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## GUIDE FOR CONTRIBUTORS

### Aims:

ELTT is a bi-annual journal devoted to the publication of articles, research reports and reviews on English Language Teaching for those involved in the teaching of English as a Second Language. It aims to:

- Provide a forum of exchange of ideas and experiences for teachers of English.
- Encourage teachers and researchers, publishers and writers to work together to develop teaching procedure, ideas and materials for the advancement of ELTT;
- Promote and support research in the areas of English for Academics/Special purposes.

Although ELTT welcomes contributions in all areas of English Language research, greater emphasis will be given to papers with strong practical classroom experience and application. Such areas may cover Needs Analysis, Course Design, Methodology, Testing, Materials Development, Programme Management, Teacher Training, and Evaluation.



## EDITORIAL

From May 26<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> 2004, English Language teachers and researchers in Nigeria gathered at the Federal University of Technology, Minna, Niger State, for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference under the aegis of English Language Teaching Today (ELTT). The theme of the conference was: Language, Technology and Democratic Culture.

The choice of the theme is instructive for two reasons: Nigeria's return to democratic governance after years of military rule, with all its attendant institutional and social dislocations; and, in consideration of a global techno-reality. The aim was for the conference of teachers to discuss issues within this thematic perspective.

It is becoming a tradition to consider some of the worthy contributions at conferences for documentation in the ELTT journal, apart from the book of Proceedings. We are keeping to that practice here in this volume.

The following seven papers have been selected for this first issue of the third volume. Paper 1 by Prof. Nwogu is a lead paper and is on Discourse Analysis and its implications for EAP/ESP. Another paper by Nwachukwu is on a similar subject of Text Analysis, this time in relation to literary texts. Two papers by Adelabu, and Adelabu and Fadimu look at choice and construction of Reading and Written texts, within Nigerian tertiary education. The last three papers are on Contrastive Analysis studies of English and three different Nigerian languages. All papers are located within the Nigerian English language teaching milieu, and are of immediate relevance.

*Editorial Collective*

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## A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVES IN ENGLISH AND NUPE LANGUAGES: IMPLICATIONS FOR ESL TEACHING

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### Abstract

Languages differ in various aspects such as phonology, syntax, morphology and semantics. Nupe and English languages are not exceptions. These differences tend to affect Nupe speakers as they learn English as a second language. This paper carries out a contrastive analysis of possessive adjectives in Nupe and English languages. It takes a critical look at the different facets of adjectives in English and compares them with what obtains in Nupe language. This analysis gives a clearer picture of the similarities and differences in possessive adjectives in the two languages. The major point of similarity discovered is the fact that possessive adjectives modify nouns in the two languages as well as in the concept of the plurality of the possessed. The differences are however many and these are likely to pose learning difficulties to the learners. The paper therefore offers worthwhile recommendations for effective teaching and learning of possessive adjectives in particular and English grammar in general to not only Nupe learners of English as a second language but all learners of English as a second language.

### Introduction

It is a well known fact that when two languages are in contact, there is bound to be areas of interference resulting from differences in their phonological, syntactic and semantic orientations. The case of Nupe and English languages is not an exception. It is the aim of this paper to carryout a contrastive analysis of possessive adjective in Nupe and English languages with a view to highlighting the possible areas of similarities and differences which might facilitate or hinder the learning of English as a second language.

English language is an international language and the lingua franca in Nigeria. It is the language of Government, Law, Education to mention only a few and therefore the medium of instruction in schools. Nupe is a Nigerian language whose speakers also use English language to receive instructions in schools. However, the differences between the two languages are bound to affect the smooth flow of communication when teaching and learning is taking place with English as a medium of instruction.

This paper therefore deems it necessary to carry out a contrastive analysis of possessive adjectives in English and Nupe with great emphasis on areas where they facilitate or hinder learning as well as provide useful recommendations for effective classroom teaching and learning of English language.

### Contrastive Analysis

Contrastive analysis according to Crystal (1992) is the study of forms of language learning, the identification of points of structural similarity and difference between two languages. The assumption of this kind of analysis is that, points of difference will be areas of potential difficulty in the learning of one or another.



Contrastive analysis operates in a particular order which is, by first writing a description of a particular subset of each language to be compared (i.e. descriptions of phonology, morphology, and syntax) and then compares these two subsets, noting the differences and similarities. From the comparison, a prediction is made as to what the learner will find difficult (or easy) to learn Headbloom (1979).

The above then shapes our discussion on the contrastive analysis of possessive adjectives in Nupe and English languages.

### English Possessive Adjectives

Possessives are markers or words that are used to show ownership or relationship between a subject and a verb. The English possessive belongs to two series, Quirk and Greenbaum (1973), Christophersen and Sandved (1969). They are the attributives referred to as possessive adjectives. The possessive adjectives are **your, my, our, his, her, its, their**, while the possessive pronouns are **yours, mine, ours, his, hers, its, theirs**. Examples:

1. This is **our** country.
2. The students are having **their** examinations.
3. He plays with **his** children.
4. This book is **mine**.

Possessives can be expressed in different ways (Dillingham and Walkins, 1988). They are:

1. Use of 's' genitive
2. use of 'of'
3. By juxtaposition of nouns
4. Use of **have, get, possess** and other semantically related verbs.

### Use of 's' genitive

Possessive adjectives are marked in different ways through the use of possessive markers. The 's' possessive marker is used with nouns to denote human beings. This is done in the following numerous ways.

1. Apostrophe and 's' for possessive of singular nouns not ending in 's' e.g. child's cup, boy's scout, man's shirt etc.
  2. Apostrophe and 's' for possession of plural nouns not ending in 's' e.g. children's cup, men's shirt.
  3. Use of 's' for plural of singular nouns ending in 's' e.g. Charles's, actress's etc.
  4. When plural noun ending in 's' is followed by a word beginning with 's' use only the apostrophe not 's' e.g. dickens', stones' etc.
  5. Use without 's' to form the possession of plural noun ending in 's' e.g. Jonese's car, waitresse's works etc.
  6. Use 's' to form the possessive to indefinite pronoun e.g. everybody's, someone's etc.
  7. When you use two names or more linked by 'and', you put the apostrophe 's' after the last name or noun e.g.  
Amina and Ali's house  
Bose and Tunde's class  
The builder and the architect's plans.
  8. In compound nouns such as mother in-law, accountant general etc., the 's' and apostrophe go with the first noun as in mother's in-law, accountant general's, wife's sister, the sun's rays, my father in-law's house etc.
  9. The president of Nigeria's eldest son.
  10. The man I saw yesterday's car.
- The above is known as group genitive.



**Independent or elliptic genitive**

Christopherson and Sandved (1969); Quirk and Greenbaum (1973) respectively refer to independent or elliptic genitive as genitive in which the head word modified by the genitive may be omitted if the context makes its identity clear.

Examples:

John's is a nice officer  
My car is faster than Audus

**Zero genitive:** This occurs especially where '-ce' or 'ss' terminate the words. Examples like **brace, prince, forgiveness, goodness**

e.g. for goodness' sake  
for forgiveness' sake etc.

**Local genitive:** This is restricted to institutionalized expression where no head needs to be mentioned. It is used in the following three cases. Quirk and Greenbaum (1973)

- (a) for normal residence e.g. My brother's  
the Audu's  
the Mohammed's
- (b) for institutions such as public building's where the genitive is usually a saint's name e.g.  
St. Paul's Cathedral  
St. James' palace
- (c) For a place where business is conducted e.g. the barber's  
The Chemist's  
The butcher's

**Use of 'of' genitive**

The 'of' genitive is used with nouns denoting inanimate things or objects. Examples: the roof of the house, the colour of the dress etc.

It should be noted that the genitive 'of' is replaceable by other prepositional constructions. Examples:

Shakespeare's plays can also be referred to as plays **by** Shakespeare.  
Nigeria's influence = Influence **from** Nigeria

**Juxtaposition of Nouns**

The juxtaposition of nouns as in

man eater	-	eater of man
table leg	-	leg of a table
fire fighters	-	fighters of fire
Nigeria government	-	government of Nigeria etc.

Possessive is also expressed in English by the use of verbs such as **have, get, possess** and other semantically related verbs. Examples:

1. He was possessed by some devils
2. He possesses an enormous wealth
3. Ali has got many houses in Minna

It should be known that the complex systems and use of possessive markers as discussed above do not exist in Nupe language and this can be a possible area of difficulty.

**The structure of Possessive Adjective in English and Nupe**

The most fundamental characteristics of Nupe adjective generally is that it comes after the noun or pronoun. It describes or modifies in the case of the possessive adjective, it is the case of possessed before the possessor. For instance:

<u>English</u>	<u>Nupe</u>	<u>Direct Translation</u>
Audu's car	Mato Audu	car Audu
Audu's cars	Matozhi Yan Audu or mato Auduzhi	cars of Audu



The child's shirt	Ewo egi	shirt child
The child's shirts	Ewozhi yan egi	shirts of child
The children's shirts	Ewozi yan egizhi	shirts of children
Amina's book	Takada Amina	book Amina
Amina's books	Takadazhi yan Amina	books of Amina

From the above examples, it is clear that the use of possessive adjective in Nupe using the possessive marker 's' is a case of possessor before the possessed. Secondly, the plurality is not steady, sometimes it is on the possessor and at the other times on the possessed. For instance, 'Mato Auduzhi' can mean both Audu's car or cars belonging to Audu and company. However, 'matozhi yan Audu' is also permitted. The addition of 'yan' in the construction means 'of' which is the equivalent of the 's' possessive marker particularly where the possessor or the possessed is in plural form.

**Possessive Adjectives with Pronoun acting as determiners**

There are seven classes of personal pronouns in English such as **I, you, he, her, our, their, it**, while Nupe has six. The pronouns he/her have the same referent 'wun' while 'it' has no permanent referent in Nupe language.

The singular and plural 'you' have different referents as 'wun' and 'ye' respectively.

<u>English</u>	<u>Nupe</u>
I	mi
You (singular)	we
You (plural)	ye
He	wun
Her	wun
They	aa
Our	yi
It	wun

The above English personal pronouns also correspond with possessive pronoun and adjective respectively. Examples:

<u>Personal Pronoun</u>	<u>Possessive adjective</u>	<u>Possessive pronoun</u>
I	my	mine
You	your	yours
He	his	his
She	her	hers
It	its	its
We	our	ours
They	their	theirs

Personal pronoun, possessive adjective and possessive pronoun in Nupe Language have the following correspondence.

<u>Personal Pronoun</u>		<u>Possessive Adjective</u>		<u>Possessive Pronoun</u>	
English	Nupe	English	Nupe	Nupe	
I	- Mi	my	- Yan me		Yan mi
You	- we	Yours	- Yan wun		Yan wun
He	- wun	his	- yan wun		Yan wun
She	- wun	she	- Yan wun		Yan wun
It	- wun	Its	- Yan wun		Yan wun
They	- Ye	Theirs	- Yan Ye		Yan Ye
We	- Yi	Our	- Yan yi		Yap yi

The sort of correspondence which exists in English does not in Nupe language as can be seen from the table above. However, for the purpose of illustration and comparison, the following nouns will be used in their singular and plural forms in the two languages.



English		Nupe	
Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
hand	hands	Egwa	egwa zhi
head	heads	eti	etizhi
dog	dogs	Eshigi	Eshigizhi
<b><u>Possessive Adjective 'my'</u></b>			
my head	my heads	Eti mi	Eti mizhi
my hand	my hands	Egwa mi	Egwa mizhi
my dog	my dogs	Eshigi mi	Eshigi mizhi
<b><u>'Your' Singular</u></b>			
your head	your heads	Eti we	Eti we
your hand	your hands	Egwa wezhi	Egwa wezhi
your dog	your dogs	Eshigi we	Eshigi wezhi
<b><u>His/her</u></b>			
his/her head	heads	Eti wun	Eti wunzhi
his/her hand	hands	Egwa wun	Egwa wunzhi
his/her dog	dogs	Eshigi wun	Eshigi wunzhi
<b><u>Our</u></b>			
our hand	our hands	Egwa yi	Egwa yizhi
our head	our heads	Eti yi	Eti yizhi
our dog	our dogs	Eshigi yi	Eshigi yizhi
<b><u>Their</u></b>			
their hand	their hands	Egwa yezhi	Egwa yezhi
their head	their heads	Eti ye	Eti yezhi
their dog	their dogs	Eshigi ye	Eshigi yezhi

From the comparison above, the following observations can be made.

1. The Nupe language maintains the system of possessed before the possessor and this situation obtains even when there is pluralization of the noun. The possessive adjectives are therefore post-modifiers in Nupe language.
2. There is no difference between he/she due to lack of gender distinction in the use of pronoun.
3. The pluralization is on the possessor rather than on the possessed as obtains in English. Moreover, the possessor comes before the possessed even in structures where there are other types of adjectives in the same sentence. Examples:

Possessor	+	English Adjective	+	Possessed
My		beautiful		slave
Ali's		nice		house
The children's		small		room

#### Nupe:

Possessed + Adjective + Adjective + Possessor

Wuzhi (slave) bonlogi (beautiful) mi (my)

Emi bonlogi (house) wangi (nice) yan Audu (of Audu)

Kata (room) tetengi (small) yan (of) Egizhi (children)

In Nupe, the possessed still comes before the possessor even in sentences involving demonstrative pronouns, possessive pronoun and possessive adjective e.g.



1. This is my car: The car is mine.  
Nupe: Emi mi dan nan: Emi nna yan mi wun yio  
DT: House my this: House this my he is
2. That is our class: That class is ours  
Nupe: Aji yi dau na: Aji nadau da na yan yi yio  
DT: Class our there: Class there there of our is.
3. These are their books: These books are theirs  
Nupe: Takadazhi yan aa dan na: Takada nanazhi yan yio  
DT: Books of there is this: Book these of their
4. Those are your friends: Those friends are yours.  
Nupe: Eya wozhi dau na: Eya nazhi dau da na ya we aa yio.  
DT: Friend your + plure there: Friends those of you they are

However, in the light of the above analysis, the following similarities and differences can be observed in the use of possessive adjectives in the two languages.

#### Similarities

1. There are singular and plural possessive adjectives in the two languages e.g.  
My book - Takada mi  
Our book - Takada yi
2. The concept of plurality of the possessed exists in both languages.  
In Nupe, it is through the addition of 'zhi' suffix while in English through multiplicity of ways.
3. In both languages, possessive adjectives are used to modify nouns.
4. Possessive Adjective in both languages indicate possession or ownership.

#### Differences

The differences in the use of possessive adjectives in the two languages are:

1. Possessive adjectives in English pre-modify the noun or limit its function while in Nupe it post modifies.
2. In Nupe plurality is done through the 'zhi' suffix while in English it is through many ways. Also, in English, plurality is on the possessed while in Nupe it is on the possessor.
3. English Language has 's' added to apostrophe or apostrophe + 's' which occurs in many ways to show possession. This does not exist in Nupe Language.
4. In English, there is word to word relationship between the subject, possessive adjective, and possessive pronoun which does not exist in Nupe Language.
5. There is no gender distinction in the use of pronoun in Nupe, therefore he/her are referred to as 'wun'.
6. There is no apt 'it' equivalent in Nupe language. Sometimes, the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular 'wun' is also used for 'it'.

#### **Implication for Curriculum Development**

English Language is a very important instrument of communication in the world. In Nigeria, it is the language of government and instruction in schools. As a result of the importance attached to English in Nigeria, its effective teaching is worthwhile and should be the collective responsibility of the teachers, learners, parents, government, curriculum planners and the entire society.

In view of the problems highlighted in this study, teachers should expose the students adequately to the language to enhance appropriate language habits. Each structure of the language should be taught gradually through constant repetition to ensure remembering and minimize the problems of rule generalization and misapplication.

Secondly, English textbooks should make correlation between each aspect of English. For instance, what is taught in grammar should be reflected in comprehension, oral and written works, the four language skills should be adequately represented. They should also allow room for revision as this allows previously learnt structures to become part of the Nigerian students and in the light of the mother tongue interferences revealed by this study. Curriculum planners should



among others bear in mind the linguistic differences existing between the learners' mother tongue and English when designing the English Language curriculum. They should make English Language curriculum child-centred by considering the learners background experience as well as expose them to situational contexts that will kindle their interest in learning the language.

### Conclusion

This paper has identified areas of possessive adjectives where English and Nupe languages share some similarities. These include the presence of singular and possessive adjectives in the two languages, the concept of the plurality of the possessed and the fact that these adjectives are used to modify nouns in the two languages. From the foregone analysis, it was realized that these areas though obtainable in the two languages also differ in some respects, for instance, the system of pluralization is only through the 'zhi' suffix while in English through various means.

The paper has also isolated areas where possessive adjectives differ entirely in the two languages. For instance, in the position of possessive adjective, use of apostrophe with or without 's', and absence of gender distinction in the use of pronoun in Nupe language. All these areas are bound to pose some difficulties for Nupe learners of English as a second language. The problems discovered in this paper could also be true of other Nigerian languages. Therefore, the recommendations given therein would go a long way in solving these problems.

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