Inflection in the Ào dialect of Yorùbá¹

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Abstract

This paper examines inflection in the Ào dialect of Yorùbá, a language spoken in southwest Nigeria. Previous studies in Yorùbá morphology have focused on derivational morphology rather than inflectional morphology. This work revealed that, in the Ào dialect, some functional categories have inflectional properties known as replasive morphemes. These functional categories are the pronoun (both long and short), tense markers, aspect markers as well as focus and imperative markers. In this paper, we discussed the various forms of these words and the environments of their occurrence.

1. Introduction

While scholars of Yorùbá morphology have focused much attention on derivational morphology, inflectional morphology, has not received much discussion. This is due to the fact in the language, major word classes do not have inflectional properties. However, some functional categories such as pronoun and tense have different forms in different positions in a construction.

There are two types of inflections identified in the literature. These are replasive inflection and additive inflection (Tomori (1977); Taiwo (2006:3–6) among others). In additive inflection, an inflectional morpheme is added to an existing root or stem to derive another form of the word. For example in the following words

¹ The author would like to thank the anonymous reviewer and proofreader for assistance in the preparation of this manuscript.
(1) boys, goes, looked, children

-s, -es, -ed and -ren are added to boy, go, look and child respectively. This type of inflection does not exist in Yorùbá. In replasive inflection, an item is used to replace an existing one to derive another form of the word. The item used to replace another can be a vowel, a tone or a complete word. In the examples below,

(2) a. b.
man men
mouse mice
foot feet
come came
is are
go went

the vowels of the words in (a) are replaced in those of (b) except the last two words where complete words in (b) replaced those in (a). This replasive morphology is what operates in Yorùbá.

In this paper, we shall take a look at these properties and discuss the various forms of these functional categories in the Ào dialect of the Yorùbá language. We shall begin by first examining those functional categories that have various forms in the standard dialect before we focus our attention on Ào.

2. Inflection in Yorùbá

In the Yorùbá language, the pronoun as well as the future tense marker have more than one form in different environments. Long and short pronouns\(^2\) inflect for number and person while the short pronoun additionally inflects for case and negation. The future

\(^2\) Long pronouns structurally have more than one syllable while short pronouns are monosyllabic. While some scholars are of the opinion that long pronouns are nouns, hence they name pronominals, others such as Awobuluyi (1992, 2001, 2008) call them long pronouns. See Ajongolo (2005) for a detailed discussion on long and short pronouns.
tense marker also inflects for negation. In the following sentences for instance, long pronouns have different forms for the singular and plural.

(3) a. èmi náà gbọ́ ọ̀rọ̀ yín.
    I also hear word you(pl)
    ‘I also heard your word’.

   b. àwa náà gbọ́ ọ̀rọ̀ yín.
    we also hear word you(pl)
    ‘We also heard your word’.

(4) a. ìwọ           ò              ní              lọ    pẹ̀lú     wọn.
    you(sg)    NEG    FUT. NEG   go   with    them
    ‘You will not go with them’.

   b. ẹ̀yin         ò             ní            lọ     pẹ̀lú   wọn.
    you(pl)   NEG  FUT.NEG  go    with   them
    ‘You will not go with them’.

(5) a. òun gan-an pèlú jèbi ọ̀rọ̀ yìí.
    he qualifier also guilty word this
    ‘He is also guilty of this case’.

   b. àwọn gan-an pèlú jèbi ọ̀rọ̀ yìí.
    they qualifier also guilty word this
    ‘They are also guilty of this case’.

èmi, ìwọ and òun in (3a-5a) are long singular pronouns while their plural counterparts are àwa, ẹ̀yin and àwọn in (3b)–(5b). In essence, long pronouns inflect for number. It is also a well-known fact that the pronouns in (3) are first person long
pronouns, those in (4) are second person long pronouns while those in (5) are third person long pronouns. These pronouns inflect for person.

(6) a. *mo máa ra mótò tuntun.*
    I   FUT buy car  new
    ‘I will buy a new car’.

   b. *mi ò ní ra mótò tuntun.*
    I   NEG FUT. NEG buy car new
    ‘I will not buy a new car’.

   c. *Táyé fun mi ní aṣọ.*
    Táyé give me PREP cloth
    ‘Táyé gave me a piece of cloth’.

(7) a. *wọ́n ti rí wọn.*
   they PERF see them
   ‘They have seen them’.

   b. *wọn ó ti rí wọn.*
   they NEG PERF see them
   ‘They have not seen them’.

   c. *Ayọ ó mọ̀ yín.*
    Ayọ   NEG know you(pl)
    ‘Ayọ does/did not know you’.

In (6) above, the forms of the first person singular short pronoun in subject position are *mo* and *mi* in (6a & b) respectively (nominative case) while the same pronoun has *mi* as its form in (6c) as the object of the verb (accusative case). This also
applies to the third person plural short pronoun. It is ọ́n and ọ́n as subjects in (7a &b) and ọ́n in (7c) when it occurs as the object of the sentence. Note also that these short pronouns have separate forms for both affirmative and negative sentences. These are mo and ọ́n in (6a) and (7a) for the affirmative, and mi/ọ́n in (6b) and (7b) for the negative construction.

The long and short pronouns have different forms when used for the expression of possession. These forms are shown in table I.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st person</td>
<td>tèmi</td>
<td>tàwa/tiwa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person</td>
<td>tìrẹ</td>
<td>tèyin/tiyín</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person</td>
<td>tòun</td>
<td>tawọn/tiọn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Bamgboṣe 1967: 13)

**Table I:** Possessive forms of long/short pronouns

Some of the pronouns in table I occur in the examples below.

(8) a. ọmọ tèmi  ‘my child’
    b. ọmọ tàwa/tiwa  ‘our child’

(9) a. ọkọ̀ ọ tiwọn/tiye  ‘your(sg) vehicle’
    b. ọkọ̀ ọ tìrẹ tìyín  ‘your(pl) vehicle’

(10) a. ìwé e tòun/tìrẹ  ‘his book’
    b. ìwé e tàwọn/tiọn  ‘their book’
The future tense marker also has different forms for affirmative and negative sentences. In other words, it inflects for negation. In the sentences in (11) below, the form of the future tense marker is á/yóò/máa in an affirmative sentence while it is ní in a negative sentence.

(11) a. ọmọ náà á/yóò/máa lọ ní òla.
    child the FUT go PREP tomorrow
    ‘The child will go tomorrow’.

b. ọmọ náà kò ní lọ ní òla.
    child the NEG FUT go PREP tomorrow
    ‘The child will not go tomorrow’.

2. Inflection in the Ào dialect

In the Ào dialect of Yorùbá3, the following morphemes have more than one form in various syntactic positions: the pronouns (both long and short), tense, aspect, the focus marker and the emphatic marker.

2.1. Forms of the pronoun in Ào.

Both long and short pronouns have various forms to express number and person in the Ào dialect as in standard Yorùbá. However, in the subject position, short pronouns have more than one form, as determined by verbs and tense and aspect markers that select them as subjects. We shall first examine the forms of long pronouns from the data below.

(12) a. òmí gan-an ó gbó òfò win.

3 The Ào dialect of Yorùbá is spoken in the north eastern part of Ondo state in Nigeria. See Ajọngolo (2005) and Oye Taiwo (2007a) for details.
I      qualifier  AGR-S   hear  word  you(pl)
‘I also heard your word’.

b.   àa gan-an ó gbọ ọfọ win.
we  qualifier  AGR-S   hear  word  you(pl)
‘We also heard your word’.

(13) a. ùgwọ nií gwọlé ọn jú.
you(sg) FUT NEG  follow  them go
‘You(sg) will not go with them’.

b.  inin nií gwọlé ọn jú.
you(pl) FUT NEG follow  them go
‘You(pl) will not go with them’.

(14) a. òun rhííì nií zókọ́ rhí ulí.
he  CONT NEG  FUT NEG  sit  in  house
‘He will no longer be sitting at home’.

b. ọ̀nọn rhíí rhíi nií zókọ́ rhí ulí.
they  CONT NEG  FUT NEG  sit  in  house
‘They will no longer be sitting at home’.

The long pronouns in (12a)–(14a) are singular while those in (12b)–(14b) are plural. The long pronoun in the examples (i.e. (12)–(14)) also inflected for person. The

4 The future tense inflects for negation in the Ào dialect of Yorùbá. The negative form of the marker is nií as we have in the sentences in (13) and (14). We shall discuss these forms presently.

5 The continuous aspect has two forms in Ào utterances. These are the affirmative and the negative forms. The negative form is rhíí which occurs in the sentences in (14). We shall discuss the forms of aspectual markers below.
long pronouns also inflect to show possession. These inflections are shown in the noun phrases in (15).

(15) a. Ùzà tòmi                                b. Ùzà tàa  
       pot my ‘my pot’                              pot our ‘our pot’

c. Òmọ tùgwọ                    d. Òmọ tìnin  
       child you(sg) ‘your child’               child you(pl) ‘your child’

e. asọ tòun         f. asọ tònnọ  
       cloth his ‘his cloth’            cloth their ‘their cloth’

The possessive forms of the long pronouns in the examples in (15) are shown in table II below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st person</td>
<td>tòmi</td>
<td>tàa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person</td>
<td>tùgwọ</td>
<td>tiin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person</td>
<td>tòun</td>
<td>tönnọ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table II:** Possessive forms of long pronouns in Ào

2.2 The forms of short pronouns
Case is marked on short pronouns the Ào dialect of Yorùbá. Hence, they have different forms depending on whether they appear as subjects, objects or genitives. These short pronouns also inflect for negation to differentiate between affirmative and negative constructions. We shall discuss each of these forms immediately.

2.2.1 Nominative forms of short pronouns

Short pronouns have five forms in subject positions in Ào. These forms are conditioned by the verb as well as the tense and aspect markers that select them as subjects. These forms are shown in table III below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perso</th>
<th>Forms</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>I</td>
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<td>Sg</td>
<td>Ò</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pl</td>
<td>À</td>
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<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Mò</td>
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<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Ò</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On</td>
<td>On</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Ó</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On</td>
<td>On</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table III: Nominative forms of short pronouns in Ào

Forms I: short subject pronouns before high tone verbs
II: short subject pronouns before mid or low tone verbs
III: short subject pronouns before future tense and habitual aspect markers and as continuous aspect markers before high tone verbs.
IV: short subject pronouns as continuous aspect markers before mid or low tone verbs.
V: short subject pronouns in negative sentences

The first and second persons singular pronouns have five different forms in the table above. The plural pronouns and the third person singular pronoun have three forms each. The forms of the pronoun before high tone verbs are shown in the sentences in (16).

(16) a. mò té ulí Tàyé.
   I arrive house Taye
   ‘I got to Taye’s house’.

b. wò rí asọ wọn.
   you(sg) see cloth them
   ‘You saw their cloth’.

c. ó gbọ ofọ win.
   he hear word you(pl)
   ‘He heard your word’

d. à jú oko uwa Òzó.
   we go farm father Ojo
   ‘We went to Ojo’s father’s farm’.

e. ọ̀n gẹ́ọ́ ọmọ tiẹ́ pa.
   they beat child the die
   ‘They beat the child to the point of death’.

6 Ajongolo (2005: 90–118) gives a detailed description of the various forms of the pronoun in Ào.
The pronouns in the sentences in (16) bear low tone except the third person singular pronoun\footnote{The forms of the third person singular short nominative pronoun are quite different from the forms of the other pronouns. This is one of the reasons scholars such as Awobuluyi (see Awobuluyi 2001 among others) believe that this pronoun does not exist in Yorùbá. However, Ajọngọlọ (2005) argues that it does. Our discussions here follow the arguments in Ajọngọlọ (2005).} which bears a high tone. The sentences in (17a&b) have low tone verbs, \( \text{rà} \) ‘buy’ and \( \text{kà} \) ‘count’; sentences (17c-e) illustrate mid tone verbs \( \text{zẹ} \) ‘win’ \( \text{pọn} \) ‘fetch’ and \( \text{zẹ} \) ‘eat’. The subject pronouns of the sentences bear mid tone.

(17) a. \( \text{mọ } \text{rà } \text{ulí } \text{Táyé.} \)

'I bought Taye’s house’.

b. \( \text{wo } \text{kà } \text{eyó tié.} \)

‘You counted the money’.

c. \( \text{in } \text{zẹ } \text{mọ́tò.} \)

‘You (pl) won a vehicle’

d. \( \text{a } \text{pọn } \text{omi.} \)

‘We fetched water’.

e. \( \text{ọn } \text{zẹ } \text{èrùn li } \text{oko.} \)

‘They ate yam in the farm’.

f. \( \text{in } \text{zókòó } \text{rhi } \text{orí } \text{odó } \text{é.} \)

‘You sat down on that portal’.
The plural short pronouns before future tense and habitual aspect markers bear mid tone as is the case with those before high tone verbs. However, the singular pronouns bear low tone unlike their plural counterparts. These forms are also used when the pronouns are employed as continuous aspect markers in sentences with high tone verbs\(^8\). In the sentences in (18), the low tone short pronouns occur before future tense and habitual aspect markers.

(18) a.  
\[ mì à gbó urun tìi Táyé ó se. \]
I FUT hear something REL Taye AGR do
'I will hear what Táyé did'.

b.  
\[ wè a⁹ rhè èrún zẹ lí oko. \]
you(sg) FUT cook yam eat in farm
'You will cook and eat yam at the farm'.

c.  
\[ e áí\(^{10}\) pon omi kófoomí. \]
he HAB fetch water always
'He always fetches water'.

The first and second persons singular pronouns in (18a&b) bear a low tone as in (16a&b) above. However, these pronouns have front vowels while those in (16) have back vowels. The third person singular pronoun bears a mid tone in (18c) but a high tone in (16c). It is also a front vowel unlike the back vowel of (16c). In the sentences in (19a)–(22a) below, the short pronouns double as the continuous aspect marker.

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\(^8\) For a detailed discussion of the multiple roles of the pronoun in Áo, see Taiwo (2006a)

\(^9\) The future tense marker can be \(à\) or \(a\) as we have in the sentences in (16a) and (16b). The low tone future tense marker \(à\) selects high tone bearing verbs while the mid tone future tense marker \(a\) selects either mid or low tone bearing verbs. See Ajöngölo (2005) for a detailed discussion.

\(^{10}\) The habitual marker \(áí\) has the variant \(aí\).
(19) a.  
\[ \text{mi rí usé tii Titi se.} \]
I see work REL Titi do
'I am watching the work that Titi is doing'.

b.  
\[ \text{Ôzó ó rí usé tii Titi se.} \]
Ojo CONT see work REL Titi do
'Ojo is watching the work that Titi is doing'.

(20) a.  
\[ \text{à gbọ aiyọ ọnon urá Ìṣùà.} \]
we hear noise them people Ìṣùà
'We were hearing the noise of Ìṣùà people'.

b.  
\[ \text{ùzoba á gbọ aiyọ ọnon urá Ìṣùà.} \]
government CONT hear noise them people Ìṣùà
'The government was hearing the noise of Ìṣùà people'.

(21) a.  
\[ \text{in rhá pa.} \]
you(pl) run much
'You are running too much'.

b.  
\[ \text{ọmọ tié é rhá pa.} \]
child the CONT run much
'The child is running too much'.

(22) a.  
\[ \text{ọ̀n g^wó olé tié kí mò té uwè.} \]
they beat thief the COMP I get there
'They were beating the thief when I got there'.

b.  
\[ \text{ọ̀nọ̀n ọmọ jì í g^wó olé tié kí mò té uwè.} \]
they child this CONT beat thief the COMP I get there
'These children were beating the thief when I got there'.

The pair of sentences in (19)–(22) describe events that are on-going at the time of speaking. The continuous aspect marker is the high tone which is borne by a vowel identical to the last vowel of the NP subjects in (19b)–(22b) but the marker is not present in the sentences in (19a)–(22a). The short pronouns with low tone double as the aspect marker. However, sentences with mid or low tone verbs have short pronouns that bear mid tone. These pronouns are shown in (23a-f) below.

(23) a. mi rhe ụta li oko ẹtí ụlị.
   I pick pepper in farm ear house
   'I am picking pepper in a near-by farm'.

   b. a ọzọ ẹzà kí Òpẹ́ ọ tẹ́.
   we eat fish COMP Òpẹ́ AGR arrive
   We were eating some fish before Òpẹ́'s arrival'.

   c. we ọ ya.
   you(sg) come
   'You are coming'.

   d. in rhùn kí ezin ọ rọ.
   you(pl) sleep COMP rain AGR fall
   'You were sleeping when it rained'.

   e. ó ọ ya mi dí mi i fọ.
   he look me as I CONT speak
   'He was looking at me as I was talking'.


f. ọn  zà  kí  tìrhà  wọn  ó té.
   they fight COMP teacher they AGR arrive
   ‘They were fighting when their teacher arrived’.

The sentences in (23a-c) have mid tone verbs while those in (21d-f) have low tone verbs. The short pronouns in these sentences bear mid tone except the third person singular pronoun that bears a high tone.

The forms of short pronouns in negative sentences are quite different from all the forms we have discussed so far. As evident in table III above, these short pronouns uniformly bear high tone. This uniformity is extended to the third person singular pronoun which has always been an exception in the various forms in affirmative sentences discussed so far. The sentences in (24) below are negative sentences, they all have these short pronouns as subjects.

(24) a. mí  rhiři  dăhùn  kí  é  fọ.
   I  CONT NEG  answer COMP  he speak
   ‘I was no longer answering when he was speaking’.

b. á  nři  fetí  rhi  ayọ  tìí  ọn  pa.
   we  FUT NEG  listen to noise  REL  they kill
   ‘We will not listen to the noise they are making’.

c. wé  è  yá  fọ  fí  wò  té  ràn
   you(sg)  PAST NEG  come speak COMP you(sg)  arrive PERF
   ‘You did not come to report that you have arrived’.

d. ín  rhiři  nři  dó  ulí  wọn  tórí  ọfọ  ré.
   you(pl)  CONT NEG  FUT NEG  live house their because word his
   ‘You will no longer be living in their house because of his words’.
2.2.2 Accusative forms of short pronouns

Short pronouns have two accusative forms in the Ào dialect of Yorùbá. As is the case with nominative pronouns, the occurrence of these accusative pronouns in sentences is determined by the verb that selects them as objects. A high or low tone verb selects a mid tone accusative pronoun while a mid tone verb selects a high tone accusative pronoun. Prepositions also select the mid tone accusative pronouns as objects. These accusative pronouns are listed in table IV below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sg</td>
<td>Mg a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pl</td>
<td>E in</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>high</td>
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<td></td>
<td>tone of verb</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table IV: Accusative forms of short pronouns in Ào
Forms I: Accusative pronouns after high or low tone verbs and after prepositions.

II: Accusative pronouns after mid tone verbs.

(Taiwo 2007b: 39)

The forms of short pronouns after high or low tone verbs are shown in the sentences below.

(25) a. Olú òun ìlòrí ó ãwólé mi jú oko etí ulí.
Olu CONJ ìlòrí AGR-S follow me go house ear house
‘Olú and ìlòrí accompanied me to the nearby farm’.

b. ọ̀nọn ọmọ sùkúrù gbó a lì àgbójé.
they child school hear us PREP hear-well
‘The students heard us well’.

c. obìnrin tìí ọ̀n ãwá à rí on rán.
woman REL they search FUT see them PERF
‘The woman they were looking for would have seen them’.

d. uzó jí ó kàn in kóíí.
dance this AGR-S. reach you(pl) now
‘It is your turn to dance now’.

e. uwa rẹ́ ó mò ẹ rhí tírhà.
father his AGR-S. know you(sg) PREP teacher
‘His father knows/knew you as a teacher’.

(26) a. tírhà wa ó fò rhí a kí ó té.
teacher our AGR-S speak PREP us COMP he arrive
‘Our teacher rebuked us when he came’.

*b.* in mọn rii fu eti rii ọn.
you(pl) EMPH CONT NEG put ear PREP them
‘Stop listening to them’.

c. ọmọbìnrin tiè ó fu asọ í mi.
child-girl the AGR-S. give cloth PREP me
‘The young girl gave me the cloth’.

The object pronouns of the high tone verbs, (25a-c) and those of the low tone verbs, (25d-e) bear mid tone as do pronouns acting as the object of prepositions in (26). In (27) below, high tone pronouns occur as objects.

(27) a. Táyé ó yá fu á gbè í ulésà.
Táyé AGR-S come take us go PREP Iléṣà
Táyé came to take us to Iléṣà’.

b. ije rè ó fi amọ mọ in dí urájé.
mother his AGR-S. use clay mould you(pl) like person
‘His mother used clay to mould you like a person’.

c. èrho ó sí rii alè, ọmọ jí ó rhe ọn.
seed AGR-S. fall PREP ground child this AGR-S pick them
‘The seeds fell (to the ground) and this child picked them’.

d. mo zẹ é lì pónùn mézin.
I owe you(sg) PREP pound two
‘I owe you two pounds’. 
e.  

\[\text{é se mí fí mi a gba àdùrà.}\]

It do me COMP I FUT make prayer
‘It is as if I should pray’.

Where the object of the verb is the third person singular pronoun, the pronoun is zero in Ào. For this reason the verb doubles as the object. This is done is such a way that the tone of the verb is employed in Ào for the third person singular pronoun. This is shown below\(^\text{11}\).

(28) a. \(\text{Olú óun ìlòrí ó gùòlè mi jú oko etí ulí.}\)

Olu CONJ Ìlòrí AGR-S follow me go farm ear house
‘Olú and Ìlòrí accompanied me to the nearby farm’.

b. \(\text{Olú óun ìlòrí ó gùòlè Ọpè jú oko etí ulí.}\)

Olu CONJ Ìlòrí AGR-S follow Ọpè go farm ear house
‘Olú and Ìlòrí accompanied Ọpè to the nearby farm’.

c. \(\text{Olú óun ìlòrí ó gùòlè jú oko etí ulí.}\)

Olu CONJ Ìlòrí AGR-S follow go farm ear house
‘Olú and Ìlòrí accompanied him to the nearby farm’.

(29) a. \(\text{uzó jí ó kàn in kóíi.}\)

dance this AGR-S. reach you(pl) now
‘It is your turn to dance now’.

b. \(\text{uzó jí ó kàn Tọpẹ kóíi.}\)

dance this AGR-S reach Tọpẹ now
‘It is Tọpẹ’s turn to dance now’.

\(^{11}\) See Taiwo (2007b) for a detailed discussion of the distribution of object pronouns in the Ào.
c. uzó jí ó kàn kóìi.
   dance this AGR-S reach now
   'It is his turn to dance now'.

(30) a. Táyé ó yá fu á gbè í ulésà.
   Táyé AGR-S come take us go PREP Iléṣà
   'Táyé came to take us to Iléṣà'.

b. Táyé ó yá fu ọmọ̀ jí gbè í ulésà.
   Táyé AGR-S come take child this go PREP Iléṣà
   'Táyé came to take this child to Iléṣà'.

c. Táyé ó yá fú gbè í ulésà.
   Táyé AGR-S come take go PREP Iléṣà
   'Táyé came to take us to Iléṣà'.

(31) a. in món rhiií fu eti rhí ọn.
    you(pl) EMPH CONT NEG put ear PREP them
    'Stop listening to them'.

b. in món rhiií fu eti rhí.
    you(pl) EMPH CONT NEG put ear PREP
    'Stop listening to it/him/her'.

In the sentences in (28) above, gwọ́lé ‘to follow’ has mi ‘me’ and Ọpẹ́ as objects in (28a&b) respectively. The same verb has no overt object in (28c). Here, the object is the zero third person singular short pronoun. However, the sentence is still well-formed and the verb still subcategorizes for an object as attested by native speakers. This is made possible by the use of the high tone verb in the sentence. A mid tone verb can also function likewise but not a low tone verb. This is why the low tone verb kàn ‘reach’
in (29a&b) bears a mid tone in (29c) where it selects the said pronoun. Another important observation is that a mid tone verb with an overt object pronoun becomes high when it selects the non-overt third person singular short pronoun as its object. See the sentences in (30a&b) where the verb ɓu ‘to take’, with mid tone, selects ā ‘us’ and ọmọ̀ jì ‘this child’ respectively. But it bears a high tone in (30c) where the non-overt third person singular short pronoun is its object.

In the sentence in (31b), the preposition rhí looks stranded because it has no object. However, this is not the case, the zero third person singular pronoun is its object. The preposition still bears a high tone as is the case in (31a).

2.2.3 Genitive forms of short pronouns

Short pronouns in genitive constructions are different from the various forms we have discussed so far. The forms are listed in table V.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st person</td>
<td>mi</td>
<td>wa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person</td>
<td>rẹ</td>
<td>Win</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person</td>
<td>rẹ̀</td>
<td>won</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table V**: Short pronouns in genitive constructions

The pronouns in table V inflect for both number (singular and plural) and person (first, second and third persons). These pronouns are illustrated in the sentences in (32).

(32) a. Ọpẹ́ ó ɓu díngín mi rhí inón ạpọ̀ Ayọ.
‘Ọpẹ́ put my glasses inside Ayọ’s bag’. 
b. ọgá ó yá kín Táyé lí ulí wa.
master AGR-S come greet Táyé PREP house our
‘The master came to greet Taye in our house’.

c. Ọzó ó gbìn èrho ulá rẹ rhí oko rẹ.
Ojo AGR-S plant seed okro your(sg) PREP farm his
‘Ojo planted your okro seed in his farm’.

d. Fúnmi óun Òní ó rí ọ̀nọn ọmọ win lí ulí.
Fúnmi CONJ Òní AGR-S see they child your(pl) PREP house
‘Fúnmi and Òní saw your children at home’.

e. é è se ẹzọ́ rẹ.
It PAST NEG be case his
‘It is/was not his fault’

f. mọ́tò wọn titọn jí ó lá zù ti télè.
motor their new this AGR-S big more GEN before
‘This their new car is bigger than the former one’.

The singular forms of short pronouns in genitive constructions are in (32a, c&e),
the pronouns are mi ‘my’, rẹ ‘your(sg)’ and rẹ̀ ‘his’ respectively. Their plural counterparts
are wa ‘our’, win ‘your(pl)’ and wọn ‘their’ in (32b, d&f), respectively. The first person
pronouns occur in (30a & b), the second person in (30c&d) while the third person occur
in (30e&f).

2.3. Forms of other functional morphemes
Apart from the forms of pronouns discussed in the preceding section, some other morphemes have more than one form in Ào utterances. These are tense, aspect the focus marker and the emphatic marker. This is because these morphemes have separate forms for affirmative and negative sentences. We shall discuss the forms of each of these functors.

2.3.1 Forms of tense markers

The Yorùbá language distinguishes between future tense and non-future tense. This is because the future tense has overt markers in the language while sentences with non-overt tense markers have the non-future tense. This is also the situation in the Ào dialect of Yorùbá where present and past tenses have no overt markers in affirmative sentences and are referred to as non-future tenses; only the future tense has either à or a as its marker.

However, in negative sentences, the present and past tenses, like the future tense, have separate and overt markers. In fact, the present tense has two distinct markers in negative sentences. The sentences below illustrate the present tense markers.

(33) a. ọbẹ̀ jí ó yan zù ti ànáni.
    soup this AGR-S sweet more GEN yesterday
    ‘This soup taste better than the one of yesterday’.

b. ọbẹ̀ jí i yan zù ti ànáni.
    soup this PRES NEG sweet more GEN yesterday
    ‘This soup does not taste better than the one of yesterday’.

c. ọbẹ̀ jí i yan zù ti ànáni.
    soup this PRES NEG sweet more GEN yesterday
    ‘This soup is yet to taste better than the one of yesterday’.
The sentence in (33a) has a non-future tense because the tense marker is non-overt. However, the translation shows that it is a present event/situation that is being described.\(^{12}\) The sentences in (33b&c) are the negative counterparts of (33a). In these negative sentences, the present tense has two markers, \(i\) in (33b) and \(i\) in (33c). While the present tense has no overt marker in affirmative sentences, it has \(i\) and \(i\) as its markers in negative sentences. The sentences in (34) below describe past events.

(34)  

\begin{align*}
\text{(34a) } & \quad \text{Ayọ́ ó } gbó aiyọ́ ōnọ́n ōmọ́ tié lí àbọ́ jí.} \\
& \quad \text{Ayọ́ AGR-S hear noise they child the PREP afternoon this} \\
& \quad \text{‘Ayọ heard the noise of these children this afternoon’}. \\
\text{(34b) } & \quad \text{Ayọ́ PAST NEG hear noise they child the PREP afternoon this} \\
& \quad \text{‘Ayọ did not hear the noise of these children this afternoon’}. \\
\text{(34c) } & \quad \text{Táyé è gbó aiyọ́ ōnọ́n ōmọ́ tié lí àbọ́ jí.} \\
& \quad \text{Táyé PAST NEG hear noise they child the PREP afternoon this} \\
& \quad \text{‘Táyé did not hear the noise of these children this afternoon’}. \\
\end{align*}

(34a) describes a past event but has no overt tense marker. In (34b&c), the event described is also a past one but in the negative. The two sentences have the low tone past tense marker borne on a vowel identical to the last vowel of the subject. The sentences in (34) clearly show that the past tense has two forms in Ào. The non-overt form employed in affirmative sentences and the low tone used in negative sentences.

The future tense also inflects for negation as is the case with the present and past tenses described above. The future tense has \(à\) and \(a\) in affirmative sentences and \(nìí\) in negative sentences. These future tense markers are shown in the sentences below.

\(^{12}\) For a full discussion of tense and aspect in Ào, see Oyé Taiwo (2003a). We shall limit our discussions here to the forms of the functors under discussion. The derivations and meanings of these functors have been discussed elsewhere. See Ajọngọlo (2005: 90–190).
(35) a. ọmọ win a zẹ udọn erhì dí ó bá té.  
child your(pl) FUT eat meat pig COMP he COMP arrive  
‘Your child will eat pork when he comes’.

b. ọmọ win níi zẹ udọn erhì dí ó bá té.  
child your(pl) FUT NEG eat meat pig COMP he COMP arrive  
‘Your child will not eat pork when he comes’.

(36) a. uzó jí a kàn Àìná dí ó bá di ọ̀la.  
dance this FUT reach Àìná COMP it COMP be tomorrow  
‘It will be Àìná’s turn to dance by tomorrow’.

b. uzó jí níi kàn Àìná dí ó bá di ọ̀la.  
dance this FUT NEG reach Àìná COMP it COMP be tomorrow  
‘It will not be Àìná’s turn to dance by tomorrow’.

(37) a. azá dúndún jí à mú ẹran lí oko ọdẹ.  
dog black this FUT catch animal PREP farm hunter  
‘This black dog will catch animal in a hunting venture’.

b. azá dúndún jí níi mú ẹran lí oko ọdẹ.  
dog black this FUT NEG catch animal PREP farm hunter  
‘This black dog will not catch animal in a hunting venture’.

The two future tense affirmative markers a and à are actually products of inflection. While a occurs before a mid or low tone verb, a high tone verb selects à as its future tense marker in affirmative sentences. This is why zẹ ‘to eat’ in (35a) and kàn ‘reach’ in (36a) select a as future tense marker. The two are low tone bearing verbs.
The high tone bearing verb mú ‘to catch’ in (37a) selects à with a low tone as its future tense marker.

Both à and a have a negative form in níí. The sentences in (35b)–(37b) are negative sentences. They describe events/situations that will not take place or occur in the future. The future tense marker in the three sentences is níí.

2.3.2 Forms of imperfective aspect markers

Ào has perfective and the imperfective aspects. The imperfective aspect is further divided into the continuous (progressive) and habitual aspects (Taiwo 2003). The perfective aspect has only one form used for both affirmative and negative sentences. It is rán.

The continuous and habitual aspects have two forms in Ào utterances. One form is used in affirmative sentences while the other one is employed in negative sentences. The sentences below show the negative and affirmative forms of the continuous aspect marker.

(38) a. ùzọba á se títí ọ̀nọ̀n urá ùbàdàn.
government CONT do road they people Ibadan
‘The government is repairing the road of Ibadan people’.

b. Òpẹ́ é gbọ́ aiyo wọn kí ó té.
Òpẹ́ CONT hear noise their COMP she arrive
‘Òpẹ́ was hearing their noise when she arrived’.

(39) a. ùzọba rhííí se títí ọ̀nọ̀n urá ùbàdàn.
government CONT NEG do road they people Ibadan
‘The government is no longer repairing the road of Ibadan people’.

b. Òpẹ́ rhííí gbọ́ aiyo wọn kí ó té.
Ọpẹ́ CONT NEG hear noise their COMP she arrive
‘Ọpẹ́ was no longer hearing their noise when she arrived’.

The affirmative form of the continuous aspect marker is the high tone borne by a vowel identical to the last vowel of the subject NP as in ((38a&b). The negative counterpart is rhii which is in (39). The two forms of habitual aspect are in (40) and (41) below.

(40) a. ezin aí rọ dí ó bá di osù kézọ ọdàn.
    rain HAB fall COMP it COMP reach month eight year
    ‘It usually rains in the eighth month of the year’.

    b. ọmọ uwà rẹ aí yá uwé kòfoomi.
    child father you(sg) HAB come here always
    ‘Your father’s child usually comes here always’.

(41) a. ezin ii rọ dí ó bá di osù kézọ ọdàn.
    rain HAB NEG fall COMP it COMP reach month eight year
    ‘It does not usually rains in the eighth month of the year’.

    b. ọmọ uwà rẹ ii yá uwé kòfoomi.
    child father you(sg) HAB NEG come here always
    ‘Your father’s child does not usually come here always’.

The sentences in (40) have the affirmative form of the habitual aspect marker which is aí, its negative counterpart, ii, occurs in (41).

2.3.3 Forms of the imperative marker

The imperative sentence can optionally have a marker in an affirmative sentence in Yorùbá. The sentences in (42) are imperative sentences in standard Yorùbá.
(42) a.  
\[ \text{wá.} \]
\[ \text{come} \]
\[ \text{'come'}. \]

b.  
\[ \text{máa dìde bí mo še ŋí wò é źen.} \]
\[ \text{IMP stand up COMP I do CONT look you(sg) now} \]
\[ \text{'Stand up as I am looking at you now'}. \]

c.  
\[ \text{kí Olórun ọba (máa) gbó àdúrà źin.} \]
\[ \text{IMP God king IMP hear prayer your(pl)} \]
\[ \text{'May God (continue to) hear your prayer'}. \]

The optional imperative marker in the affirmative sentences in (42b&c) is \( \text{máa} \). The other imperative marker in (42c) is \( \text{kí} \), used in indirect command in standard Yorùbá. The negative counterparts of (42a-c) are in (43a-c) with \( \text{máà} \) as the negative imperative marker.

(43) a.  
\[ \text{máà wá.} \]
\[ \text{IMP NEG come} \]
\[ \text{'Do not come'}. \]

b.  
\[ \text{máà dìde bí mo še ŋí wo źe źen.} \]
\[ \text{IMP NEG stand up COMP I do CONT look you(sg) now} \]
\[ \text{'Do not stand-up as I am looking at you now'}. \]

c.  
\[ \text{kí Olórun ọba máà gbó àdúrà źin.} \]
\[ \text{IMP God king IMP NEG hear prayer your(pl)} \]
\[ \text{'May God not hear your prayer'. (Let God not hear your prayer.)} \]
Unlike in (42) where the imperative marker is optional; máà, the imperative negative marker is obligatory in (43) if the negative meanings of the sentences will be realised.

In the Ào, the imperative sentence has the same features as described above. Witness the sentences in (44) and (45).

(44) a. rhùn rí alè.
    sleep on ground
    'Sleep on the ground'.

b. wàa gbórun dí ràjé bá bá e fò.
    IMP obey COMP somebody COMP PREP you(sg) speak
    'Be obedient when someone is counselling you'.

c. ..fí Olóran óba ó gbó àdúrà win.
    IMP God king AGR-S hear prayer your(pl)
    '... that God the king should hear your prayer'.

(45) a. món ọ̀n rhùn rí alè.
    IMP NEG sleep on ground
    'Do not sleep on the ground'.

b. món ọ̀n gbórun dí ràjé bá bá e fò.
    IMP NEG obey COMP somebody COMP PREP you(sg) speak
    'Do not be obedient when someone is counselling you'.

c. ...fí Olóran óba mónọ̀n gbó àdúrà win.
    IMP God king IMP NEG hear prayer your(pl)
    '... that God the king should not hear your prayer'.
The sentences in (44) are affirmative imperative sentences, while those in (45) are their negative counterparts. The affirmative sentences do not have the imperative marker except (44b). The marker is \textit{wàa}. However, the negative imperative sentences in (45) have \textit{mọ́nọ̀n} as the imperative marker.

2.3.4 Forms of the focus marker

The focus marker also has different forms for affirmative and negative sentences in Ào. In actual fact, there are two focus markers in affirmative constructions in Ào. These markers are \textit{rin} and \textit{rin}. They occur in the sentences below.

(46) a. \textit{ọmọ tìí mò féràn ó zẹ udôn.}
    child REL I like AGR-S eat meat
    ‘The child (that) I like ate a piece of meat’.

b. [\textit{ọmọ tìí mò féràn}], tì o zẹ udôn \textit{rin}.
    child REL I like AGR-S eat meat FOC
    ‘It was the child (that) I liked that ate a piece of meat’.

c. \textit{udôn}, \textit{ọmọ tìí mò féràn ó zẹ tì rin}.
    meat child REL I like AGR-S. eat FOC
    ‘It was a piece of meat that the child I like ate’.

d. \textit{ọmọ tìí mò féràn rin}.
    child REL I like FOC
    ‘It is/was the child I like’.

e. \textit{udôn rin}.
    meat FOC
    ‘It is/was a piece of meat’.
The sentence in (46a) is the basic sentence from where the focus sentences in (46b-e) are derived. The focus marker in (46b-c) is rin while rin is the focus marker in (47d&e). In (46b&c), rin is employed to focus constituents of the sentence, the subject in (46b) and the object in (46c). The sentences in (46d&e) are the elliptical forms of (46b&c) respectively. In these elliptical sentences, only the focused constituents remain with the focus marker rin. All other parts of the sentence have been deleted. The focus marker, rin performs an additional role as the predicate of the sentence. The negative form of the focus marker is ki, it occurs in (47).

(47) a. é è se [ọmọ tìí mò fèràn] tì kí ó zẹ udòn.
   it NEG be child REL I like FOC NEG AGR-S eat meat.
   ‘It was not the child I like that ate a piece of meat’.

b. é è se udòn, kí ọmọ tìí mò fèràn ó zẹ tì
   it NEG be meat FOC NEG child REL I like AGR-S eat.
   ‘It was not a piece of meat that the child I like ate’.

c. è è se ọmọ tìí mò fèràn.
   it NEG be child REL I like
   ‘It was not the child I like’.

d. è è se udòn.
   it NEG be meat
   ‘It is/was not a piece of meat’.

Apart from the negative focus marker, ki in (47a&b), the focus sentences above contain these words è è se ‘It is not the case’ at the sentence-initial positions and followed by the focused constituents. The sentences in (47c&d) have only è è se and
the focused constituents, the negative focus marker *kí*, and the other constituents of the sentences have been deleted because they are elliptical negative focus constructions. Our discussion reveals that there are three different forms of the focus marker in Ào. Two of these, *rin* and *rin*, are used in affirmative constructions, while the third one, *kí* occurs in negative constructions.

In this subsection, I have shown the various forms of the following functors: tense, aspect, focus and imperative markers. The table below gives a summary of these forms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functor</th>
<th>Forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tense</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Future</td>
<td>ñ (before high tone verbs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Non-future</td>
<td>a (before mid or low tone verbs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Present</td>
<td>not marked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Past</td>
<td>not marked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aspect</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Habitual</td>
<td>aí</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Continuous</td>
<td>high tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Imperative</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marker</td>
<td>wàà (optional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus marker</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rin (constituent focusing)</td>
<td>kí (constituent focusing only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rin (elliptical sentences)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table VI:* Inflected function morphemes and their forms in Ào.
4.0 Conclusion

This paper examined inflectional properties of functional categories in the Ào dialect. These are the pronoun (both long and short), tense markers, aspect markers as well as focus and imperative markers. We have shown the various forms of both long and short pronouns, tense and aspectual markers, the focus marker and the imperative marker. We discussed the distribution of these functional categories and how these forms occur in Ào sentences. Some function morphems that have more that one form in standard Yorùbá were also discussed.

References


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