

# Compounding in Gokana and English: A Contrastive Approach

Fashion Giobari Zabbey<sup>1\*</sup>, Chinedum Isaac<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of English and Literary Studies, Faculty of Humanities Rivers State University

<sup>2</sup>Department of Linguistic and Communication Studies, Faculty of Humanities University of Port Harcourt Port Harcourt

DOI: [10.36348/sijll.2024.v07i01.006](https://doi.org/10.36348/sijll.2024.v07i01.006)

| Received: 26.11.2023 | Accepted: 31.12.2023 | Published: 18.01.2024

\*Corresponding author: Fashion Giobari Zabbey

Department of English and Literary Studies, Faculty of Humanities Rivers State University

## Abstract

This paper contrasted compounding in the Gokana and English languages. This study employed the Contrastive Analysis Theory (CA). The data collection technique adopted in this study is unstructured elicitation oral interview method. The method of data analysis adopted in this paper is purely the contrastive method. The data collected in the Gokana language were glossed in the English language. It was ascertained that compounding is one of the morphological operations that result in the realization of new word in the Gokana and English languages. It was also observed from the data presented in this paper that the words that are joined to form a compound may or may not belong to the same word class or parts of speech. This study further found out that compounds in the Gokana and English languages can syntactically be classified into endocentric, exocentric, coordinative and appositional compounds. More so, it was affirmed that unlike in English language, endocentric compounds in the Gokana language has a head initial and modifier final structure. This study recommends that L2 (English language) teachers in the Gokana speech communities should be grounded in the morphological operations that result to exocentric compounds, semantic and non-semantic compounds in the English language so as to be able to assist the L2 English learners.

**Keywords:** Contrastive Analysis Theory (CA), Gokana and English languages, endocentric.

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Words in natural languages are not derived arbitrarily. In other words, no human language permits the derivation of new lexemes (words) or inflection by stringing morphemes indiscriminately. In view of that, every proficient user of a natural language must either consciously or unconsciously understand the morphological structure of words in his language and at the same time innately elucidates individual expressions such as morphemes, words, phrases, clauses and sentences in the language as well as interpret and categorize the meanings of the expressions. No wonder, Badom and Isaac (2019) assert that every natural language is organized and rule governed in terms of their morphological, syntactic, phonological and semantic behaviours. This indicates that every natural language has its system of word structures. This corroborates the assertion of Yul-Ifode (2001) and Isaac (2018) that there is no language without rules which governs its operation. It is also important to note that words in human languages have diverse shapes and lengths. Thus, what is

seen as a word in the Gokana language may be a whole phrase or sentence in another language such as the English language.

It is further observed that every natural language works like other living creatures in the society. Like other living creatures, every natural language has the ability to either grow or die. This implies that no language remains stagnant (Kari, 2015). This is because older forms of natural languages are either modified or replaced by new ones periodically. This suggests that every natural language has the capability to advance its vocabulary (terminology) and become better prepared to handle the different uses that its proficient users may want to put it. Simply put, it is the universal feature of all natural languages (including Gokana and English) to increase their vocabularies through morphological processes. That is, every human language increases its terminology through morphological operations such as affixation, borrowing, reduplication and compounding (Mathews, 1997). The morphological operations which

result in the derivation of new terminologies (lexical items) may vary from one language to another. This is because the shapes and lengths of words is not language universal but language specific. However, for the sake of precision, this paper focuses on compounding in Gokana and English languages.

### 1.1.1 The Linguistic Situation in Gokana

The name “Gokana” refers to both the native speakers and the language. Linguistically, Gokana is a multilingual speech community. This denotes that more than one language is used in the speech communities. It also implies the presence of language contact (Trudgill, 1992). This indicates that an average competent speaker of Gokana language is a bilingual or multilingual. The dominant languages in Gokana speech communities are: Gokana, Nigerian Pidgin and English.

The Gokana language is spoken as L1 in Nweol, Bera, Barako, Bomu, Nwebiara, Biara, Deeyor, Boghor-yeghe, Ka-yeghe, Kpor, B.dere, K.dere, Mogho, Deken, Lewe, Gbe and Bodo. The dialects of Gokana are Bodo, Bomu, Dere and Bera. Joshua (2019, p. 3) observes that “these varieties account for very slight differences in the language. The Bera dialect is the variety spoken by the majority of the villages and it is considered the central variety. This is however, based on the Bodo dialect.” Even though the degree of relatedness of these dialects has not been satisfactorily established, the present research notes that all Gokana dialects are mutually intelligible. Nevertheless, for the sake of precision, this paper will not delve into this argument about the number of dialects in the language.

### 1.1.2 Tonal Convention

Gokana is a tone language. This suggests that like other tonal languages, the pitch of the voice can be used to differentiate the meaning of grammatical elements such as morphemes, words, phrases, clauses and sentences in Gokana. In view of the foregoing, Vɔbnu (2001) affirms that the marking of tone is necessary in Kegboid (Ogoni) languages including Gokana. This is because “there are certain words even sentence which have the same spelling but different meanings” (p. 33). For instance:

- 1a. À é sí tọ Bàrì.  
3SG FUT go house God  
'He will go to the church.'
- b. A è sì tọ Bàrì.  
3SG PST go house God  
'He has gone to the church.'
- 2a. bé 'fighting' (n)  
b. be'' 'fight' (v)  
c. bē 'home'  
d. bè 'fence'

(Adapted from Vɔbnu, 2001, p. 33)

The examples in 1a-b and 2a-d clearly demonstrate that tone is an important grammatical unit in Gokana. According to Vɔbnu (2001), the tones in Gokana are H(igh) tone ( ´ ), R(aised) tone ( ¨ ), M(id) tone ( ˘ ) and L(ow) tone ( ˉ ). This corroborates the statement of Emenanjo (2015, p. 113) that “to ignore tone is to ignore an important code which not only identifies the language but also makes it unique.” In line with Vɔbnu (2001), the mid-tone is conventionally left unmarked in this paper. Therefore, any unmarked tone should be read as mid.

### 1.1.3 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Contrastive Analysis Theory (CA) which was propounded by Robert Lado in the year 1957. According to Richard (1992), Yang (1992), Adesanya (2002) and Nwala (2015), the CA theory is related with language teaching and language learning. They also unanimously state that CA theory is very significant in the examination of the areas of resemblances and variations between two or more languages. Richard (1992) and Yang (1992) say that the CA theory is relevant to the diverse levels of grammatical analysis such as phonetics and phonology, morphology, semantics and syntax. They further insist that the CA is very appropriate, specifically in order to enhance language teaching and translation. Additionally, Richard (1992) and Yang (1992) observe that the CA finds out the possible areas of challenges for language learners that could be handled with accurate exercise.

From the foregoing discussion, it is obvious that the CA theory is very suitable to this study. This is because it can help reveal the areas of resemblances and variances between compounding in the Gokana and English languages. The literatures reviewed have shown that the areas of resemblances can benefit the teaching and learning of English language in Gokana speech communities while the areas of differences can present challenges to the teaching and learning of English language in the speech communities.

### 2.1 Compounding and Compound

Yule (1996) describes the term “compounding” as a morphological operation which involves the merging of two or more separate base, root or stem to produce a new lexical item. He also notes that compounding is a prevalent morphological operation in the English language. For instance, chalk + board = chalkboard. Similarly, Yul-Ifode (2001) insists that compounding can be described as a morphological operation that encompasses combining different lexical items from the existing word. On his part, Ndimele (2003) avers that compounding is a process of linking two or more previously free roots to form a single lexical item or word and this can be either a word from the same word-classes or from diverse word-classes. Kari (2015) affirms that compounding comprises the process of deriving words by combining two or more free

morphemes or words. He also states that “the resultant word is called a compound or compound word” (p. 98). Again, he identifies different types of compounds using three criteria to classify them. In his words, “morphologically, compounds are classified into affix and non-affix compounds. Syntactically, they are classified into endocentric and exocentric compounds, and coordinative and appositional compounds. On semantic grounds, compound are (sic) classified into semantic and non-semantic compounds” (p. 100). Kari’s (2015) assertion implies that there about eight types of compounds. Even though this paper agrees with the classification of compounds by Kari (2015), it posits that the classification may be language specific and not language universal. In the same vein, Nwala (2016) and Isaac (2018) affirm that any word that is derived through compounding is called compound word. According to Nwala (2016), compounding is a morphological process of deriving new words through the lacing or combining of two or more separate words. He also observes that the lacing of two or more separate words in a language involves a sound understanding of the morphology and even the syntax of that language. He further notes that pluralization of compound nouns is different from those of the regular nouns. For example, he says that whereas some compound nouns take their plural markers on the first noun, others take theirs on the second. The only way to identify how to derive the number inflection of compound nouns is to check up the dictionary.

Following the assertion of Nwala (2016), it is obvious that compounding is prevalent in English language. This is in line with the statement of Isaac (2018, p. 43) that compounding increases the vocabulary or the lexicon of a language and most times, their semantic contents (meanings) are not identical to the semantic contents of the individual words that make up a particular compound. He also avers that “compounding is a morphological process of forming a new lexical item (single word) by linking two or more independent roots (morphemes).” He further states that any word formed in this way is called a compound. Again, he notes that the words that are linked together to form a compound must not necessarily belong to the same word-class (parts of speech). The assertion of Isaac (2018) suggests that words of different classes can be joined to realize a new word. From the foregoing discussion, it is apparent that new lexemes or words can be realized through the

morphological operation known as compounding. Thus, this paper contrasts the compounding in the Gokana and English languages.

### 3.1 METHODOLOGY

The data gathering technique adopted in this study is unstructured elicitation oral interview method. The reason for the unstructured elicitation oral interview is to obtain in-depth information through face to face verbal communication. The use of oral interview in particular yielded a lot of information, which enriched the study. The choice of oral interview stems from the fact that it is straight-forward and easy to analyze. The data were collect from two sources which include the primary data and secondary data. The primary data were drawn from the proficient speakers of Gokana, while the secondary data were drawn from the available literatures in Gokana and English language. The method of data analysis adopted in this work is purely the contrastive method. The data collected in the Gokana language were glossed in the English language.

#### 4.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

The data gathered for this study are presented in this section. The data are presented in two sets: Gokana and English languages separately. For that reason, the data collected in Gokana are presented in tables A while their English language equivalence is presented in tables B. This suggests that there are two tables for every data presented in this paper.

##### 4.1.1 Data on Compounding in Gokana and English languages

Compounding has been described as the process of putting words together to build a new word which does not denote two things. The data are also presented under the following subheadings: nominal, noun and verb, adjective and noun compounds.

##### 4.1.1.1 Data on Nominal Combinations

This is a compounding process that involves the combination of nouns in the formation of new words. Here, two complete lexical entities in the class of noun combine to form a new lexical entity. The word formed belongs to the same class but differs semantically from the two words that combined to form it.

**Table 4.1a: Words Derived through Nominal Combination in the Gokana language**

S/N	Lexeme 1	Lexeme 2	New Lexeme
1a.	bèlè ‘bag’	kpá ‘book’	bèlèkpá ‘school bag’
b.	kpó ‘box’	kpègè ‘money’	kpókpègè ‘money bag’
c.	tọ ‘house’	ból ‘goat’	tọból ‘goat house’
d.	múú ‘water’	bóó ‘rain’	múúbóó ‘rain water’
e.	tọ ‘house’	kpá ‘book’	tọkpá ‘school’
f.	tọ ‘house’	bàrì ‘God’	tọbàrì ‘church’

**Table 4.1b: Words Derived through Nominal Combination in the English language**

S/N	Lexeme 1	Lexeme 2	New Lexeme
2a.	cup	board	cupboard
b.	chalk	board	chalkboard
c.	door	man	doorman
d.	book	worm	bookworm
e.	book	shop	bookshop
f.	hand	bag	handbag

Examples 1a-f and 2a-f in tables 4.1a and 4.1b respectively demonstrate that it is possible for two nominal to combine in the Gokana and English languages to derive new words. It is observed that both lexeme 1 and 2 clusters in tables 4.1a and 4.1b are all in the class of nouns. These nouns combine together to form the new lexemes in the languages. The new word formed

may also belong to noun class, though it has different meanings from its origins.

**4.1.1.2 Data on Noun + Verb Combinations**

The available data reveal that a noun and a verb can combine to form a new word in the Gokana and English languages. The verb can either come before a noun or vis-à-vis.

**Table 4.2a: Words Derived through Noun + Verb Combination in the Gokana language**

S/N	Lexeme 1	Lexeme 2	New Lexeme
3a.	bòm ‘beat (verb)’	éé ‘something (noun)’	bòméé ‘beaten (verb)’
b.	kòràló ‘dress’(noun)	lòà ‘remove’(verb)	lòà-kòràló ‘undress (verb)’
c.	èlà ‘stand’(verb)	ditòò ‘place’(noun)	èlà- ditòò ‘represent (verb)’
d.	pō ‘fear’(noun)	síí ‘catch’(verb)	sííà-pō ‘fearful (adjective)’
e.	kòlà ‘cover’ (verb)	ló ‘body’ (noun)	kòlàló ‘cloth (noun)’
f.	bù ‘pores (noun)’	déé ‘day’	bùdéé ‘cloud (noun)’

**Table 4.2b: Words Derived through Noun + Verb Combination in the English language**

S/N	Lexeme 1	Lexeme 2	New Lexeme
4a.	hind (noun)’	sight (verb)	hindsight
b.	rain (noun)	fall (verb)	rainfall
c.	hair (noun)	cut (verb)	haircut
d.	washing (verb)	machine (noun)	washing machine
e.	draw (verb)	back (noun)	drawback
f.	pick (verb)	pocket (noun)	pickpocket

The examples 3a-f and 4a-f in tables 4.2a and 4.2b reveal that a noun and a verb can combine to form a new word in the Gokana and English languages. It is noticed that the noun can occur before the verb or the verb can occur before the noun. The words that are derived through this type of combinations may belong to different word classes.

**4.1.1.3 Data on Adjective + Noun Combinations**

This derivation process involves the combination of a word in the adjectival class with that in the class of nouns. This combination may result in adjectival words in both languages.

**Table 4.3a: Words Derived through Adjective + Noun Combination in the Gokana language**

S/N	Lexeme 1	Lexeme 2	New Lexeme
5a.	póró ‘bad (adj.)’	láp ‘character (noun)’	póróláp ‘misconduct’
b.	gbèrè ‘great (adj.)’	bíirāńńyíè ‘sad (noun)’	gbèrè-bíirāńńyíè ‘sadness’
c.	túákà ‘first’ (adj.)	bírábíl ‘play (noun)’	túákà-bírábíl ‘foreplay’
d.	kpóó ‘powerful (adj.)’	tẹ ‘tree (noun)’	kpóótẹ ‘stick’
e.	zée ‘middle’ (adj.)	víl ‘grass’ (noun)	zéevíl ‘bush’
f.	nómá ‘old (adj.)’	tẹ ‘father (noun)’	nómátẹ ‘grandfather’

**Table 4.3b: Words Derived through Adjective + Noun Combination in the English language**

S/N	Lexeme 1	Lexeme 2	New Lexeme
6a.	black (adj.)’	board (noun)’	blackboard
b.	grand (adj.)	daughter	granddaughter
c.	hard (adj.)	ware (noun)	hardware

S/N	Lexeme 1	Lexeme 2	New Lexeme
d.	hot (adj.)	dog (noun)	hotdog
e.	white (adj.)	collar	white-collar
f.	brand (noun)	new (adj.)	brand-new

The examples 5a-f and 6a-f in tables 4.3a and 4.3b shows that an adjective and a noun can combine to form a new word. It is observed that a majority of the word through the compounding of an adjective a noun or a noun and an adjective are nominal.

#### 4.1.1.4 Data on Adjective + Verb Combinations

This involves the combination of a word in the verb class and a word in the adjectival class in both languages. This combination process is few in both languages. It may derive words of various word classes.

**Table 4.4a: Words Derived through Adjective + Verb Combination in the Gokana language**

S/N	Lexeme 1	Lexeme 2	New Lexeme
7a.	pòrò ‘bad (adj.)’	tùlé ‘direct (verb)’	pòrò- tùlé ‘misdirect (adj)’
b.	mòn ‘see (verb)’	déésì ‘front (adj.)’	mòndéésì ‘foresee (verb)’
c.	tá ‘finish’ (adj.)	kói ‘strength’ (adj).	tákói ‘hunger (noun)’

**Table 4.4b: Words Derived through Adjective + Verb Combination in the Gokana language**

S/N	Lexeme 1	Lexeme 2	New Lexeme
8a.	dry (adj.)	cleaning (verb)	dry cleaning
b.	high (adj.)	light	highlight
c.	long	lasting	long lasting
d.	ever	lasting	everlasting.
e.	short	handed	shorthanded

As observed in the language, Gokana has various compounding derivational processes. In the language, nominal compounding derivation presents the majority in the compounding process of deriving new words. The others are of minimal in the Language.

### 4.1.2 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The data collected show that compounding is one of the morphological operations that result in the realization of new word in the Gokana and English languages. In other words, compounding increases the lexicon of both languages and most times, their meanings are not equal to the meanings of the individual words that constitute a particular compound. It involves the linking of two or more free morphemes or roots. The words that are derived through compounding are called compounds. It is observed from the data presented in this paper that the words that are joined to form a compound may or may not belong to the same word class or parts of speech. For instance, whereas the examples in 1a-f and 2a-f showed that two nominal (nouns) can combine to form a compound, the examples in 3a-f to 8a-e revealed that words belonging to different word classes can combine to form a compound.

It is also construed from the examples in 3a-f in table 4.2a that in the Gokana language, a verb can merge with a noun to form another verb as in 3a-c, adjective as in 3d and noun as in 3e-f. This suggests that noun + verb compounding in the Gokana language can morphologically be seen as a verbalization, adjectivization or nominalization processes. This is because all the words derived through compounding in

3a-f are verb, adjective and nominals. In contrast, examples 4a-f in table 4.2b revealed that all the words derived through the noun + verb compound are nominals. It is further noticed that unlike in the English language, compounding in the Gokana language may be an inflectional morphological operation. Simply put, compounding is not purely a derivational morphological operation. In other words, compounding in the Gokana language is both a derivational and inflectional morphological operation. On the contrary, inflectional compounds were not found in the English language. This study found out that Kari’s (2015) classification of compounds into affix compounds (those that consist of more than one stem plus an affix) as in examples 8a, c-e in table 4.4b, and non-affix compounds (those that do not have affix, whether inflectional or derivational) as in examples 8b in table 4.4b) compounds (that is, on the basis of their morphological behaviours) is not applicable in the Gokana language. This implies that whereas a compound in the English languages can comprise two or more stems plus an affix, a compound in the Gokana may comprise of two words without an affix. For instance, the word “shorthanded” in example 8e consists of the root word “short”, “hand” and the suffix “-ed”. This type of example was not found in the Gokana language.

Also, it is observed that compounds in the Gokana and English languages can syntactically be classified into endocentric, exocentric, coordinative and appositional compounds. The words “bèlèkpá” ‘school bag’ and “tòból” ‘goat house’ in examples 1a and 1c in table 4.1a demonstrate endocentric compounds in the Gokana language. This is because these compounds have



a dependent-head or a modifier-head type of relationship in the language. For instance, the word “bèlèkpá” ‘school bag’, consist of “bèlè ‘bag’ and kpá” ‘school’, and it is a type of “bèlè ‘bag’ and not a type of “kpá” ‘book’. In a similar vein, tóból” ‘goat house’ is a type of tó ‘house’ but not a type of ból ‘goat’. Similarly, the examples in 4d and 6a in tables 4.2b and 4.3b demonstrate endocentric compounds in the English language. The compounds “washing machine” (washing + machine) as in example 4d in table 4.2b and “blackboard” (black + board) as in example 6a in table 4.3b are types of machine and board but not types of washing and black respectively. More so, the Gokana examples of endocentric compounds demonstrate that unlike in English language, the words that functions as the head come before the one that takes the role of a modifier. This may be because the Gokana language is a head initial and modifier final language (Isaac, 2020).

On the other hand, examples 3e in table 4.2a and 4f in table 4.2b demonstrate exocentric compounds in the Gokana and English languages respectively. For example, the word “kòláló” ‘cloth’ is neither a type of kòlà ‘cover’ nor ló ‘body’. Likewise, the word pickpocket is neither a type of pick nor a type of pocket. Accordingly, none of the words that combine to constitute this type of compound can be identified as the head. Additionally, examples 3b in table 4.2a and 2f in table 4.1b exemplify coordinative compounds in the Gokana and English languages respectively. This is because the members of the compounds in lòà-kòràlò ‘undress’ and handbag in the Gokana and English languages respectively are equal in status. This study also notes that example 2d (bookworm) in table 4.1b demonstrates appositional compounds in the English language. It did not find any example of appositional compound in the Gokana language.

Furthermore, this study observes that compounds in both languages can semantically be classified into semantic and non-semantic compounds. Examples of semantic compounds in the Gokana and English languages are 1c and 2c in tables 4.1a and 4.1b respectively. The meanings of these compounds are collection of the meaning of the individual members of the compounds. For instance, the meaning of the compound “tóból” ‘goat house’ in the Gokana language is derivable from the individual members of the compounds (tó ‘house’ and ból ‘goat). In the same vein, the meaning of the compound “doorman” in the English language is derivable from the individual members (door and man). On the contrary, the meaning of the compound tákói ‘hunger’ in table 4.4a is not derivable from the individual members of the compound (tá ‘finish’ kói ‘strength’). Also, the meaning of the compound pickpocket in table 4.2b is not derivable from the meanings of the individual members of the compound (pick and pocket).

## 5.1 CONCLUSION

From the foregoing discussion, it is construed that compounding is one of the productive morphological operations in the Gokana and English languages. This study also ascertained that whereas compounds in the English language can be classified into different types using three criteria which include morphological, syntactic and semantic, compounding in the Gokana language can be classified basically into two types using two criteria. In other words, morphologically compounds in the English language are classified into two (that is, affix and non-affix compounds), the present study does not identify affix compounds in the Gokana language. Syntactically, there are endocentric, exocentric, coordinative and appositional in both languages, and semantically, compounds in the Gokana and English languages are classified into semantic and non-semantic compounds. Following the CA theory, which stipulates that the areas of resemblances and variances between compounding in natural languages (in this case, the Gokana and English languages), this paper postulates that L1 speakers of the Gokana will not have difficulty in the realization of exocentric compounds, semantic and non-semantic compounds in the English language. However, the realization of affix compounds in the English language will present a challenge to the L1 users of the Gokana language. It is also assumed that the derivation of endocentric compounds will be challenging to Gokana L1 users since unlike in the English language, the head words in an endocentric compound come before the modifier.

## 5.2 Recommendations

Based on the difference in the exocentric compounds, semantic and non-semantic compounds in the Gokana and English languages, this study recommends that L2 (English language) teachers in the Gokana speech communities should be grounded in the morphological operations that result to exocentric compounds, semantic and non-semantic compounds in both languages so as to be able to assist the L2 English learners.

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