

Toward an Introduction to Descriptive and Derivative Hypothesis (DDH) in Morphological Analysis: Yorùbá Language as Example

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Abstract

Many morphologists have delved into provision of morphological explanations that account for decomposition of words with the intention of bringing out the morphological contents of each morphological complex word. However, findings have shown that a lot of explanations are undetailed and incomprehensive to provide lucid explanations of the basic decomposition of the base morpheme. This paper tries to propose a theoretical basis through which a lot of information could be accessed and be employed to proffer solution to the seemingly unexplainable facts in morphological decomposition. Although, the testing template for this theory – Descriptive and Derivative Hypothesis (DDH), in this paper, is Yoruba language, we hope that further implementation of the theory in other languages of the world would prove the workability and authenticity of the theory to solve some seemingly intractable morphological problems in the world languages. We observe that a lot of morphological errors is prevailing in derivative modeling of lexical morphological theories in the literature. This theory, if fully expanded, will re-direct the research focus of the researchers to the descriptive aspect of morphological findings in the literature.

Keywords: Descriptive, Stratum, Culturally Valued, Suspension Node, Lexical, Word, Reduplicant.

Introduction

Morphological operations can be broadly grouped into two. They are Descriptive Morphology and Derivative Morphology.

Descriptive Morphology

Descriptive morphology is an aspect of morphology that provides a descriptive analysis of the lexical items in the language. This division looks into the linguistic units or lexemes that are combined to form all the lexical properties in the language. The researchers have to look into the etymology and philology of all the lexical, and grammatical items most especially nouns, verbs, adjectives, prepositions, articles and adverbs etc. The researchers need to include extra linguistic facts to explain some morphological abstractness in the language. These would explain the reasons for some ill-formed morphological entities in the language. For instance, a syntactician needs to have access to morpho-syntactic information about some syntactic peculiarities, such as countable and uncountable nouns, definite and indefinite articles, regular and irregular plurals. This aspect of morphology may seem difficult to non-native researchers due to their inability to have access to correct information. This persists because many words or phrases in African language in general and Yoruba in particular, have been misrepresented in contemporary usage. Ògúnwálé (2002) provides a tip of examples among Yoruba proper names. This aspect of the theory gives information about the decomposition of the existing lexical items.

Derivative Morphology

This is an aspect of morphology that many language researchers do explore. It is an aspect that provides a linear morphological analysis of word formation in any languages of the world. However, this aspect would not be so helpful to the description of African language morphology. It is mostly laudable in the analysis of inflected languages; African languages reflect a lot of things about African culture. They are basically culturally valued. It is the combination of the two aspects of DDH (descriptive and derivative) that can provide explicit explanation of morphological analysis of the concatenation of morphemes of African languages. This and other understated reasons call for the introduction of DDH in this study.

Reasons for Descriptive and Derivational Hypothesis

There are many differences between this new hypothesis and Beard's Derivational and Inflexional Hypothesis (see Beard 2001). The DDH covers a wide morphological scope in the sense that analytical explanations would be provided to clarify some morphological puzzles. For instance, the Derivative

model of Beard's Hypothesis cannot provide an extensive morphological reason/reasons on irregular plurals in English as in:

1.	Singular	Plural
(i)	Foot	Feet
(ii)	Goose	Geese
(iii)	Mouse	Mice

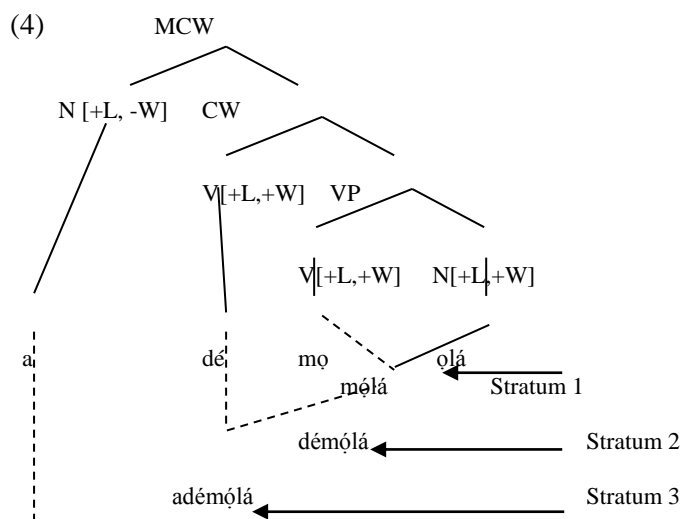
The irregular past tense

2.	Present Tense	Past
(i)	Run	Ran
(ii)	Take	Took
(iii)	Ring	Rung

The only available explanation on the foregoing in the literature is that they are foreign to English language. They emerged from proto -Germanic (see Napoli 1996:195). Also, the feasibility of some nouns in English where the same phonological entity stands for singular and plural such as: sheep (singular) sheep (plural), which are morphologically indecomposable (Zero-morphemic realisation, lend credence to the new Descriptive model of DDH. Not that alone, linguists in English Language have not come up with any other reason than the prescriptive modeling on the choice of definite and indefinite article variants in the language, (that is [a] before consonant - initial word and [an] before vowel and glide, initial word). We hope efforts should be geared towards provision of fuller explanations in the afore-mentioned lexical entities. Of central significance to our DDH are the findings in Ògúnwálé (1998). Ògúnwálé divides Yoruba personal names into two viz: mono-morphemic and poly-morphemic. Examples of mono-morphemic proper names are; Àìná, Òjò, Ìgè etc. while Adémólá, Ògúnranti, Òlabiyi etc. are poly-morphemic. However, Ògúnwálé (2012) descriptive capacity cannot be equal to what we intend to provide on such classification of names. For instance, Ògúnwálé (1998) accounts for 'Adémólá' morphologically as Adé (crown), mó (plus), olá (riches/wealth). However, a descriptive analysis would look beyond this meaning. 'Adémólá' may possess semantic ambiguity as:

- 3. (i) Adémólá → Crown join with honour
- (ii) A-dé-mó-olá → He who comes with honour

We can therefore, put the second morphological composition on a tree matrix as:



Source: We adopt Cann (1986) morphological terms whereby categorized words possess [+Lexical, + Word] features while affixes have [+Lexical, -- Word] features. MCW means Morphological Complex Words. Any word that can be decomposed into more than one basic morpheme.

A proven evidence of decomposability of 'adé' to { ' a- }+de' is evident in Ife dialect as its shown in the example below:

5.	Names	Reduced form
(i)	Adédire	Dédire
(ii)	Adémólá	Démólá
(iii)	Adéníyì	Déníyì
(iv)	Ọmótúndé	Mótúndé
(v)	Ọmọladé	Mọladé

Notice that a morpheme is internally cohesive and naturally indivisible. It is therefore apparent on the latest examples that 'adé' and 'omọ' are morphologically decomposable. The latest example shows that the above- morphological description is novel in the literature of Yoruba analysis. Such an oversight faults Adéoyè (1982) conclusion that (àwọn tí a kò bí láti idílẹ̀ ijòyè náà tí ñ jẹ́ orúkọ tó jẹ́ mó 'Adé'), 'a person that does not belong to royal family has started bearing Adé's name'. The foregoing morphological explanation has therefore permitted anybody to bear Ade's name. We believe this decomposition of 'Adémólá is fuller and more comprehensive; it would not be a problem to identify the 'head' of the morphological component of the "Adémólá" as it is graphically decomposed in the latest tree diagram.

Importance of Descriptive Morphology

Four factors are most consequential in the Descriptive Morphology. They are summarized as:

(1) What is the etymology of a word?

The idea of tracing the etymology of a word may refer to the base form. For instance, the genitive pronominal adjectival qualifier: 'àwọn' (they) in S. Y can be manifested as àhun or ùn in different sub-dialects of Kétu as:

6.	(i)	Àwọn Bólá (S.Y)	} Kétu
	(ii)	Bólá ùn (Ìmẹ̀kọ)	
	(iii)	Bólá àhun (Ìlárà)	

Aside from the recursiveness of the lexical properties in the two dialects as aforesaid, Ketu attests two variants **ùn** and **àhun**. Ordinarily, if a researcher is working on Ìmẹ̀kọ sub-dialect of Kétu, such a researcher without adequate etymological consideration would consider 'ùn' as a variant of 'un' (3rd person plural pronoun). However, looking into the etymology of the **ùn** in such a syntactic position would reveal the **ùn** (Ìmẹ̀kọ) as a reduction of **àhun** (Ìlárà) which is also sub-dialect of Kétu. So therefore, sorting beyond phonetic characterization of words in morphological explanations and analysis underlies the introduction of DDH in the literature. Awobuluyi (2008:100-101) though not literally specified, explains the constraint that beset the tracing of some counting nouns such as:

7.	(i)	Mètádínlógún	-	mẹ̀ta ó dín ní ogun three PN reduce from twenty (seventeen)
	(ii)	Mètádínlógún	-	Seventeen
	(iii)	Méjìdínlógún	-	Eighteen
	(iv)	Méjìdínlógún	-	méjì ó dín ní ogun two PN reduce from twenty

He posits that instead of "mètádínlógún" as it appears in the latest example, the output ought to be "mètádínlógún". His postulation has a phonological backing because high-tone in the language always maintains unmarked status in tonal configuration. He therefore, presents the above-examples as:

8.	(i)	Ọkándínlógún	<	Ọkan-ẹ̀dín-ní-ogún One reduce – from – twenty (nineteen)
	(ii)	Ètádínlógún	<	Èta-ẹ̀dín-ní-ogún Three reduce – from twenty (seventeen)

- (iii) Èrindínlógúun < Èrin-èdín-ní-ogún
 Four reduce from twenty (sixteen)

(see Awobuluyi 2008:100-101 for more comprehensive examples). This Awobuluyi (2008) proposition has philological basis in the central Yoruba (Èkiti. Ìjẹ̀sà and Ifẹ̀) where 'èdin' is phonetically realized.

(2) Does the word possess morphological variants?

Two words possess morphological variants when configuration does occur in the phonetic realization. A good example is 'Şònibáré' and 'Sónibaré' (personal names among Ìjẹ̀bú and Ègbá people in Ogun State). The two names can be analyzed morphologically as:

9. (i) Şònibaré ----- Oşó ni bá ré (be friendly with Oso cult)
 (ii) Şònibaré ----- sọ ẹnì (èniyàn) bá ré (beware of people)

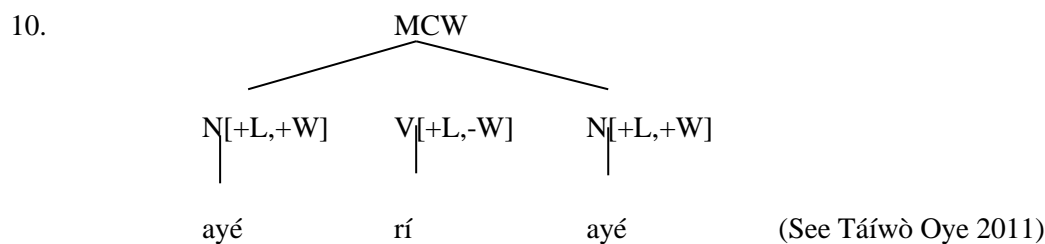
It is through the next process that a researcher could pick the variant that is culturally valued in the contextual usage, that is whether 'Şònibare' (Be selective in your personal dealings with other people) or Sónibaré (Oso cult should be your friend), which incidentally relevants to the adherents of Oso cult among the Yoruba.

(3) Which of the compositional variants is culturally valued?

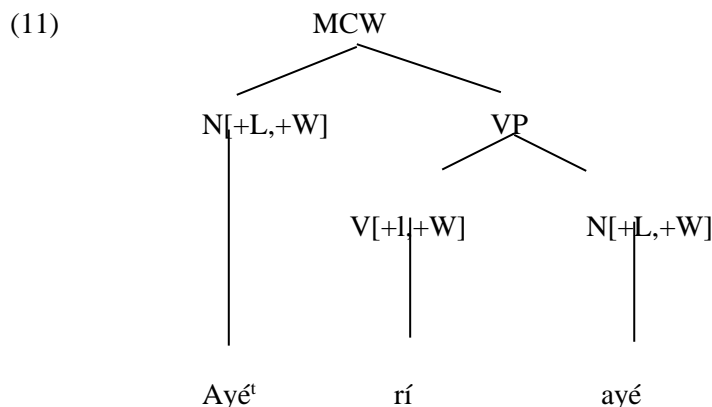
For instance, 'Òkúbánjọ' in the contemporary usage means, "Òkúbánjọ (The dead befits me), culturally, such an interpretation contradicts the Yoruba ethics and culture. 'Okù' among the Ìjẹ̀bú people of Ogun State, is a sign of royalty. It is a type of bead that people from royal families use to identify themselves by wearing it on the wrist of their right-hand. It is therefore morphologically right to decompose it as 'Okù-bá-n-jọ (sign of royalty befits me). The change in the tonal pattern of Òkú and Okù creates morphological distinctiveness. For instance, òkú is a derived word while okù is an underived word. Kú is the stem, while ò- is an affix (prefix). It shows, therefore, that though, the word 'Òkúbánjọ' in the contemporary usage can be mistakenly decomposed into the two identified variants, the second variant form is culturally more valued and compositionally acceptable.

(4) Is the head easily identifiable?

For instance, previous studies in Yoruba morphology has a morphological explanation for such a word as 'ayeraye' in the literature as:

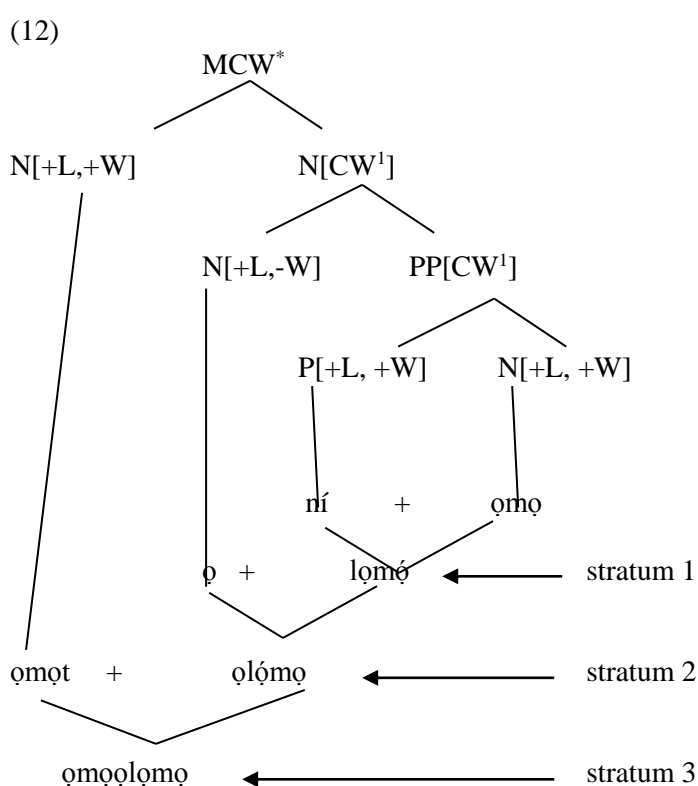


The latest tree-diagram can also be drawn linearly in line with the Descriptive analysis as thus:



The tree-diagram in **11** shows **rí** as a lexical verb, while **rí** is identified as infix in **10**. The head of the morpheme ‘**ayé**’ is first suspended and morphologically identified in **11**. The ‘**ayé**’ is a reduplicant of ‘**ayé**’ . The ‘**ayé**’ is the morphological head.

The appearance of the compositional morphemes at the same stratum would make it almost impossible to identify the Head. Although it is proposed in Táíwò (2011) that such words have two heads. This study does not oppose to bi-headed idea but not in such example as foregoing. In the DDH, it is believed that in the process of decomposing a compound morphological word, the head is easily linearly identified. That is, the morphological breakdown of a word is linearly arranged into levels or strata which allow easy identification of the morphological head. For instance, the derivative breakdown of complex morphological word must commence graphically and linearly. This principle underlies the affixal head parameter in Yoruba concatenative morphology (see Táíwò (2009:29), Táíwò (2012:109–110) and Adéwólé [2000]). The Yoruba morphology maintains a left-headed parameter similar to its syntactic phrasal structures. For instance, a compound morphological word like "Ọmọ̀lọmọ̀" in S.Y. would be morphologically, and linearly analysed as:



The left-handed morphological component obtains prominence. Other symbols are hitherto refers. Note that 'lọmọ̀' stands for stratum 1; 'ọmọ̀lọmọ̀' represents stratum 2; while 'ọmọ̀lọmọ̀' is stratum 3. That simply show that three complex morphological (CW) decomposable words with three identifiable heads occur in the word; ọmọ̀lọmọ̀. Each head is identifiable in each stratum. However, ‘ọmọ̀’ serves as the general morphological head of ‘ọmọ̀lọmọ̀’. Cultural preeminency is mostly put into consideration as a guide in morphological decomposition under the Descriptive model of Descriptive and Derivative Hypothesis. For instance, there are some place names, especially in Lagos and other big cities, which have been misrepresented morphologically in pronunciation such as:

Contemporary Pronunciation	Morphological Source
Màgódò (looks like a borrowed word)	Máà gún odó (don't pound in mortar)
Amùkòkò	A mú ìkokò

(The smoker of traditional-cigarette)	(He who captures life leopard)
Abúléojà (a market village)	Abúlé-øjà (the village of ojà family) (ojà is a family name in Adó-Èkitì)
Aláúsá (Owner of Hausa People)	Aláùsá (owner of walnut)

Note that broadcasters in Lagos state have realized this age-longed wrong pronunciation and have been trying to pronounce those place names correctly as identified above under the morphological source.

Not this alone, this wrong morphological pronunciation has gone very deep into the fabric of Yoruba personal names across the Yoruba dialectal zones, as in:

14.

Contemporary Pronunciation	Morphological source	Dialect Zone
Awósìkà (Awo did bad thing)	Awo èè se ìkà (Awòòsìkà) (Awo has never disappointed or doing bad things)	Oòdó
Òkúnéyẹ (the dead deserves recognition)	Okù ní èyẹ (Okunéyẹ) ("Okù" worth recognition/ celebration)	Ìjẹbù
Fápoùndà (Ifá has reneged on its promise)	Ifá èè pa ohùn dà (Ifáàpoùndà) (Ifá has never reneged on its promise)	Ìjẹṣà

There are a lot of such examples among the Yoruba personal and place names. We hope that this new area of morphological findings needs to be more explicated upon to bring forth new findings into the morphology of Yoruba language in specific and languages in the world generally. Furthermore, the DDH provides a morphological account of some mono-morphological words, which have been misrepresented in contemporary usage. For more clarification we can consider the usage of these words 'eni' (relation/mat) 'ara' (thunder/body) in these below sentences:

15. (i) Olóòótó kíí ní *eni*
(ii) Àsìkò *ara* làá bú *ara*

The italicized words are being confused in contemporary usage. They possess variant semantic interpretations as in:

16. (i) Olóòótó kíí ní *ení/eni*
Option a (the righteous person has no mat)
Option b (the righteous person has no relation)
- (ii) Àsìkò *ara* làá bú *ara/bùràá*
Option a (we invoke the body at the right time)
Option b (we invoke the thunder at the right time of the season)

Considering the etymological interpretations of the aforesaid sentences, it is obvious that options **b** are culturally valued. That shows that options **b** are morphologically accepted in the language. This conclusion has not invalidated the contraction of bu + ara = bura (to swear) but changes the established phonographic representation to *Ìgbà àrà làá bùràá* meaning "we invoke the thunder at the right time of the season". Note that the adoption of DDH has helped to come up with the true orthography "*bùràá*".

Conclusions

This paper tends to introduce researchers to a new approach in morphological analysis of African Languages. We used Yorùbá language as a testing language to establish our propositions. The study hereby presented the advantages of Descriptive and Derivative Hypothesis as follows:

- 17(i) It describes the morphological composition of a word beyond its phonetic representation.
- (ii) Its analysis may bring some important historic and cultural facts to the fore.
- (iii) The head of a word/morphological component is easily identifiable.
- (iv) The source of intuitive knowledge of a native speaker of a language, which lends credence to his competence in the language is identified.
- (v) It makes the native speaker of a language to be more helpful in the research process.
- (vi) It creates a new research area for scholars to dip into with the aim of bringing new facts about lexical items to the fore. This is unavoidably necessary in the synchronic analyses of the morphological studies of any language. This will therefore brighten the importance of the historical linguistics (see Bynon 1996).

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