Comparative Analysis of English and Tẹẹ Noun Phrases

By

Isaac Eyi Ngulube
Department of English Language & Literature in English, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt.
e-mail: isaacngulube540@gmail.com
&
Mboi Chika Stanley
Department of English and Communication Art, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt, Rivers State.
e-mail: mboichikastanley@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper is a comparative study of an aspect of the syntax of Tẹẹ and English (noun phrases). The study is motivated by the limited published works in Tẹẹ (an Ogonoid language). The methodology adopted was descriptive. The data was collected through primary and secondary sources. The study revealed that Tẹẹ noun phrase is both head initial and head final as opposed to English noun phrase which is only head final. Also worthy of note is that there is a slight difference in the use of pronouns to replace nouns in noun phrases in both languages. English is gender sensitive in the use of pronouns, but Tẹẹ is not. In English, the third person pronoun 'he/she' is used in place of nouns but Tẹẹ does not use the third persons 'he/she. Tẹẹ allows the same pronoun 'à' to refer to both third person singular subject (he/she), and 'yè' for third person singular object 'him/her and third person possessive pronoun, his/her.

Introduction

Language is the most common means by which human beings communicate with one another, which primarily exists in a written or in a spoken form. It is a unique attribute of humans, which is used as a chief medium of communication, for building interpersonal relationships, exchange of ideas and passing of information. Ndimele (1999) says that "language is often said to be a means of communication between individuals who share a common code''. He explains that the codes that individuals share are in the form of symbol which can be oral

(sounds) or written (letters). Language is also defined as a complex and arbitrary system of vocal sounds used by man for communication in a given community.

Alo (1995), defined language as ''the tool used for establishing ideas, emotions, interaction, and communication; the instrument for the acquisition and transmission of knowledge''. Language is very crucial for human survival and existence, because it is the most important and effective tool for communication. Language has universal principles from which individual languages select their repertoire. Nevertheless, differences occur in the application of the elements of languages because each language picks hers and uses it differently. These differences are what have been described as parameters. Hence, this study sets out to consider the notion of headedness (noun Phrase) in English and Tẹẹ languages. Tẹẹ belongs to the Ogonoid group of languages". It belongs to the Delta Cross sub-branch of the Cross River branch of eastern (new) Benue- Congo family in the Niger Congo phylum. The Tẹẹ language is spoken by the Tẹẹ district of Tai Local Government Area in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Ladefoged (1995), says that ''Tẹẹ and Kana (another Ogonoid language) are mutually intelligible, though the speakers of Tẹẹ claim that the two languages are different". There are some lexical items which the two languages do not share. According to Ladefoged, apart from lexical differences, there are also some consonant phonemes found in Tẹẹ which do not occur in Kana. The name Tẹẹ is indigenously used for both the language and its speakers.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

This research is based on the theoretical framework of Contrastive Analysis.

Contrastive Analysis

Lado (1957) is the main proponent of the Contrastive ɑnɑlysis. "Lado's findings were based on his own experience and family background," claims Mbah (2016). Furthermore, he asserts that "Lado, being a native Spanish speaker and immigrant to the United States, observed the challenges his parents faced in learning English and the ways in which this interference showed up in their speech."

"Contrastive analysis concerns two or more languages: a source language and a target language," (Nwala 2015). He continues by defining CA as a methodical study that compares two or more languages side by side in order to pinpoint their areas of similarities and differences. The purpose of this research approach is to predict and pinpoint areas of linguistic difficulty.

However, Klain (1986), referenced in Tamunobalema (2018), argues that the "CA hypothesis claims that the structure of an earlier acquired language largely determines the acquisition of a second language." Klain continued by explaining that positive transfer facilitates the easy assimilation of learning that corresponds with comparable structures of L1. He adds that because of negative transfer, opposing structures can be very challenging and lead to errors.

Conceptual Review

Phrase

One of the concepts in linguistics with several definitions is phrase. A phrase is "a word or group of words, which lack some basic sentence parts," according to Nwala (2016). He defines a phrase as a collection of connected words that have the same grammatical meaning as a single word.

According to Ndimele (1993), "a phrase is traditionally defined as a group of related words that do not have their own subject and predicate and are grammatically equivalent to a single word." He continues by explaining that the phrase is frequently referred to as being between a word and a sentence in the hierarchical structure.

Noun Phrase

A noun phrase is a group of two or more words that has a noun as its head and also functions as a noun. For instance, 'the girl', 'the beautiful girl'. A noun phrase could also be made up of a single noun or pronoun. Example;' chairs', 'many chairs', 'he is a boy'.

Umera etal (2016), define noun phrase as ''a group of two or more elements which function as a noun''. They further explain that a noun phrase is made up of a noun

head and other (optional) elements which are determiners and pre and post modifiers.

Nwala (2016), notes that ''the noun phrase like the prepositional and adjectival phrases is both simple and complex''. According to him, the important and obligatory element in a noun phrase is the head noun or its equivalent; he adds that all other elements are either qualifiers/quantifiers/modifiers or complements. His claims are evidenced in the following examples:
The wicked man has bought a car.
The headmaster, the pastor, is eloquent.
The boy given the money is a thief.

Categorization of nouns in English and Tẹẹ Languages
A noun is traditionally defined as a naming word, which are names of persons, animals, places, things, ideas. Similarly, in Tẹẹ Language, nouns are seen as lexical parts of speech which names persons, places, things, among others and also provide the main idea in a given sentence.

We shall start by giving examples of the different types of nouns in both languages; the categorization of nouns is presented based on five classes of nouns: proper noun, common noun, concrete noun, abstract noun, collective noun.

Proper nouns
Nwala (2016), defines proper noun as ''that which specifies persons, places, things and events''. They are always started with an initial capital letter; Jane, Abuja. Proper nouns in Tẹẹ language are also used to designate names of persons, places and entities.
Names of persons (English)
Blessing
Jane
James
John
Mary
Stanley
Dominion

Favour
Judith
Olivia
Kenneth
Samuel

Names of persons in Tẹẹ

Names	(meaning)
Bárìsúká	God take the glory
Bárìlè	God is good
Bárìdákárà	God answers prayers
Dűmká	life of honour
Bárìdè	God is alive
Lénű	fine
Kágbúé	mother is great

Common Nouns

Ndimele (2007), defines common nouns as ''a subclass of nouns where a name is shared by everything of the same class or kind". Examples; table, woman, book, car, tree. Below are examples of common nouns in both languages.

English language
Girl
Teacher
Boy
Child
Dog
Pastor
School
Church

Tẹẹ language	Gloss
kpá	book
nĩ:wá	woman
ŋʷĩ:nĩ:wà	girl
ŋʷĩ:	child

ŋʷĩ:nĩ:dãm	boy
ŋʷĩ:kà-nĩ:dãm	brother
té	tree
nĩ:dãm	man
tɔbàrí	church
bè	home

Abstract Nouns

According to Nwala (2016), abstract nouns ''are items whose presence or absences are never felt, touched or seen''. They are nouns that have no tangible or concrete body. E.g. are;

Tẹẹ	English
ágbé	dishonor beauty
lènű	beauty freedom
ákpè	sweetness pleasure
ásűű	anger death
bàb	wickedness childhood
bè:sĩ	insincerity liberty

Collective Nouns

A collective noun is a name given to a collection or group of persons, animals or things as a unit. Ndimele (1993), defines a collective noun as ''a class of nouns which names a group of entities or people acting as an indivisible unit''. Examples; choir, audience, family. Below are collective nouns in Tẹẹ and English.

Tẹẹ	English
gã	family class
gbáàló	congregation cluster
gbò	club library
bób	bundle team
gbáàtò:	community herd

Concrete Noun

Concrete nouns are names of objects that can be seen and touched. Ndimele (1993), says that ''concrete nouns refer to objects or entities that have material existence''. Below are concrete nouns in Tẹẹ and English.

Tẹẹ		English
ŋʷĩ:nĩ:wà	girl	house
té	tree	apple
nĩ:dãm	man	table
ŋʷĩ:nĩ:dãm	son	spoon

Simple noun phrases in Tẹẹ Language
They are simple because they are single nouns. They are;

tè	chair
pórò	fish
ŋʷĩ:nĩwà	girl
bá	hand
kpá	book
tɔ	house
té	tree

Simple noun phrases in English Language

boy	computer
shoe	board
dress	television
John	Abuja

Complex noun phrases in Tẹẹ and English Languages
Complex noun phrases are the types of nouns phrases that have more than one word. Examples;
Complex noun phrases in Tẹẹ

bèkà ŋʷĩ: nĩ:wá	two girls
gbɔ píá ŋʷĩ: nĩ:dãm	group of boys
lò nĩ:wà	the woman
lò yìrá é: ŋʷĩ: nĩ:dãm	the tall fair boy
gbɛnɛ ká tɔ	big house
jè lè gbàrà ŋʷĩ: lá	his handsome second son
bà gá lù	they are coming

Complex noun phrases in English Language
The woman
The fat tall woman.
The students in the classroom.
The small green table.
Many children in classroom.

Pre-modification and Post modification in English and Tẹ̣ noun phrases
The term pre modification means putting all modifiers (complements) before the head word (noun) in a noun phrase. In English, noun phrase, articles, demonstratives, numerals, adjectives, pre-modify nouns.
Pre-modification in English Language
Pre-modifiers: Complement (C) - initial and head final relationship.
beautiful girl
C H
hardworking carpenter
C H
wicked boy
C H
delicious meal
C H
Articles as pre-modifiers in English
the child
a mango
an apple
a girl
Demonstratives as pre-head modifiers in English
this boy
that table
these plates
those chairs

Adjectives as pre-modifiers in English
tall dark woman
beautiful black shoe

fair girl
smart boy
Pre-modification in Tẹẹ
Zìkà ŋʷĩ: nĩ:dãm one boy
C H
gbɔ pìá ŋʷĩ:nĩ:dãm group of boys
C C H
lè ŋʷĩ:nĩ:wà good girl
C H
lò jìrá é: ŋʷĩ:nĩ:dãm the tall fair boy
C C C H

Post modification in English and Tẹẹ Languages
In English, articles, numerals, demonstratives and adjectives pre-modify nouns; they do not post modify nouns in noun phrases but are post modified by other phrases and clauses.
Post modifiers in English
The tall girl who was here.
C C H C
The beautiful woman that travelled yesterday.
C C H C
Post modifiers in Tẹẹ
ŋʷĩ: là son second (second son)
H C
jè lè gbàrá ŋʷĩ: la his handsome son second (his handsome second son)
C C H C

Discussion of Findings
This paper reveals that there are similarities in the structure of the noun phrases of Tẹẹ and English languages in the sense that they both have simple and complex noun phrases, example; boy, bá (hand); zìkà ŋʷĩ:nĩ:dãm (one boy), the woman. They both take articles and demonstratives as pre-modifiers, for instance; a girl, lò jìrà é ŋʷĩ:nĩ:dãm (the tall fair boy). They are capable of accepting elements before and after the head. For instance, 'lè nĩ:wà' (good girl), 'lò jìrà é ŋʷĩ:nĩ:dãm' (the tall fair boy), 'lò jìrà è ŋʷĩ:nĩ:dãm' (the tall fair boy), 'ŋʷĩ: la'-son second (second son),

'zìká ŋʷĩ:nĩdãm' (one boy), 'lò ŋʷĩ:nĩ:wà dè kĩã' (the girl is here), the tall girl who was here.

However, there are some striking differences, it is certain that the structure of Tẹẹ noun phrase can accept pre -modification of the head word and post modification of the head word as opposed to English language which only accepts pre modification of nouns in noun phrases. This paper also discovered that most Tẹẹ nouns begin with consonant sounds. Examples; 'kpá' (book), 'nĩ:wà' (woman), 'ŋʷĩ:nĩ:dãm' (boy), 'tɔbárì' (church), 'bòò' (fear), 'gbáàló' (congregation), 'bá' (hand), 'té' (tree).

This study further revealed that Tẹẹ nouns do not change their forms to indicate plurality. That is, by adding the letter(s) 's', 'es', 'ies' among others; as found in the English Language. Instead, numerals like 'zìkà', 'bèèkà', 'tàà'- one, two, three respectively are use to indicate plurality. Also, this paper revealed that Tẹẹ language allows the possessed to come before the possessor in possessive noun phrase e.g. 'wà ŋʷĩ:ndákà' (wife my brother) unlike English language which allows the possessor and an apostrophe before the possessed (my brother's wife). It is also observed that nouns such as brother, sister, son, daughter, son-in-law or daughter's husband, house boy or house girl are all preceded by 'child' (ŋʷĩĩ) respectively, for instance, 'ŋʷĩĩ:ndákà' (brother), 'ŋʷĩ:nĩ:wá' (sister, sister-in-law), 'ŋʷĩĩnĩĩdãm' (son), 'ŋʷĩĩnĩĩwá' (daughter), 'ŋʷĩĩtɔ' (house boy or house girl), unlike the English nouns.

Another important finding is that Tẹẹ noun phrase is both head initial and head final as opposed to English noun phrase which is only head final. Also worthy of note is that there is a slight difference in the use of pronouns to replace nouns in noun phrases in both languages. English language is gender sensitive in the use of pronouns, but Tẹẹ language is not. In English language, the third person pronoun 'he/she' is used in place of nouns but Tẹẹ does not use the third persons 'he/she. Tẹẹ language uses the same pronoun 'à' to refer to both third person singular subject (he/she), and 'yè' for third person singular object 'him/her and third person possessive pronoun, his/her.

Finally, due to the fact that Tẹẹ and English noun phrases do not have the same structure, the Tẹẹ noun phrase may pose a little challenge to the Tẹẹ English second language learners.

Conclusion

This research studied and described the grammar of headedness in Tẹẹ and English (noun phrases). This paper adopted a descriptive analysis procedure. The results from the study established that there are similarities and differences in the noun phrases of both languages. The two languages are similar in the sense that they both allow the headedness of a phrase and that the head can be modified by some linguistic elements.

However, this paper revealed that both languages have some differences. The NP of English is structurally only head final, while Tẹẹ language NP is both head initial and head final. This means that a noun can occupy both first and last positions in a Tẹẹ NP.

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