

1.0 GENERAL BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This research work is based on the aspects of noun Bura noun phrase. The study forms an important aspect of the syntax of the language. By syntax, we mean the branch of linguistic analysis which involves the arrangement of words to form grammatical sentences a rule-governed way. It should be noted that there are many aspects of syntax, but this research will focus on the noun phrase of Bura language.

A phrase could be described as a group of words that forms an integral part of a sentence. There are different types of phrasal categories, for example Noun, Verb, Prepositional, Adverbial, Adjectival phrases etc. Each phrasal category is named after the lexical category that heads the phrase. For instance, a verb heads a verb phrase, a preposition heads a prepositional phrase.

In this chapter, we will carry out a survey of the historical background of the language, socio-linguistic profile under which we shall describe the occupation, marriage, religion, festivals, culture and beliefs, language status and the genetic classification of the language. Government and Binding theory is used as a theoretical framework for the analysis of the study.

1.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Pabir and Bura are ethnically different, but both speak the Bura language. They are the major tribes in Biu and Askira L.G.A's of Borno state and Gombi L.G.A of Adamawa state. The population of Bura people in Borno state is about 230,000 and there are about 46,000 speakers of the language in Adamawa state. (N.P.C 2005).

The Bura's lived north of Biu before being attacked by Yata-ra-wara around the 16th century. The few people Yamta brought with him intermarried with the Bura's and built the Biu dynasty into a kingdom. Those descendants of Yamta's group were called Pabir or (babur), this is why the Pabir and Bura's differ considerably in culture appearance until today. The Pabir are the ruling class among the Bura people and the Bura villages pay tribute to the Emir of Biu, the Bura's still resent the Pabirs.

1.2 SOCIOCULTURAL PROFILE

The following could be observed among the Bura's. The language Bura is seen as a means of communication in the market and is also used in teaching in primary schools. The Bura's found in Biu and Askira L.G.A's in Borno state and Gombi L.G.A in Adamawa state. Their main language is Bura but they also speak Hausa, Chibok, Fulfulde and a few speak Marghi.

1.2.1 CULTURAL HIGHLIGHTS

The Bura people did not circumcise their boys until the practice was introduced around the 1920's. Boys are circumcised around the age of 7. When a female child is born, a suitor may propose by throwing a leafy branch of a certain tree in her mother's kut. If he is accepted, he gives gifts as the girl grows up. He works on her father's farm and makes zana matting for them. When she reaches marriage age he captures her and brings her to his house, then the remaining part of the bride price is settled and arrangements for the marriage ceremony are concluded.

The bride is usually expected to produce a white cloth stained with the proof of her virginity and it may be displayed with pride, her parents will be ashamed if she is not a virgin.

Another form of courtship/marriage is for a boy to look over the girls while they are collecting firewood or fetching water, when he sees the one he likes he asks her to marry him and if she agrees, he gets about 8 or 10 strong fellows to capture her and bring her to his house then the marriage ceremony is arranged. As a sign of respect, a man does not eat with his parents-in-laws, when an old person dies he/she is buried on the second day, when everyone has gathered in the evening. The grave is a wide circular shaft at the top, about knee deep then a smaller round shaft is dug from the bottom of this into a loor of cavity. There is a traditional dancing for seven days after the burial, and if the deceased was an important person it lasts 14 days, during which rituals are performed. There is dancing with beating of drum and things belonging to the deceased that show who he was are displayed,

such as his/her tools and weapons. This is done till date, sometimes professional mourners are invited on one of the mourning days, the Fuinchambwi dance is done. The male dancers jump from the roof of the hut of the deceased back again until the roof destroyed. After this the date is fixed for the last mourning or sadaka, which is held about 6 months later but usually during dry season.

1.2.2 CHIEFTANCY

Originally the Bura's had no central government, now the Emir of Biu appoints the district heads (Ajia) who then approve the appointments of the village heads (Lawans). Today both titles belong to certain families. The village heads appoint the ward heads (Bulamas) over small villages and wards of larger ones. Anyone who has leadership ability is chosen as a Bulama.

1.2.3 RELIGION

The Bura had their traditional religion before Islam came around 1920 and Christianity later in the 1920's. Today these three religions can be found among the Bura's.

In traditional religion the Supreme Being is called Hyel or Hyel-taku, they approach Hyel through Haptu. Hyel they claim created everything, but a Haptu is a personal god who takes care of the individual. The Haptu have shrines where people worship and offer sacrifices. The gods are represented by various objects such as water (a lake or river), stones, mountains or forest. Usually there is an attendant or priest through whom consultations are made of the Haptu. Most sacrifices are on Saturdays so it is a special day. Some gods are for particular clans, and there is no unified form of traditional religion for the whole tribe. One of the Haptu (gods) is Dlaminpr Kampeka, a large being living in space. His chief priest is called Mthakur Haptu, there is a Mthakur Haptu in each village.

The most common of the gods is represented by a covered pot kept by a family head. At the beginning end of the dry season in times of stress, he offers a chicken to the pot for the health of his household. The practice of traditional religion has now largely disintegrated before Islam and Christianity. However witchcraft is still done. The belief that ancestors become when they die and still influence what happens in the world has not really died out.

The total number of Bura Christians is under 60,000, the percentage of Christians is actually less than 20%, though more may be nominal adherents. A rough estimate of the religious percentage is as follows: Muslims-78%, Christians-20%, Traditionalists-2%.

There is a certain amount of understanding between the Muslims and Christians which prevents too much religious tension in the tribe, but this does mean Muslims do not persecute relatives converted to Christianity.

1.2.4 OCCUPATION

The people of Bura are mainly agriculturalists as they engage themselves in planting of crops like maize, guinea corn, groundnut and rice. Among them there are also weavers, fishermen, hunters, woodcarvers etc.

Fig. 1.2.4 Fishing Occupation of Bura People

1.2.5 FESTIVAL

Since the Bura people are mainly engaged in farming all their festivals are farming related, as they organize harvest festivals before fresh harvests are eaten.

An example is the maize harvest festival performed before fresh corn can be eaten, it is believed that it is sacrilegious to eat an harvest before the harvest festival, hence all farmers adhere to this law.

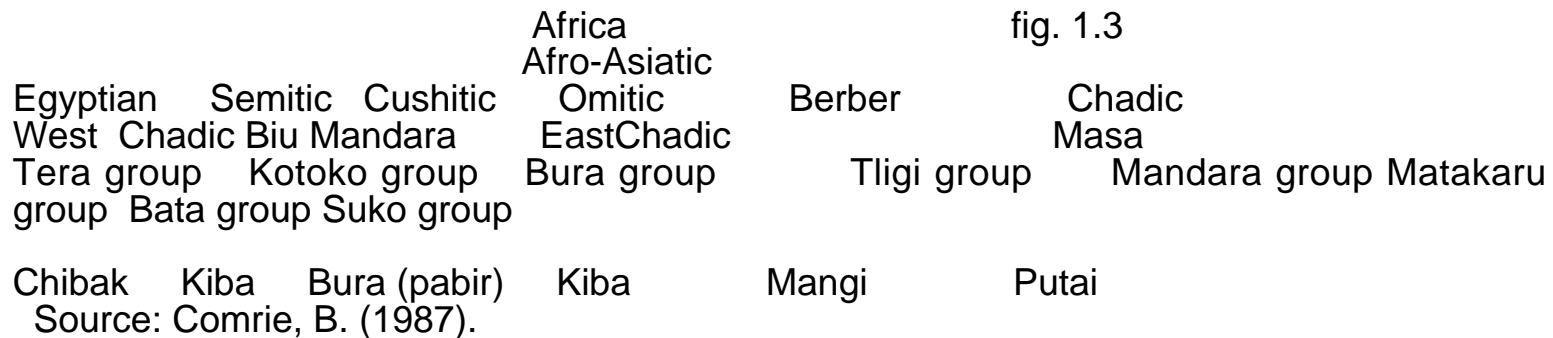
Fig. 1.2.5 Maize Harvest Festival of Bura People

1.2.6 CULTURE

The Bura people have a rich culture, preserved and handed down from generation to generation. They are simple country people, they believe in justice, modesty, equity and fairness. They are accommodating and live in peace with their neighbours. Talking about their mode of greeting they greet more or less like Hausa's they bend down or kneel down to greet each other.

1.3 GENETIC CLASSIFICATION

fig. 1.3



Source: Comrie, B. (1987).

1.4 SCOPE AND ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

This research will focus its attention on the Noun phrase of Bura language. This work aims at giving a detailed syntactic analysis of the Noun of Bura language.

This work attempts to discuss the arrangement or combination of words to form phrases, clauses and sentences in Bura. This description will also focus on some of the peculiar features of the language.

This research work consists of five chapters. Chapter one deals with the introductory aspect of the work, that is the sociolinguistic profiles of the dialect, its historical background, socio-cultural profile, genetic classification, scope and organization of the study, theoretical framework. The second chapter centers on the basic syntactic concepts, where we intend to analyze the phrase structure rules as well as the lexical categories and sentence types based on Government and Binding theory.

The third chapter will examine the noun phrase of Bura, areas as noun phrase position, noun phrase function, complementizers and the noun phrase construction.

The chapter four centers on all the levels of linguistics analysis in the language, that is the transformation processes. Chapter five will present the summary as well as the conclusion on the entire work.

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theoretical framework adopted in this work Government and Binding theory (G.B theory). This Government and Binding theory was proposed by an American linguist named Noam Chomsky in (1981), as a reaction to transformational generative grammar to account for all and only the representations that underline the grammatical sentence in a language.

Government and Binding theory is a modular deductive theory of grammar. Proponents of G.B often maintained that there is no such thing as roles of language. But only the principles and parameters whose values can only vary from one language to the other do exist with specified units.

Chomsky (1995:15-16) remarks as follows, "The principles and parameters approach held that language have no rule in anything like familiar sense transformation and no theoretically significant grammatical construction, except taxonomic artifacts". There are universal principles and finite array of options as to how such principles apply (parameter) but no language particular roles.

It is also worthy to note that though Government and Binding theory is a common label of this model of syntax, it is misleading because it gives undue prominence to the two elements of Government and Binding, whose status was not fundamentally superior to the other sub-theories like x-bar, theta, case e.t.c. Hence, the "principles and parameters theory has come to be seen as a closer to its essence.

1.5 DATA COLLECTION

The method employed for data collection is the bilingual elicitation approach, involving English and Bura language. The data were elicited with the use of the Ibadan four hundred wordlist, which consists of basic list simple words.

Apart from the 400 wordlist, phrases and sentences in English were translated to Bura, by a Bura native speaker. The data collected were subjected to analysis.

Oral interviews were conducted in English language and answers were given in Bura language by my informant. The answers to these questions were used in the syntactic analysis.

of Bura language.

Below are the full details of my informant

Name: Abdulahi Ahmed

Age: 42 years old.

My informant is a native speaker of Bura language. He is from Gombi local government area in Adamawa state. My informant speaks the following language: English, Hausa and Bura.

But due to the busy schedule of my informant at the time in which this research work is being carried out, he was unable to provide all required information needed to complete this work, hence additional information was sought by the researcher online leading to the discovery of a Bura dictionary prepared following a workshop in Jos, 24-25 April, 2009 and represents a major shift in terms of orthography and definitions etc. as prepared by Roger Blench of www.rogerblench.info/RBOP.htm E-mail trogerblench@yahoo.co.uk

1.7 DATA ANALYSIS

In this research work, the data was collected from my informant both in writing and recording an audio cassette then the analysis of the data collected was carried out using Government and Binding theory of syntax as proposed by Chomsky (1986). This research work will be

limited to the aspect of noun phrase. The informant used was fluent in the language, his fluency and competence formed the basis of his choice as my informant.

1.8 BRIEF REVIEW OF CHOSEN FRAMEWORK

Government and Binding theory refers to the theory of syntax propounded by Chomsky (1981, 1982, 1986). This theory is a radical revision of his earlier (1965, 1987) theories which was revised in a minimalist programme for linguistic theory (1993).

The name refers to central sub-theories of the theory. Government can be referred to as an abstract syntactic relation and Binding deal with their referents or pronoun R-expression.

G.B was the first to be based on the principle and parameters mode of language, which also underlines the later development of the minimalist programme. Government and Binding is a theory of universal grammar, which is one system of all the principles that are common to all human languages (Haegeman 1991:13) It is otherwise known as principle and parameter theory in the sense that G.B, the grammar is a continuous interaction between components and sub-theories embedding different principles and parameters (Cook 1988:31). It has two levels of representation related by transformation rule move alpha.

Move alpha is stipulated by movement, that is the syntactic level is elaborated by the concept of movement (Cook 1988:30). G.B requires two levels of syntactic representation. The deep structure (D-structure) which is the level at which we obtain all information on the words and their combination, it consists of base rules, lexical rules, strict sub-categorization, selectional restrictions, phrase structure rules (Yusuf 1997:68).

It is the level at which elements in the sentence are in their original location (Cook 1988:30).

We also have the surface structure level (S-structure) which is the level at which some components in the sentence have been moved. The S-structure is clearly generated from the D-structure by the application of movement rules. There is a relationship between deep structure and the surface structure, they are related by movement.

1.9 THE SUB-THEORIES OF G.B

Chomsky postulates a set of interacting sub-theories each of which deals with some control area of grammatical enquiry. Each of these may be subject to parametric variation. That is to say, it is assumed that the grammar of languages vary in only finitely many ways with respect to the domain covered by sub-theory. All these sub-theories of G.B theory operate in a modular form, this theory itself is referred to as modular deductive theory of grammar. The sub-theories assumed are the following.

- i. X-bar theory
- ii. Theta theory

- iii. case theory
- iv. Binding theory
- v. Bounding theory
- vi. Control theory

theory

1.9.1 X-BAR THEORY

X-Bar syntax replaces large numbers of idiosyncratic rules with general principles. It captures properties of all phrases and is based on the lexicon. The principle is that a phrase always contains a head of the same type.

It defines the possible phrase structure configuration of language in general. The control notion is that each of the major lexical categories (Noun, Verb, Preposition and Adjectives), is the head of structure is dominated by a phrase, Verb: verb phrase e.t.c) for example Noun phrase (NP) is headed by a Noun. It comes after possible constituents in the example below.

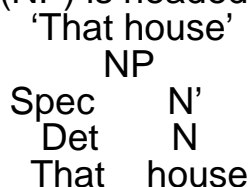


Fig. 1.9.1

X-bar encompasses projection principle which shows how head moves to its maximal projection. It projects the characteristics of lexical entries into the syntax which link the D-structure to S-structure an LF to the lexicon by specifying the possible context in which a particular lexical item can occur projection from the head to the maximal is shown below.

- XP- Maximal projection
- X''- Intermediate
- X - The head

All NPs have the same two bar level structures even if specifiers and complementizers are not actually present putting the levels of specifier and complement together, the structure of a phrase consist of two levels, arbitrary using particular specifier and complement positions.

X''

Fig. 1.9.1.2

S p e c i f i e d

X'

X

Complement

G.B claims that these two levels are necessary for all types of phrase. X-bar theory proposes that all phrase in a language

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