A Contrastive Analysis of Adjectives in English and Nkoro

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Abstract

This study contrasted adjectives in English and Nkoro with a view to identifying the areas of similarities and dissimilarities and the problem these differences pose to Nkoro learners of English. The paper sought to find out which aspects of English adjective pose problem to the learners of English as a second language. Using the descriptive research design, the data for this work were gathered through the primary sources (three Nkoro native speakers who are students in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education) and the secondary sources (examples generated from textual materials). Our description showed some level of morphological differences in the use of adjectives in English and Nkoro languages as seen clearly in the attributive, predicative, and postpositive place of occurrence. The paper concludes that For English, there are three readily available morphological positions in which adjectives can freely occur (attributive, predicative, and postpositive positions), but in Nkoro, adjectives can only functionally occur in attributive and predicative positions creating room for code-mixing as a means of realizing postpositive adjective.

Keywords: Adjectives, Nkoro speakers, mother tongue (L1), second language (L2), contrastive analysis, code-mixing.

1. Introduction

Adjective, is one of the main grammatical categories in most human languages especially English. Etymologically speaking, adjective is derived from Latin „nomen adjectivum‟ (Lewis and Short 1879).

In the words of Onugha (2019, p. 24) "adjectives are words used to modify or describe nominal (nouns and pronouns) in a sentence. Adjectives tell us more about nouns or pronouns especially the qualities of nouns in a sentence. Generally, adjectives give us a clearer picture of the nouns." Not differently, Nwala and Obisike (2014, p. 49) note that adjectives belong to the open class. It is the word class that gives information about the noun or its equivalent. The adjective is the word class that qualifies or modifies a noun. Nwala and Obisike add that adjectives are used in different ways to bring to fore the imports of expression. Similarly, Murthy (2007, p. 33) says that a word used to express the quality, quantity, number and to point out the person or thing is regarded as an adjective. This paper contrasts English and Nkoro adjectives with a view to identifying their morphological dissimilarities.

In what follows, we shall examine English and Nkoro adjectives with a view to establishing the differences. We shall also attempt to lucidly identify possible areas of difficulties to the second language learner.

2. Statement of Objectives

The objectives of this paper include: To:

1. identify the types of adjectives in English and Nkoro languages;
2. contrast English and Nkoro adjectives;
3. reveal the differences between English and Nkoro adjectives.

3. Thesis Statement

Adjectives form a vital aspect of written and spoken form of most language. It is therefore necessary to learn and use it correctly. This is why it is necessary to find out the difficult areas and possible sources of difficulties which Nkoro learners of English encounter in learning and using English Adjectives.

4. Review of Related Literature

Samson (2006) conducted a small corpus study in economic discourse and found that evaluative adjectives have more than one function at the same time and that they differ across genres and registers. The functions were "interacting with readers by underscoring the crucial points in their texts and to promote the economists‟ findings by asserting that

theirs is a correct interpretation of the topics". This is in tandem with Swales and Burke (2003) who investigated evaluative adjectives in different academic registers and discovered that adjectival evaluation is used more frequently in the spoken register. Also, Stotesbury (2003) investigated 300 articles published in 51 journals, including 100 articles in humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. He found that there were more evaluative attributes in articles in humanities and social sciences than in natural sciences. In addition, evaluative adjectives in articles in economics were more numerous than in linguistics articles.

After analyzing evaluative adjectives in a corpus, Marza (2011) concluded that "some evaluative dimensions are seen to be more central than others in the genre under study and those recurrent, emphatic lexical patterns of an evaluative nature clearly characterize this kind of discourse." Hewings (2004) grouped evaluative adjectives into eight categories after completing a corpus-based analysis. The categories are listed below with positive and negative examples:

a. *Interest (interesting, tedious)*
b. Suitability *(good, odd)*
c. Comprehensibility (*clear*, *confusing*)
d. Accuracy (*true*, *wrong*)
e. Importance (*useful*, *meaningless*)
f. Sufficiency (*sufficient*, *small*)
g. *Praiseworthiness (impressive, disappointed)*
h. *Perceptiveness (sophisticated, unaware)*

5. Theoretical Framework

This paper adopted the contrastive analysis theory. The theoretical foundations for what became known as the contrastive analysis hypothesis were formulated in Lado"s Linguistics Across Cultures (1957). Lado claims that those elements which are different will be difficult; while this was not a novel suggestion, Lado was the first to provide a comprehensive theoretical treatment and the suggestion of a systematic set of mechanical procedures for the contrastive study of languages. This involved describing the languages (using structuralist linguistics), comparing them and predicting learning difficulties.

Contrastive study was extremely used in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) in the 1960s and early 1970s as a method of explaining why some features of a target language (TL) were more difficult to acquire than others. According to the behaviourist theories prevailing at that time, language learning was a question of habit formation and this could be reinforced or impeded by already existing habits. Therefore, the difficulty in mastering

certain structures in a second language (SL) depended on the differences between the learner"s mother-tongue (MT) and the language he or she is trying to learn.

The choice of contrastive analysis as a theory in this work was based on the fact that the researcher sets out to study the adjectives of the English and Nkoro languages, in order to find out possible similarities and dissimilarities.

6. Methodology

In this work, we adopted the descriptive design. Working within this framework, the data which was got from both the primary sources (three Nkoro native speakers who are students in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education) and the secondary sources (examples got from textual materials) were analyzed.

7. Data Presentation

In this aspect of the paper, results of the dat`1a collected for this study, which cover adjectives in English and Nkoro languages are presented in sentences and analyzed. We begin with Nkoro.

1. Je ◎ d ◎ i ◎ ri ◎ na ◎ to ◎ ku ◎ -m ne ◎ d ◎ i ◎ ri ◎ ke ◎ i ◎ n-ma ◎ .
   [thing know Subj. clitic child-the Be book read-PROG.] The
   intelligent child is reading a book.

2. A ◎ n ◎ sa ◎ gha ◎ .
   [3SFG dirty] She is dirty.

3. Alali i ◎bi ◎ de ◎ re ◎ .
   [PN fine man]
   Alali is a handsome man.

4. d ◎ i ◎ a ◎ da ◎ ra ◎ -ni ◎ ke m ◎ mi ◎ o ◎ ke ◎ .
   [Some woman-PL present here LOC]
   Some women are here.

5. Ta ◎ ra ◎ a ◎ shi ◎ a ◎ wo ◎ -a ◎ pu ◎ di ◎ do ◎ m wo ◎ a ◎ to ◎ ni m◎ i ◎◎ e ◎ .
   [three boy-PL only SUBJ. MAKER money pay-PST] Only
   three boys paid the money.

English:

6. Mike bought four cars.

7. Amaka is lazy.
8. The teacher made the students happy.
9. The men are very happy.

8. Data Analysis

The Attributive Adjective

According to Nwafor (2001), "an attributive adjective denotes the quality a person or thing possesses; and using an adjective attributively means that the adjective may be placed directly before the noun it modifies. For example:

10. Alali is a kind man.
11. Nkechi is an obedient girl.
12. Ikem loves simple foot-wears.
13. Grace is a beautiful woman.

Similarly, Ugo (2001), notes that when adjectives appear before the nouns they qualify, such adjectives are said to be attributive. In other words, adjectives are attributive when they pre-modify nouns. For example:

14. We watched a thrilling football match.
15. Sandra is a pretty girl.
16. Ebiobowei is an intelligent man.

Predicative Adjective

Ndimele (1993, p. 38), says that adjectives can function predicatively (i.e. when they are used as the complements of certain verbs in the predicate slot of the sentence). In a related development, Murthy (2007, p. 33), while discussing types of uses of adjective, posits that an adjective used with a verb is known as predicative use. For example:

17. She is afraid.
18. He is alive.
19. They are dead.
20. He looked happy.

The Postpositive Adjective

Nwala (2016, p. 25), avers that the postpositive function of adjectives is seen when the adjective comes after the noun (i.e. the subject of the sentence) and before the predicative part of the sentence. For example:

21. The chairman elect has bought a new car.
22. The Bishop designate is spiritual.

Relatedly, Kirkpatrick (2010, p. 130), opines that adjectives which are post-modifiers go immediately after the noun which they qualify. For example:

23. The president-elect takes over the presidency at the beginning of the year.
24. The soldier is to appear before a court martial.

The Adjective in Nkoro

Obikudo (2013, p. 161), while discussing adjective in Nkoro, explains that in Nkoro the function of adjectives is often performed by stative verbs. She adds that adjectives belong to a small closed class consisting of only three lexical items. For example:

25. A ◎ a ◎ ja ◎ je ◎ .
[3NSG new thing]
It is a new thing.

26. O ◎ ku ◎ ru ◎ -m a ◎ja ◎ je ◎ .
[cloth-DEF new thing]
The cloth is a new thing.

27. A ◎ n ◎ sa ◎ gha ◎ .
[3SFG dirty]
She is dirty.

Comparison of English and Nkoro adjectives

The adjective as we noted earlier is used to describe, modify, and qualify the noun or its equivalent. This is the basic function of the adjective in both languages. In the data and in the analysis, the adjectives: four, beautiful, intelligent, lazy, happy, elect, d ◎ iri, nsagha, ibi, d ◎ ia, tara, and aja are adjectives which occur in various positions in both languages:

four
beautiful
intelligent
lazy
happy
elect

The following examples are the adjectives in Nkoro:
d ◎ i ◎ ri ◎
[intelligent]

n ◎ sa ◎ gha ◎
[dirty]

i ◎ bi ◎
[handsome]

d ◎ i ◎ a ◎
[some]

ta ◎ ra ◎
[three]

a ◎ ja ◎
[new]

Even though both English and Nkoro languages have adjectives, there exist clearly, some differences in the morpho-syntactic position of the adjectives. In Nkoro, adjectives belong to a small closed class and are very few. They are generally placed before and after the nouns they modify; postpositive adjective does not occur in Nkoro; but can be realized by means of code-mixing. For example:

28. Pi ◎ na ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ k ◎ ◎ .
[white fowl]
White fowl.

29. A ◎ n ◎ sa ◎ gha ◎ .
[3FSG dirty]
She is dirty.

30. Pa ◎ pa ◎ ◎ u ◎ .
[bare body]
Bare body.

31. A ◎ la ◎ -o ◎ wo ◎ i ◎ elect
[rich-man elect]
Chief elect.

32. Ka ◎ si ◎ -te ◎ ◎ e ◎ - ◎ ◎ na ◎ -a ◎ ra ◎ elect.
[chair-head-own-lady elect]
Chairlady elect.

But in English, adjectives belong to the open word class and are numerous. They can freely occur in three positions in a sentence. For example:

33. Mary is a pretty girl.
34. John is alive.
35. The chief elect is coming.

9. Discussion of Findings

In this paper, the adjectives of English and Nkoro languages were identified and each has different morphological positions which are linguistically lacking in the other language.

In English, adjectives can be used attributively, predicatively, and postpositively.
For instance:

36. Do not laugh at the poor man.
37. He is a Nigerian.
38. The chairman elect is my brother.

On the other hand, the Nkoro language has no such three positions in which adjectives can occur. Adjectives, in the language, can function attributively and predicatively; but postpositive use of adjective can be realized through code-mixing. For example:

39. Pa ◎ pa ◎ ◎ u ◎ .
[bare body]
Bare body.

40. A ◎ n ◎ sa ◎ gha ◎ .
[3FSG dirty]
She is dirty.

41. Ka ◎ si ◎ -te ◎ ◎ e ◎ - ◎ ◎ na ◎ -a ◎ ra elect.
[chair-head-own-lady elect]
Chairlady elect.

10. Conclusion

In this paper, we have examined adjectives in English and Nkoro languages with a view to finding out the morphological differences in both languages. So far, our description

lucidly showed some level of morphological differences in the use of adjectives in English and Nkoro languages. For English, there are three readily available morphological positions in which adjectives can freely occur (attributive, predicative, and postpositive positions), but in Nkoro, adjectives can only functionally occur in attributive and predicative positions creating room for code-mixing as a means of realizing postpositive adjective.

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