



A CONTRASTIVE STUDY OF THE COMPARATIVE AND SUPERLATIVE INFLECTIONAL MORPHEMES OF ENGLISH AND YORUBA LANGUAGES

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ABSTRACT: *This paper analyses and contrasts the comparative and superlative inflectional morphemes of the English and Yoruba Languages with the aim of identifying the morphological and syntactic structural differences, which may pose some difficulties to the Yoruba learners of English as a second language. The study adopted the Contrastive Analysis (CA) theory as its theoretical framework as well as the qualitative descriptive design with a content analysis approach, while using a textual data collection method. The study revealed that while the English language uses the inflectional markers “-er” to mark the comparatives and “-est” to mark the superlatives of adjectives and adverbs; the Yoruba language on the other hand employs lexical items “-ju...lo” as comparative marker and “-julo” for the superlative marker through partial reduplication. The paper further discovered that while the inflectional morphemes of the English language are all suffixes, the Yoruba language lends itself to both, but majorly prefixation. However, the comparative and superlative markers of both English and Yoruba languages are suffixes. In addition, the English language in its grammatical rules contains some exceptions or irregularities, which may further pose some challenges to the second language learner. The study therefore recommends that second language learners, whose first language is Yoruba, should ensure proper learning and acquisition of the correct formation and usage of all the comparative and superlative markers of the English language, in order to improve their proficiency in the language.*

KEYWORDS: Communication, inflectional morphemes, comparative, superlative, second language, partial reduplication.



INTRODUCTION

Language plays an important role in communication. It can be in the form of signs, signals or the use of words to disseminate information and express actions among people in a community. Morphemes combine to form words, which ultimately combine to create phrases, clauses and sentences in a language. Morphemes are the smallest, meaningful units of utterance or expression in a language. Similarly, morphemes are combined to form words following the rules of the grammar of the language such as word formation, combination of various tenses and parts of speech like the adjectives and adverbs. These rules vary from one language to another just like the English and Yoruba languages. These variations are capable of creating setbacks such as interference and overgeneralization of rules vis-à-vis those available in the learner's first language (Mother Tongue), if not properly grasped. This paper, therefore examines the comparative and superlative inflectional morphemes in English and Yoruba languages to identify the areas of differences, which may pose difficulties to the second language learners, as well as the similarity, which may make the learning of the target language easier.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Contrastive Analysis (CA)

Contrastive Analysis (CA) has been regarded as a branch of modern linguistic science and as a method of foreign language teaching (Azunda; Track, cited by Ogar 257). It is a deliberate process of comparing two languages within the specified parts of those systems and particularly important in second language teaching, otherwise called “Contrastive Linguistics.” Crystal defined Contrastive Analysis or Contrastive Linguistics as “the identification of points of structural similarity and differences between two languages” (139). Citing Finegan et al., Malomis describes the theory as “a method of analyzing languages for instructional purposes whereby a native language and a target language are compared in order to clarify the points of differences that caused difficulty for learners” (6). This idea of contrasting two languages that are socio-culturally linked (like English and Yoruba) was first explored by George Fries in 1945. He argued that “the most effective materials in foreign language teaching are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned (L2), carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner (L1)” (19). Later, Robert Lado in his *Linguistics Across Cultures* (cited by Adebileje 1756), provided a comparative description of English and Spanish based on the assumption that foreign or second language teaching can be enhanced by comparing the learner’s native language (Mother Tongue – MT) with the target or second language to be learned. Thus, this translates to ‘Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH).’ Here, the learner’s first language will pose some difficulties when in contact with a foreign or target language since s/he may realize that there are some features very easy to learn while some other ones may be extremely difficult. In Contrastive Analysis (CA), therefore, a pair of languages is systematically studied to ascertain or identify their structural differences and similarities. For instance, this can be a comparison between English and French language but in this case, the Yoruba language, with respect to their comparative and superlative markers. Hence, it is assumed that learning a target or second language is



enhanced by the knowledge of these structures especially when there are similarities between that language and the learner's native language or mother tongue.

However, those contrasts could assist in the preparation of language teaching aids like the instructional materials, textbooks as well as for effective communication and adeptness. The theory is also anchored on the fact that difficulties in acquiring a new or foreign language are as a result of the differences between the new language and the native language of the learner. This may pose a challenge whereby a learner may transfer his/her language rules into another as in positive transfer versus negative interference (Agwu 124) (Olawe 31). An instance is the process where some children apply the rules of regular adjectives and adverbs to irregular ones especially with respect to the English language comparative and superlative markers. Thus, the more the differences between both languages, the more the challenges and more errors or interference will be made if not critically and carefully studied by the learner.

Conceptual Review

The Morpheme

Morphemes are said to be the smallest meaningful units of expression in a language. Alphabets of a language are combined to form morphemes and words, while the words are then combined to form sentences, phrases and clauses. Moreover, words constitute one or more morphemes. These morphemes are joined to form words and other structures in a language such as sentences (e.g., John is a farmer), phrases (at the stadium), and clauses (She cooked the food but not tasty). Notably, word formation in any language has to do with linguistic units within a word that can convey meaning, otherwise called morphemes. A morpheme, therefore, is the smallest meaningful unit of an utterance or expression in a language. It is the smallest entity combined to form words, which cannot be divided further into smaller units.

To this end, Delahunty and Garvey succinctly submit that: "A morpheme is the smallest part of a word that has a grammatical function or meaning" (22). This also indicates that morphemes are not just the smallest units of grammatical expression but also the smallest linguistic meaningful units of a language. Examples of morphemes in English are: 'danced', 'drawn', 'skipping' and 'swims' which can be analyzed into the morphemes [dance] + [ed], [draw] + [-n], [skip] + [-p] + [-ing] and [swim] + [-s] respectively, which cannot be further divided into meaningful units. Just like [-ful] in 'helpful' and [-ness] in 'fairness' and the like. An example in the Yoruba language is a word like 'iṣẹ' (meaning, work) with morphemes [i] + [ṣẹ]. Similarly, 'ṣiṣẹ' (to work) can be divided into [ṣe] (do) + [iṣẹ] (work) but cannot be split further into meaningful linguistic units.

The Inflectional Morphemes

Inflectional morphemes are affixes that show grammatical categories like plurality, tense, number, gender, case, and voice, without changing the part of speech of the words they are attached to. They are not used to create new words but to show singular or plural, past tense or non-past, comparative or superlative and the case feature of that word in question. Inflectional morphemes, therefore, change the form of a word to reflect "grammatical relationships" (Matthews cited by Josiah and Udoudom 72) or the "grammatical function" of words (Denham & Lobeck 158). In other words, inflectional morphemes are bound morphemes attached to free morphemes to mark number, tense, gender, case, aspect, mood, person and voice (Palmer qtd by M. & K. Nwala 10). Therefore, inflectional morphemes account for the grammaticality of



sentences in a language and equally highlight the syntactic or semantic relations between the words that combine to form sentences. This is in agreement with the views of scholars: (Amuda & Medubi 17), (Ozoekwe 15) on the significance of inflectional morphemes as they play a crucial role in sentence formation of any language.

The Inflectional morphemes of the English Language

There are eight (8) inflectional morphemes in the English language, part of which the comparative and superlative markers belong to, which is the crux of this study. They include:

- ‘-s, -es’ {for plurals as in: boys, matches, boxes, books}
- ‘-s’ {for 3rd person singular as in: She dances, He sweeps}
- ‘-ing’ {for continuous tense as in: writing, speaking, looking}
- ‘-en’ {for past participle verbs as in: woven, driven, spoken}
- ‘-er’ {for comparatives of adjectives/adverbs as in: shorter, larger, fatter, farther}
- ‘-est’ {for superlatives as in: shortest, fastest, longest, largest}
- ‘-ed’ {for past tense regular verbs as in: passed, talked, walked, worked}
- ‘-’s’ {apostrophe: for possession as in: the driver's license, pupils' books, ladies' bags, John's house}.

The Inflectional Morphemes of the Yoruba Language

There are eleven (11) inflectional morphemes in the Yoruba language. They are as follows:

- The Plural Markers (i) “àwọn”, “wọn” (they) {plural pronouns as in: “Àwọn ife” - The cups; “Wọn wá” - They came}.
- ii) Quantifiers: “púpò” - many, “òpòlopò” - numerous, “gbogbo” - all {as in: “Akékò púpò” - Many students; “Òpòlopò òdòdó” - Numerous flowers; “Gbogbo ilé” - All houses}.
- iii) Cardinal numbers: “méjì” - two, “mẹwà” - ten, “ogún” - twenty {as in: “Ìwé méjì” - two books; “Tàbìlì mēwà” - ten tables; “Ogún ọmọ” - twenty children}.
- The Possessive Markers: (i) “mi, rẹ, rẹ, wọn, wa” {possessive pronouns/adjectives as in: “Ilé mi” - My house”, “Aṣọ rẹ” - His/Her cloth, “Etí wọn” - Their ears, “Iwé rẹ” - Your book, “Omi wa” - Our water}.
- ii) Modifier words: “olú, oní” - owner/lord with variants: “oló, oló, ẹlé, elé, alá” {as in: “olúáwo” - Priest, “onígbìn” - Snail owner, “Olórun” - Lord of heaven/God, “olódó” - mortar owner, “ẹlẹran” - meat owner, “elédé” - crayfish owner, “aláta” - owner of pepper}.
- The Concord Marker: “òun/ó” {3rd person singular pronoun as in: “Òun mú u” - S/He/It takes; “Ó máá n lọ” - S/he/it often goes}.



- The Past Tense (zero) Markers: “şe” - do/does/did, “mu” - drink/drank, “je” - eat/ate, “gbó” - hears/heard {main verbs as in: “Ó şe idánwò” - S/He did exam; “Wón mu ọtí” - They took/drank alcohol; “A je ẹwà” - We ate beans, “Ó gbó iròyìn” - S/he heard the news}.
- The Progressive Marker “-ń” {auxiliary prefix as in: “Jọ̀nù ń fọ așo” - John is washing clothes; “Wón ń bọ” - They are coming}.
- The Past Participle Marker “-ti” {lexical verb as in: “Ó ti mú u” - S/he has drunk it; “Wón ti padà lọ” - They have gone back}.
- The Comparative Marker “-jù...lọ” {lexical items as in: “Ó tóbi ju t’èmi lọ” - It is bigger than mine; “Ègbón rẹ ga jù mí lọ” - His/her elder brother/sister is taller than I}.
- The Superlative Marker “-jùlọ” {lexical item as in: “Òun ló tóbi jùlọ” - It is the biggest; “Àburò rẹ ló ga jùlọ ní’lé” - His/her younger one is the tallest in the house}.

The Comparative Marker in English Language

The comparative marker refers to the inflectional bound morpheme used to compare two objects, people, places, events, situations or entities. In English language, it involves the use of “-er”, a suffix attached at the end of the word to be compared, e.g., big+g-+er (**bigger**), small+er (**smaller**), fast+er (**faster**). For the sentence formation, however, it combines the word ‘than’ with the adjective or adverb compared as in “John is **smarter** than Felix,” “Irene is **prettier** than her sister.” Other examples include:

- 1) The man is **shorter** than his wife.
- 2) I do not know if she writes **faster** than her brother does.
- 3) My room is becoming **cleaner** by the day but **dirtier** by night.
- 4) Whose handwriting is **finer**, yours or mine?
- 5) We have a **better** system of gathering data in our office with this new technology.
- 6) Here is a **firmer** pillow for you.
- 7) Her brother’s bag is **bigger** than yours.
- 8) His book is **newer** than mine.
- 9) Who is **taller** between the two brothers?
- 10) We came **earlier** before other guests at the party.



The Comparative Marker in Yoruba Language

For the Yoruba language, the lexical item “-jù-” is employed in-between the adjective or adverb compared with the combination of another lexical item “-lọ” to compare two items, persons, events, situations or entities. For instance, “O’ ga **ju** iyẹn **lọ**” (It is **taller** than that), “Aṣoyi’ tuntun **ju** t’emi **lọ**” (This cloth is **newer** than mine). Other examples are:

- 1) Moráyò **sanra ju** ègbón rẹ **lọ**. (Morayo is **fatter** than her elder sister).
- 2) Ọrò náà **le ju** bímoṣe rò tẹlẹ **lọ**. (The case is **more serious** than I thought).
- 3) Ìwé rẹ **tóbi ju** tirẹ **lọ**. (His book is **bigger** than yours).
- 4) A kòtíí rì irú èyíkèyí tó **dára ju** èyí **lọ** níbí. (We have never seen anything **better** than this before here).
- 5) Ife tiwa **kéré ju** tiwọn **lọ**. (Our trophy is **smaller** than theirs).
- 6) Àgbàlá Adé **fẹ ju** tirẹ **lọ**. (Ade’s compound is **more spacious** than yours).
- 7) Iléyí **ga ju** ti ọhún yèn **lọ**. (This house is **higher** than that one over there).
- 8) Eléyì **dára ju** t’ọhún **lọ**. (This is **better** than the other one).
- 9) Njé bààgí àntìi mi **tóbi ju** tirẹ **lọ**? (Is my elder sister's bag **bigger** than yours?)
- 10) Kilodé tí ọgbéni náà n’rindìn **ju** tẹlẹ **lọ**? (Why is the man walking **more sluggishly** than ever before?)

The Superlative Marker in English Language

The superlative marker refers to the inflectional bound morpheme used for comparing more than two objects, people, places, events, situations or entities. The English language superlative marker is the suffix “-est,” e.g., big+g+est (biggest), small+est (smallest) in sentences like, “This is the **biggest** so far”; “Where is the **smallest** animal here?” Other examples are:

- 1) Where is the **closest** route to the camp?
- 2) The **poorest** of the poor shall be given some palliatives.
- 3) What are the **easiest** means of securing the company’s bond?
- 4) I have the **brightest** kid in my class.
- 5) The woman wore the **costliest** jewellery to the seminar.
- 6) Is hare the **fastest** animal on the planet Earth?
- 7) Kate got the **highest** mark in the exam.
- 8) The **easiest** route to the town is the market square.



- 9) She had the **best** result in her class.
- 10) This is the **most interesting** movie I have watched lately.

The Superlative Marker in Yoruba Language

In Yoruba language, the two-morpheme lexical items “-ju” and “-lo” are partially reduplicated as “-julo” to derive the superlative marker for comparing three or more entities, e.g., “Oun lo ga **julo**” (He is the **tallest**), “Aso yi lo tuntun **julo**” (This cloth is the **newest**). Other examples are:

- 1) Iròyìn yí ló mú inú mi **dùn julo**. (This is the **happiest** news ever for me).
- 2) Taani ẹni tí ó **lógbon julo** ní ilé ayé? (Who is the **wisest** man on the surface of the earth?)
- 3) Oko tiwọn ló **jìnà julo** sí ilé. (Their farm is the **farthest** from home).
- 4) Mo ní èyí tí ó kéré **julo** ní ibí. (I have the **smallest** one here).
- 5) Èyí ni ẹran **tóyi julo**. (This is the **toughest** meat so far).
- 6) Èwo ló **rẹwà julo** nínú àwọn àṣọ náà? (Which is the **most beautiful** among the dresses?)
- 7) Ọun ló **fínjú julo** nínú ẹbí rẹ. (S/he is the **neatest** in her/his family).
- 8) Mo fẹ jagunjagun tó **láyà julo** níbí. (I want the **bravest** warrior here).
- 9) Sẹ oun ni akẹkọ tó **dángájíá julo**? (Is s/he the **best** student?)
- 10) Ta ni akẹkọ tó **dángájíá julo** l'òdún to kojá? (Who was the **best** graduating student last year?)

Empirical Review

Many works have been done on the comparative studies of English and Yoruba morphology, although most of them actually focused on the morphological processes especially on the derivational rather than the inflectional morphology, hence the need for the current study. Tinuoye in 1979 highlighted the significance of a contrastive study of English and Yoruba (and any other Nigerian language) in whichever field of linguistics study (phonology, morphology, semantics, syntax). She established the fact that this kind of study is essential in order to throw light on what features of the languages are common and where the differences occur. In addition, it is not only valuable as an academic pursuit but of immense benefit to learners of English, writers and students alike. The study tried to contrast the morphological processes of Yoruba with that of English, based on a descriptive format. It came up with some findings that Yoruba language has limited morphological processes. For instance, while the English language makes use of both inflectional and derivational morphology, the Yoruba language makes more use of the derivational morphology. Also, while English employs both prefixation and suffixation in their morphological compositions, Yoruba employs extensively the use of prefixation aside reduplication and other processes applicable to the English morphological



processes. It likewise found out that there is no genetic relationship between both languages. Although some of the features are still common and so, comparable to some extent. For example, it is the English language's morphological processes that are used to fish out some of the processes in the Yoruba language just like the inflectional and derivational suffixes that are absent in the Yoruba language but present in English. It established that the use of morphology in English is mainly connected with syntax (the study of rules that govern how words are combined to form phrases and sentences) while the Yoruba language puts the semantic (the study of meaning) aspect into more productive use.

Akande studied some Yoruba language learners of English language vis-à-vis their acquisition of inflectional morphemes in order to examine the incongruous use of the morphemes in English essays in 2003. Sixty Senior Secondary School 1 (SSS 1) students drawn from four schools within the Oke-Igbo town of Ondo State were randomly selected from four schools (15 each), consisting of two private and two public schools. They were tested with written English composition and grammar exercise in a way to equally ascertain the reason behind the decline in English language performance of students in public examinations such as the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), as well as their substandard communicative competence. The students' ages ranged from 10 to 14 years. The study found out that there was a wide gap in the mastery of the inflectional morphemes by the students as they had very poor competence in the use of the past participle, possessive, past tense and plural inflections. Some of the reasons observed in the errors of usage were that, apart from the mother tongue interference and dearth of adequate and qualitative materials (e.g., text books) due to the harsh economic realities among learners, there are no inflectional suffixes at all in Yoruba as such features like plurality, tense and concord are contextually determined by the item that appears before or after it. He therefore suggested that teachers should employ contrastive and error analysis techniques in the teaching of English as a second language. However, the current study investigates not just these few aspects of inflectional morphemes but, holistically, all the inflectional morphemes of the English language and the available equivalents in the Yoruba language, with special focus on the comparative and superlative markers (concerning adjective and adverb comparisons), so as to examine the differences and similarities that may as well pose some challenges to the Yoruba learners of English as a second language.

Adelabu's study on the contrastive analysis of adjectives in the English and Yoruba languages of 2014 identified differences, similarities and the challenges associated with those differences that could be problematic for the English learners as a second language. The work noted that though the English language is made compulsory in the upper primary (classes 4-6) and all through secondary school, it does not really make a variance in proficiency as most children speak little or no English at home or even outside the classroom, which in turn reflects their poor performance both in internal (end of term or session examinations) and external examinations like the Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) and General Certificate of Education (GCE) examination. It further observed that this poor performance has also affected students in other subjects like Social Studies and the likes, since they are expected to write their answers in English language. Two hundred (200) students from four secondary schools comprising Junior Secondary School 2 (JSS 2), and Senior Secondary School 2 (SSS 2) in Ibadan metropolis were given a test of one hundred (100) items on various types and uses of adjectives. The results demonstrated an extensive error margin among the students as it recognized that Yoruba learners of English have problems with the use of English adjectives. The findings revealed that most of the Yoruba adjectives "post-modify" or are placed after the



words they modify with given examples such as “Èsin dúdú kan” (Horse black a) = A black horse; “Ọjà kékeré kan” (Market small one) = A small market. Unusual exemptions occur where the adjectives are placed before the nouns like when expressing a special quality of a particular thing of being with examples like “Òbùn ọmọ” (A dirty child) and “Akọ òkúta” (A hard stone).

As for the English language, it noted that adjectives "pre-modify" or are placed before the nouns they modify even though there are few exceptions. It thereby concluded that in both the English and Yoruba languages, adjectives could occur freely in predicative positions, that is, in subject-complement and object-complement. It then suggested that curriculum planners should be wary of the linguistic differences that exist between the learners' first language (L1) and English when designing the English language curriculum, while teachers could present the English language to the learners in meaningful and manageable units with sufficient exercises.

A study on the causes of problems of English inflectional morphemes on the written language of Igbo second language learners was carried out by Ozoekwe in 2017. It discovered that the Igbo language lacks inflectional morphemes that indicate pluralization, genitive case, and third person singular present tense. Thus, the only inflectional morpheme of the Igbo language according to the study is the past tense marking in verbs following regular patterning. So, the dissimilarity between both languages is established to be the reason behind the problems and major cause of the learners transferring the features of the Igbo language into the English language. The study cited some similar research works done on the problems associated with the acquisition of inflectional morphemes such as: Akande's 2003, Jiang's 2004 and Penke's 2012. It noted that these studies were focused on the discrepancies common with languages since no two languages are exactly alike. Thus, these views are closely related and in agreement with Onuigbo and Eyisi's 2008 submission that:

“The English language in Nigeria and in any second language situation is affected by two important factors. The first factor, which is a very strong one, derives from the interference from the native languages and other languages in contact. The second one, which is equally crucial, results from the inherent irregularities within the structure of the second language itself” (103).

Notably, both factors are also predominantly palpable in the current study concerning the inflectional morphemes of the English and Yoruba languages. Hence, recommendations were given to curriculum planners and teachers to assist learners in curtailing the problems while the learners should be heedful of the fundamental differences in both languages.



Contrastive Analysis of the Comparative and Superlative Inflectional Morphemes of English and Yoruba Languages

The Comparative Markers

S/NO	English (Comparative - 'er')	Yoruba (Comparative - 'jù...lọ')
1	It is bigger than mine.	1) Ó tóbi jù t'èmi lọ .
2	Your brother is taller than I am.	2) Ègbón rẹ gajù mí lọ .
3	Serah's house is higher than ours.	3) Ilé Sèrà gaju tiwa lọ .
4	I like these pictures better than those ones.	4) Àwọn àwòrán wònyí wùnmí jù àwọn'yẹn lọ .
5	This is bigger than mine.	5) Eléyí tóbi jù t'èmi lọ .
6	This is smaller than the other.	6) Eléyí kéré jù tò'hún lọ .
7	Your dress is more beautiful than hers.	7) Aşọ rẹ ti lọ wà ju tirẹ lọ .
8	This is better than that one.	8) Eléyí dára jù ti tò'hún yẹn lọ .
9	Who can run faster than the boy?	9) Ta ló lè sàré jù ọmọkùnrin náà lọ ?
10	Abuja's airfare is more expensive than that.	10) Owo okò ofurufu Àbújá wón jù 'yẹn lọ .

5.2. The Superlative Markers

S/N0.	English (Superlative - 'est')	Yoruba Superlative - 'jùlọ')
1	It is the biggest .	1) Óun lótóbi jùlọ .
2	Your brother is the tallest among us.	2) Ègbón rẹ lo ga jùlọ láàrín wa.
3	Serah's house is the highest around us.	3) Ilé Sèrà lo ga jùlọ ní ọdò wa.
4	These pictures are the best for me.	4) Àwọn àwòrán wònyí lo wùnmí jùlọ .
5	This is the biggest of all.	5) Eléyí lo tóbi jùlọ .
6	It is the smallest amongst its peers.	6) Òun lo kéré jùlọ nínú àwọn eḷẹbée rẹ.
7	Your dress is the most beautiful of all.	7) Aşọ rẹ ti lọ wà jùlọ .
8	This is the costliest painting so far.	8) Àwòrán tó wón jùlọ báyii niyí.
9	Who is the fastest runner among the boys?	9) Ta ló lè sàré jùlọ nínú àwọn ọmọkùnrin náà?
10	Abuja's airfare is the most expensive from here.	10) Owo okò ofurufu Àbújá ló wón jùlọ látii ibi yií.



Similarities

From the above analysis, it is observed that the comparative and superlative markers of the two languages are bound morphemes, (English: “-er,” “-est” and Yoruba: “-jù...lọ,” “-jùlọ”) as they cannot be independently utilized except being attached to other free morphemes in order to make complete and meaningful constructions. Aside from that, the comparative and superlative markers of both languages are suffixes attached to the words being compared. There is also the existence of a lexical item “than” in both languages (though more prominent in the Yoruba language’s comparative marker), which indicates the degree of comparison between two entities, e.g., ‘slower than,’ ‘larger than,’ ‘bigger than’ and the likes for complete and effective comparisons.

Differences

While “-er” and “-est” are used respectively to indicate the comparative and superlative markers of adjectives/adverbs in the English language (e.g., **faster**, **fastest**), Yoruba language uses the lexical items “jù...lọ” and “jùlọ,” which are separated in the comparative (other words come in between) but combined for the superlative formation, e.g., “Èyí tóbi **ju** tírẹ **lọ**” (This is **bigger** than yours); “Tiwa ló tóbi **jùlọ**” (Ours is the **biggest**). Comparisons of adjectives and adverbs in English language, therefore, are achieved through inflection (i.e., addition of ‘-er’ or ‘-est’ to the words being compared). The Yoruba language, on the other hand, employs full-fledged lexical items (‘-jù...lọ’, ‘-jùlọ’) to derive these comparisons through partial reduplication.

Reduplication entails the repetition of the whole or part of a word to create a new word, e.g., “gbọmọ-gbọmọ” (kidnapper), “kíá-kíá/weéré-weéré”(fast-fast/quick-quick). However, going by Arokoyo’s definition of partial reduplication as one, which involves “the copying of a part of the base, attached to either before or after the base” (4), it can then be equated to the Yoruba comparative and superlative markers. This is evidently clear from the given examples such as “tà” (sell) in “t +í +tà” =títà (selling), “gbà”(to take) in “gb +í + gbà” = “gbígà” (taking). Hence, a similar scenario or morphological process occurs with the Yoruba comparative and superlative markers: “-jù...lọ” (more than) to derive “-jùlọ” (most).

Furthermore, the English language has some exceptions or irregularities in its grammatical rules of comparisons with the recognition of regular and irregular adjectives/adverbs, whereas the Yoruba language has uniform but distinct lexical items for its comparisons across board regardless of the forms of adjectives or adverbs, as there are no clear distinctions between the regular and the irregular comparisons aside being noticeable during the interpretation process into the English language. For instance, the English markers “-er” and “-est” are used for the comparison of regular adjectives or adverbs, e.g., ‘smaller,’ ‘smarter’ with adjustments or additions of morphemes in some situations (big-g-er =bigger); other irregular adjectives/adverbs such as ‘beautiful,’ ‘honest,’ ‘generous,’ ‘difficult,’ ‘cautious,’ ‘beautifully,’ ‘speedily,’ ‘brilliant,’ ‘interesting’ and the likes co-occur with ‘more’ and ‘most.’ Examples are ‘beautiful - more beautiful - most beautiful’; ‘interesting - more interesting - most interesting’; ‘speedily - more speedily - most speedily.’ Also, for some other irregular adjectives/adverbs like ‘bad,’ ‘good,’ ‘badly,’ and ‘well,’ they have their comparatives and superlatives as: ‘good - better - best,’ ‘bad - worse - worst,’ ‘well - better - best,’ ‘badly - worse - worst,’ as well as ‘much - more - most,’ which constitute further challenges for the learner of English as a second language.



Consequently, all these show clearly (in spite of the similarities) that there are seemingly discrete differences inherent in both languages' comparative and superlative inflectional morphemes. It therefore buttresses the fact that no two languages are exactly alike.

CONCLUSION

This paper has presented a contrastive study of the comparative and superlative inflectional morphemes of English and Yoruba languages with a view to identifying and predicting the areas of difficulties that may be encountered by Yoruba learners of English as a second language. In view of the foregoing, it is evident that there are outstanding differences between the English and Yoruba adjective/adverb comparisons. The study revealed that while comparisons of two or more entities are achieved by inflection in the English language using markers “-er” and “-est” with the compared words, the Yoruba language does same by partially reduplicating its markers “-jù...lọ” and “-jùlọ” since most Yoruba words are not inflected through their nouns, verbs, pronouns, adjectives and adverbs; rather, they are often attached to independent morphemes as full-fledged lexical items in order to achieve inflections, unlike what obtains in the English language.

Furthermore, there are exceptions to the English language rule of comparison of adjectives and adverbs with the recognition of regular and irregular comparisons. The implication for the learner of English as a second language is that s/he has to be mindful of these irregularities and be properly guided as such, so as to avoid overgeneralization and anomalous constructions such as “bad/badly - “badder” - “baddest” (as against: bad/badly - worse - worst) or “good/well - “gooder” - “goodest” (as against: good/well - better - best).

Based on the findings of this study, there are similarities and outstanding differences in the comparative and superlative inflectional morphemes of the English and Yoruba languages. Thus, while the similarities in the morphological systems of these two languages can enhance the acquisition of the English language by a Yoruba learner, the dissimilarities, on the other hand, can pose serious hindrances towards the learning process. The differences can be attributed to the various structural, syntactic and semantic uniqueness of the languages. It is therefore suggested that this contrastive study could form part of the instructional materials, textbooks and other teaching aids that will emphasize the contrasts and in turn boost the language teachers' methodologies when adequately utilized for an effective and efficient teaching or learning procedure to take place.

Lastly, learners of English as a second language and Yoruba bilinguals must ensure proper grasping of the rules concerning the comparison of adjectives/adverbs in both languages in order to enrich their proficiency in the English language. In addition, further contrastive studies on the comparative and superlative inflectional morphemes of other indigenous Nigerian languages should be encouraged for the advancement of knowledge.



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