

## A Contrastive Analysis of Demonstratives in English and Ikwerre Languages

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### Abstract

### Original Research Article

Demonstratives, an essential linguistic element embodying deixis and indicating precise spatial and contextual relationships, serve as fundamental building blocks in communicative processes. This paper, therefore, examines the complex syntactic and morphological dynamics of demonstratives in English and Ikwerre languages and the differences and similarities in the use of demonstratives in both languages which may pose problems to the Ikwerre learner of English as a second language. This study uses the contrastive analysis theory and the descriptive grammar theory to guide its analysis of data. This eclectic approach provides a meticulous and exhaustive analysis, examining the distinctive features, elusive variations, and multifaceted usage of demonstratives within the framework of English and Ikwerre grammar. This paper meticulously explores both proximal and distal forms of demonstratives, dissecting their roles as determiners, adjectives, and possessive markers in the linguistic structures of both languages. The findings of this study reveal that similar to English, Ikwerre demonstratives function as determiners, adjectives, and indicators of possession. Notably, the post-head position of Ikwerre determiners, distinct from English, reflects the language's head-first structure, shaping its grammatical features. In the adjectival function, both Ikwerre and English utilize demonstratives in predicative contexts, imparting specific attributes or conditions to nouns. Structural disparities, such as the head-first language structure and the inclusion of a pronominal element in Ikwerre demonstratives, further distinguish their syntactic characteristics. Morphologically, Ikwerre introduces a unique structure for plural nouns, utilizing both pre-head and post-head demonstratives to enhance specificity. This stands in contrast to English's use of a single demonstrative for plural reference. The findings thus, offer invaluable contributions to the overarching realm of cross-linguistic typology and comparative syntax, enriching the scholarly discourse in the field. The Study therefore recommends that Ikwerre learners of English while learning the use of English demonstratives should avoid transfer of rules from their first language to the English language.

**Keywords:** Demonstratives, Contrastive Analysis, Ikwerre, Morphology, Syntax.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Demonstratives, also known as demonstrative pronouns or adjectives, play a crucial role in language by indicating the location or distance between the speaker and the entity being referred to. In Ikwerre, a Niger-Congo language spoken in Nigeria, demonstratives differentiate spatial relationships and provide important contextual information.

This study explores distinguishing features, variations, and usage of demonstratives in English and Ikwerre grammar, highlighting the contrast between different types and forms. By examining and comparing demonstratives in Ikwerre, we can gain a deeper understanding of how speakers of the language utilize demonstratives to convey meaning in different situations. Throughout the analysis, we will focus on the

different categories of demonstratives in Ikwerre grammar, including proximal, medial, and distal forms. We will also investigate how these demonstratives function with nouns, pronouns, and adjectives, noting any phonological, morphological, or syntactic variations that may arise. This will further unearth the semantic distinctions made by Ikwerre demonstratives, such as indicating visibility or identifying specific entities in space. We will discuss the role of gesture and context in determining the referential meaning of demonstratives.

By undertaking this analysis, this study sheds light on demonstratives' unique features and functions in the Ikwerre language. This analysis will not only contribute to the linguistic understanding of Ikwerre but will also provide a valuable resource for learners and

researchers interested in the broader field of cross-linguistic typology and comparative syntax.

### 1.1 The Ikwerre People: Language and Dialects, Discourse and Thought

The Ikwerre people, also known as Iwhuruohna, are an ethnic group primarily located in Rivers State, Nigeria. The argument on the exact origin of the Ikwerre people is the subject of various theories and narratives among historians and anthropologists. While some argue that they are a sub-group of the Igbo ethnic group, which is one of Nigeria's largest and most diverse ethnic groups, others argue that the Ikwerres are migrants of the old Bini Empire. This study does not delve into that argument however, our focus is primarily on the linguistic nuances and formations of certain aspects of their language.

The Ikwerre Language, which belongs to the Niger-Congo language family has a distinct linguistic formation influenced by centuries of interaction with neighboring communities. While it is classified linguistically as part of the larger Igbo language (Igboid), Ikwerre has its unique features and developments. The language has evolved, reflecting the cultural, historical, and social changes experienced by the people.

Four local government areas in Rivers State speak the Ikwerre language. They are; Obio-Akpor, Port Harcourt City, Emuoha, and Ikwerre Local Government Areas. Among these four local government areas, exist different dialects of the language. The grouping does not account for the dialectal variances of the individual villages making up each local government, thus, Alerechi (2008) calls it "a political grouping", for its inability to classify these villages on clear linguistic grounds. A more scholarly attempt proposed by Kay Williamson (1980) classifies Ikwerre speakers into "northern and southern Ikwerre". The southern Ikwerre, according to her, includes Ndele, Emowha, Ogbakiri, Akpor, and Obio, while Egbema, Omerelu, Apani, Elele, Ibaa, Omagwa, Isiokpo, Aluu, and Igwuruta belong to the north. This grouping also failed to capture the entirety of the dialects of Ikwerre as some communities have been left out of the grouping.

Upon the backdrop of the non-existence of a succinct Ikwerre dialectal grouping, Alerechi (2007, 2008) recognizes twenty-four dialects of the Ikwerre language which she categorizes using different linguistic features. The three different types of north and south dichotomy of the dialects of Ikwerre she identifies are; East and West division; East, West, and Extreme North dialects; East-Central, West-Central, and North and South dialects, etc. while some of the groupings conform to earlier grouping, others do not. The dialects Alerechi (2007) identifies are Rumuekpne, Rundele, Odeegnu, Emowha, Ogbakiri, Akpo, Obio, Aluu, Igwuruta, Omagwana, Isiokpo, Ibaa/Obele, Ipo, Ozuaha, Omuanwa,

Ubima, Akpnabu, Egbedna, Omademe, Eleele, Omudiogna, Ubimini, Omerelu and Apani. This study, however, focuses on the demonstratives in the Obio dialect of the Ikwerre language. The researchers have focused on the Obio dialect because there has not been any study on demonstratives in that dialect.

The Ikwerre discourse and thoughts are deeply rooted in their cultural and linguistic heritage. Traditional storytelling, proverbs, and oral traditions have played a significant role in shaping their worldview. Like many African cultures, the Ikwerre people place great importance on oral communication, and their traditional modes of discourse reflect this emphasis. Storytelling and proverbs serve as vehicles for passing down historical accounts, morals, values, and shared wisdom from one generation to another. Furthermore, Ikwerre thought is influenced by their interaction with other ethnic groups in the region, as well as their exposure to modern education and Christianity. This blend of cultural and religious influences has contributed to the development of a unique Ikwerre identity and worldview.

Conclusively, the Ikwerre people have a rich cultural heritage that has evolved. Their language, discourse, and thought reflect their unique history, societal values, and interactions with neighboring communities. Exploring the cultural, linguistic, and historical aspects of the Ikwerre people will undoubtedly provide valuable insights into their identity, and will further contribute to a broader understanding of the diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria.

### 2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Contrastive analysis theory and descriptive grammar are two important tools in the field of linguistics and language teaching. Contrastive analysis theory involves the systematic comparison of two or more languages to identify their structural differences and similarities. It has been used to design language courses more efficiently and has provided theoretical support for language teaching methods. However, it has been criticized for over-predicting errors and not being able to predict all the difficulties that learners may face.

On the other hand, descriptive grammar is a non-judgmental study of a language, its structure, and its rules as they are used in daily life by speakers from all walks of life. It does not aim to determine what represents good or bad language, correct or incorrect. Descriptive grammar has been increasingly used in language teaching contexts and has become an important tool for understanding and explaining the structures of different languages.

When used together, contrastive analysis theory and descriptive grammar can provide a comprehensive understanding of the differences and similarities between

languages, as well as insights into the structure and rules of each language. This combined approach can be valuable for developing teaching materials, designing language courses, and explaining the challenges that learners may encounter. By integrating these two tools, language educators can create more effective and tailored language learning experiences for their students.

A central aspect of descriptive grammar is its focus on linguistic competence – the inherent knowledge that speakers possess about their language’s structures. Chomsky’s transformational generative grammar (1957) contributed significantly by introducing the idea of underlying syntactic structures that give rise to surface forms. While Chomsky’s work shifted the field towards generative grammar, proponents of descriptive grammar like Postal (1971), argued for the importance of investigating the observable structures and patterns that speakers naturally produce. This gives credence to the argument put up by Battistella (2005), where he maintains that “descriptive grammar is the basis for dictionaries, which record changes in vocabulary and usage, and for the field of linguistics, which aims at describing languages and investigating the nature of language”.

The relationship between descriptive and prescriptive grammar continues to be debated. Linguists like Crystal (1987) argue that descriptive grammar forms the basis for prescriptive rules, as understanding how language is used informs effective communication. However, others, such as Pullum and Huddleston (2002), stress the distinction between the two approaches, highlighting the descriptive nature of linguistic analysis and the prescriptive nature of language advice. Supporting the argument, Hazen (2015) argues that “descriptive grammars do not give advice – rather, they detail how native speakers use their language”.

Descriptive grammar plays a pivotal role in linguistics as it provides a systematic framework for analyzing the structure and rules of a language. It focuses on how native speakers use the language naturally, aiming to capture linguistic nuances that may be missed through prescriptive grammar. This approach is crucial for languages like Ikwerre, where rich and nuanced grammatical patterns may exist outside the confines of more widely studied languages.

Contrastive analysis, as a tool for understanding language differences, has been explored in various studies. Dost (2017) and Namaziandost (2017) both emphasize its role in predicting transfer errors in second language learning, particularly in the phonological aspects. Gast (2011) further underscores the practical application of contrastive analysis in language teaching and translation studies, particularly in languages that are socio-culturally linked. Verschueren (1996) extends this concept to societal ideologies, suggesting that

contrastiveness can be observed not only between languages but also within a single language. These studies collectively highlight the importance of contrastive analysis in understanding language differences and its potential applications in language learning and translation.

Johansson (2008) sees contrastive analysis theory as a linguistic approach that involves the systematic comparison of two or more languages to identify their structural differences and similarities. This approach has been used in various studies to analyze different aspects of language, including demonstratives. For instance, a study by Ekah (2018) provides a contrastive analysis of demonstrative pronouns in English and Ibibio, while Mncwango (2022) analyzes the use of demonstratives in isiZulu and English. In this literature review, we will focus on a contrastive analysis of demonstratives in Ikwerre and English languages.

Demonstratives are words that are used to indicate the location of a person, object, or idea about the speaker or the listener. They are an important aspect of language and are used in various contexts, including in the description of physical objects, in the expression of spatial relationships, and the identification of people or things Niimura and Hayashi (1996). Demonstratives, a category within linguistics, refer to words or expressions that indicate the spatial or contextual relationship between the speaker, the listener, and the objects or entities being discussed. These linguistic elements play a crucial role in conveying information about proximity, distance, and deixis, which refers to the way language points to specific elements within a communication context. Demonstratives are found in many languages and exhibit intriguing variations in their usage and forms. In Ikwerre and English languages, demonstratives are used differently, and a contrastive analysis of these two languages can provide insights into the similarities and differences between them.

According to Ekah (2018), demonstratives in English are divided into two categories: proximal and distal. Proximal demonstratives are used to refer to objects that are close to the speaker, while distal demonstratives are used to refer to objects that are far from the speaker. Just like in Ibibio, Ikwerre, demonstratives are divided into two categories: proximal, and distal. Proximal demonstratives are used to refer to objects that are close to the speaker, while distal demonstratives are used to refer to objects that are far from both the speaker and the listener. The use of demonstratives in Ikwerre and English languages also differs in terms of their form. In Ikwerre, demonstratives are formed by adding prefixes to the base form of the word. For example, the word "nwo" (child) can be modified to "nwo-ka" (this child) and "nwo-ki" (that child) to indicate proximity and distance, respectively.

A primary distinction exists between proximal and distal demonstratives. Proximal demonstratives, such as “this” or “these”, indicate objects or entities that are closer to the speaker in terms of space, time, or discourse context. On the other hand, distal demonstratives like “that” and “those” point to objects or entities that are farther away in similar dimensions. This basic spatial differentiation forms the foundation of demonstrative systems across languages. The usage of demonstratives also intersects with culture and cognitive processes. Cultural factors can influence how speakers conceptualize space and proximity, leading to differences in demonstrative systems. Additionally, cognitive research suggests that the processing of demonstratives involves the mental representation of spatial relationships, integrating linguistic and non-linguistic cues. This phenomenon highlights the intricate interplay between language and perception. At its core, the use of demonstratives is closely tied to deixis, which is the phenomenon of linguistic expressions referring to elements in the context of utterance. This deictic function allows speakers and writers to establish a shared frame of reference, essential for effective communication.

Demonstratives help to convey distinctions such as proximity (“this” vs. “that”), number (“this” vs. “those”), and even degrees of familiarity (“this” vs “that” in discourse). As such, demonstratives enable speakers to highlight the spatial, temporal, and contextual relationships among objects, ideas, or events.

Nimura and Hayashi (1996) conducted an inquiry on the demonstratives of English and Japanese languages from the L1 and L2 perspectives and confirmed that the Japanese demonstratives *ko*, *so* and *a* seem fairly easy to acquire as lexical items for L2 speakers. They found that whilst the focus or the degree of attention on the referent is the critical determinant, in Japanese the overriding factor is whether or not the referent is in the domain of the speaker’s direct experience. This, they argue is in line with Hinds’ (1986)

distinction between “person-focus” and “situation-focus”.

Similarly, Ekah (2018) carried out a contrastive analysis of demonstrative patterns in English and Ibibio. Based on the syntactic workings of demonstratives in the two languages, Ekah (2018) argues that Ibibio consists of a three-way opposition against two in English. Her findings indicate that while demonstratives in the English language inflect for person and number, the demonstratives in Ibibio sometimes inflect for person and number and sometimes do not. The study further adds that demonstratives in the two languages can function as determiners and subjects of sentences and may also function as verbs. The study ultimately posits that demonstratives occur as headed constructions in the two languages, albeit in varying positions.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employs a mixed methods approach. It has combined both qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a robust and comprehensive insight into the topic. While the quantitative aspect involves the collection and statistical analysis of data to identify patterns or generalisable trends, the qualitative focuses on the linguistic description of these data.

The researchers have administered structured questionnaires to a total of 15 respondents – all residents within Obio-Akpor – and also native speakers of the Obio dialect of the Ikwerre language, and also, from the 15 villages in Obio. Having retrieved data, it was discovered that the demonstratives in the Obio dialect are the same, aside from idiosyncratic discrepancies, thus, the research adopts all the data for its analysis.

### 4. Data Presentation

Similar to the English language, demonstratives in the Ikwerre language have a significant function of instructing the discussants (listener particularly) to maintain focus on the intended referent. Below is a classification of demonstratives in Ikwerre and English;

**Table 1: Classification of Demonstratives**

Spatial Relationship	English Demonstratives	Ikwerre Demonstratives
Proximal	This ( <i>singular</i> )	<i>ka</i>
Distal	That ( <i>singular</i> )	<i>ki</i>
Proximal	These ( <i>plural</i> )	<i>nde ka</i>
Distal	Those ( <i>plural</i> )	<i>nde ki</i>

#### 4.1 Demonstratives in Ikwerre

As stated earlier, there are two types of demonstratives in the Ikwerre language, they are the proximal and distal demonstratives. Proximal demonstratives are a type of demonstratives used to refer to entities that are relatively closer to the speaker (and other interlocutors in the discourse). In Ikwerre, proximal demonstratives show proximity and distinguish objects or entities that are nearby from those afar off.

Below are examples of proximal demonstratives and their plurals in.

- Ikwerre;
- [ *Oro ka* – This house
  - [ *Oro nde ka* – These houses
  - ngada ka* – This chair
  - ngada nde ka* – These chairs

The examples above show that *ka* is the singular proximal demonstrative in the Ikwerre language. To mark for number, it adds the prefix *nde*. The word formation process that takes place in the English morphological system when *this* (singular) changes to *these* (plural) is inflection – which is a morphological process that involves adding a morpheme to a word to indicate grammatical information such as tense, number, or case; in Ikwerre language however, the morphological process that takes place when the singular proximal demonstrative *ka* changes to the plural *nde kaare* compounding. This is because the prefix *nde* has a meaning in isolation, and can also function as a plural marker for the Ikwerre distal demonstrative.

The other type of demonstrative is the distal demonstrative. In the Ikwerre language, the distal demonstratives *ki* (singular) and *ndeki* (plural) instruct listeners to focus on a specific referent, usually farther away (but visible) from the discourse environment. Some examples are;

- [ *okuko ki* –That book
- [ *okuko ndeki* –Those books
- [ *apa ki* –That bag
- [ *apa ndeki* – Those bags

Similar to proximal demonstratives, the distal demonstratives in Ikwerre also mark their number with the prefix *nde* to show pluralization.

In this section, the study highlights demonstratives of the Ikwerre language, categorizing them into two types: proximal and distal. Proximal demonstratives, exemplified by "*ka*" and "*ndeka*" for the plural, pertain to entities near the speaker and employ a compounding process for pluralization. This contrasts with the English morphological system, which utilizes inflection to transition from the singular "this" to the plural "these." The section also introduces distal

demonstratives, such as "*ki*" and "*ndeki*," which direct attention to distant yet visible referents. Remarkably, both proximal and distal demonstratives in Ikwerre utilize the prefix "*nde*" for pluralization, highlighting its dual role as a plural marker and a crucial component of the Ikwerre demonstrative system.

#### 4.2. Syntactic Functions of Demonstratives in Ikwerre

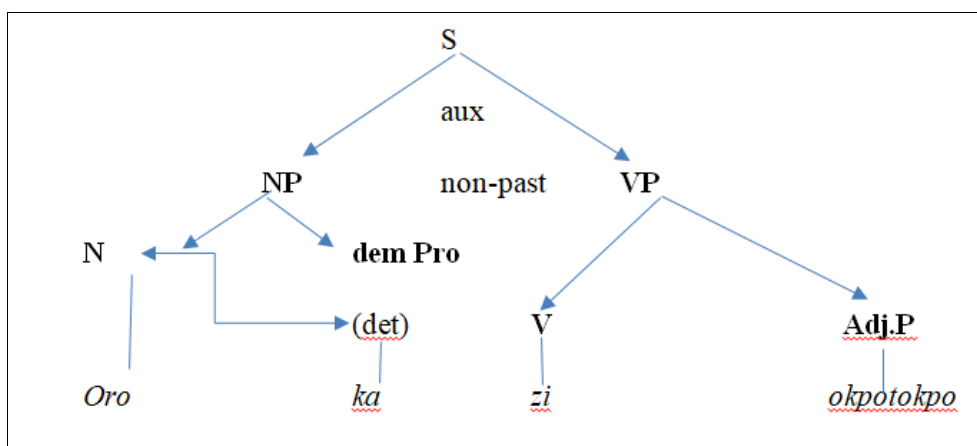
In this section, we delve into the various syntactic functions of demonstratives in the Ikwerre language. Ikwerre demonstratives, like in English, play essential roles in sentence structures and contribute to the specificity and clarity of reference. We examine the determiner, adjectival, and subjective functions to comprehensively deduce their syntactic functions.

##### 4.2.1. Determiner Function of Demonstratives in English and Ikwerre

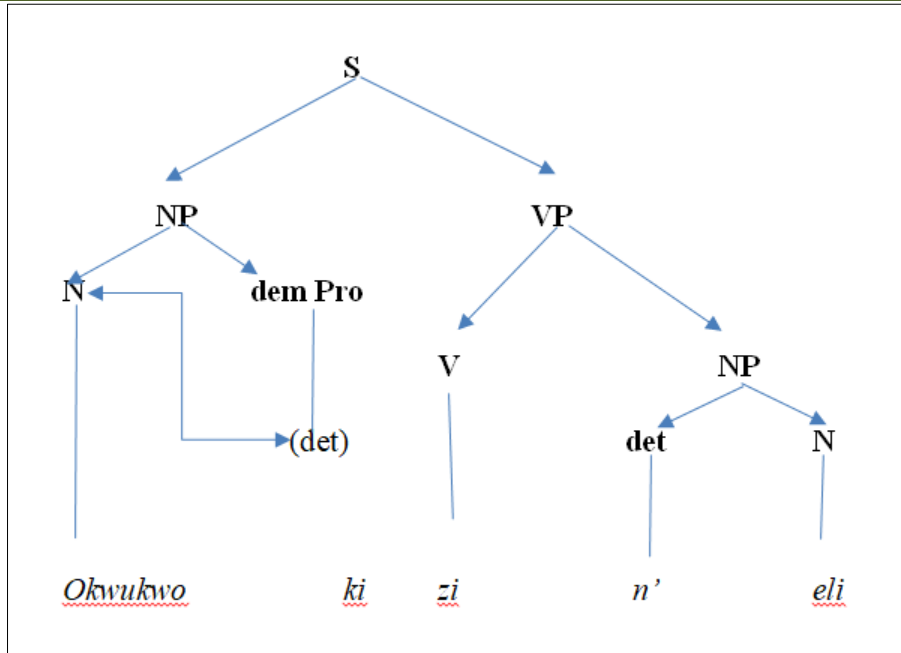
Just like in English, demonstratives in Ikwerre can function as determiners in constructions. However, they can only function in post-head positions, - that is, they follow the nouns which they modify to signal specificity. Whereas in the English language, determiners assume a pre-head position in constructions, it is observed that in Ikwerre, demonstratives assume a post-head position. This is simply because the languages categorized as Igboid languages are considered head-first languages.

Example 1  
*Oro ka zi okpotokpo.*  
 This house is big.

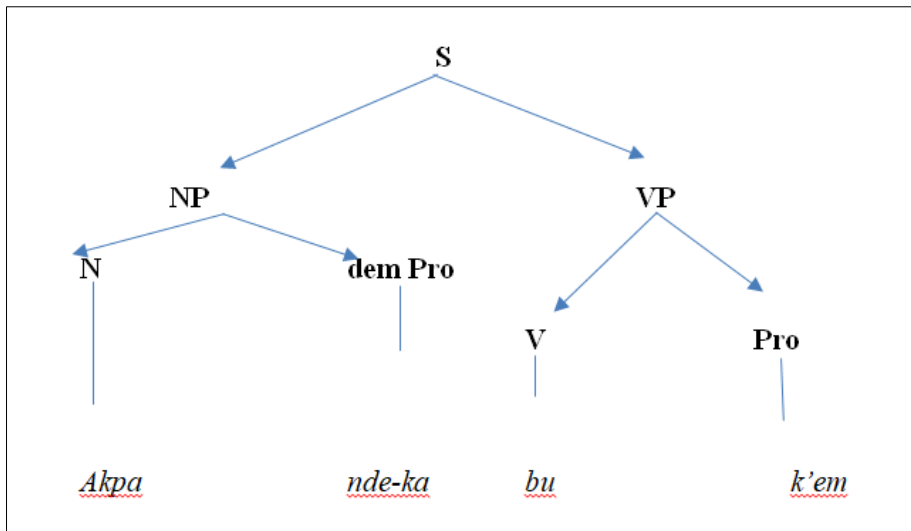
In the sentence above, *ka* (this) is the demonstrative, because it restricts the meaning of the noun *oro* (house) and transforms the noun *oro* into a noun phrase, signaling a specific reference.



Example 2  
*Okwukwo ki zi n'eli.*  
 That book is on the ground.



Example 3  
*Akpa nde-ka bu k'em.*  
 These bags are mine.

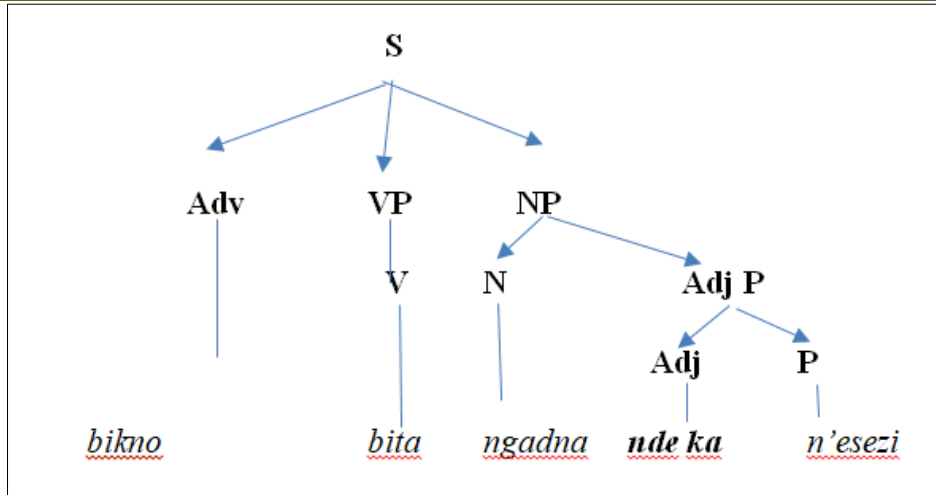


Demonstratives in Ikwerre are observed to function as determiners, akin to their role in English. However, a distinctive feature is that they exclusively operate in post-head positions, following the nouns they modify to indicate specificity. Examples illustrating this function are presented, showcasing how demonstratives transform nouns into noun phrases, thereby specifying the reference. Demonstratives help to specify or point out particular nouns, showing whether they are singular or plural and indicating their proximity in space or time.

#### 4.2.2. Adjectival Function of Demonstratives in English and Ikwerre

This subsection investigates the adjectival function of demonstratives in Ikwerre, particularly in predicative contexts. Examples are provided to illustrate how demonstratives are employed to describe nouns and convey attributes or conditions, contributing to the overall meaning of sentences.

*Bikno bita ngadna ndeka n'esezi.*  
 Please keep these chairs outside.



In Ikwerre, the demonstrative "nde" functions in a predicative context by modifying the noun "ngadna" (chairs) and conveying specific attributes or conditions. It contributes to the overall meaning of the sentence by specifying the chairs to be kept outside.

Likewise, in English, the demonstrative "these" operates within a predicative context, altering the noun "chairs." This modification imparts specific attributes or conditions, thereby enriching the sentence's overall meaning and signifying the chairs intended for placement outside.

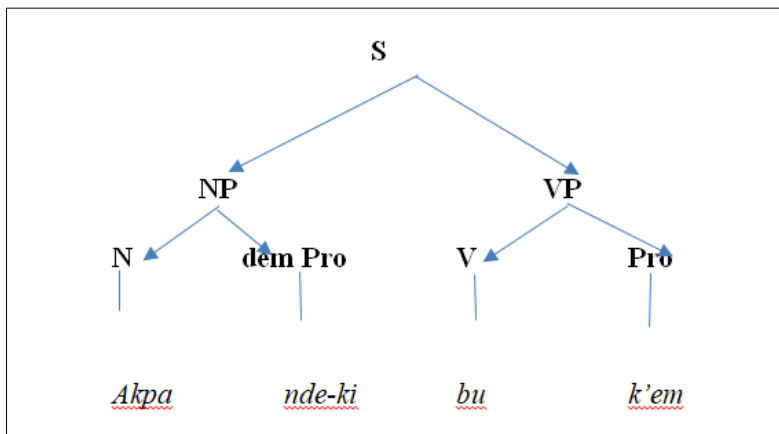
In the context of the adjectival (predicative) function of demonstratives, Ikwerre and English demonstrate similarities in how these elements modify nouns to convey specific attributes or conditions,

contributing to the overall meaning of the sentences. The demonstratives in both languages play a crucial role in specifying and describing the referred nouns.

**4.2.3. Subjective Function**

Examining the subjective function of demonstratives in Ikwerre, this subsection explores instances where demonstratives are used to indicate possession or ownership. It sheds light on how demonstratives are integral in expressing the relationship between individuals and the objects they possess, thereby enhancing the clarity of communication. Below are examples:

*apa ndeki bu k'em.*  
Those are my bags.



**Structural Differences**

**Head-First Language Structure**

In Ikwerre, as a head-first language, the noun "apa" (bag) comes first in the NP (Noun Phrase), followed by the demonstrative "nde ki" (those). This contrasts with English, which is a head-last language and places the subject (demonstrative) at the beginning of the sentence.

**Pronominal Element**

Ikwerre incorporates a pronominal element "ki" within the demonstrative "nde ki," contributing to its structure. English demonstratives do not include a similar pronominal element.

**Verb Form**

The verb form "bu" in Ikwerre functions as a linking verb between the subject and the predicate. While

English also uses a linking verb ("are"), there are structural differences in the specific forms and usage of these verbs.

**Structural Similarities**  
**Subject-Verb Agreement**

Both Ikwerre and English exhibit subject-verb agreement in their sentences. In Ikwerre, "Apa nde ki bu k'em," and in English, "Those are my bags," the verb forms ("bu" and "are") align with the plural subject.

**Demonstrative Placement within NP**

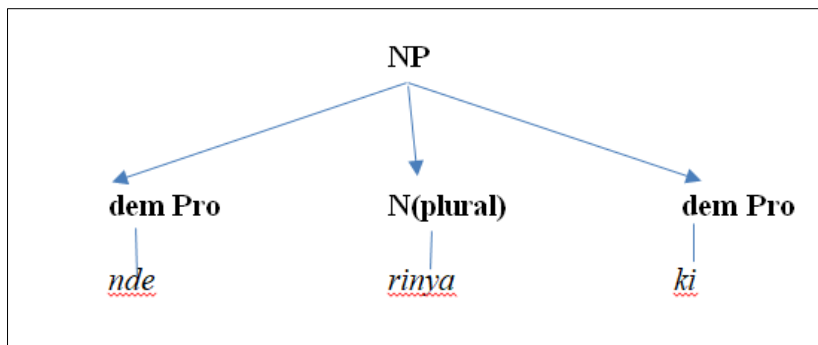
In both languages, the demonstrative is placed within the NP to identify and specify the noun ("apa" or "bags").

In summary, considering the head-first structure of Ikwerre, there are notable structural differences in the placement of the noun and demonstrative within the NP. However, there are also structural similarities such as subject-verb agreement and the placement of demonstratives within the NP to specify the associated noun.

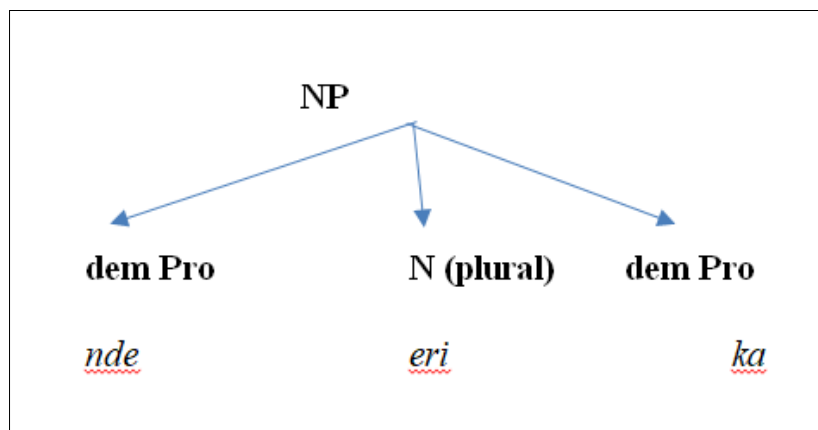
**4.3. Morphological Composition of Demonstratives with Plural Nouns**

An observable linguistic phenomenon in Ikwerre pertains to the representation of plural common nouns that reference human beings. In these instances, it is customary to employ two demonstratives: one preceding the noun and the other following it. As exemplified in the phrase "Nde rinya ki," both "Nde" and "ki" function as demonstrative pronouns, collectively modifying the plural noun "rinya," which denotes "women" in this context. Notably, "Nde" serves as the pre-head demonstrative, contributing to the noun's modification before it, while "ki" plays a similar modifying role in a post-head position, encapsulating the noun. In simpler terms, this grammatical structure is characterized by the demonstratives enveloping the noun, elucidating the intricacies of demonstrative usage in the Ikwerre language about plural nouns denoting human beings. Below is an illustration;

*Nde rinya ki*  
Those women



*nde eri ka*  
These singers



**Ikwerre Structure "Nde [plural noun] ki/ka"**  
**Pre-Head Demonstrative (nde):**

**Ikwerre Morphology:** Nde functions as a pre-head demonstrative pronoun, positioned before the plural noun (e.g., rinya or eri).

**Morphological Characteristics:**

Nde provides initial grammatical information about the noun, indicating a group or set of entities. It precedes the noun, contributing to the modification or specification of the plural noun.



**Post-Head Demonstrative (ki/ka):**

**Ikwerre Morphology:** Ki/ka serves as a post-head demonstrative pronoun, positioned after the plural noun (e.g., rinya or eri).

**Morphological Characteristics:**

Ki/ka, in a post-head position, reinforces and clarifies the reference made by the pre-head demonstrative. It contributes to the modification or specification of the plural noun, providing additional emphasis.

**Contrast with English**

English often uses a single demonstrative (e.g., "those" or "these") to modify plural nouns, without the distinction of pre-head and post-head demonstratives.

Ikwerre's morphological structure, involving both pre-head and post-head demonstratives, adds specificity and emphasis to the modification of plural nouns, providing a unique way to express reference to groups of entities.

In summary, the Ikwerre morphological structure "Nde [plural noun] ki/ka" showcases a unique approach to demonstratives, involving both pre-head and post-head positions. This morphological composition enhances specificity and clarity when referring to plural human nouns, emphasizing the grammaticality of the structure in expressing distinctions among groups or sets of entities.

**4.4. Contextualization of Demonstratives in Ikwerre Discourse**

In the context of Ikwerre discourse, the sentence "n' laikilam oro nde ka" illustrates a noteworthy linguistic characteristic: the reliance on contextual cues for determining meaning. This sentence can be interpreted in two distinct ways, either as "I don't like these houses" or "I don't like the house(s) belonging to these people." This inherent ambiguity highlights the importance of context in deciphering the intended message within Ikwerre language usage. Consequently, Ikwerre can be categorized as a high-context language, aligning with the conceptual framework outlined by scholars like Hall (1959) and Gudykunst and Kim (2003). A high-context language, according to these scholars, places a significant emphasis on deriving meaning not solely from the explicit words and grammar employed, but rather, from the broader situational and cultural context in which communication occurs. In Ikwerre and related Igboid languages, discourse participants typically assume a shared cultural background and understanding, allowing for the conveyance of understated nuances, emotions, and information through non-verbal cues, social dynamics, and the immediate contextual environment. Below are other examples of ambiguous expressions arising from the use of demonstratives;

*Okpu nde ka*<sup>1</sup> – these caps

*Okpu nde ka*<sup>2</sup> – the cap(s) belonging to (or "of") these people

*Isisi nde ki*<sup>1</sup> – those trees

*Isisi nde ki*<sup>2</sup> – the tree(s) belonging to (or "of") those people

The ambiguity arising from the use of demonstratives in phrases like "Okpu nde ka" and "Isisi nde ki" illustrates the language's propensity for context-dependent interpretations, reinforcing the characterization of Ikwerre as a quintessential high-context language within the broader spectrum of linguistic diversity.

Below is a Contrastive analysis of context dependency in Ikwerre and English languages.

**Contextual Ambiguity**

**Ikwerre Example:** "n' laikilam oro nde ka" (I don't like these houses)

**Ambiguity:**

The sentence can be interpreted as expressing dislike for either "these houses" or merely stating "the house(s) belonging to these people." Context plays a crucial role in disambiguating the meaning.

**Context Dependency (High-Context Language)**

Ikwerre is categorized as a high-context language. High-context languages rely on shared cultural backgrounds for meaning. Communication extends beyond explicit words and grammar to include non-verbal cues and immediate contextual factors.

Examples of Demonstrative Ambiguity in Ikwerre:

"sambi nde ka":

- Interpretation 1: These keys
- Interpretation 2: The key(s) belonging to (or "of") these people

"Iwo nde ki":

- Interpretation 1: Those clothes
- Interpretation 2: The cloth (es) belonging to (or "of") those people

**Contrast with English**

- Characteristics: English typically employs a single demonstrative (e.g., "these" or "those") to modify plural nouns.
- Specificity: English demonstratives may lack the inherent ambiguity seen in Ikwerre. The context is often discerned more straightforwardly through the demonstrative and the noun.

**Context Dependency (Low-Context Language)**

- Characteristics: English is generally considered a low-context language; thus, meaning is primarily derived from explicit words and

grammar, with less emphasis on shared cultural backgrounds. Contextual factors are often less crucial for interpretation.

The contrastive analysis highlights the contextual reliance and ambiguity in Ikwerre's use of demonstratives, aligning with its classification as a high-context language. In contrast, English demonstratives often carry more explicit meaning, reflecting the characteristics of a low-context language with a lesser emphasis on shared cultural understanding.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive exploration of demonstratives in Ikwerre, shedding light on their multifaceted roles and contextual dynamics. The syntactic analysis reveals that similar to English, Ikwerre demonstratives function as determiners, adjectives, and indicators of possession. Notably, the post-head position of Ikwerre determiners, distinct from English, reflects the language's head-first structure, shaping its grammatical features.

In the adjectival function, both Ikwerre and English utilize demonstratives in predicative contexts, imparting specific attributes or conditions to nouns. The subjective function in Ikwerre illustrates nuanced expressions of possession, contributing to clearer communication. Structural disparities, such as the head-first language structure and the inclusion of a pronominal element in Ikwerre demonstratives, further distinguish their syntactic characteristics.

Morphologically, Ikwerre introduces a unique structure for plural nouns, utilizing both pre-head and post-head demonstratives to enhance specificity. This stands in contrast to English's use of a single demonstrative for plural reference.

In the realm of discourse, Ikwerre's contextual ambiguity in demonstrative usage reveals a high-context linguistic nature. Contextual cues play a pivotal role in disambiguating meanings, aligning with the broader conceptual framework of high-context languages. This stands in stark contrast to English, characterized as a low-context language where demonstratives often convey more explicit meanings.

In essence, this study not only uncovers the syntactic intricacies of Ikwerre demonstratives but also emphasizes the profound interplay between language, culture, and communication within the Ikwerre community. Demonstratives transcend mere grammatical elements; they encapsulate cultural attitude, shared knowledge, and the complex web of social interactions. The findings underscore the importance of considering both structural and contextual aspects in

linguistic analysis, offering valuable insights into the unique expression and interpretation of demonstratives in Ikwerre.

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