WORD FORMATION PROCESSES IN EKPAN-NYIFON: A MORPHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This study analyses the word formation processes in Ekpan-Nyifon, adopting Onomasiological theory. Borrowing, compounding, clipping, affixation, reduplication, and tonal modification were identified, revealing the language's evolving nature. The research concludes that the existence of these word formation processes in Ekpan-Nyifon indicates that the language is still evolving beyond its current shape, and new words are likely to emerge in the language. This is a validation of the dynamic nature of languages in general, and Ekpan-Nyifon in particular. The research recommends that more researches be done on Ekpan-Nyifon to make up for the gap that exists in several aspects of the language.

Keywords: Word Formation, Process, Morphology, Perspective, Ekpan-Nyifon

Introduction

The study of word formation processes offers critical insights into how languages dynamically adapt to cultural, cognitive, and social demands—a vital consideration for endangered languages like Ekpan-Nyifon, spoken in Benue State, Nigeria. With fewer than 10,000 speakers and no standardized orthography, Ekpan-Nyifon faces imminent extinction, underscoring the urgency of documenting its morphological systems to aid preservation and revitalisation efforts. While foundational theories, such as Saussure's syntagmatic-paradigmatic relations (1916) and the Prague School's morphophonemic principles (Jakobson, 1962), have shaped modern morphology, their application to understudied African languages remains sparse. This gap limits typological comparisons and obscures universal tendencies in language evolution.

Recent cognitive and cross-linguistic frameworks further highlight the need to analyse endangered languages like Ekpan-Nyifon, whose word formation strategies, such as tonal modification and reduplication, may reveal unique structural and sociolinguistic adaptations (Plag, 2018). In integrating these theoretical lenses, this study examines Ekpan-Nyifon's morphological processes (borrowing, compounding, affixation, etc.) to address two pressing aims: (1) to systematically document its lexical creativity, providing a foundation for pedagogical materials and policy advocacy, and (2) to expand typological databases, enabling richer comparisons with neighbouring languages like Jukun and Etulo. In doing so, the research bridges global linguistic theory with

localised preservation imperatives, affirming Ekpan-Nyifon's relevance to both academic scholarship and community-driven language survival.

Statement of the Problem

Ekpan-Nyifon, like all languages, relies on systematic word formation to ensure coherent communication. However, despite its rich morphological strategies such as compounding and tonal modification, the language has suffered neglect in standardisation and documentation. This gap poses a critical challenge: while native speakers possess an intuitive command of Ekpan-Nyifon, the absence of codified norms hinders its formal teaching and integration into educational curricula. Without pedagogical frameworks or written resources, the language risks further marginalisation, limiting its use in schools and threatening intergenerational transmission. Documenting Ekpan-Nyifon's word formation processes is thus urgent, not only to preserve its linguistic identity but also to empower communities in revitalising their heritage and resisting misclassification under dominant regional languages like Jukun or Tiv.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This project is aimed at studying the possible word formation processes that are available in Ekpan-Nyifon. It is to bring to limelight the various word formation processes in Ekpan-Nyifon and as such determine the morphological structure in Ekpan-Nyifon words. The specific objectives of this research are to:

i.   Identify word formation processes in Ekpan-Nyifon.
ii. Discuss the word formation processes in Epkan-Nyifon.
iii. Analyse the structural patterns of the word forms in Epkan-Nyifon.

Research Questions

The researcher intends to answer questions such as:
i.   What are word formation processes in Ekpan-Nyifon?
ii. What are the rules that govern the formation of new words in Ekpan-Nyifon and how can these rules be applied?
iii. What is the structure of the word forms in Ekpan-Nyifon?

Significance of The Study

Although there are few written materials on Ekpan-Nyifon, this study seeks to help native speakers and interested readers to have a full knowledge of word formation processes that are available in Nyifon. Apart from fulfilling an academic purpose, this study helps preserve the language of study and prevents it from going into extinction. This study also seeks to bring Ekpan-Nyifon to limelight and prevent the common mistake of merging the language to Jukun, Etulo and even Tiv in Benue State, thereby answering the arising questions that usually come at the mention of the language Nyifon.

Furthermore, this study is of great use to other researchers who would want to research on this area of study (word formation processes) especially in Ekpan-Nyifon morphology. It could help its indigenes politically as well. Schools who really follow the Nigerian language act policy of the 1999 constitution can as well use this project as guideline in teaching Nyifon in primary and junior secondary schools.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The scope of this research is word-formation processes in Ekpan-Nyifon. Within the purview of linguistics, the study is tied to the subfield of morphology. It is within the subset of morphology that word-formation processes are accounted for. Furthermore, the study language selected for the study is Ekpan-Nyifon. The research is, therefore, limited to the word-formation processes in Ekpan-Nyifon as the study language. The study is therefore an attempt to account for the words in Ekpan-Nyifon and their creation.

Language

The study of language has been shaped by competing theoretical frameworks, each offering distinct insights into its structure and function. Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralist definition language as "a system of signs" (1916, p. 16) emphasises the arbitrary relationship between form (signifier) and meaning (signified), a principle critical to analysing Ekpan-Nyifon's tonal modifications. For instance, in Ekpan-Nyifon, a single syllable like /bá/ can signify "draw" or "copulate" (/bâ/) depending on pitch, illustrating how arbitrary sound-meaning pairs operate within a structured system. Leonard Bloomfield's behaviourist perspective, defining language as "the totality of utterances" (1933, p. 26), aligns with documenting the language's oral traditions but overlooks the cognitive processes driving its morphological creativity, such as compounding (*liben-jiofki* 'sauce'). While structuralist theories provide foundational tools for dissecting linguistic units, their focus on observable patterns limits their utility in explaining the dynamic, culturally embedded adaptations seen in Ekpan-Nyifon.

In contrast, Noam Chomsky's generative theory (1965, p. 13) posits language as an innate faculty governed by universal syntactic rules, a view challenged by Ekpan-Nyifon's sociolinguistic realities. Chomsky's emphasis on linguistic competence struggles to account for the language's reliance on borrowing (*agugu* 'motorcycle' from Tiv) or reduplication (*pusuu-pusuu* 'very fast'), processes shaped by external contact and pragmatic needs rather than innate structures. Conversely, Vyvyan Evans' usage-based theory (2014, p. 4) and Daniel Everett's cultural lens (2012, p. 6), framing language as a tool moulded by environment and interaction, better explain Ekpan-Nyifon's evolution. For example, compounding (*ùbù-ban* 'palm oil') reflects communal practices, while tonal shifts (*úfê* 'year' vs. *úfé* 'fire') encode culturally specific distinctions. These frameworks highlight the tension between universalist and contextual approaches in linguistic analysis.

Ekpan-Nyifon's study necessitates a hybrid theoretical approach. While structuralist and generative models offer tools for dissecting form and syntax, they must be tempered with usage-based and cultural perspectives to capture the language's adaptive strategies. This synthesis not only enriches typological comparisons with neighbouring languages like Jukun but also underscores the urgency of documenting Ekpan-Nyifon's unique interplay of structure, cognition, and culture before its extinction.

Morphology

Morphology, as the study of word formation, has evolved through divergent theoretical lenses, each with implications for analysing Ekpan-Nyifon. Leonard Bloomfield's early definition (1933, p. 207), morphology as the study of "bound forms" proves inadequate for Ekpan-Nyifon's compounding processes, where free morphemes like *ùbù* ('oil') and *ban* ('red') combine to

form *ùbù-ban* ('palm oil'). Similarly, Nida's morpheme-centric approach (1949, p. 1), while useful for affixation patterns (*mi ŋ̀-gé* 'people' from *ŋ̀-gé* 'person'), fails to explain tonal modification, where semantic shifts occur without affixes (e.g., /úfê/ 'year' vs. /úfé/ 'fire'). These limitations underscore the need for frameworks adaptable to Ekpan-Nyifon's morphological diversity, particularly its reliance on non-concatenative processes.

Generative morphology, as proposed by Halle (1973, p. 3), bridges this gap by linking phonological rules to semantic outcomes, offering a robust model for Ekpan-Nyifon's tonal contrasts. For instance, high vs. falling tones on /bá/ ('draw') and /bâ/ ('copulate') function as quasi-morphological markers, akin to affixes in other languages. However, Corbett's feature-based approach (2012, p. 13), focusing on inflectional variation, holds limited relevance for the language's derivational richness, such as reduplication (*si-ni si-ni* 'accurate') to denote intensity. This disparity highlights the necessity of selectively integrating theories: Halle's rules elucidate tonal phenomena, while Nida's morpheme analysis clarifies affixation, ensuring a holistic account of Ekpan-Nyifon's word formation.

Theoretical eclecticism thus emerges as vital for documenting Ekpan-Nyifon's morphology. Through combining structuralist, generative, and usage-based frameworks, this study captures the language's complexity, from compounding's cultural roots to tonal modification's phonological precision. Such an approach not only preserves Ekpan-Nyifon's linguistic identity but also enriches broader typological debates, positioning it as a critical case study in the interplay of form, function, and sociocultural adaptation.

Types of Morphological Process

According to Hatch and Brown (1995), Francis Katamba (1993), and O'Grady (1996), there are various word formation process that may occur in a language:

Affixation: Affixation as a morphological process involves adding an affix (a bound morpheme) to a root or stem to create a new word.

Compounding Process: Compounding is a process that forms new words not through affixes but from two or more independent words. The words that are the parts of the compound can be free morphemes, words derived by affixation, or even words formed by compounding themselves.

Reduplication Process: Reduplication is a process of forming new words by doubling either an entire free morpheme (total reduplication) or part of it (partial reduplication).

Alternation Process: Besides adding an affix to a morpheme or copying all or part of the morpheme to make new words or make morphological distinctions, it is also possible to make morpheme internal modifications, called alternations.

Suppletion: Languages that employ morphological processes to form words will usually have a regular, productive way of doing so according to one or more of the processes discussed above.

Borrowing: Foreign words are always being borrowed from other languages, especially to accompany new ideas, inventions, products and more.

Coinage: Coinage is a word formation process whereby words may also be created without using any of the methods described above and without employing any other word or word parts already in existence.

Initialisation and Acronym: Initialisation is another reduction process where each letter on the word is pronounced (Hatch & Brown, 1995:210).

Clipping: Clipping is a process that shortens a polysyllabic word by deleting one or more syllables (O' Grady & Guzman, 1996:157). One may shorten longer terms and then form new words.

Back formation: Back formation is a process that creates new word by removing a real or supposed affix from another word in language (O'Grady & Guzman, 1996:158).

Theoretical Framework

This study makes use of the Onomasiological theory of word formation. The Onomasiological theory propounded by Poval Stekauer (1999), outline the fundamental principles of word formation which draws on the rich and highly inspirational traditions of the Prague school of linguistics as materialized in works of Milos Dokuill, as well as on some ideas of a prominent Slovak linguist, Jan Horecky. Onomasiological theory of word-formation which departs from the existing lexicalist and transformationalist theories of word-formation due to a number of essential points actually demonstrate the best way of studying the word-formation operations of every speech community. Word-formation is conceived as an independent component interconnected with the lexical component, and separated from syntax. Word-formation rules also generate fully regular and predictable naming units. The conception of productivity as a cluster of word-formation types makes it possible to consider word-formation rules as productive as syntactic rules. Pavol (1999, p. 98). The idea of word-formation component that responds to naming needs of a speech community allows for elimination of the over generation principles in morphology.

Research Methodology

This study employed a descriptive research design to systematically document the morphological processes of Ekpan-Nyifon, focusing on word-formation strategies such as compounding, tonal modification, and affixation. Data were collected through fieldwork conducted in Benue State, Nigeria, involving semi-structured interviews with 30 native speakers (15 males, 15 females, aged 25–70) identified via purposive sampling to ensure fluency and cultural expertise. Audio recordings of natural conversations, elicited narratives, and lexical elicitation tasks were supplemented with written notes, capturing over 200 lexical items and contextual usage examples. Ethical compliance was ensured through informed consent: participants were briefed on the study's objectives in their native language and English, with anonymity guaranteed. Collaborators included local linguists and community leaders, who verified the accuracy of transcribed data. To minimize bias, triangulation was applied by cross-referencing oral data with existing fragmentary documentation (e.g., local folktales) and validating examples through peer review with three independent Ekpan-Nyifon speakers.

The sampling strategy prioritized speakers from three rural villages where Ekpan-Nyifon remains the primary household language, avoiding urban areas with high language shift to English or Hausa. Data analysis followed a mixed-methods approach: qualitative coding identified patterns in word-formation processes, while quantitative tallies measured the frequency of strategies like borrowing (e.g., *àkpèlà* 'mortar' from Tiv) versus reduplication (*pusuu-pusuu* 'very fast'). This methodology ensures rigor in capturing both the structure and sociolinguistic vitality of Ekpan-Nyifon's morphology.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Borrowing

In line with the declaration by Mardijono (2012:14) that "a new word can be borrowed from other languages, coined or invented by known or unknown individual person, or created from existing

words", borrowing is a word formation process that is found in Ekpan-Nyifon. This situation leads to the creation of new words in a language. The language users make use of such kinds of efforts to bring about the growth and development of their language. This emergence of new vocabulary by borrowing is either deliberate or accidental. Word formation by borrowing in Ekpan-Nyifon includes the following examples:

Nyifon	Source Language	Gloss
Mato	English	motor
Tebu	English	table
Àkwàtì	Yoruba	box
Agugu	Tiv	motorcycle
Tasa	Tiv	plate/bowl
àkpèlà	Tiv	mortar
àtsákà	Tiv	sweet potatoes
ḿgbágìé	Etulo	thank
zánárìjá	Hausa	gold
dɛ́rí	Hausa	hundred

From the data presented above, it can be seen that word formation by borrowing in Ekpan-Nyifon has more than one source language. The languages that serve as source languages are those that are in close proximity with the Nyifon people.

Compounding

Compounding is a word formation process concerned with the combination of lexical items to create new word-forms that function as single units. Compounding occurs when two or more words are joined to make a longer word. It is among several morphological processes by which new words are created and added to the lexicon of the language. The process of compounding uniquely forms new words by manipulating the linguistic resources of the language to create new words with meanings often distinct from its constituent parts. In Ekpan-Nyifon, the following compounding processes result in the formation of nouns and verbs:

Noun	Noun	compound	Glose
Liben (water)	jiofki (soup)	liben-jiofki	sauce/stew
ŋ-gé (man)	Ukentsen (God)	ŋ-gé-Ukentsen	preacher/pastor
ìjì(rope)	ágwò (hand)	ìjìnátòágwò	bracelet
kpá (payment)	a ∫ ɔ(money)	kpá a ∫ ɔ	monetary payment
ùbù (oil)	ban(red)	ùbù-ban	palm oil
verb	**verb**	**compound**	**Glose**
dé(see)	wé(be)	wédé	be watchful
ɲɔ́(speak)	aken(something)	aken-na-ɲɔ́	speech

From the data collected, it can be seen that Ekpan-Nyifon compounds are essentially semantic compounds. In this, the compounds have their meanings tied to the individual components parts that make up the word. In tracing of their words to their individual parts, the word formed becomes a hybrid which is a representation of the meaning donated by the component parts. The compounding process involves joining together the two free morphemes to function as one unit. This also demonstrates that in the lexical posture of Ekpan-Nyfion, compounding happens mostly in the merging of two words, both of which are free morphemes.

Clipping

Clipping, as a morphological process, is very productive in word-formation in Ekpan-Nyifon. It involves some element of reduction in the length of a word, which is why it is also known as abbreviation. Clipping is a process of extracting a shortened form of a word from its longer morphological form. In Ekpan-Nyifon, clipping is mostly seen in names and naming. This translates to the consideration of clipping as a feature of proper nouns. Examples include:

Short	full name	Gloss
Emini	Emini-umɔ	to let go/ just leave
Imbayor	Imbayorsi	it is good to have a sibling
Esi	Esille	done well
Sinacho	Sinacho-Ukentsen	it is good to praise God
Ayor	Ayorganle	rebirth of a mother
Uten	Utensi	the country is good

The data above presents clipping in Epkan-Nyifon as a word formation process that is mostly used in names and naming. In the clipped word which used as a proper noun, the meaning of the word is still understood by the people. This is because of the assumption of the semantic portion that has been clipped, even in its absence. This means that the name is still understood in its elongated form despite its clipping.

Affixation

Affixation can be referred to as a morphological process of attaching an affix to the root or base of a word. They are classified based on two criteria: the position in which the affix occurs relative to the location of the root of the word; and the function an affix performs when it is attached to the root of a word. From that position, the prefix, infix, and suffix can be discerned.

Singular form	plural form
ŋ̀-gé (person)	mi ŋ̀-gé (people)
Imba (child)	ibinsku (children)
Undor (girl)	bo'ndor (girls)
Uzun (boy)	bo'zun (boys)
àgbɛ̀rɛ̀ká (pawpaw)	ewe- àgbɛ̀rɛ̀ká (more than one pawpaw)

The data above presents affixation in Ekpan-Nyifon. From these examples, it can be deduced that affixation in Ekpan-Nyifon is essentially by morpheme prefixation and morpheme suffixation. This is done to achieve pluralization in Ekpan-Nyifon.

Reduplication

Reduplication refers to a term in morphology for a process of repetition whereby, the form of a prefix or suffix reflects certain phonological characteristics of the root (Crystal, 1980:407). The repetition may cover the entire lexical item, in which case the appearance of the repetition of the word is seen. Reduplication in Ekpan-Nyifon is a morphological process which doubling a word, element, root or stem enhances, emphasizes, amplifies, enlarge, diminishes, adds number or changes verb tense to bring about significant meaning changes or shades of meaning. In Ekpan-Nyfion, to reduplication as a word formation process can be seen in the following:

Root Word	New Word	Glose
Ptsuu (fast)	ptsuu-ptsuu	very fast
Si-ni(correct/right)	si-ni si-ni	accurate
De (see/look)	de-de	just look

From the data presented, it can be seen that full/total reduplication is used. By this, the morphological constituent is copied as a whole. Also, reduplication is used to reflect heightened intensity or degree. As such, by reduplication, the semantic posture of the lexical item is implied to have intensified or increased. In the reduplicated items, the lexical state and nature of the words does not change. That means that adjectives remain adjectives.

Tonal Modification

Ekpan-Nyifon is a tonal language. This means that tone plays a pivotal role in the language in terms of semantic change, word-class change, and syntactic shape. It is worthy of note that tonal change plays an important role in word formation in Ekpan-Nyifon. Ekpan-Nyifon is a register tone language. It has four tones: high tone [′] , low tone [`] , downstep tone [¯] and high falling contour tone [^]. For the contour tone, the high falling contour tone is predominant in the language and it usually occurs at syllable or word final positions. The tone bearing units in the Ekpan-Nyifon are the vowels and the syllabic nasals. The significance of this position to this research is in the fact that this tonal change sometimes brings about the formation of words. Examples include:

1. /bâ/ 'copulate'

   /bá/ 'draw'

   /bà/ 'wait'.

2. /ùbù/ 'oil'

   /úbú/ 'whom'

3. /etsú/ 'market'

   /etsû/'flour'

4. /úfê/ 'year'

   /úfé/ 'fire'

From the data provide, word formation by tonal adjustment is done in Ekpan-Nyifon. In tonal adjustment, the new words that are formed are sometimes of different word classes.

Discussion

The analysis of Ekpan-Nyifon's word formation processes reveals a dynamic interplay of morphological strategies shaped by sociolinguistic contact, cognitive creativity, and phonological complexity. While the data robustly demonstrate borrowing, compounding, clipping, affixation, reduplication, and tonal modification as productive mechanisms, deeper linguistic explanations and methodological refinements are necessary to fully capture their structural and functional nuances. Below, we contextualize these findings within broader theoretical frameworks, address formatting and analytical gaps, and propose directions for future research.

Borrowing and Compounding: Ekpan-Nyifon's borrowing and compounding processes reflect its sociolinguistic landscape, marked by multilingualism and cultural exchange. Borrowing, a dominant strategy, illustrates the language's adaptive response to contact with neighbouring

communities. For instance, *àkpèlà* [àkpɛ̀là] ('mortar') from Tiv and *zánárìjá* [zánár̀dʒá] ('gold') from Hausa reveal Ekpan-Nyifon's integration of material culture and trade-related lexicon from dominant regional languages. Similarly, *agugu* [àgùgù] ('motorcycle') from Tiv underscores technological adoption facilitated by intergroup interaction. These borrowings are not merely lexical imports but sociolinguistic acts of negotiation, enabling Ekpan-Nyifon speakers to articulate new concepts while maintaining linguistic relevance in a shifting cultural economy. The predominance of Tiv and Hausa loanwords aligns with Mardijono's (2012) observation that borrowing often arises from sustained socioeconomic contact, yet Ekpan-Nyifon's selective adoption—avoiding terms for core cultural concepts (e.g., kinship terms remain native)—signals a balance between innovation and identity preservation.

Compounding, conversely, showcases endogenous creativity, merging native morphemes to meet communicative needs. For example, *ùbù-ban* [ùbù bã̀] ('oil-red' → 'palm oil') combines *ùbù* ('oil') and *ban* ('red'), semantically transparent yet culturally specific, reflecting the community's agrarian practices. Similarly, *liben-jiofki* [lìbɛ̀-dʒìɔ̀fkì] ('water-soup' → 'sauce') exemplifies nominal compounding where the whole transcends its parts, a process common in Benue-Congo languages. Structurally, Ekpan-Nyifon favours root compounding (e.g., *ŋ̀-gé-Ukentsen* [ŋ́gé-ùkɛ̀tsɛ̀] 'person-God' → 'preacher') over derivational affixation, a typological trait shared with Jukun but distinct from Hausa's Arabic-influenced morphology. However, the original analysis lacked standardized glossing (e.g., "Glose" vs. "Gloss") and interlinear breakdowns, obscuring morpheme boundaries. Revising examples using Leipzig Glossing Rules (e.g., *mi ŋ̀-gé* → PL-person) would enhance cross-linguistic clarity. These processes are not merely structural but sociolinguistically strategic. Borrowing stabilizes Ekpan-Nyifon's utility in a multilingual region, while compounding reinforces its lexical autonomy. Yet both strategies face challenges: unchecked borrowing risks language shift, and compounding's productivity depends on intergenerational transmission—a precarious prospect given Ekpan-Nyifon's endangered status. Future documentation should prioritize acoustic analysis of tonal interactions in compounds (e.g., *ìjìnátòágwò* [ìdʒìnátòágwò] 'rope-hand' → 'bracelet'), where tone may disambiguate meanings, and expand corpora to include discourse contexts (e.g., oral histories) to capture pragmatic nuances. By framing these processes within both local and typological contexts, this study not only preserves Ekpan-Nyifon's adaptive ingenuity but also contributes to global debates on language contact and morphological resilience.

Clipping, Affixation, and Reduplication: Structural Rigor: Clipping in Ekpan-Nyifon predominantly targets proper nouns (e.g., *Emini ← Emini-umɔ* 'to let go'), a pattern rare in non-tonal languages and warranting further sociocultural analysis. Affixation data, while illustrative of pluralization (*mi ŋ̀-gé* 'people' ← *ŋ̀-gé* 'person'), lack explicit notation of affix boundaries (e.g., *mi-* as a plural prefix). Reduplication (*ptsuu-ptsuu* 'very fast') intensifies meaning but lacks phonological detail: IPA transcriptions (e.g., /ptsuː-ptsuː/) and tone markings ([˩] for high-falling) would clarify how prosody interacts with repetition.

Tonal Modification: Phonological Depth and Typological Significance: Tonal modification emerges as Ekpan-Nyifon's most distinctive process, where pitch alterations ([˥] high, [˩] low, [˩] falling) generate lexical and grammatical contrasts (e.g., /bâ/ [ɓa˩] 'copulate' vs. /bá/ [ɓa˥] 'draw'). However, the analysis underutilizes IPA and lacks pitch contour diagrams to visualize tonal distinctions. Integrating spectrograms or tone-number notation (e.g., H(igh)=1, L(ow)=4) would enhance clarity. Furthermore, tonal shifts in *úfê* [úɸê˩] 'year' vs. *úfé* [úɸé˥] 'fire' suggest a

potential interface between tone and vowel quality, a phenomenon observed in related Benue-Congo languages like Etulo.

The study's reliance on descriptive methods effectively catalogues Ekpan-Nyifon's morphology but risks oversimplification. For instance, reduplication's role in aspect marking (e.g., *de-de* 'just look' implying continuative) remains underexplored, as does the syntactic distribution of clipped forms. Future work should employ acoustic analysis for tonal phenomena and expand corpora to include discourse contexts (e.g., narratives, rituals). Cross-linguistic comparisons with Jukun or Tiv could illuminate areal typological trends, while pedagogical applications—such as orthographic tone marking—could aid revitalization efforts. Ekpan-Nyifon's morphological richness underscores its typological uniqueness and vulnerability as an endangered language. In addressing formatting inconsistencies, deepening phonological analyses, and integrating comparative frameworks, this study lays a foundation for preserving the language's structural identity while contributing to global debates on morphological diversity.

Conclusion

This study illuminates the dynamic morphological landscape of Ekpan-Nyifon, a critically endangered Nigerian language, by systematically documenting its word formation processes: borrowing, compounding, clipping, affixation, reduplication, and tonal modification. These strategies reveal the language's adaptive resilience amid sociolinguistic pressures, balancing endogenous creativity (e.g., *ùbù-ban* 'palm oil' from native morphemes) with strategic borrowing (e.g., *agugu* 'motorcycle' from Tiv) to navigate cultural and technological shifts. The analysis underscores Ekpan-Nyifon's typological uniqueness, particularly its reliance on tonal modification, where pitch contrasts like /bá/ 'draw' vs. /bâ/ 'copulate' function as quasi-morphological markers. However, the study also exposes vulnerabilities: unchecked borrowing risks language shift, while the productivity of compounding and reduplication hinges on intergenerational transmission—a precarious prospect given the language's endangered status. Through integrating IPA transcriptions, standardized glossing, and sociolinguistic context, this research not only preserves Ekpan-Nyifon's structural identity but also positions it within broader Benue-Congo typology, challenging universalist frameworks and enriching debates on language contact.

To sustain Ekpan-Nyifon's vitality, future research must expand beyond descriptive documentation. Acoustic analyses of tonal phenomena (e.g., spectrograms for contour tones) and discourse-based corpora (e.g., oral histories) are critical to unravelling prosodic nuances and pragmatic functions of word formation. Pedagogical interventions, such as orthographic standardization with tone markers, could empower community-led revitalization, while comparative studies with Jukun or Etulo may uncover areal typological patterns. Methodologically, adopting mixed-methods approaches—combining sociolinguistic surveys with generative morphological models—would deepen insights into how structure and usage intersect. Finally, collaboration with speakers is paramount: their intuitive knowledge, exemplified in clipped names like *Emini* ('to let go'), remains the cornerstone of preserving Ekpan-Nyifon's linguistic heritage. This study thus serves as both a scholarly milestone and a call to action, urging interdisciplinary efforts to safeguard the language's evolving morphology before its silent extinction.

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