

# A Minimalist Study of the Grammatical Requirements of Functional Heads in Second Language Learning

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## ***Abstract***

*Scholarships in the past have dealt on the lexical categories and their heads as the core of the grammar of human language. It was believed that to learn the grammar of a new language was to learn the lexical categories and their various heads in the language. This paper, premised on Ouhalla's(2004) assertion that language variation is probably to a large extent, if not exclusively, determined by functional categories, set out to investigate the place of functional categories in the learning of a second language. The study adopted Pollock's (1989) Split Infl Hypothesis to conclude that the major functional categories such as NegP, TP, AgrP, DP and ComP and their heads have some parametric differences which are implicated in linguistic variation and second language learning. Findings reveal that while NegP and DP are head-first in English, they are head last in Ibibio. TP and AgrP are head-last in English but head-first in Ibibio. ComP is head-first in both languages. These differences in the head position of functional categories in English and Ibibio show some parametric differences that may be implicated in the learning of English as a second language.*

## **Introduction**

The notion of head is very important in discussing the well-formedness or otherwise of grammatical categories beginning from sentences to phrases. This is because the head of a constituent is the only obligatory and most essential part of a construction and is responsible for the syntagmatic relationship that holds between the construction and another structure that precedes it or is preceded by it. In addition, the head of a construction gives its essential character and the name it bears. It is a

universal language principle that every phrase must be a projection of its head. This is succinctly captured in X-bar theory and is designated in extant literature as *Headedness Principle*. There are two types of head, namely: the functional and lexical heads.

## **Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

### **The Primacy of the Head**

Zwicky (1985:2) explains that the intuition to be captured with the notion head is that a certain syntactic construct 'characterises' or dominates the whole structure.' The concept of the head is central in contemporary grammar, not the less, in Split Infl Hypothesis which serves as our theoretical framework. Lamidi (2011) annotates the core features of the head as follows:

- i. Heads are endocentric. Each non-head word contributes to the head syntactically and semantically. Syntactically, they qualify the head and semantically they specify or contribute to the meaning of the head.
- ii. The head is obligatory. It is the most important word in a phrase. Without it, the phrase is meaningless.
- iii. The head is a lexical entry that contains categorial, thematic and subcategorisation features which determine the type of the phrase.
- iv. The head is the only obligatory category in a phrase and other words (or satellites) modify it.
- v. The head gives the phrasal category its name. Therefore, the head of an NP is a noun, the head of a VP is a verb and the head of an IP is an inflection and so on.
- vi. The head determines the structure of the word adjacent to it. For instance, a noun head in an NP can never be directly pre-modified by an adverb. Only determiners, numerals, adjectives can directly pre-modify the noun head. This is explained in the principle called endocentricity.

### **Functional and Lexical Heads**

Geddes and Grosset (2007:555) view functional words as lexical items that have little meaning but of great grammatical significance. A key peculiarity of functional words is that they are not meaning carriers. On the other words, they cannot independently convey meaning, except when they are used in relation to other words in a sentence. This explains why they are sometimes called functors or grammatical words. Eka (1994:34) explains

that another distinctive feature of this category of words is that it has 'complementary distribution', a grammatical requirement that the choice of one lexical item precludes the choice of another of the same type in succession. Therefore, functional words can barely occur in succession.

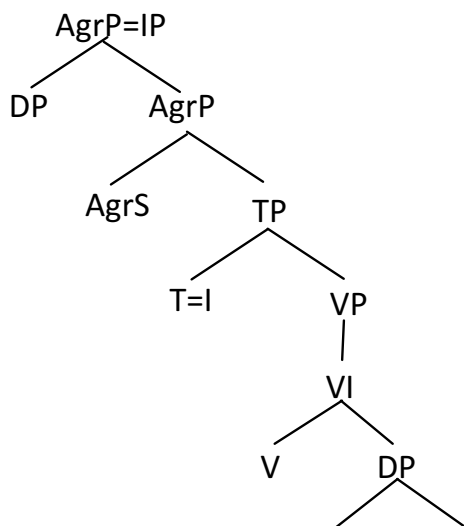
Lexical words, on the contrary, have inherent meaning independently and do not need to be used with other words in a sentence for this meaning to be visible. Hence, they are otherwise called *contentive/content* words because they have semantic content and are substantive. The dichotomy that exists between functional and lexical words seems to be analogous with the notion of close and open class systems (Barber (1993), Eka (1994), Ndimele (1999), Udofot and Ekpeyong (2001), Ufot (2009), Collins and Hollo (2010) etc).

Barber (1993:20-21) succinctly explains that functional words can be listed exhaustively in a language as opposed to the open class or lexical words such as nouns, lexical verbs, adverbs and adjectives. Membership to the open class is known for its specificity as it often changes with time as the lexicon of the language swells. Therefore one cannot give a numerical inventory of them. In the case of functional words, Ufot (2009:143) maintains that the entire members of the class are known, consequently fixed and 'no new one can be introduced without the risk of unintelligibility'. Functional heads are determiners, Complementisers and inflection. Recent literature has split Complementiser into Focus, Finite, Topic, and Force Phrases, while inflection has been split into Agreement Phrase (AgrP), Tense Phrase (TP), Negative Phrase (NegP), Complementiser Phrase (CP) and Determiner Phrase (Radford, 2009).

### **Split Infl Hypothesis**

Split Infl Hypothesis was proposed based on the need to account for multiple inflectional morphemes. The hypothesis is credited to Jean Pollock's work in 1989 where English and French syntax were compared. Pollock hypothesised that to account for the different functional projections in English and French, the INFL must be decomposed into TP and AGRP. Against the basic practice, Pollock argues that analysing the INFL as one category consisting of more than one set of features such as [ $\pm$ TNS] [ $\pm$ AGR] is misleading. Instead, each of the set of features contained in the INFL should be viewed as the syntactic head of maximal projections such as TP, AgrP, NegP, etc, (Cook and Newson, 1988:180).

(2)



In (2), the IP is replaced by the AgrP which is split into AgrP and TP. The Subject agreement is the sister of the first DP which occupies the specifier position. TP replaces the I<sup>1</sup> and has AgrS as its sister. TP and the AgrS are in turn dominated by AgrS<sup>1</sup>. The head of the TP is T which is the position which was formally occurred by I head .i.e. [ $\pm$ TNS,  $\pm$ AGR]. DP is proposed as the object of the sentence.

Split Infl Hypothesis is significant to the present study because it will perfectly analyse head positions and their projections in functional categories in English and Ibibio. Many morphemes in Ibibio serve as heads of functional categories.

## Data Analysis and Presentation

### Negation Phrase (NegP)

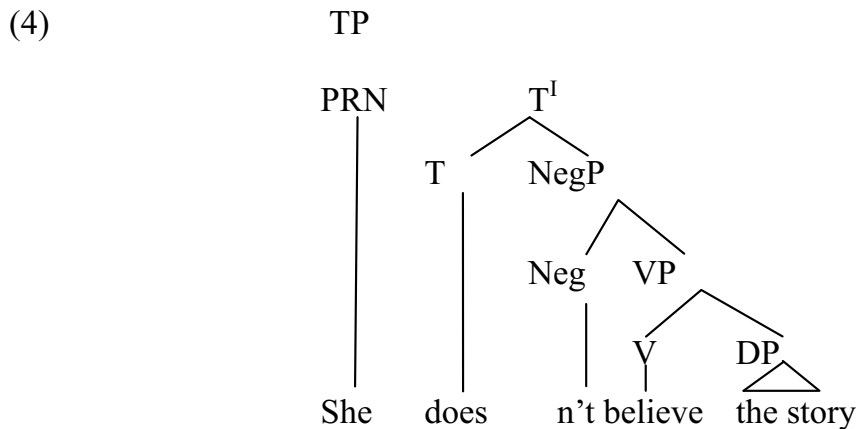
Negative Phrase is used to show that what is referred to do not have effect on or is the opposite of what should be expected. Negative Phrase is universal in the sense that it cuts across human languages. Quirk and Greenbaum (2002:34), using English as an example, explains that negative sentence involves the operator requiring the insertion of 'not' or the affixal construction *n't* between the auxiliary operator and the predication. Therefore, the presence of a *negator* makes a phrase negative.

### Neg Phrase in English

The most common straightforward marker of negation in the English language is the adverb 'not'. However, the presence of words such as *nothing*, *none*, *no*, and *never* can also make a sentence negative. In English *Neg* is the head of the *NegP*. The sentences that follow exemplify the use of *NegP* in English.

- 1a The children have *no* food
- b The poor man has *nothing* to eat

In the sentences labelled (1a-b), the negative markers appear within the predication after the auxiliary operators: *is*, *have* and *has*, respectively. This is made more obvious on the tree diagrams in (4).



The tree in (4), using the Split Infl Hypothesis makes the position of the *NegP* more visible, occupied by the adverb *not*. As the head of the *NegP*, *not* precedes the verb *believe* which is the head of the *VP* directly dominated by the *NegP*. Since the head of the *NegP* *not* comes before the verb *believe*, it is notable that *NegP* in English is head-first because the *Neg* head precedes the verb.

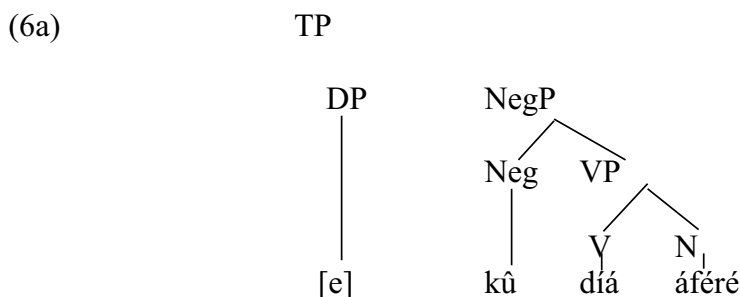
### NegPhrase in Ibibio

Ibibio marks negation using the prefixes *kû-*, *mé-* and *dí-*, and the suffix *-ké*. The following sentences contain the *Neg* markers.

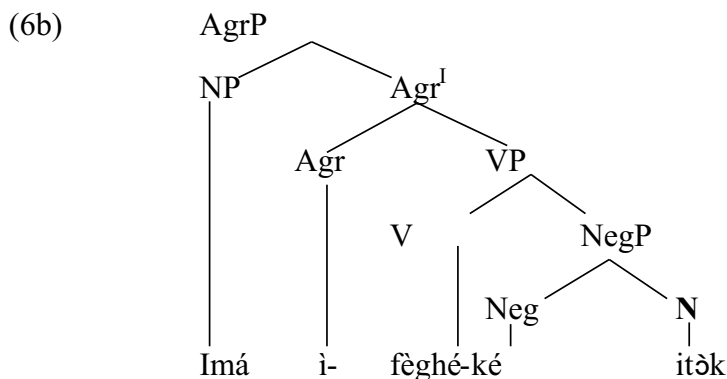
- 2a *kû-díááféré*
- NEG eat soup
- Do not eat the soup

bImá ì-fèghé-ké itk  
 Imá 3sgS run- NEG run  
 Imá is not running

The sentences in (2a-b) can be presented on the trees in (6) to illustrate head relation with its satellites.



In (6a), the Neg head is occupied by *kû* (the equivalent of the English 'do not') which is a sister of the VP and is in a c-command relationship with it. The Neg Marker appears between the null DP and the verb *díá* 'eat'. Since the head comes before the verb, it is cogent to state that NegP in Ibibio is head first.



In the foregoing (6b), the Neg position is occupied by *ké* (an equivalence of the English *not*) which comes between the verb *fèghé* 'run' and the NP *itk* 'run'. Since the Neg head is preceded by the verb, this structure of NegP in Ibibio is head-last.

### **Tense Phrase (TP)**

Verbs are, in addition to capturing actions (whether mental or stative) able to inflect for present and past events. Tense is a category that locates the action of a verb on a timeline. Present tense shows that the time of situation expressed by verb is concurrent with the time of speech, while past tense shows that the time of situation of the verb precedes the time of speech. In some languages such as English and Ibibio, tense features are marked morphologically. Constructions that indicate future actions are also realisable in the languages. Therefore, tense is a category set up to account for the moment at which predication holds. Yuka (2000: 3) avers that what holds between the TNS and the predicate head is spelled out on the caveat that a predicate must be in a c-command relation with the tense.

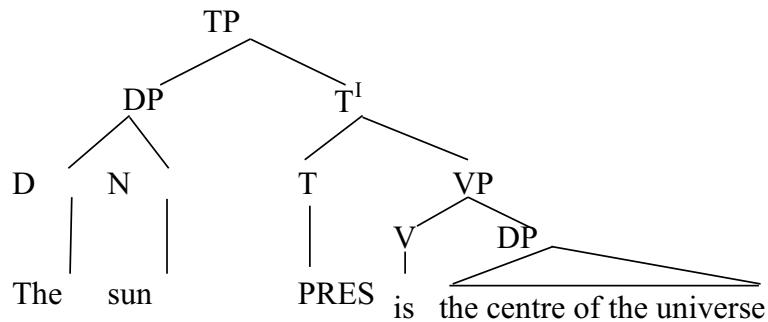
### **Tense in English**

English verbs generally inflect for both present and past tense. Present tense in English may be singular or plural. The single present tense form of verbs goes with the inflection *-s* and often governs third person singular subjects (except *I* and *you*). Plural present tense forms in English display no inflection and often govern plural subject including *I* and *you*. In English, the finite verb forms are not usually preceded by the auxiliary element because their inflection element *-s* works as the auxiliary already. This presupposes that a verb preceded by the auxiliary element in English must be in non-finite form. The past tense form of the English verbs for the most part is often marked by the suffix *-ed* for regular verbs. The irregular forms always undergo some morphological change in various ways to mark past tense. Verbs in present tense in English perform several functions. They express present states, universal actions, actions in the present and strange enough; they may be used to express future actions. The sentences in (3) exemplify tense in English.

- 3 a        The sun *is* the centre of the universe
- b        I *love* you
- c        Offiong *travels* next week

Some examples in (3) may be represented on a tree diagrams as follows:

(8)



In (8), the  $T^I$  dominates the lowered T element *PRES* and the VP. *PRES*, the head of the TP precedes *is*, which is the head of the VP. The analysis above corroborates Yuka's position that the predicate must be in a c-command relationship with the TNS. This makes clear the position of the T head in relation to the VP, which is its complement. The T head is lowered to the verb and therefore the English TP is head-last.

### Tense in Ibibio

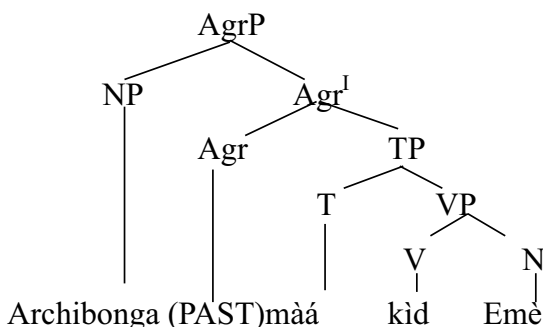
Tense in Ibibio is mainly marked morphologically with explicit tense morphemes. Ibibio overt tense markers are generally prefixes. The Ibibio tense system parallels the classical tripartite system of past: *mà-/ké-* (non-proximant) and *mé-* (proximant); present: *mé-* and future: *yá-* (proximant) and *yà-* (non-proximant). However, Ibibio tense may also be marked inherently. This is common with the third person nominative pronouns. Covert tense can occur with other persons especially in negative statements. The sentences in (4a) typify tenses in Ibibio.

- 4a      Imaá-kpón  
          1sgS PRES- big/fat  
          'I am big/fat'
- b        Archibong á- mákitEméúbàkúsén  
          Archibong 3sgS PAST see Emé morning  
          'Archibong saw Emé in the morning'

Some sentences in (4a-b) may be represented on the tree diagrams below.

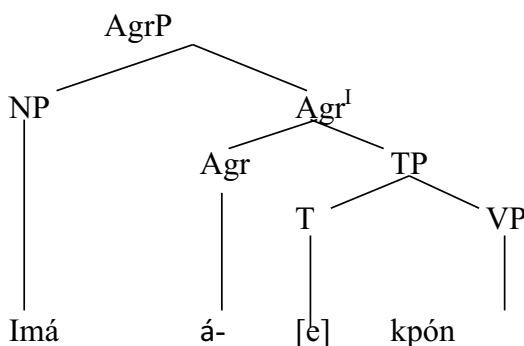


(10a)



The analysis in (10a) shows how past tense is marked in the Ibibio language. The simple past tense is overt in the structure and is realised overtly as *màá*. The root verb *kid* is an action verb which means 'see'. The past tense marker *màá* simply expresses the fact that the act of seeing *Emè* occurred in the past before the time of speech. The AgrP<sup>I</sup> dominates the TP which in turn dominates the VP. The Ibibio TP with past tense marker is head-first.

(10b)



The tree diagram in (10b) exemplifies a covertly marked present tense in the Ibibio language. The Agr<sup>I</sup> dominates the TP which immediately dominates the T and the VP. The covert head of TP [*e*] signifies inherent present tense and occurs before the verb *kpón* in the schema. Therefore, the Ibibio covert present TP is head-first.

### **Subject Agreement as Functional Head**

Number, person and gender are the various agreements which the subject must have with the verb. This phenomenon is common in most languages of the world. Subject-verb agreement is articulated in Spec-head agreement rule (of Principles and Parameters Theory). The rule states that the SPEC

must agree with the head in relevant features. As noted earlier, the inflectional head of IP splits into AgrSP, TP and NegP. The agreement between the Spec and the head and the head and the complement is essential for the well-formedness of sentences in both languages.

### Subject Agreement in English

The commonest agreement in the English language is that which exists between the subject and the verb in a sentence. It must be established that English is not a subject agreement language as such. Indeed, the only subject-verb agreement that holds in English seems to be that noticeable between the 3rd person singular subject and a verb in present tense. The third person singular subject pronouns in English are *he/she/it* and nouns generally (except for isolated cases) do not inflect for persons in English. Subject-verb agreement holds between the subjects and verbs of the following sentences.

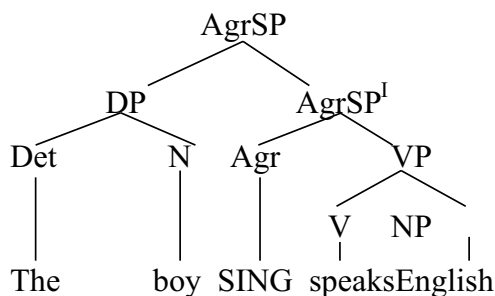
5a The boy *speaks* Portuguese

b Nigeria *has* great potentials

c France *launches* Syria anti-IS strikes

The tree in (12) illustrates the structure of the sentences in (5) and shows the relationship between the functional head and the other constituents of the sentence.

(12)



In (12), the subject DP is the Spec of the AgrSP<sup>1</sup> and therefore its sister constituent. The DP *the boy* agrees in specific terms with the *-s* inflection of the verb *speaks*. This is because the subject DP *the boy*, which is singular, selects the verb *speaks* which is in the singular form. The *-s* inflection is the head of the AgrSP and has the VP as its complement. Since the head of the AgrSP—*s* occurs after its complement, *speaks*, it is probable to posit that the English AgrSP is head-last.

## Subject Agreement in Ibibio

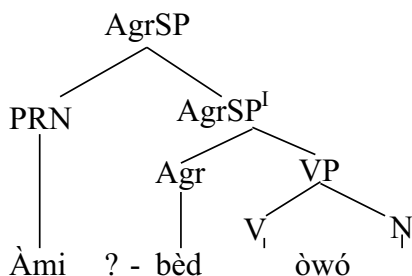
There are different affixal elements that precede verbs to agree in person and number with the subject at SPEC-I<sup>1</sup> position in Ibibio. There are 1st, 2nd and 3rd person pronoun subjects in Ibibio. Just like in other languages, the subject has some sort of agreement with the verb. This agreement is marked by some prefixes which indicate person and number. These prefixes are called concord or personal markers (Essien, 1990:75), and are *m*- indicating first person and prefixed before a verb; *i* indicating the first person plural; *è*- and *é*- indicating the second person plural and third person plural and *á* indicating the second person and third person singular. Contrary to English, the Ibibio language has a rich subject agreement system. The prefix *m*- agrees with the first person singular subject (*àmi*) while *á*- agrees with the second (*áfò*) and third person singular (*ènyé*) respectively. The plural subject verb is marked by *i*- for first person plural (*ñnyìn*), *è*- and *é*- for second (*ndùfò*) and third person plural (*mm*) respectively. The sentences that follow (borrowed from Essien, 1990:76) exemplify subject-verb relation in the Ibibio language.

6a      *Àmi m-bèdòwó*  
           I 1sgS wait person  
           'I am waiting for somebody'

b        *Ènyè á-bèdòwó*  
           He/She 3sgS wait somebody  
           'He/She is waiting for you'

The sentences can be analysed on tree diagrams as follows:

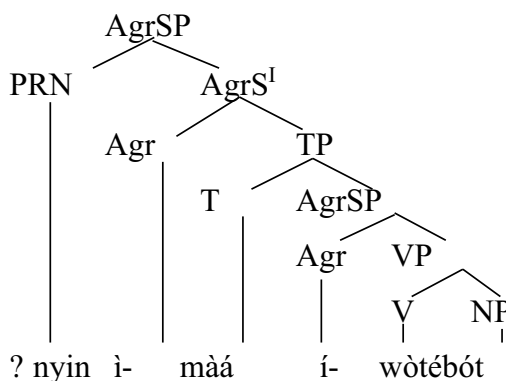
(14a)



In (14a), there is an agreement between the SPEC i.e. the subject pronoun *àmi* 'I' and the verb *bèd* 'wait'. This agreement is evident with the presence of the prefix *m* before the verb root *bèd*. Similarly, the pronominal *àmi* 'I' is marked for number and person because it refers to the person speaking at a

moment in a discourse context. It is first person singular pronoun. On the contrary, a sentence such as \**Àmi à-bèdòwó* would be ruled out because the concord marker *à* prefixed to the verb *bèd* does not agree with the first person singular pronoun *àmi*. The concord marker *m* which heads the AgrSP c-commands its complement VP. As a result of this, the verb is preceded by the concord marker. Therefore, the AgrSP is head-first.

(14b)



The tree in (14b) illustrates a situation whereby the concord marker *ì*- is prefixed twice on the verb *wòt*, surprisingly, with the past tense marker *màá* coming in between. The sentence also shows that it is possible to mark subject agreement in Ibibio at two places in a sentence with only one verb. The sentence: *Nnyin ì-màá í- wòtébót* 'we killed a goat' expresses an action in the past. This is marked by the prefix *màá*. The first person concord marker *ì* (pronounced with a low tone) precedes the past tense marker *màá*, while the second concord marker *í* (pronounced with a high tone) precedes the verb *wòt*. Where the concord marker as illustrated in (14b) appears at two places, the first marker, for instance, *ì-* has the TP as a sister node, while the second concord marker has the VP *wòtébót* 'kill the goat' as a sister node. The two subject agreement markers precede the verb *wòt*. Therefore, the Ibibio AgrSP is head-first.

### Determiner Phrase

Determiners generally specify references, whether definite or indefinite, to the noun within the DP. There are a number of subclasses of determiners, namely: articles, possessives, demonstratives, interrogatives, indefinites and numerals. Following the DP Hypothesis, D (determiner) is said to precede the NP and heads its projection. From the foregoing explication, a noun or nominal modified by the determiner is a complement to the determiner.

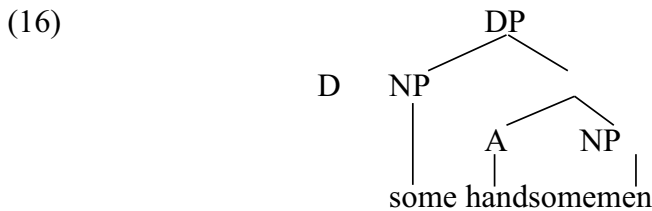
Nouns or nominals modified by overt determiners are Dps.

### **Determiners in English**

Examples of determiners in English are articles: *a, an, the*; possessives: *my, our, your, his, her, their*; demonstratives: *this, that, these, those*; interrogatives: *what, which, where*; indefinites: *each, many, both, few, a few, little, a little*; and numerals: *one, two, three, four* etc. Examples of DP in English are:

- 7 a some handsome men
- b those books
- c this boy

The DPs can be analysed on the tree diagram as follows:



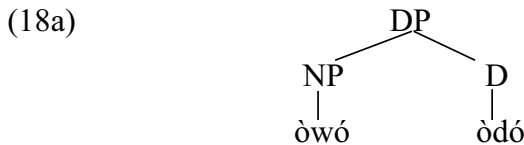
The tree diagram in (16) exemplifies the structure of a DP. The determiner *some* is the head of the DP and appears pre-nominally with the NP *handsome men* occurring as its complement. There is some sort of rich agreement feature in terms of number between the determiner *some* and its complement NP *handsomemen*. The form of the head of the NP *men* is in plural to agree with the D head *some* which is also in plural. However, if the D changes to a singular form 'a', the head of the NP must also change, possibly to 'man' to agree with the D. DP in English is head-first.

### **Determiners in Ibibio**

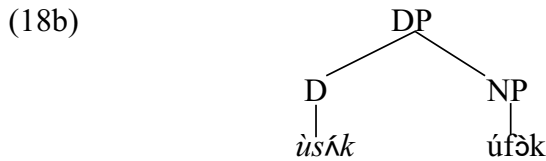
Essien (1990:136) refers to determiners in Ibibio as noun modifiers, and sub-classifies them into deictic elements: *émì, ódò or ókò*; quantifiers: *ùwák, ùsk, èfid*; and numerals: *itìòn, dùòp, ítá* etc. The present study agrees with Essien (1990:137) that the Ibibio determiner system and indeed the modifier system in general use the discourse factor in the understanding of reference. When the speaker and hearer share common background knowledge of the referent, the head noun could be deleted, enabling the determiner or modifier to act as a surrogate noun. (8a-b) exemplify DPs in Ibibio.

- 8a *ùsk úfk*  
 some house  
 'some houses'
- b *úbk ibá*  
 hand two  
 'two hands'

The DPs can be analysed on the tree diagrams in (18):



(18a) presents a DP in Ibibio headed by a demonstrative *òdó* 'that' preceding the NP *òwó* 'person'. This generates the DP *òwó òdó* 'that person'. In the analysis, the D *òdó* which is the head of the DP is preceded by the NP *òwó*. This typology of Ibibio DP is head-last.



In (18b), the D *ùsk* 'some' precedes the NP *úfk* 'house'. Note that the plural quantifier *ùsk* does not change the form of the NP to plural in Ibibio unlike what may obtain in English. The implication is that the NP is not bound by the determiner. In this structure of DP, with a quantifier as the D *ùsk*, the NP is always preceded by the D head. This is evident in *ùkéèdòwó* 'everybody', *èfidòwó*, 'all the people' where the quantitative determiners *ùkéèdand* and *èfid* precede the NPs. Therefore, this structure of Ibibio DP is head-first.

### The Complementiser Phrase (CP)

Complementiser Phrase (CP) is a grammatical category above the TP in that it houses the sentence. Radford et al (2002: p325) posit that CP comprises of a head C constituent which is often filled by a complementiser and by auxiliary elements in other languages, with a TP serving as its complement. However, in extant literature, the practice is that the complementiser moves to the Spec-CP while the C can be filled during head

movement. In other words, the X-bar projection of C which is the head of CP makes provision for a position where *wh*-words move to the Spec-CP while the auxiliary elements which serves as head of TP fills the C head to generate *wh*- or polar questions respectively.

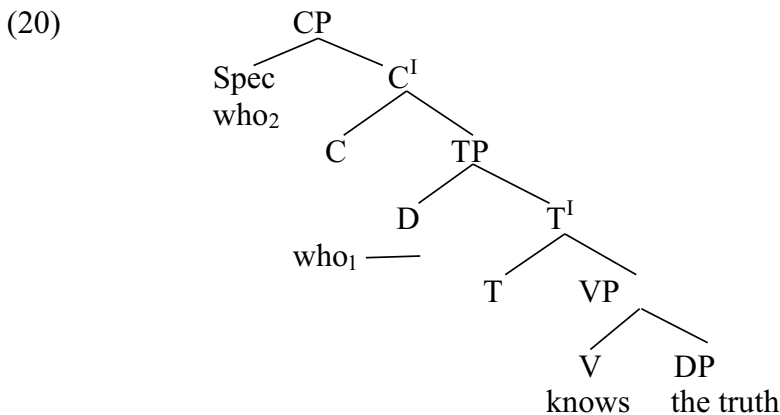
### Complementiser in English

A couple of English words such as *that*, *if*, *for* and *whether* serve as the head of CP and are consequently called complementisers. *If* and *that* subcategorise for finite TPs while *for* subcategorises for an infinite TP with *to* as the marker of non-finiteness. Examples are:

9a Who knows the truth?

b We only asked *for the chance to advertise our product*.

The examples of CP in (9) can be represented on the tree in (20).



The foregoing tree in (20) shows that the CP head, C, subcategorises for a finite TP *knows the truth* as its complement and as a result of the relative position of the head in relation to its complement, the CP is head-first in English.

### Complementiser in Ibibio

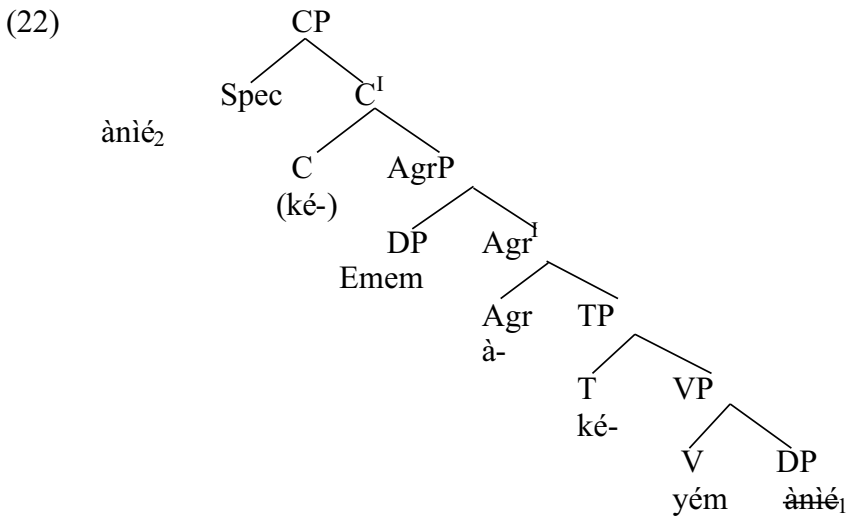
Subordinators which introduce embedded clauses in Ibibio serve as complementisers. The subordinators are *mmé*, *ké* and *sé*. (12) illustrates the use of CP in Ibibio.

12a ÀniékéEmemà-ké-yém?

Who FOC 23S-PAST-see

Who is it that you looked for?

The sentence is represented on the tree in (22):



In (22), the position of the Spec-CP is occupied by *ànié*, while the C head is occupied by *ké*, with the AgrP complement *Emem à-ké-yém*. Following this, it is apparent that *ké* occurs before its complement AgrP. Therefore, CP in Ibibio is head first.

### Discussion of Findings

The structure of NegP in English and Ibibio differs. In English, the Neg head which is most often *not* comes before the VP complement and may be contracted and attached before an auxiliary operator, generating an affixal construction like *hasn't* as shown in (4). On the contrary, in Ibibio, the Neg marker is attached directly before or after the main verb. For instance *kù* always comes before the verb it negates while *ké* is always preceded by the main verb as exemplified in (6a) and (6b) respectively. Therefore, while NegP in English is predominantly head first, NegP in Ibibio may be head first or head last depending on the Neg marker involved.

There are parametric variations in the realisation of tenses in English and Ibibio. One basic variation between both languages is in the area of Ibibio marking inherent tense. English has two major tenses which are marked inflectionally on the verb root as observed in (8). Ibibio, on the other hand, marks overt tense in (10a) and covert present tense in (10b). Present tense in both English and Ibibio are actions which are concurrent to the time of speech. English TP is head-last. However, Ibibio TP with lexically and



inherently realised tense is head first as shown in (10a-b).

Subject agreement in English is quite different from what obtains in the Ibibio language. Subject agreement in English is marked by the *-s* inflection attached after the base of the verb. This is evident in (12). Subject agreement markers in Ibibio, on the contrary, precede the verbs as illustrated in (14a, b). Therefore, Ibibio is head initial while English is head-last.

Determiners in Ibibio are marked by number just like in English. Indefinite determiners such as *ùwák:* 'many', *ùsk* 'few', *ùkéèd* 'every', *èfid* 'all', play similar role in both languages. However, the difference lies in the fact that in Ibibio, indefinite quantifiers modify plural nouns or mass nouns alike and agree with the head of the NP in specific features such as number. This differs from English where *every*, for instance, can only subcategorise an NP with a singular count noun as the head. Another instance of variation is in the use of numerals, demonstratives and possessives which come after the NP in Ibibio, whereas in English they precede the NPs which are their complements. Therefore, we can say that Ibibio varies in terms of these sets of determiners from English. While this structure of DP is head first in English, it is parameterised in Ibibio as head last.

CP in English and Ibibio are similar. This is because the position of the complementisers in (20) and (22) drawn from both languages are the same. This explains the fact that complementisers play a common role in both languages. The parametric variation is in the choice of complement by the heads of CPs in English and Ibibio. While some English complementisers such as *if* and *that* select a finite TP as their complement and *for* selects non-finite TP as its complement, Ibibio complementisers generally subcategorise finite TP as their complement in the sense that there exist elements of concord markers within any TP which serves as the complement of the C. However, in general CP is head first in both languages.

**Table 1: The Positions of Functional Heads in English and Ibibio**

<b>HEADS</b>	<b>POSITIONS IN ENGLISH</b>	<b>POSITIONS IN IBIBIO</b>
<b>Neg</b>	<b>First</b>	<b>First/Last</b>
<b>TNS</b>	<b>Last</b>	<b>First</b>
<b>Agr</b>	<b>Last</b>	<b>First</b>
<b>D</b>	<b>First</b>	<b>First/Last</b>
<b>C</b>	<b>First</b>	<b>First</b>

(Table 1) shows that while English is head first in three functional phrases, it is head-last in two functional phrases. Ibibio, on the other hand, is head first in all the five functional categories, except in NegP and DP where it alternates. Therefore, Ibibio is largely a head first language. These sharp differences between the two languages show parametric variation and can have a huge effect on second language learning.

### **Conclusion**

The present study set out to examine functional heads in English and Ibibio, and their implication for second language learning. Therefore, the goal of the present study locates the research endeavour squarely within Contrastive Analysis. Consequently, while using the Split Infl Hypothesis of the Minimalist Program to analyse the various phrasal categories, contrastive statements were made on each case.

The findings made in the course of the research work show that comparing the functional heads in English and Ibibio has three important considerations which have serious implications for second language learning:

- i. the position of the head in relation to its complement
- ii. the combinatorial properties of the head that enable the head to subcategorise a particular complement from among a number of like items

iii. the distribution of heads of phrases

The foregoing considerations give useful insight into the parametric variation of English and Ibibio. These contrasts between both languages are not known to the Ibibio learner of English. The essence of the present research work lies here. However, it is believed that more research in the area of functional heads in English and Ibibio will reveal other unique peculiarities between both languages and will make the learning of English effortless, meaningful and consequential to not only the Ibibio learner, but also other second language learners.

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