
The Comparative Analysis of Syntaco-Semantic Features of English and Kanuri Preposition

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Abstract: *This work compared the preposition in English and Kanuri language with the aim of finding out their similarities and differences. Sentences comprising of prepositions are first obtained from native speakers and textbooks written in Kanuri language and then were compared with that of English. The work reveals that the languages are identical with regards to the function of prepositions, even though Kanuri has no preposition but postposition. Preposition in English can be simple or complex but Kanuri postposition is an affix which depends solely on the part of speech that precedes it in order to give meaning. It has also been observed that a single postposition in Kanuri language can perform the function of many prepositions in English. In spite of the structural differences between English and Kanuri preposition, they have similar semantic and syntactic functions. Therefore, it was suggested that the findings in this work will help in preparing materials for Kanuri learners of English as a second language.*

Key words: *Comparison, Differences, Language, and Similarities.*

Introduction

The Kanuri language is classified by Greenberg (1963) as a member of the Sahara branch of Nilo-Saharan language. It is one of the three major languages of the Northern Nigeria and it is also spoken in Chad and Niger. The Kanuri language has many dialects. The main dialects are: -

- 1) Yerwa (Maiduguri) spoken in Borno State, North Eastern part of Nigeria. Mobar – closely related to Yerwa spoken in Eastern Niger and North Eastern Nigeria.
- 2) Manga- spoken in Eastern Niger and North eastern Nigeria.
- 3) Kanembu – spoken in Chad

The present study is based on the Kanuri spoken in Yerwa which is the traditional name for the town known today as 'Maiduguri'. Maiduguri is the capital of the modern day Borno as well as the traditional seat of the Shehu of Borno. Therefore, for both reason and also because of the political reality, the Yerwa dialect of Kanuri has become perhaps the standard dialect that is spoken in Borno state.

The aim of this work is to compare the preposition of English and Kanuri with the specific objectives of identifying the preposition in Kanuri and to find out differences and similarities in

use of preposition in English and Kanuri as well as to find out the structural difference between the preposition of English and Kanuri.

Preposition is one of the functional words in a language. The mastery of preposition shows one's proficiency in a language. Therefore, this work will compare the preposition in English and Kanuri in order to find out their similarities and differences which help in providing material for teaching English to Kanuri learners of English as a second language.

The study will only compare and analyse the preposition conceivable in English and their equivalent in Kanuri. The different types of preposition will be described noting their functions and the position they occupy in the sentence should also be noted too.

Contrastive analysis is the systematic study of pair of languages with a view of identifying their structural differences and similarities. According to the theory, most effective materials for the teaching of a second language are those that are based on the scientific description of the target language and then compared with the mother tongue of the learner. Contrastive analysis is used as a method of explaining why some features of target are more difficult to acquire than others. According to the behaviourist theory of learning, language learning is a question of habit formation and this could be reinforced by existing habit. Therefore, the difficulty in mastering certain structure in target language depended on the difference between the learners' mother tongue and the language they were learning. The goal of contrastive analysis is to make foreign language teaching more effective, the similarities facilitates learning to be positive and problem predicted can be considered in the curriculum.

The data collected consist of Kanuri sentences, particularly those containing prepositions. The sentences are obtained from native speakers of Kanuri and reputable textbooks. The sentences obtained from the native speakers are first recorded and then transcribed while; those from the textbook are transcribed for further analysis and interpretation. Firstly, the sentences in Kanuri are presented in gloss and later the translation into English follows. This enables the researcher to compare the preposition of both languages.

Literature Review

The preposition has been defined by scholars in various texts. We will consider only few definitions due to its numerical strength of literature in the field. The term preposition is defined by authors like (Adejare and Adejare 1996), (Murthy 2007), (Quirk and Greenbaum 1973) and (Huddleston 1994) as a word that occurs before noun phrase used to express relation between entities and also used to indicate direction, location, or time to introduce an object

Classes of preposition

Preposition in English can be classified into a simple or a complex preposition (Quirk 1973). Simple prepositions are common preposition used in English language. They consist of one word such as 'at', 'in', 'for', 'to', 'with' etc. While, complex prepositions are preposition plus other part of speech. Complex preposition can be placed according to their form into one of these three categories: -

- a) Verb/Adjective/Conjunction + preposition: - Except from, owing to, due to, because of etc.
- b) Adverb +preposition: -along with, apart from, aside from, as far, away from etc.
- c) Preposition 1 +noun+ preposition2: -by means of, in comparism with, etc.

In C above, which form the most numerous category, the noun and the complex preposition is preceded by indefinite article or definite article for example, in the light of, as a result etc. This category may be further divided according to which preposition function as preposition : -

Prep1 +prep2 + noun +with –in contact with

By+ noun + of –by means of

On + noun + of - on account of

On + noun + of – on behalf of

Strictly speaking, a complex preposition is a sequence that is indivisible both in term of syntax and in term of meaning (Quirk and Greenbaum 1972). However, there no absolute distinction between a complex preposition and a construction which is can be varied, abbreviated and extended according to normal syntax rule. Also, the boundary between a simple and a complex is also uncertain one. Orthographic separation is the easiest test to apply, but anomalies such as two merely emphasize the arbitrariness of distinction between one and more than one. The test can be applied to most cases of preposition, when simple is identical in form of its corresponding prepositional adverb. A complex preposition on the other hand, uses its final element when transferred to function as an adverb (Quirk and Greenbaum1973). For example:

In term of money, her loss is small.

Furthermore, a preposition expresses different meaning. The meanings are divided into functional types (Quirk et al 1973). The semantic functions are:-

- i) Time and duration
- ii) Purpose and indented destination
- iii) Orientation
- iv) resultative meaning
- v) Means and instrument
- vi) Pervasive meaning
- vii) Dimension and passage

Apart from the expression of semantic meaning, preposition also expresses syntactic meaning as well. Thus:

- i) Adjunct
- ii) Post modifier in noun phrase
- iii) Complementation of verb
- iv) Complementation of adjective
- v) Disjunct
- vi) Conjunct

The kanuri postpositon

The Kanuri language has no preposition of its own but rather set of postposition which performs the function of preposition in English language. Hutchison (1981) stated “that postposition are monomorphemic words and particles that is placed after a noun or pronoun indicating direction, source, method, means, etc. which from that position after its headword performs all of the function that we know to be those of preposition in language like English”. Hutchison (1981) identify six types of postposition in Kanuri language.

- i) Agent postposition –ye
- ii) Associative postposition -a
- iii) Indirect postposition –ro
- iv) Locative/means postposition –lan
- v) Genitive postposition –be
- vi) Direction postposition –mben

Hutchison (1981) further asserts that the above set of preposition is used to mark all oblique (adverbial modifiers of the language). He also states that Kanuri has no category adverb, words functioning in this capacity have been described as adverbial noun. All other constituent functioning as adverb are composite (oblique) postpositional phrases formed through application of a postposition to lexical noun, a noun phrase or even an entire clause.

Furthermore, in Cyffer (1998), there is no mention of postposition but sets of postposition in (Lukas 1937) and Hutchison (1981) are referred to as adverbial noun phrase construction. He states that the adverbial noun phrase with the suffix or case marker (-lan) denote location, instrument, means, benefaction, reason, intention and manner. In addition, the suffix –ro also mark indirect object for example:

- 1) Place – -la (n)
 - i) “Fatolan napsena”
House at they are sitting
They are sitting at home
 - ii) “Musa kasuwulan cidajin”
Musa Market at working

Musa is working at the market

2) Instrument:

iii) “Da janalan kamgada”

Meat knife with they cut

They cut meat with knife.

4) Means:

iv) “Tela kuluwu kekelan sudutena”

The Tailor the gown sewing machine with sew

The tailor sewed the gown with sewing machine.

5) Manner:

v) “Cida ade agallan dikin”

Work this carefully will do I

I will do this work carefully.

Cyffer (1998) is of the view that in order to specify the relationship between the action of the clause and the adverbial noun phrase construction, genitive or possessive are used in which the head noun denotes specific relationship for example:

“Kela ferben zepkano”

He descended from the horse.

“Ngawo fatebero lewono”

He/she went behind the house.

In addition, Bukakarima (2000) defined postposition in Kanuri as a word or particle that is placed after a noun or pronoun indicating place, direction, source, method, means etc. They perform the function of a preposition in language like English. Therefore, postposition in Kanuri language is suffix attached to a noun to indicate relative position of entity and function as preposition in language like English.

Furthermore, Rao (2018) carried out a comparative analysis of English and Telegu preposition using the theory of contrastive analysis with the view of identifying the similarities and differences with emphasis on its semantics perspective in English language teaching. The languages were compared with sentences selected specifically for the purpose. When two languages were compared it reveals that semantically they display a wide range of contrast particularly in conceptualizing meaning conveyed by the preposition and the postposition respectively. Also, syntactically the structure of preposition is different in both languages.

Similarly, a work carried out by Gazali (2019) on the postposition in Kanuri language examines -ro and -lan as clitics in Kanuri. He identified the different syntactic and semantic functions of these post position using the data collected in a written Kanuri text. It reveals that postposition in Kanuri language can be cliticized to virtually every lexical category in Kanuri –noun, pronoun, relativizers, dependent possessive pronoun and genitive markers to express different functions.

Also, another study based on comparative and contrastive analysis of English and Arabic preposition is by Al-Marrani(2009). The English and Arabic sub- system preposition in term of function, uses and meaning is compared using the contrastive analysis theory. The results of the study show that there were similarities and differences between these two sub-systems of preposition in English and Arabic. The similarities between them facilitates the development of process of learning a foreign language (positive transfer) while the differences between the language make the learning process difficult to Arabic learner of English. A lot of mistake is made by them as the result of the negative transfer or interference. For this work, a comparative analysis of English and Kanuri preposition will be carried out with a view of finding out their similarities and difference.

Data presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

As earlier mentioned, Kanuri does not have complex postposition but only simple postposition. The following are shows list of Kanuri postposition with their equivalent. A single postposition in Kanuri may have several positional senses in English.

+lan	beside, between, at, in, inside, from, by, beneath, outside, off, with, within, among
+ro	to, for, before, because, of, via, through, towards, by
+be	of, for
+ye	by, for
+a	with
+ga	with

The use of the preposition can be illustrated in the following sentences:

I) +lan

1) “Shitilan Napsena”.

Beside him sitting he

He is sitting beside him.

2) “ Musa katekatezalan biskejın.”

Musa among them playing

Musa is playing among them.

3) “Mallam Audu fatolan latcin.”

Mallam Audu house in sleeping

Mallam Audu is sleeping at home.

4) “Maralan kadio”.

Aeroplane by came he

He came by aeroplane.

6) “kakkade njimlan gananuwu.”

The book room in kept he

He kept the book in the room

II) Postposition +ro

1) “Adamuro kakkade yiwukena”.

Adamu for book bought I

I bought the book for Adamu.

2) “Aliro beri yikena.”

Ali to food gave I

I gave food to Ali.

3) “Fuwunzəro kara’ako.”

Before him I entered

I entered before him

III) +mben

4) “Kasuwumben lewono”.

Market towards he went

He went towards the market.

5) “Marantamben kadi.”

School through he came

He came through the school.

IV) +be

6) “Adamu sawa Musabe.”

Adamu friend Musa of is

Adamu is friend of Musa.

V) +ye

7) “Aliye wuro kakkade cewono.”

Ali by me the book given

The book is given to me by Ali

8) “Ade beri fatimaye.”

This food Fatima for

This food is for Fatima.

VI) +a

9) “Garuwa’a fargin.”

The wall over jump I will

I will jump over the wall.

Discussion on Use of English and Kanuri Preposition

In comparing languages, the most obvious in which differences between languages show themselves in respect of their mutual intelligibility of the speakers, (Corder 1973) states that “Mutual intelligibility is not is just the function of linguistics relation between languages but it also has important socio-psychological component.”

The differences between English and Kanuri preposition can be classified based on their syntactic position and structural form.

I) **Syntactic position:** the postposition in Kanuri language has different syntactic position with that of English language. Postposition in Kanuri as the name suggests appear after the noun or the pronoun that to which is the headword. For example:

i) “Kasuwuro”

Market to

ii) “Njimlan”

Room in

iii) “Wuro”

Me to

The postposition +ro and +lan appear after the noun kasuwu (market) and njim (room) respectively. But in English the preposition appear after the noun or the pronoun that precedes it.

- II) **Structural form:** English and Kanuri preposition differ in terms of structure. Kanuri postpositions are clitics to their independent nouns, in other words, they are bound morpheme. While in English prepositions are independent words that can stand on their own. For example:
- i) “Fatolan lacin.”
House at sleeping is he
He is sleeping at home.
 - ii) “Ajilan napsəna.”
Classroom in sat she
She sat in the classroom.

In the above example, the postposition + (lan) is a suffix attached to the postpositional noun (fato) “house” in order to give meaning to the postposition. On the contrary, the preposition “at” in English is an independent word that comes before the noun in order to indicate a place. However, the structural differences between Kanuri and English preposition may cause problem to Kanuri learners of English as second language. This is because they tend to transfer the structure of Kanuri postposition to English. For instance, the word order in Kanuri is SOV, while that of Kanuri is SVO. The Kanuri learner will tend to construct sentences in English using the structure found in his language.

Kasuwuro legin

Market to going is he

He is going to the market.

Also, another observation regarding, the use postposition and preposition in English and Kanuri is the form of the postposition in Kanuri language. Post position depends solely on other parts of speech to give meaning. This means that the suffix of postpositional elements is affix to the part of speech that precedes it in order to give functional meaning. For example:

“Mallam Audu Maratalan kadio.”

Mallam Audu school from came

Mallam Audu came from school.

The postposition (+lan) is realized as postposition only if it was combine with noun or pronoun and then written together as a single word.

Apart from the structural differences, English preposition differs from Kanuri postposition in terms of its polysemic nature. A single postposition expresses more than a single meaning in a syntactic structure. For example:

- i) “Fatima njimlan biskejin.”
Fatima room in playing is
Fatima is playing in the room.
- ii) “Ahmad kanolan kadio.”
Ahmad Kano from came
Ahmad came from Kano.
- iii) “Lemon janalan kamgono.”
Orange knife with cut he
He cut orange with a knife.

In the above examples, the postposition +lan expresses three meaning which is only determine by the context of usage.

In addition, few syntactic similarities are noted in both languages. They are as follows:

- I. Complement of verb/adjective
- II. Modifiers
- III. Adjunct
 - I) Postposition as verb complement
 - i) “Kungunalan kaiwu.”
Money with bought it he
He bought it with money.
 - ii) “Fatima ajilan kerajin.”
Fatima class in reading is
Fatima is reading in the class.
 - II) postposition as noun modifier
 - i) “Njim Musabe’
Room Musa of
Room of Musa
 - ii) “Kakkadi Aishabe”
Book Aisha of
Book of Aisha

- III) Postposition as an adjunct
iii) “Fatima nayiro kuwu kadio.”
Fatima my place to today came
Fatima came to my place today.

Apart from this, few semantic similarities are noted in both languages which include use of postposition/preposition to indicate place, position, direction, means and instrument.

“Adamu Damaturulan cidajin.”

Adamu Damaturu at working is

Adamu is working at Damaturu.

‘at’ and +lan indicating place in the sentence above.

“Lemon janalan kamgada.”

Orange knife with cut they

They cut the orange with the knife

‘with’ and +lan indicate instrument

Kasuwuro legin

Market to going is he

He is going to the market

‘+ro’ and ‘to’ indicate direction

In conclusion, the similarities and the differences between English and Kanuri preposition affirms that both languages are expression of thought, hence, thought is universal phenomenon. Thus, the linguistic difference between the two languages can be regarded as difference in social and cultural background. Furthermore, in teaching English as second language, this material will help in providing the teacher with background data on which successful teaching material can be built. This is because contrastive analysis is founded on the assumption that second language learner tend to transfer the formal features of his mother tongue or first language to English.

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