AWKA JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERARY STUDIES (AJELLS)

Volume 12 Number 4
December, 2025

Declarative Constructions in Igbo and Mandarin Chinese: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract

This study on declarative constructions in Igbo and Mandarin Chinese is necessitated by the ever increasing population of Igbo first language (L1) speakers learning Mandarin Chinese (MC) as a second language (L2). Igbo as a member of the new Benue-Congo group of the Niger-Congo language family is quite distinct from MC which is the standard variety of Chinese, a member of the Sino-Tibetan language. From the origin of both languages, it is right to assume that there could be differences in their systems and these differences could translate to impending challenges for the learners. With the application of descriptive analysis, the study examines the constituent structures of declarative sentences, pointing out their similarities and differences as obtainable in both languages. Data were elicited from grammar texts in both languages as well through native speaker intuition. Findings show that the two languages have the basic SVO word order though the constituent structures vary greatly. These differences abound in the nominal position of the determiners, the presence of numeral classifiers in Chinese NP, the position of adverbial elements, interrogative markers, as well as the negation strategies in the VP of both languages. Based on the aforementioned, this paper concludes that any Igbo L2 learner of Chinese should be mindful of the structural differences not withstanding that both languages have same basic sentence pattern so that there will be a proper understanding of the declarative operations in both languages. Such awareness in turn, should enable them to strategically adapt

their learning approaches, which would enhance their performance and facilitate a more effective learning strategy for the Chinese language. This consciousness would help learners minimize learning and negative transfer.

Keywords: Declarative sentences, constituent structures, Igbo, Mandarin, descriptive study

Introduction

Language stands as an indispensable cornerstone of human existence, serving as the primary medium through which individuals unravel the totality of their social lives. Structural patterns of languages are diverse due to the various lexical elements that entail their composition. This gives rise to the parametric variations that are prevalent in languages of the world. Ability of an individual to communicate freely in any language involves the mastery of the word order which manifests in performance. This mastery, whether consciously or unconsciously applied, hinges on the understanding of any language's inherent rules. While languages exhibit numerous distinctions, they also share fundamental commonalities, which Chomsky (1981), in his theory of Universal Grammar (UG), identifies as "principles." Conversely, the core differences are termed "parameters."

These parametric variations are precisely what give rise to the distinct characteristics of languages such as Chinese, English, German, Hausa, Igbo, Kiswahili, Yoruba and others. It is a fact that speakers often encounter challenges when acquiring a new language whose systems parametrically vary from their native tongue. Given the diverse nature of daily interactions, individuals are constantly exposed to languages that range from highly similar to vastly different from their L1. A thorough analysis of languages in contact is therefore crucial, as it provides users with a deeper comprehension of structural differences, thereby fostering smoother and effective communication.

To address this challenge in a specific and understudied learning context, this study present a description of the lexical components of declarative sentences in MC, a Sino-Tibetan language and Igbo a Niger-Congo shows that they are from two distinct families. MC is standard variety of Chinese (also known as Putonghua), primarily spoken in Mainland China, with significant speaker populations traceable to Taiwan, Macau, Malaysia and Singapore. Each character in MC typically represents a syllable and functions as either a word or a morpheme. In contrast, Igbo is an agglutinative language, predominantly spoken in the southeastern states of Nigeria in West Africa, though its presence extends to neighboring regions such as Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon.

Chinese does not have much inflectional morphology and basically none to mark verbs, Huang, Li, & Li (2009). Its writing system is primarily logographic where each character stands for a syllable that corresponds to a word or morpheme. Igbo as an agglutinating language is rich in derivational and extensional morphology, with extensive verb serialization. Phonologically, both Mandarin and Igbo are tonal languages, a notable similarity despite their unique manifestations. Igbo employs three distinct tones: acute [ˊ], grave [ˋ] and downstep [ˉ] while Mandarin, exhibits four main tones as first level tone [ˉ], second tone [ˊ], third (falling then rising) tone [ˇ], and fourth (falling) tone [ˋ]. There is also a neutral, light, and unstressed tone, this implies that some syllables do not have any tones indicated on them because they are neutral. Beyond phonology, significant structural variations exist in their morphology, pronunciation, word order, and grammatical rules. Syntactically, both languages adhere to a Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) sentence pattern. Languages compose of different sentence types (declaratives, interrogatives, imperatives etc.) which become obvious when their constituent structures are analysed.

Statement of the Problem

Despite sharing the basic SVO pattern, the arrangement of the lexical categories (constituent structures) provides a crucial point of comparison. It is imperative to note that both belong to the languages with Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) pattern; however it seems quite generalized and misleading for an Igbo L2 learner of Chinese. Beyond the superficial categorization, the declarative sentence is a critical area of investigation as this is usually the starting point for any language learner. This includes how grammatical elements (determiners, quantifiers, tense, aspect, mood, agreement) are expressed and ordered relative to lexical elements (verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs etc.). The fact remains that Igbo L2 learners consistently encounter diverse challenges while learning the MC structural patterns. Okafor (2021) documents real issues like tone pronunciation (especially Mandarin's 3rd dipping tone, absent in Igbo's system), classifier/measure word overuse or omission (Igbo lacks obligatory classifiers), negation placement, adjective structures (e.g., inserting "to be" before gradable adjectives like hěn 很), and grammar (e.g., ba/bei constructions). Phonological/tonal interference is particularly noted, with positive/negative transfer from Igbo tones.

Aim of the Study

The objective of this study is to examine the lexical and grammatical constituents of declarative sentences in both languages by pointing out their similarities and differences, with particular attention to the precise positions of lexical elements within sentences. The anticipated findings of this research are expected to be highly beneficial to Igbo L2 learners of Mandarin, empowering them to become aware of subtle yet significant structural distinctions. Such awareness in turn, should enable them to strategically adapt their learning approaches, which would enhance their performance and facilitate a more effective learning strategy for the Chinese language. This consciousness would help learners minimize learning and negative transfer.

Literature Review

According to Eryon (2022) a "simple sentence" contains a single independent clause, which expresses complete thought and can stand alone grammatically. A review of the simple sentence typology across languages indicates that there is SVO dominance. The SVO word order remains a highly prevalent basic sentence pattern globally. While SVO is common, Subject-Object-Verb **(**SOV**)** and Verb-Subject-Object (VSO) are also major categories. Studies on these sentence patterns as well as their distribution and correlations between basic word order and other syntactic features have been studied by scholars such as Greenberg (1963; and Hawkins (2014) For instance; SOV languages often have modifiers preceding head nouns and postpositions, while SVO languages tend to have prepositions. Besides the previously mentioned sentence patterns, there are less common word orders which include; OVS, OSV, and VOS although they are far less frequently attested. Irrespective of the fact that languages differ, the concept of linguistic universals, whether absolute or statistical continues to guide the study of simple sentence types.

Emenanjo (2015, p.273) defines the sentence as

> 'a sequence of well selected syntactic items combined into a grammatically correct and acceptable unit in accordance with certain rules, and patterns of arrangement, inherent modification, and cohesion and tone and/or intonation, in any given language'.

Functional Categories and Phrase Structure:

Beyond the classification of languages as SVO, the arrangement of functional categories within the simple sentence is vital. This includes how elements like tense; aspect, mood, and agreement are expressed and ordered relative to lexical elements (adjectives, adverbs, verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs etc.). Understanding the significant interplay between morphology and syntax in expressing grammatical relations in simple sentences is paramount in L2 learning. Hence, for Igbo L2 learners of Mandarin, the contrast between Igbo and Mandarin highlight how different languages

achieve similar communicative goals through varying structural means. This affects how grammatical roles are marked such as through case markings on nouns as well as strict word order.

Case marking in languages also affect the simple sentence types as languages with overt case marking for nouns often exhibit more flexible word orders in simple sentences, as the grammatical roles are explicitly marked on the nouns themselves, reducing the reliance on fixed positional cues, however, languages with little or no case marking tend to have more rigid word orders. In West African languages particularly in languages such as Igbo, Serial Verb Constructions (SVCs) are a prominent feature of simple sentences. These constructions involve a sequence of verbs that act as a single predicate, expressing a single event or a closely related series of events without overt conjunctions. This presents a unique challenge and interest for typological studies, as it deviates significantly from structures obtainable in many other languages.

Declarative sentences

The declarative sentence is used for making statements or view. This type of sentence can be in the affirmative or negative assertions. It can be used to express ideas that are timeless, habitual, existential and universal, Emenanjo (2015, p.275). The primary function of declarative sentence is to convey information, state a fact, or describe something. While both Mandarin and Igbo utilize declarative sentences extensively, their structures, particularly in terms of optional elements and how information is ordered, present interesting contrasts.

MC Declaratives

According to (Sun 2006, p.172) there are three major sentence types in Chinese namely: the declarative, the interrogative, and the imperative. The declarative sentence in Chinese is characterized by a string of words regulated by the phrase structure rule S → (NP) VP. In natural discourse, the declarative sentences occur much

more frequently than the other two types and, therefore, constitute the most important basis for the syntactic study of a language. The MC declarative sentence has a basic property that supports the topic (what the sentence is about), the subject, the noun phrase and the verb phrase. The topic prominent nature of the MC is one of the distinguishing typologies it has from many other languages. It generally follows SVO word order, similar to English. The declarative sentence describes or explains a fact with an indicative tone. This structure is foundational as it is highly consistent and forms the basis for more complex sentence patterns.

MC predominantly follows a fixed Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) word order. This rigidity is typical of analytic languages, as MC does not use inflectional morphology to indicate grammatical roles. As a result, altering the word order can significantly change the sentence's meaning or grammatical function. Additionally, tense and aspect in MC are closely tied to this SVO structure and are typically expressed using particles positioned after the verb or at the end of the sentence. In a simple declarative sentence that is affirmative, the degree adverb usually precedes the degree adjective (Wen-Hua 2017:71). MC declarative sentences sometimes end with modal particles such as 了 - le, 吧 - ba, 啊- a, and others. These particles are used to express mood, attitude, or confirmation to a fact or statement, as they do not change the fundamental declarative nature of sentences (Sun, 2006). The data below comprise affirmative and negative declarative sentences in MC.

Declarative Sentences in Igbo

The declarative sentence in Igbo is used to express ideas that are timeless, habitual, existential and universal. They are plain statements that assert facts. They usually follow the SVO word order where the Subject NPs precede verb complexes and objects. Declarative sentences are rich in tonal morphology and have clause-level particles that encode tense-aspect-mood. Polarity in declarative sentences is marked through negation particles as well

as tonal alternations. Igbo declarative sentences equally exhibit rich robust serial verb constructions, focus marking and clause-final prosodic cues. These sentences can be simple, derived, compound or complex with nominal and adverbial clauses which are integrated through complementizers and clause-linking strategies (Emenanjo, 2015).

Methodology

This study is hinged on Chomsky's Principles and Parameters framework which posits that all languages are defined by universal principles as well as a collection of parameters that determine syntactic variations. The data are sourced using existing grammar texts from both languages such as Emenanjo (2015), and Sun (2016) as well as native speakers' intuition whereby five consultants each both male and female aged between 26 and 55 years from both languages were presented with some prompts in English and asked to translate them in their native language.

All the MC data were also rendered using the pinyin, where all four tones were marked except for syllables that have neutral tones. Igbo data have the low tones and down steps marked with the high tones left unmarked in accordance to Green and Igwe's (1963) convention. High tones are left unmarked because it has a high frequency of occurrence in Igbo and so it reduces the number of diacritics required on the study. The Leipzig Glossing Rules was adopted for glossing both language data for proper understanding.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section presents a systematic comparison of declarative sentences using both the affirmative and negative constructions in most cases to descriptively analyse the patterns, starting with MC and Igbo afterwards. There is a critical examination of the individual constituents that make up the structures to identify similarities and differences where possible.

	Affirmative	**Negative**	
1a.	这 件 衣服是 我的。 Zhè jiàn yīfu shì wǒ de. DET CL clothes be 1SG POSS 'This cloth is mine'.	b.	这 件 衣服 不是 我的 Zhè jiàn yīfu bú shì wǒ de DET CL clothes NEG be 1SG POSS 'This cloth is not mine'.
			Negative
2a.	那 是 我 的 本书。 nà shì wǒ de běn shū DET be 1SG POSS CL Book 'that is my book'	b.	那 不 是 我 的 本书 nà bú shì wǒ de běn shū DET NEG be 1SG POSS CL Book 'that is not my book'
3.	他 **是 一位 医生**。 Tā shì yíwèi yīshēng 3SG(m.) be CL doctor 'He is a doctor'	b.	他 不 **是 一位医生**。 Tā bú shì yíwèi yīshēng 3SG(m.) NEG be CL doctor 'He is not a doctor'4.
4.	她 有 三 个 孩子 Tā yǒu sān ge háizi 3SG(f) have 3 CL child 'She has three children'	b.	她 没 有 三 个 孩子。 Tā méi yǒu sān ge háizi 3SG(f) NEG have 3 CL child 'She does not have three children'
5.	那 辆 车 很 贵。 Nà liàng chē hěn guì DET CL car DEG. expensive 'that car is very expensive'	b.	那 辆 车 不 贵。 Nà liàng chē bú guì DET CL car NEG expensive 'that car is not expensive'
6.	她 很 漂亮 Tā hěn piàoliang 3SG(f) DEG beautiful 'she is very beautiful'	b.	她 不 漂亮 Tā bù piàoliang 3SG(f) NEG beautiful 'she is not beautiful'
7.	他 每天 说 汉语。 Tā měitiān shuō Hànyǔ. 3SG(m.) every day speak Chinese 'He speaks Chinese everyday'	b.	他 每天 不 说 汉语。 Tā měitiān bù shuō Hànyǔ 3SG(m.) every day NEG speak Chinese 'He does not speak Chinese everyday'
8.	小 张 经常 坐 飞机 回来 Xiǎo Zhāng jīngcháng zuò fēi jī huí lai Little Zhang often take airplane return 'Miss Zhang often returns by airplane'	b.	小张 经常 不 坐 飞机 回来 Xiǎo Zhāng jīngcháng bú zuò fēi jī huí lai Little Zhang often NEG take airplane return 'Miss Zhang does not often returns by airplane'

The data in (1 – 8) above state facts both in the affirmative and negative forms. In (1- 5), we see that determines precede the nouns they modify, whereas the classifiers of the nouns precede the nouns. In (5 – 6), the degree words used to qualify the adjectives precede the adjectives and are deleted during the negation process. There are no absolute markers for the affirmative sentences, however for the negative forms, the particles 没 and不occur before the verbs in all situations, therefore they occupy the preverbal position. In (7 – 8), we find the adverbials每天 and 经常preceding the verbs.

	Affirmative	**Negative**	
9a.	爸爸 回来 了。 Bāba huí lái le. father return PFV. 'father has returned'	b.	爸爸 还没 回 来 Bāba hái méi huí lái. father still NEG return 'father has not returned'
10a.	他 已经 走 了。 Tā yǐjīng zǒu le. 3SG(m.) already go PFV. 'He has already gone.'	b.	他 还 没 走。 Tā hái méi zǒu. 3SG(m.) still NEG go 'He has not gone yet.'
11a.	她 昨天 买 了 菜。 Tā zuó tiān mǎi le cài 3SG yesterday buy PFV vegetable 'She bought vegetables yesterday.'	b.	她 昨天 没 买 菜。 Tā zuó tiān méi mǎi cài 3SG(f.) yesterday NEG buy vegetable 'She did not buy vegetables yesterday.'
12a.	妈妈 早上 喝 了茶。 Māma zǎoshàng hē le cha Mother morning drink PFV tea 'Mother drank tea in the morning'	b.	妈妈 早上 没 喝 茶。 Māma zǎoshàng méi hē chá. Mother morning NEG drink tea 'Mother did not drink tea in the morning'
13a.	孩子 明 天 喝 牛奶。 Háizi míng tiān hē niú nǎi Child tomorrow drink milk 'The child will drink milk tomorrow'	b.	孩子 明天 不 喝 牛奶。 Háizi míng tiān bù hē niú nǎi. Child tomorrow NEG drink milk 'The child will not drink milk tomorrow'

14a.	她 很 胖 Tā hěn pàng 3Sg(f) DEG fat 'she is fat?'	b.	她 不 胖 Tā bú pàng. 3Sg(f) NEG fat 'She is not fat.'
15a.	她 醒 了 Tā xǐng le 3SG(f) awake PFV. 'she is awake?'	b.	她 没 醒。 3SG(f) NEG awake Tā méi xǐng 'She is not awake?'
16a.	我们 吃 米饭 吧。 wǒmen chī mifan ba 1PL eat rice PAT. 'Let us eat rice'	b.	我们 不 吃 米饭。 wǒmen bù chī mifan 1PL NEG eat rice 'Let us not eat rice'
17a.	我们 走 吧。 Wǒmen zǒu ba 1PL go PAT 'Let us go'		我们 不 走 吧。 wǒmen bù zǒu ba 1PL NEG go PAT 'Let us not go'

MC verbs as seen in (9 -13) above do not inflect for tense; therefore the verb remains constant while temporal and aspectual information is conveyed through aspectual markers and temporal adverbs. The Perfective aspectual particle了*le* is used for indicating new situation. The interpretation given to declarative sentences is context dependent without fixed markers. Adverbs are used in the sentences above occupy the preverbal position. The interrogative particle 吗as used in (14 - 15) occupy the sentence final position in declarative constructions. The吧 particle as used in (16 – 17) is used for seeking confirmation/agreement; this also occupies the sentence final position.

	Measure words	
18	那 只 猫 在 桌子 上。 nà zhī māo zài zhuōzì shàng DET CL cat LOC table PREP 'That cat is on top of the table'	
19	老师 站 在 银行 前 面。 Lǎoshī zhàn zài yínháng qián miàn teacher stand LOC bank PREP 'The teacher is standing before the bank'	

20.	我 在 门 外 看见 他 的 衣服。 Wǒ zài mén wài kàn jiàn tā de yīfù 1SG LOC door outside look 3SG(m.) POSS Cloth 'I saw her clothes outside'	

The data as shown in (18 - 20) are sentences that indicate positions occupied by elements. The position words which are adverbials of position consist of 在 and Noun Phrase to indicate location where an active event takes place. The position words occur at the NP final position.

Igbo Declarative Sentences

Affirmative			**Negative**
21a.	Nwōke ahụ bụ onye nkuzī Man DET be person teach 'That man is a teacher'	b.	Nwōke ahụ a-bụ̄-ghi̱ onye nkuzī Man DET PREF-be-NEG person teach 'That man is not a teacher'
22a.	Àda rì-rì nri ahụ Ada eat-PAST food DET 'Ada ate that food'	b.	Àda e-rī-ghī nri ahụ. Ada PREF-eat-NEG food DET 'Ada did not eat that food'
23a.	Akwụkwọ à bụ nkè m Book DET be POSS 1SG 'This book is mine'	b.	Akwụkwọ à a-bụ-ghị nkè m Book DET PREF-be-NEG POSS 1SG 'This book is not mine'
24a.	Nwanyị à màrà mma Woman DET know-PAST beauty 'This woman is beautiful'	b.	Nwanyị à a-ma-ghị mma Woman DET PREF- know-NEG beauty 'This woman is not beautiful'
25a.	O nwèrè ụmụ atọ̄ 3SG have-PAST offspring 3 'S/he has three children'	b.	Ò nwē-ghi̱ ụmụ atọ̄. 3SG have-NEG offspring 3 'S/he does not have three children'
26a.	Ezè zụ̀tà-rà akwụkwọ abụ̀ọ̄ Eze buy-PAST book 2 'Eze bought two books'	b.	Ezè a-zụ̄tā-ghi̱ akwụkwọ abụ̀ọ̄. Eze PREF-buy-NEG book 2 'Eze did not buy two books'

From the data in (21 – 26), the determiners *ahụ̀* and *a* occur after the nouns they modify, in the same manner, the quantifiers in (25-26) also occur after the nouns and they can take the sentence final

position. The negation as shown in the data above is realised using the morphological process of affixation, whereby the verbs take the prefix *a/e* in conformity with the vowel harmony rule of Igbo while the suffix *–ghị* is attached after the verb root.

	Affirmative		**Negative**
27a.	Òbi nà-à-ta azụ ụbọchị ọbụla Obi PROG-PREF-chew fish day always 'Obi eats fish everyday'	b.	Òbi a-nā-ghī̱ àta azụ ụbọchị ọbụla Obi PREF-PROG-NEG chew fish day always 'Obi does not eat fish everyday'
28a.	Chikà nà-a-sụ̄ akwà Chika PROG-PREF-wash clothes 'Chika is washing clothes'	b.	Chikà a-nā-ghị a-sụ̄ akwà Chika PREF-PROG-NEG PREF-wash clothes 'Chika is not washing clothes'
29a.	Uchè nọ̀ n'ụlọ̀ tatà Uche stay PREP house today 'Uche is at home today'		Uchè a-nọ̀-ghị n' ụlọ̀ tatà Uche PREF-stay-NEG PREP house today 'Uche is not at home today'
30a.	Àda sìrì nri ụnyahụ Ada cook-PAST food yesterday 'Ada cooked food yesterday'	b.	Àda e-si-ghị nri ụnyahụ Ada PREF-cook-NEG food yesterday 'Ada did not cook food yesterday'
31a.	Nkịtā ya nwụ-rụ n'ụtụtụ Dog 3SG die-PAST PREP morning 'His dog died in the morning'	b.	Nkitā ya a-nwụ-ghị n'ụtụtụ Dog 3SG PREF-die-NEG PREP morning 'His dog did not die in the morning'
32a.	Ha gà-à-bia echī 3PL FUT-PREF-come tomorrow 'They will come tomorrow'	b.	Ha a-ga-ghị a-bịa echī 3Pl PREF-FUT-NEG PREF-come tomorrow 'They will not come tomorrow'
33a.	Ezè gà-e-jē ugbō Eze FUT-PREF-go farm 'Eze will go to the farm'	b.	Ezè a-ga-ghị e-je ugbō Eze PREF-FUT-NEG. PREF-go farm 'Eze will not go to the farm'
34a.	O tò-rò ogologo. 3Sg grow-STAT tall 'S/he is tall'	b.	Ò to-ghị ogologo 3Sg grow-NEG tall 'S/he is not tall'
35a.	O bùrù ibù 3SG be.big-STAT bigness 'S/he is fat'	b.	Ò bu-ghị ibù 3SG be.big-NEG bigness 'S/he is not fat'

Igbo as an agglutinative language adopts affixation process to mark tense and aspect. From the data in (27 - 35) *nà-* is used to indicate progressive aspect. The prefix *a-/e-* are affixed to verb root while the negation marker *-ghị* is suffixed to the verb root. In (30 - 31), for the completed actions, the past tense marker *–rV* is suffixed after the verb root, for the affirmative sentences, while the prefix *a-* is added to the verb root and the negative marker *-ghị* is suffixed after the verb root for negation. To declare future facts in Igbo as can be seen in (32 – 33), the future marker *ga-* is affixed before prefix attached to the verb root.

Therefore affixation is a vital morphological process for tense and negation marking in declarative constructions in the Igbo language. Adverbs in the Igbo langauge can occur in any position in the sentence, it could be at the initial or at the sentence final as is seen in (29 – 32). In (34 - 35), in the expression of adjective attributes, the verbs precede the adjectives and the –rV is the Stative marker used for describing quality that is currently true. Therefore the adjectives can occur at the sentence final position. For their negation, tones ones are used to counter the claims of the affirmative sentences, where the H-tone of the subjects changes to L-tone in the sentence initial position.

	Affirmative		**Negation**
36a.	Ìko ahụ̀ dì n' elu ochē Cup DET be PREP top chair 'The cup is on the chair'	b.	Ìko ahụ̀ adīghī̀ n' elu ochē Cup DET PREF-be-NEG PREP top chair 'The cup is not on the chair'
37a.	Nwatà à nọ̀ n'imē ụlọ̀ child DET LOC PREP inside house 'This child is inside the house'	b.	Nwatà à anọ̀ghị̀ n'imē ụlọ̀ child DET PREF-LOC-NEG PREP inside house 'This child is not inside the house'
38a.	Ọ nọ̀ n' akụ̀kụ̀ ọhịà 3SG LOC PREP beside forest 's/he is beside the forest'	b.	Ọ nọ̀ghị̀ n' akụ̀kụ̀ ọhịà 3SG LOC-NEG PREP beside forest 's/he is not beside the forest'

The data in (36 – 38) show that in Igbo, the position words are prepositioned with the use of *n'* before the NP that designate the place of the objects.

Findings

The study shows peculiarities in the structural constituents of both languages. Declarative sentences in both MC and Igbo employ the SVO word order. However some differences which could pose as challenges to any Igbo learner of Chinese are shown below:

Structural Composition (Position)	**MC**	**Igbo**
Determiner	Sentence initial, prenominal	Never at sentence initial position, always post nominal
Quantifier	Precede Classifiers of N	Sometimes precede N but mostly post Nominal position
Classifiers	Always used with N	Just associated with collective N
Adverbials	Sentence Initial or medial, always before V	Can occur in any position
Adjectives	Post-verbal	Post-verbal
Locatives	Postposition	Preposition
Aspectual Particles	Occur at Post-verbal	
TAM	V do not inflect for T	Preverbal articles encode T and A through affixation Processes
Negation	Markers occur at Preverbal position, does not affect the Subject tonal quality	Markers are suffixed to V, tones of the Subject Pronouns change from H to L

The structural composition of MC shows sentences that have determiners preceding the nouns, their nouns are associated with classifiers while quantifiers to the nouns occur before classifiers. The adverbs are preverbal hence occur at sentence initial or medial positions. The aspectual particles occupy the post verbal positions as a result can be found even at the sentence final position.

The Igbo language is quite different from the analytical structure of Chinese, as a language that employs agglutinative morphology within the verbs, affixation processes and crucial tonal distinctions are used to convey a wide range of grammatical meanings within its declarative statements. Igbo nouns are not compelled to be associated with measure words, the quantifiers mostly occur after the nouns, while their adverbials phrases can take up any position in the sentence. Locatives in Mandarin are postpositions whereas that of Igbo is preposition.

Conclusion

Having looked at the declaratives of both languages, Igbo L2 learners should be mindful that though the structure of the target language has the SVO at the broader categorization, with a detailed analysis, the constituent structures are discovered to be quite different. Hence, the similarities evident in the structure of both languages will aid in the learning of Chinese for Igbo L2 learners, whereas the significant divergences are core challenges for the learners.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Given that Igbo marks tense through affixation processes and MC uses adverbs and particles we therefore predict that Igbo learners could overuse temporal adverbs in MC as well as struggle with the aspectual particle le 了, attempting to map it to a tense suffix. We therefore propose that students be frequently engaged with activities on the challenging areas in order to help them familiarize with the structural differences and enhance understanding.

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