

# 14/A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE SYNTAX OF GERMAN AND IGBO ADJECTIVES

Aloysius Udosinachi UMEODINKA

[au.umeodinka@unizik.edu.ng](mailto:au.umeodinka@unizik.edu.ng)

Department of Igbo, African & Communication Studies,  
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

&

Edith Ukamaka NWOBU

[eu.nwobu@unizik.edu.ng](mailto:eu.nwobu@unizik.edu.ng)

Department of Igbo, African & Communication Studies,  
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

## **Abstract**

*Learning a foreign language, among other things, expands one's view of the world, deepens his connection to other cultures and even grows the person's brain as a bilingual. On this account, the topic of study here is "A Contrastive Analysis of the Syntax of German and Igbo Adjectives". The objectives of the study are to discover the syntactic similarities and differences of German and Igbo adjectives, carry out their syntactic analysis with the view to facilitating the teaching of German adjectives to Igbo learners. The method of study is descriptive. The theory for the study is the Theory of Contrastive Analysis. As findings, the study has established that adjectives are parts of speech that describe or modify nouns or pronouns. Also established is that German has three main types of adjectives—the Predicative, Adverbial and Attributive, whereas the Igbo language has two main types—the Lexical and Phrasal (Clausal) adjectives. In terms of similarities, the basic German and Igbo sentence order is SVO and an adjective is a part of speech in both languages, in addition to existing in types and having a noun or pronoun as their subject of description. Difference wise, in Igbo, it is the syntactic position of a word that determines whether it is an adjective or not, unlike German.*

**Key Words:** Contrastive analysis, syntax, German, Igbo adjectives

## **Résumé**

*Apprendre une langue étrangère, entre autres choses, élargit la vision du monde, approfondit le lien avec d'autres cultures et développe même le cerveau de la personne en tant que bilingue. A ce titre, le sujet d'étude de cette communication est "Une analyse contrastive de la syntaxe des adjectifs allemands et igbo". Les objectifs de l'étude sont de découvrir les similitudes et les différences syntaxiques des adjectifs allemands et igbo, de procéder à leur analyse syntaxique en vue de faciliter l'enseignement des adjectifs allemands aux apprenants igbo. La méthode d'étude est descriptive. La théorie de l'étude est la théorie de l'analyse contrastive. Comme résultats, l'étude a établi, entre autres, que les adjectifs sont des parties du discours qui décrivent ou modifient des noms ou des pronoms. Il est également établi que l'Allemand a trois principaux types d'adjectifs - le prédicatif, l'adverbial et l'attributif, alors que la langue Igbo a deux types principaux - les adjectifs lexicaux et phrasaux (clausal). En termes de similitudes, l'ordre de base des phrases en Allemand et en Igbo est SVO et un adjectif fait partie du discours dans les deux langues, en plus d'exister dans les types et d'avoir un nom ou un pronom comme sujet de description, ils se différencient du fait qu'en Igbo, c'est la position syntaxique d'un mot qui détermine s'il s'agit d'un adjectif ou non, contrairement à l'Allemand.*

**Mots clés:** analyse contrastive, syntaxe, adjectifs allemand et Igbo

## **1. Introduction**

Many countries and world communities have languages of their own. This language ownership notwithstanding, people are motivated by reasons of expanding their world view and overseas trade, furthering of education, improving employment prospects, deepening connections to other cultures, and forming meaningful friendships, to embark on second language learning. The craving for these advantages brings those concerned face to face with the difficulties of second language learning. These difficulties tend to emanate from the differences in the structures of their mother tongues and those of the foreign languages. It is against this backdrop that this study is centred on “A Contrastive Analysis of the Syntax of German and Igbo Adjectives”.

The objectives of the study are to explain the meanings of syntax and adjectives, investigate the types of adjectives in German and Igbo languages, establish the syntactic differences and similarities between German and Igbo Adjectives, find out the implications of the differences and similarities with the view to deducing the appropriate measures to facilitate the learning of the German adjectives by the Igbo.

The work is divided into four sections. The first section is about the introduction, where the motivation, purpose and research methodology of the work are presented. This is followed by the literature review, whose concern is to take analytical look into some of the publications of linguists and other language experts concerning the subject of investigation. After the literature review, then, comes the section for the Presentation and Analysis of data. Once the data have been presented and analysed, the final section will surface, which is for the summary of findings and conclusion.

The work is anticipated to be of benefit to scholars and overseas travelers. They both are expected to cash in on the work to sharpen their knowledge of German and also

generate some interest in foreign language studies. Students, especially those carrying out contrastive studies in linguistics, will consult this work to enrich their knowledge. Teachers in linguistics will capitalize on this research work for a handy source of linguistic data for their lectures. Not only that, but some Germans are also looked upon to develop interest in learning Igbo and other African languages. Furthermore, syllabuses and books are to be provided through this work, as there emerges widened Igbo interest in learning the German language, thereby fostering an understanding of the interrelation of language and human nature.

## **2. Literature Review**

This section contains the review of relevant literatures.

### **I. Adjectives and Adjectivals**

Finch (2000) sees the work of adjectives as that of a part of speech whose function is to specify nouns' attributes. The adjective gives information relating to the size, colour, shape and appearance of nouns or entities. To him, the main yardstick for defining adjectives is where they occur or their distribution or the position they occupy in a construction.

McGregor (2009:83) is of the opinion that an adjective is one of the main parts of speech found in the world's languages. In his explanation, "adjectives indicate qualities or properties of things such as colour, size, speed, and shape. He talks about the position of English adjectives as usually coming before nouns, and that the adjectives of English can be used to make comparisons. Hodges and Whitten (1982:530) defines an adjective as a part of speech regularly used to modify (describe or limit) a noun or a pronoun." When words are typically used with nouns

and such words supply more information about the things to which reference is made, such words are known as adjective (Otagburu, Okwor, Ngonebu, Orabueze, and Ogenyi, 2012). They go further to assert that adjectives also specify the attributes of nouns. Adjectives qualify or modify a noun and or pronoun and no other part of speech. This can be used in comparative and superlative forms.

The above authors are unanimous about an adjective being a part of speech whose remarkable role is to modify, extend the meaning or describe the qualities of a noun or pronoun. They are united in the opinion that the position of an adjective is worthy of note in grammar.

## **II. Foreign Language Learning**

Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2007) talk about knowing more than one language, and this can be second language acquisition or bilingual language acquisition. The latter is the simultaneous acquisition of two languages, starting during infancy, that is, before the age of three years. The former refers to the acquisition of a second language by an adult or child. According to them, conscious attention is needed by adults for them to pick up a second language. It calls for intense study and memorization. The adults find it hard to achieve native-like grammatical competence in L2, especially where pronunciation is concerned. The learners also make syntactic and morphological errors.

From the angle of McGregor (2009), the factor that affects language acquisition are motivation, aptitude, attitude and empathy. Talking about motivation, it is the desire for proficiency to participate in the life of the community or for some practical purposes like getting a job or promotion. Finegan (2008) sees motivation from the perspective of instrumental and integrative motivation. Instrumental reason may be

for vacationing abroad, taking permanent residence where the language is the only means of communication. It can be for the reason to meet a graduation requirement.

The things relevantly clear here are the issues of motivation purposes for learning a foreign language, which include the following: expanding one's view of the world, forming meaningful friendships, fostering the understanding of interrelation of language and human nature.

### **III. Igbo Language**

Igbo language is the principal native language of the Igbo people, an ethnic group from Southeastern Nigeria. As Wikipedia ([en.m.wikipedia.org](http://en.m.wikipedia.org)) reveals, as of 2020, Igbo native speakers have been put at 42 million. It belongs to the Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Volta-Niger, Igboid, nuclear Igboid and Igbo language family. It has an established standard form. Its dialects include Waawa, Enuani, Ngwa, Ọhụhụ, Etche, Ọlu, Ika, Oyibo, Anioma, Edda, Ikwere, Ezaa, Izii, Ekpeye, Ohafia and Abam. Its writing system remains the Onwu Orthography of 1961. The language is recognised as a minority language in Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon.

Igbo language is also spoken in Benin, Kogi, Benue, Haiti, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago. The Igbo language has supplied a large chunk of words to the Jamaican Patois. Its standard literary form is known as Igbo izugbe (general Igbo). This form was generically developed and adopted at about 1972 with its core foundation based on the Owerri (Isuama), Anambra and Umuahia (Ọhụhụ) dialects, omitting the nasalization and aspiration of these varieties.

The Igbo have a geographical delimitation of areas that have the same dominated and significant culture traits, complexes and patterns that run:

Outside the settlements of Agbo (Agbor), Ukwuani (Kwale), Obiarukpu, Ebu (Anioma Igbo area), Ehwuda (Ahoada) Diobu, Umuagbayi (Port Harcourt), Enugu Ezike (Nsukka area) and Nzam. [This dividing line] encloses an area in which the people not only speak the various dialects of the Igbo languages, but also share typical and significant common culture traits and patterns, up to or above 50%. In the Igbo culture area Qka (Awka), Nri, Ihiala and Owerre (Owerri) are in the culture centre, while Agbo (Agbor) and Ebu (Anioma Igbo), Enugu Ezike, Ehugbo (Afikpo), Azumiri and Ikwere (East Igbo) are in the culture margin (Emenanjo, 2015:1).

#### **IV. Igbo Language and Mutual Intelligibility**

In terms of Igbo dialects, there is an anthropological linguistic view about them, especially those dialects that are within the Igbo Culture Area (ICA). The opinion has it that all the dialects of Igbo originate from a single proto-Igbo language, and it is for this reason that they share many grammatical, lexical and phonological properties. But they are at variance in certain grammatical, lexical and phonological details (Emenanjo, 2015). Continuing, Emenanjo (2015) maintains that the differences that occur between Igbo dialects do not debar them from being used for effective communication, because mutual intelligibility still obtains between them, after some manipulations or adjustments are carried out.

The ultimate lesson of these views of the Igbo language from Wikipedia and Emenanjo (2015) is that the areas where Igbo is spoken in Nigeria and beyond is now a common knowledge. The same thing is applicable to the geographically delimited areas of the language known as the Igbo Culture Area. Also, through this

review, it is easy now to attest to the existence of many dialects of Igbo, to the existence of many dialects of Igbo, all of which do not prohibit, effective communication and the mutual intelligibility of the language after some adjustments are done.

## **V. German Language**

As gathered from Wikipedia (<http://en.m.wikipedia.org>), German is one of the West Germanic languages. It is spoken chiefly in Central Europe. The other areas the language is spoken as even an official language include Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, and the Italian province of South Tyrol. In Luxemburg and Belgium it is also a co-official language, including Namibia, where German functions as a national language.

Continuing Wikipedia reveals that such languages as Afrikaans, Dutch, English, the Frisian languages, Low German, Luxemburgish, Scots, and Yiddish, all of them share some outstanding similarities with German. The similarities, this time in their kind of vocabulary, could be traced to such languages as North Germanic group, which includes Danish, Norwegian and Swedish. After English, as Wikipedia maintains, German is the second most widely spoken Germanic language. In terms of language family, German belongs to the Indo-European. It is Germanic West Germanic, High German. Its early forms are the Proto-Germanic, Old High German/Old Saxon and Early New High German. It has Standard High German (German, Austrian, Swiss) as its standard forms. The writing system is Latin Script and German Braille. It is the recognised minority language in 9 countries which include the following: Brazil, Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Namibia, Poland, Romania, Russia, and Slovakia. The German language has no official regulation.

Subjected to analysis, the information hereby given has disclosed the countries where German is spoken and even used as official and co-official language. German is Indo-European and serves as the minority language in about 9 countries with any official regulation.

## **VI. German Adjectives**

According to <https://deutsch.lingolia.com>, German adjectives are of three types in their grammar -pradikative (predicative), adverbial (adverbs) and attributive. The ones that do not change their forms are the predicative and adverbial adjectives. Depending on the noun being modified, the attributive adjectives change their ending.

### **A. Position and Inflection**

As Schafer, M. (2005) reveals, German adjectives characteristically precede the noun they qualify, and they are not written in capital letters. In their preceding the noun, they are inflected. This means that they take an ending that is dependent on the gender, case, and number of the noun phrase. When the adjective is not coming before the noun, there is usually no inflection of the adjective.

For example (1):

(a ) Der mannist gut = (the man is good).

(b) das kind ist gut = (the child is good).

(c ) die Frau ist gut und die Menschen sind gut = (the woman is good and the people are good).

The above examples indicate where there is absence of inflection. It could be seen that the word 'gut', meaning 'good' has maintained zero inflection throughout, just because the adjective is not preceding a noun.



From the work of Zwicky (1986), we note four types of inflection, thus: (i) Strong inflection (ii) Mixed inflection (iii) Weak inflection, and (iv) Zero inflection. And it also has three comparison forms, which are the positive, comparative and superlative.

## **B. Working Modalities of German Adjectives**

Zwicky (1986:958) states thus: the language has three grammatical genders (masculine, neuter and feminine) and two grammatical numbers (singular and plural). Only four of the six combinations of gender and number are ever morphologically distinguished: masc-sg, neut-sg, fem-sg, pl. There are four grammatical cases: normative (nom), accusative (acc), genitive (gen), dative (dat). These combine with the four gender/number possibilities to yield a paradigm with 16 potentially distinct NP forms in it. Being so, the adjectives that describe the nouns and pronouns must adjust to suit all of these categories. What this means is that adjectives must agree with the nouns they modify or qualify. And this agreement must be in tandem with the quantity and gender of the nouns.

The adjective type that comes before nouns and pronouns is the attributive adjectives. In doing so, they take special endings, which rely on gender, number, case, and article of the modified noun.

For example (2): Das was einschnellerHund (that was a fast dog).

Contrary to the attributive adjective, the predicative adjectives follow linking verbs like 'to be' (sein/werden) or 'to remain' (bleiben). Also, predicate adjective modifies the subject and does not have a gendered ending. For example (3); Der Hundistschnell (the dog is fast).

What is clear here is that, in German, an adjective must be conjugated or inflected to fit the noun. The way the declension is done is at variance with the noun's case,

gender, and plurality. It does not end there, because the conjugation also gets altered according to whether the noun comes with a definite or indefinite article. Some adjectival pronouns are also declined in the manner of the definite article. For example (4): ‘-der’ (all), ‘dies-, jed-, manch-, solch- Welch-.

### **C. Declensions with the Definite and Indefinite Article**

Hohaus & Zimmermann (2020) suggest that there are certain adjective endings that signify the description of a noun that comes with a definite article. Such endings are ‘der, die or das’. But when the nouns modified by the adjective is accompanied by indefinite article, the endings that must be used are the variations of ‘ein’, which are as follows: ‘ein, eine, eines, einer, etc.

### **D. Use of Different Inflections**

In varying conditions or circumstances, German adjectives take different sets of endings. The use of different inflections occurs when there is a total absence of an article. It also occurs, according to Zwicky (1986) when a non-inflectable word or phrase comes before the noun. It means then that when a quantity is shown by ‘etwa’ (which mean ‘some’, ‘somewhat’, mehr (more), it is a strong inflection that is used. It is also used when a quantity is shown by the following:

( i) wenig- (few), viel- (much, many), mehrer- (several, many), einig- (some).

(ii) a number (bigger than one, i.e with no endings, without a definite article before it.

(iii) non-inflectable phrases: einpaar (a couple of, a few, einbisschen (a bit; a little bit).

Examples of Strong inflection when there is no article are:

Gutermann (good man), gutes Kind (good child), gute Frau and gute Menschen (good woman and good people).

Note that it is mixed inflection when the adjective comes after an indefinite article.

Examples (5) of such are as follows:

(a) Er ist ein guter Mann (He is a good man)

(b) Es ist ein gutes Kind (He/She is a good child)

(c) Sie ist eine gute Frau und sie sind gute Menschen (He is a good woman and they are good people). The time weak inflection comes in is when the adjective is following a definite article. For example (6):

(i) Der gute Mann (The good man) (ii) Das gute Kind (The good child) (iii) Die gute Frau und die guten Menschen (The good woman and the good people).

It is a matter of no inflection in so far as the adjective is not coming before a noun. For example (7): (i) Der Mann ist gut (The man is good) (ii) Das Kind ist gut (the child is good). (iii) Die Frau ist gut und die Menschen sind gut (The woman is good and the people are good).

## **E. Comparison of Adjective**

There is comparison when two things, people, actions, characteristics or qualities are seen not be equal. When something, relative to all others, is seen to have the most or

least of a given characteristic, superlatives are used. According to Hohaus& Zimmermann (2020), there is a formula for comparatives and superlatives in German.

Just as it is in English, in German, it is by adding ‘-er’ to the end of an adjective or adverb that comparatives are formed. Then, to form superlatives, it is by putting ‘-sten’ or ‘-estien’ at the end of an adjective or adverb. However, there are occasions in which the word ‘am’ comes before the superlative.

For example (7): Laut (loud), lauter (louder), am lautesten (the loudest). But exceptions to this rule are found when a monosyllabic adjective is involved. In such situations, an ‘umlaut’ is put over the verb.

For example (8): groß (big), größer (bigger), am größten (the biggest).

Another example (9) is: jung (young), junger (younger), am jungsten (the youngest).

Even at that, there are irregular comparatives and superlatives, where the words just play by their own rules. For example (10): viel (much), mehr (more) am meisten (the most); Another example (11) is hoch (tall), höher (taller), am höchsten (the tallest).

## **VII. Igbo Adjectives**

Generally, what constitutes an adjective is not different in Igbo as it is for other languages. It is that word that describes a noun or pronoun (Eyisi, 2006). It is a word whose work is to qualify a noun or its pronoun equivalents.

Specifically, in Igbo, an adjective, while identifying a noun, is also characteristically identified by the syntactic position it occupies in a noun phrase or in a predicate

(Mbah, 2011). The position of Mbah and Mbah (2014) is that it is the position of a word in a sentence that determines what function it is performing.

As is presented in Umeodinka (2017:4), Okonkwo (1974) maintains that “when Igbo nouns perform the function of qualifying another noun, they lend themselves usefully by helping to create vocabularies for things that have no original names in Igbo”. Such things are ‘*ụlọ akwụkwọ*’ (school building), ‘*ụlọ mkpọrọ*’ (prison yard), ‘*inyinya igwe*’ (bicycle), ‘*ụgbọ elu*’ (aeroplane), etc.

In Igbo, many words that come after the noun or headword in a sentence are functioning as modifiers. They are regarded as nominal modifiers, when they are nominals (Umeodinka, 2017). Alongside Umeodinka (2017), Mbah asserts that a relative clause is a type of adjective which is a phrasal form. This, by implication and analysis, shows that Igbo adjectives can take the form of phrases.

### **A. Types of Igbo Adjectives**

According to Umeodinka (2017), Igbo adjectives and adjectival are of two types, lexical and phrasal clausal adjectives. However, the lexical adjectives are classified into domains which include trajectory, stative, purpose, food type, possession, qualification and source domains. Many Igbo adjectives fall into these different domains.

For example (12): (a) Trajectory domain = *ụgbọ elu* (aeroplane), *ụgbọmmiri* (boat), (b) Stative domain = *nnụnụocha* (white bird), *ekweoma* (good gong), (c) Purpose domain = *ukweotito* (praise song), *ego ahia* (market money), (d) Food domain = *nriji* (yam food), *ofeede* (cocoyam soup), *nriūtutū* (morning food), (e) Possession domain = *Ji m* (my yam), *ụlọewu* (goat house), (f) Quantification domain = *ji ole na ole* (few yams), *mmadụ abụọ* (two persons), (g) Source domain = *mmiriazū* (fish

water), anụ ọhịa (bush meat). Analytically speaking, all these enumerated samples are lexical adjectives, because each of them represents a vocabulary (one-word adjective being modified).

## **B. Phrasal Adjectives (Umeodinka, 2017)**

The following are illustrations of phrasal adjectives:

(i) ‘-nwoke b́ara’ (the man who came (ii) ‘-- ji m gwutere’ (the yam I dug out). (iii) ‘- ndi niile riri ji’ (all those who ate yam).

Lexical adjectives/adjectival are types of lexemes in which there exists a single word as they qualify the noun. They have just a single word, whereas phrasal adjectives are the ones which have two or more words (Umeodinka, 2017).

## **C. Syntax of Igbo Adjectives**

Umeodinka (2017) maintains that Igbo language is strongly initial in terms of typology or syntactic position of adjectives/adjectival. According to him, in Igbo, the head precedes its complements and not vice versa. In so far as Igbo is a head-initial language, the syntactic position of adjectives and adjectival is post-nominal.

## **3. Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study is Lado’s (1957) Theory of Contrastive Analysis. The objectives of the theory, as Agbedo (2015) provides, is to execute the systematic comparison of two or more languages, with the target of describing their similarities and differences. The theory is often used for practical/pedagogical

considerations, for the reason of providing better descriptions and teaching materials for language learners and teachers.

The theory is made to work, first, by bringing out the features of the two languages, secondly, finding out their differences and similarities through a comparison. The resultant differences are seen to be the areas of problems, whereas the similarities are the areas of zero challenges. Once this is done, “the task of the writer of foreign language teaching programme is to develop materials which will be based on a statement of these differences” (Agbedo, 2015:94).

#### **4. Empirical Review**

Udemmadu and Chinyeaka (2017) study the contrast between English and Igbo structure and the challenge it poses to an Igbo learner of the English language. Using Lado’s (1957) theory of contrastive study, they conclude that to a great extent the knowledge of the acquired language influences negatively the mastery of learnt language especially where the L1 and L2 are from different language group.

The work of Umeodinka and Ogwudile (2017) examines the convergence and divergence of Igbo and English denominal nouns using the theory of contrastive analysis by Lado (1957). The objective is to discover the similarities and differences the nominalization process in Igbo and English. They infer that both English and Igbo use prefixation and suffixation, even though the ways they are used vary; and that Igbo, unlike English, makes a wide use of syllable reduction and noun-agent and noun-object combination in the generation of Denominal nouns.

Also, Umeodinka and Ugochukwu (2018) investigate the similarities and divergence of English and Igbo deverbal nouns”, investigate English and Igbo nominalization

modalities, with the view to establishing their points of synchrony and divergence. They opine that the teaching/learning of the deverbal nouns in English will be facilitated by not allowing the prefixation, interfixation and duplication processes characteristic of the Igbo language deverbal noun formation to interfere with the suffixation and zero derivation that are the hallmarks of the English formation of deverbal nouns.

From the review above, it is discovered that there is great need for various studies of contrasts between languages in order to help curriculum planners and language learners to concentrate on the areas of difference of such languages rather than groping in the dark. Also, the gap in literature is noted, thus making the present work a necessity.

## **5. Data Presentation and Analysis**

What is being done in this section is the assemblage of the salient points from the literature review with the intention to analyse them further to arrive at the answers to the research objectives. We shall examine the research objectives one after the other. The Igbo data is got from the researchers' intuitive knowledge of the language while that of German is got from internet sources.

### **A. Types of German Adjectives**

From the reviewed literature, we understand that the German language has three types of adjectives, the predicative adjective, the adverbial and the attributive adjectives. The predicative adjectives are the ones that come after the verbs, 'sein' (to be), 'bleiben' (remain) and "werden' (become) and their forms remain invariable, not minding the number and gender of the noun they are describing. An adverbial adjective, in German, is the type that modifies a verb or adjective or other adverbs



and is subject to declension in the language. Attributive adjectives are the ones that come before nouns, and they must be declined. Being declined implies that their case (nominative, accusative, dative and genitive), gender (masculine, feminine and neuter) and number (singular or plural) must change to suit the applicable adjective ending.

## **B. Types of Igbo Adjectives**

Following Umeodinka (2017), Igbo adjectives and adjectival are of two types—Lexical and Phrasal (Clausal). The lexical adjectives are the ones that exist as a single word in describing the noun. And they are classified into domains such as trajectory, stative, purpose, food type, possession, quantification, and source domains. The phrasal adjectives are the ones that exist as two or more words in their qualifying or describing the noun. The phrasal adjectives are classified into subject-qualifying and object-qualifying types.

## **C. Examining the Similarities between German and Igbo Adjectives**

*(i) The Way they are Perceived.*

Both German and Igbo adjectives are understood to constitute their parts of speech in grammar or syntax.

*(ii) Subject of Description.*

In both the German and the Igbo languages, adjectives are seen to be defining a noun or its pronoun equivalents. In doing this, the adjectives give information about size, shape, colour, quality, etc. For example, Igbo: ewu ojii (black goat), nwaanyi ọma

(good woman), nwoke ike (strong man); German: der große Mann (the tall man), die große Frau (the tall woman), das große Kind (the big kid).

*(iii) Basic Sentence Order.*

Both German and Igbo languages have the basic sentence order - Subject, Verb and Object (SVO). It is this sentence order that streamlines the order in which the adjectives file out in both languages.

*(iv) Existence of Adjectival Nouns*

Adjectives can be turned into nouns in German, just as nouns can be turned into modifiers in Igbo. For example, in German, 'deutsch'(German) is an adjective in German, but it can be used as a noun thus: 'der Deutsche'(masculine), which means THE GERMAN MAN; 'die Deutsche'(feminine), means THE GERMAN LADY. Another example is 'verwandt' (related) from which comes 'der Verwandte'(masculine), which means THE MALE RELATIVE and 'die Verwandte'(feminine), which means THE FEMALE RELATIVE.

In Igbo, there are noun adjectives, the nouns that perform adjective functions e.g. okwuughā (spoken lie), akwukwōiwu (law/rule book), ikemmadu (human strength).

The point of departure is that there are no issues of masculine and feminine forms in Igbo as there are in German. This means that there are no grammatical gender categories in Igbo. That is, nothing indicates masculine or feminine except the Igbo words nwoke/oke (man/male) and nwaanyị/nwunye (woman/female). But in German there are three grammatical gender categories: der (the) goes with masculine nouns, die (also means "the") with feminine, and das (...the) is for neuter nouns.

## **D. Examining the Syntactic Differences between German and Igbo Adjectives**

### *(i) Mode of Identification of Adjectives*

German adjectives are known by their coming before the nouns they describe, but they can come after the verb in a sentence, unless the noun is the subject of the sentence. And the only time the adjective does not agree with the noun it is describing is when it comes after the verb, e.g. *eineschwarzeKatze* (a black cat).

In Igbo, contrarily speaking, it is the position of a word in a sentence that determines whether the word is performing the function of an adjective or not. What this goes to say is that Igbo adjectives are post-nominal. That is, Igbo adjectives are known for coming after the noun they qualify or modify or describe. Igbo adjectives are not pre-nominal. For example, *nnụnụọcha* (white bird), *ukweotito* (praise song), *ofeede* (cocoyam soup). However, there are exceptions to this rule. Attributive adjectives come before the noun they modify. For example, *ezigbommadu* (good person), *ogologoeriri* (long rope), *nnukwuite* (big pot), *warawaraụzọ* (narrow road).

### *(ii) Conjugation Peculiarities of German Adjectives*

German adjectives are conjugated or declined to suit or agree with the noun they qualify. And the declensions differ according to the noun's case, gender and plurality. This implies that German adjectives – *i/ı* can be masculine, feminine and neuter. The declensions also vary according to whether the noun appears with a definite or indefinite article. The endings of the adjectives change according to the grammar's rules. The conjugation also shows the case of what is being described as well as whether the adjective is preceded by the definite or indefinite article. For instance, *der große Mann* (the tall man), *die große Frau* (the tall woman), *das große Kind* (the big kid), *ein großer Mann* (a big man), *eine große Frau* (a tall woman), *ein großes Kind* (a big kid). In the nominative and accusative cases we have: *Der große*

Mann heißt Tom. (The tall man's name is Tom) and Ich kenne den großen Mann/einen großen (I know a great man/one) respectively. In French and other European languages, adjectives are inflected only when they come before the noun.

*(a) German adjectives agreeing with the noun*

For example: (i) Das neueBuch ist da (The new book has arrived), (ii) Ich wollte es der altenFrau geben ( I wanted to give it to the old woman), (iii) Sie erzählte mir eine langweilige Geschichte (She told me a boring story). The underlined are the adjectives and the nouns they describe, taking their various forms to suit the nouns.

*(b) The only time German adjectives do not agree with the noun or word*

The adjective not agreeing with the noun it describes happens only when the adjective comes after the verb. For example: (i) eine schwarze Katze (a black cat), (ii) Das Buch ist neu (The book is new).

In the Igbo language, there is no conjugation or declension of adjectives to suit or agree with the noun being described. There is no inflection of Igbo adjective to conform with the nature of the noun.

*(iii) The Syntactic position of German Adjectives*

There are two syntactic positions for German adjectives. The normal syntactic position for German adjectives is before the noun, but in some cases, the adjective can come after the verb.

*(iv) The case of involvement in comparisons.*

German employs adjectives and adverbs in doing comparisons. It is this that makes them to have positive adjectives, comparative adjectives and superlative adjectives. The way to create comparative and superlative adjectives in German is to see them at being formulaic. German uses comparative to compare two things, people, actions, characteristics, or qualities that are equal. When they want to show that something, relative to all others, has the most or least of a given characteristic.

When equality of two things is envisaged, the need does not arise for comparative and superlative adjective. In this case, a positive adjective is employed. And it is brought in between 'so' (which means 'as') and 'wie' (which means 'as/like').

For example (1) Positive Adjective: (a) Ich bin so schnellwie du (I am as fast as you).

(b) Ich bin groß. (I am tall).

(2) Comparative Adjective: Ich bin größer. (I am taller).

(3) Superlative Adjective: Ich bin am größten. (I am the tallest).

From the examples, German comparative adjectives are formed by adding '-er' to the end of an adjective or adverb (in the way English does). To form the superlative, '-sten' or '-esten' must be added to the end of adjective or adverb, thus: laut (loud), lauter (louder) and am lautesten (the loudest).

But when monosyllabic adjectives are involved, an 'umlaut' is put right over the verb, thus:

(i) groß (big), größer (bigger), am größten (the biggest). (ii) alt (old), älter (older), am ältesten (the oldest). (iii) jung (young), jünger (youngest), am jüngsten (the youngest).

Irregular Comparatives and Superlatives.

However, there are irregular comparatives and superlatives, which can only be easily mastered through memorization. e.g. (i) viel (much), mehr (more), am meisten (the most). (ii) gut (good), besser (better), am besten (the best). (iii) hoch (tall), höher (taller), am höchsten (the tallest).

### *Igbo Adjectives and Conjugation or Declension*

There is nothing like conjugation in Igbo of an adjective. Igbo adjectives have no way of selecting the nouns to modify. Any adjective can modify any noun, e.g. nwokeọcha (a light complexioned man), nwaanyịọcha (a light complexioned woman), ụlọọma (good house), ụlọọjọọ (bad house), efereji (yam plate), afọọrurụ (stomach ache), isiọwụwa (headache), etc.

In all these examples, there is no conjugation, no selection of gender, case, or definite and indefinite article. What this goes to show is that, in Igbo, there is no requirement for Igbo adjectives to change their forms to suit the noun it is describing. Any adjective can be used to describe a noun or pronoun without the form of the adjective being affected in any way.

### *Igbo Adjectives and Comparison*

In Igbo, the part of speech that is compared is verbs and not adjectives. It is using the adjective-forming verb roots (verb roots that form adjectives) that an adjective is subjected to comparison. Either it is done like that, or the adjective is employed

in the form of a complement to the Igbo verb-to-be (dị/bụ), which are then subjected to the comparisons.

What happens is that the word, 'kariri' (a suffix) is attached to the verb (for comparative), whereas 'kaiṛisiṛi' (a suffix), in turn, is attached to the verb root (for superlative), e.g. mma (beautiful), verb root= (meaning to be beautiful). Consequently, the word 'makariri' (for comparative) and 'makarisiṛi' (for superlative). The following are sentential examples. (i) Ijeomaburuibu (Ijeoma is fat), Ogechibukaririyaibu (Ogechi is fatter than she is), Agbomma bukarisiṛi ha ibu (Agbomma is the fattest of them).

At times, in Igbo, adjectives can be employed in the form of a cognate complement to show comparative and superlative degrees. For example: (ii) Positive Adjective: Ojoronjo (She is ugly), Comparative: Ojokariri ya njo (She is uglier than she), Superlative: Ojokarisiṛi ha njo (She is the ugliest of them).

From this, it is easy to see that the Igbo language does not form comparison with the adjectives, but it employs the services of the verb to perform comparative and superlative functions. When then used, the adjective is made to serve as a complement to the Igbo verb-to-be, which are di/nọ (Okonkwo, 1977:72).

## **6. Summary of Findings**

The task of this section is to summarily use the findings from the analysis as a fulcrum to provide the way forward for an Igbo learner of the syntax of German adjectives.

From the analysis, it is clear that both German and Igbo languages syntactically accept the adjective as a part of speech. In this, there is no problem for the Igbo

learner of German. The same similarity and absence of problem apply to both languages employing the services of adjectives to describe their nouns or pronouns or its equivalent.

Again, the German and Igbo adjectives having the same basic sentence order, SVO (subject verb object) is a welcome similarity that will facilitate the learning of German. The same advantage is offered by the fact that both languages have their adjectives classified, as this provides a familiar terrain to the Igbo learner of German.

Another area of similarity and zero problem is in the existence of adjectival nouns. What this means for the Igbo learner is that nouns can easily function as adjectives in German, in the same way Igbo nouns can be turned into modifiers or qualifiers.

It is the areas of differences between the syntax of German and Igbo adjectives that are foreseen to pose some challenges to the Igbo learner of German. From our analysis, Igbo adjectives are post nominal, whereas the German ones can be either post-verbal or pre-nominal. This will confuse the Igbo learner to whom the position of a word is a determinant of whether the word is an adjective or not. The Igbo learner must adjust to having to learn how pre-nominal and post-verbal adjectives are formed in German.

Teaching materials will have to be arranged for the Igbo learner's mastery and adaptation to pre-nominal and post-verbal in German.

Since the German adjectives have to be declined to find the right agreement with gender, case, singularity and plurality, it poses a big problem to the Igbo learner of German. The reason is that the issue of declension does not obtain in the Igbo language. Being that strange, the Igbo learner faces the challenge of having to be acquainted with the 'weak' and 'strong' declensions of the German adjective to suit the noun in gender, case, singular and plural.



The teaching of German adjectives, the syllabus, curriculum and, in fact, the entire teaching programme, must be prepared to lay huge emphasis on the mode of declension of German adjectives to agree with the noun it describes. Attention should be given to the fact that the Igbo learner must be taught about the kind of grammatical situations that do not require the declension of the adjectives in German.

Furthermore, the Igbo learner, expectedly, must face a challenge in using the German adjectives for comparative purpose. This is expected because, in Igbo, the part of speech that is compared is the verb and not adjectives. The Igbo language has the verb form that can be subjected to comparison, unlike in German. The fact that the German language, contrarily, uses both adjectives and adverbs in doing comparisons at the positive, comparative, and superlative levels will confound the Igbo learner. He must learn the formula.

The teaching methods, programmes and materials should take these areas of differences into consideration. The syllabus and curriculum must be tailored to address these areas of variations for the Igbo learner.

## **7. Conclusion**

This research work has proceeded stage by stage. It has all been about doing a collation of the syntax of German and Igbo adjectives. The set objectives have been searched for and found. The findings indicate the existence of some similarities and differences between the syntax of Igbo and German adjectives. As stipulated by Robert Lado's (1957) theory of Contrastive Analysis, the differences and not the similarities pose some challenges to the learning of the second language, German. Based on this, the study has thoroughly examined the implications of the differences,

and, in effect, offered suggestions on how the difficulties could be overcome to facilitate the learning of the German language by the Igbo learner. With the suggestions offered, the task of the research has been accomplished. It is left for the teachers, syllabus, and curriculum planners to implement the recommendations to the full, in order to help the Igbo learner of the German adjectives.

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