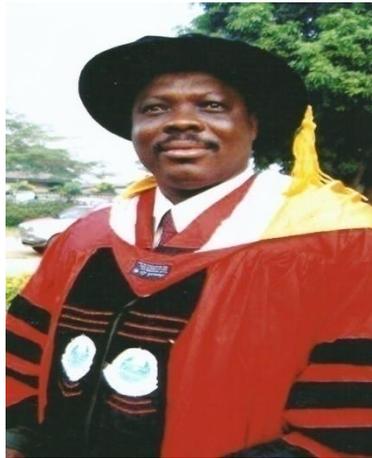


NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, LAGOS

**PRESERVING YORUBA LANGUAGE
THROUGH LINGUISTIC VACCINATION
OF COMPARATIVE GRAMMAR**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

S/N	TITLE	PAGE
1.	Introduction	2
2.	The Choice of Title	3
3.	Identification of Problem and Purpose of our Lecture	4
4.	Theoretical Framework	5
4.1	Traditional Grammar	5
4.2	Structural Grammar	7
4.3	The Origin of Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG)	8
5.	Appraisal of Some Ungrammatical Concepts in Yoruba	5
5.1	Illogical Syntactic Structures	10
5.2	Morphological Evaluation	12
5.3	Phonological Appreciation	14
5.4	Semantic Ungrammaticality	16
6.	A Comparative Appraisal of Verbal Properties in English, French and Yoruba	17
6.1	The Auxiliary Verbs	18
6.2	Lexical Verbs	18
6.3	Catenatives	18
6.4	Peculiarities of Yoruba Verbs	19
6.4.1	Mood	19
6.4.2	Tense	20
6.4.3	Morphological Characteristics of Verbs	21
6.4.4	Different Types of Verbs in Yoruba Grammar	22
7.	Appraisal of Yoruba Verbless Sentences, Resumptive Pronouns and Redundant Verbs	26
7.1	Yoruba Verbless Sentences	26
7.2	Resumptive Pronouns in Yoruba	28
7.3	Yoruba Redundant Verbs	32
8.	Appraisal of Prepositional and Antithetical Properties in Some Yoruba Verbs	35
8.1	Definition of Terms	36
8.1a	What is a Verb?	36
8.1.b	What is a Preposition?	37
8.1c	What is Antithesis?	37
8.2	Appraisal of Prepositional Properties in Some Yoruba Verbs	37
8.2.1	Prepositional Verbs	37
8.3	Appraisal of Antithetical Particles in Some Yoruba Verbs	39
9.3.1	Antithetical Verbs	39
9.	Conclusion	41
	Bibliographical References	42

CAPABILITY OF DETECTABILITY OF UNPERCEIVED ERRORS IN YORUBA GRAMMAR THROUGH THE LENS OF FRENCH COMPARATIVE GRAMMAR

1. INTRODUCTION

The aspect of language chosen for study is in the area of Comparative Grammar. Whereas literary analysis can afford to be subjective depending on the choices of the critic, grammatical or linguistic analysis is constrained to be objective. Bernard S. Cayne et al (1988:415) see grammar as “The science dealing with the systematic rules of a language, its forms, inflections and syntax, and the Art of using them correctly”. For David Yerkes and collaborators (1994:614), grammar is:

The study of the system underlying the formal features of a language, as sounds, morphemes, words or sentence (is) a theory specifying the manner in which all sentences of a language are construed.

The two formulations, it appears, are essentially the same. Cayne’s definition of grammar is seen as a scientific study that covers morphology (forms and inflections) and syntax. This position may be said to be a little vague in that “the systematic rules of language” can be identified at all levels of language. The rules of phonology are systematic. David Yerkes and others express a view that integrates phonology (sounds), morphology (morphemes and words) and syntax (sentences) but grammar goes beyond the purely formal to the abstractional, after the fashion of transformational generative grammar. In order to clarify some of the confusion and vagueness in the definitions and descriptions of grammar, Kwofie (1985:43) restrictedly defines grammar as “the part of linguistic description that deals with the morphology and syntax of a language.” He is of the opinion that three different broad types of grammar may be distinguished:

- i. Prescriptive or Normative Grammar that teaches “the art of speaking and writing correctly” as could be seen in Maurice Grevisse’s *Le Bon Usage* (1969).
- ii. Descriptive Grammars that describe what exists in the language without giving any value judgements on any aspect of the language as demonstrated by R. A. Hall (Jnr.) (1948) in *Structural Sketches I: French*.
- iii. Explicative/Psychological/Historical/Logical Grammars that attempt to explicate the structure and working of the language by having recourse to history, individual/social psychology and logic as demonstrated by Moritz Regula (1957) in *Grammaire française explicative*.

In this order of ideas, one may identify three grammatical eras: Traditional grammar, Structural grammar and Transformational generative grammar.

In order to present a clear and comprehensive study, we would like to conceive of grammar as the systematic examination of how morphemes are combined together to form words (morphology),

how phonemes (distinctive sounds) function within each language system (phonology), how meanings are assigned to words (semantics) and how the meaningfully-formed and pronounced words strung together to form sentences that are logically and grammatically correct (syntax). A critical look at above formulation shows clearly that the core of grammar is syntax.

As powerful and centrally the syntax could be to the linguistic analysis, we have realised over the years, during the course of our studies and various researches, that there is no amount of syntactic analysis basically placed and designed for a particular natural languages that could point out all the unperceived errors of this language in question. We have noted also that for most of these unperceived errors in Grammar of natural languages to be brought to the fore for proper analysis and suggestion of corrective measures, there is a need for the utilisation of Comparative Grammar. It is the centrality of Comparative Grammar in syntax and linguistic analysis and its status in the various conceptions of language analysis that have led us to the choice of this aspect for our lecture.

2. **THE CHOICE OF TITLE**

The title of our lecture is *‘Capability of detectability of unperceived errors in Yoruba grammar through the lens of French comparative grammar*. If syntactic analysis is the most important operation in grammatical analysis, it has been observed that not all the grammatically correct and logically accepted sentences through this operation could be adequately explained, devoid of unperceived errors, without the aid of comparative grammar. Comparative Grammar is concerned with the process of using the general theories or rules of Universal Grammar in looking at what is obtainable in all languages as well as the peculiarities of each of the languages. By doing this, a linguistic analyst will have the opportunity of:

- a. Discovering and proving the true similarities existing between various natural languages,
- b. Discovering and proving the true peculiarities that set apart each of the natural languages under examination,
- c. Discovering and proving the wrong notions imposed on a particular natural language as a result of grammatical over generalisation and imposition of the grammatical rules of one language over the other,
- d. Using these identified “wrong notions” to detect and present unperceived errors in the grammar of the language concerned,
- e. Suggesting the way and manner through which these proved unperceived errors could be resolved linguistically.

We propose to apply these extensive or all-embracing comparative grammar rules to French and Yoruba in the relevant domains.

3. **IDENTIFICATION OF PROBLEM AND PURPOSE OF OUR LECTURE**

As far back as 1957 when Noam Chomsky, the American linguist revolutionised the linguistic world with his transformational approach to the analysis of language, things have not remained the same in the field. Linguists from various parts of the world have been preoccupied with applying and revising his theory. Some have turned out to be his apostles, while others have become his opponents seeing his postulations as unrealistic.

However instead of completely condemning and throwing out the propounded Universal Grammar Theory (UGT), most grammarians (including Chomsky's adherents as well as many of his critics) agree that there is a great deal of logic in the work of this great scholar, who has had the merit of recognising the need for adjustments of his theory to make it truly universal. It is this realisation that led to the 'transformation' of the Transformational Grammar (TG) theory into the Standard Theory (ST). All these transformations and theoretical evolution ended up recently in a more broad-based theory known as the Minimalist Programme (MP). The Minimalist Programme is thus the end result of the progressive review of Transformational Grammar.

As good as this theory is presumed to be by the propounder and his adherents, efforts have been made by interested linguists to apply it to mainly European languages. Very little has been done to test its applicability to non European languages. African languages have received little attention in the endeavour. Indeed very limited research has been conducted on the Move Alpha Construct in European and African languages from a comparative standpoint.

We are not saying that there has not been any research work on the Move Alpha Construct of the Transformational Grammar theory on African languages. We are aware of works of researchers on African languages like those by Goldsmith (1981), Nwachukwu (1987, 1988, 1989), Awoyale (1985, 1990), Saah (1986), Yusuf (1989, 1990) and Ogbulogo (1994). However, apart from Ogbulogo (1994), most studies are anything but comparative. The result therefore is that many of their propositions purporting to be universal, in accordance with the notion and the earlier belief behind the Universal Transformational Grammar theory, end up being sources of controversy. Their assertions thus raise more questions or problems than they propose answers or solutions.

It is through the comparative analysis of syntactic or grammatical analysis of two or more languages that one can determine the similarities, differences, peculiarities, problems, shortcomings, weak-points and even viable points of one language over another language or other languages thus testing the universality or otherwise of the propounded Universal Grammar Theory. In as much as we are not saying that it is not possible albeit good to apply the Transformational Grammar Theory to a single language, we are of the opinion that it is better to apply this theory, in a comparative manner to African languages alongside the well-researched and well analysed European languages. This is

the reason for our choice of a comparative research submission on French, a European language, and Yoruba, an African language spoken in Nigeria, some other West African countries and the diasporas such as in Brazil and Cuba.

4. **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

It is not in this century that man first started talking about the importance, the classification and the description of Grammar. Many years even before the birth of Christ, man has been making incursion into the study of language and the linguistic product of each language. The work of linguistic analysis and description then belonged to philosophers like Aristotle and Plato. It is on record that Plato was the first human being to have given a classification between Nominal and Verbal groups (cf. Aitchison, 1978). But further and detailed studies on linguistics did not come to limelight until 1786, when for the first time, an erudite English scholar, Sir Williams Jones, at Royal Asiatic Society in Calcutta, declared that Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Celtic and Germanic languages have similar linguistic structures that are very hard to neglect. He then went further to postulate that Sanskrit was probably the mother of all other Indo-European languages. This discovery and assertion was like the firepower that linguists of that era had been waiting for. Immediately after this declaration, linguistic and anthropological scholars commenced volatile researches into the origin, analysis and description of languages. Through grammatical analysis borrowed from the prescriptive method known for Greco-Latin antiquity, they started the analysis of many languages grammatically and comparatively. It is this prescriptive method of analysing grammar that we also refer to as Traditional Grammar nowadays.

4.1 **TRADITIONAL GRAMMAR.**

A grammatical theory is known to be prescriptively traditional if the method of its grammatical analysis is of the same pattern with that of the 5th century before the birth of Christ, from the middle age and even up till 1900. During these periods, language study was synonymous with the study of Arts and languages. This study of Arts and languages covers what are now known as Philosophy, Literary criticism, Rhetoric and the Linguistic Studies nowadays. Grammar, at these periods, was seen as being part of Philosophy by Greek scholars and Philosophers who wanted to know if language was controlled by “The Nature” or by “Convention” and that whether or not there is a link between the form and the meaning of words. Roman scholars borrowed leaf so fast from Greek scholars and did to Latin what their predecessors did to Greek. Through the aid of this method, grammatical studies were divided into two main branches: -

- (i) *The Theory of words*
- (ii) *The Theory of sentences.*

(i) **The Theory of Words** To these traditional grammarians, grammar could only be learned through grammatical words. And these grammatical words are grouped into classes and sub-classes under the name, parts of Speech. They identified nine parts of speech. They are: *Articles, Nouns, Pronouns, Adjectives, Verbs, Adverbs, Prepositions, Conjunctions and Interjections*. We would like to point out that this word classification method is still in use to date. But the greatest defect of this theory is its over generalisation and over prescription. Words are defined in isolation and grammarians are then compelled to fix them into sentences or justify their inclusion in sentences in consonance with the prescriptive definition given to them. It is not the function of the word that allows for its usage in a given sentence but its form and its notional or semantic definitions or interpretation.

Take for instance their definition of noun as “a name of a person, animal, place or thing” or the definition of a verb as “an action or doing word”. In a sentence like “*Singing is my joy*” Singing could be said to be a verb while the sentence looks like a structure without a noun. Whereas **Singing** and **Joy** are nouns while the only verb in this sentence is **is** which is not an action word like **Singing**.

(ii) The Theory of Sentences: As they have done for words, looking at the structure of sentences, traditional grammarians classified sentences into two main types: Simple and Complex/Compound Sentences. It is from these two types of sentences that we could have four groups: -

- (a) *Affirmative/Declarative Sentences*
- (b) *Interrogative Sentences*
- (c) *Imperative Sentences*
- (d) *Exclamative Sentences.*

They agreed that a simple sentence could be divided into subject and predicate. This predicate could contain the verbal base alone or verbal base and the complement(s). This complement could either be direct, indirect, circumstantial etc. In their opinion, each sentence must have basic structure and it is to this basic structure that one could add either complements or adjuncts. These complements or adjuncts could either be added to the subject, to the predicate or to any other grammatical components of the sentence.

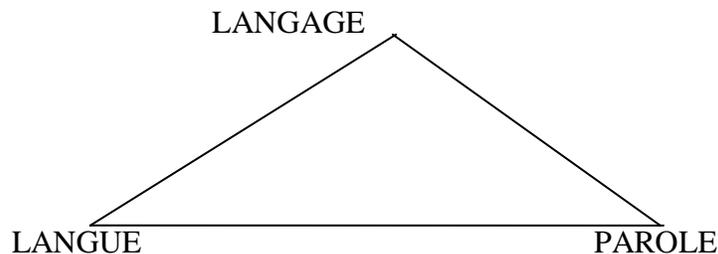
Much as this theory look simple, we would like to note that it is also too classificational and prescriptive in nature. Grammatical words put together to form these sentences are defined in isolation without recourse to syntactic relationship or the rule governing the linguistic distribution of grammatical components in sentences. Rigid and fixed rules are prescribed for the formation of either words or sentences in this approach. These rigid prescriptive rules allow for, in most cases, construction of sentences whereby words defined as having belonged to the same grammatical (part

of speech) group would not have the same semantic functions nor function together syntactically. The rules therefore allow for construction of ungrammatical sentences while they could not take care of some sentences that are grammatical in nature but deviant to the prescribed rules. It needs to be emphasised that this grammatical theory recognises three large grammatical components such as **Morphology, Semantics and Syntax**. One would not be surprised then to see the group of Ferdinand de Saussure coming in the dawn of the Eighteenth Century to violently attack this theory through the aid of structural theory.

4.2 **STRUCTURAL GRAMMAR**

The structural Grammar theory was promulgated with the post-humour publication of the Ferdinand de Saussure's classical lecture notes **Cours de Linguistique Générale** that his two former students published in 1910. The foundation of this theory was strongly laid on Morpho-Syntax. Grammar, to these structuralists, entails three components: **Morphology, Syntax, Phonology**. According to them, the first two components are more important in the formation of the linguistic units (morphological words formation) and the use of these units (syntactical words usage) respectively. These two linguistic concepts work hand-in-hand in an inseparable manner. Phonology only explains how these words or the sentences so far formed are pronounced.

These notions introduced, for the first time, scientism and objectivism into the study of language. Language study, to these structuralists, must be structurally and analytically descriptive. To achieve this objective, these structuralists replaced all the rigid and fixed prescriptive grammatical rules known for Traditional grammarians with descriptive methods whereby each linguist explains or describes what he sees in a word or a sentence without any recourse to any prescriptive rule. To perform their analytical and descriptive functions on grammar, Saussure suggested a linguistic tripod through which the study of language could be done effectively.



According to this linguistic tripod, all the human linguistic study could be grouped under “***Langage***” which could be translated as “***Communication***”. It is this “***Langage***” that generates “***Langue***” and “***Parole***” translated as “***Language and Word***”. To Ferdinand de Saussure, Language is the social product of the communication. It is a group of necessary conventions adopted by the social group so as to allow for communication between men (cf. Saussure 1972:25). “Word” to this

linguist is the “individual component of the communication grille”. It is an act of willingness and of intelligence. This means that “Langue” is collective communication system while “Parole” is the study of the individual person’s way of communicating.

One would not be surprised to see the big names like **Nikolai Troubetzkoï, Serge Karcovski, Roman Jakobson, Louis Hjelmslev, Edward Sapir and Leonard Bloomfield** as followers of this linguistic movement. It is this same structural grammar that would give birth to sub-structural group such as structural phonology, the glossematics, the American structuralism and the functionalism.

4.3 **THE ORIGIN OF TRANSFORMATIONAL GENERATIVE GRAMMAR (TGG)**

This structural theory dominated the scene for about fifty years until 1957 when an American linguist Noam Chomsky shocked the entire world with his linguistic revolution in form of Transformational Universal Grammar Theory. According to Chomsky, structural theory could only be good and adequate in analysing phonemes and morphemes of human languages but not syntax and structures. He is of the opinion that this structural theory provides for too much of morphological and syntactic limitations in sentence formation, lack of adequate consideration for internal relationship of words that form syntactic structures of sentences, inability of the grammar to identify and take care of structurally analogous but semantically ambiguous sentences and over generalisation of assertion that the study and analysis of grammar could not be universal. He thus gave us examples of these syntactic deficiencies in sentences like : -

(i) *John is easy to please.*

(ii) *John is eager to please.*

These two seemingly identical sentences are only similar at the surface level and will be similarly analysed by structural grammarians.

Now consider the following paraphrases to discover how different they are: -

(i) *It is easy to please John*

(ii) *John is eager to please someone.*

The bi-level structure of Transformational Grammar (TG) offers the ability to explain these differences. The transformational grammarians therefore came with another theory called Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG).

This grammar has three major grammatical components: -

(a) ***Syntactic component***

(b) ***Semantic component***

(c) ***Phonological component.***

With the aid of the base and the transformation sub-components of the syntactic components, this grammar generates the Deep Structure (DS) (what the speaker thinks) in form of sentence (S). The semantic components, having fine-tuned the Deep Structure Components through the aid of its projection rules and semantic presentation of sentences, gives meaning to the Deep Structure thus changing it to the Surface Structure (what the speaker speaks out). It is this surface structure that the speaker pronounces through the aid of phonological component, which might have processed the Surface structure of the sentence through the aid of its phonological rules and sound sequences. Sentences or linguistic structures formed through these processes are believed to be devoid of ambiguity, grammatical and logical errors.

As this transformational grammar preaches universality of Grammar, it also allows for easy comparison of different structures from different languages. The combination of all these attributes of this new theory and its possibility of allowing for comparative studies among various human languages allow linguists to discover new errors and some peculiarities in many languages that have been hitherto analysed with either traditional theory or structural theory in the past.

It is this theory, earlier presented as Standard Theory (ST) that would be in vogue between 1957 and 1963. By 1964, with the Publication of *Current Issues in Linguistic Studies*, the protagonist of Transformation Grammar, Noam Chomsky came out with **The Extended Standard Theory (EST)**. This theory went down for **Revised Extended Standard Theory (REST)** with the publication of *Essays on Form and Interpretation* in 1977. In 1981, with the publication of *Lectures on Government and Binding*, a new Theory called **Government and Binding (GB)** emerged. And it is this new theory that held sway till 1996 when the publication of *The Minimalist Program* announced the promulgation of the **Minimalist Program Theory (MP)** that is still in vogue to date. It is this Minimalist Programme Theory of Noam Chomsky that we shall use in analysing and presenting our data in this paper.

5. **APPRAISAL OF SOME UNGRAMMATICAL CONCEPTS IN YORUBA**

The soul of any language is the Grammar. It is the grammar that stipulates the rules guiding the formation of words and construction of sentences in any language. The argument on the scope and areas covered by Grammar of any language depends on the school of thought of the grammarians concerned. As far as the traditional (prescriptive) grammarians are concerned, grammatical theory covers three large grammatical components such as **Morphology, Semantics and Syntax**. But the Structural Grammarians believe that Grammar covers only the **Morphological, Syntactic and Phonological** components. It could be noted that while the two schools of thought both agreed on the importance of **Morphology and Syntax** as major components of Grammar, they differ on the third choice of the component. As the traditional grammarians believe that it should be **Semantics**,

the Structuralists believe in the importance of **Phonological** component of Grammar. And as if to complicate issues the more, the third grammatical school of thought, the **Transformational Generative Grammar** insists that the three grammatical components are nothing more than the **Syntax, Phonology** and **Semantics**. These grammarians believe that **Morphology** could be explained and taken care of by the **Syntactic** component of the Grammar.

In order to resolve these grammatical riddles, we need to understand the linguistic function of each of these components so as to justify the inclusion or otherwise of each of these grammatical components. The grammatical study that takes charge of putting morphemes together to form words is the **Morphology**. This word formed through morphological processes must have a significance and meaning. This aspect is taken care of by **Semantics**. The significant word could only be pronounced through the aid of **Phonology**. And it is the combination of these words formed, proved to have been meaningful and pronounceable that could be put together to form sentence(s) through well co-ordinated **Syntactic rules**. We see Grammar therefore as *the scientific study or theories and rules that specify how morphemes are put together to form words, how words are given meaning and sound patterns so that they (these words) could co-exist, on consideration of their internal components and relationship, to form sentences that are grammatically and logically correct.*

This definition therefore brings us to the conclusion that there could be four main components of **Grammar; Morphology, Semantics, Phonology** and **Syntax**. Our linguistic appraisal of some ungrammatical constructions in Yoruba language shall be evaluated through the lens-view of these four major grammatical components.

5.1 **ILLOGICAL SYNTACTIC STRUCTURES**

Noam Chomsky, in his Government and Binding Theory and the recent Minimalist Program, argues that some sentences in human languages could be taken as being grammatically correct, for they must have satisfied the structural rules of the language concerned, but a closer look at this sentence or these sentences through some other linguistic parameters could show that these so-called grammatically correct sentences are either ambiguous or illogical. He therefore suggests that before

a sentence (structure) could be accepted as being adequate and grammatically correct, it must have satisfied the Filter Rules (FR) of the Deep Structure (DS), the Surface Structure (SS), the Phonetic Form (PF) and that of the Logical Form (LF) (cf. Chomsky 1980, 1981, 1982). And with two basic operations; Selection Operation (SO) and Verifying Operation (VO), of the Minimalist Programme theory, Chomsky insists that we must consider the relationship that exists between a head and its complements as well as verifying the concept of accord between the Subject – Verb or that of Specifier – Head - Complements in phrasal structures before rushing to conclusion on the grammaticality or otherwise of any sentence (cf. Chomsky 1995, 1996, Pollock 1997).

Having these theoretical frameworks at the back of our mind, we would like to invite our listeners to consider these common Yoruba sentences:

1. **Ilé n jóná.** (or **Ilé n jó iná**) (often translated as ‘The house is burning.’)
2. **Ilé yen ti jóná pátápátá.** (often translated as ‘The house is completely burnt down.’)

We would like to remind ourselves that the syntactic structure of Yoruba sentences is still *Subject – Verb - Object* order (*SVO*) and that these constructions are simple, direct and declarative sentences. One would have been at ease, if the construction had been **Ergative** or **Middle** constructions whereby the action enumerated by the verb as being done is no longer performed by the Deep Structured Subject but the Deep Structured Object that is transforming into the Surface Structured Subject. Let us take for example:

3. **Olúwa te okò náà rì.** (DS) → **Okò náà tèrì.** (SS) (Ergative construction)
(God sinks the boat) → (The boat sinks).
4. **Olú ta èpà wàràwàrà.** (DS) → **Èpà tà wàràwàrà.** (SS) (Middle construction)
(Olu sells groundnuts fast.) → (Groundnuts sell fast.)
5. **Olúwa n yí ayé.** (DS) → **Ayé n yí.** (SS) (Ergative construction)
(God is rotating the Word.) → (The World is rotating.)

On realising that ‘**Ilé n jóná**’ is neither middle construction nor ergative, one then wonders on the logical and grammaticality of the sentence. The straight question one should ask is ‘Can the house

(as it is in ‘**Ilé**’) that is the subject, burn (as it is in ‘**jó**’ the verb of the sentence) the fire (as it is in ‘**iná**’) that is the object of this sentence? We believe that this sentence could only be logical if we reverse the position of the subject and that of the object by saying:

6. **Iná n jólé.** (or **Iná n jó ilé.**)

It is this argument that explains the incomprehensibility of some sentences formed by our young folks such as:

7. **Àánú mi n se é.** (instead of) **Àánú e n se mí.** (I sympathise with you.)

5.2 MORPHOLOGICAL EVALUATION

There are some words formed in Yoruba that denote the antonym of its semantic value and morphological process. A good example of these words is ‘**Onígbèsè**’. This Yoruba word is translated with ease as **debtor**. But a better look at its morphological engineering and diachronic use could make us change our mind on the usage.

‘**Gbèsè**’ in Yoruba is the money owed and yet to be paid back by someone. And the verb relating to it in Yoruba is ‘**je**’ (owe). If one wants to say that ‘Someone is owing me some amount of money’, it is rendered as ‘**Enikan je mí ní gbèsè (owó) kan**’. The morpheme ‘**oní**’ in Yoruba is a prefix denoting ‘the owner of’. Hence we say ‘**oníyo**’ (salt owner), ‘**onífa**’ (diviner), ‘**onísu**’ (owner of yam) etc. **Onígbèsè**’ is therefore ‘Creditor’ rather than ‘debtor’. This assertion could be seen clearer through the ‘**Odù Ogbègúndá**’ in **Ifá**:

“.....*A díá fún orísekú omo Ògún,
Orílèémèrè omo Ìjà,
Àfùwàpé omo Òrúnmílà,
Tí wón n relé Àjàlá aláámò lo rée yanrí,
Ajegbèsè ni Àjàlá,
Bí awon onigbèsè rè bá tò ó wá,
Á á sá gun òkè àjà lo.....”*

Translated as:

(... “*Cast divination for Oriseku the son of Ogun,
Orileemere the son of Ija,
and Afuwape the son of Orunmila.
All of them set for Ajala the head sculptor to select head,
Ajala is a debtor,*

*Whenever his creditors came calling,
he escaped through the ceiling.....”*

It could be seen that this Ifá verse called Ajala the debtor as ‘*Ajègbèsè*’ whereas his creditors were called ‘*Onígbèsè*’. But in Yoruba of our time, the word *Ajègbèsè* (or better still *Ojègbèsè*) has disappeared from our lexicon. We only retained ‘*Onígbèsè*’ but imposed its opposite meaning on it! Another feature noted in our morphological misuse of words concerns the way we abuse and even felicitate with others. When most Yorubas want to abuse somebody, he would say: ‘*Asiwèrè*’ (mad person), ‘*Apòdà*’ (stupid person), ‘*Akúrí*’ (dullard), ‘*Arìndìn*’ (imbecile) etc. Whereas when he wants to felicitate with others, he would say ‘*E kú oríire*’ (Congratulations), ‘*E kú odún (tuntun)*, (Happy New year) etc.

It could correctly be argued that the morphological breakdown of ‘*Asiwèrè*’ just like other similar words could be ‘*Eni tí ó nse wèrè*’. If at all there is contraction, assimilation and elision of words and sounds, the prefix ‘*E*’ (that represents *Eni*) which stands in most cases as the third person singular form, should have been retained rather than its replacement by the prefix, ‘*A*’ which is more of first person plural form. Each of these abusive words could therefore be referring to the speaker as well as the people he thought he was abusing. Take a critical look at the morphological analysis of these words:

1. *A se wèrè.* (We are mad.)
2. *A kú orí.* (We are dull headed.)
3. *A po òdà.* (*We mix paint. → We are stupid.)
4. *A rìndìn.* (We are imbecile.)
5. *E kú oríire.* {Congratulations (to you people)}
6. *E kú odún tuntun.* {Happy New year (to you people).}

The entire cases should have been in reversal of this their original form. It should have been:

7. *E se were.* → *E siwèrè* or *Osiwèrè.*
8. *E kú orí .* → *E kúrí* or *Okúrí.*
9. *E po òdà.* → *E podà* or *Òpodà*

10. **E rìndìn.** → **E rìndìn** or **Òrìndìn.**

11. **A kú oríire.**

12. **A kú odún tuntun.**

These new forms, we are sure, would satisfy the morphological rule of Yoruba words formation and the true semantic representation of the speakers genuine intention for the speaker of these types of statements would not have genuinely intended to abuse himself alongside others while at the same time exonerate himself or herself when felicitating for a universal good and joyful anniversary or occasion.

5.3 PHONOLOGICAL APPRECIATION

In standard Yoruba, there are five nasal vowels as against seven oral ones. Each of these five nasal vowels is noted, phonologically, as being distinct and important in sounds' formation. Their examples could be seen in these words:

1. **an [ã]** as in Ìbàdàn, iyàn, (pounded yam), ìran, (view), ìtàn (story or history) etc.
2. **en [ɛ̃]** as in ìyen (that one)
3. **in [ɪ̃]** as in ìyìn (praise), ìpín (share), Ìrìn (trekking), Òfin (law), Òpin (end) etc.
4. **on [õ]** as in ifòn (pimples), ìbon (gun), opón (Wooden tray) etc.
5. **un [ũ]** as in oyún (pregnancy), iyùn (beads), orun (sleep).

It should be noted that in the Yoruba Phonological rules, none of these nasal sounds is allophone to others. But one often sees in modern Yoruba pronunciation, the substitution of 'on [õ]' sound for 'an [ã]' sound. Words containing and written with 'an [ã]' sound are freely pronounced as 'on [õ]' sound:

- Ibadan is pronounced as **[ibadõ]**
- Iyan is pronounced as **[ijõ]**
- Iran is pronounced as **[irõ]**
- Itan is pronounced as **[itõ]**

It would have been easily comprehensible if there had not been Yoruba words originally containing ‘**on** [õ]’ (nasal) sounds. Ifòn (pimples), ibon (gun) and opón (Wooden tray) have, since the time immemorial written and pronounced with the ‘**on** [õ]’ sound.

Whereas, the 1976 Conference on Yoruba orthography insisted on the rule that ‘whatever is pronounced orally (through mouth) and audited through the ear should be the only thing to be written by the hand’. (Direct Yoruba transliteration of the rule is ours). Why then have we been pronouncing ‘**on** [õ]’ only to be writing ‘**an** [ã]’ sound?

A linguistic voyage into the diachronic study of the language would show:

1. That these two sounds were distinct and independent of each other up till the time of our colonisation and independence between 1850 and 1960.
2. That before and around this time, the ‘**an** [ã]’ sound was pronounced by all the Yorubas without substituting it with the ‘**on** [õ]’ sound.
3. That our interaction with English and some other languages brought to us through colonisation influenced this mysterious substitution.
4. That other Yorubas that were together with us before then but now find themselves in other Countries under a different colonial administration in Francophone nations like Benin, Togo and Cote d’Ivoire still maintain this ‘**an** [ã]’ sound as it was with all the old Yoruba Empire.

If these hypotheses are true and correct, one then wonders why this phonological substitution could not follow the strict rule of phonological permutation. If at all there will be phonemical substitution or eradication, it is the phoneme that has wider linguistic coverage that ‘swallows’ the other whose linguistic coverage is smaller. And if the two sounds are allophones (just as in the case of |l| and |n| sounds), the two must be interchangeably used alongside the consonantal or other sounds that dictate the choice of any of the two sounds.

But one could see that despite the fact that ‘an [ã]’ sound has wider phonemical coverage (as we have more words with original ‘an [ã]’ sound in Yoruba) than the ‘on [õ]’ sound, it is this ‘on [õ]’ sound that ‘swallows’ the ‘an [ã]’ sound phonologically. And it is even not the case of substitution as the Yoruba words containing ‘on [õ]’ sound such as ifòn (pimples), ibon (gun) and opón (Wooden tray) are never pronounced with ‘an [ã]’ sound.

We view this aspect to be very important. And we would like to implore our phonologists to look into this and proffer a theory or explainable solution to this for pedagogical reason. Linguistic analysis and research are no longer for descriptive reasons alone but they are also for didactic processes. It will be bad if we keep on teaching prescriptively rather than descriptively.

5.4 SEMANTIC UNGRAMMATICALITY

Yoruba, like most of other languages of the World, has a grammar that is well grounded semantically. Sentences in Yoruba are formed often, due to consideration of the internal relationship that exists between the two or more words that are to be combined together to form the new sentences. It is the combination of the first or the root meaning of each word used in the sentence and the contextual meaning imposed on each word by the sentence that helps us in giving meaning to the sentences formed in any language.

If this presentation is logical, let us consider this sentence:

- **Olú so wí pé òun ń bò.** (which could be translated as “Olu says he is coming).

To any average Yoruba person who has not been initiated into the arts of linguistic or grammatical analysis of the language, the sentence is seen to be correct and devoid of error. Whereas, the sentence contains a major error in form of tautology. The verb ‘to say’ in Yoruba could be represented by either ‘so’ or ‘wí’. That is why one could say or write:

- **Olú so pé òun ń bò.**
- **Olú wí pé òun ń bò.**

But the arbitrary use of the two together in a sentence is tautological and ungrammatical, for these two verbs are neither used as split nor serial verbs in the sentence concerned. It is worthy of note that it is not as if Yoruba grammarians are not doing what is expected of them thereby detecting and correcting these errors. But we would like to tell you that we call this kind of errors as *unperceived difficult to detect errors*. It is possible and easier for us to detect and analyse these unperceived errors because of our knowledge of comparative grammar; our having mastered the grammar of developed languages such as English and French, allow us to easily compare what could be obtainable or otherwise in Yoruba grammar.

We would like to conclude this aspect by saying that Yoruba grammar, just as it is being done to grammar of other languages, should be critically reviewed and grammatically filtered. Our scholars should endeavour to fully apply new theories towards studying, analysing, appreciating, describing and teaching this noble language. Scholars of Yoruba language should also be broad minded enough to tolerate criticism of the language and their works on it without being prescriptively rigid thus sticking to their guns on all issues concerning descriptive analysis of the language. It is through this openness and tolerance of scholars from other domains and academic spheres that the study of the language could grow for it could be sometimes and somehow difficult for a typical Yoruba man who is a linguistic expert on the language to see some of these errors we are highlighting. Whereas there are a lot more ungrammaticality in the so-called grammatical structures of the language. Civilisation and westernisation should not be allowed to bastardise our language.

6. A COMPARATIVE APPRAISAL OF VERBAL PROPERTIES IN ENGLISH, FRENCH AND YORUBA

The word, verb, is derived from the Latin word “*Verbum*” which means *the word*. This is because it is the most important element or word in any given sentence; without it a meaningful sentence cannot be made. Traditional grammar describes the verb as a doing word in a sentence. *But a verb does more than this. It states something about the subject of a sentence by expressing its action, condition or state of being.* No wonder why Charles Ogbulogbo (2000), when describing verb, sees

in it as an important parts of speech. He insists that without verbs, we cannot have sentences because they are words that express what a subject does or the relationship between the subject and the object in a sentence. Verbs can also be used to express what the subject feels, experiences or thinks. At times, verbs can just express the state of things.

Adejare and Adejare (1996) are of the opinion that verbs belong to the class of words associated with describing actions, states, processes etc. They identify three sub-classes of verbs as follows: *Auxiliaries, Lexical and Catenatives*.

6.1 The Auxiliary Verbs:

Auxiliary verbs are so named because they require the presence of other subclasses of verbs to function as the Verbal Group (VBG) in a clause or a sentence. They therefore do not normally occur alone as the VBG without the presence of lexical verb or *Catenatives*. The above dependent syntactic behaviour of auxiliaries has led to their being sometimes described as helping verbs. But the label is misleading since the syntactic dependence of auxiliary verbs does not imply their semantic dependence. In other words, though auxiliary verbs are syntactically dependent on lexical verbs or Catenatives to function within a VBG, they are semantically independent since they convey distinct meanings on their own. Examples could be seen in verbs like have, may, can etc.

6.2 Lexical Verbs:

These are the main verbs. As the name implies, they are the fully lexicalised verbs that contain the full semantical connotation of the sentence or the clause concerned. They are also referred to as *FULL Verbs* because they carry lexical meanings in addition to any other grammatical functions e.g. tense, mood, aspect etc.eg to go, to sleep, to kill etc.

6.3 Catenatives

Catenatives are lexical verbs with the characteristics of auxiliary verbs. Just like the auxiliaries, they function by preceding other verbs. They are commonly found in Verb Phrases where they function as important part of the Verbal Group (VBG) e.g. He ***kept working on the generator***. The lexical verb, ***kept***, in the above example, though looks and functions like auxiliary verb, is a catenative

verb. It modifies the action of continuity in the second lexical verb, *working*. This type of verbs are named catenatives because they trigger off a chain-like arrangement of elements of the complex VBG structure which includes lexical verbs with strong syntactic and semantic significance among the elements. Apart from being lexical verbs, which tells them apart from the auxiliaries, they cannot be negated with *NOT* like auxiliaries or other lexical verbs.

If these classifications are valid for English and some other European languages, the same cannot be said for Yoruba, hence our deciding in this paper to bring to focus some of the verbal peculiarities of Yoruba through comparative grammar.

6.4 **PECULIARITIES OF YORUBA VERBS**

When we talk of the Peculiar Verbal Features in the grammar of Yoruba, four peculiarities come to mind. Unlike in the grammar of other European languages like French and English, these features to be highlighted are only peculiar and known for Yoruba grammar. They are:

- (i) *The mood*
- (ii) *Tense characteristics*
- (iii) *Morphological features of verbs (such as passive verb, pronominal verb, inversion and infinitive)*
- (iv) *Different types of verbs in Yoruba grammar.*

6.4.1 **Mood**: In French and English grammars, we talk of four Verbal Moods: the indicative, imperative, subjunctive and the conditional moods. In Yoruba, we do not have these four verbal moods in one distinctive form as we have them in these European Languages. In as much as we could trace and prove the indicative, imperative and the conditional moods across expressions in Yoruba language, we can hardly distinguish the subjunctive mood in Yoruba language:

- a. Olú (n) je ìresì. → Olu mange du riz. → Olu is eating rice. (Indicative mood).
- b. Olú yòò je ìresì tí wón bá fún un léran. → Olu mangerait du riz si on lui donne de la viande. → Olu would eat rice if he is given meat. (Conditional mood).

c. Olú, má je ìresì mó! → Olu ne mange plus du riz! Olu, don't eat the rice anymore!

(Imperative mood).

We can say that the presence or absence of *n* before the Yoruba verb indicates the indicative mood, as the introduction of *yoo* before the verb marks the conditional mood and as the presence of *ma* (for the negative forms of the imperative) and *maa* (for the positive forms) indicate the imperative mood in Yoruba. Thus, each time we present a sentence, which tend to show the subjunctive mood, we only end up justifying the existence of the subjunctive through the help of translation and tracing the equivalent of this sentence to European languages, or else there will be no structural, graphical and modal differences between the subjunctive sentence in question and its equivalent in the indicative mood:

d. Ó seése kí Túndé wá sí ilé wa. → Il est possible que Túndé vienne chez nous. → It is possible that Túndé could come to our house).

It is through the translation and comparison of this Yoruba sentence with its French and English equivalents that we come to affirm properly that sentence (d) is in the subjunctive mood, otherwise there is nothing in the sentence that indicates to us the subjunctive mood in the sentence. One would be right if we say that the sentence is in the indicative mood, considering the structural similarity between the verb of this sentence and that of the Yoruba sentence in the indicative mood as presented in sentence (a).

6.4.2 **Tense**: In French, as in other European languages, we often use the ending as the mark of mood and tense. With the help of the endings, we can distinguish the tenses such as the present (present indicative, present subjunctive, present conditional, present participle), the past (perfect, past historic, past subjunctive, past conditional, imperfect, past participle etc.), and the future (future tenses). This signifies that the tense marker of Yoruba verbs is more of lexicalisation than affixation, which is common to most European languages. For Yoruba, there is no affix-ending (suffixation) for these verbs nor any other morphological marker to mark the tense. All Yoruba

verbs are presented in the same form without changing or taking the endings in conformity, either with the tense, the mood, the person or even the number of person, which it is talking about. We use the lexical marker to indicate the tense in Yoruba. Let us consider the verbal structure of these sentences:

- a. Olú **ta** ilé (lónìí). → Olú vend une maison (aujourd'hui). → Olu sells a house (today).
(Present tense.)
- b. Olú **ta** ilé (lánàá). → Olú a vendu une maison (hier). → Olu sold a house (yesterday) (Past tense)
- c. Olú **yòò ta** ilé (lóla). → Olú vendra une maison demain. → Olu shall sell a house (tomorrow.) (Future tense)

We can see from these examples that the structure of the verb **ta** in sentences (a – c) did not change. It is the lexical item (the word) **lónìí** which marks the present tense in sentence (a) while its opposite **lánàá** introduces the past tense in sentence (b). For sentence (c), we use the word **yòò** before the verb and the future word **lóla** to indicate the future tense. How then can we talk of tense and modal sub-categorisations (as done in French and English) in a language that only indicates the three tenses through the use of some lexical markers? That is a great difference between Yoruba grammar and other European languages. Yoruba grammar marks tenses and mood through the aid of lexicalisation or utilisation of words whereas English and French grammar could conveniently indicate tenses and moods through verbal auxiliaries or endings.

6.4.3 Morphological Characteristics of Verbs: When we talk of the morphological characteristics of verbs we are looking into the different features and forms that a verb can take in a language. In French and English, we can have passive, infinitive, pronominal or reflexive verbs and an inversion of the verb/pronoun order presentation:

- (a) Introduction of the auxiliary *être* (*to be*) (in a different form) is the verbal marker of the passive verb in French and English grammars. Examples could be seen in:
 1. Olu mange du riz. → Le riz est mangé par Olu.

2. Olu eats rice. → The rice is eaten by Olu.
- (b) The endings: *er, re, ir* and *oir* are infinitive markers in French: manger, prendre, finir, savoir while the introduction of *to* before the verbs depicts our talking of infinitives in English: to eat, to take, to finish, to know etc.
- (c) Introduction of reflexive pronouns such as: *me, te, se, nous, vous* and *se* indicate the pronominal or reflexive form of a verb in French while the English grammar will require the introduction of pronominal such as myself, yourself, himself/herself/itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves in order to form pronominal or reflexive structures.
- (d) Change in the order of presentation of pronominal subject and verb in an interrogative sentences gives us the notion of inversion in French and English grammars:
3. *Vous avez mangé?* → *Avez-vous mangé?*
4. *You have eaten?* → *Have you eaten?*

If we have all these linguistic features in the grammar French and English, we would like to inform you that Yoruba grammar does not have these same grammatical characteristics and markers; there are neither passive, distinctive marker of infinitive forms of verbs nor inversion in Yoruba grammar. Through linguistic process, the equivalent of these grammar features could only be realised in Yoruba but in the same form and structure that one could have in French and English languages.

6.4.4 **Different types of verbs in Yoruba grammar**: If the French and the English grammars demonstrate a sort of superiority over Yoruba grammar through the development and presence of verbal mood, tense and some morphological properties such as passive, infinitive, lexical pronominalisation and inversion, Yoruba grammar also have some grammatical components that are rare in French and English grammars. Among these characteristics are some peculiar types of verbs such as:

- (a) *Serial verbs*
- (b) *Split verbs*

(a) **SERIAL VERBS**: In Yoruba grammar, we can put into use two or several verbs in series which refer to single NP (either nominal or pronominal) without introducing neither conjunction nor preposition (between these verbs and all other linguistic elements of the sentence) such that the entire sentence would have a complete meaning:

5. *Túndé pa eran tà. → Túndé tue un bélier pour vendre. → Tunde slaughters a ram for sale.*

6. *Túndé ra eran pa tà. → Túndé achète un bélier, le tue pour le vendre. → Tunde buys a ram and slaughters it for sale.*

It is very important to note that there are two independent verbs (put in serial) in sentence 5 while that of 6 comprises of three independent verbs. We emphasize, through the choice of independent adjective, on the independence of these verbs put in serial because each of these verbs can exist all alone in a sentence and the sentence will be meaningfully and logically complete:

7. *Túndé ra eran. → Túndé achète un bélier. → Tunde buys a ram.*

8. *Túndé pa eran. → Túndé tue un bélier. → Tunde slaughters a ram.*

9. *Túndé ta eran. → Túndé vend un bélier. → Tunde sells a ram)*

We should note that sentences 7 to 9 are complete in form and in logic. We should note also that the three verbs used separately in sentences 7 to 9 are the three serial verbs used together in one sentence as presented earlier in sentence 6. It is necessary therefore to note that if we want to form similar sentences in French and English languages, as demonstrated in sentences 5 and 6 above, we must use either some prepositions and infinitives or some conjunctions of coordination before the second verb:

10. *Túndé pa eran tà. → Túndé tue un bélier pour vendre. → Tunde slaughters a ram **for sale**.*

11. *Túndé pa eran tà. → Túndé tue un bélier et le vend. → Tunde slaughters a ram **and sells it**.*

However in the construction of serial verbs in Yoruba grammar, we use all these verbs in serial without the usage of neither conjunction, nor preposition, nor infinitive.

(b) **SPLIT VERBS**: Apart from the serial verbs, there are split verbs in Yoruba grammar. This type of verb is a single verb which divides itself into two parts in such a way that the complement of direct object of the sentence is inserted in the middle of this one but ‘split’ verb:

12. *Gbàgbó (Croire) : Mo gba Olórun gbó. → Je crois en Dieu. → I believe in God.*

13. *Padé (Ferme): Olu pa ilèkùn dé. → Olu ferme la porte. → Olu closes the door.*

14. *Bàjé (Détruire) : Fúnsó ba ebí jé. → Funso détruit la famille. → Funso ruins the family.*

15. *Tànje (Decevoir/mentir) :Túndé tan Bólú je . → Tunde a menti à Bolu. → Tunde deceived Bolu.*

16. *Réje (Tricher) :Àgbàlagbà nàà ré omodé yen je. → Cet Adulte a triché l’enfant. → This adult cheated the child.*

We want to stress that these verbs are not of the same category with the serial verbs. They can exist together as one single verb in any construction where they are not taking the complement of direct object in the Deep Structure (DS).

17. *Réje :Omo tí o réje ti dé. → L’enfant que tu as triché est là. → The child you cheated is here.*

18. *Tànje : Eni tí o tànje n bínú. → Celui dont tu a menti est fâché. → The person you deceived to is angry.*

19. *Bàjé : Ebí tí Fúnsó bàjé kò lónkà. → Les familles que Funso a détruit sont nombreuses. → The families that Funsho ruined are numerous.*

20. *Padé : Ilèkùn padé mó mi. → La porte est fermée contre moi. → The door closed on me.*

21. *Gbàgbó : Mo gbàgbó pé Olú yòò wá. → Je crois qu’Olu viendra → I believe that Olu would come.*

As these verbs are used jointly to prove that they are one single unit altogether and are only divisible according to their grammatical situation, we cannot say the same of their ability to function and behave like serial verbs. Each time we attempt to form sentences from any part of these split verbs without the inclusion of their second part in the same sentence, as if we are dealing with serial verbs, these sentences in question would be ungrammatical in form and structure:

22. *Mo gba Olórun*

23. *Mo gbó Olórun*

24. *Olú pa ilèkùn*

- 25. *Olú de ilèkùn*
- 26. *Fúnsó ba ebí*
- 27. *Fúnsó je ebí*
- 28. *Túndé tan Bólú*
- 29. *Túndé je Bólú*
- 30. *Àgbàlagbà nàà ré omodé yen*
- 31. *Àgbàlagbà nàà je omodé yen.*

We can see that all these above sentences are ungrammatical. In sentences 23, 25, 27, 29 and 31 there is an empty category which indicates the point where the second part of this same verb must be inserted. Just as the sentences, which carry the first part of the verbs, contained empty category and trace of the second part of the verbs; sentences 22, 24, 26, 28 and 30 lack grammatical sense. This realisation signifies that it is the first part of these verbs that commands the second part in a sentence where this type of verb exists.

It could be seen from this presentation here that although there is universality in the grammar of all the languages of the world, this universality does not erode the peculiarities known for each of the natural languages. In order to adequately take care of this presumed peculiarity in the grammar of natural languages in particular and in linguistics in general, Noam Chomsky, the protagonist of Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG), in his most recent theory, Minimalist Programme (MP), came with the theory of *parameters*. According to this position, the points of convergence between various natural languages are considered as ‘*Universal Principles*’ (UP) while the points of divergence between two or more languages are nothing but ‘*parameters*’. What is point of convergence and that of divergence preaching if not comparative analysis or comparative grammar? It has been observed that comparative study or appraisal of two or more languages brings out well most of these parameters in various languages.

7. APPRAISAL OF YORUBA VERBLESS SENTENCES, RESUMPTIVE PRONOUNS AND REDUNDANT VERBS

Another discovery we made during the course of our researches on Language Studies, through the aid of Comparative Grammar, is our ability to detect that in Yoruba Language, there are:

- a. Verbless Sentences,
- b. Resumptive Pronouns,
- c. Redundant Verbs.

7.1 **YORUBA VERBLESS SENTENCES**: A lot of Yoruba speakers and specialists alike believe that there is no sentence without a verb in Yoruba. (See Bamgbose 1967, Awobuluyi 1974 etc). They are of the opinion that for a sentence to be grammatically and logically well formed in Yoruba, it must have at least a verb. Verbless sentence in Yoruba is thus considered ungrammatical. But during the course of our studies and research, most especially when we compare Yoruba grammar alongside other grammars of other languages through the aid of Generative Transformational Grammar, as well as Comparative Grammar, we discover that we have at least two verbless but grammatically and logically correct sentence structures in Yoruba language.

Take for instance these two interrogative sentences:

1. *Olú dà ?*
2. *Olú nkó?.*

Most Yoruba speakers and even renowned Yoruba linguists like Bamgbose are of the opinion that they are of interrogative sentences formed with the aid of interrogative verbs such as **dà** and **nkó** (Bamgbose 1990 :185). On realising that this assertion makes Yoruba to be the only language to have interrogative verbs, we decided to probe further. We then made up our mind to subject these two purported interrogative verbs to criteria for determining Yoruba verbs.

In Yoruba grammar, any linguistic element accepted to be a verb must be able to satisfy the following three conditions:

(a) **Nominalization**:- Any true Yoruba verb must allow for its nominalization:

3. *Mò n lo sí èkó. → àlo.*
4. *Mò n bò làti èkó. → àbò.*

(b) **Reduplication**: Any true Yoruba verb must allow for its reduplication thus serving as the subject of focus construction:

5. *Lo → *Lílo ni mo lo sí èkó.**
6. *Bò → *Bíbò ni mò n bò làti èkó.**

(c) **Negativisation**: Any true Yoruba verb must allow for its negativisation thus rendering a negative sentence at ease:

7. *Lo → *Mi ò lo sí èkó.**
8. *Bò → *Mi ò bò làti èkó.**

One could then ask if it is possible to apply these three linguistic conditions to **dà** and **nkó** by saying:

9. *Olú dà ?* → **Ìdà* → **Dídà* → **Olú kò dà*.

10. *Olú n kó?* → **Inko* → **Kinko* → **Olú kò n kó*.

Impossible! One can never nominalise, nor reduplicate nor negativise **dà** or **nkó** so as to have morphologically correct words or syntactically and logically correct sentences as we have in examples 3 - 8 .

A linguistic voyage into the diachronic study (the study of how the language is spoken and used in the past) of Yoruba language will show that these grammatical elements are not verbs. If one considers the old Yoruba with which Bishop Ajayi Crowther translated the Bible from English to Yoruba in 1884, one could note that the Deep structure (DS) of these two sentences are;

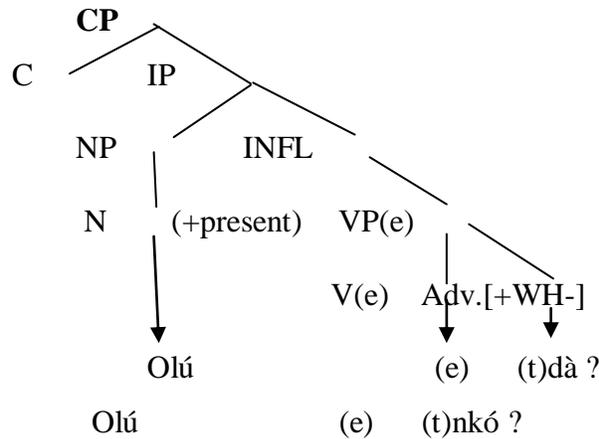
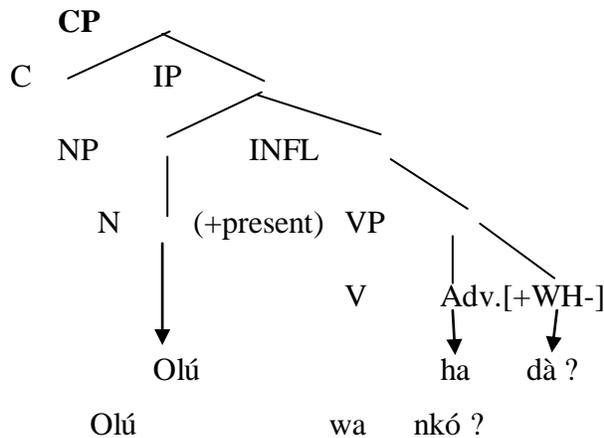
11. *Olú ha dà ?*

12. *Olú wa nkó?*

Which transform into surface structure as:

13. *Olú (e) dà ?*

14. *Olú (e) nkó?*



The verbs of these two sentences are **ha** and **wa** respectively. It is the linguistic evolution of Yoruba language that warranted the suppression of the verbs of these two sentences so that we could have the surface structure in form of :

15. *Olú dà ?*

16. *Olú nkó?*

Even if we consider the synchronic study (the study of the present day use and analysis of a given language) of Yoruba language, It could be adequately proved and justified that these two verbless sentences exist in Yoruba. There are at least two Yoruba dialects of **Ilaje** and **Ikale** (and some other dialects in Kogi State like **Owe**) that suppressed only the adverb as against the suppressed verb in the standard Yoruba. Instead of sentences 15 and 16, these dialects say:

17. *Olú ha ?*

18. *Olú ke?*

More in-depth study of these dialects would yield astonishing revelation in support of our claims. It is as a result of this omnipotent presence of the verbs **ha** and **wa** in the Deep Structure of these two sentences that we could have them constantly existing in their responses. This is why the response to any of these two interrogative sentences can never be formed without the presence of any of these two verbs in them. We say:

19. *Ó wà ní(in standard Yoruba)*

20. *Ó ha ní..... (in dialectal Yoruba) of Ilaje, Ikale, Owe.*

All these analyses, examples and explanation give credence to the fact that we have at least two verbless sentences, at the surface structure level, in Yoruba language.

7.2 RESUMPTIVE PRONOUNS IN YORUBA

Resumptive pronoun is another linguistic phenomenon that is common in Yoruba and most other KWA languages. A pronoun is said to be resumptive in Linguistic studies if this pronoun, a copy of the same person and number with the moved NP from the subject position of the Deep Structure (DS) to the COMP in the Surface structure (SS) of a Raising construction, is stranded or copied at that extraction site of the NP in question. Take for instance a Raising construction like:

21. *Ó jo pé Túndé n gbádùn ara rè.*

This above sentence in 21 is the DS of the Raising construction, it is this same sentence that will be touched by NP movement thus provoking the NP subject (+Noun) of the second clause, **Túndé**, to move from its initial linguistic site (called extraction site) at the DS into another linguistic site (called landing site) at the beginning of the SS. This transformation will enable us to have a sentence like:

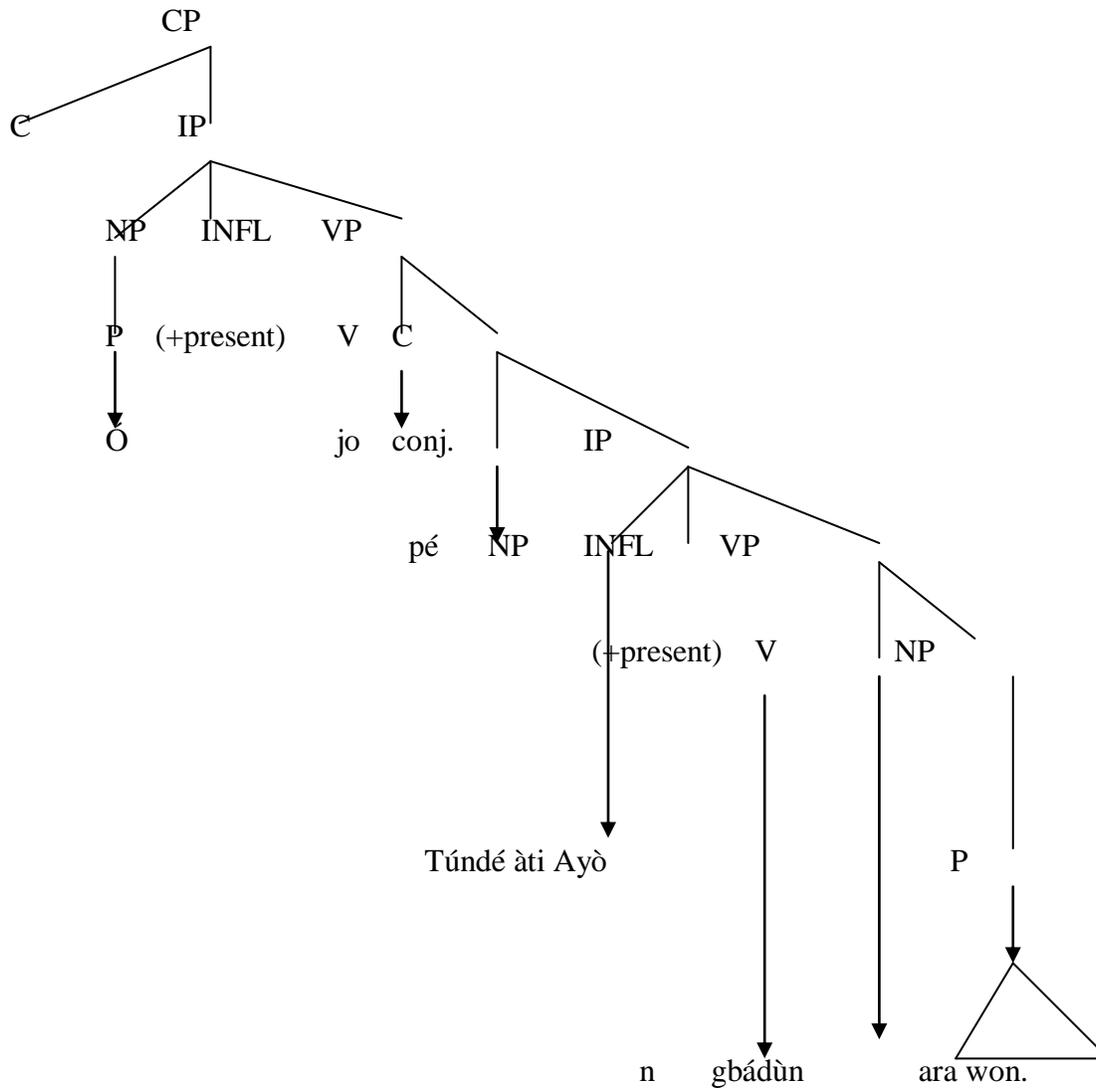
22. *Túndé jo pé ó gbádùn ara rè.*

It could be noted that this linguistic operation, called subject Raising in Transformational Grammar, has aided the movement of **Túndé** from the second clause to the main clause at the beginning of the

sentence. It is possible for an uninitiated linguist or a less versatile Transformational Grammarian to jump to conclusion that what happened between sentences 21 and 22 is a simple case of changing of position more so when we now have Túndé at where we had the pronoun Ó and Ó where we had Túndé.

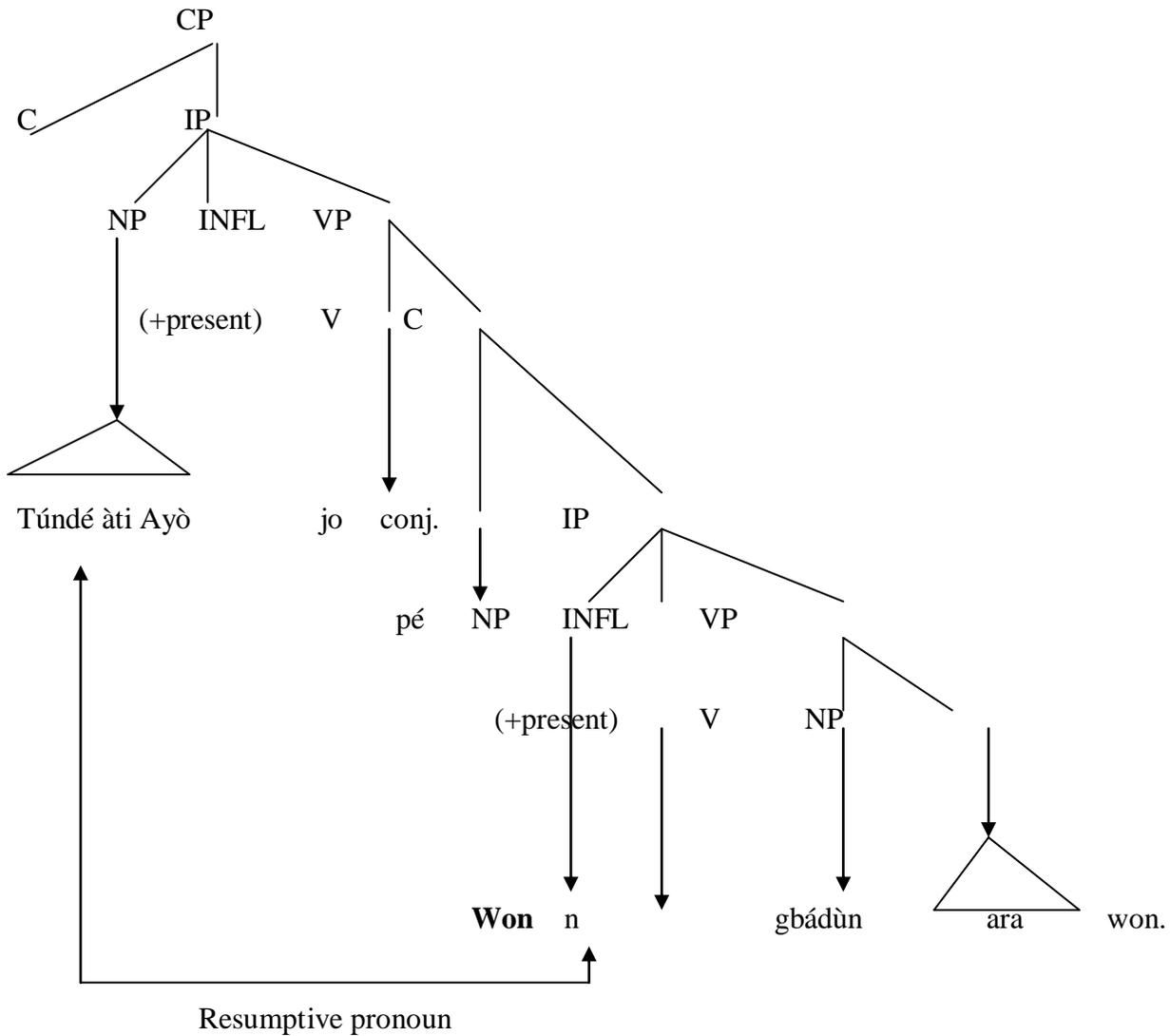
But this assumption will be a bad one if one considers the pluralisation of this Nominal NP subject as it is done in 23 below:

23. *Ó jo pé Túndé àti Ayò n gbádùn ara won.*



The moment we decide to move the nominal subject NP, Túndé àti Ayò, from their extraction site at this DS, we will definitely have a sentence like;

24. *Túndé àti Ayò jo pé wón n gbádùn ara won.*



What we now discover is that **wón** is a third person plural pronoun equivalent of **Túndé àti Ayò** (plural nouns). It could also be observed that this same pronoun is occupying in sentence 24 where **Túndé** and **Ayò** occupied in sentence 23. The impact of this linguistic phenomenon could be more visualised if these same sentences are translated into any of these languages that do not contain the resumptive pronoun saga. Take English and French as our examples:

- 25. *It seems Tunde and Ayo are enjoying themselves (DS).*
- 26. *Il semble que Tunde et Ayo s'amusement (DS).*
- 27. *Tunde and Ayo seem to be enjoying themselves (SS).*
- 28. *Tunde et Ayo semblent s'amuser (SS).*

Looking closely at sentences 25 to 28 in general and 27 and 28 in particular, one could note that the latter do not contain the equivalent of the third person plural pronoun, **wón**, that we have in Yoruba version of these sentences in 24. It could be noted also that this pronoun, **wón**, is retained at that initial position of Tunde and Ayo in sentence 23. It is this linguistic phenomenon that goes through

7.3 YORUBA REDUNDANT VERBS

If the first peculiarity noted in the Yoruba verbless sentence, whereby the verbs of the sentences have been elided, could be explained through deletion, elision and assimilation rules, the case of redundant verbs is a complete opposite of the former. We talk of redundancy in linguistics when the linguistic element in question is not performing any basic and logical grammatical functions but a secondary linguistic function in the sentence or construction under focus.

In any grammatically well-formed sentence, each lexical item is expected to perform either syntactic (morphology and syntax) or semantical function before the existence of this said lexical item could be syntactically justified. But where a linguistic element is satisfying, with its existence, a secondary function such as stylistic or rhythmic functions, we have the tendency of terming this lexical item as being redundant in linguistic. It is where this redundant lexical item is a verb that we call it redundant verb.

In Yoruba grammar, we have this case of redundant verbs in at least three types of sentences. In the traditionally named complex sentences that have subordinate clauses as circumstantial complement of, manner, place or cause, this redundant verbs saga will surface. The redundant verb of circumstantial complement of manner is **se**:

35. *Báwo ni Olú se lo ?*

The redundancy in the circumstantial complement of place could be seen in **ti** :

36. *Ibo ni ariwo ti n wá ?*

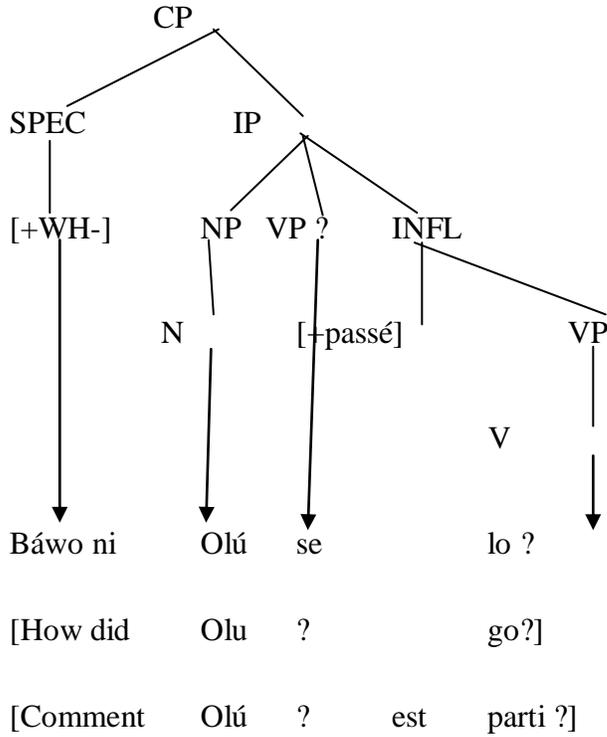
While that of circumstantial complement of cause could be seen in **fi** :

37. *Nitorí kí ni mo fi n se isé?*

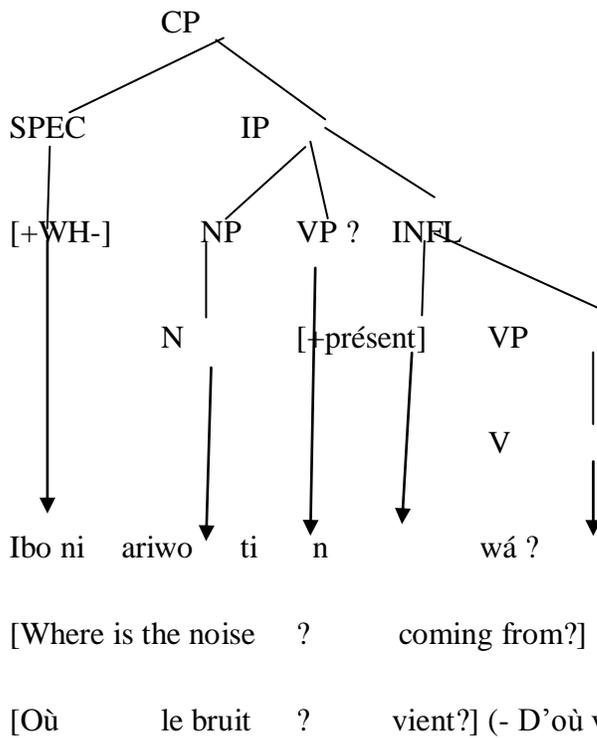
Foremost Yoruba linguists before us have, at various occasions, classified these linguistic elements variously: Bamgbose called them pre-verbs (cf Bamgbose 1967:19), Awobuluyi did not see in them other than prepositions (cf Awobuluyi 1979), Oyelaran considers them as causative verbs (cf Oyelaran 1982) while Soyoye sees in them Valency Increasing Markers (VIM) (cf Soyoye 1991). We disagree with all these classifications.

In order to justify our disagreement thus making our analysis explicit and universal, maybe we should translate these three sentences into English and French once again so that we could easily compare and contrast to see if these items are truly redundant or not :

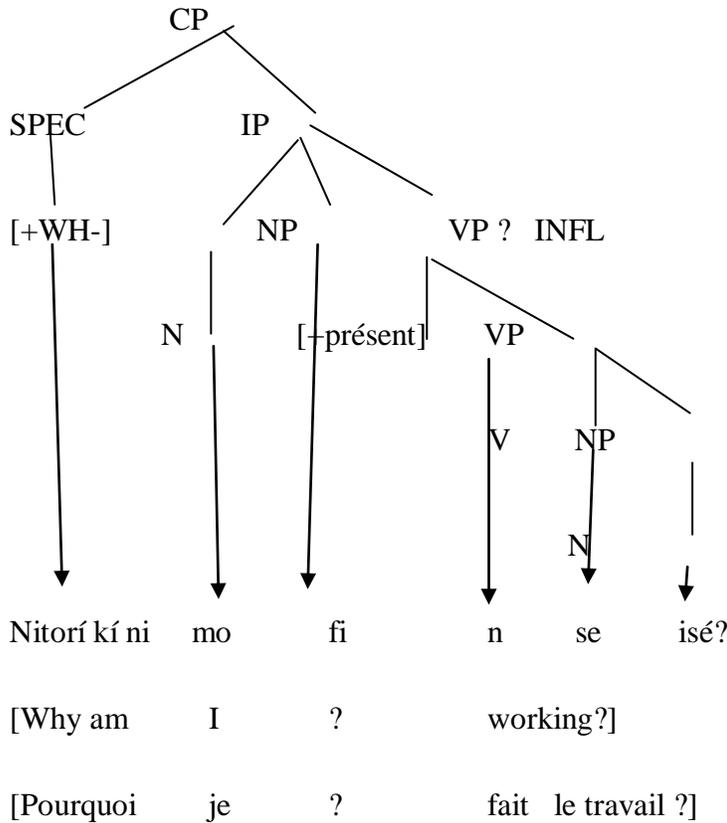
38. *How did Olu go ?*
 39. *Comment Olu est parti?*



40. *Where is the noise coming from ?*
 41. *D'où vient -ils bruit?*



42. *Why am I working ?*
 43. *Pourquoi je travaille ?*



A closer look at these underlined linguistic elements in sentences 35 to 37 above will show that each of them do not really have a syntactic nor a semantic function it is performing in these sentences. This is why Ore Yusuf (1997) called them ‘bleached verbs’. But we would like to see them as redundant verbs. And a cursory look at this Deep structure will give credence to this assertion:

44. *Olú lo báwo ? - Báwo ni Olú se lo ?*
 45. *Ariwo n wá níbo ? - Níbo ni ari wo ti n wá ?*
 46. *Mò n se isé nítori ki - Nítori kí ni mo fi n se isé?.*

It could be clearly observed that the underlined words in sentences 44 - 46 do not exist in the DS. Yet we have them in the SS. With the aid of Generative Transformational Grammar Theory and comparative grammar analysis, this phenomenon could be easily explained. According to the TG theory, the syntactic component with the aid of structural rules and lexical insertion rules engender the DS. This engendered DS depends on the semantic component and its projection rules to give us the meaning of the sentence. But for this sentence to be adequately pronounced, the transformational rules must convert the DS into the SS. It is at the level of this transformational conversion that a lot of things happen. These transformational rules could either introduce new linguistic elements to the SS, or even eliminate some lexical items from the DS. All these operation

are done by the transformational rules through the aid of sound sequences and phonological rules of the phonological components and the logical form rules so that we could pronounce rhythmically and easily.

Going by this analysis of the theoretical framework of the TG, it could then be clearer that these linguistic elements - **se, ti, fi** - in these sentences at the SS are introduced for phonological reason. They are to facilitate the rhythmical need of the pronunciation (and the lexicography) of these sentences. If not because of their existence in these sentences, there would have been a sort of phonological and rhythmic gap in their pronunciation.

8. **APPRAISAL OF PREPOSITIONAL AND ANTITHETICAL PROPERTIES IN SOME YORUBA VERBS**

Grammar is an interesting part of any human language. It proffers the rules, the theories and all the guidelines used in speaking and writing the said language correctly. Learning grammar is also as interesting as the grammatical rules themselves. From Greek to Latin, from Plato to Quintilien, each of these traditional grammarians had been out, some thousands of years ago, to outwit each other in the propagation and classification of grammatical classes.

Remember that the Structural grammarians tore into pieces all the theoretical postulations of the traditional grammarians. Nor do we forget that Noam Chomsky, since 1957, has been coming at regular intervals with grammatical theories that make non-sense of all the earlier theories, either by him or by any other persons. In grammar, criticism is the order of the day. It is in grammar that we realise, more than in other disciplines, that dynamism means constant changes. Remember Plato was the first person to identify the grammatical differences between Nouns and Verbs. His school of thought identified the first two grammatical theories: theory of words and theory of sentences. Through the aid of their theory of words, eight parts of speech have been identified and they are:

<i>Noun</i>	<i>Verb</i>	<i>Conjunction</i>
<i>Pronoun</i>	<i>Adverb</i>	<i>Interjection</i>
<i>Adjective</i>	<i>Preposition</i>	

Since the establishment of this classical classification, despite the inadequacies identified in these parts of speech, grammarians, from Ferdinand de Saussure to Nikolai Trubetzkoy, to Serge Karcevski, to Roman Jakobson, to Louis Hjelmslev, to Edward Sapir, to Léonard Bloomfield, to Martinet, to Halliday, to Noam Chomsky, to Ross, to Radford, to Cook, to Pollock, to Richard Kayne, to Bamgbose, to Awobuluyi, to Emanuel Kwofie, to Tunde Ajiboye, to Ajeigbe, to Awoyale, to Owolabi, to Ore Yusuff, to Soyoye, to Remi Sonaiya and to a host of millions of Structural and Transformational grammarians too numerous to mention, none of them has succeeded in saying that these globally accepted parts of speech are inadequate.

But the acceptance of these basic parts of speech does not stop us from criticising them from time to time and suggesting few modifications to them here and there. Remember, Saussure started the logical attack on this theory of words; he called these parts of speech as ‘bunch of normative and prescriptive rules that compel grammarians to fill in the lexical gaps with linguistic elements’. If Saussure has realised this defect long ago, we would then be pardoned if we come out in this aspect of our work to identify some grammatical inadequacies that the over generalisation of the prescriptive classification could cause if the ‘*Universal Principles*’ (UP) and ‘*parameters*’ theories, propounded by Noam Chomsky in his Minimalist Programme (MP), are not respected.

We would like to remind you that unlike the Structural grammarians who believe that the grammar of human languages cannot be universal, Chomsky is of the contrary opinion that the grammar of all human natural languages is universal. He postulates that peculiarities of each of the languages could be linguistically handled with the aid of parametric rules. It is the application of the parametric rules to Yoruba that allowed us to note that Yoruba verbs have prepositional and antithetical properties.

8.1 **Definition of terms:**

8.1a. **What is a verb?** To traditional grammarians, a verb is doing word in a sentence. To Structural grammarians verbs are words that express what a subject does in a sentence; what happens to an object in a sentence; what the subject feels, experiences or thinks or even the state of things in a sentence. It could be deduced from these definitions that a verb could be described as a

grammatical word that expresses what a subject is, feels, experiences, thinks or even does to the object in a given sentence. It is generally accepted that verb is the most important of all the parts of speech for it is the “backbone” of any grammatical structure.

8.1b **What is a preposition?** Traditional grammarians define a preposition as a word or group of words used with a noun or noun equivalent to show the link between that noun (or noun equivalent) which it governs and another word. Some other grammarians could not even see preposition more than word or group of words used before a noun or a pronoun to show place, position, time or method. But if one considers the fact that for an intransitive verb to take the complement of the object, it needs a preposition, then it could be argued that grammatical functions of prepositions could not be limited to nouns and noun equivalents alone. Preposition could therefore be seen as a grammatical word or group of words that allow an intransitive verb to take the complement of the object in a given sentence thus coming before a noun or a pronoun to show place, position, time or method

8.1c **What is antithesis?** Antithesis simply means the opposite of ‘thesis’; anything that depicts the opposite of something or another thing. Antithesis is the contrast between two or more things. A word created from two compounded words: **anti** and **thesis**. *Anti* is a Greek word that means *negation* whereas *thesis* is another word that means affirmation, postulation or innovation. Antithesis is thus an idea that negates the already established idea; something that is directly opposite of another thing.

8.2 APPRAISAL OF PREPOSITIONAL PROPERTIES IN SOME YORUBA VERBS

8.2.1 PREPOSITIONAL VERBS: If one closely considers the definitions of verbs and that of preposition given, it could be observed that each of these two grammatical words belongs to different linguistic classification. Verbs are seen to be stating the actions or the relationship between the subject and the object of a given sentence while preposition on the other hand links the verbs with the noun. But how do we describe a single word that could adequately play the verbal role in

one sentence while playing a prepositional role in another sentence? Although this kind of lexical items are not common in most languages, they exist in Yoruba. It is the group of these special word identified by us in the Grammar of Yoruba that we call *Prepositional Verbs (PV)* because these lexical items have some verbal particles and they also possess at the same time some prepositional characteristics: in two different sentences, one same word can function as a verb in one and as a preposition in the other. Take for instance the examples we are presenting hereunder:

1. Fún:

(a) Olú ko létà **fún** (Preposition) mi. → Olu a écrit une lettre **pour** moi. → Olu wrote a letter **for** me.

(b) Olú **fún** (Verb) mi ní létà. → Olu m'**a donné** une lettre. → Olu **gave** me a letter.

2. Ní:

(a) Bólú wà **ní** (Preposition) ilé. → Bolu est **dans** la maison. → Bolu is **in** the house.

(b) Bólú **ní** (Verb) owó. → Bolu **a** de l'argent. → Bolu **has** some money.

3. Bá:

(a) Túndé **bá** (Preposition) Olú lo sí Èkó. → Tunde est parti à Lagos **avec** Olu. → Tunde left for Lagos **with** Olu.

(b) Túndé **bá** (Verb) Olú ní ilé. → Tunde **a rencontré** Olu dans la maison. → Tunde **met** Olu at home.

4. Fì:

(a) Bámidélé **fì** (Preposition) òbe gé eran. → Bamidele a coupé la viande **avec** le couteau. → Bamidele cut the meat **with** knife.

(b) Bámidélé **fi** (Verb) owó si apo. → Bamidele **met** l'argent dans la poche. → Bamidele **puts** money in the pocket.

5. Lé:

(a) Mo jókòó **lé** (Preposition) àga. → Je m'assois **sur** une chaise. → I sit **on** a chair.

(b) Mo **lé** (Verb) ata sí orí igbá. → J'**étale** les piments sur la table. → I **display** the peppers on the table.

If one closely looks at the Yoruba versions of sentences 1 to 5, one would observe that it is the same lexical item highlighted above that is made use of in the (a) and (b) sets of the sentences. It could also be observed that while these words function as prepositions in the (a) sets, they are verbal in the (b) sets. This is why we name them as Prepositional Verb (PV).

This type of verbs has generated controversies and confusions among linguists and scholars in Yoruba grammar. Bangbose (1967) sees them as verbs (pre-verb), while Awobuluyi (1979) only sees them as prepositions, Oyelaran (1982) and Soyoye (1991) considered two: "Fi and ba", among these five linguistic elements and name them causative verbs (causative verbs for Oyelaran and Valency increasing markers for Soyoye) respectively.

It is this confusion that encourages us to take a look at this type of verbs and after a logical analysis of some valid examples, we see in these lexical items some equal valencies in the preposition and in the verb. This is why we call them prepositional verbs; verbs that have prepositional features and also contain verbal particles.

8.3 APPRAISAL OF ANTITHETICAL PARTICLES IN SOME YORUBA VERBS

8.3.1 ANTITHETICAL VERBS: The term *Antithetical Verb* is derived from the noun, Antithesis. If Antithesis, as defined above, is any idea that negates the already established idea; something that is directly opposite of another thing, then an *Antithetical Verb* is a verb that has two

different opposite meanings. In Yoruba language, there are some verbs that have these antithetical particles in them. We present hereunder the analysis of few of them:

6. **Dá**

*Mo bá ikú jà, mo dá ikú, → I fought death, I **conquered** death,
Mo bá àrùn jà, mo dá àrùn, → I fought disease, I **conquered** disease,
Mo bá àseèrì jà, mo dá àseèrì → I fought poverty, I **conquered** poverty.*

*Mo bá Olódùmarè jà, Olórun nikan ló dá mi, → I fought God, but God **created** me.*

*Eni Olórun dá, kò seé fara wé! → Whoever that God **created**, cannot be imitated!*

In the above context, the first three **dá** signify the idea of conquering and destruction while the remaining two **dá** connote creation and development, hence our establishing antithetical particles in these Yoruba verbs. Let us use these same parameters to assess these remaining examples:

7. **Fé**

*Ayé yòò ma fé o, → The world shall **love** you,
Nítòrí àféká laráyé n fé iná. → As every individual **blows** the fire from different directions.*

8. **Jó**

*Bí wèrè bá n jó l'ójà, àwon àgbà á máa wòran lóòotó, → If a mad person is **dancing** in the market place, the elders do watch truly,
Sùgbón won kò wo ijó tí wèrè n jó, bíkòse ti iná tí ayé fi n jó jagunlabi lábé aso. → But they are not watching the **dancing** as done by the mad person, rather the burning of the fire with which the spiritual world is **burning** him underneath the cloth.*

9. **Ro**

*Mo ro obè. → I **stirred** the stew.
Mo ro ìgbésí ayé mi. → I **think** of my future.*

10. **Fún**

*Mo fún e lówó. → I **gave** you money.
Ó fún mi pa. → He **squeezed** me to death.
Mo fún osàn. → I **squeezed** the orange.*

11. **Pa**

*Bólá pa obì. → Bola **breaks** Kola.
Túndé pa eran. → Tunde **kills** ram.
Délé pa ayò. → Dele **wins** game.*

12. **Ta**

*Olú ta eran. → Olu **sells** ram.
Túndé ta ayò. → Tunde **plays** game.
Bólá ta ìbon. → Bola **fires** the bullet.*

13. **So**

*Yétúndé so ìtàn. → Yetunde **narrates** story.*

*Bólá so eja sí enu. → Bola **throws** fish into the mouth.*

14. **Sun**

*Dàda **sun** ilé → Dada **burns** the house.*

*Tolú **sun** ekún. → Tolu **cries**.*

15. **Lé**

*Fúnmi **lé** ata. → Funmi **spreads** pepper.*

*Àwon olópàá **lé** olè. → The Police **pursue** the robber.*

These special and peculiar verbs in Yoruba Language are essential elements that make the Yoruba language interesting. They bring out the unique characteristics of the language. Prepositional Verbs are unique to Yoruba grammar so it is for Antithetical Verbs. What the presence of these two special verbs goes to prove is the applicability of Noam Chomsky's parametric rules to Yoruba grammar. These rules allow for linguists to research into and analyse the peculiarities that are known for a language but which are rare or different in another language. Identification of peculiarities of a language through the aid of parametric rules also assists linguists to use the parameters of these peculiarities to look for their equivalents in other languages of the same linguistic family with the language analysed. Who knows, with the aid of these verbal analyses through our comparative grammar rules, some African linguists could also discover Prepositional Verbs or Antithetical Verbs in some of the KWA languages.

9. **CONCLUSION**

With all said and done, we have tried to put it across to our listeners that Yoruba, like any other languages, has its peculiarities. We would like to note that our position here is not out to make non-sense of earlier assertions of previous works of linguists in these linguistic areas nor is it claiming to have given a definitive prescription to these Yoruba grammar peculiarities through the aid of comparative grammar.

Grammarians before us who have treated these topics and ended up with different results to this one might have used different theory from the one we are using now. It is possible for the coming generations also to be at the disposal of newer theory that could allow for looking at these peculiarities (or even some other new ones) from other angles. We are sure that either of these two possibilities would not take the genuinity and originality of form, content and intention away from this lecture. Our major objective in this paper is to contribute to knowledge by lightening the linguistic torchlight into some linguistic grey areas in various languages that we understand. Our

readers will be in better position then to judge whether or not this objective has been partially or fully achieved.

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