



## Word compounding as a morphological process in Efik language

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### Abstract

This study was carried out to examine Word Compounding as a morphological process in Efik Language. Compounding is a word formation process based on the combination of lexical elements. Words can be considered as a complex part in language since it has many different forms. Compound words are words formed through one of the word formation processes by combining one lexical item with another and thus produces a new word with a new meaning. This research work investigates to know how compound words are formed in Efik language. This work describes the forms of compound words, the meaning of words in their individual lexical categories as well as the meaning of words in their compounded state. It was discovered that some compound words in Efik could be literally realized or figuratively realized when undergoing the word formation process of compounding. It was also discovered that lexical categories resulting from the process of compounding are noun compound, verb compound, adjective compound and reduplication in the case of adverb. Most of the times, coined Efik counterparts of words are formed mostly by compounding and analogy. The use of English equivalents for compound words by the Efik-English bilinguals in their code-mixing utterance counts as an appropriate statement or reply. Sometimes, just as word compounding is in English, so it is Efik

**Keywords:** Morphology; Compounding; Word formation; Lexical categories; Realization; Code-mixing

### 1. Introduction

Efik belongs to the Niger-Congo family and is sub-classified as a Lower-Cross language of the Delta-Cross sub-family (Faraclas 1989), that is spoken predominantly in Southern Cross River State, Nigeria. Efik is one of the so-called minority languages in Nigeria. It is spoken by a population of over 2 million people as a first language and 3.5 million people as a second language in Nigeria, and it has had a widespread influence along the entire Southeastern coast of Nigeria. In Cross River State where it is mainly spoken, it is given some recognition in the mass media, education, public mobilization and orientation on Beginning with the Portuguese, and later the British, the Efik people had a long history of contact with Europeans. The British had a sustained contact with the Efik people for over 100 years, initially as trade partners and later as missionaries and colonial administrators. The contact of a dominant language with a lesser known one has had its attendant effects, which are mainly manifested in borrowing. This has affected every facet of the Efik language: pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary. In this way, Efik has become partially assimilated to English, and speakers of Efik also assimilate into English culture. This assimilation process justifies the popular saying Efik édi mmákára „The Efik (people) are English“ among the Efik. Efik-English bilinguals prefer the English translation equivalent of these endocentric compound words in code-mixing basically for reasons of economy. A morpheme considered the basic unit of analysis in morphology, are combined with another to form words which in turn are combined to form sentences. A morpheme, however, will only be valid if it is easy for the speaker to tell its function. In addition, in compounding is morphological process involved in bringing together two morphemes with their respective meaning to form a new word. Compounding forms a word out of two or more root morphemes. The words are called compounds or compound words. In linguistics, compounding can either be native or borrowed. Native Efik roots are

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typically free morphemes, so that means native compounds are made out of independent words that can occur by themselves.

This work will be looking at how word compounding occur in the Efik language, i.e how two or more word are joined together to form a word. Let's not forget that morphology has to do with the formation of words, through different purposes, but we will be limiting this work to compounding as a morphological process

For example; Ufok-nwed as in school. It composes of free root word, Ufok meaning "house" and Nwed meaning "book." The combination of these two words brings about compounding.

In Efik, compounds are written in various ways, either with a space between the elements, or simply with the two roots run together with no separation. The way the word is written does not affect its status as a compound. Over time, the convention for writing compounds can change, usually in the direction from separate words.

Another thing to note about compounds is that they can combine words of different parts of speech. Sometimes these compounds are different in the part of speech of the whole word. Often times the last word is usually a noun.

There are a number of subtypes of compounding that has to do with repetition in Efik language, just by repeating the initial root word, it forms a compound word in Efik. Often times repetitions occur in other for an adjective or adverb to be formed

For example: Ediye-ediye, meaning " beautifully" The reduplication of a root word is a compounding process in Efik language. Compounding is a word formation process based on the combination of lexical elements (words or stems). In the theoretical literature, compounding is discussed controversially, and the disagreement also concerns basic issues. In the study of compounding, the questions guiding research can be grouped into four main areas, labeled here as delimitation, classification, formation, and interpretation. Depending on the perspective taken in the research. one question is how important it is to be able to determine for each expression unambiguously whether it is a compound or not. Compounding borders on syntax and on affixation. In some theoretical frameworks, it is not a problem to have more typical and less typical instances, without a precise boundary between them. However, if, for instance, word formation and syntax are strictly separated and compounding is in word formation, it is crucial to draw this borderline precisely. Another question is which types of criteria should be used to distinguish compounding from other phenomena. Criteria based on form, on syntactic properties, and on meaning have been used. In all cases, it is also controversial whether such criteria should be applied crosslinguistically. In the classification of compounds, the question of how important the distinction between the classes is for the theory in which they are used poses itself in much the same way as the corresponding question for the delimitation. A common classification uses headedness as a basis. Other criteria are based on the forms of the elements that are combined (e.g., stem vs. word) or on th semantic relationship between the components. Again, whether these criteria can and should be applied crosslinguistically is controversial. English. A typical compound in Efik has a range of properties that can be evaluated for the three factors. Morphologically, it consists of two uninflected nouns. Phonologically, it has a characteristic tone pattern. Orthographically, the two components are written together. Syntactically, it behaves as a noun. Semantically, it refers to an object, marked in some way.

### *Objectives of the study*

The objectives of this study is to:

- Examine the formation of word compounding in Efik language
- Ascertain the extent to which word come together without being polysynthesized
- Identify the various words as they occur as free morphemes and how they occur in compound words.

### **1.1. Research Questions**

The following research questions were formulated as a guide for the study

- How does word compounding influence the formation of words in Efik?
- Does word compounding in Efik lead to polysynthetic words?
- To what extent are free morphemes strung up together to become compound words?

## 2. Conceptual Framework

### 2.1. Concept of Morphology and semantics

Chomskian linguists, also called generative grammarians, thought of syntax as an explanation to native speakers' ability to produce and understand an infinite number of sentences and words regardless of the fact that the majority of them would not be able to recite syntactic or morphological rules if asked. It is therefore argued that utterances do not come out of habit but rather result from a creative combination of already known words following already known, unconscious principles. By the same token, generative grammarians argued that speakers of a language are able to construct and understand new words in the same way that they produce and understand new sentences, an ability that is known as lexical competence. Accordingly, word compounding processes were considered analogous to sentence formation processes. That is to say, words were considered as having a syntactic structure, and therefore generative linguists applied transformation analysis to the lexis (Cressey, 1978; Lang, 1990; Moreno, 1986).

Morphology, however, is the branch of linguistics concerned with the internal structure of words. It can be subdivided into two categories depending on the type of process that a word undergoes. Derivational morphology, on the one hand, looks at additions made to a lexical root whose grammatical category changes as a result of the insertion of a derivational morpheme. On the other hand inflectional morphology deals with the addition of morphemes that solely express tense, gender, person, and/or number, and thus might indicate a semantic change (Moreno, 1986). Morphemes, for Moreno (1986) are meaningful units or meaning carriers, while Lang (1990) considers them as grammar units that cannot be further subdivided. Arnoff (1983, as cited in Lang, 1990), in contrast, suggests that morphemes hold no constant meaning. Instead, meaning is determined by the lexical context in which the newly formed word is produced. Consequently, meaning cannot always be deduced from morphemes alone (Arnoff, 1983 as cited in Lang, 1990). Nonetheless, morphemes are considered the basic unit of analysis.

The study of Morphology in the real sense started with Panini's (500 B.C.) „Astadhyayi“. His work contains formal rules for units below the level of word. The terms coined by him are still found relevant and a few of them are used by the Generative Grammarians. Even before this, there was Greek Classical tradition. Plato had gone into the differences of Nouns, Verbs and Adjectives. Aristotle's *Kratylos* first raised the question of arbitrary relation of meaning and sound. The Greek grammarians (216-90 B.C.) were more interested in the semantics than the formal aspects. The Stoics like Diogenes, Laertes and Appolonius took grammar as a major discipline within the study of philosophy. Even Alexandrian grammarians separated it from philosophy and gave it the status of a specialized study.

### 2.2. The Concept of Word formation processes

Word formation aims at “analyzing and understanding the process through which the lexis is created or renewed” (Lang, 1990:3). Purist and lexicographers, however, might criticize and even condemn the creation of new terms, which they might consider irrelevant and unnecessary. Nonetheless, speakers and writers, support lexical innovation and creativity either proposed by themselves or by mass media because it allows them to be more expressive when speaking and writing. To illustrate, let us think of all the playwrights, poets, and authors that have for long coined words of their own to give way to richer linguistic devices. Consequently, the data analyzed when looking at word formation processes in obtained from dictionaries, scientific and technological texts, the mass media, modern literature and colloquial speech (Lang, 1990). The most common word formation processes are compounding and derivation. The former occurs when independent lexemes, also known as free morphemes, combine and give way to more complex morphological structures. Compounding can be subdivided into two types: orthographic and syntagmatic. The former occurs when free morphemes are graphically joined, e.g. *Ofong-Ukot* (meaning “Trousers” in Efik). According to Aronoff (1983, as cited in Lang, 1990) the input and output of any word formation process must be able to fit major grammatical classes, i.e. nouns, adjectives, verbs. There are certain morphemic properties which determine the meaning and the form of new words, be it derivatives or compounds. Such properties are:

- The etymological nature of the base
- The base's conjugational category
- Whether it is an animate or inanimate item
- Transitivity and inchoativity of the bases and their derivatives
- The range of semantic labeling of both.

### 2.3. The Concept Code-mixing in the lexicon

Code-mixing is a prominent feature of bilingual speech behavior. It does not necessarily entail having grammatically and pragmatic competence in both English and Efik language. The level of bilingual competence varies depending on the language input and language proficiency of the bilingual. Several factors, linguistic and non-linguistic, are responsible for the output of code-mixing. The internal resourcefulness of Efik does not accommodate certain universal concepts and cultural items with equivalent referents, hence the recourse to English. For instance, forms like cupboard, and window do not have names in Efik. They are either transliterated or borrowed. The pattern of borrowing is such that the sound are made to assimilate in the direction of Efik phonology. Efik bilinguals simply code-mix these forms in their performance in oral communication because the Efik vocabulary cannot provide equivalent forms of expression. In a way, code mixing can be seen as an index of communicative competence. Efik-English bilinguals prefer the English translation equivalent of these endocentric compound words in code-mixing basically for reasons of economy. These compound forms are often discussed in terms of semantic compositionally or what Katamba (1993) calls “semantic transparency”, that is; the meaning of the whole is predictable from the meaning of the parts. Apart from having equivalent referents for individual lexical items, forms that can express certain ideas, notions, concepts or technical vocabularies can easily be transferred from English to Efik. Forms like phoneme, morpheme, grapheme, syllable, and complimentary distribution are difficult, whose equivalent expressions cannot readily be found in most African languages. Economic factors plays out when code-mixing involves compound words. Example;

- Nyom ndika church (I want to go to church)
- Kubode freezer odo (Open that freezer)
- Domo television nor mi (Put on the television for me)

The coined Efik counterparts for these words are formed mostly by compounding and analogy; hence they do not give room for economy. In this way, the radius of preference of the English forms is expanded. From the above data, we found that the economy factor mostly plays out when code-mixing involves compound words.

The words Church, freezer and television, are formed by compounding in Efik as follows:

- Church – úfòk Ábàsi
- Freezer – Ekebe ntùkùbé
- Television – ékébé ndisè

The use of the English equivalents of these compound words by the Efik bilinguals in their code-mixed utterance counts as an appropriate statement or reply, and makes explicit the amount of information that is required. In this way, code-mixing can be seen as an index of communicative competence.

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### 3. Theoretical framework

This work presents a critical appraisal of the theory of verbal compounding proposed by Selkirk (1981).<sup>1</sup> On her (1981 :246) view, verbal compounds are "endocentric adjective or noun compounds whose head adjective or noun (respectively) is morphologically complex, having been derived from a verb, and whose nonhead constituent is interpreted as an argument of the head adjective or noun. Selkirk presents her theory of verbal compounding as part of a more general theory of compounding. The latter theory, in turn, is presented to illustrate basic assumptions of her still more comprehensive theory of word structure. For Selkirk (1981:248), then, the term "verbal compound" "simply designates a group of compounds classified according to the type of semantic relation one has between the head word and the non head word.

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### 4. Research Methodology

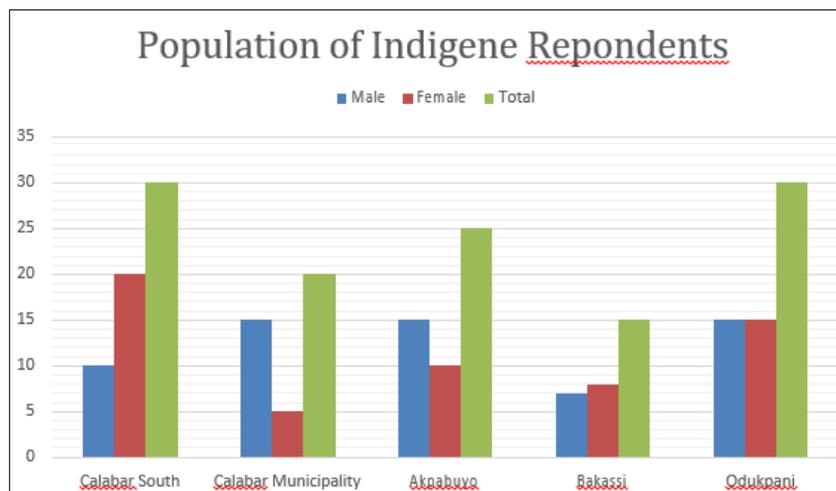
The survey research design adopted the descriptive survey design in determining “word compounding in Efik language”, of the Efik communities in Cross River State.

The design was considered appropriate because it will avail the researcher the opportunity to meet the respondents one on one (close contact). The survey method adopted in obtaining information made use of observations and interviews. The responses of the sampled respondents are used to validate the research questions. The study involved collecting data from a sample of the population of indigenes of the Efik communities. Hence, the finding of this study will depend solely on the opinion of the respondents.

This area of this study covers the geographical areas of 5 Efik speaking communities who speaks the same Efik in Cross river state. This language is spoken in Calabar South, Calabar municipality, Akpabuyo, Bakassi and Odukpani. All these Local governments are located in the southern senatorial district of Cross River State and it lies between 50 32 and 40 27 north of the equator and longitude 70 50 and 70 57 East of the meridian. Calabar south and Calabar municipality has the highest number of Efik native speakers. It is the capital of Cross River State which has a total of 18 Local Governments. The Efik speaking communities has an area of about 1129km2 and a population of approximately 12,540. The postal code of the Area is 540. The Efik language is spoken in these areas.

For the purpose of this research, different native speakers of the Efik language were selected to carry out this study. The selected informants included some respondent from each of the five (5) local governments. They were selected because of their proficiency and competence in the language, and have spent basically more than half of their lives in the area. They were native speakers who had a full understanding of what word compounding was all about after a brief explanation done by the researcher.

The selected respondents from each of the five local government areas can be seen distributed in the following chart.



**Figure 1** Population of Indigene repondents

A sample of the study in figure 1 made use of hundred and twenty correspondents from each of the five local government areas. In order to produce good and inferential data from a population of Efik native speakers who come from diverse Efik cultures, the selection of the speakers were based on random sampling technique, to compare and contrast the speakers. The administration of data was done through interviews with the native speakers of Efik language by the researcher herself.

#### 4.1. Instrument of data collection

The data were collected through and oral test and interview, the test were in two parts; Recognition test and Production test

The recognition test was made up of selected candidates to test whether they could understand word formation structure in Efik. The production test was mainly on the ability of these speakers to realize words as free morphemes and to realize words as they occur as a word compounding process. This was aimed at enabling the research draw conclusions on word compounding in Efik. The researcher also made use of random words from the Ibadan 400 wordlist which could serve as compound words in Efik.

#### 4.2. Method of data analysis

Data collected from the interview sessions are being arranged and analyzed according to the different meanings of those words and there meanings as compound words. It also analyzes the different word class those words take, as well as their semantic derivations and realizations.

## 5. Data presentation

Word compounding in Efik is expressed when two free morphemes with an identified meaning come together to form a new word or denote a single idea, whereby the compound word whether related or not, will take either the literal meaning of the morpheme or the figurative meaning of the morpheme.

In Efik language, different classes of words can be compounded together to bring about change in word class, or sometimes, the word class of the first morpheme can be retained for the entire compound word itself.

We can see this in the analysis below;

### 5.1. Data Analysis

Compounding of nouns + nouns to form a word in Efik

Here we will be looking at how two (2) nouns are compounded together to form a new word. Note: the compounding of two nouns often times result to another noun in Efik.

**Table 1** Compounded Nouns

S/N	Nouns	Nouns	
1	Ufuk (house)	Abasi (God)	= UfukAbasi (Church)
2	Ekebe (box)	Ndise (picture)	= Ekebendise (Television)
3	Ubom (canoe)	Ofum (air)	= Ubom-ofum (Aeroplane)
4	Eto (stick)	Nwed (book)	= Eto-nwed (Pen)
5	Ikpa (skin)	Eyong (up)	= Ikpa-eyong (sky)
6	Ekpat (bag)	Nwed (book)	= Ekpat-nwed (schoolbag)
7	Ikpa (leather)	Ukot (leg)	= Ikpa-ukot (shoe)
8	Mbuk (Story)	Mkpotibe (happening)	= Mbuk-mkpotibe (News)
9	Nwed (book)	Abasi (God)	= Nwed-Abasi (Bible)
10	Mkpasib (seed)	ibok (medicine)	= Mkpasib-ibok (Tablet/Drugs)
11	Mkpasib (seed)	Ikang (Gun)	= Mkpasib-ikang (Bullet)
12	Ufok (house)	Ibok (medicine)	= Ufok-ibok (Hospital)

Compounding of nouns and verbs to form a word in Efik

This denotes some nouns and verbs compounding to form a new word which is either a verb or a noun.

**Table 2** Compounded Vers & Nouns

S/N	Verbs	Nouns	
1	Tua (cry)	Eyet (tears)	= Tua-eyet (Crying)
2	Dia (eat)	Udia (food)	= Dia-Udia (eating)
3	Quo (sing)	Iquo (song)	= Quo-iquo (Singsong)
4	Sangha (Walk)	Sung (calm)	= Sangha-sung (Goodbye)
5	Feghe (run)	Itok (race)	= Feghe-Itok (run or running)
6	Okud (see)	Iso (face)	= Okudiso (Mirror)

### 5.2. Compounding of Adverbs to form a word in Efik.

Most adverbs in Efik come about as a result of Reduplication of either a noun, a verb or an adjective, as seen in the example below;

- Noun: Ediye (Beauty)
- Adverb: Ediye-ediye (Beautifully)
- Verbs: Mbre (Play)
- Adverb: Mbre-Mbre (Playfully)
- Adjective: Idiok (bad)
- Adverb: Idiok-Idiok (badly)
- Adjective: Usop (quick)
- Adverb: Usop-usop (quickly)

### 5.3. Semantic Derivation Of Compounded Words In Efik

Another result of the study is presented below showing examples of semantic derivation of word compounding in Efik. The analysis shows how these words have different meanings of their own before the morphological process of compounding took place to identify a different meaning.

**Table 3** Semantic Derivation of Compounded words in Efik

S/N	Morphemes at their literal meaning			Compound words in Efik	English meanings of compound words	Figurative of Efik
1.	Ufok (house)	Nwed (book)	=	Ufok-nwed	School	
2.	Okud (see)	Iso (face)	=	Okudiso	Mirror	
3.	Ufuk (cover)	Eyo (sun)	=	Ufukeyo	Umbrella	
4.	Ofong (cloth)	Isin (waist)	=	Ofong-isin	Wrapper	
5.	Ufok (house)	Abasi (God)	=	UfokAbasi	Church	
6.	Okpo (rubber)	Mmong (water)	=	Okpommong	Bucket	
7.	Eto (stick)	Nwed (book)	=	Eto-nwed	Pen	
8	Nda (stand)	Eyo (sun)	=	Nda-eyo	Dry-season	
9	Ikpa (skin)	Eyong (up)	=	Ikpa-eyong	Sky	
10	Eka (mother)	Ebe (husband)	=	Eka-ebe	Mother in-law	
11	Ikpa (leather)	Ukot (leg)	=	Ikpa-ukot	Shoe	
12.	Ufad (cut)	Mkpo (things)	=	Ufadmkpo	Scissors	
13	Ufok (house)	Ibok (medicine)	=	Ufokibok	Hospital	
14	Ekebe (box)	Ndise (show)	=	Ekebe-ndise	Television	
15	Ekebe (box)	Ntugube (cold vapour)	=	Ekebe-ntugube	Refrigerator	
16	Uduk (robe)	Ikot (bush)	=	Uduk-ikot	snake	
17	Mkpaga (botton)	Isin (waist)	=	Mkpaga-isin	Belt	
18	Nwed (book)	Abasi (God)	=	Nwed-Abasi	Bible	
19	Utwen (shine)	Ikang (fire or light)	=	Utwen-ikang	Lantern	
20	Mkpasip (seed)	Ibok (medicine)	=	Mkpasib-ibok	Drugs	

21	Mbuk (story)	Mkpontibe(happenings)	=	Mbuk-Mkpontibe	News
22	Ubom (canoe)	Ofum (air)	=	ubomofum	Aeroplane
23	Nkeng (scatter)	Inua (mouth)	=	Nkeng-inua	Gossiping
34	Ekebe (box)	Okpo (corpse)	=	Ekebe-okpo	Casket
35	Usen (day)	Ubok (hand)	=	Usen-ubok	Morning

## 6. Discussion of Findings

In the examples as seen in the table on semantic derivations on Efik compound words, it shows that some formation of words in Efik based on compounding do not take the literal meaning of the morpheme, though they may be closely related. Morphological conversion of word was noticed during the course of this study, and it showed that some words as free morphemes are likely to have more than one meaning, and only one of its meanings is used in word compounding.

Another form of word compounding will be seen below. In this case, some morphemes have literal meaning of their own, whereby even though they undergo compounding, they still maintain their meaning in that context, resulting to semantic realization in compounded words in Efik language. Some of them are affixes coming together to form a word.

Compounding in Efik is also expressed, when two morphemes closely related to each other are used to form a new word. Let's take a look at these in form of „Semantic realized compound words.

### 6.1. Semantic Realization In Compounded Words In Efik

Examples of word compounding with technical literal meaning or closely related literal meaning include:

- Awa-mbre - Playground
- Mkpo-idet - hairclip
- Nkanika-ubok - wristwatch
- Mmong-edim - rainwater
- Nsad-iyak - dryfish
- Ndek-obu - crayfish
- Uwem-eyo - afternoon
- Mkpu-usen - dawn
- Eso-efere - cooking pot
- Ukwo-edim - rainy-season
- Ata-adan - palm oil
- Adan-mmansang - groundnut oil
- Isip-eyop - palm kernel
- Mkpagha-ofong - botton
- Abia-uman - gynecologist
- Abia-bon - needle
- Okpo-owo - corpse
- Akparawa - gentleman
- Nkaiferi - young lady
- Abang-mmong - water pot

Sometimes, just as word compounding is in English, so it is Efik. For instance, when two meaningful words come together to form a new word or represent an idea, often times, this compounding are usually in the noun class and they could be written with a hyphen (-) in between the two words to indicate that the words are joined together.

In conclusion, from the above analysis, it is asserted that word compounding in Efik is of two kinds, the semantic derived words and the semantic realized word. Also, word compounding in Efik depicts that there are words that take the literal meaning of the morpheme when undergoing word compounding, and there are words that does not take the literal meaning, but takes the figurative meaning when undergoing word compounding.

## 7. Conclusion

Many compounds have a special order or combination of their constituents. Compounds are also often confused with phraseologisms. These are idiomatic and lexicalized word groups that have a similar form like compounds. But again, the meaning helps to distinguish between both. It is not possible to form a compound by placing any lexical item in front of another. The relation between the items brought together in compounding must be reasonable. A compound is composed of a determining and a determined part. “The determinant (modifier) generally precedes the determinatum (Head). In the Efik language, there exist a vast number of words which were produced by compound.

In conclusion, compound is the formation of a new lexeme by adjoining two or more lexemes. A compound denotes a single new idea rather than the combination of two ideas suggested by the original words, i.e the meaning of the compound words in Efik is not a pure sum total of the meaning of its constituents. Most of the times, coined Efik counterparts of words are formed mostly by compounding and analogy. The use of English equivalents for compound words by the Efik-English bilinguals in their code-mixing utterance counts as an appropriate statement or reply, and makes explicit the amount of information that is required. It is observed that Efik employs three formation processes in deriving compound words. These are affixation, reduplication and nominal compounding. One quality of compounding is based on the meaning they convey.

Based on the findings of the study and having realized the importance of Word compounding in Efik as well as how it is represented in English, the following recommendations were made for educational planners, teachers and students of Linguistics towards improving the internal and external formation of words in Efik language which can also serve as a guide to study how words are formed in other languages across the globe:

- The need for continuous research into the problems encountered during word compounding in Efik language. This is because it will enable researchers and scholars identify if truly the coming together of words is a morphological process
- Distinctions should be drawn between morphology and syntax when dealing with word compounding, as it could be mistaken for another, where a short phrase is seen as a compound word.
- Since Efik compounds vary in their orthography, more words can be constructed out of more than two constituents and could be of great benefit to the Efik lexicon.
- Revising an orthography is essential as it is seen that language changes as time goes on, and so does the formation of word. Since new word are being anglicized every now and then, their morphological process should be put in high consideration, to avoid breaking phonotactic rules of a language.
- A study into word conversion should be carried out, to fully understand the different meanings of this compound word, especially in Efik, as it is seen that some words have more than one meaning, and one of it meanings is applied in compounding of words.

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## Compliance with ethical standards

### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

The authors declared that there is no conflict of interest.

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