

(REVIEW ARTICLE)



## INVESTIGATING ASPECTS OF PREFIXATION IN ENGLISH AND IGBO LANGUAGES

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World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews, 2026, 31(02), 862–872

Publication history: Received on 07 July 2026; revised on 15 August 2026; accepted on 17 August 2026

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2026.31.2.2125>

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### ABSTRACT

Prefixation is a morphological process which studies how morphemes are affixed in the beginning of their host words for either grammatical functions or for lexical expansion and derivation. This paper investigates aspects of the grammar of prefixation in English and Igbo Languages. It adopts a comparative theoretical framework, so as to identify the morphological similarities and difference in both languages. It also adopts the qualitative design, which gives the description of the data the way they are. The paper adopts both a primary and secondary methods of data collections. The primary data were basically from the native speaker's competence, the researcher who is a speaker of the Igbo language supplied the necessary data. The secondary data were sourced from textual materials. The analysis shows grammatical and functional similarities and dissimilarities in both languages, as well derivative similarities and dissimilarities in both languages. Prefixes are used in both languages to derive new words, change word classes, but Igbo in additions realise grammatical functions with prefixes. The study of prefixation in both languages greatly reveals common universal principles of human language and at the same time, parametric variations in the languages, showing their uniqueness. The study concludes that prefixation in both languages are morphologically productive, being inflectional in the Igbo language; derivational flexible in both languages, and can as well perform different linguistic functions in both languages. The study notes the selective nature of the paper on instances of prefixation in both languages because of space, and thus, recommends an expanded investigation of the topic; and comparative investigation of other related morphological concepts, such as infixation, interfixation and suffixation in English and Igbo.

**Keywords:** Prefixation, Infection, Function, Grammar, Derivation

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Language is one of the concepts in human history that has received plethora of definitions. In fact, many people in different places, times, areas and context have defined language from different standpoints. What seems to be a commonplace definition, is that language is a means of communication. It is a medium of expressing ideas, feelings or opinion, which could be in spoken or written form. Written language encompasses sounds, letters, words, phrases, clauses, and sentences that convey meaningful thoughts in written form (Ofuani, 2010). Sweet (1989) cited in Obisakin (1993) describes language as the expression of ideas by means of speech sounds combined into words, and words combined into sentences. Language and communication go hand in hand because communication is the major goal of any language.

Language plays a vital role in human life, facilitating communication and nurturing essential social and cultural connections. It serves as a means of expressing information, ideas, emotions, and perspectives. Todd as cited in Nurjanah et al., (2018) defines language as a system of signs used by humans to communicate, emphasizing that it consists of signals designed to convey meaning and messages between individuals. Language embodies ideas, emotions, and desires, which can be translated into symbols. More broadly, language refers to the human ability to communicate through signs, words, or gestures, forming a dynamic exchange of meaning shaped by its context.

The opinion that language is a tool for communication, merely captures its essence. Chaer (1994) argues that the definition limits what language is. Beyond communication, he sees language as a complex social phenomenon with many dimensions. From a linguistic standpoint, language is an arbitrary system of sound symbols used by members of a social group to cooperate, communicate, and establish an identity (Saussure, 1916).

Language consists of different components (Nwala, 2015), which includes phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics. The components of language as Nwala observes feed into one another. They are so intertwined or interrelated that the output of one is usually the input of the other. For instance, words which are the primary units of language that convey meaning and facilitate communication are realised by combining sounds (phonemes) and morphemes- the smallest units of meaning. Words in turn are used to form phrases and sentences. They serve as the foundational elements for sentences and larger structures within a language, allowing humans to express thoughts, ideas, emotions, and concepts. In essence, words are the core components through which language functions and communicates meaning (Saussure, 1916).

Words are sometimes modified by prefixes and suffixes – types of affix. The place of affixes in human language is important. They are used to expand the numbers of words in a language, and also used to realise different grammatical functions. Grammarians categorize words according to their parts of speech and identify the forms in which they can appear. While this concept can be intricate, for simplicity, the paper notes that words can generally be realized from different linguistic forms.

At the centre of morphology – the component of linguistics that studies the formation or the internal structure of words - is the morpheme. A morpheme is the smallest part of a word that carries grammatical function or meaning. Morphemes are usually represented with braces to show the smallest meaningful units of language. For example, the word "sawed" in English can be broken down into the morphemes {saw} + {-ed}, while "sawn" is {saw} + {-n}, "sawing" is {saw} + {-ing}, and "saws" is {saw} + {-s}. Similarly, the word *ógbùrù* (killed) in Igbo can as well be broken into {gbú} + {ù}. We can also have *ígbù* (to kill), which has the morpheme or prefix, {i} and root {gbú}.

The morphemes {saw,} and {gbú} are free morphemes, meaning they can stand alone as words and do not need to be attached to another morpheme. In contrast, the other morphemes such as {- {-ed}, {-ing}, {-ing}, {-s}, {-rù} and {i} in the examples above are bound morphemes which means they cannot stand alone and make meaning. They must be attached to others unit to form a complete word. All the morphological attachments are cases of affixes.

Affixes are categorized based on their position relative to the root word. Prefixes are attached before the root form, while suffixes are attached after the root. The bound morphemes mentioned earlier, such as {-ed}, {-n}, {-ing}, and {-s}, are all suffixes. On the other hand, the morpheme {re-} and {i} in "resaw" and *ígbu* (to kill) are prefixes because they are added before the root word "saw" and *gbú* (kill) respectively.

Morphemes can be further classified as root, derivational, or inflectional, in addition to being free or bound. A root morpheme is the core part of a word that carries its primary meaning. For instance, *plant* is the root in *planter*. Derivational morphemes are affixed to a word to create a new word, often changing its meaning or part of speech. For example, the suffix {-er} is a derivational morpheme that turns a verb into a noun, typically referring to the person or thing performing the action.

This paper is basically on prefixation. As the study has noted earlier, a prefix is a type of bound morpheme that is attached before the root or host word. The prefix grammatically influences the root: it can cause a change in the meaning of the word; and it can also be used to derive a new word. A typical example in English is the word, *agree*. The prefixation of the morpheme {dis} to the root to realise *disagree* changes the initial root from *agree* to *disagree* and also changes the meaning of the word, which was positive to negative.

Similarly, the word *gbá* (shoot) in Igbo when prefix the morpheme {i-}, or {o-} to realise, *ígbà* and *ògbá*, the act of shooting, and the agentive form act respectively, the word now performs a grammatical function of infinitivisation and derivative function. In fact, in both cases, two different words are realized: one is a class maintaining situation (*ígbà*), the other is a class changing situation, *ògbá*.

The prefixes in both languages as it were, are morphemes. Morphemes are the essential building blocks of meaning. Much like atoms that compose matter, these small linguistic units combine to create words, enriching them with significance and subtlety. Morphemes exhibit remarkable variety in both structure and function. Root morphemes, such as *book*, *plant*, *love*, *slap*, *dance* in English and *gbá* (shoot), *dé* (write), *zú* (sell) and *jé* (go) in Igbo form the foundation of words, carrying their core meaning. Additionally, distinctions can be made between derivational affixes, such as "-ness" in "happiness," which alters the grammatical category of a word, and inflectional morphemes, such as "-s". The concept of morphemes and its types, free, bound, derivational, and inflectional appears to be a fundamental feature of human language.

It is against this background that this paper, therefore, sets out to compare prefixation in English and Igbo languages with the view to finding out places of convergence or similarities and places of difference or dissimilarities.

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## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This paper reviews basic concepts, such as, morphology, morpheme, affixation and prefixation, which directly form the focus of the investigation

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## 3 MORPHOLOGY

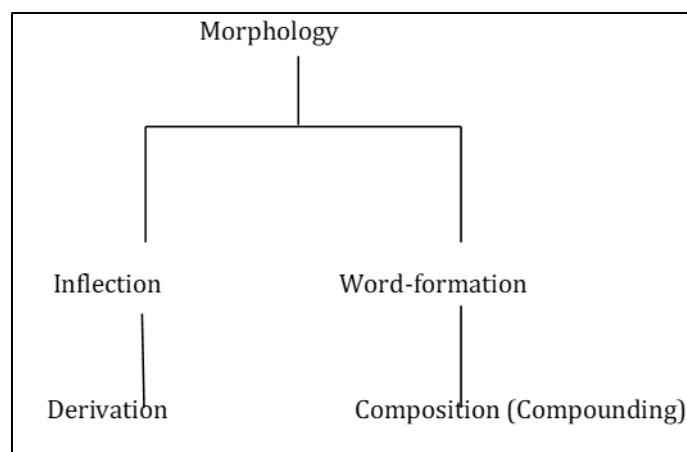
The word morphology is derived from the Greek word *morph*, which means form, and it is said to have a biological identity which defines how to form things. Morphology is a branch of linguistics that studies the internal structure and the forms of words in language: how words are formed, how they change their forms; and how they relate to other words in the same language. As a linguistic concept, it is related to phonology on one hand, and syntax on the other, hence Brown and Muller (1980), aver that morphology is the bridge between the syntax and lexicon of a language.

It is part of the grammar of a language, which every fluent and native speaker of a language learner acquires. The morphology and syntax of any language form the nucleus of the grammar of and language (Radford, 1997).

According to Aronoff (1993), morphology is a component of phonology and syntax. He notes that the stakes in morphology are neither syntactic nor phonological units, but inflectional classes and also emphasizes that morphology is a distinct component of grammar, with its own structure and phenomena. He further defines morphology as a mental system involved in word formation, and the branch of linguistics dealing with words, and their internal structures

Leonard Bloomfield, a leading structural linguists, who introduced a formal behavioural approach to language in his book *Language*, divided grammar into morphology and syntax. For him, morphology is the study of the internal structure of words, especially how morphemes (the smallest units of meaning) combine. Bloomfield made emphasis on the difference between the free morphemes (e.g. *book*) and the bound morphemes (e.g. '-s', 'un-') and focused on rules governing their use. Bloomfield's morphology is descriptive and structural, paying attention to form over meaning. He states that by the morphology of a language, we mean the constructions in which bound forms appear among constituents and that includes the constructions of words, and parts of words.

Bauer (1983, p. 34) summarizes the thrust of morphology in the chart below:



**Figure 1: Description of morphology**

The above chart shows that morphology is directly concerned with morphemes through inflection and the word-formation processes of derivation and composition.

Bauer (1983) posits that morphology is divided into two classes, namely, inflection and word-formation, (derivation and composition). But Matthews (1991) in his own analysis opines that compounding (composition) and word-formation are sub-fields of lexical morphology. According to him, lexical morphology is the study of the morphological relations among lexemes. In a related opinion, Akinpelu (2001) states that lexical morphology deals with the morphological process involved in vocabulary formation. Thus, lexical morphology is made up of sub-fields, and each sub-field is dealing with the formation of lexemes or words.

Nwala (2015) in a descriptive opinion, notes that morphology is the second level of linguistics, which clearly studies the internal structures of words and the mechanism used in word-formation processes. He observes that morphology is the bridge between the phonology of a language and the syntax of a language. Related to the opinion of Nwala (2015) is that of Nwala and Nwala (2021), who see morphology as the second level of language analysis that uses as its input the output of the first level. According to them, the knowledge of the morphology of a language is germane to the knowledge of the grammar of that language, since morphology together with syntax is at the centre of the grammar of a language. Nwala and Nwala (2021) note that in the study or description of morphology, the concept morpheme is always the point of emphasis.

### 3.1 Morpheme

Like the concepts, language, morphology, syntax, morpheme has been described or defined by different scholars. This is not because of its importance in morphology, but in language study in general. In all the facets of language study, morpheme plays a central role. Little wonder that it is in many instances, described as the building block of the grammar of any language.

In the opinion of Bloomfield (1933), the morpheme is a linguistic form which bears a parallel phonetic-semantic resemblance to any form; and it is the smallest meaningful unit beneath the word level. In his Structuralist model, he avers that morphemes are minimal meaning bearing units, free or bound, that combine systematically to form words. He notes that morphemes function as the fundamental building blocks in morphology and interlock with syntax in predictable ways.

In a similar token, Yule (2006) view of morphemes as the smallest meaningful units within a language that cannot be split without altering meanings. Their opinion is in concert with that of Trask (2003), who notes that morpheme is the smallest distinctive unit of grammar. The same is in agreement with Awokoya (2017) opinion in her book *Unlocking Morphology*. She focuses on the internal structure of words and how they are formed from smaller units called morphemes. She states that the smallest basic component of grammatical analysis is the morpheme. And that, it cannot be further broken down into smallest units; it is the minimal unit that is meaning-bearing, i.e., the basic element of meaning; and that any change in the form of the morpheme results in corresponding change of the meaning.

Nwala (2015) explains that the morpheme is the smallest minimal linguistic unit that carries a grammatical meaning. Nwala's opinion accedes with those of the scholars reviewed above, that the morpheme is the smallest linguistics unit and that it carries a grammatical meaning. Aronoff and Fudeman (2011) are more descriptive. According to them, a major way in which morphologists investigate words, their internal structures, and how they are formed is through the

identification and study of morphemes. This clearly shows that morpheme is not just at the centre of morphological analysis, but occupies a major place in language analysis.

In the words of Bybee (1985), morphemes as meaning-bearing elements whose functional vs. derivational semantic status reflects their semantic integration. In clarifying her position, she observes that Inflectional morphemes (e.g. -s) are semantically general and loosely attached, while derivational morphemes (e.g. -ness, -ship) bear stronger meaning ties to stems. She emphasizes that derivational morphemes often fuse with word meaning, while inflectional ones remain more separate cognitively, pointing to a gradient notion of morpheme autonomy.

In corroboration, Katamba (1993) postulate that a morpheme is:

The smallest indivisible unit of semantic content or grammatical function, which words are made up of. By definition, a morpheme cannot be decomposed into smaller units which are either meaningful by themselves or mark a grammatical function like singular or plural number in the noun (P.20).

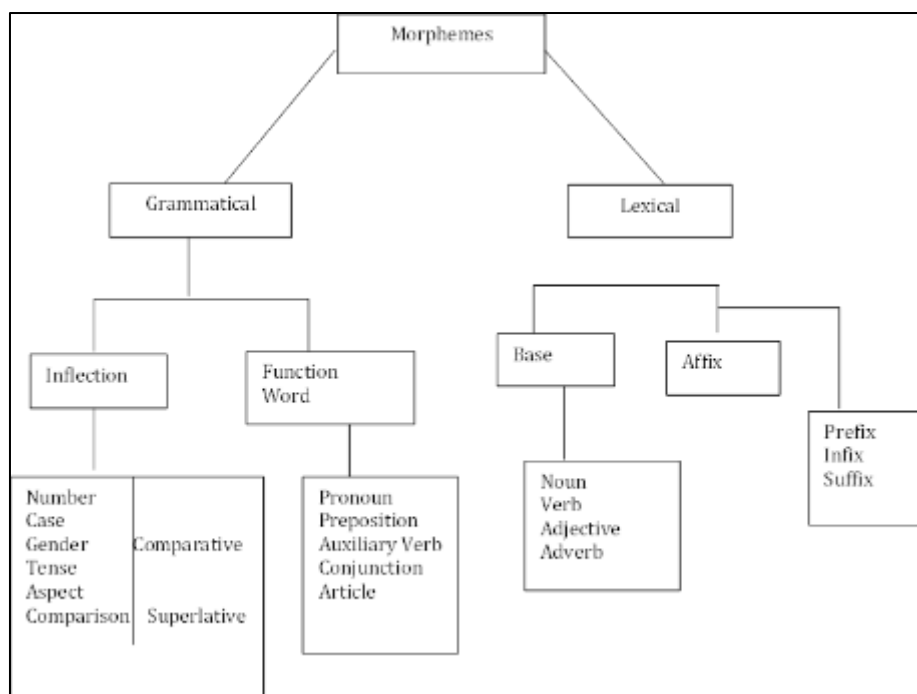
In simpler terms, Katamba expresses certain facts about morpheme, that: it cannot further be broken into tinier units; the units may be of meaning itself, and can mark a grammatical function. He goes further to define morpheme as “the smallest difference in the shape of a word that correlates with the smallest difference in word or sentence meaning or in grammatical structure” (p..24).

One basic characteristic of a morpheme is the case of ‘boundness’ and ‘freeness’ called free morphemes and bound morphemes. A free morpheme is a word of its own functioning as a base form of any word which has meaning. Many words contain roots standing on their own. Roots which are able to stand alone independently are called, free morphemes (Katamba, 1993). Examples of free morphemes in English are: *man, book, tea, sweet, cook, pain, walk, bet, very* etc.

Bound morphemes (unlike free morphemes) are morphemes that cannot occur in isolation. They always occur with some other word-building elements attached to them. The bound morpheme must lean on a free morpheme to make meaning. It is always a part of a word, never a word of its own right. Nwala (2015) says that “the major difference between a free morpheme and a bound morpheme is couched on the potential for independent occurrence as words” (p.99).

The bound morphemes can be sub-divided into two classes namely. inflectional morphemes and derivational morphemes. Inflectional morphemes according to Nwala (2015) are bound morphemes joined to free morphemes basically to derive or mark number, ' gender, tense, case, mood, aspect, person and voices. The joining of these morphemes to free morphemes do not change the word class of the lexical or free morphemes, hence, Nwala puts that they are “class maintaining” (p.99).

According to Omotunde (2006, p. 8), all morphemes have meaning, but not all morphemes that can stand independently as words. A morpheme that can stand as a word is a free morpheme, while any that cannot is a bound morpheme. He provides, further, a chart of morphemes in English that looks quite elaborate:



**Figure 2: Types of morpheme (Adapted from Omotunde 2006)**

From the foregoing, the paper simply notes two types of morphemes: Free and Bound morphemes. Free morphemes are independent words, while bound morphemes are not. The focus of this paper is on prefixation, a type of affixes, which are dependent morphemes. A morpheme, according to Omotunde (2006, p. 10), is said to be a “base” morpheme if another morpheme can be structurally attached to it. The morpheme {need} is the base of the word *needy*. A base can have attachments before, inside and after it - prefix, infix and suffix, respectively.

Just as lexical morphemes have two categories, grammatical morphemes also have two categories: function words and inflections. While function words are free morphemes, inflections are bound. Function words do not welcome the attachment of other morphemes. For instance, the conjunction *and* cannot serve as a stem. A function word conveys specific grammatical information. The second group of grammatical morphemes are inflections. They are word endings. For instance, the number inflections “-s” and “-en” distinguish the singular forms *bag* and *child* from the plural forms *bags* and *children* in terms of number. On the other hand, the suffix “-ful” in *grateful* and *joyful* do not only mark the words grammatically as adjectives, but also carries the meaning “full of”.

### 3.2 Affixation

The word “affixation” is a derivative of the word “affix”. It is a word formed from an inflectional paradigm which generally shares at least, one longer morpheme with a concrete meaning, and is distinct from shorter morphemes with an abstract meaning. Such morphemes are called affixes. Elson and Pickett (1976) opine that affixes are bound morphemes which occur with roots and generally modify the basic meaning of the root. Rubba (2004) affirms that an affix is a bound morpheme that attaches itself to a base or stem. Cornelius (2008) claims that scholars use the term to describe where a bound morpheme is annexed to a word.

As a process of word - formation, affixation has drawn the keen attention of scholars in structural and comparative linguistics including, but not limited to them (Mathews, 1974, Elton & Pickett, 1976; Crystal, 1980, Ndimele, 1999, and Rubba, 2004). According to Mathews (1991), affixation is determined by two characteristics; the form which results from the operation, which consists of the “base”, the form that the operations apply to, plus an additional morpheme. For instance, *addressed* consists of the base *address* plus the inflectional morpheme {-ed}.

In general, affixation is a process in which a new addition is added to an operand (root) to form a new linguistics unit. Thus, affixes are thus identified by an operand with a new formative which has been added to it, for instance, *walk* – *walked*. The operand is *walk*, while the new formative “-ed” is added to it, resulting to the derivation of *walked*. Put simply, affixation means, a bound morpheme attached to a free morpheme or stem.

The processes of affixation may be divided into prefixation, suffixation, and infixation depending on whether the affix is added before the base, after it, or at some determined point within it. In this paper, the thrust is prefixation.

### 3.3 Prefixation

From the morphology of the word, it is obvious that it is used to describe the act of coming before any other. In language, prefix according to Ndimele (1999), is an affix which occurs before the root or base of a word. In the same vein, Elson and Pickett (1976, P.12) define prefixes as “the affixes which occur preceding roots”.

Similarly, Agezi (2004, p. 40), views a prefix as “an affix which is added initially to a stem”. Thus, prefixation is considered a process where morphemes otherwise known as prefixes are added before the “operands”. In sum, Quirk et al. (1973, p. 442) put the prefixes in English into the following groups:

- Reversative prefixes, such as: un-, non-, dis-, il- .
- Pejorative prefixes, such as: mis-,mal- .
- Prefixes of degree or size, such as: under-, super-, out-.
- Prefixes of attitude, such as: counter-, anti-, co- .
- Locative prefixes, such as: inter-, trans-.
- Prefixes of time and order, such as: post-, pre-, re-.
- Number prefixes, such as: mono-, di-, bi-, etc.
- Conversion prefixes, such as: en-, be-.

Looking at the examples of prefixes, it is glaring that prefixes in English will seldom change syntactic categories of words; affect the semantic import of words negatively or positively; converse word. But, are these the same in Igbo? Can prefix perform grammatical function? This will be addressed shortly in the course of this paper.

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## 4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper simply adopts the comparative theory. In linguistics or language study in general, comparative theory is one that is used to investigate similarities and dissimilarities in a concept or phenomenon. The term or method of comparative investigation is almost as old as knowledge or man. From the ancient philosophers, Aristotle (384-322 BCE), Socratics and Plato, the method has been in use. Comparative Linguistics, as often called, became popular in the 1800s and it is usually associated to William Jones and Franz Bopp (1816).

The usefulness of this method in language analysis cannot be overemphasized. In many language analyses that involve two or more languages, it is usually adopted. The aspect of the theory, that investigates differences (contrastive method) in language has become so popular that many scholars adopt it in their study of two or more languages. The present papers elected to adopt the comparative framework because it considers it quite useful in investigating prefixation in English and Igbo languages.

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## 5 METHODOLOGY

The paper adopts a mixed design. It adopts both the qualitative-descriptive and the comparative designs. Data were collected purposively by the researcher based on his personal knowledge as an L2 speaker of English, and as a competent native speaker of the Igbo Language. The sampled data were interpreted resorting to the designs, qualitative and comparative designs.

### 5.1 Analysis

As already noted, Prefixation is the morphological process that involves the attachment or affixation of morphemes to the beginning of the root or host word. Cross-linguistically, prefixation performs different morphological, syntactic and semantic functions. Morphologically, prefixation changes the structure and forms of lexical items; syntactically, it changes the category of lexical items, and semantically, prefixation modifies and even changes the meaning of words. In what follows, the paper present examples of prefixes in the languages under investigation. It begins with English.

#### 5.1.1 English

|    | Prefix                | Root    | Derived   | Semantic reference |
|----|-----------------------|---------|-----------|--------------------|
| a. | Un-                   | happy   | unhappy   | Negation/opposite  |
| b. | Re-                   | write   | rewrite   | Again/repetition   |
| c. | Dis-                  | agree   | disagree  | Negation/reversal  |
| d. | in- / im- / il- / ir- | correct | incorrect | Negation/ opposite |
| e. | Pre-                  | view    | preview   | Before / prior     |
| f. | Post-                 | war     | postwar   | After / later      |

|    |        |        |            |                     |
|----|--------|--------|------------|---------------------|
| g. | Over-  | cook   | overcook   | too much            |
| h. | Under- | pay    | underpay   | Insufficient/ below |
| i. | Mis-   | spell  | misspell   | Wrongly / error     |
| j. | Anti-  | Social | antisocial | Against/opposite    |

The examples of English prefix as presented in above revealed a lot of interesting morpho-semantic information. The prefixations are basically derivative. Their occurrence supports the opinion of Nwala (2015) and Nwala and Nwala (2021) that prefixation is a common method used by languages to expand their lexical stock. Syntactically, the derived words retained their class membership.: A verb, remained a verb; a noun, remained a noun; an adjective, remained an adjective.

From the angle of semantics, the process affected the semantic references of their host. Some negate the meaning of their host. For example, the prefixes, un-, im-, non-, ir-, il-, dis-, in-, which basically are of Latinate origin change or mark opposition of their host. This is also attested by both Nwala (2015) and Nwala and Nwala (2021) that Latinate prefix are used to negate their host adjectives. The words happy, logical, important, correct, regular became opposite of their initial semantic status because of the prefixes affixed to them. For instance, happy comes, unhappy, possible, becomes impossible; ordinate, becomes, inordinate; regular, becomes irregular; logical, becomes, illogical and agreement, becomes disagreement respectively. These prefix are basically role reversal types.

Apart from the role reversal prefixes, there exist other types of prefixes that perform different discursive and semantic roles, such as:

- Pejorative prefixes, such as: mis-, mal-, as in words: misled, misconduct, mismanage, maltreatment, malformation, maladministration, etc.
- Degree or size prefixes, such as: under-, super-, out-, as words: superstar, supermarket, superstore; underestimate, understand, underground, undersize; outsmart, outwit, outrun
- Attitude prefixes, such as: counter-, anti-, co-, as in words: counteractive, counterpart, counterclaim; anticrime, anticlockwise, antisocial; cohabit, cotenant, cooperate, coeducational.
- Locative prefixes, such as: inter-, trans-, as in words: intercontinental, international, interdepartmental; transatlantic, transmigration, transplant; prenatal, preconceived, prehistoric, premarital; rewrite, reclaim, rethink, reset
- Time and order prefixes, such as: post-, pre-, re-, as in words: postgraduate, postindustrial, posthumous, postnatal etc.
- Number prefixes, such as: mono-, di-, bi-, as in words: monologue, monosyllable; unisex, unilateral; triplicate, triangle; dialogue, disyllable, bilateral; bilingual, etc
- Conversion prefixes, such as: en-, be-, as in words: encode, enslave, enthrone, enclose; befriend, bemoan, begrudge etc.

The examples of the different types of prefixes in English point to the various linguistic functions they perform. The prefixes are morphological indicators and modifiers; their affixations to their host reveal their morpho-syntactic and morpho-semantic significance in the language.

### 5.1.2 Igbo

Like English, Igbo prefixes also perform significant linguistic functions, which could be morphological, syntactic and even semantic. English prefixes are wholly derivatives, but Igbo prefixes are both derivatives and grammatical.

#### Agentive Derivative Prefix

| Prefix | Root | Derived | Gloss   |
|--------|------|---------|---------|
| O-     | gbú  | òbú     | killer  |
| O-     | rí   | òrí     | eater   |
|        | gbá  | ògbá    | shooter |
|        | dé   | ódé     | writer  |
|        | shi  | òshi    | cook    |
| O-     | kú   | òkú     | beater  |

|    |    |     |                      |
|----|----|-----|----------------------|
| O- | dó | òdó | one who draws/causes |
| O- | rá | òrá | sexiest              |

The data show instances of agentive derivations in Igbo. This is a common way of deriving nominal agents. The derivation results into class changing of the hosts or roots. The prefix or morpheme {O-} is a common linguistic item used to convert a verb to a noun in agentive derivation in Igbo. The derived nouns, personalize the functions, characteristically showing the behaviour of the nouns.

### 5.1.3 Nominal Realisation

| Prefix | Root     | Derived  | Gloss                       |
|--------|----------|----------|-----------------------------|
| n-     | rí       | ńrì      | food                        |
| n-     | kpì      | ̀kpì     | scissors                    |
| n-     | chá      | ńchá     | soap or whitening           |
| m-     | mù(tá)   | ńmùtá    | education or knowledgeable  |
| m-     | gbá      | mgbá     | wrestle or act of wrestling |
| m-     | bù(bà)   | mbù(bà)  | carry inside/into           |
| m-     | bù(t tá) | mbù (tá) | carry inside                |

The data also showed the possibility of nominal realization or the conversion of verbs to nouns through prefixation. This is a case of class changing derivation. This morphological derivation involves the prefixation of a nasal consonant to a verb base or root.

### 5.1.4 Grammatical Derivative Prefix

| Prefix | Root | Derived | Gloss    |
|--------|------|---------|----------|
|        | bia  | íbia    | to come  |
| ri     | íri  |         | to eat   |
| i-     | de   | íde     | to write |
| i-     | si   | ísi     | to cook  |
| ga     | íga  |         | to go    |
| gbu    | ígbu |         | to kill  |
| ru     | íru  |         | to work  |
| re     | íre  |         | to sell  |
| ra     | íra  |         | to sex   |

The data is a good example of infinitive derivation in the Igbo Language. The vowel or morpheme, /i/ is normally prefixed or attached to the root verb to convert the verb to a noun. In fact, following Green and Igwe, (1963.pp167-171), Emananjo (2015) described infinitives as nomino-verbals. Like English, infinitives are nouns with verbal origin (Nwala, 2015). This morphological process is very productive in the language, such that verbs of the language generally can be infinitivized. Although Emananjo (2015) noted what he called simple infinitive, emphatic infinitive, such as ìrìrì ( to actually eat), negative infinitive, such as èríghì (not to eat), and perfective infinitive, such as ìrìlà, (to have eaten) they are not treated here. However, these are all instances of infinitive derivation in Igbo and they are realized through prefixation. Infinitive derivation is very productive in Igbo, virtually all the verbs in the lect can be infinitivised which creates the room for lexical expansion in the language. Even though it is outside the scope of the present study, it is

important the study notes for record purpose that the prefix, i- and the verb base or root, harmonizes in tone. The prefix is always a high tone one, while the vowel of the base or root verb is morphologically forced to take a downstep tone for high tone verbs, the vowel of the root remains low.

## 6 FINDINGS

The analysis has thrown interesting issues in both languages pointing to why a comparative study is always linguistically plausible. Prefixation as shown in the analysis is wholly class maintaining in English. In the possible different discourse roles, which prefixes can perform in English as revealed in this paper, the syntactic class of the host words did not change. But this is not the case with Igbo language: prefixation can change the syntactic class of their host.

Again, the study revealed that in English, prefixation is possible in all the major word classes: verb, noun, adjective and adverb. But this is rarely possible in Igbo, most of the host words are verbs. And this is one of the possible reasons why Igbo is seen as a verb-centred derivative language.

Finally, the analysis has confirmed what this paper hinted at the introductory part: that prefixation may be both derivative and grammatical. All the cases of prefixation in English identified in this paper are derivative – new words are formed with them. But in Igbo prefixation is both derivative and grammatical. The data showed that simple infinitive instances or expressions in Igbo are realized through prefixation. Even though not discussed in this paper, but recommended for other researchers, is the fact that apart from simple infinitive realization, other types of infinitive realizations, such as emphatic infinitive, as in *iriri* (to actually eat), negative infinitive, as in *erighi* (not to eat), and perfective infinitive, as in *irila*, (to have eaten) exist.

## 7 CONCLUSION

Thus far, the paper has interrogated prefixation in English and Igbo languages. Prefixation is a flexible language-specific morphological process used generally to expand the lexical stock of a language. As a viable morphological process, it performs many linguistic and discourse functions in languages. In English as shown in this paper, prefixation is both class maintaining and class changing; it is very flexible in all the content bearing words or all the major word classes; and it also derivative. But in Igbo, prefixation is derivative; class changing and maintaining; verb centred; and can significant grammatical functions.

## STATEMENTS ON COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding this manuscript.

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