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bari shilluk
nandi pokot itw
vai anyi-baule kikuyu song
swahili-yoruba alur koalib biru
sidamo chaga duala sukuma luba
agau hadza ga'anda zagwa wa
bambara dan chokwe
tamasheq lingala tera
shona beja amharic tigre o
ewondo tswana krio iga mor
zulu fang bilanta zande nuer ron nua
kanakuru sandawe hausa sotho rendile
meroitic baso lendu senut
oromo haya igbo ga sango
torkana kinga mbuni bamum
makonde idoma ngizim
tagali bafut mangbetu
maasai to'un gbaya tiv
somali talodi efik bole
ganda fula kongo susu
mankon bura ewe masa
nupe lamang jukun
urhobo harari
nyakyusa higi
rwanda shi
nyanja
edo

Mouton de Gruyter

Okoji R. Oko: *The Grammar of Questions Formation in Yala Language*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 1992, 144 pp.

This book of 144 pages is a grammatical analysis of interrogation or question formation in Yala. It is a response to the call for the development of Nigerian languages stipulated both in the Nigerian constitution and the National Policy on Education of 1977 reviewed in 1981. The aim of this policy is to explore the possibility of using indigenous languages as media of instruction at different levels of education. The grammar is solidly descriptive and the theoretical orientation is eclectic. With the level of development of Nigerian languages and Yala language in particular and the readership aimed at, such an approach is the right one. This is the second attempt at an analysis of aspects of Yala grammar, the first having been done by Bunkowske in 1976. In the main, the difference between the two is that, while Bunkowske gives cursory attention to various aspects of the grammar, this analysis gives a concise description of an aspect of the grammar of Yala.

The Grammar of Questions Formation in Yala Language consists of four chapters, the first being an introduction, while the last three form the core of the study. Interestingly, the introduction informs us that there are in fact three dialects of Yala in Cross River State viz: Yala of Yala, Yala Ikom and Yala Obubra. This dialects cluster, while having between 92.5 to 95 percent cognacy amongst themselves, have an 83 percent cognacy with Idoma in Benue State. Idoma and Yala therefore form a language cluster and belong to the Benue Congo group of languages (cf. Williamson 1989).

Of interest and of consequence in the introduction also is the orthography or the alphabet system proposed for the language. While the orthography in the main agrees with that of Bunkowske, it changes the /ɔ/ and /ɛ/ sounds to /o/ and /e/ respectively following the principle of harmonization with other Nigerian languages, and also for convenience. With the Bible already translated into Yala, the implications of the modification of the orthography is quite clear. The introduction also gives an insight into the verbal and nominal categories of the language.

In the main study (chapters 2-4), the description of the grammar of questions is done from the point of view of:

- (i) the position of question particle;
- (ii) question word movement and
- (iii) verb position.

Being descriptive, it looks at morphological markers, phonological markers, the syntactic peculiarities of the constructions and intonational patterns where relevant.

The study looks at three main question types: Yes-no questions, wh-questions and embedded questions. Oko notes that for yes-no questions such as 'Did you eat?' -

- (1) **A** **ré** **ōjwōré,**
 You-sg eat food-PAST-YNM

what marks the question aspect is that the final vowel of the sentence is lengthened and the tone of this vowel is invariably lower by one pitch level, except if such a vowel already carries a low tone. Oko puts forward compelling evidence to show that other question types such as tag questions, alternative questions, rhetorical questions and deference questions, which are morphosyntactically related, be treated as sub-types of yes-no questions, and for that reason handles all of the above as such. Of interest here is the proposition that formation of the tag in Yala is not a function of the negative polarity of the main sentence. Thus, there is what can best be described as a type of constant polarity tag, where the tag remains constantly negative, irrespective of the polarity of the main sentence. For instance, sentences (2) and (3) have (4) and (5) as the respective equivalents in Yala.

- (2) **She ate didn't she?**
(3) **She did not eat, did she?**
(4) **Ó** **ré** **ōjwōré,** **íngōo** **nū?**
 he/she eat food so NEG-YNM
 'She ate, isn't that so?'
(5) **Ó** **ré** **ōjwōré** **ní** **íngōo** **nū**
 he/she eat food NEG so NEYNM

Therefore the expected response of tags in Yala is to reaffirm the truth value of the main sentence, regardless of the value of the tag. This is a departure from English language tag analysis. It may be found, with more studies, that most Nigerian languages may have a similar tag formation.

Following Lyons (1977), Langacker (1969 and 1970) Harris (1978) analyses which regard a yes-no question as having an underlying disjunctive proposition

formed by combining the affirmative with a corresponding negation of that affirmation, Oko proposes that the sentence (6) is the underlying structure for sentence (7):

- (6) **Óō** **hē** **ahrwo** **kēē** **ōō** **hē** **ahrwo** **ní?**
 he/she-HAB V- snore CONJ he/she-HAB V- snore NEG
 'Does he snore or doesn't he snore?'

underlies the sentence:

- (7) **Óō** **hē** **ahwroo?**
 he/she-HAB V- snore-YNM
 'Does he snore?'

S₂ is then deleted under identity conditions, resulting in (8):

- (8) **Óō** **hē** **ahwro**
 he/she-HAB V- snore-
 'He /She snore'.

Sentence (8) is a declarative. To get the corresponding yes-no interrogative another rule is needed to introduce the yes-no interrogative marker in order to arrive at the surface form in (7) above.

The analysis of Wh-questions, while being in the main descriptive, makes a slight use of Transformational grammar for the purpose of clearer explication. This section looks at simple Wh-questions, echo questions and alternative Wh-questions. Wh-questions in Yala, as in many African Languages, are introduced by question words. In Yala, they are: 1. **Ōnye** 'who', 2. **ojí** 'what', 3. **abá** 'where', 4. **wúchē iyí** (lit. because what) 'why', 5. **Yēgrāa oná** (lit. time which) 'when', 6. **oná** 'which', 7. **emlāa** 'how many', 8. **iyīōnye** (lit. GEN who) 'whose'.

Wh-questions in Yala are formed by the introduction of these words at initial position followed by the focus marker **nāa**, with the particle **má** occurring sentence finally in some cases. Of particular note in this section is the relationship between Wh-questions, relative constructions and focussing in Yala. This correlation seems to be found in other African languages (Welmers 1973). In Yala, Oko gives compelling reasons to propose one movement rule for Wh-questions, relativisation and focussing. Question words are removed when they occur in the object position in the underlying structure. For example, 'You are going to where?' underlies 'Where are you going to?'. The 'where' in the object position of the former sentence is moved to the initial position in the latter sentence. What Oko is proposing is that in Yala, this same rule accounts for relative constructions and focussing, which also take the **naa** and **ma** particles.

A similar phenomenon is attested in Ibibio (Essien 1989) where the particle involved is **ke**.

The third major section of this work examines embedded questions such as (9) and (10):

- (9) **Agbo jōokū ni lẹ myẹ k̄āa yá ō gbáá O**
 Agbo know NEG hunger YNE do she much YNE
 'Agbo doesn't know whether she is very hungry.'
- (10) **Ẹkọọ jẹ onē nāa ō chikpō má ni**
 Ẹkọọ know the one FOC she want WHM NEG
 Ekor doesn't know which one she wants.

Sentence (9) is a yes-no embedded question. In analysing embedded question in Yala, Oko made recourse to Langacker's Q-less analysis of embedded interrogatives as opposed to others (Katz and Postal 1964, Baker 1970), thus capturing simplicity and easy understanding. In Yala yes-no embedded questions are marked by **kaa** preverbally and **o** sentence finally, e.g., (11).

- (11) **Ogbūdú k̄āa gēē wǎ o**
 Ogbudu YNE MOD come YNE
 'I wonder if Ogbudu will come.'

In Wh-embedded questions, the clauses are marked by a question word which occurs as the head of the question clause, and a clause final particle **ma** except in negative constructions:

- (12) **Ń jẹ ọchẹ nūi wā má.**
 I know person FOC come WHM
 'I know the person who came.'

Here **ọchẹ** is the question word, while **má** is the question marker.

In conclusion, Oko in this study has proposed modifications of earlier analysis of aspects of Yala orthography, notably the changing of /ɔ/ and /e/ to /o/ and /e/ respectively for convenience and based on the principle of harmonization. The study has examined Alternative interrogatives, Tag interrogatives and Embedded interrogatives. The presence of a question particle in Wh-questions in Yala is not uncommon in languages as Ultan (1978) has attested. Oko has observed that yes-no particles occur sentence finally in Yala. This provides support for Ultan's hypothesis that SVO languages tend to have S-final question particles (Ultan 1978). Again, Oko's finding that WH-interrogatives have a clause final particle seems to correlate with Ultan's observation that question particles may sometimes occur with questions words.

Furthermore, Yala as a language with an SVO word order allows leftward, unbounded WH-movement. For instance, the two sentences below are acceptable and grammatical:

- (13) **Abá nāa a yẹ gaa má?**
 Where FOC you-sg walk go WHM
 'where are you going to?'
- (14) **A yẹ gāa abá?**
 You-sg walk go where
 'where are you going to?'

But, while (13) and (14) perform the same function – that of asking the addressee his destination – they differ in their degree of emphasis: (13) is more emphatic than (14). The response for (13) would be (15) below while the response for (14) would be (16).

- (15) **Okuku nāa n yẹ gāa áne**
 Okuku FOC I walk go COP-FOC
 'It is Okuku that I am going to.'
- (16) **N yẹ gāa Okuku**
 I walk go Okuku
 'I am going to Okuku.'

From the above examples, we find that WH-movement is correlated with syntactic focusing. (It is also observed in Ibibio [cf. Essien 1989] and with further research may be found in other African languages.) Oko's observation that WH-words in Yala have corresponding nominals like 'person', 'thing', 'place', 'time', 'reason' and 'manner' appears to be a characteristic of many African languages such as Igbo, Yoruba, Kpelle and Efik, as attested by Welmers (1973). Further research in other African languages may reveal the same phenomenon.

In the main, Oko's findings suggest that most languages have similar shapes in the underlying constructions. *The Grammar of Questions Formation in Yala Language* is well organised, compact, precise and a contribution to the growth of the Yala language and linguistic knowledge in general.

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