The use of adverbs in Ngor-okpala dialect of Igbo

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Abstract - Adverbs play a crucial role in language by providing additional information about various elements of a sentence such as verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, prepositional phrases, subordinate clauses, and even complete sentences. Very little attention has been given to usage-based approach to parts of speech, particularly the use of adverbs in different dialects, this study investigates the use of adverbs in Ngor-okpala dialect of Igbo. Adverbs in Igbo language is known as *Nkwuwa* or *Enyemaka Ngwaa,* Adverbs in the dialect are used to answer questions such as "Olee ?- where, Olee nke- which, Olee otu- how, Olee onye-who, Olee mgbe-when, Olee ihe-what, etc. It aims to understand their role, their varied usage, the implications they hold for linguistic expression and impact in the dialect. The study adopts a descriptive approach, identifying and analyzing adverbs and their usage in the Ngor-Okpala dialect, to reveal patterns of usage, syntactic structures, and semantic implications. This work adopts the Universal grammar theory. The study reveals that the use of various adverbs in the Ngor-okpala dialect help to convey details about how, when, where, how often, or to what extent an action occurs or a quality is expressed in the dialect, intensifying the meaning of the words they modify, making them a significant component of linguistic expression in Ngor-okpala dialect. The study concludes that adverb is an essential component of the dialect's linguistic expression, providing various details about actions, qualities, and relationships within sentences. An understanding of this is crucial for effective communication in the dialect where precision and clarity are paramount.

Keywords: adverbs; dialects; igbo; language; ngor-okpala

I. Introduction

Language users or learners use adverbs in considerable numbers and functions without understanding the deeper level implications and nuances. The use of adverbs in any language shows the qualified or quantified relationship with an action denoted by a verb or its equivalent (Gnanaseelan, 2016). Adverbs are a fundamental component of language, serving as versatile modifiers that enrich and refine the meaning of verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs. Their presence in speech and writing allows for the nuanced expression of time, manner, place, frequency, degree, and more. As such, adverbs play a pivotal role in shaping the texture and depth of

communication, offering a myriad of possibilities for conveying subtleties and nuances in language.

Makinde and Aniekwe (2022) observed that all human languages have ways of expressing adverbs and adverbial notions. Further noting that many studies have focused on a wide range of areas in the linguistics field with various scholars focusing on comparative analysis of different dialects of Igbo. However, this study notes a dearth of research focused on adverb usage within the varieties of the Igbo language. While numerous studies have explored broader linguistic phenomena and comparative analyses of different Igbo dialects, there remains a conspicuous lack of detailed investigations into the specific roles, forms, and functions of adverbs across these dialectical variations. This gap underscores the necessity for targeted research effort aimed at investigating the use of adverb usage in Ngor-okpala dialect, by exploring the patterns of adverbial deployment unique to Ngor-okpala dialect.

This dialect-specific focus offers a new insight into how adverbs are employed within a distinct regional variation of the Igbo language, shedding light on both universal principles of adverbial expression and dialectical particularities. The Ngor-okpala dialect serves as a microcosm through which other dialects understanding of adverbial usage can be examined and refined.

Payne, (2024) defines an adverb describes or modifies verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. It provides information about the manner in which things are done, as well as when, where, and why they are done. Examples of adverbs include quickly, extremely, fiercely, and yesterday. The boy ran **quickly** through the rainstorm. That was a **fiercely** competitive game yesterday. Ugorji, (2020) define adverb as single lexical items that could modify a verb, an adjective, or an adverb in a construction. The adverb has also been referred to as a grammatical adjunct of a verb which most typically expresses such semantic notions as: time, manner, place, instrument or circumstance. Adverbs are words always joining with verbs in order to modify them. They try to define the action in some way. In addition, their role is extended to 'express degree and limit adjectives or other adverbs (Nuhiu, 2014). According to Maienborn and Schaefer (2010), an adverb refers to a specific syntactic function within a sentence and therefore contrasts with other syntactic functions, such as subject, objects and predicate.

In Kirkpatrick's definition (2010) he made a distinction between an adverb from an adverbial by declaring that "an adverb is usually a single word and that when a group of words perform the same functions as an adverb, it is known as an adverbial phrase or adverbial.

This work adopts the Universal grammar theory. Postulated in the 1940s when it became a specific object of modern linguistic research, particularly gaining prominence with Noam Chomsky's work in generative grammar. It proposes that humans possess innate faculties related to the acquisition of language. It is based on the idea that certain aspects of syntactic structure are universal. Universal grammar consists of a set of atomic grammatical categories and relations that are the building blocks of the particular grammars of all human languages, over which syntactic structures and constraints on those structures are defined (Payne, 2024).

The theory of universal grammar posits that all languages, despite their surface differences, adhere to underlying syntactic structures and grammatical categories. These universal principles include basic elements like adverbs, nouns, verbs, and syntactic rules governing how these elements are combined to form meaningful expressions. For instance, the subject-verb-object order found in many languages is considered a reflection of universal principles rather than arbitrary variation.

Universal grammar provides an interesting perspective to understanding the use of adverbs in Ngor-okpala dialect. Adverbs, which modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs, vary widely across languages and dialects in terms of their form and placement. However, despite this variation, languages typically adhere to universal principles regarding the function and role of adverbs within sentences. For example, while English allows adverbs to modify verbs in various positions ("She quickly ran" vs. "She ran quickly"), Ngor-okpala dialect have different rule or preferences regarding adverb placement in sentence construction, as will be shown in the analysis of adverbs usage. This reflect both universal grammatical principles and the dialect's linguistic

norms. While their syntactic positions may differ between languages and dialects, adverbs use in Ngor-okpala still conform to underlying grammatical principles encoded in universal grammar.

Research on adverbs across different languages has provided valuable insights into their syntactic structures and semantic functions. Makinde and Aniekwe (2022) explored adverbs in the Obeledu dialect and Standard Igbo, highlighting how they modify verbs and contribute to the clarity and depth of expression in these varieties. Their contrastive analysis revealed differences in adverb usage, particularly how dialectal variations influence sentence construction and meaning. This study is particularly relevant to understanding the role of adverbs in indigenous languages and dialects, underscoring their importance in enriching linguistic diversity.

In the realm of sentiment analysis, adverbs have been shown to play a significant role in shaping sentiment interpretation. Zafar et al (2017) examined the impact of adverbs in computational models using Hadoop, finding that adverbs are crucial in determining the emotional tone of a text. Similarly, Benamara et al (2007) highlighted that combining adverbs with adjectives results in more accurate sentiment predictions. Haider et al. (2021) further reinforced this by demonstrating that adverbs influence sentiment classification in short-text formats, such as Twitter product reviews. These studies demonstrate the growing importance of adverbs in computational linguistics and natural language processing (NLP) tasks.

From a stylistic and discourse perspective, Lukin et al (2023) and Carretero et al (2017) investigated the role of adverbs in authorship attribution and evidentiality. Lukin et al (2023) focused on how adverbs and adjectives serve as markers in stylometric analysis, providing insights into authors' writing styles. Meanwhile, Carretero et al (2017) conducted a contrastive analysis of adverbs in English and Spanish, focusing on their use in newspaper discourse to convey certainty and source information. These studies illustrate the versatile nature of adverbs in both digital humanities and spoken or written communication.

Sholikha & Indriani (2021) conducted a study on the analysis of adverbs of time in Lindsey Fairleigh's novel *After the Ending*. Their research primarily explores how adverbs of time are used in the novel, contributing to the overall understanding of time representation in literary texts. Auni and Manan (2022) presented a contrastive analysis of English and Indonesian adverbs, focusing on identifying the structural and functional differences between the two languages. This analysis highlights the nuances in adverb usage between English and Indonesian, offering insights into translation studies and language learning. Wedhowerti (2021) examined the adverb *well* through contrastive and contextual analyses, emphasizing its various meanings and functions across different contexts.

Indhiarti and Chaerunnisa (2020) investigated the collocation patterns of degree adverbs like *very*, *really*, *quite*, and *pretty* in a corpus-driven study, revealing how these adverbs modify meaning in English language use. In another study, Auni & Manan (2022) again explored the contrastive analysis of English and Indonesian adverbs, further discussing the implications of their findings for linguistic research. Huda (2022) explored the realization of *-ly* adverbs in English sentences, providing a detailed syntactic analysis of their placement and function.

Subrahmanian and Reforgiato (2008) analysed adjective-verb-adverb combinations for sentiment analysis, focusing on how these word categories influence sentiment in computational systems. Lukin et al (2023) looked at adjectives and adverbs as parameters in stylometric analysis, discussing their relevance in author identification and digital humanities. Lonzi and Luzzatti (1993) focused on adverb distribution in agrammatic patients, exploring how adverbs are represented in the minds of those with language impairments. Finally, Sihite et al (2023) performed a contrastive analysis of adverb clauses in Indonesian and English, comparing their structure in explanation texts from both languages, offering implications for bilingual education and translation.

Finally, Tochi (2021) and Pérez-Paredes and Bueno-Alastuey (2019) explored adverb usage in translation and learner language contexts. Tochi examined challenges in translating adverbs from Albanian to English, noting the difficulties in maintaining syntactic and semantic alignment. Pérez-Paredes and Bueno-Alastuey conducted a corpus-driven study on certainty

adverbs in native and learner English, revealing that learners often struggle with appropriately using adverbs like "obviously" and "really." Together, these studies highlight how adverbs not only influence meaning but also pose unique challenges in both language learning and translation.

Somawati et al. (2024) examine the morphological transformation of numerical phrases into verbs in the Javanese language, providing insight into an intricate aspect of Javanese linguistics. The authors explore how numerical phrases such as "telung dina" (three days), "pitung dina" (seven days), and "patang puluh dina" (forty days) undergo morphological processes that convert them into verb forms by adding the prefix "N-."

Their analysis uncovers the syntactic and semantic implications of these transformations, particularly how they affect the meaning and function of the original numerical phrase when used in verbal contexts. By dissecting these morphological shifts, the authors highlight how such transformations convey action or process based on temporal concepts in Javanese.

Using a qualitative method, Somawati et al. (2024) draw on extensive examples and linguistic data to provide evidence for these transformations, shedding light on the broader linguistic phenomena within Javanese morphology. The study's findings offer valuable contributions to Javanese linguistic scholarship, particularly in understanding verb formation through morphology, and demonstrate how language structure can reflect cultural and cognitive patterns related to time and action.

2. Method
2.1 Document Study Approach
For this research, a document study approach was employed to gather data on adverbs in the Ngor-Okpala dialect of the Igbo language. Document study refers to a systematic approach to collecting and reviewing existing written, oral, or recorded materials relevant to the research topic. In the context of this study, primary data sources include:

Written Texts and Literary Works in Ngor-Okpala Dialect: These include traditional literature, oral narratives transcribed into written form, folk stories, religious texts, and other forms of written communication that are available in the Ngor-Okpala dialect. Such texts provide examples of real-life usage of adverbs within various sentence structures.

Recorded Conversations and Interviews: To complement written texts, this study also considers the analysis of spoken discourse, including recorded conversations of native speakers of the Ngor-Okpala dialect. These recordings could include naturally occurring dialogues, radio broadcasts, and interviews conducted with speakers of the dialect. Transcriptions of these spoken data serve as a basis for identifying the use of adverbs and understanding their role in spoken language contexts.

Historical Documents and Linguistic Records: In addition, historical documents that detail the linguistic structure of the Igbo language or the Ngor-Okpala dialect were reviewed. These may include linguistic studies, dictionaries, and grammar guides focused on the Igbo language and its dialects. These sources offer insights into the syntactic rules and cultural context that influence the use of adverbs in the dialect.

Other Supplementary Sources: These may include language textbooks on Igbo, academic articles on adverbs in Igbo dialects, and language learning resources. Such supplementary materials help provide a more comprehensive understanding of adverbial use within the Ngor-Okpala dialect, especially in terms of their syntactic and semantic functions.

2.2 Descriptive and Linguistic Analysis
The analysis technique in this study adopts a descriptive linguistic approach, which involves the identification, classification, and syntactic analysis of adverbs used in the Ngor-Okpala dialect. This approach focuses on a detailed examination of how adverbs function within the dialect, with an emphasis on both their syntactic roles and their semantic implications. The analysis is structured as follows:

Identification of Adverbs in Texts: The first step involves combing through the selected texts and recorded dialogues to identify adverbs. In the Ngor-Okpala dialect, adverbs serve as modifiers to verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs. They provide details about actions, qualities, and

the relationships within sentences. For each identified adverb, its context within the sentence is noted, as well as the specific element it modifies.

Categorization of Adverbs: The identified adverbs are categorized based on their types and functions. For instance, adverbs are classified into categories such as adverbs of time (e.g., when?), place (e.g., where?), manner (e.g., how?), degree (e.g., to what extent?), and frequency (e.g., how often?). This step helps in recognizing patterns in the usage of adverbs across different sentence structures.

Syntactic Structure Analysis: Next, the study analyzes the syntactic structure of sentences containing adverbs. This includes understanding the position of adverbs within a sentence (e.g., whether they appear before or after the verb) and how their placement affects the overall meaning of the sentence. The analysis will consider how adverbs interact with other sentence elements, such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives, to modify meaning and convey additional information.

Semantic Implications: The study also looks at the semantic role that adverbs play in the Ngor-Okpala dialect. This involves understanding how adverbs intensify or clarify the meaning of words they modify. The study particularly focuses on how adverbs contribute to the precision and clarity of communication in the dialect, which is vital for effective linguistic expression.

Patterns of Usage: Finally, the study seeks to uncover patterns of usage that are unique to the Ngor-Okpala dialect. This may involve identifying commonly used adverbs, frequent sentence structures in which adverbs appear, and any culturally specific uses of adverbs that may not be present in other Igbo dialects.

By adopting a document study approach combined with a descriptive linguistic analysis, this research provides a detailed understanding of the role of adverbs in the Ngor-Okpala dialect, highlighting their syntactic structures, varied usage, and semantic implications for effective communication.

3. Results and Discussion
3.1 Empirical Studies
The use of adverbs has been a subject of debate among linguists and language enthusiasts. While some argue for a judicious application of adverbs to avoid verbosity and maintain conciseness, others advocate for the rich descriptive potential that adverbs offer. It is essential to recognize that the artful use of adverbs can elevate the quality of expression, infusing language with vividness and specificity. However, overreliance on adverbs can lead to redundancy and dilution of impact, underscoring the need for balanced and discerning usage.

Ikegwuonu (2019) noted that the Igbo language does not have clear overt morphological marker for expressing manner adverbial notions, yet the expression of manner adverbial notion is attested in the language in various ways. Igbo language makes extensive use of lexical words, nouns, reduplication, idiophones, phrases, clauses and suffixes in expressing manner adverbial notions. Ikegwuonu's work contributes to broader discussion concerning the use of adverbs in language by illustrating how a non-Western language like Igbo and the Ngor-okpala dialect employs different linguistic strategies to express adverbs, by focusing on the functional aspects of adverbs. Adverbs are an essential part of the Igbo language and by extension the various dialects, as they provide additional information about verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. They help us understand the manner, time, place, frequency, and degree of an action or quality. By learning how to use adverbs in Igbo or various dialect in Igbo, speakers or users of the dialect will be able to communicate more effectively and express ideas with greater precision (Polyglot, 2024).

Effective adverb usage in Ngor-okpala dialect means that speakers can articulate ideas with specificity and clarity, tailoring their messages to suit varying contexts and purposes. Whether discussing actions, qualities, or circumstances, the strategic deployment of adverbs allows for precise delineation of how, when, where, or to what extent events or states occur. Such precision not only enriches the communicative exchange but also enhances mutual understanding and fluency within Ngor-okpala linguistic community.

Gnanaseelan, (2016) stated that categorizing adverbs based on their semantic and syntactic roles enhances language clarity and efficiency. Adverbs, as linguistic modifiers, play a

crucial role in specifying how, when, where, and to what extent actions or qualities occur. Effective classification of adverbs into meaning-based and sentence-based categories helps in systematically understanding their functions within sentences. Li and Weirich (2022) observes that adverbs go beyond providing more information but are also influenced by uninterpreted events. This implies that adverbs also explain unspecified occurrences, adding layers of clarity to the function of a construction.

3.2 Summary of literature

It is apparent from the definition of concept that adverbs are pivotal in expressions as it amplifies expressive range with intensified meanings. The universal grammar theory elaborates the discourse, and the empirical review drawing from scholars reveal that adverbs are an essential part of the Ngor-okpala dialect, that help us understand the manner, time, place, frequency, and degree of an action or quality.

3.2.1 The use of Adverbs in Ngor-okpala

Ngor-okpala is a dialect of Igbo. It is also a local government in Imo state, in the South-eastern region of Nigeria. It is an amalgam of many indigenous, autonomous communities. The dialect is spoken by the people. Nwachukwu and Imu (2023) The study investigates the use of adverb in the Ngor-okpala dialect. Adverbs are words used to talk about when, how, or where an action (verb, adjective, or another adverb) happened. At its core, an adverb it modifies or qualifies a verb, adjective, or another adverb. It provides additional information about the circumstances of an action, the manner in which it is performed, or the intensity of an attribute. Adverbs can answer questions such as **"Olee ?- where, Olee nke- which, Olee otu- how, Olee onye-who, Olee mgbe-when, Olee ihe-what, etc**, thereby enhancing the precision and detail of a sentence. They encompass a broad spectrum of meanings, ranging from temporal adverbs (e.g. today, soon) to manner adverbs (e.g., osiso/ ngwa ngwa -quickly, ofuma-gracefully), and degree adverbs (e.g., very, quite).

Below is a list of adverbs used in Ngor-okpala dialect

Ngor-okpala	Gross
Ugbuaugbua	Immediately
Ntakiri-ntakiri	
Ozugbo-oozugbo	
Osịsọ/ngwa ngwa	Quickly
Nwayọ / nwayọ nwayọ	Slowly
Kpam Kpam	Completely
N'iche N'iche	Differently
N'ike	Forcefully
Ozo	Again
Mbge niile	Always
Ojo	Badly
Ebe-a	Here
Naanị	Only
sometimes – mgbe ụfọdụ	
Ebe ahụ There –	
soon – mgbe n'adịghị anya / ngwa ngwa	
Ọfụma	Very/well/very well

> The Ngor-okpala dialect employs many structural devices for expressing manner adverbials such as incorporation of lexical words, reduplications, such as in ngwa ngwa

Examples of usage of these adverbs in sentence construction:

Ikechukwu ri chara nri no-na ite ahu *kpam kpam*

Ikechukwu ate the food in the pot completely

Chioma na-agụ egwu *ọfụma*

She sings well

Ikenga gbakara uzo anyi *n'íke*

Ikenga broke our door forcefully

Adverb of time-

Taa / tata   Today

Echi — Tomorrow
N'anyasu taa — Tonight
Echi gara aga — Yesterday

Example of these adverbs used in sentence construction:
Anyi ga-eje ahia *echi*-
We will go to the market tomorrow.
Chidi ga-abia *taa*
Chidi will come today.
Nnam ga-alobata *nányasu taa*
My father will return tonight

Adverbs in Ngor-okpala dialect can also be achieved with suffixes to the verbs.

Verb root	Suffixes	Word
Ri	pia	Ripia (To eat- Completely
Bi	kotara	Bikotara (To live-Together)
Nwu	chu	Nwuchu (Prematurely)
Ri	koro	Rikoro (To eat- Together)

Examples

Ada na Ikenna *bìkotara* n'otu imeulo- Ada and Ikenna live together in one house.
Ụmuaka *rikoro* nri- The children ate the food together food.
Okoro na arụzi ọrụ ike- Okoro works hard
Nnụnụ feliri elu- The bird flew high
Onuoha legharịrị anya Onuoha looked around
Uloaku alaghachigo ụlọ akwụkwọ Uloaku has gone back to school
Chidimma na-agụta egwu Chidimma sings well

When used appropriately, these adverbs help speakers of the dialect understand the manner, time, place, frequency, and degree of an action or quality. Adverbs are mainly verb modifiers. However, they can modify verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, phrases, clauses, or even sentences; expressing some relation of manner or quality, place, time, degree, number, cause, opposition, affirmation, or denial.

3.2.2 Summary of findings

From the above use of adverbs in Ngor-okpala dialect, it is evident that their role transcends mere embellishment of language. Adverbs contribute significantly to the coherence, flow, and expressiveness of communication. They allow native speakers and writers of the dialect to convey and express precision, and convey the intensity or manner of an action. Furthermore, the use of adverbs in the dialect enable the contextualization of statements, providing additional layers of meaning and contributing to the overall clarity and effectiveness of language use.

From the above, Ngor-okpala dialect does not have in abundance morphological marker for expressing manner adverbial notions as in English form such as clumsily, surprisingly, cleverly, carefully and so on. This study also notes that pure adverbs in the Ngor-okpala dialect are in short supply, but the dialect users have ways of making up for this deficiency and one of the ways of making up in this dialect is by the use of extensional suffixes and compound verbs. The Ngor-okpala dialect employs many structural devices for expressing manner adverbials such as incorporation of lexical words, reduplications, use of phrases, and suffixes as shown above.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study investigated the use of adverbs in Ngor-okpala dialect of Igbo because very little attention has been given to usage-based approach to parts of speech, particularly the use of adverbs in the dialect. The study revealed that adverbs are important in the linguistic expression of Ngor-okpala dialect, which are used to answer questions such as "Olee ?- where, Olee nke- which, Olee otu- how, Olee onye-who, Olee mgbe-when, Olee ihe-what, etc, providing various details about actions, qualities, and relationships within sentences. An understanding of

this is crucial for effective communication where precision and clarity are paramount. While the debate surrounding their optimal usage persists, it is undeniable that adverbs contribute substantially to the depth, precision, and expressiveness of Ngor-okpala dialect.

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