**Abstract**

This paper examines contrastive analysis as an effective tool for predicting and identifying syntactic structural similarities and differences, which may pose difficulties in second language learning or ease second language learning. The paper adopts a contrastive approach as it compares the determiner phrase structures in Igbo and English. Determiners in both languages include: number, adjectives (qualifiers and quantifiers), demonstratives and genitives. The findings reveal that the Igbo language has a head initial structure where the determiners are positioned after the head ‘X...’ the ellipses represent the determiners. Some exceptions have been shown to occur where such forms as otu, xfqdx, nd[, naan[ and qtxbx occur in the Igbo language. English maintains the structure of its head assuming the final position in a phrase. This means that all the determiners come before the head ‘...X.’ It is on this premise that we note that the knowledge of the differences in the structures of the mother tongue (MT) and the second language (L2) will enhance proficiency and good performance in language teaching and learning English as L2.

**1. Introduction**

Contrastive analysis was introduced by Lado (1957) in the book *Linguistics across Cultures*. It was a tool developed to aid second language teaching and learning. Contrastive analysis (CA) is the careful study of the structures of languages with the intention of comparing and contrasting their forms. Lado’s view of similar structures is that they do not pose difficulty in second language learning. The areas of differences are such areas that pose difficulty in second language learning. Structures in language that can be compared and contrasted include: the phonetic, phonemic, morphological, syntactic and semantic structures. However, this paper examines an aspect of the sentence structure in the Igbo language in contrast to the English language. The aspect of the sentence structure, we will be considering in this paper is the Determiner Phrase (DP) and how it functions in both languages so that the second language learner will not transfer the structure of his L1 into the target language.

**2. Literature Review**

In language learning and teaching, three tools have been identified to be operational and effective: contrastive analysis (CA), error analysis (EA) and needs analysis (NA). James (1980) aptly identifies contrastive and error analysis as tools in applied linguistics. Udegbunam (2004)
avers that they are called tools in Applied Linguistics because of the solutions they proffer to the problems encountered in the teaching and learning of a target language. She notes that contrastive and error analyses are tools developed by the structural grammarians for identifying problems encountered when learning the target language by the second language (L2) learner.

For the purpose of this study, we will be focusing our attention on contrastive analysis. Contrastive analysis is a tool developed for language teaching and learning. The chief proponent Lado (1957) sees it as a scientific out look into describing a language. He notes that it should be done carefully and in line with the native language of the learner with the aim of predicting possible problems and proffering solutions to the problems. In his view, contrastive analysis implies more differences than similarities existing between the source and the target language. Contrastive analysis (CA) according to Oluikpe (1981:21) is “the one in which the similarities and differences between two (or more) languages at particular levels are explicated in the context of a chosen theoretical framework.” This means that CA studies the differences and similarities existing between two languages that may border around different levels of study: phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics.

Smith (1969) sees the differences existing amongst languages as constituting the learning problems of non-native learner who often transfers structures acquired in speaking his/her mother tongue into the target language. It is on this premise that Anidobe (2004) notes that the hypothesis of contrastive analysis is said to be based on first language interference with the second language. Okorji and Okeke (2009:6) agree with this view by noting that CA “derives its importance from the belief that the first language (L1) influences the learning of another language.” They are of the opinion that CA should take place before teaching begins and that it incorporates error analysis. Bamgbose (1971:47) however, emphasizes that “interference of the first language poses the greatest difficulty for learners of the second language.” Oldin’s (1989) view of contrastive analysis is quite embracing. It notes that it is a technical term generated to account for the differences in the grammatical system of two languages.

Anidobe (2004) notes that the difficulties brought about by the transfer of structures from the source to the target language can best be determined by contrasting structures which has to do with contrastive analysis. This, she notes, is based on the fact that similar features are not tampered with in language learning but differences in structures could
make for exportation of structures from L1 to L2. She says that the similar ones are simpler to handle while differences bring about difficulties. Anidobe, however portends that contrastive analysis functions basically to predict the likely errors of the second language learner. This is in the bid to providing the linguistic input to language teaching materials and aiding easy learning of the target language.

Based on the aim of contrastive analysis, Fries (1945) avers that the act of carefully comparing with a parallel description of the native language of the learner and the target language is the most effective teaching material that is based on scientific descriptions of both languages. Ferguson (1965) in Udegbunam (2004) adds that a careful comparison carried out on two languages, the source and target offers the most excellent basis for preparing a worthwhile instrument or material for planning a syllable or course for second language learning and the teaching. Kelly (1969) notes that feature of languages to be contrasted are exposed in the light of contrastive analysis.

As always, there is no theory or view without flaws, CA has been however questioned on the premise that not all differences bring about error or negative transfer in the target language. The same thing goes for the similarities. It is noted that some similar structures could pose difficulties in second language learning. Johannson (1975) contends that CA should be concerned with explaining the difficulties already identified and try to tackle the difficulties rather than pitch its tent with predicting possible difficulties that may impede the speed of the second language learner.

There is the inability to account for the occurrence of errors that take place as a result of mother tongue interference such errors as developmental errors and strategies of the likes of overgeneralization, incomplete application of rules and so on. This invariably leads to Anasiudu’s (1978) assertion that CA cannot solve all the problems encountered by the second language learners. Notwithstanding, CA has given us a clue into comparing languages for the purpose of determining the similarities and differences that occur in the structures of the languages under consideration. It is carried out for the encouragement of positive measures or strategies of developing syllables that can make it easier for the L2 learner to acquire the language in a short time and for the purpose of having a good knowledge of the structures of the languages in question. It also can be applauded for predicting possible areas of difficulties that can be tackled by error analysts as well as point to some areas of need of the L2 learner.
3. Determiner Phrase

Determiner phrase, according to Wikipedia (2011), is believed to be a type of specifier for nouns. This can be seen in this example below 1. the cat. ‘the’ is a determiner, which specifies what cat is being referred to. Crystal (2008) says that a phrase is a single element of structure typically containing more than one word which often lacks the subject-predicate structure typical of clauses. O’Grady, Dobrovolsky and Katamba (1996) identify the phrase as one or more words that are built around a ‘skeleton’ consisting of two levels, a phrase level and a word level and act as a syntactic unit. Phrases are headed. Wikipedia (2011) 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 of determiner. The determiner is a part of the larger umbrella of modifiers. According to Wikipedia (2011) a modifier is as well known as a quantifier that is an optional element in a phrase structure. It says that the modifier when removed may not necessarily affect the grammaticality of the construction. The modifiers are semantically said to describe more accurately the meaning of another element. It, however 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. (The English language is a good example of pre-modifier situation that is informed by X-bar syntax as “...X” which notes that complements come before the head word. The Igbo language is an example of a post-modifier situation where the complements follow the head word “X...”)

Oluikpe’s (1981) contrastive study of the syntactic structures of the Igbo and English languages points out the learning and usage problems an Igbo learner of the English language is to encounter. He highlights the sentence and lexical choices an L2 learner of English will make in his bid to learn English. Some words in Igbo as well as English have multiple meanings. Yet, Igbo L1 speakers have a way of carrying over the structure of their mother tongue to English subconsciously. Udegbunam (2004) studies the phoneme structure of the Ngas and Igbo languages. She notes that progressive and regressive assimilations occur in both languages. One of the difficulties that may be faced by the L2 speaker of Ngas is the issue of coalescence assimilation in the language. Vowel elision poses difficulties for an Ngas learner of Igbo. The syllabic nasal has two positions in the Igbo language the initial and final positions but assumes just the initial structural position of words in Ngas language.
There is also the existence of consonant clusters in Ngas language that can pose a great difficulty to an Igbo learner of the Ngas language.

Anidobe (2007) in her analysis of Igbo and Hausa phonemes and phonatactics, finds out that the Hausa and Igbo languages are tonal. Both languages do not allow consonant clustering. She identifies Hausa as a language that operates both the closed and open syllable. She points out that the Hausa language has a CN (consonant nasal) syllable where during sound production, the nucleus which often times is a vowel will be elided leaving us with CN structure. This is notably the basic difference between both languages. Okorji and Okeke (2009) in their contrastive study of the phoneme structures of the Igbo and English languages note that the major problem in learning the target language is the interference of the phonemic features of the L1 with the L2 phonemic features.

Having looked at these studies, we say that though contrastive analysis has been queried, it still provides a good basis for identifying structural differences as well as provides a clue into what the L2 learner will need to know about the second language.

3. The Determiner Phrase in Igbo and English

In this section, we will compare the structures of the two languages, Igbo and English, to see if they are similar or different in form so as to predict the possible needs of the learners. The tone marking convention, we are adopting for the Igbo language is that which places tone on every syllabic nasal and on all vowels.

3.1 Numbers

In Igbo and English, we have ways of accounting for ordinal and cardinal numbers. From the forms below, we will observe and analyse the similarities and differences in the way numbers are counted and how they complement their heads.

Igbo examples:
1. Nwanyị [abxq] - women two- *two women
2. Otu nwoke b[ara ebe ]- a- one man come (pst) here

English examples:
3. Two women- abxq nwanyị - *nwanyị abxq
4. One man came here- Otu nwoke b[ara ebe ]- a

The Igbo language is assumed to be generally post-posed. But from the gloss above, there is an exception in examples 2 and 4, the Igbo language structure seems to agree with the structure of the English
language. ‘otu’ is pre-posed before the head word. Regarding the ordinal numbers, the Igbo language structure does not agree with that of the English language, meaning that the determiners (ordinal numbers) maintain positions after the head word. This is seen in examples 5 and 6.

5. Onye nke atq- person that is three- *third person
6. Onye nke mbx - person first- *first person
7. Third person- atq onye - *onye nke atq
8. First person- mbx onye- *onye mbx

The asterisks are a pointer to the non-conformity to the structure of the determiner phrase structure in the language under consideration.

3.2 Quantifiers

Quantifiers in Igbo are finite in number, but can be used in generating infinite structures. Such examples include; nii ‘le, xfqdx, qtxtx, dum, nd[, etc. Using these examples, we will note the positions of the determiners in the determiner phrase structures in Igbo and English.

9a. xfqdx xmx aka- some offspring hand- some children
   b. xmx aka xfqdx- offspring hand some- *some children
10a. qtxtx xmx agbqghq- some offspring ladies- some young girls/ladies
   b. xmx agbqghq qtxtx- offspring ladies some- *some young girls/ladies
11. Some children- xfqdx xmx aka- *xmx aka xfqdx
12. Some young ladies- qtxtx xmx agbqghq- *xmx agbqghq qtxtx
13. Some people - nd[ mmadx

In Igbo, some quantifiers agree with the structure of the English language where the modifiers are positioned before the nouns. This shows that there could be exceptions to rules aiding the feature of flexibility and creativity in languages. They include: xfqdx, qtxtx and nd[. These forms can be said to be used before and after their nouns. “dxm and niile” strictly obey the positioning of modifiers after the noun in the Igbo language structure. ‘nd[’ signifies ‘plurality and or people’ and can be used for emphasis and quantifying people. English examples maintain their structures as observed in the examples above.

3.3 Qualifiers

These are adjectives that give more information about a particular noun or it attributes a feature or characteristic to such a noun. In Igbo we have
E go mara m + ma - Ego know (past) beauty -* the beautiful ego
15. nwo + ke d[ oji tqrq ogologo - man is dark grow (past) high high -* the tall dark man
16. The beautiful ego- mara m + ma e + go - *e + go mara m + ma
17. The tall dark man- toro ogologo oji nwo + ke - *nwo + ke d[ oji toro ogologo
From the examples in Igbo, qualifiers of a determiner phrase (DP) are more often positioned after their nouns. An exception occurs in example 15 where one of the qualifiers ‘ogologo’ precedes the head while others maintain the structure of the Igbo noun/determiner phrase.

3.4 Demonstratives
Demonstratives are words that describe the nearness or distance of a thing from where one is. It can as well particularize things. A particularizer is a determiner that focuses and specifies an individual, thing or place. These invariably point to the fact that demonstratives perform the function of particularizing or ‘definitizing’ their noun. Examples of demonstratives in Igbo include: ‘a- this, ahx- that, nd[ a- these, nd[ ahx- those, nna- this (is dialectal and informal in the standard variety of the Igbo language), nke nna- this one, nna[ y] only’ some of these examples will be used to compare the structures of both languages.

18. akwxkwq a- book this- *this book
19. mm[ r ahx- water that- *that water
20. onye nna- person this- * this person
21. ite nd[ ahx- pot some that- *those pots
22. naan[ y] only him/her/it
23. This book- à akwxkwq- *akwxkwq à
24. that water- ahx mm[r - *mm[ r ahx
25. this person- nna onye- *onye nna
26. those pots- nd[ ahx ite- * ite nd[ ahx
27. only him/her/it- nna y] ya
Some of these examples of the Igbo structure agree with the structure of the English language thereby violating the rule of determiners branching out to the right hand side of their head. The introduction of ‘nna’ is to note that such forms exit both in standard and dialectal forms. Its use in standard form shows disgust and/or an off-hand reference especially in an informal situation. It is mostly dialectal in nature. Demonstratives in
Igbo obey the determiner phrase rule of “X…” with the exception of 20 that violates the rule as a demonstrative in the Igbo language. In English, all demonstratives remain pre-posed. Any reverse in their structural positions become anomalous.

This paper notes that demonstratives are as well known as particularizers, however refuting Obasi’s claim that it is a type of determiner that can be explained on its own given that the same examples that hold for demonstratives hold for particularizers.

### 3.5 Genitives

Genitives are pronouns that serve as determiners. In Igbo and English respectively, some of these genitives include: m- my, any[- we, g[- your, xnx- your(plural you), ya- his/her/its, nke- personifier or particularizing something.

Examples:

28. ncha g[- soap you- *your soup
29. oroma ya- orange his/her/its- *his/her/its orange
30. nke any[- own our- *our own
31. nke nwo¹ ke a- own man this- *this man’s
32. your soap- g[ ncha- * ncha g[
33. his/her/its orange- ya oroma- *orama ya
34. our own- any[ nke- *nke any[
35. this man’s- a nwo¹ ke nke - *nke nwo¹ ke a

Example 31 presents a structure where the determiners surround the head. ‘nke’ the possessive marker in the structure comes before the head violating the Igbo DP rule while ‘a’ retains the main position of determiners in the language. English maintains its structure, except in 34. Where the possessive marker ‘-’s’ a suffix is post-posed in the language.

The analyses above prove that there are areas of differences and similarities in the English and Igbo languages. For instance, demonstratives take up the position after the head word. Ordinal numbers and cardinal numbers do same except for the ordinal number ‘otu.’ In general, Igbo has its modifiers at the left side of the head word, while English has its modifiers placed before it. Areas of similarities are noted in such forms as cardinal number ‘otu,’ quantifiers ‘xfqdq, qtxtx, nd[,’ and the demonstrative ‘naan[‘ as having to be structured the way the English determiner phrases are structured and are grammatically acceptable in the language. Also, in proper names performing the
functions of determiners, the English language examples conformed to that of the Igbo language. This similarity in the case of the Igbo and English modifiers will make it easy for the learning of the language by the L2 learner.

It is worthy of note that tone plays a crucial role in all Igbo structures but it plays exceptional rules in some examples as evident above. The paper argues that particularizers are same as demonstratives and partly name adjectives.

4. Findings and Conclusion

The paper has examined the syntactic feature of the determiner phrase of Igbo and English languages. The determiners include: number, demonstratives, genitives and quantifiers. The paper notes that qualifiers also are determiners. Again, we observe that determiners qualify, modify, define, describe, limit, specify, particularize and identify a noun.

In languages, determiners include such word classes as nouns, pronouns, adjectives, articles, demonstratives, adverbs, (auxiliary verbs) etc.

Their structural positions in the two languages differ considerably judging from the X bar syntax 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. The Igbo language is however considered as a right branching language, which has its determiners post-posed to the right of the head, leaving the head at the left. This means that the determiner phrase in Igbo is post-posed. Its complements come after the noun with exceptions to an aspect of number, demonstrative and some quantifiers. English language on the other hand operates the pre-posed structure for its determiner phrase structure which has its complements coming before the head word...X. These differences inform the learning difficulties of the L2 learner and should be given due attention by the L2 teacher.

In conclusion, the L2 teacher can draw up a course plan to see to it that these differences are efficiently handled in the bid to making the L2 learner proficient in both the source and target languages. Also, there is need for more work to be done on contrasting the forms of Igbo and English in such areas as semantics and syntax. This will go a long way to broaden our horizon on the areas of peculiarities and similarities in their structures.

References


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