

# **A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF IMPERATIVE MARKERS IN THE EGGON, IGBO AND TANGALE LANGUAGES**

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines the imperative construction markers in Eggon, Igbo, and Tangale languages. Imperative marker is an integral part of speech in every language. Many studies have been done on imperative markers in English, Igbo and some other languages of the world, but none has been comparatively and contrastively carried out in English, Eggon, Igbo, and Tangale languages. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to carry out a comparative study on the imperative markers in Eggon, Igbo, and Tangale languages with a view to identifying the types of imperative markers in these languages, stating the functions of imperative markers and point out the differences and similarities in them. The study adopts the Contrastive Linguistic Analysis (CLA) theory as a framework,

which is one of the tools produced by Structural Grammar. It involves contrasting the grammatical system of two or more languages. As native speakers of these languages, the researchers use their intuition as sources of data for the study and also consult other literatures related to the research. The findings show that three types of imperative markers are found in Eggon, Igbo and Tangale as established in English. These are affirmative imperative marker, negative imperative marker and imperative with question tag. Igbo is more productive on imperative markers followed by Eggon. Imperative with question tags are found in all the languages which make use of the same term for English will and would. This shows how languages can be similar in spite of their different typology. This study adds to the existing literature in the study of imperative markers across languages, and specifically in linguistics. It also enhances documentation of under-researched languages, and in the same vein, strengthens the preservation and literacy development of minority languages in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** *Language, Imperative marker, Eggon, Igbo, Tangale*

## **1.0 Introduction**

Language is a system, just like any other system that is built from the habits of society and closely related to the culture of the people. According to Dewi (2009), language activities are what humans do to communicate. In fact, it is an activity for expression of forms or symbols that has meaning to the referent or the other person. Language is also a tool of self-expression as well as a tool to show identity. Therefore, language is very important and has close relation with human's activities. Language describes almost about everything, not just verbal functions, but also describes how humans live. There are so many languages which are spoken in the world. Language is unique and also valuable to the users. One language widely spoken internationally is English. In the development era, especially in developing countries like Nigeria, culture, local languages play important roles in supporting English language as the official language. This is obvious in the rich vocabulary available in English when compared to indigenous languages. Thus, English is widely used, not just because of the language's prestige, but also because of lack of or poor vocabularies in the indigenous languages. Therefore, carrying out research, especially comparative ones, between English and indigenous languages goes a long way in

developing indigenous languages for any form of discourse. Thus, this study, seeks to compare and contrast imperative markers in English and indigenous languages: Eggon, Igbo, and Tangale languages.

Igbo language is one of those so-called major group languages spoken in Nigeria. The other two are Hausa and Yoruba. Igbo is spoken mostly in the five South Eastern States of Nigeria- Abia, Anambra, Enugu, Imo, and Ebonyi. It belongs to the Igboid, Niger-Congo language family. Eggon is a minor indigenous language of the Benue-Congo Plateau family, spoken in Nasarawa State. Tangale is also a minor indigenous language belonging to the Chadic, Afro-Asiatic Phylum, spoken in the southern part of Gombe State. The main emphasis of this study is a contrastive analysis involving Eggon, Igbo, and Tangale languages. As each language has its unique ways of expressing imperative markers, imperative sentences do not have subjects and the verb in imperative sentences is always in simple present tense. We adopt the Contrastive Linguistic Analysis theory (henceforth, CLA), which according to Klein (1986), is appropriate in any investigation involving comparison of two languages. That is, contrastive grammar establishes a point-to-point relation between the languages' respective systems, with the aim of explaining the problematic areas, and thereby helping teachers to remedy errors made by speakers of one in learning the other. This hypothesis was credited to Lado (1957) as the lead proponent of CLA. Gast (2013) defines contrastive analysis as an investigation into the differences between pairs (or small sets) of languages against the background of similarities and differences. Mbah (2018) therefore concludes that, contrastive analysis is preoccupied with the comparison of two or more languages to be able to find areas of differences and similarities to help a learner to acquire the language easily, of which this study is based.

## 1.1 Objectives

The aim of this paper is to carry out a contrastive analysis of imperative constructions in the Eggon, Igbo and Tangale languages, with a view to identifying their structural similarities and differences, and to examining their implications for language learning, translation and multilingual communication in Nigeria. Therefore, to achieve the aim, the research seeks to:

- a. Identifies the types of imperative markers in these languages.
- b. Compares the imperative systems of the three languages, highlighting their similarities and differences.
- c. Contributes to the documentation and preservation of Eggon and Tangale (less-studied languages) by providing data and analysis of their imperative markers.

## 1.2 Research Problem

Imperatives, which are central to human communication because they express commands, requests, politeness, are realised differently across languages. While much research focuses on the core linguistic aspects of languages like phonology, morphology and syntax, less attention has been paid to imperative constructions in minority languages like Eggon and Tangale. In contrast, Igbo has a relatively richer linguistic documentation but little work has contrasted its imperative system with those of other Nigerian languages. Despite the importance of imperatives in daily interaction and the high degree of multilingualism in Nigeria, there is a lack of comparative studies that examine how imperatives are structured across unrelated Nigerian languages. This poses a problem for both linguistic theory (since cross-linguistic data is needed for universal generalisations) and for practical application (such as teaching, translation and literacy development). Therefore, there is need for a contrastive analysis of imperative markers in the Eggon, Igbo and Tangale languages. The study is also imperative because the three languages are of different genetic families, hence their structural similarities and differences worth examining. Generally, the study will enable us predict areas of difficulty in cross-language learning

and contribute to the documentation of under-researched Nigerian languages.

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

This study adds to literature expansion in the study of imperatives across languages and in linguistic studies specifically. Theoretically, it contributes to the field of contrastive linguistics by applying the Contrastive analysis hypothesis to three indigenous Nigerian languages. It also enriches linguistic typology by providing data on imperative constructions across three genetically unrelated languages (Eggon = Benue Congo, Igbo = Igboid, Tangale = Chadic), thus advancing cross-linguistic generalisations about imperative systems. By documenting imperative constructions in Eggon and Tangale, the study also contributes to the descriptive grammar of these lesser studied languages, providing data for future comparative and historical studies. Practically, the findings of this research highlight areas of similarities and differences in imperative structures, making it easier to design teaching materials and predict learning difficulties in multilingual contexts. For translators and interpreters, the study offers insights into how commands and requests are encoded across languages reducing risks of miscommunication or impoliteness in cross-cultural communication. The documentation of Eggon and Tangale strengthens their inclusion in literacy and educational programs, supporting Nigeria's indigenous language development goals. Moreover, the study gives better understanding of how commands and politeness are expressed, in order to improve mediation strategies in conflict resolution.

### **2.0 Literature Review**

Oshima and Hogue (2006) focus on writing skills. They discuss imperative markers in academic writing and how they are employed to convey instructions and guidance. Asonye (2006) claims that the progressive marker 'na' in Igbo is written at the initial position of the imperative progressive sentence, as in:

1. Na-ego m iheogeniile!  
Be buying things from me always!

He grouped Imperative markers in Igbo into three; affirmative, negative and progressive markers. Odokara (2015) examines the syntactic nature of imperative markers in English and Igbo. She was able to identify the differences and similarities between English and Igbo imperatives. She noted that both English and Igbo imperatives correspond in their usage confirming the universality of language, except for the negative markers that are usually separated from the verb in English but in Igbo are suffixed to the verb, as in (2) below:

- 2.a. Do not run. (English negation ‘not’)
- b. Agbalaṣọ (Igbo negation with suffix ‘la’)

In her study, Odokara (2015) identifies eight functions of imperative markers in English as: a request, a suggestion, a command, an advice, a warning, a prohibition, a persuasion and as an invitation. Eggon and Tangale as minor group languages, as at the time of this study, do not have any literature on imperatives. The data used here are based on the researchers’ intuitions.

## 2.1 Imperative Mood Markers and Types (An Overview)

Imperative markers are linguistic elements that indicate commands, requests, or directives. According to Oxford Learners Dictionary, an imperative sentence is one “expressing an order”, while the *Cambridge Dictionary* defines imperative as “a sentence that gives command or request to do something. Imperatives play a crucial role in language by conveying the speaker's intentions and influencing discourse dynamics. An imperative marker is an integral part of speech in every language. Crystal (1980) and Wiredu (1998) group English imperative markers into three which are found below:

- a. Imperative affirmative e.g. do, be, let us, please, etc.
- b. Imperative negative markers e.g. do not, don't, no, don't be, let's not .
- c. Imperative markers with tag question e.g. will you? Would you? Won't you? Could you? Can you? Can't you?

This study tries to replicate Wiredu's (1998) imperatives grouping in Eggon, Igbo and Tangale.

Crystal (2007:237) describes imperative as “verb forms or sentence/clause types typically used in the expression of commands”. Nnamdi–Eruchalu (2007:176) suggests that mood refers “to the form the verb takes to portray the speaker's or the writer's attitude to the topic”. She further says that it is the mood of a verb that expresses a statement. According to Crystal (2007:299), mood refers to “a set of syntactic and semantic contrast signaled by alternative paradigms”.

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

The present study adopts the Contrastive Linguistic Analysis (CLA) theory as a framework. The proponents of this theory include Fries (1945), Lado (1957), Weinreich (1953), and Corder (1967 and 1974). Contrastive linguistics is the systematic comparison of two or more languages with the aim of identifying their similarities and differences. It is closely linked to the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH), which states that difficulties in learning a second language (L2) can be predicted by identifying differences between the learner's native language (L1) and the target language.

The choice of CLA theory for this study is justified by the comparative nature of the research which seeks to examine the similarities and differences in imperative construction in Eggon, Igbo and Tangale. Contrastive linguistics theory is designed for the systematic comparison of two or more languages. Since this study compares imperative structures across three languages, the theory is an appropriate framework for identifying points of convergence and divergence.

The core tenets of CLA include: language learning is influenced by the learner's native language (L1). Positive transfer: similarities between L1 and L2 facilitate learning while negative transfer (interference) differences cause error and teaching should focus on contrast. Comparison of languages is systematic. That is, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics of the

languages being compared to predict difficulty. Errors in L2 can be predicted by contrasting it with L1. Contrastive analysis is bidirectional: differences and similarities can be identified whether moving from L1- L2 or L2- L1

### **3.0 Methodology**

This study adopts the descriptive and qualitative research design grounded in Contrastive Linguistics theory. The design allows for a systematic comparison of imperative constructions in Eggon, Igbo and Tangale with the aim of identifying their structural and functional similarities and differences. The study focuses on three Nigerian languages: Igbo (a major Nigerian language from Niger Congo, Igboid family), Eggon (a minor Nigerian language from Benue Congo family) and Tangale (a minor Nigerian language from Chadic family).

Data for the study are sourced from three sources. First is introspection. The researchers make use of their native speakers' intuition and linguistic competence to generate basic imperative construction. The second source of data is native speaker consultation. This is achieved through interactions and informal interviews with competent native speakers of Eggon, Igbo and Tangale to validate forms, meanings and usage of imperatives. Documented resources constitute the third source. These include dictionaries and journal articles related to the work. The procedure for data collection includes the elicitation of imperative sentences expressing commands, requests, and polite directives. Equivalent constructions are selected to ensure comparability across languages, following the principles of contrastive analysis. The collated data are analysed using qualitative descriptive analysis.

The present study is limited to simple and negative imperative constructions in Eggon, Igbo and Tangale. Dialectal variations and complex imperative structures are outside the scope of this research.

## 4.0 Data presentation and analysis

This section presents and analyses data for the study. Imperatives are presented in the three languages under study respectively.

### 4.1 Imperative markers in Eggon

Nothing has been done on imperative markers in Eggon language to the knowledge of the researchers. Imperative in Eggon is generally used to influence the person one is talking to, to perform or refrain from a particular action. Imperatives in the language can be either affirmative, negative or in the form of a question.

#### 4.1.2 Affirmative imperative markers in Eggon

Affirmative imperative in Eggon involves the use of single morphemes that can be mono/disyllabic words. This can be used to give direct order. Partial reduplication/triplication can also be used in Eggon affirmative imperative to express emphasis or duration. However, the order can be softened by the use of *bábgá* ‘please’ or *ká mé* ‘excuse me/ hello’. Some affirmative imperatives in Eggon include:

##### Affirmative

3. a. kpó ‘do’,
- b. bábgá ‘please’
- c. bâ ‘will’
- d. dá ‘let’,

The examples of affirmative imperatives in Eggon can be seen in the sentences in (4) below.

##### Command

4. Bimi bâba ‘will you come’  
           You (pl) will come  
           Kpó lo! ‘do it’  
           Do it

##### Request

5. dá na ba! ‘let him/her come’  
           let him/her come  
           Bábgá, rí algo lo vyé! ‘please, finish the food’  
           Please eat food it all



bimi ba mbó? ‘Won’t you come?’  
 you (pl) come no

In the examples above, the negative imperative marker *mbo* ‘no’ is used at the end of the sentences to change them from statements to questions.

#### 4.1.5 Functions of Imperative Markers in Eggon

Imperative in Eggon, as shown above, is used to influence the person one is speaking to. It performs various functions which include:

- a. To give command (e.g. 4 above)
- b. To ask a question (e.g. 7 above)
- c. To make a request(e.g. 5 above)

#### 4.2 Imperative Markers in Igbo

Imperative markers in Igbo are those markers used in constructing imperative sentences in Igbo. Some Igbo imperative sentences can be formed with imperative verbs as one word command. Such verbs have their morpheme constituents as consonants and vowels that have high or low tone stem. They have neither subjects nor objects such as the following:

8. rie –eat, gbaa- run/shoot, bee- cry, gbuo- kill, nuo- drink, and puo- go out.

These imperatives in (8) above have no subject and object but still pass a complete message and meaning.

##### 4.2.1 Igbo Affirmative Markers

Affirmative markers in Igbo include; bíkó, ka, na, di, mee. We shall further explain their usage to create imperative sentences.

**Bíkó - Please:** Biko as an imperative marker can indicate politeness or harshness in Igbo depending on the mood. It can be at the sentence initial, medial or final positions as in (9) below:

- | <b>Igbo</b>              | <b>Gloss</b> |
|--------------------------|--------------|
| 9. a. Bíkó, nyèrè ñ áká. |              |

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Please give me hand                  | Please, help me. (request)                |
| b. Àdá, bíkó zàà ùlò à.              |   |
| Ada please sweep house this          | Ada, please sweep the house.<br>(request) |
| c. Égbùlé yá bikò.                   |   |
| Prefix -e kill not him/her/it please | Don't kill it please. (appeal)            |

**Kà - Let/ Please:** As an imperative marker, “kà” can mean an appeal, advice or suggestion in Igbo. It can be at the initial, middle or final position of a sentence. For instance:

- | <b>Igbo</b>  | <b>Gloss</b>                  |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 10. a. Kà ànyị gbápú.<br>Let us run out -  | Let us run away. (suggestion) |
| b. Kà, bịa ébé à.<br>Please, come place this -   | Please, come here. (appeal)   |
| c. Gbáíá méé yá, kà nwá m̄.<br>Run endure do it, please child me – try and do it, please my child.<br>(advice) |                               |

**Nà – be:** This imperative marker is always in a progressive mood construction. It always precedes a verb or follows a noun in a sentence, as in (11) below:

- | <b>Igbo</b>  | <b>Gloss</b>                |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 11. a. Nà- àbía ùbòchì áhía niilé.<br>Be coming day market every - | Be coming every market day. |
| b. Ólá, nà- èdé yá.<br>Ola be writing it                           | - Ola, be writing it.       |

**Mèé – Do:** This affirmative imperative marker is mostly used in the initial position for request or command.

- | <b>Igbo</b>                           | <b>Gloss</b>                              |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 12. a. Mèé síé òrì<br>Do cook food. - | Do and cook food. (request/command)       |
| b. Mèé záá ùlō.<br>Do sweep house -   | Do and sweep the house. (request/command) |

### 4.2.2 Negative imperative markers in Igbo

The negative marker in Igbo uses **a/e** prefix, and suffix harmonising negative markers **la/le/na/ne** to the verb. The suffix may have a high or low tone to form negation. For example:

- | <b>Igbo</b>                  | <b>Gloss</b>   |
|------------------------------|--|
| 13. a. Bìá, éménà̀m̀kpòtù.   |  |
| Come, do not noise -         | Come, do not make noise. -<br>(prohibition/ command) |
| b. Ágbà̀l̀à égwú.            |  |
| Prefix ‘a’ dance not dance - | Don’t dance. (prohibition/<br>command)               |
| c. Úzó, égbùl̀è ónwé g̃.     |  |
| Uzo do kill not you self -   | Uzo, don’t kill yourself. (advice/<br>prohibition)   |

The underlined suffixes in (13) above are the imperative markers indicating negation in Igbo.

Apart from these suffixes, Igbo negative markers include the use of ‘kà’ with ‘ghàrà’ in sentence constructions, as in, kà há ghàrà, há anyi ghàrà, kà unu ghàrà, kà m ghàrà, etc.

- | <b>Igbo</b>                | <b>Gloss</b>        |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| 14. Kà há ghàrà ìgbà ósò.  |                     |
| Let them leave to run race | - Let them not run. |

### 4.2.3 Imperative markers with question tag

These are imperative markers in the form of question tags used in imperative sentences in Igbo. They include:

- |                               |                           |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 15. a. Ì gá? (Will you?)      |                           |
| e.g. Ì gá-ákwùsì ìbé àkwá?    |                           |
| You will stop to cry cry      | - (Will you stop crying?) |
| b. Ì gághì? (Won’t you?)      |                           |
| e.g. Ì gághì ábíá?            |                           |
| You will not come             | - (won’t you come?)       |
| c. Ì nwèrè íké? (Can you?)    |                           |
| e.g. Ì nwèrè íké ìgbà ósò?    |                           |
| You have strength to run race | - (Can you run?)          |

d. Ì nwèghì íké? (Can't you?)

e.g. Ì nwèghì íkè ìbìá?

You have not strength to come - (Can't you come?)

In example 15 (a-d), the imperative markers that indicate question tags are; Ì gá? (will you?), Ì gághì? (Won't you?), Ì nwèrè íké? (Can you?) and Ì nwèghì íké? (Can't you?) as used in the sentences.

#### 4.2.4 Functions/uses of imperative markers in Igbo

Imperative markers in Igbo have the following functions:

- a. As a request. See 9a&b and 12 above.
- b. As an advice. See 10c above.
- c. As a suggestion. See 10a above.
- d. As an appeal. See 9c, 10b above.
- e. As a command. See 12 above.
- f. As a prohibition. See 13 above.

#### 4.3. Imperative markers in Tangale

Imperative affirmative markers are linguistic elements used to indicate commands or requests in an assertive, positive manner. They are used to tell someone to do something or to give an instruction. Affirmative imperative markers in Tangale are *yà* 'do' and *kerkebe* 'please'. Below are some examples of imperative affirmative markers in Tangale language:

16. a. Yà wuten ni  
Gloss: do work the 'do the work'

b. kerkebe nas poma ni  
Gloss: please close door the 'please close the door'

In the examples above, the imperative markers *yà* 'do' and *kerkebe* 'please' are used in the sentences as underlined.

##### 4.3.1 Imperative marker with question tag in Tangale

In the Tangale language, there are only two words used for question tag. They are *yà* 'will/do' and *yám* 'will not/do not' as in the examples.

17. a. oton tag je, yà ongi?  
 Gloss: Give me shoe this, will give? ‘give me this shoe, will you?’  
 b. dangu, ka dangi?  
 Gloss: Try you try it? ‘try it, will you try it?’  
 c. yà wute ni ka yám  
 do work the you will not ‘do the work won’t you’

In the above examples, the imperatives *yà* ‘will/do’ and *yám* ‘will not/do not’ are used in the sentences as underlined to show question tags.

### 4.3.2 Negative imperative markers in Tangale

The negative imperative marker in Tangale is the suffix –m, which is attached to the affirmative *yà* (do) to form negative commands or requests *yám* with a change in tone from high to low. It indicates that the action being commanded or requested should not be performed. For example:

18. a. makyám ta wajem  
 Gloss: M don’t touch this thing ‘don’t touch this thing’  
 b. makyám sagram  
 Gloss: M don’t fight ‘don’t fight’

### 4.3.3 Functions of imperative markers in Tangale

Imperative markers in Tangale perform the functions of giving command, and expressing politeness as in examples 19 and 20 below:

19. a. Yà wuten ni  
 Gloss: do work the ‘Do the work’  
 b. Yànas poma ni  
 Gloss: do close door the ‘close the door’

20. Expressing politeness

- a. Kerkebe oton tag je  
 Gloss: please give me shoe this ‘Please give me this shoe’  
 b. Kerkebe wako  
 Gloss: Please go ‘Please go’

In examples (19-20), the imperatives *yà* ‘do’ and *kerkebe* ‘please’ are used as underlined to show command and politeness respectively.

**Table 1: Comparison of imperative affirmation markers in Igbo, Eggon and Tangale**

English (Gloss)	Igbo	Eggon	Tangale
1. please	Bìkò	Bábgá	kerkebe
2. let	Kà	Dá	---
3. be (progressive)	Nà	bâ	---
4. let me / let us/let they/him/her/it/you	kà m̄/ kà ányì/kà há/kà yá / kà gí	dá me/ dá ño /dána/dági/	----
5. do	Mèé	Kpó	yà
6. you will	ì gà	ño (s), bími (pl) bâ	ka (m) iyese (f) iye
7. you would	ì gà	ño (s), bími (pl) bâ	ka (m) iye, si (f) iye
8. you had better	ó kàrà gí m̄má	-----	-----

**Table 2: Comparison of imperative negative markers in Igbo, Eggon and Tangale**

ENGLISH (Gloss)	Igbo	Eggon	Tangale
1. don't	-----	kpó mbo	yám
2. don't be	ádìlà /ánàlà	-----	-----
3. let us not	kà ányì ghàrà	dá gi...mbo	min yám
4. no!	m̄bá!	mbo!	yám!

**Table 3: Comparison of imperatives with question tags in Igbo, Eggon and Tangale**

ENGLISH (Gloss)	Igbo	Eggon	TANGALE
1. will you?	ì gá?	ño (s), bími (pl) bâ?	kayà?
2. won't you?	ì gá ghí?	ño (s), bími (pl) ... mbo?	kayám?

3. would you?	ì gá?	ṅo (s), bími (pl) bâ?	kayà?
4. can you?	ì gá?	ṅo (s), bími (pl) kpógbú?	kayà? (m) siyà? (f)
5. can't you?	ì nwèghí íké?	ṅo (s), bími (pl) kpógbú mbo?	ka (m) yám? si (f) yám?

### 5.0 A Contrastive overview of imperatives in Eggon, Igbo and Tangale

As shown in Table 1 above, the three languages form imperatives using the base form of the verb similar to English. However, Tangale lacks the word for English 'let' while Eggon and Igbo have. Also, Tangale distinguishes gender in expressing English 'you will' while Eggon marks number for the pronoun 'you'. Igbo usage of the modal imperative *ọ kàrà gí nímá* 'you had better' shows that the language expresses negative consequences for disobeying warnings/advice; whereas Eggon and Tangale do not have the expression.

Negative imperatives are lexically marked in the three languages. Igbo lacks the word for English 'do not' while Eggon and Tangale have only one negative imperative *mbo* 'do not' and *yám* 'do not'. Igbo has three negative imperative expressions *mbá* 'no', *ádìlà /ánàlà* 'don't be' and *kà ányí ghàrà* 'let us not'. Each language uses a distinct prohibitive marker which can pose a learning difficulty especially for an Igbo person learning Eggon and Tangale and vice versa.

All three languages have ways of asking questions using imperatives. However, Igbo is more productive with three ways of expressing imperative question tags (*Ì gá* 'will you', *Ì gá ghí* 'won't you', *Ì nwèghí íké* 'can't you'). Eggon and Tangale are less productive by using the same terms for negation to express question *mbo* 'no' and *yám* 'not' respectively. This implies that learning Eggon and Tangale will be difficult with many errors for an Igbo native speaker, while an Eggon native speaker will learn Tangale with less difficulty compared to Igbo. The same applies to a Tangale speaker learning Eggon and Igbo.

In sum, imperatives in Eggon, Igbo and Tangale are similar and different in some respects. The similarities include the use of imperatives to express commands, requests or instructions; the use of verb base forms to form imperatives; and the use of special negative imperative markers. The differences include: the use of gender in Tangale negative imperative; Igbo has more imperative question tags and negation than Eggon and Tangale; Tangale is least productive when compared to the other two languages.

According to contrastive theory, learners may transfer imperative patterns from their L1 to the target language. Eggon and Tangale speakers may commit more imperative errors when learning English and Igbo than Igbo speakers. Similarly, Igbo speakers will commit more errors when learning Eggon and Tangale. Igbo and Eggon learners of Tangale negative imperatives may omit gender because it is absent in their native languages. Lastly, Contrastive theory suggests that teaching should emphasize language-specific features of affirmative, negative, command and question imperatives in the Eggon, Igbo and Tangale languages.

## 6.0 Summary of findings

The findings show that the three languages under study Eggon, Igbo and Tangale each have a way of expressing imperative construction. Three major types of imperative constructions are found in the languages in line with English. These are imperative affirmative, imperative negative and imperative with question tag. The affirmative, negative and imperative with question tags are found in all the languages with various degrees of details.

The affirmative imperative which appears to be more productive in all the languages under study seems to be more in Igbo with seven (7) terms: *bikò* (please), *kà* (let), *nà* (be progressive), *kàm̄/ kà ànyị/kàhá/kà yá / kà gí* (let me, you, him, her, they), *mèé* (do) I *gà* (you will), *okaragimma* (you had better); Eggon shows six (6) affirmative imperatives: *Bábgá* (please), *da* (let), *bâ* (will), *dá me/dá ño* (s), *bími* (pl) ‘let me, let you’/ *dá na/dá gi/* (let him, her, they), *kpó* ‘do’ *ño* (s), *bími* (pl) *bâ* ‘you will/would’. The Tangale

language has the least affirmative which are three (3): *kerkebe* (please), *yà* (do) and *ka* (m) and *si* (f) *iye* (you will/would). The three languages are similar in having terms for English please, do and you will. Similarly, all the three languages use the same term for English will and would. Only Igbo has a term for English ‘you had better’, which constitutes a major difference with the other languages under study. Tangale also differs from English and the other languages (Eggon and Igbo) under study, by the use of gender *ka* (m) and *si* (f) (you masculine/feminine). Eggon also differs from the other languages by the use of number, *ño* ‘single’ and *bimi* ‘plural’ forms of ‘you’.

The study on imperative negative constructions reveals that Eggon, Igbo and Tangale have peculiar ways of showing negation. However, the three languages differ significantly in the ways they express negation. Eggon and Tangale seem to be similar in the use of a single term to show negation. Eggon uses a morpheme *mbo* ‘no’ at the end of the negative word or sentence, while Tangale uses the suffix –*m* attached to *yà* ‘do’ with a change in tone *yám* ‘not’ to negate a word/sentence. Igbo show two ways of expressing negation: first by the use of the prefix *a/e-*, suffix harmonizing negative markers–*la/le/na/ne* attached to the verb that is being negated and *kà...ghàrà* used in negating sentences. Igbo has more ways of expressing negation than the other two languages under study which use the same morpheme to negate both words and sentences.

Imperative construction with question tags in Eggon, Igbo and Tangale show that the languages use the same terms (Eggon *bâ*; Igbo *gá*; Tangale *yà*) to represent English ‘will/would’. Igbo and Tangale also use the same terms for English ‘will/would’ to also represent English ‘can’ while Eggon uses a different term *kpó gbú*. The languages differ in the terms for English ‘won’t you’ Eggon: *ño* (s), *bími* (pl) ... *mbo?*; Igbo: *ì gághí*; Tangale: *kayám*. The English imperative question tag can’t you? is represented by *ño* (s), *bími* (pl) *kpó gbú mbo?* In Eggon; *inwèghí iké* in Igbo and *ka* (m) *si* (f) *yám?* In Tangale. Tangale seems to be the least productive here with

the use of the same term (except gender) for all the imperatives with question tag.

Imperative markers perform various functions in the languages under study. In Eggon, imperative markers perform the functions of giving command, asking questions, making requests and giving consent. Imperative markers in Igbo perform the functions of making a request, giving advice, making suggestions, making an appeal, giving a command and prohibition. Imperatives in Tangale perform the functions of giving a command, politeness, and asking questions.

The findings show a number of similarities in the languages under study. First, the languages, Eggon, Igbo and Tangale, have imperative markers, specifically, affirmative imperative, negative imperative and imperative with question tag. Similarly, the three languages use the same term for English modal auxiliaries 'will' and 'would'. That is, there are no separate words for 'will' and 'would' as found in English.

There are a number of differences in imperatives in the languages under study. Based on the findings of this study, only Igbo has a term for English 'you had better', which constitutes a major difference with the other languages under study. Tangale also differs from English and the other languages under study, Eggon and Igbo by the use of gender *ka* (m) and *si* (f) (you masculine/feminine). Eggon also differs from the other languages by the use of number, *ɲo* 'single' and *bimi* 'plural' forms of 'you'. Igbo has more ways of expressing negation than the other two languages under study which use the same morpheme to negate both words and sentences. The languages under study also differ in the use of imperative with question tag. Tangale is the least productive, with the use of the same term (except gender) for all the imperatives with question tags.

## 6.1 Conclusion

This study has examined imperative markers in Eggon, Igbo and Tangale within the framework of Contrastive linguistic analysis.

The findings reveal that while the three languages make use of the imperative mood to express affirmation, command, and request, they differ significantly in their morphological and syntactic realisation. The investigation of imperative markers in the Eggon, Igbo and Tangale languages, show that three types of imperative constructions are found in the languages which are: affirmative imperative markers, negative imperative markers and the question tag imperative markers. These imperative markers perform different functions of making a request, giving command, negating a sentence and asking questions. The languages under study are similar in having similar types and functions of imperative markers. However, the languages differ in productivity and features of the imperative markers. Igbo is the most productive while Tangale is the least productive. The imperative markers that correspond in these three languages under study, such as the use of the same terms for English will/would, therefore indicate that language is universal in nature. Considering the fact that the languages under study do not belong to the same language group (Eggon = Benue Congo, Igbo = Igboid, and Tangale = Chadic).

The study therefore contributes to linguistic theory expansion by enriching our understanding of imperative typology in different languages and provides practical application of useful insights for language teaching, translation and multilingual communication. Contrastive linguistic analysis theory suggests that teaching should focus on contrasts between native language and target language because it causes error. This study shows there are more differences than similarities in Eggon, Igbo and Tangale imperatives. Thus, this research is a major addition and an area of study in contrastive teaching and learning. Most importantly, it highlights the need for further documentation of under-researched Nigerian languages since each language provides unique evidence of how human beings structure and negotiate authority, politeness and interaction through imperative.

In conclusion, while Eggon, Igbo and Tangale share the universal feature of having imperative constructions, they represent

them in diverse ways, reflecting both their genetic differences and their unique cultural approaches to communication.

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