

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE
INFLECTIONAL MORPHOLOGICAL
PROCESSES OF EZIŌSŪ AND EGBEMA
DIALECT OF IGBO**

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Abstract

This work is aimed at investigating the inflectional morphological features that exist between EziŌsŪ and Egbema dialects of the Igbo language. EziŌsŪ and Egbema Igbo have not got the attention of researchers in the past and resent times. The objective of the study is focused on discovering the similarities and differences in the dialects under inflectional morphology. The study adopted the framework of concatenative theory. The analysis was carried out using the descriptive approach while focusing on tense, aspect and negation. The findings reveal that the simple past tense is marked in both

dialects through the ‘-rv’ suffix. This suffix undergoes verb movement in the environment of a third person plural subject. The future auxiliaries of these dialects are complemented by the participle form of verb which does not take cognizance of vowel harmony. Also, the auxiliaries responsible for past in the future tense are capable of existing independently without attaching themselves to the verb or other elements. More so, the perfective aspect in Eziọsụ and Egbema dialects are marked by a non-harmonizing suffix ‘-na’ and ‘-la’ respectively. The habitual morpheme for Egbema has the grammatical freedom to exist independently in a construction while that of Eziọsụ does not. Negation in both dialects is formed by verbal inflection. In this aspect, the simple declarative and perfective negatives are formed with both prefix and suffix. Also the future negative of Eziọsụ and Egbema is formed by both prefix and suffix. Lastly, this research can be used as a source of information or subsequent studies on various components of linguistic structures. It would also provide a premise for the study and analysis of morphological processes in the various dialects in Igbo language.

Introduction

In linguistics, morphology according to Aronoff and Kirsten (2015), refers to the mental system involved in word formation, or the branch of linguistics that deals with words, their internal structure, and how they are formed. Chukwu (2012) states that it originally means the study of shapes or forms used

in biology, but since the middle of 19th century, it has been used to describe the type of investigation which analyzes all those basic linguistics elements which are usually found in language. Yule (1996) explains that these elements are technically known as morphemes in linguistics.

Morphology, therefore, studies how words are put together from their smallest parts and the rules governing this process. It is the branch of linguistics which deals with forms of words in different constructions. Chukwu (2012) sees morphology as the grammatical study of words on construction of morphemes. Yule (1996) states that morphology is the study of morphemes and their arrangements in word formation. According to him, morpheme may be identified by its distribution and other certain characteristics.

The need for scholars and researchers to delve into dialect studies has been harped by Ikekeonwu (1986) and Nwaozuzu (2008) particularly, giving the many challenges of identifying oral classification of Igbo dialects. The direction has been on the grammar of dialects of the Igbo language as part of the ways of formalizing these varieties. Even in Igbo language, there are many contentious issues regarding word structure, affixes, derivations and inflections as well as extensional affixes which make any adventure into morphological variations or peculiarities in the varieties of the Igbo language very apt.

Furthermore, Emenanjo (1985) believes that in spite of the dialect situation and highly individualistic and republican nature of the Igbo, there has always been mutual intelligibility among them. On the question of an extensive and in-depth study of Igbo dialects, Nwachukwu (1980, p.24) holds thus:

There is need for scholars to begin to delve into studies on dialect of the Igbo language by focusing on all aspects of the dialects such as phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and other wider scope of language study. That way, we would have set the Igbo language on the path of rapid growth and development.

The variety of the observation cannot be over-emphasized and thus has necessitated the present study on the inflectional morphological processes of Egbema and Ezioşu Igbo.

According to Okoro (2022), Egbema occupies a strategic place in the geography of Igbo as a border town in the North with Ogbu/Egbema /Ndoni L.G.A. in Rivers state. So, it is part of the so called border clans of Igbo. Nwaozuzu (2008) holds that Egbema and Ezioşu are part of the South Western Group of dialects of Igbo. She states that South-Western group of dialects are spoken in Ikwere, Ohaji, Egbema, Mgbirichi, Umogwo, Ezioşu etc. From the classification above, Egbema and Ezioşu are therefore identified as distinct dialects of Igbo with distinct linguistic characteristics.

On the other hand, Ezioṣu is an autonomous community on the South bank of the Ugwuta Lake, southeastern Nigeria. It's one of the foremost territories that witnessed western or European expedition during colonization and used as a gateway by the British to advance the Igbo land further. As at the 1991 census in Nigeria, the population of Ezioṣu was estimated at 14,560. It is one of the Oil and Gas producing communities in Imo State, being the second largest producing community in Oguta L.G.A after Izombe.

This study makes use of descriptive research design since the study is aimed to undertake a comparative study of inflectional morphological processes of two different dialects, Ezioṣu and Egbema. The Linguistic field method was adopted in data collection involving oral interview of informants. The informants were selected from people between forty (40) years and above who live in Ezioṣu and Egbema and speak the two Igbo varieties. These are people we believe would provide relevant information or data for the study for the reason that they live and have spent greater part of their lives immersed in the dialects. The informants represent the nine and sixteen communities in Ezioṣu and Egbema clan respectively. We selected 18 and 32 informants, two from each of the communities that make up the two clans. The researcher, being a native speaker of Ezioṣu dialect of Igbo made a great deal of her personal observation and analysis of the Ezioṣu word formation processes. Equally,

through in-depth interview using unstructured questions in the form of oral interview, the researcher had obtained data from renowned native speakers of Eziọsụ and Egbema speech communities

Theoretical Framework

Theory of Concatenative Morphology

The theory is one of the bases for the early generative approaches to morphological processes propounded in the early 1970s as championed by the works of Siegel (1971), Aronoff and Fudeman (2007), Anderson (1982) among others. 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 blown generativist approach. According to Bender (2000, p.90), the theory assumes thus:

That all morphological contrasts consist of segmentable materials correlating on a one-to-one basis with meaning contrasts . . . segmentable because they reflect from either suffixation or prefixation (rarely infixation) Also, that complex words are created through dynamic processes; these processes operate on a specified input and produce a specified output.

The theory further assumes that morphemes are homogeneous, indivisible atomic units of linguistic form, each linking some component (s) of meaning

with a set of mutually exclusive allomorphs that express it. Each morpheme has a determinate semantic content, and each allomorph has a determinate phonological form. Words are composed exhaustively by joining such morphemes together in hierarchically organized structures. The relation between a base and a derived form with an additional morpheme is incremental, monotonic, non-decreasing in the domains both of form and of content.

According to Obuasi (2016), the theory has dominated the area of linguistics most of this century and assumes that all languages have segmentable morphemes as their smallest meaningful unit, as such have affixation as the only morphological process while taking other processes like reduplication as special affixation. Though, some languages like the Chinese may not fit into this, majority of world languages fit in.

According to Stump (2017), the theory assumes the following as basically concatenative:(a) Compounding: This is simply bringing of free morphemes together to form new words, for example:

News + paper = Newspaper;
wrist + watch = wristwatch;
foot + ball = football;
time + keeper = timekeeper.

b) 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, illustrated in the following example:

Infix, is as in some informal English words like *Uni+bloody+versity uni-bloody-versity*,

Prefix is as in *dis+ability*: disability,

Suffix is as in *affix+ation*: affixation,

Interfix: The handout couldn't get examples from the English language for this, so it can be regarded in some languages as empty morph.

Circumfix is as in *un+grateful+ness*: ungratefulness

Theory of Concatenative Morphology explains the process which deals with the formation of new lexical items by putting at least two distinct morphemes together. Concatenative processes are by far the ones which happen to be the most productive in the Indo-European language family. Thus, they are of major concern when it comes to discussing word-formation processes in English. These include: compounding, affixation and incorporation. Their presence in the language varies with the last one being even non-existent in English. Concatenation: morphological process involving the combination of morphemes.

Affixation: morphological process involving the attachment of an affix (prefix, suffix, infix, etc.).

Literature Review:

The Concept of Morphology

Morphology originally did not emanate from linguistics but rather emanated from physical sciences. According to Lyons (1986), morphology appears to have been invented by Goethe and to have been first applied in biology, to study the form of living organisms. However, in the view of Agbedo (2015), the history of morphological analysis dates back to the ancient Indian linguist Parini, who formulated the 3,959 rules of Sanskrit morphology in the text *Astadhyayl*.

In linguistics, morphology is a basic concept in grammar, in this respect, Akmajian, Demers, Farmer, Harnish (2010) avert that morphology is the subfield of linguistics that studies the internal structure of words and the relationship among words. Furthermore, while emphasizing the view of Mathew (1974), Okeke (2008) states that “the term morphology is a Greek-based concept which is different from the German ‘formmenlehre’ (the study of forms). In its linguistic sense, morphology as a branch of linguistics can be defined as the study of forms of words. Morphology is simply a term for that branch of linguistics which is concerned with the forms of words in different constructions”

Morphology is basically related to other aspects of grammar. Based on this Agbedo (2015) suggest that morphology is a bridge between the syntax of a language and its phonology. Furthermore, Nwala,

(2015) defines morphology as the word morphology is derived from the Greek word, 'morphē' meaning form. The term morphology is said to have a biological identity, which defines how to form things. It is part of the grammar of a language which a child or learner acquires.

In the light of the foregoing, it could be seen that morphology is a vital aspect of linguistic study and its main domain is the morphem/word.

In line with this, Anagbogu, Mbah and Eme (2010), observe that morphology is the level of grammar that studies the ways morphemes organize themselves to form words. This according to Okeke (2008) means that morphology is concerned mostly with the study of internal structure of words thus, it is sometimes described as "word grammar"; the study of the process involved in word formation. Specifically, according to Anagbogu, Mbah and Eme (2010):

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The meaning of morpheme has received a lot of controversial ideas from many linguists. Morpheme can be said to mean the way units are ordered to give meaningful words. Some linguists approach the

issue of the meaning of morpheme as form of units which have a meaning but base their combinations on distribution, while other linguists see morpheme as a form of composite unit. Ndimele (1999) further asserts that morphemes are the smallest indivisible meaningful elements in the utterance of a language. This means that morphemes cannot be broken down. That is, they cannot be divided and still have meanings. For example, the word ‘compound’ cannot be sub-divided into com + pound. Furthermore, Aronoff and Fudeman (2005) defined a morpheme as the smallest bit of a language which has meaning and, moreover, this meaning is different from the meaning of all other morphemes in the language. What he’s saying is that if a morpheme is added or removed from an utterance, the meaning of the utterance changes.

Inflectional Morphology

Inflectional morphology is concerned with the morphological process by which such things as past tense, plural and present participle are arrived at. The sorts of morpheme which assign inflectional process are described as grammatical morphemes and their functions usually are to indicate relationships demanded by grammar. Inflectional morphology leaves untouched the syntactic category of the bases, through which it adds extra elements to the base, unlike derivational morphemes; they do not create new words or new lexemes.

This is a form of morphological process that marks certain grammatical functions. As Palmer (1974) puts it, inflectional morphemes are bound morphemes affixed to the free morphemes usually to derive or mark number, tense, gender, case, aspect, mood, person and voice. They are simply described as morphemes of the outer layer, whenever attached to a word no other morphemes can be attached to the same word. They are always added to the root or stem words.

This example reveals the characteristics of inflectional morphemes. The word class of the root words did not change after inflection. Secondly, each of the words cannot host any other affix. We can simply conclude that the inflectional morphemes are simply grammatical marking morphemes. According to Anagbogu, Mbah & Eme (2010), inflectional morphemes are suffixes which operate within the domain of syntax where they are used to mark plural forms (e.g. goat-goats) tense or aspect (e.g. rape-raping) etc. Inflectional affixes are morphemes which are used to give extra linguistic information about the already existing meaning of a word (e.g. number, person, gender, case, etc., expressing syntactic relations between words (e.g. possession, comparison).

According to Oha (2006), inflection is a morphological process by which a word is adjoined with an affix to undergo a pattern of change to express grammatical and syntactic relation in terms of case, number, gender, person, tense/aspect and

polarity. The most popular distinction between inflection and derivation is that while the former is class maintaining, the later is class changing. In Igbo language, both inflection and derivation are verb-centred, thus, only the verbal categories (tense, aspect, mood, modality, polarity) are affected by inflection. This shows that, as Nweya (2013) affirms, inflection is relevant to syntax while derivation is relevant to morphology.

Empirical Studies

Okoro (2022) carried out a study on “aspects of the morphology of Egbema Igbo. In this study, the investigation was on the three major branches of morphology which includes derivational, inflectional and extensional morphology on Egbema dialect of Igbo language while employing the theory of concatenate morphology. The study revealed that verbal inflections in *Egbema Igbo* involves basically suffixation which operates in conjunction with prefixes and auxiliaries as well as other verbal categories like tense, aspect and negation marking. Devoiding the study from the heated and unsettled debates on tense, and its types in Igbo but with recourse to *Egbema Igbo* specific data, the study shows that the simple past, and future tense hence other verbal categories are classified as aspectual and they include the Durative continuous, the Durative habitual, the Terminative and the Intentional (unfulfilled). In the area of derivational morphology, the study shows that in *Egbema Igbo*, words are derived from simple verb roots through

such processes as prefixation, suffixation, and interfixation.

Okoro's study also show that in Egbema Igbo, some suffixes do not perform derivational functions but simply modify the meaning of the verbs to which they are attached and they are classified as extensional suffixes.

In a study carried out by Obuasi, (2016) titled "morphological processes in Anaku Igbo: situating universality". Its objective is to reveal that most of the morphological processes available in other world's languages also exist in Anaku Igbo. It also exposed the morphological processes available within Anaku Igbo language group in comparison with some universal morphological processes. The major finding of the study is that languages of the world have a lot in common when it comes to morphological processes as many of the universal processes in the sketches are applicable to Igbo language and its associated languages. The data was analyzed descriptively.

In another study, Arukwe (2012) presents a re-appraisal of Igbo tense patterns. The study holds that the debate on Igbo tense system hinges on two issues: whether or not the notion of tense is typical of Igbo, and what the tense patterns in Igbo should be. The author holds that some agree that tense is not obtainable but aspect, mood and polarity in Igbo while others hold there is tense. Yet, those who recognize the occurrence of tense are not agreed on

the nature and number of the patterns. The investigation reveals that “Painfully, over 60 % of these recognized patterns of tense do not meet the linguistic requirements of tense. The study uses the linguistic criteria to re-analyze Igbo tense patterns. Two tense patterns were realized from this perspective namely: simple past and perfective tenses. The present study does not venture into appraisal of tense types in Igbo but focuses on tense as seen in Eziọsụ and Egbema

Igbo in our morphological analysis of the dialects.

	Eziọsụ	Egbema	Igbo Izugbe	Gloss
1	Eze gbatara miri	Eze gbatara miri	Eze churu mmiri	<i>Eze fetched water</i>
2	Okoro na Ada gbara akwụkwọ n'izu ụka gara aga	Okoro na Ada gbara akwụkwọ l'izu ụka gara aga	Okoro na Ada gbara gbara akwụkwọ n'izu ụka gara aga	<i>Okoro and Ada wedded last week</i>
3	Chike hichara uno	Chike fichara ụlọ	Chike hichara ụlọ	<i>Chike cleaned the house</i>
4	A sụrụ akwa wo na uhuruchi na	A sụrụ akwa we la anyashị ni	Ha sụrụ akwa ha na mgbede a	<i>They washed their clothes this evening</i>

Data Presentation and Analysis

5	A gbara wo egwu nke oma	A gbara we egwu amaa	Ha gbara egwu nke oma	<i>They danced so well</i>
6	E shiri wo nri toro uto	E shiri we nri toro uto	Ha siri nri toro uto	<i>They cooked a delicious meal</i>

Inflectional morphology In Eziorsu and Egbema

The simple past tense

This is marked by the ‘-rv’ past tense marking. In other words, the inflectional suffix is the –rv pattern where ‘v’ is the vowel of the verb root to which it is attached. The simple past tense is illustrated in the following examples:

Table 1: The simple past

Our analysis of -rv suffix as simple past formation suffix is in accordance with the views of Emenanjo (1978), (2015), Ezikeojiaku (1979), and Arukwe (2012). From the examples above, we can deduce that the two dialects under study expressed higher degree of similarities. Firstly, the ‘rv’ past tense marker is applicable in both dialects as shown in examples 1, 2, and 3 respectively. Secondly, as shown in examples 4, 5 and 6; there appears a change and verb movement in the sentence structure unlike other examples in 1, 2, and 3. This movement or change in structure is caused when the subject is a third person plural. A dummy impersonal pronoun ‘A’ or ‘E’ comes before the verb, followed by the subject- ‘wo’/‘we’ and the subject of the sentence.

The dummy pronouns also obey the rule of vowel harmony.

Future Tense

In both dialects, the future tense is marked by the auxiliary “ya-” and “je-” which are complemented by the verb in the participle form. Examples are shown below:

Table 2: The future tense

	Eziọsụ	Egbema	Igbo Izugbe	Gloss
1	Ada ya-eje afia	Ada je-eje afia	Ada ga- aga ahia	<i>Ada will go to the market</i>
2	Nnekwu miri ya-ezo n'ututu na	Nnekwu miri je- ezo la ututu ni	Nnukwu mmiri ga- ezo n' ututu a	<i>Heavy rain will fall this morning</i>
3	Ada ya-eje ulo akwukwo	Ada je-eje ulo akwukwo	Ada ga- aga ulo akwukwo	<i>Ada will go to school</i>
4	Uche ya- abia echi	Uche je- abia echi	Uche ga- abia echi	<i>Uche will come tomorrow</i>

5	Ugo ya-eri agwa	Ugo je-eri agwa	Ugo ga-eri agwa	<i>Ugowill eat beans</i>
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Here, it is observed that the future tense markers for both dialects and standard Igbo goes hand in hand with the participle form of the verb, and it does not take cognizance of vowel harmony as shown in examples 1-5. With this, we say that the two dialects possesses a similar structure for future tense constructions.

Past in the Future Tense

In Eziọsụ and Egbema dialects, this tense is marked by the auxiliaries “ana” and “ala” respectively, and complemented by the same forms of the verb (the participles) used for the future tense above. The auxiliaries are capable of existing independently in the sentence without attaching themselves to other word elements. Examples:

Table 3: Past in the future tense

	Eziọsụ	Egbema	Igbo Izugbe	Gloss
1	Ugo ana abịa	Ugo ala abịa	Ugo gaara ibịa	<i>Ugo would have come</i>
2	Okeke ana eri nri	Okeke ala eri ife	Okeke gaara eri nri	<i>Okeke would have eaten</i>

3	Ada ana ańụ miri wa	Ada ala ara miri ya	Ada gaara ańụ ahụ	<i>Ada would have drunk that water</i>
4	Ugo ana egbu onwe ya	Ugo ala egbu onwe a	Ugo gaara egbu onwe ya	<i>Ugo would have killed himself</i>
5	Ana wo eje ụka	A we eje ụka	Ha gaara aga ụka	<i>They would have gone to church</i>
6	Ọ na eme nke ọma na nnene	Ọ la emezi amaa n' ule	Ọ gaara eme nke ọma n'ule	<i>He would have passed his examination</i>

The two auxiliaries together with that of the standard Igbo are similar in terms of word and syllabic structures. They co-occur with the participle form of verbs and as well express the same low tone when used in associative construction. The auxiliaries of Ezioşu and Egbema, when used with the third person singular pronoun suffer an elision of its initial alphabet while reducing them to monosyllabic elements. This is exemplified in example '6'. As shown in the 5th example, the auxiliaries have the ability to begin a sentence and maintain grammaticality unlike the standard Igbo. This only happens when the subject is the third person plural pronoun.

The Perfective

The perfective aspect in Eziọsụ and Egbema dialects is marked by the non-harmonizing suffix ‘-na’ and ‘-là’ respectively. If the subject is a noun or a plural pronoun, the verb takes a harmonizing a-/e- prefix. Examples:

Table 4: Perfective aspect

	Eziọsụ	Egbema	Igbo Izugbe	Gloss
1	Ugo eriena osikapa	Ugo eriel arusu	Ugo eriel osikapa	<i>Ugo has eaten rice</i>
2	Ebere eriena azụ	Ebere eriel azụ	Ebere eriel azụ	<i>Ebere has eaten fish</i>
3	Ada ataana ahụ	Ada ataala ahụ	Ada ataala ahụ	<i>Ada has become slim</i>
4	Nwaanyị a amaana ezigbo mma	Nwaanyị ni amaala mma amaa	Nwaanyị a amaala ezigbo mma	<i>This woman has become very pretty</i>
5	Abịana wo ọzọ	Abịala we ọzọ	Ha abịala ọzọ	<i>They have come again</i>
6	Okoro adọkaana akwụkwọ ya	Okoro adọkaala akwụkwọ a	Okoro adọkaala akwụkwọ ya	<i>Okoro has torn his book</i>

7	Ngozi ejeena igbasha okwuchuk wu	Ngozi ejeela igbasha okwuchuk wu	Ngozi agaala igbasa okwuchuk wu	<i>Ngozi has gone for evangelism</i>
8	Ugo anonyaan a azu	Ugo alonyaala amaa	Ugo anoteela aka	<i>Ugo has stayed long</i>

From our analysis above, the two perfective makers (-na/-la) exhibit the same grammatical function in perfective constructions. They are non-harmonizing; they are always attached as suffix to the verb without observing the rule of vowel harmony or the vowel in the verb root. This is also the case with verbs that begin with the syllabic nasals m/n as well as the nasal ‘n’ in the dialects as seen in examples 4, 8, 9 and 10. It means that in the perfective form, the nasal features of the consonants of the verb root do not spread to the perfective suffix “-la” as it is in some other Igbo dialects. The above description is applicable to the dialects under study and standard Igbo. Apart from the alphabetical difference in the morphemes, we can say that the two dialects are similar in terms of perfective aspect.

The Imperfective

Habitual

The habitual aspect is marked with the inflectional morphemes “kari” in both dialects, and the verb

takes a harmonizing prefix a-/e-. This can be seen in the illustrations below:

Table 5: Habitual aspect

	Eziọsụ	Egbema	Igbo Izugbe	Gloss
1	Ngozi na- atakari onugbu	Ngozi la- atakari olugbu	Ngozi na- atakari olugbu	<i>Ngozi is used to chewing bitterleaf</i>
2	Emeka na- awulikari elu	Emeka la- awulikari elu	Emeka na- awulikari elu	<i>Emeka is used to jumping</i>
3	Ada na- agbakari egwu	Ada la- agbakari egwu	Ada na- agbakari egwu	<i>Ada is used to dancing</i>

From our analysis above, the two dialects (Eziọsụ and Egbema) displayed notable similarities. Firstly, the habitual sentence for Eziọsụ Igbo and Egbema Igbo is usually in the present continuous form which is shown by its marker ‘na’ and ‘la’. This is accompanied by the verb which harbours the habitual morpheme as a suffix.

Progressive

This is usually in form of the present continuous tense, and is marked by the auxiliaries –na and –la

in both Eziọsụ and Egbema dialects. However, the auxiliary for Eziọsụ dialect has an absolute similarity with that of standard Igbo. In other words, they have the same structure and equally perform the same grammatical function. This is shown in the examples below:

Table 6: Progressive aspect

	Eziọsụ	Egbema	Igbo Izugbe	Gloss
1	Ugochi na-azụ afia (ụdụ)	Ugochi la-azụ afia (ụdụ)	Ug ochi na-azụ ahia (ugbua)	<i>Ugo is trading (now)</i>
2	Ada na- akpa ishí (ụdụ)	Ada la- akpa íshí (ụdụ)	Ada na- akpa isi (ugbua)	<i>Ada is making hair (now)</i>
3	Ọ na- aza uno (ụdụ)	Ọ la-aza ụlọ (ụdụ)	Ọ na-aza ụlọ (ugbua)	<i>He is sweeping the house (now)</i>
4	Ọ na- eshi ife (ụdụ)	Ọ la-eshi ife (ụdụ)	Ọ na-esi ihe (ugbua)	<i>She is cooking something (now)</i>
5	A na wo eri	A la we eri nri (ụdụ)	Ha na-eri nri (ugbu a)	<i>They are eating food (now)</i>

	iri (ụdụ)			
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The similarities of the auxiliaries including that of the standard Igbo are exemplified in their word structure. All are monosyllabic and monogrammatic. A certain similarity which we have observed earlier in both dialects is the movement of the subject when it is a third person plural as shown in example (5) above. As seen in the analysis, this movement does not occur in standard Igbo. In the grammatical environment where the subject is a third person plural pronoun, the auxiliaries precede the subject (wo/we) with a non-harmonizing dummy pronoun ‘A’ attached to it.

Negative: Simple declarative negative

Table 7

	Eziọsụ	Egbema	Igbo Izugbe	Gloss
1	Ngozi ejeadiafia wa	Ngozi ejeyefia	Ngozi agaghi ahia	<i>Ngozi did not go to the market</i>
2	O shiadi nri	O shíye nri	O sighi nri	<i>She did not cook food</i>

3	Ugo akụwadi kalama	Ugo akụwaye Ololo	Ugo akụwaghị karama	<i>Ugo did not break the bottle</i>
4	Emeka etiadi ube	Emeka aririye mkpu	Emeka etighị mkpu	<i>Emeka did not shout</i>
5	Ada asadi ugbọala wa	Ada asaye moto ya Ada asaye moto ya	Ada asaghị ugbọala	<i>Ada did not wash the car</i>
6	Okoro aruadi ujọ	Okoro ewuye ụlọ	Okoro arughị ụlọ	<i>Okoro did not build the house</i>

From the analysis above, the simple declarative transforms to negation by verbal inflection. The verb root is inflected by both prefix and suffix. While both dialects accept the harmonizing ‘a/e’ prefix, the morphemes ‘-adi’ and ‘-ye’ are suffixed to the verb roots or base of Ezioṣu and Egbema Igbo respectively. It is pertinent to state that the negative prefix for both dialects align with that of standard Igbo but differs in its suffix (ghị) as shown in examples 1-6.

Summary and Conclusion

In this study, we have examined the inflectional morphological operations of Ezioṣu and Egbema

dialects within the framework of Concatenative morphonology. The simple past for Ezioṣu and Egbema Igbo is marked by ‘-rv’ as shown in examples 1, 2, and 3 in *table 1*. As indicated, we also observed that the two dialects also undergo a verb movement when the subject is a third person plural.

Furthermore, future tense is marked in Ezioṣu and Egbema dialects with the auxiliaries “ya-” and “je-” respectively in *table 2*. The future auxiliaries of these dialects are complemented by the participle form of verb which does not take cognizance of vowel harmony. Moreso, the auxiliaries used for marking ‘past in the future tense’ “ana”/ “ala” in *table 3* are capable of existing independently without attaching themselves to other word elements. These auxiliaries are also complemented by participle and are similar in terms of syllabic structures. The auxiliaries when used with the third person singular pronoun suffer elision of its initial letter while reducing them to monosyllabic elements. This is exemplified in example ‘6’. They equally have the ability to begin a sentence and maintain grammaticality unlike that of standard Igbo. With these, we can say that Egbema and Ezioṣu dialects possess proximity and similar structure for all tense constructions.

In the area of aspect, the perfective aspect in Ezioṣu and Egbema Igbo is marked by the non-harmonizing suffix ‘-na’ and ‘-la’ respectively as seen in *table 4* and are always attached as suffix to

the verb. The two perfective markers exhibit the same grammatical function in perfective constructions. We also found out from our analysis that the verb takes a harmonizing a-/e- prefix if the subject is a noun or plural pronoun. Eg. Ugo eriena nri > O riela nri.

The imperfective aspect comprises the habitual and the progressive. The habitual in Ezioṣu and Egbema Igbo is marked with the inflectional morphemes “kari” and “kari” respectively as seen in *table 5*. It is pertinent to state that the verb in a habitual construction takes a-/e- prefix as can be seen in the examples. While the habitual morpheme for Ezioṣu can be attached to the verb as a suffix that of Egbema dialect is not. In other words, the habitual morpheme for Egbema by default exists independently in such constructions.

On the other hand, the progressive aspect of Ezioṣu and Egbema Igbo is usually in form of the present continuous tense and is marked by ‘-na’ and ‘-la’ respectively as seen in *table 6*. From our analysis, the two morphemes are monosyllabic and monogrammatic. In other words, they produce one and same meaning.

On the angle of negation, the simple declarative transforms to negation by verbal inflection which has to do with both prefix and suffix. While both dialects accept the harmonizing ‘a/e’ prefix, the morphemes ‘-adi’ and ‘-ye’ are suffixed to the verb roots or base of Ezioṣu and Egbema Igbo

respectively. It is pertinent to state that the negative prefix for both dialects align with that of standard Igbo but differs in its suffix (ghì) as shown in the examples in *tab*

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