The Interfixation as a Morphological Process in Ngwa Igbo

Jephthah Asuoha, C.

National Institute for Nigerian Languages, Aba, Abia State, Nigeria

Abstract: *The interfix is an affix which occurs in the middle of two identical disyllabic elements that are basically representation of the same element. It is a morphological process in which a morpheme is inserted in-between two words that have equal status. There are not many research works on interfixation as it is the case with the other affixation processes like prefixation, suffixation and infixation. This forms the reason for the present study which seeks to examine the form, position and function of interfixation in Ngwa dialect of Igbo. Primary data were gathered through elicitation of information from informants. The researcher's competence as a native speaker was employed in the assessment and validation of the data. Library information and internet materials formed the secondary sources. Findings reveal that the interfix appears in-between disyllabic elements that are identical. It maintains fixed (word internal) position that is stable by reference to the stem. An interfix is semantically vacuous when considered on its own capacity. However, its presence normally leads to some changes like altering the part of speech and the meaning of the host. There were no evidences of an interfix occurring in word initial or final positions. This study is significant as it adds to the few research works available on the subject area.*

Key words: Interfixation, Ngwa, morphology, Igbo, word formation

1.0 Introduction

One fact about human language is that it is dynamic and always changing. These changes could occur at the lexical, phrasal or structural levels of language. At the same time, language evolves, grows, develops, degenerates and, even, dies based on the changing characteristics of word which is the basic tool of language. Word can change its form and/or meaning to meet up new concepts and ideas. These changing patterns and variations could be attributed to factors like language contact, neologism due to advancement in science, communication and technology, or coinages to address nouveaux information and emerging ideas. There is, yet, another very productive means by which language grows called affixation.

Affixation is an important aspect of morphology. Affixes play significant roles in the derivation of new words in a language. There are six types of affixes that have been identified, according to Ndimele (1999). These are prefix, suffix, infix, interfix, circumfix and superfix or suprafix. This research investigated one of them called the interfix by examining its form, position and function in Ngwa dialect. Ngwa is an Igboid variety used in the Southern Igbo area of Nigeria. Nwozuzu (2008) classified it among the South Eastern Group Dialects (SEGD) of Igbo. It is the most predominant speech form spoken in most communities in basically seven Local Government Areas of Abia State namely, Isiala Ngwa North and South, Aba North and South, Osisioma, Obingwa and Ugwunagbo. Semantically, the word Ngwa has tripartite sense applications, viz: the geo-political area designated as Ngwa land (*Ala Ngwa*), the people inhabiting this area (*Ndi Ngwa*), and the dialect of Igbo spoken within the area (*Olu Ngwa*). Section 2 is literature review, while section 3 takes a look at interfixation in Ngwa Igbo. Section 4 is the summary and conclusion.

1.1 Statement of Problem

There are a lot of works on some morphological processes like prefixation, suffixation and infixation, but interfixation is the least studied in linguistics. One of the reasons for this paucity of research or works is because interfix is not a widespread or common feature of many languages. Emenanjo (1982:77) confirms this observation when he points out that "whereas prefixes and suffixes have been universally attested and infixes found in a few languages, the interfix has been discussed in two languages only: Igbo and Dghwede". It is in view of this paucity of research and subsequent lack of materials on the subject that the present work has been undertaken.

1.2 Research Objective

The general objective of this study is to investigate interfixation as a word formation process in Ngwa dialect. Specifically, the paper will

    i.   examine the form of interfix,
    ii.   identify its position in a word in the dialect and lastly,
    iii.   determine its function in Ngwa Igbo.

1.3 Significance of the Research

The research is considered relevant because it will act as a readily available material for indigenous language documentation and preservation. It will also be a source and reference work for students who are interested in the study of linguistics, especially in the area of morphology. The findings will help readers improve their knowledge and understanding as well as their ability to recognise compound words since interfixation usually links two parts of a morpheme to form a single word.

2. Literature Review

Morphology is the study of the forms of word or word structure (from Greek *morphe* – 'form' and *logy* – 'study'). Akmajian et al (2008:12) define it as a subfield of linguistics which studies the internal structure of word and the relationship among words. For Bauer (1988:248), it is the study of "the ways in which lexemes and word-forms are built up from smaller elements, and the changes that are made to those smaller elements in the process of building lexemes and word-forms". Napoli (1996:190) simply defines it as "the study of word formation processes".

An important area of study in linguistics is word formation processes, which according to Ndimele (1999), are as old as language itself. Throughout history, man has continued to create new words to take care of new ideas or new experiences in his world. Due to its rich productive outcome, word derivation processes have attracted much research interest and attention from language scholars. Amidst its many other aspects like compounding, clipping, back formation, etc., affixation stands out as the most productive in the derivation of new words.

Affixation is a process of generating new words from existing ones through the addition of another morpheme or element. For Ndimele (1999:22), it is "a morphological process of attaching an affix to the root or base of a word". Affixes are classified into two based on the position where they occur relative to the root of the word or the function which they perform when attached to a word.

When considered from the point of view of where the morpheme is appended, an affix can be attached to the beginning or initial position of a word. An affix which occurs in this

position is called a prefix. The process of inserting a prefix is called prefixation. The English word "dispossess", for instance, is made up of two morphemes: 'dis' + 'possess'. Prefixation is the opposite of suffixation. The <u>English Learners'</u> web describes it as "the mirror image of suffixation". The first part 'dis-' is a prefix which is added to the base, 'possess'. Prefixes, following Ndimele (1999), can be classified into negative prefixes: 'a-' as in asexual, asymmetry, 'de-' as in demerit, demystify; reversative prefixes which he said reverses an action like 'de-' in defrost, deforestation, 'un-' as in untie, undress. Prefixation is less widespread than suffixation. Some languages like Khmer only have prefixation.

However, when it is attached to the back, the end or final position of a word, it is called a suffix, while the process is called suffixation. The suffix is sometimes also referred to as a postfix or ending in linguistics. In the following examples, the '-ise' is a suffix attached at the end of the words; "modernise", "equalise", and "centralise". Akmajian et al (2008) remark that "the morpheme to which an affix is attached is known as the base (or stem) morpheme". Suffixes carry grammatical information like changing a word from singular to plural or present to past tense. In this case, the basic meaning of the word is not altered. This type of suffixation is called inflectional suffixes. An inflectional suffix is sometimes called "desinence". On the other hand, suffixes convey lexical information as in derivational suffixes whereby the new word has a new meaning derived from the original word.

An affix can also appear in the middle of a word. This is known as infix and the process is called infixation. Ndimele (1999) says that an infix "is incorporated inside the root of a word" whereby it interrupts the sequence of a root. Osuagwu et al (2007) see it as an affix which somehow shifts some of the morphemes in a root and inserts itself in-between them. Infixation is very common in such language as Latin. It is also observed in Bontoc Igorot, a language of the Philipines (Akmajian, A., Richard, A. D. Annk, F., and Robert M. H 2008:18) where the infix '-in-' is used to indicate the product of a completed action. Thus, *kayu* "wood", becomes *kinayu* "gathered wood" with the insertion of '-in-' immediately after the first consonant. In Kamhmu, a South-East Asian language also (Yule, 2006:58) the infix plays derivational function. The infix '-rn-' is inserted after the first consonant of *see* ''to drill'' a verb root to derive *srnee* ''a drill'' a noun.

As regards function, an affix is used in extending the meaning of a word (i.e. derivational) or changing the grammatical category of a word (inflectional).

2.1 The Interfix

Interfix is an affix which is inserted in the middle of two other morphemes where it interrupts the sequence of the two morphemes and so differs from an infix which is inserted inside one morpheme. Osuagwu, B. I., Nwozuzu, G. I., and Dike, G. A (2007) see it as an affix inserted in the middle of a reduplicated form and serves as a morphemic linking element. An interfix does not have any semantic content or meaning of its own. However, its semantic relevance and significance is felt when it is affixed between two base words to join and realise them as one word.

2.1.1 Some Works on Interfix

Interfix has been recorded in some Nigerian languages such as Ukwuani, Okpe and Yoruba. In Ukwuani, spoken in the south-south region of Nigeria, Oghiator (2011) identifies interfix as one of the affixes in the morphological structure of the language. She observes that the affix is placed

in between two roots and the said roots can exist independently without the interfix to give different meanings. She gives the following examples in 1(a-f).

	Interfix	Derived word
1a.	-m- as in	elimeli (feast/banquet)
b.	-g- as in	osogoso (too long/too tall)
c.	-k-	nyakanya (heavy load)
d.	-t-	opotopo (very fresh/plump)
e.	-k-	anwakanwa (fast and clever person)

In Okpe, spoken in the former Bendel State, such affixes as -ghu-, -n-, -dj-, -y-, have been identified as interfixation in the morphemes where they occur. Okeidesan (2010) argues that this process takes the shape of:

Root + -ghu-, -y-, -dj-, or -n-, + root

He cites the following examples in 2(a-e) and concludes that interfixation in Okpe is used for different purposes which include comparison between things, persons, situations, event, etc.

	Root word	Interfix	Derived word
2a.	omo 'child'	-ghu-	omoghuomo 'child pass child'
b.	owan 'person'	-ghu-	owanghuowan 'person pass person'
c.	omo 'child'	-y-	omoyomo 'child is child'
d.	owan 'person'	-dj-	owandjowan 'one should tell the other'
e.	eru 'let us do'	-n-	eruneru 'let us prepare to do'

Interfixation has also been observed in Yoruba language spoken in the south-west region of Nigeria. Awe (2012) is of the view that some of the affixes employed for this reason include: -k-, -b-, -m-, etc. The examples in 3(a-e) are drawn from Yoruba language.

	Root word	Interfix	Derived word
3a.	igi 'tree'	-k-	igikigi 'useless tree'
b.	ewe 'leaf	-k-	ewekewe 'useless leaf"

c.	ile 'house'	-k-	ilekile 'worthless house'
d.	owo 'money'	-b-	owobowo 'bad money'
e.	eya 'tribe'	-m-	eyameya 'different tribes/ethnic groups'

It is important to note with regard to the Okpe and Yoruba data that when the morpheme 'ghu' appears as interfix in Okpe, it is always for the purposes of comparison with the root word. This is evident in 2(a-b) above. On the other hand, when the morpheme 'k' appears as interfix between two identical stems, it is always for the purposes of negation of the root word. This is evident in 3(a-c) above.

In the next section, this research will present data to substantiate that interfixation is a rich and productive process of forming new words in Ngwa Igbo.

2.3 Research Questions
The following research questions have been formulated to guide the study:

1. What is the form of an interfix in a word in Ngwa Igbo?
2. What is the position of an interfix in the words where it is affixed?
3. What is the function of an interfix in the Ngwa Igbo?

2.4 Methodology
This study applied the descriptive method of analysis, while providing the gloss for each word in English language. Data for the study came from oral conversations with competent speakers of the dialect on different occasions and complemented by the researcher's native speaker's insight and participatory observation. Low Tone and down stepped High Tone are marked, while High tone is left unmarked.

3. Interfixation in Ngwa Igbo
Interfix is called "nn neetitì" in Igbo. f mata (2004) describes it thus: "Ǹn neetitì b mkp r as s na-ad n'etitì mkp r okw nkè b mkp r okw ab b otù d okw mèbèrè. n d mkp r as s ah n'etitì mkp r okw ah nà-eme kà ngh ta mkp r okw ah nkè e bu n'uchè p ta ihè. Mkp r okw ndi ah a na-ewèk ta n nkè mkp r as s mgbàkwunye nn nèetitì na-ad nà ha na-ab kar okw ngwaà, okw ngwaà mànà, mkp r as s mgbàkwunye nn neetitì na-ad nà hà na-ab kar mkp r edemede mgbòchiume. N'ihi ya, b ngwaà abu b otù ihe na nk wa ha, tinyere mkp r edemede mgbòchiume à ch k tàrà ha n d kà otù mkp r okw kà e si enweta nn neetitì"

The above description says that interfix (nn neetitì) is an affix or a letter which is located in the middle of two identical words. The presence of the affix in-between the two words help in a special way in bringing out the meaning of the words. The words in which is located the affix are often verbs, but the interfix that joins them together is often a consonant. In this regard, interfix is derived from the union of two identical verbs with the same semantic representation co-joined by a consonant.

A few conclusions can be drawn from the above discussions, namely that there are some similarities and differences between an interfix and infix. Both are morphological processes which are used to derive new words and they are located in the interior of a root/word. For some scholars, both processes are coterminous and therefore can be used interchangeably. Oghiator (20011), for instance, says that interfixation, also known as infix involves the placing of an affix in-between two identical roots either to form a new word or to alter the meaning of the existing word. But, looking at their behaviour, each presents a different phenomenon involving a different process. An infix is incorporated inside the root of a word whereby it interrupts the sequence of the root, while an interfix is an empty morph inserted in the middle of a reduplicated form where it serves as a linking or co-joining element.

With regard to interfix in Ngwa, a number of data investigated in this study show that it is not only verbs that absorb interfix in the dialect. Other word classes like nouns, adjectives, quantifiers etc., do accommodate interfixes as well. In this regard, this paper shall consider an interfix as an element which is inserted in-between two identical disyllabic words or morphemes which are basically repeated. An interfix divides a word into two equal parts in such a way that the part before the interfix is repeated after it with or without tonal change (Emenanjo, 1982). The interfix is usually a consonant or monosyllabic CV form. It is a very productive morphological word derivation process in Ngwa dialect because a wide range of lexical items lend themselves to it.

3.1 Data Presentation

The Verb
The first data presented here are words which have the following derivation: the basic form; a harmonising inflectional vowel prefix to derive the participle verb; an interfix and duplication of the participle verb. This is schematically represented as:

verb stem + participle verb + interfix   duplication

The examples in 4(a-l) are active verbs while those in 5(a-g) are stative verbs.

4. Active verb

	Verb Stem	Participle	Interfix	Duplication	Gloss
a.	-ra 'lick'	àra	-m-	aramara	'licking'
b.	-ta 'chew'	àta	-k-	atamata	'chewable', 'chewy'
c.	-zu 'buy'	àz	-m-	àz maz	'trading'
d.	-k 'hit'	àk	-r-	àkùràk	'panelling'
e.	-gwa 'mix'	àgwa	-r-	àgwàràgwa	'adulterated'
f.	-ri 'eat'	èri	-m-	erimeri	'edible'

g.	-fa 'press'	àfa	-r-	àfarafa	'tightly packed', 'squeeze'
h.	-kp 'mould'	àkp	-r-	àkp rakp	'mould'
i.	-wa 'break'	àwa	-r-	àwàràwa	'pirated', 'imitation'
j.	-ñ 'drink'	àñ	-m-	añ mañ	'drinkable'
k.	-kpa 'weave'	akpà	-r-	àkpàràkpa	'weaved'
l.	-t 'measure'	atù	-r-	àtùràt	'measurement'

The examples above are simple verb stem with only one element in its basic form. In all the examples, 4(a-l), the interfix comes after the first disyllabic element. After the insertion of the interfix, the word is repeated which changes the meaning of the verb to either noun as in 4(a) or adjective as in 4(j). In some instances, however, there are changes in tone between the basic word form and the duplicated element as in 4(d) where the basic word is àkù [LL] tone and the duplicated morpheme is àk [LH] tone.

5. Stative verb

	Verb Stem	**Participle**	**Interfix**	**Duplication**	**Gloss**
a.	-kwe 'agree'	èkwe	-gh-	ekweghekwe	'not yielding'/'consenting'
b.	-bi 'live'	èbí	-gh-	ebighèbi	'forever'
c.	-m 'learn'	am	-m-	amumàmù	'learning'
d.	-yi 'plan'	èyi	-r-	èyireyi	'pre-planned'/'arrangement'
e.	-chi 'crown'	èchi	-m-	echimechi	'ordination'/'ordaining'
f.	-che 'think'	echè	-m-	èchèmèchè	'thought'
g.	-chi 'ordain'	èchi	-r-	èchirech	'ordained'/'one that is ordained'

The data above clearly show that interfixation is a productive word derivation process in Ngwa Igbo. All the vowel sounds in each of the root morphemes in 4(a-l) and 5(a-g) above have a high tone sound pattern.

The Adjective
The following data in 6(a-g) are from the word class of adjectives. It is observed that both adverb 6(a) and adjectives 6(b-g) could be formed when an interfix is inserted in-between two identical word stems which is then duplicated.

	Word	Interfix	Duplication	Gloss
6a.	ǹhà	-ta-	ǹhàtaǹhà	'equally'
b.	mba	-dá-	mbadamba	'wide', 'broad'
c.	òyò	-gh-	òyòghoyò	'gorgeously'
d.	mpì	-r-	mpìrimpì	'stingy', 'miserly'
e.	àjà	-k-	àjàkajà	'boisterous'
f.	ìbè	-r-	ìbèribè	'foolish'
g.	ef	-l-	ef lef	'worthless'

The process going on in the data above can be explained as: the basic form of the word + an affixed morpheme (at the end) + duplication of the basic form to derive a new word. All the derived words in 6(a-g) are adjectives. However, their meaning could not have been fully grasped if the words were left at their basic form. It is the affixation of the interfix and duplication of the basic form that spelled out their meaning very clearly.

The interfixes in 6(a-b) have monosyllabic phonological structure of CV form, while 6(c-g) has a single consonant each. Apart from 6(b) which has high tone on the initial nasal and final vowel sounds, and 6(g) with an initial vowel high and final vowel down step tones, all the other vowels have low tone sound in their basic form.

The Quantifier

	Word	Interfix	Duplication	Gloss
7a.	ìmè 'many'	-r-	ìmèrimè	'numerous', 'many'

The only quantifier identified in the data used for this study is 'many'. However, this does not preclude the possibility of the existence of others.

The Noun
Nouns also can be reduplicated with the interfix coming in-between them as the following examples in 8(a-s) show. Characteristically, the basic noun forms of the words in 8(a-h) have high tone on their initial and final vowel sounds.

	Word	Interfix	Duplication	Meaning
8a.	ibe 'piece'	-r-	iberibe	'tiny piece'

b.	an 'meat'	-m-	an mànù	'animal'
c.	iri 'tiny'	-gh-	irighiri	'particles'
d.	mkp 'short'	-m-	mkp mkp	'shortness'
e.	ejí 'dress'	-m-	ejimeji	'fashion'
f.	mkpu 'ant hill'	-tu-	mkputumkpu	'uneven/hilly ground'
g.	ikpu 'surround'	-r-	ikpurikpu	'maggot'
h.	ebe 'exclamation'	-l-	ebelebe	'surprise'/'shock'
i.	ùwà 'world'	-t-	ùwàtùwà	'endlessly'/'forever'
j.	mp 'stingy'	-r -	mp r mp	'miser'
k.	mkp 'craw'	-r -	mkp r mkp	'worm'

On the other hand, 8(l-q) have low tone marks on the initial and final vowel sounds. There is an observed case of the phonological process of vowel lengthening evident in 8(p) ìbèriibè 'simpleton', and 8(q) ìghàriighà 'jokiness'.

8l.	àlù	'struggle'	-gh-	àlùghalù	'confusion'/'entanglement'
m.	òhwò	'void'	-gh-	òhwòghòhwò	'stupid'/'good for nothing'
n.	ǹgà	'cage'	-rí-	ǹgàriǹgà	'no enthusiasm'/'no zeal'
o.	ònyò	'peep'	-gh-	ònyòghony	'image'/'shadow'
p.	ìbè	'part'	-rí-	ìbèriibè	'simpleton'
q.	ìghà	'joke'	-r-	ìghàriighà	'jokey'/'jokiness'
r.	akà	'mark'	-r-	akàrak	'talent'/'skill'
s.	àt	'plan'	-m-	at mat	'policy'

4. Result
There were a total of 36 different words or lexical items used for this study. The data are discussed in line with the research questions below.

RQ 1: What is the form of an interfix in a word in Ngwa Igbo?

Findings reveal that the morphological form of interfix in Ngwa Igbo is a single segment, which comprises a consonant sound (C) or a syllabic nasal (S), which comes in-between the basic word which is then duplicated. The vowel sounds in each case adheres to the vowel harmony principle. Hence, the [-ATR] set group together, while the [+ATR] set also group together.

Specifically, the form of the verbal derivatives in (8-9) has the following structure: Prf – Vr – Int – Prf – Vr

Where: Prf   prefix

        Vr   verb root

        Int   interfix

        Prf   prefix

        Vr   verb root

A diagrammatic configuration of the verbal derivative is as represented in the following tree structure.
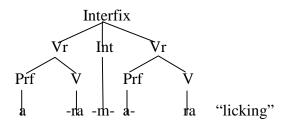

Figure 1

On the other hand, the phonological structure is usually consonants or monosyllabic CV elements. Following Emenanjo (1982), this study observes that the verbal derivative which contains an interfix has the following phonological configuration:

$S_1C_1V_1$ ...I... $S_1C_1V_1$

Where: S   syllabic (any vowel or homorganic syllabic nasal)

              C   consonant

              V   vowel

              I   interfix

In other words, the verbal derivative is made up of an initial syllabic which may either be a vowel or any of the homorganic syllabic nasals, followed by a consonant then, a vowel. After the stem or basic word is located the interfix while the initial arrangement is reduplicated.

RQ 2: What is the position of an interfix in the word where it is affixed?

It is observed that interfix in Ngwa Igbo is inserted in the middle of two identical words where it serves as a linking element. The position of interfix can be graphically shown as follows:

Stem –interfix – stem

-m-

-t-

-gh-

-ri-

Thus, interfix maintains a fixed and stable position (medial) by reference to the basic word. It can never occur in word initial or final positions.

RQ 3: What is the function of an interfix in a word in Ngwa dialect of Igbo?

Interfix in Ngwa Igbo performs mainly derivational function as could be seen from the examples above. Its presence in a word only brings about changes in the word class of the lexical item or alters the meaning of the word to which it is affixed. This can be seen, for instance, in 8(a, j).

In 8(a) the root word is -ra 'lick' and the verb is àra 'to lick'. With the insertion of the interfix '-m-' to the participle verb and duplication of the verb, it becomes aramara 'drinkable', an adjective. It is the same thing that is observed in 8(j). The root word is -tù 'measure' and the verb is àtù 'to measure'. With the insertion of the interfix '-r-' to the participle verb and duplication of the verb, it becomes àtùrat 'measurement', a noun.

The situation is also seen in 10(a), where ǹhà 'equal' (an adjective) becomes ǹhàtaǹhà 'equally' (an adverb) after adding the morpheme '-ta-' the base word and then duplicating it.

The function of interfix can further be illustrated with the following examples in 13-17 thus:

i) Nouns are derived from verbs as in 4(d & g) and 5(e & f), represented here as 9(a - d).

	Stem	Word class	Interfix	Duplication	New word class
9a.	-k 'hit'	àk - verb	-r-	àkùrak 'panelling'	noun
b.	-fa 'press'	àfa - verb	-r-	àfarafa 'squeeze'	noun
c.	-chi 'crown'	èchi - verb	-m-	echimechi 'ordination'	noun
d.	-che 'think'	echè - verb	-m-	echèmèchè 'thought'	noun

ii) Adjectives are derived from verbs as in 4(a, b & f) and 5(b), represented here as 10(a - d).

	Stem	Word class	Interfix	Duplication	New word class

10a.	-ra 'lick'	àra - verb	-m-	árámárá 'drinkable'	Adjective
b.	-ta 'chew'	àta - verb	-k-	átákàtà 'chewy'	Adjective
c.	-ri 'eat'	éri - verb	-m-	érímérí 'edible'	Adjective
d.	-bi 'live'	ébi - verb	-gh-	ébíghébí 'forever'	Adjective

iii) An adverb is derived from adjective as seen in 6(a), now repeated as (11).

	Stem	Word class	Interfix	Reduplication	New word class
11.	ǹhà 'equal'	adjective	-tà-	ǹhàtàǹhà 'equally'	adverb

iv) Adjectives are derived from noun in 8(f, h, m & q) now repeated as 12(a - d).

	Stem	Word class	Interfix	Reduplicated	New word class
12a.	mkpu	noun	-tu-	mkputumkpu 'uneven'	adjective
b.	ebe	noun	-l-	ebelebe 'shock'	adjective
c.	òhwò 'void'	noun	-gh-	òhwòghòhwò 'stupid'	adjective
d.	ìghà 'joke'	noun	-r-	ìghàrííghà 'jokey'	adjective

v) Verb from noun as in 8(h) now repeated as (13).

	Stem	Word class	Interfix	Reduplicated	New word class
13.	ebe	noun	-l-	ebelebe 'surprise'	verb

vi) Adverb from noun as in 8(i) now repeated as (14).

	Stem	Word class	Interfix	Reduplicated	New word class
14.	ùwà 'world'	verb	-t-	ùwàtùwà 'endlessly'	adverb

There are no observable cases of inflectional functions of interfix in the dialect.

Summary

From the foregoing, it is possible to draw certain conclusions that:

i) Interfixation is a morphological processes in Ngwa Igbo which occurs in-between two disyllabic elements that have identical and equal status apart from tones and some vowels in a few instances. Thus, the interfix acts as a linking element between two identical stems or words.
ii) It maintains a fixed and stable position (medial) by reference to the stem or word and it can never occur in word initial or final positions.
iii) There can be only one interfix occurring with the stem or word and the duplicated form.
iv) The form of an interfix may consist of a single consonant such as [m], [k], [r], [gh], [l], [t] or monosyllabic CV structure like [ta], [da], [ri].
v) The major function of interfix in Ngwa is to derive new word or change the word class of the morpheme to which it is affixed.

Conclusion

This study investigated interfixation as an aspect of the morphology of Ngwa dialect. It was undertaken examine the form, identify the position and determine the function of an interfix in the dialect. The study observed that interfixation is a word formation process in the Ngwa Igbo. It has a unique and distinct morphological position (medial) which is stable in all cases. The interfix divides the word in which it is found into two equal parts in such a way that the part before it is repeated after. The two parts of a word in which an interfix is inserted can exist independently having their individual meaning. In terms of their phonology, an interfix in Ngwa consists of a consonant or monosyllable. The interfix performs derivational function by changing the word class and meaning of the words to which it is attached. There was no observed case of an interfix occurring in-between two non-identical words in the dialect.

References

Akmajian, A., Demers, R. A. Farmer, A. K and Harnish, R. M. 2008. *Linguistics: An introduction to language and communication*. 5th ed. New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India Private Ltd. Bauer, L. 1988. *Introducing linguistics morphology*. Edinburg: Edinburg University Press.

Emenanjo, E. N. 1982. The interfix: An aspect of universal morphology. *Journal of African Languages* XII, 1, pp. 77-88.

Napoli, D. Jo. 1996. *Linguistics: An introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Ndimele, O. M. 1999. *Morphology and syntax*. Port Harcourt: M & J Grand Orbit Communications Ltd.

Nwaozuzu, G. I. 2008. *Dialects of the Igbo language*. Nsukka: University of Nigeria Press Ltd.

Ofomata, C. E. 2004. *Ndezu utoasusu Igbo nke ndi senio secondiri*. Enugu: Format Publishers Nig. Ltd.

Osuagwu, B. I., G. I. Nwozuzu, G. A. Dike . 2007. *Fundamentals of linguistics, language, grammar and semantics*. New Delhi: PHI Learning Private Ltd.

Yule, G. 2006. *The study of language*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

Internet Sources

Affixation, English Learner's Web. http://englishlearnersweb.wordpress.com. Accessed 12/06/2018

Affixes in English and Ukwuani Language: A Contrastive Study. http://www.centres.inpub.org.AFFIXES (2011). Accessed 16/06/2018

Aspect of the Morphology of Okpe.http://wwwscribid.com/doc/71127104. Accessed 18/07/2018