A REVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF THE MINIMALIST PROGRAMME ON IGBO NOUN PHRASE

J. A. Nweke

Abstract

This paper is an investigative study conducted with the objective of finding the resultant effect when Minimalist Theory is applied to Igbo noun phrase in sentence construction. Minimalist programme is the most current syntactic theory founded and developed by Noam Chomsky and his associates in 1996, with the aim of enabling syntacticians employ only the basic minimum apparatus required for the description (and accounting for the structure) of sentences in all human languages. The programme is designed in order to remove any non-essential and superfluous apparatus which may constitute problems in syntactic description and hence make way for the use of only essential apparatus during syntactic analysis. With the latest approach to the study of grammar, the minimalist programme had carefully eliminated many of the concepts that existed in earlier syntactic theories such as Traditional Grammar, Phrase Structural Grammar, Transformational Generative Grammar and Government and Binding Theory. The theoretical framework is based on the concept of Computational System, which is the operation where fully formed words selected from the lexicon are combined in pairs through a process called Select and Merge – which means combining new items with existing items. This paper begins with an Introduction and moves on to a Theoretical Concept of Minimalist Programme. It highlights on the impact of word order, on concept of noun phrase in Igbo language based on minimalist approach, on the application of major minimalist concepts to Igbo noun phrase, such as description of Igbo nominal, and on a bipartite description of Igbo noun phrase using minimalist approaches. Finally is the conclusion which discusses minimalist programme as a solution to the problems created by other syntactic theories.

Minimalist programme is the current syntactic theory which was introduced by Noam Chomsky and his associates in 1996 as a result of inadequacies of the grammars that came before it. The first type of grammar which came into existence was the Traditional Grammar which analyses grammar in terms of parts of speech and their isolated use in sentence construction. For example, what is a noun, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction etc? And how can they be used in sentence construction as parts of speech? Under this grammar, these categories were used in making sentences independently. This is a prescriptive type of grammar which saw grammar in parts and not as a whole. Owing to this, Noam Chomsky and his associates substituted the Traditional Grammar with Phrase Structural Grammar (PS). This type of grammar has a rule which accounts for the grammaticality or adequacy of sentence construction, i.e. S NP AUX VP. Unfortunately PS Grammar could not account for all the sentences in English language. For example, it could account for a sentence such as

\[
S \rightarrow NP \quad AUX \quad VP
\]

S \rightarrow The boy ed kill the goat (the boy killed the goat), but it could not account for passive sentences like “the goat was killed by the boy”. So many sentences could not be accounted for by Phrase Structural rule. Owing to this inadequacy, Chomsky went further to introduce the Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG) in 1960 to substitute the Phrase Structural Grammar. TGG consists of series of rules which help to account for sentences which were not accounted for by Phrase Structural Grammar. These rules were applied before explanatory and descriptive adequacies are achieved in sentence construction. Such rules are deletion rule, passivization, dative movement, affix hopping, which carry out several transformational processes before a sentence becomes grammatical. In 1971, Chomsky in his book titled “Remarks on Nominalisation” introduced the theory of Principles and Parameters which is popularly known as Government and Binding Theory. This theory is made of seven modules which account for wellformedness of grammar. The modules
are X-Bar Theory, Government Theory, Case Theory, Control Theory, Theta Theory, Binding Theory and Bounding Theory. These are the seven sub-theories of GB theory which helped to make syntactic analysis very complex. Chomsky decided to apply simplicity in grammatical analysis.

But in 1996, Chomsky and his associates decided to make syntactic description very simple. This he did by introducing the latest syntactic theory called Minimalist Programme which succeeded in eliminating all the Transformational rules used in (TGG) Transformational Generative Grammar. Minimalist Programme brought the concept of word order in syntactic analysis where any lexical category that comes first in a sentence construction becomes the head of the phrase in the sentence. For example, if a determiner comes first in a phrase, the phrase becomes a determiner phrase. For example, in the sentence “the stupid boy”, the word “boy” was the head of this phrase; and this is a noun phrase, but in minimalist programme, the determiner “The” becomes the head of this phrase following the concept of word order. Minimalist Programme adopted the head first concept as against Transformational Generative Grammar and GB Theory, which adopted the head last concept which made grammatical analysis very complex.

The Theoretical Concept of Minimalist Programme as a New Syntactic Theory

The Minimalist Programme is the latest syntactic approach to the study of syntax developed by Noam Chomsky and his associates in 1996. The aim of developing this new syntactic analysis is for syntacticians to employ only the minimum apparatus required for the description and accounting for the structure of sentences in all languages. This programme is designed to remove any non-essential and superfluous apparatus which may constitute a problem in syntactic description, and only to make use of the minimum essential apparatus during the analysis. With the latest approach to the study of grammar, the minimalist programme had carefully removed many of the concepts that existed in earlier syntactic theories such as Phrase Structural Grammar, Transformational Generative Grammar and Government and Binding Theory. For example, the concept of surface and deep structure in Transformational Generative Syntax and the concept of D and S structures in GB theory have been eliminated by Minimalist Programme. All the earlier transformational rules such as Dative Movement Rules, Equivalent Noun Phrase Deletions, Affix Hopping Rules, Reflexivisation Rules, have been screened out from the dictionary of the Minimalist Programme. The concept of case assignment and their governors which is a major aspect of GB theory has been erased by minimalist approach to syntactic analysis. According to Radford (1997: 11) Minimalist Programme “does not presuppose any background knowledge of syntactic theory”.

In the Minimalist Theory, there is a provision for lexicon; but different from the one observed in earlier theories of grammar. The Minimalist Theories, in her lexicon, contain fully formed words in contradistinction to the lexicon of earlier syntactic theory which contains stores of words and morphemes. It means that in Minimalist Programme, her lexicon contains words with all their inflexional and derivative affixes already attached to them. For example, in English language, the words are fully formed equipped with their tense affixes, number and case affixes in them. As a case, in GB Theory and Extended Standard Theory the word “daughters” would be listed as (daughter + plural + female + human), but in the Minimalist Theory, “daughters” will simply be listed as “daughters” with its descriptive specification enclosed at its side e.g. daughters = daughters (plural, female, human etc). Minimalist Programme describes her lexicon in whole not in parts as contained in the description of the lexicon of earlier syntactic theories. In the old syntactic theories, the pronoun such as “she” will be listed as (+ pronoun + female + 3rd person + singular + subject + accusative case sign + her in the accusative case) while in the minimalist programme, “she” will only be described as “she” with her specification attached to it, while “her” will be treated as a separate word with its specification attached to it e.g.

She (pronoun, fem, 3rd person, singular, subject)  
Her (pronoun, fem, 3rd person, singular, object)

In Minimalist Programme, “she” and “her” are treated as independent and separate entities. There is no invocation of the concept of government and case in Minimalist Programme that will authorize the pronoun to change from “she” to “her” at the phonetic level.
A Review Of The Impact Of The Minimalist Programme On Igbo Noun Phrase

In the theoretical framework of Minimalist Programme, it developed a concept called *Computational System*. This is the operation where the fully formed words selected from the lexicon are combined in pairs through the process of “select and merge”. The term “select” means taking an item from the lexicon while the term “merge” means combining the item with another item that had already been selected. So one selects a word from a pool of lexicon, and merges it with another word that had already been selected. This is referred to as *Operation Merge*. If the two lexical combinations become an acceptable construction, the words are said to *Converge*, but where they are not, the construction is said to *Crash*. So “converge” is synonymous to grammatical or well-formed construction while “crash” is equivalent to ungrammatical or ill-formed construction.

The phrase structure rules used in the earlier theories of grammar have been carefully replaced by the term “operation merge” in the Minimalist Programme. So Phrase Structure rules no longer exist in this new syntactic approach. Constructions can only be formed through the process of “operation merge” by combining two lexical items and where the merging is successful, the output is said to have converged but where they are not successful, the output is said to have crashed. Then the crashed or ill-formed construction is thereby eliminated and “operation merge” will carry out further combinational activities in order to ensure successful constructions otherwise there will be no continuity in sentence or phrasal construction. Phrase is created in the initial activity of operation merge, and as more successful selection and merge to the new phrase is done by operation merge, a larger phrase will result. So subsequent successful operations merge will precipitate into the creation of ever larger phrases.

The “computational system” also developed what is known as the concept of *Binary Principle*. This principle states that “all non-terminal nodes are binary branching”. This concept will be discussed in detail during the description of Igbo noun phrase.

The Impact of Word Order in Determining Phrases with Minimalist Approach

Word order is the systematic and orderly arrangement of words in a language. That is which word appears first in a construction and which words follow the first word. The orderly arrangement of words in any given construction is very vital in semantic analysis because two sentences with two different orderly arrangements must in many cases depict a difference in meaning not minding that their substantive content are the same syntactically e.g. let us examine the following Igbo construction.

1. Okeke gburu agwọ
   Okeke killed a snake
2. Agwọ gburu Okeke
   Snake killed Okeke

Despite the fact that sentence 1 and sentence 2 have equal and the same type of morphological contents, they have different semantic realization due to difference in their word order. Word order is determined in some languages through unmarked sentences. For example, simple declarative sentences usually determine word order due to their simplicity in making statement e.g.

3. Onye ahu tara anu
   Person that chewed meat
   That person chewed meat

4. Anu tara onye ahu
   Meat chewed person that
   Meat chewed person that

In the sentences (3) and (4) above, the meaning difference is caused by word order arrangement between them. Simple declarative statement is not one which asks question or gives order.
In Minimalist Programme, word order determines the type of phrase a phrase belongs to. There are many kinds of phrases in English e.g. Noun phrases, Verb phrases, Adjectival phrases, Adverbial phrases, etc. Let us examine the following phrases in English and Igbo respectively e.g. “Good person” which has Igbo semantic realization “ọnye ọma”. The word “good” is an adjective and the word “person” is a noun while in Igbo the word “ọnye” is a noun meaning “person”, while the word “ọma” is an adjective meaning “good”. Let us also examine the following in English and Igbo, “Eat food quickly” which is realized in Igbo as “rie nri ọsọọsọ”. The word “eat” in English is a verb and the word “rie” in Igbo is a verb. The word “food” is semantically realized as “nri” in Igbo and the two words are nouns. Also, the English word “quickly” means “ọsọọsọ” in Igbo. They are both adverbs. Therefore the two sentences in English and Igbo are logically equivalent with the same structural description.

Under these syntactic arrangements, word order will determine the type of rules we shall postulate in the two languages concerned.

From the study of word order we have seen that each language is arranged according to different word class i.e. major word classes and minor word classes. According to Minimalist Programme which is the latest syntactic theory propounded by Noam Chomsky and associates, every word in a sentence is part of a phrase or phrase constituent. By definition, a phrase is an element of grammar which consists minimally of a word. The word “minimally” means that a phrase must contain at least one word but maximally a phrase can contain as many words as possible e.g. one, two, three, four, etc. There is no official maximum number of words that constitute a phrase but there must be a minimum of at least one word in a phrase e.g.

Student came here

Student with long hairs came here

The word “student” is a noun phrase and the words “student with long hairs” is also a noun phrase containing an adjunct “with long hairs”. But the NP “student” and the NP “student with long hairs” occur in the same environment. The word “student” is an NP without a satellite while the NP “student with long hairs” is an NP containing the head “student” and its satellites “with long hairs”. Let us examine the NP in the following sentences;

“Nwoke biara ebea”
A man came here
And the NP Nwoke Ogologo ntutu isi ọsọọsọ
A man with long hairs came here

In these two sentences above, the NP “Nwoke” contains a head without any satellites while the NP “Nwoke ogologo ntutu isi” has satellites “ogologo ntutu isi”. The underlined NP has a head “Nwoke” (man) and a satellite “Ogologo Ntutu isi” (with long hairs) as adjunct of the head “Nwoke”. The words “Ogologo ntutu isi” are the compliment of the head “Nwoke” as can be seen in linguistic literature. The satellite or the compliment is not compulsory within a phrase rather it is optional but the head is obligatorily present in any phrase. So the satellite by being optional may not occur in any phrasal construction.

In Minimalist Programme, a lexical category heads a phrase and where phrase is headed by a noun, that noun is referred to as the Lexical Projections for noun category, while a phrase headed by a noun is referred to as Maximal Projection e.g. in Igbo let us examine the following NPs.

a. Nwoke ọjọ ọnọ (man is bad)
b. Nwoke onye ugegbe anya ọjọ ọnọ (man with eye glasses is bad).

The NP “Nwoke” which is a head without a satellite and the NP “Nwoke onye ugegbe anya” which is an NP with a head “Nwoke” and a satellite “onye ugegbe anya” have the same distribution in the two constructions above. Therefore, a lexical projection “Nwoke” and its maximal projection “Nwoke onye ugegbe anya” occur in the same syntactic position as subject of the sentence. Supposing we say.
A Review Of The Impact Of The Minimalist Programme On Igbo Noun Phrase

c.  
Mmadu nwere ego anwuọla meaning “A man who is rich is dead” and

d.  
Mmadu anwuọla (A man had died) or a man is dead

The head of a phrase and the entire phrase have the same syntactic distribution in the syntactic construction. It dare means that both the head which is the lexical projection and the head and its satellite can occupy the position of subject and object in any syntactic construction, e.g.

e.  
Mmadu anwuọla “head” subject. Human is dead

f.  
Mmadu nwere ego anwuọla “head with satellite” subject.

In the same way, let us examine the following syntactic construction.

g.  
Ahuru m mmadu (I saw a man) object

h.  
“Ahuru m mmadu nwere ego” (I saw a wealthy man) “object”.

Therefore both the lexical projection “mmadu” and its maximal projection perform the same syntactic function in the syntax of any language despite the fact that “g” is a one word phrase and “h” is a three word phrase in Igbo language.

Endocentric and Exocentric Noun Phrase

Endocentric noun phrase is a full noun phrase having the same syntactic distribution with its head. That is why maximal projection of a noun phrase has the same syntactic distribution with its lexical projection.

This means that any place a phrase containing a head and its satellite will occur in a sentence, the head of that phrase can equally occur there. Let us examine the following construction in English

a. Children with stubborn heart came here today

b. Children came here today

These sentences show that any place where the phrase “children with stubborn heart” occupies in a syntactic construction, its head “children” can equally occupy the same positions. Like English, endocentric phrase also exists in Igbo language. Let us examine these Igbo sentences.

Umuaka afo ukwu zuru ohi taa
Children stomach big stole thief today

Children with big stomach stole today

Here it is clear that where the full phrase “Umuaka afo ukwu” occurs in the syntactic structure the head “Umuaka” can also occur in the same position.

Umuaka afo ukwu zuru ohi taa
Umuaka zuru ohi taa

This type of phrase is called endocentric phrase.

The second kind of phrase is called exocentric phrase. This is the phrase which does not have the same syntactic distribution with its head. For example,

Na mmiri ahu ka ọ nọ
In water that that he is
“In that water that he is”

Following the old theory, this is a prepositional phrase with the noun phrase “mmiri” being its head while the preposition “na” being its compliment. The head “mmiri” cannot have the same syntactic distribution with the maximal projection “na mmiri ahu”. One can say “na mmiri ahu ka ọ nọ”, but it is ungrammatical to say “mmiri ka ọ nọ” (water that he is) rather we shall say “na mmiri ka ọ nọ” (in the water that he is); so this is an exocentric phrase. Using an example from English, “in the river” which is also a prepositional phrase with “river” as the head and the preposition “in” as the complement, the head and the entire phrase cannot have the same syntactic distribution e.g. one can
Chomsky and his associates approved that all categories whether lexical or functional categories can head a phrase. Nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs which are lexical categories can perform the function as a phrasal head; likewise, preposition and conjunction, which are functional categories, can head a phrase. Even some of the syntactic elements such as questions, quantifier, tense, determiner, can perform the function of head phrase. This gave rise to several phrases existing in the Minimalist Programme such as noun phrase, verb phrase, adjectival phrase, adverbial phrase, determiner phrase, conjunctural phrase, interrogative phrase, tense phrase, quantifier phrase, and even negation phrase, many of them were conspicuously absent in the earlier grammar such as Transformational Generative Grammar and Government and Binding Theory. In Chomsky’s Minimalist Programme, phrases are named with respect to word order. When a phrase starts with a category, that category takes over the name of the entire phrase and also serves as the lexical head of the phrase. For example, in the earlier grammar, “the stupid old man” was a noun phrase where the determiner “the”, adjectives “stupid” and “old” all help to describe the noun “man”. But with the Chomsky’s word order concept, the determiner which appears first in the phrasal category becomes the head of the phrase and the entire phrase became a determiner phrase. Therefore, in Minimalist Theory, “the stupid old man” is a determiner phrase not a noun phrase as was seen in the earlier grammar. Lexical categories were given the privilege of heading a one-word phrase but denied functional categories this privilege. This theory divided language into two classes, according to word order, namely Head First and Head Last languages. English language and some Nigerian languages such as Igbo, etc belong to head first language, and these two languages are our area of focus in this paper.

Secondly, we are limiting our boundary to noun phrase (NP) only, but where it is necessary that other phrasal categories can help to illustrate NP concepts, they can be applied. With the concept of Minimalist Programme, a noun phrase must begin with a noun which must serve as an obligatory head with other satellites serving as an optional complement. Let us examine the following English noun phrases:

a. Men with long throat
b. People from the market

Here “Men” and “people” are the obligatory heads, with other parts of the phrase such as “with long throat” and “from the market” serving as their satellites respectively. This is also applicable to Igbo language. Let us examine the following Igbo construction:

1. Nwoke mara mma
   Man is beauty
   A man who is beautiful

Here the noun “Nwoke” is the head of the noun phrase “Nwoke mara mma”, while the verb “mara” and the noun “mma” serve as complement or satellite of the head “Nwoke”. Other examples are:

2. Nwoke ọma toro ogologo
   A man good is tall
   A good man who is tall

In Igbo, the above phrase is a noun phrase following the word order principle; given the sentence began with the noun, while in English language it is a determiner phrase because the phrase is headed by a determiner. Let us demonstrate the two languages diagrammatically using P marker.
But in English, the tree structure will be as follows:

\[
\text{A good man who is tall}
\]

These trees proved that though English and Igbo belong to head first language, evidence from these data proves that their structural configurations are quite different.

**Bipartite Description of Noun Phrase in English and Igbo**

Chomsky and his associates developed the concept of *Bipartite Principle* or *Binary Principle*. In this concept, they stated that all non-terminal nodes are binary branching. The bipartite form of description of phrases and sentences are already done in the Computational System. In this bipartite principle, Chomsky also introduced the idea of X-bar theory which was aimed at taking care of immediate categories. This X-bar was proposed in order to give account of the phrases higher than lexical head and smaller than maximal projection in any phrasal categories.

Ndimele (1992) emphasises on the importance of X-bar theory in the following statement:

The notion of X\(^1\) theory was first introduced into grammatical analysis by Chomsky (1970) in his article entitled “Remarks on Nominalisation”, and was later popularised by Jackendoff (1977). This theory plays a very crucial role in GB. Apart from accounting for word order, X\(^1\) theory determines the configuration of D-structure. X\(^1\) convention arose out of the need to seek remedies to the inadequacies of Phrase Structural Grammar (PSG). Within PSG, only two types of ultimate categories are recognised.

a. Lexical categories which include noun, verb, adjective, preposition, adverb, etc.

b. Phrasal categories which include NP, VP, AP, S, etc.

PSG does not recognise the existence of intermediate categories which are larger than the lexical categories but smaller than the phrasal categories. But proponents of X\(^1\) convention have
argued that there seems to be evidence in support of the existence of intermediate categories which are larger than the word but smaller than phrase. Some of the primary aims of X\textsuperscript{1} convention are to make provisions for these categories which fall between the lexical categories (minimal categories) and the phrase categories (maximal projection). (Ndimele, 1992: 11)

Therefore the importance of X-bar convention cannot be overemphasized in this latest syntactic theory, more especially its use in describing the categories with phrase marker using bipartite principle. Hence NP can be divided into NP, N, and N.

Let us examine the following noun phrases in Igbo language.

\begin{itemize}
  \item Agwọ
  \item Nkwụ
  \item Ọjọọ
\end{itemize}

Snake Palm-tree bad

An evil palm snake

\begin{itemize}
  \item Agwọ
  \item N
  \item ADJ
  \item Nkwụ
  \item Ọjọọ
\end{itemize}

Now, X-bar theory has accounted for the existence of “Nkwụ Ọjọọ” which is larger than the lexical head “Agwọ” but smaller than the maximal projection N “Agwọ Nkwụ Ọjọọ”.

This X\textsuperscript{1} – theory concept can be experienced in English with the following examples:

Dr (Mrs) Okoye’s visit to Anambra State Library
Examine the following Noun Phrase in tree diagram using bipartite principle.
Chief Okeke’s wedding in Akure

Bipartite principle of Noam Chomsky accommodates Igbo language effectively. Let us examine the following Noun phrase in Igbo language:
Ogbu Agụ Okoye Kwụrụ ụdọ
Killer Tiger Okoye Hanged Rope
A tiger killer Okoye who hung with rope
We can describe the NP as follows:
The child of that big Nkechi who is large

The structural description in Igbo will be different from its syntactic description in English, though their semantic realization will be the same. Let us start with an Igbo example:

The child of that big Nkechi who was big

It will be noted that following the new theory and the old theory, Igbo language has no determiner phrase because the only determiners that exist in Igbo are “a” (this) and “ahụ” (that) and they must be preceded by an obligatory noun e.g.
Therefore, there is no room for determiner to come first in Igbo phrasal order arrangement as could be seen in English language.

Chomsky (1993:1) in his article titled “A Minimalist Program for Linguistics Theory” stated that “the theory of a particular language is the grammar. The theory of languages and the expression they generate is the Universal Grammar (UG)”. So in Universal Grammar, the same principle may be applied to generate sentence but their parameter may be different as in the case of English language and Igbo language.

### The Position of Specified in English and Igbo

A specifier is a word which specifies the category or categories that carried out an action. A specifier moves straight to expose what a noun phrase and its complement would do. In English, a head of a (NP) Noun phrase is always followed by its complement. Let us examine the following sentence:

Decision to create man

The word “decision” is the lexical projection of the entire maximal projection “decision to create man”. Therefore the word “decision” is the obligatory head containing a complement “to create man”.

Supposing the following construction is obtained, “God decision to create man”. Does it mean that the word “God” will serve as the head of noun phrase while “decision to create man” will be its complement? The answer is typically “no” because the word “decision” has already existed as the head with its complement “to create man”. The word “God” cannot be a complement to the head “decision” because complements follow their heads and not precede their head. But the word “God” preceded the head “decision”. Therefore a new term “specifier” was adopted to specify the “decision to create man”. In English language, specifier occurs before the head of a noun phrase. Therefore “God” is the specifier of the phrase while “Decision” is the head of the noun phrase. Since specifier can never head the phrase, the head of the phrase will represent the name of its phrase in any construction. Cowper (1992:20) stated that one must notice that “the name of each of these phrase categories contains the name of a lexical category. It is no accident. A noun phrase must contain a noun. In almost all cases, every other element of the phrase category is optional, while the element after which the phrase category is named is obligatory”.

Following this concept, the word “decision” which is the “head noun” will assume the name of the phrase i.e. noun phrase. Specifier is to help describe the action of the head and therefore cannot assume a head position.

For example, for the sentence above, its tree diagram will appear thus:
Let us give more English examples. “Talk against God decision to create man”. Here two phrases are merged together by operation select and merge action. The VP “talk against”, and the NP “God decision to create man” come together to form a larger verb phrase “talk against God decision to create man”. We must remember that the head of the NP “God decision to create man” is the lexical category “decision” while “God” still remains the specifier. The larger verb phrase will be realized with the specifier “God” under its NP. Therefore, the diagrammatic description will be as follows:

\[
\text{VP} \quad \text{V} \quad \text{PP} \quad \text{Talk} \quad \text{P} \quad \text{Against N} \quad \text{NP} \quad \text{N} \quad \text{God} \quad \text{IP} \quad \text{Decision} \quad \text{I} \quad \text{To V} \quad \text{Create} \quad \text{Man} \]

In Igbo language, the specifier follows the head and thereby join other categories to form a complement of the head e.g. let us examine the following Noun phrase.

Atụmatụ ịrụ ụlọọgwụ
Plans to build hospital
Plans to build a hospital
The word “atụmatụ” is the head of the phrase while “ịrụ ụlọọgwụ” is the complement. Supposing we have the construction

Atụmatụ  mmadu  ịrụ  ụlọọgwụ
Plans  human  to build  hospital
Human plans to build hospital

It will be seen that in Igbo “atụmatụ” which would have been a specifier in English goes behind the head to join the complement position. So the description obtained in Igbo will be structured thus:

\[
\text{NP} \quad \text{N} \quad \text{Atụmatụ} \quad \text{N} \quad \text{IP} \quad \text{mmadu I} \quad \text{(Human)} \quad \text{VP} \quad \text{V} \quad \text{rụ} \quad \text{ụlọọgwụ} \]

J. A. Nweke
In English, it will be obtained in this way

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Human} \\
\text{Plans} \\
\text{To} \\
\text{Build} \\
\text{hospital}
\end{array}
\]

It will be noted here that in Igbo, the specifier follows its head, and joins other complemental elements to form a complement while in English, specifier comes before the head, and helps to describe the head and its complement. One may be tempted to say that Igbo has no specifier since the element which serves as the specifier joins the complement. This however will be wrong because the word “mmadu” helps to specify the head “atụmatụ”. Other examples of Igbo specifier are

a. Ọrụ Ekwensu Igbu mmadu (devils works to kill human beings)
   Work devil to kill human
   Head specifier complement

b. Izuzu Chukwu Inye ndu (God plans to give life)
   Proposal God to give life
   Head specifier complement

In Igbo and English they can be represented as follows:

In Igbo and English they can be represented as follows:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Ọrụ Ekwensu Igbu mmadu} \\
(Head) \quad \text{spec} \quad \text{plans} \\
\text{Igbu mmadu} \\
(Head) \quad \text{spec} \quad \text{plans} \\
\text{Igbu mmadu} \\
(Head) \quad \text{spec} \quad \text{plans} \\
\text{Igbu mmadu} \\
(Head) \quad \text{spec} \quad \text{plans}
\end{array}
\]

Izuzu Chukwu inye ndu = God proposal to give life

English has **Specifier First** feature while Igbo has a **Head First** feature as proved by their descriptions.
Conclusion

In conclusion, the essence of introducing Minimalist Theory in syntactic analysis by Chomsky and his associates is to make syntactic analysis very simple. It is based on the concept of simplicity in the analysis of grammar. Chomsky eliminated all those rules found in TGG which made grammatical analysis very complex. The concept of word order made it easy in determining the head of a phrase in any sentence construction in Minimalist Programme. All these illustrations mentioned above made Minimalist Programme superior to other predated syntactic theories such as Traditional Grammar, Phrase Structural Grammar, Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG) and GB Theory.

Reference


