

A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF URHOBO AND ENGLISH PREPOSITIONS

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Abstract

This paper, a contrastive Analysis of Urhobo and English Prepositions highlights some aspects of usage of the Urhobo Prepositions. It is no gainsaying that there has been a dearth of books in Urhobo Language, especially on the grammar of the language. This of course is a teething problem that should be looked into and adequately taken care of. Methodologically, definitions of prepositions will be considered including kinds of prepositions. Since little has been written on Urhobo grammar as earlier said, this paper aims at doing a contrastive analysis of the prepositions (i.e. juxtaposing the Urhobo prepositions which of course would be a very useful material for students of Urhobo Language in all levels of education.

Introduction

The thrust of this paper is geared towards doing a contrastive analysis of Urhobo prepositions with those of English in order to highlight some peculiar aspects of the former. To facilitate this, a parallel description approach is adopted in this paper.

Grammar, traditionally, is classified into parts of speech and prepositions take up one of the slots of the parts of speech. Before highlighting some aspects of usage of Urhobo prepositions, a definition of what prepositions are will be appropriate at this point. *The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (2006:1144) defines prepositions as “a word or group of words, such as in, from, to, out of and on behalf of, used before a noun or pronoun to show place, position, time or method”.

According to Murphy (2007:190), “a preposition is a word placed before a noun or

pronoun to show its relation to some other words in the sentence”. The preposition governs a noun or pronoun, usually indicating a relationship in time or place to some other word in the sentence. Adverbial and adjectival phrases are commonly introduced by a preposition. To Adejare and Adejare (2008:299) prepositions are used for expressing relationships between two nominals and are easy to identify.

In Urhobo, prepositions are known as *Odjedia*, and the kinds of prepositions we have in Urhobo are outlined against their English equivalents.

1. Simple Prepositions
Odjedia eloloḥo
2. Double Prepositions
Odjedia ibietaive
3. Compound Prepositions
Odjedia orhuonba
4. Participial Prepositions
Odjedia odjephia

5. Phrase Prepositions

Odjedia ẹkoeta

Having outlined the kinds of prepositions, we have in Urhobo; it will be pertinent to explain each of these to highlight their usage as well as the uniqueness of some aspects of Urhobo prepositions.

1. Odjedia elolohọ (Simple Prepositions)

As stated above, simple prepositions is known in Urhobo as *Odjedia elolohọ*. *Enavwe ona vuovo ra vwo rhuon ayen*. These prepositions are formed by any method and they are common to a language. Word such as *rhawen* (since), *vren* (than), *obotọ* (under), *totọ* (down), *ne* (from) *wen* (through), *besiẹ* (till), *enu* (on) are examples. These prepositions are used to show position, place, time, etc. E.g. *obotọ imejẹ na* = under the table *enu ehwa na* = on the bed *rhawen ode* = since yesterday *obotọ imejẹ* under table

i.e. under the table

i. *ologbo na oboto imejẹ na* cat the under table the the cat is under the table

The preposition ‘*obotọ*’ (under) is used to show position and the relationship between the ‘cat’ and the table.

ii. *enu ehwa* on bed

i.e. On the bed *Ekpu na enu re ehwa* bag the on the bed the bag is on the bed.

The preposition ‘*enu*’ (on) is used to show position in the sentence above.

iii. *rhawen ode* since yesterday

i.e. Since yesterday *Nyore rhere rhawen ode* Nyore came since yesterday

The preposition ‘*rhawen*’ is used to indicate time. i.e. the time Nyore came.

2. Odjedia ibietaive (Double Prepositions)

The second set of prepositions we want to consider at this point is known as *Odjedia ibietaive* (Double Prepositions). These are used to show place and method. These prepositions contain two words. Words like *ne obuko* (from behind), *vwo kpahon* (next to), *ne obote* (from under), *ne usun* (from among), *ne evun* (out of), *ifikire* (due to), etc are used. Let us now see the usage of Urhobo double prepositions.

i. *ne usun* = from among from among

i.e. from among *mi vughe*

Tega ne usun igbeyan royen

I recognized Tega from among friends her

i.e. I recognized Tega from among her friends.

ii. *ne oboto* from under

i.e. from under

Efe reyo obe na ne oboto re ochuyovwi na

Efe took book the from under pillow the

Efe took the book from under the pillow.

The two words ‘*ne oboto*’ meaning ‘from under’ are used to show the place Efe took the book from. iii. *Ifiki re* due to

i.e. due to

Akparẹ orẹ na ifiki rẹ ughwu rẹ ovie na

Postponed festival the due to death of king the

i.e. The festival was postponed due to the death of the king.

The prepositions ‘*fiki rẹ*’ meaning ‘due to’ were used to show the reason why the festival was postponed and the relationship between the death of the king and the postponement.

3. **Odjedia ọrhuonba (Compound Prepositions)**

Compound prepositions are formed by prefixing. These compound prepositions are *vwọ kpahẹn* (about), *uvwrẹ* (between), *shariẹ* (across), *riariẹ* (around), *okọkọ* (besides), *bẹsieyen* (before), etc. Let us consider their usage in Urhobo with some sentences.

i. *Kẹsiena gbẹ ogba riariẹ egodo rọyen*

Kẹsiena built wall round compound his

i.e. Kẹsiena built a wall round

his compound. ii. *okọkọ ẹchẹ*

i.e. *ọkọ ẹchẹ mi mudia*

okọkọ ẹchẹ na I stood

beside door the

I stood beside the

door iii. *djẹ shariẹ ran*

across

i.e. ran across

Omọshare na djẹ shariẹ idjerhe na

boy the ran across road the

i.e. the boy ran across the road.

The word ‘*shariẹ*’ is used to show the relationship between the boy and the road.

We will also note that the syntactic arrangement of sentences in Urhobo is different from that of English as we can see from the sentences used so far. What we have to pay attention to is the meaning.

4. **Odjedia odjephia (Participial Prepositions)**

Present participles which are used as prepositions are known as participial prepositions. A participle is a word formed from a verb ending in – ing (present participle) e.g. concerning (*vwọ kpahẹn*), *vwọ nene* (following), notwithstanding (*dedevwo/dedene*), *vwokẹ* (during), etc. In Urhobo, we call these sets of prepositions as *odjedia odjephia*. They make something to be clearer and also relate to time. We have listed examples above and their equivalents in English. Here are some sentences to show their usage in Urhobo.

1. *Vwẹ okiuvo*

i. *Avwanre diẹ Jos vwe ọkiuvo* We stay Jos during summer

i.e. We stay in Jos during summer

2. *Vwọ kpahẹn*

ii. *Isodje na dje omavwerhovwẹn vwọ kpahẹn ọkparikpenu na*

Soldier the expressed happiness concerning promotion the The soldier expressed happiness concerning the promotion.

iii. Considering - *evwororo Vwororo*

irueru rọyen vwẹ uji na ada kanrọn ẹgbukpe ihwe Considering role his in crime the he was

jailed years ten

Considering his role in the crime, he was jailed for ten years.

5. Odjedia ẹkoeta (Phrase Prepositions)

Urhobo phrase prepositions, *odjedia ẹkoeta*, are words used to show place, relationship, etc. Here are some examples: in front of (*obaro ẹ*), in memory of (*vwẹ ẹkarophiyọ ẹ*), in consequence (*fiki ẹ*), at the back of (*vwẹobuko ẹ*), etc. Here are some sentences to buttress what we have said so far about phrase prepositions.

at the back *vwẹ
na ọbuko*

i. i.e. *vwẹ obuko ẹ*

1. *O vwẹ ogba obuko ẹ egodo
na*

There is fence back of compound the There
is a fence at the back of the
compound

These words '*vwẹ ọbuko*' meaning 'at the back' shows the position of the fence (i.e. place) in the compound. This of course will make the location of the fence easier.

ii. *Vwẹ opharo ẹ* – in the face

2. *O mudia kokoroko vwe opharo ẹ
ukpokpogho rode*

He stood firm in the face of
tribulation great

He stood firm in the face of great
tribulation.

3. in front of *vwẹ obaro ẹ a saro
obaro ẹ egodo royen* He shot
front in compound his He was
shot in front of his compound

4. in memory of *vwẹ
ẹkarophiyọ ẹ*

*Olorogun Oscar Ibru ọnon ọguan orho na
vwẹ ẹkarophiyọ ẹ ọsẹ*

royen

Chief Oscar Ibru built town hall the in
memory of father his Chief Oscar
Ibru built the town hall in memory of
his father

The prepositions '*vwẹ ẹkarophiyọ ẹ*' meaning 'in memory of' are used to show relationship, purpose, reason, etc for building the town hall.

Conclusion

In Urhobo grammar as in English, prepositions are used before a noun or pronoun to show place, position, time or method. They are used to show their relationship to some other words in the sentence.

So far, this paper has focused on a contrastive analysis of Urhobo and English prepositions. Through such analysis, areas such as the usage of the Urhobo prepositions, syntactic structures peculiarities were highlighted. A simple and parallel approach (i.e. juxtaposing the Urhobo prepositions with those of English) has been adopted in this paper. This of course will enhance understanding without doubt, especially for those interested in comparative linguistics. This type of analysis could be a suitable area of further research of some languages of the Niger Delta. Furthermore, it will also be a useful material for students of Urhobo language in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions of learning putting into consideration the scarcity of such materials for academic purpose.

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