International Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Studies
Website: https://www.ijahss.in/
ISSN(*Online*): 2582-3647
Volume 4; Issue 1; Jan-Feb 2022; Page No. 246-254

Open Access | Original Paper

A Minimalist Analysis of English and Nàijá Infinitive and Auxiliaries BE and HAVE

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ABSTRACT
This study investigates the morpho-syntactic properties of the English *to-* infinitive, progressive auxiliary BE, perfective auxiliary HAVE, passive BE and HAVE, and their Nàijá translation equivalent. (Nàijá is an English-lexifier Nigerian creole.) The adopted theoretical framework is the minimalist program (MP) of generative syntax. The objectives of the study are (i) to determine the errors which Nàijá L1 learners of English make in learning these delineated aspects of English morpho-syntax, and (ii) to explain why they make these errors. The data analysis shows that Nàijá L1 learners of English generally (i) substitute the Nàijá verb phrase structure for the English *to- infinitive* structure; (ii) shift temporal marking in progressive tenses to a temporal adverb, *bifọ* (somewhat equivalent to English 'before'); (iii) impose the morphologically invariant structure of the Nàijá perfective auxiliary *dọn* on the English perfective auxiliary HAVE; and (iv) in passive structures, equate the English 3rd person pronominal *they* with the Nàijá passive nominal marker (pnm), *dẹm*.

Keywords: *Auxiliary, equivalence, error, infinitive, minimalist, Nàijá.*

***Citation*:** Mede, E. A., Akpọjisheri, M. O., & Omoko, P. E. (2022). A Minimalist Analysis of English and Nàijá Infinitive and Auxiliaries BE and HAVE. *International Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Studies*. 4(1), 246-254.

INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the morpho-syntactic properties of the English *to-* infinitive, progressive auxiliary BE, perfective auxiliary HAVE, passive BE and HAVE, and their Nàijá translation equivalent. The research objectives are to (i) to determine the errors which Nàijá L1 learners of English make in learning these aspects of English morpho-syntax, and (ii) to explain why they make these errors. The first objective necessitates the use of procedures associated with Error Analysis (EA), while the second requires a Contrastive Analysis (CA) approach in interpreting the data. The adopted theoretical framework is the minimalist program (MP) of generative syntax. The justification for the choice of MP as the research paradigm is that it aims at providing a cross-linguistic platform for accounting for the syntactic structure of *all* languages, cognate and non-cognate.

Two sets of data are used in the study. The first consists of *actual* errors committed by Nàijá L1 learners of English as a Second Language (L2), while the second set comprises English sentences which instantiate the delineated morpho-syntactic features, and the Nàijá translation equivalent of the English sentences. The translation equivalence is based on the grammaticality judgment of coordinate bilingual speakers of English and Nàijá; that is, language users who are 'able to harness the advantages of the two languages by using them fluently while separating their grammars' [1].

The comparison of the syntactic structure of English and Nàijá in this work is informed by two considerations. First, until relatively recently, Nàijá was considered a 'broken' or 'mongrel' variety of English [2], an assumption that would predispose us to expect broad morpho-syntactic contiguities between the two languages. That this is not the case necessitates data-driven research (such as the present work) to explain the dearth of such contiguities. The second consideration—which is of even greater significance from the Contrastive Analysis point of view—is that in Nigeria, a linguistically heterogeneous society with over two hundred and fifty indigenous languages, none of the Indigenous Nigerian Languages (INLs) serves as official language because of mutual suspicion of ethnic domination among the various ethno-linguistic groups. Consequently, English plays the role of *official* language while Nàijá functions as *unofficial* lingua franca. The general acceptability of these two languages hinges on the fact that neither of them is indigenous to any of the ethno-linguistic groups.

Of the two languages, Nàijá dwarfs English in terms of accessibility because it is easily comprehended by all the ethno-linguistic groups, irrespective of educational or social status. In disseminating information, for instance, where the target audience is the general populace, Nàijá is almost invariably the language of choice; in the local entertainment industry (music, movies, stand-up comedies, and so on), it is usually the preferred medium; in the marketplace, it is the language of banter.

This utility value of Nàijá has secured for the language increasing scholarly attention. From the late 70s, researchers have investigated various aspects of the language, such as its pronominals [3]; tense, aspect, and modality [4, 5 & 6]; verbs [7]; and relative structures [8, 9]. Faraclas [2] is the first comprehensive treatment of these various subsystems of Nàijá. While—on account of the utility value of the language—some scholars such as Obilade [10], Gani-Ikilama [11], Faraclas [12], Aikhionbare [13], and Oyegbami [14] have argued the case for its adoption as a medium of educational instruction and/or as Nigeria's National Language, others such as Domwa-Ifode [15] and Faraclas [3] have noted that the language is creolizing.

Today, in many homes in parts of the country, Nàijá has creolized; that is, the language now serves as the mother-tongue (L1) in such homes. When children from such Nàijá L1 environment start acquiring formal education, they are confronted with the reality of English as the language or medium of instruction; and given the Contrastive Analysis (CA) hypothesis that in learning a Second Language (L2), aspects of the learner's L1 which differ significantly from the L2 are potential sources of L1 interference [16], it is expedient that the pedagogist or language teacher should be aware of such areas of linguistic divergence in order to adopt teaching strategies that will eliminate or, at least minimize, such potential sources of L1 interference.

There are two complementary pedagogical approaches to dealing with the issue of L1 interference. The first is Contrastive Analysis (CA). CA is a predictive pedagogical tool which suggests *probable* areas of L1 interference based on identified areas of linguistic divergence between the learner's L1 and the L2 which s/he seeks to acquire. The second approach is Error Analysis (EA). EA is diagnostic in the sense that it identifies *actual* errors of usage and attempts to proffer reason/s for the occurrence of such errors to enable the pedagogist design appropriate remedial measures.

In Error Analysis, a dichotomy is drawn between mistakes and errors; while mistakes are a non-systematic deviation from the norm (and can, therefore, be self-corrected) errors are a systematic deviation from the norms of the L2. Errors committed by L1 learners of a Second Language (L2) derive from a number of sources. One of these is Language Transfer; that is, transference of some features in the learner's L1 to the L2. While a positive transfer facilitates learning, a negative transfer causes interference. A second source of errors is Transfer of Training—the effect of prior learning on the performance of a latter linguistic activity. A third source is Strategies of Second Language learning; that is, the non-standard strategies which an L1 learner of the Second language adopts in attempting to develop linguistic and socio-linguistic competence in the L2. A fourth source is overgeneralization of the rules of the L2.

METHODOLOGY

The first set of data for this research comprised the responses of thirty (30) participants to a set of eight linguistic tasks. The participants were carefully selected to mitigate the probable effect of the second, third and fourth sources of errors; namely, transfer of training, strategies of L2 learning, and overgeneralization of the rules of the L2, in order to focus attention on the causative factor of language transfer. The thirty participants were (at the time of the research) in Primary 4, about the same age, and in the same primary school. These three shared factors—class, age, and school—would ensure a relatively uniform level of the effect of three potential factors; namely, transfer of training, strategies of L2 learning, and overgeneralization of the rules of the L2, on the assigned tasks. Of the thirty participants or respondents, fifteen were Reversed Asymmetrical Bilinguals (RABs); that is, learners whose L1 is English rather than their mother-tongue [17]. The other fifteen participants were learners whose L1 is Nàijá.

The assigned task entailed responding to eight questions on the delineated aspects of language. Each of the questions had two optional responses. The eight questions (shown below) constitute the research instrument.

1) I intend
   a. to visit them.
   b. visiting them.

2) They plan
   a. to leave today.
   b. leaving today.

3) When you called,
   a. I was eating.
   b. I was eating before.

4) They didn't respond because
   a. they were praying.
   b. they were praying before.

5) By then,
   a. they had done the work.
   b. they have done the work.

6) When we got there, they
   a. had left.
   b. have left.

7) John swept the room; so why is Ann saying
   a. it was not swept?
   b. they did not sweep it?
8) She paid the debt; so tell him that
   a. the money has been paid.
   b. they have paid the money.

The questions (1) – (8) were used to evaluate the respondents' competence in the appropriate use of (i) infinitival *to* (questions (1) and (2)); (ii) progressive auxiliary BE (questions (3) and (4)); (iii) perfective auxiliary HAVE (questions (5) and (6)); and (iv) passive BE and HAVE (questions (7) and (8)).

The responses of the fifteen RAB participants (that is, those whose L1 is English) were compared with those of the respondents whose L1 is Nàijá. Errors which were common to both groups were considered insignificant; on the other hand, those which were peculiar to the second group (comprising respondents whose L1 is Nàijá) were considered significant if, and only if, the errors were committed by at least 60% of the (Nàijá L1) respondents. It is these errors (which can be reasonably attributed to Nàijá L1 language transfer) that constitute the (first set of) data used in the study. The expressions marked with asterisk (*) in (9) – (16) are the identified significant errors.

9) a. * 'I intend visiting them.' (Rather than)
   b. I intend to visit them.

10) a. * 'They plan leaving today.' (Rather than)
    b. They plan to leave today.

11) a. * 'When you called, I was eating before.' (Rather than)
    b. When you called, I was eating.

12) a. * 'They didn't respond because they were praying before.' (Rather than)
    b. They didn't respond because they were praying.

13) a. * 'By then, they have done the work.' (Rather than)
    b. By then, they had done the work.

14) a. * 'When we got there, they have left.' (Rather than)
    b. When we got there, they had left.

15) a. * 'John swept the room; so why is Ann saying they did not sweep it?'
    (Rather than)
    b. John swept the room; so why is Ann saying it was not swept?

16) a. * 'She paid the debt; so tell him that they have paid the money'
    (Rather than)
    b. She paid the debt; so tell him that the money has been paid.

DISCUSSION OF ERRORS

In this sub-section, each of these errors will be analyzed in terms of the divergence between English and Nàijá morpho-syntactic structures with specific reference to the following aspects of morpho-syntax: infinitival *to*- (3.1); progressive auxiliary BE (3.2); perfective auxiliary HAVE (3.3); and passive auxiliary BE and HAVE (3.4).

Infinitival 'to'

The infinitive particle *to* is a functional category which requires the base or uninflected form of the verb as its complement [18]. Infinitival *to* differs from prepositional 'to'. As illustrated in the dialogue below, while the infinitive particle *to* allows ellipsis, prepositional '**to**' does not.

Speaker A: Does she want *to* give the book **to** John?
Speaker B: Yes, she wants *to*. (Compare: * 'Yes, she wants *to* give the book **to**.')

English verbs such as 'intend', 'plan', 'mean', 'determine', 'resolve', 'hope' (which mean 'to have as one's purpose') require a *to*-infinitive complement. The Nàijá translation equivalent of English verbs which denote intention (e.g. intend, plan, aim, wish, and so on) is *wọn* (pronounced /wɒn/ but with the /n/ suppressed). Unlike English verbs of intention (which require a *to*-infinitive complement), the Nàijá verb *wọn* requires a verb (rather than a *to*-infinitive) complement. To illustrate, consider the syntactic structure of the English sentences (9b) and (10b) reproduced as (17a) and (18a) respectively, below. (The Nàijá translation equivalent of (17a) is (17b), while that of (18a) is (18b)).

17) a. I intend to visit them.
[$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ I [$_{T}$ Ø [$_{V}$ intend [$_{Inf}$ to [$_{V}$ visit [$_{N}$ them]]]]]]]
b. Mí *wọn* visit dẹm.
[$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ Mí [$_{T}$ Ø [$_{V}$ *wọn* [$_{V}$ visit [$_{N}$ them]]]]]]

18) a. They plan to leave today.
[$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ They [$_{T}$ Ø [$_{V}$ plan [$_{Inf}$ to [$_{V}$ leave [$_{Adv}$ today]]]]]]]
b. Dẹm *wọn* kọmọt today.
[$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ Dẹm [$_{T}$ Ø [$_{V}$ *wọn* [$_{V}$ kọmọt [$_{Adv}$ today]]]]]]

The Nàijá L1 learner of English infinitives who erroneously adopts the Nàijá structure when using English verbs of intention (such as *intend*, *plan*, *aim*, *wish*, and so on) is liable to committing the errors (9a) and (10a), reproduced as (19) and (20), respectively below.

19) I intend visiting them.
[$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ I [$_{T}$ Ø [$_{V}$ intend [$_{V}$ visiting [$_{N}$ them]]]]]]

20) They plan leaving today.
[$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ They [$_{T}$ Ø [$_{V}$ plan [$_{V}$ leaving [$_{Adv}$ today]]]]]]

Progressive BE

In the adopted theoretical framework, the minimalist program (MP), a sentence (excluding non-in-situ interrogatives) is considered a tense phrase (TP); that is, a syntactic unit headed by tense (T). This tense (T) projects through an intermediate projection, T', to a maximal projection, TP, with a specifier (Spec-TP) on its edge. (In some other grammars, especially functional grammars, the specifier of the tense phrase (Spec-TP) is assigned the clausal function of 'grammatical subject'.) The basic schema of a tense phrase is shown in Figure 1 below.

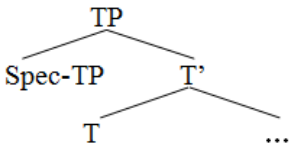


Figure 1: Basic Tense Phrase (TP) Structure

The constituent which occupies the T node bears tense. In this study, we shall define *tense* as the grammaticalized expression of temporal location of an event or state. The basic universal reference point is the moment of Speech (S); events/states which precede S are 'past'; those which are contemporaneous with S are 'present'; while those which occur or hold true after S are in the 'future'. In English, the verb can inflect to express temporal 'present' or 'past'; compare, for instance, 'She *visit***s** the orphanage' and 'She *visit***ed** the orphanage'. Temporal 'future', on the other hand, is usually expressed with the aid of a free morpheme or auxiliary; e.g. 'She **will** *visit* the orphanage'.

A related concept to tense is *aspect*. While the former refers to the grammaticalized expression of temporal location vis-à-vis the moment of speaking (i.e. present, past, and future) aspect deals with the internal temporal constituency of the situation; that is, the duration of the activity indicated by the verb as either on-going ('progressive' aspect) or com-

pleted ('perfective' aspect). Essentially then, aspect views the nature of processes or states while tense locates those processes/states in time [19, 20, & 21]. English has one unmarked 'simple' aspect (e.g. 'I *eat*') and two marked aspects; namely, 'progressive' (e.g. 'I *am eating*') and 'perfective' (e.g. 'I *have eaten*').

When the tense node, T, is occupied by either the progressive auxiliary BE or perfective auxiliary HAVE, the auxiliary responds morphologically to the *person* (1st person, 2nd person, 3rd person) and *number* (singular/plural) requirements of the constituent which occupies the Spec-TP node. For instance, auxiliary BE may have any of the following five forms, depending on the *tense* (present/past) as well as the *person*/*number* requirements of the constituent at Spec-TP: 'I *am*/*was*…'; 'We *are*/*were*…'; 'She *is*…', and so on.

Unlike English BE which has five distinct morphological forms, the Nàijá translation equivalent auxiliary has only one morphologically invariant form, *dè*, as illustrated in (21) – (24) below.

21) a. I *am* eating.
[$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ I [$_{T}$ *am* [$_{VP}$ [$_{V}$ eating]]]]]
b. Mí *dè* chọp.
[$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ Mí [$_{T}$ *dè* [$_{VP}$ [$_{V}$ chọp]]]]]
(The Nàijá verb *chọp*, meaning EAT, is pronounced /ʃɒp/).

22) a. I *was* eating.
[$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ I [$_{T}$ *was* [$_{VP}$ [$_{V}$ eating]]]]]
b. Mí *dè* chọp bifọ
[$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ Mí [$_{T}$ *dè* [$_{VP}$ [$_{V}$ chọp [$_{Adv}$ bifọ]]]]]
Literally: * I *am* eating before.
i.e. 'I *was* eating.'

23) a. They *are* eating.
[$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ They [$_{T}$ *are* [$_{VP}$ [$_{V}$ eating]]]]]
b. Dẹm *dè* chọp.
[$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ Dẹm [$_{T}$ *dè* [$_{VP}$ [$_{V}$ chọp]]]]]

24) a. They *were* eating.
[$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ They [$_{T}$ *were* [$_{VP}$ [$_{V}$ eating]]]]]
b. Dẹm *dè* chọp bifọ.
[$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ Dẹm [$_{T}$ *dè* [$_{VP}$ [$_{V}$ chọp [$_{Adv}$ bifọ]]]]]
Literally: * They *are* eating before.
i.e. 'They *were* eating.'

As evident from the data (21) – (24), whereas auxiliary BE has different inflected forms such as *am* (21a), *was* (22a), *are* (23a) and *were* (24a), the Nàijá translation equivalent auxiliary has only morphologically invariant form *dè*; e.g. (21b), (22b), (23b), and (24b). Thus, while English BE maintains an inflectional dichotomy between 'present' and 'past' (e.g. *am*/*was*; *are*/*were*), the present/past dichotomy in Nàijá is indicated with a temporal adverb, *bifọ*. Thus, the English expression 'I *was* eating' (22a) is rendered 'I *dè* chọp bifọ' (22b) in Nàijá, where the tense marking is shifted from the temporally-fossilized auxiliary *dè* to the temporal adverb, *bifọ*. Given that an English present progressive expression such as (21a) 'I *am* eating' is rendered 'I *dè* chọp' (21b) in Nàijá; and further given that the Nàijá auxiliary *dè* is (unlike the English auxiliary BE) inflectionally invariant, the Nàijá L1 learner of English (who is yet to attain mastery of the use of auxiliary BE) is likely to shift tense marking to a temporal adverb. Thus, s/he may make such ungrammatical expression as (25) and (26) below.

25) When you called, I am eating before.
[$_{AdvP}$ When you called] [$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ I [$_{T}$ am [$_{V}$ eating [$_{Adv}$ before]]]]]

26) They didn't respond because they are praying before.
[$_{TP}$ They didn't respond] [$_{Adv}$ because] [$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ they [$_{T}$ are [$_{V}$ praying [$_{Adv}$ before]]]]]

Even when the learner understands the dichotomy between 'present' *am* and 'past' *was*, s/he may still incorrectly (out of force of linguistic habit) insert the Nàijá temporal adverb *bifọ* and generate such erroneous structures as (11a) and (12a), reproduced as (27) and (28) below.

27) When you called, I was eating before.

[$_{AdvP}$ When you called] [$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ I [$_{T}$ was [$_{V}$ eating [$_{Adv}$ before]]]]]

28) They didn't respond because they were praying before.
[$_{TP}$ They didn't respond] [$_{Adv}$ because] [$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ they [$_{T}$ were [$_{V}$ praying [$_{Adv}$ before]]]]]

Perfective Auxiliary HAVE

The English auxiliary HAVE has three finite forms; namely, *has* (present singular), *have* (present plural) and *had* (past), all of which are syntactically equivalent to the morphologically-invariant Nàijá perfective auxiliary, *dọn*, as shown in (29) – (31).

29) a. She *has* done the work.
[$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ She [$_{T}$ *has* [$_{V}$ done [$_{D}$ the [$_{N}$ work]]]]]]
b. Im *dọn* du di wọk.
[$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ Im [$_{T}$ *dọn* [$_{V}$ du [$_{D}$ di [$_{N}$ wọk]]]]]]

30) a. They *have* done the work.
[$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ They [$_{T}$ *have* [$_{V}$ done [$_{D}$ the [$_{N}$ work]]]]]]
b. Dẹm *dọn* du di wọk.
[$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ Dẹm [$_{T}$ *dọn* [$_{V}$ du [$_{D}$ di [$_{N}$ wọk]]]]]]

31) a. By then, they *had* done the work.
[$_{AdvP}$ By then] [$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ they [$_{T}$ *had* [$_{V}$ done [$_{D}$ the [$_{N}$ work]]]]]]
b. Dat taim, dẹm *dọn* du di wọk.
[$_{AdvP}$ Dat taim] [$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ dẹm [$_{T}$ *dọn* [$_{V}$ du [$_{D}$ di [$_{N}$ wọk]]]]]]

The Nàijá L1 learner of English who imposes the morphologically invariant structure of the Nàijá perfective auxiliary *dọn* on the English perfective auxiliary HAVE is prone to making such errors as (13a) and (14a), reproduced below as (32) and (33), respectively below.

32) By then, they *have* done the work.
[$_{AdvP}$ By then] [$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ they [$_{T}$ *have* [$_{V}$ done [$_{D}$ the [$_{N}$ work]]]]]]

33) When we got there, they *have* left.
[$_{AdvP}$ When we got there] [$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ they [$_{T}$ *have* [$_{V}$ left]]]]

Passive Auxiliaries BE and HAVE

In English, a passive verb phrase (VP) is one which contains the passive auxiliary BE whose specifier is, semantically, the grammatical object of the corresponding transitive verb phrase. By contrast, an active verb phrase is a VP which does not instantiate passive 'BE', and whose specifier is, semantically, the agent (or 'doer') of the action represented by the transitive verb phrase. Consider the example (34a).

34) a. John swept the room.
[$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ John [$_{T}$ Ø [$_{VP}$ [$_{V}$ swept [$_{DP}$ the room]]]]]
b. Jọn sweep di room.
[$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ Jọn [$_{T}$ Ø [$_{VP}$ [$_{V}$ sweep [$_{DP}$ di room]]]]]

Here (that is, in (34a)) John, the specifier of the tense phrase (Spec-TP), is the 'agent' responsible for the sweeping; hence the entire verb phrase is in the active voice. On the other hand, in the sentence (35a),

35) a. The room *was* swept.
[$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ The room [$_{T/Pass}$ *was* [$_{VP}$ [$_{V}$ swept]]]]
b. Dẹm sweep di room.
[$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ Dẹm [$_{T}$ Ø [$_{VP}$ [$_{V}$ sweep [$_{DP}$ di room]]]]]

the specifier of the tense phrase 'the room' is, semantically, the grammatical object of the corresponding transitive verb phrase; it tells us *what* was swept. Moreover, the verb phrase contains the passive auxiliary 'was' (the past tense singular number form of passive BE); hence the entire VP '*was* swept' is in the passive voice.

If we assume that the passive structure (35a) is derived from the active structure (34a), then it must be the case that the derivation of a passive from an active sentence in English involves at least three syntactic operations; namely (i)

'Agent' dropping; (ii) insertion of passive 'BE' at the tense/T node; and (iii) movement of the DP complement of VP to the phonetically null spec-TP position. To illustrate, consider the structure of (34a), reproduced below as (36).

36) John swept the room.
[$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ John [$_{T}$ Ø [$_{VP}$ [$_{V}$ swept [$_{DP}$ the room]]]]]]

The first step in deriving (35a) from (34a) is to drop the 'agent' specifier of the tense phrase (spec-TP); the resulting structure is represented below as (37).

37) [$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ Ø [$_{T}$ Ø [$_{VP}$ [$_{V}$ swept [$_{DP}$ the room]]]]]]

Next, the appropriate form of passive BE is base-generated (or inserted) at T; this inserted or base-generated passive auxiliary [$_{T\text{-}Pass}$] sub-categorizes for a V–ed$_2$ (or 'past participle') complement. The resulting structure is represented below as (38).

38) [$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ Ø [$_{T\text{-}Pass}$ *was* [$_{VP}$ [$_{V}$ swept [$_{DP}$ the room]]]]]]

Finally, the DP complement of V moves up to the phonetically null spec-TP position, leaving a trace (*t*) at the extraction point; and the derived structure is (39).

39) The room *was* swept.
[$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ The room [$_{T}$ *was* [$_{VP}$ [$_{V}$ swept [$_{DP}$ *t*]]]]]]

Unlike English passives, the derivation of Nàijá passives involves only two operations; namely, (i) 'agent' dropping and (ii) insertion of the passive nominal marker (pnm) 'dẹm' at the phonetically empty Spec-TP node. To illustrate, consider the Nàijá structure (34b), reproduced as (40) below.

40) Jọn sweep di room.
[$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ Jọn [$_{T}$ Ø [$_{VP}$ [$_{V}$ sweep [$_{DP}$ di room]]]]]]

Applying the first operation ('agent' dropping) to the structure (40) derives the structure (41) below.

41) [$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ Ø [$_{T}$ Ø [$_{VP}$ [$_{V}$ sweep [$_{DP}$ di room]]]]]]

Then, the Nàijá passive nominal marker (pnm) 'dẹm' is inserted at the phonetically empty spec-TP node to derive the passive structure (42) below.

42) Dẹm sweep di room.
[$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ Dẹm [$_{T\text{-}Pass}$ Ø [$_{VP}$ [$_{V}$ sweep [$_{DP}$ di room]]]]]]
'The room was swept'

The Nàijá passive nominal marker (pnm) 'dẹm' is, evidently, an *expletive* constituent that is co-indexed with the DP (determiner phrase) complement of VP. This co-indexation of *pnm* and the DP complement of VP explains why the DP constituent shows up phonetically at the VP-internal position but receives a *logical form* (LF) spell-out at the Spec-TP position.

An interesting parallel may be drawn between the Nàijá passive nominal marker 'dẹm' and the English expletive (dummy/pleonastic) constituent 'there' [18] in such sentences as (43).

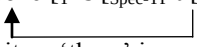
43) *There* is *someone* in the room.
[$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ *There* [$_{T}$ is [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ *someone* [$_{PP}$ in the room]]]]]

The co-indexation of expletive '*there*' and the spec-TP constituent '*someone*' allows two operations at logical form/LF (the semantic sub-component of the language faculty). The first is deletion of the expletive, to derive the structure (44) below.

44) [$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ Ø [$_{T}$ is [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ *someone* [$_{PP}$ in the room]]]]]

The second is covert movement of the Spec-TP constituent '*someone*' to the phonetically null spec-TP position to derive the LF structure (45).

45) *Someone* is in the room.
[$_{TP}$ [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ *Someone* [$_{T}$ is [$_{Spec\text{-}TP}$ *t* [$_{PP}$ in the room]]]]



The English lexical item 'there' is a polysemous term for (i) expletive *there* in such sentences as '*There* is someone in the house' and (ii) the locative adverb in such sentences as 'John sat *there*'. Similarly, the Nàijá word 'dẹm' is a polysemous term for (i) the passive nominal marker (pnm) in such sentences as 'Jọn nọ kil imself; *dẹm* kil am' (i.e. 'John did-not kill himself; he *was killed*') and (ii) the 3rd Person plural pronominal in such sentences as '*Dẹm* dọn kọmọt' (i.e. '*They* have left'). Thus, the Nàijá sentence '*Dẹm* sweep di room' could be given either (i) a passive voice interpretation meaning 'The room *was swept*' or (ii) an active voice interpretation meaning '*They* swept the room'.

Given that the derivation of English passives involves at least three syntactic operations whereas that of Nàijá passives requires only two syntactic operations, the Nàijá L1 learner of English is likely to adopt the structurally less complex Nàijá passive structure in expressing English passives; and further given that the Nàijá polysemous term *dẹm* could denote either the passive nominal marker (pnm) or the 3rd Person plural pronominal (equivalent to English 'they'), the Nàijá L1 learner of English passivization is liable to committing such errors as (15) and (16), reproduced below as (46) and (47).

46) John swept the room; so why is Ann saying they did not sweep it?

47) She paid the debt; so tell him that they have paid the money.

CONCLUSION

As was noted in the introduction to the study, this research was conducted (i) to determine the errors which Nàijá L1 learners of English make in learning the English *to*- infinitive, progressive auxiliary BE, perfective auxiliary HAVE, passive auxiliaries BE and HAVE; and (ii) to explain why they make these errors. The following are the findings. With reference to the *to*- infinitive, Nàijá L1 learners of English tend to adopt the Nàijá verb phrase structure rather than the English *to*- infinitive structure when using verbs of intention (such as *intend*, *plan*, *aim*, *wish*, and so on). Next, given that the English progressive auxiliary BE has five finite forms (*am*, *is*, *are*, *was*, and *were*) whereas the Nàijá translation equivalent auxiliary has only morphologically invariant form *dè*, Nàijá L1 learners of English tend to shift temporal marking from the verb to an adverb, *bifọ* (somewhat temporally equivalent to the English adverb 'before'). Similarly, because the English perfective auxiliary HAVE has three inflectional finite forms (*have*, *has*, and *had*) while the Nàijá translation equivalent term *dọn* is morphologically fossilized, Nàijá L1 learners of English tend to impose the morphologically invariant structure of the Nàijá perfective auxiliary on the English perfective auxiliary HAVE; hence they adopt the base form 'have' in all tense positions. Finally, because the Nàijá polysemous term *dẹm* could denote either the Nàijá passive nominal marker (pnm) or the 3rd Person plural pronominal (translationally equivalent to English 'they'), Nàijá L1 learners of English passivization tend inappropriately to use the English 3rd Person plural pronominal *they* as a passive marker.

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