

THE SYNTAX OF HEADEDNESS IN IGBO STRUCTURES

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Abstract

This work examines the headedness in Igbo structures with a view to the syntactic operations that characterize its derivations. The data for the study were gathered from the native speakers of the language. It examines the headedness from the structural and functional perspectives and noted the word order paradigms of their constituents. From the syntactic point, the work relies on the account of the Principles and Parameters model of grammar also called Government and Binding Theory. The researcher investigates whether the principle of headedness is in conformity with the Igbo syntactic structures. Findings reveal that all categories occurring at the phrase initials are characterized as heads and that each head is projected from the D-Structure. Also, each head is represented at all levels of analysis which include the D-Structure, S-Structure, Phonetic Form and Logical Form for grammaticality in Igbo.

Keywords: syntax, headedness, conformity, categories, structure, derivation.

Introduction

Man is genetically endowed with innate capacity to produce and comprehend language. The natural endowment enables man to understand even new structures in a language he is exposed to. This is the crux of generativism as opposed to traditional grammar that describes features of language in specified individual languages in a taxonomic system. One of the most weaknesses of traditional grammar, being that hardly could generalization be made of structures and processes of natural language faculty, Radford (2004) calls it the internalized grammar (I-grammar), which subsequently manifests as a physical reality. Proponents of Principles and Parameters (P & P) describe the I-grammar as a mental package containing the rules of languages system. These rules cut across all human language. However, the nuances noticeable in the manifestation of the internal rules are referred to as parameters.

Chomsky (1981) says the theory of universal grammar consists of interacting sub-system which can be studied from two different perspectives. These are the rule systems of grammar and the sub-system of principles. The sub-components of rule systems are: lexicon, syntax (categorical and transformational components). PF-Component and LF-Component are the interpretive Components.

The lexicon specifies the peculiar features of a word. Guided by the base rules, words are inserted into nodes in the D-Structure and these mapped to the S-Structure by the Move alpha rule. At the S-Structure there may be traces of movement as well as co-indexing of anaphors with their antecedents. This rule is called the transformational component. The rule can also appear at PF and LF. The PF (phonetic form) is a level where the physical structures are represented phonetically. The LF (logical form) on the other hand is the level where meaning is represented. The purpose of this study are:

To investigate whether the principle of headedness is in conformity with the Igbo syntactic structures or not.

To apply the universal grammar of Chomsky (1981) into the structure of Igbo sentences.

To examine the roles of word order paradigm in constituents.

This study is based on the headedness of the X-bar Syntax which is one of the theories of the Principles and Parameters of grammar Chomsky (1981). The scope covers the categorical structure of constituents belonging to a particular phrase. The head of the phrase bears the name of the structure. This study covers the universal principle of projection rules of the X-bar theory. The theory is represented in two different formats: projection driven (intermediate and maximal projections). It will take into account the feature specifications determining where the constituents enter the derivation and how the features are valued. The work does not examine the issue of topicalization, fronting and focusing.

Empirical studies

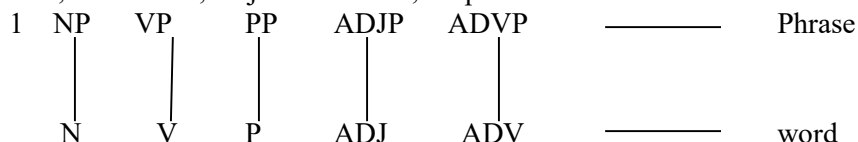
Every language has its own rules for combining words. Languages are generally constrained to combine words. Ejele (2014) says there are basic orders in languages: namely, SVO (subject-verb-object), SOV (subject-object-verb) and also VSO (verb-subject-object). Igbo belongs to the SVO group. In identifying word classes in Igbo, three criteria are used. These are the forms of the word, its meaning and function, Ndimele, (1999).

The word classes are divided into two major sets which are the open and closed classes Lyons (1968). Words in the open class include nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs, while words in the closed class include propositions, pronouns, conjunctions, determiners and auxiliaries. Ejele (2014) says it is syntactic rules that tell us the grammatical relations between different parts of a sentence—whether they are subjects, objects, (direct or indirect). The word order indicates the relationship between the words in a sentence. She argues that syntactic rules also account for grammaticality and ungrammaticality in sentences. Sentences that obey syntactic rules are said to be correct or grammatical while sentences that do not obey syntactic rules are said to be ungrammatical.

Lamidi (2000) notes that grammar is the study of the rules governing the grammaticality of a language. Such grammar reflects the unconscious innate knowledge (or competence) of the ideal native speaker-hearer of its language. A grammar is either acceptable or unacceptable. Grammaticality is decided by the speaker-hearer competence while acceptability is sociologically based. A sentence can be grammatical without being acceptable which means that the sentence is semantically deviant. On the other hand, a sentence cannot be acceptable if it is not grammatical.

In the lexicon of a language, every lexical item is assigned its appropriate categorical feature in terms of whether the word is a noun, verb, adjective and so on. The lexical items can be sub-categorized with respect to their syntactic characteristics. Ndimele (2007) asserts that sub-categorization is a syntactic phenomenon whereby members of a word class (e.g. verbs) do not all exhibit the same behavior. Emenanjo (2015) says that we have strong selectional restrictions in Igbo verbs. The restrictions are essentially semantic and syntactic. This strict selection imposed on the noun verb. This strict selection imposed in the noun verb collocation governs semantic clusters of object nouns.

Emenanjo (2015) asserts that there are restrictions on the choice of lexical items. The restrictions are associated with the headedness of phrases of phrases in Igbo and other languages. The lexical categories such as Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives, Adverbs and Prepositions are assigned heads in their phrases. The head of a phrase bears the name of the phrase. Words are taken as Projections from the lexicon Chomsky (1995:189), its precursor being the matching and substitution formats, Chomsky (1965:111), projection principle in Chomsky (1981) and merged into structures one-by-one. To build phrases and sentences, words project phrases of the category. Thus, nouns project NPs, Verbs VPs, Adjectives ADJs, Prepositions PPs and Adverbs ADVs, as indicated below.



Method of data collection

Data collected for this study was done through a structured observational list as well as comparative structure tests. We collected data through the primary method whereby the researcher engaged in the interactive oral discussion as well as interviews on the generation of Igbo sentences. The oral interview method helped the researcher to look out for the way each informant produced sentences in Igbo. The sampling method was used. The researcher ensured that doubtful data were always crosschecked for accuracy by the competent native speakers.

Presentations and analysis of data

Here, we investigate whether the principle of headedness is in conformity with the Igbo Syntactic structures. The central idea behind the formulation of X-bar is the recognition of the fact that (most) phrasal constituents have ‘heads’ upon which other elements of the constituents in question are dependent as in, Ndimele (2004), Haegem (1994), Radford (1988). In X-bar convention, the maximal projection is related to its head through an intermediate category. The maximal projection of a head is represented thus: X^{11} , XP or X^{\max} while the minimal category - the lexical head of the maximal projection is represented thus X or X^0 .

In X-bar convention all nodes dominated by XP are optional except for the nodes on the main projection path, X^1 and X . This accounts for why we can have a maximal projection of the form in Ejele (2014)

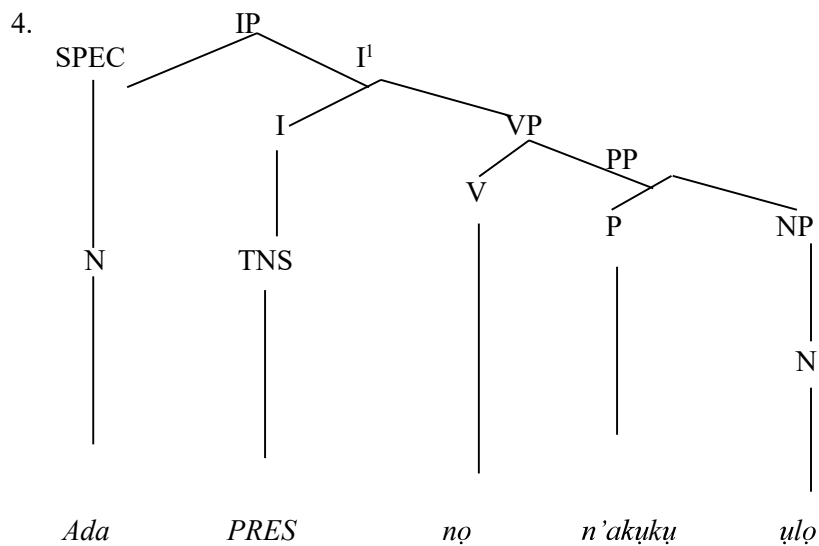
2. XP Here the projection is bottom up (from the minimum to maximum)



We demonstrate the above schema in a sentence form in Igbo:

3. Ada nọ n’akukụ ụlọ.
Ada locative VERB PREP beside house
‘Ada is beside the house’.

The above sentence is demonstrated on a tree diagram below.

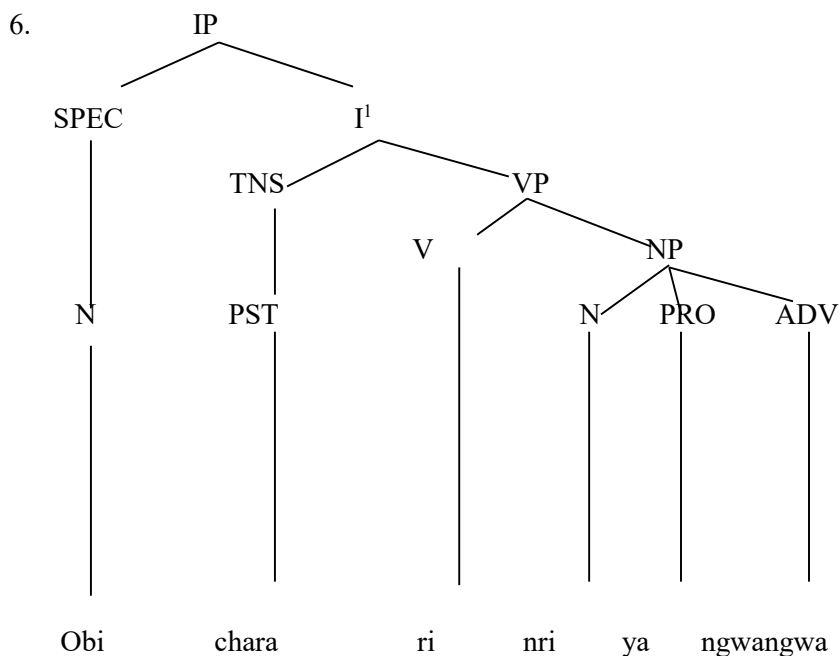


A Tree diagram with a Prepositional Phrase

IP stands for inflection Phrase and represent sentence (S) each phrase still maintains its head. Each phrase is endocentric in line with the projection principal. 'I' is Inflection (INFL) and is considered to be the head of the IP hence, the subject of a sentence which is the Specifier to IP while the VP is its complement. However, both the SPEC and COMP are obligatory in a sentence. The subject 'Ada' is the Specifier to IP Inflection Phrase. In the above sentence, the verb 'nọ' 'is selects the NP 'ulo' 'house' which is a noun to complete the sentence. The PP generates a preposition as the head.

We illustrate another example of an Igbo sentence showing Headedness of different constituents of a sentence below:

5. Obi richara nri ya ngwangwa.
 Obi eat PAST food PRO quickly ADV
 'Obi ate his food quickly'.



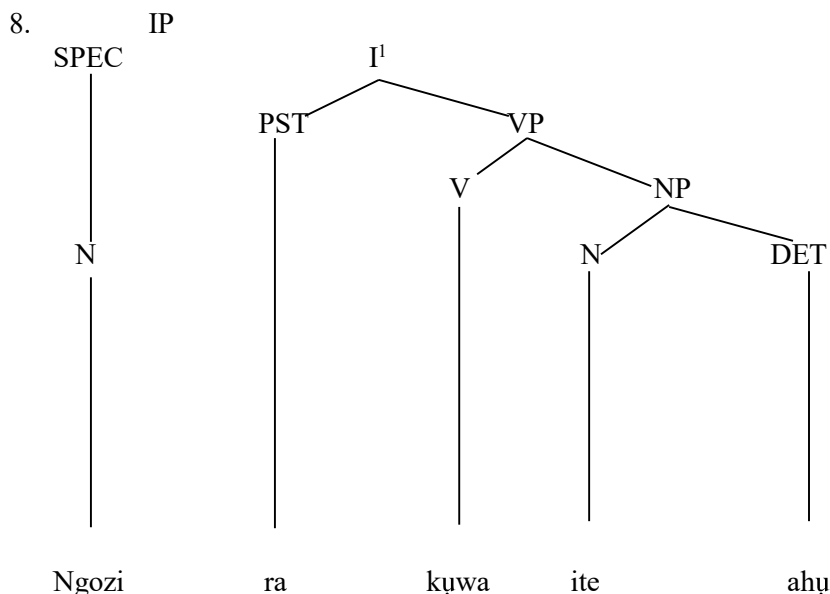
In the above example, the verb '*ri* 'eat' selects the NP as its complement as
 NP → N PRO ADV

Here the N is the head of the NP. The IP projects SPEC which is an 'animate object' that carries the action of the sentence. The 'I' is the inflection that indicates that the verb is in the past form. The V is the head of the VP. The SPEC and the VP must agree for the grammaticality sake in Igbo.

We have another example illustrating the headedness of the constituents in a sentence. This is illustrated below:

7. Ngozi kụwara ite ahụ.
 Ngozi break PAST pot DET
 'Ngozi broke that pot'.

The above example is demonstrated on a tree diagram below:



The IP projects both the SPEC and the Inflection phrase. This VP projects the head V, while the NP projects the head N and its determiner. There is agreement in the SPEC and the INFL and the rest of the sentence.

Projections

To compose a sentence structure in Igbo and any other language, we begin with words that belong to categories such as nouns, verbs, prepositions, adjectives and adverbs. Words in these categories are said to be heads of their phrases. Examples are

7. Nouns as heads of Noun Phrases as in *Ngozi*, *Ada*, *ewu* 'goat', *akwukwo*, 'book'.
10. Verbs as heads of Verb Phrases as in '*ri nri*' 'eat food', '*zaa ulo*' 'sweep house', '*saa akwa*' 'wash cloth'.
11. Prepositions as heads of Prepositional Phrases as in '*n'ime ulo*', 'in the house', '*n'elu oche*' 'on the chair', '*na Legos*' 'in Legos'.
12. Adjectives as heads of Adjectival Phrases as in '*ulo oma*', 'beautiful house', '*nwanyi ocha*,' 'fair complexioned woman', '*igbe ojoo*', 'bad box'.
13. Adverbs as in heads of Adverbial Phrases as in '*ngwangwa*' 'quickly', '*ugbu a*' 'now'.

Manifestation of Headedness in Other Languages

Languages of the world may select certain features from a common pool which specifies all the features that language have in common; this common pool is the core, however, certain languages have features which are not shared by other languages. Such features are said to be marked and are hardly replicated in other languages. This is referred to as the periphery, for instance, every language has a noun phrase, verb phrase, clause or sentence. If, however, we consider how words are strung together in each language we realize that there are difference in word order. For example the following noun phrase in English, Yoruba, Igbo and Efik languages share the common core of

being noun phrases as heads of their sentences but differ in the word order. Consider the examples below:

14. English:	A	tall	man
	Det	Adj	N
15. Yoruba:	Okùnrin	giga	Kan
	N	Adj	Det
	Man	tall	certain
16. Igbo:	Nwoke	ogologo	ahu
	N	Adj	Det
17. Efik:	ányán	été	óró
	Adj	N	Det
	Tall	man	the

The Syntax of headedness is also applicable to other languages as we have observed from the above examples. The head of the NP in the English example came last while the head came first in Yoruba and Igbo examples. It follows that the English NPs differ structurally with the NPs in Igbo, Yoruba and Efik respectively. The determiners in Yoruba, Igbo and Efik came at the end of the above sentences while in English the determiner precedes the head. Then in Efik the adjective 'ányán' comes before the noun 'été' while the determiner 'óró' comes last. Structurally, Efik is different from Igbo and Yoruba. The difference is due to the peculiarity of each language and this is referred to as periphery.

Also we have the issue of Headedness in Hausa (Amfani, 2007)

18. Tàlátù	táá	dáfà	àbincin
Talatu	AGR	cook	food
Tàlátù	Aux	V	N
'Talatu	Cooked Food'		

The above is a sentence in Hausa where the subject NP agrees with the VP to obtain a correct sentence. Any violation in this rule makes the sentence to be semantically anomalous.

Headedness in a sentence is a Syntactic feature that help in generating a grammatical sentence in different languages.

Summary of findings and conclusions

This work examines the syntactic operations that characterize the derivation of syntactic structures in Igbo. We examined the roles of word order paradigms in Igbo constituents such as nouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives and prepositions in the production of sentences. Every native speaker of Igbo has the internal dictionary known as the lexicon where the words in the language are stored in the brain. It is left for the speaker to select and combine the words according to the grammatical rules of the language to produce correct sentences from the deep structure to the surface structure level. Our findings reveal that categories occurring at the phrase initials are characterized as heads and that each head is represented at all levels of analysis which include D-Structure, S-Structure, Phonetic Form (pronunciation) and Logical Form (meaning). This study relies on the account of the Principles and Parameters model of grammar also called Government and Binding Theory of Chomsky (1981). We found that the Principle of headedness is in conformity with the Igbo

structures because each phrase projects a head (the X-bar theory) such as NP projects an N, VP projects a V, PP projects a P, ADJP projects an ADJ and ADVP projects an ADV at the minimal level. Transformations are applied to the Igbo structures at the deep structure level to produce the surface structure where phonological (pronunciation) and semantic levels (meaning) are interpreted. The Universal Grammar (UG) of Chomsky can be applied to every natural language in the world for grammaticality.

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