

*ARIDON (Nos. 2 & 3, 2022, 255–271)*

## **THEMATIC FUNCTIONS IN URHOB**

**Oghoghophia Famous Imu**

### **Abstract**

This paper examines thematic functions in the Urhobo language: using theta criteria as theoretical framework. Theta roles are concerned with agent who does what to whom? The various types of thematic functions and the manner in which they are introduced in a sentence were investigated. The basic assumption is that Urhobo language is a potential source of input for the determination of the predicate argument structure. The specific objective is to relate thematic functions to argument structure in the Urhobo language. A thorough literature was reviewed of languages whose materials were accessible at the time of this work. The method of data collection was categorised into two main sources: primary and secondary. The primary data refer to the information obtained using intuitive knowledge; the secondary source refers to documented information obtained from library, internet, and other published materials. The study shows that an agent cannot be a patient and recipient at the same time; where there is a clash in thematic functions, the most prominent one dominates the less prominent one. It is further established that functional arguments are lexical items which strictly sub-categorise phrases in their syntactic environment.

Key words: Urhobo, minimalist programme, thematic function, argument structure,  $\theta$ -criteria

### **Introduction**

#### **1. Background to the Study**

The minimalist programme is an attempt to situate linguistic theory in the broader cognitive science. Minimalism makes a case for an economical and elegant theory of syntax, which eliminates the rigours of convoluted analysis of the process of generating and interpreting linguistic structures. The theory claims that grammar is minimally complex and that it is a perfect system of optimal design.

Minimalism, according to Asher (1994), seeks to develop an account of linguistic universals that, on the one hand, will not be falsified by the actual diversity

of languages and, on the other, will be sufficiently rich and explicit to account for the rapidity and uniformity of language learning. Within the theoretical framework of minimalist programme, linguistic expressions are generated by optimally efficient derivations that must satisfy the conditions that hold on the interface levels, the only levels of linguistic representation.

Chomsky (2001) posits that the interface levels provide instruction to two types of performance system: - articulatory- perception, and conceptual – intentional. He maintains that all syntactic conditions must express properties of these levels, reflecting the interpretive requirements of languages and keeping to very restricted conceptual resources. The minimalist approach to linguistic theory is formulated and progressively developed on the theory of principles and parameters. Consequently, it avoids and redefines many terms of the earlier theories. The new terms which drive minimalist syntax include the following: Economy of derivation principle, checking principle, computational system, spell out principle and copy.

## 2. Theoretical studies

### 2.1 Theta theory

Finch (2000) states that the theta theory is concerned with assigning thematic roles to arguments of verbs. According to him, theta is the name of the Greek letter  $\theta$ , which corresponds to ‘th’ in English, and since theta begins with ‘th’ it has become standard convention to abbreviate the expression ‘thematic role’ to  $\theta$ -role. In theta theory, theme indicates one of a number of semantic roles which arguments fulfil. Clauses are seen as consisting of propositions or logical statements, which require certain types of argument in order to be acceptable sentences. When a verb is associated with an agent argument and a patient argument, according to Asher (1994), something is ultimately being said about the events in the world which this verb could be used to express. Asher (1994:1378) generalises the issues of theta theory thus:

A verb like *kill* has a *killer* and a *killed* as arguments, *hear*, a *hearer* and a *heard* and *send*, a *sender*, a *sender* and a *sendee*. There are, therefore, three relations with *send*, two with *hear* and two with *kill*. Asher goes further to consider the possibility of generalising verbs according to their predicate arguments. For instance, *sender* of *send*, with *killer* of *kill*, and *hearer* of *hear* with *believer* of *believe*, since, according to him, *believe* is a cognition verb. He continues to ask whether one could conclude that the *believer* and the *hearer* have something in common. Or similarly,

that a *killer*, a *sender* and a *dancer* have something in common. He maintains that a *killer* and a *sender* are not the same thing but that both instigate an event or action volitionally. On the part of *hearer* and *believer*, both have some sort of internal experience, one perceptual and the other cognitive. No event or action is being instigated, nor is the experience normally volitional.

Finch (2000) affirms that theta role is more concerned with ‘agency’ that does what to whom? The essential elements of the theta theory, according to him, differ somehow among linguists but the following are the commonly assumed theta theory roles: Agent experience, instrument, force, patient, theme, recipient, goal, source, locative and path in English.

Asher (1994) argues that the list enumerated above is not exhaustive in world languages. According to him, languages distinguish entities which are affected in terms of their state or condition from those which are affected in terms of locations. Based on this, Napoli (1996) identifies maleficiary, instrument, location and motive theta role in Kichaga, a Bantu language spoken in Tanzania:

Napoli (1996:419) uses the grammatical function roles and the theta function roles to analyse the sentence:

(1) John throws a ball at Susie:

John has the grammatical function of subject, and the theta role of agent; Susie has the grammatical function of indirect object and the theta role of beneficiary, a ball has the grammatical function of direct, and the theta role of theme (also called patient). In sentences like:

(2) John went crazy

(3) This key opens that door

In (2) John has the grammatical function of subject and the theta role of experiencer and in (3) the key has the grammatical function of subject and the theta role of instrument.

The analysis above follows from the fact that the theta role for all various grammatical functions (GFs) in a given sentence must be different. This is known as the theta criterion. Arguments are linked only to the GFs and it follows that each argument of a given predicate has a unique theta role; that is, we cannot have two experiencers or two instruments in one sentence (see Chomsky 1981, Napoli 1996, Riemsdijk and Williams 1986).

Napoli (1996) gives the diagnosis for the theta roles in sentences. For agents, she suggests many diagnostics for agents. First, an agent can license the occurrence of the

adverbial voluntarily. A theme, a beneficiary, an experiencer, and an instrument cannot; for example,

- (4) John ate the meal voluntarily
- (5). \*The meat burned to a crisp voluntarily
- (6). ?? John received the gift voluntarily
- (7). \*The key opened the lock voluntarily.

Thus, if a sentence has no agent, it cannot have the adverbial “voluntarily”. And if a sentence can have the adverbial “voluntarily”, the sentence has an agent.

Givon (1979) thinks that the class of agent in languages is almost exclusively human and in most cases higher vertebrates. He continues by saying that there seems to be two criteria involved in the discussion as to who is an agent and who is not, and those two are hierarchically arranged. He says that they are best reflected in the classification of verbs, especially most verbs which depict causal action which, Givon feels, are confined to humans. These humans are capable of intentional behaviour. He gives the examples of these predicate types with the following sentence:

- (8a). He left the room
- b. He danced the jig on top of the wine cask
- c. He fired all his employees
- d. She completed the assignment

He maintains that neither a four-month-old baby nor a bound adult could be the subject of these predicates, nor a machine, nor the wind nor fire, though, according to him, a dog could perhaps be the subject of (8a)

Saeed (2003) argues that verbs like ‘raise’, ‘rise’ and ‘drive’ have a particular requirement for the thematic roles. This, according to Saeed (2003), “is the part of the lexical information stored for verbs”. He points out that not every nominal in a sentence is an argument of a verb specified in the verbal grids in the lexicon. He believes that one can employ grammatical tests to identify arguments. For example, to distinguish between the role played by the preposition phrase in the bathroom below:

- (10).a. [s Roland [VP put [NP the book] [pp in the bathroom]]]
- b. [s Roland [VP read [NP the book]] [in the bathroom]].

Saeed (2003) maintains that the square brackets in (10) (a-b) reflect the fact that while ‘in the bathroom’ is an argument of the verb ‘put’ explaining why it cannot be omitted, it is not an argument of the verb ‘read’ on the other hand which can form a sentence without it; e.g.

- (11). Roland read the book

In grammatical terms, while the phrase in the bathroom is an argument in (10a), it is an adjunct in (10b).

The value of incorporating thematic roles into a model of syntax is that it allows us to give a more principled account of the way in which linguistic items behave than relying simply on formal grammatical criteria (Riemsdijk and Williams 1986).

## 2.2 Empirical Study

Aziza (2010) posits that verbs in Urhobo can be classified into transitive and intransitive verbs. The transitive verbs obligatorily take objects while the intransitive verbs do not take an object, and that transitive verbs may be used intransitively; when that happens, the construction takes an –rv suffix, with varying realisations, depending on the ATR requirements and some morphophonemic rules of the language.

Ndiribe (2008) examines maleficiary as theta role. That maleficiary is a function played by the entity which suffers indirectly from an action which one entity performs on another of which the maleficiary has an interest.

Nneji (2013) examines the interface between morphology and syntax in forming compound verbs in Igbo; the study adopts transformational generative grammar as its framework. The study shows that the composite verbs of compounds co-occur with the extensional suffixes ‘o’ and ‘a’ when in isolation and that to form infinitives from the compounds, the suffix ‘i’ is added to the compound.

Ajiboye (2014) examines the description of some of the morphological factors involved in compounding in Urhobo. It was observed that Urhobo has both headed and headless compounds. Though the heads of Urhobo compounds are left branching, there are instances where the heads are right branching. Pronominal affixes were found to head some Urhobo compounds. Ajiboyi’s (2014) study examines the description of some of the morphological factors involved in compounding in Urhobo. The present study examines thematic functions in Urhobo.

Aziza & Utulu (2018) do comparative study of word formation process in Èwùlù and Ùrhòbò and attempt to explore the various procedures by which both languages adopt in deriving compounds. Their study adopts descriptive approach. The work revealed that Èwùlù and Ùrhòbò, though are two different Nigerian languages, yet exploit nearly the same morphological patterns of compounding to create new words. The present study examines thematic functions in Urhobo.

### 2.3 Theoretical Framework

A theta criterion is adopted as a theoretical framework in this research work. Theta roles are more concerned with agency, who does what to whom?

### 2.4 Summary of literature review

This segment of the research reviews scholarly works in the area of study. The above discussion enunciates and collates the main thematic relations common in literature. A handy observation is that the  $\emptyset$  –role /function has no syntactic reflexes. In other words, each  $\emptyset$  role is not associated with a particular syntactic slot in a linguistic configuration. These features bring to the fore the salient differences between case grammar and thematic relations. Essentially,  $\emptyset$ -relations make more specific claims. In other words, they define the principle or general claim of case grammar. The set of  $\emptyset$  roles in  $\emptyset$ -relations are tied to specific  $\emptyset$ -functions. Objectively, the review shows that much has been done on thematic relation in some languages; adequate attention has not been paid to works on thematic relations in Urhobo; hence the need for this research.

## 3. Thematic roles/functions in Urhobo

Scholars employ thematic roles to describe aspects of the interface between syntax and semantics, in particular, to characterise the link between the semantic classification of thematic roles, its participants, inherent in a verb's meaning and the grammatical relations, thematic role supports. The analysis in this work will be based on the syntactic structure of the Urhobo language and its semantic imports. This is because for a sentence to be grammatical, it must be syntactically well-formed. But the syntactic wellformedness is not always a guarantee for semantic wellformedness.

Various scholars – Chomsky (1981) Remsdijk & Williams (1986), Napoli (1996), Anyanwu (2007), Ndiribe (2008) and Mbah (2006, 2012) believe that  $\Theta$ -roles have to do with thematic functions. It is believed by these scholars that the verb in a sentence assigns the thematic roles to the noun phrases in the constructions. In the thematic roles, the functions like: agent, patient, recipient, experience, location, beneficiary or goal, instrument, motive etc. are generally employed by scholars to define the relationship of the verb to the individual components of the sentence. The above theta roles are semantic classifications.

Ogwueleka (1987) in Mbah (2012) define the thematic relation as a system in the semantic representation of a sentence in which the verb assigns theta roles to each of the arguments it relates to. The verbs play fundamental roles in assigning case to arguments in the sentence structure. It is expedient here to observe that many scholars have defined thematic relation based on semantic criteria. (See Gruder 1987, Remsdijk 1986, Jackendoff 1972, Katz 1972, Chomsky 1981, Remsdijk & Williams 1987, Ndiribe 2008 and Mbah 2012).

On the other hand, Theta-grid is the lexical specification of the thematic properties predicate. Originally, (cf. Williams 1981b) a theta-grid is conceived of as an unordered list of theta roles with only an indication of their status as being external (through underlining) or internal roles. More recently (cf. Grimshaw 1990), the theta-grid of a predicate is equated with its' argument, which not only specifies a hierarchy among the theta-roles (through bracketing), but also their status as being a direct or indirect role, optional or obligatory, etc.

The following are the thematic roles or functions identified in the Urhobo language in the course of this research: agent, patient, experiencer, benefactive, instrument, location, goal, maleficiary, motive, and force. They are investigated below:

### 3.1 Agent

An agent is the perceived external instigator, initiator, controller of an action, event or state. Napoli (1996) asserts that one of the qualities of an agent is that it has the power to control his actions. e.g in Urhobo

(12)a. *Òghèné Ámákpòr ná vè Odjúvwú*

God create/mould earth pst the and heaven

God created heaven and the earth

(b) *Ókè hwé Ógodè ná*

name kill/break pst sheep the

Ókè killed the sheep

In the sentence above, *Òghèné* and *Ókè* have the theta role of the agent whereas *Akpòr vè Odjúvwú* and *Ógodè* have the role of the patient. This is because the action of the agent *Òghèné* and *Ókè*, affects the patient- *Ákpòr vè Odjúvwú* and *Ógodè*. In other words, *Òghèné* and *Ókè* can control his activity on *Ákpòr vè odjúvwú* and *Ógodè* respectively by deciding not to create and kill it respectively

but *Ákpòr vè Odjúvwu* and *Ógodè* cannot resist to be created or kill. *Óghèné* and *Ókè*'s action on *Akpòr vè Odjúvwú* and *Ógodè* is voluntary.

(c). *Òdáfé hwérhé úwévwi ná*  
name sweep pst house the

*òdáfé* swept the house

(d) *Ónimé chérémú ná*  
Mother my cook pst food the  
Mother cooked the food

In the sentences (c-d) above, *Ónimé* and *òdáfé* are the agents. The actions being described are under the volitions of agents. They have control over their activities. In other words, *Ónimé* and *òdáfé* can decide not to sweep the house, cook food.

### 3.2 Patient

It is the argument that is salient which bears the action performed by another argument; that is, a patient is the entity that undergoes the effect of an action. Lyons (1968) defines patient as the direct object of the transitive verb. Patient theta role is exemplified in the following.

(13).a *òsò ná muè òhò mè*  
Hawk the catch pst fowl me  
The hawk carried my fowl

(b) *Èránkò ná rié émúmè*  
Dog the eat food me  
The dog ate my food

(c) *Òkòró hwè òsètè mè*  
name kill/break pst plate me  
Òkòró broke my plate

In sentence (13a-b) above, *òhò* and *émú*, have the theta role of the patient. It receives the effect of the action of *òsò*, *Èránkò* and *Òkòró* respectively. *òsò*, *Èránkò* and *Òkòró* on their own have the theta role of force, while the possessive *mè* has the theta role of experience, while in sentence (c) *òsètè* has the theta role of patient while *Òkòró* has the theta role of agent.

### 3.3 Experiencer

Experiencer is the entity that undergoes some psychological state. Comrie (1989) asserts that the experiencer presupposes it to be sentient; that is, capable of receiving sensory experiences and this is crucial in distinguishing experience from patient. From the above statement, we can deduce experiencer to be an attribute of higher animates.

(14) (a) Ókè dúvwè ómámódè

Name pierce/stab pst name (good name)

Ókè stabbed ómámódè

(b) Ághòghò phièn òkòrò phièyò

(name) deceive pst name deceive pst

Ághòghò deceived òkòrò

(c) Óghòghò dá ámèrè ónirèyè

Name drink pst water mother his

Óghòghò drank his mother water

In sentences (14a-c) above, *ómámódè*, *òkòrò* and *ónirèyè* are the objects or entities experienced by the experiencer. The experiencers in the sentences have the ability not to engage in any of the psychological effects we see in the sentences. On the other hand, *Ókè*, *Ághòghò* and *Óghòghò* may decide not to stab (*dúvwè*), deceived (*phièn*), *dá áme* (drink water) respectively. Also, in sentence (d) below is an exception.

(d) ámè kù úwèvwí mè

water flood pst house me

My house is flooded

(e) úyòvwí mè kpèrú vwè

Head me aching me

My head is aching me

In (d) sentence, the possessive *úwèvwí mè* (my house) is the experiencer of the whole incidence of the flood outbreak in my house. In sentence (e), *úyòvwí mè* undergo psychological state. The experiencer does not possess the ability to determine the activities of the flood nor the initiator of the action, hence, experiencer is referred as sentient.

### 3.4 Benefactive

This is the entity benefiting from the activity of the verb

(15a) Óni mè hwò sá isikúrí mè

Mother my pay pst debt school me

My mother paid my school fees.

(b) Óni mè jè/gháre é mú vwòkè Ókè

Mother my pst serve food give name

My mother served Oke food

(c) Óni mè dè èbé kè mè

Mother my buy pst book for me

My mother bought books for me

(d) òkòrò siá mè kè *oni* rọyè

Name draw water give pst mother of his

òkòrò drew water for his mother

In the sentences 15a-b above, *isikúrí mè* (my school), and *Ókè* are the benefactives. Here they perform the theta role function of benefactive. In sentence (a) *isikúrí mè* benefited from *Óni mè* while in (b) *Ókè* benefited from *Óni mè*. *Óni mè* and *Ókè* are benefactors in the sentences. In sentences (c-d), the italicised entities *kè mè* (*for me*) and *oni rọyè* (his mother) benefited from the actions expressed in the verbs, and performed by the benefactors.

### 3.5 Instrument

This is the entity used as a means by which an action is carried out or performed. Comrie (1989) defines instrument as a means used by the agent to carry out the action.

(16a). ọ vwò úshúrhé ná vwò béré úrhè ná

He /she use axe the use split wood the

He /she used the axe to split the wood

(b). ọ vwò òdá ná vwò shè úrhè ná

He use cutlass the use wood the

He used the cutlass to cut the wood

(c.) ọ vwò úkújèrè ná vwo riè è mú ná

He/she use spoon that use eat food the

He/she used the spoon to eat the food

Sentences (16a-c) are all similar in the sense that all use the verb *vwò* (to use) to introduce the theta roles of instruments in the sentences. The underlined words - *úshúré*, *òdá* and *úkújèrè* are instruments in the sentences. In all the sentences, there are inherent preposition ‘with’ embedded in the verb ‘*vwò*’ in the Urhobo language.

Therefore, the sentences above could be translated as follows:

- (d) He split the wood with the axe
- (e) He cut the wood with the cutlass
- (f) He ate with the spoon

### 3.6 Locative

The locative is a place in which something or an entity is situated. Ndiribe (2008), identifies path, source and goal as elaborations of different aspects of locatives.

(17a) *imidáká ná èvú rẹ̀ òzè ná*

Cassava the is inside basin the

The cassava is inside the basin

(b) *ònògbò ná ènú rẹ̀ imèdjẹ̀ ná*

Cat thae is up table the

The cat is on top of the table

(c) *òsẹ̀ mè múdia úgbènú úrhie ná*

father my stand pst hill river the

My father stood at the bank of the river

(d) *òmòni mè diá Ekó*

Sister my stay pst Lagos

My sister lived in Lagos

In the sentences above, the italicised phrases show the location of the noun; *imidáká*, *ònògbò*, *òsẹ̀ mè*. The locatives are generally introduced by a preposition. The locative also can be seen as the source when the object is stationary.

### 3.7. Goal

Goal is the intended destination of a theme from the source in a motion, function; whether the intention is realised or not is immaterial. (Ndiribe, 2008). It is similar to recipient, except that it is inanimate. It is the object of effort or ambition.

(18a) *Mi kpẹ̀ éki rẹ̀ Onishá*

I go market of name

I am going to Onisha market

(b) Óni mè gwá imoto kpè Abuja

My mother drive pst motor go name

My mother drove to Abuja

(c) Oghènró kpè ódjúwú

name go Heaven

òghènró went to heaven

In sentence (11a) *Onishá*, is the goal, it is the termination point intended to be achieved. In sentences, (b-c) *Abuja* and *ódjújú* are the goal, they are the focus points of the agents in the sentences, that is, their destination. The common denominator for theta role is that there must be an intention to achieve something and an aspiration that is based on continual struggle. The mere mention of the sentence is not what makes it a goal but the marked desire that is backed up with equal craving to achieve a result. Whether this result is achieved at the end is immaterial.

### 3.8 Maleficiary

This is the sufferer of an action performed by the agent. The differences between maleficiary and patient is that the former must be a human, while the latter may or may not be a human; it should be noted that the action of the agent must be negative to the recipient.

(19a) èguòguò rè ámwá mè

house insect eat cloth me

House insect ate my cloth

(b) áyè nà riè èmù rè òmò nà

Woman the eat pst food child the

The woman ate the food meant for the child

(c) òsè mè vièviè rè òni mè

Father my suck pst breast of mother

My father sucked the breast of my mother

(d) éránkò nà dà àmè rè Okè

Dog that drink pst water name

The dog drank Okè's water

In the sentences above, *ámwá mè*, *òmò nà*, *òni mè*, *àmè Okè* are understood to be the ones to whose detriment the destruction of cloths, eating, sucking of breast, and drinking of water, are the sufferer of the action performed by the agents. In (19a) the pronoun *mè* has his cloth damaged as a result of the activities of the *èguòguò* which destroyed the cloth. In (b) the noun phrase, *òmò nà* has no food to eat as a result of the activity of the *áyè nà* who ate the food meant for the child while, in (c) the activity of *òsè mè* on my mother's breast which is meant for her child, and, (d) the action of drinking water, are all activities performed by the agents in the various sentences respectively. In all these, the actions of the agents in the sentences above are all negative to the recipients. Therefore, *mè*, *òmò nà*, *òni mè* and *Okè* play the maleficiaries in the sentences.

### 3.9 Motive

The motive shows why an action takes place. In other words, motive gives the reasons why certain things occurred. Motive is the thing that causes somebody to act. Ndiribe (2008) sees it as a propelling factor in any action.

(20a) Ó kpè isikùrú òvwò diá òdáfè

He/she go school to become rich.

He went to school to become a wealthy man

(b) O sè kpè isikùrú fikiri dié òsè ròyè ògbéré

He call go school because father his poor

He could not go to school because his father is a poor man

(c) Efè ògbà òtà éguónò fikiri dié òsè ròyè òbò

Name strong man talk love because father his native doctor

Efè is a troublemaker because his father is a native doctor

In sentence (20a-b), the motive behind going to school is not being educated but to become a wealthy person. In (b) the motive of not going to school is not that he has no zeal for school, rather, it is because of poor background. In (c) the motive behind causing trouble/confusion is because of the black power possessed by his father. It should be noted that the difference between motive and reason is very slim, but motive is the same with reason in the sense that motive instigated the action and not the reason for the action. Reason is the outward manifestation of

motive. In other words, motive is the deep structure while reason is the surface structure. Reason is always adduced from the motive set previously.

### 3.10 Force

Force is a self-imposed causal participant which, unlike an instrument, cannot be manipulated

(21a) *òdjú nà mué éránkò mè*

Wind that carry pst dog me

The wind carried my dog

(b) *òkèré nà mué àmwà mè*

Flood the carry pst cloths me

The flood carried my cloths

(c) *ágbrárhá nà hwè òdibò nà*

thunder the kill pst banana the

The thunder killed the banana

In the above sentences, *òdjú*, *òkèré* and *ágbrárhá* possess the theta roles of the force. Therefore, *éránkò mè*, *àmwà mè* and *òdibò nà* are direct objects of theta function of force.

### 4.1 Summary of findings

Scholars employ thematic roles to describe aspects of the interface between syntax and semantics; in particular, to characterise the link between the semantic classification of thematic roles, its participants, inherent in a verb's meaning and the grammatical relations thematic role supports. It ourfinding that, in Urhobo language, just like in other languages, verbs differ in the numbers of arguments a verb can take. In Urhobo language, a verb can take three-place, two-place, and one-place arguments for the sentence to be grammatically and syntactically well formed. The findings further reveal that the Urhobolanguage aligns with the principles of universal grammar (UG), a grammar that highlights the structural similarities of languages in terms of argument structures and orderliness.

In the Urhobo language, the verb brings out the actions in a given sentence(s). For instance, the verb 'hwe' (kill) in Urhobo suggests that an entity loses life as a result of the activities of another entity; the verb is a link in any argument structure; it gives the meanings of the sentences under consideration. In the Urhobo Language, the relationship between the verb and its arguments is a mutual one. Moreover,

verbs assign argument to the nouns and the complements. Therefore, verb argument structure operates effectively in the traditional classification and theta function in the Urhobo Language.

## 4.2 Conclusion

This work investigates the theta functions in Urhobo using the principles of theta criteria. The principle states that each thematic role has a particular function. An agent for example cannot be a patient and recipient at the same time. Where there is a clash in thematic functions, the most prominent one dominates the less prominent one. This is to say that where a sentence contains what should be judged as agent and experiencer, the experiencer will prevail since it has more prominence in the sentence over the other (agent), that is, the entity that undergoes some psychological state.

## References

- Ajiboye, M. (2014). Compounding in Urhobo. *Journal of West African Languages* *XLI.1*. Retrieved on 07 /09/2018
- Anyanwu, O. N. (2007). *The syntax of Igbo causatives: A minimalist account*. Port Harcourt: LAN in association with M & J. Grad Orbit communication.
- Aziza, R. O. (2010). Urhobo syntax. In YusufQre (Ed.), *Basic linguistics for Nigeria languages*.(pp. 305 326). Port Harcourt: LAN.
- Aziza, R. O. &Utulu, D. C. (2018).Compounding in Urhobo and Ewulu. *International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Studies Volume 5, Issue 3, Pp 24-30*
- Asher R. E. (1974). *The encyclopedia of language and linguistic*. London: Pergamon Press.
- Chomsky, N (1981). *Lectures note government and binding*. Dordrecht: Foris.
- Chomsky, N (2001). “Derivation by phase”. In MichealKentowicz (Ed), Ken Hale; *A life in language*. Oxford: MIT press.

- Comrie, B. (1989). *Language universal and linguistic typology*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Finch, G.(200). *Linguistic terms and concepts*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Grimshaw, J. (1990). *Argument structure*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Grivon, T. (1979). *On understanding grammar*. New YoPk: Academic Press.
- Grubber, J. S. (1995). Thematic configurationality and serial verb constructions. In E.N Emananjo, & O. Ndimele, (Eds.), *Issues in African languages and linguistics: Essay in honour of Kay Williamson* (Pp.216 – 228). Aba: National Institute for Languages.
- Jackendoff, R. (1972). *Semantic interpretation in generative grammar*. Cambridge: MIT press.
- Katz, J. J. (1972). *Semantic theory*. New York: Haper and Row.
- Lyons, J. (196). *Introduction to theoretical linguistics*. London: Cambridge University
- Mbah, B. M. (2006). *GB syntax: theory and application to Igbo*. Enugu: Association of Nigerian Authors.
- Mbah, B. M. (2012). *GB syntax: a minimalist theory and application to Igbo*. Enugu: Catholic Institution for development justice and peace press.
- Napoli, D.J. (1996). *Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ndiribe, M. O. (2008). *Argument structure of the Igbo verbs: Minimalist approach*. M. A thesis, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
- Nneji, O. M. (2013). A morphosyntactic analysis of compound verbs in Akpugo variety of Igbo. M. A. dissertation, Department of Linguistics, Igbo and other Nigerian languages, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
- Ogwueleka, O.S. (1987). *Thematic role and semantic processes in Igbo*. Doctorial dissertation. University of Ife. ??????
- Riemsdijk, H.V. & William, E.(1986). *Introduction to the theory of grammar*. London: MIT Press.
- Saeed, J. (2003). *Semantics*. Malden M. A.: Blackwell Publishers.

Williams, E. (1981). Argument structure and morphology. *Linguistics review*:  
*pp.81-114*