CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF NOUN AND VERB PHRASES OF GBAGYI LANGUAGE AND ENGLISH

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Abstract

This paper is a contrastive description of noun and verb phrases in both Gbagyi and English languages. The paper uses eclectic approaches of contrastive theory, structural grammar and the phrase structure rules in anchoring the analyse of the data. The data for the paper were gathered through the methods of observatory unstructured interview and use of secondary materials. The findings showed the incidence of the occurrence of contrasts in terms of similarities and dissimilarities in both languages. That is, noun and verb phrases occur in both languages, but with divergent grammatical orderings. Finally, the paper reveals that noun and verb phrases are aspects that quite universal to these two languages and others.

Keywords: Noun, Phrases, Gbagyi, Contrastive Description, English Language

Introduction

Language is the nucleus of human communicative life. Without it, many of our important activities are inconceivable and unassailable. Language use, then, is in many ways a natural phenomenon beyond conscious control. Yet there are also aspects of language use we can intervene and about which, consequently, there are decisions to be made. Different languages with different structures exist in the world and all of them are rule-governed, which is why this study looks at the noun and verb phrase rules of Gbagyi and English language. Akindele and Adegbite (1) believe that human language is unique in the sense that it has its own structure, its own system of organising its component units into meaningful patterns. In other words, there are rules governing the organisation of sentences such as rules of tense and concord. These are also rule for organising discourse.

The paper which is a contrastive study of the noun and verb phrase rules, essentially, focuses on Gbagyi and English languages. Gbagyi as a language is one of the languages with large speakership in the north central area of Nigeria, with a spread across such areas as Nasarawa State, Kaduna State, The FCT (Abuja) Kogi State and Niger State. However, in this paper, the one under study is found in Nasarawa State. Note that in the context of Nigeria as a multilingual society Gbagyi is characterised as a minor language. Thus, the paper specifically is a study of the contrastive analysis of the rules that guide sentence formation of Gbagyi and English languages.

The Gbagyi Language

The Gbagyi are a large ethnic group who inhabit four (4) states of Nigeria including the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. These states include: Niger, Kaduna, Nasarawa and Kogi. The Gbagyi people are predominantly agrarian farmers with pottery as additional vocational occupation. The Gbagyi language belongs to the Kwa-sub-branch of the Niger-Congo language family (Crozier and Blench...). They share close language and cultural affinity with neighbouring ethnic groups such as the Nupe, Bassa, Igbira and Kamuku, etc.

Dialectally, the variations that exist in Gbagyi language is broadly divided into two. These are *Gbagyi ngê ngê* which is a centrally used dialect and *Gbari nkwà. The presentation below showcases instances of the variant uses in the two dialects of the Gbagyi language:*

Gbagyi ngê ngê	**Gbari nkwà**	**Gloss**
Hâgyîfyê	Hârîfyê	Good morning
Mâgwódē	Māsnú yēbō	Thank you
Lō há bē	Lō hō zhí	Go and come
Sái sú	Sái súgwō	Good night
Gàmî	Gímí	Give me
Yàwyì	Kàmbà	Maize

Yusuf Audu, in his introduction to the *Concise Gbagyi – English Dictionary*, gave his own account of the Gbagyi people by which he said, "their form of greeting popularly differentiates the two groups. The larger community say *sanu* or *hanu,* sometimes pronounced *sónú* or *hónú*, while the dialects in the smaller community employ the term *ñkwá,* meaning 'greetings/well done" (viii). We note here the influence of Hausa in the pronunciation suggestive of borrowing. Here too, it is pertinent to mention that the language is deeply influenced by the speakers of other languages in the community in which they live, and this results to what seem to be lects; this means that those living inNasarawa State are influenced by Hausa while those living in Kogi State are influenced by Igbira. Those living in Niger State are influenced by Nupe, while those living in Kaduna State are influenced by Jaba, then those in Abuja FCT are influenced by Bassa. For example, those living in Karu Local Government of Nasarawa State call some objects different from those in Abuja FCT:

Karu	**Abuja**	**Gloss**
Wyísālā	Òbmnyā	Fish
Sàbúlū	Çèkwó (chèkwò)	Soap
Ḳwòlòbà	Ọmì	Bottle
Ácûmb	Ácísō (âchísō)	Comb

Also, those living in Niger pronounce items different from those in Abuja and Nasarawa State.

Nasarawa/Abuja	**Niger**	**Meaning**
Gâcé (gâché)	Nyâknwú	Kitchen
Nyâknwú	Gâcé (gâché)	Room

Few literatures have been written in the Gbagyi language which include the Bible (translated from the English version), *The Gbagyi Hymn Book*, *The Gbagyi Dictionary* which was first written by Roger Blench and Musa Doma; *The Concise Gbagyi Dictionary* by Audu, Yusuf. A; *The Gbagyi Book of Proverbs*, Gbagyi Journals and some Gbagyi newsletters.

On the other hand, the English language is one of the most spoken languages in the world, dominant in the international media, radio, television, magazines and newspapers. Many African countries, including Nigeria, have the English language as a second language official and, or even, as the case may be, a national language. Abimbola, Olusola (1-2), citing other scholars, said that English language is arguably one of the most valuable assets left behind by Nigeria's colonial experience. According to Kolawole (1998), cited by Olusola (1-2), as a

result of the multilingual and multiethnic nature of Nigeria and for administrative purpose, the English language has been adopted as the official language. Ajulo (1989), also cited by Olusola (1-2), asserts that the role of English language in a multilingual and multi-ethnic country such as Nigeria has been one of integration. Oyedokun- Alli (2014), in Olusola (1-2), corroborates this when he posits that English is the most enduring of the legacies of colonialism. And that the utilitarian use of the language for inter-ethnic communication, for politics and administration, and as a medium of instruction in education and mass-communication cannot be over emphasised. For decades English has remained the language of government, law, administration, politics, mass media, commerce and all sorts of social engagement for people from different language groups in Nigeria.

Conceptual framework

A sentence can be seen as a collection of words that make a complete thought. The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary also says* a sentence is a set of words expressing a statement, a question or an order, usually containing a subject and verb. In written English, sentences begin with a capital letter and end with a full stop/period (.), a question mark (?) or an exclamation point (!). Adegun, Sunday, Ogbonna, Theresa and Ikong, Ikade (46)believe that a complete sentence must be composed of a subject and a predicate. The subject is the focal point of the sentence. It contains the noun or noun phrase that carries out the action in the predicate. The predicate explains the action of the subject. For example:

Subject	**Predicate**
Birds	fly
Regina	danced gracefully
The administrators	made the vice chancellor angry
The dark tall man	bought a beautiful bag for me

Lowth, quoted in Tomori (5) introduces the issue of "complete sense" in the nature of sentence that, "A sentence is an assemblage of words expressing in proper form, and ranged in proper order, and concurring to make a complete sense". Tomori continues that the idea of "complete sense' lingers in this century; the main problem is the determination of "complete sense". If the question was asked: What are you? and I answered "a mechanic" or 'the mechanic', would the answer make a complete sense or would it not? In order to avoid or solve the problem in the era of traditional grammar, Cobbett quoted in Tomori (5) uses a formal (though orthographical) criterion to define a sentence: "A sentence, used as a term in grammar, means one of those portions of words which are divided from the rest by a "single" dot, which is called a period, or full stop." This aspect of a sentence having the quality or ability of standing alone as a complete utterance to test the completeness and independence of thought is projected by Bussman (1059) in his definition that, "a sentence is a unit of speech constructed according to language- dependent rules, which is relatively complete in respect to content, grammatical structure and intonation. This definition conforms to Bloomfield's emphasis on grammatical independence in his assertion that "Each sentence is an independent linguistic form, not included by virtue of any grammatical construction in any larger linguistic form" (qtd. in Tomori 20).

The Clause

A clause, as cited in Dan'Azumi et al, is a group of words which has a finite verb. It is a component of a sentence having a subject and predicate. The clause is different from the phrase in the sense that it has a finite verb while the phrase does not. The clause does not

necessarily constitute a complete logical or grammatical sentence but it is a grammatical entity or unit (43). On his own part, Nzebunachi, Oji states that a clause is, like a phrase, a group of words, but, unlike a phrase, it contains a finite verb. He further states that a clause is a small sentence embedded in a larger sentence. This adumbrates the essential part of a clause; namely (a) a group of words; (b) that has got subject and predicate of its own; and (c) that forms part of another sentence (82)

Phrases

Phrases have been explained by Dan, Uwandu (66) to be a group of words without a finite verb or a group of words without a subject and a predicate, that functions as a single part of speech. This differentiates a phrase from a clause that does have a subject and a predicate and can stand as a simple sentence. J.O, Asudo and L.G, Marsh support this idea that phrases are not the same as clauses or sentences. They are groups of words which, when put together, have some meaning, but not a complete meaning. Unlike sentences, phrases cannot be divided into subject and predicate. Look at these phrases:

In the morning
Every Tuesday
Surrounded by tall trees
Waiting for a friend
Lonely and miserable

Phrase Structure Rules

Phrase Structure rules (also known as PS rules) describe syntax, or the rules regarding how we combine words to create grammatically correct sentences. They are used to break a sentence down into its constituent parts. Constituent parts are categories of words, lexical categories (e.g., nouns, verbs, adverbs, or adjectives), or categories of groups of words, phrasal categories (i.e., noun phrases), that function as a unit and can make up larger units. According to M. T, Lamidi (32), PS rules involve the linear analysis of a structure. The rules state the constituents that make up a structure and their order in it. The general PS rule for a sentence is: S $\rightarrow$ NP VP. The statement S $\rightarrow$ NP VP means that a sentence S is re-written or expands as NP (Noun Phrase) and VP (Verb Phrase) respectively. Each of these phrasal categories is broken down into its component parts depending on the structure in question. Lamidi (42-43) further says, "words are organised into constituents through the phrase structure rules".

The PS rules ensure the logical ordering of words into constituents. This is done through the selection rules such that structures like Noun Phrase (NP), Verb Phrase (VP), Adjectival Phrase (AdjP) Adverbial Phrase (AdvP), are all identifiable wherever they occur. Generally, then, the subcategorization and selection rules make it possible for the words in the lexicon to form intelligible categories like NP, VP, AdvP, AdjP, and ultimately base forms of sentences which serve as input for the application of phrase structure rules in the language. This idea is supported by Daniel, Egbe (29), who says the rules are also posited in the base component in the syntactic component. In simple language, we can say they are part and parcel of the linguistic competence of a native speaker. The grammar claims that they are finite in number but predictive in nature and so by operating them subconsciously, the adult native speaker is able to make and interpret an infinite number of sentences (including novel ones) in a language. It is a finite set of rules each of which is represented in writing with a symbol on the left that is connected by an arrow to one or more symbols on the right. The arrow ($\rightarrow$) means that the symbol on the left is rewritten (or expanded) as that or those on the right.

The PS rules, their symbols and meanings are written bellow as thus:

Symbols of the Noun and Verb Phrase Rules and their Meanings

S → NP VP	S stands for Sentence
Np →N	NP stands for Noun Phrase
NP → (Det)(Adj) N	N stands for Noun
VP → V	Det stands for Determinant
VP → V NP	Adj stands for Adjective
	VP stands for Verb Phrase

However, it is important to note that these rules, as cited in Lamidi (66), are universal to languages or structures. That is, they do not apply to only "phrases" as the name suggests but also to clauses (sentences). These rules and their application to different structures for purposes of analysis constitute the phrase structure grammar.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework the researcher used for the study is an eclectic theoretical approach comprising the theories of contrastive analysis and other grammatical approaches and this is because the study is descriptive in nature, the goal of which is to show the distinction between the two languages and provide structural analysis of the variables under account. Essentially, the theories of structural grammar and phrase structure rules alongside contrastive theory were applied in anchoring the analysis of the data used in the paper.

Methodology

This study made use of descriptive research design since the purpose of the study has been to undertake a Contrastive Analysis of the Noun and Verb Phrase Rules of two different languages: Gbagyi and English. Visits to New Karu Central Area, and the observatory use of unstructured interview and interaction to collect data were deployed. This was done through contact with ten (10) randomly selected elders who speak Gbagyi fluently and ten (10) others who speak both Gbagyi and English language. Secondary method of the use of library materials were also used for data collection. This included selected sample of books such as *The Gbagyi Dictionary, The Gbagyi Book Of Proverbs, The Gbagyi Hymn Book, The Gbagyi Bible* and journals of both Gbagyi and English language.

The researcher employed descriptive method of data analysis. This was done by using various diagrams (tree diagrams in this case) and open tables which provide clarity of analysis and description. The diagrams and tables also provide ease of showcasing the differences and similarities in the Noun and Verb Phrases of Gbagyi language and English.

Data Analysis/Findings.

The Noun Phrase Rule NP ——▸ Det Adj N

(i) NP → N Adj Det
Gbagyi: *Ānyī* *mānāí* –
English: Song good
Meaning: A good song

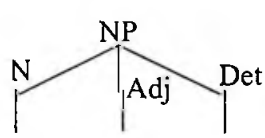


Fig A: Tree diagram of Noun Phrase Rule

(ii) NP → N Adj Det

Gbagyi: *Àshèwyí nātǐ* -

English: Rice boiled

Meaning: A boiled rice

(iii) NP → N Adj Det

Gbagyi: *Tnûtnûdā ɓwātóǐ* -

English: Worker lazy

Meaning: A lazy worker

(iv) NP → N Adj Det

Gbagyi: *Gbàdùmà ɓíɓîyí* -

English: Banana ripped

Meaning: A ripped banana

(v) NP → N Adj Det

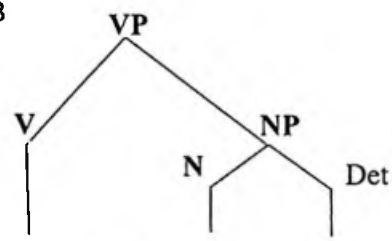
Gbagyi: *Ôɓí âpódá* -

English: Boy brilliant

Meaning: A brilliant boy

Observation: In the case of Gbagyi language, in Fig A, the indefinite articles *a* and*an* are not realized, as it is in English.

Fig B



Gbagyi: *Gò takadâ yi*

English: Take book the

Meaning: Take the book

(ii) VP → V NP

Gbagyi: *Lâ ōɓí yí*

English: Carry boy the

Meaning: Carry the boy

(iii) VP → V NP

Gbagyi: *Gù ābā yí*

English: Shut door the

Meaning: Shut the door

(iv) VP → V NP

Gbagyi: *Lō āpí*

English: Go home

Meaning: Go home

(v) VP → V NP

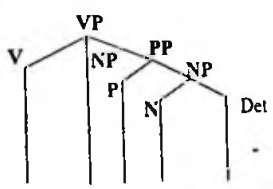
Gbagyi: *Znyā òjê zhízhì yí*

English: Wash shirt black the

Meaning: Wash the black shirt

The Verb Phrase Rule VP → V NP PP

Fig C



Gbagyi: *Tû mátō lō gnîkó* –
English: Drive car to market
Meaning: Drive the car to the market

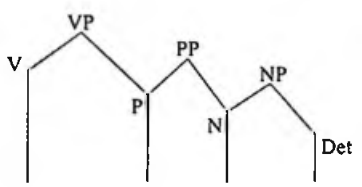
(ii) VP → V NP PP
Gbagyi: *Gbmì òhōɓwā n ɓōdáyí*
English: Remove your hand from matter the
Meaning: Don't get involved in the matter

(iii) VP → NP PP
Gbagyi: *Gnyí mátō lō hō fúwá*
English: drive car to your house
Meaning: drive the car to your house

(iv) VP → V NP PP
Gbagyi: *Tnû gyìwyè yé lō hōnúgnùdò*
English: Send money this to your friend
Meaning: Send this money to your friend

The Verb Phrase Rule VP →PP

Fig D



Gbagyi: *Gnì mà mátō yí*
English: Stand by car the
Meaning: Stand by the car

(ii) VP → V PP
Gbagyi: *Bûsí lō ōfā*
English: Run to farm
Meaning: Run to the farm

(iii) VP → V PP
Gbagyi: *knàtnúbwà gà tnútnú yí*
English: Listen to massage the
Meaning: Listen to the message

Observations: From the structures above, it can be observed that:

i. The verb in the Gbagyi language works as it is in the English language.
ii. The determinant still comes after the noun.
iii. *Lō* in Gbagyi language can be both verb "go" and preposition "to" in English as in Figures B (i) and C (iv) above.
iv. The preposition "to" in English language can be realized as *gà* as well as *lō* in Gbagyi language as seen in Figures C (ii) and D (iii) above.
v. In Figures A and C (i), the definite article "the" is not necessarily realized such that the VP rules will be thus, VP → V PP; PP → P NP; NP → N only.

Findings

From the instances it can be deduced that the Phrase Structure Grammar (PSG) is workable in Gbagyi language as it does in English language. However, there are instances of differences and similarities as seen bellow:

A. difference

1. in English language, the ordering of the NP elements is different from that of Gbagyi language

English language	Gbagyi language
NP → Det N	NP → N Det
The boy	Ōбí *yí*
The dog	*Òmyî yí*
The house	*Fúwā yí*

2. verbs, adjectives, and some nouns of the English language are open classes. This means they can be inflected, but the Gbagyi language has no open class, except in verbs where the past tense marker for Gbagyi is *бō*.

I,	Musa *lá lō*	*Musa has go for Musa has gone
	Musa *бō lá lō*	Musahad gone

3. the second person pronoun *you* in Gbagyi has plural form *ōhō* (for singular), *ōfē* (for plural)

i.	*gnyì mátō lō ōhō fúwā*	drive the car to your house ("your" as singular)
	gnyì mátó lô ōfē fúwá	drive the car to your house ("your" as plural)
ii.	*gò tnútnú gà ōhō nyîkwó*	take the massage to your wife ("your" as singular)
iii.	*gò tnútnú gà ōfē nyîkwó*	take the message to your wives ("your" as plural)

4. the third person pronoun in Gbagyi does not have gender as it is the case in English. The pronoun *òwô* refers to both male and female.

i.	*Gà wō ōwō jé*	give him *his* shirt
	Gà wō ōwō jé	give her her shirt
ii.	*Wō zhî Gbagyî zā nù*	He do Gbagyi man a
		(He is a Gbagyi man)
iii.	*Wō zhî Gbagyî nyîkwózā nù*	She do Gbagyi woman a
		(She is a Gbagyi woman)

B. Similarity

1. The second person pronoun of both English and Gbagyi have no gender.

Hō бé lō	You are welcome (*you* as in male or female)
Mî yé mâ gyê hō	I want to see you(*you* as in male or female)

The N can stand as an NP and the V can also stand as a VP in both Gbagyi and English language

Noun		Verb	
Pēcē	Mat	*Gúyā*	Open
Bûsì	Stick	*Sàsê*	Sit
Ōnā	Goat	*Lākà*	Stand

Conclusion

The attempt in this paper is able show Noun and Verb Phrases in Gbagyi language and English. This also has shown that these aspects are universal as both languages in contrast have provided. Thus noun and verb phrases are clearly structural and syntactical elements that prove the grammatical incidences of their occurrence and use in the context of the two languages dealt with in the paper. The approaches and method used have been shown to be workable both languages as tools of analysis and syntactic discourse, but with some divergence

Therefore, the rules of the Gbagyi Noun and Verb Phrase Structures are as follow:

S $\rightarrow$ NP VP

NP $\rightarrow$ N (Adj) (Det)

VP $\rightarrow$ V (NP) (PP)

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