

## Contrastive Analysis of French and Yoruba Affix

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### Abstract

This study focuses on the affixation processes in French and Yoruba, aiming to identify similarities and differences in word formation between the two languages. Each language has its own methods of arranging words morphologically to form sentences. The goal of this article is to provide linguistic researchers, teachers, and language enthusiasts with a clearer understanding of the dynamic interaction between the morphology of French and Yoruba. This research is specifically limited to the contrastive analysis of affixation in French and Yoruba. It reveals that French uses both prefixes and suffixes in word formation, while Yoruba primarily employs prefixes and reduplication. It is generally accepted that affixation, composition, and reduplication are key morphological processes that generate a significant number of word forms in many languages. In this work, we use the lexeme-based morphology model to compare the rules for how new words are formed through affixation in French and Yoruba. Our findings demonstrate that both languages share some morphological similarities and differences.

**Keywords:** contrastive analysis, affix, prefix, suffix, morphology

### Introduction

This study focuses on similarities and differences between affixation in French and Yoruba languages. Affixation is the process by which morphemes are added to create new words. Both before and after the root word are possible places to add these morphemes. The fact that Yoruba language is not as widely spoken as French may contain affixation processes comparable to the widely used languages of the world. Gast (2012) stated that, "two languages can be said to be socio-culturally related when, they are used by a sizable percentage of bilingual and multilingual speakers" As a result, French and Yoruba are described side by side in this study in order to highlight their parallels and contrasts in the pursuit of effective teaching of two languages. The concept of contrasting two socio-culturally related languages was first proposed by Fries, who claimed that "the most effective materials in foreign language teaching are those based on a scientific description of the language to be learned (L2), carefully compared with a parallel description of the learner's mother tongue (L1). Morphology can be seen as the study of morphemes and their combinations. It is the study of the internal structure of words. Linguists (e.g. Adrian 2001) often distinguish between inflectional and derivational morphology. Matthews (1991) examined morphology into two parts: lexical morphology and inflectional morphology. Within lexical morphology, he argues, there are three processes of word derivation. A word can be formed by affixing, i.e. adding an affix (prefix, suffix or infix) to the base, or by reduplication, i.e. repeating part of the base, or by modifying the base.

According to Akbarov (2023), the evolution of French affixation is deeply rooted in the language's historical progression. Prior to the Roman conquest in 58-52 BC, much of present-day France was inhabited by Celtic-speaking people, known as Gauls and Belgae. The Gaulish language, with its wide dialectal variation, significantly influenced the development of French, which evolved from Vulgar Latin. This influence is evident in various linguistic features, including sandhi phenomena like *liaison*, resyllabification, lenition, and the loss of un-stressed syllables in the vowel system.

The Yoruba language is a Kwa language of Western Nigeria. It is one of the three major national languages in Nigeria with about fifty millions populations and in the neighboring countries of the Republic of Benin and Togo. The speakers of Yoruba language are majorly located in South-West, North-Central and South-South Nigeria such as Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo in South-West. Kogi and Kwara in North-central while Edo in South-south of Nigeria. Apart from the fifty millions native speakers of the language in Nigeria, there are also descendants of Yoruba people transported to the other countries in world during the slave trade of 18th to 19th centuries; mostly in Cuba, Brazil and Haiti. This historical context helps us to understand how French affixation came to be in its current form and comprehending the historical background is crucial to appreciating the subtleties and complexity of French affixation and how it affects semantics. The process of morphologically forming words in French and Yoruba languages, especially by prefixation, is crucial for the development of a broad and

specialized vocabulary that is useful in many fields. And French suffix usage is not only a linguistic trait; it is also a tool for language evolution and adaptation to meet technical and professional demands.

### **Theoretical framework**

The theory adopted in this study is contrastive theory. Lennon cited some main idea of contrastive analysis that was propounded by Robert Lado in his book *Linguistics across cultures* (1957) that it was possible to identify the areas of difficulty a particular foreign language will present for native speakers of another language by systematically comparing the two languages and cultures. Lennon said when “two languages and cultures are similar, learning difficulties will not be expected, where they are different, then learning difficulties are to be expected, and the greater the difference, the greater the degree of expected difficulty”. However, difficulties are expected where there are differences in cultures of the two languages. Lado established that where two languages and cultures are similar, difficulties regarding those two languages are ruled out. It's better advised to compare the two languages systematically in order to identify any potential linguistic interference in order to discover a solution to a problem that a native speaker of one language may encounter when learning a foreign language. In this work, a contrastive analysis of French and Yoruba affixation was carried out in order to identify the differences and similarities of the two languages.

### **Word Formation Processes**

The procedures involved in forming new words in a language are called word formation. Nonetheless, this does not imply that word creation is limited to studying the development of words that convey ideas that are unfamiliar to us as native speakers. It also doesn't mean that each time we use one of these new terms, we "form" it mentally. Rather, it examines the methods used in languages both now and in the past to create words; some of these methods might no longer be in use. However, comprehending how the term was originally formed helps us understand how it relates to other words.

Affixation is a relatively typical way that words are formed. A bound morpheme linked to a free morpheme, or stem, is called an affixation. The bound morpheme can appear earlier, thereafter, or in the center of the stem, among other locations. Prefixes are affixes that come before the stem (from the Latin pre- meaning before). Suffixes are the ones that come after the stem; the term comes from the Latin sub- meaning under. Adebileje (2013) Affixation is the most frequent morphological procedure used to change a root by adding something to it. To indicate grammatical information about a word or its relationship to other words, the majority of the world's languages employ some sort of affixing. An affix is a grammatical morpheme that, by definition, needs to be connected to either a root or another affix. A base (or stem) is any form, simple or complicated, to which an affix attaches. Suffixes are affixes that join at the right or end of a base. Prefixes are affixes that join to the left or front of a base.

### **Affixation processes in French (Prefixes and Suffixes)**

French words are formed through different methods, mostly through the process of borrowing words from other languages. Dubois and Lagane (1995) said almost 80% of French words have their origin traced to the Latin language. According to Dubois and Lagane cited by Ajani (2022) further asserted that many foreign words known as 'emprunts' featured in the French language such as *Algebre* (Algebra), *alcool* (alcohol) are from the Arabic language, *Jazz* (Jazz), *film* (film) are from the English language, *Banque* (Bank), *carnival* (carnival) are from the Italian language. The processing of word formation is when a secondary morpheme in the French language is added to an already existing morpheme either at the beginning (prefix) to form another word which may be a noun, an adjective or an adverb. Ajani (2022) outlined some processes of word formation: Clipping is a process of formation of words in French where a part of a word is removed and the remnant remains a word and has same meaning as the original word. Example: *le fac* for *la faculté* (faculty), *les maths* for *les mathématiques*/mathematics, and Neologisms: This is a process where certain words are put in place to suit the immediate need of the speaker and as time goes on, they become part of the French word. Example: a computer word like e-mail.

Grammatical morphemes, whether derivational or inflectional, are linked together by affixes. The process of creating new words through affixation involves taking a base (theme) and adding different affixes, such as prefixes (which come before the base), suffixes (which come after the base), and some languages that have very little indication of inflectional morphemes such as Yoruba are classified as having an isolating/analytical morphological typology. Though the Yoruba language may be lacking in inflection, there are other ways to express its nominal and verbal inflection. Lexical morphemes are generally accompanied by affixes, i.e. non-autonomous grammatical morphemes. There are two types of affixes: Derivational affixes, which create new words and describe quasi-lexical content. Flexional affixes express grammatical categories (number, gender, person, case, verbal tense, etc.).

Morphemes are referred to as prefixes when they appear at the beginning of words and suffixes when they appear at the end. It is important to understand that certain words possess both root form suffixes and prefixes. Tomori (1977) stated that “inflectional suffix is a morpheme that performs a grammatical function in a word without changing the word class of the particular word. On the other hand, derivational morphemes are added to derive entirely new words from the original morphemes.

### Affixation processes in Yoruba (Prefixes)

The affixation process in Yoruba, which is recognized as the crucial operation for the formation of words in the language, is one of the morphological processes it uses for word formation. Stated differently, the underlying structure of Yoruba words is defined by specific morphological concepts that form their basis. Adebileje (2013) stated that words get their syntactic as well as semantic features which precede phonological rules of adjustment. The Yoruba language is seldom inflected neither does it exhibit suffixation (Tinuoye, 1991). Prefix is very crucial to Yoruba language which mostly used to form and complete regular system of words. Adebileje (2013) explained the different prefixation processes Yoruba employs to derive changes in polarity (positive to negative) contrasts English which is inflection by suffixation. Yoruba lends itself therefore to derivational prefixation in which a complete and regular system of prefixes occurs to form new words.

### Convergence and Divergence processes of affixation in French and Yoruba languages

Both prefixing and suffixing are used to create words in the French. Some French words created by prefixation and suffixation are shown in the following tables.

TABLE 1: French words formed by prefixation

Morphemes (Prefixes)	Root morphemes	Derived words
Dé-	Monter	Démonter
Dé-	Lirer	Délirer
Dés-	Integration	Désintégration
A-	Grandir	Agrandir
Extra-	Ordinaire	Extraordinaire
Im-	Possible	Impossible
In-	Admissible	Inadmissible
In-	Supportable	Insupportable
Re-	Dire	Redire
Re-	Venir	Revenir
Para-	Pluie	Parapluie
Pré-	Histoire	Préhistoire
Ex-	Patrier	Expatrier
Ad-	Mission	Admission
Anti-	Phrase	Antiphrase

TABLE 2: French words formed by suffixation

Morphemes( suffix)	Root morphemes	Derived word
-age	Bavard	Bavardage
-ment	Déplacer	Déplacement
-ité	Absurd	Absurdité
-ité	Actuel	Actualité
-ilité	Flexible	Flexibilité
-iser	Annuel	Annualiser
-isme	Africain	Africanisme
-ir	Grand	Grandir
-eur	Blanch	Blancheur
-ment	Change	Changement
-xion	Conne	Connexion
-ée	Port	Portée
-eur	Vend	Vendeur
-atrice	Calcul	Calculatrice
-isme	Libéral	Libéralisme

TABLE 3: Yoruba words formed by prefixation

Root Morphemes (Prefixes)	Root morphemes	Derived words
A	sòro	asòro
Ap	ẹja	apeja
Ì	kórè	ìkórè
I	bẹrẹ	ibẹrẹ
Ò	Şèlúto	òşèlú
O	Kerè	okerè
Ọl	owo	olowo
Ọl	ọrun	ọlorun
N	inu	ninu
Oni	ẹwa	oniẹwa

The word formation in Yoruba is basically derivational or reduplication. Yoruba nouns and verbs are never inflected for number and tense respectively. Yoruba is therefore not inflectional. It is agglutinating. Morphological processes attested in the Yoruba language appropriately reflect in the formation of the French words formation. Generally, Yoruba word-formation, affixation is restricted to prefixation and inter-fixation. Suffixation barely occurs in the Yoruba language. The new words under study contain some of the prefixes already identified in the Yoruba language. Affixes are not independent entities; rather, they are only comprehensible in relation to a sister category, such as the base or stem. This implies that affixes have some properties which they contribute to derivation process. In describing Yoruba derivation words, Folarin proposes two groups of prefixes: class-changing and class-maintaining prefixes. The above (table number 3) prefix example can be derived based on the class changing. Prefixes play a major role in the formation of words in Yoruba language; a noun word can be derived by attaching prefixes to a verb word.

In this study, one could see that at the level of convergence and divergence about the word formation in both languages, there are many areas of difference and similarity: In the French language a suffix could be added to an existing independent word and that word becomes another word when 's' is added to *école* (school) that word changes to plural '*écoles*' (schools) in French, while in Yorùbá language, what makes the word 'school' (*ile-iwe*) to change to plural '(schools)' is the adding of prefix '*àwon*', which is a qualifying adjective in Yorùbá, hence when '*àwon*' (some) is added to 'school' (*ile-iwe*) it becomes a new word '*àwon ile-iwe*' (some schools). This research, based on the tables 1&3 above one could see some similarities in the process of prefixation of words in both languages, this prefixation is an important element used in change or maintaining the classes of a word in French and Yoruba languages.

This work will help every Yoruba learner of French language who wants to aspire level of competence and efficiency in language learning. Furthermore, the researchers had carried out extensive study on the similarities and differences in both languages which it will help every Yoruba teacher of French language to decide what to incorporate and emphasize while teaching.

### Conclusion

Finally, this research provides a comprehensive analysis of the function of affixation in French and Yoruba. It examines how prefixes and suffixes alter the classes and meanings of words. This work contributes to the morphological lexicon of French and Yoruba by highlighting the subtleties and complexities of meaning shifts resulting from affixation. It also explores the practical application of this information in language learning and instruction, offering effective methods for incorporating affixation into the study of both languages.

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