

Determiners and Adjectives in English and Nigerian Pidgin

- A Contrastive Inquiry

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Abstract

This paper undertakes a contrastive analysis of determiners and adjectives in English and Nigerian Pidgin. It observes that there are sub-divisions of determiners; which are pre-determiners, determiners and post-determiners and it discusses the form class of determiners in English and Nigerian Pidgin. This paper notes that Nigerian Pidgin has fewer determiners than English. The sub-classes of adjectives in the two languages are analyzed. It evaluates the difference between English and Nigerian Pidgin adjectives. The intensifiers that precede adjectives and the comparative and superlative degrees of comparison in the two languages are discussed. Finally, the paper notes that the observed differences between determiners and adjectives in the two languages creates learning problems of split and collapsing for the Nigerian Pidgin speaker learning English determiners and adjectives.

Keywords: Contrastive analysis, Nigerian pidgin, Adjectives, Determiners, English

1. Introduction

This essay undertakes a contrastive study of determiners and adjectives in English and Nigerian pidgin (henceforth referred to as NP). It is a pedagogical approach to the study of English determiners and adjectives by competent speakers of the Warri/Sapele variety of NP. The two languages are structurally dissimilar. While the vocabulary of NP has a close affinity to that of English, which is the supersrate language, the syntax of the language is mostly of Benue-kwa phylum (Egbokhare, 2001 and Elugbe and Omamor, 1996).

The paper opines that the close affinity of NP to English constitutes a serious learning problem to the learning of English. The respective state governments in the Niger Delta region, where the language has creolized, should encourage a contrastive study of English and NP as a means of educationally encouraging competence in English among primary and secondary school students in the region. This study is of the view that lack of contrastive study of English and NP by educationists in Nigeria's Niger Delta region is the cause of students' incompetence in English. A contrastive analysis is therefore the panacea to the falling standard of English grammar by students from the Niger Delta region.

The data for the NP sentences in this study are mainly sentences taken from the generally accepted form of NP spoken in the Warri/Sapele speech community of Delta State, Nigeria. This form is used mainly in markets, motor parks, barbing and hair dressing salons, hotels and homes. Most of the resource persons are speakers who use the language as a creolized form.

2. Background: Standard Nigerian English and Nigerian Pidgin

English was brought to Nigeria through commercial contact with English merchants. The advent and growth of English has been investigated by many scholars (see Banjo, (1996), Akere (1995); and Osakwe (1995)). It is Nigeria's official language and that of formal education. English has a higher market value in Nigeria because of its economic importance. Bamgbose (2002:33) observes that:

Although Nigerian English is a variety of the English language among world English, standard Nigerian English has now undergone nativisation and indigenization since it is now a blend of British and Nigerian cultures.

NP is one of the groups of English-based Atlantic pidgins and creoles spoken in the West African Coast. Other related varieties include Cameroonian Pidgin (CP), Ghanian Pidgin (GP), Pichi Equatorial Guinea WAPE, Sierra

Leonian Krio and Liberian Kru. NP originated from contact with European traders; so, its origin predated the contact of Nigerians with free slaves from Sierra Leone in the second half of the 19th century. In Nigeria, NP is an indi-exogenous language, (Oyeleyen, 2005). Although the language does not exist officially, it is now a bridge between English and the indigenous languages. NP is inferior to English because it is used mainly for informal communication and it lacks a standard orthography. It is a lingua franca in Nigeria's complexly multilingual and multicultural Niger Delta region. Egbokhare (2001) calls NP the language of wider communication in Nigeria and Faraclas (1996) observes that NP will soon become the most widely spoken language in Africa.

The two ethnically neutral languages in Nigeria are English and NP. Schneider (2011:142) underscores the roles of the two languages in Nigeria's linguistic ecology thus:

Certainly English and Pidgin are mostly second (or third etc) languages, acquired in addition to tribal and regional languages. Both have been found to increasingly become mother tongues of African children as well, however, English is becoming a first language primarily in educated families and in urban contexts, and in certain regions are amongst the less affluent, strictly, Pidgin is thus a creolising language.

The growing importance of these two languages in Nigeria has deleterious effects on the indigenous languages in Nigeria's Niger Delta region. Language shift and endangerment that are plaguing the indigenous languages are attributed to the positive attitude of indigenous languages speakers towards English and NP and negative attitude towards their mother tongue.

Crenoble (2012:33) succinctly describes the causes of language shift thus:

There are a number of factors which are known to motivate language shift. They often centre around imbalances in prestige and power between the minority (or threatened) language and culture on the one hand, and the language(s) of wider communication and more dominant culture(s) on the other.

3. Determiners and Adjectives in English

The two common satellites around nouns that occur as pre-modifiers are determiners and adjectives. Adjectives are also called epithets. Determiners are optional constituents of noun phrases and they always precede adjectives if they co-occur. There are, however, two major differences between determiners and adjectives which Radford (1988) states as follows. The first difference is that while either mono-or disyllabic adjectives have *-er* for their comparative forms, determiners do not. Unlike adjectives, determiners lack comparative forms. This difference between adjectives and determiners is illustrated with examples in the schema below:

Adjective		Determiners
<i>Base Form</i>	<i>Comparative</i>	
Tall	Taller	This
Narrow	Narrower	That
Fat	Fatter	Whose
Big	Bigger	All

Figure 1. Morphological Properties of Monosyllabic and Disyllabic Adjectives

Radford (1988) observes that it is ungrammatical to have **thiser* as the comparative form of the determiner.

The second difference is that determiners and adjectives have different semantic properties. Due to the peculiar semantic properties of adjective, they are used to modify restricted class of nouns (Radford, 1988). This is due to the selectional restrictions placed on the type of nouns that certain adjectives can modify. For example, the adjective *wise* can only co-occur with nouns that have the inherent feature (+ animate) as shown in the examples below:

1a Efe is a *wise* boy.

b I have a *wise* dog.

c * I bought a *wise* kettle.

Example (c) is wrong because the noun kettle violates the selectional restriction (+ animate) placed on nouns that are preceded by the adjective *wise*.

Unlike adjectives, determiners, are semantically more neutral and they lack the type of selectional restriction constraints that are associated with adjectives. Below are a few examples to show the semantic neutrality of determiners as exemplified by the use of the demonstrative.

2a *This* boy is dirty

b *This* dog is sick

c *This* kettle is new

4. Form Class of Determiners

Determiners in English can be divided into three broad sub-groups viz. pre-determiners, determiners and post determiners. Pre- determiners and post determiners are also called pseudo- determiners. The sub-groups, and classifications within each sub-group and examples are shown schematically below:

<i>Pre-determiners</i>	<i>Determiners</i>	<i>Post-determiners</i>
All, both and half	a. Articles (i) definite – the (ii) Indefinite – a(n) b. Demonstratives – this – these – that – those. c. Possessive Determiner – his, her, their, my, our d. Possessive nouns or genitives – John’s Ovie’s boy’s, boys’	a. Numerals i. <i>cardinals</i> – one, two, a dozen, a few ii. <i>ordinals</i> – first, second, third b. Quantifiers i. <i>indefinite</i> – some, several, many ii. <i>Partitives</i> – much, a little iii. <i>Universals</i> – every, each. iv. <i>Phrasal</i> – plenty of, a lot of, a few of...

Figure 2. Form Class of Determiners in English

Pre-determiners are closed system items that precede determiners if they co-occur with determiners in a noun phrase. Pre- determiners are also called pre-articles and they can co-occur with singular count nouns, plural count nouns and non-count nouns. The sub-type of determiners that pre-determiners can co-occur with are articles and demonstratives. Pre-determiners cannot however, co-occur with qualifiers because they are also regarded as qualifiers. Below are some examples to illustrate the above observations:

3a *Half* the room is painted. (Pre-det + Art + Sing count N).

b *All* these buildings belong to me. (Pre-det + Dem + Plu count N).

c. *Half* this ink has congealed, (Pre-det + Dem + Non Count N).

d. **All* every book has been found. (Pre-det + quant + Sing Count N).

Since pre-determiners cannot co-occur with quantifiers as stated above, (3d) is deviant due to the forced co-occurrence of a pre-determiner and a quantifier.

Post determiners are form classes that must follow determiners but precede adjectives in the pre-modification structure of an NP. We regard post determiners in the study as part of determiners. The two items that constitute post determiners are *numerals* and *quantifiers*, and their form classes are shown on figure 2 above. Quantifiers may be pre-modified by intensifiers like *very* and *extremely*.

Some determiners and post determiners do impose restrictions on the choice of head nouns they can modify. Five examples of such restrictions are shown below:

(i) A definite article can co-occur with singular and plural count nouns and non-count nouns, as in:

4a. The boy is still (Def Art + Sing count N).

b. The boys are playing (Def Art + pl count N).

c. The water is boiling (Def Art + Non count N)

(ii) Indefinite articles can only modify singular count nouns, as in:

5a. A girl is coming

b. An egg has broken

(iii) Demonstratives can be followed by intensifiers and can modify count and non count nouns, as in:

6a. *This very* egg is rotten. (Dem + Int + Sing count N).

- b. *This very water* is dirty. (Dem + Int + Non count N).
- (iv) Indefinite and phrasal qualifiers co-occur with only count nouns, as in:
- 7a. *Many/several* houses were burnt (Indf. Quant + pl count N)
- b. *A few students* passed the examination (Phrasal Quant + pl count N)
- (v) Partitive quantifiers co-occur with non count nouns and abstract nouns, as in:
- 8a. I have a little idea. (Indf. Art + Part Quant + abstract N), as in:
- (vi) All cardinals occur with plural count nouns except one which occurs with singular count nouns, as in:
- 9a. One chicken is missing (one + sing + count N)
- b. Two boys came here yesterday. (two + pl count N)

There is also a constraint on the co-occurrence of determiners. At most one pre-determiner, one demonstrative, one quantifier and one numeral can co-occur.

5. Form Class of Determiners in NP

Like in English, determiners in NP are sub-divided into three viz. Pre- determiners, determiners and post-determiners. The schemata below show the sub-groups of determiners in NP.

Pre-determiners	Determiners	Post determiners
ol (all) haf (half)	a. Articles (i) <i>definite</i> –di (the) (ii) <i>indefinite</i> – b. Demonstratives –dis(this) dat (that) c. Possessive pronouns - i. <i>im</i>(his/her) ii. <i>dem/dia</i> (them/their) d. Possessive nouns or genitives i. <i>N + N</i> as in dog noz (dog's ii. nose)	a Numerals i <i>Cardinals</i> – won (one), tu (two), tiri (three), etc. ii <i>Ordinals</i> – fos (first), cekond (second), tod (third), etc. b Quantifiers i <i>indefinite</i> – som (some), meni (several/many) ii <i>Partitives</i> – plenti (much), smol (a little) iii <i>Universals</i> – evri (every) iv <i>Phrasal</i> – plenti – plenty of

Figure 3. From Class of Determiners in NP

NP has a fewer number of pre-determiners than English. Unlike English, NP does not have bot (both) as one of its pre-determiners. The two pre-determiners in NP *ol* (all) and *haf* (half) can co-occur with singular count nouns, plural count nouns and non count nouns as in English. Pre-determiners can occur with definite articles and demonstratives, as in.

- 10a. I don si di moni (pre-det. + def.Art + N)
- lit: I have seen all the money
- i.e. I have seen all the money

- b. A ki ol dis $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Snek (dem)} \\ \text{Sneks} \end{array} \right\}$ (pre-det+dem+pl count + N)
 lit: I kill all this snakes them
 i.e. I killed all these snakes

Pre-determiners and qualifiers cannot co-occur in NP because pre-determiners are also qualifiers as in the case of English.

6. Article in NP

As shown in the schema of determiners in NP above, articles are divided into definite and indefinite. There is a one to one correspondence between NP and English definite articles. From the phonetic shape of NP definite article di (the), it is derivationally related to the English definite article. The definite article in NP can co-occur with singular and plural count and non count nouns and this constitutes a case of complete identity with that of English as shown in the examples below:

- 11a. Di boi wel
 Lit: The boy well
 i.e.: The boy is healthy
- b. Di $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{boi (dem)} \\ \text{bois} \end{array} \right\}$ de ple
 lit: The boys (dem) PROG play
 i.e. The boys are playing.
- c. Di wota de boil
 lit: The water PROG boil
 i.e. The water is boiling

Indefinite articles are expressed differently in NP through the use of the numeral *won* (one). *Won* is derivationally related to English cardinal numeral one because it is a loan word and it is easily recognizable through the phonetic shape which has been adapted to NP orthography. The meaning is extended to function as an indefinite article in this context and as a cardinal numeral in other contexts. Below are two examples of *won* functioning as an indefinite article.

- 12a. *Won* boi de kom
 lit: One boy PROG kom
 i.e. A boy is coming/a certain boy is coming
- b. *Won* man PROG kom
 lit: One man be coming
 i.e. A man is coming/a certain boy is coming

7. Demonstratives in NP

NP has demonstratives in their singular number. They are loan words from English. Unlike in English, NP has no words to denote the plural counterparts of demonstratives in the singular number. Pluralisation of demonstratives in NP is identified through pluralisation of nouns that follow the demonstratives. In English, plural forms of demonstratives are formed through two processes. First, pluralisation of the demonstratives and second, pluralisation of the noun that follows the demonstratives. In NP, the first process is omitted and it is only the second process that occurs. This is a simplification of plural formation of demonstratives in English. There is truncation of the process in NP. Pluralisation of nouns in NP involves either of two processes. First, is the insertion of the plural marker (dem) immediately after the noun to be pluralized and second, is the use of English plural morpheme [-S] to the singular noun to be pluralized. Demonstratives in their singular and plural forms in English and NP are shown in the schema below:

English	NP
This	Dis
These	{Dis + N + (dem) Dis + N + (S)}
That	Dat
Those	{Dat + N + (dem) Dat + N + (pl)}

Figure 4. Demonstratives in English and NP

Below, are examples of two sentences that show the pluralisation of demonstratives in NP.

13a Dis eg don rotin

lit: This egg PERF rotten

i.e. This egg has become rotten

b. Dat boi de ple bol

lit: That boy BE PROG play ball

i.e. That boy is playing football

c. Dis { eg (dem)
egs } don rotin

lit: This eggs them perf rotten

i.e. These eggs are rotten

d. Dat { boi (dem)
bois } prog be ple bol

lit: That boys them be play football

i.e. Those boys are playing football.

Demonstratives can be sub-modified by an intensifier in NP. The intensifier is *goon* (very or exactly). Unlike in English where intensifiers occur immediately after demonstratives, in NP intensifiers occur after the noun as shown in the example below:

14a. Dis eg *goon* don rotin

lit: This egg very perf rotten

i.e. This very egg is rotten

The word *goon* is derived from Yoruba which is one of the substrate languages of NP. A sentence in Yoruba with *goon* acting as intensifier is shown below:

14b. E yin yi goon ti ra

lit: Egg this very be rotten

i.e. This very egg is rotten

8. Possessive Pronouns and Genitives in NP

Possessive pronouns functioning as determiners in NP have no gender markings unlike in English. Thus, in NP, *im* is used for both masculine and feminine gender in place of the third person pronouns in English (his/her). The possessive pronoun in English and NP is shown below:

15. English NP
 his ————— im
 her ————— im

So, NP does not distinguish between the masculine and feminine gender of possessive pronouns. Below is an example of the possessive pronoun in NP kernel sentence.

16. Im dog don dai
 lit: His/her dog PERF die
 i.e. His/her dog has died

Genitives exist in NP as modifiers of the head as in English. Unlike in English where genitives are formed through the insertion of the inflectional morpheme plus an apostrophe which might occur before or after the [-s] depending mostly on the number of the noun, genitives are formed through two lexicalization processes in NP. First, the possessive noun in NP occurs in an identical position as that of a nominator, but it is a possessive. Like in the case of the pluralisation of demonstratives in NP, this is a case of simplification of the derivation of genitives in English. Below is an example of the first process discussed above:

17. Di *man* noz de bring blod
 lit: The *man* nose prog bring blood
 i.e. The *man*'s nose is bleeding

The second lexicalization process denoting possessives in NP is pronominalisation of the noun undergoing the genitivation process. This pronominalisation involves the insertion of the possessive pronoun immediately after the noun undergoing genitivation. Below is an example of this second lexicalization process.

18. Di *man* im noz de bring blod
 lit: The *man* his nose be bring blood
 i.e. The *man*'s nose is bleeding

9. Quantifiers in NP

While there is a case of almost complete identity for numerals functioning as determiners in English and NP, there is a difference in the case of quantifiers. The word “*plenti*” in NP plays the role of about four quantifiers in English as shown below:

19. NP + English
- | | | |
|--------|-----|-----------|
| | i | A lot of |
| | ii | Much |
| Plenti | iii | several |
| | iv | plenty of |

In relation to English meanings, *plenti* in NP looks like a polysemous word. Below are some examples:

- 20a. A get *plenti* moni
 lit: I have plenty money
 i.e. I have a lot of money
- b. *Plenti* pipul de di rum
 lit: Plenty people be the room
 i.e. Several people are in the room
- c. I wont *plenti* wota
 lit: I want plenty water
 i.e.: I need much water

Although plenti (plenty) looks like a case of polysemy, it is not. Due to simplification of NP lexicon, the sub-categorization rule for distinction between solid and liquid quantity in English is omitted in NP. The translational equivalent in English is distinct.

10. Adjectives in English

Adjectives are preceded by the three sub-types of determiners discussed above. Since adjectives are open class items, their sequence of occurrence can sometimes be complicated. There are four sub-classes of adjectives which are shown below based on customary sequence of occurrence, if they co-occur.

	Quality	Age/Size	Colour	Geographical location
	<i>Adj. 1</i>	<i>Adj. 2</i>	<i>Adj. 3</i>	<i>Adj. 4</i>
i.	Good	Old	White	Nigerian
ii.	Hansome	New	Black	African
iii.	Clean	Big	Brown	Native
iv.	Shocked	Little	Yellow	Local
v.	Gifted	Young	Blue	Foreign

Figure 5. Sub-classes of Adjectives

The four groups of adjectives enumerated above are each sub-modifiable by sub-modifiers or intensifiers. Sub-modifiers are particles and adverbs. Examples of two intensifiers are *very* and *extremely*. Below are two examples of adjectives sub-modified by *very* and *extremely* in a simplex sentence.

21a I have two *very pretty* young black American friends (Card + SM + Adj₁+Adj₂ + Adj₃+Adj₄ + N).

b This is an *extremely* old African folktale. (Indef Art + SM + Adj₂ + Adj₄ + N).

We observed from the classification of determiners and adjectives above that some words fall into two different categories. A good example is *little* which is both a partitive quantifier and an adjective denoting size/age. As far as classification is concerned, this is definitely a source of confusion and complication; however, such overlap of categories is also a mark of the flexibility of the lexical group in English.

All the grammatical constituents that function as noun modifiers in an English noun phrase can co-occur. Below are a few examples of these constituents co-occurring.

22a Both John's *first, two very, gifted, young, back, American*, daughters are at home.

b. All Ovie's first *extremely, big, brown, African* elephants are dead.

c. I have *three dilapidated, old, brown*, buildings.

d. All *these very brilliant, young, Nigerian*, students passed the examination.

11. Adjectives in NP

Adjectives in NP are distinct from those in English. There are few true adjectives in NP. Most adjectives in NP are stative verbs as pointed out by Faraclas (1996:225) who states: "What might be called "adjectives" in another language are in fact verbs, modifier nouns or pronominal objects in NP".

While predicative adjectives in NP are truly stative verbs, attributable adjectives are modifier nouns derived from stative verbs. In this study, attributive adjectives will be treated as adjectives. Below are stative verbs that can function as attributive adjectives in NP showing their sequence of occurrence if they co-occur in a structure.

	A	B	C
	<i>Adjective</i> (<i>Quality</i>)	<i>Adjective</i> (<i>Age/size</i>)	<i>Adjective (Colour)</i>
a.	gud (good)	old (old)	wait (white)
b.	klin (clean)	big (big)	blak (black)
c.	fain (fine)	niu (new)	red (red)
d.	wowo (ugly)	smol (small)	blu (blue)

Figure 6. Sub-classes of Adjectives in NP

The adjectives on Figure 6 above can be sub-modified by intensifiers in two ways. First, an adjective can be an intensifier or it can be sub-modified through reduplication by repeating the Adjective. Below is an example of sub-modification of an adjective through reduplication.

23a Mai broda de laik *fain fain* gel dem

lit: My brother be like fine fine girls.

i.e. My brother likes very beautiful girls.

Second, *so-so* can function as an intensifier the way *very* or *mainly* functions in English adjectives by preceding the appropriate adjective. Although Elugbe and Omamor (1991) are of the opinion that *so-so* can function as *very*, we observed from the analysis of data collected that *so-so* functions as either *only* or *mainly* and not as *very* as shown in the example below.

b. Mai broda de laik *so-so fain* gel dem

lit: My brother be like so-so fine girls.

i.e. My brother likes very beautiful girls.

The intensifier *so-so* is multifunctional. Apart from functioning as *mainly* in (23b), it can also function as only. Below is an example of a sentence where *so-so* function as only.

23c Na *so-so eba* yu de chop

Lit: It be *only* eba you de eat.

i.e. It be only eba you eat

Lastly, adjectives in NP can be sub-modified by intensifiers through combinations of the two sub-modification processes discussed above as shown in the example below:

d Mai broda de laik *so-so fain fain* { gel dem }
Lit: My brother be like mainly fine girls { gels }

i.e. My brother likes mainly very beautiful girls.

If adjectives co-occur in NP, they will fall into the sequence arranged in figure 6 above as shown in the examples below:

e A bai won *fain niu* blak bag. (Adjs A → B → C)

lit: I buy one fine new black bags.

i.e. I bought *one beautiful new* black bag.

f Dat *wowo big wait* haus don fol (Adjs A → B → C)

lit: That ugly big white house perf fall

i.e. That dilaphidated big white house has collapsed.

g Dat *wowo gel* na Funmi

lit: That ugly girl be Funmi.

That ugly girl is Funmi.

A peculiar feature of NP items is that they have multifunctional properties. “Wowo” in (23f) above can function as both *ugly* and *dilaphidated*, in (23f) and (29g) above. The ideal interpretation of *wowo* is *dilaphidated* whereas in (23g) it is *ugly*. Due to NP’s simplified and impoverished vocabulary in comparison to that of English, *wowo* (*ugly/dilaphidated*) is a polysemic word in term of derivation of English meanings. Extended meaning of pidgin word is also manifests in NP *fain* which in English means both *fine* and *beautiful*.

A difference between NP and English adjectives is that while mono and disyllable adjectives in English are inflectionally marked-*er* and -*est* for comparative and superlative degrees. Such degrees of comparison are not expressed morphological in NP; however, they are expressed through lexicalisation. The lexical item used to indicate the comparative degree in NP is *p* as followed by a noun phrase. Below are a few adjectives in their positive and comparative degrees in NP.

NP	Adjectives	English	Adjectives
<i>Positive</i>	<i>Comparative</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Comparative</i>
Big	Big <i>pas</i>	Big	Bigger
Fat	Fat <i>pas</i>	Fat	Fatter
Smol	Smol <i>pas</i>	Small	Smaller

Figure 7. Adjective in their positive and Comparative Degrees in NP and English

An example of a sentence in NP where the adjective in its comparative degree is indicated below:

24a Mai bag big *pas*

lit: My bag big more

i.e. My bag is bigger

Although the use of the superlative degree of comparison in adjective is not common in NP, this degree of comparison is expressed through lexicalization of *pas ol* “pass all”. Below is an example of an NP sentence with an adjective in the superlative degree.

24b Mai bag big *pas ol*

lit: My bag big more than *all*.

i.e. My bag is the biggest.

Agheyisi (1970:55) believes that.

The absence of inflectionally “marked” lexical association of verbs and adjectives in the pidgin cannot be considered instance of lexical gaps, but rather as the result of the use of a different device than English for the expression of inflectional or paradigmatic concepts.

We hold a view that is at variance with that of Agheyisi pointed out above. We are of the opinion that the different device is due to substrate influence and universals of adult second language learning where morphological devices are replaced by lexicalization.

12. A Summary of the problems of an NP Speaker Learning English Determiners and Adjectives

The first structural difference between the internal structure of English and NP determiners is in the indefinite article. The substitution of won (one) for English indefinite article a(n) which are phonologically conditioned will pose a learning problem to the NP learner since a(n) are new items. So, the NP speaker will have to avoid the error of substituting won (one) which is an indefinite article for won (one) and it is a numeral as shown in the example below:

25a My friend has one bicycle (Indef. Art) instead of:

b. My friend has a bicycle (Indef. Art)

NP indefinite article is not a simplification of that of English but a derivation from a substrate language. “One” functions as numeral and indefinite article in Urhobo as indicated in the examples below:

26a Àyè òvò mi vbó ri

lit: wife one I have

i.e. I have one wife

Indefinite article

b Àyè òvó cha

lit: woman one be come

i.e. A woman is coming

Examples (26a & b) above show that NP’s use of the article is genetically related to substrate languages.

The second learning problem of NP speakers learning English determiners is that of English demonstratives in the plural number. “These” and “those” will constitute new items to most NP speakers learning English demonstratives. The NP learner of English demonstratives will have to be taught the plural number of English demonstratives so that

he can become a competent user of English demonstratives. Before he is taught English demonstratives in the plural, the NP learner can utter the ungrammatical sentence:

27a* That egg has rotten

b. Those eggs are rotten

The use of “those” is still very rare in NP and it is used mainly by bilinguals while code-mixing English and NP. Another structural difference between English and NP noun phrase modifier is in possessive pronouns in the third person singular number. While English possessive determiners are marked for gender, those of NP are not marked as shown in (17) and (18) above. The NP learner will be faced with the learning problem of “collapsing” since his and hers will be realized as “im” (him) by the NP learner of English possessive. He has to be taught gender in English possessive pronouns in order to use them correctly.

Genitives in English are formed morphologically from nouns while in NP they are formed through lexicalization and this structural difference will pose a learning problem to the NP speakers learning English. Until he is taught English genitives, the NP native speaker might utter the ungrammatical string:

28a* The boy bicycle is missing

The correct English sentence is:

b. The boy’s bicycle is missing.

The NP learner of English quantifiers will encounter the problem of collapsing since fewer lexical items are used for NP quantifiers unlike in English. The lexical item that will pose the learning problem of collapsing is plenti (plenty) as shown in (21) which the NP speaker polysemously use in place of: “a lot of”, “much” “several” and “plenty of”. The NP speaker has to be taught that the quantifiers above are not synonyms but distinct lexical items with their distinct co-occurrence restrictions. While there is almost a case of complete identity in the case of numeral and adjectives functioning as noun modifiers in English and NP adjective intensifiers are not derivatively related to those of English.

13. Conclusion

In a contrastive inquiry into determiners and adjectives in English and NP the author has tried to fill a gap in knowledge by drawing attention to the acute problems that competent NP speakers face while learning English grammar as a second language. The paper focused on a linguistic description of determiners and adjectives in English and NP with a view into identifying the differences between these two members of the nominal word group of the two languages. The major structural difference observed in determiners and adjectives in English and NP include the fact that indefinite articles are structured differently in the two languages and demonstratives in the plural number are absent in NP. Other structural differences include the fact that quantifiers in NP are fewer than those of English. Intensifiers and degree of comparison of adjectives are structured differently in the two languages. This paper will be of immense benefit to educationists in parts of Nigeria where NP has creolized.

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