

# Compounding in Igbo Community Names: The Case of Mbase Community Names

**Ngozi Ochulo**

*Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike  
ngoochulo@yahoo.com*

## Abstract

Community and place names are cultural and linguistic artefacts which can be studied and preserved. This study focuses on compounding in Igbo community names, using data from Mbase dialect of the Igbo language spoken in Imo State, Nigeria. The study highlights the productivity of compounding as a morphological process in deriving Mbase community names and also sheds light on the etymology of the village names. The study uses a descriptive approach in analyzing the data based on toponomastics and anthroponomastics which are two aspects of onomastics. Data for the research were generated mainly through oral interview and existing written sources. It is observed that two or more words are combined to form the community names. The syntactic ordering of the place names is head-initial and right branching with very few exceptions. Some of the community names are etymologically traceable to events, professions, market days and names of deities which reflect the cultural identities of the people. It is also observed that most of the names originated as male forenames. In this way, the names of the forefathers are immortalized for posterity. It is noted however, that names of women were not used in naming the communities. This reflects the patriarchal nature of the Igbo society. The study further recommends a comprehensive and extensive documentation of the community names in Mbase for posterity.

**Keywords:** morphology, semantics, compounding, Mbase, community

## 1. Introduction

The definition of Morphology as the study of internal structure of words has two very different senses. On the one hand, they are made up of sequences of sounds, that is, they have internal phonological structure. For example, the English word 'boys' [bɔɪz] has four sounds or phonological segments. The words *goats* and *fowls* share not only phonological segment (the final [s]), but also a semantic component; they are all animals. In a morphological analysis according to Haspelmath and Sims (2010), the final[s] of *goats* and *fowls* expresses plural meaning when it occurs at the end of a noun. But the final[s] in *news* does not express plurality.

Following the analysis above, morphological analysis typically consists of the identification of parts of words or better technically, constituents of words. Morphological patterns can be concatenative or non-concatenative. Concatenative morphology deals with affixation and compounding while other processes are non-concatenative. Affixation is the process of adding a morpheme – or affix – to a word to create either a different form of that word or a new word with a different meaning (Norquist, 2018). The thrust of this paper is on compounding.

## 1.1 Compounding

Compounding is another concatenation pattern of word formation. It is a morphological process of combining two or more words to form a new word. For example:

1. rain + coat → raincoat
2. heart + beat → heartbeat

Compounding, according to Norquist (2018), is the process of combining two words (free morphemes) to create a new word. A compound therefore is a complex lexeme combining two or more base lexemes or compound members (Haspelmath & Sims, 2010). The new word is known as a compound word. Compounds can be written as a single word, for example, bitterleaf, pickpocket or as two words separated by a hyphen such as bad-tempered, long-term; or two separate words such as summer school, water bottle, hit man and so on. Compounding may involve the combination of string of words equivalent to the sentence to form compounds (Aziza & Utulu, 2018, P. 25). They further note that the “combinations may involve a noun with another noun, a verb with another verb, a noun with an adjective and so on” (p.25). English allows several types of combinations of different word-classes (N, Adj, V) but not all such combinations are possible (Haspelmath & Sims, 2010). For example,

3. N + N Earring (Ear N + ring N)
4. Adj + N Whitehouse (white Adj + house N)
5. V + N Drawbacks (draw V + backs N)
6. N + V backwash (back N + wash V)
7. Adj + Adj bitter-sweet (bitter Adj + sweet Adj)

Igbo also allows free combination of different word classes. In essence, the two different words that form the compound word may belong to different parts of speech.

## 1.2 Types of Compounding

There are different forms of compounding among which include root compounds or primary compounds and synthetic compounds. “A root compound is a compound construction in which the head element is not derived from a verb. Root compounds are made up of free morphemes” (Norquist, 2017). He gives the examples of hairnet or mosquito net (Noun-Noun compounds). He further observes that the right hand noun is not derived from a verb. On the other hand, “a synthetic compound is a type of compound that parallels a verbal construction, with the head derived from a verb and the other element functioning as an object (Norquist, 2018). He lists the following examples:

- |     |                                     |     |                               |
|-----|-------------------------------------|-----|-------------------------------|
| 8a. | house + keep-ing<br>N + verb-ing    | 9a. | dish + wash-er<br>N + verb-er |
| 8b. | city + plan-(n)ing<br>N + Verb- ing | 9b. | taxi + driv-er<br>N + verb-er |

Spencer (1991) defines a synthetic compound as a “compound whose head is derived by affixation from a verb”. He gave the example of *truck driver* in which *truck* is an argument of the verb or stem *driver*. Another type of compounds are endocentric and exocentric compounds. Aronoff and Fuderman (2011), define an endocentric compound as “one that has a head. The head expresses the core meaning of the compound and it belongs to the same lexical category as the compound as a whole” (p. 114). They gave the example of *goldfish*, where ‘*fish*’ is the head

and determines both the meaning and the lexical category (Noun) of the entire compound. On the other hand, exocentric compounds are those “compounds whose lexical category or meaning are not determinable from the head” (Aronoff & Fuderman, 2011, p. 114). According to them *figurehead* is an exocentric compound because “it is not a type of head” and the lexical category is not determined from the head. An exocentric compound lacks a clear head.

### 1.3 The Head

By way of definition, a head is a word in a syntactic construction or a morpheme in a morphological construction that determines the grammatical function or meaning of the construction as a whole (Aronoff & Fuderman, 2011, p. 264). Ndimele (1992, p. 5) stresses that a head is “concerned with the relative position of the head of a construction vis-à-vis its complement or specifier”. The head parameter according to Ndimele (1992, p.5) “is a word order parameter”. Different languages have different word orders in constructions. Some languages can be head initial and complement final or head final and complement initial. For instance, the head of a compound noun *football* is *ball* since a *football* is a *ball*, not a *foot*. *Foot* modifies the head and therefore it is dependent on the head. *Foot* is the complement of *ball*. In this case, the compound word is right headed. Heads are important to establish the direction of branching. Head initial phrases are right branching, head final phrases are left branching and head-medial phrases combine left and right branching. “The asymmetry between left branching condition (LBC) and right branching condition (RBC) rests essentially on the binary distinction between head final and head initial languages (Ndimele 1992, p.148).

### 1.4 Literature Review

This section reviews some works on compounding. Aziza & Utulu (2018) studied compounding in Ewulu and Urhobo languages and attempts to explore the various procedures by which both languages adopt in deriving compounds. Ewulu and Urhobo are minority languages spoken in the southern and northern parts of Delta State, Nigeria, respectively.

The analysis of the result revealed that most compounds in the two languages are derived by combining two free morphemes either from the same or different grammatical classes. Content words such as nouns, verbs, adjectives were largely used to form compounds in both languages. In the analysis, noun – noun compounds function as full words of their own. In Ewulu, nominal compounds are derived by combining nouns with adjectives. According to them, such “a combination may describe a state that portrays emotions, positive or negative feelings. Aziza & Utulu (2018) gave the following examples:

Isi + ike isiike  
 N Adj.  
 Head + hard stubbornness

enya + ukwu enyaukwu  
 N Adj.  
 eye + big greed

In both languages, forenames and numerals are formed through compounding. These could be combination of several words ranging from three to four words. The paper reveals that Ewulu and Urhobo, though two different Nigerian languages, exploit nearly the same morphological

patterns of compounding to create new words for the purpose of expanding the vocabulary. The paper concludes by recommending that the indigenous African/Nigerian languages particularly the small ones should be rigorously researched to pave way for their continuous description and documentation. Beur & Renouf (2001) did a study of word formation patterns in words from a large corpus of British Newspaper English. The study considers new compound formations. The paper examines the headedness rule and its exceptions. Beur & Renouf (2001) note that one of the basic principles of compounding in English is that English compounds are right headed. In essence, English is a head initial language. They gave an example of god child, in which the right hand element is child. From the analysis, it is a child and not a type of god. *God* modifies *child* and the two words are in the same grammatical category.

However, there are exceptions provided by exocentric compounds. Some phrasal items are overtly left headed, for instance, lady-in-waiting, mother-in-law. They mark plural on the first element. Again the compounds pass-by and passer-by are also left headed because they take inflections on the left hand element and are hyponyms of their left hand element (Beur & Renouf, 2001). Mmadike, Eme & Mbagwu (2018) studied Noun – Noun compounds in the Igbo language based on the conceptual blending theory. The study does not depend on the juxtaposition of nouns to form a new word; rather it relies on the integration of the conceptual structures provided by the mental spaces in the input structures. The conceptual structures from the input spaces are selectively projected into the blended space where they undergo the processes of composition, completion and elaboration to derive an emergent structure which constitutes the N – N compounds (Mmadike *et al*, 2018).

Maduagwu (2010) studied the morphology and semantics of personal names in the Ogbahu dialect of Igbo. The research reveals that Igbo personal names consist of both underived and derived lexical items, especially compound names. The study also discovered that personal names are not just labels for identification rather they constitute a special class of noun compounds, derived by a concatenation of words of at least two components. The names have socio-cultural and semantic implications.

The review indicates that most compounds are formed from content words such as nouns, verbs and adjectives. Such compound words may belong to the same word class or different word classes. The review further reveals that although English compounds are right headed, there are also left headed constructions in English. Mmadike, Eme & Mbagwu adopted the conceptual blending approach in accounting for N+N compounds in the Igbo language. The review also showed that some compound names are forenames and they have cultural and semantic implications.

No field of language study is indispensable. The interface of levels of language study is evidenced between morphology and semantics. A word form for example, ‘teach’ is a sequence of sounds that expresses the combination of a lexeme and of grammatical meanings (or grammatical functions) appropriate to that lexeme. In essence, no detailed morphological analysis is concluded without reference to meaning. Such meanings are overtly or covertly expressed. Semantics is a branch of linguistic study that deals with meaning. Saeed (2003) defines Semantics as “the study of meanings of words and sentences” (p.3).

Although some works have been done on compounding in the Igbo Language (Oha, 2015, Aziza & Utulu, 2018, Mmadike, Eme & Mbagwu, 2018, Mba, 2019, etc), no work known to the researcher has examined compounding and meanings of place names in the Mbaise community. Most authors wrote on the history of Mbaise and the communities that make up Mbaise village (Osuji 2013, Jamike 2013 etc). The present study examines the nexus between morphological and semantic processes involved in compounding of certain names of communities in Mbaise, Imo State, Nigeria. This work therefore aims at examining the productivity of compounding as a morphological process in certain names of villages and communities in Mbaise town, bearing in mind the fact that every name has an origin (history). This is for posterity, so that the children and the unborn generation can understand the etymology and meaning of those names. Furthermore, the documentation of the etymology of those names is very sparse. This work is to add to what has been done already. The research is useful to lexicologist and toponymists (experts that study meanings, structure, origin and area of distribution) in building a dictionary of Mbaise place names. Hence the research is timely.

## **2. Historical and Geo-political Background of Mbaise Town**

Mbaise is an Igboland found in the South Eastern part of Nigeria. The language spoken at Mbaise is the Mbaise dialect of the Igbo language. The population of Mbaise is 611,204 people as at 2006 census (Real Jamike, 2013). The name Mbaise was suggested by Mr. JamikeIwunna in 1946 (Wikipedia). Mbaise was derived from five clans, namely, Agbaja, Ahiara, Ekwereazu, Ezinihitte and OkeUvuru (Osuji, 2013). Mbaise is made up of three Local Government Areas which are Ahiazu (derived from merging Ahiara and Ekwereazu, for administrative convenience), Aboh and Ezinihitte. The three local government areas make up 404km<sup>2</sup>, as follows – Ahiazu 111km<sup>2</sup>, Aboh 185km<sup>2</sup> and Ezinihitte 108km<sup>2</sup>. Agbaja is made up of five communities. Ahiara is historically called Ahiarafoiri which means Ahiara of ten scepters. Each scepter represents a village in Ahiara. It is divided into two sections, namely Ihitte and Ikenga. Each of them consists of five villages, giving a total of ten villages. Ekwerezu has six communities. Ezinihitte is made up of 13 communities while Oke-Uvuru consists of 4 communities (Source: Interview). At the Local Government level, Ahiazu is made up of 14 communities, Abo, 29 autonomous communities and Ezinihitte 13 communities. As indicated earlier, each of them has other communities under them (Wikipedia).

## **3. Theoretical Consideration**

The work is based on descriptivist approach to language study using data from Mbaise community names, Imo State, Nigeria, West Africa. The theoretical consideration is Anthoponomastics and Toponomastics. Onomastics is the study of names generally. The branch of Onomastics that studies personal names is called Anthoponomastics while the other aspect that focuses on place names - their meanings, origin, structure and area of distribution is known as Toponomastics. The theory (Onomasiology) was propounded by Milos Dokulil in 1962 and further developed in 1997 (Stekauer, 2019). This research adopts both Anthoponomastics and Toponomastics. The reason is that many place names are derived from personal names. Place names are indigenous and tied to a particular area (Franceschini). Toponymy is an important research tool in historical lexicology, dialectology and etymology (Encyclopaedia, 1979). It helps to locate the former cultural and economic centres and trade routes (Encyclopaedia, 1979). Place names are often maintained with great stubbornness inspite of a change of the population. They do not disappear with such a change. Although their meanings may not be understood, they are kept and integrated into the new language and they continue to exist just like fossils

(Franceschini, n.d). Many of them are difficult to analyse due to old age. Based on this framework, the study examines the etymology (meaning and origin) of Igbo community names, using data from Mbaise community place names. The forenames used in naming some of the villages reflect the cultural values of the people. The research using the descriptive approach, examines the system of compounding of the community names.

#### 4. Methodology

Data were collected through oral interview of some Mbaise indigenes, and secondary data sources. The town, Mbaise, has been chosen for this study because it is in the heart of Igboland, with several villages and communities, whose names are compounded. The researcher embarked on a trip to the villages and communities to interview the natives. Field notes were taken which formed most of the data. The data collected were analysed qualitatively. Morphological properties of compounds and their semantic interpretations were carried out. The etymology of the compounds was also analysed.

#### 5. Compounding of Mbaise Community Names

The compound names of villages and communities observed in Mbaise town are presented below. Few names of some communities are not compounded such as Ife, Itu, Udo (under Ezinihitte). These communities that do not bear compound names are not within the focus of the present study. The meaning of each town is translated literally and contextually. The compounds are grouped into endocentric and exocentric compounds following Aronoff & Fudeman (2011) classification. An endocentric compound has a head and the head expresses the core meaning of the compound. It belongs to the same lexical category of the compound. An exocentric compound is that compound whose lexical category or meaning is not determined from the head (Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011). English language is right headed and left branching, with some exceptions while Igbo is mostly left headed (head initial) and right branching. Because Igbo is an SVO (Subject, Verb, Object) and head initial language, genitives quantifiers, demonstratives and some adjectives follow the noun. Some adjectives precede the noun (Gutman & Avanzati, 2013). In the syntactic ordering of Mbaise place names, the compounds are head initial and right branching with very few exceptions, as seen in data (20), (24), (34) and (38). The compounds are formed using two or more morphemes with the exception of (31) that has five morphemes because names of two villages were combined to form the compound. Tonal changes are also observed in some of the morphemes when they become compounds. The analysis is done below.

##### 5.1 Endocentric Compounds

- |     |   |  |
|-----|---|--|
| 10  | Ókwú+àtó → Ókwúātō<br>N + N<br>Tripod+ three stand                | ‘Symbolizing three brothers’           |
| 11. | Ényì+ ògwùgwù → Ényī+ ògwùgwù<br>N + N<br>Friend + god (domicile) | ‘Friend of a deity called<br>‘Ogwugwu’ |
| 12. | Úmù + óhía + ágū → Úmùóhíágū<br>Children + bush + lion            | ‘Children of lion’s bush’              |

In the data 10- 11, some processes can be identified. First, we notice the metaphorical use of *ókwú* (dialectal variation, meaning *tripod*). *Ókwúno* longer has any link to *tripod stand* which is normally a three legged stand used for cooking. *Okwu* (tripod) is the head of that phrase while *ato* (three) is the complement. The tones in *ato* change from low, high to step tone when it became a compound word – *Ókwúātō*. The explicit meaning is three *brothers* that agree with each other. There is also disharmony in the formation of the word *Ókwúātō*. [o] and [u] are -ATR while [ɔ] is +ATR (mixed

set of vowels). Vowel harmony is a process where a vowel harmonizes with another vowel it occurs with, which may be distant to it (Udoh, 2012, p. 144). Where a vowel does not harmonize with another vowel it occurs with, then there is disharmony. One can also observe reduplication and prefixation in (11) as illustrated below:

ò- gwùgwù  
 prefixation+ reduplication

*Enyi* is the head of the compound. In (11), there is vowel assimilation. Vowel assimilation refers to the influence of one segment on another, such that the second sound becomes more like the other (Udoh, 2012, p. 143). Following this definition, *Úmùóhíagū* becomes *Úmùóhíágū* in pronunciation. The compound words in (10 - 12) are from the same grammatical class, Noun. The name, *Úmùóhíágū*, is also historical depicting an event. It was alleged that a lion was seen in the bush close to the community and that earned the inhabitants of that area the name *Úmùóhíágū* (meaning children of the lion's bush). (12) appears to be a head medial phrase, *ohia* (bush) is the head while *umu* and *agu* are the specifiers or complements.

- |     |   |                                      |
|-----|---|--------------------------------------|
| 13. | + ‘village of darkness’<br>village + night/darkness |                                      |
| 14. | Ágū+nà + ÉzèÁgúnà + Ézè<br>N conj N                 | ‘lion and king’                      |
| 15. | Úmù + nà + áamáÚmùnámā<br>N prep N                  | ‘children in front of the community’ |

In (13) *obodo* (village or nation) is the head of the phrase while *ujichi* (darkness is the complement or specifier. The name (land of darkness), is not a positive name. Darkness represents evil. There is something in a name. The compound word in (13) is from different grammatical class – N + Adj. To derive (14), there is an infixation of a conjunction *nà* (meaning and) in between two nouns *Agu... eze*. The compound is formed from two forenames, namely *Úmùágū* and *Úmùèzè* (children of Agu and children of Eze). In (15), the *na* in *Úmùnámā* (Children in front of the community) does not appear to be a conjunction rather it is a preposition; *úmù+ námā* derived by a process of deletion. *Umu* (children) is the head of the phrase while *ama* (compound) is the complement. Deletion is the omission of sound segments in certain environments in connected speech. It is also sometimes referred to as *elision* (Crystal, 1991: 119, as cited by Udoh, 2012, p133).

16. Èzí+ Údó                      Èzíūdō                      ‘compound of peace’  
           N                      Adj  
           compound+ peace
- 17    Chókó + nà + ézè    Chókónàézè                      ‘... and king’  
           N + Conj + N

In (16), the compound is formed using two different grammatical classes – N Adj. The head of the construction is *Ezi* (compound) while the complement is *udo* (peace). In (17) there is a conjunction *na* linking the two nouns *choko... eze*. The compound word is formed from two fore names *Umuchoko* and *Umueze*. The word *Choko* appears to have lost meaning due to old age. The rule of vowel harmony is obeyed in (16 – 17) apart from the conjunction.

- 18    Úmù +é zèÚmūézè                      ‘children of king’  
           N                      N
- 19    Mpàm + ísí + èké mpàm Ísíēkē                      ‘An animal that is head of Eke market’  
           N            N    N  
           Animal + head + market

18 - 19 are all NN compounds. Disharmony is observed in all the compounds (that is, mixture of vowels from different vowel groups). The vowels in the following words: *eze*, *isi* and *eke* are all -ATR while the vowels in *úmù*, *mpàm* are from +ATR group. Item (18) is a fore name derived from ‘the children of Eze’. The head is *Umu*, the complement is *Eze*. In (19) ‘mpam’ is deduced to be a foolish animal. ‘Èké is one of the Igbo market days. The use of names of market days in the formation of place names in Mbaise shows the cultural value of the market days in Igbo land.

20. Óké – Ùvùrù                      Óké – Ùvùrù                      ‘A male tree’  
           N            N  
           Male + tree
21. Àlà + órjī                      Lórjī                      ‘Land of kolanut’  
           N            N  
           Land + kolanut
22. Ámá + úzū                      Ámúzū                      ‘Community of blacksmith’  
           N            N  
           community + blacksmith
23. Ámá + íshī                      Ámíshī                      ‘Community of six’  
           N            N  
           community + Numeral
24.    Ndí + ìgbò                      Ndígbò ‘Igbo people’  
           N            N  
           People + Igbo

In (20), *Ùvùrù* (tree) is the head, *Óké* (male) is the complement. This is an exception to the right branching of Igbo phrasal pattern. In examining the etymology (origin and history) of the village names, it has been observed that most of the names are forenames. For instance, *Óké –Ùvùrùin* (20) (meaning male tree) gave birth to Uvuru, Mbutu, Lorji, Amuzu. Then Uvuru in turn gave birth to Ogbor, Egbelu, Amaishii, Ndigbo and Imee (children of imee formed Umuimee), Ogbor gave birth to Eke Ugo (Umuekeugo), Osike (Umuosike), Naru (Umunaru) and Ocham (Umuocham) and so on. These are all names of villages and communities in Mbaise. Some of them were not presented because either they are not compound words, which is beyond the focus of this work or their meanings have been lost due to old age. By naming some of the villages after forenames, the names of the fore fathers are preserved (immortalized) for future generation. It was noticed that no community was named after a woman. The assumption is that generations are produced through men and not women, even in the bible. It also shows the patriarchal culture of the Igbo people.

In (21) *ala* (land) is the head, *oji* (kolanut) is the complement. There is the process of clipping. Clipping is the word formation process in which a word is reduced or shortened without changing the meaning of the word (Kosur, 2019). In view of the above definition, Lorji is a clipped word, derived from *Ala orji* (land of kolanut). The word is also anglicized in its spelling. Igbo words do not permit consonant clustering (CCC) rather the structure is often vowel consonant vowel (VCV). The correct spelling should have been *oji* (VCV). In (22), *Ama* (community) is the head *uzu* (blacksmith) is the complement. The compound reflects regressive vowel assimilation. This is when a speech sound affects the sound preceding it or the first segment sound changes to become like the second. In the compound *Ama + uzu*, [a] changes to become like [u], giving rise to *Amuzu*. The name *Amuzu* also has a historical background. It was believed that migrants from Awka in Anambra State, Nigeria, settled among the inhabitants and taught them blacksmithing (source: oral interview) and that gave them that name. In (23), *Ama* is the head, while *ishii* (dialectal variation for six) is the complement. Six communities came together and formed a community. In (24), *Igbo* is the head. *Ndi* is the plural marker. Igbo language does not mark plural like English. Igbo makes use of *ndi* or *umu* to indicate plurality.

- |     |  |   |                      |                                  |
|-----|--|---|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| 25. | <i>Ámá + óhúrū</i><br>N     Adj<br>community + new                       | → | <i>Ámóhúrū</i>       | ‘New community’                  |
| 26. | <i>Ézí + àlà</i><br>Adj N<br>Good + Land                                 | → | <i>Ézíàlà</i>        | ‘Good land’                      |
| 27. | <i>Ngùrú + nwá + àfòr</i><br>N        N     N<br>child + afo market      | → | <i>Ngùrú Nwéàfòr</i> | ‘Ngùrú child of<br>Àfò market’   |
| 28. | <i>Ama + asaa + uvuru</i><br>N        N     N<br>compound + seven + tree | → | <i>Amasaa Uvuru</i>  | ‘Seven communities of a<br>tree’ |

29. Ibo + etiti → Ibo etiti ‘Middle door’  
 N Adj  
 Door + middle
30. Umu + nne + ato → Umunneato ‘Three siblings’  
 N N N  
 Children + mother + three
31. Ama + ishii + ndi + Igbo + Uvuru → Amaishii ndi Igbo Uvuru ‘Six communities of Igbo people of (a) ‘tree’  
 N Nominal N N
32. Umu + amadi → Umuamadi ‘Children of god of thunder’  
 N N  
 children god of thunder

In (25), *Ama* is the head, *ohuru* (new) is the complement. There is regressive assimilation. The second [a] changes to become [ɔ], giving Amohuru. In (26) *ala* is the head of the construction, *ezi* (good) is the complement. The phrase is head final and left branching which is also an exception to Igbo syntactic ordering. (27) indicates the use of a market day *afo* to form a compound – *Nguru nweafor*. The spelling is also anglicized as [r] is added to *afo*. Igbo words do not end in consonants except they are syllabic nasals- [m] and [n]. *Ama* is the head in (28). *Asaa* (seven) and *uvuru* (tree) are the complement. The construction is head initial and right branching. In (30), one can observe literally, the use of *three siblings* to form a compound name. The phrase is head initial and right branching. In (31) two semantic heads namely *ama* (community) and *Igbo* (people) are observed. In (32), the word *amadi* was deduced to be the short form of *Amadioha* (God of thunder). The formation of village names using the names of certain gods reflects the traditional Igbo belief in these deities.

33. Afor + Oru → Afor – Oru ‘Servant of Afo market’  
 N N  
 Afo market + servant
34. Umu + Opara → Umuopara ‘Children of first son’  
 N N  
 children + first son
35. Umu + dike → Umudike ‘Strong children’  
 N Adj  
 children + strong
36. Umu + ele + na + Eze + ala → Umuelena ezeala ‘Children of antelope and king of the land’  
 N N Conj N N  
 Children+Antelope+and+king+land

In (33), *oru* (servant) is the head while *afor* is the complement. It is head final and left branching. (33) also shows the loyalty of the people to their market days. Here the name depicts servants of afo market. For (34 and 35), *Umu* (children) is the head while *opara* (first son) and *dike* (strong) respectively function as the complement. Forenames were combined to form the compound name. The rule of vowel harmony is not obeyed in (33). The rule of vowel harmony is obeyed in (34). There is disharmony in (35) and (36).

37.           Ama + umara   → Amumara   ‘The community of paddlers’  
               N       V  
               Community + paddle

38.           Nna + mere    Nnamere   →   ‘Father did it’  
               N       V  
               Father + did

39.           Okpo + nkume → Okponkume   ‘Stone breakers’ or ‘stone carvers’  
               N       N

In (37), *Ama* (community) is the head of the construction, *umara* (paddle) is the complement. In (38), *nna* (father) is the head, *mere* (did) is the complement. In (39), *nkume* (stone) is the head, *okpo* (the breaker) is the complement. (39) has an agentive marker which shows the performer of an action (37) and (39) have historical background. The natives of Amumara live close to Imo River. As a result, they paddle canoes and that gave them the name *Amaumara* (compound of paddlers). In (39), the occupation of the inhabitants is stone breaking. The name of the village is therefore derived from their occupation.

## 5.2 Exocentric compounds

The second classification of compounds following Aronoff & Fudeman (2011) is the exocentric compound. In an exocentric compound, the meaning is not determined from the head. The example is as shown below:

40.           Óbù + Óhíá   → Óbòhíá           ‘Heart of bush’  
               N       N  
               Heart + bush

The head of the phrase in (40) is *Óbù* (dialectal variation, meaning heart). While the complement is *Óhíá*. It is an exocentric compound because *Óbù* (heart) is not a type of community neither is *Óhíá* (bush). Vowel assimilation is also observed in (40), [u] is assimilated by [ɔ].

From the data generally, it is observed that only a very small number of prepositions form compounds. Most of the compound words are derived from nouns. The data also illustrate that many of the compound names of Mbaïse villages are endocentric compounds. Only *Óbù + Óhíá* *Óbòhíá* is identified as an exocentric compound. The findings in this study corroborate the result of some other studies such as Aziza & Utulu (2018) and Maduagwu (2010). Aziza & Utulu (2018), for instance note that the morphemes that form the compound words are mostly content words from different word classes. This is in line with the finding of this research. Maduagwu (2010) discovered that names are not just labels; they have socio-cultural and semantic

implications. From the findings of this study, the composition of the names reflects the cultural values of the Mbaise people.

## 6. Conclusion

This study has examined the productivity of compounding as a morphological process in the formation of Mbaise community names. The research was also done to reveal the etymology of those village names. The compound names were classified into endocentric and exocentric compounds following Aronoff & Fudeman (2011). The study revealed that the compound names of villages in Mbaise are more of endocentric compounds than exocentric compounds. The syntactic ordering of Mbaise place names is head initial and right branching. The research also revealed that words from different parts of speech particularly content words are combined to derive the compound names of the villages. Some names are formed from events and professions of the inhabitants. Again, the four market days in Igbo land, namely: Eke, Orié, Afor and Nkwo are integral parts of the formation of the village names. This brings to the fore, the cultural value of the market days in Igbo land. Names of some gods were also used in forming compounds to indicate their belief in these gods.

On the etymology of the community names, the study revealed that many of them are male fore names. This helps in the preservation of the names of the forefathers. In this way, the children and the future generation will understand that those men existed in the past. It was also observed that only names of men are used in naming communities. Names of women are not included. According to some villagers, generations are produced through men. It also shows the patriarchal culture of the Igbo people; women are less important in the Igbo society.

We recommend further documentation of the morphological processes and etymology of the community names and villages in Mbaise for posterity. We also recommend a change of some negative names to positive ones, given the general belief in Igbo that negative names have negative effect on their bearers.

## References

- Aronoff, M. and Fudeman, K. (2011). *What is morphology?*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., UK: Wiley – Blackwell, pp. 2, 47.
- Aziza, R. O. and Utulu, C. (2018). Compounding in Ewulu and Urhobo In: *International Journal of research in humanities and social studies*, 5, 3. Pp. 24 – 30.
- Bauer, L. & Renouf, A. (2001). A Corpus based study of compounding in English. Available at <https://www.researchgate.net.2497>. Retrieved June 5 2019.
- Guillou, L. and Fraser, A. (2016). Morphological patterns: concatenative vs non concatenative Available at [www.cis.uni-muenchen.de/2fraser](http://www.cis.uni-muenchen.de/2fraser). Retrieved 2 March 2019.
- Franceschini, L.(nd). Toponomastics.. Retrieved May 2 2019.
- Haspelmath, M. and Sims, A. D. (2010). *Understanding Morphology*. Retrieved April 20 2019.
- Kosur, H. M. (2019). Forming New words: compounds, clipped words and blends in English Available at <https://www.brighthubeducation.com>. Retrieved April 30 2019.
- Maduagwu, G. (2010). Igbo Personal names: A morpho-semantic study. Retrieved 10 April 2019.
- Mba, B. M. (2019). Phonological features of verb compounds in Igbo. In: *The Journal of West African Languages vol. xxxix, No. 2*. Available at <https://mainjournalofwestafricanlanguages>. Retrieved May 10 2019.

- Mmadike, B. I. (2015). Morphology. In: Kamaly I. & Tamunobelem, I. (Eds.). *Issues in the study of language and literature*, Ibadan: Kraft. P. 61.
- Mmadike, B. I., Eme, C. A. & Mbagwu, D. U. (2018). A study of the Noun-Noun compound. A Conceptual Blending Approach. Available at <https://journals.ezenwaohaetoro.org>. Retrieved June 10 2019.
- Ndimiele, O. (1992). The Parameters of universal grammar: A government – binding approach. pp.5, 147. Port Harcourt: University Press.
- Norquist, R. (2017). Root Compounds. Available at <https://www.thoughtco.com> Retrieved 3 April 2019.
- Norquist, R. (2018). What is compounding in the English Language? Available at <https://www.thought.co.com> Retrieved February 20 2019.
- Oha, A. B. (2015). Verb base selection in Igbo verb compounding.. Retrieved July 2 2019.
- O’Grady, W. and De Guzman, V. P. (1996). Morphology: the analysis of word structure. In O’Grady, W., Dobrovolsky, M. and Katamba, F. (Eds.), *Contemporary Linguistics: An Introduction*, United Kingdom: Longman.
- Osuji, O. O. (2013). A short history of Mbaise, Available at <https://m.facebook.com> Retrieved March 10 2019.
- Real Jamike (2013). Historical analysis of Mbaise. Available at [9jaacademic.blogspot.co](http://9jaacademic.blogspot.co) Retrieved March 20 2019.
- Saeed, J. I. (2003). *Semantics* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Oxford: Blackwell. P. 3.
- Spencer, A. (1991). *Morphological theory: An introduction to word structure in generative grammar*, UK: Blackwell.
- Stekaner, P. (2019). Onomasiological approach to word formation. In: *Handbook of Word Formation*. Available at <https://www.researchgate.net/2263>. Retrieved 2 July 2019.
- Wikipedia. List of villages in Aboh Available at <https://nigeriazipcodes.com>. Retrieved 11 March 2019.