

## **The Parameteric-Effects of the T-Movement, PSG and X-Bar Syntax on English and Ogbah**

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### **Abstract**

Recent research outcomes in the field of linguistics have triggered a lot of reactions in the forms of contrastive syntactic investigations. These moves have in no small ways radicalised and revolutionised the approach to language appreciation. Some of the linguistic research results in these breakthroughs are the Phrase Structure Grammar, Transformational Movements and the X-Bar theory or syntax. This work examined the holds of some of these popular notions of modern grammar on language, especially the cross-linguistics relations which they may possibly hold for English and Ogbah. The major area of concentration is the parameteric consequences on the languages of study in terms of the universal parameters and the exceptional features which the Ogbah language holds against the English language sets. This paper argued that the Ogbah language shares some universal and peculiar parameters in the three selected areas of this paper. It ventured a contributory boost to the descriptive notion of grammar relating to Movement, Phrase structure rules and the modification made to the “flat structure” of phrase structure grammar. In this paper, it has been shown that the Ogbah language holds some grammatical differentials which knowledge could assist in strengthening the modern grammatical unfolding in the sphere of descriptive linguistics learning and teaching.

**Keywords:** Parameter, Transformational-movement, Phrase structure grammar, X-bar syntax, head.

## **Introduction**

Language is one of the dynamic indexes possessed by human. The development of this notion was stalled from manifestation for many years, until the advancements in human language studies made by Harris, Bloomfield, Chomsky, etc. The evolution of the Phase Structure Grammar (PSG), Transformational Movement (T-Movement), X-bar Syntax, and the Principles and Parameters theory have triggered investigations on various aspects of language based on the descriptive approach. The outcomes have been revolutionary. The massing investigations on the world's natural languages triggered by the revolutionary principles and parameter theory will be a major trigger to this paper. In other words, the locus hinges on the idea that the Ogbah language (a natural language spoken by the Ogba people of South-South Zone of Rivers State in Nigeria) could hold many differentials in the areas of the Phase Structure Grammar, Transformational Movements and the X-bar Syntax. . Radford (2004) agreed that knowledge of these parameteric implications enables the child learner to know which one of the language sets that fits the acquisition intendments. Even for the language teacher, such comprehension is mandatory.

## **Literature Review**

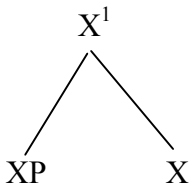
### **Foundation Problems of Language Learning and Teaching**

A wise saying has it that a teacher is a good reflection of the educational quality of his nation. It then follows that the learners of language, especially at the secondary school and tertiary levels may not exhibit more than has been transferred to them by the teachers of language. This research has identified the persistency of prescriptive grammar as an unrelenting setback to the knowledge of language realities.

### **The Phrase Structure Grammar (PSG)**

Matthew (1993:111) noted that upto the 1940s, there were two major tasks bordering syntax: "One to establish the hierarchical structure of sentences and the other to sort the units of the hierarchy into classes with equivalent distribution". Chomsky (1957) agreed that "customarily, linguistic description on the syntactic level is formulated in terms of the constituent analysis or parsing (in Matthew, 147). Lyon held Chomsky's contributions to the phrase structure grammar as "...original, and probably most enduring contribution to linguistics as the mathematical rigour and precision with which he formalized the properties of alternative system of grammatical description". This according to him "was his formalization of phrase structure grammar".

The structure of a phrase may differ from one language to another, especially the 'noun phrase' and 'verb phrase' (Palmer 1971:76). Radford (1999:390) posited in support of Palmer's preposition that two languages may emerge according to the position of the grammatical value represented by "Specifier"(Speci.). Specifier (The, an, a etc) situated left to  $X^1$  is phrase initial and vice versa. In Ogbah, the specifier is right to  $X^1$  in regard of the noun phrase; as illustrated in the schema below: 1.



Consider this Ogbah example relating to the position of the Specifier to X.

2. e. g. Nwoko ya  
 Man the  
 “The man”

The specifier, Ya (“The”), is located rightmost to a lexical in Ogbah syntactic structure. In the phrase structure grammar (PSG), there are two known levels of phrasal constructions; the first given as NP,-VP, etc and the second in the notations N, V Adv, Adj (Onyedibia, 2010:40). Ndemele (1992:29) noted that there are two “ultimate categories” within the PSG - The “lexical categories” and “phrasal categories”. The PSG, he affirmed is blank on “intermediate levels”. As we shall see later in this paper, the intermediate levels, lacked by the “flat structure” of the PSG, remains one of the majors reasons for the intervention of the X-bar syntax.

### Noun Phrase

In Ogbah language, the Specifier could be a determiner, article or demonstrative pronoun. In English language, it is obligatory that the specifier should precede the noun it modifies; which means that it is phrase initial. The Specifier, in Ogbah is phrase final as well as the complement. In the NP structure: ‘Umu isi ikne ka Jon ya’, the Specifier ‘ya’ (‘the’) occurred at the final position of the Noun Phrase, adjacent to the complement ‘ka Jon’ (‘of John’). In English language, the articles ‘a’, ‘an’ and the determiner ‘the’ are respectively obligatory precedents of the heads of Noun Phrases mainly as factors of specification and convention. This assertion is illustrated with the schema and examples below:

3. i. The thieves of Omoku.  
 Det + N + (Pp)  
 ii. A Man of honour.  
 Det + N + (PP)  
 iii. An ugly boy in Lagos.  
 Det + Adj. + N + Pp

In the Ogbah language, the articles above are not obligatory constituents of the Noun Phrase. Remember that Ogbah is a Specifier phrase-final language. In this case, the Specifier is totally absent, contrary to English in which the occurrence of any of these items with some nouns is obligatory. Note that nouns such as Peter, Mary, John, Uche, Oburu etc cannot take any of these articles or even demonstratives except ‘this’ and ‘that’ (That John.... This Peter....). Let us examine the specific instances where the uses of these items are not obligatory, using the above sentences’ equivalent in Ogbah:

4. i. Nde osni ka Omoku  
 Pm +N + (PP)  
 “The thieves of Omoku”  
 ii. Nwokno Oma  
 N + Adj  
 “Good man.”  
 iii. Nwatakri ya amawoh nma dila Lagos (High tone on the initial ‘a’ in ‘amawoh nma’) – The ugly girl that is in Lagos.  
 N + Adj + (PP)

The sentences above have no articles; unlike the case in English. These concern the occurrences of multiple adjectives in the noun phrase. Consider the examples below:

The huge black woman on the white door  
 Det +Adj. + Adj. + N +Prep +Det +Adj. +N

Nwayna ukwu oji ni dila akhu ocha ya  
 N + Adj. +Ad +Det +Prep + N + Adj.+ Det

5. i. A dirty old woman  
 D + Adj. + Adj. + N

ii. Owhnu agadi nwayna irno  
 Num + Adj. + N + Adj.

The structure of Ogbah Noun Phrase is more complex, compared to that of English language. This is due to the multiple copulation of morphemes which exhibit varied syntactic functions. Consider these examples:

- a. Those handsome boys.
- b. ‘Umutachi nwokno ndeya mranma’

### Verb Phrase

In Ogbah, intransitivity in relation to the verb is a rare occurrence. This is because the grammar does not permit verb stranding. Almost every verb has an imbued complement. This may be due to the graphic description of Ogbah verbs, which makes them to be self- explanatory. It may be in the form of tone, tense or enclitic. All these make it impossible for the Ogbah verb phrase to permit intransitiveness. Let us observe how this applies to Ogbah. Consider the verb ‘bu’ (carry):

6a. Bu (?)

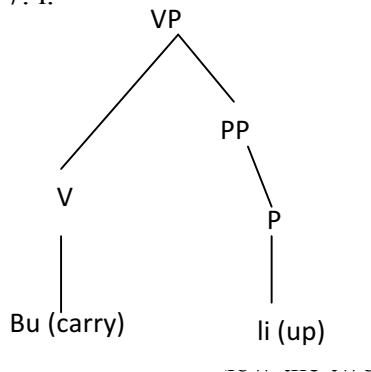
- i. bu li – carry up
- ii. burula – has carried or carried it
- iii. buje – carry to
- iv. buvyna – carry in 5. busno – carry down
- v. budna – lower down

b. kwu (?) (Inherent meaning)

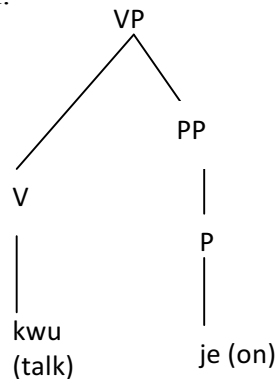
- i. kwuru – fetch(liquid)
- ii. kwuje – continue to say (talk)
- iii. kwuni – say to
- iv. kwudna – backbite
- v. kwuli – beat up or say it loud
- vi kwuknini – say it (now)

Below is the applicability of the examples above.

7. i.



ii.



This inherent nature of some Ogbah Verb Phrases is not obtainable in English language. We can expand the structures further by arguing that the structures can take object complement and adjunct. Another difference between the Ogbah verb phrase head and that of English is the contentedness of the former. This means that the verb has tone, tense marker and enclitic. Let us again use the verb ‘bu’ and see how the features are entailed.

Burula

Bu ru la  
Carry -ed has  
“Has carried”.

In Ogbah verb phrase, the adverb (adjunct) occurs mainly right of the VP head, contrary to that of English which is left driven and in some cases at the right of the verb. Consider the following schema:

8a. VP → V+ADV = Jjere knikne  
went quickly

Ri osiso  
Ate fast

b. VP → ADV + V=\* Knikne jijere  
quickly ran

In Ogbah, the past form of the verb, usually does not co-occur with some adverbs. The following verb phrases which have their heads co-occurring with some adverbs such as, always, frequently etc are ungrammatical in Ogbah:

9. i. Kissed his mother-in-law frequently (Carnie Ibid:73)
- ii. Stabbed his mother always

Let us find out how these would be in Ogbah.

10. i. \* Snusnusi nneogo a onu osangbe
- ii. \* Tiri Onakwuwoh nma osangbe

The presence of the adverb ‘Osangbe’ in the two phrases for Ogbah makes them ungrammatical. Their removal will make both VPs grammatical. Does it mean that Ogbah VP does not accept an adverb as adjunct? Let us see how these structures would be when the adverbs are governed by the simple past tense (the historic).

“Kisses his mother-in-law frequently”

11. i. Snusnusi riga nne ogo a onu osangbe.  
Kiss -es(enclitic) mother inlaw his mouth often.
- ii. Snusnusi ga nne ogo a onu osangbe  
Kiss -es mother inlaw his(enclitic) mouth often

The grammaticality of 2(a) and (b) confirms the claim that the past form of a main verb (head of a VP) does not co-occur with certain adverbs. This is not the case in English as we have observed above.

### Prepositional Phrase

Madugu (1995) and Mbah (1999) noted that “category incorporation has been argued...to be a feature of West African languages....” English language prepositions are very obvious, especially, in the sense of a word not performing variegated functions in different phrasal or clausal contexts. This is not the case in Ogbah in which a word can at different syntactic contexts have varied values. This capacity is a common feature of Ogbah language as we have earlier noted.

**Lexical Preposition:**

Ime (inside), Usor (side), la (to), la (at), elu (up), ali (down - not earth), ime (in-not pregnancy), whe(cross -not worship), Ogologo-ogologo (along); whe (cross), pia (come out) etc.

**Bound Prepositions:**

12. ‘Ni’ O gbu ni mu ewu.  
 cl kill for me goat.  
 “He/she has killed goat **for** me”.  
 ‘Re’ O gusire mu egwu ogor.  
 cl played me joke bad.  
 “He/she played roughly with me”.

In Ogbah, it is the bound affixed morpheme which carries the notion of preposition. One test to confirm the validity of this claim will be based on the “adjacency principle” which requires prepositions to be immediately adjacent to the predicate nominal it dominates. Following the above claim, it is safe to assert that English language has no bound prepositions at least in “-rV-rV” notation. Another type of prepositional phrase which English lacks is the one realised through rank shifting by Re-analysis of the semantic value of one of the co-operating phrasal items. Mbah (1999:176) called this “category incorporated preposition”. He notioned that “lexical categories...bind into a compound...of which one of the elements loses its categorial status by reanalysing its meaning”.

In Ogbah, unlike the English compound or the “compound” which Mbah insinuated, the incorporating categories result to a phrase. This is because such construction has clear phrase meaning different from the sense of a compound which commonly makes one sense. Some of the prepositional phrases which can be realised by rank shifting and semantic reevaluation are as follows:

- |                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| <u>D – structure</u> | <u>S – structure</u> |
| 13. i. Kphne je      | climb up (go)        |
| Climb go             |                      |
| ii. Je je            | hurry up             |
| Go go                |                      |
| iii. Bu li           | carry up (li)        |

Note that the verbs preceding the re-analyzed verbs (prepositions) are prepositional modifiers, and that re-categorized words should always take the appropriate objects. The verb is obligatorily an integral part of this type of prepositional phrase in Ogbah. This is not the case in English Language. One test to confirm that in re-categorization by incorporation, the preposition is the governor of the modifying verb, is to consider the case of rank-shifting as it concerns the adjectivised noun. Consider the examples below:

- 14a. Bookcase = Bring the book case (A type of case).  
       ▼     ▼  
       noun noun
- b. Mail box = I have a mail box (A type of box).  
       ▼     ▼  
       noun noun

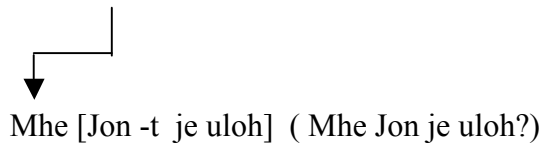
‘Case’ and ‘mail’ are re-categorized to mean adjectives which specify the type of ‘case’ or ‘book’. As much as ‘mail’ changes to adjective to describe the noun ‘box’, ‘Book’ and ‘Box’ are therefore subjects of the adjectivised nouns.



**Inflection-to-Complement Movement (I →C)**

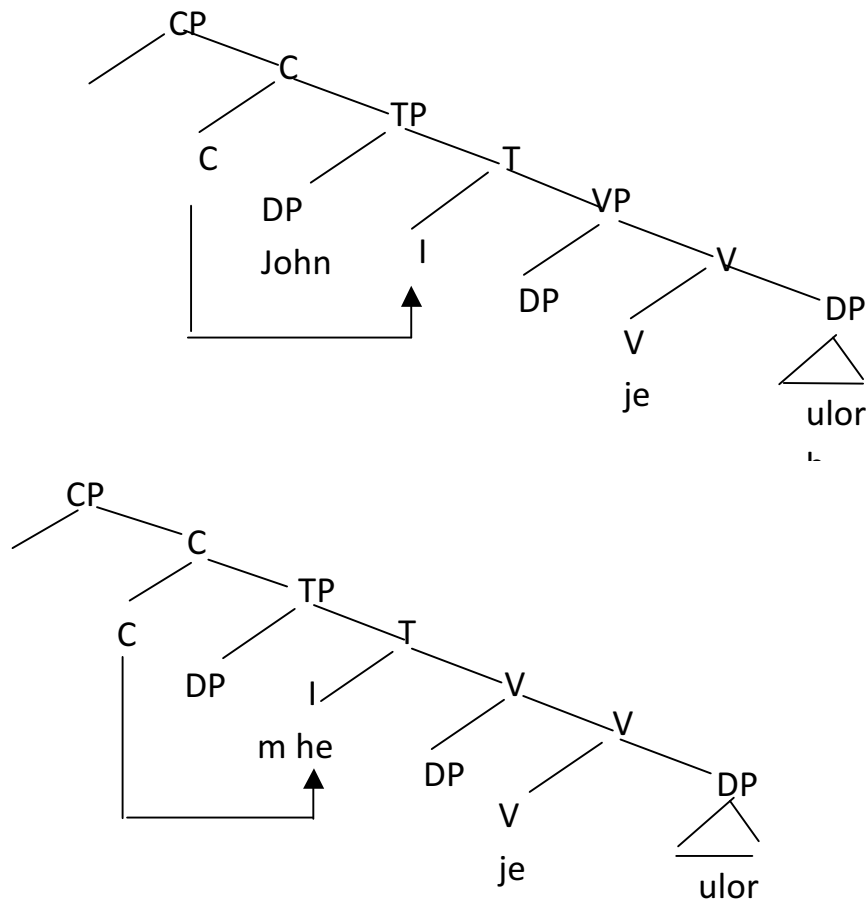
This type of movement is prelude to the realization of ‘direct question in English language.’ The mobility operation here pertains to the removal and raising of an obvious property of Inflection to the Complement positions outside the surface structure construct (S-structure). The syntactic approaches of insertion and movement can be used to realize direct questions in Ogbah. In using the insertion method, the sentence is considered unaltered by transposition of the construct’s word order. Consider the schema below.

16. [Jon mhe je uloh] (‘John will go home’)



The resulting S-structure is ungrammatical because in Ogbah, auxiliaries (which are very few) do not precede certain grammatical items, especially nominal as a matter of rule. This is why inflection movement cannot transpose itself on barriers that are sentential. A way of resolving this impasse is to assume that the bound root complement ‘wnala’ is located at Specifier-C and would lower to I and prepose on the auxiliary ‘mhe’ (‘will’) to achieve ‘mhewnala’. This is demonstrated in the tree diagrams below.

17a. Jon mhe je uloh  
 John will go home  
 “John will go home”





Under this consideration, it will be adduced that for the realization of direct questions in Ogbah, one way is to lower the bound enclitic root ‘wnala’ to I in order to achieve the Ogbah pro-future auxiliary ‘mhewhnala’ (‘will’). In English, the realization of this, is a matter of syntactic movement of I to Specifier – C. Radford (1988:411) noted thus:

What we shall argue here is that in such cases the italicized modal ‘will’ originates in the I position within S, and S subsequently moved into an empty C position...by a rule we might appropriately call I Movement (or precisely I – to – C movement). Obviously, the I movement analysis is based on two key assumptions: (i) inverted modals like ‘will’ originate in I, and (ii) they end up in C.

This is not the case in Ogbah where Specifier C would have to lower to fill I. This is very possible considering that I is strong in Ogbah, but weak in “Modern Standard English” (MSE). According to Radford et al (2002:245-347)

... a further parameter of structural variation between languages (which we might refer to as the INFL parameter) relates to whether INFL is strong or weak...this too turns out to be binary (in that INFL can be either strong or weak – It cannot be both or neither. In EME, Early Modern English, INFL and C are both strong, whereas in MSE, Modern Standard English, INFL is weak but C (in questions) is strong.... This means that it, INFL, doesn’t have to be filled.

This principle of INFL and C parameter could be accountable for the inability of C to be filled by I-movement to C in Ogbah. The immobility of the INFL ‘mhe’ to Specifier-C constrains the realization of direct question in Ogbah, which could only be achieved by lowering the bound morpheme ‘wnala’ to I which is strong in Ogbah. The movement of C-to-I conforms to the requirements of the “Head Movement Constraint (HMC)” proposed by Lisa Trevis. It states that:

“... a constraint... imposes restrictions on how grammatical operations work,” and that “A moved load can move only into the head position in the next highest phrase containing it (Radford et al, 346).

To lower C-to-I in Ogbah could be an extension rather than reversal of the HMC rule. However it is necessary as matter of last resort. In this regard, Carnie (2007:260-1) noted that the ability of INFL to move to C in English is as a result of, “... the presence of a special null question complementizer”. The initiation of ‘wnala’ from C-to-I is therefore a matter of syntactic parameter which is adoptable in Ogbah, but grammatically ultra vire in English. Some Ogbah questions can also be realised, not by the ruled out subject-aux inversion (I-to-C movement) but by insertion or the ‘som’-support. In English, certain grammatical constructs are constrained from question formation by inversion or moving the inflected verb around the subject. This pertains mainly to auxiliaryless structures.

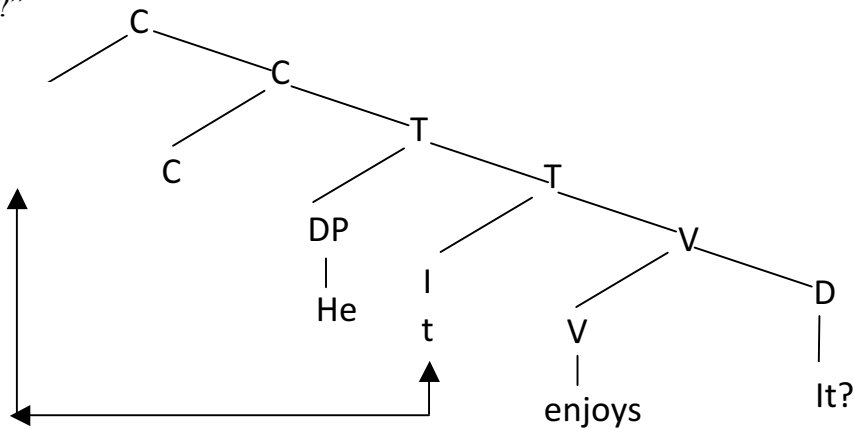
Radford et al (1999), apart from recognizing the un-grammaticality of this type of construction, also faulted the movement leading to its realization as a clear violation of the HMC economic principles. The movement is adjusted to the tenets of the rule since HMC rules out the possibility of a main verb moving directly from V to C, because the verb would be moving too far in one go. Despite the conformity of the V movement ‘restrictions’, the overriding nullity is that, INFL being weak in MSE cannot be filled because “any move to fill it is unnecessary”. To

overcome this problem, it is further suggested that the ‘dummy’ auxiliary ‘do’ will emerge from INFL and raise to fill Specifier C which is strong in Modern Standard English. Consider the following tree diagrams:

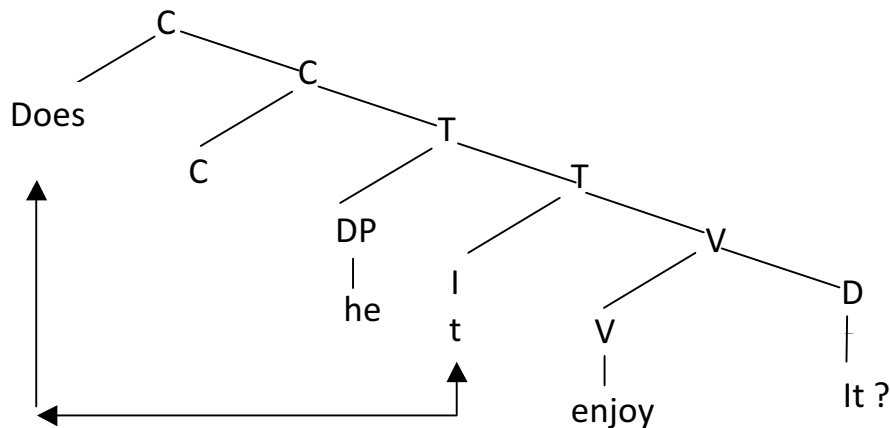
18.

“Does he enjoy it?”

a.



b.



Apart from the grammaticality of this construct, it will be observed that due to the tense form of ‘does’, the main verb in the initial expression ‘enjoys’ automatically acquires the tense/agreement properties which leads to the shading of the ‘s’ inflection. But what happens to Ogbah constructions which bear the same or similar constraint as the one discussed above. Let us use the sentences below to resolve this entanglement:

19. Uche Kponi Onyema ndaglah.

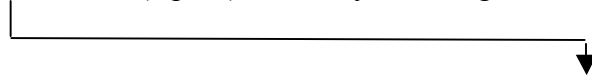
Uche told Onyema lie

“Uche lied to onyema”

The sentence has no auxiliary but the tensed verb ‘Kponi’ (‘told’). For direct question to be achieved from this expression it will not be done by raising V-to-C since the latter is weak in Ogbah. Adopting the same approach as in that of English, the enclitic ‘som’ will emerge from I and prepose on the predicate noun, ‘ndagla; (lie). When once this movement is completed, the construct phono-syntactically changes to have the bearing of question in Ogbah. The emanation of the enclitic ‘som’ from INFL is justified based on the fact that “clitics...are members of a

lexical category such as verb, noun or pronoun or preposition” (O’Grady et al p140). ‘Som’ is a verb subcategory.

20. C + DP (Uche) + I +DP +V (Kponi) +DP Onyema ndagla



C + DP (Uche) + t<sub>1</sub> + DP + V (Kponi) + DP Onyema ndagla( som?)

Summarily, in English, I-Movement raises to C, while it lowers to DP in Ogbah.

Another distinction of this parameter for Ogbah is that the INFL enclitic “som” can even apply to Ogbah grammatical structures having aux + finite verbs. It works this way. Instead of lowering, for example, the enclitic ‘wnala’ to ‘mhe’ in INFL, the inflective enclitic projects from I, lowers and attaches left of (DP) ‘Uloh’. Consider the tree diagram below in respect of the above proposition.

This paper argued that in Ogbah language, V-movement to INFL is barred. This time not because of “barriers”, but probably, in Ogbah INFL is weak. The auxiliary position in Ogbah is postpositional to main verbs, and the nature of affixation or inflection is linear; not morphologically based. One may wonder whether the NP to be moved to the matrix of the clause may need to acquire case. To answer this we need to argue that the initial structure and its passivised version produced the same value of meaning despite the transformation. Let us consider the English language example below:

21a. I ate the beans.

b. The beans was eaten by me.

We want to agree with Ndimele (1993) that this results from the effects of the “Chain Transmission Principle” (CTP), which entails the transmission of all the “grammatical properties between an antecedent and its trace”; implying that the moved structure does not leave its meaning properties at the extraction site. The moved NP does not leave behind its earlier assigned thematic role in the original structure. This makes it impossible for the moved grammatical entity to acquire new theta role at the landing site. This case is obvious in English, despite the structural and morphological transformations. But what happens when this NP transformation takes place in the Ogbah language. Let us consider these examples:

22a.

Active: E ri la m egwa ya  
Procl eat infl(pst) I beans the

“I have eaten the beans”.

b.

Passive: \*Egwa ya e ri la m.  
Beans the procl. eat infl(pst) I.

\*The beans has eaten me.

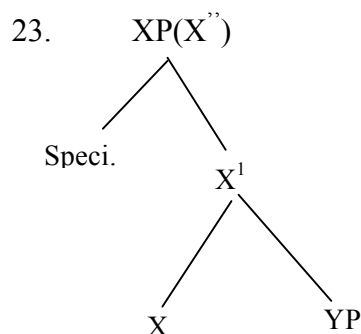
The structure produced by the passivisation of the original structure in Ogbah is both defective in syntax and semantics. It means that the CTP strictly cannot apply in the case of the Ogbah language. The impossibility of application results mainly from the post-nominal position of the definite article and the poverty of pronoun in the Ogbah language. In the latter, the pronoun “nmu” (me) clipped to “m” stands for both the subjective and objective imputations. It is inflexible and hardly able to adjust to any other position apart from where its transitivity can affect an NP. Besides, it occurs mainly with the 1st person proclitic.

The inability of the moved NP to be contained at the matrix and the disruption of meaning, violates some constraints. One of the constraints imposed on the T-Movement is that it

must move towards the front of the given structure, and the intended landing site must remain unoccupied prior to the movement. The end result of a movement must produce the same or similar meaning; which means that the original meaning of the control structure have to be preserved (Schneider, 1998 & Ndimele 1993). Because of the insituness of NP<sup>2</sup> in Ogbah, Move-a failed to move it to the front of the sentence. An attempt to force movement on the NP<sup>2</sup> will disable its ability to preserve meaning. It means that the Ogbah language has zero tolerance for inter-clausal movement, especially, in the like of passivisation.

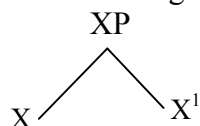
### **X-bar Syntax**

Aarts (2001:108) agreed that the non-satisfactory nature of the ‘flat structure’ representation was due to its failure to account for hierarchal structure of the phrase and the intra-relation between and among the structural nodes in the tree. It is in the interest of remedying this deficiency that Chomsky in his Remarks on Nominalisation (1968) proposed an intermediate level in the Phrase Structure Grammar. This renewed phrase structure proposition was made popular by Jackendoff (1970). It will account for the projection which is more minimal than the maximal project (noted as XP) and more maximal than the minimum projection (accounted for as X). This is represented in the following schema:



One flaw of the PSG is that it could contain phrases that are grammatical, but redundant in semantic valuability. This is demonstrated by Chomsky’s carnal sentence. It may also create an un-encompassing rule incapable of containing most of the parameteric features of all possible languages, in regard of the phrase structure.

The revised PSG rule would exhibit the following values.



Where: XP – The phrase and its structural components.

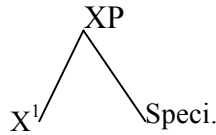
X<sup>1</sup> - Intermediate categories (ZP, XD etc)

X – Bare forms categories (N, P, V, ADJ etc)

The intermediate feature (X<sup>1</sup>) is the major entry in the Phrase Structure Grammar. Basic structural entries to be noted are head, specifier, complement and adjunct. The head’s relational position to the specifier or complement depends on the language and need. In English, specifier is usually assigned left-most of the matrix as sister of X<sup>1</sup> and daughter of the maximal projection XP. Complement is right-most (in non-stylistic constructions) and attached closely to the head.

In Ogbah, the head precedes specifier; meaning that it is right-most as shown in the schema below:

24.



The specifier and adjunct are both attachments of the head; maintaining different grammatical functions. Telaarman (2005:98) noted that the two values are “dependents” of the head; the adjunct being optional and the complement obligatory. This obligatoriness relates to the closer bond between it and the head. Where the two are attached to the head, the adjunct cannot survive deletion, but not the complement; since its deletion from the structure can eliminate or distort the core semantic intendment of the phrase. Napoli (1988:229) agreed that specifiers and adjuncts are optional since not all phrases may accept them, due to the “complex conditions governing when they can and cannot be omitted”.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has attempted an overview and interactional evaluation of the Phrase Structure Grammar (PSG), Transformational Movements (T-Movement) and the X-bar syntax. It showed the need for the accommodation of the cognitive revelations of the principles and parameters notions of modern grammar into language pedagogy of schools. The paper also considered the syntactic-parametric implications of the T-Movement transformation, PSG and X-Bar grammatical theories on the Ogbah and English language. Certain transformational movements are not possible in Ogbah. The X-bar Syntax and Phrase Structure Grammar exact some functional and grammatical parameters. The linguist is left with the thinking that the parameter notion of modern grammar exposes the inadequacies of pre 20<sup>th</sup> century grammar which was decree natured and socio-politically motivated; rather than cognitive. The paper has showed that the inculcation of the cognitive approach to language pedagogy can enable the involvement of all parties in the teaching and learning processes of language teaching; having had knowledge of the templates for both grammar.

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