

SOME TRADITIONAL YORUBA "ADVERBS"

IN TRUE PERSPECTIVE

Oladele Awobuluyi

Traditional Yoruba grammar considers words like kiákíá 'quickly' and rí '(ever) before' in the following two sentences as adverbs:¹

1. Adé lọ kiákíá
Ade go quickly
'Ade went (there) quickly.'
2. Adé lọ rí
Ade go before
'Ade went (there) before.'

But as Awobuluyi (1969, 1971:105) points out, "adverbs" like the one in (1) can be topicalised, as in

3. Kíákíá ní Adé lọ
quickly Emph-marker Ade go
'Ade went (there) without any delay at all'

1. On this, see Crowther (1852:182, 250), de Gaye and Beecroft (1964:52), Ward (1956:151, 174), Delano (1965:124, 127), Bamgbose (1966:127), Johnson (1969: xlvii - xlviii), Rowlands (1969:146), Anonymous (1971:140, 200).

while those like the one in (2) cannot, as shown by the ungrammaticality of

4. *rí ní Adé lq

In other words, these two kinds of "adverbs" do not behave alike, and this calls for explanation.

Taking the dissimilarity in the behaviour of the two kinds of "adverbs" under topicalisation as possible evidence that they actually belong in different categories, Awobuluyi (1969, 1971:105) tentatively advanced the hypothesis that "adverbs" like the one in (1) are prepositional phrase nouns preceded specifically by the preposition ní 'in, at, on' at least in deep structure, while "adverbs" like the one in (2) are indeed adverbs.² In other words, according to that hypothesis, traditional Yoruba grammar and all modern practitioners of it are mistaken in calling words like kiákíá, fòò, ségesége, kitàkità,³ etc. adverbs. Evidence will be presented in this paper to show that the hypothesis is correct, while traditional Yoruba grammar is indeed mistaken as regards the true categorial status of the words in question. The evidence to

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2. Rowlands (1970) analyses the two classes of words in question as Nominals and Bound Verbs, respectively.
 3. Most of the words of this kind are ideophonic in character, and appropriate English glosses rarely exist for them. For this reason, no attempt will be made to translate most of them.

be presented takes the form of three hitherto universally overlooked syntactic phenomena having to do with the words themselves.

To begin with, consider the following utterances:

5. (a) ó dé kíákíá
he arrive quickly
'He came quickly.'
- (b) ó dé ní kíákíá
he arrive in quickly
'He came quickly.'
6. (a) ó dé wéréwéré
he arrive quickly
'He came quickly.'
- (b) ó dé ní wéréwéré
he arrive in quickly
'He came quickly.'
7. (a) Iṣu tí a bẹ pẹlẹbẹ pẹlẹbẹ
yam which we slice thin thin
'Yam that is sliced thin.'
- (b) Iṣu tí a bẹ ní pẹlẹbẹ pẹlẹbẹ
yam which we slice in thin thin
'Yam that is sliced thin.'
8. (a) Ẹe mí pẹlẹ
do me gently
'Treat me gently.'
- (b) Ẹe mí ní pẹlẹ
do me in gently
'Treat me gently.'

9. (a) ó ñ tẹ ilẹ girigiri
 he-ing press ground girigiri
 'He walked about in girigiri manner.'
- (b) ó ñ tẹ ilẹ ñ girigiri
 he-ing press ground in girigiri
 'He walked about in girigiri manner.'
10. (a) Àrìrà òkè tí í sọlẹ kùù
 hoverer up which-ing hit-ground kùù
 'The hoverer that hits the ground
 with a kùù sound.'
- (b) Àrìrà òkè tí í sọlẹ ní kùù
 hoverer up which-ing hit-ground in kùù
 'The hoverer that hits the ground
 with a kùù sound.'

These are all surface structure utterances.

Furthermore, the (b) member of each pair contains a so-called adverb which is actually preceded by the preposition ní.⁴ The hypothesis under consideration merely states that traditional adverbs like kiákíá, kùù, wéréwéré occur preceded by the preposition ní in deep structure, and leaves completely open the possibility that they may occur in that same way in surface structure also. Now, since the

4. For further examples of such utterances, see Abraham (1958:362, 371, 662), Fagunwa (1963:16), Babalola (1973a:155; 1973b:169, 1973c:51), Faletí (1970:64), Olajubu (1972:102), Akinjogbin (1969:48, 101, 121), Esan (1969, lines 338, 661, 822, 848), Oladapo (1973:84), Oyelaran (1974:6), Layeni (1967:14), Anonymous (1969:5, verse 2).

hypothesis was actually formulated without the benefit of having ever heard or seen utterances like (5 -10) previously, those utterances have to be taken as a strong direct confirmation of it.

Examples (5 - 10) are, as far as current knowledge goes, in the minority in the language: the majority of surface structure utterances containing the so-called adverbs apparently lack (b) counterparts,⁵ as in

11. (a) Maa ta félefèlè ní ọ̀dọ̀ mí
do-not bounce félefèlè in presence my
'Don't behave in félefèlè manner in
my presence.'

(b) *Maa ta ní félefèlè ní ọ̀dọ̀ mí
do-not bounce in félefèlè in presence
my
'Don't behave in félefèlè manner in
my presence.'

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5. So little detailed systematic study of the words under consideration has ever been done that no one at all can at present seriously or meaningfully claim to know whether asterisk in these utterances means that they are ungrammatical, or grammatical but stylistically less preferred, or grammatical but rare, etc. Intuition does not help here either, because such intuition as many speakers claim to have about such words is really not distinct from what traditional grammars teach about the words.

12. (a) Mo bá jóòkó jééjé
I happen sit-down peacefully
'Thereupon, I sat down quietly.'
- (b) *Mo bá jóòkó ní jééjé
I happen sit-down in peacefully
'Thereupon I sat down quietly.'
13. (a) ó funfun láú
It be-white láú
'It is snow white.'
- (b) *ó funfun ní láú
it be-white in láú
'It is snow white.'
14. (a) ó ga fíofío
it be-tall fíofío
'It is tall in fíofío manner.'
- (b) *ó ga ní fíofío
it be-tall in fíofío
'It is tall in fíofío manner.'
15. (a) ó rí roboto
it seem round
'It is round.'
- (b) *ó rí ní roboto
it seem round
'It is round.'
16. (a) ó pupa fòò
it be-red fòò
'It is red in fòò manner.'

- (b) *ó pupa ní fòò
 it be-red in fòò
 'It is red in fòò manner.'

However, there is no question at all but that the same kinds of "adverbs" occur in (5 - 10) and (11 - 16). For, more specifically, they are the same both from the standpoint of their phonological and morphological makeup and from the standpoint of the types of meanings they convey. Furthermore, the relation between any particular "adverb" and the verb in its sentence is exactly as for the "adverbs" and verbs in the other utterances. In other words, then, (5 - 10) and (11 - 16) actually illustrate the same kind of construction. This fact must be reflected in any would-be explanatory grammar of the language, and the simplest and now conventional way to do so is to derive them in exactly the same way.⁶

In this connection, notice that the preposition ní never occurs in Yoruba except directly preceding nouns.⁷ Consequently, each of the words it

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6. Of course, one could choose to consider (5 - 10) as exceptions and describe them separately from (11 - 16). But in that event one could not legitimately claim to be writing an explanatory grammar of the construction involved.
 7. This syntactic rule can only be inferred from most of the existing works on the language, e.g. Crowther (1852:33-34), Johnson (1969:xlvi-xlix), de Gaye and Beecroft (1964:61), Ward (1956:123-24, 129-133), Rowlands (1969:146), Delano (1965:9), Bamgbose (1966:78). The only explicit formulation of the rule that the writer knows of is in Awobuluyi (1969:note 16; 1971:105).

precedes in the above examples is thereby unambiguously identified as a noun. This being the case, since the (a) and (b) members of each example are synonymous, if one takes the traditional position that words like kiákíá, etc. are "adverbs", one would be forced to also claim that the (b) utterances are derived optionally from their (a) counterparts by the following transformational rule:

$$\begin{array}{rcl}
 17. & \#\# & X - V - Adv - Y \#\# \Rightarrow \\
 & & \quad \quad \quad 1 \quad \quad \quad 2 \\
 & \#\# & X - V - ní - NP - Y \#\# \\
 & & \quad \quad \quad 1 \quad \quad \quad 3 \quad \quad \quad 4
 \end{array}$$

On the other hand, if one takes the position that all such words are nouns, one would have to derive the (a) utterances from their (b) variants by rule (18).

$$\begin{array}{rcl}
 18. & \#\# & X - V - ní - NP - Y \#\# \Rightarrow \\
 & & \quad \quad \quad 1 \quad \quad \quad 2 \quad \quad \quad 3 \\
 & \#\# & X - V - NP - Y \#\# \\
 & & \quad \quad \quad 1 \quad \quad \quad 3
 \end{array}$$

Careful comparison of these two rules reveals significant differences between them and, by implication, between the analyses they represent.

Rule (17) would have to be constrained so that it does not apply to utterances like (11 - 16). Rule (18), for its own part, would be constrained to apply obligatorily to the same kind of examples. In short, both rules would be equally constrained in respect of examples like (11 - 16), and there is therefore no basis for choosing between them at this point.

Notice, however, that rule (17) carries out

two simultaneous operations of insertion and category change, and of these two operations, the latter is extremely uncommon, if not actually unheard of, for syntactic rules. This makes that rule rather implausible and undesirable. Rule (18), by contrast, carries out only one simple routine operation of deletion, and is for this reason completely natural.

Furthermore, rule (17) is completely ad hoc: it has no motivation of any kind beyond the data in (5 - 10). Rule (18), on the other and, has firmly established independent existence in the language both in its optional and in its obligatory applications. Thus, its optional application features in the derivation of the following (a) sentences from their (b) variants:

19. (a) ó mò ti òtító
 he know that-of truth
 'He in fact knows.'
- (b) ó mò ní ti òtító
 he know in that-of truth
 'He in fact knows.'
20. (a) ó rín ìhòhò
 he walk nudity
 'He walked in the nude.'
- (b) ó rín ní ìhòhò
 he walk in nudity
 'He walked in the nude.'

21. (a) ó ní gbé apá ọhún
 he -ing reside side over-there
 'He lives over there.'
- (b) ó ní gbé ní apá ọhún
 he -ing reside in side over-there
 'He lives over there.'
22. (a) Kò dùn dídùn
 not be-sweet sweetness
 'It is not sweet at all.'
- (b) Kò dùn ní dídùn
 not be-sweet in sweetness
 'It is not sweet at all.'
23. (a) ó ọ̀rọ̀ íṣe
 it be-difficult doing
 'It is difficult to do.'
- (b) ó ọ̀rọ̀ ní íṣe
 it be-difficult in doing
 'It is difficult to do.'

Its obligatory application is needed for deriving

the (a) members of the following utterances from their (b) versions:8

8. Evidence for the existence in deep structure of these (b) utterances can be seen from the fact that their (a) versions display the item ti when the noun phrase bée lit. 'manner its' is topicalised,

ó wí bée → Bée ni ó (ti) wí
'He said so.' 'So he said.'

ó rí bée → Bée ni ó (ti) rí
'It seems so.' 'So it seems.'

just as happens when all place and a few manner nouns immediately preceded by the preposition ní are topicalised in sentences whose verb is neither wà 'to be in a place' nor gbé 'to reside in a place.' Thus, cf.

ó kú ní ọjà → Ọjà ni ó ti kú
'He died at the market' 'The market is where he died.'

ó kú sí ọjà → *Ọjà ni ó ti kú sí
'He died at the market.' 'The market is where he died.'

ó kú ní àná → *Àná ni ó ti kú
'He died yesterday' 'Yesterday is when he died.'

The element ti is not permitted in the topicalised versions of the last two examples because the latter contain wrong combinations of prepositions and nouns.

24. (a) ó wí bẹ̀ẹ̀
 he say manner-its
 'He said so.'
- (b) *ó wí ní bẹ̀ẹ̀
 he say in manner-its
 'He said so.'
25. (a) ó rí bẹ̀ẹ̀
 it seem manner-its
 'It seems so.'
- (b) *ó rí ní bẹ̀ẹ̀
 it seem in manner-its
 'It seems so.'

In short, rule (17) is not a rule of Yoruba grammar, while rule (18) is. This being the case, it has to be concluded that the analysis that rule (17) represents, namely, the one which considers words like kiákíá, etc. as adverbs, is at best, inferior to the one represented by rule (18), and at worst actually incorrect.

Next, consider utterances like the following:

26. Mo bá jóòkó jẹ́jẹ́ mi
 I happen sit-down peacefully my
 'I thereupon sat down in my usual
 peaceful manner.'
27. Ẹ jẹ́ kí ó maa gbọ́n rí rí rẹ ní ibẹ́ yẹn
 You (pl.) let compl. he-ing tremble
 rí rí his in there that

'Let him go on trembling there, as
is his habit.

28. Mǎa ta félefèlè rẹ́ dé ọ̀dọ́ mi o
do-not bounce félefèlè your reach
presence my o

'I am warning you now. Don't behave in
your characteristic félefèlè manner in
my presence.'

29. Ibi tí ọ́ ti n̄ yan kọ́ndúkọ́ndú rẹ́ kiri
place which he from -ing strut kọ́ndúkọ́ndú
his go-about

'While he was strutting about in his
usual kọ́ndúkọ́ndú manner.'

30. Bi wọn ti n̄ ẹ́ wọ̀dùwọ̀dù wọn kiri ni iye
manner they from -ing do wọ̀dùwọ̀dù their
go-about Emph that

'That is the way they go about behaving
in their usual wọ̀dùwọ̀dù manner.'

31. Ọ̀bẹ́ náà dùn mírínmírín kan bá yí
stew the be-sweet mírínmírín one manner-
this

'The stew has a funny/queer sweet taste.'

32. ọ́ rí rugbudu kan bá yí
it seem rugbudu one manner this

'It has a queer rugbudu shape.'

Each of these utterances contains a so-called
adverb which is actually qualified by a qualifier.

For example, in (26), jééjé is qualified by mi 'my' while in (27) riri is qualified by rè 'his, her, its'. Since adverbs do not normally occur qualified by qualifiers in natural languages, there is no way at all to explain the structure of utterances like (26 - 32) within the framework of any analysis which adopts the traditional view that words like jééjé, féléfèlè, kòndúkòndú, etc. are adverbs. Within the framework of an alternative analysis which considers all such words as nouns, however, (26 - 32) are completely regular and natural, and require no explanation at all, since it is the universal privilege of nouns to be able to occur with any qualifiers with which they are semantically compatible. Under these circumstances, it can be seen that the former analysis once again proves to be the inferior analysis.

This observation is actually something of an understatement. To see it, consider rule (17) once again. It claims that when the words under consideration are not directly preceded by the preposition ní, they are adverbs. If this were actually the case, such words would not be able to occur qualified by qualifiers in that particular context, since, as already pointed out, qualifiers do not qualify adverbs. But they do occur qualified by qualifiers, as seen in (26 - 32), and from this it must be concluded that such words are not adverbs even when they are not directly preceded by the preposition ní; instead, they are nouns, as claimed by rule (18).

In other words, then, the analysis that rule (17) represents is not merely inferior but actually incorrect.

There are a number of words in the language with which the so-called adverbs share very important syntactic characteristics. Such words can be exemplified by:

òjijì	'suddenness'
ogán	'suddenness'
méjiméjì	'two at a time'
métaméta	'three at a time'
ojoojúmọ	'everyday'
òsòòsẹ	'every week'
ọdọdún	'every year'

Enlightened grammarians of the language are virtually unanimous in calling all such words nouns. Their view seems to the writer to be correct both on intuitive grounds and because it has very strong structural support in the fact that most such words collocate with the preposition ní, a word which, as pointed out earlier, never occurs in the language except with nouns. For example,

33. ó dé ní ogán (*ó dé ogán)
he arrive in suddenness
'He came suddenly.'

34. ó ní mú wọn ní méjiméjì (*ó ní mú wọn méjiméjì)
he -ing take them in two-two
'He was removing them two at a time.'

35. ó n wá ní ọ̀sọ̀ọ̀sẹ̀ (*ó n wá ọ̀sọ̀ọ̀sẹ̀)
 he -ing come in week-week
 'He comes every week.'

The similarities between the nouns just exemplified and the so-called adverbs are of different kinds.

Firstly, both sets of words can occur with the preposition ní, as in (5 - 10) and (33 - 35). The nouns exemplified in (33 - 35) do so with a few definite exceptions,⁹ while the so-called adverbs in (5 - 10) do so with many apparent exceptions.

Secondly, both sets of words are severely restricted in their ability to cooccur with qualifiers. The nouns exemplified in (33 - 35) are, interestingly enough, even more severely restricted in that respect than the so-called adverbs. Thus, some examples of the collocation of the latter with qualifiers have already been given in (26 - 32), and still more could be supplied. In the case of the nouns exemplified in (33 - 35), by contrast, examples are extremely hard to come by. Only the following two are known to the writer at present:

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9. E.g. àgbààgbà 'the elders', ogboogbon
 (untranslatable), ègbèègbé (untranslatable).

36. ó gé e já ní ọgán kan
 he cut it snap in suddenness one
 'He cut it through at a stroke.'
37. Ọjoojúmọ ayé rẹ ní ó n dá Ifá
 everyday world his Emph-marker he -ing
 consult Ifa
 'He consults Ifa every blessed day of
 his life.'

The noun ọgán is qualified by kan 'one' in (36), and ọjoojúmọ by the genitival qualifier ayé rẹ 'his life' in (37).

Thirdly, both sets of words normally never function as subject and/or object of verbs.¹⁰ Thus, there are no strings like the following where the non-terminal symbols could actually be replaced

10 They actually function as the object of the verb dà/di 'to become', as in

ó mà n di ọjoojúmọ rẹ
 it indeed -ing become everyday your
 'This is fast becoming an everyday thing
 with you.'

ó di kitàkità
 it become kitàkità
 'Things suddenly turned into kitàkità.'

Such sentences, cited in Rowlands (1970), have been excluded from consideration here as some people might argue that the so-called adverbs are employed there in a special sense.

by appropriate lexical items:¹¹

38. (a) * ## ọsọọsẹ V NP ##
(b) * ## NP V ọsọọsẹ ##
39. (a) * ## kíákíá V NP ##
(b) * ## NP V kíákíá##

Finally, by virtue of the function they perform in sentence structure, both sets of words are topicalised and relativised identically. Thus, to

1. Adé lọ kíákíá
'Ade went (there) quickly.'

correspond the following:

40. (a) kíákíá ni Adé lọ
quickly Emph-marker Ade go
'Ade went (there) without any
delay at all.'

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11. The only possible exception to this observation that the writer knows of is the traditional saying

ojoojúmọ bí ọdún
everyday manner-of festival
'Everyday is like a holy day.'

whose full form would seem to be

ojoojúmọ rí bí ọdún
everyday appear manner-of festival
'Everyday seems like a holy day.'

where ojoojúmọ 'everyday' is subject.

(b). kíákíá tí Adé ló¹²

quickly which Adé go

'Ade's going (there) quickly.'

And to (35) similarly correspond

41. (a) ọ̀sọ̀ọ̀sẹ̀ ní ọ́ ń wá

every-week Emph-marker he -ing come

'He comes every week.'

(b) ọ̀sọ̀ọ̀sẹ̀ tí ọ́ ń wá¹²

every-week which he -ing come

'His coming every week.'

In short, setting aside the exceptions already noted, whatever can or cannot be done to or with one of the two sets of words concerned also can or cannot be done to or with the other. In other words, the two sets of words are for all practical purposes syntactically congruent.

This syntactic congruence finds no explanation at all within the framework of analyses that call words like kíákíá, etc. adverbs. This is so because there is no reason why adverbs and nouns should be

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12. Bangboşe (1975) raises some very interesting points which he feels show that relativisation is not involved in sentences such as these. He overlooks, however, some very pertinent facts, such as the isomorphism of relativised and focussed expressions highlighted by Awobuluyi (1972) and Schachter (1973). And even the points he raises do not seem to warrant the conclusion he draws from them, given the conception of relativisation in Awobuluyi (1972) and Schachter (1973).

syntactically congruent. Indeed, it would be both an anomaly and a contradiction in terms for them to ever be. Within the framework of an analysis that regards all the so-called adverbs as nouns, on the other hand, the syntactic congruence in question follows as an automatic consequence of the words concerned being nouns of the particular subclass of which nouns like òsòòsè, ojoojúmó are also members. In other words, the latter analysis explains the syntactic phenomenon under consideration, while the former does not and thereby once again proves to be the inferior analysis.

Of the three syntactic considerations which have now been raised, one directly confirms the hypothesis put forward at the beginning of this paper, while all three indirectly confirm it. They indirectly confirm it, since it constitutes the only uniform or homogeneous explanation possible for them. Under these circumstances, it seems safe to conclude that the hypothesis is indeed correct, and that words like kiákíá, etc. are in fact nouns, and not adverbs as claimed

in traditional grammar.¹³

This finding reveals a curious structural imbalance in an existing conception of Yoruba grammar. According to that conception,¹⁴ the

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13. Bamgboṣe (1972) tries to make a case for the traditional analysis just shown to be wrong. But, as in note 12, he overlooks the truly pertinent facts of the case, viz. the three considerations raised in this paper; considerations which, as already seen, both jointly and severally render the traditional position untenable. Moreover, seven of the eight arguments he marshals in defence of his position boil down to just one single claim to the effect that "adverbs" could not be nouns because they cannot function as subject and/or object of verbs, and as the second element, referred to as a genitival qualifier, in the following example:

àlàyé Ayò
explanation Ayò
'Ayò's explanation'

That claim, however, is completely falsified by the nouns ogán 'suddenness' and òjiji 'suddenness' which are syntactically restricted exactly like the so-called adverbs. His eighth and last argument claims that "adverbs" cannot occur with o-ní 'one who has/displays', but it, too, is falsified by oníwéréwéré 'one who acts in wéréwéré manner.'

14. See especially Bamgboṣe (1966).

language has four major parts of speech which can be arranged proportionately as below:

42.	Nouns	:	:	Adjectives
	Verbs	:	:	Adverbs

The adverbs in this set are the words which have now been shown to be nouns. Merging such adverbs with nouns, as is now necessary, has the immediate effect, however, of skewing the above set and rendering it asymmetrical, as in

43.	Nouns	:	:	Adjectives
	Verbs	:	:	-

Given such an asymmetry, one must ask whether it is natural or man-made; that is, does it actually exist in the language or is it merely the product of the particular methodological approach adopted? The whole enterprise of Linguistics, it is important to recall in this connection, is based on the assumption that Language is regular. This being the case, asymmetries like the one above must in theory be considered as unnatural and as ipso facto reflecting a fault in the approach adopted.

On the face of it, this might not appear to be saying very much, since it can also be argued that in practice irregularities are indeed a feature of human language. But it so happens that it has already been shown in another paper (Awobuluyi 1973) that Verbs in (43) is in fact an unjustifiable conflation of two otherwise distinct

categories of Verbs and Adverbs, categories which are unambiguously differentiated by their functions, as any such pair can only be in the language. And since the above asymmetry is just what one would expect if this contention is correct, it is clear that the asymmetry, far from being natural, is indeed a man-made product of the approach adopted.

This paper's finding also underscores the need pointed out by Newman (1968: 116) for syntactic descriptions of ideophones to be truly language-specific. The "adverbs" reanalysed as nouns here are, as pointed out earlier in note 3, ideophones mostly. Earlier grammarians of the language ignored the many tell-tale syntactic signs to the contrary actually existing in the language and analysed such ideophones as adverbs largely because they correspond both syntactically and semantically to Adverbs in English, as the following examples clearly show:

44. ó dé kíákíá
 he return quickly
 'He returned quickly.'

45. ó jóòkó jééjé
 he sit-down peacefully
 'He sat down peacefully.'

Had such words not thus been studied and analysed from the perspective of another completely unrelated language, their true categorial status would most certainly have been known long before now.

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