

A Comparative Study of Term Formation Process in English and Igbo Languages

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ABSTRACT

Many languages have and use more terms than others in the areas of science, economics, business, religion and industry, due to their level of development. Igbo language, based on its level of development, is one of the languages that do not have enough terminology to express certain things and concepts from a target language during translation, and this has a great effect of its usage as it, as it, most of the time, hampers communication. Consequently, this study is set to examining certain possible techniques used in terms formation in English to ascertain its applicability in Igbo language. The study reveals that Igbo language cannot accept all the techniques of the term creation examined in this study, like; acronyms and sigla. This is as a result of the fact that Igbo language is still a developing language, unlike the English language.

Keywords: Term, Terminology, Term Formation

Introduction

Technique and strategies used in developing terms should also be seen as method of word formation. The branch of linguistic which deals with the description of this knowledge is called “morphology”. This part of language study that deals with word formation rules is known as derivational morphology (Akmajian, 2001).

In scientific domain, people are involved in language learning. The same way the biologists study the various form of animal and plants, Linguists study the form of words. In scientific lesson as Chemistry, when students undergoing the course understand what is signified by these suffixes: “-ic”, “-ous” and “-ate” in words like ‘nitric’, “nitrous” and “nitrate” and how to read the symbol like CO₂, the students have involved themselves in the use of Jargons specific to that domain. Here, the researchers are concerned with the terminology and its processes of development. A critical look at most of the terminologies used in various domain will reveal that there are processes and techniques in forming them.

Scientific languages often used by specific people in specific domains are words with western culture. Anyaechie (1997) posits that “Most sci-tech terms in indo-European languages have complex structures derived from Latin, Greek and Arabic Lexico-morphomic units”.

Terms are developed in a language and some languages have more terms than others due to their level of development. But something is certain, language users must device a means of generating terms to meet up with discussions of realities around their environment.

Terminology

Terminology is the study of terms that designate concepts. Terms refer to the special vocabulary used by an individual or a social group. According to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1978) “terminologies are the totality or system of specialized words and expression used in particular science, profession, activity etc”. Terminology may be seen as the science or theoretical study of concepts in a specialized area of knowledge. In the definition of Dubuc (1978) terminology could be seen as: “The art of identifying, analyzing and, if need be, of creating the vocabulary of a given technique in a concrete situation of functionality or usage in a manner as to respond to the expression needs of the users” (p.4).

Robert (1978) views terminology as a systematic study of terms used in naming classes of objects, concepts and general principles governing this study. From Dubuc's opinion, terminology can be seen as all the arsenal of means of expression peculiar to a domain of study. To him, terminology implies a function of research, of inventory, and of vocabulary in a given domain. While Petit Robert's view implies that terminology is a discipline or an area of study. Terminology concerns technical vocabularies which are observable in special fields. In terminology, the use of lexical units is more applicable than the use of words and for clarity in language, we rather talk of "terms" not just "words". Therefore, every discipline has its technical register as confirmed by Lyons (1979), so whether in arts, science or any other discipline, we need suitable terms in teaching, learning, naming and appreciating the concepts in our language.

Terminology and Translation

Terminology in the area of translation deals partly with creation and classification of new terms, mostly in finding the right target language terms to express the idea and objects represented by the source language terms. The act of replacing or re-expressing these ideas and objects found in the source language into the target language has involved translation. The translator in rendering a text from a source language to target language especially where he is dealing with technical texts, can never avoid making use of the terminologist's work in rendering his message. This he does by making references to compiled terminological cards, glossaries in specific areas, dictionaries in specific domains; he could resort to borrowing or creating new terms to fill the gaps. It is expected that these terms found in the source text must basically correspond with the target concepts in order to be acceptable. Supporting the above view, Rotislav (1985) in his words, remarks that:

Terms must be systematic, that is to say, distinct within a terminology system and adequately reflect the referent. They must be fixed by usage, their form and meaning being known and accepted by users. They should be non-ambiguous when used in specialized texts, therefore, polysemy, homonyms and synonyms are to be avoided (p.85).

Selected or created terms in translation work must be specific and transparent, so as not to add problem or mislead the reader or the target audience.

Based on the forgoing discussion, Anyachie (1997) in his tripartite classification sees terminology as "a science, a practice and as a product". Terminology as a science, he said is concerned with form and meaning. This branch takes care of formation, meaning and use of terms. Terminology as a practice involves the collection, collating, normalization, adoption and popularization of terms. The idea under this second branch is that a contract may be engineered and sponsored by the government, individuals, language centers, or non-governmental organizations, and when such contracts are instituted, it could involve:

- Finding the local equivalent of a foreign term in a given language,
- Giving names to a new product,
- Preparing publicity/propaganda slogans,
- Harmonizing the names of products and services in a given domain
- Writing and interpreting certain sensitive documents.

In this regard, America, France and some other Asian countries have created committees or bodies whose sole tasks is to create words for new inventions and concepts.

Terminology as a product, embraces the compiled documented terminology cards, glossaries, dictionaries of terms in specific areas and on-line terminology banks in a given domain.

We have seen that terms refer to the special vocabulary used by an individual or a social group. All the same, language is used by people with different academic and scientific backgrounds, as well as by experts with varying

technological knowhow. In this vein, the psychological and socio-cultural importance of language to man is manifested in his attempt to express his ideas about himself and about the world around him. On the basis of this, Adekule (1990) opines that:

Language guarantees man freedom not only to express himself and pictures the variegated features of his environment, but it also places at his disposal the capacity for giving full rein to his imaginative adventures (p.241).

Through language, interaction between friends and neighbours will improve and in turn enhance self development. Everything has a name and naming itself is not a problem, for naming is the basis of language. Rather, “it is the erroneous attitude about naming and the exaggerated influence of name that sometimes cause problems” (Condon, 1975)

Terminology and translations go hand in hand, it is usually important to translate when speakers of different language come in contact. What usually poses problem most time is finding the right word to replace a word from the source language to the target language. In the light of the above, due to the fact that most of the foreign languages are more developed than our indigenous languages, we have problem with translating because most concepts in English do not have Igbo equivalence. Hence, the need to get Igbo equivalence and this can be done by word formation techniques. Some scholars have done some works in areas of terminology formation (see Ezeuko, 2005, and Nwosu, 2010).

Approaches to Formation of Terms

There are various views by different authors regarding the formation of new terms. Word formation processes in English language according to Joanne (1991) includes: Coinage, borrowing, compounding, blending, clipping, acronyms, conversion and derivation, while in Meta Language Congress (1981) the strategies used include: Extralinguistic borrowing, translation or Calque, intralanguage borrowing and specialization of dialectal phonological variants, and coinage.

But Ukeje (1997) proposes two methods of developing new terms in any language. One is by translation and the other is by “creation of new words”. According to him, translation implies the conversion of a term in the source language into a meaningful term in the target indigenous language. He further states that such techniques as transliteration, calque and loan should be employed.

Massamber (1987) outlined three methods of translating terms, namely: borrowing, compounding, and derivation, while Abdulaziz (1985) outlines five methods of new term formation. They are borrowing, calquing, composition, affixation, and derivation. What composition is to Abdulaziz is what is compounding is to Massamber. Both involve the combining of two or more words to form new expression.

In Dubuc’s (1978) assertion, term formation processes is divide into two broad headings:

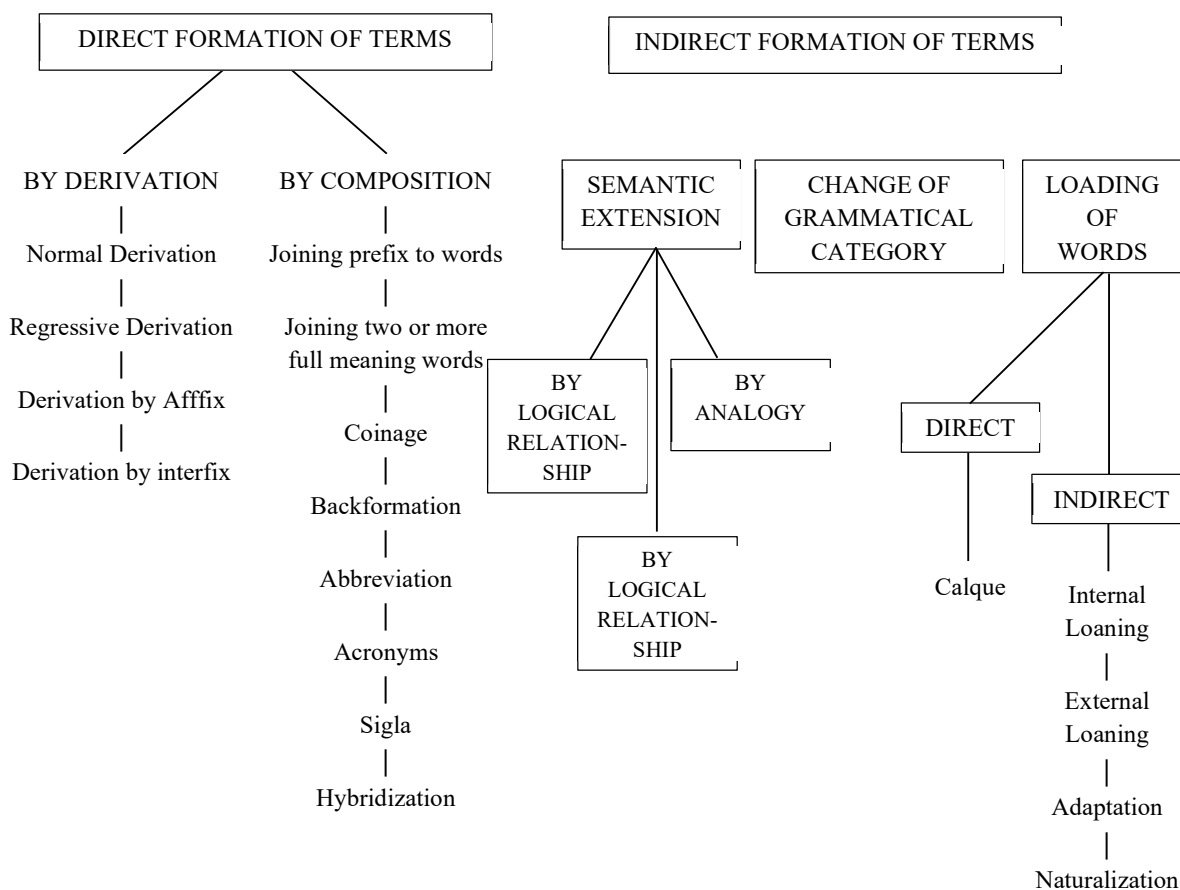
- i. Direct method of term formation
- ii. Indirect method of term formation

Below is a Table of Different Approaches to Term Formation from Researchers

Joanne (1991) - 8 approaches	Coinage, borrowing, compounding, blending, clipping, acronyms, conversion, derivation.
Igbo Metalanguage 5 - approaches	Extralinguistic borrowing, translation or calque, intralanguage linguistic borrowing, specialization of dialectal words and coinage.

Ukeje (1997) - 2 approaches	Translation, neologism.
Massamber (1987) - 3 approaches	Borrowing, compounding and derivation.
Abdulaziz (1985) - 5 approaches	Borrowing, calquing, composition, derivation, affixation.
Howard, and Etienne (2005) - 5 approaches	Derivation, compounding, conversion, Blends, shortenings.
Wrinkler (2007) - 11 approaches	Derivation, compounding, clipping and blending, coinage, reduplication, generification, onomatopoeia, Acronym, morphological misanalysis, linguistic borrowing.
Akmajian (2001) - 10 approaches	Coinage/coined words, Acronyms, Alphabetic Abbreviations, clipping, blends, Generified words, (borrowing: Direct), (Borrowing: indirect), change of grammatical category, metaphoric extension, derivation backformation.

For better classification and understanding, the researchers deemed it wise charting these approaches in terminological creation by Dubuc as prepared by Ezeuko (2005).



(Adapted from Ezeuko 2005)

Approaches in Terminological Creation

In all the processes of terminology creation outlined by various authors, the two that should be looked upon for the purpose of this work are the processes outlined by Joanne (1991) and Dubuc (1978). The two were selected because they are more elaborate and cut across languages.

Direct Formation of Terms

This is new creation of lexical units. Neologism is nothing but terminological creation. It is new formulation of terms in a language where there is a vacuum or no available term.

By Derivation

This involves the addition of affixes to the “root” word. The “root” is the part of a word that communicates the main meaning. The stem of a word is that unit to which the last morpheme is structurally attached as in the following:

- | | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|---|--|
| i. | Disloyalty -
(English) | Dis-
loyal - root
Disloyal : stem
Ty
: suffix | Prefix |
| ii. | Abiala
(Igbo) | a -
bia
abia
la | prefix
: root
: stem
: suffix |

From the illustration above, we can posit that words/terms are structurally knit together. Derivation of new words can come in various shapes such as: by addition of Prefix or suffix to a word. For instance:

English prefixation:	mono + logue	—————>	monologue
	dis + Comfort	—————>	discomfort
Igbo prefixation:	a + kwa	—————>	akwa
	m + ma	—————>	mma
English suffixation:	Wicked + ness	—————>	Wickedness
	Brother + hood	—————>	Brotherhood
Igbo suffixation:	Ugbo + elu	—————>	Ugboelu
	Ahiri + nju	—————>	Ahirinju

Interfix in Igbo

This involves the reduplication of the “root” bearing prefix by inter-fixing any of these elements – k, m, l, r, gh, d, t in Igbo considering the rule of vowel harmony. The resultant term is nominal.

- | | |
|--------------|---------|
| a – prefix | |
| gu – root | |
| m – interfix | |
| a – prefix | |
| gu – root. | Agumagu |

The following term can be observed in the same way

- Osokosu --- oso (k) osu

By Composition

This involves joining or combining words or elements of words already in existence in a language to designate new realities.

Prefixation

English: anti + aircraft → antiaircraft
 Bi + labial → bilabial
 (Idiomatic) Igbo language: Ajakaja + Nwanyi → Ajakaja nwanyi

Compounding

This involves a lexeme that is made up of more than one stem.

English: Parasite + emia → Parasitemia
 An + emia → Anaemia
 Brain + damage → Brain damage
 Igbo language Uko + obara → Ukoobara
 Uburu + nghasa → Uburunghasa
 Nche + anwu → Ncheanwu (umbrella)
 Oba + ego → Obaego (bank)

By Coinage

It is the fabrication of something new especially words or phrases. The absence of a term or a name in a language may lead to coinage.

English	Igbo
Refrigerator	Njuoyi
Air conditioner	Ntuoyi
Austerity	Otanisi
Technology	Nkanuuzu
University	Mahadum
Terrorists	Omenye mba egwu

Abbreviations

English: Professor → Prof.
 Account → Acc
 Bachelor of Education → B.Ed.
 Doctor → Dr.
 Igbo: Oriaku → Ork (Mrs.)
 Maazi → Mz (Mr.)
 Odoziaku → Odz (Mrs.)
 Dokita → Dkt (Doctor)

Acronym

Here the first letters of the component words are written out and they are called like words.

- UNESCO
- SPILC
- WHO
- OPC
- NOA

Acronym is not peculiar to Igbo language. The only way to this situation is by loan translation whereby the meaning of the source language is translated into the target language.

Sigla

This involves using the first letters of the composite word to produce a term. The term so produced is not presented as words like in Acronym. They are called out separately.

Example

Private Mail Bag ————— P.M.B
 I Owe You ————— I.O.U
 Any Other Business ————— A.O.B

It is also discovered that this process of term formation is not applicable in Igbo language, not even a loan translation could solve this.

Hybridization

This is a mixture of two different languages in the formation of terms; here, part of words is being derived from two different languages.

Igbo/English:

Pot ————— itepot
 Technology ————— Technuuzu
 Young old woman ——— Agadinwanyi Baby

Indirect Formation of Terms

According to Ezeuko (2005), it is the morphological transformation of already existing words in a given language in order to create new words. The approaches under this are semantic extension, change of grammatical category, and loaning of words.

1. Semantic Extension

This involves extending the meaning of words to other referents.

i) By Logical Relationship

It is speculated that ‘Ice-block’ was in existence before the production of ‘ice cream’. Naming of ‘ice cream’ was drawn by logical relationship. In French, ‘tribune’ means a place where people gather to discuss. ‘La tribune’ was logically given as a name to the television and radio programs where people come to be asked questions.

ii) By Analogy of Form and Function

A term is not supposed to be ambiguous but can refer to two things in two different domains. New names are related through semantic extension by analogy of form or function. Example: the word “screen” is used in hospital, in military, and in photography by analogical relationship.

Example:

English	Igbo
i. “Screen” in the Hospital.	Ogige nnyochaobara
ii. “Screen” in military.	Ihoron’ Ami/Nhochara
iii. “Screen” in photography.	Uloitirifoto/ Ogbaasamfoto
iv. “Television screen”	Ihuonyonyoo

iii) By Assimilation

This involves an already existing term that is applicable to other activities with similarity.

Example: in Igbo language, the word “agboro” used to describe touting inside the motor park can be given to any other activity similar to the same outside motor park.

2. Change of Grammatical Category

Here, the form of an existing word is not changed; rather, it is purported the meaning has changed through its usage. Example:

(V)		(N)
Nu	—————▶	onunu
(verbal)		(norminal)

Ji ahuru ahu —————▶ Ahuruahu ji

3. Loaning of Words

This is one of the ways of creating terms in a language. It occurs when there is no ready and acceptable equivalent in the target language. Under this, we have direct and indirect loaning.

i. Direct Loaning: The only approach under the direct loaning is Calque.

Calque: It means to copy, or imitate. Okafor (1996) sees calque as loan translation which involves the re-interpretation of the concept from the source culture or language and the expression of this in the receptor or target language. We shall discuss calque in two ways: structural and expressional.

Structural Calque

Example:	English		Igbo
	Factor	—————▶	Fakto
	Bank	—————▶	Obaego
	Atmospheric Pressure	—————▶	Ike ikuku

Expressional Calque

Example:	English	Igbo
	Happy Christmas	Hapi Kristimasi
	Weekend	Wikendi

In expression calque, the target language admit the foreign expression to itself.

ii. Indirect Loaning

Here, we have Internal loaning, External loaning, Adaptation, Naturalization.

Internal Loaning: When loan is carried out within a language, it is internal loaning. Emenanjo (1985) refers to it as “specialization of dialectal words”. In Igbo language for instance, some dialectal terms have been standardized into Igbo lexicon. Example:

- 100 – nari (from Nsukka dialect of Igbo).
- 1,000,000 – nde (from Umuahia dialect of Igbo).
- 1,000,000,000 – ijeri (from Delta Igbo dialect of Igbo).
- Lake – ezu (from Agulu dialect of Igbo).

These words and more have been admitted into the standard Igbo despite the fact they have dialectal undertone. As new concepts come, the need to still look inward for alternative will also arise..

External Loaning: Emenanjo (1985) refers to this as “Extra Language Borrowing”. This is borrowing from language to another. They can be traced to cultural contact and it leads to lexical enrichment. Examples:

Ashawo – from Yoruba Language
Onukwu – from Igala Language
Mita – (metre) from French Language

Adaptation: This is another form of term formation which involves adoption of the term in the source language. When it is adopted, there is no strict correspondence of the sound of the original term and those of the target language. There could be addition or subtraction of sounds moving from source to target language. There is radical modification, examples:

English	Igbo
Certificate	Safrikeeti
Oxygen	Osijin
Portugal	Potoki

Naturalization: This is what most people refer to as “Igbonisation”. It means writing down the term in the orthography/sound of the target language. Example:

English	Igbo
Phonology	Fonoloji
Astrology	Astroloji
Wire	Waya
Television	Televishon

Having explored the techniques of term formation, it is pertinent to note that not all of them is applicable to Igbo language, for instance, acronyms, and sigla. Abbreviation, also, is not so prominent in Igbo Language.

Conclusion

As we noted earlier, word/term formation is a hard venture which requires expertise and tact. Comparatively, it is obvious that English language in terms of term formation is very advanced because it can accept any of the technique of the term creation, but Igbo language, being a developing language cannot accept all the techniques like Acronyms and Sigla as we have in these words, WAEC and A.O.B. respectively. These forms of term creation are not prominent in Igbo language. By the foregoing, therefore, since Igbo language does not accept all the techniques of the term creation processes, there is every possibility that there will still be some existing problem when one is translating from English, French, German or Spanish to Igbo. Hence, there is a need to rise up to this challenge, especially linguists, translators, language owners or experts to find a lasting solution to this. Emenanjo (1990) states that when all is said and done, the fate of an endangered language may well lie in the hands of the owners of the language themselves and their will to make it survive, because only the native speakers can have the necessary “emotional commitment” for the development of their language. It is important to state categorically that Igbo language speakers/owners should have a change of attitude towards their language if it must develop to a world class language that can meet-up with the right terms in the world of reality. The government is not left out in this regards. There should be practical processes to helping our indigenous language to meet-up with other advanced languages.

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