

IMPLICATION OF OPEN SYNTAX ON DERIVED ADJECTIVES

Ajala, Fisayo Andrew

University of Benin

&

Onyemakonor, Chidinma Priscilla

Université d'Abomey Calavi Rép du Bénin

Abstract

Adjectivization is a transformational process of converting a lexical item in a language into an adjectival form. This paper reviews previous word formation processes attested for creating new adjectives in Yoruba and examines the syntactic idiosyncrasies of the derived adjectives when used in open syntax. The data employed in this study is gathered from a variety of sources, including several settings and environments in which the native speakers use the Yoruba language freely. Published and unpublished works that are also related to the research were consulted. The framework for the study was based on Dixon's (1997) Basic Linguistic Theory because of its descriptive adequacy and flexibility rather than trying to force the language into a model based on European languages. The research, amongst others, reveals that the derived adjectives with the inherent [+be] do not need the Yoruba copula verb 'ní' which most derived adjectives require to make sense. The work also reveals that the adjective so derived are not only lexical structures but also post lexical structures

Keywords: Adjectivization, Real Adjectives, Derived Adjectives, Syntax

Introduction

Linguists have identified four key areas of human language: language sound, language form, language meaning and language in context. Grammar comes first with phonetics and phonology (the scientific study speech sounds/functional sounds in a language), followed by morphology (the formation and composition of word), syntax (formation and composition of sentences/phrases from the words) and finally semantics. Traditionally, under the language form, grammar describes eight parts of speech: Noun, pronoun, verb, adjectives, adverb, preposition, conjunction and articles. Narrowing this further, we shall be talking about the Adjectives, specifically processes of the derived adjectives in Yorùbá.

Similarly, Yorùbá adjectives are modifiers of a noun or pronoun (big, brave etc.) adjectives make the meaning of another word (e.g noun) more precise and they are in the open sets of words i.e in the major class category alongside with the nouns, verbs and adverbs. They are generally placed after the nouns they modify e.g. - *Eṣin dúdú* "a black horse". However, it is not uncommon to

find some exceptions where adjectives are placed before the nouns. They are mostly used when expressing special attribute of a person or thing or thing e.g. *Ọ̀bùn ọ̀mọ* – A dirty child.

Conceptual Review and Theoretical Framework

According to Guillaume Segerer (2008) in his article "closed adjectives classes and primary adjectives in African languages", he says that there is no universally adopted definition of adjectives. Ross (1969) argues strongly that adjectives are in fact noun phrases but Chafe (1970:96) analyzes the verbal characteristics of some of them from the view point of the centrality of verbs and concludes that they are "Stative verbs" with regard to the Yorùbá language. Afolayan (1972) calls them "predicative adjectives" but Awobuluyi (1972) rejects the designation and recommends the name "Adjectivisable verbs" on the view point of the Yorùbá language.

According to Sachnine (1997) Yorùbá has five (5) adjectives in which its meaning all relates to importance either on the side of dimension or on the side of a kind moral feature.

They include (rere-good, ñlá-big, gídi-veritable, át at a- important, pàtàki- important).

Ajayi Crowther in his book “Grammar of the Yorùbá language” (1852) says there are two kinds of adjectives in Yorùbá, the participial or verbal adjectives which is the underived adjective that partake in the nature of adjectives and the verb “to be” e.g. Tõbi-“to be big”, kéré-“to be small” and the other type of adjective is the Compound adjective which is formed by doubling the first syllable of the participial adjectives e.g. kéré “small”- kékeré “small”, gùn “long”- gígùn “very long”, kúru-kúkurú, gá- gígá. This compound adjective is referred to as the derived adjective.

T.J Bowen says in his book titled “Grammar and dictionary of the Yorùbá language” in (1858) that Yorùbá adjectives are derived from abstract nouns which are placed before the nouns they qualify. They are also derived from simple verbs and compound formed by adding “ní”, “lí” or “je”- to have. E.g. kúnle ní owó (noun)- kunle is wealthy. T.J Bowen makes a distinction between predicative and qualificative adjectives in Yorùbá, he says that predicative adjectives are performed by simple verbs like: dára, dùn, ñlá etc. and compound verbs which are formed by prefixing “ní” or “lí” to nouns e.g. Àiná ní ágbára- Aina has strength. While qualificative adjectives which are attached to a noun to indicate quality is performed by abstract nouns placed after the nouns which they qualify and can be formed by reduplication from simple verbs e.g. Dídára formed from “dára”, dídùn formed from “dùn”, gígá formed from “ga” etc.

George Madugu S. Isaac (1976) in his work “Yorùbá adjectives have merged with verbs or are they just emerging” illustrates that the adjectival concepts in Yorùbá is a controversial issue and says that the derivational properties of stative verbs are indistinguishable from those of other verbs and calls Yorùbá adjectives “stative verbs” saying that majority of them are Adjectivised from nominal via partial reduplication e.g ga- gígá, dùn - dídùn. According to Madugu, when Yorùbá stative verbs such as ga (to be tall) are partially reduplicated, they become nominalizations which can be derived adjectives used attributively e.g.

1. Alágbára ni bàbá Túndé – “Tunde’s father is a strong man”.

2. Bólá ní bàtà gígá– “bola has a high shoe” Oladele awobuluyi (1978) in his book “essentials of Yorùbá grammar opines that the number of adjectives in Yorùbá is quite large and a vast majority of the adjectives, if not all are derived. He says that they are mostly derived from nouns and verb phrases in relative clauses. E.g. rere “good” Dúdu “black”. He states that not all verbs in Yorùbá can adjectives be formed from but verb phrases from which adjectives can be formed contain verbs belonging to the class of “Adjectivisable verbs”. E.g.

3. Dúdu- (to be black)

4. ga - (to be tall)

5. kúru- (to be short)

6. Dára- (to be good) etc.

Ayo Yusuff (2006) in his book “Ojulowo girama Yorùbá” says there are different ways by which an adjective is recognized in Yorùbá.

7. Only consonants can start Yorùbá true adjectives e.g. kéré, dára etc.

8. Adjectives in Yorùbá usually come before the nouns they qualify in Yorùbá sentences. He observes also that most of Yorùbá adjectives are formed by reduplication of true adjectives e.g. ga – (to be tall) gígá- (to be tall) pò- (plenty) púpò.

Bola Adelabu (2014) says that Yorùbá adjectives are open set of words and they are numerous and generally placed after the nouns they modify e.g. Èşin dúdu- “a black horse”

Friday-Otun (2021) explains that, aside reduplication, adjectives in Yoruba can also be derived by retriplings. e.g. le le le "very very hard"

It is objective to conclude from the above that numerous attempts have been made at describing adjective and the word formation processes involved in the derivation of the derived adjectives. However, this paper attempts to add to the ongoing discussions by investigating syntactic shift on a construct when a new adjective is derived through a word formation process.

This research adopts this basic linguistics theory for analyzing our data. Dixon (1997), proposes a descriptive theory called the Basic Linguistic Theory. Basic linguistic theory differs most sharply from other descriptive theoretical

frameworks in what may be described as its conservativeness: unlike many descriptive frameworks that assume previous ideas limitedly and freely assume novel ones, basic linguistic theory borrows as much as is needed from earlier methods and as much as necessary from new(er) methods. The theory frowns at the idea of forcing a language into a model based on European languages. Languages therefore must be analyzed in their own rights.

Methodology

The researcher adopted both primary and secondary systems of data collection in this research. The primary system includes interviews with competent speakers of Yorùbá. We gather a list of adjectives in Yorùbá by consulting six different informants within the age range of 45-70 (4 males and 2 females). The informants were also

able to tell some of the true adjectives and the ones which were adjectivised or derived through morphological process.

For the secondary system, we made use of written documents by reading through previous works and documents related to this study in Yorùbá. Books and journal published online were also used in the compilation of data for this work since it is now generally recognized surest way of catching up with current information in language.

Adjectivization by Prefixation

Nida (1949:699) defines prefixes as bound elements, (i.e they never occur in isolation) which precedes the root. From this definition, we can infer that prefixation is the morphological process of adding a bound element to a root of stem. This process often leads to the formation of Adjectives.

Consider the following examples

S/N	NOUNS	ADJECTIVISED NOUNS
9	Òótọ́ – “truth”	Olóòótọ́ – “a truthful person”
10	Ọlá – “wealth”	Ọlọ́lá – “a wealthy person”
11	Ọgbọ́n – “wisdom”	Ọlọgbọ́n – “a wise person”
12	’Agídí – “stubborn”	’Alágídí – “ a stubborn person”
13	’Àánú “mercy”	’Alááánú – “merciful person”
14	Àbùkù – “disgrace”	Alábùkù – “A disgraceful fellow”
15	Agbára – “strength”	Alágbára – “strong person”
16	Àwàdà – “joke”	Aláwàdà – “joker”
17	Àtẹ̀numọ́ – “persistent”	Alátẹ̀numọ́ – “persistent person”
18	Ahun – “stingy”	Aláahun – “stingy person”
19	’Ariwo – “noise”	Aláriwo – “noisy person”

The additions of the morphemes ‘Ol’ and ‘Al’ which both translates as a ‘person’ or ‘someone’ changes the syntactic class of the word from a noun to and adjective. Let us see some usage of this adjectives in contexts

20. Túndé maań sọ ọ́ótọ́
 PN PROG say Noun
 “Tunde always says the truth”

21. Túndé jẹ olóòótọ́
 PN to be adjectivised noun
 “tunde is a truthful person”

22. ọmọ náà ní ọgbọ́n
 child the have Noun
 “The child has wisdom”

23. ọlọgbọ́n ní Ọkùnrin náà
 adjectivised noun man is the
 “the man is a wise person”

24. Túndé ní ahun

25. Túndé jẹ aláahun

PN has noun
 “Tunde is stingy”

PN to be adjectivised noun
 “Tunde is a stingy person”

We would notice from the examples 21, 23 and 25 above that the adjectivised nouns have a peculiar syntactic behaviour. The adjectivised nouns takes the copula verb ‘ní’ only when it occurs at the word initial position but take the verb ‘je- to be’ when it occurs at the word final position.

1.5 ADJECTIVE BY COMPARISON IN YORÚBÁ

These categories of adjectives are used when comparing between two or more Nominal. These types are created by insertion of a new element in a construct, i.e. a new morpheme is introduced which comes after the adjectives.

The comparative forms are created by introducing the morpheme jù - an attribute which mean “to surpass or exceed” which comes after the adjectives coupled with the adverb lọ “than”. See examples below.

S/N	POSITIVE FORM	COMPARATIVE FORM
26	Tóbi – “big”	Tóbi jù – “bigger”
27	kéré – “small”	kéré jù – “smaller”
28	gùn – “long”	gùn jù – “longer”
29	ga – “tall”	ga jù – “taller”
30	Kúrú – “short”	Kúrú jù – “shorter”
31	dùn – “sweet”	dùn jù – “sweeter”
32	le – “strong”	le jù – “stronger”
33	gbó – “old/ worn out “	gbó jù – “older”
34	búrú – “wicked”	búrú jù- “ more wicked”
35	dára – “good”	dára jù – “better than “

Examples in contexts

37. Bólá kéré
 PN ADJ
 “Bola is small”

38. Bólá kéré ju Fúnké lọ
 PN ADJ greater PN than
 “Bola is smaller than Funke

39. Olúwa tóbi
 God ADJ
 “God is big”

40. Olúwa ló tóbi jù
 God that ADJ greater
 “God is bigger”

41. Ayọ ga
 PN ADJ
 “ayo is tall”

42. Ayọ ga ju àwọn ọrẹ rẹ lọ
 PN ADJ more PL friend her than
 “Ayo is taller than her friends”

43 Fúnké ni ó kéré jù láàárín ọrẹ rẹ
 PN is that small than among her
 “ Fúnké is the smallest among her friends”

44. Fúnké ni ó kúrú jùlọ nínú ilé
 PN is the short more-than in house
 “funke is the shortest in the house”

Data above show a syntactic shift when the true adjectives are used to derive the comparative and superlative . You will agree with us from data 38, 39 and 42 that the morphemes jù and lọ are used as split morphemes to derive comparison while in deriving the superlative sense the morphemes are compounded in the context.

Adjectivization by Reduplication

Reduplication is an affixation process that copies material from the stem unto the affix. The copied material could be everything in the stem (for full reduplication) or some of the elements (partial reduplication). However, only the partial can be used to derive adjectives in Yorúbá. Consider the data below.

Adjective derived from adjectival verbs

S/N	ADJECTIVAL VERBS	DERIVED ADJECTIVES
46	ga – “to be tall”	gíga – “very tall”
47	kúrú – “to be short”	kúkúrú – “short”
48	dára – “to be good”	*darádára – “very good”
49	ńlá – “to be big”	ńlá-ńlá – “very big”
50	kéré – “to be small”	kékeré – “small”
51	burú – “to be wicked”	búburú – “wicked”

The adjectival verbs are set of lexicons that partake of the nature of adjective and the verb [+be feature]. From the derived adjective above, it suffices to say that new adjectives are derived by partial reduplication only. Full reduplication of the adjectival verb result in an adverb instead. Let us consider some usage in contexts.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 52. Mo ra bàtà tó ga
ISG buy shoe rel. ADJ
“I bought a high shoe” | 53. Mo ra bàtà gíga
ISG buy shoe ADJ
“I bought a high shoe” |
| 54. Bòsẹ̀ fẹ̀ràń ọ̀kúnrin tó kúrú
PN like man rel. ADJ
“bose likes a short man” | 55. Bòsẹ̀ fẹ̀ràń ọ̀kúnrin kúkúrú
PN like man ADJ
“bose likes a short man” |
| 56. Olùkọ̀ kọ̀ wa dára
Teacher teach us adv.
“the teacher taught us very well” | 57. *Olùkọ̀ kọ̀ wa dára
Teacher teach us adj.
“the teacher taught us very well” |
| 58. Mo rá ọ̀sán ńlán
ISG buy orange ADJ
“I bought big oranges” | 59. Mo ra ọ̀sán ńláńlá
ISG buy orange ADJ
“I bought big oranges” |

In data 52 it is shown that (gíga) is reduplicated from the adjectival verb gá – tall through partial reduplication without a semantic shift in the original meaning of the word. The same semantic behaviour goes for other data except data 57, which add credence to our assertion earlier that on ly partial reduplication is productive here. Darádára is suspected to be an adverb because it effects change in the meaning of the adjectival verb when it is being fully reduplicated from (dára – “good” and appears to be modifying a verb in the sentence. In the example above from (52-59) it can be observed that the adjectival verbs do not need the Yoruba copula (ní-to have) which is mostly used for derived adjectives, due to the fact that these adjectives already possess the inherent [+be] they are able to convey meaning without adding the morpheme –ni- “to have.

Adjectives Derived from The Negative Marker (KO/O)

In Yorùbá some adjectives are derived with the use of the negative marker in the language (kò/ò), plus the positive form of the word. Some adjectives in Yorùbá are antonyms of each other like dúdú- “black”, and funfun- “white” while some others do not possess this feature. These adjectival members are expressed through the use of the negative marker plus the positive form which will be seen below:

	POSITIVE FORM	NEGATIVE FORM
60	le – “strong”	kò le – “not strong”
61	pupa – “red”	kò pupa – “not red”

62	tóbi – “big”	kò tóbi – “not big”
63	rọ̀ – “soft”	kò rọ̀ – “not soft”
64	gbóná – to be “hot”	kò gbóná – to be “not hot”
65	tutù – to be “cold/wet”	kò tutu – to be “not hot”
66	gbẹ̀ – to be “dry”	kò gbẹ̀ – to be “not dry”

See examples in contexts

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>67. Bọ́lá pupa
 PN ADJ
 “Bola is fair”</p> | <p>68. Bọ́lá kò pupa
 PN NEGM. ADJ
 “Bola is not fair”</p> |
| <p>69. Ọ̀bẹ̀ náà gbóná
 Soup the hot
 “the soup is hot”</p> | <p>70. Ọ̀bẹ̀ náà kò gbóná
 ADJ Soup the NEGM. ADJ
 “the soup is not hot”</p> |
| <p>71. Aşọ yẹn ti gbẹ̀
 Cloth that has ADJ.
 “the cloth has dried”</p> | <p>72. Aşọ yẹn kò tii gbẹ̀
 Cloth that NEGM. has ADJ.
 “the cloth has not dried”</p> |

From the above data, it can be observed that certain expressions which do not have adjectival members to represent them, are derived from the negative marker and the positive form as seen in examples 68, 70 and 72. Hence, the adjective so derived has a post-lexical structure, negation phrase or adjectival phrase, as in “kò pupa” not fair

Findings and Conclusion

The study has shown the peculiarities in the syntax and semantics of derived adjectives when used in context. The adjectivized nouns takes the copula verb verb ‘ní- to have, only when it occurs at the word initial position but take the verb ‘jẹ- to be’ when it occurs at the word final position. In using the adjectives to create comparisons between two or more persons or entities, the morphemes jù and lọ are used as split morphemes to derive comparison while in deriving the superlative sense the morphemes are compounded in the context. More also, the derived

adjectives with the inherent [+be] do not need the Yoruba copula verb ‘ní’ which most derived adjectives require to make sense. The work has also revealed that full reduplication is not productive here. In addition, expressions which do not have adjectival members to represent them are derived by inserting the negative marker and the positive form before them. Sequel to the analyses above, majority of derived adjectives are derived from nominals, adjectivized verbs and from the adjective itself. The adjective so derived are not only lexical structures but also post lexical structures.

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