
**Syntactic Analysis of
Topicalization in
Ikwuano Igbo**

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Abstract

The aim of this paper 'Syntactic Analysis of Topicalization in Ikwuano Igbo' is to examine topicalization in Ikwuano, with a view to establishing the Ikwuano strategy. Syntax deals with the rules and guidelines for sentence formation while word order arrangement contributes a lot in the grammaticality of a sentence. Topicalization is a mechanism of syntax that establishes an expression as the sentence or clause topic by having it appear at the front of the sentence. This research argues that topicalization is an unbounded movement; it claims that, there is a complex interconnection between topicalization and focus in the language as no constituents of a sentence can be focused without topicalization. The Theoretical framework for this study is the movement principle of principles and parameters of Noam Chomsky. In the process of movement, an element iterates from one place to the other. This work explains the motivation for the topicalized strategy and its behavior in the language. The data for this paper is elicited utterances by adult native speakers from Ikwuano and intuition from the researcher who is a native speaker. Finding reveals that, when the moving constituent is extracted from its logical position, it leaves behind a copy

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that is regarded as a ghost of the moving item. This study argues that topicalization is a kind of focusing and fronting of constituent's structure because it involves the preposing of the item to be topicalized as a leftward movement rule.

Key words: Constituent, Focus, Fronting, Movement, Word-order

Introduction

Syntax is the level of Linguistic study that governs the formation of sentences. The words and phrases in every language are combined into clauses and sentences. For communicative purposes, syntactic rules of every language provide descriptions that group together those words which hang closely together both formally and semantically. Grammaticality relates to a well formed sentence that brings mutual intelligibility between a speaker and a listener, Mbah (2011) defines grammar as the totality of the comprehensive language structure and a raw material for communication across human cultures. Eyisi (2006) defines grammar as the way a language manipulates and combines word (orbits of words) in order to form longer units of meanings. There is a set of rules which governs how units of meaning may be constructed in any language. A learner who knows grammar is one who has mastered and can apply these rules to express himself or herself in what would be considered the acceptable language forms. The word order is very relevant in the grammaticality of a sentence in a language. Tallerman (2011) explains that word order refers not to single words but to the order of phrases, which he terms as constituent order. In many languages, including English, subjects are distinguished from objects by having a fixed position for each Noun Phrase (NP) in the ordinary

basic constituent order. The three constituents include subject, verb and object, but there are six logically possible variations, and indeed all six orders do occur as a basic constituent order amongst the languages of the world Tallerman (2011; p.173) as in:

- i. Northern Sotho, the word order is subject-verb-object (SVO)
- ii. Turkish, the word order is subject-object-verb (SOV)
- iii. Irish, the word order is verb-subject-object (VSO)
- iv. Gilbertese, the word order is verb-object-subject (VOS)
- v. Apalai, the word order is object-verb-subject (OVS)
- vi. Apurina, the word order is object-subject-verb (OSV)

The sentence order in some of the languages of the world are reasonably uncontroversial, they represent the order of the languages as in Northern Sotho is an SVO language, and Turkish is an SOV language.

However, saying a language has certain basic constituent order does not mean that it never has any other orders. English and Igbo have basic SVO order but an object-initial order can be used to give particular emphasis to the direct object.

In syntax, as in other levels of language description, it is assumed that the native speaker has underlying competence in the generalization and comprehension of utterances in his language. This competence is manifested in many ways as a native speaker of a language can produce and understand unlimited number of totally new sentences. Part of the competence of the native speaker is his judgment on grammaticality (Chomsky 1965). This is the internalized grammar (I grammar). This internalized grammar, otherwise known as the universal grammar (UG), is claimed to be incorporated in the innate language faculty, residual in all normal human beings. Language faculty, according to

Radford (2004) is a biological endowment for speech.

Statement of Problem

The word order arrangement poses a lot of problems in the description of a natural language. The problems of word order arrangement have generated both syntactic and semantic disorder in the analysis of a language. The movement principle of Chomsky requires that a natural language has the capacity to move elements from one position of a syntactic structure to another. Some of the speakers in a particular language do not understand that, the principle of movement originated from different transformations in different languages. The word order arrangement differs from one language to another. English and Igbo have the same word order arrangement as subject-verb-object (SVO), while Turkish has subject-object-verb (SOV). The movement from one position to another position in Ikwuano Igbo is as a result of transformation which is meaning preserving. The issue of moving an item from its original position to a new position (Landing site) creates an empty category (trace) which is co-indexed with the moved item, requires a thorough description of a sentence. Topicalization involves the proposing of an item to be topicalized as a leftward movement principle in language description for grammaticality. This paper investigates the issue of topicalization in Ikwuano Igbo for grammatical analysis.

Aims and Objectives of the Study

- This study aims at illustrating how Ikwuano Igbo confirm to the Syntactic structure of topicalization transformation.

- To examine and analyze the issue of topicalization transformation in Ikwuano Igbo syntax
- To give a formal account of topicalization as a movement rule in Igbo
- To analyze how some elements can move from its site to its landing position leaving an empty gap which is co-indexed with the moved item
- **Significance of the Study**
- The significance of this study does not only lie, in its values as an added existing volume of relevant linguistic literature in grammatical analysis. Its findings will help in upgrading the Ikwuano Igbo on the same level with other dialects like the Onitsha, Ngwa, Owerri, Mbaise and others. Also, its findings will provide some scholarly analysis on;
- Highlights topicalization- in the dialect and Igbo in general and making the teachers, students and government realize the need for a better enhancement of the local dialects of Igbo. This study will help in creating awareness among the citizens as partners in progress with local, state and federal government in providing quality education in Nigeria languages. This work will assist in the area of enriching and empowering the indigenous languages in creating awareness in the socio-cultural political, religious background of the people.

Review of Related Literature

The Phenomenon of Topicalization

Topicalization is an unbounded movement by which a wh-phrase can

move indefinitely far to the left across an unbounded number of clause boundaries into an initial position, Matthews (2007) defines topicalization as a process of forming a derived construction in which one element is a topic. Nwachukwu (1995) describes topicalization as a term used to describe the movement of a constituent from its position in the predicate to a sentence – initial position for purposes of focus. Thus topicalization is a syntactic strategy for achieving focus. Nwachukwu (1995) made a distinction between topic and focus. He analyzed both topic and focus as discourse features which have definite syntactic coding. Topic centers on given or old information that is, that piece of information/knowledge which the speaker assumes to be in the consciousness of the listener at the time of utterance. Topic-comment are two terms that are closely associated with this discourage function. When a constituent is made topic, it is set apart from the rest of the sentence which acts as a comment to it.

Focus represents what is relatively the most important or salient information in a given setting (Dik 1979: p19). It contains a piece of information in a sentence which the speaker assumes to be unknown to the listener. Amaechi (2019) states that focus fronting leaves gaps, do not only hold for direct objects but also for subjects, indirect objects and adjuncts. Anyanwu (2007) explains that both topicalization and clefting are used to focus or give some communicative prominence to a constituent over and above constituents within a construction. Topicalization is “the phenomenon in which some element of a sentence is singled out as the 'topic' by the use of a marked construction”, (Trask (1993, p. 280). Clefting, on the other hand, is “the syntactic device by

which a focused constituent is extracted from its logical position and often set off with some additional material, including an extra verb (Trask 1993, p. 46)

These definitions show that both topicalization and clefting involve giving communicative prominence to some constituent within a construction.

This study argues that topicalization leaves a gap behind with an empty trace. The topicalized element allows the linking of the element with its trace like in *wh*-movement. We also argue that topicalization transformation is subject to the subjacency condition as each movement can be iterated. It is a rule that governs an item moving from *comp* to *comp*. Unbounded movement is possible in subjacency. Topicalization transformation is a kind of focusing because it involves the preposing of the item to be topicalized as a leftward movement rule. The topicalized item is the object of the most deeply embedded clause and that the sentence so generated is grammatical as Nwachukwu, (1995: 182) posits that topicalization transformation has no difference in meaning, but with a difference of syntactic structure.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework adopted in this paper is the movement principle of principles and parameters. Movement is a linguistic principle, which requires that a natural language has the capacity to move elements from one position of a syntactic structure to another. (Mbah., 2016:124). Movement is a principle that causes a lot of other reactions in the sentence after it has applied.

Matthews (2007) posits that movement is a process in generative

grammars by which a unit is moved from one position to another within a syntactic structure as in wh-movement formulated in principles and parameters theory as a principle by which any unit could move anywhere. ('move' or earlier 'move α' '). The movement principle was formed in Government and Binding Theory by the links between a unit that had moved repeatedly and successive traces in the positions it had been in previously. Richards (2012; 344) defines movement rule as a rule that plays role in deriving a surface structure by the reordering of constituents. For example, in the question "What did you see?", 'what' is assumed to be generated initially in the direct object position and then moved to initial position. Movement is a principle that causes a lot of other reactions in the sentence after it has applied. In the process of movement, an element iterates from one place to the other. When the moving constituents are extracted from its logical position, it leaves behind a copy which is co-indexed to the moved item leaving an empty gap.

Methodology

The researcher collected data from fluent speakers of Ikwuano Igbo. The researcher also relied on her intuition as a native speaker of the language but where any given set of data contradicts her intuition, direct oral interview was used to elicit comparative data from other native speakers of the language. The researcher consulted many textual materials where data were drawn for measurement. The study adopted the descriptive method analysis. We collected data through primary method whereby, the researcher engaged in the interactive and discussion as well as interview method helped the researcher to look

further way each informant produced sentences in the language. The sampling method was used. The researcher ensured that doubtful data were always crosschecked for accuracy by the competent native speaker.

Result and discussion

Analyzing the syntactic structure of Topicalization

In describing topicalization in Ikwuano Igbo we have to analyze the syntactic processes involved in the formation of topicalized structures. The grammatical structure of constituents of the topicalization drawn on speaker-hearer's competence accounts a lot in sentence formation. As we can see below;

1a) Amadi choro ilu Adanma.

Amadi VB. want SUF. INF. marry Adanma.

Amadi wants to marry Adanma.

b) [Adanma]i that Amadi want SUF. INF. marry [e]i.

[Adanma]i that Amadi want SUF. INF. marry [e]i.

[Adanma]i is the person that Amadi wants to marry [e]i.

In sentence (1a), the speaker made a statement concerning Amadi. 'Amadi' is the subject's NP while the girl 'Adanma' is the Object NP position. The sentence is divided into two – the subject, Noun phrase and the predicate with the main verb 'choro' and the infinite verb 'ilu' 'to marry': The sentence has two verbs indicating that the sentence is a complex one.

In sentence (1b), the subject NP 'Adanma' was moved from the object position (1a) into the subject NP which is co-indexed with its empty gap. The sentence in (1b) has a gap and the moved item has a relationship from the extraction site to the landing site. Transformation movement was applied in sentence (1a) through the unbounded 'that movement' which result in the sentence (1b), which has an empty trace.

The topicalized constituent allows the linking of the element with its trace. Topicalized transformation is a type of focusing because it involves the preposing of the item to be topicalized as a leftward movement. This is illustrated below.

- 2a) Nnenna siri ofe t̩r̩q̩ ezigbo ʉt̩q̩
 Nnena cook PSI soup sweet ru very sweet
 Nnenna cooked delicious soup
- b) [ofe]i t̩r̩q̩ ezigbo ʉt̩q̩ ka Nnenna Siri [e]i
 [soup]i delicious that Nnenna cook PSI
 [Delicious soup]i that Nnenna cooked. [e]i
- 3a) Onye siri ofe t̩r̩q̩ ezigbo ʉt̩q̩
 Who cook PST soup delicious
 Who cooked delicious soup?
- b) Nnenna siri ofe t̩r̩q̩ ezigbo ʉt̩q̩.
 Nnenna cook PSI soup delicious
 Nnenna cooked delicious soup
- 4a) Nnenna bu onye siri ofe t̩r̩q̩ ezigbo ʉt̩q̩
 Nnenna cop verb who cook PST deligious soup
 Nnenna is [the one]i that cooked delicious soup
- b) [Ó bù]i [Nnenna]i siri ofe toro ezigbo ʉt̩q̩
 She cop VB. Nnenna cook PST. soup delicious

[It is]i [Nnenna]i that cooked delicious soup.

Sentence (2a) is a statement that 'Nnenna cooked delicious soup'. When movement transfer is applied (2a), sentence it changes to sentence (2b) 'delicious soup that Nnenna cooked'. The leftward movement which is influenced by the transformation moves from the NP object position in (2a) to the subject position of (2b) as a focused item. The constituent lays emphasis on the subject NP of the sentence. The word order arrangement is a syntactic arrangement that contributes to grammaticality of a sentence in Ikwuano Igbo and other languages of the world.

Sentence (3a) is an interrogative sentence, 'Who cooked the soup?' When transformation movement is applied to a question sentence, the result is sentence (3b) 'Nnenna cooked delicious soup'. The WH-question receives the animate subject NP 'Nnenna' which fills the subject NP position which means that the NP slot is meant only for the proper Noun NP.

In Sentence (4a) the focus of the sentence is on 'Nnenna' and they are co-indexed meaning they refer to the same item in the subject NP position. The sentence (4b) states that emphasis and focus on Nnenna; that cooked the delicious meal. The movement items do not affect the meaning of the sentence. The movement that affected the above sentence is syntactic and not semantic.

In sentence (4b) the NPs 'Ó bù' 'it is' and Nnenna are co-indexed. The constituents which are conjoint in reference are co-indexed.

Complex Sentences in Topicalization

Another syntactic feature in relation to topicalization is the unbounded movement that can move from complementizer to another complementizer (Comp to Comp).

In Ikwuano Igbo, a complex NP is made up of head noun and a clausal modifier.

The tone of the pronoun in (4b) is high indicating emphatic structure of the pronoun

5a) Ụd?ihe a, agagh?m eme ya.

DEM. PRON. type thing DEF. 1st PERS. NEG. SUF. objective
3rd PERS. PRON.

This kind of thing, I don't think I would do it.

b) [Agaghi m]i eme ụdi ihe a [e]i

1st PER. PRON. NEG. do DEM. type thing

[I don't think]i that I would do this kind of thing[e]i.

6a) Ada átughi ụjọ maka ndi ohi áhù.

Fear Pref. NEG. VB. di CONJ. those thieves DEM.

Ada is not afraid because of those thieves.

b) [Máká ndí óhí áhụ] Ádá átugh?ujọ [e]i

Because those thieves DEM. Ada PREF. VB. Fear

[Because of those thieves]i Ada was not afraid [e]i

7a) Agagh?m eri nri ahụ.

[Nri ahu]i agaghi PREF. NEG. SUF. PREF. eat food that eri [e]i

'I will not eat that food'.

8a) Ndi mmadụ ekwegh?ila n'ụlọ akụ níhi na ego agwula.

People PREF- refuse PST INF-go PREP. bank, because money
PREF finish

'People refused to go from the bank because money had finished'.

- b) [N' ihi na ego agwula]i ndi mmadu ekwegh?ʔla n'ùlọ akụ [e]i
Because money PREF finish PSI People PREF refuse PSI WF.
Go PREP. house bank

[Because money finished]i People refused to go from the bank
[e]i

- 9a) Ada gbara egwu nke oma n' ihi na O siri ike.
Ada dance PST dance very well because 3rd Per. Pron. Strong
'Ada danced well because she was strong'.

- b) [N' ihi na O siri ike]i Ada gbara egwu nke oma [e]i.
Because CONJ 3rd PERS. PRON. PSI dance very well
[Because she was strong] i Ada danced very well. [e]i

- 10a) Ụkọ nri di ugbu a n' ihi na ọrụ ubi ebidola.
Scarcity food VB. CONJ. time work farm PREF.-start-SUF
'There is scarcity of food because farming season has started'.

- b) [N' ihi na ọrụ ubi ebidola]i ụkọ nri di ugbu a [e]i.
Because farming PREF.-start-SUF. scarcity food COP. VB.
now.

[Because farming season has started] i, there is scarcity of food
now [e]i.

'The farming season has started, there is scarcity of food'.

- 11a) Oge Ekeresimesi bu ọge ańuri maka na otụtụ mmadụ na-
alọtacha.

Time Christmas Cop. Vb. Time joy CONJ. PREP many people
PREP. COME PREF.

'Christmas time is a joyous time because many people do come

back home'.

b) ọ tụtụ mmadụ na-alọtacha ụlọ maka oge Ekeresimesi bu oge ańụri[e]i.

Many people PREP. PREF come home CONJ. time Christmas COP. VB. time

[Many people do come back home] i because Christmas time is a joyous time[e]i.

12a) Ndi ntorob'á lotara maka ʔwa ákwà.

The youths. VB.-come PST. CONJ. INF. Vb. wear cloth
'The youths came back because of cultural clothing'.

b) [Maka iwa ákwà]i Ndi Ntorob'á lotara [e]i

CONJ. INF. VB. Wear cloth, the youths VB-come PSI
[Because of cultural clothing] i the youths came back. [e]i.

13a) Ndubueze dara ada site n'elu osisi nkwụ.

Ndwbueze NB-fall PST top tree Palm tree

b) [Site n'elu osisi nkwu]i ka Ndubuze dara ada

Top tree palm that Ndubueze VB.-fall PSI
[From the top of a palm tree]i that Ndubuze fell down [e]i.

14a) Ụmụ nwany?gbara egwu n'ah'á Orié maka ego ha.

Plural marker woman VB. dance PST. PREP. market Orié.
CONJ. money their

'The women danced at the Orié market because of their money'.

b) [Maka ego ha]i ka ụmụ nwany?jiri gba egwu n' ah'á Orié [e]i.

Because money PRON. PL. that women dance PST PREP.
market Orié.

[Because of their money]i that the women danced at the Orié market [e]i.

- 15a) Ada mụrụ nwa n' ụlọ Ngozi.
 Ada give PST. birth PREP. house Ngozi
 'Ada gave birth a baby in Ngozi's house'.
- b) [N' ulo Ngozi]i ka Ada muru nwa [e]i.
 PREP. house Ngozi that Ada gave birth a baby
 [In Ngozi's house]i that Ada gave birth a baby [e]i.

Observations

We have thirty sentences from examples (1a-15b). The a-sentences represent statements from the cultural background of Ikwuano people. The b-sentences contain features of topicalization. The constituents containing topicalized features are fronted and focused at the beginning of the sentences. Topicalized element leaves a gap, empty trace which is co-indexed with the moved item from the original site to the landing site. We observed that the topicalized item is the object of the deeply embedded clause in a sentence.

The generated sentence is grammatical and has no difference in meaning. We observed that the topicalized constituent brings a syntactic word order arrangement. The topicalized element is fronted to establish it as a topic. We observed that the relative clause makers such as 'because', 'maka', “n' ihi” 'that-ka' play very important role in the construction of complex sentence in the language. The relative makers in the above sentences indicate that topicalization is an unbounded transformation for the realization of different constituent structure in the language.

Conclusion

This study investigated syntactic features of topicalization in Ikwuano Igbo. Topicalization is a syntactic feature that expresses a constituent as the clause topic by the process of moving an item from the original site to its landing site leaving an empty category behind. The empty gap is co-indexed with the moved item which is fronted and focused. Topicalization is a movement strategy which was originated from the transformational generative grammar of Chomsky. This paper has demonstrated the Ikwuano Igbo strategy of topicalization and its behavior in the language. The syntactic word order of phrases, clauses and sentences constitutes the grammaticality in every natural language for communication.

Abbreviations

ASP	Aspect
CONJ.	Conjunction
COMP.	Complement
DEM	Demonstrative
DET	Determiner
NP	Noun Phrase
NEG	Negation
PRON Pref.	Pronoun Prefix
SUF	Suffix
VB	Verb
PP	Prepositional Phrase
1 st Pers.	First person pronoun
3 rd Pers.	Third person pronoun

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