

Affixal Processes in Ogba and English Languages

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Abstract

This paper contrasted the affixal processes in in Ogba and English languages. The aim of the study is to identify the areas of similarities and dissimilarities between the affixal processes in both languages. The study adopted the Contrastive Analysis Theory (CA). The data used in this study were elicited through the use of unstructured oral interview of L1 and L2 users of Ogba and English languages respectively. The data for the study were analyzed through the use of descriptive and contrastive methods of data analysis. The data were presented using the Leipzig glossing pattern. It was observed that prefixes, suffixes and suprafixes exist in both languages. This study also found out that prefixes are segmental phonemes in both languages. However, it was noticed that whereas the prefixes in Ogba have either V or N (where N represents syllabic nasal) syllabic structure, the prefixes in English language have irregular syllabic structures which include: VC, CV, VCCV, CVCV and CVC. This study further observed that it is only the verb that host prefixes in Ogba while nouns, adjectives and verb can host the prefixes in English language. Again, it was affirmed that English language has more suffixes than the Ogba language. Only four suffixes were identified in the Ogba while the English language has several suffixes. Additionally, whereas suffixation is inflectional in Ogba, it is both inflectional and derivational in the English language. It was noticed that the suprafixes in Ogba are tone (variation in the pitch of the voice) and nasalization while the suprafix in the English language is stress. In view of that, this study recommended that English language teachers within Ogba speech communities should focus on other forms of nominalization and stress in the English language.

Keywords: affix, prefix, suffix, supra fix, root word

1. Introduction

Language is a key tool for human interaction or communication. In other words, language is an important instrument in the lives of all humans in a given society. It is observed that every natural or human language behaves like other

living organisms in the society. Like other living organisms, every natural language has the ability to either grow or die. This means that no language remains stagnant. In other words, languages change from time to time (Kari, 2015). Also, linguistic researches have shown that natural languages do not permit the stringing or

lacing of morphemes arbitrarily. Every natural language has its system of word structure. There is no language without rules that govern its morphological, syntactic, phonological, semantic and pragmatic operations (Yul-Ifode, 2001). The level of linguistic analysis that examines how sounds combine to form morphemes (the smallest meaningful unit in a word) and words is morphology. Morphology deals with the internal structure of words. Hence, some lexical items in a natural language can be segmented or separated into diverse morphological units or components. That is, a lexical item in a natural language may consist of a root word and an affix. It is important to note that even though affixes are usually bound morphemes in all natural languages, the parameter for their attachment is usually language specific. For that reason, this study contrasts the affixal processes in Ogba and English languages with the aim of identifying the areas of similarities and dissimilarities between the affixal processes in both languages.

2. The Ogba Language and Its Speakers

The nomenclature “Ogba” is commonly used to designate both the language and its speakers. However, the morpheme “ndé” ‘people of’ is sometimes used to differentiate the language and its speakers. For instance, one may say ndé Ogba ‘people of Ogba’. The language is linguistically classified or grouped as an Igboid (Igbo related) language. It belongs to the Benue-Congo family of the Niger-Congo phylum. Nwokoji and Isaac (2024) affirm that Ogba is spoken in over forty-one communities in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria. The language is closely related to Ekpeye, Igbo, Ikwere and Echie which are spoken in different local government areas of Rivers State, Nigeria.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on the Contrastive Analysis Theory (CA). According to Melefa (2015) and Nwala (2015), the proponent of the CA theory is Robert Lado in 1957. The theory is based on the notion that all natural languages have their areas of relatedness and variations. Thus, the theory assists in the identification of resemblances and differences between two or more languages. Richard (1992) and Yang (1992), the CA theory can be applied in the different levels of grammatical study such as phonetics and phonology, morphology, semantics and syntax. Also, they admit that the CA is relevant because it enhances language teaching and

translation. Richard (1992) and Yang (1992) further note that the CA identifies the areas of difficulties for language learners that could be handled with correct exercise. Thus, this paper posits that the CA theory can support the researchers in the documentation of the similarities and discrepancies between the affixal processes in the Ogba and the English languages.

4. Review of Related Literature

Isaac (2018), and Eze and Isaac (2023) unanimously affirmed that the affixal processes that result in nominalization Ogba include: prefixation, suffixation, and interfixation alone, or in combination with other nominal derivation processes. It is deduced from the assertions of Isaac (2018), and Eze and Isaac (2023) that the term affixation has to do with the process of attaching an affix to a word or root either for inflectional or derivational purposes. The term “affix” refers to an element in the morphological structure of a word which is not part of the root or stem (Mathews, 2007). According to Kari (2015), an affix is a sub-class of morpheme that is added to a root. He noted that the relationship between the root or stem of a word and affixes can be compared to the structure of a tree. Like a tree, a word can consist of different components. Kari (2015) also admitted that in morphology, the term “root” has to do with the part of a lexical item to which other word-building elements (affixes) can be added. Trask (1993) and Katamba (1993) unanimously describe an affix as a bound morpheme which can only be attached to a root or stem. On the other hand, Katamba says that a root is the irreducible core of a word with absolutely nothing attached to it. Onumajuru (2023) asserted that affixes in human languages can perform inflectional and derivational functions. She stated that a derivational affix is an affix which serves to derive new words. She also noticed that derivational affixes sometimes change the word class of the base to which it is attached. She further observed that when an affix changes the word class of the base, it is called class changing derivational affix and when it retains the word class and does not change it, it is called class maintaining derivational affix. This study affirms through literature reviewed that affixation may be inflectional or derivational morphological process which involves the attachment of an affix to the base of a word.

5. Methodology

The data used in this study were elicited through

the use of unstructured oral interviews. The unstructured oral interview was used in obtaining in-depth data through face-to-face verbal communication. The use of oral interviews in particular yielded a lot of information, which enriched our study. The data were collected from two sources which include the primary data and secondary data. The primary data were drawn from proficient L1 and L2 users of Ogba and English languages respectively, while the secondary data were drawn from related literatures, especially Isaac (2018). The method of data analysis adopted in this study is the descriptive and contrastive methods. The data were presented using Leipzig glossing pattern.

6. Discussion and Result

Affixation is the process of attaching a bound morpheme (affix) to a word. This implies that affixes in Ogba and English languages mandatorily have a host which is usually a word (root or stem). There are four different criteria

commonly employed in the classification of affixes in both languages. The criteria are position, function, meaning, and productivity. However, for the sake of precision, the present study presents affixes in both language based on position. This study observed that on the basis of their position in relation to the root words, affixes in Ogba and English languages are prefixes, suffixes and superfixes.

6.1 Prefixation in Ogba and English Languages

Prefixation is the process of attaching a prefix to a host (root word). The term prefix refers to an affix, a bound morpheme which is always attached at the beginning of a root word that is before the base or host. The data gathered for this study proved that prefixes in Ogba and English languages are unit of syllables. In Ogba, prefixes are generally tone bearing units. It is also observed that all the vowels and syllabic consonants in Ogba can morphologically function as prefixes:

Table 1. Examples of Prefixation in Ogba language

S/N	Prefixes	Roots	Gloss	Derived Word	Gloss
1a.	á-	ríò	'beg'	áríò	'(act of) begging'
b.	é-	rnà	'suck'	èrnà	'breast'
c.	é-	mú	'laugh (v)'	émú	'laughter (n)'
d.	í-	wè	'be angry'	íwè	'anger'
e.	í-	shí	'smell (v)'	íshí	'smell (n)'
f.	ó-	rnú	'work (v)'	órnu	'work (n)'
g.	ò-	hnù	'see'	òhnù	'vision'
h.	ú-	kó	'scarce'	úkó	'scarcity'
i.	ú-	hú	'grow'	úhú	'growth'
j.	m-	má	'be beautiful'	mmá	'beauty'
k.	n-	vná	'scold (v)'	nvná	'scolding'

The examples in the Table 1 indicate that the syllabic structures of the prefixes in Ogba are V or N, where V is a vowel and N a syllabic nasal (semi-vowel). It is also noticed that all the host (root or stem) of the prefixes in examples 1a-k are verbs while the derived forms are nominals (nouns). This denotes that in Ogba, verbs generally host prefixes. In other words, verbs are the only grammatical category or word class that host prefixes in Ogba. Simply put, prefixes cannot be attached to other words in the

language. It is further observed that prefixes in the language do not have any semantic quality in isolation. That is, without the verb which serves as the host, prefixes in Ogba are grammatically considered as segmental phonemes. The structural configuration of prefixation in Ogba is Pref. + V (where pref. is a prefix which is either a vowel or a syllabic nasal and V a verb root) which is one of the most productive morphological operations in the language.

Table 2. Examples of Prefixation in English language

S/N	Prefixes	Roots	Derived Word
2a.	ac-	knowledge	acknowledge
b.	anti-	malarial	antimalarial
c.	co-	occur	co-occur
d.	de-	merit	demerit
e.	dis-	play	display
f.	ex-	militant	ex-militant
g.	ir-	regular	irregular
h.	im-	moral	immoral
i.	mal-	practice	malpractice
j.	mono-	lingual	monolingual
k.	re-	view	review

The examples in the Table 2 reveal that the prefixes in English have irregular syllabic structures which include: VC, CV, VCCV, CVCV and CVC. It is also noticed that the hosts (roots or stems) of the prefixes in examples 2a-k belong to different word classes. For instance, the roots of 2a, 2b, 2d, 2f and 2j are nouns; 2c, 2e, 2i and 2k are verbs while 2g is an adjective. This implies that prefixes can be attached to nouns, verbs and adjectives in English language. With the exception of the negative prefix “un-” which can sometime have an adverb as its host as in unfairly = unfairly, this study did not find any example of a prefix that can be attached to an adverb. It is further of observed that the words that are derived through prefixation in the language belong to different classes. In 2a, it is noticed that the noun knowledge changes to a

verb (acknowledge) while the verb play remains a verb as in display in 2e. This proves that prefixation in English language is both class-maintaining and class-change morphological operation in the language. The data on Table 2 indicate that some of the prefixes in English language have inherent meanings (semantic qualities). For example, the prefixes anti- as in 2b, ex- as in 2f and mono- as in 2j have the meanings: against, former, and one respectively.

6.2 Suffixation in Ogba and English Languages

The process of attaching a suffix to a host is known as suffixation. A suffix is an affix that is attached at the end of a root word or host. Suffixation in Ogba and English languages may result in either derivation or inflection. It is observed that there are few suffixes in Ogba.

Table 3. Examples of Suffixation in Ogba language

S/N	Roots	Gloss	Suffixes	Derived Form	Gloss
3a.	zú	‘train’	-má	zúmá	‘trained’
b.	kpó-	‘call’	-mé/-mè	kpómè	‘called’
c.	biá	‘come’	-lí	biá-lí	‘come + ability’
d.	gbá	‘write’	-shí	gbá-shí	‘write + into’

The examples in 3a-d on Table 3 show that the suffixes in Ogba have the CV syllabic structure. This suggests that suffixes in the language comprise a consonant and a vowel which constitutes segmental phoneme. Like the prefixes, the suffixes in Ogba are tone bearing units. The examples also prove that suffixation

is inflectional and derivational in the language. For instance, the attached of the suffix “-má” to the verb root “zú” ‘train’ results in the perfective form “zúmá” ‘trained’. Similarly, the suffix “-lí” is commonly attached to a lexical verb to mark ability. Consider the following constructions:

4a. Wó biá áhiá.

- 3PL come-PST market.
‘They came to the market.’
- b. Wó biá-mè áhiá.
3PL come-PERF. market.
‘They have come to the market.’
- c. Wó ká biá-lí áhiá.
3PL NEG. come-ABIL market.
‘They could not come to the market.’
- d. Wó biá-shí yè ìjè.
3PL come-APPL 1PL visit
‘They visited us.’

The examples in sentences 4a-d show that the verb root (biá ‘come’) which originally expresses simple past can take different suffixes. They suffixes perform divergent grammatical roles. The suffix “-mè” in 4b changes the construction in 4a to a past perfect construction. The suffix “-lí” expresses ability as in 4c while the suffix “-shí” in 4d is an applicative marker (a morpheme which allows a verb to take additional argument or object). In view of the foregoing, this paper posits that suffixation is inflectional in Ogba. The examples 5a-g on Table 4 illustrate suffixation in English language.

Table 4. Examples of Suffixation in English language

S/N	Roots	Suffixes	Derived Word
5a.	boy	-s	boys
b.	baby	-ies	babies
c.	assign	-ment	assignment
d.	good	-ness	goodness
e.	supervise	-ee	supervisee
f.	kill	-er	killer
g.	Act	-ion	action

The examples in 5a-g reveal that suffixation is both inflectional and derivational morphological operation in English language. For instance, the attachment of the suffixes -s and -ies to the roots boy and baby which are singular in 5a and 5b respectively result in their plural forms. On the contrary, the attachment of the suffixes -ment, -

ness, -ee, -er and ion to the roots assign, supervise, kill and act result in the realization of the nouns assignment, goodness, supervisee, killer and action respectively. These examples also show that suffixation is both a class-maintaining and class-changing morphological operation in the English language. Whereas the derived words in 5a-b maintain the same class with their roots, the derived words in 5c and 5e-g changed from verb to nouns while 5d changes from adjective to noun. It is important that suffixation is one of the productive inflectional and derivational morphological operation in the language. There are several suffixes in the language.

6.3 Suprafixation in Ogba and English Languages

Suprafixation refers to the morphological operation which involves the use of a suprasegmental feature to create difference in the meaning of a lexical item or grammatical construction. The suprasegmental features in natural languages are stress, tone, nasalization, intonation, etc. It is noticed that tone and nasalization are the suprafixes in Ogba. Tone and nasalization are as essential as the phonemic sounds (consonants and vowels) in the language. This is because like the segmental phonemes (consonants and vowels), they (tone and nasalization) can alter the meaning of words, phrases, clauses and sentences which otherwise are the same in terms of their segmentals. Consider the examples on Table 5:

Table 5. Suprafixation in Ogba language

S/N	Word	Gloss	Suprafixes
6a.	égbé	‘hawk’	HHT
	ègbè	‘trap’	LLT
	ègbé	‘gun’	LHT
b.	ēkwé	‘drum’	MHT
	èkwè	‘yam barn’	LLT
c.	ché	‘wait’	HT
	chè	‘think’	LT
d.	rá	‘drink’	
	rná	‘suck’	Nasalization
e.	tá	‘chew’	
	tná	‘entice’	Nasalization
f.	tù	‘measure’	
	tnù	‘select’	Nasalization

It is noticed that the dissimilarities between the words in examples 6a-f is the variation in the pitch of the voice (tone) and nasalization. For instance, a change from high tone to low tone changes the meaning of the word “ché” ‘wait’ to ‘think’ as in 6c while the nasalization of the vowel in 6d-f result in change in meaning. Nasalization is orthographically represented in Ogba through the insertion of the letter “n” in between the preceding sound and the nasalized vowel.

Table 6. Suprafixation in English language

S/N	Word	Suprafix
7a.	REcord	Stress
	reCORD	
b.	EXport	Stress
	exPORT	
c.	SUBject	Stress
	subJECT	
d.	INsult	Stress
	inSULT	
e.	PROject	Stress
	ProJECT	

The examples in 7a-e on Table 6 show that the suprafix in the English language is stress. It is observed that the differences between the words in each of the examples are the shift in stress which results in difference in meaning and the class of the words. It is also noticed that when the stress is placed on the first syllable of the bi-syllabic words in 7a-e, they function as nouns but when placed on the second syllable, they function as verbs. This indicates that a shifting stress is one of the affixal processes in the language.

7. The Similarities and Differences Between the Affixal Processes in Ogba and English Languages

This study has been able to ascertain that the affixal processes in the Ogba and English languages have some similarities and differences. This corroborates the Contrastive Analysis Theory (CA) by Robert Lado that natural languages have their areas of similarities and differences. In terms of similarities, it was observed that prefixes, suffixes and suprafixes exist in both languages. This study also found out that prefixes are segmental phonemes in both languages. However, it was noticed that whereas

the prefixes in Ogba have either V or N (where N represents syllabic nasal) syllabic structure, the prefixes in English language have irregular syllabic structures which include: VC, CV, VCCV, CVCV and CVC. This study further observed that it is only the verb that host prefixes in Ogba while nouns, adjectives and verb can host the prefixes in English language. Again, it was affirmed that the words that are derived through prefixation in Ogba are usually the nominals (nouns). In other words, prefixation strictly result in nominalization in the language but the words that are derived through prefixation in the English language belong to different classes. This indicates that that whereas prefixation is firmly a class-changing morphological operation in the Ogba language, it is both class-changing and class-maintaining morphological operation in the English language.

This study revealed that English language has more suffixes than the Ogba language. Only four suffixes were identified in the Ogba while the English language has several suffixes. The syllabic structure of all the suffixes in Ogba is CV whereas the suffixes English language has irregular syllabic structure such as CVC, CVCC, etc. Additionally, whereas suffixation is inflectional in Ogba, it is both inflectional and derivational in the English language.

It is noticed that the suprafixes in Ogba are tone (variation in the pitch of the voice) and nasalization while the suprafix in the English language is stress. In view of that, this study posits that tones are like the segmental phonemes (consonants and vowels) in Ogba. That is, tones can alter the meaning of words, phrases, clauses and sentences which otherwise are the same in terms of their segmentals. This is because Ogba is a tone language. On the other hand, English is a stress sensitive language that is wrong placement of stress can result in misinterpretation.

8. Conclusion

This paper contrasted the affixal processes in Ogba and English languages with the aim of identifying the areas of similarities and dissimilarities between the affixal processes in both languages. The study was anchored on the Contrastive Analysis Theory (CA). The data used in this study were elicited through the use of unstructured oral interview. The data were collect from two sources which include the primary data and secondary data. The primary data were drawn from proficient L1 and L2 users

of Ogba and English languages respectively, while the secondary data were drawn from related literatures. The method of data analysis adopted in this study was the descriptive and contrastive methods. The data were presented using Leipzig glossing pattern.

This study corroborated the Contrastive Analysis Theory (CA) which posits that natural languages have their areas of similarities and differences. In terms of similarities, it was observed that prefixes, suffixes and suprafixes exist in both languages. This study also found out that prefixes are segmental phonemes in both languages. However, it was noticed that whereas the prefixes in Ogba have either V or N (where N represents syllabic nasal) syllabic structure, the prefixes in English language have irregular syllabic structures which include: VC, CV, VCCV, CVCV and CVC. This study further observed that it is only the verb that host prefixes in Ogba while nouns, adjectives and verb can host the prefixes in English language. Again, it was affirmed that the words that are derived through prefixation in Ogba are usually the nominals (nouns). This study also revealed that English language has more suffixes than the Ogba language. Only four suffixes were identified in the Ogba while the English language has several suffixes. The syllabic structure of all the suffixes in Ogba is CV whereas the suffixes English language has irregular syllabic structure such as CVC, CVCC, etc. Additionally, whereas suffixation is inflectional in Ogba, it is both inflectional and derivational in the English language. It was noticed that the suprafixes in Ogba are tone (variation in the pitch of the voice) and nasalization while the suprafix in the English language is stress. In view of that, this study posits that tones are like the segmental phonemes (consonants and vowels) in Ogba. That is, tones can alter the meaning of words, phrases, clauses and sentences which otherwise are the same in terms of their segmentals. This is because Ogba is a tone language. On the other hand, English is a stress sensitive language that is wrong placement of stress can result in misinterpretation.

9. Recommendation

Based on the assumption of the Contrastive Analysis Theory (CA) that the areas of dissimilarities between two or more languages can present challenges for the L2 learner, this paper recommends that English language teachers within Ogba speech communities should focus on other forms of nominalization

and stress in the English language.

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