

Non-referential Third Person Pronouns in Adverbial Phrases in Eastern and Central Arrernte

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1. Introduction

In the Eastern and Central dialects of Arrernte (ECA) in Central Australia, the third person singular pronoun can, in addition to its standard pronominal reference, optionally appear in adverbial phrases of the type illustrated in (1). In these constructions, the pronoun has a non-referential function, as a marker of emphasis.

- (1)¹ *Arrantherre [akwetethe anthurre renhe] ayenge apurrkele-antheme*
 2pl:ERG always INTENS 3s:ACC 1s:ACC make.tired+PRES
 You (pl) always get on my nerves! (lit. make me tired)

This construction is not particularly common overall, though there is considerable variation in frequency between the individual speakers from whom it has been recorded. The pronoun also occurs with non-referential function in some other constructions but I have less information on these.

This paper discusses three aspects of these Emphatic Adverbial Phrases:

- (i) While the presence of the pronoun in the adverbial phrases might suggest that these phrases are NPs, not all of the adverbials in question have other more clearly nominal functions. Emphatic Adverbial Phrases are analysed here as determiner phrases. There is a structural parallel with Definite Phrases, in which a 3rd person pronoun functions as a definite determiner.

¹Abbreviations used in this paper: ERG=Ergative, ACC=Acusative, NOM=Nominative, DAT=Dative, PRES=Present, PST=Past, PURP=Purposive, REFL=Reflexive, INCH=Inchoative, INTENS=Intensifier. In pronouns, numeral indicates person; s=singular, PL=Plural. '+' = stem-affix boundary, '=' = host-clitic boundary. Hyphens in orthographic forms represent boundaries between host and certain clitics, and boundaries between compound verb elements.

- (ii) The case of the pronoun in these phrases agrees with intransitive subject (S_i) argument or transitive object (O) arguments, in contrast to other Australian languages where similar adverbial nominals agree with the S_i or transitive subject (A) arguments.
- (iii) The non-referential meaning of the pronoun.

2. Core case-marking in ECA

Core case-marking for 3rd person pronouns and full nominals is as in (2), ignoring some dialectal complications. For pronouns, singular, dual and plural number are distinguished for all person categories. As with most of the other person-number combinations, the 3rd person Nominative and Ergative forms are syncretised (or alternatively put, the 3rd person pronouns operate in a ‘nominative-accusative’ opposition). I follow here the general principles of case analysis espoused by Goddard (1982) in assuming a single case system for all classes of nominals with regular neutralisations of case-marking in specific subclasses.

(2) ECA Core case-marking

	Nominative	Ergative	Accusative	Dative
Non-pronominals	∅	=el(e) ²	∅	=ek(e)
3rd person pronouns				
singular	re	renhe	renhenhe	ikwere
dual	re-atherre	renhe-atherre	re-atherrenhe	ikwere-atherre
plural	itne	itnenhe	itnenhenhe	itneke
	re-areye	renhe-areye		ikwere-areye

² In the standard ECA orthography, all words are written with final ‘e’ representing a non-contrastive typically central vowel which can occur in that position. Suffixes are written with final ‘e’ when in word-final position.

For the dual and plural pronouns there are also additional sets of forms which distinguish kin categories. These are not involved in the phenomena discussed here.

3. Phrasal status

The structure of the type of adverbial phrase under consideration here (1) is relatively simple. A single adverbial, often but not necessarily occurring with the intensifier *anthurre*, is followed by the 3rd person pronoun in final position (though certain clitics may attach to the pronoun).

The evidence that these elements form a phrase is clear. Within the relative freedom in major constituent order at the clause level, the entire sequence of adverbial and 3rd person pronoun can appear in various positions in a clause (cf. (1) and (3)). But of course this is not a good test of phrasal status because the same freedom of order at the clausal level would be expected to allow two separate constituents to appear consecutively in different positions. What demonstrates the phrasal status of the larger adverbial phrase is that the 3rd person pronoun cannot be separated from the adverbial elements without changing the meaning, or at least the emphasis. (The 3rd person pronoun can also combine with certain other clausal elements). It is also not possible to invert the order of the 3rd person pronoun and the adverbial (4). Finally, the entire phrase occurs within a single intonational extent with no evidence of a pause. The pronoun may bear emphatic stress.

- (3) *Akwetethe anthurre renhe arrantherre ayenge apurrkele-antheme*
always INTENS 3S:ACC 2pl:ERG 1S:ACC make.tired+PRES
You (plural) **always** get on my nerves!

- (4) **Renhe akwetethe anthurre arrantherre ayenge apurrkele-antheme*
3S:ACC always INTENS 2pl:ERG 1S:ACC make.tired+PRES

Wilkins (1989) recognises an internally heterogeneous adverb class which is distinct from

the nominal class, though as he recognises, the distinction is not without problems. Most spatial and temporal adverbs can bear locative case-markers and according to Wilkins (1989: 303) have ‘dual categorisation in both the nominal and the adverb class’. The set of adverbial elements that have been recorded in Emphatic Adverbial Phrases (5) does not include all of the items that Wilkins (1989) categorises as adverbs, and does not correspond to any of the adverb subclasses he proposes.

(5)	<i>alakenhe</i>	‘like this, in this manner’
	<i>arrule</i>	‘long ago, for a long time’
	<i>akwetethe</i>	‘always’
	<i>akwete</i>	‘still, for a while’
	<i>uye/uyarne</i>	‘in vain, unable to’
	<i>iparrpe</i>	‘quickly’
	<i>ware-ware</i>	‘hurriedly’
	<i>arnterre/irnterre</i>	‘intensely’

At least four of these have other clearly nominal functions and can be added to the list of adverbs with dual categorisation as nominals: the manner adverb *alakenhe* ‘thus’, the temporal adverb *akwetethe* ‘always’ and two of the three aspectual adverbs, *awethe* ‘again, more’ and *akwete* ‘still’, can bear a limited range of case-markers. The first three just mentioned can also occur as modifiers within NPs (6). *Alakenhe*, *akwetethe* and *akwete* can also occur in verbless ascriptive clauses while the remainder in (5) have the prototypical adverb property that they can only occur in clauses with verbal predicates.

(6)	<i>[mantere alakenheke]</i>	<i>irrpeme</i>
	clothes like.that=DAT	wear+PRES
	wearing clothes like that/those	

The expression of adverbial meaning, including manner, by nominals is common in Australian languages. Such nominal phrases are independent of the arguments of the clause but bear case in agreement with one of them, as demonstrated in the following example from Yankunytjatjara where, as in Arrernte, only the final element of NPs bears case-marking.

- (7) *Watingku walangku katinyi*
man+ERG quickly+ERG take+PRES
The man is bringing it quickly. (Goddard 1985: 29)

However some of the adverbials that occur in ECA Emphatic Adverbial Phrases, for example *uye/uyarne* ‘in vain’, do not have more clearly nominal functions: they do not bear case-marking and can only occur in verbal clauses. They are therefore analysed as adverbs rather than nominals here.

The fact that the case of the pronoun varies according to the transitivity of the clause—Accusative in transitive clauses (1) and Nominative in intransitive clauses (8)—strongly suggests that the pronominal emphatics are not merely emphatic forms homophonous with pronouns (though presumably derived historically from them). They bear core cases at the clause level, parallel to S_i and O arguments. Like final elements in NPs, they bear case for the entire phrase. Cf. (6). However, they do not agree in number with S_i or O arguments: only singular 3rd person forms occur.

- (8) *Ayenge intetyeke iwelheke, uye anthurre re imernte*
1s:NOM lie+PURP throw+REFL+PST in.vain INTENS 3s:NOM then
ankwe-irremele
sleep+INCH+PRES+SAME.SUBJECT
I lay myself down, (but) then I couldn’t get to sleep.

In summary, (i) at least some of the adverbials in question are adverbs rather than nominals, (ii) the emphatic marker is the 3rd person pronoun (or at least the same element that has that function), and (iii) the case of the pronoun marks a clause-level relationship. While the adverb is clearly the semantic head of the phrase, the overall phrase can be analysed as a type of determiner phrase.³

ECA Emphatic Adverbial Phrases have a structural parallel with Definite Phrases, in which

³ John Payne (p.c.) points out that English clauses like ‘*Who runs the quickest?*’ arguably contain an adverbial phrase consisting of a determiner and an adverb.

a 3rd person pronoun occurs with what are clearly nominals. The pronoun is again in final position in the phrase, but in this case it specifies number in addition to bearing case for the entire phrase (9). The pronoun has what Wilkins (1989: 129) has described as a ‘definitising’ function, by which the speaker informs the addressee that ‘the referent of the phrase is a specific entity (or group of entities) which the speaker assumes the addressee can identify’ from the context. It is commonly anaphoric (9). It therefore has a similar function to the English determiner *the*, though unlike the English determiner the ECA Definite pronouns can occur with demonstratives and proper names.

- (9) *Arrule akwele aneke artwe uthene ampe urreye uthene.*
long.ago supposedly be+PST man:NOM and child boy:NOM and
Long ago there was a man and a boy.

[Artwe re] akwele [ampe urreye renhe] arntarnte-aretyarte.
man 3S:ERG supposedly child boy 3S:ACC look.after+PAST.HABITUAL
The man used to look after the boy.

The phrasal status of ECA Definite phrases is also clear: the nominals and pronoun constitute a single phrase on the same grounds given for Emphatic Adverbial Phrases, namely contiguity and fixed order. There is no evidence that either the pronoun or preceding nominals are appositional or external to the clause proper. Similar structures involving 3rd person pronouns (or their nearest equivalents) occur in some other Australian languages, for example Yankunytjatjara (Goddard 1985) and Diyari (Austin 1981).

A possible, but untenable, alternative to the Emphatic Adverbial NP analysis is that the pronoun and adverbial do not form a phrasal constituent and that these sentences are a kind of cleft in which the adverbial nominal and 3rd person pronoun occur in a verbless clause, corresponding to something like ‘*It (is) always (that) you are getting on my nerves.*’ This is not synchronically valid since unlike the major constituents of real verbless clauses, the order of the pronoun and the adverbial nominal is not free, and the copular *aneme* ‘to be’ cannot, to my knowledge, optionally occur.

4. Agreement

As already indicated, the case of the 3rd person pronoun in Emphatic Adverbial Phrases depends on the transitivity of the clause: Accusative in transitive clauses and Nominative in intransitive ones, regardless of whether an intransitive verb takes a Dative case-marked argument in addition to the S_i argument. Following a common tradition, we can say that the case of the 3rd person pronoun *agrees* with either the intransitive subject or transitive object arguments (even where these arguments are not overtly expressed). This pattern of case-marking has not, to my knowledge, been reported for similar adverbials in other Australian languages.

It is common for Australian languages to permit secondary predications, that is, NPs that bear case-marking in agreement with an argument of the clause and which add an extra predication on that NP. Dench and Evans (1988: 15) distinguish ‘adverbial’ and ‘ascriptive’ secondary predications on the basis that ‘adverbial secondary predicates cannot be extracted as simple predications on the NP with which they agree’. With *ascriptive* secondary predicates there is some variation among languages as to which arguments they permit secondary predication on, but it commonly includes S_i and in some languages O, as (10) from Martuthunira demonstrates. ECA permits *ascriptive* secondary predication on S_i (*akutne* in (11)), O (*akwerrke* in (12)), A (*akutnele* in (13)) and at least some Dative-marked NPs.

- (10) *nhulaa miyu wajupii mungkarnuru wankaal*
cat that grasshopper+ACC eat+PRES alive+ACC+THEN
That cat eats grasshoppers alive. (Dench and Evans 1988: 15)

- (11) *Ampe yanhe akutne apure-irreme*
child that:NOM not.knowing:NOM shamed-INCHOATIVE+PRES
Not knowing (that), she was ashamed.

- (12) *Merne alangkwe nhenhe renhe akwerrke arlkweme*
food bush.banana this 3S:ACC young/small:ACC eat+PRES
The bush banana is eaten (raw) when young.

- (13) *P-le akutnele arletye anyente akeke*
P=ERG not.knowing=ERG unripe one:ACC cut+PAST
P. unwittingly picked an unripe one.

With regard to *adverbial* secondary predications, the common pattern in Australian languages is for agreement, optional or obligatory, with A in transitive clauses and S_i in intransitive clauses. Compare the Yankunytjatjara examples in (7) and (14). One effect of this, and indeed of S_i/O adverbial agreement in ECA, is that it gives an additional indication of the transitivity of the verb.

- (14) *Wati wala yananyi*
man:NOM quickly:NOM go+PRES
The man is going along quickly. (Goddard 1985: 29)

ECA also has a form of adverbial marking that probably derives historically from A/S_i agreement in secondary predicates. According to Wilkins (1989: 323), a suffix homophonous with the Ergative and Locative/Instrumental suffixes, *-el(e)*, optionally occurs on items that he characterises as manner, aspectual and degree of achievement adverbs. This includes all of the adverbials which have been recorded in Emphatic Adverbial Phrases (5). The suffix does not introduce an ‘easily discernible semantic difference’ (Wilkins 1989: 323). It also attaches to certain nominals to derive an adverb. Most importantly, it can occur regardless of whether the clause is transitive or intransitive and therefore does not appear to constitute case agreement with a core argument of the clause since Ergative case-marked A arguments do not occur in intransitive clauses, whether the intransitive verb is derived or not.

There is one systematic exception to the principle that the pronoun emphatic is in Nominative case in an intransitive clause. In clauses which are intransitive by virtue of having a derived reciprocal or reflexive detransitivised verb, the pronoun emphatics have been recorded in both Nominative or Accusative case (though I have insufficient information at this stage as to exactly what conditions the choice). Compare (15) and (16). This variation is presumably attributable to the underlying transitivity of the root versus the verb’s surface intransitivity.

Laughren (1992) has proposed that the potential for Instrumental case-marked NPs to occur with reflexivised verbs in Arrernte (where they are not generally possible with other intransitive verbs) reflects the underlying transitivity of reflexivised verbs in a similar way.

- (15) *Anwerne irnterre anthurre re ilkakelheke mane ikwere*
1pl:NOM intensely INTENS 3s:NOM UNCOVER+REFL+PST money 3s:DAT
We searched hard for the money.

- (16) *Ampe akweke yanhe akwetethe anthurre renhe ingke ntewelheme*
child small that:NOM always INTENS 3s+ACC foot:NOM/ACC dash+REFL+PRES
That child is always stomping his feet.

What explanation can be offered for the ECA S_i/O agreement? An obvious explanation of the more common Australian pattern of A/S_i agreement lies in the idea that manner and related adverbials typically represent aspects of the situation which are attributable to the subject referent, if not actually under their control. Regardless of whether this is justifiable for other languages, it does not seem transferrable to the S_i/O agreement in ECA since that would require that manner adverbials like *arnterre* ‘intensely’ and temporal adverbials like *arrule* ‘long ago’ should represent aspects which are attributable to referents of the O argument with transitive predicates and to referents of the S_i argument with intransitives. It is not obvious why a manner adverbial should have a closer connection to the O argument than to A. In the available data, Emphatic Adverbial Phrases do not appear to have any consistent semantic relationship to the arguments with which they agree in case. Similarly, there do not seem to be any obvious relationships with the semantics of the verbs they co-occur with. A structural account might attribute the difference between the more common adverbial agreement with A/S_i and the S_i/O agreement of ECA Emphatic Adverbial Phrases to differential positions in underlying structure, but this will not be pursued further here.

A plausible historical explanation is that adverbial S_i/O agreement arose by analogy with the lack of marking on full nominals in S_i and O functions. The adverbials in (5) are much more likely to occur on their own in a clause (or with the intensifier *anthurre*) than in

Emphatic Adverbial Phrases. In both transitive (17) and intransitive (18) clauses, such adverbials are unmarked and therefore appear to be morphosyntactically inert.

(17) *Tharle renhe uye alhengke-arerne*
1s:ERG=FOC 3s+ACC unable recognise+RECENT.PAST
I didn't recognise her just now.

(18) *Akunye uye anteme aheye-angkeme*
poor.thing.NOM unable now breathe+PRES
The poor thing can't breathe now.

Compare this with ascriptive secondary predications on S_i , *akutne* in (11) for example, and on O, *akwerrke* in (12). As (2) above shows, Accusative and Nominative cases for full nominals are both unmarked. It is the contrast with secondary predications on A, for example *akutnele* in (13), which reveals that the unmarked forms of secondary predications on S_i and O result from case agreement. For adverbials such as *uye* in (17) and (18), on the other hand, there is no contrasting Ergative marking in agreement with an A argument. In fact, *uye* never occurs with any overt case suffixes. That *uye* is unmarked in both transitive and intransitive clauses (17-18) is therefore attributed to morphosyntactic inertness rather than case agreement. However, suppose that the lack of marking on *uye* and similar adverbials in transitive and intransitive clauses like (17) and (18) came to be equated at some earlier time with the lack of marking on full nominals in S_i and O function, and on secondary predications on those arguments. The adverbials would then be interpreted as being in the unmarked Nominative case in intransitive clauses and the unmarked Accusative case in transitive clauses. Extending this case assignment to the functionally equivalent Emphatic Adverbial Phrases would result in the pattern of case-marking that currently occurs.

A possible alternative involves a roughly reverse process: the pattern of case-marking in Emphatic Adverbial Phrases developed through re-interpretation of the function of Definite Phrases containing one of the lexical items with both nominal and adverbial functions. Perhaps the clearest example would be the deictic *alakenhe* 'thus'. The phrase *alakenhe*

renhe, as in (19), might originally have been interpretable only with *alakenhe* in its nominal function, as an O argument referring back to a previously mentioned action or event (and this is how Wilkins (1989: 123) interprets it synchronically). If this were re-interpreted as a deictic *adverbial* sense of *alakenhe*, meaning ‘in that manner’, the Accusative case associated with the O argument would be transferred to the adverbial phrase. This is plausible in part because ECA freely permits ellipsis of argument NPs. The resulting adverbial phrase structure would then have had to be generalised to adverbials such as *uye* which do not have nominal function. This alternative is less attractive because, out of the adverbials in (5), only *alakenhe* and *awethe* can occur as the sole lexical item in an argument NP.

- (19) *Alakenhe renhe itne mpwaretyarte.*
thus 3s:ACC 3pl:ERG make/do+PAST.HABITUAL
That’s what they used to do. [i.e. They used to do those events just described.]
(Wilkins 1989: 123)

5. Pronoun as non-referential emphatic

The description of the meaning of the pronoun as emphatic here is possibly over-general, and with further work it may be possible to provide a narrower characterisation of its discourse function. Non-referential function of pronouns (or historical development from pronouns) appears to be unusual cross-linguistically but is not unknown.⁴ Laitinen (in press) argues that logophoric 3rd person singular pronouns in Finnish and Saami have developed a function as discourse enclitics. In Saami, it occurs in ‘questions expressing speculation, reflection or wonder’, while in Finnish it also occurs in other sentence types where its meaning is less easy to characterise: ‘reminder of a familiar fact’ or ‘an event contrary to expectations’.

It is not surprising that the 3rd person pronoun in ECA should have the determiner

⁴ A reviewer points out that it is important to distinguish non-referential pronouns of the type discussed in this paper from the personal verb markers in polysynthetic languages which may constitute arguments of the clause (or at least part of the argument specification) but which do not of themselves constitute referring expressions. See Evans (1999).

function it has in Definite NPs as well as standard pronominal reference, given the close synchronic and historical relationships between 3rd person pronouns, demonstratives and articles both within and across languages. It is well recognised that they have closely related functions, and that the distinctions are not universal - for example, some languages have no third person pronouns distinct from demonstratives (Anderson and Keenan 1985). There is also evidence of historical development from demonstrative to pronoun or article (Hopper and Traugott 1993).⁵

Assuming that the cross-linguistic infrequency of pronouns with both referential and non-referential functions suggests that the referential function probably precedes the non-referential function historically, there are a number of possible accounts of the development of the non-referential function in ECA.

The most attractive account involves a simple semantic extension from the definitising function. This directs the addressee's attention to a particular aspect of the physical or linguistic context as part of the *propositional* content, while the emphatic function correspondingly directs the addressee's attention to a particular aspect of the linguistic context as part of the *expressive* content or *informational* structure: 'give particular attention to this phrase'.

Another plausible account is that the pronoun lost referentiality as part of the re-interpretation of the function of Definite Phrases discussed in the previous section. A lexical item with both nominal and adverbial functions initially occurs in a determiner phrase only as an argument of the clause. When this is then re-interpreted as an adverbial phrase, the pronoun can no longer be referential. Cf. (19).

⁵ This however does not lead us to analyse the 3rd person forms in ECA as belonging to the class of demonstratives. The differences between the 3rd person pronoun and the true demonstratives include the fact that the core case-marking pattern of demonstratives is the same as for other full nominals and different from that of pronouns. Cf. (2) above.

Three further possibilities stand out but all are less plausible because they rely on unattested intermediate stages. In these the non-referential function develops from:

- (i) the determiner function: ‘the referent of the phrase is a specific entity (or group of entities) which the speaker assumes the addressee can identify’ (Wilkins 1989: 129). This could be extended to adverbial NPs as something like ‘as you know’ or ‘obviously’.
- (ii) an otherwise unattested, but plausible, deictic function of the pronoun, something like ‘to that degree’ or ‘like that’. This would be similar to the situation in which the demonstrative in some informal English has developed a function as an adverb intensifier, as in ‘*I never work that hard.*’ (= *I never work particularly hard.*), from an originally deictic modifier.
- (iii) a cleft construction of the type described earlier.

None of these three are apparent in current ECA grammar or in speakers’ accounts of the meaning and could therefore only be unattested intermediate stages.

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