Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies (SGOJAHDS), Vol.3 No.3 September, 2020; p.g. 221 – 228; ISSN: 2695-2319 (Print); ISSN: 2695-2327 (Online)

ANALYTICAL ASSESSMENT OF INTERROGATIVES IN RUSSIAN AND IGBO LANGUAGES

CHUKA CHUKWUBE (PhD)
Department of European languages and Integration Studies
University of Lagos
Akoka, Lagos
E-mail: chukachukwube15@gamil.com

Abstract

There is a growing zeal in ascertaining the level of development and growth of indigenous languages with a view to preventing their possible extinction. Suffice it to say here that while Russian is the language of Russia and the former Soviet Union, and in fact, one of the official languages of the United Nations, Igbo is one of the prominent languages in Nigeria, predominantly, in the Eastern part of the country. As long as these languages are in existence, there is always room for their development thereby making them relevant in the global world. To achieve this objective, we decided to analyse interrogatives as part of grammar in the two languages. Some valuable materials in both languages were perused and critically analysed and valuable conclusion reached.

Keywords: **Interrogatives, Igbo, Russian, Languages, Analysis.**

Introduction

According to the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, interrogative is the form of a sentence or verb that is used for asking questions. Crystal(1997) says that an interrogative could take the inverted order of the declarative sentence or the use of interrogative word. Also, Yusuf (2007) asserts that the simple sentence could perform various functions like declaration, imperativization or interrogation as one makes plain statements, gives orders or asks questions. And Igwe and Green (1963) define interrogative as a small class distinguished by the fact that they can either constitute the linked utterance known as a question by themselves or can initiate one without the low tone subject pronoun that characterises the question form of the verb. On his own, Uba-Mgbemena (2006) submits that interrogative is a type of sentence that shows lack of knowledge but desire to know; a sentence that a person uses to know what he does not know. And Shvedovoi and Lopatin (1990) posit that the interrogative pronouns *кто* and*что* denote a question about an animate *кто* or inanimate*что* object. Their primary meaning is a question about an object (person) or (what) – about a situation unknown to the questioner:

Кто пришел? Who came in?
С кем ты разговаривал? Who were you talking to?
Что растет в саду? What grows in the garden?
Чтослучилось? What happened?

Interrogation in Igbo

Igwe and Green (1963) list interrogatives in Igbo as follows:

olee	"where?, Which"
ndịị	"where" which"
cumo	"which?" (has the suggestion of I wonder which ?")
aghaa	"how?"
ọlịa	"how?"
gịnị	"what?"
ole	"which?, how many?"
onye	"who?"
ocu	"who?"

They further inform that *olee, ndii, cumo*, have not been found in isolation or as subject of a verb. They precede but do not follow a noun or pronoun and these have not then been found as subjects of a main verb from, except in certain construction with olee.

Examples:

Oleennagị?	"Where is your father?"
Oleeebeọ *gara*?	"Where did he go?"
Ọ garamba.	"He went to another village."

* Here ọgara, in the question is an adjectival clause and others will be found in the example below.

Oleeoke o gburu?	"Where is the rat he killed?"
Lekwaya	"There it is".
Oleeya?	"Where is it?"

* Before a pronoun *olee* and *ndii* usually have a low final tone. But here, and before nouns, both tones are often possible, there being according to one speaker, a slight emotional difference. Another speaker said that for him there was no emotional difference.

Oleeụnụ?	"Where are you?" (pl)
Oleeeghutaraakhụ a?	"Which goat ate the palm kernels?"
Ọ wụeghuọcha.	"It was the white goat".

* Note here the main verb form in the question.

Ị sịanyịgbuooleeanụ?	"Which animal do you say we are to kill?"

* Here the interrogative has non-inherent tones after the imperative, the tone of the first syllable behaving like that of a tone group 1 noun.

Ọ dịn'olee?	"Where is it?"

* Here the interrogative is preceded by the preposition. In this and the preceding example *ndịị* could not be substituted for *olee*.

Oleerịgị?	"Where are you?"

(This is an approximate translation. The context might be that the speaker was misinformed by a third party about someone's where about who had himself called out and now appealed to, apologetically, by the speaker). Note the –rị suffix following the interrogative.

Ndịịakhwa ị zụrụ?	"Where are the eggs you bought?"
Ha dịn'ụlọ.	"They are in the house."
Ndịịnwataririji a?	"Which is the child who ate this yam?"
Ndịịnkekamma?	"Which is the best?"
Nkembụkamma.	"The first is the best."
Ndịịnnagị?	"Where is your father?"
Ndịịya?	"Where is it?"
Ndịịniya?	"Please where is it?"

* The –nị suffix after the interrogative gives a pleading note to the question.

Cumoihye ha naemethaa?	"What can they be doing today?"
Echere m ha nwere nzukọ	"I think they're got a meeting".
Cumonwataririjiya?	"I wonder which child ate the yam?"
Ọ nụcumonwata?	"What kind of a child is it?"

(As in trying to find out what child has done some particular thing).

Some speakers use *com* in place of *cumo. Aghaa* and *ọlịa* are used more or less interchangeable both in syntax and sense. *Ọlịa* is probably borrowed from another dialect but is now frequently used.

Both these interrogatives can be used in isolation as questions. They can also immediately follow a verb and a preposition and can stand in genitival relationship to a noun. They have not been found as the subject of a verb or immediately preceding a noun or pronoun.

Examples:

Aghaa?	"How are things?" (could be said, for instance, to someone cooking, ill or troubled).
Ịdịaghaa?	"How are you?"

Note that the question form of the verb, with low tone subject pronoun, is used whenever as interrogative is not initial.

Ọ wụn'aghaa?	"Why?" (As to someone asking why you are doing something, meaning "why do you ask?")
Ị zụrụanụaghaa?	"What kind of meat did you buy?"
Ị zụrụanụaghaa?	"How did you but meat?"

Compare the tones of the two preceding examples.

Gịnị, *ole* and *onye* have the syntactical behaviour of nominals in most respects, being found in isolation, as subject and object of a verb and as genitives following a noun. *Gịnị* can also precede a genitive noun. *Ole* meaning "how many?" is distinguished by maintaining its inherent tones when it follows, as a genitive, a noun with a final low tone. Its tonal behaviour is in this respect, like that of the numerals with an initial low tone).

Examples:

Gịnị?	"What?" (as to someone whose remark the speaker hasn't heard)
Gịnị mere?	"What's happening?"
Gịnịdịya?	"What's in it?
I ririgịnị?	"What did you eat?"
Gịnịokpu?	"What about the hat?" (i.e. what did you say about it?)

Anụgịnị?	"What meat?" (This could come either as a request for information or a retort, to the question: Ị gainye m anụ? "Will you give me some meat?"
Gịnịkaụnụna-eme?	"What are you (pl.) doing?"
Ole?	"How much?" (This could be used in a suitable context, to ask the price of something).
Ole dịmma?	"How many are good?" (could be used, for instance, about oranges)
Atọdịmma.	"Three are good."
Ọ zụrụeghu ole?	"How many goats did he buy?" or: "Which goats did he buy?" (If the context does not sufficiently indicate which meaning is intended the second meaning can be made clear by adding nke: Ọ zụrụeghunke ole?
Ọ zụrụụlọ ole?	"How many houses did he buy?"

Here the meaning is unambiguous since the noun has a final low tone syllable.

Ị chọrọite ole?	"How many pots do you want?" Cp. Ị chọrọite ole? "Which pot do you want?"

Ahụrụ m madhụ ole na ole "I saw a few people".
Note, this idiomatic usage in which *ole* has no interrogative force.

Onye?	"Who is it?" (as to someone knocking at the door)
Onyebyara?	"Who came?"
Ọ wụonye?	"Who is it?"
Ikpe ọ maraonye"	"Who is guilty?"
Ọ wụuweonye?	"Whose suit or clothes is it?"
Ọ wụnkeonye?	"Whose is it?"

Onye is an interrogative cognate with the noun *onye* with its indefinite meaning of "person one". *Onye* is hardly ever found except followed by a qualifier of some kind.

In explaining interrogatives in Igbo, Uba-Mgbemena (2006) (trans.) says that interrogative is a sentence that shows lack of idea or knowledge, and intention to know, that is, it is a sentence that a person uses in order to know what he does not know. According to him, there are five types of interrogatives. These five interrogatives want:

- Only answer in affirmative
- Only answer in negative
- Answer in affirmative or negative
- Answer to know who/what/where/how
- Answer with a choice to choose

Example of answer in affirmative

Ọ bụkwanaịbụeze? (n'ụdịnkwe) (Ọ kwaịbụeze?)	"You are king?"
Ọ bụkwammadụ? (Ọ kwammadụ?)	"Is he a human being?"
Ọ bụnanwoke a abụghịnnagị (in negative form) (Nwoke a ọbụghịnnagị?)	"Is this man not your father?"
Ọ bụna i sighịAsaba? (n'ụdịajụjụ) (Ọọna i sighịAsaba?)	"Are you not from Asaba?"

Example of answer in negative:

Ọ bụkwana ị bụghịeze?	"Is it that you are not a king?
(Ọ kwa ị bụghịeze?)	
Ọ bụkwana ọ bụghịnnagị?	"Is it that he is not your father?"
(Ọ kwa ọ bụghịnnagị?)	
Ọ bụkwana i sighịAsaba?	"Is it that you are not from Asaba?"
(Ọ kwa i sighịAsaba?)	

Example of answer in affirmative and negative (yes or no):

Uche ọ lọtala?	"Has Uche returned?"
Ụnụchọrọịhụnneụnụ	"Do you people want to see your mother?"
Ụnụ ọ ga-ejeahịaechi?	"Will you people go to market tomorrow?"

Example of answer to know who/what/where/how:

Gịnị mere gịn'anya? (ihe)	"What happened to your eyes?" (something)
Onyerụrụụlụ a? (onye)	"Who built this house?" (who)
Ebeeka ị na-eje? (ebee)	"Where are you going?" (where)
Kedụkaụnụ mere? (etu)	"How are you people?" (how)

Example of answers with a choice to choose:

Ọ bụọgaranyaka ọ bụogbenye?	"Is he rich or poor?"
Ụnụga-erinrikaụnụagaghịeri?	"Are you eating or not?"
Ụnụga-eso m, kaụnụga-esonna ụnụ, kaụnụachọghịijeebeọbụla?	"Do you want to follow me or follow your fatheror you don't want to go anywhere?"

Interrogation in Russian

In Russian,Maltzoff (1984) gives interrogative relative pronouns as :

Кто?	Who?
Что?	What?
Чей?, чья? , чьё?, чьи?	Whose?
Какой?, Какая? , какое?, какие?,	Which?,what? (kind of)
Который?, которая? , которое?,которые?	Which?

Usage of interrogative relatives' pronouns

(i) The pronouns Кто? and Что?have no gender or number. As a rule, with Кто? the predicate is in the masculine singular, regardless of the gender and number of person:

Ктопришел?- Моясестра(мойбрат)	who came?-my sister (my brother)
Ктоприехал?-Мойдрузья	who arrived?-my friend.

However in a conjugative word construction, Кто may be followed by the plural predicate when called for:

Те,ктоопоздали, ничегонеполучили Those who were late did not get anything

The pronoun subject Что is always followed by a neuter predicate (in the past tense):

Чтослучилось? What happened?

Note: these constructions should not be confused with others, where Ктоor Что are no longer subjects.

Кто была эта дама? Who was the lady?

Что вы делали? What were you doing?

(ii)Какой essentially means what, what kind of, which may refer to various characteristics: color, size, quality, etc.

Какоеплатьетынаденешь?	Which dress are you going to put on?
Красное.	There done.
Какой он человек?	What kind of man is he?
Оченьмилыйй	Very nice
Какоеупражнениесамоетрудное?	Which is the hardest exercise ?
Переводсанглийскогою	The translation from English

(iii) Которыйmeans which. As such, it may refer to a certain order, to a rank, to one object out of several:

Какоеупражнениесамоетрудное? Which is the hardest exercise ?

ВтороеSecond

Которая дочь выходит замуж? Which daughter is getting married?

Старшая. The eldest.

Какой is sometimes used instead of Который, or as a variant:

На каком этаж вы живете? On what floor do you live?

Какоесегоднячисло? What date is it today?

В каком году он родился? Или What year was he born?

В котором году он родился?

The expression Который час? And Котором часу? Admits no variant from with Какой.

(iv) In complex sentences, the use if Который, Кто and Что depends on the antecedent part of speech. As a general rule:

(a)Который follows a noun:

Человек,Которыйсказалэтописьмо The man who said this is the

Котороевыписали letter which you wrote

(b) Кто and Что follows pronouns:

Тот, ктосказалэто	The one who said this
То, чтовынаписали	What you have written
Все, чтоончитает	All that he reads.

However, Который may follow a pronoun when the subject is clearly singled out and when a noun is strongly implied:

Этиофицерыамериканцы. Тот,	These officers are Americans.
которыйсидитнаслево, очень,	The one who sits on the left,
хорошоговоритпо-русски.	speaks Russian very well
моястаршаясестраздесьата,	My elder sister is here and the
котораяненедавновышлазамуж	one who recently got married
живётвдеревне.	lives in the country.
Онполучилвашиписьма ,то,	He received your letter.
Которое вы послали в среду	The one you sent on
пришлосегодня.	Wednesday arrived today.

In these sentences,the nouns офицер, сестра and письмо are strongly implied in the second sentence of each pair.

2. The analysis of Sakhava-Nekrasova (2003) the inferror dative pronouns include кто? 'who?' Что? 'what?' Какой 'what?'(sort of) чей? 'whose?' Который? 'which?' Сколько? 'how many?', how much?'

The pronoun кто? 'who?' andЧто? 'what? Have no gender and number.wordwhich.words which are adjuncts to the pronouns кто? andЧто? Take the singular.

КтоИдёт? '	'Who goes there?'
чтовидиеетсявдали ?	'what can you see in the distance?
Words which are adjuncts to the pronoun кто?	take masculine:
Ктопришёл?	'Who has come?'
Ктоготов? '	'Who is ready?'
Кто из студентов кончил роботу?	'Which of the students have finished the work?
Ктоизстудентокончилроботу?	'Which of the students have finished the work?'
Words which are adjuncts to the pronoun Что?	takes the neuter:
Чтослучилось?	'What has happened?'
Чтопроизшлоздесь?	'What has happened here?'

The pronoun какой? What (sort of)?' and Который? 'which?' agree with nouns they qualify in gender number, case and are declined as adjectives (какой as большой;который as). The pronoun Чей? 'Whose?' also agrees with the noun it qualifies in gender, number and case.

Conclusion

From the above analysis, there is no gainsaying the fact that all the literatures analysed, give indebt appraisal of interrogatives in both languages. It is also unarguable that interrogatives in both languages are vital ingredients of grammar and very essential in the two languages. Although the Russian language is more developed, there is no deficient aspect of the interrogative in Igbo. This does not mean to say that there are nothing more to learn grammatically from advanced language like Russian. We are convinced that there are some areas of interrogatives in Igbo language that are yet to be identified and analysed. Experts

and scholars of Igbo language especially are challenged to carry out more studies with a view to ascertaining these areas and use them in advancing the language.

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