

REDUPLICATION: A SYNTACTIC PHENOMENON IN IGBO BUT ABERRATION IN ENGLISH

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Abstract

Reduplication has been seen as saying one thing more than once. It is the same as repeating what has been said directly or indirectly. Igbo language like some other languages makes use of reduplication but the pattern of reduplication in Igbo and English and some other languages are not always the same. Many users of the Igbo bring in the structure of English into the Igbo and some take the reduplicating pattern of the Igbo into English. This has to lead to bringing strange grammatical patterns into the Igbo language and at the same time into the English language. In the paper, the researcher has exposed the reduplicating forms in the Igbo. We also discovered that in some areas where reduplication is grammatical in Igbo they are regarded as tautology in English. We suggest that each language should be treated as they are because attempt to transfer the English grammatical rules into Igbo will result to error in some constructions. At the same time, taking Igbo grammatical rules to English or any other language do not always result to acceptable grammar of that language. The researcher is a native speaker of Igbo language and at the same time speaks English as a second language. For this, the researcher supplied some of the data. While some are gathered from the undergraduate Igbo students of Lagos State University of Education, Oto/Ijanikin, Lagos State.

Key Words: *Reduplication, Syntax, Igbo, Structure, Language*

Introduction

This paper focuses on reduplication as a phenomenon in Igbo structures. The word Igbo language and Igbo as a people rings bell in the ears of many people. To some there is no word like Ibo, rather they believe that it is an erroneous pronunciation of the word Igbo. Some think that Igbo means business and pursuit of money while some believe that Igbo is a state.

However, Igbo is the language of the Igbo people. This means that Igbo is a linguistic community and the language of the community is called Igbo. It is very important to note that the pronunciation or the spelling “Ibo” is wrong. It is hand - work of the colonial masters who did not have the sound / gb / or the letter gb in their alphabets. They being the one that brought the modern writing system to us spelt the word ‘Igbo’ as ‘Ibo’ and it continues to spread up till today. However that is not the only aspect of Igbo language affected but this is not the major target of this paper.

Igbo people are people from South Eastern part of Nigeria. They are from the following states of Nigeria: Anambra state, Enugu state, Imo state, Abia state, Ebonyi state, some parts of Delta state, River state and some parts of Kogi state. The above mentioned states, and parts of the states mentioned speak the same language, Igbo with variations in dialects. These people have the same historical origin. The more popularly accepted origin of the Igbo is that of migration theory which traces Igbo origin to Israel as against that of evolutionary theory which has no scientific prove. They speak the same language with different dialects.

Reduplication which is our focus in this article is one of the significant features of all these dialects that make up the Igbo language. The standard Igbo being formed from the dialects embraced this feature. This research is an attempt to bring out the forms of reduplication in Igbo language structure and this pronunciation is aberration in English language. The research will draw examples more from the standard Igbo this is for easy understanding.

This article undertakes a detailed study of reduplication in the Igbo language with a view of analyzing it into types, account for it linguistically and through numerous examples drawing the bilingual users attention to the danger of adopting the expression and the structure of other language or languages to Igbo or that of Igbo to other language or languages that do not share the same structure.

Definition of concepts

Here, we will look at some concepts that are significant in this research. We will look into the terms Reduplication, syntactic, phenomenon, aberration and Igbo.

Reduplication as a Concept

Olamma and Adeyeye(2013:1) state that Igbo reduplication are based on verbal reduplication, total nominal reduplication and idiophone reduplication. They further added adverbial reduplication and prepositional reduplication.

Okoro (2000:81) describes reduplication as ‘the saying of the same thing more than once’. He further states that in most cases, it does not make one’s meaning clearer or



more forceful. Accepting the above definition, we have to add that in the Igbo language, where the reduplication is needed, the message will not be complete without making use of it.

Syntax

Syntax is nothing but the way words, and phrases are arranged in a specific order. Definition by Matt Ellis(2022:2)writing on syntax states, ‘syntax in linguistics is refers to the arrangement of words and phrases. He further states that syntax covers topics like word order and grammar rules, such as subject – verb agreement or the correct placement of direct and indirect object.’

Changing the position of a word or a phrase can change can possibly the meaning of the message one intended to pass. This action can change the meaning of a sentence at the same time altars the meaning of the message.

Syntactic Phenomenon

Phenomenon is a fact or situation that is observed to exist or happen. It is nothing but something that is observed to occur or to exist. Oxford dictionary described it as a fact or event that can be observed with the senses, either directly or using equipment such as microscopes or telescopes. Having seen what is syntax and what is phenomenon,we can now say that syntactic phenomenon is a way words and phrases are arranged in a particular language.

Aberration: This is referred to as departurefrom what is taken as normal.

Tautologies in English, Perfect Constructionsin Igbo

Although English has come to be a second language in Nigeria but it is the only accepted official language of the country. Many Nigerians are bilingual and even multilingual. Most people speak at least English and one Nigerian language. Igbo speakers are not exception. Just as it is with very bilingual or multilingual community, interference is not lacking

In attempt to translate English to Igbo many try to apply the later structure instead of considering the inherent structure of Igbo. Consider the following:

Do quick - (1) *mee ngwa* (error)

(2) mee ngwangwa (correct)

Correct Igbo Error in English

(3) Ọ bụ anyị anyị nọ ebe a.

- *It is only we we that are here*(error)

At the same time, one translating Igbo tries to adopt Igbo structure as above will commit the error referred to as tautology. As Okoro puts it, many Nigerians continue to use repetitive English expression without recognizing the tautologies they contain (Okoro, 2000:81). Consider one translating as below:

‘Rie nri ngwangwa’ as*Eat food quick quick* (Eat the food quickly)

Jee ọsịso *Go fast fast* (Go fast)

Ọdị n’elu elu *It is up up* (It is up)

Ọ na-esi mmanya mmanya *He /she/it is smelling wine wine*(He/she/it is smelling wine.)

Akwà a dị mmiri mmiri. *This cloth is water water* (This cloth is wet)

Forms of Reduplication in Igbo

We will examine reduplication in the following categories phonological, grammatical, lexical and semantic reduplications.

a. Phonological reduplication in Igbo:

David Crystal (1987:174) defines reduplication as pattern of consonant and vowels that occur twice in immediate succession. Crystal sees reduplication as an important feature of children's sound production. In accepting David Crystal's statement, we can observe that children find it easier to pronounce words like 'mama', 'ntanta', 'papa' than other words that do not have repetition of syllables.

A critical looking at some Igbo title names like: Dede, mama, papa, one can say that these words are copied from babies. In attempt to address elders, they result into repeating some syllables. However, more research needs to be done in this area.

Okoro (2000:82) states:

Here in Nigeria, phonological reduplication is observed to persist with children, but in diminishing proportions, well up to age ten beyond, often encouraged by adults who themselves resort to the forms in their communication with children as terms of endearment.

He gave examples like "mama", "daddy" referring to parents; and "pooh pooh" and wee wee referring to urination and emptying the bowel; and "bumbum" referring to the buttocks. In Igbo, we see phonological reduplication in some idiophones and coinages in Igbo. Let us examine the following:

- 4. Gbamgbam - zinc
- 5. Ogbatumtum - motorcycle

Sometimes, adjectives and adverbs appear, with repeated syllables or full word. See the following examples:

- 6. O na-acha 'mmemme' (It is red red)
- 7. Oche di n'eluelu (*The chair is high up*)
- 8. Nri na-ada okeonụokeonụ (*Food is high price high price*)
- 9. Akwa mmirimmiri ka o yi. (*He is wearing water water cloth*)

As rightly observed by Okoro (2000:82), phonological reduplication is a universal feature of language, but each language has forms which are peculiar to it, and each child affects individual forms as well.

b. Grammatical reduplication in Igbo:

Grammatical reduplication can be referred to as repetition of certain grammatical element or categories within a sentence. In the Igbo language, the commonest forms of grammatical reduplication are (i) duplication of subjects within the same sentence (ii) duplication of conjunctions and (iii) double marking of inflection. Let us examine them in detail below:

- (i) **Duplication of subjects in Igbo:** This is repetition of subject of the sentence subject in different parts of the same sentence. In discussing reduplication in Nigerian English, Okoro (2000:83) observes that it resulted from literary translation of structures from mother-tongue or first language. Indirectly, he is saying that Nigerian languages or some Nigerians have this reduplication as their natural form.

Bamgbose (1971:38), gave examples of how this appears in Nigerian English as follows:

- a. For the senior ones, they have no time, but for the junior ones, they do.
The correct form being:
The senior ones have no time but the junior ones do.
- b. The girls in the lower class, they like French
Both Bamgbose (1971) and Okoro (2000) see it as a result of improper learning or application of certain rules, or ignorance of relevant grammatical restrictions in Standard English.

In Igbo, reduplication of subject is a natural structures in Igbo construction. Let us consider the following sentences:

- 10. Nwada ahụ bịa ebe a ọ bụ enyi ya?
That girl that came here is she his/her friend.
- 11. Anụ ahụ kpọrọ nkụ ọ bụ nke m?
Meat that dry, is it mine?
That dried meat is it mine?
- 12. Ọkọkọ ọcha ahụ, ọ mara mma?
Chicken white that, is it beautiful?
That white chicken is it beautiful?

- ii. **Duplication of Conjunction in Igbo:** According to Gleitman (1969:88), conjunction is one of many syntactic processes that serve the purpose of indicating contrast or reducing repetition. According to him, a conjoined sentence that does not indicate contrast or reduce repetition has not served any purpose. For Okoro (2000:83), conjunctions are linking words that link up single words, phrases or whole sentence (clauses). He states that conjunctions link up single words, phrases or whole sentences or form coordinate structures, this is done to indicate specific semantic relationship between the clauses such as similarity, contrast, alternatives or substitution, consequence, sequence, comment (of one clause on the other), or to reduce repetition. In all the explanations and definitions, we understand that conjunctions join words, phrases or clauses together for the purpose of indicating addition, contrast or reducing repetition. In Igbo, we have the following conjunctions 'na', mana, nakwa, ma, mọọbụ, nakwa and so on. We will consider the following examples:

13. Uche na nwunye ya, ya bụ di na nwunye ahụ bịa ebe a bụ ndị Aba
(addition)

Uche and his wife, that is the husband and wife that came here they are from Aba. (addition)

14. Obi riri nri na anụmana o rijughi afọ (contrast)
Obi ate food and meat but he was not satisfied

15. Mọọbụ Okeke mọọbụ Okafọ anyị amaghị (alternative)
Whether it is Okeke or Okafọ we don't know.

16. Na ọ hụrụ onye ara na mberede wee tie mgbu bụihe anyị nūrū.
(consequence)
That he saw a mad person unexpectedly and shouted is what we heard.

17. Na Uche mara mma ma o jighi ego enweghi isi. (contrast)
That Uche is handsome but has no money is nothing.

Conjunction can link up clauses, phrases and even words. In linking up clauses, it forms subordinate structure which at the same time does the grammatical functions within the main clause similar to those performed by the different word class. Let us see the following sentences in the Igbo language:

18. O zuuru ego ahụ maka na ọ dara ogbenye.

He stole the money because that he was poor.

19. O nwere ego maka na ọ ruru oru.

He has money because that he has worked.

The above examples are obtainable in the use of conjunction in Igbo, however, we will not deny the fact that duplication of conjunctions ‘maka’ and ‘na’ are acceptable separate conjunctions. The two sentences like those listed above join to form one conjunction. We can as well say that double conjunction is obtainable in Igbo structures. Unlike English language that uses one conjunction in linking two structures and whatever the relationship between them, Igbo is not always so. Igbo language is not continuous to register cases of duplicated conjunctions. The following are typical examples:

20. Na agbanyeghi na ọ mara mma, too ogologo mana ọ maghị ihe.

Although she is beautiful and tall but she is not intelligent.

21. Ma nwoke ma nwaanyi, ma ewu ma ọkụkọ gbara ọsọ.

Both men and women, both goats and fowls ran away.

22. Kwa ụbọchị kwa kobo

A kobo each day

23. Ma ọ ma ihe ọ na eme ma ọ maghị ọ ga-anafe

Whether he knows what he is doing or not he will pass

24. N’agbanyeghi na anyị chọrọ inweta ego mana anyị agaghị eme ihe ọjọọ.

Although we want to get money but we will not do evil.

iii. Double marking of inflections in Igbo syntax: Inflections are the grammatical categories that indicate number, possession, tense, aspect, comparison, etc. in nouns, verb, adjectives and adverbs (cf Okoro 2000:84). Some of these inflectional markers in adjectives are as in:

25. Uche ka makarisia mma n’obodo a.

* Uche is more most beautiful in this community*.

26. Nke a ka ha niile bukarisia ibu.
* This is the most biggest*.
27. Obi ka onye o bula nwekarisia ego
* Obi is more richer than everybody*.
28. O ka onye o bula dakarisia ogbenye
* He is more poorer than everybody*.

It will be recalled that the single syllable 'ka' form the comparative degree while the following form the superlative: kacha, kasi. Kachasi, karisia. Superlative are mostly formed by attaching any of the above to the adjectives or verbs. The following are examples: makachasi mma, jokarisiri njo.

29. Uche ka makaria onye o bula na mma.
Uche is more beautiful than everyone.
30. Obi ka jokarisia onye o bula na njo.
Obi is more most ugly than everyone.

c. Lexical Reduplication

Lexical reduplication is compound of identical or slightly different elements. In the case of Igbo, they are mostly identical elements. The following are the most common uses of such reduplicative in Igbo.

31. Weta weta ka mma n'aka onye ozọ.
32. Rie rie abughị okwu.
33. Gidi gidi bu ugwu eze
34. Mara mara n'ihu kwampete n'azu
35. Akwa a di nkirika nkirika
38. Bia osiso osiso
39. O na-esi nsi nsi
40. O na-ada tumtum.

Lexical repetition in Igbo is one of the devices employed to indicate uniformity, emphasis, urgency, reassurance and it is habitual.

See the following examples:

41. Onye o bula ga - akwu ego ise ego ise(uniformity)
We are to contribute five naira five naira
42. Ha niile bucha ugboala ohuu ugboala ohuu(emphasis)
They all carry new new cars.
43. Obi si gi bia ugbua ugbua(urgency)
Obi said you should come now now.
44. N'ezie n'ezie o bu ihe mere eme.(reassurance)



True true it is what happened

We should note that unlike English language, outright duplication of these items is a part of the linguistic system of native speaker of Igbo which can express all the intended notions adequately without any confusion.

d. Semantic Reduplication in Igbo

This is repetition of the same idea in different words. This is commonly referred to as tautology in English. Tautology means saying one thing more than once yet the repetition does not make a clearer meaning or make the statement more forceful.

Let us consider the following sentences:

45. O gburu ya, ọ nwụọ. (gburu and nwụọ are the same)

He killed him and he died.

46. N'uche nke m, echeghi m na ọ ga-anwụ. (n'uche and echeghi m are saying the same thing)

In my mind I don't think he will die

47. Ọ na-ebe akwa, akwa ke mgbe taa. (akwa and akwa are the same)

(He is crying crying since today).

(The following are also repetitious)

48. Na ngwucha ikpeazu (ngwucha and ikpeazu are the same)

(at the final end)

49. Ndị otu ibe m (ndịotu and ibe m are the same)

(My fellow group members)

50. N'ekwughiekwu n'akaghịaka (ekwughiekwu and akaghịaka are the same)

(Without talking without informing)

51. Ozugbo, ngwangwa o mechara ọ gbapụ. (Ozugbo and ngwangwa are the same)

(Immediately, quickly he finished he ran away)

52. Nọrọ, tukwuru ala n'ọche ahu (Nọrọ and tukwuru ala are the same)

(Stay, sit down on that chair)

Considering the above semantic repetition, many of the translations are not acceptable grammatical construction in English but are highly common in Igbo. These repetition are more in oral speech and literary works.

Conclusion

We have seen that reduplication is an acceptable phenomenon in Igbo. Whereas it is as a result of mother-tongue interference in English as observed by Okoro (2000), it is a norm in Igbo syntax. From the above, we have discovered that translating English to Igbo using Igbo structure or translating Igbo to English using English structure amounts to error. Concerning Igbo and English, adopting the structure of one into the other results into deviation and may result to meaningless statement. This research can serve as a stepping stone to more research on reduplication in Igbo and other languages. It will also help the Igbo second language learners to avoid transferring the structure of another language to the Igbo language

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