Word formation strategies of Koring

Philip N. Anagbogu
Department of Linguistics,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Abstract

Traditionally, affixation, word compounding and reduplication are recognized as the major processes associated with word formation in various languages (Marchand 1974; Kiparsky 1983, Roeper and Siegel 1978). More recently, however, other processes such as diminutivization and augmentivization appear to be used to form words (cf. Hyman 2002). The present work which explores those processes as they apply to Koring, is based on Okpoto, one of the dialects of Koring, spoken in Ebonyi State of Nigeria. More information on the language is available in Anagbogu 2003a, b, 2004, 2005a, b, 2006. The research shows that:

(a) prefixation and word adjunction are the only processes applicable in Koring word-formation.

(b) the reduplicative process is synchronically dead in the language. It is concluded therefore that Koring is not a morphologically complex language.

1. Introduction

Affixation as a word formation process has been discussed in several languages such as Igbo and English (cf. Anagbogu 1990, Aronoff 1976, Kiefer 1971). However, in Koring the only variety associated with derivational morphology is prefixation. In Anagbogu (2003b), it is shown that deverbal nominals are derivable from monosyllabic, disyllabic and trisyllabic verb root bases. All the various manifestations of tonal behaviour associated with those formations form the basis for postulating tone rules summarized below:

(i) The tone of the verb root determines that of the prefix in derivations involving monosyllabic verb root bases

(1)	mzò	<	mlèzò
	'pray'		'prayer'
(2)	kal	<	kəkal
	'judge'		'judgment'



(ii) The prefixation of the nominalizing morpheme raises the tone of the vowels in the base of disyllabic verb roots to high if they are low –

(3) phìè < kòphíé
'look' 'act of looking'

(4) rìè < kèríé
'laugh' 'act of laughing'
- but root vowels with high tones remain invariable tonally as in

(5) phúé < léphúé
'gossip' (v) 'gossip'(n)

(6) díé < díękó
'decay' 'decadence'

(iii) The rule for trisyllabic roots is that the last two syllables of the derivative become high-toned. The prefix then assimilates in tone to the immediately following syllable.

(7) kenèlè < lùkènélé (LHH)
'think' 'act of thinking'

(8) gbòn̄lọ̀ò < gbọ̀kòn (LHH)lọ́ó
'prepare' 'act of preparing/preparation

Note that kọ/ku/ke and le/lu are nominalizing prefixes. What determines the choice of either is not known for now. Further research in this area is required.

Furthermore, agentive nominalizations, singular and plural, as well as instrumental nominalizations have been analyzed in the same article.

The present work concentrates on word compounding, augmentivization, dimunitivization and reduplication.

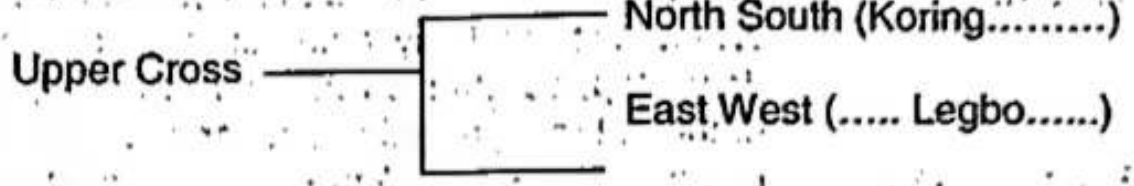
In the rest of the work, high tones are unmarked, low tones are marked / / while downstep is marked with a macron.

2. The Nominal Compound

Investigators such as Allen (1978) have identified two types of nominal compounds. Those that have double internal word boundaries, which as a result, prevent phonological rules such as assimilation from operating between the compound members; and those that have weak internal boundaries which thereby permit phonological rules to operate between the member nouns causing phonological distortion and semantic idiosyncrasies as observed in examples of lexicalization in the Igbo language (cf. Anagbogu 1995). More recently, Hyman (2002) also identified two forms of the nominal compound in Legbo N_1N_2 and N_1 ẹ N_2. Both are

identical semantically since both are involved in indicating genitival relationship and other relationships which are not genitival. See Anagbogu (1997) for details of the latter.

The two forms of nominal compounds identified in Legbo are also attested in Koring. This is not accidental. Williamson and Blench (2000:33) have shown that Koring and Legbo belong to the same Upper Cross group of the Cross River Language family; while Koring, according to their classification, is placed in the North-South, Legbo is located in the East-West as shown in a section of their classification presented below;



2.1 The N_1 ẹ N_2 compound

It has been demonstrated that every Koring noun has an 'e' article enclitic (cf. Angbogu 2005b:136). It is likely that the ẹ between N_1 and N_2 is that associated with N_1 while that of the N_2 is deleted.

This claim gains support from the fact that the definite article is often replaced or deleted when a noun occurs in utterances with modifiers such as demonstratives or adjectives (cf. Anagbogu 2005b). As a result of frequent use, the form N_1 ẹ N_2 became more established and performs interesting grammatical functions as shown in (11), (12), (13), and (14) below. It is pertinent to point out that in Koring ẹ is sometimes found in other combinations other than N_1 N_2 as shown below.

(9)	Adj + N	ezu	ẹ	kāmā 'foul mouth'
		inimical		mouth
		ezu	ẹ	lōdaàre 'nightmare'
		hostile		dream
(10)	Noun + Adj	abọ	ẹ	kērēkērē 'banana'
		plantain		small

Often the N_1 ẹ N_2 compound exhibits the head-modifier relationship where N_1 is constant in form and meaning while N_2 changes thereby introducing sub-species of N_1. In the following examples, N_1 is the generic term or head noun while N_2 modifies N_1.

(11)	Ishin	ẹ	bīle	'dragon fly'
	Fly		dragon	
	Ishin	ẹ	lisel	'sand fly'
	Fly		sand	
	Ishin	ẹ	shīle	'house fly
	Fly		house	

We can conclude that Koring is a head-first language in respect of N_1 ẹ N_2 constructions as shown above.

Tone rules affecting the N_1 ẹ N_2 compound can be stated thus:

When the first syllable of the N_2 is high, it is downstepped after ẹ but when it is low, the tonal form of the entire N_2 remains unchanged.

Examples (12)	èkòlo	ẹ	ēgbu	'ghost cocoyam'
	'ghost'		'cocoyam'	
	ènyo	ẹ	ēzeń	'eye glass'
	'glass'		'eye'	
	lifuń	ẹ	kētọ	'yam heap'
	'mound'		'yam'	
	lọgūā	ẹ	kūtọr	'newspaper'
	'paper'		'story'	
	ereń	ẹ	kìgbe	'beast'
	'meat'		'bush'	
	èkìàrà	ẹ	bèkeè	'sugar cane'
	'cane'		'whiteman'	
	banẹ	ẹ	lòkọń	'kerosene'
	'oil'		'fire'	

The N_1 ẹ N_2 compound has been used freely in naming concepts, particularly foreign institutions which have been adopted within the host culture.

Examples (13)

emārā	ẹ	kēkāl	'court'
'house'		'court'	
emārā	ẹ	lògùà	'hospital'
'house'		'medicine'	
emārā	ẹ	lūkoph	'school'
'house'		'study'	
emārā	ẹ	lòzòm	'church'
'house'		'prayer'	

kọdọ	ẹ	lōse	'bible'
'word'		'God'	
ketālā	ẹ	lōkpātā	'aeroplane'
'grasshopper'		'sky'	

Similarly, the form has been used synchronically in the area of modern dressing

(14)

ògba			'cloth'
ògba	ẹ	ēgèrì	'pyjamas'
ògba	ẹ	gìda	'sleeping dress'
ègba	ẹ	gèbè	'blouse'

It is obvious from the above that the N_1 ẹ N_2 compound is a very productive word formation process.

2.2 N_1 N_2 compound (deverbal)[1]

The deverbal nominal compound, also called synthetic compound, is derived by prefixing the agentive morpheme marker to the verb root to form the N_1 and then adjoining the N_2 to N_1. But in cases where a verb root has a noun complement, prefixation is the only rule that is applied (cf Anagbogu 1990).

(15)

ọlọō	nphọ̀ò	'weaver'
person who weaves	something	
user	ibin	'singer'
person who sings	song	
Ọbo	okele	'football player'
person who kicks	ball	
ọka	wàsèl	'fisherman'
person who catches	fish	
ọse	tụmọ̀	'messenger'
person who goes	message	
otan	nphọ̀ò	'trader'
person who sells	something	
otula	kòdeph	'hunter'
person who hunts	hunt	
ọtō	nphọ̀ò	'carver'
person who carves	something	
oyiph	nphọ̀ò	'cook'
person who cooks	something	

olè	lùkòphòlo	'pastor/evangelist/lecturer'
person who teaches		
ọkāl	kēkāl	'magistrate'
person who judges	judgment/court	
ole	lètò	'governor/ruler'
person who rules	head	

In practical terms, the verbal compound is used to name all professions, both traditional and modern.

2.3 Nominal compounds (noun – noun)

The N_1 N_2 form, that is, the noun-noun compound is derived by word adjunction only.

Examples:

(16) [edir] + [kuyim] → edir kuyim 'covenant/oath'.
idol N_1 law N_2

ite	nlụò	'palace'
?	king	
kesa	obīlā	'cooking pot'
cooking	pot	
kètòphò	òlụn	'crown'
hat	king	
agwa	kọl	'hen'
wife	fowl	
kobùè	kama	'curse'
breath	mouth	
lema	lọnyọ	'anus'
door	buttocks	
wàati	wàdum	'boy'
child	man	

It is noteworthy that all the compound members whether in N_1 N_2 or N1 ẹ N_2 forms retain their inherent tones.

2.4 Compounding involving other lexical categories

Compounds other than Noun-Noun are derivable from bases such as N + Adj, V+N and V+V - by word adjunction. It is pertinent to observe that òphòn 'something' plays an important role in some of these derivations.

2.4.1 N + Adj[3] compounds

In the N + Adj. compound, òphòn occurs as first member. But its function in the phrase seems to be complementary since the adjective itself carries the semantic weight of the affected phrases.

Examples:

(17)	ɳphòò	ọphaa	'modern', 'new'
	something	new	
	ɳphọ̀ò	udenekikpa	'necessary'
	something	necessary	
	ɳphọ̀ò	oshigbo	'past'
	'something	past'	

2.4.1.1 Dimunitivization and augmentivization: Base N + Adj

Dimunitivization is achieved by introducing any of the two adjectives – pee 'small', kerekere 'small' immediately after the noun to be dimunitivized. This time the affected noun retains the ẹ enclitic which inherently attaches to it; and the tone of the dimunitivizer is reduced to downstep because of the presence of the high toned enclitic ẹ.

(18)	àbọ			plantain
	àbọ	ẹ	kērēkērē	'banana'
	àlùmù			'orange'
	àlùmu	ẹ	kērēkērē	'ime'
	logua			'paper'
	logua	ẹ	kērēkērē	'leaf'

Augmentivization, on the other hand, is achieved by introducing òdụban 'big' immediately after the noun to be augmentivized.

Examples:

(19)	likum	'hill'	
	likum	òdụban	'mountain'
	liyese	dụbaɳò	'village square'

2.4.2 Compounding: V + N

The V + N structure is the base for deriving compound verbs. Such a verb is derived by the adjunction of the noun immediately after the verb.

Examples (20):

koke	kama	'taste'
to taste	mouth	
kòka	kọnyia	'catch in trap'
to catch	trap	

nariŋkò	bozu	'maltreat'
occur	noise	

The same base V + N, is also used occasionally to derive adjectives as shown in

Example (21)

koka	kezen	'marvellous'
to surprise	eye	

2.4.3 Compounding: V + Adj

A verb and an adjective occasionally can co-occur to form a compound verb as shown in (22) below. This form is not very productive. The meaning of each lexical item is preserved in the new word.

(22) kitèrè 'grow', esp. of plants kedù 'tall'
kitère kedù 'grow tall'

3. Reduplication

The reduplicative process is most unproductive in the language. The examples provided below are inherently reduplicated. They are lexicalized with no single forms. It is pertinent to mention here that it is only in respect of the reduplicated forms below, that single forms of the adverbs are unavailable. However, single form adverbs, especially simple adverbs, are found in the language. Examples are drawn from the major lexical categories[3]: Adverb, Noun, Verb and Adjective. The examples, with the exception of nouns, have the syllabic structure CV CV-CV, CV. This is so probably because while all verbs and some other lexical categories begin with a consonant, most nouns begin with vowels. This probably explains why the syllabic structure of reduplicated nouns is VCV-VCV. It is likely that originally all nouns had initial vowels, a fact which would probably account for the absence of consonant initial reduplicated forms of nouns. See (24) below.

(i) Adverbs: The adverbs are ideophonic expressions that have the tonal structure LL-LL and HH-HH respectively.

(23)	phèrè	phèrè	'slowly'
	gèdè	gèdè	'exactly'
	shike	shike	'gradually'

(ii) Nouns: The nouns have the tonal pattern LL-HHS, LL-LL, HH-LH and HH-HH respectively.

(24)

ùfù ufū	'guest'
ùkù ùkù	'lame person
ùlù ùlu	'married man
ube ube	'idiot'

(iii) Verbs: The syllabic structure of the verb is CV CV - CV CV and CV – CV respectively. The tonal pattern is LL-LL, and H – H respectively.

Examples (25):

yiphè	yiphè	'be many'
kpe	kpe	'kneel down'

(iv) Adjectives: All the examples below have the CVCV-CVCV syllabic structure and all have high tones:

(26)

nere	nere	'immediate'
gbere	gbere	'slim'
kpara	kpara	'slim'

4. Summary & Conclusion

Four important findings of the present research are as follows:

i. Prefixation and word adjunction are the only processes applicable in word formation in Koring

ii. Prefixation involving the verb stem base is very productive.

iii. Word compounding is the most prolific word formation process in the language. Six types of compound words examined above are formed by word adjunction: N + Adj, Adj + N, $N_1 + N_2$, $N_1 - ẹ - N_2$, V – N, and V–V.

iv. The reduplicative process is not synchronically attested. The absence of even a single word form which could serve as a base for reduplication in a corpus of two thousand, five hundred words demonstrates conclusively that the process is dead.

v. In conclusion, it could be argued that Koring is not morphologically complex since only two word formation rules-prefixation and word adjunction are applicable in analyzing its word formation[2] processes.

Endnotes

1. Formation of the deverbal nominal involves the prefixation of any of the following vowel prefixes – o, ọ-, or u – to the verb root with a noun complement. The root vowel selects the appropriate vowel prefix. When the root vowel is high or close-mid, the nominalizing vowel prefix is correspondingly high or close-mid; on the other

hand, when the root vowel is open-mid or open, the corresponding nominalizing prefix vowel is open-mid. (culled from Anagbogu 2003b).

2. In Igbo, seven different processes – prefixation, circumfixation, adjunction, suffixation, reduplication, interfixation, negativization – were deployed in explicating the intricasies of Igbo derivational morphology. (cf. Anagbogu 1990).

3. For a discussion on word classes of Koring see Anagbogu 2007.

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(2) a. Nye m mmiri 'Give me water'
b. O gara nke oma 'It went well'

Refer to numbered items as 2. 2a, 2a,b, 2(a-c); Align word for word or morpheme by morpheme glosses of example phrases or sentences with the beginning of each word:

(3) Ada si na ya ga-abia.
Ada say that she will come.

Place a hyphen between morphs within words in the original and a corresponding hyphen in the gloss:

(4) fog-okfel próbál-ni olvas-ni
will-1sg try-inf read-inf

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