

ANALYSIS OF OGBA INFLECTIONAL AFFIXES

Nwokoji, Chukwumeka (Ph.D)*

Abstract

Many indigenous language in Nigeria are spoken by a decreasing number of people, especially among the younger generations. As more people shift towards using major languages like English, Hausa, Yoruba, use of indigenous languages is declining. Without proper documentation for easy study of Ogba language, the language might go into extinction as most of its users have switched to using English language. This study is put together to describe and analyse inflectional affixes in Ogba, an Igboid language in Rivers State, Nigeria. It particularly examines the inflectional and derivational operations (role) of affixes in the language. It shows how certain grammatical ideas or notions like negation, number, imperative, present progressive, affirmative, present progressive negative, future negative forms, present perfective affirmative, the past affirmative, the unfulfilled perfective, infinitive, participle. The data for this work were gotten through interview, observation, well written material in Ogba. Eugene A. Nida's (1949) descriptive analysis of words was used to analyze the research. Furthermore, the Contrastive theory, developed by Fries in the 1940s and popularized by Robert Lado in 1957, was applied in this work. It is a theory that states that positive transfer occurs when two languages are similar, while negative transfer or interference occurs when they are not. It was discovered that Ogba language is rich in inflectional morphology.

Introduction:

Morphological constructions are products of affixation and compounding. They are very important elements in human language. Affixation is one of the two major traditional processes of word formation; the other being compounding. Affixation entails the addition of an affix to a stem to yield a complex stem, while compounding involves adding two or more stems together to form a single word which studies have revealed that the two major word formation processes are affixation and compounding. For instance, in the formation of the Ogba word *mgbashi* (poison), the first morphological process is compounding.

That is “*gba'* + *shi* = *gbashi*”

write cook to write

To the word “*gbashi*” is added the prefix *-m* to get the derivation *mgbashi* (poison) which is a product of affixation and compounding. Also in English language we have the form *selflessness*. That is *self* + *less* to yield *selfless*. If we add *ness* to *selfless*, we have *selflessness* which is also a product of compounding and affixation. There are different kinds of morphemes (affixes) regarding their distribution and function in the word. For instance, we have *state* + *s* = states, *be* +

witch + **ing** = bewitching, **village** + **s** = villages and **walk** + **ed** = walked etc. The term affixation is concerned with the concatenation (i.e. linking) of affixes. Inflection is defined as:

...an affix which performs a grammatical function without changing the parts of speech of the word to which it is attached. Inflectional affixes are not used to create new words rather they are used to show if a word is singular or plural, if the tense of the verb is past or no past, if the word expresses comparatives or superlative degree etc (Ndimele 2001:82) .

Derivational affixes are those which change the lexical meaning and syntactic category or part of speech of the words to which they are attached. Unlike the inflectional system, derivation is usually a process for generating new lexemes, Ogum, (2000). Some of the derivational affixes in English are; **Prefix**; **a-** (verb or adjective) as in a-float, **be-** (noun or verb) as in be-win, **de-** (noun-verb) as in de-frost. **Suffixes**; **-er** (verb – noun) as in preach-**er**), **-al** (verb – noun) as in sentiment-al, **-al** (adjective – noun) as in national etc.

Inflectional affixes as affixes which function to show grammatical relations with regards to number, tense, aspects, gender, case, negation etc., depending on the language involved. Some of the inflectional affixes in English are: **-s** (plural) as in lectures, **-ed** (past tense) as in worked, **-ing** (progressive) as in speaking, **-s** (verb)(3rd person singular simple present) as speaks, **-en**(past participle) as in eaten, **-er** (comparative) taller, **-est** (superlative) as in tallest and **-‘s** (possessive) as in Nwokoji 's etc.

1.1 The Language And The Speakers

Ogba is in Ogbia-Egbema-Ndoni Local Government Area of Rivers State. Some clans or villages around Ogba are Ikwerre by the east, Ndoni by the west, Egbema by the north and Ekpeye by the south. Ogba is made up of the Egnih, Igburu, and Usomini group. The Egni group is made up of the following villages: Ede, Itu, Erema, Akabuka, Akabta, Egita, Itu, Ibewa, Obite, Obiebe, Obukaegni, Obagi Obiozimini, Oboburu, Ogbogu, and Ohali-Elu. The Igburu group is made up of the following villages: Obigwe, Ohiauga, Ogbidi, Okposi, Osiakpu, Okansu, Ama, Ikiri, Uju, Egbeda, Elehia, and Elieta. The Usomini group is made up of the following villages: Ebogoro, Alinson Okanu, Okporukpoali, Obie, Idu-Osobele, Omoku, Krigeni, Ohali-Usomini, Obo and Idu-Obusiukwu.

1.2 Brief Statement On Ogba Sound System:

This section reviews the sound system of Ogba with respect to its vowels and consonants. It would be erroneous to presume that the process of Ogba affixation can be satisfactorily analysed without knowing the basic phonological system. It is on this premises that the researcher deems it necessary to review the basic sound system of Ogba. However, the aim of this research work is not to undertake an elaborate study of the Ogba phonological system, but to identify the basic speech sounds which can be used to describe the dialect adequately.

1.3 Autography of Ogba Language.

Ogba can conveniently be written with the letters below:

a b ch d e eh f g gb gh ghn gw h i ih j k kp kw l m n nw ny o oh p r s t u uh v w wh y z. The alphabetical arrangement as seen above has been done to enhance easy rhyming, reading, recognition and understanding. Double letters follow single ones (e.g *gb* follows *g*).

1.3 The Ogba Vowel Sounds

Vowels are sounds produced with no obstruction of the flow of air in the oral cavity.

(Ladefoged 1975: p.11) in (Eme 1993: p. 22) defines vowels as “sounds produced with none of the articulators coming together and consequently the passage of the airstreams is relatively unobstructed”. The Ogba language records nine (9) vowels such as [ɪ, ʊ, u, o, ɔ, a, ɛ, e, ɪ.] and seven of them are nasalized vowels [õ, ù, ï, ã, ê, ĩ, õ,].

1.4 The Ogba Consonant Sounds

(Crystal 1991: p. 74) defines consonants phonetically as “sound made by a closure or narrowing in the vowel track so that the airflow is either completely blocked or so restricted that audible friction is produced”. Consonants are classified in terms of two main articulatory components namely, the manner of articulation and the place of articulation. According to (Ogum 2003: p. 63), there are twenty eight phonetic consonants identified in Ogba language and they are list as [ŋ^w, k^w, g^w, k, g, ʃ, dʒ, p, d, t, γ, h, h^w, ʃ, l, j, w, β, r, f, v, s, z, n, m, ŋ, ɲ, ʒ]. Only [b and p] are considered non-phonemic because their occurrences are restricted. Therefore, twenty six phonemic consonants-/ ŋ^w, k^w, g^w, k, g, ʃ, dʒ, p, d, t, γ, h, h^w, ʃ, l, j, w, β, r, f, v, s, n, m, ŋ, ɲ/ are established in Ogba. It is also observed that Ogba has four nasal consonants / n, m, ŋ, ɲ/.

2.0 INFLECTIONAL AFFIXES IN QGBA

Inflectional affixes are not used to create new words; rather they are used to show if a word is “singular” or ‘plural’, if the tense of verb is *past* or *non past*, if the word expresses *comparative* or *superlative* degree, or to show “case” feature of the word in question. Note that *CASE* is a grammatical category which is concerned with the ability of a normal (noun or pronoun) to change its form with respect to the environment in which it occurs. Some of the grammatical function perform by inflectional affixes are Tense-Aspect-and Negative. The morpho-syntactic and semantic characteristics of inflectional affixes in Qgba will be treated under the following headings:

- a. Inflectional affixes in imperative construction,
- b. Inflectional affixes in Imperfective construction,
- c. Inflectional affixes in perfective construction.

2.1 Inflectional Affixes in imperative Construction in Qgba.

Imperative is a term used in the grammatical classification of sentence types. Imperative constructions are typically used in the expression of commands. They are characterized by the presence of the harmonizing open vowel suffix. Imperative can be affirmative or negative. We shall therefore examine the imperative affirmative and imperative negative under the imperative construction.

2.2 The Imperative Affirmative:-

The Imperative affirmative in the Qgba is formed by the affixation of the harmonizing open vowel suffix (-a) to the verb root. Examples of the suffix with the expanded and non-expanded verb root are given in 5-8 and 9-12 respectively.

VERB ROOT	IMPERATIVE	GLOSS
	<i>vb-suf</i> (infl)	
1 rí eat	ríá	“eat”
2 kwú speak	kwùá	“speak”
3 gwú dig	gwúá	“dig”
4 chè think	chèá	“think”
5. kpụ call	kpuá	“call”
6. sụ wash	súá	“wash”
7. zụ buy	zúá	“buy”
8. hí tight	híá	“tight”
9. gbụ vomit	gbúá	“vomit”
10. kọ narrate	kóá	“narrate”

- | | | | |
|---------|------|------|--------|
| 11. gnú | read | gnúá | “read” |
| 12. kwú | beat | kwúá | “beat” |

From the above example, it is obvious that the vowel prefix “á” harmonize with expanded and non-expanded vowel in Ogba sound system. However, ‘a’ in the above examples, harmonizes with the verbs of the root to form the imperative items. The imperative affirmative is determined by attaching high tone to the suffix “a”. This explains that Ogba imperative and negation is determined by use of tone system. Imperative affirmative and negative in Ogba is determined by high tone.

2.3 The Imperative Negative

The imperative negative in the Ogba language is formed by both processes of preffixation and suffixation. The high tone prefix **í** and **í-** is affixed to the verb root which is immediately followed by the negative suffix **-lá**. The expanded vowel [ɪ] harmonizes with the expanded vowel verb roots and is therefore attached or prefixed to them while the non-expanded vowel [i] harmonize with the non-expanded vowel verb roots and are attached or prefixed to them. The prefix, **í-** co-occurs only with the verb root containing the non-expanded vowel verb root while the prefix **í-** co-occur only with the verb root containing the expanded vowel verb root. The negative suffix occurs with both expanded and non-expanded vowels. Examples of the imperative negative construction in Ogba with both expanded and non-expanded vowel verb roots (high and low tone). With NP complements of the verbs are given in 13-19 respectively.

VERB ROOT IMPERATIVE NEGATIVE WITH NP COMPLEMENT

- | | | | |
|---------|-------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| 13. rí | eat | í-rí-lá írní – | don’t eat food |
| | | <i>pref-vb-suf</i> | <i>food</i> |
| 14. mé | do | í-mé-lá hneojo – | don’t do bad thing (evil) |
| | | <i>pref-vb-suf</i> | <i>evil thing</i> |
| 15. pé | climb | í-pé-lá ɔlɔ – | don’t climb the house |
| | | <i>pref-vb-suf</i> | <i>house</i> |
| 16. gwù | swim | í-gwù-lá mini – | don’t the river |

pref-vb-suf River

17. zà sweep í-zà-lá ìbra – don't sweep the parlor
pref-vb-suf Parlor

18. dì endure í-dì-lá égnurú – don't endure hunger
pref-vb-suf Hunger

19. ré sell í-ré-lá ègwá – don't sell beans
pref-vb-suf beans

From the above example, we observe that the high tone verbs maintain their inherent high tones before the NP complement and the low tone verbs also maintain their inherent low tones before the NP complements. The different prefixes harmonize with the vowel of their respective verb roots.

Example 20-27 below shows the imperative negative constructions in Ogbia with expanded and non- expanded vowel verb roots without NP complements of the verbs.

VERB ROOT IMPERATIVE NEGATIVE WITHOUT NP COMPLEMENT

20. rí eat í-ri-là – don't eat
pref-vb-suf
21. zú buy í-zú-là – don't buy
pref-vb-suf
22. mé do í-mé-là – don't do
pref-vb-suf
23. pé climb í-pé-là – don't climb
pref-vb-suf
24. gwù swim í-gwù-là – don't swim
pref-vb-suf
25. zà sweep í-zà-là – don't sweep
pref-vb-suf

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31. Samson dī ɪ--r̄n̄u ɔrn̄u cultivate
(Samson *aux.prog* *p* work farm)
“Samson is cultivating the farm/work”.
32. Ó dī ɪ--gb̄a ɛkw̄o write
(He/she *aux.prog* *p* write book)
“He/she is writing a book”
33. Ye dī ɪ--gn̄u ɛgw̄u sing
(We *aux.prog* *p* sing song)
“We are singing a song”.

From the foregoing example, we observe that the progressive marker **dī** (auxiliary) always precedes a prefix which is affixed to the verb root. The tone of the progressive marker is consistently low, while that of the participial prefix (**ɪ-**) is constantly high. There is tonal polarization; in other words, the prefix takes a low tone if the verb root has a high tone and a high tone if the verb root has a low tone. In the above data, “**dī**” is marking progressive tense. This is to say that in Ogba, progressive tense is determined by the insertion of auxiliary verb “**dī**” before the participial prefix “**ɪ-**” or **ɪ**

2.6 The Present Progressive Negative

The present progressive negative form in Ogba language is formed by the presence of the progressive marker **dī** (auxiliary) to which is suffixed the general negative marker **-w̄o**, followed by the verb to which is prefixed the harmonizing participial vowel prefix as in examples (34) to (39)

34. Uche á-dī-w̄o ɪ--kw̄a ɛkwa
(Uche *pf-prog-neg* *pf-sow* cloth)
‘Uche is not sewing cloth/Uche is not a tailor/Uche does not sew cloth’
35. Emeka á-dī-w̄o ɪ--gn̄u ɛkw̄u
(Emeka *pf-prog-neg* *pf-read* book)
‘Emeka is not reading book / Emeka does not read book’
36. Nkechi á-dī-w̄o ɪ--z̄a ul̄o
(Nkechi *pf-prog-neg* *pf-sweep* house)

‘Nkechi is not sweeping the house / Nkechi does not sweep’

37. Samson á-dì-wọ́ ì--r̀nù ọ̀rnù

(Samson *pf-prog-neg pf-farm work*)

‘Samson is not farming / working / Samson does not farm’

38. Ye á-dì-wọ́ ì--g̀nù ẹ̀gwù

(3pl *pf-prog-neg pf sing song*)

‘We are not singing song/we sing song’

39. Ọ̀ d̀ì'-wọ́ ì--g̀ba ẹ̀kwọ́

(3sg *prog-neg pf-write book*)

‘S(he) is not writing book / He/she does not write book’

From the data above, we observe the presence of the progressive negative marker. The participial negative prefix ‘*a-*’ is attached to the progressive marker only when the subject is a noun or a plural pronoun and the harmonizing verbal vowel prefix is affixed to the verb root. The function of *wọ́* is to mark negation in the expression. The common affix used in marking negation in Ogba is *wọ́*

2.6 The Future Negative/Affirmative Form

The future negative in Ogba is an expression of rejection, denial, or contradiction. It expresses what will not happen or what will not be done. It is formed by the participial prefix *a-* and future marker ‘*dì*’ followed by the negative marker ‘*wọ́*’ and then followed by the verb to which a harmonizing verbal vowel prefix is affixed. Examples of future negative/affirmative form of Ogba are given in (40,40b) to (44,44b) respectively.

40. Chùkà á-dì-wọ́ ì--ra mm̀ínýá

(Chuka *pf-fut-neg pf-drink wine*)

“Chuka will not drink wine/Chuka is not drinking wine”

40b. Ochi mé chń eze

(Ochi *Aux.fut crown King*)..... Affirmative Form

“Ochi will take (on) a kingship title.”

41. Yé á-dì-wọ́ ì--zù ah́ja

- (we pf-fut-neg pf-buy market)
“We will not trade”
- 41b Yé mé gbá égwú
(We aux.fut write music)..... Affirmative Form
“We will dance music”
42. wò á-dì-wọ í--hní ijí
(they pf-fut-neg pf-plant yam)
“They will not cultivate yam”
- 42b. Wo mè za ulọ
(They Aux.fut sweep house)..... Affirmative Form
“They will sweep the house”
43. Emeka á-dì-wọ ì--za ulọ
(Emeka pf-fut-neg pf-sweep house)
“Emeka will not sweep the house”
- 43b. Ọ mè znù úmù ká
(He/she aux.fut train children his/her)..... Affirmative Form
“He/she will train his/her children”
44. Ọ dì-wọ ì--gnú égwú
(He/she fut-neg pf-sing song)
“He/she will not sing song”
- 44b. òmú mè gnó òtì
(I aux.fut listen ear)..... Affirmative Form
“I will listen”

From the data above we observed that the future negative marker ‘**dì** (auxiliary)’ takes a vowel prefix when constructed with a noun subject or a plural pronoun subject. If the subject is a singular pronoun as in example 48, the future negative marker will not take a prefix.

We also observe from the above data that, the future negative and the present progressive negative are express in similar way. That is the negative prefix **a-**, the future marker **dì** and the negative marker **wọ** in Ogbia language combine to mark both present progressive negative and future negative sentences.

However, the data in examples 44b-48b shows that the future affirmative form in the Ogbá language is not formed by an affix but the future marker **me'** followed by the verb.

The negative element is splited and the host is “**di**” the tense marker. When it host prefix “**a**” and the suffix **wɔ'**, the semantic implication is negation but when it stands alone, it marks progressive tense. See example 28-33 above. However, future tenses are not mark by affix in Ogbá language but by the use of the auxiliary verb “**me**” see example. 40b-44b.

2.7 Inflectional affixes in perfective construction

The term perfective has been variously called the perfect tense. Comrie (1976:18) defines perfective as the term used in indicating a completed action. In perfective constructions, the action expressed by the verb is viewed as a whole, irrespective of the time contrast, we will consider the following:-

The present perfective affirmation

The past perfective

The present perfective Affirmative

The present perfective affirmative form of Ogbá language is formed by suffixing the perfective suffix –**mɛ'** to the verb root. Simple is marked in Ogbá by affixing the past affix “**mɛ'**” to the verb root. The difference between the simple past and perfective action is that, simple past tense is an expression made before the present while the perfective action is an expression before the simple past.e.g (*you have fetched water*-simple past). (*You had already fetched water* perfective action). Hence, The simply past is mark by “**mɛ'**”

The examples of the present perfective affirmative construction in Ogbá language is presented in (45) to (49):

45. Ibe rɔ̀nù--mɛ' ɔ̀rɔ̀nù

(Ibe work-perf. suf work)

“Ibe has done the work/Ibe has worked”

46. ɔ̀nù dɔ́--mɛ' mìnì

(you(pl) fetch-perf suf water)

“you have fetched water”

47. Èméká hní--mɛ' ékwá

(Emeka iron-perf suf cloth)

“Emeka has ironed the cloth”

48. yé zà--mẹ́' ùlò
(we sweep-perf suf compound)

“we have swept the compound”

49. ó gnu'--mẹ́' ékwó
(he/she read-perf suf book)

“he/she has read the book”

From the above data, we observe that the present perfective construction is a direct contrast of the present progressive construction which is imperfective construction. We also observe that the present perfective suffix, affixed to the verb root expresses the action that is completed, but its effect is relevant in the present time.

2.7 The Past perfective Affirmatives

The past perfective affirmatives form like its present perfective counterpart in Ogba language is formed by the perfective marker (affixe) **-mẹ́** and the past marker **-rí** which are affixed to the verb root. The past perfective form expresses a past action which is remote at the time of speaking; the following are some examples of past perfective affirmative constructions in the Ogba language. The past Perfective form of Ogba is presented in examples (50) to (54).

50. àdá dọ--mẹ́--rí míní
(ada fetch-perf-pst water)

“ada had already fetched water”

51. Ogechi kwọ--mẹ́--rí úgwó - ékwó
(Ogechi pay-perf-pst school-fees)

“Ogechi had already paid school fees”

52. òbí jẹ--mẹ́--rí áhíá
(obi go-perf-pst market)

“obi had already gone to market”

53. Ọ ózú--mẹ́--rí ékwó
(he/she buy-perf-pst book)

“he/she had already bought books”

54. Obùá zà--mẹ́--rì ụlọ
(Obua sweep-perf-pst house)
he/she had already swept the house

From the above data, we observe that the past perfective, like the present perfective discussed above, does not take an auxiliary verb. The perfective marker **-mẹ́** and the past maker **-rì** has a consistent high tone. However, completive in Ogba is derived by affixing **rì** to the suffix **mẹ́**.

2.5 The Unfulfilled Perfective Negative

The unfulfilled perfective negative in Ogba is formed when the unfulfilled marker **-gịrẹ́** (suffix) is preceeded by the verb root to which are affixed the prefix **a- /e- /ẹ-** and the negative **-wọ́** (suffix). Examples (55) to (60) show the present perfective negative constructions in Ogba language:

55. Íbè è—rì--wọ́--gịrẹ́ irni
(Ibe pf-eat-neg-unf food)
“Ibe has not eaten (food) yet”
56. Emeka à--rụ--wọ́--gịrẹ́ ọrụ
(Emeka pref-work-neg-unf work)
“Emeka has not done the work/emeka has not worked”.
57. onu à--dọ--wọ́--gịrẹ́ mini
(you(pl) pref-fetch-neg-unf water)
“you(pl) have not fetched the water”
58. ochi-oha è—hni--wọ́--gịrẹ́ ẹkwà /awo
(ochi-oha pref-iron-neg-unf cloth)
“Ochi-oha has not ironed the cloth”
59. ye à—za--wọ́--gịrẹ́ ulọ
(we pref-sweep-neg-unf house (compound))
“we have not swept the house (compound)”
60. ó gụ--wọ́--gịrẹ́ ẹkwọ
(he/she read-neg-unf book)
“he/she has not read the book”

From the above examples, we observe that the participial prefix attached to the high tone verb root has a low tone while the unfulfilled marker (**-gire**) and the negative marker (**-wɔ**), affixed to the verb root are forced to agree with the tonal pattern of the verb root (i.e. it maintain high tone) with singular nouns and plural pronouns subject. With singular pronoun (especially, third person pronoun), the participial prefix is dropped.

We also observe that in verbal constructions in Ogba, certain verb forms use inflectional suffixes, auxiliaries, verbal vowel prefixes, and tone pattern to mark different inflections. It is pertinent to state that whereas some constructions take auxiliaries, others do not. For instance, the imperative constructions do not. The future affirmative constructions need the auxiliary verb in there constructions with the exception of future negative form and the present and past perfect affirmatives.

Findings:

With respect to the data presented in this work, I have discovered thus;

- i. The Imperative negative in Ogba are formed by **wɔ** and the suffix **-la**
- ii. The present progressive affirmative sentences in Ogba are formed with the introduction of the progressive marker **di** and the participial vowel prefix **i/i**
- iii. In the formation of the present progressive negative and future negative, two participial vowel prefixes (affix) **a-** and **e-** are used with the progressive marker **di** (auxiliary) and the negative marker **wɔ**. But when the subject is 3rd person singular, the prefix **a-** is dropped.
- iv. The negative form of the present progressive and future are realized with the same morphological process.
- v. The present perfective affirmative in the language is marked by the perfective marker **'me'** while the past perfective affirmative is marked by **-me** (perfective) and **-ri** (past) respectively.
- vi. The unfulfilled perfective negative is realized by the attachment of the unfulfilled marker **-gire** and the negative marker **wɔ** to the verb root to which a participial prefix (**a-/e-/e-**) is usually attached.

- vii. Finally, the language (Ogba) do not take participial affix when the subject of the verb root is 3rd person singular pronoun (cf. 39, 44, and 60).

Conclusion and Recommendation

We have, with substantial amount of data, described and analyzed affixation in Ogba variety of Rivers State. In the procedure of analysis, the functional criterion of classification of affixes is applied thereby using two divisions of affixes thus; inflectional affixes and derivational affixes.

The entire inflectional markings are achieved with affixes. Inflection marks different levels of constructions in the language. We have identified with enough data how inflectional affix in imperative, imperfective and perfective construction are marked by various affixes in Ogba language.

We recommend that extensional affix and clitics need to be looked at by future researchers in view of its important in Ogba language. As a native speaker, I find some pertinent features in the area of extensional affix and clitics in this language. I thereby recommend further studies in area of extensional affix and clitics to researcher in Ogba language.

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