

On the Syntax of Reflexives in Yoruba: A Descriptive Perspective

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Abstract

This paper is a re-examination of the syntax of reflexive constructions in Yoruba from a descriptive perspective. It has been noted in the paper that Yoruba belongs to the class of languages in which the lexical source of the reflexive pronoun is contained in the expression of a body part, in this case, the word for ‘body’ *ara*, which combines with a possessive pronoun. It has also been observed that the possessive attribute of Yoruba reflexives can also give rise to ambiguous constructions because of the possibility of interpreting the sentences as benefactive semantically. The paper further highlights that an accurate description of the distribution of reflexives and their antecedents in Yoruba involve an examination of the verbs which they co-occur with in terms of the valency classes of the verbs as well the semantic field into which the verbs can be categorized. The paper concludes that all these play a crucial role in the determination of how the sentences involving reflexive pronouns can be interpreted.

Keywords: Reflexive, logophoric, antecedent, valency, possessive, typology

1. Introduction

This paper examines the syntax of reflexives in Yoruba. Even though the study of reflexives is not novel to Yoruba (Awoyale 1986, Ajiboye 2005, Ajiboye and Armoskaite 2005, Lawal 2006, and an online questionnaire filled in by Adeşola 2008), this present study contributes to the available knowledge by undertaking a descriptive approach to the understanding of the most important properties of reflexives, and their distribution across different constructions in Yoruba. Yoruba is a West Benue-Congo language (Williamson and Blench 2000), spoken mainly in the South-West region of Nigeria by an estimated 30 million speakers who speak the language as first language (Bamgbose 2008). Yoruba is a tone language. There are three level tones in the language (i.e., high, mid and low). Lexical tones are more widespread in the language than grammatical tones. Yoruba is isolating, and core arguments (i.e., full NPs) are not case-marked. However, the language makes use of prepositions to introduce oblique arguments. Yoruba does not mark gender distinction. Basic word order in Yoruba is SVO; and as in most Niger-Congo languages, this word order is rigid (Watters 2000). There are two major pronoun classes in Yoruba, these are traditionally called emphatic and unemphatic pronouns (Bamgbose 1966, Rowlands 1969), or Long and short (Delano 1965), the unemphatic pronouns are also sometimes referred to as enclitics (Akinlabi and Liberman 1999) or weak pronouns (Pulleyblank 1986), while the emphatic ones are called strong pronouns. The unemphatic pronouns make a distinction between subject and object forms, and the latter are also used with prepositions. Table 1 shows the three kinds of personal pronouns.

Table 1: Personal pronouns in Yorùbá

	emphatic	unemphatic subject	unemphatic object
1sg	<i>èmi</i>	<i>mo¹</i>	<i>mi</i>
2sg	<i>ìwọ</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>e/ọ</i>

¹ The 1st person singular subject pronoun also has the variant forms: *n* and *mi*. However, the variants are restricted in their distribution. For instance, *mi* can only occur as the subject of a negative clause, at least in standard Yoruba.

3sg	<i>òhun</i>	<i>ó</i>	V(owel)
1pl	<i>àwa</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>wa</i>
2pl	<i>èyin</i>	<i>è</i>	<i>yín</i>
3pl	<i>àwọ̀n</i>	<i>wọ̀n</i>	<i>wọ̀n</i>

The emphatic class of personal pronouns is identical in form with the logophoric pronouns in the language. Of particular interest to us in this regards is the 3rd person (singular/plural) logophoric pronouns which feature in reflexive expression.

2. Basics of Yoruba Clause Structure

The basic clause structure of Yoruba is SVO with transitive verbs and SV with intransitive verbs. More importantly, is the presence of a preverbal subject.

1. *mo wá a*
1SG.S search 3SG.O
'I searched for it.'
2. *Adé rí mi*
Ade see 1SG.O
'Ade saw me.'

Simple² intransitive verbs in Yoruba include: *jòkòó* SIT (down), *họ̀n* SCREAM, *kú* DIE, *yí* ROLL, *rì* SINK, *gbẹ* BE DRY, *hó* BOIL and *şubú* FALL (down).

3. a) *Adé jòkòó* b) *ọ̀mọ náà họ̀n*
Ade sit child DEF scream
'Ade sat (down).' 'The child screamed.'

With respect to Yoruba verbs and their valency classes, it is important to state that verbs with null subject do not exist in Yoruba. In fact, meteorological verbs such as RAIN and SHINE (referring to the sun), require the presence of a preverbal subject which must be a full NP (cf. 4a, b). Although it is also possible to replace the full NP with a subject pronoun as in (5a, b), it is important to note that the subject pronoun is not a dummy subject. The constructions in (5) are only possible if both speaker and listener have a foreknowledge of the NP referents; otherwise, the statement will have an incomplete sense, as the listener will still seek a clarification of the NP represented by the subject pronouns.

4. a) *ọ̀jò ñ rọ̀* (b) *ọ̀dùń ñ ràn*
rain PROG rain sun PROG shine
'It is raining.' 'It is sunny. / The sun is shining.'
5. a) *ó ñ rọ̀* (b) *ó ñ ràn*
3SG.S PROG raining 3SG.S PROG shining
'It is raining.' 'It is sunny.'

However, this is not to claim that the language entirely lacks verbs which take a dummy subject. In fact, a small set of verbs in the language are known to take dummy subjects. They include the following: *rẹ* BE ILL, *yẹ* 'to suppose / to be fitting' or in the expression of something which "ought to be"; and marginally, the verb 'to have' *ní*, which when used in certain discourse (e.g., in a folktale) can take a dummy subject. The dummy subject is always identical with the 3rd person singular unemphatic subject pronoun.

² Monomorphemic intransitive verbs which are in contrast with their complex bimorphemic counterparts which consists of a V+ an inherent N complement: *kọrin* SING, *rẹ̀rìn* LAUGH, *wíkọ* COUGH, etc.

6. *ó rẹ̀ iyá-àgbà*
it sick mother-elder
'Grandmother is ill.'
7. *ó yẹ́ kí a bọ̀wọ̀ fún àwọn òbí wa*
it ought that we respect give PL parent.POSS 1PL.POSS
'We ought to respect our parents. / 'We are supposed to respect our parents.'
8. *ó ní ọ̀jọ́ kan, ìjàpáàtiòbọ́ lẹ́ kí ọ̀ba*
it have day INDEF Tortoise and Monkey go greet King
ní ààfín
PREP palace
(Lit. 'It have one day, Tortoise and Monkey went to greet the king at the palace.')

In a compound sentence which involves two or more independent clauses, each clause must have its own overt subject, whether a full NP or a pronominal.

9. a) *Adé fo títi; Màrià rí i*
[Ade_i jump street] [Mary_j see 3SG.O_i]
'Ade crossed the street; Mary saw him.'
9. b) *Adé jẹ́ olóríkukun; Màrià kórira rẹ̀*
[Ade_i BE head.strong] [Mary_j hate 3SG.POSS_i]
'Ade is stubborn; Mary hates him.'
9. c) *Bọ́lá wà n'bí; Màrià rí ọ̀kọ̀ọ́ rẹ̀*
[Bola_i is PREP.here] [Mary_j see car.POSS 3SG.POSS_i]
'Bola is here. Mary saw his car.'
10. *Bọ́lá rí Màrià; ó kí i*
[Bola_i see Mary_j] [3SG.S_i greet 3SG.O_j]
'Bola saw Mary; she greeted him.'

We also note from the examples (9a-c), that the subject NP of the first clause can be co-referenced with the pronominal object of the second clause. But such relationship is not possible if the object of the second clause is a reflexive pronoun. The intended meaning is lost (cf. 11, 12). A reflexive must occur in the same clause as its antecedent.

11. *Adé fo títi; Màrià rí ara rẹ̀*
[Ade_i jump street] [Mary_j see body.POSS 3SG.POSS_j]
'Ade crossed the street; Mary saw herself. / Mary saw his body.'
12. *Adé jẹ́ olóríkukun; Màrià kórira ara rẹ̀*
[Ade_i BE head.strong] [Mary_j hate body.POSS 3SG.POSS_j]
'Ade is stubborn; Mary hates herself. / Mary hates his body.'

3. The Form of Yoruba Reflexives

Typologically, Yoruba belongs to the group of languages in which the lexical source of the reflexive pronoun is contained in the expression of a body part (König and Siemund 2005), i.e., the word for 'body' *ara*. This combines with a possessive pronoun. We know that the reflexive occurs in a typical possessive frame because the final vowel of *ara* is always lengthened (cf. table 2) to express possession, hence, *araa*³ X.

³ Sometimes in written Yoruba, some people tend to ignore the possessive marker, they simply write *ara* X. However, one must know that the possessive vowel is not in any way redundant.

Table 2: Reflexive Pronouns in Yoruba

1 st person singular	<i>araà mi</i>	1 st person plural	<i>araawa</i>
2 nd person singular	<i>araà rẹ</i>	2 nd person plural	<i>araayín</i>
3 rd person singular	<i>araarẹ</i>	3 rd person plural	<i>araawọn</i>

Prosodically, in the singular person forms of the reflexive pronouns in Yoruba, the third person singular is different from other persons based on its tone pattern (i.e., Mid-Low), while other person forms have a Low-Mid tone pattern. On the other hand, with the plural person forms, the form of the second person plural is different. It has a Mid-High tone pattern, while other person forms have only a mid tone which spreads all the way to the possessive pronoun. Interestingly, the tone patterns of the reflexives are stable, irrespective of the phonological environment in which they occur in a construction.

13. a) *Adé gbá araa rẹ l'etí*
 Ade_i hit body.POSS 3SG.POSS_i PREP'ear
 'Ade slapped himself.'
13. b) *Adé ti araa rẹ subú*
 Ade_i push body.POSS 3SG.POSS_i fall
 'Ade pushed himself down.'
13. c) *pépéyẹ náà fí ewé dábòbò araa rẹ*
 duck DEF_i take leaf_j protect body.POSS 3SG.POSS_i
 'The duck protected itself with a leaf.'

Furthermore, Yoruba belongs to the group of languages in which the reflexive is identical with the reciprocal.

14. *Bólá àti Akin fẹràn araa wọn*
 Bola_i and Akin_i like body.POSS 3PL.POSS_i
 'Bola and Akin like themselves.' / 'Bola and Akin like each other.'
15. *a kóríra ara wa*
 1PL.S_i hate body 1PL.POSS_i
 'We hate ourselves'. / 'We hate one another.' / 'We hate each other.'

Within the reciprocal, the language also does not distinguish between a dual, and other multiple subjects. In a language like English for instance, there is the distinction between the restricted 'each other'⁴ (i.e., dual subject) and the non-restricted 'one another' (i.e., for two or more referents).

4. Reflexives and Verbs with different Valency Properties

In the following subsection, we discuss the Yoruba reflexives with verbs of diverse valencies.

4.1 Reflexives with Simple Transitive Verbs

Here, we show the distribution of reflexives in constructions that involve simple transitive verbs without any significant syntactic consequence.

16. *Jòhánù rí araa rẹ*
 John_i see body.POSS 3SG.POSS_i
 'John saw himself.'

⁴ These days though, it appears that it is more common in the English language to use "each other" and "one another" interchangeably.

17. *o* *rí* *araà* *rẹ*
 2SG.S_i see body.POSS 2SG.POSS_i
 ‘You see yourself.’
18. *mo* *tan* *araà* *mi*
 1SG.S_i deceive body.POSS 1SG.POSS_i
 ‘I deceived myself.’
19. *àwọ̀n*⁵ *akékọ̀ọ́* *náà* *yin* *araa* *wọ̀n*
 PL student_i DEF praise body.POSS 3PL.POSS_i
 ‘The students praised themselves.’

4.2 Reflexives with Verbs of Grooming and Body-Care

Verbs of body-care such as *tọ́jú* ‘to care’ and *wẹ* ‘to bathe’ make use of the same strategy as the simple transitive verbs when they take a reflexive object. The argument frame is: <NP V NPref> (cf. 20, 21):

20. *Adé* *tọ́jú* *araa* *rẹ*
 Ade_i care body.POSS 3SG.POSS_i
 ‘Ade cared for himself.’
21. *mo* *wẹ* *araà* *mi*
 1SG.S_i bathe body.POSS 1SG.POSS_i
 ‘I bathe myself.’

However, a different strategy is used with grooming verbs like SHAVE and CUT (of one’s hair), and the body-care verb DRESS (of one’s self). These verbs occur in a different argument frame. It involves the use of the benefactive preposition *fún*, which is used to introduce a recipient object, in this case, a reflexive.

22. *mo* *fá* *rungbọ̀n* *fún* *araà* *mi*
 1SG.S_i shave.beard PREP body.POSS 1SG.POSS_i
 ‘I shaved myself.’
23. *ó* *ge* *run* *fún* *araa* *rẹ*
 3SG.S cut.hair PREP body.POSS 3SG.POSS
 ‘He gave himself a haircut.’
24. *a* *múra* *fún* *araa* *wa*
 1PL.S prepare PREP body.POSS 1PL.POSS
 ‘We dressed ourselves. / ‘We got ourselves prepared.’
25. *a* *wo* *so* *fún* *araa* *wa*
 1PL.S wear.cloth PREP body.POSS 1PL.POSS
 ‘We dressed ourselves.’

Although it can also be argued that the constructions in (22) – (25) are so realized because of the complex morphology of the verbs involved (i.e, as inherent complement verbs), and due to the fact that Yoruba does not normally allow contiguous double objects without an oblique coming in between. The point to note is that the language makes use of the preposition *fún* in the examples to differentiate between a construction which has a reflexive meaning, and one which has the normal possessive meaning (cf. 26, 27).

26. *ó* *ge* *run* *araa* *rẹ*
 3SG.S cut.hair body.POSS 3SG.POSS
 ‘He cut his body hair.’

⁵ This article which is identical with the 3rd person plural emphatic pronoun in the language is used to express the plural number in relation to the noun which it modifies. Note that, it can also combine with the definite article in a noun phrase. E.g. *àwọ̀n akékọ̀ọ́ náà*
 PL student DEF ‘The students’

27. *a wo'so araa wa*
 1PL.S wear.cloth body.POSS 1PL.POSS
 'We put on each other's dress.'

4.3 Reflexives with Experiencer Verbs

With some experiencer verbs like: HATE, FRIGHTEN and LIKE, the argument frame within which the reflexive occurs is the same frame as the one with the simple transitive verbs, i.e., <NP V NPref>.

28. *Bólá kórirá araa rẹ̀*
 Bola_i hate body.POSS 3SG.POSS_i
 'Bola hates herself.'
29. *Bólá dẹ̀rùbá araa rẹ̀*
 Bola_i frighten body.POSS 3SG.POSS_i
 'Bola frightened herself.'
30. *Adé fẹ̀ràń araa rẹ̀*
 Ade_i like body.POSS 3SG.POSS_i
 'Ade likes himself.'

However, with experiencer verbs like *dàmú* 'be worried', *banújé* 'be sad' and *pebi* 'be hungry', the argument frame is different. It has the structure: <NP V NPrefní-NP> or <NP V NPrefní-NP V>. These experiencer verbs are complex bipartite or tripartite verbs. The reflexive occurs as the object of the first half of the verb, while the nominal half of the verb functions as the object of the multipurpose preposition *ní*.

31. *Bólá da araa rẹ̀ ní àmú*
 Bola_i do.worry body.POSS 3SG.POSS_i PREP worry
 'Bola worries (about) herself.'
32. *Adé pa araa rẹ̀ ní ebi⁷*
 Ade_i do.hunger body.POSS 3SG.POSS_i PREP hunger
 (Lit. 'Ade hungered himself.')
33. *Bólá ba araa rẹ̀ ní inú jẹ̀*
 Bola_i do.destroy body.POSS 3SG.POSS_i PREP belly spoil
 (Lit. 'Bola saddened herself.')

4.4 Reflexives and Verbs with Oblique Markers

The most common oblique markers in Yoruba are the multipurpose *ní*, the benefactive *fún*, and the allative/locative *sí*. We have already encountered the first two, i.e., *ní* and *fún* in (4.2). Others are: *nípa* 'about', often used with speech verbs; and the locative *lé*. The general idea is that, within a single clause, the oblique markers always follow the object of the verb. The allative *sí* can also be used with SPEECH verbs. In

⁶Usually pronounced *asl'ámùù* in spoken Yoruba, whereby the nasal segment [n] changes to [l] before a vowel, with the exception of [i]. Also, the [i] of *ní* is dropped in the process. However, in formal/written Yoruba, it is always written as *ní*, irrespective of the prevailing phonological environment.

⁷An alternate construction for (32) is:

Adé fí ebi pa araa rẹ̀
 Ade take hunger kill body.POSS 3SG.POSS
 'Ade made himself to be hungry.'

Yoruba, speech verbs sometimes belong in the same class as motion verbs. To utter a word or statement is to set off a projectile in motion.

34. *Adé ti ọkòrọ̀ rẹ̀ sí gáréèjì*
 Ade push car.POSS 3SG.POSS to garage
 ‘Ade pushed his car to the garage.’
35. *Adé sọ̀rọ̀ sí araa rẹ̀*
 Ade_i speak.word to body.POSS 3SG.POSS_i
 ‘Ade spoke to himself.’

Another important syntactic characteristic of the speech verb *sọ̀rọ̀* SPEAK or TELL is that it always takes a prepositional phrase as its complement. One oblique marker which can also occur with the speech verb *sọ̀rọ̀* is *nípa* ‘about’:

36. *Adé sọ̀rọ̀ nípa araa rẹ̀*
 Ade_i speak.word about body.POSS 3SG.POSS_i
 ‘Ade spoke about himself.’

The oblique marker *nípa* ‘about’, can also combine with the benefactive *fún*, when a recipient is included in the construction. We note that the position of the obliques, together with their objects (reflexive and recipient) is not rigid. They can swap positions without any syntactic or semantic consequence. There is therefore no hierarchy between the two PPs as shown below.

37. a) *Pétérù sọ̀ nípa araa rẹ̀ fún wa*
 Peter_i tell about body.POSS 3SG.POSS_i BEN 1PL.O_j
 ‘Peter told us about himself.’
37. b) *Pétérù sọ̀ fún wa nípa araa rẹ̀*
 Peter_i tell BEN 1PL.O_j about body.POSS 3SG.POSS_i
 ‘Peter told us about himself.’
38. a) *Pétérù sọ̀ nípa araa wa fún wa*
 Peter_i tell about body.POSS 1PL.POSS_j for 1PL.O_j
 ‘Peter told us about ourselves (Lit. ‘Peter told us about our body.’).’
38. b) *Pétérù sọ̀ fún wa nípa araa wa*
 Peter_i tell BEN 1PL.O_j about body.POSS 1PL.POSS_j
 ‘Peter told us about ourselves.’

However, with a ditransitive verb of mental transfer such as *ṣàpèjúwèé* “DO.DESCRPTION”, the structure is different. The position of the recipient (whether a reflexive, nominal or pronominal) is fixed. The prepositional phrase introduced by *fún* must follow the verb phrase as shown in (39-40).

39. *a ṣàpèjúwèé Adé fún araa wa*
 1PL.S_i do.description Ade_j PREF body.POSS 1SG.POSS_i
 ‘We described Ade to ourselves.’
40. *Màríà ṣàpèjúwèé araa rẹ̀ fún Adé*
 Mary_i do.description body.POSS 3SG.POSS_i PREP Ade_j
 ‘Mary described herself to Ade.’

Any attempt to swap the position of the object of the verb and that of the preposition will only lead to a change in meaning, whereby the benefactive role is transferred to another entity. Example (41) shows a reversal of the beneficiary of example (39).

41. *a* *ṣàpèjùwèé* *araa* *wa* *fún* *Adé*
 1PL.S_i do.description body.POSS 1SG.POSS_i PREP Ade_j
 ‘We described ourselves to Ade.’

5. Between Reflexives and Possessives

We will recall an earlier point (see §3) that Yoruba reflexives occur in a possessive frame. The important question is whether a reflexive can combine with another possessive NP in the same clause. In Yoruba, we note that this is possible, whereby a reflexive can occur in apposition with an adnominal possession:

42. a) *ó* *féràn* *isẹ̀-owóṣo* *araa* *rè*
 3SG.S_i like work-hand.POSS body.POSS 3SG.POSS_i

(Lit. ‘He likes handiwork of himself.’)
 ‘He likes his own handiwork.’

42. b) *a* *kórùra* *àwòráanàwọ̀n* *òrẹ́e* *araa* *wa*⁸
 1PL.S_i hate image.POSS PL friend.POSS body.POSS 1PL.POSS_i

(Lit. ‘We hate the pictures of friends of ourselves.’)
 ‘We hate the pictures of each other’s / one another’s friends.’

6. Reflexives in Appositive Phrases

In 6.1 and 6.2, we examine reflexives in appositive phrases (that is reflexives as intensifiers and reflexives with emphatic pronouns).

6.1 Reflexives as Intensifiers

Reflexive pronouns in Yoruba are sometimes used as appositive modifiers, whereby they intensify the noun to which they are adjoined. The internal structure of the intensifier consists of: *fun+araPOSS+POSSpro*. The form of the intensifier is further determined by the “person”.

43. a) *obá* *fúnraarẹ̀* *ni* *ó* *gé* *ọ̀pẹ* *náà* *lulẹ̀*
 King INT FOC 3SG.S cut palm tree DEF hit.ground
 ‘The king himself cut (down) the palm tree.’

43. b) *èmi* *fúnraàmi* *ni* *mo* *fì* *ọ̀mọ* *fún* *ọ̀kọ*
 1SG.INDEP INT FOC 1SG.S take child give husband
 ‘I myself gave away the bride.’

Alternatively, the intensifier may be separated from the subject NP by occurring in the post-verbal position. However, it still tracks its reference in its new position.

44. *obá* *gé* *ọ̀pẹ* *náà* *lulẹ̀* *fúnraarẹ̀*
 King_i cut palm tree_j DEF hit.ground INT_i
 ‘The king cut (down) the palm tree by himself.’

The interesting point to note about the distribution of the intensifier in the non-appositive usage (i.e., 44) is the possibility of getting an ambiguous reading, where any of two meanings is possible. That is, the non-benefactive meaning: ‘The king cut the palm tree by himself (i.e., unassisted)’, and the benefactive sense: ‘The king cut the palm tree for himself (i.e., for his own benefit).’ Native speakers normally separate the

⁸Ajiboye and Armoskaite (2005:3) claim that this type of construction is ungrammatical in Yoruba, even though it is grammatical in English. On the other hand, they accept that (42a) is grammatical. However, there is no justifiable syntactic grounds why (42b) should not be grammatical.

benefactive meaning from the non-benefactive by simply separating each of the morphemes that make up the intensifier to express the benefactive sense. Each morpheme is made salient. This is shown in (45) below. The sentence can only be read as “The king cut the palm tree for himself.” It is shown in (45) that under the benefactive sense, the so-called intensifier can change to a reflexive meaning.

45. *òbá gé òpẹ náà fún araa rẹ*
 King cut palm tree DEF BENF body.POSS his
 ‘The king cut (down) the palm tree for himself.’

6.2 Reflexives with Emphatic Pronouns

Reflexives can also occur in apposition with any of the emphatic pronouns in the language. The appositive noun phrase usually occurs in focus (cf. 46a), and sometimes in a non-focus but emphatic construction (46b).

46. a) *àwa araa wa ni a ríaraawa*
 1PL.EMPH body.POSS 1PL.POSS FOC 1PL.S see body.POSS 1PL.POSS
 (Lit. ‘We ourselves see ourselves.’)
 ‘We ourselves see one another.’
46. b) *èmi araà mi, enítì iyá bí*
 2SG.EMPH body.POSS 2SG.POSS FOC REL mother give.birth
 (Lit. ‘I myself, born by (my) mother.’)

7. Reflexives with Attributive Phrase

Reflexives in Yoruba can occur in an attributive phrase which involves epithets (see also Ajiboye 2004), i.e., a word or phrase used to describe the attributive quality of a person or thing. Epithets in Yoruba when used to describe the quality of a person always have an abusive or derogatory sense.

47. a) *atòṣṣṣé araà rẹ*
 NOM.bed.wet body.POSS 2SG.POSS
 ‘Your bed-wetting self’
47. b) *ológògóró araa rẹ*
 drunk body.POSS 3SG.POSS
 ‘His drunken self’

With epithets, in whatever way one looks at it, even when a somewhat positive attribute, e.g., “Your rich self” as in (48), is attributed to a person, the true sense of the phrase is always negative.

48. *olówó araà rẹ*
 NOM.have.money body.POSS 2SG.POSS
 ‘Your rich self’

8. Reflexives with Honorific Interpretation

For a language like Yoruba, it is not always the case that a reflexive must agree in number with its antecedent. A singular subject can be co-referenced to a plural reflexive; as shown in (49).

49. *Bàbá fún araa wọn nīgòotíkan*
 father_i give body.POSS 3PL.POSS_i PREP bottle drink one
 (Lit. ‘Father served themselves a bottle of beer.’)

Honorific pronouns in Yoruba involve only the second person plural and the third person plural. Honorific interpretation is more obvious in a construction if the antecedent is a full NP, and not a pronominal. However, this is only possible with the 3rd person. The general idea is that if the antecedent is pronominal, it must agree

in number with the reflexive. However, the interpretation may also be ambiguous because the intended meaning may be singular. This is shown in (50a, b).

50. a) *e fún araa yín nîgòotíkan*
 2PL.S_i give body.POSS 2PL.POSS_i PREP bottle drink one
 ‘You served yourself/ yourselves a bottle of beer.’
50. b) *wọ̀n fún araa wọ̀n nîgòotíkan*
 3PL.S_i give body.POSS 3PL.POSS_i PREP bottle drink one
 ‘They served themselves a bottle of beer.’

9. Logophoric Pronouns and Reflexives

Logophoric pronouns are reference tracking devices, and they are commonly found in West African languages (Comrie 2004). Like reflexives, logophoric pronouns are used to track their antecedents. In Yoruba, logophorics occur with verbs of saying, seeing, wanting or thinking/hoping.

51. a) *Adé ní ó tí dé*
 Ade_i say he_{ij} PERF come
 ‘Ade said he has arrived.’
51. b) *Adé ní òhún tí dé*
 Ade_i say he_i PERF come
 ‘Ade said he has arrived.’

Logophoric pronouns are restricted to the third person singular and plural. Their forms are identical with the emphatic pronoun forms: *òhún* and *àwọ̀n* respectively. Even though it is possible to use the emphatic pronoun forms of other person forms in parallel examples such as (52a, b), such use is redundant, only for emphasis. It is not as syntactically distinctive as in a true logophoric expression.

52. a) *a ní a tí dé*
 we_i say we_i PERF come
 ‘We said we have arrived.’
52. b) *a ní àwá tí dé*
 we_i say we_i PERF come
 ‘We said we have arrived.’

Having established what true logophoric pronouns are in Yoruba, we proceed to show how a logophoric pronoun can combine with a reflexive in order to track its antecedent. A typical example is with the verb: *ṣàpèjùwèé* ‘to describe’, used in a three-argument construction. When this verb combines with the benefactive *fún* in a clause, it is sometimes difficult to tell which one of the NPs in the construction is the antecedent of the reflexive. The problem is further compounded due to the fact that Yoruba does not mark gender distinction as in the following examples (53) and (54):

53. *Màrià ṣàpèjùwèé Adé fún araa rẹ̀*
 Mary_i do.description Ade_j PREP body.POSS 3SG.POSS_{ij}
 ‘Mary described Ade to herself/himself.’
54. *Bọ̀lá àti Adé ṣàpèjùwèé wọ̀n fún araa wọ̀n*
 Bola_i and Ade_i do.description 3PL.O_j PREP body.POSS 3SG.POSS_{ij}
 ‘Bola and Ade described them to themselves.’

In (53) and (54), any of the NPs, *Màrià* and *Adé* on the one hand, and *Bola/Ade* and 3PL.O on the other hand can be coreferenced with the reflexive in the examples; and all have a reflexive meaning. The question is: how does the language resolve an ambiguity such as this? Such ambiguity is resolved by the use

of a relevant third person logophoric pronoun, combining with the emphatic particle *tíká*, plus the preposition *ní*, and the reflexive. This is pronounced on the surface as *tíkáláraREF* (cf. 55 and 56).

55. *Màrìà sàpèjúwèé Adé fún òhun tìkáláraa rẹ*
 Mary_i do.description Ade_j PREP 3SG.EMPH ADV.body.POSS 3SG.POSS_j
 ‘Mary_i described Ade_j to himself.’

56. *Bólá àti Adé sàpèjúwèé wọn fún àwọn*
 Bola_i and Ade_i do.description 3PL.O_j PREP 3PL.EMPH
tìkáláraa wọn
 ADV.body.POSS 3SG.POSS_j
 ‘Bola_i and Ade_i described them_j to themselves.’

10. Reflexives as Logophors

Sometimes, reflexives in Yoruba can be used as a reference tracking device. For instance, in a construction such as (57), the NP referents of the 3rd person possessive pronouns are not distinct.

57. *Màrìà rí iwé kan l’ẹ̀hìín rẹ*
 Maria_i see book INDF PREP’back.POSS 3SG.POSS_{ij}
 ‘Maria found a book behind her/him/it.’

58. *wọn taná sí iwájúu wọn*
 3PL.S_ilight.fire LOC front.POSS 3PL.O_{ij}
 ‘They set a fire in their front.’

In order to be able to track the NP referent in the examples, with the intended meanings such as: “Maria found a book in front of Maria”, and “They light a fire in their own front” respectively, a reflexive can be used (cf. 59, 60).

59. *Màrìà rí iwé kan l’ẹ̀hìín araa rẹ*
 Maria_i see book INDF PREP’back.POSS body.POSS 3SG.POSS_i
 ‘Maria found a book behind herself.’

60. *wọn taná sí iwájúu araa wọn*
 3PL.S_i light.fire LOC front.POSS body.POSS 3PL.O_i
 ‘They set a fire in front of themselves.’

It is straightforward to use the reflexive as the only reference tracking device in the examples because of the valency property of the verbs involved; namely, two-argument verbs. We recall that with a three-argument verb (as shown in (55), (56) above), the reflexive alone is not sufficient to produce the intended meaning of the sentence; it requires the presence of the 3rd person logophoric pronoun and the emphatic particle *tíká*.

11. Non-local Antecedents

Reflexives with non-local antecedents in Yoruba occur in a marginal discourse setting involving constructions with a curse-incited tone. In this type of construction, the antecedentless reflexive is always fronted in a focus construction, i.e., in the clause-initial position.

61. *araà rẹ ni ojú máa tì*
 body.POSS 2SG.POSS FOC eye FUT push

(Lit. ‘Yourself will be put to shame.’)

62. *araa rẹ̀ ni ìjàmbá ̀se*
 body.POSS 3SG.POSS FOC disaster do
 ('Lit. 'Himself was befallen by a disaster.')

The sentences above are derived from (63) and (64) below:

63. *ojú máa tí é*
 eye FUT push 2SG.O
 'You will be put to shame.'

64. *ìjàmbá ̀se é*
 disaster do 3SG.O
 'He was struck by disaster.'

An important point to note is that the object pronouns in the non-derived constructions cannot be replaced with a reflexive.

65. **ojú máa tí araà rẹ̀*
 eye FUT push body.POSS 2SG.POSS
 'You will be put to shame.'

66. **ìjàmbá ̀se araa rẹ̀*
 disaster do body.POSS 3SG.POSS
 'He was struck by disaster.'

12. Reflexives with Quantifiers

The universal quantifier in Yoruba *gbogbo* "ALL" always occurs before the noun which it modifies, and it always denotes a plural subject.

67. *gbogbo olùkọ̀ni ̀sàpẹ̀júwẹ̀é araa wọ̀n*
 all teacher_i do.description body.POSS 3PL.POSS_i
 'All the teachers described themselves.'

Yoruba does not have a dedicated word for the singular "EVERY". What the language does in order to reference a singular subject in relation with a quantifier is to make use of the reduplicated form of the adnominal numeral *kan* 'one', realized as *kọ̀ðkan* (Lit. 'one-one'), to modify the noun which it follows:

68. *olùkọ̀ni kọ̀ðkan ̀sàpẹ̀júwẹ̀é araa rẹ̀*
 teacher_i one.one do.description body.POSS 3PL.POSS_i
 'Each teacher described himself.' / 'Every teacher described himself.'
69. *wọ̀n ̀sàpẹ̀júwẹ̀é ọ̀mọ kọ̀ðkan*
 3PL.S do.description child one.one
 'They described each child.'

13. Reflexives with Negators

Indefinite pronouns in Yoruba include: the specific indefinite *ẹnìkan* 'someone / somebody', which has its negative counterpart *ẹnìkọ̀kan* 'no one / nobody'. The non-specific indefinite pronoun on the other hand is *ẹnìkẹ̀ni* 'anyone / anybody'. The indefinite pronouns, whether specific or non-specific must combine with the negative marker (*k*)ò in order to express a negative indefinite.

70. *ẹnìkan (k)ò dá araa rẹ̀ ní èbi*
 someone_i NEG assign body.POSS 3SG.POSS_i PREP fault
 'Someone / somebody did not blame himself. / 'No one blamed himself.'

71. *enikéni* (k)ò dá araa rẹ ní èbi
 anyone_i NEG assign body.POSS 3SG.POSS_i PREP fault
 (Lit. ‘No anyone blamed himself.’)

Interestingly also, the so-called specific negative indefinite must also combine with the negative marker.

72. *enikòkan* (k)ò dá araa rẹ ní èbi
 no.someone_i NEG assign body.POSS 3SG.POSS_i PREP fault
 ‘Nobody/No one blamed himself.’

Despite the similarity between (70) and (72), the existing difference between them is that (70) is less restricted. It is also important to note that the negative marker (k)ò in (72) is not redundant; hence, (73) is not acceptable.

73. **enikòkandá* araa rẹ ní èbi⁹
 no.someone_i assign body.POSS 3SG.POSS_i PREP fault
 ‘Nobody blamed himself.’

14. Reflexives with Wh-question Subjects

Question-word questions in Yoruba include: *ta* ‘who’, *kí* ‘what’, *èwo* ‘which one’, *ibo* ‘where’, *nígà* *wo* ‘when’ and *báwo* ‘how’. All these must combine with the focus marker *ní*, and together they form the interrogative phrase.

74. *ta ní ó kórira araa rẹ*
 who FOC 3SG.S_i hate body 3SG.POSS_i
 ‘Who hates himself?’
75. *kí ní ẹ fún araa yín*
 what FOC 2PL.S_i give body 2PL.POSS_i
 ‘What did you give yourselves?’

In (74), the subject of the clause is questioned, while in (75), which involves the ditransitive verb *fún* ‘give’, it is the object of the oblique *ní* that is questioned. The original sentences are shown in (76), (77) respectively.

76. *Adé kórira araa rẹ*
 Ade hate body 3SG.POSS
 ‘Ade hates himself?’
77. *ẹ fún araa yín ní iwé*
 2PL.S give body 2PL.POSS PREP book
 ‘You gave yourselves books?’

The position of the reflexives consistently remains the same in the examples.

⁹ The sentence must not be confused with:

eni kòkan (k)ò dá araa rẹ ní èbi
 person each.one NEG assign body.POSS 3SG.POSS_i PREP fault
 ‘Each one / person did not blame himself.’

15. Reflexives with Embedded Clauses

The complement clause in Yoruba is generally introduced by the complementizer *wí pé*¹⁰. The complement clause occurs as the argument of complement-taking predicates such as: *rò* ‘think’, *sọ* ‘say’, *rántí* ‘remember’, *mọ* ‘know’, *gbàgbé* ‘forget’, and *jéBE* (cf 78).

78. *Màríà rò wí pé Adé rí araa rẹ*
 Mary_i think COMP Ade_j see body.POSS 3SG.POSS_j
 ‘Mary thought that Ade saw himself / her body/ his body.’

In (78), which involves the cognition verb *rò* ‘think’ in the main clause, and the sight verb *rí* in the embedded clause, the reflexive is coreferenced with the subject of the embedded clause, i.e., Ade. The story is the same if the verb in the embedded clause is a verb of transfer, which is usually a three-argument verb such as: *rà* ‘buy’ *dìbò* ‘vote’ and *fún* ‘give’ (cf. 79).

79. *Màríà rò wí pé Adé dìbò fún araa rẹ*
 Mary_i think COMP Ade_j vote PREP body.POSS 3SG.POSS_j
 ‘Mary thought that Ade voted for himself.’

But if the subject of the main clause is the one in focus, it must be coreferenced with a logophoric pronoun (80a, b).

80. a) *Màríà rò wí pé Adé rí òhun*
 Mary_i think COMP Ade_j see LOG_i
 ‘Mary thought that Ade saw her.’
 80. b) *Màríà rò wí pé Adé dìbò fún òhun*
 Mary_i think COMP Ade_j vote PREP LOG_i
 ‘Mary thought that Ade voted for her.’

15.1 Adjoined Complement Clauses

The second type of complement clauses is one in which the complement clause is adjoined to the main clause. The complement clause as usual is introduced by the complementizer *wí pé*, which combines with the particle *kí*. In (81a) below, the antecedent of the reflexive is the object of the main clause, i.e., Ade, which is also co-referenced with the third person singular subject agreement morpheme in the adjoined clause (cf.81).

8. 1a) *Màríà sọ fún Adé wí pé kí ó sàpèjúwèé araa rẹ*
 Mary_i say PREP Ade_j COMP PART 3SG.S_j do.description body.POSS
 3SG.POSS_j
 ‘Mary told Ade to describe himself.’
 81. b) *Màríà sọ fún Adé wí pé kí ó sàpèjúwèé Bólá*
 Mary_i say PREP Ade_j COMP PART 3SG.S_j do.description Bola_k
 ‘Mary told Ade to describe Bola.’

Also, like in the complement-taking predicate type, when the subject of the main clause is in focus, it must be co-referenced with a logophoric pronoun (cf. 82).

82. *Màríà sọ fún Adé wí pé kí ó yin òhun*
 Mary_i say PREP Ade_j COMP PART 3SG.S_j praise LOG_i
 ‘Mary asked Ade to praise her.’

¹⁰ Also, the quotative marker

We note that because it is possible for subordinate clauses to change their position within a sentence, the adjoined complement clause can be converted to an embedded one as in (83); however, the meaning of the sentence remains the same.

83. *Màríà sọ wípé kí Adé yin òhun*
 Mary_i say COMP PART Ade_j praise 3SG.LOG_i
 ‘Mary asked Ade to praise her.’

15.2 Adverbial Clause and Reflexives

Some adverbial clauses in Yoruba express temporal manner clause semantically. In a temporal adverbial clause, the clause is always introduced by the temporal adverbial subordinator *nígbà* ‘time/when’ combining with the relativizer *tí*. The position of the temporal clause can be adjoined or embedded as in (84a and 84b).

84. a) *Màríà gbó Adé nígbà tí ó ñ yin òhun*
 Mary_i hear Ade_j ADV REL 3SG.S_j PROG praise LOG_i
 (Lit. ‘Mary heard Ade when he was praising her.’)
 ‘Mary heard Ade praising her.’
84. b) *Màríà gbó nígbà tí Adé ñ yin òhun*
 Mary_i hear ADV REL Ade_j PROG praise LOG_i
 (Lit. ‘Mary heard Ade when he was praising her.’) ‘Mary heard Ade praising her.’

It is the same situation with adverbial clauses, whereby the subject of the main clause must be co-referenced with the third singular logophoric pronoun. On the other hand, the object of the main clause, which is also the subject of the embedded clause, must be co-referenced with a reflexive (cf. 85a, b).

85. a) *Màríà gbó Adé nígbà tí ó ñ yin araa rẹ*
 Mary_i hear Ade_j ADV REL 3SG.S_j PROG praise body.POSS 3SG.POSS_j
 (Lit. ‘Mary heard Ade when he was praising himself.’) ‘Mary heard Ade praising himself.’
85. b) *Màríà gbó nígbà tí Adé ñ yin araa rẹ*
 Mary_i hear ADV REL Ade_j PROG praise body.POSS 3SG.POSS_j
 (Lit. ‘Mary heard Ade when he was praising himself.’) ‘Mary heard Ade praising himself.’

The manner adverbial clause in Yoruba is always introduced by the manner subordinator *bí* ‘as’.

86. a) *Màríà rí Adé bí ó se ñ gbèjà araa rẹ*
 Mary_i see Ade_j as 3SG.S_j do PROG defend body.POSS 3SG.POSS_j
 (Lit. ‘Mary saw Ade as he was defending himself.’) ‘Mary saw Ade defending himself.’
86. b) *Màríà rí bí Adé se ñ gbèjà araa rẹ*
 Mary_i see as Ade_j do PROG defend body.POSS 3SG.POSS_j
 (Lit. ‘Mary saw as Ade was defending himself.’) ‘Mary saw Ade defending himself.’

16. Concluding Remarks

As earlier stated, the lexical source of the reflexive pronoun in Yoruba is contained in the expression of a body part and expressed within a possessive frame. The possessive attribute of Yoruba reflexives gives rise to possible ambiguous meanings in relevant constructions. It should be stated that speakers sometimes rely on speech context in order to correctly judge whether a statement has a reflexive interpretation or whether it has a possessive meaning. Apart from speech context, sometimes also, speakers may rely on their knowledge of verb subcategorization / animacy when determining whether they are dealing with a reflexive or a possessive pronoun. For example, verbs like *rí* ‘see’, *sọ* ‘tell’ and *ṣàpèjúwèé* ‘to describe’, can subcategorize for animate and inanimate referents. Hence, both a reflexive and a possessive meaning can be obtained from a construction involving any of the verbs (87a 87b).

87. a) *Màrià* *rí* *araa* *rẹ̀*
 Mary_i see body.POSS 3SG.POSS_{ij}
 ‘Mary saw herself.’ / ‘Mary saw her/his/its body.’
87. b) *Màrià* *ṣàpẹ̀júwẹ̀é* *araa* *rẹ̀* *fún* *Adé*
 Mary_i do.description body.POSS 3SG.POSS_{ik} BEN Ade_j
 ‘Mary described herself to Ade.’ / ‘Mary described her/his/its body to Ade.’

On the other hand, verbs like: *gbẹ̀jà* ‘to defend’, *dibò* ‘to vote’, and *fún* ‘to give’, can only subcategorize for animate referents. A study such as this may want to include a grouping of verbs under their respective subcategorization classes, especially for languages with typological features like Yoruba.

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