

Referential nouns and complementation in M̀báìsè-Ìgbò: A Government and Binding Approach

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Abstract

Different noun types demand for and selects other grammatical elements (complements), which help to expand the head from a bare lexical element into a phrase. This paper investigates the derivation and order of relationship between simple referential nouns and derived referential nouns with their modifying/specifying elements and the complementation processes of these nominal elements. Adopting the Government and Binding (GB) framework and a qualitative method, with primary and secondary data, it is observed in M̀báìsè-Ìgbò, that simple noun heads take complements to the right to specify and limit their references, while derived nouns are generated in situ with their complements which receive their inherent theta roles, but reflexives/reciprocals (anaphors), do not subcategorize complements in that their complements have been inbuilt in them. In a [noun+ noun] relationship or a compound noun, the initial noun is the head, the other nominal element is the modifier/specifier. The observation generally is that of head-complement relationship, where the head occurs in the initial position, with modifier following it.

Keywords: *Government and Binding, Referential nouns, Noun phrase complement, complementation*

Introduction

The data on M̀báìsè-Ìgbò nouns has been classified in terms of displaying the properties [\pm pronominal], which produces the different noun types or referential expressions, comprising, WH-words, reflexives/reciprocals and simple referential nouns. This classification is adopted because it characterizes the distribution of phonetically audible nouns as the only ones that subcategorize complements. This paper divided into sections, considers the referential nouns-simple referential nouns and derived referential nouns or nouns formed from verbs (verbal nouns), and compound nouns. A referential expression is a noun with independent reference. It could be a simple word or a derived/complex word. These NPs with their modifiers enter into syntagmatic relationships with their complements coming after them, hence, the noun phrase is argued to be strictly head-initial and complement-final. This paper highlights the complement activities of these noun types and what makes them a unique study.

Theoretical reviews

Government and binding

Government and Binding (GB) framework is a theory of syntax and phrase structure grammar, developed principally by Noam Chomsky in the 1980s. The main application of government relations concerns the assignment of case and the proper government of Empty Category Principle (ECP), while binding accounts for the grammaticality or otherwise of structures. Governors are the head of each of the categories (V, N, A, P) and tensed I (T). The head designated as X, with the maximal projection XP, may be preceded or followed by specifiers and complements.

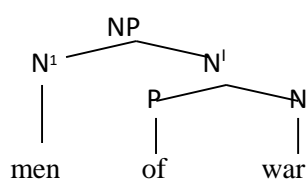
X-bar Syntax

The X-bar theory determines which lexical items must occur in the D-structure. The X-bar in generative linguistics as an alternative to traditional accounts of phrase structure and lexical categories, using a system of X-bars, each of which identifies a level of phrasal expansion to account for the intermediate categories, which were not accounted for in previous phrase-structure models. The structure of phrases is governed by the principles of X¹ theory, where every phrase (XP) is a projection of a head (X⁰). The head may be combined with a complement phrase and a specifier according to the parametric principles of any particular language

Complement in Government and Binding

A complement is any constituent which shares the same node with a lexical head as in the case of English, a head-initial language, where: $XP \rightarrow XCOMP$. In $XP \rightarrow XCOMP$, X stands for a lexical category e.g., P, N, V, while Comp, stands for complement (which could be a PP or an NP). When X equals N, then XP is an NP, as in ‘men of war’ as in Fig.1 below:

Fig. 1



In GB, the term ‘complement’ does not identify a categorial element, but a position which is filled by different items of various categorial statuses (Mbah 2012:128). In SVO languages, the complements of X⁰ follow it. This is the case in English where the branching direction of V¹ containing the complements of V is to the right, just as the complements or P¹ N¹ and A¹, are to the right, i.e., $XP \rightarrow XCOMP$. Other languages such as Korean and Japanese, exhibit an alternative order, (SOV) or $XP \rightarrow YPX$, where the head appears to the right of its complement.

Empirical reviews: Noun phrase complement

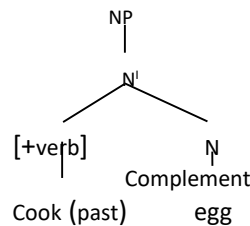
Nouns may be defined from their grammatical functions, as predicate complements, which theoretically display certain types of inflectional properties like number, gender, case, etc., with “have specific distribution”, like following “preposition... and perform a specific syntactic functions (e.g. as subject or object of a sentence” (Crystal 1991: 236). Nouns could be semantically opaque, vacuous or transparent. The meaning of semantically vacuous nouns cannot be precisely determined even in context by reason of semantic over-loading, hence, such nouns usually demand for complements to help make their meaning precise. In sentences (1a-b), the phrases- ‘the boy’ and ‘that seat’, are somewhat vacuous, but when they take the complements ‘in blue uniform’ or ‘that is high’, respectively, as in 1(c-d), they become more precise.:

- | | | | |
|------|--|-----|---------------------------------|
| 1(a) | The boy went home. | (b) | I want the seat. |
| (c) | The boy in the blue uniform went home. | (d) | I want that seats that is high. |

The noun head determines the part of speech of marking for the phrase as a whole (Bauer 1990:1), and complements of noun are not obligatory constituents of the NP, as seen in sentences 1(a)-(d). That is why Herbst (1988:299-300) claims that syntactically; “... complements are classified as obligatory or optional according to whether their deletion makes a sentence ungrammatical or not”, explaining that when obligatory complements are not realized, the sentence containing the nouns would be ungrammatical. However, when the complement is optional and not realized, the sentence is grammatical but unacceptable. “Unacceptable” here means that the noun is semantically ambiguous, lacking precision and specificity. Complements are thus by this analytical definition, constituents that specify the meaning of a head noun. Radford (1988:175-176) notes that “... complements... denote grammatical functions or relations”, saying that this “have the same status as the terms like “subject and object”.

Different NP positions like subject or object of a case assigner and can as well demand for antecedent based on its class, i.e. ([± anaphor]); hence, different head noun types will demand for different positions, like head-initial position or head-final position. The head being “the constituent whose distribution is the same as that of the resultant construction, the other constituents being modifiers” (Lyons 1968:233), example, ‘the pen on the table in the room’, has the ‘pen’ as the head noun with “on the table in the room’, as its complement. The head noun ‘pen’ is a head-initial noun. This is a [-verb] complement. The dimension of [± verb] is employed because the verb is crucial in determining whether a noun phrase is a subject or object in a sentence, therefore, is more likely to occur ‘externally’, i.e., in the initial position, because a [+verb] complement in English occurs before a head final noun as in: ‘cooked egg’

Fig.2



The NP types (R-expressions) which may demand for complements and have theta roles assignable to them includes, lexical NPs, WH-words, pronouns and small pro. The complements which may be demanded for by the referential nouns should to be semantically compatible with the head nouns. Pronominal take antecedents outside their locality. The implication of this for complement is that an NP that has an anaphor for its head will need an antecedent to clarify its reference.

Mbáísé-Ígbò noun types and complements

This highlights some of the noun types that possibly demand for complements, which have been classified as referential expressions or phonetically audible nouns.

Referential expressions in Mbáísé-Ígbò

A referential expression is a noun that has an independent reference, not dependent on upon any other word in the sentence for the clarity of its meaning. It could be a simple words, derived/complex words or verbal nouns and compound nouns. The referential nouns include:

- Simple nouns/words like- úyò ‘house’, áká ‘hand’, ányá ‘eye’, ákwúkwó ‘book’, Mmírī ‘water’, Ọbá ‘ban’.

Simple nouns do enter into syntagmatic relationships with other categorial elements as qualifiers/specifiers (complements).

- Complex nouns/derived words on the other hand, are formed from verbs and are grouped into different classes of verbal nouns - agentive nouns, instrumental nouns, gerundive nouns and reduplicative nominalization.
- Compound nouns are [noun +noun] compounds that occur in a string to represent one item. They are more of transliterated words, as in úyò ákíríká ‘thatched house’, úyò ógwù ‘hospital’, élú úgwú ‘top of mountain/mountain top’

Complex nouns/derived nouns are presented thus: Nouns formed from verbs (verbal nouns):
Examples:

2. (a) a - da = ádà
 [noun] [+verb] ‘a fall’
 [morpheme] ‘fall’
 ádà yá ‘her/his fall’
- (b) ń -má = ńmā
 [noun] [+verb] ‘beauty’
 [morpheme] (‘being) beautiful’
 ńmā Àdá ‘the beauty of Ada/ Ada’s beauty’
- (c) ń -ká = ńká
 [noun] [+verb] ‘ageing’
 [Morpheme] ‘ageing’ ńkā Àdá ‘the ageing of Ada’

(d) à -kù = àkù
 [noun] [+verb] 'wealth'
 [Morpheme] 'gather wealth'
 àkù Òbí 'Obi's wealth'

(e) ú -bé = ùbé
 [noun] [+verb] 'cry'
 [morpheme] 'cry'
 ùbé ònùnú 'the cry of a bird'

(f) Ó -bí = Òbí
 [noun] [+verb] 'hut'
 [morpheme] 'live'
 Òbí èzè 'the king's palace'

(ii) Agentive nouns - agents from verbs with the morphemes (o-/o-)

3. (a) Ó -gbù ágù = 'ògbù ágù
 [noun] [+verb] lion' [noun compl] 'the killer of lion'
 (the one that kills lions)

(b) Ó -gbù ànù = ògbù ànù
 [noun] [+verb] meat 'a butcher'
 [morpheme] 'kill' [noun compl]
 (the one that kills animals)

(c) Ọ -kwó úgbó = ọkwó úgbó
 [noun] [+verb] [noun compl] 'a driver'
 [morpheme] drive vehicle
 (the one that drives vehicle)

(d) Ọ -gbá égbè = ógbá égbè
 [noun] [+verb] [noun compl] 'a marksman'
 [morpheme] shoot gun
 (the one that shoots gun accurately)

(e) Ó -bù ájá = Òbù ájá
 [noun] [+verb] [noun compl] 'carrier of sand'
 [morpheme] sand
 (the one that carries sand)

(f) Ọ -gbá mgbáda = Ọgbá mgbáda
 [noun] [+verb] [noun compl] 'the shooter of antelope'
 [morpheme] shoot antelope
 (the one that shoots antelope)

(iii) Instrumental nouns- instruments from verbs with (m-/n-) morphemes

4. (a) rí kpópú (ìhé) = ríkpópú
 [noun] [+verb] 'opener'
 [Morpheme] hit open
 'instrument for hitting open(something)'

(b) ì -kpáká (ìhé) = ìkpáká
 [noun] [+verb] ‘instrument for opening’
 [morpheme] force open
 ‘instrument for forcing open(something)’

(c) ñ -chíchá = ñchíchá
 [noun] [+verb] ‘wiper’
 [morpheme] wipe
 ‘instrument for wiping (something)’

(d) ì -yò = ì̀nyò
 [noun] [+verb] instrument for sieving’
 [morpheme] sieve
 ‘instrument for sieving (something)’

(iv) Gerundive nouns-nominal formed from verbs with O-/O- morphemes

5. (a) Ó rí rí ñrí
 [noun] [+verb][+verb] [noun] = órí rí
 [morpheme] eat eat food
 ‘the eating of food’

(b) Ó gbú gbú ánù = ógbúgbú ánù
 [noun] [+verb] [+verb] [noun compl.]
 [morpheme] kill kill
 ‘the cutting of meat/the butchering of animal’

(c) Ó sí sí ñrí = ósísí ñrí
 [noun] [+verb] [+verb] [noun compl]
 [morpheme] cook cook food
 ‘the cooking of food’

(d) Ó kwú kwó ùgbó = Ó kwúkwó ùgbó
 [noun] [+verb] [+verb] [noun compl]
 [morpheme] drive drive vehicle
 ‘the driving of vehicle’

Discussion and analysis of data

Verbal nouns include agentive nouns, instrumental nouns and gerundive nouns, which are noun types derived from verbs. These nouns obligatorily co-occur with their complements/specifiers, which show the type of agents/instruments/nouns being referred to. For instance, [ádà yá] ‘her fall’, in 2(a) comprises [ádà] ‘a fall’, a noun from the verb ìdà ‘to fall’, which subcategorizes the complement [yá], (him/her/it), an object complement or the experiencer of the action of ‘falling’. In 2(b), [ímá] (beauty), is noun derived from the verb [ímā] (to be beautiful). [ímá] is an abstract noun and needs an ‘experiencer’(complement) - [Àdá], to express the quality of ‘beauty’. Ñká Àdá ‘ageing of Àdá’ in 2(c), is abstract noun derived from the verb ‘ìkā ñkā’ (to age), and like 2(b), it subcategorizes a noun complement [Àdá], as the ‘experiencer’ of the action of ‘ageing’.

In 3(a) the agentive noun, ógbú [‘killer] is agent derived from the verb ‘ìgbū’(to kill).. The verb subcategorizes an object complement [ágū], telling what kind of animal the agent kills,

hence, ‘ògbú áǵū ‘a killer of lion’. In 3(b), [Óǵbú àǹù], comprises of an agent [Òǵbú] derived from the verb ‘íǵbū’(to kill), and verb subcategorizes an object complement àǹū, showing what the agent cuts/ kill, hence, Òǵbú àǹū ‘butcher, while in 3(c), Ọkwó úǵbó, Ọkwó is noun agent derived from the verb ‘íkwò. As verbal agent, [ọkwó] ‘a driver’, subcategorizes a complement [úǵbó] ‘a vehicle’

In 4 (a), (b), (c) the noun instruments [m̀kpópú] (instrument for opening) ‘an opener (b) [m̀kpáká] (an instrument for breaking open), and ‘(c) [ńchíchá] (an instrument for wiping) or ‘a wiper’, are derived from the verbs [íkópú] ‘to hit open’, íkpáká ‘to tear open’ and íchíchá (to wipe off/clean’, respectively. These are instruments for doing something, which is the complement, therefore, they may be associated with ‘the something’, hence, they may subcategorise [íhé] (something) as in - [m̀kpópú íhé] (instrument for opening something) [m̀kpáká íhé] (an instrument for breaking open something) and [ńchíchá íhé] (an instrument for wiping something)

In 5 (a) [óríí ńrí] ‘the eating of food’, (b) [óǵbúǵbú àǹū], ‘the cutting of meat/the butchering of animal’ (c) [ósísí ńrí], ‘the cooking of food’ (d) [Ọkwúkwo úǵbó], ‘the driving of vehicle’, each of the gerunds, is accompanied by its complement, [ńrí] ‘ food’, [àǹū], ‘meat /animal’ and úǵbó ‘[vehicle]’, respectively. The complements specify the agentive roles.

Head-initial nouns/simple referential nouns with complements

The nouns in M̀báǐsé-Íǵbò occur within the noun phrase head-initially, and demand for complements to the right. Head-initial referential nouns demands for their complement to the right. It is observed that no matter the nature of the noun complement demanded for by the referential nouns, the syntactic feature required is merely to describe and limit the domain of reference of the head noun as in these examples

9. (a) Nwókō óchá ‘fair complexioned man’
 [-verb] [-verb]
 Man white
 [Head noun] complement
- (b) Éǵbè ósísí ‘wooden gun’
 [-verb] [-verb]
 [head noun] ‘wood’
 ‘gun’ complement
- (c) úyò òké ‘rat’s house’
 [-verb] [-verb]
 house rat
 head noun complement

The head nouns Nwókō, (man) Éǵbè, (gun) úyò (house), respectively, in data 9(a)-(c), on their own are ambiguous without the complements óchá,(fairness) ósísí,(wood/tree) òké,(rat) respectively, hence, the complements function to make precise the meaning of the heads. This is a case of [noun+noun] relationship, where second nominal element modifies the first which is the head.

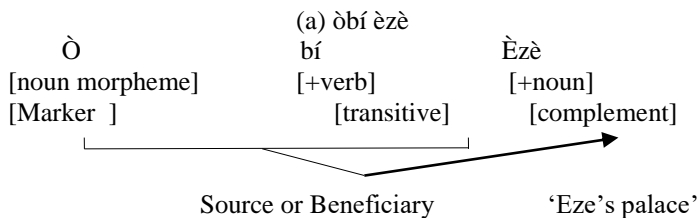
Head-initial derived referential nouns

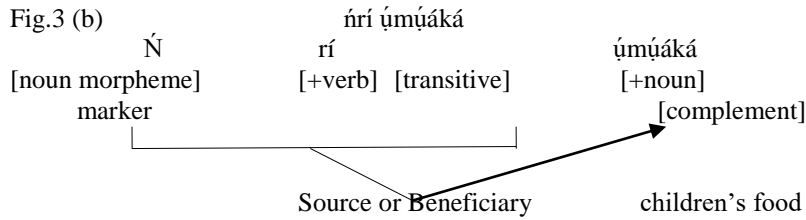
When the head noun has a [+verb] feature and is head-initial, it demands for a complement that will receive theta role from it as in the following examples:

10. (a)
- | | | |
|---|---------|--------------|
| Ọrụ | -rụ | úyò |
| ‘work’ | [+verb] | [-verb] |
| [+verb] | do | house |
| [head noun] | | [complement] |
| ‘a work done in the house or the building of a house’ | | |
-
- (b)
- | | | |
|----------------|----------|--------------|
| Ímā | -mā | Àdá |
| ‘beauty’ | [+verb] | [-verb] |
| [+verb] | ‘beauty’ | Àdá |
| [head noun] | | [complement] |
| ‘Ada’s beauty’ | | |
-
- (c)
- | | | |
|----------------------|---------|--------------|
| ńrí | - rí | úmúáká |
| ‘food’ | [+verb] | ‘children’ |
| [+verb] | ‘eat’ | [-verb] |
| [head noun] | | [complement] |
| ‘ food for children’ | | |
-
- (d)
- | | | |
|----------------|--------------|---------|
| óbí | -bí | Èzè |
| ‘ palace’ | [+verb] | ‘king’ |
| [+verb] | ‘live’ | [-verb] |
| [head noun] | [complement] | |
| king’s palace’ | | |

It is observed from data 10(a)-(d), that the NPs Ímā Àdá, (Ada’s beauty) Ọrụ úyò (house work), ńrí úmúáká, (food for children), Ọbí èzè, (Eze’s’ palace), which have the heads, Ímā, Ọrụ (work), ńrí (food), Ọbí (hut/palace), respectively, are derived NPs because their heads are nouns derived from verbs. The [+VERB] feature of the head nouns allow them to enjoy an inherent theta role assignment of patient. Therefore the heads in the above data demand for complements which may either be a source or beneficiary. This is shown with the figures below (cf.3(c) and (d)).

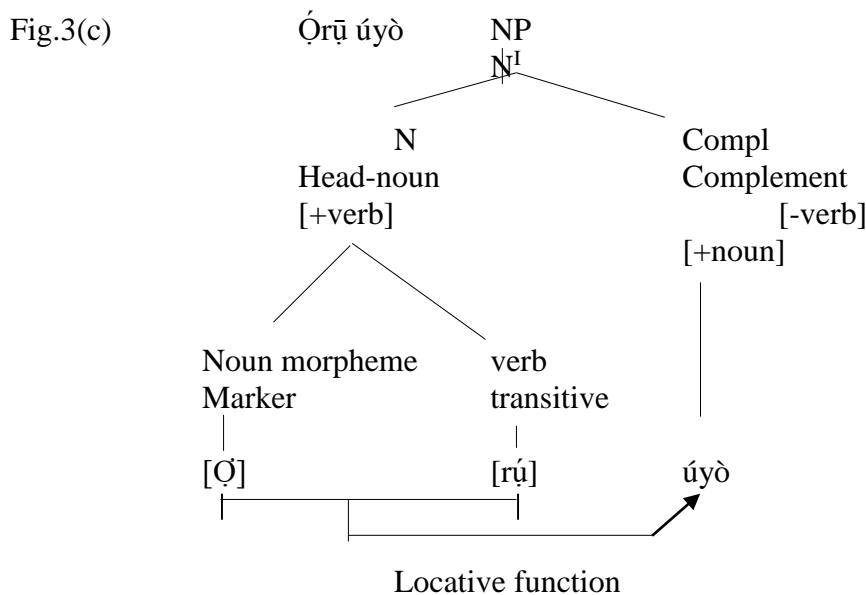
Fig.3 (a)



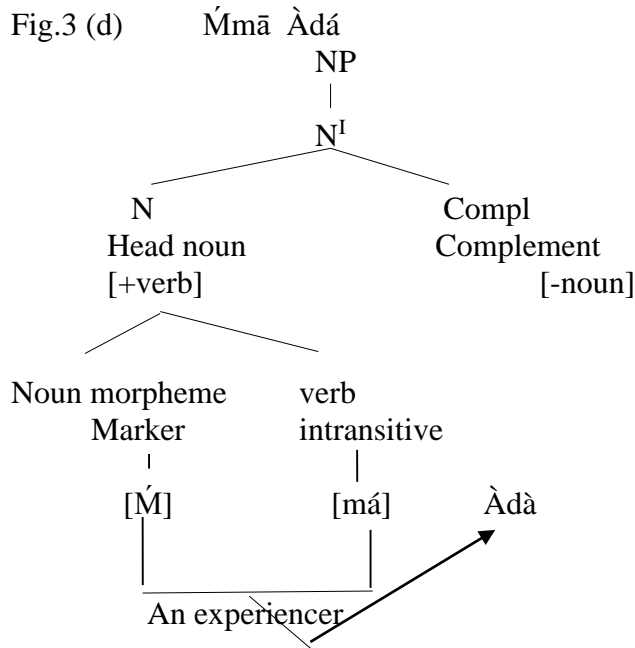


'Obi eze' in no.10 (d), could mean either a palace from ézè (the king) (source) or a palace for the king (ézè) (beneficiary). A possible explanation to why the two interpretations are acceptable is that óbí 'palace', suggests a patient -an object that has received the action of the transitive verb 'bi' "live". This presupposes that there was a possible agent (source) of the action of the verb and a possible beneficiary, benefiting from the action of the verb on the patient. Therefore, the complement ézè might be the source of the patient Òbí, or, the beneficiary or possessor of the patient. It is the same issue with ńrí ùmúáká (food for children) in 10(c). The [+verb] element -rí, (eat) in the head noun 'ńrí' 'food', suggests that the head noun has an inherent theta role of patient. If the head noun is a patient, it presupposes that there must be a source (agent of the verb) or a possible beneficiary or possessor of the patient.

Therefore, the complement ùmúáká (children) could be either a source or a beneficiary. In the case of 10(a), the head noun Órú (work) has as inherent theta role of location assigned to it by its [+verb] element -rú (do/ work), which is a transitive verb. Therefore Órú (work), can only demand for a complement that will specify its location; this is achieved in úyò 'place', as demonstrated in Fig.3(c) (cf.10 (a):



In 10(b), the NP Mmā Àdá has the head Mmā, the [+verb] element which allows it to enjoy an inherent theta role of being a state. Because the head is a state, it will demand for a complement which will not just specify it, but would be semantically compatible with this theta role and must be a concrete noun, able to experience the state "of being beautiful", like Ada in Fig.3 (d) (cf.10 (b)



Complement of compound nouns

In a (noun + noun) compound, the first noun component (the initial word), is the head, the other element, also a nominal, serves as a qualifier of the head or a complement that describes or limits the domain of reference of the head noun. Most of the nouns in the nominal compounds of a [noun + noun] compound are transliterated words in M̄báísé–Ígbò as in.

- | | | | |
|---------|--------------------------------------|--|------------------|
| 11. (a) | úyò
[-verb]
Head noun
house | ákíríká
[-verb]
complement
thatch | 'thatched house' |
| (b) | úyò
[-verb]
head noun
house | òkúkò
[-verb]
complement
chicken | 'chickens pen' |
| (c) | úyò
[-verb]
Head noun
house | ógwù
[-verb]
complement
medicine | 'hospital' |
| (d) | éíú
[-verb]
head noun
top | úgwú
[-verb]
complement
mountain | 'mountain top' |

Summary

The paper has been on the complementation activities of simple referential and derived nouns in *Mbáísé-Ígbò* and their relationship in GB syntax. The simple referential nouns demand for complements that limit their reference, while the derived nouns demand for complements that receive theta roles from them. Each of the structures show head-complement relationships where the first nominal element is the head being modified by the following nominal. The reflexives and reciprocals do not subcategorize noun phrase complement complements. Semantic compatibility is necessary in the relationship between the derived head noun and its complement.

Findings

Nouns in *Mbáísé-Ígbò* are vacuous without complements. Head-initial derived nouns demand for complements that receive theta roles from them. The [+VERB] feature of the head nouns allows them to enjoy an inherent theta role assignment of patient. Therefore, the heads demand for complements which may either be a source or beneficiary. Anaphors and reciprocals have no need for complements; rather their antecedents which they take reference from may need complements. Complements of compound nouns are mainly transliterated forms, where the second noun component explains or describes the head noun. Theoretically, there is a correlation between the semantics and syntax of the complementation of referential nouns and their heads. Complementation is necessary to further the meaning and to understand the structure of a head noun. It is observed that the phrase structure of the *Mbáísé-Ígbò* noun types can be subjected the GB syntax analysis with comparative result as in English.

Contributions to knowledge

The work has underscored the importance of complementation in the grammar of the dialect and Igbo language at large. Theoretically, there is a correlation between the semantics and syntax in the complementation referential nouns and their heads. Furthermore, it is observed that the complementation activities of the various noun types can be verified using the GB framework. Grammatically, it provides information about the behaviour of derived nouns, reflexives and reciprocals and their complementation processes. Pedagogically, the work leaves behind some facts for language teaching and further researches on grammar, intra-linguistic and comparative linguistic activities of the dialect in particular and Igbo at large. This helps to highlight the parametric principles that are applicable to the dialect and Igbo in general.

Recommendations

Further research on the complementation processes of referential nouns and the flexibilities in the occurrences of some head nouns in the initial, medial, final positions in some nouns in relation to the head noun and their complements.

Conclusion

Complementation is necessary for the specificity of the *Mbáísé-Ígbò* nominal category; hence without a complement the noun is vague, for this further research is recommended on the concept.

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