Comparative Analysis of Word-Formation Processes in Abua and English

*[1]Akirika, S.W., & [1]Oladeji, S.A.

[1]Department of English and Communication Arts, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State

*Corresponding author email: stephen.akirika@iaue.edu.ng

Abstract

The thrust of this paper is a comparative analysis of word-formation processes of Abua and English languages. The main aim of the study is to examine the similarities and differences in word-formation processes of the aforementioned languages. The study adopts constrastive analysis theory propounded by Robert Lado in 1957. The data for this study was derived from personal conversations, discussions with informants, textual materials, online research and oral renditions. Consequently, the study discussed word formation process in both English and the second language learners of Abua language. The study also focuses on the differences and similarities of morphological formations of words in English and Abua languages in the area of affixation, clipping and loaning, blending of words which are problematic areas in the study of morphology of English as a second language. The findings show that the presence of the prefix *á-* which has a high tone, obligatorily changes the tonal pattern of the verb root it is attached to from a mid or low tone to a high tone in the derived words. The research employs descriptive analysis design.

Keywords: Abua, Blending, English, Clipping, Word-Formation

Introduction

The phenomenon called language is a complex communication system used by human that comprises of words and phrases that, when combined, creates infinite variable utterance. According to Nwala (2015) defines language as a term for any complex communication system used by human that consist of words and phrases that when combined, can create infinite variable utterance. Human language is distinctive in the sense that, it posseses its own structure and system of arranging its distinctive units into meaningful patterns. In other words, there are rules however, governing the organization of sentences, structurally. Most humans learn at least one language in early childhood. Language is complex in nature and has been defined in various ways. Hence, Umera-Okere (2017) affirms that language is a system of communication that requires the ability to produce and understand spoken, signed or written utterances. Hence, language is one of the most crucial creations in universally, through language thoughts are being harnessed. If there had been no language, living would have been difficult for humans to communicate. There could not be educational activity, no law, and nothing like talking. It is essential for humans to learn one language at least. Speculatively, there are over 7,100 languages in the world with English inclusive (Ken-Maduako, 2003). According to Sapir (1921) cited in Ken-Maduako (2003), language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols. Similarly, Akirika (2024) opined that the phenomenon called language is the vehicle for sharing human's thoughts and feelings, emotions within a milieu. However, a language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group co-operates. But Hall (1968) quoted in Onugha (2019) defined language as the institution whereby humans communicate and interact with each other by means of habitually used oral-auditory arbitrary symbols.

Language is a set (finite or infinite) of sentences each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements (Chomsky 1980 cited in Nwala 2015). The term word-formation revolves round the structure and composition of words in language (Crystal 2003 quoted in Onugha 2019). However, word formation occurs in morphology, hence, it is evident in this literature. Morphology refers to that linguistics branch which deals with the scientific study of language.

In discussing the tenets of morphology, Spencer (1991) cited in Ken-Maduako (2003) describes derivation as the second type of morphological operation which deals with the creation of words from already existing words. As seen in Kiango (2000), derivation is the process of word formation in which new words are derived from other existing words using morphological rules. The new words are referred to as derivatives. However, these derived words may or may not be of the same word class with the original word.

Matthews (2007:99) posits that word formation is word forming process which most times, changes the word class. It is also an aspect of morphology which deals with, "the derivation of one word in the lexicon from another". For instance, the affixes '-er' and '-hood' in the English words 'player' and 'childhood' are derivational affixes which show that 'player' and 'childhood' are new words derived from 'play' and 'child' respectively. Thus, the affixation of '-er' to 'play' not only alters the lexical meaning from 'play' (action) to 'play' (agent), but also changes the lexical category from 'play' (V), to 'player' (N) while the affixation of '-hood' to 'child' only modifies the lexical meaning of 'child' without changing its lexical category.

It is crystal clear from the above examples that derivational morphology can be classified into two, viz: class-changing and class-maintaining-derivations. By implication, class-maintaining derivation is the process of forebearing new lexemes which are basically of the similar class form ('word formation'), also which are the base of their formation, whereas class-changing derivation generates lexemes of different classes of form based on their bases.

Word-Formation Processes in Abua

In Abua, springs different ways of word formation. The processes evident in Abua are as follows:

Affixation

Ndimele (1999) describes affixation as a morphological process whereby an affix (a grammatical morpheme which cannot stand on alone) is being attached to the root or base of a word. Also, Emenanjo and Oweleke (2012) conceptualize affixation as a major word-formation process in which affixes are being attached to the base or root to form new lexemes. They, however, see affixation as a process of addition in which bound morphemes are added to free morphemes in order to create new words. Kari (2015:8) describes affixation as, "the process of attaching an affix to another linguistic unit". He further asserts that an affix is a cover term for the different bound morphemes.

Basically, affixes are classified using two criteria: the position of occurrence relative to the location of the root and the function they perform when attached to the root of a word (Ndiemele, 1999, 2003 and Kari, 2015). Positionally, affixes are classified as follows: prefix (before the root), suffix (after the root), infix (in between the root), circumfix (surrounding the root), interfix (in between two roots) and superfix/suprafix (above the segment that up the root). By function, affixes can be inflectional, derivational or extensional.

Kari (2015) asserts that derivational affixes are used to create new words which may or not belong to the same lexical category as the words from which they were formed. Derivational affixes are divided into two" class-changing cum class-maintaining, while class-changing derivational affixes bring about the formation of new words which do not belong to the word classes from which they were formed, class-maintaining derivational affixes act in the opposite, i.e, they result in the formation of new words which belong to the word classes from which they were derived (Onugha, 2019). Note, however, that both class-changing and class-maintaining derivational affixes act on the lexical meaning of the word to which they are affixed, but only the class-changing words affect the word class (syntactic value).

In Abua, the derivational function of an affix is expressed through the different types of affixes depending on their positions relative to the root.

Prefixation

Prefixation is a derivational process used in the formation of nouns from verbs in Abua. Thus, the open front unrounded vowel [á-] in Abua can function as nominal prefix which when attached to verb roots, give rise to the derivation of nouns. For example:

Theoretical Framework

Constractive Analysis

Contrastive analysis is the analytical study of paired languages with a view to identifying their systemic similarities and differences. Historically it has been used to establish language genealogies. Furthermore, it is a practice-oriented linguistic approach that seeks to describe the differences and similarities between a pair of languages (hence it is occasionally called "differential linguistics").

This constrastive analysis (CA) theory was propounded by Robert Lado in 1957. It is the systematic comparison of paired languages, with the goal of describing their differences and similarities. CA as a theory often is geared towards practical/pedagogical purposes. The goal has been to provide better descriptions and better language teaching materials for language learners. There is more to CA than this, however. When we compare, we often see things more clearly. However, we compare across languages, we can see the characteristics of each language more clearly, and the comparison can contribute to a better description of each individual language. This type of CA has sometimes been called analytic comparison or linguistic characterology (Mathesius 1975, cited in Akirika 2024).

Consequently, constrastive analysis extends beyond individual languages. When we compare across a number of languages, we can also see more clearly what is characteristic of languages more generally. There is a lot of interest in universals of language – that is, what is characteristic of language in general. To study this, there is a need for language comparison.

Methodology

This study concerns itself with academic processes and procedures in the investigation. However, the research population of this study is 282,988 of the Abua language community resident in Abua/Odual Local Government Area of Rivers State. (National Population Census Commission of Nigeria 2006). The sample size used as the population of the present paper was specifically selected from the competent and fluent native speakers of Abua language specifically forty (50) adult respondents got in the ratio from Emughan clan in Abua/Odual Local Government Area of Rivers State were used for the study. Consequently, sources of data here hinges on where a research corpus was got. For this study, firsthand information was gotten through the primary source of data collection. The secondary data was mainly gathered from textual materials, such as dictionaries, encyclopadia, journals. Abua Translation Project (ATP), and even the internet.

The method adopted for the collection of data for this study was the unstructured oral interview. Similarly, the sample covers all levels of respondents, the unstructured oral interview was used to help the researcher to get in-depth information through face to face oral communication and to analyse the data easily. The researcher adopted a simple descriptive analysis to interpret the data. The data from both English and Abua languages were presented, described and analysed contrastively, showing areas of sameness and dissimilarities.

Data Analysis

Derivational Processes in Abua

There are different ways of deriving words in Abua. The processes evident in the language are as follows:

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1.   Derivational prefix

	Prefix	Root word (V)	Derived word (N)
a.	á-	purú 'ask'	ó-purú 'question
b.	á-	déé 'divide'	ó-déé 'division'
c.	á-	porôk 'pursue'	é-porók 'power'
d.	á-	dénaan 'direct'	é-dénaan 'directive'

Observe that the presence of the prefix *á-* which has a high tone, obligatorily changes the tonal pattern of the verb root it is attached to from a mid or low tone to a high tone in the derived words. Also, this prefix considered a class-changing derivational affix hence it is used to derive nouns from verbs in Abua.

Suffixation in Abua

In Abua, some words are created by suffixing the bound morphemes '-ra' to nouns to form verbs. For example:

2.   Derivational suffix

	Suffix	Root word	Derived word
a	-á	munum'urine'(N)	munum-á 'urinating' (V)
b.	-ni	elómaân 'sweat' (N)	eloman-ni 'sweating' (V)

In example 2 above, it is observed that root words with long vowels undergo the phonological process of deletion, owing to the presence of the derivational suffix '-ra'. However, it is important to note that the vowel deletion process only affects root words.

Suprafixation

In Abua, tones must be indicated as part of the regular spelling of words, otherwise there will arise the problem of ambiguity Otto (2000). Thus, modifications in tone give rise to the formation of new words. Some examples of this process include:

3.   Tone as a suprafix in Abua

a.   ôdón 'snake'   ôdon 'rope'   ôdon 'long'

b.   ómunúm 'to urinate'   ómunúm 'to deficate'

c.   ótu 'house'   ótu 'family'

d.   enaán 'God'   enaám 'meat'

Observed in the above examples is the fact that an alteration of tone can cause meaning change between words that have identical consonant and vowel segments. For example, ôdón can mean ôdón 'snake' ôdón 'rope'. The difference between these forms is signaled via tonal variation, and this can only be observed or seen in tonal languages such as Abua. This affixation process is very productive in the language.

Compounding

Compounding is a global concept in linguistics which accounts for derivation of new words. However, It is defined as a productive morphological process that is common to languages. Ndimele (1999:73) affirms compounding as, "a process of joining two or more formerly independent roots to form a single word". Hence, a word that is formed in this manner is referred to as a 'compound'. Going forward, he opines that it does not only involve stringing together of words from one part of speech which can equally be joined together to derive compounds. However, he notes that the overall meaning of a compound is not always equal to the meaning of the individual words making up that particular compound.

In Abua, most words are formed through compounding. These compounds mainly may consist of two or more lexemes which could be from different word classes or even from the same word classes. The compounds could be a combination of two nouns (noun + noun), verb and noun, adjective and noun, etc. For example:

Noun + Noun formation

This is a combination of two nouns to derive a new word. Here, the class is maintained (Ken-Maduako, 2003). It is observed that in Abua, most personal names are formed through the combination of nouns (i.e, noun + noun), viz:

4. a.   ódighi   +   emugh   odighiemugh   'God's work'

         work   God

   b.   Enighéni   +   emugh   emughenighéni   'Gods goodness'

         goodness   God

   c.   Eghuán   +   oyè   eghuánoyè   'honourable man'

         honour   man

   d.   déseph   +   emugh   désephemugh 'praise God'

         praise   God

It is imperative to stress that proper names (in Abua) are formed through certain circumstances, events or ideas. However, every proper name has a peculiar meaning ascribed to it.

Adjective + Noun Combination

The combination of adjectives with nouns also helps in the derivation of noun compounds which could also act as proper names where suitable.

5. a.   ogéy   +   odé   ogéyodé

         good   father   'good father'

   b.   ogéy   +   ónii   ogéyónii

         good   mother   'good mother'

   c.   ogéy   +   ánir   ogéyánir

         good   wife   'good wife'

   d.   ogéy   +   olôm   olôm

         good   husband   'good husband'

Verb + Noun formation

This is a combination of verbs with nouns in order to derive gerundives. However, this formation is not too productive in Abua.

6. a.	rá	+	ogbá		ráogbá 'stealing'
	steal		thief		
b.	knó	+	édin		knóedin 'feeding'
	give		food		
c.	béyan	+	oyé		béyanoye 'fighting'
	fight		someone		
d.	digh	+	ojó		dighojó 'farming'
	enter		farm		

Clipping

Ndimele (1999:70) asserts that clipping is, "a process of creating a new word by shortening another word". That is, clipping has to do with the reduction in the length of words. Also, Ejele (2014) adds that clipping is the shortening of words or phrases. On his part, Kari (2015) posits that clipping (as a kind of abbreviation) does not, in any way, affect the lexical category or meaning of the new word that is formed. For example: (exam)ination, (info)rmation. It is observed from these two examples that both the clipped forms and the original forms share same semantic and syntactic features. However, the two forms are separate lexical items having different morphological configurations. The full length of these formations are usually reserved and used for formal communication. In English, there are basically two types of clipping: back-clipping and fore-clipping. Back-clipping involves taking an element(s) from the end of a word, where what is derived is an abridged version but can stand in its place. For example, photo(graph), lab(oratory), gas(online), etc. Fore-clipping, on the other hand, involves taking an element(s) from the beginning of a word.

In Abua, clipping is used to shorten personal names. This process can occur at the beginning (Fore-clipping) or ending (back-clipping) of the word that undergoes the reduction. As such, the choice of what to clip vary from one individual to another, that is, there is no fixed procedure for this formation

7. Full form	Gloss		Clipped form	Gloss
a.Emughéphomokianemi	God loves me'	emughéphomokian		'God loves'
b.Emughkuigho	'God's gift'		kuigho	'gift'
c.Dianemughi	'God's namesake'		dian	'namesake'
e.Emughenaáni	'God does not sleep'		enaáni	'does not sleep'

Notice, however, that some names in Abua have undergone clipping to the extent that even native speakers find it difficult to relate the clipped form of the word to its full form.

Conclusion

The point of departure emphasizes that the process of deriving new words in Abua, three processes were identified as derivational mechanisms namely: affixation, compounding, and clipping. Out of these three, compounding attests to be the most productive. Consequently, speakers of Abua have tones which are indicated as part of the regular spelling of words, otherwise will arise the problem of ambiguity. However, we also discovered the formation of nouns from verbs in Abua which is the open front unrounded vowel [ó-] in Abua can function as nominal prefix which when attached to verb roots, give rise to the derivation of nouns. The findings show that the presence of the prefix á- which has a high tone, obligatorily changes the tonal pattern of the verb root it is attached to from a mid or low tone to a high tone in the derived words. Also, this prefix considered a class-changing derivational affix hence it is used to derive nouns from verbs in Abua. The second findings shows that It is imperative stressing that proper names (in Abua) are formed through certain circumstances, events or ideas.

However, every proper name has a peculiar meaning ascribed to it, amongst others. However, it is crystal clear, indubitable that mastering morphological aspects as second language learners of English Language based on ones qualification in competence constitutes the major factor of this research work, hence the topic: The morphological analysis and loanwords of the Abua speakers of English languages.

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