

# A Comparative Study of English and Anaang Head Linguistics: From the Viewpoint of Phrase Structure Grammar

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## Abstract

*This work is a comparative study of English and Anaang Head Linguistics: from the viewpoint of Phrase Structure Grammar. It also projects the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis as an effective tool for predicting and identifying syntax-based structural similarities and differences, which may enhance or pose difficulties in second language learning situation. The study adopts the Phrase Structure grammar and a contrastive approach as its theoretical frameworks. It compares the phrase structural systems in English and Anaang Head Linguistics with a focus on the notion of Branching, Tree Structures, Noun Phrase Determiners, as well as Pre-modifiers and Post-modifiers. The study seeks to sort out the above notions and account for them in sentential structures constructed in the two languages. The findings reveal that English and Anaang languages have similar Head Linguistics, where the three major notions: head-initial phrases are right branching, whereas head-final phrases are left branching, but head-medial phrases combine both left-and right-branching in their sentences. Conclusions were drawn that an Anaang learner/user of English would not encounter much problem in his use of the Head Linguistic systems of English and vice versa in a second language situation.*

**Key Words** Comparative Study, English and Anaang, Head Linguistics, Phrase Structure grammar, contrastive approach

## Introduction

In linguistics, the head or nucleus of a phrase is the word that determines the syntactic category of that phrase. For instance, the head of the Noun Phrase, *receiving good news*: is the noun, News. By inference, the head of a compound is the stem that determines the semantic category of that compound. For instance, compound noun, Storekeeper is 'Keeper' because a storekeeper is a 'keeper' not a 'store'. The other elements of the phrase or

compound modify the head and are therefore the head's dependents. Headed phrases and compounds are called Endocentric, whereas Exocentric (headless) phrases and compounds (if they exist) lack a clear head. Heads are crucial to establishing the direction of branching. Head-Initial phrases are right branching, whereas Head-Final are left branching, but Head-Medial phrases combine both left-and right-branching (Ferguson, 1972).

Example: big red **dog**, birdsong, big tail **Cow**, black skirt **Lady**, deep blue **Sea**. The words: dog, song, cow, lady and sea are the heads to each of the: big red **dog**,

birdsong, big tail **Cow**, black skirt **Lady**, deep blue **Sea**, since they determine that the phrases are Noun Phrases, not adjectival phrases. This is so because adjectives big, red, blue, black, qualify these head nouns, they are their dependents. In the same vein, the compound noun, Birdsong, the stem is the head since it determines the basic meaning of the compound. The stem, "bird" qualifies this meaning and is therefore, dependent on "Song" The word, Birdsong is a kind of song, not a kind of bird (Kirkman, 2013).

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

This study adopts the Contrastive Analysis (CA) (Syntactic Comparison) and the Phrase Structure grammar as its theoretical frameworks. Each of the theories will be thoroughly discussed and given their functional roles in this study as are suitable frames for this study.

### **Contrastive Analysis (CA) (Syntactic Comparison)**

Contrastive Analysis (CA), used here as the Syntactic Comparative framework, on the other hand evolved from the environmentalist theories of behaviourism and structuralism. It was the mainstay for teaching foreign languages and for L<sub>2</sub> research during the 1950s; consequently, languages to be taught were compared with the learners' native languages and the similarities and differences formed the bases for devising grammars that would remedy areas of difficulties of the L<sub>2</sub> learners.

Weinrich's concept of "interference" (1953) and Lado's notion of "transfer" (1957) constitute the main themes of the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH). "Interference" is used to describe all instances of deviant forms and usages which occur in the performance of a bilingual. From this view, interference is considered to be a direct result of a contact between two or more languages (Weinrich 1953:1) cited in Udoudom (2006:10). "Transfer"

on the other hand refers to a phenomenon in a language development involving the tendency for acquirers of a language to “carry over” the forms, meanings and the distribution of forms and meanings of their native languages and culture to the foreign language and culture (Lado 1957:2). The transfer notion of CA provides a basis for predictions about the ease or difficulty in learning, with claims that those areas of L<sub>2</sub> which are similar to L<sub>1</sub> would be easy for the learners while aspects of L<sub>2</sub> which are different from L<sub>1</sub> would pose learning difficulties. Therefore, positive and negative transfers have become possible outcomes of L<sub>2</sub> acquisition and learning.

Linguistically, no two languages are the same. Udofot (1996:6) cites the examples of two languages - English and German which according to her, belong to the Germanic group of Indo - European languages and which possess the same known language universals; yet languages from the two groups exhibit identifiable differences in the phonological, syntactic and morphological patterns. The author goes on to say that the rationale for using German as an example is because a German who learns the English language should reckon with the problems caused by the differences between the grammatical system of his language (German) and that of English, and that, thereafter, any similarities in sound and structure of his language with the language should help in his learning the second language (English).

The analysis in this study is therefore, on English and Anaang which belong entirely to two different language families. The Anaang belongs to the Cross River division of the Niger-Congo family of languages while English belongs to the Germanic family of the Indo-European language. Anaang syntax operates a centrifugal system (which allows the modifiers to go before the head-word). Again, English operates an analytical verbal system whereby verbs and adverbs in sentences stand apart whereas Anaang verbs are mostly an agglutination of various morphemes particularly those of verbs and adverbs. The contrastive analysis is, therefore, a scientific description of the language to be learnt carefully compared with a paralleled description of the native language of the learner Lado (1957:1). Those peculiar features of individual languages constitute problems to the learners of the language, but the problems could be predicted by a comparison of the two languages. Moreover, a careful contrastive analysis of any two languages offers an excellent basis for the preparation of instructional materials for the planning of courses and the development of actual classroom techniques

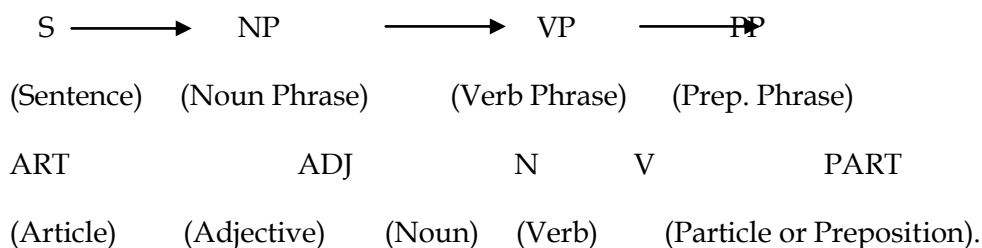
### The Phrase Structure grammar as a theoretical framework

Structural Grammar evolved out of necessity. ‘...structural linguistics...emerged as the inadequacies of traditional grammar became pronounced’. (Onuigbo and Eyisi, 20-22). It was a brainchild of Ferdinand de Saussure who introduced the use of modern scientific approach to solve linguistic problems, and was not formulated until late 1960s. Okoh, (2010:7) also maintains that Structural Grammar, like Traditional Grammar, ‘was performance-based and that their data were real speech utterances and derived from living languages.’ Yule (1985:92) summarises the rationale behind Structural Grammar in the following points:

...throughout the present century, a rather different approach has been taken. Analysts collect samples of the language they are interested in an attempt to describe the language as it is used, not according to some view on how it should be used. This is called the ‘descriptive approach’ and it is the basis of most modern attempts to characterize the structure of different languages.

For the empiricism that characterizes it, it can conveniently apply to all the languages of the world, using the same methods, though the syntactic structures of the different languages may differ.

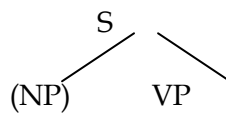
Eka (1994:18) states that the phrase structure model came up to address the shortcomings of the traditional grammar and even the finite state grammar propounded by Chomsky. The phrase structure model makes use of constituent structure, also referred to as syntactic components or constituents. He explains that: “a sentence that utilizes more than one of the usual elements (S) V (C) (O) (A) can be divided into constituents (parts). Those parts may be referred to as syntactic components or constituents”. He further explains that the phrase structure is identified by such markers abbreviated as:



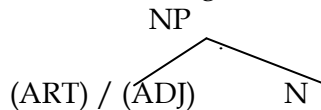
Mensah (2008) agrees with Eka and adds that when the markers shown above are arranged in such a way that they show their relationship with one another, they are said to be phrase structure rules which could be re-written as shown below:

1.  $S \longrightarrow (NP) VP$  demands that a sentence has an NP (noun phrase)

and a compulsory VP (verb phrase) as in the tree diagram below:

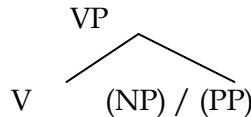


2.  $NP \longrightarrow (ART) (ADJ.) N$  which demands that a noun phrase is made up of a compulsory or obligatory N, an optional article (ART) and or an optional adjective (ADJ). as in the tree diagram below:

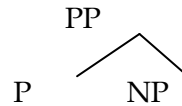


3.  $VP \longrightarrow V (NP) (PP)$  which demands that a verb phrase (VP) consists of a compulsory or an obligatory verb V, optional Noun

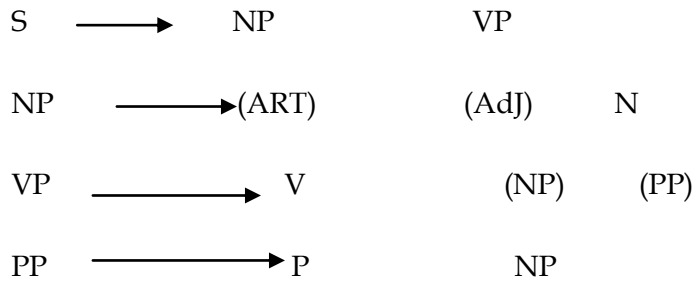
Phrase (NP) and optional Prepositional phrase (PP) as in the tree Diagram below:



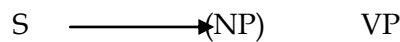
4.  $PP \longrightarrow P NP$  demanding that a prepositional phrase (PP) may be recast as preposition P and Noun phrase NP both of which are compulsory or obligatory elements in the structure. as in the tree Diagram below:



The four Phrase Structure rules (PS - Rules) highlighted above are:



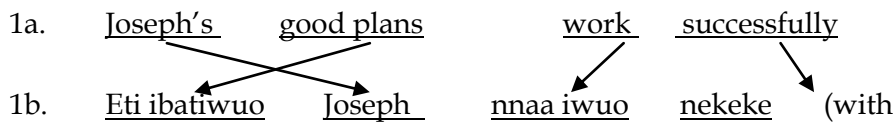
Udoka (2006) finally explains that the phrase structure model may be taken to represent generalization about word order and as constituent structure organization that has to do with the surface structure of English sentences. They are, in fact, useful generalizations in the sense that while they do not account for all possible sentences in English such as



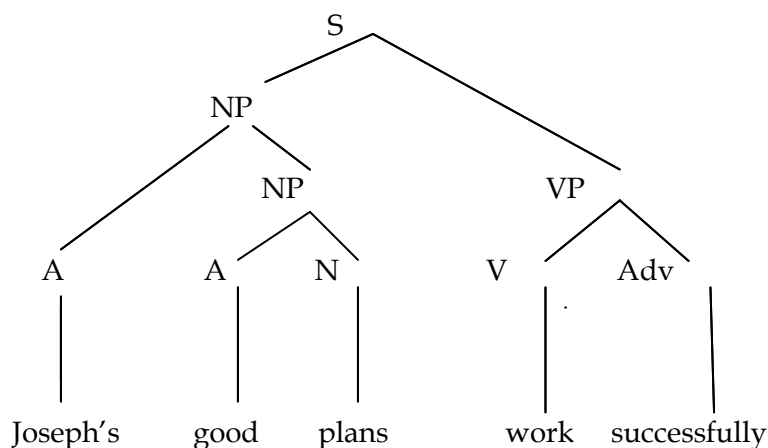
(Go Sit! Read), they account for a majority of occurrences in that language.

Therefore, with prescriptivism as the major failing of traditional grammar, Structural Grammar was developed in reaction to it. Structural Grammarians evolved scientific methods in the study of language in order to account for its exclusion of meanings from issues of linguistics, claiming that matters relating to meaning were vague, and could not be accommodated within the empirical methods of studying language. The proponents of structural grammar view individual languages as unique, coherent and integrated systems (Huddleston, 1992; Trask, 1993, Lamidi, 2000). Also, structural grammarians considered spoken language to be superior to written language, a view, which was in direct contrast to the one held by traditionalists whose emphasis was on the written medium.

The tree for Chomsky's sentence can be rendered as follows with the sentence below:



variation in word order)



This theoretical framework is very suitable to this study because of its important aspect of concern which is the fact that it allows sentence structures to be viewed from the top down. The category on the left of the arrow is a greater constituent while the immediate constituent on the right of the arrow is a lesser constituent. Through this theory, constituents are successively broken down into their parts as one moves down a list of phrase structure rules for a given sentence. The top-down view of sentence structure makes it easy for a reader to understand at a glance the meaning of each constituent which has carefully been broken down by this modern theoretical syntax.

### **Notion of the Linguistic Head**

In linguistics, the head or nucleus of a phrase is the word that determines the syntactic category of that phrase. It is the element that specifies the syntactic function of the whole phrase. For instance, in a Noun phrase, the head is the noun that refers to the same entity that the whole phrase refers to, such as "bottle" in "the man with the Red wine bottle". The head of the English Phrase usually comes after the dependency (the non-head elements in the phrase).


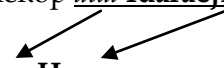
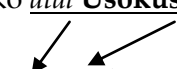
### **Dependency of a Phrase**

The dependency of a phrase is any element in a phrase that does not refer to the same entity that the whole phrase refers to. For instance, the word: 'Victor' in the noun phrase, "Victor's Camera". The idea of dependency here, lies in the fact that the word, "book" depends on 'Victor' to establish the status of its true owner(ship). Another good example is in the noun phrase "School Premises". The word, "premises" depends on "School" to

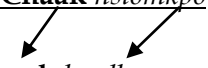
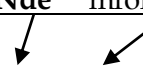
clearly mention the type of 'premises' it is, and so, must depend on the head word, "school".

### The Notion of Branching in Linguistics

In linguistics, branching refers to the shape of the parse trees that represent the structure of sentences. For instance, if a language is written or transcribed from left to right, parse trees that grow down and to the right are right-branching. It is the direction of branching that reflects the position of the heads in phrases, and in this regard, right-branching structures are HEAD-INITIAL, whereas Left-Branching structures are HEAD-FINAL. English language, for instance, has both right-branching (head-initial) and left-branching (head-final) structures, although it is more right-branching than left-branching. Anaang, which is a developing language has done a lot of borrowing from other languages, mostly from the English language. The implication of this statement is that English and Anaang have branching that are similar and so make this comparative study very easy. Examples of Left-Branching Phrases (Head-Final).

- 3a. Timi ka Ufok ade  

- 3b. Return to the House > Noun Phrase (NP) (with variation)
- 4a. Ami mekop atai Idaraejid  

- 4b. I am very Happy > Adjectival Phrase (AP)
- a. Affiong atangiko atai Usokusok  

- 5b. Affiong speaks too Sowly > Adverbial Phrase (AdvP)

Examples of Right-Branching Phrases (Head-Initial Phrases):

- 6a. Ami na Chaak nsiomkpo  

- 6b. I will Laugh loudly > Verb Phrase (VP)
- 7a. Okon akedo nwuan ami Nde mfoniso  




7b. Okon married his wife With luck > Prepositional Phrase (PP)

8a. Ajid imikom awasi Daad *ke Atibe*

8b. We thanked God That *it happened* > Subordinator Phrase (SP or Subordinate Clause).

It is worth mentioning here, that the word “Daad” which serves as a complementizer in an Anaang embedded clause in a sentence is a direct borrowing from the English language meaning “THAT”. Cases of borrowing in metalanguage development have been attributable to developing languages globally and Anaang is one of the developing languages of which some words lack direct equivalence in English or where such (expected) equivalence is markedly absent.

In head linguistics, the Left- and Right-branching commonly referred to as (= Head-Medial Phrase) tends to occur where the phrase structure allows the headword of the phrase to be positioned and always in between the pre-modifier and the post-modifier as in: Our Uncle here. The pre-modifier is the possessive adjective which serves as a determiner *Our*, while the head of the phrase is the noun **Uncle** because it is the most important word in the string thus, making it a noun phrase (NP), whereas the adverb, *here* is the post-modifier. Examples of phrases that contain both Left- and Right-branching commonly referred to as (= Head-Medial Phrase):

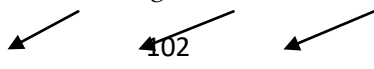
9a. Ajid ika echen ke Ufok ako

9b. We are visiting the House there > Noun Phrase (NP)

10a. Dr. Chibo Aneke Adatechid nde mkpo ade

10b. Dr. Chibo is Very Happy with it > Adjectival Phrase (AP)

11a. Nto ufokngwed ade Ekenung Echaad esiomkpo

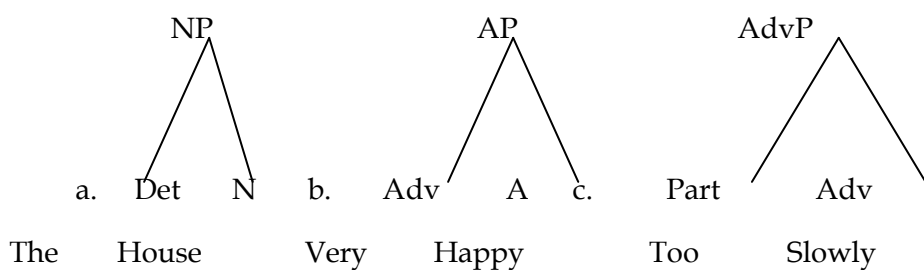


11b. The students Only Laugh loudly > Verb phrase (Verb Phrase)

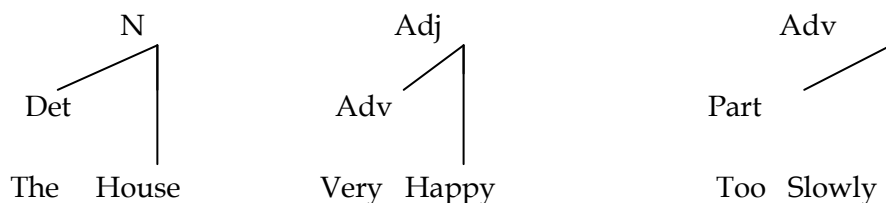
The Head word occurs in between or in the middle of two different words: the first word comes before the head on the left (Left-Branching Phrases, Head-Final) while the second word comes after the head on the right (Right-Branching Phrases, Head-Initial Phrases) in each of the phrases in such a way that the head word occupies the middle position in the phrasal string.

**Tree Structures**

**Trees illustrating Left-Branching Phrases**



The (a, b, and c) in the upper row shows the constituency-based structures where the left branching such as: [the, very and too] are present and are referred to as the no-head daughters because they all occur on the left of the heads: [House, Happy and Slowly]. In other words, these non-head structures serve as a kind of determiners or pre-modifiers to the head words. Again, those on the lower row are the Dependence-based structures. A careful look at the lower row shows that the constituency-based structures are right-branching since their non-head daughters are on the right of the head; [Laugh, With, Happened]. Their non-head daughters: [loudly]





15b. I have a feeling of fear and loneliness due to Ubong's departure.  
 (Type of Phrase) Pre-head Head Complement  
 (Prepositional Phrase)

16a. Ajid inyene akikere daaad ku'fokngwed ekpese kama akpoho ammo

16b. We have the idea that schools should control their own finances  
 (Type of Clause) Pre-head Head Complement (Adjectival Clause)

17a. Ami nim ke akpaniko daad ererimbot aliolong ajoho

17b. I believe the fact that the planet is getting warmer (Type of Clause)  
 Pre-head Head Complement (Adjectival Clause)

The sentences in the examples above could be recast to bring about the following alternative sentences:

- 18. A rise in inflation is likely in the coming months.
- 19. The idea that schools should control their own finances is not a new one.
- 20. The fact that the planet is getting warmer is no longer disputed.
- 21. I have a feeling of fear and loneliness due to Ubong's departure.

**Noun Phrase as Pre-modifiers in Grammar**

In English grammar, a pre-modifier is a modifier that precedes the head of a NOUN PHRASE or word that determines the meaning of a phrase. Pre-modifiers are most often Adjectives, particles and Nouns. When used as an adjective to characterize a person or thing, this part of speech is also referred to as an EPITHET.

Pre-modifiers are written more often than spoken. According to Biber et al (2002), "Pre-modifiers and Post-modifiers are distributed in the same way

across registers: rare in conversation, very common in informational writing". Understanding Pre-modifier, requires a careful study of the types that one is likely to encounter either in writing or in spoken situation and then learn how each could be used to avoid ungrammaticality.

### Types of Pre-modifier

Five main types of Pre-modifiers are identifiable in the English language. But other parts of speech could also be used to serve as pre-modifiers. The five major structural types of pre-modification in English are:

> Adjective: eg. Big Pillow, New Pants, Official Negotiations, Political Isolations and or Traditional Marriage, etc.

> *ed* participial: eg. Restricted Area, Improved growth, Fixed Volume, Established tradition, etc.

> *ing* participial: eg. Flashing lights, Crying Baby, a growing Problem, an exhausting task, etc.

> Noun: Staff room, Pencil Sharpener, Market Forces, Maturation Period, etc.

> *en* participial: eg. Swollen Head, Stolen Car, Hunger stricken face, Swollen legs.

Further Examples:

> the next morning, Joseph was spotted coming out of a *nearby* house.

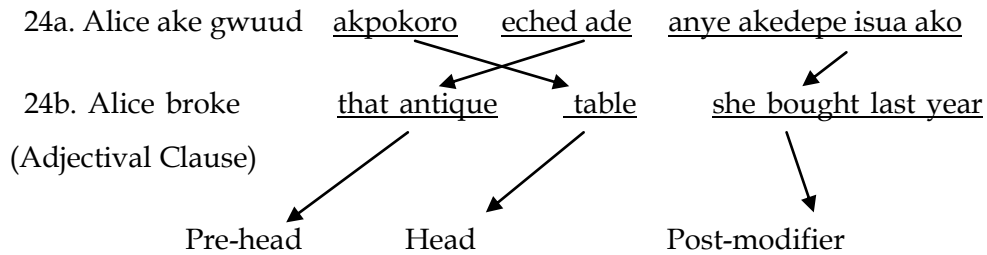
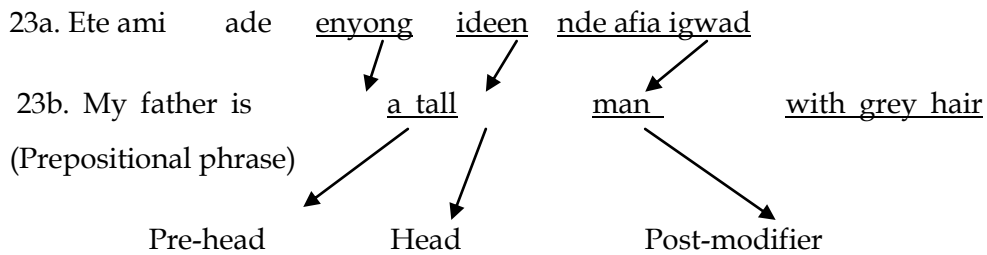
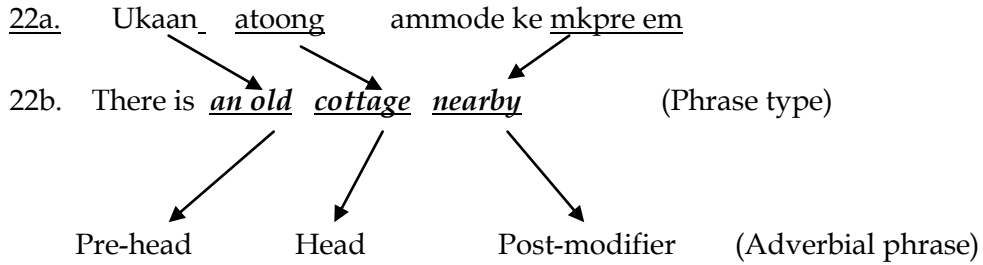
> Indeed, it is a *commonplace* observation that a *truly intelligent* youth is aided but little by the average college education.

> We have enjoyed some *extremely varied* and *consistently excellent* performances at this theater.

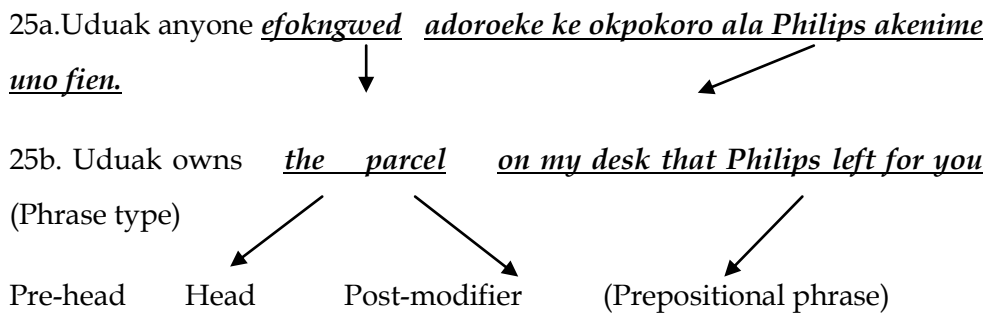
> The road deteriorated until it resembled a *casually discarded* trail of *large* and *sharp* stones.

### Noun Phrase as Post-Modifier

Post-modifiers come after the head in a noun phrase. They consist of adverb phrases, prepositional phrases and clauses. Post-modifiers give extra or specific information about the noun, for instance, place, possession, identifying features. Unlike complements, they are not necessary to complete the meaning.



A careful look at the word order in the example above shows that there is a variation syntactically where “eched ade” occurs on the Post modifier position instead of a Pre-head position like its English counterpart “that antique” on English syntactic order.





Which word, specifically noun in this sentence should locate the word (adjective) for it to qualify? A blue dealership, a blue downtown, a blue Moses, a blue salesman? Of course not! Logic dictates that **BLUE** can describe only one word, Truck. So, we must place the modifier next to that word it truly modifies, and that is **TRUCK**. The sentence will now read:

(B) At a downtown dealership, Moses bought a **BLUE TRUCK** from a salesman with a comb over.

- In the same manner, phrases that contain many words and clauses often go right next to the word they describe. For instance,

One of the most common problems is where to place modifier in a sentence. Specifically, modifiers can cause confusion or unintentional humour in a sentence once it is positioned too far from the noun it is modifying. For instance,

- They bought a car for my son they call Pathfinder

In the sentence above, Pathfinder is the name of the car, not my son's, but it is not clear. This confusion and unintentional humour is the result of a misplaced modifier. To correct this error, it is proper to move the modifier closer to the noun it modifies as follows:

- They bought a car they call Pathfinder for my son

The additional information in the sentence, by way of modifier, engages the readers and hold their attention. In most writing techniques, modifiers can be brilliant when used correctly and effectively. On the other, if a modifier is used incorrectly, the meaning of the sentence can become blurred or distorted. This is true of Dangling Modifiers and other problematic modifiers.

### **The 5 types of Misplaced Modifiers in English**

A modifier's placement in a sentence can skew your intended meaning. This is so because a modifier is a word or phrase that changes the nature of the information in a sentence without altering the sentence's grammatical structure by its inclusion or omission. The following are the 5 types of misplaced modifiers in English sentences.



### 1. Dangling Modifier

A dangling modifier is a phrase or clause that is not clearly and logically related to the word or words it modifies. (i.e. is placed next to). It is one in which the introduced word or phrase seems to be associated with subject rather than the object, or with nothing. For instance, in the sentence,

A keen observer of popular culture, Dr Noah's words are as pertinent as they are poetic.

The expression, Dr. Noah's words rather than Dr. Noah himself, are said to be a keen observer. To remove the ambiguity and make the intended point, "Dr. Noah is a keen observer" should start the sentence as a complete clause and end the sentence with a separate clause as follows:

> Dr. Noah is a keen observer of popular culture, and his words are as pertinent as they are poetic".

### 2. Dangling Participle

Another type of dangling modifier is the Dangling Participle in which the sentence element that misleads the reader is or includes, a participle, a word that appears to be both an adjective and a verb such as *Leading* in the following example:

➤ Leading the way, the path opened into a clearing.

The sentence errs because it does not explicitly mention the object of the sentence, in this case, a person preceding others as they follow a path that leads to a clearing, thereby suggesting that the path, rather than a person led the way. The construction could take either of the following:

➤ As I led the way, the path opened into a clearing.....1st person singular.

➤ As you led the way, the path opened into a clearing.....2nd person (singular or plural)

➤ As she led the way, the path opened into a clearing.....3rd person singular.

### 3. Disruptive Modifier

A disruptive modifier is one that interrupts the flow of a sentence because it is located between the verb and the object. For instance, in the sentence:

He was instructed to administer every two hours the dosage. The word, “administer” and “the dosage” should be adjacent. The modifying phrase, in this case, is best positioned at the end as in: *He was instructed to administer the dosage every two hours*. In this sentence, a split infinitive, in which preposition is separated from a verb by an adverb such as:

- She intended to quickly leave a message, rather than being in proximity with the adverb placed elsewhere as in:
- She intended to leave a message quickly.

This is a type of disruptive modifier. However, although *split infinitives* can sound awkward, many writers still consider them acceptable, not minding the long held, prescriptive ban on such constructions. This is because the Traditional Grammar Model, where it came from, was founded on a misguided effort to emulate the supposedly perfect grammar of Latin,

#### 4. Misplaced Modifier

A misplaced modifier, due to its location in a sentence is erroneous, and so affects a word or phrase other than the one intended. In the sentence,

- Do we really want folks who are so easily duped in the White House?

The incorrect implication of this construction is that there is a concern about people being deceived while they are located in the White House. But this sentence features a casual reference to the current presidential administration, not to just anyone who happens to be visiting the White House, so the modifying prepositional phrase: “in the White House”, should immediately follow ‘folks’ and precede the action, “Do we really want folks in the White House who are so easily duped?”

A variation of this problem is caused by the misplacement of a limiting modifier- almost, only, simply and the like. The word, ‘only’, in the sentence, “He wasn’t only listening to tone, but also to the rhythms and pattern”, suggests that the subject, “He” was doing more to the rhythms than listening to the “tone” itself. But the meaning becomes clear when the entire sentence is recast to show that the subject was listening to tone as well as to other qualities such as “the *rhythms*” as in:

- He was listening not only to the tone but also to the rhythms and patterns.

#### 5. Squinting *Modifier*

A squinting modifier has variously been referred to as “a two-way modifier” by scholars Boadi, (1981), Mensah (2006) and Enang (2014) and as a word or phrase whose association to the words it modifies is ambiguous. This is because it is difficult to easily make out the word it is modifying; whether a preceding word or a following one. A careful look at the sentence below reveals this point:

- Asking the child about it too often results in shrugs.

The sentence is subject to more than one line of interpretations. Firstly, it fails to communicate whether shrugs occur from too-frequent questions. Secondly, it is hard to tell whether questions asked with unstated frequency result in an excessive number of shrugs. To disambiguate this construction, the writer has to place the modifier at the beginning of the sentence as shown below:

- Too often, asking the child about it results in shrugs.

### **Conclusion**

From the outset of this study, it has been discussed that linguistically, no two Cross River division of the Niger-Congo family of languages, while English belongs to the Germanic family of the Indo-European language. The study has shown that Anaang syntax operates a centrifugal system (which allows the modifiers to go before the head-word). Again, English operates an analytical verbal system whereby languages are the same. The analysis in this study is therefore, on English and Anaang which belong entirely to two different language families. The Anaang belongs to the verbs and adverbs in sentences stand apart whereas Anaang verbs are mostly an agglutination of various morphemes particularly those of verbs and adverbs. Thus, the focus of this study has been on the Phrase Structure grammar, and the core features in the properties of the two languages have been highlighted and given specific attention based on the principled framework of the Universal Grammar before possible conclusions were drawn. The result is that the core features that are common to all natural languages provide the platform for Anaang bilinguals to make proper use of the Phrase Structure of the English language vis-avis the Anaang

language counterpart in a second language situation with little or no difficulty.

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