THE IDEOPHONES IN ANAANG LANGUAGE: FROM THE SYNTACTIC POINT OF VIEW

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Abstract
From the standpoint of the modern transformational-generative theory, grammar is an embodiment of morphology, phonology, syntax and semantics of any natural language. This paper focused attention on the

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system of rules that controls the occurrences and the distribution of ideophones in Anaang. Grammar is used here in the sense of syntax, though some references may be made to other levels, where necessary. By so doing, this work will be more meticulous and exhaustive. As the first detailed research work ever into ideophones in Anaang language, the researchers have made a detailed and painstaking examination and description of these syntactic categories in Anaang language with grammatical implications. Ibibio and Anaang languages are mutually intelligible; therefore, the researchers have reviewed the existing literature related to the Ibibio language and ideophones generally but with specific attention on the ideophones in Anaang language. In the course of this research work, the researchers have discovered very striking and peculiar characteristics of ideophones in Anaang language. The methodology has been that of assembling a bulk of data from different sources before evaluating their syntactic behaviour. From the researcher’s discoveries, conclusion was drawn with recommendations on the need for the inclusion of this aspect of oral literature in the syllabus of our primary school system.

Not many researches have been done on the different aspects of Anaang language. In spite of this, it appears not much attention has been paid on ideophones. Even where there is any, most writers on the ideophones tended to concentrate on the phono-semantic aspect with only scant attention to the grammar or syntactic aspect of ideophone. That is, most studies of ideophones pay attention almost exclusively to phonological and semantic features of these words. The analysis of the ideophone from the phono-semantic perspective alone without considering its grammar is incomplete. This has posed a challenge to the researchers’ inquisitive minds. This work intends to examine what makes the ideophones look peculiar- its characteristic nature and the grammar of ideophones in Anaang language. It is necessary to point out as an introductory remark, that for the purpose of this study, the researchers are making use of the definition of Ekere (1987:48) as the operational definition of the ideophone as:

‘a lexical item which, while exhibiting certain formal, distributional and semantic characteristics that are distinct from those of non-ideophones, has some formal, distributional and semantic properties with those non-ideophones with which it enters into paradigmatic relationship, and to whose grammatical classes it can be assigned’

The model used in this work is the transformational generative model.
The Ideophones in Anaang Language: From the Syntactic Point of View

Statement of the Problem

As a developing language, there is still a great deal to be done about the grammar of the Anaang language so as to enhance its development. Therefore, as native speakers of Anaang language, the researchers have deemed it appropriate to register a group concern for studies in this aspect of Anaang language (ideophones) to be carried out. Language, we all know, is a mark of identification for a people and or human race. If various studies in Anaang language and its properties fail to include the aspects of the grammar of ideophones, to say the least, it will make the language a sick one. It is the researchers’ opinion that ideophone is a very fertile area which is capable of inspiring academic investigations for very striking results, Ekere (1987). It is however, important to note that since the researchers of this work are all working on the development of Anaang language towards an international status comparable to that of English, that similar grammatical structures as those found in English be exclusively analysed in order to uncover new grounds on how far the structures are similar or different in function and distribution, and then be able to formulate grammatical rules, the violation of which would lead to ungrammatical structures. The researchers are more encouraged because the orthography of the Anaang language has been approved as “School Worthy”, and because the Anaang people are showing greater interest in the development of their language. This practical demonstration on the part of these scholars goes to confirm what Noss, (1985:34) puts down as evidence of the existence of the ideophones, especially in African languages as follows:

\[\text{that the ideophone is a part of language is obvious, that i is used in daily discourse is clearly evident, that it is an important literary device can be seen from the study of oral literature, that it is a unique linguistic entity is apparent in even a cursory survey of its occurrence in oral texts.}\]

On The Term: ‘Ideophone’

The term: Ideophone tends to raise a number of questions for the linguists as to whether ideophones are peculiar to African languages, what criteria set ideophone as a class and what they contribute to the grammar of a language. Statistics has shown that only a few authors mention the existence of ideophones in languages spoken outside Africa. Akpan, (1996:85), noted that:

\[\text{Ideophone, just like poetry, is a speaking picture which relates what is seen by only the mind’s eye to the other different senses of man. Therefore, the evaluation of ideophones depends on the speaker’s sensitivity, his imagination, his mental perception and his cultural background.}\]
Ekere (1987) asserted that ‘the bulk of the literature on the ideophone draws on African languages for data related ideophones.’ Authors have defined ideophones in specific languages or surveyed the existing literature and or have viewed this phenomenon called ideophone from different angles. By reason of economy of space, this paper intends to accommodate a few definitions of ideophone. The oldest definition of ideophone is that of Doke (1935) which defines ideophone as “a word often onomatopoeic which describes a predicate, qualitative or adverb in respect of manner, colour, sound, smell, action, state or intensity”.

The above definition is apt when the versatile nature of ideophone is to be considered, that it occurs alone, and as in the examples below:
1. Mmu-mmu-mmu-mmuu. “all should remain quiet or silent”.
2. Ami nwanake ke mmaa-mmaa-mmaa: “I am not sharing in loving to a fault”.
3. Kpang kpang kpang, Uwaah. Etok ako abomo, Uukpooh meaning “complete exhaustion of what was in abundant supply while the small pot containing it breaks also with aloud sound uukpooh”.

Here, the ideophone may be seen to be linguistically very versatile because it meets virtually all that is said in the above definition by Doke. This is a vivid representation of an idea in sound which he later referred to as ‘interjectional’s descriptive’ Doke (1935:11). Ideophones are known to be abundant in African folktales, songs, riddles and rhymes, most of which are fast disappearing from some speech communities in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular.

Kunene (1965) posited concerning ideophone that:

The most remarkable thing about ideophone is that it constitutes a dramatic presentation of past and future events and states. By this, the speaker conjures up before the eyes of his listener events which are not actually happening or states which are not existing at the time of speaking. It is for this that ideophones are often accompanied by gestures of mimicry and sometimes indeed completely replaced by them (P.44).

and then defines ideophone as ‘a dramatization of actions and states’. Not satisfied with the above definition, Kunene concludes that ideophone is a “Dramalogue”.

Apart from the onomatopoeic imitation of sounds by ideophones, iconicity in ideophony can be achieved by a close relationship between segments and segmental sequences on the one hand and meaning on the other. In explaining the literary role of ideophones, Noss (1975), having considered the formal and syntactic properties of ideophones, stated that: “the ideophone is impressionistic and sensual. It expresses a feeling or emotion or event by becoming that feeling or emotion, event, state or quality”
However, it has to be noted that all the definitions presented above are based on sound-sense relationships. It is the problem of acceptable or precise definition that led Ekere (1987) to add that, one major characteristic of attempted definitions of ideophone so far has been the tendency among ideophonists to emphasize the formal and the distributional deviation of the ideophone from the phototactic and the syntactic constraints of the language in which it is found. This tendency can be referred to as the aberration myth or the uniqueness hypothesis.

In spite of the postulations above, Schaefer (1984) noted that the term ‘ideophone’ “has been used... as a description of phonological and grammatically irregular word forms found in many languages in Africa”. Here again, Schaefer’s assertion is that ideophone is not only deviant, but also irregular when compared to other word forms in the languages they occur. Every attempt by scholars to allocate ideophone to a specific grammatical class attracts this reaction from Newman (1968:108) who contended that:

\[
\text{The notion that ideophones constitute a grammatical class, far from being a necessary condition to syntactic analysis, impedes such analysis. In the first, the tendency to treat the term ‘ideophone’ as being parallel to terms as noun, verb or adverb conceals the fact that ideophones often constitute a sub-class of some major category.}
\]

But a good range of attempted definitions of ideophone can also be assembled from the works of Doke (1935), Welmers (1973), Noss (1973, 1982, 1985), Ekere (1987) Essien (1990) and other ideophonists. All these scholars have attested to the existence of the ideophone, especially in African Languages, among which is Anaang language. There is a consensus among these authors that no group of words are as visible and yet as elusive as the ideophone. Judging from the views of different scholars on the ideophone and from different manifestations of the ideophone in different languages, it may therefore be difficult, at least for now, to give a comprehensive definition of the ideophone.

It must be borne in mind that a comprehensive definition of ideophone must not fail to account for the directly imitative way of designating concepts where the noise emitted by a sounding object, for example, is portrayed in the word, to the extent that the articulated sounds are capable of reproducing the unarticulated. Therefore, from whatever angle these authors have tended to view the ideophone, the essence of the ideophone still remains the constant sound-sense relationship, (Akpan 1996).
Ideophones in Anaang Language

The Anaang Language, like any other African Language, is very rich in ideophones which are found both in ordinary speech exchanges and in literary texts. Eventhough not much has been published in Anaang Language, much has been written about its native speakers. The poor attitude of native speakers of Anaang towards the development of Anaang Language is captured in the words of Essien (1986:16) when he observed that:

*Having been blackmailed into accepting adiglottic situation in which the ex-imperial language (English) languages, we ourselves sometimes become even fiercer exponents of English in our country plays a dominant role over indigenous.*

This work intends to contribute to the development of the Anaang language by describing the grammar through a syntactic treatment of ideophone. Some striking examples of ideophone in Anaang language can be presented through single phoneme or sequences of phonemes of the language as in:


The new grounds these researchers intend to uncover in the course of analyzing their data on the syntactic distribution or rank scale of the ideophones in Anaang will be based on the grammatical rules which restrict the occurrences of ideophones in sentences such as in (4) below:

4. Ekomobong agwebe ekamba ekwoñ ke afid.

(Verb ideophone)

“Ekomobong has lifted a large snail from faeces”

There is an ideophonic verb in the above instance functioning transitively (Ekere 1987). The picking has to do with a large snail from a filthy place (faeces) and instead of using the non-ideophonic verb ‘aben’ (lift) which would be adequate to capture the type of fortune experienced by Ekomobong, the snail hunter, the ideophonic verb; Agwebe is used to suit the negative and nauseated impression intended to register by the reporter here.

Let us suppose that the above sentence can be generated by the following phrase structure (PS) rules:-

PS rule (i) S ………………….NP + VP
(ii) NP………………... (Adj.) N
(iii) VP…………………V + NP + PP
(iv) PP…………………P + N
(iv) V…………………Verb Ideophone
The following tree diagramme is a corresponding phrase marker for example (4) above.

```
S
   /   
NP  VP
   /   
  V  NP
    /   
   Art. Adj. N P Ñ
  Ekamb egwong ke afid.
```

Ekomobong    agwebe
Ekamba egwong ke afid.

Ekomobong    Has Lifted   a   Large   Snail   from   Faeces

The point of interest here is that such ideophonic verb; agwebe is restricted to that verbal position, and will result in an ungrammatical structure if the ideophone occurs at any other position in the sentence, as in the example below:

5. Ekomobong …ekamba ekwong agwebe ke afid.

However, the sentence will become grammatical if another ideophonic verb is inserted in the empty node (…) left between the head word and the adjective as shown below:


Ekomobong suddenly catches and lifted up a large snail from faeces.

Structures, like the ones above, must be thoroughly analysed to ascertain what rules govern the occurrences of ideophone in Anaang. It will enable the researchers to discover and propose a formal grammar of the different types of ideophones in Anaang language. To achieve this, the description of the collocational restrictions of ideophones in Anaang and the assessment of the company ideophones keep and how they relate in such particular company is incumbent upon the researchers.
Anaang language ideophones may be treated as syntactic items that are optional since they are not obligatory elements of grammatical structure, but the semantic import of the sentences that have or contain them is well worth this study, because ideophones occur as adjectives, nouns, verbs or adverbs, Welmer (1973), Essien (1990) eventhough without situating them in syntactic frames. Take a look at these other instances below:

7. Dr. Denis akeruo gbaam ke isön. Dr. Denis fell heavily to the ground.
8. Ubong achop saam ubok ked. Ubong disappeared at once or suddenly.
9. Ake annam Jaaññ k’idem. I felt a lightening sensation in my body.
10. Ufok ade ake doobo jaai nt’udi. That house was as quiet as grave yard.

Each of the ideophones in Anaang language underlined above describes the situation as accurately, as exactly and as picturesquely as the speaker can verbalize it. It should be noted that each of them functions as adverb of manner because of the sound import they convey. Can this peculiar nature of these words by their sound imports then qualify them as words whose sounds reveal not only the mind of the speaker, but also the meaning of the action so referred?

Characteristics of Ideophones in Anaang Language

Before one can accurately identify an ideophonic item in a particular language, one needs to know what constitutes an ideophonic item in the language in question. It is agreed that ideophone is difficult to define as it was seen from the outset, but there is a basic fact that ideophones have specific definable characteristics in specific languages one of which is Anaang. These definable characteristics make ideophones to succeed where most other words fail due to the direct relationship existing between sound and ideophones, whereas there is no such relationship between sound and non-ideophonic words, Akpan, (1996).

According to Essien, (1979), one of the characteristics of ideophone is its phonological anomaly when compared with the phonological system of the language in which they occur. Hyman, (1975) and Sterk, (1977) jointly asserted that:

*Languages often use exceptional sounds or sound sequences in ideophones, a class of sound which express noises, feelings, intensity, etc...ideophones then, would be that class of items whose phonological structure is exceptional when compared to the general phonological structure of the language.*

The following example share this distinct phonological characteristics in Anaang language:

11. *Njaak njen. Leave me. Enough no more.*

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Another distinctive characteristic of ideophone in Anaang is in the **syllabic structure**. The syllabic structure referred here involves a process of lengthening of segments in proportion to the intensity or the duration of action or state portrayed by the ideophone. For instance,

12. *Asanga andook suuu...d* \(\text{ penetrites into me softly and gradually.}\)

This example contains the syllabic nucleus /u/ lengthened in proportion to the degree of penetration and the time taken in the piercing. This lengthening produces a CVVV...C structure [s u u u...d]. In this process, word division is not normally predetermined, unlike the division of ordinal non-ideophonic items.

**Descriptive potency** is characteristic of ideophones in Anaang language. By explication, it is understood that this class of ideophonic, whether noun, adverb or adjective, all have the quality of being descriptive as in the example below:

13. *Ami mbene anye kpuub k'isong, anye tii-riid* \(\text{and he shouted [tii-riid].}\)

The underlined ideophone above has the quality of being descriptive of the action and the result or consequence of that action.

**Reduplication** is another characteristic of ideophone which is sometimes used for emphasis and lengthening of duration or repeated action. Look at these examples:

14. *Nwoong ase atoi sep-sep-sep* \(\text{and it feels the pot}\)

15. *Nentip asaña kpoi-kpoi-kpoi* \(\text{agworo k'ufok ade.}\)

Finally, **Tone-patterning** is another significant characteristic of ideophone in Anaang language. The non-ideophonic form and the ideophonic forms which are differentiated by tone can be described as homobyms structuring different semantic fields (Ekere 1987). Again, look at these instances:

16. *Jaak anye fap (Verb Non-ideo.) k’idem amo. Let him climb by himself.*


**A Grammar of Ideophones in Anaang Language**

The syntax of ideophones in Anaang Language in particular and its grammar in general will be sorted out and accounted for in this section. The assumption here is based on the simple fact that syntactic analysis will reveal some if not all the distributional properties of ideophones in Anaang Language. As stated earlier, the...
analytical model used in this work is specifically the Traditional-Generative model of Chomsky (1965) but with some modifications as the need arises.

Traditional rules are usually written in two parts. The first specifies exactly what structure a sequence must have if the rules are to apply. The second shows the structure after the application of the rule. At this point, the researchers will sort out the various types of functional ideophonic items and place them accordingly in the class they belong as follows:

**Nominal Ideophones**

This section begins with the second rule. It will analyse the structure of the NP and the syntactic distribution of ideophones in it. Look at the following phrases:


A close examination of the above examples reveal that the ideophones cannot change position with the head noun, else it results in ungrammatical structures. It is necessary at this point to generate a sentence as an instance of nominal ideophone in Anaang as depicted in a tree diagram.


Let us see the diagram representing example (26),

```
S
 /  
NP   VP
 /      
Nom. Ideo.  Asep-sep
          Drip after drip
          /  
          N  
          /  
Asejoho   ekamba  abarñ
          fills  a large pot.

27. *Akpoikpoi ami ade akpok ifañ*. My motorcycle is a tear-rubber.

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From the nominal phrases 18-25 and the sentences 26 and 27, it has been seen that nominal ideophones occur at the subjective position. In the last two examples, the ideophonic nouns also have ordinary nouns; abang (pot) and akpok ifang (tear-rubber) as objects of the sentence, just as non-ideophone nouns also demand.

**Verbal Ideophones**

The identification of verbal ideophones in Anaang Language is based mainly on the phone-semantic criterion because the ideophonic verbs function as an ordinary non-ideophonic verb; it becomes an obligatory item to the syntactic content of the sentence. It then means that without it in the sentence, the sentence would be ungrammatical. Some ideophonic verbs function as simple predicators. Look at these examples:

28. *Da anung alama ilad ande mfin.* Da, you were really mad today.
29. *Usen agwegwem se akana ilong?* What is Usen perambulating about for?
30. *Erim asebe uchoro ajid mkpong.* Rain messed up our ceremony yesterday.

**Adverbial Ideophones**

Whenever the ideophone in Anaang Language functions as an adverb in a sentence, it is optional to the syntactic content of the sentence. Like their non-ideophonic counterparts, ideophonic adverbs represent the A (adjunct) element in the SVO (A) structure. Though they are optional elements in the syntax, they serve the stylistic function of creating powerful imagery, capable of capturing both mental and
sensory images descriptive of the action or state represented by the verb they modify and or the whole sentence which they are capable of modifying, (Akpan, 1996). Let us see the utterances below:

31. *Ikañ ata ufok du-aak-du-aak-du-aak*. Fire burns the house intently

   S  V  O  A  S  V  O  A

32. *Joe amen okpoetap juood*. Joe swallows a lump of spittle disgustingly.

   S  V  O  A  S  V  O  A

33. *Iriañ aforo afro foii*. The arrow flew past suddenly.

   S  V  A  S  V  A

34. *Tai Akpoikpoi agworo inwuek usokusok*. Motorcycle tyre leaks the air slowly

Adjectival Ideophones

Adjectival ideophones in Anaang language behaves much the same way as ordinary adjective; hence they generally precede the noun they qualify. Other types of ideophonic adjectives in Anaang language can also occur before or after the head noun, without any significant difference in meaning. For instance:

35. *Unaiwuot ayen ufokïwed*. “Undependable student”.


   Daring witch.  Witch daring.

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37. **Adiaha** satan isibak’agwo nteked.

**The Daughter of Satan Doesn’t Fear Anybody**

From the above examples, it is observed that the function of ideophone in the sentences determine the ideophonic type used, and not the kind of sentence.

**Comparison of Ideophones with Non-Ideophones in Anaan Language**

Ideophones occupy peculiar positions in the syntactic rank scale of Anaang language grammar. In a more technical sense, ideophones are multivariate in nature. This is because, most of them are sharing the same forms and following the same phonetactic rules as non-ideophonic lexemes do. Therefore, a comparison of ideophones with non-ideophones in Anaang language is better treated in a tabular form as shown below:

**Comparison of Ideophones with Non-Ideophones**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideophone</th>
<th>Non-ideophone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>(a) Kpañ-kpañ-kpañ uwaa-ah.</em> (Adv.) Complete exhaustion of what was in great supply.</td>
<td>*(a) Kpañ. (Verb). “Peel”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(b) Su-u-u-d.</em> (Adverb) “Penetrating softly and slowly”</td>
<td>*(b) Su-u-u-d. (Noun). “the sound of anal farting syndrome”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(c) Utwai.</em> (Adverb). “The sound of a trap catching a prey”</td>
<td>*(c) Utwai. (Verb). “to torture or oppress”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

This study was primarily motivated by the non-availability of existing work on the ideophones in Anaang language as this may be the first attempt towards discovering the features and the distributional functions of this linguistic phenomenon. Ideophones in Anaang share both formal and distributional characteristics with non-ideophones with which they can enter into paradigmatic relationships.

From the analysis and description done in the process of this research, it may be concluded that it is the syntactic distribution and function of ideophone in a sentence that determines the criterion for assigning an ideophone to a lexical class, hence, ideophones can be assigned to four lexical classes: noun, verb, adverb and adjective in Anaang grammar.
Finally, despite the difficulty in defining the ideophone acceptably and conclusively, it has been noted that ideophones in Anaang are pictorial and descriptive but are not phonologically anomalous as the case may be in other languages. The syntactic behaviour of this linguistic category in Anaang as a language in its own right is very peculiar and fascinating. The methodology used in this work is that of assembling a bulk of data from books, journals, and mature native speakers of the Anaang Language from whom verbal data was collected, most of whom were elders, opinion leaders and chiefs in Anaang land as well as their translated versions and interpretations in English. The population of this research was restricted to the eight major local government areas that make up the native speakers of the Anaang language in order to exclude dialectical variants. They are Abak, Etim Ekpo, Essien Udim, Ika, Ikot Ekpene, Obot Akara, Oruk Anam and Ukanafun.

The various attempts at defining ideophones were carefully handled after which the meaning of the ideophones was examined separately as if they were uttered alone. It also analysed their semantic import in relation to the other parts of the sentences within which they occur. It is hoped that the findings and the recommendations proffered by this work would go along way to contributing towards the development of Anaang language to the attainment of international status if implemented.

**Recommendations**

Based on these findings, it has been recommended that a lot of research work should be carried out with a focus on ideophones and other aspects of Anaang language. It is also recommended that ideophones should be included in Anaang language textbooks in great numbers so as to reflect the language in actual usage and to make the texts more effective for teaching purposes.

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