

A CONTRASTIVE STUDY OF ENGLISH AND IZHIA DEMONSTRATIVES

Chibueze Egbe Aleke

Department of English, University of Uyo, Uyo

Email: alekeegbechibueze@gmail.com



ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the syntactic relation between the Izhia demonstratives and that of the English language, and examines how the demonstratives in both languages can enter into relationship with the nouns to form a determiner phrase. The study uses the Contrastive analysis and the Determiner phrase Hypotheses as effective tools as well as the analytic method for identifying, predicting and generalizing syntactic structural similarities and dissimilarities, which may pose difficulties in second language learning or ease second language learning. Data used in this study were obtained through oral interviews. Demonstratives in the two languages include; this, that, these and those from the English perspective and *ye, yehu, ndu ye and ndu yehu* from the Izhia perspective. The findings reveal that Demonstratives in both languages are functionally similar but structurally dissimilar, as the English demonstratives occur only in pre-position in their DP structures while in Izhia the reverse is the case as the demonstratives can appear in both pre-and post-positions in their DPs, and such is acceptable and grammatical in the language. On this premise, it is realized that the knowledge of the dissimilarities in the structures of the L1 and the L2 can enhance proficiency and good performance in the teaching and learning of English language as a second language. The study therefore recommends that there is need to design a teaching hypothesis or mechanism that will draw the attention of the L2 learners to the differences in the structure of both languages to enable them achieve international intelligibility.

Keywords: Contrastive, Study, English, Izhia, Demonstratives



Introduction

Language is often said to be a means of communication between individuals who share a common code. The code that individuals share are in the form of symbols. These symbols can be oral (sounds) or written (letter). The discipline that studies human language is known as linguistics. There are four different levels which language is organized. They include phonology (which studies the sounds of a language), morphology (which studies the internal structure of words), syntax (which studies sentence structure) and semantics (which studies the meaning of words and sentences' (Ndimele, 2003, p1). Ndimele (2003), explains that the major task of a linguist analyzing a language is to work out, in separate stages, first the way the native speakers pronounce the sounds of

their language, then how the different sounds are combined into meaningful morphemes or words, then, how the different words are woven together to produce longer stretches of utterance such as phrases and sentences, and finally the meaning of an individual words and how they interact to produce the meaning of phrases and sentences.

Determiners is a syntactic unit and the head of nominal phrases. In earlier versions like Phrase Structure Grammar, Transformational Grammar and Government and Binding Theory, the determiner was only regarded as the modifier of a head noun and was not considered that it can enter into a relationship with the noun to form a determiner phrase. Consequently, all determiners which occur before the noun were regarded as

pre-modifier of the NP while the noun was regarded as head of the noun. However, the DP hypothesis was formally introduced in the MIT doctoral thesis of Stephen Abney (1987). Now within the framework of minimalist syntax, this hypothesis has become the standard for syntactic analysis.

English in Nigeria

English language may be described as one of the fastest growing languages in the world. This is because the language has continued to expand its frontiers as Crystal (2003) makes us to know, that it is fast becoming a global language. Udofot (2007) attributes the spread of English language to colonialism of many countries by Britain and the foundation of the American colonies in the 17th century.

The introduction of the English language in Nigeria can be traced to the early British traders and missionaries who first visited the West African coast. Before the advent of English, the Portuguese were the first to trade along the West African coast as early as the 15th century. In the 16th century, the coming of the British brought a replacement of the Portuguese established pidgin with the English language. Several studies have established the fact that English language has become the language of trade, government, politics, administration, and mass media, among others in Nigeria.

Nigeria, like other countries in Africa, has many indigenous languages and like many African countries, Nigeria has adopted the English language as a second language. The language has gained the status of an official language in the country. Nigerian national policy on education has established the use of more than one language in educational instruction. Thus, it advocates the learning of English and at least one Nigerian language at the primary school level. At which level, the learners are incapable of mastering enough of the English language and express the language poorly, especially in writing. In the words of Emenanjo (1978, p112), 'the language should be taught early enough in our school system to allow for effective understanding and performance by the learners'. It is a fact that problems generally

occur when two or more languages are brought into contact and it is particularly the case with language learning in which two languages are involved. A typical example is English and Izhia.

Over the years, instructors and examiners have continued to express serious concern over the poor performance of students in English language. Examples are the West African Examination Council (WAEC) and the National Examination Council (NECO). Every natural language differs from each other in their semantics, syntax, phonology and morphology. It is on this stand point that.... structures Languages are different and as a result, the... second language learner may be confronted with some challenges in the process of learning the target language hence the need for a contrastive analysis. This study hopes to serve as a medium for the contrastive work on the area of the determiner phrases in English and Izhia focusing on the demonstratives in both languages.

Linguists like Emenanjo (1978), Oluikpe (1981), Oghalu (1982), Obiamalu (2010), among others, observe that the elements of DP vary from language to language. However, this study investigates an aspect of sentence structure in Izhia language in contrast to the English language. The aspect of the sentence structure considered in this study is the demonstratives, how they can go into relationship with nouns to form determiner phrases and how it functions in both languages so that the second language learner do not transfer the structure of his L1 into the target language.

Review of Relevant Literature

In linguistics, a determiner phrase (DP) is a type of phrase posited by some theories of syntax. Determination itself is a concept employed in linguistic studies to explain the kind of referent a noun phrase has. According to Crystal (2003), determiners exhibit a sensitivity of structuring the real world entities that speakers and hearers exploit when making their references unambiguous to one another.

Scholars, particularly in the field of syntax, have made several contributions to the area. Crystal (2008) says that a phrase is a single element of

structure typically containing more than one word which often leaves the subject-predicate structure typically of clauses. Smith (1969) notes that the determiner is the head that projects into a determiner phrase (DP). It identifies the DP-hypothesis as strictly a noun phrase (NP), since NP is a constituent of DP assumed to be a complement determiner. The determiner is a part of the larger umbrella of modifiers.

There are different types of comparisons in language studies, which according to Enang (2017) focus attention principally on distinctions made between the widely spoken forms of a language, otherwise called "the standard form" and its dialect versions otherwise called "the varieties". Contrastive studies thus, portray similarities and dissimilarities between different languages and consequently equip language teachers with the facts they can use in language teaching. As a result, Udoka (2006) says that it would be proper to proceed from what is common to the two languages to what is different in them as far as the result of the comparison is dependable.

Udoka (2006, p28), comparing the Anang and English phonotactics discovered that "some consonant clusters in the two languages occur in complementary distribution while some do not. This definitely accounts for the poor performance by some Anang users of English speech sounds. Eka (1979) carried out a research based on a contrastive comparison of the segmental and non-segmental features in Efik and English. The researcher's findings revealed that 'the nature of Efik sound system exercises considerable influence on the acquisition and use of the English and sound system by the Efik speaker/users of English' (p136). Similarly, Hudson (1984) asserts that determiner should be regarded as head of NP which then would be called DP from determiner.

Aleke (2019) in a Contrastive Study of English and Igbo determiner phrases posits that English and Igbo determiners are functionally similar but structurally dissimilar in their DP system, and that Igbo language does not have the articles like the English language. The author concludes that dissimilarities as well as the absence of some determiners in the Igbo language are what pose

difficulties to most Igbo English bilinguals as they, in some cases, transfer the structure of Igbo into the English language, thereby producing ungrammatical constructions in English; hence the need for this study.

Research Methodology

This study targets Izhia-English bilinguals. Data for this study were gathered through oral interview. An interview that lasted for an hour, in three different sections, within two days interval. To achieve the aim of this study analytic method was adopted. The study was analyzed in three phases; the English phase, the Izhia phase and the comparative phase. The study also translated DPs with demonstrative determiners in the two languages- English and Izhia and consciously examined the different demonstratives in both languages and their processes of entering into a relationship with nouns to form determiner phrases.

Determiner Phrases in English and Izhia

Determiners are important elements in language studies. Nweze (2014) posits that determiners remains the indicator of given new information in many languages and needs to be accounted for. Similarly, Crystal (1997) and Berk (1999) observe that determiner is a grammatical category which includes number or rather different kinds of words that always precede a noun and an adjective. Mbah (2011, p211) observes that 'a noun cannot project into a phrase whose nucleus is a verb or a preposition'. 'A determiner is a word which signals the presence of a noun' (Ndimele 2003, p102).

According to this source, the determiner is a cover terms for articles (e.g. a, an, the), demonstratives (e.g. this, that, these, those), possessives (e.g. my, our, their, his, your), quantifiers (e.g. some, every, any, much, few, a few, several) and numerals (e.g. one, two, three, first, second, third). A determiner projects into a determiner phrase by entering into a relationship with a noun. By so doing, the determiner becomes the head while the noun serves as the complement.

Uzoigwe (2011), notes that languages could have the pre-modifier where the modifier is placed

before the head and a post-modifier where the modifier is after the head. According to the author, the English language is a good example of a pre-modifier situation. This means that, in the English language, the determiners occur in pre-position. It is important to note that singular determiners take singular NP complements and plural determiners take plural NP complements.

Determiners as we have seen are one of the elements that are found within the domain of the NP. Erichsen (2010) defines determiner as a type of word that refers to a noun and determines which object, person or other entity the noun represents. Also, the author asserts that determiners have little meaning apart from the nouns they refer to. In some languages like English, French and Spanish, determiners are usually placed before the noun, in other words, they are pre-posed before the noun they refer to, while in other languages like Igbo, Yoruba, Anaang and Izhia, they are post-posed. The above description is a justification of the intent behind this study, to ascertain the structural position of demonstratives in Izhia in comparison with that of the English language.

In Izhia, determiners invariably exceed the nouns they refer to. This is to say that, the determiners in Izhia, occur in post-position with the exception of the demonstratives which can occur in both positions. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this study, the focus is on one aspect of the determiners: demonstratives.

Structures of English and Izhia DPs with Demonstratives

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| i <i>This</i> man | Nwoke ye |
| ii <i>That</i> boy | Nwata nwoke yehu |
| iii <i>These</i> books | Ekwo ndu ye |
| iv <i>Those</i> buildings | Ulo ndu yehu |

The above instances have the same distributions and hence can be considered determiner phrases with demonstratives in both languages.

English demonstratives such as 'this, that, those, these' are words that describe the names of persons or things in relation to the distance of a person or thing from where the speaker is, and Izhia demonstratives; *ye* (this), *yehu* (that), *ndu ye*

(these), *ndu yehu* (those) also play same role in the language. In Izhia, demonstratives operate at distributional equivalence with those of English language. For instance;

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| i. Uwe m bu <i>ye</i> – Cloth my is this | This is my cloth |
| ii Ekwo m bu <i>yehu</i> – Book my is that | That is my book |
| iii Ulo anyi bu <i>ndu ye</i> – Houses our are these | These are our houses |
| iv Unwata m bu <i>ndu yehu</i> – Children my are those | Those are my children |

Theoretical Bases

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is the Determiner Phrase Hypotheses, and also incorporated is Lado's (1957) Contrastive Analysis Approach.

The Determiner Phrase Hypotheses

Syntactic theory is highly intricate and always evolving. Since the publication of Chomsky's syntactic structure (1957) and Aspect of the theory of syntax (1965), syntactic theory has been in a steady state of change and development. Chomsky's Lectures on Government and Binding (1981) and Minimalist Program (1995) paved way to re-interpreting several syntactic concepts and terms and introducing new ones.

One of the recently introduced concepts in the long diversified and rich timeline of the tradition of syntactic analysis is the notion of the determiner phrase contained in Abney's (1987) DP hypothesis. This hypothesis claims that what we traditionally think of as a noun phrase (NP) (e.g. the book) has the determiner as its head not the noun as earlier canvassed by Chomsky and others. In this kind of analysis, the NP is, in fact, a complement of the DP. Radford (2009: p, 454) succinctly states that within this hypothesis, 'all definite expression have the status of DPs-not just nominals like 'the President' which contains an overt determiner, but also proper names like 'John'.

This is to say that, the DP hypothesis has become the standard for syntactic analysis. In this study, the DP hypothesis is used in the analyses of DPs in two natural languages focusing on the

can pre- and post-modify a noun or nouns in their DP structure, and such is grammatical and acceptable in the language. This, in some cases, leads to ungrammatical constructions among Izhia English bilinguals. Similarly, from the above examples, it is shown that the English demonstratives pre-modify the persons, things and the distance to the right, while Izhia demonstratives can pre- and post-modify persons, things and the distance to both left and right.

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

This study has examined syntactically the English and Izhia demonstratives in the DP structure. The paper notes that the demonstratives are words that describe the names of persons, or things in relation to the distance of a person or thing from where the speaker is, and that they can as well particularize things.

This is why Uzoigwe (2011) says that demonstrative performs the function of particularizing or 'definitizing' their nouns. The study made it clear that Izhia demonstratives operate at distributional equivalence with those of its English counterpart. In addition, demonstratives in both languages specify or particularize the nouns they deal with either to their right in the English or to their left or right in Izhia. In other words, the structural positions of demonstratives in the two languages differ considerably (though similar in one hand, since Izhia demonstratives can occur in both positions), judging from the X-bar syntactic model which defines languages as either left-branching or right-branching because of the placement of the complements modifying and qualifying the head of the phrase (Uzoigwe, 2011).

The Izhia language is considered a right-branching language which has its determiners post-posed after the nouns they modify. This means that demonstratives like other determiners in Izhia are post-posed in their DP structures, (though they can occur both in pre- and post-position) while in the English language, the reverse is the case as they (demonstratives) occur only in pre-position. These differences are what inform the learning difficulties of the L2 learners and should be the

focus of the L2 teachers. Teachers should draw up a course plan to see that these differences are efficiently handled in order to make the learners proficient in both the source and the target language.

Finally, the study suggest that further studies of this kind should be carried out on the form of Izhia and English in such areas as semantics and syntax to broaden the horizon on the areas of similarities and dissimilarities in their functions and structure.

References

- Abney, S.P (1987), *The English Noun Phrase in its Sentential Aspect*. Ph.D Thesis Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Massachusetts.
- Aleke, C. E. (2019). *A Contrastive Study of English and Igbo Determiner Phrases*. M. A. Dissertation Department of English, University of Uyo, Uyo.
- Berk, N. (1999). *English syntax: From word to Discourse*. Oxford University Press, New York
- Bernstein, J.B.(2001). The DP Hypothesis: Identifying Clausal Properties in the Nominal Domain, PP536-561. In M, Baltin and C. Collins (Editors). *The handbook of Contemporary Syntactic Theory*. Blackwell Publishers Ltd, London.
- Chomsky, N. (1957), *Syntactic Structure*. The Hague: Mouton & Co, Netherlands,
- Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspect of Theory of Syntax*: Management Institute of Technology Press, Cambridge.
- Chomsky, N. (1981). *Lectures on Government and Binding*. Dordrecht, Foris.
- Chomsky, N. (1995), *The Minimalist Program*. Management Institute of Technology Press, Cambridge.
- Crystal, D. (1997). *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*. 4th Edition. Blackwell, Oxford.

- Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a Global Language*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Crystal, D. (2008). *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*. 6th Edition. Blackwell Publishing, Australia.
- Eka, M.E (1979), Noun Phrase in Ibibio, pp83-125. In: Afaide and Bros (Editors), *Studies in Language and Literature, Uyo*.
- Emenanjo, N. (1978). *Elements of Modern Igbo Grammar*. Oxford University press, Ibadan.
- Enang, E. (2017). *Complementation systems of English and Anaang languages*. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Department of English and Literary Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
- Erichsen, G. (2010). *Spanish Language Guide*. The New Times Company, New York.
- Hudson, R. A. (1984). *Word Grammar*. Blackwell, London.
- Lado, R. (1957). *Linguistics across cultures*. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan.
- Mbah, B.M. (2011). *GB Syntax: A Minimalist Theory and Application to Igbo*. Catholic Institute for Development, Justice and Peace, Enugu.
- Ndimele, O. (2003). *A First Course on Morphology & Syntax*. Emhai Printing and Publishing Co, Port-Harcourt.
- Nweze, I. M. (2014). Determiner Phrase in the Igbo language. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 4 (4)
- Obiamalu, G. O. (2010). On the status of 'nke' in the Igbo nominal phrase. 23rd Annual Conference of the Linguistic Association of Nigeria (CLAN), University of Port-Harcourt, Nigeria.
- Oghalu, F. C. (1982). *Igbo Language and Culture*. University Press Ltd, Ibadan.
- Oluikpe, B.O. (1981). *English in Igbo Land: A Contrastive Study of English and Igbo Syntax*. African-Fep publishers Limited, Onitsha.
- Radford, A. (2009). *Analyzing English Sentences: A Minimalist Approach*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge,
- Rodney, H. (1988). *English Grammar; An Outline*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Smith, N. V. (1969). Oral English for school certificate. *J. N.E.S.A. Syntax and Semantics: The Syntactic Structure of Hungarian*, 3:
- Sideeg, A. (2016). *Key Arguments for the Determiner Phrase Hypothesis*. IOSR. Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 21: 18-25.
- Udegbuna, C A. (2004). *A Contrastive Study of the Phonology of Igbo and Ngas* M.A Dissertation. University of Nigeria, Nsuka,
- Udofot, I. (2007). A tonal analysis of standard Nigerian English. *Journal of the Nigerian English Studies Association*, 3 (1):
- Udoka, S. T. (2006). *Lexical items in Anaang and English in distributional equivalence*. Ph.D Thesis of the University of Uyo.
- Uzoigwe. B. C. (2011). A contrastive analysis of Igbo and English determiner phrases. *Journal of Igbo language & Linguistics (JILL)* 3:
- Wilkins, D. A. (!972). *Linguistics in Language Teaching*. London: Edward Arnold Ltd. London.