



IGBO CLITICS AS AGREEMENT MARKERS: A STUDY OF GRAMMATICAL NUMBER IN ENGLISH AND IGBO

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ABSTRACT: *This study investigates the morphosyntactic analysis of grammatical number in English and Igbo languages. This study therefore sets out to examine the differences and similarities that exist in the use of grammatical number in English and Igbo, exploring areas of similarity that may enhance the learning of the second language, and areas of difficulty that may pose problems to the second language learner. No theoretical framework is employed since the study is descriptive. The study examines how grammatical number is marked in English and Igbo. The study establishes that gender could be neutral, masculine, or feminine. It delineates a person into first, second, or third. Number is the focus of this study, how it affects the various parts of speech – nouns and grammatical number, pronouns and grammatical number, verbs and grammatical number, demonstratives and grammatical number. The study concludes that the Igbo language is very rich in its ability to produce options in varying syntactic constructions and relations. We therefore termed the constituents that mark number agreement between the subjects and the objects and the verb as AGR morphemes. The nature of these AGR morphemes needs to be explained theoretically and we shall leave that for another study.*



INTRODUCTION

Language, whether indigenous (endogenous) or foreign (exogenous) is ‘a requisite tool in the life of individuals because there is no aspect of human activities that can be successful without the effective use of language’ (Ayodele 31). It plays a vital role in culture and social development because we use language every day in sundry ways and to meet myriads of needs. It is an imperative tool in society because man needs it to share his ideas, experiences, emotions, and interests with other people in the society or in his environment. The repository of a people’s identity and way of life is encapsulated in their language and transferred to other people and the younger generations via the means of language (Emeka-Nwobia 13). It is a phenomenon that fosters communication and enhances national development as it enables collaboration for economic, educational, social, religious, and political purposes (Benson 12).

Language is an integral part of human behaviour and it serves as the primary means of interaction between people (Adedeji 16). It is so important to the growth and sociability of a people that it is among the very first forms of behaviour that we learn as children, and later when we learn other skills and acquire more knowledge, much of this reaches us only through the medium of language. Language, according to Odegbenle (19), is a form of communication which allows animals (both lower and higher) to engage in transaction and share thoughts, beliefs, notions, ideas, experiences and so on, which are presumably known to both parties. It has been acknowledged that there are over four hundred and fifty (450) indigenous languages spoken in Nigeria with only few in written forms (Duara 11).

Nouns and Grammatical Number

In Igbo, nouns play a fundamental role in expressing ideas and conveying meaning. In the Igbo language, the use of correct plurals is significant for accurate communication. It reflects not only linguistic proficiency but also cultural understanding. In many contexts, using the wrong plural form can lead to misunderstanding or convey unintended meanings. Understanding the structure of nouns and their grammatical number is crucial for effective communication. Nouns in Igbo are typically composed of a root and various affixes that convey additional information about nouns. These affixes include prefixes, infixes, and suffixes. The structure of a noun can change to indicate possession, plurality, and other grammatical features. Igbo employs a concord system, meaning that various elements in a sentence, such as verbs, pronouns, and adjectives, must agree in number with the noun that they modify or relate to. This agreement ensures grammatical cohesion within the sentence.

Grammatical number in Igbo refers to whether a noun is singular or plural. The marking of plurals in Igbo is a crucial aspect of the language’s morphology. Igbo nouns can be categorized into two main number forms: singular (*mkpolu*) and plural (*obara*). In Igbo, the plural form of nouns is usually formed by adding a prefix or suffix, or sometimes both, to the singular noun. The specific prefix or suffix used depends on the noun class (*otutu odi*) of the noun. Igbo has different noun classes, each with its own unique prefix or suffix. Unlike in English, Igbo nouns are not made plural by adding ‘s’ at the end. The plural form of an Igbo noun is spelled the same as its singular form.

To make nouns plural in Igbo, you can either use *omv* or *ndi*. For instance, the noun class for living beings (humans and animals) is usually marked by the prefix ‘*ndi*’. So, if we take the singular noun ‘*mmadu*’ (person) and want to make it plural, it becomes *ndi mmadu* (people).

**Table 1: Nouns and Grammatical Number**

<i>Singular</i>		<i>Plural</i>	
Igbo	English	Igbo	English
akwukwò	'book'	òtòtò akwukwò	'books'
ugbòala	'car'	òtòtò ugbòala	'cars'
osisi	'tree'	òtòtò osisi	'trees'
flawa	'flower'	òtòtò flawa	'flowers'

In Table 1, it is observed that English uses suffixation process of adding *-s* to the singular form to get the plural form, but in the Igbo language a lexical item *òtòtò* is employed to realize the plural form. The plural is the form which refers to more than one subject, object or person. For example, 'I speak two languages.' The plural here is [languages] because it refers to more than one [language]. The examples below use plurals in different ways and places to demonstrate how they look when converted from their singular form.

Table 2: Number in Relation to Noun

<i>Singular Form</i>		<i>Plural Form</i>	
1. English:	I speak one language. [number + noun]	1. English:	We speak three languages. [number + noun + -s]
Igbo:	Ana masu ofu asusu. [number + noun]	Igbo:	Anyi na-asu asusù atò. [noun + number]
2.		English:	He visits many countries. [adverb + noun + -es]
		Igbo:	óna eje òtòtò obodo. [òtòtò + noun]
3.		English:	They are happy now. [plural pronoun]
		Igbo:	Obi idi fa anoli kita. [plural pronoun]
4.		English:	She has five red shoes. [number + adjective + noun + -es]
		Igbo:	ò nwere akpukwu nme ise. [noun + adjective + number]
5. English:	I want a sandwich without onions. [indefinite article + noun]		
Igbo:	achòrò m ofu sandwich alabasa adighi. [ofu + noun]		

In the first English example, we observe the use of the lexical item *one* to indicate singularity. In the Igbo equivalent, we also noted the use of the lexical item *'ofu'* meaning *'one'* to evince singularity. The same trend is sustained in *Example 1* under the plural forms. The English language uses the number *three* plus the noun [language] plus suffix *-s* realizing languages. The Igbo equivalent also uses the number *atò* 'three' plus the noun *asusù* 'language'; no suffixation is required. The difference between the two languages is that in the English example, the lexical item *three* occurs before the noun languages, while in the Igbo example, the *atò* occurs after the noun *asusù* 'language'.



In English *Example 2*, the lexical item *many*, an adverb, is used with the plural noun marker -es suffix to indicate plurality, while in the Igbo example, the word *ọtoto* meaning ‘many’ is also used to evince plurality. Notice that in the syntax of both languages the plural indicated *many* precede the noun *obodo* ‘country.’ In *English Example 3*, the plural pronoun *they* in the subject position, is used, whereas in the Igbo example, the equivalent is a null subject *obi* meaning ‘heart’. The actual plural pronoun *di fa* ‘they’ occurs after the null subject.

In *English Example 4*, the plurality is shown using the numeral *five* plus the noun ending with -es suffix. The adjective *red* modifies the shoe directly. In the Igbo example, on the other hand, the numeral *ise* ‘five’ is also used for plurality but it occurs after *akpukwu* ‘shoe’ and before the adjective *nme* ‘red’. Both languages deploy similar strategies, to an extent, to indicate plurality, but what differs is the positioning and the added affixation in English.

In the last English *Example 5*, the indefinite article ‘a’ is used to indicate a single sandwich. The preposition ‘without’ precedes the plural noun ‘onions’, whereas the Igbo example uses *ofu* ‘one’ *alabasa adighi*. The morphosyntactic analysis of grammatical number in English and Igbo languages are similar in that they employ similar strategies but totally different in that Igbo lacks the use of suffixation. Let us examine a different set of data showing both singular and plural form to demonstrate how both languages use plural with humans, objects, and animals.

Table 3: Plurality in Humans, Animals and Objects

<i>Singular</i>		<i>Plural</i>	
English	Igbo	English	Igbo
1. woman	nwanyi	women	umụ nwanyi
2. man	nwoke	men	umụ nwoke
3. house	ulo	houses	ọtoto ulo
4. cup	iko	cups	ọtoto iko
5. cow	efi/ehi	cows	ọtoto efi/ehi
6. horse	ayiya	horses	ọtoto ayiya

This data is very instructive in the morphosyntactic analysis of grammatical number in English and Igbo. First, English employs *vowel alternation*, such as [a] changing to [e] to indicate change from singular to plurality. This is observed in English *Examples (1) and (2)*. The Igbo example uses *umụ* ‘group’ to indicate a change from singularity to plurality. This is consistent in Igbo where lexical items are preferred indicators of plurality. In *English Example 3 to 6*, the -s and -es suffixes are again preferred, while the Igbo language prefers *ọtoto* ‘many’. This data suggests that the strategy for pluralization in English is vowel alternation and the use of suffixes. On the other hand, Igbo uses two lexical items – *umụ* for humans and *ọtoto* for objects and animals. This differentiates humans from objects and animals; the English language is opaque as to the differences between humans, objects and animals. We turn to another set of data to illustrate the grammatical number, the cardinal and ordinal number.

**Table 4: Cardinal and Ordinal Number**

<i>Cardinal</i>		<i>Ordinal</i>	
English	Igbo	English	Igbo
one	ofu	first	nke mbu
two	abuo	second	nke abuo
three	ato	third	nke ato
four	ano	fourth	nke ano
five	ise	fifth	nke ise
six	ishii	sixth	nke ishii
seven	asaa	seventh	nke asaa
eight	asato	eighth	nke asato
nine	itenani	ninth	nke itenani
ten	iri	tenth	nke iri
eleven	iri na out	eleventh	nke iri na otu
twelve	iri na abuu	twelfth	nke iri na abuo
thirteen	iri na ato	thirteenth	nke iri na ato

Another way to make an Igbo noun singular or plural is to use numbers. Usually, the number one is added before the noun and other numbers come after the noun. For instance:

otu agbamakwokwo one wedding

agbamakwokwo abuo two wedding

The English examples both under the cardinal and ordinal reveals that the English language uses different lexical items to differentiate cardinal numbers from ordinal numbers. What is the situation in Igbo? It is a bit complex; Igbo uses different lexical items in the cardinal like English but attaches the prefix '*nke*' to it to indicate the ordinal. The study also notes that *once* '*ofu mgbe*' and *twice* '*ugboro abuo*', the English language uses a single lexical item while Igbo uses two different lexical items. For ordinal numbers, you usually place the number after the noun. For 'first', you can use *mbu*. For higher numbers, you can use *nke* plus the number. Examples:

1st (first) wedding - agbamakwokwo mbu
 2nd (second) wedding - agbamakwokwo nke abuo
 3rd (third) wedding - agbamakwokwo nke ato

Igbo cardinal numbers refer to the counting numbers because they show quantity, for example, 'I speak two languages.' Ordinal numbers, on the other hand, tell the order of things and their rank: 'My first language is Igbo.' The examples below use numbers in different ways and places to demonstrate how they behave in a sentence.



English	Igbo
1. I have <i>three dogs</i> . [number + noun]	E nwere m <i>nkita atɔ</i> . [noun + number]
2. My daughter has <i>two cats</i> . [number + noun]	Nwa m nwaayi nwere <i>pusu abuo</i> [noun + number]
3. She <i>speaks seven</i> languages. [verb + number + noun + -s]	ɔ na asu asusu asaa [verb + noun + number]
4. This is my <i>second lesson</i> . [ordinal number + noun]	Nke a bu ihe omomu nke abuo m. [noun + prefix + number]
5. Did you read the <i>third book</i> ? [ordinal number + noun]	I gugo <i>akwukwɔ nke atɔ</i> . [noun + prefix + number]

The data above reveals interesting number-grammar rules in English and Igbo. In English *Examples 1 and 2*, numbers precede nouns, while in the Igbo examples, nouns precede numbers. In English *Example 3*, the verb precedes the number, which precedes the noun, that takes the suffix -s. In English *Examples 4 and 5*, ordinal numbers precede nouns. The Igbo example is very fascinating; the order is noun plus prefix plus number. The morphosyntactic grammatical numbers in both languages differ tremendously.

IGBO NUMBER AND CONCORD PATTERNS

Agreement markers could be classified into two types: *clitics* and *extensional suffixes*. The clitic '*cha*' is an agreement marker in Igbo. The singular and plural phenomenon, as it has been shown above, exists in Igbo though not as obtained in English. One of the ways pluralities is signalled is the use of clitics. Consider the Igbo data below:

- 1a. nwoke a na-ezu chi.
man DEM-steal stealing
'This man is a thief.'
- 1b. nwoke na nwaanyi a na-ezu chi.
man and woman DEM DUR steal stealing
'This man and woman are thieves.'
- 1c. nwoke na nwaanyi a na ezu-cha chi
man and woman DEM DUR-steal-CL-stealing
'This man and this woman are thieves.'

We observed that 1b and 1c have the same meaning. The coordinated nouns in 1b and 1c make them plural subjects. The presence of '*cha*' in 1c is optional. Its absence does not rule out the grammaticality of the sentence as shown in 1b. We argue that in 1b the agreement morpheme is suppressed (null), and we shall therefore refer to the clitic '*cha*' in 1c as an agreement morpheme. It is ungrammatical to use '*cha*' with a singular subject as shown in 2a.

- 2a. *nwoke a na-ezu-cha chi.
man, DEM DUR-steal-CL stealing



An interesting question to ask is why do we refer to ‘cha’ as a *clitic* rather than a *verbal suffix*? This is simply because ‘cha’ is syntactically mobile. It can occur elsewhere other than after a verb. Consider example 3 below.

- 3a. ndi a cha bia-ra oriri
 PL DEM CL come -rV feast
 ‘All these came to the feasting.’
- 3b. ndi a bia-cha-ra oriri
 PL DEM come-CL-rV feast
 ‘All these came to the feasting.’
- 3c. ndi a bia-ra oriri cha
 PL DEM come-rV feast CL
 ‘All these came to the feasting.’

It is interesting to note that ‘cha’ can occur between the verb root and an inflectional suffix. This is evident by its occurrence before the inflectional reduplicated Verb Tense/Aspect morpheme in 3b. The fact that it can occur elsewhere as in 3a and 3c leads us to assume that ‘cha’ in 3b is a clitic rather than an extensional suffix. It seems ‘cha’ has no inherent tone. Its tone is determined by the tone of the preceding segment. The argument for cliticness is outside the scope of the present study. We present below more data from different Igbo constructions to show that ‘cha’ is a plural agreement marker. We shall henceforth gloss ‘cha’ as AGR.

- 4a. Ada bua nye katoliki.
 Ada be person catholic
 ‘Ada is catholic.’
- 4b. Ada na Chike bu (ndi) katoliki
 Ada and chike be PL catholic
 ‘Ada and Chike are Catholics.’
- 4c. Ada na chike bu cha (ndi) katoliki
 Ada and chike be-AGR (PL) catholic
 ‘Ada and Chike are Catholics.’

Observe that in 4b, the nominal ‘ndi’ (an inherent plural lexical element) is the only indicator of plurality. 4c uses the clitic ‘cha’ to express plurality, hence making ‘ndi’ redundant and so can be deleted. Below are further examples. We use parentheses to show the optionality of the ‘cha’ morpheme.

- 5a. Ulo m bu ulo aja
 house 1st per be house sand
 ‘My house is a mud house.’
- 5b. Ulo m na nke gi bu (cha) ulo aja
 house 1st per and PART 3rd per be (AGR) house sand
 ‘My house and your house are mud houses.’
- 6a. Osisi ogologo di n’ohia
 stick long be forest
 ‘There is a long stick in the forest.’
- 6b. Osisi ogologo na osisi mkpumpku di (cha) n’ohia



- stick long and stick short be AGR forest
 'There are long and short sticks in the forest.'
- 7a. nwannyi a bu amosu
 woman DEM be witch
 'This woman is a witch.'
- 7b. Umu nwaanyi a bu (cha) amosu
 PL woman DEM be (AGR) witch
 'These women are witches.'
- 8a. Ji a rere ure
 Yam DEM rot rot
 'This yam is rotten.'
- 8b. Ji ndi a re- (cha)-ra ure.
 Yam PL DEM rot- (AGR)-rV rot
 'These yams are rotten.'
- 9a. Ada lu-bu-ru di
 Ada mary-PRIOR-FACT PAST husband
 'Ada was married / Ada was a married woman.'
- 9b. Ada na Nkechi lu (cha)-bu-ru di
 Ada and Nkechi mary (AGR)-PRIOR-FACT
 'Ada and Nkechi were once married / Ada and Nkechi were married women.'

That 'cha' in the examples above is an optional agreement clitic and not a verbal extensional suffix could be demonstrated by its occurrence in other positions as shown in 10.

- 10a. Ulo m na nke gib u ulo aja (cha)
 house 1st per and PART 3rd per be house sand (AGR)
 'My house and your house are mud houses.'
- 10b. Ji ndi a (cha) re-re ure
 yam PL DEM (AGR) rot-rV rot
 'These yams are rotten.'
- 10c. Ada na Nkechi lu-bu-ru di (cha)
 Ada and Nkechi marry-PRIOR-FACT-PAST husband (AGR)
 'Ada and Nkechi were once married / Ada and Nkechi were married women.'

'*cha*' is an enclitic coming after the verb in 8c, 9b, 10b, 11b, 12b, and 13b. It comes after the object NP in 7c, 10a and 10c. It appears after the subject NP in 7a and 10b. In all cases, it functions as an optional plural indicator in agreement with the plural subject of the sentence.

Apart from 'cha', there are some other clitics that function as agreement markers in Igbo. They are 'ga' and 'nu'. We shall present examples of their occurrence.

- 11a. M / I / Okeke bu onye iberibe
 1st / 2nd / okeke be person foolishness
 'I / you / Okeke am / are / is a fool.'
- 11b. *M / I / Okeke bu ga onye iberibe
 1st / 2nd / Okeke be AGR person foolishness
- 11c. Anyi / unu / Okeke na Okafor bu (ga) ndi iberibe



1st / 2nd / Okeke na Okafor be (AGR) people foolishness

‘We / you / okeke and Okafor are fools.’

11d. Anyi / Unu / Okeke na Okafor bun di iberibe (ga)

1st / 2nd / Okeke and Okafor be people foolishness (AGR)

‘We / You / Okeke and Okafor are fools.’

11b is ungrammatical because the clitic ‘ga’ does not go with singular subjects. Notice that because 11c has plural subjects; ‘ga’ can go with them. This shows that ‘ga’ is an agreement marker. 11d shows that ‘ga’ is a clitic because it can occur in another position – in this case, word final position. We present below instances of ‘nu’ functioning as an agreement marker:

12a. bia ebe a

come place DEM

‘Come here.’

12b. Emeka bia ebe a

Emeka come place DEM

‘Emeka, come here.’

12c. Emeka na Ibe bia-(nu) ebe a

Emeka and Ibe come (AGR) place DEM

‘Emeka and Ibe should come here.’

12d. kpee-nu ikpachu ofuma

Judge-AGR case DEM well

‘Judge that case well.’

The clitic *nu* is a second person plural marker which goes with imperative sentences. Since most imperative sentences do not have an overt subject as in 12a and d, the *nu* clitic serves as the indicator as to whether the covert subject is singular or plural. While in this case, it is not optional, it is optional in 12c where the subject is overt.

Si as an Agreement Marker

Extensional suffixes are those that cast additional meaning to the roots to which they are affixed. In the words of Emmanuel Nwanolue Emenanjo (97), the term extensional is used in African linguistics for referring to elements, usually affixes, which function principally as meaning modifiers, that is, extending the meaning of the word with which they are used. Chinedu Uchechukwu (11) observes that they refer to suffix components of the verb plus suffix structures with the suffixes expressing additional ideas. In other words, they are those elements that help to extend the meanings of the roots to which they are attached. Consider the following Igbo examples adapted from Ifeoma Nweze (91):

13a. chu + mi = chumi

chase + in = chase in

13b. chumi + ta-chumita

chase in + towards = chase in towards

13c. chumita + kpɔɔ = chumitakpɔɔ

chase in words + complete = chase in words completely

13d. chumi + kɔ + rita = chumikɔrita

Case in + complete + together = together chase all far inside



The examples in 13 show how extensional suffixes can modify or add more meanings to the verb root. Some of these extensional suffixes such as ‘*si*’ could be used in agreement with the subject or object NP. Consider the following examples:

- 14a. Chike new-re ugboala
 Chike own-rV car
 ‘Chike owns a car.’
- 14b. Chike nwe-(*si*)-ri otutu ugboala
 Chike own (AGR)-rV(past) many car
 ‘Chike owns a lot of cars.’
- 15a. Afo bu aha ahia ndi Igbo
 Afo be name market people Igbo
 ‘Afo is the name of an Igbo market day.’
- 15b. Afo, Eke, Nwo na orie bu-(*si*) aha ahia ndi Igbo
 Afo, Eke, Nwo and Orie be-(AGR)name market people Igbo
 ‘Afo, Eke, Nwo and Orie are names of market days in Igbo.’
- 16a. Emeka chi-ta-ra akwa
 Emeka carry-towards Vpast cloth
 ‘Emeka bought a cloth/some clothes.’
- 16b. Emeka chi-ta-si-ri akwa
 Emeka carry towards-AGR-rV past-cloth
 ‘Emeka bought some clothes.’
- 17a. Nwokē ahū mānye-re aka-n’akpa
 man DEM put-rVpast hand pocket
 ‘The man put his hand into his pocket.’
- 17b. ọmọ nwokē ahū mānyē-si-ri aka n’akpa
 PL nwoke DEM put-AGR-rVpast hand pocket
 ‘The men put their hands in their pockets.’

The interesting thing to note here is that the morpheme *si* is the plural agreement morpheme which tells one whether the subject or object is singular or plural. In the absence of a plural modifying noun such as *ọmọ*, *ndi*, *ototo*, it is *si* that tells us that either the subject or the object is a plural noun as in 16b. The point we are making here is that while the extensional suffix *si* could be used alone to mark plural, it is still in a way optional since the above sentences could be expressed without any overt agreement marker. This is illustrated in 18 below:

- 18a. ọmọ nwokē ahū mānye-rè aka n’akpa
 PL nwoke DEM put-rVpast hand pocket
 ‘The men put their hands in their pockets.’



DEMONSTRATIVES

In Igbo, demonstratives are words used to point out or indicate specific objects or people. They also have grammatical numbers, just like nouns, verbs, and pronouns. The grammatical number of a demonstrative indicates whether it is referring to a singular object or multiple objects; the definitions of demonstratives vary based on linguistic theories, semantic functions, pragmatic considerations, cognitive aspects, and cross-linguistic comparisons. These perspectives collectively contribute to a comprehensive understanding of how demonstratives operate in language. Under demonstratives we have the demonstrative adjective and demonstrative pronouns. Demonstrative adjectives are usually placed after the noun in Igbo to clarify which noun the user is talking about. Additionally, Igbo, being a language with a rich system of noun classes, exhibits variations in demonstrative adjectives based on the grammatical number. Here are some examples in Igbo:

Table 5: Igbo Demonstratives

<i>Singular</i>		<i>Plural</i>	
Igbo	English	Igbo	English
a	this	ndi a	these
nke a	this one		
oche a	this chair	oche ndia a	these chairs
ihe a	this thing		
ahụ/afụ/nke ahụ	that	ndi ahụ	those
nke ahụ	that one		
oche ahụ	that chair	oche ndi ahụ	those chairs

From the data on Table 5, Igbo uses *a* for the English singular ‘this’, and *ndi a* for the English plural ‘those’. This data further suggests that Igbo employs two different lexical items *a* and *ndi a* to represent singularity and plurality respectively, while English also uses two distinct lexical items – ‘this’ and ‘those’. These (*a* and *ndi a*; and *this*, *these*) in Igbo and English refer to objects in close proximity to the speaker. On the other hand, Igbo employs *ahụ* for the English ‘that’ and *ndi ahụ* for the English ‘those’. Furthermore, the Igbo language uses two distinct lexical items to express plurality of objects distant from the speaker; English, on the other hand, uses a single lexical item. This is further demonstrated in Table 6 below:

Table 6:

<i>Singular</i>		<i>Plural</i>	
Igbo	English	Igbo	English
Nwanyi a	this woman	ndi nwanyi a	these women
udara bekee a	this apple	ọtото udara bekee a	these apples
akwukwọ a	this book	ọtото akwukwọ a	these books
oche a	this chair	oche ndi a	these chairs
nwoke a	this man	ndi nwoke a	these men

Table 6 evinces that the Igbo *a* ‘this’ occurs after the nouns whereas the English *this* occurs before the nouns; this is a major difference between Igbo and English. The Igbo plurality is very complex. First, the Igbo language introduces *ndi a* a lexical plural marker, followed by



noun before the demonstrative: ndi + nwanyi + a. Besides, there are two distinct lexical plural markers: ndi and otutu. Depending on the nature and consistency of the object, if the object is animate, ndi is preferred, but if it is inanimate otutu is preferred. The English plural demonstratives do not make such distinctions; these or those are used depending on the distance of the object. Igbo, on the other hand, does not make a distinction based on the distance of the object from the speaker. This is another major difference between Igbo and English.

Proximal Demonstrative Adjectives (this/these)

Singular: o	Plural: ndi
Ulo o nke a bu mma	Ulo ndi a bu mma.
This house is beautiful.	These houses are beautiful.

Medial Demonstrative Adjectives (that/those)

Singular: o	Plural: ndi
olo o bu mma	olo o ndi a bu mma
That thing is good	Those things are good.

Distal Demonstrative Adjectives (that/those over there)

Singular: ala	plural: ndi
Ala a bu olom	Ala ndi a bu olom
That place is my home.	Those places are my homes.

Demonstrative adjectives in Igbo change based on the grammatical number of the noun. Singular adjectives are used with singular nouns, and plural adjectives are used with plural nouns, as in:

Singular: Ulo a bu so mma.	Plural: Ulo ndi a bu so mma.
This house is good.	These houses are good.

These demonstrative adjectives, combined with grammatical number, play a crucial role in specifying the location and number of objects or entities in Igbo discourse. In Igbo, demonstrative pronouns are used to point out or indicate specific objects or people, just like regular pronouns. They also have grammatical numbers, indicating whether they are referring to a singular object or multiple objects. Here are other forms of demonstrative pronouns and their grammatical number in Igbo:

Singular	plural	
Nkea this/that	ndeea	these/those
Nke this/that	nde	these/those
N'ime inside this/that	n'ime ndea	inside these/those
N'ozo underneath this/that	n'ozo ndia	inside these/those



IGBO PRONOUNS AND GRAMMATICAL NUMBER

In Igbo, pronouns also have grammatical numbers, just like nouns and verbs. The grammatical number of a pronoun indicates whether it is referring to a single person or multiple people. In Igbo language, pronouns play a crucial role in communication by replacing nouns to avoid repetition and add clarity and accuracy in expressing ideas and relationships within the Igbo-speaking community. As with other linguistic elements, mastering pronouns enhances one's ability to navigate and participate in the cultural nuances of Igbo communication. Let's explore the structure of pronouns and how grammatical numbers are expressed in Igbo. Igbo pronouns are structured to convey information about the person, number, and sometimes gender of the referent. These are distinct sets of pronouns for the first person (the speaker), the second (the listener), and the third person (others or objects). Igbo pronouns change their forms to agree with the grammatical number of the referent. This means that the pronoun used for a singular entity differs from the one used for a plural entity.

First person Pronouns

<i>Singular</i>		<i>Plural</i>	
Igbo	English	Igbo	English
Mu	I/me	anyi	We/us

Second Person Pronouns

<i>Singular</i>		<i>Plural</i>	
Igbo	English	Igbo	English
gi	you	unu	you all

Third Person Pronouns

<i>Singular</i>		<i>Plural</i>	
Igbo	English	Igbo	English
ya	he,him/she, her/it	ha	they

Table 7: Igbo and English Personal Pronouns

<i>Singular</i>			
Separable		Inseparable	
Igbo	English	Igbo	English
mu, m i	me, my	verb + m	I
gi	you, your	i, ï	you
ya	he, his, him, she, her, it, its	o, ụ	he / she / it
<i>Plural</i>			
Igbo	English		
anyi	we, us, our		
umu	you, your		
ha	they, them, their		



In Table 7, the pronouns in Igbo language are classified into two forms: separable and inseparable. The inseparable forms only apply to the singular pronouns and function as the single subjects in direct combination with the main verbs of a sentence, as in:

bi	live (verb stem)
ibi	you live
obi	he/she lives

Note that for the first-person singular, the *m* is attached to the verb stem. It is a bound morpheme; the English equivalent is lexicalized. The Igbo personal pronouns under the separable category are *mu*, *m-*, and *i*, and are glossed as 'me' or 'you'. The second set is *gi* glossed as 'you' or 'your', and *ya* glossed as 'he, his, him, she, her, it, its'. A study of the two systems reveals that the Igbo pronouns are ambiguously represented as each of them is capable of dual meanings. Particularly troubling is *ya* which is glossed severally as 'he', 'his', 'him', 'she', 'her', 'it', or 'its'. The English system is tidier and less cumbersome since it uses separate lexical items for each pronoun. What this translates into for Igbo is that speakers need the contents of the utterances to neatly differentiate the various categories or types.

The situation is not any better in the plural forms. For instance, *anyi* could mean 'we', or 'us', or 'our'. The same thing could be said of *umu* which is either 'you' or 'your', and *ha* which means 'they' or 'them' or 'their'. The English pronouns are lexicalized distinctly, while the Igbo examples have the propensity to be unclear, if one does not resort to content and context of the expression. Furthermore, the separable pronouns are not confined to their function as a subject co-occurring with a verb. They are also used as a subject, direct and indirect object. Consider the examples below:

buru	carry (verb stem)
anyi buru gi	we carry you.
mo na gi buru ya	I and you carry him.

Possessive Pronouns

Igbo also has possessive pronouns that indicate ownership or association. These too undergo changes based on grammatical number.

<i>Singular</i>		<i>Plural</i>	
Igbo	English	Igbo	English
m	my/mine	nū	our/ours
gi	your/yours	nū	your/yours
ya	his/hers/its	ha	their/theirs

They can also follow a noun in possessive relationship:

di	husband	nwa	child
di m	my husband	nwa m	my child
di gi	your husband	nwa anyi	our child
di ya	her husband		



IGBO VERBS AND GRAMMATICAL NUMBER

Accurate use of verb forms is not only a linguistic necessity but also a cultural necessity in Igbo communication. Proper verb agreement reflects precision in expressing thoughts and actions, contributing to effective interpersonal relationships within the community. Verbs in Igbo not only convey actions and states but also dynamically interact with the grammatical number of the subjects. The concord system ensures coherence in sentence construction, and the proper use of singular and plural verb forms is integral to effective communication within the Igbo linguistic and cultural context. Mastering this aspect of the language enhances one's ability to express ideas accurately and fosters a deeper understanding of Igbo culture and communication norms.

Let us explore the key aspects of verbs and their relationship with grammatical numbers in Igbo. Verbs in Igbo are typically composed of a root, which carries the core meaning, and various affixes that convey additional grammatical information. These affixes include prefixes, infixes, and suffixes. The structure of a verb can change to indicate tense, aspect, mood and, importantly, the grammatical number of their subjects. This means that the form of the verb changes depending on whether the subject is singular or plural. This agreement ensures grammatical harmony within the sentence. Verbs in Igbo can take different forms to match the number of the subject. Here are examples of a verb in its singular and plural forms:

Singular verb:	'o di'	'He/she is.'
Plural verb:	ndia di	'They are.'

In this example, the verb 'di' 'is/are' changes its form to agree with the singular subject 'o' 'he/she' is the plural subject ndi 'they'. Also, in every English sentence, the verb must agree in number and person with its subject. This rule runs contrary Igbo syntax. There is no lexical distinction between a singular and plural verbs in the Igbo language as illustrated below:

Singular:	o na abia	'He is coming.'
Plural:	ha na abia	'They are coming.'

The verb element na ania goes with both singular and plural subjects. Therefore, there is no grammatical agreement between the subject and the verb. Again, there is no gender distinction between a masculine and feminine pronoun in Igbo language.

o na abia could mean He is coming. / She is coming.

Here are more examples of Igbo verbs with their singular and plural forms to illustrate the grammatical number agreement:

Singular:	o na aga.	'S/he is going.'
Plural:	ndia na aga.	'They are going.'
Singular	o na agba egwu	'He/she is dancing.'
Plural	ndia na agba egwu	'They are dancing.'
Singular	o na ekwu okwu	'He/she is speaking.'
Plural	ndi a na ekwu okwu.	'They are speaking.'
Singular	ndi a na esi nri	'He/she is cooking.'
Plural	ndi a na esi nri	'They are cooking.'



These examples showcase how the verbs adapt to the singular and plural subjects, emphasizing the grammatical agreement that is integral to Igbo language structure. This agreement enhances clarity and precision in communication within Igbo linguistic and cultural context. If the personal pronoun follows the verb (which is the case for the first-person inseparable pronoun), an a- or e- prefix is attached to the verb stem in line with the vowel harmony, that is, an a- prefix for verb stems with as a, i, o, u; an e-, prefix for verb stem with an i, e, o or u vowel:

bi	live (verb stem)
e bim	I live.
chi	carry (verb stem)
a chim	I carry.

These prefixes disappear with the other pronouns. The second- and third-person inseparable pronouns harmonize with the verb stem, as in:

<i>Singular</i>		<i>Plural</i>	
<i>Igbo</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Igbo</i>	<i>English</i>
i bi	you live.	o bi	he lives.
o chi	you carry.	o chi	he carries

Observe that in the Igbo singular data the 'i' and 'o' are glossed as second person singular 'you'. These personal pronoun markers disappear in the third person plural forms of the verb. In the Igbo data above, the plural indicator of the verb is 'o', whereas in English it is the -es suffix, the third person plural indicator. The separable pronouns do not require vowel harmonization. Consider the data provided below:

<i>Plural</i>	
<i>Igbo</i>	<i>English</i>
anyi bi	We live.
unu bi	You (Pl) live.
ha bi	They live.
mu na gi bi	I and you live.
anyi chi	We carry.
unu chi	You (Pl) carry.
ha chi	They carry.
mu na gi chi	I and you carry.

Note that in the Igbo data, plurality is not marked on the verb; rather, a distinct lexical item, such as anyi and unu are used to mark plurality on the verb. The situation with the English language is different. The pronouns are inflected for plurality while the verb is opaque to plurality except only in the third person plural, as evinced above.



DISCUSSION

The study focuses on Igbo number agreement. The prompting of the study is the necessity to re-examine the postulation that Igbo verbs do not inflect to mark agreement with their arguments. It investigates agreement patterns in Igbo constructions to show that some verbs can be formally marked to reflect the grammatical number of both their external and internal arguments.

The work, using different types of Igbo constructions, explored agreement patterns in the language. It discovers that the verb cliticizes the morphemes ‘cha’, ‘ga’ and ‘nu’ to form alternate elements that mark agreement with their external or internal arguments. Igbo verbs also take some extensional suffixes, such as ‘si’ to agree with their arguments.

In conclusion, Igbo language is very rich in its ability to produce options in varying syntactic constructions and relations. We therefore termed the constituents that mark number agreement between the subjects and the objects and the verb as AGR morphemes. The nature of these AGR morphemes needs to be explained theoretically and we shall leave that for another study.

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