

## VARIATION IN HEADEDNESS: INSIGHTS FROM THE IZON AND ENGLISH LANGUAGES

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### **Abstract**

*The syntax of headedness is parameterized in two values: head-initial/complement-final or head-final/complement-initial. The Izon and English languages vary in the head parameter. Izon is head-final while English is head-initial. Using the Dependency Grammar (DG) with some insights from the Universal Grammar, the paper examined headedness in both languages to establish the common challenges an Izon-English learner would face. The data for the study that were analysed descriptively were got from textual materials and the researcher, who is a speaker of both languages. In the NP, there are evidences of head-initial structures and head-final structures in the two languages. Positionally, they share certain features such as the use of adjectives, nouns, appositives demonstratives, numerals, wh-DETs, and all other determiners except articles. However, there are areas of difference, where English has head-initial, Izon has head-final or both, such as in the use of 'that clauses', PPs, and RCs. Interestingly, as opposed to the conventional classification, the reverse is the case for the two languages as regards headedness in the NP; Izon is head-initial while English is head-final. This is viewed from the use of the most frequent, obligatory complement (article) in modifying a singular common noun. The paper therefore recommended, in addition to steps to the Izon learners of English who have difficulties in setting the English NP head parameter accurately, suggested a theoretical rethink in the classification of languages in terms of the parameter of headedness in the NP.*

**Keywords:** Headedness, complement/modifier, Dependency Grammar, head-initial, head-final, and variation

### **Introduction**

Language is a human phenomenon. Every normal human being has the ability to acquire a language. This ability has been viewed as inborn in cognitive science.

This is supported by Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2007), that “...the grammatical aspect of the language faculty is an autonomous, genetically determined module of the brain” (p. 52). That every child is born with an innate ability to acquire language, which Chomsky referred to as Language Acquisition Device (LAD).

In Chomsky’s Universal Grammar model, LAD is referred to as Universal Grammar (UG). Universal Grammar is “the language faculty built into the human mind consisting of principles and parameters” (Cook, 2008, p. 33). The principles are the unchangeable linguistic ideologies of human language which are common to all languages irrespective of the region, race, ethnicity, and so on of the speakers, while parameters are those linguistic features that are specific to a particular language. Chomsky (1981) described UG “as some system of principles, common to the species and available to each individual prior to experience” (cited in Ndimele, 1999, p. 90). This indicates that the principles are the common fundamental features across all human languages that are generally shared, whereas, the parameters are the features that vary across languages, that is, they are the cross-linguistic variations that distinguish one language system from the other. Cook (2008) explained the two standards of UG, that the principles of language are the “aspects of human language present in all human minds” and parameters as the “aspects that vary from one language to another within tightly set limits, whether or not subjects are required in the sequence – the pro-drop parameter” (p. 33). Put differently, universal grammar comprises the entire structures of all human languages from where every language must pick its repertoire, in line with the parameters associated with each.

Similarly, humans can acquire or learn other languages after acquiring the first, usually referred to as a second language (L2). But to be proficient in an L2, it generally involves conscious commitment, if not active study and memorization. Fromkin et al. (2007) observed that adult second language learners do not often attain nativelike grammatical competence in the L2. This is explained by the critical period hypothesis, which signifies UG being active at a particular period for language acquisition. Hence, if the innate ability expires there will be problems setting the parameters. The following are the components of principles and parameters of UG, obtained from Nwala (2013, pp. 197-198; 2015 p. 155) and Ndimele (1992, p. 4): The principles include: the disjoint reference condition, the condition on extraction domain, question words become clause-initial, clauses must be logically complete (have the right number of NPs), NPs can be dislocated to the edge of a sentence, the case filter, etc., while the parameters are:

The Head parameter, the Wh-parameter, and the Null-subject or Pro-drop parameter. As the subject matter implies, the paper will deal solely on the head parameter.

The head parameter, sometimes called 'headedness' refers to the positional relationship between the head and its dependents in a syntactic construction. "It is the general property of phrases that every phrase or maximal projection must have a head which gives the phrase...its essential character..." (Ndimele, 1992, p. 5). Crystal (2008, p. 225) indicated that "the head parameter...concerns the position of heads with respect to their complements within phrases." This parameter denotes the possibility of languages to be either head-initial or head-final. Izon has been categorised as "SOV and predominantly head-final language" (Kwokwo, 2015a, p. 503). The head order is often discussed by scholars in terms of two notions, the NP head order and the predication head order (Nwala, 2015). Headedness is therefore categorised in relation to the latter notion of head order; the position of the verb and its complements, since English is SVO and categorised as head-initial, and Izon is SOV and categorised as head-final. This point is anchored by Ndimele (1992) as he observed:

English is a head-initial language with respect to the position of the verb vis-a-vis its object or complement (i.e. the verb precedes the object). Izon..., on the other hand, is head-final and complement/object-initial (i.e. the object precedes the verb). This is why English is described as an SVO language, while Izon is an SOV language. (p. 5)

Headedness, particularly that of the NP, which is the focus of this paper, is a word order parameter that is concerned with the position of the head noun and its dependents. The Izon head parameter, unlike that of English, has not been given adequate attention in the literature. Hence, the Izon speaker of English who has a naturally gifted ability to ascertain the rules guiding the structure and head order of the Izon NP, may have difficulties in learning English which has a visibly different head order. Consequently, this brings to bear the main drive of this paper 'Variation in Headedness: Insights from the Izon and English Languages', which aims at highlighting the possible variances and offer likely solutions.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The paper has Dependency Grammar (DG) as the theory for the data analysis of the data. Dependency Grammar was introduced by a French linguist, Lucien Tesniere, in 1959 in his *Elements de Syntaxe Structurale*. The concept 'dependency grammar' actually arose later in the 1960s as Tesniere's thoughts were being received and evaluated (Kahane & Osborne, 2015). The central ideas of the conception of syntax in DG are: *connections, autonomous syntax, verb centrality, stemmas, circumstants, centrifugal (head-initial) and centripetal (head-final) structures, valency, actants and circumstants, and transfer*. The paper employs the concepts 'centrifugal and centripetal structures' in the analysis, because they are more appropriate to the noun and its modifiers (MODs) in the NP.

The concept of centrifugal and centripetal structures refers to the positional relationship between the head and its dependents in a phrase, in terms of pre-modification and post-modification of the NP. The modern terms for these concepts are head-initial and head-final. Centrifugal structures see heads precede their dependents, while in centripetal structures, the dependents precede their heads (Kahane & Osborne, 2015).

The basic tradition about a syntactic structure in DG is that a syntactic structure consists of lexical items connected by unequal relations called *dependencies*. That is, the common core concepts are centred upon the notion of dependency.

## **Literature Review**

### **The Izon Language**

Izon is a language spoken in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria (Ndimele, 1992, p. 5), which is the largest language of the Ijo language cluster, on the Proto-Niger-Congo tree (Williamson & Blench, 2000, pp. 18, 22). The languages belonging to the Ijoid branch are closely related internally, distinct from other families of Niger-Congo (Williamson & Blench, 2000). Hence, Izon is internally related to its sister languages in Ijoid. This similarity often leads scholars to make a division between them. Such is Martin (2013) in Uwasomba (2016), who noted the primary division between the Ijo languages as between Eastern Ijo and Western Ijo, and further subdivided them into different groups, each consisting a number of dialects. The data in this paper is based primarily on Kolokuma dialect (the standard variety) and Boma (the researcher's dialect) dialect of the Izon language.

It has been established that Izon is an SOV and head-final word order language. In the clause structure, the order of subjects and objects relative to verbs is used

in such description, while at the phrasal level, the order of the verb and its complements is the criterion. According to Kwokwo (2014), the Izon sentences, like English, can also be classified into function and structure, but Izon is SOV at the sentence level and head-final in terms of headedness. He further noted that unlike English which has prepositions, Izon has postpositions. This is evident in Haspelmath and Sims (2010), that SVO word order languages have prepositions while those with SOV order have postpositions, and that “if a language has both SOV word order and postpositions, it is predominantly head-final” (p. 153).

### **The Phrase**

A phrase is a group of words that consists of a head, and other elements dependent on it. There are different kinds of phrase in human language, which, as McGregor (2009) put it, can be differentiated according to their internal structure. Ndimele (1999) provided the list of the five major types of phrase as: the noun phrase (NP), the verb phrase (VP), the adjective phrase (AdjP), the adverb phrase (AdvP), and the prepositional phrase (PP). It is the obligatory parts or words that govern individual group that determine the “mnemonic taxonomic label assigned to them” (Moravcsik, 2006a, p. 124).

Though, in the literature, it has been argued that a phrase can consist just a word, the head. In this paper, we see a phrase as a group of ‘words’ that functions as a whole. This means that a phrase has at least a dependent element. This is basically because the study is centred on DG which also examines a phrase with the understanding that it contains two or more words, hence, the relationship between the head and its dependent(s) in the phrase.

### **The Noun Phrase (NP)**

An NP is a group of related words with a noun as its head. The head of the NP is the central or compulsory item in the phrase in that it carries the morphological marking suitable for the whole phrase (De Monnik, 2000, p. 20; Moravcsik, 2006b, p. 159). As Fromkin et al. (2007) put it, an NP is a syntactic category which can be used to substitute a noun (lexical category) without loss of grammaticality. Moravcsik’s view about NP as pertains its function, pointed out that an NP may function as the subject or as an object in a sentence (2006a). In the English NP, a noun is often preceded by a determiner (DET) with accompanying pre-MODs and/or post-MODs (Biber et al., 1999, p. 203), which may also consist of a proper noun, a pronoun, a noun without a DET, or even a clause or a sentence (Fromkin et al., 2005, p. 125).

An observation by Bibber et al. (1999, p. 203) is that, the head of the NP may not necessarily be a prototypical noun, it can be an ADJ preceded by the definite article 'the': '*The unemployed, The poor*'; and a participle: '*early morning swimming*'. Along this line, Gomez (2009, p. 12) recommended that in defining the NP, we must consider its constituent parts: Head and Dependents; their dependency: MODs depend on the head; and order relations: MODs may precede or succeed the head. The function label of the obligatory element in an NP is Head, while the class label is Noun.

### **The Concept of Headedness**

The concept of headedness refers to the head parameter of UG which determines whether the head of a phrase comes before or after its complements. The concept of headedness arose due to Chomsky's (1988) notion of the universal grammar which resulted to the principles and parameters of human language. The notion of headedness states that every phrase contains a head word, which defines it (Radford, 2006, p. 31), and that the head is "the most important word in the phrase, first because it bears the crucial semantic information: it determines the meaning of the entire phrase" (Tallerman, 2005, p. 95). When there is a head, then there are dependents that are placed around the head to identify the meaning and function of that head which dictates concord and other kinds of agreement within and outside the phrase (Quick et al. 1991; Egbe, 2000; Gomez, 2009). Anurudu (2010, p. 60) also proved the importance of the head as "that element of the phrase or expression that carries the more stable semantic content".

Dependents are all the elements apart from the head in a phrase. According to Tallerman (2005, p. 98), "Dependents are all the remaining words in a phrase other than the head". They either precede or follow the head, all of which are somewhat connected to the head, these Gomez calls "*fillers of noun phrase head*" (2009, p. 14).

Different scholars have used different terms for the dependents of the head. Quirk et al. (1985) limited the dependents to 'modifiers', while Payne and Huddleston (2002, p. 439) made a distinction between internal dependents with reference to their position, whether they precede or follow the head noun, and those that depend on their function, whether they are MODs or complements. That pre-head dependents are MODs, while post head dependents are complements. But in this paper, the terms 'modifiers' and 'complements' will be used interchangeably to mean the dependents of a head notwithstanding their position. The predominant dependents of the noun include: determiner

(D/DET), adjective/ Adjective Phrase (Adj/AdjP), noun (N), appositive (APP), prepositional phrase (PP), relative clause (RC), participle (Part), infinitive phrase (InfP), adverb (Adv) and adverbial, and 'that' clause.

### **Determiners**

Determiners are little function words (a, an, the, that, his, which, no, an etc.) which permit nouns to function as complete NPs and help to categorize the referent in the context of situation. DETs, as defined by Crystal (1997, p. 112), denote "A class of items whose main role is to co-occur with nouns to express a wide range of semantic contrasts, such as quantity or number" (cited in Ndimele, 1999, p. 102). Tallerman (2005, p. 38) also noted that "Determiners are paired only with nouns, and don't co-occur with other word classes". DETs assist in designating and enumerating the locus of the head, hence, specifiers of the noun.

Downing and Locke (1992) explained the determining elements as: articles: (*the, a* or *an*, and *zero* article); demonstratives (*this, that, these* and *those*), *wh-*DET/relatives (*what, which, whose, whatever, whichever, and whatsoever*), quantificational DETs (cardinals: *one, two*, ordinals: *first, second*, multipliers: *once, twice*, and quantifiers: *few, some*, and possessive DETs: *my, his, Juliet's* .

### **Adjectives/Adjective Phrases**

An adjective is a MOD of a noun which may be any adjective phrase that helps to modify the meaning of the NP (de Marneffe & Manning, 2008). Adjs are pre-MODs which are dispensable or optional within the NP. They have a simple syntactic structure and are generally single words (Moravcsik, 2006b). Though, Adjs can be predicative if they appear within the predicate, but our focus is on attributive Adjs; the Adjs within an NP.

### **Nouns**

In the NP structure, nouns are also used to modify the head noun. They appear at the pre-modifying slot of the NP, a spot typically set aside for classifying components with identifying role. Accordingly, Murphy (2004) and Eka (2004) maintained that, where two nouns are together, the other first noun which is like an Adj modifies the last one which is the most vital word of that NP. The modifying noun and the noun being modified together form a noun compound.

### **Appositives**

Appositives are extra words or group of words that show the recurrence of an NP in a different form for the purposes of clarity. In the view of Biber et al. (1999, p. 639), "Apposition is a maximally abbreviated form of post-modification characteristic of registers with the highest informational density". Illustrating the concept of appositive, Anurudu (2010) also noted that the APPs are MODs where the head noun (N1) is the same as the APP (N2) functioning as the post-MOD of the head, hence, the connection between N1 and N2 is an APP relationship. In other words, N2 can stand alone in place of N1 (p. 101). For example: '*The syntax lecturer, Dr. Michael Alozie Nwala*'

### **Prepositional Phrases**

Prepositional phrases are phrases that obligatorily consist two parts, naturally comprise of an initial preposition and an NP (Ndimele, 1999), hence a second NP that is part of the post modification. The PP is a post-MOD which functions as complement of the noun it modifies.

### **Relative Clauses**

Relative clauses are optional post-MODs of an NP which look more like complete clauses. As post-MODs of a noun, they are preceded by the noun. RCs "actually occur within noun phrases" (Borjars & Burridge, 2010, p. 196), and the word order pattern of English permits that, if a noun and a RC are given, the RC must succeed the head noun but it may or may not be adjacent to it (Moravcsik, 2006b, p. 148). For example, *the **book** that was given to Priye by her lecturer*

### **Participles**

Participles are words which have the features of a verb and Adj, hence it is called "a verbal adjective" (Murthy, 2007, p. 121). The participles modify the noun in their single words or participial phrases having the ending *-ing* and *-ed*. They appear in both pre-and post-modifying slots, for example '*The **crowd** shouting*', '*the cheering crowd*', '*The **boy** injured*', and '*the injured boy*'

### **Infinitive Phrases**

Infinitive phrases are those that comprise of the infinitive *to* and the *base* form of the verb. Examples are: '*The **desire** to succeed*', '*The **student** to beat*'

### **Adverbs and Adverbials**

Adverbs and adverbials are also used to modify nouns. Such categories of adverb like those signifying place or time also play the role of post-modifiers in the NP (Aremo, 2004). Examples are: '*there*', '*over there*', '*nearby*', '*above*', '*here*',

'below', as in: 'The **books** there', 'The **car** over there', 'The **notion** there', 'My **friends** nearby', 'My nearby **friends**', 'The **one** above', 'The **signs** here', 'The **sentences** below'

### **Empirical Review**

An investigation on headedness in English carried out by Rahmani and Abdolmanafi (2012) proved that English NPs can be post-modified by appositive phrases, gerund phrases, participles, adjective phrases and prepositional phrases, and pre-modified by attributive adjectives and nominals.

Next, Svencioniene and Zavistanaviciene (2012) studied the NP by exploring the preciseness of the relations between heads and their dependents inside the NP in English and Lithuanian. Its findings are that, in English, the structure of the clause is a vital part in signifying the NP as grammatical subject that precedes the main verb, while in Lithuanian the word order is irrelevant in the identification of the significance of the clause. This indicates that the structural configuration of the clause in English is the major clue for identifying the NP as the subject of the main verb.

Another study was done on English and Izon functional categories by Kwokwo (2012). The study deduced that English and Izon shared some features such as phrases, clauses, syntactic heads, and wh-fronting. However, English and Izon differ significantly in the head parameter. English has overt complementizers introducing RCs, while Izon RCs have no overt interpretable wh-expressions except an overt *amee* (that) which follows its complement clause.

A study of determiner phrase (DP) in English and Izon was done by Kwokwo (2015b), which showed that the English determiner functions pre-nominally, while that of Izon functions post-nominally. The study also observed that languages which share some universal principles may still have some parametric variations between them.

Finally, Kwokwo (2016) carried out a syntactic review of the null-subject parameter on English and Izon, and concluded that, though both languages have features of the principles of UG, they vary expressively; English is non-pro-drop, while Izon is pro-drop. Hence if a pro-drop sentence is translated into English, the sentence will be ungrammatical.

The related literatures considered and others that are not directly stated but accessed in the process of writing this paper disclose an apparent gap. Even

though, the reviewed works have their strong points, none has described or recognised the centrifugal and centripetal dependency relations between the head and its MODs in the Izon NP, which this paper has been established to do. This is vital because the dependency relation between the head and dependents in the Izon NP, either pre- or post-modification, which shows that words are not just ordered haphazardly but are connected by a relationship which is a vital aspect of syntactic analysis. Hence the aim of the paper is to investigate headedness in Izon NPs to ascertain the areas of divergence with English in order to proffer possible solutions to the problems encountered by the Izon-speaker of English in setting the parameter of the head correctly.

## **Methodology**

The study employed the descriptive research design. Data was described in terms of the position of the dependent elements in the Izon NP structure side by side their English equivalents. The population of the study covers the major Izon dialects spoken in Bayelsa state.

## **Sources and Methods of Data Collection**

Data was sourced from written materials and naturally occurring Izon NPs, which were provided by the speaker who is a speaker of both Izon and English.

## **Method of Data Analysis**

The method of analysis was the juxtaposed with the equivalents of both Izon and English NPs were placed side by side and described in terms of the position of the head noun and its modifiers, indicating the constituents of each modifier. The description started with data from English before presenting the Izon equivalents, then describe to ascertain the positional variations.

## **Data Analysis**

In the analysis, all Izon expressions are italicised, the head words within the noun phrases in both languages are in bold, the translated Izon (glossed) version is enclosed in square brackets, and the elements modifying the head are put in parenthesis to enable visibility of the positional configurations of the constituents. After structural analysis of each modifier type, a discussion of the findings is provided.

## **Determiners as Modifiers**

1. Article: the **man** *keme bi*  
N D  
[**man** (the)]

In example 1, the head word is *keme* preceding the determiner *bi*. The use of the article in modifying a noun shows that Izon is head-initial, while English is head-final, hence articles serve as postmodifiers and premodifiers, respectively.

2. Demonstratives: this **man** *bi kemebi*  
(D) N+D  
[(this) **man** the]

The head word *keme* is pre-modified by the demonstrative *bi* and postmodified by the article *bi* in Izon, the same applies to English in terms of the demonstrative. In the pre-modification of nouns with demonstratives, Izon and English share the same parameter setting.

3. Wh-words: which **man**? *dingi kemeyo/keme?*  
(D) N+interrogative  
marker  
[(which) **man**]

The analysis indicates that English and Izon share head-final parameter in the use of wh-words in modifying nouns. It also shows that Izon permits an optional interrogative marker suffixed to the head of enquiry and also a question mark.

4. Cardinals: one **man** *keni keme*  
(D) N  
[(one) **man**]

5. Ordinals: first **man** *bolou keme*  
(D) N  
[(first) **man**]

The use of cardinals and ordinals in modifying the nouns as shown in examples 4 and 5 indicates a similarity between Izon and English.

6. Multipliers: twice her **size** *amini mayo*  
Prn N  
[her **twice**]

Multipliers used in modifying the head in Izon are not overt. Instead, the multiplier assumes the place of the head. Hence the other available modifier (possessive 'her') becomes the modifier of the new head in head-final position.

7. Quantifiers: some **men**

*zua akeme/ zua keme ama*  
 (D+pl ) N+pl /D+pl N Prn+pl  
 [(some) **men**/some **men** them]

The analysis in example 7 shows that a quantificational modifier structure in Izon is similar to that of English, but the Izon phrase structure can also allow a pronoun postmodifying the head in the same structure. This doubtlessly proves the commonly used English expressions by Izon users, such as: ‘Those **men** *them* that were here’.

8. Possessives: my **man**

*ini keme/ini keme bi*  
 (D) N /(D) N D  
 [(my) **man**/(my) **man** the]

In Izon NP structures where nouns are pre-modified by possessive determiners, there may be an optional postmodifying article. This is common when the speaker wants to emphasise a point.

9. Adjectives: the beautiful **woman**/beautiful **women**

*ebi erearau mo / ebi ereamo/ ebi ereamomo*  
 Adj N+sg D / Adj N+pl / Adj N+pl+D  
 [beautiful **woman** the/ beautiful **women**/ beautiful **women** the]

In modifying nouns with attributive Adjs, Izon and English are similar. But Izon optionally uses the article *mo* to post-modify the head, hence allowing two articles in a single NP.

10. Nouns: school **children**

*Sukulu owoamo*  
 (N) N+pl+Pron/D  
 [(school) **children** them/the]

Nouns as modifiers in English and Izon both occur in head-final structures. But as always, Izon permits an extra post-modifier suffixed to the head which can be proven to be a pronoun or an article.

11. Appositions: the rich **man**, Andrew Morgan *Pere keme bi, Andrew Morgan*

Adj N D (APP)  
 [rich **man** the, (Andrew

Morgan)]

The APP in Izon occupies the same slot as English.

Prepositional Phrases: the **man** in the house

*wari gho emi keme bi/wari bi gho emi keme bi*  
 (N P BE+pres) N D/ (N D P BE+pres) N D  
 [(house in is) **man** the/(house the in is) **man** the]

The Izon PP precedes its head, and the head of the PP is preceded by its object, hence a postposition.

12. Relative Clauses: The **men** who came yesterday

*keme amomo ni bodei dein ghe bo otumo/bodei dein ghe bo akememo*  
N pl+Pron(C pst N BE V N+pl) / (pst N BE V) pl+N+D+pl  
[**man** them (that pst day is/was come people)/ (pst day is/was come)  
**men**]

The analysis indicates that RCs in Izon are flexible, in that they can precede and follow their head, while English only allows RCs as post-modifiers of the noun.

13. Participles: crying **babies** *youemi owoubo*  
(Prt) N+pl+D  
[(crying) **babies** the]

It is observed that participles in Izon, like English, appear at the initial position of the NP, therefore making Izon a head-final language with regards NP having participles as modifiers.

14. That clauses: the **story** that she is married  
*igberini ani zeinanadei ebeni gbamini igberimi/ani zeinanadei ebeni gbamini egberimi*  
N+(that Prn V+pst that V+ing N+D) / (Pr V+pst that V+ing)  
N+D

[story+(that she marry+pst that telling story+the)/(she marry+pst that telling) story+the]

The position of the 'that clause' in modifying an NP in Izon is both head-initial and head-final. The difference is that, English cannot use it in head-final position.

## Conclusion

The study highlighted headedness in NPs in Izon and English languages. The possible noun head modifiers were analysed to prove the variations. The study showed that headedness in relation to the NP in both Izon and English is not absolute. It was discovered that, in the Izon language, apart from articles, all the determiners, adjectives, nouns, and participles, just like English, precede the head, also, appositives, prepositional phrases, relative clauses, and 'that clauses', appear at the post-modifying slot, but in the case of the latter group, only appositives and PPs are limited to appear in head-initial position, all other dependents can appear both as pre- and post-modifiers in the Izon NP.

Another observation was that, unlike English, two determiners can co-occur with the head at pre- and post-modifying slots in Izon, with only determiners other than articles preceding the head, and articles appearing only after the head. This agrees with the assumptions of parameters in UG, that every language has its unique features structurally which make it different from others. Hence, the paper concludes that in the parameter of headedness in relation to the NP, English is predominantly head-final since the obligatory articles in the NP can

only occur in head-final position, while Izon is predominantly head-initial as the compulsory articles occur in head-initial position. It is recommended that Izon learners of English with the difficulty of setting the English NP head parameter should make conscious efforts to learn from such works that investigated the two parameters such as provided here to solve the problem of ungrammaticality in English as a second language.

### **Contribution to knowledge**

This work has aided us with the knowledge of the variation in the NP structures between Izon and English. It has also revealed the predominant headedness parameter in English and Izon NPs. Finally, the paper has discovered that aside the universal labels of the headedness parameter of the UG, (in which English is labelled as head-initial language, and Izon as head-final language, which is limited to VPs), noun phrases are not likely to strictly follow that order in the parametric variation in all languages. Hence, the paper advocates for a separate criterion for the classification of the head parameter in languages as regards the noun phrase.

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