

ASPECTS OF COMPOUNDING IN YORUBA

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This study examines the morphology of compounding in Yoruba so as to discover the derivational techniques deployed for use in the language. Findings reveal that compounding in all its ramifications is richly employed in the language. The analysis further confirms the age-long belief that morphology is the bridge between phonology and syntax, in that, most of these formations could not happen without recourse to these other language levels.

0. INTRODUCTION

Language is divided into linguistic levels for ease of study. Morphological level is just one of the linguistic levels of analysis like phonology, syntax and semantics. Morphology is defined as ‘the study of the structure of words’ (Iloene and Yusuf, 2007). Aronoff and Fudeman (2011:1, 2) define morphology as:

the study of form or forms In linguistics *morphology* refers to the branch of system involved in **word** formation or to the branch of linguistics that deals with words, their internal structure, and how they are formed.

To Thorne (2008:21) morphology ‘is the study of MORPHEMES, the smallest units of grammar. Morphology is defined as ‘...the study of morphemes and their arrangements in forming words’ (Nida, 1965:68). Awobuluyi (2001) in Oyeade (2007:241) defines morphology as ‘...the various ways by which single words are derived in each individual language and the various formatives by which this is achieved.

In sum, morphology is the study of the internal structure of words. Morphologists study word-formation through the identification and study of morpheme which is often defined as the smallest unit of grammatical analysis. There are two kinds of morphemes: free morphemes and bound morphemes. Most times a free morpheme could also be analysed as a word, because it can stand alone and is understandable in isolation: boy (n.), little (adj.), come (v.). Bound morphemes, also called affixes, cannot occur alone e.g. -er, -ing, -ly, un-. Bound morphemes are used in two distinctive ways: to create new words (derivational morphology) or to change the form of words (inflectional morphology). Our discussion here will be limited to only that of derivational morphology since the focus of the present study, compounding, falls within this branch of morphology.

Compounding as defined by Jespersen (1945) in Awoyale (1974:203) that is, having reviewed the previous attempts at defining compounds, is as follows:

As formal criteria thus fail in English, we must fall back on semantics, and we may perhaps say that we have a compound if the meaning of the whole cannot be logically derived from the meaning of the elements separately....

Awoyale (1974: 203) observes that attractive as this definition may be, it does not seem to help Jespersen very much, for he says further: ‘on account of all this it is difficult to find a satisfactory classification of all the logical relations that may be encountered in compounds. No definite and exhaustive rules seem possible’. Thus, it

is expedient to note at this juncture that unusual forms of compounding exist in different languages.

1. YORUBA

Yoruba is a term used for a tribe as well as the language of this tribe. To quote Samuel Johnson (1921:xix) ‘the Yoruba country lies to the immediate West of the River Niger (below the confluence) and South of the Quorra (i.e., the Western branch of the same River above the confluence), having Dahomey on the West, and the Bight of Benin to the South. It is, roughly speaking, between latitude 6 and 9 North, and longitude 2 30’ and 6 30’ East’.

Yoruba is one of the three major languages spoken in Nigeria. According to Oyetade (2007:170) :

The Yoruba language is the major language spoken in the six states that constitute the Southwest – Lagos, Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Ekiti, and Osun – and it is easy to be oblivious of the other languages attested in the area because they are minority languages, their speakers equally proficient in Yoruba.

It need be stated that outside the South-west region, Yoruba language is also in use even as the mother tongue in a large part of Kwara and Kogi States. ‘Forms of Yoruba are found outside Africa: the Caribbean, Cuba, Puerto Rico where the language is used for religion’ (Anyanwu, 2007:28).

The varieties of Yoruba language due to different locations of states in Nigeria include: Oyo dialect, Ekiti dialect, Ijebu dialect, Egba dialect and Owo dialect. The Yoruba people who occupy the Southwest of Nigeria number around 30 million (Oyetade, 2011). Yoruba is spoken by 22 million second language speakers in other countries of the world (Igboanusi and Peter, 2005:77; Gimes, 2000:202).

Attempts at documenting Yoruba compound words in the past include Crowther 1852, Bowen 1858, Delano 1965, Awobuluyi 1967, 1978, 2001, 2008; Bamgbose 1967, 1990; Ogunbowale 1970, Owolabi 1995a, Oyebade 2007, Yusuf 2007, Taiwo 2006, 2009). Many of these studies on Yoruba Grammar will help this research work in situating it within the scholarship on Yoruba morphology. However, with the exception of Taiwo (2009) much of what seems like word-formation strategies in Yoruba in these works treats only nominalization processes in depth. Thus, the present study does not cover a general ground as many of these past studies. Rather, the focus is restricted to compounding in Yoruba in all its ramifications.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The study aims at discovering the different morphological patterns involved in the formation of compounds in Yoruba. In other words, it aims to bring out the relationships which are systematic in the compounds of Yoruba.

Aronoff (1976:17) says ‘just as the simplest goal of a syntax is the enumeration of the class of possible sentences of a language, so the simplest task of a morphology, the least we demand of it is the enumeration of the class of possible words of a language’. Our aim is perfectly captured by the quoted words of Aronoff. We intend to explore the class of the possible compound words of Yoruba in this analysis.

Every derived word is a compositional entity. It is compositional semantically and structurally, the semantics being a function of the morphemes and the structure just like a sentence is semantically compositional. Thus, since every derived word has a semantic as well as a structural side, the two factors will guide our analysis throughout this work.

In a nut shell, the aim of the study is to capture the significant generalization existing in the morphological compounding of items in Yoruba. Our guiding principle is that the same information that speakers use in forming sentences is used in creating new words out of the existing words in the language. The creativity that makes somebody know and use the infinite number of sentences of a natural language underlies the production and use of derived words in the language.

The study has been tailored on an attempt to demonstrate why a speaker can tell whether a new word belongs to his language or not, just as he can tell whether a sentence is a part of his language or not. In other words, a generative account of the derived compound words of this language - Yoruba - will be presented here.

Again, like much of recent works in contemporary morphology, efforts will be made here to assign heads to these compound words.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study continues the investigation of the word formation techniques in languages of the world using samples of oral data taken from free speech (such as media programmes, advertisements, conversations, speeches and songs) as well as data drawn from written texts (such as official and literary documents).

Two important approaches to English morphology exemplified by Hockett (1954) are item-and-arrangement and item-and-process (cf. Aronoff and Fudeman, 2011). According to Aronoff and Fudeman (2011:49):

Item-and- arrangement and item-and-process represent two distinct points of view. Item-and-arrangement proceeds from a picture of each language as a set of elements and the patterns in which those elements occur. The item -and-process picture gives no independent status to the items, which arise instead through the construction of the patterns.

Item-and-arrangement approach to morphology proffers that a word, such as, *boys* results from the concatenation of the two morphemes *boy* + *s* from which it was composed. These component morphemes are the items. An item-and-process framework on the other hand is an approach to morphology in which complex words result from the operation of processes on simpler words. Thus, within the framework, *boys* results when the lexeme *boy* undergoes the function ‘make plural’. Hence, item-and-process theory is a process of word formation which yields one form out of the other. It is an attempt at explaining the process a particular root or base undergoes rather than representing a morpheme with a morph as is done within the item-and-arrangement theory.

Since the two theories explicated here are both relevant to English grammar (see Nida 1965, Quirk et al 1972, Tomori 1977, Katamba 1993, Matthews 1993, Fromkin, et al 2007), the current data gained insights from the two without necessarily being tied down to either, since flexibility is required in handling the complexities of an innovative item.

In addition to the approaches above which according to Aronoff and Fudeman (2011) are analytic, synthetic approach (see Koopman, et al, 2003) that gives the derivational history of a complex word of three or more morphemes within Chomsky’s transformational theory was also incorporated. ‘The linguist needs both’ (Aronoff and Fudeman, 2011:12).

4. FINDINGS

This section centres on the various techniques of forming compounds in Yoruba.

4.1 PATTERNS OF COMPOUNDING IN YORUBA

4.1.1 N + N → N

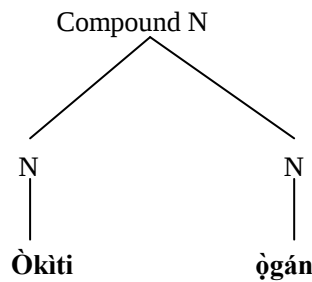
Examples of Noun-Noun compounding in Yoruba include the following:

- | | | | | | | |
|--------|--------------|---------------|----------------------|---|--------------------|--------------|
| (1) a. | Òkìtì | ògán | ‘heap ant-hill’ | → | òkìtì-ògán | ‘ant-hill’ |
| b. | Ọmọ | ẹ̀yìn | ‘child back’ | → | omo-ẹ̀yìn | ‘disciple’ |
| c. | Òde | òrun | ‘outside heaven’ | → | òde-òrun | ‘heaven’ |
| d. | Orin | Dáfídi | ‘song David’ | → | Orin-Dáfídi | ‘psalm’ |
| e. | Ilé | ẹ̀kọ́ | ‘house learning’ | → | ilé-ẹ̀kọ́ | ‘school’ |
| f. | Ọmọ | isẹ́ | ‘child work’ | → | ọmọ-isẹ́ | ‘apprentice’ |
| g. | Ibi | isẹ́ | ‘place work’ | → | ibi-isẹ́ | ‘work place’ |
| h. | Ohun | ògbìn | ‘thing for planting’ | → | ohun-ògbìn | ‘seed’ |
| i. | ọmọ | ogun | ‘child war’ | → | ọmọ-ogun | ‘soldier’ |
| j. | orí | òkè | ‘head mountain’ | → | orí-òkè | ‘hilltop’ |

N.B Yorùbá has three level tones: High tone is marked as [´], mid is unmarked, low is marked as [`] . Meanwhile, tones do not change in Yoruba when words are compounded.

The derivative history of the above compounds is as represented in the following tree diagram:

Figure 1



4.1.2 N+N → N (involving elision)

Examples of this type of compound nouns in Yoruba are as follows:

- | | | | | | | |
|-------|-------------|----------------|------------------|---|------------------|---------------------|
| (2)a. | Ọmọ | ọkùnrin | ‘child man’ | → | ọmọkùnrin | ‘boy’ |
| b. | Aya | ọba | ‘wife king’ | → | ayaba | ‘queen’ |
| c. | Ọga | ogun | ‘master war’ | → | ọgágun | ‘general’ |
| d. | Ọmọ | ọdẹ | ‘child hunter’ | → | ọmọdẹ | ‘child of a hunter’ |
| e. | Etí | odò | ‘ear river’ | → | etídò | ‘river bank’ |
| f. | Orí | ita | ‘head outside’ | → | oríta | ‘crossroad’ |
| g. | Erin | omi | ‘elephant water’ | → | erinmi | ‘hippopotamus’ |
| h. | Orí | iké | ‘head nut’ | → | oríké | ‘angle’ |
| i. | Idí | ọkọ | ‘base vehicle’ | → | ìdíkọ | ‘motor park’ |
| j. | Ẹ̀yẹ | ilé | ‘bird house’ | → | ẹ̀yẹlé | ‘pigeon’ |

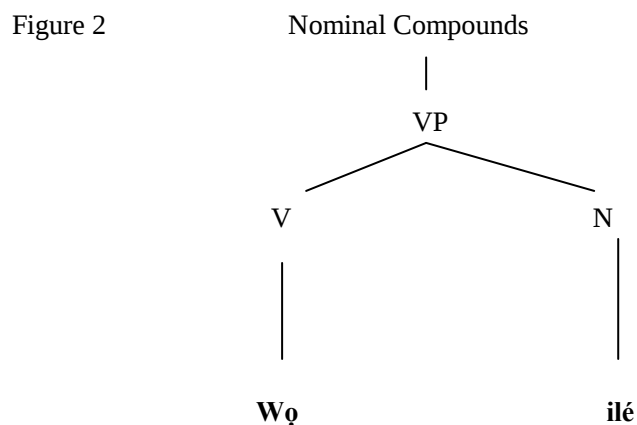
Compounds of type 2 are very similar to those of type 1 with the exception that type 2 compound nouns almost invariably involve elision of the third vowel which is the first vowel of the second noun. This is regular and predictable in that the first compound is usually of the VCV formation.

4.1.3 V+N → Verb- Nominal Compound

In Yoruba whenever a verb gets fused with a noun, a Verb-Nominal compound is derived as follows:

- | | | | | | | |
|--------|-----------|-------------|-----------------|---|--------------|------------------------|
| (3) a. | Wọ | ilé | ‘enter house’ | → | wolé | ‘come in/enter’ |
| b. | Jẹ | ọba | ‘be king’ | → | jọba | ‘reign’ |
| c. | Ro | inú | ‘think stomach’ | → | ronú | ‘think/reflect/reason’ |
| d. | Lọ | ogun | ‘iterate war’ | → | lọgun | ‘pressurize/insist’ |
| e. | Sọ | ọrọ | ‘say word’ | → | sọrọ | ‘speak’ |
| f. | Sá | eré | ‘run play’ | → | sáré | ‘run’ |
| g. | Já | ode | ‘break outside’ | → | jáde | ‘come out’ |
| h. | Yá | ara | ‘fast body’ | → | yára | ‘hurry’ |
| i. | Wá | idí | ‘search bottom’ | → | wádi | ‘investigate’ |
| j. | Kà | iwé | ‘read book’ | → | kàwé | ‘read/study’ |

The derivative history of these compounds is as follows:



One notable feature of these Verb-Nominal compounds is vowel deletion. The structure of Yoruba simple verbs is CV. Indeed, all verbs in Yoruba start in a consonant. Meanwhile, Yoruba nouns have the V-CV structure. With rare exceptions such as **bàbá** ‘father’, **filà** ‘cap’, **gèlè** ‘head tie’, **sòkòtò** ‘trouser’, nouns not beginning with a vowel (excluding personal names) are either of foreign origin or onomatopoeic. In line with the foregoing, V-N concatenation in Yoruba appears as: CV+V-CV → CVVCV. Invariably, such combinations will result in two vowels coming in contact. What is more, any time two vowels come into contact this way in Yoruba, one is always deleted. More often than not it is the first vowel of the noun that is elided. However, the deletion rule is not fixed and Awobuluyi (1978:154) explains this as follows: ‘The behaviour of words under construction is irregular. But perhaps a more

accurate way to characterise it is to say that it is not easy to describe it both accurately and exhaustively.’

The only thing that seems obvious here is tone behaviour. Whenever the tone of the vowel of the verb is a high one [´] it will be retained, even if the vowel is deleted the tone will be carried on to the next syllable’s vowel as in:

Yá ọwọ́ ‘fast hand’ = **yáwọ́** ‘very fast’

The principle of verb-nominal contraction in Yoruba as formalised in Oyelaran (1972:165-166) is as captured below:

First, a constraint on the morpheme structure of Yoruba states that

- (1) A Yoruba formative may *not* have a high-tone vowel initial.

On the syntagmatic level, (2) governs the sequence of verb and Noun object.

- (2) The tone feature of the vowel final segment of a verb is converted to mid, if it happens to be low, when that verb is followed immediately by a *Noun* object.

Examples:

	tà ẹran	→	ta ẹran	‘sell meat’
	bù ọbẹ	→	bù ọbẹ	‘serve stew’
but	tà á	→	tà á	‘sell it’
	bù ú	→	bù ú	‘serve it’

Finally, when two vowels are in contact and one of them is elided, as is common in Yoruba, only one tone feature is preserved. (3), (4) and (5) account for this process.

- (3) If the tones are identical the tone of the elided vowel is deleted; otherwise,

- (4) A non-high tone is dropped before any tone

- (5) the high tone is always retained

Statements, or preferably, rules 4 and 5 are possibly as a result of 1 and 2. We assume that this is clear and needs no further comment, Oyelaran concludes.

4.1.4 Compound Nominal groups

Bamgbose (1967:19) provides a unique kind of compounds in Yoruba that is best captured here as follows:

... Nouns, and even nouns followed by one or more qualifiers can be linked to each other by a number of conjunctions (linkers). Such linked structures may be called compound nominal groups because they consist of two or more nouns (or nouns with qualifiers) which can occur independently as nominal groups, if there were no conjunction linking them. The conjunctions are: **àti, àti ...àti, tí...tí, tàbí/àbí, yálà...tàbí**.

Bamgbose’s examples:

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| (4) | Àwo àti síbí | ‘plates and spoons’ |
| | Fílà , ẹwù àti bàtà | ‘cap, dress and shoe’ |
| | Àtomodé àtàgbà | ‘both young and old (people)’ |
| | Towó tesè | ‘hand and foot’ |
| | Ọdún kan tàbí ọdún méjì | ‘one or two years’ |

Yálà okùnrin tàbí obìnrin ‘either man or woman’

Bamgbose’s examples are also part of Yoruba compound nouns. Hence, they form part of the data in this paper.

4.1.5 De-sententialisation → Nominal Compounds

4.1.5.1 Descriptive sentences nominalized

- (5) a. **Iwé tí ñ ro ìhìn** → **ìwé-ìròhìn** ‘newspaper’
 Paper that PROG. state news
- b. **Èrọ tí ñ yára bí àsá** → **èrọ ayárábí-àsá** ‘computer’
 Engine that PROG Nom be:fast like kite
- c. **Ilé tí a ti fi iwé ránsé** → **ilé-ìfiwé-ránsé** ‘post office’
 House that we COMP is book send
- d. **Èrọ tí ó ñ sọrọ má gbèsì** → **èrọ asọrọ-mágbèsì** radio’
 Engine that Nom PROG speak NEG take reply
- e. **Ilé tí ó ñ tẹ ìwé** → **ilé-ìtẹwé** ‘printing press’
 House that Nom PROG print book
- f. **Èrọ tí ó ñ mọhùn/máwòrán** → **èrọ amóhùnmáwòrán**
 Engine that Nom PROG take voice/ take picture ‘television’
- g. **Ilé tí a ti ñ kọ iwé** → **ilé-iwé** ‘school’
 House that we COMP PROG learn book
- h. **Ọkọ tí ñ fò ní òfúrufú** → **ọkọ òfúrufú** ‘aeroplane’
 Vehicle that PROG fly in sky

The above derivation involves a combination of morphological processes like affixation and compounding. According to Ikotun (2010:171) ‘These names have two representationsIn the underlying representations, the negative markers that have been omitted at the surface representations must be reflected. Ikotun’s examples are cited below:

- (6) 1. **Akin kì í tán** → 2. **Akinkìítán** → 3. **Akíntan**
 4. **Ifá kò se ọlẹ** → 5. **Ifáòsọlẹ** → 6. **Fáàsọlẹ** → 7. **Fásọlẹ**
 8. **Adé kò gbọnmirè** → 9. **Adéègbọnmirè** → 10. **Adégbọnmirè**
 11. **Awo kò se ikà** → 12. **Awoòsikà** → 13. **Awòsikà**

While examples 1,2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, and 12 are products of slow speech and are not in use, examples 3,7,10, and 13 are products of fast speech and are in use. But, at the surface representations, the negative markers are not considered. This explanation holds for our examples above except that the deleted segments here are not negative markers but the S-V segments of the chopped off relative clauses.

4.1.5.2 Sentences reduced to personal names

Sentences in this category are like frozen expressions in that they are not structure-dependent. The derivation process involved in this type according to Adeniyi (2000), Lewis (2004), Taiwo (2006) is known as clipping. An example of a Yoruba clip given by Lewis (2004:296) is reproduced below:

Name	: Ọmọbọlá
With word boundary	: Ọmọ bá ọlá
Gloss	: Child Meets Esteem
Meaning	: The child is born into high estate.

Lewis (2004:296) reports further that:

for reasons of brevity and convenience, languages clip words while still maintaining their meaning. *A clip is a shortened form of a word; one or more syllables may be cut off.* In English, nouns and verbs are the lexical items that are usually clipped. In Yoruba, only personal names are clipped. Yoruba names are usually comprised of sentences in which word boundaries are disregarded. However clips come about, they are done in such a way as to vouchsafe the semantic component of the words involved, since the very essence of speech is to convey some meaning. It can therefore be asserted that *clips, rather than diminish words, lay emphasis on their meanings.*

Sentences reduced to personal names are learnt the way we learn single items in the language. Again, virtually all personal names in Yoruba fall into this category:

- (7) a. **Adé ti òkun bọ** → **adétòkunbọ** ‘name’
 Crown has sea arrive
- b. **Ayọ dé sí ilé** → **ayòdélé** ‘name’
 Joy arrived to home
- c. **Ọgún bọ wá sí ilé** → **ògúnbọwálé** ‘name’
 Iron arrive come to home
- d. **Ọlá sún kàn mí** → **ọlásúnkànmí** ‘name’
 Wealth shift reach me
- e. **Olúwa gbé mi ga** → **olúwagbémiga** ‘name’
 God lift me high

4.1.5.3 Compounding through root duplication

Compounding through root duplication is otherwise known as full reduplication. Ordinarily, in Yoruba Grammar, reduplication is not a type of compounding. However, according to Taiwo (2009:45) ‘reduplicated words ... behave like co-ordinate compounds because both the stem/root and the reduplicant equally share head-like characteristics.

Taiwo’s examples;

- a. **ọmọ** (N) ‘child’ → **ọmọọmọ** (N) ‘grandchildren’
 b. **fíọ** (Adv.) ‘very tall’ → **fíọfíọ** (Adv.) ‘very tall indeed’
 c. **nlá** (Adj.) ‘big’ → **nlánlá** (Adj.) ‘very big’

In Yoruba reduplication is a major morphological operation which scholars have always included in any morphological analysis of the Yoruba language. Thus, we present here full reduplication, a major word formation process in Yoruba as evident in the following examples as a type of co-ordinate compound:

4.1.6 .1 Noun root reduplicated → Noun

- (8) a. **Ọ̀sẹ̀** ‘week’ → **ọ̀sẹ̀ọ̀sẹ̀** ‘every week’
 b. **Oòù** ‘month’ → **oòùoòù** ‘every month’
 c. **Ọ̀jọ̀** ‘day’ → **ọ̀jọ̀ọ̀jọ̀** ‘every day’
 d. **Ọ̀dún** ‘year’ → **ọ̀dọ̀ọ̀dún** ‘every year’
 e. **Ọ̀sán** ‘afternoon’ → **ọ̀sẹ̀ọ̀sán** ‘every afternoon’
 f. **Àárò** ‘morning’ → **àràárò** ‘every morning’

In Yoruba, Taiwo (2009:44) states that ‘in the copying of an entire root/stem, the word class of the reduplicated word may be different from that of the root/stem; it may also belong to the same word-class as the root/stem. In line with Taiwo’s analysis, examples in (8) above are class-maintaining.

4.1.6.2 Compound action verb reduplicated → Agentive noun

Examples:

- (9) a. **Jagun** ‘fight war’ → **jagunjagun** ‘soldier/warrior’
 b. **Wolé** ‘inspect house’ → **woléwolé** ‘sanitary inspector’
 c. **Gbénà** ‘carve woods’ → **gbénàgbénà** ‘carpenter’
 d. **Mọ̀lé** ‘build house’ → **mọ̀lé mọ̀lé** ‘bricklayer’
 e. **Ghohùn** ‘amplify voice’ → **ghohùngbohùn** ‘loudspeaker’
 f. **Mugbó** ‘smoke hemp’ → **mugbómugbó** ‘hemp-smoker’
 g. **Fọ̀lé** ‘jump house’ → **fọ̀léfọ̀lé** ‘burglar’
 h. **Dánà** ‘divide way’ → **dánàdánà** ‘highway robber’
 i. **Gbálẹ̀** ‘sweep floor’ → **gbálẹ̀gbálẹ̀** ‘sweeper’
 j. **Peja** ‘catch fish’ → **pejapeja** ‘fisherman’

It is observed that whenever a compound action verb is reduplicated, an Agentive Noun is invariably derived. Following Taiwo’s (2009) classification, examples in (9) are derived nouns formed from reduplicated verb phrases.

Two other word classes derived in Yoruba through reduplication as discussed in Taiwo (2006:153) are as presented below:

4.1.6.3 Reduplicated Adjectives → Adjectives

- (10) a. **nlá** ‘big’ → **nlánlá nlánlá** ‘very big indeed’
 b. **tẹ̀ẹ̀rẹ̀** ‘slim’ → **tẹ̀ẹ̀rẹ̀ tẹ̀ẹ̀rẹ̀** ‘very slim indeed’
 c. **tín-ín rín** ‘slender’ → **tín-ín rín tín-ín rín** ‘very slender indeed’
 d. **firìgbòn** ‘robust’ → **firìgbòn firìgbòn** ‘very robust indeed’

Adjectives reduplicated here are class-maintaining. However, Taiwo’s data could be better improved by saying that the tone on the second word of reduplicated **firìgbòn** in particular must change to mid as in : **firìgbòn firìgbòn** ‘very robust indeed’

4.1.6.4 Reduplicated Adverb → Adverb

Adverbs reduplicated in Yoruba also yield adverbs as follows:

- (11) a. **fio** ‘very tall’ → **fiofio** ‘very tall indeed’
 b. **tóní** ‘very clean’ → **tónítóní** ‘very clean indeed’
 c. **régí** ‘exact’ → **régirégí** ‘very exact indeed’
 d. **yéké** ‘clear’ → **yékéyéké** ‘very clear indeed’

5. DISCUSSION

Our discussion here centres on the issue of headedness in Yoruba compound words. The issue of headedness is germane to our analysis here. Selection and locality condition stipulate that it is the head that chooses what goes with it. In other words, the head of a constituent is the element that determines the properties of its constituent (cf. Koopman et al, 2003). Speaking informally, we can say that the properties of the head are the properties of the whole constituent because it percolates into the other element with which it forms a compound. Thus, the category of compound word is determined by the category of its head.

In the English Language, the rightmost element of a compound is usually the head of that compound, Williams (2008) affirms this. However, as will be shown in the examples below, Yoruba appears to be different because the notion of headedness is not quite straight forward in this language. Moreover, Yoruba compounds belong to three types of groups as rightly pointed out by Taiwo (2009:33). The groups are:

- Endocentric compounds - with head
- Exocentric compounds - without a head
- Co-ordinate compounds - sharing both heads

Taiwo (2009:33) best explains the foregoing as follows:

Compounds which have a head are called endocentric compounds while those without a head are termed exocentric compounds (Selkirk 1982: 13; Fabb 2001 : 66-67). Fabb (2001 : 67) identifies another type of compound ‘where there is some reason to think of both words (in a compound) as equally sharing head-like characteristics’. This type is referred to as co-ordinate compounds.

Taiwo’s examples are:

- (12) a. **Oriádé** → **orí** + **adé** (**a-** + **dé** ‘to cover’)
 (personal name) head crown
 b. **lọsíwájú** → **lọ** **sí** **iwájú**
 ‘to progress’ go PREP front
 c. **nínú** → **ní** **inú**
 inside at stomach

Example (a) is a compound noun headed by **orí** ‘head’, (b) is a verbal compound headed by the verb **lọ** ‘to go’ while (c) is a prepositional compound headed by the preposition **ní**.

In line with Taiwo (2009), the pattern of compounding exhibited in the present data is as follows:

Endocentric compounds are found in sections 4.1.1, 4.1.2 and 4.1.3. while co-ordinate compounds are found in section 4.1.4 only and exocentric compounds are the desententialized nouns found in section 4.1.5. The compounds in section 4.1.6 are also

of the endocentric type as reported in Taiwo (2009). In conclusion, the head of Yoruba compounds is the left-hand member (see Owolabi, 1995a, Ogunkeye, 2002 and Taiwo, 2009). What is more, ‘most of these complex words are endocentric in nature’ (Taiwo, 2009:33). Meanwhile, both words forming co-ordinate compounds share head-like characteristics, this accounts for why we cannot assign head to any one of them. Again, nominal compounds derived through the desententialization process are irretrievably headless.

6. CONCLUSION

Compounding, although a morphological process, touches every level of language – phonology, syntax and semantics – either directly or indirectly. Compound nouns in section 4.1.4 subtitled desententialization are as a matter of fact coinages due to the introduction of new concepts and objects into the Yoruba culture.

The use of coined items consciously or inadvertently reveals a deeper linguistic problem which is that of lexical gaps, which however feature in all languages. Hence, coinage is a perfect solution for this problem. Furthermore, the use of coinage has helped to achieve some degree of economy of words and to express linguistically new and original ideas. Inversely, the phenomenon has enabled the Yoruba to physically manifest their thoughts or ideas in novel ways. What is more, the coinage method gives the variety a local colouration which often helps at identifying the socio-cultural background of the variety.

An established fact in literature is that languages make an important distinction between two kinds of words – content words and function words. True to type, the lexical formation procedures analysed here are all content words and this has once again confirmed an already established fact in Universal Grammar which is that we can and regularly do add new words to these open classes. The present linguistic evidence thus suggests that content words and function words play different roles in any language.

The analysis in this study authenticates the following linguistic universals, (1) that languages make an important distinction between content words and function words; (2) that words have internal structure, which is rule-governed; (3) these discrete units called morphemes account for creativity of human language; one of the properties that distinguish human languages from the communication system of other species; (4) that morphology stands as a link between phonology and syntax; and (5) that compounding is subject to phonological, morphological and syntactic processes. Thus, language use depends on a good mastery of the morphological compositions of words of such a language.

In conclusion, the paper serves as a prelude towards addressing the implications that compounding has for the general discussion of morphological derivations in languages. It also presents the morphological level as a challenging layer of communicative strategy employed by all language users. It hopes to stimulate further research on the ramifications that morphological complexity has for the grammar of natural languages.

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