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LEXICAL NOMINALIZATION IN EWE: A MORPHOSYNTACTIC VIEW

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Abstract

This paper studies action nominalization in Ewe, according to Comrie and Thompson's (2007) categorization: action/state nominalization, agentive nominalization, instrumental nominalization, manner nominalization, locative nominalization, and objective nominalization. It investigates how these nominalization types manifest in the language. The paper finds out that the above-mentioned nouns are derived, mainly, through the processes of reduplication and suffixation. Again, a single form can qualify for more than one category of noun, as in the case of the suffix *-fe* for deriving process/action and locative noun. Agentive noun can be derived by an agentive marker, *-la'*. The paper introduces time nominal, which denote the time for 'verbing' or the time that an action or activity takes place. Time nominal can mark the time for an event, season, or duration. Finally, the paper argues that a single verb phrase permed with different suffixes can derive a range of nouns in Comrie and Thompson's (2007) framework.

Keywords: nominalization, agentive marker, locative, instrument, objective

1. Introduction

A few studies that cover lexical nominalization in Ewe include Duthie (1996), Ameka (1991), and Ofori (2002), inter alia. These studies focused on subjects such as the strategies available for forming nominal compounds (Ofori, 2002), the properties of nominalization in Ewe (Ameka 1991), and some dialectal differences in nominalized forms (Agbedor, 1996). However, to the best of my knowledge, there has not been any study which systematically focuses on the formation of nouns of different kinds (e.g., locative, agentive, manner, instrumental, etc.), from a single base or stem. Against this background, the paper seeks to find an answer to the question: What are the various ways by which we can form a range of lexical nouns? More specifically, the paper has the objective to show the types of nouns (e.g., locative, instrument, agentive, manner, etc.) all of which may not be available in a single language, but are possible in Ewe. The meaning of these nouns can be delimited in context. The current paper therefore attempts the formation of various categories of nouns (time, instrument, manner, location, etc.) in the framework of Comrie and

Thompson (2007). The rest of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 provides a brief literature review; Section 3 gives a brief background of the Ewe language; Section 4 introduces lexical nominalization; Section 5 provides a brief comment about nominalization in Ewe; Section 6 identifies some key methods of forming nouns in Ewe; Section 7 explains how almost all the types of Comrie and Thompson's (2007) nouns are supported by the morphology of Ewe; section 8 summarizes the main arguments; and section 9 provides a conclusion of the paper.

2. Literature Review

This paper departs from Ofori (2002) in both scope and theoretical orientation. While Ofori provided a general morphological description of how nominalization occurs in Ewe, mainly through reduplication, compounding, and affixation, the present study goes further by situating Ewe nominalization within the typological framework of Comrie and Thompson (2007). This approach enables a systematic exploration of the functional categories of nominalization, including action/state, agentive, instrumental, locative, manner, objective, and temporal types. The paper also demonstrates that nominalization in Ewe is not merely a morphological phenomenon but a morphosyntactic one, involving regular alternation between verbs and their arguments. Significantly, it introduces temporal nominalization as an independent and productive category in Ewe, a feature not previously documented in the literature. In essence, my voice in this paper lies in reinterpreting Ewe nominalization from a typological and morphosyntactic perspective, showing how a single verbal root can generate multiple nominal categories, thereby revealing the multifunctionality and structural flexibility of Ewe nominalization.

3. The Ewe language and some of its typological features

According to Duthie (1996, p. 1), Ewe is a Niger-Congo Kwa language spoken in Ghana, Togo, Benin, and Badagry in Nigeria. The term Ewe is a cover term for a cluster of dialects which actually belongs to the broader term GBE, which is each dialect's word for voice or language. Ewe, properly, refers to a group of sub-dialects spoken in the south-eastern part of the Volta Region of Ghana across to parts of southern Togo as far as the Togo-Benin border (Ameka 1991). In Ghana, the language is spoken mainly in the Volta Region, which is located in the southern part of the country. In Ewe, tone is contrastive; that is, the language can distinguish the meaning of two forms by tone. The data for the research were collected from the Volta regional capital, Ho, and its neighboring towns, which form part of what is often referred to as Ewedomegbe or 'Inland' or 'western interior' dialects (Ansre 1961; Capo 1991).

4. Lexical Nominalization

Nominalization, according to Comrie and Thompson (2007), is 'turning something into a noun' (p. 334). Mathews (2005, p. 244) explains nominalization as 'the process by which either a noun or a syntactic unit functioning as a noun phrase is derived from any other kind of unit'. Comrie and Thompson's definition may be non-specific as 'something' is not well defined; perhaps in more specific terms, the grammatical categories that can be turned into nouns may include verbs,

adjectives, and other nouns (see Mathews, 2005). Payne's definition of lexical nominalization being the product of manipulation of a verb may be English-specific: 'the relationship between the verb and its nominal can be formulated by $V \rightarrow N$ Action designed by V' (Payne, 1997, p. 244). Languages around the world have different strategies to form nouns from other grammatical units (Comrie & Thompson, 2007). Payne (1997, p. 224) notes that English can form a noun from a verb by the use of a 'zero' operator, by which no affixes are added to the verb-form, but the difference between the noun and the verb can only be determined by the position the form occupies in a sentence.

- (1) a. *I walk to school.*
 b. *Let's go for a walk* (Payne, 1997, p. 244).

Example (1a) above presents 'walk' as a verb, licensing a subject that precedes it and a complement that follows it. In (1b), 'walk' functions as a noun because it is the name of an activity; secondly, it occupies a position, which qualifies it as a noun. That is, syntactically, it is an object of the preposition 'for.' According to the grammar of English, a noun can be preceded by an article, which in this case is a(n). Appah (2005, p. 133) notes that tone is lexically contrastive in Akan, a Kwa language spoken in Ghana. So different sets of tonal patterns on the same morphological form can change a verb to a noun, as shown in example (2) below.

- (1) i. *nàntsèw* 'walk' (V)
 ii. *nántséw* 'walking' (N) (Appah, 2005, p. 133)

As in English, Ewe has forms that function as verbs and also as nouns. It is the position the word occupies in a sentence that determines its grammatical category. The form *kú*, in Ewe, functions as a verb in (3) and a noun in (4).

- (2) *dèví-á kú*
 child-DEF die
 'The child died.' ('kú' functions as a verb)

- (3) *kú wù dèví-á*
 death kill child-DEF
 'Death killed the child.' (kú functions as a noun).

In the following section, I show instances where nominals are formed not only affixation to verbs but by a complex structural construction.

5. Action Nominalization in Ewe

Action nominalization is very productive in Ewe. Notable among these action-nominalization strategies are reduplication and suffixation. This paper discusses the various types of nominalizations according to Comrie and Thompson's (2007) categorization, namely, action/state nouns, agentive nouns, instrumental nouns, manner nouns, locative nouns, and objective nouns. The strategies that are employed in the derivation of the action noun in each case will be explained as the various forms of nominalizations are discussed. In the discussion, every number introduces an example of an action or stative verb, and an arrow points to its noun form. The numbers bearing a, b, c, etc., show how the examples given are used in syntactic constructions to show that they are verbs and examples of nouns that are formed from these verbs.

The derived noun denotes the fact, the act, the quality, or the occurrence of that verb or adjective. In the entire paper, it is illustrated syntactically that the derived nouns possess the characteristics of a common prototypical noun. Through their distribution, they occupy subject and object positions in sentences. In addition, they appear as possessed items in inalienable possessive construction, and they can be focused. The following section discusses some noun formation processes in Ewe.

6. Some strategies for forming nouns in Ewe

The following section discusses some nominal formation processes in Ewe.

6.1 Reduplication

In the analysis below, item 5(a) shows how a verb is reduplicated to form a nominal, item 5(b) shows the syntactic distribution of the root word as a verb, and item 5(c) shows how the reduplicated material can occupy the position of a noun.

- (5a) *dzó* *dzòdzó*
 depart → depart RED
 'depart' 'departure'
- (5b) *É* *dzó*
 3SG leave
 'He/she left'
- (5c) *É- fé* *dzò-dzó* *tsɔ̀*
 3SG-POSS depart RED quick
 'His/her departure was quick'

6.2 Serial verbs

Serial verbs can also undergo a morphological process to form a noun. The first verb is reduplicated, and the second is suffixed to the reduplicated form of the first. There is no alternation of the positions of the verbs, nor is there any permutation. Example (6) below shows how a verb

phrase is turned into a nominal; 6b shows the syntactic slot of the verb phrase, and 6c shows how the output formed from the verb functions as a nominal in a syntactic construction.

- (6) *zɔ̌ vá → zɔ̌-zɔ̌- vá (zɔ̌zɔ̌vá)*
 walk come walk RED come
 ‘Coming by walking’ (Ofori 2002, p. 176)

- (6b) *zɔ̌ vá kábá*
 walk come quickly
 ‘Come quickly’

- (6c) *zɔ̌-zɔ̌- -vá nyé dɔ̌*
 walk RED-come is task
 ‘Coming by walking is a task’

6.3 Compounding

Nouns, which denote the name of something, can be formed from compounding of verbs. In their formation, two action serial verbs are compounded into a single action nominal where the action nouns depict actions that are associated with the verbs. In this case, there is no permutation or re-ordering of the verbs, but two verbs that syntactically follow each other are compounded morphologically to form a single noun. It is observable from the output that the verbs maintain their positions with no space between them, akin to how they appear in the serial verb construction. There are tonal changes in the compound. For example, in (7), a series of low-high tones yields low, low-high tones on the last vowel in the compound. 7(a) shows the nominal in context. These tonal changes sometimes depend on the dialect of the speaker.

- (7) *dà flé → dà- flě*
 cook buy cook(ed) buy
 ‘Cooked meal for sale’
- (7a) *É flé- a dà- flé*
 3SG buy-HAB cook-sell
 ‘He/she buys food prepared for sale’

6.4 A verb plus an object

Similar to the action verb-action verb compounding to form a nominal, we can also have an action verb plus its internal object, which are juxtaposed into a single action nominal, denoting a noun

that is associated with the verb. Item (8) shows how the nominal is formed, and (9) shows its syntactic function as a nominal.

(8) *dzè àhà* → *dzàhà*

buy drink buyer (of) drink

‘Dzàhà’

NB: *dzèàhà* → *dzàhà* (following the deletion of /e/ in favour of /a/ at the word boundary).

(9) *dzà-hà mé nó - a tsí o* (Ofori 2002, p. 179)

Buyer-(of)-drink NEG drink-HAB. water NEG

‘(A) buyer of drink does not drink water’ (an Ewe proverb)

6.5 A verb plus its inherent argument

Another way of forming action nominalization is the use of a verb phrase as a base or stem, where the syntactic order of a verb and its internal argument/object is reversed, with the verb part being reduplicated. The object, in this case, is an obligatory element without which the verb does not have any syntagmatic relevance. Item (10) shows the formation of the nominal; (10a) and (10b) show the verb and its inherent argument, and how the nominal is formed from the verb, respectively.

(10) *dà tú → tú- dà-dà*

fire gun gun fire RED

‘Firing/act of firing a gun’

(10a) *Kofi dà tú*

Kofi throw gun

‘Kofi fired a gun’

(10b) *É- fě tú- dà-dà qì*

3SG POSS gun fire RED sound

‘His/firing of a gun sounded.’

Another instance of nominalization of action verbs and their internal arguments involves re-ordering or a permutation of the verb and its internal argument. However, unlike the previous category, the verb in this case does not undergo reduplication. Item (11) shows how the nominal is formed from a verb and its direct object. (11a) shows the slot for the verb, while (11b) shows the slot for the internal argument.

- (11) *nyá nú → núnyá*
 know thing thing know
 ‘Knowledge/wisdom’
- (11a) *É nyá nú*
 3SG know thing
 ‘He/she is intelligent/wise’
- (11b) *Núnyá lè é- sí*
 wisdom is 3SG hand
 ‘He/she is wise.’ (He/she has wisdom)

6.6 Nominalization of Double Object Constructions

It is possible to form nominal from a verb phrase that takes two objects. The verb and the first object alternate their positions, the verb reduplicates and the second object is suffixed to the re-ordered, reduplicated form, as shown in (12) below. These forms of nominalization name things or actions.

- (12) *dà tú xèví → tú- dà-dà- xèví*
 fire gun bird gun fire RED bird
 ‘Bird-shooting’
- (12a) *É dà tú xèví*
 3SG fire gun bird
 ‘He/she shot a bird’
- (12b) *É- nyá tú- dà-dà- xèví*
 3SG know gun- fire-RED-bird
 ‘He/she is good at bird-shooting’

6.7 Stative verbs and stative nouns in Ewe

Ewe uses stative verbs to express adjectives; therefore, some forms (adjectival) that describe nouns behave syntactically as verbs. The syntactic slot for verbs is illustrated in 13(a) and 13(b), and from this, it is clear that the descriptive in 13(c) and 13(d), *lolo* ‘be big’, and *’kɔ* ‘be tall,’ respectively,

are verbs. To form stative nouns from the stative verbs in 13(c) and 13(d), the verbs should be reduplicated or triplicated. Consider the examples in 13(e) and 13(f).

- (13) a. *É- vá* (to show the syntactic distribution of a verb)
 3SG come
 ‘He/she came’

- (13) b. *É- dzó* (to show the syntactic distribution of a verb)
 3SG leave
 ‘He/she left’

- (13) c. *É- lólò*
 3SG be big
 ‘He/she is big’
 (A stative verb has the same distribution as an action verb as in 13a and 13b.)

- (13) d. *É- kɔ́*
 3SG be tall
 ‘He/she is tall’
 (A stative verb has the same distribution as an action verb as in 13a and 13b.)

- (13) e. *É fě lólò nyó* (stative verb duplicates to form a stative noun)
 3SG POSS big RED good
 ‘His/her/its size is satisfactory’ (lit. His/her/its ‘bigness’ is good.)

- (13) f. *É fě kɔ́-kɔ́ nyó* (stative verb duplicates to form a stative noun)
 3SG POSS tall RED good
 ‘His/her/its height (is) satisfactory/good’ (lit. His/her/its ‘tallness’ is good.)

The stative noun *lólò* sometimes has a variant *lólòmè* and *kɔ́kɔ́* sometimes appears as *kɔ́kɔ́mè*. The suffix *-mè* denotes dimension.

6.8 Agentive Nominalization

Agentive nominalization means an action verb turned into a noun which denotes the ‘one who performs an action’ (Comrie & Thompson 2007, p. 338). In this case, the noun denotes an agent with the verb. In English agentive noun (doer of an action) is formed from action verb by adding the suffix *-er*. However, the process is constrained in a way, as not every word that ends in *-er* qualifies as the doer of an action. For instance, ‘Laser’

Agentive nouns can be formed in Ewe by suffixing the particle *lá* to an action verb or an action verb phrase. Action verbs such as *dù* ‘eat’, *yì* ‘go’, *kpɔ* ‘see’, can take *lá* but not without an obligatory direct object, without which the construction will be ungrammatical (The phenomena is observed for Kwa languages including Akan (Anderson 2013, Appah 2013; Appah et al. 2017;) Lɛtɛ (Akrofí-Ansah 2012a), Esahie (Broohm 2019). Consider the case for Ewe following examples:

- (14) a. *dù* (eat) → *dùlá* (eater)*
 b. *yì* (go) → *yìlá* (goer)*
 c. *kpɔ* (see) → *kpɔlá* (seer)*

These forms do not give a specific meaning because the verb must have an object for the agentive noun to be well-formed. For example, 14a above will attract the question, which is equivalent to ‘what eater?’ 14b, ‘where goer?’ and 14c, ‘what seer?’ This suggests that, in Ewe, it is obligatory for a verb and its internal argument to undergo nominalization as a unit to make the output semantically relevant. The verb and its internally/inherent argument reverse their positions, and the particle *lá* is suffixed to the reversed form to form a noun, as illustrated in (15) below.

- (15) a. *dù nú* → *nú- dù- lá*
 eat thing thing-eat-AGENT
 ‘eat’ ‘thing’ ‘eater’
- (15) b. *yì àgblè* → *àgblè- yì- lá*
 go farm farm- go -AGENT
 ‘go to farm’ ‘farm goer’
- (15) c. *kpɔ nú* → *nú- kpɔ- lá*
 see thing thing see-AGENT
 ‘to see’ ‘seer’

There are, however, some action verbs + *lá* that are straightforwardly meaningful. For instance,

- (15) d. *xɔ* + *lá* → *xɔlá* (leader)
 get/save +AGENT ‘redeemer’
- (15) e. *kpɛ* + *lá* → *kpɛlá* (leader)
 lead + AGENT ‘leader’

Agentive nouns can be derived from reduplicated motion verbs: *yì* ‘go,’ *sí* ‘run away,’ and *dzɔ* ‘depart,’ etc. However, the agentive nominalization particle *lá* must be suffixed to the reduplicated form to make the surface form encode the agentive meaning. Example (16) explains the phenomenon.

- (16) a. *yì/dè* → *yì-yì- lá /dèdè- lá*
go /go go- RED -AGENT / go-RED-AGENT
‘go’ ‘goer’/ ‘goer’
- (16) b. *sí* → *sì-sí- lá* (fugitive /a runaway)
run away run- run-RED -AGENT
‘fugitive /a runaway’
- (16) c. *dzó* → *dzó-dzó- lá*
depart depart-RED-AGENT
‘A person who departs/leaves’

6.9 Instrumental nominalization

Instrumental nominalization is a morphological process that forms nouns from action verbs. The noun that is formed refers to an instrument. In Ewe, an instrument noun is formed by suffixing the morpheme **-nú** ‘thing’ to action verb and its internal argument. The verb and its internal argument usually interchange their positions prior to the suffixation of the morpheme **-nú**.

- (17) a. *dà nú* → *nú- dà- nú*
cook thing thing cook thing
‘cook’ ‘cooking utensil’/ ‘instrument for cooking’
- (17) b. *fò àmè* → *àmè -fò- nú*
beat person person beat thing
‘to beat a person’ ‘an instrument for beating (a) person’/‘cane’

This process of forming instrumental nouns by suffixing **-nú** to an action verb is productive, but it does not specify a particular instrument that is used for any specific activity. For example, in (21a) above, **núdànú** is a cover term for all cooking utensils: pot, ladle, saucepan, and spoon, etc. To make reference to a specific instrumental noun, the suffix **-nú** must be replaced by the specific item that one wants to refer to. The structure will be formulated as the reversed positions of a verb and its internal argument, followed by a specific instrument: *xy =yx+* (specific instrument). The following, therefore, will be more specific instrumental nouns:

- (18) a. *dà nú* → *nú- dà- zé*
cook thing thing-cooking-pot
‘cook’ ‘cooking pot’
- (18) b. *fò àmè* → *àmè- fò- àtí* (àmèfòtí) [after the deletion of /a/]
beat person person-beat-stick
‘beat (a) person’ ‘cane’ (stick for beating (a) person)

6.10 Manner nominalization

Manner nominal means ‘way of verbing’ can be formed in Ewe by the use of the suffix, *-fé*. The reduplicated form of an action verb describes a process or indicates manner nominal. Sometimes, the form that denotes action nominal (19) can function as manner nominal. The reduplicated form, which qualifies as manner nominal, sometimes takes the locative marker *-mè*. The following constructions show how a form qualifies as manner nominal.

- (19) a. *É- fé nú- qù- fé mé nyá kpó ná o* (manner)
 3SG-POSS thing-eat-place NEG MOD see HAB NEG
 ‘His (manner of) eating is not beautiful’
- (19) b. *É- fé hàdzidzì mé nyá sè ná o* (manner of singing)
 3SG POSS singing NEG MOD hear HAB NEG
 ‘His/her (manner of) singing is not pleasant to hear’
- (19) c. *É- fé zò-zò- mè mé nyá kpó ná o*
 3SG POSS walk-RED-LOC NEG MOD see HAB. NEG
 ‘His/her way of walking is not pleasant to see’

6.11 Locative Nominalization

Locative nominalization involves creating a noun that means ‘a place where an action verb happens.’ Just like manner nominal, Ewe uses the morpheme *-fe* as a suffix to a verb and its internal argument, reversing their positions, and the locative particle is suffixed to the reversed structure. The examples below illustrate this phenomenon.

- (20) a. *dó dzò* → *dzò-dó-fé*
 set fire fire-set-LOC
 ‘Set fire’ ‘kitchen’ (fire-setting place)
- b. *qà nú* → *nú-qà-fé*
 ‘cook thing’ ‘thing-cook-LOC
 ‘cook’ ‘Kitchen’

Locative action nouns can be formed from an action verb or a series of action verbs to which the morpheme *-fe* is suffixed. In the case of the serial verbs, their position is not re-ordered.

- (21) *zò* → *zò- fé*
 walk walk-place

‘Walking place/footprint’

- (22) *É fé zɔ̀ fé enyè si*
 3SG POSS walk place is LOC
 ‘This is (his walking place)/where he walked’

- (23) *zɔ̀ tó* → *zɔ̀ tó- fé* (route)
 walk pass/through walk pass place
 ‘Route’

- (24) *É fé zɔ̀ tó- fé ényé ési*
 this his/her walk pass place is this
 ‘This is where he/she pass/route’/ ‘This is his/her route’

6.12 Objective Nominalization

In Ewe, it is possible to form a nominal designating the result, or the typical cognate object of an action. It creates a noun from a verb, where the noun means the object that results from an action. The word form for process or action nominalization can be the same for object or objective nominalization. Consider the following cases:

- (25) a. *flè àmè àmè- fɛflé*
 buy person → person buy RED
 ‘Person buying’(process/action)
- b. *àmè- fɛflé nyé dɔ̀*
 person buy RED is task/work
 ‘(The process of) buying a person is a (daunting) task.’
- c. *É nyé àmè- fɛflé* (object/objective)
 3SG is person buy RED
 ‘He/she is slave’ (He/she is a bought person)
- (26) a. *qà nú* (cook thing) → *núqàqà* (process/action)
 cook thing thing cook RED
 ‘cook thing’ ‘cooking’
- (26) b. *nú- qàqà nyé dɔ̀*
 thing-cook-RED is (a) task

‘Cooking is a task’

- (26) c. *tsɔ' nú- dɔ̀dɔ̀ -lá vɛ'* (objective)
 take thing cooked RED-DEF bring/3SG
 ‘Bring the cooked food’

Sometimes, the definite article *-la* which is reduced to *-a* is suffixed to the objective nominal: *àmèfɛflèa* (the person that is bought), *núqɔ̀dɔ̀a* (the thing that has been cooked).

6.13 Temporal nominalization

Ewe can derive action nouns from action verbs, where the nominal means ‘the time of verbing.’ The time nouns can specify a period, or a singular occurrence, or a season. This derivation process also involves a re-ordering of the verb and its internal argument to which the suffix is added. The derivation suffixes include *-yí*, *-gbè*, *ɲɔ̀lĩ* and *wòé*

- (27) a. *dzɔ̀ nú* → *nú- dzɔ̀ yí*
 contribute thing thing contribute time
 ‘offer’ (verb) ‘offertory/contribution time’
- (27) b. *dè àgbɛ̀* → *àgbɛ̀- dè- wòé*
 go farm farm make time
 ‘make a farm’ ‘farming time/season’
- (27) c. *nò àhà* → *àhà- nò- gbè*
 drink drink drink drink day
 ‘take (a) drink’ ‘drinking time/day’

7. Productivity of verb phrases and nominalization in Ewe

In the foregoing discussion, firstly, it is obvious that a single nominalizer morpheme can form the base for the derivation of more than one category of nominals, for example, a process or locative noun. This phenomenon exists because nominalization is highly polysemous (see, for example, Lieber, 2018, p. 1). Secondly, by reversing the syntactic order of an action verb and its internal argument, we may derive different nominals. For example, the verb phrase, *qà nú* (cook (thing)), may have the order of the verb and its object reversed as *núqà* to form the base for the formation of a range of nominals in the structure *núqà* + suffix. The following serves as a summary of items discussed. Consider the following below:

- (28) a. *nú- qà- lá lá vá núqala* [agent]
 thing-cook-AGENT DEF come
 ‘The cook has come.’
- (28) b. *nú-qà-qà nyé dɔ́ núqàqà* [action]
 thing-cook-RED is task’
 ‘Cooking is (difficult) task’
- (28) c. *é- le` nú- qà- fé- á núqàfé* [location]
 3SG be at: PRES thing-cook-place-DEF
 ‘He/she is at the cooking place’
- (28) d. *é- yì nú- qà- (gé)=fé núqàfé* [action]
 3SG-go thing-cook-ING
 ‘He/she is going to cook.’ Note: (gé)=*fé* for inland speakers
- (28) e. *flè nú-qà-nú áqé núqànú* [instrument]
 buy thing-cook-thing SPECI
 ‘Buy (a) cooking utensil’
- (28) f. *tsɔ́ nú-qà-qà lá vá àfi núqàqà* [object]
 take thing-cook RED DEF come here
 ‘Bring the (cooked) food here’
- (28) g. *nú-qà-yí ényé ésià núqàyi* [time nominal]
 thing-cook-time is this
 ‘This is cooking time’

8. Summary

The paper investigates action nominalization in Ewe. The strategies involved in nominalization in Ewe are largely morphological and syntactic. Morphologically, the process includes reduplication, permutation, and affixation or a combination of two or more of these processes. Syntactically, for the most part, the process involves re-ordering the positions of serial verbs. The ‘nounness’ of the derived nouns is tested: they can function as an argument of a verb (as subjects and objects of verbs), and they can be focused. The paper has established the following: first, in Ewe, adjectives can function as verbs, and their noun forms are derived by reduplication or triplication; second, agentive nominalization can be formed by the suffixing *-lá* to a reversed order of a verb and its internal argument; third, instrumental nominalization can be formed by suffixation of *-nú*, which

makes the derived nominal general in meaning; however, when the need arises to indicate specificity, a specific item needs to be suffixed to the verb stem which is composed of a verb and its internal argument reversed instead of *-nú* to derive that specific instrumental nominal; fourth, time nouns can be formed by the suffixes (a verb and its internal arguments alternate their positions) *-yí*, *-gbè*, *ɲɔlí* and *wòé*; fifthly, in some cases, one nominal that belong to one category can function as a member of another category. In this case, the exact category the noun belongs to can be determined by the syntactic construction in which it occurs. Finally, it is demonstrated that a range of nouns may be formed from a single verb phrase.

9. Conclusion

This study has examined the morphosyntactic processes underlying lexical nominalization in Ewe, drawing on Comrie and Thompson's (2007) typology of nominalizations. The analysis has demonstrated that Ewe employs a systematic range of morphological strategies, particularly affixation and compounding, to derive diverse noun forms from verbal bases. Crucially, the study highlights a significant and unique contribution to the typology of nominalization in Kwa languages: a single verbal root in Ewe can serve as the base for generating multiple categories of nominalizations, including action, agentive, locative, instrumental, manner, objective, and temporal nouns. This finding underscores the productivity and flexibility of Ewe morphology and reveals the rich potential of the language to express various semantic roles through nominal forms derived from a common lexical source. It also contributes to broader linguistic discussions on the interface between morphology and syntax, particularly how a single morpho-syntax base can be exploited to generate a spectrum of grammatical functions. By demonstrating the multifunctionality of nominalizing processes in Ewe, this study enriches our understanding of both the internal structure of Ewe and the typological diversity of nominalization cross-linguistically. Future research could explore the semantic constraints, frequency patterns, and possible diachronic developments associated with these nominalizations, further illuminating the dynamic processes of word formation in Ewe and related languages.

ABBREVIATIONS

RED: Reduplication, HAB: Habitual, NEG: Negation, POSS: Possession, AGENT: Agentive, MOD: Modal, LOC: Location, ING: Ingressive, SPECI: Specifier, DEF: Definite article

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