



A MORPHOPHONEMIC ANALYSIS OF YORUBA INDIGENOUS POLYSYLLABIC NAMES

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Abstract

This study addressed the under-researched morphophonemic features of Yoruba indigenous polysyllabic names and their cultural and linguistic importance. Although naming has been one of the well-researched areas in both global and Nigerian contexts, the morphophonemic processes in Yoruba names have not been paid much attention. This gap has denied a proper understanding of how the names function within the Yoruba language and culture. The mixed-method approach, with a descriptive design, was employed for this research, and Lexical Phonology (LP) is the theoretical framework upon which the work is anchored. A purposive sample of 50 Yoruba names from first-year Yoruba-major students at Obafemi Awolowo University and the University of Lagos. Data collection lasted four weeks, with structured Google Forms to elicit authentic responses. The data was then analysed to see whether such morphological processes as affixation and phonological processes such as deletion were operative. The findings showed that most of the names occurred through affixation, followed by clipping and compounding. Also, vowel harmony dominated in the phonetic occurrences mainly for fluency and aesthetic effect in pronunciation, while deletions were used to simplify the complex phonetic structure in Yoruba. This study established that the morpho-phonemic features of Yoruba polysyllabic names are richly born and deeply rooted with values formed through different linguistic features joined. It particularly recommended that the detailed features of such research should have considered other major Nigerian languages on comparative bases for a wider overview.

Keywords: Morphophonemic Analysis, Yoruba Language, Polysyllabic Names, Lexical Phonology (LP), Morphophonemic features.

Introduction

Morphophonemic analysis examines the interaction between morphemes, the smallest units of language, and phonological processes. It focuses on how morphemes undergo phonetic or phonological changes in different contexts (Fromkin, Rodman & Hyams, 2018). For instance, in English, the plural morpheme “-s” changes its surface form depending on the final sound of the base word: “cats” - /s/, “dogs” - /z/, “buses” - /ɪz/. These variations are determined by phonological rules, such as voicing, assimilation which align the morpheme’s pronunciation with the phonetic environment. Thus, a morphophonemic analysis of Yoruba indigenous polysyllabic names is critical in deciphering the morphological as well as phonological processes of these names.

Studies are abundant on names in different natural languages in the world. The abundance of these studies are attributable to the socio-cultural, historical, religious and sociolinguistic significance of names. Yet the morphophemic features of Yoruba indigenous names have not received much attention.

Studies such as Josiah and Udoudom (2012), Fajobi and Akomolafe (2019), Abbas (2018), Mensah (2020), Anyagwa (2020) and Osisanwo, Aina and Bolaji (2021) have examined both Nigerian indigenous names and English names but the morphophemic features of Yoruba indigenous names in their empirical concerns remains unnoticed.

Morphological Processes

Morphological processes refer to the methods through which morphemes, the smallest units of meaning in language, are combined, altered, or modified to create new words or grammatical forms. This is a fundamental aspect of morphology, a branch of linguistics concerned with the internal structure of words and their formation. Aronoff and Fudeman (2011) define morphological processes as “the ways in which morphemes interact and combine to produce different forms of words, both lexically and grammatically.” This encompasses both derivational processes that create new lexical items and inflectional processes that mark grammatical functions. For Booij (2007), morphological processes are mechanisms that determine the structure of complex words in a language, involving operations such as affixation, compounding, reduplication, and alternation.”. In the same vein, Haspelmath and Sims (2010), view morphological processes as “the systematic modifications applied to a root or stem to produce

morphologically complex forms.” These processes, they note, play a crucial role in the productivity and creativity of language. Morphological processes are diverse and integral to understanding the structure and function of language. They reveal how speakers manipulate linguistic units to create meaning and adapt to communicative needs. The study of these processes continues to be a cornerstone of linguistic inquiry, contributing to broader understanding in areas such as psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, and computational linguistics.

Phonological Processes

Phonological processes are systematic transformations that occur in the pronunciation of speech sounds due to linguistic, cognitive, or developmental factors. These processes play a crucial role in shaping how phonemes, the smallest contrastive units of sound, are realized in speech. They operate within the rules of a language’s phonological system and are particularly prominent in language acquisition and connected speech. Crystal (2008) describes phonological processes as "natural and predictable modifications in speech sounds due to their phonetic environment, ease of articulation, or linguistic development." He emphasizes their universality and prevalence in language learning. Nathan (2008) states that phonological processes are "patterns of sound changes that simplify or alter the structure of syllables or phonemes to ensure fluency and efficiency in speech." Phonological processes are integral to the study of language, capturing the dynamic nature of sound systems in human speech. By exploring these processes, linguists gain deeper insights into language acquisition, variation, and change, as well as practical applications in fields such as speech therapy and computational linguistics.

Theoretical framework

The study adopts Lexical Phonology (LP) complemented by English morphophonemic rules as its theoretical framework. Although LP is credited to Paul Kiparsky and K. P. Mohanan, it is a spin-off of the classic Chomsky and Halle’s (1968) Generative Phonology (GP). It was proposed in 1980s in a series of monographs by the proponents in 1982, 1985 and 1986.

In essence, the theory claims that there is a symbiotic relationship between the rules that build the morphological structure of a word and the phonological rules responsible for the way a word is pronounced. Along with English morphophonemic rules, LP has the capacity to work out underlying rules that inform the actual pronunciation of a particular word.

The study adopts English morphophonemic rules as parts of its theoretical framework. Although

there are several illustrations of these rules in many authoritative texts on English morphology and phonology, the illustration provided by Payne (2006) is preferred because of its comprehensiveness. Payne (2006) rightly instructs that morphophonemic rules should not be misunderstood as either morphological rules or phonological rules. While the former state the process words are formed in a language, the latter specify the pronunciation of sounds in particular environments. However, it remains to be seen if these rules apply to Yoruba indigenous names. Hence, the analysis will be done with this concern in view.

Methodology

The study uses mixed-methods approach and descriptive research design. The data were gathered through purposive sampling of 50 first-year students in two first generation universities in Nigeria. In particular, the students were Yoruba majors in the Department of Linguistics and African Languages of Obafemi Awolowo University and the University of Lagos. Twenty-five male students were selected from Obafemi Awolowo University while the remaining twenty-five female students were selected from the University of Lagos respectively

The students were purposively selected because they are native Yoruba speakers and are studying at prominent federal universities in the South-west region of Nigeria, the primary home of Yoruba speakers. Specifically, a *Google form* was created and sent to a closed WhatsApp group created for the students where they were asked to provide their bio-data and upload a picture of their ID-card or course form.

Overall, 50 names were collected for analysis. Twenty-five names were selected for both male and female in language. The data were collected across four weeks, from September 1, 2024 to October 1, 2024.

Data analysis

In this section, morphophonemic processes of the 50 indigenous names sourced from Yoruba Nigeria are described through the lens of Lexical Phonology (LP). The analysis bifurcates into two: analyses of morphological features where processes such as affixation, compounding, and clipping were described and phonological features in which processes such as deletion, assimilation, and vowel harmony were explained.

Morphological features in Yoruba indigenous polysyllabic names

Polysyllabic male Yoruba names

S/ N	Name	English translation	Number of syllables	Morphological process	Illustration
1	Adégòkè	The crown triumphs	4	Affixation	Adé (prefix) + gòkè (root) = Adégòkè
2	Adérèmí	The crown comforts me	4	Affixation	Adé (prefix) + rèmí (root) = Adérèmí
3	Adésínà	The crown paves way	4	Affixation	Adé (prefix) + sínà (root) = Adésínà
4	Ayòdèjì	Joy doubles	4	Affixation	Ayò (prefix) + dèjì (root) = Ayòdèjì
5	Ayòtúndé	Joy has retuned	4	Affixation	Ayò (prefix) + túndé (root) = Ayòtúndé
6	Babájídé	Father is back to life	4	Affixation	Babá (prefix) + jídé (root) = Babájídé
7	Fiyìn	Give praise	5	Clipping	Fiyìn is clipped from Fiyìnfólúwa
8	Gbòláhàn	Show the wealth	3	Clipping	Gbòláhàn is clipped from Ọmọgbòláhàn
9	Gbòláwọlé	Carry wealth home	4	Clipping	Gbòláwọlé is clipped from Ọmọgbòláwọlé
10	Olúwaségun	Lord triumphs	5	Affixation	Olúwa (prefix) + ségun (root) = Olúwaségun
11	Olúwasèyí	The Lord did this	4	Affixation	Olúwa (prefix) + sèyí (root) = Olúwasèyí
12	Oládòtun	Wealth renews	4	Affixation	Olá (prefix) + dòtun (root) = Oládòtun
13	Olúwatósìn	Lord is worthy of worship	5	Affixation	Olúwa (prefix) + tósìn (root) = Olúwatósìn
14	Olúwadámísí	Lord spares me	6	Affixation	Olúwa (prefix) + dámísí (root) = Olúwadámísí
15	Adéyemí	Crown fits me	4	Affixation	Adé (prefix) + yemí (root) =

					Adéyemí
16	Adéyínká	Crown surrounds me	5	Affixation	Adé (prefix) + yínká (root) = Adéyínká
17	Adétúnjì	Crown has resurrected	5	Affixation	Adé (prefix) + túnjì (root) = Adétúnjì
18	Adéolú	Crown of the lord	4	Clipping	Adéolú is clipped from Adéolúwa
19	Olúwagbénga	Lord lift me higher	6	Affixation	Olúwa (prefix) + gbénga (root) = Olúwagbénga
20	Adéyẹ̀lẹ̀	Crown fit house	4	Affixation	Adé (prefix) + yẹ̀lẹ̀ (root) = Adéyẹ̀lẹ̀
21	Adékúnlé	Crown fills home	4	Affixation	Adé (prefix) + kúnlé (root) = Adékúnlé
22	Ọ̀mọ̀délẹ́báyò	Child meets joy at home	6	Affixation	Ọ̀mọ̀ (prefix) + délẹ́báyò (root) = Ọ̀mọ̀délẹ́báyò
23	Owósèéní	Money is acquirable	5	Affixation	Owó (prefix) + sèéní (root) = Owósèéní
24	Ọ̀lórunsògo	God makes glory	5	Affixation	Ọ̀lórún (prefix) + sògo (root) = Ọ̀lórunsògo
25	Olówófoyèhàn	The rich shows merits	6	Affixation	Olówó (prefix) + foyèhàn (root) = Olówófoyèhàn

Polysyllabic female Yoruba names.

S/N	Name	English translation	Number of Syllables	Morphological process	Illustration
1	Yétúndé	Mother has returned	3	Clipping	Yétúndé is clipped from Yeyetúndé
2	Ọ̀mọ̀lọ́lá	Child is wealth	4	Affixation	Ọ̀mọ̀ (prefix) + lọ́lá (root) =

					Ọmọlọlá
3	Fátímàh	One who abstains	3	Borrowing	Fátímàh is borrowed from Arabic word Fāṭimah
4	Olúwakẹmi	God honours me	5	Affixation	Olúwa (prefix) + kẹmi (root) = Olúwakẹmi
5	Dámilólá	Lord grants me wealth	4	Clipping	Dámilólá is clipped from Olúwadámilólá
6	Olúwayẹmisí	Lord spares me	4	Affixation	Olúwa (prefix) + yẹmisí (root) = Olúwayẹmisí
7	Fọ́lásadé	Make crown wealth	4	Clipping	Fọ́lásadé is clipped from Afọ́lásadé
8	Témítópẹ	Mine deserves gratitude	4	Compounding	Témí (Pronoun) + tópẹ (Noun clause) = Témítópẹ
9	Adébísí	Crown makes more	4	Affixation	Adé (prefix) + bísí (root) = Adébísí
10	Adéọ́lá	Crown of wealth	4	Compounding	Adé (prefix) + ọ́lá (prefix) = Adéọ́lá
11	Abísọ́lá	Born into wealth	4	Clipping	Abísọ́lá is clipped from Abísinuọ́lá
12	Olúwatóyìn	Lord deserves praise	5	Affixation	Olúwa (prefix) + tóyìn (root) = Olúwatóyìn
13	Adétutù	The crown is calm	4	Affixation	Adé (prefix) + tutù (prefix) = Adétutù
14	Àdùkẹ	One who is cherished	3	Clipping	Àdùkẹ is clipped from Àdùkẹadé
15	Àbẹkẹ	One who is pampered	3	Clipping	Àbẹkẹ is clipped from Àbẹkẹọ́lá
16	Àárinọ́lá	Centre of wealth	6	Affixation	Àárin (root) + ọ́lá (suffix) = Àárinọ́lá
17	Ẹniọ́lá	Wealthy one	4	Affixation	Ẹni (root) + ọ́lá (suffix) = Ẹniọ́lá
18	Adùnọ́lá	The sweetness of	4	Affixation	Adùn (root) + ọ́lá (suffix)

		wealth			= Adùṅlǎ
19	Túnmise	Make me better	3	Clipping	Túnmise is clipped from Olúwatúnmise
20	Modúpé	I am grateful	1	Clipping	Modúpé is clipped from Modúpéolúwa
21	Similólúwa	Rest on the lord	5	Blending	Similé and ólúwa = Similólúwa
22	Tèmíladé	The crown is mine	4	Compounding	Témí (Pronoun) + ladé (Noun clause) = Tèmíladé
23	Adérònké	Crown sees something to care	5	Affixation	Adé (prefix) + rònké (root) Adérònké
24	Adédoyin	Crown turns to honey	4	Affixation	Adé (prefix) + doyin (root) = Adédoyin
25	Adéjoké	Crown deserves care	4	Affixation	Adé (prefix) + jóké (root) = Adéjoké

Phonological features of Yoruba indigenous polysyllabic names

Polysyllabic male Yoruba names

S/N	Name	English translation	Number of syllables	Phonological process	Illustration
1.	Adégòkè	The crown triumphs	4	Assimilation	A nasal sound in conversational speech may assimilate to a velar position, forming a velar nasal [ŋ], which facilitates a smoother transition into the suffix "/gòkè/."
2.	Adérèmí	The crown comforts me	4	Vowel harmony	The vowel /e/ in the syllables is a front vowel, facilitating smoother transition and pronunciation.
3.	Adésínà	The crown paves way	4	Deletion	A glide or unstressed vowel between syllables might be dropped for smoother pronunciation.
4.	Ayòdèjì	Joy doubles	4	Assimilation	The /j/ sound can subtly blend with the /d/ in

					casual or rapid speech, smoothing the connection between the morphemes "Ayò" and "dèji."
5.	Ayòtúndé	Joy has returned	4	Vowel harmony	The high vowels /ò/ and /ú/ contribute to a smooth vocal transition across the name's syllables.
6.	Babájídé	Father is back to life	5	Vowel harmony	The vowel /a/ in the syllables is an open vowel, which makes the pronunciation of the name fluid and connected.
7.	Fìyìn	Give praise	3	Vowel harmony	The vowel /i/ in the syllables is a high back vowel, creating a uniform and smooth phonological quality across the name.
8.	Gbónláhàn	Show the wealth	4	Deletion	A glide or unstressed vowel between syllables might be dropped for smoother pronunciation.
9.	Gbòlápólé	Carry wealth home	5	Vowel harmony	The vowel /o/ in the syllables is a mid vowel, which provides a phonological balance and fluidity in the pronunciation across the name.
10.	Olúwaségún	Lord triumphs	4	Deletion	A glide or unstressed vowel between syllables might be dropped for smoother pronunciation.
11.	Olúsèyí	The Lord did this	4	Assimilation	The /s/ in sèyí may exhibit a form of regressive assimilation where the /s/ assimilates to the palatal /ʃ/ sound in informal or fast speech.
12.	Oládòtun	Wealth renews	5	Vowel harmony	The vowel /o/ in the syllables is a mid vowel, which provides a phonological balance and fluidity in the

					pronunciation across the name.
13.	Olúwatósìn	Lord is worthy of worship	6	Deletion	A glide or unstressed vowel between syllables might be dropped for smoother pronunciation.
14.	Olúwadámi sí	Lord spares me	4	Vowel harmony	The vowel /a/ in the syllables is an open vowel, which makes the pronunciation of the name fluid and connected.
15.	Adéyemí	Crown fits me	5	Vowel harmony	The vowel /e/ in the syllables is a front vowel, facilitating smoother transition and pronunciation.
16.	Adéyínká	Crown surrounds me	5	Deletion	A glide or unstressed vowel between syllables might be dropped for smoother pronunciation.
17.	Adétúnjì	Crown has resurrected	4	Vowel harmony	"Adétúnjì" features vowel harmony where the vowels /é/ and /ú/ harmonize by being close in their articulation, both being mid to high vowels, enhancing the fluency of pronunciation across the name.
18.	Adéolú	Crown of the lord	6	Vowel harmony	The vowels /o/ and /u/ in "olú" both exhibit rounding, where /o/ is a mid-back rounded vowel and /u/ is a high-back rounded vowel, creating a smooth and harmonious sound.
19.	Olúwagbén ga	Lord lift me higher	4	Vowel harmony	The vowel /a/ in the syllables is an open vowel, which makes the pronunciation of the name fluid and connected.
20.	Adéyẹ̀lẹ̀	Crown fit house	4	Vowel harmony	The vowel /e/ in the syllables is a front vowel, facilitating smoother

					transition and pronunciation.
21.	Adékúnlé	Crown fills home	6	Vowel harmony	The vowel /e/ in the syllables is a front vowel, facilitating smoother transition and pronunciation.
22.	Omódélébá yò	Child meets joy at home	5	Vowel harmony	The vowel /ó/ in the syllables is a mid vowel, which provides a phonological balance and fluidity in the pronunciation across the name.
23.	Owósèení	Money is acquirable	5	Vowel harmony	The vowel /o/ in the syllables is a mid vowel, which provides a phonological balance and fluidity in the pronunciation across the name.
24.	Olórunsògo	God makes glory	6	Vowel harmony	The vowel /ó/ in the syllables is a mid vowel, which provides a phonological balance and fluidity in the pronunciation across the name.
25.	Olówófoyèh àn	The rich shows merits	6	Vowel harmony	The vowel /o/ in the syllables is a mid vowel, which provides a phonological balance and fluidity in the pronunciation across the name.

Polysyllabic female Yoruba names.

S/N	Name	English translation	Number of Syllables	Phonological process	Illustration
1	Yétúndé	Mother has returned	3	Vowel harmony	The vowel /e/ in the syllables is a front vowel, facilitating smoother transition and pronunciation.
2	Omọlọlá	Child is wealth	4	Vowel harmony	The vowel /ó/ in the syllables is a mid vowel, which

					provides a phonological balance and fluidity in the pronunciation across the name.
3	Olúwakémi	God honours me	5	Vowel harmony	The glide /w/ between "Olúwa" and "kémi" could be dropped in fluent speech.
4	Dámilólá	Lord grants me wealth	4	Deletion	The glide /i/ in the linking part of the name could be dropped in fluent speech.
5	Olúṣolá	Lord makes wealth	4	Vowel harmony	The vowels /o/ and /u/ in "olú" both exhibit rounding, where /o/ is a mid-back rounded vowel and /u/ is a high-back rounded vowel, creating a smooth and harmonious sound.
6	Fólásadé	Make crown wealth	4	Vowel harmony	The vowel /a/ in the syllables is an open vowel, which makes the pronunciation of the name fluid and connected.
7	Témítópé	Mine deserves gratitude	4	Deletion	The glide /i/ in the linking part of the name could be dropped in fluent speech.
8	Adébíṣí	Crown makes more	4	Vowel harmony	The vowel /i/ in the syllables is a high-back vowel, creating a uniform and smooth phonological quality across the name.
9	Adéṣolá	Crown wealth of	4	Vowel harmony	The /é/ and /o/ harmonize by being mid vowels.

10	Abísólá	Born into wealth	4	Vowel harmony	The vowel /a/ in the syllables is an open vowel, which makes the pronunciation of the name fluid and connected.
11	Olúwatóyìn	Lord deserves praise	5	Deletion	The glide /w/ between "Olúwa" and "toyin" could be dropped in fluent speech.
12	Adétutù	The crown is calm	4	Vowel harmony	The /ù/ vowels in "tutù" are both high-back rounded vowels, creating a fluid and unified pronunciation.
13	Àdùkẹ	One who is cherished	3	Vowel harmony	The mid vowels /ù/ and /ẹ/ in "Àdùkẹ" contribute to the phonetic cohesion of the name.
14	Àbẹkẹ	One who is pampered	3	Vowel harmony	The vowel /ẹ/ in the syllables is a front vowel, facilitating smoother transition and pronunciation.
15	Ànúolúwap ọ	Lord's mercy abounds	6	Assimilation	The nasal /n/ in "Ànú" can influence the vowel that follows, leading to a nasalized vowel, or the /l/ in "olú" might slightly adjust in anticipation of the following /w/.
16	Ẹniọlá	Wealthy one	4	Vowel harmony	The vowels /ẹ/ and /ọ/ are both mid vowels, with /ẹ/ being a mid-front unrounded vowel and /ọ/ a mid-back rounded vowel.
17	Adùnọlá	The sweetness of wealth	4	Deletion	The sound /n/ could be dropped in fluent speech.
18	Túnmise	Make me	3	Vowel	The sound /n/

		better		harmony	could be dropped in fluent speech.
19	Modúpé	I am grateful	3	Vowel harmony	The vowels /o/ and /u/ in "odú" both exhibit rounding, where /o/ is a mid-back rounded vowel and /u/ is a high-back rounded vowel, creating a smooth and harmonious sound.
20	Similólúwa	Rest on the lord	5	Deletion	The glide /i/ in the linking part of the name could be dropped in fluent speech.
21	Tèmíladé	The crown is mine	4	Vowel harmony	The vowel /e/ in the syllables is a front vowel, facilitating smoother transition and pronunciation.
22	Adérònké	Crown sees something to care	5	Vowel harmony	The vowels /é/ and /o/ share a mid-range tongue position and contribute to a harmonious vocalic sequence.
23	Adédoyin	Crown turns to honey	4	Vowel harmony	The vowels /é/ and /o/ share a mid-range tongue position and contribute to a harmonious vocalic sequence.
24	Adéjoké	Crown deserves care	4	Vowel harmony	The vowels /é/ and /é/ are both mid-front vowels, though /é/ is slightly higher and tenser than /é/, creating a smooth and cohesive sound pattern across the name.
25	Opéyemí	Thankfulness suits me.	4	Vowel harmony	The vowel /e/ in the syllables is a front

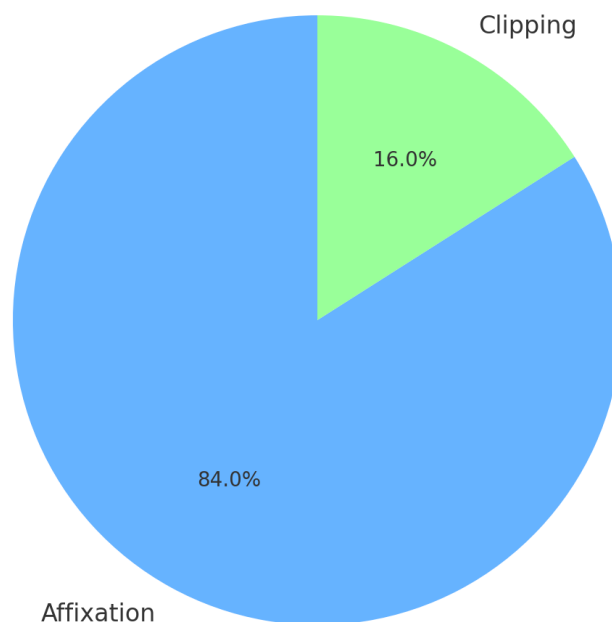
					vowel, facilitating smoother transition and pronunciation.
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Summary of findings

Following the analysis above, it has been shown that the morphophonemics of polysyllabic Yoruba names are characterized by affixation, clipping, compounding blending and borrowing at the morphological level while deletion, vowel harmony and assimilation at the phonological level.

Morphological level

Morphological Processes in Polysyllabic Male Yoruba Names



Above is a pie chart showing the morphological processes, affixation, and clippings that dominate polysyllabic male Yoruba names.

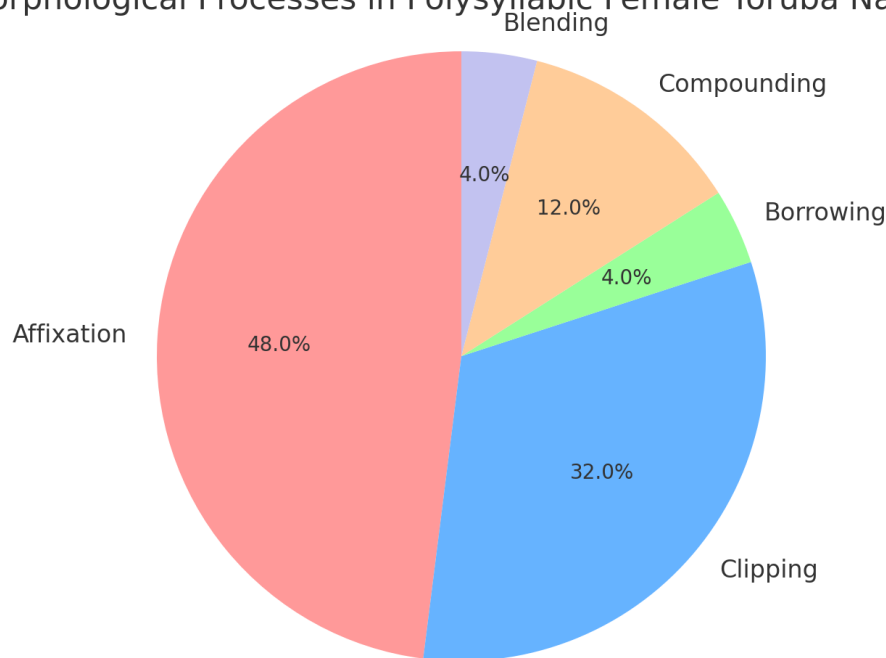
The dominant morphological type of affixation is used in 84% of the cases, which includes the addition of either prefixes or suffixes to the base word to make a new name.

In the affixation of Yoruba naming conventions, meaningful segments are used, such as "Adé" for crown or "Olúwa" for God, to convey specific attributes or blessings associated with the

name. The frequent use of affixation in Yoruba names is a linguistic strategy to fill names with cultural and familial significance, aligning them with the values and beliefs of the community.

Clipping, while less frequent, is at 16 percent; it is also an important process in the formation of names in Yoruba. Clipping means shortening the form of a name or a phrase with which a colloquial or informal variant is formed. It is this process that has made the names to be easy to pronounce or more affectionate. Such processes reflect the intimacy and the casual usage of these words in the community, thereby equally showing how language is dynamic with respect to practical realities surrounding its use. The chart, in general, displays the rich linguistic creativity in Yoruba name formation. The prevalence of affixation underlines a deep-seated cultural practice of embedding weighty meanings through morphological construction, while the presence of clipping showcases adaptability and fluidity in language use. This analysis has provided insight not only into the linguistic aspects of Yoruba names but also into the cultural practices that give rise to these names.

Morphological Processes in Polysyllabic Female Yoruba Names



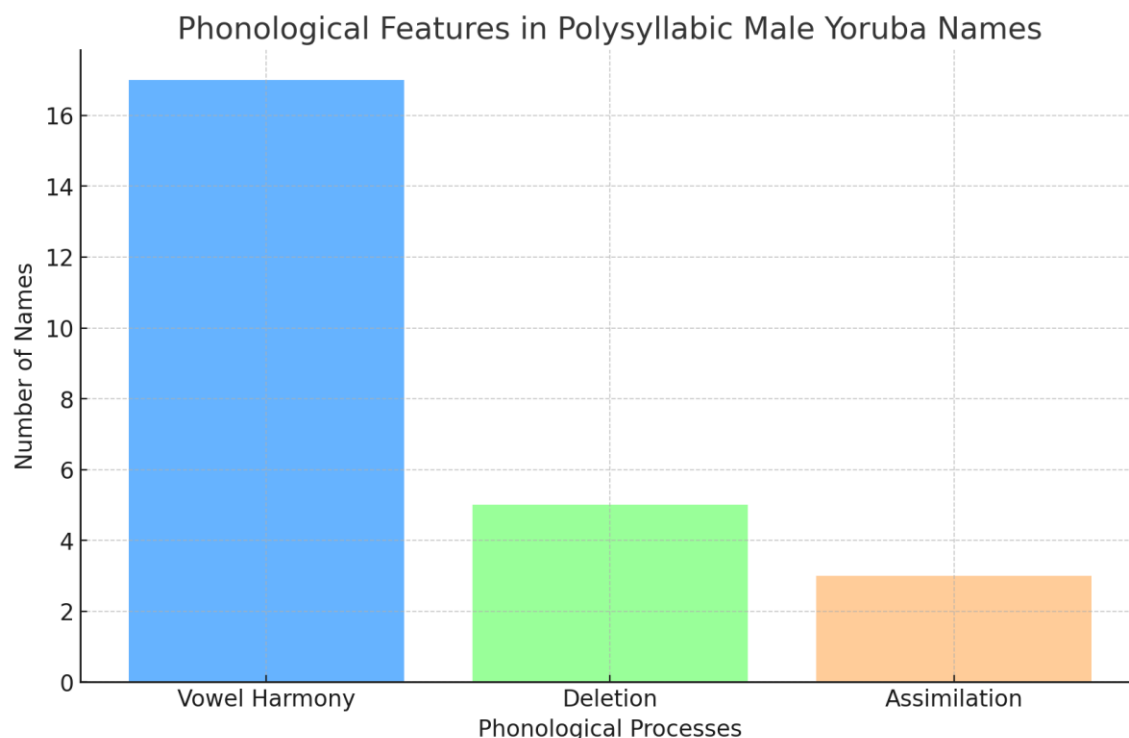
This pie chart on morphological processes in polysyllabic female Yoruba names gives great insight into the linguistic strategies that underpin Yoruba naming conventions. The dominant process of affixation is seen in 12 of the analyzed names, showing its core role in embedding cultural significance and familial aspirations within the name. This often includes appending

meaningful prefixes or suffixes that enrich the semantic depth of the name to reflect the values of the community.

Another important process is clipping, used in 8 names; it simplifies longer names into shorter colloquial forms, which implies ease of communication and perhaps a balance between formal and informal naming contexts. This process might also indicate affectionate or familiar uses of the names within close-knit circles. Less frequently though, the processes of compounding, blending, and borrowing also play consequential roles.

Compounding is apparent in three names, whereby the putting together of two or more words captures in a short form some useful idea. Blending, as seen in one, is the creation of new names through the amalgamation of elements from two or more words, showing perhaps the modern twist of naming convention. Borrowing, also in one, uses elements from other languages, hence showing how dynamic and adaptable the Yoruba language is to globalization and cultural exchanges. These diverse morphological processes are not only expressions of linguistic creativity and flexibility but also carry deep cultural implications. They act as carriers of social identity, family bonds, and personal attributes that inscribe individual identities into the greater cultural fabric. Thus, Yoruba naming practices do more than identify individuals; they provide a linguistic conduit for the continuance of social values and cultural heritage, demonstrating in great detail the interconnection of language with identity and culture within Yoruba society.

Phonological level

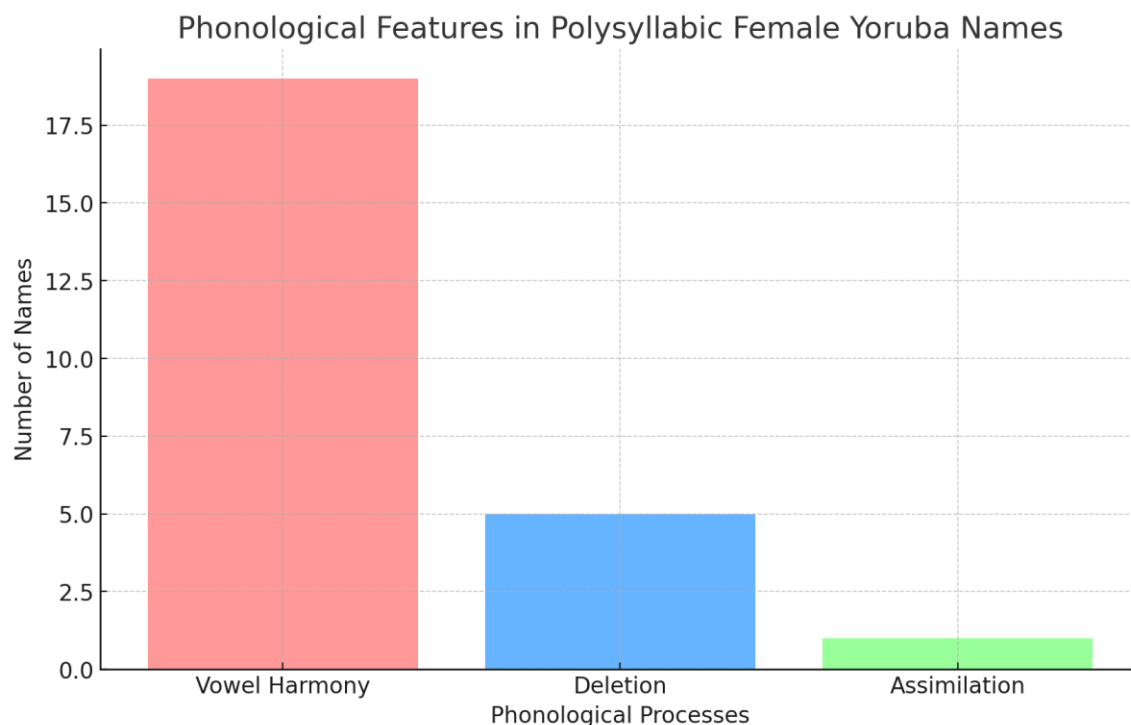


The bar chart above shows the distribution of some phonological features in polysyllabic male Yoruba names, which are the most common phonological processes used in constructing and pronouncing the names. Each of these phonological features adds to the linguistic and cultural depth in their way.

The most common procedure found is **Vowel Harmony**, remarked in 17 of the total considered names. This is a process of assimilation of vowels in a word to match each other in certain phonetic properties like backness, height, or roundness. The high incidence of vowel harmony in these names shows how important it is to ensure phonetic cohesion and aesthetic melody in Yoruba names. This makes for phonological consistency, easier, and more fluid pronunciation, which is particularly appealing in spoken language and contributes to the rhythmic quality of the names.

Deletion occurs in 5 names, a process by which some sounds within the word are removed. It usually takes place to make the pronunciation of the word easier or fit more neatly into the rhythmic and phonetic structure of the language. In the case of Yoruba names, deletion may help to simplify complex phonetic sequences, making them faster to utter and easier to remember. The process reflects a linguistic efficiency that can help in everyday communication, therefore making the names more fit for rapid and casual speech.

Assimilation manifests in 3 names as a process through which class of sound within a particular word changes toward the classes to which the neighboring sounds belong because this could favor easier and rather smooth transition from one sound in pronunciation to another, eventually promoting the flow of speech. Since assimilation occurs as words come through natural linguistic shifts in Yoruba speakers' usage for ease of pronunciation and due to phonetic environment between words, this could prove an active characteristic of human speech in naming of individuals conventionally amongst Yoruba individuals. Findings from this chart not only highlight the technical aspects of phonological processes in Yoruba names but also underscore their functional and aesthetic purposes. These are not processes that occur incidentally but are integral to the way names are formed, pronounced, and perceived within the cultural context and play a significant role in the linguistic identity of the Yoruba people. The research brings out the deep interrelation between language, identity, and culture, as expressed through phonological structuring of the names.



The bar chart illustrating phonological features in polysyllabic female Yoruba names offers a detailed look into the linguistic techniques shaping these names. It highlights the prominence of vowel harmony, deletion, and assimilation, revealing their distinct roles and frequencies in name formation.

Vowel harmony emerges as the most frequently observed phonological process, appearing in 19 names. This technique ensures that vowels within a word align phonetically, enhancing the names' ease of pronunciation and auditory appeal. The melodic quality created by vowel harmony is deeply valued in Yoruba culture, reflecting the language's focus on fluidity and aesthetic sound patterns.

Deletion, noted in 5 names, simplifies pronunciation by omitting certain sounds, typically less emphasized vowels or consonants. By streamlining more intricate names, deletion makes them more practical for daily use, particularly as traditional names adapt to modern linguistic contexts.

Assimilation, recorded in only 1 instance, though less common, remains significant. This process modifies a sound to resemble a neighboring sound, facilitating smoother pronunciation. While it is not as widespread as vowel harmony or deletion, its contribution to phonetic coherence is noteworthy.

Together, these phonological features demonstrate a careful balance between preserving cultural identity and meeting the practical demands of communication. The chart not only sheds light on technical linguistic processes but also offers a glimpse into the broader cultural importance of naming practices in Yoruba society. It underscores how these names seamlessly blend meaning, manageability, and cultural expression, serving as both personal identifiers and cultural artifacts.

Overall, the findings reveal that Yoruba polysyllabic names exhibit rich morphological and phonological processes that reflect cultural, religious, and familial values. Morphological strategies like compounding and blending integrate meaningful roots, while phonological processes such as vowel harmony and deletion enhance the euphony and fluency of names. These features underscore the importance of names as carriers of identity and tradition in Yoruba culture.

Conclusion

This study has examined the morphophonemics features of Yoruba indigenous names, paying particular attention to its different morphological and phonological processes the names are subjected to. At the morphological level, affixation, clipping, compounding, blending and borrowing are common morphological processes Yoruba indigenous names are subjected to. At the phonological level, deletion, vowel harmony and assimilation are the processes involved in Yoruba indigenous names.

Recommendation

Since the present study has engaged in an in-depth analysis of morphophonemics in Yoruba names, further study can engage in a similar analysis in other Nigerian indigenous languages, especially languages outside the three major Nigerian languages. A comparative analysis of morphophonemics process in two Nigerian indigenous languages is another research gap in morphophonemics and onomastics literature that remains to be filled.

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