# Agentive In Eke Lect of Udi Dialects Cluster

**By**

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**Abstract**

This study investigated agentive in Eke lect in Udi dialects cluster. Agentive have not been fully studied in Eke 'lect'. This work aims at helping to fill this gap. Through, the Eke lect appears in same literature, the grammar has not been given a comprehensive study. Apart from enriching Igbo language studies, the result of the research will go a long way in solidifying the field of morphology. Data were got from primary and secondary sources. Since the researcher is a native speaker, some of the data were generated by his native speaker intuition. Other data were got from books and other speakers of the dialect. The data were arranged, analyzed, and discussed under their linguistic peculiar indices. The results show that noun agents are formed in Eke lect by the pre-fixation of O/Ọ to the basic verb form. The choice of O/Ọ accords with the rule of vowel harmony. It is found that the O/Ọ prefix is mostly low tone. Most of the basic verb re also monosyllabic with very few disyllabic verb forms. Though the basic form of the verb O/Ọ go with complements, sometimes the complements are omitted and the last vowel of the basic form is duplicated to form an agentive.

**Keywords:** Linguistics – Morphology – Lect – Agent - Prefix

## Introduction

Agentive are noun forms that function as agents. It is sometimes called agentive nouns or noun agents. The noun agent is more of a human being that performs an action so regularly that he has acquired a kind of expertise in it. Agentive pertains to a form that indicates an agent or agency. Formation of these agents is a kind of nominalization which is a process of deriving a noun from some other WORD –

CLASS Nominalization can also take the form of formation of a noun phrase from an underlying letter as it is the case of Classical Transformational Grammar.

Eke is in Udi Local Government Area of Enugu State Nigeria. Though agentive are found in many dialects, it has not been fully studied in all those dialects. In Eke dialect for instance, no published work of deep analysis of agentive has been discovered by the researcher. This calls for more thorough and extensive study of agentive in Eke dialect. The study of agentives will not only enhance the field of general Igbo studies, but will also enrich the field of syntax and morphology.

Agentive is a very important aspect of grammar. Literature shows that Eke dialect has somehow been investigated. The investigations reveal that much is required to be studied in the dialect. Agentive is one of such areas beckoning for attention. If a Language or Dialect is to be fully developed, there is the need to develop all the aspects that is possible to be investigated. There is a big lacuna between what has been done in Eke dialect and what remains to be done.

This research is restricted to studying the Eke lect of Udi Dialects Cluster. The objective of the study is to examine the agentive in Eke dialect and determine how it is derived. This is with the intent of enhancing and enriching Igbo Language studies in general and Eke Lect in particular.

Some studies have been done in Eke lect including the ones done by the researcher. In spite of all those, more extensive studies of the language is still required to explicate the linguistic convolutions of the lect. This work will definitely help in this direction. The study will also contribute to the increasing area of language research. The result of the study will be of immense contribution to the area of applied linguistics and general knowledge.

**Method of Data Collection**

Data for the research were elicited from both primary and secondary sources. Since the researcher is a native speaker, some of the data for the research were generated through his native speaker intuition. Data were also got from added speakers of the lect. Some other data were sourced from books, journals, projects

and other published works. The data were arranged and analyzed according to their peculiar linguistic indices.

**Review of Related Literature**

The review of related literature was organized under the following headings:
Theoretical Studies
Empirical Studies
Agentive
Summary of Literature Review

**Theoretical Studies**

Deep knowledge is often based on copious theory. Sustainable intellectual acquisition, development, and practice is mostly based on good theoretical formulation Most of the development in science and technology which we enjoy today first existed as theories. Theories distinguish the linguist from the ordinary language observer. Linguistic Knowledge is generally based on theories relationships. Theories serve as the foundation blocks of practical. Thus, the theoretical studies on which relevant aspects of the research are hinged upon are reviewed to enable the reader gain the background of where some necessary concepts that appear in the research are based.

Maxwell (1998) states that theories of morphology have been classified as item-and-arrangement in which both roots and affixes are treated as morphemes, or item and process in which roots are morphemes, but affixes are rules. According to him, theories are based on whether all allomorphs are listed in the lexicon or whether phonological conditioned allomorphs are derived from a single listed form. Maxwell observes that in reality, derivational theories in corporate a device (allomorph rules) which can do virtually the same work as listing the phonological conditioned allomorphs. Maxwell also notes that it is possible to mechanically map a description with multiple listed allomorphs into a description with single underlying forms and allomorph rules. The implication of these two points as Maxwell observes, is that a single computational implementation can serve a variety of theoretical approaches.

Crystal (2003) states that the study of the arrangements of morphemes in linear sequence, taking such factors as phonological conditioning into account is morph tactics. He observes that the application of morphemic ideas to the analysis of language was particularly extensive in the 1940s and 1950s in post – Bloomfield an linguistics, when the approach came to be called morphemic and several analytical difficulties emerged. Some of these are illustrated by the English plural morpheme. When the plural morpheme is simply added to root as in these examples: books, bags, boxes, the correspondence between morpheme and morph is straightforward. But in cases like mouse – mice, and sheep – sheep, it is more problematic. Several solutions have been suggested to take care of such cases. For example, a zero morph of plurality may be recognized to preserve the notion sheep + plural. This being symbolized as ∅. The good reason behind this, they said, is that these linguists were often dealing with languages they have never encountered and there were no written grammars of these languages to guide them. It was, therefore, crucial that they should have very explicit methods of linguistic analysis. No matter what language we are looking at, we need analytic methods that will be independent of the structures we are examining. Preconceived notices, as Arnold and Fadiman stated, might interfere with an objective scientific analysis. This is particularly true when dealing with unfamiliar languages. The second approach to morphology is more often associated with theory than with methodology. This is the synthetic approach which basically says: "I have a lot of little pieces here. How do I put them together?

**Empirical Studies**

Writing on Igbo Language, Emenanjo (1978) observes that most Igbo prefixes are clearly derivational since they can be used for deriving nominal (or nouns) from verbs or other nominal. According to him, a given prefix may have one or more forms that are conditioned by vowel harmony. Emenanjo calls these alternative forms of morphemes, allomorphs, of which O and Ọ are allomorphs of the agentive morpheme 'O' which adapts to the rule vowel harmony which is identified with Igbo Language and some other languages of the KWA group. Anagbogu (1990) in his discussions on Igbo nominalizations using the Awka dialect example calls this agentive form, the 'OVS' under the category of Igbo nominalization he called the concrete nominalizations. Inclusive in this category are, the NVS and the EVS forms He observes that the group belongs to the one that

has the semantic feature [+ concrete]. In his analysis', he noted that the primary meaning of the: OVS, like that of all the nominalizations is compositional.

O = doer
VS = action
Arg = patient

The Agent/Patient Relationship, according to him operates within a given OVS form. Emenanjo (1978) states in his discussion of the standard Igbo, that the Noun Agent Derivative is formed by prefixing a harmonizing derivational low tone prefix' O/Ọ to the basic form of the verb with attendant tonal changes according to the rules. Onukawa (1995) observes that the 'low tone initial morpheme O/Ọ in these nouns is not the 3rd person singular subject pronoun but rather, a nominal zing prefix which derives nominal agents or other nominal with abstract notions from the verb root. In their study of the Ọhụhụ dialect, Green and Igwe (1963) opines that the usual meaning of the noun agent is one who not only does something but does it as a habit or profession. They note that the morpheme consistent(s) of the Noun Agent is a CV radical and an open prefix O/Ọ harmonizing with the vowel of the radical.

Discussing the noun instrument in standard lgbo, Emenanjo (1978) states that the noun instrument is formed by prefixing a low tone homorganic nasal to the verb root. Anagbogu (1990) discussed the noun instrument under NVS which he called instrument nominalization with the N-prefix. He states that like the OVS, the NVS which is instrumental semantically is compositional.

N = that which does
VS = action
Arg = patient

The instrument/patient relationship according to Anagbogu operates within a given NVS form. Emenanjo (1978) observes that not all verbs have this derivative. According to him, no stative verb has it, and not all active verbs have it either. He noted that with its prefix, the minimal Noun Instrument is two elements long.

The agentive negative/patient relationship operates within a given EVS form. According to Anagbogu (1990), while the OVS represents an agent, the EVS stands for an agentive negative. The prefix, he states has an agentive negative meaning.

E(e/a) = non doer
VS = action
Arg = patient

Examples:

Ekwū okwu = Agentive negative/Pat.
Non-speak word
'non-talker'
Emé njọ = agentive negative/Pat.
Non-do evil
'non-evil doer'
ańū- mmanya = agentive negative/Pat
Non-drink wine
'non-drinker (of wine)

Maxwell (1998) in his research discovered that an Item and Arrangement (IA) description can be mechanically translated into, and stored as an item and process (IP) description. He claimed that the implication for computational implementation is that a morphological parsing engine which implements item and process morphology can in fact be used for them-and-Arrangement morphology by means of an appropriate user interface.

**The Morpheme**

The morpheme may be viewed as the smallest meaningful/unit of a word. It is that unit that its presence or absence can affect the meaning of a word or its grammatical category. Thus, the combination or disintegration of these morphemes brings about word formation, change of meaning or grammatical category. Some morphemes can stand out alone as independent words and are often referred to as free morphemes while others derive their meaning only when attached to other morphemes. Such morphemes are often called bound morphemes.

Crystal (2003) identifies the morpheme as the minimal distinctive unit of grammar and the central concern of morphology. He goes further to say that the original motivation of talking about morpheme was an alternative to the notion of the word, which had proved to be difficult to work with in comparing languages. Added to this, words could be quite complex in structure, and there was need for a single concept to interrelate such notions as root, prefix, compounds etc. The morpheme accordingly, was seen primarily as the smallest functioning unit in the composition of words (Crystal, 2003)

Finnegan (2004) stated the derivational process of morphemes. According to him, it is stated that some morphemes can stand alone as words: TRUE, MOTHER, ORANGE, etc. Others function only as a word part: UN-, TELE-, -NESS, AND -ER. The morphemes that can stand alone are free morphemes. Those that cannot are bound morphemes. According to Finnegan, certain bound morphemes change the category of the word to which they are attached as with the underlined parts of these words:

doubt → doubtful
establish → establishment
dark → darken
fright → frighten
teach → teacher

When added to the noun 'doubt', FUL derives the adjective 'doubtful' MENT added to the verb establish 'derives the noun 'establishment "Dark' is an adjective, 'darken is a verb. 'Fright' is a noun, frighten, a verb. 'Teach' a verb; teacher, a noun. Finnegan observes that in English, derivational morphemes tend to be added to the ends of words (and are called suffixes). He represented the relationship in the following rules of derivation:

Noun + -FUL → adjective (doubtful, beautiful)
Adjective + → LY adverb (beautifully, really)
Verb + -MENT→ Noun (establishment, amazement)
Verb + -ER → Noun (teacher, rider, thriller)
Adjective + -EN → Verb (sweeten, brighten, harden)
Noun + EN → Verb (frighten, hasten, christen) (Finnegan, 2004:47)

On the other hand, morphemes could be added at the beginning of words. These morphemes that are added at the word initial position are called prefixes. Finnegan (2004) notes that English prefixes typically change the meaning of a word but do not alter its lexical category.

**Examples**:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| MIS + verb | → | verb (misspell, misstep) |
| UN + adjective | → | adjective (unkind, uncoil) |
| UN + verb | → | (undo, unclean) |
| UNDER + verb | → | (underbid, underrate) |
| RE + verb | → | reestablish, rephrase) |
| EX + Noun | → | Noun (ex-cop, ex-convicts) (Finnegan, 2004:48) |

Finnegan further observes that the processes of derivation that transform a word into another word that has a related meaning but belongs to a different lexical category are common in the languages of the world. He gives example with Persian (where [æ] is pronounced like the [á] in English 'hat' and x like ch in German Bach)

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| dáerd | 'pain' | dáerdnak | 'painful' |
| náem | dampness' | náemnak | 'damp' |
| xáetaer | 'danger' | xáetaernak | 'dangerous' |
| | | | (Finnegan, 2004:48) |

Finnegan (2004) gave example of another type of bound morphemes which he called inflectional morphemes. These can be found underlined in the following words; cats collected sleeps and louder. Finnegan said that these inflectional morphemes change the form of a word but not its lexical category or its central meaning. They create variant forms of a word to conform to the different roles in a sentence or in discourse.

Nouns are commonly defined as the name of a person, animal, place or thing. A more advanced concept places the noun as the head of an NP or anything that could occupy the subject or object position of a sentence. There may be other approaches to defining a noun. Finnegan (2004) views the action of inflectional

morphemes on noun as that of making semantic notions, such as number and grammatical categories such as gender and case.

The verb is often regarded as the most important part of speech. It depicts the action or state of the subject. Inflectional morphemes mark such things, as tense or number on verbs. The adjective describes or modifies the noun. The inflectional morpheme marks degree with adjectives.

Morphemes are categorized in different shapes and shades. Crystal (2003) classifies a word consisting of a single (free) morpheme as a monomorphic word and that consisting of more than one morpheme is polymorph emic. According to Crystal, a further distinction may be made between lexical and grammatical morphemes; the former are morphemes used for the construction of new words in a language, such as in compound words; (e.g. blackbird), and affixes such as, -ship, -ize, the latter are morphemes used to express grammatical relationships between a word and its CONTEXT, such as plurality or past TENSE (i.e. the inflection of words). Grammatical morphemes which are separate words are called (inter alia) FUNCTION WORDS. Finnegan (2004) observes that morphemes have a strict and systematic linear sequence within a word.

From all that is said, it could be noted that morphemes are essential as agents of nominalization since nouns do not exist in isolation of morpheme constructs. By its position and function, morphemes are indispensable element in morphology. It is realized in different forms.

**Realization of Morphemes**

A morpheme may be realized in different ways in speech depending on the environment of its occurrence. When a particular morpheme is in a word initial position, its realization may differ when it is at word final position. The case of the clear "L" and the dark "L" in English is an example. The influence of adjacent tones can change an "s" morpheme from its [s} realization in speech to [z]. Crystal (2003) observes that as with all EMIC (phoneme morpheme, etc.) morphemes are abstract units which are realized in speech by DISCRETE units known as morphs. The relation is generally referred to as one of EXPONENCE, Or REALIZATION. He notes that most morphemes are realized by single morphs while some are realized

by more than one morph according to the position in a word or sentence where such alternative morphs are being called allomorphs or morphemic alternates/variants. Thus the morpheme of plurality represented orthographically by the —s in example cots, digs and forces has the allomorphs represented phonetically by [-s], [-z] and [-iz] respectively. In the present example the allomorphs result from the phonetic influence of the sounds with which the singular forms of the words end. The process is being referred to as one of phonological conditioning. Crystal calls the phenomenon of alternative morphemic realization 'allomorph'.

Emenanjo (1978) found that in agglutinating language like lgbo, the smallest meaningful grammatical elements are affixes, enclitics and tonal morphemes, additional morphemes. He added that an element may have grammatical or inflectional meaning or simply lexical (or semantic) meaning. lgbo affixes could be realized as prefixes, suffixes or interfix. Circumfix could be discovered in some cases.

**Agentive**

This is a term that refers to a form or construction whose main function in a sentence is to specify the means by which a particular action came about (the agent). Crystal (2003) states that in some languages, the term is used as one of the cases for 'nouns' along with 'accusative' etc. In English for instance, the term has especial relevance with reference to the passive constructions where the agent may be expressed or unexpressed (agent less). Crystal gives example with English where in active constructions, the agent is usually the grammatical 'subject', though in some other languages, a more complex statement of agentive is required as in such sentences as: (i) The window broke (ii) we ran the car out of petrol. According to Crystal, agentive (or agent, as later is the case has a special status in several linguistic theories, such as: 'case grammar' and government – building theory), where it is also seen as one of the fixed set of 'semantic cases' or roles (THETA ROLES) along with, OBJECTIVE, DATIVE, etc. Crystal says that the term 'counter agent' is also used in the context of case grammar.

Agent is derived from the Latin agēns, which is the present active participle of 'agere' (to drive, lead, conduct, manage, perform, do). Agentive or agents in a

sense refer to the participant of a situation that carries out the action in this situation (https//en.wiktionary.org). Its synonyms include: actor, performer, etc. while its antonyms are: patient, recipient, under-goers, etc. The agent or agentive is regarded as the performer of the action in a sentence (https//en.wiktionary.org). An agent noun in the same vein is a noun that denotes an agent that performs the action denoted by the verb from which the noun is derived, such as "rider" derived from to "ride" or "cutter" derived from "to cut". The noun agent 'cutter' means a person who cuts or a thing that is made to or is able to cut something (https//en.wiktionary.org). Noun agents can also be called nominal agents (plural) or no mina agentium. A distinction has been made between 'agent' and subject of a sentence. While the subject is determined syntactically primarily through word order, the agent is determined through its relationship to the action expressed by the verb. It is also observed that an 'agent noun' is not necessarily the agent of the sentence, as in, "Jack kicked the runner" (https//en.wiktionary.org).

**Summary of Literature Review**

The above review reveals that some work on agentive has been done somehow in standard Igbo, and in some dialects like Ọhụhụ. In spite of the above the review did not show any work done on agentive in Eke dialect of Udi. One feature of a language or dialect may not necessarily account for every other language or dialect. This gap beckons on the need to investigate agentive in Eke dialect.

**Eke Nouns in Derivational Morphology**

**The Noun Agent**

The data below show the pattern of the noun agent in Eke Dialect.

-li basic verb(v) ńrī complement (cp) 'to eat'

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| òlí (v) | nlī (cp) | 'eater/great eater' | |
| -kwú (v) | ókwū(cp) | 'to talk' also okwu | |
| ókwū | ōkwū | 'talkative/talker' | |
| -ghə (v) | māyā (cp) | 'to drink wine' | |
| Ọghə | māyā | 'wine drinker/drunkard | ọghəə |
| -gbə (v) | ágə (cp) | 'to kill-tiger/leopard | |
| ògbə āgə | | 'tiger/leopard killer' | ogbuu |
| -gbá (v) | ńtā (cp) | 'to hunt' | |
| ògbá ntā | | 'hunter' ọgbáà | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | -kə(v) ékwe(c) | 'to beat wooden drum' | |
| | òkə ékwe | 'wooden drum beater' | |
| | -kpọ́ ūbō | 'to play guitar' | |
| . . .. | òkpọ́ ūbō | 'guitar player' | ọkpọọ |
| | -zə ashwā | 'to trade' | |
| | ộzə̄ ashwā | 'trader'ọzəə | |
| | -mé mmā | 'to do good' | |
| | ómé mmā | 'doer of good' | oméé |
| | -jé ōzə̄ | 'go on errand' | |
| | òjé ōzə̄ | 'errand person' | ojéè |
| | -kwá ákwā | 'to cry' | |
| | ộkwá ākwā | 'crier' | ọkwáà |
| | -shí ńlī | 'to cook' | |
| | òshí nlī | 'cook' | oshii |
| | -kwá nkà | 'to be artistry' | |
| | òkwá nkà | 'artist' | ộkwáà |
| | -gbə mma | 'to cut with matchet' | |
| | ogbə (v) mmà(cp) | 'one who cuts with matchet' | |
| | also ogbuu | | |
| | -chụ àjà | 'to sacrifice' | |
| | ọchụ(v) ajà(cp) | 'one who sacrifices' | " ọchụụ |
| | -ti(v) [ịgbà(cp) | 'to drum' | " otii |
| | -li(v) ọkpà(cp) | eat 'ground beans' | |
| | oli ọkpà | 'ground beans eater' | " olii eater |
| | -gbə (v) ọjà (cp) | 'to blow flute' | |
| | ogbə (v) ọjà (cp) | 'flute blower' | ogbəə" |
| | -gba àshili | 'gossip' | |
| | ọgba àshiri | 'gossiper' | ọgbáà |
| | -wá(v) nkə (cp) | 'to break firewood' | |
| | ọwá(v) nkə(cp) | 'one that breaks firewood' | ọwáà |
| | -shi(v) nli(cp) | 'to cook' | |
| | oshi nli | 'one who cooks' | oshii |

The data above show that the noun agent can be formed in Eke Dialect by prefixing O/Ọ to the basic form of the verb. The O/Ọ is prefixed according to the rule of

vowel harmony. There is also a complement following the basic form of the verb. This complement is most-often a noun or a prepositional phrase.

The data also show that the O/Ọ prefix in the formation of the agentive in Eke Dialect is most often a low tone. The available data show no case of a high tone or a step in the O/Ọ prefix. It is also found that most of the basic verb forms are monosyllabic and have high tone. Though, some disyllabic or multisyllabic basic verb forms of the Eke agentive may be discovered, they are not numerous. Example include:

| | |
|---|---|
| -kwúrə̀ ọ̀hà | 'to be mouthpiece of the people' |
| ọ̀kwúrə ọ̀hà | 'people's mouth piece' |
| -tigbə wá ṃpi | 'to beat "he" goat to death' |
| ọ̀tigbə̀ nwá m̄pi | 'he" goat killer' |

The working data show that the disyllabic and multisyllabic basic verbs form is not as productive as the monosyllabic in the formation of the Eke noun agents.

**Summary of Findings and Conclusion**

**Summary of Findings**

Eke agentive or noun agents in Eke are formed by prefixing a low tone O/Ọ to the basic form of the verb following the vowel harmony rule. The complement of the basic verb form is in most cases a noun or a prepositional phrase. The noun agent considered is human. The O/Ọ prefix in most cases, have a low tone. Most of the basic forms are monosyllabic and have high tone.

**Conclusion**

The agentive is a very important aspect of derivational morphology. The noun agent plays a significant role in nominalization. The noun agent is very productive in Eke dialect. The result of the findings will go a long way in enriching the field of morphology which was for a very long time was neglected as a result of the emergence of Chomsky's 1957 **Syntactic Structures.** It is interesting to note that it is the same Chomsky who in his 1972 **Remarks on Nominalization** made proposals that liberated morphology from syntax. These findings will further solidify the field of morphology as a major branch of linguistics for according to

Anderson in Anagbogu (1990), the program for reducing it to other domains have proven over ambitious.

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