



Igbo Verb Mood: An Adverb Modification

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Abstract

Mood as one of the verbal categories in Igbo language refers to a way in which a verb is used to express certain meanings by the speaker at the time of making an utterance/sentence. The verb mood can be in; imperative (command), interrogative (question), indicative (statement), or in subjunctive (fact). Igbo language despite its linguistic importance lacks comprehensive research on the complexities of verb mood modification by adverbs. This knowledge gap necessitates a systematic investigation into the adverbial modification of Igbo verb mood with a view to fill the knowledge gap existing in the language. The aim of this study is to explore Igbo verb moods while the specific objective is to determine how Igbo verb moods could be modified by Igbo adverbs. The study made use of primary and secondary sources of data collections. The primary sources of data collection include interview, observation method; also researcher's intuitive knowledge as a native speaker. The secondary sources of data collection include sourcing of data from textbooks written by linguists/scholars, journals, and internet materials. Study samples of thirty (30) native speakers (10 males and 10 females) were randomly selected. The respondents were adult males and females who are native speakers of the standard Igbo language within the ages of 50 – 70 years old. These respondents have vast knowledge in the language and have been permanent residents in these towns Onitsha, Umuahia, and Owerri for up to 30 years. The paper adopted both qualitative and descriptive design approaches. The theoretical framework adopted is x-bar theory. This theory is a theory of syntactic structures. The study examined three types of Igbo verb moods- imperative, indicative and the interrogative. The paper discovered that adverbs and verb moods belong to the same slot of Verb Phrase and can function as an adverbial and verb phrase. The paper concludes that verb moods in Igbo can be modified by different types of Igbo adverbs- time, manner, place and adverb of frequency etc. The study contributes to knowledge in Igbo syntax.

Keywords: Language, Igbo language, Verb mood and Adverb.

Introduction

Language is a system of speaking and writing, common to a group of people and the most fundamental means of human communication. Language as a means of human communication consists of a bundle of sounds which are called speech sounds. These speech sounds are produced by using organs of speech which exist in every normal human being. Every language is syntactically and morphologically structured in a way that a competent speaker of the language must have mastered the language as to be able to produce and understand individual words and sentences and also knows whether a sentence made in that language is correct or incorrect.

The Igbo language, rich and complex is classified as a member of the Kwa of the branch of the Niger-Congo language family spoken in the South Eastern part of Nigeria (Blench, 2019:42). Chukwu (2019) opines that the origin of Igbo is slippery. This is because there is no consensus among the Igbo people themselves on how they came into being. The word 'Igbo' according to Odokara and Nwankwo (2019:119) has three meanings which are; the people, the language, and the tribe. Igbo is the main language of trade and commerce of Igbo people and is used in mass media communication such as radio and television. It is one of the three major and official languages in Nigeria. Syntactically, the Igbo language exhibits the SVO characteristics i.e. – Subject (Isiahiri) – Verb (Ngwaa) – (Object) (Nnara), as in; *Ada kuru aka* – Ada clapped hands. The principal word formation process in Igbo is compounding, others are reduplication, blending and loaning of words from other languages.

Igbo language has a very good grammatical structure that warrants in-depth study. One crucial aspect of Igbo grammar is the verb mood system, which plays a vital role in conveying the speaker's attitude, intention, and perspective. Igbo verb moods indicate the state of verb. The state of verb can be in; imperative, (command) indicative, (states facts or reality) interrogative, (question) and subjunctive, (expresses doubt or uncertainty). All these verb moods are essential for effective interaction/ communication in the language.

Nouns, adverbs, adjectives and verbs belong to open class. They are open class because their structures can allow for grammatical inflection or derivation. Adverbs, which modify verbs, adjective, or adverb, can meaningfully impact the meaning and tone of a sentence. Despite the importance of verb moods and adverbs in Igbo, there is a need for comprehensive study on how adverbs modify verb moods in the Igbo language. This study aims to fill this gap.

Statement of the problem

Many linguists/scholars at various points in time have carried out research works on verb mood in different languages of the world in general and in Igbo language in particular. The perspectives from each of these scholars studied verb moods are not always the same. Williamson (1983) studied mood in Onicha dialect, Nwadike (2014) carried out study on Mood in Awara- Igbo, Kassatan (2022) studied "A variationist analysis of the subjunctive mood in a sociolinguistic corpus of spoken Francoprovençal" etc. To the best of the knowledge of the researcher, none has carried out a research on verb mood modified by Igbo adverbs. In view of this gap, the study aims to explore Igbo verb mood and examine how adverbs modify verb mood in Igbo using the application of x-bar theory of Jackendoff (1977) with the aim of filling the knowledge gap found to exist in this subject matter.

Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of this study is to investigate Igbo verb mood while the specific objectives are to:

1. Determine the types of verb mood realizable in Igbo language.

2. Examine how adverbs modify verb moods in Igbo.

Research questions

1. What are the types of verb mood found in Igbo language?
2. How do adverbs modify verb moods in Igbo?

1.5 Literature review

This section reviews what scholars have done concerning verb mood across languages.

In linguistics or generally, in grammar, mood refers to the way in which a verb is used to express certain meanings by the speaker or writer. It is a verbal category which captures the psychological state of a speaker at the time of making an utterance. This utterance is made possible by the use of verbal inflections that allow speakers to express their attitude towards the utterance made.

Mood is characterized by the state of verb in a sentence or utterance. A verb mood shows the mood in which an action occurs. In other words, the mood of a verb is the way an action is carried out. Mood has to do with sentence types which reveal whether a sentence is in the indicative, imperative, and subjunctive moods etc. It indicates or shows the state of the verb in a sentence.

Uzoagba (2022:12) explains that there are three types of moods in Igbo language – indicative, imperative and interrogative. For Williamson (2006) mood is categorized into four types – indicative, imperative, subjunctive, and sequential. Igwe (1987) groups mood into four types interrogative- this type of mood asks question or welfare of something. It seeks information from the addressee. Indicative - this verb mood states facts or reality and is also used for declarative and interrogative statements. Imperative- this mood expresses a command, request or instruction. Imperative mood is used to direct someone to perform a specific action. Subjunctive- this mood expresses doubt, uncertainty, possibility or potentiality. According to him, mood expresses an action/state relative to some earlier, later or contrasting state/action. Emenanjo (2015:523) sees mood as a sentence type marked by different verbal forms like morpho-syntactically and is based on morphological, syntactic and semantic and pragmatic implications. He groups mood into five – a verb that expresses a fact (indicative mood) a command (imperative), a question (interrogative mood), a condition (conditional mood) or possibility (subjunctive mood). He further states that interrogative sentences in Igbo are marked by interrogatives, proclitic tone patterns and features of intonation. I do not agree with him on the types of verb mood in Igbo because conditional mood in Igbo is a subclass of subjunctive mood which is marked with *ọbụrụna* (if). Therefore, why separating them. Emenanjo (2015) states that 'indicative' has been variously called 'past tense' or assertive which is characterized by 'Ra-time' suffix. This study adopts Igwe's (1987) types of mood but differs in terms of hortative mood which his study fails to recognize as a sub-class of subjunctive mood in the language. But for the scope of this study, it is limited to only three types of mood- imperative, indicative, and interrogative moods only.

Adverbs or (hence forth Adv) is a universal concept in grammar. Adverbs and verbs are major parts of speech in Igbo language. They belong to open class because they (adverb and verb) allow for new words. An adverb is a lexical category that contrasts with other word classes such as preposition, verbs, adjectives, or nouns. Igbo adverbs just like English adverbs can modify verbs, nouns or fellow adverbs. Adverbs tell us more about a verb, adjective or fellow adverb. Adverbs modify verbs or fellow adverbs. It provides additional information about the verb. (Aarts 2017:141) opines that adverb is "a word that functions as a modifier of a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. He further says that adverbs typically answer questions such as 'How,' 'when?,' 'where?', and 'To what extent?' about the situation

described by the verb". Uchechukwu (2019) opines that adverb in Igbo language is a word that modifies or describes a verb, an adjective, or another adverb, providing more information about the manner, time, place, frequency, or degree of the action or state described by the verb. Fatoba (2022) opines that adverb is a grammatical adjunct of a verb which most typically expresses such semantic notion as: "time, manner, place, instrument or circumstance". He further says that adverbs rarely exhibit distinctive inflectional morphology in the Igbo language though, a language like English allows comparative and superlative comparisons. Emenanjo (2015) opines that in Igbo language, adverbs when they are duplicated may act as intensifiers. When an adverb is placed after the verb it modifies or vice-versa. Huddleston and Pullum (2014) assert that an adverb is "a word that serves to modify or describe a verb, adjective, or another adverb; it typically expresses some relation of manner, time, place, frequency, or degree". The role of adverb is to modify other elements in a sentence and brings out the various semantic categories that adverbs can express. They illustrate with the following examples:

- 1a. Ken snores **loudly**
- b. The baby cried **continually**
- c. He advertises **nationally**

Mbah (2006:37) maintains that adverbs provide additional information about the verb. He further says that adverbs provide information about *how*, *when*, *why*, and *where* the action was performed. He goes further to say that adverbs when duplicated in Igbo, they may act as intensifiers. He gives the following examples of Igbo adverbs; *nnoo* (very), *kpam* (completely), *ofuma* (well), *gboo/faa* (early), *ugbu/kita/nwoshua/ehi* (now). Mbah (2006:37) continues by saying that *nnoo* is an intensifier, *kpam* and *ofuma*, *osiiso*, *nwayoo* and *gboo* are manner adverbs while *ugbu*, *kita/nwoshua/ehi* are dialectal variants of adverb of time. *Te* a variant of *ma*, is an adverb of comparison. Finally, he adds that there are four adverbial clauses in Igbo language- adverbial clause of time, adverbial clause of manner, adverbial clause of reason, and adverbial clause of place. Chukwukere (2021:63) sees adverb (nkwuwa) as a part of speech that shows how a verb is. She further says that adverb works for verb as adjective works for noun. She goes further to say that adverb is a part of speech that can be duplicated. This means that it can be repeated or called severally to intensify the meaning.

Research methodology

This study adopts a descriptive approach of research design. The Areas of study for this work are Owerri, Onitsha, and Umuahia. Total of 30 (thirty) respondents were randomly selected because it will consume both time and money to use the entire population. The population samples used are both educated and uneducated between the ages of 50 - 70 years were randomly selected from each of the three towns (Owerri, Umuahia and Onitsha) in Igbo land. The choice of this age brackets is because they are knowledgeable native speakers of the standard Igbo and have lived in those towns for up to 30 years. The instruments used for data collection in this study are- observation technique and oral interview. The methods for data collection for the study include; primary and secondary sources. Primary sources for data collection include introspection, observation method and oral interview while secondary data collection sources include relevant books written by renowned linguists in Igbo language, internet materials, and journals etc. Supplementary information by the researcher's intuitive knowledge as a competent native speaker of the language is used. The tone marking convention of Green and Igwe 1963 was adopted. This convention states that all high tone syllables should be unmarked while all low tones and down- step tones should be marked.

Theoretical framework

This work adopts X-bar theory of Jackendoff (1977) which was formally proposed by Chomsky in (1957). This theory is a model of phrase structure grammar and theory of syntactic category structures. X-bar theory captures the structure of phrasal categories with a single uniform structure called x-bar schema which has the assumption that any phrase in natural language is an XP (X Phrase) that is headed by a given syntactic category X. Why X-bar theory as theoretical framework? This theory seeks to capture the similarities between different categories of lexical phrases by assigning the same structure to them. Since the present seminar is focused on the Igbo verb mood (Verb phrase) within discourse. According to Ozo - Mekuri (2001) Verb Phrase is one of the principal syntactic categories which appears to be universally present in all languages and Igbo language being a verb centered language, this theory is very suitable and relevant for the data analysis because it shows a detailed breakdown of the sentence's syntactic structure thereby, highlighting the relationships between different constituents. The use of tree diagram is also used in some of the data analysis because with tree diagramming all the examples will make the work untidy/cumbersome.

Data Presentation

For the scope and nature of this seminar paper, only three types of verb moods in Igbo shall be discussed.

Types of Igbo verb mood

There are four types of verb mood in Igbo;

Simple Imperative Affirmative (suffixed and unsuffixed, Complex and Compound), Simple Imperative Negative, Imperative Progressive Affirmative, Imperative Progressive Negative, Imperative Unfulfilled Negative, Indicative Affirmative, Indicative Negative, Interrogative Yes/No or Polar Question, Interrogative Content/Wh-Question, and Interrogative Tag Question.

How Igbo Verb Moods are modified by Adverbs

Adverbs can directly modify the mood of a verb, indicating the speaker's attitude or emotion. In Igbo language, the intersection of Igbo verb mood and adverb sheds light on how adverbs interact with various verb moods to convey nuance meanings.

Simple Imperative Affirmative (Unsuffixed and Unsuffixed) Verb Mood Modified by Adverb of Manner *ọsịisọ* (quick) /*ọsịisọ* - *ọsịisọ* (very quickly) and *ozugbo/ozugbo-ozugbo* (immediately)

1(a) Bịa ọsịisọ
 IMP-unsuffix quick-ADV
 Come quickly

(b) Bịa ọsịisọ- ọsịisọ
 Come-IMP quick-quick-ADV

In examples (1a and b), *bia* (come) are verbs functioning as verb phrases in the sentences. They are both modified by adverb of manner *ọsịisọ* (quickly) and *ọsịisọ- ọsịisọ* (very quickly) indicates urgency/importance. The verb + adverb can constitute a verb phrase in Igbo. This is realized by reduplicating the adverb but when they are not reduplicated, they occur in pre-verbal position and functions as pre-verbal modifiers as in example (1b).

2 (a) Je -e ahia òzùgbo
 Go-IMP-suffix market immediately
 Go to market immediately

(b) òzùgbo- òzùgbo je- e ahia
 Now-now-ADV go- suffix market

Immediately, go to market

However, in examples (2a and b), the degree of going to the market is not the same because of the reduplication of the adverb *òzùgbo-òzùgbo* in (1a) making the manner adverb be in the pre-verbal and post-verbal position.

Imperative Affirmative Complex/compound Verb Mood Modified by Adverb of Time (*tàa*) today/ *tàa-tàa* (today-today)

3 (a) *Bia* were *egō* *gi* *tàa- tàa*
Come-IMP take money 2SG today-today- ADV
Come and take your money today.

(b) *Bia* *taa-taa* were *ego*
Come- IMP today-today-ADV take money
Come, today- today, and take money

In example (3b), the reduplicated adverb *taa-taa* (today-today) modifies the imperative verb *bia*. There is also movement of the adverb *taa-taa* in (3a) from the final position to the middle position.

Fig:1

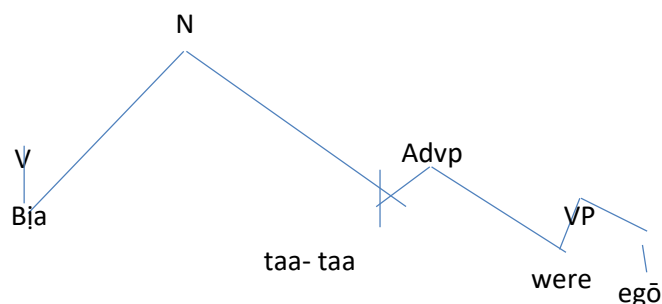


Fig. 1: Tree diagram of verb phrase functioning as adverbial

Imperative Negative Verb Mood Modified by Adverb of Time '*taa*' (today)/ '*echi*' (tomorrow)

4 (a) *Ada* *àga-là* *tàa*
AdaNOM go-neg today-ADV
Ada don't go today

(b) *A-* *gà-là* *taa* *Ada*
prefix go-neg today-ADV AdaNOM
Don't go today Ada

(c) *Kà* *Ada* *a-* *gà-là* *taa*
FOC AdaNOM prefix go-neg today-ADV
Let Ada not go today

In example (4a) the imperative negative marker *agala* is being modified by the adverb of time *taa* (today) and *echi* (tomorrow). Semantically, examples (4a-c) means that 'Ada' as the subject can be moved to any position. In example (4c) the sentence has been transformed from the underlying structure to the surface structure by the insertion of *ka* complementizer (CP).

Imperative Progressive Affirmative Verb Mood Modified by Adverb of frequency '*kwàmgbè*' (always)

5 (a) *Na-* *abjà* *n'* *ùlọ* *anyị* *kwamgbè*
AUX PROG come PREP house 3PL all time
Be coming to our house always

(b) *Nà-* *àgà* *nwayọ -nwayọ*

AUX PROG go slow- slow-ADV
Be walking very slowly

In example (5a) the imperative affirmative progressive mood (*nà-abia*) is modified by time frequency adverb *kwamgbe* as the head word while in example (5b), the verb phrase is constituted by the verb and the adverbial modifier *kwamgbe*. This shows that the internal make-up of Igbo verb phrase is verb + adverb indicating universality of language.

Imperative Progressive Negative Verb Mood Modified by Adverb of Reason *makana/n'ih* (Because)

6 (a) Anā-la àbia n' ùlo m̃ màkà Olàm̃mà!
Do-neg come PREP house 1SG for Olamma!
Don't be coming to my house because of Olamma!

(b) Àna-là achọ nsogbu n'ih i nwe-ghị ego
Do- neg find problem because 1SG have-neg money
Don't be looking for trouble all the time

In example (6a) the imperative progressive negative marker '*anala*' is modified by adverb of reason '*makana/n'ih* (Because) and functions as warning to for the addressee to stop coming to see *Olamma*. Again in example (6b), the addressee is being warned to stop looking for trouble because (*n'ih*) he has no money. The two sentences in 6 are complex ones with imperative negatives as the main clauses- *anala abia n'ulo m* (don't be coming to my house) and *anala achọ nsogbu* (don't be looking for trouble) while the subordinate clauses are; *maka Olamma* (because of Olamma) and *n'ih i nweghi ego* (because you don't have money). The two adverbs of reason provide explanations for the main clauses.

Imperative- Unfulfilled Negative Modified by Adverb of Time *ugbu à* (now)

7 (a) DS: Akà àga-la ahia ùgbu à
No go-neg market now Dem
Don't go to market yet

SS: (b) Ùgbu à akà àga-la ahia
Now Dem no go-neg market
Now, don't go to market yet

The unfulfilled marker *aka* and the adverb *ugbu a* in examples (7a and b) are not bounded at a particular position. They can be moved to any position.

Indicative Affirmative Verb Mood Modified by Adverb of Frequency *n'òge* (on time)/*òge ùfodù* (sometimes)

8 (a) Nñe m̃ mụ-rụ ñwa n' òge
MotherNOM 1SG- POSS born-rV- past child NOM PREP time
My mother delivered baby on time

(b) Okoro nà- àga ọrụ ùgbọ òge ùfodù
OkoroNOM AUX PROG go work farm time some- ADV
Okoro, sometimes goes to farm.

The structure of the VP in example (8a) is VP→ V+ AdvP and the verb is in the past mood while in example (8b) the adverb *oge ufodu* (sometimes) is modifying the verb *aga* (go) and the noun phrase *oru ugbo* (farm work). Therefore, the adverbial phrase *oge ufodu* (sometimes) modifies both the verb and the noun phrase.

Indicative Negative Verb Mood Modified by Adverb of Manner '*ike ike*' (forcefully)

9. O nye-ghì ñkità okpùkpù ìke- ike
3Sg give-neg dogNOM bone forcefully-ADV
She did not forcefully give the dog the bone

In example (9) *ike ike* (forcefully) modifies the indicative negative mood *nyeghi* indicating the manner in which the dog was given the born.

Fig: 3

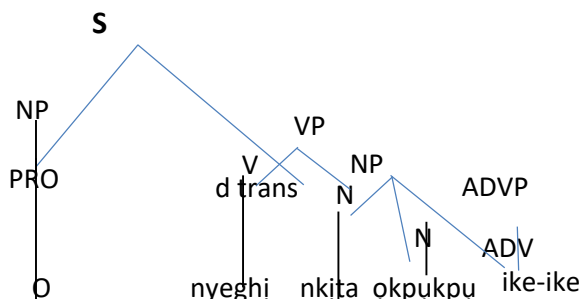


Fig. 2: Tree diagram illustrating indicative negative verb mood modified by reduplicated adverb of Manner *ike ike* (forcefully)

The diagram in fig: 3 show the relationship of the different constituents and the role each performs.

Interrogative Verb Mood

Yes/No/ Polar Questions Modified by Adverb of place '*ebe*' (where)

- (a) O tũsà-ra yā ebe dī òmà?
3SG throw-past it place-ADV is ADJ?

Did he throw it in a good place?

- (b) Èbe Ada gà-rà, o siri òfe?
Where-ADV AdaNOM go-past 2SG cook-past soup?
Where Ada went, did she cook soup?

In example (10a) the main clause structure is *Ò tũsara ya?* (Did she throw it?) the adverbial place is *ebe dī mma* (in a good place) and the noun phrase is *dī mma* (good place). The adverb of place modifies how the yes/no question seek confirmation about the suitability of the location. In example (10b), the interrogative adverb *ebe* (where) introduces the yes/no question and modify the verbs *gàra* (went) and *siri* (cooked). The main clause is *Ò siri òfe?* (Did she cook soup?) while the subordinate clause adverbial is *ebe ò gàrà* (where she went). The answers to the questions in examples (10a and b) is either '*ee*' or *mba* ('yes' or 'no') respectively.

Content/ Wh- Questions Modified by Adverb of Time *Unyaahu* (yesterday)

- (a) Ùnyaahù, gịnì kà Jon rìrì?

Yesterday, Q-what FOC JònNOM eat-past?

Yesterday, what is it that John ate?

- (b) Gìnì kà Jòn rì-rì ùnyaahù?
QW FOC JònNOM eat-past yesterday
What is it that John ate yesterday?

In example (11a) the sentence is at the surface structure. The adverb (*unyaahu*) modifies the entire sentence especially the verb *riri* (ate). It also specifies the time when the action

occurred and the scope is the entire sentence. The *wh*- word *gini* (what) is embedded in the main clause while the adverbial phrase is *unyaahu* (yesterday). The movement of *gini* (what) phrase does not remain in-situ rather it must obligatorily move from one position to another as seen in example (11b) the adverb *unyaahu* has moved from the initial position to the final at the level of deep structure

Fig:3

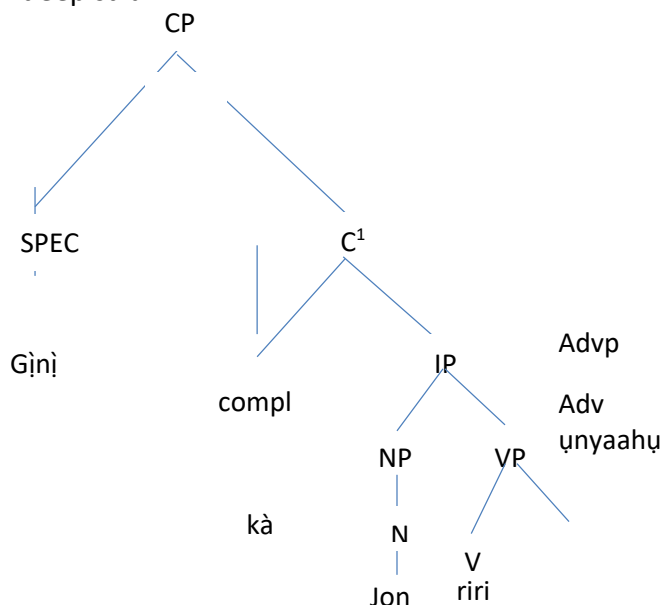


Fig. 3: X - bar tree of adverbial phrase featuring an adverb *unyaahu* (yesterday) as the head word

In the diagram in fig 3, the complementizer phrase is the maximal projection of the sentence. Spec- CP *gìnì* (what) occupies the specifier position the C (complementizer): *ka* (that) is focus marker in Igbo language and the IP (inflectional Phrase): contain NP *Jon* as the subject and the VP contain the verb *riri* (ate) and the adverb *unyaahu* (yesterday)

12(a) Kedù ònye Ngozi hùrù òge ahụ?

QW person NgoziNOM see-past time that

Who did Ngozi see that time?

(b) Òge àhụ, kedù onye Ngozi hùrù

ADV DEM QW person NgoziNOM see- past

That time, who did Ngozi see?

However, in example (12a) the adverb *oge ahu* that modifies the verb *hùrù* (saw) is at the final position. However, in example (12b) the adverb *oge ahu* (that time) has undergone movement from the initial position to the final position following the *wh*- word *kedù* (who). The adverb is at subordinate clause and is modifying the verb and the question word.

Tag Question Modified by Adverb of time ‘Unyaahu’ (yesterday)

13 (a) Ebere gùrù akwùkwọ ùnyaahu, ọ kwa yā?

EbereNOM read past book yesterday, is not it

Ebere read book yesterday, isn't it?

(b) Ọ kwa, Ebere gùrù akwùkwọ yā ùnyaahu?

Is not, EbereNOM read-past book 1SG yesterday

Isn't it, Ebere that read her book yesterday?

In examples (13a and b), it is observed that the adverb of time *unyaahu* (yesterday) accepts transformation by movement. The adverb *unyaahu* modified the verb *gùrù* (read).

Again, the tag question marker *ò kwa ya* in Igbo language involves the movement of the entire question form either to the beginning or the end of the question.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In line with the set objectives of the paper, the following findings have been made:

The paper discovered that the three types of verb mood- imperative, indicative, and interrogative mood can all be modified by an adverb like adverb of manner, time, place, frequency respectively. The study also observed that adverbs and verb moods belong to the same slot of Verb Phrase and can function as an adverbial phrase and verb phrase as the case may be. It was also discovered that adverbs when reduplicated act as intensifiers. The study, finally observed that adverbs in the Igbo language accept movement, they can be at the initial, middle or final position of a sentence as seen in the analysis.

Conclusion

This paper examined three types of verb moods in Igbo language - imperative, indicative and interrogative moods. The study examined how Igbo verb moods are modified by different types of Igbo adverbs like adverb of time, manner, place and frequency etc..

Recommendations

This paper focused on the three types of verb moods in Igbo language. Since the study did not go beyond the three verb moods in Igbo, the following are recommended;

1. Researchers should carry out more studies on the other verb moods in the language.
2. Future researchers should carry out more studies on verb moods in Igbo language using other theories other than x-bar theory.

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