

## STRUCTURAL CONSIDERATIONS AND GRAMMATICALITY IN ANNANG LANGUAGE BY JOSEPH UDONDATA

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**ABSTRACT:** *This paper examines issues relating to structure and grammaticality in Annang language. The levels of structure examined include those of morphemes, syllables and syntax. The paper uses the Constituent Structure theory which is fundamental to all syntactic theories. Every sentence in Annang has its ultimate constituents which are made up of the minimal grammatical elements of the sentence. Annang exhibits a linear as well as a hierarchical structure. All these have possibilities for grammaticality. This paper redefines grammaticality to subsume acceptability and the intuition of native speakers as well as those educated in the language. The Descriptive Linguistic Methodology was used in the analysis of the structure of Annang. The paper discovers that the morphological structure of Annang reveals it as an agglutinating language. Even though Annang exhibits characteristics of Universal Grammar, its grammaticality is rather unique particularly in its syntax and lack of articles in its word class. Its openness to delicacy is an important aspect of grammaticality. It is our opinion that the entire linguistic process is a process of grammaticality. The intuition of native speakers may not determine acceptability in a world language like English which has nativized in various corners of the globe.*

**KEYWORDS:** grammaticality, constituent structure, syntactic theories, linear structure, acceptability

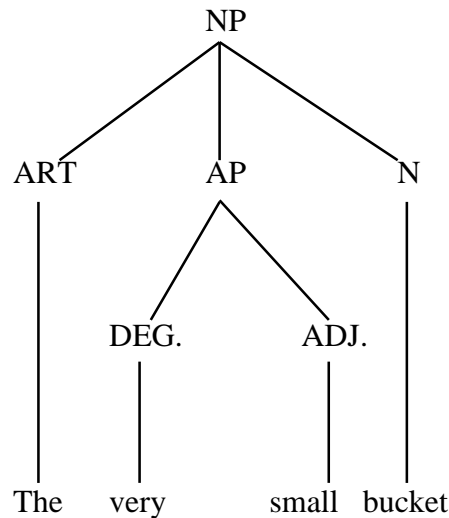
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### INTRODUCTION

The issue of what should be considered acceptable or unacceptable in the grammar of any language has been an age-old debate. This situation necessitated the prescriptivism of traditional grammar. Chomsky (1965) has noted instances of wellformedness and illformedness in grammar. There has been a growing need for norms and conformity in usage across languages. In the light of this, this paper intends to highlight relevant issues bordering on grammaticality in Annang language using the Constituent Structure Theory.

**The Constituent Structure Theory:** Every language is conceived as a structured phenomenon. In fact, language is a structured phenomenon of speech and writing. The grammaticality of a language depends largely on its structured nature. Chomsky (1981) has identified four components for the structure of language. These are: the component of the lexicon, that of syntax comprising the categorial and transformational components, the Phonetic Form (PF – component) and The Logical Form (LF – component). The author has rightly observed that “... the role of grammar is to express the association between representation of form and representations of meaning” (Chomsky, 1981:p.17). Fabb (1994:p.2) expounds three considerations in the analysis of language structure. These include

constituency, labelling and ordering. Constituency is the domain of dividing units into words and phrases.



Labelling is concerned with assigning names to the units such as N, V, Adj, NP, VP, AP and PP. Ordering is the domain of precedence involving proper arrangement. It is improper ordering that leads to “ungrammaticality” (Fabb, 1994:p.11).

This structural elucidation is presented by Riemsdijk and Williams (1986:7) as  $X \rightarrow YZW$  when X is the phrase and XZW the lexical categories.

Arts and Meyer (1995 p.4-5) sum up this structural nature of language as consisting of Categorization, Subcategorization and selectional restrictions. It is the selectional restriction that takes care of the compatibility of semantic features.

The words in sentences are not only arranged in a linear order but are also presented in a hierarchical structure. Structures combine to form larger structures and such combinations result in binary branching structures.

**Explication on Grammaticality:** Many authors are not quite clear on the distinction between the terms “grammaticalization”, “grammaticalness” and “grammaticality”. Matthews (1997 p.151) refers to grammaticalization as a process whereby words or structures assume a role in the grammar of a language. But Lyons (1977 p.234) is of the opinion that grammaticalization involves the ability to select from a set of possible distinctions in terms of such categories as tense, number, gender, case, person etc, adding that “The categories and parts of speech are combined to form sentences according to rules”. This broadening has taken care of lexicology, morphology, syntax and semantics. Udondata (2001 p.51) uses the expression “grammaticalization cycle” to explain the cyclical nature of grammar.

Chomsky (1965) uses the term grammaticalness to mean conformity with the rules of grammar and Thorne (1987 p.187) makes reference to “the phenomena of grammaticalness and acceptability” as some of the preoccupations of linguists. Gleason (1961) notes the difference between grammaticalness and sensicalness. A structure in this sense, may be grammatical but not sensical. “If the distinction between grammaticalness and sensicalness can be drawn, the task of a grammar is to describe the grammatical sentences, sensical or non-sensical, clearly distinguishing them from the non-grammatical” (Gleason, 1961 p.198). Gleason’s grammaticalness is close to our idea of grammaticality. The distinction between “grammatical and ungrammatical strings of words” has been noted by Fromkin and Rodman (1988 p.163),

Chomsky (1965) and Lyons (1981). There is much in the literature to spot the differences between acceptability, wellformedness and grammatical wellformedness which are subsumed in grammaticality. This point has been explained by Lyons (1987 p.24) which defines grammar as,

*a system of rules which specifies precisely what combinations of the basic elements (phonemes, morphemes, lexemes etc) are permissible, or well-formed. The grammar is said to generate (and thereby define as 'grammatical') all the sentences of languages and fail to generate (thereby defining as 'ungrammatical') all the non-sentences, or ill-formed combinations of basic elements.*

Grammar, in this sense, is concerned with all the combinational possibilities in a language; and these combinations must be permissible. Grammaticality will not limit such possibilities to the level of syntax. The possibilities are all-encompassing, cutting across the levels of lexicology, phonology, syntax and semantics. The issue of acceptability is very crucial to grammatical analysis. The question of who accepts what and in whose language poses a question mark on the use of the term "acceptability". Here Gasser (2003) has noted that there may be cases where grammaticality in some non-standard dialect turns out to be ungrammaticality in a standard dialect. Duffield (2000) admits that there is distinction between grammaticality and acceptability but stresses that interpretability can make sense out of ungrammaticality. Chomsky (1965) is of the opinion that neither grammaticality nor acceptability are absolute concepts since there are degrees of grammaticality and degrees of acceptability.

Grammaticality is the outcome of conventionality in language use by native speakers of a language (Darbyshire, 1967). We are of the opinion that it is the intuition of the educated native speakers that should determine acceptability. They are competent to make "grammaticality judgements" (Akmajian et al, 2004 p.152). But this may not hold for a world language like English which has nativized in many regions of the globe. In this sense, the gap between grammaticality and ungrammaticality can be considered as a continuum. The two sentences:

- |                                      |   |                          |
|--------------------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| 1. Everybody contributed their share | } | (Darbyshire, 1967 p.100) |
| 2. Everybody contributed his share   |   |                          |
- can be distributed among speakers in the basilect and the acrolect.

Grammaticality is a complex and wide concept involving the three related processes of linguistic competence, grammatical competence and communicative competence (Adejare, 1995). It is the speaker's or the writer's intelligibility that opens his communication up for acceptability; which is the essence of grammaticality. But there are instances where acceptability is a matter of regional convention. Here we are open to the options of regional acceptability and international acceptability. For example, the fact that many Nigerians say [wɒnte↓] instead of /wɒntə<u>/; and the fact that many Nigerians (even among educated speakers) say "off the light" instead of "put off the light" are some examples to prove our point. And interestingly, these two options are adopted as dots on the acceptability continuum and used by the speakers in formal and informal circumstances. Why grammaticality is basically an extensive concept is that the potential structures, situations and ideational variables in any grammar are infinite.

The issue of complexity in grammaticality has been noted by Jacobsen (1992 p.9) that "Grammaticality is part and parcel of the I-language. It is the linguist who constructed the

grammar that can make grammaticality judgement, inasmuch as it is he who has explicit knowledge of the structure of the I-language". This is confirmed by Haegeman (1994 p.7) which notes that "a sentence is grammatical if it is formed according to the grammar of English as formulated by the linguists". It is no doubt, therefore, that the sentence is the core of language and of grammaticality. Language and grammaticality are inseparable and the entire process has been summed up by Riemsdijk and Williams (1986:4),

*we may thus regard a sentence as consisting of three things: its sound, its meaning, and its syntactic structure. A grammar, then, is the rules for the formation of syntactic structures and associated sounds and meanings, and a language is the set of all such triples defined by the grammar:*

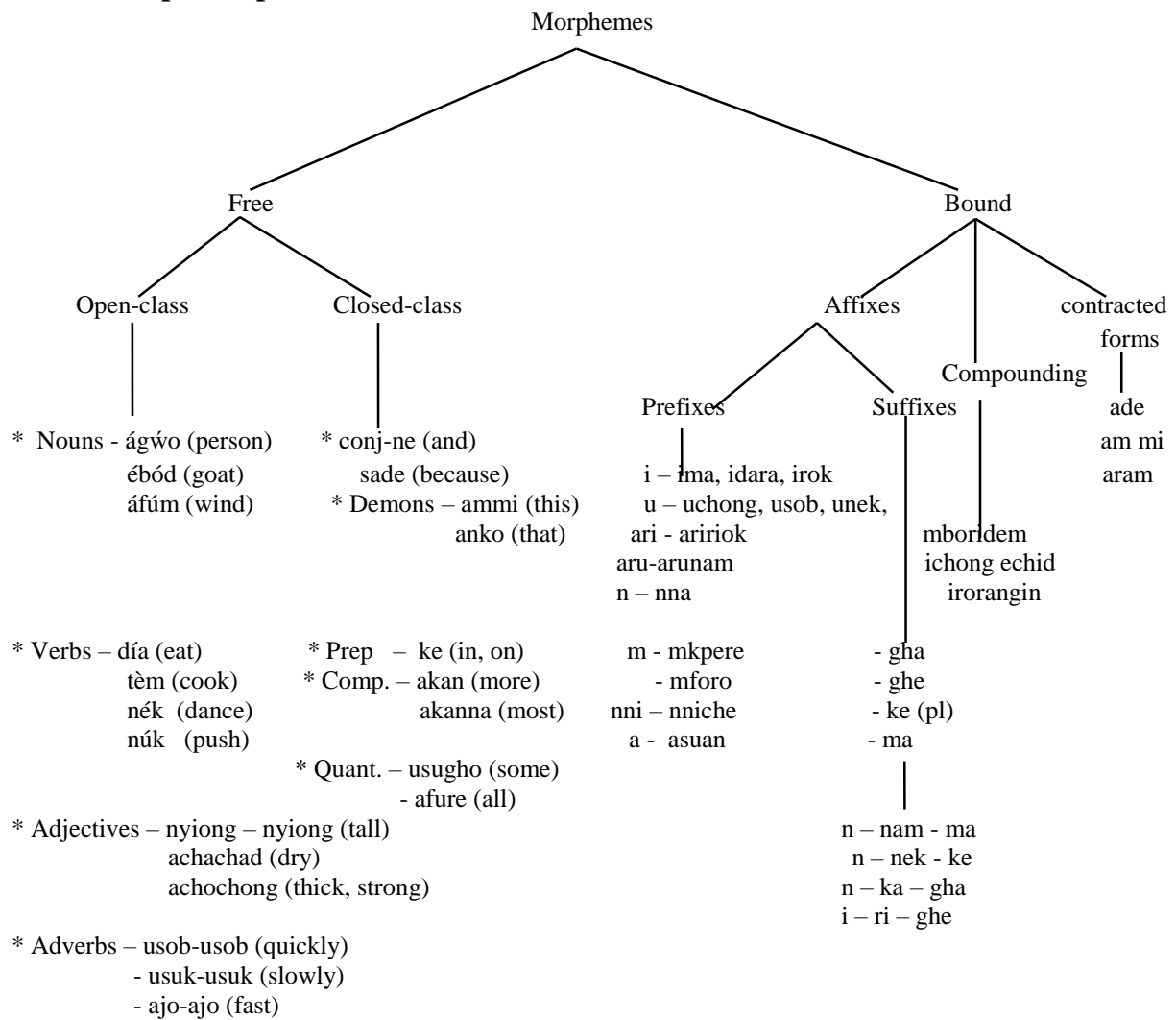
$$L = \{... (sound, syntactic structure, meaning) ... \}$$

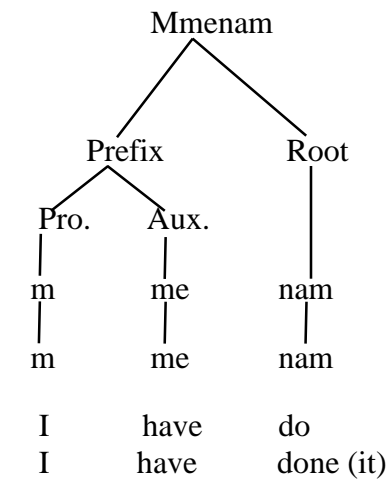
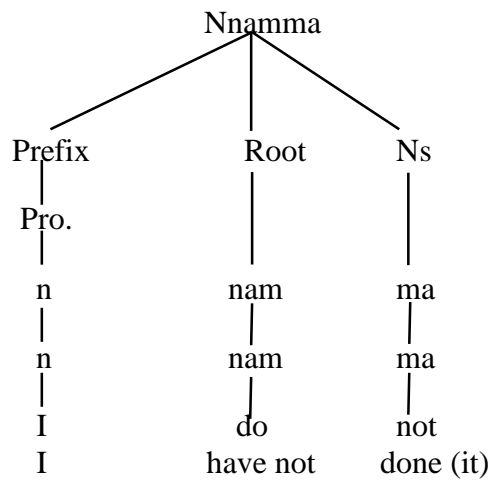
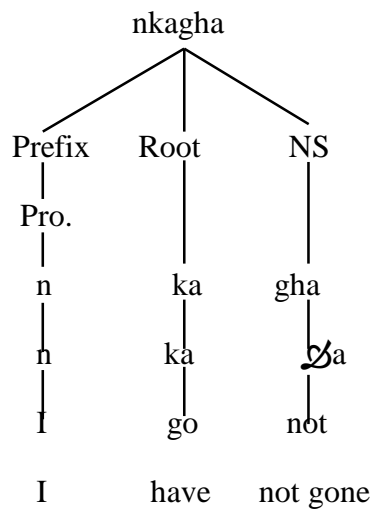
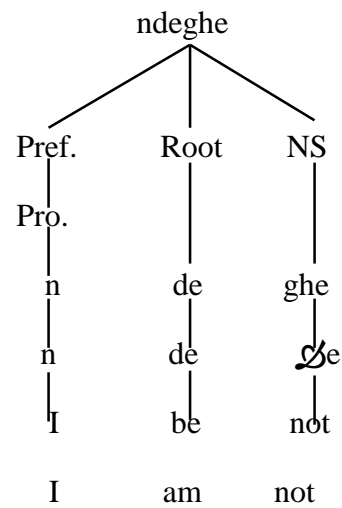
Grammaticality is therefore the totality of what transpires in the structures and sub-structures of language, as all aspects of language are subject to grammatical analysis. The thrust of this paper therefore is to examine the various dimensions of grammaticality in Annang Language using the Constituent Structure Framework.

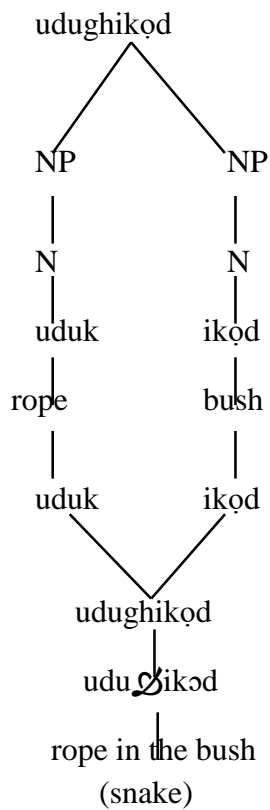
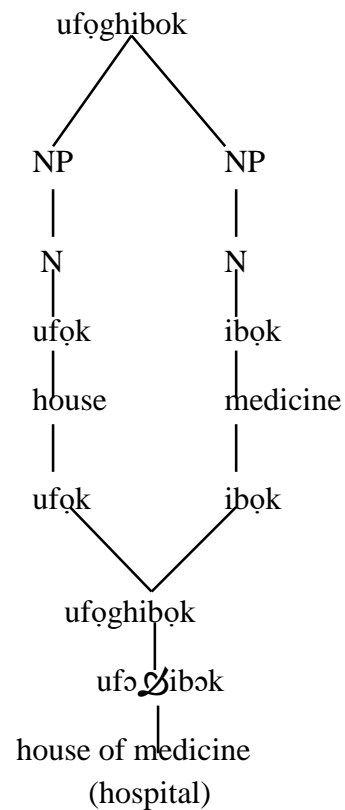
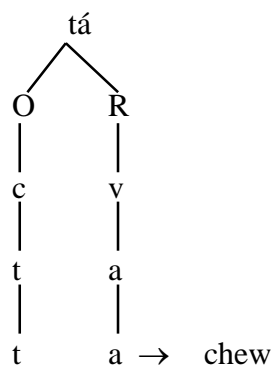
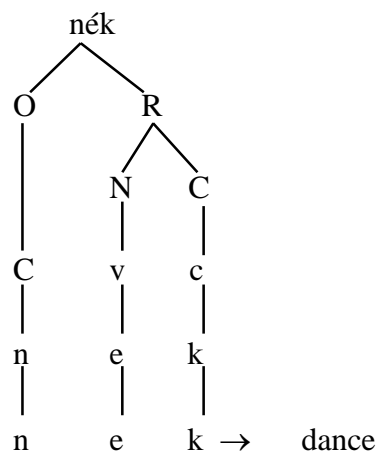
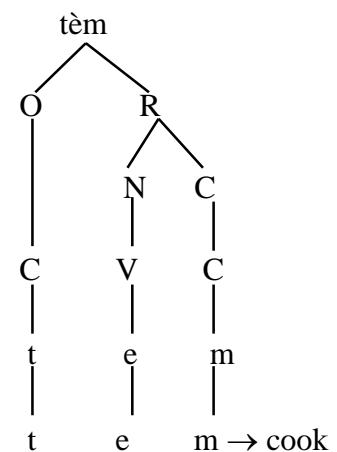
Annang language belongs to the lower-cross phylum which is one of many groups of languages which are traced to the Niger-Congo phylum. The Niger-Congo is one of the four major language groups in Africa. Others are the Hamito-Semitic, the Nilo-Saharan and the Khoisan. Over two million people in Nigeria and in the diaspora speak Annang language. Eight local government areas in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria speak Annang language. The orthography of Annang language used in this work is Idem and Udondata (2001).

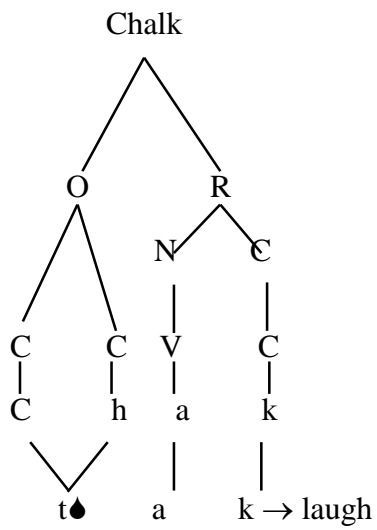
## 4.0 The Morphological structure of Annang

### 4.1 Morpheme processes

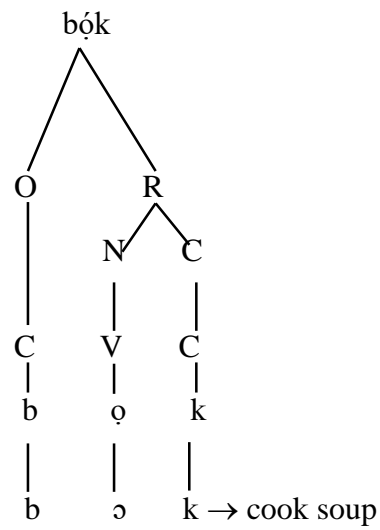


**4.1.1****4.1.2****4.1.4****4.1.3****4.1.5**

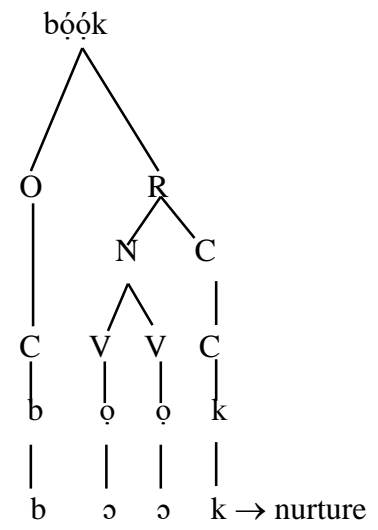
**4.1.6****4.1.7****4.2 Syllable structure****4.2.1****4.2.2****4.2.3**



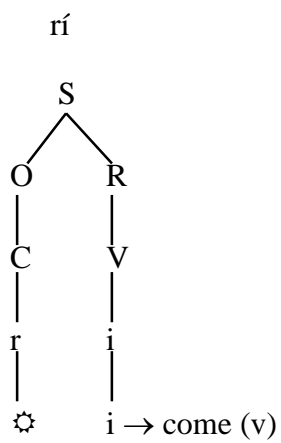
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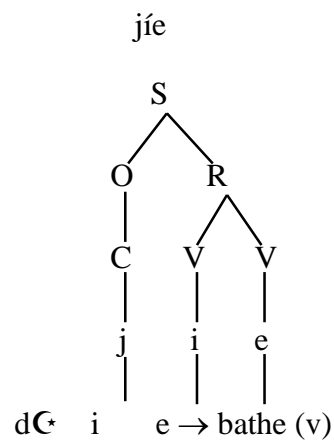
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4.2.6

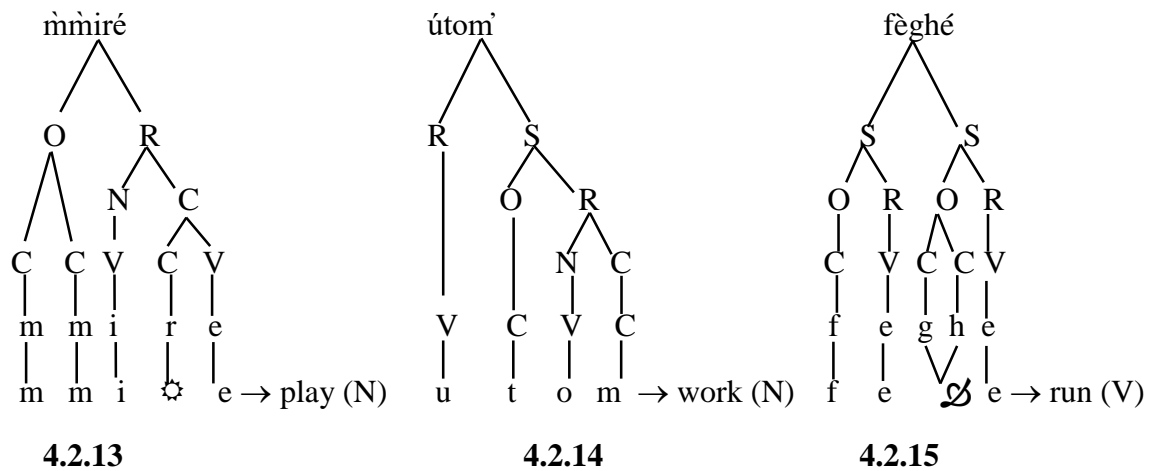
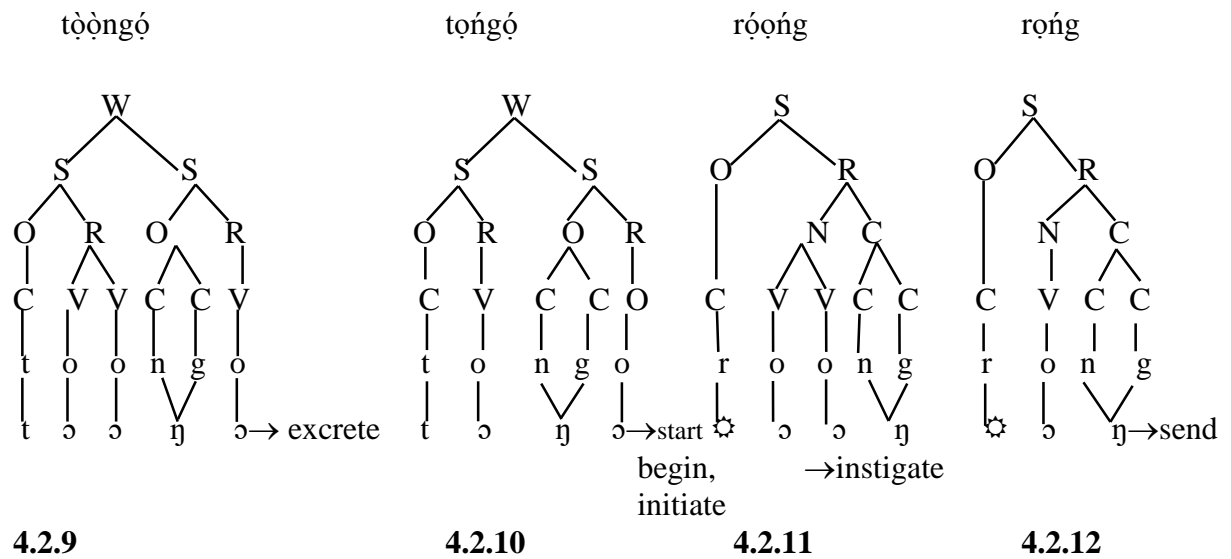


4.2.7



4.2.8





### 4.3 Syllabification

#### 4.1 Monosyllabic words

Word	Syllabification	Gloss
tá		chew
nék		dance
tèm		cook
chák		laugh

#### 4.3.2 Disyllabic words

Word	Syllabification	Gloss
fèghé	fe.ghe	run
sòró	so.ro	squad
sòòró	soo.ro	get up from squatting
sùngó	su.ngo	curse (v)
sùùngó	suu.ngo	land (in speech)

tóngó	to.ngo	start, begin, initiate
tòòngó	too.ngo	excrete
sémé	se.me	be stupid
sèémé	see.me	lament

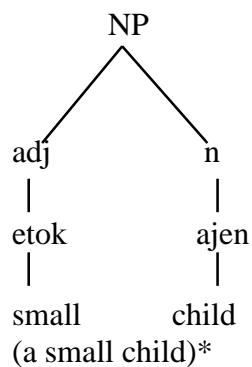
### 4.3.3 Polysyllabic words

Word	Syllabification	Gloss
úwiakirib	u.wiak.i.rib	stomachache
ékámhá	e.kam.ba	big
ákópókóró	a.kpo.ko.ro	table
mákárá	m.ba.ka.ra	European (whiteman)
úchóró	u.cho.ro	Feast, celebration
ádúdúkútoóng	a.du.duk.u.tong	Insect that invades the ear

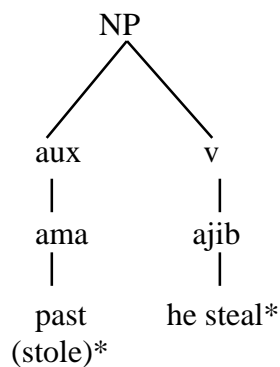
## 5.0 Annang syntactic structure

### 5.1 Phrase Structure

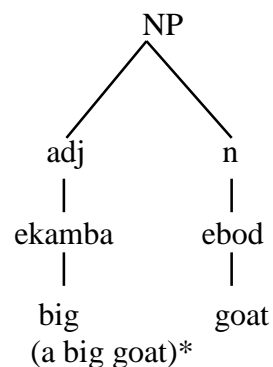
NP → N	ajen	child (child)
Adj + N	etokajen	small child
Adj + Adj + N	iriok etokajen	bad small child
Int + Adj + Adj + N	ata iriok etok ajen	very bad small boy



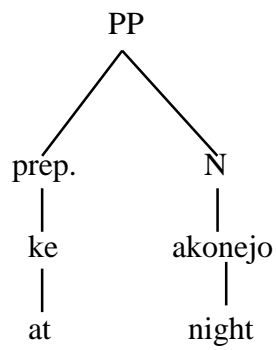
**5.1.1**



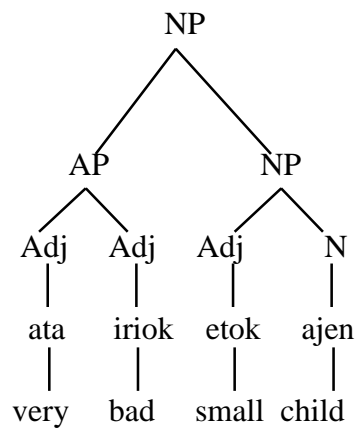
**5.1.2**



**5.1.3**



5.1.4

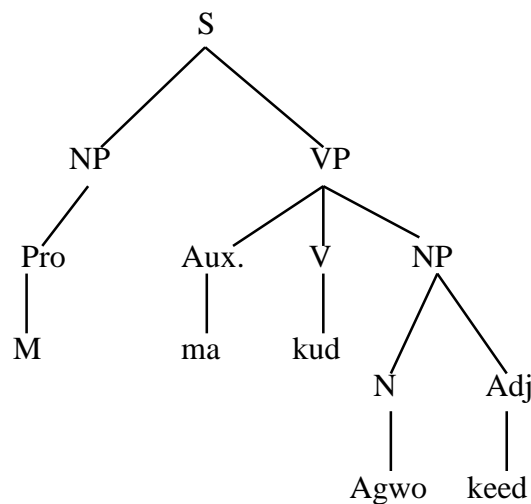


5.1.5

## 5.2 Sentence Structure

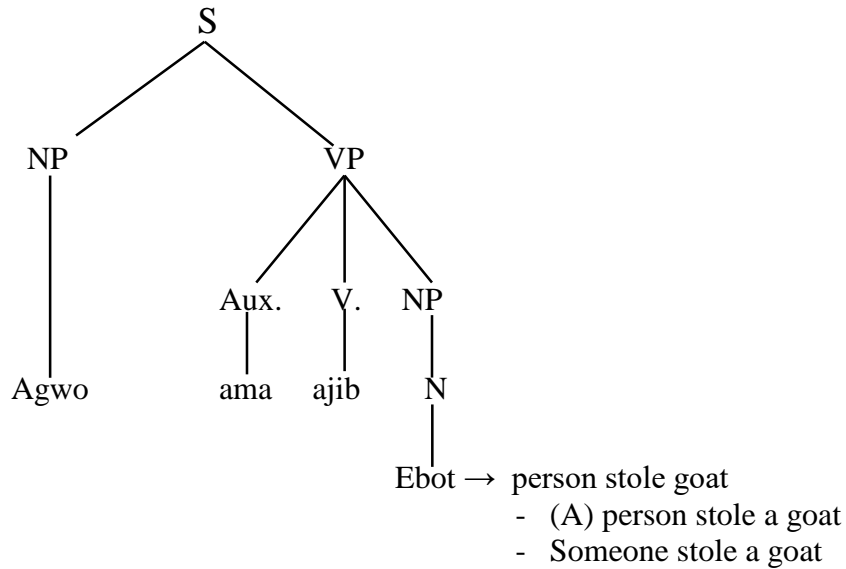
Mma       kud   agwo   keed   ( I saw one person)  
 ↓ ↓       ↓       ↓       ↓  
 I + past + see   person   one

NP → m  
 VP → ma kud  
 NP → agwo keed



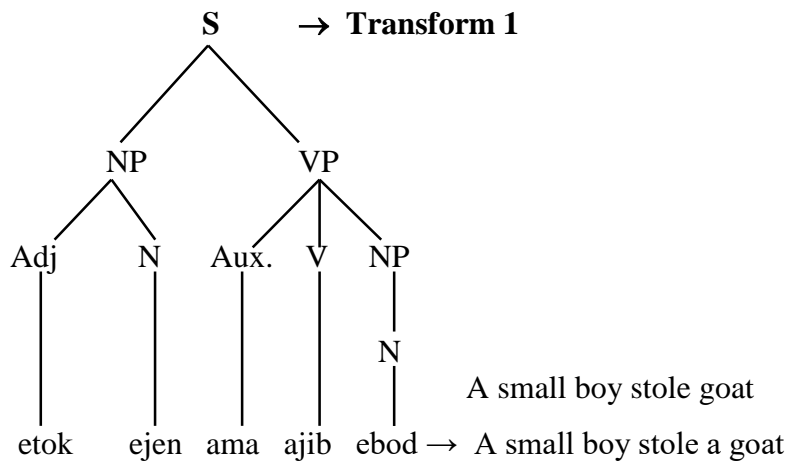
5.2.1

## 1. Agwo ama ajib ebod – Kernel Structure



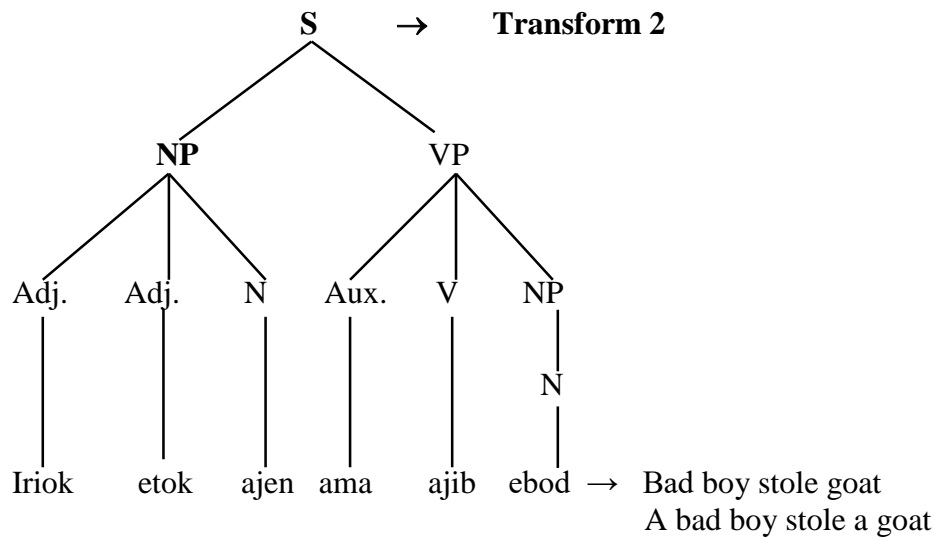
## 5.2.2

## 2. Etok ajen ama ajib ebod

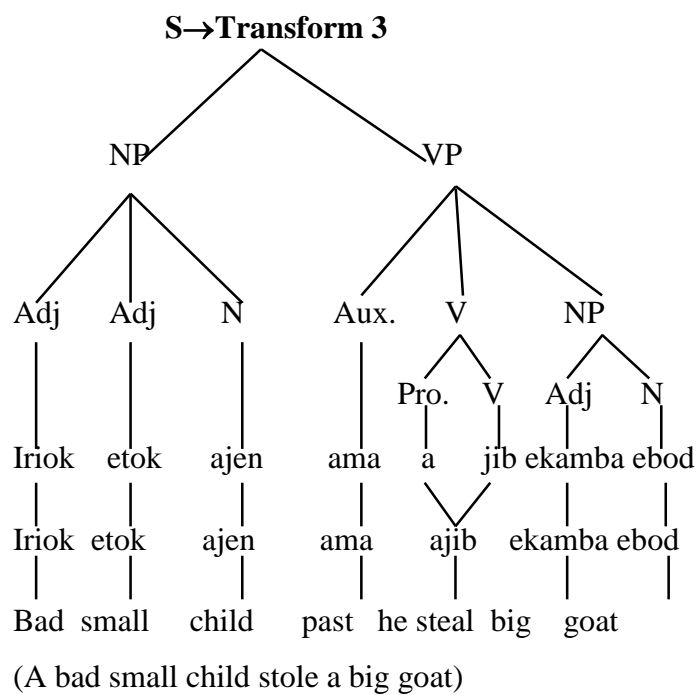


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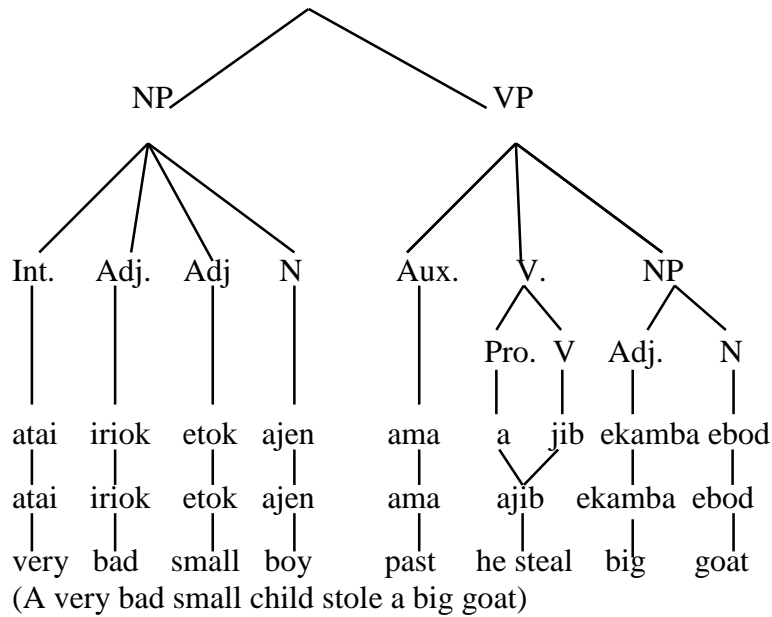
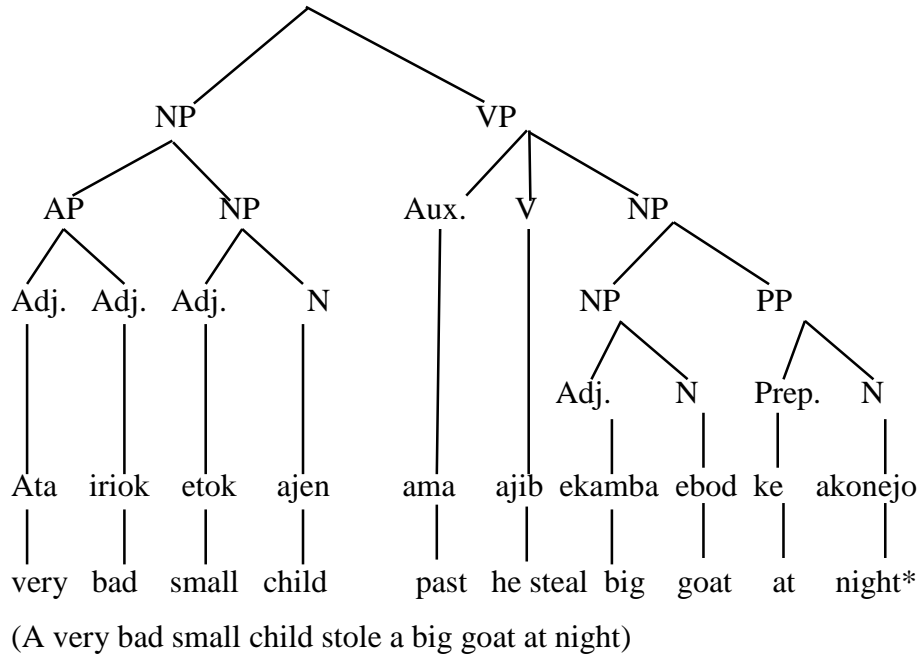
Iriok etok ajen ama ajib ebod

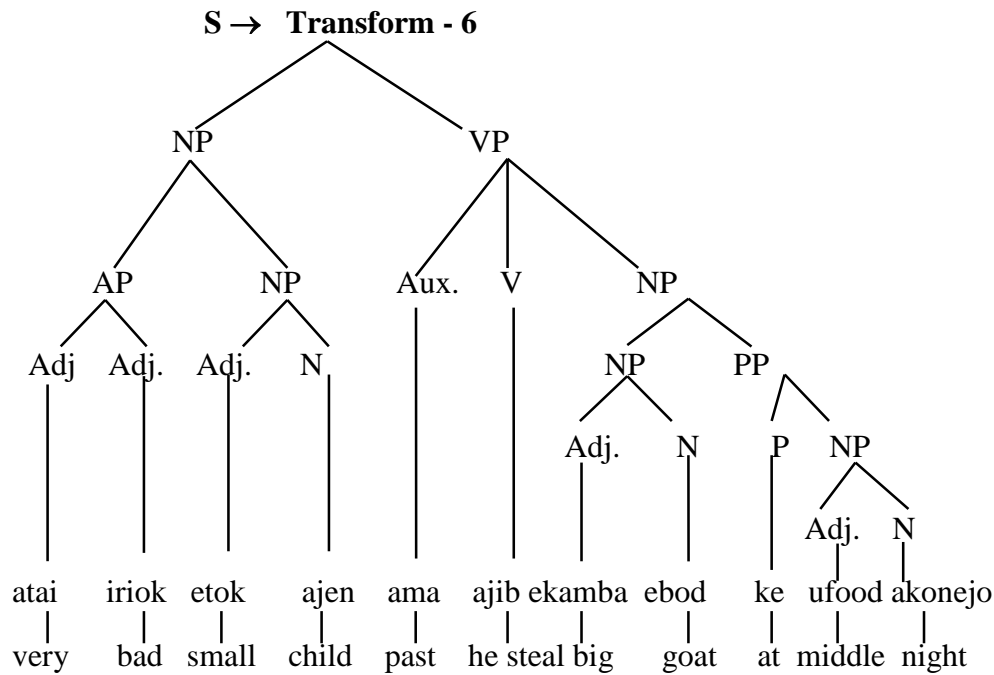


#### 5.2.4



#### 5.2.5

**S → Transform 4****5.2.6****S → Transform - 5****5.2.7**



### 5.2.8

## DISCUSSION

The paper agrees with other authors that grammaticality judgements are the exclusive prerogatives of the native speakers of the language and those adequately educated in the language.

Every level of structure has capacity for grammaticality:

In syllabification, the word “uchoro” (feast) has the following possibilities:

- (i) u.cho.ro
- (ii) uch.o.ro\*
- (iii) ucho.ro\*
- (iv) u.chor.o\*

In Annang, an alphabet can constitute a syllable as in (i) above. An interesting feature of the syllabification process in Annang is the distinction between syllables with double vowels in the nucleus and those with a single vowel as in “to.ngo” (start, begin, initiate) and “too.ngo” (excrete).

Phrase structure has possibility of grammaticality in Annang. For example, the structures on the left side are acceptable in Annang while those on the right are not.

- (i) agwo iba (person two)                      (i) iba agwo\* (two persons)
- (ii) ebod iba (goat two)                      (ii) iba ebod\* (two goats)
- (iii) iriok etokajen (bad small child)      (iii) etokajen iriok (small child bad)

Annang is agglutinative as demonstrated by its morphological structure. It attaches separable affixes to the roots of words, resulting in several morphemes in a word (Udondata,

2006:71). Examples are: “ikisikaiyake” (they had not been going) and “nkagha” (I have not gone). The outstanding morphological processes in Annang are those of affixation, compounding and reduplication (Etim, 2014).

At the sentence level, we consider the following possibilities:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| (i) Iriok etokajen ama ajib ebod iba    | (i) A small bad child stole two goats    |
| (ii) Iriok etokajen ebod iba ama ajib*  | (ii) A small bad child two goats stole*  |
| (iii) Ebod iba iriok etokajen ama ajib* | (iii) Two goats a bad small child stole* |
| (iv) Ama ajib iriok etokajen ebod iba*  | (iv) Stole a bad small child two goats*  |

Only (i) has capacity for grammaticality. The others are unacceptable in the grammar of Annang. Moreover, Annang word class does not admit articles (5.1.1 and 5.1.3).

A noticeable feature of the structure of Annang language is its openness to delicacy which is an important aspect of grammaticality. For example, 5.2.1 to 5.2.8 reveals the capacity of Annang language to generate an infinite number of grammatical sentences.

## CONCLUSION

The study demonstrates linguistic structure as a dynamic phenomenon. With structure, every language system is capable of generating an infinite number of grammatical or well-formed phrases and sentences as demonstrated by Annang. Chomsky (1965) recognized this process of grammaticality as “generative grammar”. It is a generative grammar that accounts for linguistic productivity. Grammar in this sense includes all levels of analysis.

Every grammatical structure has basic elements which signal grammaticality in the structure. These are known as elements of constituent structure. These are different forms which can be analysed phonologically, morphologically, syntactically, semantically etc. Elements of constituent structure provide the ingredients for grammatical analysis. At different levels and in various ways, these elements are significant indices of grammaticality. And from our analysis, we have noted that grammaticality occurs when a linguistic structure possesses the quality of acceptability. Acceptability is a feature of competence and depends solely on the intuition of native speakers of the language and those who are knowledgeable in it.

There is correspondence between unacceptability on one hand and ungrammaticality on the other hand. An educated native speaker has claim to grammaticality judgment since he is familiar with the structure of the language and knows where all of them overlap. What matters is the intelligibility of the words used, as well as how they combine to give meaning. Moreover, the words must occur in a relatively simple surface structure, with a relatively stable syntactic pattern. According to Johnson – Laird (1989), such consideration call for an analysis of structure and meaning simultaneously.

Annang language does not only exhibit characteristics of Universal Grammar (UG) but is interestingly unique in its structures. Its linear structure which is basically SVO is open to analysis at the functional and categorial levels. Moreover, its Phonetic Form (PF) and Logical Form (LF) have ingredients for grammaticality. The Annang hierarchical structure reveals several layers of constituents depending on the delicacy of particular sentences.



It is our candid opinion that the entire linguistic process is a process of grammaticality. Finally, we opine that the intuition of native speakers may not determine acceptability in a world language like English which has nativized in various corners of the globe.

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