



The Basic Analysis of the Morpho-Syntactic Status of the Third Person Singular Subject Pronoun in Standard Yorùbá Language.

MOSES ADEDIRE ADEKUNLE

Ọlábísí Ọnábánjọ University, Àgọ-Ìwòyè, Ọ̀gùn State, Nigeria.

Abstract. Awóbùlúyì (2001) brings a new notion of the zero morphological realization of the first person singular pronoun (ó) in Yorùbá studies. Awóbùlúyì's (2001:1-8) proposition hereby trigger arguments on the 'ó' as the first person singular pronoun subject with different views and submissions from scholars. (see Àkànbí 2004, Ọládèyí 2003 and Adéwọlé 2011). Awóbùlúyì (2001:2) hints that his proposition emerged because 'ó' and 'un' are not linguistically related. Using clipping and descriptive analysis, this paper has tried to claim that 'ò', 'ó', 'ùn', are reductions of 'òun' (pronominal) in Yorùbá language. The paper supported Awóbùlúyì (1992) previous position that pronouns are reduction form of pronominals in the language. The study informed that adoption of variants of clipping formative styles such as fore clipping or apocoptation clipping cause the different representation of the third person pronouns in Yorùbá syntax from the following; 'ó', 'ò', 'un'. The paper used examples from Ifẹ̀, Ọ̀ndó and Kétu dialects. Our findings reveal that prosodic assimilation between the third person pronoun or pronominal with the high tone syllable eventually cause 'o' 'ùn' àwọ̀n and wọ̀n to transform to ó, ún, wọ̀n and àwọ̀n as deem fit in each phonetic realization of the third person pronouns and pronominals. The study hereby recommends that the agelong established presentation as of 'ó' as the third person singular pronoun should be retained. Therefore, the zero morphological theory is hereby discouraged.

Keywords: Fore-clipping, apocoptation clipping, Anglo-phone Kétu, pscho-morphological, morphological restrictions.

1. Introduction

Many notable Yorùbá linguists such as Awóbùlúyì (2001, 2006) Olumuyiwa (2006) have agreed in support of zero morphological realization of the third person singular subject pronoun in the syntactic structure of the standard Yorùbá. These papers mostly consider the phono-morphological

and syntactical peculiarities of 'ó' which is formerly established as the third person singular subject pronoun in the literature. Awóbùlúyì (2001:1-8) which serves as the protagonist of zero morphological realization theory of the third person singular subject pronoun advances many reasons for his proposition.

Awóbùlúyì (2001:2) cited Awóbùlúyì (1992:28) when he argued that pronouns are basically derived as reduction of the pronominal such as 'èmi'(I) and 'àwọ̀n' (they) to 'mi' and 'wọ̀n' (they) pronouns respectively. Awóbùlúyì (2001:2) represents the (1) below to represent the graphical representation of his previous claim in 1992 position as in:

1		
Pronominal	pronoun	gloss
i. èmi	→ mi	I
ii. ìwo	→ (w) ọ	you
iii. òun	→ un	he/she
iv. àwa	→ (w) a	we
v. àwọ̀n	→ wọ̀n	they

However, Awóbùlúyì (ibid) cites another research findings of unknown scholar that claim that the pronominals are derived from the pronouns through prefixation of basic pronouns. Awóbùlúyì (2001:2) presents the examples as in;

2		
Prefix pronouns	pronominal	gloss
è + mi	→ èmi	I
ì + wọ̀	→ ìwo	you
ò + un	→ òun	he/she
à + wa	→ àwa	we
à + wọ̀n	→ àwọ̀n	they

(I intentionally bold 'un' for clarification)

Awóbùlúyì (2001:2) concludes the referred sub-divisions in his work as in;

Àlàyé kejì yí dára ju èyí tí àwa ẹ̀ tẹ̀lẹ̀... ohun tí ó jẹ̀ wá lógún tí a sì fẹ̀ kí àwọ̀n èyàn máa kíyèsí láti ìsìnyí lẹ̀, ní pé ẹ̀nu àlàyé méjèjè kò lórí ìrísí àdámọ̀ tí arọ̀pò-orúkọ kíkuru ẹ̀ni kẹ̀ta ẹ̀yọ̀ aṣoluwá. Ohun tí àlàyé méjèjè pe ìrísí àdámọ̀ rẹ̀ ní 'un'. 'un' àti wúnrèn 'ó' kò sí jọra rára. Ìyẹn ní a fi mò tí a sí

pe wúnrèn ‘ó’ kò ní ìrísí arópò-orúkò kíkúrú ẹ̀ni kẹ̀ta ẹ̀yọ̀ aṣòlùwá ti inú èdè Yorùbá.

(The second explanation is more preferred than our previous submission... our major concern that we are trying to direct people attention. To henceforth, is that the two prepositions agree on the basic representation of the third person singular subject pronoun. The two explanation identify ‘un’ as the basic representation. ‘un’ and ‘ó’ differ from each other. This assertion prompts our disagreement because ‘o’ does not resembles ‘un’ which has been widely endorsed as the third persons singular subject pronoun in Yorùbá studies).

To our own understanding with reference to the latest quotation from Awóbùlúyì (2001)’s work, the basic cause for Awóbùlúyì’s (2001) position is that, he believes, ‘ó’ and ‘un’ are not related linguistically. This is very appreciable. This paper attempts to adhere strictly to the noble pieces of advice from Bámgbóṣé (1986:28) Oyèláràn (1967:97) that researchers in the Yorùbá language studies should endeavour to look into Yorùbá dialects to find solutions to the seemingly intractable linguistic problems in the literature in the hope of aiming up with new findings.

Bámgbóṣé (1986:28) informs:
...we need to look closely at the dialects of Yorùbá and perhaps even some languages closely related to Yorùbá. It is my hope that Yorùbá studies will now move towards a detailed study of the various dialects so that we may appreciate better the influence of the past in our present standard Yorùbá.

Also, Trudgill (1994:2) highlights the linguistic task bedeviling the dialectologists as in:
What dialectologists are interested in are differences between dialects. The task of dialectologists is to describe different dialects, to note differences between them, and importantly, to try and explain how these differences come about.

With reference to the foregoing highlights from Trudgil (1994:2), this paper aims at providing linguistic alignment between ‘ó’ and ‘un’ (which

The examples (4a&4b) below attest to this claim as in:
(4a)

Affix	stem (verb)	output	syntactic class
ì +	fẹ́	ifẹ́ (love) verb	noun
ẹ̀ +	jẹ́	ẹ̀jẹ́ (pledge) verb	noun
ọ̀ +	pa	ọ̀pa (winner) verb	noun
ẹ̀ +	ṣé	ẹ̀ṣé (blockings) verb	noun
à +	lọ	àlọ (going) verb	noun

The stems are basically verb but they were change to noun after the nominalization process. Now consider the following:

Awóbùlúyì 2001:2, thinks are not related) most especially from Anglo-phone Kétu dialects and standard Yorùbá. The study uses descriptive theory to press home our analysis.

2. Analysis

This paper tries to establish three major contributions into the literary preview of Yorùbá studies:

Pronouns are reduction of pronominals
‘ó’ ‘ún’ and ‘un’ are derived from ‘òun’ (pronominal)

Some major clarifications about third person singular and plural subject pronouns and pronominal varieties among some Yorùbá dialects.

The aforesaid three divisions would be expanded upon sequentially in this study.

2.1 Pronouns as a reduction of pronominals in Yorùbá language

Combrink (1990) discusses some major linguistic characteristic features of a affixes in language. Combrink (1990:56) hints that affixes are subject to some restrictional rules which include “inputs and inputs restrictions. He sub-divides the restrictional rules into:

- 3
 - phonological restrictions
 - morphological restrictions
 - semantic restrictions
 - syntactic restrictions
 - pragmatic restrictions
- (Combrink 1990:56)

Each affix possesses the latest restrictional rules according to the basic conventional morphological rules of the language. Although, Yorùbá language endorses the combination of “affix plus stem” configuration in morphological operations, the language use the process to change the syntactic positions of the stem. The change may be either from compliment to head or from predicate to subject or object in syntactic distributions.

(4b)

Affix	stem (adverb)	output	syntactic class
ò	tààrà	òtààrà	(Adverb-noun)
à	tẹ́ẹ́rẹ́	atẹ́ẹ́rẹ́	(Adverb-noun)
ọ	pẹ̀lẹ̀ngẹ́	ọ̀pẹ̀lẹ̀ngẹ́	(Adverb-noun)
ò	wààrà	òwààrà	(Adverb-noun)
ọ	rara	ọ̀rara	(Adverb-noun)

The inference we are trying to deduce from the latest examples is that aside from the basic fact that the stems change syntactic categories after the morphological operation, there are also syntactic and pragmatic changes affecting all the outputs. For example, the syntactic rule in Yorùbá maintain zero tolerance for Adverb and Adjective to become a subject in the syntactic position in the basic sentence construction. That is why the following sentences in (5) are not allowed in Yorùbá language;

5.

tẹ́ẹ́rẹ́	dé	lánàá	
ADJ	V	Pp	
Pẹ̀lẹ̀ngẹ́	ra	ọ̀kọ	
ADJ		V	N
Gíga	wó	lánàá	
ADJ	V	PP	

While the following sentences in (6) are syntactical accepted in the language.

6

Obinrin	tẹ́ẹ́rẹ́	de	lánàá
N	ADJ	V	PP
Iya	pẹ̀lẹ̀ngẹ́	ra	ọ̀kọ
N	ADJ	V	N
Igi	gíga	wó	lánàá
N	ADJ	V	PP

The aforesaid examples show that “tẹ́ẹ́rẹ́ and pẹ̀lẹ̀ngẹ́” are basically adjectives. They cannot occur as head of Noun phrase in basic simple sentences. However, when affixes are attached with them in the process of nominalization, they become nouns; becoming noun accord them syntactic opportunity to take headship position in noun phrase. The examples below in (7) attest to this;

(7)

Prefix	ADJ	Noun
a	tẹ́ẹ́rẹ́	atẹ́ẹ́rẹ́
ọ	pẹ̀lẹ̀ngẹ́	ọ̀pẹ̀lẹ̀ngẹ́

As occurring in the sentences such as (i) Atẹ́ẹ́rẹ́ (nickname) dé ní àná (the man ‘tẹ́ẹ́rẹ́’ came yesterday) (ii) ọ̀pẹ̀lẹ̀ngẹ́ dára ní aya (a slim woman is a good wife material). It is evidence that both pronoun and pronominals can function as head of Noun phrase in both subject and object positions.

Therefore, we cannot establish the theory of pronouns being derived from pronominal. Adherence to such a claim will violate the syntactic and pragmatic restrictions as explained in Combrink (1990). Another pscho-morphological

question that the protagonist of pronominal chances to pronoun is how could we cognitively predict the correct prefix to be attach to each pronouns to produce the pronominals for each person and number. What is the mental justification that ‘e’ should be attached to ‘mi’ to produce ‘èmi’? How do we know that ‘I’ should be the correct affix that would merge ‘wọ’ to produce ‘iwọ’? Failure to attend to the latest seemingly intractable explanations is tantamount to violation of ‘morphological restrictions’ in Combrink (1990).

The only morphological process or theory that can account for derivational process between the pronominals and pronouns in Yorùbá language is clipping. Clipping as a morphological process is nearly forgotten in the literature of Yorùbá studies.

2.2 Clipping of pronominals to derive the pronouns

Napoh (1996:214) advises researches in morphology of languages in the world to look into clipping as a morphological process because it suffers neglect in the literature. She says: Indeed if you are looking for a paper topic in morphology, clipping in many language are begging to be studied.

That means clipping as a morphological process has been unavoidably neglected in the literature. Ogunwale (2016:62) defines clipping as ‘the cutting of certain part of a word to reduce its form without changing the meaning and the grammatical category of such word’ that is clipping is the reduction of a category to produce another word that has the same categoral status of the basic word.

Succinctly, we can therefore define clipping as:

A morphological process involving the reduction of the phono-morphological contents of basic word to produce a new word that has the same syntactic status of the basic word

The inference we are trying to make from the latest definition are as follows:

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Clipping is a process that combines phonology and morphology.

The output of a clipping must produce word of equal categoral status of the basic word

Clipping is more conventional than linguistical evident

We think scholars do neglect works on the topic because of ‘8iii’. Clipping as a process does not maintain a straightforward relationship to morphology. Sometimes, the process would involve both phonology and morphology.

Ògúnwálé (2016:62) divides clipping in Yorùbá personal names into four divisions as follows:

9

Clipping of the initial segment (fore clipping)
Clipping of the initial segment and the final segment

Clipping of the medal segment (syncope)

Clipping of the final segment (apocopation)

In references, to Ògúnwálé’s (2016) classification, the type of clipping that evolves between the pronominals and pronouns in Yorùbá language is fore clipping. That is, the initial segment of the pronominals is deleted to produce what is now established as pronouns in the language as formerly claimed in Awóbùlúyì (2001: 2) reiteratively as:

10

Pronominals	pronouns	gloss
èmi →	mi	I
ìwọ →	(w)ọ	you
òun →	un	he/she
àwa →	(w)a	we
àwọn →	wọn	they

The first syllable of the pronominals is deleted to produce the pronouns. This rule is straightforward strictly adhered to in the standard Yorùbá while some dialects do delete the intervocalic consonant. I think that assumption preempts the bracketing of the intervocalic consonant in the latest examples. For instances, Ondo dialect allows ‘wo wa nánàá’ instead of ‘O’ wa lánàá’ in the standard Yorùbá (you came yesterday). Also, the Ìjẹbú dialect has ‘wé è fọ wém wá a’ (you did not inform me that you are coming) instead of ‘o kò sọ pé ò n bọ’ in the standard Yorùbá.

2. “ó” “un” and “ún” are derived from “òun” (pronominals)

Findings reveal that Yorùbá linguists unanimously endorse ‘oun’ (You ‘plural’) as the third person singular subject pronominal as in;

11

Òun ra aṣọ Àńkára (he/she bought Ankara cloth)
Òun gba owó lánàá (he/she collected money yesterday)

Òun ra ọkọ pijó (he/she bought a Peugeot car)

Meanwhile, the latest examples can be changed to the examples below when replacing pronominals with the pronouns as follow:

12

Ó ra aṣọ Àńkára (he/she bought Ankara cloth)
Ó gba owó lánàá (he/she collected money yesterday)

Ó ra ọkọ pijó (he/she bought a peugeot car)

Before we try to align the prosodic differences between ‘o’ and ‘ó’ as reflected in the latest examples (11 & 12), we want to clarify the issue of clipping in this configuration.

Clipping of “òun”

Let us revert back to Ògúnwálé’s (2016:62) divisions of clipping types in Yorùbá personal names as in:

13

Clipping of the initial segment (fore clipping)

Clipping of the initial segment and the final segment

Clipping of the medial segment (syncope)

Clipping of the final segment (apocopation)

That is, the process of clipping in the language is at variance to opt for any type of clipping. Yorùbá language can therefore use either fore clipping or apocopation type in the process of clipping “òun”. For this salient reason, some Yorùbá dialects can use ‘ò’ instead of ‘òun’ in reference to fore clipping, while some other dialects many opt for ‘un’ in reference to apocopation type of clipping. The standard Yorùbá uses ‘ò’ (let us suspend the agument about the prosodic difference for now), while dialect like Anglo-Phone Ketu (Adékúnlé 2020:88-97) has ‘un’ in alignment with apocopation type of clipping.

On the clarification of prosodic alternation between ‘ò’ and ‘ó’ and ‘un’ and ‘ún’ as the third person singular subject pronoun, Adéwoḷé (2014) describes high tone syllable as a clitic. Phonologically, a clitic usually attaches itself to its pre-immediate neighbour. For instance, high tone syllable usually attaches itself to the nominal group in Yorùbá language. The shifting of the high tone leftwardly account for the changes of ‘ò’ to ‘ó’, ‘wọn’ to ‘wón’ ‘un’ to ‘ún’, the shifting of high tone of the high tone syllable to the last syllable of the noun phrase is very automatic in the standard Yorùbá as in:

14

“ ‘Àwọn’ in ‘Awọn’ ti dé” (they have come)

“ ‘Wọn in ‘wón sùn” (they slept)

The cause of misrepresentation of high tone syllable ‘ó’ and the ‘ò’ which syntactically represents the third person singular pronoun is due to their phonological resemblance. However, if we fail to recognize ‘ó’ as the third person singular subject pronoun, we ought to reject ‘wọn’ which stands for the third person plural subject pronoun. In other way round, ‘àwọn’ is accepted as the third person plural subject pronominal in Yorùbá but when it occurs in sentence construction, it changes to ‘àwón’ as in ‘àwón’ ti dé’ (they have come/arrived). I believe no Yorùbá man would doubt ‘àwọn as a third person plural subject pronominal. Therefore, syntactically, ‘ó’ which is the phonological representation of high tone syllable (Bámgbóṣé 1986 and Awóbùlúyì 2008) differs from ‘ó’ which emerge phonetically as third person singular subject pronoun through prosodic modification of ‘o’ clipping from ‘òun’ in the standard Yorùbá.

2.3 Some major clarifications about third person singular and plural subject varieties among some Yorùbá dialects.

For more pedagogical clarification of the third person singular subject pronoun ‘ó’ in the standard Yorùbá, I want to explain some major peculiar linguistic characteristic features of the third person subject pronoun in this paper. This division will delve into dialectal study of Yorùbá language due to the varieties of third person pronoun or pronominal among variant dialects in the language.

Adékúnlé (2018:45) defines dialect as:

Àwọn èyà èdè kan tí wọn ní ẹ̀ ṣe àmúlò òfin imò èdà-èdè ajolèdè kan náà ṣùgbọ̀n tí wọn yapa díẹ̀ síra wọn nípa ìpele imò èdè bí i; fonólójì, morfólójì, sintààsi, àká-òrò àti itumò/ sẹ̀mántiikì.

(varieties of a language that use the same linguistic distinct rules but defer to each other in some peculiar linguistic hierarchical studies such as phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicology and semantics).

In reference to the latest definition, it is noted that each dialect of a language must possess some distinctive linguistic peculiarities that defer from the standard language or the source language.

Now, let us consider the varieties of the third person singular and plural subject pronoun in Ifẹ̀, Òndó, Ìmẹ̀kọ̀ and Ìkálẹ̀ dialects. In as much that these dialects are Yorùbá dialects, we can infer some notable arguments from their varieties of examples. The third person plural subject pronoun in Ifẹ̀ is ‘Ìghán’ (they) (see Adekúnlé 2018 and Adéwólé 2012) sometimes at fast speech, Ifẹ̀ would say ‘ghán ti re ojà’ (they have gone to the market). However, the third person plural subject pronominal in ifẹ̀ dialect is ‘Ìghan’ as in; “Ìghan Olú ti síkú iya rìghan” (Olú (pl) have buried their mother) Another variant of this pronominal in Ifẹ̀ dialect is “Ìghán”. This variety occurs in the simple aspectual sentences such as “Ìghán mí bọ” (they are coming) or “Ìghán” ti dé” (they have arrived). The pscho-linguistic clarification we need to spell out in the latest examples from Ifẹ̀ dialect is why does ‘Ìghan’ changes to ‘Ìghán’ this is the evidence of tonal assimilation modification between ‘Ìghan’ and high tone syllable. When such a phonological process do occur, the modification does not affect the pronominal status of ‘ìghan’ that occurring as ‘Ìghán’ in the latest examples.

Bamgbose (1986) cites ‘ó’ as the phonological representation in Òndó dialect. He, therefore provides theoretical analysis which eventually cumulates the adoption of ‘ó’ as the basic phonological representation of high tone syllable in Yorùbá language. Let us consider the following sentences where second person singular subject pronouns occur in affirmative and negative sentences as in:

15

wo wá nánáá (you (sg) came yesterday) affirmative
wo ghò ifò naa (you (sg) heard the message) affirmative

Wé è wá nánáá (you (sg) didn’t come yesterday) negative

Wé è gbọ ifò naa (you (sg) didn’t hear the message) negative

The latest examples variantly occurring in standard Yorùbá as;

16

O wá lánáá (you (sg) came yesterday)

O gbọ ọ̀rọ̀ náá (you (sg) heard the message)

O ò wá lánáá (you (sg) didn’t come yesterday)

O ò gbọ ọ̀rọ̀ náá (you (sg) didn’t hear the message)

Based on the aforesaid examples from Òndó dialect, it shows that Òndó dialect allows prosodic retrogressive assimilation between the second person singular subject pronoun and the high tone syllable.

Adékúnlé (2020:91-94)^b has the following examples from Ìmẹ̀kọ̀ dialect, a sub-dialect of Anglo-phone Kétu, in Ògùn west senatorial district. The examples are re-ordered as:

17

Standard Yorùbá	Imeko	gloss
Ṣé wọn ti wá	ṣe ún ti wá	(have they come)
Ó fún wọn ní owó	ó fún un ní oghó	(you (sg) gave them money)
Kọ́lá pè wọn	Kọ́lá pè ún	(Kọ́lá called them)
Bola n we	Bọ́lá ún gwẹ̀	(Bọ́lá is batting)
Kemi n gbo	kẹ́mí ún gbọ̀	(Kẹ́mí is listening)

The latest examples testify that Imeko uses ‘ún’ for third person singular subject pronoun. As well, Imeko dialect has varieties of ‘un’ alternants in different morpho-syntactic positions (see Adékúnlé forthcoming)

3. Summary and Conclusions

This paper has set out to look into the one of most current contending issues in the syntax of Yorùbá language. The paper uses clipping and descriptive theories to prove that ‘ò’ and ‘un’ or ‘ó’ and ‘un’ occurring in the language as third person singular subject pronoun as a reduction of ‘òun’ which is unanimously accepted as the third person singular subject pronominal. The paper entrenches the validity and authenticity of Awóbùlúyì’s (1992) theory that pronouns are reduced form of pronominals. This study notes that evidences from some Yorùbá dialects such as Ifẹ̀, Òndó and Ìmẹ̀kọ̀ dialects point to validate the occurrence of third person singular subject pronoun ‘ó’. The paper does not agree with zero morphological realization of the third person singular subject pronoun as currently proposed in most recent works of Awóbùlúyì. It is proven that while ‘ò’ changes to ‘ó’ in the standard Yorùbá due to prosodic regressive assimilation between ‘ò’ and the high tone syllable ‘ó’; ‘un’ changes to ‘ún’ in Ìmẹ̀kọ̀ dialect as the third person singular subject pronoun, Ife dialect has ‘Ìghan’ as the third person plural

subject pronominal; 'ighan' changes to 'Ighán' in aspectual simple sentences due to prosodic regressive assimilation with the high tone syllable. Although, we observe that there are other clarifications which appear in Awóbùlúyì's theory on the subject matter that call for pedagogical explanations. We hope our future works would work on those aspects.

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