

Problems of Lexical Decomposition: The Case of Yoruba Complex Verbs

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a description and analysis of the problems associated with the identification of the internal structure as well as the derivational sources of the Yoruba complex verbs. I attempt the lexical decomposition of these composite forms within the framework of a lexical morphology vis-à-vis my knowledge as a native speaker of the language. I find that some complex verbs have had their forms modified, thereby causing some disturbances in the recognition of their component forms. I also find that a sizeable number of Yoruba verbs are not only complex but are also deemed to be either fossilized or completely opaque to any synchronic analysis. A number of hypotheses about the apparent derivational history and processes of this class of verbs are postulated. In conclusion, I posit that the absence of formal written tradition in the distant past among the Yoruba people, coupled with the paucity of research in the areas of historical linguistics in the language, account for the reasons why some verbs appear recalcitrant and defy systematic morphological analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the term morphologically complex verbs as presented in this paper subsumes a group of syntactically classified Yoruba verbs of Awobuluyi (1979: 53ff), I need to make a clear distinction between my own notion of Yoruba complex verbs and those of the Awobuluyi from the outset. Awobuluyi (1979: 53ff) identifies the following classes of verbs, among others:

- [1] Splitting verbs – bàjé “to damage, to spoil”
réjẹ “to cheat, to swindles”
- [2] Complex verbs – gbàgbé “to forget”
rántí “to remember”
- [3] Imperative verbs – pèlé “greeting”
dakun “please”

He gives a number of syntactic accounts about their different syntactic features which are not directly crucial to the focus of this paper. However, our own understanding and analysis of the *morphologically* complex verbs will encompass not only all the items of verbs in [1] to [3] above, but also others not included but tokens of which are presented in our data in Section 3. I premise the lumping together of these tokens on Matthews (1997: 64) that a morphologically complex word is one whose form is derived by the addition of other morpheme(s). I also

need to hint that the different syntactic considerations enunciated by Awobuluyi (1979: 53) about the items in [1] to [3] above have some morphology interface which will be alluded to in the course of this study. However, my principal concern in this paper is the composition or derivation of those verbal forms represented by tokens in Section 3.

The claim that the corpus in [1] to [3] and others in Section 3 are complex is further accentuated by the observation made by Awoyale (2000: 293) that:

Verbs are canonical monosyllabic roots.

Lucas (1964: 29) also observed that:

Verbal root consists of a consonant and a vowel (cv).

Root of this kind are very numerous [in the language]

If what constitutes the structure of Yoruba verbs can be so simply characterized as in the above excerpts, no problems would have ever arisen in the process of decomposing all forms of Yoruba verbs nor could we have found it difficult to describe and classify the models and types of their formations. But perhaps because he acknowledges the fact that there are intricacies involved in the analysis of these lexical forms, Lucas (1964: 17) goes further to locate the varying sources of the Yoruba composite forms in the following words:

- (i) roots and words formed from the language and its dialects.
- (ii) words which cannot be traced to roots and the meanings of which cannot be derived by putting together the meanings of their component parts.
- (iii) words acquired from foreign languages.

Although the above lexical sources are not particularly detailed nor explicitly illustrative, they cannot be spoken away. I will have reasons to reflect on them in this study (c.f. Section 5).

Moreover, the views to be advanced in this study stem from the following basic facts of morphology that, one, two or more roots may be joined together to form a new word. [And] a single root may be joined to another word for the same purpose thereby giving credence to Matthews (1997: 64) quoted earlier on the definition of a morphological word.

Two, the conceptual structures encoded by most complex words are almost always none-monolithic and more complex than what a simple form could contain hence the need for complex forms in the lexicon. Talmy (1985: 59ff). And three;

Every lexeme that does not consist of a single morpheme has internal structures and relations therefore exist among its parts. (Coates 1987: 110).

Therefore, the foregoing point to the fact that although there are verbs which contain only the roots and which are mono-morphemic, there exist other classes whose structures are composite and which may either be bi-morphemic, tri-

morphemic or more. Their derivation may take the form of compounds or, in some other cases, undergo more than a single derivational process and later become fossilized or completely opaque units. When this happens, boundary morphemes become less obvious. The crucial issues then are (i) what constitutes their complexity; is it forms, meanings or both? (ii) how can they be analysed or described using morphological models? These bring us to the problems highlighted below.

2. STATEMENT OF PROBLEMS

The fact that certain sets of Yoruba verbs are deemed to be derived, therefore, make them sensitive to morphological analysis. But more often than not the discrete internal constructions of a host of the so-called complex verbs are hard to demarcate. Even those that are not so difficult need to be characterized systematically. For example, how can the components or elements of their word formation be classified; are they affixation, compounds, reduplication or what? As our corpus in Section 3 would show, they are clear cases of zero affixation and none of them can be said to attest to reduplication process. And if they are to be compounds, why and which type? Answers to these questions and what the answers portend for Yoruba morphology are the thrusts of this paper.

3. DATA BASE

The following corpus represent the tokens of data to be described and analysed in this study:

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|-------------|-------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| [4] (a) (i) | télé | – | “to follow” ¹ |
| | (ii) ɾobí | – | “to labour (in case of child-birth)” |
| | (iii) dánwò | – | “to try/attempt/examine” |
| (b) (i) | subú | – | “to fall” |
| | (ii) bínú | – | “to be furious” |
| | (iii) pàdé | – | “to meet/come across” |
| | (iv) désè | – | “to offend/sin” |
| | (v) kánjú | – | “to make haste” |
| | (vi) kilò | – | “to warn” |
| (c) (i) | wariri | – | “to shiver” |
| | (ii) làkàkà | – | “to struggle” |
| [5] (i) | súré | – | “to run” |
| | (ii) júbà | – | “to pay homage” |

¹ Some of the interpretations adduced our corpus do not catch their semantic values exactly. We only make do with equivalences and entailments in certain difficult cases.

- | | | | | |
|----------|--------|---------|---|--|
| | (iii) | puró | – | “to tell lies” |
| | (iv) | gbúròó | – | “to overhear/eardrop” |
| | (v) | dúbùú | – | “to way-lay” |
| | (vi) | wúre | – | “to pray” |
| | (vii) | dúró | – | “to stand” |
| | (viii) | wúlò | – | “to be useful” |
| [6] | (i) | dágunlá | – | “to ignore” |
| | (ii) | korísí | – | “to face (a direction), head towards” |
| | (iii) | saájú | – | “to precede” |
| [7] | (i) | jéwó | – | “to confess” |
| | (ii) | búra | – | “to take an oath” |
| | (iii) | jéríí | – | “to trust/bear witness” |
| | (iv) | jinná | – | “to boil” |
| | (v) | pònmó | – | “to be too involved/concerned” |
| | (vi) | rántí | – | “to remember” |
| | (vii) | ránmú | – | “to speak with nose” |
| | (viii) | fèràn | – | “to love/like” |
| [8] | (i) | jókòó | – | “to sit down” |
| | (ii) | dáké | – | “to keep silence” |
| | (iii) | simi | – | “to rest” |
| | (iv) | kúrò | – | “to leave” |
| | (v) | wúwo | – | “to be heavy” |
| | (vi) | bẹrẹ | – | “to stoop/start something” |
| | (vii) | fèrè | – | “to become lighter” |
| [9] (a) | (i) | dòóbálè | – | “prostrate” see the analysis in [20] for items in this group |
| | (ii) | gbàgbé | – | “forget” see the analysis |
| | (iii) | kojá | – | “cross-over” see the analysis |
| | (iv) | wópò | – | “plenty” see the analysis |
| [10] (b) | (i) | pamó | – | “to treasure” |
| | (ii) | parun | – | “to destroy” |
| | (iii) | patì | – | “to abandon” |
| | {iv} | paré | – | “to rub off/erase” |
| | (v) | parí | – | “to finish” |

The foregoing does not mean to be an exhaustive list. I only hope to have given a good representation of the major classes of Yoruba complex verbs that may be found in the lexicon. I class them in order to facilitate easy discussion. But before I go any further, my first pre-occupation is to demarcate morpheme boundaries with precision and on principled grounds; given the Bloomfield’s (1933: 161) and Hocket’s (1958: 123) definitions of morpheme as:

A linguistic form which bears *no partial phonetic-semantic resemblance* to any other form.... (emphasis, mine) Bloomfield (1933: 161)

And:

The smallest individual meaningful elements in the utterance of the language Hocket (1958: 123).

However, my apparatus for the recognition of morphemes shall be the relevant portions in the morpheme identification principles of Nida (1949: 7ff). I briefly illustrate a few of these principles below.

4. NIDA'S MORPHEME IDENTIFICATION PRINCIPLES

Six well-articulated morpheme identification principles are illustrated in Nida (1949: 7ff). The only portions relevant to the present discussion, not minding the order with which they are presented, are:

The sixth from Nida which states that:

[11] A morpheme is isolatable if it occurs under the following conditions:

- (i) In isolation.
- (ii) In multiple combination in at least one of which the unit with which it is combined occurs in isolation or in other combinations.
- (iii) In a single combination provided the elements with which it is combined occurs in isolation or in other combinations with non-unique constituents.

Next is the Nida (1949: 54) fourth principle which states that:

[12] An overt formal difference in a structural series constitutes a morpheme if in any member of such a series, the overt formal difference and a zero structural difference are the only significant features for distinguishing a minimal unit of phonetic-semantic distinctiveness.

Having presented the above two as framework, let us go straight to the analysis of the data where I mean to make use of the principles.

5. ANALYSIS

The corpus in each class in Section 3 share certain similar characteristics which are of good relevance to morphological discussion and analysis. I will therefore begin to treat them as arranged in Section 3; given tokens in each class a sub-heading which I feel will describe their forms and structures.

5.1 Bi-Morphemic Units

All items in both [4a] and [4b] are concatenations of bi-morphological units. The items in this group are so labelled because each of the constituent of these complex verbs is a minimum unit which is capable of being stand on their own in another different contexts. For example, [4a] (i) – (iii) which are decomposed and copied as [13], for convenience, are cases of V-V structure otherwise known as serial verbs. The morpheme boundaries in each unit are very obvious.

[13]	V		V		
	tè	+	lé	–	follow ²
	(bend)		(after)		
	rọ	+	bí	–	labour (as in child-birth)
	(manufacture)		(born)		
	dán	+	wò	–	attempt
	(try)		(see)		

Moreover, all items of verbs in [4b] repeated as [14] below are verb-nominal forms. They can be decomposed thus:

[14]	V		N		
(i)	şe	+	ubú ³	–	şubú “to fall”
	do		tumble		
(ii)	jé	+	èrí	–	jeri “to bear witness”
	answer		witness		
(iii)	bí	+	inú	–	bínú “to be angry”
	give birth to		inner mind		
(iv)	pa	+	àdé	–	pàdé “to meet”
	make possible		arrival		
(v)	dá	+	èsè	–	désè “to sin/offend”
	commit				
(vi)	kọ	+	ominú	–	“to cause anxiety”
	flash		anxiety/apprehension		
(vii)	kán	+	ojú	–	kánjú “to be in a hurry”
	Pluck abruptly		eyes		
(viii)	gbó	+	adùn	–	gbádùn “to enjoy”
	benefit		pleasure		
(ix)	ki	+	ìlò	–	kìlò “to warn”
	issue out		warning		

² The plus sign (+) used here and elsewhere is meant to delineate morphemes.

³ A plausible way to provide evidence for the viability of the items whose lexical form might be somehow abstruse in the standard variety of the language is to go into dialects. Examples of such forms are those with u-fronting segments as found here.

5.2 Morphologically Fossilized Units

Another major class of Yoruba complex verbs are those I will label morphologically fossilized units. This is because they have changed or turned into almost indecomposable forms. Of course, there are a lot of controversies surrounding the essence of their fossilization. For example, Bamgbose (1995: 19) opines that:

Three phonological processes are believed to be attested in Yoruba when vowels occur across word or morpheme boundary: vowel assimilation, vowel deletion and vowel coalescence.

Of the above three phenomena, “vowel coalescence” is seemingly apparent in [5], repeated as [17] below. However, Bamgbose (1995) posits that “there is a divergence of opinion as to its (coalescence) very existence as a process” in the language. A school of thought sees [5] as sample of vowel coalescence (c.f. Awobuluyi 1984, among others) while others argue for the items being one of the two items dialectal variants (c.f. Bamgbose 1995, among others). In view of the evidence from the linguistic literature on the description of coalescence vis-à-vis the realities in the Yoruba dialects, the present writer is in support of the claim that [17] is dialectal. Corpus in [17] are just V + N in their proto-forms; except that the Korne would not accept the nominal elements as typically unscathed nouns because they negate the non-u-fronting segment of Yoruba words. I illustrate below the fact that [17] are cases of morphologically fossilized units:

[17]	V	+	N			
	sá	+	uré	–	sure	“run”
	do		run			
	jé	+	ùbà	–	júbà	“pay homage”
	pay		homage			
	pa	+	uró	–	puró	“tell lies”
	crack		lies			
	jẹ	+	ùwe	–	júwe	“describe”
	make		description			
	dá	+	ùbu	–	dúbùú	“way-lay”
	wí	+	ùre	–	wúre	“pray”
	speak		blessings			
	şe	+	ubú	–	şubú	“fall”
	do		fall			
	wá	+	ùlò	–	wúlò	“useful”
	find		use			

By and large, the segmentation exercise in [17] has proved to us that they are not different from [4b] repeated as [14] which are merely derived through vowel

elision and contraction. See Awobuluyi (1979: 152ff) and (Bamgbose 1978: 51ff) among others, for details.

5.3 Syntactic Units

All items of complex verbs in [6], repeated as [18] below are cases of phrasal expressions reduced to complex verbs. In other words, they are samples of two or more morphological units lexicalized to become a verb. It would be observed that each form can be a minimal unit in syntax but they can still be sent to morphology for word formation because, following Ekundayo (1976: 238ff), after all transformations, lexical insertion is still possible in Yoruba. This same view is supported by Pulleyblank and Akinlabi as reported in Adeniyi (1997: 115) that it is possible for “syntax to derive a word level (x0) category”. [6] is repeated as [18] below:

[18]	dá + agunla	–	dágunlá	“to ignore”
	kọ + orí + sí	–	kọrísí	“to head towards”
	şe + iwá ⁴ + ojú	–	şaájú	“to precede”

Each of the foregoing has been lexicalized. In the process, a number of morpho-phonemic alternations/modifications have taken place⁵, thereby making their inherent morpheme boundaries less obvious. Moreover, even if each of the verbs (dá, ko, se) in [18] is of doubtful semantic values, our quotation in [15] justifies our claim to isolate them. Another justification lies in the fact that since the formatives can function as predicates, it goes without saying that it is verbal elements (dá, kọ, se) that head them.

5.4 Morpho-Syntactically Complex Units

By the above label, I mean lexicalized morphological units which are products of creative ingenuity but stored in the lexicon as a unit. They are so classified because their semantic outputs are not only fixed but are also not arrived at by combining the meanings of their constituents. The item of verbs concerned are those in [7] repeated as [19] below:

[19]	jé	+	owó	–	jéwó	–	“to confess”
	bú	+	ara	–	búra	–	“to take oath”/“to blame each other”
	jé	+	èri	–	jérií	–	“to trust/bear witness”

⁴ Note the usage of “si iwa si eyin” (to front and back) as an evidence to show that iwaju can be segmented as iwa + oju.

⁵ Example of such modification is the alternation of /n/ and /l/ in certain phonological environments where, for example ni + owo becomes lowo. For details see Owolabi (1989: 52).

jẹ	+	iná	–	jinná	–	“to boil”/ “to consume fire”
pón	+	mó	–	pónmó	–	“to be too involved/concerned”/“to be rough”
rán	+	etí	–	rántí	–	“to remember”/ “to stick the edges”
rán	+	imú	–	ránmú	–	“to speak with nose”/ “to stick the nose”
fé	+	òràn	–	féràn	–	“to love/like”/ “to invoke litigation”

One major characteristic of all the items in [19] is that they are all idiomatic in meaning. The attempt made at segmenting each form stems from the fact that we suspect they are composite in structure based on our working hypothesis that Yoruba verbs have mono-syllabic roots. As a matter of fact, our knowledge about the authentic meanings of the verbal components of each item is fast becoming recondite, especially as they fit into the whole complex forms. One basic fact emerges; each of the verbs in [19] has more than one meaning. This explains the reason why we claim that the complexity in some verbs are not of forms alone but also of meanings.

Concerning the origin and the reason for our recondite knowledge about these verbal elements, three hypothesis are plausible. One, the verb forms might have attracted a welter of additional meanings on to themselves, in time perspectives, thereby creating a situation of homonymy or kindred semantic values.

Another possibility is that such lexeme with its associated meaning(s) might come from a dialect and got integrated into the koine. This can be the case in a language such as Yoruba which is believed to be a synthesis of various dialects.

Arising from the foregoing speculation, we can explain the semantic value of òràn in féràn (to love/like) as fé + òràn. Oràn⁶ is to be interpreted as “lot” or “anything pertaining to” so that by the time one loves, readiness to bear all the ensuing liabilities is assumed and taken for granted. In other words féràn seems to predicate not only feeling states but also a scenario of social action. This explanation, I believe settles all doubts about the values of the elements in the nominal side of [19].

On the verbal end, however, not all the verbs maintain distinct semantic values in their non-idiomatic usages. For example, jé in jéwó (confess) and jé in jérií (to bear witness) are not the same. The quotation [11] (iii) and [12], however, support our segmentation.

Our third speculation is that the abtrusiveness in the meanings of certain items may originate from archaism. In which case, the meaning or the form of a lexeme might have changed over the time.

⁶ Note that Oran in Oranmiyan in Ife dialect does not mean litigation, rather “lot / fortune”. The lexeme might therefore been infiltrated into the Koine from this dialect. Ife dialect may not be alone in this regard.

5.5 Morphologically Opaque Units

The items of verbs in this class appear to have a higher degree of fossilization than those we have earlier discussed. We can say that they are opaque to any synchronic morphological analysis in that efforts at decomposing them could be frustrated by inexactitudes. This is because it is either we have one component having an unknown reference or all of the forms having no semantic value. In other words, they appear to be un-analysable whole; hence the label given them above. Our construal of morphologically opaque units are therefore represented by [8], copied as [20] below for easy reference:

[20a] (i)	jókòó	–	“to sit down”
(ii)	dáké	–	“to keep silence”
(iii)	sinmi	–	“to rest”
(iv)	kúrò	–	“to leave a place”
(v)	wúwo	–	“to be heavy”
(vi)	bèrè	–	“to stoop/start”
(vii)	fèrè	–	“to be light in weight”
(viii)	fúyè	–	“to be light in weight”

However, a further probe into their syntactic usages can help us to arrive at a conclusion similar to what we have in [16] above. For example, the followings are meaningful expressions in the language.

[20b] E	dákée	yin	–	Stop your noise
E	bèrè	e	rè	Start doing it
E	jókòó	o	yín	Take your seat
Ó	wúwo	iranù	–	It is unreasonable heavy

The lengthening of the final syllables of the verbs suggests that [20b] are possible V+N; but we lack synchronic evidence for the noun forms. However, there are others in [20a] that do not behave like those in [20b]. Therefore, the claim that all Yoruba verbs are CV roots cannot be totally correct.

5.6 Pseudo-Opaque Units

Apart from the foregoing completely opaque units in 5.5, there is another class of Yoruba complex verbs whose structures are somehow deceptive: they appear as if they are un-analysable whereas with careful etymology of their forms their structure can be made apparent. This is the case with the items in [9] (a) and (b) copied as [21] (a) and (b) below:

[21] (a) (i)	dòóbálè	–	<u>dá</u> àyà bá ilè (thrust chest to meet ground) – prostrate
(ii)	gbàgbé	–	<u>gbà</u> (receive) <u>gbé</u> (lost) – forget

- (iii) *kojá* – *kọ* (flash) *já* (completely) – to cross-over
 (iv) *wópò* – *wá* (find) *òpò* (plenty) – common

According to the etymology presented above, I suspect that [21] (a) (i) is an instance of vowel alternation where /a/ in *dá*, changes to /j/ arising from the phonetic quality of /j/ which behaves like a semi-vowel in the language. It might have glided to become vowel /j/ in that context. Be that as it may, there is no qualms about the position and values of the other constituents.

As regards *gbàgbé* (to forget), however, if the speculation of vowel alternation is extended to the item on the bases of similarity, it seems to me as if the morpheme boundaries of the verb (which happens to be a serial verb), will then become obvious. For example, if *gbà* (receive) could be *gbó* (to hear); alternating /a/ with /j/, *gbàgbé* (to forget) would have been something like *gbògbé*, i.e. *gbó* (to hear) and *gbe* (to get lost/vanish) whose paraphrase would have been “to hear and later get lost/vanish (from memory)” which connotes “to forget”.

On the other hand, another layer of possibility can be found using the etymology of *gbàgbó* (to believe) whose first component *gbà* is the same as that of *gbàgbé*. These two verbs can be analysed thus:

<i>gbà</i>	+	<i>gbó</i>	“to believe”
receive		accept	
<i>gba</i>	+	<i>gbe</i>	“to forget”
receive		vanish	

Which-ever-way the verb *gbàgbé* is analysed out of the above two possibilities, *gbàgbé* can be said to be a pseudo-opaque morphological unit. Note that the Ekiti dialect of the same language can say: *ó gbà mí gbé* – “He/she forgets me” which demonstrates that the unit is not inseparable.

Arising from the third item in the Nida’s sixth morpheme identification principle, *kojá* (cross-over) can also be segmented since the element with which *kọ* is combined (i.e. *já*) can occur in isolation in the language. See for example *já gbangba* (get to the lime-light), *jàlè* (completely), *jàkè-jádò* (all over), etc. In that wise, *kojá* is a V-V construction; no more, no less.

The case of *wópò* (common) is not too different from the preceding item-*kojá*. Based on the semantic values of *wópò* (common), one can etymologised the item thus:

<i>wa</i>	+	<i>pupo</i>
come/appear		many/in multiples

Púpò (many) is clipped to become *pò*, a token of verb, and later juxtaposed with *wá* the verbal element, to yield *wápò*. Next, is the assimilation of /a/ with /j/ to become *wópò*. Be that as it may, *wópò* is also a construction of V+V structure.

The last in the series of our data is [10] (b) copied as [21](b) below:

[21](b) <i>pamó</i>	–	<i>pa + mó</i>	“to treasure”
<i>parun</i>	–	<i>pa + run</i>	“to destroy”

pati	–	pa + tì	“to abandone”
paré	–	pa + ré	“to rub off/erase”
parí	–	pa + orí	“to finish”

Because all the second elements in [21](b) can occur in isolation, this will lead us to recognize each of the forms as being bi-morphemic as decomposed presently above. And secondly, the “phonetic semantic resemblance” of all *pa* in the series is another strong factor: *pa* in the series can be given the paraphrase – “do it in such a way that it will...” *mo* (neat), *run* (ruin), *tí* (discontinue) *ré* (vanish), *dorí*⁷ (get to the end). However, the fact that *pa* has been fixed or lexicalized with their second elements cannot be disputed.

Now let us examine the derivation or the morphological models employed by these complex verbs for a good description of their structures.

6. THE DERIVATION OF YORUBA COMPLEX VERBS

By and large, the following structures have emerged as the internal constructions of the corpus examined so far: VP+VP as in 5.1, VP+NP as in 5.2, 5.3(ii), 5.4 and VP+PP as in 5.3 (i). Also, we have, VP which is unsegmentable in 5.5 and VP + VP in 5.6. The foregoing varying constructions can be collapsed into:

- (i) VP + VP – serial verb construction
- (ii) VP + NP – incorporation
- (iii) VP + PP – incorporation
- (v) VP – unanalysable.

It would be observed, therefore, that apart from the unanalysable VP, serial verb constructions and noun incorporation are the most preponderant structures in Yoruba complex verbs. There is, of course, clear absence of any derivational process because, as reported in Atoyebi (1998: 5) “Languages with verb serialization generally have limited even inexistent verbal derivation”. This is typically true of Yoruba language.

However, incorporation as a word-building process is overwhelmingly preponderant. Although, there is a divergence of opinions as to whether incorporation is a syntactic process or a lexical one⁸, the present writer is in agreement with Mithum (1984: 852) that it is a lexical process given its occurrence in the Yoruba language. His (Mithum) words:

Where syntax and Morphology diverge, incorporation is a solidly a morphological device that derives lexical items, not sentences.

⁷ We of course find it difficult to account for the deletion of ‘d’ in *dorí* here but this, however, does not render our postulate invalid.

⁸ Bussman (1998: 222) defines incorporation as “compound consisting of a... word stem with a verb, forming a complex verb”. It is a process in which one grammatical category attaches itself to another thereby losing its own categorial status.

Noun and preposition incorporation are the only types of incorporation discovered in our data.

7. CONCLUSION

As we have shown in the foregoing exposition, the problem of lexical decomposition is not limited to the segmentation of words into discrete units alone but it also involves the confusion about the criteria to be used as apparatus for such exercise. For example, one would need to determine whether a form would be called complex based on its semantic values only or it will involve the interplay of its phonetic idiosyncrasies as well. As bunch of evidence from our data have shown, both parameters should be recognized even when the full identities of certain units are not only completely obscure but are not sufficiently accessible.

Moreover, apart from the reasons highlighted as being accounting for the inaccessibility of some set of forms, the lack of written tradition of the Yoruba language in the distant past coupled with the relative paucity of research in historical linguistics in the language largely account for our recondite knowledge about the sources and the morpheme boundaries of those forms which I have had cause to refer to as completely opaque units in this work. This idea about their opacity may of course be only putative.

In addition, and as noted in the concluding remarks of Bamgbose (1995: 27), the traditional approach to linguistic analysis which makes a strict separation of levels between synchronic and diachronic descriptions while discouraging a pan-dialectal approach should be challenged.

No doubt, the facts of one dialect is bound to be useful for the analysis of another, including the koine (the standard dialect). So, more intensive research into Yoruba dialects is bound to unravel the mysteries surrounding the decomposability of some forms both in verbal and other lexical categories.

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