

NOUN PHRASE STRUCTURES IN MANDARIN CHINESE AND IGBO: A CONTRASTIVE STUDY

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Abstract

This study conducts a contrastive study of noun phrase structures in Mandarin Chinese and Igbo. Utilizing Contrastive Analysis Theory as its theoretical framework and a descriptive approach, the research identifies and compares the noun phrases in both languages, highlighting their similarities and differences in syntax. It also explores the implications of these differences for Chinese learners of Igbo and Igbo learners of Chinese. Data were sourced from secondary materials, including published works on grammar, linguistics, and comparative analysis, as well as unpublished lecture notes and internet-based resources. The analysis focuses on Standard Mandarin and Standard Igbo and is qualitative in nature. A key finding reveals the use of the particle 的 (de) in Mandarin to form noun phrases from adjectives, a feature which is absent in Igbo. This study contributes to the broader field of comparative linguistics, offering valuable insights into how different languages structure the fundamental unit of meaning: the noun phrase.

Introduction

Language is human object. This means that language is connected and associated with humans. Nicholas & Stephen (2009), state Language is a structured system of communication that consists of grammar and vocabulary. It is the primary means by which humans convey meaning, both in spoken and written forms, and may also be conveyed through sign languages. The vast majority of human languages have developed writing systems that allow for the recording and preservation of the sounds or signs of language. Human language is characterized by its cultural and historical diversity, with significant variations observed between cultures and across time.

Trask (2007) defines language as a formal system of signs governed by grammatical rules of combination to communicate meaning. This definition stresses that human languages can be described as closed structural systems consisting of rules that relate particular signs to particular meanings. Further explanation by Britannica.com, stated that many definitions of language have been proposed. Henry Sweet, an English phonetician and language scholar, stated: Language is the expression of ideas by means of speech-sounds combined into words. Words are combined into sentences, this combination answering to that of ideas into thoughts. The American linguists Bernard Bloch and George L. Trager formulated the following definition: A language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates. Any succinct definition of language makes a number of presuppositions and begs a number of questions. The first, for example, puts excessive weight on thought, and the second uses arbitrary in a specialized, though legitimate, way.

This research is a comparative study of Noun phrase in Mandarin Chinese and Igbo language. It explains the style adopted by speakers of both languages in expressing noun phrase. Comparative analysis is the study and comparison of two languages. This is done by looking into the differences and similarities of the studied languages. The main idea of contrastive analysis, as propounded by Robert Lado in his book *Linguistics Across Cultures* (1957), was that it is possible to identify the areas of difficulty a particular foreign language will present for native speakers of another language by systematically comparing the two languages and cultures.

This work is based on the syntactic level. Typologically, Chinese and Igbo share the same word order to form phrase and sentences (SVO).

Example: Chinese: 妈妈给我买的衣服。
the clothes that mom buys for me.

Igbo: Uwe nke mama m na-azutara m.
the clothes that mom buys for me.

Genetically, Chinese and Igbo belong to different language families. Igbo is one of the three major indigenous language of Nigeria. It is classified as a Niger Congo language which belongs to the New West Benue Congo, sub branch of language (Bender Samuel 1989) or the West Benue Congo (Williams & Blench 2000). The native speakers are found in the seven south east states of Nigeria namely: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Delta, Rivers and Imo. Chinese on the other hand is a member of the Sino-Tibetan language family. It is spoken by the Hans across the Northern central and western region of the People's Republic of China.

Statement of the Problem

Every language of the world has its own characteristics and rules governing the formation. Chinese and Igbo are two different languages with different Linguistics origin, background and conditions that make them naturally different. This research intends to analytically compare noun phrase in Chinese and Igbo language using the comparative analysis and unravel the implications the linguistic differences may have on the adequate teaching and learning of the Chinese language called Chinese to Igbo speakers.

Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to compare noun phrase in Chinese and Igbo language in a bid to identify the similarities and differences that occur between the two languages. This research aims as follows:

- 1) To further enlighten the speakers of Chinese and Igbo who do not have full knowledge of the use of noun phrase in both languages.
- 2) To find out how this relationship affects the use of noun phrase of Igbo learners and Chinese Learners as a second language (CSL) in their communication.
- 3) To educate the native speakers of Igbo on how noun phrase of Mandarin Chinese will be free from mother tongue interference (MTL Igbo).

Research Questions

This research will focus its attention on these questions:

1. In what position do noun phrase occur in Chinese and Igbo sentence?
2. What function do noun phrase perform in both languages?
3. What are the similarities in Chinese and Igbo noun phrase?
4. What are the differences in Chinese and Igbo noun phrase?
5. What implications does the differences have on learners of both languages?

Significance of Study

This study provides a threshold for proper understanding of noun phrase in the Chinese and the Igbo language. It will also serve as a rich source of data for consultation by teachers and students on how to improve in their noun phrase in both languages. The research will form an invaluable material for the academia and the public in general. It will also improve the knowledge of Chinese second language (CLS) learner and thus improve both students and teacher's performance as it relates to teaching and learning of Chinese as a second language (SL).

Conceptual Studies

Comparative Analysis

According to online source (Indeed.com), Comparative analysis is the process of comparing items to one another and distinguishing their similarities and differences. When a business wants to analyze an idea, problem, theory or question, conducting a comparative analysis allows it to better understand the issue and form strategies in response. A comparative analysis details how data or processes compare to one another

and explains how they relate. This provides context for the analysis so the differences and similarities in the relationships between data sets are clear. This type of analysis might provide in-depth data on each feature and provide historical data to make comparisons about how each feature performs. Comparative analysis has come to mean the description and explanation of similarities and differences (mainly differences) of conditions or outcomes among large-scale social units, usually regions, nations, societies and cultures (Smelser, 2003).

According to online source (study.com), Comparative analysis is the process that researchers use to compare various datasets to see what they have in common. They can compare and contrast variables to see their similarities and differences.

Lehmann (1993) explains that in linguistics, the comparative method is a technique for studying the development of languages by performing a feature-by-feature comparison of two or more languages with common descent from a shared ancestor and then extrapolating backwards to infer the properties of that ancestor. The comparative method may be contrasted with the method of internal reconstruction in which the internal development of a single language is inferred by the analysis of features within that language.

According to online source (springer.com), the goal of comparative analysis is to search for similarity and variance among units of analysis. Comparative research commonly involves the description and explanation of similarities and differences of conditions or outcomes among large-scale social units, usually regions, nations, societies, and cultures. While the former contrast is well known, it is argued that the latter contrast is fundamental and opens up many possible avenues for comparative study.

Concept of Noun phrase

Noun phrase, as the term suggests, is a group of two or more words that functions like a noun when put together. Like a noun, a noun phrase can also take the place of a subject or an object (Study.com). According to the Oxford Learner's Dictionary, a noun phrase is defined as a word or group of words in a sentence that behaves in the same way as a noun, that is, as a subject, an object, a complement, or as the object of a preposition. Noun phrase, or nominal (phrase), is a phrase that has a noun or pronoun as its head or performs the same grammatical function as a noun. Noun phrases are very common cross-linguistically, and they may be the most frequently occurring phrase type (Wikipedia).

Noun phrases often function as verb subjects and objects, as predicative expressions and as the complements of prepositions. Noun phrases can be embedded inside each other; for instance, the noun phrase *some of his constituents* contains the shorter noun phrase *his constituents*. The Cambridge Dictionary defines a noun phrase as a group of words in a sentence that together behave as a noun, and according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, a noun phrase is a phrase formed by a noun and all its modifiers and determiners and any syntactic element (such as a clause, clitic, pronoun, or zero element) with a noun's function (such as the subject of a verb or the object of a verb or preposition).

According to Ndimele, Uche (2023), defines noun phrase as one of the principle syntactic categories which "appears to be universally present in the English language". It can function as the subject of a sentence, direct or Indirect object of a verb or a complement of an object /a subject or object of a Preposition. Furthermore, "every noun phrase containing a singular count noun must begin with a determiner".

Example

That old neighbourhood. It is not all noun phrase that must begin with a determiner, only those that involve a singular count noun.

Types of Noun phrase

Ndubuisi J. Ike (2001), in his book states seven categories phrase; Regular noun phrase, Gerund phrase, Infinitive phrase, Appositive phrase, Prepositional phrase, Absolute phrase and Participial phrase.

Regular noun phrase

It functions as a single word "noun" in a sentence. It consists of a noun and its modifiers and or qualifiers.

Example

1) The **house** behind.

2) The young **Teacher**.

The modifiers or qualifiers of each noun -head are adjectives and the pattern- determiner (a, an, the) + adjective + noun or determiner + noun + qualifier is a very familiar kind of noun phrase.

Example

3) The tall tree (determiner + adj + noun)

Regular noun phrase is not limited to one modifier or qualifier.

Example

4) The tattered, ragged, smelly shirt above.

Furthermore, noun phrase can occur in various Constituent position.

Example

5) The **suspect** has disappeared.

6) John is determined to sell **the old house** at a given away price.

Gerund phrase

It functions as a noun in a sentence and consist of a gerund and its modifiers or complements.

Example

7) **Forcing the condemned to work the plank blind-folded**, was the usual way of execution in the olden days.

8) **Running round the house** can drive a rewarding exercise.

In the first and last sentence, the gerund phrase functions as the subject of the sentence, and in the Second is the object.

Infinitive phrase

It consists of an Infinitive and its modifiers or complements. The Infinitive phrase functions as noun in a sentence.

Example

9) **To absent oneself from class** is considered a big offence in the Secondary School. [Subject]

10) His life ambition is **to become a lawyer**. [Complement]

11) John pretends **to be innocent**. [object].

Appositive phrase

An appositive is a noun phrase that comes after another noun phrase (its antecedent) to provide extra information about it.

12) Example, in the sentence my wife, **Dorothy**, enjoys musical theater, Dorothy is the appositive, with the antecedent my wife.

Prepositional phrase

A prepositional phrase is a group of words that begins with a preposition and ends with a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase (this noun, pronoun, or noun phrase is the object of the preposition). Prepositional phrases modify or describe nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, and verbs. Prepositional phrases are just that: phrases that begin with a preposition like "to" or "of". Example

13) "The stained glass of the cathedral in **Spain**", everything from "of" to "Spain" is part of a prepositional phrase. We use them to modify other words.

Participial phrase

A participial phrase is a group of words consisting of a participle and the modifier(s) and/or (pro)noun(s) or noun phrase(s) that function as the direct object(s), indirect object(s), or complement(s) of the action or state expressed in the participle.

Example

14) **Removing his coat**, Jack rushed to the river.

15) **Having discovered their mistake**, the student apologized to their teachers.

Participle phrase is of three main kinds:

Participle phrase using present participle: It mostly joins two sentence, especially short sentence.

Example

16) The baby was crying in pain.

She crawled into her mother's hut.

These can be joined by changing the First sentence into a participle phrase.

17) Crying with pain, the baby crawled into her mother's hut.

Participle phrase using past participle:

It also joins two sentences, especially short sentence.

Example

18) The rain soaked the students.

The students ran in different direction.

These can be joined by change the first sentence into a participle phrase.

19) Soaked by the rain, the students ran in different direction.

Participle phrase beginning with "having".

This is use to show that one action and had been completed before another started. Again, the phrase is mostly used ti join short sentence.

Example

20) I started the car.

I discovered there was no petrol.

21) Having started the car, I discovered there was no petrol.

Absolute phrase

Absolute phrase is made up of noun or pronoun followed by participle phrase.

Example

22) **The lecture being over**, the student departed.

An absolute phrase can be said to perform similar function to a clause in a sentence. In the above sentence absolute phrase can be replaced as follow:

23) When the lecture was over, the student departed.

Functions of Noun phrase

Uche (2023) in his Chapter Phrases and Clauses states the following as the grammatical functions of noun phrase: Subject of a sentence, Object of a verb, Complement of a Subject, Complement of an Object, and Object of a preposition.

Noun phrase as Subject of a sentence

This is when the noun phrase occupies the first position in a sentence.

Example: **The tall fat boy** has come again. "**The tall fat boy** " is the noun phrase.

Noun phrase as the Object of a Verb

This is when the noun phrase come after the verb in the sentence.

Example:

25) The police slapped **the tall fat boy.** 'The tall fat boy' function as the object of the verb 'slapped'.

Noun phrase as the Complement of a Subject

When the noun phrase is referring to the same thing or person as the subject, it serves as the complement.

Example

26) Our teacher is **a hard -working man.**

Noun phrase as the Complement of an Object

When the noun phrase follows the object, it functions as the object complement.

Example

27) We made Festus **our leader.**

Noun phrase as the object of a Preposition

Here, the noun phrase occurs after a preposition.

28) The man sees beyond **the ordinary.**

'the ordinary' function as the object of the preposition 'beyond'

Contrastive Analysis Theory

According to online source (Wikipedia), contrastive analysis is the systematic study of a pair of languages with a view to identifying their structural differences and similarities. Historically it has been used to establish language genealogies. From the CAH framework, the assessment tool adopted for this research is Contrastive Analysis (CA). This language teaching tool was extensively used in the field of second language acquisition in the 1960s and 1970s. It was used to explain why some features of a target language were more difficult to learn than others. CA involves comparison of linguistic systems of two languages at various levels which include phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics in order to identify their similarities and differences. It is believed that from this comparison, it is possible to predict areas of possible difficult encountered by learners during the foreign language learning process. The application of CA to teaching is based on the notion that students will naturally acquire those aspects of the L2 which have common features with their L1. It is expected that notion language teachers of the 1960s and 1970s were trained in CA with the aim of analyzing and comparing grammars of the L1 and the L2 of their students as well as training their students to often compare and contrast the language systems as well. The teaching method which was closely associated with the CA was the audio-lingual method.

With the use of audio-lingual method learners were drilled to produce correct responses and errors were immediately corrected. This was done in order to promote a strong emphasis on formation habit. According to the proponents of CA, language is regarded as a conditioned response which is based on the behaviourist approach to learning. Behaviourists believe that errors made by L2 learners are due to interference from the L1 of the learners. Language is seen as a set of structures at the levels of phonology, morphology, and syntax or grammar. Based on this structural view of language and the behavioural view to learning, the task of pedagogy is to determine which sets of habits need to be dropped and those that need to be reinforced so that the learning of L2 would be successful - (Lightbown & Nina ,2006).

According to Contrastive analysis hypothesis formulated by Lado (1957), difficulties in acquiring a new (Second) Language are derived from the differences between the new Language and the native (First) Language of a language user. In this regard, errors potentially made by learners of Second Language are predicted from Interference by the native language. Such a phenomenon is usually known as "negative transfer". Corder (1967), states that Contrastive analysis was largely displaced in SLA by error analysis and

that too much emphasis was placed in transfer errors. Contrastive analysis conveys numerous studies of different language pair have already been carried out in particular focusing on learners of English. Conventionally, Contrastive analysis emphasizes on the “ explanation of differences and explanation of similarities. This helps to establish relationships between two or more phenomena and provide valid reasons.

Empirical Review

Cheng, L.L-S & Sybema, R (2005) focused on the syntactic structure of the noun phrase in Chinese. It discusses the different forms the nominal phrase can take and their interpretational properties, and investigates issues related to modification and the nature of the classifier. They discuss proposals in the literature on the structure of the noun phrase, discussing issues related to number as well as to the question of whether the Chinese noun phrase involves a DP or not. A structure of the Chinese noun phrase must take into account: (i) all the different forms the nominal phrase in Chinese can take; (ii) the interpretational properties of these forms (definiteness, number); (iii) the status and position of “ modification marker” de; and (iv) the differences between the different varieties of Chinese. Drawing on data from Mandarin and Cantonese, the study also talks about significance of NumeralP and NumberP.

Saito et al (2014) stated that noun phrases in Chinese and Japanese are similar in structure. They are N-final in surface word order, they employ “ modifying markers (de in Chinese and no in Japanese) extensively, and they require classifiers for numeral expressions. The study shows that, contrary to appearance, they have quite distinct structures and examines N'-ellipsis, reanalyzed as NP-ellipsis, in the two languages and present evidence for the hypothesis argued for by Andrew Simpson, among others, that Chinese noun phrases are head-initial. According to this hypothesis, de is D, and a classifier heads another projection within DP. Japanese noun phrases, on the other hand, are head-final. No is a contextual Case marker, and classifier phrases are adjuncts modifying nominal projections. The discussion shows that Richard Kayne's LCA analysis of N-final relatives applies elegantly to Chinese but not to Japanese.

Owolabi (1976) carried out a study in noun- noun construction in Yoruba. The study is an insightful and intuitively satisfying description of noun- noun construction from the point of view of an overall syntactic satisfying analysis. Although the constructions are multifarious, the study concentrated on the highly productive one among others. The study is a modified form of the standard theory which utilized both modeled analysis in the description.

Oliukpe (1979) gave a detailed discussion on a comparative study of noun phrase complement construction in English and Igbo. He states that the process of embedding generates either noun phrase complement or relative clause. Because of these two kind of structures generated by embedding, he notes that the practice in TG is to introduce the embedded sentence in two different configurations, thus:

NP=NP+ S

NP=N+S

The first rule generates restrictive relative clauses while the second accounts for noun phrase complements. Oliukpe further states that the T-rules which apply to embedding generate two forms of embedded structure- noun phrase complement introduced by complementizers and relative clause signaled by relative pronoun in English, but by tone change in Igbo. He also provides a discussion on each type of embedded sentence.

Mbah (1999) stated a study of Igbo phrase structure by using Igbo data from both standard Igbo and Nsukka dialect, based on his intuition cross checked with the intuition of other speakers. The work provides an account of Igbo NP within the government and binding framework. It discusses the structural configuration of Igbo NP and examines what constitutes the Igbo NP head as well as its modifiers and their order of modification, and dismisses among other things that two modifiers can modify an NP in a contiguous manner. It also discusses how the NP traces enter into chain relationship with their operators and finally

examines the origin of parastic gaps in Igbo in terms of whether they are occasioned by empty operator movement or deletion order, phonetic, matrix identity and sense anophora.

Mbah (2006) stated that noun phrase in Igbo language can either be the noun by itself as the head, or the noun in conjunction with one or more modifiers. When broken down into its component parts, the Igbo noun phrase (NP) is made up of a noun as the head element and one or more adjectives, adverbs, or adverbial nouns as the dependents. There is a wide variety of dependents, and any NP can have as many as they like. Adjectives, demonstratives, quantifiers, numerals, and pronominal modifiers are all recognized in Standard Igbo, as were these same classes in Igbo, along with a few others, such as the number, the relator 'nke' and the pronouns themselves, among others.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Noun Phrase in Mandarin Chinese

Noun phrase in Chinese is called Míngcí duǎnyǔ (名词短语). Noun phrases in Chinese can consist of a bare noun only or they may contain quantity expressions, numeral classifiers, demonstratives, pronouns, and several types of modifiers. Chinese languages are often called "numeral classifier languages" (all set learning. com).

Regular noun phrase (名词短语) Míngcí duǎnyǔ

It functions as a single word "noun" in a sentence. It consists of noun and its modifiers or qualifiers.

Example

1) The **house** behind

Hòumiàn de fángzi.

后面的房子。

2) The younger **teacher**.

Niánqīng de lǎoshī.

年轻的老师。

The modifiers or qualifiers of each noun head are adjective and the pattern (a,an,the) + adjective+noun or determiner+noun+ qualifier is a very familiar kind of noun phrase.

Regular noun phrase is not limited to one modifier or qualifier

3) The **tattered, ragged, smelly shirt** above.

上面那件破烂、破烂、发臭的衬衫。

Shàngmiàn nà jiàn pòlàn, pòlàn, fā chòu de chènshān.

Furthermore, Mandarin noun phrase can occur in various constituent position.

4) The **suspect** has disappeared.

嫌疑人失踪了。

Xiányí rén shīzōngle.

5) David is determined to sell **the old house** at a given away price.

大卫决心以赠与的价格出售这栋老房子。

Dà wèi juéxīn yǐ zèngyǔ de jiàgé chūshòu zhè dòng lǎo fángzi.

Gerund phrase (动名词短语) Dòng míngcí duǎnyǔ

A gerund phrase is when a verb takes on an "-ing" and becomes a functional noun. It functions as a noun in a sentence and consists of a gerund and its modifiers or complements.

Example

6) **Eating ice cream on a hot day** is refreshing. (Subject)

大热天吃冰淇淋很清爽。

Dà rètiān chī bīngqílín hěn qīngshuǎng

7) **She enjoys reading novels** in her free time. (Direct object)

她空闲时间喜欢读小说。

Tā kòngxián shíjiān xǐhuān dú xiǎoshuō.

In the first sentence, the gerund phrase functions as the subject of the sentence, and in the second as the direct object.

Infinitive phrase (不定式短语) Bùdìng shì duǎnyǔ

Infinitives are used to explain why someone is doing something, often replacing the phrase "in order to." In this case, they act as adverbs to describe the main verb. It consists of an Infinitive and its complements. It functions as noun phrase in a sentence.

Example

8) Her life ambition is **to become a Lawyer**. [Complement]

她的人生理想是成为一名律师。

Tā de rénshēng lǐxiǎng shì **chéngwéi yī míng lǚshī**.

9) John pretends **to be innocent**. [Object]

约翰假装无辜。

Yuēhàn jiǎzhuāng **wúguī**.

Appositive phrase (同位语短语) Tóngwèi yǔ duǎnyǔ

An appositive is a noun phrase that comes after another noun phrase (its antecedent) to provide extra information about it.

Example

10) In the sentence "my wife, **Dorothy**, enjoys musical theater", "**Dorothy**" is the appositive, with the antecedent "my wife"

我的妻子多萝西喜欢音乐剧。

Wǒ de qīzi **duō luó xī** xǐhuān yīnyuè jù.

Prepositional phrase (介词短语) Jiècí duǎnyǔ

A prepositional phrase is a group of word that begins with a preposition and ends with a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase (this noun, pronoun, or noun phrase is the object of the preposition). It modifies or describes nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, and verbs. Prepositional phrase are just phrase that begin with a preposition like "to" or "of".

Example

11) The cat fell off **of** the couch.

猫从沙发上掉下来。

Māo cóng shāfā **shàng** diào xiàlái.

Participle phrase (分词短语) Fēncí duǎnyǔ

A participial phrase is a group of words consisting of a participle and the modifiers and/or pronouns or noun phrase(s) that function as the direct object(s), indirect object(s) or complement(s) of the action or state expressed in the participle.

Example

12) **Removing his coat**, David rushed to the river.

大卫脱下外套，冲向河边。

Dà wèi tuō xià wàitào, **chōng xiàng hé biān**.

13) **Having discovered his mistake**, he apologised to his teacher.

发现自己的错误后，他向老师道歉。

Fāxiàn zìjǐ de cuòwù hòu, tā xiàng lǎoshī dàoqiàn.

Absolute phrase (绝对短语) Juéduì duǎnyǔ

Absolute phrase is made up of noun or pronoun followed by participle phrase.

Example

14) The lecture being over, the student departed

讲座结束，学生离开。

Jiǎngzuò jiéshù, xuéshēng líkāi.

Also, an absolute phrase can be said to perform similar function to a clause in a sentence.

In the above sentence absolute phrase can be replaced as follow:

15) When the lecture was over, the student departed.

讲座结束后，学生离开。

Jiǎngzuò jiéshù hòu, xuéshēng líkāi.

Use of Noun phrase in Chinese

A noun phrase consists of a main noun, and any words or phrases that describe or modify the main noun.

In Chinese, all noun modifiers occur before the main noun (Learn Chinese everyday .com).

Nouns can be modified by: Specifiers / Number + Measure Word

- Nouns
- Pronouns
- Adjective Phrases
- Verb Phrases (verb + object)
- Verb Phrases (subject + object)
- Preposition Phrases

Modifier = Specifiers / Number + Measure Word

Example:

1. Those three books

nà sān běn shū。

那三本书。

Modifier Noun

those 3 measure word book

Modifier = Nouns

Example:

1. Teacher's book

lǎoshī de shū。

老师的书。

Modifier Noun

teacher particle book

Modifier = Pronouns

Example:

1. Our book

wǒmen de shū。

我们的书。

Modifier Noun

our particle book

Modifier = Adjective Phrases

Example:

1. A very thick book

hěn hòu de shū 。

很厚的书。

Modifier Noun

very thick particle book

Modifier = Verb Phrases (verb + object)

Example:

1. The girl who sells books

mài shū de nǚzǐ 。

卖书的女子。

(Verb Object)

Modifier Noun

Sell books particle girl

Modifier = Verb Phrases (subject + verb)

Example:

1. The book that we bought

wǒmen mǎi de shū 。

我们买的书。

(Object Verb)

Modifier Noun

we buy particle books

Modifier = Preposition Phrases

Example:

1. A friend who has come from UK

cóng yīngguó lái de péngyǒu 。

从英国来的朋友。

Modifier Noun

from UK come particle friend

In English, for the Verb Phrases and Preposition Phrases.

Examples above,

– the girl who sells books

– the book that we bought

– a friend who has come from UK

The Modifier occurs after the main noun as a relative clause introduced by a relative pronoun ('who,' 'whom,' 'which') or a complementizer ('that').

However, in Chinese, all phrases/ clauses that describe or modify the main noun should precede the main noun.

There are no words that correspond to relative pronoun (who, whom, which) or a complementizer (that) in Chinese.

In some occasion, when the main noun is predictable from the context, it may be omitted. When the main noun is omitted, '的' cannot be omitted. Example:

1. That book is mine (That book is my book)

nà běn shū shì wǒ de 。

那本书是我的。

that measure

word book is mine

那本书是我的书。

Formation of Noun phrase in Mandarin Chinese

The order of constituents in the (maximal) noun phrase structure is as follows: possessor + nominal modifiers + head noun and appositive modifiers + adjectives + determiners + relative clause. The word order of noun phrase is SVO- Subject+ Verb+ Object.

Noun phrase in Igbo

Noun phrase in Igbo is called (Okwu aha). Noun Phrase in Igbo language can either be the noun by itself as the head, or the noun in conjunction with one or more modifiers (<https://gjournal.org/GJLLR>). The following are types of Noun phrase in Igbo:

Regular Noun phrase (Akpaokwu aha mgbe niile)

It functions as a single noun in a sentence. It consists of a noun and its modifiers.

Example

1) The **house** behind

ụlọ dị n'azụ

2) The old **man**

agadi **nwoke**

Regular noun phrase is not limited to one modifier.

Example

3) That **kind, caring, handsome** man above

Nwoke ahụ **mara mma, nwe obi umeala** no na- elu.

Gerund phrase (Akpaokwu Gerund)

It functions as a noun in a sentence and consists of Gerund and its complements.

4) **Running round the house** can prove a rewarding

igbagharị gburugburu na- ụlọ nwere ike igosi mmegha ahụ na-akwughachi ụgwọ.

In the first and last sentence, the gerund phrase functions as the subject of the sentence, and in the second is the object.

Infinitive phrase (Akpaokwu enweghị ngwụcha)

It consists of an Infinitive and its modifiers or complements. The Infinitive phrase functions as noun in a sentence.

5) **To absent oneself from class** is considered a big offence in secondary school. (Subject)

A biaghị klaasị dị ka nnukwu mmejọ na ụlọ akwụkwọ sekondrị.

6) His life ambition is **to become a lawyer**. (Complement)

ọchịchọ ndu ya bu **ibu onye oka iwu**.

Appositive phrase (Akpaokwu dị mma)

An appositive is a noun phrase that comes after another noun phrase (its antecedent) to provide extra information about it.

Example

7) "My brother, **Ifeanyi** , loves cooking as his hobby".

nwannem, **Ifeanyi** huru isi nri dika ihe omume nturundụ ya.

Ifeanyi is the appositive, with the antecedent "my brother".

Prepositional phrase (Akpaokwu amụma)

A prepositional phrase is a group of words that begins with a preposition and ends with a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase are the object of the preposition. Prepositional phrases modify or describe nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, and verbs. In Igbo, some of the lexical prepositions include: na 'to, in, at, from', maka 'for', and gbasara 'about'. Prepositions in Igbo are used to show relationships between words in a sentence,

indicating location, direction, time, and other relationships. The similarity observed between Chinese and Igbo lexical prepositions is that they both occur before a Noun Phrase (NP), that is, they take NP as their complement.

Example

8) Our people **and** the white men will compete today.

Ndi ala anyi **na** ndi bekee ga-aso mkpi taa.

Participial phrase (Nkebi ahirjokwu)

A participle phrase is a group of words consisting of a participle and the modifiers, and or pronouns or noun phrase that function as the direct objects, indirect objects, complements of the action or state expressed in the participle.

Example

9) **Having seen the teacher in class**, the student stopped playing.

Ka ọ hụrụ onye nkuzi na klaasi, nwa akwukwọ ahụ kwusiri igwu egwu.

Absolute phrase (Akpaokwu zuru oke)

Absolute phrase is made up of noun or pronoun followed by participle phrase.

Example

10) **The lecture being over**, the student departed.

Ka nkuzi a gwusiri, nwata akwukwo apuru.

An absolute phrase can be said to perform similar function to a clause in a sentence.

In the above sentence absolute phrase can be replaced as follow:

11) **When the lecture was over**, the student departed.

Mgbe nkuzi ahụ gwụchara, nwa akwukwọ ahụ pụturu

Use of Noun Phrase in Igbo

The typical structure for a sentence containing Igbo NP

Emenanjo (2015) states that noun phrase in Igbo language can either be the noun by itself as the head, or the noun in conjunction with one or more modifiers. When broken down into its component parts, the Igbo noun phrase (NP) is made up of a noun as the head element and one or more adjectives, adverbs, or adverbial nouns as the dependents. There is a wide variety of dependents, and any NP can have as many as they like. Adjectives, demonstratives, quantifiers, numerals, and pronominal modifiers are all recognized in Standard Igbo, as were these same classes in Igbo, along with a few others, such as the number, the relator 'àkè' and the pronouns themselves, among others. These are only a few examples of elements that are integral to the Igbo NP, especially the noun that serves as its head. These are:-

The Noun/ Noun Alone (N0)

To put it simply, the noun is the most important part of the noun phrase. The noun stands alone as the topic of the sentence, without any modifying or qualifying adjectives or adverbs. This can be any noun or head word. A nouns singular form is:

1. (a) Proper nouns

Examples

Àmaka, Àbá, Ọnìchà, Amaku, Peter, etc.

NP → PROP NOUN

(b) The noun can also be names of things:

Examples:

Óché 'Chair', áká 'hand', ímírí 'water', ímí 'nose', etc

In accordance with the rules, a demonstrative (determiner) can be used with a common noun as shown:

NP/N1 → N + (DET)

Examples:

2. (a) Uzo à 'this door'

Door this

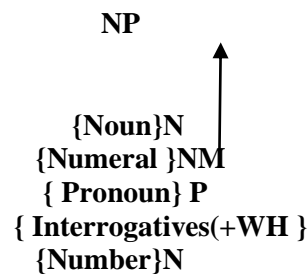
(b) Ugbo ala áhụ ‘that car’

Car that

(c) nwókō áhụ ‘that man’

man that

The nominal categories in Ígbò include the nouns, pronouns (in this case, the independent pronouns), numerals, numbers and interrogatives/+WH-words, each of which forms a noun phrase; represented diagrammatically as follows:



The NP can be rewritten as:

NP → Noun (N)/ (n)

The NP can hence, expand thus:

3. (A) NP → Noun (N) as in:

Aba, nwóke, óché, ụkwụ

‘a town’ ‘man’, ‘chair’, ‘leg’

(B) NP → Numerals (Nm) as in:

ábùò, àt’ọ, ìrì, nàrì, ọgū/óhū ótù nàrì

‘Two’, ‘three’, ‘ten’, ‘hundred’, ‘twenty’ ‘one hundred

The Noun with Dependents/Modifiers (Qualifiers and Specifiers)

Nouns can have constituents known as nominal modifiers in their syntax. Adjectives, demonstratives, quantifiers / plural markers, relators, and pronominal modifiers are examples of NP dependents/modifiers in Igbo language. Emenanjo (2015) coined the term pronominal modifiers, which is used here to describe a construction that includes a noun as the head and a pronoun as a specifier/qualifier. The adjectival modifiers have also been divided into two types: pre-head adjectival modifiers and post-head adjectival modifiers.

Plural Markers

Plural markers turn singular nouns into plurals. A singular noun becomes countable when pluralized. In Igbo, the morphological agreement features for singular and plural are not visibly marked; instead, singular and plural are indicated by means of morphemes that stand on their own, such as the pronouns he/she and they/them: ụmụ/ndị, (children/people) óthụthụ ‘several/many’, express plural or a condition of more than one. Mbamba is another word that denotes multiples. A phrase can be formed with a noun and a plural marker.

NP → PL marker+N

4. Examples:

(a) ụmụ ákwúkwó

Pl + N

Children book

‘Students’

(b) ndị mmádu

pl+N

People people

‘A race of people /group of people’

The Noun with Quantifiers

Similar to the quantifier, a small number of words make up this closed class in Igbo. Like adjectives and demonstratives, quantifiers change the noun that they follow. They present and alter a compiled set of items. The quantifiers identified in Ígbò include: ‘dùm/lílélé, òchá (all), náàní/sóósò ‘only/alone’, úfódhù ‘some/few’ and óthùthù ‘many/several’, ághá/óhú (many/ plenteous). The quantifiers derived from numerals include, ààbuò ‘two’, ààtò ‘three’ àànó four. ìisè, ìisì, etc. They precede the noun they modify. The list of quantifiers derived from numbers is endless.

Sóósò/Náàní, ‘alone/ only’, úfódhù ‘few/some’, can come before or after the noun or pronouns they modify. óthùthù ‘many/several’ and Mbamba/óhú occur only head-first, while ‘dùm/ lílélé, òchá (all), occur head-last. Plural pronouns take quantifiers in Ígbò.

Examples:

5. (a) mmádhù ànọ náàní/sóósò (bìàrà).

(N+NUM +Q)

People four only

‘Only four People ‘

(b) náàní/sóósò mmádhù ànọ (bìàrà).

Q + N +NUM

Only people four

Only four people ‘

(c) óthùthù mmu agbogho (ábìàghì)

[Q] + [N]

Many/several young girls come neg.

‘Many or several girls did not come’

(d) úfódhù há (riri)

Q + Pro(3pl) (ate)

‘Some (of them) (ate)

(e) mmádhù aabuo/ ààtò/àànó/ìisè/ìisì, (bìàrà).

[N]+[Q]

People ‘two’, ‘three’ four,’five’, ‘six’,etc, came

Two, three, four, five, six people came’

Quantifiers also follow the head. Some of them like dùm/lílélé, òchá, (all) ààbò ‘two’, ààtò ‘three’ àànó, four’, ìisè, five, ìisì ‘six’, etc; cannot form the head of a syntactic unit in Ígbò. Emenanjo (2015), states that Quantifiers can keep their original tone when used with nouns, but when they come after other words—especially demonstratives—they often lose that tone i.e. ‘à’ and ‘áhù’, or a relative clause, two of them may change their tones according to the tone rules.

Examples:-

6. (a) Hì lílélé bí l’ Àbá

Them all live in Aba

They all live in Aba’

(b) Hì dùm bí l’ Àbá.

They all live in Aba

‘All of them live in Aba’

(c) Hì ààbò bí l’ótù úlò.

The two live in one house
'All of the two live in the same house'

The Noun with the Numeral

The numeral is among the nominal elements in Ígbò. Examples, ótù, ábùò 'two', àtó 'three', ìrí na ise 'fifteen', ìrí áto 'thirty', ìrí isii 'sixty', ìrí ano 'fourty,' etc. Numerals are words that represent quantities and figures of numbers. In addition to being used in counting, they also function as modification for specific nouns.

Emenanjo (2015), Commenting on their syntactic and tonal behaviors, says Numerals following nouns behave like nouns in second position in the associative construction. However, when a numeral with low initial syllable follows a noun with a low final syllable, both the noun and the numeral keep their natural tones. Numerals appear in cardinal and ordinal forms. In contrast to position, a cardinal number displays amount. On the other hand, both the noun and the numeral adjust their tones in accordance with the tone rules when ordinal meaning is required. Ordinal numbers do not represent amount but rather a location. Here, tone plays a key role in conceptually separating the ordinal and cardinal numbers.

Examples

Demonstrate cardinal to ordinal:

7. (a) úlò + àtó (cardinal/quantity) (b) úlō ātó (ordinal/position)

House three house three

Three houses 'third house'

(a) úlò + ànó (b) úlō ānó (ordinal)

House four house four

'Four houses' 'fourth house'

The tone of the cardinal and ordinal differ from one another but in terms of structure, the cardinal's numerals are the modifiers, whereas the ordinal's word modifies the numeral. When ordinal meaning is being stated, associative constructions alter the tone pattern, while maintaining them when cardinal meaning is being used.

8. (a) mímádù aábùò/átó mímádū ābùò/ātó

[NOUN+NM] [NOUN+POSITION]

Person two/three person two/three

Two/three person second/third person

The Noun with the Relator

In Ígbò, an independent lexical item 'n̄kè' Ndimele (2016), in an oral discussion, terms it "particulariser", which designates position/genitive, appears in relation with the noun it modifies. The relator is the term used to refer to it in this study. One can see the relator inside the NP. The relator connects the noun phrase and the possessor through the location being possessed.

Examples

9. (a) ónyé n̄kē ikpe-azu

[NOUN]+[RELT]+[NM]

Person place/position last

'Person in the last position/last person'

(b) nwá n̄kē āťó hí

[NOUN] + [RELT] + [NM] + [Pro.M]

Child place/position three their

'their third child'

N̄kè also behaves as a noun in some environments, such as, when it combines with demonstratives as in:

10. (a) n̄kè à

Thing/one this
N+DEM
'this one'
(b) ñkè áhù
N+DEM
Thing that
'That one'

Formation of Noun phrase in Igbo

A phrase can be formed with a noun and a plural marker as: NP → PL marker+N. The order of constituents in the (maximal) noun phrase structure is as follows: possessor + nominal modifiers + head noun and appositive modifiers + adjectives + determiners + relative clause.

Similarities in Mandarin Chinese and Igbo Noun phrase

They both have the SVO word order at sentences structure and they form their noun phrase using this other.

Mandarin Chinese

1. The book that we bought.
wǒmen mǎi de shū.
我们买的书。

Igbo

1. The book that we bought.
Akwụkwọ anyị zụtara .

Just like Igbo language, some Mandarin Chinese noun phrase are formed through compounding.

2. They both have phonology. Mandarin Chinese have four lexical tones while Igbo have three distinct tones.
3. They both have Morphology. Mandarin Chinese and Igbo have extensional morphology and makes use of affixes: prefix, superfix, interfix, infix and suffix. Both have bound morphemes as well as free morphemes.

Differences in Chinese and Igbo Noun phrase

The noun phrases of Chinese and Igbo are quite different in a number of ways.

- 1) Chinese noun phrase are very short and simple often consisting of just a single noun while Igbo noun phrases are typically much longer and can contain a number of modifiers and prepositional phrases.

Chinese, the phrase "shenme shi" (什么事), which means "what happened," is a simple noun phrase that consists of two nouns.

Igbo, the phrase "Ihe ojoo, which means "bad thing," is a more complex noun phrase that includes a noun, a number, a possessive pronoun, and a modifier.

- 2) Chinese noun phrases typically do not have article while Igbo noun phrase often includes articles. In Chinese, noun phrases typically do not include articles, such as "a," "an," or "the." Instead, nouns are typically preceded by a demonstrative, such as "这" (this), "那" (that), or "哪" (which). For example, "这本书" (this book) does not include an article. In Igbo, however, noun phrases often include articles, such as "o", "E" and "A".

- 3) Chinese noun phrases are not usually inflected, while Igbo noun phrases can be inflected to indicate number, gender or case. There is no difference between the singular and plural forms of nouns, and there are no nouns that are specifically masculine or feminine. For example, the noun "书" (book) is the same in both the singular and plural forms, and does not change to indicate gender. In Igbo, however, nouns can be inflected for number, gender, and case. For example, the noun "dike" (hero) has a singular form "dike" and a plural form "Umu dike".

Implication for Igbo speakers learning Chinese and Chinese speakers learning Igbo

This study demonstrates the differences between noun phrase in Mandarin Chinese and Igbo. Chinese has more noun phrase than Igbo Language. Some Chinese noun phrase structure do not occur in Igbo and vice

versa. This result to errors on the part of the Chinese learner and Igbo learner. For them to get over this problem, they must appreciate the fact that every language is dynamic and unique. They, therefore, must learn to use noun phrase as the owners of the language would use them.

Conclusion

The study having examined the noun phrase of Chinese and Igbo language. We have gone this far in solving the stated problem of this paper by, among other things, discussing and comparing the noun phrase and use of noun phrase of Chinese and Igbo and finding out the implication for Igbo learners of Chinese and Chinese learners of Igbo. We advocate, for the learners, of both languages to know the differences in the use of Chinese noun phrase and Igbo noun phrase. This would enable them to improve on their use of noun phrase of both languages. Chinese Teachers, on their part should teach their students how to correctly use Chinese noun phrase especially those not found in Igbo. Moreover, the teacher should promptly correct any structural error by the students.

Recommendations

Teachers of Igbo L1 learners of Chinese should have a good knowledge of Igbo. This will enable them to know the differences between Igbo noun phrase and Chinese noun phrase. With this, they will be able to account for the errors they observe in spoken Chinese. Again, the students should be made to note the difference between Chinese and Igbo especially as they concern the noun phrase class. This will help them in using the noun phrase correctly. Learners of Chinese should know how to structure Igbo noun phrase to be able to make a statement. Drill exercise should be used in teaching aspects if Chinese noun phrase have a highly divergent from Igbo noun phrase.

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