

An Assessment of Affixation of Igbo Verbs in Goddy Onyekaonwu's Text "Nwata Rie Awọ"

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Abstract

This research work hinges on the assessment of affixation. Affixation forms an integral aspect of word formation processes in most languages of the world, Igbo language inclusive. This paper looks at the pattern and the most frequent affix used in Goddy Onyekaonwu's text *Nwata Rie Awo*. Data were drawn from the said book through exclusive reading, lexical items which are affixes were identified and the types of affixes explained. A descriptive approach was employed in this paper. The study observed that such affixes as employed by Goddy Onyekaonwu in the text *Nwata Rie Awo* performed certain functions such as emphasier, negative markers, inflectional function. The paper opines that owing to the fact that the affixation pattern inherent in any literary work goes a long way in helping the reader to understand the text, further studies of this nature should be undertaken by other scholars in this direction in order to help the readers to understand the text.

Introduction

Language is the chief source of communication of ideas. There are some other ways such as dance, music, physical gestures and symbols through which we can communicate ideas. But language is a very common and easy source of communication. As encyclopaedia Americana (2004, p.727) puts it:

Language is the principle and richest means of communication used by human beings. Language functions primarily as spoken means of communication. It can however, also be transferred to other media, mostly clearly as in the case of writing... In addition, the deaf communicates, in which the aural medium is not available, the visual medium is exploited for deaf sign language.

Every language has its own ways and rules about the structure and formation of new words that makes it unique. Affixation is one of these processes of word formation and it occurs under the concept of morphology and morpheme. Morphology is a branch of linguistics that deals with the internal structures and formation of words.

Yule (2006, p.62) defines morphology as “the study of forms”. These forms are what we have as morphemes. Morphemes are the smallest units of grammar. There are two kinds of morphemes; free morphemes and bound morphemes. A free morpheme can stand alone and is understandable in isolation. Example rat. A bound morpheme cannot occur alone. Example –ish in girlish. Affixation is the process of attaching affixes (bound morphemes) to the existing stem, root or base morphemes in order to form new words or change the meaning of the existing one. It is one of the productive ways of forming words in Igbo language.

Babarunde (2009, p.58) states that affixation comprises of prefixation, suffixation, interfixation, infixation. Anagbogu, Mbah and Eme (2000, p.102) include circumfixation. All these are morphological processes. Morphological process is a means of changing a stem to adjust its meaning to fit its syntactic and communicational context.

Ndimele (2008, p.22) classified affixes based on two criteria. The first criterion is the position in which the affix occurs relative to the location of the root of the word while the second is the function an affix performs when it is attached to

the root of a word. This paper, therefore attempts a detailed analytical study on the types of affixes used in Goddy Onyekawnwu's text *Nwata Rie Awo*.

The text under analysis is an Igbo drama text written by Goddy Oyekaonwu (1980). The main character in the drama text is a young man named Aworo son of Obidike from Amangwu community. When Aworo won Akatoosi in a wrestling competition, he was not aware that a lady named Obioma has developed an affection for him, due to the affection Obioma had for Aworo, she left Anene who was supposed to marry her. Aworo's parents accepted Obioma out of Aworo's wish.

After the marriage, Obioma was pregnant and gave birth to a baby girl. This made Aworo to detest Obioma in a pronounced way, only for the reason that Obioma gave birth to a baby girl instead of a baby boy as their first issue. Due to this, Aworo sold Obioma and her baby to slavery. He stayed for fifteen years without a wife. During this period, Obioma's daughter who she named Odinchefu was sold to a goldsmith who is from Utonkom, who took Odinchefu as a slave girl. They relocated to Amangwu Aworo's village.

After fifteen years, Aworo decided to get married. He got married to her daughter unknowingly, lived with her for five years without a child. Odinchefu started suffering from a very terrible sickness. These circumstances made Aworo to seek for solution to these problems. He consulted a chief priest who said for thing to fall in place, he must go in search of his wife and his daughter, whom he sold to slavery. The chief priest told him to go to Isuama where he will find his wife, with this, things will fall in place but a tragic story will go with it.

It took Aworo one year to find Obioma, good things began to manifest in the life of Aworo. For this reason, Aworo called for celebration. On the faithful day, Obioma and Odinchefu found out that they are mother and daughter and co-wife as well, which is abomination. This draw the attention of

people and it was done on Aworo that he has been sleeping with his daughter. This made Aworo to commit suicide.

This study is arranged as follows: abstract, introduction, conceptual framework, analysis of data collected from Goddy Onyekaonwu's text, findings, summary, Recommendation and Conclusion.

Conceptual Framework:

Here concepts are defined and ideas are systematically organized to provide focus and are used for interpretation of information. These concepts include: Affixation with its types.

Morphology

Akmajian, Demers, Farmer and Harnish (2001, p.12) assert that, morphology is a subfield of linguistics that studies the internal structure of words and the relationship among words. Okolo and Ezikeojiaku (1999, p.119) state that, morphology is concerned with the shape or form of words. It is interested in such questions as: "what is the smallest meaningful unit in language? How are the distinctive units set up in phonology realized in words? The opinions of these scholars are pointing at morpheme, which is the minimal units of linguistic form and meaning and how these morphemes are make up to form words. According to Ndimele (2008, p.9) morpheme is the smallest meaningful unit of an utterance which may not, however, exist in isolation. Babarinde (2009, p.22) states that there are basically two types of morpheme. These are free morphemes and bound morphemes". Free morphemes are morphemes that can stand on their own with meaning and can function in a sentence independently. Free morphemes are lexical morpheme because they have inherent or intrinsic meanings. Words belonging to lexical categories like nouns, verbs, adjectives, conjunction, propositions, and determiners.

Bound morphemes are morphemes that cannot stand on its own, it is exclusively attached to a free morpheme for meaning. Example, in-, un-, -less, -ly. As being stated, morphology deals with the formation of words and words are formed through several ways. Affixation is one of the ways of word formation.

Affixation

Affixation is a morphological process whereby a bound morpheme, an affix, is attached to a morphological base. Ndimele (2008, p.22) points out that, affixation is a morphological process of attaching an affix to the root or base of a word. Umera, Nneka and Nwankwo (2009, p.50) assert that affixation is the addition of prefixes and suffixed to the root word or base with or without change of word class. Example is the addition of dis- to advantage to get disadvantage. This does not change the word class from noun which it is, while the addition of -er to driver making it driver. This has changed the word class from verb to noun. From all these definitions above, affixation is thus a process of adding a morpheme or affix to a word to create either a different form of that word or a new word with a different meaning. Affixation is the most common way of making new words.

Ndimele(2008,p.3) also notes that, the position and function of an affix when attached to a root is definitive of the category of that affix. Hence, there exist prefixes, suffixes, infixes, interfixes, circumfixes, superfixes and suprafixes in the positional classification of affixes. An affix can be in inflected or derived from when they are attached to the root of a word. For Igbo language, prefixes.

Igbo is an isolating language with relatively little morphology. That is to say grammatical information is for the most part encoded word externally or discrete root morphemes as opposed to word internally via a series of affixes. As is typical of kwa languages, the

majority of Igbo words are morphologically simple, showing little to no morphological structure. Igbo verbs, however, do bear a modest amount of morphological structure. Verb inflects for tense (past, present, future) and aspect (progressive, perfective, durative, incoactive) via both prefixation and suffixation. In addition, verbs bear additional morphology depending on the sentence type. For example, verbs in imperative sentences bear special suffixes and in negative sentences they take certain prefixes (UCLA, 2009).

Affixes involved in word formation are only derivational morphemes that can change the structure and the meaning of words they are added to. According to Emenanjo (1991, p.85) says that Igbo affixes can be prefixes, suffixes and interfix. Most Igbo prefixes are clearly derivation in deriving nominal (nouns) from verbs. Igbo language is a verb, centered language and so derivational processes involve the verb. Derivation is the process whereby new words are formed from existing words.

Methodology

In this research, a descriptive approach was employed in this paper. Linguistics takes a descriptive approach to language. It tries to describe things as they are not as we wish them to be.

Data Analysis and Presentation

This study provides proper assessment of affixation of Igbo verbs in Goddy Onyekaonwu's text *Nwata Rie Awo*. This study further identifies certain functions such as emphasiser, negative markers, and inflectional function that determine the most frequent affix used in the text.

Affixes Base on Position

Ndimele (1999, p.22) says “prefixes is an affix which occurs before the root or base of a word”. Ballard (2001, p.51) “a prefix is an affix which occurs in word initially”.

Here morphemes are added at the word initial position of words. Verb is the major source of word formation in Igbo language, noun and gerund are inclusive. Examples:

PrefixesRoot words Derived words

a-	Gba	agba	to run
a-	Ju	aju	ask
a-	Ji	aji	hairs
a-	Ru	aru	abomination
a-	Isi	isi	head
i-	Ru	iru	to work
i-	Ji	iji	to hold
i-	Ime	ime	to do
i-	Ku	oku	fire
Q	Ru	aru	work
q-	Cha	ocha	fair

The sound / i/, /a/ and /q/ are used in the text as a prefix and a second person pronoun. These examples also show that prefixation in the text make the verbs change to noun which makes prefixation an inflectional as well as derivational operation in Igbo language

Suffixation: According to Ejele (1996, p.83) states that, suffix occurs after. It is an affix that is added after the root word. Igbo suffixes are bound morphemes and they modify the meanings of the verbs to which they are affixed. Such inflectional suffixes are recognized in the text. In the case of past tense, examples from the text

Roots	Suffixes	Derived Words
Kpe	Sara	kpesara complained
Gwa	Ra	gwara told
Bia	Ra	biara came
Nu	Chara	nuchara finished drinking
Gba	Tara	gbatara ran
Je	Chaa	jechaa finished working
Me	Turu	meturu touched
We	Putara	Weputara brought out
Ri	Gotara	rigotara climbed
Zi	Tere	zitere sent

Inter-fixation

Ndimele (2008, p.32) asserts that, an interfix is an affix which occurs between two or sometimes non-identical roots. It involves the existence or insertion of an affix in between two identical forms. It is a bound morpheme uniting two segments in derivational operations.

Examples from the text

egwu + re + egwu	-	egwuregwu (play)
mkpu + ta + mkpu	-	mkputamkpu (beat)
efu + re + efu	-	efurefu (vagabone)
atu + m + atu	=	atumatu (plan)

Affixes Based on Function

Affixation as employed by Goddy Onyekaonwu in the test *Nwata Rie Awo* performed certain functions. The following include the inflection suffixed recognized so far.

The perfective affirmative form: Igbo language has the perfective affirmative inflectional verbal suffix marker –la. Perfective aspect expresses action that has been completed. The suffix –la is affixed to the verb root to express perfective aspect.

Example from the text

Aworo aburula nwa m taa
Ha emeteela agu nu n'ura
Azutachaala m umu irighiri ihe a siri m
zukota
Awaala m oji
Nna anyi i meela
Ugbu a o chajaala

Anyi emechaala ihe niile

The underlined morphemes –la are bound inflectional affix attached to the CV stem in accordance with the principle of vowel harmony. They cannot occur alone in the sentence except when attached to CV stem. The writer used perfect aspect to express a completed action.

Negative Suffix:

Emenanjo (1987, p.96) divided the negative suffixes into two: Imperative negative –la and the non-imperative negative-ghi

In the case of imperative negative –la used in the text. It gives order in a negative sense.

Examples

Biko egbula m.	Please don't kill me.
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Aka ahu emetukwala m n'onu.	Don't touch your hand on my mouth.
Ewela iwe.	Don't be angry.

The writer used the imperative negative –la to give order in a negative sense. In the case of non-imperative statements in the text, it gives the opposite in meaning of an idea. It is marked with the negative suffix –gh.

Examples

O buru na i kpotag <u>hi</u> ya.	If you did not bring him.
Nke mere na o lotag <u>hi</u> n'abali.	This made him not to come back in the night.
O dig <u>hi</u> ha mma.	It is not good for them.
Kemgbe m jiri huchaa ike Aworo kpara unyaahu amakwag <u>hi</u> m ebe m no.	Ever since I saw Aworo's strength, I have not been myself.
A makwag <u>hi</u> m ihe m ga-ekwu.	I did not know what to say.

Inflectional Suffix – riri used in the case of emphatic marker. In the text, the writer used the suffix – riri to lay emphasis, to show that it is something you must do. The suffix – riri shows the importance and urgent it is, making it clear by speaking with force.

Examples

I ga-eririri nri a taa.	You must eat that food today.
A ga-achopuriri ya n'obodo a.	We must chase him/her away from this village.
Afo ga-ewetariri ihe o togboro.	You must bring what you kept.
Uzu ga-akpoliteriri ya.	Noise must wake him up.

Findings

The findings of the study based on the data analysis found out that:

Affixation is the morphological process in which bound morphemes are attached to a root or stem to mark changes in the meaning, part of speech or grammatical relationships.

From the study, the researcher has observed the three types of affixes in Igbo to mark changes in the meaning, parts of speech and grammatical context. Three examples above made the opinion clear. One important features of affixes is that affixes take on several forms and serve different functions. The researcher found out that the author used affixes on several forms and they serve different functions in the text which shows that what the character said is important and also expresses actions completed by the character.

Summary, Recommendation and Conclusion

The aim of this study is achieved by finding out various affixes used in the text *Nwata Rie Awo* and such affixes performed certain functions in the text. Every language has its own ways and rules of new words formation which makes the language unique. Word formation is a complex process which requires adequate mastery of the rules to control and apply the

process of formation. Formation of words does not just appear like that out of the idle rather, there are several methods that are used to create new words which affixation is one of the processes of word formation in Igbo language. It occurs under the concept of morphology and morpheme. The affixation pattern used in Goddy Onyekaonwu's text *Nwata Rie Awo* goes a long way in helping the reader to understand the text. However, this study do not claim an exhaustive treatment of the morphological processes in the text. Further studies of this nature should be undertaken by the scholars in this direction in order to aid comprehension.

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