaker's message was meant for Mupositori and not Patrick. The indirect use of the second person singular pronoun to imply the third person in the above discourse provides an insight into the social relationship between the interlocutors. Specifically, it tells us that the interlocutors are friends, who know each other very well or are of equal status.

The discussion in this section has revealed that the second person pronoun has ranges of meanings and reference: it can refer to a single addressee; it can refer to a set of more than one addressee; or it can refer to an abstract category of people that do something or has something done to them.

### ***Third person***

Besides referring to people being talked about, rather than talked to by the speaker and addressee in talk, the third person pronoun performs other pragmatic functions in discourse. Jespersen (1924), Head (1978) and Openg (1997) discuss, in detail, the use of the third person in self-address. Jespersen (1924: 217) notes that writers' use of the third person in self-reference in autobiographies is sometimes considered a form of modesty. It may also be self-effacement to convey the impression of absolute objectivity. This, argues Head (1978), implies greater distance than does the more commonly used first person. Head (*ibid*: 172) further remarks that in a natural conversation, 'use of the third person for self-reference is more likely to occur when the speaker is also addressed in the third person by those with whom he is communicating'. Furthermore, Head points out that while in several other languages the use of both the third person singular and plural is attested (especially in differential situations), in English, the use of the third person in self-reference occurs in the singular.

The data surveyed for this study shows that although the third person singular is more widely used in Shona, both the third person singular and plural are used to index the first person and the second person.

*Third person used to mean first person*

In Shona, the third person enumerative singular pronoun *mumwe* (someone) and/or its subject concord, *a-* (she/he) or the generic honorific plural *ivo* (and/or its subject concord *va-*) (they), may be used to index the first person only in reference. We cite two extracts to help substantiate this claim:

23. Unoswera uchipedzera mari mumahure ako zvako uchikanganwa kuti une **umwe munhu** anoda kudya. Haunyari!  
(You waste all the money on your prostitutes forgetting that there is someone (= 'me') who needs food. You are not even ashamed of yourself!)
24. Tendekai: Baba, baba chimukai munonditengera pfuti yangu.  
Father, father, could you please wake up so that you can go and buy me a (toy) gun.)  
George (baba): Ndazvinzwa Tendi. Chirega kudaro *daddy* **vakaneta**. Tichazoenda *later*.  
(Ok Tendi. Leave daddy (= 'me') alone, he (= 'I') is tired. We will go later.)

Example 23 is an extract from Maud's (aged 35), complaint to her husband for neglecting her and spending all the family savings on other women. In this utterance, Maud refers to herself as *mumwe munhu* (someone). This use of the generic third person to mean first person is also found in Akan (Obeng, 1997) and French (Grevisse, 1964). The generic third person is deliberately used to draw the husband's attention to the fact that he is being selfish by wasting the family resources on other women and has ignored his responsibility of taking care of his wife. Shona cultural norms require a man to take care of his wife [and children] adequately. Neglect, is therefore a breach of the wife's cultural rights. In the above example, then, the speaker expresses self-pity or the fact that she is being deprived of what is her cultural right. The indirect style that the speaker uses is such a common convention that there is no ambiguity as to whom the third person enumerative pronoun refers.

Example 24 features an extract of a conversation between Tendekai, aged 4, and his father George, aged 29, in George's bedroom. George had, earlier on promised to buy Tendekai a toy gun from a local shop. In this context Tendekai enters his father's bedroom in the morning to remind him of his promise by asking him to go and buy the gun. The reply that George gives is not unusual. But, 'it is certainly not explicable by reference to the standard grammatical paradigm' (Malone, 1997: 44). Why would someone refer to him/herself in the third person? According to prescriptive grammarians, people should not use language that way. Hence, only an interactional explanation that focuses on the pronoun's reference to the speaker's identity or status and the rights and obligations that go with it, can offer a plausible answer to the question raised above.

First, when George uses the third person pronoun to refer to himself he implies his institutional role as father, which allows him to claim certain rights. Second, this self-reference becomes a resource for refusing politely to honour the child's request. In Shona

society, as in many other cultures, refusals are not preferred responses to requests, and hence must normally be accompanied by accounts to justify or mitigate the refusal (Heritage, 1984, Mashiri 2003a) as a way of saving face. Here George's refusal to his son's legitimate request not only involves reference to his institutional [kinship] status and its implied rights, and an explanation of why his refusal is being made ('*Daddy vakaneta*'), but may also be seen as a distancing in which a third person, rather than *I*, marks the refusal. The use of the third person pronoun in Example 23 and Example 24 is clear evidence of the 'creative indexical usage' (Silverstein, 1976) of pronouns in Shona.

*Third person used to mean second person*

Our transcripts reveal that the use of the generic third person enumerative pronoun (also referred to as 'quantifier pronouns by Leech and Svartvik, 1975: 163) to indicate the second person is widespread in Shona society. The most common contexts of use are those involving intimates: parent-child, siblings, lovers and friends. The excerpt in (25) involves Panashe, aged 5, misbehaving in the house in the presence of visitors. The mother, Vena, aged 36, repeatedly orders him to stop misbehaving but Tadiwa is unmoved by the order. Finally, Vena issues a threat:

25. Vena: **Mumwe munhu** ane pari kumuvava chete!  
Someone is itching for a beating.  
[Stop misbehaving or I will smack you!]

Vena uses the generic third person enumerative pronoun, *mumwe [munhu]* (someone) to mean *iwe* (you). Given the context that Panashe is the only child (misbehaving) in the house and the Shona socialise their children to behave themselves in the presence of elders or visitors, there is no ambiguity with regard to the referent. Vena uses the generic third person pronoun for two reasons. First, Shona values do not allow a parent or caregiver to openly reprimand or threaten a child in the presence of visitors, lest the threat is interpreted as being indirectly targeted at the visitors. This is so since the Shona, like other African peoples, believe that a FTA may be addressed to a pseudo-epicentre, usually a child, a dog, a cat, or any pet, rather than to the real addressee (Obeng, 1999: 83). Since the referent is only a child, the indirection is prompted not by the relationship between mother and child, but by the mother's relationship with the visitors and the need to protect her public self-image that is 'emotionally invested and cannot be lost, maintained or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction' (Brown and Levinson, 1978: 66).

Second, the use of the third person generic pronoun is for distancing or avoidance. In the context in which it is used, it suggests that Panashe's behaviour is so detestable that he is not worthy to be addressed by name and moreover addressing him by name would give him the undue recognition and attention that he does not deserve.

A similar context was the use of the same pronoun by Tsitsi, aged 25, to discourage her fiancé, Fanuel, aged 27, from drinking in excess at Tsitsi's cousin's wedding ceremony:

26. Tsitsi: Uchiri kunwa here sha?  
(Haven't you had enough dear?)

Fanuel: (Speaking loudly) Handiti muchato here Tsitsi, rega ndimbonwa *a bit more.*)

(This is a happy occasion Tsitsi, let me take some more.)

Tsitsi: **Vamwe vanhu** makuda kuonererwa!

Someone is now trying to show-off

[You are now trying to embarrass me.]

Since Tsitsi and Fanuel are still dating, cultural values do not allow the latter to lose his public image in the presence of Tsitsi's family. Since Fanuel has an avoidance relationship with members of Tsitsi's family, Tsitsi is responsible for controlling his behaviour in this context. The situation is emotionally delicate hence; Tsitsi uses the plural form, *vamwe vanhu* (some others), in this case, to hide Fanuel's identity by avoiding the singular form, *mumwe munhu* (someone) and his name. However, both the addressee and the overhearers are still able to infer who the referent is. Such uses of the generic third person could be said to be fully consummated and sufficient for referent identification (Ashby, 1992).

We observed that the generic third person could also be used in a superior-subordinate relationship. A female secretary, aged 28, checks on her boss, aged 37, who is in the habit of forgetting to charge his cellular phone:

27. I know kuti **mumwe munhu** akanganwa kuchagisa *phone*.

I know that someone has not remembered to charge his phone

[I know that you have not remembered to charge your phone.]

Instead of using the second person honorific plural *imi/ma-* (you), the secretary uses *mumwe munhu* (someone). This pronominal shift enables the speaker to politely ridicule her superior without risking a reprimand.

## DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS

Studies on demonstratives have often been limited to their anaphoric characteristics and functions. Leech and Svartvik's (1975: 58) categorisation of demonstratives as 'pointer words': back pointing (i.e. they can point to something mentioned earlier), forward-pointing (i.e. they can point to something mentioned later) and outward-pointing (i.e. they can point to something in the context outside language) clarifies this point. Referentially, demonstratives are classified into those that identify 'something near the speaker (either physically, in terms of space or time, or psychologically)' and those that 'identifies something not so near the speaker' (Leech & Svartvik, 1975: 58).

The data surveyed for this study show that Shona speakers use demonstratives as reference terms in place of the referents' names. What we found interesting is that only those demonstratives Leech and Svartvik say identify something near the speaker are used, except that in the usages we observed, the issue of physical proximity is insignificant. Primarily speakers use the singular form *uyu* (this), to refer to equal status referents and the plural (honorific) form *ava* (these), to refer to superior referents. Consider examples 28 (a), (b) and (c):

28 (a) Researcher: Muri kurongei nezve *accomodation*?

- (What plans do you have for housing?)  
Tandi: Hapana *but* tine *stand* yatakatenga **ava** vachiri vapenyu.  
Nothing specific, but we own a stand that we bought when this one (= ‘He’) was still alive.)
- (b) Sorry shamwari *I delayed you*. Ndanonotswa ne**ava**.  
(I am sorry friend for delaying you. I was held up by this one (= ‘him’).)
- (c) Tami: Unosvika kumba nguvai ne*Friday*?  
(What time do you get home on Friday?)  
Simon: Ndichaona kuti ndasvika *by 6.30* asi ndichambonopika **uyu**  
*Kucollege*.  
(I will make sure I am home by 6.30, although I have to pick this one (= ‘she’) first from college.)

Example 28(a) is an excerpt of an interview that the researcher had with Tandi, aged 29, a family friend, about her housing plans since the death of her husband, (b) was uttered by a woman, aged approximately 25, to a friend who waited for outside their house and Example 28(c) is part of a conversation the researcher’s former students, Tami, aged 26, and Simon, aged 26, had at a bus terminus. We noted from these examples and many others that the speaker only uses the demonstrative for a referent known by both the speaker and the addressee and that the demonstrative is meant to hide the identity of the referent. Tandi’s use of *ava* (this) to refer to her deceased husband also seemed to have a distancing and/or avoidance effect. The tone of the voice and the facial expression of the woman cited in 28(b) show that she used *ava* (*these*) to denigrate and scorn her husband.

In an interview, Esther Chivero, a fellow linguist at the University of Zimbabwe, noted that ‘When this demonstrative is used between husband and wife it normally shows a negative attitude towards the referent. Either the husband is being referred to as such because he is authoritative and demands respect or there is no intimacy between them that warrants use of the other’s first name’. Esther’s explanation reveals that the use of the honorific plural *ava* either connotes genuine respect or scorn. The demonstrative *uyu* (this) that Simon uses in 28(c) is commonly used by intimates, although our data show that students and junior workers also use it to derogatorily refer to a teacher or superior. The underlying factor in all these usages is that the interlocutors are intimates/friends or acquaintances who share sufficient knowledge to disambiguate the referents of the demonstrative. The creative use of demonstrative in interaction enables interlocutors to engage in private conversations in public places.

There are cases where interlocutors may use commentary demonstratives such as *iri* (class 5), *ichi* (class 7), *idzi* (class 10) and *aka* (class 12) [this +NEGATIVE]. We noted that *idzi* is also used to refer to a person whom the speaker or both the speaker and the addressee view positively, or specifically, admire or empathise with. It is clear from the data that speakers of all sexes, ages and social classes only use any of these demonstratives when speaking to an intimate about a referent they both know and view the same. Depending on the conversational context, these commentary demonstratives are preferable because, to some extent, avoid face threat. In fact, the commentary demonstratives seem to be more ambiguous and anonymous than the ordinary ones, hence are more effective pragmatic devices.

## CONCLUSION

In this article we have discussed the pragmatic significance of chiShona pronouns focussing specifically on the different personal pronouns, enumerative pronouns and demonstrative pronouns and illustrated how in some communicative contexts, specific pronouns are used to mark different persons. We addressed the general problem with the grammatical paradigms, the question of pronouns as linguistic signs, that is, entities in which constant form is paired with constant meaning. The case of the componential treatment of pronouns by structuralist linguists illustrates the problems in identifying tokens of the same form. The problem is considerably more difficult with meaning, where 'the establishment of de-contextualised 'literal' meanings of pronouns run into problems for the very reason that the meaning of pronouns is text- and context-derived' (Muhlhausler & Harre, 1990: 58). Hence, we have illustrated with numerous data, that the same pronoun form express a number of different meanings since meaning is situated in a particular context. As Malone (1997: 75) noted, pronouns are 'irredeemably interactional markers and their use is ruled by interactional rules primarily and grammatical rules only secondarily'.

Besides the first person reference, the first person pronouns (singular and plural) and or their agreement concords can be used to index a second or third person reference form. Such pronoun shifts function in various communicative categories; for example, stressing authority, asserting and maintaining power, caricaturing, creating alignment, solidarity, showing commitment and compassion. Based on our data, therefore, pronoun switches involving the first person also help express what is otherwise unspeakable. This function of the pronoun switch, says Obeng (1997: 218), has implications for psycholinguistics. It reveals that fact that, 'through pronoun switches, [interlocutors] can communicate their emotional state through a form of indirectness that is transparent enough for an addressee to understand but strong enough to prevent direct confrontation'.

When the second person pronoun is used to index the first person it connotes a wide range of meanings. In Example 19 and Example 20, for instance, the second person indicates solidarity and shared experience, whereas in Example 18 it refers to a hypothetical activity and has a generalising effect.

The third person, apart from its ordinary usage, may be used indirectly to mean either the first or second person, especially when warning or threatening someone, hide the address's identity or communicating a face-threatening act. We have also discussed the use of the demonstrative pronouns in place of personal names with a distancing/avoidance effect. Sometimes demonstrative pronouns are used to hide the identity of the referent in primate discourse or to denigrate the referent. Throughout, we stressed the relevance and interplay of linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic factors in determining the various uses of pronouns.

From the discussion presented in this article, it is clear that the knowledge of grammatical rules is not adequate for a proper understanding of pronoun usage. The discourses discussed in this study reveal that with respect to pronoun usage, we could argue that rules of social behaviour take precedence over rules of grammar.

In conclusion, following Hymes (1962), Lyons (1982: 58) notes that natural languages are primarily designed for use in face-to-face interaction hence; any analysis of natural language should take the speech event or context of the utterance into account. We therefore

hypothesise that the choice of a pronoun depends on a speaker and the relationship between the speaker and the addressee or the referent, as well as the context of interaction. This discussion does not necessarily advocate the subordination of the morphosyntactic characteristics of Shona pronouns (or those of any other language) to their functional features. As Obeng (1997: 219) reminds us, an integration of the pragmatic, morphosyntactic, and discourse or social connotations of these pronouns will yield a considerable understanding of the behaviour of pronouns in a language.

## END NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Pronominal substitution is one of several and varied 'off-record' linguistic politeness strategies (Pan, 1995: 465) that are used in different cultures to save face. Brown and Levinson (1978) and Goffman (1987) employ the notion of face to refer to 'the public self-image that people want to claim for themselves' (Chen, 1991: 113) in interaction. Face is something that must be constantly attended to in social interaction, since it can be lost, maintained, or enhanced. Details of what face involves are not given in this study. However, being 'off-record' in the case of the utterance in Example 2 implies that the speaker used pronouns stylistically to avoid embarrassing or hurting the referent. The ambiguity or implicitness created by this strategy provides a high disclaimer of performance. When words attract a high disclaimer of performance it means that a speaker can use them with immunity or impunity in potentially threatening situations such as the one involving someone living with HIV AIDS.

<sup>2</sup> This concept is attributable especially to Speech Act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) and is relevant here because of our emphasis on the intentional nature of a communicative activity. Trudgill (2003: 125) defines an illocutionary force of a speech act as 'the effect, which a speech act is intended to have by the speaker'.

<sup>3</sup> When we examine the ways in which different speech acts are realised in actual everyday speech, and when we compare these behaviours in terms of the social relationships of the interlocutors, we find again and again that the two extremes of social distance – minimum and maximum – seem to class forth very similar behaviour, while relationships which are more toward the centre show marked difference' (Wolfson, 1988: 32).

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