Compounding in Ewulu and Urhobo

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ABSTRACT

This paper is largely inspired by the increasing linguistic research studies geared towards the description, development and documentation of African languages in order to continously keep them in the limelight, without which they could be threatened with extinction. In this regard, this paper examines compounding in Èwùlù and Ùrhòbò and attempts to explore the various procedures by which both languages adopt in deriving compounds via the compounding process. Moreover, the paper adopts existing data in both languages and tries to expose the relationships between the two compounding systems in which two or more existing morphemes (or words) are combined to form a new word referred to as 'Compound Word'. Èwùlù and Ùrhòbò are one of the small languages of Nigeria spoken in   the northern and southern part of Delta State, Nigeria respectively. In the analyses, the paper revealed that Èwùlù (Igboid) and Ùrhòbò (Edoid), though are two different Nigerian languages, yet exploit nearly the same morphological patterns of compounding to create new words for the sole aim of expanding their vocabulary. The paper concludes by recommendeding that the indigenous African/Nigerian languages, particularly the small ones should be rigorously researched in order to pave way for their continuous description/documentation and existence. The methodology adopted in the current work is descriptive.

Keywords: *Compounding, Ewulu, Urhobo, Small languages, Compound word*

INTRODUCTION

Èwùlù refers to a group of people and their language. Similarly, Ùrhòbò refers to a group of people and their language. By virtue of size, recognition and dominance, which prompts the use of the term 'main' Nigerian languages in Bamgbose (2000), the latter languages as opposed to the former one is a main Nigerian language. However, what is common to the two languages is that both are small languages. The population of Èwùlù is about fifteeen thousand (15,000 = 0.01%) people, while the population Urhobo, 2006 population census, is about two million (2,000,000 = 1.25%) people. These percentages suggest that the population figures of both languages is a paltry figure, given the approximately one hundred and sixty million (160,000,000) people in Nigeria.

Èwùlù belongs to a group of languages referred to as Enuani or Igboid, spoken in the northern part of Delta State   . The Énúànì group of languages comprise a cluster of dialects often called 'Delta Igbo' languages, alongwith the Ika and Ukwuani group of languages . Ùrhòbò, on the other hand, is a south-western Edoid language spoken in the southern part of Delta State (Elugbe, 1989). In language classification, Èwùlù and Ùrhòbò   are classified under West Benue Congo group of languages (see Heine and Nurse, 2000) even though both are mutually unintelligible languages.

Compound words are typically two or more word items combined from existing vocabulary of a language for the purpose of of generating new words (Katamba, 1993).   This process becomes necessary when a language needs to conceptualise some idea which a single word in the language in incapable of expressing. Thus compounding as a linguistic term is a productive process that generate new words into a language using existing materials in the lexicon. Exploring the various procedures untilised in generating compounds is the focuse of this present paper couched in the structuralist/ descriptivist framework.

OBJECTIVE

This paper is largely inspired by the increasing research studies on African linguistics, whose aim is principally to describe, develop and document African languages, both the so-called

big (e.g. Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa) or small languages so as to continously keep them in the limelight, and by so doing ensure that they are maintained. Otherwise they stand the risk of becoming endangered, a situation that ultimately can lead to extinction. For this reason, the objective of the current paper is to investigate the compounding process in Èwùlù (Énúànì/Igboid) and Ùrhòbò (Edoid), with an attempt to examining the morphological procedures which both languages adopt in deriving compound words.

COMPOUNDING

Compounding is a morphological process whereby two or more free morphemes/words are combined to form a new word (Fabb, 2001; Aziza, 2007). The newly formed word is referred to as compound word. Compounding may involve the combination of string of words equivalent to the sentence to form compounds. Forenames and numerals fall into this category. A number of Niger Congo languages (Èwùlù and Ùrhòbò inclusive) derive forenames and numerals through this process.

Corroborating Fabb's and Aziza's view of compounding as a morphological process , the most common pattern of forming compounds in Èwùlù and Ùrhòbò is by systematic ally combining free morphemes in the noun class, verb class, adjective class and preposition class. Typically, combinations may involve a noun with another noun. It may involve a verb with another verb, a noun with an adjective and so on.

Combination of specific morphemes are subject to the morpho-syntactic constraints of the languages under investigation.

Basically, compounds in Èwùlù and Ùrhòbò , as will be shown in this study, function to expand or form new concepts, or express (new) ideas which a single word in itself is incapable of expressing. Functionally, compounds in Èwùlù and Ùrhòbò are typically used for descriptive purposes; some, however, may be used as modifiers or intensifiers. This is particularly the case in Èwùlù.

Compounding in Èwùlù and Ùrhòbò

Most compounds in Èwùlù and Ùrhòbò are derived by combining two free morphemes either from the same or different grammatical classes (Aziza, 2007). Observation of data in the two languages shows that a noun may combine with another noun, an adjective or a verb. A verb may combine with another verb or noun. Moreover, a preposition may combine with a noun, though fewer compounds are derived from preposition -noun combination in Èwùlù and Ùrhòbò . The scantiness might be traced to the fact that both languages, like most languages, have few prepositions when compared with other categories such as the noun, verb and adjective.

Like mentioned in the foregoing, in Èwùlù, a noun may be combined to form nominals which denote animate and inanimate objects. The morphological procedure in deriving this kind of compounds is shown in (1a) as follows

(1a) Noun + Noun Compounding In Èwùlù					
	Noun		**Noun**		**Compound Noun**
i.	ónyé	+	ń-kúzí	→	ónyéńkúzí
	'person'		'teach-ing'		'teacher'
ii.	ḿkpú!lú	+	osísí	→	ḿkpúlúósísí
	'seed'		'stick/tree'		'fruit'
iii.	ẹ́ká	+	ńrí	→	ẹ́káńrí
	'hand'		'food'		'right hand'
iv.	ókwú	+	ọ́nụ́	→	ókwúọ́!nụ́
	'word'		'mouth'		'utterance'
v.	úgbọ́	+	ànì	→	úgbọ́ànì
	'canoe'		'land'		'automobile'
vi.	èshụ́	+	ọ́kwụ́	→	èshụ́ọ́!kwụ́
	'body'		'fire'		'fever'
vii.	ágụ́	+	ǹkwó	→	àgụ̀ǹkwọ́
	'tiger'		'first day of the week'		'eagle'
viii.	ǹmányá	+	ńkú	→	ǹmányáńkụ́
	'wine'		'wood'		'palmwine'
ix.	èshụ́	+	únọ̀	→	èshụ́únọ̀
	'body'		'house'		'wall'

On the other hand , in Ùrhòbò, a combination of noun-plus-noun normally would derive words that describe genealogical/gender terms such as

father, boy etc. The procedure of deriving such compound nouns is presented in (1b) as follows:

	Noun		Noun		Compound Noun
	(1b) Noun + Noun Compounding In Urhobo				
i.	óniọ̀vò	+	ómóshàrè	→	óniọ̀vòómóshàrè
	brother/sister'		'boy'		'brother/sister (of the same parents)'
ii.	ómọ́	+	ósē̩	→	ómóósē̩
	'child'		'father'		'half brother/sister'
iii.	ómọ́	+	óshàrè	→	ómóóshàrè
	'child'		'man'		'boy'

It will be noticed that, in both languages, noun-noun compounds function as full word of its own. The difference, however, lies in the descriptive functions which their nominal compounds convey.

Besides, Èwùlù can derive nominal compounds by simply combining nouns with adjectives. Such a combination may describe a state that portrays emotions, positive or negative feelings. Examples are presented in (2a) and (2b) as follows:

	Noun		Adjective		COMPOUND
	(2a) Noun + Adjective Compounding In Èwùlù				
i.	ísí	+	íké	→	ísíí!ké
	'head'		'hard'		'stubbornness'
ii.	é̩nyá	+	úkwú	→	é̩nyáúkwú
	'eye'		'big'		'greed'
iii.	é̩ká	+	íké	→	é̩káíké
	'hand'		'hard'		'stinginess'
iv.	ísí	+	ọ́má	→	ísíọ́má
	'head'		'beautiful'		'good-luck'
v.	ọ́nwú	+	íké	→	ọ́nwúíké
	'death'		'hard/power'		'untimely death'

Like Èwùlù, Ùrhòbò does derive some nominal compounds by conflating a noun and an adjective. The combination yields compounds that have descriptive function. They are illustrated in (2b) as follows:

	Noun		Adjective		Compound
	(2b) Noun + Adjective Compounding In Urhobo				
i.	ùdì	+	ọ́nọ̀họ̀ + ùnù	→	ùdìọ́nọ̀họ̀ùnù
	'drink'		'soften' 'mouth'		'soft drink'
ii.	ùdì	+	ònìè̩mìè̩	→	ùdìònìè̩mìè̩
	'drink'		'sweet'		'sweet drink'
iii.	ùdì	+	ọ́gágàn	→	ùdìọ́gágàn
	'drink'		'strong'		'alcohol'
iv.	ọ́!sé	+	Òròdè	→	ọ́!séòròdè
	'father'		'big one'		'father'

Moreover, compounds may be derived from a combination of nouns plus gerunds. Gerunds (words with -ing ending) structurally look like verbs, but are functionally nouns owing to their syntactic function. Noun-gerund combination yields compounds which denote specific activities in Urhobo. Compounding process of this kind seems never to operate in Èwùlù. The Urhobo noun-gerund compounding takes the following form in (3) as follows:

	Noun		Gerund		Compound
	(3) Noun + Gerund Compounding In Urhobo				
i.	ìyèrìn	+	èhwé	→	ìyèrìnèhwé
	'fish'		'fishing'		'fishing'
ii.	èkì	+	è̩chuọ́	→	èkìéchuọ́
	'market'		'trading'		'trading'
iii.	íg!hó	+	èguónò	→	íg!hóèguónò
	'money'		'looking'		'looking for money'
iv.	èvùn	+	èmré	→	èvùnèmré
	'belly'		'seeing'		'pregnancy'

Furthermore, Èwùlù has a compounding system which bears some resemblance with one othercompounding system in Urhobo. It is the one that combines a preposition with a nouns to

derive certain concrete nouns. A few isolated examples of the forms in Èwùlù are shown in (4a) as follows:

(4a) Preposition + Noun Compounding In Èwùlù					
	Prep.		**Noun**		**Compound**
i.	ímé	+	ụ́nọ̀	→	íméụ́nọ̀
	'in		'house'		'room'
ii.	énú	+	ụ́nọ̀	→	énúụ́nọ̀
	'top'		'house'		'roof'
iii.	énú	+	ànì	→	énúànì
	'top'		'land'		'name of a town

In the case of Urhobo, a noun rather comes before a preposition followed by a phrase. This complex combination of a sort appears to generate the same semantic result of the type found in Èwùlù, that is, in (4a). The complex Urhobo forms are examplified in (4b) as follows:

(4b) Noun + Preposition + Phrase Compounding In Urhobo						
	Noun		**Prep.**		**Phrase**		**Compound**
i.	èvùn	+	ré	→	ùvwèvwìn	→	èvùnréùvwèvwìn
	'belly'		in		the house		'inner room'
ii.	ótō	+	ré	→	úrhé	→	ótōréúrhé
	'land, ground'		in		'bottom of tree'		'under a tree'

Also, Èwùlù has verbal compounds derived by a combination of simple verb roots/stems. Compounds in this category express an action which is not expressible using a single simple verb stem. Compounds of this sort create a sense of 'intensification' or 'modification' of an action. This process is shown in (5a) as follows:

(5a) Verb + Verb Compounding In Èwùlù					
	Verb		**Verb**		**Compound**
i.	tí	+	gbú	→	tígbú
	'beat'		'kill'		'lynch'
ii.	nọ́	+	gbú	→	nọ́gbú
	'press'		'kill'		'massage intensely'
iii.	gbá	+	wá	→	gbáwá
	'shoot'		'split'		'break (an hollow object)'
iv.	tí	+	wá	→	tíwẹ́
	'beat'		'split'		'break (a ceramic plate)'
v.	kà	+	gbú	→	kàgbú
	'mark'		'kill'		'clean up (a written text)'

Likewise in Urhobo, the same compounding process is attested, where simple verb roots are combined to form verbal compounds. Semantically, verb-verb compounding in Urhobo also expresses an action. The process is illustrated in (5b) as follows:

(5b) Verb + Verb Compounding In Urhobo					
	Verb		**Verb**		**Compound**
i.	brù	+	hwè	→	brùhwè
	'cut'		'kill'		'condemn' or 'find guilty'
ii.	mùdìa	+	gaga	→	mudiagaga
	'stand'		'strong'		'stand firm'
iii.	djè	+	mrè	→	djèmrè
	'run'		'see'		'run and see'
iv.	tè	+	dè	→	tèdè
	'reach'		'buy'		'reach there and buy'
v.	chò	+	dà	→	chòdà
	'sell'		'drink'		'trade on drinks'

Compounding in Ewulu and Urhobo

As described so far, it will be observed that the compounds mostly have descriptive function and fall into the class of nominals, excepting the ones in (5a) and (5b).

However, there exists compounds which, on the one hand, denote an action performed by someone, and on the other hand, those which are purely descriptive in nature. Compounds with these twin functions occur in Èwùlù and Ùrhòbò. In Èwùlù, such compounds are derived by a combination of agentive nouns (nouns that denote performer of an action) plus simple nouns in Èwùlù, whereas in Ùrhòbò they are derived by a combination of simple verbs plus nouns. A description of this pattern is given in (6a) and (6b) as follows:

(6a) Agentive Noun + Noun Compounding In Èwùlù				
Agentive Noun		**Noun**		**Compound**
i.	ò-gbá-à	+	èbùnù	→	ògbáàèbùnù
	'shooter		'ram'		'native doctor'
ii.	ò-ché-è	+	únò	→	òchéèúnò
	'guard'		'house'		'gecko'
iii.	ò-gbú-ù	+	ánú	→	ògbúùánú
	'killer'		'meat'		'butcher'
iv.	ò-gbú-ù	+	Éfí	→	Ògbúùéfí
	'killer'		'buffalo'		'a chieftaincy title'
v.	ò-rí-ì	+	ǹgwélè	→	òríìǹgwélè
	'eater'		'lizard'		'a kind of bird'

The Urhobo examples of similar compounding process in Èwùlù are illustrated as follows:

(6b) Simple Verb + Noun Compounding In Urhobo				
Verb		**Noun**		**Compound**
i.	sì	+	òbè	→	ò-sìòbè
	'write'		'book'		'Secretary', 'writer'
ii.	gùn	+	èdjò	→	ò-gùèdjò
	'judge'		'case'		'a judge'
iii.	yònrè	+	í!ghó	→	ò-yònrèìghò
	'hold'		'money'		'treasurer'
iv.	sùn	+	ìgòdè	→	ò-sùnìgòdè
	'lead'		'sheep'		'shephered'
v.	hwè	+	ìyènrì	→	ò-hwèìyènrì
	'kill'		'fish'		'fisherman'

As discussed earlier in section 2, more than two free morphemes may combine to form compounds in Èwùlù and Ùrhòbò. Forenames and numerals fall into this group.

Below in (7a) and (7b); (8a) and (8b), we present data showing the formation of Èwùlù and Ùrhòbò forenames and numerals via compounding respectively as follows:

It will be observed that in (7a) and (7b), what appears to be sentences turn out to be compound words. Functionally, the forenames express the meaning reflected in the basic items.

		Èwùlù Forenames as Compounds							**Forenames**
(7a)	i.	Chúkwú	+	è-mé	+	ká	→	Chúkwúèméká	→	Chúkwêméká
		God		has-do		more than		'God has done so much'		
	ii.	Chí	+	nà	+	è-dú	→	Chínàèdú	→	Chínèdú
		God		is		is-helping		'God helps.'		
	iii.	nwá	+	à-má	+	ká	→	Nwáàmáká	→	Nwâmáká
		Child		is-beautiful		more than		'The child is so beautiful'		
	iv.	ò-bìà	+	gà	+	è-rí	→	Òbìàgàèrí	→	Òbjàgèrí
		She-come		to		eat-ing		'She came to eat'		
	v.	ònyé	+	mà	+	échí	→	Ònyémàèchí	→	Ònyémèchí
		Who		know		tomorrow		'Who can foretell what tomorrow holds?'		

Ùrhòbò Forenames as Compounds								Forenames
(7) i.	ọ́ghẹ̀nẹ́	+	té	+	gà			→	Ọ́ghẹ̀nẹ́tégà
	'God'		'reach'		'worship'				
ii.	ọ́ghẹ̀nẹ́	+	rú	+	kẹ̀	+	Vwè	→	Ọ́ghènẹ́rúkẹ̀vwè
	'God'		'did'		'for'		'me'		
iii.	ónò	+	riẹ́n	+	ódẹ̄	→	ónòriẹ́nódẹ̄	→	Ónórjódẹ̄
	'who'		'know'		'tomorrow'				
iv.	èfè	+	té	+	úrì	→	èfètéúrì	→	Èfètúrì
	'wealth'		'reach'		'two hundred'				
v.	ọ́mọ́	+	nọ́	+	íghō	→	ọ́mọ́nọ́íghō	→	Ọ̀mọ́níghō
	'child		'more than'		'money'				

Similarly, combination of strings are done to derive numerals in both languages. To derive certain numeral, non-base numerals such as 1-9 are merged to base numerals such as 10, 20, 30 etc. via compounding. The procedure which both languages adopt in deriving numerals is to some extent similar, only with slight difference, as is shown in (8a) and (8b). In Èwùlù, for example, to derive numerals 11-19, base 10 is added to numerals 1-9 via the infixation of a conjunction -nà- 'and' in between the base numeral and non -base numerals . In contrast, Ùrhòbò simply combine base 10 and numerals 1-9 without a conjunction to achieve the same result. However, the infixation of a conjuction becomes necessary in Ùrhòbò numeral system when the language derives numerals within the range 21-29; 31-39 and so forth. The conjuction -gbè- is then used in between numerals as is the procedure in Èwùlù. Consider the derivational patterns as follows:

Èwùlù Numeral as Compounds								
Compound Numeral								
(8a) i.	ìrí	+	nà	+	òfú	→	ìrínàòfú	→	ìrínòfú
	'ten'		'and'		'one'		'eleven'		'eleven'
ii.	ìrí	+	nà	+	ẹ̀bùá	→	ìrínàẹ̀bùá	→	ìrínẹ̀bùá
	'ten'		'and'		'two'		'twelve'		'twelve'
iii.	ìrí	+	nà	+	ìsé	→	ìrínàìsé	→	ìrínìsé
	'ten'		and		'five'		'fifteen'		'fifteen'
iv.	óshú	+	nà	+	òfú	→	óshúnàòfú	→	óshúnòfú
	'twenty'		and		'one'		'twenty-one'		
v.	óshú	+	nà	+	ẹ̀bùá	→	óshúnàẹ̀bùá	→	óshúnẹ̀bùá
	'twenty'		and		'two'		'twenty-two'		
vi	óshú	+	nà	+	ìsé	→	óshúnàìsé	→	óshúnìsé
	'twenty'		and		'five'		'twenty-five'		

Ùrhòbò Numerals as Compounds								
Compound Numerals								
(8b) i.	íhwè	+	òvò	→	íhwèòvò	→	Íhwõvò		
	'ten'		'one'				'eleven'		
Ii	íhwè	+	ívè	→	Íhwèívè	→	Íhwĭvè		
	'ten'		'two'				'twelve'		
iii.	íhwè	+	íyòrìn	→	íhwèíyòrìn	→	Íhwìórìn	→	Íhwjórìn
	'ten'		'five'						'fifteen'
iv.	ùjè	+	gbè	+	òvò	→	ùjègbèòvò	→	ùjègbòvò
	'twenty'				'one'				'twenty-one'
v.	ùjè	+	gbè	+	Ívè	→	Ùjègbèívè	→→	ùjègbĭvè
	'twenty'				'two'				'twenty-two'
vi.	ùjè	+	gbè	+	Ésán	→	ùjègbèésán	→	ùjègbĕsán
	'twenty'				'six'				'twenty-six'

As shown in the data in (8a) and (8b), the established procedure for deriving numerals in Èwùlù and Ùrhòbò depict s that the numeral systems of both languages, like what is predominantly the case in West Benue Congo, thrives basically on compounding process.

CONCLUSION

The paper has revealed the various productive morphological strategies by which Èwùlù (Enuani/Igboid and Ùrhòbò (Edoid) use in enlarging their vocabulary base via

compounding process. In the analysis, it was revealed that the languages largely used content words such as nouns, verbs and adjectives to derive compound words with specific grammatical functions. Most common is the procedure that allows a combination of noun-plus-noun, verb-plus-verb to form nominal and verbal compounds respectively. Sometimes the languages may combine nouns and grammatical words, specifically prepositions to derive compounds. Functionally, it was shown that Èwùlù and Ùrhòbò compounds are typically used for descriptive purposes. A number of however, may be used as modifiers or intensifiers, mostly in Èwùlù.

Most intriguing aspect of compounding in the languages is the fact that both languages can combine several words ranging between three to four words, in what appears to be a sentence, to form compounds. Evidence of this is revealed in forenames and numerals. Given the strategies employed to derive compounds in the two languages, the pattern is fairly the same, and of course, the difference is hinged on the fact that both languages belong to different sub-language families of West Benue Congo, namely Igboid and Edoid.

On the whole, we want to recommend strongly that there should be a continuous rigorous linguistic resarch on these languages as well as other indigenous African/Nigerian languages, particularly the small ones. It is only in this way that the languages can come to limelight and stand the chance of recognition and survival, especially in the current face of the threat of globalisation.

Note:*A large number of the Èwùlù data used in the work appear in 'Compounding process and its effect on the structure of segments and tones in Èwùlù'(Utulu, 1992; Utulu, forthcoming).*

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