

INTRODUCTION

1.0 General Background of the Study

Language is the fabric that ties every member of the society together, which serves as an instrument used by man for specific and distinguishable purposes. Indeed, the focus of this research is to shed light on how verb phrases are formed in Migili language. Therefore, the first chapter of this research is focused on the genetic classification of Migili language. As an introductory chapter, attempts shall be made to trace the origin, socio-cultural profile, administrative system, religion, geographical location, topography (life zone) economy, marriage rites, map, genetic classification of Migili. Effort shall also be extended to the organization of the study, theoretical framework together with a review of the chosen theory, data collection and analysis and some syntactic concept.

According to Crystal (1994: 420) syntax is the study of the rules governing the way words are combined to form grammatical sentences in contrast with morphology that studies word structure. This branch of linguistics is concerned with how words are combined to form phrases and sentences in a rule governed manner. In a nutshell, words are not together in a random order, they follow certain observable patterns in any language.

1.1 Historical Background of Migili

Migili refers to the name of a language and also a group of people. The Migili people constitute about 96% of the total population of Agyaraoju Obi Local Government, Nasarawa State in Nigeria; with a total population of about 18,000.

History has it that different tribes including Migili, Alago, Eggon all settled at Korofa Kingdom in Taraba state. It was said that a man named Akuka was denied the right to the throne and as a result had to leave Korofa together with some other members of the Migili tribe to a place called Ukari and later to Lafia region. Some of them moved to Abuja, Minna in Niger State, Kubacha in Kaduna state.

The Eggon tribe are also neighbours of the Migilis with some of them having the knowledge of Migili language.

Today, Migili language has various alternate names such as: Higili, Migili, Koro of Lafia.

1.2 Socio-Cultural Profile

Like most communities around them, the socio-cultural background of the people of Migili include: Occupation, Religion, Festival, Mode of Dressing, Marriage.

1.2.1 Occupation

The Migilis are farmers to the core. Yam is the major cash crop that is being produced in the area. Some other agricultural produce include guinea corn, maize, millet, groundnut, and beans. However, they also engage in weaving and artistic works. The land has varying proportion of nitrogen and phosphorus, it is sandy on the up land, it makes plant grow well, agricultural products are sold in the market called Migili market once in a week.

1.2.2 Religion

The Migili people are predominantly Christians. Before the coming of the missionaries, the Migilis were traditional worshippers who had belief in ancestral gods. By the coming of Christianity, a lot of people who were traditional worshippers became converts and embraced Christianity.

1.2.3 Festival

One major festival in Migili land is the Odu masquerade festival. The Odu masquerade is dressed in colourful masks and displays great dancing skills with spectacular dancing skills and beautiful dance steps. According to the people, Odu was the god of war and it is believed that he helped the people win battles, equipping them with magical and spiritual powers which made them unconquerable. In every village in Migili, there is a small building built for the Odu masquerade around which he will dance for three (3) days.

1.2.4 Mode of Dressing

The people of Migili are fashionable people. These are people who still preserve the tradition of their ancestors and their rich culture. In the olden days, both male and female were usually

seen wearing bracelet, cowries, beads. Another distinguishing feature of the Migilis' was the plaiting of head by both men and women.

Nowadays, civilization plays a significant role in the mode of dressing of the people as most of them especially the younger ones now dress into western manner.

1.2.5 Marriage

Before the coming of the missionaries into the Migili society marriage was done by the father of the boy approaching the mother of the girl (from birth) and paying a token amount of money to her parents. Once this has been done the girl was said to be betrothed and will continue to live with her parents until she gets about fifteen (15) years of age. The boy pays his first installment of her dowry and farms for the father-in-law once every year.

Today marriage is done in churches and unlike before women are free to choose their groom and are not mandated to marry from their society alone.

1.3 Genetic Classification

According to Greenberg (1966: 8) African languages belong to various families, and there are four main groups. These groups are: Niger Kordofania, Nilo Sahara, Afro-Asiatic and Khoisan.

DIAGRAMATIC REPRESENTATION OF GENETIC CLASSIFICATION OF IJAKORO LANGUAGE

1.4 Scope and Organization of Study

This research is aimed at discussing the general overview of verb phrase in Migili language. This research work is divided into five chapters which are relevant aspects of the theory of syntax.

Chapter one which is the introductory part includes the historical background, socio-cultural profile, the scope and organization of study as well the theoretical framework, the data collection method and data analysis and lastly, a brief review of the chosen framework.

Chapter two shall focus on sound inventory, the basic syntactic concept such as phrase structure rule, lexical categories, basic word order and the sentence types.

Chapter three contains the main aspect of the study which is the verb phrase. In this chapter the nature of verb phrase in Migili language and the processes that are attested will be discussed.

Chapter four will examine the transformational processes such as focusing, relativization, reflexivization, passivisation and question formation.

Chapter five which is the last chapter will present a brief summary of the whole research and also the conclusion and recommendation based on such finding.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The theory to be adopted in this research is the government and binding theory in the analysis of Verb Phrase in Migili language.

1.6 Data Collection

This research is made possible through the bi-lingual language helper. However, the Ibadan four hundred word list and some sentence constructions are used to extract necessary information from the language helpers (informants) The method of collection was through direct translation from English to Migili language. The language helpers speak Migili, English, Hausa, and Eggon.

Mr. Ayuba Osibi Haruna one of the language helper is a typist in the local government secretariat, Agyaragu Obilocal government. Also, Revered Albert, a man of God in Agyaragu.

1.7 Data Analysis

Statistically, about one hundred and fifty sentences were collected from the native speaker. In order to have accurate analysis for this research, the Ibadan four hundred word list with an equivalent meaning of the item in Migili language was used.

Also, the frame technique used in his research is by framing of sentences in English language and the translation of these sentences into Migili language by the informant. This enables the researcher to determine the actual underlying form of a word, constituent and

possible syntactic classes to which each word belongs to in Migili language.

1.8 Review of the Chosen Framework

The theory to be used in the analysis of Verb Phrase in Migili language is the Government and Binding theory (GB). This theory is a modular deductive theory of universal grammar which posits multiple level of representation related by the transformational rule. However, it is a more advanced theory of universal grammar. Sanusi (1996:19-21).

Again, Sanusi (1996:21) explained that government and binding theory greatly eliminates proliferation of transformational rules like passive, affix, hoping verb-number agreement, question formation, equi-NP deletion, raising permutation, insertion etc.

Hegman (1991: 13) defined government and binding theory as a theory of universal grammar which is the system of all the principles that are common to all human languages. Government and binding theory is otherwise known as principle and parameter theory.

In government and binding theory, the grammar is a continuous interaction between component and sub-theories embodying different principle and parameters.

Government and binding theory operate through the modules of grammar like government, case, theta control, binding, bounding, and X-bar theory.

1.8.1 Sub-Theories of Government and Binding

Horrock (1987: 29) stated that, the core grammar of a given language is derived from the interaction of sub-theories of universal grammar. These sub-theories are inter-related that each of them can account for grammaticality or ungrammaticality of any sentence. These sub-theories are: X-bar theory, case theory, government theory, control theory, binding theory, bounding theory and the theta theory.

The above listed sub-theories are diagrammatically represented below to show the inter-relationship among them.

MODULAR THEORY OF GRAMMAR

X-BAR Theory

ECP

Control

Binding

PHONETIC FORM LOGICAL FORM

(Adapted from Cook (1988: 33).

X-bar Theory

Based on appropriate analysis, for this research work, X-bar is the theory to be adopted for comprehensive analysis.

According to Chomsky (1981) "the X-bar theory is the central module of the principles and parameters approach in syntax".

Also, Haegeman (1994) says that the X-bar theory is the part of grammar regulating the structure of a phrase.

The core of X-bar theory is the recognition of the fact that phrasal constituents have 'head' upon which the other elements of the constituents in question are dependent. (Horrocks 1987: 63) He submits that items which are involved in sub-categorization and which are in most cases interrupted as arguments of the head, appear with the head X in a phrasal category X-bar. X-bar is called a phrasal 'projection' of head, in this case the smallest constituent X as a sub-constituent (Horrocks, 1987: 64).

From the above, the cover symbol 'X' stands for the set of lexical categories which head phrases, as in V (for verb), N (for noun), Adj (for adjective), P (for preposition), Adv (for adverb), such that N heads NP, V heads VP, P heads PP, Adj heads AdjP and Adv heads AdvP. This implies that phrasal categories e.g. VP, PP, NP, AP all have heads that belong to the same category as the phrasal category (Akmajian, 2001: 215).

Again, Horrocks (1987) explains that X-theory periods principles for the projection of phrasal categories from lexical categories and imposes conditions of hierarchical organization of categories in the form of general schemata. Thus, the general phrase structure rule

schema for phrasal categories would be: XP → X Comp.

Where 'comp' which stands for complement could be a 'PP' or an 'NP' with 'X' standing for a lexical category e.g. P, N, V etc. This implies that when 'X' represents 'N', it means that 'XP' is an 'NP', when 'X' represents 'V', then 'XP' is a 'VP' and so on.

In summary, the major concern of the X-bar theory is to describe the syntactic and formal structures of phrases and the inherent general characteristics they have in common.

1.9 Case Theory

According to Horrocks (1987: 102), "case theory deals with the principle of case assignment to constituents".

Yusuf (1998: 26) defines case theory as a theory that deals with the forms that NPs take in different syntactic environments.

Basically, the assignment of case is done under government theory in which the choice of case is determined by the governor.

Yusuf went further to say that adjacency is required for case assignment. This means, case assignees and the assignors must be contiguous with no barrier blocking the discharge of the (Abstract) case.

He also makes it clear that, case assignors are always head of their phrases and are adjacent to the complements that receive the case (pg. 28).

The implication is that, a verb cannot assign any case to a prepositional phrase as there is an NP barrier. That blocks such a transfer.

The three common cases under Government and Binding theory are:

Nominative case assigned by tensed INFL

Accusative case assigned by verb

Oblique case assigned by prepositions

1.10 Theta Theory

Another module under GB theory is theta theory. The submission of this theory is that a lexical category will have attributes either as assigner or assignee.

Horrocks (1987: 101-107) says -theory is concerned with the assignment of what Chomsky called 'thematic' roles to sentential constituents. By thematic roles, Chomsky means thematic assignment called semantic roles such as agent, patient, etc. It is assumed that these are assigned to the complements of lexical items as a lexical property.

For example:

Play the ball on the pitch

The NP complement "the ball" is assigned the role of patient or theme while the PP complement is assigned the role of location.

In all, the fundamental task of -theory is to determine the circumstances (i.e. the syntactic position) occupied by an NP as well as the governor of such position in the sentence.

Examples:

The goalkeeper threw the ball to the opponent

The goalkeeper → subject

The ball → Direct object

The opponent → Indirect object

The main principle of -theory is criterion which requires each thematic role to be uniquely assigned. Each argument bears one and only one -role and -role is assigned to one and only one argument. Yusuf (1998: 124).

The commonly expressed roles are agents, theme, instrument, locative (goal, source, direction) and a few more.

Yusuf stresses further that, participants are assigned these roles in the D-structure, whatever it is, the V or P assigned -role to their governed complement while the VP assigns a role to be subject NP.

The thrust of -criterion is that every argument (be it subject, direct or indirect object) must have a -role.

1.11 Binding Theory

Madjaer (1991: 46) refers to binding theory as a theory that is concerned with the systematic domain in which NP can and cannot be constructed as co-referential.

Yusuf (1998: 45) in his own view states that binding theory is concerned with the relationships of NP participants in the sentence. Precisely, binding theory shows how NP can be related to another NP.

Chomsky (1988: 520) submits that binding theory deals with the connection among Noun Phrases that have to do with such semantic properties as dependence or reference, including the connection between the pronouns and its antecedents.

The implication of the above definition is that, binding theory deals with the co-referential relationship among NPs in the same sentence. That is, how NPs co-refer or co-index one another in a simple sentence.

NPs that are arguments are assumed to fall into one of these three categories:

Anaphors

Pronominal

Referential expressions

Anaphors

These are NP types that must have antecedents they depend on one for existence in some definite place in the sentence. Reciprocals and reflexive pronouns fall under this class. e.g.

Ade hurts himself

“Himself” in the above sentence refers back to Ade, therefore Ade is the antecedent which licensed its existence.

Pronominal

These are NPs that lack specific lexical content and have only the features; person, number, gender and case they either refer to individuals independently or co-refer to the individuals already mentioned in a given sentence. E.g.

Bola greeted her mother.

“Her” may refer to the individual denoted by Bola, or another individual not mentioned in the sentence.

Referential Expression

These are NPs lexical heads which potentially refer to something. A referential expression is also known as R-e

ASPECTS OF MIGILI VERB PHRASE

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