

Sentential Negation in English and Izon Languages

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a contrastive study of Sentential Negation in English and Izon languages. Contact language situations have given rise not only to the influences of one language over the other but also to the differences between the structures of the two languages in contact and the likely learning difficulties which an L1 learner of a second language may likely encounter in learning the structure of the L2. Thus, the data for this study were sourced from competent native speakers of the Ogbe-Ijo dialect of the Izon language and a contrastive approach was adopted using the Chomskyan's Government and Binding theory as a theoretical framework with a view to identifying the structural variations, hierarchy of difficulties and the likely learning problems an Izon learner of English as a second language may encounter at the level of Negation. It discovers that there were obvious parametric variations between the English and Izon languages at the levels of do insertion and the negative particle not among others. It then recommends that conscious efforts should be made by teachers and Izon learners / speakers of English as a second language at the level of realisation of negation in English as a second language.

1. Introduction

Negation is a feature of languages which reject the validity of a proposition. According to Huddleston (1988, p. 143), "negating a proposition reverses its truth value". Negation is a grammatical process of deriving a negative sentence or proposition from a declarative by the addition of negative particles. Crystal (2008, p. 323) sees negation as "a process or construction in grammatical and semantic analysis which typically expresses the contradiction of some or all of a sentence's marching" while Al-Momani (2011, p.482) states that negation is the opposite of affirmation; one sentence or statement can be the negation or denial of another. Thus, negation is the process of making a sentence negative usually by adding negative particles". It is one of the most basic elements in human mind that makes an indispensable part of natural languages (Alnawaisheh, 2015, p.1). Negation is interesting in languages for many reasons: it is present in every language in the world; it exhibits a range of variation with respect to the way it can be expressed or interpreted; it interacts with many other phenomena in natural language; and finally, due to its central position in languages, it sheds light on various syntactic and semantic mechanisms (Zeijlstra, 2004, p.1). In English, a derived negative proposition can function either as constituent negation or sentential negation depending on the semantic scope of the negative element. The semantic scope of constituent negation is the grammatical constituent the negative word contains, while sentential Negation has the entire sentence as its scope. Constituent negation can be derived through prefixation, the occurrence of the free negative particle (not) in the initial position of the clause or when a negative lexical item occurs in a clause (Mowarin, 2009, p. 190).

There are four possible cross-linguistic variations of sentential negation. These are combining a negative marker with an aspectual marker, when a negative with features of a finite auxiliary is used to negate a declarative clause, when the negative marker is an affix which is always a part of the derivational morphology of the verb and negating a declarative with a free preverbal negative particle. The English language belongs to this last cross-linguistic variation (Mowarin, 2009, p. 191-192). Also, most languages of the world use a particular negative marker to express sentential negation. However, languages differ with respect to the number, the syntactic position and the syntactic status of these negative markers (Zeijlstra, 2004, p. 1). For instance, Italian uses a preverbal negative marker to express sentential negation. Catalan has such a preverbal negative marker too, but it also allows an optional negative adverb. In Standard French such a combination of a preverbal negative marker and a negative adverb is obligatory, while a language like German expresses sentential negation by means of a single negative adverb (Zeijlstra, 2004, p. 2).

Such cross-linguistic variations at the level of Negation are sources of problems in L₂ learning. For instance, in the speech pattern of Izon learners of English as a second language, realising sentential negation in English is often challenging due to the perceived parametric differences between the two languages. Yet, there is the need for an Izon speaker to be proficient in English as an L₂ due to its utilitarian value in Nigeria. Therefore, this study is motivated by the need to acquire proficiency in English in the area of Negation by an Izon L₁ speaker and learner of English as a second language in Nigeria.

2. 1. Review on Izon Language

The Izon language is one of the minority languages spoken in southern Nigeria. The speakers of the language are also referred to as Izon people and they are mainly fishermen as they dwell along the swampy region of the Atlantic Ocean. They are also one of the minority ethnic groups that produce the oil resource in Nigerian. In the literature, the name Izoŋ is preferred to Ijwo or Ijo because it is historically the original spelling of the term (Williamson and Egberipou, 1994). There are many versions of the history of Izoŋ language. According to Kekai (2012), the origin of Izoŋ is traceable to that of the descendants of Ife. Today the Izoŋs language is spoken in six (6) out of the thirty-six (36) States of the Federal Republic of Nigeria: Bayelsa, Delta, Edo, Ondo, Rivers, and Akwa Ibom states. The name Izoŋ is synonymous with the people and the language. It is one of the four clusters of closely related languages often called Ijo (Williamson, 1965). The Izoŋ language belongs to the Ijoid sub-group of the Niger – Congo family of languages (Williamson, 1990; Williamson and Blench (2000). Izoŋ has a total of about four million (4,000,000) speakers with about twenty-eight (28) dialects (Kekai, 2012). The dialects are mutually intelligible; the differences are mostly noticeable in the areas of tense and aspect markers and most in most cases, in the pitch of the structures. Donwa–Ifode (1995, p. 13) states that “the Ijo speaking people spread from Nkoro in the extreme east of Rivers State, westwards to the towns of the Arogo clan in Ondo State of Nigeria, and from the Atlantic coast in the South to Elemebri in the Niger”.

Izoŋ, being one of the minority languages in Nigeria, is an understudied language Odingowei (2012) observes that existing studies on Izoŋ language have concentrated on unilingual application of traditional grammar in constructing well-formed sentences. He further noted that there is paucity of research materials on the Izoŋ language. Therefore, adopting a contrastive approach and Chomskyan’s Minimalist Program, he undertakes a description of the ways morphosyntactic features ensure the derivation of convergent structures in Izoŋ and English languages. Odingowei (2016), using Minimalist programme of Chomsky’s transformational generative grammar, studies the null subject parameter in English and juxtaposes its occurrences or non-occurrence in Izoŋ language. The aim of the paper is “to characterize the parametric choices in English and Izoŋ languages in the derivation of grammatically convergent sentences with null subject constituents”.

Blench and Williamson (2015) is a study of Izoŋ verbal extension. They state that the Ijoid languages can have suffixed verbal extensions which are constructed out of very limited segmented materials, but do not allow seriated extension. Okunrinmeta (2004) is a sociolinguistic study of lexico-semantic variations of Izoŋ speakers of English in Nigeria while Williamson (1969) provides a considerable insight into the structural descriptions of Izoŋ language.

2. 2. Theoretical Review

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is the Chomskyan Government and Binding (GB) theory which he developed in Chomsky (1981, 1982, & 1986). It is an approach to linguistic theory which follows from Chomsky’s Extended Standard theory of Transformational Generative Grammar. The theory is aimed at discovering the universal grammar underlying the parametric variations of natural languages (Bily, 1983, p. 37). In this sense, the theory assumes that a large portion of the grammar of any particular language is common to all languages, and is therefore part of Universal Grammar (Black, 1999, p. 2). Universal Grammar is a set of universal principles of language, some of which are rigidly fixed, some of which are parameterized. Universal Grammar assumes that the source of a native speaker’s knowledge of his language is innate and that this innate capacity for language is common to all humans. It also holds that there are certain linguistic principles which are common to all languages and that humans are born equipped with such universal linguistic principles (Haegeman, 1994). However, despite the innate linguistic principles common to all languages, structural variations do occur. This is due to the presence of “parameters” that can assume one of two possible values.

Parameters are components of the grammar that can assume different values (Leonard & Leob 1988, p. 520). For instance, question formation is a linguistic universal principle common to all languages of the world. However, different languages have different ways of question formation. The different ways of question formation peculiar to a language is called “parameter setting”. Also, the position of head in phrases is determined by a parameter. Whether a language is head-initial or head-final is regarded as a parameter which is either turned on or turned off for particular languages. The goal of Government and Binding

theory therefore is to discover how complexes of properties differentiating otherwise similar languages are reducible to a single parameter value (Leonard & Leob 1988, p. 520).

According to Haegeman (1994, 19), to determine how a particular language is acquired, it is necessary to determine to what extent the properties of that particular language vary from one language to another, i.e. to what extent the properties are language-specific, and to what extent they vary across languages. Properties of language that vary across languages will be learnt by the speaker as a result of exposure to some specific linguistic environment. On the other hand, properties which are shared by all languages might well be taken to be part of Universal Grammar. Contrastive study of languages such as we are engaged in this study plays a crucial role towards providing answers to what is a linguistic universal and what is language-specific. Thus, this study adopts Negation as a linguistic Principle common to English and Izon languages to identify the parametric variation between the two languages.

Contrastive analysis is a relatively modern discipline which emerged during and after the Second World War, particularly in the United States, in the context of foreign language teaching and learning. At that time, a lot of immigrants rushed into the country from different parts of the world to stay away from the war (Hoey & Houghton, 1998; Ke, 2019). According to Ke (2019), a key figure in its development is C.C. Fries whose *Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language* was published in 1945. James (1980, p. 3) defines contrastive analysis as “a linguistic enterprise aimed at producing inverted (i.e. contrastive, not comparative) two-valued typologies (a CA is always involved with a pair of languages) and founded on the assumption that languages can be compared”. Crystal (1987) sees CA as a systematic comparison of first language and second language so as to predict difficult aspects in learning while Hoey and Houghton (1998) defines contrastive linguistics as a linguistic study of two languages, aiming to identify the differences between them in general or in selected areas. From the above, it is obvious that CA is an area of applied linguistics aimed at the comparison of two or more languages or their sub-systems towards diagnosing their differences or similarities. However, the emphasis is on the contrast or differences between the learner’s mother tongue and the language to be learnt (Igboanusi, 2000).

According to Ke (2019, p. 25), Contrastive Analysis has three basic assumptions. The first is that the main difficulties in learning or using a new language are caused by interference from the first language; second, these difficulties can be predicted by contrastive analysis which helps second language learners or users to perceive or recognize the differences between their first language and the new language they are learning or using; and third, teaching materials can benefit from contrastive analysis, which provides insight as to how the effects of first language interference can be reduced. Two major types of contrastive analyses have been identified by linguists (Sajaavara, 2000, p. 141). These are theoretical and applied CA. Theoretical CA studies extensive accounts of the differences and similarities between languages that are being contrasted which add to the information about the characteristics of individual languages or about linguistic analysis in general. Theoretical CA is not necessarily a pedagogical instrument but an intrinsic exercise in linguistic analysis. In contrast, the prediction of learner’s difficulties is the main concern of applied CA. This orientation of applied CA, according to Waudhaugh (1980) (as cited in Sajaavara (2000, p. 142) is called “the strong hypothesis of contrastive analysis”. Its aim is basically pedagogical.

The general principles of CA involve a description and comparison of linguistic features of the two languages involved. Contrastive linguists first describe the linguistic features of second language learners’ L₁ and L₂ and proceed to compare these features. Following this explanation, it becomes obvious that the goal of CA would appear to be pedagogical. Its aim is the facilitation of learning of a second or foreign language. Following this inclination towards pedagogy, the goal of CA is generally said to belong to psychology while its techniques are linguistic (James, 1970). And as Banjo (1991) claims, contrastive analysis is born out of the desire to evolve a more effective methodology of language teaching. He claims further that since a second language is learnt in the context of a second language and subsequent languages in the context of all the previously acquired and learned languages, a good methodology must be based on a careful examination of the grammars of the first language and the target language.

There has been serious criticism on the validity of the predictive powers of CA from the proponents of error analysis (see Ellis, 1994). However, in spite of these criticisms, CA has continued to be a useful tool in second language teaching and learning.

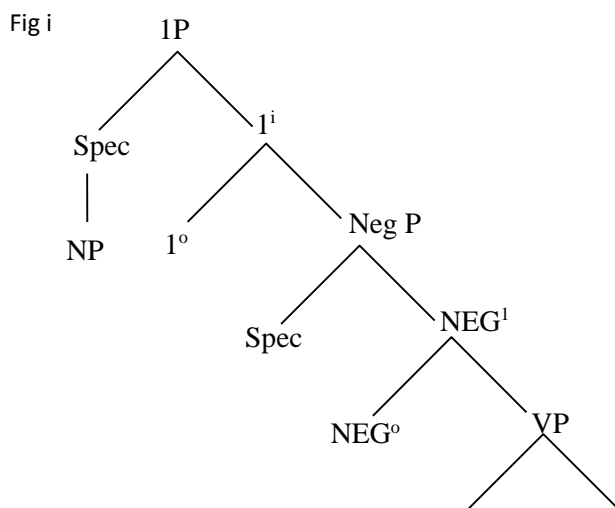
3. Methodology

The data for this study is sourced from the Izoŋ language. Out of the over 30 inherently intelligible dialects of the language, the Ogbe-Ijoh dialect is selected for this study. This choice is motivated by the fact that the Ogbe-Ijoh dialect has not been given

much scholarly attention to the best of our knowledge. Thus, apart from attracting the attention of linguistic scholars to this dialect, this study will also help its development and preservation. The data is collected from competent native speakers of the Ogbe-ijo dialect through observation, recording, and transcription. Competent native speakers of the Ogbe-Ijoh dialect were observed in their natural context of use of the language without prompting. While the observation was going on, they were then recorded without their knowledge to avoid manipulation in. Instances of the use of sentential negations were noted. The recordings were then transcribed into the English language by an English-Izɔn bilingual. And as a general approach in contrastive linguistic studies, this study follows the two steps of description and contrast.

4.0 Data Analysis

Sentential negation is a linguistic universal, so it is part of the principles of universal grammar. However, there are parametric variations in how it manifests in different languages. In the Government and Binding theory adopted for this study, Negation is also called Neg P. meaning Negative Phrase. English has *not* as its negative operator; Izɔn has *gha* and *kumo* as its negative particles. Fig. i below is a tree diagram of the Negative Phrase:

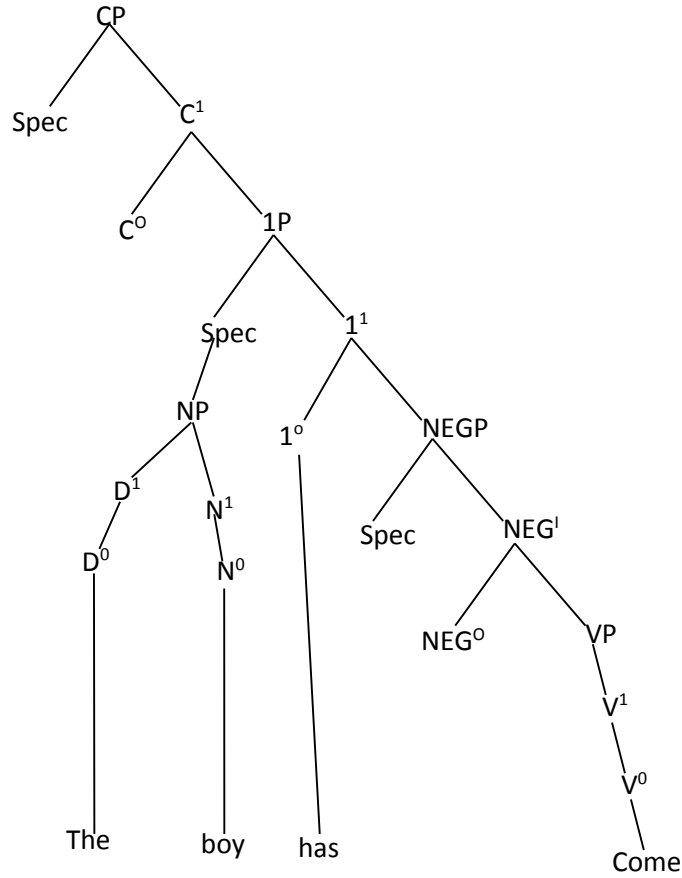


4.1 Negation in English

Negation in English is regarded as a functional head which projects maximally into phrases. Radford (1997, p. 232) explains that negation is expressed in English mostly by the use of the negative particle *not* with the assistance of the *do*; and that if there is no auxiliary in an English sentence *do* is inserted for the negative marker to function. This is called “do support”. When an English sentence has an auxiliary verb, the *do*-support rule does not apply. The negative particle *not* is headed by the negative phrase (NegP) in the Government and Binding theory. A sentential illustration is given in fig. ii below:

The boy has come.

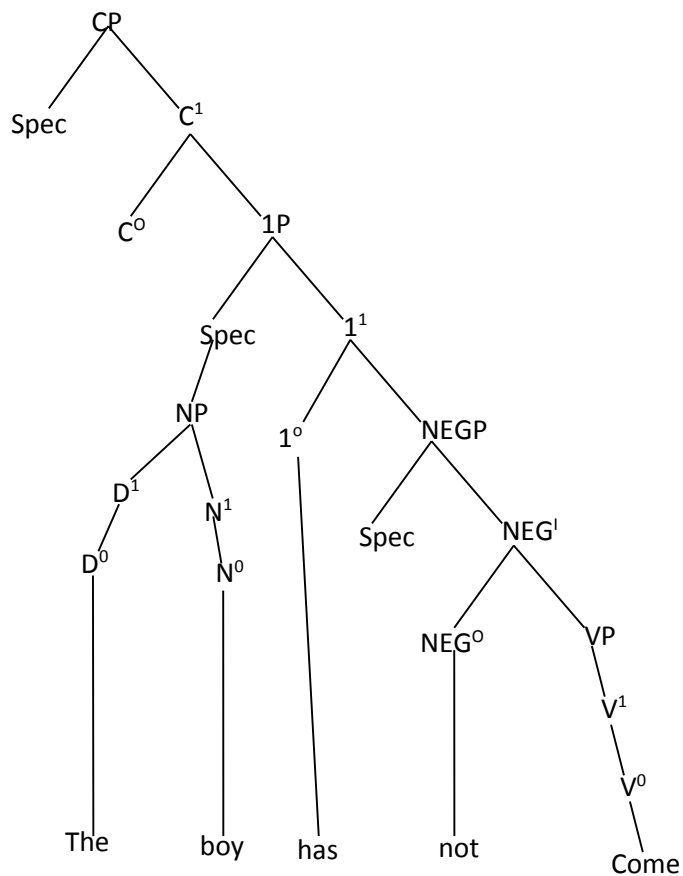
Fig ii



From the tree diagram in Fig. ii above, we notice that the negative particle *not* is a lexical constituent represented by Neg⁰ in the Government and Binding theory. A grammatical constituent that is to be inserted into a sentence must have a space created for it before the insertion. In Fig. ii above, that space is represented by Neg⁰. Once *not* occupies Neg⁰, the statement automatically changes to a negative sentence as shown in Fig. iii below:

Derivation of a negative sentence from Fig ii: The boy has not come

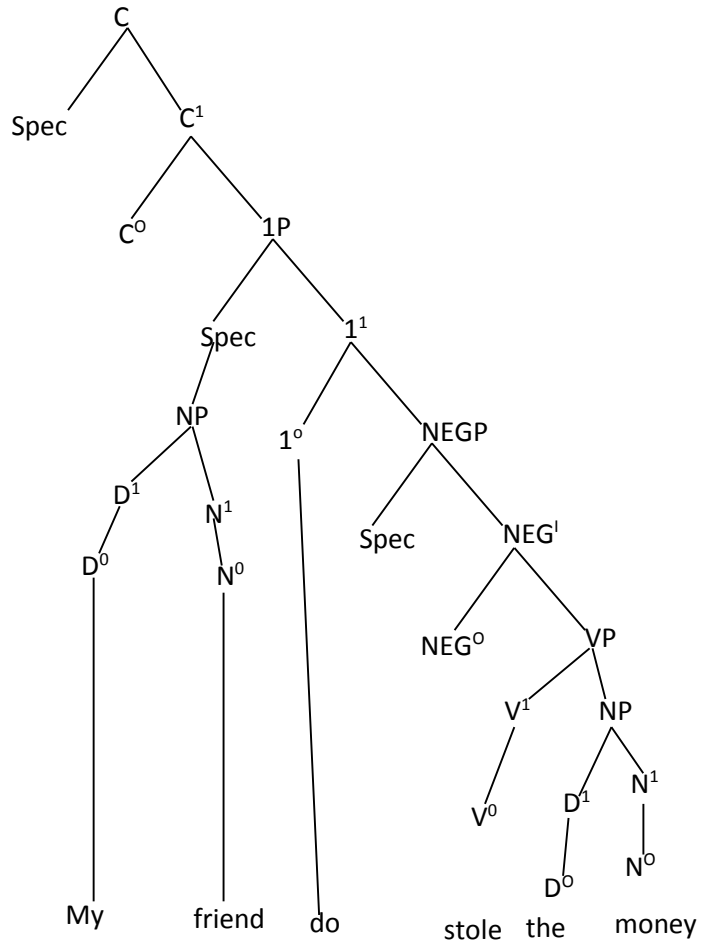
Fig. iii



In terms of structural position of Neg⁰, we notice that Neg⁰ occurs after I⁰ and I⁰ is occupied by the first auxiliary verb in a complex verb phrase in English. That auxiliary is always known as the operator. So in Fig. iii, *has* is the operator.

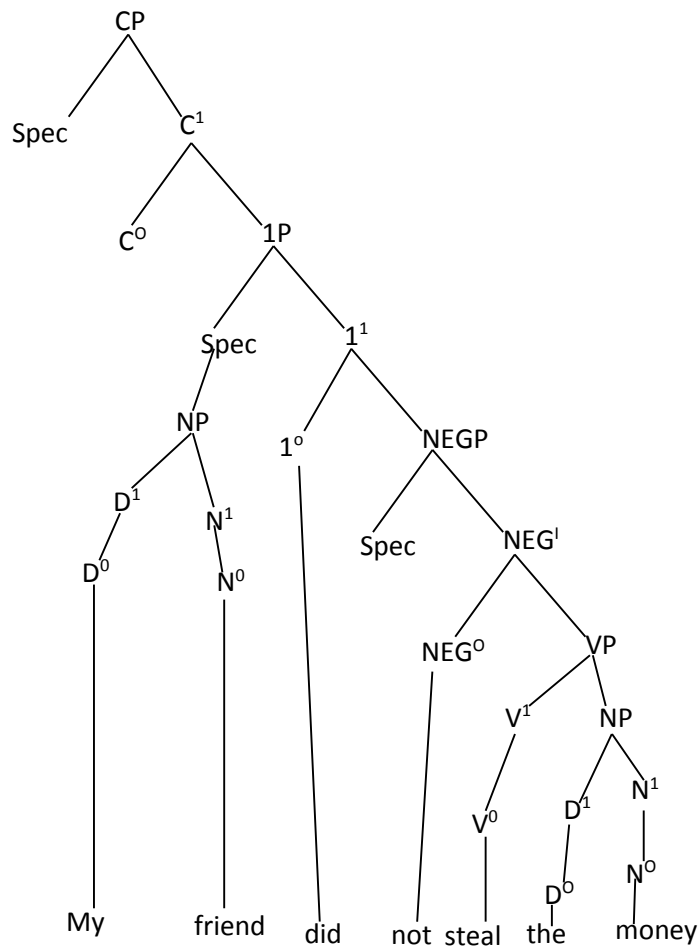
For the sentence *My friend stole the money*, there is no auxiliary verb functioning as operator, so in order to derive a negative sentence, there has to be an inserted primary auxiliary verb *do* that will function as the operator before NegP is inserted. This is shown in Fig. iv below:

Fig iv



Derivation of Negative sentence from Fig. iv: My friend did not steal the money

Fig v



From Fig. v above, *do* is inserted before a negative sentence is derived through the insertion of the negative marker *not*. Figs. i - v above illustrate the two ways by which sentential negation is derived in English.

4.2 Negation in Izq̄n

Unlike English, there are two negative markers in Izq̄n. These are *kumo* and *gha*. In the Government and Binding theory, the negative markers *kumo* and *gha* are headed by the negative phrase (NegP). The negative markers, *gha* and *kumo* are bound morphemes that are attached to a verb, that is, they come after verbs. While *gha* is used to derive negative statements, *kumo* is used mostly to derive negative sentences from imperative sentences. These are illustrated below:

Derivation of negative sentence with the negative particle *gha* in Izoŋ

Izoŋ: À bomé English translation: She came

Fig vi

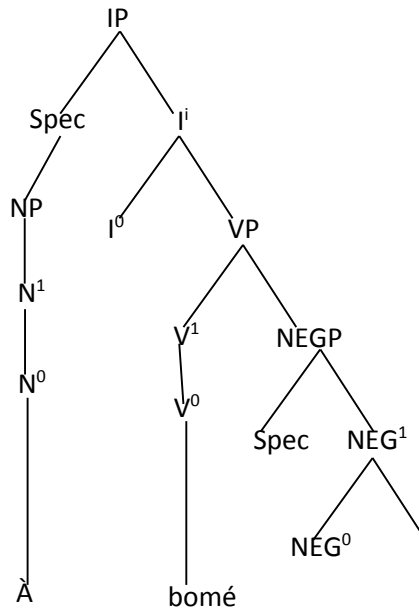
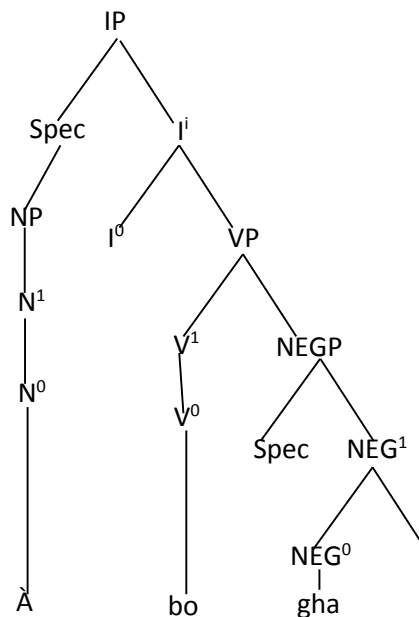


Fig. vi is a tree diagram showing a simple declarative sentence in Izoŋ. To derive sentential negation from this, the negative marker has to be attached to the verb. This will then bring about the deletion of the final syllable of the verb. This is illustrated in Fig. vii below:

Izoŋ: À bogha English translation: she come not

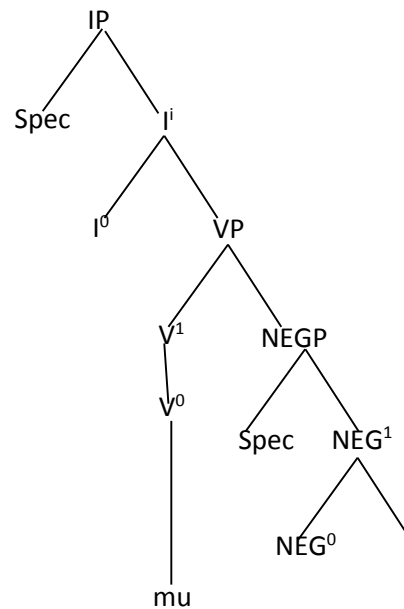
Fig. vii



The NegP occurs after VP in Izoŋ, so it does not require an auxiliary functioning as an operator to mandatorily occur before the negative particle is inserted. As stated earlier, *gha* is the negative particle that is used to convert statements to negative sentences. The *-mé* morpheme used in the positive statement is a tense marker denoting past tense. When the negative particle is attached to the main verb, the suffix *-mé*, the tense marker, is deleted from the main verb to derive *bo+ gha* meaning come + not.

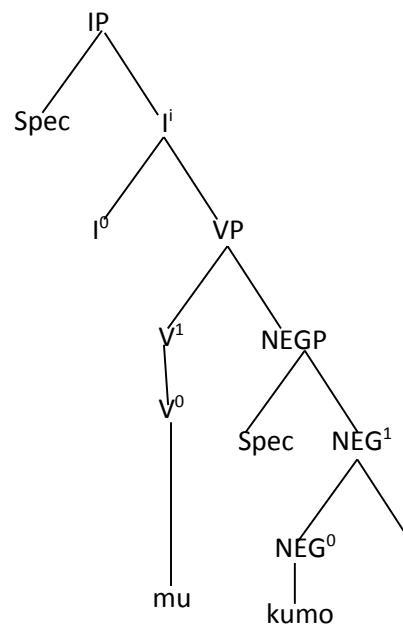
The tree diagramme in Fig. viii is a realisation of a simple declarative sentence *mu* in Izon, meaning *go* in English.
Izon: *mu* English: *go*

Fig. vii



To derive a negative sentence from the above, the negative particle *kumo* has to be added to *mu* as a postverbal element to derive *mu kumo* meaning *go notas* shown in Fig. vix below:

Fig. vix



As shown above, commands are always in the present tense so there is no past tense marker, like *mé* that was deleted in *À bomé*.

5.4 Discussion

The above analysis has shown the structural difference between sentential negation in English and Izon languages. First, the negative particle in English occurs between I^0 and the VP and the I^0 is occupied by an auxiliary verb and if there is no auxiliary, *do* is inserted. On the other hand, in Izon, NegP occurs after VP. So an auxiliary verb is not required for the negative particle to

occur. Secondly, while there is only one negative particle *not* in English for the derivation of negative sentence from statements and commands, there are two different negative particles in Izoŋ. While *gha* is used to derive sentential negation from statements, *kumo* is used to derive sentential negation from commands.

From this study, it is obvious that an Izoŋ learner of English as a second language will encounter some difficulties as a result of the parametric variations between the two languages in the aspect of sentential negation. The learning difficulties include:

- a. The fact that English negative marker occurs between I⁰ and VP while that of Izoŋ occurs after VP shows that the position of occurrence of English VP will constitute a learning difficulty to the Izoŋ learner of English Sentential Negation.
- b. The fact that English requires *do* insertion and Izoŋ does not require the insertion of an auxiliary means that the Izoŋ speaker will utter the ungrammatical sentence: *John come not*, until he is taught the need to insert *do* to such sentence to derive *John did not come*.
- c. The fact that Izoŋ has two negative markers for statement and command respectively shows that the Izoŋ learner may experience difficulty in learning sentential negation in English imperative sentences such that he might presume to be different from the use of *not*.

There are also differences in derivation on what is in English Negation and not in Izoŋ. For the derivation of sentential negation in English, the auxiliary *do* is always inserted for a sentence that does not have auxiliary while in Izoŋ, the *do-support* rule does not apply. For example, to derive a negative sentence from a simple sentence, *she came* can be said in the negative in English as *she did not come*, whereas in Izoŋ, it can be said as *a bogha*, this when interpreted means, *she come + not*. Izoŋ negative markers are bound morphemes and function as enclitics to the verb. They occur in post-verbal positions. Izoŋ negative particles are functionally and morphological attached to the finite verb while the English negative marker *not* is a free morpheme because it is not attached to any word. It occurs in pre-verbal positions, closer to the auxiliary verb in form and function.

At the level of hierarchy of difficulty, there will be split and collapsing. English has two rules for forming negative sentences. The *do insertion rule* and the *neg insertion rule* while Izoŋ has only one rule. Both English and Izoŋ have negative markers and so there is close identity in the insertion of negative particles but the position of insertion in each language differs. In Izoŋ, negative markers occur at post-verbal positions while in English the negative particle occurs at pre-verbal position after the auxiliary verb before. Thus, an Izoŋ speaker learning English negation may collapse all negation rules of English into one. From the data analysed in this study, the table below is a summary of the hierarchy of difficulties that an Izoŋ learner of English sentential negation may encounter:

Component syntactic	Rule	Nature of difficulty
	Tneg	<p>Close Identity</p> <p>i. There is a close identity in the insertion of negative particles in both languages but the position of insertion in each language differs.</p> <p>Split</p> <p>ii. English has at least two rules, the <i>do</i> insertion rule, negation rule while Izoŋ has only Neg insertion rule</p> <p>Collapsing</p> <p>iii. The Izoŋ learner of English Tneg may collapse all Tneg rules in English into one.</p>
	Tdo	<p>New item</p> <p>Tdo is unique to English since Izoŋ does not have it. It may prompt an Izoŋ speaker learning English sentential negation to utter ungrammatical sentences</p>
	Negative particle	<p>English has one negative marker <i>not</i> while Izoŋ has two negative markers, <i>kumo</i> and <i>gha</i>. The simple reason that Izoŋ has two negative markers for statement and command indicates that the Izoŋ learner will have difficulty in learning of sentential negation in English command which he might presume to be different from the use of <i>not</i>.</p>

6. Conclusion

This study is motivated by the need to identify the linguistic universal properties and the parametric variations between the English and the Izoŋ Languages at the level of sentential negation in English and Izoŋ Languages. Through this, it has shown the structural differences between the two languages at the level of sentential negation. It has also shown the processes of

derivation of the negative element in the two languages. The hierarchy of difficulties between the English language and the Izon language are also highlighted and the learning difficulties which Izon learners of English as a second language are likely to encounter in the process are stated. Through these, the pedagogical importance of the study is underscored. It then recommends that conscious efforts should be made by teachers and Izon learners / speakers of English as a second language at the level of realisation of negation in the second language. However, it should be noted that the findings of this research is limited to the Ogbe-Ijoh dialect of the Izon language and should not be taken as a generalisation for the over 30 different dialects of the Izon language. Further research is therefore suggested between other dialects of the Izon language and the English language both in the area of Negation and other areas of syntax.

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