

THEMATIZATION IN NGWA-IGBO

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Abstract

Thematization is a syntactic process that is concerned with the communicative prominence placed on a constituent in a construction. The word 'Ngwa' refers to the people and the geo-political area known as Ngwa land. The Ngwa people are found in Abia State in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Some of the objectives of this paper are: to demonstrate communicative dynamism through the use of marked structures and to show the various ways by which communicative prominence is achieved in the Ngwa – Igbo through the syntactic processes of Left-dislocation, Topicalization, Clefting and Pseudo-clefting. Data for this study was obtained using the elicitation method of translating a set of thematized constructions in the English language into Ngwa-Igbo by two competent native adult speakers of Ngwa-Igbo. Secondary data was collected from text books and the internet which were acknowledged. The theoretical framework used for this paper is the X – Bar theory of phrasal analysis and the tree diagrams will reflect this wherever it is necessary. The reason for the adoption of the X-bar framework is that it provides the required platform for the presentation of thematized constituents. Some of the findings of this paper are: that in Left-dislocation a preposed constituent leaves a ghost copy of itself at the site of extraction and that there is a movement trigger in Cleft constructions in Ngwa-Igbo. This paper has considered thematization only in relation to the foregrounding of lexical item(s), it therefore recommends for an intense study of the syntactic processes used in the thematization of constituents in relation to End Focus in the Ngwa dialect and other languages of the world.

Keywords: *thematization, left-dislocation, topicalization, clefting, X-Bar, Ngwa-Igbo.*

Introduction

The word 'Ngwa' refers to the people and the geo-political area known as Ngwa land. The Ngwa people are found in Abia State in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Ngwa is classified by Williamson and Blench (2003, p. 31) as an Igbo dialect, under the New Benue – Congo, itself a sub – branch of the Niger – Congo languages.

Thematization is a syntactic process that is used in marked structures for communicative dynamism. Thematization of constituents in syntax is a universal feature of human languages that comes in different forms in different languages. For instance in the English Language, objects of active sentences can be thematized via the syntactic process of passivization. In the Igbo language, active structures cannot be passivized due to the poor inflexional

ability of the Igbo verbs. But then this does not mean that the Igbo language does not have other means of thematizing structures in the language. What happens is that while some languages have great syntactic processes of thematization, others have few.

According to Brown and Miller (1985, p. 356), "the constituent that occurs in initial position is the theme, and processes used to make some constituents initial are processes of thematization". This explains that thematization is a syntactic process where a marked constituent at sentence initial position is intentionally used for communicative effectiveness. Brown and Miller, went on to add that the *Thematic subject* is the same thing as the *psychological subject* or *the subject of discourse*. They distinguished this psychological subject from the *grammatical subject* which is *the subject of a sentence*. To them, the terms *theme, rheme, end – focus, topic,*

comment, *given* and *new*, are words which come up whenever the issue of thematization occurs. They went on to add that: *theme*, *rheme* and *end – focus*, also refer to the structural positions within the sentence and that in the English language, the two focal points for thematizing linguistic units are the beginning and the end of a sentence. Following their explanation in the text, the *theme* of a sentence refers to the part of the sentence, that draws the greatest attention of the hearer or reader of a (text) or sentence structure, and that the *theme* is usually at sentence initial position in marked structures; that is structures that have undergone some movement processes. The *rheme*, they explain is the part that comes after the theme. The *rheme* gives added information to whatever message the *theme* has already passed across to the hearer or reader of a text. Implicitly from their assertion, the *theme* of a sentence, is equivalent to the topic or the given information in a piece of conversation, while the *comment* and the *new* refers to the *rheme* of a discourse. To illustrate thematization in sentences, Brown and Miller (1985, p. 356) give the following examples; with the underlined constituents being the thematized structures.

- 1a. Someone parked a large furniture van right outside our front door last night.
- b. A large furniture van, was parked right outside our front door last night.
- c. Last night, someone parked a large furniture van right outside our front door.
- d. Right outside our front door, someone parked a large furniture van last night.

According to Brown and Miller, the propositional structure of each of these sentences is identical; they differ in forms of which constituent is thematized and that (1a) above is the unmarked or neutral form. Thus, from their assertion, thematization is concerned solely with the stressing of a particular part of a sentence for semantic or communicative prominence. In other words, thematization can be effected on any part of the sentence by placing the highest communicative value on the stressed constituent. End – focus according to Brown and Miller (1985, p. 361) is used to delay the identification of a topic until the end of a discourse. This also implies that a constituent can be thematized at sentence final position.

This means that Foregrounding (Focusing) and End-focus are different processes of thematizing a constituent.

In literary studies, thematization is used to refer to the central focus of a text. In other words, the theme is the crux of the matter that the writer unravels to his audience. According to Amaechi (1997, p. 30), thematization is an issue that is concerned with the theme of text. He states that, “the theme is the major or central idea in a particular story or literary work”. He went further to add that the achievement of the theme is the pre – occupation of the writer. To buttress his point, he asserts that the theme of Ola Rotimi’s *The Gods Are Not To Blame* is ‘predeterminism’. In the literary perception and use of the word thematization, there seems to be a degree of relatedness or similarity in the idea of what thematized constituent is in syntax. This similarity comes from the fact that thematized constituents in a sentence forms the focus or nucleus of conversation, while the other parts of the sentence (the rheme) make comment on the theme (topic) of the sentence. On the other hand in literature in the same vein, the thematized issue in a piece of writing is the topic or focus of the general conversation in the text. The contrast lies in the fact that the thematized constituent in syntax is concerned with a part of sentence that is stressed, while that of the literary studies is concerned with the central message that the writer wants to pass across his to his audience.

According to O’ Grady, W., Archibald, J., Aronoff, M., and Rees-Miller, J., (2001, p. 264), “thematization refers to the thematic roles Nps play in sentences such as; agent, patient, instrument, path, location et cetera et cetera”. Thematization referred to here has to do with the argument roles that is assigned to nominals by the nature of the theta- role assigner (the verb) with which they co-occur in a construction. This however, is not the idea of thematization that is considered in this paper. The perception followed in this paper of the term, *thematization* is that which refers to constituents that are projected in any part of a sentence in order to effect a communicative contrast, emphasis or stress.

According to Matthews (2007, p. 406), thematization refers to having the role of *theme*. From his assertion, this means having the role of focus of communication, point of emphasis, stress, or centre of interest in a particular part of a sentence. Again, Matthews (2007, p. 407) using the word *theme* in relation to thematization asserts that the *theme* of a sentence is that part of a sentence

corresponding to what the sentence as a whole is all about, while the other parts are comments on the thematized structure”. Looking at Matthews’s assertion, the *theme* of a sentence can occur in any part of the sentence, but the stressed part of the sentence is the thematic part. Thus, from his assertions one can infer that the thematic part is also equivalent to the topic of conversation.

Ndimele (2007, p. 50), in relation to thematization, asserts that: “Thematic meaning is the type of meaning which an expression conveys depending on how the speaker organizes his message in terms of ordering, focus, and emphasis”. He went on to add that in certain situations, a speaker may decide to make one part of the sentence communicatively prominent over and above other surrounding words in the same sentence. Ndimele notes that the different ways of achieving communicative prominence in a sentence are through focalization, topicalization or through the use of certain prosodic features such as: stress and intonation. The idea of thematization above by Ndimele (2007), is very much the perception of thematization in this paper.

From the internet source, Margoli (2001, p.1), refers to thematization as foregrounding. Margoli classifies sentences into constructional operation and non – constructional operation. The constructional operations refer to marked or thematized structures while the non – constructional operations refer to neutral or unmarked (unthematized) structures. Margoli notes that some of the constructional operations in human language include: Left Dislocation (LD), Topicalization (TOP), Passivization (PASS), Cleft Construction (CL), Pseudo – cleft Construction (PCL) and the process that moves adverbials of all kinds leftward may be termed as Adjunct Fronting (AF). This paper, agrees with Margoli that thematization is effected through constructional operations of one kind or the other. In this paper one shall use as much as possible illustrations in the Ngwa – Igbo to demonstrate thematization through the constructional operations in the dialect. However, it will be important to mention that the use of passive structures in the Ngwa – Igbo and may be Igbo in general is impossible due to the poor inflexional ability of the Igbo verbs, and the inability of the transitive verbs to have a passive form.

Another insight from the internet by Romero and Soria (<http://www.google.com.ng/url?=http://ejhtmu.ir/%3Fbased>) on their study on Referential Metonymy state that, thematization is a “syntactic strategy in assigning

informational prominence in clause structures”. The explanation of this will be that thematization is often found in sentences. They went on to add that the thematic approach to phrases sheds light on the marked word order of elements in a noun phrase (NP) which increases the degree of prominence of a component NP. According to them, they assert that Referential Metonymy is a thematic strategy in syntactic structures, where an NP is marked by the exchange of modifier – head syntactic functions, or by omission and supplantation of the head. To illustrate Referential Metonymy as a means of thematization, they give the examples below:

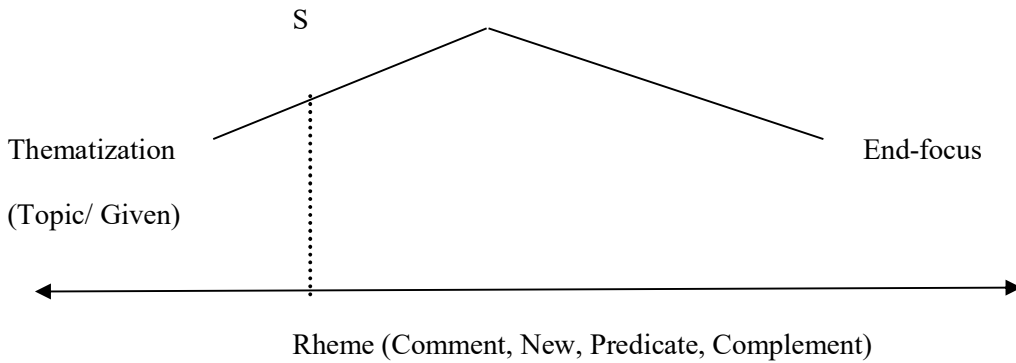
- 2a. That silly lecturer does not say anything interesting.
- b. That silly of a lecturer does not say anything interesting. (Marked by exchange of modifier head functions).
- 3a. The customer of the ham sandwich is waiting for his check.
- b. The ham sandwich is waiting for his check. (Marked by omission and supplantation of the head).

They argue that “the motivation for this type of marked structures is the assignment of prominence to the new information in the NP”. Romero and Soria went further to say that of course, all these thematic structures are identified when they are in context. Their motivation they argue again “is communicative and pragmatically dependent”. These operations they further added “are achieved, among other things by realizing that in the examples above, there is a marked or abnormal presentation of the information, and that in referential metonymy, there is usually a pragmatic (contextual) process of recovery of a deleted NP as in (3b) above. Thus, they define Metonymy as “a marked noun phrase in which a part of a restrictive modifier has been thematized. Implicitly this means that Referential Metonymy is restricted to noun phrases where syntactic operations have taken place for communicative projection of a part.

Romero and Soria also pointed out that structures that are thematized are: the interrogative sentence, imperative sentence, passivized structures, extraposed structures, structures that have gone through tough movement, clefting and there-insertion.

Having briefly seen some of the literatures that refer to the notion of ‘Thematization’, one would not fail to recap the earlier declaration, that this paper is concerned with thematization as it concerns the placement of NPS to a

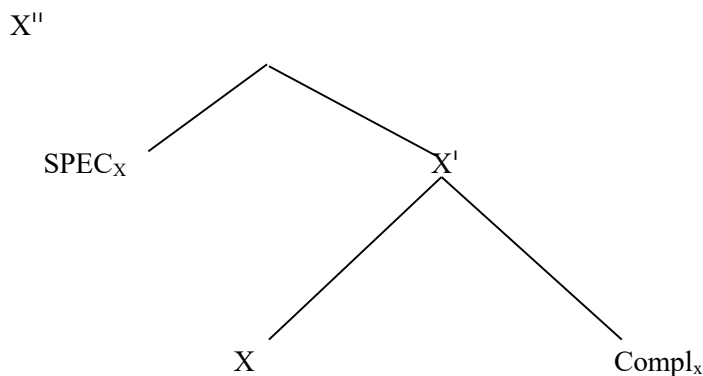
focal point where it is made the topic (nucleus) of communication. The schema below presents a diagram to show the position of a thematized constituent within a sentence.



The diagram above indicates that thematized structures are usually at sentence initial or final position for informational dynamism. It also shows that the thematized constituent can also be called the topic or the given. The rheme from the schema above, can be referred to as the comment, new, predicate or complement of the sentence. From the diagram above, one can also see that End – focus is a syntactic process of delay in the revelation of the centre of communication at the end of asentence. On this note, one moves on to give a brief background of the X – Bar Theory of phrasal analysis on which data on this paper will be analysed.

expanded by Jackendoff (1977) in a monograph entitled “X – Syntax”. The major concerns of the X – Bar Theory are: to account for word order, to determine the configuration of the D – structure, to determine the direction of movement if there is any, to demonstrate constraints in the movement of structural constituents, to determine the structural relationship between the head of a construction and other members of the construction such as: determiners, complements and adjuncts, to recognize intermediate categories like: (N¹, V¹, P¹, I¹), which are larger than the terminal lexical categories; (N, V, P, A) but smaller than the phrasal categories such as: (NP, VP, PP, IP) and so on. The X – Bar schema for phrase structure analysis as proposed by Chomsky and his associates proposed is schematized in the following tree diagram.

The notion of X – Bar Theory was first introduced into grammatical analysis by Chomsky (1970) in his article titled “Remarks on Nominalization” and was later



(Cf. Ndimele, 2004, p. 34)

In the above configuration, X^H is the maximal projection (X^{\max} or XP) of the lexical head X, which for instance may refer to such categories like: IP (inflection projection) and CP (complementizer). The head of a projection is the only obligatory constituent of the projection. It is the unit upon which other constituents are dependent. These other constituents merely modify or limit the reference of the

head. The $SPEC_X$ (specifier of X), refers to such things as determiners which modify the head. $Compl_x$, refers to constituents which the head can be subcategorized for. A prototypical $compl_x$ of X^{\max} in the case of the VP, is the object. The $compl_x$ of a projection is as a result of the inherent property of its head. In this paper, one shall represent the maximal projection of any category as XP and present a rule rewriting XP as follows:

4a. $XP \longrightarrow SPEC_X X^1$

b. $X^1 \longrightarrow X Compl_x$

From the above, the rule rewriting a minimal sentence can be represented thus:

5a. $IP \longrightarrow NP \text{ ---} I^1$

b. $I^1 \longrightarrow I \text{ ---} VP$

c. $VP \longrightarrow V^1 - (NP) (PP) (AP) (CP)$

d. $V^1 \longrightarrow V - (NP) (PP) (AP) (CP)$

e. $NP \longrightarrow (DP) N^1$

f. $N^1 \longrightarrow (DP) (AP) (QP) (CP) \text{ --} N$

The X-bar structure equally includes the complementizer node. The Complementizer structure (CP) has a Cas the head, a TP complement, and an empty specifier position. The complementizer node houses question particles for languages that have overt phonological Q-markers, it is also the site for the placement of conjunctions. Within the X-bar theory, it has been argued that subjects are underlyingly generated in the predicate. This idea is called VP-internal subject hypothesis. The motivation for the VP-internal subject hypothesis is that the verb is the theta role assigner in every syntactic construction. Thus, in X-

bar tree diagram for a language like Irish there is a straight forward instance of V to T movement, while for SVO languages like English, French, and Varta where the subject precedes t (tense), the subject DPs move from the specifier of VP to the specifier of TP. (cf. Carnie 2007, p. 207- 258).

Having seen the background of the Theory of the phrase markers that shall be used for the analysis of data in this paper, one can now present thematization in the Ngwa – Igbo syntax in the next section.

1.2 Thematization in Ngwa-Igbo

In this section of the paper, one will consider: Left – dislocation, Topicalization, Clefting Pseudo-clefting and Imperativization as possible ways of realizing thematization in the Ngwa – Igbo.

Left – dislocation in Ngwa – Igbo

According to Ndimele (2004, p. 122), “Left – dislocation is a leftward movement of and an NP from the complement to a focal point in the subject position in a sentence, where the left – dislocated phrase is picked up

by a pronoun, with the preposed element as its antecedent”. The dislocated constituent is the thematized segment which has become informative and semantically prominent as opposed to other surrounding constituents within the same construction.

The Left-dislocated Subject in Ngwa-Igbo

6a. Úchè nnyèrè Óziomá ákwúkwó.

Uchepr – give – past Ozioma book).

Uche gave Ozioma a book.

- b. Úchè;Ó;nnnyèrè Óziómá ákwúkwó.
 (Uche he/she pr – give + past Ozioma book).
 ‘Uche he/she gave Ozioma the book’.

(6a) is an unmarked construction. (6b) above has a left – dislocated subject. The left – dislocated subject leaves behind an overt trace of itself at the vacated site and it is moved to SPEC¹ position. This trace ‘he’, assumes the subject role of the sentence. The preposed element which is extracted from SPEC- I¹ position is moved into SPEC – C¹ position which is the ultimate landing site for it. The moved subject and its trace are coindexed.

The Left-dislocated Direct Object in Ngwa-Igbo

- 7a. Ùchè égwérélaákpa àhù
 (Uchepr – take – past – pert. Bag that)
 ‘Uchè has taken that bag’.
- b. [Akpaahu]_iÚchè égwéréla ya_i.
 (book that Uchepr – take – past – pert. it)
 ‘That bag, Uche has taken it.

From the above, one observes that when the object NP is extracted and moved into SPEC – C¹ position, an overt

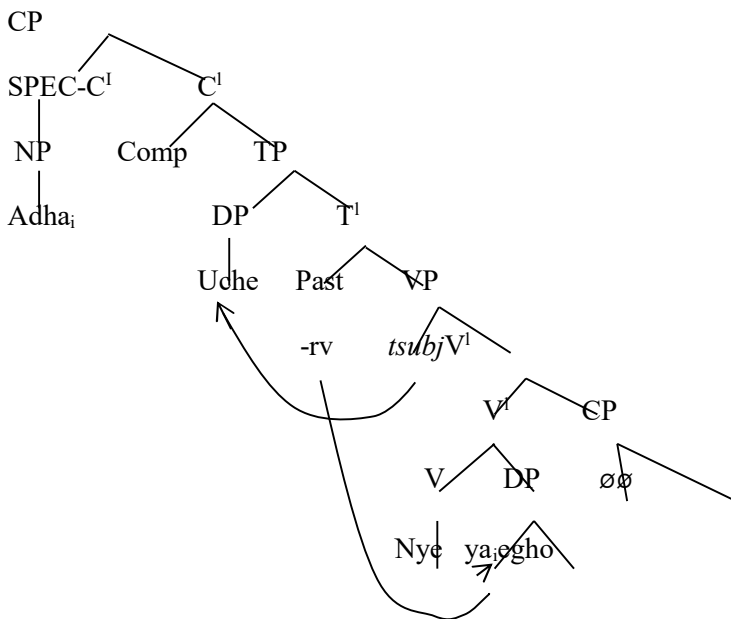


Fig.1: Diagram illustrating the left dislocation of the direct object in Ngwa-Igbo

trace in the case of it comes up. In (7b) this trace is *yá* ‘it’. The preposed constituent is coindexed with the overt trace and they are both in a Θ – chain of the thematic function of patient (object). Thus, *àkpa* ‘bag’ inherits the Θ – role of patient by the inheritance of its trace. One must mention that the preposed constituent in (7b) is moved from an internal A – position (argument) into an \bar{A} (A barred) position. ‘An A- barred position, is a position for which neither case nor Θ – role is assignable. However, the syntactic operation moved the object into SPEC-C¹ to effect a semantic prominence of the moved object as the theme (nucleus) of conversation at sentence initial position.

The Left-dislocated Indirect Object in Ngwa-Igbo

- 8a. Óbì nnyèrè Àdhá éghó.
 (Obi pr – give – past Adha money)
 Obi gave Adha some money.
- b. Àdhá_i, Òbì nnyèrè yá;éghó.
 (Adha, Obi pr – give – past her money)
 ‘Adha, Obi gave her some money’.

In (8b) the left – dislocated indirect object behaves in the same way as the left – dislocated direct object. The left – dislocated indirect object is obligatorily moved into SPEC – C¹ position from the predicate where it leaves behind an overt trace. The preposed constituent in (8b) is in a Θ -chain with its trace and by the inheritance of its trace, it retains its dative function in the sentence but with a greater communicative stress on it in its present position as the centre of the discourse.

Topicalization in Ngwa – Igbo

According to Radford (1988, p. 531), “Topicalization exhibits the typical movement property of leaving a gap at the extraction of the rule...”. This means that in Topicalization, one expects to see an empty gap at the site of extraction of an item in a sentence. The ‘rule’ here, refers to the moved constituent of a construction. Ndimele (2004, p. 122) notes that “Topicalization is a syntactic process, in which some communicative prominence is placed on a particular constituent of a sentence over and above the surrounding constituents within the same sentence. Thus, a Topicalized constituent has greater emphasis over the non- topicalized ones in the same construction. Ndimele also observes that Topicalization involves the movement of a nominal category into the SPEC-C¹. This implies that Topicalized constituents are always moved to sentence initial position. Below are examples of Topicalization in Ngwa-Igbo:

The Topicalized Direct object in Ngwa-Igbo

- 9a. \acute{A} chòrò mófé.
(PH want A – r v me soup).
‘I want some soup’.
- b. Ófé; là m chòrò. [t_i]
(Soup that me want trace)
‘It is soup that I want’.
- c. * \acute{A} /Úchè làchòrò mófé.
(PH comp. want A – r v me soup).
‘I that want some soup’.

From the analysis above in (9b), the object *ófé* ‘soup’, is moved from its position in the complement into the SPEC – C¹ position via Topicalization. When the object NP is moved, it leaves behind an empty trace at the extraction site. From the analysis for, (9b), one observes that when making an object a Topic, a complementizer *là* ‘that’ surfaces to introduce the next clause. (9c) is an instance of topicalizing the subject of the sentence which resulted in ungrammatical construction. This shows that subjects in Ngwa-Igbo cannot be topicalized.

The Topicalized Indirect Object in Ngwa-Igbo

- 10a. \acute{E} zè òzùtàrà Nnéómá úwéyí.
(Ezepr – buy – Dir – rv buy’ Nneoma dress).
‘Eze bought a dress for Nneoma’.
- b. Nnéómá là \acute{E} zè òzùtàrà úwéyí.
(Nneoma that Ezepr – bay-dir-rvBen.Dress).
‘It is Nneoma that Eze bought a dress for’.

From the analysis above, in (10b), the dative object Nneoma, was moved from its position in the complement immediately after the verb, into the SPEC – C¹ position where the thematization takes place. This movement of the indirect object brought about the complementizer *là* ‘that’ which introduces the clause that acts as a complement to the moved constituent. From all indications, it is only the object and the indirect object that can be topicalized in the dialect. A possible explanation for the inability of the subject to be topicalized is that any noun phrase in the subject position is already assumed to be topicalized. Thus, only NPs from the predicate can be topicalized.

Clefting in Ngwa – Igbo

Thematization can also be achieved through clefting. Clefting rules according to Brown and Miller (1985, p. 364) “involve the distribution of the constituent of some proposition into a copular sentence”. To illustrate clefting and pseudo – clefting they gave the examples below;

- 11a. I am very fond of Marzipan.
 b. It's Marzipan that I'm very fond of.(clefting).
 c. Marzipan is what I'm very fond of. (Pseudo – clefting)

Aclefted sentence in the Ngwa – Igbo, is a sentence marked by a sentence – initial *ó bù* 'it is'. The environment immediately after the copular *bù* 'is' (be), is the landing site for any lexical element or constituent that is to be given communicative prominence in a cleft – construction. The focus marker *ó bù* 'it is' in Ngwa, is used for contrastive focusing. Below, are examples of constituents that can be thematized through focus marking via clefting.

The Clefted Subject in Ngwa-Igbo

- 12a. *Àdhá ñzùrù àkìsì.*
 (Adhapr – buy – rv scarf).
 'Adha bought a scarf'.
 b. *Ó bù Àdhá ñzùrù àkìsì.*
 (It is Adhapr – buy – rv scarf).
 It is Adha that bought the scarf.
 c. *Óbù Àdhá mbù ónyé ñzùrù àkìsì.*
 (It is that pr – be person pr – buy – rv scarf).
 'It is Adha, that is the person who bought the scarf'.

(12a) is the underlying sentence from which (12b) and (12c) are respectively derived from. (12c) is derived from (12b). In (12b), there is a case of single focusing, while (12c) is a case of repeated focusing. It would be observed that the repeated focusing in Ngwa results in a complex CP (complementizer projection). It is worthy to note that in (12b), the NP in SPEC – C¹ position leaves behind a null trace at the extraction site. This trace has a feature because it takes the position of the subject in the matrix

clause as its antecedent. The trace 't' and the moved constituent are in a Θ – chain. The thematized constituent *Àdhá* has the Θ – role of agent. The new position of the moved item, shows that the concern of the speaker is for the listener (the audience) to know that it is solely *Àdhá* that is responsible for the action contained in the clause. In the case of the repeated focusing, the preposed agent, *Àdhá* is moved from SPEC- C¹ position into another SPEC – C¹ position. At the second movement, an overt trace or coordinate nominal *ónyé* is left behind at the SPEC- C¹ position from which *Àdhá* is moved. This is a kind of successive cyclic movement. This Top – to – Top movement is to prevent a long jump or the violation of subadjacency which states that any single movement operation should not cross more than one bounding node. In other words, movements should not be too far away from the site of extraction. Thus, movement in smaller hops is better than long jumps. One observes that in (12b – c), that the presence of the initial focus marker *ó bù*, 'it is', heightens the communicative prominence, hence, (12c) is more emphatic than (12b) and (12c) is semantically more prominent than (12b).

The Clefted Direct Object in Ngwa-Igbo

- 13a. *Óbì ñràràépè.*
 (Obi pr – lick – rv orange).
 'Obi licked the orange'.
 b. *Ó bù épè là Óbì ñràrà.*
 (It is orange that Obi pr – lick – rv).
 'It is orange that Obi licked'.
 c. *Ó bù épè; mbù hwé; Óbì ñràrà.*
 (It is orange pr – is thing Obi pr – lick – rv)
 'It is orange that is the thing that Obi licked'.

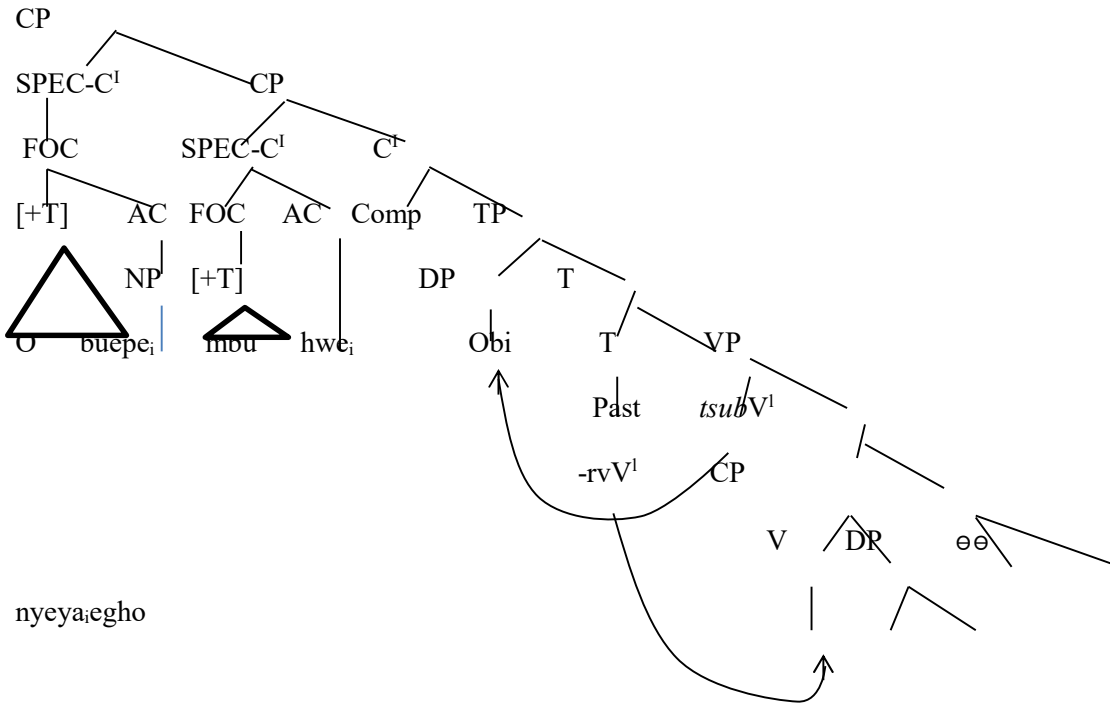


Fig. 2: Diagram illustrating double focusing of a clefted direct object

In (13b – c), one observes that clefting in those sentences involves movement from the complement (predicate) position in SPEC – C¹ which is called Top position (Toicalizationposition). The preposed constituent in SPEC – C¹ / Top enters into a Θ – role with its trace in the vacated site. The trace inherits the Θ – role of patient (object) which is bequeathed to it by its operator *épe*, ‘orange’ in the preceding SPEC-C¹. Θ – role inheritance is possible, because the trace and its operator are in a Θ – chain link. In this case, one observes that when movement is from the complement position in Ngwa, the complementizer *là* ‘that’ is introduced immediately after the preposed constituent. This complementizer, introduces the clause that acts as a complement to the preposed element.

In (13c), the complementizer *là* ‘that’, is obliterated. The reason for the obliteration is because *ónyé* ‘who’, and *là* ‘that’, are both complementizers in the dialect. Hence, their use in adjacent position will result in an ungrammatical construction. The nominal in the ultimate clefting binds the intermediate nominal that occurs in SPEC – C¹ position of the second instance of CP. This intermediate nominal which occurs in an A – position, binds the trace at the original extraction site. The successive binding operation in the preposed constituent is possible because

of the overt reference in the forms of *óbù*, ‘it is’ and *ónyé* ‘who’ that co-reference to each other. Thus, in (13c), there is a complex CP configuration. One also observes that the pronoun *hwé* ‘something’ is the attracted nominal which reduplicates the object *épe* ‘orange’.

The Clefted Indirect Object in Ngwa – Igbo

- 14a. Úchè ñzùtàrà m ákwùkwò.
(Uchepr – buy – Dir – rv me book)
‘Uche bought a book for me’.
- b. Ó bù mí; là Úchè ñzùtàrà t;ákwùkwò.
(It be me that Uchepr – buy – Dir – rv book).
‘It is me that Uche bought the book for’.
- c. Ó bùm; m̀bùónyé; Uche ñzùtàrà t;ákwùkwò.
(It be me pr – be person Uchepr – buy – Dir – rv book).
‘I am the person that Uche bought the book for’.

From the illustrations above, (14b – c) are derived from (14a) which is the unmarked structure. The indirect object of the benefactive verb *zù* ‘buy’ has been brought to focus (thematized) from its position in the predicate into the SPEC – C¹ position. The focus marker *óbù* ‘it is’, as usual is the movement trigger. The pronoun *mí* ‘me’ in (14b – c) plays the Θ – role (theta /nominal/argument role) of being the benefactive entity (nominal). This benefactive role is also assigned to its trace at the site of extraction by coreference and coindexation. In other words, in (14b – c), *mí* ‘me’ is in an E – chain with a Θ - role of indirect object.

The Clefted Verb Phrase in Ngwa-Igbo

The verb phrase is the predicate of a construction. This may be the verb alone or the verb and its nominal or adverbial complements. In the Ngwa – Igbo, the verb phrase can be thematized through cleft constructions.

Example:

- 15a. Keléchingàrà ñkhú.
(Kelechpr – go – rv wood)
‘Kelechi went to fetch firewood’
- b. Ó bụìgàñkhú; là Keléchingàrà;.
(It be firewood that Kelechpr – go – rv)
It is firewood that Kelechi went to fetch.

In the Ngwa – Igbo, when a verb is focused, it is infinitized. It is interesting to note that in Ngwa the infinitized verb (the thematized verb phrase), cannot be focused without the object being moved along with it as in *ìgà ñkhú* ‘to fetch firewood’. This, reflects the bound nature of the Igbo verbs to a following nominal which helps to complete the meaning of the verb. In the example above, one observes that when the verb phrase is moved into SPEC – C¹ position, it leaves behind at its extraction site a referent (cataphoric) verb of its type that is semantically identical with it. The proposed constituent and its trace are coindexed.

Adjunct Clefting in Ngwa – Igbo

According to Hornby (2005, p. 18), an adjunct is “an adverb or a phrase that adds meaning to the verb in a

sentence or part of a sentence”. Matthews (2007, p. 9) asserts that an adjunct is “any element in the structure of a clause which is not part of its nucleus”. Matthews went on to add that adjuncts include adverbials of manner, place and time. In Ngwa – Igbo adjuncts can be thematized through the clefting of adverbial complements in a sentence. For example:

- 16a. Ó ìawàrà l’ ùthùthù
(She go – INC – rv in morning)
‘She left in the morning’.
- b. Ó bùl’ ùthùthù là Ó ìawàrà.
(It be in morning that he /she go – INC – rv)
‘It was in the morning that she left’.

In the example above, one observes that (16b) is derived from (16a). In (16b), *ùthùthù* ‘morning’ has been extracted from the predicate position and moved into SPEC – C¹ position through the thematization process of clefting for the purpose of communicative prominence. The proposed constituent leaves behind an empty trace. One also notice’s that the complementizer *là* ‘that’, surfaces in the clefted construction to introduce the subordinate clause.

Clefting in Ngwa – Igbo Interrogatives

According to Matthews (2007, p. 200), interrogatives are constructions whose primary role is in asking questions. It is distinguished from sentences that are in the assertive (indicative) mood”. Thus, questions are mainly used for the elicitation of information. He went on to add that an interrogative pronoun or adverb is one that represents a focus of questioning. He gave examples of question words as: who or what and so on. Further, he indicates that the words question and interrogative are often synonymously used.

- 17a. Úchè, Òmèrè òngìrì?
(Uche he / she do – rvpr – wh)+
Uche, she / he did what?
- b. Òbù òngìrì là Úchè m̀m̀rè?
(Is it what that Uchepr – do – rv)

What is it that Uche did?

From the illustrations above, in (17a) which is the kernel (neutral, unmarked or deep) structure, the grammatical subject of the sentence, *Úche*, has a co – referential clitic or pronoun *Ò* after it which helps to carry the tone of the question. The focus trigger *òbù* ‘it is’ comes up at the surface structure. The preposed question word *ngìrì* ‘what’ leaves a gap at the extraction site. The complementizer *là* ‘that’ appears to introduce the main clause. The thematized constituent *ngìrì* ‘what’? carries a stronger stress, a stronger questioning tone showing that the speaker is anxious to find out what the subject did. The focusing makes the question word to be the psychological or contextual subject or the centre of conversation. This in essence confirms the view of Brown and Miller that “the main thrust of a question is to discover the identity of the participant sequelled by the ‘wh’ word. With wh- questions, if the wh- word is not thematic, then in speech it usually bears heavy stress”. This in essence means that questions are stressed for communicative purpose.

Pseudo – Clefting in Ngwa – Igbo

Pseudo – clefting is a case of partial clefting, where the main clause is not completely split or overtly divided by a complementizer, but the (pseudo – clefted) structure begins with a wh – word (what) which is followed by the stressed item in situ, while the copular verb ‘be’ precedes the object. For examples:

- 18a. Nwóriè ñkhùrù òsò.
(Nworiepr – plant – rv pepper).
‘Nworie planted pepper’.
- b. HwéNwóriè ñkhùrú mbù òsò.
(What Nworiepr – plant – rvpr – be pepper)
‘What Nworie planted is pepper’.

From the examples above, (18a) is the unmarked construction. (18b) is the pseudo – clefted construction with the wh – word *hwé* ‘what’ at sentence initial position under the SPEC – C¹ position. In Ngwa, the pseudo – clefted constructions have the wh – word preceding the grammatical subject of the sentence. The psychological

subject of pseudo – construction in Ngwa is usually the object because of the focus or thematization marker *bù* ‘be’, which is a copular verb that usually precedes the thematized nominal. However, one will not fail to mention that there is equally a prosodic stress on the subject. This dual stress on the subject and the object seems to indicate that in pseudo – cleft constructions, the nominals (subject and object) which retain their positions in the clause bear emphatic markers *hwé* ‘what’ and *bù* ‘be’, respectively preceding them, thematize both the nominal at the beginning and at the end of the sentence.

Focusing in Ngwa – Igbo Imperatives

According to Matthews (2007, p. 185), “*Imperative* is in principle a term in grammar that refer to expressions that are used to give order”. According to Brown and Miller (1985, p. 379), “In imperative sentences, the thematic element is normally the main verb”. This means that in imperative sentences, the nucleus of the construction is solely the verb. This also explains the reason why they can be used alone for such constructions. Brown and Miller illustrate the above assertion with the examples:

- 19a. Go away!
b. Shut up!

Below are examples Ngwa – Igbo:

- 18a. rìé! ‘eat’
(run go out – suff)
- b. fùò! ‘go away’!
(carry – toward)

In (19a-b) the verbs are: *rìé* ‘eat’ and *fùò* ‘go away’! respectively. Each of the verbs in the imperative construction is thematized by being the centre of the expression. From the examples above, there is no movement required. The verb of an imperative construction is inherently thematized since the focus of the utterance is on the execution of the action in the verb. The urgency of the action and the speech itself does not call for the presentation of any nominal subject since the participant(s) is naturally understood. In (19a) the verb involved is *rìé* ‘eat’ which has an imperative suffix *-é* and in (18b) the verb is *fùò* ‘go out’, which has the

imperative suffix $\text{-}\acute{o}$. The suffixes one must observe follows the vowel harmony system of the dialect. The prefix of $\text{-}\acute{e}$ has feature Advanced Tongue Root[+ATR] while the prefix $\text{-}\acute{o}$ has the feature [-ATR].

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to demonstrate some of the ways by which thematization can be achieved in Ngwa – Igbo. This paper, started off by giving a brief account of the geographical location of the Ngwa – Igbo people. This was followed by a brief review of literatures on Thematization. This informed one that thematization can be achieved by, Left-dislocation, Topicalization, passivization, clefting, pseudo – clefting of structures, Referential Metonymy and so on. It was also seen that thematization can be effected at sentence initial or final position.

The illustrations under Left – dislocation in this paper showed that only the subject, object and the indirect objects can be left – dislocated in the Ngwa – Igbo. The illustrations in Left – dislocation showed that this movement, leaves behind an overt trace at its extraction site which shares all the features of the preposed constituent.

In Topicalization in the Ngwa – Igbo, only the objects (direct or indirect) can be moved. Subjects cannot be topicalized. The reason being that the grammatical subjects in an SVO language, are already in a topicalized position. Hence, the attempt to topicalize the grammatical subject often results in ungrammaticality. Typographically, the topicalized constituent is separated from the rest of the sentence by a comma. This helped to show that the topicalized constituent stands in parenthetical relationship with the rest of the sentence, and that there is some sort of intonational break between the topicalized constituent and the rest of the sentence.

In the Cleft constructions in the Ngwa – Igbo, it was seen that, such structures, obligatorily take the focus marker \acute{o} *bu* ‘it is’. This focus marker is used for contrastive specifications. In thematization through clefting, it was seen that more constituents can be preposed to sentence initial position than in topicalization and left – dislocation. Thus, clefting is a more productive mode of achieving communicative prominence in the Ngwa –

Igbo. However, one must not fail to mention that not all constituents can move with the same amount of freedom. A verb phrase for instance cannot be focused without its object. This thus, supports the argument that in the Igbo language, of which Ngwa is a dialect, that verbs underlyingly co – occur with a bound cognate noun that facilitates the semantic realization of the verbs in the language. In the clefting of the verb phrase, in the Ngwa – Igbo, when a verb phrase is moved, the vacated site is filled with another verb of its kind. This refilling is necessary because the verbal slot in the Ngwa – Igbo cannot be vacant in order to avoid ill – formed structures.

Looking at the thematized structures in the dialect, one would testify that they are not the regular structural forms, however the truth is that they are grammatical structures that are used to achieve communicative prominence in the dialect. Thus, this paper is encouraging the study and use of such structures in speech and in writing and that persons, translating any text from the dialect to another language would find the communicative dynamism of such thematized structures very useful. This paper has considered thematization only in relation to the foregrounding of lexical item(s), it therefore recommends for an intense study of the syntactic processes used in the thematization of constituents in at sentence final positions in the Ngwa dialect and other languages of the world.

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