Construction Morphological Analysis of Pluralisation Strategies in Mgboejeogu Igbo

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Abstract

This study examines pluralisation strategies in Mgboejeọgụ dialect of Igbo. The objectives are to identify plural formation strategies in Mgboejeọgụ, investigate the functions of plurality in Mgboejeọgụ, and explore construction morphology of pluralisation in Mgboejeọgụ. Introspection and unstructured oral interviews were used as methods for data collection and construction morphology was adopted as the theoretical framework for its analysis. The findings show that the dialect has peculiar ways of forming plurals. Six strategies were identified as follows; prefixation, reduplication, quantifiers, qualifiers, personal pronouns, and particulariser. The findings revealed that in the dialect, the prefix *ụ́* can only be used to show plural of human nouns while *ụ́nwụ̀* can be used both for human beings, animals and other inanimate objects. From the

findings also, it shows that Mgboejeọgụ uses only complete reduplication to form plurals. The functions of plurality in Mgboejeọgụ are itemized as follows; to show number in nouns, function as an adjective to qualify a noun, to ask questions, to show ownership and to show repetition in sentences for emphasis. Finally, the study used construction morphology schemas to analyse some pluralisation strategies and show how they combine and the processes they follow to derive plurality from the singular forms. This study therefore recommends further research in Mgboejeọgụ dialect of Igbo for the development of the dialect and expansion of its knowledge.

Keywords: inflection; plurality; language; dialect- Mgboejeọgụ

1. Introduction

Language is the rule and principle of human communication. It is a medium of expression and an essential flavour of human existence. As a means of communication, language is used exclusively by human beings and also has various functions. It is a channel that links people together and binds them to their culture. It is a major phenomenon in human society and it is therefore an important regulator of individual consciousness and social interaction. Language can indeed be seen as the only thing that makes man distinct from other animals, this is because man is the only creature that uses language as a means of communication including speech and gestures which involves the spoken language, sign language and writing. A language spoken by a group of people identifies and distinguishes them from other group. The Igbo language identifies the Igbo people, represents their culture and distinguishes them from other group or speech community.

This study focuses on morphology as an aspect of linguistics. Morphology studies the internal structure of words and the rules by which words are formed. Omachonu (2001) explains morphology as the meaningful combination of sounds to form words. According to Omachonu, morphology is concerned with the formation of words from smaller units of meaning called ‘morphemes and it is made up of two main branches; derivational and inflectional morphology.

Derivational morphology studies the ways that new words are formed. For example: change in meaning- leaf →leaf**let**, pure→ **im**pure. Change in grammatical category - help (verb) → help**er** (noun), logic (noun) → logic**al** (adjective). Inflectional morphology on the other hand, studies how words are modified to express grammatical relationships, such as number, tense, gender, case, and aspect. In other words, it is the system of adding suffixes, prefixes or changing the stem of a word to indicate number, grammatical function or preserve its meaning. An inflectional morpheme can be added to a noun, verb, adjectives, or an adverb. For example, adding '-s' to the singular noun 'student' can change it to a plural form 'students'. Similarly, adding '-ed' to the verb 'dance' creates a past tense of the verb which is 'danced'.

This study centers on pluralisation. It is a process of forming a word to indicate that there is more than one object or entity being referred to (number). Pluralisation is the morphological process for indicating number in a language. In other words, it is the modification of a word to show that it refers to more than one thing at a time. Every language/dialect has its own ways of forming plurality and Mgboejeọgụ dialect of Igbo is not an exception.

There are scanty literatures especially on the morphology of Mgboejeọgụ Igbo; a few works have emerged from the study of both linguistic and non-linguistic scholars. Such vacuum in the dialect need to be filled. This is the main motivation for this research work. Thus, this study discusses the pluralisation strategies in Mgboejeọgụ Igbo. The specific objectives of the study are to: identify plural formation strategies in Mgboejeọgụ, investigate the functions of plurality in Mgboejeọgụ and explores the use of construction morphology to sectionalise complex words in the Mgboejeọgụ Igbo.

2. Empirical studies

Over the years, a number of researches have been carried out on pluralisation strategies in different languages. Under this section, some of this research works which are related to this study are reviewed. For instance, Akata (2004) carries out a study on the realisation of plural in Kana. The aim of the study is on the phonological realisation of plural forms in the Bangha dialect of Kana, using a descriptive approach. The paper argues that except the modifying numerals,

which specify the number of the nominal items after them and which cannot co-occur with the plural markers, various plural markers exist in the language. The finding reveals that plurals in Bangha are phonologically realised by the reduplication of number classifiers, specifiers and some adjectives. This study is related with the current study in the aspect of pluralisation and differs in aspect of language. Nkamigbo (2011) explores the various ways in which nominal plurality is formed in the Eggon. The objective of this study is to highlight the various ways in which Eggon speakers form plural. The pluralisation strategies examined include: zero affixation 'mo' prefixation, vowel alternation, reduplication, tonal permutation and vowel insertion. It was observed that vowel alternation involved the vowel **'o'** changing to **'e'** and the vowels **'ọ/o'** changing to **'a'**. In complete reduplication, the whole word repeats itself. Partial reduplication involves the repetition of the second syllable of a noun in order to form its plural. The vowels **'a'** and **'e'** are inserted immediately after the onset of the second syllable. Nkamigbo observed the following examples in Eggon: Zero affixation as in ubing→ ubing 'ground', amyi→ amyi 'water'. 'Mo' prefixation: ana → moana 'mothers, asi → moasi 'thieves', anwye → moanwye 'children'. Vowel alternation: onom → enom 'tongues' osku → esku 'towns', ololo → elolo 'sicknesses', ongwu → angwu 'chests', ongbre →angbre 'rocks'. Reduplication: complete reduplication: aki → akiaki 'trees', ashim → ashimashim 'ancestors', ekon → ekonekon 'knives', partial reduplication: aku → akuku 'rooms', amu → amumu 'pictures'. Tonal permutation: àgá → ázá 'lizards', èdzú → édzú 'houseflies', ènú → énú 'chickens'. Vowel insertion: the vowels 'a' and 'e' are inserted at the word initial position to form nominal plural in Eggon as in **'a'**; mada → amada 'flutes', masin → amasin 'palm oils' kpatu → akpatu 'boxes'. **'e'** insertion**:** bida → ebida 'waist beads', kpazhi → ekpazhi 'compounds' ngbaha → engbaha 'ladders'. The study is similar with the current study because both discuss pluralisation but differs in the aspect of language.

Furthermore, Ikegwuonu and Nweze (2012) examine the expression of plurality in Igbo using a descriptive method. Their paper examines the strategies for expressing plurality in Igbo. The result of the analysis shows that the Igbo language employs different strategies in the plural formation such as: uses of numerals, nouns, and pronouns, reduplication of pronouns, quantifiers, enclitics, certain inherently plural verbs and phrases in grammatical constructions. The

study also discovers that plurality can be expressed either in a lexical form, phrases or clauses or sentences. The paper reveals that Igbo is unique in the sense that it does not express any overt morphological feature to indicate plural and this is contrary to what is obtainable in languages such as English, French and Latin. These languages mark plurality using overt inflection suffixes. This study is similar to the current study as both look at plural plurality but varies in the aspect of language. Olori (2015) examines the various structural manipulations employed in Igala to mark plurality on lexical items at word and phrase/clause levels. Using a combination of the lexicalist and syntactic approaches to word formation. Johnson demonstrates that the language employs a range of structural devices, including the use of prefixes and reduplication, quantifiers and tone. But mainly prefixes and reduplication. According Olori discussed the following plural strategies in Igala; prefixation: In Igala, to form the plural of the singular form of the noun the prefix 'àm' and 'àb' is added to the singular form as in: ónè→àmónè 'persons', ẹla → àmẹla 'animals', ímọtọ → àbímọtọ 'children'**.** Reduplication in Igala: òkwúta → òkwútaòkwúta 'stones', úwó →úwóúwó 'hills'. The findings show that Igala plural formation system is not so distant from what is obtained in other Yoruboid languages. It also punctures the claim that the apophony/ablaut plural marking type in Itsẹkiri is a Proto-Yoruba-Igala feature. The study has fundamental implications for understanding the plural interpretation of words, both lexical and functional, and number agreements in the clause structure of Igala language. This study and the current study are similar because both of them focuses on pluralisation, but differs in theories, while this study used lexicalist theory, the current study uses construction morphology for analysis.

Nweya (2016) analyses strategies and devices adopted in Igbo to mark plurality on lexical items at both word and phrasal levels. The study finds out five basic strategies could be employed to mark plurality in Igbo. These include merging of singular nouns with plural words or morphemes, via reduplication, use of conjunctions, use plural sensitive verbs, and context of speech. Plural devices include nouns with an inherent PL feature such as ndi 'persons' and umu 'offspring'; the third person plural pronoun, ha; quantifiers such as niile/dum 'all'; numerals abuo 'two' and above; mass nouns, igwe/igwurube 'group'; clitics ga and nu; reduplicated nouns; conjunctions na 'and'; and plural-sensitive verbs such as chiita 'bring', and ju, 'reject'. This is expressed in the examples that follows:

Marking plural with inherent plural words, ndị and ụmụ in Igbo: Using ndị: mmadu nọọ n'ụlọụka- 'somone/person is in the church'→ndi mmadu nọọ n'ụlọụka- 'many people are in the church', onye agboro na-alụ ọgụ - 'a tout is fighting'→ndi agboro na-alụ ọgụ - 'touts are fighting'. Using ụmụ: ụmụ akwụkwọ ga anọ nzụkọ taa - 'the students will hold meeting today', ụmụ azụ jùrù na mmiri - 'fishes are much in the river'. Marking plural with the third person plural pronoun 'ha': Uche ha biara ebe a - 'Ụche and others came here', Ngọzi ha ala-wa-la ụlọ - 'Ngọzi and others are going' Marking of plural with quantifiers and numerals: mmadụ dara ụle ahụ - 'someone/person failed the exam' → *ịmịrịkịtị* mmadụ dara ụle ahụ - 'a lot/most persons failed the exam', mmadụ *abụọ* nwụrụ n'ihe mberede ahụ - 'two persons died in the accident', mmadụ **ise** rùrù ọrụ ahụ - 'five persons did the work'. Mass nouns as plural words as in: ìgwè mmadụ - 'a crowd', ìgwè atúrú - 'herd of sheep', igwùrùbe ndii ụwe ojị - 'group of policemen' igwùrùbe aṅū - 'a group of bees'. The clitics gà and nù as plural morphemes: arụsị gà - 'deities', bịa nù ebe a - '(You pl.) come here'. The study conclude that Igbo belongs to the set of languages that syntactically mark plural by using independent morphemes/words; i.e. plural words. The study is similar with the present study because both of them discuss pluralisation strategies but varies in the aspect of language.

Mohammed and Aminu (2016) explore pluralisation in English and Hausa languages. They examined the transformation of plural nouns in English, a member of Germanic subgroup of Indo-European languages, and Hausa, a member of Chadic subgroup of Afroasiatic languages. The work is underpinned by natural morphology theory and Lado's contrastive analysis hypothesis. The findings revealed that Hausa has much more varied ways of pluralisation than English. Furthermore, while English is strict in pluralisation of nouns, both in isolation and in connected speech, Hausa is loosed in using plural forms of nouns in connected speech. Hence, Hausa may be more difficult to learn as a second language than English as a second language. Also learners of Hausa as an additional language may have to struggle with many plural markers which could lead to wrong analogies, over generalisation and other difficulties in learning L2. Similarly, Hausa learners of English as a second language may transfer such pluralisation patterns in the process of learning English as a second language. This study and the current study discuss pluralisation but differ in the method of

analysis and theories. The former discuss contrastive analysis of pluralisation of two languages using natural morphology, while the latter focus only on the pluralisation strategies of one language (dialect), using construction morphology.

Odeh, Ivworin, and Nwafor (2020) investigate plural markers in Ùrhòbò. The specific objectives are to identify plural markers in Ùrhòbò and to examine how plural nouns, pronouns, adjectives and plural compound nouns are formed considering their positions. The study adopted the descriptive approach in analysing data. Data was collected, through introspection. The work identified four plural markers in Ùrhòbò. Which include: vowel mutation, zero morpheme marker, cardinal number marker and post nominal marker. The identified markers occur as affixes and free morphemes in the language and they bring about change at the initial position of the word. The study further reveals that plural formation in Ùrhòbò is done by changing the initial vowel of the lexical item, mostly nouns and pronouns in the singular form to plural in Ùrhòbò. The finding also reveals that prefixes at initial position change to form plurality in Ùrhòbò. Some words in Ùrhòbò do not change both in singular and plural form (zero morpheme markers). The study proves that the plural morpheme of Ùrhòbò is basically **/e/** or **/i/** and it is phonologically conditioned by the vowel harmony rule of the language. Thus, all + ATR vowel occupying word initial position in a noun changes to **/e/** in their plural form. In describing a small or little quantity, the prefix 'emera' is used while the process of describing large quantity 'plenty or much', a suffix 'buebu' is used. Vowel mutation: this process involves a change of a vowel(s) in the singular form of the noun to get the plural form. This process is the commonest of all plural marker formations in the language. As in; áfíòtò → éfíòtó 'rabbits', àràgbà → éràgbà 'chairs', ékpètì → íkpètì 'boxes', òbò → àbò 'hands', ùnè → ìnè 'songs'. From the examples, vowels at the initial positions of the nouns changed to another vowel in forming plurality in Ùrhòbò. This explains the fact that morphology has a relationship with phonology (sound). Plurality is a morphonemic process which involves not only morphology but also phonology of the Ùrhòbò Language. Zero morpheme marker in Ùrhòbò: This is a morphological process that is also possible in forming plurality in Ùrhòbò. Some nouns in Ùrhòbò retain their form in their plural formation. The morpheme **/i/** and **/e/** word initial does not change in their plural form, a case of zero vowel changes. There are few irregular plural forms of some nouns which also exhibit zero change. These are either uncountable nouns

or abstract nouns. Examples include: ẹton →ẹto 'hairs', ígho → ígho 'money', amẹ → amẹ 'water', oma → oma 'bodies'. In the examples, the singular and the plural forms of the words are the same. This confirms the difference between zero plurality in Ùrhòbò and English. Cardinal number plural marker in Ùrhòbò: In measuring quantity in Ùrhòbò, cardinal number is used to show plurality. Number here is singular and plural. Singular means one while plural is more than one. Numbers in Ùrhòbò include: *íve* 'two' , *érha* 'three' **,** *éne* 'four' **,** *ésan* 'six' etc. These numbers re used to show plurality of Ùrhòbò uncountable nouns. Ùrhòbò also uses post-nominal plural marker as *'bùèbun'* 'many/plenty', '*emera*' 'little' and *'imi'* or *'ama*''some' to show plurality in the language. Examples are; amẹ → amamẹ 'some water', amẹ → emeramẹ 'little water'. From the examples, it seems to be that the forms *'imi'*, *'ama'* and *'eme'* are variants of the stem *'emera'* which occur as a result of phonological transformation and ease in pronunciation. The concept of some or little and number are marked by prefixation while the concept of much or plenty is marked by a suffix. The essence of plurality in Ùrhòbò is to show that a lexical item can appear more than one. The study encourages further researches on other aspects of Ùrhòbò morphology as this work only looks at an aspect of inflectional morphology in Ùrhòbò. This study is similar to the current study because both discusses plurality but varies in the aspect of language

Uwen and Ansa (2020) examine aspects of pluralisation in Erei and its implication on the learning of English as an L2. The Findings indicated that, just as it is in English, nouns in Erei are inflected for grammatical number. While plural nouns are predominantly realized through suffixes in English, those of Erei are formed through three morphological (inflectional) processes which comprise replacive morphemes, suppletive morphemes and null affixation. Replacive morpheme in Erei: a replacive morpheme is one which substitutes, displaces or replaces item(s) of the root (Matthews, 2007). The initial syllable which indicates the singular noun is deleted and substituted with another to form the plural. In Erei, plural noun formed through replacives has seven allomorphic variants: "o'→ 'i', 'o' → 'a', 'i → 'u', 'u' → 'i', 'e' → 'a', 'e' → 'i' and i'→'a', examples are; oma → ima 'holes', oge → ige 'knives', obok → abok 'hands', odi → adi 'ears', irarak → urarak 'brooms', ise → use 'trees'. Null affixation in Erei: Null affixation is also called a zero morph, it is a bound morphological element that is not physically present but whose meaning is determined from the context which its host is found Ndimele (2003).

Zero or null morph is one with null affixation. Nouns pluralisation in Erei is also realized without any change in the form; there is the physical absence of any morpheme or allomorph to mark the plural form. There is no change in pitch for the plural form, the tone is the same for the singular and plural. The examples in Erei are; ichokolong → ichokolong 'oranges', sin → sin 'hairs', jep → jep 'crocodiles'. Suppletion in Erei: the final process for plural formation in Erei is by suppletion. It is a morphological process or alternation in which one form wholly replaces another. There is often a complete change of the word in all its inflected variants. That is, there is no resemblance, phonetically or morphologically between the root morpheme and its variants. Words in this order often have suppletive relationship. Some plural nouns in Erei are formed through partial suppletion; that is, part of the form not the whole is replaced. Examples are; onulom → anelom 'man/men', onegwa → aneba 'woman/women', esodoi → asedoi 'pot/pots'. Uwen and Ansa state the forms of these processes and occurrence in particular context are accidental and not guided by any specific rule. The study also reveal that these dissimilarities may have negative influence that could pose difficulty to the Erei native speaker intending to learn English as an L2 (second language). The similarity between this study and the present study is that both studies focus is pluralisation. The difference between them is that this study examines pluralisation in Erei and its implication on the learning of English as an L2 (second language) while the present study examines only pluralisation strategies in mgboejeọgụ.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework employed in this study is construction morphology. The theory claims that complex words can be listed as a lexicon which emanates from morphological operations. The lexicon contains words that can be accounted for in the constructional schemas. The theory aims at a better understanding of the relation between syntax, morphology, and the lexicon, and of the semantic properties of complex words. In construction morphology, words are organized in schemas which motivate functions to the existing complex words and specify how new complex words can be formed. One of the demerits of construction morphology is its absence of boundary between the lexicon and grammar. Again, the theory further sheds more light on language change such as; the use of case makers to show specific constructions. This study uses the construction

morphology to account for complex words and their properties and structures in Mgboejeọgụ. The following schemas are used to sectionalise complex words in Mgboejeogu Igbo:

i. [[ness] [X] N] A [property of SEM] SEM]

This schema is used to account for prefixes in Mgboejeọgụ. The variable 'ness' represents the prefix, 'X' represents the root word. The 'N' and 'A' represent the lexical category of the derived word which may be a verb, noun, adjectives. 'SEM' represents the semantic property of the inflected words.

ii. [[a] N[b] V]V property of schema [a] V] V

The schema above will be used in the study to account for compound words in Mgboejeọgụ. The variable 'a' is arbitrary and represents the lexical item captured. 'SEM' represents the semantic property of compound words while 'N' and 'V' represent the major word classes.

3. Data presentation and analysis

3.1 Plural formation strategies in Mgboejeọgụ

Plural formation is a process by which words are changed from their singular to plural forms. Every languages has a specific rules or patterns of forming plurals. In Mgboejeogu, the formation of plurals is quite different from English. Plural formation in Mgboejeogu involves prefixation, use of particularisers, use of quantifiers, use of quanlifiers, use of the personal pronouns and through reduplication.

3.1.1 Plural formation by prefixation

Prefixation is a morphological process that involves the attachment of an affix usually referred to as prefix, often a bound morpheme at the initial position of a root word or stem either to inflect or derive another word. In order words, it is the addition of prefixes to the root words in order to bring about semantic changes. According to Gleason (1961:59), "prefixes are affixes, which precede the root with which they are closely associated. The use of prefixes in word structure introduces change in meaning of a word. In Mgboejeọgụ, prefixes can be used to indicate plural of words in the language.

3.2.1.1 Use of *'ụ́'* and *'ụ́nwụ̀'* to indicate plural

In Mgboejeọgụ, nouns allow for prefixation in the dialect. Examples of prefixes such as *ụ́* and *ụ́nwụ̀*are used to indicate plurals in noun, *ụ́nwụ̀*is an inherent plural word in Mgboejeogu. This is expressed in examples below.

Example 1

	Singular	**plural**
i.	nwàtà - child	ụ́nwátà – children
ii.	nwóké - man	ụ́nwóké – men
iii.	nwànyì - woman	ụ́nwányì - women
iv.	ókóróọ̀byíà - young man (Male youth) (male youths)	ụ́nwụ̀ọ̀kóróọ̀byíà - young men
v.	àgbọ́gọ̀byíà - young Lady (female youth) ladies (female youths)	ụ́nwụ̀àgbọ́gọ̀byíà - young
vi.	nkụ́tá – dog/puppyụ́	nwụ̀nkụ́tá – dogs/puppies
vii.	éghụ̀ – kid/goat	ụ́nwụ̀éghụ̀ – kids/goats
viii.	ókụ̀ – fowl/chick	ụ́nwụ̀ókụ̀ – fowls/chicks
ix.	óshíshí – wood	ụ́nwụ̀óshíshí – woods
x.	ócyé – chair	ụ́nwụ̀ócyé – chairs
xi.	ínyà – horse	ụ́nwụ̀ínyà – horses
xii.	mkpí – he-goat	ụ́nwụ̀mkpí – he-goats
xiii.	átụ́rụ́ – sheep	ụ́nwụ̀átụ́rụ́ – herd of sheep
xiv.	nchí – grasscutter	ụ́nwụ̀nchí – grasscutters
xv.	éʒì – pig	ụ́nwụ̀éʒì - pigs

From the above examples, it shows that the affixes *'ụ́' and 'ụ́nwụ̀*serves to mark plural of nouns in Mgboejeọgụ. When they are added to the root words, the word will change from its singular form to plural as shown in the examples above. It is also clear from the examples that *'ụ́'* can be used to mark plural only in three nouns of Mgboejeọgụ and such nouns represents human beings they include; nwàtà (child), nwóké (man), and nwànyí (woman).

It is important to note here that apart from these nouns, no other nouns are pluralised using *'ụ́'***.** Again, while the affix *'ụ́nwụ̀*can be used to mark plural of nouns that represents human beings such as okoroọbyia and agbogọbyia, it can

also be used in animals but cannot be used to form the plurals of ofnwàtà, nwoke, and nwànyí in the dialect. In summary, the affixes *'ụ'* and *'ụ́nwụ̌*are the only plural marker for three stages in life which include, childhood, youth, and adulthood. But while *'ụ́'* is used for childhood and adulthood, *'ụ́nwụ̌*is used for the youth stage, and whereas *'ụ́nwụ̌*is used for human beings, it can as well be used to form plurals in animals and inanimate objects as contained in the above examples.

3.2.2 Plural formation with particulariser

Plurals are formed in Mgboejeọgụ by using the particulariser *'ndụ́'* 'persons/group' to replace another word *'ónyé'*'person' in a word. Particularisers are inherent plural words, Mgboejeọgụ has nominal expressions with inherent plural features that interpret adjoining nouns as plural. In other words, they serve to mark plural whenever they are merged with other nouns in a construction. When this happens, such constructions appear as compound words. They identify a particular group or set, mainly human elements and animals and the plurals. The singular particulariser *'ónyé'*stands for person. This is clearly expressed in examples below:

Example 2

	Singular	**plural**
i.	ónyéntá – hunter	ndụ́ntá – hunters
ii.	ónyéndiágụ̀ - villager	ndụ́ndiágụ́ - villagers
iii.	ónyéékwà - cloth seller	ndụ́ékwà - cloth sellers
iv.	ónyémmánụ̀ - foolish person	ndụ́mmánụ̀–foolish persons
v.	ónyéọ̀kụ́tá – wine taper	ndụ́ọ̀kụ́tá – wine tapers
vi.	ónyéámụ́má – prophet	ndụ́ámụ́má – prophets
vii.	ónyénkụ́zí – teacher	ndụ́nkụ́zí - teachers
viii.	ónyéísí – headmaster	ndụ́ísí – headmasters
ix.	ónyéígbo – an Igbo	ndụ́ígbo - Igbos
x.	ónyéhausa – an Hausa	ndụ́hausa - Hausas

From the above examples (i-x), '*ónyé*' 'person' was replaced by the particulariser *'ndụ́'* 'group' to indicate plural of the nouns wine taper, hunter, person, villager, and cloth seller among others.

3.2.3 Plural formation with quantifiers

Quantifiers include numeral quantifiers like étó, ésàà, ìsé, tété, ébọ́ among others in Mgboejeọgụ Igbo. They perform the function of plural marking in the dialect. When nouns are merged with cardinal numerals or numeral quantifiers two and above, they are interpreted as plural. This assertion is demonstrated in the examples below:

Example 3

i. ụ́mádụ̀ + étó → ụ́mádụ̀étó - three persons
↓ ↓
person three

ii. ụ́zọ̀ + ésàà → ụ́zọ̀ésàà - seven roads
↓ ↓
road eight

iii. ụ́nwányì + ìsé → ụ́nwányììsé - five women
↓ ↓
women five

iv. ókụ̀ + tété → ókụ̀tété - nine fowls
↓ ↓
fowl nine

v. ìtè + ébọ́ → ìtèébọ̀ - two pots
↓ ↓
pot two

vi. ọ́nwá + íryí → ọ́nwáíryí – ten months
↓ ↓
month ten

vii. ndụ́nkúɜí + èsátọ́ → ndụ́nkúɜíèsátọ́ **-** eight teachers
↓ ↓
teachers eight

viii. ócyé + ébọ́→ócyéébọ́ - two chairs
↓ ↓
chair two

ix. ígwé + íshí → ígwéíshí **-** six kings
↓ ↓
King six

x. ụ́lọ̀ékwọ́ + ụ́kpọ́rọ́ → ụ́lọ̀ékwọ́ụ́kpọ́rọ́ - twenty schools
↓ ↓

school twenty

3.2.4 Plural formation with qualifiers

Qualifiers in Mgboejeọgụ dialect are;*lófụ́* 'all', *íbvụ̀ríbvụ̀* 'many/plenty', *ìgìdì* 'many/all', *òlémòlé* 'few', *ọ̀tụ́tụ́* 'many' and *ụ̀phhọ́dụ́* 'some'. In Mgboejeọgụ Igbo, these qualifiers are used to indicate plurality when attached to a noun or pronoun. Below are clear examples:

Example 4

i. ụ́mádụ̀ *lófụ́* - everybody
ii. ànyí *lófụ́* - all of us
iii. ụ́nụ́*lófụ́* - you all
iv. nkú*lófụ́* - all fire woods/fire woods
v. ụ̀kọ́bọ́ *íbvụ̀ríbvụ̀* - many cutlass/cutlasses
vi. mótó*íbvụ̀ríbvụ̀* - many cars/cars
vii. nwámmá *íbvụ̀ríbvụ̀* - many masquerades/ masquerades
viii. *ụ̀phhọ́dụ́*ụ́nwányì – some women
ix. *ụ̀phhọ́dụ́*ụ́mádụ̀ - some persons
x. *ụ̀phhọ́dụ́*ékpà – some bags
xi. *ọ̀tụ́tụ́*ndúérá – many mad persons
xii. éphhéré*òlémòlé* – few plates
xiii. éswí*òlémòlé* – few cows
xiv. ócyé*òlémòlé* – few chairs
xv. nkú *òlémòlé* – few cooking woods
xvi. ụ́mádụ̀ *òlémòlé* – few persons
xvii. *ìgìdì ụ́mádụ̀* – many people
xviii. ọ̀tụ́tụ́ ùwé - many clothes

From the above, it shows that the qualifiers have a fixed environment of occurrence to make a complete sense otherwise the real meaning of the expression will be altered. For instance, in Mgboejeọgụ one cannot say *òlémòlé ocyé*to mean 'few chairs' but *ocyé òlémòlé* which conveys the complete message 'few chairs', also one cannot say *ụ́mádụ̀ìgìdì* to mean 'large number of persons' but *ìgìdì ụ́mádụ̀*. The word *'òlémòlé'* comes after the noun it qualifies and that shows its function as an adjective to qualify the noun in Mgboejeọgụ. In the same vein, just like *'òlémòlé'*, *íbvụ̀ríbvụ̀* and *lófụ́* comes immediately after the noun in a sentence or utterances. While *ìgìdì*, *ọ̀tụ́tụ́* and *ụ̀phhọ́dụ́* come before the noun they qualify.

3.2.5 Plural formation with personal pronouns

Generally, personal pronouns are used to express plural cross-linguistically. Mgboejeọgụ Igbo is not an exception. The singular 1st, 2nd, and 3rd personal pronouns in the dialect has their plural counterparts. As shown below:

Example 5

Singular	plural
mụ́ - I	ànyí - we
o/ọ/yé – he/she	héé/èhéé - them
wụ́/gụ́ - you	ụ̀nụ́– You

It is important here to describe the differences between the second person singular pronoun; *o, ọ, yé* and plural; *héé and èhéé.* As well as the third person singular pronoun *wụ́* and *gụ́*. In the second person singular, *yé* is mainly used to show possession, while *o*and *ọ* are used just to indicate number. For the second person singular, *héé* is used to show possession, *èhéé* is used in normal speech to indicate plurality. This is also applicable in the third person singular *wụ́* and *gụ́*. In summary, *mụ́, ànyí yé, héé, wụ́, ụ̀nụ́* are used to show plural possession.

Example 6

i. Kèmụ́ - mine
ii. Kìyé – his/hers
iii. Kèhéé – thiers
iv. Kèwụ́ - yours (singular)
v. Kụ́-ụ̀nụ́ - yours (plural)

On the other hand, *o, ọ, èhéé* are used in normal speech to indicate plurality.

Example 7

i. sọ̀*mụ́*lérụ̀ ụ̀lé ụ̀nyárụ̀ - I wrote exam yesterday.
*ànyí*lérụ̀ ụ̀lé ụ̀nyárụ̀ - we wrote exam yesterday
ii. *Ò*ryìrụ̀ nrí lèbè égbụ́ ógè time. – he ate the food without wasting

èhéé ryìrụ nrí lèbè égbụ́ ógè - they ate the food without wasting time

iii. sọ̀*gụ́* gé égyé àpphíátánù – you will go to the market today.
ụ̀nụ́ ge egyé apphia tánù – all of you will go to the market today

iv. Ụchè byìárụ̀ lè éká tánụ̀ - Uche came here today.
Ụchè*héé* byìárụ̀ lè éká tánụ̀ - Uche and others came here today

v. Amaka làwàrụ̀ íbéhéé – Amaka has gone home.
Amaka *héé* làwàrụ̀ íbéhéé - Amaka and others has gone home.

vi. Ńná èbérè zụ̀tàrụ̀é ụ̀wé – Ebere's father bought her a cloth.
Ńná èbérè zụ̀tàrụ̀ *héé* ụ̀wé - Ebere's father bought her and others clothes.

vii. sọ̀gụ́mérụ̀ íphhé mụ̀ shì tè ụ́nụ́ mèhéé – you did what I asked you.
*ụ̀nụ́*mérụ̀ íphhé mụ̀ shị̀ tè ụ́nụ́ mèhéé - you people did what I asked you.

viii. ónyé èrábọ́ bụ̀ – he is mad.
ụ̀nụ́ bùndụ́ èrá - all of you are mad people.

ix. *ànyí*nọ̀wà èrụ́ - we getting close.

x. *ànyí* gé méryí - we will win.

The examples above show how personal pronouns with their counterparts in the singular and plural forms indicate plurals as used in sentences captured. The words in italics are those that indicate plurality in the expressions. They are; *mụ́* (singular) – *ànyí* (plural), *ó* (singular) – *éhéé*/*hee* (plural) and *wụ́*/*gụ́* (singular) - *ụ̀nụ́* (plural).

3.1.6 Plural formation by reduplication

Reduplication is a morphological process in which the root or stem of a word or part of it is repeated exactly or with a slight change. It deals with the meaning expressed by repeating all or part of a word. It is used as inflection to convey grammatical functions, such as plurals and for vocabulary derivation to create new words. Reduplication is of two types namely; total and partial reduplication. While partial reduplication involves incomplete copying of the root, stem or base, total reduplication involves complete or full copying of the root, stem or base. In Mgboejeọgụ, total reduplication is used to mark plurality. It is mainly used to form

plurals of human beings, animals and inanimate objects. This is shown in the examples below:

Example 8

	Singular	**Plural**
i.	mótò – car	mótò mótò – cars.
ii.	ụ́mádụ̀ - person	ụ́mádụ̀ ụ́mádụ̀ - persons/people.
iii.	ócyé – chair	ócyé ócyé - chairs
iv.	ékpà – bag	ékpà ékpà – bags
v.	ọ́kụ̀ - fowl	ọ́kụ̀ ọ́kụ̀ - fowls
vi.	ọ́cyá – cockroach	ọ́cyá ọ́cyá– cockroaches
vii.	ìtè – pot	ìtèìtè - pots
viii.	nkụ́tá – dog	nkụ́tá nkụ́tá – dogs
ix.	éghụ́ – goat	éghụ́ éghụ́ - goats
x.	ìnyà – horse	ìnyàìnyà – horses

The examples above illustrate that the root words reduplicate completely carrying over all the properties from the base to the reduplicant in order to show the plural of the nouns. Such nouns include human being, animal and inanimate objects.

3.3 Functions of plurality in Mgboejeọgụ

Plurality have specific functions they perform in Mgboejeọgụ Igbo. Plurality are used to show number in nouns, to ask questions, to show ownership as an adjective to qualify nouns.

3.3.1 Function to show number in nouns

Counting is a very important phenomenon in all languages. The basic evidence of the category of number is observed in the distinction between singular and plural in relation to nouns in any language. In Mgboejeọgụ, plural words perform the function to indicate number in nouns by drawing out the differences between singular and plural in relation to nouns. These are shown in the examples below:

Example 9

i. ụ́mádụ̀ ètó - three persons
   ↓ ↓
   person three

ii. ụ́zọ̀ esaa - seven roads
↓ ↓
road seven

iii. ụ́nwànyí ísé - five women
↓ ↓
women five

iv. ókụ̀ tété - nine fowls
↓ ↓
fowl nine

v. ìtè ébọ́ - two pots
↓ ↓
pot two

vi. nwátà – child ụ́nwátà – children

vii. nwóké – man ụ́nwóké – men

viii. nwànyì - woman ụ́nwànyì– women

As shown in the examples above, the use of the quantifiers; ètó (three), èsáá (seven), ìsé (five), tété (nine), èbọ́ (two) and ụ́ (a prefix) helped to show number in nouns addressed in the expression. Without these plural words, it will be impossible to show the plurals of the nouns as regards the context of expression in the dialect.

3.3.2 Function as an adjective to qualify nouns

In Mgboejeọgụ Igbo, plural words such as *òlémòlé, ụ̀phhọ́dụ́ , lófụ́*, and *íbvụ̀ríbvụ̀*are used to qualify nouns as an adjectives and are translated into English to mean; few, some, all and many/plenty. The examples are as follow;

Example 10

i. éphhére òlémòlé – few plates
↓ ↓
Plate few

ii. óshí òlémòlé – few chairs
↓ ↓
Chair few

iii. ụ̀phhọ́dụ́ ụ́nwànyí – some women
↓ ↓
some women

iv. ụ̀phhọ́dụ́ ndụ́ ụ́mádụ̀ - some persons
↓ ↓
some persons

v. ànyí lófụ́ – all of us
↓ ↓
us all

vi. ụ̀nụ́ lófụ́ – you all
↓ ↓
you all

vii. mótò íbvụ̀ríbvụ̀ - many cars
↓ ↓
car many

viii. ụ́mà íbvụ̀ríbvụ̀ - many cutlasses
↓ ↓
cutlass many

As illustrated in the examples above, it shows that the plural words stand as adjectives to qualify the nouns and pronouns in order to indicate plurality in the dialect. It is important to note here that without these plural words, the number of plate, chair, person, car and cutlass as contained in the examples will not be stated and such will give an incomplete expression which will make it not to be meaningful.

3.3.3 Function to ask questions

Another function of plurality in Mgboejeọgụ Igbo is to ask questions. Plural words like qualifiers, are also used to ask questions in the dialect. Below are examples:

Example 11

i. *ìgìdì*ócyé nọ̀ lè èkáhụ̀ bọ̀ édzụ̀ dụ̀ nyíé? - are all the chairs there not enough?
ii. mọ́ ụ̀nụ́*lófụ́* pássụ̀rụ́ọ̀? – did all of you passed?
iii. èhé dụ̀*ìbvụ̀ríbvụ*ọ̀? - are they plenty?
iv. éwéé bọ́*èhéé* nọ̀? – Where are they?
v. *ụ̀nụ*bụ̀ndụ́ òlé? – Who are you people?

From the above examples, the plural words are used to ask questions which is directed to more than a person. With the presence of these plural words; *ìgìdì, lófụ́, íbvụ̀ríbvụ̀, èhéé, ụ̀nụ́* in the constructions, we know it addresses more than one person.

3.3.4 Function to show ownership

In Mgboejeogu, ownership can be indicated using the personal pronouns; mụ́, wú, ụ̀nụ́, ànyí, and héé. The examples are below;

Example 12

i. ékpà *mụ́* - my bag
ii. ékpà *wụ́* - your bag
iii. ékpà *ụ̀nụ́* – your bags
iv. ékpà*ànyí* - our bag
v. ékpà *héé* – their bag

From the above examples, it reveals that the personal pronouns; mụ́, wú, ụ̀nụ́, ànyí, and héé show ownership and is translated in English to mean; *mụ́* - I, *wụ́* - you, *ụ̀nụ́*- you (pl.) *ànyí* -we, and *héé*– them. To show ownership, the personal pronouns comes after the noun. The words in slant in the construction above, are the possessive personal pronouns and in they indicated plurality.

3.3.5 Function to show repetition in sentences

Reduplicated words can be used to create emphasis via repetition in sentences. In Mgboejeọgụ, reduplicated words can indicate plurality by way of repetition in sentences. Examples are shown below;

Example 13

i. Parkí bụ̀*mótò mótò* - park is filled with cars.
ii. ụ̀lọ̀ ànyí bụ̀*ụ́mádụ̀ ụ́mádụ̀*- our house is filled with people.
iii. mbárá íbéụ̀nụ́ bụ̀*nkụ́tá nkụ́tá*ámá égyé dụ́ kwá – you people's compound is filled with dogs, am not going there.
iv. égyémụ́ íwòtà ụ̀kọ̀bọ́ ọ̀ bụ́rụ́*ékpà ékpà*bọ́ jírụ́ lè ụ̀lọ̀ - I went inside to take cutlass but its only bags that are in the house.

v. éká ọ̀bụ̀là bụ̀*ụ́lọ̀ ụ́lọ̀* lè ndíágú Ígùbé – there are lot of houses in Ígùbé village.

From the above examples, the base words are reduplicated to indicate plurality in the sentences. The words in a slant fonts are the reduplicated words and it goes for all nouns both animate and inanimate phenomenon. This process captures repetition in the language and such repetition creates emphasis which clearly indicates plurality.

3.4 Construction morphology of pluralisation in Mgboejeọgụ

Construction morphology will be used for the analysis of pluralisation in this study. The theory aims at a better understanding of the relation between syntax, morphology, and the lexicon, and of the semantic properties of complex words. In construction morphology, words are organized in schemas which motivate functions to the existing complex words and specify how new complex words can be formed. We shall consider the analysis for prefixation and compound words below.

3.4.1 Construction morphology of prefixation

Using the schema below, prefixation as a pluralisation strategy will be analysed for a better understanding. Thus;

[[ness] [X] N] A [property of SEM] SEM]

This schema above is used to account for prefixes in Mgboejeọgụ. The variable 'ness' represents the prefix, 'x' represents the root word. The 'N' and 'A' represent the lexical category of the derived word which may be a verb, noun adjectives. 'SEM' represents the semantic property of the inflected words. Using this schema, example 2 (in 3.2.1.1) will be analysed as follows:

a. nwàtà 'child' ụnwàtà 'children'
[[ụ́] [nwàtà] N] N [noun] ụ́nwàtà]

b. nwóké 'man' ụ́nwóké 'men'
[[ụ́] [nwóké] N] N[noun] ụ́nwóké]

c. nwányì 'woman' ụ́nwányì 'women'
[[ụ́] [nwányì] N] N[noun] ụ́nwányì]

d. òkóróbyíà 'young man' ụ́nwụ̀òkóróbyíà 'young men'

[[ụ́nwụ̀] [òkóróbyíà] N] N[noun] ụ́nwụ̀òkóróbyíà]

e. àgbógọ̀byíà 'young lady' ụ́nwụ̀àgbógọ̀byíà 'young ladies'
[[ụ́nwụ̀] [àgbógọ̀byíà] N] N[noun] ụ́nwụ̀àgbógọ̀byíà]

The above analyses of construction morphology schema for prefixation is explained as follows; the [nwàtà], [nwóké], [nwányì], [òkóróbyíà], and [àgbógọ̀byíà] are the root words. The [ụ́], and [ụ́nwụ̀] are the affixes (prefix) attached to the root words. The 'N' attached to them shows their lexical category which is a noun. The [verb] in the above examples represent the semantic property of the inflected words which are; [ụ́nwàtà], [ụ́nwóké], [ụ́nwányì], [ụ́nwụ̀òkóróbyíà], [ụ́nwụ̀àgbógọ̀byíà].

3.4.2 Construction morphology of particulariser

To analyse particulariser as a pluralisation strategy in Mgboejeọgụ Igbo using construction morphology, this study will use the schema below and break it down for better understand. Thus: **[[a] N [b] V] V property of schema [a] V] V**

In the schema above, the variable 'a' is arbitrary and represents the lexical item captured. 'SEM' represents the semantic property of compound words while 'N' and 'V' represents the major word classes. Using the construction morphology schema that account for compound words, examples 3 will be analysed as follows;

a. ndụ́ 'group'ndíágụ́ 'village' ndụ́ ndíágụ́ 'villagers'
[[ndụ́] N[ndíágụ́] N] N-[ndụ́ ndíágụ́] N] N

b. ndụ́ 'group'ékwà 'cloth' ndụ́ ékwà 'cloth sellers'
[[ndụ́] N[ékwà] N] N-[ndụ́ ékwà] N] N

c. ụ́nwụ̀'offspring' nkụ́tá 'puppy' ụ́nwụ̀nkụ́tá 'puppies'
[[ụ́nwụ̀] N[nkụ́tá] N] N-[ụ́nwụ̀nkụ́tá] N] N

d. ụ́nwụ̀'offspring' éghụ́ 'kid' ụ́nwụ̀éghụ́ 'kids'
[[ụ́nwụ̀] N[éghụ́] N] N-[ụ́nwụ̀éghụ́] N] N

e. ndụ́ 'group' ụ́mádụ̀ 'person' ndụ́ụ́mádụ̀ 'persons/people'
[[ndụ́] N[ụ́mádụ̀] N] N-[ndụ́ ụ́mádụ̀] N] N

From the analysis above, the variable 'a' and 'b' represent two independent words. The N and represent the lexical category of the independent words which are nouns. The SEM represent the semantic properties of the words, which comprises;

ndụ́ndíágụ́, ndụ́ékwà, ụ́nwụ̀nkụ́tá, ụ́nwụ̀éghụ́, ndụ́ụ́mádụ̀, ndụ́ọ̀kụ́tá, ndụ́ámụ́má, ndụ́nkụ́ɜ́í, ndụ́íshí, and ndụ̂igbo.

3.4.3 Construction morphology of quantifiers

This study will use the schema below to analyse quantifiers in Mgboejeọgụ dialect:
[[a] N [b] V] V property of schema [a] V] V

In the schema above, the variable 'a' is arbitrary and represents the lexical item captured. 'SEM' represents the semantic property of compound words while 'N' and 'V' represents the major word classes. Using the construction morphology schema that account for compound words, examples 4 will be analysed as follows;

a. ụ́mádụ̀ 'person' étó 'three' ụ́mádụ̀étó 'three persons'
[[ụ́mádụ̀] N[étó] N] N-[ụ́mádụ̀étó] N] N
b. ụ́zọ̀ 'road' ésàà'seven' ụ́zọ̀ésàà 'seven roads'
[[ụ́zọ̀] N[ésàà] N] N-[ụ́zọ̀ésàà] N] N
c. ụ́nwányì 'women' ìsé 'five' ụ́nwányììsé 'five women'
[[ụ́nwányì] N[ìsé] N] N-[ụ́nwányììsé] N] N
d. ókụ̀ 'fowl' tété 'nine' ókụ̀tété'nine fowls'
[[ókụ̀] N[tété] N] N-[ókụ̀tété] N] N
e. ìtè 'pot' ébọ̀ 'two' ìtèébọ̋'two pots'
[[ìtè] N[ébó] N] N-[ìtè ébó] N] N

From the analysis above, the variable 'a' and 'b' represent two independent words. The N and represent the lexical category of the independent words which are nouns. The SEM represent the semantic properties of the words, which comprises; ụ́mádụ̀étó, ụ́zọ̀ésàà, ụ́nwányììsé, ókụ̀tété, ìtèébọ́, ọ́nwáíryí, ndụ́nkú3íèsátọ́, ócyéébọ́, ígwéíshí, and ụ́lọ̀ékwọ́ụ̀kpọ́rọ́. All the semantic properties of the words indicate plurality in the language and with the aid of construction morphology schemas, the process or ways which certain words merges to create a plural form is better expressed as shown in the examples above.

4. Conclusion

From the data presented and analysed, it shows that Mgboejeọgụ Igbo like every other language/dialect, has special patterns/ways of forming plurals. Plural formation involves the process of changing words from their singular to plural

forms in a language. From the findings, it is revealed that Mgboejeọgụ dialect has special ways or strategies of forming plurals which are prefixation, reduplication, particulariser, qualifiers and quantifiers. The study also reveals that in prefixation, the affix *ụ́* is used to indicate only the plural of three nouns which represents human beings like *nwàtà, nwóké*, and *nwànyí* in the dialect. Apart from these nouns, no other word in the dialect is pluralised using the affix. As well, the findings also reveal that the affix *ụ́nwụ̀*is used to show plurality in nouns that represents human beings, animals and even inanimate objects. The findings show that the particulariser *ndụ́* can only be used to indicate plurals in nouns that represents human beings aside animals and inanimate objects. We can see from the study that the qualifiers; *lófụ́* 'all', *íbvụ̀ríbvụ̀* 'many/plenty', *ìgìdì* 'many/all', *òlémòlé* 'few', *ọ̀tụ́tụ́* 'many' and *ụ̀phhọ́dụ́* 'some' have fixed environment to indicate plurality in a word. In reduplication as a strategy, the findings show that there is total reduplication of root to derive the plural forms and it can be used to indicate plurals of human beings, animal and objects in the dialect. The findings unveil that in Mgboejeọgụ Igbo, personal pronouns are used to indicate plurality in normal speeches. Again, the study also deduce that plurality performs certain functions in the dialect. Plurality can be used to ask questions through the use of qualifiers; *lófụ́* 'all', *íbvụ̀ríbvụ̀* 'many/plenty', *ìgìdì* 'many/all', *òlémòlé* 'few', *ọ̀tụ́tụ́* 'many' and *ụ̀phhọ́dụ́* 'some', to show number through the quantifiers, to show ownership through the use of personal pronouns such as *mụ́*, *wụ́*, *héé, ànyí* and *ụ̀nụ́*. The native speakers only attach an affix *kè* to the personal pronouns or the personal pronouns attached to a noun to show ownership. Plurality also creates repetition through reduplication and act as adjectives to qualify nouns in the dialect.

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