

Extensional Suffixes in Egbema Igbo

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Abstract

This work studies the extensional suffixes in Egbema Igbo. This study provides adequate description and explanation as not much has been studied about this dialect of Igbo. Data were collected through oral interviews, observations and from existing literature. Data collected were analyzed using the theory of concatenative morphology. And it was observed that the extensional suffixes in Egbema Igbo are of six types and they are the Inceptive, the Directional, the Repetitive or Continuous, the Contactive, the Completive and the Retaliative. This study concludes that Extensional suffixes do exist in Egbema Igbo and they are indeed meaning modifiers.

Introduction

Extensional morphology is that branch of morphology that applies mainly to African Languages and is consumed with the meaning of the verb roots to which they are attached and this form varies from languages and dialects of languages. Emenanjo (2015) in Okoro (2019:35) holds that the term extensional is peculiar to African linguistics morphology. In his words:

In African linguistics, the term extensional is used in morphology for morphemes, usually affixes, which ‘external’ the meaning of the words to which they are affixed. In Igbo, these essentially meaning-modifies are suffixes: extensional suffixes (ESS)...:233.

- i. Mechaa – do completely
- ii. Metu – do a bit contactively
- iii. Mekuwa – do repetitively

Stump (2017) agrees with Emenanjo, that extensional morphology deals with suffixes which are attached and that this branch of morphology appears to apply in most African languages and have attracted heated research attention on their forms, co-occurrence and their order. So, views on this aspect of morphology seem to apply to scholars interested in Emenanjo (1978) in Okoro (2019:36), leads in this regard in relation to Igbo Language. He holds that the Igbo extensional suffixes are:

- a. “Attached to verb roots”.
- b. Non-Inflectional and lexical.
- c. Class-Maintaining.
- d. Inner formation which often precede inflectional suffixes.
- e. Usually closer to verb root.
- f. Highly productive morphology but low in diachronic morphology.
- g. Optional i.e, they are only used, if desired (Emenanjo, 2015:233).

A recurrent issue in extensional morphology particularly with emphasis to the Igbo morphology is the distinction between extensional suffixes and verb roots.

This is as a result of the fact that the distinction between verbs and suffixes in the Igbo language is not a sharp one. Aronoff, 1936; Green & Igwe (1963); Emenanjo, (1978). It is held that suffixes are verbal in origin in Igbo (Emenanjo, 1979 & Onukawa, 1999). Nwaozuzu in Okoro (2019:4) holds that Egbema is part of the South Western group of dialects of Igbo stating that South Western group of dialects are spoken in Ikwere, Ohaji, Egbema, Mgbirichi, Umuagwo etc. So from the above classification, Egbema is identified as a distinct dialect of Igbo with distinct linguistic characteristics. Egbema occupies a strategic place in the geography of Igbo as a border town in the North with Ogba / Egbema / Ndoni LGA in Rivers State, and this makes it a border clan of Igbo.

Statement of the problem

Nwaozuzu (2008) classified this dialect of Igbo known as Egbema Igbo as a distinct dialect of Igbo with distinct linguistic characteristic as not much has been known about this dialect of Igbo. This work is therefore aimed at finding out the distinct way extensional suffixes are Identified and grouped in Egbema Igbo.

Theoretical Studies

This work adopts the theory of concatenative morphology which was one of the bases for the early generative approaches to morphological processes propounded in the early 1970's as championed by the works of Siegel (1971); Aronoff (1976); Anderson (1982) among others. This theory assumes that morphemes are homogeneous, indivisible atomic units of linguistic forms, each linking some component(s) of meaning with a set of mutually exclusive allomorphs that express it. Spenser (1971) holds that the theory which is often referred to as a perspective to morphological analysis, linear model or agglutinative approach to morphology, partly influenced the work of Chomsky (1981) which resulted in full brown generativist approach.

According to Stump (2017), the theory assumes the following as basically concatenative:

- i. Compounding: This is simply bringing free morphemes together to form new words, for example:
 - News + Paper = Newspaper.
 - Wrist + Watch = Wristwatch.
 - Foot + Ball = Football.

- Time + Keeper = Timekeeper.
- ii. Affixation: This involves the insertion of morphemes to a root word: that is forming morphologically complex words by the addition of morpheme(s) to the base, as illustrated in the following examples:
 - a. Infix: is as in some informal English words like uni bloody + varsity = uni – bloody varsity.
 - b. Prefix: is as in disability: dis + ability.
 - c. Suffix: is as in affixation: go + ing.
 - d. Interfix : The handout couldn't get examples from the English language for this, so it can be regarded in some languages as empty morph.
 - e. Circumfix: is as in un + grateful + ness = ungratefulness.

In relation to this study, the theory provides basis for our account of such a morphological process as suffixation in Egbema Igbo which is our main concern in this work.

Review of Related Literature

For the review of related literature in extensional suffixes in the Igbo, the following studies were captured: Carell (1970); Lord (1975); Emenanjo (1975; 2018) Nwachukwu (1983); Onukawa (1999) and Onwukwe (2018).

Carell (1970) presents the phrase structure account for verb-suffix collocation in Igbo. This study identifies extensional suffixes and labels them into lexical categories of adverbials. Thus, the following examples are provided as culled from Onukawa (1999:110):

Adv₁ : + a (+ motion towards)
Adv₂ : kwa (+ Repetitive)
Adv₃ : r (+ Benefactive)
CA (+ Completive)
SI (+ Distribution)

Lord (1975) presents an ESS (Extensional suffixes) distinction from simple verb roots in Igbo compounds. Verbs of which the second compound does not occur elsewhere as an independent verb, the study observes that Igbo verb compound was labeled as meaning-extender – a result of an action represented in the first verb constituent. She identifies extensional suffixes in Igbo as “result” of location represented by the simple verb root that co-occurs with them. She presents the following examples where the second element is seen by her analysis as extensional suffixes:

- | | | | |
|-----|-----------------|--------|----------|
| i. | Nɔsi | nɔ | - si |
| | “Finish staying | ‘seat’ | “finish” |
| ii. | Felari | fe | -lari |

“Fly away from”

‘fly’

‘away’”

Emenanjo (1973:79) exemplifies aspects of Igbo verb. The study Identifies that the ESS refer to those “suffixes which function principally as meaning modifiers i.e. extending the meaning of the word with which they are used”. The study Identifies well over eighty ESS and classifies them according to their occurrence on various verbal derivatives. He holds that the extensional suffixes are numerous in Igbo than the other suffix – types and have the tendency to occur together “quite frequently”. This study is similar to Emenanjo (1975) in that both focus on extensional suffixes but the present one adopts a concatenative theoretical orientation in analysis.

Nwachukwu (1983:76) presents the structure of extensional suffixes in Igbo. He classifies extensional suffixes as a sub of ‘Non-inflectional suffixes’ as opposed to inflectional suffixes in Igbo.

The study states thus: “The above term (extensional suffixes) is borrowed from Emenanjo (1975) where it is used to denote those suffixes which have wide scope of occurrence. In other words, they can be found with the infinitive form of the verbs as well as with simple and compound verb forms. They extend the meaning of a given verb and have generally been described as meaning “modifying suffixes”.

The study concludes by stating that the number of these meaning modifying or extensional suffix is yet to be determined. So is their relationship with “existing and erstwhile verbs”. The study of Nwachukwu (1983) is not too different from this present one in terms of aspects of extensional suffixes but the point of divergence is that while the former is on the larger Igbo Language, the latter is on Egbema Igbo. In another study, Onukawa (1999) examines the order of extensional suffixes in Igbo. The study quarrels with the position of Carrel (1970) and Lord (1975) on extensional suffixes in Igbo. He holds that, (i) The ESS – Extensional suffixes have a fixed order of co-occurrence; (ii) the maximum order of the ESS is more than... (p.112). The study adopts the “theta role theory” of Chomsky (1981) to distinguish simple verb roots from extensional suffixes. The principle has it that the theta role assigning properties of a second verb of the constituent verbs in a compound must be satisfied and this may be within the complement of the verb phrase. This means that the complement of a compound must consist of the item to which the second verb can state that if the second constituent element of a verb compound has a theta role assigning property and assigns a theta role to a complement, the second constituent is a verb, but if it does not have any role assigning property and does not assign a theta role to a complement, it is a suffix.

In a recent study, Onwukwe (2018) examines “percolation principle perspective of verb-suffix distinction in Igbo verb compounds”. The study attempts a distinction of verbs and (extensional suffixes in Igbo verb) compounds from the percolation principle angle. According to the writer, percolation principle is convention regarding the distribution of features in compounds. The study submits that when a verb compound in Igbo obeys the percolation principle then, it infers that, the second element of such compound is a verb otherwise; it is a suffix (extensional suffixes).

Onwukwe (2018) holds that the percolation principle stipulates that “if a construction is headed by X, that X shares diacritic and syntactic features with its constituents. In other words, the features (diacritic and syntactic) of the head X percolate on other constituents”. This present study differs from Onwukwe (2018), in that it analyzes extensional suffixes in Egbema Igbo not from the percolation principle but linear morphological analysis. From all the studies discussed here we observed that all other studies were either on Igbo language in general or on other dialects of Igbo but this present work is solely on Egbema Igbo as a distinct dialect of Igbo.

Extensional Suffixes In Egbema Igbo

Identifying the extensional suffixes in Egbema Igbo, using Emenanjo (1978) classification thus:

1. The Inceptive.
2. The Directional.
3. The Repetitive/ Continuous.
4. The Contactive.
5. The Completive.
6. The Retaliative.

- 1) The Inceptive: This kind of suffix in Egbema Igbo expresses the beginning of an action is often marked by the suffix – WV where V is Vowel in harmony with the vowel of the verb root. Examples include :

- a) Rí – wé > ri ‘eat’ we ‘begin’ = ‘Begin eating’.
- b) Bìà – wà > bia ‘come’ wa begin = ‘Begin coming’.
- c) Mè – wè > me ‘do’ ‘we’ begin = ‘Begin doing’.
- d) Shí – wé > shi ‘cook’ ‘we’ begin = ‘Begin cooking’.
- e) Sù – wá > sù ‘wash’ ‘wa’ begin = ‘Begin washing’.
- f) Jé – wé > je ‘go’ ‘we’ begin = ‘Begin going’.
- g) Tá – wá > ta ‘chew’ ‘begin’ wa = ‘Begin chewing’.
- h) Gbá – wá > gba ‘run’ wa ‘begin’ = ‘Begin running’.
- i) Gbá – wá > gba ‘urinate’ wa begin = ‘Begin urinating’.
- j) Gbì - wá > gbi ‘flog’ wa begin = ‘Begin flogging’.

Here we Identified the – WV as the inceptive suffix marker in Egbema Igbo which can either be ‘ – wa’ or ‘ – we’ depending on the vowel of the verb root which its vowel must be in harmony with as earlier stated.

- 2) The Directional: This type of suffix expresses direction of an action in relation to the verb to which they are attached. We classify them as directional suffixes in Egbema Igbo. Some examples of the suffixes are provided below:

- a) Bà – tà > ta ‘come in – toward speaker’.
- b) Wé – tà > ta ‘bring in – toward speaker’.
- c) Wé – puà > - puà ‘bring out – away from speaker’.

- d) Wé – liá > - liá ‘take upwards’.
- e) Wụ - liá > - liá ‘jump upwards’.
- f) Wụ - shidà > - shidà ‘jump downwards’.
- g) Lù – shidà > - shidà ‘throw downwards’.
- h) Kù – shidà > - shidà ‘carry downwards’.
- i) Lọ - shidà > - shidà ‘sit downwards’.
- j) Gbá – shidà > - shidà ‘come downwards’.

Here we observed that the vowels of the root verbs and that of the directional suffixes are not in harmony and the suffixes identified were

- I. Tà – ‘in – towards speaker’
- II. Puá – ‘out – away from speaker’
- III. Liá – ‘upwards’
- IV. Shidà – ‘downwards’

3) The Repetitive/ Continuous: These types of suffixes express the repetition of an action in relation to the verb to which they are attached. The repetitive aspect is expressed by the suffix –kuwa in Egbema Igbo. Some of the examples are :

- a) Me – kụwà > ‘do again’
- b) Wō – kụwà > ‘wear again’
- c) Wụ - kụwà > ‘jump again’
- d) Shí – kụwà > ‘cook again’
- e) Bià – kụwà > ‘come again’
- f) Lú – kụwà > ‘throw again’
- g) Gbị - kụwà > ‘flog again’
- h) Dé – kụwà > ‘write again’
- i) Gbá- kụwà > ‘kick again’
- j) Gbú – kụwà > ‘cut again’
- k) Gbú – kụwà > ‘plant (cassava) again’
- l) Gbá – kụwà > ‘urinate again’
- m) Gbù – kụwà > ‘kill again’
- n) Wópù – kụwà > ‘undress again’
- o) Wógháí – kụwà > ‘wear again’

Here we observed that the repetitive suffix in Egbema Igbo is – kuwa. The vowels in the verb root and that of the suffixes are in harmony eg. 3b, 3e, and 3i. They are in harmony.

4) The Contactive: This type of extensional suffix expresses either full or partial contact with an item relative to the verb to which they are attached. They are as well referred to as experimentative or temporariness of an action performed by the verb to which they are attached. Some examples in Egbema Igbo are:

- a) Gbá shidà – tū > - tū ‘come down a bit or temporarily’.
- b) Lọ - kpō > kpo ‘sit a little while’.

- c) Lọọ - tų > tų 'sit a while'.
- d) Jé - tų > tų 'walk for a while'.
- e) jé - kpō > kpo 'walk for a little while'.
- f) Gbí - tų > tų 'flog temporarily'.
- g) Dē - tų > tų 'write temporarily'.
- h) Chái - tų > tų 'have a bite' for a while.
- i) Shí - tų > tų 'cook temporarily'.
- j) Yíí - tų > tų 'put more temporarily'.
- k) Gbù - tų > tų 'cut temporarily'.

Here we identified two Contactive suffixes which are – tų and – kpo.

5) The Completive: This type of suffix expresses a complete action relative to the verb to which they are attached. They are marked by the suffix – chaa in Egbema Igbo as could be seen in the examples that follows:

- Rí - chaà 'eat completely' or 'wholly'.
- Tá - chaá 'chew all or completely'.
- Shì - chaá 'cook completely or all'.
- Rụ - chaá 'work completely'.
- Zaá - chaá 'sweep completely'.
- Kwú - chaá 'talk completely'.
- Ghù - chaá 'bath completely'.
- Gbè - chaá 'prepare all'.
- Mè - kụwá - 'do it again completely'.
- Sù - chaá - 'cut completely'.
- Dé - chaá - 'write all'.

Here, just as earlier stated, the suffix identified as the completive suffix is the suffix – chaá.

6) Retaliative: This type of suffix expresses retaliation in respect to the verb to which they are attached. They are marked with the suffix – gwa and often operate in conjunction with rV marker in Egbema Igbo as can be seen in the following examples:

- a) Sé - gwá - rá 'Draw it retaliatively'.
- b) Mé - gwá - rá 'do it retaliatively'.
- c) Kụ - gwá - rá 'hit or beat retaliatively'.
- d) Gbu - gwá - rá 'kill or cut retaliatively'.
- e) Tí - gwá - rá 'beat retaliatively'.
- f) Gbị - gwá - rá 'flog retaliatively'.
- g) Gwà - gwá - rá 'say retaliatively'.
- h) Rí - gwá - rá 'retaliatively'.
- i) Fí - gwá - rá 'squeeze retaliatively'.
- j) Fụ - gwá - rá 'blow retaliatively'.



Here we identified the – gwá suffix as the retaliative suffix operating in conjunction with the rV marker as – ‘ra’ in Egbema Igbo.

Summary and Conclusion

Indeed Extensional morphology applies mainly to African languages and its main concern is on the affixes that extend the meaning of the verb roots to which they are attached to. They are also called the meaning modifiers. The form these affixes take varies from languages and dialects of languages. Here, in this study, our main concern was on the extensional suffixes and the dialect studied was the Egbema dialect of Igbo. Here, we were able to identify the forms the extensional suffixes in Egbema Igbo take and using the Emenanjo classification of (1978), we were able to classify them into six types which are the Inceptive, the Directional, the Repetitive, the Contactive, the Completive and then the Retaliative. We conclude by stating that the Igbo verb suffixation is a rich and extensive morphological process which poses a lot of challenge to Igbo lexicographers. This is because it is a highly productive word formation process where many new words can be formed with significant meaning different from the root word.

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