
Enclitics in Igbo and Chinese: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract

Clitic as a linguistic element is neither a word nor an affix; this has not been easy for scholars to assign a singular grammatical category. The principle of its operation is universal but the parameters with which it operates is specific among languages. Clitic classifications of proclitic, mesoclitic, enclitic and endoclititic exist in many languages but this work centres on enclitics in Igbo and Chinese. The data used for this work is secondary as they are elicited from already existing studies on the clitics of Igbo and Chinese. This is a comparative study, the enclitics are descriptively analysed and used to highlight the universality of human languages that is displayed by enclitics of both languages despite that both languages are very distinct from each other and belong to different language phyla. The findings confirm that, enclitics in both languages take hosts that belong to different linguistic categories, semantically, their presence in sentences is not mandatory but they influence the meaning of the sentences in which they occur. Phonologically, their tonal dependency on hosts and level of attachment to host in both languages is specific. Morphologically, Igbo enclitics occur on the word level whereas Chinese enclitics take the form of phrasal affixation. This study concludes that though the concept of enclitic is universal, therefore making it a general principle; languages are diverse in ways of operation. Enclitic in

both languages is language specific as what obtains in Igbo is not completely obtainable in the Chinese language.

Keywords: enclitics, universals, principles, parameters

1. Introduction

The manifestation of clitic in human languages as a linguistic element that borders between words and affixes varies as they influence meaning, and can attach to different linguistic categories. Their features span across phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics, while it is obvious that their absence do not render a sentence ungrammatical. From already existing studies on clitic classifications, there are proclitic, mesoclitic, enclitic and endoclititic in many languages of the world which includes the languages under study. The Igbo language is an agglutinating language. In accordance to Williamson (1989) language classification, it belongs to the Kwa group of languages under the Niger-Congo family. It is one of the most widely spoken languages in West Africa with a population that is not less than 7 million speakers. Indigenous speakers of the language are found in the South eastern part of Nigeria in states like Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo. Other speakers are also found in Delta, Edo, Rivers, Akwa-Ibom, and Cross River states. The Chinese language is an Isolating language which belongs to the Sinitic branch of the Sino-Tibetan family of languages. There are various dialects of the Chinese language. It is the language with the largest population through-out the world with about 30 million speakers. It is a graphematic pictographic language; however it has the *pinyin* which is the alphabetic representation of the language. In the Chinese language, each unit usually a Chinese character Hànzì (汉字) corresponds to a syllable.

Globalization has provided opportunity for people to learn other languages in order to interact with others on their daily activities. Chinese government in their bid to reach out to the whole world is investing enormously in the study of their language and as such China is indirectly influencing the world. The study of Chinese language within Africa is on the increase, and Nigeria is not an exception as this is evident in the number of Universities that study Chinese now; unlike what was obtainable in the past. Within the last decade, the ties and relationship between Nigeria and China has increased tremendously. This spans through economy, industrialization, education and others. Igbo speakers are deeply involved in this move as many have embraced the learning of Chinese language, greater percentage of who are youths because of the opportunities that abound from it. With this development, it is justified that studies involving both languages be carried out in order to understand the principles and parameters with which both languages operate. Studies already carried out between Igbo and Chinese include but not limited to Phonology of Igbo and Chinese (Eme & Odinye, 2008), DP in Igbo and Chinese (Anajemba & Mbagwu, 2015), Igbo and Chinese tonal Systems (Odinye & Udechukwu, 2016), Chinese and Igbo proverbs: analysis of sexism (Okafor, 2020), Interrogative patterns of Igbo and Chinese (Anajemba, 2016), Grammatical errors of students learning Chinese (Odinye, 2011), Error analysis of Igbo learners of Chinese (Anajemba, 2021) and others.

1.1 Statement of Research Problem

Owing to the growing interest in the Chinese language by Igbo speakers and the studies that abound, it is important to examine the clitic of both languages narrowing it down to the enclitics. The objective is to demonstrate the universality that exists between both

languages despite being distinct and not belonging to the same language phyla. This is done by showing the features of enclitics that is common to both languages and also specifying those that are language specific.

1.2 Methodology

Descriptive analysis here anchors on comparative framework in order to specify language common and language specific parameters that boost the universality of human languages. Data used for the study is secondary as all of them are sourced from already published works by scholars in Igbo and Chinese. Both languages are tonal, therefore all tones are properly marked save for those that bear neutral tone as in the case of Chinese.

2. Review of Literature

Clitic originates from a Greek word *klitikos* which interprets as ‘leaning’; its root word is actually *klinein* ‘to lean’. The traditional grammarians’ approach to the notion of clitics is that they are ‘little words’, especially in reference to that which does not bear an independent accent and have to lean accentually on an adjacent word (Anderson 2005). In the Igbo language, various linguistic elements have been identified as clitics, their typologies, and possible places of attachment to hosts are illustrated in (Anagbogu 2001, Nweze 2009, Egenti 2011, Nweze & Ikegwuonu 2012, Anyanwu 2012, Mbah *et al* 2012, Emenanjo 2015 and Udemmadu & Anidobe 2017).

Clitics in Chinese come after any word class. They mainly function at the phrasal level. It can be equated to phrasal affixation in accordance to Klavans (1985), Anderson (1992), Liu (1998) and others. Chinese clitics are toneless function words which are always unstressed such as structural particles (结构助词) de 的, de 得, de 地, aspectual particles (动态助词) le 了, zhe 着, guo 过 and

sentence particles (语气助词), ne 呢, ba 吧, ma 吗, a 啊, and ou 呕 (Huang, 1989, Tráisková, 2014).

The rules responsible for the placement of clitic can be specified in terms of parameters such as scope (it is located in the scope of some constituents), anchor (located by reference to first vs. last vs. head) and orientation (proceeds or follows its anchor) (Klavans, 1985). With regard to the placement of clitics on their host; scholars have identified three different types as proclitic, mesoclitic, and enclitic. Enclitics are elements that follow the host/words that they depend on. It occurs at the object position or after the main verb. They may not attach to the word just like some auxiliaries in the English, French, Spanish, and Italian do. Anagbogu (2001) defines enclitic as the object clitics which are positioned between the main verb and the sentence final position. Some of these clitics are bu/bu, cha, fu, kwa, nnọ, tu, ri, zi and others. Ngoesi (1989) describes enclitics as elements that add meaning to sentences and occur in any position in the sentence structure but in most cases they attach to verbs, nominal and nominal modifiers. When following verbs, enclitics combine with the verb as a word but when it follows other linguistic categories, it is written separately.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Comparative method in linguistics is used to show similarity in languages based on four dimensions namely; chance, universality, borrowing (contact) and geographical/social contacts. Comparing languages based on universal is arrived at in part by comparison that is typologically inspired and how widespread a feature is cross-linguistically. This type of comparison is not genealogically oriented rather based on universality of languages (Joseph, 2016:40). Based on the above notion, the comparative framework as

used in this study is a comparative framework with a contrastive implication in order to identify similarities in the enclitics of both languages that establish universality of languages as well as the differences that portray their language specific parameters.

2.2 Empirical Studies

Nwankwere *et al* (2014) describe enclitic as linguistic elements that follow hosts anywhere in a construction. In their study of morphology of clitics in Òwèrè satellite dialect (OSD) of Igbo, they assert that the position of enclitics in constructions varies which includes preverbal subject positions (before the main verb). These enclitics may or may not be phonologically and/or syntactically attached to their hosts. They attach to verbs, nouns, pronouns, adjectives and so on.

- 1) Ńdé èkóówukó tàátà!
Pl. psn det ecl be ecl babies
'So, these are also babies!

They can also form long clusters and can be seen below:

- 2) Ì jé –má –ná –àrí (rî/rí hè) (d́áā)
2sg go – inc –prog –vwl ecl (ecl) (ecl)
'good bye/safe journey (to you) my darling' [Nwankwere
et al 2014: 90]

The ordering of the enclitics in OSD is mostly Subj (-ecl) –pcl –host –ecl –suf –(ecl) as shown above. The enclitic 'rí' is believed to have evolved from the verb rí (be) as in the example above. This enclitic can be reduplicated severally with the reduplicants on a low tone as

in *rî/rîrî/rîrîrî/rîrîhè/rîrîrî* hè. These reduplicants show different degrees of emphasis on endearment or derision. Syntactically, enclitics add to the phrasal structure and semantically modify the meaning of their host and in other cases, they modify the meaning of the entire construction in which they appear. Contrary to earlier researchers on Igbo enclitics, Udemmadu and Anidobe (2017) show that prepositions can equally host enclitics just like other linguistic categories as can be seen below.

- 3) Há biàrà gbàsárannoòó ókwú áhù
They come-pst prep (about) –encl talk that
‘They came because of the matter’
- 4) Nneka na- eche banyereri ihe ahu e mere ya
Nneka aux-pref-think prep (about) encl thing that someone
do-pst her
Nneka is thinking just about the thing done to her
[Udemmadu & Anidobe 2017:9]

According to the data below, the function of enclitics is primarily semantically oriented as they add meaning to an expressed meaning of a sentence as in the instances below;

- 5) E-so-kwu m
Pref-follow-encl(also) me
‘I am also included’
- 6) Ndeewo nu
Hello all
‘greeting to more than one’ [Udemmadu & Anidobe, 2017:9]

Mbah et al (2012:179) discussing the enclitics in Igbo add that enclitics can be separated from hosts as can be seen below:

- 7) Nyè-tụ́ m' íchà
Give –cl 1sg soap
'(please) give me a little soap'
- 8) Ònyé –zí kà í kpòrò?
Who –cl that 2sg call pst
'who then did you call?'

3. Data Presentation and Analysis

3.1 Enclitics in Phonology

Igbo and Chinese languages are both tonal. Here we consider the prosodic effects on the enclitics as shown in the data following:

- 9) Ndí à -chà bù n'kè yá
Pl. Dem-Cl be poss 3sg
'All these are his'
- 10) Àtó -chá dì n' ímé yá
Num –Cl be prep inside 3sg
'As many as three are inside it' [Udemmadu & Anidobe, 2017: 11]
- 11) Gà tú .
Go Cl
'go a little'
- 12) N'nyè-tụ́ m' íchà

give Cl 1sg soap
(please) give me a little soap [Mbah
et al., 2012: 184, 179]

- 13) Òbí rì kà m sírì ní
Obi Cl that 1sg cook Apl pst food
'Obi is the one I really cooked for'
- 14) Égo rì kà ó nyèrè Ùjú
Money -Cl that 3sg give pst Uju
'money is even what s/he gave Uju'
- 15) Ákwà rì kà ó nyèrè Ùjú
cloth -Cl that 3sg give pst Uju
'Cloth is even what s/he gave Uju'
[Mbah *et al.*, 2012:185]
- 16) Ákwàà rì kà ó nà-èbé
Cry -Cl that 3sg aux Pref cry
's/he is even crying'
- 17) Újúù rì kà mmádù nchá nà-èché
Uju -Cl that person all aux-Pref wait
'It is even Uju that everybody is waiting for'
[Mbah *et al.*, 2012:187]

The tones for *-cha* in (9 & 10) depend on the host for prosodic interpretation, while in (11 & 12) the tones for *tú*, and *rì* in (13-15) are specific, they do not depend on their hosts. (8 – 9) show the use of *rì* as it enforces the introduction of a tone bearing unit, so that it maintains their tones without change, and this shows that they

comply with obligatory contour principle, they affect the tones of their hosts in order to comply with their tonal prosody. So, some clitics in Igbo are host dependent, some are tone specific while others conform to obligatory contour principle.

Here we consider the following Chinese examples:

- 18) 去 吗?
Ni□ qù ma?
2sg go Cl
'Do you go?'
- 19) 我 马上 就去, 你呢?
Wo□ ma□ shàng jiù qù ni□ ne?
1sg horse-up then go 2sg Cl.
'I will go immediately, and you?'
[Chaofen, 2006: 76, 77]

From the data (10 – 11), the enclitics ma 吗 and ne 呢 are neutral, they bear no tones irrespective of what tones their hosts might bear.

3.2 Enclitic in Semantics

In this section we try to investigate the influence of enclitics on the semantics of the sentences where they are found in both languages.

- 20) Bìá-nú
come Cl
'you(please) come'
- 21) Bìá-nù
come Cl
'you(Pl.) come' [Udemmadu &
Anidobe, 2017:10]

- 22) (你) 来 !
Nǐ lái
(you) come
'You come here'
- 23) (你) 来 啊/呀
Nǐ lái **a/ya!**
(you) come Cl
'You come here!'
- [Li & Thompson, 1981: 315]

The imperative as specified above in (22 & 23), equally employ the use of enclitics to influence the meaning of the sentences. In (20) *nú* is used to add some form of politeness to the command, but in (21), *nù* is used to mark pluralization, to show that the command is meant for more than one person, therefore, the difference in their tone realization. In the case of Chinese, without the enclitic *a/ya* 啊/呀, the command becomes very strict as in (22) above, but with the addition of the enclitic, the speaker shows some kind of politeness in the command. The enclitics both come at the end of the imperative sentences. So, we see universality in the use of enclitics to influence meaning of sentences as well as their positions in the sentences in both languages.

More instances on other enclitics and their tonal behaviour in both languages:

- 24) Hé **kwá** bjàrə
3sg Cl come
'They also came again'

- [Nweze & Ikegwuonu, 2012:611]
- 25) Kèdú **fù** ò ke ka mmā ?
Wh- Cl that pass beauty
‘Which one is even better?’ [Mbah
et al., 2012: 186]
- 26) Ònyé – **dù** tìrù gí òkwutē?
Wh- Cl throw-Pst 2sg stone
‘Who was that that threw stone on you?’
[Udemmadu & Anidobe, 2017:7]
- 27) Ndị à **-chá** bù nke ya
Pl. Dem-Cl be Poss 3sg
‘All these are his’
[Udemmadu & Anidobe, 2017:11]
- 28) 她 很 好 看 吧?
Tā hěn ha□o kàn **ba**
3sg(f) very good look Cl
‘She is very good looking, don’t you agree?’
- 29) 好 好 做 功 课 呀
ha□o hào zuò go□ng kè **ou**
good good do exercise-work Cl
‘Do homework carefully, ok?’
- 30) a. 我 喝 了 三 杯 咖 啡
Wo□ hē le sān bēi kā fēi
1sg drink PFV three cup coffee

‘I drank three cups of coffee’

- b. 我 喝 了 三 杯 咖 啡 了
Wǒ hē le sān bēi kā fēi **le**
1sg drink PFV three cup coffee Cl
‘I have drank three cups of coffee’

[Chaofen, 2006:244]

- 31) 来 呀! 你 呀, 还 是 去 吧!
Lái **ya!** Ni **ya,** ha **i** shì qù **ba!**
come Cl 2sg Cl still be go Cl
‘Come!’ ‘You, you should go!’
- 32) 他 放 了 一 本 书 在 那 张 桌 子 上
Tā fàng le yī běn shū zài nèi zhang zhuōzi **shang**
3sg put Asp one CL book at that CL table Cl
‘He put a book on that table’
- 33) 李 四 卖 得 那 张 桌 子 上
Lisi ma **i** **de** nèi zhang zhuōzi **shang**
Lisi buy Cl that CL table Cl
‘On the table that Lisi bought’
[Lui, 1998: 63]

In the data (24-27), the clitics *-kwá*, *-du*, *-fu*, and *-cha*, imposed additional meanings of emphasis, inclusion and surprise to the sentences. Without the inclusion of the clitics, the sentences would still be meaningful. In (28-32), the use of enclitics *ba*吧, *ou*呕, *le*了, *ya*呀, *de*得, and *shang*上 also imposed additional meanings to the

sentences. This agrees with the universal assertion that clitics are straightforward function words because they do not have meaning on their own; rather have to lean on another word in order to add meaning to the phrase or sentence. Their presence or absence in a sentence contributes to the total meaning of the utterance. Clitics are semantically like the independent word because they express notions similar to those of words. They are not obligatory for grammatical acceptability of any sentence in both languages. However, their usage is specific in both languages.

3.3 Enclitics in Morphology and Syntax

The combination of enclitics and words in sentences is considered in both languages with the following examples;

- 34) Bìá-nú
come Cl
'you(please) come'
- 35) Nyè-tù m' íchà
Give -cl 1sg soap
'(please) give me a little soap'
- 36) Égo □ rì kà ó nyèrè Ùjú
Money -Cl that 3sg give pst Uju
'money is even what s/he gave Uju'
- 37) Ndí à -chà bù nkè yá
Pl. Dem-Cl be poss 3sg
'All these are his'
- 38) Àtọ -chá dì n' ímé yá
Num -Cl be prep inside 3sg

‘As many as three are inside it’

- 39) Kèdụ – zì – nnọọ – kwa – zì ihe m mètè gi.
what - Cl – Cl – Cl - Cl thing 1sg do pst 2sg
‘What then really have I done to you again?’
[Mbah *et al.*, 2012: 181]
- 40) 我 告 诉 他 那 件 事 了 咯
wo □ gaosu ta nei jian shi le ou
1sg tell 3sg(m) that CL matter Cl Cl
‘I told him about that matter’
- 41) 他 当 然 是 了 啊 / 呀!
Ta dangran shi le a!
3sg(m) of course be Cl Cl
‘Of course he is!’
- 42) 来 呀! 你 呀, 还 是 去 吧!
Lái ya! Ni □ ya, ha □ i shì qù ba!
come Cl 2sg Cl still be go Cl
‘Come!’ ‘You, you should go!’ [Li & Thompson, 1981:316]

In (34-39), the enclitics are attached after the host words, this implies that the affixation process is on the word level in Igbo; the enclitics can equally come in clusters of up to four as shown in (31), however with the Chinese data in (40-42) the enclitics attached to phrases (VP, NP and others) and not more than two clusters as in (42). Enclitic in Chinese takes the form of phrasal affixation.

3.4 Similarities in Igbo and Chinese Enclitics

From the discussions above, we have been able to show that in Igbo and Chinese, enclitics just as it is obtained in other languages, attach to different word categories as can be seen below:

- 43) Ndí à -**chà** bù n'kè yá
Pl. Dem-Cl be poss 3sg
'All these are his'
- 44) Àtó -**chá** dì n' ímé yá
Num -Cl be prep inside 3sg
'As many as three are inside it'
- 45) 去 吗?
Ni□ qù **ma**?
2sg go Cl
'Do you go?'
- 46) 我 马 上 就 去, 你 呢?
Wo□ ma□ shàng jiù qù ni□ **ne**?
1sg horse-up then go 2sg Cl.
'I will go immediately, and you?'
[Chaofen 2006: 76, 77]

3.5 Differences in Igbo and Chinese Enclitics

Tonal behaviour of enclitics in both languages are specific, hence this is illustrated with given examples:

- 47) Hé **kwá** biàrà
3sg Cl come
'They also came again'

- 48) Kèdú **fù** ò ke ka mmā ?
Wh- Cl that pass beauty
'Which one is even better?'
- 49) 他 当然 是 了 啊/呀!
Ta dangran shi le **a!**
3sg(m) of course be Cl Cl
'Of course he is!'
- 50) 来 呀! 你 呀, 还 是 去 吧!
Lái **ya!** Ní **ya**, ha **i** shì qù **ba!**
come Cl 2sg Cl still be go Cl
'Come!' 'You, you should go!'

Morphologically, enclitics attach to words in Igbo but in Chinese it displays a kind of phrasal affixation as can be seen below:

- 51) Nyè-**tù** m' ñchà
Give -cl 1sg soap
'(please) give me a little soap'
- 52) Égo **rì** kà ó nyèrè Ûjú
Money -Cl that 3sg give pst Uju
'money is even what s/he gave Uju'
- 53) 她 很 好 看 吧?
Tā hěn ha **o** kàn **ba**
3sg(f) very good look Cl
'She is very good looking, don't you agree?'

- 54) 好 好 做 功课 呕
ha□o hào zuò go□ng kè ou
good good do exercise-work Cl
'Do homework carefully, ok?'

4. Findings

The phonological features of clitic in both languages show that in consonance with the universal features of clitic, both languages partially depend on hosts for tonal prosody of their enclitics. In Chinese, the tones of the enclitics are always dependent on their hosts and in such cases, the enclitics all have neutral tones. But in the Igbo language, the tonal prosody varies. Some enclitics are totally dependent on their hosts for their tonal representation; some have specific tones no matter the tones of their hosts, while others obey the obligatory contour principle. In this situation, the clitics affect the tones of their hosts in order to comply with their own tonal prosody. Semantically, the presence of enclitics in sentences in both languages is not mandatory but they influence the meaning of the sentences in which they occur. Morphologically, it was observed that enclitics in both languages take hosts that belong to different linguistic categories. For Chinese, enclitics are attached to phrases as it comes at the end of NP, VP, AdjP or even the AdvP. In the Igbo language, enclitics are attached to words and they can have up to five clusters while Chinese rarely have clitic clusters. This shows that the level of attachment to host in both languages is specific.

5. Summary and Conclusion

Comparative studies help to bring out the universality among languages by showing enclitics as a principle that exists in both languages. In the case of phonology, tonal prosody is not totally universal as the enclitics in Igbo are not completely dependent on

their hosts. In the morphology of enclitics in both languages, enclitic in Chinese takes the form of phrasal affixation. This study concludes that though the concept of clitic is universal, therefore making it a general principle; languages are diverse in ways of operation. Enclitic in both languages is language specific as what obtains in Igbo is not completely obtainable in the Chinese language.

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List of Abbreviations

1sg	First person singular pronoun
2pl	Second person plural pronoun
2sg	Second person singular pronoun
3pl	Third person plural pronoun
3sg	Third person singular pronoun
AdjP	Adjectival phrase
AdvP	Adverbial phrase

Asp	Aspectual marker
Aux	Auxiliary
Cl	Clitic
CL	Classifier
Dem	Demonstrative
Ecl	Enclitic
f	female
NP	Noun phrase
Pfv	Perfective marker
Pl	Plural marker
Poss	Possessive marker
Pref	Prefix
Pst	Past tense suffix
Psn	Person
Suf	Suffix
VP	Verbal phrase