

**PLURALIZATION IN ENGLISH AND URHOBO:
A COMPARATIVE MORPHOSYNTACTIC ANALYSIS**

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS
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THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS (BA) DEGREE IN
LINGUISTICS.**

NOVEMBER, 2025

PLAGIARISM CERTIFICATE PAGE

I, DUMBI OMEOGOR ENAEFEME with the matriculation number ART2100746

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APPROVAL PAGE

I, DUMBI OMEOGOR ENAEFEME, a student of the Department of Linguistics Studies, University of Benin, with matriculation number ART2100746, have duly satisfied the requirements for the research towards the award of the Bachelor of Arts degree of the University of Benin. The work embodied in this project is the result of my original research. It has not been submitted in part or in whole for the purpose of obtaining any degree, diploma, or professional qualification in this or any other institution of higher learning.

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated first and foremost to Almighty God, the ultimate source of my strength and inspiration, guiding me through this academic journey.

Special appreciation is reserved for my loving parents, Mr. and Mrs. Nelson Dumbi.

Their essential financial, spiritual, and moral contributions have been my greatest motivation, enabling me to reach this achievement.

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on how plural forms are created and used in Urhobo and English, comparing the grammatical (morphological and syntactic) systems of both languages. The main goal is to analyze the processes involved in pluralization, identify the rules that guide them, and point out the similarities and differences between the two languages.

The reason for this study is the lack of detailed comparison between Urhobo and English, especially in terms of grammar. While English has been widely studied, Urhobo has not been explored as much, particularly in the area of plural formation. This work hopes to contribute to the understanding of Urhobo grammar and encourage more linguistic research on local Nigerian languages. The study will use a descriptive and comparative approach. Data on Urhobo will be collected directly from native speakers through interviews and conversations. A set of words (mainly nouns and pronouns) will be used to guide the data collection. For English, the data will come from existing grammar books and linguistic materials. The speakers selected for the study will include people from different age groups and dialects to ensure variety.

The analysis will be guided by morphosyntactic theory, which focuses on how words are formed and how they function in sentence structure. This approach will help explain how pluralization works in both languages and how it affects grammar and meaning.

Early observations show that English mostly uses suffixes like -s or -es to form plurals, while Urhobo uses a mix of methods such as reduplication, tone changes, and sometimes even context. These findings show that Urhobo has a unique and rich structure that is quite different from English. In conclusion, this research highlights the value of studying indigenous languages like Urhobo and how they compare with more global languages like English. It also shows the need to preserve and understand local languages through proper linguistic research and documentation.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Language is a system of communication used by humans to express thoughts, ideas, emotions and experiences. One of the key features of any natural language is the ability to express number, especially in the form of pluralization—the grammatical process used to indicate more than one of a noun. While the concept of plurality is universal, the way it is realized differs across languages depending on their grammatical and morphological systems.

This study focuses on pluralization in Urhobo and English, from a morphosyntactic perspective. Morphosyntax refers to the relationship between morphology (the structure of words) and syntax (the structure of sentences). By comparing the pluralization systems of these two languages, the study aims to uncover both their structural similarities and differences, especially in how plural forms are marked and used within sentence structures.

Plurality is an important aspect of grammar because it plays a crucial role in effective communication. Understanding how pluralization works in different languages can enhance learning, translation, and even linguistic preservation efforts. In English, pluralization is generally marked through suffixation, such as adding -s or -es to nouns. In contrast, Urhobo employs more diverse strategies, which this study will explore in detail.

The Urhobo language is spoken in the South-South region of Nigeria, primarily in Delta State by the Urhobo ethnic group. It is one of the prominent indigenous languages in the region and serves as a means of communication in homes, markets, and some educational contexts. English, on the other hand, is a global language and Nigeria's official language, used in formal education, administration, and the media.

This comparative study seeks to analyze the morphosyntactic processes that underlie plural formation in both languages. It also aims to highlight how understanding these processes can contribute to language learning and the documentation of indigenous languages like Urhobo.

1.1 METHODOLOGY

This study will adopt a descriptive and comparative research method. The aim is to examine and analyze the morphological and syntactic processes involved in plural formation in Urhobo and English, and to highlight similarities and differences between both languages.

The data for Urhobo will be sourced primarily through fieldwork. This will involve eliciting data from native speakers of the Urhobo language, using structured interviews and oral conversations. A list of selected words and phrases that require pluralization will be used as a guide during the data collection process. These words will be chosen to reflect different grammatical categories such as nouns, pronouns, and determiners where applicable.

For the English data, examples will be drawn from existing grammar texts and linguistic studies, since English pluralization patterns are well documented and standardized. After data collection, the analysis will focus on the morphological processes (such as affixation, reduplication, or tonal changes) and syntactic patterns (such as noun phrase structure) involved in pluralization in both languages. Comparisons will then be made to establish structural and functional differences or similarities.

This methodology will allow for a systematic and objective comparison of the pluralization strategies in both languages and will form the basis for drawing conclusions about their morphosyntactic features.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main aim of this research is to carefully examine and compare how plural forms are created and used in both the Urhobo and English languages. This involves studying the way words change their form (morphology) and how sentences are structured (syntax) when expressing plurals. By looking at these aspects in both languages, the study hopes to uncover the different methods each language uses to show plurality, as well as identify where they are similar or different.

More specifically, this study seeks to achieve several key objectives:

- First, to describe the patterns and rules involved in forming plurals in the Urhobo language, including any unique features it may have.
- Second, to analyze how English forms plurals and how it compares to Urhobo in terms of word formation and sentence structure.
- Third, to highlight and explain the similarities and differences in pluralization between Urhobo and English, focusing on both the grammatical changes in words and the way these changes fit into sentence construction.
- Lastly, the study aims to contribute useful information to the field of linguistics by expanding our understanding of how plural forms work in Urhobo, an indigenous language that has not been as extensively studied as English.

This study aims to deepen the reader's understanding of how plural forms operate in both Urhobo and English. By exploring the complexities and unique features of each language's system, it will offer valuable insights into the ways languages express similar ideas differently. This will not only broaden knowledge about these two languages but also contribute to the wider field of linguistics, especially in relation to lesser-studied indigenous languages like Urhobo.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

This research is important for several reasons. First, it contributes to the documentation and analysis of the Urhobo language, which is an indigenous Nigerian language that has not been studied as much as English or other major world languages. By comparing Urhobo with English, the study helps to show how different languages can express similar ideas—like plurality—in distinct ways, enriching our overall understanding of language diversity.

The findings of this study will be valuable to different groups of people:

- **Linguists and researchers** will benefit by gaining a clearer picture of the morphological and syntactic systems of Urhobo, adding to academic knowledge about African languages.
- **Students and teachers** involved in learning or teaching either Urhobo or English will find this research helpful for understanding how plurals work in both languages, making language learning easier and more effective.
- **Speakers of Urhobo** will gain recognition and appreciation for their language, which is important for preserving and promoting their cultural heritage.
- Additionally, this study can assist educational policymakers and curriculum developers who may want to create more informed language programs that respect the structure of indigenous languages.

Moreover, this research is justified because understanding how plural forms work in different languages can help foster respect for linguistic diversity and encourage further studies in lesser-known languages. It also addresses the need for more descriptive work on Urhobo, helping to fill gaps in the current literature.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

2.1 CONCEPTUAL REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This section undersees fundamental concepts that supports the study, including pluralization, morphology, syntax, and morphosyntactic comparison.

Pluralization refers to the method of modifying nouns to signify multiple items or individuals. In English, this is commonly attained by adding the morpheme **–s** or **–es** (for example, boy becomes boys, and box becomes boxes). However, English also features irregular plural forms (such as child to children and foot to feet), and there are nouns that remain unchanged (like sheep and deer). However, Urhobo leans less on suffixes for pluralization, frequently using **prefixes**, **quantifiers**, or **contextual cues** to show plurality. Some nouns in Urhobo may use “**o**” or “**e**” as plural indicators, or employ duplication of the nouns in specific dialects.

Morphology is the study of how words are organized internally. Pluralization is a morphological process that differs from language to language. English morphology primarily has to do with inflectional methods using suffixes for plural forms, while Urhobo is characterized by both inflectional and tonal morphological processes.

Syntax focuses on how words are organized within sentences. In the context of pluralization, syntactic factors involve agreement (for instance, ensuring plural nouns corresponds with

plural verbs or modifiers) and modifier placement, which consists of adjectives and determiners. In English, plural nouns need a plural determiner (such as “these books”), while in Urhobo, agreement may depend more on context or meaning.

Morphosyntactic Analysis investigates the interplay between morphological elements (like plural forms) and their role within syntactic structures (such as noun phrases). It talks about how plural markers interact with other components of sentences, which is essential for comparative studies between languages with differing structural rules.

Understanding these ideas provides a foundation for analyzing the pluralization processes in Urhobo and English—not just in how each language morphologically constructs plurals, but also in how these constructions operate syntactically in everyday communication.

2.2 PREVIOUS STUDIES

Numerous researchers have examined pluralization and morphosyntax in both English and Urhobo. Here are summaries of relevant studies, outlining their focus, methodologies, and findings.

Umukoro (1999) conducted a comparative study on pluralization in Urhobo and English, he gathered linguistic data from both native speakers and written texts in the two languages. He also applied descriptive methods to examine how plurals are formed, unveiling that English primarily relies on inflectional suffixes like **-s**, whereas Urhobo utilizes methods such as

prefixation, reduplication, and contextual markers. The study highlighted notable differences in both structural and phonological pluralization techniques. However, it concentrated mainly on morphological aspects and did not thoroughly investigate syntactic contexts, such as noun phrase agreement or their use in broader constructions.

Aziza (2003) investigated tonal variation within the Urhobo noun phrase and found that tone significantly influences the distinction between singular and plural forms in specific contexts. His research indicates that pluralization in Urhobo may sometimes be indicated not by explicit affixes but rather by tonal changes or contextual cues. This complexity enhances Urhobo's morphological framework, illustrating how tone can serve as a grammatical marker akin to suffixes in English. The study involved phonological and syntactic analysis, but it did not exclusively focus on pluralization.

Imu and Ejobee (2022) explored the inflectional morphology of Urhobo, primarily focusing on verbs. Their findings revealed that Urhobo employs both prefixes and suffixes to indicate grammatical roles. Although the study concentrated on verbs, it offers valuable insights into the process of affixation in Urhobo and its potential application to the pluralization of nouns. They used natural language data and a descriptive linguistic framework for their methodology.

Godwin-Iworin and Imu (2024) conducted a comparative analysis of number marking in Urhobo and Ukwuani. Utilizing data gathered from fieldwork and written materials, their

research demonstrated that while both languages employ affixes and context to convey plurality, Urhobo relies more on prefixation and tone, whereas Ukwuani emphasizes quantifiers and syntactic arrangement. Their findings underscore the linguistic diversity in the Niger Delta region regarding plurality, and they affirm that Urhobo's pluralization should be examined in both morphological and syntactic contexts.

Akpojisher and Dumbi (2024) carried out a comparative analysis of nominal group structures in Urhobo and English, focusing on the construction of noun phrases, which include modifiers, determiners, and plural markers. Their findings revealed significant differences in the arrangement and roles of components within Urhobo noun phrases compared to English, particularly in terms of plural marking. This has important consequences for second language learning, as Urhobo speakers often carry over native grammatical structures into English, resulting in errors.

Mohr (2021) investigated pluralization and countability in African English varieties. Utilizing both corpus-based and acceptability-based approaches, she studied how non-native speakers manage plural formation in English. Her research indicated that many African English speakers tend to depend on semantic indicators and local conventions, leading to constructions like "furnitures" or "equipments," which do not conform to Standard English grammar. This demonstrates the influence of native language structures, such as those in Urhobo, on English usage, with implications for comparative linguistic studies.

Similarly, **Haspelmath (2013)** provides cross-linguistic insights into plural marking strategies, highlighting the variety of morphological tools used across languages such as affixation, suppletion, and tone, which echoes the mechanisms observed in Urhobo. His typological approach gives a broader perspective, though it does not zoom in on specific language pairs like English and Urhobo.

Katamba (1993) provides foundational insights into morphological structures in natural languages, including plural formation. His work lays the groundwork for understanding inflectional morphology, which is crucial for analyzing how English and Urhobo manage plural constructions.

Spencer (1991) adds to the discussion by examining the interaction between morphology and syntax, especially in how inflectional markers affect syntactic agreement, a key concern in this study.

The research conducted so far has primarily focused on the morphology of plural forms in various languages, with limited exploration into how pluralization interacts with other syntactic components such as quantifiers, adjectives, or determiners. There is a notable lack of in-depth analysis on how speakers perceive the grammatical acceptability of plural forms within complete sentence structures.

2.3 THE CONCERN OF THE PRESENT STUDY

This study aims to address this gap by examining the issue of pluralization within the contexts of English and Urhobo, particularly from a morphosyntactic perspective. Existing studies have predominantly examined pluralization from a morphological standpoint, with few delving into morphosyntactic analysis, especially in a comparative framework between English and Urhobo. Furthermore, little attention has been given to assessing the acceptability and grammaticality judgments of plural forms within syntactic structures such as noun phrases and full sentences.

This research project aims to investigate how plural forms are used and function in both Urhobo and English languages. It will delve into the mechanisms of creating plural forms and their behavior within larger linguistic structures. The study will explore the differences in number agreement, the impact of descriptors and determiners, and how plural forms influence sentence organization in both languages. Additionally, the study will gather data on how native speakers of Urhobo and English perceive plural constructions to uncover any discrepancies between grammar rules and speaker intuition.

Furthermore, it will examine how Urhobo speakers learning English adapt to pluralization, especially given the differing strategies used in their native language. By addressing these aspects, this study contributes to the comparative morphosyntactic literature and offers practical insights for language instruction and translation studies.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has reviewed relevant literature on pluralization and morphosyntactic analysis in both Urhobo and English. The conceptual framework clarified key linguistic terms and concepts, helping to lay a strong foundation for understanding how plural forms are structured and interpreted within each language. Through the review of previous studies, we identified what has been done so far in the field, particularly the emphasis on morphological analysis while also pointing out significant gaps, such as the limited attention given to syntactic integration, real-life usage, and speaker judgments on grammaticality and acceptability of plural forms.

Existing works have largely focused on either the morphological or phonological aspects of pluralization without delving deeply into the comparative morphosyntactic structures of Urhobo and English. There is also a notable absence of studies that examine how pluralization interacts with other syntactic components like determiners, quantifiers, and modifiers within actual sentence constructions. These gaps underline the need for the present study, which seeks to go beyond surface-level descriptions and offer a holistic morphosyntactic comparison of pluralization in both languages.

Moreover, this study is valuable not only academically but also practically. It provides critical insight into second language acquisition challenges, especially for Urhobo speakers learning English. By analyzing structural interference and variation in plural usage, the

findings can inform more culturally sensitive and linguistically informed approaches to English teaching and curriculum development.

Beyond education, the research contributes meaningfully to the preservation and promotion of indigenous languages. By highlighting the structure and function of pluralization in Urhobo, this study supports broader efforts to document, develop, and revitalize African languages. It draws attention to the richness of Urhobo grammar and affirms its place within linguistic scholarship.

Ultimately, this study contributes to the global understanding of language diversity and cross-linguistic influence. It helps bridge the gap between indigenous and global linguistic systems and advocates for cultural inclusivity, equity in language development, and the preservation of African linguistic identity in a world increasingly dominated by major global languages.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theoretical frameworks are essential for investigations grounded in specific theories. The resolution of particular issues often relies on the application of corresponding theories or frameworks. Clearly articulate the theories in play, explain their operational mechanisms, and demonstrate how they can aid in addressing the identified problem.

This research employs a morphosyntactic theoretical framework to steer the examination of pluralization in Urhobo and English. The analysis will draw upon the following linguistic theories:

3.1. MORPHEME-BASED MORPHOLOGY (**Item-and-Arrangement Theory**)

The **Item-and-Arrangement (IA)** model, originating from structuralist linguistics, perceives words as structured sequences of morphemes—each morpheme denoting a specific grammatical function like plurality, tense, or gender. Within this framework, pluralization is interpreted as the attachment of a plural morpheme (e.g., **-s** in **dogs** or **-es** in **boxes**) to a noun stem.

This theory proves valuable for examining the pluralization of English, which typically follows a regular pattern involving suffixes. For instance:

- cat → cats

- church → churches

- box → boxes

In contrast, Urhobo does not consistently pluralize through suffixation. The **IA** model will be employed to investigate if Urhobo plural forms can be analyzed as combinations of specific morphemes, like plural markers "ò" or "é", and whether these markers are consistent within noun classes. This approach will help detect similarities or discrepancies in morpheme structure between the two languages.

3.2. MORPHOLOGICAL TYPOLOGY THEORY

The theory of morphological typology categorizes languages based on how they form words—whether through methods like **isolating**, **agglutinative**, **fusional**, or **polysynthetic**. English is classified as somewhat **fusional**, where morphemes can convey multiple grammatical functions (e.g., **-s** indicating both plural and third person singular). On the other hand, Urhobo displays agglutinative and isolating characteristics, using distinct morphemes or separate words to denote plurality.

This theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the inherent structural characteristics of each language. It aids in illustrating the distinctiveness of pluralization in Urhobo not only in terms of form but also in the language's typological characteristics. This

distinction can clarify why a plural marker in Urhobo may exhibit different behaviors or attachments compared to English.

3.3. GOVERNMENT AND BINDING THEORY (Syntax)

Noam Chomsky introduced Government and Binding (GB) Theory as a fundamental tool for syntactic analysis. GB theory comprises various components such as X-bar theory, case theory, and agreement theory, all of which play crucial roles in morphosyntactic investigations.

In this context, Agreement Theory holds particular significance. It delves into how linguistic features like number, gender, and person need to correspond between elements within a sentence. For example, in English, plural subjects must agree with plural verbs:

- **The boys play football** (correct)
- **The boys plays football** (incorrect)

In Urhobo, similar agreements may arise between a noun and an adjective or a noun and a verb, albeit with distinct patterns and markers. GB Theory empowers researchers to assess the presence of such **agreement principles** in Urhobo and how they are structurally upheld, especially within plural contexts.

3.4. CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS HYPOTHESIS (CAH)

The **Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis** posits that the mistakes made by learners of a second language can be attributed to the differences between their first language (L1) and the language they are trying to learn (L2). This theory is especially beneficial for research that compares English with a native language such as Urhobo.

By applying CAH, this research can:

- Determine the rules for pluralization in both Urhobo and English.
- Anticipate the challenges Urhobo speakers might face when learning English plurals.
- Clarify instances of language interference regarding plural forms.

This framework will enhance the educational significance of the study, particularly in creating teaching materials that consider cross-linguistic variations.

3.5. SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS (SFL)

Created by M.A.K. Halliday, Systemic Functional Linguistics perceives language as a system of choices that serve communicative purposes. It prioritizes context, meaning, and function over rigid structural guidelines.

In the context of pluralization, SFL aids in examining:

- The application of plural forms in **actual communication**

- The **roles** of plural markers in conveying quantity, generalization, or emphasis.

How speakers of Urhobo and English select plural forms based on social or contextual influences.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) enhances the research by going beyond traditional grammar to explore how plural forms operate within discourse, making the analysis more dynamic.

3.6. RELEVANCE OF THESE THEORIES TO THE PRESENT STUDY

The integration of these theories offers a strong basis for a comparative morphosyntactic examination of pluralization in Urhobo and English.

- The Item-and-Arrangement Theory assists in outlining the structure of plural morphemes in both languages.
- Morphological Typology helps in categorizing and clarifying the structural characteristics of Urhobo and English.
- Government and Binding Theory facilitates an in-depth syntactic examination of agreement patterns and plural constructions.
- The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis allows the study to anticipate and clarify learner challenges and interference patterns.

- Systemic Functional Linguistics contributes insights into the contextual and functional application of plural forms, enhancing the comparative analysis.

These frameworks will enable the researcher to investigate not only **what** plural forms exist, but **how** they behave structurally, functionally, and communicatively in both languages. This approach will offer a thorough insight into pluralization and assist in tackling the research questions from various linguistic viewpoints.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the data collected in both English and Urhobo, showing their singular and plural forms. It further analyzes the pluralization systems of both languages under five main categories: Semantic fields, Number Behavior in English, Morphological Complexity, Animacy, and the Possibility of Pluralization in Urhobo.

Each category includes selected English nouns, their singular and plural forms, and their equivalents in Urhobo (both singular and plural where applicable). The analysis will help reveal structural similarities and differences in the morphosyntactic behavior of plural nouns in the two languages.

The data were elicited and translated with the help of a native Urhobo speaker.

4.2 DATA PRESENTATION

The data consists of 20 words each under the five categories in singular and plural forms, both in **English** and their **Urhobo** equivalents (as translated). Each set will be analyzed subsequently.

4.3 SEMANTIC FIELDS

This section investigates the pluralization strategies in English and Urhobo by organizing nouns into distinct semantic fields, such as animals, people, objects, and places. This classification provides a clear lens through which to observe how the conceptual meaning of a noun influences its morphological behavior. The data reveals that while both languages systematically mark plurality, they employ fundamentally different mechanisms to do so, reflecting their unique typological structures.

ANIMALS

S/N	English(Sin)	English(Plu)	Urhobo(Sin)	Urhobo(Plu)
1	Cat	Cats	Ónógbo	Inógbo
2	Goat	Goats	Evwé	Evwé
3	Sheep	Sheeps	Ogode	Ogode
4	Pig	Pigs	Esi	Isi
5	Bird	Birds	Óvwra	Evwra

PEOPLE

S/N	English(Sin)	English(Plu)	Urhobo(Sin)	Urhobo(Plu)
6	Child	Children	Ómó	Emó
7	Friend	Friends	Ugbeya	Igbeya
8	Boy	Boys	Omoshare	Emeshare
9	Girl	Girls	Omote	Emete
10	Man	Men	Oshare	Eshare

OBJECT/THINGS

S/N	English (Sin)	English(Plu)	Urhobo(Sin)	Urhobo(Plu)
11	Book	Books	Ọbe	Ẹbe
12	Table	Tables	Iméje	Eméje
13	Chair	Chairs	Agbara	Egbara
14	Bag	Bags	Ékpu	Ikpu
15	Bottle	Bottles	Ọgo	Ego

PLACES/NATURE

S/N	English(Sin)	English(Plu)	Urhobo(Sin)	Urhobo(Plu)
16	School	Schools	Uweruyono	Iweruyono
17	Tree	Trees	Úrhé	Irhé
18	Mountain	Mountains	Ugbenu	Igbenu
19	Church	Churches	Uwega	Iwega
20	Garden	Gardens	Ogba	Egba

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The data presented above shows a clear pattern: both English and Urhobo have well-defined pluralization systems, but their morphological approaches are starkly different. English generally relies on a highly productive, suffixal system, while Urhobo's system is rooted in a system of prefixal alternation, vowel changes, and tonal shifts.

English Pluralization

In English, the plural is typically formed by adding the suffixes -s or -es to the singular form, a strategy known as regular pluralization. The data consistently illustrates this pattern across various semantic categories, such as cat → cats, book → books, and table → tables. This suffixal system is highly predictable and applies to the majority of nouns in the language. The few exceptions, often remnants of older linguistic forms, are considered irregular plurals, such as child → children and man → men. While these forms do not follow the standard suffixal rule, they are still fixed and predictable within native usage. This regularity makes the English pluralization system relatively transparent and uniform across different semantic fields.

Urhobo Pluralization

In sharp contrast, Urhobo pluralization is not based on suffixation. The data reveals a more complex and intricate system, characterized by prefix changes. This is a hallmark of many

Niger-Congo languages, which often employ noun class prefixes to mark grammatical distinctions like number. The change from singular to plural is primarily achieved by swapping one prefix for another.

For example, nouns in the 'people' category consistently show a change in the initial vowel:

- Ómó (child) becomes Emó.
- Omoshare (boy) becomes Emeshare.
- Omote (girl) becomes Emete.

The animal and object categories follow a similar pattern:

- Ónógbo (cat) becomes Inógbo.
- Óvwra (bird) becomes Evwra.
- Obe (book) becomes Ebe.
- Ékpu (bag) becomes Ikpu.

This prefixal system is the dominant method for plural marking across various semantic categories in the data. Furthermore, subtle vowel alternations and tonal shifts may also accompany the prefix change, adding another layer of complexity to the morphological process. For instance, the singular Ogode (sheep) becomes Ogode in the plural.

A few nouns, like *Evwé* (goat), appear identical in both singular and plural forms. In these cases, the plural is not morphologically marked but is instead conveyed through contextual clues or the use of numerical indicators (e.g., "three goats").

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The analysis of the data by semantic fields reveals that while English and Urhobo both distinguish between singular and plural forms, their underlying grammatical systems are fundamentally different. English primarily relies on a regular, suffixal system for its plural nouns. Urhobo, on the other hand, employs a prefixal system that is deeply connected to its noun class structure, a key feature of its linguistic typology. This comparison highlights a significant structural difference: English pluralization is a linear, predictable affixation process, whereas Urhobo's system is a more integrated, pre-fixed system where the singular and plural forms are part of a broader noun class paradigm.

4.4 NUMBER BEHAVIOR IN ENGLISH

This section examines the various pluralization patterns of English nouns and contrasts them with their Urhobo equivalents. The analysis is structured around four distinct categories of English nouns: regular plurals, zero plurals, uncountable nouns, and plural-only nouns. This categorization reveals key similarities and differences in how the two languages handle number marking, highlighting English's reliance on diverse morphological strategies and Urhobo's more uniform system of prefixation and contextual understanding.

REGULAR PLURALS

S/N	English(Sin)	English(Plu)	Urhobo(Sin)	Urhobo(Plu)
1	Bag	Bags	Ékpu	Ikpu
2	Chair	Chairs	Agbara	Egbara
3	Tooth	Teeth	Úbíáko	Ibíáko
4	Foot	Feet	Owọ	Awọ
5	Phone	Phones	Itinagọfu	(No plural)

ZERO PLURALS

S/N	English	Urhobo
6	Fish	Eri
7	Deer	Órhua
8	Sheep	Ogodẹ
9	Aircraft	Okorenu
10	Offspring	Ivwie

UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS

S/N	English	Urhobo
11	Water	Ame
12	Rice	Iresu
13	Sugar	Oyubu
14	Salt	Ughwaka
15	Sand	Ekpen

PLURAL-ONLY NOUNS

S/N	English	Urhobo
16	Surroundings	Orhoma
17	Congratulations	Ewewu
18	Manners	Uruemu
19	Scissors	Utudjéru
20	Trousers	Ékpacho

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The data reveals that English employs a diverse array of strategies for indicating number, including regular suffixation, vowel alternation, and zero marking, while Urhobo's system appears more uniform, often relying on a combination of prefixal change, context, and the noun's inherent meaning.

Regular and Irregular Plurals

The majority of English nouns, as shown in the data for bag and chair, form their plurals by adding the suffixes -s or -es. This makes English's primary pluralization method highly productive and predictable for new or foreign words. However, the language also includes irregular plurals, such as tooth becoming teeth and foot becoming feet. These plurals, which involve internal vowel changes, are relics of older language stages and do not follow a general rule. They must be learned individually by speakers, presenting a challenge for second-language

learners. Interestingly, the Urhobo equivalents for these items, *Úbíáko* and *Owọ*, form their plurals (*Ibíáko* and *Awọ*) through prefixal and root modification, a more systemic pattern than English's sporadic internal changes.

Zero Plurals and Uncountable Nouns

The analysis of zero plurals and uncountable nouns highlights a significant point of convergence between the two languages. In English, zero plural nouns like fish, deer, and sheep use the exact same form for both singular and plural. Determining number requires relying on context or accompanying words (e.g., "one sheep" vs. "two sheep"). This phenomenon is mirrored in Urhobo, where nouns like Ogoḍe (sheep) and Eri (fish) do not undergo a morphological change to indicate plurality. This pattern also applies to uncountable nouns such as water, rice, and sugar, which refer to substances and lack distinct individual units. Neither English nor Urhobo inflects these nouns for plurality, instead relying on external quantifiers (e.g., "a cup of water"). This shared characteristic suggests that both languages are guided by a universal semantic principle that prevents the pluralization of non-discrete entities.

Plural-Only Nouns

The final category, plural-only nouns, further illustrates the different typological approaches of the two languages. In English, words like scissors and trousers are always treated as plural due to their reference to objects with two connected parts. Similarly, abstract concepts like manners and surroundings are inherently plural. Urhobo handles these concepts differently. While the Urhobo equivalents Utudjéru (scissors) and Ékpacho (trousers) also denote collective or composite items, they often function as collective or compound nouns that do

not change form. This shows that while English has a class of nouns that are morphologically and grammatically fixed as plural, Urhobo expresses the same collective or composite meaning through singular, non-inflected forms that are understood contextually.

In conclusion, the comparison in this section reveals that English's pluralization system is a multifaceted one, combining a productive suffixal rule with numerous exceptions and fixed forms. Urhobo, by contrast, relies on a more consistent and predictable system of prefixal alternation and contextual understanding, demonstrating a fundamental difference in how number is encoded and interpreted in the two languages.

4.5 MORPHOLOGICAL COMPLEXITY

This section investigates the morphological complexity inherent in the pluralization systems of English and Urhobo. Morphological complexity is determined by the number of distinct rules, the level of irregularity, and the specific structural changes (affixation, internal changes, etc.) required to form the plural. By grouping the English data based on its specific morphological process (simple addition, spelling changes, suppletion, and internal vowel changes), a detailed comparison with the Urhobo prefixal system is established.

SIMPLE ADDITIONS (-s)

S/N	English(Sin)	English(Plu)	Urhobo(Sin)	Urhobo(Plu)
1	Boy	Boys	Omoshare	Emeshare
2	Girl	Girls	Omote	Emete
3	Table	Tables	Iméje	Eméje
4	Pen	Pens	Ugbẹ	Igbẹ
5	Book	Books	Ọbe	Ẹbe

SPELLING CHANGES

S/N	English(Sin)	English(Plu)	Urhobo(Sin)	Urhobo(Plu)
6	Wolf	Wolves	Okpohrokpo	Ikpohrokpo
7	Shelf	Shelves	Ikpekpa	Ekpekpa
8	Wife	Wives	Aye uwevwi	Eya uwevwi
9	Knife	Knives	Aphia	Ephia
10	Leaf	Leaves	Ẹbe	Ẹbe

SUPPLETIVE FORMS

S/N	English(Sin)	English(Plu)	Urhobo(Sin)	Urhobo(Plu)
11	Child	Children	Ómó	Emó
12	Foot	Feet	Owọ	Awọ
13	Man	Men	Oshare	Eshare
14	Tooth	Teeth	Úbíáko	Ibíáko
15	Woman	Women	Aye	Eya

PLURAL WITH INTERNAL VOWEL CHANGES

S/N	English(Sin)	English(Plu)	Urhobo(Sin)	Urhobo(Plu)
16	Mouse	Mice	Oghresi	Íghresi
17	Louse	Lice	Oshu	Íshu
18	Goose	Geese	Oho-ame	Eho-ame

ADDITIONS (-es)

S/N	English(Sin)	English(Plu)	Urhobo(Sin)	Urhobo(Plu)
19	Hero	Heroes	Ógbá	Egbá
20	Potato	Potatoes	Kpekpeduku	Kpekpeduke

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The data in this category emphasizes the typological contrast between English, an analytic language with many inherited irregularities, and Urhobo, a Niger-Congo language that employs a systematic noun class and prefixal structure.

English: A Highly Diverse and Irregular System

The English pluralization system demonstrates high morphological complexity due to its reliance on multiple, sometimes arbitrary, rules:

Affixation: The most common rules are the addition of the -s suffix (e.g., boy boys) and the -es suffix for words ending in sibilant sounds or specific vowels (e.g., hero → heroes). This suffixal pattern is the productive and regular core of English pluralization.

Spelling Changes (Fricative Voicing): This rule involves changing the final voiceless consonant to its voiced counterpart before adding the plural suffix, such as the change from /f/ to /v/ in wolf → wolves. This is a morphophonemic rule that adds a layer of complexity not found in the regular suffixation pattern.

Internal Vowel Change: Nouns like mouse → mice and goose → geese form their plural by changing the vowel within the root word (vowel alternation). These forms are relics of Old English, and the rule is no longer productive, meaning new words do not adopt this pattern.

Suppletive and Zero Forms: Suppletive forms, where the singular and plural are derived from historically different roots (man/men or woman/women), represent the highest degree of morphological irregularity and must be memorized individually.

These varied strategies reveal that English plural morphology is a patchwork of rules, making it less predictable and hence more morphologically complex for learners.

Urhobo: A Consistent and Predictable Prefixal System

In marked contrast, Urhobo exhibits a simpler and more consistent approach to pluralization, primarily through prefix alternation linked to its noun class system.

The data shows that for nearly every English plural category (simple addition, spelling changes, suppletive forms), Urhobo achieves the corresponding plural form by replacing the singular prefix with a distinct plural prefix:

- Omoshare (SG) \rightarrow Emeshare (PL)
- Iméje (SG) \rightarrow Eméje (PL)
- Úbiáko (SG) \rightarrow Ibiáko (PL) (Suppletive category)
- Okpohrokpo (SG) \rightarrow Ikpohrokpo (PL) (Spelling change category)

This strategy means that Urhobo does not employ the internal vowel changes or suppletive forms that characterize English irregularity. Instead, the plural is consistently marked at the

beginning of the noun, following a systematic, rule-governed pattern common in agglutinative languages.

The only instances of complexity in Urhobo are found in subtle tonal shifts or minor vowel harmony adjustments that accompany the prefix change, rather than drastic internal root modifications. This structural consistency makes the Urhobo pluralization system less morphologically complex but highly predictable.

In essence, the morphological contrast is between English's inflectional and highly irregular system versus Urhobo's prefixal and systematic noun class system.

4.6 ANIMACY

This section analyzes the role of the animacy hierarchy in the pluralization systems of English and Urhobo. Animacy refers to the quality of being alive and possessing the capacity for agency or mobility. By comparing how animate nouns (people, animals) and inanimate nouns (objects, concepts) form their plurals, we can determine whether either language uses animacy as a defining factor in its morphosyntactic rules for number marking.

ANIMATE NOUNS

S/N	English(Sin)	English(Plu)	Urhobo(Sin)	Urhobo(Plu)
1	Brother	Brothers	Oniovo Ọshare	Iniovo
2	Sister	Sisters	Oniovo aye	Iniovo
3	Pastor	Pastors	Orheren	Irheren
4	Ant	Ants	Esakpa	Isakpa
5	Tortoise	Tortoise	Ogbeyin	Ogbeyin
6	Soldier	Soldiers	Ogbu	Igbu
7	Driver	Drivers	Ọdjofa	Idjofa
8	Bird	Birds	Ovwra	Evwra
9	Rat	Rats	Erhawevwi	(No plural)
10	Snake	Snakes	Ọrọdekọ	Erọdekọ

INANIMATE NOUNS

S/N	English(Sin)	English(Plu)	Urhobo(Sin)
11	Bed	Beds	Éhwá
12	Stone	Stones	Ubiukuta
13	Fan	Fans	Adjudju
14	Shoe	Shoes	Isabato
15	Clothes	Clothes	Emwá
16	Cup	Cups	Úkó
17	Clock	Clocks	Ugojor
18	Wall	Walls	Igbehẹn
19	Lamp	Lamps	Urhukpẹ
20	Key	Keys	Usiavwre

NOTE: These words don't have plural forms in Urhobo.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The data reveals a stark contrast in how English and Urhobo treat the animacy of a noun in their respective pluralization systems. English exhibits animacy neutrality, while Urhobo demonstrates significant animacy sensitivity.

English: Animacy Neutrality

In English, the pluralization mechanism is largely indifferent to animacy. Both animate nouns (brother, pastor) and inanimate nouns (stone, cup) adhere to the same set of suffixation rules (e.g., -s or -es). The grammatical requirement for number marking is structural, not semantic. Whether a noun refers to a living entity or an inert object, the morphological process for forming the plural remains consistent, illustrating a uniform inflectional system.

Urhobo: Animacy Sensitivity and Prefixal Productivity

In Urhobo, animacy emerges as a highly salient factor in number marking.

Animate Nouns and Productive Plurality: The data confirms that animate nouns (especially those referring to humans, e.g., Oniovo (sibling), Orheren (pastor), and most animals, e.g., Ovwra (bird)) show a highly productive morphological process for pluralization. This process almost universally involves prefix alternation (Orheren \ Irheren, Ovwra \ Evwra), which is the standard mechanism of the Urhobo noun class system. This

suggests that the marking of plurality on living, agentive entities is grammatically privileged and required.

Inanimate Nouns and Zero Marking: Conversely, the analysis of the inanimate nouns reveals a remarkable pattern: the vast majority do not have a distinct morphological plural form. Nouns like *Éhwá* (bed), *Ubiukuta* (stone), and *Úkó* (cup) remain unchanged in the plural, a phenomenon known as zero pluralization or invariable forms. For these nouns, plurality is not explicitly marked on the word itself but is inferred entirely from context or by the use of external numeral classifiers or quantifiers (e.g., 'three cup' rather than 'three cups').

COMPARATIVE CONCLUSION

The differing treatments highlight a core typological distinction. English maintains a single, uniform pluralization mechanism across all countable nouns, regardless of their position on the animacy scale. Urhobo, however, employs a system that is semantically sensitive: it reserves its most productive and consistent prefixal marking for animate nouns, while relying on morphological zero marking for many inanimate ones. This differential treatment demonstrates that in Urhobo, the grammatical distinction of number is more strongly linked to the animacy feature of the noun than it is in English.

4.7 POSSIBILITY OF PLURALIZATION IN URHOB

This concluding analytical category synthesizes the findings from the previous sections to determine the overall rules governing the possibility of pluralization for various noun classes in Urhobo. The central aim is to define the morphological limits of number marking in the language and establish the key factors—semantic, structural, and pragmatic—that dictate whether a noun will have a dedicated plural form.

ANALYSIS OF PLURALIZATION POSSIBILITY

The data decisively demonstrates that Urhobo does not possess the near-universal, productive pluralization system found in English. Instead of the simple affixation of -s used for almost all English countable nouns, Urhobo employs a selective and systematic strategy where the possibility of marking plurality is contingent upon the noun's inherent characteristics.

The Animacy and Noun-Type Constraint

The most significant factor determining pluralization is the noun's place on the Animacy Hierarchy.

Productive Pluralization (Animate Nouns): Urhobo exhibits a high propensity to morphologically mark the plural for animate nouns, particularly those referring to humans (e.g., child/Ómó → children/Emó and man/Oshare → men/Eshare). The

noun class system is most productive and reliable in this domain, ensuring that number is explicitly marked for agents and living beings.

Zero Pluralization (Inanimate, Abstract, and Mass Nouns): Conversely, inanimate nouns (including artifacts and place names), abstract nouns, and mass nouns typically resist morphological pluralization. Nouns like salt (Ughwaka) or sugar (Oyubu) remain invariant regardless of quantity. For these items, the number is not encoded in the noun itself but must be inferred from the communicative context or explicitly stated using quantifiers (e.g., "a handful of salt"). This zero-marking strategy for non-discrete and non-agentive entities highlights Urhobo's semantic sensitivity.

Linguistic and Cultural Usage Factors

The data also suggests that the frequency and nature of usage can influence the availability of a plural form. Nouns that refer to entities rarely encountered in groups, such as specific animals like tortoise (Ogbeyin) or *rat (Erhawevwi), may lack commonly attested or culturally established plural equivalents. This pragmatic constraint further limits the universality of plural marking, in contrast to English, where one would simply add '-s' to create the plural form for virtually any countable animal.

The Systematicity of Prefixal Alternation

When pluralization is possible, it adheres to a highly systematic structure across the language, demonstrating morphological regularity within its limited scope. The most frequent and reliable marking strategy is prefix alternation, where a singular prefix (e.g., O-, U-) is systematically replaced by a plural prefix (e.g., E-, I-). This pattern, observed repeatedly across various noun classes, reveals a highly structured noun classification system, despite its selective application.

CONCLUSION

In sum, the possibility of pluralization in Urhobo is not a universal feature of the noun class, but rather a controlled morphosyntactic process governed by a complex interplay of semantic constraints and structural regularity. The language prioritizes explicit number marking for animate, countable entities using its prefixal system, while relying on contextual understanding and zero marking for mass, abstract, and many inanimate nouns. This reliance on context rather than universal morphology positions Urhobo's number system as significantly different from the highly inflectional and less semantically constrained system of English.

4.8 TOTAL SUMMARY

This chapter has presented and analyzed data from both English and Urhobo languages under five key categories: **Semantic Fields**, **Number Behavior in English**, **Morphological Complexity**, **Animacy**, and **Possibility of Pluralization in Urhobo**. Each section included selected nouns in English and their corresponding forms in Urhobo, with both singular and plural forms represented where applicable.

From the analysis, the following observations can be made:

- **Semantic Fields** revealed that both languages mark plural forms, especially in familiar categories such as people, animals, and places. However, while English uses suffixation (mainly –s or –es), Urhobo often marks plurality through vowel or prefix changes, particularly with animate nouns.
- In terms of **Number Behavior**, English demonstrates various plural patterns including regular, irregular, zero plural, and plural-only forms. Urhobo, however, does not pluralize all nouns explicitly. Some remain unchanged, especially inanimate or abstract nouns, and plurality is often inferred through context.
- The analysis of **Morphological Complexity** showed English pluralization through diverse methods such as simple addition, spelling change, internal vowel change, and suppletive

forms. In Urhobo, pluralization mostly involves changes in noun prefixes or vowel alternations, though some words remain the same in both singular and plural.

- The **Animacy** category further supports the observation that Urhobo tends to mark plurality more explicitly in animate nouns than in inanimate ones. While animate nouns undergo prefix or vowel changes, inanimate nouns frequently retain the same form in both singular and plural.

- Finally, the **Possibility of Pluralization in Urhobo** shows that the language does not treat all nouns equally when it comes to plurality. Many inanimate or borrowed words do not undergo any plural transformation. This demonstrates a limitation in the plural system when compared to English, which tends to pluralize most countable nouns explicitly.

Overall, this chapter has provided foundational insights into how both English and Urhobo handle pluralization, highlighting structural similarities and key differences. This analysis sets the ground for deeper comparison and interpretation in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves as the capstone of this comparative morphosyntactic analysis. It moves beyond the presentation of data in Chapter Four to provide a deeper interpretation and discussion of the major findings. The observations regarding pluralization in Urhobo and English are rigorously examined against the initial research questions and the existing linguistic literature. The chapter culminates in drawing firm conclusions, elucidating the theoretical and pedagogical implications of the study, acknowledging its limitations, and proposing concrete recommendations for subsequent research and practical application.

5.1 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The comparative analysis reveals that the pluralization strategies in English and Urhobo are governed by distinct typological principles, with Urhobo's system being far more sensitive to the semantic and animate nature of the noun.

5.1.1 Semantic Fields and Pluralization Patterns

The initial survey of semantic fields established a fundamental difference in morphological preference. English, as a Germanic language, exhibits a clear and dominant tendency toward suffixation (via -s or -es) as its primary plural marker, applying this rule consistently across most countable categories like animals (cat \rightarrow cats) and objects (book \rightarrow

books). Conversely, the Urhobo data immediately signaled a divergent strategy. Urhobo pluralization is primarily achieved through prefix alteration or vowel and tonal shifts (e.g., Omoshare \rightarrow Emeshare). More significantly, the data showed a strong correlation between inanimacy and non-marking. Many nouns representing inanimate objects or places displayed no overt plural form, forcing the reader or listener to rely solely on contextual cues, numerals, or quantifiers to determine number. This suggests that the Urhobo system operates based on semantic necessity, reserving explicit morphological change for nouns that occupy a higher position on the animacy scale.

5.1.2 Number Behavior: Selectivity versus Generality

The analysis of diverse English number behaviors—ranging from the regularity of -s addition to the unpredictability of zero plurals, uncountables, and irregular forms—contrasts sharply with the highly selective nature of the Urhobo system. While English employs a complex suite of strategies to inflect virtually every countable noun, Urhobo's system is demonstrably more constrained. Morphological marking in Urhobo is often reserved for the semantically salient, primarily animate nouns (Oshare \rightarrow Eshare). Inanimate and abstract nouns often remain morphologically invariant (unchanged). This selectivity implies that for many noun types in Urhobo, the grammatical function of number is fulfilled by external, syntactic elements (quantifiers, sentence structure) rather than internal, morphological changes to the noun stem.

5.1.3 Morphological Complexity and Systemic Regularity

The comparison of morphological complexity offers a crucial insight into the structural difference between the two languages. English demonstrates a high degree of complexity and historical layering, utilizing multiple non-productive rules such as spelling changes (wolf → wolves), internal vowel changes (umlaut: mouse → mice), and suppletive forms (man → men). This diversity indicates a historical process of absorbing and retaining various rules. Urhobo, however, exhibits a far simpler and more uniform morphology for number. Its core mechanism is the predictable prefix alternation (typically moving from O-/U- to E-/I-) coupled with minor vowel or tonal adjustments. The conspicuous absence of internal stem reordering or complex suppletion in the Urhobo data underscores its preference for consistency and systemic regularity over the morphological flexibility found in English.

5.1.4 Animacy and Morphological Decisions

The animacy analysis strongly validated the hypothesis that animacy is a significant conditioning factor in Urhobo pluralization. A clear pattern emerged where nouns representing humans or animals were significantly more likely to possess distinct, marked plural forms (Ovwra → Evwra for bird). The systematic zero marking observed among inanimate nouns (Éhwá for bed, Úkó for cup) suggests that the Urhobo language structurally prioritizes the numeration of living, agentive entities. English, on the other hand,

makes no such grammatical distinction; its plural rules are applied uniformly across the board, demonstrating an animacy-neutral system.

5.1.5 Pluralization Possibility: Selectivity and Contextual Binding

The findings converge to establish that the possibility of pluralization in Urhobo is highly selective and constrained. The language draws a clear line: nouns that are abstract, mass, or borrowed (e.g., salt, sugar, water) rarely, if ever, receive explicit morphological plural markers. Urhobo favors contextual, quantificational, or numeral phrases to express multiplicity for these categories. This contrasts with English, which allows for at least some form of plural marking for almost every countable noun. Therefore, the Urhobo system is best characterized as a semantically bound system, reserving its morphological resources for nouns with high semantic weight, particularly those categorized as animate.

5.2 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study contribute meaningfully to several areas of linguistic theory:

Typological Plurality: The study offers empirical evidence supporting the typological claim that languages utilize diverse morphological strategies to encode the universal semantic concept of plurality. Urhobo's reliance on prefix alternation, tonal/vowel shifts, and non-marking reinforces the existence of distinct pluralization systems beyond the dominant Indo-European model of suffixation, strongly aligning its morphology with other Niger-Congo languages.

The Universality of Overt Marking: The data challenges the assumption, often implicit in formal grammatical models, that all countable nouns must be morphologically pluralizable. Urhobo demonstrates that plurality can be covertly encoded through context, quantification, and discourse-level features, rather than strict, word-internal morphology.

Animacy Hierarchy in Grammar: The clear distinction between the treatment of animate versus inanimate nouns in Urhobo supports the concept of the Animacy Hierarchy as a key factor in grammatical conditioning. It suggests that number marking is part of a broader system of grammatical alignment where high-animacy nouns receive more prominent structural features.

5.3 PRACTICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings have direct consequences for language education and technological applications:

Pedagogy for Urhobo: Instructors teaching Urhobo to speakers of English must explicitly de-emphasize the English-style suffixal rule. Teaching should focus heavily on the prefix alternation patterns and, critically, on identifying and using the vast number of nouns that employ contextual plural strategies.

Translation and Writing: Translators and local writers must exercise caution to avoid linguistic interference by forcing English-style plural endings onto Urhobo nouns. Understanding precisely which nouns are unmarked is vital for maintaining fluency and idiomatic correctness in Urhobo.

Computational Linguistics: For the development of Natural Language Processing (NLP) tools for Urhobo (e.g., machine translation, morphological analyzers), plural detection algorithms cannot rely on simple suffix rules. They must be designed to incorporate the language's systematic prefix patterns, noun class features, and contextual inference rules to accurately identify number.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Despite the revealing nature of the data, the study faced several constraints:

Data Scope and Generalizability: The sample size of 20 words per category, while detailed, is limited and cannot capture the entire spectrum of Urhobo's noun classes or semantic fields. Generalizations based on this sample must be cautiously applied.

Dialectal Variation: The study's reliance on a single native speaker for elicitation and translation means the findings may not fully represent the dialectal or idiolectal variation that exists across different Urhobo communities.

Corpus Validation: The use of elicited data rather than large, naturally occurring corpora means the observed patterns are based on competence (what speakers know) and may not perfectly reflect the nuanced frequency and usage patterns found in natural discourse.

Data Ambiguity: Certain plural forms were either unobtainable, contextually ambiguous, or not readily agreed upon, limiting the ability to draw comprehensive comparisons in those specific cases.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Building upon the foundations laid by this comparative analysis, the following areas are recommended for further investigation:

Large-Scale Corpus Studies: Conduct corpus-based research on spoken and written Urhobo to quantitatively validate the observed pluralization patterns and frequency in natural discourse.

Noun Class and Prefix Mapping: Undertake a comprehensive study to map all productive noun classes in Urhobo and systematically correlate them with their singular and plural prefix alternations.

Dialectal Variation Analysis: Examine dialectal differences in pluralization rules across various geographic regions where Urhobo is spoken to determine the stability and variability of the system.

Language Acquisition Studies: Conduct developmental studies focusing on how Urhobo-speaking children acquire plural forms, comparing their developmental stages to those of English-speaking children to highlight innate cognitive strategies.

Applied Computational Linguistics: Develop practical software tools, morphological parsers, or analyzers specifically for Urhobo that are sensitive to the prefix patterns and contextual rules identified in this study.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This study successfully demonstrated that while both English and Urhobo possess robust systems for encoding number, they operate via fundamentally different morphosyntactic

strategies. English employs a morphologically complex system reliant on a wide array of suffixation and irregular stem modifications. Urhobo, conversely, maintains a system that is structurally simpler, prefix-based, and highly selective, reserving explicit morphological marking almost exclusively for animate and semantically salient nouns. For a substantial portion of its lexicon (inanimate, mass, and abstract nouns), Urhobo relies on contextual and syntactic indicators rather than mandatory word-internal plural markers. These structural differences provide valuable insights into linguistic typology and are essential for anyone engaged in the study, teaching, translation, or technological processing of the Urhobo language.

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