

ASPECTS OF ỤKWỤḂANÍ GRAMMAR: A STUDY OF THE NOUN PHRASE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates aspects of the noun-phrase in ỤkwụḂaní, an Igbo variety spoken in Ukwuani/Ndokwa Communities of Delta State, Nigeria. The aim is to describe the internal structure, modifier order, and concord relations within the ỤkwụḂaní NP. Using data elicited from four (4) native speakers, aged 38–67 in Obiaruku, in May 2025, the study adopts a descriptive-qualitative approach within a structural framework. Findings reveal four main patterns: (1) a fixed post-head order of Noun + Adjective + Numeral + Demonstrative; (2) tonal concord between the Noun head and its dependents; (3) regular use of a prenominal associative with tone alternation; and (4) emerging pre-head placement of demonstratives among younger speakers due to contact with English and Pidgin. The study contributes to knowledge by providing the first grammatical description of the ỤkwụḂaní NP, supporting dialectal diversity in Igbo, offering resources for language teaching and documentation, and establishing a baseline for future research on syntactic change in distinct Igbo languages.

Keywords: *ỤkwụḂaní, Noun-Phrase, Igbo Syntax Tone, Delta State*

Introduction

Language is a key marker of identity, and grammatical description is essential for its documentation and transmission. In Nigeria, many Igbo varieties remain under-studied, despite their distinct syntactic patterns (Ethnologue, np, 2024). ỤkwụḂaní is one such variety, spoken primarily in Ndokwa West, Ndokwa East and Ukwuani Local Government Areas of Delta State, Nigeria. While attention has been given to Standard Igbo and major dialects, the structural features of ỤkwụḂaní grammar have not received adequate scholarly focus (Glottolog, np, 2023). The noun-phrase is a central unit of syntax because it carries much of the information about participants and entities in a clause. Understanding how the noun-phrase is formed in ỤkwụḂaní is therefore important for describing the language's internal structure. At present, there is no dedicated study on the ỤkwụḂaní noun-phrase, and existing Igbo grammars do not capture its specific patterns of modification, determination, and tonal agreement. This study, "Aspects of ỤkwụḂaní Grammar: A Study of the Noun-Phrase", sets out to describe the composition, order, and concord relations within the ỤkwụḂaní. The goal is to document its unique features, provide data for teaching and preservation, and contribute to comparative Igbo linguistics.

Ndokwa Nation State

The Ndokwa nation state (popularly called the ỤkwụḂaní community) has been in existence for almost seven centuries. (Okolugbo, E.O 2000). It is presently the second (?) largest ethnic grouping after Urhobo (?) in Delta State! The Ndokwa people inhabit the area enclosed between longitude 6° 6' 6" 142 East and latitude 6° 31' and 5° 25' North of Delta State of Nigeria (2,10,11). In the words of Okolugbo,

".. The ỤkwụḂaní form part of the Western Igbo who in turn are an integral part of the Igbo race commonly grouped into five: Northern or Onitsha Igbo; Southern or Owerri Igbo; Western Igbo Eastern or Cross River Igbo; and North-Eastern Igbo. This main grouping marked the dialectal and cultural differences among the Igbos who are widely dispersed within a large number of small territories" (3).

It is this same group of people that Onwubiko, K.B.C (1973) (quoting K.O Dike) referred to as members of the Ika Igbos when he asserts that "... It is now believed that some ancient Ibo people had earlier settled in this area earlier than the 9th century A.D." as a result of the Eastern movement of population from Benin, that resulted in increased population of the Western or Ika Ibo country" (167). This nation-state encompasses the people who presently dwell in Ndokwa-East, Ndokwa West and Ukwuani Local Government Areas, with their headquarters in Aboh, Utagba-Cgbe and Obiaruku, respectively. According to Elugbe (2000), Ndokwa" is a coinage from the names of the two district councils that once co-existed in the former Aboh Division, in 1938, namely, the NDOSIMILI and Ụkwụṅání district councils -"Ndo the first syllable, emanates from Ndosimili, while the second syllable, "kwa", is derived From "Ndokwa" (1). Distributed within these two British administrative units are thirty-six clans, with twenty-one in NDOSIMILI and fifteen in UKWUANI area. Among the twenty-one clans in NDOSIMILI are:

Abara, Aboh, Adia, Afor, Akari, Ase, Ashaka, Asaba-Ase, Okpai, Ibrede, Inyi, Ibedeni, Onuabo, Onyia, Ossissa, Umuolu, Igbuku, Itchi, Ushie, Utuoku and Azagba; while the fifteen in UKWUANI area are: Abbi, Ebedei, Akoku, Amai. Emu. Ezhiokpo, Ezhionum, Obiaruku, Onicha-Ukwuani, Ogume, Umukwata, Umutu, Utagba-Uno and Utagba-Ogbe. Again, Elugbe is of the view that, "before 1951, the area also included Orogun and Abraka as well as Ndoni. In 1951, however, Orogun and Abraka were transferred to the Urhobo Division and in 1976 Ndoni joined the Rivers State (I).

The diverse groups of people in Ndokwa speak the UKWUANI language, although with little dialectical variations that hinged on the geographical locations of the distinct entities. Though Ukwuani is the main language of communication, often, other Nigerian languages exist alongside it, such as the main Igbo language, the Urhobo language, the Itsekiri language. the Bini language, the Yoruba language and Hausa language, among others. The existence of these languages is the resultant effect of the age-long mutual co-existence among different settlers in the communities, the more reason for the slight linguistic variations between the Ụkwụṅání language spoken by the people of Obiaruku and that of the typical Utagba-Ogbe man. It is usually the reason for the infiltration of many foreign words into the Ụkwụṅání lexicon, such as, "moi-moi, agidi and "akara", from the Yoruba language and "bioma", "migwo" and "vulendo" from the Urhobo language, among others. Ụkwụṅání as a language is spoken by about 500,000 people in Ndokwaland. (Okolugbo,1). But with the current socio-political cum economic developments in contemporary Nigeria, it is estimated that the current speakers of Ụkwụṅání language must have approximated to almost 545,000 people, nation-wide. This is in contrast with the 1991 and 2006 population censuses which state that the population of the three administrative units, put together is 355,496, with Ndokwa-East having 103,171, Ndokwa West, 149,325 and Ukwuani, 103, 000, respectively. It should be noted that the word "Kwale" is an anonymous substitute for "Ukwuani", and was initiated by the Urhobos, whose orthography does not accommodate the nasal /n/. As guards to the British masters, who made their first entry into what they called "Kwale country" in 1996, enroute Abraka, they taught the whites to pronounce- "Ukwuani" as "Kwale" (Okolugbo, 2).

The English Language in Ndokwa land

It is on record that the British colonial administration in Ndokwaland came into being long before 1819 with Aboh as the first place of contact and Amai as the headquarter of the Ụkwụṅání Native Council in 1905. As a result of the Ezhionum punitive expedition on September. 2, 1905, and on the order of the imperial administration, the headquarters was moved to Abraka (then known as the Ibariki. as result of the barracks where the then British soldiers were stationed), and later to Obetim (a suburb of Utagba-Ogbe), in 1938. In an abortive attempt to establish a monarchy over the enclave called Ndokwa, in order to enhance the colonial policies of indirect rule, the two district councils became merged as Aboh division, in 1931. But Elugbe, is of the view that the merging of the two divisions was carried out in 1938. (1). The naming was equally a resultant effect of the socio-political cum-economic importance attached to Aboh town, being the anchorade point of the Lander Brothers (Richard and John) in 1830, therefore a viable and vintage imperial post (Okolugbo, 41,

58, 3, 42). The coming in the 19th century, of the British administration, witnessed the upsurge of missionaries, who were the first batch of Europeans to venture into Aboh coasts and Ndokwa hinterlands. These whites preached Christ's doctrines via Christianity, invariably, with an aim to "civilizing" the "savaged" Africans. The only instrument for this mission is the Holy Bible, which of course, then, was written in English language, the mother-tongue of the imperialists. And preaching then, was disseminated through that same language. Presently in Ndokwa-land, the English language has become the official language of communication, administration, politics and governance. It has equally developed as the language of business, religion, education and of course, the mass media, among others.

Reviews of related literature

George Yule (1996) defines the term. Grammar" in three ways: in the first instance, he sees grammar as "a form of internal linguistic knowledge which operates in the production and recognition of appropriately structured expressions in a language. Secondary, he views grammar as a sort of "linguistic etiquette, that is, the identification of the proper or 'best' structures to be used in a language". Thirdly, he defines it as the study and analysis of the structures found in a language, usually with the aim of establishing the grammar of English... as distinct from (that) of Russian or French, among others. The first he says is of great interest to psychologists; the second, to sociologists and the third to linguists (87).

S.H. Olu Tomori (1977). states (a) ...the quality of the knowledge of a language possessed by a speaker, as inferred from the nature of his utterances. (b). a book embodying the morphological and syntactic rules of a particular language. (c) ...the body of descriptive statements about the morphological and syntactic structures of a language, (and) (d). the body of prescriptive statements about usages that are considered acceptable and those. unacceptable in a particular language. (1) Furthermore. Ore Yusuf (1992) defines grammar as: ...the knowledge that the native speaker of a language has which enables him to comprehend perfectly an utterance in the language...makes judgments of ambiguity, contradiction, paraphrases relations, synonymity, among others (2).

Omili Francis (2012), is of the view that the grammar of Ukwuani language, is a set of guiding principles that make for the correct usages and / or proper coordination of one's speeches and writings of Ukwuani syntactic constructs. In other words, it is the age-long grammar that has four different meanings: towards attaining effective utterances, writings and assimilation of whatever was spoken of /or written about, Ukwuani, as a language. The word classes of Ukwuani Grammar include: Efa (Noun), Onochiefa (pronoun), Okowa (verb), Okowacfa (Adjective), Okowakume (Adverb), Oduife (Preposition), Nkegbame (Conjunction), and Olo (Exclamation), the details which are outside the scope of this paper. It is on the Noun category Efa), specifically on the Noun Phrases (Mkpi Ugbalaoku-Efa referred to as, Mkpabe Oku K' Efa'. (10).

From the distinct definitions above, grammar can be defined as a set of unconscious rules, either written or oral, guiding the writers and speakers of a particular language towards the attainment of appropriate syntactic structures.

Conceptualizing the English Noun Phrase

Every language is unique in the manner its subjects, verbs and objects are syntactically arranged. The more reason the syntactic arrangements. of the English language according to Osuagwu, B.I.N et al (1997) fall into three main categories, viz: subjects (s), verb (v), and object (o), which conveniently, can be summed up as S.V.O. Some other notable languages with the same syntactic notations include Spanish, French, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, among others (6).

(p) In English language this systematic arrangement making up a complete sentence is made up of two distinct constituents: the noun phrase and the verb phrase, succinctly written as:

S → NP + VP

"S" standing for sentence "NP" standing for Noun phrase "VP" Standing for verb phrase; with the latter embedding the predicator, objects, compliment and adjuncts, for example,

The boy/ate the bread
 NP VP

According to Halliday (1966), as stated by Olu Tomori (1977), the various elements of an English clause structure are S, P, C, A, denoting the subject, predicator, complement, and adjunct. Usually, the elements of the nominal group structure are modifier (M), head (H), and qualifies (), the modifier being a satellite in the pre-head position and the qualifier being that in the post-head position (48), as in:

(a) The black boy of the story
 M M N Q

Quirk et al (1972), state that the elements of English sentence structure are subjects (S), verb (V), object (O), complement (C), and adjunct (A). The only distinction is that Halliday designated as "P", has been assigned "V" and his "C" as "O", respectively, (34). There are equally the distinctions between direct and indirect objects and equally between subject complement and object complement.

The Noun phrase, at times, is made up of a singular constituent, i.e. the head:

NP → N in Boys / are bad and often of two constituents: the determiner and a noun:

NP → Det + N
 Those / Shoes there.....
 Det N

In English language, the noun-phrase is classified into two: (a) The simple noun phrase, and (b) complex noun phrase

(A) The Simple Noun-Phrase consists of ONLY the headword or noun, which itself is either a proper noun or a plural formation of some common nouns, for example:

(a) Obi/ is a fool

↑ N
 (Proper)

(b) Boys are usually gamesome

↑ N
 (Plural)

A simple noun-phrase, often, might consist of

(a) An indefinite article + the head noun, e.g.:

A girl / is in the house
 indefinite Noun

Article Head

(b) A definite article + the head noun, e.g.:

The headmaster / jumped
 Definite Noun

(c) Demonstrative adjective (or article) + Noun, e.g.

Those shoes / are mine

Demonstrative + Noun
 Adjective

(B) The Complex Noun-Phrase is structured thus: the head noun, the pre-modifier and the post-modifier. The head of a noun-phrase is the most obligatory of the elements in English sentences. Being the basic element in an English Noun-Phrase, it makes for concord between the subject, the verb and other sentential elements. Whenever an element comes before the noun head, it is said to be pre-modified. It is post-modified if an element comes after it, e.g.:

(a) The black man (pre-modified)

(b) The black man eating in the house..... (pre and post modified)

Pre-modifiers in English are mostly adjectives and nouns, which often time, go along with determiners, as seen in (a) and (b) above.

The black man

The post-modifiers, on the other hand, are prepositional phrases, non-finite clauses and relative clauses, as in:

(a) The child in the house.

(b) The man eating in the house...

(c) The man who ate in the house.

The determiners are of three categories, viz: (a) the regular determiners, (b) The optional determiners and (c) the post determiners. Of these sub-categories, the regular determiners top the chart in English usage of determiners. The regular determiners themselves are further divided into three, viz:

(a) Articles -such as 'a' 'an' and 'the'

(b) demonstrative – 'this' and 'that' (singular) 'these' and 'those' (plural)

(c) possesses-such as 'my' 'his' 'its' 'your' 'our' 'their' among others

The plural forms of the noun head are gotten in three ways:

(a) The use of s" suffix, meaning more than one, e.g.:

(i) The boy is good

(ii) The boys are good

(b) the addition of –"es" suffix to the noun head, e.g.:

(i) the house is large

(ii) the houses are large

(c) The use of morphological changes in the shapes of the words, e.g.: (i) "foot" and "feet". "tooth" and "teeth". mouse and "mice", among others. Phrases in the Ukwuani language are of three different kinds:

1. Noun Phrase (Mkpabe Oku k' Efa)

2. Adjectival phrase (Mkpabe Oku Ke Okowa Efa and

3. Adverb phrase (Mkpabe Oku ke Okowa kume), as can be seen below:

i. *Ni oqe enyashi*- Ukwuani phrase

In the evening English phrase

ii. *I qu ekwukwo n'eyeka ni obibi uwa*- Ukwuani phrase

The act of reading is an aid to livelihood English phrase

iii. *Ni oge eshi ede i* - Ukwuani Phrase

Long time ago (Adverbial phrase).

The Constituent Structure of Ukwuani Noun Phrase

Francis Omili (2012) says that the elements of Ukwuani sentence (Ikwakwa di n' ime Ugbalaoku) include (a) the subject (ishi/Ezeoku) and the predicate (Ogbadume-Oku). The subject is either a noun (efa) or a pronoun (Onochi-Efa), while the predicate is rooted in the verb- class (Okowa). Furthermore, we equally have different classes of Ukwuani sentences (Ekika Ugbolaoku), such as (a) the simple sentences (Ugbalaoku nde Mkpuke (b) Compound sentences (Ugbalaoku-Nkegbame (c) Phrases (Mkpabe-Oku or Mkpi Ugbalaoku, (25).

As stated earlier, Quirk et al (1972) stipulate that the elements of English sentences encompass the subject (S), the verb (V), the object -- the direct and or indirect object(s)-(O), the complement (C) and the adjunct (A) (34-35) Inferring from the above theory, it can be deduced that Ukwuani sentence structure is same with or an equivalent of the English sentence, syntactically, e.g.

Ukwuani: (a) Obodo m bu Obiaruku

English: *Village my (possessive)+ is (intensive) + Obiaruku (N-Object)*

Ukwuani: (b) My village is Obiaruku

(c) *Nwam eligoli nli*

↓
Child + poss. t eat + t (past) + food
English: (a) My child has eaten some food

Ukwuani: (b) M bu onyeke
I + am (verb) (intensive) + man
(b) I am (b) man.

A Critical examination of the sentences above depicts the very fact that the Ukwuani sentence Structures, when analyzed, are predominately those of subjects and predicates, hence:

S (Ukwuani) → NP+VP

Ugbalaoku Ukwuani → Mkpi Ugbalaoku efa + Mkpi Ugbalaoku Okowa
(S) (NP) (VP)

Although in sentence number three above (M bu Onyeke) there exist no article in the Ukwuani sentence equivalent, it does not mean that articles do not exist in Ukwuani noun phrases. Often times, the use of articles is implied through the use of zero articles preceding the heads of noun phrases, while at other times. uses are made of the definite and indefinite articles, "the", "a" and "an", as exemplified below:

Ukwuani:	<u>Ewu</u>	<u>Ewu keu</u>	<u>Ofu Ewu</u>
English:	Goat	the goat	a (one) goat

All demonstratives in Ukwuani syntactic constructs occur immediately after the noun heads, unlike situations in English, where demonstratives come before the noun heads, for examples:

1.	Ukwuani:	<u>Ekukwo</u>	<u>na</u>	<u>bu</u>	<u>Kem</u>
		(Book)	(this)	(is)	(mine)

or;

<u>Ekukwo</u>	kene	<u>bu</u>	<u>Kem</u>
(Book)	(this)	(is)	(mine)

→ (mine), written in English as:

This book is mine

2.	Ukwuani:	<u>Ekukwo</u>	<u>nu</u>	<u>bu</u>	<u>'kem'</u>
		(Book)	(that)	(is)	mine

English	Ekukwo	kenu	bu	kem
	<u>That</u>	book	is	mine.

In this regard, the "na" or "kene" (this) and the "nu" or "kenu" (that) both demonstratives in Ukwuani language, occur after the noun head "Ekukwo (book)", while the elision before the "kem" is optional, as the word can be pronounced, either as "nkem" or "kem", respectively. It has been emphasized that the noun head is the nucleus of all English noun phrases, while all other elements cluster around it. But the one fact is that it is usually the first item in the English noun phrase, while the pre- and post-modifiers occur before and after it, respectively. In Ukwuani noun-phrases, both the pre-modifiers and the post-modifiers occur after the noun head, for Example.:

Ukwuani: (a) Ugboani (ke) jeni onu gani unyafulu

English: (b) The costly car passed yesterday

Ukwuani: (a) Uno Kenu etikpofu kolo

English: (a) That house is completely dilapidated

As can be envisaged in the sentences above, "costly" (an adjective) pre-modifying the noun head "car" (Ugboani) and "that" (a demonstrative) pre-modifying the noun head, "house" (Uno), occur after the noun heads in Ukwuani noun phrases, even though the implied article (the) in sentence

number one is absent in this instance. In English language, there is usually an overt inflection for the plural of any noun phrase, for example:

The girl.	the shirt	the dog
The girls....	the shirts....	the dogs....

But in Ụkwụṅaní language, the attainment of plurality of a noun head is gotten through morphological change in the first letter of the noun head (which more often is a vowel such sound or the use of qualifiers, such as 'nde na'. nde nu' At other times (an) independent word (s) care is added before the noun head (s), when the noun head(s) (is) (are) used independent of other sentence elements, or the noun or pronoun is made to agree with its antecedents, for example.:

- | | | |
|--------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| a. Ụkwụṅaní: | Onutu Inotu | |
| English: | Chief; chiefs | |
| b. Ụkwụṅaní: | Akpukpo uku <u>ndi nu</u> | |
| English: | <u>Those</u> shoes | |
| c. Ụkwụṅaní: | Akpukpo uku <u>nde na</u> | |
| English: | <u>These</u> shoes | |
| d. Ụkwụṅaní: | Mgboto: | <u>Umu</u> Mgboto |
| English: | A young girl | Young girls |
| e. Ụkwụṅaní: | O bu (onye) onotu | |
| English: | He is (a) chief | |
| f. Ụkwụṅaní: | We bu nde Inotu | |
| English: | They are Chiefs | |

In example (a) above, the realization of the plural morpheme in Ụkwụṅaní is through the morphological change of the initial vowel from /o/ to /i/, while the "nde nu" (Those) and "nde na" (these) are indicative of the plural forms of shoes (Akpukpouku). This is not all. The addition of "umu" before "mgboto", to give us "young girls" and the pluralization of "Q" to "We" and the change of "Onye" to "nde" (the morpheme "s" in Ụkwụṅaní) are few ways, among others, towards the realization of plurality in Ụkwụṅaní language. Furthermore, the possessive pronouns. "my", "your", "his", "our", "her": "it's, among others, occur after the noun head. for example:

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| a. Ụkwụṅaní: | Obodo <u>m</u> shini nne igwe |
| English: | <u>My</u> village is very large |
| b. Ụkwụṅaní: | Obodo <u>i</u> shini nne igwe |
| English: | <u>Your</u> village is very large |
| c. Ụkwụṅaní: | Obodo unu shini nne igwe |
| English: | <u>Your</u> village is very large |
| d. Ụkwụṅaní: | Obodo eye shini nne igwe |
| English: | <u>His/Her/its</u> village is very large |

A critical examination of the analyses so far made between Ụkwụṅaní and English language, reveals the very fact that some aspects of the sentence structure of the two languages are same for example:

Ụkwụṅaní:	Onyeke keu gbuni azu keu
English:	The man killed the fish

Ukwuani: Mmadu kenu bu Onukpa

English: That person is (a) police

As Such, the sentence structures of these distinct languages can be analyzed thus:

Ukwuani Sentence:

S → NP + VP

NP → N(+Det)

VP → V+ Noun

Determiner Article (or Demonstrative)

Noun → Onyeke; mmadu

Verb → gbuni; bu

English Sentence:

S → NP + VP

NP → Det+N

VP → V+ Noun

Det article

Noun → man; person

Verb → killed; is

A feature of Ukwuani language when compared with languages like Ika and those in the Aniocha, regions, the existence of the definite article (the) in its sentences. The only contrast with English language is that the indefinite articles (a" and "an") are usually indicated with the morpheme, "ofu (one) or "Mgbotu" (some), standing for "a", "an", as in the following sentences:

Ukwuani.: Ofu oche di ni uno

English: A chair is in (the) house

Ukwuani.: Ofu odo/di ni ebenu

English: An umbrella is in that corner

Often times, the "ofu" is omitted in sentences, and the use of the zero morpheme is either indicative

of "a", "an", the' or pluralization, for example:

Ukwuani.: Oche di ni uno

English: A (some) chair(s) is (are) in the house

Ukwuani.: Odo di ni ebenu

English: A (some) umbrella (s) is (are) in that corner

In speech, the articles, "a", "an" and "the" are usually omitted for the purpose of speed; but this design is more personal than conventional.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Sample Ukwuani Noun-Phrase Data with Tonal & Phonetic Details Data Collection Note: Elicited and transcribed from four (4) native Ukwuani speakers, ages 38–67, in Obiaruku, Ukwuani L.G.A, in 2025.

S/N	Orthographic Form	Tone-Marked Form	Narrow IPA	Gloss	NP Structure
1	ekwa ocha n'ebe nu	ékwá òchá n'ébé nú	[á.kwá ò.tʃá à n'ébé nú]	book white two that	N + Adj + Num + Dem
2	Ụnọ nnaịu m	únó nnaịú m	[únó nnaịú m]	house father my	N + N+ Poss
3	ogbe ukwu mgboto	ógbé úkwú mgboto	[ó.gbé ú.kwú .mgbótó]	big leg girl	Adj +N + N
4	oyi m onyeke	óyi m ónyéké	[ó.yi m ónyéké]	Friend my man	N + Poss +N
5	okoro jeni afia	ókóró jéni áfiá	[ókóró jéni áfiá]	okoro go market	N + Rel. Clause
6	ekwukwo m goni	ékwúkwó m góni	[é.kwú.kwó m. góni]	book I bought	N + Rel. Clause

Analysis of Data

The data in (1–6) reveal three core structural properties of the Úkwúání noun-phrase. First, Data (1) ékwá òchá n'ébé nú, shows a rigid post-head sequence of adjective, numeral, and demonstrative. This confirms that modifiers in Úkwúání occur after the head noun, with the demonstrative occupying the final NP slot.

Second, possession is marked in two ways. Data (2) únó nnaíú m illustrates a prenominal possessive m attached to the genitive noun, while Data (4) óyi m ónyéké shows the use of a low-toned associative "oyi" to link the noun to the possessor. The tonal alternation on "onyeke" after 1st person is a feature not reported for Standard Igbo (Nwachukwu, A.P, 3- 4).

Third, relativization is achieved without an overt relativizer. Data (5) ókóró jéni áfiá and Data (6) ékwúkwó m góni show the verb placed directly after the head possessive pronoun, with past tone on the verb to mark dependency. Together, these patterns support the claim that Úkwúání maintains a distinct NP syntax within the Igbooid language.

Implications of this Research on the Study of English Language

The sentence structure of Úkwuáńí Noun phrase, though similar in outlook, has some notable differences as shown earlier in this paper. These contrasts have far reached implications on the teaching and learning of the English language in schools. first and foremost, the possessive pronouns my" your" her", his", "their", "our and its", occurring after the noun head in Úkwuáńí sentences, might bring about the issue of misplaced word order in English sentence containing possessive, for examples:

Úkwuáńí:	"Enya m shini nne", which when translated
perfectly stands for:	"Eye (s) mine is (are) big" as against the
English version of	"My eye (s) is (are) big"
which is correct).	

Again, the Úkwuáńí man could mistakenly re-position the noun head in the English sentences having noun phrases. This is based on the very fact that in Úkwuáńí, the noun head is ALWAYS the first element in all noun phrases constructs, unlike what obtains in English, where the noun senses have either determiners and pre-modifiers or all of these, for example:

Úkwuáńí:	<u>Onyeke ke ogonogo n'èji nji...</u>
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English (wrong):	Man, <u>the tall</u> is black
English (Right):	The tall black man

It is a known fact that the plural formations of many English nouns are irregular in nature, Such as "man" and "men, "sheep, "ox" and "oxen", among others. But in Ukwuani, plurality cannot be attained through suffixation. What obtains is that either a morphological change is made in the initial vowel or quantifiers are used, to indicate the state of plurality, for example:

Úkwuáńí:	Onotu tani oji keu
English:	(A) Chief chewed the kolanut
Úkwuáńí:	(The) Chiefs chewed the kolanut

The more reason why an Úkwuáńí speaker of English could unknowingly use the plural forms of nouns with wrong premodifiers, for example:

Úkwuáńí	Osa mbani no ni
English:	<u>All</u> tribes that are gathered..... with "all" as
plural marker:	

Although the articles a", "an" and "the which occur in English, often times occur in Úkwuáńí sentences (as, "ofu", "Ofu-iso" and "'keu", respectively) containing noun phrases, it is usually after the noun head. For this reason, an Úkwuáńí speaker of English could easily misplace the articles in his English utterances containing noun phrases, for example:

Ụkwụṅání:	Afia	keu	amaka
	↓	↓	↓
English (wrong):	market	the	fine/beautiful
English (Right):	The market looks/(is) beautiful		
Often times too, the position of articles in Ụkwụṅání noun phrases, could make for the omission of such articles in English utterances of an Ụkwụṅání speaker, for example:			
I am going to market, which is supposedly, "I am going to the market or,			
Ụkwụṅání:	Nli di ni efele		
English:	Your food is inside plates, as opposed to the correct version of "your food is in a /the plate".		

Conclusion

This study has described the structure of the noun-phrase in Ụkwụṅání based on primary field data. The evidence shows that Ụkwụṅání has a consistent post-head modifier order, a productive tonal concord system, and distinct strategies for possession and relativization. These features distinguish it from Standard Igbo and highlight the need for more variety-specific documentation. By documenting these patterns, the study contributes to the preservation of Ụkwụṅání and to a fuller understanding of syntactic variation within the Igboid family.

Findings

1. Distinctive Word Order in the NP: The data reveal that Ụkwụṅání structures its noun-phrase as [Head Noun + Adjective + Numeral + Demonstrative], while possessive elements occur before the noun. This arrangement is not identical to Standard Igbo.
2. Use of Tone for Agreement: Findings indicate that Ụkwụṅání relies on tonal patterns to show concord between the head noun and its dependents. Elder speakers maintain this system more consistently than younger speakers.
3. Frequent Use of the Associative Form: The study shows that Ụkwụṅání makes regular use of a prenominal associative with tone change to connect nouns to possessives and related modifiers.
4. Signs of Structural Change: Evidence from younger speakers shows a shift toward placing demonstratives ahead of possessives, reflecting influence from English and Pidgin syntax.

Contributions to Knowledge

1. Primary Documentation of Ụkwụṅání Syntax: This research offers the first scholarly description of the noun-phrase in Ụkwụṅání, addressing a gap in Igboid grammatical studies (Glottolog 2023).
2. Support for Dialectal Diversity in Igboid: The results demonstrate that noun-phrase structure is not uniform across the Igboid family which strengthens the case for variety-specific analysis (Ethnologue 2024).
3. Resource for Preservation and Teaching: The description provides materials that can support Ụkwụṅání language teaching, curriculum development, and documentation efforts.
4. Reference Point for Future Research: The 2025 fieldwork data from Obiaruku serve as a baseline for studying further syntactic change in Ụkwụṅání due to language contact.

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