

Categorial Status of Yoruba Attributive Modifiers

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Abstract

This paper re-examines claims in the literature that Yoruba attributive words such as **dúdú** 'black', **pupa** 'red', **funfun** 'white', etc., which function as modifiers of N, are adjectives. It provides data and analytic evidence to show that the items have the morphology and syntax of nominals. The fact that the items in question have the syntactic distribution and morphology of nouns; semantically refer to attributive features such as colour, size, quantity, etc. of concrete nouns; and sometimes function as verbs with the same phonetic forms informs the conclusion that they are not canonic adjectives but derived nouns converted to verbs and possibly adjectives, respectively, via a N→V/A conversion process. It equally argues that forms like **burúkú** 'bad' and **wẹ́ẹ́rẹ́** 'small (-bits)' are morpho-syntactically fused compounds consisting of verb + degree adverb.

Keywords: adjective; nominal; verb; attributive; reference; conversion.

1. Introduction

Attributive items such as **dúdú** ‘black’, **pupa** ‘red’, **funfun** ‘white’, **ńlá** ‘big’, **kékeré** ‘small’, **tuntun** ‘new’, etc., as illustrated in (1a-c), are analyzed as adjectives or adjective/adjectival qualifiers in most of the literature on Yoruba grammar (Bamgboṣe 1967, 1990; Awobuluyi 1978; etc.).

- 1a. *aṣo* **dúdú/funfun/pupa**
cloth black/white/red
‘black/white/red clothe’
- b. *ilé* **ńlá/kékeré**
house big/small
‘big/small house’
- c. *ọkọ* **tuntun**
vehicle new
‘new vehicle’

However, apart from their semantic features, which appear to parallel those of canonic adjectives in languages like Dutch, English, and French in that they are attributive in nature, there appears to be no other serious structural justification for analyzing them as adjectives. Drawing inferences from their morphological structure and syntactic distribution, this paper discusses the extent to which the words in question could be considered adjectives in the language. The paper is organized in five sections. This section introduces the study. Section two is devoted to adjective category and morphological structures of the words being understudied. Issues bothering on the syntactic distribution of the words are considered in section three; section four focuses on implications of the position taken in the study; while conclusions are drawn in section five on the basis of findings in sections three and four.

2. The adjective category

Adjective is a syntactic category of words that modify noun (N) within the noun phrase (NP). Adjectives provide additional information about the N thereby narrowing down its meaning to certain feature specifics which differentiate such N from others in the discourse context (Dixon 1982; Creissels 2000). Adjective is one of the optional complements which pre-/post-modify N within NP. The modification type depends largely on whether a language is syntactically head-first or head-last. For instance, attributive adjectives in languages like Dutch and English are pre-nominal modifiers while their counterparts in Yoruba are post-nominal (Déchaine 1993:80-81; Donaldson 1997:50; Radford 2004: 32).

Functionally, adjectives may be attributive or predicative. In their attributive function, they perform the modification function as a complement of N inside NP, as in the Yoruba and Dutch examples in (2).

2a. ọgèdè **dúdú**
 plantain black
 ‘unripe plantain’

b. **mojie** foto
 ‘beautiful picture’

However, in their predicative function, adjectives possess the structural ability to function as the predicate of the clause. They more or less take over the function of the verb (V) in such clauses which lack the presence of lexical verb. A copula is often used alongside the adjective in such clauses, depending on the language. Adjectives functioning in such capacity, e.g. Dutch **groot** and English **good/bad/wicked** in contexts like (3b) and (4b), are called *predicative adjectives*.

3a. een **groot** huis
 INDF big house
 ‘a big house’

b. *Het huis is groot*
 DEF house be big/large
 ‘The house is big.’

4a. *John is good/bad/wicked.*
 b. *John is a good/bad/wicked man.*

2.1. Adjectives and their morphology in Yoruba

Words often categorized as adjectives in Yoruba, as evident in examples (1a-c), are basically attributive in nature. Earlier works (e.g. Delano 1965; Bamgbose 1966, 1990; Awobuluyi 1972, 1978; Déchaine 1993; and Ọduntan 2000) have argued, contra Afolayan (1972), that there is no structural justification for a predicative adjective category in Yoruba. Their position, to which we fully concur in this study, is premised on the syntactic properties of the speculated predicative adjectives in the language, e.g. **ga** ‘tall’, **kún** ‘full’, **gbón** ‘be wise’, **dára** ‘be good’, etc. which favour their analysis as lexical verbs with attributive meanings.

A careful consideration of relevant data on the internal structure of words considered as adjectives in Yoruba shows that all of them are derived forms, with the exception of **diẹ** ‘few, little’ and **gbogbo** ‘all’, which we consider to be lexicalizations of existential and universal quantifiers. Awobuluyi (1978:37) seems to share this same intuition when he reported that *the vast majority, if not all, of such adjectives are derived. ... from nouns and verb phrases in a relative clause*. He however did not provide any examples. Bamgbose (1990) classifies Yoruba adjectives into two: the non-derived root adjectives such as **kékeré** ‘small’, **ńlá** ‘big’, **dúdú** ‘black’, **rere** ‘good’, **pupa** ‘red’, **púpọ** ‘many’, **funfun** ‘white’, **diẹ** ‘little’, **gbogbo** ‘all’; and the derived adjectives which he also claimed are derived from verbs in relative clauses (cf. Awobuluyi 1978), as illustrated in (5) (adapted directly from Bamgbose 1990:123).

5a. <i>isẹ́ lile</i>	(= <i>isẹ́ tí ó le</i>)
work hard	work REL HTS hard
‘hard work’	‘a work which is hard/difficult’

- b. *àwo fífọ* (= *àwo tí ó fọ*)
 ceramic broken ceramic REL HTS break)
 ‘broken ceramic’ ‘a ceramic which is broken’
- c. *omi mínu* (= *omi tí wọn máa n mu*)
 water drinking water REL 3PL-HTS HAB PROG drink
 ‘drinking water’ ‘water which people drink’
- d. *eja dín-dín* (= *eja tí wọn dín*)
 fish fried fish REL3PL-HTS fry
 ‘fried fish’ ‘fish which is fried’

We however argue that those words in the two subgroups are morphologically derived. Apart from **díẹ** and **gbogbo**, which are quantifiers for which we do not have any evidence of derivation, evidence abound showing that the rest of the words in the allegedly non-derived group are actually derived via partial reduplication, just like those in (5).

Our position in this study is that the vast majority of items analysed as adjectives in Yoruba are actually derived through reduplication, and if that is the case, we should suspect that they are nouns, as it is common knowledge in the literature that reduplication is one of the core morphological processes employed in the derivation of nouns in Yoruba grammar. Two subgroups are easily identifiable in this regard: (a) those derived through partial reduplication (which consists of the two groups of Bamgbose (1990); and (b) those derived via full reduplication illustrated in (6).

- 6a. *óunjẹ dárádára*
 food good
 ‘good food’
- b. *ọwọ díẹdíẹ*
 respect little~little
 ‘little-little respect’

These two items in boldface in (6) are also said to be used as adverbs in the literature, especially in sentences like (7):

7. *Jidé n sùn **dáadáa / dièdiè***
 Jide PROG sleep well / little~little
 ‘Jide is sleeping well.’/ ‘Jide is sleeping little by little.’

It is noteworthy that these same items categorized as adverbs in (7) have been argued to be nouns (Awobuluyi 1975, 2013) given their morphology and syntactic behaviour. This further reinforces the position in this paper that the items in question are not adjectives but derived nouns. The derivations of the two groups are considered in the following subsections.

2.1.1. Partially reduplicated forms

The lexical structure of the highlighted attributive words in (8) shows a regular pattern of partial reduplication:

- 8a. *òbúkọ **dúdú / pupa/ funfun / ñlá***
 he-goat black / red / white / big
 ‘black/red/white/big he-goat’
- b. *ọmọ **kékere /kúkurú / búburú***
 child small / short / bad
 ‘small/short/bad child’
- c. *igi **gíga/gbígbe/tútù/tuntun***
 tree tall /dry /wet /new
 ‘tall/dry/wet/new tree’
- d. *aşọ **pípọn/bibọn/púpọ***
 cloth dirty/worn/plenty
 ‘dirty/worn/plenty clothes’
- f. *orúkọ/işé **rere***
 name/work good
 ‘good name/work’

With the exception of **tutù** ‘cool, cold’ discussed later in §3.3, we are of the opinion that each of the highlighted words in (8a-f) is derived from a distinct verb root, as illustrated in (9).

9a. <i>dú</i> ‘be black’	→ <i>didú</i>	→ <i>dúdú</i> ‘black’
b. <i>[?]pa</i> ‘be red’	→ <i>pipa</i>	→ <i>pupa</i> ‘red’
c. <i>fun (/fún)</i> ‘be white’	→ <i>fifun</i>	→ <i>funfun</i> ‘white’
d. <i>[?]lá</i> ‘be big’	→ <i>lilá/nilá</i>	→ <i>ńlá</i> ‘big’
e. <i>tun</i> ‘be new’	→ <i>titun</i>	→ <i>tuntun</i> ‘new’
f. <i>ga</i> ‘tall’	→ <i>gíga</i>	→ <i>gíga</i> ‘tall, being tall’
g. <i>gbẹ</i> ‘to dry’	→ <i>gbígbe</i>	→ <i>gbígbe</i> ‘dry’
h. <i>pọn</i> ‘be dirty, red’	→ <i>pípọn</i>	→ <i>pípọn</i> ‘dirty/change colour, red’
i. <i>pọ</i> ‘be plenty’	→ <i>pípọ</i>	→ <i>púpọ</i> ‘plenty’
j. <i>bọn</i> ‘be worn’	→ <i>bibọn</i>	→ <i>bibọn</i> ‘worn’
k. <i>kéré</i> ‘be small’	→ <i>kikéré</i>	→ <i>kékeré</i> /* <i>kékéré</i> ‘small’

1. *kúrú* → *kíkúrú* → *kúkúrú/kúkúrú*
 ‘be short’ ‘short’

m. *burú/búrú*¹ → *biburú/bibúrú* → *búburú/búbúrú*
 ‘be wicked, bad’ ‘wicked/bad’

It is pertinent to mention and clarify two issues that may arise from (9): (i) the restricted or near obsolete nature of some of the verb roots in (9a-d), i.e. **dú**, **pa**, **fun**, and **lá**, in contemporary Standard Yoruba (SY henceforth) does not rule them out as verbs in the language. They are still being actively used as verbs both in SY (though restrictedly) and much more in other Yorùbá dialects. For instance, relics of the verbs are still found in various Yorùbá traditional names of persons, places, and other dialectal expressions such as those in (10-12).

10a. *a-* [VP [V **dú** [ní ojú]]] → *adúlójú*
 one-who-is black LOC eye ‘one who is black
 (on the face)’

b. *a-* [VP [V **dú** [V **mú** ara dán]²]] → *adúmáadán*
 one-who-is black make body shine ‘one who is
 black and shining.’

c. *Ìrẹ̀sà a-* **dú** → *Ìrẹ̀sà-adú* (cf. *Ìrẹ̀sà a-dúdú*)
 Irẹ̀sà one-who-is black ‘Ìrẹ̀sà of the black / dark
 complexioned one’
 ‘an ancient Yorùbá town in Oyo state’

d. *É* **dú** wòdò (Akúrẹ̀: a CY dialect)
 HTS black DEG
 ‘It is very black.’

¹ This form is available and well-formed in dialects like Àkúrẹ̀, Mòbà, Ìkálẹ̀, and Ìlájẹ̀.

² The semantic import of this structure is that of ‘an individual whose blackness causes his/her body to shine’. In other words, the second V here, **mú** is causative.

- 11a. ϵ - *fun* → *efun*
 thing-which-is white traditional name connected
 to colour white';
 'white powder/chalk'; 'whiteness'
- b. *Efun ún yí mi ká* → *Efún yínká*
 whiteness HTS roll 1SG round 'whiteness surrounds me.'
 'traditional name connected to the whiteness of a deity'
- c. *É fún gbòò* (Akúrẹ: a CY dialect)
 HTS white DEG
 'It is very white.'
- 12a. *Ìrẹ̀sà a- pa* → *Ìrẹ̀sàpa* (cf. *Ìrẹ̀sà a-pupa*)
 Irẹ̀sa one-who-is red 'ancient Yoruba town close to
 Irẹ̀sà-adú'
 'Irẹ̀sa of the fair-complexioned one'
- b. *Òkìtì i- pa* → *Òkìtìpa* (*Òkìtì pupa*)³
 boulder that-which-is red 'ancient Yorùbá town
 in Ondo State'; 'literally:
 the red boulder'

In similar vein, *lá* 'big, to be big' is still employed as verb in Ìlájẹ and Ìkálẹ dialects of Ondo State, as illustrated in (13), which is a common saying in the area.

13. *Ayé yìí mà lá/lála ò*⁴
 Earth/world this indeed big PART
 'This earth/world is indeed big/large.'

³. Indigenes of this town normally call it *òkìtìpa* which to them literally means *òkìtì pupa* 'the red boulder' which non-indigenes often call it.

⁴. This expression was reported to be central to the origin of a deity called *Ayé lála* among the Ìlájẹ and Ìkálẹ. Cf. the following Akurẹ dialect question and answer expressions:

Question: *Ṣé ó lálá* 'Is it big?'

Answer: *É kàn lá kànkàn* 'It is not big at all.'

Constructions like (13) provide strong evidence in support of the position that SY **nílá** ‘big’ derivationally originated from the verb root **lá** through partial reduplication of the root as illustrated earlier in (9d). It is also interesting to note that /l/ and /n/ are allophones in Yoruba phonology and that the form **nílá** is still employed in SY constructions such as the ones in (14) (cf. the Akurẹ example in footnote 4).

14a. *Ìwé yẹn-ẹn nílá/níla.*
 Book that-HTS big
 ‘That book is big.’

b. *Şé kékeré àbí nílá?*
 Q small or big
 ‘Is it the small or big (one)?’

Similarly, the use of **tù** ‘cool’ and **tun** ‘new’ as verbs is still visible in SY, as confirmed in constructions like (15a-e).

15a. *Ìlú á tù ibà á tù isẹ (i.e. tùba ... tùşẹ)*
 town FUT cool homage FUT cool authority
 ‘The town will be peaceful.’

b. *Olúwa yòò tù ú ní inú*
 Lord FUT cool 3SG-ACC LOC stomach
 ‘The Lord will heal his/her wounded heart.’

c. *Ó ti n tù mí*
 HTS PRF PROG COOL SG-ACC
 ‘It is relieving me.’

d. *ìgbà ọ- tun → ìgbà ọtun*
 season PREF new ‘new season’

e. *ọ- tun ọla → ọtunla*
 PREF new tomorrow ‘the day after tomorrow’

(ii) the forms in the middle column, e.g. **dídú**, **pipa**, etc. in the morphological derivation presented in (9) are possible alternatives used in place of the final outputs almost in all Yoruba dialects, SY inclusive. They therefore represent a stage in the V→N derivation process.

It is also important to underscore the fact that examples of constructions like (15a-c) show that the items under discussion co-occur with tense and aspect markers, and that supports the position of this paper that they are verb roots.

Morphological evidence from words like **i-re** ‘good’, **à-re** ‘vindication’, **o-rire** → **oire** → **oore** ‘good/help’ suggest that **rere** ‘good’ in phrases like **orúkọ rere** ‘good name’ is equally derived through partial reduplication from the root V **re** (i.e. **re** → **rire** → **rere**). In addition to this, the syntactic distribution of **rere** as illustrated in (16a-c) parallels those of nouns in Yorùbá.

16a. *È se rere.*
 2PL do good
 ‘You (PL) do/be good.’

b. *Rere dára ní síṣe.*
 good be-good in doing
 ‘Doing good is good.’; ‘It is good to do good.’

c. *Rere ni N ó(ò) ṣe, N ò ní í ṣèkà.*
 good FOC 1SG FUT do 1SG NEG FUTHTS do.evill
 ‘I shall do GOOD and not evil.’

What these pieces of evidence clearly show is that items highlighted as adjectives in (5 and 8) are derived from monosyllabic verb roots through partial reduplication, which is a pointer to the fact that they are nouns.

2.1.2. Fully reduplicated forms

These are attributive words derived by fully reduplicating a root or stem which may be a V/VP, such as **dára** ‘be good’, or a quantifier like **díṣẹ** ‘few, little’. For instance, **dáradára** is a word

derived by fully reduplicating **dára**, an N-incorporated V root, as illustrated in (17a).

17a. *dá ara* → *dára* → *dáradára*
 well body ‘OK, good’ ‘good’

b. *ara rẹ̀ kò dá*
 body 3SG-GEN NEG well
 ‘He/she is not OK/feeling well.’

(17b) is a clausal example showing how the two words in **dára** are used independently of one another in the syntax. Similarly, though not exactly the same way, **díèdíè** is derived through full reduplication of the quantifier **díè**.

2.1.3. Others

Apart from the reduplicated types already discussed, there are other word items such as **wẹ̀rẹ̀/wẹ̀éré** ‘small pieces’, **tẹ̀éré/tínínrín** ‘tiny, slim, slender’, and **burúkú**, as illustrated in (18), which have been analysed as adjectives in Yoruba. Our observation of the structural make-up of words in this group is that each of them is made up of a combination of verb plus modifying degree adverb, which have become fused or compounded.

18a. *òkúta wẹ̀rẹ̀ / wẹ̀éré / burúkú*
 stone small-bits / small-pieces / bad
 ‘small-pieces/small-bits of stones’; ‘bad stone’

b. *Òkúta yẹ̀n-ẹ̀n wẹ̀ rẹ̀rẹ̀⁵* → *òkúta yẹ̀n wẹ̀éré*
 stone that-HTS small DEG
 ‘Those stones are made up of very small-pieces/small-bits.’

⁵. Cf. *ẹ̀- kún rẹ̀rẹ̀* → *ẹ̀kún rẹ̀rẹ̀*
 PREF full DEG ‘full to the brim’

- c. *Ọmọ yẹn-ẹn burú kú⁶* → (cf. *ọmọ burúkú*)
 Child that-HTS wicked DEG child bad
 ‘That child is very wicked.’ ‘bad/wicked child’
- d. *igi tẹ́ẹ́rẹ́/tínínrín*
 stick/tree tiny/slim
 ‘tiny slim tree/stick’
- e. *igi yẹ-ẹn tẹ́ rẹ́rẹ́* → *tẹ́ẹ́rẹ́*
 stick/tree that-HTS spread-tiny DEG
 ‘That stick/tree is tiny/slim.’
- f. *ẹsẹ ọmọ yẹn-ẹn tin.* (i.e. *tin rínrín* → *tínínrín*)
 leg child that-HTS tiny tiny DEG
 ‘That child’s leg is tiny/thin.’

The idea being canvassed here is that forms like **wẹ́ẹ́rẹ́** is derived from **wẹ́ rẹ́rẹ́**, **tẹ́ẹ́rẹ́** from **tẹ́ rẹ́rẹ́**, **tínínrín** from **tin rínrín**, just as **burúkú** comes from **burú kú**. If this observation is anything to go by, then it is plausible to conclude that those derived items are not canonic but derived adjectives, if at all they are, in Yorùbá (cf. Déchanine 1993:81).

2.2. Quantifier words as nominals

On the categorial status of quantifier words like **díẹ** ‘few, some’ and **gbogbo** ‘all, every’, there is no evidence to show that either of them is derived. However, their semantics and syntactic distribution indicate they are functional D items within the nominal phrase; quantifiers to be precise. They have no descriptive content of their own but exclusively refer to nominals, whether such is present in the phrase or not. **Gbogbo** is even more constrained on this as it obligatorily requires a nominal referent complement in the syntax. For instance, (19a)

⁶. This is a bit dialectal, as it is common only in CY dialects (e.g. Èkìtì and Àkúrẹ́), at least, to the best of our knowledge. Cf. SY: *ó le kú* ‘It is pretty difficult/serious.’

is ill-formed because the subcategorized nominal complement of **gbogbo** is not there.

19a. ***gbogbo** *dé lánàá*
 All arrive LOC.yesterday
 ‘All came yesterday.’

b. **gbogbo** *wón dé lánàá*
 all 3pl-HTS arrive LOC.yesterday
 ‘All of them came yesterday.’ /
 ‘They all arrived yesterday.’

diẹ on the other hand can occupy an argument position by itself, as evident in (20), which is a signature characteristic of noun phrases. Thus, **diẹ** functions like an adnominal quantifier in (20a) and a pronominal quantifier in (20b, c, & d).

20a. *Oúnjẹ_i diẹ_i ti tó*
 food little PRF enough
 ‘A little portion of food is enough.’

b. **diẹ** *ti tó*
 little PRF enough
 ‘A little bit/piece is enough.’

c. *E gba diẹ*
 2PL take little/some
 ‘You can have little/some (of it).’

d. **diẹ** *ni/tí mo rà*
 little FOC/REL 1SG buy
 ‘I bought a FEW/LITTLE.’ / ‘The little that I bought’

These considerations inform our position that **gbogbo** and **diẹ** are not adjectives but functional quantifier words in the syntax of Yoruba language.

3. Syntactic distribution of Yoruba attributive modifiers

The attributive items regarded as adjectives in Yoruba grammar show up in three syntactic positions within the nominal phrase. First, they show up as post-N modifier in examples like (21).

21a. [_{NP} Aṣọ **dúdú**] wà lójà.
 cloth black.HTS be LOC.market
 ‘There are black clothes in the market.’

b. Wón tan[_{DP}[_{NP} àbẹ̀là **pupa**] kan].
 3PL.HTS lit candle red one
 ‘They lit a red candle.’

This distribution parallels those of undisputed derived nouns like **sísè** ‘cooked’ and **gíga** ‘tall’ in **oúnjẹ sísè** ‘cooked food’ and **ọmọ gíga** ‘tall child’.

Second, they show up in pre-N position such that N functions as their genitive modifier, as illustrated in (22).

22a. [_{DP}[_{NP} **funfun** ilé] yẹn] wù mí.
 white house that attract 1SG.ACC
 ‘The whiteness of that house entices me.’

b. [_{QP} **diẹ** ọkúnrin] ò tó.
 little man NEG enough
 ‘Little of man is not enough.’

Third, they show up in isolation as the only item in the nominal phrase, as in (23a) (adapted from Awobuluyi 2013:39) and (23b).

23a. Olè náà jí **dúdú**, ó fì **funfun** sílẹ̀.
 thief DEF steal black HTS put white LOC.down
 ‘The thief stole the black and left the white.’

b. Bí ó ṣe ñ pa **kúkúrúló** ñ pa **gígùn**
 as HTS do PROG kill short FOC-HTS PROG kill tall
 ‘As he kills the short so he kills the tall.’

3.1. Referential capability of Yoruba attributive modifiers

One interesting semantic feature of assumed Yoruba adjectives that has been pointed out in some earlier works (Déchaine 1993; Ilori 2010; Awobuluyi 2013; etc.) is the fact that they anaphorically or deictically refer to N or some feature of the N they supposedly modify. In their post-N position as illustrated in (20a) and (21), the adjectives refer to the N or the attribute/feature of the N. This becomes clearer in examples like (22) where the attributive items **funfun** and **díẹ** takes genitive N modifiers (**ilé** and **òkùnrin**) to which they cataphorically refer. Only nominal items (determiners used in the context of Abney 1987 functional nominal words to be precise) refer to N in this manner. As a matter of fact, they behave exactly like pronouns in contexts like (23) where they show up as the only item in the nominal phrase. They refer straight to some unmentioned but understood lexical N which evidently form part of the GIVEN perfectly known/understood by the encoder and decoder in the discourse context.

3.2. Yoruba attributive modifiers as verbs: the V and N connection

The forms of Yoruba attributive items such as **funfun** ‘white’, **dúdú** ‘black’, **tutun** ‘new’, and **tútù** (/tutù) ‘cold/wet’ commonly regarded as adjectives in the literature but analyzed as derived attributive nouns in this study additionally function as verbs in the syntax of Yoruba. Such function is easily identifiable in constructions like (24a) in contrast to (24b) where they perform the attributive function.

24a. *Mótò mí pupa /funfun/dúdú / tuntún /tutù*
 car 1SG.HTS red / white / black / new / wet
 ‘My car is red/white/black/new/wet.’

b. *mótò pupa / funfun /dúdú / tuntun / tútù*
 car red / white / black / new / wet
 ‘red/white/black/new/wet car’

In (24a), the attributive item is directly selected by T(ense) assumed to be projected by the high tone syllable (HTS), which signals that structures like (24a) are clauses, and not phrases. In addition to that, each of the attributive verbs there can in turn be nominalized just like other Yorùbá verbs to yield, e.g. **pípupa**, **fifunfun**, **dídúdú**, etc. On the other hand, these items have no specific property that uniquely makes them adjectives in (24b). Our position is that they are attributive simply because they are nouns derived from attributive verb roots as demonstrated in (9) just like **ga** → **gíga**, **gbón** → **gbígbón**, etc.

One considerable piece of phonotactic evidence that appears to back up the claim that Yoruba attributive words are adjectives, whether derived or not, is the fact that they do not take the prosthetic vowel **i** when they occur as N₂ in [N₁ N₂] constructions. This, however, does not stop them from being nouns because first: they are not the only set of derived nouns that behave in such manner. For instance, **gíga** ‘being tall’, **jíjẹ** ‘eating’, **sísẹ̀** ‘cooking’, **lílọ** ‘going’, etc. likewise do not take the prosthetic vowel **i** in similar context, yet they are regarded as derived nouns in the literature. As a matter of fact, the attributive words in question do take the prosthetic vowel when they occur in genitive constructions e.g. **ilé e-dúdú/e-pupa** ‘dúdú’s / pupa’s house’, **aya a-kékeré** ‘kekere’s wife’, etc. Interestingly, items in the group of **gíga** behave exactly the same way the moment the structure is regarded as genitive, e.g. **yàrá a-gíga** ‘gíga’s room’.

Another observation which appears to counter our claim that the attributive items in question are nouns is the fact that, unlike other Yorùbá nouns, they cannot be substituted with the genitive 3sg pronoun (**i**)rẹ̀ in constructions like (25). That explains why some portions of (25b) and (25c) are ill-formed.

- 25a. ìwé **Akin** / (**e**)rẹ̀
 book Akin / 3SG-GEN
 ‘Akin’s / his book’

- b. *ìwé dídú / *(e)rẹ*
 Book black / 3SG-GEN
 ‘black/his book’
- c. *ilé gíga / *(e)rẹ*
 house tall / 3SG-GEN
 ‘tall house’
- d. *ìwé e-dídú / (e)rẹ*
 book black / 3SG-GEN
 ‘black’s book’ / ‘his/her book’
- e. *ilé e-gíga / (e)rẹ*
 house tall / 3SG-GEN
 ‘tall’s house’ / ‘his/her house’

This observation however poses no challenge to the claim of this paper as it simply shows that nominal constructions where the attributive items occur as modifiers are not genitive but appositive constructions. In other words, the attributive noun item and the noun it supposedly modifies are referentially connected. For instance, while *ìwé* in (25b) semantically refers to the item ‘book’ in the real world, *dídú* refers more specifically to the colour attribute of the book. This fact is evident with *gíga* in (25c) to which *rẹ* can also not refer in similar context. The reason for this is not unconnected with the fact that *rẹ* refers only to +HUMAN/ANIMATE nouns, whether real or personified. That explains why (25d) and (25e) are well-formed.

Lastly, there are other nouns, e.g. *gààrí* ‘cassava grits’, *pàtàkì* ‘importance’, *wàhàlà* (a loanword from Hausa) ‘trouble/problem’, etc. which also function as verbs, and not as adjectives, in the language. These are exemplified in (26).

- 26ai. *Mo ra gààrí àpo kan.* (gààrí as N)
 1SG buy cassava-gritts sack one
 ‘I bought a sack of cassava-gritts.’

- aii. *Ìwọ kọ ni o ñ gààrí mi* (gààrí as V)
 2SG NEG FOC 2SG PROG feed 1SG-ACC
 ‘You are not the one feeding me.’
- bi. *Akín pàtàkì ara-rẹ.* (pàtàkì as N)
 Akin.HTS make-important himself
 ‘Akin made himself important.’
- bii. *Pàtàkì ọrọ mi si yín* (pàtàkì as V)
 main-point word 1SG.GEN TO 2PL.ACC
 ‘The main point of my discussion with you’
- ci. *Wàhálà rẹ ti pọ jù* (wàhálà as N)
 trouble 2SG.GEN PRF many too-much
 ‘Your trouble is too much.’
- cii. *Jọwọ má wàhálà mi*
 Please NEG trouble 1SG.ACC
 ‘Please don’t trouble me.’

Therefore, such behaviour is not exclusive to **dúdú**, **funfun**, **pupa**, **tuntun**, etc. This, in addition to other pieces of evidence already presented, makes the claim of this study compelling.

3.3. On *tutu* and *tútù*

One common denominator in the morphological make-up of **tutù** ‘to be cold/wet’ and **tútù** ‘cold/wet’ is the V **tù**, which evidently explains their relatedness. However, the fact that each of the two words has exclusive syntactic distribution is an indication that they do not belong to the same syntactic category. **Tutù** ‘to be cold/wet’ is constantly used as a verb, but never as a modifier of noun. That accounts for the ill-formedness in (27b).

- 27a. *omi-í tutù.*
 water-HTS cold
 ‘The water is cold.’

- b. **omi tutù*
 water cold
 ‘?water be cold.’

What makes the difference between (27a) and (27b) is the presence of the HTS in (27a) and the lack of it in (27b)⁷.

In contrast, **tútù** is exclusively used as a modifier of noun, but never employed as a verb. That equally explains why (28a) is well formed and (28b) ill-formed.

- 28a. *omi tútù*
 water cold.
 ‘cold water

- b. **omí tútù.*
 water.HTS cold
 ‘water is cold.’

This observation has far-reaching implications for the internal structures of these items. First, it implies that unlike **tuntun**, **funfun**, **dúdú**, etc., **tutù** cannot be a noun as it does not have the syntactic distribution of nouns. Added to this is the fact that it does not have the partial reduplication morphology. The position of this paper is: **tutù** is syntactically derived from a combination of Yoruba perfective aspect, **ti**, and the root verb **tù**, as illustrated in (29)⁸.

⁷ HTS is a syntactic functional morpheme which occurs immediately after the subject in Yoruba clause constructions. The basic shape of the morpheme is **ó** (Bamgbose 1966, Awobuluyi 2006) but it usually assimilates to the feature of the final vowel of the final syllable of the subject, as seen in (27a). Some studies have claimed that it marks present-past tense in Yoruba (Awobuluyi 2006, 2013, Ilçri 2010, Oshodi 2016, etc.).

⁸ It is pertinent to mention here that there is another view in the literature which says this derivation is from **tù itù** → **tutù**. Apart from the hypothetical nature of the supposed noun input **itù**, the analysis runs into problem with forms like **tútù** which would have to be from ***tù itù** and other partially reduplicated forms like **gíga** (← ***ga íga**), etc. However, whichever one settles for, the fact that **tutù** is not a nominal but a derived V is not in any way jeopardized.

- 29a. *Omi-í / Aṣọ-ọ ti tù*
 Water-HTS / Clothe-HTS PRF cool/wet
Contraction of PRF + V:
 → *Omi/Asọ titù*
Regressive Assmilation of /i/ + /ù/ → /uù/:
 → *Omi/Asọ tutù*
 ‘The water/clothe is cold/wet.’

- b. *omi náà-án ti-tù/tu-tù*
 water DEF-HTS PERF-COLD
 ‘The water has cooled.’ / ‘The water is cold.’

If this analysis is anything to go by, then **tutù** should be an Aspect Phrase (AspP) which has over time become a V via incorporation of the perfective aspect into the V **tù**. That straightforwardly explains why **tutù** exclusively functions as V, and never as a noun modifier in Yoruba.

On the other hand, we have every reason to conclude that **tútù** is a nominal word derived via partial reduplication in the same manner with **gíga**, **jíjẹ**, **sísè**, etc., (i.e. **tù** → **títù** → **tútù**). This is because it also shares the same syntactic distribution with them by being exclusively used as a supposed modifier of N, and never as V, as the ill-formedness of (30a-c) shows.

- 30a. **Bàtà mi-í gíga.*
 Shoe 1SG-HTS being-tall
 ‘My shoe is high.’
- b. **Oúnjẹ wa-á sísè.*
 Food 1PL-HTS cooking
 ‘Our food is cooking.’
- c. **Aṣọ (ọ)mi-í tútù.*
 cloth 1SG-HTS wet
 ‘My cloth is wet.’

Therefore, it is logical to conclude that **títù/tútù** like **gíga** ‘tall’, **sísè** ‘cooked’, **jíjẹ**, **fífẹ** ‘wide (dimension)’, **gbígbe** ‘dry’, etc.

does not belong to the group of nouns like **tuntun**, **funfun**, **pupa**, etc. Although they evidently share the partial reduplication morphology, the latter differ in that they can additionally function as verbs in the language. This difference is reflected in Table 1, which, though not exhaustive, is a representation of the attributes and features of the group of Yoruba attributive modifiers.

Table 1: Yoruba attributive modifiers and their features

Attribute	Examples	+N	+V	+Partial Reduplication	+Full Reduplication
Colour	dúdú, pupa, funfun, lílá	✓	✓	✓	-
Size/ Dimension	fifè, gíga, ñlá / lílá, gígùn, kékeré, kúkurú, etc.	✓	-	✓	-
Quantity 1	díè, púpò,	✓	-	±	-
Quantity 2	gbogbo, díèdíè	✓	-	-	✓
State 1a	tútù, gbígbe, dídùn, kíkòrò, wíwà, bíbọ̀n, rere, etc.	✓	-	✓	-
State 1b	dáradára	✓	-	-	✓
State 2	tuntun	✓	✓	✓	-
State 3	sísè, títà, lílò, jíjẹ, mímu, etc.	✓	-	✓	-

The features common to all of the attributive modifiers in Table 1 are +N and the reduplication feature. With the exception of **diẹ** and **gbogbo**, which are quantifiers, these are clear-cut indicators that Yoruba attributive modifiers are actually nominal words most of which are derived from verb roots via partial reduplication.

4. Synchronizing the evidence and their implications

The following evidence suffice in regard to the claim of this paper that items viewed in the literature as adjectives are primarily derived nouns as suggested by their morphology and syntactic distribution. The items in question

- are derived from attributive verb roots through partial reduplication, and only nouns are generally assumed to be so derived in Yorùbá (Awobuluyi 1978; Bamgbose 1990)
- refer to N or some features of the N that they supposedly modify, a behavior which is characteristic of nominal words such as nouns, pronouns, quantifiers, determiners, etc. cross-linguistically.
- syntactically show up in nominal exclusive positions, e.g. as subject, object, and modifier of N position. Other such positions are focused and relativized positions illustrated in (31).

31a. *[funfun/pupa/dúdú/tuntun]_i ni mo fẹ [t]_i* (focusing)
 white/red/black/new FOC 1SG want
 ‘I want WHITE/RED/BLACK/NEW.’

b. *[funfun/pupa/dúdú/tuntun]_i tí mo fẹ [t]_i* (relativization)
 white/red/black/new REL 1SG want
 ‘the white/red/black/new, which I want’

Some studies (e.g. Taiwo 2015) have argued that the modified noun head covertly precedes the modifier in contexts like (31). The position of this paper however is that the attributive modifiers simply behave like pronouns in such context as they obey binding principle ‘B’ which states that pronominals are free in their governing category but could be bound from outside

it (Haegeman 1991:198, 216). By implication therefore, the claim that referents of attributive modifiers in contexts like (31) is covertly present is not supported by theoretical facts. Similarly, tone change on low-toned verbs that take such attributive modifiers as object complement, as illustrated in (32) below, is an indication that the attributive words are nominals because that's how such verbs behave before nominal objects in the language (Bamgbose 1990: 133; Awobuluyi 2016:3-4).

32a. *Mo gba iwé náà*
 1SG collect book DEF
 'I collected the book.'

b. *Mo gba funfun/pupa/dúdú/tuntun náà*
 1SG collect white / red / black / new DEF
 'I collected the white/red/black/new.'

Ordinarily, *gbà* 'take, collect' is a low-toned verb but it becomes mid-toned in (32) because it takes a nominal object. The referent of *funfun/pupa/dúdú/tuntun* (32b) is either *iwé* in (32a) if both are discourse linked or any other antecedent nominal item in the universe of discourse linked to it⁹.

- also behave like nouns in contexts where they are thought to be adjectives in that they cannot be independently focused without their referents just like appositive nouns, as exemplified in (33).

33a. *Mo ra [aṣọ dúdú]*
 1SG buy cloth black
 'I bought a black cloth.'

↓
 b. **[N dúdú]_i ní mo ra [aṣọ t_i]*
 lack FOC 1SG buy cloth --
 '*It is BLACK I bought cloth.'

⁹. See Awobuluyi (2016:6-7) for similar explanation. See also Stahlke (1974: 179) and Ilori (2005:90-92) in particular for discussion on anaphoric relations of Yoruba personal pronouns.

- c. *Mo n ka [iwé Ilọri]*
 1SG PROG read book Ilọri
 ‘I am reading Ilọri’s book.’
 ↓
- d. **[N Ilọri_i] ni mò n ka [iwé t_i]*
 Ilọri FOC 1SG PROG read book --
 ‘*It is ILORI that I am reading book.’
- e. *Olè jí [iwé tí mo rà]*
 thief steal book REL 1SG buy
 ‘Thief stole the book which I bought.’
 ↓
- f. **[RelP tí mo rà]_i ni olè jí [iwé t_i]*
 REL 1SG buy FOC thief steal book --
 ‘*which I bought the thief stole book’
- g. *Olè jí [iwé rẹ]*
 thief steal book 3SG-GEN
 ‘Thieves stole his/her book.’
 ↓
- h. **[rẹ]_i ni olè jí [iwé t_i]*
 3SG-GEN FOC thief steal cloth --
 ‘*HIS/HER is whom the thief stole cloth.’

Given these structural facts, the conclusion, it seems to us, is that **dúdú**, **Ilọri**, **tí mo rà**, and **rẹ** function as some kind of nominal qualifier/modifier in those contexts. By this, we mean nominal expressions modifying another nominal word expression, especially nouns. The question that arises from this view however is: what kind of nominal modifiers are the items in question? The expected answer would be that **rẹ** is a 3SG-GEN D pronoun, **tí mo rà** is a RelP, **Ilọri** is a noun, and **dúdú** is also a noun/nominal word given its morphology and syntactic distribution that parallel those of nouns/nominal words/expressions in the language.

4.1. Derivation as verbs

As mentioned earlier, Yoruba attributive modifiers function as verbs. One sure way of explaining this is to assume that the morphological process involved in their derivation as V is conversion. Conversion is a syntactic class-shifting morphological process in which a root word is transformed to another syntactic category without any visible/overt change in form. The same structural form is therefore maintained for both the root and the derived output. In this instance, the attributive nouns, claimed in this study to have been derived through partial reduplication, are employed as roots to derive verbs through N→V conversion. Word items involved in this derivation are those entered under colour and state 2 attributes in Table 1, i.e. **dúdú**, **funfun**, **pupa/pipa**, **lílá**, and **tuntun**. **Tutù** as earlier explained is derived differently from these, i.e. from the combination of the perfective aspect, **tì**, and the V **tù**.

4.2. Derivation as Adjectives

On the possible derivation of the attributive words as adjectives, one may also want to consider conversion from Noun to Adjective (i.e. N → A) as option, as done in Iløri (2010). However, the syntactic behaviour of the so-called Adjective output, highlighted so far in this study, calls such consideration to question. This among other reasons we suppose may have informed Awobuluyi (2013:39-40) designation of the words in question as *àdamòdì arópò-orúko ajúwe* ‘default adjectival pronoun’, which for us is a vindication of the position taken in this paper that those items are actually nominal words. It, at the same time, affirms the reality of the thin line of demarcation between N(oun) and A(djective) as syntactic lexical categories cross-linguistically.

5. Conclusion

We have in this paper shown that Yoruba attributive words analyzed as adjective in the literature are nominal words given their morphological derivation, syntactic distribution, and referential capabilities which parallel those of Abney (1987) functional determiners. We have shown in consonance with Iløri

(2010) and Awobuluyi (2013) that the items have referential and attributive features such as colour, size, quantity, state, etc. through which they refer to the noun or nominal item they supposedly modify. Therefore, If other non-attributive items like **jíjẹ** ‘eating’, **lílọ** ‘going’, **wíwá** ‘coming’, etc., which have the same morphology and syntactic distribution are analyzed as nouns, it is only logical, if Yoruba grammar is to be deemed consistent, to analyze the attributive items (i.e. **dúdú**, **pupa**, **funfun**, etc.) as some kind of nouns or, at best, nominal words in the syntax of the language.

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List of unconventional abbreviations used

AspP	Aspect phrase
D	Determiner
DEG	Degree
CY	Central Yoruba
HTS	High Tone Syllable
PART	Particle
PREF	Prefix
RelP	Relative clause phrase