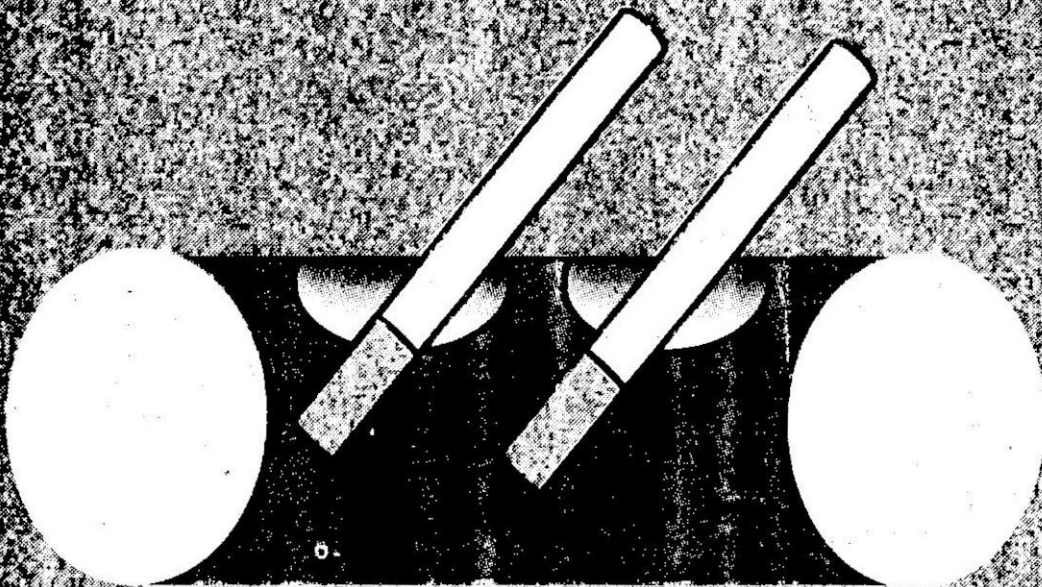


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# PREFIXATION AS WORD BUILDING STRATEGY IN ANNANG AND ENGLISH

By

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## ABSTRACT

*The poor performance of some Annang speakers of English in word building has assumed an alarming proportion. The complex strategies of word building in Annang and English, a distinctively two languages have hindered quick comprehension and creative ability of learners of English. This paper therefore examines prefixation, a strategy of word building in Annang and English, to highlight the similarities and differences, and to ascertain the extent to which knowledge of Annang word building technique can influence the performance of Annang learners of English. Sixty subjects were chosen from a geographical spread where Annang is spoken in Akwa Ibom state. An achievement test was designed to evaluate the knowledge of the respondents in word building strategies. The study identifies that Annang and English inflect and derive new words through prefixation but that the knowledge of Annang does not influence the performance of Annang speakers of English, for instance, Annang verbs are largely agglutinating, a phenomenon which is not common in English; and adjectives are pluralized in Annang but not in English.*

## INTRODUCTION:

Annang, a language of a geo-linguistic group of the people of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, comprises Abak, Essien Udim, Etim-Ekpo, Ika, Ikot Ekpene, Obot Akara, Oruk Anam and Ukanafun. Annang forms a cluster of dialects with Ibibio and Efik with which it is mutually intelligible, (cf Essien (1973), Udondatta(1993).

Halliday and Hassan (1989) describes dialects as

*a variety of language according to users. That is, the dialect is what you speak habitually, depending in principle on who you are; and that means where you come from, either geographically in the case of*

*regional dialects or socially in the case of social dialects, (p.4)*

Thus, Annang has dialectal varieties, spoken in geo-linguistic communities. Annang dialectal variants tend to differ not in the meanings they express but in the realization of these meanings at some grammatical levels. For instance, Abak and Oruk Anam communities contrast the voiced alveolar consonant (gliding consonant) [r] and the voiceless alveolar fricative [s] sounds to replace [i] and [t?]; however, the knowledge of Annang word building is important because its morphemes show significant links with other morphemes in the language through derivational and inflectional processes.

For instance, the root *dia* means *eat* but when the prefix *ndi* is added to form.

*ndidia* which means *food*, a new word is derived; and, the word class of the new word changes from verb to a noun which shows that there is a significant relationship between the morphemes. A morpheme can be said to be the smallest unit which is grammatically pertinent, (cf Eka (1996), Bauer (1989), Matthew (1974), Lyons (1965). Generally, linguists have come to a conclusion that word building is in a state of flux, thus making its mastery difficult to users (Bauer 1984). On the complex nature of word building, this study identifies prefixation as a problem area worthy of study. Prefixation is a process whereby morphological parts are usually added before the root/base words. Prefixation in Annang is mainly through the process of inflection and derivation. All the same, inflectional prefixation in Annang in most cases does result in a change of word classes; it produces different grammatical forms of the same word, examples:

- ❖ *mme* + *kpeb*(verb) (*teach*) = *mmekpeb*(*have taught*)
- ❖ *ke* + *irak*(preposition) *under* = *kirak* (preposition) *under*.

But derivational prefixation results in a change of word classes, examples:

- ❖ *i* + *rok*(verb) *harvest* = *irok* (noun) *harvest*.
- ❖ *ku*+*tia*(verb) *kick* =*kutia* (verb phrase)*don't kick*
- ❖ *i* +*fum* (verb) *fan someone* = *ifum* (noun) *seat*

This contrasts with English where inflectional prefixation results in a change of word class. English also inflects through the process of prefixation either to negate certain words or maintain grammatical classes. Examples:

- ❖ *en* + *danger* (noun) = *endanger* (verb);
- ❖ *en* + *courage*(noun) =*encourage* (verb)
- ❖ *co* + *equal* (adjective) = *co-equal*(adjective).

Finally, this study accounts for certain word building strategies in Annang and English, with the aim of recommending ways of improving the performance of Annang speakers of English with regard to word building.

### **Method of Data Collection for the Study**

An achievement test was designed to evaluate the knowledge of informants on derivational and inflectional prefixation in Annang and English word structures. Sixty (60) informants were selected through a simple random sampling method. The eight local government areas in Annang were stratified into three groups. Twenty informants were selected from each group with uniform spread in relation to age, gender and educational qualification. Since the researcher needed educated speakers of English and Annang languages who have a fair knowledge of prefixation in Annang and English, students of secondary schools, the Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua and undergraduates of the University of Uyo were our choice. To ensure that the informants administered the test items to were Annang English bilinguals, the researcher confirmed from each informant before conducting the tests. For our framework of comparison, we relied on the diachronic-synchronic model in the examination of data. This model is useful for this kind of analysis because we are also using the already existing rules of word formation prefixation. However, we limit our analysis of prefixation to the Orthography of Annang (2001), and Udondatta,(2006:60-72)

### **Inflectional Prefixation in Annang**

Like other languages, prefixation, one of the processes of affixation in Annang, is mainly through the process of inflection.



Those prefixes, however are morphological parts usually added before the root words. Naturally, the phenomenal characteristic of inflectional prefixation is that it can lead to a change of word class, and in most cases, it does not result in a change of word class of the root to which it is added. We observed that most of the grammatical properties in Annang are indicated by prefixes regularly attached to the verb roots and or noun stems.

### Nouns

Annang words inflect for nouns. Some of these nouns can be analysed under zero plural formation. For instance, a vowel prefix [a-] can be used to indicate singular noun while a syllabic nasal prefix [n-] can be used to indicate plural nouns. Besides, the prefixes [mmé] and [mmíán] can be used to indicate number prefixation in Annang.

Examples:

- á-kpáráwà (boy) singular
- m-kpáráwà (boys) plural
- mme-ébód many goats
- mmíán usan many plates

However, certain nouns which cannot take prefixes to form plurals can determine their number through the verbs or adjectives used in the sentence.

Examples:

- ❖ ntó íwá 'the act of planting cassava'
- ❖ mfia édón 'white sheep' (plural)

Again, certain nouns take zero plural morphemes. However, plurality of such words is determined through their usages in sentences.

Examples:

- ❖ ndidia áféed anyin ádèm
- ❖ 'This food is for all of you.'

In the above sentence, *n-di* morpheme is a noun forming prefix morpheme in Annang, thus, *ndi + dia = ndidia* (food). But the plural formation *ndidia* is determined in the context of *áféed anyin* a phrase which indicates a plural form - many people, 'all of you.'

### Verbs

In Annang, the non-proximates {*i-má, m-má; i-súk and i-yá, n-yá*} are sequences of morphemes prefix and root morphemes. They are often used in sentences as subordinate verbs. They are employed to indicate past, present and future times. Accordingly, {*i-má, m-má and i-yá, n-yá*} are examples of the modal auxiliary, 'will' while {*i-súk, n-súk*} are examples of the finite verb 'are'. The vowels prefix {*i-*} and the syllabic nasal prefix {*m-, n-*} indicate third person plural 'we', and the first person singular respectively.

Examples: *i-má-i-dép* we had purchased it.

- ❖ *n-súk-n-dép* I am buying it.
- ❖ *m-ma-dep* I had bought it.
- ❖ *n-da-dep* I shall buy it.
- ❖ *m-me-dep* I have bought it.

### Class Maintaining Prefixation

Certain Annang morphemes can inflect with some roots without a change in word class, example:

- ❖ *Ke-irák* (preposition) under
- = *kirák* (preposition) under.

### Derivational Prefixation in Annang.

Like other tone languages, Annang morphemes can be derived from verb radicals or roots which have CV or CVC syllabic structure. For instance, *nék*: 'dance' (CVC) and *dó*: 'marry' (CV). cf Udoudom (1996:97)

## Nouns and Nominals

Nouns and nominals can be derived from verb phrases or verb roots. This phenomenon is possible by prefixing the nominalizers {u-,i-,e-} to the verb phrases or verb roots, (cf Udoudom, 1996:97), as in the following examples:

- ❖ {u-}prefix + {sin}'put'  
= {ú-sin}'addition'
- ❖ {i-}prefix + {kpé}'judge'  
= {i-kpé}'a case'
- ❖ {e-}prefix + {nó}'give'  
= {ènó}'gift'

## Class Changing Prefixation:

In Annang, prefixes such as {m-,n-,i-,u-,ari-,aru-,} are usually attached to verb, adjective roots to derive class changing stems

Examples:

M +fèkké( be deformed)( V)	-	mfèkké(deformed person) (N)
m+kpèré (be near) (adj)	-	mkpèré(nearness) (N)
n+ná( be down) (V)	-	nná (place of rest) (N)
i +tiè (sit down) (V)	-	itiè (seat)(N)
a+ma(love) (V)	-	àmá (lover) (N)
a+sián (be proud)	-	asián (pride) (N)
u +tân(talk) (V)	-	útán(talking ) (N)
ari + tibé(prevent) (V)	-	aritibé(prevention) (N)
aru +sàd(discriminate) (V)	-	àrùsàd(discrimination) (N)

(Udondatta(2006:66-68))

## Inflectional Prefixation in English

Like Annang, English also inflects through the process of prefixation either to negate certain words or maintain grammatical classes.

### Negative Prefixes.

With appropriate roots, the prefixes {un-, in-,im-} can be used to form negatives in English.

- ❖ un + kind = unkind
- ❖ in + clement = inclement
- ❖ im + possible = impossible.
- ❖ mis+ manage = mismanage
- ❖ mal + treat = maltreat

### Class Maintaining Prefixes

Most prefixes can be considered in terms of the form of the grammatical class (of the base) to which they are added. Nevertheless, the majority of the prefixes can be added to bases of more than one form of grammatical class. However, Bauer (1987:216) has considered nouns, verbs and adjectives as familiar forms of grammatical classes for analysis.

### **Nouns:**

Many prefixes can be used exclusively with noun roots. Some are particularly added to human nouns to denote an extreme or pre-eminent person. Example:

- ❖ {arch}+ Bishop (N) = Arch-bishop.(N)
- ❖ {ex}+ president (N) = ex-president (N)
- ❖ {dis}+order (N) = disorder (N)
- ❖ {post}+ graduate(N) = postgraduate(N)
- ❖ {in}+ significance(N) = insignificance (N)

However, some prefixes are not longer productive. This is simply because all available noun roots have been used. Interestingly, most prefixes are used to denote immediate family circle, example:

- ❖ {step}+ father (N) = Step-father/ mother/ son / daughter.
- ❖ {grand}+child(N) = grandchild

### **Verbs:**

Prefixes used exclusively with verb roots are rare. Bauer (1987:218) is of the view that the morpheme {de} has a number of distinguishable meaning and is often in competition with {dis-} and {un-} when added to verb roots. Other prefixes such as {co-} can be added to the verb roots without a change of the form of grammatical class.

- ❖ {de-}+ boost = deboost (V)
- ❖ {co-}+ articulate = co-articulate(V)
- ❖ {mal}+nourish(V) = malnourish(V)
- ❖ {re}+assure (V) = reassure(V)

### **Adjectives**

Certain morphemes such as {extra-, a-,} can be used exclusively with adjective roots. For instance, {extra-}+ sensory = extrasensory. We observed that {a-} has replaced {un-} in daily usages. For instance, the term 'unpolitical' is often in use than 'apolitical.' Though the morpheme, {un-} is replaced for {a-} in certain roots, a few examples still maintain the prefix {a-}.

- ❖ {a-}+ moral (adj) = amoral(adj)
- ❖ {A}+ typical (adj) = atypical(adj)
- ❖ {un}+ kind(adj) = unkind (adj)
- ❖ {in}+ sincere(adj) = insincere (adj)

Besides, the prefix {co-} can be added to some adjective roots without a change in the grammatical class.

- ❖ {co-}+ equal (adj.) = co-equal (adj.)

### **Derivational Prefixation in English.**

Certain morphemes in English can be used as class-changing prefixes. Most of these prefixes which can be used to form transitive verbs are derived from nouns, adverbs, and

adjectives classes.

Verbs in English can be derived by prefixing {en-} to certain nouns

- ❖ en + slave(N) = enslave (V)
- ❖ en + trench(N) = entrench (V)
- ❖ en + sure (adj) = ensure (V)

Adverbs can be derived from nouns, adjectives and verbs with the prefix {a-} (cf Tomori (1977:36). •

- ❖ a + loud(adj.) = aloud (adverb)
- ❖ a + head (noun) = ahead (adverb)
- ❖ a + sleep(verb) = asleep (adverb)

Many free morphemes are often prefixed to various roots to derive varied word classes. Consequently, the core meaning of words prefixed often changes the meaning of the roots.

- ❖ new + born(V) = newborn (N)
- ❖ news+ worthy(adj) = newsworthy (N)
- ❖ easy + going(v) = easygoing (adj)
- ❖ new + found(v) = newfound (adj)
- ❖ hard + working(v) = hardworking (adj)
- ❖ relation + ship(N) = relationship (N)
- ❖ old + fashion (adj) = old-fashion (adj)
- ❖ extra+ marital(adj) = extra-marital (adj)
- ❖ cyber + cafe(N) = cybercafé (N)
- ❖ audio= cassette(N) audio-cassette (N)

### **Data Analysis/Result**

The results of the test items administered on the informants were meant to assess the informants' disposition to derivational and inflectional prefixation in Annang and English.

In Annang, four roots: '*dómó, diá, bióm and má*' were selected to test the informants knowledge of prefixation with the morphemes {kú}, {a}, {i}, {mme}.

With regard to English, four roots: '-phone, -cafe, -marital, -possible' were used to test the informants' ability to use the morphemes {tele, cyber, extra, im} as inflectional prefixes. We also observe in the study the tendency of a particular Annang morpheme to match with many roots, for instance, the morpheme {kú}, can prefix the roots {*dómó; bióm*} to function as imperatives. However, this phenomenon which is uncommon in English would not yield the result in the study. Details of the results of the informants' performance in English and Annang prefixation are shown in Tables (i, ii, iii, iv)

Table I inflectional Prefixation in Annang

Prefix	Root	Meaning	Stem	Meaning	No of Resp	Able	% able	Not able	% Not able
ku	diá	Eat	Kú-diá	Do not eat	60	40	67	20	23
a-	bióm	Carry	a-bióm	Is carrying	60	30	50	30	50
i-	má	Love	i-má	Love(n)	60	35	58	25	42
mmé	dóm	Measure	Mmé-dóm	I have measured	60	37	62	23	38

Table II Derivational Prefixation in Annang.

Prefix	Root	Meaning	Stem	Meaning	No of Resp	Able	% able	Not able	% Not able
m	fèkkè	Be deformed	m fèkkè	Deformed person (N)	60	45	75	15	25
ari	tíbè	Prevent (v)	áritíbè	Preventing (n)	60	37	62	23	38
a	síán	Be Proud(adj)	ásián	Pride (N)	60	44	73	18	27
u	táñ	Talk (v)	úñ	Talking(N)	60	38	63	22	37

Table III Inflectional Prefixation in English

Prefix	Root	Stem	No of Resp.	Able	%able	Not able	% not able
tele	-phone	telephone(N)	60	50	81	10	19
cyber	-cafe	Cybercaf (N)	60	49	82	11	18
extra	-marital	Extramartial(adj)	60	40	67	20	33
im	-possible	Impossible(adj)	60	46	72	14	28



Table IV Derivational Prefixation in English

Prefix	Root	Stem	No of Resp.	able	%able	Not able	% not able
New	Born(V)	Newborn(N)	60	40	67	20	33
A	Head(N)	Ahead (adv)	60	45	75	15	25
Easy	Going(V)	Easygoing(Adj)	60	42	70	18	30
A	Loud (Adj)	Aloud (adv)	60	38	63	12	37
New	Found(v)	newfound	60	39	61	21	39

### Discussion

In Table one, the informants' performance in the four test items may be considered satisfactory. The study item *diá* (eat) required the informants' knowledge of how to negate a verb with the prefix {kú}. An average of (67%) sixty seven percent of the study group gave the correct option: *kúdiá* (do not eat). We however noted that the (33%) thirty three percent of the informants who could not choose the correct option came from the secondary school category. Their inability to choose the acceptable option shows their poor knowledge of negation through prefixation.

Fifty percent (50%) of the informants tested on the item: *biom* (carry) showed understanding of inflection of verbs which was to change the tense class from present to present continuous, *á-biom* (carrying) This demonstrates the fact that Annang marks tense through prefixation. However, the difficulty of the (50%) fifty percent respondents who could not choose the right option may be attributed to the fact that the two languages mark tense differently.

Annang marks tense through prefixation while English does it through suffixation. Informants thus may have been more informed about English tense systems than Annang.

About (75%) seventy five percent of the respondents were able to derive new words in Annang. Derivational prefixation in Annang seems quite easy than inflection. Their ability to derive the items (*mfékké, àritíbé, àsián, útáñ*) showed a high degree of intelligibility in derivational processes in Annang. Generally, we observed among the secondary and few Polytechnic students that they had no knowledge of how to use tone marks. This perhaps influenced their inability to form the required options from the test items.

In English, we noted in Tables III & IV that informants showed a very high degree of intelligibility of the test items. An average of (70%) seventy percent of the respondents were able to form the options, ranging from test items: *cybercafe, telephone, extramarital, and impossible*, correctly. We observed that the high performance is because of qualified graduate teachers of English language who may have taught the students word formation in English. We noted that no

school in Akwa Ibom State teaches Annang as one of the school subjects. Thus, the informants depended only on their native speakers' intuition to select the correct prefixes for the Annang roots and stems. We recommend that Annang be taught in schools to enhance greater understanding of word formation strategies.

### Comparison and Predictions

A close study of prefixation in Annang and English has revealed differences between the two languages. Nouns in Annang receive marking for plural through prefixation which is done by alternating the vowel prefix {a-} for a syllabic nasal {n-} to get plural nouns. We observed that Annang tense system is realised through prefixation. This, the morpheme {mma-} is usually attached to the root verb to indicate non-proximate (indefinite) past tense as for example: 'mma kwok' 'I had swept.'

In contrast, English has a peculiar tense system which is realised through suffixation of the past tense {ed} morpheme, consequently, irregular verbs inflect for past tense by replacing the vowel root which is contrary to Annang past tense morpheme word formation. For instance, the word *drink*, an irregular verb which is expressed in the present tense can delete the vowel root morpheme {i} for {a} in *drank* to form past tense. Nevertheless, Annang, a typical Niger Congo cluster of languages, has complex inflection of verbs which are most agglutinating, example, *ányé-ámà-sé-dí*: (*He used to come*).

This phenomenon is not common in English. With these complexities of verb formation, Annang learners of English language find it increasingly difficult to understand English verbs. This is

obvious because the learner will first adopt the Annang verb formation system which is largely agglutinating, in writing English verbs. We recommend learners to learn each language verb system separately.

Adjectives are pluralised in Annang but not in English. We observed that the number relationship between adjectives and nouns in an utterance depend on the adjectives. For instance, English has '*white books*' while Annang has '*mfiá nwèd*'. With these illustrations, we noted that the number in English is indicated in the noun: books, while in Annang the number is indicated in the adjective, '*mfiá*'.

We observed that there are similarities between Annang and English word formation systems, though peripheral in nature. We noted a change of word class which is a typical outcome of a derivation. For instance, Annang prefixed {u}, {i} to the verb roots that bring about a change in word class. And, the situation is similar in English where {a} can be prefixed to certain verbs and adjective roots to bring about adverbs. Examples:

- ❖ **Annang:** dómó Tempt (verb)  
i-dómó temptation (noun)
- ❖ **English:** loud (adjective)  
Aloud (adverb)

### Conclusion:

The nature of Annang word formation strategies has shown that each morpheme has a single lexical meaning or grammatical function. This is true of agglutinating languages because each of the glued morphemes can be separated and they still make meaning. With the major differences that Annang inflects and derives new words mostly through the process of prefixation. English word formation processes indicate grammatical classes through suffixation. We recommend adequate exposure of Annang learners of English through competent

linguistic teachers and good learning facilities would surely enhance the learning of Annang morphology by Annang- English bilinguals.

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