

# A STUDY OF WARJI NOMINAL COMPOUNDS

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## **Abstract**

This paper investigates the nominal compounds in the Warji language. A minority language in the Chadic language family of the Afro-asiatic Phylum that is spoken in Northern Nigeria in Bauchi State. The aim of the study is to find out the grammatical category that is combined to form a nominal compound word in the Warji language, ascertain the rules governing the formation of compound words and point out the head of the compound words in the Warji language. The study uses ethnographic method in collecting data and adopted Descriptive Approach to analyze the data. The study examines the various ways of forming nominal compounds. The findings show that there are noun + noun, noun + Adjective and Adjective + noun compounds. Analysis has showed that syllable deletion, vowel deletion and shortening of left most member of the compounds are some of the features of compounds in Warji. The study concludes that the head of a compound is the left most member of the compound in the Warji language.

**Key words:** Warji, Language, Compound, Formation.

## **Introduction**

The term compounding refers to a combination of two or more independent words into a higher word unit (Carr 1939). According to Lieber (1994) compound is a new lexical item created by putting together two fresh standing stems or words. Booij (2002:141) says “The defining criteria for compounding is that in compounding,

two lexemes are combined into a new lexeme". In the view of Mathews (1991:37), compounding is the branch of morphology which deals with the relationship between compound lexeme and two or more simpler lexemes. Fromkin & Rodman (1998:84) posit that compound occurs 'when new words are formed by combining words together to form compound words. Algeo (2010) asserts that creating words from nothing is comparatively rare. Most words are made from other words, for example by combining whole or word parts. A compound is made by putting two or more words together to form a new word with a meaning in some way different from that of its elements.

Bauer (1978) and Ahmad (1994) believe that the best definition of compound is the one that consider both morphological and semantic criteria and define a compound as a 'morphologically complex unit made up of two or more words/stems acting as a single word and whose meaning is mostly non-compositional.

### Compound Head

In compounds, the head is the dominant constituent whose inflectional (that is gender and number) normally bind the entire compound. Head of a compound can be right or left hand headed (Ahmad 1994:50). Therefore, a head of a compound is the stem that determines the semantic category of that compound. For example, in English where head of a compound is right member of the compound, the head of the compound noun '*handbag*' is bag, since a '*handbag*' is a bag not hand and '*homework*' means a kind of work done at home. The other member of the compound modifies the head and is therefore head dependent.

Indivisibility, lexical integrity, word order restriction are some of the features that easily distinguish a compound from a phrase, that is to say, a compound always functions as a single unit with a close

nexus between its members. The criteria for establishing what may or may not be a compound can vary from one language to another.

## Methodology

Methodologically, the research adopts Descriptive Approach that will reason, explore and describe situations of nominal compounds in Warji. Descriptive method is a process which involves observing language and creating conceptual categories for it. The Descriptive Approach remained the most effective in the handling of investigations of unwritten languages most of which are found in Africa (Al-Hassan 1998). The data was collected from informants and the native speakers of the language through ethnographic methodology that involves informal observation as well as unstructured interviews.

## Nominal compound formation in Warji

A nominal compound could be formed in Warji by composing of two individual words, one of which is a noun to become a complex word which functions as a unit. The process through which these words become integrated as a unit can be described as compound formation. The formation process is given below;

1. A combination of two words becomes a compound when it is lexicalized such that its components do not function independently but rather as a unit.
2. These processes include vowel deletion, vowel change and syllable deletion that only occurs in the first member of the compound as shown below;

<b>Vowel deletion</b>	<b>Vowel change</b>	<b>Syllable deletion</b>
1 <i>Muzái(soil)-múzi</i>	2 <i>dábai(friend)-dabu</i>	3 <i>wadína(excretion)-wádi</i>
<i>Shivíuna (oil)-shivín</i>	<i>diyúuna-diyúuni</i>	<i>pína(milk)-pi</i>

Example 1 above shows vowel deletion of *-a-* occurs in both *Muzái* and *Shivíuna* as middle and final vowels respectively. In example

2, vowel change occurs in final positions of both words where vowel *-ai-* and *-a-* are replaced with vowels *-u-* and *-i-* in *Dábai* and *Diyúuni* while in example 3, the final syllable *-na-* was deleted from both words.

3. The head of nominal compound in Warji is determined by the member that is affected or altered during the formation of the compound, and the first member, left most is the head in Warji compounds

### Data Presentation and Analysis

In this section, the data collected is presented to show how nominal compounds are made in the Warji Language. The data discovers Noun + Noun, Noun + Adjective, Adjective + noun compounds. In the data presented here, the compounds are italicized, literal meaning is given under the compounds, and a gloss is also given in each case. Only high tones are marked and low tones are unmarked. Long vowels are indicated by double vowels, thus *-aa* (long) and *-a* (short). Tables are formed for easy identification.

#### Noun + Noun Compound

Noun + Nouns compounds are those compounds made by noun followed by another noun. According to Ahmad (1994) when the two words are in the same grammatical category, the compound will also be in this category; that is noun + noun compounds belongs to the category of noun. These types of compounds are what he referred to as Endocentric compounds. Here are examples from Warji as presented in table 1 below;

TABLE 1

	Noun	Noun	Compound	Gloss
1.	Gyizái(hair)	Ghàmai (head)	Gyízi <i>ghámai</i> Hair of head	Scalp hair
2.	Gyizái(hair)	Ćiyéi (eyebrow)	Gyízi <i>ćiyéi</i> Hair of eye	Eyebrow

3	Gyizái(hair)	Vinahyína (mouth)	Gyizi <i>vinahyína</i> Hair of mouth	Moustache
4	Súuna(egg)	Lhirkiyái (hen)	<i>Suu lhirkiyai</i> Egg of hen	chicken egg
5	Súuna(egg)	zuburyái(guinea hen)	<i>Suú zuburyái</i> Egg of guinea hen	guinea hen egg
6	Súuna(egg)	Zhuwáana (snake)	<i>Suú zhuwaána</i> Egg of snake	snake egg
7	Vírdai(bulb)	Ćiyéi (eye)	<i>Virdi ċiyéi</i> Bulb of eye	Eyeball
8	Wadína(excre tion)	Gwaráana (rat)	<i>Wádi gwaráana</i> Excrete of rat	rat excrete
9	Wadína(excre tion)	Duhúuna (horse)	<i>Wádi duhúuna</i> Excrete of horse	horse excrete
10	Wadína(excre tion)	Lhirkhiyái (hen)	<i>Wádi lhirkhiyái</i> Excrete of hen	hen excrete
11	Wadína(excre tion)	Nadái (animal)	<i>Wádi nad'ai</i> Excrete of animal	animal excrete
12	Kangírna(mac hine)	Lthanahyína (sewing)	<i>Kangír Lthanahyína</i> Machine of sewing	sewing machine
13	Shivúuna(oil)	Zuuwái groundnut)	<i>Shivun zuuwái</i> Oil of groundnut	groundnut oil
14	Shivúuna(oil)	Mbína(red)	<i>Shivun mbína</i> Oil of red	red oil
15	Shivúuna(oil)	Ghirwái(cow)	<i>Shivun ghirwai</i> Oil of cow	cow cheese
16	Shivúuna(oil)	Fakakái(rub)	<i>Shivun fakakai</i> Oil of rubbing	rubbing oil
17	P ína(milk)	Tiyái(female dog)	<i>Pi tiyái</i> Milk of dog	dog milk
18	P í na(milk)	Dakwái(mare)	<i>Pi dakwái</i> Milk of horse	horse milk
19	Pína(milk)	Ghirwái(cow)	<i>Pi ghirwái</i> Milk of cow	cow milk

In the above table 1 examples of compounds, the leftmost member is the head of the compounds since *gyizi ghámai* is ‘hair of head’ and not head.

Examples 1-3 has *gizái* ‘hair’ which turns to *gyízi* ‘hair of’, vowel deletion of *-a* occurs in the process of making the compounds. There is also a change of tone in pronunciation of the Warji words from when they stand alone to when they are involved in compound words, in these examples 1-3, *gizái* is pronounced low/high tone but in the compound ‘*gyízi ghámai*’ the vowel deletion of *-a* changed the pronunciation to high/high while the second member of the compounds; *ghámai*, *ciyéi* and *vinahyina* remain unchanged by either writing or tone. Examples 4-6 portrays compounds made from *súuna* ‘egg’ where *-na* was taken off from the word to become only *súu* (egg of) and compounds were made. In example 7, *virđái* ‘bulb’ was shortened to become *v írđi* in making a compound word where tone change occurs from High Low to Low High. From examples 8-10, *wadína* ‘excretion’ under goes compound formation and becomes *wádi*, syllable deletion of *-na* was seen, so, instead of LH, the word changed to only HL. While in example 12 above, *kangírna* ‘machine’ becomes just *kangír*, *shivúuna* ‘oil’ to *shivun* and their tones also changed. In example 19, *pína* ‘milk’ to *pí* where syllable *-na* was deleted. In the process of making the compounds, either *-a* or ‘*na*’ is taken away from the left most member of the compound words.

**TABLE 2**

	Noun	Noun	Compound	Gloss
20	Vinaavwái (door)	Padírna (house)	<i>Vináavu Padírna</i> Door of house	house door
21	Vinaavuwái (door)	Vinahyí (front)	<i>Vináavu Vinahyí</i> Door of front	front door

22	Vinaavuwái (door)	Tikyár (back)	<i>Vináavu Tikyár</i> Door of back	back door
23	Vinaavuwái (door)	Yuuwái (city)	<i>Vináavu Yuuwái</i> Door of city	city gate
24	Vinaavuwái (door)	Hulcinna (nose)	<i>Vináavu Hulcinna</i> Door of nose	Nostril

The word *Vinavuwái* in the table above means door in the Warji language. It sometimes takes meaning of ‘gate’, however, entrance could sometimes mean *Vinavuwái*. The following examples 20-23 has *vinavuwái* as door either of house, front /back doors of house or even city entrance while example 24 has *vinavuwái* as ‘door of nose’ nostril. In table two above, process of deletion of a syllable ‘wai’ in Warji language occurs in all the above examples since *Vináavu* ‘door’ is the head of the compound, it is also the member that undergoes changes in the compound formation process, tone has changed from LH to HL.

TABLE 3

	Noun	Noun	Compound	Gloss
25	Dábai (friend)	Burazína (playing)	<i>Dábú burazína</i> Friend of play	play mate
26	Dábai (friend)	Bufatái (fighting)	<i>Dábú bufatái</i> Friend of fight	fight mate
27	Dábai (friend)	Bacáana (working)	<i>Dábú bacáana</i> Friend of work	Colleague
28	Dábai (friend)	Bujigái (chatting)	<i>Dábú bujigái</i> Friend of chat	chat partner
29	Dábai (friend)	Bucigáana (enmity)	<i>Dábú bucigáana</i> Friend of enmity	Enemy
30	Dábai (friend)	Butsagái (staying)	<i>Dábú butsagái</i> Friend of staying	Neighbour

31	Dàbai (friend)	Bucivúuna (traveling)	Dábú <i>bucivúuna</i> Friend of travelling	travelling partner
32	Dàbai (friend)	Cinikína (business)	Dábú <i>cinikína</i> Friend of business	business partner
33	Dàbai (friend)	Butakái (competitio n)	Dábú <i>butakái</i> Friend of competition	Competitor

The word *Dàbai* in table 3 above means ‘friend’ in Warji. It has the following realizations when it is involved in to compound words; In the above compounds from *Dàbai* ‘friend’ is used to refer to many things since it is used as *Dábú* ‘friend of’. The criteria at this segment is deletion of *-ai* and insertion of *-u* to the first member of all the compounds. The head of the compounds remained in the left most member in this case. In example 32, the word *cinikina* is no doubt borrowed from the Hausa language due to lack of its equivalent in the Warji language, the tone has also changed from HL *Dàbai* to HH *Dábú*.

TABLE 4

	Noun	Noun	Compound	Gloss
34	Kurínna (cooked meal)	Zúna (guinea corn)	<i>Kurín zúna</i> Meal of guinea	cooked guinea meal
35	Rivúuna(soup)	Dumbúrna (baobab)	<i>Rivu dumbúrna</i> Soup of baobab	baobab soup
36	Rivúuna(soup)	Taguwái (okro)	<i>Rivu taguwái</i> Soup of okro	okro soup
37	Rivúuna(soup)	Zamáana (beans)	<i>Rivu zamáana</i> Soup of beans	beans soup
38	Rivúuna(soup)	Lhirkyána (roselle)	<i>Rivu lhirkyána</i> Soup of roselle	roselle soup

39	Kwataráí (tail)	Àwáí (goat)	<i>Kwátar awáí</i> Tail of goat	goat tail
40	Kwataráí (tail)	Batuwáana (monkey)	<i>Kwátar batuwáana</i> Tail of monkey	monkey tail
41	Kwataráí (tail)	Ghirwáí (cow)	<i>Kwatar ghirwáí</i> Tail of cow	cow tail
42	Rinjína (wrapper)	Lhanáí (bed)	<i>Rínji lhanáí</i> Wrapper of bed	Bedsheet
43	Gudubúuna (cover)	Vinavuwáí (door)	<i>Gudubún Vinavuwáí</i> Cover of door	Curtain
44	Galiyáí (calabash)	Tsuwáara (water)	<i>Gali tsuwáara</i> Calabash of water	water calabash
45	Galiyáí (calabash)	Busína (bath)	<i>Gali busína</i> Calabash of bath	bath calabash

Some of the compounds listed in table 4 above are associated with food, however, others are not. The formation of the compounds; noun with another noun is what formed them all. In the above examples of compounds, In example 34, *Kurínna* ‘cooked meal’ and 35. *Rivúuna* (soup) were shortened to *kurín* ‘a meal of’ and *Rivu* ‘soup of’ respectively in the process of making them compounds. *Kwataráí* ‘tail’ in examples 39,40 and 41 were reduced to *kwátar* ‘tail of’, *Rinjína* ‘wrapper’ in example 42 is also reduced to *Rínji* ‘wrapper of’, *Gudubúuna* to only *gudubún*, and 45 *Galiyáí* to *Gáli*. All the processes of syllable deletion, vowel deletion and vowel change occurs in the above compounds as shown in the table. The processes do not affect the second member of the compounds in all the examples.

The head of the compounds is in the left most member, the one that undergoes into the process of vowel deletion, vowel change or

syllable deletion while forming the compound words. Thus *Kurin* means cooked meal and not Guinea corn, *Rivu* = soup, *Kwatar* = tail, *Rinji* = bed, *Vinavu* = door and *Gali* = calabash

### Noun + Adjective Compounds

A noun plus adjective compound is the one that has a noun as the first member of the compound word followed by an adjective as second member.

Table 5

	Noun	Adjective	Compound	Gloss
46	Diyúuna (boy)	Mbaráana (tall)	<i>Diyúni mbaráana</i> Boy of tallness	tall boy
47	Ghidái (fish)	Ndidiyái (uncooked)	<i>Ghídi ndidiyái</i> Fis of uncooked	raw fish
48	Muzái (soil)	Pyawái (white F)	<i>Múzi pyawai</i> Soil of white	white soil
49	Pálá (yard)	Rínna (black)	<i>P á li rínna</i> Yard of black	black yard
50	Kab á i (shirt)	Gar á I (big)	<i>Kábi garái</i> Shirt of big	big shirt
51	Shivúuna (oil)	Rínna (black)	<i>Shívun rínna</i> Oil of black	black oil
52	Mir á ana (iron)	Rínna (black)	<i>Mir á n rínna</i> Iron of black	black iron
53	Cir á ana (moon)	Pyáuna (white M)	<i>Cir á n pyauna</i> Moon of white	white moon
54	Kuwína (nail)	Mbína (red)	<i>Kuwíni mbína</i> Nail of red	red nail
55	Vinahyína (mouth)	Mbína (red)	<i>Vinahyín mbína</i> Mouth of red	Red mouth

In the above table 5, noun + adjective compounds, the adjectives took the right most positions of the compounds while the nouns took the left most positions hence Noun+ Adjectives. Vowel change occurs in examples 46, 49 & 54 *diyúuna* to *diyúuni*, *Pála* to *Páli*, *kuwína* to *kuwini* while vowel deletion occur in examples 47, 48, 50,51,52,53 and 55 respectively. *Kabái* to *kâbi*, *Shivúuna* to *Shivun*, *miráana* to *mirán*, *muzáí* to *múzi*, *ciráana* to *cirán* and *ghidái* to *ghidi* respectively, tone is always changing as seen in the examples given so far. Gender identification could be seen in examples 48 and 53 where *pyawái* ‘white’ (female) and *pyáuna* ‘white’ (male) was used. The head of these compounds remains the first member of these compounds as the case is with noun + noun compounds.

### Noun+ Adjective Compound of Colours

In this category of compounds, the first member is a noun, followed by an adjective in formation of colour names, hence noun + adjective. Colour has no name in Warji, you simply refer to *tsuwara* like Hausa would say ‘*ruwan bula*’ for example. The following are description of colours in Warji that are compounds by nature;

**Table 6**

	Noun	Adjective	Compound	Gloss
56	Tsuwáara (water )	Mbína (red)	<i>Tsuwáar mbína</i> Water of red	red colour
57	Tsuwáara (water )	Rinna (black)	<i>Tsuwáar rínna</i> Water of black	black colour
58	Tsuwáara (water)	Pyáuna (white)	<i>Tsuwáar pyáuna</i> Water of white	white colour
59	Tsuwáara (water)	Wassína (green)	<i>Tsuwáar wassína</i> Water of green	green colour

60	Tsuwáara (water)	Bulína (gray)	<i>Tsuwáar bulína</i> Water of gray	gray colour
61	Tsuwáara (water)	Pína (milk)	<i>Tsuwáar pína</i> Water of milk	milk colour

In table 6 above, compound formation of 'colours' differs slightly from that of 'water' even though the same word *tsuwáara* 'water' is used. In the formation of compounds like *tsuwári dindínna* 'hot water' and *tsuwari sahyiyái* 'drinking water' vowel change of -a to -i occurs, while in the name of colours vowel deletion of -a occur. *Tsuwáar* means 'water of'.

### Adjective + Noun Compounds

Table 7

	Adjective	Noun	Compound	Gloss
62	Gwána (aching)	Vinahyína (mouth)	<i>Gwána vinahyína</i> <i>Aching of mouth</i>	mouth ache
63	Gwána (aching)	Ghámái (head)	<i>Gwána ghámái</i> <i>Aching of head</i>	Headache
64	Gwána (aching)	Ćáćáalna (heart)	<i>Gwána ćáćáalna</i> <i>Aching of heart</i>	Heartache
65	Gwána (aching)	Rabibyána (cold)	<i>Gwána rabibyána</i> <i>Aching of cold</i>	Catarrh
66	Gwána (aching)	Kuwayóna (forest)	<i>Gwána kuwayóna</i> <i>Aching of forest</i>	Cancer
67	Gwána (aching)	Ulsána (sleep)	<i>Gwána ulsána</i> <i>Aching of sleep</i>	Narcolepsy
68	Gwána (aching)	Gwánnai (sugar)	<i>Gwána gwánnai</i> <i>Aching of sugar</i>	Diabetes

In the above table 7, *Gwánana* ‘ache’ as noun turns into adjective *Gwána* (aching) in the process of making compounds, the head of the compounds is in the left most member of the compounds. The word *gwánana* ‘ache’ is shortened to only *gwána* to mean ‘aching’, as adjective, syllable deletion of *-na* occurs, the right most members of the compound words remained unaltered.

### Discussion and Conclusion

This paper studied the nominal compounds in Warji, a minority Chadic language family of the Afro-Asiatic Phylum that is spoken in Northern Nigeria in Bauchi State. Warji is spoken by about 105,000 speakers in Nigeria (Dymitir & Iya 2016). The study examined the various ways of forming nominal compounds, the findings show that there are Noun + Noun, Noun + Adjective, Adjective + noun compounds, many nominal compounds are made up of productive words such as *Gwánana* (ache) *Dábai* (friend) in the Warji Language. Analysis has shown that compound formation takes processes of vowel change, vowel deletion and syllable deletion in the process of forming compounds are some of the features of nominal compounds in Warji. The head of a compound in Warji remains in the left most member of the compounds. The compound member that undergoes the change or in many cases shortened is what Ahmad (1994) refers to as the productive member of the compound. There is also great deal of tone changing in the formation of nominal compounds in Warji language.

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