

The Mirage of Interfix or Infix in Yoruba Concatenative Morphology

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Abstract. Yorùbá linguists do not agree on the attestation of infixes in morphological analysis of the language. This is because if one needs to consider and adhere strictly to the definition of infix as a linguistic term, infix has zero occurrence in Yoruba concatenative morphology. Awobuluyi's recent works, most especially, Awobuluyi (2008), opts for interfixation instead of infixation. This paper understudied the most current works on the topic (Awobuluyi 2008 and Taiwo 2011) and concludes that none of the two aforesaid affixal morphological operations occur in Yoruba morphological analysis. We, therefore, account for the process through lexical reduplication. The study tries to give reasons for the non-feasibility of the two affixal processes in the language. We adopt the word syntax theory as well as descriptive analysis to expand upon our current position which is novel in the literature of the Yoruba morphological analysis. It is therefore evident from this paper that further and intensive researches need

to be done on some established positions in the morphological aspect of the Yoruba language in the hope of assessing the suitability and validity of such positions.

Keywords: Infix, Interfix, Concatenative Morphology, Reduplication and Mirage

1. Introduction

Two schools of thought have emerged in Yoruba studies on the feasibility of interfixation or infixation in Yoruba concatenative morphology. This problem, we assume, arises from the efforts of some Yoruba linguists to exhibit affixes in the language as it occurs in some other languages of the world.

Prior to Awobuluyi (2008), it was erroneously established that infixation does occur in Yoruba concatenative morphology, most especially, within two nouns as in

	N	Afix	N	Output	Gloss
i.	omọ	kí	omọ	omókómọ	bad behaved child
ii.	àgbà	ní	àgbà	àgbàlagbà	very old people
iii.	ilé	dé	ilé	ilédélé	from house to house
iv.	èrò	kí	Èrò	èròkerò*	bad thoughts
V	òrò	kí	òrò	òròkòrò*	insidious speech

(The last two examples are asterisked for a purpose in this study)

Awóbùlúyì (2008: 40) observes the definitional default of the morphological connotation 'infix' and, therefore, posits that Yorùbá does not exhibit infixes in its morphological analyses. He, therefore, suggests interfixation to account for examples in (1). However, having considered the porosity of either of the claims (interfixation or infixation), Awóbùlúyì (2008: 41) says

Méjì péré nínú àwọn wúnrèn tí a sàpẹrẹ wọn síbí yíí, iyen {iyí-} àti {-kí-}, ní a lè kà sí ojúlówó àfòmó aṣopò. **Onírúurú èyà ọrọ tí a kàn ló bí àfòmó-àṣopò ní àwọn wúnrèn yòókù. Ní pátó, ọrọ-ìṣe ní**

àwọn méjọ àkókó. Ara èrì fún èyí ní ohùn isàlẹ àdámọ àwọn kan nínú wọn tí a rí tí ó dì ohùn àárín gbàrà tí ọrọ orúkọ tẹlé wọn nínú àpẹrẹ karùn-ún àti ikẹfà lókè. (the bold sentences are for emphasis in this study).

(Two of the grammatical items that are used in the examples, that is {iyí-} and {-kí-} are the real interfixes. **Words from different syntactic categories are collected or grouped to function as interfixes in the other examples; succinctly the first eight examples are basically verbs.** Part of the evidence for such conclusion is their basic low tone

that usually changes to mid tone when they are followed by noun in examples five and six above (the bold statement are for emphases).

To get the clear picture of Awóbùlúyì's (2008) position. The underlisted examples in (2) are copied from Awóbùlúyì (2008: 40-41):

2.			
{-bá-}	ayé-bá-ayé > - ayébáyé	time immemorial	
{-bí-}	iye-bí-iye > - iyebíye	very costly	
{-dé-}	ìgbà-dé-ìgbà > - ìgbàdégbà	time to time	
{-mò-}	òdún-mò-òdún > - òdúnmodún	yearly	
{-rè-}	ayé-re-ayé > - ayéráyé	eternity	
{-jò-}	iró-jò-iró > - irójiró (f.w onírójiró)	age-mate	
{-jó-}	igè-jó-igè > - igèjigè (f.w. gbirègèjigè)	no English	
	equivalent		
{-ní-}	àgbà-ní-àgbà > - àgbàlágba	old people	
{-ni-}	opé-ni-opé > - opélopé	reasons	
{-iyi-}	ilè-iyi-ilè > - ilèyilè-ilènlè	no	English
	equivalent		
{-kí-}	isè-kí-isè > - isèkísè	bad work	

Bámgbósé (1990: 110) hints that one of the nomilization processes in the Yorùbá language is through infixation of reduplicated nouns. He cited the following examples:

3	òpò > òpòlopò (òpò-ní-òpò)	many people
Àgbà	> àgbàlágba (àgbà-ní-àgbà)	old people
Ògbó	> ògbólógbò (ògbó-ní-ògbó)	very difficulty people

Two things are noticed from Bámgbósé (1990) examples as shown in examples (3: 1-iii)

1. He accepts 'ní' as the basic infix that occurs between the two nouns. This makes Bámgbósé's (1990) position to be strictly consistent as he has been able to account for the change that occur in these examples in Bámgbósé (1990: 45). He says
Tí silébù olóhùn isàlè bá ʒájú silébù olóhùn òkè tí ohùn isàlè amòòkùn tẹlẹ, iyipadà maa n ʒẹlẹ tí ohùn-òkè yíi yóò di ohùn áárín. Bí àpẹrẹ:

4ai.	bí èjì-bé'jì	'born twins'
ii.	ì-bejì -	ìbejì 'act of giving birth to twins'
iii.	dá iwọ -	dá'wọ 'cut umbilical cord'
iv.	ì-dá wọ -	ìdà'wọ 'act of cutting umbilical cord'.
Irú iyipadà ohùn yíi ni a maa n rí nínú àwọn ọrọ bí i:		
4bi.	èròkè'rò	'bad thought'
ii.	ọròkọ'rọ	'useless speech'
iii.	èkẹ'jì	'the second thing/position'
iv.	ẹkẹ'wá	'the tenth position/thing'
v.	kò gbọ'dọ wá	'He shouldn't come'

(When a low tone syllable preceeds a high tone syllable that occurs before an assimilated low tone syllable, the high tone will change to mid tone. Such tonal change accounts for examples in (4ai-iv, 4bi-v) Although, Bámgbósé (ibid) was trying to establish the importance of assimilated low tone in the Yorùbá orthography, the examples he presented and the

explanation he posited are very relevant to our position on the feasibility of either interfixation or infixation in Yorùbá concatenative morphology.

Bámgbósé adopts the orthographic position of 1974 orthography committee in example 3iii (see Aróhunmólàṣe 1987) as in, ògbó ògbólógbò instead Bámgbósé would have preferred writing ògbo ògbógbó as he has been doing reiteratively in Bámgbósé (1990: 45).

Aside from Awóbùlúyì (2008) and Bámgbósé (1990), Táíwò (2011: 42-43) considers the meaning of infix and concluded that the definition cannot be employed to account for the process in the Yorùbá concatenative morphology. However, he fails to maintain a consistent position on the topic when he claimed that the possibility of infixes in the language may be language specific.

Having considered the inconsistent and incoherent positions of the previous studies on the accountability of either interfixes or infixes in the Yorùbá concatenative morphology, this study tends to provide evidence for non-feasibility of the infixes in Yoruba morphological analysis. Before this we want to discuss the theoretical background for this paper.

2. Theoretical Background

Theoretically, our analysis in this study is basically descriptive. However, our explanations adhere strictly to the linguistic characterization of the word syntax theory. Toman (2001: 320) stresses the importance of word syntax theory as:

A certain consensus about strategies of word syntax is that it is meaningful and theoretically legitimate to discuss the question of whether general principles of grammar hold in word structures. One of the superficial effects of this approach to morphology is that morphology now look very much like syntax. This does not mean that morphology has been completely assimilated into syntax.

Considering the syntactic formation of the examples in Awóbùlúyì (2008: 40-41), it is shown that they are sets of paradigmatically morphological related words. They have an internal morphological structure of noun, verb, and noun morphemic sequence.

Consequently, word syntax theory is very relevant to analyse word formation process in Yoruba morphology due to the fact that the language does not operate inflections. The status of inflection has been a conflicting issue on headship subcategorical constituency in the theory. The protagonists of the theory such as Selkirks (1982), Spencer (1991). Di

Sciullo and Williams (1987) Beard (2001), Toman (2001) amongst others, believe that syntactic principles can be straightforwardly applied to the domain of morphology. Indeed, Di sciullo and Williams (1987: 52) expand upon the theory of word-syntax to account for compounds with respect to wh-movement which is an uncontroversial syntactic phenomenon. Beard (2001: 48) informs that the simplicity of the word-syntax theory to derivation is achieved by the assumption that affixes are regular lexical items, and, as such, may serve as heads of derivatives.

We adopt the parametric characterizations of the word-syntax theory in a descriptive manner in this study.

3. Analysis

Spencer (2001: 129) defines infixation as follows:

The term infixation is properly applied to the insertion of an affix within some other morpheme (and not, for instance, simply between two other morphemes)...

Genuine examples are provided by the Tagalog examples (taken from McCarthy and Prince 1993: 101 in which an affix {um} appears as a prefix. When the stem begins with a consonant (or consonants), {um} shifts to the first syllable as in: Sulats (write)→s-um-ulat (to write) Gradwet (graduate)→gr-um-adwet (to graduate)

Based on Spencer's (2001) definition, it will be very hard for linguist to account for examples in '1' and '2' through infixation. On the term 'interfix' which Awóbùlúyì (2008) used to avoid misrepresentation of the term 'infixes' for the same morphological process, it does not even exist in that morphological constituency. This is evident because the two nouns that are involved in the process, as highlighted in example '2', are the same. Up till now, findings have not shown in the same manner of any other examples of interfixation process in concatenative morphology of any language in the world. The only morphological process that can conveniently account for examples (2i-xi) is reduplication.

Notice that the formal relationships of morphemes (affixes or stems) to each other are structural and positional. Nida (1949: 69) explains reduplication as follows:

Reduplication consists in the repetition of all or of part of a root or stem... Where only a part of the root or stem is repeated, the repeated portion may be called "reduplicative". Such reduplicative may occur preposed, interposed, and postponed to the root or

stem, and they may consist of just the morphemes of the stem or there may be some added elements.

Therefore, it is just a misrepresentation of morphological term by converting 'reduplicatives' to either prefix, infix or suffix as done by Taiwo (2011: 106-107) under the subheading of 'Àfòmò iparí Aláiyisòrípadà' (Non-lexical changing suffixes) as in: 6. (a) geere (AP) – re, ge-geerere, geerege (AP) (smoothly) (b) wòròrò (AP) – wò - wòròròwò (AP) (cooling continuously) (d) gboro (AJ) – gbo- gborogbo (AJ) (strait -forwardly) (e) kànkà (AJ) – kà - kànkàkà (AJ) (extremely very big)

These foregoing examples are conveniently taking care of in another work.

Now, we want to proffer reasons for non-possibility of interfixation in the referred morphological consistency in Yorùbá concatenative morphology.

4. Reasons for Non-feasibility of interfixation in Yoruba concatenative morphology

Affix has no linguistic status of structural independence to function as a lexical item. This is evident as the referred interfix do occur in Yoruba language as a lexical item in some syntactic constructions such as:

- (7) i. kómọ (kí + ọmọ) rẹ fún mí (Greet your child for me)
- ii. Dànidàni kii bá ní ní lágba ní + àgbà (Stupidity does not start in old age)
- iii. È jòwó, ẹ má ẹe báyé (bá+ ayé) yí (Please, do not conform with the world)
- iv. Ó lópẹ (ní + ọpẹ) láti gbà ní ẹnu mí (I need to praise appreciate him).
- v. Ó pẹ kíşẹ (kí+ işẹ) nàà tó parí. (The work was finished very late in the day)

The foregoing examples corroborate Awóbùlúyì's (2008: 41) observation that the referred interfixes are basically verbs and verb phrases.

If interfixation does occur in the language, it will not be restrictedly used between reduplicative nouns. Affixes have free-occurrence with any stem or root. It is only phonological rules that can curtail the occurrence of affixes as it is evident in English plural allomorphs as provided by the following set of words;

(8) **Group 1: Ending with 'es' as in:**

Singular	Plural
Wolf	wolves
Knife	knives
Shelf	shelves
Thief	thieves
Calf	calves
Life	lives

Group 2: (Ending with 's') as in

Singular	plural
Belief	beliefs
Proof	proofs

Chief chiefs
Safe safes

Group 3: (Ending with es) as in:

Singular plural
House houses
Blouse blouses (see Brinton 2000

for more examples)

The foregoing examples are phonologically conditioned.

The flanking nouns also occur under full reduplication in the language as in:

(9)	Noun	Redup	Noun
	Derived		
	(stem)		
	1	2	3
	4		

(i) ọmọ (child) > ọmọ + ọmọ
ọmọọmọ (Grandchild)

(ii) àgbà (elder) > àgbà + àgbà
àgbààgbà (Elder to elder)

The evidence for the inequality status of the lefthanded copy of the noun in the latest examples is reflected in tone pattern as in:

òwọ́ + òwọ́ > òwọ̀òwọ́
(order) (order) (Very orderly)

The basic tonal pattern is LHLH' sequence, while the Derived Noun takes LLLH. Ordinarily, the Yoruba basic tone configuration allows high tone to be super-imposed on any other tones in phrasal morphological consistency. The following examples can also be compared as in:

i.	èta	+	èta	→	ètètèta
ii	(three)		(three)	→	(In
	thirdly manner)			→	
iii	èrin	+	èrin	→	èrètèrin
iv	(four)		(four)	→	(In
	fourthly manner)			→	
v	ọdún	+	ọdún	→	ọdọdún
vi	(year)		(year)		(Every
	year)				
vii	alẹ	+	alẹ		alaalẹ
	(night)		(night)		(Every
	night)				

The examples in 'qa' and 'qb' reflect lexical reduplication.

This show that the Reduplicative 'Noun 2' occurs as copy of 'Noun 3' as preposed reduplication (to share terms with Nida 1949: 69)

Variant of the same reduplication process do occur in Yoruba counting system as in:

(10) Verb phrase counting Redup

Output gloss

(i) mú + èwá > mēwáá + èwá →
mēwèwéwá (The whole ten)

(ii) mú + èjì > méjì + èjì →
mējèjèjì (The whole two)

(iii) mú + èta > mēta + èta →
mētètèta (The whole three)
(iv) mú + èjọ > méjọ + èjọ →
mējèjèjọ (The whole eight)
(v) mú + èsán > mēsánán + èsán →
mēsèèèsán (The whole nine)

Notice that tone change occur in examples (10i) and 10v) as in:

(11) i mēwáá + èwá > mēwèwéwá 'The whole ten'
ii. mēsánán + èsán > mēsèèèsán 'The whole nine'

The high tone on the third syllable has to be changed to low tone because it is being preceded by a low tone in the merging. This, of course, expands upon Bámgbóṣé's (1990:45) claim that high tone can be elided for low tone when the flank tones are low tones in phrasal morphology. Also, the mid-tone when preceded by low tone do changes to mid tone. The latest examples account for post-posed reduplication.

Also, the reduplicative noun can be replaced with an affix (prefix) in nomilization process as in

(12)i. {i-} bá ayé – ibáyé rẹ ọtá Ọlórún ní (conformity with world is enmity with God)

ii. {à-} mó ọdún – àmódún (The following year)

iii. {a-} ní àgbà – alágbà ní ilé (he who has elder in the home)

iv. {o-} ní ọpé – ọlópé (The celebrant)

Notice that the structural position of the reduplicates in examples' 2i-xi' is taken by prefixes in '12i-iv' as reflected in the latest examples. We deduce from the foregoing examples that the reduplicatives do not have the same linguistics status as the stem. Premise on this, the reduplicative serves as the head of reduplication

Aside from the aforementioned points, Bámgbóṣé (1990: 108) presents an example of nomilization process in the language as:

Ṣíṣe àpètúnṣẹ ọrọ-orúkọ pèlú isọdorúkọ tí a fì àfòmó-ibèrẹ {oní-}ṣẹdà; itumọ isọdorúkọ yìí ní pé èlòmíràn yàtò sí ẹni tó ń sọrọ ní ó ní nńkan náà. (Reduplicating of derived noun with {oní-} prefixation. The meaning of such a derived noun is that another person that defers from the speaker has the material)

(13)i. ọkọ ọkọ → ọlọkọ (The owner of husband)

ii. ọmọ ọmọ → ọlómọ (The owner of child)

iii. ilé ilé → ọnlé (The owner of house (Landlord).

iv. owó owó → ọlówó (The owner of money (The rich)

v. ọrọ ọrọ → ọlórọ (The owner of riches)

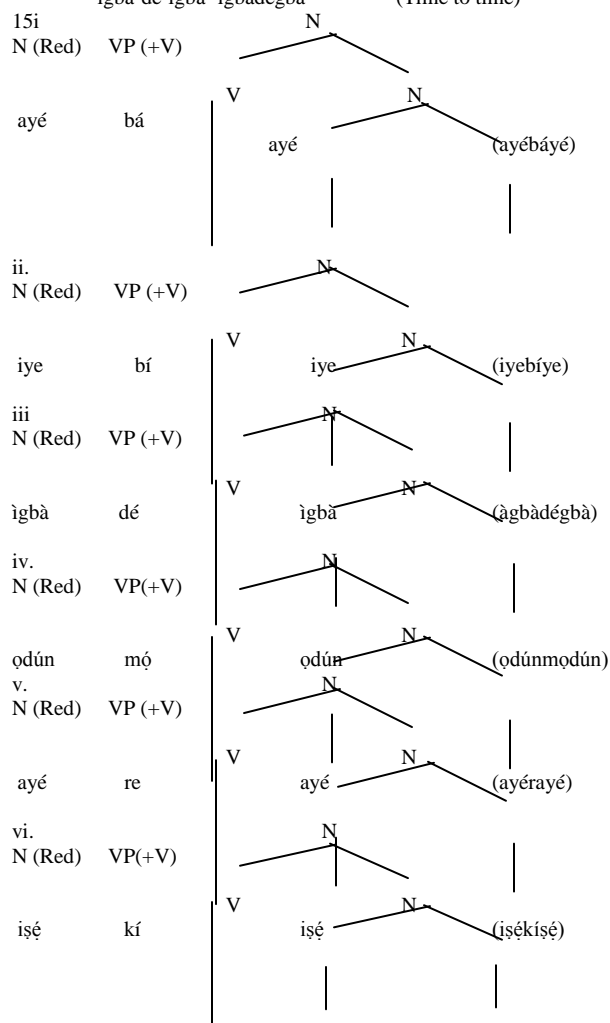
Consequent to this, the referred interfixation can be treated through reduplication in Yoruba concantative morphology.

5. Morphological Analysis of the Referred interfixation in Yoruba Concantative Morphology

Having disagree with the previous proposals on the infixation or interfixation in the Yoruba concantative morphology, we want to give morphological account of the process through reduplication as claimed in

this study. Part of Awóbùlúyí's (2008: 41) examples are repeated here for easy reference as in:

- (14) i. ayé-bá-ayé - ayébáyé (Time immemorial)
 iye-bí-iyé - iyebíyé (Very costly)
 ìgbà-dé-ìgbà - ìgbàdégbà (Time to time)



- òdún-mọ-òdún- òdúnmọdún (Yearly)
 ayé-re-ayé - ayéráyé (Eternity)
 isẹ-kí-isẹ - isẹkíisẹ (Bad work)

The reduplicate (Red) occur on the left hand side as it is exemplified on the tree diagrams below:

The reduplicates (Red) serve as the head of each morphological analysis. This is evident because its inclusion changes the stem which is basically a verb phrase to a noun. This, of course, corroborates the left headed characterization of Yorùbá phrasal composition in both syntax and morphology. The issue of double headedness does not exist as the foregoing analysis represents the sequence morphological analysis of the data.

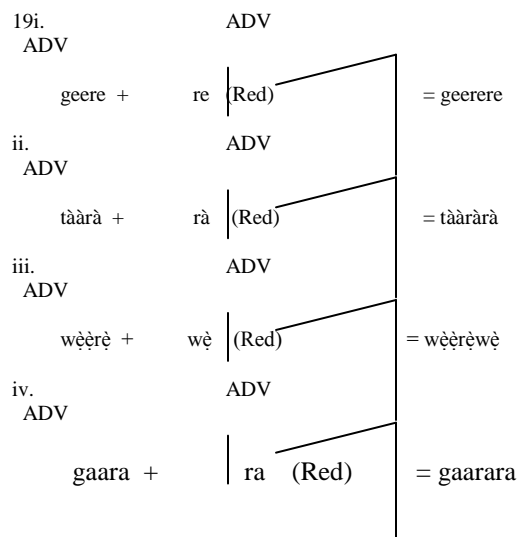
Although, the headship position may change in other type of reduplication such as postposed. Yoruba allows post-posed reduplication as in:

5.1 Phonological postposed

It occurs when a phonological part of the stem, most specially syllable, is reduplicated postpositionally as in:

16.	Stem	Reduplication	Output	Gloss
i.	geere	geere + re (ge)	geerege or geerege	Smoothly or unstopped
ii.	tààrà	tààrà + rà (tà)	tààràrà or tààràtà	Straightly or uncurved
iii.	gaara	gaara + ra (ga)	gaarara or gaaraga	Progressively
iv.	wẹ̀rẹ̀	wẹ̀rẹ̀ + rẹ̀ (wẹ̀)	wẹ̀rẹ̀rẹ̀ or wẹ̀rẹ̀wẹ̀	Extremely small
v.	pààrà	pààrà + rà (pà)	pààràrà or pààràpà	Continuous strange sound
vi.	wẹ̀rẹ̀	wẹ̀rẹ̀ + rẹ̀ (wẹ̀)	wẹ̀rẹ̀rẹ̀ or wẹ̀rẹ̀wẹ̀	Dropping continuously.

It is noticed from the examples in '16' that the phonological postposed reduplication can be sub-divided into postposed reduplication or fronted postposed reduplication. whatsoever manner it occurs, the reduplicate serves as the morphological head of the morphological compositions. This is illustrated on the tree diagrams as in:



6. Summary and Conclusion

Our discussions in this study show that Yoruba language does not exhibit neither interfix nor infix in the Yoruba concatenative morphology. Our findings reveal that it is a mere misrepresentation of term in morphological analysis to approve neither interfix nor infix in Yoruba concatenative morphology. We consider reduplication as the true morphological operation that can straightforwardly account for the morphological constituencies where the previous studies tend to claim interfixation or infixation. This study adopts word-syntax theory as the theoretical base for our analysis. Also, we try to account for the headship status of each examples that we illustrate with the tree-diagrams. It is clearly exhibited in the study that each derived word should have a morphological head. It is hoped that this paper would encourage detailed understudy of some established positions in the literature. The paper hereby supports the presence of prefixes in the Yoruba concatenative morphology, but seems unfavourably disposed toward the acceptability of any other affix types in the language.

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