

THE INTERNAL STRUCTURE OF URHOBO NAMES OF PERSONS

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OCTOBER, 2025.

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS
STUDIES, FACULTY OF ART, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY, IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF
BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A) DEGREE IN LINGUISTICS STUDIES**

OCTOBER, 2025.

APPROVAL PAGE

I, **EXCEL OGHENEYOMA ABEKE**, a student of the department of linguistics studies, University of Benin, with the matriculation number **ART2106391**, have completed the requirements for course work and research for the Bachelor of Arts Degree of the University of Benin. This research work is a product of my personal effort and does not contain any previously written or published material that has been submitted in any other degree or diploma program from any university or higher institution of learning.

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PLAGIARISM CERTIFICATION

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to God Almighty for his wisdom, strength and provision.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

That I have completed this project work is worthy of note, but more worthy is the fact that I could not have achieved this feat without the help of the following persons:

First, I thank God for the enablement in seeing that I complete this project work in good faith.

I appreciate the mentorship of my project supervisor, Dr. O. O. Evbuomwan for his openness, simplicity and co-operation throughout the course of this project work.

I appreciate the Head of Department, Dr.(Mrs.) P. O. Solomon-Etefia for her administrative prowess and leadership qualities.

To my lecturers in the Department of Linguistics, University of Benin, Benin City, amongst whom are, Prof. (Mrs) E.M. Omoregbe, Mr G.O. Agharuwa, Mr F.A. Ajala and Dr. W. I. Aigbedo of blessed memory, among others. I am immensely grateful for the knowledge and skills imparted to me throughout my academic journey.

I appreciate my lovely parents Mr. and Mrs. Malick Abeke their unwavering support and encouragement in seeing that I finish strong.

To my siblings Triumphant, Honour, Crown, Trophy and Icon, you are appreciated. Thanks for being there.

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a morpho-syntactic analysis of the internal structure of Urhobo personal names. While existing scholarship has often focused on the cultural and semantic significance of these names, a significant gap remains in the systematic description of their grammatical architecture. This research, therefore, aims to examine the morphological processes and syntactic patterns that underlie the formation of Urhobo personal names. The study is framed within the Item-and-Process model of morphology and the Principles and Parameters theory of syntax. Data comprising 100 personal names were collected from native speakers in Jesse town and school registers in Delta State, Nigeria, and were subjected to linguistic analysis. The findings reveal that Urhobo names are predominantly complex linguistic constructions rather than simple labels. Morphologically, they are formed primarily through compounding and the productive use of nominalizing prefixes (e.g., Á-, Ò-, È-). Syntactically, a majority of names are shown to be desententialized forms, originating as full clauses (e.g., Óghènéguédjókè meaning "We give account to God") that conform to the Subject-Verb-Object word order of the language. The analysis also identifies governed morpho-phonological processes like vowel elision at morpheme boundaries. The study concludes that Urhobo personal names are rule-governed, systematically generated from the language's grammatical system. It recommends further

research into the sociolinguistics of naming, comparative Edoid onomastics, and detailed phonological analysis. This work contributes to African linguistics by providing a formal grammatical account of naming practices and serves as a resource for Urhobo language education and preservation.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The focus of this research is on the internal structure of Urhobo personal names, concentrating on how morphemes are combined and how syntactic relations are compressed into single lexical items. For example, names such as “Èjiròghèné” meaning “praise God” and “òkiémuté” meaning “time has come” illustrate that Urhobo names can be formed from complete clauses or verb phrases that have been nominalized. These examples highlight the grammatical richness of naming systems in the language and show that names can reveal much about word formation processes and grammatical patterns.

Personal names are an important aspect of human language because they serve as identifiers of individuals while also encoding meaning through their linguistic structure. In many African language, including Urhobo, personal names are not arbitrary labels but are systematically formed through morphological and syntactic processes. These processes often involve affixation, compounding or the reduction of full sentences into shorter forms. Such linguistic mechanisms make personal names in Urhobo an ideal area of study for morpho-syntactic analysis.

1.2 The Urhobo People and Language

Urhobo is a Niger-Congo language belonging to the southwestern edoid branch. It is primarily spoken by the Urhobo people, who are a major ethnic group in the Niger delta region of Nigeria. The language is concentrated in Delta state of Nigeria, particularly in areas such as Uvwie, Agbarho, Okpe and Udu, among others (Elugbe, 1989; Omamor, 1982). The Urhobo people live in a number of kingdoms and communities, including Warri, Ughelli, and among others. While some speakers can be found in other parts of Nigeria and the world, Delta state remains the linguistic and cultural heartland of the Urhobo people.

The language is an important part of the region's linguistic landscape, coexisting with other languages like Isoko, Itsekiri and Ijaw. The vitality of the language is evident in its use in daily communication, media and cultural expressions, including the personal names that are the subject of study.

Urhobo is a tone language and it follows a subject-verb-object (SVO) basic word order, features that directly influence the shape and interpretation of personal names. Despite the cultural and linguistic significance of Urhobo personal names, most existing studies have focused on their semantic or sociolinguistic values, often emphasizing how names reflect history, beliefs or social identity. However, there is relatively little attention to the grammatical composition of these names, how they are internally structured, what morphological processes are used, and how syntactic patterns are reduced or preserved when

full clauses become names. This gap creates a need for morpho-syntactic investigation that systematically describes Urhobo personal names in linguistic terms.

Therefore, the present study addresses this gap by analyzing the internal structure of Urhobo personal names from a morpho-syntactic perspective. It situates the problem within the broader field of word formation studies and grammar, providing an account of how personal names in Urhobo are formed, how they behave grammatically.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Existing scholarly work on Urhobo personal names has predominantly focused on their semantic, historical, and sociolinguistic significance, highlighting how names reflect cultural beliefs, social identity, and historical events. However, this emphasis has led to a relevant gap in the linguistic understanding of these names. There is a conspicuous lack of systematic investigation into their grammatical architecture specifically, the morphological processes and syntactic patterns that govern their formation.

While it is acknowledged that names like Èjiròghèné ("praise God") and Òkiémuté ("time has come") are derived from clauses or phrases, the precise morpho-syntactic mechanisms involved, such as affixation, compounding, nominalization, and the reduction of syntactic relations into single lexical items remain largely undescribed. This gap means the fundamental linguistic rules and creative processes that generate Urhobo personal names are not well understood. Therefore, the problem this study addresses is the lack of a systematic analysis of the internal structure of Urhobo personal names. This research aims

to fill this gap by providing a grammatical account of how these names are constructed, moving beyond their meaning to explain their formation.

1.4 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to examine the internal structure of Urohobo names of persons.

The objectives of the study are to;

- Identify the different lexical items that make up names in the Urohobo language.
- Investigate how lexical items are combined in the names.
- Reach informed conclusions on the complex nature of personal names in Urohobo based on point (1) and (2) above.

1.5 Research Questions

To guide the investigation of the identified problem, this study will seek to answer the following research questions:

- What are the constituent lexical and grammatical morphemes that form the building blocks of Urohobo personal names?
- How are these lexical items combined to form names?
- What morphological and syntactic processes contribute to the internal structure of Urohobo personal names?

- What conclusions can be drawn about the overall grammatical nature and complexity of personal name formation in the Urhobo language based on these findings?

1.6 Methodology

The target population of this study consisted of native Urhobo speakers with knowledge about personal names in the language. These individuals provided insights into the structure and meaning of the names.

The data used in the study comprises of personal names gathered from the Urhobo people based in the area of Jesse town and from the community school register at Ovade Secondary School, Oghara, Delta state, Nigeria. Data collected occurred between June 15th 2025, when the research began and June 25th 2025 when the verification of collected names concluded.

The researcher collected a total of 100 names by recording personal names heard and saw using pen and paper. The gathered names were taken to an Urhobo native speaker for verification and further discussions on their meanings and complete forms where they were still recognizable.

A total of four (4) Uhrobo speakers who are fluent and familiar with the language participated in the data collection. Interviews were conducted using prepared questions to

collect personal names and their meanings. The study also consulted online textual sources from cultural archives containing personal names.

The data collected were analyzed using tools from morphology and syntax with attention to how these names were internally structured and how they behave grammatically. These names were organized according to their word classes and analyzed through careful observations, relying on a morpho-syntactic approach.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The significance of this research is rooted in its ability to bridge a gap in understanding by shifting the focus from what Urhobo names mean to how they are grammatically constructed. By studying the grammar of these names, we can gain a much better understanding of how the Urhobo language is built. This makes the research useful in many different areas. For the field of linguistics, particularly the study of African languages, this work serves as a case study in word formation. It demonstrates how a language can systematically compress full sentences into single words, a process known as clausal nominalization. The research provides a record of the grammatical rules behind Urhobo names. This data is vital for linguistic comparison, allowing researchers to improve general theories about how languages create new words and handle sentence structure. This goes beyond just explaining the meanings or cultural stories behind names. Instead, it shows the actual grammatical rules used to build them, which helps create a more complete record of Nigeria's many languages.

Beyond its theoretical contributions, the study has important practical applications, particularly for the preservation and teaching of the Urhobo language. By showing the grammar rules used to create names, this research can be used to create better teaching materials. Language learners and educators can use these insights to make the acquisition of Urhobo grammar more intuitive, using familiar names as accessible examples to illustrate core vocabulary and fundamental sentence structures. This makes the structure of the language easier to understand and gives a practical tool to programs that are working to keep the Urhobo language alive.

Most importantly, this research gives the Urhobo people a new way to see their own culture. It shows that their names are not just simple labels, but are actually made using a complex and orderly system of language rules. This confirmation can strengthen cultural pride by giving native speakers a clearer understanding of the sophisticated grammar inherent in their names. In short, the importance of this study is two-fold, it adds to the world's knowledge about the language, and it also gives the Urhobo community a deeper appreciation of their own language's value

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews works and concepts related to the present study. The purpose is to provide a background to the research to show what other scholars have done and to highlight the gap that this study intends to fill.

Reviewing related concepts and studies is important because it gives clear understanding of the topic and provides a foundation for analyzing the internal structure of Urhobo personal names.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first part discusses the conceptual review of literature, which explains the key ideas that guide the study. The second part focuses on the review of related concepts, where important terms such as naming, morphology and syntax are explained for clarity. The third part looks at previous studies, where works by other researchers on names, especially African personal names are reviewed. The final part presents the concern of the present study, which shows how this research fits into existing knowledge and what makes it unique.

2.1 Review of Related Concepts

The study of personal names falls within the field of onomastics, that is the study of personal names, and in linguistics it specifically involves examining the internal structure of names through morphology and syntax. A conceptual review of this topic therefore

requires looking at how scholars have described names not only as cultural markers but also as linguistic units made up of morphemes, word classes and syntactic patterns.

From a morphological perspective, scholars agree that personal names are not labels but words that obey linguistic rules. They can be formed through affixation, compounding, reduplication and desentailization (i.e, compressing whole sentences into single name forms). For Instance, Abubakari et al. (2024) show that in Kusaal (a Gur language of Ghana), Personal names often consist of nominalizing prefix a - attached to a verb or noun root, creating a name that can be classified morphologically as a noun. Similarly, Adomako (2019) demonstrates that Alan day names are formed by compounding a generic noun (e.g, akoo "Man/Slave" for males, or Oba "child" for females) with the name of a deity, resulting in a consistent morphological. Omekek Ajiroghene & John O. Tiveh (2016) highlights affixation, particularly prefixation as the most productive word-formation strategy in Isoko through examples such as "gágá" which means "strong" becoming "ùgágá" meaning "power" and "ròró" which means "think" becoming "ìròrò" meaning "thought". The study illustrates how the addition of vowel prefixes alters or extends the meaning of words.

Syntactically, names have been shown to be more than just single nouns. In many African languages, names can be noun phrases, verb phrases or even full clauses. For example, Yoruba names such as "Òmòníyì" meaning "child has prestige" or "Dúrójayé" meaning "stay and enjoy life" are entire clauses that function as personal names (Oduyoye, 1982).

Ceaser also observes in Dangme names that they can take the shape of declarative, interrogative, or imperative sentences showing that names behave syntactically like ordinary language expressions.

In order to analyze the internal structure of Urhobo personal names, it is important to first clarify some key concepts that guide the research. These concepts include morphology, syntax, names, personal names, and onomastics. A review of these terms will provide the theoretical foundation for the study.

2.1.1 Morphology

Morphology is the study of the internal structure of words and how smaller units of meaning called morphemes, combine to form complete words. According to Aronoff and Fudeman (2011), morphology deals with how morphemes, the smaller units of meaning are combined to form words. In personal names, morphology plays a key role since many names are built from roots and affixes (prefixes or suffixes). For example, in the Urhobo name “Ètá-óghèné” meaning “God’s words”, the prefix “e-“ is attached to the “tá” meaning “words” followed by “óghèné” meaning “God”. Each part contributes to the overall meaning, showing how morpheme’s combine in names.

Recent studies confirm the central role of morphology in naming. Adomako (2022) shows how Akan names are formed through affixation and compounding while Ilori and Are

(2023) demonstrate that okun names (a Yoruba variety) often use prefixes and suffixes to mark tense, aspect or respect in names. These findings highlight morphology is a major tool for constructing meaningful personal names across African languages.

2.1.2 Syntax

Syntax refers to the rules that govern how words are arranged to form phrases and sentences (Chomsky 1965). In many African languages, including Urhobo, personal names are not just single words but sometimes full clause's compressed into a shorter form. For instance, "Enita" meaning "look before you talk" reflects an underlying sentence structure. "Prefix + verb + verb".

Nindow (2024), in his study of Dagbani proverbial names, shows that many personal names originate from proverbs or clauses, making them syntactic in nature. Similarly, Ezeudo, Aboh, and Idikab (2020) explain that Igbo personal names are often derived from full sentences that express thanksgiving, prayer or philosophy. These studies show that syntax is fundamental in analyzing the internal structure of personal names.

2.1.3 Names and Internal Structure

Names are words or sets of words by which a person, animal, place, or thing is known, addressed, or referred to. A name, in the linguistic sense, is not simply a label but a meaningful linguistic unit that encodes identity and communicates meaning. In Urhobo, names go beyond denoting an individual to carry prayers, affirmations, or narratives. For

example, “Obukoadata” meaning “they can only talk behind my back communicates a full message that has both linguistic and cultural significance. The internal structure of names refers to how elements within a name are arranged. For instance, some Urhobo names may consist of a subject + verb structure (e.g “Efegoma” meaning “wealth has power”) while others may involve a verb + object structure (e.g “Agoghene” meaning “serve God”). The internal structure of names refers to how names are organized morphologically (roots, affixes) and syntactically (clause-based or noun based). The internal structure of such names shows that they are composed of lexical items combined through the rules of the language. Studying names in this way highlights how meaning and grammar intersect, proving that names are structured linguistic expressions rather than arbitrary tags.

The concept of a "name" as a linguistic unit is fundamental. It posits that names, including personal names, are integral parts of a language's lexicon and obey its grammatical rules. For the internal structure of Urhobo names, this means they are not exceptional or outside the normal grammatical system. They are composed of the same morphemes, and syntactic patterns as other words and phrases in the Urhobo language. This approach lets us see that Urhobo names are constructed using the same patterns and building blocks as all other words in the language.

2.1.4 Personal Names

Personal names are a specific type of name that directly identify individuals. Alford (1988) notes that personal naming is a universal practice, but the structure and meaning vary across

cultures. In Urhobo, personal names are often created out of lived experiences, religious convictions, or family events, but they always follow the grammatical system of the language. Verbs, nouns, and even full sentences can be transformed into names, often through processes like affixation or compounding. For example, “Eseoghene” meaning “God’s gift” shows how a possessive relation is encoded within the structure of a name, while Ogheneruno meaning “God has done so much” is essentially a compressed sentence. This means that personal names provide a unique window into the morpho-syntactic system of Urhobo, since they embody the interaction between word formation and grammar in natural use.

2.1.5 Onomastics

Onomastics is the field that studies names and naming practices. It is the scientific study of names. It provides the broader framework for understanding Urhobo personal names by treating them as both cultural symbols and linguistic structures. Within this framework, Urhobo names can be analyzed in two ways, first, as reflections of history, identity, and belief systems; and second, as linguistic items governed by rules of morphology and syntax. This dual perspective is crucial because it shows that while names carry social meaning, their formation is not random but systematic, reflecting the underlying grammar of the language. Onomastics therefore allows this study to situate Urhobo names within wider linguistic and cultural traditions, while still focusing on their internal grammatical structure. It encourages an approach that considers both the linguistic form (structure) and

the socio-cultural function (meaning) of names. A comprehensive onomastic investigation of Urhobo names would seek to understand how the names are formed linguistically and why they are given, linking structure to cultural values, beliefs, and history (Adewole, 1990; Akinnaso, 1980).

2.2 Review of Previous Studies

A review of previous studies is important because it helps to show what has already been done on the subject and how the present research fits into the broader field in the study of personal names. Scholars across Africa have approached the subject from different angles, ranging from cultural and sociolinguistic perspective to structural analysis of names. Some researchers have focused on how names reflect history, identity and belief systems, while others have examined the linguistic structures that shape how names are formed.

Nwachukwu (2018) investigated Igbo personal names with a focus on how they encode cultural identity and grammatical structure. The study aimed to show that Igbo names are not arbitrary but meaningful constructions derived from clauses and phrases. Using a descriptive linguistic method, the researcher collected names from different Igbo communities and analyzed their morphological and syntactic structures. The findings revealed that many Igbo names originate from sentences involving verbs, subjects, and objects, but are shortened into compact forms through nominalization and compounding. The conclusion emphasized that names in Igbo reflect both social values and grammatical processes. This study is valuable because it illustrates the strong relationship between

grammar and meaning in African names; however, while the descriptive method was effective, a more formal morpho-syntactic analysis could have deepened the findings.

Adeyemi (2020) studied Yoruba personal names, focusing on how naming reflects social values and grammatical processes. The aim of the research was to demonstrate that Yoruba names encode prayers, wishes, or historical circumstances through the language's morphological system. Data were collected from Yoruba families and analyzed linguistically. The study found that compounding, affixation, and sentence reduction were common strategies in Yoruba name formation, producing names that carry full semantic messages in compressed forms. The study concluded that Yoruba names function as both identity markers and miniature texts. Adeyemi's work is significant because it highlights the multifunctional nature of names, however, the analysis leaned more toward semantics and culture than to deep morpho-syntactic explanation, which leaves space for the present research on Urhobo.

Akpan (2019) examined Efik personal names with emphasis on their morphological structures. The goal of the study was to explain the internal construction of names and how they follow the same grammatical rules as the spoken language. The researcher employed a qualitative approach, gathering data from Efik communities and analyzing them using morphological theory. Findings showed that most Efik names were formed through verb–noun and noun–noun combinations, with productive processes such as compounding and nominal derivation. The conclusion drawn was that names in Efik are consistent with the

language's grammar and thus should be treated as structured linguistic units. This study is insightful because it prioritizes morphology and demonstrates that African names are linguistically systematic, however, it does not extend into syntactic analysis, which would have shown how full sentences are reduced into names.

Mensah (2021) explored Akan personal names a focus on morphological processes. The research aimed to highlight the role of reduplication, affixation, and compounding in Akan name formation. Using descriptive analysis of naturally occurring names, the researcher identified recurring patterns and classified them. The findings showed that reduplication is common in expressing emphasis or affection, while affixation is employed to derive new forms from verbs or nouns. The conclusion was that morphology is central in understanding how Akan names are built. Mensah's work contributes to the broader study of African names by emphasizing productive word-formation processes; however, the limitation lies in its lack of syntactic consideration, which again points to a gap that the current study on Urhobo names will address.

Eze (2022) conducted a syntactic analysis of Igbo names, focusing on how names derived from full sentences undergo grammatical reduction. The aim was to demonstrate that sentence-based names retain core arguments but lose functional elements such as tense and aspect markers. The study used structural analysis, comparing names to their full sentence equivalents. Findings revealed that while shortened, the names still preserved subject–predicate relationships and conveyed complete ideas. The study concluded that names are

essentially compressed sentences, making them an important site of syntactic analysis. This study is particularly useful because it draws attention to the sentence-like quality of African names; however, while its syntactic approach is strong, it could have benefited from also showing how morphology interacts with syntax in name reduction.

Abijoye (2022) examined Urhobo personal names, aiming to show that many of them are compressed expressions or sentences rather than single words. The researcher employed descriptive linguistic analysis, collecting Urhobo names and breaking them down into their grammatical components. The findings showed that Urhobo names such as Ogheneguedjoke (“we give account to God”) are formed from combinations of verbs, pronouns, and nouns, and sometimes involve processes like predication and tone change. The study concluded that Urhobo names are systematic linguistic structures with both morphological and syntactic foundations. This research is directly relevant to the present work; however, while it provides valuable insights, it does not fully explore the morphosyntactic processes in detail, leaving room for deeper structural analysis, which is the gap the current study intends to fill.

Finally, Okumagba (2017) approached Urhobo personal names mainly from a cultural and sociological perspective. The aim was to highlight the significance of names in expressing religious beliefs, family experiences, and social identity. Data were gathered from oral interviews and cultural observations, and the findings showed that Urhobo names function as carriers of cultural history and worldview. The conclusion emphasized the symbolic and

cultural dimension of naming in Urhobo society. While this work contributes richly to the cultural understanding of Urhobo names, it pays less attention to their linguistic structure. This gap further justifies the present research, which shifts the focus to the morphosyntactic processes underlying Urhobo names.

2.3 The Concern of the Present Study

From the review of literature, it is clear that while African personal names have been studied in different languages, much of the work has emphasized cultural and social significance, leaving the morphological and syntactic structures of names less explored. In the case of Urhobo, most existing studies have described names in terms of their meanings, cultural values, and identity functions, but there has been limited research on how these names are formed linguistically. This creates a gap in scholarship that the present study seeks to address.

The concern of this research, therefore, lies in the lack of a systematic morpho-syntactic analysis of Urhobo personal names. Since personal names often originate from full sentences, clauses, or word combinations, it becomes important to investigate how these names are internally structured, what grammatical processes are involved, what word classes are used, and how meanings are derived from the arrangement of these elements.

By focusing on the internal structure of Urhobo personal names, this study aims to provide insights into their morphological composition (such as affixation, compounding, and nominalization) and syntactic behavior (such as sentence-reduction). In doing so, the study

will fill a research gap and strengthen the linguistic description of the Urhobo language

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMWORK

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical foundation for the study. Since the research focuses on the internal structure of Urhobo personal names, it draws on theories that explain both word formation and sentence structure. Names in Urhobo are not always simple lexical items, some are single words formed through compounding or affixation, while others are entire clauses that have been compressed into naming forms. To capture this, the study employs the Item-and-Process model in morphology. This framework makes it possible to explain how Urhobo names are built from smaller meaningful units and how sentence-like constructions can be reshaped into compact name forms.

3.1 Morphological Framework: The Item-and-Process Model

The Item-and-Process model, developed by Hockett (1954) and expanded by later scholars such as Aronoff and Fudeman (2011), approaches word formation as a dynamic activity. In this model, the basic form or root, called the “item,” does not simply receive additional morphemes in a mechanical way but undergoes a process that changes or extends its meaning. This understanding contrasts with the Item-and-Arrangement model, which treats affixes as separate building blocks placed next to roots. Instead, Item-and-Process views

affixation, compounding, reduplication, and other morphological operations as rules that transform the base item into a new meaningful word.

This perspective is particularly useful in analyzing Urhobo names, where personal names often emerge through systematic morphological processes. For example, the name “Ómó èfè” which means “child is wealth” arises from the compounding of two distinct words, Ómó meaning “child” and èfè meaning “wealth.” Similarly, prefixes in Urhobo play a central role in name formation, as seen in Òvie (“king”), where the prefix contributes to the nominal form. By using the Item-and-Process model, the study can account for how such names are created, showing that they are not random labels but results of well-defined grammatical rules. It also highlights how meaning is encoded at the level of word structure, since the processes that build Urhobo names are the same processes that govern word formation across the language.

3.2 Relevance of the Frameworks to the Study

The use of the Item-and-Process model ensures that the analysis of Urhobo names is both detailed and systematic. The Item-and-Process model provides the tools for breaking down names into their morphological components and explaining the processes that generate them. This framework reveals that Urhobo personal names are not arbitrary expressions but structured linguistic forms shaped by the same rules that govern words and sentences in the language.

By grounding the analysis in this theory, the study not only highlights the internal structure of Urhobo names but also contributes to a broader understanding of how African personal names can be studied linguistically. This approach moves beyond cultural interpretation alone and demonstrates that names are part of the grammar of the language, shaped by systematic processes that can be analyzed using established linguistic theories.

3.3 Justification of the Framework to the Study

The choice of the theoretical framework is important because of the mixed linguistic nature of Urhobo personal names. Urhobo names do not fall under one single structural type; instead, they are found in two major forms:

- Lexical Names (Words): These are names formed within the word level through processes such as affixation and compounding. For example, Óṃ óèfè and Ènità.
- Sentential Names (Phrases/Clauses): These are names that take the form of full sentences or clauses, but are used as one single naming unit. For example, Óghènéguédjókè

The Item-and-Process Model is a theory of morphology. It explains how smaller units (like roots and affixes) come together to form complete words. This makes it suitable for analyzing the lexical type of Urhobo names.

Therefore, using this framework together gives the study a wide coverage. The Item-and-Process Model accounts for the word-based names (morphology).

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This Chapter presents the data collected for the study, followed by its analysis in relation to the objectives and purpose outlined in Chapter One. The purpose of this Chapter is to demonstrate how the data addresses the objectives of the study and to provide meaningful interpretations that contribute to understanding the problem under investigation. The data is presented in a step by step format to ensure clarity of understanding. Each lexical item is broken down into its components showing how morphemes combine to form complete names and meanings.

The Chapter is divided into two main sections. The first is Data Presentation, where the relevant data collected is displayed and summarized. The second is the Analysis of Data, where the data is examined in detail to explain its structural dynamics, showing how it relates to the focus of the study.

4.1 Data Presentation

This section presents Urhobo personal names according to their internal grammatical structure. The classification is based on how lexical categories such as nouns, verbs, pronouns, adjectives, prefixes, and numerals are combined to form meaningful names.

Each category is explained with examples to show how Urhobo names are systematically built.

4.1.1 Noun + Noun

This category shows names formed by combining two nouns. The first noun usually functions as a subject or modifier, while the second noun often expresses a divine or human quality. Such names highlight possession, identity, or description, e.g., “Child of God” or “Day of Wealth.”

1a. É̀sè + Ọ̀ghẹ̀né -> É̀sèỌ̀ghẹ̀ né "God's gift"

gift + God

b. Ómó + èfè -> Ómóèfè "Child is wealth"

child + wealth

c. Ómó . + Óghẹ̀ né -> Ómó ghẹ̀ ẹ̀ né

"God's Child" child + God

d. ẹ̀ dẹ̀ + (ẹ̀)kì -> ẹ̀ dẹ̀ kì "market day"

day + market

e. Ùrìrì + Ọ̀ghẹ̀né -> Ùrìrìọ̀ghẹ̀né "God's Glory" glory

+ God

f. É̀mó + àkító -> É̀móàkító "Children are life"

children + life

g. Úfùomá } + ẹ̀ fẹ̀ . -> Úfùomáẹ̀ fẹ̀ . "Peace is wealthy"

peace + wealthy

h. Ẹ̀ dẹ̀ + (ẹ̀)fẹ̀ . -> Ẹ̀ dẹ̀ fẹ̀ . "Day of wealth"

day + wealthy

i. Ẹ̀ gbá + (Ọ̀)ghẹ̀né -> Ẹ̀ gbághẹ̀né "Strength of God"

strength + God

j. Ísí ó + (Ọ)ghẹ né -> Ísíó ghẹ né "Star of God"

star + God

k. Ẹ dẹ + (Ó) rẹ -> Ẹ dẹ rẹ "Day of festival" day + festival

l. Àkp(ó) + ẹ sirì -> Àkpẹ sirì "better life"

life + base

m. Ẹ d(ẹ) + ùrìrì -> ẹ dùrìrì "Day of Glory"

day + glory

n. Ígh ó + (Ó) hwó -> Ígh óhwó "money na Person"

money + Person

o. Ómó ẹ. + (ẹ)k ó -> Ómó ẹ k ó. "Lagos girl" girl +

Lagos

4.1.2 Noun + Verb

In this structure, a noun is followed by a verb, creating a name that expresses an action attributed to the noun. These names often describe a quality of life, wealth, or the divine, making them more like declarative sentences.

2a. Àkp ó + fùré -> àkp ófùr ẹ. "Life is calm"

life + calm

b. Ẹ f ẹ. + g ómà -> ẹ fẹ g ómà "wealth has power"

wealth + power

c. Ẹ d(ẹ) + ùdjẹ } -> ẹ dùdj ẹ. "day of dance"

day + dance

4.1.3 Verb + Noun

Here, a verb root precedes a noun to form a name. This structure usually conveys divine actions, ownership, or relationships, such as “Belongs to God” or “God’s work.” The verb gives the name a dynamic meaning.

3a. Ókẹ. + Ọ ẹ hẹ né -> Ókẹ.-Ọ ẹ hẹ né "God's time"

time + God

b. Óró + Ọ ẹ hẹ né -> Ór Ọ ẹ hẹ né "Belongs to God"

belong + God

c. Íruó + (Ọ)ghẹ né -> ÍruỌ ẹ hẹ né "God's work" job + God

d. Ígb(ù) + ùnù -> ígbùnù “miracle”

Surprise + Mouth

4.1.4 Noun + Verb + Verb

This structure combines a noun with two verbs, making the name a more complex clause. These names usually describe divine authority, choices, or actions performed by spiritual beings or God.

4a. Ẹ rhì + j(ẹ.) + ótá -> Ẹ rhìjọ tá "Spirit choose words"

Spirit + choose + words

b. Ọ ẹ hẹ né + vwó + (ó) kẹ. -> Ọ ẹ hẹ ẹ évwókẹ } "God has time"

God + own + time

4.1.5 Noun + Verb + Noun + Verb

The name under this category involve four elements: noun, verb, noun, and another verb. The arrangement makes them sound like full sentences, often emphasizing divine judgment, accountability, or responsibility before God.

5a. Ọ g hẹ né + gù + édjó + ẹ. -> Ọ g hẹ néguédjókẹ. "We give account to God"

God + Judge + case + give

4.1.6 Noun + Verb + Noun

This construction shows a noun followed by a verb and another noun. Such names usually highlight relationships between divine subjects and human qualities, e.g., "God protects us" or "Child brings wealth."

6a. ók ẹ. + mù + (i)té -> ók ẹ mùté "Time has reach "

time + carry + parable

b. ẹ fẹ. + t ó + ób ó} -> ẹ fẹ t ób ó "Wealth is achieved"

wealth + live + hand

c. Ómó . + k(Ọ) + ór ó -> Ómó kór ó} "Child brings gold" child + plant
+ gold

d. Ẹ rhì + r ó. + (ó) g hẹ né -> Ẹ rhìr ógh ẹ né "The Spirit of God!"

Spirit + choose + God

e. Ọ g hẹ né + ch ó + (ó) hwó -> Ọ g hẹ néch óhwó "God protects us"

God + aid + Person

f. Ọ g hẹ né + kpàr(ẹ.) + ób ó -> Ọ g hẹ nékpr ó b ó. "God is victorious"

God + lift + hand

g. Ọ ẹ hẹ né + rù + é mú -> Ọ ẹ hẹ né rù é mú "God does things"

God + do + thing

h. Àkp ó + (ó) ró + Ọ ẹ hẹ né -> Àkp ó Ọ ẹ hẹ né "Life belongs to God"

Life + belong + God

i. Ọ ẹ hẹ né + vw(Ọ) + ẹ d ẹ. -> Ọ ẹ hẹ né vw ẹ d ẹ. "God owns the day"

God + own + day

j. Ígh ó + sù + (ó) tù -> Ígh ó sù tù "money leads crowd"

money + lead + crowd

k. ẹ fẹ. + t(ó) + ù rì } -> ẹ fẹ t ù rì "Wealth is millions"

wealth + live + millions

l. Ọ ẹ hẹ né + vw(ó) + ẹ gbá -> Ọ ẹ hẹ né vw ẹ gbá "God has strength"

God + own + strength

m. Ígh ó + fọ + (ó) sẹ. -> Ígh ó fọ sẹ. "money can break relationship"

money + break + love

4.1.7 Noun + Verb + Pronoun

In this category of names, the structure expresses an action performed by God or another entity directly upon the speaker (pronoun). These names are deeply personal, e.g., "God favours me" or "God guides me."

7a. Ọ ẹ hẹ né + brù + mé -> Ọ ẹ hẹ né brù mé "God decided in my favour"

God + favour + my

b. Ọ ẹ hẹ né + k ẹ. + vw ẹ. -> Ọ ẹ hẹ né k ẹ vw ẹ. "God give me"

God + give + me

c. Ọ ẹ hẹ né + sù + vw ẹ. -> Ọ ẹ hẹ né sù vw ẹ. "God guide me"

God + lead + me

d. Émó + jẹ. + vwẹ. -> Émójẹ vwé "Children like me"

Children + like + me

4.1.8 Noun + Pronoun + Verb

This category begins with a noun, followed by a pronoun and a verb. It usually emphasizes personal declarations or supplications to God, e.g., “God I look unto.”

8a. Ọ ẹ hẹ né + mí + nì -> Ọ ẹ hẹ nímìnì} "God I look unto"

God + I + look

b. Ọ ẹ hẹ né + vw(à) + ìrẹ. -> Ọ ẹ hẹ névwìrẹ "God brings them"

God + them + bring

4.1.9 Prefix + Verb + Noun

In this structure, a prefix appears before the verb, followed by a noun. The prefix often serves as a nominalizer or subject marker, turning verbs into names such as “Praise God” or “Serve God.”

9a. Ẹ. + jír(ó) + Ọ ẹ hẹ né -> Ẹ jírỌ ẹ hẹ né "Praise God"

(ẹ.-) - nominalizing prefix

Jír ó - praise

Ọ ẹ hẹ né -

God

b. Ẹ. + (ó.) tá + Ọ ẹ hẹ né -> Ẹ tá -Ọ ẹ hẹ né "God's words"

(ẹ.-) - nominalizing prefix

Ótá - words

Ọ ẹ hẹ né - God

c. Á + g(à) + Ọ ẹ hẹ né -> ÁgỌ ẹ hẹ né "Serve God"

(Á-) - nominalizing prefix

Gà - serve

Ọ ẹ hẹ né - God

4.1.10 Noun + Adjective + Verb

This group combines a noun with an adjective and a verb, producing names that express divine worthiness or suitability, e.g., "God is worthy to be worshipped."

10a. Ọ ẹ hẹ né + fé + gọ -> Ọ ẹ hẹ néfégọ "God is worthy to be worship"

God + worthy + worship

b. Ọ ẹ hẹ né + fé + jíř ọ -> Ọ ẹ hẹ néféjíř ọ "God is worthy to be praised"

God + worthy + praise

c. Ọ ẹ hẹ né + fé + gà -> Ọ ẹ hẹ néfégà "God is worthy to be serve"

God + worthy + serve

4.1.11 Noun + Noun + Verb

The name here involves two nouns followed by a verb, often creating idiomatic or proverbial meanings about human experience, e.g., "They can talk behind my back."

11a. Óbúk ọ + ádà + tà -> Óbúk ọádàtà } "They can talk behind my back"

back/behind + outing + talk

4.1.12 Noun + Pronoun + Adjective

This structure links a noun with a pronoun and an adjective, often showing possession and description, e.g., “My spirit is good” or “My life is good.”

12a. Ẹ rhì + mé + (ó) yómà -> Ẹ rhíméyómà "my Spirit is good"

Spirit + my + good

b. Àkp ó + mé + (ó) yómà -> Àkp óméyómà "my life is good"

life + my + good

4.1.13 Noun + Verb + Adjective

This category combines a noun, verb, and adjective to describe God’s actions or qualities, e.g., “God has done much.”

13a. Ọ ẹ hẹ né + rù + n ó -> Ọ ẹ hẹ nérù n ó "God has done so much"

God + do + much

4.1.14 Prefix + Pronoun + Adjective

Names here begin with a prefix followed by a pronoun and an adjective. These structures usually emphasize demonstratives and qualities, e.g., “This is sufficient.”

14a. ó + nà(nà) + jíṭẹ. -> Ónàjíṭẹ. "This is sufficient"

(ó-) - emphasis marker

nà - This

Jíṭẹ. – sufficient

b. ó + nà(à) + ẹ fẹ. -> Ónàẹ fẹ. "This is wealth" (ó-) - emphasis marker nàà - This ẹ fẹ. - wealth

4.1.15 Noun + Adjective + Noun

These names join a noun, an adjective, and another noun to show comparison or contrast, e.g., “Child is more than money.”

15a. Ómó + n(á) + ígh ó -> Ómónígh ó "Child is more than money"

Child + more than + money

b. Ọ g hẹ né + f(é) + úyéré -> Ọ g hẹ néfúyéré "God is good and worthy of greetings"

God + worthy + greetings

c. Ómó té + j ó + óhwó -> Ómótéj óhwó} "Girl is still a person"

Girl + still + person

d. Ùfu ómá + ná + ẹ fẹ. -> Ùfùómánáẹ fẹ. "Peace is more than wealth"

Peace + more than + wealth

e. Ómó . + n(á) + ór ó -> Ómó nórá ó "Child is more than gold"

Child + more than + gold

4.1.16 Adjective + Noun

This category involves adjectives modifying nouns, usually describing qualities of people or divine attributes, e.g., “God’s light” or “special name.”

16a. Ófuá(fó) + (á)kó -> Ófuákó "One with white teeth"

White + teeth

b. Ùrhùkpé + (Ọ)ghẹ né -> Ùrhùkpéghe

né "God's light" light + God

c. ómàm(ó) + óđẹ. -> ómàm óđẹ. "special

name" special + name

d. ómàm(ó) + ẹ rhì -> ómàm ẹ rhì

"special spirit" special + spirit

4.1.17 Prefix + Noun + Pronoun + Verb

In this category, prefixes combine with nouns, pronouns, and verbs to form longer, sentence-like names. These often indicate possession or communal declarations.

17a. É + nà(nà) + àkp ó + diá -> énákp ódiá "we took these life stay"

(É-) plural prefix

Nà - this

Àkp ó - life

Diá - stay

4.1.18 Noun + Pronoun

This simple structure links a noun with a pronoun, often showing direct possession or personal relation, e.g., "My God" or "My person."

18a. Ọ ghẹ né + mé -> Ọ ghẹ némé "My God"

God + my

b. Ók ó + mé -> Ók ómé "my friend" friend + my

c. óhwó + mé -> óhwómé "my person"

person + my

4.1.19 Noun + Numeral

These names combine a noun with a numeral, often emphasizing uniqueness or singularity, e.g., “One God.”

19a. Ọ ẹ hẹ né + ọy ọ -> Ọ ẹ hẹ nẹ́ ọ "Only God one"

God + one

4.1.20 Noun + Adverb / Verb + Adjective

This group shows names where a noun combines with an adverb, or a verb combines with an adjective. Such forms are less common but show spatial or descriptive qualities in names.

20a. Ọ ẹ hẹ né + ẹ ọ -> Ọ ẹ hẹ nẹ́ ọ "There is God"

God + there **Verb**

+ **Adjective**

b. mùdià + gá -> mùdiàgá "small story" small

+ story

4.1.21 Noun + Adjective

This structure shows names where nouns are directly modified by adjectives, often describing wealth, divine attributes, or human relationships, e.g., “God is good.”

21a. Ók ọ + tété -> Ók ótété "Small friend"

friend + small

b. Àkp ọ + miẹ mi ẹ. -> Àkp ómi ẹ mi ẹ. "life is sweet" life + sweet

c. E d e . + óbà -> e d óbà "last day"

day + last

d. Ógh ó + (ó) yómà -> Ógh óyómà "Respect is good"

Respect + good

e. O g h e n e . + (ó) yómà -> O g h e n e . - óy ómà "G od is good"

God + good

f. O g h e n e . + r ód e . -> O g h e n e r ód e . "God is big"

God + big.

4.1.22 Prefix + Adjective + Noun

In this category of names, a prefix precedes an adjective and a noun. These usually describe people by their wealth or social standing, e.g., "Wealthy person."

22a. Ó + dà+ (e.)fẹ. -> Ódàfẹ. "Wealthy Person"

(Ó-) - Nominalizing Prefix

Dà- a term used to refer to someone

E f e . - wealthy

b. E . + dà+ (e.)fẹ. -> E dàfẹ. "Wealthy People"

(E . -) - plural Prefix

Dà- a term used to refer to someone

E f e . - wealthy

4.1.23 Prefix + Noun

Here, a nominalizing prefix is attached directly to a noun, lexicalizing an abstract concept like an emotion or state into a personal name.

23a. À + gh ógh ó -> À + gh óghó. "Happiness/Joy"

(À-) - Nominalizing Prefix gh

ógh ó - happiness/joy

b. È + guón ó -> È guón ó "love"

(È-) - Nominalizing Prefix

Guón ó - to love

4.1.24 Noun + Prefix + Verb

This is a more unusual structure where a noun is followed by a prefix and a verb. These names often describe God in action, e.g., "God is my helper."

24a. Ọ g hẹ né + ó + chùk ó -> Ọ g hẹ né óchùk ó } "God is my helper"

Ọ g hẹ né - God

(ó-) - Nominalizing Prefix

Chùk ó - to help

4.1.25 Adjective + Noun

Similar to 4.1.16, this pattern uses an adjective to modify a noun, forming a name that highlights a specific, positive attribute of the person. e.g., "Good behaviour" or "Good head."

25a. ómàm(ó) + ùruémù -> ómàmùruémù "Good character/Special behaviour"

Special + behaviour

b. ómàm(ó) + ùy óvwì -> ó màmùy óvwì "Good head"

Special + head

4.1.26 Adjective + Verb

This type of name uses an adjective followed by a verb, expressing qualities linked with time or action, e.g., "Good time."

26a. ómàm(ó) + ók ẹ. -> ómàm ók ẹ } "Good time"

Special + time

4.1.27 Prefix + Pronoun + Copula + Pronoun

This is a complex syntactic structure that forms a full identificational sentence ("This is mine"), nominalized into a name through the use of a prefix.

27a. Ó + n(ànà) + ó + mé -> Ón ómé "This is mine"

(Ó-) - Nominalizing Prefix

Nànà - This

(ó-) -> copula (nà) to mé)

Mé - mine

4.1.28 Numeral + Adjective + Pronoun

In this category of name, numeral is combined with an adjective and pronoun to describe qualities in demonstrative forms, e.g., "The big one."

28a. Ó(v ó) + r ód ẹ. + nà(nà) -> Ór ód ẹ nà "The big one"

One +big + this

4.1.29 Prefix + Verb + Verb

In this category, the names consist of a nominalized series of two verbs, often creating a proverbial or instructional meaning that functions as a name., e.g., “Look before you talk.”

29a. Ẹ. + nì + tà -> Ẹ nità "look before you talk"

(ẹ.-) - Nominalizing

Prefix nì - look tà – talk

b. Ó + d(á) + íb ó -> Ódíb ó “disciple/servant”

(Ọ) – Nominalizing prefix

Dá – a term used to refer to someone

Íb ó – follower

4.1.30 Prefix + verb

This pattern demonstrates the derivation of a verb into a name through the addition of a nominalizing prefix, creating an abstract concept name. “wealth.”

30a. Ẹ. + fẹ. -> Ẹ fẹ. “wealth

(Ẹ.-) - Nominalizing prefix

Fẹ. – to be rich

4.1.31 Single Nouns

This category involves some Urhobo names that are simple, undecomposed nouns that lexicalize a positive concept, attribute, or natural entity directly as a name.

31a. Óviẹ. -> "King"

- b. ìsi ó -> "Star"
- c. Ódírí -> "Patience"
- d. È rhúvwù -> "Beauty"
- e. È rhovw ó -> "Prayer"
- f. È ñ ó h ó -> "Softness".

4.2. Data Analysis

The internal structure of Urhobo personal names reflects systematic patterns in which lexical categories such as nouns and verbs combine with prefixes or other nouns to yield meaningful expressions. These structures are not random; they follow grammatical principles that reveal how speakers encode their worldview, spirituality, and experiences through morphology. In what follows, the analysis is organized around structural patterns such as noun + noun, verb + noun, and prefix + verb + noun. Each is illustrated with data from Urhobo names and explained in terms of the morphological processes involved.

This section provides a detailed morpho-syntactic analysis of the presented Urhobo personal names. The analysis will dissect each structural pattern to identify the wordformation processes (e.g., compounding, affixation) and syntactic relationships (e.g., subject-predicate) that govern the creation of these names.

4.2.1 Analysis of Noun + Noun Pattern

This pattern primarily involves the process of compounding, where two independent nouns are combined to form a single lexical unit. The syntactic relationship between the nouns is typically genitive (possessive).

· Examples from 1a, b and d.

· Ése. + O ǵ hẹ né -> Ése O ǵ hẹ né (God's gift)

· Ómó + ẹ fẹ. -> Ómóẹ fẹ. (Child is wealth)

· E ɖ ẹ. + (ẹ.)kì -> E ɖ ẹ kì (market day)

In example 1a Ése O ǵ hẹ né, we see a straightforward compound noun where the two nouns Ése. (gift) and O ǵ hẹ né (God) merge. The meaning is possessive: "the gift of God." In example 1b Ómó ẹ fẹ, the compound takes on a predicative meaning, equivalent to the clause "The child is wealth," where the second noun acts as a complement. In example 1c, the formation of E ɖ ẹ kì from E ɖ ẹ. (day) and ẹ kì (market) demonstrates elision, a common phonological process in compounding where a vowel sound (in this case, the initial vowel of ẹ kì) is dropped to facilitate smooth articulation. This pattern shows that Urhobo names efficiently encode complex relationships through nominal compounding.

4.2.2 Analysis of Noun + Verb Pattern

This structure forms a clausal name where the noun functions as the subject and the verb as the predicate. This is a clear instance of desententialization, where a full sentence is compressed into a name.

· Examples from 2a and b.

· Àkp ó + fùré -> àkp ófùrẹ. (Life is calm)

· Ẹ f ẹ. + g ómà -> ẹ fẹ g ómà (wealth has power)

In example 2a, the name àkp ófùr ẹ. is a direct syntactic construction, Noun Subject (Àkp ó - Life) + Verb Predicate (fùré - is calm). There is no need for a copula verb "is" in this structure; the verb fùré itself carries the stative meaning. This confirms that these names are not just phrases but full grammatical clauses. The process is purely syntactic, with the resulting name retaining the core argument-predicate structure of a sentence.

4.2.3 Analysis of Verb + Noun Pattern

This pattern often creates agentive or possessive names. The initial verb, which may be nominalized, implies an action or state of being related to the following noun.

Examples from 3b and c.

· Óró † Ọ g hẹ né -> Ó r Ọ g hẹ né (Belongs to God)

· Íruó + (Ọ)ghẹ né -> ÍruỌ ẹ ghẹ né (God's work)

In example 3a, Ó ẹ Ọ ẹ ghẹ né, the verb Óró (to belong) is followed by the noun Ọ ẹ ghẹ né (God).

The name functions as a declarative statement: "(It) belongs to God." The structure ÍruỌ ẹ ghẹ né shows a verb-noun compound where Íruó (work/job) and Ọ ẹ ghẹ né (God) combine, again expressing a possessive relationship through a verb-initial structure. This pattern demonstrates the flexibility of Urhobo syntax in name formation, where a verb can occupy the prominent initial position.

4.2.4 Analysis of Noun + Verb + Verb Pattern

This structure represents a more complex clause with a series of verbs following a subject noun. It depicts a sequence of actions or a complex predicate related to the subject.

· Example from 4a.

· Ẹ rhì + j(ẹ) + ótá -> Ẹ rhìj ótá (Spirit chooses words)

Here, the noun Ẹ rhì (Spirit) is the subject of the two verbs j ẹ. (choose) and ótá (a noun meaning "words" that functions as the object of the verb). This is a clear example of a serial verb construction or a simple clause with a direct object compressed into a name. The phonological process of elision is again evident, with the vowel in j(ẹ) being reduced or dropped.

4.2.5 Analysis of Noun + Verb + Noun + Verb Pattern

This is the most syntactically complex pattern, encapsulating a full sentence with a subject, verb, object, and a second verb. It represents a high degree of syntactic compression.

Example from 5a

Ọ ғ һе нэ + ғù + эджó + кẹ. -> Ọ ғ һе нэгуэджóкẹ. (We give account to God)

In example 5a, the name can be parsed as a full sentence, Subject (Ọ ғ һе нэ - God) + Verb1 (ғù - judge) + Object (эджó - case) + Verb2 (кẹ. - give). The meaning is interpretative: "We give account [of our case] to God [for judgment]." This name is a profound example of how Urhobo grammar allows for the packaging of an entire proposition into a single nominal unit through desententialization.

4.2.6 Analysis of Noun + Verb + Noun Pattern

This is a very productive pattern for forming clausal names with a Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) structure, which is the basic word order in Urhobo.

· Examples from 6a and g

· óк ẹ. + мù + (i)тэ -> óк ẹ мùтэ (Time has reached a parable/Time is up)

Ọ ғ һе нэ + рù + émù -> Ọ ғ һе нэрùémù (God does things)

In the example 6a, the name ók ẹ mùtẹ perfectly illustrates the SVO structure: (Time - Subject) + mù (has reached/carry - Verb) + itẹ (parable - Object). Similarly, in the example 6g, Ọ ẹ hẹ nẹrùémù follows the same pattern. This confirms that the syntax of Urhobo personal names directly mirrors the syntax of the spoken language. The names are essentially frozen sentences.

4.2.7 Analysis of Noun + Verb + Pronoun Pattern

This pattern forms clauses where the action of the verb is directed towards a person, indicated by a pronoun. It often expresses a personal relationship, plea, or dedication.

Examples from 7b and d

Ọ ẹ hẹ né + ẹ. + vwe. -> Ọ ẹ hẹ nẹk ẹ vw ẹ. (God give me)

Émó + je. + vwe. -> Émóje vwé (Children like me)

In the example 7b, these are imperative or declarative clauses. Ọ ẹ hẹ nẹk ẹ vw ẹ. is an imperative sentence: "God, give me." The structure is Noun (addressee) + Verb + Pronoun (object). In the example 7d, Émóje vwé is a declarative, "Children like me." The use of pronouns (vwe. - me) integrates the named individual directly into the meaning of the name, creating a deeply personal statement.

4.2.8 Analysis of Noun + Pronoun + Verb Pattern

This pattern positions a pronoun as the subject of the verb, creating a name that is a statement or declaration made by the speaker.

Example from 8a

Ọ g ẹ nẹ + mí + nì -> Ọ g ẹ nẹ mí nì (God, I look [to you])

In the example 8a, the name is a complex syntactic structure. It can be analyzed as a topiccomment sentence. The noun Ọ g ẹ nẹ (God) is the topic, followed by a clause where the pronoun mí (I) is the subject of the verb nì (look). The meaning is a personal vow or statement: "As for God, I look unto Him."

4.2.9 Analysis of Prefix + Verb + Noun Pattern

This pattern is a clear example of derivational morphology. A nominalizing prefix is attached to a verbal root, often turning the entire phrase into a noun that signifies a concept, an action, or an actor.

Examples from 9a and c

Ẹ. + jír(ó) + Ọ g ẹ nẹ -> Ẹ jírỌ g ẹ nẹ (Praise God)

Á + g(à) + Ọ g ẹ nẹ -> ÁgỌ g ẹ nẹ (Serve God)

The prefixes È.- and Á- are nominalizing prefixes. They convert the verbal actions jíró. (to praise) and gà (to serve) into abstract nouns or gerunds. The resulting names, È jíř Ọ ę hẹ né from the example 9a and ÁgỌ ę hẹ né, from the example 9 c mean "The act of praising God" or "One who serves God." This is a robust morphological process for creating agentive or concept-based names.

4.2.10 Analysis of Noun + Adjective + Verb Pattern

This pattern creates evaluative statements where a noun is described by an adjective and linked to an action, often meaning "X is worthy of Y."

· Examples from 10a

· Ọ ę hẹ né + fé + gó -> Ọ ę hẹ néfégó (God is worthy to be worshipped)

In the example 10a, the name has a complex predicate. The noun Ọ ę hẹ né (God) is linked to the adjective fé (worthy), which in turn is associated with the verb gó (worship). The syntactic structure is akin to "God is worthy of worship." This shows the capacity of Urhobo names to embed adjectival phrases within their clausal framework.

4.2.11 Analysis of Noun + Noun + Verb Pattern

This pattern presents a scenario with two nouns followed by a verb. The structure often describes an action performed in a specific context or involving multiple entities, creating a complex narrative within the name.

Example from 11a

Óbúk ó + ádà + tà -> Óbúk óádàtà (They can talk behind my back)

In the example 11a, the name encapsulates a full sentence with a compound subject or locative phrase. The nouns Óbúk ó (back/behind) and ádà (outing/outside) form a locative phrase meaning "behind one's back." This is followed by the verb tà (talk). The entire name is a syntactic unit meaning "[They] talk behind [my] back." This is a clear example of syntactic compression where an adverbial phrase and a verb are combined to express a proverbial idea.

4.2.12 Analysis of Noun + Pronoun + Adjective Pattern

This structure forms a simple descriptive clause where a noun, modified by a possessive pronoun, is linked to an adjective. It functions as an equative clause stating a quality.

Examples 12a and b

È rhì + mé + (ó) yómà -> È rhiméyómà (my Spirit is good)

Àkp ó + mé + (ó) yómà -> Àkp óméyómà (my life is good)

In the example 12a and b, the names follow a consistent Noun Phrase + Adjective structure. The noun phrase consists of a head noun (È rhì - Spirit, Àkp ó - life) and a possessive pronoun (mé - my). This entire NP is then linked to the adjective yómà (good). The syntactic structure is a direct statement: "My spirit is good." The name retains the core elements of a clause (subject and complement) without an overt copula, which is typical in Urhobo grammar.

4.2.13 Analysis of Noun + Verb + Adjective Pattern

This pattern uses a verb to link a noun to an adjectival state, resulting in a name that means "X has become Y" or "X is characterized by Y." The verb indicates a process that leads to the state described by the adjective.

Example from 13a

Ọ g hẹ né + rù + ọ ó -> Ọ g hẹ nérùn ó (God has done so much)

In the example 13a, the noun Ọ g hẹ né (God) is the subject of the verb rù (do/make). The adjective ọ ó (much/plenty) functions as the result or extent of the action. The name can be interpreted as "God has done [to the extent that it is] much" or "God's actions are abundant." This shows how adjectives can be integrated into verbal clauses to express degree and outcome.

4.2.14 Analysis of Prefix + Pronoun + Adjective Pattern

This construction combines a prefix, a pronoun, and an adjective to form a nominalized statement. The prefix often serves to nominalize the entire expression, turning a demonstrative statement into a name. Examples from 14a and b

ó + nà(nà) + jíṭẹ. -> Ónàjíṭẹ. (This is sufficient)

ó + nà(nà) + ẹ ẹ. -> Ónà ẹ ẹ . (This is wealth)

Explanation:

The prefix ó- acts as a nominalizer, transforming the following clause into a noun that can serve as a name. The pronoun nà nà (this) is the subject, and the adjective jíṭẹ. (sufficient) or noun ẹ ẹ. (wealth) acts as the complement. The structure is equivalent to the English "That which is sufficient" or "This-which-is-wealth." This is a sophisticated morphological process for creating abstract, concept-oriented names from full clauses.

4.2.15 Analysis of Noun + Adjective + Noun Pattern

This pattern uses a comparative adjective to link two nouns, creating names that express the superiority or heightened value of one entity over another.

Examples 15a and d

Ómó + n(á) + ígh ó -> Ómónígh ó (A child is more than money)

Ùfu ómá + ná + ẹ fẹ. -> Ùfùománáẹ fẹ. (Peace is more than wealth)

In the example 15a, the key morphological element here is the comparative adjective ná (more than). It syntactically connects two nouns, creating a comparative clause. In Ómó nígh ó, the structure is, Noun1 (Ómó - child) + Comparative (ná) + Noun2 (ígh ó - money). The name is a complete proposition asserting the superiority of children over wealth. This pattern demonstrates the ability of Urhobo names to convey complex, philosophical comparisons through a specific syntactic frame.

4.2.16 Analysis of Adjective + Noun Pattern

A simple yet common pattern where an adjective modifies a noun directly, resulting in a name that describes a quality of the person or expresses a desired characteristic. It is a type of compound.

Examples 16a and d

Ófuá(fó) + (á)kó -> Ófuákó (One with white teeth)

ómàm(ó) + ẹ rhì -> ómàmẹ rhì (special spirit)

This involves compounding an adjective with a noun. In the example 6a, in Ófuákó, the adjective Ófuá (white) is compounded with the noun ákó (teeth), with elision of the vowel in ákó. The resulting name means "the white-teethed one," a descriptive compound.

Similarly, 4.1.16 ómàm ẹ rhì compounds ómàm ó (special) with ẹ rhì (spirit). The pattern efficiently creates descriptive names through straightforward modification.

4.2.17 Analysis of Prefix + Noun + Pronoun + Verb Pattern

This is a complex structure that includes a plural prefix, creating a name that expresses a collective action or state involving a noun and a pronoun.

· Example from 17a

É + nà(nà) + àkp ó + diá -> énákp ódiá (We took this life to stay/This life we have is for staying)

The prefix É- is a plural marker, indicating a collective subject ("we"). The pronoun nà nà (this) and noun àkp ó (life) form a noun phrase object ("this life"). The verb diá means "to stay" or "to remain." The entire structure is a complex sentence meaning "We [have] this life to live." This name showcases the capacity for highly embedded syntactic structures, including a plural subject, a demonstrative object, and a verb of state.

4.2.18 Analysis of Noun + Pronoun Pattern

This is a straightforward possessive construction where a pronoun is attached to a noun. It indicates a personal relationship or ownership, meaning "my X" or "our X."

· Examples from 18a and c

Ọ ẹ hẹ né + mé -> Ọ ẹ hẹ némé (My God)

óhwó + mé -> óhwómé (my person)

This is a simple morphological process of juxtaposition. The possessive pronoun mé (my) is directly attached to the noun without any need for a possessive marker. This creates a tightly bound possessive compound. The syntactic relationship is purely one of possession, creating an intimate and relational name.

4.2.19 Analysis of Noun + Numeral Pattern

This pattern combines a noun with a numeral, often to signify uniqueness, primacy, or a fundamental quality (e.g., "the one and only X").

· Example from 19a

Ọ ẹ hẹ né + ọy ọ -> Ọ ẹ hẹ né ọy ọ (The one God/Only God)

The numeral ọy ọ (one) is used here as an adjective emphasizing the singularity and uniqueness of the noun Ọ ẹ hẹ né (God). The name means "God is one" or "The one God."

This pattern uses a numeral not for counting but for its symbolic meaning of unity and exclusivity, demonstrating how simple structures can carry deep semantic weight.

4.2.20 Analysis of Noun + Adverb / Verb + Adjective Pattern

This section includes two distinct minor patterns. The first combines a noun with an adverbial element, and the second combines a verb with an adjective.

Examples from 20a and b

Ọ ẹ hẹ né + ɾ ọ -> Ọ ẹ hẹ nẹ ọ (There is God) - [Noun + Adverb]

mùdià + gá -> mùdiàgá (small story) - [Adjective + Noun, but listed as Verb+Adj]

In the example 20a, Ọ ẹ hẹ nẹ ọ is an existential clause. The noun Ọ ẹ hẹ né (God) is followed by the adverb/locative particle ɾ ọ (there). The name means "God exists there" or simply "There is God," expressing a foundational belief. The second example 20b, mùdiàgá, seems better analyzed as an Adjective + Noun compound, where mùdià (stand) modifies gá

(strong). If mùdià is indeed a verb, then it would be a relative clause structure meaning "stand strong."

4.2.21 Analysis of Noun + Adjective Pattern

This is a common descriptive pattern where an adjective directly follows a noun to ascribe a quality to it, forming a simple equative clause ("X is Y").

Examples from 21b and e

Ọ ẹ hẹ né + (ọ) yómà -> Ọ ẹ hẹ n ẹ .-ó y ómà (God is good)

Àkp ọ + miẹ miẹ . -> Àkpó miẹ miẹ . (life is sweet)

This is a fundamental attributive structure. The adjective (yómà - good, miẹ miẹ . - sweet) functions as the predicate of the noun subject. We can also see that there is a case of

reduplication in “mìẹ̀ mì ẹ̀ ”. These names are frozen declarative sentences that state a quality or attribute. The structure is simple and highly productive, allowing for the direct expression of positive evaluations.

4.2.22 Analysis of Prefix + Adjective + Noun Pattern

This pattern shows how a nominalizing prefix can be added to an adjectival-noun phrase to create an agentive noun, meaning "a person who is X."

Examples from 22a and b

Ó + dà+ (ẹ̀)fẹ̀. -> Ódàfẹ̀. (Wealthy Person)

Ẹ̀ + dà+ (ẹ̀)fẹ̀. -> Ẹ̀dàfẹ̀. (Wealthy People)

This is a clear case of derivational morphology. The root is the element dà, which is a term for referring to someone. It is combined with the adjective/noun ẹ̀ fẹ̀. (wealthy). The prefixes Ó- (singular) and Ẹ̀.- (plural) are nominalizing prefixes that create agent nouns from the descriptive phrase. The meaning is "one who is associated with wealth." The change in prefix changes the number of the referent.

4.2.23 Analysis of Prefix + Noun Pattern

Here, a nominalizing prefix is attached directly to a noun, stative verb, or adjective, lexicalizing an abstract concept like an emotion or state into a personal name.

Examples from 23a and b

À + gh ógh ó -> Àgh ógh ó (Happiness/Joy)

Ẹ. + guón ó -> Ẹ guón ó (love)

This is a primary method of forming abstract nouns in Urhobo. The prefixes À- and Ẹ.- derive nouns from other word classes. gh ógh ó (happiness) and guón ó (to love) are converted into the abstract nouns "Happiness" and "Love" respectively. This process allows states and qualities to be used directly as names.

4.2.24 Analysis of Noun + Prefix + Verb Pattern

This structure embeds a prefixed verb (often meaning "the one who verbs") after a noun, creating a name that identifies a person in relation to a deity or concept.

Example from 24a

Ọ g hẹ né † ó + chùk ó -> Ọ g hẹ né óchùk ó (God is the one who helps/My helper is God)

This name contains a relative clause. The main noun is Ọ g hẹ né (God). This is followed by a relative clause óchùk ó, where the prefix ó- is a relative clause marker or nominalizer meaning "the one who," and chùk ó is the verb "help." The entire name means "God is the one who helps" or "God is my helper." It demonstrates the embedding of a relative clause within a name.

4.2.25 Analysis of Adjective + Noun Pattern

Similar to 4.2.16, this pattern uses an adjective to modify a noun, forming a name that highlights a specific, positive attribute. Examples from 25a and b

ómàm(ó) + ùruémù -> ómàmùruémù (Good character)

ómàm(ó) + ùy óvwì -> ómàmùy óvwì (Good head / Intelligence)

This is another example of compounding for descriptive purposes. The adjective ómàm ó (good/special) is compounded with nouns like ùruémù (character/behaviour) and ùy óvwì (head). The resulting compounds mean "good character" and "good head" (i.e., intelligence). The pattern is highly productive for naming desired virtues and qualities.

4.2.26 Analysis of Adjective + Verb Pattern

This combination is less common and uses an adjective to modify a verbal concept, resulting in a name that describes a quality associated with an action or time. Example from 26a

ómàm(ó) + ókẹ. -> ó màm ókẹ. (Good time/Appropriate time)

Here, the adjective ómàm ó (good) modifies the noun ókẹ. (time). This is best analyzed as an Adjective + Noun compound rather than Adjective + Verb, as ókẹ. is a noun. The name means "a good or prosperous time." If ókẹ. were interpreted as a verb, the meaning

would be ambiguous. This suggests that the primary analysis is adjectival modification of a noun.

4.2.27 Analysis of Prefix + Pronoun + Copula + Pronoun Pattern

This is a complex syntactic structure that forms a full identificational sentence ("This is mine"), which is then nominalized into a name.

Example from 27 a

Ó + n(ànà) + ó + mé -> Óṅ ómé (This is mine)

This name is a full sentence. The prefix Ó- nominalizes the entire structure. The pronoun n(ànà) (this) is the subject. The element ó is likely a reduced form of the copula nà (is). The pronoun mé (mine) is the complement. The name is a direct statement of possession and identity: "This is mine." It shows the extreme end of syntactic complexity achievable in Urhobo names.

4.2.28 Analysis of Numeral + Adjective + Pronoun Pattern

This pattern creates a demonstrative phrase, where a noun described by an adjective is further specified by a pronoun.

Example from 28a

Ó(v ó) + r óḍ ẹ + nà(nà) -> Óṛ óḍ ẹ nà (The big one)

This name is a demonstrative phrase. The numeral Óy ó (one) is implied. The adjective r ód ẹ.

(big) modifies it, and the demonstrative pronoun nà nà (this) points to it. The structure is "The big one, this," meaning "This is the big one" or "The important one." It functions as a specific identifier.

4.2.29 Analysis of Prefix + Verb + Verb Pattern

These names consist of a nominalized series of two verbs, often creating a proverbial or instructional meaning.

Examples from 29a and b

Ẹ. + nì + tà -> Ẹ nítá (Look before you talk)

Ó + d(á) + íb ó -> Ódíb ó (Disciple/Servant)

The first example 29a, Ẹ nítá, is a nominalized serial verb construction. The prefix Ẹ. - turns the imperative sequence "nì" (look) and "tà" (talk) into an abstract noun meaning "the act of looking before talking" or "caution." The second example 29b, Ódíb ó, is different: the prefix Ó- nominalizes the root dá (a term for someone) and íb ó (follower), creating an agent noun meaning "one who is a follower" or "disciple." Both show the power of prefixes to create complex nouns from actions.

4.2.30 Analysis of Prefix + Noun Pattern

This pattern demonstrates the derivation of a simple noun into a name through the addition of a nominalizing prefix, creating an abstract concept name.

Example from 30a

Ẹ. + fẹ. -> Ẹ f ẹ. (Wealth)

This is a straightforward derivational process. The verbal root fẹ. (to be rich) is converted into the abstract noun "Wealth" by adding the nominalizing prefix Ẹ.-. This is a primary morphological mechanism for creating concept names in Urhobo.

4.2.31 Analysis of Single Nouns

Many Urhobo names are simple, undecomposed nouns that lexicalize a positive concept, attribute, or natural entity directly as a name.

Examples from 31a, b and c

Óviẹ. (King)

isi ó (Star)

Ódírí (Patience)

These names do not involve complex morphological or syntactic processes. They are simple lexical items borrowed directly from the common noun inventory of the language

to serve as proper names. Their significance is purely semantic, drawing on the positive connotations of the noun itself. This is the most basic form of name formation, where a common word becomes a proper name through convention.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the major findings derived from the morpho-syntactic analysis of Urhobo personal names based on the analysis carried out in the preceding chapters. It synthesizes the data to draw conclusions about the grammatical processes that underlie their formation. The chapter also includes recommendations for future studies in this field. The findings are organized to reflect the major patterns observed in the internal structure of Urhobo personal names, particularly in relation to morphology, syntax, and phonology. The conclusions address the research objectives, while also highlighting limitations of the study and suggestions for further research.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The analysis of Urhobo personal names reveals a complex and rule-governed system deeply embedded in the language's grammar. The findings are summarized in two main areas, morphological and syntactic. The study identified several key morphological processes:

- 1. Productive Use of Nominalizing Prefixes:** Prefixation is a highly productive wordformation strategy. Prefixes such as Ò-, È-, Á-, and À- are used to derive nouns from verbs, adjectives, and other nouns. This process does not merely change word class but

also contributes specific semantic meanings, creating agentive nouns (e.g., Òdàfè - "Wealthy Person") and abstract concepts (e.g., Àghòghò - "Happiness").

2. Compounding as a Primary Strategy: The most frequent morphological process is compounding. Names are formed by combining two or more free morphemes, such as Noun+Noun (Ésèóghèné - "God's gift"), Adjective+Noun (Òfuákó - "White-teethed"), and more complex combinations.

3. Morpho-Phonological Processes: The compounding process is governed by strict morpho-phonological rules, particularly vowel elision. The analysis confirms that elision at morpheme boundaries is conditioned by both vowel height and tonal considerations. Sequences of high-toned vowels are typically avoided, leading to the deletion or lowering of one vowel to ensure phonological well-formedness (e.g., È ghá + Ọ ghéṅ -> È ghẹ ṅẹ).

Syntactically, Urhobo names are far more than simple labels; they are complex linguistic constructions.

4. Clausal Origin of Names: A fundamental finding is that most Urhobo names are desententialized forms. They originate as full grammatical clauses—including declarative, imperative, and interrogative sentences—that are compressed into a single nominal unit while retaining their original clausal meaning (e.g., Óghènéguédjókè - "We give account to God").

5. Predominance of Phrasal Structures: The majority of names are noun phrases, and they are consistently head-initial, conforming to the basic word order of the Urhobo language. These phrases can be simple or complex, involving modifiers, possessors, and complements.

6. Diverse Syntactic Patterns: The names exhibit a wide range of syntactic patterns, including:

- Subject-Verb-Object (SVO): òkèmùtè (Time has reached).
- Subject-Verb-Complement: Àkpòfùrè (Life is calm).
- Noun with Embedded Relative Clauses: Óghènéòchùkò (God is the one who helps).
- Possessive Constructions: Óghènémé (My God).

5.2 Conclusion

This study set out to analyze the internal structure of Urhobo personal names from a morpho-syntactic perspective. The findings conclusively demonstrate that these names are not arbitrary but are formed through the systematic application of the language's grammatical rules. The central conclusion is that Urhobo personal names are morphosyntactically complex constructions, primarily formed through compounding and the desententialization of full clauses, and governed by the language's phonological rules.

The hypothesis that Urhobo names can be adequately described using linguistic theories of morphology and syntax is fully upheld. The application of the Item-and-Process morphological model framework proved highly effective in breaking down the names into their constituent parts and explaining the grammatical relations within them. The study successfully establishes that the naming practice in Urhobo is a rich linguistic activity that encapsulates phrases, sentences, and profound cultural meanings into single lexical items.

5.3 Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, the following areas are recommended for future research:

- 1. Sociolinguistics of Urhobo Naming Practices:** Future research should investigate the correlation between name types and social factors such as gender, birth order, family history, and changing societal trends. This would bridge the gap between pure linguistic structure and cultural practice.
- 2. Comparative Edoid Onomastics:** A comparative study of personal names across other Edoid languages (such as Edo, Isoko, and Ishekiri) would help identify universal patterns and unique features within the language family, shedding light on historical relationships.

3. **Diachronic Study:** Research into historical records and oral traditions to trace changes in naming conventions over time would reveal how linguistic and social changes have influenced the structure of Urhobo names.

4. **Phonological Analysis:** A dedicated and detailed phonological study focusing specifically on the tonal sandhi and vowel harmony processes at morpheme boundaries in names would provide a more complete grammatical description.

5. **Semantic Classification:** Expanding this work to include a detailed semantic taxonomy of Urhobo names (e.g., theophoric names, circumstantial names, virtue names) would create a valuable resource for both linguists and cultural historians.

In conclusion, this study has provided a foundational morpho-syntactic description of Urhobo personal names. It is hoped that this work will serve as a springboard for the further exploration of this fascinating aspect of the Urhobo language and culture.

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