A CONTRASTIVE STUDY OF ENGLISH AND IZHIA NUMERALS

Chibueze Egbe Aleke
Department of English
University of Uyo, Uyo
Email: alekeeggbechibueze@gmail.com
Tel:08035496351

Abstract

This paper investigates the syntactic relation between the Izhia numerals and that of the English language, and examines how the numerals in both languages can enter into relationship with the nouns to form a determiner phrase. The study uses the contrastive analysis and the minimalist program as effective tools for identifying, predicting and generalizing syntactic structural similarities and dissimilarities, which may pose difficulties in second language learning or ease second language learning. Ten senior secondary three (SS3) students, aged between fifteen and seventeen randomly selected from Izhia Boys Secondary School were used as population for this study. A three-part questionnaire was administered to the respondents on determiners in both languages in the area of numerals. Numerals in the two languages include; one, two for cardinal and first, second for ordinal numerals from the English perspective and naanu, ebo for cardinal and ke mbu ke ebo for ordinal from the Izhia perspective. The findings reveal that numerals in both languages are grouped into cardinal and ordinal and are functionally similar but structurally dissimilar, as the English numerals occur only in pre-position in their determiner phrase (DP) structures while in Izhia, the reverse is the case as the numerals appear in post-position in their DP system. The study also reveals that there is co-occurrence of determiners in Izhia DP with numerals which is not common in English. The study brought to the fore the fact that nouns can co-occur in DP with cardinal numerals in the two languages under study. On this premise, it is realized that the knowledge of the

dissimilarities in the structures of the L1 and the L2 can enhance proficiency and good performance in the teaching and learning of English language as a second language. The study therefore recommends that there is need to design a teaching hypothesis or mechanism that will draw the attention of the L2 learners to the differences in the structure of both languages to enable them achieve international intelligibility.
Key Words: Contrastive, Study, English, Izhia, Numerals.

Introduction

This study is fundamentally a contrastive study of Izhia and English numerals. Language itself is a patterned system of communication meaningfully ordered to serve the communication needs of human society. It is made of subsystems divided into phonology, morphology syntax and semantics. Syntax, one of the components of language in which this research is embedded, examines the structure of the sentences of language taking close cognizance of the inter-relationship of its constituents.

The sentence is made up of two major syntactic categories: phrasal categories and lexical categories. Phrasal categories are maximal projections or full phrasal category of a lexical category. Phrasal categories include Noun Phrase (NP), Prepositional Phrase (PP), Verb Phrase (VP), Adjectival Phrase (AP).

Lexical categories on the other hand refer to the various classes into which lexical items, that is, words of language are subdivided based on their morphological and syntactic behaviour such as noun, verb, adjective, proposition and determiner. The lexical category of determiner is the main focus of this research. This research concentrates on an aspect of the determiners - numerals in two languages English and Izhia and how the numerals could go into relationship with nouns to form a determiner phrase as well as investigate the pedagogic implications of the two systems to Izhia learners of English.

English in Nigeria

The English language may be described as one of the fastest growing languages in the world. This is because the language has continued to expand its frontiers as Crystal (2003) makes us to know that it is fast becoming a global language. Udofot (2007) attributes the spread of English language to colonialism of many countries by Britain and the foundation of the American colonies in the 17th century.

The introduction of the English language in Nigeria can be traced to the early British traders and missionaries who first visited the West African coast. Before the advent of English, the Portuguese were the first to trade along the West African coast as early as the 15th century. In the 16th century, the coming of the British brought a replacement of the Portuguese established pidgin with the English language. Several studies have established the fact that English language has become the language of trade, government, politics, administration, and mass media, among others in Nigeria.

Nigeria, like other countries in Africa, has many indigenous languages and like many African countries, Nigeria has adopted the English language as a second language. The language has gained the status of an official language in the country. Nigerian National Policy on Education has established the use of more than one language in educational instruction. Thus, it advocates the learning of English and at least one Nigerian language at the primary school level. At which level, the learners are incapable of mastering enough of the English language and express the language poorly, especially in writing. In the words of Emenanjo (1978, p. 112), 'the language should be taught early enough in our school system to allow for effective understanding and performance by the learners'. It is a fact that problems generally occur when two or more languages are brought into contact and it is particularly the case with language learning in which two languages are involved. A typical example is English and Izhia.

Over the years, instructors and examiners have continued to express serious concern over the poor performance of students in English language. Examples are the West African Examination Council (WAEC) and the National Examination Council (NECO). Every natural language differs from each other in their semantics, syntax, phonology and morphology. Languages are different and as a result, a second language learner may be confronted with some challenges in the process of learning the target language hence the need for a contrastive analysis. This study hopes to serve as a medium for the contrastive work on the area of the determiner phrases in English and Izhia focusing on the numerals in both languages.

Linguists like Emenanjo (1978), Oluikpe (1981), Oghalu (1982), Obiamalu (2010), among others, observe that the elements of DP vary from language to language. However, this study investigates an aspect of sentence structure in Izhia language in contrast to the English language. The aspect of the sentence structure considered in this study is the numerals, how they can go into relationship with nouns to form determiner phrases and how it functions in both languages so that the second language learner do not transfer the structure of his L1 into the target language.

Research Methodology

This study targets Izhia-English bilinguals. 10 senior secondary 3 students, aged between fifteen and seventeen years randomly selected from Izhia Boys Secondary School were used as population for this study. The research elucidated data from the respondent by administering a three-section questionnaire to them. The questionnaire comprised test of translation of DPs in the two Languages-English and Izhia and an indication of determiners in Izhia DPs. The questions were consciously formulated to cover the different numerals in both languages. To achieve the aim of this study, analytic method was adopted. The study was analyzed in three phases; the English phase, the Izhia phase and the comparative phase. The study also translated DPs with numerals in the two languages- English and Izhia and consciously examined

the different numerals in both languages and their processes of entering into a relationship with nouns to form determiner phrases.

Determiner Phrases in English and Izhia

Determiners are important elements in language studies. Nweze (2014) posits that determiners remain the indicator of given new information in many languages and needs to be accounted for. Similarly, Crystal (1997) and Berk (1999) observe that determiner is a grammatical category which includes number or rather different kinds of words that always precede a noun and an adjective. Mbah (2011, p211) observes that 'a noun cannot project into a phrase whose nucleus is a verb or a preposition'. 'A determiner is a word which signals the presence of a noun' (Ndimele 2003, p102). According to this source, the determiner is a cover term for articles (e.g. a, an, the), demonstratives (e.g. this, that, these, those), possessives (e.g. my, our, their, his, your), quantifiers (e.g. some, every, any, much, few, a few, several) and numerals (e.g. one, two, three, first, second, third). A determiner projects into a determiner phrase by entering into a relationship with a noun. By so doing, the determiner becomes the head while the noun serves as the complement.

Uzoigwe (2011) notes that languages could have the pre-modifier where the modifier is placed before the head and a post-modifier where the modifier is after the head. According to the author, the English language is a good example of a pre-modifier situation. This means that, in the English language, the determiners occur in pre-position. It is important to note that singular determiners take singular NP complements and plural determiners take plural NP complements.

Determiners as we have seen are one of the elements that are found within the domain of the NP. Erichsen (2010) defines determiner as a type of word that refers to a noun and determines which object, person or other entity the noun represents. Also, the author asserts that determiners have little meaning apart from the nouns they refer to. In some languages like English, French and Spanish, determiners are usually placed before the noun, in other

words, they are pre-posed before the noun they refer to, while in other languages like Igbo, Yoruba, Anaang and Izhia, they are post-posed. The above description is a justification of the intent behind this study, to ascertain the structural position of numerals in Izhia in comparison with that of the English language.

In Izhia, determiners invariably exceed the nouns they refer to. This is to say that, the determiners in Izhia occur in post-position with the exception of the demonstratives which can occur in both positions. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this study, the focus is on one aspect of the determiners: numerals.

The Determiner Phrase Hypotheses

Syntactic theory is highly intricate and always evolving. Since the publication of Chomsky's syntactic structure (1957) and Aspect of the theory of syntax (1965), syntactic theory has been in a steady state of change and development. Chomsky's Lectures on Government and Binding (1981) and Minimalist Program (1995) paved way to re-interpreting several syntactic concepts and terms and introducing new ones.

One of the recently introduced concepts in the long diversified and rich timeline of the tradition of syntactic analysis is the notion of the determiner phrase contained in Abney's (1987) DP hypothesis. This hypothesis claims that what we traditionally think of as a noun phrase (NP) (e.g. the book) has the determiner as its head not the noun as earlier canvassed by Chomsky and others. In this kind of analysis, the NP is, in fact, a complement of the D. Radford (2009: p, 454) succinctly states that within this hypothesis, 'all definite expression have the status of DPs-not just nominals like 'the President' which contains an overt determiner, but also proper names like 'John'. Now, within the framework of minimalist syntax, this hypothesis has become the standard for syntactic analysis'. This is to say that within the minimalist syntax, the DP hypothesis has become the standard for syntactic analysis. In this study, the DP hypothesis is used in the analyses of DPs in two natural languages focusing on the numerals to find out any possible cross-linguistic application of this hypothesis. The DP is

not an alternative but a mandatory hypothesis for a consistent and valid syntactic analysis of the English sentence (Sideeg, 2016). According to Bernstein (2001; p,537), 'the DP hypothesis resolves what was a theoretical inconsistency between the treatment of noun phrase and clauses, that is, according to this approach, nouns like verbs project into a functional category. The head as a syntactic category is the most important element from a grammatical point of view'.

The English Numerals

Numerals are words used for counting. According to (Crystal, 1997), they are one, two, three, first, second, third etc. In the words of Eka (1998), Ndimele (2003), numerals are split into cardinal (one, two, three etc) and ordinal (first, second, third etc.). While cardinal numerals are used to indicate the number of noun words, the ordinal numerals are used to show positions (Nweze, 2014). For example, in the phrases 'one book' and 'two books' the cardinal numeral 'one' and 'two' signify the number of the noun head word thereby demonstrating the fact that the noun (book) is just one in the former and two in the latter. In the same vein, in the phrases 'first person' and 'second person', the ordinal numeral 'first' and 'second' are used to show the position of the entity indicating that the person in question is the first in the former and second in the latter. Below are the structural analyses of English numerals in tree configurations using the examples earlier cited.

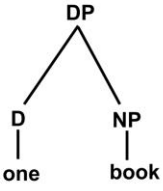

Fig.1

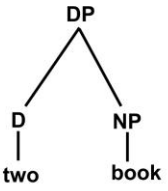

Fig.2

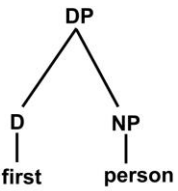

Fig.3

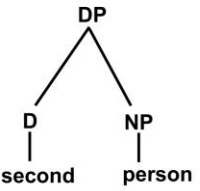

Fig.4

In Fig. 1, the cardinal numeral 'one' is the head of the phrase 'one book' and is used to signal the number of the entities in the phrase while the noun 'book' is the complement of the head. In Fig. 2, the cardinal numeral 'two' is the head of the phrase 'two books' and is also used to demonstrate the number of entities in the phrase while the plural noun 'books' is the complement of the head. In Figures 3 and 4, the ordinal numerals first and second are the heads of the phrases 'first person' and 'second person' respectively while the noun 'person'(s) serve(s) as their respective complements, and are used to indicate positions. This means that cardinal numerals in English are used to show the number of noun words in a phrase while ordinal numerals are used to indicate position. This study observes that English numerals both cardinal and ordinal occur in pre-position in their determiner phrase system.

Izhia Numerals

In Izhia language, numerals are those words used for counting. Etu (2018) observes that counting is required in any natural language. We have ordinal and cardinal numerals in Izhia language. Cardinal numbers in Izhia include: *naanu, ebo, eto.,* etc. While ordinal numerals include: *ke, mbu, ke ebo, ke eto etc.* While cardinal numerals are used to indicate the number of the nouns in phrases, clauses and sentences, the ordinal numerals are used to show position (Nweze, 2014). In the case of ordinal numerals, it is observed that more than one determiner can co-occur in a determiner phrase with ordinal numerals. For instance, In the DP "*ekwo ke mbu ehu lofu"*, (all his first books), we have four determiners which include; *ke, mbu ehu* and *lofu*. This example is a proof that more than one determiner can co-occur in a DP in Izhia DP system. Below are the analyses of Izhia cardinal and ordinal numerals in tree configurations:

Ekwa+naanu ⟶ egg + one ⟶ one egg.
(egg) (one)
Ekwa+ebo\nabo ⟶ egg + two ⟶ two eggs
(egg) (two)
Iko + ereshi + ise ⟶ cup + rice + five ⟶ five cups of rice

(cup) (rice) (five)
Onye + ke + mbu ⟶ person + the +first ⟶ the first person
(person) (the) (first)
Ekwo+ ke + mbu + ehu + lofu ⟶ book + the + first + his + all ⟶ all his first books
(book) (the) (first) (his) (all)

Structures of the Izhia DPs with Numerals

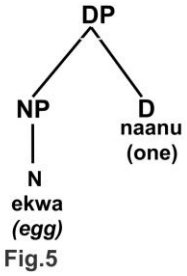

Fig.5

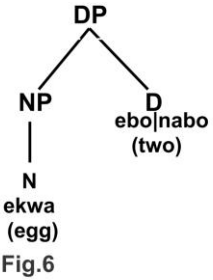

Fig.6

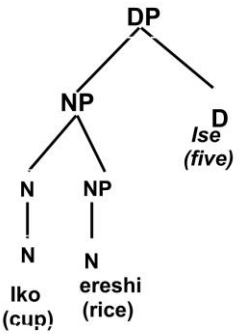

Fig.7

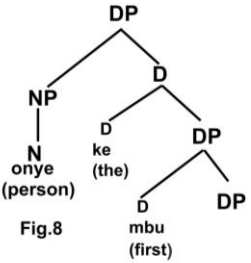

Fig.8

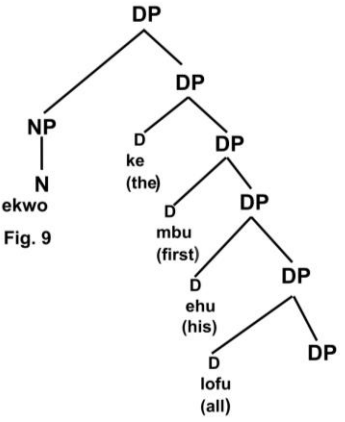

Fig. 9

The figures show that Izhia ordinal numerals occur in post-position in their DP system as all the determiners appear rightward after the nouns they modify. In Fig. 5, the cardinal numeral *naanu* (one) is the head of the DP *ekwa naanu* (one egg), while the noun *ekwa* (egg) is the complement to the head. In Fig. 6, the cardinal numeral

ebo (two) is the head of the phrase *ekwo ebo* (two books) while the noun ekwo (books) forms the complement. In Fig. 7, the cardinal numeral *ise* (five) is the head of the phrase *iko ereshi ise* (five cups of rice), while the nouns *iko* and *ereshi* form the complement. This means that Fig. 7 have two nouns complementing a determiner, meaning that nouns can co-occur in Izhia DP with cardinal numeral. Fig. 8 have two determiners; *ke and mbu* while Fig. 9 have four determiners modifying a noun. This means that different determiners can co-occur in a determiner phrase with all the determiners modifying a noun, buttressing the fact that determiners can co-occur in Izhia determiner phrase system. In Fig. 8 the complement *onye,* (a noun) merges with the determiners *ke, and mbu* to form the DP *onye ke mbu*, while in Fig. 9, the complement *ekwo merges* with the determiners *ke, mbu, ehu* and *lofu* to form the DP *ekwo ke mbu ehu lofu*. This is because the determiners have the selectional property that it can select a noun to form a DP. This merger of the determiners is rightward as all the determiners occur in post-position.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is the Minimalist Program, and also incorporated is Lado's (1957) Contrastive Analysis Approach.

The Minimalist Program

The Minimalist Program (MP) is a modification of the Principles and Parameters Theory (PP) earlier known as Government and Binding Theory (GB) advanced by Chomsky (1989, 1993 and 1995), where Chomsky presents a Minimalist inquiry into linguistic theory. It is an offshoot of the government and binding grammatical levels of representation: D-Structures, S-Structure, Logical Form (LF) and Phonological/Phonetic Form (PF) to interface levels, that is, just PF and LF. In this theory, Chomsky minimizes syntactic entities and principles for a plausible linguistic expression and explanation (interpretation). The PF interacts with sound/motor articulatory-perceptual faculties whereas the LF interfaces the meaning and conceptual modules of cognition like

inference and conceptual-intentional reasoning. The MP is designed in such a way that all the superfluous apparatus which may constitute a problem in the syntactic description are removed.

This theory was developed when the emphasis on syntactic description began to shift from the constraint-based grammar of the Government and Binding (GB) framework to notions of economy and simplicity (Luraghi and Parodi, 2008). GB had focused on "limiting the scope of generative power by increasing the role of constraint grammar and limiting the power of Generative rules" (Carnie, 2007: p22). This led to the formulation of a lot of theories such as the Binding theory, the Case theory, and others, which in the GB era became cumbersome.

In the work, *Minimalist Program for Linguistic Theory* (1995), Chomsky proposes a theory of syntactic study which embodies economy, simplicity, and elegance (Hendrick, 2003). The principle of economy is central to the Minimalist Program. The notion of economy ensures that everything that appears in a sentence serves a purpose (Cook & Newson, 2007). This eliminates all superfluous elements in sentences.

Movement operation is integral to the MP. A key proposal of the minimalist program is that displacement and plane structure-building are established by one operation, Merge (Chomsky 1995). Movement is forced by the requirement that a phrase appears in the minimal syntactic domain of a functional head to achieve feature checking (Radford 2004). The restriction on movement to cases where a phrase is raised to a minimal domain of head for feature checking is called the principle of last resort. This constraint constitutes part of the definition 'Move alpha'. Features that are uninterpretable at LF (such as case) are eliminated after checking. They cannot appear at the LF as their presence would result in a violation of the interface condition of Full Interpretation (FI) (Cook and Newson 2007). Chomsky describes a derivation that yields an ill-formed interface as that which 'crashes'. Interpretable features like categories and semantic features are not eliminated after checking, and so, may enter into subsequent checking

relations. The feature of the head that forces overt movement is uninterpretable (Carnie 2007).

Merge introduces substantive heads into positions where they can assign theta roles to their complements and certain specifiers (SPECs) and complements into configurational positions, where they can receive theta-roles from substantive heads. In a Determiner phrase, the D is the head. Its features are inherited by the Head Feature Principle (HFP), which states that 'the head features of a headed phrase are identical to those of its head daughter (Adger 2003).

The concept of computational system is well developed in the MP. This is the operation where the fully formed words selected from the lexicon are combined in pairs through the process of "select and merge" (Luraghi and Parodi, 2018). Operation Select means the derivation begins from an Array (A) which is an unordered list of lexical items selected from the lexicon, for example, Array {Boys, the……} forms a grammatically correct DP as follows; The boys.

The unordered list such as the example (which formed the DP) is called Numeration. This is because it shows the number of times a particular item occurs in an array. Each lexical item (LI) is taken from a tree formation which forms a set of the syntactic object (SO). Operation 'merge' therefore, is the merger of two syntactic objects (SO), (that is, the item that can undergo syntactic operations). Operation Merge involves combining two lexical items and where the merging is successful, the output is said to converge, but where they are unsuccessful, the output is said to have crashed. This is illustrated below, {long, boy} *long boy

The operations Move and Merge which have combined the two lexical items, long and Boy, to form long boy is not successful, the final output has therefore crashed (i.e formed a wrong construction). Then the ill-formed construction is deleted and operation merge will carry out further combinational activities to ensure successful constructions otherwise there will not be continuity in the construction of sentences or phrases.

In the MP, a lexical category heads a phrase and where a phrase is headed by a determiner, that determiner is referred to as the lexical projection for the determiner category, while a phrase headed by a determiner is referred to as maximal projection. For example; The students

The determiner 'the' is a lexical projection while the whole phrase (the students) is a maximal projection. The head of a phrase and the entire phrase have the same syntactic distribution in the syntactic construction. It, therefore, means that both the head which is the lexical projection and the head and its satellites can occupy the positions of subject and object in any syntactic construction. In the MP, all categories, whether lexical or functional can head a phrase. Nouns, verbs, adverbs and adjectives which are lexical categories function as the phrasal heads. Functional categories like conjunction (and, but, etc) and prepositions (on, in to, by, beneath, etc) can also be heads of their phrases. Even such syntactic elements as questions, qualifiers, tense and determiners and negators can perform the function of heading a phrase (Chomsky, 1995).

Locality is another term that is very relevant to economy. It is used to define domains in a given structure. In a review of Chomsky's (1995) work, Luraghi and Parodi (2008: p134) say that in the MP, "all relations between elements should be local…". This is to say that, "movement in the MP considers minimal domain, that is, the extraction site should be near like the landing site" (Carnie, 2007: p355). In order words, movement in the MP prefers short moves to long one**s.**

The Contrastive Analysis Approach

The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis is pedagogic, as it compares and contrasts the similarities and differences in languages and the proper assessment with an adequate method of diagnosing the problems. Contrastive analysis hypothesis is dependent on the belief that languages are different, and because of the differences, the second language learner may face difficulties in the process of learning the target language. The language "contrast" is a

juxtaposition or comparison showing striking differences. Wilkins (1972) posit that if a contrastive study of the target language and that of the mother tongue is carried out, then the dissimilarities and similarities between the two languages can be revealed or shown. The essence of contrastive analysis is, therefore, to help in second language learning, revealing the similarities and dissimilarities that exist between two or more languages which make it possible to understand possible learning problems and possibly proffer solutions to them.

The status accorded English as a second language in Nigeria makes it pertinent for the continual need for contrastive studies of this language and Nigerian languages to investigate some of the learning problems of the speakers of such languages. Since English is accorded the prestige of an official language in the country, there is need to carry out contrastive studies on the language of Nigeria like Izhia and the second language with which it co-exists to ascertain the processes of learning and the possible difficulties. It is worthy of note that in learning a foreign language, contrastive analysis is very necessary since structures and cultures of languages differ (Udegbuna, 2004). These dissimilarities pose a lot of problems to learners of languages. To lessen learner's difficulties, it is pertinent to compare and contrast the similarities and dissimilarities of the languages concerned, hence the need for this study.

Comparative Analysis of English and Izhia Numerals: Cardinal Numerals

In both English and Izhia, we have ways of accounting for ordinal and cardinal numerals. Below are examples of cardinal numerals in English and Izhia. English cardinal numerals include; one, two, three etc. Also Izhia cardinal numerals include; *mbu\naanu, ebo, eto* etc.

The following are examples of English and Izhia cardinal numerals in their DP structure.

	English		**Izhia**	
i.	One	egg	*ekwa*	*naanu*
	D	NP	NP	D
ii.	Two	eggs	Akwa	ebo\nabo
	D	NP	NP	D

The above phrases signify that both English and Izhia cardinal numerals are used to indicate the number of nouns in their DP system. For instance, in the English DPs, 'one egg', and 'two eggs', the cardinal numerals 'one' and 'two' are used to indicate the number of the noun 'egg' in the phrases and their Izhia counterparts; *naanu* (one) and *ebo* (two) are used to show the number of the noun *'ekwa'* (egg) in the phrases as well. This means that functionally English and Izhia cardinal numerals are similar as both are used to indicate the number of nouns in their DP systems. Below are their structural analyses in tree configurations.

Structures of the Comparative Analysis of English and Izhia DPs with Cardinal Numerals

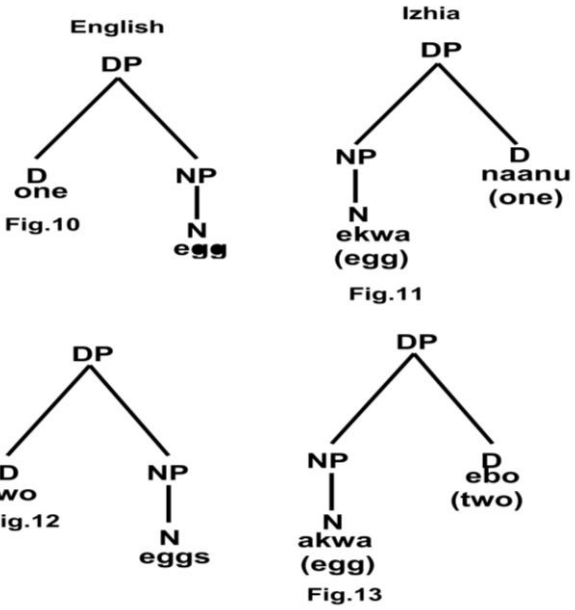

Fig.10 Fig.11 Fig.12 Fig.13

From the above structures we discover no similarities but dissimilarity in the positions of the cardinal numerals. For instance, in Fig. 10, the English cardinal numeral one appears in pre-position while in Fig. 11, the Izhia cardinal numeral *naanu* (one) takes a different position as it occur in post-position. Dissimilarity is also found in figures 12 and 13 as the English cardinal numeral 'two' appear in pre-position in contrast to its Izhia counterpart *ebo* (two) which occur in post-position. This means that there is no similarity in the position of English and Izhia cardinal numerals but dissimilarity as they are pre-positioned in English and post-positioned in Izhia.

Comparative Analysis of Determiner Phrases with English and Izhia Ordinal Numerals

These are determiners used to signal positions (Nweze, 2014). Below are their examples in English and Izhia. English ordinal numerals include; first, second etc. while Izhia ordinal numerals include; *ke mbu* (the first), ke *ebo* (the second) etc. as in:

	English	**Igbo**
1.	First person	*Onye ke mbu*
2.	Second person	*Onye ke ebo*

From the above expressions we understand the fact that both cardinal and ordinal numerals in both languages have similarity in their functions as the Izhia ordinal numerals like their English counterparts are used to signal positions in their DP system. This simply means that functionally they are similar. Below are their structural analyses in tree configurations:

Structures of the Comparative Analysis of English and Izhia DPs with Ordinal Numerals

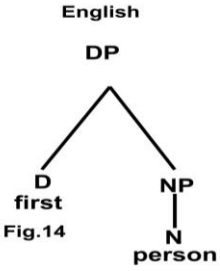

Fig.14

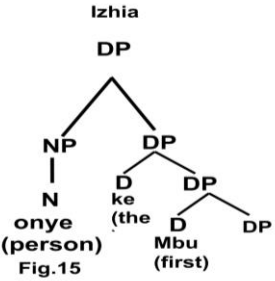

Fig.15

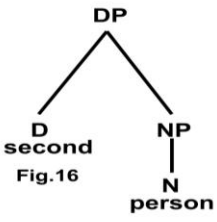

Fig.16

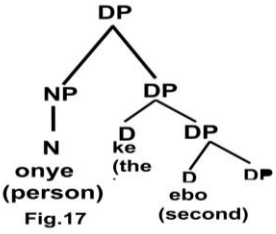

Fig.17

The above structures express the fact that Izhia ordinal numerals unlike their English counterparts are post-posed. Put differently, there is dissimilarity in the structural position of ordinal numerals in the two languages as they appear in pre-position in English while in Izhia they occur in post-position.

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

This study has examined syntactically the English and Izhia numerals in their DP structure. The paper notes that numerals are split into cardinal and ordinal, and that while cardinal numerals are used to show the number of nouns in phrases, clauses and sentences, the ordinal numerals are used to demonstrate positions. The study made a comparative analysis of the functions as well as the structural position of numerals in the two languages. The study realized that numerals both cardinal and ordinal in English and Izhia are functionally similar. The paper also reveals that nouns can co-occur in DPs with cardinal numerals in the two languages. Using the minimalist trees for structural analysis, the study reveals that numerals in the two languages are structurally dissimilar as they occur leftward in English and rightward in Izhia. The study also made it clear that there is co-occurrence of determiners in Izhia DPs with numerals while such is not obtainable in English. Still in the minimalist parlance which is the theoretical base of this study, the data reveal that English numerals occur in head-first while Izhia numerals appear in head-last position and the complement occur rightward in English and leftward in Izhia. These differences are what inform the learning difficulties of Izhia learners of English and should be given proper attention by the English teachers. Teachers should draw up a course plan to see that these differences are efficiently handled in order to make the learners proficient in both the source and the target language. Finally, the study suggests that further studies of this kind should be carried out on the form of Izhia and English in such areas as semantics and syntax to broaden the horizon on the areas of similarities and dissimilarities in their functions and structure.

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