On the Structure of the Qualifier System in Öko-Ösanyen

Akeem Ségun Sáláwù*

Abstract
The paper identifies the different types of qualifiers in Öko-Ösanyen, one of the endangered African languages spoken in Ògòri-Mágómò Local Government in Nigeria. It also examines and explains in detail the sequential co-occurrence of the qualifiers within the noun phrases. The paper believes that the language still retains the relics of the old patterning of the Qualifier-Qualified sequence of the Proto-language to the African languages under the sub-phylum of West-Benue-Congo which it belongs.

1. Introduction
Öko-Ösanyen is a member of the West Benue Congo of the sub-phylum Niger-Congo family of the African languages (Heine and Nurse 2001:31). It is the main language of the Ôkûrô and Ôsányénrô people living at Ògòri-Mágómò Local Government Area in Kogi State of Nigeria. It is one of the endangered languages in the world and it has received a little recent serious scholarly academic attention. (Chumbow 1982a&, b; Adègbija 1993, 2001, Sáláwù 2005, 2006a&b). The data for this study are drawn from many native speakers who served willingly as our informants.

The purpose of this paper is to look at the qualifier system in Öko-Ösanyen by identifying different types of qualifiers in the language and discussing the sequential co-occurrence of these qualifiers in phrases.

2. Headhood and Qualifier
Öko-Ösanyen is a SVO language and it is a head-first language. The Head parameter within the theoretical framework of Principles and Parameters as propounded by Chomsky (1981, 1986) deals with the position of heads within the phrases (NP, VP etc). A particular language consistently has its heads on the same side of the complements in all its phrases. In fact, head has been employed to divide the languages of the

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world into two. A language can be head-first or head-last. Chomsky (1981:6) has this to say:

Ideally, we hope to find that complexes of properties differentiating otherwise similar languages are reducible to a single parameters, fixed in one or another way.

Chomsky & Lasnik 1993: 527 comment further on the issue:

The phrase structure system for a particular language is largely restricted to specification of the parameters that determine the ordering of head-complement, head-adjunct and SPEC-head.

For instance, while Ebira and English are head-first languages, Japanese is a head-last language. (1) shows this clearly.

(1) a. Èbirà

(i) NP: Ôhinóyyi i Okene 'King of Okene'
   King Okene

(ii) VP: re Õchôku 'buy rice'
   Buy rice

b. English

(i) NP: King of England ii. Brought the chair

c. Japanese

(i) VP: Hon -o Katta 'He bought a book'
   Book buy
(ii) PP: [Fune] ńi 'on the boat'

Boat on

Ọkọ-Ọsanyẹn is a head-first language as shown in (2).

(2a) NP: Ìpíléṣò ìónókó ìókókó àrò 'The eight car'

Car eight

b. VP: Wàn údúdó 'kill.slaughter a sheep'

kill sheep

(2b) assumes that the Noun (N) – Qualifier (Q) sequence should be the pattern in any Ọkọ-Ọsanyẹn noun phrase that consists of a qualifier and a qualified item. But it seems that there are some exceptions to this general format. This will be discussed fully in the next section of this study.

3. Noun Qualifiers in Ọkọ-Ọsanyẹn

The focus of this section is to identify and discuss different types of qualifiers for the nouns in Ọkọ-Ọsanyẹn with relevant data. Awóbǔlúyì (1978:30) defines a qualifier as follows:

Any word or grammatical (i.e. acceptable) combination of words which qualifies a noun is a qualifier. Therefore the actual work of qualifiers is to narrow down the conceptual range of meanings of nouns.

From this definition, one can deduce first, that any linguistic item that will be classified as a qualifier cannot occur in isolation in any sentence containing it. Second, a qualifier co-occurs with nouns only. Third, a qualifier in a noun phrase can be represented by a single word, or a phrase or by a clause. Both semantic and syntactic criteria can be employed to classify the qualifiers in Ọkọ-Ọsanyẹn into different groups. All these observations shall be substantiated with relevant data as we progress in this paper.

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3.1 Adjectival Qualifier

In Òkó-Ósànyèn, adjectives are usually used to qualify nouns. Unlike many African Languages such as Yorùbá, Edó where their adjectives begin with consonantal segments, it is discovered that all Òkó-Ósànyèn adjectives start with vowels and end with vowels. The language has an open-ended syllabic structure system. (3) presents the data for the adjectival qualifiers.

(3) a. ësa  órinrin  'Black cloth'
    Cloth  black

b. úbó  ókèkà  'large house'
    house  large

c. ówùn  óránràn  'sweet soup'
    soup  sweet

d. àgàn  òyànyàn  'red hoe'
    hoe  red

e. emumu  ókùkùrà  'white book'
    book  white

The italicized words are the qualifiers following the qualified nouns: ësa, úbó, ówùn, àgàn and emumu.

3.2 Numeral Qualifier

Numerals in Òkó-Ósànyèn can be grouped under two main headings namely cardinal and ordinal. We present these numerals in (4).
The cardinal numerals are the ones under column A and they are used to indicate the exact quantity or number of nouns that they occur with. The data in (5) illustrate this:

(5) a. úbó ëbọrë 'two houses'
    House two

b. ahérë ëta 'three fish'
    fish three

c. ãgán ọnkọnkọkọ 'eight hoes'
    hoe eight
The numerals in Column B are the ordinal ones which generally indicate the exact position of an object in a series. The phrases illustrating this are in (6).

(6)a. emumu ọtétáró 'The third book'
       Book    third
b. ujun upupiró 'The fifth door'
       door    fifth
c. ọsèn ufombôrèrò 'The seventh month'
       month    seventh

The structural position of these numeral qualifiers (both cardinal and ordinal) in relation to nouns they are qualifying is that the nouns – the head-words, occur in the initial position, then the qualifiers come after them.

In addition; the ordinal qualifiers have different phonological structures from their cardinal ones. Looking at the data in (4) very closely, one can infer that some ordinal qualifiers are formed from the cardinal qualifiers through the morphological processes of reduplication, suffixation and prefixation as shown in (7).

(7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Root</th>
<th>Partial Reduplication</th>
<th>Suffixation</th>
<th>Prefixation</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. èta 'three' -&gt; tèta</td>
<td>-&gt;</td>
<td>tèta + -rò -&gt; ò-+tètarò -&gt;</td>
<td>ọtétárò</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. èna 'four' -&gt; nènà</td>
<td>-&gt;</td>
<td>nènà + -rò -&gt; ò-+nènà + -rò -&gt;</td>
<td>ọnènərò</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. upi 'five' -&gt; pupi</td>
<td>-&gt;</td>
<td>pupi + -rò -&gt; ù+pupi + -rò -&gt;</td>
<td>upupirò</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Meanwhile, some are formed only through the process of suffixation as presented in (8).
Root Suffixation Result

a. ọpọ.ọjọ̀ 'seven' -> ọpọ.ọjọ̀ + rọ -> ọpọ.ọjọ̀rọ 'seventh'

b. ọnékọ́nýọ̀kóòdö 'eight' -> ọnékọ́nýọ̀kóòdö + rọ -> ọnékọ́nýọ̀kóòdö 'eighth'

c. ọgò 'ten' -> ọgò + rọ -> ọgò rọ 'tenth'

3.3 Demonstrative Qualifier

Demonstrative qualifiers in Òko-Ọsányén are specifiers of number. They indicate the number in terms of singular or plural. They are few in number. They are presented in (9).

(9)a. ñúbọ ọ̀nè 'this house'
    house this

b. ñúbọ ènànè 'these houses'
    house these

c. èrùnrò ṣńàbè 'that farmer'
    farmer that

d. èrùnrò ènàbè 'those farmers'
    farmer those

From the data in (9), it is shown clearly that ọ́nè and ṣńàbè are the singular demonstrative qualifiers while ènànè and ènàbè are the plural demonstrative qualifiers. Also, the structural position of these demonstrative qualifiers in relation to the nouns is such that the nouns being qualified occur before these qualifiers. In addition, this language has only one definite article ì ayé.

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3.4 **Appositive Qualifier**

Appositive qualifier is one of the qualifiers in Òko-Ósànyèn. Quirk and Greenbaum (1973:276) outline the criteria for appositive constructions as follows:

> Four units to be appositives, they must normally be identical in reference or else the reference of one must be included in the reference of the other... In many cases, the co-reference and grammatical similarity will permit the omission of either appositive unit with a resultant acceptable and synonymous sentence.

From this explanation, it means that for a constituent to be regarded as an appositive, it must satisfy the criteria of co-reference and similarity in syntactic status. We present the data in (11) to show-case the appositive constructions in Òko-Ósànyèn.

(11)a. Òjimò yìn isuru,  iɡilà  ọkèkà

```
Jimò buy a type of bitter edible tuber yam big
```

'Jimò buys/bought isuru, a big yam'.

b. Ọkí, ẹrùnrọ ọyẹ  sù  Ibímẹ̀

```
Okì, farmer the marry Bímẹ̀
```

c. Àúdù, ìkógi  Ègómìnà  pílà  à lè

```
Audù Kogi Governor arrive come has
```

'Àúdù, Governor of Kogi state has arrived'
In all the examples in (11), Ḩisur, Ṣgiilē ǭkēkā, Ṣkē, ǭrūnro ǭyē, Aūdū and Ikōgi, Ḩgōminā are the appositives but they have different syntactic status. Ḩisur, Ṣkē and Aūdū are the head-words of the noun phrases where the appositives: Ṣgiilē ǭkēkā, ǭrūnro ǭyē and Ikōgi Ḩgōminā function as their qualifiers.

Using the criterion of co-reference as hinted by Quirk and Greenbaum (1973), we can generate two different sentences having the same semantic output from the data in (11) as in (12).

(12)a. Ûjmō yin Ḩisur 'Jimō buys/bought and edible yam'
   Ûjmō yin Ṣgiilē ǭkēkā 'Jimō buys/bought a big yam'

b. Ṣkē su Ṣbimpe' 'Ôki marries/married Bimpe'
   ǭrūnro ǭyē su Ṣbimpe 'the farmer marries/married Bimpe'

c. Aūdū pila ša kē 'Aūdū has arrived'
   Ikōgi Ḩgōminā pila ša kē 'Governor of Kogi State has arrived'

3.5 Relative Clause Qualifier

Another qualifier of the nominal items in ƕko-Ǒsanyén is the relative clause qualifier. The markers of the relative clause qualifier in the language are ne or nenē. All constituents that can perform the functions of subject, object or qualifier can be relativized in this language as presented in (13).

(13)a. Ayō su Ûdēlē ǭgbēn
   Ayō marry Dēlē child
   'Ayō marries/married Dele's child

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b. Ayọ nẹ(ǹẹ) sù ìdélé ogben
   Ayọ REL marry Dele child
   'Ayọ who marries/married Dele's child'

c. ìdélé ógbèn nẹ(ǹẹ) Ayọ sù
   Dele child REL Ayọ marry
   'Dele's child whom Ayọ marries/married'

d. ìdélé nẹ(ǹẹ) Ayọ sù yógbèn
   Dele REL Ayọ marries his child
   "Dele whose Ayọ marries/married his child"

(13a) is the kernel sentence. It is the subject of (13a) that takes the relative clause qualifier in (13b); while the object of (13a) is qualified by the relative clause qualifier in (13c). and, the nominal qualifier ìdélé in (13a) takes the relative clause qualifier in (13d). in (13b – d), the relative clause qualifiers follow their head-words: Ayọ, ìdélé, Ògbèn and ìdélé respectively.

3.6 Genitival Qualifier
Ôko-Ôsanyèn has some grammatical items that do function as genitival qualifiers in noun phrases. They have grammatical categories of number and person as presented in (14).

(14)a. |       | Singular | Plural |
    |-------|----------|--------|
    | 1st persa | Meékà   | Tēékà  |
    | 2nd person| Wēékà   | Nēékà  |
    | 3rd person| Yēékà   | Bēékà  |

As shown in (14b), the structural position of these genitival qualifiers in a noun phrase is that they always follow the nouns (head-words) to be qualified. Another observation is in the morphological composition of these genitival qualifiers. They are composed of the short pronouns in the language such as mọ, ti, wọ, nẹ, yẹ, bẹ and the lexical item 'kà' in the language.

3.7 Pronoun Qualifier

In Òkój-Osányèn, there are two types of pronouns: short and long ones. Either of the two can be used as qualifiers in the language. On the short pronouns functioning as qualifiers, they are monosyllabic and they also have allomorphic variations as a result of the operation of the vowel harmony in the language. (15) displays these pronoun qualifiers while (16) contain their usage in grammatical constructions.

(15)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SET A</td>
<td>SET B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person</td>
<td>mì</td>
<td>mọ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person</td>
<td>wú</td>
<td>wọ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person</td>
<td>yú</td>
<td>yẹ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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(16)a.  

i.  Ṫkí gbá mí emumu 'Oki sees/saw my book'

ii.  Ṫkí see my book

ii.  Ṫkí gbá mó órè 'Oki sees/saw my friend'

Oki see my friend

b.  i.  Ṫkí gbá ti égbèlé 'Oki sees/saw our cutlass'

Oki see our cutlass

On the long pronouns functioning as qualifiers, they are bisyllabic and they have no allomorphic variations like the short pronoun because the harmonic constraints on or the tenseness or laxness of the vowel of the verbs do not have any influence on them. They have a system of number like their short counterparts. These long pronouns are presented as follows in (17):

(17)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st person</td>
<td>Àmè</td>
<td>Àtò</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person</td>
<td>Àwò</td>
<td>Ànò</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person</td>
<td>Àyè</td>
<td>Àbè</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following sentences in (18) will reveal their structural positions in relation to the nouns that they are qualifying.

(18)

a.  iyá bè: àtò isúdà 'A mother beat/beats our brothers'

mother beat our brother

b.  àmè èsà àyè Èsàdè jò 'It is my cloth that Sàdé sold'

my cloth FOC Sàdé sell
There is one glaring observation to be noted in the data in (16) & (18) as regards the structural position of the short and long pronouns. The N-Q sequence is not followed at all. We have an inverted version of sequence. The qualifier mi, mó, ti té, àtō and àmē are placed before the nouns 'emumu, órè, égbèlè, ésa, isúdà and ésa - the head words of the noun phrases where the qualifiers function.

3.8 Nominal Qualifier
As in other languages, Òkọ-Òsanyen does permit some nouns to qualify other nouns. These are labeled in this paper as nominal qualifiers. They may be human or non-human nouns. Anytime, we have grammatical structures involving these nominal qualifiers and qualified nouns, the N-Q sequence order is changed to Q-N order as we have in (3.7). (19) presents the data to buttress this syntactic observation.

(19) a. ówún ótélè 'The soup's pot'
   Soup pot
b. òtun ódótè 'The ear's hole'
   ear hole
c. úwó ọmodótè 'dog's nose'
   dog nose
d. Ìbìsì iwà 'Bisi's behaviour'
   Bisi behaviour
e. Ìkòkò ọtí 'Cocoa's tree'
   cocoa tree
f. Èkò ógbèn 'Lagos child'
   Lagos child

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One may try to find out the genesis of the difference in the qualifier–
qualified sequence in Ōko-Qsanyen. This paper subscribes to Sáláwù’s
(2006a) reconstruction proposal to the effect that the proto-language to
the African languages under the sub-phylum of West Benué-Congo
which Ōko-Qsanyen belongs to (Heine & Nurse 2001:31), must have
permitted the N-Q and Q-N patternings at one time before. This
suggestion is a product of analysis of the cross-linguistic data. In all
languages relating to Ōko-Qsanyen such as Igbo, Yoruba, Edó and Erirà,
the N-Q sequence is generally chosen as shown in (20)

a. Erirà

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ērēhi</th>
<th>āmi</th>
<th>'my house'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>house</td>
<td>my</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ēnu</td>
<td>Òzòzà</td>
<td>'good yam'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yam</td>
<td>good</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ònòru</td>
<td>Épàpà</td>
<td>'first man'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>man</td>
<td>first</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. Yorùbà

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Àso</th>
<th>mi</th>
<th>'my cloth'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cloth</td>
<td>my</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Òbinrin</td>
<td>pupa</td>
<td>'A fair woman'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>woman</td>
<td>red</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ílé</td>
<td>owó</td>
<td>'A bank'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>house</td>
<td>money</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Our assumption is that Òko-Ósânyên still retains the relics of the old patterning in the short and long pronoun qualifies and the nominal qualifiers.

4. The Sequential Co-occurrence of the Noun Qualifiers in Òko-Ósânyên

The focus of this section is to show the distributional patterning of the different noun qualifiers discussed in (3-3.8). Awóbǔlúyì (1978):42 has this to say on the sequence of the qualifiers in language:

The order in which qualifiers occur with themselves is partially free and partially fixed.

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It is possible in the language to have a cluster of qualifiers in an orderly manner after a noun that will be functioning as the head-word of a phrase. We shall use the table in (21) to explain the sequential co-occurrence of these qualifiers in Òkó-Ósànyèn.

(21)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Descriptive</th>
<th>Numeral</th>
<th>Relative clause</th>
<th>Demonstrative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(21a) says that if the descriptive qualifier follows the head-word closely then descriptive, numeral, relative clause and demonstrative qualifiers can co-occur with it as shown in (22).

(22)  
a. ūwó òyànyàŋ òóóó 'A tall red dog'
    Dog red tall

b. ūwó òyànyàŋ ẹtā 'Three red dogs'
    Dog red three

c. ūwó òyànyàŋ nǹg(ǹg) Áyó sú 'A red dog which Áyó has'
    Dog red RELÁyó have

d. ūwó òyànyàŋ ọnèbè 'that red dog'
    Dog red that
e. Igilá ọlọlọre ńgbokóre 'seven long thin tubers of yam'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>yam</th>
<th>long</th>
<th>thin</th>
<th>seven</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(21b) introduces numeral qualifiers as being the closest to the head-word and requires it to be followed by descriptive, relative clause and demonstrative qualifiers. It cannot be followed by another numeral. The distributional patterns are presented below:

(23)a. Ubo upupironede Ayó yin 'The fifth house that Ayó bought'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>House</th>
<th>fifth</th>
<th>REL</th>
<th>Ayó</th>
<th>buy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. Ubo upupirono onabé 'The fifth house'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>House</th>
<th>fifth</th>
<th>that</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(21c) introduces the relative clause qualifier immediately following the head-word and states that it can only be followed by another relative clause and demonstrative qualifiers. The data in (24) buttress this co-occurrence.

(24)a. Adé nè fó, nè tiye eguru, sá enran

Adé REL tall REL sing song come yesterday

'Ade who is tall, who sang, came yesterday'

b. Alakétà nè Olú yin oné

cassava REL Olú buy this
'This cassava which Olú bought'

(21d) introduces the demonstrative qualifier immediately following the head-word and stipulates that it can only be followed by relative clause and demonstrative qualifiers as shown in (25).

(25) a. ümü ọnábẹ̀ nè tè wán 'That goat that we killed'
   Goat that REL we kill

b. ógbèn ọnábẹ̀ gèdègèdè
   child that exact

The table in (21) does not account for the pronoun and nominal qualifiers because of their own parametric positioning. In addition, we must state categorically that not all demonstrative qualifiers can co-occur. The demonstratives such as áyè, ọnè, ọbábè, ẹnábè, ẹnánè can not function together as shown in

(26) *ümú ọnábẹ̀ áyè
   Goat that the

5. Conclusion
In this paper, we have looked at the eight different types of noun qualifiers in Òkó-Ọsànyèn and also we have been able to discuss the sequential co-occurrence of these qualifiers within the noun phrases in the language.
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