

Affixes in English Language and Ukwuani Language: A Contrastive Study

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This paper made a contrastive study of affixes in English language and Ukwuani language. Information about the two languages was fully discussed. The terms contrastive analysis, morphology, and morpheme were explained in detail for proper understanding of the subject matter. From the analysis of the affixes of the two languages, this study showed vividly that in remarkable differences abound between English affixes and Ukwuani affixes, and so likely to infer with the learning of English affixes. Contrastive study mostly focuses on the differences between the language in contrast. The two languages in contrast for this study: English and Ukwuani, are socio-culturally linked as English is used by a good number of Ukwuani speakers. The English language is L2 to Ukwuani speakers/learners of English. There are four major ways contrastive analysis is applied to. They are description, selection, contrast, and prediction. The method approach to this study is interview. The data collected from Ukwuani language source are analysed. Consequently, the literary is one of the methods employed for this research for information from textbooks, journals, and other research materials.

Keywords: contrastive analysis, morphology, affixes, English and Ukwuani

Introduction

Modern linguistics identifies two separate approaches to language learning. The first approach is contrastive analysis, which is based on the premise that since languages differ, the second language learner will encounter difficulties. The second approach is error analysis, sometimes referred to as “posteriori contrastive analysis” (after—the fact—analysis). The major difference between contrastive analysis (C.A.) and error analysis (E.A.) is that C.A. is from cause to effect (a priori), while E.A. is from effect to cause (a posteriori). This paper, however, is a contrastive study of affixes in English and Ukwuani language. A lot of morphological processes manifest in Ukwuani language and to the best of our knowledge these processes are absent in English. It is likely therefore, that based on the assumptions of contrastive analysis, these processes would cause problems for an Ukwuani L1 speaker learning English as a second language. Since this paper is a contrastive study of affixes of two languages, information about the two languages will be given. The thrust of this paper is most especially on contrastive study. Therefore, a constructive discussion of contrastive analysis will be given. Consequently, before delving into affixes, the terms morphology and morpheme will be fully discussed, because affixes are morphological process and affixes are also morphemes. This paper focuses most particularly on the differences between English affixes and Ukwuani affixes. The differences are the problem areas in English language learning for Ukwuani L1 speaker.

English Language

The English language is the mother tongue of the major countries of the world. At the beginning of the 19th century, English was the native speech of barely 15 million people. It is spoken in many countries of the world as official Language. Presently, English is the most widely studied language in area where it is not native. It is the chief foreign language taught in Latin America and in schools in European countries. Children begin the study of English in the seventh grade in schools in Japan; in Philippines, all classes are conducted in English from the fourth grade; and in India, English is an official language alternative to Hindi (Lawrence, 1994, XI). The use of English is widespread in international trade, scholarship, and scientific research. More than half of the world educational journals (including scientific and technical journals) as well as newspapers are printed in English. Most of the world's mails are written in English and majority of the world's radio and television stations use English in their broadcast (Lawrence, 1994, XI).

Historically, English belongs to the Germanic branch of language (Lawrence, 1994, XI). In the 16th century A.D., three Germanic tribes: the Angles, the Saxons, and the Jutes are, invaded England. The integration of their three dialects resulted in old English which also emanated from tribal migrations and invasions. The vocabulary of English is on the increase because of its methods of word-formation. Words are derived in English in different ways, such as: borrowing from other languages; compounding; addition of affixes; and functional shift and imitations of sounds (Lawrence, 1994, XV, XVI). In Nigeria, English is the official language and language for commerce and industry. English is used at all levels of education in Nigeria. Biodun Sofunke (2004, p. 34) cited Osaji, who suggested that the “needs of international viability in the modern world”, among others “dictates the adoption of English as the official national language”. He further states that:

Although spoken by majority of the educated, one can rightly say that English being the language of administration, commerce and education is our national Lingual-Franca, because it serves as official medium of linguistic communication between a people with about 368 languages. (2004, p. 34)

Also, Mabel Osakwe states that:

If England lays the first claim to English, she will not deny that nativization of the language in Nigeria soil, entitles Nigeria to some claims of its ownership. It is not for similar reasons that foster parents are often granted custody to the disappointment of some biological parents? English is not just deeply rooted in some homes... it actually flowers and bears fruits: as fascinating hybrid, unique in Nigeria. (Akpojiseri, 2009, p. 144)

Majority of the books used in different subjects in Nigeria are written in English, especially major disciplines, such as sciences, social sciences, and arts textbooks which are written in English. In Ukwuani speaking areas of Delta State, English is used as the official language and as a medium of instruction in schools.

The Ukwuani language is spoken by the people of Ukwuani or Ndokwai in Delta State of Nigeria. Ndokwa is a coinage from the names of two former district councils in Aboh division, namely, Ndosimili and Ukwuani District councils, which later became Ndokwa Local Government Area.

Presently, the people occupy three local government areas. These are Ndokwa West, Ndokwa East, and Ukwuani Local Government Area. The Ukwuani people live in the Southern part of Delta North, and have slight dialectal differences in the language based on their closeness to the four ethnic groups at their borders. These are Igbo, Urhobo, Isoko, and Ijaw. The influence of these languages is manifest in slight variations in their pronunciation manifesting in different dialects namely: Onu-Agboh dialect, Ukwuani Akashi, Utakwa dialect, and Osissa dialect. The one spoken by the majority of Ukwuani people which is regarded as the standard dialect,

is the Utagba dialect. It is easily understood by speakers of the other dialects. It is the dialect that is used in this study.

Methodology

The library is one of sources of information for this paper. This is where we can get access to linguistic textbook, journals, and other reference materials. Information about English language is language sourced from textbooks and journals while information about Ukwuani language will be based on data collected through written interview. The method of the comparison in this paper is most especially on the differences between the English language and Ukwuani language. This is because the differences between the two language are where the LI speaker of Ukwuani language will encounter problem when learning English as a second language.

Objectives of the Paper

The objectives of this paper are:

1. Give an opportunity for language teachers and students of linguistics to have knowledge of the affixation process of Ukwuani language in order to know the areas to emphasis while teaching;
2. Help the English language teacher in preparing language textbook and other teaching materials in grammar for their students, since Ukwuani and English are used side by side;
3. Since affixes are morphological process and morphology is part of grammar of any language, this paper will give an insight to the teaching of the grammar of English;
4. This study will also yield insights into the language learning process which will eventually have direct relevance in the improvement of language teaching material and methods.

Contrastive Analysis

Contrastive analysis is a study in applied linguistics. The applied linguists use information from other areas of knowledge for their analysis. They believe that the language one learns first affects the second language the person is aspiring to learn. All definitions of contrastive analysis revolve around the common theme: That is an analysis of the similarities and differences at different levels of linguistic analysis. Ayo Banjo (1983, p. 20) defined contrastive grammar thus.

The comparison of two relevant scientific grammars yields another kind of grammar, namely, a contrastive grammar. The aim of a contrastive grammar as the name implies is to find out systematic way-points of similarities and differences between the two languages to be brought into contact.

Corder (1973, p. 148) and Obodeh (2011) saw contrastive analysis as the process of comparing different mother tongue of the learners and the second language. According to David Crystal (2008, p. 112) and Obodeh (2011), contrastive analysis is a general approach to the investigation of language (contrastive linguistics), particularly as carried out in certain areas of applied linguistics, such as foreign-language learning. Contrastive analysis plays two major roles, viz.: linguistic role and psychological role. The linguistic role involves qualifying the degree of differences between the structures of two languages, while the psychological role is concern with establishing the relationship between degree of linguistic differences and degree of learning difficulties. This has made Fries (1952, p. 9) to state that: "The most efficient materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description with the languages of the learner".

The thrust of this paper is on the linguistic role of contrastive analysis. This is because the study involves the comparison of affixes (a morphological process) of two languages: English language and Ukwuani language.

Morphology as a Branch of Linguistics

Morphological analysis dates back to the ancient Indian linguist, Panini who formulated 3,959 rules of Sanskrit morphology in the text *Astadyayi* by using a constituent grammar (Wikipedia, 2004; Obodeh, 2011). Mark Aronoff and Kristen Fudeman (2008, p. 1) also explained that morphology is generally attributed to the German poet, novelist, playwright, and philosophy, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), who coined it early in the 19th century in a biological context. Its etymology is Greek: “Morph” which means shape or form, and morphology is the study of form or forms. The term morphology was coined by August Schleicherr in 1858 (Wikipedia, 2004, p. 1; Obodeh, 2011). According to Andrew Spencer and Arnold Zwicky (2001, xvii), morphology is at the conceptual centre of linguistics. This is because it is the study of word structure and words are at the interface among phonology, syntax, and semantics. They further state that words contract relationships with each other by virtue of their forms. That is, they form paradigms and lexical groupings. For this reason, morphology is something all linguists should know about (xvii). Yule (1996, p. 60) stated that, morphology which literally means the study of forms was originally used in biology, but since the mid-19th century, it has also been used to describe that type of investigation which analyzes all those basic elements which are used in a language (1996, p. 60). Morphology is defined by Robins as “the study of the grammatical structure words” (1965, p. 160). Donna Jo Napoli (1996, p. 190) posited that “Morphology is the study of word formation processes”. Crystal (2008, p. 314) also opined that morphology is the branch of grammar which studies the structure or forms of words primarily through the use of the morpheme construct. Akmajian (2001, p. 12) saw morphology as the subfield of linguistics that studies the internal structure of words and the relationship among words.

Looking at all these definitions of morphology by different linguists, one will conclude that morphology is the field within linguistics that studies the internal structure of words. Those elements being described in the form of linguistic message are technically known as morphemes. The morpheme is the smallest meaningful unit of a word. According to Napoli (1996, p. 171), a morpheme is “a minimal meaning-bearing unit”.

Affixes

Affixes are morphemes that are attached or affixed to the base or root of a word. Affixes are one of the morphological processes we have in English and Ukwuani. According to David Crystal (2008, p. 16), the morphological process whereby grammatical or lexical information is added to a stem is known as affixation. He further states that affixes are limited in number in language and are generally classified into three types, depending on their position with reference to the root or stem of the word (p. 16).

Mark Aronoff and Kristen Fudeman (2008, p. 113) asserted:

In English, some affixes may be attached to more than one category of word-class. One such affix is “-ish”. It may be attached to nouns as in prudish, bookish, girlish, and childish, adjectives as in oldish or smallish or verbs as in ticklish. In each case, the resulting form is an adjective.

From the foregoing assertion, affixes are also a process of derivation. This has made Aronoff and Fudeman (2008, p. 110) posited that one of the derivational processes they consider is affixation. Ndimele (1993, p. 13)

and Obodeh (2011) also opined that affixes do not have independent existence. Consequently, Aronoff and Fudeman (2008, p. 78) observed that one distinction that has come out of work that pairs morphology and phonology is between primary and secondary affixes. Primary affixes in English are often of Latin-Romance origin, while secondary affixes are often of native Germanic origin (2008, p. 78). Below are examples of words bearing primary affixes “-(i)an” and words with secondary affixes “-ism”.

- i.
 - Grammar → grammarian
 - Shakespeare → Shakespearean
 - Parkinson → Parkinsonian
 - Comedy → comedian
- ii.
 - Capital → capitalism
 - Parkinson → parkinsonism
 - Mental → mentalism
 - Mongol → mongolism

When we read the words in “i” and words in “ii” above, we will hear some differences. For instance, the stress in “grammar” is on the first syllable. Also, the stress in Shakespeare is on the first syllable, while in Shakespearean, the stress is on the second syllable. However, in mentalism, the stress is on the first syllable just as it is in mental. Similarly, other words in the group that have “ism” as their affix have stress on the same syllable as their unaffixed counterparts. From the foregoing, it can be generalized by saying that all morphemes that end with “-(i)an” have stress on the syllable that immediately precedes the suffix, while morphemes that end with “-ism” have the same stress as their base form. In addition, primary affixes cause a stress shift, while secondary affixes do not. There are basically two types of affixes in English and three in Ukwuani language. These are prefixes, suffixes, and interfix. Interfix is very prominent in Ukwuani language.

Prefix

A prefix is a morpheme that comes before the root morpheme. Prefixes are bound morphemes that occur before the root or base of a word. Prefixes occur in English and many other languages most especially in Ukwuani.

English Prefix

English prefixes are usually seen in derived words. This means that prefixes in English are used for derivations. Therefore, English prefixes are derivational morphemes and are also bound morphemes. Examples of English prefixes are illustrated in Table 1 as below:

Table 1
English Prefixes

Prefix-	Root	Derived word
em-	power (noun) bitter (adj., n)	empower (vb.) embitter (vb.)
en-	slave (n)	enslave (vb.)
mis-	conduct (vb., n)	misconduct (n)
un-	tie (vb.)	untie (vb.)
pre-	view (vb., n)	preview (vb., n)
sur-	charge (n)	surcharge (n, vb.)

(Table 1 to be continued)

de-	merit (n)	demerit (n)
dis-	merit (n)	demerit (n)
il-	legal (adj.)	illegal (adj., n)
in-	discreet (adj.)	indiscreet (adj.)
im-	possible (adj., n)	impossible (adj.)
out-	grow (vb.)	outgrown (vb.)

The foregoing Table 1 shows English prefixes, the roots which they are attached, and their derivations.

Ukwuani Prefix

Ukwuani prefixes are attached to root morphemes to form new words. Therefore, Ukwuani prefixes are also used for derivations. Prefixes in Ukwuani language are “o” and “ọ”. Table 2 below shows their use and derived words.

Table 2

Ukwuani Prefix

Prefix	Roots (verbs)	Derived words (nouns)
o	de (to write)	ode (writer)
	te (to dance)	ote (dancer)
ọ	zaa (to sweep)	oza (cleaner)
	su (to pound)	osu (pounder)

In the above Table 2, the derived words from the prefixes have suffixes in their English equivalent in meaning. This is a very striking difference between English prefix and Ukwuani prefix; a word (root) which has prefix attached to it in Ukwuani language has a suffix as its bound morpheme in English.

Suffix

Suffixes are morphemes that come after the root of a word (Tomori, 1999, p. 33; Obodeh, 2011). Ndimele (1993) also stipulated that a suffix is an affix which occurs after the base or root of a word (p. 27). Suffixes are also bound morphemes.

English Suffix

English suffixes are bound morphemes that are used for derivations. Napoli (1996, p. 19) stated that “English language allows multiple derivational morphemes in a word”. These multiple morphemes are usually suffixes. For instance, the words instrumentalist and nationalize have two suffixes each as their bound morphemes: “al”, “ist” and “al”, “ize”, respectively. Inflections in English are suffixes and some English suffixes are class changing or class maintaining derivations. Examples of suffixes in English are presented below (see Table 3).

Table 3

English Suffixes

Suffix	Root	Derived word
-ment	amend	amendment
-age	link	talked
-ed	talk	talked
-en	beat	beaten

(Table 3 to be continued)

-ing	sing	singing
-ist	social	socialist
-able	forgive	forgivable
-er	teach	teacher
-ful	care	careful
-ry	rival	rivalry
-ness	great	greatness
-ation	import	importation
-s	eat	eats
-y	oil	oily
-or	sail	sailor
-ship	fellow	fellowship

The foregoing Table 3 illustrates English suffixes, their roots, and derived words.

Ukwuani Suffix

There are only two suffixes in Ukwuani which are “ni(i)” and “fu”. The suffixes are the inflections we have in Ukwuani language and they are past tense and part participle tense. In Ukwuani language, there is no derivational suffix that makes a change of word-class as it is in English. Examples of suffixes in Ukwuani with their derived words are shown below (see Table 4).

Table 4

Ukwuani Suffix

Suffixes	Roots	Derived words
-ni(i)	lu (to work)	luni (worked)
	je (to go)	jeni (went)
	se (to draw)	seni (drew)
	wesę (bring)	wesęni (brought)
-fu	li (to eat)	lifu (ate)
	la (to drink)	lafu (drank)
	je (to go)	jefu (gone)

Interfix

Interfix also known as infix involves the placing of an affix between two identical roots either to form a new word or to alter the meaning of the existing word. Ndimele (1996, p. 32) posited that interfix interrupts the sequence of two roots. He further stated that interfix is an affix which is incorporated inside the root of a word (p. 29). Aronoff and Fudeman (2008, p. 238) asserted that interfix is an affix that surfaces within a word. The English language does not have any use of interfixation as it is in Ukwuani language. Interfix is one of the morphological processes in Nigerian languages.

Ukwuani Interfix

Interfix is one of the affixes in the morphological structure in Ukwuani language. It is placed between two roots and the roots can exist independently without the interfix to give different meanings. Ukwuani language has multifarious use of interfix. Examples are illustrated below:

Interfix	Derived word
-m- as in	elimeli (feast, banquet)
-g- as in	osogoso (too long, too tall)
-ka- as in	nyakanya (heavy load)
-t- as in	opotopo (very fresh, plump, and fresh)
-k- as in	anwakanwa (fast and clever person)
-k- as in	oyokoyo [(a person) soft and fragile]
-g- as in	ojogojo (someone looking haggard, something of extreme length)
-t- as in	apatapa (watery, not strong)
-ki- as in	nnokinno (elasticity)

Conclusion

This study has made a distinctive constative analysis of affixes in English and Ụkwuani. Thus, a contrastive study of affixation in the two language has tried to fill a gap in knowledge by drawing attention to the fact that the acute problems a competent Ụkwuani speaker will face while learning English grammar in general and morphology in particular as a second language can be minimized. By a contrastive study, this paper focused on a linguistic description of affixes of English and Ụkwuani language, with a view to identifying, most especially, the differences between the affixes in the language. A close look at the affixes of English language and Ụkwuani language shows that there is remarkable difference between the affixes (prefix, suffix, and interfix) of the two languages. For example, where we have the same words in the two languages, the positions of the prefixes differ; prefixes in Ụkwuani appear as suffixes in English. Similarly, there are only two prefixes in Ụkwuani language, “o” and “o’”. English prefixes are very numerous.

Although, both English prefix and that of Ụkwuani make a change of word class when added to a root morpheme, addition of Ụkwuani prefixes only makes a change of one-word class from verb to noun. Most times, addition of English prefix to a root causes a different change in word class, for example, from verb to noun, adjective to noun, adjective to verb, and noun to adjective. Consequently, suffixes in English are derivational bound morphemes and all inflections in English language are suffixes. Ụkwuani language has only two suffixes and these are inflected past tense and past participle tense.

Finally, this paper has shown a striking distinction between English language and Ụkwuani language. This is as a result of the absence of interfix in English, which is present in Ụkwuani language. In conclusion, the differences in affixation in the two languages are very significant in language learning and linguistics. This is because, affix is a morphological process and morphology is part of the grammar of a language.

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