

YORUBA ADJECTIVES HAVE MERGED WITH VERBS:
OR ARE THEY JUST EMERGING?

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1.0. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the ongoing discussion on the nature of the syntactic category 'Adjective'. This will be done by examining how adjectival concepts are handled in Yoruba¹ in the light of the typological study of adjectives in various languages as presented in Dixon's 1977 paper, 'Where have all the adjectives gone?'

According to him, lexical items of any given language are grouped into a number of semantic types (cf Whorf's notion of cryptotype) such as DIMENSION, MOTION, OBJECT, etc, at the universal semantic level. Then each semantic type is in turn associated with a single syntactic category at the basic (deep) syntactic level. COLOUR, for example, is associated with Adjective in English at this level. And finally at the derivational level lexical items may, through derivational processes, change their categorial membership. Thus, for instance, English black, which is basically an adjective, may occur in certain contexts as a verb blacken.

We will examine the concept of adjective in Yoruba at the various levels mentioned above. It will be shown that the differences in the categorization of the lexical items used to express adjectival concepts depend on the semantic features that are incorporated into the lexical items. At the derivational level, we suggest a historical explanation for certain irregularities observed in connection with a small set of lexical items. We conclude that the question of whether or not the Adjective is a universal category would receive different answers, depending on varying theoretical models.

Underlying this study is simply an attempt to understand grammar.

Some clarification is in order. Although it is conceivable that ideophonic expressions, particularly those employed to describe physical objects (e.g.

1 Yoruba is a member of the Kwa subgroup of the Niger-Congo family. Tones are marked over the vowels as follows: High /^ˈ/, Low /^ˋ/, and Mid, no marking.

roboto 'round') are an important source of adjectives in the language, ideophones are not considered in this study. Similarly, numerical quantifiers (e.g. náá 'two'), pseudo-numerical quantifiers (e.g. pò 'to be many'), and demonstratives (such as ɛyí 'this') are not considered either.

2.0 Semantic considerations

The semantic concept of an adjective is centred around perceptually-based features that distinguish two or more members belonging to the same class from each other. Dixon (1977:63) puts it this way:

An adjective describes some important but non-criterial property of an object. That is, an adjectival description will serve to distinguish between two members of the same species that are referred to by a single common noun.

In the illustrations of (1-6) below, we present lexical items used in connection with adjectival concepts. These are concerned with the semantic types DIMENSION, PHYSICAL PROPERTY, COLOUR, HUMAN PROPENSITY, AGE, and VALUE.² The items are arranged in antonymous pairs.³ Unless otherwise indicated, each gloss is to be understood as to include TO BE (e.g. ga = 'to be tall').

(1) DIMENSION

- | | | | |
|------------------|-------------|---------------|---------|
| a. <u>ga</u> : | <u>kírú</u> | 'tall'/high : | 'short' |
| b. <u>tóbi</u> : | <u>kéré</u> | 'big' : | 'small' |

(2) PHYSICAL PROPERTY

- | | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|--------|
| a. <u>tutù</u> : | <u>gbóná</u> | 'cold' : | 'hot' |
| | <u>gbé</u> | | dry |
| b. <u>ní ɛwà</u> : | <u>burɛwa</u> | 'beautiful' (lit., to have beauty : | 'ugly' |
| | [-BE] | | |
| c. <u>jín</u> : | --- | 'deep' : | --- |

(3) COLOUR

- | | | | |
|------------------|---------------|----------|---------|
| a. <u>dúdú</u> : | <u>funfún</u> | 'black : | 'white' |
| b. <u>pupa</u> : | --- | 'red' : | --- |

2 The semantic type SPEED is left out of consideration. This is because the lexical items that are used in connection with speed are verbs modifying some other verbs, e.g. yára ló 'to go quickly'.

3 Details about antonyms in such terms as contradictions (e.g. alive : dead), contraries (e.g. rich : poor) and converses (e.g. taller : shorter) are not included. Neither is the idea of 'markedness' in adjectives discussed. For discussions on 'marked' and 'unmarked' adjectives see Givón (1970) and Creider (1975).

(4) HUMAN PROPENSITY

- a. ní lkhā : ---
[-BE] 'wicked' (lit., to have wickedness : ---)
- b. gbṛn : gṛ
ní ogbṛn 'wise : foolish'
'to have wisdom'

(5) AGE

- a. gbṛ : titun/tuntun 'old : new'
- b. di àgbà : di titun
[-BE] 'to become old : to become new'

(6) VALUE

- a. dára : burú 'good' : 'bad'
- b. rere : buburú/burukú
[-BE] [-BE] 'good' : 'bad'

Let us now make a few observations concerning the data in (1-6) (but see also the Appendix). First, the greatest number of the descriptive lexical items is found in connection with PHYSICAL PROPERTY, followed by DIMENSION. This is expected, since semantic distinctions in the quality of objects are easily perceived in terms of their physical properties and dimensions. Second, quite frequently, the items are antonymously paired, but in some cases gaps exist, some of which are universal by nature. Thus while black and white are antonyms, there is no direct opposite of red. Others are language specific, for example, in 'to be deep' in (2c). In Yoruba the missing members are generally expressed through the use of the negative particle (k)ò plus the positive form as in kò pupa '(it) is not red'.

Third, in some cases a particular lexical item may have a wide range of senses, depending on the nouns they describe. The word tutù is a good example of such. Thus consider the examples of (7).

- (7) a. omi nǎǎ tutù 'The water is cold',
water the cold
- b. Asọ nǎǎ tutù 'The clothes are wet',
clothes
- c. Èwé nǎǎ tutù 'The leaves are green/fresh',
leaves

In (7a) it means 'to be cold', but in (7b) we get the meaning 'to be wet' and it carries the meaning 'to be green/fresh' in (7c).

Fourth, as indicated in the data, although the majority of the items inherently include BE in their semantic make-up, some of them do not. Furthermore, there are instances in which two lexical items are used (e.g. *ní gǔà* in (2b)). We should also notice the use of the form *dí* 'to become' in (5b).

These three ways - a single item with an inherent BE, a single item without an inherent BE and multiple items with no inherent BE - then represent the patterns of expressing adjectival notions in the language.

At the universal semantic level, we see that just like any human language, Yoruba has lexical items for expressing adjectival concepts. But is it the case that all languages assign such lexical items to one and the same syntactic category? We know that this is not the case. Precisely, then, to what category are they assigned in Yoruba?⁴ In the next section we make an attempt to answer this question.

3.0 Basic syntactic considerations

In section 2 above we saw that certain lexical items are grouped under certain semantic types. The next level of organisation is that of the basic syntax or deep level, where in a given language each semantic type has a basic or "norm connection with a single part of speech" (Dixon 1977:27). In English, for example, COLOUR is normally associated with the Adjective. We now proceed to consider the categorization of the semantic types mentioned in section 2 above. This will be based particularly on their function in basic sentences⁵ to determine whether they can be connected with Adjective, which is characterized by Dixon (1977:63) as:

A set of lexical items, distinguished on morphological and syntactic grounds from the universal classes Noun and Verb. Typically, Adjective is likely not to require tense/aspect/mood or whatever specification it is that characterizes members of the class Verb in a given language, and it may be independent of specification for number/person or whatever it is that characterizes nouns. An adjective may syntactically depend on a noun, this being realized through positioning and/or case agreement, etc.

4. This question has generated a good deal of controversy in the grammatical studies of Yoruba (see for example, Afọlayan (1972) and Awobuluyi (1972)).

5. By using the term 'basic sentence' we have in mind a sentence with minimal presuppositions used to describe a given situation just as it is.

Consider then the following sentences:

- (8) a. Ọmọ nàà ga 'The child is tall'
child the is tall
- b. Ọmọ nàà dúú 'The child is dark-skinned'
is black
- (9) a. Ọmọ nàà ní ẹwà 'The child is beautiful'
has beauty
- b. Ọkùnrin nàà ní ọgbón 'The man is wise'
man has wisdom
- (10) a. Olú jẹ ọmọ rere 'Olu is a good child'
is child good
- b. Ìbàdàn jẹ ìlú ńlá 'Ibadan is a large city'
city large

The constructions in (8) through (10) represent the three basic patterns (hereafter P(attern) I, II, III respectively, for convenience) in which those lexical items associated with the notion of adjective appear in sentences. In (8) ọmọ nàà is the subject while ga and dúú occur in the predicate position. In (9) we find ní ẹwà and ní ọgbón in the predicate slot; Olú in (10a) and Ìbàdàn in (10b) are the subjects in (10) while their respective predicates are jẹ ọmọ rere and jẹ ìlú ńlá⁶. Schematically, the structure of the predicate in the three Patterns is as follows:

$$\text{Predicate} + \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{QUALITY WORD} \\ \text{NI/VERB} + \text{QUALITY NOUN} \\ \text{BE} + \text{NOUN} + \text{QUALITY WORD} \end{array} \right\}$$

3.1 Pattern I

The syntactic categorization of the predicating form of PI has been a subject of controversy among Yoruba grammarians since the earliest grammatical studies of the language. One school of thought has labelled such items as ga 'to be tall' as predicative adjectives,⁷ while another regards them as a subclass of the category Verb.⁸ Undoubtedly, each characterization must have been based,

6 It is difficult to get rere and ńlá direct after jẹ without the nouns they qualify (see further in section 3.3 below).

7 e.g. Crowther (1852), Johnson (1957) and Afplayan (1972), (see Awobuluyi (1972) for a critique of this position).

8 e.g. Bowen (1858), Ward (1956), de Gaye and Beecroft (1959), Delano (1965), Bamgboye (1966) and Awobuluyi (1967).

implicitly or explicitly, on the set of criteria used. As we have seen above if Adjective is defined purely on the basis of semantics, then one cannot avoid the conclusion that the predicating elements in PI are adjectives.

But in spite of their indisputable adjectival meaning, lexical items such as dúḡá, 'to be black', and ga 'to be tall' display verbal qualities in their syntactic behaviour. This fact is borne out by the illustrations in (11)

through (17) below:

- (11) Ọmọ náà $\begin{Bmatrix} 1ọ \\ ga \end{Bmatrix}$ 'The child $\begin{Bmatrix} \text{went} \\ \text{is tall} \end{Bmatrix}$
- (12) Ọmọ náà (tí) (á) $\begin{Bmatrix} 1ọ \\ ga \end{Bmatrix}$ 'The child has gone'
(PERF) (PROG) 'The child is going'
'The child has started/is already going'
- (13) Ọmọ náà á/yó $\begin{Bmatrix} 1ọ \\ ga \end{Bmatrix}$ 'The child will $\begin{Bmatrix} go \\ \text{be tall} \end{Bmatrix}$
FUTURE
- (14) Ọḡ ọmọ náà $\begin{Bmatrix} 1ọ \\ ga \end{Bmatrix}$? 'Did the child go?'
QUESTION 'Is the child tall?'
- (15) a. Bẹ́ẹ̀ ní, ọmọ náà $\begin{Bmatrix} 1ọ \\ ga \end{Bmatrix}$ 'Yes, the child $\begin{Bmatrix} \text{went} \\ \text{is tall} \end{Bmatrix}$
b. Bẹ́ẹ̀ kọ́, ọmọ náà (k)ò $\begin{Bmatrix} 1ọ \\ ga \end{Bmatrix}$ 'No, the child $\begin{Bmatrix} \text{did not go} \\ \text{is not tall} \end{Bmatrix}$
- (16) $\begin{Bmatrix} Lílọ \\ Gf ga \end{Bmatrix}$ ọmọ náà wù ní 'I like the child's $\begin{Bmatrix} \text{going} \\ \text{tallness} \end{Bmatrix}$
pleases me
- (17) Ọmọ náà $\begin{Bmatrix} nùra \\ ga \end{Bmatrix}$ ju Olu (1ọ) 'The child is $\begin{Bmatrix} \text{more active} \\ \text{taller} \end{Bmatrix}$ than Olu
 $\begin{Bmatrix} \text{more active} \\ \text{is tall} \end{Bmatrix}$ surpass

Even a most cursory glance over the examples in (11-17) above would recognize a number of parallels between intransitive verbs such as 1ọ 'to go' and items like ga 'to be tall' (hereafter stative verbs). First, in the example of (11) both 1ọ and ga function as minimal predicators without any modification or supporting elements. Both qualify to be verbs, albeit of different subclasses.

Second, even though tense/aspect/modals are frequently viewed as sentential properties, more often than not they are found localized adjacent to the category Verb, and precisely before the main verb in SVO languages. This is exactly what obtains in Yoruba as (12) and (13) illustrate. In these examples both

lọ and ga may occur immediately following the PERFECTIVE/PROGRESSIVE marker (or both, as in (12)) or following the FUTURE as in (13).

Third, in confirmation (yes/no) questions, stative as well as intransitive verbs (and verbs in general) show identical patterning. Thus in the interrogative sentences of (14) and the alternative responses of (15a,b), all of which involve lọ and ga, the structures are identical.⁹

Fourth, the derivational properties of stative verbs are indistinguishable from those of other verbs: an overwhelming majority of them are nominalized via partial reduplication as lọ → lilọ, ga → giga show in (16).¹⁰

Fifth, both stative and non-stative verbs have an identical comparative construction as shown in the examples of (17).

Judging from these parallel properties of both stative and non-stative verbs, we have ample evidence to support the categorization of such elements as ga as stative verbs, even though they express adjectival meaning.

3.2 Pattern II

Turning now to the examples of (9) (reproduced here for convenience) we find the pattern rather interesting.

- (9) a. Ọmọ náà ní ọwà 'The child is beautiful'
child the has beauty
- b. Ọkùnrin náà ní ọgbón 'The man is wise'
man the has wisdom

The structure of (9) is NP ní N (NP HAVE N) where N is a quality of the NP, and occurs in the predicate position, but preceded by HAVE.¹¹ In other words,

9 lọ and ga, however, behave differently in information questions. As Bamgbose (1974) has shown, whereas ACTION verbs such as lọ are questioned by the use of KÍ ... ẹ as in Kíní ọmọ náà ẹ? 'What did the child do?', stative verbs are questioned in the form Báwo ... rí as in Báwo ní ọmọ náà rí 'How does the child look/seem?'

10 See Kufore's (1972) paper where he observes that 'this formative principle which in Yoruba appears to be peculiar to the verb, and which, therefore, can often be used as a touchstone for this class of items' (p.62). A few exceptions of verbs which do not reduplicate, however, exist, e.g., wà 'to exist', ńkọ 'what about?' and dá 'where is?'

11 A few other verbs occur in the position of ní. One of them is dí 'to become' as in Ọkùnrin náà dí àgbà. 'The man became old'. This of course involves process. Another is ya as in Ọkùnrin náà ya dí. 'The man is dumb'.

the noun in the predicate position is a quality possessed by the NP in the subject position.

The sentence in (9b) can be expressed in at least two other ways as in the following sentences:

- (18) a. Ọkùnrin nàà gbọ̀n 'The man is wise'
man the is wise
b. Ọkùnrin nàà jẹ́ ọlọgbọ̀n 'The man is a wise person'
BE a wise person

The sentences (9b, 18a,b) are content-wise synonymous in the loose sense of the term. The form of (18a) is that of Pattern I, where gbọ̀n, having BE as part of its semantic content, requires no BE in the structure or any other kind of verb. The word ọlọgbọ̀n 'wisdom' in (9b) is presumably derived from gbọ̀n. Having lost the inherent BE it now requires HAVE before it in that structure. Then the word ọlọgbọ̀n 'one who possesses wisdom', a compound derived noun, has also lost the inherent BE of gbọ̀n, and so must have a verb form along with it. This time jẹ́, which is a kind of equative BE, is chosen, thus conveying the meaning the noun-phrase (subject) = the noun in the predicate phrase. A choice of HAVE would be inappropriate in this structure.¹²

A very interesting fact is that selectional restrictions obtain between the NP subject and any form that occurs in the predicative position, be it a stative verb, a noun across HAVE, or a noun across BE. Thus the following sentences are unacceptable because selectional restrictions have been violated.¹³

- (19) a. *Igi nàà gbọ̀n *'The tree is wise'
b. *Igi nàà ní ọlọgbọ̀n *'The tree has wisdom'
c. *Igi nàà jẹ́ ọlọgbọ̀n *'The tree is a wise person'

One other feature of P II is the fact that it can be used in comparative

12 Sentences such as Ọkùnrin nàà ní ọlọgbọ̀n ní ọ̀rẹ́ 'The man has a wise man as a friend' is possible, but the meaning is different from that of (18b). The second ní in this example is a particle and not the same ní 'to have'.

13 Givón (1970:284) has made a similar observation in respect of adjectives in English. According to him 'What is particularly revealing ... is the close parallel between noun-noun restrictions across HAVE and noun-adjective restrictions across BE [as in]: (a) The table has great size vs. The table is large. (b) *The great size has a table vs. ...

constructions, but the BE Noun type cannot, so that (20) below is acceptable, though (21) is not:

(20) Ọmọ nàà ní ọgbọn jù Olú (lọ)
child the has wisdom surpass Olu
'The child is wiser than Olu'

(21) *Ọkùnrin nàà jẹ ọlẹgbọn jù Olú (lọ)
*'The man is a wiser person than Olu'

In P II then we have seen that the structure of the predicate phrase involving adjectival expressions depends on the available lexical item in the language - primitive or derived.

3.3 Pattern III

In Yoruba grammars, such lexical items as rere 'good' and ńlá 'large' found in the sentences of (10) (brought forward here for ease of reference) are called adjectives:

- (10) a. Olú jẹ ọmọ rere 'Olu is a good child'
is child good
b. Ìbàdàn jẹ ńlá ńlá 'Ibadan is a large city'
is city large

These forms are perhaps best regarded as attributive adjectives, for even in the predicate position they hardly occur independently of the nouns they qualify. We therefore do not have

- (22) a. *Olú jẹ rere 'Olu is good'
b. *Ìbàdàn jẹ ńlá 'Ibadan is large'

Another restriction of such adjectives is that, unlike the forms of PI and PII, they are not possible in comparative constructions, hence the unacceptable status of the sentences of (23) directly below:

- (23) a. *Olú jẹ ọmọ rere jù Adé (lọ)
is child good surpass
'Olu is a better child than Ade'
b. *Ìbàdàn jẹ ńlá ńlá jù Ọyọ (lọ)
is city large surpass
'?Ibadan is a larger city than Oyo'

Comparability then seems to be a feature of certain subtypes of Verb rather than of Adjective. Thus a structure like (24) containing a stative verb tóbi 'to be big' would be used instead of (23b).

- (24) Ìbàdàn tóbi jù Ọyọ (lọ) 'Ibadan is larger than Oyo'

A note about the word pàtākí 'to be important' is in order. Like rere and fiá it occurs after BE (jẹ) as in

- (25) Ẹkẹ jẹ nikan pàtākí 'Education is an important thing'
education is thing important

In addition we also have

- (26) Ẹkẹ ẹ pàtākí 'Education is important'
BE

which can be used in comparative constructions as in

- (27) Ẹkẹ ẹ pàtākí ju owó (lọ)¹⁴ 'Education is more important than money'

The word ẹ is another form of BE in the language, but differs from jẹ in that it is used in connection with temporary rather than permanent situations.

Rowland (1969:152) explains the difference as follows:

... jẹ is used when we are thinking of natural, inborn permanent characteristics, while ẹ is used with what is accidental, acquired or temporary.

To support this, he cites the following examples, among others:

- (28) a. Ó jẹ ọkúnrin 'He (i.e. a child) is male, boy'
b. Ó ẹ ọkúnrin 'He is manly, brave' (i.e. he acts as a male)

We can see then that forms occurring after jẹ in the predicate phrase must denote features of NP subjects which are of a permanent nature. This is perhaps why they do not admit comparative constructions.

3.4 Summary of Pattern I-III

In summary, we have seen that adjectival concepts in Yoruba are, in general, categorized as stative verbs and occasionally, as nouns and adjectives. These three patterns in fact illustrate some universal tendencies regarding how adjectival notions are categorized in different languages. In some languages they are principally nouns, in others, verbs, and in others still they may be adjectives. (A mixed system within one language is, of course, possible.) This fact of diversity has been abundantly attested. Dixon (1977:20) reports that

Some adjective-deficient languages express all adjectival concepts through intransitive verbs (as in the case of Chinese),

14 There is also a use of pàtākí as an active verb (adjective ?) in radio advertisement, e.g. Pàtākí ara re 'Be important' (Lit., make yourself important).

others express some through nouns and some through verbs (for example, Hausa), and others invoke further means (Chinook renders adjectival concepts through the major classes Noun and Verb and the minor class Particle.

(See Givón (1970:836) and Welmers (1973) for similar reports.)

But why is this variety possible? There is no simple answer to the question. We would, however, like to point out that the predicate phrase is the crucial point in the study of adjectival systems. Universally, every language has the means of supplying lexical items in the predicate position. Then the syntactic categorization of such elements would depend on the semantic features that are incorporated into each of them. Stative verbs in Yoruba provide a good example of this. Because they are inherently [+BE] as far as their semantic make up is concerned, they need no other BE, or any other form of verb, along with them in basic syntactic structures. In English it is the other way round.

4.0 Derived adjectives

In addition to their occurrence in their basic form in the surface structures, lexical items may change their categorial membership from one class to another via derivational processes. We have seen in section 3.1 that when Yorubas stative verbs such as *ga* 'to be tall' are partially reduplicated, they become nominalizations. In fact such nominalizations can be derived adjectives used attributively as in

(29) *qmq gíga* 'tall child'

Awobuluyi (1967) describes how phrases like (29) are formally derived. Two of his derivations will be examined, the first one being (30) below (the numbering is mine).

(30) a. *Bólá ra ògòdò tí ògòdò pupa*
bought banana RC banana red [RC = relative clause marker]

b. *Bólá ra ògòdò tí ó pupa*
PRO
'Bola bought bananas which are red'

c. *Bólá ra ògòdò pupa* 'Bola bought red bananas'

The structure (30a) is the underlying form; then, after the pronominalization of the second *ògòdò* 'banana', we get a relative clause structure (30b) and,

by deleting tí 6, we get (30c). We believe that the derivation is essentially plausible, although this is not our concern here. What is of interest is the fact that pupa 'to be red' fails to be reduplicated (as we have claimed it should). We return to this in section 4.2.

The second example is the derivation of the phrase igu síṣè '(the) cooked yam' from an underlying structure

- (31) igu # tí Bṣíṣà sè igu
yam RC cooked yam

From (31) we get igu síṣè after several rules have applied. We believe that the rules are unworkable, but again this is not our concern here. The point is that the verb sè reduplicates but pupa does not. Awobuluyi correctly observes that sè but not pupa is marked in the lexicon as capable of reduplication. Before we examine this, we would like to draw attention to the fact that verbs such as sè are not stative by nature.

4.1 Participials and derived adjectives

It is correct that one meaning of síṣè in igu síṣè 'the cooked yam' is qualificative in the sense that it makes a distinction between a cooked yam and possibly a raw or a roasted piece of yam. But this is a participial meaning. The object has now acquired a new quality as a result of cooking. Basically, then sè is not a stative verb. The differences are:

First, a stative verb occurs with only one NP in a basic sentence; that is, like intransitive verbs, it takes no object. In a minimal sentence, verbs like sè require two NPs, since they are transitive verbs.

Second, stative verbs have an inherent feature [BE], non-statives, of which sè is a member, do not have the feature.

Third, and finally, when stative verbs are reduplicated and used attributively, they have the qualificative meaning only. But participial phrases like igu síṣè have at least one other meaning, precisely that of action nominalization, as the example of (32) shows.

- (32) Igu síṣè ro wa lṣjḍ
'Yam cooking is painstaking to us'

We see from the differences outlined above that a distinction must be drawn

between verbs like sè and stative ones. Forms like síà are therefore not derived adjectives: they are participials.

4.2 Irregularities

As we pointed out in section (4.0), the fact that stative verbs such as pupa do not reduplicate calls for an explanation. We now consider such forms as in (33) below.

(33)			
	A Verbal form	B Adjective form	C Expected form
(a) 'to be good'	dára	dáradára	dídára
(b) 'short'	kúró	kókúró	kíkúró
(c) 'bad'	burú	búburú/burúkú	bíburú
(d) 'small'	kéré	kékéré	kíkéré
(e) 'cold'	tútù	tútù	títutu
(f) 'new'	tuntun/títun	títun	títuntun
(g) 'red'	pupa	pupa	pípupa
(h) 'black'	dúúú	dúúú	dídúúú
(i) 'white'	fufun	fufun	fífufun
(j) 'thin'	tínrin	tínrin	tíntínrin

In the above list, the forms under (33b) rather than those in (33c) are used as derived adjectives. We now focus attention on these. Several irregularities should be noticed. First, (33a) is a case of a complete reduplication of the basic form dára. Second, in (33b-d), some kind of vowel harmonization in respect of the expected forms in (33c) seems to have been effected (e.g. í + ú in b, c, and í + é in d).¹⁵ Third, a tonal change has taken place in (33e), tútù + tútù. Fourth, some kind of contraction of the expected form has taken place in (33f). This is coupled with some tonal change, or perhaps it is just the case of using the basic form and not the reduplicative. Fifth, the derived forms in (33g-j) are identical with their non-derived ones. What accounts for these irregularities?

Concerning (33a) I suspect that dáradára is an adverb frequently used as a derived adjective. Thus in (34a) below, it functions as an adverb, but as an adjective in (34b).

15 búburú and burúkú both mean 'bad'. Burúkú seems to be associated with permanent features. The following examples are from Fagunwa's novel Irínkérindé nínú Igbé Elégbéje. (i) Branko búburú kan wà ní ilú yí 'There was a bada animal in this city' (ii) Mò bẹ̀rẹ́fí ronú nípá ẹ̀sẹ̀ burúkú tí mọ́ kọ́ 'I began to think about my bad stumbling' (which is a special stumbling with a fixed meaning).

- (34) a. Wọn ɣiɣe wọn ɔ́aradára 'They did their work well'
 they did work their well
- b. A de ile ɔ́aradára kan 'We arrived at a good house'
 we arrived house good one

Conceivably, one may explain the derived forms in (33b-d) by postulating that they have in fact undergone the process of reduplication, but in addition to that their vowels have been harmonized. One may cite the example of *pò* 'to be many' whose reduplicative form *pípò* alternates with *púpò* to support this.

Turning now to (33c), the tonal change may be regarded as a minor innovation. As a matter of fact, the change does not occur in some variety of Igbomina. Thus, whereas in Standard Yoruba we get (35a), in Igbomina (35b) obtains.

- (35) a. omi tútù 'cold water'
 water cold
- b. omi tutù 'cold water'

As for (33f) it may be regarded as a form of contraction of the expected reduplicative, coupled with a minor tonal adjustment. And for (33g-j) one may simply view them as forms requiring no reduplication as they are already in some kind of reduplicative shape.

While these possible explanations cannot be ruled out completely, they hardly touch the real problem. The question is, why are these irregularities peculiar to those lexical items which are concerned with the semantic types COLOUR, DIMENSION, PHYSICAL PROPERTY and VALUE?

The clue to this answer lies in the fact that there is a universal tendency for these semantic types to be categorized as adjectives. That is, if the major category Adjective occurs in any language at all, its core membership would be drawn from the semantic types COLOUR, DIMENSION, PHYSICAL PROPERTY and VALUE. In Dixon's (1977) survey of twenty languages or so, he discovered that

Languages that have a limited class of adjectives show considerable similarity in the concepts that are expressed through adjectives. For instance, in the case of Igbo (from the Kwa subgroup of the Niger-Congo family) formal criteria support the recognition of an adjective class with just eight members.

These eight members are: 'large', 'small', 'new', 'old', 'black/dark', 'white/

light', 'good', and 'bad'. Hausa is also reported to have a small closed adjective class with about twelve members, namely, 'big', 'small', 'long', 'short', 'fresh', 'raw', 'new', 'old', 'black', 'white', 'red', and 'bad'.¹⁶ We can see quite clearly that the irregular forms in Yoruba fall within this small class of adjectives.

These irregularities in fact indicate quite strongly that Yoruba had a few adjectives at some stage. We propose then that the forms in (33B) were historically adjectives along with *rere* 'good' and *filá* 'large'. Then they merged with verbs (but *rere* and *filá* did not, hence they are 'relics'). Synchronically, they perfectly reduplicate just like other verbs (see therefore (33C)). Notice then that when occasions demand their use as derived adjectives, they simply revert to their erstwhile adjectival forms rather than using the reduplicatives, which are more complex. For, as Lipka (1971:213) remarks, 'If the language has a choice between a simple and a derived lexical item, the simple item seems to be preferred when a more complex construction is formed.'

But the reduplicatives in (33C) are used as gerundive nominalizations. Thus in the example of (36) below the reduplicated but not the adjectival form is appropriate.¹⁷

- (36) *Fifunfun* (*funfun*) *tí* *agb* *níà* *funfun wù* *mí*
 whiteness (white) that clothes the are white pleased me
 'I like the whiteness of the clothes'

5.0 Concluding observations

Our study of adjectival concepts in Yoruba has shown why the syntactic category Adjective is a controversial issue. There is no doubt that at the

16 On page 23 of his paper, Dixon provides a table showing the distribution of the occurrence of these adjectives in 20 languages. This is reproduced here.

'large'	occurred in 20 languages	'good'	1 in 13
'small'	in 19	'bad'	in 14
'long'	in 14	'black'	in 13
'short'	in 15	'white'	in 14
'new'	in 15	'red'	in 8
'old'	in 14	'raw/green/unripe'	in 7

17 One must be careful to mention that an alternative direction of historical processes is possible. In this case, one would stipulate that adjectives are just emerging and that the forms in (33B) constitute the emerging class. That is, the verb forms in (33A) are changing to adjectives. The forms *rere* and *filá* would then be seen as (advanced) innovations rather than relics.

universal semantic level, Yoruba, just like any other language, possesses lexical items through which adjectival notions are expressed. At the basic (deep) syntactic level, however, such lexical items are largely categorized as stative verbs, and at the derivational level, derived adjectives are found and used attributively. At this level the marks of historical processes are observable.

Can it be said that Yoruba has the major class Adjective? Any answer to this question would depend on one's theoretical framework of grammatical description. A model which has the semantic or the derivational level as its base will certainly come to a conclusion that adjectives are found in Yoruba. If on the other hand the basic syntactic level is regarded as the base, then the conclusion is that there is no clearly defined major class Adjective in the language.

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APPENDIX

Lexical items used for expressing adjectival notions. In most cases their meaning include BE. Forms without BE in their meaning are marked. The list is not exhaustive.

A. DIMENSION

- | | | | | |
|----------|---|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1. gũn | : | kũrũ | 'long' : | 'short' |
| 2. fũ | : | — | 'wide' : | — |
| 3. sanra | : | tĩnrĩn
rũ | 'fat' : | 'thin, lean' |
| 4. tũbi | : | kũrũ | 'big/large' : | 'small' |
| + fĩfĩ | : | + kekere | | |
| 5. ga | : | kũrũ | 'tall' : | 'short' |
| | | kukuru | | |
| 6. jĩn | : | — | 'deep' : | — |

B. PHYSICAL PROPERTY

- | | | | | |
|---------------|---|---------|--------------------|----------------|
| 1. mĩ | : | — | 'sharp' : | — |
| 2. tũ | : | wũ | 'straight' : | 'crooked' |
| 3. dũn | : | — | 'smooth, bright' : | — |
| 4. le | : | rũ | 'hard' : | 'soft' |
| 5. +nĩ agbára | : | dũ | 'strong' : | 'weak' |
| 6. wũwo | : | fũyũ | 'heavy' : | 'light' |
| 7. gbũnũ | : | tutũ | 'hot' : | 'cold' |
| 8. pũn | : | — | 'ripe' : | — |
| 9. kĩ | : | gũn | 'thick' : | 'watery' |
| 10. gbũ | : | tutũ | 'dry' : | 'wet' |
| 11. mũ | : | dũtĩ | 'clean' : | 'dirty' |
| | | +nĩ ãrĩ | | |
| 12. yi | : | rũ | 'tough' : | 'tender' |
| 13. dũn | : | kũn | 'sweet' : | 'sour, bitter' |
| | | korũ | | |
| 14. +nĩ ɣwũ | : | burũwũ | 'beautiful' : | 'ugly' |

C. COLOUR

- | | | | | |
|---------|---|--------|-----------|---------|
| 1. dũdũ | : | fũnfũn | 'black' : | 'white' |
| 2. pupa | : | — | 'red' : | — |

D. VALUE

- | | | | | |
|-----------|---|------|---------------|-------|
| 1. dũra | : | burũ | 'good' : | 'bad' |
| + rũre | : | — | | |
| + burũkũ | : | — | | |
| + bũburũ | : | — | | |
| 2. patakĩ | : | — | 'important' : | — |

E. HUMAN PROPENSITY

- | | | | | |
|-------------|---|-----------------|-------------|-----------|
| 1. +bĩnũ | : | — | 'angry' : | — |
| 2. +nĩ ãkũ | : | — | 'wicked' : | — |
| 3. +jowũ | : | — | 'jealous' : | — |
| 4. +banũjũ | : | nĩ ãnũ
dĩdũn | 'sad' : | 'happy' |
| 5. gbũn | : | gũ | 'wise' : | 'foolish' |
| 6. +nĩ aamu | : | — | 'kind' : | — |

F. AGE

- | | | | |
|-----------|---|--------------|-------|
| 1. tuntun | : | gbo. 'new' : | 'old' |
| | | + di ãgbũ | |
| | | + di arũgbũ | |