

## Tiv Noun Inflection and Its Morphosyntax

Vanessa Chivir Adzer PhD

*Department of Languages and Linguistics, Benue State University, Makurdi*  
[vanessaadzer@gmail.com](mailto:vanessaadzer@gmail.com); 08177384203, 08036808992

### Abstract

This paper investigated the various processes of noun inflection for number in Tiv and described their morphosyntactic relations with other words they occur with. These processes include; Morpheme Additive-involving, prefixation, suffixation, and infixation; Suppletion- total and partial, Vowel Alternation, Vocalic and Consonantal Alternation, Zero affixation and Pitch Variation. The study was carried out within the broader theoretical framework of generative grammar and anchored on inferential realizational theory of inflectional morphology. The data collection for the paper was through elicitation of relevant data from native speakers of Tiv, consultation and written sources. Data is presented as list of examples and the descriptive approach to linguistic structure analysis using the Leipzig glossing rules was adopted for analysis. It was established that, Tiv has a very complex morphology and shrouded in it are the irregular variations characteristic of number inflection on nouns and these inflected nouns in Tiv are relevant to syntax since they express syntactic information of number. Thus, the study emphasized the intricate but fascinating nature of the number aspect of Tiv grammar and recommends a thorough description of the entire grammar of the Tiv language. The findings in this paper are valid intellectual contributions that can be replicated in other languages for description and documentation.

*Keywords: Language, Nouns, Inflection, Morpho-syntax*

### Introduction

The study of language is divided into subfields; phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. As much as each subfield is distinct and has its specified area of study, their relatedness and interconnection is an indisputable fact as can be observed on a general note; phonemes combine to form morphemes and words, and words combine to form phrases, clauses, and sentences on which meaning is superimposed as constrained by context. Specifically, there may exist defined relationships between one subfield and the other or between aspects of such subfields that could yield additional areas for exploration. Several of these areas have been identified and studied within individual languages. In the linguistic subfield of morphology, such interconnectivity is notable in areas such as morphophonemics, morpho-syntax and morpho-semantics. These interconnections are rule governed. In other words, there are rules that come into play, to show the interaction for instance, between morphology and syntax.

This paper examines Tiv noun inflection and its morpho-syntax. The term, “Morpho-syntax”, is derived from morphology, the study of the internal structure of words and their formation; and syntax, the study of how words are combined into larger units such as phrases and sentences. These two are combined because they have a very close relationship. This relationship or interface is notable and more productive under the branch of morphology called inflectional morphology.

Inflectional morphology is concerned with inflection, which is the modification of a word’s form to indicate grammatical information such as tense, mood, aspect, person, number and case; and paradigm, which is the complete set of related word forms associated with a given lexeme. The familiar examples of paradigms are the conjugations of verbs and the

declensions of nouns which are classified according to their shared inflectional categories as mentioned earlier.

The inflectional categories used to group word forms into paradigms cannot be chosen arbitrarily; they must be categories that are relevant to stating the syntactic rules of such a language, and in this case, Tiv. For example, one of the syntactic rules of Tiv relates to number distinction and agreement between *gbande* (dish) and *agbande* (dishes), because the choice between these two forms determines which verb is to be used, for example, a singular subject must go with a singular verb and a plural subject with a plural verb, as in the following:

- |    |        |                          |                    |            |                                      |
|----|--------|--------------------------|--------------------|------------|--------------------------------------|
| a. | (1) a. | <i>Gbande</i>            | <i>ngu</i>         | <i>sha</i> | <i>tebur.</i>                        |
|    |        | SG-Sbj-Gbande            | SG-COP- <i>ngu</i> | PREP       | table                                |
|    |        | Dish                     | is                 | on         | table ‘The dish is on the table.’    |
|    | b.     | <i>A-gbande</i>          | <i>nga</i>         | <i>sha</i> | <i>tebur</i>                         |
|    |        | PL-Subj- <i>a-gbande</i> | PL-COP- <i>nga</i> | PREP       | table                                |
|    |        | Dishes                   | are                | on         | table ‘The dishes are on the table.’ |

The distinction in number between the noun forms, *gbande* and *agbande*, constitutes a morpho-syntactic category, on the one hand, they require morphological definition (e.g. add *a-* for plural); on the other hand, number contrasts affect syntax (e.g. singular subject requiring a singular verb). Thus, the two noun forms, which are subjects in example (1a&b), can be described using both syntactic and morphological criteria.

These criteria or processes are rule-governed and must be adhered to for grammatically accepted linguistic units and structures to be produced; and for clarity and intelligibility to be achieved. GyangGyang (2013:28) concurs that,

Hanma zwa ngú a atindi a lamén ú vough-vough, man aluer ior mba kuran atindi ne ken alam ávé ga yô, mbagenev mba vé fe zwa shon dedoo je kpaa vea kera lu kaven kwagh u i lú oron ken zwa ve la dedoo ga.... Aluer hanmaor ngu lamen er nan soo, kera ka sha atindi a zwa la ga yo, ica iá gba ga tsô ior mbala cii vea kera lu kaven ayol ave ga, nahan ve cii vea hingir abumeaior.

Every language has rules by which it is spoken but if people do not adhere to the rules when speaking, even those who understand the language perfectly well, would find it difficult to understand what is being said in the language.... If everyone speaks the way he/she likes but not according to the rules of the language, in no distant time, all these people would not be able to understand one another, they would all become foolish people (English version- GyangGyang).

The excerpt captures the fact about the grammar of languages in general and Tiv in particular. Every language is rule-governed, and to preserve the standard, such rules must be consciously preserved through correct usage. This would ensure clarity and intelligibility and avoid seeming foolish when, out of careless negligence of correct usages, a people cease to understand one another as pointed out by GyangGyang (2013). This is one among the observed threats on Tiv language to which researchers and lovers of the language are out to find solutions. If not, in the near future, Tiv speakers would no longer understand one another when they speak, because the correct rules or way of speaking would have been long forgotten. Hence the necessity to describe and document the correct forms and usages of this aspect of Tiv grammar for preservation.

Thus, the paper identified and discussed the various processes of noun inflection for number in Tiv and described their morpho-syntactic relations with other words they occur with. Describing an aspect of Tiv grammar is one of the conscious efforts being employed as a measure to ensure the revitalisation and sustenance of the language for future generations. Considerable efforts have been made to describe, document, and develop the Tiv language, many indigenous and non-indigenous writers have described different aspects of the language, yet much still needs to be done, as some areas of the language have received little or no attention. The aspect being discussed is one of such areas. This paper aims at bridging this gap.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper is carried out in line with the word-and-paradigm theory of inflection, which is of the inferential realizational type. According to Stump, (2001:2), it was proposed by Matthews (1972), Zwicky (1985), and Anderson (1992), and the central assumption of inferential realizational theory states that, an inflected words association with a particular set of morphosyntactic properties licenses the application of rules determining the word's inflectional form. For example, *loves* arises by means of a rule appending *-s* to any verb stem associated with the properties '3sg Subject agreement', 'present tense', and indicative mood. Also, 'books' results when the lexeme 'book' undergoes the function 'make plural' Aronoff and Fudeman (2011: 49) . Thus, the study is anchored on this theory and the inflected noun forms in Tiv which the study investigated and described based on the application of rules determining their inflected forms.

### **Conceptual Review Language**

The term, 'language' can be used to refer to a variety of concepts or things. Finegan, (2004:1) sees it as "the particular form of words and speech used by the people of a country, area or social group or the method of human communication using spoken or written words." Langacker (1967), quoted in Vashney (1978:2) states that "language is a device that establishes sound meaning correlations, pairing meanings to signals to enable people to exchange ideas through observable sequence of sounds." These definitions posit a very complex human phenomenon but one that helps fulfils almost all of human needs.

### **Inflection**

O'Grady, Archibald, and Katamba (2011:132) define inflection as "the modification of a word's form to indicate grammatical information of various sorts." They are of the view that affixation is the most common process in word modification but also, they affirm the existence of other processes such as substitution and internal change. Affixation which is the process of attaching bound morphemes to roots of words to inflect them for grammatical information effects this by prefixing, infixing, or suffixing to roots. According to them, "inflection does not change either the grammatical category or the type of meaning found in the word to which it applies." For example, the words *cups* maintains its class as well as its meaning: *cups* remains a noun and its meaning is retained even with the attachment of suffix *-s*, which only indicates the number value of the word.

## Number

Number is a grammatical category used for the analysis of word classes displaying such contrast as singular, plural, dual, trial, paucal, etc., as in English; *boy vs boys*; *he walks vs they walk* (Crystal 2008: 335). ‘Number’ has to do with whether the speaker or writer refers to one person; *she is listening* (singular); or more than one: *they are listening* (plural) (Miller 2002:61). Many languages including English can boast of distinct markings for number. Tiv has a marvellously intricate but interesting system of forming plurals, and so do other languages. Imoh (2014:95) attests to the presence of an equally complex process of plural marking in Basa, a language in Kogi State of Nigeria.

## Morpho-syntax

Aronoff and Fudeman (2005:151) view morpho-syntax or morpho-syntactic information as syntactic information that is expressed morphologically. This includes the abstract syntactic categories of tense, aspect, number, and case. Specific values for these categories, such as past, imperfective, plural, or genitive, are generally referred to as morpho-syntactic features or properties. An instance of this can be seen in the use of the plural morpheme /s/ which is added to nouns to show that more than one item is being discussed: *mats, pens, spoons*, etc. The morpheme /-s/ has a meaning beyond the word to which it is attached. Its meaning becomes more apparent when it is used in a sentence. For example,

- (2) a. The boy-s                    are                                    playing    football.  
          PLU-Sub                    PLU-AUX-Verb    PRES-CON-Verb    OBJ

The plural morpheme /s/ is an inflectional morpheme, and according to Richards and Schmidt (2010:377), to discuss or describe all inflectional morphemes, criteria both from morphology and syntax are used. These syntactic categories as mentioned above, and which are sub-sets or subcategories in the morpho-syntax of a language indicate instances of morpho-syntactic relations in grammar and thus, emphasize the relevance of inflected values to syntax.

## Data Analysis

The Tiv noun inflection processes explored below are: Morpheme-Additive involving; prefixation, suffixation, and infixation; Suppletion- total and partial, Vowel Alternation, Vocalic and Consonantal Alternation, Zero affixation and Pitch Variation.

## Pluralisation by Morpheme Additive

Additive morphemes are outer grammatical affixes as opposed to the absence of morphemes in grammatical alternation. The affixes may be prefixes, infixes or suffixes. According to Tomori (1977: 32), “additive is the appendage of the morpheme to an already existing root or stem”. Tiv language is rich in inflections, especially in its formation of plural nouns from singular noun stems. Additive morphemes are attested in Tiv and they form a part of this plural formation process, such are, ‘i’, ‘a’, ‘u’ and ‘mba’ prefix.

### **Plural Formation by Prefix i-**

- (3) a. or 'person' i-or 'persons'      b. wo 'mountain' i-wo 'mountains'

The above examples exemplify the prefixing of the 'i' to noun stems to inflect the stems for number, thereby, changing their forms in accordance with the position held by O'Grady et al that, a word's form is modified to indicate grammatical information of various sorts; number, tense etc. (O'Grady, Demers, Farmers and Harnish 2011:132).

### **Plural Formation by Prefix i- and Infix -y-**

In forming plurals with the plural prefix morpheme 'i' in some words, there is an insertion of 'y' in the stem after the initial consonant sound of the stem. In other words, nouns in this group take both prefix 'i' and infix 'y' affixed to their stems to form their plurals, as illustrated below;

- (4)  
(4) a. Kov 'generation' i-kyov 'generations'  
b. Kwe 'crack' i-kywe 'cracks'

The rule in Tiv word structure for this group of plurals is that such words that would receive the 'y' infix must start with a consonant and the 'y' infix must necessarily be inserted immediately after the initial consonant. Though there is no overt explanation to why this group of nouns would take the infix while the first group would not. The base for the understanding of such an insertion is the native speaker's intuitive knowledge.

### **Plural Formation by Prefix a-**

The plural morpheme 'a' is prefixed to the noun stem thereby modifying it for number.

- (5) a. tasa plate a-tasa plates  
b. gbande dish a-gbande dishes

### **Plural Formation by Prefix u-**

- (6) a. nor elephant u-nor elephants  
b. canca broom u-canca brooms

The plural morpheme 'u' just like the others is prefixed to noun stems to inflect it for number.

### **Plural Formation by Prefix mba-**

The additive plural form 'mba' is also a copula in Tiv language, for example: *Kasev mba wuan amine* – Women are grinding millet. It is among the inflectional prefixes attached to noun stems in Tiv to form their plurals.

- (7) a. Alum 'orange' mba-alum 'oranges'  
b. akwati 'box' mba-akwati 'boxes'  
c. mzeyol 'trouble' mba-mzeyol 'troubles'  
d. Aondo 'God' mba-aondo 'gods'

It is interesting to note in this process that, while the base morphemes which take the ‘mba’ plural are stressed when they begin with a vowel as in /mba-alum/mba-Aondo/, etc, those which have initial consonants are unstressed (Jija, 2012:28).

### **Plural Formation by Suffix –ev, -ov, ôv and -v**

This group of nouns form their plurals by suffixing their stems with these inflectional suffix morphemes ‘ev’, ‘ov’, and ‘v’, as in the following examples;

(8) a.	Nomso	male	nomso-ov	males
b.	Angbyan	relation	angbyan-ev	relations
c.	Anngô	brother	anngô-ôv	brothers
d.	Won	in-law	won-ov	in-laws
e.	kwase	woman	kase-v	women

This process of plural formation through suffixation is not very productive in Tiv, the examples above seem to be the few attested to in the language.

### **Pluralization by Suppletion**

According to Ndimele (1999: 62), suppletion is a situation where, the root morpheme and its variant look so different that one may be forgiven if one thinks that they are different words. There is the evidence of both total and partial suppletion in Tiv plural formation process as can be observed below;

#### **Total Suppletion**

(9) a.	Wan	child	onov	children
b.	Zwa	mouth	ijo	mouths
c.	uwasegh	cheek	aase	cheeks

It can be observed from the above examples that; the root morphemes look different from their variants showing a clear case of total suppletion.

#### **Partial Suppletion**

In the words of Radford et al (2009: 152) where the form bears a partial resemblance to the base form, as in the English words bring – brought, it is the case of partial suppletion. Aronoff and Fudeman (2005:155) also confirm the evidence of partial suppletion and cite examples such as; think-thought, bring-brought etc. This is also attested in Tiv as can be seen below;

(10) a.	Ikyungugh	dove	mkungum	doves
b.	Ikyônogh	chair	mkonom	chairs

In this instance of partial suppletion in Tiv, the little resemblance the inflected form has with the stem is the retention of the second consonant and the vowel(s) of the stem. What all the plural forms have in common is that, they begin and end with the phoneme (m).

### **Pluralisation by Vowel Alternation**

The process of vowel alternation in Tiv is unique with the ‘i’ a vocalic segment in the singular noun stem being substituted especially with the ‘a’ and ‘u’, all vocalic segments. Notable about this process is the alternation of just the initial vowel and none other. Examples are as shown below;

- (11) a. Iji egg a-ji eggs  
b. Ijuan joint u-juan joints

### **Plural formation by Vocalic/Consonantal Alternation**

This process of plural formation uniquely alternates the initial vowel and consonant sounds of the noun stem while every other sound in the stem remains unchanged.

- (12) a. Ijor well azor wells  
b. Icahuu soap atsahuu soaps

It is worth noting that, this group of nouns are divided into two; the noun stems that have the vocalic /i/ and consonantal /j/ as their initial sounds alternate to /a/ and /z/ in their plural forms, while those that have /i/ and /c/ in their singular forms change to /a/ and /ts/ in their plural forms.

### **Pluralisation by Pitch Variation**

Tiv like many other African languages is a tone language; for this reason, certain words in Tiv indicate their grammatical number through tone, that is, depending on the native speaker’s pitch. In most cases, the low tone indicates singular while the high tone indicate plural. In other words, some nouns in Tiv do not change their forms to indicate grammatical number, the distinction between singular and plural is realised only through tone as the native speaker raises or drops his pitch. Below are some examples;

- (13) a. ìyò snake Íyó snakes  
b. ishù fish Íshú fishes

### **Plural formation by Zero affixation**

This process of zero affixation “refers to an abstract way of pluralising, which has no overt or physical realisation in the stream of speech. It is usually symbolized by Ø null, no overt phonological or morpho-syntactic effect” (Imoh, 2014: 95). In other words, these nouns maintain their forms, without changing not even through tone. Many mass nouns in Tiv fall under this group. Below are some examples;

- (14) a. Ice hair ice hair  
b. Mkurem oil mkurem oil

The context usually determines the meanings or quantities of these nouns, or they may be expressed by means of certain partitives which have plural forms (Imoh, 2014:97). For example, to show quantity for such nouns as ‘iyoo’- honey and ‘mkurem’ – oil, quantifiers





- Se unde iwó i- taven*  
we PST-climb PL-mountain AGR- high ‘We climbed high mountains’
- (16) Prefix i- and infix y
- a. *kor u- lihen i-kyor i-lihen*  
rope AGR- long ‘long rope’ PL-rope AGR-long ‘long ropes’
- b. *Tor u- kumen ruam ku heen*  
pestle AGR- pound food AGR-is here  
‘The pestle for pounding food is here’
- Ityor i- kumen rum ngi heen*  
pestle AGR- pound food AGR-are here  
‘Pestles for pounding food are here’.
- (17) Prefix a-
- a. *tasa u- cuku atasa a- cuku*  
plate AGR- small ‘small plate’ PL-plate AGR- small ‘small plates’
- b. *Gbände u- vesen ngu shin kicen*  
dish AGR- big AGR-is in kitchen ‘The big dish is in the kitchen’
- c. *Agbände a- vesen nga shin kicin*  
PL-dish AGR- big AGR-are in kitchen ‘The big dishes are in the kitchen’
- (18) Prefix u-
- a. *nor u-cuku unor mba- cuku*  
elephant AGR- small ‘small elephant. PL-elephant AGR-small small elephants
- b. *Saan na-m canca u- gôgônan*  
NOM-name PST-give me broom AGR-is long ‘Saan gave me a long broom’
- c. *Saan na-m u-canca mba- gôgônan*  
NOM-name PST-give me PL-broom AGR-are long ‘Saan gave me the long brooms’
- (19) Prefix mba-
- a. *alum u-kô mbaalum mba-kô -*  
orange AGR- unripe ‘unripe orange’ PL-orange AGR- unripe ‘unripe oranges’
- b. *Terngu yam akwati u- kon*  
NOM-name PST-buy box AGR-is wood ‘Terngu bought a wooden box’
- c. *Terngu yam mbaakwati mba- kon*  
NOM-name PST-buy PL-box AGR-are wood ‘Terngu bought wooden boxes’

The examples above show agreement between the modifier and the modified. All the singular subject noun forms happen to be from the *ngu* class of nouns, which selects a vowel counterpart /u/ to use with its complements. For example, in (15a) *or* – ‘man’ belongs to the *ngu* class (singular) which obligatorily uses /u/ with its complements, as in *Or u-dedoo* ‘good man’. In the plural forms, some modifiers adopt the noun class marker of the modified, which is the nouns copula according to its class to be in agreement with it, for example: *ior mba-dedoo*, ‘good men’, *mba-* accompanying the complement *dedoo* is the copula of the noun *ior* marking the noun class to which *ior* belongs. While some other plural forms simply transfer their plural properties to bear on their complements, as in (19b-plural); in another



under the *ngu* noun class (singular), which uses /u/ and *onov-children* is under the *mba* noun class (plural).

### Partial Suppletion

The nouns in this group both the singular and the plural forms also mark agreement by obligatorily requiring their complements to reflect their noun class, thus, the complement of the singular noun form in the below examples is prefixed with *ki*, the noun class of the modified to mark agreement, similarly, the complement of the plural noun form is prefixed with *ma* the noun class of the modified to mark agreement. It is worth noting that, all the noun forms in the *ki* noun class often have *i-* as their initial sound and *-gh* as their final sound; similarly, all the nouns under the *ma* noun class often have /m/ as their initial and final sounds as seen below:

- (22)
- |    |           |                         |          |                          |
|----|-----------|-------------------------|----------|--------------------------|
| a. | ikyungugh | ki-pupuu                | mkungum  | ma-pupuu                 |
|    | dove      | AGR-white ‘white dove’  | PL-dove  | AGR- white ‘white doves’ |
| b. | ikyonogh  | k-kon                   | mkonum   | ma-kon                   |
|    | chair     | AGR-wood ‘wooden chair’ | PL-chair | AGR-wood ‘wooden chairs’ |

### Subject Agreement marking in Vowel Alternation

These set of nouns are inflected for number by modifying the initial sound of the nouns. That is, all other sounds in the noun remain unmodified except the first which happens to be all vocalic sounds. Below are examples:

- (23)
- |    |              |             |               |            |
|----|--------------|-------------|---------------|------------|
| a. | iji          | i-hôô       | aji           | a-hôô      |
|    | egg          | AGR- rotten | PL-egg        | AGR-rotten |
|    | rotten egg   |             | rotten eggs   |            |
| b. | ijande       | i-cuku      | ujande        | mba-cuku   |
|    | ladder       | AGR- small  | PL- ladder    | AGR-small  |
|    | small ladder |             | small ladders |            |

In the above examples, only the initial vowel sounds of the head nouns are alternated, all other sounds remain unchanged. The nouns agree with their complements by making it mandatory that the complements reflect their initial phonetic feature.

### Subject Agreement marking in Vocalic/Consonantal Alternation

The nouns in this group alternate their initial vowel/consonant sounds to form plurals. They are specifically known for alternating the back vowel /i/ in the singular form to the front vowel /a/ in the plural form, similarly the consonant sound /tʃ/ is alternated to /ts/. Both the singular and plural forms mark agreement with their complements by demanding that, their complements assimilate their initial phonetic sounds as presented below:

- (24) a. iJOR
 i-tse | azor | a-tse ||  | well | AGR-old ‘old well’ | PL-well | AGR-old ‘old wells’ |

b.	icahuu	i-he	atsahuu	a-he
	soap	AGR-new 'new soap'	PL-soap	AGR-new 'new soaps'

### Subject Agreement marking in Pitch Variation

(25) a.	ishu	i-ndoo	íshu	i-ndoo
	fish	AGR- fresh 'fresh fish'	PL-fish	AGR- fresh 'fresh fish'
b.	íkyegh	i-uma	íkyegh	i- uma
	chicken	AGR-life 'life chicken'	PL-chicken	AGR-life 'life chickens'

This group of nouns express number through change in tone, in most instances, low tone indicates singular while high tone indicates plural. The form whether marked with high or low tone, mark agreement with its complement by assimilation. The complement assimilates the initial sound of the subject noun and reflects it in marking agreement; so that when the tone of the subject is low as it is in (25a) singular, the complement assimilates the tone and is equally low, when the pitch of the subject is high as in (25a) plural, the tone of the complement automatically alternates to high to mark agreement.

### Subject Agreement marking in Zero Affix Nouns

This group of nouns in Tiv do not change their forms whether singular or plural. That is, their inflected form has no overt or physical realization when uttered or written; in most cases, the context of use determines which form. The absence of a change in form is called zero affixation and represented by the symbol Ø. These particular set of nouns have no unique feature with which they can be identified, though, the sounds /i/, /m/, /a/ are observed as common initial sounds for most of the words in this set. These nouns are noted to extend their phonetic features to their complements, such that, each complement assimilates the phonetic feature of its head to show agreement as presented below:

(26)	/i/		
	Noun	Complement	English
a.	Ishô	i- aiee	false justice
	Justice	AGR- false	

b.	Iyoo	i- ii	black honey
	Honey	AGR-black	

(27)	/m/		
	Noun	Complement	English
a.	mnyam	ma - aiee	false sleep
	sleep	AGR- false	

b.	mkurem	ma-nyian	red oil
	oil	AGR-red	

(28)	/a/		
	Noun	Complement	English
a.	azer	a- kyôô	snail saliva
	saliva	AGR- snail	

b.	awambe	a- or	man's blood
	blood	AGR- man	

(29)	/n/		
	Noun	Complement	English
a.	Nyam	i- hôôn	spoilt meat
	Meat	AGR- spoilt	
b.	Nyaregh	ki- bou	bad money
	Money	AGR- bad	

There is agreement between the noun and its complement in the above examples. Each complement to a noun is prefixed with the head noun initial sound to show agreement. For instance, in (26a) the noun *ishô* has to select an agreeing complement that begins with /i/, a sound that has the phonetic properties of the head noun, which is a vowel. This is the characteristics of all the examples in (26-28), with the exception of the examples in (29), which have selected the agreement features appropriate to them according to the noun class they belong to.

The discussion above on subject agreement with their complements show the fact that agreement in Tiv expresses clearly the operational rules of morpho-syntactic features which in this case is the number markings on Tiv nouns with the rest of the words they occur in a given grammatical environment. The intricacies involved only emphasize the unique nature of Tiv noun inflection and its morpho-syntactic relations.

## **Conclusion**

The paper has explored the various ways that nouns inflect for number in Tiv and their manner of agreement with other elements in a grammatical environment expressing their morpho-syntactic relations. This is with the aim to expose the intricate but interesting rule governed nature of Tiv language and to preserve the standard, such rules must be consciously preserved through correct description, use and documentation. This would ensure clarity and intelligibility for both speakers and would be speakers of the Tiv language. It will also raise its status and invariably complement other efforts geared towards sustaining and standardizing the Tiv language. More efforts towards the description of core areas in Tiv language is recommended as this will help unravel the rich linguistic resource the language possesses and bring about effective development of the language as a whole.

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