

A Morphosyntactic Discourse of Adjectives in Ibibio

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Abstract

An adjective is a universal concept that forms an integral component of all the languages in the world. The importance of adjectives in articulating the realism of any growing language and the paucity of literature in Ibibio adjectives informed this research. This paper focuses on structures, features, functions, interpretation of Ibibio adjectives. The data were gathered from a face to face interview with native Ibibio informants as well as special Ibibio programmes such as "Local Man" and "Native introspection" By our intuition as native speakers of the speech form in focus, the data so selected were categorized and analysed using the Descriptive model and generative morphology theory. The analysis reveals that at the morphological level, Ibibio adjectives can be classified into deep and derived structures, and that deep structure adjectives are monomorphemic in a nature, most of the Ibibio adjectives are lexical items. It is also observed that in Ibibio, predicative adjective are often preceded by the copular verb 'ado' in the construction. The predicative copular construction is purely ascriptive in Ibibio.

Keywords: Ibibio, Adjective, Morphosyntactic, structure, attributive, predicative

Introduction

The concept of adjective is a universal phenomenon that constitute an integral component of all the languages of the world. In particular, it is a class of words that modifies or specifies nouns or noun phrases besides adding details to abstract concepts such as Platonic realisms which deal with the existence of justice, beauty and goodness. In Ibibio language, adjectives do not

only describe an inherent attribute of a noun phrase but are also grammatically interwoven with the noun itself. In Ibibio, the linguistic structure and functions of adjectives are very crucial in eliminating absurdities in communication. It is believed that in studying general linguistics, an examination of the five basic components of grammar is necessary. However, in this paper and without prejudice to the above claim, adjectives shall be examined and analyzed based on the two levels of linguistic domains namely morphology and syntax.

According to Crystal (1995p 90), morphology is concerned with the word formation in a language as well as the rules that guide such a phenomenon. The importance of adjectives in articulating the realism of any growing language and paucity of literature in Ibibio adjectives informed the motivation of this research. This paper focuses on structures, features, functions and interpretation of Ibibio adjectives.

Aim and Objective

All languages in the world have morphological, syntactic and semantic structures except African and Asian languages which have in addition tonal changes and Ibibio is one of such languages. The aim of this research is to investigate the basic morphological and syntactic structures of Ibibio adjectives while the specific objectives seek to:

- (i) Identify lexical files of adjectives in Ibibio
- (ii) Examine the morphological structure of adjectives in Ibibio
- (iii) Analyze the identified syntactic structure of adjectives in Ibibio with special reference to attributive and predicative forms
- (iv) Produce a data bank on the intricate structure and syntactic functions of Ibibio adjectives.

Statement of the Problem:

A reasonable number of researches have been published in the areas of verbs, nouns, pronouns, adverbs and determiners. However, only a handful of researches exists on morphosyntactic exposition of adjectives in Ibibio. In view of the claim that Ibibio is a developing language, this paper on morphosyntactic discourse of adjectives in Ibibio utilizes descriptive framework to harness the relationship between morphology and syntax.

Theoretical Framework:

This study seeks to analyze its data within eclectic model made up of descriptive model and the generative morphology theory proposed by Morris Halle (1973). This approach is preferred because a descriptive analysis has the ability to generate unlimited number of constructions which adequately describe the native speaker's intrinsic comprehension of the structure of sentences and their relationship even though they have no pre-knowledge of any rules of grammar. Generative morphology theory, on the other hand, makes use of the rules and techniques of morphology to select suitable word formation which can generate actual words and potential words. **Literature review:**

Generally, adjectives form a class of words that modifies nouns and play a unique role in the construction of sentences since they are amendable and capable of making specification. According to Hurford (1994, p 8) adjectives constitute a set of words typically used to modify a

noun which also describe some property of the things referred to by the noun such as its shape, colour, age, value, size, origin or impression. Talleman (2005, p 50) also believes that an adjective is a describing word which modifies a noun. Benjamin (2024), posits that adjectives carry the qualities which invariably describe or add meaning to the state of being of a noun or pronoun. Dixon (2004) in a related study asserts that all languages in the world have a distinguishable class of words called adjective. In their contribution, Hyman and Olawsky (2004) opined that adjectives are uniquely distinct from nouns they modify. This view is endorsed by Agbetsoamedo (2014: a,b) who observed that a basic distinction between nouns and adjectives is that nouns more often occur after adjectives in any phrase structure and also have inherent class markers while adjectives have not.

Ndimele (1999, p 98) affirmed the above definition and further professed that adjectives can be partitioned into two classes namely attributive and predicative, depending on their position in a sentence. Besides, he adduced an attributive adjective always comes before the noun it modifies thereby assigning a quality to what is denoted by the noun. On the other hand, predicative adjective usually occurs as an integral part of the predicate particularly after the linking or copulaverb. In a noteworthy study, Essien (2008, p 148) asserts that adjectives in Ibibio can occur either predicatively or attributively depending on well-defined criteria. For instance, when it occurs predicatively as ordinary verb, it must necessarily agree with the subject of the sentence in number and person. However, when it occurs attributively, it must agree with the noun it modifies only in number. In other studies, Udofot (2006, p 17) posed adjectives as words which add credence to the meaning of the word next to it. Klammeret-all (2010, p 76) postulate adjectives as words that stand for quality as well as modify the noun.

Methodology:

The authenticity of any study depends largely on the sources of data and subsequent tools of analysis. In this paper, the data were gathered from face to face interview with native speaker informants as well as special Ibibio programmes of the speech form under consideration. Specifically, the data were also sourced through listening and jottings in the open market square and local church sermons. Based on the author's intuition as a native speaker of the speech form chosen for this study, the data were sieved and categorized into distinct patterns. A descriptive model otherwise known as the generative morphology hypothesis were applied on the observed patterns.

Discussion and Analysis:

Adjectives in Ibibio perform the functions of describing nouns or noun phrases in terms of shape, height, colour and so on. This can clearly be seen in such description as im[^]k (short), afia (white), nsoon (hard) and so on. The adjectives in Ibibio are always positioned before and after the nouns they are describing. For instance etəkufok (small house), afiausan (white plate) and ewainaan (four dogs).

Morphological Description of Adjectives in Ibibio Language:

At the morphological level, formation of adjectives could be achieved using different ways. This paper therefore focuses at the different patterns of adjectives found in Ibibio language and

their formation techniques. Specifically, we shall be examining formation of adjectives through the deep structure and derived format.

Deep Structure Adjectives in Ibibio

Deep structure adjectives are basic adjectives which are not necessarily from any word class but only describe the nouns they occur with. In other word, for deep structure adjectives to be meaningful, they do not need to be segmented into morphemes. For examples;

- 1 (a) idiok---->bad (b) eti----->good (c) ibak---->wicked
 (d) ekamba----> big (e) idod---->bitter (f) ayaan---->long
 (g) ufa ----> new (h) etək ---->small

It is observed from examples 1(ah) that deep structure adjectives are monomorphemic in nature. In essence, they cannot be split into two or more morphemes to remain meaningful. The following sentences illustrate the application of deep structure adjectives in Ibibio.

- 2 (a) Abasiekemea diokido
 Abasiekeme 3rd person bad character Abasiekeme is bad.
 (b) Mfoniso a namnkponteetəkayin
 Mfoniso 3rd per work thing like small baby Mfoniso behaves like a small girl
 (c) Nsekayinibaahakeotunyin There is no baby among us
 Baby is not in group we
 (d) Afoayaakwoufaikwoisuaami You will sing a new song this year
 You will sing new song year this
 (e) Ete adoannyieekambaufokkeuyo That man has a big house in Uyo
 Man that has 3rd per big house in uyo

In examples 2 (ae), the underlined adjectives describe the nouns they occur with. The basic adjective adiokin 2(a) is used to modify the noun ido while etək in 2(b) describes the type of person 'ayin'; that it is not an old person but a small baby. Similarly, nsek in 2(c) specifies that the person involved is a small baby while ufa in 2 (d) shows that the song has new lyrics and not the familiar ones.

Reduplication of Deep Structure (Level) Adjectives:

Even though deep structure adjectives are monomorphemic in nature, they can be reduplicated. Some examples of reduplicated adjectives are shown in 3 (a- g).

3. Adjectives	Reduplicated Adjectives
(a) idiok---->bad	idiok-idiok----> very bad
(b) ekamba---->big	ekamba-ekamba ----> very big
(c) uwak----> many	uwak-uwak ----> plenty
(d) ibak----> wicked	ibak-ibak ----> wickedly
(e) uto---->yellow	uto-uto ----> yellowish
(f) idod----> bitter	idod-idod ----> bitterly
(g) ufa---->new	ufa-ufa ----> new

The data in 3 (a - g) are not derived but reduplicated in line with a morphological process of obtaining new words, while still retaining all the phonological features of the root adjective. It is instructive to note that in Ibibio, adjectives realized through reduplication are not productive but are only created for emphatic purposes and to intensify the word base. It is equally important to state that adjectives in this class can only be reduplicated once and are used mainly to show degree or intensity of the noun they modify. The following sentences illustrate the degree or intensity of the reduplicated root adjectives:

- 4 (a) Eka ammoado ataanyananyanawowaan ---> His/her mother is a very tall woman
Mother his/her is very tall tall woman
(b) Ofon mmiadoufa-ufa ----> My dress is new
Cloth my is new
(c) Atidodafidini ado idod-idod ----> Bitter leaf is always bitter
Bitterleaf all time is bitter bitter

Adjectives Derived From Nouns:

Adjectives in Ibibio can be derived through total reduplication of nouns. For instance;

5. Nouns	Reduplicated Adjectives
(a) itiat ----> stone	itiat-itiat ----> stony
(b) mmon ----> water	mmon-mmon----> watery
(c) okpo ----> bone	okpo-okpo----> bony
(d) adan----> oil	adan-adan ----> oily
(e) ntan----> sand	ntan-ntan ----> sandy
(f) ibad ----> number	ibad-ibad ----> few/countable
(g) nkan ----> charcoal	nkan-nkan----> charcoal/dark

A critical look at 5 (a - g) reveals that when nouns undergo the process of total reduplication, the resulting reduplicated nouns translate into adjectives qualifying the nouns they occur with. Consider the following sentences:

- 6 (a) Itiat-itiatufokke nse ----> It is the stony house that I am looking at.
Stone-stone house that 1st person look
(b) Afoamaakanadiautommon-mmonafere ado?--> Were you able to eat such watery soup?
You able eat such water-water soup that
(c) Ndepokpo-okpounammfin ----> I buy bony meat today.
1st pers buy bone-bone meat today
(d) Ebemmi Isimaahaadan-adanafere ----> My husband does not like oily soup.
Husband my 3rd pers does love not oil-oil soup
(e) Ben ntan-ntanedesiutoamikaa ----> Take this type of sandy rice away.
Carry sand-sand rice kind this go
(g) Afidufok adonton-nton ----> The whole house is dusty.
All house is dust-dust

- (h) Ibad-ibadawoebado ----> Few people are there.
Countable-countable people are there

An incisive observation of the sentences in 6(a-h) shows that the reduplicated class of words modifies each noun they precede. For instance, *itiat-itiat* 'stony' specifies *ufok* 'house', *mmon-mmon* 'watery' qualifies *afere* 'soup', *okpo-okpo* 'bony' specifies *unam* 'meat', *ntan-ntan* 'sandy' describes *edesi* 'rice', *nton-nton* 'dusty' modifies *ufok* 'house' and *ibad-ibad* specifies the number of people involved. It is insightful to state that in *Ibibio*, adjectives which are realized through total reduplication copy the root segmentally and suprasegmentally.

Adjectives Derived From Verbs in *Ibibio*:

In *Ibibio*, it is possible to derive adjectives from verbs through the process of either total or partial reduplication as well as affixation. We state below some examples of these processes:

7. Verbs	Derived Adjectives
(a) Kpa ----> die	ukpa-ukpa or mkpa-ikpa ----> deadly
(b) fop ----> burn	ufofop ----> burnt
(c) wan ----> dry	uwawan ----> dried
(d) wed ----> write	uwewed -----> written
(e) tem ----> cook	utetem -----> cooked
(f) biat ----> spoil	ubiabiat -----> spoilt
(g) saad ----> dry	nsaad-nsaad -----> dried
(h) daad ----> ripe	ndaad-ndaad -----> ripened

In examples 7(a-h), adjectives are derived through partial reduplication with affixation of the 'prefix' 'u' as in 7(a-f) or 'n' as in 7(g-h). Nonetheless, when the verb is intransitive, despite the affixation of 'u' as in *kpa* 'die' or 'n' as in *saad* 'dry' and *daad* 'ripe', the transition from verb to adjective can only be realized through total reduplication. Although the reduplicate accepts the relevant prefix as a morphological process, the sounds 'of' 'u', 'n' and 'a' are attached to the root verbs of the reduplicants. This observation is also applicable to the deleted sounds in the derivation.

Comparison of Adjectives in *Ibibio*:

Generally, objects described by adjectives can be different in degree and sizes and can be expressed in a comparative sense. In English language, suffixes '-er' and '-est' are attached to adjectives to express comparative and superlative. Udofot (2001, p 47) affirms that the comparative degree is used when two entities are involved while the superlative degree is applied when more than two entities are compared. However in *Ibibio*, there are different ways of expressing comparative and superlative degrees. Whereas, '-a-nnekke' is used to show comparative degree, 'nkan' on the other hand is used to express superlative form. We state a few examples below;

8.	Adjectives	Comparative	Superlative
(a)	nyaiya---> nice	nnekenyanya---> nicer	nyaiyankan---> nicest
(b)	akpon---> big	nnekkenkpon---> bigger	nkponnkan---> biggest
(c)	asip---> small	nnekkensip---> smaller	nsipnkan---> smallest
(d)	afia---> white	nnekkafia---> whiter	nfiankan---> whitest

It is instructive to attest that in Ibibio, adjectives at the comparative and superlative levels admit the attachment of affixes. Whereas comparative adjectives accept prefix 'nnekke', superlative adjectives admit only the suffix 'nkan'. These can clearly be seen in examples 8(ad). Besides, the examples in 8(ad) can best be understood in the light of the following sentences;

- 9 (a) Enoakpon -----> Eno is fat (first level)
Eno fat
- (b) Itoroannekkeakponakan Eno -----> Itoro is fatter than Eno (comparative level)
Itoro fatter than Eno
- (c) Mfonado nkponkankeotummo --> Mfon is the fattest among them (superlative level)
Mfon is fattest in among them

Syntactic Classification of Adjectives in Ibibio:

Ndimele (1993,p.95) asserts that adjectives perform attributive function when they precede the nouns they modify. Dixon (2004) likewise admits that in the grammar of any language, adjectives typically fill two roles namely attributive and predicative. This view is endorsed by Essien (2008,p.143),who postulates that adjectives in Ibibio can occur predicatively and attributively. The major function of predicative and attributive adjectives is to modify the head of a noun in a noun phrase. Based on the construction, adjective modifiers can occur at both pronominal, that is when the adjective is positioned before the noun or noun phrase and postnominal, that is when the adjective is positioned after the noun or noun phrase.

Ibibio Adjectives in Attributive Position:

In Ibibio, it is possible for adjectives to precede the nouns they modify. This is illustrated in examples 9 (a f) below.

- 10 (a) Ufausanakpon -----> The new plate is big.
New plate big
- (b) Nyaiyaufokke nyem -----> I want that beautiful house.
Beautiful house that I want
- (c) Nkponnkan Abasiakara -----> The biggest God is in control.
Biggest God control
- (d) Nsaad Abakpaakwene -----> The dry maize has finished.
Dry maize finish
- (e) Idoreyinyamm fiausan -----> Idoreyin sells white plates.
Idoreyin sell plural whiteplate
- (f) Akaanusana bomom -----> The old plate breaks.
Old plate break

In examples 9 (a-f), it is observed that the adjectives *sufa* 'new', *nyaiya*, *nkponnkan*, *nsaad*, *mfia* and *akan* precede the nouns they modify.

More Than One Adjective in Attributive Position:

In *Ibibio*, it is also possible to have two or three adjectives at the attributive position as modifiers of one noun or noun phrase. The following examples affirm this claim;

10 (a) Et>knyaiyaafiaufok -----> A small beautiful white house.

Small beautiful white house

(b) Anyanafiaawounwan -----> A tall fair woman.

Long white woman

Clearly, the adjectives *et>k*, *nyaiya* and *afia* jointly modify the noun *ufok* in 10 (a) while *anyan* and *afia* describe the noun *woman* in 10 (b).

Ibibio Adjectives in Predicative Position:

According to Dixon (2004, p 106) adjectives can function predicatively as copula complement to modify the subject of the sentence. Predicative adjectives which occur in the complement position in clauses are usually placed immediately after the copula verbs. Specifically in *Ibibio*, predicative adjectives are often preceded by the copula verb 'ado' in the construction. Consider the following sentences;

11 (a) Abasiakeme ado im^k

Abasiakeme is short

(b) Afereado et?ket?k -----> The soup is small.

Soup is small

(c) Emem ado abubid

Emem is black

(d) Ekpado ado afia -----> The bag is white.

Bag is white

In examples 11 (a-d), it is noteworthy to state that the words *im^k*, *et?ket?k*, *abubid* and *afia* are intransitive constructions with one core argument each in the subject position. These words are intransitive predicates with their heads as copula verbs. Incidentally, all the verbs that assign adjectival meanings in 11 (a-d), occupy the predicative position but respectively modify the nouns *Abasiakeme*, *Afere*, *Emem* and *Epad*. Generally, predicative adjectives make use of copula verbs while the noun phrase that occurs in the complement position describes the subject. Besides, the predicative copula construction is purely ascriptive in the sense that the subject of a sentence is directly linked to the complement through the verb for overt description of the subject.

Conclusion

This paper focuses on descriptive analysis of Ibibio adjective. The eclectic application of descriptive and generative morphology theory shows that at the morphological level, Ibibio adjective can be classified into deep and derived structures, and that deep structure adjectives are monomorphemic in a nature. They cannot be split into two or more morphemes to remain meaningful. It is instructive to note that in Ibibio, adjectives realized through reduplication are not productive but are only created for emphatic purposes and to intensify of the noun they modify. It is also insightful to note that when nouns undergo the process of total reduplication, the resulting reduplicated nouns translate into adjectives qualifying the nouns they occur with.

It is also observed that when the verb is intransitive, despite the affixational processes, the transition from verb to adjective can only be realized through total reduplication. Another result is that adjectives at the comparative and superlative levels admit the attachment of affixes, comparative adjectives accept prefix, 'anekke', while superlative adjective, accept suffix "nkan". Syntactically, it is possible to have two or three adjectives at the attributive position as modifiers of one noun or noun phrase. Specifically, in Ibibio, predicative adjective are often preceded by the copular verb 'ado' in the construction the predicative copular construction is purely ascriptive.

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