

QUANTIFIERS IN IGBO SYNTAX

By

UMEODINKA ALOYSIUS U. (aloyudo@yahoo.co.uk)

Department of African and Asian Studies

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Nigeria.

&

ILECHUKWU DANIEL I. (alldano@yahoo.com)

Department of African and Asian Studies

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Nigeria.

Abstract

This paper agrees that the lexical categories of the parts of speech have given birth to a separate syntactic group known as the nominal modifiers. And it singles out “Quantifiers” out of them to look at its syntax in the Igbo language. The nominal modifiers’ distinct form class members have hardly enjoyed full fledged syntactic behaviour examination. Adopting a descriptive approach, the study gives a definition to quantifiers, assembles the different types that exist in the Igbo language and attempts a classification of quantifiers in Igbo. The investigation identifies the patterned structural characteristics of quantifiers and indicates their limitations. The paper discovers that contrary to speculated claims, the number of quantifiers in Igbo is not limited to three. Many other types are discovered. Also, through the structural manipulation or changing of the quantifiers, the Igbo language will manifest the capability to generate useful communicational meanings; and this is a welcome enrichment of the language in semantics and syntax.

1. INTRODUCTION

The achievement of effective communication is arguably the main goal of any language. To this lies the explanation for the provision of additional information, describing clearly or narrowing down the meaning of the word or other parts of a grammatical construction. By so doing, the meaning of a word or some other parts of a sentence are changed or modified to bring about better constructions. The agents of the meaning change are known as modifiers. Those that effect the meaning change in nouns are referred to as “Nominal Modifiers”. As Emenanjo (1978:78) puts it,

“Nominal modifiers is a cover term for those “qualifying” words which, even though they only occur in the NP, can never be used alone in a minimal NP”.

In the Igbo language, the nominal modifiers are sub classified into adjectives, Demonstratives, Pronominal Modifiers and quantifiers. Out of these four sub-classes of Emenanjo in Ogbalu and Emenanjo(1982) and Uba-Mgbemena (2006), this paper is set to examine “Quantifiers in Igbo syntax”. The quantifiers are said to be very few in the Igbo language. There could be more. Their syntactic behaviour is yet to be a general knowledge. And of all the linguists that have treated quantifiers, none has tried to do a categorization of the examples, neither has there been a devotion of special attention to any peculiar syntactic features of the categories. It is for these reasons that this research focuses on the Syntax of Quantifiers in the Igbo language. By this, we mean to delve into the ways in which words are put together to form quantified expressions in the language.

The paper commences with a preliminary explanation of the study and its layout. From the introduction, we proceed to give the definition and explanation of quantifiers before we dwell on the different types of quantifiers that exist. This will take us to the classification of the sampled quantifiers. Thereafter, it will be the turn of the syntax of quantifiers, where their syntactic behaviour will take our attention. The last section of the study is the summary of findings and conclusion.

3.0 Types of Quantifiers

There are not many quantifiers in the Igbo language. The few that exist include the following:

(4) Òtútụ (several/many), (5) Ùfọdụ (some), (6) Òlénòlé (a few), (7) Níilé/nine (all), (8) Dúm (all), (9) Nch́á (all), (10) Ìmirikíti/imerime/imeka (many), (11) Naaní/ sòsò/sò , (12) Óbùlà (each, every), (13) Nnaa (one) , (14) Naabọ and its semblances, (15) Náà (one), (16) Náàbọ (two), (17) Náátó (three), (18) Náésé (five), (19) Náésî (six), (20) Náásá (Seven), (21) Náàsátó (eight), (22) Ọkara (half), (23) Náerì (ten).

These ones above are the assemblage we have made from the reviewed literature.

(Note: These enumerations are without the inclusion of the Antiquated numeral quantifiers (see 4f) which seem to have fallen out of use in the present dispensation of Igbo grammatical constructions.

4.0 The Classification of Quantifiers

Here, we are going to do our own classification based on the reviewed works. Delving into it is perceived to help clear out many remaining hurdles in driving home the understanding of this subject matter. The classification is to be based on the complementary relationship between syntax and semantics. Of course, syntax needs semantics to form any grammatical structure that will be acceptable to the competent speakers (native speakers) of any language.

Our grouping of the quantifiers in 4-16 above leaves us with six different categories. They are as follows:

- (a) Definite quantifiers
- (b) Indefinite quantifiers
- (c) Collective Quantifiers
- (d) Numeral Quantifiers
- (e) Distributive Quantifier
- (f) Antiquated numeral Quantifier

We shall justify the semantics behind the categorization in the sections that follow:.

4.1 (a) Definite Quantifiers

The definite quantifiers are made up of the following:

- (17) Ñaani/sọsọ (only), (18) Niile/Níne (all), (19) Dúm (all), (20) Nchá (all), (21) Ọkàrà.

When something is definite, it means that it is certain or unlikely to change. Such a thing has some clarity and certainty associated with it. Anything definite is already clearly stated. It is something already decided. Something, that is not vague or doubtful. There is no ambiguity associated with it.

“Niile”, “Dum” and “Ncha” give the meaning that all are involved without exception. So, it is certain that nothing or nobody is excluded.

On its part, “Okara” shows with certainty that it is a reference to two equal parts; that is, one of the two equal parts into which something is divided.

For example:

22. Náaní Obiọra ka a chọọ

(only Obiọra is wanted)

This means it is clear that no other person except Obiọra is needed.

23. Ha níile lere ule ka a kọọ

(All of them that took the examination are called)

This makes it certain that as long as the person took the examination, he is among those called. It is definite that there is no exemption in the call of those that sat for the exam.

(b) Indefinite Quantifiers

The members of this group are the direct opposite of the members of the definite quantifier. This is because there is no certainty or clarity about what or who is mentioned or is involved. It is vague, ambiguous, not clear.

The quantifiers in this group include:

(24) Òtútù (several, many)

(25) Ûfódù (some)

(26) Òlénòlé (a few)

(27) Ìmirikíí/Ìmeka (many, plenty of)

For Example:

28. Òtútù mmadụ nwurụ ebe ahụ

(many people died there)

29. Ûfódù ndịụka amaghị Chukwu

(Some Christians do not know God)

30. Òlénòle mmadụ ghotara na ụwa bụ ahịa

(A few people understand that the world is a market)

In example 28 above, the make-up of the many people who died is not clear. In example 29, those included in the “some Christian” that “do not know God” are not known. Then, in example 30, those few who understand that “the world is a market” are a subject of guess work. Therefore, definiteness is lacking in all the indefinite quantifiers.

(Ch) Collective Quantifiers

This is a group of small membership. The quantifiers involved here always an assemblage of things or a group of people. It often refers to things that are associated with moving in groups together.

The two handy examples are:

(31) Ìgwe (a great number)

For example:

32. ìgwe atùtù adìghì mfe nchekwa

(It is not easy to shepherd a flock of sheep)

It is clear in the above example that there is no case of singularity, but a bringing together and coming together of the involved nominal, which is given a sense of quantity by the collective quantifier.

(d) Numeral Quantifiers

Numeral quantifiers are so called because their semantic glossing resembles that of numerals. Also, their meaning and implication point directly at numbers. They are the semblances of “naabọ, because they follow the same pattern, increasing in number correspondingly from it. Some of them are:

(33) Náàbọ (two), (34) Náató (three), (35) Náánó (four), (36) Náésé (five), (37) Náésî (six), (38) Náásá (Seven), (39) Náàsátó (eight), (40) Náerì (ten).

For example:

(41) Ewu naabo furu efu

(Two goats are missing)

(42) Mmiri naasaa dî n’umuchu.

(There are seven streams in Umuchu)

It is easy to see in the two examples that “naabọ” and “naasaa” signify numbers.

(i) Differentiating Quantifiers from Numerals

The existence of numeral quantifiers is bound to make somebody mix up quantifiers with numerals. There is no doubt that numerals and quantifiers have some resemblance. The slight difference between them can easily be understood by considering how they both work in Igbo grammar.

(ii) **Differentiation of Numerals from Quantifiers**

	NUMERALS		QUANTIFIERS
1	Numerals or numbers can stand alone without any modifier qualifying it e.g otu, abụọ, atọ, anọ, etc	1	All quantifiers work as modifiers. In effect, none can stand alone without a nominal it qualifiers, e.g. Mmadụ naabọ (two persons) Ụdara naanọ (four apples)
2	Numerals or numbers are many in number; even uncountable	2	Quantifiers are very few in number. They are easily outlined and countable

(f) **Antiquated Numeral Quantifiers**

It is good to keep historical records, so that the younger generation of the Igbo will be aware of what obtained in the past. Doing so will enable them to appreciate the level of the developmental stages the Igbo language has passed through. With this lies the reason for carving out the antiquated numeral quantifiers, which is the old fashioned, absolute set. The set is a reflection of the way the Igbo did their counting in the past.

The members of this group include:

(45) Máolu (eleven), (46) Maabụọ (twelve), (47) Maatọ (thirteen), (48) Maanọ (fourteen), (49) Maise (fifteen).

Note: All the members of this group are from Emenanjo's sample of quantifiers in Ogbalu and Emenanjo(1982).

For example

(50). Ogbe ji máátọ ka m nyere ya
(I gave him thirteen tubers of yam)

(51). Ikem dị afọ máólù
(Ikem is 11 years old)

This old system of the use of numeral quantifiers relies on the number 10, as the base of counting the excess. The morpheme, “má”, means “excess”.

It follows from this, for instance, that “máàbọ” means “two numbers in excess of ten”, which is 12. In the same pattern, the number “13” is counted as “three numbers in excess of ten”, which is “maato, and so on and so forth. It is only the number, 11, that is odd in this way of using quantifiers.

However, this way of counting does not seem to exist any longer in any dialect. The present stage of the Igbo language development has officially departed from the use of this form of quantifiers. It is only treated here for historical reflection and record.

From these sets of quantifiers, it could easily be seen that there are many quantifiers in Igbo language. The existence of such quantifiers as Ufodu, Olenole, Otutu, Ncha, Igwe, Imirikiti/Imerime, Okara may not have been taken cognizance of by Emenanjo in Ogbalu and Emenanjo (1982) In effect, Emenanjo’s (1978:72) view that “only three (quantifiers) are recognized” can no longer be tenable. Also debunked in this section is the claim that all quantifiers begin with consonants. After all, Olenole, Otutu, Igwe, Ufodu, Imirikiti/Imerime are quantifiers, but are not begun with consonants.

4.0 The Syntax of Quantifiers

By syntax, we mean the means of the proper arrangement of words, in a sentence (Eyisi, 2001). According to Finegan (2008:140), “The study of syntax addresses the structure of sentences and their structural and functional relationships to one another”. We want to identify the behavioural characteristics of quantifiers in associative constructions.

(A) The identical features

- (i) All quantifiers are nominal modifiers
- (ii) They all express quantity

For example:

(52). Ha dum bucha ndị nkuzi

(All of them are teachers)

(53). Anyị niile ga-agarịrị ụka ụbọchị ụka

(We all must attend church on Sunday)

iv All numeral quantifiers have numeral – like semantic glossing.

For example:

(54). Mmadu naabọ is like mmadu abuọ

(55). Efere naeri is like Efere iri

(56). All quantifiers are incapable of functioning as the head of the noun phrase.

(57). Also, all quantifiers are incapable of being used independently.

For Example:

(58) Ha di naani abuọ - They are two

Naani abuọ ka ha di - They are only two (with emphasis on “naani abuọ (only two)

(B) Some Uncommon Features:

(i) The quantifiers, Niile, Dum, Ncha, ufodu, olenole can all function as post modifiers. That is, they come after the nouns they qualify. Only “Ufodu” can function both as premodifier and postmodifier.

For example:

(59) Ulokwu kwọ niile emechiela

(All the schools have closed)

(60). Ukwokwu gwara ndi ekpemekpe dum okwu

(The priest spoke to all the worshipers)

(61). Mmadu ncha nuru okwukwukwu Ukwokwu

(All the people heard the preaching of the priest)

(62). Umaka ufodu nwere ezigbo omume

(Some children have good behavior)

(63). (Umaka olenole bu ndi eziokwu

(A few children are truthful)

ii. It needs to be particularly stated that all numeral quantifiers are post modifiers.

For example:

(64). Ndi ori naasato ka e nwudere

(Eight thieves were caught)

(65). Ndị Bokoharam naese chergharịrị

(Five Bokoharam members repented)

(iii) The quantifiers, “Naanị, ọtụtụ, igwe imirikiti/imorime/imeka” function as premodifiers.

For example:

(66). Ahurū m igwe aturū gbafere n’okporo ụzo

(I saw a flock of sheep that ran across the road)

(67). Naanị Ogechukwu nọ n’ụlọ

(Only Ogechukwu is in the house)

(68). Imirikiti mmadụ b́jara agbamakwukwọ ha

(Many people attended their wedding)

(69). Imerime/Imeka udara m t́t́tara chara acha

(Many of the apples I picked are ripe)

(70). Ọt́t́t ụmụakwukwọ akwuọla ụgwọakwukwọ

(Many students have paid their school fees)

(71). Ọt́t́t ndị ime obodo amatala uru agụmakwukwọ bara

(Many rural people have realized the value of education).

(iv) The quantifiers, “ufodu and olenole”, have dual modification characteristics

For Example:

(72). Ufodu ụmụakwukwọ ab́agh́ ịgụakwukwọ

(Some students have not come for education)

(73). Ụmụakwukwọ ufodu b́ ndị ogbuoge

(Some students are idlers)

(74). Olenole ndị Katoliki na-aga nkwupute

(A few catholic Christians go for confession)

(75). Sọ mmadụ olenole ga-egoteli ụgbọelu nke aka ha

(Only a few people can buy their own private jet)

v. With pronouns, “Naanị” can be used in the subjective and objective positions. When so used, there are only some nuances of semantic change in the constructions.

For Example:

(76). Ha d́ naanị abụo

(They are only two)

(77). Naanị abụọ ka ha dị

(They are only two)

In our example 83, the difference is only emphatic. There is a stress on “Naanị abụọ” (only two).

(vi) Our observation is that numeral quantifiers can co-function with the third person plural pronoun to produce an appositive effect.

For Example:

(78). Ha mmadụ naanọ b́jara

(They four of them, came)

(79). Ha, ndị ọgbaugwọ, atọ, buoro ngwaahịa anyị

(They, the two debt collectors, carried our articles of trade)

C. Relationship of Quantifiers with Adjectives

(i) The quantifier “ọtụtụ” can co-occur with adjectives in a sentence. In such a construction, “ọtụtụ” functions as a premodifier with the adjective coming immediately after it, followed by a noun.

For Example:

(80). Ọtụtụ ọmaricha ụmụagbọghọ bụ ọnwunwa

(Some beautiful young girls are temptations)

(81). Ọtụtụ okwu ndị ara na-aba uru

(Some of mad people’s words are valued)

(ii) In a grammatical construction involving adjectives, a quantifier can succeed the adjective.

For Example:

(82). Ndụ ọjọọ dum Ekekwe biri duhiere ụmụaka ụzọ.

(All the bad life Ekekwe lived misled children)

(83). Okwu ọma olenole na-adajụ iwe

(A few good words can calm down anger)

(84). Agwa ọjọọ ụfọdu na-eme agbọghọ alughị di.

(Some bad conducts make young girls not to get married)

(D) The Relationship of Quantifiers with Demonstratives

- (i) A numeral quantifier can be made to succeed a demonstrative.

For Example:

- (85). Akwa ọcha ahụ naatọ dị n'elu ọkwasa

(Three of those white clothes are on the table)

- (86). Akụkọ ọma ahụ naabọ kuziere m ihe

(Two of those good stories taught me a lesson)

- (ii) It is possible for a numeral quantifier to be employed in the midst of an adjective and a demonstrative in a sentence to produce some nuances of meanings.

For Example:

- (87). Uwe ojii naabọ ahụ dị ka akwa mkpe

(Two of those black clothes are like mourning clothes)

- (88). Nwaanyị ọma naatọ ahụ maazị Ụba na-alụ gafere ebe a

(E) The sequential co-occurrence of quantifiers

- (i) A numeral quantifier can co-exist sequentially with a Definite quantifier in a sentence to produce an emphatic meaning

For Example:

- (89) Ha naabọ dum bụ nke m

(The two of them are mine)

- (90). Ha naanọ niile nọ n'ọche azụ bụ ndị ọjọọ

(The four of them sitting at the back seat are bad people)

- (ii) The definite quantifiers, "Niile, Dum and Ncha" can co-occur in a successive pattern in a sentence for the same addition of a slight meaning difference.

For Example:

- (91) Mmadụ ncha niile kwuru uche ha

(All of the people said their mind)

- (92) Ha niile dum ka a ga-ahụ n'ọkụ

(All of them will be roasted)

(F) The peculiarities of "Dum" and "Niile"

The Definite quantifiers, “Dum and Niile” cannot be used immediately after the verb “dị”.

(G) Tonal Behaviour of Quantifiers

(i) Quantifiers have their inherent tones intact at any time they are used with nominal alone.

For Example:

(93) Ha dùm bi n’Enugu

(All of them reside in Enugu)

(94) Ha náatọ gara akwụkwọ

(Three of them went to school)

(ii) When succeeded by such other things as the demonstratives and relative clauses, quantifiers may alter their tones as the tone rules stipulate.

(iii) With the exception of “Niile”, when succeeded by such other things as the demonstratives and relative clause, quantifier may change their inherent tones as the tone rules stipulate.

For Example:

(95) Mmadụ naábó ahụ abịala

(Those two persons have come)

In example 95 above, the inherent low tone of the last syllable in “Naabọ) changes to a high tone in order to convey the right meaning intended by the demonstrative “áhù”.

(96) Ndị nwoke dum a chọrọ erutela

(All of the men who are needed have arrived)

In the no. 96 example above, the natural low tone of the last syllable of the quantifier, dum, changes to a high tone so as to deliver the grammatical sense engendered by the relative clause.

(gb) It is not all the quantifiers that begin with consonants.

For Example:

(97) O bụla; as in:

Nwoke o bụla ga-akpọ nwunye ya wee bịa

(Each man will come with his wife)

(98). Igwe aturu tosiiri inwe onye ozuzu

(A flock of sheep is supposed to have a shepherd)

(99). Okeke ji ugwo okara nde naira

(Okeke has a debt of half a million naira)

Note: The above sentence examples are our own creation to analytically make known our observations.

5.0 Summary of Findings and Conclusion

5.1 Findings

These analyses we have done have debunked the claim that only three quantifiers are recognized in Igbo. We have been able to establish that they are many. Also, the discovery is made that the varying categories of quantifiers in Igbo have been created and known. Also revealed is the huge depth of the syntactic relationships arising from the use of quantifiers. Our investigation has also indicated variations in the number of quantifiers in Igbo.

Through this study, the wealth of the Igbo language in quantifiers can easily be seen. From definite to indefinite, collective to numeral and antiquated classes of quantifiers, they are all for the good of the language. There is a wider range of alternatives in the choice of structural or syntactic relationships. These include the identical, uncommon and dual-modification features, the relationships with adjectives, demonstratives and the tonal behavior.

5.2 Conclusion.

What this research set out to do has been accomplished. Igbo quantifiers can no longer be said to be few. Many exist. Their previously unknown syntactic behaviour has been done here. And their examples not yet classified by linguists have also been carried out by this study. These accomplishments indicate that the development of the Igbo language, like in all languages, should be a continuous process.

REFERENCES

- Eyisi, J. (2006). *A Grammar of English*. Nimo: Rex Charles and Patrick Ltd.
- Mc Gregor, W.B. (2009). *Linguistics : An Introduction*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Finegan, E. (2008). *Language: Its Structure and Use*. Boston : Thomas Wadsworth.
- Fromkin, V. Rodman, R. and Hyams, N. (2007). *An Introduction to Language*. Boston: World sworth Cengage Learning.

- Kroeger, P. (2005). *Analyzing Grammar: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wiese, H. (2003). *Numbers, Language, and the Human Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Emenanjo, N. (1978). *Elements of Modern Igbo Grammar*. Ibadan: University Press Ltd.
- Ekeulu, C.V. (2009). *Ntuziaka N'omumu Asusu, Agumagu, Omenaana Na Ekwumewu Igbo Nke Sekondiri Ukwu Nke Mbu*. Yaba: Kandu Publishing Company.
- Usoh, R.A.N. (2009). *Mgbaama Maka Omaumu Asusu Na Utomasu Igbo*. Lagos Kemji Nigeria Ltd.
- Uba- Mgbemena, A. (2006). *Ntala Usoro asusu Igbo*. Ibadan: Gold Press Ltd.
- Emenajo, N.E. (1991). *Nchikota Asusu na Utomasu: Igbo Izugbe*. Ikeja: Longman Nigeria Plc.
- Okafo, C.U. and Ewelukwa, U. (2008). *Nhazi Asusu Igbo: Maka Ule Sinio Sekondiri na Koleji*: Onitsha: A.C. Publishing Co. (Nig).
- Ogbalu, F.C. and Emenajo, E.N (ed:) (1982). *Igbo Language and Culture*. Ibadan: University Press Ltd.
- Umeodinka, A.U. (2011). *Apposition in Igbo Syntax: A Thesis submitted in Partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Award of Masters of Arts (M.A.) in Linguistic Dept. of Linguistics and Nigerian Language University of Nigeria, Nsukka*.