

## Inflection in the Ào dialect of Yorùbá<sup>1</sup>

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines inflection in the Ào dialect of Yorùbá, a language spoken in south west 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

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<sup>1</sup> 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<sup>2</sup> inflect for number and person while the short pronoun additionally inflects for case and negation. The future

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<sup>2</sup> 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 gbọ ọ̀rọ̀ yín.*

I also hear word you(pl)

'I also heard your word'.

b. *àwa náà gbọ ọ̀rọ̀ yín.*

we also hear word you(pl)

'We also heard your word'.

(4) a. *iwo ọ̀ ní lọ pẹ̀lú wọ̀n.*

you(sg) NEG FUT.NEG go with them

'You will not go with them'.

b. *ẹ̀yin ọ̀ ní lọ pẹ̀lú wọ̀n.*

you(pl) NEG FUT.NEG go with them

'You will not go with them'.

(5) a. *òun gan-an pẹ̀lú jẹ̀bi ọ̀rọ̀ yíí.*

he qualifier also guilty word this

'He is also guilty of this case'.

b. *àwọ̀n gan-an pẹ̀lú jẹ̀bi ọ̀rọ̀ yíí.*

they qualifier also guilty word this

'They are also guilty of this case'.

*èmi*, *iwo* and *òun* in (3a-5a) are long singular pronouns while their plural counterparts are *àwa*, *ẹ̀yin* and *àwọ̀n* 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 așọ.*

Táyé give me PREP cloth

'Táyé gave me a piece of cloth'.

(7) a. *wọn ti rí wọn.*

they PERF see them

'They have seen them'.

b. *wọn ò ti rí wọn.*

they NEG PERF see them

'They have not seen them'.

c. *Ayọ ò mọ 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 *wọn* and *won* as subjects in (7a &b) and *yín* 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 *wọn* in (6a) and (7a) for the affirmative, and *mi/wọn* 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.

	Singular	Plural
1st person	tèmi	tàwa/tiwa
2nd person	tirẹ	tẹyin/tiyín
3rd person	tòun	tàwọn/tiwọn

(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. *ọkọ ọ tiwọ/tirẹ* 'your(sg) vehicle'  
 b. *ọkọ ọ tẹyin/tiyín* 'your(pl) vehicle'
- (10) a. *iwé e tòun/tirẹ* 'his book'  
 b. *iwé e tàwọn/tiwọn* '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. *omọ náà á/yóò/máa lọ ní ọ̀la.*  
child the FUT go PREP tomorrow

'The child will go tomorrow'.

b. *omọ náà kò ní lọ ní ọ̀la.*  
child the NEG FUT go PREP tomorrow

'The child will not go tomorrow'.

## 2. Inflection in the *Ào* dialect

In the *Ào* dialect of Yorùbá<sup>3</sup>, 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. *òmi gan-an ó gbọ ọ̀fọ win.*

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<sup>3</sup> The *Ào* dialect of Yorùbá is spoken in the north eastern part of Ondo state in Nigeria. See Ajongolo (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 gbó ọfọ win.*  
we    qualifier AGR-S hear word you(pl)  
'We also heard your word'.

(13) a. *ùg<sup>w</sup>ọ ní<sup>4</sup> g<sup>w</sup>ólé ọn jú.*  
you(sg) FUT NEG follow them go  
'You(sg) will not go with them'.

b. *inin níí g<sup>w</sup>ólé ọn jú.*  
you(pl) FUT NEG follow them go  
'You(pl) will not go with them'.

(14) a. *òun rhíí<sup>5</sup> níí zókòó rhí ulí.*  
he    CONT NEG FUT NEG sit    in house  
'He will no longer be sitting at home'.

b. *ọnon rhíí níí zókòó 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 pronouns in the examples (i.e. (12)–(14)) also inflected for person. The

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

<sup>5</sup> 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*  
 pot my 'my pot'
- b. *Ùzà tàa*  
 pot our 'our pot'
- c. *Ọmọ tùg<sup>w</sup>ọ*  
 child you(sg) 'your child'
- d. *Ọmọ tinin*  
 child you(pl) 'your child'
- e. *asọ toun*  
 cloth his 'his cloth'
- f. *asọ tọnon*  
 cloth their 'their cloth'

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

	Singular	Plural
1st person	tòmi	tàa
2nd person	tùg <sup>w</sup> ọ	tìín
3rd person	toun	tọnon

**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.

Perso n	Forms									
	I		II		III		IV		V	
	Sg	Pl	Sg	Pl	Sg	Pl	Sg	Pl	Sg	Pl
1 <sup>st</sup>	Mò	À	Mo	A	Mì	À	Mi	A	Mí	Á
2 <sup>nd</sup>	W	ìn	W	In	Wè	ìn	W	In	Wé	ín
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Ó	Ọn	Ó	Ọn	E/É	Ọ	É	Ọn	É	Ón
						n				

**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<sup>6</sup>

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 Táyé.*  
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 ọfọ 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 g<sup>w</sup>ó ọmọ tié pa.*  
they beat child the die  
'They beat the child to the point of death'.

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<sup>6</sup> Ajongolo (2005: 90–118) gives a detailed description of the various forms of the pronoun in Ào.

- f.        *in zókòó rhí orí odó é.*  
you(pl) sit        on    head portal that  
'You sat down on that portal'.

The pronouns in the sentences in (16) bear low tone except the third person singular pronoun<sup>7</sup> which bears a high tone. The sentences in (17a&b) have low tone verbs, *rà* 'buy' and *kà* 'count'; sentences (17c-e) illustrate mid tone verbs *zẹ* 'win' *pọn* 'fetch' and *zẹ* 'eat'. The subject pronouns of the sentences bear mid tone.

- (17) a.        *mo rà ulí Táyé.*  
I        buy    house Taye  
'I bought Taye's house'.
- b.        *wo kà eyó tié.*  
you(sg) count    money    the  
'You counted the money'.
- c.        *in zẹ mótò.*  
you (pl)    win    vehicle  
'You (pl) won a vehicle'
- d.        *a pọn omi.*  
we    fetch    water  
'We fetched water'.
- e.        *ọn zẹ èrún lí oko.*  
they    eat    yam    PREP    farm  
'They ate yam in the farm'.

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<sup>7</sup> 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).

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<sup>8</sup>. In the sentences in (18), the low tone short pronouns occur before future tense and habitual aspect markers.

(18) a.            *mi à gbó urun tíí Táyé ó se.*

I FUT hear something REL Taye AGR do

'I will hear what Táyé did'.

b.            *wè a<sup>9</sup> 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<sup>10</sup> pọn omi kòfoomi.*

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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<sup>8</sup> For a detailed discussion of the multiple roles of the pronoun in Áo, see Taiwo (2006a)

<sup>9</sup> 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 Ajongolo (2005) for a detailed discussion.

<sup>10</sup> The habitual marker *áí* has the variant *ai*.

- (19) a.            *mì rí usẹ tíí Títí se.*  
I see work REL Titi do  
'I am watching the work that Titi is doing'.
- b.            *Òzó ó rí usẹ tíí Títí se.*  
Ojo CONT see work REL Titi do  
'Ojo is watching the work that Titi is doing'.
- (20) a.            *à gbọ aiyo ọnon urá Ùsùà.*  
we hear noise them people Ìsùà  
'We were hearing the noise of Ìsùà people'.
- b.            *ùzoba á gbọ aiyo ọnon urá Ùsùà.*  
government CONT hear noise them people Ìsùà  
'The government was hearing the noise of Ìsùà people'.
- (21) a.            *in rhá pa.*  
you(pl) run much  
'You are running too much'.
- b.            *omọ tiẹ é rhá pa.*  
child the CONT run much  
'The child is running too much'.
- (22) a.            *ọn g'wó olé tiẹ kí mọ té uwẹ.*  
they beat thief the COMP I get there  
'They were beating the thief when I got there'.
- b.            *ọnon omọ jí í g'wó olé tiẹ kí mọ té uwẹ.*  
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 uta lí oko etí ulí.*

I pick pepper in farm ear house  
'I am picking pepper in a near-by farm'.

b. *a zẹ ẹza kí Ọpẹ ó té.*

we eat fish COMP Ọpẹ AGR arrive  
We were eating some fish before Ọpẹ's arrival'.

c. *we ya.*

you(sg) come  
'You are coming'.

d. *in rhùn kí ezin ó rọ.*

you(pl) sleep COMP rain AGR fall  
'You were sleeping when it rained'.

e. *é yò mi dí mi í fọ.*

he look me as I CONT speak  
'He was looking at me as I was talking'.

- f.            *ọ̀n zà kí tírhà wọ̀n 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 rhíí dáhùn kí é fọ̀.*  
I CONT NEG answer COMP he speak  
'I was no longer answering when he was speaking'.
- b.            *á níí fetí rhí aiyọ̀ tíí ọ̀n pa.*  
we FUT NEG listen to noise REL they kill  
'We will not listen to the noise they are making'.
- c.            *wé è yá fọ̀ 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 rhíí níí dọ ulí wọ̀n torí ọ̀fọ̀ 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'.

e. *é i mo omí ran ọ̀n rì kòró.*  
 he PRES NEG drink water PERF they COMP stand  
 'He has not finished drinking (water) before they left'.

f. *ọ̀n íí zín lí alé àfi dí tírhà bá í ulí.*  
 they HAB NEG wake at night except COMP teacher COMP be house  
 'They don't usually wake up at night except when the teacher is at home'.

### 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.

Person	Forms			
	I		II	
	Sg	Pl	Sg	Pl
1 <sup>st</sup>	Mi	a	Mí	á
2 <sup>nd</sup>	È	in	È	ín
3 <sup>rd</sup>	high tone of verb	ọ̀n	mid tone of verb	ọ̀n

**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 g<sup>w</sup>ólé 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. *ònon ọmọ sùkúrù gbọ a lí àgbójé.*  
they child school hear us PREP hear-well  
'The students heard us well'.
- c. *obìnrin tíí òn g<sup>w</sup>á à rí ọn 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 ré ó mọ 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 fọ 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 rhíí fu etí rhí ọn.*  
you(pl) EMPH CONT NEG put ear PREP them  
'Stop listening to them'.

- c. *ọmọbinrin tiẹ 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 Ilésà  
Táyé came to take us to Ilésà'.
- b. *ije rẹ ó fi amọ mọ ín 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 rhí alẹ, 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 lí pọ̀nùn mézìn.*  
I owe you(sg) PREP pound two  
'I owe you two pounds'.

- e. *é se mí fí mi a gba àdúrà.*  
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 in such a way that the tone of the verb is employed in Ào for the third person singular pronoun. This is shown below<sup>11</sup>.

- (28) a. *Olú òun Ìlòrí ó g<sup>w</sup>ólé 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. *Olú òun Ìlòrí ó g<sup>w</sup>ólé Ọpẹ jú oko etí ulí.*  
Olu CONJ Ìlòrí AGR-S follow Ọpẹ go farm ear house  
'Olú and Ìlòrí accompanied Ọpẹ to the nearby farm'.
- c. *Olú òun Ìlòrí ó g<sup>w</sup>ólé 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. *uzó jí ó kàn in kóíí.*  
dance this AGR-S. reach you(pl) now  
'It is your turn to dance now'.
- b. *uzó jí ó kàn Tọpẹ kóíí.*  
dance this AGR-S reach Tọpẹ now  
'It is Tọpẹ's turn to dance now'.

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<sup>11</sup> See Taiwo (2007b) for a detailed discussion of the distribution of object pronouns in the Ào.

c. *uzó jí ó kàn kóíí.*

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 Ilésà

'Táyé came to take us to Ilésà'.

b. *Táyé ó yá fu ọmọ jí gbè í ulésà.*

Táyé AGR-S come take child this go PREP Ilésà

'Táyé came to take this child to Ilésà'.

c. *Táyé ó yá fú gbè í ulésà.*

Táyé AGR-S come take go PREP Ilésà

'Táyé came to take us to Ilésà'.

(31) a. *in mọn rhííí fu eti rhí ọn.*

you(pl) EMPH CONT NEG put ear PREP them

'Stop listening to them'.

b. *in mọn rhííí fu eti rhí.*

you(pl) EMPH CONT NEG put ear PREP

'Stop listening to it/him/her'.

In the sentences in (28) above, *g<sup>w</sup>ólé* 'to follow' has *mi* 'me' and *Ọpé* 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 *fu* ‘to take’, with mid tone, selects *á* ‘us’ and *omò jí* ‘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.

	Singular	Plural
1st person	mi	wa
2nd person	rẹ	Win
3rd person	rẹ	wọn

**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.                    *Ọpẹ ó        fu dínjín mi rhí inọn àpò Ayọ.*  
                                  Ọpẹ AGR-S put glass    my PREP stomach bag Ayọ  
                                  ‘Ọpẹ put my glasses inside Ayọ’s bag’.

- b. *ògá 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. *Òzó 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 òun Òní ó rí ònon 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 ẹzọ rẹ.*  
It PAST NEG be case his  
'It is/was not his fault'
- f. *mọtò wọn titọn jí ó lá zù ti tẹlẹ.*  
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 *rẹ* '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. *ọ̀bẹ̀ jí ó yan zù ti ànání.*

soup this AGR-S sweet more GEN yesterday

'This soup taste better than the one of yesterday'.

b. *ọ̀bẹ̀ jí ì yan zù ti ànání.*

soup this PRES NEG sweet more GEN yesterday

'This soup does not taste better than the one of yesterday'.

c. *ọ̀bẹ̀ jí ì yan zù ti ànání.*

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.<sup>12</sup> 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 *ì* in (33c). While the present tense has no overt marker in affirmative sentences, it has *i* and *ì* as its markers in negative sentences. The sentences in (34) below describe past events.

- (34) a. *Ayò ó gbọ aiyo ònọn ọmọ tié lí àbọ jí.*  
Ayò AGR-S hear noise they child the PREP afternoon this  
'Ayò heard the noise of these children this afternoon'.
- b. *Ayò ọ gbọ aiyo ònọn ọmọ tié lí àbọ jí.*  
Ayò PAST NEG hear noise they child the PREP afternoon this  
'Ayò did not hear the noise of these children this afternoon'.
- c. *Táyé è gbọ aiyo ònọn ọmọ tié lí àbọ jí.*  
Táyé PAST NEG hear noise they child the PREP afternoon this  
'Táyé did not hear the noise of these children this afternoon'.

(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 *á* and *a* in affirmative sentences and *níí* in negative sentences. These future tense markers are shown in the sentences below.

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<sup>12</sup> 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 Ajongolo (2005: 90–190).



- (35) a. *ọmọ win a zẹ udòn 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 níí zẹ udòn 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 dì ọ̀lá.*  
 dance this FUT reach Àìná COMP it COMP be tomorrow  
 ‘It will be Àìná’s turn to dance by tomorrow’.
- b. *uzó jí níí kàn Àìná dí ó bá dì ọ̀lá.*  
 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 ẹ̀ran lí oko ọ̀dẹ.*  
 dog black this FUT catch animal PREP farm hunter  
 ‘This black dog will catch animal in a hunting venture’.
- b. *azá dúndún jí níí mú ẹ̀ran lí oko ọ̀dẹ.*  
 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. *ùzoba á se tíí ọ̀nọ̀n urá ùbàdàn.*  
government CONT do road they people Ibadan  
'The government is repairing the road of Ibadan people'.

b. *Ọ̀pẹ́ ẹ́ gbọ́ aiyọ wọ̀n kí ó té.*  
Ọ̀pẹ́ CONT hear noise their COMP she arrive  
'Ọ̀pẹ́ was hearing their noise when she arrived'.

(39) a. *ùzoba rhíí se tíí ọ̀nọ̀n urá ùbàdàn.*  
government CONT NEG do road they people Ibadan  
'The government is no longer repairing the road of Ibadan people'.

b. *Ọ̀pẹ́ rhíí gbọ́ aiyọ wọ̀n kí ó té.*

Ọpẹ CONT NEG hear noise their COMP she arrive  
'Ọpẹ 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 *rhíí* 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 kòfoomì.*  
child father you(sg) HAB come here always  
'Your father's child usually comes here always'.

(41) a. *ezin íí 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 íí yá uwé kòfoomì.*  
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, *íí*, 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. *wá.*  
come  
'come'.
- b. *máa dide bí mo ʃe ní wò é yẹn.*  
IMP stand up COMP I do CONT look you(sg) now  
'Stand up as I am looking at you now'.
- c. *kí Ọlórún ọba (máa) gbọ àdúrà yín.*  
IMP God king IMP hear prayer your(pl)  
'May God (continue to) hear your prayer'.

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

- (43) a. *máà wá.*  
IMP NEG come  
'Do not come'.
- b. *máà dide bí mo ʃe ní wo ẹ yẹn.*  
IMP NEG stand up COMP I do CONT look you(sg) now  
'Do not stand-up as I am looking at you now'.
- c. *kí Ọlórún ọba máà gbọ àdúrà yín.*  
IMP God king IMP NEG hear prayer your(pl)  
'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 gbòrun dí rájé bá bá ẹ fọ.*  
                         IMP obey COMP somebody COMP PREP you(sg) speak  
                         ‘Be obedient when someone is counselling you’.
- c.        *..fí Ọlórán ọba ó gbọ àdúra win.*  
                         IMP God king AGR-S hear prayer your(pl)  
                         ‘... that God the king should hear your prayer’.
- (45) a.        *mọn ọn rhùn rí alè.*  
                         IMP NEG sleep on ground  
                         ‘Do not sleep on the ground’.
- b.        *mọn ọn gbòrun dí rájé bá bá ẹ fọ.*  
                         IMP NEG obey COMP somebody COMP PREP you(sg) speak  
                         ‘Do not be obedient when someone is counselling you’.
- c.        *...fí Ọlórán ọba mọnọn gbọ àdúra 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 *wáa*. However, the negative imperative sentences in (45) have *mónòn* 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 *rín* and *rin*. They occur in the sentences below.

- (46) a.            *ọmọ tíí mò fẹràń ó zẹ udọń.*  
child REL I like AGR-S eat meat  
'The child (that) I like ate a piece of meat'.
- b.            *[ọmọ tíí mò fẹràń]<sub>i</sub> t<sub>i</sub> o zẹ udọń rín.*  
child REL I like AGR-S eat meat FOC  
'It was the child (that) I liked that ate a piece of meat'.
- c.            *udọń<sub>i</sub> ọmọ tíí mò fẹràń ó zẹ t<sub>i</sub> rín.*  
meat child REL I like AGR-S. eat FOC  
'It was a piece of meat that the child I like ate'.
- d.            *ọmọ tíí mò fẹràń rin.*  
child REL I like FOC  
'It is/was the child I like'.
- e.            *udọń 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 *rín* while *rin* is the focus marker in (47d&e). In (46b&c), *rín* 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 *kí*, it occurs in (47).

- (47) a.                    *é è se [ọmọ tíí mò fẹràn]; t<sub>i</sub> 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 tíí mò fẹràn ó zẹ t<sub>i</sub>*  
 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.                    *ẹ è se ọmọ tíí mò fẹràn.*  
 it NEG be child REL I like  
 'It was not the child I like'.
- d.                    *ẹ è se udòn.*  
 it NEG be meat  
 'It is/was not a piece of meat'.

Apart from the negative focus marker, *kí* in (47a&b), the focus sentences above contain these words *é 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 *é 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, *rín* 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.

Functor	Forms	
	Affirmative	Negative
Tense		
i. Future	à (before high tone verbs) a (before mid or low tone verbs)	nií
ii. Non-future		
(a) Present	not marked	i / ì
(b) Past	not marked	low tone
Aspect		
i. Habitual	aí	íí
ii. Continuous	high tone	rhíî
Imperative marker	wàa (optional)	món ọ̀n
Focus marker	rín (constituent focusing) rin (elliptical sentences)	kí (constituent focusing only)

**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 morphemes that have more than one form in standard Yorùbá were also discussed.

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