

Negative Morphemes in Nsukka Igbo

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Abstract: This paper examines negative morphemes in Nsukka-Idẹkẹ Igbo, with a view to highlighting significant characteristics of negation in the dialect. As such, the study also aims to investigate the basic characteristics of negation in Idẹkẹ dialect of Igbo with particular focus on the selectional restriction observed in their distribution. The study provides within the scope of its size, a more comprehensive and insightful grammatical description of the dialect's negative morphemes. The study adopts a descriptive survey method as research design and analyses its data descriptively. The databases for the study were drawn from primary sources through informal oral interview and introspection because, the researcher is a native speaker of the dialect. Findings reveal that Idẹkẹ dialect employs four different morphemes in marking negation. They are: the widest distributed negative suffix -gu, the past negative suffix -dígu, the negative perfective suffix -legu, and the negative imperative suffix -le. In these negative morphemes, -gu, -digu and -legu are realised as -gə, -dɛgə and lɛgə respectively in the dialect. The variants are the allomorphs of -gu, -digu and -legu. The study observes that the past negative suffix (-digu) is hosted only by the root verbs and is never found on the auxiliary verb. Similarly, the negative perfective suffix (-legu) is also hosted by the verb root and could be attached to the auxiliary verbs in the dialect, particularly where the construction is responding to question(s) negatively. The study also discovered that the negative imperative mood suffix (-le) is phonologically conditioned as opposed to what is obtainable in the Standard Igbo, where the negative imperative mood suffix (-la) is invariant irrespective of the Advanced Tongue Root (ATR) pattern of the vowel in the verb where it is hosted. The above observations infer that the dialect under consideration has a genius of its own, which any analyst must approach in his or her analysis with no presuppositions from his/her knowledge of Standard Igbo.

Keywords: Negation; Morpheme; Nsukka-Idẹkẹ, Igbo

1.0 Introduction

Some scholars have contributed to the scope of the interaction of the components of linguistic description in cross-linguistic studies, which include negation. Actually, the study on negation has been carried out by scholars from various disciplines. Consequence upon that, negation has been variously defined by different scholars. From the field of semantics as Uba-Mgbemena (1981) notes that negation is an act of denying, that is, denial with respect to action, assertion, quality, state, idea, entity, and so on. Nonetheless, in phonology and syntax, it is seen as a grammatical process whereby affirmative sentences are converted into negatives (Uba-Mgbemena, 1981). From Uba-Mgbemena's definitions of negation, it is gathered that negation involves a denial of an assertive proposition or a contradiction that a proposition is not true. Working toward the same motivation, Payne (1985:75) avers that the principal function of negation is "to negate the positive declarative main clause of the language". In contrast, Crystal (2008:373) views negation as "a process or construction in grammatical and semantic analysis, which typically expresses the contradiction of some or all of a sentence's meaning". This means that the negative morpheme when affixed to the lexical or root verb in a grammatical construction may either negate part of the sentence or the whole of the sentence. In this study, negation is viewed as a denial or contradiction of another proposition, and which can be obtained from that other proposition by the appropriately insertion of the word "not". This is adopted because, no matter how negation is viewed, it will boil down to the denial or contradiction of something, the method and name given to it notwithstanding. For instance, a careful look at the above definitions of negation by different scholars will observe that those scholars are saying the same thing, but in various ways.

Negation marking displays abundant morpho-syntactic and phono-syntactic processes in Igbo. The Igbo language is one of the major African languages and also, one of the three major languages spoken in Nigeria. Yoruba and Hausa are the other two languages. Bendor Samuel (1989) asserts that the Igbo language belongs to the family called Benue Congo. Presently, Igbo is classified as a New Benue-Congo Language

(Williamson and Blench, 2000). Prior to these recent discoveries, Greenberg (1963) has it that the Igbo language belongs to the major Kwa branch of the Niger Congo. Although, Igbo is spoken predominantly in Abia, Anambra, Delta, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo and Rivers State, it is widely spoken in almost all the countries of the world by the Igbo in people diaspora (Eze, 2011). For instance, it has been discovered that the Igbo language is spoken natively in Cameroon, and written in the Latin alphabet, which was introduced by British colonialists. Today, Igbo language is taught and study as a course at University of Oxford, United Kingdom (Umeonyirioha, 2022). According to the present geopolitical zoning of Nigeria, Igbo is spoken in South Eastern geopolitical zone of Nigeria. It is a tonal language with two distinctive tones – high (ˊ) and low (ˋ). In some cases, a third, down stepped high tone is recognised.

Negation is an integral part of grammar, and a universal grammatical phenomenon that is distinguishably realised cross-linguistically. Consequent upon that, different dialects of Igbo have different ways of displaying negation. In this study, Nsukka- Ịdẹkẹ dialect of Igbo is our focus. Ịdẹkẹ dialect is spoken in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria, specifically in Nsukka metropolis. It is one of the dialects of Igbo that is neglected by scholars of Igbo grammar compared to other dialects like Ngwa, Owere, Ọnicha, Echie, Ọhụhụ, and so on (Eze, 1998). To the best knowledge of the researcher, there is no substantial recorded evidence so far available to show that negative morphemes in Ịdẹkẹ dialect of Nsukka Igbo has been fully studied. Yet, one cannot fully appreciate the grammatical expression of Ịdẹkẹ dialect without a comprehensive knowledge of negation in the dialect. Hence, the need for the study. The aim of this study is to explore the essential characteristics of negation in Nsukka- Ịdẹkẹ, with particular reference to the position of the negative morphemes.

Some scholars like Uba-Mgbemena (1981), Ndimele (1995, 2004), Obiamalu (2004) and Onuora (2017) have written on negation in Igbo as if it is a homogeneous entity, without considering the differences. However, the motivation for this study lies on the observed unique characteristic and distributional pattern of the identified negative morphemes in Ịdẹkẹ dialect, which are opposed to what is obtainable in Standard Igbo. For instance, it is a common belief that imperative constructions do not carry an overt subject NP, but this does not hold true for Ịdẹkẹ dialect because, an imperative construction can bear overt subject, especially if the constituent in the subject position is second person singular or plural. Again, the negative imperative mood suffix (-le) is phonologically conditioned as opposed to what obtains in Standard Igbo, where the negative imperative mood suffix (-la) is invariant irrespective of the Advanced Tongue Root (ATR) pattern of the vowel in the verb where it is hosted. The study on negation have been really carried out by many scholars such as Uba-Mgbemena (1981), Ndimele (2004) and Onuora (2017) in Igbo, but much attention has not been given to negative morphemes in Nsukka-Ịdẹkẹ Igbo.

The study is a qualitative research. It is a descriptive research designed to ascertain the characteristic feature of negative morphemes in Ịdẹkẹ dialect of Nsukka Igbo. Nworgu (2015) defines descriptive research as gathering data and describing them in a systematic manner, the characteristic features or facts about a given population. The descriptive design is chosen, among other research designs such as sampling survey design, quantitative design, experimental design, among others to ensure a more detail investigation of the findings of the study. The Nsukka Ịdẹkẹ variety is the object of the study. The data for the study were gathered from primary sources through informal oral interview. Besides, introspection is used in order to verify facts because, the researchers are native speakers of Igbo (Ịdẹkẹ dialect) and linguists. Other pieces of information were drawn from the library sources such as books, articles and journals together with online materials from the secondary sources.

The paper is divided into four sections. Section one introduces the work. Section two addresses the ways of displaying negative marking in Nsukka- Ịdẹkẹ Igbo; section three looks at the use of negative morphemes to mark negation in Ịdẹkẹ dialect, while section four addresses the summary of findings and conclusion of the study. Although, this study is restricted to the Nsukka Ịdẹkẹ dialect, it will make references to other dialects of Igbo if and whenever such references will make our description more insightful.

The tone-marking convention used in this study is that introduced by Nwachukwu (1982), where low-tone and down stepped tone will be marked, leaving the high tone unmarked

2.0 Review of related literature

2.1 Ways of Displaying Negative Marking in Nsukka-Ịdẹkẹ Igbo

Different strategies of showing negation in languages abound. Various scholars have carried out researches on negative marking strategies in different languages and came up with varying strategies. For instance, Dahl (1979) clarifies different languages based on three strategies, which are: the use of negative particles (affixation), independent lexical item and prosodic melody (tonal change). For Dahl, these three strategies constitute the operative mechanism to effect negation in languages. Ndimele (2004) in his own contribution establishes some Igbo dialects with four strategies: negative inflectional affixes, inherently negative auxiliary verbs, tonal alternation and contrastive focus. In contrast, Obiamalu (2004) contends that Igbo employs only two negative marking strategies: affixation and tonal melody. The above varying strategies by different scholars infer that every language possesses some ordered procedures or methodical means of polar contrast of a sentence. In *Idẹkẹ* dialect of Nsukka-Igbo, the chief strategy for communicating negation is through the use of negative morphemes, which are normally suffixes. Other means of conveying negation in *Idẹkẹ* dialect are the use of tonal alternation, the use of independent negative lexical items, and the scope of negation. Despite the fact that different negative marking strategies exist cross-linguistically, the produced meaning and functions of negation are somewhat the same. Though, the above mentioned different negative marking strategies in Nsukka- *Idẹkẹ* dialect exist, the paper discusses only the basic characteristics of negation in the dialect with respect to the position of the negative morphemes. In other words, what constitute the operative mechanism to effect negation in this study is the negative morphemes. The root verbs or the root of lexical verbs form the input fed into the negation process. That is, the lexical verb or root verb is the nucleus of the negation process in the sentence. To change an affirmative sentence into a negative one, a negative morpheme is suffixed to the verb (lexical or root verb).

2.2 The Use of Negative Morphemes in Nsukka-*Idẹkẹ* Igbo

Different Igbo grammar books have presented discussion on negation, but each of these discussions has not viewed negative morphemes in Nsukka *Idẹkẹ* dialect of Igbo. This section of the study therefore, looks at the use of negative morphemes in Nsukka *Idẹkẹ* dialect of Igbo. Before going into the use of negative morpheme in the above said dialect, we should first of all, look at what morpheme is. Morpheme, according to Onuora (2017:125) is “the minimal, meaningful, indivisible segment of grammatical description used in the analysis of words”. It is also the smallest linguistic unit within a word that can carry meaning such as “un-”, “doubt”, and “-able” in the word “undoubtable” (Ezebuilo, 2020). However, the operational definition of morpheme in this study is a meaningful morphological unit of a language that cannot be further broken down into smaller meaningful grammatical units. On the other hand, negative morpheme refers to any morpheme, which is used to alter affirmative sentence to negative sentence. In Nsukka *Idẹkẹ* dialect, the use of negative morphemes, which are suffixes, is the principal strategy for showing negation. Also, in Nsukka *Idẹkẹ*, negative morphemes are affixed mostly to the lexical or root of the verb and some times, to auxiliary verb just as it is in Standard Igbo, where negative morphemes are attached either to the root or to the auxiliary verbs. That is to say that negative morphemes are not found on the auxiliary verbs regularly in Nsukka dialect of Igbo

3.0 Data Analysis

3.1 The Widest Distributed Negative Marker in Nsukka *Idẹkẹ* Igbo

The widest distributed negative marker in *Idẹkẹ* dialect is the monosyllabic suffix ‘-gu’ (-gu/-gu). The variants are the allomorphs of the morpheme, which are phonologically conditioned. The negative suffix ‘-gu/-gu’ is marked as the widest distributed negative marker in the dialect because it could be used with all tenses and aspects. Beside, the negative suffix ‘-gu/-gu’ can be attached to the main verb, stative, and non-stative verbs, and some times, found on the auxiliary verbs in the dialect. Despite the above explanation concerning the widest distributed negative marker (-gu) in *Idẹkẹ* dialect, there also exist some disyllabic negative morphemes, which are used in the dialect to display negation. They are: ‘-digu’ (-digu/-digu) ‘negative’ and ‘-legu’ (-legu/-legu) ‘negative’. These disyllabic negative morphemes possess bimorphemic nature, which cause them to express two different notions: the first morpheme ‘-di’ in (-digu) and -le in (-legu) express completed action respectively while the second morpheme -gu (-gu/-gu) expresses negation. It is worthy of note that the negative morpheme ‘-digu’ is never found on the auxiliary verbs, but root verbs. In contrast, the negative morpheme -legu (-legu/-legu) could be attached to the auxiliary verb, especially in construction(s) that responds to questions negatively as in:

- 1a. Ọ bịa?

- 3sg come Has he/she come?
- b. Ọ bialẹgə
 3sg come – NEG ‘He/she has not come
- 2a. Ọ̇ kərə ụrụa?
 3sg sleep-rv (past) sleep Has he/she slept?
- b. Ọ kulegə ụrụa
 3sg sleep-NEG sleep ‘He/she has not sleep.

Below are more examples that instantiate the uses of the negator in Ịdẹkẹ dialect:

- 3a. Ọ wùrə ẹshi
 3sg wash-rV (past) body ‘He/she washed his/her body’ (Past Affirmative)
- b. Ọ wudəgə ẹshi
 3sg wash-NEG body ‘He/she did not wash his his/her body’ (Past Negative)
- c. Ọ wugə ẹshí
 3sg wash-NEG body ‘He/she did not wash his/her body’ (Past Negative)
- 4a. Ụbe Ifeoma charə
 Pear Ifeoma ripe rv (past) ‘Ifeome’s pear is riped’ (Stative Negative)
- b. Ụbe Ifeoma achadəgə
 Pear Ifeoma Vpre-ripe-NEG Ifeoma’s pear did not ripe (stative negative)
- 5a. Chinwè lātərə taa
 Chinwe return-rV (past) today ‘Chinwe returned today’ (Past Affirmation)
- b. Chinwè alatadəgə taa
 Chinwè Vpre-return-NEG today ‘Chinwe did not return today’ (Past Negative)
- 6a. Chinèdu vùrə ívù
 Chinedu fat-rv (stative) fat ‘Chinedu is fat’ (Stative Affirmative)
- b. Chínèdu evùgə ívù
 Chinedu Vpre-fat-NEG fat ‘Chinedu is not fat’ (Stative Negative)
- c. Chinèdu evùdəgə ívù
 Chinedu Vpre-fat-NEG fat ‘Chinedu is not fat’ (Stative Affirmative)
- 7a. Ngozi shìrə ji
 Ngozi cook-rV (past) yam ‘Ngozi cooked yam’ (Past Affirmative)
- b. Ngozi eshidəgə ji
 Ngozi Vpre-cook-NEG yam ‘Ngozi did not cook yam’ (Past Affirmative)
- 8a. Hẹ nwèrə egbè
 3pl have-rV (stative) gun ‘They have gun’ (Stative Affirmative)
- 8a. Hẹ enwegə egbè

	3pl	Vpre-have-NEG	gun	‘They do not have gun’ (Stative Negative)
9a.	Èberè	dèrə	ẹkwụkwọ	
	Èberè	write-rv (past)	book	‘Ebere wrote a book’ (Past Affirmative)
b.	Ebere	ededəgə	ẹkwụkwọ	
	Ebere	Vpre-write-NEG	book	‘Ebere did not write a book’ (Past Negative)
10a.	Hẹ	nə-ege	ntị	
	3pl	Aux-Vpre-listen	ear	‘They are listening’ (Progressive Affirmative)
b.	Hẹ	anəgə ege	ntị	
	3pl	Vpre-Aux-NEG-Vpre-listen	ear	‘They are not listening’ (Progressive Affirmative)
11a.	Hẹ	màrə	ẹkwụkwọ	‘They are intelligent’ (Stative Affirmative)
	3pl	know-rV (stative)	book	
b.	Hẹ	amagə	ekwụkwọ	‘They are not intelligent’ (Stative Affirmative)
	3pl	Vpre-know-NEG	book	
12a.	O	ryìrə	nri	‘He/she ate food’ (Past Affirmative)
	3sg	eat-rV (past)	food	
b.	O	ryigə	nri	‘He/she did not eat food’ (Past Negative)
	3sg	eat-NEG	food	
13a	Ọ nẹ - eti		ìgbà	
	3sg Aux – Upre-beat (progressive)	drum		‘He/she is beating drum’ (progressive affixmative)
b.	Ọ	nəgə	eti	ìgbà
	3sg	Aux-NEG Vpre-beat	drum	‘He/she is not beating drum’ (progressive Negative)

In the above examples 3-13, (a) examples are the affirmative sentences while the (b) examples are their negative counterparts. In (3b, 4b, 5b, 7b and 9b), the negative suffix (*-digu/-digu*) which has a disyllabic structure as well as a bi-morphemic nature is attached to the root of the non-stative verbs: *wu* ‘wash’, *la* ‘return’, *shí* ‘cook’ and *de* ‘write’. Also, in 6(c), the negative suffix (*-digu*) is also attached to the root of the stative verb: *vù* ‘fat’. The bi-morphemic nature of this negative marker (*-digu/-digu*) causes it to express two different notions: the first morpheme (*-di*) expresses completed action, while the second morpheme (*-gu*) expresses negation. However, in 10(b), where the sentence has an auxiliary verb, the negative suffix is attached to the auxiliary verb (*nẹ-*). In some dialects of Igbo like Nenwe, the attachment of the negative suffix to the auxiliary verbs derives semantically odd or meaningless sentences (Onuora, 2017). But, in Ịdẹkẹ dialect, it does not hold true. The attachment of the negative suffix to the auxiliary verb in a sentence does not cause the sentence to be odd or meaningless. Proceeding, in (4b), (6b and c), (8b and 11b), the suffix is attached to the stative verbs: *wu* ‘wash’ *vù* ‘fat’ and *nwè* ‘have’. The behaviour of the general negative markers in Standard Igbo and Ịdẹkẹ dialect are almost the same, but the negative suffix is rarely suffixed to the auxiliary verb in Ịdẹkẹ. As the widest distributed negative suffix (*-ghi*) can co-occur with lexical or auxiliary verbs in Standard Igbo, so do the widest distributed negative morpheme (*-gu*) in Ịdẹkẹ dialect of Igbo. In contrast, in Ịdẹkẹ dialect, the disyllabic negative morphemes (*-digu or -legu*) are never found on auxiliary verbs, but on lexical or root verbs.

In spite of the foregoing, another vivid observation in examples 8(b) and 11(b) above pertaining the behaviour of negative morpheme (-*gu/-gu*) in Iḍeḱe dialect is that the verbs that hosted the rV-past and rV-stative suffixes in those examples lose them when the widest distributed negative suffix (-*gu*) is attached to them as is evident in example 8(b) and 11(b) above. This observation is captured in Morava (1977), Baertsch (2001), Ndimele's (2004) findings in Standard Swahili, Lamnso and Standard Igbo respectively that the presence of negative suffix causes the loss of inflectional endings such as the tense marker (see also Onuora, 2017). As a matter of fact, this calls for further studies on the behaviour of the widest distributed negative marker in other dialects of Igbo in order to find out if other dialects have similar behaviour with Iḍeḱe dialect.

Worthy of note in the data for this study is the behaviour of the subject NPs and the verbs in negative construction. It is observed that if the negative sentence has a noun or a plural pronoun as its subject NP, the verb takes a verbal prefix (Vpre) together with the negative suffix (-*gu*) as seen in *evugə* 'not fat' in example 6(b), *enwegə* 'does not have' in example 8(b), and in *amagu* 'does not know, in 11(b). However, if the construction has a singular pronoun as its subject NP, the verb does not take the verbal prefix (Vpre), rather, it appears only with the negative suffix (-*gu/-gu/-gə*) as in example 3(c) *wugə* 'not wash' and in *rigə* 'not eat' in example 12(b) above respectively. On the other hand, if the sentence has an auxiliary verb and a singular pronoun as its subject NP, the auxiliary does not take the verbal prefix, rather, the negative suffix is written together with the auxiliary verb as in *nəgəeti* 'is not beating' in example 13(b). In contrast, if the construction has a noun or a plural pronoun as its subject NP, the auxiliary verb takes a verbal prefix as shown in example 10(b) – *anəgəege* 'is not listening'.

3.2 The Negative Simple Future Tense Marker

The future tense marker in Iḍeḱe dialect is '*ji-*' 'will'. It is an auxiliary verb, which in the affirmative, communicates simple future. If this auxiliary co-occurs with the verb, the verb root takes the participle verbal prefix '*E-*', which could be realised phonologically conditioned as '*e-/a-*'. This prefix is attached to the verb root to produce the participle form of the verb that co-occurs with the future tense auxiliary. To change a simple future tense string to a negative one in Iḍeḱe dialect, the general negative suffix is attached to the future tense auxiliary just as it is obtained in Standard Igbo. Also, the future tense auxiliary (*ji-*) could be phonologically conditioned as '*ja-/je-*'. Consider the following examples:

- 14a. He jì – abĩa taa
 They Fut Aux-Vpre-come today 'They will come today' (Future-Affirmative).
- b. He abĩajagə taa
 They Vpre-come-FutAux-NEG today 'They will not come today' (Future Negative)
- 15a. Ibe jì- agata
 Ibe Fut-Aux-Vpre-Pass-branch 'Ibe will branch' (Future Affirmative)
- b. Ibe agajagə
 Ibe Vpre-Pass-FutAux-NEG 'Ibe will not branch' (Future Negative)
- 16a. Chizàrà jì-edhte di énye
 Chizàrà FutAux-Vpre-lead-come husband her 'Chizara will bring her husband' (Future Affirmative)
- b. Chízàrà edhjegə di énye
 Chizara Vpre-lead-FutAux-NEG husband her 'Chizara will not bring her husband' (Future Negative)
- 17a. O jì-ego tè oburə naa
 3sg FutAux-Vpre-buy even if one 'He/she will buy even if it is one' (Future Affirmative)
- b. O gojegə tè naa

3sg buy-FutAux-NEG even one 'He/she will not buy even one' (Future Negative)

The above examples (14b – 17b) instantiate *Idẹkẹ* dialect negative future tense constructions. Unlike *Nenwe* dialect, where the negative suffix is hosted by the main verb, the negative suffix is hosted by the future auxiliary verb in *Nsuka - Idẹkẹ* Igbo. Again, it is observed that if the auxiliary is preceded by a noun or a plural pronoun, there is a harmonizing verbal prefix (*a-/e-*) as shown in 14(b), 15(b) and 16(b) respectively. In contrast, when a singular pronoun precedes the future tense auxiliary as displayed in example 17(b) above, it does not take any harmonising verbal prefix. The former observation is in line with what holds in the Standard Igbo, where the negative suffix is constantly hosted by the future tense auxiliary verb '*ga-*' as in:

18a. Ji ahụ ga- ezu
 yam that FutAux-Vpre- enough 'That yam will be enough/okay' (Future Affirmative)

b. Ji ahụ agaghị ézù
 yam that Vpre-FutAux-NEG enough 'That yam will not be enough/okay' (Future Affirmative)

19a. Ha ga-akwọ aka ha
 3pl FutAux-Vpre-wash hand their 'They will wash their hands' (Future Affirmative)

b. Haagaghị akwọ aka ha
 3plVpre-FutAux-NEG Vpre-wash hand their 'They will not wash their hands' (Future Negative)

The above examples 18(b) and 19(b) exemplify the negative simple future tense in Standard Igbo. As can be seen in 18(b) and 19(b) examples above, the negative suffix '*-ghi*' is always attached to the future tense auxiliary verb '*ga-*'. It is observed that when the negative suffix is affixed to the auxiliary verb, there is a harmonising verbal prefix attached to the auxiliary verb. Also, there is a harmonising verbal prefix attached to the auxiliary verb when a plural pronoun precedes the future tense auxiliary as in example 19(b) above, but the harmonising prefix is absent when a singular pronoun precedes the future tense auxiliary as is observed in 17(b) above.

3.3 The Negative Progressive Aspect Marker

In *Idẹkẹ* dialect, the auxiliary '*ji-*' marks the simple future tense as seen in section (3.2) while '*ne-*' is used to display the progressive aspect. To negate an affirmative sentence that displays or expresses progressive aspect, the widest distributed negative suffix '*-gu/gu*' is attached to the auxiliary '*ne-*' as it is contained in example 10(b) above under (3.1) section. The difference between the simple future tense string and the progressive aspect construction lies on the auxiliary that is used to portray simple future tense and the progressive aspect respectively in the affirmative as well as in their negative counterparts. As we have said before under (3.2) above, the future tense auxiliary '*ji-*' could be phonologically conditioned and realised as '*ja-/je-*'.

Consider the following examples:

20a. Nnennàjì-apata nryi
 NnennaFutAux-Vpre-carry- food 'Nnenna will bring food' (Future Affirmative)

b. Nnennàapajagə nryi
 NnennaVpre-carry-FutAux-NEG food 'Nnenna will not bring food' (Future Negative)

21a. Ọ ne - ete ofe
 3sg ProgAux-Vpre-cook soup 'He/she is cooking soup' (Progressive Affirmative)

b. Ọ nəgə ete ofe
 3sg ProgAux-NEGVpre-cook soup 'He/she is not cooking soup' (Progressive Negative)

- 22a. Àda ne – ède ihe
 Àda ProgAux-Vpre-write something ‘Ada is writing something’ (Progressive Affirmative)
- b. Àda anəgu èdeihe
 Àda Vpre-ProgAux-NEG writesomething ‘Ada is not writing anything’ (Progressive Negative)

In the above examples 20(a)-22(a), which constitute both future affirmative sentence as in 20(a) and the progressive affirmative sentence as in 21(a) and 22(a) respectively, it is observed that the difference between the future affirmative sentence in 20(a) and the progressive affirmative in 21(a) and 22(a) lies on the auxiliary, which they take. In the future affirmative construction, the auxiliary ‘*ji-*’ is used, while the progressive affirmative takes the auxiliary ‘*ne-*’. To negate a progressive aspect sentence and the future tense construction in Ịdẹkẹ, the general negative suffix *-gu(-gu/-gu)* is attached to the progressive aspect auxiliary and future tense auxiliary respectively just as it is done in the Standard Igbo.

3.2.3 The Negative Perfective Aspect Marker

In Ịdẹkẹ dialect, the negative perfective aspect verb form is marked by the suffix *-legu(-legu/-legu)*. This suffix can be affixed to any lexical verb, especially the non-stative verbs. The negative perfective aspect suffix in Ịdẹkẹ has a disyllabic as well as a bi-morphemic structure. Its bi-morphemic nature makes it to express two different notions: the first morpheme (*-le*) expresses completed action, while the second morpheme (*-gu*) expresses negation. Consider the following examples of perfective aspect verb forms and their negative counterparts:

- 23a. Ọ sagwoma afere
 3sg wash already-Perf plates ‘He/she has washed plates’
- b. Ọ salẹgə afere
 3sg wash-Perf-NEG Plates ‘He/she has not washed plates’
24. Ọ shigwome nryi
 3sg cook already-Perf food ‘He/she has cooked food’.
- b. Ọ shilegə nryi
 3sg cook-Perf-NEG food ‘He/she has not cooked food’.
- 25a. Chidièberè ènwemee ego
 Chidièberè Vpre-have-Perf money ‘Chidiebere has gotten money’
- b. Chidièberè enwelegə ego
 Chidièberè Vpre-have-Perf-NEG money ‘Chidiebere has not got money’
- 26a. Ha amagwoma màkà nya
 3pl Vpre-know already-Perf about it. ‘They already know about it’
- b. Ha amalegə màkà nya
 3pl Vpre-know-Perf-NEG about it ‘They have not know about it’

Considering the above examples of perfective aspect verb forms and their negative counterparts, it is gathered that the verb roots, which hosted the negative perfective aspect marker lose the perfective aspect marker (*-gwoma/-gwome, -me*) as the case may be before the attachment of the negative perfective suffix (*-legu/-legu*) as shown in 23(b) – 26(b). Also, the variants of the perfective aspect marker (*-gwoma* and *-gwome*) and (*-legu/-legu*) are the allomorphs of the morphemes, which are phonologically conditioned.

Worthy of note is that the behaviour of the subject NPs and the verbs in negative construction as discussed in the previous sections is also observed here. That is, if the negative sentence has a singular pronoun as its subject NP, the verb does not take the verbal prefix (Vpre), rather, it appears only with the negative perfective suffix (*-legu/-leḡu*) as seen in *sáleḡu* ‘has not washed’ and *shíleḡu* ‘has not cooked’ in examples 23(b) and 24(b) respectively. However, if the sentence has a noun or a plural pronoun as its subject NP, the verb now takes a verbal prefix (Vpre) together with the negative perfective suffix (*-legu/leḡu*) as exemplified in *énwèleḡu* ‘has not got’ and *ámaleḡu* ‘have not known’ in examples 25(b) and 26(b) above.

3.4 The Negative Imperative Mood Marker

Every dialect has a way of marking negative imperative mood. In Ịdeḡe dialect, the negative imperative mood is marked by *-le* (*-le/-leḡ*). This suffix can be affixed to verbs – stative or non-stative. Consider the following examples:

- 27a. Lùá ẹshì
 hurry-Imp body ‘hurry up’
- b. Alùle ẹshì
 Vpre-hurry-NEG body ‘Do not hurry up’
- 28a. Gbaa ọsọ
 Run-Imp run ‘Hurry up; come quickly’
- b. Agbale ọsọ
 Vpre-run-NEG run ‘Don’t run’
- 29a. Ùnu rye nryi
 2pl eat-Imp food ‘You people should eat food’.
- b. Ùnu eryile nryi
 2pl Vpre-eat-NEG food ‘You people should not eat food’.
- 30a. Nwonyenyè chĩa ọchì
 Woman Laugh-Imp laugh ‘Laugh woman’
- b. Nwonyenyè achìle ọchì
 Woman Vpre-laugh-NEG laugh ‘Do not laugh woman’

In the above example (27a – 30a), the verbs that hosted the imperative mood markers (Imp) lose them when the negative imperative mood *-le* (*-le/-leḡ*) is attached to them. That is, the imperative mood marker, which is an open vowel suffix (OVS) (*-a* in *lùá* ‘hurry + Imp’; *-ain* *gbaa* ‘run + Imp’; *-e* in *rye* ‘eat + Imp’; *-a* in *chĩa* ‘laugh + Imp’), disappears when the negative imperative mood *-le* (*-le/-leḡ*) is attached as shown in examples (27b – 30b) above. It is also observed that the verbs that hosted the negative imperative suffixes take a harmonising vowel prefix (Vpre) *-e/-a-* together with the negative imperative marker as seen in *álule* ‘do not hurry’, *ágbale* ‘do not run’; *eryle* ‘do not eat’ and *áchìle* ‘do not laugh’ in examples (27b), (28b), (29b) and (30b) above. Again, an imperative construction in Ịdeḡe dialect can have an overt subject, especially if the constituent in the subject position is second person singular or plural as in examples (29) and (30) above. Similar observation has been made in Standard Igbo by Ndimele (2004) and Onuora (2017). But, their observations did not include a second person singular as it is obtained in Ịdeḡe dialect. However, these observations contrast the common belief that imperative constructions do not carry or have an overt subject NP.

Furthermore, in Ịdẹkẹ dialect, the negative imperative mood suffix *-le* (*-le/-le*), is phonologically conditioned against what obtains in the Standard Igbo, where the negative imperative mood suffix *-la* is invariant irrespective of the Advanced Tongue Root (TB) pattern of the vowel in the verb where it is hosted. Below are examples in standard Igbo:

- 31a. Juo ajuju
 Ask-Imp questions ‘Ask questions’
- b. Ajula ajuju
 Vpre-ask-NEG questions ‘Do not ask questions’
- 32a. Tie ya
 Beat-Imp it ‘Beat it’
- b. Etilā ya
 Vpre-beat-NEG it ‘Do not beat it’

In the above examples 31(b) and 32(b), the ATR values of the vowel in the verbs are not the same. In example 31(b), the value of the ATR is (+ATR) while in 32(b), the ATR value is (ART), yet, the negative imperative mood suffix remains invariant in the two constructions in examples 31(b) and 32(b) respectively.

4.0 Summary of Findings

The study has explored negative morphemes in Nsukka- Ịdẹkẹ Igbo and observed that the Ịdẹkẹ dialect employs four different morphemes in marking negation. They include the widest distributed negative suffix ‘*-gu*’ (*-gu/-gu*) negative, the past negative suffix ‘*-digu*’ (*-digu/-digu*) and the negative imperative suffix *-le* (*-le/-le*). Nonetheless, the nature and type of negative suffix to be employed is dependent on the needs and the morphological structure of the dialect. The distribution of these identified negative morphemes in the dialect varies. For instance, the widest distributed negative suffix (*-gu*) could be hosted by the root verbs and auxiliary verbs; unlike the past negative suffix (*-digu*) and the negative imperative suffix (*-le*), which are only hosted by the root verbs. However, the negative morphemes in Nsukka- Ịdẹkẹ dialect is viewed in this study to include ways of displaying negative marking and the uses of negative morphemes in the dialect.

Nevertheless, it is observed that languages (dialects) have a lot in common, but we must equally be aware that there are parametric variations despite this acclaimed common core. For instance, it is a common belief that imperative constructions do not carry an overt subject NP (in Standard Igbo). This does not hold true in Ịdẹkẹ dialect because, an imperative construction can bear overt subject, especially if the constituent in the subject position is second person singular or plural (see examples 29 and 30). Furthermore, the negative imperative mood suffix (*-le*) is phonologically conditioned as opposed to what is obtainable in the Standard Igbo, where the negative imperative mood suffix (*-la*) is invariant irrespective of the Advanced Tongue Root (ATR) pattern of the vowel in the verb where it is hosted. It is gathered from the above observations that the dialect under consideration has a genius of its own, which any analyst must approach in his/her analysis with no presuppositions from his/her knowledge of Standard Igbo. This observation at this point calls for further researches on the behaviour of the widest distributed negative marker in other dialect to find out the similarities and differences in the morphemes.

The study also discovered that the presence of negative suffix causes the loss of inflectional endings such as the tense, aspect and mood markers in the dialect. This observation is in line with the findings of some scholars like Morava (1977), Baertsch (2001), and Dimele (2004) in Standard Swahili, Lamnso and Standard Igbo respectively concerning the loss of inflectional endings such as tense, aspect and mood markers, because of the attachment of the negative suffix in their hosts. In this study, it is also observed that in Ịdẹkẹ dialect of Igbo that tense, aspect and mood markers are neutralised when negated.

Discovered also, is that, if the negative sentence has a noun or plural pronoun as its subject NP, the verb takes a verbal prefix together with the negative suffix (*-gu*). But, if the construction has a singular pronoun as its subject NP, the verb does not take the verbal prefix, rather, the negative suffix is written together with the auxiliary verb (see example 13(b)).

4.1 Conclusion

The study duly reviewed the available literature in relation to the topic of the study and found out that no previous study has examined the negative morphemes in Nsukka- Iḍeḱe dialect of Igbo to the best knowledge of the research. Having discovered this research gap, the researcher goes on to carry out the investigation on the topic of the study.

During the course of investigation, efforts were made to define and explain negation, expose the ways of displaying negative marking in the dialect (Iḍeḱe), highlight the varieties of ways in which negative morphemes are used in the dialect, which include the widest distributed negative marker, negative simple future marker, the negative progressive aspect marker and the negative imperative mood marker. The negative morpheme employed for each of the above uses, follow some rules, which are dependent on each language (dialect). The study has also shown that a sound knowledge of negation and its usage will help learners of the dialect and Igbo language at large to appreciate the grammar of the language fully. Therefore, linguists and researchers should respond to the awareness created by this study and keep the flame of Igbo studies burning.

Abbreviations

AUX	Auxiliary verb
-gh	Harmonising negation marker
ji-	Simple future tense marker
OVS	Open vowel suffix
-rV (past)	Suffix that indicates past tense
-le	Harmonising negative imperative mood marker
-legu	Negative perfective aspect marker
NEG	Negation
ne-	Negative progressive aspect marker
FutAux	Future tense auxiliary marker
-gu	Harmonising general negative marker
Imp	Imperative mood marker
ProgAux	Progressive aspect auxiliary marker
-rV (stative)	Suffix that indicates state
Vpre	Verbal prefix
2pl	Second person plural pronoun
3pl	Third person plural pronoun

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