AN ATTEMPT TO A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF IGBO AND TONGAN CONDITIONAL CLAUSES

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Abstract

This study examines the conditional sentence structures in Igbo and Tongan languages and aims to reveal the similarities and differences between these languages regarding the semantic structure and syntactic characteristics of the conditional clauses. Therefore, the contrastive analysis procedure is applied which consists of three steps as (1) description; (2) juxtaposition; (3) comparison (Krzeszowski, 1990). In pursuit of the description of the conditional sentence structures in Igbo and Tongan languages, they are juxtaposed and compared. This contrastive analysis procedure revealed that Igbo and Tongan languages have both the first, second, and third conditions. In addition, Tongan has also zero conditions. Moreover, they may use different forms to express the condition which gives the meaning that the situation may or may not be fulfilled, theoretically possible but unlikely future situations and impossible conditions. In view of all the similarities and differences found in the analysis, Tongan and Igbo languages which are the member of different language families and whose native speakers live so far away from each other share common points in regard to the types of conditional clause while their structures differ in terms of degree.

Keywords

Contrastive Analysis, Conditional Sentence, Semantic Structure, Syntactic Structure, Igbo Language, Tongan Language

1. Introduction

The contrastive analysis (CA), a systematic branch of applied linguistics whose main concern is the teaching and learning of foreign languages, helps to determine the differences or similarities between two languages (Kazemian & Hashemi, 2014). Accordingly, it is expected to predict the main difficulties in learning a new language which is caused by interference from the first language, and teaching materials that are produced as a result of contrastive analysis of two languages reduce the effects of interference. CA also gives clues about the genetic relationship between two attested languages by establishing language genealogy in the framework of comparative historical linguistics. Moreover, it is used as a tool in typological linguistics to create language taxonomies and in translation, theory to investigate problems of equivalence to create bilingual dictionaries (Tajareh, 2015).

The early proponents of contrastive analysis started in the 1940s and 1950s in the United States with the aim of producing effective and economical foreign language teaching materials. To achieve this, it was necessary to make a scientific description of the language to be taught by means of its careful comparison with a similar description of the learner's first language. Contrastive analysis underwent a period of rapid development between the end of the Second World War and 1965, which was also known as the classical period of contrastive studies. Because the first systematic and extensive formulation of the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis was proposed by Lado (1957) in linguistics across cultures. It was believed to launch the CA movement in language teaching as Lado set out procedures for the comparison of phonology, grammar, and vocabulary by using structuralist linguistic methods. Among many others, the other prominent figures of that period were Charles Fries (e.g. 1945), Kenneth Pike (e.g. 1943), Ureil Weinreich (e.g. 1953). In this period, CA was able to yield a huge number of studies of bilingualism, teaching methodology, translation studies. Moreover, some subfields of linguistics such as cognitive linguistics, pragmatics, and corpus linguistics have all offered new theoretical frameworks and methodology. Accordingly, this phase credited its status as a scientific, pragmatic, and academic discipline despite theoretical issues being criticized (Hamp, 1968).

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, however, the contrastive analysis was extensively practiced in various European countries, particularly in Eastern European countries. The rapid development of automatic data processing and information technology in the early 1990s opened up new prospects for contrastive approaches through the potential of large corpora. Notwithstanding that CA has been

assigned different labels such as "comparative linguistics", "contrastive grammar", "differential description", it is basically "…the juxtaposing of accounts of two languages and the extraction of certain observation of difficulty" (Hamp, 1968, pp.139).

Over the last decade, there have been numerous research which contrasted the languages from a structural point of view (e.g. Abushibab, 2012; Salim, 2013; Nuhiu, 2014; Al-Jarf, 2015; Güçlü 2015, 2017, 2018; Kadir, 2015; Uwaezuoke & Ogunkeye, 2017; Streb, 2018; Udemmadu & Chinyeaka, 2017; Uktolseja et al., 2019; Rahardian, 2020) and revealed the points that differ and the sources in learning the target language. Conditional sentence structure is one of the structures in linguistics which has been recently examined in the framework of contrastive analysis (e.g., Abbas, 2012; Ali, 2013; Haff, 2013; Hammadi, 2019).

2. Conditional Sentence Structure

As one of the complex structures in linguistics, the conditional sentences express a myriad of meanings and functions via various manifestations. It is considered complex since its realization is dependent upon the occurrence of another event (Abdollahi-Guilani et al., 2012). A conditional sentence is composed of the main clause (the consequence), conjunction (if), and a conditional clause (the condition) as in the following sentence: "If it rains, I will stay at home." In this sentence, 'If it rains' is the conditional clause or protasis, and 'I will stay at home' is the main clause or apodosis. Thomson and Martinet (1986, pp.197) assert that a conditional clause is an adverbial, and "the event described in the main clause depends on the condition described in the conditional clause." In the example above, the speaker stays at home depends on the weather condition. Conditional sentences come in many forms. For example; in EFL textbooks and grammars there are three main *if*-conditional types. These are given below with the examples taken from Turunen (2007):

Type 1: *if* + simple present (will-future)

[1] If John comes, Mary will leave.

In this type, the event described in the apodosis depends on the condition described in the protasis. Accordingly, Mary's leaving is dependent upon John's coming.

Type 2: *if* + simple past

[2] If John came, Mary would leave.

In the above sentence, the use of the past tense refers to the unreality of the proposition.

Type 3: *if* + past perfect

[3] If John had come, Mary would have left.

According to this type of conditional, the use of past tense shows that it is impossible that the condition will be fulfilled and they are counterfactual.

Conditional constructions given above can express different meanings. Specifically, they can convey a sense of possibility, wish or regret, and volition (Abdollahi-Guilani et al., 2012). Moreover, they can also be used to express different degrees of reality. That is to say, a condition can be open or unreal. An open condition expresses something which may be true or may become true as in the sentence "If you join the library, you can borrow books." An unreal condition expresses something which is not true or is imaginary as in the example "If you would arrive ten minutes later, we would have been closed." (Eastwood, 1994, as cited in Abbas, 2012). Generally, conditionals can express different types in regard to semantic relationships as factual, future, or predictive and imaginative.

The present study attempts to compare the conditional sentence structures of Igbo and Tongan languages and organized as follows: Section 3 provides the research questions and methodology. Section 4 and 5 describe the Conditional Clauses in Igbo and Tongan languages respectively. Section 6 comparatively analyzes conditional sentence structures in these languages. Section 7 presents the conclusions derived from the contrastive analysis.

3. Aim and Methodology

This research aims to analyze the conditional clause in Igbo language and Tongan language in regard to their semantic and syntactic structures and to reveal the differences and similarities between these languages. In parallel to this aim, the study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. How Igbo and Tongan languages differ from each other in regard to the semantic structure of their conditional sentences?

2. How Igbo and Tongan languages differ from each other in regard to verb forms of their conditional sentences?

To answer the above research questions, this study applies the classical contrastive procedure which involves three steps: (1) description; (2) juxtaposition; (3) comparison (Krzeszowski, 1990). In this study, description of the conditional clauses in two languages are given firstly as Krzeszowski (1990, pp. 35) asserts that no comparison is possible without a prior description of the elements to be compared and all contrastive studies must be founded on independent descriptions of the relevant items of the languages to be compared. The second step is the juxtaposition of the full reduplication

process in these languages which enables to decide what is to be compared with what and whether or not element X in one language is equivalent with element Y in another language (Krzeszowski, 1990, pp. 35). In the last step of the contrastive analysis, the similarities and differences existing between the two languages are identified and presented.

4. The Conditional Clause in Igbo

Igbo is one of the largest languages of West Africa and is spoken by 18 million people in Nigeria. It belongs to the Benue-Congo group of the Niger-Congo language family (Mbah, 2012; Thompson, 2014). It is being taught as a second, additive language in Nigerian secondary schools (Emenanjo, 2016). Nearly two million Nigerians speak it as a second language, and it is also spoken by another three to five million people in Diaspora (Linux, 2010, as cited in Eze, 2016).

The conditional clause is one of the adverbial clauses in Igbo because they occupy adverb positions and function like adverbs. In terms of meaning, conditionals in Igbo can be classified into three categories. The following examples are taken from Okoro (2007).

Type 1: (a) if + simple present | will + simple present

[4] A ga m azụ ụgbọala *mà ọ bụrụ na m nweta ego.*

"I will buy a car if I have the money."

 (b) if + simple present | imperative

 [5] *Ọ bụrụ na ọ lota, sị ya na m bịara.*

 "If he returns, tell him that I came.

 (c) if + present continuous | will + simple present

 [6] *Ọ bụrụ na ọ na-ekwu ezi okwu, anyị ga ama.*

 "If he is telling the truth, we will know."

 (d) if + will + simple present | will + simple present

 [7] *Ọ bụrụ na ọ ga-abịa echi, nsogbu agaghị adị.*

 "If he will come tomorrow, there'll be no problem."

In this type, the condition is open; the condition may or may not be fulfilled.

Type 2: (a) if + Past perfect Subjunctive | would + perfective infinitive

 [8] *Ọ bụrụ na m maara*, a gaara m abịa.

"If I had known, I would have come."

 (b) if + past subjunctive | would + perfective infinitive

[9]*A sị na ọ bịara, anyị gaara ahụ ya.*

"If he came, we would have seen him."

According to this condition type, the condition cannot be fulfilled because the opportunity to fulfill it is already past or has been overtaken by events.

Type 3: (a) if + Past subjunctive | will + simple present

[10] *Ọ bụrụ na m bụ ghị*, a gaghị m ekwe.

"If I were you, I won't agree."

(b) if + Past subjunctive | would infinitive

[11] *Ọ bụrụ na m bụ gị, a ga m eje.*

"If I were you, I would attend."

In this type, the condition cannot be fulfilled because the conditional clause is hypothetical. That is, it is impossible to fulfill the condition. As can be seen in the above examples, the first category of conditional clauses usually implies the possibility of the condition being fulfilled; the second category expresses some regret by the speaker because of the unfulfilled condition; while the third category expresses a wish or desire on the part of the speaker.

5. The Conditional Clause in Tongan

As Tongan is an Austronesian language of the Polynesian branch which is spoken by about 100,000 people in the Kingdom of Tonga (Beller et al., 2005) and predominantly spoken in the Southern Provinces of Zambia with 1, 268, 469 native speakers (Jimaima, 2014).

The conditional clause is one of the adverbial clauses in Tongan because they occupy adverb positions and function like adverbs. In terms of meaning, conditionals in Tongan can be classified into four categories. The following examples are taken from Jimaima (2014).

Type 0: (a) If + present tense | present tense

(12) *Kuti waumpa nkendulo, ilasungunuka.*

"If you heat a candle, it melts."

(b) If + past tense | past tense

(13) *Nindakali kwiida mbeu, Mutinta wakali kusanzya mitib*

"If (when) I watered the garden, Mutinta washed the plates."

The result in the Zero Conditional is (or was) always true or that one action is (or was) always followed by another. The grammatical construction is such that both clauses (protasis and apodosis) have the same tense.

Type 1: (a) if + simple present | will + simple present

(14) *Kuti tutanyamukiino, cilatusiya citima*.

 "If we don't leave now, we will miss the train."

 In the example above, the fulfillment of the action in the main clause is dependent on what happens in the condition (protasis).

(b) if + present continuous | will + simple present

(15) *Na uyandaula Lungowe, ulamujana mucisambila.* (Present action-continuing)

 "If you are looking for Lungowe, you will find her in the bathroom."

(16) *Naa ulakkala kumanina nsondo, tuyakwiinka ku sinema.* (Future arrangement)

"If you are staying for the weekend, we will go to the cinema."

The use of the Present Continuous tense in the Tongan first conditional is meant to refer to a present action or a future arrangement.

(c) if + Past perfect Subjunctive | imperative

(17) *Na wamanizya kujika nsima, ndakomba kosanzya mitiba*.

"If you have cooked nsima, please wash the plates."

The use of the imperatives in the first conditional is commonly used in Tongan utterances mostly by parents to order or give instructions to their children in households (Jimaima, 2014).

Type 2: if + Past subjunctive | would + infinitive

 (18) *Nindalizyi bwiinguzi, nindakwaambila.*

"If I knew the answer, I would tell you."

 In Tongan language, this conditional is used to express imagination what the speakers would do if the situation in the protasis was not an imagination.

 (19) *Kuti/Niyalibukide nkondo yatatu yanyika yoonse, inga caamba kumana kwamusela.*

 "If the third world war broke out, it would mean the end of human kind."

 Notable in the study was also the fact that Tongan speakers use the second conditional to express theoretically possible but unlikely future situations.

Type 3: if + Past perfect Subjunctive | would + perfective infinitive

(20) *Neekalijisi ciindi, nindaakugwasya.*

"If I had had time, I would have helped you."

In the sentence (20)*,* the condition is impossible because they are in the past and cannot be changed. In fact, it can be said that these past situations did not happen since neither action took place.

Overall, the semantics and verb forms for each of Tongan conditional types have been discussed in the above. The differences in meaning between various types of conditionals are based on the composition or construction of the conditionals. The first category of conditional clauses expresses always true conditions; the second category usually implies the possibility of the condition being fulfilled; the third category expresses a wish or desire on the part of the speaker; while the fourth category expresses some regret by the speaker because of the unfulfilled condition.

6. Contrastive Analysis of Conditional Clauses in Igbo and Tongan Languages

The study set out to identify types of conditional clauses in Tongan and Igbo languages and to investigate the semantics and syntactic structure of Tongan and Igbo conditional clauses. The similarities and differences between Tongan and Igbo languages in regard to these perspectives are given as follows: Igbo conditional clause can be classified into three broad types while Tongan conditional clause can be classified into four broad types; zero conditional exists in Tongan while it does not exist in the Igbo language; both languages have the first, second and third conditionals; There are four different formulas in Igbo for type 1 conditional sentences while in Tongan there are three different formulas for type 1 conditionals; In conditional type 1 in both languages, following formulas are available: "*if* + simple present | will + simple present" and "*if* + present continuous | will + simple present"; In type 1 imperative sentences, Igbo uses the simple present tense in protasis whereas in Tongan past perfect subjunctive is used in protasis; in Tongan, "will" is not used in protasis while in Igbo "will" is used in protasis in Type 1 conditionals. Accordingly, while Igbo has the structure "*if* + will + simple present | will + simple present" for type I conditional, in Tongan such a construction is not used; in regard to semantics, type 1 conditional in both languages, the condition is open, that is to say; the condition may or may not be fulfilled. In the construction "*if* + present continuous | will + simple present", Igbo has present action in terms of only 'continuing' perspective. On the other hand, Tongan language uses the present continuous tense in the first conditional which refers to a present action or a future arrangement. In both languages imperative use is applied is to give an order or a direction to the hearer; in Tongan language, the second conditional is used to express theoretically

possible but unlikely future situations whereas the second conditional is used to express impossible conditions in the Igbo language; in Tongan language, the third conditional is used to express impossible conditions, whereas the third conditional is used to express theoretically possible but unlikely future situations in the Igbo language; to express theoretically possible but unlikely future situations, in both languages following construction is used: "*if* + Past subjunctive | would + infinitive." Moreover, this construction is also used to express the imagination in Tongan language; to express impossible conditions, Igbo can use two different formulas while Tongan uses only one formula; both languages have the formula "*if* + Past perfect Subjunctive | would + perfective infinitive" to express impossible conditions; the formula "*if* + past subjunctive | would + perfective infinitive" does not exist in Tongan, while this is used in Igbo in order to express impossible conditions.

7. Conclusion

The aim of the study was to explore the conditional sentence structures in Igbo and Tongan languages comparatively and to reveal the differences and similarities between these languages in regard to the semantic structure and syntactic characteristics of the conditional clauses. No study has hitherto compared the Igbo and Tongan languages in regard to the conditional clauses.

The contrastive analysis showed that these languages share many common points in regard to the semantic structure. The conditional clauses in both languages can give the following meanings: The condition may or may not be fulfilled; the condition cannot be fulfilled because the opportunity to fulfill has already past or has been overtaken by events; the condition cannot be fulfilled because the conditional clause is hypothetical that is impossible to fulfill the condition. However, Tongan has one more conditional meaning: zero conditional which is (or was) always true or that one action is (or was) always followed by another. This type is not found in the Igbo language.

Another striking finding of this study is that the meanings are not given by only one type of condition, but more than one structural form of conditionals. For example; in the Igbo language, the open condition which gives the meaning that the condition may or may not be fulfilled can be given with the following syntactic structures: *if* + simple present | will + simple present, *if* + simple present | imperative, *if* + present continuous | will + simple present, *if* + will + simple present | will + simple present. However, under this common point, these languages may differ from each other because of the different forms used to give conditional meaning. For example; differently from the Igbo

language, Tongan has *if* + Past perfect Subjunctive | imperative form to give the open conditional meaning. On the basis of these findings, it can be concluded that Igbo and Tongan languages share many similarities regarding the type of the conditional clauses and fewer similarities regarding the degree of form under the semantic and syntactic framework.

This study may help to predict possible difficulties Tongan learners of Igbo may face in learning conditional sentences, or vice versa. Thus teachers of Igbo or Tongan languages will profit from this article to reduce the difficulties arising from the differences in conditional sentences between these languages when teaching, namely they help their students to understand conditional sentences and all its types. This study is limited to small sample size with a few sources giving information about the conditional sentence structures in these languages. Further study may include much more data for a more comprehensive study. Moreover, Igbo and Tongan languages could be compared with English languages in order to reveal the difficulties that Tongan and Igbo speakers face in learning the English language.

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