

A Study of the Morpho-Syntactic Features Realised During Discourse among Selected Students in Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri

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Abstract

This paper explored the morph-syntactic features realized during discourse to determine the level of nativisation of English among selected students at the Department of English Language and Literature, Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, (AIFUE), Owerri. The theoretical framework is anchored on Syntactic Structures by Noam Chomsky, 1957. Three hundred students both degree and NCE were purposively selected as the population for the study and they were divided into ten groups. One research question was asked to guide the study. The statistical tool used for data analysis was the simple mean graded into four levels of extent. The instrument used for data collection was a topic given to the students to discuss on, orally. Thus; the researchers came up with the findings that the extent of the morpho-syntactic features realized during discourse among these students was very high with the following outcomes: 210 students fell under VHE, 50 students fell under HE, 30 students fell under LE, and 10 students fell under VLE given the following percentage 70%, 16.66%, 10 % and 3.33%, respectively. The study finally, suggests that students studying English should acculture themselves with the owners of the language so as to reduce the extent of nativisation and also for enhancement in performance.

Key Words: morphology, syntax, nativisation, extent.

Introduction

The etymological description of morphology involves the study of forms which started in Biology as the study of form of living organisms and its related concepts to the English language which means the study of the internal structure of words and the rules by which words are formed. Words are notably, the hallmark and the building blocks of a sentence. Murthy (2007: 343) explains that, "A group of letters which has a meaning is called a word". Certainly, morphemes are the smallest meaningful grammatical units

that constitute the building blocks of words, Agbedo (2003: 82). According to Ndimele (2008: 9),

A morpheme is thus defined as the smallest meaningful unit of utterance which may or may not, however, exist in isolation. Unlike a word, a morpheme often needs the presence of another grammatical unit onto which it attaches. The morpheme is the basic unit of analysis in morphology. Morphemes are generally short sequences of sounds used

to build words. Unlike words, morphemes cannot be further broken down into smaller meaningful units.

There is no sentence without words. Of course, words are the bedrock of any language. They are also known as the pillars of any well-formed sentence. The differences between words and morphemes are minimal. Eyisi and Anyaegbu (2019: 238) defines morphemes as “the smallest meaningful unit of a language. The morpheme consists of variants, allomorphs, which are either phonologically or morphologically conditioned e.g., please, pleasant, pleasure”. Fromkin et al (2011: 41) stress that the term morphology “consists of two morphemes, morph + ology. The suffix -ology means science of or branch of knowledge concerning. Thus, the meaning of morphology is the science of word forms”.

In Linguistics, words play veritable roles that are unspeakable even in our grammar. the funniest aspect is that, we can learn hundreds to thousands of words in any language yet we still do not know the language. We express our thoughts through language in words and we also communicate and comprehend others through language in words. We can know where a word begins and ends only when we know a language. On this note, Fromkin et al (2011:36) claim that;

Every speaker of every language knows tens of thousands of words. Unabridged dictionaries of English contain nearly 500,000 entries but most speakers don't know all of the words. It has been estimated that a child of six knows as many as 13,000 words and the average high school graduate about 60,000. A college graduate presumably knows many more than that, but whatever our level of

education, we learn new words throughout our lives.

Contrarily, syntax is a branch of linguistics that studies the internal structure of sentences. Jowitt (2012:107) asserts that;

Syntax refers to the arrangement within sentences of grammatical categories and lexical items as realisations of those categories but since there is a relatively small number of words (auxiliaries, conjunctions, determiners, prepositions, pronouns), syntax often deals with the structure, use, and meaning as well as with the combinational properties of such words and so trespasses upon the territory of morphology, lexis, and semantics. Likewise, lexis strictly means the selection of vocabulary for use in particular co-texts and contexts, but since content words are far more numerous....

Syntax can also mean the linear representation of words to form meaningful sentences. According to Agbedo (2003:96) “...syntax spells out a set of finite rules that users of a given language follow in generating an infinite number of acceptable sentence structures”.

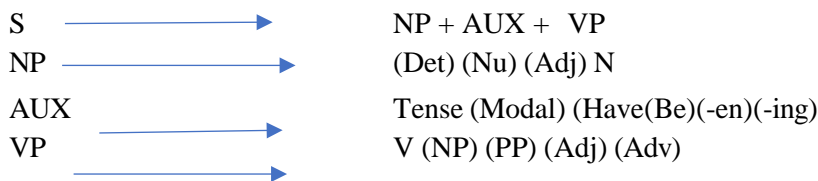
Therefore, the morpho-syntactic levels of language involve both the morphological and the syntactic components. Thus; for any good morpho-syntactic study, the meaning of meaning must be considered. Onuegwunwoke, et al (2022:132) note that, “The right word is that word which means exactly what we want it to mean. Words are supposed to be chosen with care and used with proper regard for their associated as well as their literal meaning. It may or may not be true that somewhere in the English language,

there is the one best word for whatever we wish to express...”.

Nativisation otherwise known as domestication, is a method of translation and acculturation of a target language. It is also called indigenization. Ngulube (2013: 18) argues that; “Language vary predominantly in the way and manner they work out the dissensions between the clashing forces. Specific languages resolve the rivalry by ordering hierarchically in draconium supremacy the various competitors”.

In the Nigerian setting, nativisation involves attempting to make English conform to our cultural linguistic systems. Some scholars call it domestication. When any language is domesticated or nativised, that language loses certain information from the source language.

Nativisation can be viewed as a sociolinguistic manifestation of acculturation, a process of Sociology in which people use certain cultural features that belong to another culture for interaction.



We can interpret the above rule as;

S represents sentence. S has an NP (Noun Phrase), an AUX (Auxiliary) and a VP (Verb Phrase). NP, which is the subject of S could optionally have Det which is (determiner, adjective) before the head word N which is the only compulsory element.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is anchored on the Phrase Structure Grammar (PSG) by Noam Chomsky, 1957. This grammar model is also called a rewrite grammar that makes provision for splitting given structures into their constituents starting from the immediate constituents. This grammar converts symbol as an input into different sequence of symbol(s) as its output. The major purpose of PSG is to identify the constituents of a construction and how they are related to one another. Ndimele (2008: 156) explains that;

PSG does not only segment the constituents of a construction, it also identifies the constituents and even their constructions in grammatical terms, ie, PSG also provides appropriate grammatical labels for both constituents and their constructions. Another interesting quality of PSG is that it does not merely account for sentences that are already in existence at the expense of possible sentences in a language.

Agbedo (2003:103) presents PS rewrite rules as follows;

AUX represents Tense which could be optionally realized as (Modal), (Have (Be) (-en) (-ing).

VP represents the predicate part of sentence (S) that compulsorily has a V for main verb and other optional elements like (NP) (PP) (Adj) (Adv).

Incidentally, this theory would be used to analyze most of the sentences produced by the population for this study to check the extent of nativisation.

Limitation of the Study

This study is limited to 200 Level students both Degree and NCE of the Department of English Language and Literature, School of Languages, AIFCE, Owerri, Imo State.

Methodology: This is an experimental study and therefore would be strictly empirical.

Population of the Study

The total population of the study is one thousand two hundred for Degree students and five hundred for NCE students, all in the Department of English Language and Literature.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The researcher sampled the total population between the Degree and the NCE students with ratio the of 6:5 respectively. Thus;

Degree students = $1200/6 = 200$ students
 NCE students = $500/5 = 100$ students

This was done through a purposive sampling technique. Therefore, the total purposive sampled population of the study is three hundred (300).

Instrument for Data Collection

The three hundred students purposively selected for the study were divided into ten groups which

resulted to thirty students in each group. Ten topics chosen from Syntax, one for each group was given to them to discuss on, orally. The researcher supervised and collated the test items, sorted them and organized them for the study through observation.

Method of Data Analysis

The statistical tool used for analysis is the simple mean graded under; VHE: Very High Extent
 HE: High Extent
 LE: Low Extent
 VLE: Very Low Extent

Research Question

A research question was asked to guide the study. To what extent has native language features interfered morpho-syntactically in the English spoken by students of the Department of English and Literature, AIFUE, Owerri?

Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Research question: To what extent has native language features interfered morph-syntactically in the English spoken by students studying English in AIFUE, Owerri?

Groups	VHE	HE	LE	VLE
1	18	6	4	2
2	21	4	4	1
3	23	5	2	-
4	21	5	3	1
5	22	5	2	1
6	23	3	4	2
7	18	6	4	2
8	21	6	2	1
9	21	5	3	1
10	22	5	2	1
Total	210	50	30	10

$$\text{VHE} = \frac{210}{300} \times \frac{100}{1} = 70\%$$

$$\text{HE} = \frac{50}{300} \times \frac{100}{1} = 16.66\%$$

$$\text{LE} = \frac{30}{300} \times \frac{100}{1} = 10\%$$

$$\text{VLE} = \frac{10}{300} \times \frac{100}{1} = 3.33\%$$

From the table and the calculations above 210 representing students 70% of the study fell under very high extent, 50 students representing 16.66% of the sampled population fell under high extent, 30 students representing 10% of the total sampled population fell under low extent and finally, 10 students representing 3.33% of the sampled population fell under very low extent.

Some Features of Nativisation of English Realised among these Students.

1.	He pregnanted the woman.	He impregnated the woman/he got the woman pregnant.
2.	Her hand is paining her.	She has pain on her hand.
3.	He is spoiling my name.	He is defaming me/ he is vilifying me.
4.	She is a matured woman.	She is a mature woman.
5.	Biko, let's go now.	Let's be on our way.
6.	The man naked himself.	The man striped himself.
7.	She wants the book, ejoor.	She wants the book, please.
8.	We must survive, whether or whether not.	We must survive, all the same.
9.	She doesn't like it sef.	She doesn't like it after all.
10.	It is sweet, shey?	It is sweet, right?
11.	What of the drink, nko?	What about the drinks?
12.	You will see shege.	You will see heck.
13.	Uche seniors Ola.	Uche is older than Ola.
14.	The children need the ball, jaree.	The children need the ball.
15.	I want the book, joor.	I want the book. Please.
16.	They deserve their own too.	They deserve theirs, too.
17.	Me, I want to present my own opinion on the matter.	I would like to present my opinion on the matter.
18.	I went to her birthday party and enjoyed.	I went to her birthday party and I enjoyed it.
19.	I will escort you.	I shall see you off.
20.	My parents hired the house for two years.	My parents rented the house for two years.

Some PSG illustration with some of the structures above;

1. I want the book, joor.*

[I] [want [the [book], [please].

S → NP AUX VP

NP → Pro(I)

AUX → Present tense

VP → V(want) + NP

NP → Det (the) + N (book) + Adv (please or joor).

2. The man naked himself *

[The [man] [stripped [himself].

S → NP AUX VP

NP → Det (the) + N (man)

AUX → Past tense

VP → V (stripped) + NP

NP → Pro (himself)

3. He pregnanted the woman.*

[He] [impregnated [the [woman] OR

[He] [got [the[woman [pregnant]

S → NP AUX VP

NP → Pro (he)

AUX → Past tense

VP → V (got) + S¹

S¹ → NP + VP

NP → Det (the) + N (woman)

VP → V (pregnant).

Conclusion/Recommendation

This study came up with the obvious findings that there are varieties of the English language spoken in Nigeria due to interference from Mother Tongue/First language of speakers. Incidentally, this same reason has affected the resultant effect of students in the Department of English Language and Literature, AIFUE, Owerri. The extent of nativisation is very high even with the selected students for the study. This nativisation can be traced to cultural factors. Njoku & Izuagba (2004:10) insist that; “Language is culture bound, as a result there are notions in the target language which the child’s

first language do not have lexical items for and vice versa. In order to express his thought, he forms what he thinks should be the English equivalent or he uses an English word that he thinks best expresses that notion in his first language. Thus, most times, leads to ambiguity or unintelligibility, especially when interacting with native speakers of English or people from another cultural group”. There is also nativisation because every culture has its concept on certain things. The English spoken by these students is nativized to suit the concepts of their various culture as we can see from the study. The researchers recommend that students studying English should

be given the opportunity to acculture themselves from time to time during the course of their study.
with the owners of the language they are studying

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