

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ÌGBÒ AND ÀLAGO NOMINAL PLURALITY

Martha Chidimma Egenti¹

&

Emmanuel Chukwunonso Ikeomu²

Department of Linguistics

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

cm.egenti@unizik.edu.ng; ikeomuchukwunonsoemmanuel@gmail.com²**Abstract**

*The morphological process of noun plurality is widely diffused in African languages. Adopting a purely descriptive and qualitative approach, this study aims to ascertain how plurals are marked on nouns in Ìgbò and Àlago languages, and to compare them using three morphological parameters namely: concatenation, base modification and productivity. For the Ìgbo plural markers, data were collected from existing Ìgbo literature, in addition to the researchers' native language intuition; while the Àlago data were got from three Àlago native speakers who reside in Doma Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. Also, Adagye and Abdullahi's (2011) book 'A Dictionary of Alago' forms the secondary data used in the work. Using a descriptive approach in the data analysis, the findings reveal that Ìgbò marks plural with the use of some inherent plural words like *ndị* and *umụ*, quantifiers like *imirikiti*, numerals like *ise*, clitic 'ga', mass nouns like *ìgwè*, and the reduplication of nouns like *mmadu mmadu*; while Àlago employs four strategies in the formation of plural nouns. These strategies are zero affixation, *àwo-* prefixation, *lèwà/nwàshika* suffixation, and vowel transmutation. These two languages show some similarities and differences as regards the comparative parameters used to examine them.*

Keywords: nominal, nominal plurality, concatenation, base modification, productivity, morphological parameter, pluralisation.

1. Introduction

This study examines pluralisation marking on nouns with focus on nominal plurality in Ìgbo Language and the Àlago Language. Hitherto, relatively scant attention has been paid to nominal plurality in Nigerian languages. However, with the advent of Ejele's (1997) work on nominal plurality, there has been a new wave of interest shown by linguistic scholars, resulting in studies of pluralization marking in different languages such as Omachonu (2003), Anagbogu (2005), Nkamigbo (2009, 2011 and 2015), Ajíbóyè (2010), Ilori (2015), Nweya (2016), Naess (2006) and Ezenwafor-Afuecheta & Ikeomu (2021). In African languages, particularly Nigerian languages, plurals are treated in a special way because the way they occur is very peculiar compared to those in non-African languages. For instance, Dryer (2011) distinguishes between various forms of morphologically marked plurals (prefix, suffix, stem change, tone and reduplication), plural words, plural clitics, and systems with no plural.

The Ìgbo language is one of the three major languages in Nigeria. The language is spoken in the south east of Nigeria. Clusters of the language are found in Rivers and Delta states as well as pockets of speakers in Benue, Cross River and Akwa Ibom states in the south-south geo-political zone (Emenanjo, 2015). Under the classificatory parameter of languages, Igbo belongs to the West Benue-Congo phylum, a major subdivision of the Niger-Congo language family (Williamson and Blench, 2000). Notable studies have been done to preserve the Ìgbo language. Some Ìgbo scholars like Ohiri-Aniche (2008) consider the language to be endangered following the author's observation that among the three major Nigerian languages, Ìgbo has been documented as endangered. However, according to Eberhard, Simons and Fennig's (2021), Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS)'s estimation with regard to language size and vitality, Igbo has more than 30 million user population (including both first and second language speakers) with institutional status. It is also provincial since it is used in education, work, mass media, and government in the south eastern geo-political zone of Nigeria.

On the other hand, the Àlago language has faced and is still facing serious endangerment. It is spoken in the Northern region and South senatorial district of Nasarawa State, Nigeria. It is a minority language dominated by the majority of Hausa language. Though the language has over two thousand speakers, it

is still considered to be endangered, following Hale's (1992:23) criterion for defining an endangered language, which is "the incidence of domination by a more powerful language". Moreover, Àlago has no standard orthography. Lending credence to these claims, Ogaji and Abdullahi (2011: vi) posit that "the Àlago language, like any other of the minority languages in Nigeria, is in serious danger of extinction since it does not have a standard orthography yet...."

The foregoing shows that there is a pressing and urgent need to salvage, especially the Àlago language by way of describing an aspect of the language such as how plurals are marked on nouns. The study sets out to investigate the different ways in which the speakers of Ìgbo and Àlago express plurals in nouns. The tone marking convention adopted in this study is Green & Igwe's (1963) tone marking convention which marks all tones with the exception of high tone. The rest of the work is structured as follows: section two discusses the concept of pluralization and provides empirical evidence of plural marking, while section three provides the different strategies of nominal plural marking in Igbo and Alago, section four compares the two languages using three morphological parameters. Section five summarises and concludes.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Concept of Pluralisation

Pluralisation is attested in all the languages of the world. Plural is one of the values of the grammatical category of number. It is not uncommon that plurals denote two or more of something, although they may also denote more than fractional, zero or negative amounts. Counting is an indispensable phenomenon in language. The basic evidence of the category of number is observed in the distinction between singular and plural in relation to nouns (Lyons, 1968 and Robins, 1971).

Different languages of the world exhibit peculiar strategies in the realization of their plural forms. While some realize their plurals through various types of inflections, including the addition of affixes (like English), some have specific plural markers used in forming plurals like Ìgbo. Still, others realize plurals through partial or total reduplication. Nkamigbo (2011) exemplifies this using Eggon to show that pluralization is achieved by reduplication and other strategies as in: *aki* 'tree' - *akiaki* 'trees'.

Plurals can be marked in such categories as noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, and determiner in different languages so that the languages have distinct plural forms which are used in agreement with the number of their associated nouns. For instance, in French language, verbs often agree with their subject in number, person and gender. Verbs have different forms for the first, second and third persons such as *parler*- 'to speak': *parle*, *parles*, *parlez*, *parlons* and *parlent*.

2.2 Studies on Pluralisation

This section reviews some works on pluralisation that have been done in African Languages such as Naess's (2018) studies of Plural-Marking Strategies in Aiwoo, a language of the Timotu subgroup of Oceanic. His study describes number marking on pronouns and pronominal argument markers on verbs, focusing on the structure of the overall paradigm and the status of the "unit-augmented" suffix *-le* within the system. The author argues that the Aiwoo facts support the suggestion of Cysaoun's (2003, 2011) study that "number" may be different phenomenon with pronouns than with nouns. The author also briefly discusses number with verbs with a focus on the role that number-marked verbs may play as modifiers within the noun phrase. Relevant to this study is Naess's (2018) description of various strategies used to indicate plural on nouns. The strategies the author proposes for Aiwoo nominal plurality are *peliva* (*li*) – for kinship terms, *geji*-, the use of the bound noun *pe*- 'people' to form nouns referring to specific groups of human referents, the use of the person suffixes *-gu-I* '3 MIN-3 AUG' to indicate plural of possessed nouns with 3 MIN possessors, the use of the 3 AUG pronoun (*i*) *jii* to mark plurals of possessed nouns with non- 3 MIN possessors, and with O arguments of certain verbs; the combination of the bound noun *mi*- "the one which..." and the 3AUG prefix *li*- to form plurals of certain human referring nouns, notably those referring to ethnicity or profession. They are examined from a typological perspective, focusing on their formal properties and on their functions. Example (1) below is a sample of kinship nouns pluralized by *peliva* (*li*)-

Table 1: Kinship nouns pluralized by *peliva* (*li*)

Singular	Plural
gino ‘his/her son’	pelivano ‘his/her children (male, female)’
ibete ‘his/her friend’	pelivalibete ‘his/her friends’
gite ‘his brother, ‘her sister’	pelivalite ‘his brother, her sisters’
siwe ‘his sister’	pelivaluwe ‘his sisters’
gianga ‘his/her maternal uncle’	pelivalianga ‘his/her uncles’
gibo ‘his/her nephew/grandson’	pelivalibo ‘his/her nephews/ nieces’
ginuwe ‘her brother’	peluwe or pelivaluwe ‘her brothers’
meego ‘his/ her relative, family member	pelivaago ‘his/ her relatives, family members’

The examples in table 1 are kinship terms pluralized with *peliva* (*li*). These kinship terms are pluralized by replacing the initial bound root with the plural form *peliva* (*li*).

Ajíbóyè (2010) examines the strategies that Yoruba adopts to mark plural. He rightly asserts that languages either mark plural morphologically or syntactically. By morphological, he means a process whereby plural is marked by a noun inflection, either a prefix as in the case of Tagalog and Bantu Languages or a suffix in English. He gives the examples below:

- | | | | |
|-----|-------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| (1) | a-i. wa-toto ‘children’ | Swahili (Bantu) | |
| | PL-child | | |
| | a-ii mga-aso ‘dogs’ | Tagalog | |
| | PL-dog | | |
| | book-s ‘books’ | English | (Ajíbóyè, 2010: 142) |

He explains that a syntactically marked plural is instantiated by a morpheme or word that may not be solely dedicated to plural marking and they are called “plural words”. He gives the following examples in (2):

- | | | | |
|-----|---------------|------------|-----------------|
| (2) | te | swóweles | ‘boys’ |
| | DET | boy-PL ye | swíweles ‘boys’ |
| | PL-DET | boy | |
| | méle | má-mele | ‘children’ |
| | | PL-child | |

Halkomelem (Wiltschko 2004) cited in (Ajíbóyè 2010: 143)

In his discussion of pluralisation, Ajíbóyè adopts a syntactic procedure for marking plurals in Yoruba by the use of certain plural words. According to him, the plural word can either interpret the noun as plural directly as he gives with ‘*awon*’ and quantifying words such as *púpò* ‘many’ and *méji* ‘two’ or it can be realized on a primitive adjective or on a demonstrative (in the form of *wòn-*). His study proposes that these plural words possess a covert or an overt [PLURAL] feature, which percolate onto the NP.

Ilori’s (2015) works on Plural Formation in Igàlà examines the various structural manipulations employed in Igàlà to signal and/or mark plurality on lexical items at word and phrase/clause levels. Using a combination of the lexicalist and syntactic approaches to word formation, as in Selkirk’s (1982) word syntax and Wunderlich & Fabri’s (1995) minimalist morphology, the study shows that Igàlà plural formation system is related but appears structurally different from what obtains in other Yoruboid languages. On nominals, he examines plural marking on animate and inanimate nouns and the use of quantifiers. He maintains that apart from pre-merging the inherently plural *àma* and/or *àbó* to animate nouns to derive their plural forms, another strategy used to derive plural forms of nouns in Igàlà is reduplication. This strategy, according to him is mostly used for non-animate nouns such as trees, stones, hills, etc. and it involves full reduplication. This is exemplified in table (2):

Table 2: Full reduplication of non-animate nouns in Ígálà

Singular	Plural
òkwuta ‘stone’	òkwuta òkwuta ‘stones’
óílí ‘tree/sticks’	óílí óílí ‘trees’
ájí ‘river’	ájí ájí ‘rivers’
ónú ‘king’	ónú ónú ‘kings’

Another study by Ilori (2015) proposes also that the plural forms of other non-animate nouns are formed by the use of quantifiers or numerals to reference the noun. According to him, it is achieved by modifying the singular noun with some inherently plural quantifiers or numerals and the result is a noun interpreted as plural by native speakers. The following example in (3) illustrate this:

- (3) óyà - óyà wéwe/méjì
 wife - wife many/two
 ‘many wives/ two wives’

Ilori also studies the plural of personal pronouns and demonstratives. Finally, he examines the plural marking in the Igala predicate, identifying the verbs *jọ* and *kó* as the plural verbs and discusses how they structurally realize their plural features with which they select appropriate arguments in the syntax of the language.

A similar study in Igala by Omachonu (2003, 2008) presents instances of noun plural formation in Igala. The research shows that the plural morpheme ‘*ab*’ co-occurs with human specific terms while ‘*am*’ co-occurs with animate objects. ‘*ab*’ is strictly for human terms. Inanimate objects do not take any of these forms as illustrated in (4).

- (4) ‘*ab*’ plural morpheme
 a. onekele ‘male/man’ abok?? ‘males/men’
 ‘*am*’ plural morpheme
 b. ewe ‘bird’ amewe ‘birds’

Anagbogu (2005) studies Koring plurals and identifies five pluralisation rules, three of which are stated in example (5). He observes that there is a large productivity in a great number of nouns in forming plurals, simply stated as noun+gbɔdɔrɔ ‘many’ as shown in (5).

- (5) a. letɔ ‘head’ letɔgbɔdɔrɔ ‘heads’
 ‘*gbi*’ prefixation
 b. ilagba ‘woman’ gbilagba ‘women’
 Zero affixation
 c. araa ‘father’ araa ‘fathers’

In (5a), the plural marker is *gbɔdɔrɔ* which is attached to the noun *letɔ* ‘head’; in (5b), the plural marker *gbi* is prefixed to the noun *ilagba* ‘woman’ resulting in the plural form ‘*gbilagba*’ and then, in (5c), there is an instance of zero affixation whereby the plural form is covertly marked.

Ejele (1997) investigates plurality in Esan nouns and verbs. The author states that the Esan Language adopts the following strategies in forming its plural nouns and verbs as exemplified in (6):

Vowel alternation in nouns

- (6) a. ukpon ‘cloth’ ikpon ‘clothes’ /u/- /i/
 Reduplication of nouns
 b. aba ‘father’ abaaba ‘fathers’
 Addition of the suffix – *nv* to verbs
 c. de ‘buy’ dene ‘buy many times.’

It is very important to note here that Ejele's (2007) study incorporates both nominal and verbal plurality, but the focus of this study is on plurality of nouns.

Nkamigbo (2009) examines lexical pluralisation in Jaba. She observes that the language employs the following strategies in forming its plural nouns: zero affixation, 'mo' prefixation, 'fu' prefixation, consonant alternation, reduplication, morpheme alternation and tonal permutation. Similar study of pluralization in Eggon in Nkamigbo (2011) reveals the following strategies captured in (7).

- (7) **Zero affixation**
- | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| a. ubing 'ground' | | ubing 'many grounds' |
| | 'mo' prefixation | |
| b. ana 'mother' | | moana 'mothers' |
| | Vowel alternation /o/- /e/ | |
| c. onom 'tongue' | | enom 'tongues' |
| | /o/- /a/ | |
| d. ongwu 'chest' | | angwu 'chests' |
| | Reduplication | |
| e. aki 'tree' | | akiaki 'trees' |
| | Tonal permutation | |
| f. àgá 'lizard' | | ágá 'liard' |
| | Vowel alternation ('a' insertion) | |
| g. mada 'flute' | | amada 'flutes' |

With regard to Igbo, Nweya (2016) examines strategies and devices adopted in Igbo to mark plurality on lexical items at both word and phrasal levels. He applied the principles of the Minimalist Programme in his data analysis. His study shows that five basic strategies could be employed to mark plurality in Igbo. They are merging of singular nouns with plural words or morphemes, reduplication, use of conjunctions, use of plural sensitive verbs, third person plural pronoun 'ha', quantifiers, numerals, mass nouns. He concludes that Igbo belongs to the set of languages that syntactically mark plurals by using independent morphemes/ words; (plural words). The relevance of Nweya's study to this present study is limited to his treatment of nominal plurality. As for the plurality of verbs and his syntactic treatment of the plurals, they are not relevant to the study. The foregoing shows the different plural marking strategies and morphological parameters used in depicting more than one in different languages such as prefixation, suffixation, stem changes, tonal changes, vowel alternations in nouns, reduplication, etc. They are usually marked on animate and inanimate nouns and on verbs. Hence, there are verbal and nominal plurality, but this study focuses on nominal plurality in Ìgbò and Àlago languages.

3.0 Data Presentation and Analysis

3.1 Ìgbò Nominal Plurality

In this section, we present our data for the Igbo nouns and their plural markers.

3.1.1 Plural Marking with Inherent Plural words, *ndí* and *umụ*

The forms *ndí* and *umù* are inherently plural and they are used with animate nouns in Ìgbò to express plural of such nouns. They are exemplified in Table (3):

Table 3: Plural marking with *ndí* and *umù*

Singular	Plural	Gloss
mmadu	ndi mmadu	Person
onye agbòrò	ndi agbòrò	Tout
onye òbòdò	ndi òbòdò	Villager
nwatàkiri	umụ ntàkiri	Child
Nwannē	umunnē	Sibling
nwa akwụkwọ	umụ akwụkwọ	Pupil/student
nwa nnunụ	umụ nnunụ	Bird

3.1.2. Plural Marking with Quantifiers

The quantifiers in the Ìgbò language are imirikiti, ọtutu, olemaole, niile, dum, ufodu. They are used with both animate and inanimate nouns to suggest plurality. The examples in table (4) below illustrate their roles in plural marking.

Table 4: Plural marking with Igbo quantifiers: imirikiti, ọtutu, olemaole, niile, dum, ufodu.

Singular	Plural	Gloss
mmadu	imirikiti mmadu	Person/many people
Ehi	otutu ehi	goat/many cattle
akwukwo	akwukwo olemaole	book/a few books
Akwà	akwà niile	cloth/all clothes
ulo	ufodu dum	house/all houses
anu	ufodu anu	meat/some meats

3.1.3. Plural Marking with Numerals

Numerals in Ìgbò, just like in any language, are used to mark plurality in nouns. They are also used with both animate and inanimate nouns. The numerals usually occur after the noun. They are exemplified in table (5)

Table 5: Plural marking with numerals

Singular	Plural	Gloss
nwokè	nwokè abuo	man/ two men
oche	oche ise	chair/five chairs
osisi	osisi isii	stick/six sticks
anu	anu asato	meat/ eight meats
anya	anya ato	eye/three eyes

3.1.4. Plural Marking with Mass Nouns

Plurality is also marked in nouns in Ìgbò using mass nouns. The Ìgbò mass nouns are igwè, igwùrùbè, ùkwù, aju, oyokò. They are equivalent to the English mass nouns, herd (of cattle), bunch (of keys), log of wood, group (of people) etc. Their use in Ìgbò as markers of plurality is shown in table (6):

Table 6: Plural marking with mass nouns

Singular	Plural	Gloss
anu	igwùrùbè anu	bee/a swarm bees
nkù	ùkwù nkù	firewood/ a log of firewood
Unèrè	aju unèrè	banana/ a bunch of bananas
igodo	oyokò igodo	key/ a bunch of keys

3.1.5. Plural Marking with the Clitic *ga*

The clitic *ga* is a marker of plurality in Ìgbò. The examples below demonstrate this:

Table 7: Plural marking with the clitic *ga*

Singular	Plural	Gloss
ugbala	ugbala ga	car/cars
mmadu	mmadu ga	person/persons
Ìko	iko ga	cup/cups
oche	oche ga	chair/chairs
Ìlì	ilì ga	grave/graves

3.1.6. Plural Marking with Reduplication

The reduplicative operation in Ìgbò can also signal plurality. Here, nouns undergo full reduplication and the resultant constructions are interpreted as plural by native speakers of the Ìgbò Language.

Table 8: Plural Marking with Reduplication

Singular	Plural	Gloss
mmirī	mmiri mmiri	water/filled with water
mmadù	mmadù mmadù	person/ filled with people
Osè	osè osè	pepper/filled with pepper
osisi	osisi osisi	wood/ filled with woods.
nnu	nnu nnu	salt/ filled with salt

3.2. Àlago Nominal Plurality

This section discusses data from Àlago with regard to nominal plural strategies with credence to Ezenwafor-Afuecheta & Ikeomu's (2021) study.

3.2.1. Zero Affixation

Zero affixation as a pluralisation strategy involves a process whereby the plural noun is the same in form with the singular noun. As the name implies, there is no overt affixation in the plural form of the noun that distinguishes it from the singular form, they are both the same. The examples of nouns involved in this pluralisation operation are stated in table (9):

Table 9: Plural marking involving zero affixation in Alago

Singular	Plural	Gloss
Oka	Oka	Chair
Ola	Ola	Fire
Inyo	inyo	Water
èfú	èfú	firewood
Éfū	éfū	Leaf
umwua	umwua	Salt

The examples given in table (9) show that there is no affixation process involved in the singular forms, resulting in identical plural forms. In other words, no alterations were made in the singular forms of the nouns to derive the plural forms. The plural forms are the same with the singular forms. Hence, the name zero affixation.

3.2.2. Vowel Transmutation

Vowel transmutation involves a change in the vowel of the singular noun in the formation of the plural noun. In Àlago, this operation involves a situation whereby the initial vowel of a singular noun differs from the initial vowel of the plural noun. This means that the singular and plural forms of the noun are the same in every respect, but only differing at the initial position as a result of a difference in the vowel. The vowel 'o', which is at the initial position of the singular noun, changes to the vowel 'a' in forming the plural form of the singular noun. Examples in the Àlago language are presented in Table (10):

Table 10: Plural marking involving vowel transmutation

Singular	Plural	Gloss
onyia	Anyia	woman
omhuo	Amhuo	Man
oyinomhuo	Ayinomhuo	Boy
oyinonyia	Ayinonyia	Child
oyigine	ayigine	brother
Oyimeme	Ayimeme	Baby

Observe that the vowel 'o' changes to the vowel 'a' as in **o**→**a** in Table (10).

3.2.3. 'Àwo'-Prefixation

Prefixation as a pluralisation strategy involves the attachment of a prefix to singular noun to derive its plural form. In Àlago, the prefix 'àwo-' is attached to a singular noun for the derivation of the plural form of the noun. Examples are as follows:

Table 11: plural marking involving 'àwo-' prefixation

Singular	Plural	Gloss
Odah	àwodah	Table
Odogwa	Àwodogwa	Prison
okpah	àwokpah	Plate
Kasalaba	àwokasalaba	Duck
ikah	àwikah	Idol
ebwu	àwebwu	Spoon
oza-kheyi	Àwoakheyi	Cap
Akata	àwakata	Hat
Koobole	àwokoobole	football
opunu, opu	àwopunu, awopu	Door

3.2.4. The Plural Markers 'Lèwà' and 'Nwàshikà'

The pluralisers 'lèwà' and 'nwàshikà' are equivalents of the English plural markers 'many, plenty' in the Àlago language. They are used with singular nouns to denote the plural forms of such nouns. The 'lèwà' and 'nwàshikà' plural markers are used interchangeably. They occur after the singular nouns in the language. Examples are in Table (12):

Table 12: pluralizing singular nouns with 'lèwà' and 'nwàshikà'

Singular	Plural	gloss
okposhi	okposhi lèwà/nwàshikà	stick
ikwiri	ikwiri lèwà/nwàshikà	money
ekah	ekah lèwà/nwàshikà	Masquerade
opunu, opu	opu, opunu lèwà/ nwàshikà	Door

4. Comparing Ìgbò and Àlago Nominal Plurality

The Ìgbò and Àlago languages are compared in terms of some morphological patterns: concatenation, base modification and productivity.

4.1 Concatenation

Concatenation is a morphological pattern that involves ordering of morphemes to form words. In this case, a word can be conveniently segmented into different parts. The Ìgbò examples of plural nouns show that the Ìgbò language follows the concatenative morphological pattern in the formation of plural nouns, but the concatenation cannot be said to be fully representative. This is because the plural form cannot be said to be a word which can be segmented into the singular and plural morphemes. Rather, two separate words that are ordered side by side. Different markers of nominal plurality exist in the Ìgbò language and they can conveniently be said to be partially concatenative.

This is exemplified in Table (13):

Table 13: Partial concatenation of Igbo plural markers

Singular	Plural	Gloss
mmadù	ndi+ mmadù	person/people

In table (13), we could see that the plural marker 'ndi' can be placed side by side with the noun 'mmadù' to form the plural form. On the other hand, the Àlago language utilizes a full concatenative

pattern in the formation of plural nouns. This is achieved by means of affixation, specifically prefixation and suffixation. To illustrate this, we have the following instances in Table (14), while (14a) is derivation by prefixation, (14b) is by suffixation.

Table 14: partial/full concatenation of Àlago plural markers by prefixation and suffixation

	Singular	Plural	gloss
a.	Ikyowe	àwo+ ikyowe = àwikyowe	Block
b.	Ekah	ekah + lèwà /nwàshikà = ekahlèwà	Masquerade

4.2 Base Modification

Base modification involves the morphological pattern that does not involve concatenation. In this sense, a word cannot be segmented into different parts. The Ìgbò language does not have base modification as can be seen from the plural examples above. The Àlago language can form its plural by modifying the base of the singular word. In this case, it uses the vowel transmutation strategy. The operation involves changing the vowel of the base, which is the singular form, to another vowel to form the plural. In Àlago, the vowel 'o' at the initial position of the singular noun changes to 'a' to form the plural noun as in **o**→**a**

Table (15)

Table 15: Base modification in plural marking of Àlago

Singular	Plural	Gloss
Onyia	Anyia	Woman

4.3 Productivity

In Ìgbò, the plural marker 'ga' and the reduplicative operation could be said to be very productive. The plural marker 'ndì' attaches to the nouns with the feature [+HUMAN] whereas 'umù' attaches to nouns with the feature [ANIMATE].

For zero affixation as a pluralisation strategy in Àlago, there is a limitation in its occurrence, only a few nouns use this morphological operation in the formation of their plurals. Both count and non-count nouns are involved in this pluralisation strategy. An example each of non-count noun and count noun involving zero affixation from the data is given in table (16) below.

Table 16: Zero affixation in count noun

Singular	Plural	Gloss
Èfú	Èfú	Woman

For the *àwo* prefixation, there is a large productivity in a great number of nouns in the formation of plurals. The majority of the nouns of Àlago employ this pluralisation strategy. For ease of description, it could be stated thus in Example (8):

àwo + singular noun = plural

5. Summary and Conclusion

In this study, we have discussed the markers of plurality in the nouns of Ìgbò and Àlago languages and have established a system of morphological comparison. The study reveals that Ìgbò marks its plural with the use of some inherent plural words like *ndì* and *umù*, use of quantifiers like *imirikiti*, use of numerals like *ise*, use of the enclitic *ga*, use of *ha*, the third person plural pronoun, use of mass nouns like *ìgwè*, and reduplication of nouns like *mmadù mmadù*; while Àlago marks plurality on nouns through zero affixation, *àwo*- prefixation, *lèwà/nwàshika* suffixation, and vowel transmutation. These findings corroborate the widely known fact that African languages utilize a set of interesting strategies in the pluralisation of nouns as well as show a striking likeness in their behaviour.

References

- Ajíbóyè O. 2010. Plural Strategies in Yorùbá. In *Studies in African Linguistics*, volume 39:2.
- Anagbogu P. 2005. Pluralisation in Koring. In *Journal of Linguistics and Languages*, 132-140.
- Crystal, D. 1980. *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*. USA: Blackwell, 1980.
- Eberhard, D. M, G. F. Simons and C. D. Fennig 2021. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*. 24th edn. Dallas: SIL International. Retrieved at <https://glottology.org/resource/linguoid/id/nucl1417>.
- Dryer M. 2011. Coding of Nominal Plurality. In the *World Atlas of Language Structure*, 138-139. Oxford. Oxford University Press.
- Ejele, P. 1997. The Expression of nominal Plurality in Esan in *Nigerian Language Studies*, 62.
- Ezenwafor-Afuecheta C. I & E. C. Ikeomu (2021) Nominal Plurality in Alago. *Awka Journal of Linguistics and Languages*, Vol. 14 (89-100)
- Green, M. M. & G. E. Igwe. 1963. *A descriptive grammar of Igbo*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Ilori F. J. 2015. Plural Formation Strategies in Igala in *Journal of Universal Language*, 49-86.
- Naess A. 2018. Plural Marking Strategies in Aiwoo in *Journal of Oceanic Linguistics*, vol. 57, No 1.
- Nkamigbo, C. L. 2009. Lexical Pluralisation in Jaba. In *Journal of the Linguistics Association of Nigeria*, vol. 12
- Nweya G. O. 2016. Plural Strategies and Devices in Igbo. In *Kansas Working Papers in Linguistics*, vol. 37:1-22.
- Ogaji, O. O. and M. M. Abdullahi .2011. *A Dictionary of Alago Names*. Lafia: His-Grace Printing Productions, 2011.
- Ohiri-Aniche C. 2015 Preserving Igbo Ancestral Language and Upholding the Linguistic Human Rights of Igbo Children. In *Igbo Nation: History and Challenges of Rebirth & Development*. Vol. 2. Ibadan: Kraft Books Ltd..
- Ohiri Aniche C. 2008. 5% of Igbo Children Do Not Speak the Language. *Ndigbo Journal* vol. 1
- Oluikpe Benson O.2009. *Thesis Writing: Its form and Style*. Enugu: Africana First Publishers Ltd, Association of Nigeria
- Omachonu G. 2003. Animacy Hierarchy: A Case for Noun Plural Formation in Igala. In M.E Attah et al *Language and Literature in Education for a better society*. Nsukka: AP Express Publishers Ltd
- Omachonu, G.S. 2008. Inflectional Morphology in Igala. *Journal of the Linguistics Association of Nigeria*. No. 11, 33-40.
- Oruchalu, S. U. 1979. *The Fundamentals of Igbo Spelling*. Ihiala: Deo Gratias Press.
- Soles, D. 2010. *The Essentials of Academic Writing*. USA: Soka University of America.
- Ugwuona Nwaeze C. 2015. Igbo Language Before, During, and After the Biafra War in Nigeria. In *Igbo Nation: History and Challenges of Rebirth & Development*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Ltd.
- Williamson, K. and Blench, R. M. 2000. Niger-Congo. In *African languages: An introduction*. Edited by Bernd Heine and Derek Nurse, 11-42. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.