Pluralisation in *Ígálá* and English

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Abstract: Languages of the world have certain similar linguistic features in terms of a finite set of fundamental principles which are universal to all languages on one hand, and a finite set of parameters which determine syntactic variability amongst them. In order to substantiate evidence of linguistic universals, there is need for comparative analysis of languages. The thrust of the paper is to expound the diversities and similarities in Ígálá and English linguistic systems in the area of patterns of pluralisation. The paper is hinged on Inferential-realizational theory. The paper observed that the noun class in Ígálá is marked for number through three inflectional markers [ám(á), ìb(ó) and áb(ó)] while the noun class in English is inflected for number by the following exponents: [-s, -es, -ies, -en, -ren, -ves] not losing sight of zero concept. Germane to this work is the fact that Ígálá and English exhibit extended exponence- a linguistic situation where a particular morphosyntactic property could be expressed by more than one morphological marking in the same word depending on the lexeme's root. Plural markers in Ígálá are prefixes while plural markers in English are suffixes. In conclusion, English and Ígálá are uniform in one specific sense of the capacity to inflect words for grammatical purposes, but have different structures in the process of inflection or associating an inflected word with a specific set of morphosyntactic properties.

Keywords: Pluralisation, Ígálá, Morphosyntactic properties

1. Introduction

Pluralisation is the act of pluralising or attributing plurality to noun class words. It is the inflection of arguments. Words are usually inflected to denote various grammatical features. For instance, nouns are inflected to denote number; verbs are inflected to denote tense while adjectives are inflected to denote degree of comparison. The capacity for inflecting words for the purpose of denoting plurality does not reside in only one language. Despite the divergent nature of world languages, certain features abound which they have in common. A set of principles applies to all languages and parameters that vary within clearly defined limit between languages. Thus to acquire a language means learning how these principles apply to a particular language and which value to appropriate to each parameter (Cook & Newson, 1996, p.2). The thrust of this paper is to compare the patterns of pluralising nouns in English and Ígálá within the ambience of inferential-realizational theory.

In Ígálá inflectional system, nominal items are inflected for number through the addition of the prefixes *"am", "ab", and "ib"* to base words. It was remarked that "it must be emphasised that this plural formation in Ígálá is applicable to animate nouns (person and animals) only" (Okpanachi, 2002, pp. 19-20). This claim also received an echo in Omachonu (2003, pp. 203-204) that ".àm(a) is used as plural morpheme for both human and higher animals ". But on the pluralisation of inanimate nouns in Ígálá, it was debated that inanimate nouns are pluralized through the use of "numeral quantifiers and repetition" Okpanachi (2002) while Omachonu (2003, 2008) said that inanimate nouns can be pluralized through the use of adjective either through cardinal or ordinal approach, the use of quantifiers, and the use of reduplication. It was also asserted that àb(ó) is never used with inanimate nouns in Ígálá rather it is used with human specific animate noun. The claim that the affix "am(a)" is restricted to only animate nouns is highly contestable. Attabor (2011) argued that "there are no intrinsic features in both animate and inanimate nouns which attract and repel "am(a)" to and from them respectively" (32). But Okpanachi (2002)

and Omachonu (2003, 2008) hinged their claims on animacy hierarchy citing Trask (1993). However, one of the basic facts of inflectional morphology, according to Stump (2001) is that "the morphosyntactic properties associated with an inflected word may exhibit EXTENDED EXPONENCE in that word's morphology" Besides, applying animacy hierarchy to the inflectional patterns in Ígálá is like forcing a theory on data or vice versa. Therefore there is no intrinsic morphosyntactic rules in Ígálá that inhibit "am(a")" from being used with inanimate nouns.

2. Theoretical Framework

This paper is anchored on inferential-realizational theory. In an inferential theory, relations between a root and its various inflected forms are expressed by rules or formulas while in a realisational theory, a word's association with certain morphosyntactic properties licenses the appropriate affixes. Thus the basic claim of inferential-realisational theory is that the association of an inflected word with a specific set of morphosyntactic properties will guarantee the application of rules which determine the inflectional form of that word. In other words, when an inflected word is connected with a given set of morphosyntactic properties, it is certain that the connection will license the application of rules which in turn determines how that word is to be inflected.

> An inflected word's association with a particular set of morphosyntactic properties licences the application of rules determining the word's inflectional form; likes, for example, arises by means of a rule appending -s to any verb stem associated with the properties "3sg subject agreement", "present tense", and indicative mood" (Stump, 2001, p.3).

In realizational theories, a word's associations with a particular set of morphosyntactic properties guarantees the introduction of those properties' inflectional exponents. Following the above fact, the association of the root **think** with the properties "3sg subject agreement", "present tense", and "indicative mood" guarantees the attachment of the suffix –s (whether this attachment is effected by lexical insertion or by the application of a morphological rule). Stump (2001) states that two fundamental facts about inflectional morphology are in favour of realizational theories over incremental theories and one of such facts is that "the morphosyntactic properties associated with an inflected word may exhibit EXTENDED EXPONENCE in that word's morphology". What is extended exponence? Exponence refers to the number of categories that cumulate into a single formative. It is a purely morphological notion. Matthews (1972) uses the term extended exponence to refer to simultaneous asymmetry. This means that a particular morphosyntactic property could be expressed by more than one morphological marking in the same word. This fact is adequately supported with copious examples (http://everything2.com/title/morphosyntactic+property).

> In Breton, the productive pattern of pluralisation for diminutive nouns involves double marking (b*agig*"little boat", pl *bagòuigoù)*; in Swahili negative past-tense verb forms, negation is expressed both by the use of the negative past-tense prefix *ku* and by the prefix *ha-(tuli-ta-taka* "we wanted", but *ha-tu-ku-taka* "we did not want"); in French, the verb *aller* (go) has a special suppletive stem *i-* appearing only in the future indicative and the present conditional-yet, *i-* doesn't resist that attachment –*r(a)*, the suffixal exponent of the future indicative and the present conditional; German *gesprochen* is distinguished as a past participle both by its stem vocalism and by its stem affixes; and so on (Stump, 2001, p.4).

In addition to the fact stated above on some world languages, Ígálá is not left out in the display of extended exponence. For instance, the pattern of pluralisation in human-specific animate nouns in Ígálá is a good example of the concept of extended exponence where the morphosyntactic property (*number)* is achieved through different morphological markings. The noun *ògíjó-elder* can be pluralized using either of *àm(á),àb(ó)*and *ib(ó)* plural marking prefixes (*àm ógíjó*-elders *àb ógíjó*-elders, *ib ógíjó*-elders). Also, (*àm'énékèlé*-men, *àb'ókélé-men and ib'ókélé-men), àm'ímótó*-children, *àb'ímótó*-children). Thus, in terms of compatibility with widespread incidence of extended exponence in the morphological marking of world languages, realisational theories are better candidates. This is because in realisational theories, "there is no expectation that a given morphosyntactic properties will be realized by at most one marking per word". On the contrary, the possibility is left open that the same property may induce or participate in making the introduction of a number of distinct markings. This is in

sharp contrast to incremental theories where the custom is to assume that a given morphosyntactic property has at most one affixal exponent as advanced by lexical-incremental theorists, Selkirk (1982) and Lieber (1992) in their definition of the percolation mechanism. In a similar vein, Steele (1995, p.280) contends that "[b]ecause operations are informally additive, multiple additions of identical information are precluded" in Articulated morphology. So, incremental theories deny that instances of extended exponence actually arise, and must therefore resort to extraordinary means to accommodate those that do that.

3. Pluralisation in Ígálá

Basically, noun class in Ígálá is inflected for number through the use of three inflectional morphemes [*ám*(á), *ìb*(ó) and *áb*(ó)] irrespective of gender. For example the nouns: *ónèkèlé*(male) *ónòbùlé*(female) *ogijo*(elder) and *imọtọ* (child) when associated with the morphosyntactic property: [**Number pl**], will have their plural forms as follows:

Àmónékèlé	**Àm**ónóbúlé	ámógíjó	àmimọtọ children
Ìbókélé males	**Ìb**óbúlé females ìbógíjó	elders àbimọtọ
Ábókélé	**àb**óbúlé	àbógíjó	

This shows that a given morphosyntactic property does not have at least one affixal exponent in Ígálá. The pattern of pluralisation in human-specific animate nouns in Ígálá as shown above is a good example of the concept of extended exponence where the inflectional category (*number*) is achieved through different morphological markings. Likewise the noun I mọtọ (child) with child in parenthesis can form its plural with the prefixal exponents: *ám(á)* and *áb(ó)* as shown below:

Ámímọtọ	children
àbímọtọ	

But it cannot form its plural with the prefix:

★   *íb(ó) íbímọtọ*(children)

In realizational theories as manifested in Ígálá, there is no expectation that a given morphosyntactic properties (number pl {in Ígálá}) will be realized by at most one marking per word. That is why the possibility is left open that the same property may induce or participate in making the introduction of a number of distinct markings such that the nouns **ògíjó**(elder) and **ímọtọ**(child) do not have the same affixal exponent. Thus **ògíjó** (elder) makes use of the three plural markers: [**ám***(á)* **áb***(ó)* **ìb***(ó)*] While **ímọtọ** (child) makes use of two out of the three plural markers [**ám***(á)*and **áb***(ó)*].

The cardinal point of inferential theories is that formal and systematic relations existing between a lexeme's root and the fully inflected forms which constitute its paradigm are expressed in terms of rule and formulae. It means that the association between the morphosyntactic properties of a word and its morphology are expressed by the morphological rules which relate that word to its root. The existence of the words **ámógíjó (elders), íbógíjó (elders) and ábógíjó (elders)**, for example is inferred from that of the lexeme [ò**gíjó(elder)**] by means of a rule associating the appearance of the prefixes [*ám(á), íb(ó) and áb(ó)* with the presence of the property [number plural]. Likewise the existence of the words *àmímọtọ* (children) *and àbímọtọ*(children) is also inferred from that of the root **ímọtọ (child)** by means of a rule associating the appearance of the prefixes [*ám(á), and áb(ó)*] with the presence of the property [number plural].

4. Pluralisation in English

Number is one of the major characteristics of noun and it is a grammatical category which deals with singularity and plurality. A particular noun is thought of either as being singular or plural whether it is isolated or contextualised. Morphologically, a noun is in the plural form if inflected but the kind of morpheme which makes a noun plural may not pluralise another because a given set of morphosyntactic properties say [Number (Pl), subject agreement,] could have more than one inflectional markers say [**-s, -es, -ies, -en, -ren, -ves**] depending on the lexeme's root. So if we associate the properties [**number Pl, subject agreement**] with the lexemes: *Piano, photo, halo, solo, banjo* then the affixal exponent becomes [-**s**] giving us the forms: *Pianos, photos, halos, solos,* and *banjos.* But the association of the same properties: [**Number Pl, subject agreement**] with the lexemes: *potato, hero, cargo, mango, volcano* does not make use of the [**-s**] suffixal exponent thereby giving us the ill-formed [*potatos, heros, cargos, mangos, volcanos*] but it uses another exponent [**-es]** which in turn gives us the well-formed [*potatoes, heroes, cargoes mangoes* and *volcanoes*].

In the pluralisation of nouns ending in "y" as in the case of *lady, city,* and *industry*, the affixal exponent used for their morphosyntactic realization is elbowed aside by another affixal exponent in realizing the morphosyntax of lexemes which also end in "y" as in the case of [boy, monkey and quay]. In inferential-realizational theory, focus is on the application of rules which lead to appropriate exponent. In other words, the concern of inferential-realizational theory is the relationship between a set of morphosyntactic properties associated with a word and its morphology. With this theory, we can state clearly why the association of [**number Pl**] with the lexemes [City, lady, industry] and the lexemes [Boy, monkey, quay] have two different terminal desinences [-**ies** and **−s**] respectively. This is because the first set of lexemes [City, lady and industry] are preceded by consonant sounds and so the last letter "y" is replaced with [**-ies**] but the second set of lexemes [Boy, monkey, quay] are preceded by vowel sounds and so the last letter "y" is not substituted but [**-s**] is rather affixed. Sometimes there is no rule of thumb to tell why [*shelf and loaf*] have [*shelves and loaves*] as paradigms when [*chief, reef , cliff, roof and belief*] have [*chiefs reefs, cliffs, roofs and beliefs*] as paradigms when associated with the same morphosyntactic properties. Others have **zero morphemes**, examples are: *gold, silver, music, furniture information, advice, sheep* and so on. These forms which have no inflectional paradigm are referred to as lemma because they are chosen to represent all inflectional and spelling variants, Aitchison, (1996, p.162). These forms are chosen conventionally to represent the canonical form of a word and are considered to have minimal or no inflections. Yet others such as [*louse, lice, goose, geese*] form their plurals through vowel change.

5. Discussion

One of the features of the English language is the distinction between singular and plural. Word such as *girl*(singular) or *man*(singular) are in a form used in referring to a single individual: one girl or one man, only. However, forms like *girls* (plural) or *men* (plural) are used in reference to two or more individuals. A similar distinction between "one" and "more than one" is a common feature in Ígálá nominal system. Plural markers in Ígálá are easily identifiable and calculable than those of English due to their limited number and simplicity of combination except in some few instances. Plural markers in Ígálá are: [**am(a), àb(ó)** **and ìb(ó)].** Amongst these three, àb(ó) and ìb(ó) are not used for (a) non-human animate nouns such as [ábíá (dog)] and (b) inanimate nouns like [òkwútá (stone)] because the language system does not allow it. But in English, plural markers are: [**-s, -es, -ies, -en, -ren, -ves**] depending on the root word. They can be preceded by human and non-human animate nouns and inanimate nouns alike. Yet few nouns in English do not change morphologically while others show their changes in form of vowel change.

An interesting feature of the category of number in English and Ígálá is in terms of classification of plural markers. For the English plural markers, suffixation is the appropriate noun for describing the suffixal roles they play while plural markers in Ígálá are through prefixes. Whether through suffixes or prefixes, one thing that comes to mind whenever a plural marker is affixed to a singular noun: *person (persons), onẹ (ámónẹ)* is that more than one entity is spoken about and it is usually known to respective speakers of the language.

In the light of the above, the linguistic tendency for speakers of a language to speak of things which are in singular form and also speak of the same things but in plural form is not a feature limited or peculiar

to either of English and Ígálá. In English and Ígálá, animals, towns, things, objects, etc. could be spoken of in terms of singular and plural by way of absence and presence of inflectional markers which are morphologically attached through prefixing terminal desenence in the case of Ígálá and by suffixation in the case of English.

6. Conclusions

The discussion on inflectional morphologies of English and Ígálá is centred on morphosyntactic properties, and a morphosyntactic property is a grammatical property of a grammatical word and these properties are manifested as exponence in phonological words. Exponence is one of the parameters of morphological typology and English and Ígálá exhibit extended exponence. Extended exponence is a linguistic situation where a particular morphosyntactic property could be expressed by more than one morphological marking in the same word. The pattern of pluralisation in human-specific animate nouns in Ígálá is a good example of the concept of extended exponence where the morphosyntactic property (number) is achieved through different morphological markings. The noun ògíjó-elder can be pluralized using either of àm(á),àb(ó)and ìb(ó) plural marking prefixes (àm ógíjó-elders, àb ógíjó-elders, and ìb ógíjó-elder), as well as (àm' énékèlé-men, àb'ókélé-men and ìb'ókélé-men), àm'ímótó-children, àb'ímótó-children). This is also true in English where number is always expressed on nouns by means of different affixal exponents marking one morphosyntactic property as in the case of piano (-s) and tomato (-es) for the property (number pl).

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Conflict of interest

The Author has no conflicts of interest to declare that they are relevant to the content of this article.