

Nominalization, and de-nominalization in Yoruba fused-head construction

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Abstract

The study investigates nominalization, and de-nominalization as processes of fusion in the Yoruba language from the theoretical viewpoint of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). It explored fused heads in the corpus dataset of the Yoruba language by primarily identifying the frequency of derived compounds in the corpus data, focusing on whether they are nominalized (as nouns) or de-nominalized into adjectives. Results show that Yoruba-affixed compounds tend to function more as nouns rather than adjectives, some words exhibit high flexibility, by allowing them to function between nominalized and de-nominalized usages depending on the context. The findings help readers understand how the morphosyntactic flexibility of derived words in Yoruba affects headless constructions. The study also affirmed that the frequent use of post-modification through PRGs in nominalized affixed compounds can be interpreted as a way to avoid ambiguity and allow for precise categorization of the head noun. The high occurrence of nominalized heads suggests a productive nominalization system in Yoruba, where the affixes (A- and O-) are used to create person-denoting nouns. It would be interesting to examine whether other Niger-Congo languages exhibit the same quality, where post-nominal modifiers and head-initial structures are common.

Keywords: nominalization, de-nominalization, headedness, fused head, headless construction

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1. Introduction

The concepts of nominalization and de-nominalization are instructive to the discussion about fused heads in the Yoruba Language. Unfortunately, this scope of conversation has not enjoyed significant patronage in academic research. The study therefore explores the interplay of nominalization and de-nominalization in the Yoruba Noun Phrase from the perspective of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Fused heads, according to Halliday (1985), occur when the subordinate elements of a group (e.g., modifiers in a Nominal Group), such as Deictic, Ordinal, Epithet, etc., assume the role of the Head. Often time, the syntactic head is missing while the semantic head is fused into the subordinate elements or modifiers (Halliday (1985). For instance, the phrase ‘the three’ in the sentence “The three attended the party” suggests an omission of the syntactic head “people”; meanwhile, the semantic features or properties of the word ‘people’ is implicitly fused into the nominalized head ‘three’. In another instance, the noun phrase “the red one” exemplifies a fused head construction with the syntactic head (one) present but a missing semantic core which could only be realized via an anaphoric reference to the preceding clause (*I wanted the green apple, but she gave me the red one*). Hence, the semantic referent of ‘one’ is ‘apple’.

The idea of fused heads in the Yoruba language can be traced to nominalization (Eleshin, 2021). In Yoruba language, nominalization occurs via morphological processes like derivation, reduplication, and compounding. For example, the word ‘Apeja’ is a derived compound nominal in the Yoruba language that primarily functions as a noun meaning ‘fisherman.’ ‘Apeja’ is formed through de-sententialization (Oye, 2009), a common morphological process in Yoruba coinage where a compound noun is derived from a sentence. As such, ‘Apeja’ is derived from the sentence “*We killed fish*”. *Apeja* remains a logical example of both nominalization and de-nominalization in Yoruba grammar. *Apeja* is formed through a morphological process that combines the pronoun “*a*’ (we), the verb ‘*pa*’ (kill), and the noun ‘*ɛja*’ (fish). This structure exemplifies nominalization, as the derived compounding creates a new noun that refers to an individual associated with fishing. However, *Apeja* can also function as an adjective without any morphological changes to describe someone with characteristics associated with a fisherman, such as persistence or skill in gathering resources. This process is called de-nominalization. In such contexts, the originally nominal form extends beyond its core noun function, demonstrating the flexibility of word-class transformations in Yoruba linguistic structures.

The study examines the concepts of nominalization, and de-nominalization as processes of fusion in the Yoruba language from the theoretical viewpoint of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). It sought to explore the facts about fused heads in the corpus dataset of the Yoruba language. The study primarily explores the frequency of derived nominals (such as *Apeja*,) in the corpus data, focusing on whether they are used as nouns or de-nominalized into adjectives.

2. The Concept of Headedness: The Systemic Functional Perspective

The concept of ‘head’ is a prominent topic in Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). According to Halliday (1985), a head represents the semantic core of the nominal group, which can be expressed by a common noun, proper noun, or (personal) pronoun (Halliday, 1985). He further differentiates between the Head and the Thing. While the Head serves as the structural center of the nominal group, the Thing remains the semantic core (Halliday, 1985). This indicates that Systemic Functional Grammar’s interpretation of a ‘head’ is multi-layered (Halliday, 1985). The distinction between *Thing* and *Head* arises from Halliday’s Ideational meaning, which is divided into ‘experiential meaning’ and ‘logical meaning.’ Therefore, Halliday (1985) examines the English nominal group ‘head’ in terms of these experiential and logical functions. In the experiential framework, the core meaning of the nominal group is represented by the *Thing*, while in logical analysis, the *Head* functions as the focal point of the entire group. Halliday’s concept of the Thing closely aligns with the idea of the Head in other linguistic frameworks

(Berry, 1996). Typically, the *Thing* and the *Head* within a nominal group intersect, but they differ in measure expressions (Halliday, 1985). For example, in the nominal group “a cup of tea,” the experiential analysis identifies ‘tea’ as the Thing, whereas the logical perspective identifies ‘cup’ as the Head. Similarly, the nominal group “a lot of water,” which lacks a measure word, can also be systematically analyzed concerning these dimensions. Halliday (1985, p. 331) explicitly stated that “there is always a Head in the nominal group, but there may be no Thing.”

According to Fawcett (2000), the Head is the morphosyntactic element that carries both structural and semantic weight. The syntactic head corresponds to Halliday’s logical Head, while his semantic Head aligns with Halliday’s experiential Thing. Fawcett further clarifies that it is the Head that dictates the concord and distribution of a phrase (Fawcett, 2000); for instance, the phrase “two cups of tea” agrees with a plural verb (e.g., two cups of tea are available). He asserts that the Head is an essential component of the nominal group, and its omission would result in a great change to the group both grammatically and semantically (Fawcett, 2000).

Fused Heads in Systemic Functional Grammar - The concept of Fused heads is a significant subject of discussion in Systemic Functional Grammar. Halliday’s (1985) view of fused heads in SFG refers to situations where elements like Deictic, Numerative, and Epithet function as the Head of a Nominal Group. For example, in “you’re very lucky,” the adjective ‘lucky’ technically serves as the Head, describing the subject ‘you,’ while in “You’re a very lucky boy,” the adjective modifies the noun ‘boy’ (Halliday, 1985, p. 331). Halliday also notes that adjectives like ‘poor’ can act as Subjects when they appear without a head, as in “The poor need help” (Halliday, 1985, p. 331). Such adjectives are usually preceded by the article ‘the’ representing a group based on a property (Halliday, 1985, p. 331). Additionally, Halliday explains that in some constructions, the Head can be replaced by Deictic or Numerative, as in “three of those tiles.”

According to Fawcett (2000), fused heads are grammatical situations where the syntactic head is omitted but the semantic head is visible. Fawcett (2000) demonstrates an instance of this via the use of grammatical ellipses. Giving an example of “one blue eye and one brown” (where ‘brown’ stands for ‘brown eye’), Fawcett posits that the syntactic head is omitted, but its semantic equivalent remains implied with an anaphoric reference. Similarly, in expressions such as “We should give to the poor,” the semantic head (‘people’) is inferred despite the absence of a syntactic head. He also points out cases where the syntactic head and semantic head do not align, as seen in phrases like “a lot of time,” where ‘lot’ is syntactically the head, but ‘time’ holds the semantic weight, or “a cup of tea,” where ‘cup’ is syntactic, but ‘tea’ is semantic. Additionally, in certain constructions, such as sentences with dummy subjects (e.g. “There is a man at the door”), the entire group may be semantically empty despite having a syntactic head. Fawcett likens this semantic head to the ‘Thing’ in Systemic Functional Grammar, although his account lacks detail on the internal structure and modifier relationships within Entity groups (Fawcett, 2000).

The above submission can help in theorizing that certain constructions can warrant the omission of the syntactic head and a fusion of the semantic head and vice versa. For instance, in the example “the rich”, the syntactic/ lexical head is missing while the semantic head (people) is fused within the nominalized adjective. Whereas, in another instance of “the poor one”, the syntactic head (one) is present, but the semantic head (thing) is missing. Since Halliday distinguishes between the *Thing* and the *Head* as semantic head and syntactic head respectively, the occurrence of headless construction could be possible in both instances. Look at the following examples:

- a. The poor ----- the *adj* (poor) functions as the *HEAD* while the *THING* is implied.
- b. The poor one ----- the *HEAD* is present, but the *THING* is missing (referenced anaphorically).

Issues with Headedness in Yoruba - The concept of ‘head’ is a fundamental universal principle or feature that every language possesses; its position in a phrase differs based on the parameters established in each language (Sobin, 2011). According to Amusan (2023, p. 36), Yoruba is a head-initial language (SVO). For example, the typical structure of a Yoruba sentence follows the pattern of “Subject-Verb-Object.” In the structure of the Yoruba Noun Phrase (NP), modifiers are placed (rarely) before but (more often) after the head (Amusan, 2023, p. 36). Ajiboye (2016) further notes that while Yoruba NP structures can exhibit mixed properties (head-initial and head-

final), they are predominantly and consistently head-initial. In other words, modifiers in the Yoruba NP structure are largely postnominal, with a few exceptions of prenominal cases that cause semantic and pragmatic changes (Adelabu, 2014).

The structure of the head in the Yoruba NP has been described as having complex morphological compositions that influence the identification scope of headed and headless constructions. For instance, heads in Yoruba NPs are sometimes realized through derivation, compounding, and reduplication. Compound words are word structures composed of two or more lexical items (Quirk and Greenbaum, 2000), each belonging to classes of noun, adjective, verb, or preposition (Selkirk 1982). The derived compound word may belong to the noun, verb, or adjective (Oye, 2009). For instance, the word “omoba” (meaning “the king’s child”) is derived from two lexical nouns: “Omo” (meaning ‘child’) and “oba” (meaning ‘king’). Quirk and Greenbaum (2000) point out that one of the major problems of compound nouns is identifying the head, which is essential for addressing major issues like plural formation and S-V agreement complexities. Amusan (2015), using Halliday’s group structures (MHQ), posits that the head of a compound noun can be identified by applying the ‘MHQ’ structural formula. For instance, the compound noun ‘governor general’ follows a head-qualifier (HQ) structure, where ‘governor’ is the head and ‘general’ is the qualifier. As a result, the plural form is ‘governors general,’ not the other way around. Whereas the head of the compound “School bus” is ‘bus’ not ‘school’.

Williams (1981) proposes the right-hand head rule (RHR) for identifying the head of compound words. The rule states that the head of a compound word will be the right-hand member of that word (Oye, 2009). Selkirk (1982) disagrees with this notion stating that ‘RHR’ is not a universal rule; perhaps, it must be a statement valid only for English grammar, being a parameter set for the language. In its practical sense, the RHR rule is not always the case in English compounding. For instance, while the RHR approach is valid for “school bus”, it does not avail for “major general” and “head of state”. Owolabi (1995a) and Ogunkeye (2002) opine that the head of Yorùbá compound nouns is the left-hand member. This assertion seems valid for some Yoruba compounds with obvious heads (endocentric). However, some Yoruba compounds exist without an obvious head (exocentric) (Owolabi, 1995a). Owolabi (1995a) grouped compounding into three types namely:

- endocentric compounds: compounds with a head (hypotactic relation and subordination).
- exocentric compounds: compounds without a head.
- co-ordinate compounds: structures where both words are equal (paratactic relation).

For instance, examples 1 a, b & c are endocentric compounds (where one serves as the head and the other serves as a modifier or subordinate) while 1d is an example of an exocentric compound without any form of head.

H Q

a. **Omoba** ---- Omo Oba
 Gloss: child King
 Translation: King’s child

H Q

b. **Adeola** ----- Ade Ola
 Gloss: Crown tomorrow
 Translation: Tomorrow’s crown

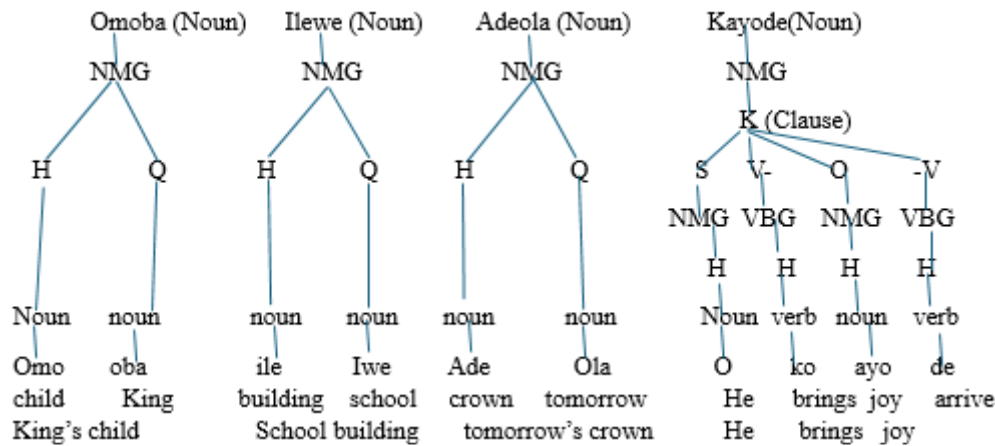
H Q

c. **Ilewe** ----- Ile Iwe
 Gloss: Building school
 Translation: School building

S V- O -V

d. **Kayode**----- O ko ayo de
 Gloss: He bring joy arrive
 Translation: He brings joy

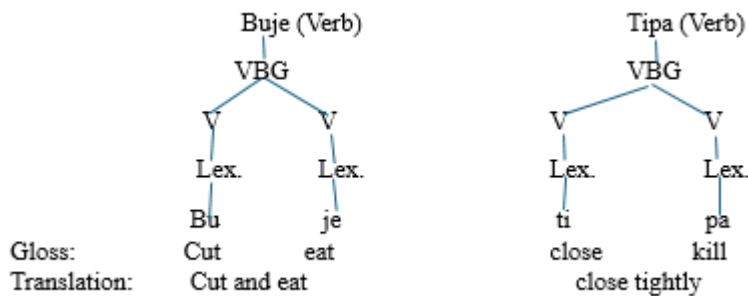
In examples 1a, 1b, & 1c, “omo”, “Ade” and “Ile” are the heads respectively while 1d exemplifies the exocentric compounding category where nouns are derived from a sentence. This process is called *desententialization* (Oye, 2009). According to Oye (2009), *desententialization* is a common morphological process in Yoruba coinage of head nouns derived from sentences. For instance, in 1d, ‘Kayode’ is a noun word, abstracted from the sentence “O ko ayo de” (meaning: He brings joy). Although the head of a sentence is the verb, the derived form, “Kayode” is a proper noun that usually functions as a head within its category. Also, the word “Ọlórúnfún mí” is a proper noun in the Yoruba language which is abstracted or derived from the sentence “Ọlórún fún mí” that is “God gives me”. Both *Kayode* and *Ọlórúnfún mí* are proper nouns (person names) derived when sentences are fused to form a noun. None of the structural components of the sentence can be regarded as the head of the derived compound. Therefore, these nominal compounds are exocentric (Oye, 2009).



This complexity and lots more tend to cause some issues with headedness in Yoruba. Sometimes, the coinage of exocentric compounds involves morpho-phonemic processes such as mutation, vowel elision, deletion, and contraction (Oye, 2009). This is reflected in the deletion of the first vowel ‘o’ in “O ko ayo de” to become ‘Kayode’. Also, there is an elision of the second ‘o’ in “Kayode”. In “omooba” the vowel ‘o’ is contracted to reflect “omoba”. In “ile iwe”, the vowel ‘i’ is deleted to reflect “ilewe”. Co-ordinate compounds are a little tricky. They are structures with no dependency. Taiwo (2008) submits that co-ordinate compounds are derived through the formation of two verbs. Examples 2a, & b below demonstrate this in a V+V situation.

a. **buje**-----bu je
 Gloss: cut eat
 Translation: cut and eat

b. **tipa** -----ti pa
 Gloss: close kill
 Translation: close tightly



Examples 2a & b demonstrate V + V compounds, where the two verbs equally share head-like characteristics of the word. Two facts are notable here.

- That the two lexical items are verbs
- That they both contribute to the meaning of the derived word. (Oye, 2009)

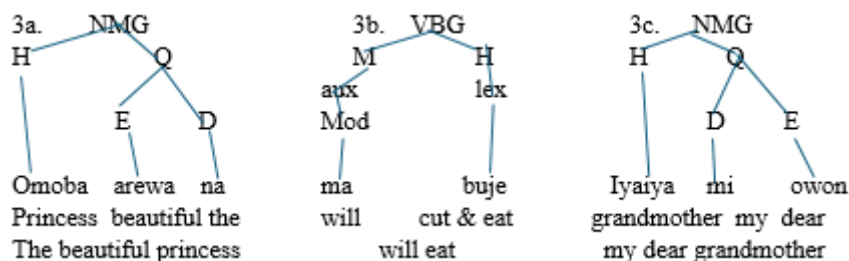
Therefore, heads cannot be assigned to only one of them because they have some sort of paratactic relationship without subordination. Unlike English where there are hyphenated and unhyphenated compounds, most Yoruba compounds are fused without space separation or hyphens. They appear as a single word and occur as the head of whatever phrase within which they are functioning. However, some are derived through a morphological process called reduplication (Oye, 2009) where the same morpho-phonemic structure is repeated.

Reduplication - Reduplication, according to McCarthy (1981) is a morphological process of repeating a part of a word to create a new meaning, show emphasis, or form a new version of the word. Taiwo (2008) posits that reduplication in Yoruba can change the meaning of the word or show something like intensity, emphasis, or frequency.

- a. Iya (N)---mother → iyaiya (N)-----grandmother
- b. giga (Adj)---tall → gigagiga (adj)----- very tall indeed
- c. **sùn** (V) -----fry → **sùnsùn** (Adj)----- fried

In 2a, reduplication changed the meaning of the word. In 2b, reduplication performs the function of intensifier. In 2c, reduplication changes the class of the word from a verb to an adjective. This demonstrates that reduplication has a way of modifying some information about the root word or changing its meaning/ class. Like coordinate compounding, reduplicated words have paratactic relations, that is, they equally share headlike characteristics.

Headless Constructions or Fused Heads in Yoruba - The derived heads discussed above (either through compounding or reduplication) can co-exist with other elements within the structure in which they function. This section investigates the uniqueness of their existence as to whether they are mandatory or can be omitted from the structure. Examples 3a “omoba arewa na”, 3b “ma buje” & 3c “iyaiya mi owon” represent this vividly.



Phrases in 3a, b & c are headed by ‘omoba’, buje’, and ‘iyaiya’ which are coinages of endocentric compounding, coordinate compounding, and reduplication respectively. The broader question is whether structures like this can exist without the head form. While head ellipsis is possible at 3a (e.g. Arewa na), it is impossible in 3b & c. The reason why “omoba arewa na” could function without the head is because of the quality of the derived word “arewa” which is primarily a derived nominal but can also be de-nominalized to function as an adjective.

Nominalization and De-nominalization - To further demonstrate the occurrence of fused heads in Yoruba, Eleshin (2021) emphasizes the concept of nominalization in Yoruba grammar. He explained this from the point of view of ‘derivation’. Eleshin (2021) explores the concept of fused heads via headedness and nominalization. His study demonstrates that the nominalization processes in Yoruba involve derivation, reduplication, and compounding; and they rely on the principle of “merge” (a popular term in Chomsky’s MP) as the core operation.

According to Eleshin (2021), prefixation and reduplication involve class changes. In his opinion, prefixes and reduplicated forms act as heads in nominal derivation (Eleshin, 2021, p. 28). Here is where de-sententialization plays a major role. Take, for instance, the words ‘arewa’, ‘alagbara’ and ‘alagidi’ is derived from the following sentences:

- | | | | |
|--------------------|---------|--------|---------------|
| | S | V | O |
| 4. a. Arewa | ----- A | ra | ewa |
| | We | bought | beauty. |
| b. Alagbara | ---- A | ni | agbara |
| | We | have | power |
| c. Alagidi | ----- A | ni | agidi |
| | We | have | stubbornness. |

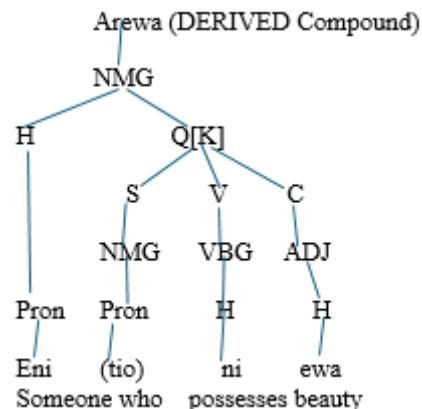
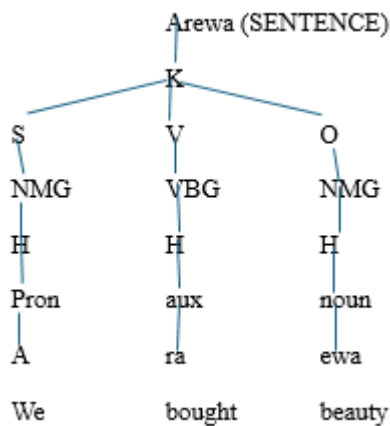
The above description demonstrates that each word is derived from an SVO sentence form. To derive a noun, the pronoun subject ‘a’ (we’) is transformed into a “nominalizing prefix” to mean ‘someone’. Therefore, the following is possible:

- A+ rewa = Arewa (“someone who possesses beauty”)
- A + lagbara= Alagbara (“someone who possesses power”)
- A+ laid = Alagidi (“someone who is stubborn”)

The subject ‘a’ which is now functioning as a nominalized prefix derives a noun from a verb phrase. Another prefix in this category is ‘O’, e.g. “Olola” (meaning someone wealthy). The prefix ‘A’ or ‘O’ is considered as the head in such a context (Oye, 2009). The difference between the pronouns ‘a’ and ‘o’ when used as subjects is that of person and number. ‘O’ is a second-person singular pronoun while ‘A’ is a first-person plural pronoun.

- O ni ola ----- (You have wealth)
- A ni ola ----- (We have wealth)

Therefore, both pronouns are transformed into nominalized prefixes to derive a noun from the sentence where they exist as a subject. Here is an example.



Here is a structure of the derived compound after the subject (pronoun) has become a nominalizing prefix. The structural diagram below reflects the real semantic illustration of the coinage in its nominal form.

While coinages like ‘Arewa’ are primarily derived (or nominalized) to function as nouns, the nominalized versions can also be de-nominalized to function as adjectives. For instance, in the phrase “Omoba arewa na”, ‘arewa’ is a de-nominalized form of an adjective, modifying the head ‘omoba’. Meanwhile, ‘arewa’ can function alone in the capacity of a fused head noun.

	H	Adj	det		Noun	det
5. a.	Omoba	arewa	naa	5b.	Arewa	na
	Princess	beautiful	the		beautiful	the
	The beautiful	princess			The beautiful	(person)

The word ‘Arewa’ (beautiful ~~person~~) in 5b functions as a fused head of the NP. The coinage of the word ‘Arewa’ is derived from “eni ti o rewa” meaning “someone beautiful”. When used as an adjective (as in 5a), it often occurs with a person noun, usually feminine (e.g. ‘obinrin’: lady/woman). Although rarely, it also occurs with non-person entities. This means that it has passed through the process called ‘*de-nominalization*’. But when it functions alone (as in 5b), there is an implied head of the same word ‘obinrin’. While nouns formed by the same process mostly function as nouns, they can be de-nominalized to function in an adjectival capacity. Other examples are “alagbara”, ‘alaseju’, ‘alako’, ‘oniranu’ and so on. For instance, ‘Alaseju’ is a Yoruba word that produces a meaning that can be exhibited in a clause form (Èniyàn tí òhùn sẹ́ ẹ́ àṣẹ̀jú) meaning (someone who overdoes things). ‘Àlàṣẹ̀jú’ could function both as a noun and adjective. When it functions alone, there is an implied head (noun), that is, “Àlàṣẹ̀jú ~~eniyan~~”. The ‘eniyan’ means ‘person’.

To put this in a proper context, the nominalized adjective “the poor” has an implied head (people). But its primary class is an adjective. Here, ‘Arewa’ is a word derived nominal from a VBG. But when it is de-nominalized, it functions as an adjective.

Nominalized forms----- the head is fused (e.g. **Arewa**)

De-nominalized form-----the head is isolated. (e.g. Omoba **Arewa** naa)

The derived nominal form often puts language users through the mental stress of precision of the implied head. For instance, ‘Arewa’, used alone as a head could imply the following:

“Arewa Obinrin’ or “arewa iyawo”, or “arewa omoge” or “arewa opo” or “arewa arugbo”
 Beautiful girl / beautiful wife / Beautiful lady / beautiful widow / Beautiful old woman

All these choices are possible implicit heads that can be implied in the context of fused NP where ‘Arewa’ functions as a noun. But when it is de-nominalized, the precise head is made explicit while it functions as an adjective.

Sometimes, fused heads create a shift in the emphasis of the words used in the sentence. This can be seen in the examples 6a-d below.

6a. Fused Head: H
 Alaseju (~~eniyan~~)----- The focus is on the excesses/ overdoing.

6b.de-nominalized H adj
 Eniyan alaseju----- The focus is on the person who does the act.

6c. Fused head: H
 Arewa (~~obinrin~~) ----- The focus is on beauty.

6d. Denominalized H
 Obinrin Arewa ----- The focus is on the person who does the act.

In “Alaseju (eniyan),” the fused head emphasizes the concept of excess or overdoing, while in “Eniyan alaseju,” the focus shifts to the person who exhibits excessive behavior. Similarly, in “Arewa (obinrin),” the fused head emphasizes beauty, but in “Obinrin Arewa,” the focus is on the person possessing that beauty. These examples

demonstrate how the position of the fused head can change what aspect of the sentence is highlighted, either the quality or the person exhibiting the characteristic.

3. Methodology

For this study, data were extracted from a Yoruba corpus (*Yoruba Web Corpus*, Sketch Engine, at <https://app.sketchengine.eu>) to examine derived words formed using the affixes ‘A’ and ‘O,’ such as ‘Olólà’ (noble/wealthy) and ‘Àrẹwà’ (beauty queen). These affixed words can function as either nouns or adjectives, exemplifying fused heads when they function alone. The focus was on determining their more frequent syntactic usage within the corpus. By analyzing the context in which these words appear, the study categorized them as either (nominalized) nouns or (de-nominalized) adjectives, based on the surrounding linguistic structures such as determiners, classifiers, and verbs. The frequency of each usage was counted to identify whether these derived words are predominantly used as (nominalized) nouns or (de-nominalized) adjectives, providing insight into their morphological and syntactic roles in Yoruba. Ten words were selected, namely:

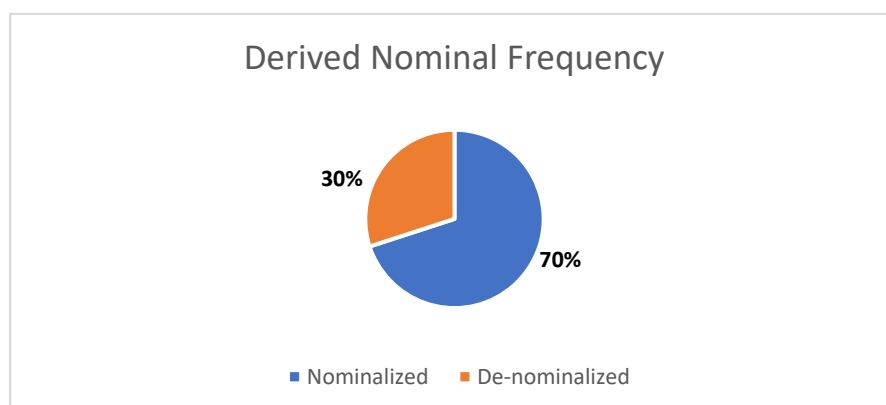
1. **Arewa** (nominalized: a beautiful woman); (de-nominalized: beautiful).
2. **Ojogbon** (nominalized: a professor/scholar); (de-nominalized: scholarly).
3. **Omoluabi** (nominalized: a person of good character); (de-nominalized: ethical).
4. **Aṣoju** (nominalized: one who is a representative); (de-nominalized: representative).
5. **Oṣere** (nominalized: actor/performer); (de-nominalized: dramatic).
6. **Alágbà** (nominalized: an elder); (de-nominalized: elderly).
7. **Oniṣẹ** (nominalized: a worker or craftsman); (de-nominalized: industrious).
8. **Alágídí** (nominalized: a stubborn person); (de-nominalized: stubborn).
9. **Ológò** (nominalized: a person of greatness); (de-nominalized: great).
10. **Alàga** (nominalized: a chairman/leader); (de-nominalized: leading).

The researcher observes the patterns of use in about twenty (20) usages of each word, therefore making a total of 200 usages for the ten (10) words.

4. Results of the Corpus Data

The dataset presents the actual language use of the ten (10) selected words in the Yoruba corpus. It exhibits nominalized and de-nominalized usages of Yoruba words, extracted from the Yoruba Web Copus (YoWaC). The results showed that 70% of the derived compounds are used as nominals in the corpus data, while 30% are de-nominalized. That is, out of the 200 occurrences or usages of ten words under study, the total of nominalized usages across all words is 140 while de-nominalized usage is 60.

Table 1. *Derived Nominal Frequency*



However, some words reflect a more balanced distribution while others strongly favor one category. This is clearly stated on the table below.

Table 2. *Occurrences of Headless Construction in the Yoruba Corpus*

Derived Words	Nominalized Usages	De-nominalized usages
1. Arewa	6	14
2. Ojogbon	18	2
3. Omoluabi	12	8
4. Asoju	10	10
5. Osere	20	---
6. Alagba	7	13
7. Onise	20	---
8. Alagidi	11	9
9. Alejo	16	4
10. Alaga	20	--
	140	60

Note: Some of the selected forms of nominalized affixed compounds from the corpus data are presented below:

Table 3: *Occurrences of Selected nominalized affixed compounds*

Word	Context in NP	Gloss	translation
Ojogbon	Ojogbon Ede Geesi	Professor Language English	English Language Professor
Ojogbon	Ojogbon ninu Imo Ikowe	Professor in Studies Literary	Professor of Literary Studies
Osere	Osere ara ile Amerika	Actor from Land America	Actor from the United States
Osere	Osere ori itage	Actor on Stage	Stage Actor
Alagba	Alagba Ile Igbimo Asofin	Leader House Assembly legislature	Leader of the Legislative House of Assembly
Alaga	Alaga Igbimo Ijoba	Leader Executive Government	Leader of the Executive Government
Alaga	Alaga Ikejila	Leader Twelfth	Twelfth leader
Onise	Onise Ero	Worker factory	Factory worker
Alejo	Awon Alejo lorisirisi	All visitors assorted	All sorts of visitors

Some of the selected forms of de-nominalized affixed compounds from the corpus data are presented below:

Table 4: *Occurrences of Selected De-nominalized affixed compounds*

Word	Context in NP	Gloss	translation
Alagba	Alagba Asofin	Senior senator	Senior senator
Alagidi	Alagidi Okan	Stubborn heart	Stubborn heart
Alagidi	Alagidi Ogun	Stubborn	Stubborn battle
Onise	Onise Oniroyin	Worker reporter	Reporter

5. Discussion of Findings

The finding is discussed based on the actual language usage of affixed compounds as nominal or de-nominalized constructions.

Nominalized Affixed Compounds - As presented in the finding, it could be interpreted that the fact that nominalized usages occur 140 times might suggest that affixed compound words are more frequently used as nouns than as adjectives or other de-nominalized forms in actual language use. More notably, some words outstandingly appear in their nominalized form with very few or no de-nominalized occurrences. Some of these words and their frequency ratio are 'Alaga' (20:0), 'Onise' (20:0), 'Osere' (20:0), 'Ojogbon' (18:2), 'Alejo' (16:4). The fact that these words never or hardly exhibit any de-nominalized uses demonstrates that they strongly retain their noun functions, and it also suggests their primary role as concrete entities rather than descriptive adjectives.

It was noted that some of these words exhibit a unique structural pattern. For instance, virtually all these nominalized NPs exhibit a Head-initial (HQ) structure, with the headword usually followed by a Prepositional Group (PRG).

	H	Q
	Ojogbon [Ede Geesi]	
Gloss:	Professor language English	
Translation:	English Language Professor	

A notable point here is that Yoruba typically omits articles when referring to singular nouns unlike English where every singular noun requires an article (e.g., *the English Language Professor* in English). Meanwhile, in Yoruba language, a singular noun can exist without any article to refer to an indefinite entity (e.g. Ojogbon Ede Geesi). But the definite article is used to address definite entities (e.g. Ojogbon Ede Geesi **naa**). More importantly, this structure shows that the head ‘Ojogbon’ appears first before its complement. Below is a slightly different form where the complement is realized by a Prepositional Group (PRG).

	H	Q[PRG]
	Ojogbon [ninu Imo Ikowe]	
Gloss:	Professor in studies Literacy	
Translation:	Professor in Literacy Studies	

Using the preposition, ‘*ninu*’ (‘in’) marks the kind of relationship that exists between the head and the qualifier in the Yoruba HQ structures. Although this structure seems to contrast with “*Ojogbon Ede Geesi*” because it includes a preposition, some scholars argue that the latter inherently contains a covert PRG headed by an elliptical preposition ‘*ti*’. This is captured below:

	H	PRG
“ Ojogbon Ede Geesi ”	could also be written as	“ Ojogbon [ti Ede Geesi] ”
		Professor of English Language
		Professor of English Language

Below is another example of a structure in the corpus that follows the HQ pattern, where the qualifier restricts the reference of the head noun.

	H	Q[PRG]
	Osere [ara ile Amerika]	
Gloss:	Actor from land America	
Translation:	Actor from the United States	

The use of the prepositions (‘*ara ile*’ – ‘from the land of’) reflects the common Yoruba way of expressing place of origin. Below is another construction “*Osere ori itage*” with a structure that aligns closely with English noun phrases like ‘*stage actor*’, except that Yoruba maintains an explicit proposition.

	H	Q[PRG]
	Osere [ori itage]	
Gloss:	Actor on stage	
Translation:	Stage Actor	

The prepositional structure (‘*ori*’ – ‘on’) presents a spatial relationship, a typical characteristic of HQ structures. Below is a seemingly complex structure.

	H	Q[PRG]
	Alagba [Ile Igbimo Asofin]	
Gloss:	Leader house Assembly legislature	
Translation:	Leader of the House of Assembly	

This structure further demonstrates Yoruba as head-first, where the (PRG) qualifiers provide extra identifying details about the head. The lack of the explicit preposition ‘*ti*’ (as in “*Alagba ti Ile Igbimo Asofin*”- “leader of the House of Assembly”) is noteworthy as it suggests a possibility of expressing possession using a PRG with an (omitted) preposition. This is also demonstrated in “*Ojogbon Ede geesi*”- “English Language Professor” or “Professor of English Language”. Below are several examples of this.

H Q[PRG]
Alaga Igbimo Ijoba
 Gloss: Leader Executive Government
 Translation: Leader of the Executive Government

H Q[PRG]
Alaga Ikejila
 Gloss: Chairman twelve
 Translation: Twelfth chairman

H Q[PRG]
Onise Ero
 Gloss: Worker factory
 Translation: Factory worker

The lack of explicit prepositional markers in these structures depicts Yoruba's reliance on parallel structures for expressing relationships between nouns instead of a rankshifted paradigm structure like a PRG. What is common in all the examples above is the frequent occurrence of the 'HQ' type Nominal Group structure in the corpus usages where each affixed compound word appears as the head of the whole group. The fact that the Yoruba language which is predominantly a head-initial language where the head of a noun phrase (NP) typically precedes its modifiers, aligns with the observed structure where the nominalized noun (head) appears first followed by a prepositional group qualifier. The frequency of PRGs as qualifiers demonstrates a strong post-modification strategy in Yoruba NP. Below is an example of a unique structure of the Modifier-Head-Qualifier (MHQ) pattern.

M H Q
Awon Alejo lorisirisi
 Gloss: Those visitors assorted
 Translation: All sorts of visitors

'Awon' ('those') is a determiner; *Alejo* ('visitors') is the head noun, and *lorisirisi* ('assorted') is a qualifier expressing variety. The qualifier is not a prepositional phrase but an adjectival modifier. This structure highlights how Yoruba allows both adjectival and prepositional qualifiers. Additionally, the adjectival use of some nouns (*lorisirisi*) suggests a fluid distinction between nominal and descriptive functions in Yoruba syntax.

In summary, while Alaga (chairman/leader), Osere (actor), and Ojogbon (professor) are exclusively nominalized retaining their role-based meaning as head, some words like '*Asoju*' (10:10) and '*Alagidi*' (11:9) have exhibited some sort of equal representation in the use of affixed compounding as both nominalized and de-nominalized features.

De-nominalized Affixed Compounds - A few words tend to exhibit de-nominalized (adjectival or descriptive) usage. For instance, '*Arewa*' (14:4) and '*Alagba*' (13:7) occur more often as adjectives than nouns in the corpus. This might suggest that such words are more likely to function as descriptive modifiers rather than standalone as nouns. This kind of construction often raises an interesting morphosyntactic question of whether they are Modifier + Head (MH) constructions, where the first element functions adjectivally, or Head + Qualifier (HQ) structures in Yoruba.

M H
Alagba Asofin
 Gloss: senior Senator
 Translation: Senior Senator

Here, *Alagba* does not function as a head noun, rather it modifies '*Aṣòfin*', indicating rank or status. This reflects an MH structure (Modifier-Head), where the first noun functions adjectivally.

	M	H
	Alagidi Okan	
Gloss:	Stubborn heart	
Translation:	Stubborn heart	

The word *Alágídí* functions descriptively, meaning ‘stubborn,’ modifying *Òkàn* (‘heart’). While *Alágídí* is originally a noun (‘a stubborn person’), its usage here suggests a shift to an adjective, reinforcing its de-nominalization.

	M	H
	Alagidi Ogun	
Gloss:	Stubborn battle	
Translation:	Stubborn battle	

The structures above might generate some confusion among linguists as to whether they are ‘MH’ or ‘HQ’ structures, because of their complexity and the structural flexibility of the language as it seems like Yoruba affixed compounding functioning in adjectival capacity lacks explicit adjectival markers. For instance, there is a Noun + Noun construction in one of the usages of ‘Onise’. This is captured below:

	Noun + Noun	
	Onise Oniroyin	
Gloss:	Worker reporter	
Translation:	Reporter	

This type of construction appears tricky because both words are formed through the same process of affixed compounding via de-sententialization. Here, the person is a worker, and also a reporter. One needs to complement the other. In the English Language, two ‘-er’ suffixed nominals hardly co-occur side-by-side as a Noun-Noun nominal group. A close example of this type of construction in the English language is ‘A student teacher’, where the person is a teacher and student. However, the final noun ‘teacher’ is considered the head while ‘student’ remains a modifier. It is very unlikely for speakers of English to produce a structure like “Worker reporter” to refer to “someone who works as a reporter”. But in the context of ‘Onise Oniroyin’, both words tend to be equal because they both have the same lexical and morphological formation. Some scholars would argue that the second noun ‘Oniroyin’ is the head of the NMG because ‘Oniroyin’ when used alone as an NMG conveys completeness in meaning in terms of ‘*someone who works as a reporter*’. Whereas when ‘onise’ is used alone, it only conveys the meaning of “a worker”. In other words, ‘Oniroyin’ suggests ‘worker’ and ‘reporter’, whereas ‘onise’ only suggests ‘worker’ and not ‘reporter’.

H	H
/Onise/	/Oniroyin/
Worker	Reporter

Meanwhile, the combination of both “Onise Oniroyin” means “*a worker who does the work of a reporter*”. In another instance, some scholars would argue that ‘Oniroyin’ is attached to an elliptic preposition, therefore, making it a particle of a PRG operating in a secondary degree of delicacy. The analysis is done below.

	H	Q[PRG]
	“Onise Oniroyin” could also be written as “Onise [ti Oniroyin]”	
Gloss:	Worker of Reporter	
Translation:	Reporter	

‘Ti’ is the Yoruba preposition translated to ‘of’ or ‘to’ depending on the co-text. In Yoruba language, a prepositional construction of such could be made by omitting the preposition. This often creates confusion as to whether what is supposed to be the prepositional complement has become the head of the phrase or modifier. Other examples of such constructions in the data are documented below.

“Onise Ero” could also be written as H Q[PRG]
“Onise [t̩i Ero]”
Gloss: Worker of factory
Translation: Factory Worker

“Ojogbon Ede Geesi” could also be written as H Q[PRG]
“Ojogbon [t̩i Ede Geesi]”
Gloss: Professor of Language English
Translation: Professor of English Language

“Alaga Ikejila” could also be written as H Q[PRG]
“Alaga [t̩i Ikejila]”
Gloss: Chairman of twelve
Translation: Twelfth Chairman

6. Conclusion

The study concludes that while Yoruba-affixed compounds tend to function more as nouns rather than adjectives, some words exhibit high flexibility, by allowing them to function between nominalized and de-nominalized usages depending on the context. The findings help readers understand how the morphosyntactic flexibility of derived words in Yoruba affects headless constructions. Also, the frequent use of post-modification through PRGs in nominalized affixed compounds can be interpreted as a way to avoid ambiguity and allow for precise categorization of the head noun. The high occurrence of nominalized heads suggests a productive nominalization system in Yoruba, where the affixes (*A-* and *O-*) are used to create person-denoting nouns. It would be interesting to examine whether other Niger-Congo languages exhibit the same quality, where post-nominal modifiers and head-initial structures are common. The occurrence of de-nominalization of Yoruba nouns suggests that certain words naturally shift into adjectival roles when placed before another noun. However, ambiguity arises when both nouns are realized through affixed compounding such as “Onise Oniroyin”, as Yoruba affixed compounding functioning in adjectival capacity lacks explicit adjectival markers, leading to multiple interpretations. Context and meaning play a crucial role in distinguishing between MH (Modifier-Head), HQ (Head-Qualifier), and pure Noun-Noun compounds.

Practical Implications on Students and Curriculum Planners - This study is significantly crucial to learners of linguistics especially those focusing on African languages in the area of morphology. The study exposes them to the reality that Yoruba-affixed compounds are flexible in terms of their categorization of nouns or adjectives. Therefore, students should have a vast understanding that part of speech tagging for Yoruba-affixed compounds is not what could be done in isolation as it requires contextual underpinnings and robust understanding of the morphosyntactic behaviour. This identification helps to develop their linguistic skills while doing syntactic parsing of headless constructions in Yoruba especially with the ones having ambiguous structural identity like the affixed compounds. Secondly, findings from this study would be beneficial to curriculum planners as it helps to suggest a dynamic course design that integrates flexibility or contextual determinism in the identification of word classes in Yoruba languages and other languages that share similar characteristics with it. The study also provides curriculum planners to incorporate usage based or functional approaches to concepts of nominalization, de-nominalization and post-modification. This should be a wake-up call for instructors in such a way that they are mentally enriched with the knowledge of identifying ambiguous affixed compounds and equipped with the tactics of easy identification.

7. References

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