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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Afix</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>omo</td>
<td>kí</td>
<td>omo</td>
<td>ìmòkí</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii.</td>
<td>ìgbà</td>
<td>ní</td>
<td>ìgbà</td>
<td>ìgbàlògbà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii.</td>
<td>ìlè</td>
<td>dé</td>
<td>ìlè</td>
<td>ìlélé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv.</td>
<td>èrò</td>
<td>kí</td>
<td>Èrò</td>
<td>Èròkèrò*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>óró</td>
<td>kí</td>
<td>óró</td>
<td>órókèrò*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(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 pèrè ninú àwọn wùrèn ti a sàpẹ̀rẹ̀ wọ̀n sìbi yi, iye {iyi-} àti {-ki-}, ni a lè ká sì ojúlòwó àfòmò asòpò. Ònírùùrá ẹ́yà òró tì a kànn lò bi àfòmò-àsòpò ní àwọn wùrèn yóójù. Ní pátò, òró-iṣẹ ní àwọn méjò àkòkó. Àra èrì fùn èyí ní oahun iṣàlẹ àdámọ àwọn kan ninú wọn tì a rí tí di oahun àárin gbàrá tì òró orúko télè wọn ninú ìpèrẹ̀ karùn-ùn ìtì ikefà lókè. (The bold sentences are for emphasis in this study).

(Two of the grammatical items that are used in the examples, that is {iyi-} and {-ki-} 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
   [-dê-] igbá-dé-igbá > igbádegbá time to time
   [-mọ-] odún-mọ-odún > odunmọdun yearly
   [-rê-] ayé-re-ayé > - ayéréyé eternity
   [-jo-] iro-jo-iro > -  irójiró (f.w onirójiró) age-mate
   [-jó-] ige-jó-igé > igéjigé (f.w gbirégéjigé) no English equivalent

   [-nì-] ágbá-ní-ágbá > - ágbálágá old people
   [-ni-] ọpè-ní-ọpè > - ọpèlọpè reasons
   [-iyì-] ilè-iyì-ìlé > - iléyílé-ìlènì no English equivalent
   [-kì-] isè-ki-ìsè > - isèkìsè 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. òpó > ọpèlòpò (ọpó-ní-ọpó) many people
   Ágbá > agbálágá (ágbá-ní-ágbá) old people
   Ògbó > ògbòlògbò (ògbó-ní-ògbó) very difficulty people

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

1. He accepts ‘nì’ 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 that morphology now look very much like syntax.

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

Aside from Awóbùlúyì (2008) and Bámgbósé (1990), Táiwò (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 subcategorial constituency in the theory. The protagonists of the theory such as Selkirk (1982), Spencer (1991). Di
Sciullo and Williams (1987) and Beard (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 derivates.

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 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 ipari Aláiyisíripádá’ (Non-lexical changing suffixes) as in:

6. (a) geere (AP) – re, ge-geere, geerre (AP) (smoothly)
(b) wọjọrọ (AP) – wọ – wọjọrọ (AP) (cooling continually)
(c) gbọrọ (AJ) – gbo- gborogbo (AJ) (strait-forwardly)
(d) kàkàkà (AJ) – kà (kàkàkà (AJ) (extremely very big)

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

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

4. Reasons for Non-feasibility of interfixation in Yorùbá 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 Yorùbá language as a lexical item in some syntactic constructions such as:

(7) i. kómọ (ki + òmọ) re fun mi (Greet your child for me)
ii. Dànlàndì ni bá ni nágbá ní + ìgbá (Stupidity does not start in old age)
iii. È jówò (ni + ògè) láti gbá ní èmù mi (I need to praise appreciate him).
iv. Ò lópè (ni + òpè) láti gbá ní èmù mi (I need to praise appreciate him).

v. Ò pé kíjé (ki+ éjé) náa tó pari. (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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wolf</td>
<td>wolves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knife</td>
<td>knives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelf</td>
<td>shelves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thief</td>
<td>thieves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calf</td>
<td>calves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life</td>
<td>lives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Group 2:** (Ending with ‘s’) as in:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belief</td>
<td>beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proof</td>
<td>proofs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chief
Safe

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:

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{Noun} & \text{Redup} & \text{Noun}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{Derived} & \text{stem} & \\
1 & 2 & 3
\end{array}
\]

(i) omọ (child) \(\rightarrow\) omọ
omọ-omọ (Grandchild)
(ii) àgbà (elder) \(\rightarrow\) àgbà
àgbà-àgbà (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:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{òvw} + \text{òvw} & \rightarrow \text{òvwòvw} \\
\text{order} + \text{order} & \rightarrow \text{Very orderly}
\end{align*}
\]

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

i. ēta + ēta \(\rightarrow\) ētētēta
ii. (three) \(\rightarrow\) (In thirdly manner)
iii. érin + érin \(\rightarrow\) érērin
iv. (four) \(\rightarrow\) (In fourthly manner)

v. ódún + ódún \(\rightarrow\) ódọdún
vi. (year) \(\rightarrow\) (Every year)

vii. alé + alé alaálé
alá (night) \(\rightarrow\) (Every night)

The examples in 'qa'and 'qō' 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:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Verb} & \rightarrow \text{phrase counting Redup}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Output} & \rightarrow \text{gloss}
\end{align*}
\]

(i) mú + èwá \(\rightarrow\) mèwà + èwá
mèwèèwà (The whole ten)
(ii) mú + èjì \(\rightarrow\) mèjì+èjì
mèjèjìì (The whole two)

(iii) mú + ètā \(\rightarrow\) mètā+ètā
mètètètā (The whole three)
(iv) mú + èjọ \(\rightarrow\) mèjọ+èjọ
mèjèjọjọ (The whole eight)
(v) mú + èsàn \(\rightarrow\) mèsànàn + èsàn
mèsèsèàn (The whole nine)

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

(11) i. mèwàá + èwá \(\rightarrow\) mèwèèwà
The whole ten
ii. mèsànàn + èsàn \(\rightarrow\) mèsèsèàn
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 Bámgbọ̀sé'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 dose 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:

The structure of the position of the redupicates in examples '2i-xx' 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. Prestume on this, the reduplicative serves as the head of reduplication

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

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Siše òpétùǹpè òrò-orúkọ pełù isodóruko ti a fì àfòmò-ibèrè {oni}-sèdá; itumò isodóruko yii ni pé òlòmíràn yátò si éni tò ò sòrò ni ò nì nńkan náá. (Reduplicating of derived noun with {oni}-’ prefixation. The meaning of such a derived noun is that another person that defers from the speaker has the material)}
\end{align*}
\]

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

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

(14) i. ayé-bá-ayé - ayébáyé  
    iye-bí-iyé - iyebíye  
    ìgbá-dé-ìgbá-ìgbádègbá  
    (Time immemorial)  
    (Very costly)  
    (Time to time)

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

15i N (Red) VP (+V)

iye bí

ii. N (Red) VP (+V)

iye bí

iii. N (Red) VP (+V)

ìgbá dé

iv. N (Red) VP(+V)

ódún mó

v. N (Red) VP (+V)

ayé re

vi. N (Red) VP(+V)

ìşé kí

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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>Reduplication</th>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>geere</td>
<td>geere + re (ge)</td>
<td>geerere or geerege</td>
<td>Smoothly or unstopped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tààra</td>
<td>tààrà + rà (tà)</td>
<td>tààràrà or tààràtà</td>
<td>Straiglty or uncurved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gaara</td>
<td>gaara + rà (ga)</td>
<td>gaara or gaaraa</td>
<td>Progressively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weeere</td>
<td>weeere + re (we)</td>
<td>weeere or weeerewe</td>
<td>Extremely small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pààrà</td>
<td>pààrà + rà (pa)</td>
<td>pàààrà or pàààràpa</td>
<td>Continuous small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wèèrè</td>
<td>wèèrè + re (wè)</td>
<td>wèèèrè or wèèèrè</td>
<td>Dropping continuously</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 re Duplicate 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.

References
