

## The Morphological Structure of Igbo Male Nicknames

John Odo Onu & Inoma Nsima George Essien

Department of Linguistics Studies  
University of Benin, Benin City

### Abstract

The study examines the morphological structure of Igbo male nicknames. It is aimed at analysing the morphology of Igbo male nicknames selected from elders and name bearers through snowballing and simple face to face interviews. Participant observation was employed from naturally occurring interactions in public and private spheres over a period of six months. The study applied descriptive research design largely informed by qualitative approach. The study employed descriptive linguistic theory in order to analyse and provide adequate descriptions of the identified morphological patterns of selected nicknames as they appear in the Igbo language. The findings of the study revealed that, Igbo nicknames have references and sense relations which are denotative and connotative and these make them meaningful. It was also revealed that Igbo nicknames have a morphological structure where prefixes and suffixes added to roots or stems alter their meanings. They are de-nominal, de-verbal and de-adjectival. They display long, and short clauses and a proverbial structure. The study revealed that conventions regarding nickname coinage and usage are intimately connected to the gender of bearers and users.

**Keywords:** name, nickname morphology, linguistics, descriptive theory, denotative and connotative meaning.

### 1. Introduction.

In Igbo society, naming and naming practices are vital activities. The commonest practice is that the new born is named immediately the umbilical cord drops. According to Magesa (1998:87), "naming involves incarnation and actualization of a person's desired quality or value or physical trait". The name is vital as it incorporates the child into a clan and lineage. Therefore, more than merely symbolic identification, real identification takes place in the act of naming; because of the great value attached to names, the names are carefully selected and bestowed by parents. Uncles, aunties and grandparents can also perform the act of naming

the child.

#### 1.1. Nicknames among the Igbo people.

Nicknaming is part of the Igbo people's lifestyle. They influence behaviour, personality, interaction based on activities and the general welfare of an individual. They are so poetic. A talented onomasticist can tell a full story about an individual without him grabbing what is being said about him just because the story is spiced with a simple figurative nickname. A proper name is a word or a specialised term or a linguistic speech sound that is bestowed upon an individual for everybody to identify him/her with. It remains a label for that particular person until such a time that circumstances create a change of

it.

Like many other languages or groups of people, the Igbo people have nicknames as part of their naming practices. These nicknames present peculiar morphological structures. They are important because they communicate the history of a nickname, the developmental stages of the character of the bearer that has become part of his current personality and qualifies the name bearer to gain that nickname. However, there has been paucity of systematic scholarly work so far on nicknames in Igbo despite the numerous linguistic features embedded in Igbo nicknames.

A nickname is an informal, often humorous name for a person that is connected with their real name, their personality or appearance or with something they have done (Tuernbull, 2010). It is a wide spread linguistic phenomenon. These nicknames do not only depict peculiar meaning, but also have interesting morphology. A name is a linguistic sign, that could hence be subjected to the same linguistic scrutiny as other linguistic signs, phonologically, morphologically, syntactically or semantically, (Neethling,2005:2). Among personal names or proper names are a sub-category called nicknames, an additional name a person acquires in the course of life.

Individuals all over the world acquire additional personal names besides those that were officially bestowed upon them. The most common category is probably that of nicknames. Neethling (2005:115) postulates that 'Nicknames in essence, can function like a given first name. Such nicknames can, therefore, replace the first name, and are commonly used in less formal or informal circles ". She explains that the term 'Nickname' is considered to be a derived form of English, 'eacan' Meaning 'also' relating to its role as an additional name evolving subsequent to assignment of the first name, 'ekename' in middle

English.

Neethling (2005) further notes that in the English -speaking world, a nickname has certain connotation often dealing with a characteristic feature, physical or otherwise of the name bearer. Nicknaming in Igbo occurs in a wide array of relationships and age groups, although it happens more frequently among males than females. Also, the form that nicknames take, how they are used and the nicknaming patterns depend mainly on the social distance between the participants, their relative social statuses, age, sex, the context of naming and the speaker's intention, the nicknames intended effect (Mashin,2004).

In nicknames, there is negotiating identities. The war name plays an important role in not only concealing the identity of a combatant for security reasons, but also in creating a new identity for that person. Negotiating identity is a multi-faced process. An identity is not fixed, but constantly being negotiated. Joseph (2004:94) points out that, "identity is something we construct and negotiate throughout our life time". Any identity is a function of surrounding conditions and circumstances hence the meaning of any nickname is ephemeral.

## **2.Methodology**

This study has applied the methodological approach of data collection and analysis which is largely informed by qualitative approach to research. This section presents the methodological approach used in data collection and analysis.

### **2.1. Method of Data collection.**

The study adopted two main research techniques for data collection namely, oral interview and participant observation. Oral interview technique involved face to face interviews with the selected respondents. Participant observation involved taking of

naturally occurring interactions in public and private spheres where individuals were using their various nicknames. Nicknames were collected using tape a recorder, a notebook, and interview guide.

## **2.2. Method of Data analysis.**

The study employed descriptive analysis and lexical morphological analysis of morphological structures by segmenting, identifying, and describing the morphemes that constitute the selected nicknames. Lexical morphology was applied because it enabled the researcher to analyse the elements (morphemes) that form individual nicknames as it concerns itself primarily with word formation, derivation and compounding of selected nickname as linguistic signs.

## **3.Literature Review**

This section presents the review of related literature under the following sub-headings: conceptual framework, theoretical framework and empirical studies.

### **3.1. Conceptual framework**

The following concepts are reviewed in this study: name, nickname, morphology, descriptive theory, denotative and connotative meanings.

### **3.2. Name**

A proper name is a word or a specialized term or a linguistic speech sound that is bestowed upon an individual for everybody to identify him/her with. It remains a label for that particular person until such a time that circumstances create a change for it. Raper's (1987:78) definition of a name reads:

A proper name is like any other linguistic sign, consists of a sound sequence, which may be represented graphemically, and a 'sense' or 'meaning'. It also has the function of referring to or designating an extra-linguistic entity.

### **3.3. Nickname**

Morgan (1929:16) offers a short and concise definition of a nickname when he says: A nickname is an eke-name, derived from the English verb 'ecan' meaning "to add to or argument" Thus, an eke-name was one given over the legal or baptismal name.

Ashley (1989:49) defines nickname by saying: "Today our nicknames are eke (extra) names given in derision... Or out of affection.... Sometimes, they are informal versions of forenames.....or of surnames."

Leslie and Skipper (1990:273) define a nickname as:"...a term of familiarity with substitutes for a proper name, meaning, and the nickname may or may not totally blackout the proper name depending on the type and current background of influence."

Kahari (2009) text sums up the importance of nicknames in an argument that," a nickname is a name that an individual is given by the community which is usually descriptive because it sums up that individual's character or shape or idiosyncratic indications ".from these names, it is possible to see which qualities they endorse and which they discourage and to derive hierarchy of values constituting the people's worldview.

In the context of this study, nicknames are names acquired in addition to one's personal names in the course of life for various purposes and situations. A nickname is used to designate an extra name superimposed over and above the legal one.

### **3.4. Morphology**

Morphology as employed in this study is simply a study of the internal structure of nicknames in Igbo; their denotative and connotative manifestations

## **4. Theoretical framework**

This study has employed an eclectic

theoretical framework namely: Descriptive linguistic theory developed by Evans (1973) and lexical morphology.

#### 4.1. Descriptive linguistic theory

Descriptive linguistic theory developed by Evans (1973) is employed in order to analyse and provide adequate descriptions of the identified morphemes of selected nicknames as they appear in Igbo as a language. Descriptive theory is about what languages are and what tools we need in order to provide adequate descriptions of individual languages. It sees names as denoting an item only if they satisfy all or most of the descriptions or characteristics one associates with the item that the name is supposed to represent. The speakers also have to believe and intend to use given names with the necessary denotation including the necessary set of characteristics.

Ferdinand de Saussure was one of the earliest proponents of this theory and it was well expanded in his posthumous published work "Cours de Linguistique Générale" by his students in 1916. In this study, the descriptive linguistic theory is applied in order to analyse and provide us with adequate descriptions of the morphemes of the selected Igbo nicknames. Names are seen as denoting an entity if and only if it satisfies either all or most of the characteristics that are associated with them. Speakers also have this belief that every item must fulfill all necessary denotations of its name. This theory is relevant to this study because the data analysis will entail description and analysis of selected Igbo male nicknames.

#### 4.2. Lexical Morphology:

Lexical morphology is a branch of morphology that deals with the lexicon which is morphologically conceived as the collection of lexemes in a language. Lexical morphology dates as far back as the time of the ancient Indian

Linguist, Panini who formulated 3,959 rules of Sanskrit morphology in his grammar, Astadhyai. His grammatical description was constituent based. Linguists through the stages of linguistic evolution have come to realize that over generated grammatical and morphological rules may be unnecessary. This theory focuses primarily on word formation, derivation, and compounding of selected Igbo nicknames. Because we will be dealing basically with words, this theory's relevance will keep us guided operating in the jurisdiction of morphemes.

#### 5. Empirical studies

Onomastics is a relatively new area in linguistic analysis in Nigeria. There is scanty literature available particularly on nicknames. A few that have been done in African linguistics have focused on anthropology more than the linguistic perceptive. Some are: Madubuike (1994), Mashiri(1999), Mofele (1999), Neethling (2005), Batoma (2009), Felecan (2009), Mutunda (2011) and Hangome (2015).

Madubuike (1994) conducted a research on naming among the Igbo people of Nigeria. He observed that among the Igbo people of Nigeria, naming a child is a big ceremonial event involving the immediate family and some villages. The focus of this study was on naming practices among the Igbo people rather than the morphological dimension which is the focus of the present study.

Mashiri(1999) also looked at Terms of Address in Shone in an intercultural contact in Africa. The Data for the study were derived from a multiplicity of sources, both modern and traditional. The emphasis of the study was on the discussion of the type of names the Shone utilize, the contexts in which they are applied, their semantics and the circumstances that motivate their creation. In this study, Mashiri(1999), Terms

of Address refers to proper names, nicknames, titles, pronouns, prefixes and other reference terms with semantic significance. The findings of the study revealed that in Shona, names and other forms of address, their origins and context in which they are used create an awareness of the identity and the sociolinguistic history of the Shona. The study also revealed that address terms can be screens upon which the Shona project their attitudes towards different aspects of their life. Nicknaming in Shona occurs in a wide array of relationships and age groups, although it happens more frequently among males not the females.

Mofele (1999) investigated the onomastic aspects of Zulu nicknames. The study focused on the semantics in nicknames and linguistic features of nicknames in the Zulu society. The study was anchored on the theory of nicknames. The major findings of the study revealed that Zulu nicknames are taken from all types of parts of speech. Even sentences offer themselves as a reservoir of nicknames. Nouns employ the class prefixes – **u** and **o** – and this happens in combination of nouns and other parts of speech, so long as the noun precedes all other constructions. The study further revealed that foreign linguistic terms, words from other languages are borrowed to become part of some nicknames.

Neethling (2005:7) also added a similar study to the current study about naming in Xhosa of South Africa. She postulated that, “the primary function of name giving activity is to distinguish the new born from all the others that have gone before, that is, name giving has a referential function. The major findings of the study revealed that humanity, that is, homo Sapiens, move through life, naming entities, this implies that, if people, places and goods do not have names, it would have been totally impossible for us to live a

meaningful life in the present world.

Batoma, (2009) had an interesting study on Kabre proper names. The study focused on the analysis of the communicative use of proper names among the Kabre of Northern Togo. The emphasis of this study was placed on allusive names because of the communicative strategies these names entail. The findings of the study revealed that, Kabre proper names fall into the personal names subcategories: nominal and syntagmatic. The study identified three main categories of Kabre names: the ontological names whose purpose is to capture and express the ontological identity of the name bearers, the pedagogical names which express the plurality of their socio-cultural identity, and the allusive names which are used to convey messages in an indirect way.

Felecan, (2009) conducted a study on the North Western part of Romania on Nicknames as a reflection of Polyphony within the linguistic area. The aim of the study was to show that nicknames are the result of series of voices. Felecan approached this study from the perspective of Bakhton’s theory of polyphony. The findings of the study revealed that a nickname is not the result of the single act of denomination, but the combined usage of the appellative form by the entire community of people who validate it by use. Felecan looked at the nickname as a marker of polyphony. She categorized nicknames into analytical nicknames, synthetic nicknames, anecdote nicknames and meta-nicknames as semantic criteria.

Mutunda, (2011) conducted a study on personal names in Lunda cultural milieu. The forms of the study dwell on what is relevant to Lunda speaking people with regards to meaning of the names, their naming practices, and factors governing the choice of names. This had more

cultural inclination than a morphological and semantic analysis of names. However, the study is related to the current study because it provides some insight into the general onomastics and naming practices in Igbo which has bearing with the present study of nicknames.

Hangombes, (2015) study stands out as the only work that studied nicknames as part of the morphology and semantics of the Tonga anthroponyms. The study asserts that the Tonga nicknames have meanings and comes from various sources. The findings of the study revealed that nicknames, handiwork, travel, social conflict, wealth and powerlessness, fertility, behavioural, baptismal, disaster and order of birth are some of the motivations for nicknames in Tonga. In line with morphology, the study revealed that nicknames fall within the morphological structures of denominals, deverbals and de-adjectivals of the Tongas anthroponyms, given names and nicknames.

However, instead of an eclectic theoretical framework, the study used the unified theory of names which argues that names have both denotative and connotative senses and that each of these senses has a range of correct applications. Nevertheless, the two differ in the ways in which they come to have their applications. The current study uses eclectic theoretical framework in analyzing the morphological structure of Igbo nicknames to arrive at their desired meanings. This study is relevant to the current study of morphology of nicknames in Igbo as it is directly related to the present study in terms of the morphological structure which it seeks to analyse.

### **5.1. SUMMARY OF THE REVIEWED LITERATURE**

The reviewed literature has revealed an impressive amount of both nicknames collected

and nicknames studies. Although a number of studies add to the existing onomastics from time to time, onomastics of nicknames continues to be an enigma for scholars. The current study is a departure from socio-cultural dimensions to a more linguistic approach where linguistic analysis of nicknames in Igbo will occupy a central slot of the study. In this study, nicknames will be analyzed socio-culturally and linguistically to determine their morphological structure and establish their etymology. This as aforesaid creates knowledge gap through which the researcher will direct the current study.

### **6. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

This section concerns the presentation of some selected nicknames and their morphological analysis.

#### **6.1. Root Determination Conditions (RDC):**

This basically explains the conditions responsible for determining the root in Igbo male nicknames. We discovered three primary conditions that help ascertain this and they are listed and exemplified below:

- (1) Headedness Condition
- (2) Significant Verb Condition and
- (3) Ambivalent Verb Condition.

#### **6.2. Headedness Condition:**

Headedness has to do with endocentric compounds which are a type of compounds in which one member functions as the head and the other as its modifier, attributing a property to the head. When elements under this category are compounded, their meanings are combined together to have a new meaning. These are denominal nicknames. Endocentricity defines compounds on the basis of their constituent semantic headedness. (Duru and Agbo, 2021)

Examples of Lexical items that fall under this category are listed below and the items underlined are the head (root).

MORPHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS	ORTHOGRAPHIC REALIZATION
<u>Akpa</u> +aja (Bag) (Sand)	Akpaaja
<u>Dí</u> +íké (Husband) (Strength)	Dike
<u>Iké</u> +mba (Strength) (City)	Íkémba
<u>Ágú</u> +íké (Tiger) (Strength)	Ágúíke
<u>Di</u> + ókpá (Husband) (First)	Díókpá

Table 1. showing Endocentric compounds as nicknames

From the above analysis, the underlined are the respective roots, the co-occurring lexical items are performing adjectival functions of modifying the head.

### 6.3. Significant Verb Condition:

Basically, these forms of nicknames take the form of predicate nominal clauses or in some cases agentive clauses. The absence of the verb causes the nickname to lose its original meaning. This suggests that, there is a verb termed significant which when removed, causes the whole lexical item to lose the original intended semantic value. We call them Significant Verbs. These nicknames, which are complex word forms are decomposable into prefixes, roots and suffixes in this case for analytical purposes. The verb providing the main sense of the nickname.

Examples from the data;

1. **Ûbanaeseokwu : ‘wealth that causes trouble’ (literal meaning)**

- Ûba- : Prefix (meaning “wealth”)
- na- : AUX.
- e- : Infix
- se- : Root (meaning “cause”)
- okwu : Suffix (meaning “quarrel”)

“Ûba-” is the prefix, “-na-”, “-e-” are infixes, “-se-” is the root and “-okwu” is the suffix. If the verb “se” is removed from the word, the semantic value or original intended meaning is lost. So a complex word form such as “Ûbanaeokwu – Wealth AUX infix Quarrel will not give the same sense as ‘Ûbanaeseokwu’

In the examples that follow, we find similar manifestations, where the verb carries the main sense of the nickname.

2. **Nwataanyóze : ‘a child that is being begged to be a king’ (lit)**

- Nwata- : Prefix (meaning “child”)
- a- : Infix (a pronoun marker)
- na- : AUX

- a- : Infix (originally prefixed to the verb, yó- “beg” but it is now an infix in this word form)  
-yó- : Root (meaning “beg”)  
-eze : Suffix (meaning “king”)
3. **Eribeagwúagwú : ‘wealth that is unlimited’ (lit)**  
e- : Prefix (also a pronoun marker)  
-ri- : Root (meaning “eater”)  
-be- : Infix  
-agwúagwú Suffix (meaning “unlimited”)
4. **Nwarùpuoakù : ‘a child that amasses wealth’ (lit)**  
Nwa- : Prefix “child”  
-rù- : Root “pierce or point” (depending on context)  
-pu- : Infix  
-o- : Infix  
-akù : Suffix “riches”
5. **Mmirienweilo : ‘water that has no enemy’ (lit)**  
Mmiri- : Prefix “water”  
-e- : Infix  
-nwe- : Root “have”  
-ilo : Suffix “enemy”
6. **Ojiakaaghómgbó : ‘one who receives bullets with the hand’ (lit)**  
Oji- : Prefix “holder”  
-aka- : Infix “hand”  
-a- : Infix  
-ghó- : Root “catch”  
-mgbó : Suffix “bullet”
7. **Ugochimereze : ‘an eagle that was made king’ (lit)**  
Ugochi- : Prefix (a personal name)  
-me- : Root “do”  
-re- : Infix  
-eze : Suffix “king”
8. **Ezeebunaafó : ‘one made a king in the womb’ (lit)**  
Eze- : Prefix “king”  
-e- : Infix (pronoun marker)  
-bu- : Root “carry”  
-na- : Infix (AUX.)  
-afó : Suffix “stomach”



9. **Agújiegbe : ‘a tiger with a gun’ (lit)**  
Agú- : Prefix “tiger”  
-ji- : Root “hold”  
-egbe : Suffix “gun”
10. **Jùkwaese : ‘look before you leap’ (lit)**  
Jù- : Root “ask”  
-kwa- : Infix  
-ese : Suffix “about”
11. **Okwuanyịónú : ‘no words that the mouth cannot speak’ (lit)**  
Okwu- : Prefix “word”  
-a- : Infix  
-nyị- : Root “heavy”  
-ónú : Suffix “mouth”
12. **Akùbùeze : ‘wealth is king’ (lit)**  
Akù- : Prefix “riches”  
-bù- : Root “is”  
-eze : Suffix “king”
13. **Akùnaesiibiike : wealth that makes the heart strong (lit)**  
Akù- : Prefix “riches”  
-na- : Infix (AUX)  
-e- : Infix  
-si- : Root “cook”, (means “make” in this context.)  
-obi- : Infix “heart”  
-ike : Suffix “strength”
14. **Ọnọchie : ‘one who replaces’ (lit)**  
Ọ- : Prefix (Pronoun marker)  
-nọ- : Root “stay”  
-chi- : Infix  
-e : Suffix
15. **Ọnwanaetiriọha : ‘the moon that shines on everybody’ (lit)**  
Ọnwa- : Prefix “moon”  
-na- : Infix (AUX.)  
-e- : Infix  
-ti- : Root “shine”( in this context)  
-ri- : Infix  
-ọha : Suffix “people”
16. **Agbaegonkịtị : ‘one who spends money extravagantly’ (lit)**  
A- : Prefix (pronoun marker)  
-gba- : Root “shoot”  
-ego- : Infix “money”

17.           -nkítì : Suffix “alone”  
**Agaba :** ‘the strong one’ (lit)  
 A- : Prefix (pronoun marker)  
 -ga- : Root “go”  
 -ba : Suffix
18.           **Ọ̀zòpuruiniego : ‘one who finds hidden money underground’ (lit)**  
 Ọ̀- : Prefix  
 -zò- : Root “match”  
 -pu- : Infix  
 -ru- : Infix  
 -ini- : Infix “grave”  
 -ego : Suffix “money”
19.           **Ojìòfógaana : ‘one who is upright succeeds’ (lit)**  
 Oji- : Prefix (money “holder”)  
 -òfó- : Infix  
 -ga- : Root ‘will’ (AUX.)  
 -a- : Infix  
 -na : Suffix go
20.           **Azùanùka : ‘the back that does not hear gossip’ (lit)**  
 Azù- : Prefix “back”  
 -a- : Infix ((Neg)  
 -nù- : Root “hear”  
 -ùka : Suffix “discussion”
21.           **Akùnaatakasí : wealth that is being squandered (lit)**  
 Akù- : Prefix “rich”  
 -na- : Infix (AUX.)  
 -a- : Infix  
 -ta- : Root “bite”  
 -ka- : Infix  
 -sí : Suffix
22.           **Dikeanaagbaraizu : a strong man surrounded by conspirators (lit)**  
 Dike- : Prefix “strongman”  
 -a- : Infix (pronoun marker)  
 -na- : Infix (AUX.)  
 -gba- : Root “shoot”  
 -ra- : Infix  
 -izu : Suffix (“discussion as in planning”)

#### 6.4. Ambivalent Verb Condition:

When a verb has been nominalized and also carries the major sense of the nickname by reason of affixes, it is termed an Ambivalent verb. We call it an ambivalent verb because of the dual function it performs

(nominalized and major sense carrier). These are deverbal nominals or agentive clauses.

The following example reveal this feature of Igbo nicknames:

1. **Omeego** : ‘one who spends money’ (lit)  
O- : prefix and nominalizer  
-me- : root and ambivalent verb  
-ego : suffix
2. **Omereòha** : ‘one who is generous’ (lit)  
O- : prefix and nominalizer  
me- : root and ambivalent verb  
-re- : suffix to the verb but an infix in the complex word  
-òha : suffix
3. **Ogbuefi** : ‘killer of a cow’ (lit)  
O- : prefix and nominalizer  
-gbu- : root and ambivalent verb  
-efi : suffix
4. **Okwuruòha** : ‘people’s spokesman’ (lit)  
O- : prefix nominalizer  
-kwu- : root and ambivalent verb  
-ru- : suffix to the verb but an infix in the complex word  
-òha : suffix

#### 6.5. MORPHOLOGICAL STRUCTURE OF THE SELECTED IGBO MALE NICKNAMES.

From the observations in the headedness condition, the structure is totally “noun+noun” and the head may take any position depending on the placement of the compound word. The researchers are particular about the head first, then the modifier. The position of the head is termed “N<sub>1</sub>”, that of the modifier is termed N<sub>2</sub>.

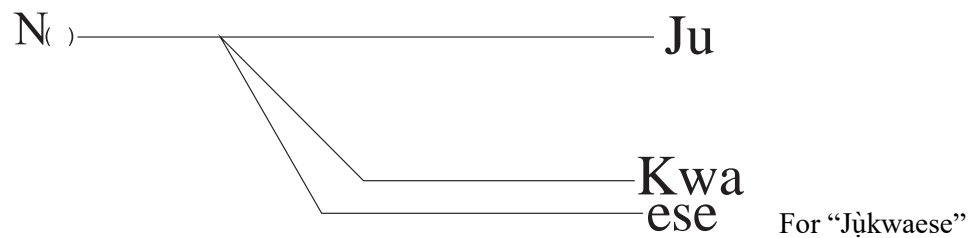
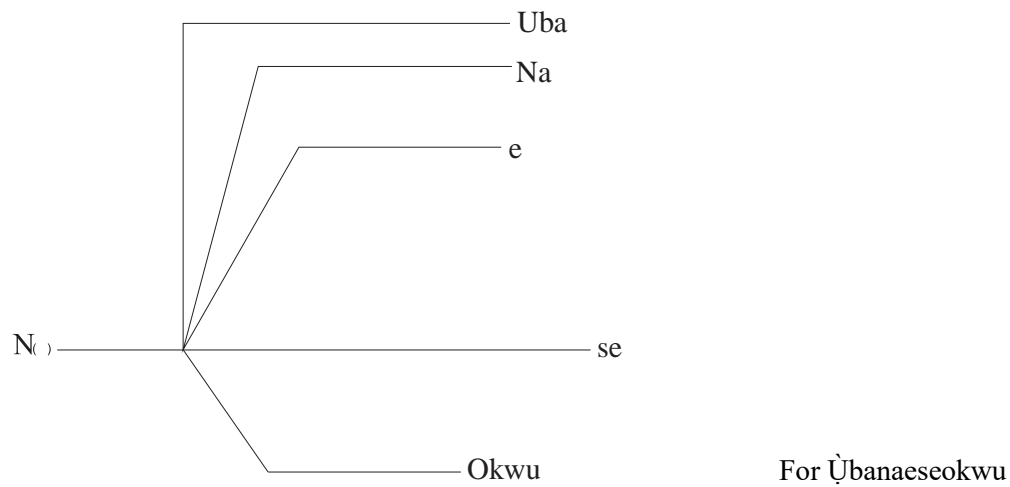
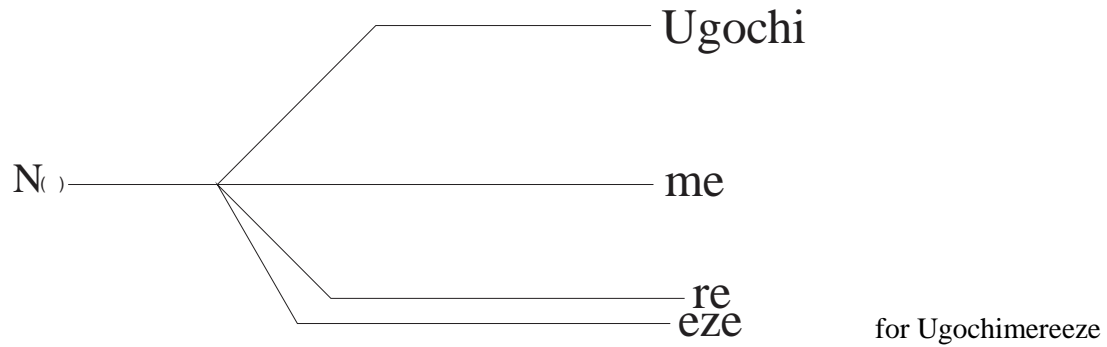
1. N<sub>1</sub>-N<sub>2</sub>  
akpa-aja
2. N<sub>2</sub> – N<sub>1</sub>  
ike - mba

N<sub>( )</sub> : Noun Compound

N<sub>1</sub> : Head

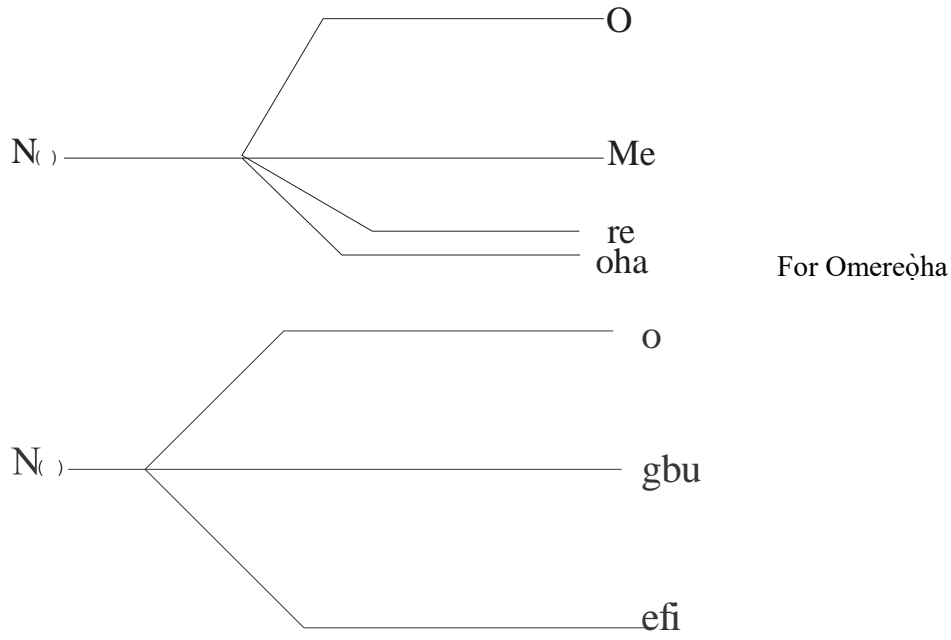
N<sub>2</sub> : Modifier

From the observation in the significant verb condition, the structure is put thus:



These examples can be used in structuring the other complex word forms. The line of the root must be straight indicating significance while the others appear in the format given.

The same structure applied in significant verb condition is applicable to the ambivalent verb condition only that the line of the root which is straight is showing ambivalence and the prefix is the nominalizer. Hence, we have.



Why did we use N<sub>c</sub> (Noun compound)? It is simply because nicknames are nouns and the bracket signifies the combination of every lexical item that came together to form the nickname irrespective of their lexical category. Observe how the breakdown was done in (RDC) Root Determination Condition to be able to structure them accurately.

#### 6.6. Summary of the Study and Conclusion

A careful study of the model of analysis in the significant verb condition provides a possible analytical pattern for describing Igbo male nicknames since they are made up more of complex word forms. The study employed descriptive linguistic theory in order to analyse and provide adequate description of the identified morphemes of the selected male nicknames as they appear in the Igbo language. The findings of the study revealed that Igbo male nicknames have references and senses which are denotative and connotative and these make them meaningful. The findings of the study also revealed that Igbo nicknames have a morphological structure where prefixes and extensions added to roots or stems

alter their meanings. They are either denominal, deverbal or deadjectival and they take the form of endocentric compounds, predicate nominal clauses and agentive constructions. The finding of the study further revealed that conventions regarding nickname coinage and usage are intimately connected to the gender of the bearers and users.

We conclude from the analysis in this paper that, nicknames emerge from various sources. The themes nicknames are given have semantic values. Cultural and social situations are reliable sources of these nicknames in Igbo. Also, the findings have shown that like any other language, the nicknames in Igbo are really linguistic signs which could be subjected to linguistic scrutiny.

### References

- Felecan D. (2006, 2009), "Nicknames-A Reflections of Polyphony within the Linguistic Area from the Northwestern Part of Romania." *Nomina Africana*, Vol. 23, No 2 pp. 61-90.
- Neethling B. (2005). *Naming among the Xhosa of South Africa: studies in Onomastics. Volume. 8*. New York: The Edwin Mellen Press.
- Ashley, L.R.N. (1989). *What is in a name?* Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co. Inc.
- Botoma, A. (2009) *Onomastics and indirect communication among the Kabre of Northern*
- Felecan, D. (2009) *Nickname: A reflection of Polyphony within the Linguistic area from the Functionality Perspective*. Ph.D. thesis, Department of Literature and Philosophy, University of Zambia.
- Hangombe, K. (2015). *The morphology and Semantics of Tonga anthropology and Semantics of Harere*. Harere: Zambesia University Press.
- Joseph, J. (2004). *Language identity*. London: Macmillan
- Evans, G. (1993). *The causal theory of names. Part 2 proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volume 47: 187*
- Kahari, A. (1990). *Plots and characters in Shona fiction*. Gweru: Mambo Press.
- Leslie, P.L. and Skippper, J.K. (1990). *Towards the theory of nicknames*: London: Routledge & Kegan Paul
- Madubuike, I. (1994). *A hand book of African names*-Colorado Springs, Co: Three continents
- Magesa, L. (1998). *African traditional religion*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications
- Mashiri, P.M. (1999). *Terms of address in Shona: A socio-linguistic approach*. *Zambezi* 26(1)
- Mashiri, P.M. (2004). *More than mere Linguistic tricks*:
- Mofele, L. (1999). *Onomastic aspects of Zulu nicknames with special reference to source and*
- Morgan, J. (1999). *Nicknames: Their Origin and socio consequences*.
- Mutunda, S. (2011). *Personal names Lunda Cultural milieu*. New York: Macmillan
- Neethling, B (2005). *Naming among the Xhosa of South Africa. Studies in Onomastics volume North western part of Romania. Nomina Africa* 23 (2), 61 -90
- Raper, P.E. (1987). *Aspects of Onomastic theory. Nomina Africa* 2, 178