Indefinite Modifiers in Kanuri:
A Case Study of Səmonəm Wuro Sarusəgəne

By
Kalli Hussaini
Mohammed Goni College of Legal and Islamic Studies, Maiduguri Borno State
&
Muhammad Hussaini Bulama
National Institute for Nigerian Languages Aba,Abia State

Abstract

This paper examines structure of indefinite modifiers in Kanuri text within the framework of descriptive linguistics adopting the works of Hutchison (1981) and Cyffer (1998) model of approach in analysing it. In conducting the research, both sources of data collection were employed: the primary source includes a Kanuri written text Səmonəm wuro sarusəgəne, where all the various place where the indefinite modifiers occurred in noun phrase were underlined and extracted from the text for presentation and analysis. The study also employed the secondary source of data collection where linguists from the Kanuri unit of the Department of Languages and Linguistics, University of Maiduguri, Nigeria were engaged to validate the data collected from the text. The outcome of the study reveals that there are four indefinite modifiers used in modifying noun phrase in the text and the study identified the indefinite modifiers are: 'laa', 'so', 'woso' and 'gade'. The indefinite modifier 'laa' occurs as a free and bound morpheme to postmodifies a noun phrase, the indefinite 'so' is a bound morpheme to modify a noun phrase while the indefinite 'woso' and 'gade' are free morphemes to modifiers noun phrase in Kanuri. Finally, the study identified two hundred and eleven instances of the four indefinite modifiers with their number of occurrences and their percentages in the text analysed.

Keywords: Modifier, Indefinite, Description, Kanuri.

Introduction

Kanuri is a member of the Saharan branch of the Nilo–Saharan phylum of African languages (see Greenberg, 1963). Bender (2000:44) presents the Saharan branch according to the following groups: Saharan Kanuri: Kanembu, Daza, Teda–Tubu, Zaghawa –Bideyat, and Berti. Lewis (2009) presents the Saharan languages into Eastern, Western and Northern branch. Kanuri is the widest – spread language in the Lake Chad region and is spoken in all countries bordering Cameroun Chad, Niger, and Nigeria. There are also small numbers of Kanuri speakers in Fezzan Libya. Some Kanuri in diaspora also live in Sudan in around

Khartoum. However, Kanuri speakers in Nigeria outnumber those in other countries by far. The estimated number of Kanuri speakers in Nigeria is between three to four million. Those in other countries do not exceed five hundred thousand Cyffer (1998).

Kanuri is an amalgamation of several ethnic groups. The ethnic groups that constitute Kanuri language according to Bulakarima (1991), Bulakarima and Shettima (2012) are twenty different ethnic groups. The speech forms of the Kanuri ethnic groups are further classified into six major dialects. The classification of these six major dialects is based on their phonological, phonetic,

morphological and semantic differences. The six major dialects according to Bulakarima (1991), Bulakarima and Shettima (2012) are:

i- Manga

ii- Mowar   iii- Bilma

iv-   Suwurti

v- Dagəra vi-
Yerwa

The present study is based on Yerwa dialect of Kanuri which is the most widely used dialect of Kanuri and the standard Kanuri orthography (sko) is written in Yerwa dialect of Kanuri (Cyffer 1991).

Trask (1996) Defines indefinite as denoting a noun phrase or its associated determiner, which most typically expresses a nonspecific or unidentified referent. Such as the NP *a book* or *the* determiner *a* generally. It classifies the reference of the head noun, i.e. whether the referent is specific, unique, generic, definite, indefinite, and visible or previously mention. In short, determiners are one way in which language indicates the cognitive status of the noun. (Hutchison 1981: 205) According to Lyons (1999) many languages have determiner expressing something like indefiniteness or arbitrariness (like English any, some or other) which can be optionally present in a noun phrase, and others indicating specific indefinite reference (Spanish *cierto* 'a certain').

The negative hypothesis of the proposal that indefinite are modifiers in Kanuri sentence in the text. The indefinite is a common structural unit which can act as a modifier in Kanuri. Therefore, the paper examines indefinite modifier in Kanuri using the text *Səmonəm Wuro Sarusəgəne*. Indefinite modifier in Kanuri pay much attention to syntactic description but none of them stated in theirs strides discusses on indefinite modifier modifying noun phrase in written Kanuri text.

According to Hutchison (1981) the determiners *+so*, *sammaso*, *waso* and *yaye* are all inherently nonspecific and indefinite, referring to indefinite NPs, or to all inclusive clauses or group of NPs whether the numbers be definite or indefinite. Lukas (1937) notes that the end of the relative clause may be marked with a combination of the determiner and the relevant case marking (dəga for accusative case). Koelle (1854) discusses the different uses of the indefinite *ye*, *yaye,* and *so*, appears to be this, that *ye* is numeric, i.e. referring to each individual separately, *so* qualitative i.e. referring to each individual equally, and not more than one the other, and *yaye* either identical with *so* or indicating any one individual. But not the whole number.

The paper observes that indefinite modifiers that are modifying noun phrase (NP) in the text and which is types of modifiers are more frequent in modifying nouns. Therefore this paper examines how to describe indefinite in Kanuri but this work will give much emphasis to indefinite noun phrase in Kanuri written text within the purview of descriptive approach.

Cyffer (1998: 48) observes that there is a category of modifier of unspecific determination; accordingly, these usually do not occur in combination with demonstratives or the determiner e.g.

1a) am laa   *some people*

 b) tada gade   *another boy*

 c) kam woso   *each person*

 d) feroso   *girls*

Kalli Hussaini & Muhammad Hussaini Bulama

The above examples in (a, b, c and d) shows that the indefinite modifiers *laa* 'some' *gade* 'another', *woso* ;each', and *so* 'collective plural' are post modifying the head noun am 'people', tada 'boy', kam 'person' and fero 'girl' respectively and unspecific. According to Cyffer and Bulakarima (manuscript) state that, indefinite determiners belong to the grammatical category of modifiers. In Kanuri there are members of a noun phrase that belong to the category of modifiers. These determiners refers to the head of the noun phrase, which is not definite, examples:

2b) kam laa mbeji   *there is somebody*
b) aliso kasuwuro lewono   *even Ali went to market*
c) maləm woso kərazəna   *every teacher is knowledgeable*

The above example in (2a) shows that the indefinite modifier laa 'certain, some' post modifiers the head noun 'person'. In example (2b) the indefinite so 'collective plural' modifiers the noun Ali 'name' and in example (2c) above the indefinite woso 'each' modifiers the noun maləm 'teacher'.

This paper describes the syntactic aspect of indefinite modifier in Kanuri noun phrase and analysed in the text by adopting descriptive approach.

The descriptive linguistics a theoretical framework due to the fact that the model is general in nature and can adequately describe the structure of the modifier types in Kanuri. Descriptive linguistics gives a comprehensive, systematic, objective and precise account of the patterns and use of a specific language or dialect at a particular point in time. The aim of descriptive linguistic is to describe the fact of linguistics usage as they are not how they are ought to be reference to some real or imagined ideal state Crystal (1985). The study adopting Hutchison (1981) and Cyffer (1998) state that Kanuri indefinite modifiers have four different types that are used in different variants. The four types are *laa* 'some', *gade* 'another', *woso* 'each' and *so* 'collective plural'.

In the text analysed, we identified two hundred and eleven (211) instances of occurrences of four indefinite modifiers. These are indefinite modifiers *laa* 'some', *gade* 'another', *woso* 'each' and *so* 'collective plural' identified in the text *Səmonəm Wuro Sarusəgəne*. The four indefinite modifiers are presented in the text Table (1) below. The (1) shows indefinite modifiers, number of their occurrences and the percentages of their occurrences in the text.

Table 1: Indefinite determiner functioning as postmodifier found in the text

S/N	Indefinite determiner found in the text	Number of Occurrences	Percentages of Occurrences
1	*-so* collective plural	95	45.02%
2	*láá* a, a certain, some	82	38.86%
3	*Gade 'another'*	23	10.90%
4	*wosó* each, every	11	5.21%
	Total	211	100%

Table (1) above shows that out of a total of two hundred and eleven (211) instances of occurrences of different indefinite determiner,*-so* "collective plural" occurs in ninety five (95) instances with 45.02%,   *láá* "a, a certain, some" occurs in eighty two (82) instances with 38.86%, *gade* "another" occurs in twenty three (23) instances with 10.90%, and *woso* "each, every" occurs in eleven (11) instances with 5.21%. In the text analyzed.

Indefinite Modifier – *so*

The indefinite determiner -*so* is suffixed to the head noun it modifies in Kanuri. Consider the following examples below taken from the text:

3)   kúwì -*sò*   tádà   kádà   sásámbì (p7)   hen
-pl   boy   many   they delivered   the hen hatched
many chicks

4)   dábbà   -*só*   mánàzáiyà   sámmà   fánjìn (p26)
Animal   -pl   they talk   all   he hear
        he understands the language of all animals

In examples (3 and 4) above the indefinite determiner –*so* occur as a bound morpheme after the head noun and postmodify the head noun *kuwi* "hen" and *dabba* "animal" respectively has not been specified. **Indefinite Modifier - *laá***

The indefinite determiner *laá* (a, a certain, some) stand as a free morpheme after head noun in Kanuri; Consider the following examples below taken from the text:

(5) kâm   *laá*   ísə̀nà   kâmzə̀   kójìn (p15)
    Person some he came   he cut he pass
    Someone passed by

(6) tádà   *laá*   -à   férò   *laá*   -à   wádə̀   gówàtà (p28)
     Boy some - CONJ   girl some - CONJ promise take
     A boy and a girl promised to each other

In the examples (5 and 6) above the indefinite determiner *laá* is a free morpheme which occurs after the head noun to postmodify the head noun *kam* "person", *tada* "boy" and *fero* "girl" respectively.

Indefinite Modifier *gádè*

 The indefinite determiner *gade* (another) stands as a free morpheme after a head noun in Kanuri as exemplified below taken from the text:

7) kâm   *gádè*   kûrù   kádiò (p15)
     Person another and   he came
     Then another person came

8) kámù   *gádè*   tə́mmá -rò   mángìn   -bà   wónò (p28)   woman another
   never -for he look   NEG he said
     He said that will never look for another woman

The examples (7 and 8) above show that the indefinite determiner *gade* (another) occur after head noun and postmodify the head noun *kam* "person" and *kamu* "woman" respectively.

Indefinite Modifier - woso

The indefinite determiner *woso* (every, each) stands as a free morpheme after a head noun in Kanuri consider the following examples taken from the text.

9)   lárdə̀ *wôsɔ̀* - n   káfiyà   lápkàtà (p42)   country every -
in   shade   constructed   they are shades / canopies everywhere in the
country

10)   saá   *wôsɔ̀* -n   ísə̀ ná -də̀ -n ngə́wùl fíjíyà kálzə̀ léjìn
(p14)   Year   every -in came place –the –in   egg   lays   hatch
he going
    Every year he would come to the same place to lay eggs and then hatch them

Kalli Hussaini & Muhammad Hussaini Bulama

In the examples (9 and 10) above, show that the indefinite determiner *woso* (evey, each) occur after head noun to postmodify the head noun *lardə* 'country' and *saa* 'year' respectively.

Conclusion

This paper examines indefinite modifier in Kanuri noun phrase using a Kanuri written text as a source of data. The study identified four types of indefinite modifiers used in modifying noun phrase in Kanuri. These are: the indefinite laa 'a certain, some', gade 'another', woso 'each' and –so 'collective plural'. The indefinite laa 'a certain, some', gade 'another', and woso 'each' are free morphemes independently stand on their own immediately after the head nouns it modifiers while the indefinite –so 'collective plural' bound morpheme attached to the noun it modifiers. The study also identified two hundred and eleven instances of these four indefinite modifiers with their number of occurrences and percentages of their occurrences in the text.

References

Bender, M.L. (2000) "African Languages". In: Heine and Nurse (ed.) pp 43-73.

Bulakarima, S. U. (1991): *A Study in Kanuri Dialectology, phonology and Dialect Distribution In Mowar*. Unpublished PhD. Thesis, Department. of Languages and Linguistics, University of Maiduguri, Maiduguri.

Bulakarima, S.U. and Shettima, A.K. (2011) *Elements of Kanuri Grammar.* Desktop Publisher's co-operative society, Maiduguri.

Crystal, D. (1985) *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*. Basil Blackwell, UK.

Cyffer, N. (1991): *We Leant Kanuri*. Koln, Rudiger Koppe Verlag.

Cyffer, N. and Bulakarima, S.U. Manuscript Entitled Grammar of the Kanuri Language.

Cyffer, N. (1998) *A sketch of Kanuri*. Köln: Köppe Verlag. Cyffer, N.

(1979) *Səmonəm wuro Sarusəgəne*. Lagos Thomas Nelson Greenberg,

J.H (1963*): The Languages of Africa*. The Hague.

Hutchison, J.P. (1981) *The Kanuri Language. A Reference Grammar.* Madison: University of Wisconsin, U.S.A.

Koelle, S.W. (1854) *Grammar of the Borno or Kanuri Language*.   Church of Missionary Society, London.

Lewis, M. Paul (2009) Ethnologue: Languages of the World. 16 editions. Dallas. Online version: // WWW.ethnologue.com.

Lukas, J. (1937) *A Study of the Kanuri Language Grammar and Vocabulary*. Oxford University Press, London.

Lyons, C. (`1999) *Definiteness* University of Cambridge.

Trask, R. L. (1996) *A Dictionary of Grammatical Terms in Linguistic.* London: Arnold Publishers.